

CHAPTER II

VLADIMIR MAIAKOVSKII. TRAGEDIIA

The composite title of Maiakovskii's first major work *Vladimir Maiakovskii. Tragediia* (1913) indicates both the central subject and the dominant mode of his lyric poetry, and, in Pasternak's well-known interpretation, it also implies a shift in the relationship of the poet to his work:

Заглавие скрывало гениально простое открытие, что поэт — не автор, но — предмет лирики, от первого лица обращающийся к миру. Заглавие было не именем сочинителя, а фамилией содержания.¹

In the original production Maiakovskii also directed the play and acted the part of V. Maiakovskii. He uses the dramatic form to explore his subject polyphonically in a way that Livshits related to Evreinov's theory of monodrama:

Центром драматического спектакля был, конечно, автор пьесы, превративший свою роль в монодраму. . . . Остальные персонажи . . . были вполне картонны: не потому, что укрывались за картонажными аксессуарами и казались существами двух измерений, а потому, что, по замыслу автора, являлись только облеченными в зрительные образы интонациями его собственного голоса.²

The voices of the Poet and the other characters, and their relationship to each other, are represented in the polymetric composition of the play.

Metrical Composition

In his autobiography 'Ia sam' (1922, 1928) Maiakovskii writes under the heading 'Nachalo 14-go goda': 'Чувствую мастерство' (I, 22); but the *Tragedy*, written in 1913, shows him still experimenting and exploring. This experimental and exploratory character of the play is one of its strengths, but at the same time, with the poet not yet the complete master of his form, it can also lead to difficulties and uncertainties of interpretation, so that not all lines or stanzas can be classified unambiguously; these doubtful cases, however, do not affect the basic metrical outline of the play.

The *Tragedy* has a complex and variegated polymetric composition involving ten different metrical forms or measures; as such, it belongs to the third of the

three main metrical traditions in Russian verse drama — iambic pentameter, free iambic, and polymetric.³ The cast of metrical and rhythmical voices arising out of this polymetric composition fits Khlebnikov's notion of a 'theatre of measures' in which 'размеры суть действующие лица, каждое с разными заданиями выступая на подмостках слова' (although Khlebnikov's immediate reference here is in fact to the rhythmical variations of a single measure).⁴ Two of the ten metrical voices (or maybe even four) are peculiar to a single character, while the others are found in the speech of two or more. The Poet, who in the original production wore a variety of costumes, and the Ordinary Young Man, who wore normal clothes, each have several metrical voices, while the other characters, who carried shields or props designating their distinctive features, have set metrical or rhythmical voices in accordance with their cardboard status and the manner of acting:

О какой бы то ни было жестикуляции нечего было и думать. Вся игра сводилась к читке ролей и к передвижению по прямым направлениям: вперед, назад, вправо, влево, и всё это лицом к зрителю.⁵

Apparent attempts by these other characters to speak out of character, as it were, are brief and unsuccessful.

The account of the metrical composition of the four parts (Prologue, Acts I and II, and Epilogue) and of the play as a whole will be followed by an account of each measure (in order of appearance) not only overall but also, where appropriate, in terms of the individual rhythmical voices of different characters (also in order of appearance); in one case, however, the minor characters are all classified together. The clausula patterns are not generally related to the characters, and, as in subsequent chapters, they are not always described in full. The basic unit for the purposes of classification both here and subsequently is the metrical line marked by rhyme, although unrhymed lines may be included where the form of the verse dictates it. The normal compositional unit is the stanza but occasionally the measure may alternate within a stanza, a kind of extreme micro-polymetricity developed by Khlebnikov but generally avoided by Maiakovskii;⁶ its use here makes for some of the difficulties and uncertainties of interpretation.

One area of difficulty lies with lines in a hexametral context which cannot properly be classified as hexametral. There are ten such lines in the play, one in the Prologue, five in Act I, and four in Act II; the context suggests that those in the Prologue and Act I may be classified under four-ictus accentual verse and those in Act II under free accentual verse (respectively the leading forms in the two halves of the play), but they will be treated as doubtful cases. There are also two lines in a non-hexametral context in the Epilogue which could be related to the hexametral form; they too have been treated as a doubtful case, as has a single, incorrect line of three-ictus anapaestic *dol'nik*. The other main

difficulty of metrical classification concerns a six-line stanza and three couplets (half-quatrains) which seem to combine four-ictus and three-ictus verse; there are three alternating four-ictus and three-ictus measures in the play, but in these cases the metrical classification is still uncertain. There can be a problem in distinguishing between a rhythmical echo and the metrical form itself, but for the sake of consistency all the examples listed here have been treated as doubtful cases. Another problem of interpretation arises out of a rhythmical deformation of metrical structure in some of the measures; this can lead to verse that in other circumstances could at best only be described as a transitional metrical form, but here the point lies precisely in the deformation of metrical structure and so the verse is classified and described according to the basic measure. Finally, the four-ictus accentual verse might also be interpreted as a transitional metrical form (accentual verse with a four-ictus metrical tendency), but it has been treated, perhaps without sufficient justification, as the measure proper. In the summary account of the play's metrical composition the doubtful cases are listed as such; in the ensuing account of each individual measure they are covered as and when is appropriate, and are then considered in detail in the commentary.

Maiakovskii's standard stanza form, the abab quatrain, is maintained with hardly a break throughout the play, accounting for 264 of the 283 lines. The only other forms used are a six-line stanza (abcabc), a five-line stanza (ababb), two three-line stanzas (aax), and a couplet (aa); as in subsequent chapters, the significance of these minor forms will be considered in the commentary. The great majority of stanzas are metrically homogeneous, but eight quatrains (twelve if the doubtful cases are included), the couplet, and the two three-line stanzas are heterogeneous. The two unrhymed lines in the three-line stanzas are hexametral and have naturally been included in the classification as metrical lines, but there is also a single unrhymed segment which stands outside the stanza fabric of the verse and so has been classified as 'prose'. A full rhythmical description and a breakdown of the metrical segments are given in Appendix I.

The ten metrical forms or measures employed in the play are hexametral verse, four-ictus accentual verse, free accentual verse, iambic tetrameter with feminine or dactylic caesura, alternating four-ictus and three-ictus amphibrachic *dol'nik*, four-ictus *dol'nik* with an amphibrachic tendency in the anacrusis, free trochee, three-ictus anapaestic *dol'nik*, alternating four-ictus and three-ictus accentual verse, and alternating four-ictus and three-ictus dactylic *dol'nik*. The distribution of the play's 283 lines among these ten measures (with doubtful cases) in the Prologue, Acts I and II, and Epilogue and also overall is given, in percentages of the relevant total, in Table 1; as in subsequent chapters, the single 'prose' segment is shown too, but not as a percentage, and it does not count towards the line totals.⁷

TABLE 1. Metrical Composition

	Prologue	Act I	Act II	Epilogue	Total	Lines
Hx	10.0	3.0	11.0	—	5.7	16
Ac4	66.7	27.4	—	—	23.3	66
AcF	—	10.7	63.0	83.3	26.1	74
I4c+1/2	—	7.1	—	—	4.2	12
Dk4343Am	—	7.1	—	—	4.2	12
Dk4–Dk4Am	—	17.9	2.7	—	11.3	32
TF	—	2.4	—	—	1.4	4
Dk3An	—	11.3	—	—	6.7	19
Ac4343	—	7.1	—	—	4.2	12
Dk4343D	—	—	15.1	—	3.9	11
Doubtful	23.3	6.0	8.2	16.7	8.8	25
'Prose'	—	—	1	—		
Lines	30	168	73	12		283

The table shows the dominance of accentual verse and the *dol'nik*, while the two binary forms account for only 5.6% of the total. The leading metrical form is accentual verse: the three accentual forms account for nearly 55% of the total and the two leading types (four-ictus and free accentual verse) each account for about a quarter of the total, while the four *dol'nik* measures and hexametral verse account for a little over 30%. Four-ictus accentual verse is the leading form in the Prologue and Act I, but free accentual verse, which steadily rises in prominence from Act I through Act II to the Epilogue, is the leading form in the second half (and also overall). The two halves are unevenly balanced in length; similarly, while the first half is metrically quite varied (featuring nine of the ten forms used in the play), the second is more uniform. In the first half, however, the four-ictus scheme on its own or in alternation with the three-ictus form accounts for about two thirds of all lines and so provides considerable unity and regularity within the variety, while in free accentual verse, which dominates in the second half, the form of the verse can come close to dissolution. Thus, in its basic compositional outline, the play moves from a certain unity within variety towards dissolution in a single, dominant form. The most prominent of the secondary forms is the four-ictus *dol'nik*, but the most notable is hexametral verse because it alone is found in the Prologue, Act I, and Act II (and maybe in the Epilogue too); the other secondary forms appear in linear succession rather than in combination, and generally do not recur at all, exhausted after a single segment, or else, apart from the four-ictus *dol'nik*, recur only locally.

1. Hexametral Verse

Hexametral verse is a long line form based more or less closely on the traditional Russian hexameter, a six-ictus dactylic *dol'nik* measure with a final interval of two syllables (almost invariably) and an unrhymed feminine clausula.⁸ So the criterion for the interpretation of a line as hexametral is that it can be related to the hexameter; the distance allowable will depend on the context. It is a feature of this metrical form not only here but also elsewhere that the basic compositional unit may be the line not the stanza; in the case of isolated lines, therefore, the criterion is applied more rigorously, while in a hexametral context the scope of the measure is extended to include longer lines and perhaps also shorter, five-ictus ones too. An approach to hexametral verse can be seen in three short poems of 1913. In 'Neskol'ko slov obo mne samom', the fourth poem in the cycle 'Ia', six-ictus *dol'nik* lines alternate with shorter five-, four-, and three-ictus ones, in 'Ot ustalosti' five-ictus lines (for the most part regular dactyls) dominate, although there are some six-ictus lines too, but in 'My', the most consistently hexametral of the three poems, Maiakovskii develops a range of five-, six-, seven-ictus and longer lines, for example:

110221f	Дорога — рог ада — пьяни грузовозов храпы!
13212m	Дымящиеся ноздри вулканов хмелем расширь!
022222f	Перья линияющих ангелов бросим любимым на шляпы,
0222222m	будем хвосты на боа обрубать у комет, ковыляющих в ширь.

(1, 53)

Hexametral verse will also be used in *Oblako v shtanakh*, but its most important role is in the four major works of the years around the Revolution — *Voina i mir*, *Chelovek*, *Misteriia-buff*, and *150000000*.

Here in the *Tragedy* the hexametral voice belongs primarily to V. Maiakovskii the Poet (abbreviated to VM in tables), and, in accordance with its derivation from the hexameter, it is adopted as the classical voice of the poet; it is also briefly adopted 'out of character' by the Man with a Stretched Face (abbreviated to Face). These classical associations on the metrical level link with a general orientation towards Greek tragedy in the play which is evident in the genre itself, the use of masks, the reporting of action which takes place off-stage, and so on.

Since, by definition, hexametral verse lacks a precise metrical scheme, it presents problems of description as well as of interpretation; it is therefore described according to its function and character in the given text. Here Maiakovskii is basically using the traditional hexameter as a six-ictus dactylic *dol'nik* (without the fixed final interval), but the standard form is not always adhered to. In addition he borrows from the pentameter of the elegiac couplet by using a zero interval over the caesura; such lines will be considered as correct, but otherwise the hexametral verse will be described as a *dol'nik* form.

The distribution of the sixteen lines of hexametral verse according to line length and rhythmical form is given in Tables 2 and 3. Line length is measured in ictuses and rhythmical form is primarily classified as correct or incorrect, both in terms of *dol'nik* metre (with the qualification outlined above), while lines with a ternary rhythm are classified additionally as such; lines with a hypermetrical stress are classified, as generally, according to their underlying rhythmical form.

TABLE 2. Line Length

	12	8	7	6	5
VM	1	1	1	9	2
Face	—	—	1	1	—
Total	1	1	2	10	2

TABLE 3. Rhythm

	Ct	Inct	Ty	Lines
	12	2	2	14
	1	1	1	2
Total	13	3	3	16

The tables show that the six-ictus measure of the hexameter is maintained in ten of the sixteen lines, while thirteen, including two which feature zero intervals over a caesura, are correct in rhythmical form (anacrusis excluded); in fact, in two of the three incorrect lines the irregular interval occurs over the caesura (compare the variable caesura in the iambic tetrameter with feminine or dactylic caesura). Most of the six-ictus lines have a central caesura, but in others it is asymmetric. Maiakovskii also uses a division into third-lines,⁹ either within a six-ictus line or else in combination with half-lines as a way of extending the measure to seven or eight ictuses; the twelve-ictus line is a remarkable double hexameter. There is an interesting development in the hexametral verse which echoes the play's basic compositional theme: at first the hexametral voice has a traditional profile, but later the form is subject to variation. In the two lines in the Epilogue which might be classified as hexametral, variation of the measure turns to rhythmical deformation: both lines (probably) have six stresses and the second is quite close to the hexameter in rhythmical form, but the first line has a binary rhythmical emphasis that makes it unrecognizable as a hexameter.

The distribution of the sixteen lines of hexametral verse according to anacrusis and clausula is given in Tables 4 and 5.

TABLE 4. Anacrusis

	0	1	2
VM	10	3	1
Face	1	1	—
Total	11	4	1

TABLE 5. Clausula

	m	f	Lines
	8	6	14
	—	2	2
Total	8	8	16

The hexameter base shows in the leading role of the zero anacrusis, although it only accounts for eleven of the sixteen lines. The two unrhymed hexametral lines both have feminine clausulae, as in the traditional hexameter, but otherwise Maiakovskii both rhymes and varies the clausula; the alternation of feminine and masculine clausulae (in that order) found in three of the four quatrains which have two or more hexametral lines is also found in the elegiac couplet.

2. *Four-ictus Accentual Verse*

Accentual verse had been used before in Russian poetry, but it is first developed widely (and variously) in early Futurism; Maiakovskii is of course a leading figure in this development. This measure, which he first uses in the short poem 'Liubov'' (1913), corresponds to the leading stress scheme in his accentual verse. Here it is the leading form in the Prologue and Act I but is completely absent from the second half of the play. It is introduced by the Poet in the Prologue and is adopted in Act I by the Man without an Ear (abbreviated to Ear), the Man with a Stretched Face, the Ordinary Young Man (OYM), and the Man without an Eye and a Leg (Eye); these are all the main characters in the first half of the play except for the Old Man with Black Dry Cats. The Poet and his disfigured parts or doubles use four-ictus accentual verse as the main narrative measure to tell of the alienated state of things in the modern city: Maiakovskii's use of this and the other two accentual forms can be related to the introduction of accentual verse in a tragic lyric mode in early Symbolism, but more directly it relates to contemporary Futurist use in association with urban themes, as, for example, in Khlebnikov's *Zhuravl'* or in the verse of Shershenevich and Bol'shakov.¹⁰

The distribution of the sixty-six lines of four-ictus accentual verse according to line length and rhythmical form is given in Tables 6 and 7. As subsequently with accentual verse, line length is measured in stresses, and rhythmical form is classified as accentual, *taktovik*, *dol'nik*, ternary, and binary; ternary and binary are subsets of *dol'nik*, while two-stress and one-stress lines (when they

TABLE 6. Line Length

	8	7	5	4
VM	5.0	—	15.0	80.0
Ear	—	4.2	8.3	87.5
Face	—	—	—	4
OYM	—	—	—	2
Eye	—	—	18.7	81.2
Total	1.5	1.5	12.1	84.8

TABLE 7. Rhythm

	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	Lines
VM	20.0	40.0	40.0	5.0	20
Ear	29.2	50.0	20.8	8.3	24
Face	2	—	2	—	4
OYM	1	—	1	—	2
Eye	12.5	56.2	31.2	—	16
Total	24.2	43.9	31.8	4.5	66

appear) are too short to be classified for rhythmical form. Percentages are given for the Poet, the Man without an Ear, and the Man without an Eye and a Leg (the three main voices), as well as for the overall totals, but actual figures are given for the two minor voices.

Since Table 6 shows that the four-stress form accounts for about 85% of all lines, this verse might alternatively be interpreted as accentual verse with a four-stress metrical tendency, but in context it seems preferable to treat it as four-ictus accentual verse with certain local variations. The eight-stress and seven-stress lines, for example, are extended, double lines (a device already noted in the hexametral verse), and all four longer lines in the Poet's speech appear in two consecutive stanzas with a theme of extension beyond set limits. A single extra stress has been counted in just five other lines, but there are no shorter lines; in context this extra, fifth stress can be interpreted as indeed additional, quasi-hypermeterical (although the notion of a hypermeterical stress in accentual verse must be handled with care), and so a four-ictus scheme would seem to pertain.¹¹ Table 7 shows that *taktovik* rhythm is the leading form, while ternary rhythm is rare and binary rhythm not present at all. An interesting feature of this accentual verse is the fact that a *taktovik* rhythm may fit the metre of free trochee (or iamb) for a few lines at a time, before varying again with an interval of two syllables; in the cycle 'Ia' a related phenomenon can be discerned when lines of free iamb or trochee contain the occasional irregular interval. Once again, therefore, the link between Maiakovskii's free binary and tonic verse is demonstrated.

The rhythmical differentiation of the individual voices is not great: the Poet introduces the devices of an extra stress and the extended line, while both the Man without an Ear and the Man without an Eye and a Leg show a clear preference for *taktovik* rhythm, with the former leaning towards irregularity and the latter towards regularity. The two minor voices, curiously, are drawn to the contrasting types of *dol'nik* and accentual rhythm, although their lines are very few.

The distribution of the sixty-six lines of four-ictus accentual verse according to anacrusis and clausula is given in Tables 8 and 9; percentages and actual figures are used as before.

TABLE 8. Anacrusis

	0	1	2	3
VM	15.0	45.0	35.0	5.0
Ear	41.6	29.2	25.0	4.2
Face	2	2	—	—
OYM	—	1	1	—
Eye	43.7	25.0	31.2	—
Total	33.3	34.8	28.8	3.0

TABLE 9. Clausula

	m	f	d	Lines
VM	—	85.0	15.0	20
Ear	41.6	58.3	—	24
Face	2	2	—	4
OYM	2	—	—	2
Eye	37.5	50.0	12.5	16
Total	30.3	62.1	7.6	66

Dactylic clausulae, which come to prominence in Maiakovskii's verse from 1914, are few here, and there is just one heterosyllabic rhyme (also a common type in his mature rhyming practice). Some differentiation of the main voices is evident in both anacrusis and clausula. The Poet prefers a longer anacrusis and, even more so, the feminine clausula, but then there is a shift to zero anacruses and masculine clausulae in the voices of the Man without an Ear and the Man without an Eye and a Leg, although feminine clausulae remain the leading form. This shift, like the preference for *taktovik* rhythm, also serves to emphasize these characters' distance from the Old Man's voice, which is amphibrachic *dol'nik*, while the rise of the zero anacrusis may be related to a rise in tension through Act I as well. There are seven different clausula patterns in the fifteen homogeneous accentual quatrains, of which the most common are ffff (five quatrains) and mfmf (four quatrains).

The six lines in the first half of the play which appear in a hexametral context but which cannot properly be classified as hexametral show the dual influence of hexametral and four-ictus accentual verse: five of the six lines are standard four-stress lines (one is short), but these five lines also have zero anacruses and are *dol'nik* in rhythm.

3. *Free Accentual Verse*

This metrical form, which lies near the end of the metrical scale in Russian verse,¹² plays an important role in the development of Maiakovskii's verse and is the leading form in the play. In it the form of the verse can come close to dissolution, and its rise in prominence from Act I through Act II to the Epilogue is the key movement in the play. It is introduced by the Poet at the very beginning of Act I and is subsequently used by various other characters too, but the only other major voice is that of the Man with Two Kisses (2K) who has the central and longest speech in Act II. The other individual characters to use it are the Ordinary Young Man, the Man without an Ear (with a voice from the crowd), the Man without an Eye and a Leg, and the Man without a Head (Head); it is also used by the Newsmen (News), people trying to speak all at once (All), the Children Kisses (Ks), and threatening voices (All). In accordance with its formal character free accentual verse is the voice of dissolution and disintegration. It is the voice into which the Poet increasingly lapses when he is no longer a creative, moving force but barren and redundant; then, without the Poet to direct them, it takes over among the other characters in Act II as the ideal of a common language, which was proclaimed by the Poet in the Prologue, dissolves — it becomes a common language, but a language of disintegration and dissolution.

A compositional equivalent of the form's significance can be seen in the principle governing the alternation of speakers. Elsewhere this generally

occurs between stanzas or sometimes between the two halves of a stanza, but here it may occur not only after a single line but also, twice, within a metrical line; in both these cases the line is classified as a whole under the character who begins it. In two or three places the division into metrical lines is not certain, but for the purposes of classification a probable (or possible) interpretation which keeps the basic stanza form is adopted.

The distribution of the seventy-four lines of free accentual verse according to line length is given, in percentages, in Table 10; all the voices apart from those of the Poet and the Man with Two Kisses are classified together because they all have just a very few lines each.

TABLE 10. Line Length

	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Lines
VM	3.8	—	—	11.5	7.7	15.4	11.5	26.9	19.2	3.8	26
2K	4.2	—	—	20.8	16.7	33.3	16.7	—	4.2	4.2	24
Others	—	4.2	4.2	—	12.5	20.8	4.2	20.8	16.7	16.7	24
Total	2.7	1.4	1.4	10.8	12.2	23.0	10.8	16.2	13.5	8.1	74

The range of line length is great and the spread wide, both overall and within the individual voices, and the four-stress form, the leading form in the first half of the play, is relegated to an unremarkable role. The poet's voice shows a great range and spread, while the voice of the Man with Two Kisses shows a concentration of long lines in the range of four to seven stresses; among the other characters, however, there is a contrasting, but not uniform, tendency towards shorter lines.

The distribution of the seventy-four lines of free accentual verse according to rhythmical form is given, in percentages, in Table 11.

TABLE 11. Rhythm

	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	By	Short	Lines
VM	34.6	30.8	11.5	—	3.8	23.1	26
2K	45.8	33.3	12.5	4.2	4.2	8.3	24
Others	41.7	8.3	16.7	—	4.2	33.3	24
Total	40.5	24.3	13.5	1.4	4.1	21.6	74

This table shows that the free accentual verse is rhythmically very irregular too (in all the voices), much more so than the other two accentual measures (see Tables 7 and 26); it is so irregular that a sense of rhythmical organization may more or less dissolve.

The distribution of the seventy-four lines of free accentual verse according to anacrusis and clausula is given in Tables 12 and 13.

TABLE 12. Anacrusis

	0	1	2	3	4
VM	34.6	15.4	46.2	3.8	—
2K	45.8	20.8	29.2	—	4.2
Others	20.8	50.0	25.0	—	4.2
Total	33.8	28.4	33.8	1.4	2.7

TABLE 13. Clausula

	m	f	d	h	Lines
	30.8	53.8	15.4	—	26
	16.7	58.3	20.8	4.2	24
	41.7	50.0	8.3	—	24
Total	29.7	54.1	14.9	1.4	74

The theme of diversity (dissolution) is evident in both anacrusis and clausula. In the anacrusis there is an even spread among the three main forms, while the two anacrusis of four syllables are the only such ones in the play. Similarly, there is more diversity than elsewhere in the clausula, although feminine clausulae are in the majority; the hyperdactylic clausula is one of only two in the play, and there are also four heterosyllabic rhymes involving lines of free accentual verse out of a total of only six in the play. Eight different clausula patterns are found in the fifteen homogeneous free accentual quatrains, of which the most common are ffff (five quatrains) and fmfm (three quatrains).

The four lines in Act II which appear in a hexametral context but which cannot be interpreted as hexametral range in length from three to five stresses; three have zero anacrusis, and two are *dol'nik* in rhythm.

4. Iambic Tetrameter with Feminine or Dactylic Caesura

The iambic tetrameter with feminine caesura is one of the leading measures with an expanded (or truncated) interval over the caesura which were first widely used by Bal'mont and Lkhvitskaia and were subsequently favoured by Severianin, particularly around this time; it is used by Maiakovskii in the short poem 'Za zhenshchinoi' of 1913, and it will play a small but crucial role in *Chelovek*. The iambic tetrameter with dactylic caesura, though not exclusive to Severianin, was especially developed by him.¹³ Here the iambic tetrameter with feminine or dactylic caesura (Maiakovskii's own innovation?) is a metrical voice exclusive to the Poet. It is adopted as the voice of Severianin for the Poet's dance near the beginning of Act I and does not subsequently recur, but it does set the four-ictus scheme which gives the verse direction in Act I.

TABLE 14. Caesura

	f	d
VM	10	2

TABLE 15. Clausula

	f	d	Lines
	11	1	12

The distribution of the twelve lines of iambic tetrameter with feminine or dactylic caesura according to caesura and clausula is given in Tables 14 and 15.

There is only one omission of stress, in the first ictus; this is the most common position for the omission of stress in the iambic tetrameter with feminine caesura. As the tables show, both caesurae and clausulae are predominantly feminine, thereby reproducing the symmetrical rhythmical movement typical of Severianin. Both heterosyllabic and compound rhyme, which Severianin developed, are represented in a heterosyllabic rhyme involving a (heavy) hypermetrical stress in one clausula; this is one of just three examples in the play of a hypermetrical stress in the clausula.

5. Alternating Four-ictus and Three-ictus Amphibrachic *Dol'nik*

Although the *dol'nik* was brought into the mainstream of Russian verse by the Symbolists, the four-ictus and alternating four-ictus and three-ictus forms were not canonized by them (unlike the three-ictus *dol'nik*).¹⁴ The alternating four-ictus and three-ictus *dol'nik* (not necessarily with an amphibrachic anacrusis) is an important measure in Maiakovskii's metrical repertoire, particularly in the 1920s; it is first used, for just one stanza, in 'Neskol'ko slov obo mne samom' in the cycle 'Ia'. Here it is neither introduced nor subsequently adopted by the Poet; it is one of the two metrical voices of the Old Man with Black Dry Cats (abbreviated to Old). It is closely related to his major, four-ictus *dol'nik* voice which is predominantly amphibrachic too; the two measures alternate at the start of his main speech in Act I after which this one does not recur in the Old Man's speech, but in two doubtful cases it may subsequently be adopted by the Ordinary Young Man and the Man with a Stretched Face (these will be considered in the commentary).

The distribution of the twelve lines of alternating four-ictus and three-ictus amphibrachic *dol'nik* according to rhythmical form and clausula is given in Tables 16 and 17; four-ictus and three-ictus lines are classified separately, and,

TABLE 16.	Rhythm (Dk4)			Rhythm (Dk3)			Lines
	222	221	122	22	12	OS	
Old	3	2	1	2	3	1	12

TABLE 17.	Clausula (Dk4)		Clausula (Dk3)		Lines
	m	f	m	f	
Old	2	4	6		12

as subsequently with *dol'nik* measures, rhythmical form is classified as 222, 122, 22, 12, and so on, while lines with omitted stresses are classified as such because the omission of stress is rare in Maiakovskii's *dol'nik* and is therefore a distinctive rhythmical feature.

For the purposes of this classification an interjection which precedes the first metrical line has been ignored. The verse is rhythmically regular with almost half the lines overall having a ternary (222 and 22) rhythmical form. A masculine clausula is maintained without a break in the three-ictus lines; this association of three-ictus lines with masculine clausulae is almost constant in the play and assists in the demarcation of measures (a preference for feminine clausulae is evident in the four-ictus measures).

6. *Four-ictus Dol'nik with an Amphibrachic Tendency in the Anacrusis*

The four-ictus *dol'nik*, often, as here, with an amphibrachic tendency in the anacrusis, is a very important measure in Maiakovskii's later metrical repertoire; it is the main narrative measure in *Liubliu* and *Pro eto*, and it is also used in *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin* and *Khorosho*. Here it is the Old Man's major metrical voice, but it is also adopted by everyone together (All) in a chorus stanza near the end of Act I.

The distribution of the thirty-two lines of four-ictus *dol'nik* with an amphibrachic tendency in the anacrusis according to rhythmical form, anacrusis, and clausula is given in Tables 18, 19, and 20.

TABLE 18. Rhythm

	222	212	211	122	112	111	Lines
Old	19	5	2	—	1	1	28
All	2	1	—	1	—	—	4
Total	21	6	2	1	1	1	32

TABLE 19. Anacrusis

	0	1	2
Old	5	21	2
All	—	4	—
Total	5	25	2

TABLE 20. Clausula

	m	f	Lines
Old	2	26	28
All	—	4	4
Total	2	30	32

The overall percentage of monosyllabic anacruses (78.1%) is sufficient to define an amphibrachic tendency in the anacrusis. The voices of the Old Man and everyone in chorus are in effect indistinguishable (the 122 form used by the latter but not by the Old Man is found in his other measure), and the rhythm of the Old Man's voice is itself essentially the same here as in his other measure,

even a little more regular (see Table 16). The regularity of the verse in this measure is further reinforced by the strict maintenance of a feminine clausula in all but two lines, and these come outside the Old Man's main speech. In general, the predominance of ternary rhythm and the monosyllabic anacrusis suggests a broad definition of the Old Man's voice as amphibrachic. This rhythm, which does not derive from the Poet, can be related to the Old Man's distinctive feature, his millennial age, because in Maiakovskii's later verse ternary, especially amphibrachic, rhythm comes to express the inertia of time, the inertia of millennia in *Chelovek* and of centuries in *Pro eto*. In this connection it is also worth noting that both of the Old Man's measures can have ballad associations, as they will do in *Pro eto* where the ballad genre is described as 'HEMOΛOΔ' (IV, 140).

7. Free Trochee

This measure, which is approached in occasional experiments in early twentieth-century Russian poetry (and before),¹⁵ is first used by Maiakovskii in the cycle 'Ia' in the last two stanzas of 'Neskol'ko slov o moei mame' and the first two lines of the following 'Neskol'ko slov obo mne samom'; it will play a key role in *Pro eto*, *Vladimir Il'ich Lenin*, and Maiakovskii's later verse more generally. Here it is a second metrical voice exclusive to the Poet, and, like the iambic tetrameter with feminine or dactylic caesura, it appears just once, in a single stanza in Act I. In context the free trochee has a compositional role, but it is also intriguing to find a journey motif present (it is not evident in the cycle 'Ia') because of the subsequent association of this measure with the journey motif in *Pro eto* and elsewhere in Maiakovskii's later verse.¹⁶

The distribution of the four lines of free trochee according to line length (measured in both ictuses and stresses) and clausula is given in Tables 21 and 22.

	TABLE 21. Length (Ictus)				Length (Stress)				TABLE 22. Clausula		
	15	9	6	5	11	6	4	3	m	f	Lines
VM	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	4

A comparison of the figures for length in ictuses and stresses shows that the latter are quite readily omitted, but the most striking feature of this verse, which it shares with the free accentual verse, is the extraordinary range in the length of the line.

8. Three-ictus Anapaestic Dol'nik

The three-ictus *dol'nik* was canonized by the Symbolists with Blok at their head. This variant, with an anapaestic (disyllabic) anacrusis, soon became the leading form;¹⁷ it will play a special, though minor, role in *Chelovek* and *Pro*

eto, and is found elsewhere in Maiakovskii's later verse too. Here it is introduced by the Poet in Act I and then, following a final, doubtful line from the Poet, it is taken up by the Ordinary Young Man. The Poet adopts it as the voice of the Symbolist poet (specifically that of Blok) in association with the theme of the feminine, while the Ordinary Young Man adopts it in imitation of the Poet.

The distribution of the nineteen lines of three-ictus anapaestic *dol'nik* according to rhythmical form, anacrusis, and clausula is given in Tables 23, 24, and 25.

TABLE 23. Rhythm

	22	12	21	11	Inct	Lines
VM	3	3	2	1	1	10
OYM	2	1	3	—	3	9
Total	5	4	5	1	4	19

TABLE 24. Anacrusis

	0	2	3
VM	—	10	—
OYM	1	7	1
Total	1	17	1

TABLE 25. Clausula

m	Lines
10	10
9	9
19	19

The relative frequency of the first three rhythmical forms is close to that of the measure in its earliest period of development (1890–1910); a certain percentage of incorrect lines can also be found in this period.¹⁸ The presence of a single incorrect line in the speech of the Poet is not too unusual, but the presence of three such lines in the speech of the Ordinary Young Man is striking: it shows a rhythmical deformation of metrical structure which is characteristic of his use of verse form generally; moreover, he also fails to maintain an anapaestic anacrusis in every line. But the association of three-ictus lines with masculine clausulae is confirmed in the maintenance of a constant masculine clausula in the speech of both characters.

9. Alternating Four-ictus and Three-ictus Accentual Verse

This measure, which is closely related to the four-ictus accentual verse, corresponds to another leading stress scheme in some of Maiakovskii's accentual verse, although as a distinct measure it is not found elsewhere in his early verse. Like the four-ictus accentual verse, it is only found in the first half

of the play where it serves as an alternative to the main narrative measure. It is used by the Man without an Eye and a Leg at the end of Act I, but the principle of alternation of four-ictus and three-ictus lines would seem to have been introduced by the Poet in a six-line stanza in the Prologue: this stanza appears to have an underlying 443443 ictus scheme, but the interpretation is not certain and so it has been left as a doubtful case.

The distribution of the twelve lines of alternating four-ictus and three-ictus accentual verse according to rhythmical form, anacrusis, and clausula is given in Tables 26, 27, and 28; four-ictus and three-ictus lines are classified both separately and together.

	Rhythm (Ac4)					Rhythm (Ac3)					Rhythm (Ac43)					Lines
	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	By	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	By	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	By	
Eye	—	2	4	1	—	2	1	3	1	1	2	3	7	2	1	12

	Anacrusis (Ac4)		Anacrusis (Ac3)			Anacrusis (Ac43)			Lines
	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	2	
Eye	3	3	2	3	1	5	6	1	12

	Clausula (Ac4)		Clausula (Ac3)		Clausula (Ac43)		Lines
	m	f	m	f	m	f	
Eye	4	2	4	2	8	4	12

The voice of the Man without an Eye or a Leg is more regular than in the four-ictus accentual verse, with *dol'nik* rhythm more prominent and even two lines of ternary rhythm (see Table 7); in context this may show the influence of the Old Man. The anacrusis is more streamlined here and the masculine clausula is the leading form (see Tables 8 and 9), but the association of three-ictus lines with masculine clausulae is no longer constant.

10. Alternating Four-ictus and Three-ictus Dactylic Dol'nik

The experimental rhyme poem 'Iz ulitsy v ulitsu' (1913) has a dactylic base which in the last stanza at least is clearly embodied in an alternating four-ictus and three-ictus scheme, though with one monosyllabic (*dol'nik*) interval. Here the alternating four-ictus and three-ictus dactylic *dol'nik* is the metrical voice of the three Women with Tears: the Woman with a Little Tear (T1), the Woman with a Tear (T2), and the Woman with a Large Tear (T3). They speak in turn in

the opening passage of Act II, although the Poet intervenes in free accentual verse with the first line of the middle stanza; it is also possible that the Poet himself adopts this measure in a couplet later, but the interpretation is uncertain. Maiakovskii's use of the alternating four-ictus and three-ictus dactylic *dol'nik* for the Women with Tears appears to derive from the tradition of Nekrasov, who uses the parent dactylic form in association with the theme of grief and probably in stylization of the folk lament, as in 'V derevne' and 'V polnom razgare strada derevenskaia';¹⁹ these associations accord with the Women's distinctive feature, their tears.

The distribution of the five four-ictus and six three-ictus lines of the alternating four-ictus and three-ictus dactylic *dol'nik* according to rhythmical form, anacrusis, and clausula is given in Tables 29, 30, and 31 (two lines do not conform to the ictus scheme of the measure).

TABLE 29.	Rhythm (Dk4)			Rhythm (Dk3)			Lines
	222	221	Inct	22	21	Not	
T1	1	1	—	2	—	—	4
T2	—	—	1	1	—	1	3
T3	—	—	2	—	1	1	4
Total	1	1	3	3	1	2	11

TABLE 30.	Anacrusis (Dk4)		Anacrusis (Dk3)			Lines
	0	2	0	1	2	
T1	2	—	2	—	—	4
T2	—	1	1	—	1	3
T3	2	—	1	1	—	4
Total	4	1	4	1	1	11

TABLE 31.	Clausula (Dk4)		Clausula (Dk3)		Lines
	f	d	m	f	
T1	2	—	2	—	4
T2	1	—	—	2	3
T3	—	2	—	2	4
Total	4	2	2	4	11

These tables show a severe and progressive deformation of the metrical structure in accordance with the increasing size of the tears; as elsewhere, the

point lies in this deformation of the proper measure, rather than in a transitional metrical status. The first stanza is correct and very regular in rhythm, but in the second and third stanzas there are three incorrect lines, three incorrect anacruses, and even two lines which do not conform to the ictus scheme of the measure, although in context the one in the second stanza might be interpreted as a regular three-ictus line preceded by a metrical interjection; without the parallel of the first two stanzas the third stanza could hardly be related to the measure at all. It is interesting that a zero interval between stresses is found in four lines, because this rhythmical effect, which is generally avoided, will be associated with the expression of pain in *Pro eto* (see Chapter VII, p. 238). In the first stanza the three-ictus lines end in masculine clausulae, but not thereafter.

The polymetric composition of the *Tragedy* clearly illustrates the play's transitional and pivotal status in the development of Maiakovskii's verse from his earliest, syllabo-tonic and experimental, period (1912–13) to his periods of maturity. The play brings together many of the measures from his short poems of 1912–13, especially from the cycle 'Ia', with the notable exception of the iambic tetrameter; it also holds the elements out of which his distinctive accentual verse will be formed, while at the same time raising some of the key metrical themes that re-emerge in later years. Maiakovskii's distinctive accentual verse, in which the line length and rhythm may be more or less regulated, could be said to arise out of a fusion of the free accentual verse with the fixed-ictus accentual and *dol'nik* measures in the play. The play is thus a presentation or dress rehearsal of aspects of Maiakovskii's metrical persona.

The play's metrical themes together form a composite structure. The detailed analysis of this structure has now reinforced and clarified the basic compositional outline which showed a movement from a certain unity within variety towards dissolution in free accentual verse. In the first half of the play, as already noted, a quite extensive correlation of measures is established through the four-ictus and alternating four-ictus and three-ictus schemes; on this level there is also a potential link between free accentual verse and the free trochee, while the three-ictus anapaestic *dol'nik* and hexametral verse stand more or less apart in accordance with their roles as poetical voices. The dactylic *dol'nik* in Act II shares the alternating four-ictus and three-ictus scheme, but the scheme is now subject to deformation. On the metrical level the main body of measures divides into two groups, *dol'nik* and accentual, sharing a common tonic base. The Old Man's two *dol'nik* measures are rhythmically assimilated so that his voice can be defined more broadly as amphibrachic; his rhythmical influence may also show in the alternating four-ictus and three-ictus accentual verse, but not in the four-ictus accentual verse. The theme of dissolution is evident in the deformation of metrical structure in the other two *dol'nik*

measures — the three-ictus anapaestic *dol'nik* and the alternating four-ictus and three-ictus dactylic *dol'nik* — and also in the hexametral verse, but it reaches an extreme in the form of the free accentual verse itself. Finally, the two binary measures — the iambic tetrameter with feminine or dactylic caesura and the free trochee — stand apart both from the main body of tonic measures and from each other. In the play's polymetric composition, therefore, disintegration overcomes integration.

The play's polymetric composition also highlights the leading role of the Poet and defines the other characters' roles relative to him. Through the Poet Maiakovskii would seem to be searching for a voice of his own, yet he also adopts established voices: those of the classical poet (hexametral verse), Severianin and the Bal'mont melodic tradition (iambic tetrameter with feminine or dactylic caesura), and Blok and Symbolism (three-ictus anapaestic *dol'nik*). Indeed, the play's composition provides a metrical illustration of Matiushin's assertion that 'в "Трагедии" Маяковский пробирался к новому сквозь заросли традиций символизма: Белого, Бальмонта, Брюсова, Блока'.²⁰ The three poetical voices and the free trochee essentially belong to the Poet alone, while in the two main accentual forms his role is that of initiator. He introduces the forms, and the other characters, as 'intonations of his voice',²¹ then take them up with individual rhythmical emphasis. Although he does not initiate the three Women's dactylic *dol'nik* voice, it turns out that they are divorced from their form which indirectly derives from the Poet himself. Whereas the Poet initiates voices, the Ordinary Young Man, his negative double, imitates them, and, through his rhythmical theme of deformation, he embodies a variant of the play's basic compositional theme. Of the other characters only the Old Man in his millennial detachment possesses a certain genuine independence from the Poet; he initiates his own two closely related metrical voices, pursues them without interference from the Poet, and himself even influences other characters, although the four-ictus scheme and probably also the principle of alternation of four-ictus and three-ictus lines have already been introduced by the Poet.

Commentary

The text of the *Tragedy* divides into sixty metrical segments (including the doubtful cases) and one 'prose' segment; the metrical segments range in length from one to twenty-eight lines. For the purposes of the commentary the play is divided into thirteen more or less discrete passages, ranging in length from eight to forty-four lines. Each passage is characterized according to its metrical and rhythmical composition: the analysis of each passage is headed by a tabular description of its constituent metrical segments and their rhythmical composition according to the parameters of line length and rhythmical form. Each segment within a speech and each speech within a segment have a separate line

in the table, except where the speaker alternates within a metrical line in which case, as before, the line is classified as a whole under the character who begins it. Heterogeneous stanzas are treated as separate compositional units, so each segment within such a stanza has a line of its own. In the left hand column of the table the number of the opening graphical line of the segment or speech within a segment and the identity of the speaker are indicated. The main body of the table gives the classification according to line length and rhythmical form. Line length is measured in stresses, whatever the measure, and hypermetrical stresses (other than those in the clausula) are counted; six-stress and longer lines are classified together as long, and two-stress and one-stress lines are classified together as short. The binary measures are not classified for rhythmical form, nor are short lines other than those arising from the omission of stress. All other lines are classified as accentual, *taktovik*, *dol'nik*, and ternary; ternary, as usual, is a subset of *dol'nik*. This is the form used to describe the accentual measures in the first half of the chapter, and it is now extended to the *dol'nik* measures and hexametral verse; incorrect lines of these measures may therefore be classified as accentual or *taktovik* according to the length of the incorrect interval(s), while correct lines are classified as *dol'nik* (or *dol'nik* and ternary). Lines with an initial omitted stress or a hypermetrical stress in the anacrusis are classified according to the rhythm of the rest of the line, while lines with a non-initial omitted stress or a hypermetrical stress in the stem are classified according to their underlying rhythmical form; the presence of an omitted or hypermetrical stress shows in the line length (only heavy hypermetrical stresses are counted, unless the graphical lay-out dictates that a stress-ambiguous word should be hypermetrically stressed). The metrical classification of each segment is indicated in the penultimate column of the table, and the number of lines in the segment or speech within a segment is indicated in the final column. This basic pattern is continued in all but one of the other chapters as well, and so, after the first table has been set out in full, subsequent tables will be given without the headings Line Length and Rhythm.

Prologue (ll. 1-59)

TABLE 32.	Line Length				Rhythm							Lines
	Long	5	4	3 Short	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	Form			
1) VM	3	—	—	—	—	—	3	1	Hx	3		
9)	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	Ac4?	1		
12)	—	—	8	—	—	5	3	1	Ac4	8		
26)	—	1	3	2	—	1	4	1	Ac443443?	6		
33)	1	3	8	—	—	4	3	5	Ac4	12		

The Prologue is delivered by V. Maiakovskii the Poet, who in the original production was dressed in a frock coat:

022222f	Вам ли понять, почему я, спокойный, насмешек грозою
022121m	душу на блюде несую к обеду идущих лет.
122122f	С небритой щеки площадей стекая ненужной слезою,
0122m	я, быть может, последний поэт.

(I, 153, l. 1)²²

The Poet opens with a perfect dactylic hexameter, and of the first three lines only the third, with a monosyllabic anacrusis, deviates from what can be considered the regular Maiakovskian hexameter (without the fixed final interval and unrhymed feminine clausula of the traditional form). In this way V. Maiakovskii, who is introduced in the list of *dramatis personae* as ‘поэт 20–25 лет’ (I, 152), seeks to establish his role and identity as poet in the very opening lines of the play itself by assuming the metrical voice of a poetic tradition, the hexameter, which stretches back to classical literature; the hexameter is an eminently respectable voice to match his dress. The Poet, however, may be the last poet, and the verse shifts out of the hexameter in the last line of the stanza.

This shorter last line moves the verse into the four-ictus scheme of the main narrative measure in the first half of the play, four-ictus accentual verse. In this measure the Poet now goes on to describe the alienated state of things in the modern city that threatens the classical poetic tradition:

2323f	Замечали вы — качается в каменных аллеях
2312f	полосатое лицо повешенной скуки,
2212f	а у мчащихся рек на взмыленных шеях
1222f	мосты заломили железные руки.
0122f	Небо плачет безудержно, звонко;
2331d	а у облачка гримаска на морщине ротика,
1131f	как будто женщина ждала ребенка,
1123d	а бог ей кинул кривого идиотика.

(I. 12)

As yet, however, the rhythm remains *dol'nik* and *taktovik*.

In the next stanza, a problematical six-line stanza, the Poet contrasts 'you' and 'I':

0222d	Пухлыми пальцами в рыжих волосиках
0333d	солнце изласкало вас назойливостью овода —
231/0131m	в ваших душах выцелован раб.
21311(1)/	Я, бесстрашный,
011311(1)d	ненависть к дневным лучам понёс в веках;
1131d	с душой натянутой, как нервы провода,
000m	я —
	царь ламп!

(l. 26)

The interpretation of an underlying 443443 scheme (or at least some kind of alternation of four-ictus and three-ictus lines) is supported by the contrast and parallelism between the first and second and fourth and fifth lines, the standard abab stanza, on the one hand, and between the third and sixth lines, in which the Poet moves from description to evaluation, on the other; this interpretation is also supported by the clausula pattern, with masculine clausulae, the form which is associated with three-ictus lines, in the third and sixth lines. Given the possibility of a fourth stress in the third line, however, as well as the extra length of the fourth line, the stanza is probably best considered a doubtful case. The rhythm of the middle four lines is in fact consistent with binary metre,²³ but, since three lines have the rhythm of trochaic metre and the fourth of iambic metre, this rhythm would seem not to be significant. In his later verse Maiakovskii avoids such fortuitous rhythms, but here, as noted earlier, it is an example of how the free binary and tonic principles can run close at this stage in the development of his verse. In other respects the two halves of the stanza contrast sharply in order to highlight the opposition of 'you' and 'I'. The opening two lines continue the rhythm and narrative or descriptive thread of the preceding stanzas, and the preferred interpretation of 'в ваших' at the start of the third line as unstressed creates a contrast with the emphatic 'я' at the beginning of the last line. The second half of the stanza opens with a line which can be interpreted as extending beyond the four-ictus scheme in both directions through 'Я, бесстрашный' at the head of the line and the hypermetrical stress in the clausula at the end; the device of extension is continued in the stanzas following and is echoed in the expanded stanza form itself. In the fifth line the verse returns within the bounds of the measure in preparation for the emphatic last line in which the Poet proclaims himself the 'tsar of lamps' (material light), a parody of the Prince of Light (spiritual light);²⁴ with two zero intervals, this last line breaks the inertia of *dol'nik* and *taktovik* rhythm which has been maintained so far.

The Poet now appeals to all those who have rebelled against the order of the world, understood not only as the light of day but also as silence, and proclaims the aesthetic means by which his kingdom will be realized:

1131/11111d	Придите все ко мне,
	кто рвал молчание,
12111f	кто был
	оттого, что петли полдней туги, —
3223/11223f	я вам открою
	словами
	простыми, как мычанье,
22242/ 012242f	наши новые души,
	гудящие,
	как фонарные дуги.

(l. 34)

The affirmation of life and self through the overcoming of silence is a very archaic notion with its roots in primitive culture, and the identification of silence as a form of imposed order locates the struggle against this order in the articulation of the word as sound.²⁵ The wording of the Poet's aesthetic programme recurs in the introduction to the rhythmical *gul* in 'Kak delat' stikhi' ('Сначала стих Есенину просто мычался приблизительно так' (XII, 102)),²⁶ for in Maiakovskii's verse the word receives articulation as sound and sense through its metrical-rhythmical form; it is primarily on this level that the struggle against imposed order, the struggle for a voice, will be carried out. In the actual form of the stanza, in accordance with the thrust of his rhetoric, the Poet expands the established four-ictus scheme through the addition of extra stresses. The odd lines can both be interpreted as four-stress or perhaps five-stress lines, while the even lines both have five certain stresses; the last line could even be interpreted as a six-stress line. In this last line the rhythmical stride also extends to take in an interval of four syllables.

In the first two lines of the next stanza the Poet moves on to present his ideal, a world of huge kisses ('simple' love) and one common language:

2122f	Я вам только головы пальцами трону,
20233312f	и у вас
	вырастут губы
	для огромных поцелуев
	и язык,
	родной всем народам.
11423f	А я, прихрамывая душонкой,
	уйду к моему трону
0221f	с дырами звезд по истертым сводам.

(l. 44)

After a standard four-stress opening line the metrical expectation is for the second line to end at 'поцелуев', forming a five-stress line with an extra stress on 'вас', but it turns out that the line extends beyond its metrical limit into a

whole new period (not just a hypermetrical stress in the clausula). This extension leaves the four-ictus scheme behind and the words reach beyond the conventions or boundaries laid down in one poetic tradition, individual or national, and so, as it were, into a common language.²⁷ In the last two lines of the stanza, with the old order erased in the heavens and his mission of liberation complete, the Poet, deflated but still regal, will become redundant;²⁸ the third line still has five stresses ('моему' has been considered stress ambiguous here and so not stressed), but the last line returns to the four-stress form.

In the final stanza of the Prologue the poet envisages radiant acceptance of death:

0122f	Лягу, светлый, в одеждах из лени
1243f	на мягкое ложе из настоящего навоза,
1221f	и тихим, целующим шпал колени,
1232f	обнимет мне шею колесо паровоза.

(1. 53)

The stanza stays within the four-ictus scheme but now embodies a range of *dol'nik*, *taktovik*, and accentual rhythm, with intervals of one to four syllables.

Act I (ll. 60–80)

TABLE 33

	Long	5	4	3	Short	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	Form	Lines
60) VM	2	—	1	1	—	2	2	—	—	AcF	4
69)	—	—	11	1	—					I4c+1/2	12

After the high tone of the Prologue Act I opens conversationally in free accentual verse with the Poet now dressed in Maiakovskii's famous yellow blouse:

0623313f	Милостивые государи! Заштопайте мне душу, пустота сочтись не могла бы.
2213m	Я не знаю, плевков — обида или нет.
213f	Я сухой, как каменная баба.
2362221323m	Меня выдоили. Милостивые государи, хотите — сейчас перед вами будет танцевать замечательный поэт?

(1. 60)

The scene is the city in a web of streets and a beggars' festival is being celebrated, but the radiant resolution envisaged at the end of the Prologue has been subverted into contradiction, inability to distinguish between opposites, and empty exhaustion. This sudden, unexplained loss of faith and purpose is reflected in the form of free accentual verse: the organization of the verse has dissolved on the level of measure with a range of three to ten stresses in the line, but a degree of organization remains on the rhythmical level with all but two intervals in the *taktovik* range. The theme of empty exhaustion here adumbrates the Epilogue ('Теперь я немного высох' (l. 517)), while the introduction of free accentual verse sums up the play's metrical movement at the very inception of the action.²⁹

The Poet's role has been reduced to that of performing artist, and as a spent force he must adopt a ready-made metrical voice in order to move the verse forward: the voice he chooses for his dance is that of Severianin, from the melodic tradition of Russian verse. So, echoing the theme of 'breaking silence' in the Prologue, the Poet now incites the alienated people of the city to carnival rebellion in the iambic tetrameter with feminine or dactylic caesura:

1121f	Ищите жирных в домах-скорлупах
1121f	и в бубен брюха веселье бейте!
1131f	Схватите за ноги глухих и глупых
1131f	и дуйте в уши им, как в ноздри флейте.

(l. 69)

The basic measure is a form typical of Severianin at the time and the use of a dactylic caesura, which was especially developed by him, helps further to identify his metrical voice as the particular model within the tradition, while another indication lies in the move into dance itself. Khardzhiev cites a contemporary account of Severianin's manner of declamation as half singing, half dancing,³⁰ and Maiakovskii himself scathingly dismisses Severianin as a 'ballerina' in the article 'Poezovecher Igoria Severianina' (1914):

Увлекаются голосом, осанкой, мягкими манерами, — одним словом, всем тем, что не имеет никакого отношения к поэзии. Да в самом деле, не балерина ли это, ведь он так изящен . . . (l, 339)

The symmetrical rhythmical movement generated by the metre with its strong caesura readily lends itself to a dancing lilt, and it is even possible to suggest Severianin's 'Egopolonez' (1912) as a particular model in the basic measure. The parallels between the opening stanza of Severianin's poem and the Poet's dance are quite striking:

Живи, живое! Под солнца бубны
 Смелее, люди, в свой полонез!
 Как плодоносны, как златотрубы
 Снопы ржаные моих поэт!³¹

In both cases the exhortation is couched in musical terms and the same word is even used ('бубен'; 'бубны').

The adoption of Severianin's voice may be appropriate for the Poet in his role as performing artist, the empty poet whom V. Maiakovskii announces himself to be at the start of the Act, but his frivolous posture is belied by the import of his words. While the opening stanza of the dance reproduces the Severianin variation of a dactylic caesura, the second introduces heterosyllabic rhyme and a hypermetrical stress in the clausula (both typical of Severianin):

1121f	Разбейте днища у бочек злости,
1121(0)f	ведь я горящий булыжник дум ем.
1121f	Сегодня в вашем кричащем тосте
321d	я овенчаюсь моим безумием.

(l. 73)

The other characters, except for the Old Man who entered earlier, now fill up the stage, and the dance is concluded in a regular stanza with constant feminine caesura and clausula:

1121f	Граненых строчек босой алмазник,
1121f	взметя перины в чужих жилищах,
1121f	зажгу сегодня всемирный праздник
1121f	таких богатых и пестрых нищих.

(l. 77)

Act I (ll. 81–125)

TABLE 34

	Long	5	4	3	Short	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	Form	Lines
81) Old	—	1	3	3	1	—	—	8	2	Dk4343Am	8
90)	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	4	4	Dk4–Dk4Am	4
94)	—	—	2	2	—	—	—	4	4	Dk4343Am	4
98)	—	—	20	—	—	—	—	20	14	Dk4–Dk4Am	20

The Poet's dance is interrupted by the Old Man in the amphibrachic voice which can be associated with his millennial age. He dismisses the Poet's adopted voice as an inappropriate, frivolous framework (echoing Maiakovskii's own estimation of Severianin) behind which there lies a cry of anguish:

11222f	Оставь.
42m	Зачем мудрецам погремушек потеха?
1221f	Я — тысячелетний старик.
112m	И вижу — в тебе на кресте из смеха распят замученный крик.

(l. 81)

‘Оставь’ serves as a metrical interjection standing outside the first metrical line proper of the measure, and the Old Man’s relative independence from the Poet is indicated by the switch from the four-ictus scheme of the dance to the alternating four-ictus and three-ictus scheme in his amphibrachic *dol'nik*. The Old Man’s major, four-ictus *dol'nik* voice, which is also predominantly amphibrachic, is introduced in the third stanza, but the alternating four-ictus and three-ictus measure then returns for one more stanza before the four-ictus measure takes over for the rest of the speech. There may be some differentiation of the two measures’ compositional roles. The first half of the Old Man’s speech, where the alternating four-ictus and three-ictus *dol'nik* is dominant, is more narrative or descriptive, while the switch to the four-ictus *dol'nik* in the third stanza accompanies a switch, at least in the first two lines, to rhetorical declaration, but the fourth stanza is again narrative or descriptive:

1122f	Легло на город громадное горе
112m	и сотни махоньких горь.
1221f	А свечи и лампы в галдящем споре
112m	покрыли шопоты зорь.
1222f	Ведь мягкие луны не властны над нами, —
1222f	огни фонарей и нарядней и хлеще.
1222f	В земле городов нареклись господами
1222f	и лезут стереть нас бездушные вещи.
1222m	А с неба на вой человечесьей орды
122m	глядит обезумевший бог.
1222m	И руки в отрепьях его бороды,
122m	изъеденных пылью дорог.

(1. 86)

In the second half of his speech, however, the Old Man takes up the seditious thrust of the Poet’s dance, calling on the people of the city to overthrow God, and his voice becomes set in the four-ictus scheme.

Ternary rhythm becomes much stronger from the third stanza onwards, and in the second half of the speech other rhythmical forms and zero anacruses are used to highlight the Old Man’s key refrain:

0222f	Бросьте квартиры!
	Идите и гладьте —
0211f	гладьте сухих и черных кошек!

(1. 123)

The explanation of this image is given by Maiakovskii in his article ‘Bez belykh fagov’ (1914):

Ведь когда египтяне или греки гладили черных и сухих кошек, они тоже могли добыть электрическую искру, но не им возносим мы песню славы, а тем, кто блестящие глаза дал повешенным головам фонарей и силу тысячи рук влил в гудящие дуги трамваев. (1, 324)

The Old Man’s overthrow of God will take the same form, mastery of light, as that proposed by the Poet in the Prologue, but, whereas the Poet’s kingdom

will be powered by men's liberated souls, the Old Man offers another, and old, superstition. He also takes up the theme, raised by the Poet in the Prologue, of the alienated city: he presents it in terms of the relationship between man and things and the rebellion of things, but, regarding things as soulless, he cannot bring harmony between them and man.³²

Act I (ll. 126–61)

TABLE 35

	Long	5	4	3	Short	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	Form	Lines
126) Ear	1	2	17	—	—	4	13	5	2	Ac4	20

The Old Man gives way to the first of the Poet's disfigured parts or doubles, the Man without an Ear; he returns to the narrative proper and introduces a female figure deriving from the woman given an idiot child by God in the Prologue:

01251/ 2251m	Это — правда! Над городом — где флюгеров дровки —
0231m	женщина — черные пещеры век —
0342m	мечется, кидает на тротуары плевки, —
2222m	а плевки вырастают в огромных калек.

(l. 126)

The switch to one of the Poet's disfigured doubles brings a sudden shift into the greater irregularity of four-ictus accentual verse, with a probable extra stress at the head of the first line; the shift into four-ictus accentual verse also accompanies a rise in the general tension which is indicated by an authorial remark ('Все в волнении' (I, 157)) after the third stanza. This is immediately followed by a long, seven-stress line at the head of the fourth stanza:

1120210f	И вот сегодня с утра в душу врезал матчиш губы.
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(l. 146)

This line repeats the form of the extended line in the Prologue (with two zero intervals), but the correspondence between the metrical and semantic levels seems to have been lost.

A certain rhythmical development within the speech can be seen in the move from a more varied profile towards a more sustained *taktovik* rhythm at the end:

2313f	Господа! Остановитесь! Разве это можно?!	
03331f	Даже переулки засучили рукава для драки.	
2323f	А тоска моя растет, непонятна и тревожна,	
2123f	как слеза на морде у плачущей собаки.	(1. 155)

But although the Man states that his anguish is growing, the rhythmical development within the speech hardly corresponds to such a rise; this confirms the relative lack of rhythmical manoeuvre that the minor characters possess. Within this stanza itself, however, the extra stress on the emphatic ‘Даже’ at the head of the second line can act as a local rhythmical signal of the growing anguish (extra stresses are also just possible on ‘это’ and ‘моя’ in the first and third lines); on another level there are of course the exclamations.

Act I (ll. 162–71)

TABLE 36

	Long	5	4	3	Short	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	Form	Lines
162) Old	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	2	1	Dk4–Dk4Am	2
165) Face	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	1	—	Ac4	2
167) Ear	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	1	—		2
170) Face	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	1	—		2

The opening movement of Act I, which had been initiated by the Poet’s dance, now ends in a dispute about things between the Old Man, the Man without an Ear, and a new character, the Man with a Stretched Face:

	Старик с кошками
1212m	Вот видите! Вещи надо рубить!
1222f	Недаром в их ласках провидел врага я! Человек с растянутым лицом
1212m	А, может быть, вещи надо любить?
0411f	Может быть, у вещей душа другая? Человек без уха
0214m	Многие вещи шиты наоборот.
0221f	Сердце не сердится, к злобе глухо. Человек с растянутым лицом (радостно поддакивает)

1412m И там, где у человека вырезан рот,
0211f многим вещам пришиито ухо!

(l. 162)

This altercation is preceded by another authorial remark ('Еще тревожнее' (I, 158)) indicating a further rise in anxiety, which here is conveyed through the orchestration of the contrasting voices and their alternation within a stanza rather than through a straightforward move towards greater irregularity. The Old Man repeats his rejection of things in his familiar four-ictus *dol'nik* voice, while the other two characters adopt a more positive attitude, suggesting that man and thing are not opposed as soul and matter but that things may have a different spiritual make-up. The agreement of these two characters on the ideological level is paralleled on the rhythmical level in the like combination of accentual and *dol'nik* rhythm in each of their speeches. In context, however, this combination of rhythmical types may indicate an underlying uncertainty which remains unresolved even when positive affirmation takes over on the verbal level; the form of the first line of the Man with a Stretched Face, when he is still expressing uncertainty, actually repeats that of the rhyming line in the Old Man's speech. So, although the latter's influence appears to have been rejected, it may still be present in the form of the verse (in the *dol'nik* rhythm) in preparation for the return of his voice in a chorus stanza near the end of the Act when the problem of the relationship of man and things is raised again and apparently resolved.

Act I (ll. 172–219)

TABLE 37

	Long	5	4	3	Short	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	Form	Lines
172) VM	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	Ac4?	1
173)	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	Hx	1
176)	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	1	—	Ac4?	2
179)	2	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	TF	4
193)	2	—	1	1	—	—	3	1	—	AcF	4
203)	—	—	2	6	—	—	1	7	2	Dk3An	8
213)	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	1	—	2
215)	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	AcF	1
219)	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	Dk3An/AcF?	1

The conclusion of the opening movement of Act I in uncertainty calls for an intervention on the part of the Poet, who now shifts the play into a discourse that ranges over past, present, and future; this shift is accompanied by a shift into metrical diversity. In the opening stanza the Poet establishes himself in a didactic role:

0221m	Злойой не мажьте сердце концы!
012222f	Вас, детей моих, буду учить непреклонно и строго.
0112m	Все вы, люди, лишь бубенцы
31f	на колпаке у бога.

(l. 172)

The rhythmical form of the first line repeats that of the line in the preceding alteration which it most closely echoes on the verbal level:

0221f	Сердце не сердится, к злобе глухо.
-------	---------------------------------------

(l. 168)

This creates a rapport between the Poet and his doubles, specifically the Man without an Ear, through the form of the verse; the metrical classification as four-ictus accentual verse could also be taken from this earlier line, but even so there is no obviously satisfactory metrical classification for the three non-hexametral lines in this stanza. In the second line, a hexameter, the Poet adopts his classical voice again as the most appropriate voice for his didactic role. The third line then returns to the four-ictus scheme, while the rhythmical fall and breakdown into the short last line reinforces the bathetic thrust of the Poet's teaching.

The force of this short line is felt in the stanza following, in which the four-ictus scheme set by the dance dissolves into the free trochaic measure as the Poet recounts his past search for the soul:

01133113131f	Я ногой, распухшей от исканий, обошел и вашу сушу и еще какие-то другие страны в домино и маске темноты.
213m	Я искал
211331f	ее, невиданную душу, чтобы в губы-раны положить ее целящие цветы.
2113m	

(l. 179)

The association of the free trochee with a journey motif may or may not be significant here, but the trochaic base certainly has a compositional role because it gives the verse an underlying structure just as the journey has an underlying purpose. Bearing in mind the possible interpretation of measure in terms of the organization of space, the free measure may correspond to the Poet's free wandering in space and the very division into metrical lines is

rendered less distinct by the presence of potential additional rhymes ('исканий' — 'страны' — 'раны'; 'сушу' — 'душу'). The Poet's search for the soul and his Harlequin guise indicate the assumption of a Symbolist identity which may have its roots (note the past tense) in Maiakovskii's professed early enthusiasm for the Symbolists (see I, 17). This assumption of a Symbolist identity will soon extend to the metrical level and will lead to the appearance of the Poet's *Znakomaia*, an echo or parody of Blok's *Neznakomka*.

The Poet now pauses ('Остановился' (I, 159)) before moving on to describe first his present state and then his encounter with the soul:

2111f	И опять, как раб в кровавом поте, 023f тело безумием качаю.
0112131f	Впрочем, раз нашел ее — душу. Вышла в голубом капоте, 2132231f говорит: "Садитесь! Я давно вас ждала. Не хотите ли стаканчик чаю?"

(I. 190)

The break or inversion in the logical chain in the middle of the stanza is a device which effectively reduces the soul to a logical irrelevance, an afterthought hardly worth mentioning, and the dissolution into a loose, *taktovik* rhythm in free accentual verse corresponds to the loss of that purpose which informed the Poet's search, for the soul turns out to be a caricature of the Symbolist ideal: the soul is material and drinks tea, a recurring symbol of *byt* for Maiakovskii. The rhythm of the first line is in fact consistent with trochaic metre and may carry a rhythmical echo of the preceding stanza; this rhythm, however, may be fortuitous, and with the strong pause between the stanzas it would be difficult to classify the line as free trochaic (even as a doubtful case).

The revelation of the material nature of the soul offers a possible resolution of the problem of soul and matter, but the dissolution of the Poet's purpose, as of the form of the verse, brings him to another halt ('Остановился' (I, 159)) and returns him, in the present, to his state of emptiness. In order to move the verse forward, therefore, the Poet again has to adopt a ready-made metrical voice. Although he has discredited the spiritual content of the Symbolist ideal, he now returns to the past and transfers his Symbolist guise onto the metrical level, adopting, in its anapaestic variant, the three-ictus *dol'nik* which was canonized by the Symbolists with Blok at their head:

212m	Я — поэт, я разницу стер
232m	между лицами своих и чужих.
0121m	В гное моргов искал сестер.
212m	Целовал узорно больных.

(l. 203)

The parallels and differences between the *Tragedy* and Blok's *Lyrical Dramas* have been studied in some detail,³³ though not on the metrical level. There is, however, a close parallel on this level. The free *dol'nik* dominates in *Korol' na ploshchadi* and *Neznakomka*, but the three-ictus *dol'nik* is one of the two leading metrical themes in *Balaganchik*,³⁴ which had been performed on the same stage as the *Tragedy* in 1906. A possible source of the Poet's three-ictus anapaestic *dol'nik* voice within *Balaganchik* is Pierrot's lament for his cardboard love, which begins as follows:

Я стоял меж двумя фонарями
И слушал их голоса,
Как шептались, закрывшись плащами,
Целовала их ночь в глаза.³⁵

In addition to the metrical parallel (the monosyllabic anacrusis in the second line is an exception) there is also a verbal parallel in the identical position of 'Целовала' here and 'Целовал' in the *Tragedy*, while a more general parallel lies in the cardboard status of Pierrot's Columbine because the Poet's *Znako-maia* also turns out to be a doll.

The adoption of this metrical voice allows the Poet to reassert himself in his role as poet (albeit in past, Symbolist terms), but he now switches into the present and then future in order to propose a fire to burn out emotion and a feast of flesh:

222m	А сегодня на желтый костер,
0112m	спрятав глубже слёзы морей,
211m	я взведу и стыд сестер
222m	и морщины седых матерей!
222m	На тарелках зализанных зал
221m	будем жрать тебя, мясо, век!

(l. 208)

The repetition of a rhyme from the first stanza in the second ('стер' — 'сестер'; 'костер' — 'сестер') may be designed to reinforce the incantatory tone, but the adopted Symbolist voice, the voice of spiritual love, is quite inappropriate here and its use rings like parody (compare his other adopted voice). This incongruity is indicative of an inherent instability in the Poet's voice which is made manifest in the lack of support for his triumphant conclusion in the form of the verse, for the rhetorical burst reaches its climax not at the end of the rhythmical period but mid-stanza, thereby leaving the rhythmical movement unresolved.

out, he fits Maiakovskii's definition of 'the happy possessor of common sense' in the article 'Otnoshenie segodniashnego teatra i kinematografa k iskusstvu' (1913):³⁶

Счастливым обладатель здравого смысла имеет громадное преимущество перед другими людьми — быть всегда и всем понятным.

Это достигается благодаря двум, едва ли имеющим достоинства, фактам: Ограниченность уровня знания теми же рамками, как и знания ближнего. (Что же при таких условиях можно сказать непонятого?)

И способность при усидчиво-нудном занятии своим делом воспринимать усталым и слабым мозгом только самые режущие и случайные черты нового явления. (I, 282)

The key to the metrical composition of the Ordinary Young Man's speech would seem to lie in this definition and in the stage direction 'подбегает к каждому, цепляется' (I, 160). His addressee at any given moment may be deduced not only from what he says but also, given that he clings parasitically to the voice of the character being addressed, from the metrical voice in which he says it (the voices of the characters are, as it were, designated like their distinctive features). His reproduction of these metrical voices matches his dim and facile understanding of the issues; in accordance with Maiakovskii's definition he grasps the most obvious feature (usually the ictus scheme), or else an accidental feature, but he shows no real understanding of the voices he reproduces.

The Ordinary Young Man begins by addressing the Poet; he has grasped the idea of a fire, but he has a confused idea of what is to be burnt:

061163212m	Милостивые государи! Стойте! Милостивые государи! Господин, господин, скажите скорей:
222m	это здесь хотят сжечь матерей?

(I. 220)

The Ordinary Young Man here reproduces the Poet's last two lines, but, confusing a compositional unit for a stanzaic one, he makes them into a rhyming couplet; he reproduces the free accentual line with exaggerated length, while the second line becomes a regular three-ictus anapaestic *dol'nik* (compare the doubtful status of the corresponding line in the Poet's speech).

In the next stanza, in an unwitting parody of the Poet's own assumption of this voice, the Ordinary Young Man continues in the three-ictus anapaestic *dol'nik* as he moves on (or back) to the question of life's mysteries:

2011m	Господа! Мозг людей остер,
-------	-------------------------------

321m	но перед тайнами мира ник;
223m	а ведь вы зажигаете костер
212m	из сокровищ знаний и книг!

(l. 228)

The Ordinary Young Man bows before life's mysteries, relying instead on the knowledge reproduced in books, and there is a parallel between his misconstruction of the Poet's rhetoric and his reproduction of the Poet's metrical voice: he has picked up the distinctive and repeated rhyming complex 'срер', just as he has grasped the idea of a fire, but there is also an incorrect line and a line with a trisyllabic anacrusis, while the rhythm of the opening line is disrupted by the hypermetrical stress in the stem.

The Ordinary Young Man would now appear to leave the Poet as he goes on to consider the problem of things; he would appear to be addressing, both separately and together, the Old Man, the Man without an Ear, and the Man with a Stretched Face:

2222m	Я придумал машинку для рубки котлет.
202m	Я умом вовсе не плох!
2222m	У меня есть знакомый —
	он двадцать пять лет
1421m	работает
	над капканом для ловли блох.

(l. 233)

For the Ordinary Young Man the problem of things is a purely technological one on a petty, household scale, and he seems to show no awareness of the differing views on the subject among those he is addressing; it may be, however, that his speech shows a dim awareness of some differentiation of their voices. The first two lines could be addressed to the Old Man in the alternating four-ictus and three-ictus scheme of his major metrical voice, while the second two lines could be addressed to the other two characters, or perhaps all three together, in their four-ictus scheme. In his reproduction of the Old Man's voice (if that is what it is) the Ordinary Young Man fails to perceive its amphibrachic rhythm, continuing instead with the anapaestic anacruses (and masculine clausulae) picked up in his reproduction of the Poet's voice; moreover, although the first line has a ternary rhythm, there is a zero interval in the second, while in the second half of the stanza ternary rhythm returns in the third line but the fourth is accentual again.

In reproducing the voices of those around him the Ordinary Young Man is exercising his chief asset, the ability to be understood. This ability, however, is the negative realization of the Poet's ideal, because communication is achieved not through one common language but in a multiplicity of individual ones, thereby institutionalizing mankind's disunity.

In the final two lines of his speech the Ordinary Young Man would appear to lapse into his own natural voice as he comes to the kernel of his philosophy, reproduction:

211203f У меня жена есть,
 скоро родит сына или дочку,
12152122f а вы — говорите гадости!
 Интеллигентные люди!
 Право, как будто обидно.
(1. 239)

Yet again the Ordinary Young Man demonstrates his indifference to qualitative distinctions ('сына или дочку'), and, without a metrical model to feed off, the form of his voice dissolves in free accentual verse: the two lines are both long, but unequal, and more or less lack rhythmical organization; moreover, the speech in fact ends before the verse has been given structure through rhyme.

Act I (ll. 244–83)

TABLE 39

	Long	5	4	3	Short	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	Form	Lines
244) Ear	1	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	AcF	2
248) OYM	—	1	1	1	—	2	—	1	—		3
253) VM	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—		1
254)	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	Ac4?	1
255)	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	Hx	2
260) OYM	—	—	1	3	—	—	2	2	1	Dk3An	4
267) Face	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	Ac4?	1
268)	2	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	Hx	2
273) Ear	—	—	2	—	—	1	1	—	—	Ac4	2
275) Face	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	1	1	Dk43/AcF?	2
278) All	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	4	2	Dk4–Dk4Am	4

The reaction of the other characters to the speech of the Ordinary Young Man is to suggest that he gets up on a box or a barrel in order to be seen:

 Человек без уха
220222f Молодой человек,
 встань на коробочку!
 Из толпы
 Лучше на бочку!
 Человек без уха
121f А то вас совсем не видно!
(1. 244)

This suggestion can be interpreted as a translation into visual and spatial terms of the Ordinary Young Man's facelessness, which was realized on the level of costume in his normal clothes; when he is not reproducing the voices of others the form of his voice dissolves and so, lacking a proper metrical identity, he cannot be 'seen'. The renewed participation of these other characters releases the movement suspended by the Poet's discourse on the soul and tension soon rises as events move rapidly towards a climax in the rebellion of things. But without the guiding influence of the Poet, who has relinquished the centre of the stage to the Ordinary Young Man, the Man without an Ear is disorientated. He begins in his accustomed four-ictus accentual voice but does not quite manage the rhyme, which is supplied in an extension by a voice from the crowd ('дочку' — ('коробочку') — 'бочку'), while his second line has only three stresses.

The Ordinary Young Man rejects these characters' sarcasm but is apparently confused in his attempt to reproduce the nearest voice at hand by their metrical disorientation:

1341m	И нечего смеяться!
	У меня братец есть,
04232f	маленький, —
	вы придете и будете жевать его кости.
111m	Вы всё хотите съест!

(1. 248)

These three lines hover round the four-stress form but are all unequal in length, and so have been classified as free accentual (like the two lines before). After an authorial remark indicating general anxiety ("Тревога. Гудки. За сценой крики: "Штаны, штаны!" (1, 161)), the Poet himself steps in to finish the stanza with a short line:

0f	Бросьте!
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(1. 253)

The Poet's intervention, though decisive (the crowd surrounds the Ordinary Young Man), is nevertheless essentially negative and his subsequent attempt to assert the vast potential of his unfulfilled appetite and justify the call to a feast of flesh is couched in conditional form:

0212f	Если б вы так, как я, голодали —
02222f	дали
	востока и запада
	вы бы глодали,
112222f	как гложут кость небосвода
	заводов копченые рожи!

(1. 254)

The complex and somewhat contrived form of this stanza, which is repeated in the next stanza but one, may be intended as the metrical equivalent of a

conditional construction. The opening line, the protasis, follows the four-ictus scheme set in this Act by the Poet's own dance, while the second line, the apodosis, moves towards the hexameter (and has been classified as hexameter) but does not achieve the full measure; the initial-final internal rhyme ('дали' — 'глодали') in this line corresponds to the sense of embracing spatial extremes. The full measure of the hexameter is only achieved in the unrhymed third line, a subordinate clause attached to the apodosis: it is a regular hexameter in all but the anacrusis. This return to (or towards) the hexameter is to be expected because it is the only ready-made metrical voice left to the Poet which has not been discredited; the Poet will assume this voice again in Act II, but here the form of the stanza would seem to give it a conditional status.

The attempted hexameter voice does not appear to count for the Ordinary Young Man who now intervenes to defend love, which for him lies in possession, in the Poet's earlier, three-ictus anapaestic *dol'nik* voice:

0121m	Что же, — значит, ничто любовь?
213m	У меня есть Сонечка сестра! (На коленях.)
031m	Милые! Не лейте кровь!
222m	Дорогие, не надо костра!

(l. 260)

In familiar fashion there are two incorrect lines, one with a zero anacrusis.

The Ordinary Young Man's frantic appeal is followed by another authorial remark indicating a rise in the general anxiety as off-stage the things begin to take on a life of their own: 'Тревога выросла. Выстрелы. Начинает медленно тянуть одну ноту водосточная труба. Загудело железо крыш' (I, 161). The rise in tension and anxiety throughout this passage is not matched by a straightforward move towards greater irregularity in the form of the verse (if anything the opposite is the case); it is transmitted instead through the cacophony of metrical voices arising out of the general disorientation. An attempt to follow the Poet's metrical lead is now made by the Man with a Stretched Face who rejects the Ordinary Young Man's defence of love by rejecting love itself:

0211f	Если б вы так, как я, любили,
022222f	вы бы убили любовь или лобное место нашли и растлили б
122322f	шершавое потное небо и молочно-невинные звезды.

(l. 267)

In attempting to follow the Poet, however, the Man with a Stretched Face is speaking 'out of character', because the hexametral voice is specifically associated with the role of poet, and the conditional metrico-syntactic construction, in accordance with the general disorientation, loses its point and form. The relationship between the second and third lines has been altered: the second line now over-achieves the measure, and the distinction between the two lines has been lost on the syntactic level because the third line is now part of the apodosis; furthermore, the attempted internal rhyme in the second line ('убили' — 'расталили б') is out of place. Correspondingly, the sense of the Poet's parallel stanza would seem to have been altered or even inverted: whereas the Poet asserted the vast potential of his unfulfilled appetite, the Man with a Stretched Face moves from his lack of fulfilment in love (the implication, in context, of the first line) to a violent rejection of love as such.

The Man without an Ear takes up this rejection of love in relation to 'your women', but he now reverts to character in his accustomed four-ictus accentual voice in the ictus scheme set by the Poet's dance:

0142m	Ваши женщины не умеют любить,
1322f	они от поцелуев распухли, как губки.

(l. 273)

These two lines are followed by a further indication of a rise in tension: 'Вступают удары тысячи ног в натянутое брюхо площади' (l, 162). The stanza is then completed by the Man with a Stretched Face who switches to the theme of matter and spirit in a feminine context:

31011/3121m	А из моей души
	тоже можно сшить
122f	такие нарядные юбки!

(l. 275)

The earlier dispute involving the Man with a Stretched Face, the Man without an Ear, and the Old Man is resolved here (at least in relation to man) in accordance with the Poet's teaching: the human soul is in fact material, so the opposition of matter and spirit is removed. Disorientation, however, persists on the metrical level. The metrical form of the verse is hard to determine: this could be free accentual verse, or, given the amphibrachic rhythmical form of the second line, there could be an approach to the alternating four-ictus and three-ictus amphibrachic *dol'nik* in preparation for the adoption of the Old Man's voice in the climactic chorus stanza following.

The tension on stage now reaches an extreme: 'Волнение не помещается. Все вокруг громадной женщины. Взваливают на плечи. Ташат' (l, 162). The assault on the doll, the symbol of the spiritual and the feminine (or perhaps the spiritual in the feminine), brings all the characters together for the final, chorus stanza of the passage in the Old Man's voice:

1222f Идем, —
 где за святость
 распяли пророка,
 1212f тела отдадим раздетому плясу,
 1222f на черном граните греха и порока
 1122f поставим памятник красному мясу.
 (l. 278)

This assertion of base physicality against spirituality rounds off the theme of matter and spirit in the four-ictus scheme set by the Poet's dance (note the dance motif here), but the Old Man's metrico-rhythmical influence is now clear in the strong amphibrachic rhythm of his major, four-ictus *dol'nik* voice. On the one hand, this move into the four-ictus *dol'nik* rounds off the passage's disorientated, heterogeneous composition with one last voice; on the other hand, it may also be adopted because the Old Man is the only figure left capable of giving a positive metrical lead, since he alone possesses a certain genuine independence from the Poet. The resolution of matter and spirit cannot be attributed either solely or primarily to the Old Man, but a retrospective indication of his ideological influence can be seen in his appearance in Act II with just one plucked cat (the others, presumably, have been rubbed bare in order to generate electricity according to his ancient rite).

Act I (ll. 284–338)

TABLE 40

	Long	5	4	3	Short	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	Form	Lines
284) Eye	—	—	4	4	—	1	3	4	2	Ac4343	8
299)	—	1	7	—	—	1	5	2	—	Ac4	8
316)	—	—	2	2	—	1	—	3	—	Ac4343	4
321)	—	2	6	—	—	1	4	3	—	Ac4	8

The preceding passage ends triumphantly with the discarding of the doll: 'Безумие надорвалось. Женщину бросили' (I, 162). Meanwhile a new character, the Man without an Eye and a Leg, has entered, and in the concluding speech of the Act he tells of a rebellion off-stage:

0232f Стойте!
 На улицах,
 где лица —
 как бремя,
 111m у всех одни и те ж,
 1211f сейчас родила старуха-время
 132m огромный
 криворотый мятеж!

(l. 284)

This is the rebellion of things, as in Khlebnikov's *Zhuravl'*, and it complements or perhaps supersedes ('Стойте!') the resolution which has been proclaimed on stage in the Old Man's voice. In their rebellion the things turn against the existing order manifested in their names, which are discarded as worn out and so incapable of signifying the objects they traditionally and conventionally denote; the things have taken on a human life of their own, and everybody, as well as everything, has been reduced to raw material ('лица / . . . у всех одни и те ж').

The voice of the Man without an Eye and a Leg incorporates both four-ictus and alternating four-ictus and three-ictus accentual verse; as such, and also in its rhythmical profile, it brings together the main voices of the city — the voices of the Old Man, the Man without an Ear, and the Man with a Stretched Face (with the Poet in the background). The accentual base and the four-ictus accentual measure derive from the latter characters, while the alternating scheme and the combination of the two schemes derive from the Old Man; *dol'nik* rhythm is also quite prominent in the alternating measure.

Although this Man's voice brings together the main voices of the city, in his speech there would seem to be a move towards an erosion or erasure of existing structural relationships on the level of verse form corresponding to the things' discarding of their names. The alternating scheme, as in the Old Man's main speech, continues from the first stanza into the second, but it does not then return until the fifth stanza and the relationship between the two forms as minor and major no longer clearly applies. Whereas in the Old Man's speech there seemed to be some differentiation of the two measures' compositional roles, here none is apparent, and the switch from one to the other, for example between the second and third stanzas, does not seem to have any compositional or other significance:

0223m	Смех!
222f	Перед мордами вылезших годов
1222m	онемели земель старожилы,
	а злоба
042f	вздывала на лбах городов
	рёки —
	тысячеверстые жилы.
0221f	Медленно,
	в ужасе,
	стрелки вдолс
2213m	подымался на лысом темени времен.
11141f	И вдруг
	все вещи
	кинулись,
	раздирая голос,
0323m	скидывать лохмотья изношенных имен.

(1. 292)

The close association of masculine clausulae and three-ictus lines is broken in the second stanza, and the same clausula pattern is not found in any two consecutive stanzas throughout the speech. Similarly, the three main types of rhythmical form appear to alternate and combine more or less indiscriminately. There is no one clear rhythmical tendency or movement within the speech, no stanza has a sustained rhythm of one type or another, and no two stanzas have the same overall rhythmical profile. The penultimate stanza, for example, has three lines of *dol'nik* rhythm while the final stanza has none:

0333m	Каждая калоша недоступна и строга.
1121d	Чулки-коготки игриво шурятся.
2122m	Я летел, как ругань.
1221d	Другая нога еще добегаёт в соседней улице.
01131/0115f	Что же, вы, кричащие, что я калека?! —
0233m	старые, жирные, обрюзгшие враги!
11133f	Сегодня в целом мире не найдёте человека, у которого
2224m	две одинаковые ноги!

(l. 321)

Although there is a change from narrative to rhetorical statement between these stanzas, the principle of rhythmical composition here matches the notion of a body incongruously put together, and the presence of an extra stress in at least one line of the final stanza (as well as in a line earlier) prepares for the dissolution of the leading role of the four-ictus scheme and the general deregulation of line length in the second half of the play.

The erosion or erasure of existing structural relationships and the reduction of everyone and everything to raw material could lead to a transformation of reality through the renaming of things. This would be a task to be performed by the Poet, whose very role once involved the erasure of distinctions between people: 'Я — поэт, / я разницу стер // между лицами своих и чужих' (l. 203);³⁷ but the Poet in the *Tragedy* is by now a spent force.

Act II (ll. 339–73)

TABLE 41

	Long	5	4	3	Short	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	Form	Lines
339) Eye	—	2	—	2	—	1	1	2	—	AcF	4
347) VM	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—		1
349) T1	—	—	2	2	—	—	—	4	3	Dk4343D	4
357) VM	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	AcF	1
360) T2	—	—	2	1	—	2	—	1	1	Dk4343D	3
366) T3	—	—	2	1	1	2	—	1	—		4

The problem of things has been resolved by their rebellion and Act II takes place in the new city: 'Скучно. Площадь в новом городе' (I, 165); in this Act the unresolved problems of human relations come to the fore. V. Maiakovskii has changed into the classical attire of the poet (toga and laurel crown), and in the opening stanza of the Act the Man without an Eye and a Leg announces that the Poet has been proclaimed prince, presumably in recognition of his supposed leading role in the liquidation of the old order and creation of the new:

	Человек без глаза и ноги (услужливо).
11021/1131f	Поэт! Поэт! Вас объявили князем.
13212m	Покорные толятся за дверью, пальцы сосут.
221f 121m	Перед каждым положен наземь какой-то смешной сосуд.
	В. Маяковский
011m	Что же, пусть идут! (I. 339)

The Man without an Eye and a Leg provides a superficially smooth transition between Acts, but the form of the verse in this stanza indicates a radical change in the situation. The four-ictus scheme which gave the verse direction throughout much of Act I has lost its leading role, and the verse is set in the free accentual form which will dominate in this Act. The last line, which stands outside the standard abab quatrain and is only added to it through a relatively poor additional rhyme ('сосут' — 'сосуд' — 'идут'), reveals the Poet to be on the edge of or almost outside the verse, hence the loss of a pivotal ictus scheme. The Poet's status has been inverted: he is no longer the mover of the verse, a role which he had already potentially relinquished by the middle of Act I, but its audience.

This change in his status is brought home to the Poet in the next three stanzas as tears, which he had buried in Act I, are presented to him by the three Women with Tears. The first is the Woman with a Little Tear:

- 0221f Вот это слёзка моя —
 возьмите!
- 022m Мне не нужна она.
 Пусть.
- 0222f Вот она,
 белая,
 в шелке из нитей
- 022m глаз, посылающих грусть!
- (l. 349)

The basic measure in this and the next two stanzas is the alternating four-ictus and three-ictus dactylic *dol'nik*, but, with the erasure of the traditional relationship between form and content (at least for the people of the city), the Women do not understand the significance of their tears and so are not aware of the form as a lament. Suffering still persists, but it is not recognized as such. The tears are objects divorced from their bearers and therefore seem redundant; attribute and person are divorced, and the form of the Woman's voices is determined not by them but by their tears. There is a direct correspondence between the progressive deformation of the metrical structure and the increasing size of the tears, and an inverted correspondence between these features and the concern of the Women. In this opening stanza the rhythm is regular, even dactylic, in three lines, and the three-ictus lines end in masculine clausulae, but there is a striking enjambement between the third and fourth lines.

The poet now intervenes in an attempt to refuse the proffered tear, but it is in fact the logic of his situation which has called it and the following tears forth:

- В. Маяковский
(беспокойно).
- 23311f Не нужна она,
 зачем мне?
 (Следующей.)
 И у вас глаза распухли?
- Вторая
(беспечно).
- 2022f Пустяки!
 Сын умирает.
 Не тяжело.
- 2102f Вот еще слеза.
 Можно на туфлю.
- 022f Будет красивая пряжка.
- (l. 357)

The Poet's brief speech stands as the first metrical line of the stanza, but his uneasy status in the verse is clearly evident in the line's form which cannot be related either to the metrical structure or ictus scheme of the measure. The stanza is completed by the Woman with a Tear, and the greater degree of suffering implied is conveyed through the form of the verse. Only the last line has a dactylic anacrusis and rhythm, the even lines no longer end in masculine clausulae, and there are zero intervals in both the second and third lines (the zero interval is the rhythmical effect which will be associated with the expression of pain in *Pro eto*). The second line even breaks the measure, but it could be interpreted as an amalgam consisting of a regular three-ictus line, dactylic in rhythm, preceded by a metrical interjection or surrogate opening line ('Пустяки!') after the Poet's anomalous contribution. This stanza does not elicit any further verbal reaction from the Poet but his reaction of mute fright is nevertheless recorded: 'испуган' (I, 166).

The third Woman now presents her large tear with yet greater indifference:

0220d	Вы не смотрите, что я
	грязная.
021f	Вымоюсь — буду чище.
0310d	Вот вам и моя слеза, праздная,
12f	большая слезища. (I. 366)

The deformation of the verse is now severe: no lines have a dactylic rhythm, two have zero intervals, and the measure breaks down in the short last line.

Act II (ll. 374–468)

TABLE 42

	Long	5	4	3	Short	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	Form	Lines
374) VM	—	1	—	1	—	1	1	—	—	AcF	2
378) News	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
381) All	1	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	3
388) Head	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
390) 2K	—	3	—	—	1	1	1	1	1	—	4
397) All										'Prose'	
399) 2K	10	5	4	—	1	10	7	2	—	AcF	20
452) Ks	—	1	—	1	2	2	—	—	—	—	4
459) VM	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	2	1	Dk43D/AcF?	2
464) All	—	1	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	AcF	2
467) Old	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	2	—	Dk4-Dk4Am	2

After the presentation of the third and largest tear the Poet has had enough, but he tries to hide behind a flippant tone before giving way to the cries of newspaper vendors:

	В. Маяковский
031/0111m	Будет!
	Их уже гора.
21053m	Да и мне пора.
	Кто этот очаровательный шатен?
	Газетчики
22m	Фигаро!
	Фигаро!
1m	Матэн!

(1. 374)

Free accentual verse has returned, and the form of the verse in this stanza further underlines the Poet's altered status in the new order. He appears to attempt some impromptu rhyming ('Их уже гора. // Да и мне пора') which has the ring of popular light verse, but, without answering his question, the cries of the Newsmen complete the stanza with two short lines, and the Poet's attempted couplet (if that is what it is) is broken up by a dissonance rhyme ('гора' — 'Фигаро').

The Man with Two Kisses has appeared, causing consternation among the other characters who try to speak all at once ('Говорят впереводку' (1, 167)):

13f	Смотрите —
	какой дикий!
222132m	Отойдите немного.
	Темно.
	Пустите!
1d	Молодой человек,
	не икайте!
	Человек без головы
00m	И-и-и-и . . .
	Э-э-э-э . . .

(1. 381)

The interpretation adopted is one of several alternatives, some more likely than others, since almost every graphical line might be considered to end in a possible rhyme ('Смотрите' — 'Пустите' — ('И-и-и-и'); 'дикий' — 'икайте' — ('И-и-и-и'); 'немного' — 'темно'; 'человек' — 'Э-э-э-э'). As a result the boundaries of the metrical lines and even of the stanza itself (should the stutters be considered part of the stanza or not?) cannot be established with any certainty.³⁸ This dissolution of the primary constraint of verse form, the division into metrical lines, corresponds to the confused babble of voices; it not only indicates the characters' disarray and disunity but also represents the

dissolution of the Poet's ideal of a common language (note the Newsmen's French), just as the stuttering of the Man without a Head, a progression on the theme of disfigurement, represents the dissolution of language itself.

This is an appropriate cue for the Man with Two Kisses whose main speech will record the breakdown of the means to that common language, kissing. In his introductory stanza, however, he describes the degradation of sexual relations on a heavenly scale:

	Человек с двумя поцелуями
03112f	Тучи отдаются небу, рыхлы и гадки.
0(0)f	День гиб.
02222f	Девушки воздуха тоже до золота падки,
21102f	и им только деньги. В. Маяковский
	Что?
	Человек с двумя поцелуями
	Деньги и деньги б!
	Голоса
01 ³⁹	Тише! Тише!

(1. 390)

The reactions of the Poet and the other characters suggest that there is something inappropriate in what is said and/or in how it is said; the Poet either cannot understand or cannot hear, but when the Man with Two Kisses repeats, it is unnecessarily loud. The Man's voice does not quite have the amorphous contours of his main speech, that is, it is not quite his proper voice, and the stanza certainly has some curious features: apart from the hypermetrical stress in the clausula (one of only three such examples in the play) in the short second line, the most curious feature is the smooth rhythm of the third line, which has the form of a dactylic pentameter with three dactylic word boundaries. The unrhymed, 'prose' extension at the end of the stanza then completes the dissolution of verse form in the previous stanza when the characters were trying to speak all at once.

In his main speech, which is introduced as a 'танец с дырявыми мячами' (1, 167), the Man with Two Kisses tells the tragic tale of a man who has been given two kisses (i.e., himself):

124312f	Большому и грязному человеку подарили два поцелуя.
2220221m	Человек был неловкий, не знал, что с ними делать, куда их деть.

02413f	Город,
	весь в празднике,
	возносил в соборах аллилуя,
0323m	люди выходили красивое надеть.

(1. 399)

The man eventually commits suicide, and so the dislocation of narrator and subject is compounded by a dissolution of causality to the extreme point where the narrator of the story has, as its subject, hanged himself.⁴⁰ With the erasure of structural and now also causal relationships the act of kissing is divorced from both agent and object; it is materialized, and the kisses, like the tears earlier, lose meaning for their bearer and are discarded as redundant only to take on a life of their own. Thus the Poet's ideal of kissing has turned into a self-sufficient cause in itself, not a relationship between people, and leads to suicide.

The dissolution of the Poet's ideal in this speech is matched by an extreme dissolution of the form of the verse: the lines are mostly long but of unequal length, the range of line length is vast (from two to ten stresses), and the rhythmical organization has more or less dissolved. As a dance, therefore, this speech also represents the ultimate dissolution of the Poet's original dance which set the metrical and thematic direction of Act I (note also the return of the festival motif). In the first two stanzas the lines are concentrated in the middle of a range of four to seven stresses, but in the third and particularly the fourth stanzas even this semblance of organization disappears:

0231221f	Бросил. И вдруг у поцелуя выросли ушки, он стал вертеться, тоненьким голосочком крикнул: "Мамочку!"
0411d	Испугался человек.
2321332f	Обернул лохмотьями души своей дрожащее тельце, понес домой, чтобы вставить в голубенькую рамочку.
11232d	Долго рылся в пыли по чемоданам (искал рамочку). Оглянулся — поцелуй лежит на диване, громадный, жирный, вырос, смеется, бесится!
0123204312f	"Господи! — заплакал человек, — никогда не думал, что я так устану. Надо повеситься!"
11121d	
0332131f	
02f	

In the third stanza there is already a slight tendency for the lines to diverge in length but in the fourth stanza, which ends in the man's suicide, this divergence reaches an extreme; and the dissolution of the form of the verse again extends to the division into metrical lines and even stanzas, for the first line of the fourth stanza could end on 'чемоданам' rather than 'диване' (or there could be five metrical lines in the stanza), while either 'рамочку' could mark the end of the third stanza.

In the final stanza of the speech, while the man hangs, there is a general disintegration of the sexual relationship in the mechanical, impersonal process of a kiss production line:

2111d	И пока висел он, гадкий, жаленький, —
21232m	в будуарах женщины — фабрики без дыма и труб —
235131h	миллионами выделявали поцелуи, — всякие, большие, маленькие, —
1413m	мясистыми рычагами шлепающих губ.

(l. 442)

The lines are shorter again and the range has contracted, but the range of intervals is greater than ever; the clausulae are generally more varied in this speech than elsewhere, and the heterosyllabic rhyme here ('жаленький' — 'маленькие') involves the first hyperdactylic clausula in the play.

The children kisses now roll off the production line and onto the stage, each one bringing a tear to signify the universal unhappiness in sexual relationships:

114f	Нас массу выпустили. Возьмите!
12210f	Сейчас остальные придут. Пока — восемь.
00f	Я — Митя.
0f	Просим!

(l. 452)

The tone is inappropriately bright and cheery ('резво' (l, 169)), while there is a breakdown into short lines and also two zero intervals.

The presentation of tears involves the Poet once again, but he protests that he cannot take on the burden of suffering:

2122/215m	Господа! Послушайте, — я не могу!
022h	Вам хорошо, а мне с болью-то как?

(l. 459)

These two lines would fit into the free accentual context, but it is possible that there is an approach to the alternating four-ictus and three-ictus dactylic *dol'nik*, the voice, appropriately, of the lament, since the second line has the form of a dactylic trimeter. But the reaction of the other characters is now openly hostile ('Угрозы' (I, 169)):

41403/ Ты поговори еще там!
 411203m Мы из тебя сделаем рагу,
 2d как из кролика!
 (I. 464)

The third line of the stanza breaks up any possible organization established in the Poet's opening couplet, and the familiar, bathetic effect of the short last line drives the point home (compare the earlier stanza with the Newsmen).

The reversal in the Poet's fortunes is thus complete. The other characters have turned against him and the Old Man, the most independent of them and the first and now also the last to speak, steps in to pass judgement. The Old Man commands the Poet to take up both the role of poet, which he alone can fulfil, and the burden of suffering:

2111m Ты один умеешь песни петь.
 (На груди слёз.)
 2212f Отнеси твоему красивому богу.
 (I. 487)

The rhythm of the Old Man's voice in his major, four-ictus *dol'nik* measure has altered notably: both lines have a disyllabic anacrusis, and neither has a ternary rhythmical form while one has a binary form. This rhythmical alteration may be related to the disjointing of the millennial inertia of time in the rebellion of things or else to a change in the Old Man's other distinctive feature, his cats, for he now appears with just a single, plucked cat.

Act II (ll. 469–511)

TABLE 43

	Long	5	4	3	Short	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	Form	Lines
469) VM	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	—	—	AcF	2
472)	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—		1
474)	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	Hx	1
477)	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	AcF	1
481)	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	Hx	1
483)	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	AcF	1
485)	2	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	Hx	2
491)	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	AcF	1
493)	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	Hx	4

In the final speech of the Act the Poet offers some very brief initial resistance but then agrees to assume the burden of tears and so also assumes the archetypal role of poet as martyr and scapegoat:⁴¹

11m	Пустите сесть! Не дают. В. Маяковский неуклюже топчется, собирает слезы в чемодан. Стал с чемоданом.
202f	Хорошо! Дайте дорогу!

(l. 469)

Since the Old Man's speech breaks off in the middle of the stanza the Poet has been forced, for the first time in this Act, to give structure to the verse through rhyme and so commit himself in his role as poet.

In the rest of the speech motifs from the Prologue return as the Poet envisages a life of wandering with his burden of tears (compare 'стекая ненужной слезою' (l. 8)) rather than the assumption of his throne. Hexametral verse returns too, because that is the only metrical voice left through which he can assume his role as poet:

012f	Думал —
1212121m	радостный буду. Блестящими глазами сяду на трон, изнеженный телом грек.
00223f	Нет! Век, дорогие дороги, не забуду
223122m	ваши ноги худые и седые волосы северных рек!

(l. 472)

The Poet's hexametral voice may match his attire in toga and laurel crown, but these classical associations and the image of a lordly Greek are now subverted. Moreover, compared with the opening lines of the Prologue, the Poet's assumption of his role in this measure is no longer smoothly accomplished: the odd lines both fall short of the measure, while the second line is a longer, seven-ictus line with a monosyllabic anacrusis and the final line, a six-ictus line at last, has a disyllabic anacrusis and an irregular interval over an asymmetric caesura.

In the second stanza the Poet envisages his departure, with his soul left shred by shred on the way (a recurring image in Maiakovskii's poetry that is first found in the cycle 'Ia'):

0212f	Вот и сегодня — выйду сквозь город,
-------	--

022221m душу
на копьях домов
оставляя за клоком клок.
021131f Рядом луна пойдет —
туда,
где небосвод распорот.
2424/24212m Поравняется,
на секунду примерит мой котелок.
(1. 483)

The opening line again falls well short of the measure, but the next two lines are hexametral (and more correct); the last line, however, is not at all close to the hexameter and has not been classified as hexametral, even though, given stress omission, it could in fact be related to a six-ictus *dol'nik* scheme.

Then, in the final stanza of the Act, the poet at last sets off with his burden:

002122m Я
с ношей моей
иду,
спотыкаюсь,
ползу
022222-
0201022m дальше
на север,
туда,
где в тисках бесконечной тоски
пальцами волн
вечно
грудь рвет
океан-изувер.
02122012m Я добреду —
усталый,
в последнем бреду
брошу вашу слезу
021221m темному богу гроз
у истока звериных вер.
(1. 493)

Although the opening line at last has six stresses, it is more like a five-ictus line with a hypermetrical stress on 'Я' than a six-ictus line with an incorrect, zero interval, but it has still been classified as hexametral. The second line, however, is a remarkable double hexameter. Its first half, ending at 'тоски', is a dactylic hexameter, while the second half, following a zero interval, splits into three with another zero interval over the first caesura and a hypermetrical stress on 'грудь'. This repetition and continuation of the measure beyond its allotted span allows the Poet no escape from his role and his burden even as his journey continues beyond the span of finite time into infinity. The third line too is extended, though not to the same extent: it can be interpreted as composed of a third-line and two half-lines, the first two of which rhyme with each other

(‘добреду’ — ‘бреду’). The zero interval between the two half-lines, like the zero intervals between sections in the preceding line, may recall the elegiac couplet, where this occurs over the caesura in the pentameter, and so introduce an appropriate elegiac note. The last line, as the Poet reaches his end, concludes the action of the play in a regular Maiakovskian hexameter.

So, in order to free himself of his burden, the Poet must journey northwards (the negative pole) and backwards in time to the source of human suffering in a dark, not beautiful, God at the very origins of religious consciousness. The Poet’s end is not a glorious reign nor a radiant death but probable annihilation as the last stage in a process of gradual disintegration. In this context of movement backwards in time the hexametral voice could acquire a new significance, because, with its roots in early literature, it might serve as a medium through which to return towards the origins of consciousness. As the final token of failure, this movement also reverses the movement forwards in time projected at the beginning of the Prologue (‘к обеду идущих лет’ (1.6)).

Epilogue (ll. 512–35)

TABLE 44

	Long	5	4	3	Short	Ac	Tk	Dk	Ty	Form	Lines
512) VM	2	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	Hx/AcF?	2
517)	1	2	1	2	4	4	1	1	—	AcF	10

Dressed once more in his frock coat and more as author than as character, the Poet concludes the play with a brief epilogue in which he sums up what has been achieved. A flippant and provocative tone and the confession of barren exhaustion echo very closely the opening stanza of Act I:

111101/ Я это все писал
 31101f о вас,
 бедных крысах.
 121321d Жалел — у меня нет груди:
 я кормил бы вас доброй нененькой.
 121f Теперь я немного высох,
 01/2d я — блаженненький.

(1. 512)

The form of the first two lines may recall the hexametral verse of the preceding speech or of the opening stanza of the Prologue, but only as an ironic echo to reinforce the general effect: the rhythm of the first line, with largely monosyllabic intervals, is altogether uncharacteristic of hexametral verse (and there may be only five stresses), but the bipartite, six-stress form and rhythm of the second line are more characteristic and so remind of the hexameter. But the

breakdown into shorter lines then shifts the verse unequivocally into the free accentual form which sums up the play's metrical movement.

The second stanza continues with a mixture of longer and shorter lines and the rhythm becomes more irregular, but the Poet now qualifies his self-disparagement:

200f	Но зато кто где бы
01132m	мыслям дал такой нечеловечий простор!
2101f	Это я попал пальцем в небо,
21m	доказал: он — вор!

(1. 519)

The assertion of proven divine guilt is undermined by the usual idiomatic sense of 'попал пальцем в небо' as against the literal meaning invoked here, while the first two lines make a virtue of the play's exploratory and experimental character.

Finally, in the last stanza of the Epilogue, the Poet signs off in equivocal self-affirmation:

21411d	Иногда мне кажется — я петух голландский или я
10f	король псковский.
312044d	А иногда мне больше всего нравится моя собственная фамилия, Владимир Маяковский.
13f	

(1. 528)

There is here a striking disparity in the length of the odd and even lines and the rhythmical irregularity reaches an extreme, while the equivocal self-affirmation takes the form of a disguised obscenity ('петух голландский'), an absurdity ('король псковский'), and a final throw-away line which at the same time returns to the title and central subject of the play.