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## **Reasons for Semantic Extension in the Meaning of Artistic Symbols**

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**Abstract.** This article examines the process of change in the meaning of artistic symbols in the novels by J. R. Fowles, whose books are filled with deep philosophical content, which is considered to be one of the main components of any symbol. The paper analyzes excerpts from the writer's novels A Maggot, The Magus, The Tree, The Aristos, as well as the author's diaries. The problem of studying an artistic symbol lies in its changeability: a symbol as a unit of culture transmits its basic meanings from generation to generation, but at the same time it can acquire other new meanings during the development of society and culture. In addition, new meanings of a symbol can be found in works of different authors. The purpose of this study is to identify the reasons for the occurrence of these meanings. The main research methods included a definition analysis of the artistic symbol in special dictionaries, contextual analysis, and methods of interpretation. Basing on the literature review, the author of the article formulates the following definition: an artistic symbol is a conventional figurative-semiotic object of language and culture (unconsciously or consciously) included by the author in a figurative text in which the symbol actualizes one or some interpretations that reduce the denotative meaning of the word and expand the semantic boundaries of the lexeme. The study reveals that cultural-historical and pragmatic factors influenced the change in the meanings of different artistic symbols in the works of Fowles. It was also found that pragmatic factors brought more changes than cultural-historical factors. This phenomenon is explained by the fact that a person's personal experience of interaction with an object-symbol can be diverse and generate new meanings. However, such meanings of a symbol may not be fixed in the language in contrast to the meanings caused by changes in society. This study is novel in that it explores the process of formation of new meanings in an artistic symbol.

Key words: artistic symbol; figurative text; pragmatic factors; stylistic devices; a meaning change.

### Introduction

The idea of a literary text reflects the worldview of a writer who creates their own model of reality based on events that are significant to them. The understanding of the author's message can be provided to a certain extent using the knowledge of a writer's biographical facts. The author's worldview can be reflected in their literary text in the form of author's digressions and comments, as well as indirectly through the figurative pictures of descriptions, artis-

tic comparisons and other rhetorical techniques. One of the forms of the writer's representation of the world is an artistic symbol because it has an ability to reflect man's worldview. As a unit of the cultural field in the society, a symbol embodies an idea which is significant for culture, for example, a "tree" can act as a symbol of eternal life. The main symbolic forms associated with the tree are manifested in the image of the World Tree (realizing the universal concept of the world) and its variants like the Tree

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of Life and the Tree of Knowledge [Encyclopedia of Signs and Symbols]. In this case, the basis for the symbol is the culture view. An artistic symbol in a literary work manifests itself as an object of a literary text, which contains a complex idea important for understanding the author's message [LES 1987: 567–570]. The most important object for the present study is an artistic symbol formed by the author's inclusion of a fixed cultural unit in a figurative text in which the author reveals a conventional interpretation or embodies their ideological worldview. In this article we have chosen the works by John Fowles as the material for our research, because this writer's prose is characterized with the saturation of philosophical content, rich imagery, a combination of fictional and real. In addition, it was originally intended to identify the role of pragmatic information about the author in the formation of other meanings in an artistic symbol which implied the analysis of works and biography of a particular author. Moreover, within the framework of books by one author it became possible to find recurrent symbols (used in two or more works) and their interpretations.

## **Hypothesis**

The meanings of symbols can be changed and this process is influenced by 2 factors: culturalhistorical and pragmatic. The first factor includes various historic events related to the word representing the artistic symbol. For example, in ancient times the white dove was considered a symbol of fertility, but after the end of the Flood, according to the legend, it was the bird that brought Noah an olive branch as good news, so the white dove became a symbol of peace and hope [Langacker]. The second factor includes subjective reasons for the formation of other symbol meanings. So, each of us has some individual associations with an object to which we attach abstract content, so in their texts the writers can symbolize a new object or add new meanings to the usual symbols fixed in culture.

It is assumed that the formation of a new meaning in a word and an artistic symbol is more facilitated by pragmatic factors that include a person's knowledge, their status and belonging to a certain culture.

#### Methodology

The methodology of the analysis of the actual language material includes a set of generally accepted techniques and procedures for the linguistic description of language units:

- 1) definition analysis that includes using of explanatory dictionaries and special dictionaries;
- 2) contextual analysis that determines relevant factors of actualization symbolic meaning;

3) methods of interpretation.

The combination of the methods and types of word analysis contributed to the comprehensive consideration of the artistic symbol not only in a certain context, but also in the entire work of the writer.

Interpretation of an artistic symbol is based on the comparison of data from special dictionaries of symbols (for example, Kerlot H. "Dictionary of Symbols"; Tressider J. "Dictionary of Symbols") and comparison of data from explanatory dictionaries.

#### Theoretical framework

An artistic symbol can reveal the author's intention due to the presence of complex content and high expressiveness [Yang, Malt, Srinivasan 2017: 42–48]. Due to the complex nature and many properties of the symbol in culture, the artistic symbol also cannot be unambiguously defined. Having the ability to express a semantic load by means of a combination of concrete and abstract, an artistic symbol is understood as a spiritual-eidetic integrity, representing a certain reality and realized only in the process of aesthetic perception of a particular text by a specific recipient through their inner world. It includes a deep meaning that purposefully leads the recipient to a spiritual reality that does not exist explicitly in the text itself [Bychkov].

An artistic symbol contains a specific image and the signified content, connected by transferring the features of the object to the description. This connection is motivated and acts as the basis of symbolization, as well as a form of interaction between the symbolic meaning of the object and the meaningful component of the signified content [Shelestyuk 1997: 127–129].

Some scientists interpreted symbol through an image. For example, any symbol can be understood as a special image construction, an objective substantiality containing many meanings [Losev 1982: 443]. Indeed, the image can represent the basis for a symbol because development and transformation of meanings go beyond the literal meaning. However, the symbol has certain boundaries of interaction with its referent. The symbol has a more pronounced referent than the image, which is used for emotional impact on the reader. When an image is transformed into a symbol, the process of achieving the highest degree of generalization of meaning and expression of an abstract idea takes place. The symbol and the image differ in that the image is equal to itself, and the symbol expands the boundary of the image [Arutyunova 1999: 314–316].

An artistic symbol appears in a figurative text on the basis of symbols existing in language and culture, being filled with new content and author's understanding, and also can be supplemented by the reader's interpretation. In addition, an artistic symbol can belong to an individual author if a new concept that has appeared in society recently is symbolized in the text, as well as in the case when an already existing object acquires the status of a symbol for the first time in the context of the writer [Lotman 2000: 240–244].

The analysis of the definitions given above allows us to form the following definition: an artistic symbol is a conventional figurative-semiotic object of language and culture, (unconsciously or consciously) included by the writer in a figurative text in which the symbol actualizes one or more interpretations that reduce the denotative meaning of the word and expand the semantic boundaries of the lexeme. This interpretation of the artistic symbol emphasizes its belonging to the language, culture and text, and also explains its figurative essence, iconic character and the presence of a dominant interpretation. At the same time, an artistic symbol, on the one hand, is objective, because it reflects the objective worldview of culture, but, on the other hand, it can be subjective, since it is expressed through the view of an individual and can be amplified with subjective interpretations. An artistic symbol may have a conventional meaning fixed in the culture of society in the process of its historical and cultural use, and may also belong to the author's system of world representation and determine the nature of the author's idiostyle [Makeeva, Tsilenko 1997: 143-150].

In the beginning we will consider the role of the cultural and pragmatic factors in the process of change in the meanings of artistic symbols. To illustrate this phenomenon, we are going to analyze the following example:

(1) "Conchis, perhaps; <u>as wizard as owl. <...></u> and once again, <u>as with the owl, I had an uncanny apprehension of a reality of witchcraft; Conchis's haunting, brooding omnipresence. <...> The owl called again, at monotonously regular intervals. I stared out into the <u>darkness</u> of the pines" [Fowles, The Magus].</u>

In this example the process of linguistic melioration is presented, as a result of which the symbol "owl", which initially had a negative assessment, acquires a positive connotation. In the initial general cultural perception the owl as a symbol received interpretations of fear and witchcraft which were obtained as a result of a metaphorical reinterpretation of its large luminous eyes and dwelling in the darkness. In ancient times the owl became an attribute of Athena, the goddess of wisdom, knowledge, and military tactics, therefore, thanks to this affiliation, it began to be perceived as a symbol of wisdom [Tressider]. Both meanings are present in the novel

by J. R. Fowles, as the sounds of an owl create an atmosphere of fear which is expressed by the words "witchcraft" and "darkness", but at the same time there is a positive meaning conveyed with the word "wizard" which semantically correlates with words "wisdom" and "wise".

Now we are going to consider the role of the second, pragmatic, factor. The incentives for generating a new word or its meaning may include the intention and need of the addresser, as well as a possible motive is the attitude towards the addressee. For example, the speech addressed to a child often contains many words with diminutive suffixes that express a kind of tender attitude. The process of forming a new word or its new meaning is carried out as a result of the interaction of cognitive, semantic and pragmatic factors. At the same time, the latter factor determines the type of speech act, the attitude and intention of the addresser, therefore it is primary in the generation of a new word. Moreover, there is a cognitive process of categorizing the phenomenon of reality, as well as a search for a form for a cluster of semantic features, and as a result, a new lexeme and its additional meanings are formed. The formation of new variants for the already designated objects is based on the intention of expressiveness. With the further use of a new word or its meaning its conventionalization is carried out in the language of society [Zabotkina 2012: 118, 136–137].

#### Results

The pragmatic information presented by the addresser's background knowledge, their belonging to a certain culture, their age, gender, job and status in society is implicit and largely affects the formation of the symbol itself or new meanings of an existing symbol. Based on their own perception of the world, a person can put their own specific meaning into a symbol, the formation of which is influenced by their attitude to the object that verbalizes the symbol, as well as events related to this subject. It is necessary to take into account the emotions that arise from the creator of a new symbol or its new meaning, since they can affect the name of a new token or a new interpretation of an existing word. To identify the relationship between pragmatic information about the writer and the formation of the meanings of an artistic symbol we analyzed the biography of the writer (John Fowles), his description in the works of literary critics, his diaries and autobiographical works such as "The Tree" and "Aristos".

In the essay "The Tree" the writer implements in his digressions images of family, unity, a source of energy and an object of sacred veneration. These meanings can be considered as general interpretations of this symbol in many cultures. The writer's individuality is expressed in interpretation of the symbol "Tree" as a person:

(2) "<u>They (trees) are all in some sense symbiotic, being together</u> in a togetherness of <u>beings</u> <...> Far more than ourselves <u>they are social creatures</u>" [Fowles, The Tree].

The lexeme "trees" actualizes another meaning of belonging to the society with the help of the context which is supported by an epithet "symbiotic" and a metaphor "social creatures". This combination expresses the complexity of relations in nature and society and the comparison underlines its similarity. The presence of figurative content and high expressiveness of the artistic symbol contribute to the disclosure of the author's idea: a man and nature are a single whole, the essence of one system, and they should obey the same laws.

It was revealed that the formation of this meaning in the symbol (the use of the word "tree" in the interpretation of a person) is influenced by the writer's attitude to trees and the emotions that arise when he is surrounded by trees:

(3) "Slinking into trees was always slinking into heaven. <...> I cherish trees <...> But they were already more than trees, their names and habits and characters on an emotional parity with those of family" [ibid.].

In this example the author is using a comparison of trees with members of his family to personify the trees and underline their significance. The process of symbolizing the word "garden" is realized throughout the work in which the author presents it in such generally accepted meanings as general cultural images of refuge, paradise and the Garden of Eden, beauty and fertility:

(4) "...the <u>private</u> garden<...> his little <u>sacred</u> grove of fruit trees<...> his <u>own beautifully disciplined</u> apples and pears <...> the <u>closed</u> garden <...> <u>his own garden of Eden</u> <...> ... in that <u>minute</u> garden, a <u>physical sanctuary</u>, but a kind of poetic one, however banal the surroundings: <u>a place he</u> <u>could control</u>, that was different from all around it, not least in its huge annual yield of fruit" [ibid.].

The deviation from the generally accepted symbolism of the word "garden" occurs through its use in the meaning of "society" in the following example:

(5) "...there was also, I suspect, some religious element in my feeling towards woods and garden.
<...> Their society in turn creates or supports other societies of plants, insects, birds, mammals, microorganizations. <...> But all nature, like all humanity, is made of minor exceptions... <...> The two natures, private and public, human and non-human, cannot be divorced <...> our endless efforts to 'gar-

<u>den'</u> (to invent disciplining social and intellectual <u>systems</u>) <...> emblematic <u>walled garden of civilization</u>" [ibid.].

This meaning is formed due to the writer's respect for nature and its equating with the general system of society. Woods and gardens represent groups of plants and this co-existence correlates with people's interaction. Some essays written by Fowles ("Wormholes", "The Green Man") raise problems of saving nature and support ideas of being ecofriendly, so it proves the positive attitude of the author to the nature.

Another natural symbol that occupies a leading position in the writer's work is the "Island" which is the place of action in the novel by J. Fowles "The Magus". In J. Fowles's view the concept of "island", as in many cultures, also includes the meanings of refuge, reflection, escape from real problems, magic, search for opportunities for self-realization, and in some cases is presented as a place for the chosen [Tressider]. In addition, the island is described as the place of initiation for the main character of the novel. But, first of all, the symbol "Island" presents freedom:

(6) "There, was absolute solitude: there wasn't a single car on the island, there being no roads outside the village, and airplanes passed over not once a month – these things made me feel healthier than I had ever felt before. I began to get some sort of harmony between body and mind. <...> A blackbird, poor fool, singing out of season from the willows by the lake. A flight of gray pigeons over the houses. Fragments of freedom, an anagram made flesh." [Fowles, The Magus]

This example reflects the finale of the entire work: the passage of a series of trials on the island, a process of isolation on the island and parting with his beloved leads the main character to gain freedom and independence. The writer's choice of this artistic symbol is not accidental, since the main theme of his books is the theme of freedom which is presented as isolation from the outside world and self-knowledge. In addition, the theme of freedom also expresses the elimination of social restrictions and the challenge of changes within the individual.

It was found that the formation of this meaning (the island as a symbol of freedom) was influenced by the personal experience of the writer who worked as a teacher on the island of Specie in 1951–1952. In the name of the island ("Phraxos") there is a meaning of the turn of obstructions and deadlocks:

(7) "But my island of Phraxos (the 'fenced' island) was the real Greek island of Spetsai, where I taught in 1951 and 1952 at a private boarding-school – not, in those days, very like the one in the

book. It gave the most curious sense of timelessness and of incipient myth." [Fowles, The Magus].

The formation of the individual interpretation of the symbol "Island" as a place of initiation was greatly influenced by the writer's emotional state:

(8) "No correlative whatever of my fiction, beyond the above, took place on <u>Spetsai</u> during my stay. <...> This unresolved sense of a lack, a missed opportunity, led me to graft certain dilemmas of <u>a private situation in England on the memory of the island and its solitudes, which became increasingly for me the lost Eden, the domaine sans nom of Alain-Fournier – even Bevis's farm, perhaps" [ibid.].</u>

The semantic analysis of the word "island" allowed us to find different key semes: "deserted", "isolated", "peace", "calm" [Merriam-Webster's Dictionary]. The first two semes point to the meaning of solitude, the other two semes point to the sense of harmony. The meaning of freedom represents a combination of solitude and harmony which is achieved by feeling of freedom from society and its conventionalities. This example contains an allusion on the novel by Alain Fournier, "Le Grand Meaulnes", which tells us about the writer's memories of his childhood and youth, so this comparison points to the meaning of initiation which supposes a process of growth, self-development reached in special conditions.

Now we are going to analyze another symbol. The symbol "Star" also acts as a cultural symbol, having an interpretation different from conventional interpretation which occurred as a result of the pragmatic factor. In many cultures, the star symbolizes joy, happiness [Roshal 2008: 10–12], soul, ascent [Kerlot 1994: 206], energy of life, birth, constancy, superiority, leadership, protection [Tressider]. But in Fowles's book "A Maggot" this symbol has a negative connotation of indifference created contextually by the lexemes "mock, shake with laughter, matters not, care not, indifferent, scorn" which contradict the traditional meanings of protection and leadership:

(9) "She glances quickly out of the window. "Nothing but the stars. The sky is clear." "Do the beams of the brightest shake?"Again she looks. "Yes, sir." "Do you know why?" "No, sir." "I will tell you. They shake with laughter, Fanny, for they mock you. They have mocked you since your day of birth. They will mock you to your day of death. <..> It matters not to them whether you have faith in Christ or not. Whether Hell or Heaven awaits you, good fortune or bad, pain or bliss, to them it is equal. <...> They care not one whit what may become of you, <...> indifferent to all but its spectacle. You are nothing to them, Fanny. Shall I tell thee why they

scorn?" She is silent. "Because thou dost not scorn them back." [Fowles, A Maggot].

In this example, the star as a celestial body that performs the function of protection in culture correlates with God, therefore, to identify the emergence of the interpretation of indifference, one should turn to the religious worldview of the writer. This meaning, which contradicts the general cultural interpretation, may have arisen as a result of the atheistic views of the writer himself:

(10) "I <u>reject Christianity</u>, along with the other great religions. <...> we will do better to assume <u>there is no God</u>" [Fowles, The Aristos].

Thus, the personal experience of the writer and his attitude to different objects have a great influence on the formation of other meanings in an artistic symbol.

#### Discussion and conclusion

In conclusion it should be said that the artistic symbol acts as one of the means of verbalization of the writer's concept, reflecting their philosophical and aesthetic perception of the world. The cultural symbols used by the author in some cases were reinterpreted and individualized, so this process led to the formation of other meanings of symbols. Thus, the pragmatic information including the living conditions of a person, their emotions and attitude to various objects act as an incentive for the symbolization of the subject and the formation of new meanings of the symbol.

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# Причины семантического расширения слова-символа в художественном тексте

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается процесс изменения семантического поля значений художественных символов в романах Дж. Р. Фаулза, чьи произведения наполнены глубоким философским содержанием, одной из важных составляющих символа. Анализируются отрывки из таких произведений писателя, как «Куколка», «Волхв», «Дерево», «Аристос», а также дневники автора. Проблема изучения художественного символа состоит в том, что он, как единица культуры, передает свои основные значения из поколения в поколение, но в то же время может приобретать новые значения с развитием общества и культуры. Кроме этого, новые значения символа могут быть обнаружены в произведении того или иного автора. Целью данного исследования выступает выявление факторов возникновения таких значений. Основные методы работы включали анализ дефиниций художественного символа в специальных словарях, контекстуальный анализ и методы интерпретации. Обзор литературы позволил сформулировать следующее определение: художественный символ это условный образно-семиотический объект языка и культуры, включенный автором (бессознательно или сознательно) в образный текст, в котором символ актуализирует одну или несколько интерпретаций, редуцирующих денотативное значение слова и расширяющих его семантические границы. В результате было выявлено, что именно культурно-исторические и прагматические факторы повлияли на изменение значений различных художественных символов. Обнаружено также, что прагматические факторы привели к более значительным изменениям, чем культурно-исторические факторы. Это явление объясняется тем, что личный опыт взаимодействия человека с предметом-символом может быть разнообразным и порождать новые смыслы. Однако такие значения символа могут не закрепляться в языке, в отличие от значений, полученных путем изменений в обществе. Данное исследование характеризуется научной новизной, поскольку в нем изучался процесс формирования новых смыслов в художественном символе.

**Ключевые слова:** художественный символ; художественный текст; прагматические факторы; стилистические приемы; изменение смысла.