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### OLFACTORY IMAGERY IN THE NOVEL “SPIES” BY MICHAEL FRAYN

#### ОЛЬФАКТОРНІСТЬ В РОМАНІ МАЙКЛА ФРЕЙНА «ШПІОНИ»

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The article is devoted to the study of olfactory imagery and its functions in the novel “Spies” by M. Frayn. Imagery is one of the unique techniques of writing that evokes a sensory experience with the help of descriptive language, creating a vivid picture of a character, an event or a thing, thus contributing to a better perception of an intended message.

The main objective of this article is to explore the peculiarity of use of sensory images and to analyze their functions in the text. Smell is viewed as a perceptive concept that integrates its notional and cultural components.

Michael Frayn is a British novelist, playwright and translator. His works are often compared to those of Anton Chekhov for their insight into society. “Spies” is a psychological novel, narrated in the form of bildungsroman.

The novel is set in 1940's, revolving around the events connected with World War II. The perception of war experience is accumulated in human feelings, language and the text itself. It is expressed by means of smell imagery, contributing to the development of the main themes in the novel.

The topicality of the article is defined by the lack of profound study of olfactory imagery in the novel “Spies”.

The main function of imagery is to evoke a physical reaction in the reader, conjuring up some emotions and feelings, associated with a similar personal experiences. Effective images create the intended environment, the particular atmosphere, the mood, rendered in more tangible way.

Some olfactory images in the novel “Spies” form an atmosphere of disgust and horror, a susceptible sense of the end of human existence and create a total metaphor of death. Other vivid examples of smell images contribute to the development of the main themes in the novel: maturity and memory.

**Key words:** smell, olfactory imagery, perception, association, image.

Статтю присвячено дослідженню запахових асоціацій та їх функцій у романі Майкла Фрейна «Шпіони». Художня образність є унікальним засобом, що викликає певні сенсорні почуття, створюючи виразні картини героїв, подій та окремих найважливіших речей, сприяючи найкращому сприйняттю головної думки автора.

Майкл Фрейн – британський романіст, драматург та перекладач. «Шпіони» – психологічний роман, написаний у формі роману-виховання. Події в романі обертаються навколо життя людей часів Другої світової війни. Сприйняття досвіду війни накопичується у почуттях людей, у мові та самому тексті. Це відображається за допомогою образів запаху.

Одоративні асоціації в романі є досить поширеним явищем. Відчувається індивідуально-авторський підхід до образного втілення запахових відчуттів. Оригінальна одоративна картина світу, яка постає в романі, насичена переважно неприємними запахами навколишнього середовища. Це пов'язано з тим, що саме негативні ольфакторні образи відіграють значну роль у формуванні однієї з основних тем роману – теми страху. Чисельні ольфакторні характеристики передають, переважно, неприємні емоції. Ці неприємні запахи формують атмосферу огидності та жаху, відчуття кінця людського існування, створюють метафору смерті та безнадії.

Проаналізовано також і чисельні одороніми, пов'язані зі спогадами головного героя, та визначено їхню функцію у формуванні однієї з основних тем роману – пам'яті.

Літературознавчий підхід зумовлює пошук засобів виявлення та аналізу функцій одоронімів у загальному полі художнього тексту. Запахова образність формує широку палітру, яка поєднує епітети та метафори, що виконують описову та сюжетотворну функції, доповнюючи інші характеристики, які націлені на передачу образів персонажів, на розкриття їхнього внутрішнього світу.

Метафоричність та алгоричність слів, пов'язаних із запахом, представлені як ольфакторна образність. Стверджується, що запахові образи в романі можуть не лише характеризувати персонажів, а й впливати на динаміку сюжету.

**Ключові слова:** запах, ольфакторність, сприйняття, асоціації, образ.

**Problem statement.** Literature is a universal way authors use to communicate their feelings to their readers. They use language to convey their emotions, spiritual ideas. Imagery is one of unique techniques of writing that evokes a sensory experience with the help of descriptive language, creating a vivid picture of a character, an event or a thing, thus contributing to a better perception of an intended message.

According to the Princeton Encyclopedia, imagery refers to “images produced in the mind by language, whose words may refer either to experiences which could produce physical perception, were the reader actually to have those experiences or to the sense impressions themselves” [13, p. 560].

There are seven primary types of imagery that appeal on different level to reader’s imagination through their sensory perception: visual imagery, auditory imagery, gustatory imagery, tactile imagery, olfactory imagery, kinesthetic imagery, organic imagery.

Visual imagery, which appeals to visual imagination, appears most frequently in literature. Physical attributes including color, size, shape, lightness and darkness, shadows, and shade quite often serve the subject of the analysis.

Auditory imagery, which is used to explain things, ideas and actions using sounds that appeal to our sense of hearing, is intended to invoke up sound images in the minds of the readers. A number of articles are devoted to the analysis of the literary devices such as onomatopoeia and alliteration, which can help create sounds in writing.

**Literature review.** The investigation of olfactory imagery has received less attention among the literary critics and researchers, though smell imagery serves an important component in the text, developing its ideas, motifs or themes.

The topicality of the article is defined by the lack of profound study of olfactory imagery in the novel “Spies”. Moreover, the novel “Spies” has never become the subject of a special analysis from the viewpoint of literary imagery, the importance of which has been overlooked by the researchers. The works which are related and relevant with the current study explore primarily the phenomena of imagery itself. Reuven (1998) in his journal, “A Cognitive Analysis of Religious Imagery in Poetry” explores the way figurative language turns religious ideas into verbal imitations of religious experience, in two stylistic modes: “Metaphysical” and “Mystic-Romantic”.

Masagus Sulaiman in his article “Imagery analysis on Emily Dickenson poetry” figures out the imagery and its meanings in the five poems of Emily Dickinson. This research was regarded

as a descriptive-qualitative study. The results of the research showed that there were sixty-two types of imagery found in the five poetry of Emily Dickinson.

B. L. Boyko in his article “Sound, colour and smell in war picture” discusses sensory aspects of several episodes of war and the way they were perceived by the author Leo Tolstoy in his “Sevastopol Sketches”.

Natalia Zykhevskaya in her article “Breathing of the text: the problem of verbalization of smell in Russian prose” deals with the issue of national and cultural originality in the interpretation of olfactory imagery in the 19-20<sup>th</sup> centuries Russian prose.

The analysis of the aromatic associations in the works of modern Ukrainian writers was realized in the “Smell associations in the novels of I. Rozdobudko “The sixth door” and N. Snyadanko “The thyme in milk”.

Among the works that focus on the analysis of the novel “Spies” one should single out the article by Virginia Lee “Spies by M. Frayn”, in which the author explores the main themes in the novel.

Kolesnikova Ol'ga Vladimirovna in her work “Functions of mystery motif in creating image of the past in the novel “Spies” by Michael Frayn” considers the poetics of mystery motif in the novel, analyses the various functions of mystery motif and the techniques of its manifestation in the text.

Thus, the study of literary imagery in the novel “Spies” and olfactory images, in particular, has been overlooked by the researchers. The main objective of this article is to explore the peculiarity of use of sensory images and to analyze their functions in the text.

**Purpose statement.** In this article the researcher will primarily focus on the study of the olfactory imagery and its function in the text. The researcher approaches the phenomena of smell, examines the application of olfactory imagery in the novel. Smell is viewed as a perceptive concept that integrates its notional and cultural components.

**Research results** . Michael Frayn is a British novelist, playwright and translator. His works are often compared to those of Anton Chekhov for their insight into society. His previous novels include “Towards the end of the morning”, “The Trick of it”, “A landing on the sun”. His most recent “Headlong” was shortlisted for the 1999 Booker Prize, Nobel Prize. His thirteen plays range from “Noises off” to “Copenhagen”.

“Spies” is a psychological novel, narrated in the form of bildungsroman. The review, given by the Guardian emphasizes the importance of imagery details in the novel: “ This is a lovingly conceived, handsomely detailed novel in a conservative vein

with a vivid sympathy for how lonely, scared and helpless being a child often feels... It is about memory and imagination" [12, p.1].

The novel is set in 1940's, revolving around the events connected with World War II. The perception of war experience is accumulated in human feelings, language and the text itself. It is expressed by means of smell imagery, contributing to the development of one of the main themes in the novel "masculinity".

During the wartime, there was a fixed idea about masculinity. Men that didn't join the war felt emasculated and were discriminated against. The main antagonist in the novel Mr. Hayward is presented through Frayn's use of language techniques, dialogues, rendering the theme of 'superiority' and "fear". Fear is a recurring theme in the novel, mostly associated with Mr. Hayward intimidating nature, his constant threats towards his son, demonstrating contrast of power. This theme is realized through numerous examples of olfactory imagery, creating atmosphere of oppression and supremacy. In the description of the garage, where Keith's father spends most of his time, the author employs particular literary technique, which illustrates vividly the idea of masculinity: "A characteristic scent hung in the air. What was it? Sawdust, certainly, and machine oil. Swept concrete, perhaps. And a car" [12, p. 21].

Later in the book, as the story unfolds, when Stephen is confronted by Mr. Hayward, the familiar description of the garage is accompanied by the feeling of intimidation. He asks Stephen for the basket without addressing him directly, using affectionate term "old chap" sarcastically to frighten the boy. "The light is on above the workbench, and he bends over some small piece of metal held in the jaws of the great vice. . . The air is full of the smell of sawdust and oil, of concrete and car, and of fear. . . He can't snatch the basket out of my hands, because it would be beneath his dignity to secure something by force and not by fear" [12, p. 191]. The diction of this passage is aimed at presenting Mr. Hayward as an oppressive character, the embodiment of the main social issue of the 1940's: masculinity.

The theme of masculinity is realized through another character as well. Uncle Peter, the model of a bravery, a bomber pilot, is physically not present for the major part of the novel. The character is introduced to the readers in a varieties of ways, but never directly. At the beginning of the novel, Uncle Peter is presented as an absent figure of worship in Auntie Dee's house. He is viewed by young Stephen as an image of perfection. He is portrayed as a caring father and husband. The perfect nature

of the character is rendered through the description of the portrait in a silver frame, on which " Three laughing figures in tennis whites: Keith's mother and Auntie Dee, with Uncle Peter lounging boyishly between them..."[12, p. 47].

There is a striking contrast between the way Stephen perceives Uncle Peter as a glorified hero and an old tramp in the Barns. Stephen even denies the fact, that the man, he is dealing with, the man, "down there in his grave under the elders" [12, p. 202] is Uncle Peter. "The man was sitting on the ground, in what seemed to be a muddle of blankets and sacking. . . Did Stephen really not understand who it was? I am pretty sure he still adhered to the central tenet that the man was also a German" [12, p.200].

To intensify the idea of disgust and denial the author employs vivid smell imagery that creates the atmosphere of misery and despair. The elder trees, the smell of which is so striking to Stephen when he approaches Uncle Peter's hideaway, represent his admission into the adult world and puberty. "I move reluctantly closer and stop again as I meet the sour, defeated smell of elders. There is no sign of life. . . The living grave. . . Then, among the smell of the elders, I catch the faint breath of the other smell I smelt before, of human excrement on freshly turned soil" [12, p. 195].

Elder tree symbolizes rebirth and ending. In the novel it is associated with the idea of uselessness and degradation of a human being. "The hopelessness of the elder's pretensions to be a proper tree -its humiliating position at the very bottom of the hierarchy of trees – seems curiously appropriate to the way the familiar world finally gutters out here at the end of the Lanes" [12, p. 130]. Social degradation is introduced on the example of Uncle Peter, whose character's transformation from "the silver-framed heroes" to "an old derelict taking refuge under a sheet of corrugated iron in a stinking elder bush" [12, p. 130] shows that war is not as impressive and glorious as it may seem.

Uncle Peter is not the only character, who undergoes transformation throughout the text. His gradation contributed to the personal development of Stephen as well, who has discovered the truth and entered the adult reality through the tunnel, which is seen as the transition from safety of childhood to the more troubling nature of adulthood. In order to undertake this transition, Stephen is forced to confront guilt, shame and he finally faces the Barns which shows his development as an individual.

Connected with the idea of disgust, which is realized with the help of olfactory imagery of the elders, is Stephen's obsession against getting germs on himself. He finds germs everywhere:

the slime from the tunnel, the children from the Cottages, the bayonet. Author employs different techniques to render the feeling of disgust, associated with germs. A lot of kinesthetic images express the idea of dirtiness.

The feeling of disgust is skillfully conveyed through the following example of olfactory imagery: “The only thing I can make out is the smell. It is a mixture of damp earth, mildew, old sacking, mouldy food, illness... I put the things on the ground beside him, still not looking at him, trying not to breathe in germs [12, p. 204].

On the other hand, the word “germs” is associated with Germans, who are seen as evil. Fryan uses Stephen’s fear of germs to emphasize his hatred of Germans. The idea of disgust accumulates, as the story develops, and finally reaches its highest point, when Stephen came to Uncle Pere’s hiding place. “His Germaness lingers in the air, as inherent a part of his identity as Mr. Gort’s murderousness, as intimately pervasive as the scent of the privet in my life, as insanitary as the germs he is giving off” [12, p.203]. It can be assumed, that the imagery of germs reveal the general nationalistic hatred of Germans in the novel.

One of the themes in the novel is “memory”, the role of memory and its integrity. Memory is presented as a literal and metaphorical journey. The theme of memory is realized in the text through numerous examples of smell imagery. Stephen flies the “far-off” land to revisit his childhood, an impulse, triggered by the scent of the privet blossom. “The third week of June, and there it is again: the same almost embarrassingly familiar breath of sweetness that comes every year about this time. It’s not like the heartbreaking, tender sweetness of the lime blossom, or the serene summer happiness of the honeysuckle” [12, p. 3]. His daughter finds it “rather vulgar smell” [12, p. 4]. Then he realizes that the smell comes from the privet shrubs: “Liguster (german for privet)... I am no wiser... No. And yet, as another wave of that shameless summons drifts over us, everything inside me stirs and shifts” [12, p. 4].

Privet is a type of shrubs and small trees that are widely used for screens and hedges. It is usually described as having a coarse and vulgar scent. Stephen associates privet with his childhood, because the privet hedges were the hiding place, from which they were spying on Keith’s mother. On

the other hand, the vulgar scent of privet blossom is associated with the motif of sexuality within the theme of maturity and growing up. When Stephen is confronted by Keith’s mother, he could smell “that disconcerting perfume”, the source of which is “plain ordinary privet” [12, p. 31].

As the story progresses, along with the maturity of the main character, the perfume that conjures up particular emotions is also changing. It is connected with Stephen’s gradual personal development and his discovery of the facts, which he was unaware of. When Keith’s mother approaches his lookout post, asking for help, he notices some changes in the perfume: “But something has changed about the perfume of the air in the lookout. The guileless of the limes and the honeysuckle has been overlaid by a sweetness of a different kind, harsh, coarse, and reckless, with just a touch of the catty stink of elder in it [12, p. 171]. This time the smell of privet blossom, which was earlier associated with the idea of intimacy, lust, shame, conjures up unexpected feeling of disgust, foreshadowing the upcoming events.

Furthermore, privet is misspelled as “private” by Keith on the table in the lookout post. It hints at the place for discovery, secrecy, hiding spot, refuge. “If you know the right pot, in the shrubs that were once the front hedge of Braemar, you can part the screen of vegetation and crawl along a kind of passageway under the branches into a secret chamber...” [12, p. 52].

Thus, privet blossom serves an important symbol in the novel, connecting the main themes of memory and maturity through vast range of olfactory imagery.

**Conclusions.** The main function of imagery is to evoke a physical reaction in the reader, conjuring up some emotions and feelings, associated with a similar personal experiences. Effective images create the intended environment, the particular atmosphere, the mood, rendered in more tangible way.

Some olfactory images in the novel “Spies” form an atmosphere of disgust and horror, a susceptible sense of the end of human existence and create a total metaphor of death. Other vivid examples of smell images contribute to the development of the main themes in the novel: maturity and memory.

The study of poetic functions of imagery in the novel offers a window into the cognitive semantics of the imaginative mind.

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