ОНА FORM OF POETOLOGICAL REFLEXIVITY IN LYRICS OF GILLIAN ALLNUTT, CAROL ANN DUFFY, SIMON ARMITAGE  
ОБ ОДНОЙ ФОРМЕ ПОЭТОЛОГИЧЕСКОЙ РЕФЛЕКСИИ В ЛИРИКЕ ДЖИЛЛИАН АЛЛНАТ, КЭРОЛ ЭНН ДАФФИ, САЙМОНА АРМИТИДЖА

Розглянуто три вірші британських поетів – Джилліан Аллнат, Керол Енн Даффі і Саймона Армітидж, об’єднаних загальним мотивом авторської рефлексії щодо породження та побутування поетичного твору в контексті сучасної культури. Всі три вірші належать до так званої метапоетичної лірики, або метапоезії, яка, за висловом Х. Вейнріха, має темою «своє власне виробництво». Предмет авторської рефлексії становлять такі аспекти творчості і власної мовної поведінки, як естетичні критерії, нормативні канони, ставлення до мистецтва попередників, логіка оповіді, відбір лексики та її інтерпретація, трактування мовних виразних і образних засобів, поетичних технік (метрика, ритміка, строфіка) і таке інше.

Проаналізовано одну з форм творчої рефлексії авторів трьох віршів, а саме: взаємодію поетичної мови з не-поетичними регістрами сучасної англійської мови, яка втілена в самому поетичному тексті, що є неодмінною умовою метапоетичної (поетологічної) лірики.

На матеріалі трьох віршів досліджено мовні засоби та дискурсивні стратегії деяких функціональних регістрів, які використовуються авторами проаналізованих поезій як продуктивний ресурс для розширення і збагачення своєї поетичної мови. Вербальні знаки поетологічної рефлексії виявляють себе по-різному у творах Аллнат, Даффі і Армітидж, оскільки їх розуміння творчого процесу індивідуальне, але всі вони співвіднесені з їх метапоетичною функцією – вираження глубинних уявлень автора про специфіку поезії.

Ключові слова: поетична мова, метапоезія, поетологічна рефлексія, функціональні регістри.
Рассмотрена одна из форм творческой рефлексии авторов трёх стихотворений, а именно: взаимодействие поэзии с не-художественными (функциональными) регистрами современного английского языка, которое находит языковое выражение в тексте произведения, что является обязательным условием метапоэтической (поэтологической) лирики.

В текстах анализируемых стихотворений обнаруживаются вербальные и невербальные знаки поэтологической рефлексии, связанные с использованием языковых средств и дискурсивных стратегий функциональных регистров, являющихся продуктивным ресурсом для развития и обогащения поэтической речи. Эти вербальные знаки функционируют по-разному в стихотворениях Аллнот, Даффи и Армитиджа, однако все они соотносимы с их метапоэтической функцией – выражением глубинных представлений автора о специфике поэзии.

Ключевые слова: поэтический язык, метапоэзия, поэтологическая рефлексия, функциональные регистры.

The aim of this paper was to consider one form of poetological reflexivity connected with the interaction of poetry with non-poetic discourses in the context of contemporary culture. Poetological reflexivity is understood here as foregrounding in poetry author’s contemplations dealing with the creative process, including such philological aspects as aesthetic criteria, normative cannons, relationship with the art of predecessors, interpretation of language expressive means, stylistic devices, poetic techniques (meter, rhyme, stanza, rhythmic modifiers) and others, incorporated into the texture of a poem. Such poems are often referred to as «metapoetic lyrics» or «metapoetry».

Three poems by Gillian Allnutt, Carol Ann Duffy and Simon Armitage were analyzed from the point of view of language signs actualizing authors’ reflexivity concerning the relationship between poetic and non-poetic discourses. This problem, which has always been in the center of poets’ attention became especially acute today in the context of expanding mass media.

The analysis of the poems revealed verbal and nonverbal markers of their authors’ reflexivity connected with the use of language means and discourse strategies of nonfiction registers, which appeared to be a productive resource for enrichment of poetic speech. These markers manifest themselves in a different way however all of them can be coordinated with their metapoetic function – expression of their authors’ understanding of poetry specifics.

Keywords: poetic language, metapoetry, poetological reflection, non-poetic register.

Among many aspects of poets’ reflexivity concerning «art made of language» (John O’Brien) and forms of their existence in the text, there is one centered on investigating interaction of poetic discourse with all other non-fictional modes of speech, the use of the latter as a resource for the development and enrichment of the former.

A number of philologists made an important contribution to the study of various aspects of contemporary metapoetry (the term used for defining poetry centered on the problem of its own production). Among them are: S. N. Broitman, N. Fateeva, W. Hinck, E. Hessenberger, F. Israpova, E. Muller-Zettelmann, M. Mayer, M. Perloff, L. Zubova and many others. The majority of them agree on the growing preoccupation with poetological lyrics (a synonym of metalyrics) as one of the defining marks of the 20th – the beginning of the 21st-century poetry.

Karen Leeder, describing the poetic experience of German poetry of the 90s – the first decade of the 21st century, remarks the «self-consciousness of language as one of the clear constants of the contemporary scene» and draws attention to the opposition between «essentially conservative inward-looking poetry, set against a body, alive to the fact of its own construction» [1, p. 67].

Mattew Marr, characterizing postmodern metapoetry in Spain, argues that, in essence, it talks about language and literature «bringing linguistic and literary selfconsciousness to the discursive fore of contemporary Spanish poetry» [2, p. 53].
Similar characteristics can be found in the works on contemporary metapoetry in the USA (see «Critical Essays on American Self-Reflexive Poetry», 1997 [3] and in Italy Olivia Santovetti’s «Self-Reflection in Italian Literature» [4].

Russian and Ukrainian researchers L. Artemenko, V. Fashchenko-Takovitch, N. Fateeva, O. Tishchenko, L. Zubova et al. point out one common feature, characteristic of metapoetry in different languages: its rapprochement with philology.

Zubova conveys this idea in such a way: «Rapprochement of poetry with philology is the main perspective line of poetry development in the XXth century. Of course, nobody can be a poet unless he feels a word, however, today the language with all its inherent potential becomes more often the object of poet’s attention than means of expression» [5, p. 6].

According to N. Fateeva, literature breaks up its ties with reality and deepens into self-reflexivity in search for sources of development inside itself. A wide field of metapoetics is being created, the result of which is elimination of borderline between literature and philological theory [6].

Epshtein suggests his interpretation of this fact: «The thing is that contemporary theory is approaching poetry to the same extent as poetry is approaching theory. They have one feature in common – paradigmatic structure of the text, which formulates rules of yet unknown language rather than makes a piece of information in the already known one, creating tables of declension and conjugation of new poetic forms» [7, p.364]. He also maintains that limitation of the role of poetry by the sphere of language will make it possible to enhance new life into it.

The focus of this article is to consider three poems by the contemporary British poets (Gillian Allnutt, Carol Ann Duffy, Simon Armitage), the central motif of which is their authors’ reflexivity concerning the process of poem’s creation and, in particular, the interaction of the poetic discourse with all other non-poetic modes of speech.

Gillian Allnutt’s intense philological contemplations on the problem of production of an artistic text do not lie on the surface but are always incorporated in the texture of a poem. The bright example of author’s investigation of the role of non-fiction registers as a productive resource for the development of poetic speech is her poem «The Making of Marmalade». Here is the poem in its entirety:

unripe oranges in silk-lined sacks sow bristled brushes
China jugs of orange-washing water
One big bowl
pith-paring knives, one for each woman a mountain of sugar, poured slowly a small Sevillian well
songsheets against the tedium, in parts pine cones for burning silver spoons for licking up the lost bits a seven-gallon pot a waxed circle, a cellophane circle, elastic small pieces of toast

In the poem Allnutt uses the form of a recipe which serves as a metaphor of a poem: the items and instructions of a recipe are often structured as a paradigm of lines in a poetic text. The author demonstrates a number of techniques which turn this matter-of-fact register into a piece of poetry. To begin with, such everyday objects as bristle brushes, big bowl, pith-paring knives, seven-gallon pot, waxed circle are combined with other objects which due to epithets accompanying them are singled out and look like treasured things in the Dutch still-life: silk-lined sacks, China jags, small Sevillian well, silver spoon. The eighth line: songsheets against tedium, which stands out of the suggested paradigm, adds
playful character to the whole poem and is, in fact, a metapoetic element foregrounding the process of its creation. The play upon similarity between the established form of a recipe and established rhythmic form of a poem (a more or less regular alteration of 5 or 6 beat lines with 3 beat lines) on the one hand, and discrepancy between material and spiritual aspects of the things compared, on the other, make evident the poetological stance of the poem – author’s reflections concerning her own poetic technique.

One more mode of artistic reflexivity in the poem is actualized in the use of sound form of such pairs of words as: silk-lined sacks, bristled brushes, washing water, big bowl, pith-paring, small Sevillian well, silver spoon, where sound repetition is more than ordinary alliteration but rather reminds paronymic attraction of semantically connected words though in fact they are not. The frequency of sounds (s, l, w/v) repeated in the poem demonstrates that sound form of the poetic speech is of particular importance for Gillian Allnutt. The concentration of repeated sounds within a small text performs several functions, being a means of structural, semantic and stylistic cohesion of the poem and foregrounding its poetic essence which differs radically from non-poetic discourses. The repetition of sound [m] in the headline of the poem («The Making of Marmalade») is also more than mere alliteration. It involves more than one sense perception – not only hearing but taste and touch as well and I would risk to suggest that the heading for a recipe was the occasion for writing a poem.

Interaction of various speech modes of the language in a poem – colloquial speech, social dialects, functional registers, professional jargons – is the issue of deep interest on the part of Carol Ann Duffy. This philological stance is very noticeable in her satirical poem «Poet for our Times».

I write the headlines for a Daily Paper.
It’s just a knack one’s born with all-right-Squire.
You do not have to be an educator,
Just bang the words down like they’re screaming Fire!
CECIL-KEAYS ROW SHOCK TELLS EYETIE WAITER.
ENGLAND FAN CALLS WHINGEING FROG A LIER.

Cheers. Thing is, you’ve got to grab attention With just one phrase as punters rush on by. I’ve made mistakes too numerous to mention, So now we print the buggers inches high.
TOP MP PANTIE ROMP INCREASES TENTION.
RENT BOY: ROCK STAR PAIDME WELL TO LIE.

I like to think that I’m a sort of poet Four times. Know what I mean?
I’ve got a special talent and I show it
In punchy haikus featuring the Queen
DIPLOMAT IN BED WITH SERBO-CROAT.
EASTENDERS’ BONKING SHOCK IS WELL-OBSCENE.

Of course, these days, there’s not the sense of panic
You got a few years, back. What with the box
Et. Cet. I wish I’d been around when the Titanic Sank. To headline that. Mate, would’ve been the tops.
SEE PAGE 3 TODAY GENTS THEY’RE GIGANTIC.
KINNOCK – BASHER MAGGIE PULLS OUT STOPS.
And, yes, I have a dream – make that a scotch, ta – That kids will know my headlines
off by heart.

IMMIGRANTS FLOOD IN CLAIMS HEATHROW WATCHER.
GREEN PARTY WOMAN IS A NIGHTCLUB TART.
The poems of the decade... Stuff’em! Gotcha!
The instant tits and bottom line of art [8].

Three speech registers – poetic, newspaper and colloquial, clash here. The first is
represented by the form of the poem – meter, stanza and rhyme. The second manifests
itself in the language of newspaper headlines from some «Daily Paper» – an edition in
Britain for a not very fastidious reader, susceptible to sensation. Every stanza ends in
a couple of scandalous headings written in capital letters and embodying the essential
language peculiarities of this newspaper genre. Colloquial speech is represented by an
emotional monologue of a lyrical persona, which is rich in derogatory lexis, clichés of
everyday speech, slang and idioms.

The author paradoxically compares the most stereotypical art – newspaper language
to the art of poetry, famous for destroying all kinds of stereotypes. The art of creating
headlines is comically described in the first two stanzas: «it’s just a knack...», You do not
have to be an educator; / Just bang the words down like they’re screaming Fire!» The
hero, calling herself «the poet for our times» represents her work in such a way: «I’ve got
a special talent and I show it / in punchy haikus featuring the Queen». ‘Punchy haikus»
means here short humorous poems intended to entertain people. Making a parallel between
poetry and the language of mass media, Duffy underlines the idea that, in order to establish
contact with the reader, modern poetry uses communicative strategies of mass culture.

On the other hand, in the base of comparison between poetic texts and newspaper
headlines lies an objectively existing similarity of the two discourses: the concentrated
formulation of idea within a small form, laconism and «density» of the text, which Yuri
Tynianov, referring to poetry called «tesnota stihovogo riada» and which is actualized
in both discourses in the omission of articles, auxiliary verbs, abundant use of elliptical
syntactical structures, play upon words based on conversion and other techniques. On
the semantic level this similarity manifests itself in clashing incompatible ideas and
lexis used for their expression. In the text analyzed this feature is effectively realized in
rhymes: Queen – obscene; heart – tart – art; high – lie.

The author does not conceal her negative attitude to «mass poetry» born by the
time: «The poems of the decade...Stuff’em! Gotcha! / The instant tits and bottom line of
art». At the same time, in search for contact with the reader poets use language means
and discourse strategies characteristic of mass culture. What we see here is the author’s
unmasking, parodying mass media techniques, and simultaneous appropriating them.
The intended clash of diverse speech registers appears to be fruitful in revealing poetry
in the language itself: the striking realism of the live colloquial speech with its intonation
of immediate presence.

This poetological feature manifests itself to the full extent in the most radical, from
the point of view of content, poem by Simon Armitage «Very Simply Topping Up the
Brake Fluid»:

Yes, love, that’s why the warning light comes on. Don’t
Panic. Fetch some universal brake fluid
And a five-eighths screwdriver from your toolkit
Then prop the bonnet open. Go on, it won’t
Eat you. Now, without slicing through the fan-belt
Try and slide the sharp end of the screwdriver
Under the lid and push the spade connector
Through its bed, go on, that’s it. Now you are all right
To unscrew, no, clockwise, you see it’s Russian,
Love, back to front, that’s it. You see, it’s empty:
Now, gently with your hand and I mean gently,
Try and create a bit of a space by pushing
The float-chamber sideways so there’s room to pour;
Gently does it. Try not to spill it, it’s
Corrosive: rusts, you know, and fill it till it’s Level with the notch on the clutch reservoir. Lovely. There’s some Swarfega in the office
If you want a wash and some soft roll above The cistern for, you know. Oh don’t mind him, love, He doesn’t bite. Come here and sit down Prince!
Now, where’s that bloody alternator? Managed?
Oh any time, love. I’ll not charge you for that
Because it’s nothing of a job. If you want
Us again we’re in the book. Tell your husband [8, p. 8–9].

In the poem Simon Armitage investigates means and stylistic potential of the most ordinary, mundane speech and how it functions in the poetic context. Author intentionally chooses a banal «non-poetic» life situation: a mechanic instructs a woman how to pour the brake fluid into the clutch reservoir of the car. In doing this Armitage stresses the real subject of his interest: his attention is directed at the very process of speech functioning. Author does not deform, transform or reduce the speech of his character. Like a philologist he investigates the appearance of artistic value in conditions of speech reality. His poetics bases on conversational phrase or remark. Moreover, phrasal intonation plays a decisive role in making speech artistically relevant because it is often rich in emotion and implication. Thus not the texture of the language becomes the material of poetry but its speech function, the texture of speech. Language acquires sense only in its realization, in concrete speech context.

To conclude, all three poems analyzed are united by one common motif – their authors’ intense reflexivity concerning the production of an artistic text in the context of contemporary culture. Language is the center of poets’ attention and, in particular, interaction of one’s poetic language with all possible non-poetic registers to show the extent to which the idea of the self is linguistic. The poets mentioned here, actively engage the communicative models of everyday discourse and other registers, producing language constructions that foreground the artifice of the writing process. How the negotiation between poetic and non-poetic discourses takes place depends on the author but on the whole the new context of poetry functioning (especially taking into account expanding role of the language of mass media) makes poets find new forms of expression.

The prospects of this investigation could be seen in expanding material for analysis which would provide a more substantial basis for generalization concerning features of poetological thinking in poetry in the context of contemporary culture.
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