



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Constructing the modernist vision of time

Citation for published version:

Smith, A 2017, 'Constructing the modernist vision of time: Tsvetaeva's rendering of Bely's dynamic worldview in 'A Captive Spirit'' Australian Slavonic & East European Studies, vol 31, no. 1-2, 1, pp. 1-42.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Australian Slavonic & East European Studies

Publisher Rights Statement:

This is the accepted version of the following article:

Smith A. Constructing the modernist vision of time: Tsvetaeva's rendering of Bely's dynamic worldview in 'A Captive Spirit', which has been published in final form in 'Australian Slavonic & East European Studies', 2017 Dec 31;31(1-2)1-42: <https://arts.unimelb.edu.au/soll/research/research-publications/european-studies/asees-journal>

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



ALEXANDRA SMITH

CONSTRUCTING THE MODERNIST VISION OF TIME: TSVETAeva's RENDERING OF
BELY'S DYNAMIC WORLDVIEW IN *A CAPTIVE SPIRIT*

Andrei Bely (Boris Bugaev, 1880-1934) is often praised as one of the most important innovators in the history of twentieth-century European and Russian fiction, poetry and literary theory. Yet he is not well known in the West due to the lack of translations of his works into English and the inherent difficulty of his writings. Gerald Janecek, in his 1978 introduction to a collection of articles on Bely, maintains that in Russia Bely 'has not become the property of academic circles in his native language because his ideas are still considered politically unacceptable'.¹ Although the post-Soviet period is characterised by a steadily increasing upsurge of interest in Bely's life and works, in the West he continues to be seen as a highly difficult writer to comprehend. Steven Cassedy's observation about the reception of Bely in Russia and in the West captures well the contradictory nature of Bely's thought and aesthetic views. Cassedy aptly points out that at any given moment Bely subscribed 'to any number of different and sometimes conflicting philosophical and aesthetic systems, and over time he altered the mix of systems'.² In Cassedy's view, any attempt 'to establish a unified terminology for describing Bely's thought in general and his aesthetic system in particular' can be compared to trying to hit a moving target located 'in seven different places simultaneously'. Indeed, Bely's eclectic worldview encompasses various influences, including the ideas of Rudolf Steiner, Pavel Florenskii, Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein and Russian neo-Kantians such as Aleksandr Vvedenskii, and Sergei and Evgenii Trubetskoi. These Russian thinkers appropriated Nikolai Lobachevskii's non-Euclidean geometrical system for their ideas about the simultaneous existence of diverse spaces such as the noumenal and physical realms.³ In their polemical works on

¹ Janecek, Gerald, 'Introduction', in Janecek, Gerald (ed.), *Andrei Bely: A Critical Review*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1978, p. 1.

² Cassedy, Steven, Review of: Keys, Roger, *The Reluctant Modernist: Andrei Belyi and the Development of Russian Fiction, 1902-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), *Modern Philology*, 96.3/1999, 412.

³ A comprehensive discussion of the influence of non-Euclidean geometry and Russian neo-Kantian philosophy on Bely's evolutionary theory is provided in: Kosalowska, Elizabeth, 'On the Crossroads of Science, Philosophy, and Literature', unpublished PhD thesis, New York: Columbia University, 2013, pp. 1-25.

German neo-Kantianism published in the 1910s, they advocated the view that philosophy cannot be reduced to methodology because knowledge has an ontological and metaphysical basis. Like Russian neo-Kantians, Bely regarded belief and creativity as cognitive tools for understanding the truth.

Both Tsvetaeva and Bely had close ties with Russian neo-Kantian philosophers in the 1910s-1920s, including Nikolai Berdiaev and Evgenii Trubetskoi. Trubetskoi investigated the personalistic nature of cognition of reality – overlooked by Kant – and concluded that in every act of consciousness the self both affirms itself and goes out beyond itself. As Trubetskoi elucidates, the act of judgement presupposes a knowledge of oneself that ‘goes beyond subjective representation to the trans-subjective realm’, linking thereby one’s own individual judgment with the absolute.⁴ Trubetskoy’s idea is developed in Tsvetaeva’s 1923 cycle ‘Poety’ (‘Poets’): it suggests that the poet’s mission is to challenge Kant. Tsvetaeva in her 1934 memoir *Plennyi dukh (A Captive Spirit)* portrays Bely as a Russian thinker and poet whose engagement with Kant and neo-Kantianism enabled him to develop a unique vision of time as a form of inner sense. Her memoir uncovers the primacy of the visual in Russian modernism after 1910 and explores the new kind of observer created by changing cultural conditions.

Tsvetaeva’s memoir offers new ways of thinking about visual relations, including habits of perception and the cultural construction of vision. The use of Bely’s two photographs in *Plennyi dukh* enables the narrator to talk about the power of the photographic image to create a sense of connection not only with the past but also with the imaginary, transcendental other world. By making readers participate in another person’s mortality and mutability, Tsvetaeva creates a community of mourners who collectively lament the death of the poet. As an elegiac art, Susan Sontag affirms, photography actively promotes nostalgia by reminding the viewer about a person who has ‘aged or decayed or no longer exists’. Sontag’s statement that ‘all photographs are memento mori’⁵ is fully applicable to Tsvetaeva’s descriptions of the Bely photographs in her memoir: they articulate Tsvetaeva’s conception of loss. Molly Blasing’s observation that Tsvetaeva’s interpretation of the Bely photographs

⁴ Meerson, Michael A., ‘Put’ Against Logos: The Critique of Kant and Neo-Kantianism by Russian Religious Philosophers in the Beginning of the Twentieth Century’, *Studies in East European Thought*, 47.3-4/1995, 239.

⁵ Sontag, Susan, *In Plato’s Cave: On Photography*, London: Penguin Books, 1979, p. 15.

visualises ‘a transgression of boundaries between the living and the world beyond’⁶ points to the ethical concerns embedded in Tsvetaeva’s memoir. By teaching us a new visual code, photographs contribute to our understanding of ethics of seeing. They prompt us to think about what we are looking at and ‘what we have a right to observe’.⁷ Tsvetaeva’s memoir has an ethical goal, too. It directs the reader away from the sensationalist images of contemporary media towards a private commemorative event that celebrates the life of an important modernist writer who would have been forgotten in the Soviet Union. In the late 1920s-early 1930s, Soviet authorities saw Bely as an anachronistic author whose works were not consistent with the spirit of socialism and Soviet culture. It is not a coincidence that the concluding part of Tsvetaeva’s memoir refers to a memorial service at St. Sergii’s church in Paris organised by several Russian émigrés, including Vladislav Khodasevich and Father Sergei Bulgakov. She describes it as the Orthodox final farewell to the burned man (she uses the adjective *sozhzhennyi* that could be applied both to a cremated body and to an overburdened person). The description of the church service portrays the Russian émigré community as being fully committed to its mission to preserve Russian pre-revolutionary culture and to develop it further. That is why Tsvetaeva’s story attempts to construct a Russian modernist canon by further developing several tenets of modernist writing and by portraying Bely as an exciting practitioner of the new mode of writing. Tsvetaeva reminds her readers that Bely’s way of destabilising syntactical structures and visual presentation of verbal messages collapses the temporal and spatial structures found in realist narratives.

In her memoir, Tsvetaeva links the representation of temporality in art to the artist’s inner experience. Bely’s psychic life is portrayed in the story as part of the creative transformation of chaos with the help of Logos. The aforementioned cycle ‘Poety’ also implies that the modern poet is preoccupied with psychic life and subjectivity: he cannot talk about life in general as an abstraction in the manner of Kant. Tsvetaeva’s allusion to Kant in ‘Poety’ might be seen as a veiled homage to Bely, with whom she spent several days in Berlin in summer 1922. It also looks strikingly different from the attempt of Soviet authorities in the 1920s to suppress

⁶ Blasing, Molly Thomasy, ‘Marina Tsvetaeva and the Visual Arts’, in: Forrester, Sibelan (ed.), *A Companion to Marina Cvetaeva*, Brill: Leiden, 2017, p. 227.

⁷ Sontag, ‘*In Plato’s Cave*’, p. 3.

religious and idealist philosophy, as exemplified by Nadezhda Krupskaya's 1923 circular sent to all public libraries in the Soviet Union ordering them to remove from the shelves any obsolete and counter-revolutionary authors such as Plato, Kant, Lev Tolstoy and Vladimir Solov'ev.⁸ As will be demonstrated below, Tsvetaeva in her story about several encounters and creative dialogues with Bely shares Bely's belief that Marx's theory of historical necessity is incompatible with individual creativity.⁹ She portrays Bely as a Russian and European modernist rather than as a Soviet writer. She describes his spontaneity and psychoanalytic approaches to creativity as being superior to the Soviet ideological concerns with self-censorship and self-control discussed in literary criticism and the media in the 1930s. As Vaughan James points out, Socialist Realism was an extension of Stalin's propaganda: 'it was invented by Stalin, Zhdanov and Gorky and forced on the unwilling artists in the early thirties by the formation of the artistic unions'.¹⁰

By describing Bely sympathetically in Berlin as an absent-minded individual who loses his manuscript in a café and who blames Rudolf Steiner for this devil's trick, believing that the Doctor gave the order for the manuscript to disappear, Tsvetaeva portrays her fellow poet as being attentive to issues more profound than the trivia of everyday life. The poet's imagination is shown as easily triggered by unexpected associations and the intuitive cognition of life rather than by abstract thinking in the style of Marxist dogma or a Kantian notion of intelligence that advocates the superiority of objective scientific laws to human experience.¹¹ The structures of narrative visuality in *Plennyi dukh* – the collapse of the actual, the virtual and the spatial form of the memoir – reproduce a time that emerges, suggesting thereby that Tsvetaeva coalesces the perspective of the memoirist with the perspective of the poet who teaches the reader to view time through the prism of Henri Bergson's duration. It can be described as a personal experience of constant becoming that constitutes an overlapping of the past and the present. As conscious activity, claims Bergson, life

⁸ Karlinsky, Simon, *Marina Tsvetaeva: The Woman, Her World and Her Poetry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 114.

⁹ Elsworth, J.D., *Andrey Bely: A Critical Study of the Novels*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 12.

¹⁰ James, C. Vaughan, *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1973, p. x.

¹¹ Bergson, Henri, *Creative Evolution*, translated by Arthur Mitchell, Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1998, pp. 230-231.

might be seen as an invention and ‘unceasing creation’.¹² Tsvetaeva’s memoir poses several important questions about the nature of time and the potential of a narrative to show the texture of intangible time in images. What looks like a search for a form in which narrative can imprison time might be also seen as a search for timelessness.

Tsvetaeva’s memoir has two distinct parts: ‘Predshestvuiushchaia legenda’ (‘A Preceding Legend’) and ‘Vstrecha’ (‘The Encounter’). While the first part focuses on Tsvetaeva’s interactions with Bely and the members of the group of writers, thinkers and critics associated with the Musaget publishing house, it refers occasionally to places outside Moscow, including Tarusa, Germany, and Italy. The second part comprises a vivid reconstruction of Tsvetaeva’s meetings with Bely in Berlin, references to their correspondence, quotes from the poems of both poets and Tsvetaeva’s response to the obituary on Bely’s death. It also discusses the two photographs of Bely published by the influential émigré newspaper *Poslednie novosti*. The narrative does not have a linear structure and comprises a collage of different episodes, meditative passages and several fragments of conversations with or about Bely.

Tsvetaeva met Bely in Moscow on several occasions in the 1910s. These meetings include various gatherings organised by the Musaget publishing house in which her friend Lev Kobylynski (Ellis) was involved. Yet the significant part of her memoir describes Bely in Berlin rather than in Moscow. A few facts related to the meetings in Moscow are mentioned very briefly. The memoir gives an impression that Tsvetaeva was introduced to Bely by Ellis in 1909. Shortly afterwards she gained entry through Ellis and Voloshin to Briusov’s *Obshchestvo svobodnoi estetiki* (Society of Free Aesthetics) and to the Musaget publishing house. According to Ute Stock, these early interactions with Russian Symbolists shaped Tsvetaeva’s ethical outlook for many years to come.¹³ Yet Tsvetaeva chooses to write about her encounters with Bely and his friends in an impressionistic way, omitting thereby many significant names and facts.

Such a method of recollecting the past selectively might be explained by the author’s desire to highlight the unreliability of memory. Tsvetaeva also conceals some

¹² Ibid., p. 23.

¹³ Stock, Ute, *The Ethics of the Poet: Marina Tsvetaeva’s Art in the Light of Conscience*, Leeds: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2005, p. 14.

facts that would be seen as being controversial by her contemporaries in 1934. It is not clear whether Tsvetaeva was aware of the anti-Catholic and anti-theosophical waves of arrests that took place in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s. Her memoir does not allude to them explicitly. Several friends and relatives of Bely were among the victims of this wave of political oppression. The list of victims includes Sergei Solov'ev (he is mentioned briefly in her memoir),¹⁴ Klavdiia Vasil'eva (Bely's wife)¹⁵ and Tsvetaeva's sister Anastasiia who was arrested in 1933 for 64 days because of her links with Russian theosophers.¹⁶ Whatever the reasons for Tsvetaeva's sketchy representation of the literary and philosophical debates of the 1910s related to Bely and his circle, it is odd to see that her approach to rendering the past excludes several important names. She fails to mention Russian theosopher and psychoanalyst Emilii Medtner, who had close links with Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung and who became a Nazi supporter in the 1930s.¹⁷ In 1931 Medtner delivered a lecture at the Psychology Club in Zurich in which he described Russia in Jungian terms with a focus on the ongoing division in Russia between the East and the West. He thought that the division reached the stage of a national neurosis.¹⁸ Similarly, Tsvetaeva portrays Bely's behaviour and artistic persona in terms of personality polarities and neurotic tendencies. In *Plennyi dukh*, she downplays the influence of the publishing house Musaget on her outlook and pays lip service to the fact that Medtner's publishing enterprise was financed by his German friends. The main purpose of it was to promote German culture and philosophy in Russia.

In the 1910s Medtner and his associates in Moscow cherished 'dreams of Russia's future leadership, based on the reception, continuation and advancement of the loftiest elements of the German cultural past, taming the Tiutchevian "chaos" of the Russian soul'.¹⁹ By spending more time on her description of Bely in Berlin,

¹⁴ On Bely's friendship with Sergei Solov'ev see: Ljunggren, Magnus, 'Andrey Bely and the Philosopher's Nephew', *Poetry and Psychiatry: Essays on Early Twentieth-Century Russian Symbolist Culture*, translated by Charle Rougle, Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014, p. 16.

¹⁵ Shentalinskii, Vitalii, 'Oskolki serebriannogo veka. Okonchanie', *Novyi mir*, 1998/6, http://magazines.russ.ru/novy_i_mi/1998/6/shent.html (accessed 28 May 2017)

¹⁶ Aidinian, Stanislav, *Khronologicheskii obzor zhizni i tvorchestva Anastasii Tsvetaevoi*, Moscow: Akpress, 2010, p. 78.

¹⁷ Ljunggren, Magnus, 'Emilii Medtner and Carl Jung', *Poetry and Psychiatry*, p. 132.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Flamm, Christoph, 'Emilij Metner as Music Critic: Preliminary Remarks', *Russian Literature*, 77.4/2015, 628.

Tsvetaeva makes the reader aware of Bely's love-hate relationship with German culture, suggesting thereby that the participants of Musaget's gatherings would have been horrified by the growing gap between German modernity and German classical culture, exemplified by Goethe, Bach and Beethoven. They thought that culture was not defined by sociological and political circumstances, but exclusively by single geniuses.²⁰ Understandably, due to the Nazi seizure of power in Germany in 1933, Tsvetaeva would have liked to avoid mentioning the views of Medtner, who wanted to reshape Russian modernism in accordance with an eclectic model of his own making. His model mixed the ideas of Kant and Goethe in an eccentric manner. He hoped in 1909 that Germany would help to heal Russia after the 1905 revolution.²¹ His 1912 collection of articles *Modernism i muzyka (Modernism and Music)*²² contained many of the racist overtones shaped by Houston Stewart Chamberlain's view of European culture as an ongoing battle between subversive Semitic influences and German-Aryan traditions. In October 1912 Medtner was treated by Sigmund Freud for his anxiety attacks. Subsequently he befriended Carl Jung whom he called his ideal *alter ego*. This view was expressed in the 1935 collection of articles dedicated to Jung's birthday. He died in a mental clinic in Dresden in 1936 as 'a dedicated Nazi'.²³ Tsvetaeva chooses to ignore the fact that Medtner's involvement with Bely and Jung enabled the cross-fertilisation of psychoanalytic and Symbolist ideas both in Germany and in Russia. 'Bely and Jung's messages to the world,' affirms Magnus Ljunggren, 'had much in common: if it is not bridged, the split in contemporary humanity – the gap between conscious and unconscious, between the self and others, between intellect and emotion – threatens culture with destruction'.²⁴ Despite the failure to mention Medtner and the Musaget's group's interest in psychoanalysis and in the subconsciousness in literature, Tsvetaeva's memoir questions the ethical aspects of contemporary art and implicitly suggests that artistic communities should find the means to overcome the destructive and irrational forces of history and overcome divisions.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 625.

²¹ Ljunggren, 'Emilii Medtner and Carl Gustav Jung', p. 124.

²² Medtner, Emilii Karlovich, *Modernism i muzyka: Stat'i kriticheskie i polemicheskie (1907-1910)*, Moscow: Musaget, 1912.

²³ Ibid., p. 132.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 133.

Likewise, it is not coincidental that in 1933 Anastasiia Tsvetaeva translated from English into Russian Thomas Carlyle's book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* because she considered Carlyle's ideas to be highly relevant to the understanding of different projects of modernity emerging in Europe in the early 1930s that relied on mass culture and promoted conformism. Being dissatisfied with the language of the 1898 translation of the book into Russian by V.I. Iakovenko, Anastasiia Tsvetaeva wanted to bring Carlyle's essay to the attention of the modern reader. According to her book of memoirs *Neischerpaemoe (Inexhaustible)*, Anastasiia Tsvetaeva discussed her translations of Thomas Carlyle in her letters to Marina Tsvetaeva.²⁵ Like her sister, Anastasiia Tsvetaeva was influenced by the members of the Musaget publishing house, including Ellis and Maximilian Voloshin. Her understanding of Carlyle's idea that some poets should be treated as heroes in the same way as military or political leaders would have been influenced by the Symbolist concept of the interrelationship between art and life as well as by Russian neo-Kantian thinkers interested in intuitive and creative cognition of reality.

Although Marina Tsvetaeva fails in *Plennyi dukh* to mention Ellis's 1910 book *Russkie simvolisty (The Russian Symbolists)* in which Bely was portrayed as a visionary and as a spiritual leader of the new Symbolist group resembling religious brotherhood that promoted the cult of the Eternal Feminine and the Madonna,²⁶ she depicts Bely as a cultural hero in his own right. According to Karin Grellz, Ellis's book was inspired by the group discussions pivoting around the relationship between life and art and the future of Symbolism, in which Tsvetaeva also took part.²⁷ Her memoir gives the impression that women were not active participants of the discussions, concealing the fact that Russian theosopher and translator Anna Mintslova (1865-1910)

²⁵ Tsvetaeva, Anastasiia, 'Tomas Karleil' v moei zhizni (kak ia perevodila Kerleila)', *Neischerpaemoe*, Moscow: Otechestvo, 1992, pp. 211-212.

²⁶ According to Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, the Musaget discussions, courses and workshops on Symbolism, theosophy and philosophy were mostly lead by Bely and Kobylinskii (Ellis) who influenced many subsequent publications and activities. Although Medtner was critical of Rudolf Steiner, some members of the group of writers related to his publishing house befriended Steiner in 1910 and became members of the Vladimir Solov'ev Antroposophical Society founded in Moscow in 1913. See: Von Maydel, Renata. 'Anthroposophy in Russia', in: Rosenthal, Bernice Glatzer (ed.), *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, Chapel Hill, NC: Cornell University Press, 1997, pp. 157-158.

²⁷ Grellz, Karin, *Beyond the Noise of Time: Readings of Marina Tsvetaeva's Memories of Childhood*, Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2004, pp. 33-34.

was a highly influential figure among Bely and his friends. Mintslova's name is absent from the memoir. Tsvetaeva presents herself and her friend Asia Turgeneva (who was married to Bely briefly) as being observers during the Musaget workshops rather than active participants in group discussions. Yet her involvement with the Musaget group of poets, writers and thinkers informed her aesthetic and philosophical views considerably, including her desire to present Alexander Blok as a new martyr and visionary in her 1916 cycle of poetry which was dedicated to him.

It is worth mentioning here that Bely himself considered fellow poets as worthy of worship as new visionaries. Bely's cycle of poems dedicated to Valery Briusov, for example, presents the older poet both as a heroic and a demonic figure, who is always 'engaged in making poetry, bent over his book, [...] for whom everything is just a symbol'.²⁸ Tsvetaeva's memoir develops a similar approach. Yet she replaces Bely's mythic landscapes of mountains, sunsets and sunrises, admired both by Briusov and the narrator of Bely's cycle interested in the mystery of redemptive action, with urban experiences of everyday life in Berlin, moulding Bely into a Baudelaire-like figure.

Tsvetaeva's narrative also implicitly challenges Medtner's fascination with music as the highest medium of artistic expression and the innermost centre of Western culture. She portrays Bely as a captive spirit of the Symbolist mindset shaped by the aesthetic and philosophical ideas of his time. She brings Bely closer to her own vision of urban life entwined with imagining of the everyday as an extension of the city symphony comprising sounds and visual spectacles governed by the power of rhythm. Her memoir foregrounds the vitality of urban life and attempts to capture the sense impressions of the city at the moment of their unity in cinematographic manner, displaying an atmosphere of fluidity and disorientation.

The essence of film, as Raymond Williams suggests, is to serve as 'a medium to the disorienting ephemerality of the modern city'. As the definitive modernist mode, film affects other artistic modes of expression by locating them in 'the *intermediate* zone of urban experience'. According to Williams, this intermediate space might be seen 'as a "structure of feeling" that has not yet assumed the relatively formalised

²⁸ Pyman, Avril, *A History of Russian Symbolism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 235.

shape of aesthetic doctrine or political act'.²⁹ Tsvetaeva's *Plennyi dukh* depicts vividly how Bely creates a biographical legend out of his life and how his linguistic expression is shaped by the urban consciousness. The new way of seeing life, as Tsvetaeva's memoir shows, is affected by a cinematic vision that relies on montage. The use of montage in modern filmic and literary narratives highlights the disconnectedness of the image from its context and celebrates its fleeting quality. The title of the memoir serves as a metaphorical allusion to the experienced time in modern contexts. Not only does the memoir depict modernist time passing through arrested moments, but it also shows how the private worlds in motion are relative to one another as if each individual has its own rhythm and inner clock. It is also preoccupied with the question 'How does one represent intangible yet nevertheless flowing time in images and words?'

Tsvetaeva's younger contemporary Vladimir Nabokov, whom she befriended in Prague in January 1924,³⁰ created his own image of time as a foldable, patterned carpet which is meant to serve as an antidote to traditional uniform clock time. In his autobiography *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov said: 'I confess I do not believe in time. I like to fold my magic carpet, after use, in such a way as to superimpose one part of the pattern upon another'.³¹ In contrast to the notion of mathematical time that progresses successively and irreversibly from the past into the future, Nabokov's Bergsonian image alludes to reversible time that constitutes simultaneously past and present. For Nabokov, time becomes a personal thing that he can manage and control by folding and unfolding to superimpose distant images imprinted on it like a magic carpet.

Similarly, Tsvetaeva's description of the past talks about the personal flow of time as experienced by her, Bely and her daughter Ariadna, who accompanied Tsvetaeva and Bely to the Berlin zoo and other locations including beer houses in which Alia drank beer while listening to her mother and Bely. Tsvetaeva describes one of the cafés they visited after the zoo as an extension of the zoo: 'The zoo ended up with Alya's routine beer in a long wooden latticework structure that resembled a cage'. She goes on to describe Bely, 'who got sunburned during that day to a kind of tea-kettle, samovar color, from which his clearly-Asiatic eyes shone even more blue,

²⁹ Williams, Raymond, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, edited by Tony Pinkney, London: Verso, 1989, p. 11.

³⁰ Boyd, Brian, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, p. 221.

³¹ Nabokov, Vladimir, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited*, New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1966, p. 139.

against the background of the clearing that splashed greenery and sunshine through the slats of the cage'.³² As we can see, Tsvetaeva's poet's attentiveness to Bely's appearance creates an insightful association between the world of nature and Bely's interest in primordial forms of life that serve as a source of inspiration. Her verbal portrait is completed with Bely's perspective on the peaceful atmosphere of this summer outing: 'It's nice, isn't it? How I like all this! The grass, the big animals off over there, you, so simple ... And your daughter, quiet, sensible, not saying anything ... (And now like a refrain:) It's pleasant'.³³ The moment of pleasant contemplation becomes associated in Tsvetaeva's narrative with the slow pace of life opposed to the rhythms of hasty life on the streets of Berlin, and enables the memory to relive the past as a fleeting moment.

It also draws her readers' attention to the attentiveness of Tsvetaeva the narrator of the memoir. It provokes the question: how long would an individual need to look at a work of art or a person as an art object in order to gain a full aesthetic appreciation of it? Tsvetaeva's habit of attentiveness to aesthetically experienced moments of life as well as objects is ironically juxtaposed to her husband's inability to remember things correctly. Upon his arrival from Prague to Berlin he gets the age of his daughter wrong: 'A few days later her father arrived from Prague and was horror-struck at her passion for beer. "Like a bottomless barrel! At eight years old! No, we must put an end to that. Today I'll give her as much beer as she wants – so as to wean her off for good"'.³⁴ Not only does Sergei Efron appear to forget that his daughter is almost ten years old, he also objects to his wife's eccentric parental skills. Yet Tsvetaeva portrays her daughter's own attentiveness to Bely's stories about the past and his friendship with Alexander Blok and other poets as something insightful: after a few mugs of beer, Alia expresses her desire to go off to sleep, so she would not start saying 'the same stupid things as Andrei Bely'.³⁵ Being exposed to the conversations of the two poets of significance, Alia appears to have learnt from them the habit of attentiveness that enabled her to appreciate creativity and develop her own judgement. The observation on Alia's ability to be attentive and to think creatively is also

³² Tsvetaeva, Marina, 'A Captive Spirit', *A Captive Spirit: Selected Prose*, edited and translated by J. Marin King, London: Virago, 1983, p. 145.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 141.

³⁵ Ibid.

illustrated by her description of a lion in the zoo as the spitting image of Lev Tolstoy. The scenes related to the zoo promote a special link between verbal and visual modes of expression as part of a larger project of self-development and self-creation inspired by cinematographic explorations of reality that inform the development of a modern identity.

Tsvetaeva's memoir also validates Boris Tomashevskii's thesis that 'the biography that is useful to the literary historian is not the author's curriculum vitae or the investigator's account of his life' but 'the biographical legend created by the author himself'. In Tomashevskii's view, 'only such a legend is a *literary fact*'.³⁶ It is important to note here that Tomashevskii's notion of biographical legend as the literary conception of the poet's life serves as a useful background for the poet's literary works, as described in his 1923 article 'Literatura i biografii' ('Literature and Biography'). Tomashevskii's article suggests that the poet's self-fashioning intimate confessions and allusions appeared only 'in hidden, mystically masked forms of Symbolism'.³⁷ By contrast, he discusses the poets of the post-Symbolist mould, including Vladimir Mayakovsky, as writers who show readers their own biography through works that resemble 'an open diary in which intimate feelings are recorded'.³⁸ Bearing in mind Viktoriia Shveitzer's observation that Bely, in *Plennyi dukh*, lives in Tsvetaeva's reminiscences as a human being,³⁹ we can see that Bely's experience of time interrelated with his creative process inspired Tsvetaeva to appreciate modern poetic rhythms as manifestations of urban experiences. Tsvetaeva, like D.S. Mirsky before her,⁴⁰ presents Bely as the progenitor of Russian Futurist poetry by describing his ability to talk about his life as part of his creative process and to be attentive to the visual and aural aspects of the flow of time.

Tsvetaeva's narrator self-fashions herself as a writer who understands the difference between documentary biographies that belong to studies concerned with

³⁶ Tomashevsky, Boris, 'Literature and Biography', in: Matejka, Ladislav and Pomorska, Krystyna (eds), *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971, p. 55.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

³⁹ Schweitzer, Viktoriia, *Tsvetaeva*, translated from the Russian by Robert Chandler and H.T. Willets, New York: Noonday Press, 1992, p. 179.

⁴⁰ Mirsky, D.S., *A History of Russian Literature*, ed. Francis W. Whitfield, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960, p. 463

cultural history, ‘on a par with the biographies of general and inventors’,⁴¹ and literary memoirs in which ‘the juxtaposition of the texts and the author’s biography plays a structural role’.⁴² Given that Tsvetaeva’s memoir concludes with the reproduction of Bely’s poem dedicated to Tsvetaeva that praises the power of her poetic rhythmical structures, it confirms the continuity of Bely’s vision. The method of rendering multiple viewpoints and moments of urban life shaped by the experience of space-time in constant motion is celebrated in *Plennyi dukh* as a new form of artistic expression. Early Symbolist literature, concedes Tomashevskii, created a new intimate style oriented towards the reproduction in literary works of ‘intimate conversations and confidential confessions’. This style was succeeded by biographical lyricism. For the Symbolist poet, Tomashevskii concludes, ‘his biography was a living and necessary commentary to his works. His poems are lyrical episodes about himself, and his readers always informed themselves [...] about the principal events of his life’.⁴³ In Tsvetaeva’s memoir, biographical lyricism is inseparable from an aestheticist exploration of patterns, shapes, movements and rhythms that differs strikingly from the descriptions of metropolitan modernity produced by contemporary journalists, sociologists and architects.

Tsvetaeva’s rendering of Bely’s stream of consciousness reinforces Tomashevskii’s conception of biographical lyricism as an important element of post-Symbolist culture. The narrator of *Plennyi dukh* makes her readers aware that, being informed by the space-time experiences of metropolitan modernity, Bely’s oral and written forms of self-expression are superior to the realist idea of art found in the Russian nineteenth-century novel. Her memoir demonstrates how Bely’s artistic language transcends the ossifying power of everyday language and scientific terminology, so that the rapid change of modern reality becomes registered in its rhythm, pauses and disjointed narratives.

According to a letter from Bely to Fedor Gladkov written shortly before the former’s death in 1934, Bely suffered from a condition that he defined as tongue-tie (*kosnoiazychie*). The letter includes Bely’s confession about inadequacy of his artistic expression: ‘The word is always buried inside me with difficulty; since childhood I

⁴¹ Tomashevsky, ‘Literature and Biography’, p. 55.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 54.

was terrified by the emptiness of everyday words; and this is why up to the age of 16 all words were taken away from me; I aspired to big words but they did not exist, even to this day'.⁴⁴ Tsvetaeva's *Plennyi dukh* is sympathetic to Bely's desire to find an adequate expression for the modern perception of the universe affected by radical developments in science in the 1880s-1920s and by contemporary discussions of the cultural crisis.

The story presents Bely's disjointed monologues not as a speech impediment but an ability to speak in tongues in the style of prophets and holy fools. This quality of Bely's word-weaving was defined in Yurii Lotman's article on Bely as a search 'for a different language' and a quest for new forms of expression due to Bely's realisation that semantic meaning can be carried not just by words, but also by sounds, intonation and non-verbal forms of expression. Lotman thought that Bely's formal linguistic experiments of the late period outgrew the Symbolist aesthetic and 'became close to Khlebnikov's dadaism'.⁴⁵ As Olga Cooke has noted, some critics went so far as to define Bely in the 1920s as 'a cosmic Suprematist' because nothing was static in his artistic world. Cooke suggests that 'the principle of spontaneity dominated' during the composition of Bely's late works to the effect that the spirit of creation was articulated too, as if the author wanted to free himself from the tyranny of temporal and spatial categories.⁴⁶

Tsvetaeva's definition of Bely as a captive spirit reflects the fluidity of Bely's gestalt and links his search for a new mode of artistic expression to contemporary theoretical models foregrounding a new perception of space. It is worth noting here that Tsvetaeva's memoir depicts different stages of his career. According to Anna Saakiant, Tsvetaeva's participation in the seminars on poetry organised by the Russian publisher Musaget and Bely might have influenced her own experiments with rhythmic structures in poetry despite the fact that she would remember Bely largely as a talented eccentric rather than her teacher.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Quoted in English in Cooke, Olga, '“Kosnojazyčie” in the Final Decade of Andrej Belyj's Artistic Life', *Russian Literature*, 53/2005, 47-48.

⁴⁵ Lotman, Yu., 'Poeticheskoe kosnojazyčie Belogo', in: Lesnevskii, S. and Mikhailov, A. (eds), *Andrej Belyi: Problemy tvorčestva: Stat'i, vospominaniia, publikatsii*, Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1988, p. 439.

⁴⁶ Cooke, '“Kosnojazyčie”', p. 55.

⁴⁷ Saakiant, Anna, 'Vstreča poetov: Andrej Belyi i Marina Tsvetaeva', in: Mikhailov and Lesnevskii, *Andrej Belyi*, pp. 367-368.

What interests Tsvetaeva in Bely is his Bergsonian approach to modern art which dispenses with the surface gestalt and reveals the automatic creation of the attentive mind, thereby looking for deeper insight beyond the limits of human rationality. Bergson talks about his model of metaphysical intuition (a gestalt free vision) thus: ‘When I direct my attention inward to contemplate my own self, I perceive at first [...] all the perceptions which come to it from the material world. These perceptions are clear, distinct, juxtaposed or juxtaposable with one another; they tend to group themselves into objects [...]. But if I draw myself in from the periphery towards the centre, [...] I find an altogether different thing. There beneath these sharply cut crystals and this frozen surface, a continuous flux which is not comparable to any flux I have ever seen. There is a succession of states each of which announces that which follows and contains that which precedes it. In reality no one begins or ends, but all extend into each other’.⁴⁸ Bergson’s description of gestalt-free perception implies that the artistic technique of superimposition, as it is used in modern painting, could enable individuals to suppress rational ideas and attain first-hand experience of reality. Creative thinking is presented in Bergson’s book on metaphysics as a state of fluid vision comparable to intuitive cognition of reality. The modern ‘automatic’ artist embodies Bergson’s ideas about the necessity of remaining static in the state of gestalt-free perception by suppressing definitive formative ideas. ‘The traditional artist too knows the state of fluid and gestalt free vision,’ affirms Anton Ehrenzweig, ‘but he forgets them as soon as definitive formative ideas emerge’.⁴⁹

Tsvetaeva’s story attempts to render the gestalt-free perception of reality. It highlights the difference between traditional and modern art as well as between conscious and automatic forms of artistic expression. It demonstrates that the gestalt-free ‘ear-wandering’ type of writing that Bely tried to achieve in his late period produces the effect of polyphony. Arguably, Tsvetaeva’s own evolution from lyricism to polyphony appears to have been partly shaped by her encounters with Bely as well as by her exposure to the works of European Dadaists, Surrealists, and Soviet and French filmmakers. As one of her 1939 letters to Sergei Efron (sent from Paris to Moscow) testifies, Tsvetaeva was especially fond of French cinema and she considered

⁴⁸ Bergson, Henri, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, London: Macmillan, 1913, p. 8.

⁴⁹ Ehrenzweig, Anton, *The Psycho-Analysis of Artistic Vision and Hearing*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2007, p. 36.

it to be the best in the world. She particularly praised the human touch as one of the most important features of French cinema.⁵⁰ She was also aware of Eisenstein's films and theoretical works and essays on film produced by Russian Formalists. Being an enthusiastic reader of Sergei Efron's articles on Soviet filmmakers, Efron's sister Lilia Efron sent from Russia a collection of essays on film written by Russian Formalists to her brother and Tsvetaeva in February 1931.⁵¹

Given Tsvetaeva's interest in aesthetic experiences as a tool for cognising reality, it is worth comparing some of the aforementioned verbal 'snapshots' of her meetings with Bely with the two obituaries of Bely written in January and July 1934. The July obituary was written by the established Russian émigré critic and editor Gleb Struve. Struve's essay mentions Bely's links with Russian Symbolists and Rudolf Steiner. In Struve's opinion, Bely and Blok were representatives of the religious-philosophical current of Russian Symbolism that developed many tenets of Vladimir Solov'ev's mystical philosophy. While finding Bely's novel *Petersburg* uneven, Struve praises Bely's autobiographical novel *Kotik Letaev* (1915-1922) for its utilisation of 'new methods for rendering subconscious emotions and impressions'. Struve defines these methods as Bely's 'most daring experiment in the style of Joyce's technique'.⁵² Arguably, Struve's obituary links Bely's experiments with European modernism. Struve also states that Bely is well known in Germany through the successful translations of his works into German, and laments the absence of English translations of his works. He comments that 'a genius and a fool coexisted in Bely's soul' to the extent that nearly all Bely's creative output 'is marked by that double personality'.⁵³ Struve's observation stands close to Tsvetaeva's portrayal of Bely as a genius and a holy fool. By juxtaposing Struve's and Tsvetaeva's characterisations of Bely, we can see that at the centre of Tsvetaeva's story is her interest in Bely's creative method rather than in his achievements as a writer. Her memoir attempts to portray Bely's private world as a world in motion and as an embodiment of modern urban consciousness.

⁵⁰ Tsvetaeva, Marina, *Neizdannoe. Sem'ia: Istorii v pis'makh*, edited by E.B. Korkina, Moscow: Ellis Lak, 1999, pp. 380, 384.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 348-349.

⁵² Struve, Gleb, 'Andrey Bely (Boris Bugaev)', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 13.37/1934, 184.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

The second obituary – which appeared in the prestigious émigré newspaper *Vozrozhdenie (Renaissance)* on 13 January 1934 – was written by Vladislav Khodasevich, who signed it as V.K. ‘It was a person who was not just talented and gifted: he was a genius. [...]’, asserts Khodasevich. ‘Being always torn between different things, always highly impressionable, Andrey Bely did not realise all the potential with which he was endowed so generously. Perhaps, his restless mental life which always cascaded so many gushes of energy out of his physical body was the main reason for this. Nevertheless, Bely’s literary output is enormous’.⁵⁴ Like Tsvetaeva, Khodasevich suggests that Bely was a true Symbolist in everything he did. He goes as far as to claim that only Alexander Blok, Bely and Viacheslav Ivanov could be considered as true representatives of Russian Symbolism, as opposed to the older generation of Symbolists who could be defined as decadents. Khodasevich also talks about the impact of Bely’s works and activities on all Russian literary life after 1905. ‘Perhaps, just as important as his books,’ affirms Khodasevich, ‘his highly complex personality – which at times was incompatible with existing conventions of everyday life – had a tremendous influence on people due to his unique and unforgettable charisma’.⁵⁵ Khodasevich thought that, despite all Bely’s works and activities containing a trace of hastiness and nervous breakdown, his philosophical and critical writings created a compelling argument that Russian Symbolism should be seen not as a literary movement but as an embodiment of a certain worldview. Tsvetaeva’s statement (inserted into her memoir) ‘Symbolism was much more than a literary movement’⁵⁶ echoes Khodasevich’s pronouncement about Symbolism’s ability to endow its adherents with a certain worldview.

Khodasevich emphasises that Bely’s death brings a huge sense of sadness to everyone who was fortunate to know him. He predicts that Bely’s death will create a void in Russian literature which cannot be filled by anyone else. In contrast to Khodasevich, Tsvetaeva’s insertion of Bely’s poem praising her invincible rhythms and the vitality of her melodies implies that the void left by Bely could be filled by Tsvetaeva’s own verse and fiction.

⁵⁴ V.Kh. ‘Andrei Belyi’, *Vozrozhdenie*, 9.3147/13 January 1934, 2.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Tsvetaeva, Marina, ‘Plennyi dukh’, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1984, vol. 2, p. 276.

The narrator of *Plennyi dukh* self-fashions herself as a person who possesses important techniques inspired by Bely's experiments with verbal and visual structures. She relies on overtone montage to release images from two dimensions because a new kind of cinematographic narration requires a new perception of space. By blurring the boundaries between visual image and word, between reader and text, as well as between spectator and performer, Tsvetaeva redefines the notion of the captive spirit by creating a literary equivalent of the filmic fourth dimension found in Sergei Eisenstein's films.

Tsvetaeva creates her own bond with Bely by portraying him as an exile who experiences displacement both inside and outside Russia. In her rendering of Bely's life, his restless spirit becomes synonymous with the fleeting quality of urban experiences and liminality associated with the prevalent sense of homelessness among many Russians and Europeans affected by the World War I. Hamid Naficy's definition of exile as a 'process of perpetual becoming, involving separation from home, a period of liminality and in-betweenness that can be temporary or permanent, and incorporation into dominant and host society that can be partial or incomplete'⁵⁷ can be successfully applied to Tsvetaeva's works of the 1920s-1930s.

The notion of liminality that Naficy borrowed from the famous American anthropologist Victor Turner is usually related to anthropological studies of various rites of passage in primitive societies. According to Turner, liminality might be partly characterised as the stage of reflection. 'During the liminal period,' writes Turner, 'neophytes are encouraged to think about their society, their cosmos, and the powers that generate and sustain them'.⁵⁸ Neophytes are also presented with *sacra* and are told that 'they are being filled with mystical power' which would enable them to attain successfully a new status or to undertake new tasks 'in this world, or the next'.⁵⁹ As Turner puts it, 'the communication of *sacra* [...] teaches the neophytes how to think about some degree of abstraction about their cultural milieu'.⁶⁰ Turner describes the

⁵⁷ Naficy, Hamid, *The Making of Exile Cultures: Iranian Television in Los Angeles*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. 9.

⁵⁸ Turner, Victor, 'Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage', in Mahdi, Louise Carus, Foster, Steven and Little, Meredith (eds), *Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation*, La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1994, p. 14.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

knowledge attained during the liminal state portrayed through the Eleusinian Mysteries practised in Ancient Greece as the foremost principles of life. Likewise, Tsvetaeva describes her encounters with Bely in 1922 as a symbolic rite of passage into émigré life that enlightened her on the positive aspects of in-between existence: they enabled Tsvetaeva to shape her sense of selfhood in the European cultural context of the 1920s.

The application of Turner's notion of liminal space to the description of the exilic condition makes problematic the definition by Elisabeth Bronfen of life in exile as a 'simultaneous and imperfect presence in two worlds'.⁶¹ I would argue that Tsvetaeva's memoir reinforces the belief in the importance of mystical rituals and symbolic thinking for the spiritual transcendence of the everyday. Thus her last meeting with Bely in a suburb of Berlin is portrayed as a night of allegorical seclusion in which the narrator participates in a symbolic mystical marriage as Bely's 'ritual wife'. Berlin is ascribed in Tsvetaeva's story with the qualities of a liminal space used for the exploration of thresholds between the sensory and performative, the visual and verbal, the literal and metaphorical. Her portrayal of Bely as a captive spirit is comparable to Michael Seidel's definition of the exile as 'someone who inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another'.⁶²

Although Tsvetaeva's story highlights the significance of the Moscow environment for her creativity and identity, the references to Moscow, Berlin and Prague embedded in her story are portrayed through the prism of a mythopoeic vision of the exilic condition that presupposes the trope of the writer as a displaced person, the Romantic association of exile with the fall from grace, and a psychoanalytic view of exile in terms of the Oedipal separation from the mother.⁶³ The loss of home as a category of identification affects both Bely and Tsvetaeva, and subsequently they respond to the estrangement from their home and their past identities with a striking insistence on the power of poetic imagination. Tsvetaeva's imagined space of exile – as depicted in *Plennyi dukh* – is assembled from her fragmented memories of the past and omits any references to her life in Moscow in the early Soviet period.

In *Plennyi dukh*, the discussion of Tsvetaeva's life in emigration pivots around the creation of a third space constructed out of her desire to challenge a normative

⁶¹ Bronfen, Elisabeth, 'Entortung und Identität: Ein Thema der modernen Exilliteratur', *Germanic Review*, 69/1994, 71.

⁶² Seidel, Michael, *Exile and the Narrative Imagination*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986, p. ix.

⁶³ Bronfen, 'Entortung und Identität', p. 68.

gendered space of the feminine. The description of Bely's photographs in Tsvetaeva's story reinforces the state of liminality of the female narrator who explores her memoir writing as part of a performative space that relies on the automatic creation of the depth mind. The liminal space, as Josette Feral notes, invokes the concept of journey, rather than destination. According to Feral, the performative space is transitional: it represents undefined zones and reoccupied spaces 'inhabited by individuals' because 'it is a space of passage and crossing rather than a place of identification'.⁶⁴ By presenting the Berlin of *Plennyi dukh* as a space of exile and as a space of transition, Tsvetaeva highlights the fluidity of her poetic identity associated with the automatic creation of the depth mind. While Moscow is lamented in the story as a place of permanence (it is linked, to a large extent, to the identity of the fathers of both Tsvetaeva and Bely, and to the creative developments of the pre-revolutionary period), Berlin is portrayed as a space of transit, and Prague is mentioned as a place that could have been an ideal home for Bely. The story notes the existence of Czech grants offered to Russian writers and how, in addition to Tsvetaeva, Professor Kondakov and his associates would have served as a perfect community of like-minded people for Bely.

The counterfactual approach to history used in the concluding part of the story indicates Tsvetaeva's disappointment with Bely's decision to go back to Russia, where he had to assume the role of an internal émigré. She recalls how in November 1923 Bely asked her to find a room for him in Prague or near Prague, so they could continue their conversations. Tsvetaeva provides a few quotes from Bely's four-page letter to her that she describes as a hysterical emotional outburst: 'it was a 4-page outburst of emotions expressed on four pages'; 'the four pages contained his sobs and howling, mixed with childishly useless instructions and descriptions of a room he needed'.⁶⁵ Tsvetaeva admits that she assured Bely that he was more precious to her than anyone else and the most dearest friend of hers ('dorozhe dorigogo i rodnee rodnogo'), but she never received a reply from him. As Tsvetaeva reports in her memoir, a few days later after sending her letter to Bely she learnt from the newspaper *Rul'* (*The Rudder*) about Bely's departure. The newspaper commented briefly that Bely left Berlin for

⁶⁴ Feral, Josette, 'Every Transaction Conjures a New Boundary', in: Reinelt, Janelle and Roach, Joseph (eds), *Critical Theory and Performance*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2007, p. 59.

⁶⁵ Tsvetaeva, Marina, 'Plennyi dukh', p. 285. (All translations from this story are mine unless specified otherwise.)

Soviet Russia during November 1923 for good. She speculates that Bely left for Russia the same day that he sent her his emotional letter in which he asked for Tsvetaeva's help with accommodation in Prague. Tsvetaeva suggests in another paragraph that perhaps Bely did not appreciate her enough. She also describes one visitor from Berlin who came to Prague in 1924: he told her that Bely talked strangely about Tsvetaeva. Allegedly, Bely told that friend of Tsvetaeva an odd thing: 'Of course, I like Tsvetaeva, how could I not like Tsvetaeva when she *too* is a professor's daughter'.⁶⁶

Tsvetaeva's confessional mode in the concluding part of the memoir suggests that she did not feel guilty about Bely's hasty departure for Russia. Her feelings are conveyed in a dispassionate manner as a documentary-style account of events. This contrasts with Bely's aforementioned emotional letter sent to Tsvetaeva from Berlin to Prague. She writes: 'What didn't I write! I wrote *everything*! The room waited, the Czech scholarship waited. And the Czechs waited. And the friends condemned to slavery waited. And I – waited'.⁶⁷

In contrast to Tsvetaeva's portrayal of Bely as a highly unstable individual, driven by his inspiration and his intuitive search for a new artistic language, Mark Aldanov, the well-known Russian émigré fiction writer, sees Bely in his letter of 26 June 1922 as a rational person preoccupied with psychoanalytic modes of writing:

I had a supper with Bely recently in one of the restaurants in Berlin. (I saw him before that at Gessen's place.) He is a very educated and even highly knowledgeable person who belongs to an exhilarating breed of people. When he talked enthusiastically in the restaurant, he was a spectacle, everyone was looking at him. I had a strange but favourable impression of him. When we discussed private matters and political issues, he criticised mercilessly the Bolsheviks and the Smenovkhovtsy. Yet when I read his essays afterwards [...], I was surprised to see his strange use of syntax: in each sentence he places the subject (noun or pronoun) in such a manner that it makes no sense at all. What can it be? He is a famous author, I must say. The German

⁶⁶ Tsvetaeva, Marina, *Captive Spirit*, p. 156.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

newspaper *Berliner Tageblatt* compares Bely to Dostoevsky... He is our best modernist writer in all respects.⁶⁸

As can be seen from Aldanov's account of his meetings with Bely, Bely's word-weaving did not affect his conversational style, but it manifested itself in Bely's written language. Aldanov also comments on Bely's sound judgement in political matters. Aldanov's preference for a realist aesthetic provides a useful insight to Bely's feeling of loneliness among Russian émigré writers in 1922.

Unlike Aldanov, Tsvetaeva portrays Bely as a Surrealist-like writer interested in automatic writing as well as in decoding the gestalt-free perception of reality. By 1934 Tsvetaeva successfully developed herself as an émigré author who found her own voice through her memoir writing using the cross-cutting narrative style akin to Eisenstein's theory of the overtone montage. Its function, as manifested in such films as *Bronenosets Potemkin* (*Battleship Potemkin*, 1925), is to push the perceptual boundaries of the audience. Anne Nesbet suggests that the idea of attaining high reality through the use of overtone montage in Eisenstein's films derives from Petr Ouspensky's notion of the fourth spatial dimension developed in 1909.⁶⁹ Caroline Maclean thinks that the notion of the overtone montage stems both from Ouspensky's idea of the fourth dimension and from Hermann Minkowsky's 1908 article 'Space and Time' in which he argues that space and time are 'two parts of a unified whole'.⁷⁰

The validity of the comparison between Eisenstein's and Bely's experiments with language might be explained by how Eisenstein, a member of the Rosicrucian order, developed a strong interest in the occult and in the ideas of Blavatskaya and Rudolph Steiner.⁷¹ In August 1920 he attended a lecture on Bergson's theory of laughter delivered by Boris Zubakin (1894-1938), the famous Russian theosopher, sculptor and poet; after the lecture, Eisenstein talked to Zubakin and joined his order of Rosicrucian knights. He described the ritual of conversion thus: 'Some words. And we,

⁶⁸ Grin, M. E. (ed.), 'Pis'ma M.A. Aldanova k I.A. i V.N. Buninym', *Novyi zhurnal*, 80.1/1965, 262-263.

⁶⁹ Nesbet, Anne, *Savage Junctures: Sergei Eisenstein and the Shape of Thinking*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2007, p. 223.

⁷⁰ Maclean, Caroline, 'That Magic Force that is Montage: Eisenstein's Filmic Fourth Dimension, Borderline and H.D.', *Literature and History*, 21.1/2012, 45.

⁷¹ Lövgren, Hakan, 'Sergei Eisenstein's Gnostic Circle', in: Rosenthal, *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, 1997, p. 276.

linking hands, walked past a mirror. The mirror sent our union... into the astral'.⁷² Later on Eisenstein developed his theory of montage that comprised scientific and mystical notions. He identified different types of montage with various vibrations: while metric montage was associated with physical vibrations, tonal montage was supposed to trigger emotional vibrations, and the overtone or fourth-dimensional montage usually caused 'the kinds of vibrations that once again ceased to be perceived as tones but are perceived rather as purely physical "parallaxes" on the part of the perceiver'.⁷³ As Maclean notes, 'parallaxes occur when an observer shifts position and an object appears to have moved'.⁷⁴ Slavoi Žižek suggests that, through parallax, subject and object are inherently mediated: 'The subject's gaze is always already inscribed into the perceived object itself'.⁷⁵ According to Žižek, the subject understands that the picture is in his/her eye, but he/she also sees himself/herself in the picture. Parallax is usually defined as the displacement of the object caused by a change in observational position.

Tsvetaeva uses Eisensteinian fourth-dimensional parallax at the end of her story when she describes one of the photographs of Bely published in an émigré newspaper as 'an astral picture' (*astral'nyi snimok*) and defines Bely's face as 'the face of a spirit with eyes through which shines that otherworldly light (*tem svetom*)'. She suggests that the light emanating from Bely's photograph affects the viewer: 'The light shines through – on us (*na nas skvozit*)'.⁷⁶ She describes the displacement caused by the photograph in the manner of Eisenstein's four-dimensional montage, so the readers of her story could visualise it themselves and experience the binding effect of the photograph as well as feel the vibrations resembling irregular movements triggered by the breeze. The narrator of Tsvetaeva's memoir functions as an Eisenstein-like figure who uses scientific and mystical knowledge in order to control the impact of her image of Bely on the reader. Bely's tongue-tie mode of speaking is presented in the story not only as an exilic condition but also as a quality of the true modern poet who aspires to push the boundaries of perception through rendering the fourth dimension's presence in the real world. With the use of the parallax, Tsvetaeva binds the reader to the image

⁷² Quoted in Lövgren, 'Sergei Eisenstein's Gnostic Circle', p. 277.

⁷³ Quoted in Maclean, 'That Magic Force that is Montage', p. 54.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Žižek, Slavoi, *The Parallax View*, Boston: MIT Press, 2006, p. 17.

⁷⁶ Tsvetaeva, Marina, 'Plennyi dukh', pp. 287-288.

of Bely in the photograph. She describes her own presence in that image in such a way that the definition of the captive spirit applied to Bely becomes applicable to Tsvetaeva herself.

It is clear that Tsvetaeva's memoir about Bely reveals her strong interest in overtoneal/fourth-dimensional montage. She was familiar with Soviet and French films of the 1920s-1930s, and in the late 1920s Tsvetaeva became interested in photography. Her friendship with Nikolai Gronskii, a passionate photographer and poet, enabled her to understand many technical aspects of photography. Her friend Prince Sviatopolk Mirsky characterised Soviet films produced in 1925-1931 as 'the most significant development in the whole history of cinematography' and stated that: 'The purely technical importance of the work of Eisenstein and his school for the art of the moving pictures can hardly be exaggerated and is universally recognised, even in Hollywood'.⁷⁷

Mirsky's article on Soviet films also praises the highbrow cinematography of Western Europe represented by the French school which 'has been seized on by poets and by directors inspired by the modern poetic outlook, that is to say consciously concerned with the expression of the subconsciousness'.⁷⁸ In Mirsky's opinion, the best films produced by the French school are comparable to the high standards of modern poetry. He praises Eisenstein's 1925 film *Bronenosets Potemkin* for being the true embodiment 'of the inherent kinship of the art of cinematography with science'.⁷⁹ Mirsky describes the invention of montage as a significant development that introduced 'a new scientific attitude into the very process of creation'.⁸⁰ His definition of montage as 'a creative practice of "cutting" individual shots and putting them together in an order aiming at a maximum effectiveness'⁸¹ is a fitting description of the principle of montage used in Tsvetaeva's story about Bely, in which she attempts to render Bely's unconsciousness and to stimulate different sensory reactions of the reader with the help of rhythmic and overtoneal montage. Mirsky believed that both American behaviourism and the reflexology of Bekhterev and Pavlov had already

⁷⁷ Mirsky, D.S., 'The Soviet Films', *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 7.4/1931, 522.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 526.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 527.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 528.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

influenced the new cinematography and could enable it to develop further.⁸² Tsvetaeva's *Plennyi dukh* suggests that Tsvetaeva was aware of many important aesthetic developments in Russia and in Europe in the early 1930s. That is why she portrays Bely as a precursor of the new language of modern poetry who was torn between the rational and irrational aspects of modern culture. She also appears to be suspicious of Bely's interest in theosophy. This is felt in her self-representation as someone repeating enthusiastically after Father Sergii the prayer: 'Grant peace, O Lord, to the soul of the servant newly come to Thee – Boris'.⁸³

The story ends with the report of Tsvetaeva's husband bringing home Bely's collection of poetry *Posle razluki* (*After Separation*), which contains a poem dedicated to Tsvetaeva. Bely's poem praises Tsvetaeva's poetic prayers: 'Vashi molitvy- / Malinovyie melodii / I- / Nepobedimye / Ritmy' ('melodies of crimsons and invincible rhythms').⁸⁴ The concluding part of the story featuring Bely's poem celebrates the vitality of poetic imagination. It also functions as superimposition, suggesting thereby that Bely is a beholder of Tsvetaeva's gaze, too. Like the Dadaists, Tsvetaeva was suspicious of the Futurists' fascination with the militant, industrial machine culture and of their celebration of the rapid rhythm of modern life as a tool that should make new art more material, direct and more simplified. More appealing to her was the Dadaists' exploration of modern noises and rhythms, and abstract symmetries instead of principles as part of the subversion of existing cultural conventions from within. Dadaists wrote: 'Rhythm is the trotting of intonations you can hear; there is a rhythm which you cannot see or hear, light-rays from an inner cluster towards a constellation of order'.⁸⁵ The allusion to light rays associated with psychic experiences of reality is comparable to Tsvetaeva's aforementioned photograph of Bely permeated with a special light that makes it look like an astral picture.

It appears that Tsvetaeva's insistence on the cinematographic qualities of Bely's writing was shaped by her own exposure to Russian and French films. Tsvetaeva's description of Bely in Berlin found in her letter to Aleksandr Bakhrakh on 20 July 1923 differs strikingly from her memoir. It says: 'I love Boris Nikolaevich

⁸² Ibid., p. 532.

⁸³ Tsvetaeva, 'Plennyi dukh', p. 313; *A Captive Spirit*, p. 158

⁸⁴ Tsvetaeva, *Captive Spirit*, p. 159.

⁸⁵ Tzara, Tristan, 'Note sur la poésie' (1919), quoted in English in David Gascoigne, 'Boomboom and Hullabaloo: Rhythm in the Zurich Dada Revolution', *Paragraph*, 33.2/2010, 202.

tenderly [...]. He is a lonely person. In everyday life he is less capable than me; he acts like a madman. When I am around him, I feel that he acts like a blind person and I function as his guide dog. It is healing to relate to somebody else's weakness. My best memories of Berlin are connected with him'.⁸⁶ It is clear that in 1934 she wanted to portray herself as a person inspired by Bely who had mastered the rendering of the unconsciousness and of the fourth-dimensional gestalt-free perception of reality as a spatio-temporal continuum. Tsvetaeva's Post Scriptum at the end of the story has a confessional statement: 'I sometimes think that there are no endings (*kontsa – net*)'.⁸⁷ The statement is double-edged. It can mean both that poetic speech is immortal and that things which are spatially unrepresentable in the three dimensional world can emerge in the fourth dimension. The visual overtone or overall impression from watching moving images might prove to be a real element of a 'four-dimensional space-time continuum', as Eisenstein defined the fourth dimension that shifts between space and time.⁸⁸

Since Tsvetaeva's memoir was written in Paris we can see that Paris, being another centre of cultural innovation from the late 1920s to the early 1930s, is described in the story as a more vibrant city than Berlin of the early 1920s. Paris offers Tsvetaeva a vantage point that enables her to assume a hybrid identity and assemble images from the past in the style of a theatrical performance in order to bring them back to life through her public reading of the memoir to her fellow émigré writers and critics. Tsvetaeva read her memoir during the commemorative evening dedicated to Bely on 15 March 1934 in Paris. She was pleased with her ability to embody the living image of Bely constructed out of her impressions of him. She wrote:

My portrait of Bely is successful. [...] He appears to be alive; he is all in motion; he communicates directly with the reader as if he is alive. During my public reading of the memoir, everyone who knew Bely admired my portrayal of him because of its close resemblance to the real Bely. I used Bely's monologue as much as possible. [...] My Bely

⁸⁶ Quoted in Saakiantz, Anna, 'Vstrecha poetov', p. 383.

⁸⁷ Tsvetaeva, *Captive Spirit*, p. 158.

⁸⁸ Eisenstein, Sergei, 'The Fourth Dimension in the Cinema', *Selected Works*, vol. 1, Moscow, 1988, p. 185. Quoted in Maclean, "That Magic Force That is Montage", pp. 44-60.

sounded like the real Bely so strongly that I would not be surprised to see him in the middle of the room while I was reading out my story. I would not have been frightened by his resurrection.⁸⁹

The physiological sensation created by the reading of the memoir once again invokes the notion of fourth-dimensional space. It suggests a space without boundaries, into which even the body could walk. Tsvetaeva's comment is double-edged: while she highlights the power of performance to embody images and spaces, she also professes a near-religious veneration for the Word shared by many Russian writers. It appears that one of the main goals of Tsvetaeva's 1934 memoir about Bely written for the Russian émigré community in Paris was to remind the Russian reader abroad about Bely's contribution to the development of Russian literature as an experimental space for the cross-fertilisation of Russian and European ideas. Tsvetaeva's focus on Bely's unusual syntactical structures, his style of speaking and his belief in the ability of the language to embody the visible and the invisible might be influenced by Khodasevich's concerns about the conservative nature of the Russian émigré community. These were conveyed in his seminal 1933 essay 'Literatura v izgnanii' ('Literature in Exile').⁹⁰ By challenging the views of some émigré critics that Russian literature would not survive outside Russia, Khodasevich's article dispells their fears and anxieties. It states: 'The nationality of literature is created by its language and spirit, and not by the territory where its life transpires, not by the everyday (*byt*) it reflects'.⁹¹ Khodasevich promotes a notion of transnational identity and links it to Russian cultural heritage and spiritual values.

Tsvetaeva is keen to remind the Russian émigré reader that the only concept of self that Bely and herself were willing to accept during their meetings in Berlin in 1922 was that of the poet. By creating a subtitle for her story, 'Moia vstrecha s Andreem Belym' ('My meeting with Andrey Bely'), Tsvetaeva emphasises how the importance of her identity as a Russian poet was reinforced by her encounters with Bely. Her memoir notes that their fathers were university professors from Moscow;

⁸⁹ Tsvetaeva, 'Plennyi dukh', p. 284.

⁹⁰ *Literatura v izgnanii*, <http://hodasevich.lit-info.ru/hodasevich/kritika/hodasevich/literatura-v-izgnanii.htm>, (accessed 1 August 2017).

⁹¹ Quoted in English in: Slobin, Greta N., 'Why the First-Wave Russian Literary Diaspora Embraced Shklovskian Estrangement', *Poetics Today*, 26.4/2005, 713.

they had common friends among Russian Symbolist poets, critics and translators; they were both interested in religious sects such as flagellants; they shared an interest in the interrelationship between music and poetry; and their emigration to Berlin heightened their sense of the irrevocable loss of the pre-revolutionary Russian culture to which they belonged. Yet the sense of displacement triggered by the October Revolution provided Tsvetaeva and Bely with an opportunity to broaden their repertoire and to seek a new language of expression suitable for their somatic poetics.

In addition to some biographical affinities between Bely and Tsvetaeva, the memoir constructs an image of the poet-exile whose displacement ensures his renderings of the otherworldly and metaphysical encounters with reality to be conveyed in spatial terms, creating thereby a sense of simultaneous existence in several temporal dimensions. Although the notion of the poetic vision described in the story is rooted partly in the works of Plato as well as in German and Russian Romantic and Symbolist poets, the distinct characteristic of the modern poet highlighted in the story is linked to otherworldly themes. This is how Tsvetaeva describes her last trip with Bely to Charlottenburg which became a suburb of Berlin in 1920:

There remains the final thing: an evening-nighttime excursion with him to Charlottenburg. And this final thing remained in me the perfect vision of a dream [...]. I remember only statues that fell back, crossroads that were traversed, squares that were suddenly skirted, grayness, roseness, blueness. I do not remember words except for the abrupt: '*Weiter! Weiter!*' that rang out not to where Berlin ended but to where the earth ended.⁹²

The episode features a landscape that reminds the readers of Kandinsky-like abstract paintings and creates a sense of the otherworldly experience.

By contrast, Tsvetaeva depicts her eight-year-old son as a practical person who relies on newspapers to shape his worldview and vision of contemporary life. She depicts him reading the issue of the émigré newspaper *Poslednie novosti* (*Latest News*) published on 10 January 1934. While her memoir starts with the prayer of her daughter Ariadna in 1916, it concludes with the depiction of her son, who had no first-hand experience of Russian pre-revolutionary culture. She affirms that the period between

⁹² Tsvetaeva, *Captive Spirit*, pp. 153-154.

the exclamation of her son ‘Bely is dead!’ in 1934 and her daughter’s prayer featuring Bely in 1916 encapsulates Tsvetaeva’s trajectory as a poet.

In other words, we can see at play here Tsvetaeva’s principle of doubling. While Tsvetaeva presents her son as a boy appreciating facts and enjoying reading newspapers, she portrays herself as a modern poet endowed with a prophetic vision:

Ladies and gentlemen, look closely at the two last portraits of Andrey Bely in *The Latest News*. Approaching you along a kind of walkway, detaching himself from some building, with a walking stick in his hand, in the motionless frozen pose of flight, comes a man. A man? And not that final form of a man that remains after being burnt to ashes? Breathe on it and it scatters? Not a pure spirit? Yes, a spirit in a coat, and on the coat six buttons could be counted, but what count, what weight ever convinced anyone? [...] That picture is an astral picture.⁹³

Tsvetaeva’s commentary on the photograph of Bely reveals her conception of the metaphysical power of the photographic image. Tsvetaeva problematises the notions of historical documentation and human memory associated with the press media and documentary films. More importantly, she uses her verbal reproduction of the photographic image of Bely as an anti-elegiac device since she doubts the existence of finality.

It is worth noting here that Tsvetaeva’s story suggests that her son Georgii saw the article about Bely’s death in the newspaper that she forbade him to read. The negative attitude towards the newspaper *Poslednie novosti* found in Tsvetaeva’s story might be partly explained by how in 1933 the newspaper’s editors rejected her autobiographical story ‘Dom u starogo Pimena’ (‘House at Old Pimen’) featuring Dmitrii Sergeevich Ilovaiskii (1832-1920), a famous Russian historian of modern times whom Tsvetaeva met on many occasions through her father (he was Ivan Tsvetaev’s father-in-law during Tsvetaev’s first marriage to Ilovaiskii’s daughter). Tsvetaeva’s story about Ilovaiskii and pre-1917 revolutionary youth is full of melancholic and nostalgic overtones as well as references to Ivan Turgenev’s verse poem ‘Kak khoroshi, kak svezhi byli rozy...’ (‘How good and how fresh the roses

⁹³ Ibid., p. 157.

were...').⁹⁴ According to Nina Berberova, Pavel Nikolaevich Miliukov, the editor-in-chief of *Poslednie novosti* and a well-established historian, strongly disliked Tsvetaeva's memoirs and found her creative accounts of history incomprehensible.⁹⁵ Berberova fails to mention though that Tsvetaeva was barred from Miliukov's newspaper for several years due to her enthusiastic letter to Vladimir Mayakovsky published in 1927 in the Eurasian newspaper *Versty*. Miliukov interpreted the statement 'The strength is over there' in the letter as an endorsement of the entire Soviet system and, subsequently, he refused to continue with Tsvetaeva's collection of poems *Lebedinyi stan (The Swan's Encampment)*.⁹⁶

As Simon Karlinsky succinctly points out, Tsvetaeva's conflict with Miliukov and Mark Vishniak's criticism of Tsvetaeva's independence, which he called irresponsible, demonstrate that her disagreement 'with some of the basic attitudes of her fellow Russians went deeper than a quarrel with Soviet or émigré policies or mentality'.⁹⁷ Karlinsky writes: '

She refused to subscribe to the cherished Russian notion that good art is always ethical and always edifying and that therein lies its value. [...] Her Goethe-derived respect for the sources of life in all of their manifestations, her preference for the exalted and the lofty rather than for the lowly and the humble went against the grain of the greater part of the Russian nineteenth-century tradition after Pushkin.⁹⁸

Tsvetaeva's image of the poet-vitalist concerned with lofty ideas, as implied in Karlinsky's characterisation of Tsvetaeva's outlook, is strongly pronounced in her portrayal of Bely, whom she associated with modern dance. In an episode describing her recollections of Bely at the Musaget gathering, she remembers Bely's lecture during which he wrote an explanation on the blackboard in a dance-like manner. She depicts him as a man dancing in front of Goethe and Steiner and compares him to

⁹⁴ Smith, Alexandra, 'Nostalgic Visions and Mnemonic Figures: Tsvetaeva's Allusions to Ivan Turgenev's Goethian Outlook', in: Andrew, Joe, Offord, Derek and Reid, Robert (eds), *Turgenev and Russian Culture: Essays to Honour Richard Peace*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008, p. 342.

⁹⁵ Berberova, Nina, *Kursiv moi: Avtobiografiia*, Munich: W.Fink Verlag, 1972, p. 195.

⁹⁶ Karlinsky, Simon, *Marina Tsvetaeva: Her Life and Art*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, p. 77.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

David dancing in front of the Ark. The image of Bely dancing mentioned at the beginning of the story become replaced in Tsvetaeva's memory with the image of the flying man reaching out to the transcendental as portrayed in a concluding episode of the story that deals with spectatorship and the way of seeing reality poetically. Tsvetaeva's memoir is written in a way that would not have been approved by the editors of *Poslednie novosti*. This was the most popular Russian émigré newspaper (1920-1940), read even by Stalin,⁹⁹ whose circulation at times reached 40,000. Its editor-in-chief was famous for his economic materialism and his belief in general law of history. 'In his attacks on subjective sociologists,' writes Laurie Manchester, 'Miliukov focused on the metaphysical freedom that the school assigned to personality'. She goes on to say: 'Arguing against the unknowable and non-rational in history, he chided his adherents for "continuing to look at will as independent", as outside historical regularity (*zakonomernost'*). He lambasted Thomas Carlyle's "cult of heroes"'.¹⁰⁰

In contrast to Miliukov, Tsvetaeva stands closer to Nikolai Kareev, a Russian specialist on French sociology whose book *Sushchnost' istoricheskogo protsessa i rol' lichnosti v istorii* (*The Essence of the Historical Process and the Role of Personality in History*)¹⁰¹ was criticised by Miliukov. In this book Karaev foregrounded the view that, although all people play a role in history, it is difficult to ignore that a few socially committed individuals, who were non-conformists and non-state personages, contributed to change in society due to the new ideas and pioneering methodologies.

Unlike Miliukov, who downplayed the role of exceptional individuals in history and ignored the role of peasant culture and religious traditions in Russian history, Tsvetaeva used Russian folk culture and religious beliefs for the construction of her vision of Russian national identity. She would have been totally opposed to Miliukov's personal disdain for Muscovy and his belief that the primitive state of Russian mentality was inferior to European and was one of the main causes of the absence of a culture in Russia. According to Miliukov, 'the most striking feature of

⁹⁹ Gul', Roman, 'Ia unes Rossiui', *Novyi zhurnal*, 138/1980, 22.

¹⁰⁰ Manchester, Laurie, 'Contradictions at the Heart of Russian Liberalism: Pavel Miliukov's Views of Peter the Great and the Role of Personality in History as an Academic, a Politician, and an Émigré', *Russian History*, 37/2010, 108.

¹⁰¹ Kareev, N.I., *Sushchnost' istoricheskogo protsessa i rol' lichnosti v istorii*, 2nd edn, St Petersburg: Stasiulevich, 1914.

Russian national character is the complete lack of well-defined identity and the lack of strikingly-expressed national traits'.¹⁰² Tsvetaeva shared Bely's interest in primordial forms of thinking and in Russian folk culture as well as in supposedly Asian traits of Russian national identity. That is why *Plennyi dukh* portrays Bely as a truly Russian modernist poet who, despite being traumatised by the historical upheavals, believed in the invincible rhythms of Tsvetaeva's poetry and in the immortality of the creative self.

¹⁰² Miliukov, P., *Ocherki po istorii russkoi kul'tury v trekh tomakh*, vol. 2, St Petersburg: Mir Bozhii, 1897, p. 6.