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EXPLORING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE OF H. MORT'S POETIC WORLD

The given article represents an attempt to examine specific features of individual writing style of a contemporary British poetess Helen Mort, based on the analysis of the figurative language used in her poem "Push the Button, Hear the Sound" (2020) as the embodiment of her creative activity. H. Mort belongs to a new cohort of British poets, whose poetry combines intimate emotions and individual experiences with deep and sophisticated philosophy. It creates a dynamic sketch of routine and extraordinary images emerging in the author's and evolving in the recipients' thoughts. Consequently, her figurative language appears to be a fruitful and promising research subject in modern linguistics from the viewpoint of both qualitative and quantitative analyses. However, it has never been studied from such a perspective. Therefore, the aim of this article is to identify, categorize, and define the dominant and recurrent stylistic devices used by H. Mort in her poem "Push the Button, Hear the Sound" (2020).

According to the received results, the blank poem under consideration is based on the spiral structure generated by consistent use of parallelisms and repetitions with contrast addressing natural and imaginary sounds switching between imperative (Listen to...) and interrogative sentences (Can you hear...) broken by short notes of sketch nature.

The use of short elliptic sentences provides unforgettable visual sketch effect. The poem directly involves floristic items, different bird species, insectis, and mammals proving the important role of fauna and flora in H. Mort's figurative language. They are actively combined with daily routine objects.

The poem's figurative language is saturated with original metaphors (7 cases, 26%), quite standard epithets (6 patterns, 22%), unexpected personifications (4 instances, 15%), and supporting them similes (3 cases, 11%). These stylistic devices are reinforced by sporadic understatements and hyperboles (2 patterns and 8% each), and single instances of a metonymy, pun, and contrast (4% each). The poem figurative language reflects typical features of H. Mort's individual writing style.

Key words: contemporary British poetry, figurative language, stylistic devices, image, Helen Mort.

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ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ОБРАЗНОЇ МОВИ ПОЕТИЧНОГО СВІТУ Г. МОРТ

Ця публікація є спробою дослідити специфічні особливості індивідуального письменницького стилю сучасної британської поетеси Гелен Морт шляхом аналізу образної мови, що використовується в її вірші *“Push the Button, Hear the Sound”* («Натисни кнопку, почуй цей звук») (2020) як втілення її творчості. Г. Морт належить до нової когорти британських поетів, чия поезія поєднує інтимні емоції й індивідуальні враження з глибокою й витонченою філософією. Вона створює динамічні замальовки буденних та екстраординарних образів, що народжуються у світі автора й розвиваються індивідуальними траєкторіями в думках читачької аудиторії. Як наслідок, її образна мова видається перспективним та продуктивним предметом філологічного дослідження крізь призму кількісного та якісного аналізу. Однак, ще досі не вивчалася в такому аспекті. Отже, метою цієї розвідки є ідентифікувати, класифікувати та з'ясувати домінуючі й рекурентні стилістичні прийоми, якими послуговується Г. Морт у своєму вірші *“Push the Button, Hear the Sound”* («Натисни кнопку, почуй цей звук») (2020).

Згідно з отриманими результатами, аналізований білий вірш має спіральну структуру, утворену послідовним використанням паралельних конструкцій і повторень із зіставленням, що покликані відтворити справжні природні та уявні звук шляхом переключення зі спонукальних речень (*Listen to... / Послухай ...*) на запитальні (*Can you hear... / Чуєш...*), які перериваються короткими зауваженнями типу замальовок.

Використання коротких еліптичних речень створює незабутній візуальний ефект справжнього етюд. Звернення до флористичних мотивів, вживання назв різних видів птахів, комах і ссавців доводять важливу роль фауни й флори в образній поетичній мові Г. Морт. Художній ефект досягається шляхом їх поєднання з повсякденними рутинними об'єктами.

Образна мова вірша насичена оригінальними авторськими метафорами (7 випадків, 26%), доволі традиційними епітетами (5 зразків, 22%), неочікуваними персоніфікаціями (4 приклади, 15%) та художніми порівняннями (3 випадки, 11%). Спорадичне застосування літот і гіпербол (2 зразки й 8% кожен) та поодинокі випадки метонімії, каламбуру й протиставлення (4% кожен відповідно) підсилює вищеперелічені стилістичні прийоми. У вірші чітко простежуються типові риси індивідуального письменницького стилю Г. Морт.

Ключові слова: сучасна британська поезія, образна мова, стилістичні прийоми, образ, Гелен Морт.

Introduction. Compared to other genres of literary writing, poetry has at its disposal a wide range of specific phonetic stylistic devices, such as rhyme, rhythm, enjambment, alliteration, assonance and much more to provide a smooth flow of the harmonious melodic narration. Furthermore, it involves a plentitude of figurative language patterns, which are among distinguishing features of any creative writing. L. Perrine (Perrine, 1977: 61) defines figurative language as any way of expressing something other

than the ordinary way. It helps the author to generate vivid images and pictures, explain concepts and ideas eloquently, spark varied feelings and emotions in the readers' heads and hearts inviting them to feel connected and engaged. Due to extensive and unexpected combinations of such literary devices, a poetic text converts into a compressed and condensed rhythmic message packed with diversified images and emotions (Perrine, 1977: 9). Therefore, poetic figurative language is considered to be a sophisticated and promising

subject of linguistics studies. It should be examined extensively through the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the poems by different writers representing particular periods and epochs of literature development. For instance, R. F. Pasaribu, W. Safitri, R. Rangkuti singled out the stylistic features of the selected poems by W. Shakespeare (Pasaribu, Safitri, Rangkuti, 2024); J. K. Sandy, M. Natsir & C. Asanti and A. Putri analysed figurative language in selected T. Hardy's poems (Sandy, Natsir, Asanti, 2021; Putri, 2018); M. R. O. Nur & R. R. Miranti identified and interpreted the manifestations of figurative language in the poem "Still I Rise" by M. Angelou (Nur, Miranti, 2018); M. Ajmal, E. Suprayetno & M. Abbasi studied stylistic devices used in W. H. Davies' selected poems (Ajmal, Suprayetno, Abbasi, 2024); A. Latif, M. Ajmal & S. Maqbool and L. S. Jose, M. Austria, M. L. I. Javate, A. S. Jorge, J. Mijares & C. Santiago carried out a stylistic analysis of R. Frost's selected poems (Latif, Ajmal, Maqbool, 2022; Jose, Austria, Javate, Jorge, Mijares, Santiago, 2024); M. Imran, M. Ansar, Y. Baig & S. A. Nabi investigated the stylistic peculiarities of the Poem "A Dream Within A Dream" by E. A. Poe (Imran, Ansar, Baig, Nabi, 2021).

However, poetry by contemporary British writers has never been examined from this perspective. Helen Mort as the rising star of modern British literary scene whose poems have never been translated and published in Ukrainian appears to be quite promising in this context. Some Ukrainian translations by K. Dashko, produced as part of student research projects, serve as rare exceptions that support this idea (Dashko, 2019). Helen Mort belongs to a new cohort of British poets whose poetry combines intimate emotions and individual experiences with deep and sophisticated philosophy. It creates a dynamic sketch of routine and extraordinary images emerging in the author's and evolving in the recipients' thoughts. Therefore, the **given paper aims to** identify, categorize, and define the dominant and recurrent stylistic devices used by H. Mort in her poem "Push the Button, Hear the Sound" (2020) with the help of both qualitative and quantitative analyses.

Findings. Helen Mort was born in Sheffield in 1985 and spent her childhood in Derbyshire, whose landscapes constantly appear in her poetry. She graduated from Cambridge University with a degree in Social and Political Sciences. In 2014, H. Mort completed her PhD thesis in English/Neuroscience. Currently, she is a Professor of Creative Writing at Manchester Metropolitan University. H. Mort received different literary prizes, including "Foyle Young Poets Award", Eric Gregory Award from The Society of Authors, Manchester Poetry Young Writer Prize, etc.

H. Mort is a big fan of nature which accompanies her poetic journey. Mort's poems are full of sounds converted into vibes, tunes and melodies due to the consistent use of relevant phonological stylistic devices. Nature offers a plentitude of unexpected images dynamically changing each other. This dynamics is achieved through so-called jumps, leaps and shifts in the author's and, consequently, readers' focus. Reading her poems creates a distinctly surreal experience, leading the recipient from strange and weird details to accurately depicted real-life scenes representing basic existential contradictions and phenomena. Her confidence and determination are easily traced through the lines flashing with irony and even sarcasm. Her poems centre around one image developed and reviewed from different perspectives. H. Mort compares her poetry to a theatrical performance – dramatic, expressive, and sometimes playfully absurd, like wearing a funny hat. This effect can be achieved through the extensive use of rich figurative language, which is under consideration in this paper.

The poem "Push the button, hear the sound" (2020), whose name itself represents antithesis, declares the central sense in the limelight, i.e. a sound. It is completely based on the extensive use of parallelisms and repetitions with contrast (*Listen to* and *Can you hear*), which arrange the central image unfolding consistently addressing natural and imaginary sounds switching between imperative (*Listen to...*) and interrogative sentences (*Can you hear...*) broken by short notes of sketch nature inviting the reader to summer night (*It's summer, high, emptied* and *It's almost dark*).

In the following quote, we can clearly trace image leaps in the poem from different birds' songs (*the lorikeet's whistling song* and *the call of the mynah bird*) to their behaviour patterns (*the flamingos in the water*):

Listen to the lorikeet's whistling song.

Can you hear the call of the mynah bird?

Can you hear the flamingos in the water?

Can you hear your small heart next to mine
and the house breathing as it holds us?

They pop up again in the 26th line (*Listen to the noisy penguins on the ice...*) and almost complete the poem in the 44th one (*Listen to the blackbird's chirpy song...*), reversing to their tweets again and linking sound sensory images to 'your small heart next to mine' beating and 'the house breathing' embracing author's intimate feelings. In such a way, H. Mort makes visual images sound, gradually converting emotions and feelings into a combination of image-patched music. The given passage, which starts the poem, embraces personification and simile use (*the house breathing as it holds us*).

The use of short elliptic sentences provides unforgettable visual sketch effect. The poem directly involves floristic items (*eucalyptus* and *roses*) in the creation of metaphors and puns as well as exploits them as a ground for further metaphor development. It is saturated with different bird species (5 items totally), mentions one insect and three mammals proving the important role of fauna and flora in H. Mort's figurative language. They are actively combined with daily and routine objects such as a *lipstick* or *bikini briefs*, while the other ones (*vase* or *grater*) are used both directly and indirectly to develop vivid extended metaphors.

Family relations appear to be an important component of poem imagery system (4 cases):

Listen to the casual racists in the family pub

or

Can you hear your grandfather's lost childhood?

or

Listen to your half-sister hissing to her friends at 2 a.m.

or

Can you hear your father lighting his first cigarette?

Sheffield and its urbanistic views are parts and parcel of H. Mort's poems. This one is not an exception:

Can you hear the sleepless girls in Attercliffe?

(Attercliffe is Sheffield's suburbs with a questionable reputation).

Urgent social issues appear in this poem overlapping with individual emotional experiences:

Can you hear the suburban library shutting? The door closing?

The books still breathing? O can you hear the budget tightening?

They are skillfully mixed and contrasted to contemporary daily routines:

Listen to my late-night online purchases.

Classical music pieces are mentioned in the poem twice supporting its central image and being combined with birds' calls and songs:

Listen to "The Trout" by Schubert.

Listen to the blackbird's chirpy song.

Listen to this waltz by Paganini.

The poem concludes with the image – or even the sound – of the theatre: its *stage*, *audience*, *pit*, and *a silent orchestra*, when no more sound is needed to express the author's feelings.

The poem's figurative language is highly saturated with bright and unexpected metaphors contributing to the sensory experiences reflected in it (7 patterns, 26%):

Can you hear the chainsaw start, the bones of our neighbor's eucalyptus breaking?

or

Can you hear the aspirin of the sun dissolving?
or

Listen to the panic in their emojis.

Some metaphor samples appear to be quite extended, revolving around the initial image and gradually supplementing it:

Listen to my fear, blooming in the vase of my chest, and listen to how I water it.

This metaphor sample correlates with another example of an extended metaphor based on the kitchenware and dishware grounds:

The night is full of holes and we grate our bodies against them.

Epithets are the second most represented stylistic devices in the analysed poem (6 cases, 22%). However, they are mostly quite expected and standardized: *whistling song*, *murderous water boatmen*, *cheeky monkey*, etc.

Personifications are also actively employed by H. Mort (4 patterns, 15%):

Listen to the ground, giddy with thirst.

Breathing is used twice in different context to give rhythm and intimate ambience to the narration, making objects live:

... and the house breathing ...

and

The books still breathing?

Similes conclude the list of the dominant stylistic devices in this poem, with three distinct examples identified (11%). In two cases they are used to extend either a personification or a metonymy:

Listen to the house Shiraz I drink as if it's something's blood.

Hyperboles as figures of quantity are presented by three cases (11%):

Types of plant that will never die

or

Listen to the utter indifference of the stars.

or

Can you hear me

holding you, closer than my life?

Understatements appear to be less productive in this poem (1 pattern, 4%):

There are sounds your book lacks names for.

Single representation of a pun (4%) is found in this instance:

Can you hear the roses rioting on the trellis?

where *rioting* can be interpreted as both revolting and protesting against something loudly and blooming brightly at the same time.

Metonymy also occurs once (4%):

Listen to the house Shiraz I drink...

Contrast (1 case, 4%) was fixed in the following line in combination with an extended metaphor:

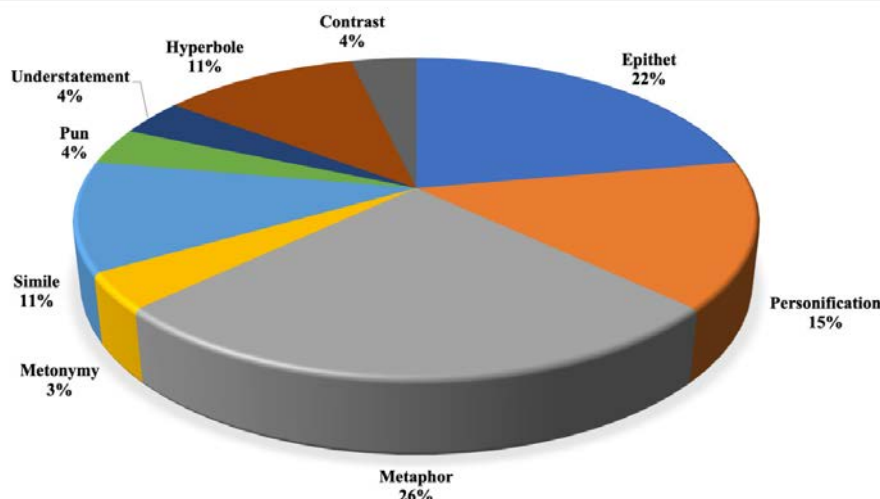


Fig. 1. Quantitative analysis of stylistic devices used in the poem
“Push the Button, Hear the Sound” by H. Mort

Their sounds are inhuman,
too human, scaling the high fences,
pressing our windowpanes.

The results of quantitative analysis of the stylistic devices used in the poem “Push the Button, Hear the Sound...” (2020) by Helen Mort are summarized in Figure 1.

Conclusions. According to the qualitative analysis results, the blank poem under consideration centres around the image of a sound embracing diversified manifestations of love. It is delivered through the unexpected and absolutely sudden combination of birds’ songs and behavioral patterns, varied plants and animals, family relationships and social issues, daily routines, musical pieces and theatre scenes.

The poem “Push the Button, Hear the Sound” by H. Mort is based on the spiral structure generated by consistent use of parallelisms and repetitions with

contrast addressing natural and imaginary sounds switching between imperative (*Listen to...*) and interrogative sentences (*Can you hear...*) broken by short notes of sketch nature. It is saturated with original metaphors (7 cases, 26%), quite standard epithets (6 patterns, 22%), unexpected personifications (4 instances, 15%), and supporting them similes (3 cases, 11%). These figures of quality are reinforced by sporadic use of understatements (1 case, 4%) and hyperboles (3 patterns, 11%), and single instances of a metonymy, pun, and contrast (4% each). The poem figurative language reflects typical features of H. Mort’s individual writing style. The prospects for further research lie in conducting a similar analysis of other poems by H. Mort from different periods of her creative work, as well as comparing the results with the outcomes of stylistic analyses of other contemporary poets.

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