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The Retrospective Composition of Jean Anouilh's Drama "Skylark"

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A French writer, Jean Anouilh, is one of the most famous innovators in the sphere of drama of the twentieth century. His drama is rightfully called intellectual: in its basis there is the ideological confrontation of two worlds: a conformist and a non-conformist one, the stand of the latter the dramatist supported over the period of his creative development. Therefore one and the same problems, one and the same ideas pass through Anouilh's works. The play "Skylark" is one of the summits of Jean Anouilh's drama creative work. In the article – "The Retrospective Composition of Jean Anouilh's Drama "Skylark" – the composition peculiarities of this play are considered as well as the retrospective method used by Anouilh as fundamental for the creation of the play.

Keywords: dramaturgy, french literature, Anouilh Jean.

Point

During the whole 19th century problems in drama are growing. In its last third H. Ibsen's drama, which can be related to the drama of ideas, appears. In drama of the 20th century, starting with B. Shaw's works, idea subdues the structure. Besides the term "the drama of ideas" the term "intellectual drama" comes into service. In our opinion there is no distinction in kind between them. Only a varying degree of structure subordination to the idea might be considered.

The writers transfer the conflict of the play to the intellectual sphere and in connection with it they reconsider their attitude to the structure of drama itself. A.G. Obraztsova wrote about B. Shaw's works: "The collision of ideas in Shaw's dramas is so consuming, that it entirely subdues the plot, the dialogue, the characters"

(Obraztsova, p. 68, 1965). These words can refer to the intellectual drama in whole.

Drama often became "non-dramatic"; intrigue (if it had been) could fade away right in the first act (in case if the play was divided into acts at all). B. Shaw was right when remarked: "I, as well as our leading dramatists, am constantly praised for our old professional stunts... As for our real achievements, they are either not noticed, or condemned for "non-dramatism" or some other nonsense of that kind" (Shaw, p.492, 1963). M.S.Kurginyan writes that drama should be enriched with "epic comprehensiveness, that a mass hero, not an individual one, should be put into the foreground; the whole epoch should be a storyline, not just separate episodes" (Kurginyan, p.165, 1989). Therefore the drama structure is built via the clash of the main idea and the ones

opposed to it, like "crossing" at which different points meet and from which they move away" (Kurginyan, p.166, 1989).

But besides the transference of conflict into the intellectual sphere, drama of the 20th century reveals itself also in compositional transformations. And, as M.S.Kurginyan correctly remarked, "innovative forms of the contemporary drama <...> are born in works of progressive-minded dramatists influenced by the new problems of the new epoch <...> for all the variety the search is united by one common tendency: the breach of those general principles and specific drama laws, followed as obligatory, by their predecessors" (Kurginyan, p.165, 1989).

A French writer, Jean Anouilh, is one of the most famous innovators in the sphere of drama of the twentieth century. His drama is rightfully called intellectual: in its basis there is the ideological confrontation of two worlds: a conformist and a non-conformist one, the stand of the latter the dramatist supported over the period of his creative development. Therefore one and the same problems, one and the same ideas pass through Anouilh's works.

The play "Skylark" is one of the summits of Jean Anouilh's drama creative work. In our work the composition peculiarities of this play are considered as well as the retrospective method used by Anouilh as fundamental for the creation of the play.

P.Pavies, a French researcher of theatre art, defines retrospection as "a term <...> for indication a scene or a motif in a play, prior to the performed episode" (Pavies, p. 322, 2003). And further: "This method <...> reminds an introduction to a play at the height of the action, the plot of which sends us then to the prior events" (Pavies, p. 322, 2003). G.N.Khrapovitskaya defined the functions of the retrospective method in "new drama": "Retrospections – descriptions – epic elements in a drama are one of the reactions of the form

to a changed content. At the same time it is the reaction of that part of the form which is called composition" (Khrapovitskaya, p.191, 1979). And further: Presence of retrospection creates the illusion of time extension of the events, so does an open ending" (Khrapovitskaya, p.194, 1979).

In the 20th century drama structure is getting more and more complex. P.Pavies in his "Theatre Dictionary" writes not only about retrospection, but also about its forms: "retrospection within retrospection" (crossing of two or more past times) or "cascade of retrospections" (number of retrospections in characters' cues following one another). P.Pavies stated that it was necessary "to define the moment of retrospection for the audience to understand what was going on. <...> It should always be definite, limited with distinct "frames" for adequate perception: retrospection within retrospection or moreover cascade of retrospections can only disorient the audience. But the methods mentioned above are reasonable when the principle of linear and objective narration is deliberately broken and there is a stake on the overlaying of realities" (Pavies, p. 322, 2003).

M.G.Merkulova remarked that "the specific character of retrospection functioning in drama is first of all connected with "resurrection of the past" as a representation on the stage, therefore the realization of retrospection at the levels of action, character and conflict formation inherent to drama literary kind is particularly significant" (Merkulova, p. 55, 2006).

In Jean Anouilh's works the retrospective method is more than just reasonable. Retrospection within retrospection is the author's constant compositional trick for drawing the audience in the stage reality. "Skylark" is the brightest example of the retrospective composition in Anouilh's drama. Two thirds of the play consist of retrospection: it is the performance of Jeanne d'Arc's life before the trial, though the play begins with the bringing in the verdict. With the help of

retrospection the whole Jeanne's life is shown, uncovering plenty of hard events, which couldn't crush her determined character.

Example

In Anouilh's drama works the division into acts is often absent. The same situation is with "Skylark". Directors had to decide themselves when to set an intermission so not to harm the notional goal of the author, who hadn't intended to make any break in the stage action. So "Skylark" came out extremely integral with Jeanne's past and present inseparably interwoven.

The tense plot intrigue (if Jeanne will be sentenced, if she'll die or not), the end of which is well-known, steps back and gives place to action-reflection in the heroine's mind, which is though not always represented as a monologue, oftener as a dialogue, but attracts readers' and audience's attention to the very process of the formation of the thoughts.

Jeanne. Cela aurait été mieux, n'est-ce pas, si j'avais été brûlée?

Warwick. Je vous ai dit que pour le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté, l'abjuration est exactement la même chose...

Jeanne. Non. Pour moi? (Anouilh, pp. 176-177, 2009)

(Jeanne. Tell me, would it be better, if I were burned?)

Warwick. I have already told you that for His Majesty's government it is one and the same thing...

Jeanne. No. For me?)

To make the audience understand how difficult it is for the character to make their decision, Anouilh uses the retrospective composition to extend the time frames of the stage action. Almost the whole play is the narration about Jeanne's life before the trial. Before that the author put the stories of characters' past into the mouths of these or those personages. In "Skylark"

the retrospective action is performed directly on the stage. All the personages from Jeanne's past life (before the trial) appear and tell their stories themselves.

For example, the scene of the first meeting of Jeanne and Charles, the king of France, happens before the trial, but is shown on the stage. So this scene in the play is already retrospection.

It is performed after the dialogue between Warwick and Cauchon, discussing Jeanne's grandeur and solitude, who they have been forcing to sign the deed of repudiation for nine months. Warwick knows, that Jeanne will lead the French army, but suggests Cauchon watch the scene of the meeting of the king and Maid of Orleans, since "little coward Charles" has always "amused" him. Charles's image is already brought down to the level of retrospection.

With the help of retrospection within retrospection (Charles's narration about the family) Anouilh "deheroizes" the king of France as much as possible. Even in Warwick's words we can see the author's negative attitude to the king, but to emphasize that, Anouilh doesn't put the story about Charles into the mouth of one of Jeanne's judges, but lets the personage come to the stage and reveal himself to the audience.

Charles is depicted as a "nasty boy" or "little Charles". In comparison with Jeanne he looks pathetic and not capable to take any resolute actions, moreover he realizes that.

In the dialogue with Iolanthe (Charles's mother-in-law), which is more alike a monologue, the king accuses his generals of being deceitful, of the war being more like a fair, where everything is sold and bought. His private life itself resembles the war: Charles complains to Iolanthe that he is tired to fight for his budget with his wife and his lover, who care only about new fashionable caps for appearing in society. At this moment Anouilh

brings the retrospection: the king recollects his grandfather – Charles the Great, who, in his opinion, became famous, because “in his time there was no such scarcity”. Charles also tells about his parents, who “have spent the entire treasury on food”. Though the king tries to set himself right with not only Iolanthe, but also the audience, his image is falling even more.

Charles. Quand comprendrez-vous, tous, que je ne suis qu'un pauvre petit Valois de rien du tout et qu'il faudrait un miracle? C'est entendu, mon grand-père Charles a été un grand roi; mais il vivait avant la guerre où tout était beaucoup moins cher. Et d'ailleurs, lui, il était riche... Mon père et ma mère ont tout mangé; il y a eu je ne sais combien de dévaluations en France, et je n'ai plus les moyens d'être un grand roi, moi, voilà tout! (Anouilh, p.76, 2009)

(Charles. When will you all understand that I'm just a worthless offspring of the Valois, and at least a miracle will be needed to make your dreams come true? Of course, my grandfather, Charles, was a great king, but he lived before the war, that time there was no such scarcity. Though he was rich... My father and my mother have spent all the money on food ; in France there have been so many devaluations that I can't even remember, and I personally don't have means to become a great king, and that's all!)

Charles excuses his failure to act during the war with absence of money. But in the conversation with Jeanne it already becomes evident that the king is also coward and just weak-willed. In this dialogue Jeanne promises him to reveal the secret of always being brave. The king supposes that Jeanne is a witch, but he assures her that he won't tell anybody. And just at that moment he utters such words:

Charles. Les supplices, j'ai ça en horreur. Une fois, ils m'ont emmené voir bruler une hérétique. J'ai vomi toute la nuit. (Anouilh, p.97, 2009)

(Charles. Tortures, to me, they are horrible! Once they dragged me to watch how a heretic was burned. I had been vomiting all night.)

He doesn't want to give up Jeanne to the Inquisition not because he admires the heroine, but because of his own reasons – in order not to watch the tortures. Anouilh, spontaneously giving an insignificant retrospective element, intensifies Charles's deheroization, depicting his weak character.

Anouilh uses the retrospective method and at the moment of Jeanne's crucial choice. After she has signed the deed of repudiation, the heroine is being conducted to the dungeon, where Warwick comes to support her. In the dialogue with Warwick Jeanne's cues sound aloof, they are more alike a monologue, within which she is still hesitating, not knowing which decision is more right for her. And so Jeanne, having whispered incomprehensibly, cries that she doesn't want to linger, as most people do. Recollections about the voices (retrospection), having foretold her a great future, make her refuse the almost forced agreement, made at the trial, and accept the execution, but remain herself – the real Jeanne d'Arc, for who no compromise exists.

Jeanne. Messire saint Michel! Sainte Marguerite! Sainte Catherine! <...> Je ne suis née que du jour où j'ai fait ce que vous m'avez dit de faire, à cheval, une épée dans la main! C'est celle-là, ce n'est que celle-là, Jeanne! <...> Pour ce qui est de ce que j'ai fait, je ne m'en dédirai jamais. (Anouilh, pp.172-173, 2009)

(Jeanne. Archangel Michael! Saint Margaret! Saint Catherine! <...> I was born on that very day when you talked to me for the first time. I began to live since the day, when I had done what you had told me to accomplish astride, with a sword in my hand. That is the real Jeanne, only she is the Jeanne! <...> I will never repudiate what I have done.)

Retrospective elements are brought unexpectedly, are closely interwoven with the stage action – the court session, and then again unexpectedly come to the direct action on the stage.

The intrigue dies when Jeanne signs the deed of repudiation (of all her ideas and deeds). And so she is allegedly safe and has to spend the rest of her life in the nunnery, but the audience knows, that Jeanne d'Arc will be burned at the stake, even before the beginning of the stage action. So the concentration of the action is in the heroine's mind. But the conflict, consisting in the confrontation of conformists and non-conformists, which passes through all of Anouilh's plays, focuses not only on the main heroine. The confrontation between Jeanne and the surrounding world, embodied in her judges, is important. And if Jeanne makes the only possible and right decision for her (which turns true for the author too), the other personages (excluding the Inquisitor) are not so definite in their choice. Her main opponents – Warwick and Cauchon – are constantly hesitating about Jeanne's verdict. In their recollections some lyrical notes can be heard. For Cauchon she is "a poor girl", "a child", an innocent victim. For Warwick – the heroine, with whose help the French got their victory.

Cauchon. Nous avons ergoté neuf mois avant de vous livrer Jeanne. Neuf mois pour faire dire «oui» à une petite fille abandonnée de tous. <...> La santé de la mère <...> nous préoccupait seule et nous avons de bonne foi sacrifié l'enfant quand nous avons cru comprendre qu'il n'y avait pas autre chose à faire. (Anouilh, p.65, 2009)

(Cauchon. We had been arguing for the whole nine months, before we gave up Jeanne to you. The whole nine months to persuade a poor girl, left by everyone, to say "yes". <...> We are concerned solely about health of the mother [the country] <...> and we scarified the child when we,

as it seemed to us, had understood that there was no other way.)

And then it is Warwick who names Jeanne the skylark, which proclaimed the French victory over the Englishmen.

Warwick. C'est cette petite alouette chantant dans le ciel de France. (Anouilh, p. 111, 2009)

(Warwick. This little skylark sang in the skies of France.)

In the dialogue between Warwick and Cauchon, taking place before the episode with Charles, everything, referring to the present – to the trial, is performed stiffly, as if enumerating the facts. As for the recollections, the retrospective elements, they are on the contrary full of warmth and sympathy to the main heroine.

Jeanne embodies the ideas of freedom of will and mind, when her judges – subordination to the dogmata and system. If everything referring to Jeanne is the truth, then that, referring to her opponents is lies and doubts. Here we can talk about the problem of faith. Jeanne's belief in God is absolute, it goes from her heart, but she also believes in the Man, their willpower, capacity to cope with all life difficulties and resist in any situation.

Cauchon. Ainsi, Jeanne, tu excuses l'homme? Tu le crois l'un des plus grands miracles de Dieu, voire le seul ?

Jeanne. Oui, Messire. (Anouilh, p. 121, 2009)

(Cauchon. Well, Jeanne, do you excuse the man? Do you believe that he is the greatest miracles of God, if not the only?

Jeanne. Yes, Monsieur.)

Before the execution Jeanne asks for a crucifix, the English soldiers bring it to her – they, her recent enemies, admire her strong-willed character. The Inquisitor is afraid that the Englishmen might come down on her side. Her story becomes eternal, her name – a legend.

Jeanne's judges don't have any veritable faith either in God, or in the Man. They have only the law and settled scheme of behaviour, which are impossible to neglect. Any rebel is a traitor. In the speeches of Jeanne's antagonists there are only cynicism and an attempt to persuade the heroine to take their side, in comparison with Jeanne, who doesn't try to convince anybody of the truth of her words. The Inquisitor is her most vehement accuser. He says that she is worse than devil.

L'Inquisiteur. Plus notre ennemi est petit et fragile, plus il est tendre, plus il est pur, plus il est innocent, plus il est redoutable... <...> La chasse à l'homme ne sera jamais fermée... <...> et qui humiliera encore une fois l'Idée au comble de sa puissance, simplement parce qu'il dira «non» sans baisser les yeux. (Anouilh, p.123-124, 2009)

(The Inquisitor. The weaker and the more fragile our enemy is, the gentler, the purer and the more innocent it is, the more dangerous it is...<...> The hunting of that one will never end...<...> who once more will humiliate the Idea, having reached the summit of might, humiliate by just saying "no" without casting down their eyes.)

Here one more conflict is marked – the confrontation of the idea of implicit obedience to laws, embodied at the highest pitch by the Inquisitor, and the idea of humanity, which is embodied in Jeanne herself and to which Warwick, Cauchon and ordinary people are prone. The final of the play proves the triumph of humanism over laws. Thus, Anouilh yet believes in the human ability to overcome the frames set by the society and the state.

In the final of the play Jeanne, who consciously dooms herself to death, doesn't perish. The dramatist with the help of a ridiculous personage Baudricour stops her execution at the stake, saying that at the trial the most important episode in Jeanne's life was forgotten – her

presence on the coronation of the king of France, Charles.

So the play finishes with the retrospective final, which happens before the beginning of the stage action, – before the trial. The play is structured so that in the final it closes up with the absolute triumph of Anouilh's main heroine, having said her "no" to the world, but not with Jeanne's death.

Charles. La vraie fin de l'histoire de Jeanne, la vraie fin qui n'en finira plus, celle qu'on se redira toujours, quand on aura oublié ou confondu tous nos noms, ce n'est pas dans sa misère de bête traquée à Rouen, c'est l'alouette en plein ciel, c'est Jeanne à Reims dans toute sa gloire... La vraie fin de l'histoire de Jeanne est joyeuse. Jeanne d'Arc, c'est une histoire qui finit bien! (Anouilh, p.188, 2009)

(Charles. The real end of Jeanne's story, the real end, which will never end, which will always be retold even when our names have been forgotten or confused, – this story is not about the troubles of a creature, coursed in Rouen, but the story of a skylark in the skies, it is Jeanne in Rheims, in the prime of her glory. The real end of her story is a happy one. Jeanne d'Arc it's the story with a happy ending!)

In the world, where the compromise rules, there is no life for Jeanne, and she chooses death. But, as we have already said, the final scene of the play is not the heroine's execution as it should have been expected. Anouilh, using retrospection, in the end of his work presents his favourite heroine flourishing – on Charles's coronation, where only she was allowed not to kneel. She turns her eyes to the skies, "as she is depicted in pictures".

Resume

"Skylark" is one of the best Anouilh's plays. Though he used the retrospective method in his earlier works, in "Skylark" the dramatist

applies not only retrospection, but also its form – retrospection within retrospection – the characters' past reflects not only in their cues, but also it is performed directly on the stage. Anouilh mainly uses the very retrospection within retrospection to show the past events and their influence on the present – the trial of Jeanne – more objectively. In "Skylark" the retrospections are often performed in the form of a dialogue, though they are taken for monologues, as the personages, being absorbed in their past, stop paying attention to their interlocutors (for example, in Jeanne's speeches). Sometimes retrospection appears suddenly, as a spontaneous recollection (Charles's cue about the

tortures), what focuses audience's attention on this very detail, on this very moment. The past is interwoven with the present, and by their crossing the drama conflict is brighter represented – the contradiction between Jeanne and her judges, between the ideas of freedom of will and humanity and the idea of implicit obedience to the rules, set in the society. The retrospective end affirms the victory of humanism and freethinking over the law.

Thus, with the help of the retrospective method in "Skylark" Jean Anouilh created one of his brightest works, which is still being performed.

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Ретроспективная композиция в драме Ж. Анюя «Жаворонок»

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Французский писатель Жан Ануй является одним из самых известных новаторов в области драматургии XX века. Его драма по праву названа интеллектуальной: в ее основе идейное противостояние двух миров – конформистов и нон-конформистов, с позицией последних драматург был солидарен на протяжении всего творческого пути. Поэтому у Анюя из произведения в произведение переходят одни и те же проблемы и одни и те же идеи. Пьеса «Жаворонок» – одна из вершин драматургического творчества Ж. Анюя. В статье «Ретроспективная композиция в драме Ж. Анюя «Жаворонок» рассматриваются композиционные особенности данной пьесы и использование Анюем приема ретроспекции как основополагающего при создании данного произведения.

Ключевые слова: французская драма, интеллектуальная драма, Ануй Жан.
