

Грунтоўную характарыстыку панегірычных твораў XVI–XVII ст., напісаных на тэрыторыі Вялікага Княства Літоўскага, не абмінуўшы і эпіталамы, прадставіў Я. Недзведзь (J. Niedźwiedz. «Nieśmiertelne teatra sławy: teoria i praktyka twórczości panegirycznej na Litwie w XVII–XVIII w.», 2003). Вясельныя пражайчыны творы ахарактарызавала М. Трэбска (M. Trębska. «Staropolskie szlacheckie oracje weselne: genologia, obrzęd, źródła», 2008).

Як бачым, польскія літаратуразнаўцы часта звяртаюцца да напісаных у папярэднія часы твораў, якія адлюстроўваюць агульначалавечыя і сямейныя ідэалы і грунтоўна прадстаўляюць іх шматграннасць і непаўторнасць у сваіх даследаваннях.

S. Konovalov

THE ROLE OF PHOTOGRAPH IN *THE RAIN BEFORE IT FALLS* BY JONATHAN COE

If his name weren't printed on the cover, we might never guess that *The Rain Before It Falls* was written by Jonathan Coe. After seven wildly plotted and politically tinged novels – including his classic *What A Carve Up!* – Coe has written a brief, sad and often very moving story of mothers and daughters, of pain passed on through generations, and of deep and abiding loneliness. It's not always smooth sailing in this new direction, but there are riches to be found.

Every picture, they say, is worth a thousand words, and in *The Rain Before It Falls* the reader lucks out in both categories. The clever underlying premise of the story lies in 20 pictures the 73-year-old Rosamond refers to as she tapes her life memories for her blind distant cousin Imogen, in hopes of explaining how Imogen fits into their dysfunctional family.

Coe uses examples from *The Rain Before It Falls* to demonstrate how the photographs are essential to the verbal descriptions in the book, to the mechanisms by which the images are catalysts to the narrative, and to the words used to carry that narrative.

The Rain Before It Falls is a melancholy story told in an unusual and effective visual style. We view a family album – a carefully chosen collection of 20 photographs. Rosamond, in whose voice most of the story is told, is an old woman close to death. She has decided to take her own life. One of her last acts is to try to help Imogen, the granddaughter of her cousin and one-time blood sister, Beatrix. She wants to set the record straight about their shared past. She feels strongly that Imogen has a right to know her family history:

What I want you to have, Imogen, above all, is a sense of your own history; a sense of where you come from, and of the forces that made you. One of the ways in which most people, most young people, acquire the sense of themselves is through looking at photographs of themselves, when they were children, and photographs of their parents and grandparents and even older relatives. But you have never been able to do this.

Imogen is blind and will not be able to read a letter or see the photographs for herself. So Rosamond hits on a simple, if eccentric, device. She bequeaths Imogen the 20 photographs, along with a tape-recording in which she explains who or what is in each photograph and its underlying significance.

Coe uses this visual technique to full advantage. Writing is often likened to word-painting: here, with a sighted person addressing a “reader” who was blinded as a child, Coe ensures every description is vivid and precise. Some of the best writing in the book occurs when Rosamond is recalling the visual texture of a farm in Shropshire or a boating excursion on the Serpentine. Some may feel that this technique is rather contrived, reminiscent of a creative writing exercise, but everyone acknowledges Coe’s skill as a writer.

His ability to set atmospheres and create believable characters is impressive. In a few words he often captures the essence of a situation. For example, at the very beginning of the novel we are introduced to Rosamond’s niece Gill and her husband Stephen. Gill has to tell her husband the news of her aunt’s death. Stephen says he will not be able to go with Gill to help her to make arrangements for the funeral. In just one sentence we gain a deep insight into the nature of their marriage:

She smiled and turned, her ash-blonde hair, the only distinct part of her, bobbing down the garden pathway: leaving him, as so often, with a sense of having obscurely failed her...

Gill is clearly going to have to cope on her own. Indeed the men in *The Rain Before It Falls* tend to be in the shadows. This is a novel by a male writer about women’s lives and the men play a small part, if any, in the story.

Rosamond has died in Shropshire. Predeceased by her longtime companion Ruth and leaving no children, she has made Gill her executor. To Gill’s surprise a large part of Rosamond’s estate has been left to someone called Imogen, a girl who Gill met only once 20 years previously. Rosamond has also left a packet of cassette tapes for Imogen, recorded up to the very night she died, a death that Gill discovers wasn’t due to heart attack but suicide.

Unable to locate Imogen, Gill listens to the tapes herself, and they make up the bulk of the book. Coe is performing a neat modernist manoeuvre here. This is more or less the novelisation of a book-on-tape, reversing the usual route and also raising nicely downbeat questions of how words can truly represent anything visual and how a picture is rarely what it seems anyway:

Everybody smiles for photographs. That's one of the reasons you should never trust them.

Tapping into childhood memories of World War II Rosamond explores photographs taken in the months she spent at the farm of her young cousin Beatrix during the historic evacuation of the children from London. Beatrix is an anomaly and, in a sense, can be considered the key to almost everything that happens. Unloved by her mother Beatrix welcomes Rosamond and immediately makes her “a blood sister”. From the very beginning, though, she pursues her own agenda – eventually at the cost of her own daughter Thea and her granddaughter Imogen.

This major storyline is accompanied by Rosamonds gradual recognition of her own lesbian inclinations and indeed, the tapes reveal more about the older generations than they do about their intended recipient:

Even the presence of the mostly unknown picture takers and makers sets up a haunting heartbeat in a story that is triggered by unknowns, especially of intentions and unheeded life lessons.

In one of his interviews Coe has said that writing this book he took his inspiration from the novels of Rosamond Lehmann (and indeed Lehmann had a sister called Beatrix) and it's perhaps her influence that makes Rosamond the character so easily believable, so understandable in all her actions and desires. At the end of her many years with Ruth the truth of their relationship is comforting, sad, and completely familiar:

I don't remember that we spoke to each other much. Hardly at all. What was there to say? We were lifelong companions...

Н. В. Копытко

ФУНКЦИИ ПРИЕМА ПОГРУЖЕНИЯ В МИФ В РОМАНЕ А. КАРТЕР «НОЧИ В ЦИРКЕ»

Художественный метод современной британской писательницы Анджелы Картер (1940–1992) предполагает восприятие реальности в фантастическом ключе, что отражает специфику английского магического реализма в целом и ее романа «Ночи в цирке» (1984) в частности. Использование магического реализма в данном произведении позволяет писательнице исследовать человеческое общество, а также раскрыть сущность и роль мифа в его жизни.

Отличительной чертой магического реализма является особая погруженность в миф. Многие мифы, на которые А. Картер ссылается в своих произведениях, обладают специфической текстовой природой. В этом отношении читателям наиболее известны сказки писательницы, которые сами по себе являются мифами, поскольку уже глубоко укоренились в сознании европейцев и представляют собой неотъемлемую составляющую их культурной традиции.

Центральным мифом, творчески переосмысленным в романе «Ночи в цирке», является греческий миф о Леде и Лебеде, увековеченный в «Илиаде» Гомера, а также упомянутый во многих произведениях искусства, среди которых картины Микеланджело и Леонардо да Винчи, а также сонет «Леда и Лебедь» У. Йейтса (1924).

Согласно древнегреческой мифологии Леда была дочерью этолийского царя Фестия и Евритемиды и женой царя Спарты Тиндарея. Пленившись красотой Леды, Зевс предстал перед ней на реке Еврот в образе лебедя и овладел ею, после чего она снесла два яйца, из которых на свет появились Полидевк и Елена. В романе «Ночи в цирке» присутствуют артефакты,