Enthymema X 2014

Self-identification of the lyrical subject in Russian poetry (a draft typology)

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Abstract

The end goal of this paper is to shed light on the changes in the lyrical subject self-identification logics that were characteristic of Russian poetry of the 'modernist' era. We are going to focus our attention exclusively on the poems with a lexically expressed *I*, which build the nucleus of the poetic fraction of literary texts and allow to get a clear idea about the mechanism of self-naming that we regard as fundamental for self-identification of the lyrical *I*. The paper discriminates between the two methods of lyrical subject identification/self-identification: referring and attributing. Based on this, we suggest determining four basic functional incarnations of the lyrical subject in Russian poetry of the 18th–19th centuries, which are in part terminological reconsiderations of the conventional Russian philology categories. These incarnations are: 1) 'anonymous' lyrical *I* referring directly to the real author; 2) lyrical *I* referring to the author through the prism of in-text heteronymic or metonymic transcoding; 2) lyrical character (lyrical hero) referring to the author through the prism of metaphoric transcoding; 3) role character (role hero) with zero reference to the author. The revolution that affected the strategies of lyrical self-identification in Russian poetry of the Silver Age manifested itself in some fundamental shifts. First of all, kaleidoscopic multiplication of lyrical *I*'s, both through the lyrics of specific poets and even within individual poems. Second, blurred boundaries between different incarnations of the lyrical subject that had been more or less clearly contrasted in poetry of the 19th century. Third, theatralization and problematization (to the extent of open conflicts) of the relationship between the author and his/her lyrical 'doubles'.

Keywords

lyrical subject, lyrical *I*, lyrical character (lyrical hero), role character (role hero), self-identification, referring, attributing, Russian poetry, metaphor, metonymy

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The end goal of the suggested sketchbook is to shed light on the changes in the lyrical subject[1] self-identification logics that was characteristic of Russian poetry of the 'modernist' era. That makes us need to discover the standard versions of lyrical subject functionality that had appeared by the first decades of the 19th century. To make it more precise, we are going to focus our attention exclusively on the poems with a lexically ex-

[1] There is an almost endless amount of academic literature on the lyrical subject (the lyrical *I*). We will cite only some of the studies, different in their methods, part of which have to do with the Russian poetry, too: (Hamburger; Hühn; Iser 746-49; Postoutenko 225-35; Schönert 289-94; Sławiński 311-20; Spinner 290-94; Westseijn 235-58). Special attention should be paid to the fundamental monograph (engaged in an explicit and implicit dialogue in the article: (Broytman).

pressed I, which build the nucleus of the poetic fraction of literary texts and allow to get a clear idea about the mechanism of self-naming that we regard as fundamental for self-identification of the lyrical.[1]

First, we should also make a more generalized preliminary explaining comment concerning differentiating between the two types of identification (and self-identification, too).[2] In keeping with Strawson's ideas (but not in perfect sympathy with them),[3] we will differentiate between referring to an object (i.e. answering the question, 'Whom/What are you talking about?' and denoting/ascription/attributing an object (i.e. answering the question, «What are you telling about it/him/her?» Otherwise speaking, we will understand reference as such an indication of an object (inscribed in a specific spatio-temporal horizon) through an indicator—name or its substitute—that does not inherently predicate any set of attributes to this object (except some individual markers of the horizon). As soon as we have to do with the fictional world, we observe what Ricoeur would call a 'split reference', when—normally—reference to an imaginary object automatically entails reference to the relevant real life object. For instance, if we meet a character called Peter the Great, winner of the Battle of Poltava, this is the normal version of reference (allowing to assign Peter the Great's properties to the character easily, provided that the author doesn't mix reality with fiction on purpose or involuntarily). However, if we have a character that bears the same name but is known to have participated in the Battle of Stalingrad, there are various interpretations possible. First, it may be a character whose first name is Peter and last name is The Great, which makes him a referentially different person endued with his own system of characteristic features (so that they can only overlap with the heroic namesake's predicates by chance). Second, Peter the Great may be a nickname (or a product of self-naming) created through a metaphoric transfer, which makes the character a referentially different person to which the set of markers associated with the first Russian emperor is partially projected, where such projecting should not necessarily meet the criteria of verity completely. Third, it may be a character who fancies himself as Peter the Great. In this case, we have a person who is different both referentially and characteristically but who believes he matches the original bearer of the name both referentially and characteristically. Fourth, finally, it may be Peter the Great himself, who has made a fantastic leap to the future in a time machine or by means of metempsychosis, and thus we have a character who retains semantic identity with the winner of the Battle of Poltava but who is at first a referentially different person and later (after it becomes clear that the spatio-temporal horizons have changed) the same as originally. It should be added that using our basic formula of self-naming, i.e. 'I am placeholder name', in a text reveals a specific regularity. If the placeholder name is a proper noun in itself, the preferential reference is normally made to the speaker; however, if the placeholder name is descriptive, we'll assign some properties to the I first and foremost. We are not dwelling here on the extensive gradation scale between these two points.[4]

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[2] Cf. the approach partly similar in the original attitude: (Winko 208–231).
[3] Cf. Strawson's theoretical articles *On Referring* (1950) and *Identifying Reference and Truth-Values* (1964) in the collection of articles: (Novoye v zarubezhnoy lingvistike 55-86; 109-33). Cf. also the overview: (Evans).
[4] Cf. on this topic: (Faustov 103-126; Faustov, Savinkov 8-31), etc.

In one of the standard versions (we may call it a source, or 'zero', version), the lyrical subject neither takes any names in the text nor receives any names in the title, staying anonymous. Obviously, degrees and forms of such anonymity may be different, as we will see in some of Lermontov's poems,[5] mostly well-known ones. To start with, the absence of direct self-nominations and nominations of the lyrical subject does not exclude concealed 'guiding' of the reader to a specific possible name. For example, in *Выхожу один я на дорогу*… (1841) the role of such implicit name is played by the word «putnik» (wanderer) in terms of motive, vocabulary, and meter (relevant semantics of trochaic pentameter was described long ago by Taranovsky in his classical article), with all the inherent symbolic connotations. Conversely, direct self-naming of the lyrical subject may sometimes be presented syntactically and inscribed in the plot and composition in such a way that it is not perceived as a fully-functional self-nomination. Thus, the poem *Как часто, пестрою толпою окружен*… (1840) contains the following words in the beginning of the sixth (second to last) sextain: «Так царства дивного всесильный господин — / Я долгие часы просиживал один…».[6] 'Drowned' in the text flow, localized in time as a memory, and positioned syntactically as an apposition, these lines virtually lose their nominative potential (despite the intensifying em-dash).[7]

Let's cite some examples of indirect, slide-over naming performed by means of reference play. In *Нищий* (1830), the person denoted in the title is the protagonist meeting the lyrical subject's eye, but the final stanza, the comparative one, establishes parallelism between the beggar and the I («Так я молил твоей любви…», etc.). As a result, the reference in the title gets split in two: the title name, together with its descriptive content, is 'redirected' to the lyrical subject. The protagonist's name metonymically associated with the lyrical I provides the basis for the underlying metaphor 'I am the beggar'. In *Желание* (1831), the nominative collision is even more complicated, metonymic disposition being preserved. The poem begins with lines presenting the 'candidate' for the lyrical subject's name, but at once in the impossibility mode, as a name with an unchangeable reference: «Зачем я не птица, не ворон степной, / Пролетевший сейчас надо мной?». Later on, the imaginary, conjunctive trip to Scotland as an ancestral homeland that the lyrical subject would undertake if he could turn into a bird is ended by proposing an alternative name which is also detached from the lyrical I—this time, through grammatical distancing provided by a sudden change from first person to third person: «Последний потомок отважных бойцов / Увядает средь чуждых снегов…». This reference play gets the most sophisticated, including in the metonymic sense, in the poem *Тучи* (1840). The very first stanza openly declares the protagonists exiles because the lyrical subject is

[5] Cf. some of the works on Lermontov's lyrical subject: (Savinkov 90-96; Serman 35-52; Udodov 73-90; Freise 259-72; Etkind 11-39).

[6] Lermontov's poems are quoted through in-text indication of volume and pages from: (Lermontov, *Soch.: v 6 t)*.

[7] However, if we look outside the poem, we will see that Lermontov recurrently rhymes the word "властелин" (sovereign), which is semantically close to both «господин» (Master) and «всесильный» (omnipotent) (and even phonetically to the latter, in Russian), with the word «один» (alone) (15 times out of 18) and puts it twice as a self-naming lyrical subject – in similar contexts – both times syntactically within a comparative clause, and both times in the stressed–final–position: «Живу — как неба властелин — / В прекрасном мире — но один» (*Пусть я кого-нибудь люблю*… (1831) [1; 236], or: «Остался я один — / Как замка мрачного, пустого / Ничтожный властелин» (*Как в ночь звезды падучей пламень*… (1832) [2; 30].

doomed to be exiled, which is explicitly stated in the text («Мчитесь вы, будто, как я же, изгнанники…»). The whole second stanza represents a chain of rhetorical questions addressed to the clouds but evidently characterizing the lyrical subject («Кто же вас гонит: судьбы ли решение?..», etc.), which makes us expect this accumulation of disguised descriptions unfold into expansion of the title name, just like in *Нищий*, and end up with qualifying the lyrical subject as a cloud. Yet, these two are dissimilated in the third stanza, the last one («Нет у вас родины, нет вам изгнания»). While the reference of the name seemingly starts extending to the lyrical subject, the name itself turns out to be alien to the lyrical subject, as in Желание.

Anyway, however, when the refracting onomastic prism is negligible or absent in a text, the lyrical subject is usually perceived by the reader as an ideal I with a direct reference to the writer, yet not identical to him/her completely and undoubtedly (cf. the often cited quote of Vyazemsky: «Неужели Батюшков на деле то же, что в стихах? Сладострастие совсем не в нем»; Ostafiev 382). Yet, this rule has its exceptions, which are not unique. Such Lermontov's poems as *Письмо* (1829), *Завещание* (1840), or *Сон* (1841) are nothing but pre-death monologues of lyrical subjects, even though there are no self-nominations or nominations of the I in them, the narration pattern itself inhibiting the reference to the author. In a broader sense, we should be saying that texts with 'anonymous' lyrical subjects may contain some signals of reference impossibility, such as obvious unreality of the 'stated event', for instance (see the poems cited above). We will talk about some other inhibition signs of this type later in this paper. At this point, we must note that restricting reference within fictional reality does not impose a comprehensive ban on semantic transfer from the lyrical subject to the author. Lermontov's monologues pronounced by dying lyrical subjects allow the reader to reveal quite easily, inter alia, the fatal separation of lovers that is so typical of his mythology, while the storylines of *Завещание* and *Сон* resemble that of *Валерик* (1840), where nothing prevents us from referring to the poet himself.

When the lyrical subject receives nominations in a text, its communicative and semiotic status changes dramatically. The most neutral type of naming, rather archaic for the beginning of the 19th century, derives from poetry of the classical age (talking about the Russian tradition). Thus, the title of Derzhavin's most widely known ode praising the Empress Catherine II (*Ода к премудрой Киргиз-кайсацкой царевне Фелице, писанная Татарским Мурзою, издавна поселившимся в Москве, а живущим по делам своим в Санкт-Петербурге*…) (1782) declares its author «Татарский Мурза» (Tatar Mirza) who can be indirectly though quite easily likened to the poet biographically (it is characteristic that the Empress's parcel «из Оренбурга от Киргиз-кайсацкой царевны» with gifts to the lyricist was intended either to Derzhavin or to Mirza, according to different versions[8]). «Татарский Мурза» plays the role of an alternative author's name,[9] such renaming being part of a sheer onomastic masquerade that we can find in Derzhavin's poetry with its countless Felitsas, Gremislavs, Pleniras, Milenas, etc.—«иносказательными, или аллегорическими именами» (as the poet himself called them) mentioned with various frequency. At the same time, change of names implying translocation of the author and his characters from the real world into the fantasy neither affects reference (the imagi-

[8] Cf.: (Derzhavin, *Soch.* 1880 298; Derzhavin, *Soch.* 2002 558). Derzhavin's letters mention the «…пакет, подписанный на мое имя…» (Derzhavin, *Soch.* 1869 367-68).

[9] We can also remember here, of course, 'Tatar' roots of Derzhavin's family tree, which he would always talk about with pleasure (Derzhavin, *Soch.* 1864 133; Derzhavin, *Soch.* 1880 19).

nary referent acts as a doublet of the real one) nor entails any noticeable semantic metamorphoses (e.g. there is almost nothing oriental in the image of Mirza, etc.)[10]. Among the late relics of this tradition are poems like С бородою седою верховный я жрец… (1884) by Fet, which are based on a metaphorical transformation of the lyrical I and its environment («Эту детскую грудь рассеку я потом / Вдохновенного слова звенящим мечом…» (Fet 208), etc.).

The 19th century introduced other models of lyrical subject nomination. The first one to mention is a form of identification making the lyrical subject referentially different from the real author. Using a conventional term (reinvented for our purpose), we can talk about 'role lyrics',[11] meaning exactly that lyrical subject plays not the poet's role but the role of a different, imaginary I emphatically non-identical to the author.

First and foremost, distance between the lyrical I and the real poet may be determined by the title reduced to lyrical subject nomination and acting as an inhibition sign preventing reference to the poem creator. There are multiple examples; we can cite, almost at a guess, nearly the whole prophet series of Russian poems, Pushkin's pastiche *Паж или пятнадцатый год* (1830), or Nekrasov's *Пьяница* (1845), or the metonymic displacement in poems with blurred intratextual reference, like Baratynsky's *Недоносок* (1835), the title of which, as it turns out in the end, denotes not the speaker but the one his useless efforts are applied to. At first glance, additional context is often required to make sure that fictional and real referents do not fall together in role poetry. A butterfly obviously cannot create a poem in the real world (*Бабочка* (1884) by Fet, etc.), but there is nothing absolutely unthinkable in a poem where the lyrical subject turns fifteen. In the latter case, reader should have some background knowledge (Pushkin was twice as old as the lyrical subject and never served as a page-boy) to prove such self-reference wrong. However, another communicative rule, a rather universal one, allows to do without context: as far as we can judge, there are no non-role poems without lyrical subject's name in the title. This regularity does not include few poems where the title name is transpositioned in some way. For instance, the poem *Мститель* (1902) by Balmont gets its name through a description that may be interpreted not so much as a name of the lyrical I as such but as an indication of a specific point in the story of this I («А теперь, угрюмый и больной, / А теперь, как темный дух, гонимый, / Буду мстить вам с меткостью стальной…»; Balmont, *Stikhotvoreniya* 239). Yet, although the lyrical subject belongs to the cohort of role characters, it doesn't render impossible hidden semantic projection connecting it with the author. In the same Pushkin's *Паж*, we could easily uncover a clearly stated autobiographical plane (even more so if we remember the manuscript version with the *Варшавская графиня* (Countess of Warsaw; Pushkin 843) in place of the *Севильская графиня* (Countess of Sevilla), which is an obvious reference to Karolina Sobańska).

In a situation where a role poem is untitled or doesn't have the lyrical subject's name in its title, other onomastic mechanisms come into play. In the simplest version, the lyri-

[10] There was a change of attitudes in the early 19th century. Cf. Pushkin's remark in falsified notes of Smirnova-Rossettte, which is interesting in itself, regardless of its authenticity (another time, it was also cited by Tynyanov in a totally different context): «…всегда воображают, что если поэт пишет стихи, заглавие которых — женское имя, то он пишет о своей любовнице; но эти поэмы всего чаще — просто гимны любви… Женское имя так же мало реально, как все эти Хлои, Лидии или Делии XVIII века. Это только название» (Smirnova-Rossette 404).

[11] K. Hamburger and B. Korman began to use this term independently in similar meanings.

cal I names itself, and such self-nomination may also be introduced dynamically, disclosing the name in a dramatic bottom line (e.g. in Pushkin's message *К Наталье* (1813), the lyrical subject confesses in the final lines that he is a monk). However, the lyrical I may not name itself in role poems at all. It's quite natural in this case that poetic context and more generalized, cultural and semiotic conventions give the reader a 'hint' to the possible 'hidden' name: thus, the role character of Pushkin's *Я здесь, Инезилья…* (1830) is definitely perceived as a Spanish caballero. Such implicit naming (that we have already mentioned above for a similar reason) becomes possible thanks to intratextual signals inhibiting reference to the author. In terms of role lyrics, these signals may be divided into the key categories: gender-based, ethnic, and social signals (the stylistic factor seems rather optional in this relation). If we suggest that a poem is written by a man on behalf of a woman (such texts in the song form had been widely popular since Sumarokov's early oeuvres), reference to the lyricist will automatically become impossible. As compared to similar 'anonymous' non-role poems (like Lermontov's *Завещание* or *Сон*), we can say that impossibility of reference to the author is specifically emphasized here. Nevertheless, again, it is not absolutely impossible for the lyrical subject to make a 'disguised' semantic transfer to its creator in 'anonymous' role poems: e.g. Pushkin's message *К Наталье* fits perfectly the young poet's 'lyceum' personal mythology.

Another standard variant of lyrical I nomination and self-nomination corresponds (if we resort again to the modified conventional terminology) to the method of self-identification known as lyrical character (lyrical hero).[12] There are three texts in Russian poetry of the early 19th century applying this model most explicitly and aphoristically. These are: 1) the dedication to Alexander Bestuzhev opening Ryleyev's poem Войнаровский (1825): "Я не Поэт, а Гражданин" (Ryleev 186); 2) Davydov's *Ответ* (1826): «Я не поэт, я — партизан, казак» (Davydov 100); and 3) Koltsov's *Последние стихи* (1830): «Я мещанин, а не поэт» (Koltsov 76) (see also the earlier ironical version of Vyazemsky in his epigram *Что пользы — говорит расчетливый Свиньин…* (1818), representing, however, a monologue of a ridiculed character, a text within a text: «Я не поэт, я дворянин»; Vyazemsky 114). Syntactically, the lyrical subject names himself and by doing so, renounces himself. This paradoxical double operation is based on an implicit re-identification of the figure of the poet (referentially equivalent to the lyrical I, which, after all, speaks the poetic language and manifests its belonging to the artistic class) that adopts purely biographical, extra-poetic personal features of the text creator. In lyrical character poetry, properties of the imaginary I are not assigned to the author; instead, a reverse semantic process takes place, unlike in lyrics with direct or onomastically refracted self-reference or in role lyrics.

We will show it in more details through the example of Davydov's poetry. The poem Ответ evolves in three phases. The first four lines illustrate the original paradoxical point based on Davydov's unique phraseological antithesis between the conventionally poetic: *Пинд* (the Pindus), *Кастальский ток* (the Waters of Castalia)—and the professional military: «наскоком» (in a jump), «бивак» (bivouac shelter). The following two lines generate

[12] The history of lyrical character (lyrical hero) research has not yet been written. We should refer to the following works as the major milestones (in the chronological order): (Tynyanov [1921] 118-24; Maksimov [1931] 7-33; Ginzburg [1940]; Gukovsky, *Pushkin* [1946]; Blok 63-84; Korman [1956] 8-98). Lidiya Ginzburg's letter to Boris Korman (on the manuscript version of the said article) and the letter of reply (1956), in: (*Zhizn' i sud'ba* 376-380; Ginzburg, *Pushkin* 140-53; Ginzburg *O lirike*; Korman, *Lirika*; Mandelstam *Vtoraya kniga* (chapters *Два полюса* and *Литературоведенье*).

another denial: «Нет, не наезднику пристало / Петь, в креслах развалясь, лень, негу и покой…». Semantic content of the poetic gets reduced to a hedonist horizon right in front of our eyes here. Finally, the closing two lines oppose this false poetry to the genuine one by means of a metaphorical transposition: «Пусть грянет Русь военною грозой — / Я в этой песне запевало!» (Davydov, *Stikhotvoreniya* 100). Poetry is denied but accepted again in another disguise in the next phase. We observe similar loops of semantic transformations not only in lyrics but in all Davydov's works. In his autobiographical *Некоторые черты из жизни Дениса Васильевича Давыдова* (1832) (written in third person), Davydov speaks about himself: «…он был поэтом, но поэтом не по рифмам и стопам, а по чувству <…> по мнению других — по залету и отважности его военных действий,» (Davydov, *Stikhotvoreniya, proza* 41) depicting the theater of war as a transformed manifestation of the poetic. In *Опыт теории партизанского действия* (1821, 1822), the writer gives a rather indicative description of requirements to a guerilla commander: «Сие исполненное поэзии поприще требует романического воображения, страсти к приключениям и не довольствуется сухою, прозаическою храбростию — это строфа Байрона» (Davydov, *Opyt* 83), this time viewing the military in the light of literary metaphorical implications (cf. the direct definition in Davydov's letter to Vyazemsky (1834) in the same semantic plane: «…война та же поэзия…»; *Starina* 60). Finally, letters to Vyazemsky often depict war as an indispensable pre-requisite for poetry: «…зарыт в бумагах и книгах, пишу; но стихи оставил! Нет поэзии в безмятежной и блаженной жизни» (1819); or: «Мне необходима поэзия, хотя без рифм и без стоп, она величественно, роскошна на поле сражений…» (1829) (*Starina* 30, 39). What should be in the confrontation with poetry in fact becomes its reincarnation, in this or that aspect.

In short, Davydov's semiotic mechanism generating the lyrical character comes down to the fundamental metaphor «poet—soldier / hussar / guerilla / Cossack,» which may be realized on the surface in different forms and styles, sometimes contradicting each other. This mechanism may be reduced to the same form in lyrics of Ryleyev or Koltsov—'poet—citizen' or 'poet—bourgeois,' respectively. With a number of authors, similar metaphors are made completely tacit, retaining the same force. Thus, the subject structure of Yazykov's 'Derpt' lyrics is based on the conceptual metaphor 'poet—Bursch,' while Küchelbecker's poetry is centered around the key metaphor 'poet—person endowed with ardent feelings.'[13] It should be noted that such metaphors used by different authors could, first of all, have different range of coverage (either penetrating all of the works or remaining within a series of texts) and, second of all, have antipodal effects on the logic of self-identification. Davydov's lyrical character, for instance, was born quite formed, preserved his main features until the end, and was imprinted equally in poetry and prose. Besides, not only Davydov's contemporaries regarded him as a soldier poet, but he also thought of himself that way (although he didn't really have a hussar

[13] *Отрывок путешествия по полуденной Франции* (1821) by Küchelbecker contains a very characteristic thought on this: «…не всякий даже хороший стихотворец может назваться поэтом; напротив, всякий муж необыкновенный, с сильными страстями, пролагающий себе свой собственный путь в мире, — есть уже поэт, если бы он и никогда не писывал стихов и даже не учился грамоте». (Küchelbecker 53) Note the striking parallelism between perceiving feelings as a poetry indicator in Küchelbecker's and Davydov's poems, which is typical of the 'elegiac/romantic' age, when poets, from Batyushkov to Ryleyev, were eager to find contrasts (even in rhymes) between the *art* and the *feeling*.

nature). For Yazykov, however, he and his lyrical character were obviously different figures. His early poetry created a roaring world ruled by «свобода, песни и вино», where the lyrical I dissolved in the collective us of students. In the letters to his family of that time, the poet complained about «пьянство и буянство» of fellow students and reflected on a behavioral tactic that would have set them at a "почтительное отдаление" from him (cf. the letter to his brother (1824) written eighteen months after arriving to Derpt: «Мне при начале моего вступления в университет было гораздо труднее самостоятельствовать, чем теперь: тогда нужно было наблюсть большую политику, не удаляться и не слишком приближаться к студентам; теперь же они меня любят, но узнали, что мне не так-то нравятся их пьяные забавы и проч.»; *Yazykov's* 112).

Hence, on the one part, his determined attempts to break up with his lyrical character at the end of the studies and, on the other part, the dramatic collisions of his 'after-Derpt' life caused largely by his desperate search for a new, competitive lyrical disguise instead of the lost one, all in vain.

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So, what happens to the outlined strategies of poetic self-identification at the turn of the 19th century, in lyrics of the Russian Modernity? Perhaps, the most spectacular feature of the epoch is coming of role lyrics to the foreground, not due to its frequency (which has to be verified yet) but due to emergence of role cycles and to endless expansion of the array of role characters. We may cite, for example, Bryusov's cycles *Любимцы веков* (from the book *Tertia vigilia* (1898–1901)) and *Властительные тени* (from the book *Зеркало теней* (1909–1912)), Kuzmin's *Александрийские песни* (1904–1908) and cycle *Харикл из Милета* (1904), Sologub's *Когда я был собакой* (1911–1912), or Vaginov's series of gymnasium poems, not collected but perceived as a whole (from the so called *Парчовая тетрадь* (1917), which are built as monologues of very different I's, personified voices of contemporary life: from cocotte or spinster to porcelain doll or lyre. However, role characters were most often played by "the second sex" or by representatives of other, exoticized ethnicities, epochs or cultures (like Assargadon, Egyptian slave, Isis oracle, Circe, Clytemnestra, Cleopatra, Faust, etc.). The key difference between these texts and role lyrics of the 19th century lies in the impossibility of semantic transfer from the lyrical subject to the author. In Sologub's poem *Астероид* (1918) such change of milestones even inverts the natural communicative perspective: in the last stanza, the role I—the asteroid—talks with envy to the author who is free to change his ways. (Violation of this semantic distance established in poetry of the turn of the 19th century immediately brings about grammatical reconstructions, which are especially noticeable in Bryusov's poems: inside his role cycles, we can find an alternation of strictly role poems and poems where potential role characters mentioned in the title take the position of second or third person; this is where the lyrical I—and, above its head, the author—associates itself with pseudo role characters.) At that time, the lyrical subject played inherently alien roles it had nothing in common with. Mandelstam defined it very precisely in his own way, speaking about the 19th century but virtually pointing at the whole culture of the past: «Минувший век не любил говорить о себе от первого лица, но он любил проецировать себя на экране чужих эпох…» (Mandelstam, *Soch.* 196).

What's even more curious, at the same time communicative foundations of role lyrics were washed out in different aspects (which was mentioned by Broytman with regard to

some of symbolist poets and within the framework of his own general concept; Broytman 224–226). We'll only cite a few examples here. Gumilev's book of lyrics *Путь конквистадоров* (1905) begins with the poem *Я конквистадор в панцире железном*…. We have all indicators of a role poem here but the broader context demonstrates explicitly that the author identifies himself completely with the "конквистадор" (conquistador). The epigraph to the book—an imprecise quote from André Gide's Nietzschean prose-poem *Les nourritures terrestres* (1897) («Я стал кочевником, чтобы сладострастно прикасаться ко всему, что кочует»)—doesn't simply introduce the motif of wanderings. Traveling and nomadism in Gumilev's poetry are formal consequences of an entire theory of existence affirmed by an anonymous narrator and his mentor Menalque. The theory claims the new to be the highest value that allows to enjoy life to the maximum; hence refusal from attachment to places, to individuals, or even to oneself as the person identical to oneself (in the narrator's words, «Я ищу иногда в прошлом некий ряд воспоминаний, чтобы выстроить наконец свою историю, но не узнаю в них себя, и моя жизнь не укладывается в них. Мне сразу кажется, что живу все время в новое мгновение»), and the ardent desire to «…испробовать все формы жизни, даже рыб и растений».[14] A conspicuous variation on these themes can be found in the poem Credo, where the lyrical subject, not knowing or wondering where he came from and where he is going, is trying to get filled with the beauty of life and with «тайна мгновений» and to cast «свой сон» over everything in the world that is open to him. In this perspective, diversity of lyrical I's in the book (including the paladin-like creature, Zarathustra, the king, someone from the «пучина морская» the «покинутый бог», etc.) is understood as a product of reincarnations of the «conquistador», the subject which is uniform in its metamorphoses, which serves as the converging lens of the book, and which is therefore inevitably associated with the real author. (It is worth noting that the book title collides the singular with the plural: the «путь» (way) of «конквистадоры» (conquistadors); it is actually typical of Gumilev to use a lyrical subject in the form of us regularly in his verse). Nonetheless, all of this means that we have not a row of role characters but their strong fusion with the lyrical character, i.e. lyrical role characters. Gumilev develops a new imaginary reality each time and adjusts his lyrical subject to these ever new types of reality, while visible referential difference of the lyrical subject from the author is interlocked by their semantic affinity and, finally, turns into some sort of poetic reincarnation. The well-known late Gumilev's poem Память (1921) is enclosed between the following lines, positioned differently: «Только змеи сбрасывают кожи, / Мы меняем души, не тела» (Gumilev 338–339). However, in his imaginary reality Gumilev succeeds in changing 'bodies,' too.[15]

Another version of dissolved role incarnations is provided in lyrics of Blok. His contemporaries were the first to write about the kaleidoscope of his lyrical disguises (from monk to Harlequin and Vampire)[16] and the dream-like nature of his Universe keeping a

[14] Electronic resource. Available at: http://www.modernlib.ru/books/zhid_andre/yastva_zemnie/

[15] If required, Gumilev's wandering may also be interpreted through mystical religious or occult perspectives. Cf.: (Basker 113–144; Zobnin 8–52).

[16] Analytical chapters of Bely's *Воспоминания об А. А. Блоке* (1922) are mostly built on investigating fates and fortune of the poet's lyrical doublets (knight, vulgar quipster, mystic, Harlequin, etc.). In fact, a similar principle lies behind one of the most significant research papers on Blok's poetry—the four-chapter work *Лирика Александра Блока* (1965–1975) by Zara Mints (see in particular the chapter *"Страшный мир" (Пути лирического героя)*)

"cryptographic" code of his "жизненный опыт" (life experience), according to Chukovsky (80–82, 117). Indeed, if we read the poem *Я — Гамлет. Холодеет кровь…* (1914), we'll realize pretty soon, just as with Gumilev, that this poem rather has a lyrical character than a role one. Yet, Blok's lyrical role characters (or we'd better call them role lyrical characters this time) and their respective sceneries are highly unstable and incompletely materialized. Unlike Gumilev, who builds a closed exotic reality and places another himself into it, Blok transcodes his own reality and himself in that reality, almost like Fet, but such deep allegorism transposes both reference and, more importantly, the sense. In the abovementioned poem, I is not Hamlet as such and not a 'Hamlet' type, but I in the role of Hamlet: the lyrical subject is assigned properties of a literary character positioned between the lyrical subject and the author (of course, we should not forget about the remote biographical pre-history of the poem reflected quite often in Blok's lyrics—the amateur direction of some acts from Hamlet in the Mendeleyevs' estate in 1898, when the poet played a number of roles including that of the Prince of Denmark).[17] Derzhavin's onomastic masquerade thus turns into an exotic theatrical performance, a lyrical character playing, when the spectator should believe and distrust at the same time the trueness of the events. i.e. the uniformity of reference. Again, Mandelstam described this symbolist semiotic machinery in a more than discriminative way: «Роза кивает на девушку, девушка на розу. Никто не хочет быть самим собой» (Mandelstam, *Soch.* 183).

At the extreme, such indistinction could erase all the marking lines between the lyrical I and the others (and the whole world). In a philosophical reflection, it could be interpreted through various theories of expansion of the I—partly solipsist, partly pantheistic, partly occult—appreciated by many Modernity's writers and antipodal to poetic mysticism of the 19th century (whether in Tyutchev's or Fet's version) with its pathos of a lost, reduced, dissolved I.[18] We are not dwelling here on such Sologub's demonstrative oeuvres of provoking stylistic sharpness as *Я. Книга совершенного самоутверждения* (before 1904, 1906) or mystery play *Литургия Мне* (1907). We will only cite two examples, which are of specific interest to us as they legitimate elimination of the boundary between the animate and the inanimate. The first example is fragmentarily selected ideas of Konevskoy. Thus, his letter to Nikolay Sokolov (1900) (as well as the drafts of this letter) explicates the idea of diffusion, or reciprocal projection, between the inner and the outer, the I and the non-I: «…подобает жить в мире, как в своем воображении, изображении, выражении, отражении. В т<ак> н<азываемых> предметах или представлениях — ничего нет сверх предметанного, представленного, принесенного пред меня собственного облика (" 'объекты', объективации или 'проекции' внутренних точек")».

However, such outward expansion of the subject, reducing the reality to a screen for imagination, is actually possible because «в лицезрении мира стихий, мира внечеловеческого мое лицо и существо расширяются и распространяются» (*Pisateli* 188–189). In his earlier article *Олицетворения сил* (1897), Konevskoy even talks about probable existence of demonic forces, 'spirits' of nature that are capable of «временные воплощения» and represent «…центры личных сознаний и личных организмов, в которых свободно сосредотачиваются творящие силы вселенной…» (Konevskoy 147). Objectification and transfer only become possible because the whole world is penetrated by the continuously circulating energy that is condensed for a while in ever

[17] See also on this topic: (Rybnikova).
[18] Cf.: (Faustov, *Yazyk* 87–113).

changing incarnations. Balmont's foreword to the second edition of his book of lyrics *Горящие здания* (1904) describes this permeability of all for the subject in a more essayist way:

«Я отдаюсь мировому, и Мир входит в меня. Мне близки и звезды, и волны, и горы. Мне близки звери и герои <…> Я говорю с другом, а сам в это время далеко от него, за преградой веков, где-то в древнем Риме, где-то в вечной Индии, где-то в той стране, чье имя — Майя» (Balmont, *Goryashchiye* 5).

Perceivable reality of such comprehensive transfer in Balmont's lyrics affects directly the logic of lyric subject self-naming[19]. Overlapping nominations likening the I to inanimate objects («Я — внезапный излом, / Я — играющий гром, / Я — прозрачный ручей…» (Balmont, *Stikhotvoreniya* 232, 233), etc.) in the blatantly self-revealing poem Я — изысканность русской медлительной речи… (from the book *Будем как солнце* (1902)) may be interpreted as the product of metonymic slippage, rather illustrative though, from the poet to his poetry[20]. It's no coincidence the next poem in the book, Мои песнопенья, refers similar descriptions to lyrics: «В моих песнопеньях — журчанье ключей…», etc. However, other Balmont's texts reveal an expressly purposeful, non-metonymic collision of names deliberately differing in their taxonomy, such as (from the first edition of Горящие здания (1900)): «Я закат непогасшего дня, / Я потомок могучих царей» (*Я в глазах у себя затаил…),* or: «Я — просветленный, я кажусь собой, / Но я не то, — я остров голубой…» (and the following summary: «…везде встает мой лик, / Со всеми я сливаюсь каждый миг»; Balmont, *Goryashchiye* 152, 168).

The same logic, although inclined largely towards elimination of boundaries between different subjects, reigns in Sologub's poetry, where instant doublet characters may appear not only within a poem but even within a single stanza:

…я стремлюсь
Расширять бытие без конца.
Я — царевич с игрушкой в руках,
Я — король зачарованных стран.
Я — невеста с тревогой в глазах,
Богомолкой бреду я в туман
(*Надо мною жестокая твердь…* (1896).[21]

[19] Annensky noticed this trend in his clairvoyant article *Бальмонт-лирик* (1906), where he argues through the example of the poem *О, да, я Избранный, я Мудрый, Посвященный…* (1899) (with the lyrical subject feeling itself in the grip of the evil ancestral spirit) that «…лирическое самообожание поэта выступает на страшном фоне юмора совместительства» (Annensky 110). In parallel with this, we should cite Balmont himself, who blames in one of his article the European view of the human being for «…великая Ересь отдельности…», proposing in opposition a rather canonic doctrine of metempsychosis, which makes such genetic 'pluralism' possible: «...не теряя тождественности своего истинного внутреннего "я", мы в действительности живем не один раз и не на одной планете, а воплощаемся много раз…"» (Balmont, *Belye zarnitsy* 159).

[20] This is exactly how Annensky perceives this poem (although with other emphases) in his article on Balmont: «Но, позвольте, может быть, *я* — это вовсе не сам К. Д. Бальмонт под маской стиха <…> Важно прежде всего то, что поэт слил здесь свое существо со стихом… <…> *Стих не есть созданье поэта*, он даже, если хотите, не принадлежит поэту. Стих неотделим от лирического *я*…» (Annensky 98-99).

[21] In: (Sologub 179).

The same mechanism is hidden in Sologub's overall form of generating the I:

Меняя разные личины,
Все принимая имена,
Всходя на горные вершины
И опускаясь в долины,
И проходя все времена…
<…>
Я остаюсь все тот же Я (1922; Sologub 466).

Since the I finds itself everywhere, under any names and disguises, the problem of specific qualitative correlation between the lyrical subject and the writer is neutralized once for all. Meanwhile, just like in less 'radical' versions of Blok and Gumilev, oblique reference to the author is restored in a paradoxical, 'hovering' way, as the real poet turns out to be the only standing point that short-lived, emerging and vanishing descriptive names can be pinned to.

Ambiguity in establishing semantic and referential boundaries between the author and his/her lyrical alter ego could also develop in another way. We should first of all refer to Bely whose poetry in its communicative and semiotic structure is a fusion—logical, of course, and not genealogic—of the dominant Blok's model (focused on the lyrical) and Gumilev's model (focused on the role)[22]. For instance, in the book *Пепел* (1908 / 1909) we observe continuous oscillations between these two trends. On the one part, some role characters (like merchant or prisoners in the eponymous poems) are objectified enough against the background of the motley crowd of lyrical subjects, and some I's even become actors in discrete microstories developing within the book sections (the story of a suicide killer lying down and waiting for the train in Россия, the story of a killer who stabbed his rival out of jealousy in *Деревня*, the story of a hunchback's ill-starred marriage in *Паутина*, etc.). Besides, Bely often changes grammatical perspective from one poem to another, so that I turns to he. On the other part, most of these lyrical subjects can easily transform one into another metaphorically: prisoner, madman, wandering prophet, crucified man and others merge finally into one person, thus demonstrating their explicit instability and insufficiency of incarnation, which are caused by the disturbing presence of the author's experience (the experience of «самосожжение и смерть», in Bely's own interpretation) lying deep in the text and diffusing these disguises. Later, in 1923, Bely wrote about it in a broader perspective in the foreword to his collection of poems:

> Лирическое творчество каждого поэта отпечатлевается… в модуляциях немногих основных тем лирического волнения, запечатленных градацией в разное время написанных стихотворений; каждый лирик имеет за всеми лирическими отрывками свою ненаписанную лирическую поэму… (Bely, *Stikhotvoreniya* 534)

[22] Bely interprets this difference in his own way in one of his letters to Blok (1911), talking about the priority of real life experience for symbolists:
…при всей разности наших темпераментов, у нас нечто общее, что отличает нас, символистов, от Гумилевых: наше творчество было не эстетическим скептицизмом… некогда мы видели *зори*, зори были чем-то столь важным, что у нас и не возникало слов, искусство *это* или не искусство; прежде всего "*это*", а потом уже ярлычки.
(*Chronicles* 311; s p a c i n g is replaced with *italic* in all citations from Bely's works.)

By contrast, however, in the foreword to the second, Soviet edition of Пепел (1929), Bely describes his character as a tramp and lumpenproletarian (using sociology jargon, as in the foreword to the first edition) and suddenly warns in conclusion: «Прошу читателей не смешивать с ним меня: лирическое «я» есть «мы» зарисовываемых сознаний, а вовсе не "я" Б. Н. Бугаева (Андрея Белого), в 1908 году не бегавшего по полям, но изучавшего проблемы логики и стиховедения»[23].

Such distancing from one's lyrical subject, which had been impossible in literature of the 19th century, was caused by atrophy of previous semiotic mechanisms of self-identification that had regulated 'exchange' between the author and her/his lyrical I and maintained the distance between the lyrical and the role, the real and the imaginary. As a result, the imaginary speaker is perceived as an infringer of sovereignty of the real author who cannot detach himself from the speaker anymore. In the philosophical aspect, this is a sort of inverted solipsism, when the gravity center is transferred from the I to the doublet character. In terms of poetry as a whole, this rebellion of the imaginary, pseudonym subject was mentioned as early as in the preface to the epic poem about evolving of the I conceived by Bely—the novel *Записки чудака* (1919, 1922)[24] (we can easily drop its anthroposophical connotations here). Just as the second edition of Пепел, it is prefaced with a warning to reader: «Герой пролога "Я"… не имеет же никакого касания к "Я" автора; автор "пролога" Андрей Белый; герой пролога — Леонид Ледяной; этим все сказано: Леонид Ледяной — не Андрей Белый» (Bely, *Sobr.soch.* 280). However, this phrase turns everything even more sophisticated, as Leonid Ledyanoy is not just a character but the narrator I, the diegetic narrator. This equivocation is only escalated by two afterwords to the novel. In the first one, Послесловие к рукописи Леонида Ледяного, написанное чьей-то рукой, its author meets the author of the book to ask him what spurred him to create the oeuvre and receives the following answer: «– Не натолкнуло ничего: разве вы отрицаете вымысел?» (Bely, *Sobr.soch.* 492). The second afterword (signed by Andrei Bely, as the foreword) declares the sketchbook to be a satire on the author and his "пережитое лично", a record of a patient who got cured, but declares it in the following way: «…здесь пишу о себе, издеваяся зло над событьями, болезненно прошумевшими над судьбою моею; пишу то не я, Андрей Белый, а — пишет Чудак, "идиот", перепутавший планы глубиннейшей внутренней жизни» (Bely, *Sobr. soch.* 493). Bely is obviously trying to solve two problems at once—the problems that provide for the (self-) psychotherapeutic effect of the novel that would not have been achieved otherwise. First, unlike Leonid Ledyanoy who presents the sketchbook as a fiction, the author insists on trueness of the story. Second, he is trying to appear in another—healthy—state of mind at the present time by attributing the poem to Leonid Ledyanoy, his double from the past. Yet, these two attempts hardly go together or even succeed on their own. Meanwhile, the only condition of paramount importance that could somehow reconcile the two objectives—retaining the chronological distance from the events narrated—is not fulfilled in the novel. In the very beginning of the first volume, the narrator describes in detail the war against «Чудак» caused by the unwillingness to remain his slave and the victim of his deeds: «"Леонид Ледяной"…

23 (Bely, Stikhotvoreniya 100). In his foreword to the 1925 cancelled edition of *Пепел*, Bely was even more schematic and even more 'paranoid': «…субъект лирической поэмы — не личность автора; он — рупор коллектива; "*Я*" героя "*Пепла*" есть синтез каких-то "мы", за поступки героя "*Пепла*" личность автора не отвечает» (Ibid, 541).

24 Cf. about author behavioral strategies in the novel (Skonechnaya 60-67; Kozyura 28-42).

превратился из тени в меня самого; повторялась сказочка Андерсена о тени, судебные следствия тени над обстоятельствами моей собственной жизни, ее тирания, сперва угрожала тюрьмой: заключением в футляр, а потом и лишением жизни» (Bely, *Sobr. soch.* 309). But this way, the narrator I finds itself inside the elapsed story time of Andrei Bely's I, instead of Leonid Ledyanoy's I, or at least becomes a true referential puzzle without solution for the reader who is unsure where each of them is. In the end, neither the author nor the reader can differentiate between the real and the imaginary anymore or get out of the fantastic mirror room.

Yet, Bely could also interpret artistic behavior in a less conflict way (some hints to that are contained in *Записки чудака*). In his autobiographical treatise *Почему я стал символистом*… (1928), the writer puts forward an anthropological concept (let's put off again its Steiner component), presenting the I as an ensemble of fractional personalities: «…никакое "Я" по прямой линии невыражаемо в личности, а в градации личностей, из которых каждая имеет свою «роль»; вопрос о режиссуре, о гармонической диалектике…» (at the same time, Bely makes a notable remark, probably recalling the episode of the fight with the «тень» (shadow): harmonization of the I is «…не изгнание «актеров» со сцены жизни за исключением одного…»; Bely, *Simvolizm* 420). Bely also defines the position of a symbolist (in accordance with his mediatory idea of the nature of symbols) as that of a director, i.e. a third party sitting at the vertex of the triangle, beyond all the direct lines tying the inner with the outer, the I with its disguises. However, we don't find a harmonization like that neither in Bely's prose nor in his lyrics.

* * *

In a nutshell, the revolution that affected the strategies of lyrical self-identification in Russian poetry of the Silver Age manifested itself in some fundamental shifts. First of all, kaleidoscopic multiplication of lyrical I's, both through the lyrics of specific poets and even within individual poems; second, blurred boundaries between different incarnations of the lyrical subject that had been more or less clearly contrasted in poetry of the 19th century; third, theatralization and problematization (to the extent of open conflicts) of the relationship between the author and his/her lyrical 'doubles'. It is no coincidence the first quarter of the 20th century was marked with intensive reflections on the lyrical subject / lyrical character—most notably in oeuvres of Annensky, Bely (in a special refraction, as we have discussed in part), and later Tynyanov and Eikhenbaum (mostly in his book about Akhmatova)—such reflections being focused on the issue of reference, of mating the lyrical disguise with the poet in his biographical dimension.

In conclusion, we should mention one more thing. The era of Modernity is not only characterized by restructuring—sometimes very deep, as we have seen—of those strategies of lyrical self-identification that had been inherited from the 19th century. Modernity also gave birth to a specific method of building the lyrical I developed mainly in poetry of Sologub and partly of V.I. Ivanov and especially popular with Mandelstam and Vaginov. This strategy, which had been unfamiliar to the Russian poetry before, consists in self-isolation of the lyrical subject. However, the way this self-isolation is performed should be the topic of another specific study.

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