The Spatial Hierarchy in the Poetics of Anna Akhmatova: Ontological, Mythological and Psychological Aspects

Elena Vladimirovna Merkel1, Lyubov Gennadievna Kihney2, Tatiana Sergeevna Kruglova3 and Dmitry Nikolayevich Zhatkin3*

1Department of Russian Philology, Technical Institute (branch) of the North-Eastern Federal University, Neryungri, Russian Federation; ev.merkel@s-vfu.ru
2Department of History of Journalism and Literature, the Institute of International Law and Economics named after A.S. Griboyedov, Moscow, Russian Federation; lgkhihney@yandex.ru
3Department of Translation and Methods of Translation, Penza State Technological University, Penza, Russian Federation; tatjana.sk@mail.ru, ivb40@yandex.ru

Abstract

Objectives: The article aims at understanding the role of the space and time categories in the artistic world of Anna Akhmatova. The problem is considered in ontological, mythological and psychological aspects. Methods: In terms of methodology the article is based on research of the Russian Acmeism as a literary movement and creative works of Anna Akhmatova as one of its leading poets. We perceive Acmeism within the limits of a system-typological approach – not as a static reality, but as a tendency of purposes and principles common to a number of authors. The analysis used socio-cultural, biographical, cultural-historical and comparative-typological methods of research. Findings: Anna Akhmatova as a representative of Russian Acmeism in her polemics with Symbolists and with their characteristic loci, both abstract and generalized, focused her attention on the concept of real life, on the image-motive embodiment of time and space. The external space in the lyrics of Akhmatova includes three areas – the space of home, of the city, and the nature, each of which is characterized by the materiality and the Artifact. There is a gradual evolution of mythological connotations, the formation of the semiotic opposition “top – down” and accentuation of the vertical axis of natural coordinates of “heaven – earth”. In the work of Anna Akhmatova dd.1930-1960-ies the disposition “top – down” remains, however the “top” begins to be associated with harmonious existence, and “bottom” – with death, grave. In those years the antique intertext starts to appear in her works, producing impression that the poet is going back to the origins of civilization, but it was associated with the Soviet ideology and its polytheistic pantheon headed by the “Father of all peoples”. Novelty: The space-time bases of Anna Akhmatova’s artistic world has been changing during her work, the transformation of semiotic opposition “top – bottom”, a shift from the abstract to the tangible materiality, from the external to the mental.

Keywords: A. A. Akhmatova, Intercultural Communication, Intertext, Lyrics, Mythological Connotations, Silver Age of Russian Poetry, The Art World, Poetics

1. Introduction

Categories of space and time, belonging to the number of universal categories of culture, are crucial in the design of the artistic world of Anna Akhmatova. According to A.Ya.Gurevich, space and time embody the “attitude of the era, the behavior of people, their minds, the rhythm of life, attitude to things”1. A turning point in the poetic outlook of the 1910s caused the emergence of a new trend – Acmeism, to which Akhmatova belonged as well. The controversy with the symbolism actualized the concept of real life for Acmeists. For the poets of a new
The Spatial Hierarchy in the Poetics of Anna Akhmatova: Ontological, Mythological and Psychological Aspects

Chronotope 3–5. It is the “Acmeism” of early lyric of the poet onto-poetics; secondly, we can see the new design of space-time. That is why in the early collections of Akhmatova, we first find figuratively motivated embodiment of time and space, strikingly differing from similar reflection of these categories in symbolist onto-poetics; secondly, we can see the new design of chronotope. It is the “Acmeism” of early lyric of the poet with which this locative-temporal component is primarily linked, because the domestication of the world is implemented just within the chronotope design.

2. Results

Domestication of reality leads to the fact that in the artistic space of Akhmatova’s poetry the psychology category occupies a key position. Thus, the principle of forming of Akhmatova’s space reminds the principle of focusing of the human eye, which primarily allocates the psychologically important details. Such psychologizing of locative areas is one of the most important characteristics of early lyrics of the poet (see, for example, the poems from “Evening” collection).

This psychologization of space sets its phenomenological interpretation. It seems that this aspect makes the very specificity of the lyrical themes of Akhmatova: she does not speak directly or allegorically symbolic about her emotions, but embodies them in a spatial code. In this regard, the expression of lyrical emotions is predominantly metonymic in nature: through things to feelings. At the same time the thing here gets some semiotic status, it becomes a kind of sign-index, which indicates the allied lyrical emotion. For example, in the poem “Love” Akhmatova creates a small myth: the dynamics of the feeling of love is embodied in external images, and the little allegory, where the signifier becomes a thing, and the signified – the very emotion. The same semantic structure can be seen in the poem “With coal I outlined on the left side...” in which melancholy is personified. This psychological aspect of space quite naturally leads to the formation of a special space of memory and imagination, which was clearly demonstrated in the “Prayer Beads” collection. It is remarkable that this locative model that merges outer world and inner world into a single unit has been actively used in the later works of Anna Akhmatova.

An interesting attempt of conceptualization of chronotope in early works of Akhmatova was done by S.F. Nasrullaeva. The researcher, having considered the “jacks of repetitive images” revealed “the distributive correlation” of categories of space and time in the early lyric of Akhmatova and identified a parallel between Akhmatova’s space-time model and folkloric chronotope. We believe that this research conclusion needs further development.

On the whole the model of space-time in the works of Akhmatova is characterized by two aspects. Its first hypostasis is associated with a real-life incarnation of the world; the second is projected on the psychological and mythopoetical coordinates. Therefore the picture of reality all the time doubles. On the one hand, landscape, interior parts of the outside world entered into the context of real space are self-valuable, just like self-valuable are the dates or other time boundaries showing a real time (calendar and time of day). On the other hand, the toponymic images and chronological details bear “emotionally-sensual” or “ontological” information.

Spatial-temporal images of the real world stores information about the structure of the soul of heroine. The peculiarity of their realization in the early lyrics of Akhmatova is that the more vital they are the brighter they embody the lyrical subjectivity. For example, the interior detail of “forever nailed up windows” from the poem “We are all revelers here, and harlots...” together with the portrait detail of the character (“Your eyes are similar / To the eyes of a cautious cat”) indirectly convey the nature of the relationship of heroes that exclude the deep spiritual contact.

However, the same landscape, interior details and a statement of the time of day, season etc. associate individual life of lyrical heroine of Akhmatova with the mythological and poetically interpreted universe. Those “nailed up windows” from the above poem, without losing its psychological suggestiveness become a semiotic sign of
isolation, tightness of the described space, its total isolation from the big world.

According to V.N. Toporov "global and integrating determinism", representation of the relationship of things with each other in an organized space is inherent in mythopoetic worldview. Chronotope of lyrics of Akhmatova acts as a kind of structural and semantic model, organized according to the cosmological, calendar, mythological, and eschatological laws. The artistic thinking of Akhmatova as well as the mythological consciousness is characterized by sanctification of certain dates of the annual ritual (hence – the mythological concept of the number, endowing certain number the semantic quality); sanctification of the marked points of space; a system of binary oppositions (up – down, right – left, east – west, even – odd, etc.) and a number of other iconic complexes, by which the cosmological universe is described. As the "maturity" of Akhmatova and the evolution of her work increases the mythological background of chronotope of her poetry is becoming more and more conspicuous.

The external space in the lyrics of Akhmatova is divided into three major areas: space of the house, the city and nature. Each of them bears the stamp of the materiality and "artifact". Even the nature in the works of the poet as if has been "made"; therefore there are so many (frequent) analogies of the world around and man-made constructions. Thus Acmeists, paying much attention to the inner form of the word, reveal the etymological meaning of the word “universe”, which is read as “a building of the world". This setting is typical for creativity of Akhmatova throughout its duration (cf.: “The unprecedented autumn has constructed a high dome …”12; "Heaven looks like the arch stone"13; “There was dawn in the sky, / Like the gate …”14).

Specificity of Akhmatova’s chronotope is that there is a gradual escalation of mythopoetic connotations, and it eventually leads to the semiotic division of space into a series of binary archetypes. In this regard, we must first identify mythopoetical constants that embody the semiotic opposition to top – bottom and that are grouped around a vertical axis of natural coordinates of the sky – the earth.

In her late works (1930–1960-ies) this vertical will be displaced, although the binary disposition will remain: the top will be associated with earth, nature (and symbolize the harmonious existence), and semantics of the bottom will take the derivation of basement or grave (and will symbolize death, bondage, remote past, cf.: “De profundis ... My generation ...”15, “The cellar of memory”16).

It is important to note that in Akhmatova’s model of artistic space, the vertical axis – unlike that of symbolist’s ontological model – is no more associated with the Divine. The sky symbolizes more likely the upward impulse of a lyrical heroine, the ideal rejection of the soul from all the everyday. Although sometimes there flashes an allusion to paradise «sacred» space in her poetry, but it is not associated with a locus of the sky, but with the urban space or topos of memory-dream.

In later works of hers the lower (underground) tier of being acquires demonic (of hell) connotations. Akhmatova’s ideas about the bottom of the spatial vertical are largely rooted in the biblical discourse, but they are also affected by mythological-pagan beliefs that are being motively updated and also by some literature infernal themes, the main of which is “The Divine Comedy” by Dante Alighieri, which also has a mythological subbase. This idea of locative sphere not only entered the structure of the world-modeling motives of poetics of Akhmatova, but also rooted in a wider artistic discourse – that of Acmeism, with its increased attention to the Bible and the antique monuments of literature, which here became the sources of not only imaginative but also plot borrowings. It is the representation of the lower locative sphere that becomes the key opening the universal laws of art space in the author’s poetics of Akhmatova.

In the early works of the poet Hell is a place devoid of concrete – visible and sensual – connotations that (often) has the mental localization. In fact, this is a kind of space having some features of Christian purgatory or antique Elysium.

The attractive infernality was one of the toposes of Russian modernism of the early XX century. Culture as a whole and literature in particular, disappointed in the “eternal values”, in the Christian understanding of the world, were looking for new ways of self-expression, which attracted close attention of many artists to the “the dark side” of life. Moreover “gloomy German geniuses” Nietzsche and Schopenhauer were becoming rulers of the minds. Probably literary sources also played an important role: on the turn of the century Russian literature was in demand of a type of strong demonic personality like Lermontov’s Pechorin. Quite often it is the type of the sweetheart of a lyrical heroine of Akhmatova in her first collections: We said goodbye as in a dream, / I said, “I’m waiting”. / He replied laughing: / “See you in hell”17.

Vol 9 (42) | November 2016 | www.indjst.org

Indian Journal of Science and Technology
In general, the researchers note that “See you in hell” “Akhmatova’s artistic space, as well as the space of a myth, is divided vertically into three tiers – upper, middle and lower”[14], although in our case we do not have the very triad, but some other form: the third loci seems to be suspended over the two main ones, as though staying outside the binary opposition of “top – down”. This chronic toponic feature of Akhmatova’s poetry will be carried throughout the decades, in many respects it is caused by the feeling of total loneliness and bitterness of separating with the dear, closest, loved ones. Such a position of “absolute isolation” in some vacuum alien to Infernal and Eden spaces, the “nothingness” was one of the most important world-simulating factors of lyrical heritage of the poet.

Note that in the mature works of Akhmatova the antique intertext related to the infernal sphere is still more clearly evident, as though a lyrical heroine makes her reverse historical way – to the very origins of civilization, pagan archetypes. Perhaps this was due to the Soviet ideology, which had so much in common with pagan cults, and this polytheistic pantheon was headed by “the Father of all nations”. Under these conditions the possibility of transition to the lower ontological realm is caused not only by memory, but also by the status of the lyrical heroine, seeing herself as a mediator with the world beyond the grave, and sometimes – even a “living dead”, “Will forget? – That’s a surprise! / I have been forgotten more than once / A hundred times I was lying in the grave / There I can be now”[21].

Among the dead the heroine of Akhmatova feels at home. On the one hand, this can be explained by the Christian notion that “God is not a God of the dead but of the living” (Matt 22: 32): “In well-disposed rows Leningraders go. / Alive with the dead. There are no dead for God”[22]. On the other, as noted by T.S. Kruglova, it is often that in the later poems “the lyrical subject of Akhmatova has a different existential status”[23]. The researcher points out that this status is often interfaced with overcoming certain boundaries between the worlds, and towards the otherworld. Thus, St. Petersburg (Leningrad) appears an original projection of the underworld kingdom, an analogue or perhaps even identical locus. And here the poet continues the line actively developed by the Russian literature in the XIX century, namely – about the afterlife and even more infernal status of “the Neva capital”. “Petersburg is the center of evil and crime, where suffering exceeds the measure and irreversibly deposited in people’s minds; Petersburg is the abyss, “other kingdom”, death, but at the same time St. Petersburg is the place where the national identity and self-awareness has reached a limit, beyond which new horizons of life opens... “, stated V. N. Toporov[24]. This infernal status of St. Petersburg is confirmed by many texts of Akhmatova’s poetry. Already in her early works there are references to it; so in her microcycle “Verses about St. Petersburg” (1913) she states: “Indeed, under the arch of the Galley / Our shadows are forever”[25].

The first collections of the poet create a set of images somehow correlated with the traditional “St. Petersburg text”. All these landscapes and their inherent epithets are connected with fading, burning, disappearance, i.e. implicitly – with necrotic semantics. Petersburg is ambivalent: it cannot only give the state of bliss (despite the epithets of “dark”, “terrible”), but also to become a crypt. It turns out that “Akhmatova expresses an ambivalent attitude towards the legend city: on the one hand, her heroine if full of feeling of almost intimacy with the city, on the other” – she “feels it dangerous and even fatal”[26]. That warmth and intimacy related to the northern capital, to which the researchers point is only a mirage, a dream of paradise and something wonderful, but Petersburg can only fascinate by mirages. That is why it can often be associated with signs, indicating the area of devil, not only locative, but also temporal: “black angel wings are sharp, / Soon to be the final judgment” (“How can you look at the Neva...”) [27].

According to the Bible, Judgment Day will come when the cup of humanity’s sins overflows, “when the iniquity abounds and the love of many grows cold” (Matt. 24:12). Thus, if “black angels” appear (probably the angels of death), if the final judgment is close, it means that the infernal forces have entered the peak of their power. In fact, as described in the Book of Revelation and in other Bible passages the apocalyptic events (during a brief reign of the Antichrist) is the hour of triumph of Satan in the world, actually – the transfer of hell from the underworld to the outer world, and Akhmatova makes the Neva capital the point of this breakthrough. However, sometimes through infernal traits of St. Petersburg there appear the signs of the divine properties: “the essence of personal contradictions is embodied in the mosaic placers of numerous, deep, sometimes antinomic images: from “infernal” characters “of black angels” and “crimson fires” up to the cross – the sign of acceptance of the joys and sorrows of life and love”[28].
During the late works of the poet there happens a mystical “substitution” connected with the city on the Neva; it gets a new name as though the second capital gets a counterpart and the two cities exist in a uniform mythological chronotope: St. Petersburg and Leningrad (see, for example, “Poem without a hero”). Signs of the last locus are also infernal, but they are still supplemented with “signs of the times”: there comes an era of the Great Terror – decades of repression and terror. In her notebook Akhmatova writes: “... In 1936, I again start to write, but my handwriting has changed, and the voice already sounds different. And the life presents me such a Pegasus that somewhat reminds the apocalyptic Pale horse...”. Recall that it was Death who was marching on the horse of such color.

It is about that time that Akhmatova bitingly said in her famous preface to “Requiem”: “That was when only dead / Were smiling enjoying their calmness. / And as unnecessary appendage Leningrad / was dangling near its prison”. And again, as in the early works, infernal center (albeit as an “unnecessary appendage”) becomes Northern Palmyra. Poet draws a semantic parallel between torture chambers of the hell and Leningrad prisons: “Having arisen from prison delirium / Funeral lanterns burn” (“Celebrate the last anniversary ...”). While Leningrad is still the city of alive, the exit from which is “the blessed death”. And there were so many of those who “have arisen”: the time of Stalin’s repressions took away countless numbers of lives, many of the deceased were relatives and friends of Anna Akhmatova. And it is the city on the Neva that has become the world beyond the grave, whither their souls go: “And the lattice of Summer Garden, / And Leningrad coated with snow / Emerged, like in the book of this / From darkness of magic mirrors / And over pensive Lethe / The reed revived and sounded” (“The inscription on the book”).

This poem is dedicated to Lozinsky, who became a translator of “Divine Comedy” with its large-scale description of hell that in our context is also quite characteristic. “Dedication to Lozinsky was written in the years when the country was under the heel of Stalin and was increasingly turning into a sort of Dante’s hell with a clearly structured circles and holes inhabited by ghosts and shadows of people. Anna Akhmatova does not separate herself from the rest; hence, she voluntarily chooses the nickname and the title – a shadow.”

The otherworldly Lethe seems to flows across Leningrad. Due to this in the “Inscription on the book” Summer Garden (Letny Sad) gets a different etymological actualization (as if it is derived from the “Lethe” but not from “summer”) – in harmony with the river in the ancient kingdom of the dead. LG Kihney wrote about allusions exactly to the work of Dante: “The presence of Dante’s code specifies images of “shade behind Lethe”, “thoughtful Lethe”, “and reed revived”, “magic mirrors”, which are assembled together despite their different meanings; they become recognizable characters of Dante’s space. So the shadow is the most frequent image of Dante’s Inferno.”

Another text, where Neva-Lethe appears is associated with the memory of another poet who was in love with antiquity – O.E. Mandelstam: “Our shadows are racing / Above the Neva, above the Neva, above the Neva, / <...> The voice of mysterious lyre, / Staying in the afterlife meadow” (“I will bow down over them as over the bowl...”). Akhmatova associates Mandelstam – a singer having an outstanding gift – with an unsurpassed Orpheus, who descended to the underworld following the beloved Eurydice and who succeeded thanks to his talent to charm Hades. Eurydice also appears in the Akhmatova’s text devoted to Mandelstam, however, the poet uses the plural – Eurydices, as if to emphasize how many souls have already come down to “underworld meadow”, and how many of Orpheus did not manage to rescue their loved ones from the grim captivity of underworld, a kind of counterpart of which was Leningrad.

In late Akhmatova’s works this city is still infernal. Moreover, it gains the signs that are perhaps even more gloomy and scary than in the early lyric of poetess. Northern capital that became a “drunken harlot, who does not know who takes her” in the year of revolution, relates to the apocalyptic “Babylon the Great, mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (Rev. 17: 5.) inhabited by evil forces. Dark Angels, “St. Petersburg demons”, “roll call of brownies” – these are indications of the city on the Neva. And often Akhmatova’s appeal to the infernal forces is associated with the strategy of “the spell of supernatural creatures, endowed with a demonic nature”. Sometimes they can be attributed to a demonic “uninvited, not betrothed” dead man, who invades the world of the living; and this conflict “can be burdened by the motive of underworld revenge.”

War and postwar poetry related to the blockade of Leningrad step somewhat aside from this series with its hope to win and the imminent resurrection of the city. Patriotic pathos partially expels the northern capital from the infernal locative field; the courage of Leningraders
became the key to overcome the devil’s delusions. Where once there were “stars of death” symbolizing a final verdict on the country and its capitals, now the hostile “birds of death” (probably the fascist aviation) were severe but not the almighty enemy. The antithesis of the old infernal Petersburg - Leningrad and the new, updated by the Great Victory, is represented in the poem “Primorsky Park of Victory” (1950).

Soon, however, Leningrad will return its infernal status in the poems of Anna Akhmatova. Northern capital once again becomes “terrible”, everything comes back into place: for example, one of the heroes of Akhmatova sees “blue / Terrible hour of dawn over the horrible Neva” (“From me, as from that of the Countess...”)44. And again – like hellish were the flames raging over the city: “Like a mirror that day the Neva was lying / red glow in the sunset...” (“Like a mirror that day the Neva was lying...”)39. Pay attention to the kind of an oxymoron: the element of water, aimed to cool the flame (be its ontological antagonist), changes its status to opposite. This substitution (semantic “Changeling”) fits well with the concept of Akhmatova’s city on the Neva River, connected with the illusory mirage of capital on the Neva enshrined in the general cultural code.

3. Discussion

The upward tendency and aspiration to build mythopoetical vertical, facing the sky, was one of the key tasks of Acmeism. This is due to the very etymology of the Greek root “acme”, translated as “edge”, “top”. Therefore, the poets of this movement often seek the vertical movement (rather than horizontal) into semiotic top. The heritage of Anna Akhmatova is of no exception here, where the higher, celestial sphere is often connected with rather the release of the soul, its creative upsurge than with the heavenly abodes. Eden can be localized in the upper, middle and even the lower tier of the locative.

Paradise in the lyrics of Akhmatova is often “occasional” and endowed with features that are not characteristic of Paradise; it is sometimes eclectic, and has biblical and folkloric sources. In a number of works Akhmatova talks about Kitezh-Town, which according to legend sank to the bottom of the lake anticipating the Second Coming of Christ. The poetess showed the special interest in this subject in the 40-ies. For example, in the poem “When I put my curly son to bed...”42 two paradises – traditional Orthodox being “before the throne of God” and folklore represented in the image of “Kitezh-Town” are mixed up. “Having put her curly son to bed” the heroine of the poem goes to the lake, where from under the water she hears “a menacing voice”, calling her to heavenly abode. And suddenly, in the enumeration of the dead, praying for the heroine, she hears mentioning of her son: “Why do you sadden your brother-soldier / Your dove sister, the hermit, / And your baby? ...”42. Turning around the heroine sees her house in flames.

By the way, motif of “losing the son”, in particular related to its transition to the heavenly palaces is one of the cross-cutting motives of Akhmatova: “In white paradise did the wicket dissolved / Magdalene took the son” (“Where, high, is your gypsy boy...”)45. If at first this motif had no biographical subbase, then over time it begins to be correlated with life collisions of Akhmatova – namely, with putting to camps of Lev Gumilyov, to whose tragic fate she dedicated many verses, including the allegorical.

Again, the theme of Kitezh-Town appears in the poem “The Path of All the Earth”44, which has the subtitle “Kitezhanka” (woman living in Kitezh). This work “refers to the beginning of World War II, and is generated by a sense of impending historical crisis, reflecting a crisis of consciousness of the author”35. However, as Zhirmunsky notes, the poem sublimes different time layers, correlating the already passed events with the occurring and the future. And at the center of these events there is an apocalyptic theme of war: “Akhmatova deliberately gives the pan-chronic pattern of military battles of the twentieth century, having pointed to the epigraph from the Apocalypse as if hinting on the abolition of the category of time in general, – says Yakovleva, – Thus, the time-space of the poem embodies the author’s idea of modernity as of apocalyptic time, that is, of universal destruction approaching”.46 Therefore, the image of Akhmatova’s Kitezh is somewhat inverted in comparison with its traditional comprehension, and involved in necrotic semantics by various techniques: beginning from the epigraph to the poem and ending with a motif of going a way towards “last dwelling” in the final. Thus, belonging to the bottom (“over - lake”) field, Kitezh is a kind of quasi-Eden correlated with the underworld, Elysium, where there is peace, but there is no light. In addition, there is a loneliness motive as inauthentic religious representation of the kingdom of heaven in the poem.

Among paradise the lyrical heroine of Akhmatova cannot forget about the northern land of Tsarskoye Selo, and recalls it with joy, but the Eden area of Crimea (pay
attention to the harmony: Paradise – Bakhchisaray) makes her nap. If in this case we consider that for many years the native and beloved Petersburg / Leningrad in the works of Akhmatova has been invariably associated with the infernal sphere, the tendency of going from Paradise (south) toward the grave (to the north) is highly symptomatic. The poet will exactly repeat this motif half a century later: “Let someone else resting in the south / And basking in the Garden of Eden. / It is very northern here – and I choose autumn / as my friend this year” (“Let someone else resting in the south...”)49.

In the poem “Isn’t it because having escaped from this damned easiness ... “ (1917)50, a lyrical heroine sees the reflection of God’s kingdom, and she says: “... I see a marvelous hail, and hear the sweet voice, / As if there is still no mysterious grave”51. Her fate is similar to the fate of Petersburg (“wicked”), to which paradise does not come in reality, but only in visions as well. Comparisons of creativity and idyllic Vertograd in the context of Akhmatova’s idio-poetics are only sporadic; although creative act means reviving from the depths of nothingness by means of memory and gift of speech, still it often appeals to the lower, infernal sphere. Therefore, the muse of Akhmatova according to her own admission is “the muse of crying” and it does not live in paradise but in some other spheres. And despite Acmeist imperatives associated with the semantic top, lyrical heroine of the poet often resides in the lower areas (basement, pit, underground), and her rare “forays” into the upper space often lead to the recognition that the paradise “does not have the heavenly essence”: “We are so poisoned by each other, / That can perish by chance, / We call a black humiliating disease / Our incomparable paradise” (“We are so poisoned by each other...”)52.

Note the word “humiliating”, which in its internal form is related to the morphological root of the “lower”, it makes up a kind of oxymoron: “humiliating paradise”. This ambivalence is the key to Akhmatova’s idea of paradise, maybe because of this her paradise is not localized in one of the tiers of vertical space but has its “representation” in each of them.

Perhaps the only mediator, connecting the Lower and the Higher is the art, and particularly music: “Isn’t it you eh, alas, the only connection / of good and evil, of life depression and heaven? / I think that are you always on the edge” (“Music”)53. Hence she has an idea about the artist located on the border of the worlds capable to cross this border in different directions. In this regard, it is natural that the Orphic and Dante codes, also associated with a category of memory of the departed loved ones, friends and colleagues, and with mourning them, and Christian remembrance of them as a way of transgradient contact with the dead, appeared in the works of Akhmatova: in such a way the poet “restores the communication of times – as though having put a mirror between the past and the future”54. In this case the poet despite the fact that she is rooted in the infernal space, which crushes her and does not let go, must not only break herself into the higher realms but also, like Orpheus, withdraw the others from the hell, until the pejorative world will be rearranged by harmony that exists in the creative works.

4. Conclusions

It can be noted that the upper ontological sphere is represented in the works of Akhmatova much more poorly than the lower. And even heaven is not always becoming its mouthpiece, localized in the middle and lower areas of the spatial vertical. This setting to “blur” the boundaries of Paradise, the uncertainty of its semantic origin is largely due to the ambivalent status of Eden, which is often hostile or alien to a lyrical heroine, because she is unworthy (sinful)55,56.

Summing up we note that the infernal space of Akhmatova’s poetry is evolving: from abstract it turns into a real-visible from the outside – to the mental. With regard to specific representations of hell, they can be both as much as possible wide, capturing the entire area of this world, and can be narrowed till the size of a country, the city (as a rule it is Petersburg-Leningrad), and house.

The representatives of paradise space become either abstract concepts (“love”, “creativity”, “innocence”, etc.), especially associated with the mental “space” of the lyrical subject, or loci referring to the biblical discourse: garden (“wonderful”, “Divine”), city (idiopoetic “transcription” of the Heavenly Jerusalem), idyllic South (despite the fact that, according to the Scripture, Vertograd is located in the East). Besides the Judeo-Christian ideas about the High Palaces, Eden in the works of Anna Akhmatova can be connected with the ancient-mythological discourse, Slavic mythology, and Russian folklore.

5. References


