

THE POEM “I WAS ONLY WHAT” AS THE SEMANTIC CENTRE OF BRODSKY’S SUPertextUAL UNITY

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The study was supported by a grant from the Russian Science Foundation № 22-28-01671, <https://rscf.ru/en/project/22-28-01671/>; Russian Christian Academy for the Humanities.

Abstract: This article presents a hypothesis about the functioning of a peculiar unconventional supertextual unity with lyrical metaplot of initiation, cognition and hero's creation by love in I. Brodsky's work. The poem "I was only what" is seen as the semantic centre of this unity: a work that embodies in concentrated form all the main features of the whole cycle. The content and poetic peculiarities of the poem are studied: lyrical plot and subject system, imagological and thematic structure, chronotopical wholeness, intertextual level.

Keywords: Brodsky, cyclisation in poetry, initiation plot, semantic centre.

1 Introduction

The works of Brodsky, poet, essayist, Nobel laureate remains a constant subject of interest for researchers, offering new aspects in the recognized classic areas of lyric studies. Among the latter is the phenomenon of poetic cyclization, significant for the development of Russian literature. The urge to create overt textual forms in poetry and their theoretical comprehension by literary theory becomes especially active at the turn of the 19–20 centuries: in the works of A. Blok, V. Ivanov, N. Gumilev, B. Pasternak, M. Tsvetaeva, etc., it becomes more active. In the second half of the 20th century the connection with the heritage of the Silver Age is actualized, including through personal contacts of young creative intelligentsia with representatives of the older generation, intensified activities of writing studios, changes in the overall socio-cultural situation, requiring search and experiment, synthesis of tradition and innovation. All this contributes to the formation of Brodsky as a poet, who was able to combine in his work the highest achievements of the preceding Russian and world poetic process with an individual author's view and an original system of poetic means and techniques. The tendency to create a supertext in Brodsky's work showed itself in different ways: the use of the genre of the large poem, the formation of poetic collections, the creation of texts in the form of diptychs, etc. However, we do not exclude the possibility of considering the poet's work as a potential non-traditional supertextual phenomenon, characteristic of both the classical poetic tradition and the contemporary postmodernist one.

2 Literature Review

Within the study of overt textual formations in Brodsky's poetry there are mainly works devoted to traditional forms of cyclization, especially the author's cycle and the poetic collection, which are studied in various aspects.

In his book «The Poetics of Russian Classical and Non-classical lyric poetry» Broitman (Broitman 2008) devotes the section to correct the established views on the detachment of the poet's speech subject and presents the complex interpretation of the system of lyric utterance forms.

E. Semyonova (Semyonova 2000) considers the collection «Part of Speech» as unique genre of poem-cycle connected with the tradition of Silver Age.

Among the non-traditional supertextual formations of Brodsky, scholars are primarily interested in topical or thematic texts: St. Petersburg text, ancient text, Italian text, Christmas text, studied in the works of A. Ranchin (Ranchin 2001), V. Gudoniene (Gudoniene 2000), T. Savchenko (Savchenko 1993) and others. However, these scholars consider each of these phenomena immanently, without questioning the possibility of including them in a broader poetic context.

The most productive idea for the study of non-traditional cyclical unities can be considered an observation made by K. Taranovsky, who proposed to include the poem “in a wider context” on the basis of recurring themes and images in the poet's work (Taranovsky 2000, 18). The scholar applied this method of interpretation to the poetry of O. Mandel'shtam, without leaving a detailed theoretical description, but it is worth considering this direction of philological study of non-traditional cycles as promising for the poetic heritage of other poets.

Thus, we can conclude that there is a constant and unceasing interest of researchers to the multiple issues of cyclization in the works of I. Brodsky. However, not all aspects of non-traditional cyclization have been fully studied, the question about the status of non-traditional supertextual unity, its boundaries, formative tendencies, content-poetological features remains open.

The aim of the article: to put forward a hypothesis about the possibility of forming a special phenomenon in Brodsky's poetic work – an unconventional supertextual unity and to study the main content and poetological features of the poem “I was only what” as its potential semantic centre

3 Materials and research methods

This paper is devoted to the study of I. Brodsky's poem “I was only what” (1981), which is included in the collection “New stanzas for Augusta” compiled by the poet himself in 1983. The author studies the basic content and poetological features of the text as a potential semantic centre of the selected supertextual unity, which primarily involves a comprehensive philological analysis of the poem in terms of thematic and image unity, interpretation of chronotopic content, description of subject structure peculiarities, and singling out the features of the poem's subject. The connections of the features highlighted at these text's levels with other works of I. Brodsky, which are part of the potential supertextual unity, are also actualized.

4 An unconventional supertextual unity of Brodsky's poetry

For Brodsky's literary legacy, drawn towards cyclization in its various forms, the desire for a particular wholeness, which cyclization embodies on the poetological level is extremely important. The restoration of a broken or unattainable in reality, but necessary unity in the potential state of being, becomes one of the main impulses of the creative act. At the same time, the integrity being formed does not require obligatory explicit expression in traditional cyclic form, the latter being particular in relation to the general. What is fundamentally important is the specific perspective of perception which implies the active participation of the reader's consciousness.

Within Brodsky's poetry, the cycle-forming units are special texts representing large constituent parts of a single mythopoetic space. Such texts can include topical (antique, Petersburg and Italian texts), Christmas and love texts. The correlation of these texts within a separate poetic work, a traditional cycle or a collection may be different, but the idea of wholeness action as an incentive to form a supertext implies accentuation of exactly secondary formations formed in the framework of the creative

co-acting act of the reader and the author. Obviously, such aesthetic event should result in a special supertextual unity with a number of content-poetological features that provide a dynamic balance of the whole and the parts. These features include a common lyrical metaplot, a system of lyrical subjects, a chronotopical system and a thematic, figurative, symbolic, intertextual and mythopoetic complex.

Potentially, in the work of one author there can be various supertextual cyclical formations, built up in diverse systems of hierarchical and equivalent relations. However, it is possible to speak of a meaningful dominance of a single supertext in relation to the peripheral ones. Within Brodsky's poetry a set of works is combined by the unity of a lyrical metaplot where a lyrical subject undergoes a number of initiatory experiences – he gets the feeling of love and lives through it, acquires a voice and creative ability, crosses the border of time and space that is correlated with the transition from the world of living to dead and gets special knowledge for his existence.

5 Functions of the semantic centre of supertextual unity

The reader's reconstruction of the development's stages of the supertextual unity's metaplot includes the actualisation of the so-called semantic centres. The latter are understood as works in which the features of the whole supertext's integrity are fully realized, in a kind of concentrated form. Their role and significance in the supertext functioning is particularly marked, as they can be metonymically representative of it. One manifestation of this specific significance could be the confirmed status of the work in reader perception as a text of deliberately complicated meaning or a recognized masterpiece. The latter includes Brodsky's poem "I was only what I was".

Especially important is the famous metapoetic commentary on the collection: "Unfortunately, I have not written The Divine Comedy. And apparently, I never will. And here it turns out to be a kind of poetry book with its own plot according to the principle of prose rather than any other" (Volkov 2000, 317).

The tendency towards disjointedness is embedded at the level of the author's consciousness, when the collection formed by the poet is perceived as an unwritten large text with an aspiration for the future, where such a task is still relevant. Thus, poems with a dedication to M. B. will be created by the poet afterwards. A number of these poems will belong to different contexts at the same time. The fact of dedicating a poem from the Christmas cycle to M. B. allows us to speak of an intersection of the meanings with some love text's poems. The reference to the "Divine Comedy" and a number of other features orient "The New Stanzas for Augusta" towards the poetics of the Italian text. Thus, one can potentially speak of multiple intersections of private texts in the poet's work, which should eventually organize a unity formed by a particular integrity.

The poem "I was only what" is an example of a semantic centre, also because it actualizes all paradigmatic semantic connections and the leading poetic contexts of Brodsky's work. Its place in the composition of the collection "New Stanzas for Augusta" as the concluding text is no coincidence. It is well known that in any cycle there are different relations between the part and the whole. The ending of the collection can then be seen as a meaningful silence, a pause which, with the finale of the poem "I was only what", marks the anticipation of its continuation. The possibility of the latter within Brodsky's poetry has already been mentioned with the later creation of the poems addressed to M. B.

Thus, the finale of the collection "New Stanzas for Augusta" suggests the open structure of this cycle and the possibility to form a larger unity within the act of reception by the reader where "I was only what" has the role of the semantic centre.

The poem's lyrical plot reproduces the main stages of the supertextual unity's metaplot with the main events of initiation, acquisition of special knowledge or skills, crossing the border in space and time, resulting in a meaningful transformation of the subject, whose comprehension occurs in the process of a creative act.

6 Composition of the poem "I was only what"

The dedication to M.B. should be singled out, which not only defines dialogicality as one of the semantic and poetic dominants, but is also a linking element between the three texts. The love text will be directly expressed and signified in this poem, while the Italian and Christmas text, presented in subtext and as elements of poetic, supported by previous experience of other Brodsky's poems reading. Already on the level of dedication, one can establish a connection between this poem and the Christmas cycle, in which the work "25.XII.1993", also addressed to M. B., is presented. The dedication of "25.XII.1993", in turn, makes it part not only of the poet's Christmas text, but also of his love text.

The very fact of dedication makes it possible to identify the connection between the texts already identified and another – the Italian one, which in the poem "I was only what" functions within the framework of explicit expression, but enters the composition of the poem at different levels, determining its content and poetological features. In this case, we can talk about different aspects of the Italian text, diverse in Brodsky's poetry, above all the intertextual level, where one of the central places for the poet is occupied by the name of Dante and his main creation. "The Divine Comedy" as an affirmation in the mass reading consciousness and cultural space Dante's love for Beatrice influences multiple components of Brodsky's poem. These components can include the development of the lyrical plot and poem's composition, the thematic integrity and the subject structure's peculiarities. At the same time, all the highlighted levels of the text will be characterised by an accentuated trinity, which is also a continuation of Dante's meaningful symbolism.

The triple division of the composition is the most significant. The accentuated anaphora and the partial syntactic parallelism of the constructions clearly distinguish three groups of stanzas, corresponding to the three compositional poem's parts and the subject system's triple division. The first group includes the first, second and seventh stanzas, dominated by the sphere of the lyrical hero; the second group – the third and fourth stanzas, marked by the presence of the pronoun "you" and a number of his active actions in relation to the object "I"; the third group consists of the sixth and seventh stanzas without explicit pronoun forms and a symbolic subject of the big world. This ternary division raises the question of the stanza's number: seven instead of the canonical nine. However, the number of stanzas in Brodsky's poem is not coincidental, it has symbolic semantics and paradigmatic links with Dante's work.

Thus, in terms of the composition's structure and the subject system's development, the architectonics of the stanzas is no less significant: the three stanzas of the first part reveal the lyrical hero's predominance in the plot movement, which is explained by the main lyrical event's nature as initiation in which he takes part. At the same time, the number of the first- and second-person pronoun forms – the spheres of the lyrical hero and his interlocutor lover – are quantitatively equal: there are twelve in total. Moreover, the stanzas within the first part, a kind of sphere of the lyrical hero's being, absorb the second part – the sphere of his beloved's "you" action, and then merge with the third part, which introduces the final lyrical event – the creation of worlds. Moreover, the last stanza's final verse, which belongs to the sphere of the lyrical hero, may be considered as a borderline verse, referring to both parts simultaneously, owing to the syntactic parallelism and anaphora. In the fifth stanza, then, there is a peculiar meeting of the three distinguished spheres.

From the point of view of the number's semantics it is possible to see a meaningful juxtaposition of the seven and the nine, which will also be supported by the semantic difference in the compositional-architectural form of Brodsky's poem as part of the unwritten "Divine Comedy" and therefore impossible to reproduce its form.

Interestingly, the peculiarities of the poem's lyrical plot (respectively, the entire supertextual unity) implement this same concept of the subject system's main images. The ideas of creation, authorship and perception, intension and its realisation will constitute the leading lyrical events and set the main trends of chronotopical development.

7 Poetics of the poem "I was only what" as a semantic centre

The first stanza opens the plot's first stage, from which the absolute predominance of the past tense with the meaning of processualism and repetition within the chronotope begins. The verb which introduces the state of the lyrical hero: "was" (Brodsky 2001, 226) is accentuated. The very fact of presence, existence, which in the absolute beginning of the poem is not connected to the sphere of the hero's past, but is immediately set in direct correlation with the heroine's action, is emphasized. In the architectonics of the first stanza, "I" and "you" occupy parallel positions to the absolute beginnings of the first and second verses, but their differences are revealed in the ratio of verb forms corresponding to them. Thus, the state of the lyrical hero is not just passive and devoid of activity, but the very fact of its possibility is fully determined by the heroine's activity.

From the first stanza, the poem is deliberately constructed as an erotic poem, and the main lyrical event is duplicated in the motif of the rapprochement, including the physical encounter of the lyrical characters. The meeting of the characters, their acquaintance, etc., takes place in other parts of the overtextual unity, meanwhile the references to these preceding stages are easily recovered and occur throughout the poem "I was only what". The second verse of the first stanza is already a retrospection of the lyrical hero, created in the word in the present moment, which each perceiver actualises in the act of reading.

The attempt to define the form of the lyrical hero's being, which both serves as a kind of material for creation and at the same time limits him within these borders occurs in the descriptive – pointing paraphrase "that which" (Brodsky 2001, 226), which receives no further clarification in the first stanza. Indication without designation, without referring to an object or phenomenon can be linked to the motif of creation out of a kind of emptiness, an emergence from non-existence.

The motif of creation, which results in the acquisition of form, evokes associations with numerous myths, the main one for European culture being represented in the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea. However, what is significant for the poem is the emphasis on the transformation of the motif of form, which in myth is associated with a perfectly embodied material form, whereas for Brodsky it is that indefinable which can only be indicated in correlation with the creative gesture of the heroine. The motif of touch in the context of Brodsky's poetry is one of the most important among the motifs denoting action and movement. It also takes on a special significance in the framework of the supertextual unity's development, primarily because the lexeme itself and its variants suggest a connection with the idea of wholeness – actually present or potentially possible or impossible to implement. The verb "touch" and its derivatives assume in its direct meaning the realisation of two valences, which directly connect the subject, the active producer of an action and the object to which this action is directed.

An important sense in the meaning of the motif of touch is lightness, combined with the attribution of the action to the palm – potential tenderness, care, generated by the desire to protect. This motif complex is connected with creation directly through the actualization of mythological semantics: the accentuation of raised hands in various hypostases of the archaic Goddess Mother and her variations in pagan religions, in the image of the Mother of God in Christianity. The unexpressed motif of the beloved's relationship to the lyrical hero is realised in the subtext – creation is accompanied by protection and caress. However, the image of the palm can be significant in another respect due to the system of parallels between the subjects in the development

of the lyrical event in the following stanzas. The creation of the palm in the act of touch-forming potentially correlates with the significance of the naming of this part of the human body for the traditional image of the writing person, and the gesture of writing as analogous to the touch of the pen to paper. Such an assumption is possible in the context of the poem's lyrical plot development, in which the priority of possession of knowledge, skill and direct existence belongs to the heroine.

The second part of the first stanza continues the chronotopical development of the main event of the highlighted poem's first part, introducing an indication of the time's specification in the procedural past, as well as the spatial arrangement of the subjects. The idea of verticality, of a movement encompassing up and down, enveloping or absorbing into itself in the subtext could already arise in connection with the gesture of touch-creation by the woman's hands. Explicitly, however, this motif of space is introduced in verse 3 in the second repetition of the turn "than", with the accentuation of the motif separating the spheres of top and bottom by the preposition "over". In addition to the erotic implication of the physical proximity of the subjects, the motif of dividing space into two spheres in which the bottom belongs to the hero, who is in the process of becoming, and the top to the heroine, who is creating, is significant. Such an attribution of spatial spheres appears justified in the context of the mythopoetic story of creation, where the heroine belongs to the sphere of sacral top (heaven, eternity), and her moving in space from top to bottom corresponds to the motif of descending, bestowing the bottom (earth) with her goods. In the collection of national mythologies, heaven is not only the sphere of supreme god's action – the thunderer (male principle), but also in some cases the female principle's sphere, as it is represented in the Egyptian version (a number of key images of which will be developed later by Christian culture). The crouching face and the palm's touch create a visual image of the heroine that enhances her perception as a sacral figure, while remaining intimate: images of goddesses of various religions, heroines of world literature, dominated by the image of Beatrice from Dante. The high status of the beloved is also accentuated by the archaic form of her face's nomination, represented in Brodsky's poetic heritage in a small number of ways.

The deepening of the temporal development of the poem's first part – the reference to night with two characteristic epithets in the enjambement ("in a deaf, ravening / night") (Brodsky 2001, 226) – is similar to the Christmas text in Brodsky's poetry. Night retains its traditional ambivalent meanings: on the one hand, it is a time of unclean power's actions, associated with danger and light's absence, a halt of habitual life, on the other hand, it is a time of waiting, solitude, a time of intimate and innermost doings, magically marked. The main action in the poet's Christmas works unfolds at night or in the late evening. Brodsky's night can be a time of total stupor, sleep, silence, a processional state, a time of special action and heightened activity, a hidden life, or a combination of these two possibilities in their dynamic transition, realised or potential.

Night as the time of lyrical plot's action is also linked to the world of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. It is known that Dante's journey begins at six o'clock on Good Friday's evening and ends at six o'clock on Good Saturday's evening. This particular temporal development suggests precisely Hell as the total dominance of night as opposed to Paradise as the realm of day and the different relation of the day's parts in Purgatory. The juxtaposition of different stages of the hero's spiritual path and the dynamic development of diurnal time will also be preserved in the lyrical plot "I was only that". Thus, the first stanza, which opens the first of the three compositional parts, is the kingdom of night, corresponding to the first stage of Dante's journey. Brodsky's choice of two epithets to describe this time – state is also appropriate.

"Deaf" night implies the sound's absence in space and the perceiving subject's ability to hear. Deafness in Brodsky's mythopoetic picture of the world, like night, is an accentuated

ambivalent concept that combines the motifs of sound's absence, voice, movement, potential emptiness, lifelessness with the motifs of hidden potential, birth and formation, the elements, etc.

The second epithet of the night "raven" simultaneously introduces a number of manifold characteristics that define the night of the beginning of creation. Thus, referring directly to the raven in the context of Brodsky's work realises a stable series of traditional mythological-symbolic meanings, emphasised as ambivalent. The raven as a talking bird is associated with the voice's motif, sometimes a poetic one, as in different cultures the raven is capable of giving voice to prophecy. However, at the same time, the sound motif associated with the raven is a cry, often foretelling death and destruction. In such a context, the appearance of the raven motif in the first stanza can be seen as a similar event at the beginning of Dante's journey, who not only meets the vices allegorically embodied in the three beasts, but also receives further prophecy from Virgil.

However, unlike medieval culture, Brodsky's emblematic is not allegorical, but accentuated symbolic, which causes an ambivalent semantic multiplicity. The night of the raven is simultaneously imbued with connotations of anxiety, restlessness, potential death and disappearance and ominous prophecy, but it also has connotations of the opposite, affirming the value of knowledge, enlightenment and initiation. Raven in a number of national traditions acquires the qualities and functions of a cultural hero who obtains important knowledge or values, as well as acting as a world-creating demiurge. The latter correlates with the main lyrical event of both the first stanza and the entire first part, within the boundaries of which the lyrical hero's creation takes place.

In the second stanza, the heroine's action is not physically active, but intellectual and spiritual: to discern – that is, to recognise something, to distinguish it from another. The motif of distinction as a variant of the recognition's motif is one of the most common motifs in world literature, associated with the transition from ignorance to knowledge and usually coinciding with the decisive peripeteia in the plot. The recognition's motif is also significant in the "Divine Comedy". Dante at the beginning of "Inferno" does not immediately recognise Virgil, which finds its realisation by the polysemous motif of sight that pervades the entire text: "Quando vidi costui nel gran deserto" (Dante 2014, 11). A similar situation is presented in detail within the Song XXX of Purgatory, where Dante and Beatrice meet. In both cases recognition is not possible until the new person to the protagonist starts talking and identifies himself.

The initial stage of the hero's transformation – the emergence of a vague image – is presented as an accentuated process over time. At this stage of the plot's development, the lyrical hero becomes a work (creation) of the heroine, which does not immediately acquire its completed and embodied form. The vague appearance may be a stage of conception, while the manifested features are the fixation of content in form. The epithet of appearance implies the idea of a vague vision combined with the lack of form in the lyrical hero's creation. In the diurnal chronotope of the poem, the possibility of the transition in perception from vague appearance to features can suggest the change from the dull raven night to the coming dawn, which corresponds to the dynamics of Dante's hero's journey in "The Divine Comedy".

In the first verse of the third stanza, the motif of a new sensual perception, the tactile one, emerges. At the same time, the motif of physical perception turns out to be the heroine's first explicit characteristic. On the one hand, hot as a sign is one of the most expected and explainable in the logic of the erotic plot's development. On the other hand, hot as one of the gradations of warmth, as opposed to cold, is the main stable feature of a living rather than a dead being by most cultural traditions. However, the sign of hot is, like many other important qualities and properties in the context of supertextual unity, fundamentally ambivalent. Hot can be the highest degree of warmth, the active and creative presence of life, intimacy and affection, but it can

also be a destructive heat, a burning passion, a symptom of illness and discomfort, etc.

For "I was only what" the motif of hotness realises a different range of potential meanings. As we know, by the mythological ideology, the transfer of power, life energy, etc. is most often possible as a literal transfer within direct physical interaction: physiological or intimate contact, eating, drinking, etc. In this case, we can assume that touching the lyrical hero's beloved's hot palm endows him with her same ability, in this case we can speak of a kind of animation accompanied by the acquisition of form (body part).

The actualisation of the auricle's creation as a paired organ is significant. In addition to the already mentioned motif of parity as an emphatically feminine element, the chronotopic context is also developed in this case. On the one hand, the creative gesture of the protagonist's auricles suggests a close intimate contact linking the subjects in a limited space. On the other hand, the idea of embracing space with the heroine's gesture both on the left and on the right sets up an implicit motif of all-embracing, expanding space, its integrity within the unity of different parts.

In the poem "I was only what" the image of the shell becomes the first embodied gift of the beloved to the lyrical hero. Until now, her actions have had no objectified result. The first creation, however, turns out to be dual (two auricles), which is motivated by both the femininity of its creator and his essence. On mythopoetic level, the shell is linked to a number of motif's complexes of the poem and its actualised private texts. Thus, the love story, apart from its obvious participation in the interaction between hero and heroine (she creates him directly), is also set in the implicit context of the myth of Aphrodite, whose images evoke the context of Italian culture, which left the most famous representations of the myth (Botticelli, Titian, Tiepolo, etc.).

The sea shell also evokes an associative link with water and the sea. There is an accentuation of mythological ideas, according to which the world's creation, the transition from non-existence to existence is expressed in the appearance of sound, light, motion, heat within or near the water. In Christianity, the shell becomes an attribute of the Mother of God and John the Baptist, signifying the idea of rebirth, purification from new sin, the beginning of a new life. At the same time, the understanding of the shell as an erotic symbol is no less important for the poem's context. Thus, the lyrical hero undergoes his initiation (baptism), joins the new life and new knowledge and is purified from all sinfulness, which is facilitated by unity with the heroine and mutual love.

The creation of the auricle is accompanied by the motif of sound – whispering. Within the mythological and Christian tradition, the act of creation, of embodiment requires not only a gesture, but also the naming of a word. Whispering is an important motif in the context of Brodsky's poetry, whispering is not every sound, it is special speech, intimate and personal, accentuated by the motif of address, the convergence of the speaker and the addressee, the particular importance of the reported, etc. It also foreshadows the main event of the fourth stanza – the appearance of the hero's voice.

The voice as a further heroine's gift is made possible both by the previous acquisition – the appearance of the ears, and by the principle of isomorphism: the heroine's whisper (the ability to speak) is transmitted to the hero. Linguistically neutral, within the context of Brodsky's poetry the lexeme «voice» is between the most important concepts, forming one of the leading mythopoetic and philosophical ideas with its multitude of meanings and possibilities of usage. The voice is a way of the poet's metaphysical language's expression, finding its form in sound, a direct manifestation of life, a living being (in some cases the voice belongs to the soul, however, it can also characterize an animated personified death), a metonymic designation of the subject and a leading characteristic of the lyrical hero and his interlocutor, both real and potential.

The voice as a transmitted gift also has its spatial definition: "raw mouth" (Brodsky 2001, 226). The motif of dampness, on the one hand, is associated with a complex of meanings of insufficient readiness, incomplete processing, unfinished, etc., and, on the other hand, with meanings of dampness, contrasting dryness. As a defining characteristic, raw in Brodsky's work can be attributed to a variety of realities, both subjective and objective. In the poem's context "I was only what" the epithet raw in relation to the oral cavity is not so redundant and obvious in view of its opposition to the state of dryness, the absence of moisture in the mouth. The dampness of the mouth in the story of love and eroticism can be explained by the lyrical hero's particular emotional state, correlating with the motif of hotness as a characteristic of his beloved in the preceding stanza. At the same time, there is a kind of repetition of the motif of filling body parts with moisture created by the heroine, for in the preceding stanza the main event was the creation of hearing in the form of the ears themselves. As we know, the latter are just the outer part of the ear, the organ responsible for hearing, where sound collects, while its inner parts are filled with liquid. There is an obvious actualization of mythological semantics, motivated by the cosmogonical plot, when creation implies water's emergence, filling the empty space with liquid; in some cases, the water's prevalence is the initial state, necessary for subsequent creative acts of the deity.

The motif of the mouth cavity, which, like the auricle, has terminological precision as an anatomical definition, is also associated with an ambivalent range of meanings. A cavity is both a space in the body for various organs, bounded by internal surfaces, suggesting the idea of filling, a receptacle for something, and at the same time it is an emphatically empty space, capable of potentially being a repository for something, but associated with the idea of emptiness, absence.

With the lyrical plot's development the cavity of the lyrical hero's mouth, possibly created, as well as his whole form, also within the heroine's action of the first and second stanzas was empty, probably dry, with their proximity emotional and physical acquires the quality of humidity (becomes damp) and is filled when the lover puts her voice there. Obviously, symbolically, this part of the poem represents the culmination of the two's erotic rapprochement and is also the central part of the creation's plot, which grants the lyrical hero the ability to speak (potentially, also to create, in particular, to be a poet, which is evidenced by his creation of this poem). However, the first act and a kind of this gift's function is the possibility of communication, the addressee of which is the beloved: «calling out to you» (Brodsky 2001, 226).

The choice of this particular lexeme is due to the actualization of some motifs, above all, a motif which is absent in the synonymous variants – to call by name. In this case, there is an implicit question for the reader about the beloved woman's name. On an explicit level, the reader's answer could be a dedication, but outside the biographical context of the poem, this only strengthens the motif of communication, in particular of address and calling, suggesting personification, a particular person, and in the poem itself, the dialectic of the concrete-personal and the generalized-symbolic. The minus-principle associated with the absence of a name, yet its implied use with the lyrical hero's gaining a voice, can be regarded as an apophatic motif. The appearance of the latter logically follows from the general concept of beloved's sacral status, her higher supernatural functions and manifestations and the idea that the apophatic negation of deity definition (including her name, which is the determinant of essence) is one of the main conditions for human-god personal contact.

The result of the lyrical hero's ability to be active in the poem is the possibility of independent participation in communication with the heroine, a kind of approaching her, real or potential, which is witnessed by the first and only appearance of the object form of the pronoun denoting the heroine. It is no coincidence that this form appears in connection with the possibility of possessing the voice and the word, and is alluded to in a sacral

genre of prayers in various religious traditions. For example, Christian culture primarily embodies this in the Psalter, which is a collection of such hymns (prayers, eulogies) with multiple invocations.

This concludes the second part, devoted to the sphere of the heroine-lover, and opens the final part, which includes both the sphere of the lyrical hero and the world sphere. The first three verses of the fifth stanza are a continuation of the already familiar plot of the first and second stanzas, which accounts for the syntactic structure's parallelism, but the first verse of the fifth stanza differs from the corresponding verses in the initial stanzas of the poem. First of all, the composition of the first two verses lacks the enjambement, while the boundaries of the first verse and the syntactic sentence ending in a full stop coincide markedly. So far in the textual development of the poem, there has been no other such case of a coincidence of verse and sentence boundaries, whereas afterwards such a coincidence of boundaries will be used twice more: in the last verse of the fifth stanza and in the first verse of the sixth, i.e., three times in total. Taken together, they form a kind of peculiar gradation: "I was simply blind" – "so leave a trace" – "so create worlds" (Brodsky 2001, 226). It is obvious that the last two verses will be part of a series of four verses with the anaphora "so", referring to the cosmogonical plot, while the marked one is the first verse, characterizing the lyrical hero.

The fifth stanza completes the creation plot of the lyrical hero, and the first three verses are devoted to another significant acquisition, with the explicit motif of a gift appearing in the poem's context for the first time. This is preceded by the first of the three verses, a kind of statement by the lyrical hero of his condition preceding the impact of his beloved on him. In contrast to the first two statements, in this case the description of his state is not accompanied by a strengthening of the restrictive particle, but the word form "simply" appears, marked as colloquial, distinguished from the neutral one not only by stylistic connotations, but also by an additional semantic complex. In its direct and primary meaning "simply" means literally, elementally, artlessly, etc. In this case, the lyrical hero gives a kind of motivation to his assertion of blindness, suggesting that the search for other definitions and characteristics is meaningless, unnecessary. His state before he met his beloved can be defined in a very "simple" way, without the need for other, more complex or more figurative expressions. It is likely that a similar clarification is also necessary to explain the categorical, maximum degree of "negativity" of his status in the past: exactly blind, that is, with a complete lack of the ability to see. Taking into account that the first verse of the fifth stanza is a statement of the lyrical hero, who already has a form, a voice and sight, this comprehension of his past appears to be prepared. The motif of a deaf night in the first stanza, that is, devoid not only of sound, but also of light, also corresponds to it.

However, at the same time, the motif of simplicity emerges, which is set by the word form associatively, developing its direct meaning and actualizing the etymology of the particle. It is worth noting that the use of the particle "simple" and its derivatives is characteristic of Brodsky's work and is associated with the already indicated ideas of the clearest, most unambiguous and not in need of additions or variations of the idea (motivation, reason), state, action, etc. No less important is the motif of simplicity, set more often as a characteristic of some reality – both subject and object.

At the same time, Brodsky's attitude to simplicity is fundamentally ambivalent, which, on the whole, corresponds to the ambiguity of this quality in the mentality of different nations. Russian traditional culture perceives simplicity as a special state of purity and pristine quality, and as potential stupidity and superfluous naivety that could be harmful or hindering. For the lyrical hero, both of these meanings come together. He is characterised by simplicity as ignorance, lack of true knowledge, ignorance and limitation in a state of blindness before he met the heroine, and simplicity as a special wisdom, a vision revealed to him and a clear understanding of "simple" truths afterwards.

The main revelation of this simplicity for the lyrical hero is the knowledge of his blindness in the state preceding the meeting with his beloved. For Brodsky, blindness as a subject's or an object's quality is a marked characteristic associated with a fundamentally inherent ambivalence rooted in the mythological tradition. This understanding of the motif of blindness is elaborated in the work "Poems about Blind Musicians".

Blindness in various archaic traditions can realise two sets of meanings with opposite semantics. Thus, a positive series is associated within the separation of "outer" and "inner" vision with the value priority of the latter as an opportunity to comprehend sacred knowledge and disregard for the earthly world. According to this tradition, most epic poets or performers are depicted as blind. Blindness also appears as an attribute of fair impartial judgment. More often, however, a negative series is realized, suggesting the idea of ignorance, delusion, loss, limitedness, etc. Multiple examples of such symbolic semantics can be found in biblical myths: the blinded inhabitants of Sodom, the blinded Samson, the blindness of Paul, etc. In the latter case, as in a number of other situations in the Bible, blindness is represented as a temporary condition preceding transformation, the acquisition of the true way or knowledge, at least potentially possible in the future.

The motif of blindness as a lack of vision is also connected to the significant motif of light, and this connection is already set at the lexical level in the derivative motif of dazzling – the highest manifestation of light, capable of taking away vision. The motifs of darkness and light that emerge from the first stanza and the motif of the dead night become particularly important in connection with the hero's sightlessness. Such a semantic relationship, as has already been noted, is characteristic of the "Divine Comedy", where the motifs of night-day and darkness-light play a key role in the hero's journey. As we know, light as a metonymic signifier of the Sun is a manifestation of the Divine presence. Given the sacralized status of the beloved in Brodsky's poem, her gift of vision to the lyrical hero is logically motivated. The third gift, in the poem "I was only what", linked to the sphere of the lyrical hero's senses, transforms him as Dante, whose transformation and journey from darkness to light was in many ways, in turn, guided by the plot of Paul's vocation. On the one hand, it is in the fifth stanza, after the plot's completion by the beloved's creation, that the heroes are equalized in status, become full and equal to each other. In textual terms, this is witnessed in the verse architectonics of the stanza, where both subjects occupy the same position of absolute beginning, as they did in the first stanza, but now their interdependence, suggesting enjambement, is absent and graphically they are equated: I – You. In the fifth stanza, for the first time the hero's form of address to his beloved is given in a capital letter, preceded by an urgent for the heroine and an uppercase for the "I" of the subject. It is possible to suggest that the significant change is linked to a qualitative change in the subject's point of view, which required the acquisition of sensory organs and abilities for hearing, voice and especially sight. And as a logical development of this, the hero's becoming enables him to see his beloved adequately and to realise not only himself, but also her as a subject, the other-self.

In turn, if we consider the main lyrical event of the fifth stanza as the lyrical hero gaining sight and vision of his beloved, then a series of motifs characterizing the image of her action becomes clear: "arising, hiding" (Brodsky 2001, 226). In most of the interaction's plots between man and deity, the latter is often not given to the gaze constantly and unhindered, it requires effort from the believer, etc. One can speak of an epiphany that is not immediately revealed to the beholder. For the lyrical hero, the completion of this process is the acquisition of sight, but it is with this gift that the beloved disappears from the text. The fact of her full-fledged appearance can only be assumed as potential, as it does not receive explicit expression, but its probable possibility is evidenced by the last verse of the fifth stanza, connecting the two parts.

Verse 20 in the composition of the poem turns out to be consciously actualised by dual semantic and logical relations: as the outcome of the creation's plot by the hero's beloved and as the beginning of the cosmogony plot. There are various motivations for this juxtaposition of scales: the concept of the identity of micro- and macro-cosm with the idea of man as a world's model, the idea of love as the driving force that completes Dante's "Divine Comedy", and the formation of man as creator, capable of directing his gifts towards creating worlds, above all verbal ones. The cosmogonical plot, the main events of which are denoted by the anaphoric "so", fundamentally involves the correlation of two partial plots: a love plot with the lyrical hero's meaningful centre of creation, and the plot of the world's creation.

The present timeless, the time of eternity without end, is the time by which creation is described. And it is capable of being reproduced both in the repetition of the world-creation event itself (the form of the present timeless, the motif of the frequency of action's repetition) and in the multiplicity of creation objects (the plural form "worlds"). In this case the context of philosophical comprehension of the cosmogonical plot emerges as a possible source for Brodsky's poetic representation. In this connection, the poet's reference to Parmenides in the poem from the cycle "Twenty Sonnets to Mary Stuart": "He shall not create – according to Parmenides – twice" (Brodsky 2001, 226) becomes relevant. However, the possibility of specific creation's in "I was only what" turns out to be entirely motivated by a fundamentally different, non-metaphysical concept, which can be seen as a continuation of the polemic with the philosophical position of the distant ancestor who does not take into account the operative power of love.

This is why Brodsky's extended comparison is constructed in such a way that the cosmogonical plot, which implies a larger scale, occupies a subordinate position. However, its analogy as a dependent subject of love is traceable in a similar composition: the first three repetitions of "so" introduce the poems dedicated to the creation's events, and then there is the result-sequence, marked by the fourth stage. It is known that, summing up the development of ancient culture, Proclus proposed to consider the structure of the universe as a triad: staying – coming – returning. This concept presupposes a view on the world as complete and limited. For Brodsky, however, one of the main culminating events of the lyrical plot, the poem as well as the entire supertextual unity, is the essentially unlocking of borders – their intersection by the lyrical hero within the framework of the love story and the plot of creation (which can be regarded as a kind of initiation), and their openness in time and space within the cosmogonical plot, which denies Parmenides, rather suggesting an affinity with Heraclides' dialectic (with the important overcoming of any theory in immediate life, whose driving energy is love).

The four-part scheme of the poem's final part is set within the framework of an extended comparison of the first two parts with the creation's plot and corresponds to the main stages of the mythological plot scheme in its vegetative version. Taken together, these are the stages of initiation that the lyrical self undergoes with the active help and complicity of the beloved, who assumes the functions and significance of Godhead. Thus, Brodsky's first and second stages (disappearance and suffering) correspond to blindness, lack of form, the possibility of perception. As has already been noted, the lyrical hero is associated with a position of spatial lowering and a deaf night, which finds a parallel in the mythological hero's departure underground. The third and central stage – the quest – in this case is carried out not by the lyrical hero himself, but by his beloved, who in creation realises the hero's discovery of himself, which corresponds to the final stage of creation.

Creation is associated with the motif of completeness and inexhaustibility, harmony as a dynamic balance of all possible manifestations, which evokes the enumeration, introducing a series of alternating elements-states (heat – cold – darkness – light) and the most perfect form for world culture – a sphere.

Interestingly, the implicit motif of loneliness appears twice in the final section: “left to rotate”, “lost in the universe” (Brodsky 2001, 226). However, now we can talk about the transformation of this motif, which is significant for Brodsky’s poetic context, into a motif devoid of negative connotations, associated with the self-sufficiency of the created object and its possibility for a fully autonomous existence. The idea of the circle, also set twice in the motifs of rotation and sphere, suggests an allusion to the theory of the heavenly spheres, associated in Pythagoreanism with music. The lyric as originally sung reinforces this analogy between the creation of the world and the poetic text, right up to their absolute coincidence: the world as text (the reverse is also possible). This also finds a parallel in Dante’s “Divine Comedy”, seen as a kind of poetic *summae theologiae*.

8 Conclusion

Thus, the perspective of singling out and modelling the supertextual unity is extremely fruitful, allowing us to reconstruct the logic of the author’s artistic thinking and reconstruct his mythopoetic worldview, which cannot be fully and adequately understood in the immanent analysis of a single work. However, functioning as part of the whole, the poem actualises multiple contextual connections, allowing us to see new possibilities of interpreting motifs and images of complex meaning.

The poem recognised as the semantic centre of this unity helps the reader to reconstruct the intended model of the whole lyrical plot, the individual work acts as a metonymic representation of the whole, further guiding the perception of the author’s other texts.

In Brodsky’s poetic work the author’s intention potentially implies the possibility of forming a special supertextual unity with active reader’s reception. The main components of this phenomenon are thematic texts: Christmas, topical (Italian) and love, which form a complex series of content and poetological intersections. However, the supertextual unity can be embodied in its main features within a single poem, which acquires the function of the semantic centre. For such a unity with the subject of the hero’s initiation into love and creativity, the poem “I was only what I was” becomes the semantic centre. Dante’s *Divine Comedy* appears to be the model of a large text form, which dominates the intertext and determines the integrity of the poem at all levels.

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Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AJ