

Title: Metaphors of Poetic Language in Osip Mandelstam's "Conversation About Dante"

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In his essay "Conversation about Dante" Osip Mandelstam resorts to an entire catalogue of metaphors to describe poetic language. The two main realms Mandelstam draws from in talking about poetry - stone/mineral/textile and movement/journey – seem to clash with each other. However, poetic language, according to Mandelstam, keeps a delicate balance between the "magnetic storm" and the "measuring arrow of the compass" - the mutable and the fixed. Mandelstam's poetry resides in a permanent tension of opposites: stillness and movement, order and chaos. These opposites do not negate or cancel, but contain one other.

This paper examines how Mandelstam resolves the tension between those different metaphors by artfully bringing them into one semantic field. A third category of metaphors – winged species from the animal world – serves as an intermediary between the realms of culture and nature, of order and chaos, and blurs the distinction between them. A similar function is given to music and to the resonance of quotations.

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