

THE FORMS AND FUNCTIONS OF MASKS IN POETIC HERITAGE OF M. I. TSVETAYEVA

Galina N. Bozhkova*, Nadezhda N. Shabalina, Galina A. Frolova

Yelabuga Institute of Federal University, 89, Kazanskaya Street, Yelabuga, the Republic of Tatarstan (RUSSIA)

*Corresponding author: Russia@prescopus.com

DOI: 10.7813/jil.2015/6-3/30

Received: 26 Jul, 2015

Accepted: 14 Aug, 2015

ABSTRACT

Interest in literary mask today is conditioned by its functioning at all text levels: in contemporary study of literature the mask is again included in many dictionaries, encyclopedias; a terminological definition of the mentioned above notion has emerged as well. The objective of this article is to reveal the forms, features and meanings of the functions of the face and mask in a poetic world of M. I. Tsvetayeva. The face of a poet accomplishes the biography which comprises all the external real facts, «conjectures», myths, and the mask allow to feel spiritual pursuits, fears, emotional experiences – everything that is easily concealed by the mask. The obtained results enabled to do the following conclusions: the mask allows to reveal the true and the present by transforming a lyrical female character, demonstrates indissoluble connection with her desires. The mask in poetry by Marina Tsvetayeva performs suggestive, meditative, compensatory and nominative functions and contradicts stereotyped ideas: it does not conceal the author's face, but exposes inner experiences. It grants moral freedom that allows to feel more at ease and not to be afraid of outside blames.

Key words: mask; the author's face; lyric poetry; theatricality; play; ambivalence; functions of literary mask; cross-gender mask; character-based and folkloric mask; the mask of "the mother of the deceased child"

1. INTRODUCTION

In literature of "the silver age" there emerges a new, bright, unknown world, generated by vortex of the historical events and radical reorganization of life. In this world the myth and reality are confluent, different philosophical theories and images of literary works.

Social cataclysms of the century lead to aspiration to find cover from perturbations that go on. Peculiar protection against "serious and terrible" world turns to be laughter, abandoned hilarity by means of which it is created a comic model of being where such notions as "show", "carnival", "masquerade", "scandal" become central [1].

All the world is a stage, and relationship between the men and the women merely a play. Many poets of "the silver age" in life and creative work begin to create different reality resembling more than the myth – life creation as work of art. One of the central lines of the life-myth in the culture of XX century becomes the mask – at the same time it is a personal creative work of its creator, and a role, and a strategy approximating to the unattainable ideal, and vagaries of fashion.

As O. Yu. Osmukhina notes: "At present in domestic humanities it is observed a visible interest in the phenomenon of mask on the whole, and in modern study of literature, in particular" [2]. This problem was referred by M.M. Bakhtin, Yu.M. Lotman, S.G. Isayev, N.V. Mokina, K.G. Isupov, Z.G. Mints, L.S. Alyoshina and the others. A special attention of the scholars is paid to the fact that the mask as a category of principal importance for understanding cultural peculiarity of the epoch of "the silver age" was typical for woman's literature of that time.

The objective of our article is to study the forms of functioning masks and to reveal their transformation in poetic works of M.I. Tsvetayeva.

The methodological basis. Systematic-typological and historical-functional approaches are mainly used in the work.

The main body. Since olden times the mask is inseparably associated with a human face that was traditionally concealed by it during the cult performance, where the mask was a peculiar magic charm. At the beginning of XX century it used to be changed the attitude to the functions of mask, having become nowadays an essential attribute in the art environment and in the life that is also understood as creative work. This device can be met in the works of N.S. Gumilev, A.A. Belyy, V. Ya. Bryusov, K.D. Balmont, F.K. Sologub, D.S. Merezhkovsky, M.I. Tsvetayeva.

With the help of masks the reality phenomena and the man himself are transformed, which sets taking a new look at the reality and discovering one phenomenon in another. One can distinguish several ways of mask occurring in literature of this period: "at characters, story level, in the field of narration, text and genre" (aesthetic aspect), and also the author's mask (mythopoetic, psychological, social aspects) in order to "mingle" with the others and "abstract away from the text" [3].

Notwithstanding the poetry of M. I. Tsvetayeva is detached among the literary schools of XX century, all the features and perturbations of the period found reflection in it. Tsvetayeva's poetics of masks comprises several variations that relate to the notion "face", "masquerade", "name" and transformation of set, folkloric masks. Tsvetayeva's lyric female character has many faces and is presented in different hypostases of woman's fortune: at one and the same time she is a profligate, and a mistress, and a faithful wife, and a mother. However these hypostases are not conflicting, but constituents of personal intimacy and creativity of the poet. Consideration of the category of masks allows to present the author's true face, his hidden fears, complexes, strivings, that are originated from the days of the childhood. The playing format of the mask enables to feel secure in the process of exposing of own feelings, emotions, thoughts. As S. G. Isayev notes, "the irony is that the art language of the mask gives a hint of the genuine, the true in a man, without daring to express plainly" [3].

In Tsvetayeva's poetry one can distinguish several objective reasons of originating "mask". One of the most widespread – loneliness, in this case the mask helps the poet to spread her wings, to cast a lively colours on her dream. This process is brightly presented in lyric work "August". August – is a central image of elegy, having its time portray, rather lyric landscape. It is not only the last summer month, but the first autumn one – the turn from summer to autumn, from youth to

maturity (Tsvetayeva was 25 at the moment of writing). In the poem we observe active striving for emphasizing individual traits inherent in the poet. Tsvetayeva did not like autumn, therefore the poem is very contradictory. The poetic epithets ("late kisses", "the lightnings late", "the cloudbursts starry" allow to convey it [4]). A special interest in the lyric poem is provoked by colour palette, that comprises a warm palette – red, ruginous: red for M. I. Tsvetayeva is a life, abundance of emotions, youth, and ruginous means old age. Emotional state also conveys the image of rowan widespread for poetic heritage of Tsvetayeva ("Rowan – bitter lot"). This berry core resembles a star. The star in this poem – a fate symbol (the poem is written in 1917), which is in contrast with hope for protection, supporting and patronage of a wise, strong man: "Как ладоню, гладишь сердце" (You caress my heart as if with the palm) [4]. Therefore, the poet changes the nominative, direct meaning of the word "August" (summer month) into the true image of a man-protector, the main traits of which are realized through the proper name being transformed into the common, distinctive periphrasis of the imperial power, that is emphasized by repetition of the epithet "imperial". The power in Tsvetayeva's poem is associated with self-will: "Полновесным, благосклонным / Яблоком своим имперским, / Как дитя, играешь, август" (Full-embodied, supportive/ The apple of your empire, / Like a child, playing, August) [4]. It is created a stereotyped image of a true strong man of power, but who is far from her ideal, because caress of such man is only his whim. All the second stanza breaks up into lines about reality and dream.

Incompatibility of the desirable and the real engenders the state of light melancholy. So two main functions of the mask are traced: suggestive, that conveys mood and emotional state, and meditative, that demonstrates the desire of the lyric female character to overcome the internal breakdown, to come out of this state with an assumed quiet [5]. The lyric female character of this poem puts on the mask of playfulness and lightness, though she is very strained and concentrated inwardly. She felt chagrined at quick, inexorable course of life, which is proved by the use of time repetitions of the words "поздний" (late), "август" (August), "месяц" (month) [4]. A spiritual strong personality who longs to be a weak, beloved, loving (woman, partner in life, wife, friend, mother) stands behind the mask of romantic, weak lyric female character. The verses become the only diary of the poet in which a motif of loneliness sounds.

M.I. Tsvetayeva realizes a heathen, rather superstitious view on the reality in her poetry: the features of animism, anthropomorphism and totemism. Therefore, in Tsvetayeva's poetry it is brightly and distinctively presented the character and folkloric masks that expose the essence of intimate experiences of the lyric characters, on the one hand, and mark the inner transformation or moral lapse of the character, on the other hand. This kind of masks emerges in Tsvetayeva's poems of the 20th: «Red Bull-Calf», «Tsar-maiden» and the others.

In the center of the poem "Red Bull-Calf" – there is an image of sacral character – a small sick boy who is having a dream. This choice of the character is another attempt to conceal the face, to be unrecognized. But within the limits of the literary work the mask is marked by certain autobiographical parallels: this work is dedicated to her friend Vera Zavodskaya who had gone through the death of her brother Volodya. In the letters to Tsvetayeva Zavodskaya tells of people's dying quietly, and Volodya as well, as if he saw a dream to be called death. The dream is prophetic in the dream, it also embodies death, and it is a magic reincarnation for the poet. Passing off, a man recollects all his life that is why the bright images are "мамочка" (mummy), "родина" (motherland), "бычок" (bull-calf). The character and folkloric mask is created thanks to affectionate diminutive suffixes: "бычок", "косточки", "ямочку", "мамочка", "ребеночка", "садик" [4], that help to reconstitute childhood in the mind – waiting time, that is why the magic image of the red bull-calf having come in the boy's dream is so vivid. The image of the bull in many ancient cultures is an embodiment of masculine courage, faith in rebirth, fertility, endurance. At the same time the image of bull emerges in the Slavonic charms, in which it is formed the picture how the force of the horned animal is directed against either disease and eradicates it. In the poem the name of the animal is resounded with refrain through the whole narration and acquires a sacral meaning of the secret incantation about gaining victory over death. Red as one of the dominating colours in folklore is again associated with the symbol of health, aggressive vital force. But here resistance occurs again, since red is at the same time the symbol of death. The child in the poem being borderline condition appeals subconsciously to the force and power of the natural origin.

One cannot but see the historical context (loss of the old world, occurrence of a new social and political situation) in rhyming words: "Красный бычок. Большевичок" [4]. The mask, being transformed, stresses the changeableness of the world organization: бычок (bull-calf) (the world of childhood) – бык (bull) (the period of maturation) – bolshevik (the cause of maturation).

An unusual colour of the bull conveys the psychological state of the character – agony. But there is another semantic symbol: the child appears before the reader, and in the magic world of the child there is enchantment (not evil bull, but bull-calf; of not usual colour but red). In the first semantic part there is no fear, there is only fear that will pass quickly because he can awake and have a talk with mummy "мамочкой". The meaningful is also the psychological detail-symbol – a candle "Будет играть – свет свечной<...> It will play light a candle / С правой свечи – воск потек On the right candle – wax dripping" [4]. Man lives while the candle lights. It is the struggle between life and death we observe in the first semantic part which is rendered by the mask devices.

In the second semantic part of the poem there is a change of emotional background, the lyric female character puts on another mask, enters into an adult life where there is no place for magic, that is why the devices of creation of the mask change. The lyric female character transforms from that who believes into the exhausted mother who has outlived her own child: she has no child's immediacy, belief in miracles, there is dire reality. The repetition of the words ("дома" (at home), "зычен" (loud), "бычья" (bull's) [4]), consonant sounds, rhetorical exclamations help to contemplate the true face of the suffering female character and perform the semantic function – they convey loneliness and confusion.

So, in this poem Tsvetayeva reflects upon many problems: life and death, emotional maturation, loss of children's illusions and habitual way of life. The range of topics, outlined by Tsvetayeva, is a part of the spectrum of personal experiences, which are keenly perceived in constant transformation of the lyric female character. Firstly she appears as a dying child before the reader, then – looks at his death with the eyes of his mother. The composition division of the poem into two parts allows to compare the appreciation of death by the child and the adult. The tragedy of bereavement is increased by emotional involvement of the reader into awareness of the fact that death in the world of children's reveries is like a dream, and in everyday life the adult it is associated with suicide of hopes, belief in all the best, habitual world order.

The lyric female character – is an adult woman, the mother with the wasted childhood, who became a killer of the childhood of her children. One cannot but notice a leitmotif feeling of guilt. At the beginning of verse poem there is the guilt of a little child before his mummy he disturbed; than the guilt of the sister who could not to win the brother from death (the story of Zavodskaya); in the final part – the guilt of the mother before the child who has passed away. It is worth remembering that it was that year (1920) when Tsvetayeva lost her small daughter Irene, whose death was caused by starvation and missing

for maternal love. It is also known the poetess's strange treating the children. She confessed that she loved only physically extremely vivacious and smart children, Alya was always considered to be such child, and Irochka seemed to Tsvetayeva to be "usual" (capricious, always hungry). In Tsvetayeva's thinking, their souls did not coincided with a united sound: Irene needed earth, and she – flight. She confessed that she always did not let her younger daughter have her fair share for her elder daughter's sake. The cause of her child's death was not only coincidence of circumstances and time, but the motherly pride as well. In this poem Tsvetayeva exposes her soul by trying on the mask of "the mother of the deceased child", which is connected with the desire to justify her behavior. She regretted, the feeling of guilt was a weight on her mind. In the article "About Tsvetayeva's Treatment of her Daughter Irene" Natal'ya Gvelisiani Godarova writes: "And when Irene's death opens her eyes in regard to all happened, she writes not long after: "Irene! If the heaven exists and you are there, conceive and forgive me, who was a bad mother to you, who could not overcome enmity towards your dark incomprehensible essence"[6]. In Tsvetayeva's works there are also the lines where she confesses: "Детоубийцей на суду / Стою немилая, несмелая" (Infanticide in court / Standing - unloved, timid) [4]. But the poetess persuaded that she was deserving happiness and, after having buried her daughter, she was waiting for happy motherhood by addressing the verses to an unborn son yet, probably, longing for expiating her sin. In the cycle "Poetry to Son", the lyric female character – is tender, loving mother, who wants to keep her child from all the misfortunes. In one contrasting headline "Our consciousness, Not Your Consciousness" there appears the desire to guard and protect her children from the parents' mistakes. There is also a psychological tension in the poem: "Не быть тебе нулём" (Do not you be zero), which comprises not only a lyric message but the genres of the children's folklore such as invocations (invoking song that reflect the mother's expectation and interests) and entertaining songs (facetious sayings that stimulate reflexes): "Не быть тебе<...> (do not you) / Коптителем кают<...> Ни медным королём<...> (not an idler <...> not a copper king) / Ни парой челюстей <...> Не быть тебе буржуем"; "Я, что в тебя – всю Русь (not a pair of jaws <...> Do not you be bourgeois, I have that in you – the whole Russia) / Вкачала – как насосом (injected as a pump) / Бог видит – побожусь! (God sees – I will swear) / Не будешь ты отбросом (Shall not you be garbage)" [4].

The main characters of Tsvetayeva's poems are often males that is indicative of the presence of "transgender" mask. The appearance of such mask is connected with feminist ideas of early XX century, with the destruction of social and cultural roles. The men near the women striving for independence and equality of rights lose volitional qualities and turn into weak men, unable to independent decisions and actions. In Tsvetayeva's poetic space a female type of the man prevails. The lyric female character in Tsvetayeva's verses is, quite the reverse, masculine type of the women which is even indicative of the very headline of the poem "Tsar-maiden" (1921). The image of Tsar-maiden is embodiment of the desirable spiritual and moral core of the poetess herself, acquisition of which will not bring long-expected happiness, but increase inner tensions. "The transgender" mask appears in this way, the main function of which is compensatory: getting the feel of the lyric female character's role, Tsvetayeva feels herself as spiritual and physically strong personality.

2. SUMMARY

In M. I. Tsvetayeva's poetry the mask is quite often as the image or device in the literary work and as the means of expressing mood, attitude to the reality and performs the following functions: meditative, suggestive, nominative, compensatory. So, the specific variety of masks («transgender», «character and folkloric», the mask of «the mother of the deceased child») allows to create multidimensional image of both lyric female character and the poet himself.

3. CONCLUSION

Tsvetayeva's mask from the point of view of stereotype opinion does not conceal the author's face, but exposes the inward experiences. She endows with the moral independence which allows to feel more at ease and not to be afraid of the blames of detached onlookers. Tsvetayeva fears to uncover her real face, bawaring a public stroke that is why she prefers a peculiar escape. Contradictoriness of the nature, ambivalence of the poetess's wishes, inner search of herself true lead a continuous change and transformation of the masks. At the same time by means of choice of one or another mask Tsvetayeva provokes the reader into a certain attitude to her own fortune, therefore "a confessional origin" [7] is often replaced by a playing one. So, the specific variety of masks allows to create multidimensional image of both the lyric female character and the poetess herself. Loneliness of the very lyric female character and Tsvetayeva, fear of the approaching hardship, lack of love, misunderstanding of the people around and homesickness become evident [8]. The mask also uncovers a range of child's complexes: unattractive appearance, inability to justify hopes of her parents (her mother dreamt of having the sons, and later Marina to become a musician), total control, her mother's death: "Куклу я на пол швырнула: (Doll I through on the floor) / В маму играть надоело! (The mother to play – tired) / Не поднимаясь со стула, (Without rising from the chair) / Долго я в книгу глядела. (For a long time I looked into the book) / Книгу я на пол швырнула: В палу играть надоело!" (Book I threw on the floor: The papa to play – tired) [4]. In these lines there are all the fears of the lyric female character (self-doubt, wish to orient herself in life), and also to find the real face of Tsvetayeva herself, who suffered in a feminine way from being unable to love her own children, which she tried to do for her life. The striking illustration of that fact is the lyric heritage of the poetess.

THE CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author confirms that the presented data do not contain the conflict of interests.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

REFERENCES

1. Shabalina, N. N., Bozhkova, G. N., 2013. Function of the scandal in literary-critical circles. International Congress on Interdisciplinary Behavior and Social Science. Jakarta. Indonesia: CRC Press / Balkema, P. 461-464.

2. Osmukhina, O. Yu., 2009. The Author Mask in Prose of the 1760-1830s. Saransk: N. P. Ogarev Mordvinian State University, P. 32-40.
3. Isayev, S.G., 2012. Literary and Art Masks: Theory and Practice. SPb.: "Dmitry Bulanin", P. 7-38.
4. Tsvetayeva, M.I., 1990. Rhymes. Poems. Dramas. Moscow: Fiction, P. 5-120.
5. Fesenko, E. Ya., 2008. Literary Theory: Tutorial for Universities. Moscow: Academic project; Fund "Mir", 307 p.
6. Gvelesiani, N. About Marina Tsvetayeva's Daughter. <http://brb.silverage.ru/zhslovo/sv/tsv/?id=36&r=about>, (11.02.2015).
7. Lommel, A., 1972. Masks. Their Meaning and Function / A. Lommel. New York, Toronto, 54 p.
8. Danilova, J.J., Razzhivin, A.I., Salimova, D.A., 2014. The Temporal-Spatial Continuum in the Texts of Marina Tsvetaeva and Zinaida Hippus /World Applied Sciences Journal 31 (2), P. 267-271.