Even in front of myself

Imagining the Self in the Poetics of Love

by

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Abstract

The letters that Russian poets Marina Tsvetaeva and Boris Pasternak exchanged with their mentor, the older German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, engage the poetic project of self-imagination and simultaneously enact its analog, the discovery of the self in human relationship. These letters have been much discussed in themselves, but this dissertation seeks to place key questions raised by the poets in a larger philosophical and literary-historical context. In this comparative framing, the relationship between the poet and the faculty of self-imagination reveals itself as one of structurally necessary interrelation. The work of poets gives us unique insight into the experience of imagining the self because the poet's project depends upon and builds out of this imaginative act.

This study follows the letters and poems of Tsvetaeva and Rilke to the stories of three mythical women: Psyche, Eurydice, and Dido, who model the perils and possibilities of making contact, of boundary-crossing, and of self-destruction. These myths reveal the form and development of the imagined self, a story that begins with Psyche's trials and ends with Dido's self-immolation. This process and stakes of self-imagination are illuminated not only by the twentieth-century poets' interpretations of the myths, but also by earlier historical permutations, from Vergil, Ovid, Apuleius, Molière, and the *Roman D'Enéas*.

This project brings together the concepts of love and imagination developed by Gaston Bachelard, Roland Barthes, and Luce Irigaray to analyze the myths central to these poets' concerns, and to trace the philosophical implications through the vocabularies of both the philosophers and the poets. These stories move us toward an understanding of how self-

imagination grows out of relationship, and also of how the poet, through many languages and centuries, achieves special access to the landscape of the imagined self.

Contents

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Introduction: Three Poets, 1926

On 29 December 1926, Rainer Maria Rilke died in Switzerland, where he had spent the end of his life under care for leukemia. Perhaps the great poet of his generation, whose legacy is still on the ascendant in the English-speaking world, where he has recently been enjoying a surge in fame and readership in translation. Rilke was the creator of the images that make up many of our modern iterations of myths that spring from ancient sources. His *Sonnets to Orpheus* are a visible example of this project, but the highly-quoted "Archaic Torso of Apollo" gives the sense of his project, which connects the ancient and unreachable to the contemporary, living mind. The line from the poem that is most remembered is the last, which ends with "Du musst dein Leben ändern," "You must change your life," but the opening of the poem reveals the imaginative fires that connect the living with the long-dead: "Wir kannten nicht sein unerhörtes Haupt, / darin die Augenäpfel reiften," "We didn't know his head, unheard-of, in which his eyes ripened like apples" (*Sämtliche Werke* II.557; translation mine). He connects to the mystery, and simultaneously brings the invisible past to life in vivid imagery; it is for this talent that Rilke is most, and most enduringly, loved.

Rilke was himself a lover of Russian literature and the Russian imagination, which has its own special relationship to the inheritance of the past. For Rilke, this connection was a living one. One of the ways in which Rilke survives to us today is through Lou Andreas-Salomé, whose letters with the poet have long been published and translated. Resonances from the Russian world appeared in Rilke's work, especially in his "Russia-inspired" collection of poems, *Das Stundenbuch* (*The Book of Hours*), which was one of his works that would reach and inspire Russian poetess Marina Tsvetaeva (Hasty 138). It was

Tsvetaeva, whom he did not know for long, and never knew in person, whose impression of Rilke's death captures the feeling of the poetic world at the passing of the great poet: "If you are dead—I, too, and dead; if I am alive—you, too, are alive"[1] (*Letters, Summer 1926*, 347). How Tsvetaeva came, in the last year of Rilke's life, to be crucially involved in the crisis of Rilke's passing from the world, is one of the beautiful stories from the history of poetry.

In 1926, Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva was living in Paris, not her first place of residence in her years outside of Russia but marked by the special relationships that filled her life and poetic mind while she was living there. In the words of her biographer and reader, Viktoria Schweitzer: "Tsvetaeva's months in the Vendée are coloured by Pasternak - and also by Rilke, whom Pasternak 'gave' to her" (285). This is the story of an intergenerational connection, and a poetic relationship in two parts—between Tsvetaeva and Boris Pasternak, and between Tsvetaeva and Rainer Maria Rilke—that set off resonances that would illuminate the work of all three poets both between themselves and for posterity. On 12 April 1926, Pasternak wrote to Rainer Maria Rilke, who had been a friend to his father, Leonid Osipovich Pasternak, a painter with a circle of artist friends from his generation, of which Rilke was a part. Boris Pasternak's father put him in touch with Rilke, and the younger Russian poet wrote, in a deferential tone charged with the emotion of his admiration, to the already-celebrated Rilke, asking that he reply not directly to Pasternak, but to Tsvetaeva instead.

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[1] "Если ты мертвый, я тоже мертвая, если я живая, — ты тоже живой" (*Собрание сочинений*, IV.203)

Schweitzer enumerates the other components of Tsvetaeva's life during the time of the correspondence, living from day to day in her apartment with her son, Mur: "Everyday life - taking Mur for walks, sitting with him and Alya on the beach, shopping, washing and cleaning, cooking meals - all this went on but appears to have been less of a burden than usual" (285). It was either less of a burden, or the space that would have been taken up by quotidian concerns was simply filled up by the letters, which contain the material of an entire life in themselves. The life of the letters, however, is nothing like the life lived from one day to the next, and that day-to-day life did not figure strongly in the letters. Tsvetaeva occasionally mentions her money troubles in the letters, but only a couple of times, and Rilke, for his part, never mentions his illness to Tsvetaeva, with the result that she was taken completely by surprise when he died at the end of the year.

As for the letters themselves, there are elements of them that read a great deal like love letters, mostly from Tsvetaeva's side. She had an emotional turn of phrase, and her understanding of the relationship between the three poets conjures something beyond the reality (letters exchanged over many years with Pasternak, and for a number of months with Rilke, which did not culminate in a long-imagined meeting), and it is hard not to believe with Tsvetaeva in the deep metaphysical resonances she feels in the three-person relationship. On 25 May 1926, for example, she wrote to Boris Pasternak: "I love your name so much that for me not to take advantage of the opportunity to write it in a letter to Rilke was genuine sacrifice, a real deprivation"[2] (153). This is not to say that the relationship was

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[2] All text from letters between Tsvetaeva and Rilke are taken from the excellent English translation of Wettlin, Arndt, and Gambrell, which is based on the German

conjured entirely by Tsvetaeva; shortly after this letter, on 8 June, Rilke sent Tsvetaeva the poem he had written for her, one of his last, "Elegie an Marina Zwetajewa-Efron". She couldn't have known at the time that it would be less than a year before she would be writing an Elegy back to Rilke, following his death.

The World of the Poet

It is worth noting what went unsaid in the letters: what the poets did not say delineated the boundaries of the world they created within the letters. This was a world filled by all three poets, and each contributed insight into life and art that colored the thoughts of the others and the shape of the world they imagined together. Gaston Bachelard spoke of the creation of such a world as a transformation of the external once it is brought into the poetic world. Once the poetic world is created, we, as readers, are equally free to enter:

> But once a poet has chosen his object, the object itself changes its being. It is promised to the poetic.

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edition of the letters. I have included the German text as well where relevant, for letters between Tsvetaeva and Rilke. This and the following notes giving the Russian texts for letters, except where otherwise noted, are taken from the Korkina and Shevelenko edition of Pasternak and Tsvetaeva's correspondence, *Души начинают видеть*:

"Я так люблю твое имя, что для меня не написать его лишний раз, сопровождая письмо Рильке, было настоящим лишением, отказом" (214).

> What a joy therefore to take the poet at his word, to dream with him, to believe what he says, to live in the world that he offers us by putting the world under the sign of the object, of a fruit of the world, of a flower of the world![3]

This configuration presupposes Bachelard's idea of *rêverie*, which is both an inherently creative mode of engaging with the world, and also a mode of thinking where poet and reader can meet. By engaging in *rêverie*, the poet is able to create a world for the reader, effecting the miraculous transformation of external objects into internal. For Bachelard, the action is quite active on the part of the poet, whose powers over the word translate directly into a world-creating power: "The Poet's feat at the peak of his cosmic *rêverie* is to constitute a cosmos of speech"[4]. The term "cosmos" is apt to describe the nature of creation in this instance. The poet does not create out of thin air but assembles elements into a system that makes sense of them, which allows the poet and the reader to meet in the space imagined and ordered by the poet, what I will refer to as the poetic world.

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[3] "Mais une fois qu'un poète a choisi son objet, l'objet lui-même change d'être. Il est promu au poétique.

Quelle joie alors de prendre le poète au mot, de rêver avec lui, de croire ce qu'il dit, de vivre dans le monde qu'il nous offre en mettant le monde sous le signe de l'objet, d'un fruit du monde, d'une fleur du monde ! " (Poétique de la rêverie 132)

This and the following translations from Bachelard are mine. I do not translate the word "*rêverie,*" since the English cognate does not encompass the same lexical scope as the French word.

[4] *"*L'exploit du poète au sommet de sa rêverie cosmique est de constituer un cosmos de la parole*" (160)*

At the same time, the power of the poet's creative force is only realized in the reading of the text: "In the cosmic *rêverie*, nothing is inert, neither world nor dreamer; everything lives a secret life, and thus everything speaks sincerely"[5]. Through *rêverie*, the reader is able to enter into the world the poet creates, which, within the conditions created by a state of *rêverie*, becomes internal also to the reader. The world is shared in these two internal spaces and conditioned by each. Bachelard acknowledges the ways in which the conditions of the reader's internal space change the world of the poet that the reader receives, especially through the power of poetic text to engage memory. While the poet does not speak to the reader about the reader's specific memories of the past, "by virtue of the imagined life, the poet places in us a new light,"[6] which illuminates the past that already exists internally within the reader. So much to describe what the poet offers to the reader, beyond entry into a state of *rêverie*, the practice of which concerns much of *La Poétique de la reverie*. Still, this is not sufficient to define the responsibilities of the reader in this cooperative model of text and reading. In this regard, the letters and poems of these three poets are a special case: because the personal and the poetic—and indeed, the Poetics—of these three real historical people are so deeply interwoven, special care is needed to understand the world that they create, and the terms on which we may enter it.

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[5] "Dans la rêverie cosmique, rien n'est inerte, ni le monde ni le rêveur ; tout vit d'une vie secrète, donc tout parle sincèrement" (162)

[6] "Naturellement, le poète ne nous dit rien de notre passé positif. Mais par la vertu de la vie imaginée, le poète met en nous une nouvelle lumière" (90)

The reader's main responsibility is receptivity to the specifics of the lives reflected in the letters, and a corresponding sensitivity to the meaning of their thoughts in the context of those lives. The reader, to apprehend these specificities accurately, is responsible above all for an awareness of her expectations when approaching the text, which will be made up mainly of the background of memories and beliefs about those memories that Bachelard mentions. The poetic text sets out to engage these expectations, and to surprise in contrast with the expected. The personal letter will also surprise, and this surprise will also contrast with the expectations the reader brings to the text, but in this case the reader is wholly responsible for the transaction: the letter was not written to posterity, but to another, then-living person.

1926: Before and After

Rilke's death as experienced by Tsvetaeva and Pasternak was an important and singular moment, but it also, for readers of the letters between the poets, illuminates the meaning that the Death of the Poet held for Tsvetaeva in general. To approach the shape of the poet's development, growing understanding of self, and death, it is necessary to acknowledge the aspects of historical specificity that shaped the experience of Tsvetaeva and Pasternak as poets and as self-creators during and after the years of the Russian revolution.

Pasternak's association with the Symbolists in the early 1910s provides some keys to understanding the structures of his understanding around the relationship between music, philosophy, and poetry. He explored all three in his youth, in that order, and while

only the last became his life's work, the influence of the first two can be seen in his literary works and in his poetics. Lazar Fleishman, in his political biography of Pasternak, shows that Pasternak's concept of Symbolism, which makes space for the paradigm of meaning suggested in the Greek etymology of *symballein*, to throw together, or unite, builds on the strong interest in the Symbolist group in music, as well as explications of Biely and Ivanov on this unifying aspect, and takes symbolism one step further (51). Pasternak's eventual formulation of his evolved concept of symbolism takes a philosophical route to a theory of literature that surpasses the bounds of the Symbolist movement, concluding, in Fleishman's summary, that "only poetry, which shares the same foundation as music, rhythm, can reveal the meaning of musical language" (53). We might adopt this, in Tsvetaeva's terms, as a *formula* that can frame the poetics expressed by either poet, and inform our understanding of what the poets recognized in one another's work. In my second chapter, I show how the connection between music and poetry proves formative in the early years of both poets' lives, and how their later recollections of that impact take very different routes to similarly significant positioning in the poets' mature poetics.

Catherine Ciepiela and others have discussed what it means for Tsvetaeva's poetics to mature out of her early work into what would ultimately become a rich poetic philosophy that she expressed not only in her poetry, but also in her letters and essays. In particular, Ciepiela pointed to Tsvetaeva's *Evening Album*, which was her passport into literary circles, but also revealed a specifically girlish voice that is identifiably different from her later, mature poetry. Olga Peters Hasty identifies the Orphic story as central to her poetic adolescence, the story that animates and enables the transformation that followed

Evening Album, catalyzed in Tsvetaeva's own accounts by the relationships she developed at that time. Hasty points in particular to her relationship with Max Voloshin: "In the essay «Дом у Старого Пимена» [The House at Old St. Pimen's], she registers a confrontation with the death of a loved one in her childhood as a cardinal point in her maturation as a poet" (xvi). In Hasty's reading, the poet's access to an imagined "elsewhere," a place not accessible without the meditation of poetry, is one of the primary concerns of Tsvetaeva's poetic project, and also the reason for her centering of the Orphic myth in so much of her metapoetic work. This is perhaps the most important motivating aspect of Tsvetaeva's poetics, which Hasty calls her "poetic project of engaging poetic language to mediate between the visible and the invisible, the personal and the universal, between inner creative space and the external world" (136). Hasty aligns this search with another: for specific forms of relationship based on poetic ideals informed by the myth. These she identifies in Tsvetaeva's interactions especially with Blok and Rilke, and ultimately with her concept of herself as a poet.

The current project takes up many of the same strands around Tsvetaeva's work: poetic adolescence, the "elsewhere" that I explore as a poetically created world, and the Orpheus myth, which is the subject of the second chapter. Some key poetic texts engaged this project, including *Поэма Горы* (*The Poem of the Mountain*), *Попытка Комнаты* (*Attempt at a Room*), and *Новогоднее* (*New Year's Greeting*) all belong to a group of *Поэмы*, mid-length narrative poems, that Michael Makin describes as different from her other work. The difference consists partly in their freedom from literary sources, but also, crucially, in their adaptation of the "literary epistle" format (301). These are poems that

exist in the space of relationship, in dialogue, like the letters of 1926, with other poets, and therefore *with poetry*. In Tsvetaeva's essay on Max Voloshin, she recounts the exchanges of poetic thought and experience that make a relationship meaningful to a poetics and shows some of the foundation of her own poetic world. Hasty follows another thread that appears in Tsvetaeva's accounts of herself: the alignment of her relationships with the roles suggested by the Orphic myth. This is a rich subject, but the current study will rely more heavily on the former method, following the moments in relationship that make up a poetics, relying on the myths that interested Tsvetaeva and her interlocutors primarily as a means of orientation. Rather than looking to mythology to explain the *people* involved in the creation of these poetics, we will look to them here to show us the *world* to which the poetics belong.

Michael Makin makes the case in *Marina Tsvetaeva: Poetics of Appropriation* that the shift into Tsvetaeva's mature poetry can be seen particularly in her engagement with literary sources. He suggests that her engagement with source material follows a pattern she had already established in her earlier poetry that maintains an intentionally uncomfortable tension between the "private" and "public" content of her work:

In the mature works this is often expressed as the conflict between the source—a public property—and the poet's own radically revised vision—a 'private' form. In the early works this conflict is more directly psychological and social—since it is between the private world of childhood of the lyrical speaker, and the adult world of shared conventions and proprieties which threaten that world. The embarrassment felt by the reader of her early poems on encountering the exposure of what are conventionally 'private', intimate

feelings anticipates the dislocation experienced by the reader of her later, sophisticated treatments of literary themes (24).

This touches on the quality of Tsvetaeva's poetry that makes a study of the present kind possible: her poetry is, as has often been observed, deeply personal, even after the period of her early work. The poet is very present in the poetry, especially the lyrics, but also, if differently, in the narrative works. At the same time, and even through this same personal presence, the poems constantly engage the readers and do their emotional work in the space of readerly reaction. Makin identifies an adversarial possibility for this relationship, which he sees modeled in "Sidestreets" ("Переулочки"), a poem that describes love-magic contained in a comb given as a gift to a lover. The enchanted object stands in for the poem, which works the same kind of trick, precisely through Tsvetaeva's method of "disruption in an inherited text," in this case ensuring fidelity of the reader in place of the lover (32). This example demonstrates the structure at work in the poet-reader relationship as Tsvetaeva understood and practiced it, cast in clear relief by the adversarial element. We can further fill in the dynamics of this relationship by reading the letters with an eye for her understanding of relationships more broadly, under this fundamental understanding: that Tsvetaeva's poetics is always at the same time a philosophy of relationship.

It cannot be forgotten that the context for these relationships was formed by the singular trials of the revolution. Ciepiela explains the effect that the revolution years had on Pasternak's work and especially on his relationship with other poets, in particular Mayakovsky and Aseev, whose work became much more overtly political than Pasternak's

(134). Christopher Barnes, in his biography, points to evidence that even Pasternak's invitation to collaborate on the new journal LEF, or Left Front of the Arts, positioned Pasternak as "a target for attack rather than a colleague" (316). He was only grudgingly included in the project, and enthusiasm did not appear from Pasternak's side to fill the gap. Instead, Ciepiela reads his projects from that time, both "A Sublime Malady" and the epic "1905" with its companion work "Lieutenant Schmidt" as exercising "a way of bringing together lyricism and history," a fusion that resulted in an epic form because "lyricism cannot exist at this moment in Soviet Russian history" (142). These projects aligned Pasternak with Blok, whose influence Ciepiela identifies in 1905, and to some extent against the members of LEF. Still, given Pasternak's ongoing participation in Soviet literary life, the space between his path's and Tsvetaeva's took on a special starkness at this moment.

Simon Karlinsky, in his second biography of Marina Tsvetaeva, traces Tsvetaeva's political feelings alongside shifting contemporary understandings of events as the revolution developed. Her own trajectory moved from a youthful enthusiasm in 1902 and in 1905, to a very different reaction in 1917 (21). He brings this experience back to the crucial role of relationship in the formation of understanding, landing on the moment when Tsvetaeva sought advice from Voloshin. She received a narrative from him that made the revolution an understandable whole. Taking the French Revolution as a historical guide, he predicted some of the worst of what was to come, and this took on a prophetic character for her in retrospect. Karlinsky portrays Voloshin in that moment as singular in his ability to historicize what was still very much the present moment (71). This is not altogether

different from the historical approach that Ciepiela describes Pasternak attempting as the necessary work of the poet in that time, leading to a realist poetics in "1905" that Tsvetaeva would also admire for its honesty (144).

The echoes of all these forces can be seen in the letters of 1926. The political environment had a significant impact on the subject matter taken up by both Tsvetaeva and Pasternak, and their material circumstances have an impact not only on the content of the letters, but also on the logistics of communicating between Pasternak in Russia and Tsvetaeva in Europe. Importantly, the changes of these times left an imprint on the childhood and early adulthood of both poets, and their impressions of those formative years came to form the portion of their metapoetic understandings that describe the poet's first steps toward self-creation. The world of childhood, as we will see in the second chapter, contributes a great deal to the formation of the poetic world, and it echoes deeply through the world established in poetic adolescence and beyond.

Figures

In Barthes' terminology, "The figure is the lover at work" (*A Lover's Discourse* 4). To parse the components of real lives and relationships when they interact so closely with poetic imagination, we can look to the system for filing lived experiences and literary depictions of experience under applicable tropes in his *Lover's Discourse*. What Barthes assembles in his *Fragments Amoureux* functions not unlike the collection of commonly (over-) believed figures he brings together in his *Mythologies*. Taken together, the *figures* he assembles around the lover constitute familiar narrative of the love-relationship, starting

from the characters of lover and beloved, and moving through all the ways in which they self-characterize. The *figures*, as he calls them, make up this shared, familiar universe:

> Figures take shape insofar as we can recognize, in passing discourse, something that has been read, heard, felt. The figure is outlined (like a sign) and memorable (like an image or a tale). A figure is established if at least someone can say: *"That's so true! I recognize that scene of language."* [7] (Barthes, tr. Howard 4)

This familiarity is the key to establishing the shared world, the world outside of the text, and external to individual minds, this external that might be referred to as reality, and which Barthes goes on to refer to as the "mundane." The characteristics of internal and external help to establish the difference between the experienced and the imagined, but it is the *familiar* that signifies the world as given, the version of the world that members of a society share in common. At the same time, Barthes' specificity is telling: this *figure* is familiar to "at least someone." The familiar is not universal; it is probably shared, but whether the familiar thing is in fact shared is less important than the *feeling* that it is shared, and therefore "so true."

Tsvetaeva also employs figures, but assembles them more independently, constructing her world only with her chosen collaborators. A possible contrast to the

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[7] "*Les figures se découpent selon qu'on peut reconnaître, dans le discours qui passe, quelque chose qui a été lu, entendu, éprouvé. La figure est cernée (comme un signe) et mémorable (comme une image ou un conte). Une figure est fondée si au mois quelqu'un peut dire :* "Comme c'est vrai, ça ! Je reconnais cette scène de langage." (Barthes 8)

The English in all following citations of Barthes' *Fragments* are also taken from Richard Howard's translation.

figures are the "things" referred to by both Tsvetaeva and Barthes. Barthes asks to which world these "things" belong: the world external or internal to the love-relationship: "Where are 'things'? In amorous space, or in mundane space?" (92) "Mundane" here points to the world that has not been refigured by the "amorous" imagination. For a love-relationship to constitute itself, the world must be reimagined, a new one made by and for the participants in the love relationship. Barthes' *figures* are the familiar, the well-known components that make up the world of love *seen from the point of view of the inhabitants of the mundane*. That is, each of Barthes' *figures* refers to an experience of the lover, but in many of the fragments, he repeats: the first rule of the lover's world: none of the things described, especially his suffering, and the quality of his severance from the mundane, can be understood by one outside the world of the lover. The material of the lover's world itself, his image repertoire, his "*Imaginaire*," is not shared in detail as the figures are, because they are only viewable from inside the lover's world. In this sense, Barthes' figures are the language available for the "mundane" world to communicate with the lover's world. They are the common language, the only thing that can move between the two.

This is why I see in Tsvetaeva's world-creation figures that perform the same—but inverse—operation. Speaking from within the world of the lover—or in her case the world of the poet, who similarly creates a world in relationship—she engages images that will speak to one outside of her own imagined world. Perhaps due to what Anna Tavis once called her "pathological capacity for creating myths out of every possible situation," Tsvetaeva's world-creation is vividly transmissible thanks to her fluency in images (518). Her images are at once familiar enough from the mundane side that they can be

approached by the other, but they also contain enough of the strange that they lead to her imagined world.

That is the key difference between the mechanism of Tsvetaeva's figures and the *figures* Barthes assembled. Barthes' project depends on the device of defamiliarization (*остранение*[8]) to illuminate the examples: we look with him so closely at the well-known, and well-codified, experiences of the lover that they end by becoming strange again. Tsvetaeva's figures are strange to begin with, but their strangeness is detectable only as a trace influence. They compel the reader to examine them more closely (whereas the practitioner of *остранение* does the examining as a performance *for the reader*) to search out the source of the just-sensed strangeness.

In one brilliant moment in a letter to Pasternak, she describes her own early morning, inserting him in the scene, describing her own experience of feeling close to him, and also enacting the immersive experience many readers look for in an imaginative text, but on her reader's (Pasternak's) behalf:

> Hello, Boris! Six in the morning, with everything blowing and howling. I just ran to the well between rows of trees (two opposite pleasures: an empty pail, a full pail) and I greeted you with my whole body, and with the wind in my face. Back at the house (now with a full one—the second in the parentheses), everyone was still

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[8] This is the term employed by Viktor Shklovsky in his essay "Art as Technique." In this essay he engages the definition of art as "thinking in images" to show how an image can make an argument. In the technique of defamiliarization, an image of a familiar object is presented in such a way, by the inclusion of details or the arrangement of characteristics, that the object appears strange even to someone who is very familiar with the thing being described. For more, see Chklovski, "*L'Art comme procédé.*"

> asleep. I stopped and lifted my head to see you. Thus I live with you, morning and evening, getting up in you, lying down in you.[9] (157)

Everything is out of order. Rather than explaining first that she feels "I live with you," she describes the feeling in all its detail before explaining that it is a sense she has often. She brings in the "opposite pleasures" of the empty pail and the full pail before she gives any indication that she had gone out for water, telling the story backwards. In this passage, from the beginning of the letter, she describes how she feels this interaction with Pasternak in very total terms, "with my whole body," "morning and evening." She ends the same letter with a question in postscript: "Have you noticed that I give you of myself *in pieces*?"[10] (160) This contradicts her earlier language of totality, but it is perfectly clear what she means. She gives us a glimpse of a pail, a time of day, a schedule, and it all swirls around to form a facsimile of ecstatic experience; nothing is sorted into a comfortable, *familiar* narrative.

The disruption of the familiar is only possible with the cooperation of the reader, and the reciprocity involved in this relationship always creates responsibilities for those involved. The lovers in a love relationship (or the lover and the beloved, if we follow the tradition in adhering to one point of view) bear certain responsibilities to one another once they enter into this imaginative collaboration. The relationship itself constitutes and

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[9] "Здравствуй, Борис! Шесть утра, все веет и дует. Я только что бежала по аллейке к колодцу (две разные радости: пустое ведро, полное ведро) и всем телом, встречающим ветер, здоровалась с тобой. У крыльца (уже с полным) вторые скобки: все еще спали—я остановилась, подняв голову навстречу тебе. Так я живу с тобой, утра и ночи, вставая в тебе, ложась в тебе." (218)

[10] "Замечаешь, что я тебе дарю себя ВРАЗДРОБЬ?" (220)

necessitates this imagination: to the mundane, the world outside of the relationship, its components are cut and dried, easily recognizable: pining, pursuit, happiness, unhappiness (or Barthes' recurrent term to cover all of this: suffering). It is only within the imaginative collective of two that these particularities take on depth and interest, constituting and necessitating their own world.

It is not altogether different between the poet and the reader. The poet posits a world, and this imagined world both makes up the poetry and is required for the poetry to come into being. The existence of this world presupposes the reader, and the world of the poetry includes the reader in the foundation of its physics, the natural laws of its cosmos. To match with this model, we can look to the lover/beloved model of the love relationship, which helps to mark the difference between the poet and the reader. It is mainly from this model of relationship that Barthes' fragments (and the received ideas of the love-relationship to which they refer) proceed. Just as with the figures that Barthes' lover translates into particularity, the poet takes the figures—images of things that exist on the earth—and translates them from familiarity to unfamiliarity. This operation is only completed as the familiar becomes unfamiliar, strange and new as if just discovered (or imagined) in the mind of the reader. In this regard, the reader is not a co-creator with the poet (the poem is already made), but she is a collaborator, who realizes the purpose of the poet's poiesis (the poem's final cause: to be read) and validates the newly made world by inhabiting it. After this operation, the *mundane* designates the world exterior to the relationship, exterior to the text: the world before reading.

The meaning of poiesis in context, necessarily and forever surrounded by the world of the mundane, determines the shape and the force (equal and opposite) of that poiesis. Jean-Luc Nancy acknowledges this when he takes the structure of love beyond the Hegelian dialectic in "*L'amour en éclats*": "there is no sublimation of the heart, nor of love. Love is what it is, identical and plural, in all its registers or in all its explosions, and it does not sublimate itself, even when it is 'sublime'"[11] (Nancy, Tr. Connor 90). This incompatibility with the dialectic places love beyond the reach of philosophy, but poiesis establishes a relationship that depends on the same non-dialectical forms of relationship as love does. The poet and the reader enter into an imagining together that is at once "identical and plural." They imagine the text together, always differently, but with a difference that anticipates itself. After all, the poet writes for an audience of others, and the reader reads to imagine with another mind. Nancy also acknowledges the importance of the familiar to this exchange: "Nothing leads us more surely back to ourselves (to the Occident, to philosophy, to the dialectic, to literature) than love" (92)[12]. This only further proves the trickiness of nature of love, which functions always as just what it is about not to be.

In perhaps his most architecturally stunning formulation, Nancy describes love as by its nature "double and contradictory, even though it also contains the infinite resolution of its own contradiction. This nature is thus neither simple nor contradictory: it is the

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[11] "il n'y a pas de sublimation du cœur, ni de l'amour. L'amour est ce qu'il est, identique et pluriel, sur tous ses registres ou dans tous ses éclats, et il ne se sublime pas, même lorsqu'il est « sublime ». " (Nancy 237)

[12] "Rien ne nous reconduit plus sûrement à nous-mêmes (à l'Occident, à la philosophie, à la dialectique, à la littérature) que « l'amour ». " (240-241)

contradiction of contradiction and of noncontradiction"[13] (87). Love, in the reciprocity of relationship, continuously and necessarily folds in upon itself. This is a knot that appears in philosophical grapplings not only with the love relationship, but also with its depictions, reaching back at least as far as the Greek philosophers to whom Nancy looks for the models of love's perpetual motion.

Myths of Love

There are certain myths that recur in the understanding of the love relationship, and they are not unrelated to the myths that surround ideas of reading. Barthes situates himself in the place of Orpheus as he imagines himself as the lover attempting to express his love, still in the *Fragments*:

> Someone would have to teach me that one cannot write without burying "sincerity" (always the Orpheus myth: not to turn back). What writing demands, and what any lover cannot grant it without laceration, is to sacrifice *a little* of his Image-repertoire, and to assure thereby, through his language, the assumption of a little reality.[14] (98)

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[13] "Selon ce schème, la nature de l'amour est avérée comme double et comme contradictoire, cependant qu'elle comporte aussi bien la résolution infinie de sa propre contradiction. Ce n'est donc ni une nature simple ni une nature contradictoire." (232)

[14] "Il faudrait que quelqu'un m'apprenne qu'on ne peut écrire sans faire le deuil de sa 'sincérité' (toujours le mythe d'Orphée: ne pas se retourner). Ce que l'écriture demande et que tout amoureux ne peut lui accorder sans déchirement, c'est de sacrifier *un peu* de son Imaginaire, et d'assurer ainsi à travers sa langue l'assomption d'un peu de réel." (115)

He believes that the two roles cannibalize one another: by becoming more the writer, the lover is wounded, since, by virtue of being a lover, he is inherently ill-suited to be a writer. It is the insertion of Orpheus in the middle of this trade that signals the troubled solution. Is it possible that lovers make poor poets, when Orpheus, the ur-poet, is also among the great lovers, his fate defined as much by his love as by his music? Orpheus, after all, *did* turn back: what does this promise as the fate of "sincerity" in the writing of lovers (or indeed, in all writing, since the writing itself establishes a love-relationship)? If we believe with Bachelard that in the cosmic *rêverie* of poetry, everything speaks sincerely, then the problem is only illusory; once the lover enters into the *rêverie* of poetic creation, the question of sincerity will dissolve. As I will discuss in the second chapter, Rilke in his poems, and Tsvetaeva in her letters, both returned to that moment of Orpheus' turn, and the myth, like all myths of love, reveals most about where the writer positions herself. Who is Orpheus, who Eurydice in the writer-reader relationship? The question is basic to the establishment of a personal Poetics. A similar question can be asked around the figure of Psyche, whose story I discuss in my first chapter. Psyche is the relatable character in her story, but the story offers so many crises, they are like an expansion into plurality of Orpheus' turn: abandoned, disoriented, afraid, and eventually temporarily dead, failure appears in so many guises, they provide a menu for the experiences of frustration in relationship.

These constantly resurfacing myths construct themselves (of course they are created by humans, but often recreated, growing around their self-imagined roots, as if mistletoe clung to a scarcely visible tree) around our concepts of love, and in particular

around the woman. In these mythologies, the woman is defined by the terms of the myth, reinvented in its retellings. Yet the woman in the story is seldom the focal point. The Orpheus myth is about the poet. Aeneas' story is always his own, except when Ovid makes it Dido's, a famous case of defamiliarization that I examine in my third chapter.

Psyche's story might be her own - its message takes aim at her analogues in the world. She is certainly overshadowed by the god, who keeps her also in the dark. The story itself, in its structure, holds the key to the question faced by its recipients: Amor is not the villain; everything he does is inevitable, ordained, necessary. The only one left to hate, the perpetrator of everything we fear and despise in Psyche's plight, is the story itself.

I: Psyche and the Imagined World

Love and the Invisible in Tsvetaeva and Krzhizhanovsky

New Year, New World

Joseph Brodsky describes Marina Tsvetaeva as "quite possibly the most candid" Russian poet (198). Candid is an interesting word to keep in mind when we read these lines from her 1918 "Психея," here in an English translation by Nina Kossman:

> There, on earth, they gave me nothing
> And hung millstones around my neck.
> —Don't you recognize me, beloved?
> I am your swallow: Psyche. (147)

> Там на земле мне подавали грош
> И жерновов навешали на шею.
> — Возлюбленный — Ужель не узнаешь?
> Я ласточка твоя — Психея![15] (I.394)

A voice from beyond earth reaches back to address a human beloved. The lines could come straight from a retelling of the Psyche myth: here is a Psyche that is no longer

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[15] The Russian text quoted from this and the longer poems is given from the 1994 seven-volume collected writings, *Собрание сочинений в семи томах*.

part of the human world, whom the human world did not treat well, and who has been transfigured by her change of place, who is no longer recognizable.

The story as it appears in Apuleius' telling begins with the spreading fame of Psyche's beauty. When the mania reaches the point where Psyche is being worshipped instead of Aphrodite (or Venus in Apuleius' *Golden Ass*), whose temples are increasingly neglected, the goddess of beauty is enraged. She sends her son, Amor, to see to it that Psyche should marry the vilest of men. Instead, the god of love is pricked by one of his own arrows and falls in love with Psyche himself. When an oracle convinces her family to have her left on a mountain in a "marriage to death," Amor sends Zephyr to spirit her away to a mountaintop palace where she is attended to by invisible beings in great luxury.

At night, Amor comes to her in the darkness, and these nightly meetings constitute their illegitimate, secret marriage. Psyche is constrained by one rule: that she can never see her husband. She is eventually allowed to speak with her sisters, to let them know she is not dead, and they convince her that she is married to a monster, and that she needs to kill him.

After Amor has fallen asleep, she takes a lamp up to the bed to get a look at him, pricks herself on one of his arrows in the process, and falls in love with the beautiful god she sees in the bed. She is no longer interested in killing him, but, leaning over to kiss him, she spills a drop of hot oil from the lamp on him, causing an injury that incapacitates him so thoroughly that he disappears for most of the rest of the story.

To redeem herself, Psyche must complete impossible tasks assigned to her by Aphrodite, the enraged mother-in-law: sorting grains, which ants handle for her, gathering some wool from the sun god's sheep, where some whispering reeds advise her, and to fill a

vessel with water from the spring that feeds the rivers Styx and Cocytus, where she is helped by Zeus' eagle. The fourth task is to retrieve a beauty potion from Persephone. This she also accomplishes, but then she opens the container to take a little of the beauty treatment for herself. Since the potion came from the queen of the underworld, Psyche immediately falls into a death-like sleep, and she is only brought back to herself through the intervention of Amor, who has finally recovered from his injury. Then Zeus legitimizes the marriage, and Psyche is granted immortality.

Michael Makin has summarized Tsvetaeva's interest in the Psyche story (to which the returned several times, in this poem as well as in her collection of poems named for Psyche and a reference in her play *Приключение*) as stemming from causes that are "obvious: it is about a pair of lovers, separated on earth, but united in the world of the immortals, and it was frequently used as an analogy for the trials and tribulations of the soul during its stay on earth—themes prominent in her poetry" (39). The "use" of this analogy was extensive in Jungian circles, and we might turn to just such a reading to cast light on the "obvious" attraction at work here.

Erich Neumann looked at the Psyche story as a story of her "independent development" beginning in the moment with the lamp, where her independence is asserted against "what necessity had impelled her to sacrifice" (83). In Neumann's reading, however, the rupture that Psyche effects in this relationship is also the path to realization of the love-relationship for both parties. Although Amor, or Eros, as he is referred to in Neumann's analysis, had already long since been wounded by his own arrow, awaking the love that impelled him to orchestrate her abduction in the first place, it is only "through Psyche's act that Eros first suffers the consequence of the arrow of love that he has aimed at himself"

(83). For Neumann, realization in reciprocation is tied to a conception of love as an original unity. This is a model, however, that prioritizes the processes of *self*-realization: the Jungian approach makes even the development of relationship look like the development of self. Considered from the other side, the same story is about the way that self-discovery becomes newly possible in relationship. This relationship can, and sometimes must, change. It is not static, and neither is the self.

Elsewhere, Neumann addresses the differential of status and power between Psyche and Eros as an important mythological feature:

> When gods love mortals, they experience only desire and pleasure. The suffering had always been left to the mortal part, the human, who was usually destroyed by the encounter, while the divine partner went smilingly on to new adventures equally disastrous for humankind. But here something different happens: Psyche, for all her individuality a symbol of mortal woman's soul, takes an active part. (84)

The modern concept of the psyche is informed by this transcendence of the Psyche character over the usual limitations of humanity in myth. The key to her shift in status is the "active part" that she takes up in the story. In the end, Neumann locates Psyche's most important triumph in her final failure, following her completion of the fourth task: "Psyche fails," he says, "she must fail, because she is a feminine psyche. But though she does not know it, it is precisely this failure that brings her victory" (121). The process that Neumann describes is undoubtedly the path that Psyche follows to her eventual victory, although we might still ask whether she does not know how her failure is transfigured "because she is a feminine psyche," or simply because she is unconscious.

There is a limit to the Jungian approach: while gender roles are strongly thematized in the story, it is not as easy to categorizes the purviews of these roles as Neumann suggests, categorizing *understanding* as masculine and *beauty* as feminine. After all, if Psyche's beauty sets things in motion, then Amor's beauty is the cause of the whole second half of the story. If he hadn't been so beautiful, this would be a story about what happens when an adolescent girl tries to kill a god. Still, it rings true to say that Psyche's story is that of a girl achieving self-realization in and through relationship.

Tsvetaeva's short lyric also references Psyche's eventual transcendence of humanity, and at the same time recalls the troubled beginning of Psyche' story. The reference in those lines to her experience on Earth—in Russian, she is literally given "*грош*," a penny, a gift as useless as the "marriage" to which Psyche is given on the mountain—suggests the circumstances that create Psyche's problem, which will set in motion the events that effect her transformation. On the other hand, the expectation hangs all its weight on that word, "beloved", especially in the Russian, where "Возлюбленный" dominates the line and introduces the surprise of the second half of the stanza. The implication is that this relationship opens the possibility of locating identity: the expectation is that the beloved will know the speaker, because the identity, psyche and Psyche, reside with the beloved. The other world from which the speaker addresses the beloved is not in any way described, but it is implied, and of necessity created by the opening of the first line, "Там на земле," which shows that "there on Earth" is not the place where the speaker is. The impression of the whole is that the speaker was once there but is no longer "on earth." Quickly, in two lines, or even in three words, the speaker takes ownership of two worlds: the new world, unnamed other world known only to the speaker,

and the earth, of which the speaker also has knowledge (which is how we know that she has been there before, even if she is not now). Even by the end of the short poem, all that we know about this other place is that something about that place has changed the speaker in such a way that the speaker herself is now less recognizable, even to the beloved. Therefore, the question, "Don't you recognize me," a question that creates a doubled emotion on the sides of the asker and asked: the surprising question conveys the surprise felt by the asker.

In Brodsky's essay, about the stunning poem "Новогоднее," (the title translated as "New Year's Greetings" by Kossman) on the occasion of Rainer Maria Rilke's death, he goes on to say of the candid poet: "Tsvetaeva is a poet of extremes only in the sense that for her an "extreme" is not so much the end of the known world as the beginning of an unknowable one" (201). Her constant and active discovery of another world is explicit in this poem. We have it already in the opening line: "С Новым годом — светом — краем — кровом!" (108) Difficult to translate into an uninflected language, the line in Kossman's English becomes "Happy New Year, new sphere, world, home!" (109) The link of the repeated case-endings is lost in English, but the words in Russian are all tied to the greeting construction with the common instrumental case. Kossman's combination of rhyme (New Year, new sphere) with the omission of structure-marking words before the last two nouns (world, home!) stands in to suggest the seamlessness of Tsvetaeva's logic of continuity. Impossible to convey in English is the resonance, which Brodsky dwells on, in the Russian word "свет," which signifies both world and light. He arrives at the observation that, in the context of an elegy, "in the concept of 'next world' emphasis falls tautologically on the aspect of the light rather than, as usual, of darkness" (206). The "usual" darkness imagined as occupying what

comes after death could refer to the darkness of the tomb, the blackness of oblivion, or more simply to the metaphor that marks the unknown as "dark," the explored and explained as illuminated.

In this last case, the substitution of light for dark could signify either that the poet feels she has some access to knowledge of what lies beyond death, or that she herself sees death as the point of access to that unknown, and thus, illumination. If the poet is in a position to describe this world beyond in terms that evoke lightness, then she implies that she does herself have access to the world beyond, that it has become illuminated for her. As in her lyric lines of nearly nine years earlier, which imply such a world beyond in the distance created in the words "there on Earth," Tsvetaeva brings to the poem a special vision of a world beyond the earth. The imagination of a world accessible to the poet is, in fact, a quality that reappears throughout her work, as will be further illustrated below.

"Even in front of myself"

There are many singular aspects to Tsvetaeva's modes of expression, but the singularity of her poetics is often insisted upon to the point of exaggeration, especially in comparison with Rilke and Pasternak, her interlocutors. Alessandro Achilli has read[16] Tsvetaeva's work as "poetic language of *another* world," (133) in contrast with Pasternak's

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[16] In Achilli's essay, "The Lyrical Subject as a Poet in the Works of M. Cvetaeva, B. Pasternak, and R.M. Rilke," Achilli establishes the "human and poetic relationship" (129) between the three poets as the basis for a poetics that exists between the lines of difference he identifies between the three. While he insists most strongly on these differences, his relational model is one of the most satisfying approaches to explaining the alchemical effects of the personal and poetic relationship, acknowledging as he does both the distinctions between the poetic approaches and the connection that defines one with and against another.

"acceptance of his own humanity" (134). This contrast tacitly assumes that the apprehension of the contents of another world is beyond the scope of the human. However, it is, as far as we know, only humans that imagine another world, or indeed even imagine the capability to apprehend the other-worldly, even if that power is ascribed to some (also imagined) non-human being. This world-imagining is an especially prominent feature of Tsvetaeva's poetry and poetics.

If we are looking for indications to map the world that Tsvetaeva imagines, especially in the relationship that existed between her and Rilke, concluding in "Новогоднее," then, with Brodsky, we can look to the indications furnished by the poet herself: "She makes no secret of anything, least of all of her aesthetic and philosophical credos, which are scattered about her verse and prose with the frequency of a first person singular pronoun" (199). This tendency was especially pronounced in the time immediately following Rilke's death, when Tsvetaeva's letters to Pasternak overflow with the structures of understanding she was rapidly building around the experience of having known Rilke and then of having learned of his death. On 1 January 1927, in the first letter she sent after learning of Rilke's death, she writes to Pasternak:

> If the three of us had remained alive, nothing would have come of it. I know myself: I couldn't have helped kissing his hands, couldn't have helped it even in front of you, even in front of myself, almost. I would have balked and kicked and struggled free,

> Boris, because, after all, it is still *this world*. Oh, Boris, Boris! How well I know the other one![17] (265)

The terms in which she goes on to describe this new world, "light, radiance, things illuminated quite *differently*" suggest this is the same world she continued to imagine in "Новогоднее". She was already addressing the deceased Rilke at this time, and we also have a letter that she wrote to Rilke on 31 December about his death, closing with "Happy New Year and may you enjoy the heavenly landscape!"[18] (268) The very fact of this letter, written to someone no longer alive, conjures not only a world beyond as a place, but a specific landscape in which she locates herself. From where she is, she is sending a letter to the other place where Rilke will receive it—even if the letter does not insist on this as a sincere belief, the imagined connected landscapes of two worlds make up the implied world of the letter. In that letter, she vacillates between conventional forms of their former epistolary relationship and acknowledgements of the new reality: "Rainer, write to me! (A

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[17] The above translation corresponds to the letter draft consulted in the Soviet edition of the letters: "в-троем, в живых, все равно бы ничего не вышло. Я знаю себя: я бы не могла не целовать его рук, не могла бы целовать их—даже при тебе, почти что при себе даже. Я бы рвалась и разрывалась, распиналась, Борис, п<отому> ч<то> все-таки еще *этот свет*. Борис! Борис! Как я знаю тот!" (Письма 1926 года 203)

For comparison, the text in the Korkina and Shevelenko edition: "втроем, в живых, все равно бы ничего не вышло. Я знаю себя: я бы не могла не поцеловать его руки, не могла бы поцеловать его руки даже при тебе, почти что при себе даже. Я бы рвалась и разрывалась, п.ч. ведь еще *этот* свет. (Борис! Борис! Как я знаю тот!...)" (273)

The "other world," in Russian, is designated with the deictic, "тот," suggesting how closely she still senses the world that no longer exists now that Rilke is gone.

[18] "Freudiges Neujahr und eine schöne Himmelneujahrslandschaft." (248)

foolish request?)"[19] (268) Even as she acts out a belief in the continued possibility of communication, she undercuts the possibility of such a belief, of access to the world beyond where she imagines Rilke now to be. The slippage she shows here—the simultaneous maintenance of contradicting ideas—was already manifesting as a branch of her poetics, and she was inhabiting the transformation of her poems as she dealt with this transformation of the world she inhabited, now a world without her key poetic mentor in it.

When expressed in her poems, Tsvetaeva's philosophy of poetry manifests in a way that might be characterized as a microcosm of the poetic process of world-creation. Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) belonged to an even earlier generation of European thinkers than Rilke, but his poetics, expressed in his essay "The Imagination of the Poet" and elaborated upon in his readings of Goethe and Hölderlin, are a part of the same conversation Tsvetaeva later entered with her essays and letters. Like Tsvetaeva after him, Dilthey was especially interested in the point of origin in the poet of the creative force that made space for poetic work. In particular, his work posed the question of what and how the poet accesses through imagination, of how the internal world converses with the external world.

Julius Goebel, writing in the same year as the poets' triangular exchange, 1926, identified Dilthey's concepts of *Erlebnis*, lived experience, and *Verstehen*, a model of understanding that guided the psychological approach that Dilthey opposed to methods imported from the natural sciences. Goebel believed these concepts to be fundamental to

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[19] "Du, Rainer, *schreib* mir! (Dumm genug, die Bitte?)" (248)

Dilthey's later major work, his *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften*. These terms, however, originate in Dilthey's earlier essays on Goethe and other poets, and it is from the psychological characteristics of the poetic imagination that the principles of his greater psychological-historical philosophy developed. This perspective highlights the insight that Dilthey offers into the poetic-psychological connection. For Dilthey, the poets show a path to the relationship between experience and understanding. For a reader almost a century later, he offers once again what Goebel remembered as a "deep and liberating impression" (145): that there is a way into the workings of the human mind other than that offered by the methods of hard science, that poetry and experience also lead to that internal space. Tsvetaeva explores the mind-imagined space, the external world as understood in the internal realm of the imagination, in her poem "Attempt at a Room." Here the structure of the poem—established within a physical structure of a room being described from within—presupposes a stance about the life and work of the poet that displays a certain agreement with Dilthey's description of the poetic imagination at work:

> The specific characteristic of the poet already asserts itself when his perception fashions simultaneous sensations into spatial forms or sequences of sensations into rhythms, melodies, and phonic patterns. His life-relations, moods, and passions exert a primordial force on the constitution of his perceptions. (239)

The inner world of the poet has an effect on the external world as the poet perceives it. The shape of external things, once incorporated in the internal space by the poet, will change according to the conditions of that internal space. Olga Zaslavsky has described the technique of the poem as aligned with Julie Kristeva's "language of absence," insofar as "the

material world is rejected in favor of another, unreal world" (148). For Zaslavsky, the tie that remains to reality lies in the empathetic connection that is developed in relationship, in this case, with Rilke and with Pasternak. The closeness of empathy to experience underlines the connection that Dilthey draws between the poet's perceptions and creative force, only further clarified in relationship with other poets. It is in this relationship that it becomes possible to create the conditions of a world out of the components of reality, or as Olga Peters Hasty argues, for Tsvetaeva to move "the conditions of reality into a mythic framework in which cosmogony and mythopoeia coincide" (233).

Tsvetaeva's understanding of this influence of the poet's inner life is expressed through the images of "Attempt at a Room" ("Попытка комнаты"), which literalizes the sensation of the world shifting around the mind that experiences it. In this poem, the spatial forms are literalized in a scale ready to be digested in a sitting—the poem can be encountered by an imagination that functions on one scale, a scale determined by the human self to which it belongs. Against the certainty of this human-sized poet, interpreter and center of the strange physics that define the space of the poem, the surrounding environment is constant only in the change that it continually enacts:

> I remember three walls,
> I can't vouch for a fourth.
>
> Who can tell, with their back to the wall?
> Maybe it was there, maybe

Not. It wasn't. A draft, then. Yet

If not a wall behind me—what?

Я запомнила три стены.

За четвертую не ручаюсь.

Кто же знает, спиной к стене?

Может *быть*, но ведь может *не*

Быть. И не было. Дуло. Но

Не стена за спиной — так..? (III.114)[20]

The means of apprehending the space shifts, and along with it, the space that is imagined. First the poet searches for the fourth wall in memory, then places the body (human scale) in the space, back to the wall, and in neither case is the last wall apprehensible. Moreover, the person in the room is generalized: anyone with their back to the wall would be unable to say for sure that the last wall is even there. This appeal to universal experience also calls attention to the rootedness of much of that universality in the possession of a body, which has a certain size, and faces certain limitations. The neck will only turn so far around; the eyes can only see so much at once. The mention of the

[20] Here, and in other quotations from Attempt at a Room, the translation given is again Nina Kossman's, and the Russian text comes from the seven-volume collected works.

body in the room leads back to the logic of the space, to the next question: if not a wall, then what? Three walls imply a fourth. This shifting of the space continues even when the inhabiting human enters the spatial diagram:

> Were you playing the piano? A breeze.
> A draft. Luffing like a sail. Cottony
> Fingers. A sonata page flutters.
> (Don't forget: the ninth is yours.)
>
> For that unseen wall,
> I have a name: the wall of a back
>
> Bent over a piano, a desk,
> Or even a shaving kit.
> (This wall has a way of
> becoming a corridor
>
> In the mirror. You glance—*it's there*.
> A portable chair of emptiness.)
>
> На рояле играл? Сквозит.
> Дует. Парусом ходит. Ватой —
> Пальцы. Лист сонатинный взвит.

(Не забудь, что тебе — девятый).

Для невиданной той стены

Знаю имя: стена спины

За роялем. Еще — столом

Письменным, а еще — прибором

Бритвенным (у стены — прием —

Этой — делаться коридором

В зеркале. *Перенес* — взглянул.

Пустоты переносный стул). (III.114)

The back of the person in the room reappears here, but rather than mirroring the wall, it becomes the wall, and the perspective shifts into and through the mirror. This section brings the earlier questions of perception into context with the questions of scale introduced in this new round of images. The breeze, finger-sized in reference to a sail (enormous), but also to a page of music (human-sized), functions, because invisible on both scales: architectural and human. Then the two scales are collapsed again in the back that is a kind of wall, though now human and architectural at the same time. Then, as the "wall" of the back becomes a corridor when seen through mirror, the transformations are once again effected through instruments of perception, in this case a mirror, echoing the mirror of Pasternak's poem of childhood reflection, "Зеркало" ("Mirror"). It is interesting to note that

mirrors are also an important image in Rilke[21], perhaps an aspect of why Tsvetaeva saw Rilke in the poem after she completed it.

The mirror further calls into question whether the person seen here is the perceiving voice of the opening lines of the poem or another person. The poem makes an argument for the key to the elegiac mode identified by Brodsky: the poet is also her subject. It could be anyone who sits in a room, knowing nothing about the wall behind them. The back of the person bent over a piano, a desk, or a shaving kit could likewise be anyone, but this person can also be seen by anyone, through a mirror, an instrument of perception that will lead to elsewhere with the corridor it opens.

Later, Tsvetaeva pulls into this highly abstracted collection of spatial images a reference to a recognizable place, if itself fully imaginary, with all the resonances of the myth that accompany it:

> Without feverish "where-are-yous?"
> I wait. Akin to silence,
> Gestures serve me
> In Psyche's hall. (101)
>
> Без судорожных «где ж ты?».
> Жду. С тишиной в родстве,

[21] For more on Rilke's mirror imagery, see the third chapter, "Every Angel is Terrifying."

Прислуживают – жесты

В Психеином дворце. (III.117)

Like the unwillingness to turn around and see the fourth wall, a faculty is again being ruled out as a space is explored. In Psyche's hall, in Psyche's courtyard, the space made up of whatever we imagine from those two words, there are certain rules. Shouting "where are you" will not be useful, but gestures will. This is a space that will not answer to demands, that will answer to an interacting motion from the body. Perhaps most importantly, just as in the first scene where the fourth wall is invisible to the speaker, here again the speaker says "Жду," "I wait." This is the form that finding takes in the logic that continues throughout this poem: rather than pursuing, the speaker waits, is silent, and imagines in order to discover.

Psyche and the Invisible

The corridor in "Attempt at a Room" could be seen as another of Tsvetaeva's links between worlds, especially with the involvement of the mirror. In the story of Psyche that she invokes, the space between worlds is much more literalized: Psyche is taken to a mountain and abandoned there, where her family and she assume that she will die. Instead of dying, she is carried by Zephyr to the home of Amor, the god of love who has himself fallen in love with Psyche, and who, against his mother's instructions, has made arrangements to take her (informally, at this stage) as his wife. At the house, described by Apuleius in appealing detail, Psyche is taken care of by invisible attendants, and met at night in the dark of her bedroom by Amor, who "made Psyche his wife," a moment that

Apuleius passes over rather tersely compared with her other experiences in the house up to that point (tr. Walsh 81). It is only after Psyche has had time to accustom herself to her new surroundings that she communicates with her family again and is goaded by her sisters into sneaking a look at her unseen husband. She falls in love, but he flies off in a rage, and she won't see him again until she has undergone Aphrodite's apparently impossible tasks, and accidentally kills herself with the same curiosity—desire to see the unseen—that got her into all her trouble in the first place. After that, Amor reappears to rectify the situation (the "sleep of Hades" to which she was subjected turns out to be reversible) and Zeus marries them in a ceremony that bestows legitimacy in all the ways that the ritual of abandoning Psyche on the mountain at the beginning of the story failed to do.

Psyche's story begins with death in the mountains, with a sacrifice that is only called a marriage, and ends, very legalistically in Apuleius' telling, with the legitimation of her union with Amor. Although Zeus does not include this rationale in his speech, the sequence of the story instructs us that without undergoing the tasks that pertained to her relationship, this legitimation would not have been possible. Thus, space between worlds is literalized, and the trials of entering into relationship are dramatized in a sequence that establishes another internal logic for the events.

Her tasks were imposed by Aphrodite who, after all, more than simply a difficult mother-in-law, is herself the goddess of love, and whose behavior can be understood to represent aspects of the experience of a love-relationship. If the feminine personification of love, sought-after but harsh, supplies the torments that experienced love contains, then it is

the male personification, her son, who performs only love's kindness (though we might feel he could step in sooner, intervening when his mother starts to get out of hand, or in any case before Psyche is rendered eternally unconscious). He resolves problems, forgives, saves Psyche from her only troublesome quality, her curiosity.

The haunting aspect of Psyche's story is the impact of the invisible on her material experience. Her first experience past the funerary scene of her abandonment of the mountain is that of the invisible Zephyr lifting her and carrying her away. After this, her interactions are with the invisible beings she encounters in the house, a condition of interaction to which she now seems to accustom herself in Apuleius' telling:

> Psyche felt a blessed assurance being bestowed upon her by heaven's provision. She heeded the suggestions of the disembodied voice, and after first taking a nap and then a bath to dispel her fatigue, she at once noted the semicircular couch and table close at hand. (tr. Walsh 81)

Unable to see the invisible handmaidens, her attention, shaped to us by the narrative, turns to the visible space in its beautiful specificity. Later, Amor himself is unseen by her until that decisive moment that sets the rest of the story in motion. Her experience is constantly shaped by what she can and cannot see, but her tendency is always toward what she can see, what she wants to see, and what she chooses as a result.

If Psyche's story is about the invention of the self, the apprehension of the world through the self, and the different means available to the self in these exercises of perception, then the image, in its pointed absence, looms large. Maurice Blanchot asked of the image, in *The Space of Literature*:

> But what happens when what you see, although at a distance, seems to touch you with a gripping contact, when the manner of seeing is a kind of touch, when seeing is *contact* at a distance? What happens when what is seen imposes itself upon the gaze, as if the gaze were seized, put in touch with the appearance?[22] (tr. Smock, 60-61)

This seeing-as-touching is the opposite of Psyche's necessary mode of apprehension, when she can only touch, and this must substitute for seeing. Still, Psyche's experience would probably have had much to teach her about the ways in which the one can substitute for the other. It might be illuminating to think of her experience in terms of the "chiasm" that Maurice Merleau-Ponty began to develop as a quality of "flesh," a term from which he squeezed a heavily extended meaning beyond the obvious physical referent. Psyche's case seems to show exactly the quality of flesh, including flesh that is not (as far as she can tell) physical flesh in the normal sense, between the visible (Psyche) and the invisible (Amor): "every relation with being is *simultaneously* a taking and a being taken, the hold is held, it is *inscribed* and inscribed in the same being that it takes hold of"[23] (Merleau-Ponty, tr. Lingis 266). Psyche cannot touch without being touched, and, as she discovers, she also cannot

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[22] "Mais qu'arrive-t-il quand ce qu'on voit, quoique à distance, semble vous toucher par un contact saisissant, quand la manière de voir est une sorte de touche, quand voir est un *contact* à distance? Quand ce qui est vu s'impose au regard, comme si le regard était saisi, touché, mis en contact avec l'apparence ?" (28)

[23] "tout rapport à l'être est simultanément prendre et être pris, la prise est prise, elle est *inscrite* et inscrite au même être qu'elle prend." (Merleau-Ponty 313)

This definition belongs to the idea of chiasm, *chiasme*, that Merleau-Ponty began to develop in his posthumously published unfinished work, *Le visible et l'invisible*. This formulation comes from his working notes for the project.

see without being seen. The particulars of the plot, as Apuleius arranges it, undermines an understanding of the story in which Psyche's perception is as strictly controlled as a one-way perception would require: she must not have learned a great deal in her nightly meetings about the being she cannot see if she still finds it possible to imagine him as a monster when her sister constructs the image for her. Her sisters' stories touch her, too.

In Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve's eighteenth century imagining of the story, *la Belle* goes to the palace, which retains its strange emptiness and force of the invisible, but she can see the beast who lives there. Also in her mind, however, is an image of a "*jeune homme beau comme on dépeint l'amour*," (388) a young man who looks like the paintings of the god of love. Here is the image of the handsome prince she cannot see in the person of the beast, whom she can see but cannot quite touch through the false image of his beastly form. Even the beast's physicality has something unseen behind it, and that unseen image resides in her imagination, revealing itself in a dream. This key change to the story essentializes the invisible as a relocation of the basis of reality away from the sensed world and into Psyche's own mind.

Even more dramatic is the shift that appears in Molière's 1671 play, *Psyché*. Molière also thematizes the transition from childhood into adulthood, but the transformation is displaced from Psyche onto the god *L'Amour*, as he is designated in the play. L'Amour's disguise in the play is the beautiful adult body that Psyche only discovers by lamplight in the darkness, the need for disguise his excuse for transitioning from the familiar childish *Cupidon* into the adult who can enter into relationship with Psyche. He explains to *Zéphire*, who has an active speaking role in the play: "Il est temps de sortir de cette longue enfance /

Qui fatigue ma patience / Il est temps désormais que je devienne grand" (III.964-6) Zephyr replies that *Vénus* is sure not to like the idea of having an adult son, in line with "l'humeur des belles," the reaction he finds to be typical of beautiful women (III.974). This adds another dimension to the conflict between Psyché and her mother-in-law[24], literalizing the mother's experience of losing a son to a wife, the moment that renders his childhood irrevocable.

L'Amour's visibility in Molière's play allows for his participation in the narrative about the end of childhood, and it also confuses that categories of gendered symbolism that Neumann identifies in Apuleius. This is not, however, an exchange of masculine and feminine roles, but rather the result of relationship, where the roles of both participants are subject to the same forces. It is because of his love for Psyché that L'Amour takes on his adult form, and it is his new form that moves her to love in return. Adulthood comes to them both in the form of love, and, like in the other versions of the stories, the lovers' gaze is central to the development of relationship. Psyché tells L'Amour: "Ne les détournez point, ces yeux qui m'empoisonnent, / Ces yeux tendres, ces yeux perçants, mais amoureux ; / Qui semblent partager le trouble qu'ils me donnent" (III.1065-7) ("Don't turn them away, these eyes that poison me, / these tender eyes, these piercing eyes, yet loving; / which seem to share in the trouble they give me"). Psyché is as enthralled by what she sees when she

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[24] Molière's Vénus still resents Psyché with a jealousy very similar to that seen in Apuleius, depicting a mother-in-law-like dynamic. In the play, however, there is not the language of marriage placed on Psyché's situation with L'Amour that we see in *The Golden Ass*; even in Act V, after she has been abandoned and chastised by Vénus, she refers to L'Amour as "Ce cher, cet adorable Amant," her dear, devotion-inspiring lover (V.1683).

meets L'Amour openly as Apuleius' Psyche was after having waited and wondered about her lover's appearance.

This also means that the revelation of the god's identity is not brought about through Psyche's actions alone, but as the outcome of a verbal tussle between the two. The rupture in their relationship is created by both parties together; she asks, and he tells her. It is only once her eyes, whose gaze give meaning to his new, mature concept of himself, appear to have closed forever, that L'Amour reappears and intervenes to save Psyché from death (V.1841-2). Invisibility is not required to give force to the gaze; even in this version, Psyché's gaze remains the binding force that gives form to the relationship.

Blanchot, in his answer to his question about the gaze's response to the image, describes a structure for the reciprocal exchange between image and viewer:

> What happens is not an active contact, not the initiative and action which there still is in real touching. Rather, the gaze gets taken in, absorbed by an immobile movement and a depthless deep. What is given us by this contact at a distance is the image, and fascination is passion for the image.[25] (tr. Smock, 61)

The fascination that follows seeing is created by a part of the self being absorbed by the seen thing. The seeing self loses the "initiative and action" in this absorption, and the energy of that self is represented in the intangible portion of the self that is absorbed. Here is the "kind of touch" experienced in seeing that generates passion and establishes

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[25] "Non pas un contact actif, ce qu'il y a encore d'initiative et d'action dans un toucher véritable, mais le regard est entraîné, absorbé dans un mouvement immobile et un fond sans profondeur. Ce qui nous est donné par un contact à distance est l'image, et la fascination est la passion de l'image." (*L'Espace littéraire*, 29)

relationship between the seer and the seen. This accounts for the difference between what Psyche does not see and what she then sees, and also for the difference between what Belle sees and what she knows from a distance but does not see. The time-elements of the stories differ, but the structure of the seen and unseen, the touched and untouched, map out in the same configuration.

"Human love is a frightened thing with half-shut eyes"

To imagine Blanchot's structure of seeing is challenging, but its features are the same as those in some literalized metaphors of love-relationship, even beyond Psyche. In Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky's strange short story "In the Pupil," the narrator, who has fallen in love, and whose relationship has fallen into a period of doldrums and disenchantment, is approached in the night by a tiny version of himself. His homunculus narrates the story of how he had jumped from inside the man's eye, the world he came from, into the pupil of the woman he loved, where the little man had taken up residence. The tiny man tells how he lived there, inside the woman's pupil, until the relationship between man and woman began to cool. Then the little man disappeared down a dark passage in the back of the eye, into a mysterious inner world, where he found the other little men that corresponded to the woman's eleven previous lovers. In the strange ritualistic prison of the "forgotten," (the little man calls it "a mantrap," 41, a "*Человеколовка*") they all tell their stories to one another in a ritual succession, each repeating his own story when his turn comes, speculating and philosophizing about what went wrong, and what general rules apply.

The little men are named for the order in which they appeared, "first," "fifth," and so on, and they all have differences of philosophy about the nature of human love in relationship. Sixth even outlines a theory that scaffolds the metaphor of the little men in the eye:

> "People use diminutives to express magnified emotions; the significance grows, the sign diminishes. We call those who mean more to us than others by diminutives. No wonder the words *mil* and *mal* were confused in Old Church Slavonic. Yes, I, like Eleventh, am convinced that women love not those mastodons who propel us from pupil to pupil but us, the little men who live cooped up in other people's eyes"[26] (45).

The connection between the small and the beloved is usually conceptualized in the opposite direction: something small, like a baby or a puppy, is easy to love because of its size. The small, in this context, is small with a purpose (small enough to move through a pupil), and this logic works in the opposite direction: the little men are small ("*mal*") *because* dear ("*mil*"). That is, women love the version of the man that they internalize, the version of the man that becomes a part of their interior world, not the real man who is the

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[26] "Скажем так: к уменьшительным именам прибегают для выражения увеличительных процессов эмоции; значимость растет -- знак умаляется; ведь уменьшительными именами мы называем тех, кто для нас больше других, и недаром в старославянском языке слова мил и мал отождествлены. Да, я, как и Одиннадцатый, убежден, что любят не тех громадных человечищ, которые вытряхивают нас из зрачков в зрачки, а именно нас, странствующих человечков, ютящихся всю жизнь по чужим глазам."

object of love. The fact that this story is told from the perspective of the man, in his large and small versions, underlines the connection to Blanchot's idea of the image. The little man enters the woman's eye in a mutual gaze, the condition that makes it possible for him to jump from one eye to the other, but once the little man is in the woman's eye (and his larger version therefore in her favor), the little man, like a hostage to love, exists on the terms of the world inside the woman's pupil. This would mean that love is necessarily enacted when the (little) man is subsumed in this way in the woman's interiority; this is the strange and unexpected literalization of Blanchot's image-gaze relationship.

Adam Thirlwell, in his essay toward a taxonomy of Krzhizhanovsky's works, suggests that the scale on which Krzhizhanovsky created is more than an aspect of his aesthetic, but rather a constitutive principle of the structures within which his fictions are made possible. In Thirlwell's description, Krzhizhanovsky is the inventor of an "inverted poetics, where everything that seems peripheral to a literary work—details, titles, epigraphs, stage directions—is what Krzhizhanovsky most likes to examine" (xiv). Though here we might think of Barthes' qualification of his "*hommes féminisés,*" which also touches on relationship and subsumption: "a man is not feminized because he is inverted, but because he is in love" (20). Inversion may be illuminating, as a technique, but it does not distort the truth of that to which it points; the fact remains the same, even if inverted. So, in Krzhizhanovsky's story, a man looks at a woman, and a little man crawls through a woman's pupil. The result is the same: the man gazes, and his gaze is seized.

This tendency is apparent in the matter of his story "In the Pupil," in which he hangs the entire account of love's forms and machinations on the space in between self and other.

Still, the existence of the internal world is dependent upon the little men it contains, who not only populate, but bear witness to the inner world and philosophize on its significance and its hidden laws. The tiny meeting-place, the eye, becomes the entire world for the story of love found and lost, and indeed, for more than one of these stories, each of which is given space and voice – here is a thematization of multiplication in relation to love.

To this end, the inner world changes the ratio in the narrative: rather than belonging to the two people engaged in a single love-relationship, in the inner world of the woman, the narrative is characterized by the multiplicity that leads to the rest of the questioning; the ritual of the dark inner world demands that each of the twelve stories be recounted in sequence. The function of multiplicity here is to problematize universalisations in "love" even as it exploits them. The stories reveal that even as *chasseur*, the man is still, in Barthes' terms, "*miraculeusement féminisé*" (20). That it happens miraculously implies that it is in some way wonderful, but also that there is something unexplained in the forces that bring it about. The man does something recognizable in terms of a familiar narrative, but the result is, inevitably *because* of the narrative's familiarity, strange. He pursues, but even as he does so, he is pulled in by the undertow of the variations on the shared, familiar narrative that underlies each little man's perception of his own fate. This narrative, as well as its reach and its implications, is illuminated, its complexity revealed in the multiplicity that appears in the story-telling ritual in the pupil.

For instance, the stories of the little men in the eye share certain commonalities that each story reveals not in spite of, but through the aid of its peculiarities. The narrator comments in the framing narration on his own state in relation to his narrative, expressing

an inability to attain to a purity that the scale of the little men should, by his logic, give them access to. He imagines these purities into his image of love, in contrast with the awkward realities that he experiences, as he complains that "lovers' bodies" are "huge and clumsy compared with their eyes"[27] (31). It is in this hopeful narrative, which denies even the narrator's own experience, that he elects his emissary, the little man, who will later report back and clarify the nature of love imperfectly experienced. That is, perception depends on scale.

Krzhizhanovsky suggests from the outset that perception is inherently compromised by the perceiving human entering into relationship. The story opens, enigmatically, with these lines tying love to darkness by its nature: "Human love is a frightened thing with half-shut eyes: It dives into the dusk, skitters about in dark corners, speaks in whispers, hides behind curtains, and puts out the light"[28] (31). This introduction is an unaccustomed image of love, but it is especially strange in the context of what comes after. If love is taken in the literalized version Krzhizhanovsky gives us of entering the beloved through the eye, then why does love itself keep its eyes half-shut? Perhaps love itself, like Amor, well aware of the dangers, but not himself immune to them, is wary of entering into the relationship. N. L. Leiderman characterizes Krzhizhanovsky's

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[27] "по сравнению с их глазами неповоротливые и огромные"

[28] "Любовь у людей пуганая и с зажмурью: ныряет в сумерки, шмыгает по темным углам, шушукает, прячется за занавески и тушит свет."

"materialization of metaphors," (518) or "thought-images," in Krzhizhanovksy's term (519), as a kind of Frankenstein-like process of revivification:

> He restores the etymological sources of words materializes ossified tropes, establishes new connections between reanimated sense-meanings. By turning abstract terms into things, he extracts from their formal meaning a palpable, thing-like aspect, which becomes yet another living splash of color in his artistic world. (519)

In this case, the metaphor of the lover's gaze that causes love becomes a much more complex image of a homunculus who interacts in different ways with the anatomy of the beloved before, during, and after the affair. For Leiderman, Krzhizhanovsky's "thought-images emerging from his imagination do form entire worlds" (519), and it is only with this understanding that a sense of the cosmos of this imagined love-relationship can be approached. The rituals enacted by the little men are the picture of a small civilization seeking to understand their circumstances, making a story about how they arrived where they are. This story is not the same thing as the circumstances that brought them there: this is the history of the civilization inside the beloved woman, but we as readers have access to more of the metaphysics of the universe to which they belong than the little men themselves do. We know, because the story is being told by the little man who escaped, that escape is possible. We know something more about the Theogony—connected to the cosmos—of this universe, that love is a "frightened thing," that skitters, whispers, and hides.

The little men themselves are dependent on the perception of the beloved woman. The narrator, getting his bearings in the space, notices that the inhabitants of the place in the pupil are not equally constituted: "some pupilites were more clearly defined than others; some so blended with the yellow gloom of those lower depths that I tripped over them without meaning to, without noticing their faded, half-effaced shapes"[29] (40). Each of the inhabitants of the pupil is able to tell his story, and to engage with their community debates about the meaning of love and their fates, but their visibility does not survive in equal measure. The state of First—the first little man to take up residence in the pupil—suggests that the little men fade with their memories in the woman's mind: First "had become so completely discolored as to be the color of air"[30] (40). He remains capable of maintaining a log book, in which he requires that each new arrival fill out a detailed form about the circumstances of his own love affair, and he propounds a theory that his original status in the woman's life made him "the soil" for all of her love affairs that followed. Such are the laws of the place inside the pupil: the specifics of any given love affair may be forgotten, but the love narrative must be continuously fed.

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[29] "…очертания зрачковцев были разной степени ясности и вычерченности: некоторые до того сливались с желтой мглой придонья, что я невольно натыкался на них, не замечая выцветших, как бы полустертых фигур."

[30] "номер Первый ясно вытусклился до конца и был под цвет воздуху."

Cross out the truth

Each "pupilite" tells a love story distinct from the others, but the ritual of recounting the narratives refers to the familiarity of love narratives in the figures they repeat, as Barthes illustrates. There is no narrative of a love affair that can reproduce the vivid experience of the love relationship, but the little man's narrative is intensified because he is able to take us inside the miracle. The feeling in the exchange of gazes is literalized by the capture of the little man, which models the feminization of the man. It is clear that in the rules of this universe, the capture of the little man is a necessary condition in the transactions of love, whatever the other terms may be (and presumably the little men in the dark of her eye have limitless time to hash out what further terms are implied). The philosophies of the little men are important only in their multiplicity; the narrator, as he ends the story by contemplating how to tell the story he has just related, excludes a candid approach: "To begin with, I must cross out the truth"[31] (60). For us readers, this sentence informs us that everything we have just read has been something other than the truth, which was excluded from the story to begin with. What this "truth" was before the narrator crossed it out remains obscure.

Barthes quotes a koan to explain the urgency of truth, the truth of the *amorous*, not the *mundane* world, in his fragment "*L'absent,*" "The Absent One":

> A Buddhist Koan says: "the master holds the disciple's head underwater for a long, long time; gradually the bubbles become fewer; at the last moment, the master pulls

[31] "Прежде всего надо перечеркнуть правду"

> the disciple out and revives him: when you have craved truth as you crave air, then you will know what truth is."
>
> The absence of the other holds my head underwater; gradually I drown, my air supply gives out: it is by this asphyxia that I reconstitute my "truth" and that I prepare what in love is Intractable.[32] (Barthes, tr. Howard 17)

The same division appears here: the water, the breath, are components of the mundane world, but beyond, there are truths that exist without being revealed. The beloved other creates the urgency that makes it possible for these truths to be uncovered, but it is the other's *absence*, specifically, that brings about the discovery of this truth, which is true within the world of the love relationship. Who, then, facilitates the keeping and revelation of this truth: the lover or the beloved? Or: is love imagined in the self or in the other? These examples and Barthes' model of the subversion of the mundane world suggest that love, in the most familiar gendered model of lover and beloved, is imagined in the self by the man and in the other by the woman but can only be actualized when the reverse becomes true. In either final configuration, it is still unclear where this leaves the imagination of self: if love is imagined in the other, does the self then reside there? If the

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[32] "Un koan boudhique dit ceci: « Le maître tient la tête du disciple sous l'eau, longtemps ; peu à peu les bulles se raréfient ; au dernier moment, le maître sort le disciple, le ranime : quand tu auras désiré la vérité comme tu as désiré l'air, alors tu sauras ce qu'elle est. »

L'absence de l'autre me tient la tête sous l'eau ; peu à peu, j'étouffe, mon air se raréfie : c'est par cette asphyxie que je reconstitue ma « vérité » et que je prépare l'Intraitable de l'amour. " (24)

other is imagined *into* the self, does the imagined "self" change, either in terms of its scope or its qualities?

Krzhizhanovsky's short story ends, chronologically, where it began. In the final paragraph, the narrator lists the steps necessary to record the story that has just ended, that is, to create the text that has preceded. The instructions are given in order: after crossing out the "truth," which we could take as being the particulars of the mundane world attached to the imaginative story, he must "then variegate the pain to the limits of my canvas" (60). He will add a "touch of the day-to-day," "a veneer of vulgarity," and "a few philosophical bits and…"[33] (60). All of these things, however, belong to the mundane: these are the familiar elements that will make the unfamiliar world of the story accessible. Of course, the names he gives to these inclusions undermine those very aspects of the foregoing narrative: he makes clear that the additions are only superficial in nature, perhaps in contrast with the "truth" that he omitted. Could the "truth" he excluded from the narrative be the hard-won truth of the imagined world, after all?

The tone of self-mockery is interrupted by a desperate final appeal, as the narrator fears his reader is leaving him, asking the reader not to leave him, to hold his hand. This is just the problem in philosophizing love: just as soon as enough distance is achieved for skepticism, the need recurs. The philosopher of experience is also the one who experiences; he needs his experiences as material to examine, but he can never purely observe. It is always possible that an experience, or a feeling, will interrupt reflection on the experience

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[33] "чуть тронуть бытом и поверх, как краску лаком, легкой пошлотцой – и без этого ведь никак; наконец, два-три философизма и..."

of feelings. This is also the problem with writings on love; all of the questions framed above, about where the self is sent in love, apply with equal urgency and greater immediacy to the relationship between reader and text. Again, in the relationship of readership, we can see chiasm at work. Merleau-Ponty identifies two apparently opposed philosophies of poetics in Husserl and Valéry:

> In a sense the whole of philosophy, as Husserl says, consists in restoring a power to signify, a birth of meaning, or a wild meaning, an expression of experience by experience, which in particular clarifies the special domain of language. And in a sense, as Valéry said, language is everything, since it is the voice of no one, since it is the very voice of things, the waves, and the forests. And what we have to understand is that there is no dialectical reversal from one of these views to the other; we do not have to reassemble them into a synthesis: they are two aspects of the reversibility which is the ultimate truth.[34] (155)

This means, in the first place, that whether we follow Tsvetaeva outward to an imagined other world, or Pasternak inward to the world as imagined there, the result is equally the revelation of *poiesis.* This also applies to Achilli's distinction between Pasternak's approach to nature and Rilke's. He sees Rilke's poetic subject as turning to "a mythical mediator to

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[34] "En un sens, comme dit Husserl, toute la philosophie consiste à restituer une puissance de signifier, une naissance du sens ou un sens sauvage, éclaire notamment le domaine spécial du langage. Et en un sens, comme dit Valéry, le langage est tout, puisqu'il n'est la voix de personne, qu'il est la voix même des choses, des ondes et des bois. Et ce qu'il faut comprendre, c'est que, de l'une à l'autre de ces vues, il n'y a pas renversement dialectique, nous n'avons pas à les rassembler dans une synthèse : elles sont deux aspects de la réversibilité qui est vérité ultime." (201)

achieve definite harmony with everything," in contrast to Pasternak's poetic subject, who "has already incorporated myth in himself" (136). If myth and poetic subject are both flesh, then neither can touch without being touched. Do we, as readers, experience the philosophical questions contained in the emotional expressions of myth or do we send ourselves to them for the experience? In the chiasmic view, we do both, and there ceases to be a meaningful difference between a Tsvetaevan poetics of leaving the world and a Pasternakian poetics of deeply inhabiting the world.

Krzhizhanovsky's solution is a risky but hopeful one. Perhaps the truth can be rendered in fabulous images, the experience can be philosophized, and then literalized, and then belittled, and finally, underhandedly acknowledged. In the chiasmic model, the contradictions of this procedure constitute, rather than undermining, the truth. For, above all, in expressing his need to "cross out the truth" from his whimsical account, he affirms that there *is* truth in it in the first place.

Alternative Mythologies

When divisions between the internal and external worlds are exercised, it reveals many possible permutations in strikingly different models of the experience of love. The problem of the internal/external division does not simplify the matter even for those whose models of love subscribe to the reality of the division.

Tsvetaeva's project, taking up as it does ideas of self and her specific conceptions of her self as poet, is most importantly one of world-creation. Alyssa Dinega, whose study of Tsvetaeva's "poetic mind," *A Russian Psyche*, identifies Tsvetaeva's relationship with gender

norms in the mythologies of the pot as a central snag in her self-conception, divides the pieces of the puzzle into a world—that of poetry—and everything else that takes up space in human experience. Still, if one side of this division--that of everything other than poetry—is dignified with the appellation "world" and the other is not, then she still qualifies the difference as one between two systems, each with its own natural laws, painting for us "an irreparable disjunction between the sphere of human interaction on the one hand (in which the 'default position' must be some form of morality or ethics) and the fantastical world of poetry on the other hand" (5). Dinega further characterizes the world-building project with Elizabeth Grosz's description of Irigaray's imaginative contribution, the main concern of which Grosz formulated as "the question of partiality, that is, the sexualisation of all knowledges." Dinega presents this description as "equally applicable to Tsvetaeva's poetry," (234) where we might even take the word "poetry" as a caveat—in her letters and essays, Tsvetaeva does not neglect sexualized aspects of the questions she raises. Still, she does not address them in the same terms, and the line between her imaginings there and those of Irigaray become subtler, or even distorted.

Dinega is not explicitly setting out to bring Tsvetaeva together with Irigaray, nor does she see Tsvetaeva as a world-creator, necessarily. Rather, she finds in Tsvetaeva a "theme of 'myself against the world,'" (236) and it is under this thematic that she places the closing lines of Tsvetaeva's youthful poem "A Savage Will," which she finds interesting for "the extremity to which Tsvetaeva extends old tropes. The concluding lines of the poem tell

all: 'If only in the world there were just two: I and the world!'"[35] (20). While it is true that, as a response to the self-against-the world trope, Tsvetaeva's extremes carve out the space for herself and for her own poetics that Dinega sees as the main stakes of this poetic impulse, the two lines in question also position Tsvetaeva in the place of the world-maker. If there is only the poet and the world, then the role of the poet, etymologically the "maker," is clear: a world needs a maker. It is not Dinega's subject, but it is mine, and in these instances, I see her walk right up to it and show that it is there.

Clearly, Tsvetaeva's project keeps as a constant concern "her efforts to develop a personal poetic myth," taking often as her source what Dinega calls "other poets' alternative mythologies" (27). All mythologies, however, are alternative mythologies. The re-creation of the idea of the poet is as much of a part of the poet's task as the other trappings of poetic place-finding that fall under the rubric of "influence" or the deeply entangled web of reference and allusion that characterizes Russian poetry in particular.

In Dinega's map of Tsvetaeva's mythologies, Tsvetaeva has conjured an image of "her split Psychean self as the incarnation of intermediary and in-betweenness, unable ever to find peace or equilibrium" (128). Peace and equilibrium might carry apparent, even universal value, but the space that the Psychean imagination of self takes up in Tsvetaeva's oeuvre leads me to suspect the influence of an opposing value: that suspension itself becomes a dwelling-place made specially for the poet. A place for the poet to imagine herself cannot be fully inside or outside, if it is to serve as a place for the poet to imagine or

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[35] In the Russian: "*Чтобы в мире было двое: / Я и мир!*"

construct, in Dinega's words, "a different exit from the self, a different entrance into externality" (28). This is the kind of place that Krzhizhanovsky imagines inside the beloved woman, and we can see the same potentialities exercised in the spatial qualities of the place, more like a non-place, described in "Attempt at a Room." Dinega, who ascribes the usefulness of the Psyche myth for Tsvetaeva mainly to her conceptualization of her relationship with Boris Pasternak, sees the impossibility of the space as the formulation of the central problem, including its lack of resolution: "Tsvetaeva fantasizes a physical space where she and her poetic beloved can finally meet that she explicitly likens to Psyche's enchanted palace. Yet the room never materializes" (128). The lack of satisfaction, however, is not the point. It is the promise of the unfinished space—that the creative act can continue forever—that Tsvetaeva looks for in her custom-built locus of self-imagination. It is out of necessity ("My poem is my corridor") and for the sake of her poetry that she follows the myth to "Psyche's courtyard" where "To a poet, wind is the only pathway..." Still, in a reminder that the world created is necessarily and simultaneously the self is created, the corridor that aspires to the perfect formlessness of wind is soon refigured in a form both more built and more bodily.

For the reader, the experience of following Tsvetaeva in these imagined spaces that figure aspects of mind might be profitably compared with Gaston Bachelard's idea of slow reading, *lecture lente*. The purpose of this kind of reading for Bachelard is to access the function he calls *rêverie*, a term that he expands from its more obvious difference with the *rêve* (deliberate indulgence of the wandering movement of mind, non-necessity of actual sleep) to include an alignment with the feminine mental energies. This *rêverie* belongs to

the *anima*, the feminine guide within the mind. We might understand this as an entire psychological realm particular to the *anima,* especially as Bachelard explains the benefits the reader receives from slow reading, from entering into the writer's *rêverie*:

> Si nous acceptons l'action hypnotique de la page du poète, notre être rêvant, de lointaine mémoire, nous est rendu. Une sorte de *souvenir psychologique*, rappelant à la vie une ancienne Psyché, rappelant l'être même du rêveur que nous fûmes, soutient notre rêverie de lecture. Le livre vient de nous parler de nous-mêmes. (139)[36]

This former Psyche, which appears in a syntactical position that could serve only to reference the psychoanalytical concept designating a consciousness that belonged to a younger version of the reader, evokes, through its capitalization, just the myth that Tsvetaeva leans on to express the location of her poetic *rêverie*. It makes sense to look for one's own Psyche/psyche in a former version of oneself, because the myth explains that earliest moment of self-awareness. The completion of Psyche's journey, the entry into Psyche's hall (which is also Amor's hall), is the prerequisite to all *rêverie*, to all poetry. It is also, through these same conditions, the node at which the poet and reader can meet, locating this knowledge of a former condition that they share in common, and meeting in that place together, beyond the mountain, in Psyche's hall.

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[36] "If we accept the hypnotic action of the poet's page, our dreaming being is returned to us from distant memory. A sort of psychological memory, recalling the life of a former Psyche, recalling the very being of the dreamer that we were, supports our reverie of reading. The book has just spoken to us of ourselves." (translation mine)

Mountains for Psyche consistently mean death. First, she is sacrificed to a certain death on a mountain-top, and later, when faced with ' impossible tasks, she sees each perilous elevation to which she is sent in a hostile landscape as an opportunity to end her own suffering by throwing herself from the height. In each case, from the first where she is sacrificed, to the later instances where she seeks to enact her own self-sacrifice, she is kept from these imagined deaths by divine forces. Still, at no point does she seem to have been saved often enough to believe any less in the nearness of her own death. She imagines death in each mountain and cliff, and these seem to be the only shapes that death can take in her imagination. The deathly sleep that overtakes her when she opens Venus' box entrusted to her in her last task fulfills her imaginings. Even knowing the origins of the boxes' contents, which she has just received from Persephone herself in fulfillment of Venus' order, she either fails to imagine the death-like sleep that overtakes her when she opens it, or she opens it in spite of this, in spite of her accomplished record as imaginer of her own death. The substance is difficult for the reader to imagine as well: Apuleius describes it in terms that decline to settle on a definite characteristic, or even a state of matter: "As soon as the lid was removed and it was laid bare, it attacked her and pervaded all her limbs in a thick cloud. It laid hold of her, so that she fell prostrate on the path where she had stood" (tr. Walsh 111). This substance that attacks, that "lays hold" of Psyche bodily, while also behaving like a cloud, is as hard to pin down as Zephyr or the invisible "handmaidens" earlier. These are the physics of the in-between-worlds, a space Psyche treads thoroughly.

Poem of the Mountain

In Tsvetaeva's "Поэма Горы", "Poem of the Mountain", the mountain is again a place of mourning, just as it is at the beginning of Psyche's story. The argument that underlies the entire poem, coming out occasionally in more explicit terms, is that the mountain is *the* locus of the creative action of the poetic imagination, the place from which Tsvetaeva engages her project of world-creation: "The mountain was—worlds!" ("Та гора была — миры!") as she puts it toward the end of the eighth section (III.28). The line that follows, "The gods avenge their graven images!" ("Боги мстят своим подобиям!") does not call into question the makers of worlds (humans have a power at least over the images they create) so much as remind of possible consequences of creative acts. The image of contested creation also calls attention to the stakes of world-creation: the gods have their worlds, but if human (poetic) worlds compete in imagining even the gods, then these competing human-created worlds have raised the humans at least to the notice of the gods, even if the outcome is destruction.

The "Dedication" to the poem closes with the evocation of the mountain as place and intention: "Let me sing of my mourning / Atop the mountain," "Дай мне о горе спеть / На верху горы" (III.24; tr. Kossman 37). For Christopher Lemelin, this self-positioning of the narrator is both dramatically and logically effective for framing the events that follow, and the poets' relation to the story: "the poet-narrator exists in mythic time, while the world she narrates exists in real time" (475). Lemelin draws a distinction between the "real time" events that the poem references, specifically Tsvetaeva's affair with Konstantin Rodzevich and its real setting in Prague with its overlooking mountain. Even the term "real time"

might be a stretch, since the poem would not have been composed on the spot, but this terminology stands in for the same motion we have already seen elsewhere in Tsvetaeva's work: she gestures eternally from the familiar world outward, to an imagined other world. The poem is full of non- "real" imagery that must therefore belong more to the "mythic time" of the poet's imagining, which, in Lemelin's analysis, would belong to the diegetic level of the poem. Early in the first section, to connection of this mourning to Psyche's story is made explicit: "The mountain craved virgin lips, / And marriage rites," "Та гора хотела губ / Девственных, обряда свадебного" (III.25; tr. Kossman 37). The shift here is that, rather than Amor's desire or anger, it is the mountain itself that requires Psyche's sacrifice.

Like in the story of Psyche, the beginning, the discovery of the world, corresponds to the location that marks death in "Poem of the Mountain": "My mourning began with the mountain, / The mountain over me is a tombstone," "Горе началось с горы. / Та гора на мне — надгробием" (III.28; tr. Kossman 45). These are the closing lines of the eighth section, and the English here cannot convey the closeness between grief, "Горе," and the mountains, "горы" here, in the genitive. The grief from the mountain explains much about Tsvetaeva's frequent return to the figure of the mountain. Grief occupies the space between rightness and wrongness, and much of Tsvetaeva's poetic questioning spans the space between what she identifies as right or wrong, as hers or not hers, as part of her world or excluded from it. The mountain is the beginning, and in the world Tsvetaeva creates, especially in what Lemelin describes as "cyclical, ritualistic, and therefore mythic time" (477), the space of the beginning is also that of the ending. By keeping an eye on the

mountain, we can trace our progress in the landscape of Tsvetaeva's world and at the same time orient toward our destination.

"Heavy are the mountains, heavy are the seas…"

Tsvetaeva signals the importance of these features of the landscape in understanding the internal space that they define in her letter to Rilke of 12 May. Tsvetaeva had been reading Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*, and she quotes his own line back to him, giving her impression of its tone:

> "Heavy are the mountains, heavy are the seas…" as though you were comforting a child, urging him to take heart…and—almost smiling about his unreason:
>
> …But the winds…but the spaces…
>
> This line is *pure intonation* (intention), therefore pure, pure angel speech.[37]
>
> (117-118)

She finds in Rilke's poems a map for the interior space as it appears in her own space of thought. Here are the mountains, like the one on which Psyche was abandoned, and here is even the wind that carried her, which, if it appears to her as pure speech, must have a great deal to say to poetry. She does not attempt to disguise the fact that she has found in Rilke a map of herself as a poet, and even as a person. She tells him right away in

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[37] "Schwer sind die Berge, schwer sind die Meere…" (als ob Du ein Kind tröstest, ihm Muth zuredest)…und – fast lächelnd über sein Unvernunft:

…Aber die Lüfte…aber die Räume…

Diese Zeile is reine *Intonation* (intention), also reine Engelsrede. (116-117)

the beginning of this same letter, "A topography of the soul—that's what you are"[38] (114). This phrasing simultaneously adds to and collapses her idea that Rilke has access to a topographical knowledge of a "Beyond (not the religious one, more nearly the geographic one)," knowledge that she imagines as encompassing "mountains and islands and castles"[39] (114). She doesn't explain what that world of the beyond would look like outside of the items on this list, perhaps because the knowledge she imagines does not belong to her, but supposedly to Rilke, a theory she says is based on her reading of his *Book of Hours*, and of course, the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, of which she adds, "your *Orpheus* is a country"[40] (116).

Her reading does reveal certain strains of images in Rilke's poetry, but it is primarily witness to Tsvetaeva's experience as a reader of poetry. For her, poetry is a landscape, and by reading it, she enters into it. Having left it, she retains a map of its contents. This metaphor for relationship is heavy with the weight of its geological features, but the motions are not unlike those we see in Krzhizhanovsky's literalized metaphor, where the lover enters the beloved, and comes back to himself imprinted. Psyche's story also, imprinted like Tsvetaeva's with the forms of mountains and the interventions of air in the story of the soul, is one of seeing, which means entering into the seen, and being forever changed.

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[38] "Eine Topographie der Seele – das bist Du." (114)

[39] "Das Jenseits (nicht kirchlich, eher geographisch) kennst Du besser als das Hieseits, Diesseits, Du kennst es topographisch, mit allen seinen Bergen und Inseln und Bergen." (114)

[40] "Dein Orpheus ist ein Land" (115)

II: Eurydice: Out of The Sea, Out of Love

Tsvetaeva's Rilke's Orpheus and the Vergilian model of Poetic Self-Invention

"The sea, love"

Certain figures reappear in Tsvetaeva's letters, and while she always frames her explanations in the specificity of their relation to herself and to Rilke and Pasternak, the concepts she includes and excludes in her world-creation are all positioned relative to one another in the form of the stunningly exact figures that make up her poetics. The scope of her world, inclusive or exclusive, is enormous. She locates the process, her meta-discourse as deeply embedded in her poetic-prose figures as everything else, in a letter to Rilke on 2 August: "The mouth I have always felt as world: vaulted firmament, cave, ravine shoal"[41] (251). The comparison depends on specific, physical aspects of the mouth, but this does not discount—if anything it only makes more vivid—the meaningful acknowledgment of her verbal process of world-creation. The physical specificity of the mouth-world locates the self-created world as physically *within* the self, but also as inherently dependent upon the interiority of experience, of which the mouth is emblematic. As the anatomical locus of the earliest human interactions with the world, but even without an appeal to a lasting impression of a Freudian oral stage, the centrality of the mouth in the interactions of interior and exterior is self-illustrative. The mouth is where nourishment enters from the world, that basic input without which all others would be irrelevant. Of equal importance,

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[41] "Den Mund hab ich immer als Welt gefühlt: Himmelsgewölbe, Höhle, Schlucht, Untiefe." (232)

the verbal function of the mouth makes it the point of interaction between the interior world and the exterior world, which the world creator might etch back upon with the vision of the interior created world that the speaker projects back out.

By locating in the mouth her own verbal process that comes not only to us, but also to Rilke, only in the form of text, Tsvetaeva underlines this same tension – a tension between the bodied and the unbodied, a body in the world and the world that the body contains, and at the same time, the unbodied imaginings of the interior world for which the body supplies a place in the exterior world. This tension is central to her project, as she goes on to relate:

> I have always translated the body into the soul (*dis*-bodied it!), have so gloried "physical" love—in order to be able to like it—that suddenly nothing was left of it. Engrossing myself in it, hollowed out. Penetrating into it, ousted it. Nothing remained of it but myself: Soul (that is my name, which is why I marvel: name day!).[42] (251)

Tsvetaeva had opened the letter saying that she had received Rilke's last letter on her, Marina's, name day, which allowed her to imagine the letter as a gift to mark the occasion. The name day becomes significant not only as a springboard to a contemplation of identity, which occupies her for most of the letter, but also in the Russianness of a name day celebration, since in Tsvetaeva's imagined world, her identity and the center of

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[42] "Ich habe den Körper immer in die Seele übersetzt (*ent*körpert!), die "physische" Liebe – um sie lieben zu können – so verherrlicht, daß plötzlich nichts von ihr blieb. Mich in sie vertiefend, *sie* ausgehölt, in sie eindringend, *sie* verdrängt. Nichts blieb von ihr, als ich selbst: Seele (so heiß ich, darum das Staunen: Namenstag!)" (232)

Russianness are one and the same. She pours her themes fluidly together into a few words: the name, identity; the body, love; the inside, the outside, the self.

Much of Tsvetaeva's category-creation serves the purpose of defining and understanding herself as Russian outside of Russia. In multiple letters, she opposes the sea and the mountains, and, similarly to her inside/outside play with the body and physical love, she creates for herself a protean position in relationship to the geographical features. In her letter of 25 May, Tsvetaeva writes to Pasternak: "There are things that my feelings always make me reject: *the sea, love.*"[43] (156) Here, at first the sea and love appear as concepts, as *someone else's* concepts. Tsvetaeva is guided by feelings, as opposed to concepts, and is further repelled by these concepts being *not hers*. That is the force carried here by the word "things," "вещи," not altogether dissimilar from the way that Barthes employs the term. The water imagery takes us out of the human element, beyond the self, the air that one breathes, but at the same time, serves as the figure of sinking more deeply into self, finding a deeper level. The sea becomes a figure for her of the exteriority of concepts that do not belong to the system of her interior world, and her rejection serves the preservation of that interior world. What is not immediately clear is what about the sea makes her reject it: its vastness, an association for her with the landscapes of her expatriate years, or even something about the element of water that does not conform to her symbolic system?

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[43] "Есть вещи, от которых я постоянном состоянии отречения: МОРЕ, ЛЮБОВЬ." (217)

In "Poetry, Passion, and History," Hélène Cixous follows similar threads to a memory from Tsvetaeva's childhood, in which she imagines herself into an underwater world beneath the piano in her very musical home. Cixous jokes that the description could refer to a pseudo-Lacanian "piano stage,"[44] but Tsvetaeva's language is that of the world, and she understands the developmental processes that children experience in developing awareness in terms of world-creation, in this case of what she calls "the whole underwater, underpiano world" (144). There is a physical reality, in the piano, but the purpose of the passage is the coming-to-terms with the piano, and by extension, with her mother, with herself in this context, through the figure of covering water. Once submerged, Tsvetaeva's perception of everything changes. Her mother's feet are "separate beings," natives of the submerged world, the underpiano, followed by what Cixous calls "an inversion of movement" (145). But for Cixous, no matter how strange Tsvetaeva's "underpiano" landscape, her face merging with the piano surface, the piano becoming an extension of her mother, the purpose is a new way of seeing a thing that was there from the start. The inversion opens a new point of view: "To look at oneself in the piano is also to look into the mother-sea-mirror, and at that point it is to see in this mutation of colors an indication of *how* one can read the *lacuna*, both black and white" (145). From a psychological standpoint, this describes the childhood experience; Tsvetaeva climbed under the piano, conjured her

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[44] The piano stage could also be understood very literally. Simon Karlinsky summarized the end of this "stage," ending around 1906, when Tsvetaeva was fourteen: "The forced musical education of Tsvetaeva was gradually discontinued, leaving as its residue the astounding rhythmic variety of her later poetry and prose and the occasional musical imagery found in them" (24). Regardless of how much we wish to participate in Tsvetaeva's mythological mode of autobiography, the influence of this early musical training on her poetry is the object of general agreement.

mother as a creative figure that was closely tied to that primal quantity, song, and as a result, the child Tsvetaeva invented for herself a way of singing that would feed her poiesis for the rest of her life.

Pasternak's mother was also a pianist, who gave up a promising career to raise her children. We can see similar ripples in his childhood of his early exposure to musical art in the home, especially in his recollection of having seen Tolstoy at one of his parents' parties as a child. In his memory, recounted in his 1956 autobiography, he says that the music being played that evening moved him to tears, and that, when his mother came to soothe him and put him back to sleep, he glimpsed a face he later realized was Tolstoy. Although, as Lazar Fleishman points out, the memory was most likely inaccurate, the details of the early encounter, or even the question of whether it took place it all, is secondary to the poetic force that the story holds in its styling as a recollection. Fleishman prefers to frame Pasternak's account as one of his "lyrical truths," the truth of which is determined less by factuality than by faithfulness to a greater principle, a concept that contributes to Pasternak's poetics material that acts as a "much more accurate recording of facts than any factual statement" (11). Christopher Barnes adds, when he pauses over the same passage, that it was the addition of string instruments to the usual piano music that had so moved Pasternak as a boy, and that the emotional experience of that night served as a boundary between his early and later childhood awareness (22). While Barnes does not make an explicit argument for a particular connection, he brings the two aspects of the memory together in a way that makes a case that the strings took on this lyrical signification in Pasternak's poetics of memory. The sounds of the strings in the quartet stand in for the

awakening consciousness of the adult in the child in the "lyrical truth" of Pasternak's recollection. Like Tsvetaeva's memory of the "underpiano world," a phrase that also delineates a world of childhood in a space created by music, Pasternak's account of waking up crying and meeting Lev Tolstoy shows how the world is distorted and re-represented in a new kind of clarity through the lens of music and the emotions of childhood.

We might even follow this thread in Pasternak's thinking to his university years, which, again according to Fleishman, "proceeded under the banner of 'self-consciousness,'" a term that appears in Pasternak's philosophical notes as well as in the drafts that mark his move into the literary career that would be the culmination of his musical and philosophical beginnings. The meaning of the term, for Pasternak, was not equivalent to a centering of the self, but rather the careful apprehension of the position of self in context, in the philosophical tradition, in the literary world (and thus relative to Tolstoy), in historical time. This care for the relational informed the psychological approach[45] that Pasternak took to philosophy and especially to his narrative literary works. In this sense, Pasternak's approach to his personal history is not unlike the approach that Cixous would later take to Tsvetaeva's childhood recollections.

However, to read Tsvetaeva psychologically is to read against the grain of her poetics, which were never "switched off" even in her prose writings. Her mythology was

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[45] Lazar Fleishman interprets Pasternak's interest in psychological approaches, attested especially in Psternak's paper "On the Nature and Method of Psychology," as deeply influenced by the scientific methodologies of Paul Natorp and others, but as essentially interesting to Pasternak because of the resonance they held for his own innate sensibilities in philosophy and in art (35ff). Fleishman draws an especially strong connection to what would become Pasternak's poetics in saying that "the 'I' of the subject in Natorp is, in Pasternak, 'pure lyricism.'" (45)

not of the allegorical kind, but it was vital with the imaginative engagement that she also recognized and loved in Rilke. It drove her poetic work, her sense of self, and the images that allowed her to map the world around her. From this point of view, imagining the "underpiano" space as an underwater world serves the same purpose as the figure of the cavernous mouth: it collapses the self and the cosmos into the same scale, allows them to interact on equal terms. By sliding underwater, Tsvetaeva slides more deeply into herself and yes, into her concept of her mother as well. At the same time, she creates a world that resembles her, or that she comes to resemble, and the connection leaves lasting effects. Cixous quotes this image as the end of the passage: "the sea, receding, leaves pits behind, at first deep, then getting shallower, then barely damp. Those musical pits—the trace of the mother's seas—stayed in me for good" (146). For Cixous, this outcome represents the shift away from the sea, toward the mountain, after which Tsvetaeva goes on to create poetically "with less mother and with more earth and mountain…but all the while keeping some archaic humidity" (146). She takes the lessons of the underwater inversions and returns to her own element to implement them in her *poesis*. This is more than a shift between elements, however, as elemental shifts are perhaps bound to be. In the underwater space, she was at a scale with her mother, music, and the world. Afterwards, back in her own element, she cannot engage on the same scale with any of those figures, but she retains the knowledge that she gained by having once engaged the song, the mother, the world on those terms.

Still, later on, there will be that complement to the sea, which she rejects along with love. The love that she rejects belongs, like the sea, to the other world not fitted to the scale

of the poet. Tsvetaeva positions herself against a received concept of love, and her rejection exemplifies a general need in her to demarcate *her* world, the world with which she can come to terms, to separate it from the world as she finds it. In the one instance, she defines herself; in the other instance, the context of the world she imagines for herself. In both cases, these positive positionings are soon undermined by so many contradictory self-accountings. She makes statements, and then doubles back on them: the woman who rejects the sea and love forms a habit of framing her life in terms of the sea, and of including an "I love you" in most of her letters to Pasternak.

But we should not indulge this deception too far, since deception it is to read this line of Tsvetaeva's outside of its complicating and qualifying context. In fact, even as she declares her rejection, she reveals much about the anxieties surrounding it:

> And every time—the unexpected bliss, which one forgets the minute one is out of it (out of the sea, or out of love)—gone without a trace, without recall. I jotted this down on the seashore so that I wouldn't forget to tell you. There are things that my feelings always make me reject: *the sea, love.* And can you believe it, Boris? As I was walking along the shore the waves were obviously bowing and scraping to me. The ocean, like a monarch or a diamond, curries favor from those who do not sing its praises. Not so the mountains. Mountains are grateful (divine).[46] (156)

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[46] "И то же неожиданное блаженство, которое забываешь, как только вышел (из воды, из любви)—невосстановимое, нечислящееся. На берегу я записала в книжку, чтобы тебе сказать: Есть вещи, от которых я в постоянном состоянии отречения: МОРЕ, ЛЮБОВЬ. А знаешь, Борис, когда я сейчас ходила по пляжу, волна явно подлизывалась. Океан, как монарх, как алмаз: слышит только того, кто его *не* поет. А горы—благодарны (божественны)." (письма 1926 года 120)

The Unexpected Bliss

Though the relation is not one of thorough-going analogy, an Orphic moment is recognizable here. The "unexpected bliss" can only, necessarily, like Orpheus' backward glance, last momentarily. Afterwards, "out of the sea, out of love," the feeling is "gone without a trace, without recall." Still, it comes back: the sea bows and scrapes to Tsvetaeva, in spite or because of its abandonment, as soon as Tsvetaeva rejects it. The dynamics of tension, which follow from the importance of the forces involved between Tsvetaeva's perception of the world and the world as she imagines it, while apparently chaotic, reflect very closely Maurice Blanchot's model of the "Gaze of Orpheus" in his essay of that title.

Blanchot identifies the moment of the backward glance with inspiration. This is a destructive vision of inspiration; Orpheus severs himself from Eurydice, not as the price of inspiration, but in its very enactment. At the same time, Blanchot recognizes the primacy of "the work" to Orpheus the poet. Though Eurydice is "the limit of what art can attain," (tr. Davis, 99) still the work itself "is everything to Orpheus, everything except that desired gaze in which the work is lost"[47] (tr. Davis, 102). Here is the self-contradictory tension that Tsvetaeva is describing when she describes the sea and herself. The work is everything; the only thing that is not the work is the destruction of the work. Tsvetaeva rejects the sea, rejects love, because the sea, like love, cannot accept not to be everything: "the ocean, like a monarch or a diamond, curries favor from those who do not sing its praises."[48] (156) Her

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[47] "L'œuvre est tout pour Orphée, à l'exception de ce regard désiré où elle se perd" (230)

[48] "Океан, как монарх, как алмаз: слышит только того, кто его *НЕ* поет." (217)

figures multiply in these monarchs and diamonds, but they all reach toward the same concept, and the concept is the problem—and in the fact that it is also its own solution, it is all the greater a problem. This figure, the sea as monarch, looms enormously against the rest of the figurative system that gives us Tsvetaeva's created world, but even if we are able to grasp her creation as a whole, the exteriority of the sea will continue to evade our comprehension: because it is excluded by the system, the system cannot explain it, cannot account for the sea. This is Tsvetaeva's exact admission and complaint, and the fact is built into her system of metaphors, but none of this explains the meaning of the sea in Tsvetaeva's world.

Her material condition also agrees with Blanchot's conclusion on the basis of her model of total internal tension. She writes of herself in the same letter that her "letters are not written with any purpose, but you and I must *live* and *write*"[49] (156). Orpheus must live, and this fact dooms him. But the truly damning component of the condition peculiar to the servants of *the work*, in Orpheus' tradition, is the constant impossibility of their position. In Blanchot's formulation:

> Orpheus already needed the power of art in order to descend to that instant. This means: one can only write if one arrives at the instant towards which one can only move through space opened up by the movement of writing. *In order to write one must already be writing.***[50]** (Tr. Davis, 104; emphasis mine)

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[49] "Мои письма не намеренны, но и тебе и мне нужно *жить* и *писать*." (217)

[50] "pour descendre vers cet instant, il a fallu à Orphée déjà la puissance de l'art. Cela veut dire : l'on n'écrit que si l'on atteint cet instant vers lequel l'on ne peut toutefois

And perhaps, for Tsvetaeva, who was already writing, it would have been impossible to accept the sea unless she already loved it. Tsvetaeva rejects the sea not because she is able to; the sea will not countenance her rejection, and in fact, even as she claims to reject it she is making it the subject of her reflection. In the meantime, she cannot turn her back entirely on the "unexpected bliss" that the sea and love offer, if only momentarily, as an experience that implodes back on itself. What she calls rejection is only her way of registering the frustration to which her position in this self-defeating experience of inspiration exposes her.

The sea, however, is not what marks the Orphic in Tsvetaeva's poetic project. The appearance of the Orphic in Tsvetaeva's attempts to locate herself and define her world is even more significant for her understanding of love. Some of the same elements and tensions appear in her poem of six years earlier, which begins "Любовь!" ("Love!"). In that poem, as in the story of Orpheus, love is the stated subject, but the material of the work adheres more closely to the thematics of death. In this poem, we can already see Tsvetaeva's contrarian development of impossible tensions as a means of entering a concept thoroughly. In the course of the poem, she claims and undermines her power over death in the course of four stanzas, with only limited direct reference to the ecstatic "Love!" of the opening line. Here is the full text, as translated by Andrey Kneller:

> Love! Even convulsing, even in the grave,
>
> I'll get attentive - squint - get scared - and dart.

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se porter que dans l'espace ouvert par le mouvement d'écrire. Pour écrire, il faut déjà écrire." (232)

My dear! We'll part in neither snowy caves

Nor in the graves of clouds shall we part!

I have been blessed with these two gorgeous

Wings and I refuse to load my heart with weights.

And I won't multiply the villagers' misfortune

Of swaddled, blind, voiceless, wretched fates.

I'll free my arms! - And then, my sturdy torso

Out of your garments, Death, with just one blow!

And there, for thousands of yards, the forest

Will burn to ash and melt the fallen snow.

And even if - pressing my wings and shoulders

And knees - I'll let myself be taken to the tomb, -

I'll do this only so that, later, laughing over

The ash - I'll rise up as a poem or a bloom. (70)

Любовь! Любовь! И в судорогах, и в гробе

Насторожусь — прельщусь — смущусь — рванусь.

О милая! Ни в гробовом сугробе,

Ни в облачном с тобою не прощусь.

И не на то мне пара крыл прекрасных
Дана, чтоб на сердце держать пуды.
Спеленутых, безглазых и безгласных
Я не умножу жалкой слободы.

Нет, выпростаю руки, стан упругий
Единым взмахом из твоих пелен,
— Смерть — выбью! Верст на тысячу в округе
Растоплены снега — и лес спален.

И если все ж — плеча, крыла, колена
Сжав — на погост дала себя увесть, —
То лишь затем, чтобы, смеясь над тленом,
Стихом восстать — иль розаном расцвесть! (I.570)

The poem is bracketed with these figures: Love, on the outside, and at the other end, a poem or a bloom, give a context or a counter to the finality of the grave, of ash. The actions that transition from the framing images (of life) to those just inside their bracket (Death)—convulsing, as a way down to the grave, rising, as a way back up—again recall the Orpheus story.

It is also immediately underlined that here, as later in her letter, the body is everywhere. The grave implies the body, and it is from this grave, from death's garments that stand in metonymously for the whole apparatus that surrounds the corpse, that the

body is freed, part by part: arms, wings, shoulders, and knees. These key parts, the parts that would be signaled by a constellation forming the figure of a body, serve as Tsvetaeva's map, the way that she defines herself, where *herself* is an entity beyond and outside of the bounds of life and death.

At the same time the body is her means for conversing with the world that she did not create, the world that believes in death as a serious demarcation: "I'll let myself be taken to the tomb," she says, the better to mock the division later, "laughing over / The ash." She claims this power of resurrection here without any explanation or any proof (perhaps it comes naturally along with the possession of wings), but it is equally taken for granted that this is the power innate to a poem. A flower, new life that rises from the ground, is a familiar figure of resurgence; this we can take as much as a matter of course as Tsvetaeva does when she employs the illustration as a point of reference. Including the poem as an option, however, along with the flower, is an argument. Again, without proof, without making a case for the assertion, she offers a bold claim: a poem possesses the same power that Tsvetaeva ascribes to her own body here. It can easily cross the boundaries of the grave.

All Tsvetaeva's claims about love, herself, the sea, and her geography of worlds and imagined places, are given orientation in 1926 and later by her grapplings with death. Her philosophical project, evident as always in the candor of her poetics, holds more surprises as we read toward the conclusions she formulated.

“with roses, the bedroom kind”

In her essay, "Your Death," in which she begins from the death of her children's governess, she explains that after the initial surprise that "Mademoiselle," as they called her, did not arrive for her usual lesson, "surprise simply shifted from the point of departure to the point of application. It was surprising from *over there*" (328). This means that after the initial surprise, the human minds in Tsvetaeva's household soon accustomed themselves to the idea that the governess would not be coming, after which the truly surprising thing would be if she suddenly *should* come for a lesson, as if the rupture had not occurred. Still, despite the manifest fact, Mademoiselle's absence, Tsvetaeva recounts the behavior of her family, who would continue to remark with "sedimentary surprise": "Mademoiselle hasn't come" (328). The term is elegantly well suited to the emotional enactment she describes: the surprise was living once, but now it is old, ossified, and layered over by so many reenactments of the same.

This impulse might also be seen to play a role in the evolution of Tsvetaeva's opinion of love. She begins with the extremes of her statements, like her dismissal of the sea, but her position softens as she rehearses it. The image of love, or of the sea, as an enemy is a stark one, but as in a drawing that one outlines over and over to strengthen the lines, the delineations lose form, becoming blurrier and less true to themselves in the repetition.

The space inhabited by and created within Rilke and Tsvetaeva’s letters is in a way accessible to a reader nearly a century later: the images are vivid; the world is not yet so far removed from our own that we cannot orient ourselves against the familiar pieces it

contains. Still, this is above all a world of the poets' own creation—we are only more privileged voyeurs in this case, because we can witness the falterings and false starts of the processes of creations chronicled in the letters.

Tsvetaeva marks the intersections of the letter writers' familiar/unfamiliar world with our theme in a letter from 22 May, in which she defines immorality as "lack of divinity" ("небожественность") (137; 205). She offers this definition parenthetically, and shortly after she offers a set of codifications that attempt the world-creative project with open consciousness of the effort:

> Boris, I don't know what sacrilege is. All sins against grandeur of any kind (and there aren't many kinds) are one and the same. All others—a matter of degree. Love! Perhaps—degree of heat? Fire? Fire-red (with roses, the bedroom kind). Fire-blue. Fire-white (White for God). White in strength? In the purity of its burning? Purity. Which I invariably see as a black line. (Just a line.) That which burns without heat is God.[51] (137)

To break down the emotional values of the concept, "sacrilege," the problem that she has posed herself, Tsvetaeva opens a prismatic representation, and renders the components she identifies in a colored system that translates from a value-based lexicon (sacrilege) into an emotional system (love), on the bet that this latter will have more productive access to

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[51] "Борис, я не знаю, что такое кощунство. Грех против grandeur какой бы то ни было, потому что многих нет, есть одна. Всё остальные—степени силы. Любовь! Может быть—степени огня? Огнь—ал (та, с розами, постельная), огнь-синь, огнь-бел. Белый (Бог) может быть *силой* бел, чистотой сгорания? (Чистота. Которую я неизменно вижу черной линией. (Просто — линией.)

То, что сгорает без пепла—бог." (206)

the problems posed by the former. Heat stands in entirely as a metaphor for the measurement of degree.

The question of degree is necessitated by the question of divinity: for Tsvetaeva, divinity is functionally a kind of continuum. Some degree of the divine she imagines is the province of all humans, to deny or lose hold of which constitutes a transgression (immorality). Moreover, through love (heat) humans can attain to something (fire) that is already the province of God, although fire is an element that pertains to humans on their own human scale.

She points without qualification or apparent disturbance to the incompatibility of "purity" with her conception of divinity. Appearing bluntly among the kaleidoscopic fires of human-divine love, purity's black line doesn't speak to the rest of the imagery at all. It doesn't even belong to the same system: purity is a geometrical construct, while love is figured as a natural phenomenon. Her idea of purity only appears by the way, included for its curious opposition (the black line) to the fire-white color of God. Her phrasing, however, "which I invariably see as a black line," implies that this image predates the rest of the colorful imaginative system that she has deployed to describe sacrilege within the human-divine gradient of heat.

Though these images appear at a tempo that leaves behind any hope of an explanation on Tsvetaeva's part, already they do a great deal to explain the tensions that recur in these fictional worlds build around the mysterious structures of love. Still, while Tsvetaeva's images offer access to those structures with a clarity unknown to reality-based fictions, and the text they belong to spins a poetics on the basis of the world she created for

herself. (She concludes her ecstatic cosmology of the erotic by tying the structure she has portrayed back to her work: "And those vast trails of ashes—my ashes—floating in space—they are my 'Swain'," (137) referring to her recently finished poem.) The scaffolding upon which these images depend is a poetic one; when she finds herself in her cosmological imagery, it is in the figure that stands in for the 'Swain,' the poem she was then working on. This poetic figuration is a mode she slips into, and quickly shakes herself out of. After this interruption, she transitions abruptly back into her physical world: "more about life" (137).

Mountains and Divisions

If we return to the letter of 25 May, we see that Tsvetaeva's rejection of the sea also leads to an opposition that positions the sea and love within such a structure of tension: "The ocean like a monarch or a diamond, curries favor from those who do not sing its praises. Not so the mountains. Mountains are grateful (divine)" (156). The sudden shift to mountains may not seem immediately helpful to our understanding of Tsvetaeva's problematics of love, but it does position this discourse in terms of the "divine," a word—recall the wings she wears in the 1920 poem—that for Tsvetaeva is intimately tied up in balancing the concepts she suspends in opposition. This cue at the very end of the thought about the sea, mountains, and—lest we forget—love, signals that we are here *not* in the realm of the divine, and the experience of love and of the sea do not unfold under its aegis.

Instead, in the lived experience that Tsvetaeva is also relating in this letter, her imagining of love depends on the functions and failings of memory. Even this complaint was "jotted" against otherwise certain mental erasure, but the jotted thing is not the

memory of the "unexpected bliss," only the complaint that it cannot be remembered. The sea is not a fragile thing, nor does this love appear to be, especially when it can subject Tsvetaeva to a sudden emotional experience, as if without her participation.

Still, the difference between these two ways of not-being-fragile underlines the special form of these letters: Tsvetaeva's lived experience, even when related in her most poetic mode, cannot illustrate in the way of the figures to which she assigns conceptual import. The rejection is her answer to the loss of control in forgetting, but she answers the concept: she rejects the sea, and love with it, and she assumes an advantaged position: the sea now "bows and scrapes." Her new position is only an advantage over her own created concept, however, and this was already ultimately under her control; her experience of love is only subdued by proxy.

Structurally, Tsvetaeva specializes in divisions. She is always setting up lines, especially between herself and certain phenomena of the outside world: the sea, or the money problems that might prevent her from enacting the meetings she continues to plan. She is perhaps at her most forceful when she divides parts of the world that she claims as "hers" from the world that she reserves for everyone else. These divisions, as they multiply one upon the other, fragment the experience of love as she conveys it to the reader.

Tsvetaeva, in her essay on the posthumous publication of Rilke's letters, writes that "to convey—is to betray" (355). In this instance, in the attempt at a treatment of love as a whole, the fragmentary form might be the best shot that anyone has at truthfulness. Whether truthfulness in this case does not still betray is another question. All the same, the fragment, appearing as it does in the interstices between letters, bears out the evolution of

Tsvetaeva's thought, but in the only way it could be possible, that is, in *moments*. Any given letter, as a moment in time, can only speak from that finite space, but can fully speak for that space alone. This, as Tsvetaeva makes clear again and again in her letters, is the advantage of related experience, and perhaps therefore the reason why she includes it on the same level with her purely conceptual illustrations.

Tsvetaeva's divisions also serve a purpose beyond the *relation* of experience. She is creating her experience as she writes—the relationships we find in these letters are, after all, between the letter-writers—and she is making a space for herself within the worlds opened in this space of relationship. She tries to enforce these divisions in letters to both Pasternak and Rilke.

In another letter, in order to situate herself in her hatred of "things,"[52] she conjures a woman whose entire sense of purpose is encompassed by them: "She doesn't care about the orderliness of life based on reason; just the common mania for putting *things* in order" (137). Tsvetaeva positions herself on the side of orderliness and reason—one wonders whether this is the order that governs her multicolored fire, or the order that demands a favorite be chosen between mountains and sea.

Why should Tsvetaeva evince such disgust for "things"? This moment offers a great deal of insight into Tsvetaeva's level of investment in her project of world-creation. She sees *things* as a limitation in the experience of others, but her imagination of the

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[52] As to the specific meaning that she assigns to this word, the only clues we have are its bareness—she presents it without qualification, as if self-explanatory—and the emphasis that she places on it.

experiences of others is necessarily based on her own, so we can ask in what way *things and the system to which they belong* limit Tsvetaeva materially. She complains throughout 1926 of a lack of funds. In one of the attempts to plan a meeting with Rilke, she writes to him: "Oh, yes, one more thing: I haven't any money; the little I earn by my work...vanishes as soon as soon as it is received. I wonder if you'll have enough for both of us. Rainer, as I write this I have to laugh: a strange sort of guest!"[53] (258) Even here, as frank as she ever is regarding her material circumstances with Rilke, she immediately undermines the telling in her self-fashioning: "a strange sort of guest." Here she enacts the refusal to be serious about *things* that proves her consistency with her earlier complaint about the sea, and love.

The city, the world

In a letter that Tsvetaeva wrote to Pasternak after Rilke's death at the end of 1926, she acknowledged that this signaled also the death of their long-imagined plan to visit Rilke together: "Boris, we will never go and see Rilke. That city doesn't exist anymore" (264). This is one of several themes that Tsvetaeva traces over repeatedly in her writings around Rilke's death.

Still, in this letter, she doesn't name the "city" that she means, and in fact doesn't elaborate at all. After her stunning statement - "that city doesn't exist anymore" - she stops hard, and when she resumes, she turns the subject to seeing Pasternak, she hopes, in London. The statement, standing alone as it does, is forced into a role of standing for much

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[53] "Ja, noch eins: Geld hab ich keins, das wenige was ich erarbeite…– wie erhalten – entschwunden, ob Du für uns beinde genug haben wirst? Rainer, ich schreib und muß lachen: ein sonderbarer Gast!" (239)

else, since without the context of her geographical imaginings, to which Pasternak was not privy, the city must itself explain everything.

When she returns to the subject of what died with Rilke, this impression is only strengthened, as she imagines herself back into the potentiality, now lost, that had so recently existed in her mind, but reconfigures its parameters in light of Rilke's death. This is the letter in which Tsvetaeva laments that she remains in this world, with her complaint of the displaced: "How well I know the other one!" ("Как я знаю тот!") (264; 273).

Of course, "this world" here refers to the world of the living, but it also, especially in light of the city that doesn't exist anymore, reminds the reader that there was another world, recently inhabited by Tsvetaeva, that is now closed. Or rather, it is only accessible through imagination, though now the certainty of impossibility places a new cast on this imagination. This was the world in which the meeting would be real; that was the future that belonged to the world Tsvetaeva inhabited until she was ripped from it. Now her imagination functions differently, and as Tsvetaeva will go on to explain to others following Rilke's death, in some ways it brings her consciousness closer to that other, imagined, world.

One sign of this new sense of access is the manifestation in dreams, which she already signals here, the day after she had learned of Rilke's death. How well she knows the other world, she explains:

> From dreams, from the ambient air of dreams, from the density, the essentiality of dreams. And how little I know of this one, how much I dislike it, and how hurt I have

been by it! But the other one—just fancy!—light, radiance, things illuminated quite differently, with your light and mine!

"The other world." As long as this idea remains, people will remain. But it is not about people I am thinking now.[54] (265)

Again, the dual meaning of the "other world" bears out. The world may exist as an idea in the culture in general, as this last sentence acknowledges, but it also exists in a very sensible way in her lived—if unconscious—experience, in the visions of her dream-world. And perhaps it is just such an experience that allows people to "remain," that is, not only the hope of an "other world" beyond the immediate one, but the active imagination of a world that is not the present one, whether it is believed to be real, or simply believed.

Also on 25 May, in her letter to Pasternak, Tsvetaeva put herself in the place of Eurydice: "I would've been able to say to Orpheus: 'Don't look back!'" (153). She blames Eurydice for Orpheus' failure, for his turning, which to Tsvetaeva must have been "the result of either the blindness of Eurydice's love," though she doesn't expand on the mechanics of this possibility, "or her impatience (hurry, hurry!)" (153). In either variation on this imagining, Eurydice was united with Orpheus in purpose, but her excessive enthusiasm for achieving the reunion is her, and Orpheus', undoing.

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[54] "по воздуху снов, по разгроможденности, по насущности снов. Как я не знаю этого, как я не люблю этого, как обижена в этом! Тот свет, ты только пойми: свет, освещение, вещи, *инако* освещенные, светом твоим, моим.

На *тем свету* – пока этот оборот будет, будет и народ. Но сейчас не о народах." (273)

Over and against this reading she immediately layers a possibility that both completes and contradicts the imagined self-defeating excess of yearning: "Or could it have been a *command* to turn and thus to lose him?"[55] (154). She imagines a Eurydice who is still in some small part the same as the living person she was, who, although "all that still responded to her woman's name followed in his footsteps," found that when it came to the return, "this time she may not have wished to go"[56] (154). This Eurydice, whom Tsvetaeva can also locate in her own poem, "Eurydice's Gift to Orpheus," is one who knows death with great intimacy, the intimacy she never knew with her husband.

The subject of Tsvetaeva's essay "Your Death" is the death of Rainer Maria Rilke. Rilke's death is the surprise that can only be approached backwards. Still, it is *only* in that essay that Tsvetaeva approaches the death at all. This is the danger of working with letters made literary by poets who step constantly between experience and its poetic correlates. Rilke's death was not a literary event; it was not an end to an Orphic story or any other. It interrupted Tsvetaeva's world-creation as thoroughly as anything could, and in her account of the city to which she could never return is only the coming-to-terms with that interruption, not the resumption of the task of world-creation.

This can show us, in inverse, the proof of the creative function that existed in the first place. We can see Tsvetaeva's world-creation from altogether another angle when it is interrupted. We might also recall Blanchot's formula (perhaps even a *formula* in the

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[55] "Либо *прикраз* обернуться – и потерять." (215)

[56] "Все, что еще отзывалось в ней на ее женское имя – шло за ним, она не могла не идти, хотя, может быть, уже не хотела идти." (215)

Tsvetaevan sense) for authenticity: "as though what we call the insignificant, the inessential, the mistaken, could reveal itself—to someone who accepted the risk and freely gave himself up to it—as the source of all authenticity."[57] (tr. Davis, 102) To give oneself up, however, presumes a certain tranquility, which was obviously completely inaccessible to the Tsvetaeva who wrote to Pasternak a few years after Rilke's death, "Boris, I'm afraid of all words with you…Each of our letters—is the last."[58] (312) Blanchot's "authenticity," often attained to by Tsvetaeva in her sublime handling of detail, is irrelevant in this crisis. Blanchot's authenticity exists in words, belongs to art. Tsvetaeva, at the end of 1926, was eclipsed for authenticity by reality, by a world not her own.

Victoria Schweitzer, in her biography of Tsvetaeva, made a note of the topographical changes in Tsvetaeva's poetry, comparing the places inhabited by the poems of her early volume *Youthful Poems* with the markedly different localizations of her more mature follow-up, *Mileposts*:

> In "Youthful Poems" there are hints of luxury everywhere: a magnificent frock of gold-threaded faille, a jacket with a winged collar, a straw hat, a shawl from Turkish lands, a fur coat, a muff, an opal ring, a turquoise bracelet, a chaise-langue, a fire-place, Sèvres figurines. In *Mileposts* there is simply nothing comparable. Tsvetaeva had lost interest in such things. There are no descriptions of dress, her own or anyone else's, exquisite or otherwise. There are no interiors, because Tsvetaeva's

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[57] "comme si ce que nous appelons l'insignifiant, l'inessential, l'erreur, pouvait, à celui qui en accepte le risque et s'y livre sans retenue, se révéler comme la source de toute authenticité" (229)

[58] "Каждое наши письмо – последнее." (514)

> verses have migrated from confined rooms to open fields, the bazaar, the outskirts of the city, the streets and squares of Moscow. (107)

It is not impossible that "such things" are akin for Tsvetaeva with the "things" that her mind makes her reject. There is a large difference between the sea and a dress, but perhaps not insurmountably large in Barthes' sense of the term "things."

The mode of metatextuality (or at least that impulse, which engenders a recognizable discursive mode into which Tsvetaeva sometimes dips) that suits Tsvetaeva's interests throughout her career makes a strong impression on Schweitzer, who describes a of reading the second volume: "A tornado seems to snatch up the heroine and her reader, whirling them from page to page. Every page is a blind corner round which something unexpected awaits" (107). Tsvetaeva doesn't merely describe an experience; she subjects her reader to it, recreating it in the layer of the reader's own experience of the text. Because she always treats poetry itself as a theme, this technique is miraculously apt: the reader's experience recreates the experience of Tsvetaeva herself as a reader of poetry, which turns out to have been her subject in the first place. For her reader, however, it becomes more than a subject: it is lived philosophy, imparted by work that does more than tell.

It was around this time[59] in Tsvetaeva's life, as her work was turning inward as she was discovering the depths of her lifelong metapoetic project, Tsvetaeva was reading the

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[59] Tsvetaeva's *Mileposts* was published in 1921, and her acquaintance with Vladimir Ottonovich Nilender, whose translations introduced her to the Orphic hymns, only started up at the time of the publication of her *Evening Album* in 1911 (Schweitzer 58). Catherine Ciepiela pauses on a description of the *Evening Album* collection as having been written "'in place of a letter' to Nilender," which suggests the

Homeric Orphic hymns, of which she said, "I first heard of Orpheus with the ears of my soul"[60] (*A Captive Spirit* 73). Soon after, Max Voloshin took her to a cave that he described as "the entrance to Hades"; she recounts her memory of the cave in her essay "Живое о Живом," translated by J. Marin King as "A Living Word About a Living Man," admitting that she doesn't remember what they found on the other side of the grotto: "I remember only: the *entrance* to Hades"[61] (72). Enactment, embodied experience of the metapoetic themes of the Orphic, was as much a part of Tsvetaeva's working poetics as any printed words could be. In the same essay, she goes on to metaphorize the entrance to Hades to describe the nature of relationships: "How many people have led me along the back ways of life, led me in and abandoned me—now find your way as best you can"[62] (73). The abstraction of experience and the literalization of the abstract concept balance one another in her metapoetic method. The correlation between the discovery of the metapoetic and the figure of Orpheus recalls that work of Vergil which most exemplifies this developmental moment: where the poet, in a kind of poetic adolescence (a calm before the storm?) pauses in the sudden urgency of reconciling the poet as self, of defining poetry, self, and world.

For Pasternak, his "adolescent" work, *My Sister Life*, full of the emotion of experience (what Ciepiela calls his "hysterical" style), explored the stakes of his personal poetics, and

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interrelation between letters and poetic work that existed for Tsvetaeva even early on (20).

[60] "Об Орфее я впервые, ушами души, а не головы, услышала" (IV.195)

[61] "Помню только: *вход* в Аид." (IV.195)

[62] "Сколькие волили меня по черным ходам жизни, заводили и брошали – выбирайся как знаешь." (IV.196)

also served as Tsvetaeva's introduction to Pasternak as a poet (Ciepiela 99; 44). If there was something in the development of Tsvetaeva's self-imagination that circled around the sea, perhaps harkening back to those early moments of her mother's music and the under-water feeling it created, then Pasternak's coming-of-age collection is also very watery. At moments, as in the beginning of the series "Entertainment for the Beloved" ("Развлеченья Любимой"), the water comes in a sudden torrent; the first three poems of the series are full of water in different forms. The first follows a rolling, sparkling raindrop, the second opens on the motion of a rowboat not being rowed: "The rowboat rocks in a drowsy creek" ("Лодка колотится в сонной груди")[63] (33; I.127). In the third, the spring rainstorm of the title transforms by the end of the poem into a political storm: "the tide of Europe's night / swelling with pride on our pavements" ("Заколебавшейся ночи Европы, / Гордой на наших асфальтах собой") (34; I.129).

At moments, mythology does glint out from Pasternak's poetry in a similar flash-allusion of the kind that we have seen in Tsvetaeva. For example, the last stanza of "Oars Crossed," which moves from the rocking of the little boat to an expansive moment of possibility, where Hercules stands in for impossibility:

> This is to embrace the horizon,
> encircle Hercules with your arms.
> This is to swirl through time,
> squander sleep for nightingales' songs. (33)

[63] The English translations for *My Sister, Life* are taken from Mark Rudman's translation, and the Russian is from Pasternak's *Полное Собрание Сочинений*.

Это ведь значит – обнять небосвод,

Руки сплести вкруг Геракла громадного,

Это ведь значит – века напролет

Ночи на щелканье славок проматывать! (I. 128)

As much as this is the description of a moment of spiritual expansiveness, it is also a description of the kind of breadth available to the self-imagining spirit in the adolescent moment. In this malleable space, fact runs together with impossibility. This perception is perhaps best described in the poem "Зеркало," "The Mirror," the same mirror to which Tsvetaeva's mirror in the corridor responded in "Попытка Комнаты," "Attempt at a Room." In "Зеркало," steam glazes the mirror, and then a watery quality transforms the world as perceived through that mirror:

The mirrored tide glazes the world

with sweatless ice, knocking

bitterness into knots, smell into lilacs,

reigning through mesmerism. (14)

Зеркальная всё б, казалось, на́хлынь

Непотным льдом облила,

Чтоб не горчил и сирень не пахла, —

Гипноза залить не могла. (I.118)

In the next chapter we will see that Rilke also provides a poetic image of a mirror that provides special access between worlds imagined and experienced; the image is hardly an unlikely one. The interesting quality in Pasternak is what Ciepiela also called the "ecstatic" quality that the images take on (44). The ability to move between one world and the next, between the room containing the mirror and the garden that seems alive in its reflection there, is contained not in the glass, but in the poet. This is the burgeoning of the poetic world, which is the singular strength of the poetic adolescence.

For Vergil, this adolescent moment, in which he establishes his poetics and the stakes for himself as a poet, can be found in the Georgics.

Miserabilis Orpheus

The Georgics, written by an emerging Vergil, and described as having "provided a programme for the *Aeneid*,"[64] came shortly before Octavian would take the title of Augustus. There is a hopefulness in the work for the reign of Octavian, and implicitly for the poetic career that Vergil is still building. In Book Four of the poem, which deals with various aspects of husbandry[65], the poet takes up the subject of beekeeping. This eventually leads to an extended diversion into the story of Aristaeus, a beekeeper who loses his bees,

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[64] see Heyworth and Morwood, 18ff, for more on the relationship between the poetic projects and the tradition to which each richly referred.

[65] My focus here is on what Vergil does with the Orpheus myth, but Christian D. Haß points out that the didactic poetry that makes up the larger part of the work displays the same poetic function, creating the world as it shows it: "the textual *representation* of the cosmic order (in the mode of *didaxis*) on the one hand, and the *generation* of an intrinsic textual order (in the mode of *poiesis*) on the other" (100).

and who, in his mission to rectify the loss, uncovers the story of Orpheus, whose fate turns out to have been indirectly caused by Aristaeus' pursuit of Eurydice. It transpires that Eurydice was bitten by the snake while fleeing from Aristaeus' attentions, and the death of Aristaeus' bees is Orpheus' punishment for the role he played in Orpheus' sorrow. This opens the opportunity to tell the rest of Orpheus' story, on which Vergil leaves a singular mark.

When we meet "*miserabilis Orpheus*," the use of the epithet signals the familiar (as if to say, "You know Orpheus; he's that miserable one"). As soon as Orpheus is mentioned, the audience must recall the well-known causes of his broken heart. Later on, the figure of Orpheus becomes less comfortable—at least for the contemporary audiences of the poem—when he disrupts his own story by turning to look at Eurydice, something he seems not to have done before Vergil's version of the story. But we don't have the 37 lines (454-491)—the space between the introduction of Orpheus and the moment of Vergil's innovation, Orpheus' turning—for the unfamiliar to break in on the presumed familiarity of the mythological figure. It is, rather, an essential attribute of the mode Vergil evokes in his formal evocation of the neoteric epyllion: the specificity of characterization, the vivified personalities of well-known characters.

Following this tradition and making his own contribution to the always expanding figures from myth, Vergil's Aristaeus cuts a noble figure—perhaps even one at odds with the excesses of lust that provide the causal backdrop of the story— the bitter notes of his lament giving a greater depth to his character.

The questions that make up the opening of Aristaeus' lament, desperate and even hyperbolic in their register of expression, establish with some economy a clear situation for what follows. In fewer than twenty lines, before Cyrene even appears, the reader knows exactly in what kind of story she finds herself. Aristaeus blames his mother for not helping him when he loses his bees and insists she should finish the job in his bitter self-defeating rant: "quin age et ipsa manu felicis erue silvas," ("why not go and uproot the fruitful trees with your own hands"). This phrase, with which he ends his lament, is already miles away in the depths of irony in the tone and in its verisimilitude (even if it is difficult to find an adult child of a divine parent to compare) from the stock evocation that marked his complaint's beginning. There, he evokes "mater Cyrene mater," making a note of her dominion over the sea, "quae gurgitis huius / ima tenes" ("you who hold the depths of this whirlpool") (IV.321-2), and beginning his lament at the beginning, with his own birth. If we read a rhetorical argument here, then his complaint implies that the suffering of the child must be the fault of the mother who brought the child into the world to suffer, but Aristaeus is not making an argument in these lines. Instead, the formulaic opening signals a lament, and we discover the argument simultaneously with the personality of Vergil's Aristaeus, who believed himself exempt from the disappointment of failure as a favor of his divine heritage, and now blames his mother for failing to assure him the charmed life he had imagined.

Cyrene's cave as a point of departure for Aristaeus' discovery of the Orpheus story exerts a framing force. Though not formally functioning as a frame, it does recall the multiple framings that shape the Alexandrine pastorals that constantly inform this

section—they, too, often included nested structures of frames and partial frames—a complex architecture always leading deeper into the story. In this case, the depth is reinforced by the geographic scale of the bodies of water that Aristaeus travels through. In this, Vergil's metapoetic map is written as much in abstract geographies as are Tsvetaeva's mountains and Tsvetaeva's sea, and like those figures in her ever-shifting metaphorical world of poetic philosophy, the values that they represent likewise evolve and shift.

Still all of this is only a preface to Aristaeus' confrontation of Proteus, where he will have the chance to prove himself a competent agent of masculinity rather than a persistent figure of the petulant adolescence he displayed in his opening monologue. The pattern of shifting between formulae of characterization and character-rounding detail, with an arc that develops toward the latter, will repeat itself when Proteus evokes Orpheus.

Between Tsvetaeva's youthful watery worlds and Vergil's fictions drawn across watery boundaries, we can imagine the two poets as a pair, a grouping that from the reader's perspective will approximate the structure of relationship, but only within the regulation of a theoretical structure. Tsvetaeva herself does this with Pasternak and n, whose complementarity (or more precisely that of their poetics) she stresses to the point of strain. Vergil's construction of himself as poet under the figure of Orpheus is equally dependent upon the figure of Aristaeus who, like Octavian for Vergil, provides impetus for the voicing of Orpheus' whole story. In both cases, the context of the relationship is also a reckoning of the outside context, the politics that are only named slantwise in the poetry itself. Mayakovsky and Pasternak were both unavoidably caught up in the revolution that shaped their time, but their participation crystallized in inverse poetic modes, according to

Tsvetaeva in her essay "Световой ливень," "Downpour of Light." Erika Nelson described Rilke's poetics of history in similar terms: "Rilke also tried to redefine poetry as a means of writing and rewriting cultural history—as a historical, rather than simply an aesthetic, force" (84). As for Virgil, whose poetic enterprise is made possible by being just countenanced (in contrast to the case of the exiled Gallus[66]) and secondly, underwritten by Octavian, he cedes the place of hero to the youth's promise. In Lee's reading, even in the brief epyllion, Aristaeus' adventure fulfills all the major characteristics of the hero's journey, and his ultimate success in restoring bees from the bodies of the sacrificed oxen stands in for Octavian's ability to restore the empire after a time of intense violence[67].

What the layers of narrative relation conceal is that this is no concession at all. Orpheus might have caused Aristaeus' problem—Cyrene seems to attribute the punishment to the "*facile Napaeae,*" the lenient wood nymphs, and the success of Aristaeus' supplications to them bears out this account—but Vergil has caused the whole of the narrative to adhere to its real-world referents. He characterizes Octavian in this way as more—a leader of men, not bees—and no less (as a hero and shepherd of souls, as represented by the bees) than the Aristaeus he imagines. At the same time he, Vergil, is

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[66] Lee observes that "The Orpheus section of the epyllion may well have been composed in the style of Gallus, and as a tribute to him, just as the Aristaeus section is indebted to and a tribute to Homer's style," (124) an interpretation which incidentally positions Vergil, associated with Orpheus, alongside poets of the modern sphere, but simultaneously as the inheritor of the epic tradition, which position he will manifest with his Aeneid.

[67] In particular, Aristaeus' character shows the need for restraint in Octavian's future career, especially in light of his career up to that time. In Lee's words, "Octavian's violent deeds are beyond anything a man who hopes to restore peace to the world ought to have done" (126).

more—as the imaginer of the whole—than the Orpheus he writes, staking his claim also to be considered no less than him, since the adoption of Orpheus for the poet's avatar is Vergil's innovation, which will be much imitated (Lee 11). In the case of Tsvetaeva's essay, the extravagantly imagined complementarity of the two poets she puts in relationship is borne out in their bodies of work, of which her knowledge is thorough. In Vergil's case, he would bear out his claims characterizing himself in his chef d'oeuvres to follow, the Aeneid, which also fulfilled his argument for Augustus' godhead.

Orpheus' Turning

The Epyllion[68] that closes the Georgics interrupts the rhetorical rhythm established in the didactic poem up to that point with a narrative that juxtaposes the authority of myth with that of *scientia* employed in the preceding books of the poem. Moreover, if the earlier chapters established an image of a cosmos, orderly in the arrangement of stars and the classifications of soil below, then the major male characters of the epyllion are endowed with the power to transgress orderly cosmic divisions.

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[68] The use of the term "epyllion" to denote a section of a larger work is not unproblematic, and indeed, a significant portion of the work on the subject concerns itself primarily with the legitimacy of the term in specific cases or in general. Still, for the sake of ease, the term serves to designate the section of Vergil's work that imitates the forms and conventions employed in the neoteric epyllia, such as Catullus 64, emblematic of the genre, if genre it is. These echoes can be taken for our purposes as the influence on the young Vergil of the great poet of the generation just prior to him. For a clearer idea of the ambivalent impact of Catullus 64 on the concept of Epyllion, see Gail Trimble's discussion of its formative influence, "Catullus 64: The Perfect Epyllion?"

Aristaeus, with Cyrene's assistance, walks through water, as the rivers open up at her command to accommodate his visit to her where she holds court with other river-nymphs. Orpheus, also through the facilitation of a divine feminine agent—Persephone—is also enabled to impossibly transgress the bounds of the human sphere, descending to Hades. Aristaeus learns this after his mother sends him to wrestle Proteus, who will explain to him the story behind the demise of his bees, and whose narrative within the narrative creates a further digression from the treatise on husbandry. Though Aristaeus encounters Orpheus in Proteus' revelation as an opponent, who is devastating Aristaeus' bees as retribution for Eurydice's fatal snake bite, the transgressions the two men enact mirror one another and emphasize the similarities between their functions and faculties.

Still, while Aristaeus gets what he came for in the end, capturing Proteus and ultimately renewing his hive with the method in which he is instructed by his divine mother, Vergil's Orpheus does not leave Hades with Eurydice, for whom he transgressed an even sterner boundary than that of water and air. Though the underwater space means death to humans, Orpheus crosses not into a deadly space, but into death itself. M. Owen Lee points out that while Vergil's sources allow for some ambiguity in Orpheus' fate, his failure and his famous turning-back appear to have been Vergil's innovation, and he suggests that he might have "changed the story of Orpheus and had the mythic poet fail in his mission" because of a fundamental insecurity that Vergil experienced in the role of the poet, even though a great one, the fear that "through some fault of his own, he may fail in his mission" (40).

Orpheus' state after this survives in the crystalline portrait of grief that belongs to Vergil's shaping of the myth. This is what we think of: "nulla, non ulli animum flexere hymenaei" ("No, nor any wedding hymn could bend his soul"). Music and love are deserted at the same time, leaving only the one word, *Eurydice*: "Euridicen vox ipsa et frigida lingua, / a miseram Euridicen! anima fugiente vocabat" ("'Eurydice' the voice itself and the cold tongue called, 'O wretched Eurydice,' with fleeing soul"). This image of the wretched Orpheus is so clearly preserved in the collective memory of the poetic tradition after Orpheus because of this perfect collapse of the structure of the poet into the single word. Bereft of the relationship that allows for the definition of self, Orpheus is reduced to a single element of verse; no music, but only a single word remains to him. It is only further proof of the endless echoing of his "a miseram Euridicen" that Rilke all those centuries later responded precisely to this call. Rilke inverted the sense of the phrase to show that Orpheus, flattened without the three-dimensional structure of relationship to teach him who he is and in what world, has missed the mark. As we already knew from Proteus' opening words, Orpheus is the "miserabilis," and Rilke discovers what part of the world that leaves to Eurydice in "*Orpheus. Euridike. Hermes.*":

> She was in herself, like a woman near birth,
> and thought not of the man, who walked ahead,
> and not of the path, which ascended into life.
> She was in herself. And her having died
> filled her with abundance.
> Like a fruit ripe with sweetness and night

she was filled with her great death,

which was so new that she understood nothing. (tr. Snow 201)

Sie war in sich, wie Eine hoher Hoffnung,

und dachte nicht des Mannes, der voranging,

und nicht des Weges, der ins Leben aufstieg.

Sie war in sich. Und ihr Gestorbensein

erfüllte sie wie Fülle.

Wie eine Frucht von Süßigkeit und Dunkel,

so war sie voll von ihrem großen Tode,

der also neu war, daß sie nichts begriff. (II.544)

Rilke's Eurydice receives precisely what Vergil's Orpheus loses: the project of self-imagination. She is in a new world, and Orpheus' attempt (by now, the failure is already crystallized, a foregone conclusion) is less even than an interruption, merely an interlude. She is on the verge of her self-creation, and "in sich," even as she goes through the motions of playing out Orpheus' failure, she is engaged in her own project, which belongs to a world with a wholly different geography from Orpheus'.

Even more than boundaries, the topographical elements—the sea, the mountains, the worlds below and above—through and within which these poets map their conceptions of *the poet* are valuable for the adversity they present to the human. The mere fact that these images of the sea recur in poetic imaginings of adolescence, however, does not answer the most obvious question that the image raises: why the sea? In Tsvetaeva's case,

the juxtaposition of the mountains to the sea in what appears to be a productive antagonism in her internal cosmography only adds the question: why (not) the mountains?

Here, as in many questions where honesty is required before all other reason, the most painful explanation has a reasonable claim to the truth. Tsvetaeva was hurt by her impression of the waves of the sea bowing and scraping to her. Elsewhere, in a real and insistent way, she figures the lyric poet as the sea. There is no good reason given in her essays or her letters around these figures that will allow us to misbelieve either statement, which leaves us to imagine how both can be true. If the lyric poet goes as to the sea with the jug, again and again, immune to repetition, but Tsvetaeva hated the sea, preferring the mountains, then either she is not a lyric poet, or she is. This is the same hole that Vergil identified in his portrayal of his own vocation: he has a mission, undeniably, but failure is always possible. And if the self-imagining poet, in imitation of Vergil's dark rendition of Orpheus, fails, then in what sense is he a poet?

III: Dido: Destruction and Poiesis

If the poet fails, then in what sense is he a poet?

The answer to this question leads in different directions depending on which poet we follow. In Vergil's case, he was a success on his own terms. He set out to be a (the) regime poet, and he was a star under Augustus. What if he had failed in his mission? He might have wound up like Gallus, exiled and forgotten (or at least lost to the manuscript tradition). Yet even for Vergil, who so carefully built his career around the regime that sponsored his art and assured his place in posterity, it is a cynical step too far to suggest that his idea of success consisted in these social distinctions alone. His choice of Orpheus as the model poet centers the bodily experience of the poetry. Orpheus' songs would only exist when he made the music himself; the tragedy of his story depends on this condition, since the loss of his song to grief both signals the depth of his misery and contributes to his demise.

Perhaps Vergil did have another vision of failure haunting him in his poetic project, one in which his voice failed, and he—if less literally than Orpheus—fell apart. If so, we cannot follow him there; the only hint we have is his Orpheus, and the end that Vergil gave him. Tsvetaeva and Rilke, on the other hand, each in a different way, crack open that space of failure to which Vergil gestured.

What Tsvetaeva fought in Rilke's version of Eurydice's story (in which she imagined she could have stopped Orpheus from looking back) still locates her bright spot of imaginative power in that same space: it is through, and even after death that a certain kind

of self-realization is possible. The main difference is that the two poets imagine the outcome of that self-realization differently. Tsvetaeva's Eurydice suddenly finds power in her voice—Rilke's is beyond the need to speak. In her new project, in the underworld, she does not share a common language with Orpheus, or a common sense of reality.

The failure in Tsvetaeva's vision of the encounter lay with Eurydice, who didn't intervene in Orpheus' turning. In Rilke's poem, as in Vergil's imagining, Orpheus is the one who fails, but Rilke does not limit that failure to the moment of turning. In failing to recognize Eurydice's transformation, Orpheus has already failed in undertaking to bring her back. She no longer belongs to his world, and his imagination does not have the power to make it so. Each poet constructs a unique configuration of imagination, failure, and death, but, just as constellations viewed from different galaxies would take different shapes, even very different interactions show the consistent importance of one thing. This is the line between death and life for the poetic imagination, which shapes Rilke's Eurydice, confounds Vergil's Orpheus, and opens a defining test for Tsvetaeva's self-as-Eurydice.

It is not irrelevant in any iteration of the myth that Orpheus is a man and Eurydice is a woman. The weight of that difference, however, is engaged by Rilke and Eurydice in a way that Vergil's epyllion does not allow for. In that poem, Eurydice is a non-character, and the full weight of Vergil's imaginative contribution is applied to Orpheus. The silence that surrounds Eurydice is, of course, exactly the ground on which Rilke built his imagining of the story. Short of Rilke's imaginative intervention, the empty value of Vergil's silent Eurydice must speak for itself.

We have another chance, however, to reveal this ancient potential for imagining the feminine imagination. Vergil, writing for the by-then emperor Augustus, in the custom-built regime mythology of the Aeneid, pauses on that same bright spot, the possibility of self-realization in death, with Dido. If the Orpheus story places the masculine and feminine powers of imagination on opposite sides of life and death, then Dido's story deepens the divide, and offers more significant avenues of approach to the female character, and with this a new configuration of the idea of failure.

Dido's death in the Aeneid is surprising and vivid in a way that none of the versions of her story that built on Vergil can approach. The specific moments of her death, when Anna has returned to discover that Dido has gruesomely taken her own life, are given to the reader in the kind of vivid images that not only impress the drama of the situation, but imprint a lasting memory of the moment:

> …Now she had climbed
> The topmost steps and took her dying sister
> Into her arms to cherish, with a sob,
> Using her dress to stanch the dark blood flow.
> But Dido trying to lift her heavy eyes
> Fainted again. Her chest-wound whistled air. (Fitzgerald IV, 949-954)

> …sic fata gradus euaserat altos,
> semianimemque sinu germanam amplexa fouebat
> cum gemitu atque atros siccabat ueste cruores.

illa grauis oculos conata artillerie rurus

deficit ; infixum stridit sub pectore uulnus. (Verg. Aen. 4.685-689)

The vividness of these lines, the unsparing image of Dido's human death, contrasts the woodenness of her speech in the same scene, where she anticipates her death with an accounting of her circumstances that withholds that same human heat that suffuses the physical description. With unshakeable correctness, she says "*uixi et quem dederat cursum Fortuna peregi, / et nunc magna mei sub terras ibit imago,*" ("I have lived and finished that course that fortune gave me, / and now the tall shade of me will go underground") (Verg. *Aen.* 4.653-654). The strong division at the line ending between the conditions of her life and those of her death enacts the containment that her ordered thinking enforces in the structure of her thoughts. On the one hand, her path is clear, on the other hand her shade is distinguished and recognizable, tall like her living self. In both cases, the story she puts forward is defined by its simplicity and characterized by a lack of invention on her part. Still, there is no story so straightforward that it is not a story. Vergil's Dido's version of her own story might not be forceful in imagination, but the blunt force of it places Dido in the clarity of her own sense of rightness.

This is the sense that will be elaborated on in other imaginings of Dido's perspective on her story. It has even been suggested that Vergil himself opened the Dido story to the ambiguities that were read into it by later interpreters, as by A. D. Nuttall, who saw in Vergil "the moralist of empire, who taught those who came after to love and pity Dido" (89). For Nuttall, posterity's reaction to Dido contains the same mystery that we are tracing in the experience of the reader of any poetry: did Dido become sympathetic in spite of

Vergil, on the initiative of readerly imaginations alone? The alternative, and the side where Nuttall comes down, is that the sympathetic view of Dido was already there, in Vergil's text, to be found in later reception.

Circumference

How are we allowed to encounter Dido? Who brings us her story, and on what terms? An understanding of the structures of world-creation are prerequisite to approach Dido's story, which is a story told between two worlds: Dido's, of course, but necessarily also that of Aeneas. Working within these same structures, where the capacity to self-create a world is bounded by gendered divisions, Luce Irigaray takes the most pressing questions of world-creation to an extreme of immediacy and relevance in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. The title points in the direction of her inquiry: the questions of access in world-creation become urgently defined and arranged on the basis of sex (evoking grammatical sex in Irigaray's analysis, which deals in gendered modes of discourse, "sexuation" of syntax) (24). Irigaray's "worlds" exist within and around language, depending on it, and also made out of it. Syntax is the structural material of linguistic creation, so it follows that, if one constructs one's world out of language, then the syntax to which one has access will determine the shape and even viability of that world. Irigaray insists that in the contemporary iterations of sexed discourse, the masculine and feminine syntaxes each bring particular limitations. The masculine syntax provides the means to construct a world, but: "The world, or worlds, that he constructs will close over him so tightly that reaching something outside him becomes difficult for him. He does not even

remember the fact that his body is the threshold, the portal for the construction of his universe, or universes" (99-100). This is a model of a too-successful world creation, where the created world assumes the control that its creator pretended to.

On the other side (of the question of sex, and of the spectrum of possible world-construction problems) the woman also struggles: "What is sometimes difficult for women is to provide themselves with a *periphery*, a circumference, a world, a home" (106). The man becomes over-bounded by his own world creation, and suffers from a limitation of place, whereas the woman struggles to define place at all. The options in this menu of broken worlds appear to be: only one place, or no place at all. Nor are these two situations independent of one another; Irigaray sees them in a simple system of tension, where each serves as cause and inverse of the other: "This linguistic home that man has managed to substitute even for his dwelling in a body, whether his own body or another's, has used women as construction material, but (therefore?) it is not available to her" (107). Place in this instance has always also meant discourse: in order to be able to speak, the man must have this dwelling, and the security of his dwelling defines his masculine syntax as much as the woman's position defines her own syntax. Her condition is not insecure, exactly, as the "construction material" of the man's dwelling-place, but as a condition that enables the man's security, she is excluded from benefitting from that security. This is one way to view the "femininity" to the extent that such a thing is identifiable in Tsvetaeva, or in Psyche, Eurydice, or Dido: they must create their own circumference, and the visibility of that circumference translates into the perceptibility of their femininity.

Irigaray paints the hopelessness of this system to fill out the necessity of her call for a new discourse. She looks forward, to the possibility of a dissolution, but the need for world-creation is not new, and neither are the problems attendant upon it. The retracing of mythological lines of force in the Dido story can teach another approach to dissolve this recognizable struggle. In Dido's story, Irigaray's description of the women's side of the problem is gruesomely manifested. Even as the queen of Carthage, she does not possess the resources to preserve her own world against Aeneas. We could guess from the fact that she appears in a story titled under his name, that this will be a story told in the terms of his world, from which it comes, to which it belongs. Of course, all of this applies especially and specifically to Vergil's Dido. There might be an inclination to think first of Vergil's Dido, but Ovid's portrait in the *Heroides* gives us an account from another—Dido's—world.

At the beginning of Dido's story, the transgression has already taken place. Once again, this is figured in the crossing of waters. Whereas Aristaeus crossed through watery boundaries in an impossible succession that emphasized his divine help, Aeneas makes an impressive water-journey that, if again indebted to divine favor, also serves to illustrate his prowess as a leader. Ovid's Dido confronts Aeneas on what she sees as his dangerously casual attitude toward his own sea-travel, the journey that brought him to Carthage, that allowed him to transgress the boundaries of Dido's world. She reminds him repeatedly of the sea's dangerous qualities, insisting that he should know "*insana quid aequora possunt*," (55) "what the mad seas are capable of," and yet he sails out regardless.

Ovid's Dido contrasts the sea-faring that brought Aeneas to Dido's country, which will take him away again, to what she has identified as the element of his birth, the same

that Tsvetaeva contrasts with the sea: "*te lapis et montes innataque rupibus altis / robora*" ("The stone and mountains [gave birth to] you, along the oak trees native to the high cliffs") but this soon becomes the sea in Dido's wandering logic, when she continues: "te saevae progenuere ferae / aut mare, quale vides agitari nunc quoque ventis: / qua tamen adversis fluctibus ire paras?" ("the savage wild creatures gave birth to you, or the sea that you see churned by the winds, where you nonetheless prepare to go, with the waves turned against you?") (39-42). Following this, her question "Where do you flee?" seems to mean more than simply her regret that he is leaving her against her desires. Along with her doubt about Aeneas' judgment in undertaking his sea journey, her tracing of his history back past the sea to a beginning in the mountains highlights the wrongness of his whole enterprise.

This is the condition that enables her curse, very different from the curse that makes up the final words of Vergil's Dido: "vive, precor! sic te melius quam funere perdam, / tu potius leti causa ferere mei" ("Live, I pray! I would rather lose you if you bear the weight of having caused my doom than by your death.") (65-66). Her guess that he will survive his sea-journey is, the readers of this poem know, correct, and by positioning herself on the side of events as they will unfold, she takes power for herself and for her narrative. It is her own story now that becomes the curse with which she leaves Aeneas, and we are invited at least to hope that this version will succeed. "*protinus occurrent falsae periuria linguae*" ("The oath-breaking of your false tongue will rush to you immediately.") (69). Dido is sure that the memory of the broken oath will haunt Aeneas. At the same time, if Aeneas does not remember it, then at least Ovid's readers will; Ovid's poem simultaneously imagines and creates the triumph of Dido's narrative.

It must be observed that Dido repeatedly grounds her narrative in Aeneas' story. If anything, Ovid's Dido spends more time on Aeneas' past than her own, and even looking forward, she indulges a final plea to him to stay: "*Ilion in Tyriam transfer felicius urbem*" ("Bring Ilion more successfully into this Tyrian city.") (155). Still, in the space that this imagined future opens, she creates a future that centers the story on Dido, rather than on Aeneas: her version gives an alternate ending that depends on her own primacy in its creation: "*nequid desit … / hic pacis leges, hic locus arma capit*" ("Nothing will be lacking, the laws of peace are here, and there is a place here for arms") (159-160). She fills out the imaginary future, full of terms meaningful specifically to Aeneas' story, the resting place of Anchises, the joy waiting for Ascanius. She bows to imagined protestations, conceding never to be called his wife, or even to have him stay permanently. And then she abruptly drops the idea with the conclusion that Aeneas will not listen to her and turns her planning mind to the details of her own demise.

In the last two lines of the epistolary poem, we see the act, Dido's recourse for the re-establishment of her own world under the weight of Aeneas' narrative, codified in the discursive form that was not enough to accomplish her world's restoration. Her act, her suicide, accomplishes that: in her death, she reclaims her world. It is true that she necessarily destroys it in the process, but she re-orients the narrative to align with the gravity of her own self-conception, even as her ability to hold it is extinguished.

The only proof of her victory over the discourse, and therefore the construction of herself and the narrative world she inhabits, is the inscription for her tomb, her last instruction: "*praebuit Aeneas et causam mortis et ensem. / ipsa sua Dido concidit usa manu*"

("Aeneas provided both the reason for death and the sword—using her own hand, Dido struck the blow herself"[69]). The heavily spondaic line is dramatic, but also characterizes the discourse, circling back to the most noticeable attributes of Vergil's Dido in her speech, as one of control and emotional continence. The discourse codifies the act, casts the participants in the narrative in final terms. The inscription derives its force from the physical act it represents, but it is only by laying it down in words that Dido asserts full control over her action and indicates to whose world this story belongs. The word "*usa*," having used, appears *after* "*concidit*," she dealt the blow; the fact that she initiated the actions with her own hand is more important than the fact of her death. This is Dido's story now.

Perhaps there is even room for this in the portion of Irigaray's vision that points both forwards and necessarily backwards, as she asks for a redefinition, but this of the ancient concept of divinity. Irigaray calls for a new *parousia*, the divine present in the physical world, a state that she engages with not as a hypothetical, but in the present urgency of its arrival. She even codes her understanding of the dichotomy of spirit and body in terms that Dido herself might have chosen: "Yielding to the bride through the mediation of a fire that is itself transmuted? Appearing anew, beyond idol, image, fetish, those representations that are still extrapolated from the body" (148). Dido's instrument is her body, her passage is through fire, and this is her point of access to the divine in the

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[69] Or, more literally, "having used her own hand," a progression of tenses that places the agency of her decision in strongly embodied terms ahead of the blow that ends her narrative.

discourse that didn't provide her with the means to reach it otherwise. Indeed, she remakes herself as a bride in her final act; Aeneas might have made her a bride the first time (if there is some difference over the solemnity of their time in the cave), but the second time she makes herself whole, the destruction of her body acting as preface to her passage beyond the limits it represented for her as a world-creator.

The appearance of the bride and the fire suggest the reliance of this new discourse on old shapes as much as they recall Dido's fate. No one yields to Dido but herself; still, the surrender is implied by the violence of her act. She does not direct her violence at Aeneas, but at herself; only this orientation preserves the imagined surrender. Perhaps even for Vergil, Aeneas does yield some portion of his story, his heroic figure, to the abandoned Dido. At the least he is literally haunted by her in his katabasis, and her book frames some of the most important aspects of his story.

When Aeneas does go to the underworld, however, his voice is the only one that recalls her story. He has heard of her death, wants to know whether he was the cause of her death, "funeris heu tibi causa fui?" ("Oh, was I the reason for your funeral?") (Verg. *Aen*. 6.458), and from there on, his main concern is explaining his lack of agency, to frame events so that, even if he was the cause, really the only cause worth blaming is his fate, "*iussa deum,*" "the gods' commands" (Verg. *Aen*. 6.461). Dido's impassivity in response to Aeneas' attempts to connect and his pleas for her not to leave, make up the whole of her response. The image of her as "ardentem…animum" ("burning soul"), who glares at him silently as he approaches her, who won't even look at him once he starts to speak, says more strongly what her final speech made claim to (Verg. *Aen*. 6.467-471). Perhaps the dignity of her

accomplishments, as she outlined them earlier, exempt her from speaking, and her final curse on Aeneas and his undertaking infuses the glare, and most of all informs the silence with which she meets Aeneas, who wants his version of their story to be heard by her one last time.

Boccaccio's Unchaste Dido

The image of Dido in the underworld is searing, but verbally, it is the Ovidian Dido who takes most command of her own story. Her final perfect formulation carries a force that even the chilling silence of Vergil's Dido cannot equal. It is difficult to recognize either version of her in the strange interpretation offered by Boccaccio in his *De Mulieribus Claris*. Boccaccio's Dido is weaponized as an example of perfect chastity in order to shame Christian women who are considering re-marrying after the death of a first husband. To accomplish this purpose, Aeneas is removed entirely from her story (we are told quickly, "*Enea trojans nunquam viso*," she had never ever seen him (42.14)). This leaves a story of a new monarch who, having suffered multiple disadvantages and the death of her first husband, is faced with a single decision, which makes up the most significant question regarding her fate and also defines her purpose as a model woman for inclusion in this collection. Her story is narrowed to a single focus on her behavior as a widow.

Also removed, to a significant extent, is Dido's voice. She delivers a short speech about the duties of citizenship, which is then used against her to force her into a marriage she is unwilling to enter, and then is given some brief and bitter final words. This speech, "*Prout vultis cives optimi, ad virum vado" (*"As you wish, good citizens, I go forth to my

husband") (42.16), removes all sense of narrative from her power-taking act, leaving her with control only over the tone of the story, which she turns to wholesale irony. By excising Aeneas from Dido's narrative, Boccaccio removes all of her best material for narrative revision. Her anger now only has her people to turn on, and the injury she suffered from them (and her supposed reason for killing herself) is thin in comparison to Aeneas' bad behavior.

The purpose this is all leading to is the chastisement of Christian women, with the especially damning qualification: if even this pagan woman could guard her chastity, how could you fail to do so? Boccaccio spends as much time on possible objections of his Christian contemporaries, women he imagines in various circumstances and of various ages, none of whom he considers to have just grounds to remarry after the death of a first husband. For this purpose, Dido's suicide, even though described in Boccaccio's account complete with the pyre and blade, is reduced to the faculty of her mental strength, so that "*mente saltem valens*," ("at least with a strong mind"), which makes up for her lack of physical strength, and only as an aside, "*moriens*," (through death), she escapes the second marriage (42.17). The death itself ceases to be a potent force in the story, as it must, since un-Christian suicide must be sublimated under the category of mental strength for the purposes of this admonition to Christian women.

The elegy: a destructive world-creation

Looking for the element that makes possible the striking differences of narrative and emotional expression between Vergil's Dido and Ovid's, Harold Isbell suggests that "at

root, the difference is that which obtains between elegy and epic" (*Heroides* 57). If we follow Brodsky on those things particular to elegy (remembering that he is speaking specifically of elegies by poets on poets, and, more specifically, about "Новогоднее"), then elegy points in two directions other than toward the mourned person. First, the poem serves "as a pretext for more or less general speculations on the phenomenon of death per se," and, which probably follows, "the tragic timbre is always autobiographical," so that the poem about one death is also implicitly about another (195). If this is true, then we are lucky in Tsvetaeva's "Новогоднее" and in Rilke's "*Elegie, An Marina Zwetajewa-Efron*," which give us the complete set: both poets' elegies for the other, and therefore for themselves. If each poet is engaged in a poetic project of world-creation, then the elegiac mode brings them together. Olga Peters Hasty, who sees the elegiac exchange as the collision of two cosmogonies, explains the creative role of relationship in the elegiac mode: "Cyclical change and the fluidity of relationships shape the universe of the elegy" (194). Elegy becomes the meeting place for two worlds, an exchange that takes place through the exchange of images.

Many of the images that recurred in the letters between Rilke and Tsvetaeva appear in the poem. Rilke's angels, which Tsvetaeva felt as akin to her own, appear here, along with gods who "warten auf Lob wie die Schüler"[70] (612). That is, they wait for praise (although, imagining gods, we might have understood "*Lob*" as "tribute" were it not for the last three words) like the schoolchildren do. In a sudden interjection that recalls us to the

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[70] The German text for this poem is taken from Snow's edition, and the English translation, where not otherwise noted, is Snow's.

elemental that both poets share, the eighth line of the poem stands alone: “Wellen, Marina, wir Meer! Tiefen, Marina, wir Himmel,” “Waves, Marina, we’re ocean! Depths, Marina, we’re sky!” (612, Snow 613) It has been observed that Rilke's syntax reflects his meeting with Marina's Russian, omitting both the articles and the present tense of the verb to be, but it does more than that. In German, the phrases "wir Meer" and "wir Himmel" do what Russian never could do - they evoke a paratactic ambiguity that contains more in its omission than a habitually spare syntax could be expected to do.

The *Elegie* remains steadfast in that space between the two poets, German and Russian, always in different places, always meeting and never met. Rilke shows the connection, calling Marina “weibliche Blüte am gleichen/unvergänglichen Strauch,” “feminine flower on the same deathless bush” (614, my translation). Then he underlines the loneliness that co-exists with this connection, closing with an image of the poet, the human, as a waning moon, each with an “einsame eigene Gang über der schlaflosen Landschaft,” “our own solitary course over the sleepless landscape” (614, Snow 615). These apparently impossible coexistences are Tsvetaeva’s native language, and Rilke captures the logic that underlies their strange grammar. By putting his finger on this particular flavor of impossible possibility, he also answers the question about failure for Tsvetaeva. Hers is a system built on the paradox of never being what one is; the contradiction is the story. This is what makes it impossible for her to fail; even in failing, she would at the same time fail to fail. Perhaps the elegiac mode, at least in the hands of this master elegist, is the best suited to untangle Tsvetaeva’s strange and strong structures of self.

Every angel is terrifying

This last "Elegy" of Rilke's might also call to mind those elegies more easily associated with the poet: the Duino Elegies. The second of these, with its opening challenge, "Jeder Engel ist schrecklich" ("Every angel is terrifying"), brings the highest stakes to the self-formed cosmography in terms of ancient human mythologies of the spaces between worlds (*Sämtliche Werke* II.689). Here are the mountains, here is the air ("wir / atmen uns aus und dahin," "we / breath ourselves out and over"), the gods, and a small space in the end "zwischen Strom und Gestein" ("between stream and stone"), the last image the smallest to contain the outcome of the rest. When Rilke brings all these images together, elements that belong to Psyche, to Eurydice, to Tsvetaeva, along with the embers that suggest the more furious path that Dido takes in death, a logic takes shape. The shape might be the kind of three-dimensional map that shows different paths from different angles, but if we follow along, Rilke indicates some of the best clues about the nature of the in-between.

The purpose of the expedition can be found in the last three lines of the first stanza:

> Were the archangel now to emerge behind the stars
> and take just one downward step this way:
> our own thundering hearts would slay us. Who are you? (Snow, 291)

> Träte der Erzengel jetzt, der gefährliche, hinter den Sternen
> eines Schrittes nur nieder und herwärts: hochauf-
> schlagend erschlüg uns das eigene Herz. Wer seid ihr? (II.689)

It's inviting to take the stanza in as the space between its beginning and its end: "Every Angel is terrifying. …Who *are* you?" A specific logic is suggested by this pairing: the circumstances being what they are, one question is most pressing. This is followed upon by the startling lack of syntax in the second stanza. Rilke, with his great mastery of modern parataxis, and the perennial poetic tendency toward lists, describes without explaining:

> Favored first prodigies, creation's darlings,
> mountain ranges, peaks, dawn-red ridges
> of all genesis, —pollen of a flowering godhead,
> links of light, corridors, stairways, thrones,
> spaces of being, shields of rapture, torrents
> of unchecked ecstatic feeling and then suddenly, singly,
> mirrors: scooping their out streamed beauty back
> into their peerless faces. (Snow 291)

> Frühe Geglückte, ihr Verwöhnten der Schöpfung,
> Höhenzüge, morgenrötliche Grate
> aller Erschaffung, – Pollen der blühenden Gottheit,
> Gelenke des Lichtes, Gänge, Treppen, Throne,
> Räume aus Wesen, Schilde aus Wonne, Tumulte
> stürmisch entzückten Gefühls und plötzlich, einzeln,
> *Spiegel*: die die entströmte eigene Schönheit
> wiederschöpfen zurück in das eigene Antlitz. (II.689)

Is this the angel's answer to the question "Who *are* you?" Or perhaps it is the attempt of the questioner to fill in the silence with his own best guesses. We know why the question should be unanswerable, after all: to be approached by the angel is to die, "*schlagend erschlüg und das eigene Herz*" ("our own thundering hearts would slay us"). So, in the impossibility of the angel's answer to the question, the answer comes from the phenomena that can approximate some truths about the angel. After all, the form the question takes, its sudden change to direct address, can the reader at first as addressed directly to the readers: who are you, reading this, now? The following stanza constructs the world to which the question belongs only after the fact, draws the reader back to the question at hand: who are the angels? This following stanza is filled with parts of a world that can be experienced by the poet who is imagining angels in the world: mountain ranges, corridors, stairways, thrones; but also, with images that are themselves imaginings: the flowering godhead, shields of rapture, and perhaps also, in this context, mirrors. Mirrors are real, of course, but these particular mirrors have direct access to the angels that humans cannot approach, and the images they stream back can *only* be imagined.

This may be an instance that recommends itself to Bachelard's idea of *lecture lente*, slow reading, the purpose of which is to enter into the *rêverie* of the poet that the text opens for the reader. That mode of reading might allow us to access what he calls the *cogito* of the dreamer, which is a very different kind of *cogito* from any contemplated by the non-dreaming mind. This is the mode of imagining that takes the being of the dreamer, that is, the reader, to the "things, to the sounds, to the scents" of the text (*La Poétique de la rêverie*, 139).

In other words, he prescribes the exact opposite kind of reading from the approach I've taken up to here. Rather than categorize the types of experience offered by the poem, Bachelard would have the reader, slowly, digest them, in order to experience the poet's experiences with him. This is not something that can be done by the waking mind, the mind that is aware that the thing in front of it is a page, a collection of words formed from letters by ink on paper. This is something done by the dreaming mind, which is able to meet the dreaming mind of the poet within the realm of *rêverie*. In that place, the text can be experienced rather than understood, even if non-dreaming minds would not count the experience of reading as anything more than that. This is an imagining that takes a step beyond itself, and it is the most important way in which the reader can participate in the world-creation of the poet. The context, the world of *rêverie*, must be agreed upon, believed in, before the rest is possible, and as such, the reader is in a sense agreeing to imagine this world with the poet in order to have that place to meet. This same mutuality could be the path to the intimacy posited by Blanchot when he describes the outcome of the writer-reader relationship:

> The writer writes a book, but the book is not yet the work. There is a work only when, through it, and with the violence of a beginning which is proper to it, the word being is pronounced. This event occurs when the work becomes the intimacy between someone who writes it and someone who reads it.[71] (Tr. Smock, 43)

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[71] "L'écrivain écrit un livre, mais le livre n'est pas encore l'oeuvre, l'oeuvre n'est oeuvre que lorsque se prononce par elle, dans la violence d'un commencement qui lui est propre, le mot être, événement qui s'accomplit quand l'œuvre est l'intimité de quelqu'un qui l'écrit et de quelqu'un qui la lit." (15)

This is not, however, identical to the world-creation in which the poet engages, who creates on a blank page (if never quite, as the saying has it, "from scratch").

Rilke's Pyre

After Tsvetaeva had stopped hearing from Rilke, in December of 1926, he wrote a poem that touched on his own death[72]. The striking image from the middle of this poem is of the speaker willingly climbing a pyre: "Ganz rein, ganz planlos frei von Zukunft stieg / ich auf des Leidens wirren Scheiterhaufen," "Without plan, completely pure, free of future / I mounted suffering's tangled pyre" (618-9). The image recalls nothing so much as Dido's death, that most famous willful mounter of her own pyre. For Dido, the suffering presented in the form of the pyre, figurative for Rilke, was very literal: she built the fire by burning the things that reminded her of Aeneas, the memory that caused her pain while she lived. In further lines, Rilke asks:

> Is it still I, burning here beyond recognition?
>
> I will not drag memories inside.
>
> O life, life: externality.
>
> And I in flame. No one knowing me. (Snow 619)
>
> Bin ich es noch, der da unkenntlich brennt?

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[72] This poem was not published in one of Rilke's collections, having been written so close to the time of his death, but Snow includes it in his edition of Rilke's poetry. The German and the English here come from Snow's edition.

Erinnerungen reiß ich nicht herein.

O Leben, Leben: Draußensein.

Und ich in Lohe. Niemand der mich kennt. (618)

Flame transfigures. The present moment in these lines is some time after the speaker has climbed onto the pyre (presented, in the first place, in the past tense). Speaking to us, the poet is already burning. If Dido specifically collected the objects of memory to burn, then this speaker perhaps preserves them by refusing to bring them inside—or perhaps the fact of burning has freed the speaker not only of the future, but of all internality, a thing facilitated by a body that believes in its own wholeness. Now nothing further will come "herein," as "herein" ceases, in the destroyed body, to be. The state in which the self interacts with "Draußensein" belongs to life, elegized in miniature, in one line. Life was the belief in externality, life is forever external to what follows. In this state, no one can know the speaker anymore, because the speaker is burned beyond recognition (if we take "kennen" in that sense, as to recognize) or because the self that was once contained in that body has moved beyond (and here "kennen" means to know personally). In either case, the narrative of the self has surpassed the concepts of inside and outside that belong to life, and the rupture is captured succinctly in the image of the fire.

Tsvetaeva had produced a set of images from which this fiery vision breaks. In her letter of 14 June to Rilke, she comments on the photographs Rilke had sent her with his previous letter. In a kind of imaginative *ekphrasis*, she describes Rilke in one of the photographs as displaying an expression of slightest hesitation:

> One on the point of departure who casts a last glance—seemingly a cursory one (the horses are waiting)—over his garden, as one might over a page of writing before it is dispatched. Not tearing himself away—easing himself off. One who gently drops an entire landscape. (Rainer, take me along!)[73] (179).

Some read in this image of gentle finality the echo of Rilke's "Und doch ist Einer, welcher dieses Fallen / unendlich sanft in seinen Händen hält," ("And yet there is one that holds this falling / unendingly softly in his hands") but it is not necessary even to go so far to find a possible point of origin for Tsvetaeva's imagining (*Letters, Summer 1926*, 366). Dinega locates the necessity in the image in Tsvetaeva's emotional landscape, describing them as "distancing devices that will off-set her hesitant overtures toward intimacy in other places in her letters," a plausible explanation for her inclusion of the images in her letter (136). Still, the most immediate source for the hands that drop an entire landscape lies in the combination of the two images that precede it: one leaves the garden as one leaves the page. For Tsvetaeva, who reads these scenarios into a still photograph of Rilke, he is both at once.

The pyre, on the other hand, is the exact and ecstatic emblem of tearing oneself away. Rilke was not likely thinking of Tsvetaeva's image of the gently dropped landscape as he wrote that last poem, but in these two instances, something is given to posterity: Tsvetaeva has made herself an image of Rilke taking leave, and he makes another. Dido, for

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[73] "Ein Abreisender, der noch einmal, scheinlich flüchtig – die Pferde warten schon – seinen Garten übersieht, wie ein beschriebenes Blatt, bevor es abgeht. Nicht sich losreißend – loslösend. Einer der eine ganze Landschaft – sanft – fallen läßt. (Rainer, nimm mich mit!)" (174)

her part, was not finished remaking her story with Ovid's version; the story continued to be remade in the centuries that followed.

Dydo

In the anonymous narrative of *Le Roman d'Enéas*, Dido's speech on the pyre lengthens to several times the number of lines dedicated to the purpose in Vergil's telling. Vergil's poem dedicates twelve lines to a final speech in Dido's own voice, whereas the *Roman d'Enéas* spends twenty-nine lines to Dido's final assessment of her position, and to her own version of her story. In part, as with the mention of Dido's suitors, who are angry over her preference for a foreigner, the twelfth-century version is informed by Ovid, but it also adds an organizing logic that does not come directly from either source. Like in Vergil, the twelfth-century French version shows Dido, or *Dydo*, as she appears in the poem, delivering her final address to an empty room; her sister will only come back to discover the deed immediately after the fact. This means that the story that Dido tells about herself is, powerfully, committed to words and to a form of the story custom-built by Dido *only for herself*. As readers, we can dream along with Dido in the empty room, as Bachelard recommends, and if we do, we will discover with her the portions of her story that she invests with meaning and feel the force that remains in her final breaths.

She apostrophizes Aeneas' clothes, which stand in for him in her speech about their shared story. She dates her doomed state to the moment she first saw those clothes and, we understand, Aeneas. She explains that she wants to end her life on the clothes, on the bed that witnessed her dishonor, there specifically to lose her power and position, to leave

Carthage and the glory that would have been hers. She is locating the end-point of her story in this literalization of the moments that defined her downfall, the accessories to the love she experienced "*comme folle*," as a madwoman. She qualifies all this in saying that she will not die unremembered, that the Trojans will certainly remember her; this nod to the text of which she is a part (part of the purpose of translating and re-imagining the Aeneid was to lay claim to the same Trojan ancestry that Vergil's text claimed for the Romans) is especially poignant after many centuries of the Aeneid's survival and popularity. Again, she distances herself from the feeling that led her to this point, recalling the intervention of the god Amor that kindled in her to the love she conceived for Aeneas. She imagines the happiness she could have enjoyed, in her former state of virtue and wisdom, before that intervention. She does not, as Vergil's Dido did, list her accomplishments, and announce the cause of her death. Instead, she recalls the events that led to this moment as a story, as an inevitability, as the work of gods, and places herself securely within the story that she constructs about that inevitable arc from love to death.

Much of the characterization that appears in the *Roman d'Enéas* comes not from Vergil, but from Ovid, and it is the mixture of sources that makes the Dido of the romance such a compelling character. As Kathryn Marie Talarico has shown, the characters of the *Roman* are given their most vivid descriptions when they are either falling in love or dying (215). When Dido dies for love, she becomes the key example of this technique, which is why this Dido exhibits the unsteady breathing and irrational behavior that layers another dimension on what either Vergil or Ovid imagined. Becoming most real to the audience through her experience of love, and asserting her own reality through her suicide, the

vividness of this Dido is most surprising in how she illuminates this character so familiar from Vergil.

Perhaps most powerfully, this medieval imagining of Dido diverges completely with Vergil's Dido in her very last words. Where Vergil's Dido cursed Aeneas, in her final breath, this *Dydo* touches the clothes left behind by her betrayer, and says, "*jel vows pardoins, sire Eneas*,"[74] ("I forgive you, Lord Aeneas") (2152). The final image of Dido in this narrative spares the reader nothing; we see her rasping, hiccuping, emptied already of her blood, struggling through last breaths, still kissing Aeneas' clothes, until suddenly, approaching the final moment where she will pass from death to life, we miss it: "*elle souspiroit a mount grant paine, / ja en art faille l'alaine*"[75] ("she sighed with very great pain, already breath had left her") (2158-9).

In a *lecture lente*, these last two lines open a space between her vivid, gasping, bleeding, physical body, and the world that she has just created for herself, the world beyond her life. At first, her sigh seems just another expression of the difficulties she is experiencing, breathing and speaking while pierced through with a sword. But in the light

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[74] This quotation and those that follow are taken from Aimé Petit's recent edition of the *Roman d'Eneas.*The manuscript that Petit used, Manuscript D, dating from the fourteenth century, is interesting for the expansions on Dido's character that appear here, but not in the earlier manuscript (Manuscript A) that formed the basis of J.J. Salverda de Grave's edition. For more on this, please see Mora Francine's 2000 review of Petit's edition. In any case, these this line is substantially similar between the two; they appear in the 1925 edition of manuscript A thus: "Gel vos pardons, sire Eneas." (2067)

[75] In the 1925 edition: "al sospiroit a molt grant poine, / ja li faillait tote l'aloigne." (2073-4) For our purposes, the two manuscripts are not importantly different.

of the line that follows, we realize that this sigh contained no air at all; her breath had already ended. What sort of sigh was this, then, and what sort of pain? If she had already died, then her physical pain would have ended, but perhaps the pain of her separation from Aeneas endured, or otherwise she was experiencing a pain—a sensation that, if she once experienced it, Rilke's Eurydice was now far past—at the separation from her accustomed experience of life. Perhaps in one moment, she could still smell the smell of Aeneas on his clothes even through the smell of her own blood that soaked them, and in the next, she no longer had that tether to the life of her body. This could have caused her pain. The sigh could also be felt as the departure of her spirit from her body, leaving in a rush that resembles the deep exhale of a sigh.

The *Roman d'Enéas* retains the very literal concept of the shade, the spirit that we know remains of Dido in the underworld, and which Aeneas later encounters. In that scene, the medieval poet does not depart significantly from Vergil: Aeneas sees Dido, makes his excuses, wishes for a response that he will never get from her, and she turns away from him, returning to her first husband, Sychaeus. This image, the silent and insubstantial tenant of Hades, is the substance that we can imagine leaving Dido in her sigh. This twelfth-century *Dydo*, however, gives the reader less reason to hope she will speak in that moment in the underworld. She has already said everything, already formed an ending for her story.

The Mountain, the Sea, and the End

Rilke's death does not need to be explained. As readers of dead poets, however, we are responsible to create a relationship with these poets. At a minimum, instrumentally, we

have to establish a plane of understanding that will enable us to read a poem from beginning to end. To take the obligations of the reader beyond this minimum level of engagement, the world that the poet has opened to the reader of poetry creates the possibility for a space of meeting. The space where the poet and the reader meet is the world created in the poetic creation of self, and the relationship between poet and reader is, like the love relationship, the context that makes this world-creation and self-imagination possible. When the poet is dead, this world is no longer a "city," like the one that Tsvetaeva felt closing to her when she learned of Rilke's death. The space where the poet and reader meet is necessarily collaborative (not on the level of meaning, but at the point of apprehension, the imagined space that constitutes the conditions necessary for the communication of meaning), a condition that makes the reader responsible not only for the self that reads, but also for the imagination that exerts an immediate shaping force on the space it enters. Instead of a city, this is the dark of the tunnel, the invisible action of the wind in the air, the implied spaces beyond the usual paths open to humans on the mountain, or on the pyre.

This world ends where it began: on the mountain. It is only on the force of the final re-creation of the self, a creation that is perfect through destruction, that the contest between the mountain and the sea can be reconciled. In the first section of "Поэма Горы" "Poem of the Mountain," Tsvetaeva brings together the mountain, the sea, and the unreachable city, in a unified landscape only available to the poet above it all, atop the mountain and outside of time, that is, unreachable by the worlds and the stories that belong to others. Here is the first section in its entirety:

The mountain was like the breast

Of a recruit cut down by shells.

The mountain craved virgin lips,

And marriage rites.

The mountain demanded these.

—An ocean rushing into the ears

Like a sudden hurrah!—

The mountain raced and wrestled.

The mountain was like thunder!

Flesh raffled off by Titans!

(Do you remember the last house

At the mountain's foot, at the suburb's edge?)

The mountain was—worlds!

God charges dearly for a world.

My mourning began with the mountain,

The mountain over a town. (37)

Та гора была, как грудь

Рекрута, снарядом сваленного.

Та гора хотела губ

Девственных, обряда свадебного

Требовала та гора.

— Океан в ушную раковину

Вдруг-ворвавшимся ура! —

Та гора гнала и ратовала.

Та гора была как гром!

Грудь, титанами разыгранная!

Той горы последний дом

Помнишь — на исходе пригорода?

Та гора была — миры!

Бог за мир взывает дорого!

Горе началось с горы.

Та гора была над городом.[76] (III.24-25)

The experience of the mountain's demand, the demand that signals mourning, that triggers the beginning of the process of world-creation, the marriage rites, the entry into

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[76] The Russian text of the poem is taken from the seven-volume edition of Tsvetaeva's works; differences that appear in Kossman's edition of the text are reflected in her English translation, above.

relationship, sounds like the ocean. Dinega reads a reconciliation in Tsvetaeva's inner conflict over the mountain in the see in "Новогоднее." When Tsvetaeva wishes Rilke "С целым морем," "Happy whole sea," Dinega sees a "metamorphosis" in which Tsvetaeva "overcomes her habitual dislike of the aquatic element—which previously has seemed to her tyrannical and threatening and which, in fact, she has associated with Rilke's illness and death—even as she overcomes her fear of death itself" (164). The sea, after all, is its own world, as Tsvetaeva recognized from the time of her childhood, so in that sense, it is what she has been moving towards all along: the other world. It is only in this moment, which Dinega calls a "metamorphosis," but which we could more accurately call a *poiesis*, that Tsvetaeva remakes the under-water world as a world that she can access, though it accessible only through death.

The ocean's enormity is figured on a scale with the mountain: the physical contests of antiquity, at the size of the mountain, is made up of titans, a scale that makes the conclusion possible. The mountain contains worlds also, in the "Poem of the Mountain," worlds that sound like the ocean, and even the poet who overlooks worlds from the mountain-top will be overcome by the force of these enormities. In fact, this is precisely what is required. The poet must step above the town, give in, like Psyche, to the demands of the mountain, to receive the thunder that can be experienced there.

For Psyche, as for Eurydice and for Dido, marriage was tied up with death. In each case, the marriage itself was of questionable legality: Psyche, because she was a mortal married to a god, and privately, Eurydice, because her marriage was not consummated before her death, and Dido, whose marriage in the cave was not respected even by its other

participant. In each case, the surer thing was death, and each woman came into herself at the moment of giving into her death, the thing forever and truly her own. These stories show us how "God charges dearly for a world," but also how, if willing to pay that price, the poet, living always within the death the world employs, yet creates her own world.

Postscript: Toward an Untimely Nietzscheism of the Feminine

In this study, I have often made reference to structures of imagining in the philosophical-poetic projects of these poems and letters. In Tsvetaeva's letters and essays, we have encountered a mappable system of thought, which adheres to and springs from what Olga Peters Hasty has called her "specifically historical apprehension of existence" (xvi). The structures I have identified in the poets' collaborative poetics reveal themselves on their own terms, but a closer consideration of "structure" in a philosophical and historical context may now prove useful. Gadamer, in his summary of Dilthey's approach to the historical, makes explicit the function of structure-building (in fact, *Bildung*) in Dilthey's work: "He used the concept of structure to distinguish the experiential character of psychological continuity from the causal continuity of natural processes. Logically 'structure' is distinguished by its referring to a totality of relationships that do not depend on a temporal, causal succession but on intrinsic connections" (223). This illuminates not only Dilthey's idea of structure, but also the structures that appear in the poetics examined here. When a structure is established for the sake of working with historical material (and this applies equally to the literary-historical material that interested Tsvetaeva, Pasternak, and Rilke), the structure's component parts are themselves relationships.

Relationships exist between reader and text, between poet and poet, and between text and text. The question that the structure is set up to answer is only: what kind of relationships? That is the question that Dilthey answers with "intrinsic connections," but there is some leeway within the other possible categories Gadamer suggests, i.e. "temporal" or "causal" connections, especially when the structure in question is a poetics and not a

science of history. The poets are free to re-define the temporal and the causal, as when Tsvetaeva decides that she will represent Russia for Rilke, but not on a factual basis, since Rilke is not unfamiliar with Russia. Tsvetaeva is not unaware of Rilke's past connections to Russia—she has, after all, sent him her poetry in Russian—but the "causal" element here is her own desire, not the temporal facts of the situation. The salient aspects at play in this idea of structure are those exercised by Dilthey but identified by Gadamer.

Writing about Dilthey's *Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (*Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*), Gadamer locates Dilthey's argumentative position around one of Gadamer's own main terms: "For Dilthey the ultimate presupposition for knowledge of the historical world is experience (Erlebnis)" (222). *Erlebnis*, the experience that takes place in the world, is often the target of criticism from Gadamer, and its centrality to Dilthey's grounding is part of what Gadamer identifies as the problem in Dilthey's approach to the historical. René Wellek summarizes Gadamer's rejection of Dilthey's psychologism in favor of his own *Wirkungsgeschichte* in the claim "that interpretation is a fusion of our own horizon, our own historicity clearly recognized as such, with the horizon of the past" (Wellek xxvi). As for the difference between this and Dilthey's approach to the historical sciences, the pithiest summary appears when Gadamer references Dilthey's appropriation from Vico for his own methodology: "The first condition of possibility of a science of history is that I myself am a historical being, that the person studying history is the person making history" (Dilthey, quoted by Gadamer, 222). The pithy dispatch of this formulation appears in Gadamer's note on the quotation, which asks, "But who, properly speaking, "makes" history?" (262) This can be taken as a pinpoint diagnosis of both the weakness in Dilthey's historical approach and as of the problem with

dependence on *Erlebnis* for a concept of the historical. In order to say where in the self there is space for experience and where there is a synthesizing understanding, Dilthey has to divide the self and rely on simultaneity. This does not address the epistemological problem that haunts the questions of subjective historicity that concern both philosophers. Gadamer's *Wirkungsgeschichte* moves beyond simultaneity into mutual necessity, or what Wellek calls his "fusion," which is a much more powerful solution to the problem of subjectivity.

Dilthey has excused himself from relying on a single epistemological model by claiming that the applications of models toward understanding history has always depended on a flawed division "between the content and form of the human spirit" (*The Formation of the Historical World* 296). The division necessitates a total schism in systems of understanding: "natural science creates one world through its categories and human science another" (296). To this he proposes an experiential solution, where the grounds for reconciliation is not in a philosophical system but in a lived interiority: "These philosophical systems of Descartes and Kant are no use. What we need is to grasp the inner relation of these two worlds in ourselves, how we adopt changing views on the world" (296). From this principle he builds his idea of "historical understanding," grounded in *Erlebnis*, which, if a kind of fusion, is an especially active kind, functioning only so far as it is enacted in the experience of the historical being.

The only remaining problem, one we might expect in a system where *Erlebnis* is always treated with caution if not hostility, could be summarized in another question: can a simple and elegant model describe the messy, uncomfortable experience of the subjective student of history? Of course, Gadamer also provides an answer for this. If Dilthey allows

for cramps and crawling in individual experience, he also over-imagines the experience of the historical scientist to a fictitious level, where it can no longer serve, since it is simply not true. This happens, as Gadamer points out, when Dilthey imagines a final coherence in the conception of history, realized through *Erlebnis*: "The decisive step for Dilthey's epistemological grounding of the human sciences is the transition from the structure of coherence in an individual's experience to *historical coherence*, which is *not experienced by any individual at all*" (219).

What is experienced by the individual, whether we believe it clears the bar of "coherence" or not, is expressed in Tsvetaeva's poetics of relationship. We might return now to Tsvetaeva's imagining of the powers of Psyche, to which she appeals in the lines: "I wait. Akin to silence, / Gestures serve me / In Psyche's hall" (Kossman 101). Erich Neumann's Jungian reading assigned certain of Psyche's actions to either masculine or feminine impulses and capacities, a division that is troubled by Tsvetaeva's location of Psyche's main source of power in this gestural silence. These elements—silence, gestures, waiting—are at once powerful and not readily gendered. It may be that Neumann's reading suffers from an insufficiency of forgetting, which Nietzsche saw as the main handicap of the "historical man." Of them he says:

> These historical men believe that the meaning of existence will come more and more to light in the course of its *process*, and they glance behind them only so that, from the process so far, they can learn to understand the present and to desire the future more vehemently; they have no idea that, despite their preoccupation with history, they in fact think and act unhistorically, or that their occupation with history stands in the service, not of pure knowledge, but of life. (65)

Contrast with this the space Nietzsche reserves for classicists, which is to say for Nietzsche himself: "for I do not know what meaning classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely—that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come" (60). The trick is that, in a maneuver that Neumann characterizes as the special preserve of the feminine psyche, the classicists serve the future by *not attempting to serve the future*, whereas those who believe they serve the future have failed to understand their role. According to his own schema, Nietzsche, like Psyche, succeeds by failing—failing, in the view of his "historical" contemporaries, to be timely.

Tsvetaeva offers a vision of Psyche as a relational adept, with a vocabulary of movement that allows her to navigate the confusing space of invisible and incomprehensible objects that she finds in the realms of the gods.

These "gestures," learned from Psyche, create space for discovery in relationship, of the other, and also of the self. They belong to a lexicon aligned with femininity, but not the symbolic, archetypal vision of femininity of Jungian imagining. Instead, Tsvetaeva's approach is more in line with Nietzsche's insistence on the usefulness of forgetting, which he calls "essential to action of any kind" (62). For a femininity based in action, we could look to something like the vision of the poetess as an Amazon that Ciepiela sees in Tsvetaeva's "Scythian poems": "Her poet-warriors write not with pens but with arrows, which are also Cupid's arrows" (99). Ciepiela shows that the poems of this cycle, like "Attempt at a Room," dramatizes Tsvetaeva's relationship with Pasternak. The same shifting quality of her poetic world that characterizes these poems, which allows her to

inhabit different figures in turn, now Cupid, now Psyche, is also essential to Tsvetaeva's conception of the feminine.

This is where the femininity she finds in the Psyche myth differs from that identified by Neumann: she also sees gendered categories in the figures of the story, but the quality of the feminine in Tsvetaeva's poetics, rather than checking certain boxes, moves between all of them. Her interest in Psyche is not directed at the archetypal space that she occupies, but at her interiority in the moment of strangeness she inhabits as she enters the palace in the mountains. She waits; she shows her fluency in silence by communicating with gestures. What she describes is action, which Nietzsche has designated as the foremost purpose of history: Tsvetaeva gives us what Gaston Bachelard hoped for, a "nietzschéisme du féminin," embodied and enacted.

The relationship that Tsvetaeva is describing in the poem in which these lines appear is her epistolary relationship with Boris Pasternak. In their letters, they discuss their respective and shared poetics in similarly allusive language to what we see in Tsvetaeva's poetry. It is in Pasternak's account of his earliest inkling of a poetics and a theory of art, however, that we can most clearly see the strands of the Nietzschean that informed their poetic conversation. In his memoir, *Safe Conduct*, he describes his early-dawning understanding of art in this way:

> We take people as our symbols so as to overcast them with weather, set them in their natural surroundings. And we take weather, or what is one and the same, nature—so that we may overcast it with our passion. We drag everyday things into prose for the sake of poetry. We entice prose into poetry for the sake of music. This,

> then, in the widest sense of the word, I called art, set by the clock of the living race which strikes with the generations.[77] (30)

The circular image of the clock is the vital thing here, the passage of time that repeats as it moves on. But if we are tempted to associate Pasternak's vision less with Nietzsche's "eternal return" than with the Jungian ouroboros, then we might look to Pasternak's other rule upon which he bases his "aesthetic of creativity": that

> art concerns itself with life as the ray of power *passes through it*. The conception of power I would take in that same widest sense in which it is taken by theoretical physics, with this difference only, that the subject under discussion wouldn't be the principle of power but its voice, its presence.[78] (65)

Whatever we may conclude about Pasternak's grasp of physics, this is certainly an admissible illustration of a Nietzschean concept of power, centering action as it does.

The circular clock also describes the interrelation between the three myths of this study: we begin with death, Psyche's involuntary, unrealized sacrifice, and end with death, Dido's destruction undertaken in the fullness of her self-possession. The only one who knows the way between the two worlds, mortality and immortality, equal in their power over the eternal, is Eurydice. The relationship that the three mythological women have to

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[77] "Людей мы изображаем, чтобы накинуть на них погоду. Погоду, или, что одно и то же, природу, — чтобы на нее накинуть нашу страсть. Мы втаскиваем все-дневность в прозу ради поэзии. Мы вовлекаем прозу в поэзию ради музыки. Так, в широчайшем значении слова, называл я искусство, поставленное по часам живого, бьющего поколеньями, рода." (III.160)

[78] "искусство интересуется жизнью *при прохожденьи* сквозь нее луча силового. Понятье силы я взял бы в том же широчайшем смысле, в каком берет его теоретическая физика, с той только разницей, что речь шла бы не о принципе силы, а о ее голосе, о ее присутствии." (III.186)

one another is continuously realized, developed and re-imagined in the circular movement of historical reception, which is both the material that makes up poetic relationship and the condition that makes it possible.

What I am describing in these cases takes the received literary material as the "historical" input in the creative act (itself a form of Nietzschean "action"). The balance recalls Nietzsche's formula, which stipulates: "the unhistorical and the historical are necessary in equal measure for the health of an individual, of a people and of a culture" (63). Ciepiela has shown that Pasternak intentionally cultivated a historical approach in his poetics amidst the post-revolutionary changes in the poetic movements in Russia. For her, Tsvetaeva's untimeliness stood in opposition to Pasternak's historicism, centered on Tsvetaeva's belief "that the poet was necessarily and even fatally in conflict with his times; hence her interest in the myth and the reality of 'the poet's death'" (145). If Tsvetaeva's untimeliness and Pasternak's historicity stood in an active relationship of balancing one another, then the poet's death is the fulcrum. At every stage in the poet's development in this relationship, everything emerges from and circles around the knowledge that the poet will die, and it is this knowledge that allows the balance of the historical and the unhistorical to be maintained.

The Nietzschean feminine reinforces the importance of this balance, which is necessary to maintain the circular model of historical engagement. Under the auspices of the feminine, however, the scope of impact does not skip from the scale of individuals to that of the culture. This Nietzscheism of the feminine maintains the balance of historical and the unhistorical specifically within and for the sake of the relationship. The feminine in turn shows us that the relationship, when conducted with this license to move between

historical and unhistorical, allows for the realizations of the individual, and of the culture. The Nietzschean circle is closed by its reimagining in the feminine and through the poetic mode developed by Tsvetaeva, Rilke, and Pasternak in and for relationship.

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