
УДК 821.161.1

doi: 10.18101/1994-0866-2017-3-134-139

**THE POEM “SHAKESPEARE” BY B. PASTERNAK:
A GENRE AND SEMANTIC ASPECT**

© *Aleksey V. Barykin*

Cand. Sci. (Phil.), A/Prof.

Department of Humanities, Tyumen State Institute of Culture

19 Respubliki St., Tyumen 625000, Russia

© *Marina V. Korablina*

Cand. Sci. (Cultural Studies), A/Prof.,

Department of Foreign Languages, Tyumen State Institute of Culture

19 Respubliki St., Tyumen 625000, Russia

The article analyzes the poem by B. Pasternak “Shakespeare” (the cycle “Five Stories”) in the aspect of its lyrical-epic genre peculiarity, its interpretation potentials at the inter-textual and hermeneutic levels and poetics of lyric intentions as well. According to the authors, the inter-textual level is orientated towards a dialogue situation with the previous tradition mainly presented by some reminiscences and allusions. The hermeneutic level is reflected in appeal to Shakespeare’s and other authors’ literary texts for understanding the universal significance of the literary hero status, a complicated process of his identification (“self-identity”). The hero that recognizes himself as a part of a global literary context combines the elements of epic, lyrical and even dramatic types, pretending to perform a certain primordial generic syncretism. The authors analyze the poem, taking into consideration Pasternak’s views on Shakespeare’s personality presented in his critical notes (“Comments on Translating Shakespeare”), Shakespeare’s figurative embodiment in the poet’s reflexive practice. The article presents the first translation of the analyzed poem into English by M. Korablina and T. Kline.

Keywords: Pasternak; Shakespeare; genre-forming elements; epic; sonnet; poetics; poetic style; artistic image.

The poem “Shakespeare” by B. Pasternak is included in his cycle “Five Stories” (the collection “Themes and Variations”). Such a genre definition has a principal significance in appealing to epic sources: in Pasternak’s opinion the Epic is the component part of Shakespeare’s artistic vision. Shakespeare “is still the ideal and yet he exhibits the height of realism”, that is because of his “miracle of objectivity”, “his famous characters, the gallery of types, ages and temperaments with their peculiar deeds and a special language”, but “their conversations are intertwined with the effusions of his own genius. His aesthetics is built on selflessness taking turns with attentiveness, in his variation of the elevated and the ridiculous, prose and poetry <...>. His comparisons are the threshold and poetry’s subjective source had never stepped beyond it” [4, p. 387].

In “Comments on Translating Shakespeare” Pasternak wrote, defining Shakespeare’s poetic style: “Poems were the quickest and the most spontaneous form of expression for Shakespeare. They were the means of his thoughts’ immediate record. It often seemed that in many of his poems the preliminary drafts for his prose were made” [4, p. 414]. Paraphrasing Pasternak it is possible to say that Sha-

Shakespeare was a versatile personality, who left the characteristic imprint on his works. But at the same time figurativeness receives the impression of objectivity, true life manifestations, comply with social realm determinants. Shakespeare is presented as the embodiment of creative natural power, organically entering the world's common cultural context [4, p. 215].

Trying to understand Shakespeare, to explain the specific nature of his creative method, Pasternak tried to understand himself as well. He indisputably felt his affinity with Shakespeare concerning basic signs of artistic philosophy of life, approaches to representation, and general mood of imagery creation. It is not by chance that O. Freidenberg in her letter to Pasternak (dated 11.04.1954) showed the "mental affinity" of the two poets: "There was never so much mental affinity between any two writers as between Shakespeare and you. "Shakespearianisms" in your poems were the pretext for merciless criticism; they wanted to destroy them. While reading Shakespeare I feel astonished to find too many "pasternakianisms"; your critics called them futurisms, Chlebnikovisms etc. Shakespeare's figurativeness was expressed in use of metaphor, thought counterpoints, involvement of the events in all times and of all kinds simultaneously, making all details universal..." [5, p. 282]. O. Ivinskaya recalled that one day someone brought Pasternak a copy of a British newspaper in which there was a double page feature under the title "Pasternak Keeps a Courageous Silence". It said that if Shakespeare had wrote in Russian he would have written in the same way as he was translated by Pasternak... [3, p. 35].

To start analyzing the poem it is reasonable to point out that at the very beginning of the poem we see not so much the portrait of Shakespeare as depiction of a landscape, interior drafts; that gives the basis to consider that those objective signs are the epic, depersonalized Shakespeare's "image", or perhaps it is better to say "Shakespeare's spirit" presented in all given realities.

A livery stable, and rising from the waters
The stairs — the treacherous and shrouded Tower,
And sonorous horseshoes and hoarse, ringing
Westminster, like blocks wrapped in mourning ...

And the narrow streets; walls like hedges of hops,
Hoarding dampness in outspread alleys,
Gloomy as soot, as mash for ale,
Like London, cold, like the horse's tread, uneven.

(translated by M. Korablina and T. Kline)

Let us pay attention to a remarkable detail of the given excerpt — the image of "dampness". It is possible to say that "dampness" is conceptually important for Pasternak in understanding the poetic state of Shakespeare. For Pasternak "spots of dampness" mean literature: "Damp spots. The result of reading but not of choice (of how much you had to read), everything did good. He (Shakespeare — A. B., M. K.) thought that everything was nature because in his opinion it was not art... Leonardo da Vinci said that even damp spots that have been seen suddenly on the wall

can lead an artist to finding an image. So this literature was spots of dampness” [4, p. 688]. Compare also: “the maximum artistry of [Shakespeare’s] raw material” [4, p. 692].

As for the artistic peculiarity of the given stanza it is reasonable to mark the insularity of external world which later will be transformed into a cramped tavern space. The “window” is becoming a boundary between the external (London’s landscape) and internal (tavern) worlds: “a window and the seeds of lilac mica // In lead rims...”. Exactly the images of a “window”, a “tavern” with drunken visitors and inharmonious reality outside the window (as in a state of some agony) allow us suggest that the poem “The Lady Unknown” by Blok influenced the creation of Pasternak’s poem. The theme of a true poet’s vocation also unites those two poems. In addition to the analogy with “The Lady Unknown” one more comparison can be made with the scene in Auerbach’s wine cellar, where Mephistopheles and Faust came (Goethe’s “Faust”). It is worth pointing out that Mephistopheles is one of the characters of the Pasternak’s cycle “Five stories”. Moreover, in the further context of the poem the images of “father” and “ghost” point to Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” (even if instead of the “father” there is the lyrical hero, and his work instead of “the ghost”).

It is necessary to note that in the text there is an implicit indication of the feast and death motif. In this case London’s mourning atmosphere is very revealing (may be here there is a hint at Pushkin’s tragedy “A Feast in Time of Plague”). It is important to underline that in this case Pasternak follows the tradition of friendly messages, combining the ideas of death and feast: “... a rare message avoids mentioning at least the only attribute of a feast, the idea of death, your own or someone else’s one, real or imagined” [2, p. 295]. Compare also: “convivial feast funeral” [1, pp. 100–101]. The hero’s state is becoming more acute because he feels his loneliness among “feasting” philistines and so happens sham, profanity of the “feast” as a gathering of the chosen few, people close in spirit. The tavern is becoming the place of peculiar trial, where the lyrical individual is tested by his work. Drunken state (as a dominating motif of the whole cycle it was already outlined in the poem “Meeting”: “two heroes came back from the gathering”) and creative sobriety generates the hero’s existential conflict.

The plot and core of the poem is the dialogue between a “sonnet” and its creator:

The sonnet says to him:

“I admit

Your abilities, but, genius and master,

Do you, and that person with a foaming mug on the rim of

The beer keg, see that I am of the same kind as lightning,

I am of higher caste,

Than others, — in short, I pour out fire

as, into my nostrils, your canister pours foulness.

Forgive, my father, your son’s skepticism,

But, sir, but, milord, we are in the tavern,

What can I do in your crowd? What can a cygnet do

Amongst the splashing rabble?
I need expansiveness!

(translated by M. Korablina and T. Kline)

It is quite important that Shakespeare in this context is introduced as the sonnets' author. For Pasternak the genre nature of a sonnet has a worldview foundation: "... the sonnets are wholly absolute; they are at the height of the genre. The content and pithiness of sonnets are at their utmost. It is difficult to imagine that greater life in its colours, contrasts, more passion and thoughtfulness with more fervor, naturalness etc. could be instilled in a form which to this day keeps its phenomenal novelty, newer or more inspired... How many stages before entering the aesthetic dwelling-place are left, when travelling Shakespeare's thought, idea; plot or life can be caught in its inartificial form? It is aesthetic in its own incipience" [4, p. 692]. In a sonnet the possibility of achieving the extreme limit in expressing deep content, implementing inexhaustible sense in a fixed traditional form is very important.

As for the artistic context given above it is possible to note that there is the existing tension between the Elevated (a sonnet, a poet's mission) and the Low (a tavern, "mob" as in a traditional opposition "a poet and mob"; between freedom (creative freedom) and no freedom (in this meaning the image of the Tower is very characteristic), and hopelessness (for providence will fulfilment). Here the problem of inspiration freedom and "incarcerating" it into a form is also announced. A genius and master are two incarnations of a poet-creator who presents the unity of insight and artistic skill.

The main theme of this poem is perhaps the theme of an unappreciated poet and his true vocation. "The Sonnet" tempts its creator, proposes to read his poems to the tavern visitors to feel the burden of popularity. The poet refuses to achieve success with a non-initiated audience. In the end, "Shakespeare" is not tempted and throws a napkin at the door where "the sonnet-ghost" stands. The situation of the dialogue between "a father-poet" and "a son-sonnet" and its ending is, indeed, the self-reflection of a lyrical hero who feels his inner opposition to social environment's imperfect nature and who doubts his ability to change this world with the help of his creations. Those creations in turn gain their independence and do not always correspond with the artist's creative plans but present the ideal goal which cannot be correlated with ordinary life's realities. That is why the poet's inner disorder happens; he realizes the discrepancy between his mission and his abilities. This dialogue illustrates this disharmony. It is also possible to mention that the text indicates the problem of adequacy of perception (the way the artist perceives his own creations) and the problem of an adequate environment for creative self-expression.

To differentiate this story from Pasternak's earlier "stories" it is necessary to say that it more likely has a dramatic but not epic character. The dialogue between a creator and his creation has a dynamics akin to a well-sound; characters' deeds are subordinate to the principle of epic and dramatic plot development but the highest level of concentration of conflict's ending gives us the idea that we are reading a

dramatic story. Pasternak defined such genre as the “form of the highest creative density” [4, p. 693].

“Shakespeare” as an image expresses the essence of a creator-genius whose scale and breadth of creative vision comes into conflict with the social realm. Pasternak’s interpretation of such personality is aimed at discovering the hero’s inward life; the conflict between a creator and his creation is essentially directed to the objectification of feelings and the adequate perception of artistic intentions by a lyrical hero. According to Yu. V. Shatin, “the Shakespeare Code have the important function in Pasternak’s poetics that witnesses cultural immortality in the face of transient history” [6, p. 215].

All things considered, it is possible to say that on the one hand the lyrical life survey is presented in the cycle “Five stories”, on the other hand, “life epic” enters the poetry. Thus traditional ideas about poetry are expanding; poetry overcomes the conditional nature of eternal themes and appeals to life’s truth with the help of “variations”. In this connection the historic vector of life events is exchanged by the vector of eternity, unshakable topicality of correlation between existential realities and their substantial basis.

References

1. Vatsuro V. E. *Lirika pushkinskoi pory: “Elegicheskaya shkola”* [The Lyrics of Pushkin’s Times: The School of Elegy]. St Petersburg: Nauka Publ., 1994. 240 p.
2. Virolainen M. N. *Rech’ i molchanie: syuzhety i mify russkoi slovesnosti* [Speech and Silence: Plots and Myths of Russian Literature]. St Petersburg: Amfora Publ., 2003. 503 p.
3. Ivinskaya O. *Gody s Borisom Pasternakom: v plenu vremeni* [Years with Boris Pasternak: Captivated by Time]. Paris: Fayard, 1978. 437 p.
4. Pasternak B. L. *Sobranie sochinenii* [Collected Works.]. In 5 v. Moscow: Chudozhestvennaya literatura Publ., 1991. V. 4.910 p.
5. *Perepiska Borisa Pasternaka* [Boris Pasternak’s Correspondence]. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya literatura Publ., 1990. 576 p.
6. Shatin Yu. V. *Russkaya literatura v zerkalesemiotiki* [Russian Literature in Semiotics Mirror]. Moscow: Yazyki slavyanskoi kultury Publ., 2015. 343 p.

СТИХОТВОРЕНИЕ Б. ПАСТЕРНАКА «ШЕКСПИР»: ЖАНРОВО-СЕМАНТИЧЕСКИЙ АСПЕКТ

Барыкин Алексей Валентинович
кандидат филологических наук, доцент,
Тюменский государственный институт культуры
Россия, 625000, г. Тюмень, ул. Республики, 19
E-mail: barikin0906@inbox.ru

Кораблина Марина Викторовна
кандидат культурологии, доцент,
Тюменский государственный институт культуры
Россия, 625000, г. Тюмень, ул. Республики, 19
E-mail: marinakorablina@yahoo.com

В статье представлен анализ стихотворения Б. Пастернака «Шекспир» (цикл «Пять повестей») с точки зрения лирико-эпического жанрового своеобразия, возможностей интерпретаций на интертекстуальном и герменевтическом уровнях, а также поэтики лирических интенций с опорой на представления поэта о личности Шекспира (изложенных в критических замечаниях), его образное воплощение в рефлексивной практике поэта. Интертекстуальный уровень, по мнению авторов, ориентирован на диалоги с предшествующей традицией, представленной главным образом в некоторых реминисценциях и аллюзиях. Герменевтический уровень реализуется в обращении к художественным текстам Шекспира и других авторов с целью понимания универсальной значимости статуса литературного героя, сложного процесса его идентификации («автоидентичности»). Герой осознает себя частью мирового литературного процесса (контекста), который сочетает элементы разных традиций, аспекты эпического, лирического и даже драматического родов, в совокупности воссоздающих некий исконный родовой синкретизм. В статье впервые представлен перевод М. Кораблиной и Т. Кляйном этого стихотворения на английский язык.

Ключевые слова: Пастернак; Шекспир; жанрообразующие элементы; эпическое; сонет; поэтика; поэтический стиль; художественный образ.