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Juri Lotman's *Analysis of the Poetic Text*: Its Censorship History and an Unpublished Chapter on Marina Tsvetaeva

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Abstract. Based on archival materials and Juri Lotman's correspondence with publishers and colleagues, this article reconstructs the editorial history of his *Analysis of the Poetic Text* (1972) and examines how ideological constraints influenced the book's final form. The selection of poems for analysis emerged as a central issue in the author's negotiations with the Leningrad branch of the Prosveshchenie publishing house: editors and reviewers urged the inclusion of poets from the nineteenth-century Romantic and Realist canon and pressed for the reduction or removal of twentieth-century Modernist authors, most notably Marina Tsvetaeva and Boris Pasternak. These interventions affected not only the corpus of examples but also the logic of Lotman's argument, which was oriented toward demonstrating the methods and scope of immanent analysis rather than offering representative coverage of all periods of Russian literary history. The article also introduces Lotman's previously unpublished chapter on Tsvetaeva's poem "*Ty, menja ljubivshij fal'sh'ju…*" ("You, who loved me with the falseness…"). Read in the context of Lotman's theoretical vocabulary and his readings of other poets in *Analysis of the Poetic Text*, this chapter offers a particularly clear illustration of his structuralist method.

Keywords: Juri Lotman, Marina Tsvetaeva, Soviet censorship, structural poetics, close reading, immanent analysis, poetic language, archival publication

1. *Analysis of the Poetic Text* as the apex of Juri Lotman's structural poetics

Among the three closely related books on poetics and semiotics of artistic texts that Juri Lotman published in the 1960s and early 1970s, *Analysis of the Poetic Text* – issued in 1972 by the Leningrad branch of the publishing

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house Prosveshchenie as a "student manual" – stands out as the clearest and most coherently organized. This clarity should not be understood as a form of popularization. Rather, the book is deliberately designed as a methodological introduction to a sophisticated analytical toolkit, in which stylistic simplicity serves the accuracy of analytical procedures rather than reducing theoretical ambition. From this perspective, *Analysis of the Poetic Text* can be seen as the most compact yet also the most intelligible presentation of the foundations of Lotman's structural poetics. The conceptual density characteristic of his *Lectures on Structural Poetics* (1964) and *The Structure of Artistic Text* (1970) is here combined with a sustained effort to render analytical methodology explicit, with each step of the procedure clearly articulated and exemplified. The content of the two earlier books was compressed into a lapidary Part One – still the best short introduction to structuralist poetics (just 130 pages). Lotman sets out the theoretical premises underlying analytical work and, at the same time, demonstrates its internal logic, seeking to make it reproducible and open to verification. This aim is reflected in the second part of the book, which offers close readings of poems by Russian poets of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Several of these analyses will be addressed in the present article; before doing so, however, it is necessary to briefly sketch Lotman's conceptual framework.

Lotman's analytical approach rests on the notion of the polyfunctionality of the artistic text. A single text can simultaneously fulfill multiple sociocultural functions – aesthetic, moral-religious, scientific-philosophical, political, and others (Lotman [1972] 1976: 6–7; for the Russian original, see Lotman 1972: 7).[1] Moreover, at different historical moments, distinct "clusters of functions" (7 [8]) may coexist within the same work. For Roman Jakobson, "a poetic work is not confined to aesthetic function alone", and "aesthetic function is not limited to the poetic work" (Jakobson 1971 [1935]: 83). Therefore, "a poetic work is defined as an utterance whose aesthetic function is its dominant" (ibid.: 84). The dominant function of any utterance or message is not its only function, but it specifies the work (in this case, as a work of verbal art). By concentrating, in line with Jakobson, on the aesthetic (poetic) function, Lotman adopts a deliberate methodological self-limitation, setting aside an examination of the text in its full range of social roles.

[1] Hereafter, references to *Analysis of the Poetic Text* are given in abbreviated form: page numbers indicate the English translation (Lotman [1972] 1976), followed by the corresponding pages of the Russian original (Lotman 1972) in square brackets.

This brings us to the central issue of Lotman's book, which aims to "answer the question 'Why is the present work a work of art?'" (9 [10]). A focus on immanent analysis enables the scholar to conceive of the text as an organic whole. No element of an artistic text carries meaning independently: each element "is realized only in relation to the other elements" (10 [11]). This entails a crucial consequence: a textually identical detail, when embedded in different structural unities of a higher order, "is not equal to itself" (ibid.). The system of relations among elements forms the work's inherently hierarchical structure; accordingly, the text itself, as the realization of that structure, is likewise hierarchically organized. At the same time, the opposition between text and system is not absolute, since "a single phenomenon may appear in certain connections as a text, and in others, as a system that deciphers texts" (12 [13]; see Pilshchikov 2024b).

Following the Russian Formalists, Lotman envisages language as the material of literature, comparable to paint in painting, stone in sculpture, or sound in music (17 [18]). Yet there is a crucial difference: paint and stone have a natural structure and are socially indifferent; they are not semiotic by nature and acquire sign status only within an artistic system. Language, by contrast, is socially and meaningfully prior to any poetic deployment, since it functions as "a mechanism of sign communication" (ibid.). On this basis, Lotman defines natural language as a primary modeling system, while verbal art belongs to secondary modeling systems; taken together, these systems "merge into a single complex semiotic whole – a culture" (19 [21]).

These assumptions also determine Lotman's view of the relationship between poetry and prose. He rejects the widespread belief in the primacy of prose over poetry. On a scale from simplicity to complexity, genres are ordered differently: everyday speech is followed by song as the combination of text and melody, then by "classical poetry", and only thereafter by artistic prose (belles-lettres), which "arose against the background of a particular poetic system as its negation" (27 [29]). The most recent response to the dominance of prose, according to Lotman, is free verse – a form of verse that retains only "a certain minimum number of features recognized by the author and the reader, without which the text ceases to be perceived as poetic" (38 [41]).[2] Its opposition to

[2] Here and passim, the Russian adjective *stikhovoj* ('related to verse', from *stikh* 'verse') is rendered in D. Barton Johnson's Anglophone translation as "poetic" ('related to poetry'). It should be remembered, however, that in Russian theory, verse is not necessarily an attribute of poetry: it may also occur in proverbs or advertisements, as well as in other non-literary contexts. Conversely, poetry is not necessarily composed in verse (Oscar Wilde's *Poems in Prose* are written in prose).

prose is essentially reduced to the enforced division into lines, which functions as a signal of the text's belonging to verse (29 [31]). In this context, a formula to which Lotman repeatedly returns is particularly indicative:

> Artistic simplicity is more complex than artistic complexity, for it arises as the simplification of the latter and against its background. (25 [26])

One of Lotman's central claims concerning the nature of poetry is that a poetic text cannot be understood as a standard linguistic text supplemented by a set of additional constraints. If this were so, the informativeness of a poem would be considerably lower than that of a non-poetic text (32–33 [35]). Poetic language, however, is structured in a fundamentally different manner. Poetry gives rise to occasional instances of what Lotman terms the principle of the contrastive comparison of elements – *so-protivopostavlenie*, a neologism formed from *sopostavlenie* 'contrast, comparison' and *protivopostavlenie* 'contrast, opposition'. This notion was first introduced in *Lectures on Structural Poetics*, where a special symbol to denote it is proposed: ⇄ (Lotman 1964: 128). Such correlations are unattainable within the structure of ordinary language and are precisely those that acquire heightened meaning (33–35 [36–38]). Furthermore, in a verse text, special significance is attributed to elements that remain functionally neutral in ordinary linguistic usage: "Poetry is a complexly constructed meaning [*smysl*]. All of its elements are semantic elements and are designations of certain content" (35 [38]).

This conception of poetry is closely tied to a general structural model of language organized along two complementary axes, paradigmatic and syntagmatic. The paradigmatic axis establishes order through classes of equivalence, while the syntagmatic axis governs combinability and sequence (18–19 [20]). In narrative prose, syntagmatic organization predominates, whereas in poetry the paradigmatic dimension assumes a dominant role (37 [39]). In ordinary-language texts, no natural-language paradigm is ever entirely made explicit; such complete realization is possible only in a scholarly metatext. In a poetic text, by contrast, the paradigm of poetic language is fully realized (37 [40]). Consequently, the syntagmatic sequence of a poem comes to be governed by paradigmatic laws.

The latter statement is directly linked to Jakobson's theory of the poetic function of language as he reformulated it in the late 1950s (Pilshchikov, Sütiste 2022: 71–72). In "Linguistics and Poetics", Jakobson proposed describing the functioning of poetic language as a specific interaction between the metaphorical and metonymical axes (i.e. those of similarity and contiguity), which he identified with the two types of structural relationship underlying

the operations of selection and combination performed in the construction of texts: "*The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination*. Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence", and "similarity is superimposed on contiguity" (Jakobson 1960 [1958]: 358, 371, original emphasis). Thus, according to Jakobson, the poetic function builds sequences (syntagmatics, combination *in praesentia*) on the principles of equivalence (paradigmatics, selection and substitution *in absentia*) (Lotman 1990: 39).

In Lotman's article 'Literary Structuralism', which was commissioned by *Kratkaja literaturnaja entsiklopedija* (*The Concise Literary Encyclopedia*) in the late 1960s but remained unpublished in Lotman's lifetime due to censorship (see Pilshchikov 2012; 2015; Pilshchikov, Trunin 2018a), he described this thesis as Jakobson's main contribution to text analysis:

> The procedure of text description requires distinguishing the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes. The former defines a set of possible structural elements and types of relations among them (a system), while the latter generates sequences (a text). The dialectical relationship between these axes in the poetic text was revealed by Roman Jakobson. (Lotman 2018 [1967]: 233–234)

Lotman refers to this definition in *The Structure of the Artistic Text* (Lotman 1977 [1970]: 78 fn. 1, 86; 1970: 112, 371 n. 1) and employs it in *Analysis of the Poetic Text* to interpret grammatical meanings in poetry (72 [75]).

The paradigmatic character of poetry is based on repetition. However, repetition in art is necessarily partial: the elements that are brought into comparison are equated only on a particular structural level or in a specific respect, while at the same time they are differentiated on another level or along another dimension (37–40 [40–42]). This bidirectional movement constitutes the foundation of poetic meaning production. In a work of art, as Lotman puts it, "two mechanisms must work simultaneously: the automatizing and the deautomatizing" (40 [43]). Order on one structural level corresponds to disorder on others. Consequently, a poetic text can be described at each level in a dual manner – both as a system that realizes certain rules and as one that violates them (39–41 [42–43]).

Within this framework, versification assumes particular importance. Lotman draws a clear distinction between the rhythm of verse and the periodicity of natural cyclical processes. Verse rhythm, he argues, consists in "the cyclical repetition of different elements in identical positions to equate the unequal or reveal similarity in difference, or the repetition of the identical to reveal the false character of this identity and establish difference in similarity"

(42, translation modified; [45]). In iambic or trochaic verse, for example, the strong position in the foot may be filled by either a stressed or an unstressed syllable: functional similarity is thus established between elements that differ in their prosodic nature, while material difference emerges between elements identical in their metrical position. This tension between equality and inequality forms the structural basis of verse rhythm.

Here, Lotman develops the theory that opposes verse rhythm to verse meter, first suggested by Andrej Belyj in 1910 and advanced by Viktor Zhirmunskij and Boris Tomashevskij in the early 1920s (see Pilshchikov 2024c). This theory is grounded in a distinction between the empirical reality of stresses in verse and the abstract scheme of an idealized verse meter. Empirically, a poetic text is perceived relative to an ideal structure that manifests itself as rhythmic inertia, or "structural expectation" (45 [47]).

> Against this background, [rhythm] is perceived as a simultaneous realization and disruption of certain rules, as recurrence and non-recurrence in their mutual tension. (46 [49])

As with any artistic structure, verse "is comprised of structural mechanisms of opposing tendencies". One of these – meter – establishes inertia and automatizes perception, while the other – rhythm – de-automatizes it, thereby generating structural tension (46 [50]). This interaction constitutes the fundamental "constructional principle" of the poetic text.

When addressing the problem of rhyme, Lotman first dismisses the idea of rhyme as a universal marker of verse. Like other components of verse structure, rhyme is governed by a complex interplay of recurrence and non-recurrence. Rhyme "belongs equally to the metrical, phonological, and semantic organization" of poetry; accordingly, tautological rhyme is perceived as impoverished, while homonymic rhyme is perceived as rich, since "coincidence on one level only highlights non-coincidence on another" (58 [61]).

> Words, which have nothing in common outside of a given text, create sound complex coincidences in rhyme. This contrastive comparison gives rise to unexpected sense effects. (58–59 [62])

The same principles hold for alliteration. Sound repetitions become noticeable when a text exhibits a higher-than-normal concentration of particular phonemes; conversely, reduced frequency or systematic avoidance of certain sounds throughout a text is equally meaningful. Marked positions such as rhyme, assonance, and obligatory alliteration are of special importance, since

the occurrence of specific phonemes in these positions acquires structural significance (61–63 [63–65]).

The graphic aspect of poetic structure plays a similar role. In modern poetry, the alignment of the graphic line with the verse line shifts from a purely auxiliary function to a constitutive feature of the poetic text. In free verse, "graphic spacing into lines may remain the sole signal that the text belongs to the category of poetry" (68 [70–71]). At the same time, poets may mark omitted or even unwritten lines with ellipses and designate stanzas by numerals unaccompanied by text, as in Aleksandr Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*. Against the backdrop of the stabilized graphic conventions of nineteenth-century poetry, the twentieth century saw the development of individual graphic styles, such as Andrej Belyj's "column", Vladimir Majakovskij's "ladder", and the immediately recognizable graphic practices of Marina Tsvetaeva or Il'ja Sel'vinskij (69 [71–72]).

Grammatical elements likewise acquire a heightened functional load within the poetic text (Jakobson 1987 [1961]). Lotman agrees with Jakobson that "grammatical meanings, thanks to the fact that their elemental unconscious use in language is replaced by the artist's meaningful construction of the text, can assume unaccustomed semantic expressiveness on being incorporated into unusual oppositions" (72 [75]). In this way, lyrical personae are associated with the system of first-, second-, and third-person pronouns; identifying the types of relations among these grammatical centers allows one to discern the basic plot structures of lyric poetry (82–83 [84–85]). In poetry, relational meanings are conveyed not only by pronouns but also by other grammatical classes, such as conjunctions (logical relations), verbs (temporal relations), nouns (relations of identity and opposition), and so forth.

At the lexical level, the poetic text constitutes a distinct universe: the poem's vocabulary defines the limits of this world, while the words that comprise it are perceived as its content. The relations between these words are structured as a model of the world endowed with its own system of synonyms and antonyms (84–85 [87]). As Lotman observes, "the essence of poetic structure is that it obviously uses non-synonymic and non-equivalent units as synonyms and equivalents" (133 [132]). Furthermore, a single word in poetry may fail to be identical with itself or may even appear as its own antonym, since, while "obtaining special meanings in the poetic structure, [words] also preserve their own dictionary meanings" (85 [87]).

These various levels are brought together by the principle of poetic parallelism. Parallelism – whether semantic, syntactic, prosodic, or phonetic – is always partial; it foregrounds neither complete identity nor absolute difference but a condition of analogy. In Lotman's words, "poetry is a structure

all of whose elements on all levels are in a state of mutual parallelism and which, consequently, bear a particular semantic load" (89 [91]). The relation of one verse line to others is syntagmatic in narrative structures, whereas in all instances of verse parallelism, it is reconfigured as paradigmatic (91 [92]).

The unity of the verse line is realized simultaneously on metrical, intonational, syntactic, and semantic levels and may be supplemented by the unity of its phonological organization (91 [92–93]). As Lotman formulates it:

> The semantic unity of the line is manifested in what Jurj Tynjanov called "the closeness of the poetic sequence" [*tesnota stikhovogo rjada*]. The lexical meaning of the words within a line induces in neighboring words supra-meanings impossible outside of the given poetic context. (91 [93])

A verse line, consisting of a sequence of words, thus resembles a single word: "the line's rhythmico-phonological unity creates the indivisibility of its semantic unity" (92 [93]).

Similar principles apply at the level of the stanza. Boundaries between verse lines give rise to intralinear and interlinear connections, whereas boundaries between stanzas generate intra-stanzaic and inter-stanzaic connections; the former have an integrative function, while the latter are primarily relational in nature (99–101 [100–102]). The most elementary stanzaic form is the distich, a consequence of the binary nature of rhyme (95 [96]), while the addition of a refrain constitutes a step toward increased stanzaic complexity. In this respect, the stanza functions analogously to the verse line:

> The recurrence of the refrain plays the same role as the element of recurrence in rhyme. On the one hand, each time difference is revealed in sameness and, on the other, different stanzas are contrastively compared and mutually projected upon each other, forming a complex semantic whole. (101 [102])

The poetic text functions as a single and unique artistic sign – one that neither repeats other texts nor can itself be repeated. This uniqueness, however, is paradoxical. The text is "constituted from numerous intersections of different recurrences on the lower levels and is incorporated into genre, stylistic, epochal, and other recurrences on the supra-textual level". Its uniqueness, in turn, "is an individual modality inherent to the text and comprised of the intersection of numerous recurrences". Even spontaneously improvised artistic texts emerge as "an inspired montage of numerous common formulae, ready-made plot ploys, images, and rhythmico-intonational devices instantly synthesized in the creator's consciousness" (114 [114]).

The compositional organization of the poetic text displays a comparable duality. On the one hand, "it should be possible to define composition as the supra-phrasal and supra-lineal syntagmatics of the poetic text". On the other hand,

> ... these same segments are somehow equated and constitute a set of unambiguous unities in fixed relationships. Not only adjoining, but also in a state of contrastive comparison, they form a structural paradigm both on the supra-phrasal and supra-lineal levels, and for texts in stanza form, on the supra-stanzaic level as well. (115 [115])

Outside art, a *system* (which, in Lotman's terminology, is synonymous with Saussure's *langage* and Jakobson's *code*) functions to describe and decipher a text understood as a realization of that system. Extra-systemic elements in such contexts are either disregarded or treated as errors to be eliminated (120–121 [119–120]). In the poetic text, however, the situation is fundamentally different: "meaning arises not only as a result of the observation of certain structural rules but also as a result of their violation" (121 [121]).

This difference stems from the fact that a work of art is correlated not with a single decoding code, but with multiple codes operating simultaneously. Consequently, what is individual in the artistic text is not extra-systemic but multi-systemic: "that which is extra-systemic becomes systemic and vice versa" (123 [123]). For this reason, the relationship between text and system in a work of art cannot be reduced to the automatic implementation of an abstract structure in a concrete material: "it is always a relationship of struggle, tension, and conflict" (123–124 [124]; see Pilshchikov 2024a). In Lotman's formulation, poetic structure emerges "as a dynamic combination of both the affirmation and violation of the norms" (146 [142]).

The second part of *Analysis of the Poetic Text* belongs to a wholly different genre: immanent close readings of individual poems. The printed version of the book includes detailed analyses of poems by Konstantin Batjushkov, Aleksandr Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, Fedor Tjutchev, Nikolaj Nekrasov, Aleksej Tolstoj, Aleksandr Blok, Marina Tsvetaeva, Vladimir Majakovskij, and Nikolaj Zabolotskij. Additional analyses – of complete poems or of fragments – by the same authors as well as Petr Viazemskii, Evgenij Baratynskii, Koz'ma Prutkov, and Innokentij Annenskij, appear throughout the book's theoretical chapters.

Lotman does not apply his analytical tools uniformly across all poems. In some cases – for instance, in his readings of Batjushkov's or Tsvetaeva's poems – he offers a detailed "Jakobsonian" examination of the composition of vowels in each line and devotes significant attention to the distribution of

rhythmical forms, using the statistical methods developed by Kiril Taranovsky and Mikhail Gasparov (see Lotman, Pilshchikov 2020). This choice is itself indicative of stringent academic standards, given that Taranovsky's *Russian Binary Meters* (1953) was published in Serbian and was unlikely to have been familiar to students at Soviet pedagogical institutes, the primary target audience of the Prosveshchenie publishing house. In other cases – for example, in his reading of Nekrasov's "Last Elegies" – Lotman limits his analysis to the lexical level. These differences in the scope and degree of analytical elaboration were shaped not only by the features specific to the poetic material under analysis, but also by ideological circumstances.

2. *Analysis of the Poetic Text* in the light of its editorial history

In the late 1960s, Lotman was at the height of his intellectual and academic career. The proposal for *Analysis of the Poetic Text* was submitted to the Prosveshchenie ('Education') publishing house in the first half of 1967.[3] The University of Tartu periodicals edited by Lotman – *Sign Systems Studies* and *Studies in Russian and Slavic Philology* – were small in circulation but influential within the humanities and were developing rapidly. At the same time, major publishing houses in Moscow and Leningrad were preparing several books by Lotman and his closest collaborators for release.

The Structure of the Artistic Text was released by the Moscow art publisher Iskusstvo ('Art') in 1970. In the same year, and at the same press, Boris Uspenskij's *Poetics of Composition* also appeared; proposals for both books had been submitted in the first half of 1966. Together, they were intended to inaugurate the series *Semiotic Studies in the Theory of Art*, a project envisioned to comprise at least twenty volumes. From the outset, the series was subject to heightened ideological scrutiny and never brought to fruition. After numerous conflicts and delays, the publishing house formally rejected the project in November 1970 (for details, see Pilshchikov, Trunin 2018b: 315–320).

In late March 1969, amid the difficulties surrounding *Semiotic Studies in the Theory of Art*, Lotman wrote to Boris Uspenskij about problems with the Leningrad branch of Prosveshchenie, where *Analysis of the Poetic Text* was

[3] The publishing proposal preserved in Lotman's archive bears no date and specifies only the intended completion of the manuscript in December 1967. Later correspondence with the publisher allows us to establish both the date when the contract was signed (5 April 1967) and the date by which the revised manuscript was to be submitted, after the author had responded to editorial and reviewers' comments: 1 January 1969 (TÜR, fond 135, folder Ca1780, fol. 2, 8).

undergoing editorial review. He compared the conditions and constraints there with those in Iskusstvo:

> I have just received a thoroughly unpleasant letter from Prosveshchenie. I submitted a book of analyses to them – they are demanding that all analyses of Pasternak and Tsvetaeva be removed, and the letter is written as though I were their yardman. But getting angry with them is as pointless as getting angry with the weather. At Iskusstvo, by contrast, people are different, and so is the style. Let us value that! (Lotman, Uspenskij 2016: 162)

The letter to which Lotman refers has not been found in his archive. Nevertheless, earlier correspondence between Prosveshchenie and Lotman indicates that negotiations over the selection of authors and poems to be analyzed became the principal obstacle in the manuscript's editorial peripeteia. In the earliest version of Lotman's manuscript, the corpus of authors and works was structured as follows:

A. S. Pushkin. "To F. N. Glinka"
A. S. Pushkin. "Reveille sounds... from my hands..."
M. Ju. Lermontov. "We parted; but thy portrait..."
F. I. Tjutchev. "Two Voices"
F. I. Tjutchev. "On the Eve of the Anniversary of August 4, 1864"
M. Tsvetaeva. From the cycle "Epitaph"
M. Tsvetaeva. "You, who loved me with the falseness..."
B. Pasternak. "The Substitute"
N. A. Zabolotskij. "The Passerby"
Eugene Onegin[4]

The analysis of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* appears to have been excluded from the final plan of the book primarily because of its substantial length (164 typewritten pages).[5] In 1975, this material was published separately in Tartu as a rotaprint edition of a specialized course entitled *"Eugene Onegin", Pushkin's Novel in Verse: Introductory Lectures on the Analysis of Its Text*.

On 20 August 1968, Lotman received the manuscript back from the publishing house for revision in accordance with the reviewers' comments. In the accompanying letter, the publisher also put forward a number of their

4 TÜR, fond 136, folder 104, fol. 2.

5 TÜR, fond 136, folder 112, fol. II.

own remarks and recommendations, including an emphatic suggestion that, if Tjutchev and Tsvetaeva were not to be removed from the book altogether, the number of chapters devoted to their poems should at least be reduced:

> [T]he selection of poets necessitates several suggestions. The "people-oriented" tendency in poetry [*"narodnaja" linija v poezii*] is entirely absent. Why are there no nineteenth-century "pre-Pushkin" poems? At the same time, there are two poems by Tjutchev and two poems by Tsvetaeva.
>
> It would appear advisable to include among the authors whose poems are analyzed Zhukovskij (or Batjushkov), Nekrasov (or someone from his school), one of the "pre-Symbolists" (Lokhvitskaja, Sluchevskij, Fofanov), Blok, Brjusov, Majakovskij, Tvardovskij, and one of the contemporary "young" poets (Voznesenskij, Rozhdestvenskij, Evtushenko).[6]

Lotman marked the publisher's general recommendation concerning the selection of poets with a bold minus sign; at the same time, he placed plus signs next to the names of Batjushkov and Nekrasov. On 2 February 1969, Lotman sent the revised manuscript back to the publisher, accompanied by the following letter:

> In response to the recommendations of the editorial board and the reviewers, I have included in the section of analyzed texts a poem by Batjushkov and a poetic cycle by Nekrasov. In addition, analyses of poems by Innokentij Annenskij and Majakovskij have been added to the first part of the book.
>
> At the same time, I consider it necessary to note that the selection of texts is not guided by any attempt to provide a comprehensive representation of the history of Russian poetry (or of the history of its structure) – this would be the subject of an entirely different book – but rather by the aim of demonstrating the scope of analysis of poetic texts at various levels and by multiple methods. The fact that some poets are represented by two texts, while others, very significant ones, are not represented at all, is of no particular importance for the conception of the present book.
>
> In principle, I do not object to a further expansion of the list of texts in line with the suggestions of the editorial board and reviewers; however, it should be borne in mind that this would entail a significant increase in the length of

[6] TÜR, fond 135, folder Ca1780, fol. 3–4.

> the book. If this does not concern the editors, I would be willing and ready to broaden the corpus of texts within a short period of time.[7]

The analysis of Annenskij's "There Will Still Be Lilies" remained in the first part of the book (the chapter "'The Alien Word' in the Poetic Text"), while the analysis of Majakovskij's "A Scheme for Laughter" was moved to the second part (110–113, 254–261 [110–113, 248–255]). Shortly after submitting the revised manuscript, Lotman received a letter from the publishing house, no longer extant, requiring the removal of analyses of poems by Tsvetaeva and Pasternak, a demand he privately lamented in correspondence with Boris Uspenskij (see above). As a result, the final set of poetic analyses included in the second part of the book was as follows:

K. N. Batjushkov. "Thou awakest, O Baiae, from the tomb..."
A. S. Pushkin. "To F. N. Glinka"
A. S. Pushkin. "Reveille sounds... from my hands..."
M. Ju. Lermontov. "We parted; but thy portrait..."
F. I. Tjutchev. "Two Voices"
F. I. Tjutchev. "On the Eve of the Anniversary of August 4, 1864"
N. A. Nekrasov. "Last Elegies"
A. K. Tolstoj. "There sits beneath a canopy..."
A. A. Blok. "To Anna Akhmatova"
V. V. Majakovskij. "A Scheme for Laughter"
N. A. Zabolotskij. "The Passerby"[8]

This list corresponds almost entirely to the published version, with one notable exception. In the end, Lotman was able to reinstate one analysis of a poem by Tsvetaeva, "In vain with my eye – as with a nail..." from the cycle "Epitaph", which in the published book is placed between the readings of Blok and Majakovskij (240–253 [235–247]). The circumstances under which this reinstatement became possible remain unknown: no archival evidence relating to the return of Tsvetaeva's text has yet been identified among the materials connected with the publication of *Analysis of the Poetic Text*.

The fate of Lotman's analysis of Pasternak's poem "The Substitute" followed a somewhat different trajectory. In 1968, Lotman published it in the proceedings of the Third Summer School on Secondary Modeling Systems

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7 Ibid., fol. 12.

8 TÜR, fond 136, folder 112, fol. I–II.

held in Kääriku near Tartu, where it appeared together with his analysis of Lermontov's "We parted; but thy portrait..." under the title "An Analysis of Two Poems" (Lotman 1968). This pairing was deliberate rather than incidental: both poems realize the same structural-semantic invariant—the motif of substituting the beloved person with her image (a portrait in Lermontov's case and a photograph in Pasternak's). In Pasternak's poem, this invariant is developed under the evident influence of Lermontov.

In the published version of *Analysis of the Poetic Text*, however, Pasternak's poem is reduced to a brief mention in a footnote to the chapter on Lermontov (290 n. 113 [170 fn. 3]). As a result, a significant comparative gesture linking the two poets was effectively neutralized by censorial intervention. The analysis of Pasternak's "The Substitute" was not lost to circulation: following its Tartu publication in 1968, it was later reprinted in Lotman's posthumous volume *On Poets and Poetry* (1996: 718–726), which also reprints the complete text of *Analysis of the Poetic Text*.

3. Lotman's analyses of Tsvetaeva and Nekrasov, compared

Lotman's analysis of Tsvetaeva's "You, who loved me with the falseness..." is preserved in his archive, but remained unpublished until its appearance in the present volume (Lotman 2025 [1967]). It is all the more unfortunate that it remained unpublished for so long, given that it offers a particularly revealing example of Lotman's version of structuralist poetics. As in his general theoretical framework, the elements of poetic structure are defined not by their intrinsic properties but by correlations and oppositions and by the functions they perform within the system as a whole. To conceptualize these relations, Lotman, as already noted, introduces the neologism "contrastive comparison" (*so-protivopostavlenie*), a term he also uses in his analysis of Tsvetaeva's poem.

Lotman points out that the poem is compositionally divided into two unequal parts – six lines followed by two – and that this formal asymmetry already signals the text's fundamental constructive principle: shift, or displacement (*sdvig*). The first six lines enact an extreme displacement of lexical meaning that runs counter to common language usage: "the falseness of truth" (*fal'sh' istiny*), "the truthfulness of lies" (*pravda lzhi*), "no way further" (*dal'she nekuda*), and "longer than time" (*dol'she vremeni*). Tsvetaeva reinforces this effect through a deliberate accumulation of oxymorons (and, it may be added, paronyms: *dal'she – dol'she*).

By contrast, the final two lines – "You don't love me anymore: / The truth in five words" (*Ty menja ne ljubish' bol'she: / Istina v pjati slovakh*) – stand in marked contrast to what precedes them precisely because *no* displacement occurs here: all words are used in their standard meanings. Lotman identifies a similar contrast at the levels of rhythm and poetic syntax. Three of the four oxymoronic phrases cited above are split by enjambments (compare Etkind 1970: 94; Nikolić [1982] 1991: 332–333; Thomson 1990: 517–518) – or, as Lotman himself puts it, "are arranged so that both words are stressed and occupy strong positions – one at the end of the line and the other at the beginning of the next line". In this way, Lotman shows that poetry transcends linguistic conventions not so much by rejecting as by reinterpreting and refunctionalizing them.

From this perspective, it is particularly revealing to compare the analysis of Tsvetaeva's "You, who loved me with the falseness..." with Lotman's reading of Nekrasov's "Last Elegies" (207–218 [204–214]). Confronted with the purely ideological necessity of including Nekrasov's poetry in *Analysis of the Poetic Text*, Lotman was thus compelled to test the viability of his analytical method on material that lay outside his usual field of inquiry: neither the literature of the second half of the nineteenth century nor Nekrasov's oeuvre fell within his primary research interests.

In his formal analysis of Nekrasov's poetry, Lotman draws on the earlier interpretations of Jurij Tynjanov and Boris Ejkhenbaum, who in the 1920s emphasized that Nekrasov should be understood not merely as a poet of liberal-democratic content, compassionate toward the "sufferings of the common people" (the halo, under which he was incorporated into the Soviet poetic pantheon) but as an innovator in poetic form. This claim serves as Lotman's initial premise.

The heterogeneity of Nekrasov's poetic language – or, in Lotman's own terms, "the presence within a single stylistic system of two diverse substructures and the effect produced by their correlation" – results from the poet's extensive use of vernacular expressions and prosaisms combined with a parodic deployment of Romantic poetic clichés. The aim of the mature Nekrasov, however, was not to discredit earlier poetic forms but to expand poetic language by reintroducing these clichés as elements of a new construction, in which both prosaisms and poeticisms become *objects of representation* (210 [206]): "For Nekrasov, the poetic and anti-poetic formulas are but two countenances of a single reality" (214 [210]).

This approach is most clearly evident in Lotman's analysis of Nekrasov's first elegy, where the scholar employs the same descriptive terms as in his reading of Tsvetaeva: *contrast* and *shift*.

Душа мрачна, мечты мои унылы,
Грядущее рисуется темно,
Привычки, прежде милые, постылы,
И горек дым сигары. Решено!
Не ты горька, любимая подруга
Ночных трудов и одиноких дум –
Мой жребий горек. Жадного недуга
Я не избег. Еще мой светел ум,
Еще в надежде глупой и послушной
Не ищет он отрады малодушной,
Я вижу все... А рано смерть идет,
И жизни жаль мучительно. Я молод,
Теперь поменьше мелочных забот,
И реже в дверь мою стучится голод:
Теперь бы мог я сделать что-нибудь.
Но поздно!.. Я как путник безрассудный,
Пустившийся в далекий, долгий путь,
Не соразмерив сил с дорогой трудной.
Кругом все чуждо, негде отдохнуть,
Стоит он, бледный, средь большой дороги.
Никто его не призрел, не подвез:
Промчалась тройка, проскрипел обоз –
Все мимо, мимо!.. Подкосились ноги,
И он упал… Тогда к нему толпой
Сойдутся люди – смущены, унылы,
Почтят его ненужною слезой
И подвезут охотно – до могилы...

[My soul is gloomy, my dreams despondent,
The future is silhouetted darkly,
Habits, formerly sweet, are repellent,
And bitter is the smoke of my cigar. It is decided!
Thou art not bitter, beloved friend
Of nocturnal labors and solitary thoughts—
My lot is bitter. The ailment of thirst
I have not evaded. My mind is still lucid,
Still in stupid and obedient hope
It does not seek craven joy,
I see all... But early death approaches,
And life is tormentingly grievous. I am young,

> Now there are fewer trivial worries,
> And more rarely does hunger knock on my door:
> Now I might do something.
> But it is too late!.. I am like a reckless traveler,
> Having set out on a far long journey,
> Not having measured my strength against the hard road.
> Around all is strange, there is nowhere to rest,
> He stands, pale, midst the highroad.
> No one took pity on him, nor gave him a ride:
> A troika rushed by, a wagon train creaked on –
> Everything past, past!.. His legs buckled,
> And he fell... Then around him in a crowd
> People will gather—troubled, despondent,
> They honor him with a needless tear
> And willingly give him a ride – to the grave...][9]

In Nekrasov's poem, "the presence of two incompatible systems, each internally fully organic, and their combination, in spite of everything, [...] constitutes the specific character of the stylistic structure" (211 [207]). Lotman observes that in the first half of the elegy, words are used almost exclusively in their direct meanings. At a certain point, however, a shift occurs, and words begin to operate simultaneously on two semantic planes:

> Up to the middle of the sixteenth line the text offers a direct description of the author's spiritual state, with words used almost exclusively in their direct ("ordinary-language") meaning. From the words "I am like a reckless traveler..." onward, the text takes the form of an extended comparison, each element of which has two meanings: an ordinary-language one [...] and a second one that is contextual-poetic. (Ibid.)

In this respect, Nekrasov's poem presents a mirror image of Tsvetaeva's text, where words recover their direct meanings only in the final lines.

Working with a pre-given poeticism – the conventional metaphor of life as a road – Nekrasov's text deliberately frustrates the reader's expectations. Instead of developing the allegory in the manner customary for poetry, he presents an everyday, mundane scene. Yet once the reader accepts that what is offered is not an allegory of life as a road, Nekrasov abruptly concludes the

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[9] Translated by D. Barton Johnson.

poem with an explicitly allegorical finale. As Lotman observes, "The final line [...] introduces an image of the road ending in the grave, i.e., it returns the entire scene to the semantics of allegory" (212 [208]).

At the same time, the grave in the final line is real, and not metaphorical. This is what Tynianov, whose theories underpin Lotman's analysis, called "a realized metaphor" (Tynianov 2019 [1921]: 35 fn. 38): the marked intensification of poetic clichés and tropes restores the words constituting them to their original, material meanings. Lotman draws attention to the formulaic character of expressions such as "my soul is gloomy", "the future is silhouetted darkly", and "sweet habit" in the poetic language of the mid-nineteenth century. But here, "in Nekrasov's work, 'habits' designates 'habits', and 'sweet' means 'sweet'. This makes the word combination simultaneously both a poetic cliché and a violation of the cliché" (213 [209]).

Lotman's conclusion regarding Nekrasov's "Last Elegies" echoes his observations on Tsvetaeva that were omitted from the published version of *Analysis of the Poetic Text*. At the end of his analysis of Nekrasov's poem, structured around the metaphor of life as a road, Lotman writes:

> Nekrasov's achievement was the creation of "poetic vernacular" [*poeticheskoe prostorechie*] not as a result of the simple casting off of a rejected tradition (vernacular could not become an aesthetic fact in this case) but by its inclusion as one of the elements of style and by the creation of contrastive effects based on the correlation of formerly incompatible structures.
>
> This course was also that of all subsequent Russian poetry. Not rejection of cliched, traditional, and banalized stylistic forms, but their bold use as a contrastive background (not merely with the aim of mockery or parody) came to be the basis of the new style. (216, translation modified; [213]).

A comparable conclusion is reached in the analysis of Tsvetaeva's "You, who loved me with the falseness...":

> Instead of the expected scenario in which an idyllic image of love gives way to a tragic separation, Tsvetaeva offers a more complex structure: love is presented at the very limit of tragic tension. Consequently, for the rupture that follows it – accompanied by a further intensification of tragedy – in principle, no expressive means remain. Yet an unexpected return to everyday intonations and ordinary constructions against this background is perceived as the utmost tension, exceeding the bounds of expressivity. The phrase "You don't love me anymore", which outside the poetic structure of this text would be flat and possibly banal, becomes tragically elevated and tense. The final antithesis "falseness of truth"

> – "the truth in five words" thus affirms the victory of lofty and tragic simplicity. (Lotman 2025 [1967]: 110)

A comparison of the two readings demonstrates that, in both cases, Lotman describes the operation of the same mechanism: the effect of extreme tension emerges through the incorporation of "antipoetic" forms into a poetic structure. In the chapter on "You, who loved me with the falseness...", this mechanism is described with remarkable clarity.[10]

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