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*, subdued 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 phenomenical 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.

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:

Poэт – издалека заводит речь.
Poэта – далеко заводит речь.

As the dominant mechanism of intratextual cohesion is represented by the motif of the *path* (path’ 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 *речь* account for the ontological stratum of this transitive exchange.

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

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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 dvoemirje, are made explicit in the third poem of the cycle, “Čto že mne delat’ slepcul i posynku” (1923):

The hierarchical reversal enacted by ontological de-basement 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.

Glaucion: 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?

Glaucion: 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?

The substitution of the “true forms” (plač, strasti) by shadows (nasmork, anafermy) 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, dobavočnuye” (1923) and “Poet i vremja” (1932):

Yes, in the world of lišnie, the added, Not written in the album. (Not crowding among your справочниках, But swallochka slice – the home)⁴

But and Russia is little. Each poet by his existence, 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 bytie⁷. 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 (воплощение) of words between worlds: “Поэзия – уже перевод, с родного языка на чужой – будь то французский, или немецкий – незвяно. Для поэта нет родного языка. Писать стихи и значит перелагать”⁵.

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”)⁶, cannot accept the shadows projected in the cave, an empirical fragmenta-

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1. For a sense of place and time, see also Gumilev’s “Ja i vy”: “Da, 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 biff (1920–21): “Кто я? Я не из класса, не из нации, не из племени. Я видел тридцатый, сороковий век”, V.V. Majakovskij, Sobranie sočinenij v dvadacatи tomach, Moskva 1978, IX, p. 142. Note that, as in Cvetaeva’s poem, the poet’s spiritual orphanhood (“что же мне делать… посыну”) coincides with his otherworldliness (“я видел тридцатый, сороковий век”). The image will be brought to its extreme ideological consequences in Poema konca with the metaphor of the poet-jew: “Поэты – жиды”, M. Cvetaeva, Sočinenija, op. cit., I, p. 412.


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

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


8. See also Cvetaeva’s sixth letter to Rilke, Ibidem.
Plato, in "Poema vozducha" (1927), \footnote{10} transcendence of terrestrial sight signals the beginning of the poet-flyer's ascension: “В полную невидимость / Даже не тени. […] Расценив схваткою / Мири на сей и твой – Больше не запачкаю / Ока – красотой”. Ivi, p. 440.\footnote{12}

The poet’s izdaleka is the Presocratic whole defying categorial distinctions, being as opposed to entities (shadows), time as opposed to instants, language as opposed to languages, “тот свет, / Наш […] не без-, а все-язычен”\footnote{13}. It is “sam jazyk”, the primordial, synthetrical 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\footnote{14}, 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):


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\footnote{16}. 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 глу-бинные слои времени, его чернозем, оказываются сверху”\footnote{17}.

The words of the past (the deeper layers of the soil, the diachronic izdaleka), by resurfacing in the present (“сверху”, 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 syncrétism substitutes for literary evolutionism, the Darwinistic illusion of a smooth, ineluctable progression of the word towards the ephemeral-ality of sej-čas. The limitations of aesthetic mechanicism, erasing the a-temporal (panchronic) izdaleka from the cognitive frame of creation and imprisoning poetic...
movement into the synchrony of sej-čas, have been outlined by Mandel’štam 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 смешиваются, одни формы уступают место другим. Но каждая смена, каждое приобретение сопровождается утратой, потерей. Никакого лучшего, никакого прогресса в литературе быть не может, хотя бы просто потому, что нет никакой литературной машины и нет старта, куда нужно скорее других доскааться.18

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 outside19.

Bergsonian “duration” imbues Cveateva’s rewriting of her subtexts, as the reintegration of literary (Hamlet), historical (Marina Mníšek) 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 — натянут”20, in reenacting through the fictional case of Hamlet of the past, is penetrated by its original counterpart, which grows, like a wave, to embrace him. Similarly, the first verse of the “Magdalina” cycle, “Между нами десять заповедей”, marks the intersection of two, apparently separate, temporal levels – Magdalene’s and Cveateva’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.21

Cvetkeeva’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 времени, конца и начала, живой узел – который только разрубить.”22

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 “О своебеснike” (1913): “Поэзия как целое всегда направляется к более или менее далекому, неизвестному адресату, в существовании которого поэт не может сомневаться, не усовнившись в себе”23.

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 Cveteva in “Поet i vremja” (1932):

Я идёйно и жизненно могу отстоять, отстояю, ушедшее – там за краем земли оставшееся –

18 Ivi, p. 445.
19 H. Bergson, The Creative Evolution, New York 1911, p. 407. Cveteva may have got acquainted with Bergson’s theories through Volosin, who saw the French philosopher lecturing in Paris in 1906; for this last aspect, see also I. Ševelenko, Literaturyj put’ Mariny Cvetaevoj, Moskva 2004, p. 317.
22 “Poet i vremja” (1932). M. Cveteva, Sočinenija, op. cit., II, p. 360 [my emphasis].
23 O. Mandelštam, Stichotsverenia, op. cit., p. 443.
This complex dialectics between poet and logos, their mutual transitivity through time and space, is condensed in the double morpho-semantic shift poet-poeta/рец-рец. 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 creators. 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):

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 consequentity, the word emerges as the arché which preexists (издалека), embraces and survives (далеко) phenomenal being. The word is the embryo eradicated from the distant uterus of издалека and led by the hand (за-водит) 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. За руку: like Пушкин with the young Cvetaeva down the mountains of Crimea, like Cvetaeva with the dead Rilke, through the river Styx, towards that third entity transcending life and death. In the incessant conjoinments of hands (за-водит), 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.

The functional transition poet-poeta – from agent to object, from possessor to possessed (πίτευ, не он) – cannot be disjuncted from the ontological implications symbolized by linguistic fiction: in modifying its form through declination (poet-poeta), the poet’s being is marked as transient, phenomenal - mortal – as opposed to the immutability of рец, 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, the poet survives – surfaces – through the word, which, like a wave, transports (за-водит) him beyond the temporal borders of his empirical existence. The metaphorical translation, marking the (eternal) return of

24 M. Cvetaeva, Sochinenija, op. cit., II, p. 366 [my emphasis]. For an analogous conception of the written word as 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.


27 O. Mandel’štam, “Ne verja vo skresenija čuda” (1916). Stichotvorenija, op. cit., p. 64. Ironically enough, Mandel’štam, in denying the resurrection of the body, re-asserts that of the word.

28 Equivalences between the word and natural elements clearly refer to the communion between poetic logos (устих) and pre-Logos Logos (устиха): 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 труд и чуда, но оно есть. Есть!”, М. Cvetaeva, Sochinenija, op. cit., II, p. 375; “Vskryla zili: неостановимо (1934) re-states the aquatic essence of Cvetaeva’s logos: “Невозратно, неостановимо, / Невостановимо хлещет стих”, бр. р. 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 — чудовища. Пушкин (собирательное) будет умирать столоц раз, сколько его будут любить. В каждом любящем — заново. И в каждом любящем — вечено.


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 времени в своем стремленьи
Уносит все дела людей,  
И топит в пропасти забвенья  
Народы царства и царей31.

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:

…Он незачем искать других имен. Когда раздается пенье раз навсегда мы будем знать – Орфей.  
(именно это – Орфей поющего и умирающего в каждом поэте – я ищела в виду на предыдущей странице)34.

On the other hand, as an instrument of potential separation, taking the poet daleko, language emerges as a diabolic force that διασαλαξει, “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.

29 Ivi, p. 350.  
31 “S morja” (1926), Ivi, p. 112.  
34 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 “sideral” 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’nya* 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 consequentiaity, 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 *mezdnu*, 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, да не размахивавшись с колокольни/крюк выворочит”; in the voluntaristic reshaping of time and space, *deviated* in the act of falling, the irreversible geometry of the Kantian *a priori*, 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.

The inescapability of the descensional path (for Mandel’s*am* 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 *za-bluždaetsja* and chooses the *perdition* of polisemey over the laws of salvation.

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

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К груди моей,
Младенец, льви,
Рожденье – паденье в дни.
С заблудчых низдешних скал,
Младенец мой,
Как нику пал!
Ты духом был, ты прахом стал.
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35 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.

36 On the other hand, besides rewriting Kantian cognitive theory, the joyful *bezakonnost’* of Cvetaeva’s poet defies the tragic irretrievability of Mandel’s*am*ian falling bodies: “Я чувствую неведомый страх / В присутствии таинственных высот”, “Pelechód” (1912), O. Mandel’s*am*, *Stichotvorenija*, op. cit., p. 35; “Паденье – неизмен- ный спутник страха, / И самый страх есть чувство пус- тоты, / Кто камни нам бросает с высоты – / И камень отрицает иго праха?”, “Paden’e neizmennyj sputnik stracha” (1912), *Ivi*, p. 130.

37 “Sivilla – mladencu” (1923), M. Cvetaeva, *Sučinemija*, op. cit., I, p. 191. Nonetheless, in “Bes 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 cyclicity. 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 at both the logical and the iconic level erases the natural consequentiality of the causal preposition at both the logical and the iconic level.

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‘ poetov put‘* erases the natural consequentiality of the causal preposition at both the logical and the iconic level.

38 Besides subverting linear time and space, the comet is itself a diachronic product, as different subtexts intersect in this motif. Puskin’s “Portret” (1828) may represent one of the sources of Cvetaeva’s rebellious star: “С своей пылящей душой, / С своими бурыми 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”, Puskin, Sobranie sochinenij v četyre tomach, Moskva-Leningrad 1936, II, p. 509 [my emphasis]. It is worth noting that, in Cvetaeva’s appropriation of the Puskinian bezzakonnost’ theme, defiance of conventions (mimo svych uslovi sveta) is stripped of its romantic aura (see i 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 svetlennosti. In this respect, a subtext coherent with Cvetaeva’s cosmological urgency is Apollon Grigor’ev’s “Kometa” (1843): “Когда средь сомни звезд, размеренно и стройно, / Как зауков вернения, одна после другой, / Определенный путь сверкающих святых, / Комета полетит неправильною чертой, / Недосозданная, вся полная раздора, / Невзнузданных стихий неистового сна, / Гора еще сама и на пути своему / Гроза нын звездам стремлением и огнем, / ЧтБ нужды ей тогда до общего смещения, / С до разрушения гармони?.. Она / Из лона отчего, из родника творенья / В создавая стройный круг борьбою послана, / Да совершит путь борьбы и испытая, / Цель очищения и цель самосознава”. A. Grigor’ev, Stishovorenija. 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’nj certoj” which synthesizes both the images of deviation at the beginning of the poem (okol’nych priti, krjak vy-morositi) and the ‘poetics of crookedness’ at the end of the last stanza (tvoja steza, yresti, kriyvaia). Disharmonic tensions, which in Cvetaeva’s poem represent a cohesive lexico-semiotic element, are made explicit in the spatial and moral friction between the straightforward axis of the fixed stars, ‘определенной’ put’ sverkajushchih spokojno, and the inclined axis represented by ‘неправилинь joě.certoj-nedosodanajaj nevznuzdannych’; the destructive potential of the comet, expressed in the lines “Гора еще сама и на пути своем / Гроза нын звездам стремлением и огнем” is clearly echoed in Cvetaeva’s “Зна, а не созвучая, / твоя, а не виртуешься — вьзы и взлом”, whose acoustic texture relies on the same z/gr alliteration. The cathartic implications of the comet’s path, made explicit by the acenssional orientation of vzryv and vzlom and by the prosody of fire in the context of Cvetaeva’s outre (see below), are clearly stated also in the final lines of Grigor’ev’s poem, the purifying cupio dissohii marking the diachronic intersection of the two comets: “Да совершит путь борьбы и испытая. / Цель очищения и цель самосознава”.

40 M. Cvetaeva, Sočinenija, op. cit., I, p. 189.
42 In “Iuskstvo 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 произве-дения природы, поемы от дерева? Ни в чем. Какими путями труда и чуда, но оно есть. Есмь!”, M. Cvetaeva, Sočinenija, op. cit., II, p. 375.
Temporal deconstruction, expressed by the non-consequentiality of life (the tree) within death (the prison), leads to spatial fragmentation and to the ruptured space of disappearance: tot, č’j sledly vsegd prostyl / tot poezd na kotoryj vse / opazdynajut... 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 Derzavin’s “Reka vremen” or the Leontovian “Я бы хотел забыться и заснуть,” is a moving forward, 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:


Dis-harmony, dis-connection become manifest in the third stanza. The line Razvejannyje zven’ja / pričinnosti – vot svja’ zego!, 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 antideterminism46.

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

Бергсон рассматривает явление 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 ветвь, структура которого можно развернуть во времени, но в то же время они поддаются умопостигаемому свертыванию. Уподобление объединенных во времени явлений такому ветру подчеркивает только их внутреннюю связь и вместо проблемы причинности [...] выводит проблему связи47.

The erasure of external links between phenomena (razvejannyje zven’ja) allows for the emergence of their inner cohesion (svja’ zego), 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:

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44 See “Poet i vremja” (1932): “Заползать 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 likiza sovremennoj Rossi” in M. Cvetaeva, Sočinenije, op. cit., IV, p. 376: “Этим своиими быстрыми шагами Майковский ушагал далеко за нашу современность и где-то за каким-то поворотом долго еще нас будет ждать.”
46 “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-

47 See G. Bartolini, “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...”
As opposed to Mandel’stam’s harmonic anabasis to the native star, Cветеева’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 personačalnye zven’ja of panchrony) and for the recreation of the Presocratic whole, the sea-logos of poetry.

On the other hand, Cветеева’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) 51.

49. Similarly, the refusal of Darwinism that informs Mandel’stam’s late production draws on the principles of Bergsonian voluntarism; for this aspect, see also M. Gasparov, “Vos’mistisija Mandel’stama”, Moskva 2001, pp. 47–54. In defying the ineluctability of a fixed path, the polemic regression celebrated in “Lamark” (1932), although entailing a descensional movement, is equivalent, in its theoretical motivations, to Cветеева’s stellar degradations: “На подвижной лестнице Ламарка / Я займу последнюю ступень. // К кольцам спущусь я и к усовозим. / Пробужуя средь явери и змей. / По угрозам сходя, по изложом / Сокращу, исчезну, как Протей. // Ровную матию надену, / От горячей крови откажусь, Обрасту присосками и в пену / Океана замятн впойсь”, O. E. Mandel’stam, Sitcovoreniya, op. cit., p. 183.
50. Ivi, p. 125. As Ronen (An Approach to Mandel’stam, 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 Cветеева’s orpanhood in “Poety 2”: “что же мне делать с лучи и пыльку/в мире где каждый и отч и зрач”. The network of latent correspondences between the two poems seems to confirm the Platonic subtext behind the “Poetry” cycle (see above).
While “Развеянные звенья/Принципности — вот связь его! Кверх лбом” sets the spatial transition from terrestrial to ethereal geography, the impossible forecasting of the eclipse (откажёте?), besides disclosing a hint to Puškin (“солнце русской поэзии”)52, 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 (непредугаданность) 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 mani-

vzrascivaja – vzryv i vzlom!

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 word54 and leads to the creation of a third, synthetical 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”55.

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 (небеса!), 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 (vzrývaet) pre-constructed categories (the shadows of the cave, time and space), while substituting them for true forms: “Национальность — это от- и заключённость. Орфей взрывает национальность или настолько широко раздвигает ее пределы, что все (и бывшие, и сушие) заключаются в неё”56.

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 vzrásčivaja and vzryv57.

54 See also O.P. Hasty, Tsvetaeva’s Orphic Journeys, op. cit., p. 154.
55 M. Cvetaeva, Sobranie, op. cit., VII, p. 60.
56 From Cvetaeva’s sixth letter to Rilke, Ivi, p. 66.
57 It is interesting to observe that in his 1915 article on André Chenier, Mandel’štam quotes “explosion” (vzryva) as a defining trait of Romantic poetics: “А романтическая поэтика предполагает взрыв, взрыва, неожиданность, ищет эффекта, непредусмотренной
The constructive potential of explosion is part of Cveateva'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: “Moim stiham, napisannym tak rano;/Что и не знала я, что я – поэт./Сорвавшись, как брызги из фонтана./Как искры из рaket”\(^{58}\), in “Čto drugim ne znalo – nesite mne” (1918), a celebration of the creative and purifying power of destruction\(^{59}\), 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”\(^{60}\); in “Sivilla”, the word-fire burns the Sybill's body: “Сиylla: выжжена, сиylla: ствол./Все птицы вымерли, но бог вошел […] Сиylla: выбыла, сиylla: зев:/Доли и гибели – Древо меж дев./Державным деревом в лесу нагом – сначала деревом шумел огонь”\(^{61}\).

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, tvoya stezja, grivastaja krvija, an extreme formulation of the poetics of deviation. An ideal counterpart to Christ-Blok's firm path - neruzhina tvoya stezja\(^{62}\) – Cveateva's diabolic non linearity will then contaminate Mandel'štam's sardonic self-portrait\(^{63}\):

Это какая улица?
Улица Манделштама.
Что за семья чертова!
Как ее ни вывертывай
Криво звучит, а не прямо.
Мало в нём было лицевого
Нрава он не было лилейового,
И потому это улица
Или, верней, это что
Так и зовется по имени
Этого Манделштама.

Interestingly enough, the refusal of straightness informs also Mandel'štam's self-definition in “Grifel’ naja oda” (1923)\(^{65}\):

Кто я? Не каменьщик прямой,
Не кровельщик, не корабельщик;
Дворушек я, с двойной душой.
Я вчера друг, а я дня застрельщик.

A functional equivalent of Mandel'štam'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\(^{66}\) in Mandel'štam's oda.

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58 M. Cvetaeva, Sochinenija, op. cit., p. 45.
59 Notice that apocalyptic associations mark the same geneis of Cveateva: “Krasnoe kistyu / riberna žalozuja / надалас листвы;/ Я родилась,/Спорили сотни колоколов/День был субботний: /Иван Богослов”, \(Ivi, p. 64\). In perturbing natural order, the birth of the poet closely resembles the destructive dialectics of the tetradic sequence of gerunds: “ža...a ne viračivaja”.
60 \(Ivi, p. 99\).
61 \(Ivi, p. 189\).
62 “Jy prochodiš’ na zapad solnca”,1916, \(Ivi, p. 66\).
64 Notice the indirect (?) reference to Cveateva’s lines: “Ne chislyaimusya v vosxo spravochnikah, / Im svalochonalja la – dom”. O. Mandel’štam, Stichotvorenija, op. cit., p. 90.
65 As Ronen (An Approach, op. cit., pp. 198–99) points out, the dualism inherent in Mandel’štam’s autodescription has its model in Orphic poetry. Similarly, Cveateva’s poet, a reincarnation of Orpheus in the transtemporal continuum of the word, is an ozymoronic entity, acting as both a medium and an iconoclast. Forced into form by the prototypic hands of the poet (dvurukih), reality is either dismembered, as it happens in these lines, or recomposed. Thus, in “Orfej” (1921) the disordering force of “Poetry” (on tot, kto smešivaet karry) is trans-
In this fourth stanza, transcendence of physical constraints (obmanyvaet ves i schet), torn to pieces like Orpheus’ body, anticipates the poet’s impalpability in “Čto že mne delat’ splecu i posynku”: “Čto že mne delat’ [...]
C etой невесомостью/В ми ре укры/[...] C этой безмерностью/В ми ре 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:

Пламень маленький: рожденье в вес!
Где спрятана его щедрот?
Пламень маленький: рожденье в счет,
И в крови, И в пот.

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 брехи:
Больше не веду.
Слава тебе, обвалившему крышку:
Больше не слышу.
Солнечничества, больше не шуруюсь.
Дух! Не душу уж!
Твердое тело есть мертвое тело:
Оттянутеля.

Similarly, in “Novogodnee” (1927), immeasurability (bezmernost’) marks the divide between the world of contingency and the non-terrestrial dimension, identified with the vertical axis (vysocha):

Как тебе смешны (кому) “должно быть”, (Мне же)
должны быть, с высоты без меры Наша Белев и Бельведер.

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 –
дело портных [...]. Разве страсть – делить на части?/Часовщик я, или врач?”.70

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 (sprasivat’ s party) reverses traditional “teacher-student” dialectics, whereas the iconoclastic - futuristic – aggression against Kant (Kanta nagolovu b’et) externalizes Cvetaeva’s radical re-thinking 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, sprasivat’ s party, 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 этот из всех людей тот, кто ничего не знает, раз даже у меня, ребенка, спрашивает. [...]. Наставий 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 заданника.

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

70 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), “bezmernost’” may allude to treznernost’, 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 postulate of “Čto drugim ne znino nese mne”, (“Все должно сгореть на моем огарке”), to the poetics of self-donation of Mary Magdalene; from her black Pukhin (“Чувство меры? / Чувство моря”) to the self-
immolation of “Vskryla zily”, 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 empti-
ness leads to complete fusion (refilling) with the arche: [about the Sybil] “Мои жили иссякнут, мои вести высокнут, во ГОЛОС, ГО-ЛОС – оставит мне судьбу!”, from a letter to Bachrach dated June 5th, 1923; M. Cvetaeva, Sobranie, op. cit., VI, p. 561.

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

72 M. Cvetaeva, Moj Pukhin, op. cit., p. 53 [author’s emphasis].

figured into Sapho’s reordering, recomposing embrace: “Просто-
волосой лебединий./Быть может, вытнела сеть?”, M. Cve-
taeva, Sochinenija, op. cit., I, p. 171.


68 Ivi, p. 443.

69 Ivi, p. 262.
the thesis (Kantian metaphysics, the triumph of pre-
dugadannost’) 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 cristallyze 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 плюю, плюю в лицо вам/Я бесценных слов транжир и мол”)73, is alien to the Puškinian di-
alectics of poet vs cern’ entailed in Majakovskij’s invective74. Rather, the symbolic implications of Cvetaeva’s gesture are clearly those of a patricide, and one that re-
sembles 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 su-
persede 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 al-
lows 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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73 “Nate!” (1913), V. Majakovskij, Sobranie, op. cit., I, p. 114. Notice that for both Cvetaeva and Majakovskij access to the word justifies icon-
oclasic behaviour.

74 On the other hand, Puškinian antagonism between the poet and the others (see in “Moj Puškin”: “Я поделила мир на поэта и - всех, и выбрала – поэта”; Moj Puškin, op. cit., p. 25) dominates the second and the third poems of the cycle.