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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RHYME IN THE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND ALISHER NAVOI (WITH REFERENCE TO ROMEO AND JULIET AND LAYLI AND MAJNUN)

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Abstract The article compares the use of rhyme in William Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet and Alisher Navoi’s Layli and Majnun (1484). The material consists of the Folger Shakespeare online text of the play and the 1992 academic edition of Navoi’s poem (Complete Works in 20 volumes, vol. 9). Passages were selected where rhyme is structurally marked: the sonnet Prologue, the shared sonnet of Act 1, scene 5, rhymed couplets of antithesis and the closing couplet of the play, and bayts of the poem identified by its editors as instances of tajnis and tarse’ or containing the lovers’ names in rhyme position. The passages were compared by close reading according to the same criteria: the unit of rhyme, the scheme, the words that carry rhyme, and the function of rhyme. In the examined passages Shakespeare uses rhyme as a marked frame that delays closure and distributes rhyme between speakers, while Navoi closes rhyme in every bayt (aa, bb) and extends it through radif, homonymic rhyme and word-by-word parallelism. In both works the lovers’ names are placed at the rhyme end, but in the play the names close the action once, whereas in the poem they recur and become the rhyme material itself.

Key words: rhyme, sonnet, couplet, masnavi, bayt, qofiya, radif, tajnis, tarse’, Shakespeare, Navoi.

СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ РИФМЫ В ПРОИЗВЕДЕНИЯХ УИЛЬЯМА ШЕКСПИРА И АЛИШЕРА НАВОИ (НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ «РОМЕО И ДЖУЛЬЕТТЫ» И «ЛЕЙЛИ И МЕДЖНУН»)

Аннотация В статье сопоставляется использование рифмы в трагедии Уильяма Шекспира «Ромео и Джульетта» и в поэме Алишера Навои «Лейли и Меджнун» (1484). Материалом служат электронный текст пьесы Шекспировской библиотеки Фолджера и академическое издание поэмы 1992 года (Полное собрание сочинений в 20 томах, т. 9). Отобраны фрагменты, в которых рифма структурно выделена: сонет-пролог, сонет, разделённый между героями в 5-й сцене I акта, антитетические двустишия, заключительное двустишие пьесы, а также бейты поэмы, отмеченные издателями как

примеры таджниса и тарсеъ или содержащие имена влюблённых в позиции рифмы. Фрагменты сопоставлены методом медленного чтения по единым критериям. В рассмотренных фрагментах Шекспир использует рифму как выделенную рамку, откладывающую завершение, и распределяет её между говорящими; Навои замыкает рифму в каждом бейте (aa, bb) и расширяет её за счёт радифа, омонимической рифмы и пословного параллелизма. В обоих произведениях имена влюблённых стоят в позиции рифмы, однако в пьесе они однократно завершают действие, а в поэме повторяются и сами становятся материалом рифмы.

Ключевые слова: рифма, сонет, двустишие, маснави, бейт, кафия, радиф, таджнис, тарсеъ, Шекспир, Навои.

UILYAM SHEKSPIR VA ALISHER NAVOIY ASARLARIDA QOFIYANING QIYOSIY TAHLILI («ROMEO VA JULYETTA» HAMDA «LAYLI VA MAJNUN» MISOLIDA)

Annotatsiya Ushbu maqolada Uilyam Shekspirning «Romeo va Julyetta» tragediyasi hamda Alisher Navoiyning «Layli va Majnun» dostonidagi (1484) qofiya qiyosiy tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot materiali – Folger Shekspir kutubxonasining pyesa elektron matni va dostonning 1992-yilgi akademik nashri (Mukammal asarlar to‘plami, 20 tomlik, 9-tom). Qofiya tuzilish jihatidan ajralib turadigan parchalar tanlandi: sonet shaklidagi Prolog, I parda 5-sahnadagi ikki qahramon o‘rtasida bo‘lingan sonet, zidlikka qurilgan qofiyali juftliklar va pyesaning yakuniy juftligi; dostondan esa nashr izohlarida tajnis va tarse’ namunasi sifatida ko‘rsatilgan hamda oshiq-ma’shuqlar ismi qofiya o‘rnida kelgan baytlar. Parchalar bir xil mezonlar asosida sinchkov o‘qish usulida qiyoslandi. Tahlil qilingan parchalarda Shekspir qofiyani yakunni kechiktiruvchi alohida vazn sifatida qo‘llaydi va uni so‘zlovchilar o‘rtasida taqsimlaydi; Navoiy esa qofiyani har baytda yakunlaydi (aa, bb) hamda radif, omonim qofiya va so‘zma-so‘z parallelizm orqali kengaytiradi. Har ikki asarda oshiq-ma’shuqlar ismi qofiya o‘rnida keladi, biroq pyesada ismlar voqeani bir marta yakunlasa, dostonda ular takrorlanib, qofiyaning o‘zi uchun asos bo‘ladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: qofiya, sonet, qofiyali juftlik, masnaviy, bayt, radif, tajnis, tarse’, Shekspir, Navoiy.

INTRODUCTION

The editors of the 1992 academic edition of Alisher Navoi’s Layli and Majnun open their commentary with I. Yu. Krachkovsky’s remark that in the East the story of Layli and Majnun is more famous than that of Romeo and Juliet in the West [1; notes to ch. I]. The comparison of the two love stories is therefore an old one, yet it is usually drawn at the level of plot and character. The poem, according to the same commentary, is the third poem of Navoi’s Khamsa and was written in 1484 [1; notes to ch. I]; Romeo and Juliet is a play written for the stage. One is a narrative poem in the classical masnavi tradition, the other a tragedy that mixes rhymed verse with other kinds of speech. Rhyme is present in both, but it does different work, and this difference has not been the focus of the comparative studies we were able to consult.

Existing scholarship touches the problem from several sides. A. Seyed-Gohrab’s entry in Encyclopaedia Iranica describes the Persian prototype of the story, Nizami’s romance, as a narrative poem written in the hazaj meter, hazaj-e mosaddas-e akhrab-e maqbuz-e mahzuf [4]. A. Hojiahmedov’s dictionary of Uzbek aruz shows that Navoi’s poem continues this metrical choice and describes it as a “two-meter” work in which the catalectic variants hazaji musaddasi akhrabi maqbuzi mahzuf and maqsur are used side by side, with two further rare variants occupying 140 and 96 hemistichs respectively [2; 198–201]. Comparative work on the story has, however, concentrated on images and themes. A. Avezova compares the image of Layli and related female characters in Jami’s and Navoi’s poems [5; 232–244]; S. Akcan’s doctoral thesis compares Fuzuli’s Leylâ and Mecnûn with Shakespeare’s play through chronology, sources and themes, and concludes that plot, setting and character parallels are extensive [6]. On the English side, H. Lees-Jeffries reads the Prince’s final lines of Romeo and Juliet as a six-line unit ending in a couplet and comments on the wording “Juliet and her Romeo” [7].

None of the works listed above compares rhyme in the two texts directly. Rhyme, however, is the point where the formal systems of the two traditions differ most clearly: the English sonnet and couplet on the one hand, the bayt with its qofiya (rhyme) and radif (a word or words repeated after the rhyme) on the other. The aim of this article is to compare how rhyme is organised and what it does in selected passages of Romeo and Juliet and Layli and Majnun.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Uzbek material is taken from Alisher Navoi, Complete Works in 20 volumes, vol. 9: Khamsa. Layli and Majnun (Tashkent: Fan, 1992), prepared by T. Gafurjonova on the basis of P. Shamsiev’s critical text [1]. We used the electronic copy of this edition distributed by the ziyouz.com library. This copy reproduces the text, the chapter division (Roman numerals) and the editors’ notes, but not the printed page numbers of the book. For this reason the poem is cited by chapter, and the commentary by chapter and note number; the page numbers of the electronic copy are not used as book pages. Two obvious misprints of the electronic copy were corrected and the corrected letters are given in square brackets; the source of each correction is indicated in the text. Quotations are given in the Cyrillic of the edition, followed by our Latin transliteration and our literal translation (marked “author’s translation”). Where the editors explain the meaning of a word, the translation follows their explanation.

The English material is the Folger Shakespeare online text of Romeo and Juliet [3]. The Folger text numbers lines continuously through the play (Folger Through Line Numbers, FTLN); quotations are cited by act, scene and FTLN, as displayed in that edition.

Passages were selected by a formal criterion rather than by thematic similarity. From the play we took the places where rhyme is structurally marked: the sonnet Prologue, the sonnet shared by Romeo and Juliet in Act 1, scene 5, two rhymed couplets built on antithesis, and the final couplet of the play. From the poem we took (a) bayts that the editors themselves identify as instances of tajnis (rhyme on words of identical form and different meaning) and tarse’ (correspondence of the words of the two hemistichs in sound, meter and rhyme) [1; notes to ch. XIII, n. 7; notes to ch. XX, nn. 11–12], and (b) bayts in which the names of Layli and

Majnun, or the words “name” and “attribute”, occupy the rhyme or the radif. Each English passage was paired with an Uzbek passage that performs a comparable function, and both members of a pair were described by the same criteria: the unit that carries rhyme, the rhyme scheme, the words in rhyme position and their grammatical form, the presence of repeated elements (radif, refrain-like repetition), and the function of the rhyme in context. Rhyme schemes are given in letter notation. Metrical information on Navoi’s poem is taken from Hojiahmedov [2]; no new metrical or statistical counts were made.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The unit of rhyme: the sonnet frame and the bayt. Romeo and Juliet opens with a Chorus speaking fourteen lines:

Two households, both alike in dignity
(In fair Verona, where we lay our scene), …
The which, if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend. [3; Prologue, FTLN 0001–0002, 0013–0014]

The line-final words are dignity – scene – mutiny – unclean, foes – life – overthrows – strife, love – rage – remove – stage, attend – mend [3; Prologue, FTLN 0001–0014]. The scheme is ABAB CDCD EFEF GG: three quatrains with alternating rhyme, each leaving a sound “open” for one line, and a closing couplet that resolves the whole. Immediately after this rhymed frame the first scene begins with a prose exchange between Sampson and Gregory [3; 1.1, FTLN 0015 ff.], so that the rhymed Prologue is set apart from what follows. One of the pairs, love / remove, does not rhyme fully in present-day pronunciation; this reminds us that a rhyme is also a convention of the language of its time.

Navoi’s poem opens with an address to God. Its first chapter contains the following two bayts:

Ey har sorikim qilib tajalli,
Ul mazhar o‘lub jahonda Layli.
Ey oniki Layli aylab otin,
Majnun qilmoq qilib sifotin, [1; ch. I]

(Author’s translation: “O You, wherever You manifest Yourself, / that manifestation appears in the world as Layli; / O You who made ‘Layli’ Your name / and made ‘turning [people] into Majnun’ Your attribute.”)

The editors paraphrase this passage in the same way: God’s manifestation appears in the world as Layli, and His property is to make created beings Majnun [1; notes to ch. I]. The rhyme scheme is aa, bb: every bayt rhymes within itself and the next bayt introduces a new rhyme. Hojiahmedov defines the bayt as two hemistichs, rhymed or unrhymed, each built of several metrical feet [2; 36]; in the masnavi form of the poem the bayt is rhymed internally, and continuity is provided not by rhyme but by the constant meter, which in this poem is the hazaj in its catalectic variants [2; 199]. Comparing the two openings, we see two different ways of using rhyme to frame a long text. Shakespeare delays the full closure of rhyme until the fourteenth line, and the couplet acts as a final “lock”. Navoi gives closure every two lines, so

that rhyme does not mark the boundary of the whole text but the boundary of each statement. At the same time, the name Layli already occupies the rhyme position in the first bayt quoted (тажалли – Лайли), and the second bayt rhymes отин (‘name’ + accusative ending) with сифотин (‘attribute’ + the same ending).

2. The lovers’ names in rhyme position. The play closes with the Prince’s couplet:

For never was a story of more woe

Than this of Juliet and her Romeo. [3; 5.3, FTLN 3173–3174]

Here the hero’s name is the last rhyme word of the play (woe / Romeo), and the name is paired with a noun of grief. Lees-Jeffries notes that the Prince’s final speech is a six-line unit ending in a couplet rather than a full sonnet, so that “versification itself mourns”, and she draws attention to the wording “Juliet and her Romeo” [7]. In terms of rhyme, the name arrives once, in the voice of an outside speaker, and closes the action.

In Navoi’s poem the names occupy the rhyme position repeatedly and within the narrative itself. Chapter XV, which describes Qays after he has lost his reason through love, contains these bayts:

O‘z otiyu qavmu xayli oti,

Yo‘q yodida g‘ayri Layli oti.

«Layli, Layli» debon chekib un,

El deb: «Majnundur, ushbu Majnun». [1; ch. XV]

(Author’s translation: “His own name, and the name of his people and his tribe — / there is nothing in his memory but the name of Layli. / Crying “Layli, Layli!”, he raised his voice; / people said: “He is mad (majnun) — this one is Majnun.””)

In the first bayt the rhyme (qofiya) is хайли / Лайли, and it is followed by the radif оти (‘his name’, ‘the name of’). The repeated element thus literally means “name”, and the rhyme that precedes it isolates the only name that remains in the hero’s memory. In the second bayt the rhyme links ун (‘voice, cry’) with Мажнун: the word stands both for the common noun ‘mad’ (the editors gloss Мажнун as ‘madman, insane’ [1; notes to ch. I]) and for the name that people give the hero. Hojiahmedov cites a variant reading of this bayt, punctuated «Лайли!», «Лайли!», as an example of the rare meter hazaji musaddasi akhrami ashtari maqsur, which occupies 96 hemistichs of the poem [2; 201]; the bayt is thus marked by meter as well as by rhyme. In chapter XXI the poem itself names these devices when it describes the ghazals that Majnun composes:

Ham qofiyasi aning sifoti,

Ham barcha radifi oning oti. [1; ch. XXI]

(Author’s translation: “Their rhymes were her attributes, / and all their radifs were her name.”)

The bayt rhymes сифоти with оти, the same pair of words, ‘attribute’ and ‘name’, that we saw rhyming in chapter I. Both works therefore bring the lovers’ names into rhyme position, but the function differs. In the play the name is a single closing rhyme that sums up the story. In the poem, rhyme and radif are the very means by which the name is repeated, and the poem openly says so.

3. Rhyme between speakers and rhyme in one voice. In Act 1, scene 5 Romeo and Juliet speak a sonnet together. The first quatrain is Romeo’s:

If I profane with my unworthiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss. [3; 1.5, FTLN 0707–0710]

Juliet answers with the second quatrain, which ends “And palm to palm is holy palmers’ kiss” [3; 1.5, FTLN 0714], so that she repeats Romeo’s rhyme pair this / kiss in her own quatrain. The third quatrain alternates between the speakers: too (Romeo) – prayer (Juliet) – do, despair (Romeo), and the couplet is split:

Saints do not move, though grant for prayers’ sake.
Then move not while my prayer’s effect I take. [3; 1.5, FTLN 0719–0720]

Juliet speaks the first line and Romeo completes the rhyme (sake / take). The rhyme scheme of a sonnet is preserved, but it is distributed between two voices: one speaker opens a sound and the other closes it. The rhyme pattern thus stages agreement between the speakers.

CONCLUSION

The comparison of rhyme in selected passages of Romeo and Juliet and Layli and Majnun shows two different ways of using the same device. In the passages of the play, rhyme is a marked frame: the sonnet delays closure until its final couplet, the shared sonnet distributes rhyme between Romeo and Juliet, and rhymed couplets carry antithesis. In the passages of the poem, rhyme is closed in every bayt and is extended by radif, homonymic rhyme (tajnis) and word-by-word parallelism (tarse’). Both works bring the lovers’ names into rhyme position; in the play the hero’s name closes the action once, while in the poem the name recurs, becomes the radif (оти, ‘name’), and is named by the poem itself as the material of Majnun’s rhymes.

The contribution of the article is a set of common criteria (unit, scheme, closure, repeated element, names in rhyme, distribution between voices, antithesis and wordplay) that allow passages from the English sonnet tradition and the Uzbek masnavi to be compared directly. Further research could apply these criteria to the whole text of both works with frequency counts, include the ghazal tradition and the rhyme theory of Navoi’s own time, and compare published Uzbek translations of Romeo and Juliet with the original to see how translators render its rhymed passages.

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