

Utilization of Key Images toward Enhancing Text Informativeness

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As is generally acknowledged one of the basic goals of any text is to convey information. Every text, including that of the verbal art, contains a certain amount of information, the overall amount of which makes the latter an informatively saturated unit of speech. From the pragmatic perspective most valuable is considered to be the information which is fresh and imparts the reader new knowledge on a certain problem. Informativeness of the text is measured by the volume of the new content found in the main theme of the text, author's strategy, imagery, etc. (Valgina 2003).

A vast number of research material allows us to define the property of informativeness as an "unstable" index of text quality. It can rise and fall depending on the quality and the volume of the new information on the one hand, and depending on the reader's interpretive skills on the other. Of course, as far as verbal text is concerned, all the units of the text to this or that extent contribute to increasing the informative function of the text. This peculiarity is conditioned by the complex nature of the literary sign and the nature of intricate correlations underlying the content and the form of expression. If we regard the problem of text informativeness with respect to interpretative processes, the aforementioned statement becomes more grounded. Hence, from the point of modern research in Contemporary Philological Hermeneutics and Text Stylistics a complete understanding of a text can be reached when the latter is considered as one complete unit, and the text ideology is considered in close interaction with the structure, composition and units from all the levels of the text (phonetic, semantic, synthetic, stylistic). Nevertheless, adequate interpretation of a piece of literature becomes even more complicated when we come to deal with ideologically and aesthetically overloaded images, which due to the skillful intention of the writer, perform the function of kernel informative units of the text, implicitly concentrating the writer's ideological and aesthetic strategy. In fact every unit of the text may undergo various modifications imposed by the writer's intention, thus extending its informative potential.

In the present paper the basic unit of consideration is the image-symbol (the literary symbol), which, according to our assumption, can be regarded as a key informative unit of the literary text.

The image-symbol is usually described as an image which implicitly concentrates rather generalized notions of the objective reality. In traditional literature the *symbol* is defined as an image or sign which is endowed with the potential of concentrating various aspects of the objective reality, functioning as a model for re-transforming and remodeling that very reality (Losev 1976). Literary symbols, unlike the traditional ones, are produced as a result of the writer's individual manner of conceptualizing the reality, metaphysical interpretations of life and philosophical outlook. In the context of the literary text the image-symbol gets organically intermingled with all the units, contributes to

complementing the ideological and aesthetic content of the text. From the functional-communicative perspective, the image-symbol is an essential element of the text via which communication is established between the writer and the reader, serving as a powerful tool for bridging the communication gaps (Gasparyan, Sargsyan 2011:135). In contrast to other units of the text, symbolic images are endowed with emotive-expressive-evaluative properties. This aspect conditions the wide spectrum of associations that generate in the reader's imagination. The associations enhance the understanding of the global purport of the text, reveal the writer's vision of reality, making the reader empathize with him. Symbols are actually introduced into the text as a tool to generate not only interest or enjoyment, but create highly generalized meanings, entailing feelings, moods, empathies. The latter in their turn create a special aesthetic impact on the reader, making him an active participant of the writer's message. Finally, symbolic images are actually those units of the text in which the author's message is condensed and through the interpretation of which adequate understanding of the text can be reached.

All the above stated arguments come to show that the image-symbol, due to the writer's intention, comprises a huge amount of valuable information, the interpretation of which will help the reader evaluate the text from the perspective of its qualitative properties, in this particular case, the property of *informativeness*.

As far as the interpretation of the image-symbol is concerned it is worth mentioning that symbolic images do not easily yield to interpretation; here it can even be stated that in terms of the number of interpretations symbolic images are polysemantic. The reader, the level of his background, literary and cultural knowledge, the level of education and his individual approach to the reality account for the number of interpretations. Moreover, symbolic images may bring forth even opposite feelings and emotions not consistent with the author's message. Hence, only the reader of average background knowledge shared with that of the writer will succeed in getting a full insight into the text ideology and perceive the propositional meaning of the images and consequently that of the text. This will unfailingly lead to deriving the most valuable information primarily encoded into the text as part of the writer's strategic intention (Gasparyan, Sargsyan 2011:135).

With a view to demonstrating the informative function of the image-symbol within the frames of the present paper we will strongly adhere to the consideration of literary texts, which have already been studied by us from the perspective of the ideological and aesthetic messages encoded therein. We firmly hold the opinion that the approach based on the availability of background knowledge will ensure a more complete and scholarly more grounded conclusions on the informative function of the key images.

Thus, the texts under investigation cover the Modernist era - the era of formal innovations and radical changes in literary thought. Modernism had the estrangement of an individual as its main theme. The task of the Modernist is to reveal human spirituality with all the complexities of human nature and mind (NA 2012).

Now, let us turn to the study of the following passage adduced from T.S. Eliot's *Hollow Man*, which is the best demonstration of the Modernist mission and can justifiably be regarded as the epitome of symbolic expression of the Modernist ideology:

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quite and meaningless
As wind in dry glass
Or rats' feet over broken glass in our dirty cellar
Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion... (NA:2543)

Eliot depicts the whole terror of the reality through the extensive use of stylistic devices (metonymy, metaphor, simile). The carefully chosen system of images enhances text informativeness in view of imparting Eliot's main concern for the future of the physically alive, but emotionally *paralyzed* man, whose head is stuffed with nothing but straw. The *hollow man*, the result of the historic era, is stuffed with useless and meaningless ideas, his voice is dried and his whispers are associated with the sounds of rats' running over the broken glass. In the adduced passage let us specially highlight the word *cellar* modified by the epithet *dirty*. It would be rather naïve on our part to consider the word combination merely in its denotative meaning. If regarded in the larger context, including the context of the historic era, *the dirty cellar* becomes completely re-interpreted, acquiring a symbolic status. The *dirty cellar* is the symbolic projection of the reality, in which people, like rats, are running for life unaware of the uselessness of the whole mess they are involved in.

In the adduced passage the atmosphere of profound pessimism, alienation and despair become especially tangible with the repetition of the preposition *without*. The atmosphere intensifies under the influence of the epithet *paralyzed*, which, symbolizing man's helplessness, stands for the author's disbelief in the man's ability to change anything.

The whole arsenal of images, connotations imposed to the latter and the chain of associations generating in the reader's imagination make the passage overfilled with subjectively re-interpreted information about the reality.

Pessimism and estrangement are the dominant lines of presentation not only in the poetry of the time, but in the novel, which in Modernist era was a more widely employed genre.

Switching to the the ethical-symbolic projection of J. Joyce's *Clay (Dubliners)* we can follow Maria, the heroine, facing the same harshness of reality. On the symbolic level it is a story of broken dreams and vain illusions. The informativeness of the text augments when the text is considered complexly, taking into account the close interaction between the part and the whole, in this case, the title and main text. The symbolic value of the story and particularly that of the title is more visibly observed in the scene where Maria, getting involved in Hallow Eve games, is led to the table blindfold to see what she will get. Moving her hand here and there she descends her hand on one of the saucers and feels a "soft wet substance" with her fingers, *the clay*, which in Celtic mythology sym-

bolizes death. The image of death intensifies, and consequently, informatively the text obtains quite new qualitative property at the segmental level of the phrase “soft wet substance”, by the repetition of the sounds [s] and [t]. It would not be in vain to state once again that linguists - psychologists claim that the repetition of this or that sound may produce a certain state of mind, associating with different emotions (Chastaing 1958). The informativeness of the passage enhances in light of the aesthetic impact of the phrase created due to the repetition of the underlined sounds, which provokes shuddering, accompanied by a feeling of something unpleasant, or even ominous.

As far as the interaction between the reader and the text is concerned, informativeness of text units may rise or fall depending on the reader’s average level of background knowledge shared with that of the writer. In this respect, as far as symbols in Modernism are concerned, one will unfailingly observe the close correlations that exist between the symbol and the myth. Myth serves for Modernists as a sound base to derive semantically and metaphorically transformed images which concentrate a lot of valuable information on the writer’s message and intention (Sargsyan 2007).

As a true demonstration of the above-mentioned let us turn to studying the image of *the sun* in D.H. Lawrence’s *The Woman Who Rode Away*. In this novel we come across the traces of Indian (Aztec) Savagery of sacrifice, an almighty power, which constantly demands sacrifice for vices committed on the Earth and as a sign of veneration. Here we follow a woman escaping mundanity in search of a new God and true meaning of life.

*... She is tired of the white man’s God... She would like to serve the
Gods of Chilchui. (p.345)*

But what is most conspicuous in this novel, is that nature-man relations are undergoing the phase of alienation. Unlike the prehistoric man, who was full of emotions, prejudice and utter fear towards nature, the modern man is guided by capitalistic values.

*We have lost our power over the sun, and we are trying to get him back.
But he’s **wild with us**, and shy like a horse that has got away. We have to
go through a lot. (p.330)*

The living nature, its powerful energy and its activity are contrasted to the man’s life full of conventionality and restrictions imposed by modern civilization. The sun is *wild* with people. Nevertheless, this situation finds its solution. The woman who rode away is sacrificed to the Gods of Chilchui. Lawrence reserves death and consummation for those who lack vital connections.

The interpretation and understanding of explicitly occasional (original) but innerly myth-based image of the sun enables the reader to overcome the gap of time and distance between himself and the writer, contributing to establishing dialogical links not only with the primary, but also with the secondary texts. In this respect, the informativeness of symbolic images is complemented by the function of establishing inter-textual links between various texts.

Finally, with a view to presenting a more comprehensive picture of the informative property of key Modernist imagery let us dwell upon one of the central images of Woolfean imagery – *the wave*:

To begin with, it is essential to mention that Modernist novel experienced deep influences imposed by the reactionary theories introduced by Sigmund Freud and Henri Bergson, who denied any possibility of rational cognition of the objective reality and ardently claimed the dominance of intuition and sub-consciousness over the reason (NA 2012). Thus they endeavored to explore all the complexities of reality confining themselves to the study of biological instincts introducing the method of psychoanalysis. The latter was quite successfully employed by Modernists, and soon gave birth to the psychological novel, in which the method of stream of consciousness was widely employed. The latter opened new horizons for cognizing the human individuality and creating man's true psychological portrait.

And as she began to go with Miss Pym from jar to jar, choosing, non-sense, nonsense, she said to herself, more and more gently, as if this beauty, this scent, this colour; and Miss Pym liking her, trusting her, were a wave which she let flow over her and surmount that hatred, that monster, surmount it all; and it lifted her up and up when — oh! a pistol shot in the street outside!
(Mrs. Dalloway, p.41)

The image of *wave* plays a key informative role in Woolfean imagery which represents the stream of consciousness in full, symbolizing various emotional states, associating with a wide spectrum of such feelings as carelessness, easiness, freedom, abstraction from reality, etc. In the adduced passage the image of the *wave* intermingles with the ideas of extreme emotional freedom surmounting all obstacles. The informative function of this image enhances due to the quite extended structure of the simile, which aesthetically succeeds in leading the reader into a certain emotional state and by the ideological antithesis created by the sudden shot heard from outside, which brings Mrs. Dalloway back to reality.

Thus, the results of our study come to substantiate the assumption that the key images may function as core informative units of a text. Informativeness is conditioned by the potential of images to condense the most important message embedded therein as a part of the writer's strategic intention. In image-symbols information is multilayered and multifunctional, and is formed as a result of complex interactions inherent to content - form and whole - part relations. In the meanwhile we have defined text informativeness as an "unstable" index of text quality, which may increase or decrease depending on such factors as volume and quality of the information, reader's interpretative skills, availability of background knowledge.

Basing our present research on already accumulated background knowledge on Modernist Literature, we tried to reveal the functional - communicative characteristics of the key symbolic images with a view to demonstrating the amount of valuable information encoded therein. As can be concluded, image-symbols are actually those tools that

boost text informativeness and help the reader decode the writer's strategic intention, penetrate into the global purport of the work, share the writer's empathies. It is also concluded that due to the depth and origin of the information embedded in the key images it is possible to establish dialogical links with secondary texts, which certifies the ability of image-symbols to move out from one independent text into a network of textual relations, thus promoting intertextuality.

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Հիմնապատկերների դերը տեքստի տեղեկատվական բովանդակության բարձրացման գործում

Սույն աշխատանքի նպատակն է զարգացնել խորհրդանիշ-պատկերների բազմակողմ քննությանն ուղղված մեր ուսումնասիրությունները փորձելով համադրել խորհրդանշական գործառույթ իրականացնող հիմնապատկերների գաղափարական եւ գեղագիտական կողմերի քննությամբ ստացած արդյունքները պատկերի տեղեկատվական գործառույթի հետ: Այս առումով անփիճելի է այն պնդումը, որ տեքստի, այդ թվում նաեւ գեղարվեստական տեքստի հիմնական նպատակներից է տեղեկատվություն հաղորդելը, որն իրականացվում է տեքստ ներմուծած լեզվաոճական հնարների եւ տեքստի տարբեր մակարդակները կազմող միավորներին ամ-

րագրվող ներակա իմաստերի միջոցով, որոնք հեղինակի մարտավարական մոտեցմամբ եւ միտումով ամփոփում են տեքստի ընկալման եւ մեկնաբանման ողջ արժեքավոր տեղեկատվությունը: Հիմնապատկերների տեղեկատվական արժեքն իր էությանը անկայուն է՝ կախված արժեքավոր տեղեկատվության որակից եւ ծավալից, ընթերցողի մեկնողական հմտություններից, հենքային գիտելիքների առկայությունից: Հիմնապատկերներում ամփոփված արժեքավոր տեղեկատվության վերծանումը թույլ է տալիս ընկալել հեղինակի մարտավարական միտումը, ներթափանցել ստեղծագործության բուն բովանդակության մեջ, կիսել հեղինակի հույզերը: Հիմնապատկերները, իրենց մեջ ամփոփված տեղեկատվության ծագման եւ խորության շնորհիվ, կարող են ընթերցողին օգնել հաստատել երկխոսական կապ երկրորդական տեքստերի հետ, որը վկայում է այն մասին, որ խորհրդանշական պատկերների միջոցով հնարավոր է մի տեքստից անցում կատարել դեպի այլ տեքստեր՝ ստեղծելով միջտեքստային կապեր: