Approaches to Poetry

Some Aspects of Textuality, Intertextuality and Intermediality

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To Cross Or Not To Cross: Axmatova's "Sacred Boundary"

1. Introduction

The title refers both to the text at hand and to my theoretical quandary, as I find myself approaching Axmatova's programmatically borderline poem with what can be described as a borderline poetics. Having worked for quite a while within the Soviet structuralist fold and then graduated into the poststructuralist beyond, I can best formulate my present position as a study in enlightened eclecticism with an intertextual bent.

1.1 A post-poststructuralist poetics

My previous theoretical stance and practical analyses were shaped by Russian Formalism with its notions of device (Shklovsky) and invariant function (Shklovsky, Propp); Jakobsonian principles of isomorphism, iconicity, and text-foregrounding; Eisenstein's theme-oriented expressive generativism amant la lettre; and multi-level models in linguistics. This pool of ideas was systematized into a model of literary competence called a poetics of expressionism (Stechov and Zholkovsky 1976, 1987), based on the concepts of

- theme: master invariant of the text;
- poetic world: hierarchy of invariants recurrent in an author's texts;
- expressive device: theme-preserving expressiveness-enhancing transformations;
- derivation: formulation of the theme-text correspondence in terms of expressive devices;
- levels: successive approximations of the text in the derivation (theme — deep design — deep structure — surface structure);
- dictionary of reality: data base of all derivations, comprising the referential and stylistic spheres and their further subdivisions, or codes (e.g. ideological, psychological, ..., syntactic, phonetic, ...).
- ready-made objects: dictionary realizations of clusters of themes and devices.

The model was tested against various works of poetry and prose, yielding a wealth of practical analyses and prompting further refinements of the apparatus.

1.2 Corrections

There were, I believe, several interconnected reasons that led me to discontinue exclusive reliance on the model just described. One had to do with the difficulty of incorporating it in the phenomenon of intertextuality. Another reason was the unwieldy complexity of the format, which increased with every attempt to account for longer or more sophisticated texts and their wider intertexts. A third resulted from the realization that finite closure is hardly a tenable universal, even if we allow for the text's thematic ambiguity: the admission of an open plurality of interpretative perspectives seemed unavoidable. As a fourth reason, I came to accept the fundamental textuality of the critic's discourse itself, with the corollary that derivational analyses were not only conceptually cumbersome but also discursively unanswerable (and, therefore, impractical in the current intellectual climate). None of this amounts to a reiteration of the model, but rather suggests a change of tone and emphasis in its use.

The issue of intertextuality can be addressed in the spirit of Riffaterre's (1978) representation of any poem as an expansion and conversion of a known (textual, ideological, cultural) model. Yet, even this schema may be an oversimplification inherited from the structuralists' binary opposition. A strong case has been made by Smolov (1985) for four-term intertextual homologies, but an unspecified range of possible intertextual designs appears to be an even more attractive (if less strict) theoretical option. The concepts of opposition, homology, and mediation remain staples of poetic analysis, but they should be given freer play in stating the type and degree of interaction between the text's various voices (Zholkovsky 1988, Culler 1975: 174). This naturally brings up the Baxtinian concept of mutually subversive discourses, in particular the idea that any speech act is oriented toward an explicit or implicit "other voice." The polyphonic principle awaits its adoption in poetic analysis despite Bakhtin's own disregard for poetry as an allegedly monologic opposite of novelistic dialogism.²

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¹ In principle, such incorporation does not seem feasible if one (a) manages to distinguish clearly between the discourse's stylistic concerns proper, its general intertextual import, and its specific textual allusions, borrowings etc., and (b) undertakes to state all these elements at every level of the derivation (Zholkovsky 1983, 1985).
² For Baxtin's "standard" view of poetry as monologic see the chapter on "Discourse in Poetry and in the Novel" (1961: 275–300, esp. 285). Cf., on the contrary, his earlier work (1966 [1920–1929], esp. pp. 138–157), where he focuses on the interaction between the ethical-cognitive reactions of the hero(ines) of a lyrical poem and the author's esthetic "reaction to these reactions." Of particular relevance to our discussion in this early piece are
--- the identification of the author's "encompassing reaction" as the source of a poem's "esthetic completion," i.e. closure;
--- the actual poetic example used: Pushkin's "For the Shores of Your Faraway Fatherland...", which happens to be part of the subtextual background of Axmatova's poem under
One important type of intertextual tension is that between the poet and the prevailing discourse of his time. If that discourse is authoritative, it results in political, cultural, moral and other kinds of censorship and, as a corollary, the "dialogue" with it results in Aesopian language (Loew 1984, Zholkovsky 1986). Similarly, a poet's evolution can be envisaged as the introduction into his/her poetic world of new elements which both subvert and change it. Especially instructive is the case where the situation is Aesopian, as, for instance, in the second period of Pasternak's work, marked by the adaptation of his poetic world to the demands of 1930s' Stalinist ideology (Zholkovsky 1989 b).

The search for the text's subtexts should include, along with its predictable antecedents in the native and world poetic tradition, prosaic and even un-literary texts (of manifestoes, documents, the other arts, the "practical series," etc.; Ronen 1983). Furthermore, the preoccupation of Slavists with specific "subtextual" sources has to be transcended, making room for structural, stylistic, mythological, psychoanalytic, archetypal, and other generalized intexts (Lafcadio 1978: 120 ff., Zholkovsky 1987). A successful combination of the two approaches is instanced by the study of "semantic haloes" ( narody) of Russian meters (Taranovsky 1963, Gasparov 1976, 1979, 1982, 1983, 1984). A meter's thematic potential, stored in its memory, is discovered through a comprehensive analysis of all the poems written in that meter. This means that in choosing a meter the poet is confronted with a generalized set of options (rather than individual subtexts), which can be followed, subverted, overcome, recombined, etc. (cf. Bloom 1975).

The idea of assigning a text an unordered assemblage of readings was broached in Barth's STJ (1974 [1970]), as yet from within the immanent concept of the text as a sum-total of its codes. In "standard" poetics-of-expressiveness analyses, similar limited polyphony was admitted in the form of the centrally controlled variety of the theme's projections onto the text's levels and codes. It now seems preferable to accept a loose set of readings, perhaps mutually related but not necessarily coordinated in an unambiguous manner, each stating the posture taken by the text vis-à-vis the respective discourse convention (genre, code, ideology). 1

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2 Recent focus on the pragmatics of literary discourse owes much to the impact of Austin's (1975) work on performatives but it also had strong forerunners in the fields of literary and art theory, such as Bakunin, Eisenstein (see Zholkovsky 1984: 35–59), Burke (1957), and the American New Critics. Without claiming definitiveness, one can suggest the following types of context that should supplement the components of the text itself (i.e. its "zero-degree" context) as a tentative

In what follows I offer readings of some aspects of a poem by Anna Axmatova (1889—1960) and demonstrate some parts of the outlined program. The exposition will be less rigorous than before, but, alas, not as discursive as my newly found post-structuralism would imply.

2. The text

2.1 The original

N. V. N.

Est' v blizosti ljudej zavazenja jerta,
Be ne porej vljubljenosti in strasti, —
Post' v žitkem tleh nišljivaja usta,
I sedeče cvetaja ce ljudjev na ženi.

I dal'ce vse dele besedila, in gole
Vysokoj i ogromnogo klasiča,
Kogda duša svobodna i žuda
Medšeščnej istine šalostanča.

2.2 A literal translation

In human intimacy there is a sacred boundary,
It cannot be crossed by romance or passion —
Though lips be fusioned together in awful silence
And the heart be without love.

Friendship, too, is powerless here, and so are years
Of sublime and fiery happiness,
When the soul is free and alien
To the slow languor of voluptuousness.

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format for intertextual studies:
— the specific subtext(s) engaged by the text;
— the genre in which the text is written and which it most likely is trying to satirize;
— the system of the author's invariants, which the text may also be reviewing;
— the influential contemporary context, a love-hate relationship with which informs the text;
— the mythological or psychological archetype that manifests itself in the text, probably with innovative variation;
— the text of the author's life and work, of which the given literary text forms a special version.

For attempts of multi-contextual analysis see Zholkovsky 1989 a, c.

1 All subsequent quotes are from this version.
Those striving towards it [the boundary] are insane, while those
who have reached it [are] stricken with anguish ...
Now you have understood why my
heart does not beat under your hand.
(Rewritten from Obolensky 1965: 317)

2.3 A poetic translation

With closest friends there is a secret line ...
Passion and love can't cross it or deny it,
Although in eyes silence lips combine
And hearts are torn to pieces by love's riot.
Friendship is helpless here ... So are the years
Of even a supreme, bright happiness ... 
When these, our souls, are free and foreigns
To the lazy languor of voluptuousness.
Those who strive for it are insane ... Those who
Gain it are stricken with anguish and yearning.
Now you know why my heart which still loves you
Can never tremble under your hand's turning.
(Markov and Sparks 1967: 210)

3. Structure

3.1 Referential motifs

The poem openly states its theme: the unbridgeable intimacy gap — the 
qvestina četë that can be translated approximately as “sacred [secret, inviolate, 
specially designated] boundary [line, mark, limit].” This border line cannot 
be crossed even under the pressure of the strongest forces of emotional fusion 
(lust, love, friendship), whether in moments of amorous passion or in long-
term relationships. It manifests itself in the heart's lack of physical response 
to the caring hand and in the soul's spiritual freedom (to the point of 
alienation) from the body's sensuality. At best it can be reached, not transcended, 
but this and even more striving towards it are punished with mental breakdown.

3.2 Stylistic motifs:

The boundary motif has as its age-old stylistic counterpart various run-on 
effects, which dramatize the conflict between linguistic and verse boundaries.
Azmato's work is a sophisticated exercise in run-ons. The first stanza has 
none; the second has two, which are prominent but not extreme: (“years/of ... happiness;” “alien/to ... voluptuousness”); and the third (which, referen-
tially, treats of reaching the fatal boundary) boasts a series of spectacular run-
on and pauses. The text of stanza III is interrupted by pauses after begasy, 
“insane” (end of clause); after e, “it” (end of line; iti. “... while those who
it have reached ...”); after dostiglo, “who have reached [it]” (end of the 
grammatical subject group in the second of two coordinated parallel clauses); 
after pojač, “understood” (end of clause); after nowe, “my” (end of line).

The acuteness of two of these ruptures is enhanced by inverted word 
order: odostiglo rather than the normal odostiglo vs, the convoluted more 
bnatna bizia siro (lit. “my/not beats heart”) instead of sinoni bizia m dzi. In fact, 
the inversions serve as icons of both the separating obstacles and the powerful 
drive towards fusion, which, in a sense, does take place as the sentences 
succeed in being completed.

The final crossing is undertaken on the poem's narrative frame. The last 
two lines, appearing after an ominous three dots, turn out to be direct speech, 
addressed by the poem's lyrical 'I' to its lyrical 'you' (actually, the intimate 
second person singular ty is used) in the here and now rather than in the 
impersonal and indefinite meditative present of the rest of the poem. The 
transition again both succeeds (stylistically the switch is very effective) and 
fails in a different mode and under even more daunting circumstances the 
speaker reasserts the same denial.

4. Intersects

4.1 The poetic world

A poet's text is usually just another variation on his/her recurrent motifs — 
a sentence, as it were, written according to the grammar of the entire oeuvre. 
This 1915 poem is one of the most widely anthologized gems of Anna 
Azmato's early period, typical of that period and her style in general. It 
is vintage Azmato in many respects:
— the profound mistrust of love and happiness;
— the blunt honesty, sometimes with a touch of exhibitionist coyness, with 
which she addresses sex, death, the human condition;
— the poem's elegant narrative point, which involves the addresser and 
is fleshed out with a striking physical gesture;

6 On Azzato's poetic world see Shushalov 1979. The book of verse Beloja face (The White 
Flask, 1977), in which the poem was later included, is marked by the influence of Puschkin 
(Zhiranovskii 1973: 79). The poem is dedicated to N.V. Maldororov, Azmato's friend 
and critic (see Azzato 1976: 461), but the discussion of the biographical context is omitted 
from the present analysis.

7 Azmato's poems often open with higher troubles, in particular, with close-ups of 
lovers' hands, e.g. Koc repovak/ na objzajl/Prikladomnoj džiče ruk ("How unlike embrace/ Are the touches of these hands"); On mato transm se halli/Poći ne dragovolj roža ("Again
— the consummately regular poetic diction (meter, rhyming) that disguises stylistic and versification innovations (e.g. the narrative surprise at the end; the irregular line length of the six- and five-foot iamb) and provides a perfect background for the modest but telling play of run-ons and pauses.

4.2 The tradition

In the historical perspective, Aksamova's poetics is a modernist version of the Russian romantic tradition, in particular, of that neo-classicist mold into which it was cast by Pushkin, the playfully harmonious reconciler of opposites, on the one hand, and Batayski and Tjutchev, the self-corrosive metaphysicists, on the other. From Pushkin, her worshipped model, Aksamova inherits an obsession with exploring all possible mediations between passion and impassivity, but she pushes his mortification of vitality to deliberate extremes in the spirit of Batayski's and Tjutchev's philosophical disillusionment.

Within the modernist camp, Aksamova is part of the Acmest, moderately conservative reaction to Symbolism, as distinct from Futurism's aggressively radical exploding of the entire nineteenth-century tradition. While sharing in the general decadent atmosphere of the times, Acmism, especially Aksamova's brand, prided itself on both bringing poetry down to earth from Symbolism's otherworldly heights and maintaining its idealistic adherence to higher values. One of the noted hallmarks of Aksamova's poetics, her allusive reliance on the stereotypes of the nineteenth-century psychological novel (Eisenbaum 1969: 140), is representative of both these tendencies: it is a move toward prosanization and novelization of poetry (began by the great civic poet Nekrasov); yet, it confines itself to the love-and-lyricity aspects of the novelistic paradigm (steering clear, for instance, of its streetwise and criminal aspects poetically promoted by Majakovski).

be touched my knees/With [his] hand that almost did not tremble’); Kak bezpokoito, zaku i medko [glofli] Xelomo riivi and “Now helplessly, avidly and heedlessly [he] stroking [my cold hands]”; and the like.

On Aksamova's use of narrative painter, *you*, and detail see Eisenbaum 1969: 140–143. 9 On Aksamova's Batayski and Tjutchev connection see Eisenbaum 1969: 139 (of particular relevance to the analyzed poem could be two Tjutchev's lyrics that treat of love, parting, and death and use the same “There is ...” formula: “V zaluke est' y to cherez zanekoe” ... “[There Is In Separation a Sublime Meaning ...”], 1851, first publ. 1914; “Ist' i v morni strad' i cherez zanoe ...” “[There Is In My Suffering Stagnation ...”], 1874). This leaves out, among the great nineteenth-century poets, Lermontov and Fet, both of whom were very important for the Symbolists and, one or the other or both, for Majakovski, Pasternak, and Mandel'stam in Aksamova's own post-symbolist generation; it was probably Lermontov's demonically overstated ‘I and Fet's gushingly lyrical poetic personality that Aksamova had to realize.


6 On the "novelization" of poetry in Nekrasov—Annenski—Aksamova see Magomedova 1989.

The poem under analysis reflects these intertextual presences by

— the soberly resigned acceptance of limits to the grand utopian claims about human nature; 11
— the delicate balance of order/disorder in the structure, which echoes the provocatively bisez blend of indifference and sensuality in the plot;
— the characteristic mix of lofty philosophizing with the physical vividness of the narrative pointe.

The last item also deserves special generic attention.

11 As an example of such claims in the immediately preceding (and still lingering) poetic discourse see the 1904 poem "Stikhe" ("Glories") by a founder of Russian Symbolism, the famous woman poet Zhovanka Gippius that treats of a symbolic dark glass dividing the lovers ("we"), yet ends on a note of faith in the future union:

V stseve, gde vse neobylajo,
My splendery podnebeh tajnoj.
No v zhit' nalet, ne slozajo,
Raz'edini na, ost, seglo.
Mel nami tomnoe stikhe...

U sljat Bog, Kregoram svedlo.
On dass nam til nab' seko.

(In the land where everything is unusual
We are intersected by a victorious mystery.
But in the world, not accidentally,
Dividing us, there lay down
Between us a dark glass.

... God will hear [us]. It is light all around.
He will give us the strength to break the glass.)
(Gippius 1910: 55)

Characteristically, the divine otherworldly forces work here against the obstacles of life on this earth and for the partners' intertwining (in body and soul) and the eventual breakthrough in communication. In Aksamova's poem, on the contrary, the couple's real circumstances seem to promote fusion, while the fundamental laws of the human condition perpetuate the boundaries. Involved are also the respective value systems: Gippius prizes a complete union of souls, Aksamova, the freedom that comes with boundaries and alienation ("When the soul is free and alien to/ The slow languor of voluptuousness").

True, Gippius cultivated also the eternal tension of unrequited, unsummoned, or otherwise unresolved love and to an extent Aksamova shared in this continuation of the romantic tradition, but there is a crucial difference. For Gippius (and other Symbolists), love as a real or virtual union of (two or more) persons or souls, promised from above, is a symbol of ultimate — whether Platonic, Christian, Federovian, or Socialist — community (see Matich 1990). Aksamova, especially in this poem, views such expectations as futile attempts to invade invisible privacy. Thus, her position is basically dystopian, i.e. two conservative (returning to bourgeois individualism) and innovative (transcending the utopian claims). Rather than exiling in the newfound freedom, she states it as a sad but given reality.
4.3 Genre

The poem’s general tenor is signaled from the start by the formulaic *Est* et... (“There is in ...”), which opens scores of similar philosophical musings in Russian poetry.\(^{12}\) This meditative genre welcomes negated predicates, adverbal constructions, controversial arguments, and outright and downright decidable conclusions. What makes Aksmatova’s poem so distinctly her own is the way it handles its particular paradox.

The effect of the finale does not boil down to the pattern outlined above: an oxymoronic physical exemplum of the expanded philosophical thesis providing an unexpected narrative twist and a boundary crossing. Aksmatova’s recourse to the methods of prosaic composition is not merely technical; it follows the most fundamental principle of novelistic discourse: that of subverting the pretensions of the dominant voice by exposing its less than noble origins.

While ostensibly providing the dissertation about limits to intimacy with an example from the speaker’s addresser’s own experience, the concluding remark actually weakens the case by showing the authoritatively objective impersonal statement for what it is — a personal opinion of somebody involved in the disputed issue, nursing a trauma, and holding forth about sound grapes.\(^{13}\) The credibility of the speaker’s haughty philosophical posture is further undermined by her spatially low position “under the hand” (and presumably other bodily parts) of the addressee. Still, the subversion stops short of explosion: the final lines maintain the stoically dignified tone of the rest of the poem.

5. Subjects

Aksmatova’s general focus on the Pushkinian tradition makes Pushkin a likely source of direct quotations; her post-symbolist stance privileges the texts of her immediate predecessors; while her novelistic strategy suggests reliance on prosaic hypogams, possibly to be found in the works of Baxtin’s novelist par excellence, Dostoevskij — all the more so, given his special interest in threshold situations and the problematic of transgression. Indeed, two references to Pushkin, one to Annenskij, and one to Dostoevskij seem to underlie the poem’s linguistic texture.

5.1 Lexical subjects

The leitmotif image of ‘uncrossable boundary’ — and, in fact, the entire ‘there is ...’ phrase — may have been consciously or unconsciously borrowed from Pushkin:

No nedostupnaya tera ne znaiu est’.  
Naprasno khristro voychilja ja.  
(By an unattainable boundary is between us.  
In vain did I espire any feeling[1])

(Pushkin 3: 20)  
“Pod nebom goleymbry strony  
Svoey rodnoy ...”  
(“Under the Blue Sky of  
Her Native Land ...”[2]; 1836)

Yet, despite the obvious thematic, linguistic and metrical affinities, the difference is pronounced. In Pushkin, the boundary is drawn between the

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\(^{12}\) To give some examples: Batalkov: *Est* nesteplisaj i v dikati kos ... (“There is pleasure in the wilderness of forests ...”); Barasjynskij: *Est* neljub strane, est sag na gende ... (“There is a dear land, there is a corner in the world ...”); Lermontov: *Est* reti — zaustaj ... (“There are speeches — [whose] meaning ...”); Tjutčen: *Pokon* est’ s morshie volshen ... (“There is melodiousness in sea waves ...”); see also Note 6; Fre: *Est* neljub juhkel hie sta ... (“There is the brilliance and force of the winter night ...”); Blok: *Est* mizhke, koja an izskreb ... (“There are minutes, when it troubles not ...”); Annenskij: *Est* liubot, povestja na dun ... (“There is love that resembles smoke ...”); Mandel’stam: *Est* rostovoj nepryjebaja chada ... (“There is the unapproachable scale of values ...”).

\(^{13}\) Cf. Vinogradov’s (1976: 138—139) similar observation about this poem and also Eisenstein’s (1909: 131) remark on Aksmatova’s “predilection for contrasting combinations of ... prosaic and ... colloquial intonations with solemn expressions and intentional parody” in more general terms, this is, of course, an instance of Baxtin’s diachrony (both Vinogradov and Baxtin see brought to bear on Aksmatova’s and Annenskij’s “novelization” of lyrical poetry in Mesyats and Vinogradov irrespective of Aksmatova and novelization see Perlin 1988).

In the present analysis the possibilities of Baxtin’s approach are barely touched upon (see also Note 2). A more consistent effort in that direction would have to consider the dialogic interactions between the autonomous consciousness of the heroine, the hero, and the speaker of the poem (Baxtin’s “author”). Even more stimulating could prove an attempt to read Aksmatova’s treatment of boundaries and death (see section 5.1) in light of Baxtin’s views (as aptly formulated in Emerson 1988: 508, 510, 514, 516) on death as the ultimate closure or closure as the opposite of the always desirable unfinalizability; and on “innovanted demolition” as the ideal and possible solution to the “conflict between an organism and its surroundings.” Incidentally, this last, somewhat stigmatic assumption — Emerson’s (1988: 516—517, 520) arguments notwithstanding — places Baxtin together with the Symbolists, and not with the more skeptical Aksmatova (see Note 11).
speaker and his old love who has now expired in a foreign land; in Axmatova's, it cuts across all loving couples, even in moments of utmost intimacy.

Incidentally, the motif of 'death,' central to the Pushkin poem and apparently absent from Axmatova's (but, in fact, implicit in the general mood of disillusioned resignation and soul's estrangement from the body), is subtly reinforced by another subtext. The wording of the second line seems to rely on a covert quote from the Book of Job: "... [his days are determined ...]" (14:5). Although the noun ('boundary') in Russian predel is lexically different from Axmatova's (erra, "boundary"), the negated main verb ('to pass,' pervet) is the same, as is the general syntactic and semantic structure; as a result, a sense of terminal irreversibility is imparted to the sad observations of Axmatova's speaker.

A chronologically closer elaboration on the 'fateful boundary' is found in a 1904 poem by Axmatova's acknowledged mentor Innokentij Anenskij:

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Navist net li plenennoj snoj,
I, povija, mstolotajsa volny,
Dva pasos lodi odno,
Odno i dvyem om my pole.

Nem barja elenja stila,
My svity beznannym stoni,
No mochka sud'be mezhdu namii
Cesta navetgda provela.

I na sobu bezznamnego loga,
Kogda tak privol'no-tomen,
Sgoraja, kosyr'tja drug druga,
Odnyi parzom ne dano.

(Whet her the fiery heat hangs over,
Or, foaming, the waves disperse,
Two sails of one boat,
We are filled with one and the same breath.

The storm has fused our desires,
We are woven together by insane dreams,
But silently has the fate between us
Drawn forever a boundary.
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15. Anenskij's strain in Axmatova's style was noted by Eisenbaum (1909: 139); with "Two Sails ..." the poem in question shares a number of lexical and referential motifs ("fused desires," "woven together," "insane," "fiery," etc.).

16. In The Cypress Boc, "Two Sails ..." immediately precedes the poem "Dve iloryt" ("Two Lovers"), which begins Estonian, provokacija na dyne ..., "There is love that resembles smoke ..." and several pages later these poems are followed by "Nezamatok" ("Impossible," 1907), a metacritic declaration of love for the sounds of the title word, opening with Estonian, ce grunt, ce act ..., "There are words — their breath is like color ..." (Anenskij 1959: 155–158).

As a result, the poem's subsexual aura reinforces the existential connotations of the fatal boundary by associating its hazards with crime (in addition to insanity and death, as before). And, of course, the Dostoevskij connection foregrounds the text's dialogicity.

5.2 A structural subtext

The poem's dominant pattern, the play with run-ons and pauses, finds its denouement in the two concluding lines — to be precise, in the segment between the last two and most striking boundaries: ..., otlega my... "... why my..." This phrase stands out as an epitome of uneasy isolation thanks both to the effectively surrounding pauses and the nonsensical combination of two strange bedfellows: a conjunction and a displaced adjective. And by standing out it brings to mind a similar conclusion of a Pushkin classic:

1 serde vnov' gorit i ljubit — otsego,
   Co ne ljubit' ono ne moeet.

(And my heart again burns and loves — for the reason
   That not love it can not.)

("Pushkin: 1: 158; "Na solnax Gruzii letlit
notsaja nigla ..." ["Upon the Hills of
Georgia Lies Night Frost ..."]; 1839)

The similarities are many:

— the general pattern of stops and syntactic subordination, as well as the actual conjunctions (otlega, "why" — otlega "for the reason", which are as similar in Russian as, say, "wherefore" and "therefore" in English);
— the negation of the verbs ("does not beat="/cannot not love");
— the rhyming pattern (alternation of masculine and feminine O-rhymes);
— and the central "heart" (serde) lexeme and image.

But what Axiomova does is make Pushkin's effects more pronounced:
— by moving the conjunction inside the line, she is able to add a second dangling word (the adjective one, "my") and thus literally give greater pause to the demands of passion,19

18 The poems as wholes also exhibit similarities: Pushkin alternates iambic hexameters and tetrameters, while Axiomova gradually moves from hexameters to pentameters; and both shift from A- to O-rhymes. In this latter respect, the difference is noteworthy, too. In Pushkin's stanza I the two vowels alternate, in II, there are only O-rhymes. Axiomova starts with eight A-clauses, after which follow four O-clauses, so that yet another boundary, this time in the sphere of rhyme vocalism, is drawn. On Axiomova's foregrounding of vowels see Eisenbaum 1969: 120 ff.
19 On the passion-restraining pauses, with special reference to the ending of "Upon the Hills of Georgia ...," see Zholkovsky 1979: 86—87.

— and, of course, she converts drastically the meaning of the finale: Pushkin's pauses and overall emotional restraint not-withstanding, his speaker's heart "burns and loves" even when far away from his beloved (in Gruzin), whereas in Axiomova's poem, the heart "beats not" even "under [the partner's] hand."

5.3 Subtexts in dialogue

To summarize, Axiomova's intertextual focus on Pushkin is actualized through two specific subtexts: lexical, which launches the poem as its leitmotif, and structural, which determines and caps the poem's composition. As a result, Axiomova's text turns into a quasi-dialogue20 between the two Pushkin sources, one ("Under the Blue Sky...") supplying the image of "boundary," the other ("Upon the Hills of Georgia..."), the 'will to fusion.' The dialogue proceeds from radicalizing the stance of the first borrowing (unattainability of the boundary) to a complete reversal of the second (transcendence of unattainability by love'), inspired, perhaps, by the mood of Annenskij's subtext (relishing unattainability) and by the subversiveness of the Dostoevskij reference.

The link established between the two Pushkin subtexts relies, among other things, on their metrical similarity, echoed in Axiomova's poem. All three use combinations of six-foot and shorter iambics: both Pushkin poems alternate iambic hexameters and tetrameters, while Axiomova has a less regular sequence of hexameters (predominantly in stanza I) and pentameters.

6. Conclusion

My analysis has engaged some of the relevant structural and intertextual aspects of the poem, leaving out some others, for instance, the semantic "halo" of its meter, the poet's biography, the underlying psychological and mythological archetypes. Even the coverage of those types of intertext that have been discussed cannot claim completeness: conspicuously absent are possible classical and European intertexts, while the added Russian ones could prove to be no more than the tip of the iceberg. But, however limited in scope, the analysis does illustrate my approach and, hopefully, sheds light on the poem. The major point was to show how a structuralist's interest in themes, invariance, and formal patterns can be reconciled with intertextual

20 The concept of 'quasi-dialogue,' as opposed to dialogue proper, was introduced by Smirnov (1985: 226 ff. et passim) to refer to intertextual relations creatively established in a later text between two previous texts; see also Zholkovsky 1988.
concerns and the emphasis on discourse pragmatics. As for the rest, would it not be tactless to probe too exhaustively into a poem that insists on the inviolability of boundaries?

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ANTONIO GARCÍA-BERRIO

Paintings and Poems: A Synthesis of Methodological Reflections on the Work of Luis Feito

0.1 Comparing and attempting to bring together, methodologically and strategically, the analysis of painting to that of literature — or that of a picture to that of a book of poems — is not an eccentric or pointless occupation. There already exists a certain tradition of exercises in comparative analysis of the arts, which could be considered as a “weak” one. These types of activities have principles and objectives which are almost completely opposed to the spirit of scientificity that has stimulated the development of modern sciences, including the humanistic ones, such as philosophy, linguistics, and even poetics and the theory of literature and art. We think of the evolution of linguistic and analytical thought which has most affected our discipline since Wittgenstein as being the linguistic and semiotic ideal of scientificity par excellence, with explicit, canonical models such as N. Chomsky and his followers’ generative-sentential one, or J. S. Petöfi’s model of the macrotext.

0.2 As a reminder of only some of the most recent directions in that long tradition, I will mention that of the comparative historiographical study of the arts, which was carried out especially during the first thirty years of this century (P. van Tieghem, 1921), as well as the more recent one of the semiology of art, with a linguistic base (O. Calabrese, 1985). The historiographical comparison of one section of the arts to another corresponded to the universalist plan of the “Geschichte”, within the ambitious and noble, general program of The History of Culture. The Kantian and Hegelian, idealistic basis for this historiographical project perhaps did not go into the common psychological angle implied in comparative criticism as systematically as it did the objective and positivist tendency in the analysis of artistic texts which began by calling itself formalism. It should be pointed out that it is often necessary to remind linguists and even critics and literary theorists, that “formalism” was a German and central European trend in artistic criticism rather than a Russian school of literary criticism: the “formal method” school of Sklovsky, Tynjanov, Buktenibaum, etc. ... In any case, this should be considered a late arrival within the great European formalist expansion of the Kantian aesthetic (I. Ambrogio, 1968).