Internationale Zeitschrift für Kulturkomparatistik
Band 10 (2023): *Contemporary Poetry and Politics*
Herausgegeben von Anna Fees, Henrieke Stahl and Claus Telge
Schlund, Katrin: What Makes a Poem Aggressive? A Comparison of Joseph Brodsky's and Aleksandr Byvshev's Versions of «На независимость Украины» [On the Independence of Ukraine]. In: IZfK 10 (2023). 165-208.
DOI: 10.25353/ubtr-izfk-5688-88dc

Katrin Schlund

What Makes a Poem Aggressive? A Comparison of Joseph Brodsky's and Aleksandr Byvshev's Versions of «На независимость Украины» [On the Independence of Ukraine]

Shortly after Ukraine had declared its independence in December 1991, Joseph Brodsky, Nobel Prize Winner in Literature 1987, wrote the poem «На независимость Украины» [On the Independence of Ukraine], which sarcastically mourns the separation of Russia and Ukraine. In 2015, responding to the armed conflict in Ukraine, teacher and poet Aleksandr Byvshev issued a reply to this poem under the same title, taking the side of Ukraine. Both poems have been perceived as aggressive, insulting, and anti-Ukrainian or anti-Russian, respectively. This paper asks the question of whether – and in what sense – the two poems are aggressive by drawing on the linguistic features of the two texts. The investigation of the linguistic characteristics of the poems is supplemented by an analysis inspired by argumentation theory, since, as will be shown, both texts are essentially argumentative.

Keywords: Aggressive Language, Aleksandr Byvshev, Argumentative Language, Joseph Brodsky, «На независимость Украины», Substandard

1. Introduction[1]

The poem «На независимость Украины» [On the Independence of Ukraine] falls among the most neglected pieces of Joseph Brodsky's oeuvre. As Demchikov[2] puts it, "even though it exists, this poem, it is at the same time as if it didn't"[3] («вроде бы оно и есть, это стихотворение, но в то же время как бы и нет»). It was never printed in Brodsky's collected works, and it is probably also among the least read or recited of his poems.[4] This was true particularly until the year 2014, when the poem experienced unexpected attention due to the war in Donbas. The poem has also largely escaped the notice of researchers until recently.[5] This neglect is certainly attributable to the politically incorrect nature of the poem, both in terms of content and language: the poem sarcastically laments Ukraine's declaration of independence from the USSR, using coarse language directed towards the Ukrainian side. With the beginning of the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, the poem has gained sad topicality and received growing attention in scholarly literature as well. Bertelsen[6] and Pekurovskaya[7] are cases in point, who consider the piece "a propaganda leaflet"[8] and an "imperialist and chauvinist poem" («великодержавное и шовинистическое стихотворение»[9]). Losev[10] and Demchikov[11] take a more moderate stance by arguing that the poem is also offensive towards Russia and its people.

In 2015, the Russian poet and teacher of German and French, Aleksandr Byvshev, issued a reply to Brodsky's original poem under the same title. Byvshev's version of «На независимость Украины» is no less provocative than

[1] I would like to express my gratitude to my colleagues Anna Fees (Trier) for her valuable information and suggestions, and David Hock (Princeton / Trier) for his careful reading of earlier versions of this article. I would also like to thank Jurij B. Orlickij (Moscow) for quickly sharing his expert judgment on the verse structure of the poems with me. Finally, special thanks go to Alexander Bierich (Trier) and Alessandro Achilli (Cagliari) for their careful reviews. All possible errors remaining in this contribution are my own.

[2] Cf. Demchikov (2015: unpag.).

[3] All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

[4] The poem was, however, rather well known among educated Ukrainian readers, who have traditionally seen it as the quintessence of Russian chauvinism. I thank Alessandro Achilli for pointing this out to me.

[5] There is no mention of the poem, for instance, in Herlth (2004).

[6] Cf. Bertelsen (2015).

[7] Cf. Pekurovskaya (2017).

[8] Bertelsen (2015: 277).

[9] Pekurovskaya (2017: 63).

[10] Cf. Losev (2008).

[11] Cf. Demchikov (2015).

Brodsky's, however reversely so, since its abusive language is not directed towards Ukraine but towards Russia.

Although the scientific interest in Brodsky's version has increased in recent years, no analysis of the linguistic characteristics of the poem is available. To the best of my knowledge, Byvshev's version of the poem has not been in the focus of scientific attention yet. The present study seeks to provide a comparative analysis of the lexical, grammatical, and argumentative structure of the two poems. The goal underlying this endeavor is to establish and compare the underlying devices contributing to the provocative character of the poems.

It is beyond doubt that many Ukrainians feel offended by Brodsky's poem, and many Russians feel offended by Byvshev's. While it is to be expected that lexical and stylistic devices contribute to this perception, the nature of these features, their placement in the text, and their interplay with grammatical and prosodic features is not quite clear. As will be argued in more detail below, both texts are argumentative in nature, which is why they also need to be interpreted within an argumentation theoretical framework. The framework adopted here is a distillation of Atayan's[12] macrostructural account of argumentation theory and Kuße's[13] account of aggressive argumentation. The analysis of the poems as essentially argumentative texts makes it possible to reveal the – often stereotypical but also subtly demasking – nature of the underlying arguments.

Section 2 gives a brief outline of Atayan's[14] and Kuße's[15] frameworks. Section 3 presents a lexical, stylistic, grammatical, and argumentative analysis of Brodsky's "On the Independence of Ukraine". Section 4 goes through the same procedure with Byvshev's version. Section 5 provides a summary and conclusions.

Importantly, this paper does not intend to provide an exhaustive analysis of the two poems. Rather, it represents an effort to contribute to such an analysis by focusing on the linguistic features of the texts and the way in which they help promote the arguments put forward in the texts.

[12] Cf. Atayan (2006).

[13] Cf. Kuße (2018; 2019a).

[14] Cf. Atayan (2006).

[15] Cf. Kuße (2018; 2019a).

2. Argumentation, aggression, and aggressive argumentation

Although not present in the two classic models of communicative functions – Karl Bühler's Organon Model and Roman Jakobson's elaboration thereof – argumentation is an important function of human communication.[16] Humans engage in argumentative discourse all the time, be it in terms of justifications, explanations, apologies, excuses or related contexts. Kuße construes the argumentative function of language as one out of three meta-functions (alongside Jakobson's metalinguistic and poetic functions).[17] Meta-functions can manifest themselves in any of Bühler's three basic functions, that is, in the expressive, conative, and representation functions.[18]

An argumentation is based on a contentious issue (*quaestio*). The argumentation itself is a complex communicative act including three constitutive parts: a *thesis* concerning the *quaestio*, an *argument* supporting the thesis and a *conclusion*.[19] The argument is related to the conclusion by means of a *warrant*.[20] Atayan introduces a binary model of argumentation, which defines a minimal argumentation as consisting only of an argument and a conclusion, that is, of two communicative acts linked by a mutually supportive relationship.[21] As Atayan points out, a warrant includes in itself an argumentative relation, which is why he excludes the notion of warrant from his definition of minimal argumentation.[22]

Prototypically, the constituents of an argumentation are realized explicitly. Prototypical argumentation therefore includes the manifestation of argumentative markers on the surface, such as meta-argumentative expressions (e.g., *argument, issue, to conclude*, *to (dis)agree*, etc.) and argumentative connectors (Ger. „argumentative Konnektoren" [23]), such as *since, because, therefore*, etc. However, prototypical argumentation is not the rule in authentic communication.[24] For instance, an argumentation may be realized solely in terms of an argument, as long as the interlocutors share the relevant background knowledge. A trivial example of such a situation is as follows: The *quaestio* of whether someone needs a visa to travel

[16] Popper (1984: 123-124, 248); referred to in Kuße (2018: 41f.; 2019a: 53) distinguished the "argumentative function" of language, so to speak as the fourth function of language (Atayan 2006: 18) in addition to Bühler's original three functions (cf. also ibid.).

[17] Cf. Kuße (2019a: 54f.).

[18] Cf. ibid., 52-55.

[19] Kuße (2018: 42f.; 2019a: 31f.).

[20] German *Schlussregel* (Kuße 2019a: 31-33). An example of a warrant is the shared assumption that actions from the past legitimize present actions, or that the actions of others legitimize one's own actions. Such rules typically remain unquestioned in discourse and are simply taken as given by both speaker(s) and hearer(s).

[21] Atayan (2006: 35-41).

[22] Cf., ibid., 29f.

[23] Ibid., 44f.

[24] Cf. Kuße (2018: 43).

to Great Britain can be answered solely by the argument *s/he was born in Bermuda*. Given that everyone involved in the conversation knows that the Islands of Bermuda are a British Overseas Territory, the argument that someone was born there allows for the conclusion that such a person is a British citizen and will therefore not need a visa to travel to British territory.[25] The fact that argumentation is often implicit will be important for the analysis of the poems as argumentative texts.

An argumentative speech event can be dialogical or monological. In monological argumentation, the speaker typically not only anticipates possible objections against their position by a fictitious interlocutor, but also assumes less common knowledge than in dialogical argumentation. Therefore, monological argumentative texts often yield a more fruitful analysis for an argumentation theoretical analysis.[26] Poems tend by their very nature toward the monological kind of argumentation (the possibility of introducing dialogues and various "voices" in poems does not alter this, as these dialogues are always fictitious). It will be the task of the subsequent chapters to establish the perspectives adopted in the two poems and the linguistic means by which this is achieved.

Aggression in communication is a core topic in contemporary social sciences and the humanities.[27] At first sight, one is prone to think that aggression and argumentation are quite different manifestations of communication, with argumentation being rational and objective, and aggression irrational and subjective.[28] However, everyday argumentation does not always follow the laws of logic. This kind of argumentation is called "enthymemic":

> In enthymemic arguments, premises can be valid, or better to say plausible, and therefore convincing to communication participants even if they do not conform to the strict criteria of validity, i.e., truthfulness of the given reason(s), rationality of the argument, and logical coherence between premises and conclusion(s).[29]

Argumentation cannot only deviate from logic; it can also include aggressive elements (for instance, arguments or even the *quaestio* itself can be aggressive). Therefore, and as worked out in detail by Kuße,[30] there are no clear dividing lines between argumentative and aggressive discourse. Instead, aggression and argumentation can be intertwined in complex ways, and any constituent of an argumentation can be aggressive. Aggression can be overt (as in hate speech), or covert or diffuse (as for instance in official political discourse in totalitarian regimes).[31]

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[25] Cf. Kuße (2019a: 35), with reference to the famous example from Toulmin (1958: 103-106).

[26] Cf. Atayan (2006: 91f.).

[27] Shcherbinina even observes the constituation of *agressiologija* as a new discipline (ibid. 2015: 7).

[28] Kuße (2018: 38).

[29] Ibid., 42.

[30] Cf. e.g., ibid.; Kuße (2019a).

[31] Cf. Kuße (2019b).

But what actually is aggression? Judging by the etymology of the word, aggression has to do with directed movement towards somebody or something (Latin *aggredi* 'to approach, attack').[32] As pointed out by Bonacchi, the meaning 'to attack' is only secondary to the neutral meaning 'to approach', which is also indicative of the fact that aggression has to do with (physical) contact.[33] Accordingly, Leipelt-Tsai describes aggression as a "form of touch" („Form der Berührung"[34]). Aggression is thus not only a kind of directed movement towards someone or something[35]; it also implies an element of transgression, that is, the potentially harmful intrusion into another one's space[36]. Such transgression can be of symbolic nature, and the most frequent kind of symbolic aggression is certainly verbal aggression. Unlike physical aggression, which can also be directed towards objects, verbal aggression implies directionality towards a human or at least an animate being.[37] The "success" of a verbal attack is not under the complete control of the attacker. For a verbal attack to do harm to another one's "symbolic space" or face wants, it is also essential that the respective person or group does indeed take offence at what is being said.[38] Therefore, the evaluation of a given utterance as aggressive is highly context dependent.[39]

Just like argumentation is not purely rational or honest, aggression is not always negative. Aggression can serve the purpose of self-protection[40] or as a substitute for physical aggression.[41] Cursing – otherwise a typical instantiation of verbal aggression – demonstrably raises the pain threshold.[42] In such situations, cursing is not directed towards someone or something else; if anything, it is directed towards oneself.

In the case of the two poems discussed here, it is beyond doubt that the poems are aggressive in the sense that they intrude into the addressees' symbolic space, since many Ukrainians feel offended by Brodsky's poem, and many Russians feel

[32] Cf. e.g., Shcherbinina (2015: 30).

[33] Cf. Bonacchi (2017: 5).

[34] Leipelt-Tsai (2008: 57).

[35] Cf. Kuße (2019a: 24).

[36] Cf. Shcherbinina (2015: 29f.).

[37] In terms of Brown and Levinson's face-theory, one could say that verbal aggression aims at damaging Alter's positive and / or negative face wants. (Brown / Levinson 1987)

[38] Cf. Kuße (2019a: 25).

[39] Cf. Shcherbinina (2015: 52f.); Piskorska (2017: 53-58); Topczewska (2017: 47f.).

[40] Shcherbinina points out that the Russian word *брань* 'swear words, abusive language' is etymologically related to *оборона* 'defense'. (Cf. Shcherbinina 2015: 50f.)

[41] Cf. ibid., 13f.

[42] Cf. e.g., Stephens / Spierer / Katehis (2018). Shcherbinina refers to such uses of invectives as "stressful invectives" («стрессовые инвективы») – i.e., invectives induced by stress – and points out that cursing cannot only serve to ease physical pain, but may occur in all kinds of extreme situations, including also great surprise, danger, or fear. In these cases, invectives come close to interjections. (Cf. Shcherbinina 2015: 121f.).

offended by Byvshev's. The question is how, from whose perspective and to what ends these feelings of offense are created, and whether alternative readings of (parts of) the two poems are also derivable from the texts.

3. Iosif Brodsky's «На независимость Украины»

Before proceeding to the poem itself, it is important to take a brief look at Brodsky's biography. Iosif Brodsky was born on May 24, 1940 in Soviet Leningrad to a family of Jewish descent, whose ancestors had allegedly come from the town of Brody in Ukrainian Galicia.[43] Although Brodsky was not a dissident in the real sense of the word (he did not participate in any oppositional group or distribute his poetry in samizdat), and he did not consider himself a dissident, either[44], he was put on trial for the first time in 1964, and ultimately forced to emigrate in 1972. He spent the rest of his life in the United States, where he started writing poems also in English, and he experienced a period of ever-increasing fame and success, which culminated in the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1987. He had suffered from a heart condition since he was young and died of a heart attack in January 1996, aged only 55. The fact that Brodsky was a victim of the Soviet regime makes it all the more surprising that he seemed to be grieving for the state that forced him into emigration in the poem «На независимость Украины».

The controversial content of the poem, alongside with the fact that Brodsky never issued it, led to years of debate about Brodsky's authorship.[45] The question was settled only in 2015, when the Facebook user Boris Vladimirsky[46] published a video on his account, which shows Brodsky reading the poem publicly[47] in the Palo Alto Jewish Community Center in California on October 30, 1992.[48] Before reading the poem, Brodsky utters the following words, which are also recorded on the video tape: "I will read you something risky, but I will read it nevertheless"

[43] Cf. Losev (2008: 19).

[44] Cf. Bertelsen (2015: 264); Pekurovskaya (2017: 66).

[45] One of the strongest advocates of the thesis that the poem was a fake was the famous Soviet dissident Aleksandr Danièl', who assumed that the poem was "an obvious stylization, and not a very thorough one: it's rough and just inept" («очевидная стилизация, да и не очень тщательная: исполнено грубовато и просто неумело»); cf. Mashchenko (2020).

[46] Cf. [1]. According to Vladimirsky's Facebook account, Boris Vladimirsky was born in Odessa in 1949. From 1993 to 2015, he worked as a performing arts manager at the Jewish Community Center in Palo Alto.

[47] Cf. [2].

[48] Cf. also Bertelsen (2015: 274). According to Bertelsen, the poem was first published online in May 2008 by Natalja Gorbanevskaya (cf. ibid., 276). However, the user to which Bertelsen's link (https://ng68.livejournal.com/123368.html) leads is named ng68, and it was not possible to verify the identity of this user. On that website, the text of the poem follows an introduction stating that the user received the text from Valentina Polukhina, who claims to have been given the text by Brodsky himself.

(«Я вам прочту нечто рискованное, но тем не менее я это прочту»). Before another reading at Queens College, February 28, 1994, Brodsky reportedly announced the poem with the words "Now I will find a poem I like" («Сейчас найду стихотворение, которое мне нравится»). He then added, as if to himself "I risk doing that" («я рискну, впрочем, сделать это»[49]). This shows that Brodsky was not only aware that the poem was provocative, but also that he was standing fully behind its daring content and form.[50]

There are different views available on why Brodsky did not publish the poem. According to Losev, it was Brodsky himself who refused to publish it because he did not want it to be interpreted as an expression of Russian imperialism and chauvinism.[51] Losev therefore considers the poem Brodsky's only case of self-censorship.[52] Pekurovskaya,[53] however, assumes that Brodsky was actually eager to publish the poem and stopped only by the intervention of his Lithuanian colleague and friend Tomas Venclova. There seems to be more truth in Pekurovskaya's version, as, according to yet another source, Brodsky was advised against the publication by his friend and biographer Bengt Jangfeldt.[54]

Before its proliferation in the digital age, the poem was published only once, namely in September 1996 in the Kyivan newspaper «Столица» ("The capital")[55], "buzzing with errors" («с массой ошибок»[56]). There are slightly distinct versions of the poem circulating on the internet up to the present. However, by checking the contentious parts against the videoclip, it has been possible to determine the exact wording of the text read by Brodsky in 1992.

The beginning of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict in 2014, together with the proof of Brodsky's authorship in 2015, brought the poem unexpected attention, manifesting itself in journalistic coverage in print and online media, discussions in social networks and, to a lesser extent, also in research.[57] The poem was even declared the poetic event of the year in Russia.[58]

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[49] Losev (2008: 263).

[50] Cf. also Okhrimovskaya (2019: unpag.).

[51] Cf. Losev (2008: 263-265).

[52] Cf. ibid., 263. Even if this assumption of Losev's is true, «На независимость Украины» would not be the only case of self-censorship: Brodsky decided not to include the poem «К переговорам в Кабуле» into his last American collection of poetry (cf. Sumerkin 1998: 42-48, cited by Smith 2002: 655).

[53] Cf. Pekurovskaya (2017: 66).

[54] Cf. Mitjaeva (2015: unpag.).

[55] Unfortunately, the year 1996 is missing in the online archive of the newspaper, which is why I have not been able to view the printing myself (cf. [3]).

[56] Losev (2008: 423).

[57] Cf., e.g., Bertelsen (2015).

[58] Okhrimovskaya (2019: unpag.).

In spring 2020, the poem experienced a second revival on the occasion of Brodsky's 80th anniversary. Mashchenko notes in his article on this occasion that

> [с]тихотворение «На независимость Украины» было написано поэтом в 1992 году, но удивительно точно отразило чувства подавляющего большинства крымчан к этой стране не только сразу после распада СССР, но и во время событий крымской весны 2014 года, завершившихся воссоединением полуострова с Россией.[59]
>
> the poem "On the Independence of Ukraine" was written by the poet in 1992, but surprisingly accurately reflected the feelings of the vast majority of Crimeans for this country, not only immediately after the collapse of the USSR, but also during the events of the Crimean spring of 2014, which culminated in the reunification of the peninsula with Russia.

As noted in the introduction, there are quite different evaluations of the poem available in the literature. Whereas Bertelsen[60] and Pekurovskaya[61] evaluate it as clearly offensive, aggressive, imperialistic, chauvinist, etc., Losev[62] and Demchikov[63] choose decidedly milder words and emphasize the ironic and ambiguous nature of the poem.

After this short spotlight on Brodsky's life and the poem's reception history, we will now turn to the text itself. The idea behind the analysis is to determine whether the poem is really – and primarily – aggressive and offensive, and how this impression and possible other impressions are brought about:

На независимость Украины[64]

Дорогой Карл Двенадцатый, сражение под Полтавой,
слава Богу, проиграно. Как говорил картавый[65],
время покажет – кузькину мать, руины,
кости посмертной радости с привкусом Украины.

[59] Mashchenko (2020: unpag.).

[60] Cf. Bertelsen (2015).

[61] Cf. Pekurovskaya (2017: 63-66).

[62] Cf. Losev (2008: 263-265).

[63] Cf. Demchikov (2015: unpag.).

[64] The wording given here corresponds exactly to the text Brodsky himself read in the video provided on youtube [18].

[65] A person referred to as *картавый* has a particular speech impediment, typically rhotacism regarding the pronunciation of the Russian r-sound, a post-alveolar trill [r], which is wrongly pronounced as a uvular fricative [ʁ] or as a related sound. *Картавый* does not only allude to Lenin, but also to Brodskyj himself, who attributed his own *картавость* to his Jewish origin (Losev 2008: 36). Note that last two and a half lines of the first stanza include an accumulation of r-sounds (*говорил, картавый, время, руины, посмертной, радости, привкусом, Украины*).

То не зелено-квитный, траченый изотопом,
– жовто-блакитный реет над Конотопом,
скроенный из холста: знать, припасла Канада –
даром, что без креста: но хохлам не надо.

Гой ты, рушник-карбованец, семечки в потной жмене!
Не нам, кацапам, их обвинять в измене.
Сами под образами семьдесят лет в Рязани
с залитыми глазами жили, как при Тарзане.

Скажем им, звонкой матерью паузы метя, строго:
скатертью вам, хохлы, и рушником дорога.
Ступайте от нас в жупане, не говоря в мундире,
по адресу на три буквы на все четыре

стороны. Пусть теперь в мазанке хором Гансы
с ляхами ставят вас на четыре кости, поганцы.
Как в петлю лезть, так сообща, сук выбирая в чаще,
а курицу из борща грызть в одиночку слаще?

Прощевайте, хохлы! Пожили вместе, хватит.
Плюнуть, что ли, в Днипро: может, он вспять покатит,
брезгуя гордо нами, как скорый, битком набитый
кожаными углами и вековой обидой.

Не поминайте лихом! Вашего неба, хлеба
нам – подавись мы жмыхом и потолком – не треба.
Нечего портить кровь, рвать на груди одежду.
Кончилась, знать, любовь, коли была промежду.

Что ковыряться зря в рваных корнях глаголом!
Вас родила земля: грунт, чернозем с подзолом.
Полно качать права, шить нам одно, другое.
Эта земля не дает вам, кавунам, покоя.

Ой-да левада-степь, краля, баштан, вареник.
Больше, поди, теряли: больше людей, чем денег.
Как-нибудь перебьёмся. А что до слезы из глаза,
Нет на неё указа ждать до другого раза.

С Богом, орлы, казаки, гетманы, вертухаи!
Только когда придёт и вам помирать, бугаи,
будете вы хрипеть, царапая край матраса,
строчки из Александра, а не брехню Тараса.[66]

[66] Cf. [19].

On Ukrainian Independence[67]

Dear Charles XII, the Poltava battle
Has been fortunately lost. To quote Lenin's burring rattle,
"Time will show you Kuzka's mother", ruins along the waste,
Bones of post-mortem bliss with a Ukrainian aftertaste.

It's not the green flag, eaten by the isotope,
It's the yellow-and-blue flying over Konotop,
Made out of canvas – must be a gift from Toronto –
Alas, it bears no cross, but the Khokhly don't want to.

Oh, rushnyks and roubles, sunflowers in summer season!
We Katsapy have no right to charge them with treason.
With icons and vodka, for seventy years we've bungled,
In our Ryazan we've lived like Tarzan in the jungle.

We'll tell them, filling the pause with a loud "your mom":
Away with you, Khokhly, and may your journey be calm!
Wear your zhupans, or uniforms, which is even better,
Go to all four points of the compass and all the four letters.

It's over now. Now hurry back to your huts
To be gang-banged by Krauts and Polacks right in your guts.
It's been fun hanging together from the same gallows loop,
But when you're alone, you can eat all that sweet beetroot soup.

Good riddance, Khokhly, it's over for better or worse,
I'll go spit in the Dnieper, perhaps it'll flow in reverse,
Like a proud bullet train looking at us askance,
Stuffed with leathery seats and ages-old grievance.

Don't speak ill of us. Your bread and wheat we don't need,
Nor your sky, may we all choke on sunflower seed.
No need for bad blood or gestures of fury ham-fisted,
Seems that our love is up, if it at all existed.

Why should we plow our broken roots with our verbs?
You were born out of earth, its podzolic soils and its herbs.
Quit flexing your rights and laying all the blame on us,
It is your bloody soil that has become your onus.

[67] Translation by Artëm Serebrennikov [20].

Oh, gardens and grasslands and steppes, varenyks filled with honey!
We've had greater losses before, lost more people than money.
We'll get by somehow. And if you want teary eyes –
Wait 'til next time, guys, this provision no longer applies.

God rest ye merry Cossacks, hetmans, and gulag guards!
But mark: when it's your turn to be dragged to graveyards,
You'll whisper and wheeze, your deathbed mattress a-pushing,
Not Shevchenko's bullshit but poetry lines from Pushkin.[68]

3.1 Formal properties

Most written versions of the poem distinguish ten stanzas à four lines, and this was apparently also the visual representation chosen by Brodsky himself.[69] The poem does not have a meter in the proper sense but is written in tonic verse («тонический стих»), more precisely in a tetrametric tonic verse.[70] These metric characteristics are not untypical for Brodsky's poetry, particularly for his later work.[71] What is interesting, though, is another finding from Smith, who analyzes the versification of 28 poems written by Brodsky between 1990 and 1992.[72] Only seven of these poems are written "in 'classical' [single quotes in the original] metres [and] have a particular feature in common, in fact, the negative feature of an absence of that authorial irony that characterizes Brodsky's poetry in general."[73]

Although «На независимость Украины» is not included in Smith's study, the fact that this poem is not written in a classical meter allows for the prediction that authorial irony will be present also in «На независимость Украины». Okhrimovskaya's characterization of the intonation of the poem as "epic […], simultaneously sublime-decadent or pathetic-scornful" («эпическая, декламация одновременно возвышенно-эпическая, или пафосно-издевательская»[74]) points to a similar direction, as does Tabachnikova's observation that Brodsky established "a sobering intonation, with cynicism 'as a form of despair' as its limit" («отрезвляющую интонацию, в пределе имеющую цинизм 'как форму отчаяния'»[75]),

[68] Cf. [21].

[69] Assuming that the version published in May 2008 by the user ng68 on cf. [4] is really based on his manuscript.

[70] I thank Jurij B. Orlickij (Moscow) for the metric characterization of the poem.

[71] Cf. Smith (2002: 657).

[72] Cf. ibid.

[73] Ibid., 658.

[74] Okhrimovskaya (2019: unpag.).

[75] Tabachnikova (2013: 464).

which, according to Tabachnikova, has become a characteristic of contemporary Russian poetry in general.[76]

The text has a rather complex syntactic structure, including, for instance, a number of participial and attributive phrases. The complexity of the syntax is reinforced by enjambments, which create an element of movement towards the climax in the final line of the poem, that is, the line including an offense directed towards the Ukrainian poet and national hero Taras Shevchenko. There are not many instances of transitive sentences in the poem. Transitive sentences are associated with narrative discourse,[77] which implies the evolution of a sequence of events. The lack of transitive clauses is not surprising, as the poem does not include a narration, but expresses a subjective attitude and evaluation of an event (namely the independence of Ukraine).

3.2 Perspectivation

The poem is written from the perspective of the first-person plural, which can be identified as the collective voice of Russia and Russians. The Ukrainian side is addressed either, and predominantly, directly, that is, by second person plural pronouns and the according verb forms. It is also addressed indirectly, in the third person plural. Finally, there are some instances in which the pronoun is left out (so-called pro-drop), and the verbal form is ambiguous. In most of these cases, however, it has been possible to determine the underlying pronominal subject, which is why such structurally ambiguous forms could be ascribed to either the Russian or the Ukrainian side. Table 1 summarizes the different forms of address directed towards Ukrainians and Russians:

Pronominal and verbal forms with reference to Russians				
1pl pronominal forms		1pl verbal forms		3pl forms
мы	1	*скажем*	1	–
нам	3	*сами*	1	
от нас	1	*жили*	1	
нами	1	*перебьемся*	1	
		(мы) теряли	1	
Reference to both Russians and Ukrainians				
пожили	1			
Pronominal and verbal forms with reference to Ukrainians				
2pl pronominal forms		2pl verbal forms		3pl pronominal forms

[76] Ibid.

[77] Hopper / Thompson (1980).

вы	1	imperatives	3 (*ступайте, прощевайте, не поминайте*)	*им*	1
вас	2		1 (*будете хрипеть*)		
вам	3				
вашего	1				

Table 1: Pronominal and verbal forms expressing reference to Russians and Ukrainians

The perspective adopted in the poem is the Russian perspective. The Russian subject either addresses the Ukrainian counterpart directly, including also imperatives, which is the most direct way of addressing others. Or else, the subject speaks about Ukrainians in the third person. These instances create the impression of a monologue among the Russian in-group. Reference about others in the third person can increase the offensiveness of an utterance, because third person reference is not a statement directed *towards* someone at eye level, but a statement *about* someone or something.

Brodsky's perspectivation creates a binary opposition between us "the Russians" and you "the Ukrainians." Alongside pronominal and verbal forms directed towards Russians and Ukrainians, respectively, there are also a number of nominations, particularly towards Ukrainians. These are summarized in Table 2:

	Designations for Russians		**Designations for Ukrainians**	
1.	*кацапам*$_{DAT}$	1	*хохлам*$_{DAT}$	1
2.			*хохлы*	2
3.			*кавунам*$_{DAT}$	1
4.			*орлы*	1
5.			*казаки*	1
6.			*гетманы*	1
7.			*вертухай*	1
8.			*бугай*	1
9.			*поганцы*	1

Table 2: Designations for Russians and Ukrainians

There is a clear predominance of designations for Ukrainians. The one nominal reference to Russians is the negatively connotated ethnonym *кацап*[78], which occurs once in the text. Its counterpart, the about equally disparaging ethnonym *хохол* (Ukr./Russ. *хохол*, a particular kind of ponytail and traditional hairstyle of the Cossacks) for Ukrainians[79], occurs three times. It is used twice in the nominative plural in vocative function (*хохлы*), and once in the dative plural (*хохлам*). The nominative forms are thus instances of direct address, whereas the dative form occurs in a statement about Ukrainians in the third person. The passage in question is "alas, it bears no cross, but the Khokhly don't want to"[80] («даром, что без креста, но хохлам не надо»). The passage relates to the Ukrainian flag, which bears the colors yellow and azure-blue. The remark that the Ukrainian flag does not have a cross refers to the well-known, but incorrect assumption that the colors of the Ukrainian flag were taken over from the Swedish flag. Rather, blue and yellow are the historical colors of Galicia.[81]

Among the seven additional nominations depicting Ukrainians are negative and positive ones; most of them evoke stereotypes. *Орлы* ('eagles') can be used as an acknowledging form of address towards brave infantrymen, which perpetuates the stereotype of Ukrainians as brave and proud fighters. Whereas *хохлы* is connotated negatively, *казаки* ('Cossacks'[82]) and *гетманы* ('hetmans') have a more positive connotation. The association of Ukrainians with Cossacks, although not entirely historically justified, is obvious and also a part of Ukrainian self-mythologization; hetmans were the highest military commanders in Ukraine. Both expressions likewise perpetuate the stereotype of Ukrainians as freedom-loving and self-sustaining warriors. *Бугай* ('bull') points in the same direction; it is obviously a form of address towards strong and, possibly also somewhat naïve and / or (mentally) clumsy (male) persons. The word *вертухай* ('security guard, warden in prison or camp') comes from prison and gulag argot but is generally understood by Russian natives.[83] There is no evidence that there were disproportionally many Ukrainians among gulag guards. Rather, the opposite seems to be true, for many Ukrainians were interned in gulags after World War II for collaboration with the Nazi regime. It might also be that Brodsky is hinting at Ukrainian prisoner functionaries in the gulags; but again, I did not find any evidence that Ukrainian prisoner functionaries

[78] The word is possibly a contamination of ukr. *цап* 'billy goat' and Russian *как* 'as, like,' referring to the traditional beards of Russian peasants (cf. footnote ten in the comments given with Artëm Serebrennikov's translation of the poem into English, cf. [5]. Cf. also Kuße (2019a: 119).

[79] Cf. ibid.

[80] Translation by Artëm Serebrennikov [6].

[81] Cf. Kuße (2018: 48).

[82] The Cossacks were originally units of East Slavs settling in the Ukrainian steppe.

[83] Cf. Bierich (2016: 198). Words originating from jargons, but which have penetrated into the colloquial language (and hence lost the separative function of jargons), are summarized under the notion of "general jargon" («общий жаргон»; cf. Kudinova 2010).

were particularly frequent among gulag guards.[84] Another possibility is that what is meant are Ukrainian guards of German concentration camps in World War II. It would then evoke the negative stereotype of Ukrainians as fascist, betraying their Russian compatriots and collaborating with the German occupying forces.

Out of eight different nominations for Ukrainians, there are thus two negative ones (*хохлы, вертухаи*), one rather positive one (*орлы*), and several neutral to slightly positive ones, which depict stereotypical associations with Ukrainians (*казаки, гетманы, бугаи*). The one nomination left is *кавунам*, the dative plural of Ukr. *кавун* ('watermelon'), which is not a common nomination for Ukrainians. It obviously alludes to the giant fields of watermelons in Southern Ukraine. Although 'watermelon' is *арбуз* in standard Russian, the word *кавун*, which is clearly exotic in a Russian text, is included, for instance, in Dal's explanatory dictionary[85] and annotated as a western and southern regionalism. The denomination appeals to the romantic stereotype of Ukraine as a rural, idyllic and fertile scenery.

The invective *поганцы* ('repulsive, despicable, insignificant persons'[86]) occurs in the nominative plural, and could therefore refer to "Krauts and Polacks" («Гансы с ляхами»), or it could be a vocative addressed towards Ukrainians. There is reason, though, to assume that the second interpretation is correct. First, although formally not distinct from the nominative, the vocative case is not embedded into the syntax of a clause, and it typically occurs at the beginning or end of an utterance, that is, in the left or right periphery. If *поганцы* referred to 'Krauts and Polacks,' it would syntactically be an apposition, which is more likely to appear immediately after the noun phrase it refers to, and not in the rightmost periphery of the clause. The impression that *поганцы* refers to Ukrainians is probably even stronger when the poem is perceived audially, not visually, since the invective occurs in final position and is thus particularly prominent.[87]

Although not all denominations for Ukrainians have a negative connotation, the juxtaposition of denominations for both sides does not support Demchikov's statement that "the picture of offensive invectives towards Ukrainians is complemented and in full harmony with murderous words from Brodsky directed towards himself ('us')" («картину оскорбительных инвектив в адрес украинцев вполне гармонично дополняют убийственные слова Бродского в свой (‹наш›) адрес»)[88].

To verify Demchikov's claim, it is necessary to include all expressions and phrases relating to the two peoples. Alongside the derogatory ethnonym *кацапы*,

[84] I cordially thank Tanja Penter (Heidelberg) for sharing her specialist knowledge about these aspects of Ukrainian history.

[85] Cf. Dal' (2008–2017) [7].

[86] *Поганец* also has the meaning of 'pagan,' but this meaning is nowadays only secondary. The regular word for 'pagan' is *язычник*.

[87] In this context, it is also noteworthy that the etymologically related and very similar-sounding Ukrainian adjective *поганий* means 'bad, evil, of low quality'.

[88] Demchikov (2015: unpag.).

there is only one more passage in the poem including a direct predication about the Russian side. The respective passage occurs in stanza 3, and is repeated here for convenience:

> Не нам, кацапам, их обвинять в измене.
> Сами под образами семьдесят лет в Рязани
> с залитыми глазами жили, как при Тарзане
>
> We Katsapy have no right to charge them with treason.
> With icons and vodka, for seventy years we've bungled,
> In our Ryazan we've lived like Tarzan in the jungle[89]

The line including the self-reference to Russians as *кацапы* evokes one of the most persistent stereotypes, namely of Ukrainians as traitors[90]. This stereotype has its roots in the Battle of Poltava (1709) mentioned in the first stanza of the poem, during which the Ukrainian hetman Ivan Mazepa sided with the Swedish king Charles XII against tsar Peter. Although Brodsky denies Russia's right to charge Ukraine with treason, the "traitor narrative" is evoked nevertheless.[91] The following two verses are among the most enigmatic in the text. Ryazan is a city in Central Russia, and, as noted by Artëm Serebrennikov in a footnote to his translation, "often a byword for a backwater province."[92] «Залитыми глазами» (lit. 'with inundated eyes') is a variation of the idiomatic expression *залить глаза* ('to get drunk.). The expression might be motivated by the whininess ("world-woe") and self-pity that sometimes occur under the influence of alcohol. This passage includes some self-irony.

Brodsky also uses a number of words relating to the romantic stereotype of Ukraine as an idyllic and unspoiled rural place. However, this stereotype is to be taken with caution, since it can create a picture of Ukraine not only as idyllic, but also as underdeveloped and backward. There are no phrases relating specifically to Russia. The following notions refer to Ukraine and Ukrainians: the word *квитный* 'blossoming' in *зелено-квитный* 'green-blossoming' and *жовто-блакитный*[93] 'yellow-light-blue'; *рушники*, a traditional Ukrainian embroidered cloth; *карбованец*, a historical Ukrainian unit of currency[94]; *семечки* (*в потной жмене*) '(a sweaty handful of) sunflower seeds'; *жупан* 'traditional Ukrainian

[89] Translation by Artëm Serebrennikov (cf. [8]).

[90] Cf. Kuße (2018: 56).

[91] It has been maintained that the human brain is virtually insensitive to negation (cf. the catchphrase "negating a frame evokes the frame," e.g., Lakoff 2014), but recent research has shown that negation suppresses neuronal activity at least to some extent (e.g., Nieuwland / Kuperberg 2008; Papeo / Hochmann / Battelli 2016).

[92] Cf. [9].

[93] Although the expression itself is Ukrainian, it is written in Russian Cyrillic spelling (the Ukrainian spelling is *жовто-блакитний*).

[94] The unit was shortly revived in the first years of Ukrainian independence.

overwear'; *мазанка* 'clay hut'; *мундир* 'uniform'; *небо* 'sky'; *хлеб* 'bread'; *грунт, жернозем с подзолом* 'soil, chernozem[95] (black earth) with leucophyllite (white earth)'[96]'; *левада-степь* 'meadow-steppe; *краля* (prostorečie)[97] 'beautiful woman, female lover'; *баштан* 'melon or pumpkin field'; vegetable garden' (regionalism); *вареник*, a dumpling with various fillings; and the Ukrainian poet *Тарас* (*Шевченко*).

Whereas some items are clearly associated specifically with Ukraine (*жовтоблакитный, карбованец, Тарас*), some are typical not only of Ukrainian but also of (Southern) Russian and Belarusian culture (e.g., *рушники, вареники, семейки*). This notwithstanding, the association of these items precisely with Ukraine in the poem is obvious, and the blending of elements from Southern Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian culture might also be due to the fact that Brodsky was from St. Petersburg, an urban center in the very North of Russia.

Some of the notions associated with Ukraine again evoke a romantically idealized picture of Ukraine (*жупан, левада-степь, краля, баштан, вареник*). These and other notions may also be associated with a more negative picture, namely again with underdevelopment and backwardness (e.g., *мазанка*). The mere mention of Taras Shevchenko, the most famous of Ukrainian poets is of course not offensive. There is a clear offense, and an obvious intent to offend, however, in the description of his poetry as *брехня*, translated by Serebrennikov as 'bullshit.' Importantly, *брехня* also has the meaning of 'lie.' In this sense, referring to Shevchenko's verses as *брехня* alludes to the Ukrainian interpretation of the Poltava Battle, expressed, for instance, in his poem «Іржавець» ("Irzhavetz", settlements in Ukraine). The poetic dispute about the interpretation of the Poltava Battle, headed by Pushkin on the Russian and Shevchenko in the Ukrainian side, included also the mutual reproach of lying.[98]

There are only a few adjectives in the poem. Some of the adjectives occurring in the text are substantivized (e.g., *зелено-квитный* 'green-blossoming', *жовтоблакитный*, *скорый* 'fast train'), which further reduces the number of adjectives proper. Attributes mostly consist of participles – e.g., *скроенный из холста* 'made of canvas'; *залиты[е] глаза[…]* 'inundated eyes'; *рваны[е] корн[и* 'pulled-out roots'; *кожаны[е] угл[ы]* 'leather seats (seating corners)' – not of adjectives, the part of speech predestined for the function of an attribute. In fact, only three adjectives in the poem are used as attributes: *посмертн[ая] радост[ь]* 'postmortem joy,' *потн[ая] жмен[а]* 'sweaty handful,' and *веков[ая] обид[а]* 'age-old resentment.' Adjectives serve the function of characterizing entities. This

[95] Very fertile soil.

[96] A kind of fine-grained sedimentary rock, infertile land.

[97] *Prostorečie* ('simple speech') refers to a nonstandard Urban speech variety of Russian.

[98] E.g., the Ukrainian poet Volodymyr Sosyura wrote in his poem «Mazepa» (1928) «О Пушкін, я тебе люблю, та істину люблю ще дужче!» ("O Pushkin, I love you, but I love truth even more!") (Mel'nychenko 2006: 84).

function is taken over by other parts of speech in the poem, such as participles, nouns, and adverbs. The avoidance of adjectives plays a role not only in Brodsky's poetry, but has a certain tradition in Russian poetry. As Zubova shows on the basis of quotations from various poets before Brodsky, the use of adjectives was interpreted as a distraction from the essential, namely from the ideas and processes expressed by nouns and verbs, respectively.[99]

As mentioned above, the denominations referring to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people belong to different registers. For instance, *поганец* and *краля* are instances of *prostorečie*; *вертухай* originates from criminal argot. The presence of argot and the mixing of styles will be addressed in the next section.

3.3 Mixing of styles and mixed feelings

Heterogeneity of styles is typical of Brodsky's poetry in general[100], including the use of non-standard language[101], but both traits are particularly present in «На независимость Украины»:

> Свойственная вообще Бродскому стилистическая гетерогенность здесь повышена – Бродский использует полный набор клишированных украинизмов, перемешивая их со словами и выражениями из воровского арго. Таким образом усиливается ощущение незаконности, криминальности отделения Украины от России.[102]
>
> Brodsky's stylistic heterogeneity is elevated here. He exploits the whole range of Ukrainian clichés, mixing them with expressions from criminal argot. In this way, the sense of illegality and criminality of Ukraine's separation from Russia is underlined.

Alongside *argot* and *prostorečie*, there are also folkloristic elements, such as the interjections *гой* (stanza 3) and *ой-да* (stanza 9), and archaisms (*коли* in stanza 7, *поди* in stanza 9), but these are clearly outnumbered by elements from the lower styles.

Many of the *argot* and *prostorečie* expressions are idioms. Idioms are generally associated with colloquial speech due to their pictoriality, expressiveness, and creative potential. Colloquial idioms are often also symptomatic of emotional speech, a trait that is important in «На независимость Украины» as well. The use of idioms is thus also indicative of emotional involvement of the speaker. The following paragraphs will go through some of the idioms occurring in the poem.

The first stanza includes the colloquial idiom *показать кому Кузькину мать* 'to teach someone a lesson.' This is of course an allusion to Khrushchev's legendary performance before the United Nations General Assembly in 1960. The idiom implies a threat to the person(s) it addresses. When the poem was written in 1992, this

[99] Cf. Zubova (2015).

[100] Cf. e.g., Sandler (2007: 669); Pekurovskaya (2017: 64).

[101] Cf. Losev (2008: 235-238).

[102] Ibid., 263.

threat was issued in the name of a falling empire, which is why it probably sounded quite harmless or even desperate. In 2014, however, the threat became real.[103]

Stanza 4 includes three idioms. The first one, *скатертью*$_{INST}$ *дорога*$_{NOM}$ 'get lost, beat it'[104] is creatively modified by replacing *скатерть* 'tablecloth' with *рушник*, the traditional Ukrainian towels / cloths, which yields the highly expressive variation *рушником*$_{NST}$ *дорога*$_{NOM}$. *По адресу на три буквы* and *на все четыре стороны* are two other nonchalant ways of telling someone to go away.[105] The two idiomatic expressions belong to clearly different levels of style. Whereas *по адресу на три буквы* is an (attenuated) vulgarism, *на все четыре стороны* is stylistically more elaborate.

There are more idioms originating from gulag jargon and criminal jargon: *ставить на четыре кости* (stanza 4) 'have anal intercourse with someone (usually violently)' and *качать права* 'look after one's own interests' (stanza 8). Whereas the referent of *качать права* cannot be recovered unequivocally, the second phrase makes it clear that it is directed towards the Ukrainian side, who should also stop 'pinning things on <u>us</u> [the Russians]' (*шить <u>нам</u> одно и другое*). These substandard expressions are combined with the archaism *полно* '[it's] enough'.

The motive of Ukrainian accusations against Russia is taken up again in stanza 6. The Dnieper River, flowing from Russia to Ukraine and therefore lending itself as a potential symbol of mutual closeness, is turned into the opposite. It is assumed that it might flow in reverse when being spit into on the Russian side, to "proudly express despise for us" (*брезгуя гордо нами*), and is compared to an express train stuffed with *вековой обидой* 'age-old resentment.' These passages reproach Ukraine for being resentful, which somewhat counteracts the resentful words expressed towards Ukraine at so many points in the texts.

The heterogeneity of styles iconically represents the emotional heterogeneity expressed in the poem. Although a dominant emotion of the poem is anger, there are also a number of passages expressing grief. Brodsky himself stated that the reason to write the poem was «печаль […] по поводу этого раскола»[106] ("sadness […] on behalf of that split"). Balashov, among others, raises the question of why Brodsky was so thin-skinned with respect to the independence of Ukraine, but not with

[103] Another passage fatefully anticipating the present war is in stanza 4: «Ступайте от нас в жупане, не говоря в мундире» ("Step away from us in your zhupans, not to mention in uniforms").

[104] The idiom is a phraseological fusion (*frazeologičeskoe sraščenie*) in Vinogradov's classification, which means that its meaning is not derivable from its components. The idiom was originally motivated by the image that a road and, therefore, the journey, will be faster when the road is even, that is, free of the potholes considered typical of Russian streets. The instrumental case is thus an *instrumentalis comparationis*, and the idiom could be translated as '[may your] road be even like a tablecloth.'

[105] The three letters hinted at in *по адресу на три буквы* make the word *хуй* 'penis' (vulg.). The meaning of telling someone to go to *все четыре стороны* 'all four sides' is more transparent.

[106] Losev (2008: 264).

respect to the independence of, say, Georgia or Uzbekistan.[107] Balashov gives the answer right away: It hurts more when a close person turns away.[108]

Demchikov notices parallels between «На независимость Украины» and Brodsky's many poems dedicated to women after they had split up, for instance in the intonation of the poem, to which he refers to as «‹послеразрывная› интонация» ("after separation intonation").[109] Although he does not specify this notion, he elaborates the parallel between «На независимость Украины» and Brodsky's love poetry:

> Бродский довольно неожиданно воспроизвел в этом, казалось бы, совсем не личном стихотворении именно эту очень личную интонацию […]. И в этом смысле стихотворение «На независимость Украины» является – со всеми своими грубостями, несправедливостями, почти площадной бранью «в спину» уходящей из общего дома исторической родине – фактически любовным стихотворением, в каком-то смысле даже объяснением в любви Украине.[110]
>
> Rather unexpectedly, Brodsky reproduced in this seemingly not personal poem this very personal intonation […]. And in this sense, the poem "On the Independence of Ukraine" is – with all its rudeness, injustice, almost square curse "in the back" of the historical homeland leaving the common home – in fact a love poem, in a sense even a declaration of love for Ukraine.

Demchikov therefore concludes that the poem is actually a «величественной прощальной любовной антиоде» ("a majestic farewell love antiode").[111]

In the same way, Bertelsen notes that "Ukraine's 'deviation' and 'transgression' embodied a personal cataclysm associated with losing a lover and a friend"[112]. She further states:

> His sadness, however, does not exhaust the whole spectrum of emotions that could be traced in this poem. Brodsky was furious, and his deliberate attempt to reduce Ukrainians to an uncultured and crude people was achieved through the use of stereotypical Ukrainian identifiers, such as *varenyk*, *zhupan*, *bashtan*, *kavun* alternating with a slang usually employed in labor camps.[113]

Grief is explicitly mentioned in stanza 9, following a defiant *как-нибудь перебьемся* ('we will get by somehow'). As Artëm Serebrennikov's translation given above is not very felicitous at this point, I am giving a more literal translation here:

> А что до слезы из глаза,
> Нет на неё указа ждать до другого раза.

[107] Cf. Balashov (2013: unpag.).

[108] Ibid.

[109] Cf. Demchikov (2015: unpag).

[110] Ibid.

[111] Cf., ibid.

[112] Bertelsen (2015: 276).

[113] Ibid.; italics: Bertelsen.

> And concerning the tear in the eye
> it hasn't received orders to wait until next time.

As another typical element of "acute lovesickness," the whole relationship is questioned in a sarcastic tone (*кончилась, знать, любовь, коли была промежду* 'seems that our love is up, if it at all existed', stanza 7).

It is noteworthy that the passages of the poem that include substandard lexical and idiomatic elements are the passages in which anger and resentment are the dominant emotions. In passages expressing primarily grief and sadness, we find folkloristic and archaic elements. These latter elements are interjections (*гой, ой да*), and what could be summarized as function words (e.g., the adverb *знать*[114], the conjunction *коли*). These parts of speech do not have a referential meaning of their own but unfold their meaning only in context. Interjections can either modify utterances or function as independent utterances; function words cannot be independent utterances but can only modify them. Here, they add a melancholic tone to the enumeration of items associated with Ukraine (*гой ты, рушник, карбованец; ой да, левада-степь, краля, баштан, вареник*). The expression of grief is thus more subtle than the expression of anger; but it is noticeable nevertheless.

Similarly, the evocation of joint aspects of Ukrainian and Russian culture is also expressed less directly than the evocation of (negative) Ukrainian stereotypes. This is the case in the following line of stanza 8: «Что ковыряться зря в рваных корнях глаголом!» ("Why should we plow our broken roots with our verbs?")[115] This line refers to the common roots of Russians and Ukrainians as East Slavic peoples once united in the Kievan / Kyivan Rus.' However, since these roots are considered ripped out by force from the Ukrainian side, there is no way back to this original idealized state.

Grief also underlies the expressions of resentment and anger. This becomes evident in the abundant use of irony and sarcasm. Even the title of the poem is ironic. Irony is also present in the very first line, when the Swedish king Charles XII, who attacked Russia, is addressed as *дорогой Карл Двенадцатый* 'dear Charles XII,' which is at the same time the regular form of familiar address in letters.

In sum, the parts expressing anger dominate both quantitatively and qualitatively (that is, they are more direct) over the parts expressing sorrow. Of course, anger is also a self-protective reaction to grief and powerlessness. It has been noted in section 3.1 that the verse scheme of the poem is indicative of irony in the text.[116] The ways in which anger and sorrow are expressed are at some points ironic, sarcastic, and sardonic. An example of irony without any strong sarcastic or sardonic undertone is the laconic statement *пожили вместе, хватит* 'we have

[114] *Znat'* 'know' is normally a verb, but it may be used as sentential adverb colloquially.

[115] Translation by Artëm Serebrennikov [10].

[116] Cf. Smith (2002).

lived together, it's enough' (stanza 6). There are also instances of sarcasm, that is, of scorn and derision directed towards Ukraine. A case in point is in stanza 5:

> Пусть теперь в мазанке хором Гансы
> с ляхами ставят вас на четыре кости, поганцы.
>
> May now Krauts and Polacks
> get you down on all fours in your huts.[117]

Another passage with a clear sarcastic undertone is stanza 2:

> То не зелено-квитный, траченый изотопом,
> – жовто-блакитный реет над Конотопом,
> скроенный из холста: знать, припасла Канада –
> даром, что без креста: но хохлам не надо.
>
> It's not the green flag, eaten by the isotope,
> It's the yellow-and-blue flying over Konotop,
> Made out of canvas – must be a gift from Toronto –
> Alas, it bears no cross, but the Khokhly don't want to.[118]

The first line evokes the Chernobyl disaster by asserting that the Ukrainian flag is not *зелено-квитный* 'green-blossoming'[119] but rather *жовто-блакитный* 'yellow-light-blue.' The second line alludes to the battle of Konotop in 1659 between Russian and Ukrainian Cossacks in the Russian-Polish war, which resulted in a defeat of the Russian troops. A sarcastic undertone is achieved by the realization of *зелено-квитный* and *жовто-блакитный* in the left periphery. The mention of Canada as the donor of the precious material of canvas is an allusion to the strong and, allegedly, nationalist or at least nationally very aware Ukrainian diaspora settling there. The last line accuses Ukraine of godlessness and lack of morality. Although stanza 2 is clearly sarcastic, the allusion to the battle of Konotop lost by Russia adds a sardonic tone to the sarcasm directed towards Ukraine.

Grief is, however, not the only source of the anger expressed in the poem. Another source of the anger appears to be a feeling of Russian superiority that is not acknowledged from the Ukrainian side. This attitude makes it impossible to truly understand the Ukrainian attempt to autonomy. There are several points in the text at which Russian imperialism is most clearly expressed. Among these are the menace in stanza 1 (*время покажет Кузькину мать* 'time will teach you a lesson'), the passage *скажем им, звонкой матерью […] строго* 'we will tell them sternly with a loud curse' in stanza 3, and the disparagement of Taras Shevchenko's poetry as compared to Pushkin's in the final stanza. Statements like

[117] Translation slightly adapted from Artëm Serebrennikov [11].

[118] Translation by Artëm Serebrennikov [12].

[119] The word 'isotope' and the green color allude to the Chernobyl disaster. Although radioactivity is itself invisible, Uranium glass, for instance, shimmers green-yellow.

these have been interpreted as imperialistic views.[120] Although such an interpretation is problematic against the background that Brodsky was a victim of the Soviet regime himself, it becomes more understandable against the fact that he spent his entire life in one of the two world powers at that time, in the (Russian part of) the Soviet Union and in the United States. In sum, however, the imperialistic stance is less pronounced than sadness and anger.

The language of the poem is aggressive in that it seeks to address and challenge the Ukrainian alter emotionally. Psychologically, the transmission of one's own negative feelings to others makes sense because it represents a chance to interact with the other despite the separation. This is achieved by transgressing the limits of standard language. The aggression attested in Brodsky's poem is a reaction to frustration, and therefore one of three subtypes of "genuine aggression" in the sense of Kuße.[121]

There is not only a mixing of styles and emotions in the poem. There is also modest lexical code-mixing, with single Ukrainian words and phrases embedded in the Russian matrix language. These Ukrainian words include the naming of colors as *зелено-квитный*[122] 'green-blossoming' and *жовто-блакитный* 'yellow-light-blue' (albeit in the Russian spelling), the addressing of Ukrainians as *kavuny* 'watermelons', the phrase *ne treba* 'not necessary', and *Dnipro* 'Dnieper' (again in Russian spelling as *Днипро*; the Ukrainian spelling would be *Дніпро*). In sum, the Ukrainian elements are very restricted in number and include expressions known to the average speaker of Russian without any knowledge of the Ukrainian language.[123] The motivation behind their occurrence seems to be the evocation of Ukrainian stereotypes and, sometimes, also adherence to meter and rhyme.[124]

3.4 Argumentative analysis

We will now turn to the argumentative structure of Brodsky's text. The poem can be read as an argumentative text because it expresses a certain viewpoint with respect to a *quaestio*, namely, the *quaestio* of whether Ukraine should be an independent state or not. The overall answer to this question in the poem is clearly negative. This section will look out for arguments put forward in favor of this answer and focuses on how these arguments are expressed. As noted in section 2, the constituents of authentic argumentations are not always expressed explicitly,

[120] Bertelsen (2015: 277); Pekurovskaya (2017: 63).

[121] Kuße (2019: 28). Kuße distinguishes instrumental and genuine aggression. Instrumental aggression serves to accomplish certain goals or prestige; genuine aggression is either an instinctive reaction to outward threat, behavior out of delight in physical exertion or sexual pleasure, or a reaction to frustration due to anger or as revenge (ibid.).

[122] Cf. Ukrainian *квітний* 'blooming' and *квіт* 'flower.'

[123] An exception might be *квітний* 'blooming.' Cf. previous footnote.

[124] *Не треба* 'not necessary' rhymes better with *хлеба* 'bread' than the Russian equivalent *не надо*.

which is why open markers of argumentation (e.g., argumentative connectors such as *therefore*, *consequently*, *because (of)*, *but*, etc.)[125] are not always present in argumentative texts. This applies even more to poetry, in which relations between phrases are often ambiguous and argumentative connectors seem particularly rare.[126] Poetry may nevertheless serve argumentative purposes, and the two poems analyzed here are clear cases in point.

In the first stanza, the historical fact that Sweden and Ivan Mazepa's troops lost the battle of Poltava against the tsar includes an openly positive evaluation expressed by *слава Богу* 'glory [thanks] to God.' This does not represent an argument in itself but prepares and guides the reader towards the overall statement that Ukraine should not be independent from Russia. *Слава Богу* functions as a sentential adverb positively evaluating the outcome of the Poltava battle. Argumentatively, the positive evaluation of a proposition can serve the purpose of suggesting indisputable truth („unstrittigkeitssuggerierende Wirkung"[127]).

The third line in stanza 4 includes a hidden argument in favor of the thesis that Ukraine should not be independent. The call to leave Russia (*ступайте от нас в жупане* 'step away from us in a zhupan' [traditional Ukrainian clothing]) is supplemented by an appositional phrase (*не говоря в мундире* 'not to say in a uniform') anticipating the danger of war if Ukraine becomes an independent state. The argumentative value of the apposition is associated with its non-obligatory syntactic status, as non-obligatory syntactic elements are particularly apt for argumentative purposes.[128]

The scornful lines in stanza 5 *Пусть теперь в мазанке хором Гансы с ляхами ставят вас на четыре кости* ('May now Krauts and Polacks get you down on all fours in your huts') includes another argument against Ukrainian independence, namely the warning that this may lead the Ukrainian people into oppression by foreign powers and turn them into despicable, insignificant people (*поганцы*).

The rhetorical question implying a negative answer (*Курицу из борща грысть в одиночку слаще?* 'Is it tastier to gnaw the chicken out of the borshch alone?') does not represent an argument, but serves as a marker of non-controversy („Marker der Unstrittigkeit"[129]).

The final stanza includes another argument in favor of the overall thesis defended in the poem. The offensiveness of the last line mocking Taras Shevchenko's poetry receives an additional interpretation if seen as part of an argumentative passage starting in the second line of the last stanza. The announcement that the Ukrainian people will turn to Russian culture (by citing verses of Alexander Pushkin) on

[125] Cf. Atayan (2006: 44f.).

[126] This is of course only an intuitive assumption awaiting empirical verification.

[127] Ibid., 437.

[128] Cf. ibid., 171.

[129] Ibid., 437.

their deathbed can be seen as another argument against Ukrainian independence. What is announced, then, is not the death of individuals (which is inescapable anyways), but the looming demise of the Ukrainian people if it turns away from the Russian cultural sphere.

As expected, the text does not include any open argumentative expressions or argumentative connectors. Nevertheless, there are some parts in the poem which serve to substantiate the position taken in the text. Although not exhaustive, I believe that the above analysis has shown that it is justified to identify the text as also argumentative.

4. Aleksandr Byvshev's «На независимость Украины»

Aleksandr Byvshev (*1972) is a poet and teacher of German and French from Kromy (Oryol oblast) in Western Russia. As Byvshev states, his version of the poem is a "poetic-polemical answer" («поэтико-полемический ответ»[130]) to Brodsky, whose original poem Byvshev considers a "stupid anti-Ukrainian opus with […] imperialist rhetoric" («глупым антиукраинским опусом с […] великодержавной, имперской риторикой»[131]). Byvshev is very active on social media, particularly on his account on *vkontakte* ('in contact'), a Russian social media platform similar to Facebook. He published the poem on his *vkontakte* account in 2015.[132]

This is how Byvshev announces the poem before publishing it on the website "Pavlograd news"[133] («Павлоградские новости») on March 1, 2015:

> Здравствуйте! Решил предложить вашему вниманию своё новое стихотворение из «УКРАИНСКОГО ЦИКЛА».
>
> Это полемический ответ на одноимённый опус Иосифа Бродского. К сожалению, нашему классику принадлежат позорные, не делающие ему чести откровенно антиукраинские стихи, написанные с позиции русского воинственного великодержавного шовинизма. А сейчас этим, с позволения сказать, «произведением» козыряют российские имперцы-фашисты, прикрывающие свою ксенофобию и агрессивный национализм авторитетом нобелевского лауреата. В подобной ситуации я не мог остаться в стороне, смолчать и счёл своим гражданским и человеческим долгом выразить личную точку зрения по данному вопросу, пусть и расходящуюся с мнением «подавляющего большинства» зомбированного российского населения. От всего сердца желаю вам Победы в вашей борьбе за свою свободу и независимость.
>
> И да поможет вам Бог![134]

[130] Byvshev in an interview on [13].

[131] Entry from April 20, 2020, on Byvshev's account on *vkontakte*.

[132] Cf. Kljagin (2018: unpag.).

[133] Pavlograd / Pavlohrad is a city in eastern central Ukraine.

[134] Cf. [14].

Hello! I decided to offer you my new poem from the "UKRAINIAN CYCLE."

This is a polemical answer to the eponymous opus by Joseph Brodsky. Unfortunately, to our classic belongs a shameful, openly anti-Ukrainian poem, not doing him any honor, written from the perspective of Russian belligerent great power chauvinism. Now Russian fascist emperors, covering their xenophobia and aggressive nationalism with the authority of a Nobel laureate, are trumped by this "work." In such a situation I could not stay aside and keep silent. I considered it my civic and human duty to express my personal point of view on this issue, albeit at variance with the opinion of the "overwhelming majority" of the zombified Russian population. From the bottom of my heart, I wish you Victory in your struggle for your freedom and independence.

And may God help you!

The poem itself reads as follows:

На независимость Украины

В адрес тебя летят пули, снаряды, маты.
(Не наигрались, поди, кацапы в свои «аты-баты».)
«Ишь, захотела свободы! – взвыла Москва. – Вот дерьмо!..»
Твой Майдан для Кремля, как для циклопа бельмо.

Прав был Мыкола Гоголь: эти свиные рыла
Русь захватили «Святую» спереди, с флангов и тыла.
В месте на букву «ж» засели уже глубоко.
Здесь прописались навечно Шариковы и Ко.

К зеркалу подойти боится немытая «Раша».
«Третий Рим», «Китеж-град» и прочее – просто лажа.
Но мечтает по-прежнему в мире иметь всех в рот.
И с похмелья рыгает: «Мы – богоносец народ!»

Северная держава смотрится наглым подростком.
В ней квартирует тьма горячих голов-отморозков.
Бомб ядрёных до чёрта и «калашей» будь здоров...
Дай им топор войны – ох, наломают дров!

«Ватник» захлёбывается ненавистью к «укропу»
И на чём свет стоит Штаты клянёт и Европу.
НАТО пускай готовит побольше и крепче сеть. –
Русскому хватит медведю на соседей борзеть.

В ледяном Быдлостане ничто под Луной не ново:
Сталина почитают опять как отца родного.
Дружно встать в позу рака – иванушкам самый смак.
Видно, и впрямь без плётки им не прожить никак...

С той, что тебя гнобила, Господь ещё спросит строго.
В дебри, леса, болота скатертью ей дорога.
А я на Запад гляжу, слёзно небо моля:
«Щастя тобі бажаю, Україно моя!»

СЛАВА УКРАИНЕ!

С уважением, Александр Бывшев[135]

On the Independence of Ukraine[136]

Bullets, grenades, curses are flying towards you
(surely the Kacaps have not yet finished their "aty-baty"[137]
"Well, you wanted freedom! – howled Moscow. – Here you have filth!..."
The Maidan is to the Kremlin what a belmo is to a Cyclops.

Mykola Gogol' was right: these pig snouts
have grabbed the "holy" Rus' from front, sides, and back.
They are stuck here on their asses.[138]
Šarikovs and the like have registered their residence here for good.

Filthy "Rasha" is afraid of stepping in front of a mirror.
"Third Rome", "Kitež town" and so on – just a lie.
But it is dreaming as before of having everyone in the world in its mouth.
And it vomits from hangover: "We are crusaders of God!"

The northern state considers itself an impudent adolescent.
It's home to a host of unscrupulous villains.
A hell of a lot of well-formed bombs and Kalashnikovs, bless you...
Give them the axe of war – oh, they'll break wood!

The "vatnik" suffocates from hatred towards "ukrops"
he curses what the world stands on, the USA and Europe.
Let NATO build a bigger and stronger net.
The Russian Bear is content to behave boldly towards his neighbors.

There is nothing new under the moon in icy Bydlostan.
Stalin is again worshipped like a father.
Adopting the crab's pose unanimously is the Ivanushkis ultimate pleasure.
Obviously, they just can't live without the whip.

[135] Cf. [22].

[136] Translation by Katrin Schlund.

[137] An allusion to the song and Soviet film «Аты-баты, шли солдаты» ("Aty-baty went the soldiers", 1977). Originally, the phrase is the beginning of a counting-out rhyme (*считалка*).

[138] The word *жопа* 'buttocks' (vulg.) is only hinted at by the initial letter *ж*, which is easily understood by native speakers of Russian.

> God will speak severely to the one who put you down.
> May she [Russia] get lost in mazes, forests, swamps.
> And I look west, begging the sky with tears in my eyes:
> "I wish you luck, my [dear] Ukraine!"
>
> GLORY TO UKRAINE!
>
> Respectfully, Aleksandr Byvshev

Several legal proceedings have been instituted against Byvshev since 2014. He also lost his job as a teacher because of his political poems. In 2015, he was charged with publishing two "anti-Russian" poems[139] and sentenced to 300 hours of community service.[140] In 2017, he was charged for «На независимость Украины», and sentenced to community work again in April 2018, work he characterizes as "humiliating forced labor" («унизительны[е] принудительны[е] работ[ы]»[141]). Like other poems by Byvshev, «На независимость Украины» was classified as extremist and forbidden on Russian territory. Byvshev was temporarily included in the list of terrorists in June 2015, but removed from it in December 2019.[142] Byvshev is facing great hostility, not only from his fellow citizens, but also in journalistic coverage.[143]

It is noteworthy that Byvshev was popular and successful as a poet up to the 2010s. He was known especially for poetry about World War II and children's poetry, and his poems were published in regime-loyal literary journals like «Родная Ладога» ("Native Ladoga"[144]), or in the youth newspaper «Пионерская правда»

[139] Namely the poems «Украинским патриотам» ("To Ukrainian patriots") and «Украинским повстанцам» ("To Ukrainian rebels").

[140] Cf. Efimova (2018: unpag.).

[141] Byvshev in an interview published on 16 July, 2016, cf. [15].

[142] Cf. [16].

[143] The following excerpt from an article entitled «Таким поэтам места в России нет!» ("Such poets have no place in Russia!") from the regional newspaper with the Soviet name «Znamja» ("Banner") is a revealing example of the media propaganda carried out against Byvshev (note the striking stylistic and lexical parallels with Soviet newspeak):

> Наиболее активная и политически грамотная часть молодежи нашего города бьет тревогу […] В неспокойное время, когда внешние враги оскалили свои зубы и затаились в смертоносном прыжке, находятся люди, которые подрывают Россию изнутри, действуя как пятая колонна. (Cited from Kanygin 2017: 6)
>
> The most active and politically literate part of the youth of our town are raising the alarm […]. In a turbulent time, when external enemies have shined their teeth and are lurking in a deadly jump, there are people who are undermining Russia from within, acting like a fifth column.

[144] Reference to the lake Ladoga near St. Petersburg.

("Pioneer's truth").[145] He also took third place in the Crystal national literary festival-competition «Хрустальный родник» ("Crystal spring") in 2012.[146] Although his doubts had been gradually growing since the late 1990s, it was not until the events of 2014 that he finally turned his back to the mainstream.[147]

4.1 Formal properties

The poem consists of seven stanzas à four lines, and a regular rhyme scheme of aa – bb that is interrupted only in the first two lines of stanza 4. It also differs from Brodsky's poem in terms of metrics, as it is written in a five-stress *dol'nik* (*пятииктный дольник*)[148].

There are almost no enjambments in the poem. Instead, almost every line includes a syntactically complete sentence. Exclamations occur only in literal speech. This makes the poem appear more uniform and less dynamic than Brodsky's. It is possible that Byvshev chose this rhythmic and syntactic structure to reflect the opposition to Brodsky's original.

Some of the simple sentences in the poem are transitive sentences, the subject of which is the Russian leadership (subject actants in point are *свиные рыла* ('pig snouts'), *немытая «Раша»*[149] ('unwashed Russia'); for an interpretation of these terms, cf. sections 4.2 and 4.3). These constructions underline an active role of the Russian leadership in the policy towards Ukraine deplored in the poem.

The passages relating to the Russian people, on the other hand, include constructions implying reduced semantic subject properties of the subject actant. The first construction in point is traditionally referred to as *неопределённо-личная конструкция* 'indeterminate personal construction': *Сталина почитают опять как отца родного* ('Stalin is again worshipped like a father', stanza 6, line 2). The subject actant of this construction cannot be overtly expressed and refers to a referentially underspecified group of people.

The third line of stanza 6 makes the first explicit reference to the Russian people, by means of the dysphemism *иванушки* 'Ivans' («иванушкам самый смак», "the Ivanushkis ultimate pleasure"). Importantly, these *иванушки* do not occur as semantic agents of the clause. Instead, they are marked in the dative case, which is the typical case to express the semantic role of experiencer, that is, of an actant that is affected by the actions of others. The last line of stanza 6 includes an impersonal construction with a so-called "dative subject" (*Видно, и впрямь без плётки им не прожить никак...*, 'Obviously, they just can't live without a

[145] Cf. ibid., 5.

[146] Cf.: [17].

[147] Cf. Kanygin (2017: 5).

[148] I thank Jurij B. Orlickij (Moscow) for this information.

[149] The spelling imitates the English pronounciation of the word *Russia* (cf. section 4.3).

whip'). Dative subjects are semantically restricted to "non-agentive" semantic roles, primarily to the roles of experiencer and patient. This underlines the passiveness ascribed to the Russian people in these lines, and relates to the stereotype of Russians as a people of servile subjects.

4.2 Perspectivation

Byvshev's reply is written from a decidedly different perspective than Brodsky's original. Whereas Brodsky adopts the perspective of a generalized Russian majority, Byvshev expresses a minority view. The singularity of the views expressed in Byvshev's poem becomes evident most clearly in the final stanza, when the perspective changes from third person (singular and plural, see below) to first person singular, including even direct speech in the first person singular. In the first and last stanzas, the second person singular occurs, in an address towards the country of Ukraine.[150] This yields a strong personification effect of Ukraine and promotes sympathy and compassion.

The middle verses (stanzas 2 to 6) deal with the Russian self-image and Russian policy towards Ukraine. The Russian position is described from the outside perspective, which is reflected in the use of the third persons singular and plural. The only exception is the citation «мы – богоносец народ» ("we are the people of God") put into the mouth of «немытая Раша»[151] ("unwashed Russia"), stanza 4.

The middle stanzas evaluate the Russian self-conception from an external perspective adopted by the lyrical I. Some notions of Russian self-conception are put in quotation marks to express ironic distancing. Examples in point are *Русь «Святую»* (''holy' Rus''), *Третий Рим* ('Third Rome')[152], and *Китеж град* ('City of Kitež'[153]). Importantly, reference to Russia is more differentiated than in Brodsky's poem. There are a number of negative (and few neutral) denominations and predications relating to the representants of the Russian state and its perceived henchmen. For instance, the toponyms *Москва* ('Moscow') and *Кремль* ('Kremlin') (stanza 1) refer to the Russian government (but not usually to an entire people). Using the name of a state's capital to refer to this country's government is of course an established metonymy. The *свиные рыла* ('pig

[150] Note that the second person singular imperative *дай* 'give' in stanza 4 does not count as a form of address in the second person towards Ukraine or another entity or person. This is because this form is an instance of what is known as the general-personal construction (*обобщённо-личная конструкция*), which means that it is not directed towards a concrete person but has a generalized referent.

[151] Reference to a poem by Mikhail Ju. Lermontov (cf. section 4.3).

[152] Reference to the dictum of Moscow representing the legacy of Rome after the fall of Constantinople under Ottoman rule in 1453.

[153] *Kitež* is a mythical city said to have sunken into the lake Svetloyar in central Russia when the city was attacked by the Golden Horde while its inhabitants were praying for their salvation.

snouts')[154] mentioned in stanza 2 likewise relate only to parts of the Russian society, and not to the Russian people as such. This becomes evident in the two subsequent lines of the stanza, which state that "these pig snouts" have captured (*захватили)* Russia. The meaning of the verb *захватить* 'seize (e.g., power); conquer' is crucial here, since it is not possible for an entire people to seize power or conquer its own country. Rather, the seizure of power is an act of only a group of people. Denominations and predications referring to the mass of the Russian people occur only in stanza 6. They evoke the stereotype of the Russian people as submissive and obedient to authority (cf. the last two lines of stanza 6).

The distinction between partial and holistic reference to the Russian people is not always clear cut. A case in point is the expression *Шариковы* ('Sharikovy')[155] mentioned in the last line of stanza 2. Although it is claimed that this group makes up a large part of the population, the formulation does not cover the Russian population as a whole. Similarly, although a *тьма горячих голов-отморозков* ('host of unscrupulous villains', stanza 4) is undoubtedly a large group and, consequently, refers to a majority of the Russian population, it does not necessarily include the entire Russian people. This means that the reader has the choice to identify with the alleged majority of Russians, which is likely to result in a feeling of offense. Or else, s/he can take a critical stance towards the alleged behavior of Russian elites and masses. This alternative stance is encouraged by the perspective of the lyrical I, which gets the chance to speak implicitly in the first stanza, where it addresses Ukraine, and explicitly the last stanza, where it gets to speak to Ukraine directly.

The perspectivation of Byvshev's version thus contrasts greatly with Brodsky's. As elaborated in section 3.2, Brodsky's poem establishes a binary opposition between a Russian inside perspective directed towards the Ukrainian outside perspective. Byvshev's text is, to some extent, the mirror image of Brodsky's in that it associates with Ukraine by adopting a respectful and compassionate attitude towards Ukraine, which is reflected also in the direct address in the second person singular. The views expressed about Russia are, in turn, consistently negative, almost devastating.

The perspectivation in Byvshev's reply to Brodsky is also more differentiated and not only binary. As elaborated above, the poem adopts the perspective of a lyrical I that does not share the (conceived) Russian mainstream views. As argued above, the Russian "masses" are distinct from the Russian elites and policy-makers, although both come off badly in the text. This constellation of inner and outer perspectives, or "constellation of figures", in Byvshev's poem can be illustrated as follows:

[154] A citation from Gogol's famous comedy «Ревизор» ("The Government Inspector").

[155] *Sharik* is a typical dog's name. *Sharikov* is the name of the mongrel created of a dog and a man in Mikhail Bulgakov's novella "Heart of a Dog" («Собачье сердце», 1925). The word *Sharikov* has become a designation for an uncultivated, coarse person.

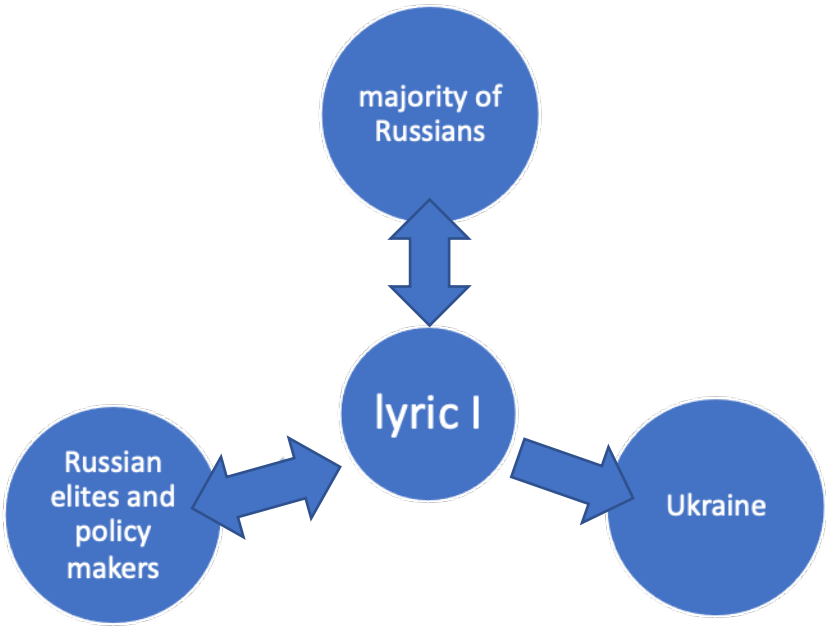

Figure 1 "Constellation of figures" in Byvshev's version of «На независимость Украины»

The lyrical I addresses only Ukraine directly, that is, in the second person singular. The Russian elites and the adherents of the majority view are addressed only indirectly, that is, in the third persons singular and plural. The arrows pointing in both directions indicate oppositional views; the one-way arrow indicates that the lyrical I addresses Ukraine.

4.3 Lexical and stylistic analysis

Byvshev's poem also brims with colloquial and non-standard language, and even more so than Brodsky's. There is also a mixture of styles, but slightly less pronounced than in Brodsky, with an emphasis on *razgovornaja reč'* (colloquial language), and particularly on the non-standard styles of *prostorečie*, *ugolovnyj žargon* (criminal jargon), and *mat* (vulgar language). There is an opposition between the language styles in the first two lines of stanza 1 and the last two lines of stanza 7, which are directed towards Ukraine, and the rest of the poem. The passages addressing Ukraine adhere to the standard language, including forms associated with conceptually written,[156] and, hence, "higher" style. Cases in point are the use of the gerund *моля* 'asking for, requesting', and the verb *глядеть* 'gaze' (stanza 7, line 3). The last line of the poem includes direct speech in Ukrainian, uttered by the lyrical I towards Ukraine. The use of Ukrainian is typical of Byvshev's recent poetry, and expresses appreciation of the autonomy of the Ukrainian lan-

[156] Cf. Koch / Oesterreicher (1985).

guage and people; an autonomy that has been questioned repeatedly by the Russian side.[157] Another element of Ukrainian language is the name of Nikolaj V. Gogol'. It is given in the Ukrainian variant of his first name, however in Russian orthography (*Мыкола* instead of Ukrainian *Микола*[158]). Gogol's last name is spelled alike in both Russian and Ukrainian; a difference is perceivable only in the pronunciation.[159] The choice of the Ukrainian version of Gogol's first name is a gesture of recognition of Ukrainian autonomy, and a reminiscence of Gogol's Ukrainian origin, also against the background of the frequent usurpation of Gogol' from the Russian side.[160]

The elements of higher style occurring in the intermediate verses are either allusions to literary works or carry an ironic touch. A case in point is the designation of Russia as *Северная держава* 'Northern state,' with *держава* belonging to the upper or poetic style[161], or the archaism *поди* 'probably' (which occurs in Brodsky's version as well). Other examples are references to Russian historical narratives (the dictum of Moscow as the "Third Rome" and the legend of the sunken city of Kitež, cf. section 4.2).

Keeping in mind that the boundaries between *razgovornaja reč'*, *prostorečie*, and other substandard varieties are not always clear cut,[162] relevant examples of colloquial and non-standard expressions include:

Взвыть 'howl, wail', *отморозок* 'a cold-blooded, ruthless person', *борзеть* 'to get impudent, bold', *лажа* 'lie, deceit', *до черта* 'a lot of; lit.: to the devil'. The phrase *тьма горячих голов-отморозков* 'host of unscrupulous villains' includes an expressive oxymoronic element: the phraseonym *горячая голова* 'quick-tempered person, hothead' contrasts with *отморозок* 'cold-blooded person' (whose root {*moroz*} means 'frost'). More literally, the phrase could be translated as 'a host of cold-blooded hotheads.' Russia is associated with climatic and mental coldness at other points as well: Stanza 4, line 1 refers to Russia as the *Северная держава* 'Northern state', and *ледяный Быдлостан* 'icy Bydlostan'.

[157] Cf. Kuße (2019a: 77-90, 91-111).

[158] The reason why Byvshev does not use Ukrainian orthography is most probably that the Ukrainian grapheme <и> signals the non-palatalization of the preceding consonant (/m/, in our case) and is spelled approximately like the Russian grapheme <ы>. Russian <и>, on the other hand, signals the palatalization of the preceding consonant, which for a Russian reader results in the erroneous pronunciation [m'ikola].

[159] Byvshev pronounces the name in the Russian way, that is, as [gógol'].

[160] For instance, the Russian Wikipedia entry of Gogol' classifies him as «русский прозаик, драматург, поэт, критик, публицист» ("a Russian playwright, poet, critic, publicist"), whereas the Ukrainian entry considers him a «російський письменник українського походження» ("writer of Russian nationality [but not ethnicity, KS] and Ukrainian origin"). For a more profound treatment of Gogol's disputed identity, cf. Bojanowska (2007) or Ilchuk (2021).

[161] The neutral term for 'state' is *государство*.

[162] Cf. Valieva (2016).

Boutler's Russian-English slang dictionary defines the term *Быдлостан* as a "[b]ackward place, boring and behind the times [, an] area populated by Philistines".[163] The term *быдло* is defined as a "[s]imple-minded and usually strong bloke […] easily manipulated by others".[164] This meaning is derived from the original meaning of *быдло* 'cattle.'

The words and idioms belonging to these styles occur in the middle verses. As noted in section 4.2, these verses express the lyrical I's evaluation of Russian policy towards Ukraine, Russian militarism, and nation-building narratives. These narratives are consistently questioned and exposed as lies. This part includes a number of nominations for and predications about the Russian elites and / or the Russian people. Table 2 summarizes these nominations:

Neutral nominations	**Positive nominations in ironic use**	**Negative nominations**
Москва	*«Третий Рим»*	*Кацапы*
Кремль	*«Китеж-град»*	*свиные рыла*
Русский медведь	*богоносец народ*	*немытая "Раша"*
	Северная держава	*тьма горячих голов-отморозков*
		«Ватник»

Table 3 Nominations for Russia, Russian elites and the Russian people in Byvshev's «На независимость Украины»

The only nominations for Ukraine occurring in the text are *укроп* and the name of Ukraine itself. *Укроп* is an abbreviation of *украинские патриоты* ('Ukrainian patriots').[165] The notion of *Укропатриот* is clearly derogatory, but the abbreviation has been reinterpreted by the Ukrainian side as representing the Ukrainian syntagm *Український опір* ('Ukrainian resistance').[166] *Ватник* (also *телогрейка* 'body warmer') is actually a special kind of warm jacket used in the Soviet army. The association with the Soviet regime is why the term has been reinterpreted as a nomination for Russian nationalists and adherents of Russian

[163] Cf. http://www.russki-mat.net/e/Russian.php [08.08.2020].

[164] Boutler (1997–2020: 10, s.v. *быдло*).

[165] Another of Byvshev's poems is called «Украинским патриотам» ("To Ukrainian patriots"). The poem is also forbidden in the Russian Federation.

[166] Cf. Kuße (2019a: 69). Note that *укроп* also means 'dill,' which is why the abbreviation UKROP is even used by a Ukrainian political party founded in 2014 named «Українське об'єднання патріотів» ("Ukrainian Association of Patriots"). The party uses illustrations of dill as its party badge (ibid., 69f.). According to Kuße (ibid.), the party was founded only in 2015, but according to its Wikipedia entry, the party was registered on 25 September, 2014.

imperialism. The poem also perpetuates the negative stereotypes of the Russian people as submissive (stanza 6, lines 3 & 4), bibulous (stanza 3, line 4), ruthless (stanza 4, lines 2 & 4; stanza 5, line 4), and backwards (stanza 6, lines 1 & 2).

Mat (vulgar, obscene language) represents the "most offensive forms of invectives" («крайние формы словесной брани»[167]), and obscene language is often a marker of aggression.[168] The strongest expressions included in Byvshev's poem occur in stanzas 3 and 6. The respective lines are as follows:

> [Н]емытая 'Раша' […] мечтает по-прежнему в мире иметь всех в рот.
>
> Дружно встать в позу рака – иванушкам самый смак.
> и впрямь без плётки им не прожить никак...

Иметь кого в рот 'force someone to have oral sex' is a vulgarism, obviously used here to refer derogatorily to Russia's striving for world power. *Стать в позу рака* 'stand in the crab's position' depicts a sexually submissive position; the subsequent predication *без плётки им не прожить никак* ('they just can't live without the whip') likewise evokes association with sado-masochistic sexual practices. As a whole, the lines perpetuate the stereotype of Russians as a submissive people[169] in decidedly vulgar language. The sexually connotated *mat* expressions create an emotionally aroused and aggressive tone. Byvshev himself (p.c.) acknowledges that he wrote the poem in a highly emotional state, as a sign of protest against Russia's involvement in the Donbas war.

There is a plethora of references to famous works of Russian literature woven into the text. As noted already in section 4.2, *свиные рыла* 'pig snouts' makes reference to Gogol's comedia "The Government Inspector" («Ревизор»); *немытая «Раша»* is an expression from the poem «Прощай, немытая Россия» ("Farewell, unwashed Russia") from Mikhail Ju. Lermontov, in which the great Russian romanticist laments state surveillance and censorship. *Раша* imitates the Russian pronunciation of the English word *Russia*, which brings to mind the idea of international oligarchy. The expression «ничто не ново под луной» (stanza 6) relates to a famous line from the poem "Solomon's wisdom, or thoughts chosen from the ecclesiastes" («Соломонова мудрость, или мысли, выбранные из экклезиаста») by Nikolay Karamzin, which, in its turn, is a variation of the Bible verse "there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). The term *Богоносец народ* ('people of God') relates to the idea of the Russian people as pioneers of a new Christianity, expressed famously in Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel "The brothers Karamazov" («Братья Карамазовы»). As mentioned already in the previous

[167] Shcherbinina (2015: 118).

[168] Ibid. As noted in section 2, invectives may serve other functions as well. For instance, invectives can function as pain-relievers, attention catchers, expressions of individuality (ibid., 129f.).

[169] A stereotype that has played a central role in the social debate, including the viral poetical discussion following the release of Anastasiya N. Dmitruk's poem «Никогда мы не будем братьями» ("Never will we be brothers"; cf. Stahl 2015; Kußе 2019a: 122-136).

section, the term *Шариковы* (‘Sharikovy’) alludes to the figure of *Шариков* (‘Sharikov’), a cold-blooded mixed-species of man and dog in the novella “Heart of a Dog” («Собачье сердце») by Mikhail Bulgakov. The choice of references is well-motivated, as all the works criticize the omnipotence of the Russian state and / or the submissive attitude of the Russian people. At the same time, the works and their authors belong to the canon of Russian world literature. By referring to these socially critical but celebrated works, Byvshev lays bare the contradiction between the content of the works and the increasingly autocratic raison d’être of the Russian state.

There are also intertextual references to Brodsky’s original of the poem. Alongside the identical title, the first two lines of the last stanza make the most immediate reference to Brodsky’s text by reversing its content.

> С той, что тебя гнобила, Господь ещё спросит строго.
> В дебри, леса, болота скатертью ей дорога.
>
> God will speak severely to the one who put you down.
> May she [Russia] get lost in mazes, forests, swamps.

Taking up the patronizing announcement that Russia will rebuke Ukraine strictly in Brodsky’s poem, Byvshev’s text announces that God will rebuke Russia and punish it for evil it is doing to Ukraine. In the same way, Russia, not Ukraine, is told to ‘hit the road’ (*скатертью ей дорога*, stanza 6).

The poem ends with the words *с уважением, Александр Бывшев*, a respectful farewell formula typically used in letters. Byvshev uses this formula also after other poems and in online posts, but here the formula appears to take up the first words of Brodsky’s poem, which begins like a letter addressed to Charles XII (cf. section 3.3).

To sum up, Byvshev’s poem is characterized by substandard elements, which give the text a strong emotional coloring. A number of lexical elements include a clear violation of norms, that is, a transgression of a symbolic border, and it is in this sense that the poem can be called aggressive. It is not aggressive, however, in the sense that it advocates violence towards a group of people. Like Brodsky, Byvshev includes mixing of lower and higher style, and the use of the different styles represents the attitudes expressed by the lyrical I towards the different referents of the predications, with low style being directed towards Russia, and elaborated style towards Ukraine.

4.4 Argumentative analysis

The *quaestio* underlying Byvshev’s poem can be paraphrased as follows: Is Russia’s foreign policy towards Ukraine justified? Although there are no open markers of argumentation, it is clear that the poem’s answer to this question is negative. A number of arguments are given to support this position, which all boil down to the reproach of lying and hypocrisy towards the Russian authorities. Positively

connotated terms for Russia are used only ironically (e.g., *Третий Рим, богоносец народ, северная держава*). The intensity of the arguments put forward in vernacular and vulgar language intends to shock the addressees (namely, the Russian people) and tear them out of their supposed lethargy. The last line of the first stanza points to what represents the core of Russian resentment towards Ukraine in the view of the lyrical I. The Majdan movement is as threatening for the Russian leadership as a leukoma for a one-eyed (namely the one-eyed giant Cyklops from Greek mythology), as it weakens Russian influence over Ukraine and might lead to uprisings in Russia as well.

The simple syntax of Byvshev's texts includes hardly any omissible elements that could be exploited for argumentative purposes. There are no overt markers of argumentation, and only few markers of modality and evaluation. The particle *ишь* 'well [here denoting patronizing surprise]' in the third line of the first stanza characterizes Russia's stance towards Ukraine's strive for democracy and independence as malevolent. Another example of the modal evaluation of an argument is the last line of stanza 6: *Видно, и впрямь без плётки им не прожить никак*. The modal word *видно* 'obvious, visible', intensified by the adverbs *впрямь* 'really; lit: directly' and *никак* 'in no way', serves as a marker of indisputability in the sense of Atayan.[170]

Given that Byvshev's poem has been forbidden and classified as «уничижительным для русского народа» ("humiliating for the Russian people"), and, more importantly, as «разжигающ[ее] ненависть»[171] ("inciting hatred"), it is important to ask whether the text is really an instance of hate speech. The poem does not include any direct or indirect appeals to violence. Yet it draws a decidedly negative image of groups of people, namely, of Russian authorities and their citizens. The criticism expressed in the poem targets Russian paternalism and imperialism, the glorification of national myths, and the (alleged) particular mindset of the majority of Russian citizens to accept these ways. The language chosen to utter this criticism is harsh and potentially offensive, and it deliberately breaks the rules of public language use. This is done to express deep indignation and to call for reflection. On the other hand, the numerous references to Russian literature in the poem imply appreciation and esteem for Russian culture, and highlight the discrepancy between this praiseworthy aspect of Russian identity and centuries of perceived encroachment of the Russian state on the freedom and autonomy of its own citizens and of neighboring countries.

Importantly, the potential offensiveness of an utterance does not automatically mean that it is an instance of hate speech.[172] For an utterance to classify as hate

[170] Cf. Atayan (2006: 437).

[171] Kljagin (2018: unpag.).

[172] Cf. Linde-Usiekniewicz (2020: 251).

speech, Linde-Usiekniewicz assumes that there must be a "hate component"[173], and proposes

> to trace the hate component to the notion of attack […]. This attack actually takes the form of an implicature […], along the lines of 'something should be done about the targeted individual or targeted group'.[174]

The measures called for may include all kinds of discriminatory practices, ranging from social exclusion to physical annihilation.[175] Therefore, although Byvshev's poem includes offensive language, it is not an instance of hate speech in the sense of Linde-Usiekniewicz adopted here.[176] Rather, by criticizing Russian policy towards Ukraine as militarist (whether one agrees with this criticism or not), one could argue that the poem actually rejects violence.

5. Conclusion

As noted in section 2, the question of whether a given utterance or sequence of utterances is aggressive cannot be answered by focusing merely on the utterance itself. This is because the evaluation of an utterance is always context dependent, with the notion of context including not only the setting of a communicative event (time, place, social background of interactants, etc.), but also the speaker's intention and the hearer's interpretation of the intention as aggressive. Yet the use of swearwords is a typical indicator of aggression on the part of the speaker, and both poems have these characteristics. Given that these designations are used in predications about others, it is not surprising that individuals perceiving themselves as members of the respective groups take offense in these designations. As language use in poetry is highly conscious and intentional, the possibility that this emotional reaction was unintended by the authors of the poems can be excluded. Rather, the poets chose their words carefully to express their views and emotions, and were aware of the fact that they would in all likelihood cause discomfort, offence, and even anger. As noted in section 3, Brodsky explicitly acknowledged the daring content of his poem.

In addition to the opposed contents, the poems also differ in terms of emotional overtones. Brodsky's poem is a sarcastic "billing;" the lyrical I is reminiscent of an abandoned lover trying to pass on part of his own pain, hurt pride and anger to the abandoner. In doing so, the lyrical I disrespects the other one's right to autonomy and self-determination. At the same time, the poem adopts the alleged view of the majority of Russians, which manifests itself in the form *мы* 'we' as opposed to *вы* 'you.' It is hard to describe the poem as a misstep or outlier that cannot not

[173] Ibid., 252.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Ibid.

be integrated into Brodsky's oeuvre. The poem is not only consistent with the view that Ukraine did not constitute a state structure distinct from Russia expressed by Brodsky on several occasions;[177] it also contains stylistic features which are typical of Brodsky's poetry, such as the mixing of styles, including archaisms and colloquialism, and complex syntax. The poem thus fits into his oeuvre in terms of content and form.

Although Demchikov's claim that there are just as many invectives and reproaches towards Russia as there are towards Ukraine could not be corroborated, it is true that there are argumentative fractions in the text in which the reproachful and condescending tone towards Ukraine is suspended and makes way to other, mournful, bitter, and even slightly self-ironic nuances (cf. sections 3.2 and 3.3).[178]

As noted in the introduction, the analyses given here are far from exhaustive. Particularly with respect to Brodsky's original, the following desideratum expressed by Demchikov is therefore still valid:

> Думаю, когда-нибудь это хаотичное, растрепанное и уязвимое для критики, но великолепное, мощное и страстное стихотворение будет издано отдельной книгой – с подробным комментарием, в котором будут разобраны все переклички с другими стихами и поэмами Бродского.[179]
>
> I think that someday this chaotic, disheveled and vulnerable to criticism, but magnificent, powerful and passionate poem will be published as a separate book – with a detailed commentary, which will sort out all the roll calls with other verses and poems by Brodsky.

Byvshev's poem is a mirror image of Brodsky's with respect to content, and it imitates its structure with respect to the mixing of styles. It surpasses Brodsky's original regarding the use of non-standard language in that it does not only hint at vulgar language but uses it openly. The non-standard language serves to express despise for the Russian political leadership and harsh criticism of the mass of the Russian population, whom he perceives as unreflecting and servile. However, there is decidedly no call to violent acts against anyone. The language indicates anger, an emotion associated with aggression as a possible physical reaction. This anger, similarly to the anger expressed by Brodsky, has been caused by feelings of disappointment, powerlessness and sadness. The sadness is caused by sympathy for Ukraine, which is expressed in the personal address with *ты* 'you.' Byvshev is aware that he expresses a minority view, which is reflected in the use of the first person singular.

Both texts are argumentative in so far as they advocate a certain thesis and put forward arguments for it. The fact that the poems feature almost no open markers of argumentation somewhat conceals their argumentative nature. As shown in the re-

[177] Cf. Bertelsen (2015: 273f.).

[178] Cf. also Demchikov (2015: unpag.).

[179] Ibid.

spective sections above, the texts still underpin their position by using highly expressive lexis, hinting at already existing stereotypes, and by using less explicit markers of argumentation, such as markers suggesting the indisputability of a viewpoint.

Both poets use substandard lexical elements to mark their dissenting views. In other words, linguistic deviation from the norm iconically hints at deviation from mainstream opinion. The use of non-standard language, including not only lexical but also grammatical deviation, to indicate social deviation of various kinds is a typical feature of contemporary Russian poetry.[180]

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[180] Cf. e.g., Bierich (2016); Gavrilyuk (2019).

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