

The Literary Cycle as Supertext: Apollon Grigor'ev's „Dva soneta” (1845)

REINHARD IBLER

(Marburg an der Lahn)

In the centre of interest of twentieth-century philology stood the *text*, or, strictly speaking, the text and its components (i.e. its phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic structure, and so on), later on also the context of textual production and reception, for example author and reader as well as the ‘reality’ represented in the text. In course of time philologists came to realize that the single text could not be the final point of their concern, for a text cannot exist without other texts. Every text is to a certain degree the product of other texts, and nearly every text takes part in the constitution of new texts. Concepts within literary and cultural studies such as intertextuality, transtextuality, hypertextuality, and others are based on this comprehension of the nature and functions of the text (by the way, not only the literary text). These concepts more or less proceed on the assumption that every text contains traces of other, former texts, either in the form of allusions, quotations, and the like, or through generic, thematic, or other references. Besides these relations on a mainly diachronic level, there are also numerous types of a ‘synchronous’ interaction of texts: just think of newspapers, journals, digests, anthologies and other kinds of text collections. The essential point is that the single texts within such mediums do not co-exist independently of each other, but get in contact and thus ‘communicate’ with one another. Hence follows that such forms of textual interaction provide additional semiotic possibilities, thereby influencing the semantic, ideological or even axiological quality of the texts: just remember, for example, objective newspaper articles that are followed by critical commentaries.

In literature, where specific publication forms such as editions of works, anthologies, collections and others automatically produce various kinds of direct textual contacts, this problem has hitherto been systematically studied in the field of *cyclization*. The literary *cycle* such as the lyric or the narrative cycle is that form or even genre of literature where the described effects of direct textual 'neighbourhood' are functionalised poetically and aesthetically¹. Unlike anthologies or mere collections (for example collections of poems) cycles by uniting autonomous texts effect the emergence of a new entity that is not only the formal co-existence of various autonomous texts, but an autonomous, i.e. an independent and self-sufficient literary text itself. With other words, the single texts, that is the single poems, stories or plays, forming a cycle, have always a kind of double nature: they are at the same time autonomous works with their own semantics and cultural sense and – on the other hand – dependent components of the cyclic 'super-text'. By the way, this process of forming cyclic 'super-texts' by uniting single literary works need not end on this level, for cycles on their part may get in direct interaction with other cycles thus forming so to speak 'super-super-textual' structures, as we know them, for example, from many symbolist poem books that are subdivided into various parts, departments, cycles, sub-cycles and so on, but forming one semantic and esthetical entity.

In my opinion, the phenomenon of the literary cycle could be of broader interest, because it provides a deeper insight into facts and processes being of a general philological importance, the problem of textual interaction existing in nearly all spheres of culture. In order to demonstrate some of the main features of this phenomenon I want to give you a concrete example, Apollon Grigor'ev's short sonnet cycle *Dva soneta*, published in 1845. I think this little work can illustrate our subject very well since with its two texts, i.e. its two poems, it has the minimum size a cycle can have.

Apollon Aleksandrovič Grigor'ev (1822 – 1864), who is above all known as one of the leading Russian critics of his time (the founder of 'organic criticism'), belongs to the group of postromantic poets such as Afanasij Fet, Apollon Majkov or Nikolaj Ščerbina, who in the time of dominating realism continued the tradition of Puškinian and Lermontovian poetry thus forming a direct connecting link between Russian romanticism and symbolism. It was the great symbolist poet Aleksandr Blok, who highly esteemed the poetry of Apollon Grigor'ev and regarded him as

1 For further details see among others Darvin 1983, Fomenko 1984, Ibler 1988, Fieguth 1998 (chapter "Zur Theorie des Gedichtzyklus", p. 25–60), Ibler 2000.

one of Russia's best poets in the 19th century. One of the most important achievements of postromantic poetry was in the field of the literary, especially the lyric cycle. The cyclization of poems in this time became a common device of high poetic and aesthetic relevance, and was later on taken over by the symbolists who raised the lyric cycle to their dominant literary genre.

Apollon Grigor'ev wrote several lyric cycles², *Dva soneta* being one of his first. Nearly all of these cycles are characterized by two factors: 1) the vindication of truly romantic values such as individualism, strong emotions, striving for the metaphysical world; 2) the direct connection with real events (first of all the poet's unhappy love affairs). Both factors are also present in the cycle *Dva soneta*, which was written under the impression of Grigor'ev's unrequited love to Antonina Korš, the daughter of a well-known Moscow family of intellectuals, who had shortly before married another man³.

Whereas the titles of other cycles Grigor'ev wrote comprise informations being more or less directly connected with the works' subjects – for example *Starye pesni, starye skazki* (1846), *Improvizacii stranstvujuščego romantika* (1860), or his most famous cycle *Bor'ba* (1857) – *Dva soneta* is a rather formal title referring to the genre of the cycle's two texts. This kind of entitling and the fact that the two sonnets have no titles of their own can be understood as a certain form of understatement and, moreover, as an instruction not to read the poems as mere reactions to concrete events in the poet's life, but, first of all, as *literary*, i.e. artistic, fictional texts. And the numbering of the two sonnets is a clear signal that each of the texts has its own, unremovable place within the cycle. The order of texts can, generally speaking, be a very important feature of a cycle's semantics.

In a short interpretation of *Dva soneta* the Russian literary scholar Larisa Ljapina asserts that the two texts extremely resemble each other in form (“предельно схожи по форме”; Ljapina 1993: 31). In my opinion, this is true only to a certain degree. Both poems, without doubt, have the form of classical sonnets⁴ (Grigor'ev being one of the few masters of this genre in Russian literature before symbolism), and, moreover, they correspond metrically in using iambic pentameter. But there are also clear formal differences. So, the order of rhymes in the quatrains of the first sonnet, where we have cross rhyme (*abab*), are different from those in the second sonnet with its envelope rhyme (*abba*). Besides, in the first son-

2 See my articles Ibler 2001a, 2001b, 2002.

3 There are hitherto two books on the life and work of Apollon Grigor'ev: Nosov 1990 and Dowler 1995.

4 See the texts of the two sonnets at the end of this paper.

net masculine and feminine rhymes are changing, whereas the second sonnet has only feminine rhymes. Therefore it would be more correct to say that comparing the form of the two poems we can find out both analogies and differences. Similar relations between the first and the second sonnet can also be stated in the field of semantics.

The first sonnet is the monologue of a male persona or speaker (a lyric "I") addressing himself to an obviously not present woman whom he idealizes and whom he once hoped to be his ally in a romantic partnership ("Душа моя в тебе искала жрицы // Святых страданий, воли роковой"). But this hope did not come true ("То был лишь сон..."), and the speaker had to accept this in his opinion unjust lot ("С насмешливой улыбкой // Отмечен в книге жизни новый лист // Еще одной печальной ошибкой..."). Feeling not at fault the speaker is convinced that he acted on behalf of a higher, metaphysical authority, but has been unfairly treated ("Я был жрецом, я был пророком бога, // И, жертва сам, страдал я слишком много"). It is easy to recognize that the pathetic conjuration of romantic ideals in this poem is nothing else but the poetic mask for the expression of lover's grief. The persona's feelings are in this little poem running through a process from the idealization of the beloved to blame, disappointment, and finally defiance. It is an autonomous text that gives us the impression of a disappointed lover's changing emotions. Let us now switch over to the second sonnet and ask, in which way the two texts are related to each other.

The communicative structure here is, at first glance, similar to that of the first sonnet: a man speaks to a woman, this conversation taking place only in the man's – the speaker's – spirit. He emphatically asks her to think of him, when her own dreams and ideals will be disappointed ("О, помяни, когда тебя обманет // Доверье снам и призракам крылатым [...]"). In this moment, he wants to be like her elder brother, and he is sure that she will absolve him from any guilt, i.e. she will understand that he has been wronged by her in the past ("[...] пусть он старшим братом // Перед тобой, оправданный, восстанет"; "[...] Он верит в оправдание"). As he is able to foresee her future, he knows that she will also suffer from disillusionment and frustration, and he is convinced that she will return to him ("Что вспомнишь ты пророка в час печали").

It is easy to recognize that there are several motifs corresponding in the two sonnets (see for example: "С насмешливой улыбкой" in sonnet 1, and "Змея насмешки злобно виться станет!.." in sonnet 2; "Ты не сестра душе моей больной" in sonnet 1, and "пусть он старшим братом // Перед тобой" in sonnet 2; "я был пророком бога" in sonnet 1, and "Что вспомнишь ты пророка в час

печали” in sonnet 2). These thematic parallels are a clear signal that the two sonnets, although being autonomous texts, belong together. It is obviously the same love affair to which they refer, though we may find certain shifts in the perspectives and attitudes of the central persona, first of all a shift from self-pity, dominating in the first sonnet, toward self-confidence. That there is a certain change in the personality of the unhappy lover finds its formal expression also in the transition from “I” in sonnet 1 to “he” in sonnet 2, i.e. a change from the first to the third person. Thus we can suppose that the relation between the two poems is determined by a certain dynamics, what is also evident from the fact that the prevailing temporal orientation in the first text is a retrospective view of the past, whereas in the second text a future perspective comes to the fore. Generally speaking, the two poems present two different situations in an unhappy romantic lover’s thinking and feeling, one being characterized by sadness and despair, the other by defiance and hope. “A dramatic situation emerges, a presentiment that the romantic union unrealised in the past will be realized at some future time in the realm of memory and feeling” (Sloane 1998: 46). This correlation of the two poems within the cycle can easily be recognized as a complementary confrontation of two of the main principles by which romantic ideology is identified: melancholy and revolt. By confronting these two principles the cycle gets also a metapoetic and an aesthetic dimension.

I do not want to go into further details, because it is clear what this little work is aiming at. It is part of Apollon Grigor’ev’s general intent of defending romanticism at the age of realism, and this intent is reflected by the structural relations of the two sonnets. First of all, I wanted to demonstrate with my little excursion into the field of the literary cycle that two or more texts being placed side by side do not co-exist independently of each other, but enter into an often very complex process of mutual interaction. Although I know that the literary cycle is a very special phenomenon, I am convinced that the comprehension of its rules and semantic possibilities could bring us closer to a general ‘grammar’ of super-textual structures and processes which on its part could be a challenge for future philology.

APPENDIX:

Апполон Александровч Григорьев

ДВА СОНЕТА⁵

1

Привет тебе, последний луч денницы, *A*

Дитя зари, – привет прощальный мой! *B*

Чиста, как свет, легка, как божьи птицы, *A*

Ты не сестра душе моей больной. *b*

Душа моя в тебе искала жрицы *A*

Святых страданий, воли роковой, *B*

И в чудных грезах гордостью царицы *A*

Твой детский лик сиял передо мной. *b*

То был лишь сон... С насмешливой улыбкой *C*

Отмечен в книге жизни новый лист *D*

Еще одной печальною ошибкой... *C*

Но я, дитя, перед тобою чист! *D*

Я был жрецом, я был пророком бога, *E*

И, жертва сам, страдал я слишком много. *E*

2

О, помяни, когда тебя обманет *A*

Доверье снам и призракам крылатым *B*

И по устам, невольной грустью сжатым, *B*

5 See Grigor'ev 1959: 113–114.

Змея насмешки злобно витясь станет!..	A
О, пусть тогда душа твоя помянет	A
Того, чьи речи буйством и развратом	B
Тебе звучали, пусть он старшим братом	B
Перед тобой, оправданный, восстанет.	A
О, помяни... Он верит в оправданье,	C
Ему дано в твоём грядущем видеть,	D
И знает он, что ты поймешь страданье,	C
Что будешь ты, как он же, ненавидеть,	D
Хоть небеса к любви тебя создали, –	E
Что вспомнишь ты пророка в час печали.	E

1 декабря 1845

Literature

- Dowler, W., 1995, *An Unnecessary Man. The Life of Apollon Grigor'ev*, Toronto – Buffalo – London.
- Fieguth, R., 1998, *Verzweigungen. Zyklische und assoziative Kompositionsformen bei Adam Mickiewicz (1798 – 1855)*, Fribourg.
- Ibler R., 1988, *Textsemiotische Aspekte der Zyklisierung in der Lyrik. Dargestellt am Beispiel ausgewählter Gedichtzyklen Karel Tomans*, Neuried.
- Ibler R. (Hrsg.), 2000, *Zyklusdichtung in den slavischen Literaturen. Beiträge zur Internationalen Konferenz, Magdeburg, 18. – 20. März 1997*, Frankfurt am Main [and others].
- Ibler R., 2001a, *Zum Verhältnis von lyrischen und epischen Komponenten im Gedichtzyklus der russischen Romantik (am Beispiel von Apollon Grigor'evs „Starye pesni, starye skazki“)*. – *The Romantic Epic Poem* (Obdobja 19), Ljubljana [in print].

- Ibler R., 2001b, „*Esli b čista ty byla...*“. *Apollon Grigor'ev und sein Zyklus „Elegii“*. – *Festschrift für Rolf Fieguth zum 60. Geburtstag*, [in print].
- Ibler R., 2002, *Zu einigen Aspekten des Bedeutungsaufbaus von Apollon Grigor'evs Sonettenzyklus „Titanii“*. – *Festschrift für Gerhard Giesemann zum 65. Geburtstag*, [in print].
- Sloane D.A., 1988, *Aleksandr Blok and the Dynamics of the Lyric Cycle*, Columbus, Ohio.
- Дарвин М.Н., 1983, *Проблема цикла в изучении лирики*, Кемерово.
- Фоменко И.В., 1984, *О поэтике лирического цикла*, Калинин.
- Григорьев А.А., 1959, *Избранные произведения*, Ленинград.
- Ляпина Л.Е., 1993, *Русские литературные циклы (1840 – 1860 гг.)*, С.-Петербург.
- Носов С., 1990, *Аполлон Григорьев. Судьба и творчество*, Москва.

Литературный цикл как супертекст: «Два сонета» Аполлона Григорьева (1845)

Взаимодействие текстов с другими текстами является не только диахроническим феноменом (интертекстуальность, транстекстуальность и т.д.). Как показывают многообразные формы корреляции текстов находящихся в непосредственном «соседстве» (напр. в газетах, журналах, сборниках, антологиях и т.д.), существует и синхронический размер этой проблемы, который был до сих пор систематически исследован только относительно литературного феномена *циклизации*. Литературный цикл (напр. лирический цикл, драматический цикл, цикл рассказов и т.п.) является «супертекстом», разные тексты (стихотворения, драмы, рассказы и т.д.) которого имеют двойной характер: они автономные тексты и одновременно подчиненные циклическому супертексту компоненты. В докладе обсуждается несколько структурных и функциональных вопросов проблемы циклизации на примере маленького лирического цикла *Два сонета* русского поэта Аполлон Григорьев (1822–1864).