

# MYTHOLOGICAL COMPONENT OF POETIC IMAGES IN THE WORKS OF MARK STRAND

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***Summary:** The article studies the aspect of personification in the poetic works of Mark Strand. The main stylistic peculiarities of a poem are given, which are to render maximum accurately emotions of the author. Personification is viewed as the main category of imagery that helps the addressant to render own intention. And in its turn, the author's appeal to mythological component is a guarantee of maximum expressiveness of the poetic image, as not only the author's experience is used, but also the experience of generations, nations and cultures. The poetic work turns into knowledge treasury of objective, subjective, individually comprehended and experienced life aspects.*

***Key words:** mythological component, imagery, personification, pragmatics, stylistic device, literary text.*

The poetic language with its complex formal and semantic organization is the subject of numerous scientific and literary studies, analytical approaches and hermeneutic decoding. The works of such linguists as O.M. Afanasiev, W. von Humboldt, O.F. Losev, J. Taylor, J.-G. Frazer, G. Chesterton, F.Schelling and others are devoted to the studying of poetic language.

The poetic language has always attracted the researches by its mystery, polysemanticism, implication and at the same time by its musicality, melody, and fluidity. It is the poetry that can reveal unlimited potential of the language units, as long as a poem is not only a small poetical work, written by a metrical language [15], but it is also author's knowledge, his emotional experience, generation experience fixed in a word.

It is necessary to mention, that the oeuvre of Mark Strand as an **object** of the study has been chosen on purpose. He was one of such artists that could take the only one image and then create a full-fledged literary text. M. Strand was a master of brief poetic form. A lyric according to M. Strand is an elegy, which creates the future and mourns the past [4]. There is no one who can render silence better than this poet, who attracts attention to a number of details in his lines, which surround and devour us [11, p. 226].

As for the technique, M. Strand is mostly a poet of eternity, mythological essence of phenomena, notional core of things, which defined **the subject** of the study, that is imagery of M. Strand's oeuvre and mythological component of images, depicted by M. Strand in his poetry.

Thus, **the topicality** of the given research is defined by the general functional direction of modern linguistics, which studies the mechanism of language influence and, correspondently, pragmatic component, which directs an addresser and addressee in the process of communication. **The purpose** of the study is to identify the role of personified images in the poetic oeuvre of Mark Strand with the further distinguishing of mythological component, which determines the fulfillment of the following **tasks**:

- to identify personification in the poetic work;
- to reveal the examples of mythological component in the oeuvre of Mark Strand;
- to analyze the opposition subjective vs. objective in the poetic work.

The sense unit of the poetic language is a poem. Thus, in broad meaning poetic diction is defined as a process of language using for expression of thoughts, emotions and observations [3, p. 5]. Instead of it, its narrow definition is interpreted as specifically sensual verbal coating of poetic text, accented individualized form of speech that makes the speaker's emotional evaluation attitude to the subject more expressive, taking into account aesthetic impression [8, p. 176].

While analyzing image and sense aspect of both classical and free verse, the emotional and sensual perception of the objects of reality by the author comes on to the foreground. Such perception forms the pragmatic component, which is the basis of a poetic work [1, p. 115].

No doubt, that pragmatics is the competence of communicative linguistics: study of language influence mechanism. The corner stone of this methodology is the philosophy of image and speech activity as a special type of activity. An image emerges in the imagination of an author and with the help of certain sign system of a language is embodied in the literary work [3]. Its basis can be the theory about the interaction of sensual and rational perception in the process of speech activity with information exchange. Sensual perception is the basis of using of stylistic devices, for instance, personification [9]. M. Strand's poetry is a bright illustrative example.

*Streams of light were passing through me* [12].

The author renders his own emotions through reviving light. The reader does not have to adjust his perception to the author's perception, the reader interprets the poetic image according to own world perception. The pragmatic approach is revealed this way, which is a stimulus for perception of poetic texts [7, p. 300].

Pragmatics is present in almost every expression and like air it is invisible and subtle, that is why it is difficult to grasp and describe. Imagery is an indispensable component of pragmatic understanding of the world. M. Strand depicts the pragmatics of the sensual according to intuitive perception of the reality in his personified images [2, p. 119].

Thus, imagery is a complex and many-sided category of stylistics, which has a lot of interpretations because of varied comprehension of an image. In other words, it

is expressiveness, artistry, metaphoricalness, figurativeness, vividness, raciness, relief of a literary text. These are exactly the items which make a literary text to be *literary* [18]. Imagery is mostly reached due to such tropes and stylistic devices such as epithet, metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, litotes, and gradation.

As to a poetic text, its functioning is impossible without imagery. The formal component of the text is not enough to name it a verse. For example, if we apply rhyme, rhythm, and divide a scientific text into strophes, will it be a verse? The absence of stylistic devices and aridity of the language does not allow identifying such a text as poetic. Also a literary valuable poetic text cannot be based on standardized metaphors, cliché imagery and banalities. In this case it will be only rhymed lines, but not a poem. Fresh, original, not “tired” stylistic devices and imagery make a rhymed text to be poetry. The author issues the challenge to search for uncommon in common and embodies it in imagery [17].

One of the means of imagery creating in a poetic text is personification.

Personification (from Latin *persona+facere*) or *prosopopoeia* is a type of metaphor, when the properties of a living being are transferred on to a non-living being (subjects, phenomena, notions, animals). There are grounds to consider metaphor to be one of the oldest metaphorical notions of language, because it reflects the animistic point of view of people as to the nature, according to which all the world was populated by the spirits: it spoke, laughed, cried and mourned [14].

Personification makes the image more concrete, more available for comprehension by several analyzers in imagination:

visual – *shadows covering the field;*

acoustic – *wind...tries to find the sky;*

tactile – *no tears come to your eyes* тощо [13].

Thus, personification has all characteristics of metaphor. Personification is not only stylistic device, which gives beauty and imagery to an expression, but it is also a means of expression of a certain world perception, and mythological thinking in particular.

Personification plays a special role in expression of mythological picture of the world. If to consider human's attitude to himself and to the nature in the period of pre-reflexive thinking, we can see that the perception of objects of reality as a living beings and as equal rights partners of a human is important component of mythological picture of the world [14]. Mark Strand revives non-living beings to enforce expressiveness while rendering artistic loading:

*And stones...came and set themselves there* [12].

The author transfers actions of human's on to actions of stones. A myth is first of all a means of world generalization in the form of vivid images. In primitive period some aspects of the world were generalized not in notions like now, but in sensual and vivid images [14]. The totality of such interconnected vivid images formed the mythological world view. The nature was humanized in the myth. The nature is a field of action of human forces for the myth (anthropomorphism). The world was perceived as a living being in mythological perception, having the form of certain primitive communal system. The world view was analogous to the view of a tribe, where the myth emerged [14]. That is why personified humanization of non-living beings, natural phenomena is based on the mythological perception of a human.

*The morning goes* [12].

Mark Strand describes morning as a living-being, giving it an ability to walk.

The myth possesses not only high emotional and affective tension, but also dynamism of imagination, iconic fullness of reproduction of memory content, syncretism and polyfunctionality of visual and sensual images [14].

The modern human has improved the old mythological perception, dividing natural and sense (associative) characteristics of things, while in the myth they are identical without any possibility of distinguishing. In the poetry it is realized in the following way: a reader, perceiving the personified image, clearly understands author's associative interference in natural properties of things:

*The moon drifted over the pond turning the water to milk* [6].

It is obvious, that "to turn water to milk" is not natural ability of the moon, but it is the author who gives certain associative characteristics to the subject. Thus, the

poetic text is a formal and semantic unity, generated by the author's imagination on the basis of the pragmatic approach to reality perception, when sensual has an advantage over logical and comes into associative connections between the author and the subject of his imagination. The imagery of expression plays an important role in the poetry, which is fulfilled through the usage of reasonably applied various stylistic devices, personification in particular.

Personified images are not only verbal coating of author's imagination. It is something deeper and more sacral phenomenon. The objects of personification, such as the wind, moon, sun, shadow, light, darkness and others have many-sided mythological underlying basis, introduced into artistic canvas of the poetic works.

*Darkness fall from light [12].*

*Darkness – 1. when there is no light;*

*2. evil or the devil;*

*3. the dark quality of a colour [10].*

*To fall (fell, fallen) – to move or drop down from a higher position to a lower position [10].*

Light and darkness are an eternal opposition, they accumulate endless stream of philosophical notions such as good and evil, truth and lies, love and hatred, God and devil, day and night, life and death. Light always overcomes darkness in the mythological subconsciousness of humankind. Good always overcomes evil.

Also the author revives the natural phenomena, strengthening the associative background of poetry:

*And there was thunder, which, however menacing... [6].*

*Thunder – the loud noise that you hear during a storm, usually after a flash of lightning [10].*

*To menace – (formal) to threaten [10].*

Thunder has always been associated with something powerful and threatening. People were afraid of it, respected it and worshipped it. To see it clear let's address English phraseology:

*Thunder and lightning* – to render not only the very direct meaning, when we are talking about natural phenomenon; but also some rough judgment, low evaluation, even hatred [5, p. 950], or to speak loudly, threateningly, bombastically [16].

The semantics of the word *thunder* (*the loud noise that you hear during a storm, usually after a flash of lightning* [10]), due to its similarity or it's better to say similar psychological reaction of a man upon sudden clap of a thunder and someone's rough shouting, spreads further and covers new communicative situations. Since the 13<sup>th</sup> century it renders not only that natural phenomenon, connected with claps of thunder while the rain, but hard, challenging, dramatic communicative situations making addressee's heart pound the same way as while the very strike of thunder [16]. This semantic component serves the creation and further spread of new coined phraseological units. Compare: *a thunderbolt in a serene day, a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, a thunderclap in a clear sky* [5, p. 150]. Etymologically it goes back to the period of paganism, when people worshipped nature powers. Zeus (Jupiter), the master of thunder and lightning, was especially respected; people were afraid of his punishment. The author personifies the image of thunder to render the mood of anxiety.

The images of the sun and moon have an important place in the mythological perception of humankind. The dearest people are compared with the sun; the sun is waited for in a grey day, all living beings are glad to see the sun. In the poetry, the sun is not only a heavenly body, but it is also a prototype of divine light and endless good. "The sun is the guard of the day, the moon is the guard of night" – so say the people who gather myths. Mark Strand poeticized these images by using them in personified similes:

*You take my arm and say something will happen,  
something unusual for which we were always prepared,  
like the sun arriving after a day in Asia,  
like the moon departing after a night with us* [6].

*The Sun – the large bright object in the sky that gives us light and heat, and around which the Earth moves;*

*to arrive – to get to the place you are going to;*

*the Moon – the round object that you can see shining in the sky at night, and that moves around the Earth every 28 days;*

*to depart – to leave, especially when you are starting a journey [10].*

The waves are represented by the author like a living being that can have different emotions: it can laugh, cry, dream... From early times the sea had special divine meaning; it was attributed supernatural characteristics and magic powers:

*When tears of the sea fell from the Bridge of Sighs [6].*

*Tear – a drop of salty liquid that comes out of your eye when you are crying;*

*sea – the large area of salty water that covers much of the earth's surface;*

*to fall (fell, fallen) – to move or drop down from a higher position to a lower position [10].*

Thus, Mark Strand's poetry is full of mythologized images of natural powers and phenomena, which are revived by the author and are used to render his the inner world and many-sided outlook.

The given study facilitates further studying of lexico-semantic, grammar aspects of personification and analyzing of mythological component of personification as an ornament of a literary text. Studying of poetic works, transformation of meaning into sense and vice versa can reveal the mystery of word-formation, can show the mechanism of nomination and the place of cognitive and pragmatic component in it, because the mythological component contains in itself the experience of previous generations.

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Popova, O. Mythological Component of Poetic Images in the Works of Mark Strand [Text] / O. Popova, T. Osipenko, N. Prykhodko // East European Scientific Journal. – 2016 – Volume 1. – 2(6). P. 167–170.