

acceptance of the coming generation of poets. Chekhov did not expect his contemporaries to recognize in his art the elements of the old Russian literary tradition that shaped his language perceptiveness. As a result of the preoccupation with civic and philosophical themes in the second half of the nineteenth century, Russian readers had grown unused to paying attention to such details as the harmony of the first series of syllables in a prose narrative. The story "Easter Night" functions as an evolving statement of Chekhov's artistic credo formulated in his peculiarly oblique way, as the secret manifesto of Chekhov's art.

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Two Poems on the Death of Akhmatova: Dialogues, Private Codes, and the Myth of Akhmatova's Orphans

This essay will consider two poems, provoked by the same event--the death of A.A. Akhmatova on March 5, 1966. The first poem, Dmitrii Bobyshev's "Traurnye oktavy" (Funeral Octaves), was written in 1971 and appeared in Bobyshev's first published collection of verse *Ziianiia (Gappings)* in 1979.¹ The second, written by Iosif Brodskii a year later, in 1972, was entitled "Pokhorony Bobo" (The Funeral of Bobo) and published in 1977 in his fourth collection, *Chast' rechi (A Part of Speech)*.² In 1960 Brodskii joined a literary group of young poets that had existed in Leningrad since 1956 within the literary society (*lito*) at the *Dvorets Kul'tury Promkooperatsii* (Club of Industrial Cooperation)³ and included Il'ia Averbakh, Dmitrii Bobyshev, Anatolii Naiman, Evgenii Rein, and David Shraer-Petrov. After the disintegration/transformation of the group (circa 1961) Bobyshev and Brodskii, along with Naiman and Rein, gravitated to A.A. Akhmatova and remained closely associated with her until her death in 1966.⁴ For a number of years Bobyshev and Brodskii fell under the powerful influence of Akhmatova's personality and her poetry.

¹ The poem was originally published in the 1974 collection *Pamiati Anyi Akhmatovoi* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1976).

² The complete texts of both poems are provided in the Appendix. For simplicity's sake, Bobyshev's eight-liners have been assigned Arabic numerals from 1 to 8.

³ It was later renamed *Dvorets Kul'tury Lensoveta* (Club of Leningrad Soviet).

⁴ See David Shraer-Petrov, *Druz'ia i teni* (New York: Liberty Publishing House, 1989) 66-134, 160-179, 210-222, 241-254, 273-283; Shraer-Petrov's memoir, *Druz'ia i teni*, is so far the most important published source of information about the history of the original group of five within *Lito Promkooperatsii* (popularly known as *promka*); what is hereafter referred to as "original group" consisted of five poets, Averbakh, Bobyshev, Naiman, Rein, and Shraer-Petrov who perceived themselves as a separate literary unit within the larger formation of young writers, also members of the *Lito Promkooperatsii*. At different times, the membership of *promka* also included Vasilii Aksënov, Sergei Volf, Mikhail Erëmin, Aleksandr Kushner, Viktor Sosnora, Gennadii Ugreninov *et al.* The history of the original group yet remains to be written and currently exists in various bits and pieces of evidence such as published and unpublished memoirs, letters and accounts by both the principal actors and the witnesses of the Leningrad literary scene of the mid-late fifties-early sixties. Anatolii Naiman's account of his years as Akhmatova's secretary, *Rasskazy o Anne Akhmatovoi* (1989), contains no references to either the late Il'ia Averbakh, poet and

filmmaker, and David Shraer-Petrov, poet, novelist, and memoirist, or the transformation of the original group circa 1961. Making no mention of the *Lito Promkooperatsii*—Naiman's poetic *alma mater*—his account thus *ipso facto* blurs the important literary-historical distinction between the original group of five within *Lito Promkooperatsii* and a later development, the so called group of Akhmatova's orphans (*akhmatovskie siroti*) which originated in 1961–62 to include Bobyshev, Brodskii, Naiman and Rein. Parts of Naiman's memoir distort and obfuscate historical facts, particularly the temporal framework of the events he reminisces about. In places, Naiman contradicts himself. For instance, he writes the following regarding the formation of the group: "Bobyshev i Rein v 1953 godu [...] postupili v Leningradskii tekhnologicheskii institut i okazalis' na odnom fakultete [...]. Togda zhe v tot zhe institut postupil ia, no soshëlsia s nimi tol'ko cherez god. Eshchë goda cherez tri [note the temporal ambiguity—*M.D.S.*], kogda my uzhe prochno družhili i v predstavlenii postoronnikh, a poëtomu—vynuzhdenno—i v svoëm sobstvennom sostaviali literaturnuiu gruppu, k nam prisoedinilsia Brodskii, on byl nemnogo molozhe nas [...]. Kak gruppu vosprinimala nas i Akmatova[...]" (*Novyi mir* 1 [1989]: 198–99). A series of simple calculations yields the following: $1953+1=1954$, the year when Naiman met Bobyshev and Rein; $1954+3=1957$; $1957-1958$ are precisely the years of the highest activity of the *Lito Promkooperatsii*. At the same time, Naiman's account contradicts Brodskii's own account of his activity circa 1957 as quoted by Valentina Polukhina: "In 1957 [Brodskii was born in 1940 and is four years younger than Bobyshev, Naiman, Rein, and Shraer-Petrov—*M.D.S.*] he joined the geologists: 'I had some interest in geology—it gave me an opportunity to travel as widely as I could possibly wish. I covered quite a lot of the ground in the Empire. I saw lots of landscape. Then gradually I began to write.' One day, finding himself in Yakutsk, Brosky discovered a slim volume of Baratynsky's poetry in a bookshop: 'When I read this book, it became clear to me that I had no business in Yakutsk, or with the expedition, that I knew and understand nothing else, that poetry was the only thing I understood'" (Valentina Polukhina, *Joseph Brodsky: A Poet for Our Time* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990] 7). Thus, Brodskii could not possibly join the group around 1957 ("goda cherez tri" in Naiman's text). In a later interview with Polukhina, Naiman is again ambiguous about the date of his first meeting with Brodskii: "ia dumaiu, chto èto bylo godu v 58-m, naverno. Tut mozhet byt' oshibka v polgoda" (Anatolii Naiman, "Interview with V. Polukhina," *Iosif Brodskii razmerom podlinnika. Sbornik, posviashchënniy 50-letiiu Brodskogo* [Tallinn: n.p., 1990] 127). Other accounts of Brodskii's early steps in poetry date his appearance in the literary circles of Leningrad as 1959–1960; see, for instance, Konstantin Kuz'minsky, *The Blue Lagoon Anthology of Modern Russian Poetry*, vol. 2B (Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1982) 303. Brodskii joined the original group of five no earlier than the fall of 1959, which is in full agreement with the date, offered by Rein in an interview with V. Polukhina in 1990. In the interview, Rein recalls his first meeting with Brodskii in the apartment of Efim Slavinsky; see "The Introduction of the Prosaic into Poetry," *Brodsky Through the Eyes of His Contemporaries*, ed. Valentina Polukhina (New York: Macmillan, 1992) 57. Another telling instance of Naiman's self-contradicting emerges out of the Russian version of his 1989 interview with V. Polukhina. There, Naiman recalls that it was Rein who introduced Brodskii to him; see *Iosif Brodskii razmerom podlinnika* (Tallinn, n.p., 1990) 128. Then, how could Brodskii and Naiman have met before the fall of 1959 when Rein himself did

"Funeral Octaves" and "The Funeral of Bobo" form a system of communications, centering on the questions of Akhmatova's place in the lives of both poets, the literary generation to which they belong, and the Russian poetic tradition. They provide contrary answers to the question: *What will happen to the literary legacy of Akhmatova?* The dialogic exchanges occur simultaneously on a number of levels and present us with a case study of poetic dialogue, offering a unique, partially concealed frame of reference for the problems of Russian culture of the last four decades. The two poems are by no means the only ones on the death of or in memoriam of A.A. Akhmatova that deserve attention. A number of poets, including the former members of the *Lito Promkooperatsii*, have written on the topic of Akhmatova's death.⁵ More so, Bobyshev and Brodskii have reflected elsewhere upon this sorrowful event in

not get to meet Brodskii before October, 1959? From the fall of 1959 until the spring of 1961, Shraer-Petrov—the Chairman of the *Lito Promkooperatsii*—served as military physician in Belorussia; Shraer-Petrov's departure—along with Averbakh's having already left for Sheksna near Vologda upon his graduation from medical school (1958–1960)—largely contributed to the transformation of the original group of five. Beginning with 1960 Bobyshev, Brodskii, Naiman and Rein were changing their literary orientation; their turning to Akhmatova laid foundations for a new, later formation, Akhmatova's orphans (*akhmatovskie siroti*). Their rapprochement to Akhmatova marked a radical turn in the verse aesthetics of the young poets. Just how rapid the change of their poetic preferences really was—these poets started off with worshipping Khlebnikov and Zabolotskii but now turned to Akhmatova's predominantly classical forms and prosodies—becomes apparent, for instance, in the following passage from Naiman's memoir. Naiman describes his first conversation with Bobyshev where they shared their favourite poets and texts: "V vesennii solnechnyi den', kogda ia i Bobyshev vpervye zagovorili drug s drugom, my proshli peshkom po Zagorodnomu, Vladimirskomu, Liteinomu, cherez Nevu, po Lesnomu, do moego doma nedaleko ot Lanskoï, bespreryvno chitaia stikhi, i eshchë chas toptalis' u vorot, dochityvaia 'Fevral' Bagritskogo i na vyhor iz 'Ordy' i 'Bragi' Tikhonova" (*Novyi mir* 1 [1989]: 190). The group of Akhmatova's orphans emerged after Bobyshev, Naiman and Rein, joined by Brodskii, replaced Averbakh, their old mentor, with a new mentor, Akhmatova. Neither Averbakh nor Shraer-Petrov chose to belong to the new group although both certainly had their independent opportunities to enter Akhmatova's circle; see, for instance, David Shraer-Petrov, "Belaia staila nad Finskim zalivom," *Druz'ia i teni* (New York: Liberty Publishing House, 1989), 160–65. The desintegration of the original *Lito Promkooperatsii* group of five was not only prompted by circumstances (first Averbakh's, and then, Shraer-Petrov's two-year absence) but was also a result of growing aesthetic differences. At Averbakh's funeral on January 12, 1986 in Moscow all the members of the original group—living and deceased—except Bobyshev who had emigrated to the U.S.—gathered for the first time in many years. Naiman, Rein, and Shraer-Petrov all stood there around Averbakh's coffin reminding the world and themselves of their shared past in poetry and of Averbakh's role in the formation of their original group.

⁵ See, for example, M.M. Kralin's recent anthology *Ob Anne Akhmatovoi* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1990).

Russian culture. While all poems on the death of Akhmatova may be seen as part of a larger funeral text, it is only in the case of "Funeral Octaves" and "The Funeral of Bobo" that we encounter what may be termed "funeral text of dialogue," a unique textual space which emerges from a consecutive/simultaneous reading of the two poems and concerns itself with a set of problems created by the death of Anna Akhmatova, the poet and the person. Trying to understand the dialogue between the two poems depends largely upon decoding a number of private and semi-private codes contained in the texts and the (inter)textual space of dialogue. That in its turn requires a close comparative analysis of the metric and stanzaic structures of the two poems and their sound-and-image structure, as well as an inquiry into the way cultural history and its cultural myths inscribe themselves into the texture of the two poems.

Bobyshev's "Funeral Octaves" consists of eight eight-liners, each bearing a title: "Golos" (Voice), "Vospominanie" (Recollection), "Portret" (Portrait), "Vzgliad" (Look), "Peremeny" (Changes), "Vse chetvero" (All Four), "Vstrecha" (Encounter) and "Slova" (Words).⁶ Each of the eight-liners or octaves,⁷ as Bobyshev so terms them, comprises at least two distinct moments in time, one preceding the other. In eight-liner 1, "Voice," the moment of the past is that of Akhmatova's recording her poetry; the moment of the present is that of Bobyshev's playing a record with the poems of the already dead poet.⁸ In eight-liner 2, "Recollection," the two moments are represented by the two different states of Bobyshev's being, the one before Akhmatova's death and the one after it. In eight-liner 3, "Portrait," the moment of the past is represented by the

⁶ Hereafter all citations from the text of "Traurnye oktavy" are from Dimitrii Bobyshev, *Zitaniia* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1979) 56-60.

⁷ In fact, none of Bobyshev's "octaves" is indeed an octave. In versification, an octave, *ottava rima*, is solely an eight-liner with a rhyme scheme abababcc and therefore three different rhymes (a, b, c) and not two as in Bobyshev's "octaves"; also, an octave is usually written in five- or six-foot iambs, while "octave" 3 is in trochaic pentameter, "octave" 5—in dactylic tetrameter. Three of Bobyshev's eight-liners, "Golos" (1), "Portret" (3), and "Slova" (8), belong to the type of *ottava siciliana* or, simply, *siciliana*, an eight-liner which rhymes abababab. *Siciliana* is rather rare in modern Russian poetry. One of Bobyshev's eight-liners, "Portret," has a major predecessor, Blok's famous "Mai zhestokii s belymi nochami..." (1908), written in trochaic pentameter and rhyming AbAbAbAb // CdCdCdCd; A, B, C here and hereafter stand for feminine rhymes, a, b, c for masculine. By calling his eight-liners "octaves" Bobyshev uses poetic licence; also, "Traurnye oktavy" is actually an octave of eight-liners, a highly deliberate poetic form.

⁸ Some biographico-literary background for "Traurnye oktavy" is given in Naiman's introductory remarks to four poems dedicated to Akhmatova or written on her death: Bobyshev's "Traurnye oktavy," Brodskii's "Sreten'e," Naiman's own "Kartina v rame," and Rein's "U zimnei t'my pechalen rot...." See A. Naiman, "Chetyre stikhotvoreniia," *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 5 (1989): 110-111.

image of Akhmatova during her last years, while the moment of the present is signified by a photograph of Akhmatova, presumably on the jacket of the record that Bobyshev is playing. In eight-liner 4, "Look," the moment of the past is that of Akhmatova's burial; a particularly tragic look of Akhmatova's eyes has crystallized in Bobyshev's memory and fills the moment of his present. In eight-liner 5, "Changes," the past is a series of consecutive moments that describe replacing a wooden cross by an iron one and building a tombstone, while the present moment communicates one's impression of the condition of Akhmatova's grave. In eight-liner 6, "All Four," the means of expressing the past include both the actual past tense and the present tense; a cinematographic technique is used—Akhmatova's funeral is presented as a set of present moments-sequences; the moment of the present that opposes the funeral scene in the eight-liner is a "present" state of friendship between the four poets—Brodskii, Naiman, Rein, and Bobyshev himself.⁹ Eight-liner 7, "Encounter," encodes an encounter between Bobyshev and Akhmatova, during which Akhmatova asked Bobyshev for a line from his poem to be used as an epigraph to her poem "Piataia roza" (The Fifth Rose, 1963); the moment of the present—grounded in the private code of the past encounter—describes the posthumous publication of "The Fifth Rose" (Bobyshev's epigraph was withdrawn from Akhmatova's poem).¹⁰ "Words," the eighth and last eight-liner, juxtaposes the moment in the past when Akhmatova's voice could be heard live, and the present moment of voicelessness/verselessness. The end of eight-liner 8 returns the poem to its beginning, the motif of Akhmatova's voice and/or Bobyshev's memories of it. Thus, the main structural principle of the poem, as well as of each eight-liner, is *diachronic*, that of temporal dichotomies.¹¹ Bobyshev's

⁹ A documentary about Akhmatova's funeral ("Lichnoe delo Akhmatovoi") was made by S. Aranovich but did not come out until 1989. For details, see Evgenii Rein, "Sotoe zerkalo," *Znamia* 12 (1992): 188-195.

¹⁰ See *Literaturnaiia gazeta*, September 15, 1971: 7; in the book edition of his memoir Naiman provides an account of the relationship between Bobyshev's epigraph and Akhmatova's poem, see Anatolii Naiman, *Rasskazy o Anne Akhmatovoi* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1989) 110.

¹¹ Also note that within each of Bobyshev's eight-liners diachrony is also preserved by two principal groups of means, grammatical and metrical. The grammatical means include the following: juxtaposing past tense forms of the verb with those of present or non-past, for example, in eight-liner 1 *zabylos'*, *peremololos'* vs. *stonet*, *lovit*; in 2 *zatekla*, *posmotrel'i* vs. *sdvoiu*, *videt'* *Vas...* *moia beda*; in 4 *ushla*, *skazal* vs. *reshit*, *puskai predstavit*, in 5 *zasnezhila*, *zamenili* vs. *padaet*; in 6 *vypil*, *prozrela* vs. *zakhodiat*, *zhizn'... ne obratima*; in 7 *velela*, *vnës* vs. *i vot — ona*; in 8 *stikhilo* vs. *nemotstvuiut*. Among other grammatical means are such markers of the past and present as *segodniashnee* (*vremia*) vs. *byloe* (*mgnoven'e*), *togdashi* vs. *tepereshnii* (about the authorial subject), both in eight-liner 2. The metrical diachrony is supported by regular alternation of two rhymes within each

project is that of matching a set of present moments that form his present state of being with a respective set of moments from the past, both on the level of the eight-liner (part) and the poem (whole). Akhmatova's death serves as the controlling agency in selecting and organizing the time and space of the poem.

Eight-liner 8 not only completes the diachronic chain of the poem, it also follows the rhyme scheme and meter of eight-liner 1. At the same time, the rest of the eight-liners are marked by a unique combination of their meters and their rhyme schemes, as can be seen in the following table:

METER AND RHYME SCHEME IN BOBYSHEV'S "FUNERAL OCTAVES"

Eight-liner	Meter	Rhyme scheme
"Voice" (1)	iambic pentameter	AbAbAbAb
"Recollection" (2)	iambic pentameter	AbbAAbbA
"Portrait" (3)	trochaic pentameter	AbAbAbAb
"Look" (4)	iambic pentameter	aBBaBaaB
"Changes" (5)	dactylic tetrameter	AAbAbbAb
"All Four" (6)	iambic pentameter	aBaBaaBB
"Encounter" (7)	iambic pentameter	AbbAbAAb
"Words" (8)	iambic pentameter	AbAbAbAb

Thus, the diachronic structural principle of the poem does not allow for a repetition of the meter-rhyme scheme combination in any of the eight-liners except 1 and 8. The function of each eight-liner is to create a poetic intonation that would express a unique past/present concurrence, and for that reason may not match with any other concurrences.¹² In the case of 8, as has been suggested earlier, the diachronic chain is completed, and the coupled moments of the past and of the present are either the same as in eight-liner 1, or temporally contiguous with it.

Brodskii's four-part lyrical poem "The Funeral of Bobo" follows the meter/rhyme scheme combination of the first quatrain of eight-liner 6 of

eight-liner; in 1, 3, and 8 the rhyme scheme is AbAbAbAb (*ottava siciliana*), an alternation of rhymes *par excellence*.

¹² By intonation I mean here a combination of poetic syntax, meter/rhythm, sonic qualities, and the semantic plane of a given line, stanza, etc.; in this analysis of Bobyshev's and Brodskii's poems I decided to limit myself to the meter/rhyme scheme units; a comparison of the role of pyrrhics and caesuras in rendering the intonation of poetic dialogues in both texts merits a special inquiry. Also significant are the internal symmetries within "Traurnye oktavy," for instance, between eight-liners 2 and 7, or 4 and 6.

Bobyshev's "Funeral Octaves": iambic pentameter with masculine rhymes in the odd lines.¹³ The aBaB rhyming pattern is consistent throughout the 12 quatrains of Brodskii's poem. The relatively simple metrical and rhyming structure of "The Funeral of Bobo" (compared to the complex structure of Bobyshev's poem) corresponds to the *synchronic principle* that organizes Brodskii's poem. The poem communicates the state of Brodskii's despair over Akhmatova's death. It is the effect of the text that although a certain temporal frame is traceable in it—the third quatrain of the first part mentions Wednesday ("konchaetsia sreda") and the last quatrain of the fourth part reports Thursday ("idët chetverg")—the whole poem is perceived as one extended present moment. This is achieved through three main groups of means. Firstly and obviously, because of the identical rhyme schemes (aBaB) and meter (iambic pentameter) each quatrain is bound to point not only to itself but also to the eleven other quatrains of the poem. Secondly, with a few exceptions, Brodskii limits himself to the use of the non-past verbal forms.¹⁴ Finally, the synchronic organization of the poem is realized by means of a principle that may be called *sound-shape-image roundness*.

Over 20%, or 55 out of 252 words in Brodskii's poem are words with a stressed vowel *o*.¹⁵ 12 out of 48 (25%) lines end with rhymes, carrying stressed "o"s: *nedoloi-igloi*, *Bobo-slabo*, *naperëd-naoborot*, *lomonose-Rossi*, *noz' no-nevozmozhno*, *kherovo-slovo*. The central image of the poem is that of a circular shape, or, rather, the poem presents a series of metamorphoses of various circular objects into one another. The metamorphoses of roundness are paralleled on the phonetic level by the stressed *o*-vocalism. *Bobo*, the very name that encodes the figure of Akhmatova in the poem, contains a stressed *o*. The

¹³ This is, of course, a commonly occurring pattern in Russian versification as a whole; still, as I will demonstrate below, quatrain six of "Traurnye oktavy" communicates the most significant, the most compelling signal for Brodskii to be reacting to in "Pokhorony Bobo."

¹⁴ Quatrain 1 of part 3 is one of the five instances in the poem when the past tense forms are used. But the effect of the dream process is that if remembered (as it is presented in the quatrain) it becomes a present-tense extension of the past, or past-in-the-present. Thus, "Segodnia mne prisnilos', chto lezhu/ v svoei krovati. Tak ono i bylo" does not disrupt the synchronic organization of Brodskii's poem: the time/tense of the poem (continuing present) is joined with the clock time of the extra-"Pokhorony Bobo" space. Similarly, in quatrain 2, part 1, *striaslos'* of "Chto striaslos'" the perfective form connotes the present result of a past action/event, i.e. of Akhmatova's death. In quatrain 1, part 4 we read: "Ty vsem byla. No, potomu chto ty/ teper' mertva, Bovo moia, ty stala/ nichem." While *stala* connotes a present-moment result of a past action (much like *striaslos'*), *byla*, like *hylo* of quatrain 1, part 3, provides the extra-temporal frame of the poem (along with *sreda i chetverg*).

¹⁵ The ten one-consonant prepositions and the two words of the title were not included in this calculation. All calculations and citations here and hereafter are from Iosif Brodskii, "Pokhorony Bobo," *Chast' rechi* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1977) 8-9.

peculiarity of the vowel *o* is that both its graphic shape and the shape of the mouth upon pronouncing it are round.

The first quatrain of part 1 is opened by the word *Bobo*. The phonetic pattern of roundness, set by the first word of "The Funeral of Bobo," continues throughout the poem, its last word being *slovo*, again with a stressed *o*. While in the first quatrain of part 1 the chain *Bobo – nedoloi – prokolem – tol'ko* does not seem to signal anything but sheer phonetic roundness, already in the second quatrain the sound-shape-image interactions begin.¹⁶ Two things occur. First, the round shape of *o* (and from quatrain 1 on *o* encodes Akhmatova's persona) is inscribed into the square frame: *kvadratny okon*. Second, answering the question about Akhmatova's death ("Chto striaslos'") is compared to opening a tin can, empty inside ("pustuiu iznutri/otkroi zhestianku: 'Vidimo, vot èto'"). Opening a tin can (a cylinder, round shape)¹⁷ parallels opening one's mouth to utter round vowels (*vot*, a stressable word, retains its vocalic *o*-quality). Thus, the round-shaped emptinesses ("pustuiu iznutri zhestianku," "vot èto") signify the result of Akhmatova's death and Brodskii's despair over it. The next quatrain is opened by the word *Bobo*, the chain *Bobo – belo – nochnoi* brings us to part 2, the first quatrain of which also starts with *Bobo*, and further solidifies the sound-shape-image quality of the poem.

In line 2, quatrain 1, part 2, *kvadratny okon* are inscribed into *arok polukruzh'ia*. The *o* phonetic chain continues: *Bobo – strochke – okon – takoi – moroz – kol'*. In quatrain 3 the roundness of the sound image of Akhmatova's name *Bobo* (*obraz* here stands for *Bobo*) is further inscribed into the symmetry of the right angles ("v nepovtorimoi perspektive Rossi"). The use of Rossi's architecture into which the image of Akhmatova is inscribed recalls the first quatrain of the poem. There another landmark of Petersburg's architecture ("igloi admiralteistva") is situated in the textual space next to the line that communicates the absence of consolation ("uteshat'sia nechem"). Quatrain 3 of part 2 is also exemplary in terms of the *o*-vocalism. All its four lines rhyme stressed "*o*": *naperèd – moroze-lomonose – naoborot – Rossi*.

Part 3 of the poem continues the chain of *o*-sounds: *Bobo – skol'zkie – segodnia – ono – listok – Bobo – vozdukh – vkhodit – komnatu – Bobo – posle*. Quatrain 2 introduces a new form of roundness—zero (*nul'*). Notice how consistently throughout the poem the phonetic and spatial roundness is paralleled by the images and the verbal expressions of despair/loss: "nul' otkryvaet perechen' utratam." The inscription of roundness into right-angularity

¹⁶ One could even argue that the interaction in question starts as early as the title of the poem, "Pokhorony Bobo."

¹⁷ A side projection of a tin can is also a rectangle and therefore we have another instance of inscribing a round emptiness into a system of right angles.

occurs again in the last line of quatrain 2: "i vozdukh vkhodit v komnatu kvadratom." In quatrain 3 the roundness—emptiness correspondence, established in quatrain 2 of part 1, is utilized again: "I khochetsia usta/slegka razzhav, proiznesti 'ne nado'./ Naverno posle smerti pustota."¹⁸ The proximity of the word *pustota* further crystallizes the connection between Akhmatova's death, emptiness, and roundness.

In part 4 the *o*-vocalism is represented by the following chain: *Bobo – tozhe – Bobo – nozh no – Bobo – nevozmozhno – kherovo – pustoe – slovo*. Two important finalizing moves take place in part 4. Firstly, *Bobo*, standing for Akhmatova and roundness in the poem, is connected directly with *pustota*, the "emptiness word" par excellence: "Bobo moia, ty stala/nichem—tochnee, sgustkom pustoty." Despair and loss, communicated in quatrain 2 by "kruglye glaza," and thus, round again, are intersected by the straight line of horizon: "vid gorizonta deistvuet, kak nozh." That act belongs to the group of acts aimed at inscription of the poem's various roundnesses into straight lines and right angles. (Recall, in quatrain 2: "Tvoi obraz budet, znaiu naperèd/ v zharu i pri moroze-lomonose/ ne umen'shat'sia, no naoborot/ v nepovtorimoi perspektive Rossi.") In quatrain 3 of part 4, the last quatrain of the poem, all the sound-shapes-images of roundness/emptiness are brought together: "Idèt chetverg. Ia veriu v pustotu./ V nei, kak v Adu, no bolee kherovo./ I novyi Dant skloniaetsia k listu/i na pustoe mesto stavit slovo."

Thus, the synchronic organization of "The Funeral of Bobo" centers the structure of the poem on a chain of unique metamorphoses of the sounds, shapes, and various images of roundness. Part 1 of the poem establishes links between roundness and despair/loss, caused by Akhmatova's death, and assigns the above combination another spatio-emotional characteristic: emptiness. Part 2 continues the inscription of roundness into the right angles and straight lines of Petersburg architecture that begins in part 1. Part 3 continues the fusion of the various forms of roundness and emptiness in the poem that appear in parts 1 and 2. Quatrain 3 of part 3 and quatrain 2 of part 1 demonstrate close sound-shape-image correspondences. As indicated above, part 4 brings the metamorphoses of roundness/emptiness to their completion. As a whole, Brodskii's poem offers the

¹⁸ Although the *o* in *ne nado* is unstressed and therefore loses the vocalic quality of a stressed *o*, the very act of describing opening one's mouth falls in synch with the imagery of emptiness, while 'ne nado' communicates enormous despair. In addition to rendering roundness by means of stressed *o*-vocalism, "Pokhorony Bobo" contains a system of *u*-vocalism that I will not consider in this essay; there are 37 words with the vowel *u* in the text; the chains of *u*-words are parallel to the chains of *o*-roundness/emptiness; *nul'* and *usta* are the two important points in the text where the two chains are joined (although, in the case of *usta*, *u* does lose some of its vocalic quality, the shape of the orifice still remains the same).

following chains of associations, based on the principle of sound-shape-image roundness, amended by the addition of emptiness as a second spatial parameter: *Bobo – mertva – uteshat'sia nechem – kvadraty – okon – chto striaslos'? – pustuiu iznutri ... zhestianku – Bobo – mertva – Bobo – mertva – grust' – kvadraty – okon – proshchai – Bobo – Bobo – obraz – v ... perspektive Rossi – Bobo – mertva – nul' – bez Bobo – vozdukh – kvadratom – Bobo – mertva – usta – pustota – mertva – Bobo – sgustkom pustoty – Bobo – mertva – kruglye glaza – vid gorizonta – Bobo – nevozmozhno – pustotu – kherovo – listu – slovo*. The last quatrain of the poem inscribes *slovo* into a sheet of paper, i.e., usually a plane, limited by four perpendiculars. The very act of inscribing *slovo* into the empty space of this non-round emptiness not only destroys the emptiness, but also signifies the emergence of a conclusion to the various acts of *round* and *empty* despair in "The Funeral of Bobo."¹⁹ The deeply synchronic organization of the poem lies in the fact that all the metamorphoses of the sound-shape-image complex, signifying and communicating Akhmatova's death and its result, are spatial, but never temporal extensions of roundness/emptiness.

To return to Bobyshev's "Funeral Octaves," whose diachronic structure was analyzed earlier in the essay, the transition from eight-liner 1 to eight-liner 8 is a temporal one; it consists of a series of past-present constructs, each of them establishing a connection between a certain point of Akhmatova's past and of her present as they exist in Bobyshev's memory. From quatrain 1 of part 1 to quatrain 3 of part 4 the authorial subject of Brodskii's "The Funeral of Bobo" makes a spatial transition of meaning without making a temporal transition. On the contrary, Bobyshev's "Funeral Octaves," presents us with a series of temporal transitions while the meaning of what it communicates does not change, but rather saturates itself with layers of reminiscences. It is only natural in the light of the above distinction that the first two and the last two lines of Brodskii's poem frame a nearly timeless textual space that provides an answer to the question about Akhmatova's literary heir:

Bobo mertva, no shapki nedoloi. (1) Chem ob'iasnit', chto uteshat'sia nechem. (2) I novyi Dant skloniaetsia k listu (47) i na pustoe mesto stavit slovo. (48)

¹⁹ Richard Wilbur dealt with an extremely difficult task when translating "Pokhorony Bobo." Above all, the translator had to reconcile the restrictions dictated by the differences between the Russian and English phonological systems with the ultimate need to stay close to Brodskii's original design. The translation is especially remarkable in the way it renders the sound-shape-image roundness of the Russian. For instance, line 2 of part 2 reads as follows in Wilbur's translation: "O window squares, O arches' semicircles" (Joseph Brodsky, *A Part of Speech* [New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux] 50). *Os* are clearly added to compensate for the vocalic discrepancy between the Russian *okon* and the English *window*. Also, the second *o* in *Bobó* was now furnished with an accent mark.

The textual space of Bobyshev's poem is circular, and the complex transitions of time bring the last two lines of "Words" (eight-liner 8) back to the note of voicelessness/verselessness that appears already in "Voice" (eight-liner 1):

Zabylos', no ne vsë peremololos': / ogromno-golubinyi i grudnoi, / v razluge s sobstvennoi gortan'iu, golos/ ot novoi muki stonet pod igloi. / Ne gorlo, no bezzhiznennaia polost'/ seichas, teper' vot lovit mig byloi. / I zvukovoi borozdki rvëtsia volos, / no tol'ko ten' ot golosa so mnoi. ("Voice") Vsë stikhlo razom v martovskie dni. / Teper' stikham zvuchat' by nevozbranno, /no bez neë nemotstvuiut oni. ("Words")

Is the presence of *slovo* (sg.) in the finale of Brodskii's poem and *slová* (pl.) in the title of Bobyshev's last eight-liner another evidence of their complex dialogue?

As I already suggested, both poems entail a number of private and semi-private codes. The most important of these codes deal with the issues of Akhmatova's poetic legacy, her literary/personal relationship with Bobyshev and Brodskii, and her poetic heritage. I shall now attempt to decode four codes—two from each poem—that seem most important for understanding the dialogue between "Funeral Octaves" and "The Funeral of Bobo." Note that the very title of Brodskii's poem is already a private code, disguising the name of Akhmatova. *Bobo* is used consistently throughout the poem. Quatrain 2 of part 4 adds two more private names of Akhmatova—*Kiki* and *Zaza*, and further complicates the system of private codes of the poem. At the same time, nominally, Brodskii's poem contains fewer private codes than Bobyshev's. The latter poem does not disguise Akhmatova's name. It appears directly in the dedication ("Pamiati Anny Akhmatovoi") and line four of eight-liner 6 ("akhmatovskimi sirotami v riad"), and indirectly in line 3 of eight-liner 8 ("I dazhe samoe prostoe: 'Khanna'.")²⁰

²⁰ Characteristic is the use of the name Khanna in the poem. It most likely refers to Akhmatova's sister-in-law Khanna Vul'fovna Gorenko who lived in Riga and frequently visited Akhmatova; thus "Khanna! / Zdes' molodye liudi k nam, vzgliani..." are Akhmatova's own words, *molodye liudi* encodes a group of young poets, followers of Akhmatova. That "Khanna/ zdes' molodye liudi k nam, vzgliani..." were in fact Akhmatova's actual words becomes evident from Bobyshev's memoiristic essay "Akhmatovskie siroty," published in 1984. Here is Bobyshev's account of his first visit to Akhmatova (together with E. Rein): "Otkryla dver' ona sama [Akhmatova—M.D.S.]: — Khanna! — kriknula ona v glub' kvartiry. Zdes' molodye liudi k nam prishli"; see Dmitrii Bobyshev, "Akhmatovskie siroty," *Russkaia mys'* No. 3507, March 6 1984: 8. At the same time, the ecclesiastical context of the beginning of eight-liner 8 may suggest two more identifications, with Hannah the mother of Samuel from I Samuel and with (Anne) Hannah the mother of Virgin Mary. Since Anna is merely a Western version of the Hebrew Hannah, *Khanna* in Bobyshev's text also points to Akhmatova herself. Also, another Anna, Anna the

Probably to compensate for the title-decoding dedication of his poem, Bobyshev incorporates a larger number of other private codes in his text.

In the 1979 Biblioteka poeta edition of Akhmatova's poetry, her poem "The Fifth Rose" appears with a dedication, that encodes the name of Dmitrii Bobyshev: Dm. B-vu.²¹ The title of the poem figures in the first line of "Encounter" (eight-liner 7) in Bobyshev's poem. The eight-liner narrates two encoded episodes that form a diachronic relationship. The first episode (the past moment) deals with Akhmatova's asking Bobyshev for an epigraph from his poem for her "The Fifth Rose": "Ona velela mne dlia Piatoi rozy/ epigrafom svoiu stroku vpisat'...." The second episode (the present moment) describes the publication of Akhmatova's poem in a newspaper without the epigraph and Bobyshev's name: "I vot—ona, ona v gazetnoi proze!/ Ėpigraf zhe—i vpriam' po-al'batros'i—/ kuda vdruk uletel—ne razyskat'." In fact, Bobyshev's poem is dated 1971, which suggests that the September 15, 1971 *Literaturnaia gazeta* posthumous publication of Akhmatova's poems, including "The Fifth Rose," served as direct impetus to the creation of at least eight-liner 7 of "Funeral Octaves." This, in its turn, illustrates the way Bobyshev's poem records history (literary and political) and time. The title and the last stanza of "The Fifth Rose" (1963) both call upon an earlier poem by Akhmatova, "Posledniaia roza" (The Last Rose), dated 1962. The latter poem first appeared in the January issue of *Novyi mir* for 1963 under an epigraph from Brodskii's 1962 poem "A.A. Akhmatovoi" (To A.A. Akhmatova).²² The epigraph reads: "Vy napishte o nas naiskosok." Its author is disguised under the initials I.B.²³ The Biblioteka poeta collection of Akhmatova's verse prints neither the epigraph of "The Last Rose", nor its source.²⁴ In the case of Bobyshev, the situation is almost completely reversed: the newspaper publication does not have Bobyshev's name, while the

Prophetess of Luke 2:36 (*prorochitsa Anna*) figures in Brodskii's 1972 poem "Sreten'e" ("The Presentation of Christ in the Temple.")

²¹ See Anna Akhmatova, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1979) 309.

²² See Anna Akhmatova "Iz novykh stikhov," *Novyi mir* 1 (1963): 64.

²³ In the *Novyi mir* publication "Posledniaia roza" is followed by "Dva chetverostishia"; the second of the two quatrains bears encoded references to Brodskii's fate, "O svoem ia uzhe ne zaplachu,/ No ne videt' by mne na zemle/ Zolotoe kleimo neudachi/ Na eshch'e bezmiatezhnom chele" (Anna Akhmatova, "Iz novykh stikhov," *Novyi mir* 1 [1963]: 65).

²⁴ Naturally, the definitive Western edition of Akhmatova's works prints both the epigraph to "Posledniaia roza" and the name of its author, I. Brodskii, see Anna Akhmatova, *Sochineniia*, vol. 1 (Washington: Inter-Language Literary Associates, 1967) 328; "Piataia roza" appears in vol. 3 of the latter edition with the dedication Dm. B-vu, see Akhmatova, *Sochineniia*, vol. 3, 100.

Biblioteka poeta edition prints it. To elucidate the connections between the 1962 and the 1963 poems of Akhmatova, I shall quote their last quatrains:

Gospodi! Ty vidish', ia ustala	I guby my v tebe omochim,
Voskresat', i umirat', i zhit'.	A ty moi dom blagoslovi,
Vse voz'mi, no etoi rozy aloi	Ty kak liubov' byla...No, vprochem,
dai mne svezhest' snova oshchutit'.	Tut delo vovse ne v liubvi.
("The Last Rose")	("The Fifth Rose")

The request of the 1962 poem is granted in 1963. It was Dmitrii Bobyshev who presented Anna Akhmatova with five roses, one of which is described in "The Fifth Rose."²⁵ Thus, two of Akhmatova's poems, forming a dialogic

²⁵ See commentary in Anna Akhmatova, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1979) 501. Dmitrii Bobyshev recalled the episode of presenting the five roses to Akhmatova in his essay "Akhmatovskie siroty": "Ėti stikhi [Bobyshev's "Velikolepnaia sem'erka"] ia pov'ež Akhmatovoi na den' rozhdeniia v pisatel'skii pos'ełok Komarovo, gde ona arendovala v Litfonde dachu, tak nazivaemuiu 'Budku.' Ia podaril ei takzhe buket iz otbornykh roz. Kak svidetel'stvuet Naiman, byvschii eš sekretar'em, 'ob etikh tsvetakh govorilos', i oni pokazivalis' gostiam.' Anna Andreevna vspomnila o nikh i v moi sleduiushchii priезд: — Chetyre iz nikh vskore uviali, no zato piataia neobyknovenno khorosho rastsvela i tvorila chudesa, chut' ne letaia po komnate..."; see Dmitrii Bobyshev, "Akhmatovskie siroty," *Russkaia myst'* 3507, March 8, 1984: 9; hereafter "Akhmatovskie siroty." In the book edition of *Rasskazy o Anne Akhmatovoi*, Naiman added a few pages which elucidate among others the circumstances in which "Piataia roza" was composed (110): "Pervonachal'no Akhmatova predpolagala ob'edinit' ego [Akhmatova's poem "Ty—verno, chei-to muzh i ty liubovnik chei-to..."—M.D.S.] s 'Poslednei rozoi' i "Piatoi rozoi' v tsikl "Tri rozy". K kazhdomu stikhotvoreniiu byl vybran epigraf iz stikhov, ei posviashchennykh: Brodskogo—"Vy napishte o nas naiskosok" k 'Poslednei', moikh—"Vasha gor'kaia bozhestvennaia rech'..." k 'Ty—verno, chei-to muzh...'. 'Piataia' byla napisana po povodu buketa iz piati roz, podarenogo ei Bobyshevym: chetyre srazu zaviali, piataia—'siiala, blagoukhala, chut' ne letala'. Nezadolgo pered tem Bobyshev posviatil Akhmatovoi stikhotvorenie 'Velikolepnaia semerka' s takimi strochkami: 'Ugnat' by v vashu chest' elektropoezd, napolnennyi slovarnym serebrom'.—no shchital ego nedostatochno 'vyskokim' i predlozhit' ei dlia epigrafa chetverostishie o roze, imevshee prezhde drugogo adresata. A.A. dala vpisat' chetverostishie v tetradku, no khitrost' nemedlenno raskusila—"Piataia roza' ostalas' bez epigrafa"; as one can see, Naiman's explanation of the disappearance of Bobyshev's epigraph in the *Literaturnaia gazeta* publication differs from Bobyshev's own in "Traurnye oktavy" and in the essay "Akhmatovskie siroty," written five years prior to Naiman's memoir, Bobyshev writes: "Vskore my uznali, chto 'natvorila' eta roza,—Akhmatova posviatila nam po stikhotvoreniiu: Brodskomu—"Posledniuiu rozu', mne—"Piatuiiu', a Naimanu—"Nebyvshuiiu'. Nashi initials byli uzhe postavleny, i kazhdomu predpolagalos' vpisat' kakoi-nibud' epigraf 'iz sebii.'" ("Akhmatovskie siroty," 9). Bobyshev's essay, "Akhmatovskie siroty" (9), also contains the complete text of his poem "Velikolepnaia sem'erka," clearly pertinent to the poetic dialogue between "Traurnye oktavy" and "Pokhorony Bobo": "Eshch'e

communication, stand behind the dialogue between Brodskii's and Bobyshev's poems. While "Funeral Octaves" encodes "The Fifth Rose" and its connections with Bobyshev, Brodskii's poem contains no references to "The Last Rose" or any other poem by Akhmatova. In the light of Iurii Lotman's notion of minus-device, the absence of the above references may be seen as meaningful silence,²⁶ i.e. as a silence answering Bobyshev's use of Akhmatova's poem and its aura in his poem. In the dialogue between the two poems Brodskii's minus-device serves the synchronic and focused organization of "The Funeral of Bobo." (As demonstrated above, until the very last quatrain the whole poem communicates one and only one emotional state: despair over Akhmatova's death via a sound-shape-image system of different forms of roundness/emptiness.) Any digression or reference (of the kind that Bobyshev makes on the subject of the epigraph in eight-liner 7 or Arsenii Tarkovskii's funeral speech in eight-liner 4²⁷) is impossible within Brodskii's highly structured and consistently mono-semantic poem.²⁸

"All Four," eight-liner 6 of Bobyshev's poem, carries a reference to four poets, whose names are encoded in the text as the diminutives from their first names: *Osia* for Iosif Brodskii, *Tolia* for Anatolii Naiman, *Zhenia* for Evgenii

podyshe dvukh — i vsemerom, / dispetchera vytselivaia v prorez', / ugonim v vashu chest' èlektropoezd, / napolnennyi pechatnym serebrom. O, kak Vy guby stronete v otvet, / prilazhivaia budto dlia svireli.../ Takoi iz nikh iskhodit mirnyi svet, / chto delaiutsia mal'chiki smireny. I khochetsia togda, korzinoi roz/ roskosno otiagchaia motoroller, / u Vashego kryl'tsa zakonchit' kross/ i vskriknut' divnym golosom Tirolia: Boh — èto Bakh, a tsar' pod nim — Motsart, / a Vam ulybkoi angel'skoi mertsat'. I slushaia motorov iunyi grom, / i vidia ètikh roz usemeren'e, / ne prositsia l' togda stikhotvoren'e/ s upominan'em kazhdogo dobrom?" K. Kuz'minskii also provides the almost-complete text of the poem, see Kuz'minskii, *The Blue Lagoon Anthology of Modern Russian Poetry*, vol. 2B, 180. Note also that a small scale poetic dialogue between Bobyshev and Brodskii can be seen as early as in the Bog-Bakh motif in Bobyshev's "Velikolepnaia semerka"; cf. Brodskii's "Stikhi pod epigrafom": "V kazhdoi muzyke Bakh, / V kazhdom iz nas Bog" (Iosif Brodskii, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy* [Washington: Inter-Language Literary Associates, 1965] 23). Finally, Brodskii has also reminisced about his involvement in the creation of Akhmatova's "rose cycle"; see *Vspominaia Akhmatovu: Iosif Brodskii—Solomon Volkov; dialogi* (Moscow: Nezavisimaia gazeta, 1992) 40.

²⁶ See Iurii Lotman, *Struktura khudozhestvennogo teksta* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1971) 122.

²⁷ Arsenii Tarkovskii spoke at Akhmatova's funeral in Komarovo, see *Ob Anne Akhmatovoi* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1990) 571.

²⁸ The references to Pushkin and to Dante will be discussed below; due to their encodedness the references to Pushkin do not disrupt the unified synchronic structure of Brodskii's poem, while the references to Dante conclude and transcend the poem's structure.

Rein, and, finally, *Dima* for Dmitrii Bobyshev himself. Bobyshev's poem, written in 1971, appears to have been the first text to give rise to what has become one of the Russian literary/cultural myths of the past two decades—the myth of Akhmatova's orphans. A detailed discussion of this interesting phenomenon goes beyond the scope of this essay and indeed deserves a separate study. Suffice it to say for the moment that Bobyshev's poem, and eight-liners 6 and 8 of it primarily, presents the four poets whose names are half-disguised by the semi-private codes, as linked with Akhmatova's poetic and personal legacy. Let us quote from eight-liner 6,

...v cheredu utrat
zakhodiat Osia, Tolia, Zhenia, Dima
akhmatovskimi sirotami v riad.
Lish' priamo, drug na druga ne gliadiat
chetyre stikhotvortsia—pobratima.
Ix družba, kak i zhizn', ne obratima.

The term *akhmatovskie siroty* implies a genetic/hereditary relationship between the poetry/persona of the dead Akhmatova and the four poets who survive her. It is precisely the ambiguity of the term that resulted in its general misreception, and in the emergence of an obfuscatory literary/cultural myth²⁹. The myth presents the four poets—"orphans" as starting their literary genealogy from Akhmatova. Akhmatova is presented as the only poetic mentor of the four poets although it is quite apparent—both from the early texts of the four "orphans" circa 1956–1960 and their memoirs and interviews—that long before meeting Akhmatova they had received a serious formal education in poetry (see beginning of the essay and, especially, fn. 4). How can we understand such a severe change in the aesthetic models of the would-be "Akhmatova's orphans"? How did Bobyshev, whose literary idols during the *Lito Promkooperatsii* period were Khlebnikov and Zabolotskii (Akhmatova's animosity towards Zabolotskii is well-known!), end up an Akhmatova orphan? Or consider Brodskii himself whose early poetry is saturated with the formal achievements of the Constructivists, Slutskii, Tsvetaeva, quite alien, it seems, to Akhmatova's poetics?³⁰ The myth of Akhmatova's orphans emerges from both versions of the

²⁹ The term "obfuscatory myth" was used by Professor Stephen Walker of Rutgers University in his seminar on drama in the Spring of 1990. Professor Walker contrasted obfuscatory myths with Jung's "compensatory myths."

³⁰ See Brodskii's interview with Tomas Venclova: "Mne uzhasno nraivilsia v molodosti Bagritskii. Uzhasno nraivilsia — men'she, chem Reinu, naprimer, no dovol'no sil'no — Sel'vinskii"; see "Chuvstvo perspektivy." *Strana i mir*, 3 (45), 1988: 150.

relationship between Akhmatova and the four poets that "Funeral Octaves" intertwines. Akhmatova's death is perceived as 1) a great personal loss of an older friend of maternal stature by a group of younger friends: "ona ushla ot nas"; 2) a loss of a poet whose verse has deeply affected the poetry of Brodskii, Naiman, Rein and Bobyshev: "chetyre stikhotvortsya-pobratima./ Ikh družhba, kak i zhizn', ne obratima". The salutary bridge between the two perceptions is created by the lines "zakhodiat Osia, Tolia, Zhenia, Dima/ akhmatovskimi sirotami v riad." The latter lines are the locus of obfuscation in the poem, and they most likely are the *locus classicus* of the whole confusion over *akhmatovskie siroty*. Its location in immediate proximity to both the very personal reference to the four poets (diminutives, semi-private codes, etc.) and the reference to poetry ("chetyre stikhotvortsya") makes the term *akhmatovskie siroty* a highly loaded one. What does *akhmatovskie siroty* mean in Bobyshev's text? An allegorical rendition of the relationship between a matriarchal figure and four younger men? An indication of the existing literary, textual connections between the corpus of texts known as Akhmatova's oeuvre and the texts by Brodskii, Naiman, Rein, and Bobyshev? Does *družhba* in the last line of eight-liner 6 refer to a personal friendship among the four young men, or to a literary camaraderie among the four poets? Bobyshev's text leaves it for us to interpret and to misinterpret. Having done so, the text proceeds to its final eight-liner ("Words") which offers an extremely pessimistic answer to the question about Akhmatova's heritage/legacy. The appearance of *molodye liudi* in line four of eight-liner 8 forms a connection between eight-liner 6 and eight-liner 8. Thus, "Teper' stikham zvuchat' by nevozbranno./ no bez neĕ nemotstvuiut oni" can be read in four major ways: 1) as proclaiming a poetic dead-end for Akhmatova's four orphans; 2) as stating Bobyshev's own poetic crisis after the death of Akhmatova—the poem was written five years following Akhmatova's death; 3) as a conclusion to eight-liner 1 with its motif of the record and the shadow of Akhmatova's voice on it; 4) as a combination of all the above. In any event, Bobyshev's poem via a series of past-present transitions communicates his great despair over the death of Akhmatova but does not nominate a literary heir to Akhmatova's poetic legacy.

Brodskii's poem "The Funeral of Bobo," written a year after Bobyshev's "Funeral Octaves" and forming an intricate dialogue with the latter, challenges Bobyshev's answer to the question about Akhmatova's legacy. Twice in his poem, Brodskii refers to an entity that seems to coincide with what Bobyshev

calls *akhmatovskie siroty*.³¹ Both of the encoded references occur in the first half of the four-part poem; in quatrain 1 of part 1 we read: "My ne prokolem babochku igloi/ Admiralteistva—tol'ko izuvechim"; in quatrain 2 of part 2: "Nam za toboi posledovat' slabo,/ no i stoiat' na meste ne pod silu." Already in the latter quote we can see a difference between the two positions. "Nam...slabo" literally means "we have not got the guts." Not having the guts, being incapable, refers to both following Akhmatova in her last journey, and continuing Akhmatova's poetic legacy. The reference to a *particular tradition* in Russian verse is present in an encoded form in quatrains 1 and 3, part 1 of Brodskii's poem. "Igloi admiralteistva" is a paraphrase of Pushkin's "admiralteiskaia igla" from the prologue to *Mednyi vsadnik (The Bronze Horseman)*, "chĕrnaia voda/ nochnoi reki ne prinimaet snega" brings in the topic of Pushkin's duel at Chernaia rechka.

That Brodskii responds, here and elsewhere, to Bobyshev's earlier poems by arguing with them, becomes evident from Bobyshev's poem "Ego zhe slovami" (In His Own Words, 1963). The latter is built as a dialogue with Pushkin incorporating Pushkin's "Na kholmakh Gruzii lezhit nochnaia mgl..." (On the Hills of Georgia Lies the Night Dim...). The immediate reason for Brodskii's use of Pushkin's "admiralteiskaia igla" also has to do with Bobyshev's "In His Own Words": "Puskai ne skhozhi glinnik i granit,/ no s kholodom soshlis' puti tepla./ na kholmakh Gruzii lezhit / Admiralteiskaia igla, NA KHOLMAKH GRUZII LEZHIT NOCHNAIA MGLA..."³² The source of Brodskii's "my ne prokolem babochku igloi / Admiralteistva—tol'ko izuvechim" also lies in Bobyshev's "In His Own Words": "i tonkaia izdaleka igla, / kotoria prikalyvaet naspekhi/ chuzhoe serdtse na chuzhikh prostranstvakh, / kak motyl'ka, na gran' ego stola." Both "kak motyl'ka, na gran' ego stola" and "my ne prokolem babochku igloi" are in iambic pentameter. This, again, substantiates my thesis of the dialogic nature of Brodskii's response to Bobyshev's funeral poem. However, despite the metrical and imagistic proximity to Bobyshev's subtext, Brodskii's response, "my ne prokolem babochku igloi / Admiralteistva —tol'ko izuvechim," reflects doubt about the very compatibility of the two traditions which began to dovetail each other when Bobyshev fell under Akhmatova's influence. "Igla Admiralteistva" (Admiralty spire) here stands for the Pushkin-Akhmatova tradition in Russian poetry whereas the "babochka" (butterfly) which it pierces embodies the Khlebnikov-Zabolotskii tradition. It is the latter that

³¹ In the context of the dialogic exchange between the two poems equating Brodskii's *my, nam* and Bobyshev's *nas, sirotami* appears to be a legitimate operation.

³² In Bobyshev's poem the verses from Pushkin's "Na kholmakh Gruzii lezhit nochnaia mgl..." are given in all caps, see Dimitrii Bobyshev, *Zitanii* 105.

shaped Bobyshev's early verse and still remains his aesthetic foundation nowadays. The poetic dead-end depicted in "Funeral Octaves" was caused by the loss of the living connections with Akhmatova's poetry after her death and Bobyshev's incapacity for a harmonious synthesis of the two major traditions. The salutary myth of Akhmatova's orphans, shaped by Bobyshev's funeral poem, presents Bobyshev (and the other orphans) as stemming specifically from Akhmatova's poetry and thereby masks the historical and textological realia of Akhmatova's relationship with the would-be "orphans."

To come back to the question of the place Brodskii outlines for himself within the Pushkin-Akhmatova tradition, "stoiat' na meste ne pod silu" suggests a powerful alternative to Bobyshev's motif of a poetic dead-end after Akhmatova's death. The references to Pushkin establish Akhmatova's connection to the Russian poetic tradition going back to that poet. In addition to the Akhmatova-Pushkin connection encoded in the poem, parts 3 and 4 refer to a different poetic tradition, that of Dante. The last two lines of part 3 read: "Naverno posle smerti—pustota. / I veroiatnee, i khuzhe Ada"³³; the last quatrain of part 4 decodes the capitalization of "Ad" by introducing directly the author of *The Inferno*: "Idët chetverg. Ia veriu v pustotu. / V nei, kak v Adu, no bolee kherovo. / I novyi Dant skloniaetsia k listu / i na pustoe mesto stavit slovo."³⁴ Akhmatova took a great interest in Dante, of which Brodskii was certainly aware. Akhmatova's poem "Dante" (1936) served as one of the subtexts to Brodskii's "Dekabr' vo Florentsii" (December in Florence, 1973), which is structured by a series of parallels between Brodskii's fate and the fate of Dante, and, inevitable as it is at the interjection of the Brodskiesque and the Dantesque contexts, between Leningrad/Petersburg and Florence.³⁵ In the context of the

³³ This motif appears in the same collection, *Chast' rechi*, only some ten pages later in "Pesnia nevinosti, ona zhe—opyta" (1972): "pustota veroiatnei i khuzhe ada": see Iosif Brodskii, *Chast' rechi*, 18; here, however, Brodskii does not capitalize 'inferno' for it does not refer specifically to Dante's text. Notice also that "ada" again rhymes with "ne nado."

³⁴ George Kline comments on the last two lines of the quatrain: "Brodsky's identification with such historical figures is, not surprisingly, most complete in the case of Dante and had been prefigured in an important poem of the second group, 'The Funeral of Bobo' (February–March, 1972)." George Kline, "Variations on the Theme of Exile," *Brodsky's Poetics and Aesthetics*, ed. Lev Loseff and Valentina Polukhina (Houndmills and London: Macmillan, 1990) 71.

³⁵ In 1302 Dante was sentenced to death after a change of power in his native Florence; because he was at the time away from Florence this verdict exiled him *de facto*; Dante spent the rest of his life in exile in Ravenna where he died in 1321. Brodskii's "Dekabr' vo Florentsii" adopts a line from Akhmatova's "Dante": "ëtot, ukhodia, ne oglianul'sia" (Akhmatova, *Stikhotvoreniia i poëmy* 193); Akhmatova's "Dante" takes its epigraph from canto 21 of *The Inferno*: "Il mio bel Giovanni" by altering it slightly.

encoded references to Pushkin, *novyi Dant* not only refers to a direct heir to the poetic tradition of Dante, but also suggests Akhmatova's being the *staryi Dant* of Russian poetry.³⁶ Thus, the "I" of the last lines of Brodskii's poem is the sole heir of the great tradition of European poetry, represented by Dante, Pushkin, and Akhmatova. Note that Brodskii avoids using direct self-references and references to the group of Akhmatova's orphans in the last two lines. It is neither *nam* or *my*, referring to Akhmatova's orphans in the (con)text of the Bobyshev-Brodskii dialogue, nor the clear *ia* of Brodskii's poem—"Ia veriu v pustotu." Thus, responding to Bobyshev's "no bez neë nemotstvuiut oni," Brodskii's poem nominates a new Dante who is to fill the post-Akhmatova poetic void with *slovo*.³⁷ Whether or not Brodskii is a new Russian Dante is a separate and legitimate question, demanding a separate forum for discussion. But while Bobyshev in "Funeral Octaves" assumes the role of heir to sorrow, Brodskii in "The Funeral of Bobo" makes a claim to being heir to poetry.³⁸

In summary: Bobyshev's "Funeral Octaves" (1971) and Brodskii's "The Funeral of Bobo" (1972) present the reader with a unique funeral text of poetic dialogue that occurs simultaneously on a number of levels.³⁹ While Bobyshev's poem consists of eight eight-liners that are marked by a different combination of meter and rhyming patterns, Brodskii adopts the meter/rhyme scheme combination of the first four lines of Bobyshev's eight-liner 6 and follows it consistently. While

³⁶ Barbara Heldt writes on the subject of Bobyshev's "Traurnye oktavy" in connection with Dante: "Bobyshev's 'Funeral Octaves' pay tribute to the woman who was able to connect the younger Leningrad poets (Bobyshev calls them 'Akhmatova's orphans') to the poets of the prerevolutionary age in Russia, and of all ages outside it—to Dante, for example." (Barbara Heldt, "The Other Worlds of Dmitri Bobysev," *WLT* 58[1]: 28) However, in the poem, Bobyshev, unlike Brodskii, does not make any connection between Akhmatova's orphans (or one of them) and Dante via Akhmatova.

³⁷ I realize how loaded the word *slovo* is; the discussion of *golos* (Bobyshev) vs. *slovo* (Brodskii), speaking vs. writing, and a number of Biblical references in both poems calls for a separate inquiry. Suffice it to say here that Brodskii's insistence upon the singularity of *slovo*, the last word both in his poem and in poetry contradicts Bobyshev's plurality of the words of sorrow in his last eight-liner, "Slova."

³⁸ J.-M. Bord'e in his account of Akhmatova's funeral writes the following: "Khorosho pomniu dorogu v lesu, sneg, tolpu i postoianno mel'kavshuiu figuru Iosifa Brodskogo, kotorogo koe-kto uzhe togda nazyval eë 'priëmnikom'." (Zhan-Mark Bord'e, "Vstrechi s Annoi Akhmatovoi," *Akhmatovskii sbornik*, vol. I [Paris: Institut d'Études slaves, 1989]: 227).

³⁹ My essay has left unaccounted a number of interesting small-scale dialogues; for example, Bobyshev's "Da ëtot vzgliad pristavit' by k visku, / kogda v razlade zhizn', i net spasen'ia" and Brodskii's "kol' ub'ïut, to pust' / iz ognestrel'nogo oruzh'ja" attract immediate attention.

diachrony serves as a main organizing principle of Bobyshev's poem, a synchronic principle underlies the structure of Brodskii's poem. While each of Bobyshev's eight-liners creates its own poetic intonation and its own poetic microcosm, all twelve quatrains of Brodskii's poem communicate one poetic intonation. While each eight-liner in Bobyshev's poem celebrates an autonomous system of imagery, Brodskii's 12 quatrains are centered on a single principle: the sound-shape-image of roundness/emptiness. While Bobyshev's poem mourns the defeat of authorial time by historical time, Brodskii's poem creates a nearly-timeless textual space that transcends despair into a new self-awareness. While Bobyshev's poem contains a number of references to Akhmatova's poetry, and to his biography and the way in which it is inscribed into Akhmatova's biography, Brodskii's silence may be interpreted as a minus-device. Finally, while Bobyshev's poem gives a pessimistic answer to the question about Akhmatova's poetic heritage/legacy, Brodskii's poem nominates a successor to the poetic tradition that Akhmatova carries into the second half of the twentieth century.

By means of a number of private and semi-private codes both poems inscribe literary, cultural, and political history into their texts. The ultimate result of the dialogue between "Funeral Octaves" and "The Funeral of Bobo" is that the intertextual structures in Bobyshev's poem become intratextualized in Brodskii's poem. Having once belonged to the same literary group and having both contributed to the formation of the literary/cultural myth of Akhmatova's orphans, Dmitrii Bobyshev and Iosif Brodskii represent opposing tendencies in modern Russian poetry.⁴⁰

³⁹ This paper was originally presented to Professor Vladimir E. Alexandrov (Yale University) for his Proseminar in Russian Literature in the Fall, 1990. An earlier version of the paper was read at the AATSEEL Conference in San Francisco in 1991. In May, 1993 it was also given as a lecture at the Faculty of Philosophy of Charles University (Prague). In November, 1993 a different version was given as a lecture at the Department of Modern Slavonic Studies of the University of Leeds. The author wishes to acknowledge the kind assistance of the following colleagues who have commented on the several drafts of this paper: Mikhail L. Gasparov, Hilary Fink, Michael J de K Holman, Susan Seijas, Edward Stankiewicz, Miluše Zdražilová. Special thanks to CSP's anonymous readers.

APPENDIX:

(The eight-liners of Bobyshev's poem have been assigned numbers from 1 to 8.)

ТРАУРНЫЕ ОКТАВЫ

Памяти Анны Ахматовой

ГОЛОС (1)

Забылось, но не всё перемололось:
огромно-голубиный и грудной,
в разлуке с собственной гортанью, голос
от новой муки стонет под иглой.
Не горло, но безжизненная полость
сейчас, теперь вот ловит миг былой,
И звуковой бороздки рвётся волос,
но только тень от голоса со мной.

ВОСПОМИНАНИЕ (2)

Здесь время так и валит даровое...
Куда его прикажете девать,
сегодняшнее? Как добыть опять
из памяти мгновение живое?
Тогдашний и теперешний – нас двое,
и – горькая двойная благодать –
я вижу Вас, и я врываю вспять
сквозь этих слёз в рыдание былое.

ПОРТРЕТ (3)

Затекла рука сердечной болью...
Как Вы посмотрели навсегда
из того мгновения на волю
в этот вот текучий миг, сюда!
В памяти я этот облик сдвою
с тем, что знал в позднейшие года.
Видеть Вас посмертною вдовою,
Вас не видеть – вот моя беда.

ВЗГЯД (4)

С мольбой на лбу, в кладбищенском леску
в день грузный и сырой, зимне-весенний
она ушла от нас к корням растений,
туда, в подпочву, к мерзлomu песку,
"Кто сподличать решит, – сказал Арсений, –
пускай представит глаз её тоску".
Да, этот взгляд приставить бы к виску,
когда в разлуде жизнь, и нет спасенья.

ПЕРЕМЕНЫ (5)

Холмик песчаный заснежила крупка,
два деревянных скрестились обрубка;
их заменили – железо прочней.
На перекладину села голубка,
но упорхнула куда-то... Бог с ней!
Стенку сложили из плоских камней.
Всё погребенье мимически-жутко
знак подает о добыче своей.

ВСЕ ЧЕТВЕРО (6)

Закрыв глаза, я выпил первым яд.
И, на кладбищенском кресте гвоздима,
душа прозрела: в череду утрат
заходят Ося, Толя, Женя, Дима
ахматовскими сиротами в ряд.
Лишь прямо, друг на друга не глядя
четыре стихотворца – побратима.
Их дружба, как и жизнь, не обратима.

ВСТРЕЧА (7)

Она велела мне для Пятой розы
эпиграфом свою строку вписать.
И мне бы – что с Моцартом ей мерцать,
а я – о превращеньях альбатроса
непоправимо внёс в её тетрадь.
И вот – она, она в газетной прозе!
Эпиграф же – и впрямь по-альбатросьи –
куда вдруг улетел – не разыскать.

СЛОВА (8)

Когда гортань – алтарной частью храма,
тогда слова Святым Дарам сродни.
И даже самое простое: "Ханна!
Здесь молодые люди к нам, взгляни..."
встает магически, поёт благоуханно.
Всё стихло разом в мартовские дни.
Теперь стихам звучать бы невозбранно,
но без неё немотствуют они.

1971

Dimitrii Bobyshev, *Zitaniia* (Paris, YMCA-Press, 1979) 56–60.

ПОХОРОНЫ БОБО

1

Бобо мертва, но шапки не долой.
Чем объяснить, что утешаться нечем.
Мы не проколем бабочку иглой
Адмиралтейства – только изувечим.

Квадраты окон, сколько ни смотри
по сторонам. И в качестве ответа
на „Что стряслось“ пустую изнутри
открой жестянку: „Видимо, вот это“.

Бобо мертва. Кончается среда.
На улицах, где не найдёшь почлега,
белым-бело. Лишь чёрная вода
ночной реки не принимает снега.

2

Бобо мертва, и в этой строчке грусть.
Квадраты окон, арок полукружья.
Такой мороз, что коль убьют, то пусть
из огнестрельного оружия.

Прощай, Бобо, прекрасная Бобо.
Слеза к лицу разрезанному сыру.
Нам за тобой последовать слабо,
но и стоять на месте не под силу.

Твой образ будет, знаю наперёд,
в жару и при морозе-ломоносе
не уменьшаться, но наоборот
в неповторимой перспективе Росси.

3

Бобо мертва. Вот чувство, дележу
доступное, но скользкое, как мыло.
Сегодня мне приснилось, что лежу
в своей кровати. Так оно и было.

Сорви листок, но дату переправь:
нуль открывает перечень утратам.
Сны без Бобо напоминают явь,
и воздух входит в комнату квадратом.

Бобо мертва. И хочется, уста
слегка разжав, произнести „не надо“.
Наверно, после смерти – пустота.
И вероятнее, и хуже Ада.

Ты всем была. Но, потому что ты
теперь мертва, Бобо моя, ты стала
ничем – точнее, сгустком пустоты.
Что тоже, как подумаешь, немало.

Бобо мертва. На круглые глаза
вид горизонта действует, как нож, по
тебя, Бобо, Кики или Заза
им не заменят. Это невозможно.

Идёт четверг. Я верю в пустоту.
В ней, как в Аду, но более херово.
И новый Дант склоняется к листу
и на пустое место ставит слово.

1972

Iosif Broskii, *Chast' rechi* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1977) 8–9;
by permission of Ardis Publishers.

The First (and Only) Year of the May 3 Constitution

Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, a young deputy elected to parliament in 1788, dashed off his political comedy, "The Deputy's Return" for the 1790 Fall election campaign. Already well-known as an advocate of radical social and political reform, Niemcewicz depicted the romance of a hero from a reform-minded noble family of modest means with a heroine from a much richer, politically conservative, noble family. The prospective father-in-law, Starosta Gadulski (Sir Chatterbox) agreed to the young couple's engagement, after considerable discussion about Poland's future direction, on condition that his future grandson receive a traditional education.¹ The magnate had come to see that old-fashioned values could be maintained in a reformed system, while the son-in-law accepted the continuation of tradition within reform. Niemcewicz intended his comedy "to ridicule all...outmoded prejudices" of traditional patriotism, but, like other reformers, he enthusiastically endorsed the compromise solution to Poland's problems that was soon embodied in the Constitution of May 3, 1791 and the supplementary legislation passed in succeeding months.

The compromise nature of the May 3 constitution has often been obscured in Polish popular rhetoric since the constitution offered a valuable symbol for developing patriotic and democratic traditions throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Historians have long understood the constitution's imperfections, but the reasons for its limitations have escaped analysis until recent decades. Although that analysis is not yet complete, enough new archival research has appeared to provide a revised account of the May 3 system as it actually functioned in its only year of existence before Polish opponents destroyed it by inviting Russian military intervention. Without the partitions, that system would have governed Poland for at least one generation.

Analysis of the May 3, 1791 Constitution occupies a central place within Polish political and historical consciousness, together with the causes of the Polish Partitions in general, as the French Revolution plays a central place in French consciousness. May 3 celebrations became an annual political ritual in Polish emigré communities in the nineteenth century and continue to the present

¹ Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki czasów molch*, Jan Dłhm, ed. vol. 1 (Warsaw: PIW, 1957) 323; Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, *Powrót posła*, 11th edition (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1973) 46, 51, 98, 107.

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