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**Overcoming Modernism and Postmodernism:
Paradoxes of Subjectivity in Anna Akhmatova's *Poem
Without a Hero***

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Abstract. This article examines the subject organization of Anna Akhmatova's *Poem Without a Hero* in its late editorial phase, dating from 1963 to 1965. Drawing on the framing prose passages, stage directions and key episodes, the analysis demonstrates that the poem simultaneously decentralizes the subject while ultimately reasserting its unity. Alien voices, masks, and intertextual "roles" create an effect of polyphony; however, this polyphony proves illusory, since it is entirely regulated by the author-subject, who demonstratively controls the entrance and exit of voices and establishes the boundaries of interpretation. The author is shown to assume several roles simultaneously: creator and director of the textual and performative space; lyrical persona and participant in the events; commentator and textual scholar of her own work; a historiosophical thinker who projects the private plot onto a historical perspective; and a judge who assumes the role of a collective arbiter. At the same time, the author is not merely the director of this drama of voices but is herself incorporated into the choral space. This determines the distinctive subjectivity of *Poem Without a Hero*: on the one hand, the authorial voice appears to dissolve into the choral whole; on the other, it may itself become objectified in external phenomena, as though transferring the right to speak to the elements of nature and to the text of the poem itself. The article concludes that the subjectivity of "Poem Without a Hero" cannot be reduced to modernist masking and does not coincide with the postmodernist "death of the author". Rather, the poem presents an integrative model of subjectivity in which the external carnival of discourses turns into an instrument of a single author's center of memory and responsibility.

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Keywords: author, lyrical hero, text, Anna Akhmatova, subject organization of the text, objectification and integration of voices

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Преодолевая модернизм и постмодернизм: парадоксы субъектности в «Поэме без Героя» Анны Ахматовой

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Аннотация. Рассматривается проблема субъектной организации «Поэмы без Героя» в ее поздней редакционной фазе, соотносимой с 1963–1965 гг. На материале рамочных прозаических фрагментов, ремарок и ключевых эпизодов доказывается, что поэма одновременно осуществляет децентрацию субъекта и отменяет ее: чужие голоса, маски и интертекстуальные «роли» создают эффект полифонии, однако эта полифония мнима – она полностью регулируется субъектом-автором, который демонстративно управляет вводом и выводом голосов, а также задает границы интерпретации. Показывается, что автор одновременно выступает в нескольких ипостасях: как создатель-режиссер текстового и сценического пространства; лирический герой и участник событий; комментатор и «текстолог» собственного произведения; историософ, выводящий частный сюжет к исторической перспективе; судья, берущий на себя роль коллективного арбитра. Однако автор оказывается не только режиссером этой драмы голосов, но и сам включается в хоровое пространство. Отсюда и специфика субъектности «Поэмы без Героя». Так, с одной стороны, авторский голос как будто растворяется в стихии хора, а с другой – этот голос может объективироваться и во внешних феноменах, как бы передавая право говорения природным субстанциям и самому тексту. Сделан вывод о том, что данная субъектность в «Поэме без Героя» не сводится к модернистской масочности и не совпадает с постмодернистской «смертью автора»: перед нами модель собирающей субъективности, где внешний карнавал дискурсов превращается в инструмент единого авторского центра памяти и ответственности.

Ключевые слова: автор, лирический герой, текст, А.А. Ахматова, субъектная организация текста, объективация и интеграция голосов

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Introduction

The problem of subjectivity in *Poem Without a Hero* is usually described through two seductive (and therefore risky) frameworks: the modernist framework (the splitting of the lyric self, masking, theatricality, and the accumulation of preceding traditions) (Belousova, 2022; Temirshina et al. 2021; Timenchik, 1989) and the postmodernist framework (intertextual play, the carnival of quotations, the decentering of the lyrical self, “semantic openness”, and the shift of authority to “other voices” and the reader) (Kikhney, Temirshina, 2002, pp. 53–62). However, the later state of the text, associated with the 1963 edition, demonstrates a structure in which these frameworks are both applicable and insufficient: The Poem stages the multiplicity of voices, only to reveal that this multiplicity is controlled by the author’s unified will.

The textual caveat is not a formality, but rather a part of the argument. As N.I. Krayneva (2009a; 2009b, pp. 156–158) has shown, *Poem Without a Hero* does not have a single “canonical” completed text: the most recent 9th edition dates from 1963, but it is not final, as it includes corrections and additions from 1963 to 1965. The researcher is forced to work with multiple sources and versions¹.

The methodology of this article is based on three pillars. Firstly, it involves analyzing the “author – hero” framework and the author’s *surplus of seeing*: the author’s position is determined by the fact that the author “knows and sees more”

¹ In this article, we mainly quote the critically “established text” of *The Poem Without a Hero* (1940–1963), reconstructed by N.I. Krayneva, based on the last (9th) edition of 1963, with subsequent author’s additions and changes. See: Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). *Poem Without a Hero: critically established text*. In N.I. Krayneva, & O.D. Filatova (Eds.), *“I haven’t known you like this before...”: Anna Akhmatova. Poem Without a Hero. Prose about the Poem. Sketches of a ballet libretto: Materials for the creative history* (pp. 871–897). Izdatel’skii dom “Mir”. (In Russ.); Akhmatova, A.A. (2009b). *Poem Without a Hero: ninth edition (1963)*. In N.I. Krayneva, & O.D. Filatova (Eds.), *“I haven’t known you like this before...”: Anna Akhmatova. Poem Without a Hero. Prose about the Poem. Sketches of a ballet libretto: Materials for the creative history* (pp. 587–615). Izdatel’skii dom “Mir”. (In Russ.)

than the hero and occupies a position of completion that is fundamentally inaccessible to the hero (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 16–20). Secondly, the theory of the lyrical subject as a point of “apprehension is used (Silman, 1977, pp. 5–45): the lyrical hero may coincide with the poet or be a performative “I”, but it is more important for analysis to understand how the text organizes the point of view and the “milestone” of inner experience. Thirdly, a comparative scheme of the criteria of subjectivity in modernism and postmodernism is applied, as these terms are established in the humanitarian meta-linguistic tradition (for example, through the set of categories simulacrum, paralogy, death of the author, and other concepts associated with postmodernism (Epshtein, 2019, pp. 21–29).

The purpose of this article is to describe the mechanism by which *The Poem Without a Hero* simultaneously demonstrates and overcomes decentering, creating a unique model of “sobornost subjectivity.”

Results and Discussion

Theoretical Guidelines and a Comparison Table

In a nutshell, the modernist practices of subjectivity in lyric poetry and in *Poem Without a Hero* are often based on the tension between the “I” and the mask: the subject experiences a crisis of identity, acts in roles, and splits into “doubles”, but at the same time retains the privilege of the “center of experience” – a point from which the world is grasped as an internal experience (even if the experience is traumatic or fragmented). For the genre of lyrical poem, it is crucial that it is not so much the “plot” that is depicted (cf.: Platonova, 2018), but rather the experience and comprehension that belong to the lyrical “I”. This core can be given through role masks, but it does not disappear as an organizing center.

The postmodern model usually radicalizes another dimension: instead of the center of experience, there is a network of discourses, quotations, and simulacra; the author’s instance is thought of as decentered (“the death of the author”), and meaning – as an effect of the intersection of alien languages and reader practices. It is noteworthy that descriptions of postmodernism often rely on the body of Western theory, where “the death of the author” and “paralogy” are part of the standard vocabulary used to “recode” literary material (Barthes, 1994, pp. 384–391; Derrida, 2000, pp. 203–232; Lyotard, 1998, pp. 61–67).

However, even at the level of purely formal mechanisms, *Poem Without a Hero* demonstrates not just “multilingualism” but a double (and triple) framing: the carnival of 1913 in *Part One* is staged within the author’s space of the Fountain House, and then in *Parts Two and Three*, in *The Tails* and *The Epilogue*, it is linked to Russia’s historical catastrophe, the experience of war, and, in the latest editions, the experience of repression. What is useful here is not so much the anachronistic “post-postmodern” label, but rather the observation that the mechanisms of “closed space” and frame-based coercion into a specific position (what Raoul Eshelman calls the strategy of “double framing” and the shift from postmodern irony to

positive (albeit tragic) identification; 2021, pp. 1–3) help to better describe the function of the frame in *Poem Without a Hero*².

Below is a working table of subjectivity criteria, which serves not as a “classifier” but as an optical device for reading.

Criteria of subjectivity			
Criterion	Modernism, typologically	Postmodernism, typologically	<i>Poem Without a Hero</i> , in the late editorial phase
Center vs. decentralization	The center of experience remains intact, although the self is masked and split	Decentration as a principle: the “I” is dissolved in discourses	Decentration is staged, but then “collected” by the author’s frame (“the author’s study”)
Authorial control over voices	High, often “sacralized”	Fundamentally problematic; “the death of the author” as a metaphor	Demonstratively high: the author does not allow “extra lines” in the main text
The multiplicity of the author’s guises	Masks, <i>doppelgangers</i> , and the role of the self	The author as a function or effect; a game with authorship	The author is also a director, a lyrical persona, a commentator, a judge, and a historiosopher
Historical consciousness	Often, the mythologization of history; the crisis of time	A tendency towards “post-historicism” and ironic reconfiguration of the past	Historical memory as an ethical core; war and catastrophe is not “played” but judged
The role of the reader	An active interpreter of “complex text”, but the system	The reader as a producer of meaning; multiple readings	The reader must be active, but the author sets the boundaries

Imaginary Decentration: How Other Voices Are Subordinated to the Author’s Framework

The paradox of *Poem Without a Hero* begins with the introduction of “other voices” as something external to the text, but they almost immediately become an element of the author’s self-identification and justification: the voices of deceased friends and listeners are incorporated into the author’s memory.

The next step is even more significant: the author introduces a direct prescription for interpretation, refusing to “change” or “explain” the poem, and concludes with the formula “What I have written, I have written”.

In the context of discussions about “other voices”, this formula serves as a key to the apparent decentering: while postmodern logic would suggest a fundamental openness and “dispersion of the authorial instance, here, the author’s authority, on the contrary, establishes the limits of permissible reading (and thus the limits of the “sovereignty” of other voices and the reader).

In the actual poetic fabric of *Part One (The Year 1913)*, the plot unfolds as a theatrical performance: on New Year’s Eve 1940 in Leningrad, in the space of the Fountain House, where “the shadows” of “the year 1913” arrive “instead of the one they were waiting for”, representing “other” characters or discourses. However, it is crucial to note that this is not a “self-manifestation” of the shadows, but rather an

² Let us make a reservation: we use the term *frame* in the sense of a prose or remark that frames the poetic text of the *Poem*. In our interpretation, this term only partially coincides with the concept of the text frame introduced by A.V. Lamzina, as well as with the definition of the *title-final complex*. For more information about the frame of *Poem Without a Hero* in the second sense, see S.A. Khomyakov (2018).

invitation magically initiated by the subject (*Ya zazhgla zavetnye svechi* [I lit the cherished candles...]³) and described as a staged scene.

It is significant that even at the beginning of the *mise-en-scène*, the author's speech acts as an authority for distributing roles and correcting the "other". The line *Vy oshiblis': Venetsiya dozhei...* [You have made a mistake: Venice is the city of the Doges...]⁴ is structured as a gentle yet fundamental "correction" stage direction demonstrating the frame to the voice-mask. The carnival speech is allowed, but under the control of someone who sets the "correct" location and "correct" names. It is not the "what" that matters, but rather who has the right to speak: who corrects and who controls access to the text.

This principle is formulated not only lyrically, but also "technically" – through the stage direction demonstrating the frame: *Belyi (zerkal'nyi) zal snova delaetsya komnatoi avtora* [The white (mirror) hall is once again transformed into the author's study]⁵. The decentered carnival (masks, polyphony, and cultural characters) literally "collapses" into the author's space. At the level of poetic pragmatics, this means that any "alien voices" belong not to the "street" multitude, but to the staging within the author's home and room.

Finally, at the level of the poetics of montage, the "imaginary de-centering" is fixed in the ninth edition in the most straightforward way: the author's confession in the preamble to "Intermezzo" is placed next to the main text, *vokrug... mesta* [around... places] about *maskaradnoi boltovne* [masquerade chatter], *brodili eshche takie stroki, no ya ne pustila ikh v osnovnoi tekst* [there were still such lines, but I didn't include them in the main text]⁶. The author then transmits the captured fragments of conversations between the literary and artistic bohemians of St. Petersburg: *Uveryayu, ehto ne novo... / Vy ditya, sin'or Kazanova... / Na Isak'evskoi rovno v shest'...* [I assure you, this is not new... / You are a child, Signor Casanova... / At six o'clock on Isakievskaya Street...]⁷. Here, the author's subject is not "dissolved" in the discourses, but rather acts as an editor and censor, managing the degree of polyphony as a material. This remark is the most obvious textual argument in favor of the thesis of the imaginary de-centering: the other's word is present in the status of potentiality, but its actual existence within the work is determined by the author's will.

By comparing this mechanism with Bakhtin's logic of "author and hero", we can refine the theoretical formula. In Bakhtin's work, the author "knows and sees more" than the hero, and therefore occupies a position that is fundamentally inaccessible to the hero. The author's position is one of completion and "surplus of seeing" (1986, p. 16). In the *Poem*, this "excess" is not only manifested in evaluation and completion but also in the literal technical control of the frame. The author not only "sees more" but also regulates the very possibility of hearing other voices.

³ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). *Poem Without a Hero*: critically established text (p. 875).

⁴ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). *Poem Without a Hero*: critically established text (p. 875).

⁵ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). *Poem Without a Hero*: critically established text (p. 879).

⁶ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009b). *Poem Without a Hero*: ninth edition (1963) (p. 595).

⁷ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009b). *Poem Without a Hero*: ninth edition (1963) (p. 596).

Author's Hypostases

The second paradox of the embodiment of subjectivity in the *Poem* is due to the author's multi-hypostatic nature. Moreover, the apparent de-centering becomes convincing precisely because the author does not hide behind "masks" but reveals herself in various functional modes (cf.: Platonova, 2019).

The first hypostasis is *the author-director*. It is already evident in the stage directions and remarks: the space transforms into a stage, the "mirror hall" into the "author's study", and time and place are fixed as a theatrical coordinate grid.

The second aspect is *the lyrical hero*, a participant in the events: the "I" not only "organizes the stage" but also becomes involved in the experience of anxiety, anticipation, and recognition of shadows. In the *Poem*, the "I" is both "inside" and "outside" the stage, as the text constantly switches the modes of the subject's presence.

The third aspect is *the commentator and textologist* of her own writing. It is embodied in the framing prose fragments and in the meta-communicative gestures, where the author regulates the reader's expectations. In *Instead of a Preface*, the author explains the situation of rumors and interpretations, refusing to "make the poem more understandable", thereby setting the ethics of reading. This is complemented by the "technical" aspect of the editor-complier (*ne pustila ...* [I did not include them]), which transforms the self-production of the text into a part of the artistic structure.

The fourth aspect is *the judge and arbiter*, who sets the moral and historical perspective. In *Part One*, the author explicitly states that she is willing to assume *rol' rokovogo khora* [the role of the fateful chorus]⁸. This self-identification is significant as it changes the status of the author's speech: the author ceases to be merely an "observer of the carnival" and becomes an authority of fate/judgment, a final authority that sets the final perspective.

The fifth hypostasis is *the historiosopher*, for whom personal experience and cultural memory turn into a model of history. In *Instead of a Preface*, there is already an important linkage of dates and places: the writing of parts of the poem in 1940–1944, the blockade experience, and the connection with Tashkent, where work on parts of the text is recorded. This linkage does not allow the *Poem* to be read as a pure "game of quotations": "other people's voices" here are primarily the voices of memory and loss, and not "equal discourses" in the postmodern sense.

Inside the second part (*Reshka* [Tails]), the multi-hypostasis takes the form of a mask, which is immediately unmasked. The formula *Ya ne ta angliiskaya dama...* [I am not that English lady...] ⁹ demonstrates that the "I" can assume cultural and genre identities and reject them, maintaining its own line of origin and self-description. In argumentative terms, this means that the multiplicity of identities does not "kill" the author, but becomes her strategy – a way to show how the author creates and removes the mask.

⁸ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). *Poem Without a Hero*: critically established text (p. 883).

⁹ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). *Poem Without a Hero*: critically established text (p. 893).

Voice Transmission and Subject-Object Reversal

The late-editorial strategy enhances not just the “presence of the author”, but specifically objectification, that is, the transformation of the author’s voice into the observed or named substance of the text.

Subjectivity in *Poem Without a Hero* is not fundamentally reduced to the stable “I” of the lyrical narrator. Rather, it acts as a distributable function of the voice: the right to speak is constantly being transferred, lost, returned and redefined here.

It is significant that already in Part One, “the voice” is included in the stage remark as an independent event: *Putanitsa ozhivaet, skhodit s portreta, i ei chuditsya golos, kotoryi chitaet* [Confusion comes to life, comes off the portrait, and it seems to her that a voice is reading]¹⁰. That is, the subjectivity of speech here no longer coincides either with the physical author or with the sole lyrical instance – it is staged in the “voice as an event” that occurs in the character-object (portrait or role) as an auditory vision.

The next step is even more radical: the author objectifies her own subjectivity, identifying it not with her personal self, but with natural substances and ultimate states of sound. In the preamble to the 3rd chapter of *the Petersburg Tale*, the right of speech is directly delegated to the wind: the remark states that *veter ne to vspominaya, ne to prorochestvuya bormochet* [the wind mutters, either remembering or prophesying]¹¹, that is, the role of the bearer of memory and foresight is attributed to the wind, and it begins to “lead” a speech fragment as a narrator.

Unlike the folklore and romantic personification of nature, here the “wind” does not express the inner feelings of the heroine, but performs the function of a medium of historical time, which means it connects the past and the future, the eve of two great wars – “1914” and “1941”.

Then the author’s remark precedes the 4th chapter, concluding with the words: *...govorit sama Tishina* [...Silence itself speaks]¹². Silence ceases to be a background, the absence of a word, but becomes a speaking subject, and the author places her speech in the interval “between” sounds (bell ringing, palace ball, snowstorm). Subjectivity here is transferred to the “threshold of perception”: it is not the person who “describes silence”, but silence that “speaks”, and her speech becomes the structural principle of the scene. This is important for the consistent development of subjectivity: the subject is not equal to a “personality”, it is equal to the act of speaking and hearing, which can also be attributed to a non-human agent.

The culmination of the consistent development of the subjectivity of the object is the final self-reflection of the text in the afterword *Devyat’ sot trinadtsatogo goda* [*The Year 1913*] (cf.: *Vse v poryadke: lezhit Poehma / i, kak svoistvenno ei, molchit. / Nu, a vdrug kak vyrvetsya tema, / kulakom v okno zastuchit...*)¹³. [Everything is in order: The Poem lies / and, as is typical of it, is silent. / Well, what if the theme breaks out, / knocks on the window with her fist...]¹³.

¹⁰ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). *Poem Without a Hero*: critically established text (p. 881).

¹¹ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). *Poem Without a Hero*: critically established text (p. 884).

¹² Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). *Poem Without a Hero*: critically established text (p. 886).

¹³ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). *Poem Without a Hero*: critically established text (p. 887).

The meaning of this final frame of the first part cannot be reduced to postmodern self-irony (“text about text”) because the “theme” here is not a game or a quotation mechanism, but a dangerous energy of historical experience that can return as compulsion and as sound. The author’s will does not guarantee the silence of the text, the text itself has the “power of the theme”.

If we combine the finale of *The Year 1913* with the voice of Stalin’s victims in *Tails* and the voice of the author’s “camp double” in the *Epilogue (A za provolokoi kolyuchei...* [And behind the barbed wire...]¹⁴, it becomes clear which “topic” is being discussed in the *Afterword*. Subjectivity therefore arises here not as a stable self, but as a tension between silence (under censorship restrictions) and a forbidden topic (personal and historical trauma), a tension held in the author’s frame.

The subject-object inversion reaches its climax in *Part Two* of the *Poem*. Moreover, the line of voice science moves from a predominantly figurative-narrative register to a meta-descriptive one. At the same time, in *Tails*, the mechanism of voice delegation becomes more explicit and at the same time more enigmatic. The prosaic exposition sets the acoustic source – it’s the wind again, but it howls “in the chimney”, and this sound is described as a carrier of hidden meanings: *mozno ugadat’... spryatannye obryvki* [one can guess ... hidden fragments] of another Akhmatova text, *Requiem*¹⁵. Thus, the “voice” is transferred to the field of noise/natural sound, which no longer acts as a landscape detail, but as a container of traumatic memory, and it is directly intertextually labeled.

At the same time, *Tails* is built as an internal polemic: the editor’s voice appears, which makes a claim against the author and forces her to respond. Thus, subjectivity becomes dialogical: the author is no longer the “only speaker”, but the side of the dialogue and dispute within the *Poem* itself. It is important that the “editor” here can be read as an internal representative of an external authority (the reader, the critic, and in the historical context, censorship pressure). At the level of subjectivity, he functions as a competing voice, forcing the author’s position to become one of the sides of the dialogue.

Then the *Poem* itself, which has come to life and found a voice, becomes the author’s counterparty. One of the most profound commentators and researchers of Akhmatova’s poem, R. D. Timenchik, directly records the specific nature of the work as “a poem within a poem” and “a poem about a poem”, telling “about its own origin” and “doomed to be completed, rewritten” during the author’s lifetime (1989, p. 3). For our concept, this means that the poem is structurally arranged as a subject of self-knowledge, “exploring” its origins and its own difficulties with self-identification.

Moreover, the subjectivity of the *Poem* is also hypostatized: at first, according to Akhmatova’s note, it “comes to life” as a “romantic poem”, and then renounces its romantic “ancestors”: *Vovse net u menya rodoslovnoi* [I don’t have a lineage at all]¹⁶ and appears as a subject of will, effective force and *The Incarnate Word*

¹⁴ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). *Poem Without a Hero*: critically established text (p. 895).

¹⁵ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). *Poem Without a Hero*: critically established text (p. 888).

¹⁶ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). *Poem Without a Hero*: critically established text (p. 893).

(cf.: *A tvoei dvusmyslennoi slave, / Dvadsat' let lezhavshei v kanave, / Ya eshche ne tak poslužu* [And your ambiguous glory, / which has been lying in a ditch for twenty years, / I shall serve you yet in a different way]¹⁷).

In conjunction with the afterword of *Part One* (The poem is “silent”, but the “theme” can “break out”) This gives a formula suitable for the Poem as a whole: the author ceases to be the sole owner of the voice because both the *Poem*, its internal “editor”, and acoustic substances (wind and silence) enter into a system of mutual restrictions and responses.

In the third part (the *Epilogue*), the alienation of the author’s voice from its bearer is not just implied, but is framed by a remark: *Golos avtora, nakhodyashchegosya za sem' tysyach kilometrov, proiznosit...* [The author’s voice, located seven thousand kilometers away, pronounces]¹⁸. The author’s speech loses the status of “presence” and becomes a distant vocal trace – not the center of space, but its acoustic reflection, which provides support for the formula of objectification of subjectivity: the author’s subjectivity ceases to be the center of space, but dissipates into the world, turning into a shadow, reflection, and vocal trace (cf.: *Ten' moya na stenakh tvoikh, / Otrazhen'e moe v kanalakh, / Zvuk shagov v Ehrmitazhnykh zalakh* [My shadow on your walls, / My reflection in the canals, / The sound of footsteps in the Hermitage halls]¹⁹).

Inside the same epilogical scene, “things” receive the status of addressee and witness: the author *aukalas's dal'nim ehkhom* [met with a distant echo], confusing *son' veshchei* [the slumber of things]. The object world (“things”, “maple”) is introduced as an instance with which communication is established – that is, the object layer receives the signs of the subjectivized.

Choral Subjectivity and Voice Integration

At the same time, in the later editions of *Poem*, the choral principle is noticeably strengthened, with which the author’s “I” sometimes merges. This process is most logically described as the transition from “I-voice” to “we-voice”, and this transition in the late body of the text is supported by three levels simultaneously: the frame (author’s explanations), inserted and omitted stanzas and the ancient model of the tragic chorus.

In a framed prose fragment, “Instead of a preface”, the author records that she hears “their voices” (in memory of deceased friends/listeners), and thus simultaneously recognizes the plurality of voices as a condition of the poem; fixes them inside his own memory and his own reading (*kogda chitayu poehmu vslukh* [when I read a poem aloud]). This is not an autonomous polyphony, but an “embedded choir” that exists as an internal resource of the author’s consciousness.

Furthermore, in the second part (and in the “missing stanzas” adjacent to it), another choral subject is recorded – *bezmolvnyi khor* [the silent choir] of suffering

¹⁷ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). Poem Without a Hero: critically established text (p. 893).

¹⁸ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). Poem Without a Hero: critically established text (p. 894).

¹⁹ Akhmatova, A.A. (2009a). Poem Without a Hero: critically established text (p. 895).

contemporaries (which is associated with the experience of Stalinist repression). The strongest point here is grammatical and role-related: speech is organized in the first person plural (*rasskazhem my... zagemim my* [we will tell ... we will thunder]), that is, the subject of speaking becomes collective.

The key to why this choir is comparable to the classical model is not only cultural allusions (Hecuba, Cassandra), but also function: the ancient choir in tragedy is a collective participant who remains on stage, expresses a general assessment of what is happening and serves as the morally commentatorial voice of the community.

The most important detail for our concept is the late-editorial “political” fate of these stanzas. A number of stanzas of *Tails* and in the *Epilogue* were absolutely “unpublishable” in Soviet times, therefore, in the author’s, as it were, “final”, ninth edition of 1963, there are ellipsis marks²⁰. At the same time, reconstructions and later editions return these stanzas are returned in different ways, changing the composition of *Tails*. This gives us a research base: choral subjectivity here is not only an artistic choice, but also a zone of extreme historical risk, therefore it is structurally related to late editions, auto-commentary and self-censorship.

Finally, the connection with *Requiem* has a direct textual basis: the remark in *Tails*, as we wrote above, speaks of “fragments of Requiem” “hidden” in the howling wind in the chimney. This turns the “voice of the wind” into an acoustic carrier of the requiem (funeral choral) layer within the *Poem*, which emphasizes the connection of Akhmatova’s two final works.

As a result, the objectification of the subject and the choral integration of voices receive structural support: the individual author’s subjectivity recedes, become a distanced voice and one of the voices of the choir. And “things”, “silence”, “wind”, “Poem” and the collective “we” receive the right to speak – that is, they are subjectivized within the artistic world.

Conclusion

The analysis allows us to formulate several conclusions.

Firstly, the late editorial phase of the *Poem Without a Hero*, associated with 1963, really builds the effect of decentration of the subject through “alien voices”, carnival masks and intertextual roles, but this decentration is imaginary: the author’s frame is not only present, but also demonstrated as the “author’s study and as the editorial inclusion and exclusion of the multihypostatic system of the text.

Secondly, the subjectivity of the poem is realized as a multipostatic system: the author, the director, the hero, the commentator, the editor, the judge and the historiosophist are not “empirical persons”, but functional modes of speech, which are consistently distributed throughout the composition. It is this multiplicity that holds the single center together with the apparent multiplicity.

²⁰ See: Akhmatova, A.A. (2009b). *Poem Without a Hero*: ninth edition (1963) (pp. 606–607).

Thirdly, in the later editorial layers, the choral organization of the speaking subject is enhanced. Framed by *Instead of a Preface*, the poem is directly justified by the “secret chorus” of the voices of the first listeners who died in besieged Leningrad: the author hears their voices and reads the *Poem* as if “in front of them” and “with them”. In *Tails*, the author enters the mode of the choral “we”, where the individual position dissolves into the collective one. At the same time, the “choir” does not cancel out the individual voice; it expands it towards historical responsibility.

Thus, a comparison with modernist and postmodern models shows that the poem “goes beyond” both models not by rejecting their techniques, but by reworking them: modernist masking and the splitting of the “I” are used as a tool of memory and judgment, and postmodern intertextuality is used as a resource of historical consciousness, which does not allow the game to become an end in itself.

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