

Symbolism in Ann Beattie's "Snow"
Naimanova Ch.
Символизм в рассказе Энн Битти «Снег»
Найманова Ч. К.

*Найманова Чолпон Капаровна / Naimanova Cholpon – доктор филологических наук, профессор, заведующая кафедрой,
кафедра западных языков, гуманитарный факультет,
Кыргызско-Турецкий университет «Манас», г. Бишкек, Кыргызская Республика*

Abstract: *the paper studies the opposition images that are revealed through the usage of symbols that include weather depiction, color representation, etc. They all are used to depict the image of purity, innocence and love, i.e., those happy and joyful days spent together with her beloved and at the same time the image of darkness and night, i.e. sad, unhappy feelings and coming to an end love.*

Аннотация: *в статье рассматриваются противоположные образы, которые раскрываются через использование символов, включающих описание погоды, отражение цвета и др. Все они используются, чтобы раскрыть образ чистоты, невинности и любви, т.е. счастливые и радостные дни, проведенные вместе с любимым, и в то же время образ темноты и ночи, т. е. грустные, несчастные чувства и заканчивающуюся любовь.*

Keywords: *symbolism, imagery, weather description, color symbolism, opposition images.*

Ключевые слова: *символизм, образность, описание погоды, цветовой символизм, противоположные образы.*

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Ann Beattie (born in September 8, 1947 in Washington D.S.) is an American short story writer and novelist. Her characters are mostly from middle and upper-middle classes and usually they are unhappy and frustrated in love, work and family. As it is stated in the book "The Facts on File Companion to the American Short Story": "The hallmarks of Ann Beattie's fiction include emphatically realistic dialogue and the physical details as well as the specter of spiritual emptiness in contemporary life. Headlines, current soap operas, popular music, and even accurate depictions of weather contribute to the realism of her fiction, and she acknowledges a debt to Ernest Hemingway for the laconic exchanges between and among her characters" [1, p. 49].

Ann Beattie's "Snow" is very short, only a few pages long, but it is full of meaning. The story is about a woman who recollects happy wintertime spent together with her beloved in the country and analyzes what was wrong in their relations, since she and her beloved have broken up.

"Snow" is narrated in the first-person point of view, which means that the story is told by the narrator using pronoun "I". The tone of the story is warm, and at the same time longing and pessimistic. We can feel the atmosphere of sadness and despair. This atmosphere helps to define the plot of the story. To show this sad atmosphere Ann Beattie uses imagery. The story is full of symbols, metaphors and similes that reveal those happy and joyful days spent together with her beloved and at the same time sad, unhappy feelings and coming to an end love...

The narrator spent one winter with her beloved in a country house and through the imagery used in the story a reader feels that this was the most significant time in her life, though very short. This imagery is revealed by symbols, metaphors, weather depiction, color representation, etc. The most important symbols used in the story are as follows: *snow, chipmunk, Allen's pool, Queen Anne's lace, frozen ground, etc.* The story consists of two paragraphs that differ through the images presented in them. There is the image of snow in the first paragraph. In the second paragraph, the attention is concentrated on the image of darkness and night.

The core symbol in the story is *snow*. Snow can be white and cold, but at the same time, it can be warm. Using the image of snow as a symbol the author shows that love as snow can be white, i.e. pure love; it can be warm, i.e. warm relations between people. The woman talks about her love affair as something "fertile to discuss"; this could have happened with anyone, nothing out of this world. While describing how great her love to her beloved was the author used a number of metaphors. Using the image of snow and its whiteness as the symbol of purity, innocence and love the author uses the following phrases: "the day of big snow", "in white towel turban", "a crazy king of snow", "knee-deep in snow", "and all that whiteness", "the newly fallen snow"... These metaphors and phrases were used to describe the way they were feeling at that particular moment: happy and joyful. However, like snow that melts and disappears, some love stories have an ending; like snow, love is not always forever.

The second symbol used in the story is the *chipmunk*. The chipmunk symbolizes peace and harmonic space. It also reveals a comfortable kind of positive feelings to the spirit. Like the chipmunk she felt at ease,

comfortable being together with her beloved. The chipmunk means comfortableness, happiness that love has brought. The chipmunk did not stay at their house for a long time as love in their hearts.

The woman recollects the time when they painted the walls yellow. This too reminds her of this special time. They were happy painting the walls yellow together. The woman imagines *“the vine popping though, the way some plants can tenaciously push though anything.”* After the breakup, she sees some plants that she placed in the yard where they once lived have grown up in the yard. This was also a memory of those times. *When I left that day, I drove past what had been our house. Three or four crocuses were blooming in the front—...just a few dots of white, no field of snow. I felt embarrassed for them. They couldn’t compete.* By depicting the spring flowers in front of their old house the author wanted to show how their love was shrunken.

As it was mentioned before, like the snow, love is not always forever. *“People fall in love, then it’s time to say good-bye, and this happens even with married people”*. In contrast to the purity, innocence and love Ann Beattie uses different symbols to accent on darkness and night which give a feeling of sadness and tense: *“a small curve of light was shaved from the moon night after night”, “the sky was black”, “the chipmunk ran to hide in the dark”, “one night”, “frozen ground”, “yellow paint”, etc.* According to the story spring has come. As a universal symbol, spring is something new: new life, new love. Usually in spring, the Nature awakens from its long winter sleep. The trees are in blossom. Countless sparrows start twittering in the eaves. The tops of trees are aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of the spring is in the air. The ground is covered with beautiful flowers. It looks like a Persian carpet: white, brown, red, purple, yellow colors. However, in this particular story, spring represents a different symbol; it is a symbol of the end of their fascinating love. With years passed away, the sense of respect remains, but Love is gone. Nevertheless, our character does not want to become reconciled with this fact and she arranges flashback to her past, even driving back to the place that was their house. She definitely still loves him and wants him back. *“Even now, saying “snow”, my lips move so that they kiss the air”*. The author describes spring when the snow starts melting as their love that is ending.

To show the ending of their love, one more symbol is used in the story: Allen’s pool. Allen, in spite of all visitors, was their good friend. In spring, in April, he died. His death symbolizes that time when she was so happy and yet it did not last. The friend had covered his pool with a black tarp. It had sunk down into the pool. *“... and there was Allen’s pool, still covered with black plastic that had been stretched across it for winter. It had rained, and as the rain fell, the cover collected more and more water until it finally spilled onto the concrete”*. A black shroud as a symbol represented a person who knew her when she was in love. Now like her love, he too is gone.

Using the symbol *a snow plow* that was always *scraping off the snow on their road - an artery cleared* the narrator underlines that it was the pathway to the heart which was lost that winter.

As for her beloved, probably his feelings were a bit different. It may be because a man’s perception of love is different. As the narrator writes, *“You remember it differently”*. Realizing it, this narrator characterizes the story: *“Somebody grew up, fell in love, and spent a winter with her lover in the country”*. In this paragraph, the attention is concentrated on the image of darkness and night. In contrast to the purity, innocence and love Ann Beattie uses different symbols to accent on darkness and night which give a feeling of sadness and tense: *“a small curve of light was shaved from the moon night after night”, “the sky was black”, “the chipmunk ran to hide in the dark”, “one night”*. Another interpretation of this paragraph starting with *“You remember it differently”* might be that they do not belong to each other. Moreover, by depicting the chipmunk and the wallpaper which were not the only things that were not native to the time or the country house the narrator wanted to show that the lovers did not belong there either.

The vocabulary of the story is highly poetic. The author uses a number of alliterations in “Snow”: *in the white towel turban; like a crazy king of snow, sand sparkling in the sun, wind whirled, etc.* The alliteration creates cold effect, winter atmosphere.

We cannot but mention syntactic structure of the story. There are a lot of verb and noun ellipsis and usage of nouns by detached attributes (*“headlights off, our car”, “you, in white towel turban”*), attributes in post-position, such as *“king of snow”, “the day of big snow”, “the idea of our being together”*; participles in attributive function: *“the man standing on the beach”, “sand sparkling in the sun”, “one bit glinting”*. All this structures make a certain effect; it strengthens the emotions of the character.

Thus resuming the study of Ann Beattie’s “Snow” we can see that the story is full of opposition images that are revealed through the usage of symbols that include weather depiction, color representation, etc. They all are used to depict the image of purity, innocence and love, i.e., those happy and joyful days spent together with her beloved and at the same time the image of darkness and night, i.e. sad, unhappy feelings and coming to an end love...

References

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