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THE SERIOUSNESS OF COMEDY IN *PYGMALION AND GALATEA* BY W.S. GILBERT

The article is intended to show the tragic aspect of the play by William Gilbert 'Pygmalion and Galatea' the genre which is traditionally defined as a comedy. The author suggests analyzing the Galatea's behavior from the humanistic point of view and proves that the play 'Pygmalion and Galatea' cannot be considered as exclusively comic.

Key words: *comedy, tragedy, dialogue, play.*

Literature, undoubtedly, has never stopped its advancement. Characters and events have continued to engage and surprise the reader. Reading the text, it has long become much harder to define when to laugh and when to cry; which character deserves admiration and which protagonist evokes disgust. The reader cannot always understand in which way it is actually right to assess the personages. There is a perfect example of such kind of literature. One of the most inconspicuous and controversial texts to think of is the play by W.S. Gilbert *Pygmalion and Galatea*.

This play has raised some interest not only from the side of British, but also other European scholars. Weiser considers the question of Galatea's education to be central in the modernity. Neumann considers the play from the point of view of pedagogic [1]. Miller describes Galatea in the play: 'It is clear that she cannot be accepted by society, and her return to stone is the only solution for the other characters' problems' [2: 211]. As for other European scholars, in her essay *Pygmalion: die Geschichte des Mythos in der abendländischen Kultur* the renowned German scholar Aleida Assmann investigates the Pygmalion story's balance between art and myth, and she mentions Gilbert's play in this context [3]. While there has been insightful analysis of the play, I believe there is always something new to learn from reading the text because time brings changes in people's perception of their creative work and, as a result, requires a new interpretation of problems which lie dormant in the text. Like an infection or a parasite within the tissue of a host animal, a new interpretation is bound to spring to life from the text under certain conditions.

An interesting ambiguity lies in that the genre of Gilbert's play has always been defined as comedy. And in one respect, such an interpretation is reasonable. The plot of the play appears to be quite humorous: a woman made from stone comes to life and appears to be so innocent that she cannot fathom how people live. Of course, her innocence causes a lot of comic situations, such as Galatea's conversation with Chrysos, a rich patron of arts:

Galatea: And yet I like you, for you make me laugh;
You are so round and red, your eyes so small.
Your mouth so large, your face so seared with lines.
And then you are so little and so fat!

Chrysos: (aside) This is a most extraordinary girl.

Galatea: Oh, stay – I understand – Pygmalion’s skill

Is the result of long experience.

The individual who modelled you

Was a beginner very probably? [4: 27]

But is the idea of *Pygmalion and Galatea* so simple? Are the audience expected merely to laugh at the sincerity and innocence of Galatea? This is the problem I shall attempt to resolve in my essay.

Despite the fact that Gilbert’s play was written in the 19th century, some motifs of the plot are familiar to the modern audience. Creating an ideal in our mind, the idea to reach a desirable end by all means and the lack of knowledge which would allow one to realize the dream are widespread problems in our life. And one more significant problem which also makes *Pygmalion and Galatea* relevant for modern readers is the concept of truth. Is it worth telling? At present, there exists a seemingly irrevocable conviction (maybe even a stereotype) that in order to become successful one must never show his or her real feelings and thoughts. People who do not care about pulling a “poker face” are considered to be weak and incapable of living in the modern society. But this unwritten law causes nothing but pretense and pose. In the modern world of cynicism, it is very hard to break the vicious circle of pretense and vacuous negativity.

Let us analyze some scenes from the play and make observations about the characters. One of the most distinct moments is the conversation between Pygmalion and Galatea about the kinds of love. Pygmalion admits that he is in love with his creation. Galatea replies that her love to him is something different:

Galatea: A sense that I am made by thee for thee.

That I’ve no will that is not wholly thine.

That I’ve no thought, no hope, no enterprise,

That does not own thee as its sovereign;

That I have life, that I may live for thee,

That I am thine – that thou and I are one!

What kind of love is that? [4: 13]

And she elicits an answer that surprises her very much:

Pygmalion: A kind of love

That I shall run some risk in dealing with...

... Such love as thine a man may not receive, except indeed

From one who is, or is to be, his wife.

Galatea: Then I will be thy wife.

Pygmalion: That may not be;

I have a wife – the gods allow but one.

Galatea: Why did the gods then send me here to thee?

Pygmalion: I cannot say – unless to punish me [4: 13].

It is clear that Galatea is not acquainted with the laws of the society where she is to live. She does not know that some things cannot be told. Her outlook is direct, sincere and simple (but not primitive). She intends to express her feelings, to ask if something is not understandable.

One more interesting and outstanding feature of Galatea’s character is the absence of jealousy. Let us analyze the following quotation:

Galatea: I'm glad of that, I like thy wife.

Pygmalion: And why?

Galatea: (surprised at the question) Our tastes agree.

We love Pygmalion well, and what is more,

Pygmalion loves us both, I like thy wife;

I'm sure we shall agree.

Pygmalion: (aside) I doubt it much [4: 15].

Every woman is expected to be jealous when she finds out that her beloved one is fancied by another woman. But Galatea's logic is different. She thinks that if two women love the same man, then their outlooks are almost the same because they agree on the key issue – love. And such an agreement stands for the kinship of souls.

But it will be a mistake to claim that the author has not granted Galatea with some originally female features. For example, she is glad to realize that she is beautiful, even a bit more beautiful than Pygmalion's wife Cynisca.

Galatea: Believe me, love,

I could look in this mirror all day long.

So I'm a woman...

...I'm very glad that I am lovelier than she [4: 14].

Again, Galatea does not try to make an impression. She only expresses what she thinks. The proof of Galatea's simplicity can be found in such words:

Pygmalion: Hush ! Galatea—in thine innocence

Thou sayest things that others would reprove [4: 15].

Galatea's conversation with Chrysos which has been mentioned in the very beginning also serves as an evident reflection of Galatea's almost unbelievable frankness.

One more bright example of this feature of Galatea's character is her misunderstanding with Leucippe, the soldier. She asks Pygmalion who a soldier is. Pygmalion answers that a soldier is a man who protects the government from the enemies by killing them. Galatea is horrified. She cannot understand how killing can be a profession, normally accepted by people. Pygmalion's explanation fails to calm Galatea. She feels that killing enemies is still killing people. So the readers can conclude that her mindset is very humane.

But there is always a reverse side of the coin. One point of view is that Galatea's innocence is her biggest advantage. On the other hand, her frankness is nothing more than absence of shame caused by ignorance. Let us try to think whether there is a grain of truth in the second statement.

To begin with, it should be understood what we mean by the shameful behavior. Obviously, the person's deeds or words which make other people feel embarrassed are considered to be shameful. But the notion of shame is changing with time. For instance, children always tell what they think because they do not look for benefits. They do not know yet that in some cases it is better not to say something. Their outlook is completely different from the adults' point of view. Galatea is not a child, but she has come into life only a few hours ago. She knows practically nothing about the rules which are accepted in the society where she has come to live. Thus, her so-called ignorance is caused by the circumstances, not by the features of her character. She is an innocent being, so she is ruled by her own principles. Like a child, she simply does not know that other ways of behavior exist.

But there is another issue, arising from Galatea's apparently eccentric frankness. Is it the absence of education or an alternative form of education and behavior? To answer this query, we should look at the consequences of Galatea's influence on the life of other characters; what deeds she has done and what moral they have.

There is no point in denying that Galatea's innocence has caused many problems. For example, in the episode when Galatea tells Myrina, Pygmalion's sister and Leucippe's lover, that Leucippe has killed somebody. Indeed, Leucippe has killed a fawn but Galatea does not know that it is quite normal for people to kill animals. Of course, Myrina is horrified and there is a huge degree of risk for Leucippe to lose her because of this misunderstanding. But when the situation becomes clear, Myrina is angry with Galatea and shouts at her: 'Why, girl – thou must be mad!' [4: 24] But if to go deeper in this situation, it can characterize Galatea as a very kind woman, who feels the sympathy toward every live creature. And we can see here one more unpleasant reality of our life: kind people are often called mad because most of their beliefs are unusual and unacceptable for people who have got used to think only about themselves and tolerate the widespread violence and aggression of the society.

The second example is even more dramatic. It is about the love triangle between Pygmalion, Galatea, and Cynisca. When Cynisca comes and sees Galatea with Pygmalion, she considers it Pygmalion's betrayal. Cynisca is an unusual woman as she describes herself:

Cynisca: I was a holy nymph of Artemis,
Pledged to eternal maidenhood [4: 7].

But when Cynisca saw Pygmalion, the only wish she had was to marry him. And she asked her patron Artemis about that:

Cynisca: No need to tell the arguments we used,
Suffice it that they brought about our end.
And Artemis, her icy steadfastness
Thawed by the ardour of Cynisca's prayers,
Replied, 'Go, girl, and wed Pygmalion;
But mark my words... which ever one of you,
Or he or she, shall falsify the vow
Of perfect conjugal fidelity
The wronged one, he or she, shall have the power
To call down blindness on the backslider,
And sightless shall the truant mate remain
Until expressly pardoned by the other' [4: 8].

Pygmalion has betrayed the vow and, as a consequence, he has become blind. Again, Galatea is the reason of his unhappiness. But actually, is she responsible for Pygmalion's mistake? He knows much more about life and should not have created a delusion that he loves Galatea. And Galatea simply does not understand why gods have animated her if she is not allowed to love the man who has created her. All her mistakes are not intentional. As Chrysos says:

It's the audacity of innocence;
Don't judge her by the rules that govern you,
She was born yesterday, and you were not! [4: 29]

The last proof of Galatea's kindness and tragedy is the episode after which she has preferred to be a statue again. I mean the episode in which she reconciles Pygmalion and Cynisca.

What a profound meaning there is in Galatea's last prayer: 'I do not ask Pygmalion's love; I ask Pygmalion's life' [4: 37]. She pretends to be Cynisca who comes to Pygmalion and forgives him. And then Galatea hears the words after which she understands clearly that there is no place for her, an animated creation of art, in this world. Pygmalion and Galatea-Cynisca have the following dialogue:

Galatea: (with an effort) But then, this woman, Galatea... Thy love for her is dead?

Pygmalion: I had no love.

Galatea: Thou hadst no love?

Pygmalion: No love. At first, in truth,
In mad amazement at the miracle
That crowned my handiwork, and brought to life
The fair creation of my sculptor's skill,
I yielded to her god-sent influence,
For I had worshipped her before she lived
Because she called Cynisca's face to me;
But when she lived – that love died – word by word [4: 38].

When Cynisca hears these words she forgives Pygmalion, and his sight is restored. But Galatea is destroyed and distraught. Pygmalion's behavior has greatly contributed to it. Pygmalion can start a new life thanks to Galatea but he does not realize it. As the dialogue progresses, he says unforgivable words:

Pygmalion: Away from me, woman or statue !

Thou the only blight that ever fell upon my love – begone,
For thou hast been the curse of all who came
Within the compass of thy waywardness [4: 40].

Cynisca tries to calm and defend her but Galatea's feelings have been hurt too much. 'That curse, his curse still ringing in mine ears, for life is bitterer to me than death' [4: 40].

Undoubtedly, Galatea evokes more sympathy than all the other characters. She has managed to put her own dreams and wishes aside in order to make the man she loves happy, to help him make the right choice. In Galatea's deed there is no room left for egoism. She becomes the victim of Pygmalion's inconsistency. And this is the real human tragedy; it is impossible to laugh at Galatea's pain.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the question, raised in the very beginning. Is the play *Pygmalion and Galatea* a comedy? It does not seem to be the case. There is certainly irony in the text. For instance, Chrysos and his wife are shown as not very bright people but full of self-importance. They do not evoke either sympathy, or love. But the story of Galatea is completely different. Despite the fact that she knows little about this world, Galatea has turned out to be much wiser than other characters. Her personal tragedy makes us remember about the purity of kindness and the danger to being so open to people.

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РОЗКРИТТЯ ТРАГІЧНОГО В П'ЄСІ В. ГІЛБЕРТА «ПІГМАЛІОН І ГАЛАТЕЯ»

У статті мова йде про розкриття трагічного в п'єсі Вільяма Гілберта «Пігмаліон та Галатея», жанр якої традиційно визначається як комедія. Автор пропонує аналізувати поведінку Галатеї з гуманістичної точки зору та доводить, що п'єсу «Пігмаліон та Галатея» не можна вважати виключно комедійною.

Ключові слова: комедія, трагедія, діалог, п'єса.

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РАСКРЫТИЕ ТРАГИЧЕСКОГО В ПЬЕСЕ В. ГИЛБЕРТА «ПИГМАЛИОН И ГАЛАТЕЯ»

В статье речь идет о раскрытии трагического в пьесе Уильяма Гилберта «Пигмалион и Галатея», жанр которой традиционно определяется как комедия. Автор предлагает анализировать поведение Галатеи с гуманистической точки зрения и доказывает, что пьесу «Пигмалион и Галатея» нельзя считать исключительно комической.

Ключевые слова: комедия, трагедия, диалог, пьеса.

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ГОРИЗОНТ ЛІТЕРАТУРНОГО СПОДІВАННЯ В ХУДОЖНІЙ БІОГРАФІЇ Ф. ЕБЕРСБАХА «КАРОЛІНА»

Стаття присвячена проблемі передбачуваності читацького очікування у творі сучасного німецького письменника Ф. Еберсбаху «Кароліна».

Ключові слова: *рецептивна естетика, горизонт сподівання, романтизм, оповідна лагуна, техніка замовчування.*

На сучасному етапі розвитку літературно-критичної думки особливої актуальності набула проблема взаємовідношення літературного тексту з читачем, вивченням якої займалися засновники рецептивної естетики, ґрунтовно розробленої наприкінці 60-х років ХХ ст. представниками Констанцької школи, зокрема, найвідомішими німецькими теоретиками В. Ізером та Г. Р. Яуссом. Відомо, що основні положення рецептивної теорії викладені у працях «Історія літератури як провокація літературознавства», «Рецептивна естетика й літературна комунікація», «Естетичний досвід і літературна герменевтика», «До проблеми діалогічного розуміння» Г. Р. Яусса, «Процес читання: феноменологічне наближення» В. Ізера та інших роботах. До них приєдналося багато інших дослідників, які переважно цілком поділяли їх погляди. Так, питання рецептивної естетики знаходили всебічне висвітлення не тільки у працях зарубіжних критиків (М. Наумана, Р. Варнінга, Г. Грімма), а також у роботах вітчизняних аналітиків (М. Ігнатенка, О. Червінської, І. Фізера, Г. Грабовича).

Об'єктом досліджень представників Констанцької школи, згідно з Г.Р. Яуссом, є «історія літератури як процес, в якому завжди задіяні три чинники – автор, твір і читач. Тобто це діалектичний процес, в якому взаємодія між твором і реципієнтом відбувається за посередництва літературної комунікації» [1 : 37]. Сутність теорії сприйняття полягає у тому, що вчені цього напрямку звертали основну увагу на читача. Одним із завдань дослідників є вивчення особливостей сприйняття тексту читачем, який, за концепцією В. Ізера, повинен особистим чином заповнити прогалини, свідомо залишені автором у тексті: «Рецептивна естетика відновлює право читача на активну роль у послідовній конкретизації змісту творів упродовж історії» [1 : 38]. Також важливим для критиків є власне процес взаємодії між читачем і твором: «У рецептивній естетиці твір розглядається вже не сам по собі, а як елемент взаємодії з реципієнтом» [2 : 253]. Таким чином, для рецептивної естетики важливим є не просто образ читача, а його функції, перспективи, реакція, позиція, яку він займає: читачеві надається можливість самостійно вирішувати порушені автором проблеми, знаходити суперечності у тексті і пояснювати їх, відповідати на поставлені питання, доміслювати те, про що не сказано, оцінювати, робити остаточні висновки. Отже, наукове усвідомлення проблеми читацького сприйняття залишило помітний внесок у загальній системі літературознавчих концепцій і методів дослідження.