

SHAKESPEAREAN (INTER) MODALITY IN THE POST-POSTMODERNISM: NEW PARADIGMS FOR COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Dr. Dmytro Drozdovskyi

T. Shevchenko's Institute of literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine

Abstract

These days world humanitarian society is analyzing the trends we have after the era of postmodernism. To some extent, the postmodern situation was a final point in the era of modernistic mind. On the other hand, the postmodern situation was an opposition to the modernistic changes in the beginning of the XX Century. Anyway, it is highly important to define the cultural mind that can exist after the postmodernism. The prefix 'post' is really unique as it disables all intentions to create something *post*-postmodernistic. So, we need not only a new cultural mind to be fixed but also a new notion for this mind to be invented. What is more, in the comparative studies, we have a constant question: whether the classic literature can be reinforced and explored in the new cultural time. As we now, Shakespeare could be represented as a *pastiche* or a *remake* in the postmodern literature. In what way his life can be described in the XXI Century, in the new era of high technologies?

The theoretical ideas of L. Hutcheon, R. Eshelman, T. Vermeulen, R. Van den Akker, M. Epstein are applied to this study. More and more thinkers on arts and humanity in the world come to the conclusion that the situation of the present days can be features as a return to *metamodernism*. As we know from the Ancient times, *meta-* is used to mark something which goes further and after something. For example, we can name Aristotle's 'Metaphysics.' The original meaning of this title underlines that this sections goes just after the previous part 'Physics' and is not a special spiritual section as we sometimes understand this term now. Metamodernism underlines that is goes after modernism. And this is the most important point.

Contrary to the postmodernism, metamodernism is explained as a new philosophy which is based on new sensuality and emotionality. It reinforces sincerity and psychological adequacy. This means that the reality is not perceived as a set of virtual transformations of various simulacra (Baudrillard). Postmodern identity is the identity of tranquility and sometimes obsessive virtuality. The hero of the postmodern novel cannot make any right logical decision; he or she represents the reflective mind that lives in the set of permanent transformations. The hero lives in a virtual world, and the narrative peculiarity of the postmodern text is a text written from the 'ego' position which underlines the transgressive subjectivity of the textuality.

Keywords: W. Shakespeare, "The Lovely Bones", metamodernism, post-postmodernism, film studies, comparative literature studies.

Introduction. Post-Postmodernism

This question we are going to develop. The author of this paper will try to suggest that one of the trends that exists in the post-postmodernistic paradigm can be featured as *neuroaesthetics*. On the conference in London University of Westminster which had a title *Apocalypse and its Discontents* (December, 2010) the researcher from Spain Xavier Aldana Reyes defined another post-postmodernistic tendency as 'carnihilismo'. Anyway, all these discussions demonstrate a high value of the answer that may be provided to this question. *Neuroaesthetics* is a very awe-inspiring cultural paradigm when humane reality (aesthetics) can be 'accompanied' by new investigations in neurosciences, neurolinguistics, mind theory, etc (Gebauer, 1992: 34). This conception unites the outstanding problem of 'mind' and 'materia' (natura) or humanitarian and scientific experiences (Lodge, 2003: 112).

Nowadays we have a tremendous change in the humanitarian discourse—more and more texts (in literature, cinema, and drama) appear that provide a new outlook on the nature and this world that is represented as a two-faced reality: *ordinary* reality and a *transcendent* reality. Between these two dimensions we do not have gaps, but slight,

subtle bonds and spiritual interactions. Firstly, let us remember a film with Leonardo DiCaprio *Shutter Island* (2010), in which we have an eerie description of the mind that creates *invisible monsters* in itself. The work of art demonstrates this new change we have—after the postmodernism comes era that deals with shifts not only in time and matter, but in memory. Memory becomes a powerful machine that could reinvent people and realities. History (with time shifts) becomes like a polygon for mental experiments. And, what is more important, we cannot say whether a human being (the doer, Subject in the text) may know the truth about himself or herself. In this film, the main idea is concentrated on the fact that a person could be a *nowhere being*, and someone else could create a life instead of her- or himself for this person. But we'll never find the truth what life is real, as our world is described as a multifaceted virtual labyrinth. This film reveals the recent researches in physics—the *string and superstring theories* in quantum mechanics and general relativity. Practically the same problematic we have in the novel *La Question humaine* (*Human Question*) by François Emmanuel.

Secondly, in the novel *La Possibilité d'une île* (*The Possibility of an Island*), written by the contemporary French writer Michel Houellebecq we have the application of the following idea: in future, people will find mental forms of communication; their nature will be transformed drastically. High technologies will modify the essence of the human beings who will get an opportunity to be *never-dying* and *mortal* at the same time. New virtual clones will be like new parts of the big mind.

Finally, the author of the paper concentrates on the film *The Lovely Bones* (2009), in which we have even the direct realization of the Shakespearean text. The movie evokes a cultural matrix which is very close to the Renaissance aesthetics. Firstly, this could be realized with the support of high video technologies that represent the visualization of the metaphor (conceit). This metaphor unites several forms of humane world perception: kinesthesia contact, eye contact, etc.

This film provides us to two texts of Shakespeare: *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliette*. It demonstrates the idea that people who are dead and alive could have the supernatural subtle bond one with another. This bond is based on love as the only supernatural matter spread in the visible and not visible Universe. As we know, Shakespeare was great writer of Love. He created a unique world where time is cyclic and eternal, and a human being seems to be “a revelation of the world and cosmic powers” (Berger, 1957: 96). Anyway, the number of the examples could be amplified, but all of these movies and literature texts represent new model of reality and mind.

Aesthetics + Sciences = New Renaissance

Before the analysis of the movie, we need to say that the contemporary art describes a new paradigm of the human reality, where *death is deathless*, where matter and time have a *superstring cyclic* nature. Analyzing these cinema texts from the comparative view, we need to be familiar not only with theoretical approach but with *sciences* (and not only *humanitarian discourse*). Minds in these texts could communicate to each other despite the physical limitations. What is more, this is connected with the recent investigations in physics. Practically, what we have now is very close to what we had in Europe in the end of the XIX Century—when new forms of representation were initiated by ‘new scientific researches and discoveries’ (Bordwell, 1993: 24). Furthermore, the modernistic mind was formed as a revelation of the new trends in the humanities and sciences. Our era demonstrates that after the postmodernism we are going to have new forms of art (especially in literature), and the coordination and relations between natural and supernatural will be its centre. Anyway, we can predict that one of the alternative culture paradigms after the postmodernism will be close to such a term as *neuroaesthetics*. This academic field provides an experience spotlighting that sciences and humanities could co-exist peacefully. Mind and Spirit will be united in one substance in these texts with the help of high technologies. Thus, the literature of the future is based on the combination of traditional realism and realism *ad realiora* (or super-realism). In this way, we should mention new frontiers for the comparative studies.

We know that comparative studies deal with the analysis of different texts, or it can deal with the representation of one idea in different types of art (literature, music, and painting.) Anyway, we can study the influences of one text into another or one mode of art into another mode of art. The author of this paper considers that the news frontiers for the comparative studies should ‘deal with the influence of sciences into humanities’ (Wellek, 1956: 47). The humane experience should be very attentive to what we had in the past, some centuries ago, especially in the Renaissance which was the first revolution on the mind of the New Times.

What is more, in a paradoxical way, we see that this tendency *ad realiora* we have in the mentioned films and novels, returns us to the Renaissance times, when a human being had a special imaginative power (let us remember interpretations of *Othello* and *Macbeth* in the *New Historicism*). Imagination is one of the key words when we face with the works of, e.g., William Shakespeare (Bloch, 1988). No doubt, nowadays imagination (represented in the cultural texts with the help of high 3D technologies and new modes of *message* as *medium* in McLuhan understanding) becomes an object in *neuroaesthetics*. So, when we analyze the paradigm of the post-postmodern cultural mind, we can use the term *neuroaesthetics mind* that comes after the *postmodern one*. Dante, Shakespeare, Blake, Donne, or Goethe are the best examples—these authors reveal the great impact the imagination (religious or artistic, transcendental or social) may have on “the development of literature and ideas in the European community”.

‘Matter’ and ‘Qualia’

In this paper, we would like to start the investigation from the *Consciousness and the Novel* (Lodge, 2003). Our human body is a system of duality that modern sciences want to reject. We mean that the position of the *Ghost in the Machine* seems to be illogical in the modern neurosciences.

It is what Gilbert Ryle denounced, in his influential book *The Concept of Mind*, as the fallacy of the Ghost in the Machine. According to this orthodoxy, the human body, including the human brain which produces the phenomenon of mind, is a machine; mere is no ghost, no soul or spirit, to be found in it. And the self is not an immaterial essence but an epiphenomenon of brain activity.¹

Examples of qualia are in smell of freshly ground coffee or the taste of pineapple; such experiences have a distinctive phenomenological character... (*The Oxford Companion to the Mind*)

Here we have some examples of qualia:

The winter street is a salt cave. The snow has stopped falling and it's very cold The cold is spectacular, penetrating. The street has been silenced, a theatre of whiteness, drifts Eke frozen waves. Crystals glisten under the streetlights, (Ann Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, p. 177)

This illustrates one of the primary means by which literature renders qualia—through metaphor and simile. Whiteness *is* white, coldness is cold. There is no literal, referential description of such things that is not tautological. But in literature, by describing each quale in terms of something else that is both similar and different—"a salt cave," "a theatre of whiteness," "like frozen waves"—the object and the experience of it are vividly simulated. One sensation is invoked to give specificity to another. The nonverbal is verbalised...²

The most renowned experts on literature come to the conclusion that a mythical mind is only a kind of the mental illusion that comes from our consciousness. Our mind is not a separate fragmentation of the body. In fact, it is just an illusion that was created by the brain, as we need to live telling stories. And we can tell stories only in the situation when we understand the role of the *Otherness*. Each story is a representation of *another* mind. When we tell a story we retell it from the third position. All folk tales and stories were the representation of this paradigm. Even the first-position narrative in fact exists as a constructed in the mind position, a vibration that comes from our mythological mind. In this situation fiction is no more than an illusion.

O that you were your self, but love you are
No longer yours, than you your self here live,
Against this coming end you should prepare,
And your sweet semblance to some other give.
(William Shakespeare, *Sonnet 13*)

¹ Lodge, David (2003). *Consciousness and the Novel*. London: Penguin Books. P.8.

² Lodge, David. Ibid. P.12-13.

This is Shakespeare whose subjectivity communicates to different cultural minds because this textual voice declares the eternal moment of personal being.

As we know from the *Reader Response Criticism*, the moment of reading is an extremely small moment of time when we read, and in our mind we construct a 3D unique and individualistic world. This process takes really seconds or less. Because after this we have in our mind the process of explanation of what we just have read. This is another stage when our mind is accepting the recently read text trying to provide some interpretations according to our personal experience. We have to provide the interpretation of the mind we received from the book. This second mind is constructed in the reader's consciousness as a symbolic semiotic system. Only having received the interpretation, we transform this *Other's Mind* into *Ours*. For this purpose, we have to explain to ourselves what we have read. Only in this process of telling we obtain our own version of another's mind. It seems to be very important to take into account this phenomenon. It works when we read fiction literature and does not work when we deal with sciences.

Film as a Visualized Conceit

The Lovely Bones represents several Shakespearean motifs and contain some Shakespearean 'emotional' elements. To some extent these elements seem to be not central and not important. But if we take into account the theme revealed in the movie, then our assumptions need to be altered. Unfortunately, we do not have much time to stop on the scanning the film plot. Anyway, in this film we have three (or perhaps three as someone might be so accurate and attentive to find more points) important dimensions when we meet Shakespeare. The first one deals with *Othello*—Ray Singh, the young male hero in the film, signs himself in the letter of love as the *Moor*. This issue also can be successful in the postcolonial criticism. Just before Susie's murder, Ray writes on a piece of paper a letter in which he creates a poem of love dedicated to Susie. This guy looks as a strange young man who came from the 'beautiful past.'

The second topic can be remarked as the interpretation of the Romeo and Juliet story. In the new option, Susie tends to be Juliet. What is precisely interesting is the fact that the teenager has the same age as Juliet (she is 14). Ray is a revelation of the Moor in the USA—he even looks as a moor, as he has the Indian origin, and his parents came from India firstly to the UK (in the film, the UK is named as England with the concept of classic *Englishness*). Some years later his family moved to the United States. The same day Susie dies she asks her 'Romeo' (*Romeo and Ray*—the names have the same initial letter 'R'), 'Are you really from England?' Ray's Englishness is very important for Susie. Englishness in this movie means *classic humanity* or classic ability to demonstrate human feelings of love and patience. Ray is a very handsome and intelligent guy who represents the English behaviour model. He loves Shakespeare and *Othello* instead of Susie's classmates who find Shakespeare boring and too old-fashioned. Just the same problems we are struggling against these days: if the Shakespearean text can be converted to the mentality of new generations of the XXI Century?

Susie's friends do not understand the tragic mode of the play as they live in the absolutely another world. This new generation wants to experience fast love without any tragic points and any deep humane emotional understanding. Love is featured, speaking frankly, as a more 'technical' process in this film for the American generation of 70-s. Ray, who has Indian origin, can understand the Shakespearean world which means that he can understand love, friendship, and *Otherness*. What is more, his *Shakespeareanness* means the ability to have a mystical bond with the Susie's spirit. The heroes have strange mental relations. Ray also seems to be *other* than Americans. This 'otherness' reminds us of *Othello*—this strange male hero also represents not absolutely European mentality. Ray is Othello in the multicultural XX Century. And Ray's writing seems to be a typical Shakespearean text. *The Lovely Bones* is based on the interrelations between two modes of human reality: smoothing tragedy and lyrical happiness. Tragedy is connected with the assassination but the tragedy has been dissolved in the atmosphere of love. Susie says that new bones will have a new life after her death.

These were the lovely bones that had grown around my absence: the connections — sometimes tenuous, sometimes made at great cost, but often magnificent — that happened after I was gone. And I began to see things in a way that let me hold the world without me in it. The events my death brought were merely the bones of a body that would become whole at some unpredictable time in the future (the phrase has been taken from the book on which the film is based: Sebold, Alice. *The Lovely Bones*. P. 363.)

This girl's death brought to live new experience, new friendship (between Ray and other girl Ruth Connor who has a supernatural ability to see people's spirits.) *Bones* in the movie become *lovely*, as love is the central and most important power of creation. The same idea was described in thousands of researches on Shakespeare. Love of Romeo and Juliet is eternal, and new *lovely bones* are brought to life after the tragic death. In Shakespearean world, dead people have the ability to return to the reality to inform people about some secrets as what we have in *Hamlet*. Hamlet's father came to the reality as a ghost (spiritual essence). In *Macbeth*, this issue also has been represented. Mind power is the reality which dissolves the tragedy of the ordinary life because it can create something more powerful than the real world. Susie creates the realities with her mind. Her power is eternal and endless, as the world of magic illusions which is behind the physical humane experience.

PROSPERO

Mark but the badges of these men, my lords,
Then say if they be true. This mis-shapen knave,
His mother was a witch, and one so strong
That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs,
And deal in her command without her power.
These three have robb'd me; and this demi-devil--
For he's a bastard one--had plotted with them
To take my life.

(V,I)

George is visually represented in the same way: he is a neurotic man (we can see this mental disorder in the episode with flowers in his garden.) Mr. Harvey lives in the atmosphere of isolation and is structured to behave as a beast.

In the film, the power of love seems to be the most important power that can interconnect two worlds—of those who are alive and those who still exist in the supernatural dimension. This film features the topics that find its explanations in the Shakespeare's plays. Anyway, this film directed in 2009 and presented on the TVs in the XXI Century demonstrates problems which seem to be not actual in our era or, by the way, can be defined as 'eternal humane problems.' Mind world, reality based on phantasms—this is the key point of the film. The author of this paper want to pay your attention to the fact that on the theme level *The Lovely Bonds* look as a sequel of the film *What Dreams May Come* with Robin Williams. In that film (2008), we have a super reality as the main physical and structural dimension. These two films have very much in common. In *What Dreams May Come*, the main hero Chris awakens in Heaven, (where everything is controlled and produced by his powerful and 'innocent' mind which also deals with the philosophy of 'pure' heart based on love). In that dimension, he meets a man whom Chris recognizes as Albert, his friend and mentor from his medical residency (Albert will guide Chris in Heaven). In *The Lovely Bones* the main plot idea is connected with the supernatural world controlled by Susie's mind (it looks as Prospero's magic island.) Things which happen in the 'ordinary' reality influence her mind and emotional life after death. The magic world (which is called as a pre-Heaven) is directly controlled by Susie's fantasy. She also meets another girl in this dimension who will guide her in the pre-Heaven. Let us remind that, by the way, the title *What Dreams May Come* comes from Shakespeare's soliloquy in *Hamlet* ('To Be Or Not To Be', line 11):

...No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come

This fragment from the most well-known Shakespearean text reveals the quintessence of both *What Dreams May Come* and *The Lovely Bones*. The binomial dichotomy of body and spirit, pain and love, death and life, madness and ordinary life is represented in this famous soliloquy. Anyway, as S. Greenblatt proves that Shakespeare created a unique model of imagination.

Conclusions

The Shakespearean world 'reinforced' and reinterpreted in the contemporary cinema art is based on a very 'omnipotent' fantasy which unites natural and supernatural. Shakespeare's discourse could exist in the text when the plot dynamics has powerful emotional shifts evoked by the energy of heart and mind. Shakespearean intentions take place when we have the visualization of unnatural bonds between people (as between Susie and her father, between Susie and Ray, Susie and Ruth Connors) which become possible due to the extremely powerful spiritual energy. In *The Lovely Bones*, imagination is the code for any further interpretations of the movie. The film takes more than 2 hours, and during this time we can see a world of bright colours and outstanding imagination. Imagination (or mind system) has subtle relations to the world natural (physical) processes. Susie and her father have an unexplained bond even after Susie's death. But this bond tends to be unexplained only from the classical physical viewpoint. Shakespearean imagination creates something which is beyond physical limitations and traditional scientific explanations. *The Lovely Bones* also reveal the problem of new post-postmodernistic cultural paradigm as a combination of sciences and humanities. What is more, the Shakespearean theme becomes possible when the situation or heroes seem to be 'odd', strange and not 'spoiled' by the civilization. Ray is a new Romeo because his love can bring to live the most powerful memories. But this ability is connected with his emotional experience, in this way his mind accepts the Shakespearean text as something eternal, thought-provoking and 'organic' to the humane nature. Shakespeare's *Othello* provokes him to write his own poem in the Shakespearean *sonnet* style. New technologies in the cinema industry visualize of the Shakespearean type of metaphors which appeal to different types of receptors.

Brief biography

Dmytro Drozdovskyi is a Ukrainian scholar, literary critic, editor, and translator. Since 2012, he has been working at the position of the managing editor-in-chief of the Ukrainian magazine of translations "Vsesvit". He is a PhD academic fellow of the Department of world literature of Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. In 2013, he has completed his PhD dissertation "Reception of William Shakespeare in Ukrainian emigration literature process of 1940-1960-s." Dr. Drozdovskyi is a scholar whose academic goals are in the field of contemporary English and British literature, European studies, Shakespearean studies and cultural explanations of post-postmodernism which combines modern and postmodern aesthetics.

References

1. Bloch, Ernst (1988). *The utopian function of art and literature: selected essays*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 310 p.
2. Bordwell, David (1993). *Film art: an introduction*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 508 p.
3. Bosanquet, Bernard (1922). *A history of aesthetic*. London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 502 p.
4. Collingwood, Robin George (1960). *The principles of art*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1960, 347 p.
5. Croce, Benedetto (1960). *Estetica come scienza dell' espressione e linguistica generele*. New York: Noonday Press, 503 p.
6. Dufrenne, Mikel (1987). *In the presence of the sensuous: essays in aesthetics*. Edited and translated by Mark S. Roberts and Dennis Gallagher. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1987. 213 p.
7. Gebauer, Gunter (1992). *Mimesis: Kultur, Kunst, Gesellschaft*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 462 p.
8. Lodge, David (2003). *Consciousness and the Novel*. London: Penguin Books.
9. Sachs, Hanns, (1942). *The creative unconscious: studies in the psychoanalysis of art*. Cambridge, Mass. : Sci-art Publishers, 240 p.
10. Wellek, Rene (1956). *Theory of literature*. 3rd ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 374 p.
11. Wollen, Peter (1972). *Signs and meaning in the cinema*. 3rd ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.