

# Marina Cvetaeva's "Poety".

## An analysis

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**I**N In the first poem of the cycle "Poety" (1923), Cvetaeva's redefinition of the poetic role implies a perturbation of traditional cosmological models and a polemic *perversion* of the axes of cognitive perception. The rejection of Kantian and Platonic *Logos*, subverted by the demiurgic power of poetic *logos*, points to the ontological interdependence of textual (*word*) and extratextual (*world*) reality, whose ordering mechanisms rely on the dynamics of creative production.

The communion of textual (*stich*) and extratextual (*stichija*) *logos* entails also the radical rewriting of the Kantian cognitive frame of phenomenal being, *i.e.* the *a priori* of time and space, polemically substituted with systematic transcendence of categorial borders.

Cvetaeva's *chaotic* refoundation of both poetic and philosophical *kosmos* has its semantic nucleus in the poet-comet, whose path marks the intersection of horizontal (time and space) and vertical (being) axes and the establishment of a new, *voluntaristic* cosmology. In Cvetaeva's rewriting of the poet, *disjunction* is functional to *re-union*, as the rejection of analytical accounts of reality leads to the re-establishment of the Presocratic wholeness, the *apeiron* of the sea-logos. Through the mediation of the poet, reality ceases to be a juxtaposition of discrete entities, isolated within the borders of their spatio-temporal environment, and becomes a fluid *continuum* in which, as in the sea of poetry, every wave fuses with the next and *survives* in it.

Поэт – издалека заводит речь.  
Поэта – далеко заводит речь.

Планетами, приметами... окольных  
Притч рытвинами... Между *да* и *нет*  
Он, даже размахнувшись с колокольни  
Крюк выморочит... Ибо путь комет –

Поэтов путь. Развешенные звенья  
Причинности – вот связь его! Кверх лбом –

Отчаяйтесь! Поэтовы затьменья  
Не предугаданы календарем.

Он тот, кто смешивает карты,  
Обманывает вес и счет,  
Он тот, кто спрашивает с парты,  
Кто Канта наголову бьет,

Кто в каменном гробу Бастилий  
Как дерево в своей красе...  
Тот чьи следы – всегда простыли,  
Тот поезд, на который все  
Опаздывают...

– ибо путь комет –

Поэтов путь: жжа, а не согревая,  
Рвя, а не возвращивая – взрыв и взлом, –  
Твоя стезя, гривастая кривая,  
Не предугадана календарем!<sup>1</sup>

A first glimpse of the cosmological (im)balances shaped by the poetic *logos* is contained in the first two lines of the poem, isolated from the remaining stanzas by means of their structural and iconic organization:

Поэт – издалека заводит речь.  
Поэта – далеко заводит речь.

As the dominant mechanism of intratextual cohesion is represented by the motif of the *path* (*put' kometov – poetov put'*), the poem's intro marks the ideal borders - *izdaleka-daleko, poet-poeta* –, the starting and the ending point of the poetic journey. Structural harmony, imperceptibly violated by two morphological shifts, relies on the intersection of the horizontal axis of time and space with the vertical line of being: the polysemic couple *izdaleka-daleko* condenses both time and space, while pointing to their deictic indeterminacy, whereas *poet* and *reč* account for the ontological stratum of this transitive exchange.

As space and time coexist in an a-deictic junction, the creative genesis (*izdaleka zavodit reč'*) emerges as

<sup>1</sup> M. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija v dvuch tomach*, Moskva 1988, I, p. 219.

both a diachronic and a diatopic act, defying spatial and temporal classifications. The semantic borders of the adverb fluctuate to include between the sources of the poetic *logos* both past and future experience and an ideal otherworld, a dimension separated from that of empirical experience.

References to a horizontal divide between *empirical* (the *others*) and *poetic* (*izdaleka*) reality, to an ideal *doemirie*, are made explicit in the third poem of the cycle, “Čto že mne delat’ slepcu i posynku” (1923):

Что же мне делать, слепцу и сынку  
В мире, где каждый и отч и зряч,  
Где по анафемам, как по насыпям,  
Страсти! – Где насморком  
Назван – плач!<sup>2</sup>

The hierarchical reversal enacted by ontological debasement may disclose an overt reference to the Platonic myth of the cave:

Socrates: And now, let me give you a parable to show how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened. Imagine human beings living in an underground cave with an opening upwards towards the light, which filters into the depth of the cave. These human beings have been here since birth and their legs and necks have been chained so that they cannot move. They can only see what is directly in front of them since they are prevented by the chains from turning their heads to either side. At a distance above and behind them is a raised path. And if you look closely you will see a low wall built along the path, like the screen used by marionette players to conceal themselves from the audience while they show their puppets.

Glaucou: I see

Socrates: And do you see men passing behind the wall carrying all sorts of objects, such as figures of animals, humans made of wood, stone and various materials which they are holding above the wall?

Glaucou: You have shown me a strange image, and these are strange prisoners.

Socrates: They are similar to us. For, initially, how could they see anything but their own shadows, or the shadows of each other, which the fire projects on the wall of the cave in front of them? [...] And wouldn't they see only the shadows of the objects that are being carried by the men?<sup>3</sup>

The substitution of the “true forms” (*pláč, strasti*) by shadows (*nasmark, anafemy*) generates a sense of displacement which points to the terrestrial existence of the poet as to an exile. An explicit formulation of poetry as a condition of spiritual emigration from an ineffable *izdaleka* is found in “Est’ v mire lišnie, dobavočnye” (1923) and “Poet i vremja” (1932):

Есть в мире лишние, добавочные,  
Не вписанные в окоем.  
(Не числящимся в ваших справочниках,  
Им свалочная яма – дом)<sup>4</sup>

Но и России мало. Всякий поэт по существу эмигрант, даже в России. Эмигрант царства небесного и земного рая природы. На поэте – на всех людях искусства – но на поэте больше всего – особая печать неуютта, по которой даже в его собственном доме – узнаешь поэта. Эмигрант из бессмертья в время, невозвращенец в свое неба<sup>5</sup>.

The poet's alienation from the world<sup>6</sup> implies, of necessity, a binary opposition between terrestrial *byt*, the domesticity of the *cave*, and a non-terrestrial *home*, the “upper world of the things in themselves”, the ideal “seventh heaven” transfiguring the warmth of *byt* into the perfection of *bytie*<sup>7</sup>. This displaced home synthesizing self-assertion and ascension is the diatopic *izdaleka*, the distant cradle of the poetic *logos*, whose separation in space justifies the description of poetry as a process of translation, a *transferring* (заводит) of words between worlds: “Поэзия – уже перевод, с родного языка на чужой – будь то французский, или немецкий – неважно. Для поэта нет родного языка. Писать стихи и значит перелагать”<sup>8</sup>.

In the process of symbolic translation between worlds-texts, the poet, after experiencing the light of the upper world (*izdaleka*, the symbolic source-text, Cvetaeva's “*sam jazyk*”)<sup>9</sup>, cannot accept the shadows projected in the cave, an empirical fragmentation of the wholeness of the *idea*: “Почвенность, национальность, народность, расовость, классовость,

<sup>4</sup> M. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., I, p. 221.

<sup>5</sup> Ivi, p. 364.

<sup>6</sup> See also Gumilev's “Ja i vy”: “Да, я знаю, я вам не пара, / Я пришел из другой страны” (N. Gumilev, *Sobranie sočinenij v trech tomach*, Moskva 1991, I, p. 213) and Majakovskij's *Misterija buff* (1920–'21): “Кто я? Я не из класса, не из нации, не из племени. Я видел тридцатый, сороковой век”, V.V. Majakovskij, *Sobranie sočinenij v dvenadcati tomach*, Moskva 1978, IX, p. 142. Note that, as in Cvetaeva's poem, the poet's spiritual orphanhood (“что же мне делать... сынку”) coincides with his *otherworldliness* (“я видел тридцатый, сороковой век”). The image will be brought to its extreme ideological consequences in *Poema konca* with the metaphor of the poet-jew: “Поэты – жида”, M. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., I, p. 412.

<sup>7</sup> See also Cvetaeva's “Provoda” cycle (1923): “И домой: / В неземной – / Да мой”, Ivi, p. 217.

<sup>8</sup> M. Cvetaeva, *Sobranie sočinenij v semi tomach*, Moskva 1994, VII, p. 66.

<sup>9</sup> See Cvetaeva's sixth letter to Rilke, *Ibidem*.

<sup>2</sup> Ivi, p. 219.

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, translated by P. Shorey, Idem, *The Collected Dialogues including the Letters*, edited by H. Cairns and E. Hamilton, Princeton 1961, pp. 1611–12 [my emphasis].

самая современность, которую творят – все это только поверхность, первый или седьмой слой кожи, из которой поэт только и делает, что лезет”<sup>10</sup>.

In a world made of appearances (*spectres*) – the multitude of *target-texts* generated by the physical declination of the ideal language – his acquired *sight* is marked as *blindness*, thus generating the reversed dialectics *slepec-zrjac*<sup>11</sup>:

Socrates: Indeed, imagine what it would be like for him to come suddenly out of the sun and to return to his old place in the cave. Would he not be certain to have his eyes full of darkness?

Glaucon: Most assuredly.

Socrates: And while his eyes were filled with darkness and his sight still weak, if there were a contest in which he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never been out of the cave, would he not be ridiculous? *Men would say of him that his ascent and descent had destroyed his eyesight*<sup>12</sup>.

The poet's *izdaleka* is the Presocratic whole defying categorial distinctions, it is *being* as opposed to entities (*shadows*), time as opposed to instants, *language* as opposed to languages, “тот свет, / Наш [...] не без-, а все-язычен”<sup>13</sup>. It is “*sam jazyk*”, the primordial, synesthetical bundle of language condensing sight, acoustics and odors in a trans-sensorial union. For the poet to reconquer that union, de-finitions have to become open and borders between worlds-texts have to be transcended.

Thus, the poet is both a mediator and an iconoclast, a *recomposer* of time and space and a *decomposer* of temporal and spatial divisions<sup>14</sup>, reconnected, like Orpheus' pieces, in the embrace of Sapho's hands. The hand of the poet stretches over distances, shuttles between temporal and spatial *beyonds* (*izdaleka-daleko*) to grab the essence, the *embryo*, of language and lead it

(*zavodit*), like a child. The poet is *movement*: ascension and descension in space, from the hyperuranic *izdaleka* to the cave, regression and progression in time.

In this respect, a temporal reading of *izdaleka* has its distanced subtext in Cvetaeva's correspondence with Rilke (1926):

Райнер Мария Рильке! Смею ли я так назвать Вас? Ведь вы – воплощенная поэзия, должны знать, что уже само Ваше имя – стихотворение. Райнер Мария – это звучит по-церковному – по-детски – по-рыцарски. Ваше имя не рифмуется с современностью, – оно – из прошлого или с будущего – *издалека*<sup>15</sup>.

The identification of the genesis of the poetic word with a diachronic point on the temporal axis (the past or future *izdaleka*) transforms the creative act into the simultaneous recollection of synchronic and diachronic fragments, an acmeist “eternal return” of the words of the past renewed and transfigured into the present<sup>16</sup>. Within this symbolic exchange condensing different temporal levels, the synchrony of the poet-recollector and the diachrony of the word coexist in a transtemporal continuum which allows for functional shifts.

In this respect, the dynamics of Cvetaeva's word closely resembles the circular mechanism governing the courses and recourses of Mandel'shtamian *logos*: “Поэзия – плуг, взрывающий время так, что глубинные слои времени, его чернозем, оказываются сверху”<sup>17</sup>.

The words of the past (the deeper layers of the soil, the diachronic *izdaleka*), by resurfacing in the present (“*sverchu*”, the synchronic layer of the *poet*) through the mediation of the poet-recollector, defy the linearity of Christian time as a dry succession of separated instants. Temporal syncretism substitutes for literary evolutionism, the Darwinistic illusion of a smooth, ineluctable progression of the word towards the ephemerality of *sej-čas*. The limitations of aesthetic mechanism, erasing the a-temporal (*panchronic*) *izdaleka* from the cognitive frame of creation and imprisoning poetic

<sup>10</sup> “Poet i vremja”. M. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., II, p. 364.

<sup>11</sup> In “Поэма воздуха” (1927), transcendence of terrestrial sight signals the beginning of the poet-flyer's ascension: “В полную невидимость / Даже не тени. [...] Расцедив сетчаткою / Мир на сей и твой – Больше не запачкаю / Ока – красатой”, Ivi, p. 440.

<sup>12</sup> Plato, *The Republic. The Collected Dialogues*, op. cit., pp. 1611–12 [my emphasis].

<sup>13</sup> “Novogodnee” (1927). M. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., I, p. 261.

<sup>14</sup> For the oxymoronic nature of the prototypal poet, Orpheus, see Vj. Ivanov's “Orfej” (1912): “Но кто же для эллинов был Орфей? Пророк тех обоих [Dyonisus and Apollus], и больший пророка: их ипостась на земле, двуликий, таинственный воплотитель обоих [...] Орфей – начало строя в хаосе; заклинатель хаоса и его освободитель в строе”, V.V. Ivanov, *Sobranie sočinenij v trech tomach*, Bruxelles 1973, II, pp. 66–67.

<sup>15</sup> M. Cvetaeva, *Sobranie*, op. cit., VII, p. 55 [author's emphasis].

<sup>16</sup> This specifically Mandel'shtamian approach to the poetic material is confirmed by the latent subtext of these lines, a passage from “Pis'mo o russkoj poezii” (1922): “Итак, не одного поэта без роду и племени, все пришли издалека и идут далеко”, O. Mandel'stam, *Stichotvorenija. Proza*, Moskva 2001, p. 527 [my emphasis].

<sup>17</sup> Ivi, p. 429.

movement into the synchrony of *sej-čas*, have been outlined by Mandel'stam in "O prirode slova" (1921):

Для литературы эволюционная теория особенно опасна, а теория прогресса прямо-таки убийственна. Если послушать историков литературы, стоящих на точке зрения эволюционизма, то получается, что писатели только и думают, как бы расчистить дорогу идущим впереди себя, а вовсе не о том, как выполнить свое жизненное дело [...] Теория прогресса в литературе – самый грубый, самый отвратительный вид школьного невежества. Литературные формы сменяются, одни формы уступают место другим. Но каждая смена, каждое приобретение сопровождается утратой, потерей. Никакого лучше, никакого прогресса в литературе быть не может, хотя бы просто потому, что нет никакой литературной машины и нет старта, куда нужно скорее других доскакать<sup>18</sup>.

The poet's regression in time – his transtemporal journey towards the embryonic *izdaleka* of language – represents a radical rejection of evolutionary accounts of literature, of the disappearance of the past in the triumphant march towards a multitude of ever-changing (and ever-dying) *sej-čas*. Renewed and reborn in the embrace of the poet, the past, as in Bergson's "duration", is preserved within the flow of time and coexists simultaneously with the present:

For our duration is not merely one instant replacing another [...] Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances. And as the past grows without ceasing, so also there is no limit to its preservation. In reality, the past is preserved by itself, automatically. In its entirety, probably, it follows us at every instant; all that we have felt, thought and willed from our earliest infancy is there, leaning over the present which is about to join it, pressing against the portals of consciousness that would fain leave it outside<sup>19</sup>.

Bergsonian "duration" imbues Cvetaeva's rewriting of her subtexts, as the reintegration of literary (Hamlet), historical (Marina Mnisek) and biblical (Mary Magdalene) sources always implies a polyphonic dialogue between the present and the past which results in the dynamic intersection of different temporal levels and different *dramatis personae*. The Hamlet of the present, "Гамлетом – перетянутым – натуго"<sup>20</sup>, in reenacting through the *fictional* instrumental case the Hamlet of the past, is penetrated by its original counterpart, which

grows, like a wave, to embrace him. Similarly, the first verse of the "Magdalena" cycle, "Между нами десять заповедей", marks the intersection of two, apparently separate, temporal levels – Magdalene's and Cvetaeva's – and their subsequent fusion within the cycle. Thus, in re-emerging through the *word*, the past ceases to be a discrete unit within the temporal spectrum: as it undergoes synchronization through the mediation of the poet-recollector, it "gnaws" into the present while embracing it to form a homogeneous flow.<sup>21</sup>

Cvetaeva's model is clearly *panchronic*, as the penetrating force of her *logos* transcends both past and future constraints by renewing and perpetuating itself in the flow of time. Through the multiple temporal stratifications of the word, the univocity of *so-vremennost'* is definitely erased and transfigured into a *vse-vremennost'*: "Всякая современность в настоящем – сосуществование времен, концы и начала, живой узел – который только разрубить"<sup>22</sup>.

Transcendence of temporal borders through the *intertemporal* mediation of the poetic word informs also the second adverb, *daleko*; the future resurfacing of the poet through the word-vector (as opposed to the recollection of the first line) implies the existence of Mandel'stam's "distant addressee", the diachronic interlocutor of "O sobesednike" (1913): "Поэзия как целое всегда направляется к более или менее далекому, неизвестному адресату, в существовании которого поэт не может сомневаться, не усомнившись в себе"<sup>23</sup>.

On the other hand, the *moving* force of the word and its ability for diachronic projections through the mediation of a reader-interlocutor have been investigated by Cvetaeva in "Poet i vremja" (1932):

Я идейно и жизненно могу отстаивать, отстою,  
ушедшее – там за краем земли оставшееся –

<sup>21</sup> An explicit rejection of linear time as a dry succession of separated instants is contained in "Chvala vremeni" and "Minuta", both written a few months after "Poety": "Ибо мимо родилась / времени! Воотще и всу е/ Ратуешь! Калиф на час: / Время! Я тебя миную", "Chvala vremeni" (1923), M. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., I, p. 226; "О, как я рвусь тот мир оставить, / Где маятники души рвут / Где вечностью моею правит / Разминовение минут", "Minuta" (1923), Ivi, p. 238.

<sup>22</sup> "Poet i vremja" (1932). M. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., II, p. 360 [my emphasis].

<sup>23</sup> O. Mandel'stam, *Stichotvorenia*, op. cit., p. 443.

<sup>18</sup> Ivi, p. 445.

<sup>19</sup> H. Bergson, *The Creative Evolution*, New York 1911, p. 407. Cvetaeva may have got acquainted with Bergson's theories through Vološin, who saw the French philosopher lecturing in Paris in 1906; for this last aspect, see also I. Ševelenko, *Literaturnyj put' Mariny Cvetaevoj*, Moskva 2004, p. 317.

<sup>20</sup> "Ofelija – Gamletu" (1923). M. Cvetaeva, *Sobranie*, op. cit., II, p. 123.

отстаиваю, а стихи сами без моего ведома и воли выносят меня на передовые линии. [...] Стихи наши дети. Наши дети старше нас, потому что им дольше, дальше жить. Старше нас из будущего. Поэтому нам иногда и чужды<sup>24</sup>.

This complex dialectics between poet and *logos*, their mutual transitivity through time and space, is condensed in the double morpho-semantic shift *poet-poeta/reč-reč*. Morpho-semantic inversion points to the interconnection – the *communion* – between the two axes of the creative act and to their functional interchangeability: both emerge as either creators or *creata*. This reversal of fixed roles, which relies on the *panchrony* of the word – a child older than its parents –, discloses a hint to the mysterious dynamics of the writing process. In fact, as Cvetaeva observes in “Iskusstvo pri svete sovesti” (1932):

Робость художника перед вещью. Он забывает что пишет *не он*. Слово мне Вячеслава Иванова (Москва, 1920 г., убеждал меня писать роман) – “Только начните! Уже с третьей страницы вы убедитесь, что никакой свободы нет”, то есть: окажусь во власти вещей, то есть во власти демона, то есть только покорной слугой [...] Недаром каждый из нас по окончании: “Как это у меня чудно вышло!” – некогда “Как это я чудно сделал!”. Не чудно вышло, а чудом – вышло, всегда чудом вышло, всегда благодать, даже если ее посылает не бог<sup>25</sup>.

The paradoxical *panchrony* of the *logos* is embodied in its trans-temporal ambivalence: it is both a child, the product of a creative act, and “older than its parents”, a potential, ever-existing demiurge. In synthesizing different temporal levels and annihilating consequentiality, the word emerges as the *archè* which preexists (*izdaleka*), embraces and *survives* (*daleko*) phenomenal being. The word is the *embryo* eradicated from

the distant uterus of *izdaleka* and led by the hand (*zavodit*) into the world-text, a child who grows to take its parents gently by the hand and lead them through the infinite succession of worlds-texts to come. *Za ruku*: like Puškin with the young Cvetaeva down the mountains of Crimea<sup>26</sup>, like Cvetaeva with the dead Rilke, through the river Styx, towards that third entity transcending life and death. In the incessant conjoinments of hands (*zavodit*), bridging the gaps between time and space, nothing can disappear or be swallowed by the voracious “machine of literature”: every poet, every word resurrects and transcends distances, carried in the gentle hands of other poets, other words.

Нам остается только имя:  
Чудесный звук, на долгий срок,  
Прими же ладоням моим  
Пересыпаемый песок<sup>27</sup>.

The functional transition *poet-poeta* – from agent to object, from possessor to *possessed* (*pišet, ne on*) – cannot be disjuncted from the *ontological* implications symbolized by linguistic flecion: in modifying its form through declination (*poet-poeta*), the *poet's* being is marked as transient, phenomenal – *mortal* – as opposed to the immutability of *reč*, which undergoes a functional metamorphosis without altering its essence. A corollary to its *panchrony*, the immortality of the poetic *logos* contaminates its mortal counterpart – the poet – through the dynamics of their symbolic exchange. Thus, in the flow of hands, the eternal cycle of the sea-*logos*<sup>28</sup>, the poet survives – *surfaces* – through the word, which, like a wave, *trans-ports* (*zavodit*) him beyond the temporal borders of his empirical existence. The metaphoric *translation*, marking the (eternal) return of

<sup>24</sup> M. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., II, p. 366 [my emphasis]. For an analogous conception of the written word as of a creature independent from its demiurge, see also Plato's *Phaedrus*: “Socrates: I cannot help feeling, Phaedrus, that writing is unfortunately like painting; for the creations of the painter have the attitude of life, and yet if you ask them a question they preserve a solemn silence. And the same may be said of speeches. You would imagine that they had intelligence, but if you want to know anything and put a question to one of them, the speaker always gives one unvarying answer. And when they have been once written down they are tumbled about anywhere among those who may or may not understand them, and know not to whom they should reply, to whom not: and, if they are maltreated or abused, they have no parent to protect them; and they cannot protect or defend themselves”, translated by R. Hackforth. *The Collected Dialogues*, op. cit., p. 1514.

<sup>25</sup> M. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., II, p. 401.

<sup>26</sup> See “Vstreča s Puškinym (1913): “Мы [Cvetaeva and Puškin] рассмеялись бы и побежали / За руку вниз по горе”, M. Cvetaeva, *Moj Puškin*, Sankt Peterburg 2001, p. 119.

<sup>27</sup> O. Mandel'stam, “Ne verja voskresenija čudu” (1916). *Stichotvorenija*, op. cit., p. 64. Ironically enough, Mandel'stam, in denying the resurrection of the body, re-asserts that of the word.

<sup>28</sup> Equivalences between the word and natural elements clearly refer to the communion between poetic *logos* (*stich*) and pre-Socratic *Logos* (*stichija*); the latter is made explicit in “Iskusstvo pri svete sovesti” (1932): “В чем же отличие художественного произведения от произведения природы, поэмы от дерева? Ни в чем. Какими путями труда и чуда, но оно есть. Есмь!”, M. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., II, p. 375; “Vskryla žili: neostanovimo” (1934) re-states the aquatic essence of Cvetaeva's *logos*: “Невозвратно, неостановимо, / Невозвратно хлещет стих”, Ivi, p. 299.

the poet in the flow of the word, is made explicit in Cvetaeva's correspondence with Rilke:

Смерть поэта – вообще незаконна. Насильственная смерть поэта – чудовищна. Пушкин (собирательное) будет умирать столько раз, сколько его будут любить. В каждом любящем – заново. И в каждом любящем – вечно.

А сегодня мне хочется, чтобы Рильке говорил – через меня. Это, в просторечи, называется перевод. (Насколько у немцев лучше – Nachdichten! Идя по следу поэта, заново прокладывать всю дорогу, которую прокладывал он. Ибо, пусть – nach (вслед), но – dichten! – то что всегда заново. Nachdichten – заново прокладывать дорогу по мгновенно зарастающим следам.) Но есть у перевода еще другое значение. Перевести не только на (русский язык, например) но и через (реку). Я Рильке перевожу на русскую речь, как он когда-нибудь переведет меня на тот свет. За реку – через реку<sup>29</sup>.

The identification of poetry with the sea, whose cyclicity is opposed to the ever-changing Eraclitean river, is found in “Poety s istoriej i poety bez istoriej” (1932):

Когда идешь к морю и к лирику, идешь не за невозвратностью течения, а за возвратностью волн; не за неповторимостью мгновенья и не за непреходящим, а именно за повторяемостью морских и лирических непривиденностей, за неизменностью смен и перемен, за неминуемостью собственного изумления ими<sup>30</sup>.

In the Homeric sea of poetry, the οἶνολα ποντος stained with the blood of Orpheus, the place of the poet is on the seashore: writing poetry is waiting for the wave that, coming *izdaleka*, will bring the mourning head and lyre, being docilely submerged by that wave and then re-emerge, rejuvenated, *reborn* in the word:

Родиться (цель –  
Множиться!) – сесть на мель.  
[...]  
Отбыл... Орфей... Арфист...  
Отмель – наш нотный лист!<sup>31</sup>

In the liquid realm of poetry, *mel'* (shallows) becomes *mel* (chalk): the liminal space between the marine *izdaleka* and the solid – terrestrial – world of the others is Cvetaeva's *grifel'naja doska*, the slate tablet imbued with the salt water of world culture. As opposed

to the acmeist *yearning* for culture, Mandel'stam's resurrectional (yet monodirectional) manifesto “Я снова хочу Катулла, Овидии, Пушкина”<sup>32</sup>, Cvetaeva abandons the *verticality* of remembrance and descends in the baptismal font of poetry; fused with the *logos*, she acquires the primordial unity of Venus and becomes both an instrument and an object of resurrection, the translator and the text.

The assertion of the permanence of both the poet and the poetic word within a non-linear spatio-temporal model is reinforced by the parallel with the latent subtext of these lines, Deržavin's “Reka vremen”

Река времен в своем стремленьи  
Уносит все дела людей,  
И топит в пропасти забвенья  
Народы царства и царей<sup>33</sup>.

As opposed to the irretrievability of Deržavin's river of *linear* time, Cvetaeva's *panchronic* sea-logos is an instrument of permanence in transience; its symbolic flow does not erase (*u-nosit*) beings, but invests them with *transhistorical* (*za-vodit*) permanence. As in Rilke's fifth sonnet, quoted by Cvetaeva in their correspondence, the poet – Orpheus – resurrects *in* and *through* the word in the diachronic *daleko*:

... Нам незачем искать  
других имен. Когда раздастся пенья  
раз навсегда мы будем знать – Орфей.  
(именно это – Орфей поющего и умирающего в каждом поэте – я имела в виду на предыдущей странице)<sup>34</sup>.

On the other hand, as an instrument of potential separation, taking the poet *daleko*, language emerges as a *diabolic* force that διαβαλλει, “throws across” and brings fracture within unity. Poetic language threatens the unity of signifier and signified and searches for deviations within fixed meanings. Like the devil, poetic language is a *traducer*: it *violates* words, forcing them into new forms and meanings, and brings far way (*transducere*) from traditional truths. Those who follow it are doomed to walk a tortuous path, the curved line of the comet.

<sup>29</sup> Ivi, p. 350.

<sup>30</sup> M. Cvetaeva, *Sobranie*, op. cit., IV, p. 406.

<sup>31</sup> “S morja” (1926), Ivi, p. 112.

<sup>32</sup> O. Mandel'stam, *Stichotvorenija*, op. cit., p. 409.

<sup>33</sup> G.R. Deržavin, *Stichotvorenija*, Moskva 1957, p. 114.

<sup>34</sup> M. Cvetaeva, *Sobranie*, op. cit., VII, p. 60.

Thus, the poem's polysemic intro marks the emergence of Cvetaeva's *logos* as an entity defying traditional definitions of time and space. Christian linear time is polemically substituted by Bergsonian "duration", whose constant flow erases binary oppositions between phenomenal (the *transient* poet) and noumenal being (the *permanent* word), while re-unifying them within an active dialectic relationship.

Similarly, subversion of traditional cosmology through the destabilizing power of the poetic *logos* imbues all the stanzas of the poem. As it will emerge from my analysis, the semantic pattern unifying the six stanzas relies upon the interrelation between vertical movements, marking the subversion of fixed patterns, and the deconstruction of the Kantian *a priori*, the horizontal axis of time and space. The Kantian cognitive frame of being, annihilated through the rejection of causal links and of homogeneous space, is substituted by a Bergsonian (voluntaristic) spatio-temporal model. The force marking the intersection of vertical and horizontal axes is represented by the comet, whose rebellious path is an extreme expression of the Bergsonian *élan vital*. This apparently disharmonic model, dominated by disjunctions, generates its inner balances.

The second stanza starts with a brisk, upwards movement, signaled by the instrumental *planetami*, which marks the passage from the marine horizontality (*prostornost'*) of *daleko* to "sidereal" verticality. The establishment of a vertical axis informs the marginal lines of the stanza, as the initial *planetami* creates a thematic link with *komet*, whereas the noun *kolokol'nja* functions as a "terrestrial" indicator of the ascensional orientation of the stanza.

Refusal of causal links dominates the first two lines, as the juxtaposition of *planetami* and *primetami* and the reiterated use of ellipses defy logical consequentiality, while pointing to the existence of arbitrary, voluntaristic links between phenomena.

As a corollary to temporal non linearity, spatial fragmentation is introduced by the preposition *meždu*, shifting the emphasis from arrival (*da i net*) to *deviation*, from the static ineluctability of linear paths to the tortuous mutability of the inbetween, the *perdition* of the *diabolic* word. Defiance of traditional space and time culminates in the subversion of physical laws,

condensed in the anti-Galilean "Он, даже размахнувшись с колокольни/крюк выморочит"; in the voluntaristic reshaping of time and space, *deviated* in the act of falling, the irreversible geometry of the Kantian *a priori*<sup>35</sup>, a pre-existing condition of our perceptions, is subverted by the poet's *impetus of life*.

In the anti-Galilean rebellion of the poet-weight, time is reconceptualized through spatial images: the *inclined* axis is a response to the *straightforward* progression of traditional time, annihilating the past as it advances towards its end<sup>36</sup>.

The inescapability of the descensional path (for Mandel'stam a symbol of the being-for-death) is violated by Cvetaeva's *logos*, whose realm is not the univocal linearity of *da i net*, the beginning and the end of Christian time, but the tortuous *vse-vremennost'* of the in-between, the endless possibilities of the panchronic word. Led far away by the diabolic word, the poet *zabluzhdaetsja* and chooses the *perdition* of polisemy over the laws of salvation.

The reversal of Mandel'stamian spatiality is made even more radical by the semantic equivalence between falling and *birth* as it is established in the Sybill cycle:

К груди моей,  
Младенец, льни:  
Рожденье – паденье в дни.  
С заоблачных нигдешних скал,  
Младенец мой,  
Как низко пал!  
Ты духом был, ты прахом стал<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Compare Bergson's polemic account of Kantian fixed spatiality as opposed to Cvetaeva's flexible frame: "With Kant, space is given as a ready-made form of our perceptive quality – a veritable *deus ex-machina*, of which we see neither how it arises, nor why it is what it is rather than anything else", H. Bergson, *The Creative Evolution*, op. cit., p. 205.

<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, besides rewriting Kantian cognitive theory, the joyful *bezzakonnost'* of Cvetaeva's poet defies the tragic irretrievability of Mandel'stam's falling bodies: "Я чувствую непобедимый страх / В присутствии таинственных высот", "Pešechod" (1912), O. Mandel'stam, *Stichotvorenija*, op. cit., p. 35; "Паденье – неизменный спутник страха, / И самый страх есть чувство пустоты. / Кто камни нам бросает с высоты – / И камень отрицает иго праха?", "Paden'e neizmennyj sputnik stracha" (1912), Ivi, p. 130.

<sup>37</sup> "Sivilla – mladencu" (1923), M. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., I, p. 191. Nonetheless, in "Bez zova, bes slova" (1921), the death of Blok is described as a falling from a roof; on the other hand, death is dialectically overcome by a hint to rebirth: "Без зова, без слова, – / Как кровельщик падает с крыш./А может быть, снова/Пришел, – в колыбели лежишь?", Ivi, p. 72.

Thus, not only does the deviation of falling subvert physical laws: it reverts both symbolic spatial balances and temporal cyclicality. In prolonging his path, the poet refuses to precipitate into *this life*, *i.e.* to re-descend into the blindness of the cave.

The spatio-temporal voluntarism of the first lines becomes embodied in the comet, whose appearance in the poetic space deconstructs causal and scriptorial links, as the enjambment *ibo put' komet//poetov put'* erases the natural consequentality of the causal preposition at both the logical and the iconic level<sup>38</sup>.

The structural and iconic organization of the second

stanza is mirrored in the fifth: intratextual cohesion is achieved through the transitional clause *ibo put' komet*, occupying the same slot, and the reiterated use of ellipses; as in the second stanza, the spatial axis is dominated by the passage from the *chthonian* horizontality of *v kamennom grobu* to the verticality of *kak derevo v svoej krase*. The ascensional, resurrectional movement is followed by a refusal of causality, the *non-sequitur* of organic life (*derevo*) within inorganic death (*kamennyj grob*).

The tree's ascensional qualities disclose a Rilkean subtext. In fact, as Cvetaeva writes in her second letter to the German poet (12<sup>th</sup> May, 1926)<sup>39</sup>:

Твой "Орфей". Первая строчка:

И дерево себя перерастало. . .

Вот она, великая лепота (великолепие). И как я это знаю! Дерево выше самого себя, дерево перерастает себя, – потому такое высокое. Из тех, о которых Бог – к счастью – не заботится (сами о себе заботятся!) и которые растут прямо в небо, в семидесятое (у нас, русских, их – семь!).

The analogies between the image of the tree and the poet, prompted by Cvetaeva's self identification with Rilke's sonnet, become incarnate in the Sybill's body, a *tree* burning with the word:

Сибилла: выбыла, сивилла: зев

Доли и гибели! Древо меж дев.

Державным деревом в лесу нагом –

Сначала деревом шумел огонь<sup>40</sup>.

Like the tree, which mediates between aerial and chthonian space, "between the radiant solar enlightenment of Apollus and the somber subterranean knowledge of Dionisus"<sup>41</sup>, the poet is a *medium* between past and future (*izdaleka* and *daleko*), hypo and hyperuranium, the death of the cave and the life of the seventh heaven<sup>42</sup>.

two comets: "Да совершит путем борьбы и испытанья,/Цель очищения и цель самосознания".

<sup>39</sup> М. Cvetaeva, *Sobranie*, op. cit., VI, p. 59.

<sup>40</sup> М. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., I, p. 189.

<sup>41</sup> О.Р. Hasty, *Tsvetaeva's Orphic Journeys in the Worlds of the Word*, Evanston 1996, p. 148.

<sup>42</sup> In "Iskusstvo pri svete sovesti" (1932), on the other hand, the Rilkean subtext blends with Bergsonian "creative evolution", as nature and culture (poetic creation) are fused in an ontological continuum: "В чем же отличие художественного произведения от произведения природы, поэмы от дерева? Ни в чем. Какими путями труда и чуда, но оно есть. Есмь!", М. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., II, p. 375.

<sup>38</sup> Besides subverting linear time and space, the comet is itself a diachronic product, as different subtexts intersect in this motif. Puškin's "Portrait" (1828) may represent one of the sources of Cvetaeva's rebellious star: "С своей пылающей душой, / С своими бурными страстями, / О жены Севера, меж вами / Она является порой / И мимо всех условий света / Стремится до утраты сил, / Как беззаконная комета / В кругу расчисленных светил", Puškin, *Sobranie sočinenij v četyrech tomach*, Moskva-Leningrad 1936, II, p. 509 [my emphasis]. It is worth noting that, in Cvetaeva's appropriation of the Puškinian *bezzakonnost'*, defiance of conventions (*mimo vsech uslovij sveta*) is stripped of its romantic aura (see *s svoimi burnymi strastjami*) and transfigured into overt subversion of physical laws; the rewriting of the Kantian *a priori* dilates the semantic and physical borders of *svet* while investing them with the cosmological allure of *vseleennost'*. In this respect, a subtext coherent with Cvetaeva's cosmological urgency is Apollon Grigor'ev's "Kometa" (1843): "Когда средь сонма звезд, размеренно и стройно, / Как звуков перелив, одна вослед другой, / Определенный путь сверкающих спокойно, / Комета полетит неправильной чертой, / Недосозданная, вся полная раздора, / Невзнузданных стихий неистового спора, / Горя еще сама и на пути своем / Грозит иным звездам стремленьем и огнем, / Что нужды ей тогда до общего смущения, / До разрушения гармонии?.. Она / Из лона отчего, из родника творенья / В созданья стройный круг борьбою послана, / Да совершит путем борьбы и испытанья, / Цель очищения и цель самосознания", А. Grigor'ev, *Stichotvoreniya. Poemy. Dramy*, Sankt Peterburg 2001, p. 54. The morpho-semantic texture of the poem encloses the main semantic clusters of Cvetaeva's "Poety": spatial displacement is clearly expressed in "kometa poletit nepravil'noj čertoj" which synthesizes both the images of deviation at the beginning of the poem (*okol'nych pritč, krjuk vymoročičit*) and the "poetics of crookedness" at the end of the last stanza (*tvoja stezja, grivastaja, krivaja*). Disharmonic tensions, which in Cvetaeva's poem represent a cohesive lexico-semantic element, are made explicit in the spatial and moral friction between the *straightforward* axis of the fixed stars, "opredelennyj put' sverkajuščich spokojno", and the *inclined* axis represented by "nepravil'noj čertoj-nedosozdannajanevznuzdannyh"; the destructive potential of the comet, expressed in the lines "Горя еще сама и на пути своем / Грозит иным звездам стремленьем и огнем" is clearly echoed in Cvetaeva's "žža, a ne sogrevaja, / rvja, a ne vzraščivaja – vzryv i vzlom", whose acoustic texture relies on the same *z/gr* alliteration. The cathartic implications of the comet's path, made explicit by the ascensional orientation of *vzryv* and *vzlom* and by the prosody of fire in the context of Cvetaeva's *ouvre* (see below), are clearly stated also in the final lines of Grigor'ev's poem, the purifying *cupio dissolvi* marking the diachronic intersection of the

Temporal deconstruction, expressed by the non-consequentiality of life (the tree) within death (the prison), leads to spatial fragmentation and to the rarefied space of disappearance: *tot, č'j sledy vseгда prostyli / tot poezd na kotoryj vse / opazdyvajut. . .*, with the last line implying a mutual disharmony, an absence of temporal and spatial coordination.

The poet's disappearance, far from being a concession either to Deržavin's "Reka vremen" or the Lermontovian "Я б хотел забыться и заснуть"<sup>43</sup> is a *moving forward*<sup>44</sup>, a necessary corollary to the panchrony of the word. In anticipating the dynamics of linear movement, the poet is the consequence preceding the cause, a phenomenon, whose genesis – whose traces – cannot be *tracked*, for it does not belong to the realm of logic:

Поэт есть ответ [. . .] Ответ не на удар, а на колебание воздуха – вещи еще не двинувшейся. Ответ на до-удар. И не ответ, а до-ответ. Всегда на явление, никогда на вопрос. Само явление и есть вопрос [. . .] Раньше, чем было (было-то всегда, только до времени еще не дошло, – так тот берег еще не дошел до парома). Оттого рука поэта так часто и повисает в воздухе, что упор – во времени – еще не существует (nicht vorhanden)<sup>45</sup>.

*Dis-harmony, dis-connection* become manifest in the third stanza. The line *Razvejjannye zven'ja / pričinnosti – vot svjaz' ego!*, in re-establishing a paradoxical harmony, marks the abandoning of terrestrial burdens and the beginning of the poet's ascension. The oxymoronic quality of these lines, although peculiar to Cvetaeva, discloses a hint to Bergson's antideterminism<sup>46</sup>.

Interestingly enough, Mandel'stam's account of Bergson's works focuses on the same shift from external causality to inner unity:

Бергсон рассматривает явления не в порядке их подчинения закону временной последовательности, а как бы в порядке их пространственной протяженности. Его интересует исключительно внутренняя связь явлений. Эту связь он освобождает от времени и рассматривает отдельно. Таким образом, связанные между собой явления образуют как бы веер, створки которого можно развернуть во времени, но в то же время они поддаются умопостижаемому свертыванию. Уподобление объединенных во времени явлений такому вееру подчеркивает только их внутреннюю связь и вместо проблемы причинности [. . .] выдвигает проблему связи<sup>47</sup>.

The erasure of external links between phenomena (*razvejjannye zven'ja*) allows for the emergence of their inner cohesion (*svjaz' ego*), while emancipating them from the constraints of linear progression. Within a theoretical frame dominated by independent entities, the ontological quality of single events prevails upon their function within a logical chain: the past does not serve as the *conditio sine qua non* for the irretrievable march of the present, but acquires an intrinsic, absolute value that leads to its preservation in the transtemporal journeys of the poet. As Mandel'stam observes in his analysis of Bergson:

ment it falls under the glance of the intellect, whose eyes are ever turned to the rear [. . .] if our action be one that involves the whole of our person and is truly ours, it could not have been foreseen, even though its antecedents explain it when once it has been accomplished. And though it be the realizing of an intention, it differs, as a present and new reality, from the intention, which can never aim at anything but recommencing or rearranging the past. Mechanism and finalism are therefore, here, only external views of our conduct. They extract its intellectuality. But our conduct slips between them and extends much further. Once again, this does not mean that free action is capricious, unreasonable action. To behave according to caprice is to oscillate mechanically between two or more ready-made alternatives and at length to settle on one of them; it is no real maturing of an internal state, no real evolution; it is merely – however paradoxical the assertion may seem – bending the will to imitate the mechanism of the intellect. A conduct that is truly our own, on the contrary, is that of a will which does not try to counterfeit intellect, and which, remaining itself – that is to say, evolving – ripens gradually into acts which the intellect will be able to resolve indefinitely into intelligible elements without ever reaching its goal", H. Bergson, *The Creative Evolution*, op. cit., p. 358. On the other hand, the philosophic orientation of these lines is multifaceted, as they may disclose a polemic reference to Kantian intelligence, defined by Bergson as "preminently a faculty of

<sup>43</sup> See "Vychožu odin ja na dorogu" (1841). M. Lermontov, *Sobranie sočinenij v 4-ch tomach*, Moskva 1961, I, p. 543.

<sup>44</sup> See "Poet i vremja" (1932): "запоздать в искусстве нельзя, само искусство, уже само есть *продвижение*", M. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., II, p. 360 [my emphasis]. On the other hand, the ephemerality of the poet's traces may point to his non-earthly nature: in "Ty prochodiš na zapad solnca" (1916) the disembodied footsteps of Christ-Blok are suddenly covered by a snowstorm "Ты проходишь на запад солнца / Ты увидишь вечерний свет. / Ты проходишь на запад солнца / И метель заметает след", Ivi, p. 66. See also "Epos i lirika sovremennoj Rossii" in M. Cvetaeva, *Sobranie*, op. cit., IV, p. 376: "Этими своими быстрыми ногами Маяковский ушагал далеко за нашу современность и где-то за каким-то поворотом долго еще нас будет ждать".

<sup>45</sup> M. Cvetaeva, "Iskusstvo pri svete sovesti" (1932), Idem, *Sočinejja*, op. cit., II, p. 395.

<sup>46</sup> "As soon as we go out of the encasings in which radical mechanism and radical finalism confine our thought, reality appears as a ceaseless upspringing of something new, which has no sooner arisen to make the present than it has already fallen back into the past; at this exact mo-

Наука, построенная на принципе связи, а не причинности, избавляет нас от дурной бесконечности эволюционной теории, не говоря уже о его вульгарном прихвостне – теории прогресса. Движение бесконечной цепи явлений без начала и конца есть именно дурная бесконечность, ничего не говорящая уму, имеющему единства и связи<sup>48</sup>.

The creative freedom entailed in the Bergsonian model shapes Cvetaeva's voluntaristic rewriting of cosmic balances: her transtemporal oscillations between the realms of *izdaleka* and *daleko* do represent a direct manifestation of the anti-Darwinistic rejection of causal links. Within a model devoided of the *immobility* of causality, i.e. the "oscillation between two or more ready-made choices" ("между да и нет"), *deviation* (perdition in the word) is a free choice, the celebration of intuition over intelligence<sup>49</sup>.

On the other hand, images of disjunction (*razvejannye zven'ja*) within a stellar context contrast with one of Mandel'shtam's early post-symbolist poems, "Dušu ot vnešnich uslovij" (1911):

Душу от внешних условий  
Освободить я умею:  
Пенье – кипение крови –  
Слышу – и быстро хмелею.

И вещества, мне родного,  
Где-то на грани томленья,  
В цепь сочетаются снова  
Первоначальные звенья.

Там, в беспристрастном эфире,  
Взвешены сущности наши –  
Брошены звездные гири  
На задрожавшие чаши;

И, в ликованьи предела,  
Есть упоение жизни:

Воспоминание тела  
О неизменной отчизне<sup>50</sup>.

As opposed to Mandel'shtam's harmonic *anabasis* to the native star, Cvetaeva's chaotic ascension, prompted by a voluntaristic violation of fixed balances ("the laws of destiny"), and not by natural completion of the latter ("his appointed time"), does not coincide with the reestablishing of a primordial harmony, but with its polemic destabilization. Yet disjunction is functional to reunion, as the abolishing of causal links allows for the re-emergence of a temporal continuum (the *pervonačalnye zven'ja* of panchrony) and for the recreation of the Presocratic whole, the sea-logs of poetry.

On the other hand, Cvetaeva's rereading of stellar imagery does not erase the Platonic subtext behind the equivalence between souls and stars; in particular, the latter clarifies the vertical orientation of the poem while confirming the identification of the lower world with the blindness of the cave.

After the discarding of terrestrial burdens – the links of causality –, the poem's ascensional tensions, introduced in the second stanza by *planetami*, are reinforced by an imperious upwards movement (*kverch lbom!*), which culminates in the refusal of spatio-temporal predictability (*poetovy zatmen'ja ne predugadany kalendarem*). The vertical deixis of *kverch* points to the spatial divide between mundane and poetic dimension and, within the extensive dialectics of *high* and *low*, relocates the poet on the non-terrestrial level of verticality, while anticipating the metaphysical geography of "Novogodnee" (1927) and "Poema vozducha" (1927)<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>49</sup> Similarly, the refusal of Darwinism that informs Mandel'shtam's late production draws on the principles of Bergsonian voluntarism; for this aspect, see also M. Gasparov, "Vos'mistišija Mandel'shtama", *Smert' i bessmert'e poeta*, Moskva 2001, pp. 47–54. In defying the ineluctability of a fixed path, the polemic regression celebrated in "Lamarck" (1932), although entailing a descensional movement, is equivalent, in its theoretical motivations, to Cvetaeva's stellar deviations: "На подвижной лестнице Ламарка / Я займу последнюю ступень. // К кольчещам спущусь и к усоногим, / Прошуршав средь ящериц и змей, / По упругим сходням, по излогах / Сокращусь, исчезну, как Протей. // Роговую мантию надену, / От горячей крови откажусь, Образу присоскамаи и в пену / Океана завитком вошьюсь", O. E. Mandel'shtam, *Stichotvorenija*, op. cit., p. 183.

<sup>50</sup> Ivi, p. 125. As Ronen (*An Approach to Mandel'shtam*, Jerusalem 1983, p. 144) points out, the subtext of this poem is Plato's *Timaeus*, with its notion of the equivalence between souls and stars ("Animas nostras partes esse caeli" – Plin, *Nat. Hist.* II.XXVI): "into the cup in which he had previously mingled the soul of the universe he [the creator] poured the remains of the elements and mingled them in much the same manner. . . And having made it he divided the whole mixture into souls equal in number to the stars, and assigned each soul to a star; and having there placed them as in a chariot, he showed them the nature of the universe, and declared to them the laws of destiny [...] He who lived well during his appointed time was to return and dwell in his native star", Ibidem. Compare Cvetaeva's organhood in "Poety 2": "что же мне делать слепцу и посылку/в мире где каждый и отч и зряч". The network of latent correspondences between the two poems seems to confirm the Platonic subtext behind the "Poety" cycle (see above).

<sup>51</sup> "Как Колумб здороваюсь / С новой землей – / Воздухом, Ходячие / Истины забудь!", M. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., I, p. 441.

While “Развешенные звенья/Причинности – вот связь его! Кверху лбом” sets the spatial transition from terrestrial to ethereal geography, the impossible forecasting of the eclipsis (*otčajates'!*), besides disclosing a hint to Puškin (“*solnce russkoj poezii*”)<sup>52</sup>, marks the passage from the dry causality of linear time (condensed in the calendar), to voluntarism as the moving force of the poetic wor(l)d. A contradictory synthesis is thus achieved between the hyperuranic aura of the star and its rebellious – transient – path. As unpredictability (*nepredugadannost'*) defines the ontological borders of becoming and separates them from the immutability of the thing-in-itself, the perfection of the *fixed* stars, Kant’s “Best Welt”, is polemically invested with the traits of phenomenal being. In establishing a substantial equivalence between herself and a manifestation of becoming, Cvetaeva embraces the flow of being, the *reka-reč*, while refusing Nietzschean *remedies* against the “terror” of becoming. Mandel’štam’s stone, the metaphysical refuge against the erosion of *void*, is substituted with ethereal space, the realm of the poet-flyer who is not afraid to precipitate, for he can pervert space.

Superhomistic acceptance of void dominates the sixth stanza, whose marginal lines create a distanced ring with stanza III. The inner disjunction of the two couples of verbs, *žža, a ne sogryvaja/ ruja, a ne vzraščivaja – vzryv i vzlom!* marks the monodirectionality of destruction, whereas the absence of harmonic complementarity, signaled by the presence of the disjunction *a*, points to the definitive reversal of Kantian “Best Welt”. The dynamics of the poet-comet, whose destructive movement is not followed by reconstruction, closely resemble those of Cvetaeva’s horse, a symbol of poetry, which, like the comet, is *grivastyj*:

Пожирающий огонь – мой конь!  
Он копытами не бьет, не ржет.  
Где мой конь дохнул – родник не бьет  
Где мой конь махнул – трава не растет.

Ох, огонь мой конь – несытый едок!

Ох, огонь на нем – несытый едок!  
С красной гривой свились волоса...  
Огневая полоса – в небеса!<sup>53</sup>.

As Cvetaeva hints in her sixth letter to Rilke, the complex relation between the horse and its rider is analogous to the functional interchangeability between the poet and the word<sup>54</sup> and leads to the creation of a third, synthetic entity: “Твой всадник! Ибо всадник не тот, кто сидит на лошади, всадник – оба вместе, новый образ, нечто не бывшее раньше, не всадник и конь: всадник-конь и конь-всадник: ВСАДНИК”<sup>55</sup>.

Similarly, the comet, in leading the others in their path, becomes a symbol of both the poet and language and of their transtemporal shifts as either text or translator. Like language, the comet is a deviating (*diabolic*) force; like the poet, it is an ambivalent entity, bringing both union, as it leads to the Messiah, and disunion, as it threatens the straightforward axis of the other stars. And like the horse’s flame (*v nebesa!*), the comet’s path, a condensation of the *terror* of becoming, is manifestly vertical, as it is revealed by the morphological texture of *vzryv* and *vzlom* (*vz-*).

The ascensional implications of the two nouns clearly hint to the cathartical and *creative* value of destruction as opposed to the *sterile* fixity of Kantian stars. The impetuous erosion of fixed borders is a prerogative of the true poet, whose words annihilate (*vzryvaet*) pre-constructed categories (the shadows of the cave, time and space), while substituting them for true forms: “Национальность – это от- и заключенность. Орфей *vzryvaet* национальность или настолько широко раздвигает ее пределы, что все (и бывшие, и сущие) заключаются в нее”<sup>56</sup>.

The oxymoronic equivalence between deflagration – the erasure of borders – and creation, – the dilation of all borders to form an all-embracing whole – is reinforced by the phonetic similarities between *vzraščivaja* and *vzryv*<sup>57</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> “Požirajuščij ogon’ – moj kon’!” (1918). M. Cvetaeva, *Sobranie*, op. cit., I, p. 116 [my emphasis].

<sup>54</sup> See also O.P. Hasty, *Tsvetaeva’s Orphic Journeys*, op. cit., p. 154.

<sup>55</sup> M. Cvetaeva, *Sobranie*, op. cit., VII, p. 60.

<sup>56</sup> From Cvetaeva’s sixth letter to Rilke, Ivi, p. 66.

<sup>57</sup> It is interesting to observe that in his 1915 article on André Chenier, Mandel’štam quotes “explosion” (*vzryv*) as a defining trait of Romantic poetics: “А романтическая поэтика предполагает взрыв, explosion, неожиданность, ищет эффекта, непредусмотренной

<sup>52</sup> See also Mandel’štam’s “Kogda v teploj noči zamiraet” (1918) on the death of Puškin: “Это солнце ночное хоронит / Возбужденная играми чернь, / Возвращаясь с полночного пира / Под глухие удары копыт”, O. Mandel’štam, *Stichotvorenija*, op. cit., p. 72.

The *constructive* potential of explosion is part of Cvetaeva's self-consciousness as a poet: in her aesthetics of natural elements, fire clearly emerges as a hypostasis of the *word*, whose ambivalent power, both destructive and resurrectional, points to the ethical necessity of the poet's self-immolation.

In "Moim sticham, napisannym tak rano" (1913), the deflagrating potential of the word is clearly stated in the first stanza: "Моим стихам, написанным так рано, / Что и не знала я, что я – поэт, / Сорвавшимся, как брызги из фонтана, / Как искры из ракет"<sup>58</sup>; in "Čto drugim ne nužno – nesite mne" (1918), a celebration of the creative and purifying power of destruction<sup>59</sup>, the ascensional – cathartical – orientation is made explicit by the reiteration of *vysoko*: "Высоко горю – и горю дотла! / И да будет вам ночь – светла! / Ледяной костер – огневой фонтан! / Высоко несу свой высокий стан, / Высоко несу свой высокий сан / – Собеседницы и Наследницы!"<sup>60</sup>; in "Sivilla", the word-fire burns the Sybill's body: "Сивилла: выжжена, сивилла: ствол. / Все птицы вымерли, но бог вошел [...] Сивилла: выбыла, сивилла: зев / Доли и гибели – Древо меж дев. / Державным деревом в лесу нагом – сначала деревом шумел огонь"<sup>61</sup>.

On the other hand, as the poet's incandescent initiation *in the word* is counterbalanced by *ascension* (the verticality of *vysoko gorju* and of the Sybill-tree), martyrdom contains the germs of resurrection: deflagration is death into enlightened life, as opposed to the birth

into unenlightened death of descension.

The temporal disharmony of these lines – the *non sequitur* of destruction – is coupled by the spatial disharmony of the third line, *tvoja stezja, grivastaja krivaja*, an extreme formulation of the poetics of deviation. An ideal counterpart of Christ-Blok's *firm* path – *nerušima tvoja stezja*<sup>62</sup> – Cvetaeva's *diabolic* non linearity will then contaminate Mandel'stam's sardonic self-portrait<sup>63</sup>:

Это какая улица?  
Улица Мандельштама.  
Что за фамилия чертова!  
Как ее ни вывертывай  
Криво звучит, а не прямо.  
Мало в нем было линейного  
Нрава он не было лилейного,  
И потому это улица  
Или, верней, это яма<sup>64</sup>  
Так и зовется по имени  
Этого Мандельштама.

Interestingly enough, the refusal of *straightness* informs also Mandel'stam's self-definition in "Grifel'naja oda" (1923)<sup>65</sup>:

Кто я? Не каменьщик *прямой*,  
Не кровельщик, не корабельщик;  
Двурушник я, с двойной душой.  
Я ночи друг, я дня застрельщик.

A functional equivalent of Mandel'stam's *negative* definition of the poet, Cvetaeva's fourth, assertive stanza is linked to the poem's intro through the semantic equivalence between "poet" and the periphrasis "on tot, kto".

The semantics of *displacement* dominate the four lines at both the spatial (*smešivaet*) and the ontological level (*obmanyvaet*) and reenact the symbolic deviation produced by duplication<sup>66</sup> in Mandel'stam's oda.

акустики и никогда не знает, во что ей самой обходится песня", "Zametki o Šen'e", O. Mandel'stam, *Stichotvorenija*, op. cit., p. 490. Interestingly enough, all of these characteristics can be easily referred to Cvetaeva's poetry, which was clearly influenced by the Romantic literary legacy. The romantic aura of this word has been pointed out also by T. Venclova ("Almost a Hundred Years Later: Toward a Comparison of Karolina Pavlova and Marina Cvetaeva", *Essays on Karolina Pavlova*, Evanston 2001, pp. 187–214) apropos of the similarities between Cvetaeva and K. Pavlova: "Both women favour the word *vzryv* (explosion, burst), which corresponds to the general intensely romantic tone of their works".

<sup>58</sup> M. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>59</sup> Notice that apocalyptic associations mark the same genesis of Cvetaeva: "Красною кистью / рябина зажглась / падали листья / Я родилась / Спорили сотни колоколов / День был субботний: Иоанн Богослов", Ivi, p. 64. In perturbing natural order, the birth of the poet closely resembles the destructive dialectics of the tetradic sequence of gerunds: "žža . . . a ne vzraščivaja".

<sup>60</sup> Ivi, p. 99.

<sup>61</sup> Ivi, p. 189.

<sup>62</sup> "Ty prochodiš' na zapad solna", 1916, Ivi, p. 66.

<sup>63</sup> "Eto kakaja ulica?" (1935), O. Mandel'stam, *Stichotvorenija*, op. cit., p. 209 [my emphasis].

<sup>64</sup> Notice the indirect (?) reference to Cvetaeva's lines: "Не числящимся в ваших справочниках, / Им свалочная яма – дом".

<sup>65</sup> O. Mandel'stam, *Stichotvorenija*, op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>66</sup> As Ronen (*An Approach*, op. cit., pp. 198–99) points out, the dualism inherent in Mandel'stam's autodescription has its model in Orphic poetry. Similarly, Cvetaeva's poet, a reincarnation of Orpheus in the transtemporal continuum of the word, is an oxymoronic entity, acting as both a medium and an iconoclast. Forced into form by the proteiform hands of the poet (*dvurušnik*), reality is either dismembered, as it happens in these lines, or recomposed. Thus, in "Orfej" (1921) the disordering force of "Poety" (*on tot, kto smešivaet karty*) is trans-

In this fourth stanza, transcendence of physical constraints (*obmanjvaet ves i sčet*), torn to pieces like Orpheus' body, anticipates the poet's impalpability in "Čto že mne delat' slepcu i posynku": "Что же мне делать [...] С этой невесомостью/ В мире гирь/ [...] С этой безмерностью/ В мире мер?!". The Platonic subtext of these lines is confirmed by contextual occurrences, as in the "Sybill" cycle "weight" and "measure" are sad companions of the *falling into (unenlightened) life*:

Плачь маленький: рожденье в вес!

Где залежи его щедрот?  
Плачь маленький: рожденье в счет,

И в кровь,  
И в пот<sup>67</sup>.

As weight marks the descension into the cave, emancipation from its mortal burden accompanies the glorious ascension of the poet-*vozduchoborec* of "Poema vozducha" (1927):

Слава тебе, допустившему бреши:  
Больше не вешу.  
Слава тебе, обвалившему крышу:  
Больше не слышу.  
Солнцепричастная, больше  
не щурюсь.  
Дух! Не душу уж!  
Твердое тело есть мертвое тело:  
Оттяготела<sup>68</sup>.

Similarly, in "Novogodnee" (1927), *immeasurability (bezmerzost')* marks the divide between the world of contingency and the non-terrestrial dimension, identified with the vertical axis (*vysota*):

Как тебе смешны (кому) "должно быть", (Мне же) должны быть, с высоты без меры Наши Беллеву и Бельведеры<sup>69</sup>.

A corollary to the fragmentation of contingency as opposed to a philosophical all-embracing whole, measurability is fiercely refused, as it happens in "Poema gory" (1924): "Частности мелом/Отмечать –

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figured into Sapho's reordering, recomposing embrace: "Просто-волосой лесбянки,/Быть может, вытянула сеть?", M. Cvetaeva, *Sočinenija*, op. cit., I, p. 171.

<sup>67</sup> "Sivilla – Mladencu" (1923). Ivi, p. 191.

<sup>68</sup> Ivi, p. 443.

<sup>69</sup> Ivi, p. 262.

дело портных [...] Разве страсть – делить на части?/Часовщик я, или врач?"<sup>70</sup>.

While these first two lines develop the "poetics of ascension" of the third stanza, in the subsequent lines, displacement is realized through role reversal, which couples the morpho-semantic inversion in the first stanza (poet-poeta): the poet's *asking (sprašivaet s party)* reverses traditional "teacher-student" dialectics<sup>71</sup>, whereas the iconoclastic - *futuristic* – aggression against Kant (*Kanta nagolovu b'et*) externalizes Cvetaeva's radical rethinking of Kantian cosmology. It is interesting to observe that, as in the previous stanzas, defiance of fixed models is reinforced by the vertical orientation of the actions, *sprašivat' s party, bit' nagolovu*, which imply an ascensional movement of the body.

The image of the poet asking questions is a metonymic transposition of the essence of poetry, an enigma (*zagadka*), that, in Cvetaeva's disjuncted universe, has no solutions, because it transcends (*za-gadka*) fixed answers:

Если бы мне тогда совсем поверить, что он действительно не знает, можно было бы подумать, что поэт из всех людей тот, кто ничего не знает, раз даже у меня, ребенка, спрашивает. [...] Настойчивый вопрос стихи обращает в загадку и задачу, и если каждое стихотворение само есть загадка и задача, то не та загадка, на которую готовая отгадка, и не та задача, на которую ответ в задачнике<sup>72</sup>.

While unpredictability (*nepredugadannost'*) marks the ontological borders of the poet-comet, poetry signals the dialectical overcoming of the two poles of

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<sup>70</sup> Ivi, p. 416. Yet the Platonic subtext behind these lines does not exhaust the spectrum of their possible meanings; besides defining the wholeness of the true forms as opposed to the fragmented shadows of the world-cave (the *byt*), "bezmerzost'" may allude to *črezmernost'*, the defiance of Horace's *measure* in favour of the communion with the *stichija-stich*, a distinguishing trait of Cvetaeva's poet: from the symbolic *potlâc* of "Čto drugim ne nužno nesite mne" ("Все должно сгореть на моем огне"), to the poetics of self-donation of Mary Magdalene; from her *black Puškin* ("Чувство меры? / Чувство моря") to the self-immolation of "Vskryla žily", the poet is the one who *empties* into the sea of poetry to enundate it with his blood-logos. In the osmotic relation between the poet and the *word*, death is functional to rebirth and emptiness leads to complete fusion (refilling) with the *archè*: [about the Sybill] "Мои жили иссякнут, мои кости высохнут, но ГОЛОС, ГОЛОС – оставит мне судьба!", from a letter to Bachrach dated June 5<sup>th</sup> 1923; M. Cvetaeva, *Sobranie*, op. cit., VI, p. 561.

<sup>71</sup> Compare the symbolist treatment of the poet-people (*narod*) relationship as a teacher-student, sower-soil relation and the radical rethinking enacted by Cvetaeva.

<sup>72</sup> M. Cvetaeva, *Moj Puškin*, op. cit., p. 53 [author's emphasis].

the thesis (Kantian metaphysics, the triumph of *predugadannost'*) and the antithesis (*ne-predugadannost'*): it is a *za-gadka*, a mobile entity declining into action (trans-passing) the stasis of negation. In the passage from negation (*ne-predugadannost'*) to affirmation (*za-gadka*), poetry erases the possibility to crystallize the flow of becoming (the flow of *logos*) in the fixity of pre-dictions (*gadanie*); like the anti-Galilean body of the second stanza, it refuses the immobility of *da i net* ("otvet v zadačnike") and deviates in the space *beyond*, the ineffable realm of enigmas.

In the cyclical flow of poetry, the beginning and the end, the question and the answer, are blurred points on a tortuous line: every question is a response to previous questions (the wave that comes *izdaleka*) and the solidity of any answer will be swept away by the next wave, the one that goes *daleko* and *rejuvenates* the transparency of dictions (*gadanie*) into the awkward grace of enigmas.

Thus, the *conditio sine qua non* (the answer?) of the poet's questions is the rejection of Kantian reason and

of its links between cause and phenomenon, questions and explanations. In this respect, the poet-iconoclast, although resounding with a Majakovskjan subtext ("Я радостно плюну, плюну в лицо вам/Я бесценных слов транжир и мот")<sup>73</sup>, is alien to the Puškinian dialectics of *poet vs cern'* entailed in Majakovskij's invective<sup>74</sup>. Rather, the symbolic implications of Cvetaeva's gesture are clearly those of a patricide, and one that resembles Plato's "killing" of Parmenides in the *Sophist*. For Cvetaeva's cosmology to emerge, Kant's cognitive theory has to be deconstructed and substituted by a new, flexible model based on intuition, the ability to supersede links, rather than on intelligence, the ability to establish connections. The erasure of *deictic* constraints emancipates the poet from the bonds of *sej-čas* and allows for the immersion in the panchronic sea of poetry. In the communion with the *archè*, the old temporal connections are substituted by a new, immortal link: the symbolic conjoinment of hands between words of the present and words of the past.

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<sup>73</sup> "Nate!" (1913), V. Majakovskij, *Sobranie*, op. cit., I, p. 114. Notice that for both Cvetaeva and Majakovskij access to the *word* justifies iconoclastic behaviour.

<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, Puškinian antagonism between the poet and the *others* (see in "Мой Puškin": "Я поделила мир на поэта и - всех, и выбрала - поэта"; *Мой Puškin*, op. cit., p. 25) dominates the second and the third poems of the cycle.