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Opposition of Male Characters in the Novel “Doctor Zhivago” by Boris Pasternak: Beauty vs. Freedom

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Beauty for Boris Pasternak is linked to nature images, female images, and art aspects. In Pasternak's works all these concepts are made closer on the basis of perception of vitality, life energy – a starting point in every system of poet's art and philosophy worlds. However, we find it important to consider the way the theme of beauty is interpreted in the system of male images as the given analysis allows us to create a whole perception of philosophy and poetic category of beauty appearing in images and artistic context of Pasternak's works.

The beauty concept in Pasternak's view is deprived of monosemanticity, it can be reached through correlation of antinomic qualities and features. Internal antinomies are expressed in a formal structure of works, in particular, in the novel “Doctor Zhivago”. In this novel immanent characteristics of the beauty concept are explicitly expressed in a system of male characters, thus, being one of criteria of opposition: Yuri Zhivago, Yevgraf–Komarovskiy, Antipov-Strel'nikov. It is the antinomy of “performed” and “performing” beauty.

According to the concept of “beauty” in Pasternak's creative work the source of beauty is life. But not in every case the beauty itself can be the source of life – and it is the major specific feature of Pasternak's notions about the beautiful. The extend of life forces survival in the world gives a rise to opposition of “performed” and “performing” beauty. The “performed” beauty is life energy presented in a form but stopped in its creative development, while the “performing” beauty is life energy initiating a creative potential.

Keywords: Russian literature, Boris Pasternak, novel “Doctor Zhivago”, concept of “beauty”.

Introduction

Studying the phenomenon of beauty from ontology, axiology, and aesthetics perspectives researchers tend to apply it to female images. It is a female image where beauty standards can be found. Focusing on female images they have an inclination to prove value and aesthetic, ontological and other criteria as well. However,

studying literary works we should take into account that female images form a united system of images along with male ones. That is why it is logical to consider the images independently.

In the present article we consider images of male beauty in Boris Pasternak's works. It goes without saying that this set of characters is not a key one to represent the concept of “beauty” in

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Pasternak's view. It is likely to explain why this question has not been touched upon in widely-known research papers dedicated to poet's works (Muchnic, 1957; Smirnov, 1996; Al'fonsov, 2001; Fateeva, 2001; Bykov, 2006; and others). Beauty for Pasternak (as well as for many other writers) is linked to nature images, female images, and art aspects. In Pasternak's works all these concepts are made closer on the basis of perception of vitality, life energy – a starting point in every system of poet's art and philosophic worlds. However, we find it important to consider the way the theme of beauty is interpreted in the system of male images as the given analysis allows us to create a whole perception of philosophy and poetic category of beauty appearing in images and artistic context of Pasternak's works.

Statement of the problem

The "beauty" concept in Pasternak's view is deprived of monosemanticity. It can be reached through correlation of antinomic qualities and features. Internal antinomies are expressed in a formal structure of works, in particular, in the novel "Doctor Zhivago". In this novel immanent characteristics of the "beauty" concept are explicitly expressed in a system of male characters, thus, being one of the criteria of opposition: Yuri Zhivago, Yevgraf–Komarovskiy, Antipov-Strel'nikov.

Discussion

Considering the given male characters it is not difficult to mention the diversity of their world views. Komarovskiy and Strel'nikov are antipodes of the main character in his perception of life and strengthening salutary, united, creative coherence with everything and everyone in the world on the basis of universal love. For Zhivago it is a naturally experienced process, not linked to ideas, demands and expectations: freedom, good or something else.

Incongruity of life positions is underlined by characters' appearance. Komarovskiy and Strel'nikov are different from Yuri Zhivago and his half-brother Yevgraf: they have nice appearance. Although Pasternak does not present detailed portrait descriptions in his works, nevertheless, we can find traits to the portrait of one or another character. We see Komarovskiy with Lara's eyes, "a handsome man with gray hair" (Pasternak, 2004, 48). But we realize that a well-groomed and sleek appearance is only an external gloss hiding a self-interested person achieving the set goals by any means.

The other character, Pavel Antipov, turns into Strel'nikov as a result of the twists and turns of life. Deep soul and idea transformations seemed to change Antipov's appearance. That is proven by the fact that many people who had seen him before did not recognize him as Strel'nikov. But we can not find a detailed portrait of both Antipov and Strel'nikov in the novel. Pasternak makes an emphasis on details that are relevant to reveal subtle implications of the images and the novel as a whole. He says that the boy, Patul Antipov, is "a neat boy with regular features and blond-brown hair parting in the middle" (Pasternak, 2004, 36). Later having met Strel'nikov, Yuri Zhivago noted: "Everything inside and the things he was wearing seemed to be exemplary" (Pasternak, 2004, 248). Cleanliness, regular features and parting in the middle are the important marks of firmness of purpose, exemplarity and reasoning. Strel'nikov and Komarovskiy have some things in common: they were both guided by a purpose-idea, they overcame the difficulties fighting with their lives and conquering, while the main character was driven by the life stream and did not try to impede it.

As in the case of other characters, we can reconstruct Zhivago's portrait only with the help of few details mentioned in the text. Combined details can give us the idea that Zhivago was

marked with the internal charm and force rather than nice appearance. Lara describes him as "snub-nosed and, one cannot call him a handsome young man" (Pasternak, 2004, 128), in her letter to her husband Tonia writes that she "loves <...> the face ennobled by internal content, but without this content it may not look beautiful" (Pasternak, 2004, 413–414). Komarovsky's demonic beauty as well as his power over her attracted Lara. She tried to overcome it by getting married to Antipov. As for Zhivago, his quick mind and talent won Lara's heart. Tonia also talked of Zhivago's talent.

Considering the appearance of the characters we should note that in the case of Komarovsky and Antipov much more attention is paid to their appearance, but in the case of Zhivago his internal world is placed in the first place. What is behind outer beauty, the beauty of a form? To answer this question, let us apply to ideas of a French philosopher Henri Bergson, as stated in his book "Creative Evolution" (1907). A link to Bergson is not accidental as a connection of his philosophic world view with Pasternak's art world view is explained by their tie with philosophy of life, desire to create a universal energy formula of the world process. In the context of the present research philosophy of life is considered to be not only a branch of philosophical thought, but a way of poetic reflection over world view issues.

Bergson supported the idea that the form (free from any value categories) is associated with the matter, that is a limit, completeness, and it is on another side of the process that embodies creativity and progress. The foundation of life, according to his opinion, is "a life impulse characterized by inherent need in creativity. The life impulse can not create freely as it confronts the matter that is a reverse motion. But it seizes the matter that is the very need attempting to fill it with a scope of uncertainty and freedom" (Bergson, 1998, 248). The similar antinomies can be found in the concepts of other philosophers reflecting life

("philosophy of life"): the life impulse and matter by A. Bergson, "emotional experience" (Erlebnis) and "expression" (Ausdruck) by W. Dilthey ("The Essence of Philosophy", 1909), the process of formation and formed matter by O. Spengler ("The Decline of the West", 1918-1922) etc. The conflict of these bases is beyond the moral imperative, but it is the foundation for the historical process and continuation of life.

Bergson's concepts Pasternak was aware of (collected works "Choix de texts" kept in a private library at the house-museum in Peredelkino village) are in harmony with the poet's philosophy and art world view. In French philosopher's opinion, the life impulse is an initial one giving a push to the development of all living things, in other words, it is a basis of world's creative evolution. In these world view coordinates creative work is supposed to be a hope for progress and further impulse. The life impulse is a force able to overcome the matter, form, finiteness, cessation, death, it is a force associated with freedom (freedom from a form as well), and improvisation.

In the novel "Doctor Zhivago" this imperative is embodied in Yuri Zhivago, Lara and Yevgraf. And Komarovsky and Strel'nikov, we can say, are the characters embodying the matter – a movement that is reverse to the motion of the life impulse. But however, it does not possess a negative-valued meaning. The matter is "the very need": life power would not manifest itself in a full scale without this limiting factor. The higher the resistance is, the greater is the power. That is why the images of Komarovsky and Strel'nikov are of great importance not to prove "anti-life" but to realize the idea of "passive" and "fruitful" life.

"Passive" life is wasting of life, its beauty; it forces to serve false ideals. False ones are the things depleting life forces and vital beginning. "Fruitful" life is an increase of the energy given

by life, it is co-authorship relations with the life itself.

The dualism of relations is revealed at a number of levels of Pasternak's art and philosophy systems. It is realized in contrasting male characters in the novel, particularly in their appearance. Obviously Komarovskiy and Strel'nikov are distinguished in their appearance: granted external beauty is the beauty of a form deprived of creation efforts and having no extension. This kind of beauty can be named "performed", beauty-"reiteration" that stopped in its ideal shape and lost an internal impulse to move ahead (due to some reasons in cases of Komarovskiy and Strel'nikov).

Yuri Zhivago and Yevgraf, Yuri's half-brother, are not marked with magnetic appearance, but attractiveness of their images is generated by internal energy. They can feel beauty of life, its power, they prefer spontaneous movement to a form, and therefore, they demonstrate the existence of "performing" beauty, creation beauty, demanding creative implementation.

Yevgraf is one of the most mysterious images in the novel. He cannot be weighted by the means of moral assessment, his appearance and actions are beyond any ordinary descriptions. He embodies "another" power that is both inconceivable and magnetizing. In the portrait description of Yevgraf one detail is emphasized. He had "narrow Kirghiz eyes" (Pasternak, 2004, 192). This detail points to Yevgraf's uncommonness, and his dissimilarity. His image comprises unprecedented life potential, amazing skills and resources. He appears and disappears in a strange way. He is entitled with freedom; but reflective consciousness, spiritual search, qualms, assertion or negation of some things are not inherent to him. He is protected from it by the very existence. His freedom is granted by life.

Opposition of "performed" and "performing" beauty is repeatedly emphasized in the novel.

Thus, for instance, in the episode presenting a description of a guerilla band and its leader – Liveri Mikulitsyn – the narrator noted: "On each side of him there were two young men, his guards, keeping silent <...>. Their lifeless beauty faces expressed nothing but the blind devotion to their leader and readiness to do everything for the sake of him" (Pasternak, 2004, 316). This brief description of supporting characters proves the idea that "performed" beauty is an expression of an idea set in its form.

A notion about "passive" and "fruitful" ways of life revealed in Pasternak's art and philosophy system allows us to find out another opposition – "passive" and "fruitful" immortality. All things existing are inherent to life, therefore, in accordance with this principle everything in the world is equivalent and equally significant. And a priori this involvement grants immortality to things in existence, including human beings. However, "passive immortality" is not linked to creative work, progress, and internal development. It is opposed to "fruitful immortality" when a person realizes his/her own predestination and follows it till the end. As to the poet, predestination is pursuing its own poetic mission. Only the process of increasing life forces at the expense of own forces prevents life impulse from stopping. This is a fight with a form and substance, but not a fight of good and evil.

In this aspect Pasternak's notions about beauty are considered. Beauty cannot possess only esthetic value, but it shall have internal forces, vitality. Beauty deprived of a creative potential is dead. A creative potential can manifest itself in different ways: in art, love, birth of a new life. In a line with it female beauty and male beauty are different categories as a female is initially linked to a mystery of giving birth to human beings. A male is fated to search for beauty, guard and increase it. If he does not follow this way, he reaches a deadlock when progress stops and outer

beauty loses its significance as there is no link to existence of other things anymore.

In another case beauty energy is intensified in creative work, thus, determining a link of forms of the matter, and circulation of life forces. To prove a dynamic integrity of life we can regard family resemblance of Zhivago's son and Zhivago's mother: "A boy in a cot seemed to be not so pretty as he was pictured, but he was the image of his late grandmother, Maria Nikolaevna Zhivago, he was a carbon copy of his grandmother even more than all the photos left after her death" (Pasternak, 2004, 172). And this family resemblance is not the copying of a form, but it is an extension of a once given life impulse (in a wider sense – a soul rebirth).

Conclusion

Thus, considering an art and philosophy realm of the concept of "beauty" in Pasternak's

creative work we can come to the conclusion that the source of beauty is life – its energy. The idea of indisputable beauty's involvement in life has elucidated comprehension of beauty from time immemorial, this idea also could be found in a number of ancient concepts. But, according to Pasternak, not in every case beauty itself can be the source of life – and it is the major specific feature of his notions about the beautiful. The extend of life forces survival in the world gives a rise to opposition of "performed" and "performing" beauty. "Performed" beauty is life energy presented in a form but stopped in its creative development, while "performing" beauty is life energy initiating a creative potential.

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Оппозиция мужских персонажей романа Б. Пастернака «Доктор Живаго»: красота или свобода

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Красота в эстетической концепции Пастернака связана прежде всего с образами природы, женскими образами, с творческим аспектом. Все эти образы у Пастернака сближаются на основе восприятия витальности, жизненной энергии – точками отсчета всех систем художественно-философского мира поэта. Однако мы считаем важным рассмотреть, как преломляется тема красоты в системе мужских художественных образов, поскольку данный анализ позволит воссоздать целостное представление о философско-поэтической категории красоты, проявляющейся в образно-художественном контексте произведений Б. Пастернака.

Категория красоты в понимании Пастернака лишена однозначности, она постигается путем сопоставления антинормальных свойств и качеств. Внутренние антинормы проявляются в формальной структуре произведений, в частности в романе «Доктор Живаго». Здесь имманентные характеристики понятия красоты находят эксплицитное выражение в системе мужских персонажей романа и, тем самым, становятся одним из критериев оппозиции «совершаемой» и «совершенной» красоты: Юрий Живаго, Евграф – Комаровский, Антипов-Стрельников.

Исходя из понятия красоты в творчестве Б. Пастернака, мы пришли к выводу, что источником красоты является жизнь, но не всегда красота может стать сама источником жизни – и в этом заключается принципиальное отличие представлений Пастернака о прекрасном. Степень проявленности жизненной силы в мире рождает оппозицию «совершенной» и «совершаемой» красоты. «Совершенная» красота – воплощенная в форме энергия жизни, прекратившая свое творческое развитие, в то время как красота «совершаемая» – это энергия жизни, иницирующая творческий потенциал.

Ключевые слова: русская литература, Борис Пастернак, роман "Доктор Живаго", концепт красоты.
