



Tropes As A Means Of Artistic Expressiveness In The Idiolect Of M. Bulgakov

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Abstract: The article examines the system of tropes as one of the essential components of the artistic-expressive means of the Russian language, which are characteristic of M. Bulgakov's idiolect.

Keywords: trope, metaphor, metonymy, epithet, comparison, personification, allegory, hyperbole, periphrasis, poetics, idiolect

Introduction. Language is the most essential means of depicting life in literary art. Figurative words and expressions constitute a necessary constructive element of literary style. The study of expressive devices in Bulgakov's work is pertinent both for examining the peculiarities of the writer's idiolect and his unique, authorial linguistic worldview, and for deepening the theoretical and methodological foundations of contemporary linguistic poetics.

In a broad sense, expressive potential resides in the very structural organization of discourse, which includes the structure of paragraphs, chapters, and entire texts. In a narrower sense, artistic and representational means of language refer solely to what are known as expressive-visual devices, namely tropes and stylistic figures. Tropes (from the Greek *tropos* — a turn or figure of speech) are words or phrases employed in a figurative or allegorical sense, and they constitute an essential element of artistic thought. This category includes devices such as comparison, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, epithet, personification, allegory, hyperbole, litotes, and the like. Stylistic figures, in contrast, refer to those rhetorical constructions used to intensify the expressiveness of an utterance, including anaphora, epiphora, ellipsis, antithesis, parallelism, gradation, inversion, rhetorical question, apophysis, among others.

In the present study, and in view of the limited scope of the article, we will examine only the system of tropes as a vivid means of expressiveness characteristic of the structural organization of Bulgakov's texts, which is conditioned by the peculiarities of the writer's artistic mentality.

Literature review. M.A.Bulgakov's body of work long remained in obscurity, with many of his works only becoming accessible to a wide audience well after the author's death: the play «The run» (1926–1928) was staged in 1957, the unfinished «Theatrical novel» (1936–1937) was published in 1965, the novel «The Master and Margarita» (1929–1940) appeared in 1966–1967, and the novella «Heart of a dog» (1925) was published in 1987.



Czech

Journal of Multidisciplinary Innovations

Volume 40, April 2025.

Website: www.peerianjournal.com

ISSN (E): 2788-0389

Email: editor@peerianjournal.com

In the 1960s–1970s, analyses of Bulgakov's works were primarily limited to individual journal articles authored by A.Vulis, M.Gus, S.L.Ermolinsky, V.Y.Lakshin, N.P.Utekhin, M.O.Chudakova, and others. Over the past thirty years, however, the study of his creative legacy has been conducted much more broadly and actively in the works of I.L.Galinskaya, R.G.Nazar'yan, V.I.Nemtsev, V.V.Novikov, V.V.Khimich, V.V.Petelin, A.M.Smelyanski, B.V.Sokolov, E.A.Yablokov, L.M.Yanovskaya, among others.

Nevertheless, these investigations, which are primarily rooted in literary criticism, have only occasionally and indirectly addressed the distinctive features of the writer's language and style. Almost all of these studies tend to be local in scope, focusing on either a single work or a specific problem within Bulgakov's oeuvre. In nearly every instance, the studies note the complexity of thematic and stylistic issues and the necessity of addressing the context of the writer's entire body of work.

Western European philologists (such as E.Berrat, D.Curtis, L.Milne from the United Kingdom; V.Levin and R.Schröder from Germany; E.Baccarelli and R.Giuliani from Italy, among others) also draw attention to the genealogy of artistic images, the ideological content of Bulgakov's works, and their connection to literary traditions.

Therefore, despite the abundance and diversity of scholarly literature on Bulgakov's work, many linguistic issues remain insufficiently researched or entirely unexplored. Given the contemporary philological principle that the poetics and thematic concerns of literary works are interdependent, it is imperative to link the study of the thematic and genre-specific aspects of Bulgakov's creativity with an analysis of the artistic-expressive features of his language. Such an integrated approach will enable scholars to consider the writer's idiolect as a structure of interdependencies between ideas and their linguistic manifestation, and to uncover the individual figurative code of Bulgakov's creative persona — a code that is largely genetically determined and dependent on his mode of thought. This perspective paves the way for future interdisciplinary research into the symbiotic relationship between language and creative cognition.

Discussion. In studying the evolution of language and style in M.Bulgakov's work, we have concluded that the distinctive linguistic features of his writerly talent manifest most vividly in his major works — namely, his novellas and novels. Consequently, for our analysis of the artistic and representational means and techniques within Bulgakov's idiolect, we have selected individual short stories, the novellas «Diavoliada», «The fatal eggs», and «Heart of a dog», as well as the novels «The white guard», «The Master and Margarita», and «The theatrical novel».

Tropes undoubtedly occupy a central position in the array of figurative devices that characterize Bulgakov's language. The expressive capacity of the word is reinforced and amplified by the activation of its semantics — a phenomenon grounded in the associative nature of figurative thought. This is particularly evident in the use of epithets, comparisons, metaphors (with personification functioning as a variant of metaphor), and metonymy.

An epithet is understood as a figurative modifier imbued with expressiveness that conveys the author's sentiment toward the depicted subject and creates a vivid representation of it. Typically, an epithet is rendered through an adjective that carries a specific semantic as well as expressive-emotional weight. M.Bulgakov scrupulously selects his modifiers; hence, many of these are evaluated precisely as epithets.



Czech

Journal of Multidisciplinary Innovations

Volume 40, April 2025.

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ISSN (E): 2788-0389

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The works under analysis are characterized by an abundance of simple epithets, frequently employed by the author as homogeneous members within a sentence. For instance, the novel «The white guard» opens with a description of the first post-revolutionary year in Russia, at a time when the Civil War was erupting:

The year was grand and dreadful at the Nativity of Christ 1918, being the second since the revolution's beginning. It was abundant with summer sun, and in winter with snow; and especially high in the sky, two stars stood: the shepherd's star — the evening Venus, and the red, trembling Mars.

By means of precisely chosen epithets, Bulgakov succeeded in depicting an apocalyptic vision of the impending events. Particularly symbolic is the contrast established between the epithets «shepherd's star, evening Venus» and «red, trembling Mars,» which represents the confrontation between the idyllic peacefulness observed in the Turbin family and the catastrophic horrors of war, the collapse of the old order, and the looming uncertainty of what is to come.

The epithet is an exceptionally potent artistic device. At times, a single felicitous descriptor enables the author to unfold an entire scene and to characterize a figure through the varied connotative shades inherent in language. As noted in [3, p. 354], «M.Bulgakov is one of the masters of the Russian language, in whose work a remarkably broad spectrum of functional-stylistic and emotional-expressive connotations is represented». In «The white guard», while meticulously delineating the appearance and character of many — even secondary — figures, Bulgakov refrains from providing a complete portrait of Sergey Ivanovich Talberg, the husband of Elena Turbin, who abandoned her and fled Kiev alone. The reader is instead presented with various disparate, indirect remarks concerning his gaunt figure and the bristles of his black mustache. Only one detail of Talberg's visage is described with exceptional eloquence:

«Perhaps the primary reason for this lies in the two-layered eyes of Captain of the General Staff Talberg, Sergey Ivanovich... Talberg had already kissed his wife, and there was a moment when his two-storied eyes were permeated by nothing but tenderness.»

Synonymous epithets chosen by Bulgakov for the noun «eyes» — namely «two-layered» and «two-storied» — exquisitely capture the duplicitous, hypocritical, and secretive character of the egotist. In the farewell scene, the writer continually draws the reader's attention to the expression of these eyes, specifying which «layer» is meant at each moment.

In the novel «The Master and Margarita», the Master encounters his beloved for the first time on the street:

«She was carrying repulsive, disquieting yellow flowers in her hands... And it was not so much her beauty that struck me as the extraordinary, hitherto unseen loneliness in her eyes!»

The epithets used by the author to describe the flowers intersect with those attributed to the heroine herself, thereby characterizing the melancholy, solitude, and monotony of her entire life prior to her meeting with the Master.

Another significant trope in Bulgakov's idiolect is the simile — an expressive device based on juxtaposing one phenomenon or concept (the object of comparison) with another (the means of comparison) in order to highlight a particularly important artistic attribute of the former [2, p. 348]. More frequently, similes are rendered in speech as comparative phrases composed of a word or phrase accompanied by one of the comparative conjunctions (such as «like», «exactly like», «as



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if», «as though», or «that»). Such comparisons are highly characteristic of the writer's works. For example, in «The white guard»:

«Once, in the month of May, when the City awoke, radiant as a pearl in turquoise, when the citizens had already set off like ants on their affairs...; and Myshlaevsky, as if a rockslide, unleashed a dreadful curse...»

Similes are also conveyed through other linguistic means, for instance through the combination of a verb with a noun in the instrumental case:

– «Ivan leapt into the water like a swallow»;

– «Blood spurted upward in fountains from the torn arteries on his neck» (The Master and Margarita);

– «Elena stormed through the kitchen, through the dark bookroom, into the dining room» (The white guard).

This trope is also expressed through the degrees of comparison of adjectives, as illustrated in «Heart of a dog»:

«Here, [he is] Swiss. And worse than this, nothing in the world exists. Many times more dangerous than a janitor. An utterly detestable breed. Worse even than cats».

At times, in order to juxtapose certain phenomena or concepts, the artist employs extended similes:

– «Thus, he clattered his teeth at the cat so fiercely that it ascended the pipe to the second floor with a hissing sound reminiscent of a leaky hose»;

– «The dog sat in the shade of the tablecloth with the look of a guard at a powder magazine» (Heart of a dog);

– «Vit'ka, Vit'ka,» said Elena, shaking her head, which resembled a meticulously polished theatrical crown... (The white guard).

Equally significant in Bulgakov's oeuvre are metaphors — words or expressions used in a figurative sense based on similarity [2, p. 227]. Among the myriad types of metaphors, the writer most frequently employs those based on the similarity of functions and impressions:

– «There, sparks were chaotically leaping, snow was leaping, and ahead the steam locomotive rushed and howled so thunderously, so unpleasantly, that even Talberg became dismayed» (The white guard);

– «Pilate, with a piercing look from beneath his brow, drilled the prisoner with his eyes...» (The Master and Margarita);

– «Somewhere far beyond Moscow, lightning rent the sky» (The theatrical novel).

Metaphoric imagery reflects the writer's philosophical worldview. A metaphor is one of the fundamental methods of understanding the objects of reality, their designation, the creation of artistic images, and the generation of new meanings. In addition to verbal metaphors, metaphoric images or extended metaphors are widely employed in literary art. This is often observed in Bulgakov's works, where several types of metaphor collide within a single sentence, thereby creating a multifaceted image: «Elena sat in the half-darkness, a flame pierced her tousled crown of hair, and tears streamed down her cheeks»; «the piano revealed cozy white «teeth» and the score of Faust in a place where thick black squiggles formed a dense, black regiment» (The white guard); «Yes, a wave of sorrow rose, sustained itself for a time, and then began to ebb» (The Master and Margarita).



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ISSN (E): 2788-0389

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According to E.A.Yablokov, «a metaphor is a hidden comparison. Unlike a simple comparison, which contains two elements, a metaphor presents only the second» [4, p.67]. Thus, a metaphor is succinct; it condenses language, whereas a simile tends to expand it. Bulgakov frequently employs metaphor precisely in those instances where it is necessary to concisely convey the essence of a phenomenon in a vivid, associative form, thereby bridging objects belonging to different categories.

Metonymy, as a trope, appears less frequently in Bulgakov's works than metaphor. Metonymy (from the Greek *metonymia* — re-naming) involves renaming objects on the basis of proximity or their spatial or cause-and-effect relationships [2, p.241]. The metonymic mode of expression is one way to create expressiveness, as it is typically associated with semantic shifts that lend the text an additional layer of expressive saturation. Bulgakov favors the following types of metonymic transfer:

1. Transfer based on the relationship between part and whole (synecdoche): For instance: «The diamonds departed, the darting eyes, the hairstyles, and the money; the spurs were trampled» (*The white guard*); «The enigmatic gentleman leaned toward the dog, and his eyes flashed with golden rims (*Heart of a dog*).

2. Transfer based on the relationship between form and content: For example: «Officers, the whole hope of the City rests with you. Justify the trust placed in you by the dying mother of Russian cities; and in the event of an enemy's appearance — advance, for God is with us!» (*The white guard*); «And suddenly, as if breaking free from chains, both halls began to dance — and the veranda danced along with them» (*The Master and Margarita*).

3. Transfer based on the relationship between the author and his works or between a person and that which is associated with his name: For example: «In the green light, the roots of Goncharov and Dostoevsky softly glistened, and the gold-black cuirassier Brockhaus-Efron stood in rigid formation» (*The white guard*).

As a compliant instrument in the hands of the artist Bulgakov, metonymy intermingles spatial and temporal coordinates. Such mingling is underpinned by an emotive rationale — through them, the author permits emotion to express itself. These techniques are rather complex, requiring the reader to engage in decoding and interpreting the text.

Hyperbole and periphrasis appear somewhat less frequently in Bulgakov's texts. Hyperbole is a means of artistic depiction that involves the inordinate exaggeration of events, feelings, force, significance, or size of the depicted phenomenon. It is a visually striking form of presenting the object of thought, which can function either in an idealizing or a derogatory manner [2, p.35]. Such expressiveness is employed when it is necessary to make a particularly strong impression on the listener or reader. Hyperbole enables the creation of a tangible image of a person or event. For example, when bidding farewell to Moscow in «*The Master and Margarita*», Voland and his retinue find themselves on the Vorobyovy Hills, where for a jest, Fagot-Korovye whistles: «Margaret did not hear this whistle, but she saw it while, together with a passionate steed, she was thrown some ten cubits away. Next to her, an oak tree was uprooted by its very roots, and the ground fissured all the way to the river. A vast section of the bank, along with the wharf and the restaurant, was swept into the river. The water boiled, surged, and a whole river tram was flung onto the opposite bank».

Such an extended hyperbole is rarely used by Bulgakov. More commonly, he opts for brief yet vivid descriptions: «How an enormous warrior stood as a vaunted hero, his chainmail radiating



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Journal of Multidisciplinary Innovations

Volume 40, April 2025.

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ISSN (E): 2788-0389

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light; and because of this piece of paper —undoubtedly because of it — such calamities, such campaigns, bloodshed, fires, and pogroms, despair, and horror ensued» (The white guard).

An example of derogatory hyperbole may be found in the description of the secretary-dame in «The theatrical novel»: «I arrived after two weeks and was attended to by some maiden with eyes that were perpetually slanted from incessant lying». Bulgakov repeatedly emphasizes this trait — slanted, deceitful eyes — in every encounter with that character, thereby focusing the reader's attention not on her physical appearance but on the typical aspect of her character — falsehood.

Conclusion. Numerous and diverse means and techniques of artistic expressiveness permeate all of M.Bulgakov's works, rendering their style both original and inimitable. Comparative constructions, sustained by metaphor, metonymy, and epithet, structure the semantic field of the text. Hyperbole and the grotesque emphasize the interweaving of satirical and fantastic motifs, which are characteristic of nearly every work by the author.

Thus, M.Bulgakov's oeuvre represents a system that encompasses its own set of ideas, themes, and characters, forming an aesthetic unity governed by specific poetic regularities. In every work he created, there is an expressive imprint of his distinctive artistic individuality.

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