Rendering the Sublime
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A Reading of Marina Tsvetaeva’s Fairy-Tale Poem

The Swain

Tora Lane
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I have had the good fortune to receive considerable guidance, support and advice from scholars at institutions around the world at different stages of my work on this book. I am deeply indebted to all who have helped me and made me go much further in this work than I expected.

I would first of all like to thank my supervisor Anna Ljunggren at the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Stockholm University, for working closely and patiently with me throughout the course of this work, for sharing her knowledge, her feeling for poetry, and attention to detail.

I owe certain central ideas in this study to my second supervisor Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback at Södertörn University College, who has been a constant source of inspiration, and in particular, has guided me in matters that concern the philosophical and poetological aspects of Tsvetaeva’s poetry.

A grant from STINT, The Swedish Foundation for International Co-operation in Research and Higher Education, enabled a visit at Princeton University, where I was able to receive supervision from Olga Hasty. I am deeply grateful to her for working closely with me, generously sharing her time and erudition, and giving me decisive supervision at the crucial moment when the dissertation was about to take its form. I am also grateful to other members of staff and graduate students at Princeton University for letting me take part in their scholarly atmosphere.

A grant from The Swedish Institute enabled a visit to Moscow and consultations with Liudmila Aleksandrovna Sofronova at the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow on questions concerning Russian folklore. I am very grateful to her for being a good mentor in matters of Russian culture, for her caring support and for our inspiring meetings.

I thank Karin Grelz, Lund University, who has given me valuable and constructive guidance at different times of my work on the thesis. I am also

Acknowledgements
grateful to Olga Grigorievna Revzina at Moscow State University, whom I consulted at a very early stage of my doctoral studies, and James Bailey, University of Wisconsin-Madison, who has given me valuable advice on folkloric metre.

I am deeply indebted to Irina Shevelenko, University of Wisconsin-Madison, for reading and commenting on the manuscript and providing me with decisive critique, and to Irina Sandomirskaja, Södertörn University College, for her thought-provoking comments on the manuscript.

I am grateful to Ursula Phillips for editing the English of the final manuscript.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the funds and institutions that have given financial support to this project over the years. Besides STINT and The Swedish Institute, I owe thanks to the Birgit and Gad Rausing Foundation and to the Ad Infinitum Foundation for giving me funding to work on the completion of the script. I am also grateful to the Vera Sager Foundation for funding a visit to archives in Moscow.

I wish to express my most profound gratitude to all colleagues at the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Stockholm University, for making it such a wonderful place in which to work. People who have played an important role in the formation of my thesis are Peter Alberg Jensen, who led the graduate seminars and whose perspicacious critique, inspiration and warmth have provided me with motivation to continue to develop; Per-Arne Bodin, whom I thank not only for the interest he has taken in this work, and the beneficial comments he has made, but also for his great kindness and the support he has given since my time as a student at the department, and Leonard Neuger, who has always been there to develop any thoughts in the most unexpected and joyful direction, and who has always been a wonderful friend. I would also like to thank Elisabeth Löfstrand for the keen interest she has shown and for always being so good.

Thanks also to doctoral students and other senior researchers, who have participated in seminars and other formal or informal discussions of the book. I thank in particular Mattias Ågren and Fabian Linde for comments, critique and friendship, in short, for being such good fellow travellers in the troika that we constituted during our years of doctoral studies. I owe special thanks to Fabian for his reading of the final manuscript. I would also like to thank
Natalia Ringblom for her participation in seminars on this work, and last but not least, Larisa Korobenko for her enthusiastic support, substantial help with the final redactions, and for doing the layout. I also owe thanks to Susanna Witt for reading and commenting on the bibliographical part.

Finally, I cannot imagine having written this thesis without friends and relatives, and I am especially grateful to all those who have shown manifest interest in the work over the years. I would like to particularly thank Howard Goldman for contributing with careful editing at different stages, Maja Thrane and Carl-Filip Brück for reading and commenting on the manuscript, and Evgenij Wolynsky and Alisa Ilmenska for advice on the oral and rhythmical qualities of the poem.

Some thanks seem to be beyond mention, but I owe so much to my mother, Karin Rodhe, who has given me great and vital support throughout the years.

Last I thank my husband, Oleg Iliuyshchenko, for his constant inspiration and, for sharing everything, and my daughter Hilda, for everything.
Tsvetaeva’s writings are quoted in Russian and in English translation, see *Primary Sources*, page 135 for full bibliographical note.

Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine. I will quote the poem *The Swain (Mólodets)* in Russian, but also give translations and transliterations of the lines that I discuss, with the sole purpose of making my argumentation accessible to the reader who is not or little acquainted with Russian. I have used the Library of Congress system for transliteration. However, Russian names are given in their familiar spelling (Bely, Gogol) in the English text. They are accurately transliterated (Belyi, Gogol’ ) in the Russian entries of the bibliographical part.
The reader of the Modernist poet Marina Tsvetaeva’s writings is often struck by the vehement intensity of her poetic intonation, which can seem to be on the verge of an outburst. In a critical remark, Osip Mandelstam asserts that the women’s poetry of his times, including Tsvetaeva’s, “vibrates at the highest pitch”\(^1\), and Joseph Brodsky echoes him, albeit as a sign of praise, with the assertion that it is typical of her poetry to begin on “high C”\(^2\). It has already been remarked that the characteristic fervour of her poetic voice should not be mistaken for a mere expression of the poet’s personality, but that it is related to the central artistic questions of Russian Modernism.\(^3\) In both her poetic and prose writings, she experiments with potential meanings, rhythms, tonalities and forms of speech. In a remark on a poem in a letter to Pasternak, she asks if he noticed how: “I cry, leap, roll myself to meaning” (“dokrikivaiusʹ, Quotation in English is from Svetlana Boym, *Death in Quotation Marks: Cultural Myths of the Modern Poet*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 192. Mandelstam writes in the essay “Literaturnaia Moskva” (1922): “[…] женская поэзия продолжает вибрировать на самых высоких нотах, оскорбляя слух, историческое, поэтическое чутье.” (Osip Mandel’shtam, *Sobranie sochinenii v dvukh tomakh* (ed. P. Nerler). Tom 2. Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990, p. 276).


\(^3\) Olga Hasty asserts in *Tsvetaeva’s Orphic Journeys in the Worlds of the Word* that “The emotional intensity Tsvetaeva achieves in her verse is the product of highly consistent translations of large poetic concerns into the technical resources of poetry” (Hasty 1996, p. XIV). She further describes Tsvetaeva as “a serious, intellectually responsible writer whose avant-garde writings document a systematic and sustained engagement with fundamental questions of poetic discourse.” (Ibid.)
doskakivaius’, dokatyvaius’ do smysla”) (2004, p. 240). She explored language to its extreme in her quest for language to become a force. In the opening lines of the poetic triptych *Poets (Poety)* (1923), she declares: “The poet brings language from afar. / The poet is taken far by speech.” (“Poet – izdaleka zavodit rech’. / Poeta – daleko zavodit rech’.”) (1994:2, p. 184). With a chiastic pun, Tsvetaeva conveys poetic speech as a reciprocal process, in which the writer is both the subject of it and subjected to it. The poet brings language, or speech, from a faraway locus, and this is the incentive for the wonder of the reverse: the experience of the faraway loci that speech takes him or her to.

0.1. On *The Swain* and Tsvetaeva’s other Folkloric Writings

One form of bringing “language from afar” to be “taken far” that Marina Tsvetaeva ventured in her poetry was to explore Russian folk tales and the language of Russian folk poetry. Following a strain in Russian Modernism that can be traced back to Russian, and even further to German, Romanticism, Tsvetaeva turned to Russian folk art as an alternative creative paradigm and a mythical form of art.

In Tsvetaeva’s early poetry her attraction to folk art was mostly felt in the imagery, but in the course of several formative years, approximately 1916–1923, Tsvetaeva explored the language and rhythms of folk poetry in her more ‘bookish’ forms of writing. She developed a unique folkloric style, which reached its climax in a series of narrative poems written in the early 1920s: *Side Streets (Pereulochki)* (1922) and the long poetic tales, written in the sub-genre of *poema-skazka*: *The Tsar-Maiden (Tsar’-Devitsa)* (1920) and *The Swain (Mólodets)* (1924). *The Swain* was to be the last in this series of

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4 The quotation is from a letter of 26 June 1926, where Tsvetaeva replies to Pasternak’s commentary on the poem *The Pied Piper (Krysolov)*. See full quotation in footnote 190 and discussion of it on p. 120.

5 Translation quoted from Hasty 1996, p. 113.

6 This formula may be understood in light of the double sense of both the Greek word *topos* and the Latin equivalent *locus* meaning both a linguistic form and a place or position.

7 I will refer to the poems hereafter by their English titles. The English title is taken
poems based on models of Russian folk art, apart from an unfinished poem called *Egorushka*, which Tsvetaeva began in 1921 and attempted to return to in 1923 and 1928.\(^8\) In the genre of poetic tales, it was followed only by the *The Pied Piper* (*Krysolov*) (1925), inspired by the German legend and literary treatments of it in German Romanticism and after.\(^9\) After she emigrated to Europe in 1922, Tsvetaeva came to gradually abandon the Russian folkloric style, but the work with folk art continued to be felt in her poetic language and themes.\(^10\)

The present study comprises a reading of this last major poetic piece, *The Swain*, a foremost example of her poetic folkloric style. The poem is a considerable poetic work of approximately 2200 lines, or 100 pages in print, arranged in two parts, each with five chapters. It is a central poem in her work, and she returned to the poem in later literary essays.\(^11\) The fact that Tsvetaeva translated *The Swain* into French and diligently prepared it for an edition with illustrations by the Russian painter and sculptor Natalya Goncharova, an edition that was not published during her lifetime,\(^12\) also testifies to the importance of the experience of folkloric writing and, in particular, of *The Swain*.\(^13\) It was first

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\(^12\) The French version was first published in its entirety in 1992. It was republished in 2005 in a bilingual edition, see Primary Sources, p. 135.

\(^13\) In a letter to Raisa Lomonosova from 12 October 1930, Tsvetaeva mentions a translation into English by Alec Brown (1995:7, p. 322). The translation has never been published, however, to my knowledge.

The poem is a rendering of the Russian folk tale “The Vampire” (“Upyr’”) from Aleksandr Afanasiev’s collection of Russian Folk Tales, Narodnye russkie skazki (1855–1863), and I will refer to Vladimir Propp’s edition (1958:3, pp. 124-7).15 The poem has the subheading “A tale”, “Skazka”, but it is not the story for children that we usually associate with such tales. Afanasiev’s tale, which in itself is a rather morbid story about a vampire in disguise, is turned into a poetic drama about blind demonic passion and a human being’s overcoming of death and subsequent transgression of human nature. In the present study, I will attempt to probe how Tsvetaeva explored Russian folk poetry in The Swain in her quest for an experience of the magic loci of poetry.

To briefly introduce the plot, which I will treat at greater length further ahead: The vampire turns up at a village feast as a young handsome stranger, a Swain, associated with fire. He becomes betrothed to the heroine, Marusia, who discovers that he is a vampire. She is forbidden to reveal his true name, because by doing so she would lose him. She is infused with his fire, and sacrifices her mother and brother in order to unite with him and consummate their love through death. But this is only the beginning of a second life, which presents a kind of life in suspension, a limbo in anticipation of the final union at the end of the poem.

0.2. Research and Purpose of Study

The Swain attracted the interest of prominent critics. Some were highly enthusiastic, considering it a milestone in the experiments with folkloric expression in Russian poetry, as did the poet and critic Vladislav Khodasevich,16

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14 The manuscript is kept at The Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI) in the fond 1190, Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva, opis’ 2, no 8 (chernovaia tetrad’), no 9 (belovaia tetrad’).

15 There is a transcription of the fairy tale “Upyr’”, and the fairy tale from “Rasskazy o mertvetsakh”, which Tsvetaeva also invokes in the poem, included in the Appendix, pp. 143-7.

or proof of Tsvetaeva’s exceptional lyric mastery, as did the critic Dmitry Sviatopolk-Mirsky. Some strongly disapproved, considering the folkloric style to be an inaccurate representation of both folk poetry and the Russian language, such as Georgy Adamovich. The poem then suffered the same destiny as Tsvetaeva’s poetry in general; it fell into the oblivion of Soviet repression.

From the 1960s onwards, after Tsvetaeva’s poetry began to attract the attention of scholars in Russia and elsewhere, the poem received “relatively little critical attention”, as Michael Makin wrote in 1989. However, in the last decades the poem has been examined in several studies with respect to both folkloric and literary tradition as well as in the context of Tsvetaeva’s oeuvre and life. The most recent and also most thoroughgoing study of the poem is Häretische Transgressionen: Das Märchenpoem “Mólodec” von Marina Cvetaeva by Christiane Hauschild (2004), a monograph dedicated entirely to the poem. Hauschild reads the poem with reference to intertextual links as transgressive writing against the backdrop of gender theory. In contrast to Hauschild, the transgressive or experimental aspects of The Swain will be read in this study as a consequence of the poet’s attempts to bring out a magic poetic locus through writing.

Despite these many important studies, a vital aspect of the poem has not been sufficiently addressed, namely Tsvetaeva’s treatment of folk poetry as a locus for the sublime in correlation with the attraction to folk art in Romanticism and Modernism. With a few exceptions, the research on the folkloric po-

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19 Hauschild identifies a series of intertextual links and concludes that although the poem invokes several textual traditions, any attempt to establish its theme would denigrate its contradictory nature. “Diese Deutungsansätze offenbaren, wie viele Texttraditionen im Poem präsent sind, zeigen jedoch auch seine Widerspuchlichkeit.” (Hauschild 2004, p. 11). She focuses on Tsvetaeva’s discontent with established subject positions as a resistance to inherent gender categories, but the assertion is, in my view, more pertinent with regard to Tsvetaeva’s defiance of an identity established by representation.
ems has been divided generally speaking into studies of the folkloric aspects, on the one hand, and of the literary or biographical aspects, on the other. I will consider both the folkloric and literary aspects, in the attempt to shed light on how Tsvetaeva reworks folk art in order to render a story about an elemental and sublime force. While her treatment of this force is linked to central artistic questions in Tsvetaeva's poetry and prose, I will relate my reading of the poem to the poet's own reflections on it and on art in general.

The works of Jerzy Faryno and Liudmila Zubova represent milestones in the research on the folkloric aspects of Tsvetaeva's poetry. Faryno analyzed Tsvetaeva's folkloric poems from a mythopoetic perspective, and Zubova from a linguistic, while both examined archetypal or formal convergences between her poetry and folk art. They were followed by Vladimir Aleksandrov, who further probed Tsvetaeva's use of folkloric forms primarily with respect to folk art, but also against the backdrop of Russian Modernism. The works on the strictly folkloric aspects, and in particular Zubova's, are very important for the present study, in which I seek to investigate further the nature of Tsvetaeva's treatment of folk art in The Swain. However, the focus in these earlier studies

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21 Like Zubova and Faryno, Aleksandrov draws attention first and foremost to similarities, and argues that Tsvetaeva’s poetry presents a form of folklorism (“natural’nyi fol’klorizm”). (Vladimir Aleksandrov, Fol’klorizm M. Tsvetaevoi (Stikhotvornaia poe tika, zhanrovoe svoeobrazie). Avtoreferat, Moskva, 1989, p. 65).
on the convergence between Tsvetaeva’s folkloric writings and folk art or culture, precludes any enquiry into the relation between Tsvetaeva’s concept of art and her treatment of the themes and style of folk poetry.\textsuperscript{22}

I wish therefore to re-examine the folkloric style in \textit{The Swain} against the backdrop of literary tradition and in particular German Romanticism and Russian Modernism. Several studies have related both the theme and the poetic language of \textit{The Swain} to Russian Modernism, and in particular to Symbolism and Futurism, while others have related the genre and certain aspects of the theme to German and Russian Romanticism. In his ground-breaking works on Tsvetaeva’s poetry, Simon Karlinsky remarked on aspects of the poem as regards both theme and language, pointing to her unique folkloric style, while at the same time placing her within the general context of Russian primitivism.\textsuperscript{23} Elena Korkina made a thematic study of Tsvetaeva’s folkloric poems as an expression of Tsvetaeva’s poetics, which she read in the light of Russian Symbolism as the poet’s preoccupation with the otherworldly.\textsuperscript{24}

The relationship between Tsvetaeva’s individual textual treatment of the plot of the original folk tale in \textit{The Swain} has also been addressed by Elena Semeka-Pankratov, who insisted on the “psychologizing” aspects of the story.\textsuperscript{25} Natalya Teletova traced the poem to the Romantic tradition in a compara-

\textsuperscript{22}“Вряд ли будет преувеличением сказать, что самый глубокий, исходный пласт Цветаевской поэтической системы наиболее эксплицитно выражен в поэме-сказке \textit{Царь-Девица}. С предельной четкостью он раскрывается как на уровне ее сюжета и состава персонажей, так и на уровне семантики. Эта четкость, однако, проистекает не от какой-либо метапоэтической установки в поэме (данное явление вообще здесь не имеет места), а оттого, что тут выведена та народная (или шире – мифологическая) глубинная основа, на которой покоится вся Цветаева.” (Faryno 1985, p. 111).

\textsuperscript{23} Karlinsky 1966, pp. 227-30.


tive reading of the poem and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*. Michael Makin claimed that the poem adheres to a Romantic tradition of fairy tale, and insisted that the poem represented a violent Modernist break with that tradition both in theme and language through its treatment of active female desire. Irina Shevelenko presented an interpretation of the poem in her wide-ranging monograph on Tsvetaeva's literary career, *Literaturnyi put’ Tsvetaevoi*, where, on the basis of Korkina's study, she treats the theme of the poem against the background of the connection between Eros and artistic creation in Russian Symbolism. In her monograph, as mentioned, Hauschild also explores intertextual relations of *The Swain* to Romanticism, and in particular to Russian Modernism.

As these studies have shown, the literary traditions of Russian Modernism and Russian and German Romanticism are central to *The Swain*. More precisely, the poem relates to a Romantic tradition that starts from the pre-Romantic literary period of *Sturm und Drang*, of Goethe, Schiller and Herder, the German Romantic Movement of the Jena circle and the so-called *Frühromantik*, continues through the Romantic movement proper and finds further expression in certain aspects of Modernism. However, none of these studies addresses what links the poem to these traditions on a deeper level, namely the literary quandary of how to write or render mythical art as a locus for the sublime. The Romantics turned to folk art and fairy tales as examples of national mythical art, and there was a related attraction amongst certain Russian Modernists’ to Russian folk art as a locus for the mythical and magical. I will examine the influence of the quest for a mythical art in these traditions on Tsvetaeva’s interpretation of Afanasiev’s folk tale.

Other important studies have addressed aspects of Tsvetaeva’s literary biography because of the intimate connection between life and art that Tsvetaeva

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29 Although she relates the poem to Romantic writers, her reading is focused on placing the poem within the context of Russian Modernism. She writes: “‘Der Mólodec’ steht im Kontext der russischen Postsymbolismus.” (Hauschild 2004, p. 188).
shares with the Symbolists, and their notion of life-creation (zhiznetvorchestvo). Anna Saakiants read the poem as a tragic psychological piece about an impossible passion, and compared it to Mikhail Lermontov’s poem The Demon.30 Lily Feiler and Jane Taubman also explored the correlation between Tsvetaeva’s experiences in life and those of Marusia.31 Like Saakiants, Taubman asserted that the poem was about an impossible passion, which she read in the light of Tsvetaeva’s relatively recent acquaintance with Pasternak and of the poem’s epigraph with its dedication to Pasternak: “For your magnificent play / For your tender consolation”,32 (“Za igru za tvoiu velikuiu / za utekhi tvoi za nezhnye…”) (1994:3, p. 280). Catherine Ciepela also addresses the poem with respect to gender in her comprehensive study of the relationship between Tsvetaeva and Pasternak. She remarks on a potential intertextual connection between the Swain as a demon and the demonic theme in Pasternak’s My Sister Life (Sestra – moia zhizn’) (1922).33

The poem treats the relation between life and art, but not as a tragic piece of impossible love, for Marusia and the Swain are united, albeit in the beyond, and through Marusia’s non-human transformation. It is a love story, which converges with Tsvetaeva’s description of her relation to Pasternak in a letter to Anna Teskova, dated February 1928, about an impossible love, which nevertheless can take place in a third realm of fairy tales and dreams. It is a love “in the free” (“ins Freie”), which is: “Not this world, and not the other, but a third: the dream’s, the fairy tale’s, mine.” (“Ne tot svet i ne etot – tretii: sna, skazki, moi”) (1994:6, p. 365). This third realm, which is neither life nor death, can, as I will try to show, be understood as a world of poetic reality, where the poets meet in a different way. To the extent that the poem treats the process of writing and the force of language, the epigraph to Pasternak can be read with respect to his influence on her not only as a person, but also of his poetry.34

34 This question will only be addressed indirectly in the present study, because a
Finally, the reflections and remarks of critics and poets contemporary to Tsvetaeva represent a different, but nonetheless important and illustrative body of material with many shrewd observations on the poetic language of *The Swain*. For instance, the critic Dmitry Sviatopolk-Mirsky and the poet and critic Vladislav Khodasevich both underlined the significance of the connections with the Russian Futurist Movement and with the poet Boris Pasternak as regards Tsvetaeva's poetic style. Reflections made by Tsvetaeva's daughter Ariadna Efron and Boris Pasternak also provide significant material. Moreover, the correspondence between Tsvetaeva and Pasternak may also contribute to an understanding of *The Swain* and of Tsvetaeva's way of relating to poetry at that time (2004). Other works or comments on the folkloric poems and other aspects of Tsvetaeva's poetry will also be cited when relevant.


0.3. Writing as Rendering

In previous research on Tsvetaeva, the concept of “mythopoeia” or “mythopoetics” has frequently been defined in terms of a set of codes or a fictionalized narrative, which the poet alters to formulate her worldview and her understanding of art. Jerzy Faryno, who was one of the first to apply the term “mythologism” to Tsvetaeva’s poetry, defines myth as “an initial text-code”, and analyzes Tsvetaeva’s reformulation of mythical codes on a semantic level. Jerzy Faryno, who was one of the first to apply the term “mythologism” to Tsvetaeva’s poetry, defines myth as “an initial text-code”, and analyzes Tsvetaeva’s reformulation of mythical codes on a semantic level. Irina Shevelenko similarly treats Tsvetaeva’s “mythologism” in terms of the expression of the poet’s world view through mythical codes and analyzes Tsvetaeva’s poems on a thematic level. This limited understanding of myth fails, however, to do justice to important aspects of Tsvetaeva’s specific concern with myth in her writings.

Instead of considering myth as a set of codes that present a starting point for her creative activity, I will approach myth in Tsvetaeva’s poetry as an idea that is related to the quality of poetic language to speak the sublime, and therefore read her “mythopoeia” as the attempt to achieve such a language.

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38 Irina Shevelenko defines Tsvetaeva’s approach to different myths in terms of “mythologization” (“mifologizm”) or mythopoetics (“mifopoetika”). By Tsvetaeva’s mythopoetics, she understands: “Разные по методикам анализа, все эти работы близки нам своим стремлением к выявлению некоторого целостного мировоззрения автора, которое проявляет себя в его пристрастии к тем или иным мифологическим кодам или схемам, повторяющимся (либо видоизменяющимся) при разработке разных сюжетов и тем.” (Shevelenko 2002, p. 11).

39 The autobiographical childhood prose piece “Дом у Старого Пимена” (1933) comprises an important key to the poet’s perception of myth. She asserts that she will read the story of her old grandfather Izmailov through the myth of Charon: “И так как все – миф, так как не-мифа – нет, вне мифа – нет, из-мифа – так как миф предвосхитил и раз и навсегда изваял – все, Иловайский мне нынче предстает в виде Харона, перевозящего в ладье через Лету одного за другим – всех своих смертных детей.” (1994:5, p. 111). The notion that myth has shaped “all” (“всё”) is ambiguous. It can be interpreted, on the one hand, in terms of the supremacy of mythical narratives, which seem however, on the other hand, to be based on the ability of myth to convey being in its totality. As I will try to show, Tsvetaeva seems to have ascribed this ability to language.

40 There is a tradition of considering mythos in opposition to logos as a form of speech and not as a narrative that goes back to the time before the Pre-Socratic notion of the
Venclova describes Tsvetaeva’s treatment of myth in a comparison of her dramatic works *Ariadna* (1924) and *Phedra* (1927) with tragedies of the Symbolist Vyacheslav Ivanov, and contends that the poets do “not simply retell or rework the mythological plot, but also repeat the distinctive logic, polymorphous semantics, and eternal openendedness of myth.”

Venclova’s description of myth has bearings on the choice of poetic style, by means of which the poet renders myth. His remark does not only apply to the tragic dramas that build on Greek myths, but also to *The Swain*, to the extent that Tsvetaeva, as I aim to show, develops an obscure poetic language in order to convey a mythical force. In other words, central to her preoccupation with myth is a concern with the poetic means to speak it, and this concern permeates her treatment of the fairy tale and her explorations of the poetic word through invocations of folk art in *The Swain*.

Without addressing the question of Ivanov’s particular influence, this study will touch upon a related aspect of the general influence of the so-called younger Russian Symbolists on Tsvetaeva’s understanding of poetry, namely their approach to folk art as a locus of myth and magic. Tsvetaeva explored the folk tale as a source of myths and a language to speak the myth in a way that is reminiscent of the Russian Symbolists’ interest in folkloric magic. As known, Aleksandr Blok and Andrey Bely had taken a deep interest in the magic and elemental aspects of folk art. Blok argued in an essay of 1910 that it was in “The Poetry of Spells and Incantations” (“Poeziia zagovorov i zaklinańi”), as the essay was called, that true poetry could be sensed, and Bely saw the “Magic of

word. Kathryn A. Morgan asserts that: “We shall see that before the Presocratics the world of myth was characterized by undemonstrable truth and poetic authority; the word *mythos* similarly connoted authoritative, efficacious and performative speech.” (Kathryn A. Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 16).

41 Venclova 1985, p. 89.

42 Despite the differences in the approach to myth, Jerzy Faryno’s comments on the poetic technique by which Tsvetaeva’s achieves what he interprets as a “code-creating energy” and “rearticulation” are highly valuable for this study (Faryno 1985, p. 407f).

Words” (“Magiia slov” 1909) in the form of conjuration. In the present study of The Swain, I will enquire further into the nature of Tsvetaeva’s particular interpretation of the enchanted aspects of folk art and how Tsvetaeva seeks a poetic language to render them.

As both Korkina and Shevelenko have asserted, The Swain presents an image of art and the artist, and as such it can be related to Russian Symbolism. The myth-creating activity of the Russian Symbolists involved a fusion of life and art, so-called life-creation, zhiznetvorchestvo, characterized by its “aesthetization of life”. This does not mean that they sought to make life beautiful, but that they applied mythical narratives, some demonic, to contemporary life. Korkina argues that The Swain should be inscribed into Tsvetaeva’s mythopoetics, because it contains an image of art as transcendence into the otherworldly that relates to Russian Symbolism, and Shevelenko relates the poetic theme of obsessive love to the Symbolist tradition of aligning art with Eros, and contends that the poem is about the impossibility of the poet not to submit to the force of the otherworldly. The image of art and the nature of this image deserve, however, further investigation, and in particular with respect to the question how Tsvetaeva interprets the force of the otherworldly in The Swain and how this force relates to art.

In order to grasp the image of art that the poem presents, it is important to look beyond the Symbolist influence. Zara Mints has shown that the Symbolists understood art as a deep analogy for the world, which was conceived as a myth and legend to be created. In contrast to the Symbolists, at the time of writing The Swain, art for Tsvetaeva appears not to have been an analogy for the world, but a second essential life, or Life (Zhizn’) with a capital letter. Tsvetaeva often wrote through personae. As Hanna Rutuu explains: “Ts-

vetaeva’s poetry is filled with speakers, images and stories from earlier literary traditions.” The parallel between Tsvetaeva’s first name Marina and Marusia, which is a popular diminutive form, is indicative, and in a letter to Pasternak of 22 May 1926, she emphasized the correlation: “why, I am Marusia” (“ved’ ia sama Marusia”) (2004, p. 205f) and in a letter from 10 July she wrote “The whole Mólodets – so much about myself” (“Ves’ Mólodets – do chego o sebe!”) (2004, p. 255). In yet another letter to Pasternak, written on 11 February 1923, that is, just as she was about to complete The Swain, she urged him to write a “big piece” (“bolshaia veshch”), because in this way poetry would become a “second life, first life, only life” (“vtoraia zhiznʹ, pervaia zhiznʹ, edinstvennaia zhizn”) (2004, p. 40). Tsvetaeva explored Marusia’s entranced love for the demon and her transformation into an element, as an image of the coming into being of this second life in art. Furthermore, this image is linked to poetic language, because as the letter to Pasternak indicates, for Tsvetaeva writing was the means of attaining this second, more essential form of life.

Although Tsvetaeva like the Symbolists sought a more absolute form for the reality of myth in literature and language, for her this reality was an immanent presence that the poet had to render or “open” through poetic language. She described writing (and reading) as “co-creating” (“sotvorchestvo”), which is an intricate and complex concept that conjoins the notion of individual art with a view on poetry as interpretation. In the later essay “The Poet and Time” (1932), she defines art as “Not fellow travelling, but lonely co-creating” (“Ne poputchestvo, a odinokoe sotvorchesto.”) (1994:5, 340). Co-creating can be understood in light of the overall tendency in Tsvetaeva’s poetry to render


49 Sviatopolk-Mirsky makes the interesting remark that the world for Tsvetaeva is the emanation of essences, and that things only live in the word: “Вещественный мир для нее – только эманация сущностей. Вещи живут только в словах. Они не sunt, а percipiuntur. Sunt только их сущность.” (Sviatopolk-Mirskii 2002, p. 111).

50 Tsvetaeva remarked in the essay “The Poet on the Critic” (“Poet o kritike”) (1926) that her task was “To open the essence given in the tale as a skeletal frame.” (“Вскрыть суть сказки, данной в костяке.”) See full quotation and discussion on p. 44f.

given mythical or fairy tale narratives, and it indicates that the poet understood writing as a continuous process of interpretation and reinterpretation. In a letter to Rainer Maria Rilke of 6 July 1926, Tsvetaeva wrote: “Keine Sprache ist Muttersprache. Dichten ist nachdichten.”52 The German word “dichten” means literally to write or to compose, while “nachdichten” which can be translated as “to render”, has the prefix nach which means after. Tsvetaeva, who was highly sensitive to morphemes, certainly sensed the notion of writing after or in the tracks of somebody or something else. It can be related to the fact that Tsvetaeva seems to have seen the presence of a force in poetry, which would take the poet to life in art.53

The force seems to be related to poetic language, for the notion of co-creating can also be related to Tsvetaeva’s explorations of folkloric style in her poetic language.54 In an essay on Natalyia Goncharova, the artist and sculptor, written in conjunction with Goncharova’s work on her illustrations to the French translation of The Swain, Tsvetaeva noted that national art is to be “co-

52 The full passage is as follows: “Dichten ist schon übertragen, aus der Muttersprache – in eine andere, ob französisch oder deutsch, wird wohl gleich sein. Keine Sprache ist Muttersprache. Dichten ist nachdichten. Darum versteh ich nicht wenn man von französischen oder russischen etc redet. Ein Dichter kann französisch schreiben, er kann nicht ein französischer Dichter sein. Das ist lächerlich.” (1992, p. 76). She repeated and expanded upon her understanding of poetry as nachdichten in the later essay “Neskol’ko pisem Rainer Maria Rilke” (1929), where she writes that nachdichten is to follow anew the path taken by another poet, a path that always vanishes or grows over: “Nachdichten – заново прокладывать дорогу по мгновенно зарастающим следам.” (1994:5, p. 322).

53 In the later essay “Epos i lirika sovremennoi Rossii” (1933), Tsvetaeva writes about a force that runs through the poetry of all times: “[...] ибо поэзия не дробится ни в поэтах, ни на поэтов, она во всех своих явлениях — одна, одно, в каждом — вся, так же как, по существу, нет поэтов, а есть поэт, один и тот же с начала и до конца мира, сила, окрашивающаяся в цвета данных времен, племен, стран, народов, лиц, проходящих через ее, силу, несущих, как река, теми или иными берегами, теми или иными небесами, тем или иным дном.” (1994:5, p. 375). Olga Hasty argues that “Orpheus became for her the prototypical poet, an embodiment of that mysterious power that ever reappears in poets of different forms and terms.” (Hasty 1996, p. 8). Tsvetaeva treated the appearance of this force not only through the Orphic theme, but also through the demonic in her poetry and essays.

54 Although she denies in the letter to Rilke that a writer writes in his/her mother-tongue, she comments further however that each language is specific: “Doch jede Sprache hat etwas nur ihr Gehörendes, was sie ist.” (Ibid., p. 77).
creating” with the people. In her essays, she repeated her understanding of writing as listening, for instance, she argued that she “heard out” (“vyshushivala”) The Swain in “The Poet on the Critic”. In the essay “Art in the Light of Conscience” (“Iskusstvo pri svete sovesti”) (1932), Tsvetaeva formulated the dictum that “Word-creation, like any creation, only means following the track of the hearing ear of nation and nature. A journey by ear.” (ALC, p. 169) (“Slovotevorchestvo, kak vsiakoe, tol’ko khozhdenie po sledu slukha narodnogo i prirodnogo. Khozhdenie po slukhu.”) (1994:5, p. 363). Although the essay is from a later date, it can be related to Tsvetaeva’s explorations of folk art and folkloric language in The Swain, where she sought to render and experience this creative force. In the Russian original, the poet writes that word-creation is “khozhdenie po slukhu narodnogo i prirodnogo”, which in the English translation by Angela Livingstone is rendered as the “hearing ear of nation and nature”. The word “narod” (“nation”) can also be interpreted as people. Tsvetaeva draws a parallel between the people and nature and thus unites them in an image that seems to suggest the immanent presence of a creative force in the language of the people.

0.4. The Sublime

The notion of the people and their language as an organic force, as well as the insistence on literature as interpretation, suggests, in fact, a crucial link between Tsvetaeva’s concept of art and German Romanticism. The idea that folk art presented an original form of art of the people or the nation inspired the ground-breaking works of such pre-Romantics as Herder and Goethe. Fairy tales and other forms of folk art, or Volksdichtung, came to constitute an important locus for the Romantics’ preoccupation with myth. In the folk tales

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55 In a version of the essay “Natal’ia Goncharova” written in 1929 and intended for a translation into Serbo-Croatian, first published in facsimile version in 2005, Tsvetaeva argues that the artist must merge with the people through art: “В чем складывается национальность творчества? В связанности его с творчеством народным, в преемственности, в корнях. […] Народ нужно всосать, а всосать народ – уже быть самому народом, самим народом. Не подражание, а сотворчество. И, сказав художник национальный, мы тем самым еще и говорим новый – новый, как сам народ, старое помнящий, новое творящий” (2005, p. 197). On the publication, see commentary by Anastasiia Ivanova (ibid., p. 324).
they found traces of a rite of passage and a magic or otherworldly presence that could be interpreted as mythical. The German Romantics’ interest in myth and their attraction to folk art converged, moreover, with a preoccupation with the aesthetic category of the sublime, *das Erhabene*, which stood for an aesthetic experience of something that the human mind was unable to fathom through reason.\(^{56}\)

In Russian, the category of the sublime, *vozvyshennoe*, has acquired the connotations of the elevated and beautiful, which corresponds more to Longinus’s treatment than to its reinterpretation in eighteenth and nineteenth-century aesthetics.\(^{57}\) The aesthetic category came to be associated with the divine and natural phenomena representing power and immensity, on the one hand, and negativity and sacrifice, on the other.\(^{58}\) The sublime presents a paradoxical image of that which in art is too powerful or too immense to be represented. According to Kant, the sublime could not be represented or imagined, yet he considered the poet able to bring out the sublime.\(^{59}\) Kant’s distinction between

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56 The sublime has a long history and presents a cluster of renditions, treatments and concepts. In modern times, its influence dates back to Boileau’s translation of Longinus’s treatment of the theme in *Peri hypsous* (*On the Sublime*), which acquired increasing influence during the 18\(^{th}\) century. Through Edmund Burke’s *Enquiries* and Immanuel Kant’s critique it came to have an immense impact on the Romantic Movement and later on Modernism.

57 If the term figures at all in Tsvetaeva’s writings, it was not central to her reflections on art. However, instead of the word *vozvyshennoe* Tsvetaeva uses a closely related term “vysokii”, which has been translated as *lofty* and comprises a similar notion of height as *vozvyshennoe*. Examples of lofty poets in her essay *Art in the Light of Conscience* (1932) are the Romantic poet Friedrich Hölderlin and Rainer Maria Rilke (1994:5, p. 359).


59 Kant divided aesthetic judgements into two categories: the beautiful (das Schöne) and the sublime (das Erhabene): “Das Schöne der Natur betrifft die Form des Gegenstandes, die in der Begrenzung besteht; das Erhabene ist dagegen auch an einem formlosen Gegenstande zu finden, sofern Unbegrenztheit an ihm, oder durch dessen Veranlassung, vorgestellt und doch Totalität derselben hinzugedacht wird.” (Ibid., p. 165).
Darstellung and Vorstellung has been translated as representation (Vorstellung) and presentation (Darstellung), and I will follow this terminology.

Kant’s definition became decisive for Romantic explorations of writing and the quandary of Darstellung (presentation). The sublime is reflected in the Romantics’ attraction to the dark and irrational aspects of reality, that is, aspects not subjugated to the parameters of human reason. David Ellison asserted that the Romantic fairy tale became “an avatar of the sublime”,60 because the folk tale with its uncanny, demonic presence, which joins natural forces with the divine, offered an appropriate form for treatments of the sublime, as in the stories of Hoffmann in Germany and Gogol in Russia. Through the themes of myths and folk tales, the Romantics sought to explore the sublime as something that cannot be fathomed by the human mind and cannot be represented, but could somehow appear as a poetic presence.

The aesthetic category of the sublime can shed light on Tsvetaeva’s rendering of Afanasiev’s folk tale in The Swain, and the presentation of the sublime in the poem is to be understood in relation to her demonic and elemental interpretation of folk art. In convergence with the Romantic tradition of presentations of the sublime, the poem is a treatment of an uncanny horror tale as a locus of a story about the appearance of an immense force. It can, furthermore, be linked to the very quandary of writing the sublime, because the paradoxical question how to make present what cannot be represented, or how to speak the unspeakable, is pivotal to her rendering in several respects. In order to probe Tsvetaeva’s writing against the backdrop of this quandary further, I will apply such terms as “presentation” and “presence” in accordance with the translation of Darstellung, but also as “bringing out” and “conveying” to the extent that they correspond to the notion of writing as rendering.

Tsvetaeva explored the tale as an organic, and at the same time mythical form of art that demanded an immediate presentation or presence (Darstellung). She considered that her task was to render an “essence” that was present in Afanasiev’s folk tale as she wrote in a remark on the poem in the essay “The Poet on the Critic” (“Poet o Kritike”) (1925). She had to “open the essence, given in the tale as a skeletal frame” (“raskryt’ sut’ skazki, dannoi v kostiake”) Tsvetaeva explored the story about the appearance of a mythical elemental

force that infuses Marusia with a passion that demands immense sacrifices and that takes her beyond the confines of the human world as an image that indicates the means of presentation (Darstellung) of the sublime in poetic language. Through sacrificing conventional forms of individual expression and immersing herself into the language and art of the people, Tsvetaeva sought in The Swain to convey the sublime as an immense and immediate presence on the confines of the unspeakable.61

0.5. Performance and the Visitation of the Elements

In “The Poet and Time” (1932) Tsvetaeva commented on The Swain as follows: “It is about the Revolution. (To say that the listener didn’t understand is also ignorance, because: it is not about the revolution, but the revolution itself: its steps)” (“Eto o Revoliutsii. (Skazat’, chto slushatel’ prosto ne ponial – samomu ne poniat’, ibo: ne o revoliutsii, a ona: eë shag)”) (1994:5, p. 333). Hauschild argues on the basis of this quotation that the poem is an image of the Revolution: “Bild der Revolution”,62 and asserts that the idea that the poem is the steps of the Revolution can be understood in the context of Aleksandr Blok’s The Twelve (Dvenadtsat’) (1918). It should, however, be added that The Swain, like The Twelve, can be linked to the Revolution through its elemental theme.63 It was not uncommon to interpret the Russian Revolution as elemental, stikhiiinyi,

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61 Tsvetaeva’s explorations of the confines of speech can be related to presentations of the sublime. In the essay “L’Offrande sublime”, focused on Kant’s reasoning, Jean-Luc Nancy argues that the sublime is not to be represented, but is that which presents itself at the confines or limits, because the limits point to what cannot be limited “Dans le sublime est donc en jeu la présentation elle-même: pas quelque chose à présenter ou à représenter, ni quelque chose d’impréparable (ni l’impréparable de la chose en général), et pas non plus le fait que ça se présente: et comme ça se présente: ça se présente dans l’illimitation, ça se présente, toujours à la limite.” (Jean-Luc Nancy, “L’Offrande sublime” in Du Sublime (ed. Michel Deguy). Paris: Editions Belin, 1988, p. 54).


63 In a comparative reading of Tsvetaeva’s poem The Pied Piper and The Twelve, Catherine Ciepiela asserts that The Twelve exerted a powerful influence on the poetry of Tsvetaeva and that the notion of elements was pivotal. (Catherine Ciepela, “Leading the Revolution: Tsvetaeva’s The Pied Piper and Blok’s The Twelve, in Marina Tsvetaeva: One Hundred Years (eds. V. Schweitzer, J. A. Taubman, P. Scotto and T. Babyonishev). Oakland, California: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 1994, p. 111).
which literally means spontaneous, or as an uncontrolled outburst.\textsuperscript{64} The poem presents a vision of the appearance of an elemental power that somehow was associated with the Russian people and the course of the Russian Revolution.

In the present study, I will explore the vision of this elemental force in \textit{The Swain} as a sublime force to be found in the art and language of the people. I will probe \textit{The Swain} with respect to plot, theme, composition and poetic language and do close readings of selected parts in the light of the poet’s reworkings of folk art to present the sublime. In the first chapter “Folk art and the Sublime”, I will relate the plot and theme of the poem both to folkloric tradition and to Romantic presentations of the sublime. I will also enquire into the way that Marusia’s experience of the Swain relates to the image of art that the poem conveys. Shevelenko asserted, as mentioned above, that the love story about Marusia’s fatal passion for the Swain about the inability not to submit to the power of the Swain also treats the poet’s “entrancement” or “obsession” and “possession” (“oderzhimost’”) of art.\textsuperscript{65} The possession of art is related to the elemental theme and concerns, as indicated, also the forms of creation of the poem.

The story about Marusia’s passion for the Swain can be further related to Tsvetaeva’s reflections on art in terms of elements in the essay “Art in the Light of Conscience” written several years later (1932). In the essay, Tsvetaeva describes writing as a “visitation of the elements” (“naitiie stikhii”), and she defines “the condition of creation” as obsession that leads to possession: “The condition of creation is the condition of enthrallment. Till you begin – \textit{obsession}; till you finish – \textit{possession}. Something, someone lodges in you: your hand is the fulfiller not of you, but of \textit{it}.” (ALC, p. 172) (“Sostoianie tvorchestva est’ sostoianie navazhdeniia. Poka ne nachal – \textit{obsession}, poka ne konchil – \textit{possession}. Chto-to, kto-to v tebia vseliaetsia, tvoia ruka ispolnitel’, ne tebia, a togo.”) (1994:5, p. 366). In a reading of the course of Marusia’s love and transformation, who is first obsessed by the element of the Swain, and then possessed by it, I will examine how Tsvetaeva within the frame of the folk tale, treats the question what it means to be subjected to the visitation of an element, understood as a sublime power.


\textsuperscript{65} Shevelenko 2002, p. 237.
In the following chapters, I will attempt to relate Tsvetaeva’s understanding of poetic writing as a “visitation of the element” to technical aspects of her rendering of the sublime. In the second chapter, I will examine her technique of rendering the sublime in *The Swain* in terms of a “Poetic Performance”. The word through which Tsvetaeva defines the creator’s hand in the above quoted passage from “Art in the Light of Conscience” *ispolnitelʹ* is translated as “the fulfiller”, but it can also be translated as “the performer”. The visitation of the elements can be understood in relation to the way that Tsvetaeva immersed herself in the folkloric diction in order to perform the tale. The focus of the chapter is on Tsvetaeva’s use of folk songs and other ritual genres of folk poetry to form an enactment of the tale in poetry. Drawing on folkloric oral performance, Tsvetaeva sought a poetic language to sound out the presence of the characters and of the element as voices in an immediate way. Thus she sought to perform the visitation of the elements in the poem.

The “visitation of the elements” also suggests a means of attaining the elemental force of art. The notion that the sublime was contrary to human forms of representation had engendered a preoccupation with spontaneous forms of art, such as performance, both in Romanticism and later in Modernism.\(^\text{66}\) In Romanticism, artists moved away from the notion of art as skilled imitation to an understanding of art as a natural force that could strike the poet and carry him to an intense, ineffable experience. This notion resounded in Russian Modernism and the avant-garde, both in the insistence on art as the force of the here and now, and in the interest in the people and their art understood as spontaneous elemental forces.\(^\text{67}\)

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\(^\text{66}\) Jean-François Lyotard describes in his essay “Le sublime et l’avant-garde” how the attempt to overcome the limits of representation with respect to the sublime evolved into an attempt to convey the sublime as an immanent property of art in the here and now of the piece of art: “Pour être fidèle à ce déplacement en quoi consiste peut-être toute la différence entre le romantisme et l’avant-gardeisme ‘moderne’, il faudrait traduire *The Sublime is Now* non pas par: ‘Le sublime est maintenant, mais par: Maintenant, *tel est le sublime*’.” (Jean-François Lyotard, *L’Inhumain: Causeries sur le temps*. Paris: Gallilée, 1988, p. 105).

\(^\text{67}\) Alexandra Smith has also addressed the role of performance in Tsvetaeva’s works in “Writing as Performance: The case of Marina Tsvetaeva”. *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, 2003, pp. 143–53. She highlights the correlation in particular between Tsvetaeva’s dramatic pieces and Modernist theories of performance against the backdrop of the poet’s personal relation to Nikolay Evreynov and Sergey Volkonsky, both active in the development of Modernist theatre in Russia at the time.
The motivation to perform may be seen in the notion of play in terms of drama, and of play in the sense close to game. One of the distinctive features of play ("Spiel") with respect to the experience of art, according to Hans-Georg Gadamer, is that it is not focused on the authorial subject, but on the being of the piece of art itself. The player is subordinated to the play, whose rules must be followed and taken seriously, so that the player will take part in the experience that the play offers. In fact, in the notion of play understood as Spiel, performance and ritual, there is a supposed primacy of the artistic act over the subject who performs it. It can be related to Tsvetaeva’s concept of co-creating, wherein the writer and the reader enter a game of performing a poetic piece. It also converges with the image of art as obsession and possession, that is, that art carries an extraneous force to which the poet must submit. To perform the “essence” of the tale in an act of focused rendering seems to have meant for her the ability to take part in the ritual of the people. Tsvetaeva sought to perform the “visitation of the elements”, because through performing Marusia’s transformation into an element, the poet was also to partake in the sublime loci of the tale.

In the third and last chapter, “Literal and Secret Writing” I will further explore Tsvetaeva’s reworkings of poetic language against the backdrop of her quest for a poetic language to present the element. She explores the language of folk art in The Swain in its potential to give birth to new meanings and metaphors, that is, as a creative instance through which she seeks to render the elemental force behind the tale. The folkloric canvas forms only the starting point for Tsvetaeva’s explorations of the word in relation to Modernist experiments with the language and rhythms of folk poetry. Like the Symbolists Blok and Bely, and Futurists such as Khlebnikov, she sought to bring out the magic of language through a creative return to folk art. Marcia Schuback argues in an essay that there is a kind of “nameless naming” in the German statement: “Es läßt sich von da aus ein allgemeiner Zug angeben, wie sich das Wesen des Spieles in spielenden Verhalten reflektiert. Alles spielen ist ein Gespieltwerden. Das Reiz des Spieles, die Faszination die es ausübt, besteht eben darin daß das Spiel über den Spielenden Herr wird. […] Das eigentliche Subjekt des Spieles (das machen gerade solche Erfahrungen evident, in denen es nur einen einzelnen Spielenden gibt) ist nicht der Spieler, sondern das Spiel selbst.” (Hans-Georg Gadamer, Gesammelte Werke. Wahrheit und Methode. Band 1. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1990, p. 112).
Tsvetaeva's poetry, and this notion is apposite for the poet's attempt to attain a language to bring out the element as a sublime presence in *The Swain*. In the taboo on the name, which is a central theme in the folk tale and in her treatment of it, she arguably saw an indication of the force of a “secret writing” to bring out a language to speak the sublime. She avoids the descriptive and objectifying functions of conventional language in order to bring out a highly obscure and elliptic language, where the literal and sublime throbs in the unspoken or unspeakable.

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70 In his introduction to *Andrei Belyi: razyskaniia i etiudy*, entitled “Ritm i Smysl”, Aleksandr Lavrov writes about a similar enterprise in Bely’s poetry. One aspect of his experiments with melody in poetry was, according to Lavrov, the creation of a different language that cannot be grasped from the point of view of “logical-discursive semantics” (Lavrov 2007, p. 17).
In her commentaries on the poem, Tsvetaeva repeatedly attempts to blur the notion of herself as the author of the text, and insists that the text is the work of the people. In the essay “Art in the Light of Conscience”, she writes in a passage that concerns *The Swain*, that she wrote particular pieces, because: “Certain things of Russia wanted to be expressed, they chose me.” (ALC, p. 173) (“Kakim-to veshcham Rossii khotelos’ skazat’sia, vybrali menia.”) (1994:5, p. 366). Later on she writes that she experienced writing these things as an “aural lesson” (“sluhovoi urok”). In a remark on *The Swain* in the essay “The Poet on the Critic” she writes, as mentioned, that she “heard out” (“vyслушivala”) and comments further on her interpretative task as follows: “In the folk tale, the folk have interpreted the dream of the elements; in his narrative poem, the poet has interpreted the dream of the people; the critic (in a new poem!) has interpreted the dream of the poet.” (ALC, p. 63) (“Narod, v skazke, istolkoval son stikhii, poet, v poeme, istolkoval son naroda, kritik (v novoi poeme!) istolkoval son poeta.”) (1994:5, p. 296). The poet must render or interpret, because in art there is a genealogy that derives from an elemental force. Her task in writing *The Swain* can be understood as the interpretation of the “dream of the people” (“son naroda”), behind which there was the greater force of the “dream of the elements” (“son stikhii”). She interprets, however, the “dream of the element” behind Afanasiev’s folk tale in correlation with the Romantic tradition of uncanny fairy tales as a vision of the fatal and magic appearance of a sublime power.

Simon Karlinsky asserts that “the poem follows its source, the folk tale “Upyr’” (“The Vampire”) with utmost fidelity even to the point of including

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71 The comment, arguably, refers to, amongst other things, *The Swain*. The “things of Russia” (or pieces of Russia) or “my Russian pieces” as she also calls them, seem to concern poems with themes from Russian literature and folklore.
into its verse texture quotations”. Karlinsky’s remark, however, is only partly true, for although The Swain follows the structure of the plot closely, and incorporates quotations, the poet made certain substantial changes to the plot, turning it into a story about a girl who becomes possessed by this elemental power and makes deadly sacrifices. The tale is rendered in an obscure poetic language, so that knowledge of the original folk tale would seem to be more or less indispensable for a basic understanding of the poem, and in a letter to Boris Pasternak she advised him to read Afanasiev’s folk tale in connection with the poem. Her purpose can be sought, however, not only in the fact that she wished to enhance his understanding; the relation between the original tale and the poem was important to her to the extent that she understood the creative process as a rendering of an intrinsic “essence” (“sut’”). She followed Afanasiev's fairy tale closely, because she considered it to be a locus of a sublime force. In order to elucidate further how Tsvetaeva reworks the fairy-tale plot, I shall give a short summary of Afanasiev’s tale, before I present my reading of The Swain.

1.1. The Two Tales

1.1.1. The Vampire

The folk tale “The Vampire”, which is about three pages long, tells the story of the young girl Marusia, who meets the Swain at a village feast and falls in love with him. Her mother persuades her to find out more about her betrothed, and she discovers in the churchyard that he is a vampire. She is terrified, but she cannot reveal what she has seen. Through a threefold repetition, in which she denies that she has seen him, she must first see her father and mother die, in order to finally face death herself. Before her impending death, she visits a babka, that is, a woman with knowledge of magic forces, who tells her that she must not receive a proper burial: she must be carried out under the threshold of her own house and she must be buried at the crossroads. She also gives young Marusia

74 According to folk belief this is an unclean form of burial that indicates that the deceased is possessed by an evil force, nechistaia sila.
holy water. After her death, Marusia is resurrected as a beautiful flower, which is spotted by a nobleman, who plucks it. She metamorphoses into a beautiful girl, they marry and she bears him a child. They are under an interdict not to go to church, but some guests come by and persuade them to go. At the church the vampire appears, but this time when he repeats his questions, she reveals that she had seen him and throws holy water on him so that he disappears.

1.1.2. The Swain

I shall now give a breakdown of The Swain as construed in the light of Afanasiev’s fairy tale and of remarks that Tsvetaeva made about the poem. The poem is structured as a symmetrical composition with two parts, simply named parts one and two, each divided into five chapters with the following headings: 1.1. “The Swain” (“Mólodets”), 1.2. “The Ladder” (“Lesenka”), 1.3. “At the Gates” (“V vorotakh”), 1.4. “The Second Gates” (“Vtorye vorotá”), 1.5. “Under the threshold” (“Pod porogom”), 2.1. “The Nobleman” (“Barin”), 2.2. “Marbles” (“Mramorá”), 2.3. “The Son” (“Syn”), 2.4. “The party” (“Pirovan’itse”), 2.5. “The Cherubicon” (“Kheruvimskaia”). Both the division into two parts and the titles of the chapters coincide with the structure of the central events in “The Vampire”, except for the final chapter “The Cherubicon”, which is based on the ending of a different tale from Afanasiev’s collection of folk tales, namely the first of “The Tales of the Dead” (“Rasskazy o mertvetsakh”). The tale is about an impudent girl, who steals the burial robe from a deceased person in Church. In the final scene, the Dead man appears in a storm during the Cherubicon hymn at a service and takes the girl with him.

The first chapter, “The Swain” (“Mólodets”), opens with the phrase “Sin’ da sgin’ – krai sela”, which may be translated as “Blue (and) begone – the village end”. We are presented with the setting of the poem: a family living on the outskirts of the village consisting of Marusia, her widowed mother, and as we later are to find out – her brother. It is time for the village feast, where the Swain appears. Marusia is introduced as happy (“veselá”) and red-cheeked (“rumianista”), and she is characterized through epithets that associate her with the harvest and fertility. She is eager to go the feast, and her mother

75 In Afanasiev’s collection of folk tales, it has no. 351 (1958:3, p. 112f). See also comments by Elena Korkina to Marina Tsvetaeva, Poemy 1920–1927 (1994b, p. 325).
agrees, because it is time for her to enter life beyond the confines of home: “The ore has slept / too long under the stone!” (“Zasplas’ uzh ochen’-to / Pod kamnem – ruda!”). The girls are gathered at the feast and they sing roundelays, in which they repeat in different ways that Marusia is the most remarkable of them all, and this plays on a reference to Afanasiev’s tale that Marusia is “the best” (“luchshe vsekh”). The boys enter, and with them, the Swain, who is all fire: “the swain-fire” (“mólodets-ogon’”), and the element of fire spread in the ecstatic frenzy of the feast:

Руки врозь,
Ходом скор,
Вкруг березьеньки — костер.

Грива — вкось,
Дыхом — яр,
Вкруг часовенки — пожар! (1.1.282)76

The girls and boys have become infused with the Swain’s fire. He chooses the striking Marusia, who responds passionately. The dance becomes more and more intense, and the two dance ecstatically. There are several erotic allusions in the depiction of the dance, both in the general chorus of the boys and girls as well as between Marusia and the Swain. For instance, the girls’ lips are like raspberry (“malinovy gubki”) and the Swain asks Marusia to give of her “raspberry zest” (“malinovyi naliv”). When the dance reaches the point of exhaustion, the Swain asks her to follow him to the gates and asks her if she will marry him.

In the second chapter, “The Ladder” (“Lesenka”), Marusia announces to her mother that she has found a suitor and her mother convinces her to tie “a thread to his button” (“pugovku na petel’ku”), another reference to Afanasiev’s tale, in order to find out who he is. Marusia follows the thread, which leads her to an abandoned church with closed gates. There she climbs a ladder and discovers the Swain biting into a corpse. She starts to run away, but in her hurry

she knocks over the ladder, and the vampire notices her. Her vision is fatal, because now she is bound to the Swain by otherworldly bonds:

Уж и хват
Суженый! — Взгляни-ка взад,
Привыкай к своим хоромам:
Вдогон церковь с вором, с гробом,
С Богом, с громом! (1.2.287)

Once at home, her mother asks her what she saw and she answers in riddles that are suggestive of the double nature of her betrothed. His house, she says, has a “cross roof”, which hints at the grave.

In the third chapter, “At the Gates” (“V vorotakh”) Marusia hesitates at first and appears not to want to go back to the feast, which continues several days, but her mother urges her. At the feast, Marusia is unwilling to approach the Swain, but her girlfriends more or less force her to go up to him, ironically asking if she thinks that he will bite:

— Аль укусит
Дружок?
(Уж Маруся — шажок).

— Аль удушит
Жених?
(Уж Маруся — от них). (1.3.288f)

Out of fear, Marusia follows the Swain to the gates. He asks her if she saw him at the churchyard. She denies for the first time that she has seen him, in a scene with questions and denials that will be repeated twice more:

— Пиши, девка, на́бело:
На лесенку лазила?

Пыхтит, глаза — стеклами:
— Приступочкой грохала?
Because Marusia denies it, the Swain announces that her brother will die. The heroine returns home and at nightfall the Swain comes to kill her brother. He cries out to Marusia, but she remains passive and hears her brother die. Thus, slowly under the force of her silence, she gives in to her passion, and her threefold denial gradually develops into a confession of love. In the fourth chapter, “The second gates” ("Vtorye vorotá") the events of the third are repeated. The vampire understands that she is lying and pleads with her in the fourth chapter to reveal what she has seen, in order to save her mother:

Брось свою хитрость!
— Сердце, клянусь:
Прахом рассыплюсь,
Ввек не вернусь!

(Рученьки сжаты,
Ноженьки ноют).
Нашего брата
Правдою кроют!

До сердцевины,
Сердь моя, болен!
Знай, что невинен,
Знай, что неволен!

/…/

Не одну твою жызть
В руках, сердце, держу:
Вчера брата загрыз,
Нынче мать загры —  

(1.3.289)

(Глаза вски — ды — вает):
— Была-видела? — Нет.  

(1.4.292)
The Swain begs her to reveal what she has seen and free him from the bond that destines him to kill her brother, mother and ultimately herself. He exclaims: “See, I am not guilty / See, I do not want to!” (“Znai chto nevinen / Znai chto nevolen”). There is a chiastic inversion of their roles, which can be related to Tsvetaeva’s assertion in the proposed preface to the French edition that Marusia acquires non-human qualities and the Swain human qualities. There she wrote that the poem is a story: “D’une humaine devenue inhumaine. D’un damné devenu humain.” (2005, pp. 18, 290.) The Swain appeals to her conscience, warning her that her life is not the only life that is at stake: “Not only your life / is in my hand / Yesterday I had your brother / Now your mother will be –” (Ne odnu tvoiu zhyst’ / V rukakh, serdtse, derzhu: / Vchera brata zagryz, / Nynche mat’ zagry – ”). He wishes to save hers and her mother’s life, but Marusia denies having seen him and confirms thereby that she is ready to make the sacrifice.

At midnight, the Swain comes for her mother, who calls out to Marusia like her brother did, and in the end urges her to go to the “wise woman for a herbal cure” (“K znakharkhe za snadob’em”), but Marusia refuses to go. She thus abandons her mother, in order to finally die herself and join with the Swain in death in the fifth chapter, “Under the threshold” (“Pod porogom”). Death is the final consummation of their love. Marusia is ecstatic and exclaims that she is “dancing her death” (“svoiu smert’ pliashu”) before her marriage. She confesses her love for the Swain and her readiness to enter death with him in a series of oxymorons:

Оттого что ад
Мне кромешный — рай:
С молодцем! С молодцем!

/…/

Не хочу твоей раны!
— Ад с тобой — сад румяный!
— Не хочу твоей пены!
— Смерть с тобой — жемчуг ценный! (1.5.296f)
After the feast, she goes home and prepares herself for her meeting with the Swain. She lies “as dressed for church” (“kak v tserkvu ubrannaia”). The following scene, in which the Swain sucks her blood, is described as a love scene with erotic overtones:

— Сплю, не трожь!
— Жжем-не ждем!
Вкруг роскошества —
Шмемем.

— Час да наш,
Ад мой ал!
К самой чашечке
Припал.

— Конец твоим рудам!
Гудом, гудом, гудом!

— Конец твоим альм!
Жалом, жалом, жалом!

— Ай — жаль?
— Злей — жаль!
С одной пей!
Ай, шмель!

Во — весь
Свой — хмель
Пей, шмель!
Ай, шмель! (1.5.298f)

Marusia urges him to drink her blood fast and to the end: “Drink in one go! / Oh bumble-bee!” (“S odnoi pei! / Ai, shmel’!”). The scene is based on a parallel between the words _khmel’_ – _shmel’_, that is, intoxication and bumble-bee. In contrast to the fairy tale, where the _babka_ tells Marusia how to act in order
to rise from the dead, the Swain conjures her up as he sucks her blood. She is to be resurrected as a flower, live in seclusion for five years, and not go to church. In the final scene of part one, Marusia lies dying and the village girls surround her. She utters her last wish, which is to be carried out under the threshold and to be buried at the crossroads, which draws upon folk belief, and implies that she has had an unclean death, that is, that she is possessed. Marusia’s brother and mother are thus taken to the church, but Marusia is buried at the crossroads.

The first chapter of the second part is entitled “The Nobleman” (“Barin”). It is very short and describes how a young and foolhardy nobleman comes by and spots a burning red flower, which he plucks against the advice of his butler. He takes it home to his ancestral marble mansion, which gives its name to the second chapter “Marbles” (“Mramorá”). As the clock strikes twelve, the flower begins to metamorphose. First it turns into a ghastly queen-like figure, vested with the element of fire, but subsequently she turns into a beautiful girl, a krasna devitsa, which is a typical figure in Russian fairy tales. As a beautiful girl, she is deprived of her name, blood and fire, she is “as a doll” (“kak kukla”) or an empty shell:

Ослабла, размякла.
Последнее пламя,
Последняя капля
Иссякла, потухла,
Потухла, погасла.
Как пакля — как кукла —
Как лампа без масла...

Потухла,
Поникла,
Погасла. (2.2.311)

Now that she is a beautiful girl, the nobleman proposes to her. She accepts but makes him promise to live in seclusion and not to go to church for five years, not to keep anything red in their home and to burn the plant from which she stems. The third chapter, “The Son” (“Syn”) depicts how time goes by and
announces that she has borne the Nobleman a son. By now he has become disturbed by boredom and isolation. As soon as he realizes that he wants to hold a feast, some uncanny creatures appear ready to celebrate:

(Сласти — шагом,  
Страсти — рысью.)
Барин, барин,  
Вслух не мысли!

Вести — шаром,  
Гости — шастом.  
Барин, барин,  
Вкось не хвастай!

Шаром-жаром-  
Жигом-граем...  
Барин, барин, барин, барин!.. (1.3.315)

The feast is the theme of the fourth chapter “The Party” (“Pirovan’itse”), when a bunch of ghoulish figures, presented as a “fiery herd” (“ta-bun ognen”) and “as a band of crows” (“rovno grai voronye”), arrives uninvited at midnight and surprises the sleeping nobleman. They decide to hold a feast, which also is depicted as fire: “Fire in the marbles” (“Zhar v mramorakh”). The beautiful girl sits singing with the child in another room. In her song, echoes of Marusia’s life are heard. The girl remembers for instance, that she is from the outskirts, or borders (“s kraiu”), and that it is as if she had fallen from a ladder:

Словно жизнь мою угнали  
Верстой, — а я с краю.  
Голова моя дурная,  
Что пою — не знаю.  

У меня ль дружок — не пара,  
Уборы — не хитрые?  
Точно с лесенки упала,  
Упала — не выпрямлюсь. (1.4.320)
During the feast, the guests, who have announced that they are “godfathers” (“kumov’ia”) manage to convince the nobleman to take his wife and child to be christened at church, which he does in the fifth chapter, “The Cherubicon (Cherubic Hymn)” (“Kheruvimskaia”). It is winter and during their journey there is a storm. In the storm, the girl experiences apparitions that further echo Marusia’s experiences in the first part. They arrive at the church and enter. A hymn is sung, but it blends with the people’s comments, the girl’s thoughts and the voice of the vampire, who has come to call back Marusia. He calls her by her name, and she wakes up to answer in a moment of recognition. They unite as elemental forces and fly away “Home / to the blue fire” (“Do-moi / V ogn’ sin’”).

1.2. The Return of the Myth

1.2.1. Inverting the Tale

In the essay “The Poet on the Critic” (1994:5, pp. 274-96), Tsvetaeva asserts, as mentioned above, that she altered the tale in accordance with what she believed to be its “essence” given in “The Vampire” as a “skeletal frame”. The following quotation is taken from a passage that comprises a comprehensive commentary on the poem, where Tsvetaeva reflects on the principles underlying her interpretation of Afanasiev’s tale:

Я прочла у Афанасьева сказку “Упырь” и задумалась, почему Маруся, боявшаяся упыря, так упорно не сознавалась в ею виденном, зная, что назвать — спастися. Почему вместо да — нет? Страх? Но ведь от страха не только забиваются в постель — и в окно выбрасываются. Нет, не страх. Пусть — и страх, но еще что-то. Страх и что? Когда мне говорят: сделай то-то и ты свободна, и я того-то не делаю, значит я не очень хочу свободы, значит мне несвобода — дороже. А что такое дорогая несвобода между людьми? Любовь. Маруся упыря любила, и потому не называла, и теряла, раз за разом, мать — брата — жизнь. Страсть и преступление, страсть и жертва...
I read the tale and began wondering why Marusya, who was afraid of the vampire, so stubbornly refused to confess what she had seen, though she knew that to name it meant to be rescued. Why no, instead of yes? Fear? But fear doesn’t only make people hide in bed, it also makes them throw themselves out of the window. No, not fear. Or, if fear, then something else as well. Fear and what? When I’m told: do this and you are free, and I don’t do this, it means I don’t greatly want freedom, it means that to me non-freedom is more desirable. And what is desirable non-freedom among human beings? Love. Marusya loved the vampire, and that’s why she did not name him, why she lost, one after the other, her mother – her brother – her life. Passion and crime, passion and sacrifice…

That was my problem, when I started to work on The Swain. To open up the essence of the tale, which had been given in skeletal form. To unmagic the thing. Not in the least to create a ‘new form’ or a ‘folk form’ The thing was written, I worked at it, listening to every word (not weighing them up – hearing them out!). That there is labour in it is evidenced by: (1) its imperceptibility to the reader (2) the rough drafts. But all this is the work’s process, its coming into being, not a plan for it. (ALC, p. 62)

Tsvetaeva’s task was, in her own view, “to open the essence” and “unmagic the thing” (“raskoldovat’ veshch’”). However, the story that Tsvetaeva tells is no less magic, on the contrary. As Zubova maintains, Tsvetaeva’s reasoning concurs with the central notion of the sacrality of the word in folk belief, that is,
the belief that if something is named it is evoked as a spirit. Tsvetaeva argues that there is no motivation in Afanasiev’s folk tale for why Marusia does not reveal that she has seen the Swain biting into a corpse, because, as she asserts, “to name it meant to be rescued” (“nazvat’ – spastis’”). In her interpretation, the reason why Marusia does not name or confess what she saw had to be that she either could not or did not want to be saved and depart from the vampire. Marusia had been taken by a love for the Swain that somehow was magic, and she did not say anything because she wanted to stay under its spell.

In these remarks, the poet also outlines other central themes in The Swain. She links the theme of the interdiction on the name to the story of a magic passion. The sounds of the formula nazvat’ – spastis’ (“to name is to be rescued”) echo of the keywords strast’ – strakh (passion – fear). Whereas Marusia in Afanasiev’s folk tale acts out of fear (strakh), in The Swain fear and passion (strast’) intermingle in Marusia’s motivation not to speak. Fear and passion determine her refusal to speak, and fear and passion motivate her crimes, which can also be read as sacrifices in the parallel construction: “Passion and crime, passion and sacrifice…” (“Strast’ i prestuplenie, strast’ i zhertva…”). Marusia is afraid because she is aware of the fatal consequences of her passion, but she sacrifices her relatives and herself in order to stay under the sway of the Swain, because, as Tsvetaeva asserts “desirable non-freedom” is love.

Hauschild argues that the poem is a palimpsest, which is undoubtedly true in the sense that the poem presents a text written onto Afanasiev’s tale. Both Tsvetaeva’s motivation for her rendition of the folk tale and the contrasts between the poem and Afansiev’s tale suggest, however, that she considered it to be a palimpsest of a myth. She was to render “the essence” of the tale, that is, a more true version, and she portrayed herself, as mentioned above, as a kind of a medium that “heard out” (“vyshlushivala”) the words of the poem, which wrote itself (“veshch’ napisalas’”). Her rendering testifies to the understand-

78 The similarity in sound is also the object of a pun in her essay “Moi Pushkin”. Tsvetaeva’s mother asks her what doll she likes the most, and Tsvetaeva answers that she likes the doll whose eyes are passionate (“strastnye”). When her mother is shocked by the young girl’s choice of words, she changes her mind, and says that they are horrifying (“strashnye”) (1994:5, p. 69).
79 Angela Livingstone translates the expression “veshch’ napisalas’” as “the thing was
ing of co-creating with the people, which she described in the above quoted version of the essay “Natalya Goncharova” as a double movement of “remembering the old, creating the new” (“staroe pomniashchii, novoe tvoriashchii”) (2005, p. 197). At the same time as she seeks in the poem to bring out what she saw as an inherent potential myth, and she turned the tale into a story of the force of the Swain’s sublime appearance.

The poem follows Afanasiev’s tale closely, but overturns the content of the tale in what appears to be a more pagan and more demonic version. The folk tale testifies to double faith (dvoeverie), that is, to the coexistence of pagan belief and Christian faith in Russian culture, and Tsvetaeva repeats the tension between the two beliefs in The Swain, but inverts the relation between them. Afanasiev’s folk tale seems to present an image of the victory of Christian faith over pagan belief in Russian culture, because Marusia conquers the force of the vampire with recourse to holy water. The fairy tale as interpreted by Tsvetaeva instead tells an uncanny story about Marusia’s inability to resist the sublime power of the elemental, which is both wondrous and magic, on the one hand, and fatal and horrifying, on the other.

Afanasiev’s fairy tale is ripe with imagery that Tsvetaeva reworks in poetic language against the background of the traditional loci of evil forces or “nechistaia sila” in folkloric belief. The relation between good and evil in the poem and in Afanasiev’s tale is highlighted against a central distinction in Russian folk belief, between the own and the strange (“svoe–chuzhoe”), as Iurii Lotman showed.\(^80\) Home and the known represent the earth and the human, which is opposed to the “strange” or “foreign” (“chuzhoy”). A person, who is “strange” or “alien”, can both be seen as a fiend and thus a representative of evil, or as a magician or a shaman and thus as a representative of the otherworldly and magic, and the latter is more closely related to pagan belief.\(^81\)


\(^{81}\) Ibid., p. 222f.
In Afanasiev’s tale, “the own” is safe and “the other” dangerous; Marusia belongs to the locus of the “own”, but because she stands out, being the most beautiful amongst the girls, her position becomes dangerous and attracts the attention of the “strange” in the form of the Swain. In The Swain, Marusia’s outstanding beauty and power appears to have the potential to attract and unite with the “other” and “the strange”; and although it’s force is dangerous and destructive, she is taken by its enchantment. The fairy tale becomes inverted in accordance with the notion that the Swain is both dangerous and magic, which is why Marusia acts out of both fear and passion. Traditional loci horribili, as for instance, places that imply borders or limits such as the gates and crossroads, are also images of freedom and loci amori of the Swain and Marusia. The story brings together passion (“strast’”) and fear (“strakh”), because Marusia’s love and non-freedom pave the way for the elemental possession through death, where there is a greater kind of love and a greater kind of freedom.

1.2.2. Composition: the Course of the Elements

The Swain is an orderly composed piece. It is divided into two parts, each with five chapters with headings, and the composition is ripe with symbolism, both in its dual form and in the subtitles of the headings. The poetic tale is arranged through repetitions and echoes that run through the poem and form correspondences between the parts. Tsvetaeva’s notion of a “skeletal frame” correlates in some respects with the narrative folkloric structure based on repetition, in a manner reminiscent of formulaic turns in traditional oral poetry.

82 This can be related to Tsvetaeva’s reflections on the possession of art in “Art in the Light of Conscience”. She describes the relation between the poet and the demon as a voluntary bond, where the poet gives the demon, also termed the element or elemental, “blood, life, conscience, honour” (ALC, p. 176) and the demon gives the poet in return immense power and immense freedom: “Демон (стихия) жертве платить. Ты мне — кровь, жизнь, совесть, честь, я тебе — такое сознание силы (ибо сила — моя!), такую власть над всеми (кроме себя, ибо ты — мой!), такую в моих тисках — свободу, что всякая иная сила будет тебе смешна, всякая иная власть — мала, всякая иная свобода — тесна — и всякая иная тюрьма — просторна.” (1994:5, p. 369).

83 According to Oral-Formulaic Theory, the rhapsode, or singer, memorizes for each story a set of formulae, which constitute a kind of “narrative path” (John Miles Foley,
with the Swain, all centred on the same question about whether she was at the churchyard and saw him. The technique of repetition is reinforced in the poem, where repetitions are made into a vital element of the composition. The repetitions of Marusia’s departure for the festivities, and then the threefold repetition of the Swain’s questions, as well as Marusia’s denials and the deaths structure the first part, while repetitions in the form of fragmentary echoes and parallels to the first part permeate the second part.

The division into two parts corresponds to the division between Marusia’s two lives and reflects a parallelism in the relation between the two worlds, and her two bridegrooms. The first chapter of the first part entitled “The Swain” is contrasted with its counterpart in the second, “The Nobleman”, in the sense that the former is Marusia’s “non-human” and elemental, and the latter her “human” fiancé. The two parts present different chronotopes, which can shed light on the relation between them. Part one shares the characteristic features of tales that Dmitry Likhachev describes in Poetika drevnerusskoi literatury in the chapter “The hermetic time of tales” (“Zamknutoe vremia skazki”).

It takes place in an unknown past, at an unknown site. Time and space are, moreover, directly linked to the plot and reflect a rhythmic progression: all progression in time and place has direct bearing upon the development. Each chapter marks the beginning of a new day, and a new event in the fatal development. In the second part, the development is more complex and ambiguous, and spans a greater period of time. Time is imbedded in the characteristics of the nobleman’s house, which is represented by the “Ancestral marble” (“Pradedovy mramorá”). The development in the nobleman’s house is less dynamic, a year or more can pass between the chapters.

The poem’s dual composition does not reflect a dualist worldview, but rather two aspects of Marusia’s transformation into a sublime elemental force. In the first part she becomes obsessed by the Swain’s element fire, and towards the end she herself becomes possessed, which she remains in the second part, and these are two aspects of her course away from humanity in the tale. In the French translation of The Swain, Le Gars (2005), Tsvetaeva entitled the first


part “La Danseuse”, and the second “La Dormante”, and the titles denote the different conditions Marusia undergoes. “La Danseuse” indicates the heroine’s ecstatic condition during the dances at the festivities, and the second presents the condition of the dream, in which she dwells in the second part. The first part enacts Marusia’s path out of the world as an obsessed person and it conditions the second, in which the elemental possession is present in a dormant form.

Hauschild argues that the headings symbolize Marusia’s path through the otherworld (“Jenseitswanderung”), but it can also be read as the course of Marusia’s love story and experience of the “visitation of the elements”. The headings of the chapters are connected with the two different forms of love-story that take place in the poem, that forms Marusia’s path to the chthonic world and then through a dormant life in suspension of the element, before the flight to the Swain’s realms. The first part takes her from the meeting with “The Swain” through “The Ladder”, then “The Gates” and “The Second Gates” and finally “Under the Threshold”. It conveys the course of Marusia’s obsession with the Swain until her otherworldly marriage, which leads her to the chthonic world and her transformation into a possessed. The title of the second chapter “The Ladder” seems to allude to a symbolic tradition that originates in Jacob’s ladder in the Book of Genesis (28:11-19). At the top of the ladder, Marusia becomes initiated into the Swain’s secret, and thus to the sublime. The gates, as mentioned above, are loci of the otherworldly force in folkloric belief. The third chapter, “At the Gates”, signifies not only the meeting place of Marusia and the Swain, but also the border between the two realities, and the title of the fourth chapter of the first part, “The Second Gates”, signifies the second and penultimate milestone. “Under the threshold” implies an unclean burial and is, as Hauschild remarks, the passage to the chthonic world.

The first three headings of the second part are connected instead with the circumstances of what may be considered to be common marital life. The girl meets “The Nobleman”, who lives in his marbled home: “Marbles”, and bears him a child: “The Son”. The last two then announce the disturbance of their peace in “The Party”, which leads to a sublime conclusion in “The Che-rubicon”. There love can only endure in the absence of the element, which, however, cannot be avoided; the second part is interspersed with the ominous

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loci associated with elemental force. The first part is mirrored in the second part in various ways through repetitions and echoes of epithets, themes and metaphors that go back to the elemental theme and Marusia’s sublime experience. The Nobleman remains ignorant of their presence, but the signs are there for the reader to construe.

At the end of the first part, the Swain conjured Marusia for her second life. Because the meetings between Marusia and the Swain amount to five, which corresponds to the five chapters, Marusia must wait five years before she goes to church: “Time after time – five times: / Before God – five years: / Your worries – five loads: / Without communion – five years.” (“Raz da raz – piat’ razov: / Pered Bogom – piat’ godov. / Tvoikh bed – piat’ vozov: / Bez obedni – piat’ godov.”) (1.5.300). She is resurrected as a red flower, which the Nobleman plucks in ignorance. He takes her home and before metamorphosing into a beautiful girl, she first appears as a dancing elemental being. In the third chapter, as the beautiful girl has borne him a son, and he longs for his previous life in terms of fire: “Ved’ bylo zhigom zheg”. He cannot restrain himself and breaks the promise to live in seclusion with the girl for five years, and this becomes an invitation for the elemental forces to return.

One striking parallel is given in the locus of the ladder or the stairs as the nobleman takes Marusia home to his marbled house. There is a reference to the second chapter of the first part, “The Ladder”, which stands for the ladder that Marusia knocks down. The chapter “Marbles” starts with movement up a ladder: “On those stairs – up we go / A look: down to our feet / Flickered and fell / On the stone precipice” (“Po toi lestnitse – da vvys’: / Vzglianut’: nogi otnialis’: / Sverknula i kanula / Stremninoiu kamennoi”) (2.2.303). In both parts, the ladder is an image, which conveys at the same time movement up the stairs, or ascendance, and movement, or rather a gaze, down into something abysmal, that is, descent. This can be further linked to the ending of the later Poem of the Staircase (Poema Lestnitsy) (1926), which ends with an image of “Ascending-descending – / Rainbows...” (“Voskhodiashchie – niskhodiashchie – / Radugi...”) (1994:3, p. 131) after a fire has devoured the stairs.

There is another outstanding parallel between the festivities and the

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86 The expression is difficult to translate. It can roughly be rendered as “For I used to set on fire”, and it refers to his previous hot-headed life, when he used to spend money without restraint.
meetings between Marusia and the Swain in the first part and two nocturnal spectral parties in the second part. First, when the red flower at midnight metamorphoses into a beautiful girl, *krasna devitsa*, the first appearance of the girl is elemental: “fiery” (“ognennyi”) (2.2.307), and there is a ghostlike feast with dances. Second, there is “The Party” (“Pirovan’itse”), the title of the fourth chapter in the second part. With the ghoulish guests the presence of the elemental increases by means of puns and hints.

As mentioned in my description of the tale, from the fourth chapter onwards, the beautiful girl begins to have inklings of her previous life as Marusia, in the form of involuntary memories that she does not understand. In the final chapter of the second part, the Nobleman goes with Marusia to church in order to read her the catechism and turn her into a Christian. The journey, which goes through a snowstorm, takes her, however, to the final union with the Swain. “Under the threshold” which portrays the first marriage between Marusia and the Swain ends with the open movement “into those wide open spaces” (“v te prostorny-i”) (1.5.302) and there is a parallel here with the “The Cherubicon” where she reunites with her demon and flies in an open movement into the blue fire.

The poem begins and ends with the word blue: “Blue (and) begone, at the village end”, “*Sin’* da sgin’, krai sela” (1.1.280), and the last line of the poem: “Into the blue fire”, “*V ogn’ sin’*” (2.5.340). Zubova asserts that the repetition of blue in the final “blue fire” provides the poem with a cyclical structure. In a diary entry, Tsvetaeva comments, however, that the poem is a movement from “the blue of Rus’” (“*sin’ Rusi*”) “home: to the blue fire” (“*domoi: v ogn’ sin’*”), and she asserts that it was not her idea to end on the same word, but that it wrote itself. The movement from the beginning to the end could be perceived

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87 The appearance of the Swain through the snowstorm seems to contain a reference to Pushkin’s image of Pugachev as Tsvetaeva reads it in the late essay “Pushkin i Pugachev” (1937). Tsvetaeva remarks that: “Мое дело – вечно смотреть на чернеющий в метели предмет”, in other words, to look for the appearance of Pugachev in the snowstorm, that is, as he turns up in the opening scene of *The Captain’s Daughter* (*Kapi tan’ skaia dochka*). There are in fact many correlations between Tsvetaeva’s rendering of the Swain and her reading of Pugachev as the leader (“Вожатый”). According to her, he represents revolt, and she associates him several times with fire (жар), and writes, quoting Blok, that he is “secret fire” (“тайный жар”) (1994:5, p. 511).

88 “Синь да стинь / Край села… / и: / Домой: / В огнь синь / т.е. первая строка и по-
at the same time as the return of elemental forces that correlates with pagan belief in the ancient Russian culture of “Rus’”, as well as a movement further towards a sublime “home” of poetic reality. This movement can be related to the act of retelling the fairy tale and co-creating with the people, in the sense that the poet in her rendering turned to what can be conceived of as a myth about an element behind the tale, in order to attain the elemental and sublime locus of art.

The return of the elemental Swain as Marusia’s true spouse as an image of the resurgence and victory of the elemental presence that belongs to the people relates further to a vision of the Revolution as an event that embodies the tragic and at the same time liberating presence of the elemental forces of the people, which was also a theme in Blok’s The Twelve. To judge from Tsvetaeva’s remarks, the revolutionary theme does not concern the Bolshevik revolution, but the forces at play behind it. For instance, she talked about a different red than that of its red flags in the proposed preface to the French edition: “Et voici, enfin, la Russie, rouge d’un autre rouge que celui de ses drapeaux d’aujourd’hui” (2005, p. 19, 290). There she also described the foul creatures at the party in the fourth chapter of the second part as “the most false friends” (“les amis les plus faux”) (2005, p. 18, 290) and in a letter she hinted that they might be associated with the Bolsheviks.89 (1994:7, p. 323). The locus of Marusia’s and the Swain’s elemental passion story is the poor village and the simple feast, where he appears to have immense and unending riches leading to the possession of souls, while the locus of the Nobleman is a marble mansion, which indicates a different kind of wealth. The elemental Swain wins as an irresistible and sublime force of the people and their art, which somehow was present in the “steps” of the Russian Revolution.

1.3. The Sublime Non-Tale

1.3.1. More than Art

In the meeting between Marusia and the vampire, Tsvetaeva perceived a standard locus of Romantic, Gothic and Russian Symbolist Literature: a story

89 See also discussion in Chapter two, p. 89.
of a meeting between a human and an non-human, demonic force. Tsvetaeva's treatment of the fairy tale plot can be related in particular, as established by scholars, to Russian and German Romanticism and to Russian Modernism. Scholars, however, have not directly linked the poem to the Romantic uncanny ("unheimlich") fairy tale, where the people's art was explored as a locus for the mythical and tragic presence of fatal otherworldly forces.

In Russian literature there is a genre of horror tale, "strashnye skazki", which was explored for example by Gogol, and which presents a similar Romantic fusion of folk art and meetings with the sublime, and might better be described as the uncanny tale. In a comparison between Goethe's poem "Der Erlkönig" (1782) with Zhukovsky's translation of it into Russian "Lesnoi Tsar" (1818) in her later essay "Two Erlkings" ("Dva 'Lesnykh Tsaria'") (1933) (1994:5, pp. 429-43), Tsvetaeva reflects on Goethe's poem in relation to the genre of horror tales. According to her, Zhukovsky's translation, on the one hand, was a horror tale, which tells the story as fairy tales do, being "Horrrifying but nevertheless a fairy tale" ("Strashnaia, no skazka"), while Goethe's poem, on the other, is too horrifying to be called a fairy tale. It is a horrible "non-tale":

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90 Tsvetaeva dated the completion of the poem “Sochel’nik, 1922”, which could also link the poem to the Russian horror tale. The term “Sochel’nik” stems from the folk calendar, and refers to Christmas or Yule eve (“Rozhdestvenskii sochel’nik”), that is the time between the 6th of January (24th of December) and the eve of the Baptism of Christ (“Kreshchenskii sochel’nik”) also called Epiphany (“Bogoiaavlenskie”) on 18th of January (6th of January). Christmastime is a time associated with renewal and the transition from the old year to the new, when, according to pagan belief, there was a particularly intense presence of “unclean forces” (“nechistaia sila”). It was also considered a time particularly determinant for the future. Christmastime marks both a Christian and a pagan feast, where girls and boys engaged in the ritual of singing yule songs, so-called “koliadki”, and in telling Christmas tales, so-called rozhdestvenskie or sviatochnye rasskazy. These tales were so-called bylichki, that is, stories that claimed to be real, and were about meetings with unclean forces that took place during the “sviattki”, that is, between Yule eve and the eve of the Baptism of Christ. The folklore tradition of telling Christmas tales gave rise to a literary genre, which became popular from the Romantic era and further into the 19th century. The most famous in the genre are probably Nikolai Gogol’s “Christmas Eve” (“Noch’ pered Rozhdestvom”), and Nikolai Leskov’s stories, as for instance “The Pearl Bracelet” (“Zhemchuhnoe ozherelie”).
Страшная сказка на ночь. Страшная, но сказка. Страшная сказка нестрашного дедушки. После страшной сказки все-таки можно спать. Страшная сказка совсем не дедушки. После страшной гётевской не-сказки жить нельзя — так, как жили (в тот лес! Домой!)...Добрее, холоднее, величественнее, ирреальнее. [...] вся вещь Жуковского на пороге жизни и сна. Видение Гёте целиком жизнь или целиком сон, все равно, как это называется, раз одно страшнее другого, и дело не в названии, а в захвате дыхания. Что больше — искусство? Спорно. Но есть вещи больше, чем искусство. Страшнее, чем искусство. (1994:5, p. 433f)

Tsvetaeva’s understanding of Goethe’s poem may be linked to the Romantic notion of the sublime as a paradoxical image of the presence in art of an immense and unrepresentable force. Tsvetaeva compares the two poems, asserting that Zhukovsky’s rendition is a piece of art, while Goethe’s poem is “bigger than art” (“veshchi bol’she, chem iskusstvo”), and “more horrifying than art” (“strashnee, chem iskusstvo”). Zhukovsky’s tale can be separated from the storyteller, but Goethe’s poem is a “vision” (“videnie”), a term that unites the poet with his piece.

Der Erkönig brings out the otherworldly lure of the Erlking who calls the little boy back, as Tsvetaeva phrases it: “Into that forest! Home!” (“V tot les! Domoi!”). Goethe’s poem performs the Erlking’s spell, in the sense that we, as readers, feel the otherworldly enchantment, unable to continue living our lives.
as before. It does so less by force of designation or naming, than by the way it captures the reader’s breath (“delo ne v nazvanii, a v zakhvate dykhaniia”). Der Erlkönig is a piece of art, which at the same time comprises what is bigger and more horrifying than art.

As a parallel to Goethe’s “The Erlking”, as Tsvetaeva presents it in her reading, she explores the potential of the folk tale in The Swain as a framework for the story of a human being who comes into contact with elemental forces more powerful than herself. She conveys an image of the elemental and its irresistible magic, and it follows a similar structure of repetitions, where the horror increases with every step. The Swain appears in the form of an element that infuses Marusia with an unearthly fire, which opens a development that leads to death and destruction. Marusia is forced to detach herself, step by step, from her human surroundings, and approach the loci of death. Besides sacrificing her family, she is forced to go through her own death in order to unite with the Swain. In the proposed preface to the French edition, Tsvetaeva wrote that the heroine’s love goes through death “à travers la mort aime” (2005, p. 18), and the metaphorical expression is given a literal meaning in the poem.

Death overshadows the first part from the third chapter onwards, when each chapter ends with a death. The deaths of Marusia’s mother and brother are highly concrete in a manner that is reminiscent of Expressionism. Twice we see the vampire approaching his victim in the night, and both lie crying in vain to Marusia for help. Marusia’s own death, however, which brings the first part to an end, presents an image of liberation. She cries out that she dances her death, and that she is ready to partake of a life in hell with her beloved. It is even as though Marusia’s death crowns her sacrifices, in an otherwise ghastly and uncanny story, with an image of freedom and fusion. The poem unfolds as Marusia moves away from her human condition and further into eternity: she becomes infused with the demonic fire of the Swain and is drawn step by step by this burning element first into death, and then into the sublime, into the “blue fire”, where they become one, where they: “merge together and soar up” (“slilis’ / vzvilis’”). The poem thus ends on an elated note, with an ecstatic open ending that conveys the joyous fusion with the immense elemental force in the flight home “do-moi”. It is a vision of the sublime, which is both art and more than art.

91 This too can be related to the poet’s experience of death during the Revolution and subsequent Civil War, when she also lost her second daughter, Irina.
1.3.2. The Theme of Obsession and Possession: Faust and Marusia

The demonic theme can also be seen in the correlations between The Swain and Goethe’s Faust. In Russian Symbolism, and for Tsvetaeva and other poets in the post-Symbolist era, Goethe’s Faust presented a supreme image of a piece of art inspired by a divine and demonic genius. Teletova pointed at several correlations between the demonic theme in The Swain and in Faust, reflected amongst other, in the parallel between the composition of The Swain and the dual structure of Faust, where the second part also consists of five chapters. Like Faust, The Swain is inspired by a folkloric story about a human who enters a pact with an evil force, and like Faust, the poem has dramatic qualities. It repeats the central theme of entering into a contract with a demon, who will then take the main protagonist to new realms and vest him or her with new visions or powers, also a popular theme amongst Romantics and Symbolists.

Tsvetaeva’s poem presents, however, a different rendering of the image of the evil force in the folk legend upon which it is based. The two realities in Faust, and the demonic role of Mephistopheles, converge on several points with The Swain, but instead of presenting an image of a person who does not succumb to the forces of evil, The Swain portrays an image of a girl who voluntarily gives in to her passion because she is taken by its lure. The story of Marusia’s journey to the otherworldly has a parallel not only in Faust, but also in Gretchen, who perishes because of her love. There is a parallel between the final scene of The Swain, “Cherubicon”, when the voice of the demon intermin-

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93 See Teletova 2000.
94 The dynamics between the two parts present a similar relation, but they are opposed to each other in reverse order. In Faust the first part is more realistic, and the second fantastic, while in The Swain, on the contrary, the first is mythical, and the second, historical. In the first part of Faust, the chronotope is historical. It is based upon the German legend of Dr. Faustus, and takes place in ca. 1480–1538, in Leipzig and the Harz mountains in Germany. The second part takes place during the Walpurgis night in the Harz mountains, which is an otherworldly locus. The first part of The Swain is the story of Marusia’s love for the mythical figure, the vampire, and the second part, of her life with the nobleman. In Faust, the first part covers Faust’s love for the earthly Gretchen, and the second her hypostasis as Helen of Troy.
gles with the church song and summons Marusia to the otherworldly, and the final scenes of the first part of *Faust*, when first of all, Gretchen hears voices in church, and second, in the moment of her death, a choir of angels announces that she is saved. Both ascend, but while Gretchen goes to heaven, Marusia goes to the blue fire. The ending is thus more like the finale in the *chorus mysticus* of the second part of *Faust*: Marusia is drawn into the beyond.  

The parallels between the two works can be further highlighted against the elemental theme and the image of art to which it is linked. In comparison to Faust, who eventually conquers Mephistopheles, Marusia is obsessed by the demon and sacrifices everything to stay with him. The *Swain* can also be contrasted against Goethe’s *Faust*, because instead of to human supremacy, the poet performs Marusia’s relentless forfeit to a non-human force, as she becomes possessed and loses her humanity. This also suggests a parallel to her view on possession in art, and the idea that non-human possession is a condition for the presentation of the sublime.

1.4. A Passage to Poetic Reality

Faryno, who has explored aspects of Tsvetaeva’s use of mythology and theology, contends that the connection between Tsvetaeva’s poetry and folk art consisted in her participation “in the annual folk ritual cycle or even submersion in these rites, naturally without personal participation, but through writing.”

The distinction that Faryno makes between “personal participation” and

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96 There is a possible parallel to a diary entry of 1924, where Tsvetaeva reflected on Goethe as an artist as follows: “A thought: Beethoven was possessed by a demon. Goethe tried to contain demons. Hence Goethe’s fear of Beethoven, and, perhaps, the secret insight that it is greater to be possessed.” (“Mysl’: Betkhoven byl oderzhim demonom, Gete demonov uderzhival. Otsiuda strakh Gete pered Betkhovenom, a m.b. tainoe soznanie, chto *byt’ oderzhimym – bol’she*”) (1997, p. 277). In the commentary, Tsvetaeva seems to blend Goethe with *Faust* as an image of containment, and she compares it with an image of the artist Beethoven as an uncontrolled Romantic genius, which she defines as being possessed by demons. Through this image, she asserts that it is greater to be possessed.

97 Faryno 1985, p. 404.
“writing” is, however, in the context of Tsvetaeva’s understanding of art, not as straightforward as it might seem. Tsvetaeva did arguably not repeat the rite for the sake of the rite, but she saw in the rite a locus of the force of art. Writing offered a form of personal participation, and the fusion between the poet and his vision that Tsvetaeva made with respect to Goethe’s *Erlkönig* is telling. The vision, arguably, takes place in the act of writing, because, in the end, writing was the means of taking part of the rite, where art plays a central role.

Tsvetaeva’s treatment of the tale suggests that she discerned a rite of passage behind it.98 Liudmila Zubova sees the presence of the Russian folk wedding in Tsvetaeva’s rendering of the fairy tale, both as concerns the plot and quotations from ritual wedding songs in the poem.99 The course of the love between Marusia and the Swain is more reminiscent of the rite of passage through death that the Russian folk wedding repeats in its ritual. The folk wedding enacts a farewell from the father’s home and lineage and the passage of greeting the other, the unknown locus of the fiancé, whereby the departure is associated with death and the new home with resurrection. The poem tells, however, the story of a marriage, which goes through death and partial resurrection. The union with the Swain demands the complete surrender and departure of Marusia in order to enter the realms of the Swain: first the sacrifice of her brother and mother and her own life in the first part, and then of her earthly husband and child in the second part.

Zubova argues that folkloric texts attracted Tsvetaeva, because they offered her a passage to the otherworldly that converged with her quest for ascension,100 but it is not a question of an otherworldly ascension or transcendence, as Korkina also argues.101 The fairy tale and the rite of passage that it repeats, offered the poet an image of becoming possessed by an element,

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98 Mircea Eliade defined the folk tale as a more ancient version of an initiation scenario. In *Myth and Reality*, Mircea Eliade writes that: “We could almost say that the tale repeats, on another plane, and by other means, the exemplary initiation scenario. The tale takes up and continues ‘initiation’ on the level of the imaginary.” (Eliade 1963, p. 201f).

99 Zubova argues that the poem conjoins ritual elements from both wedding and burial ceremonies, but does not remark on the connection between them. (Zubova 1999, p. 172ff).

100 Ibid, p. 152.

through which she rendered and experienced the vision of the sublime force of art. Tsvetaeva reworks this rite of passage and turns it into a story about an elemental visitation, because it is in the visitation that she saw an image of the “ritual” force of art that she sought to perform and partake of. The marriage between Marusia and the Swain as it takes place in the end of the first part is, as mentioned, a “krasna svad’ba”. The word “krasna” is polysemous, meaning both “beautiful” and “red” (see discussion on p. 123ff). Their beautiful marriage is also a red wedding of fire and blood, which turns Marusia into a possessed. Marusia’s possession is the condition for her attainment of the elemental and sublime realms of the Swain.

The flight to the blue fire is an image that conjoins ascendance and descent, heaven and hell, as a movement into an indefinite beyond. In the letter to Pasternak from 22 May 1926, Tsvetaeva commented on the end and its relation to folk art as follows:

Да, о Молодце, если помнишь, – прав ты, а не Ася.

Борис, мне все равно, куда лететь. И, может быть, в том моя глубокая безнравственность (небожественность). Ведь я сама – Маруся: честно, как нужно (тесно, как не можно), держа слово, обороняясь, заслоняясь от счастья, полуживая (для других – более чем – но я-то знаю), сама хорошенько не зная для чего так, послушная в насилии над собой, и даже на ту Херувимскую иду – по голосу, по чужой воле, не своей.

Я сама вздохнула, когда кончила, осчастливленная за нее – за себя. Что они будут делать в огнь – синь? Лететь в него вечно. Никакого сатанизма. Херувимская? Так народ захотел.

(2004, p. 205f)

Yes, as concerns The Swain, if you remember – you were right, not Asia.102

Boris, it doesn’t matter, where they fly to. And, maybe, that is my profound lack of morality, (ungodliness). Why, I am – Marusia: honest, as one should be (intimate, as one should not) keeping her word, defending, protecting herself from happiness, half-dead (and

102 Asia refers to Marina Tsvetaeva’s sister, Anastasiia Tsvetaeva.
for the others even more than alive – but I do know), not really knowing why it is so, submitting and forcing herself, even into that Cherubicon – heeding the voice, heeding the will of somebody else, not her own.

I took a deep breath when I finished it, happy for her – for me. What will they do in the fire – blue? Fly into it forever. No hint of Satanism here. The Cherubicon? The people wanted it thus.\textsuperscript{103}

According to the poet it does not matter how you interpret the blue fire, or as she says, “where they / we fly to”; the important thing is that they will fly into it forever, that it presents an image of endless movement. This flight into the element of the blue fire, which in the poem is also described as a flight “home” (“do-moi / v ogn’ sin”) presents a flight into a locus, which is on the limits of the poems and therefore, as indicated, on the limits of what can be told in the poem. The endless movement suggests an open ending, which is a characteristic Romantic ending, considered to break the closed unity of literary composition and thus overcome the boundary between creative work and life.\textsuperscript{104} It was not meant to be an ending, because poetry was not to be an artifice, while the ending of the Swain is intended to comprise an image of the sublime, which is more than art.

The passage also suggests an important clue to the form of writing indicated by the image of art in the poem. Tsvetaeva ends the poem with an image of submission that aligns the poet and Marusia, who both act “heeding the voice, heeding the will of somebody else, not their own.” Through the ellipsis of the personal pronoun, the distinction between Marusia and Marina, between “I” and “she” is blurred. Just as Marusia follows a voice, calling her in the church, the poet, in her creative activity, also follows the Swain, who can be understood with respect to the elemental force in the art of the people. As I will try to show in the following chapters with concrete examples, the poet

\textsuperscript{103} Tsvetaeva uses the impersonal form, which allows her to blur the identity of the subject, and fuse herself with Marusia.

immerses herself in folk art in the performance of the tale, submissive to the voices at play, in order to bring out an appearance of the sublime at the limits of poetic language.
Chapter 2

Poetic Performance

The poem can be understood as an act of co-creating with the people not only in the sense that the poet follows the plot closely, but also seeks to render the tale both in a folkloric manner and as a poetic and immediate performance. In the remark on *The Swain* in “The Poet on the Critic” Tsvetaeva writes that she “heard out” (“vyslushivala”) the poem, which is indicative of the way that she seeks to “sound out” the poem. The poem presents a poetic performance of the tale in the sense of a polyphonic oral drama through which the characters would speak or sing in a direct way. In an *esquisse* to a foreword to *The Swain* in her notebooks, *Svodnye tetradi*, she writes: “This piece was written aloud, not written but spoken, and therefore I think it is wrong (unjust!) to read it with your eyes! Sing it!” (“Eta veshch’ byla napisana vsluh, ne napisana, a skazana, poetomu, dumaiu, budet nepravil’no (nepravedno!) chitat’ ee glazami. Spoite vsled!”) (1997, p. 152). The poet Andrey Bely characterized Marina Tsvetaeva as a “composer and singer” (“kompozitorsha i pevitsa”) in a remark on her lyrical poetry,105 and the remark can be aptly applied to *The Swain*, where the melodic qualities of the text play a prominent role. The poetic language is built on quotations and references to folk songs and other minor folkloric genres,106 which form the basis of the poet’s experiments with sound and rhythm, aimed at bringing out dramatic aspects, as well as voice intonation, as well as songs and

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105 Bely wrote an article on Tsvetaeva “Poetessa-pevitsa. ‘Razluka’, stikhotvoreniiia Marin’ Tsvetaevoi”. It was first published in the émigré paper *Golos Rossii* in 21 May 1922. The quotation is from *Russkaia literatura*, no. 4, 1982, p. 277, where it was republished a second time (pp. 276-80). On the article and Tsvetaeva’s reaction to it, see Mikhail Gasparov, “Slovo mezhdu melodiei i ritmom. (Ob odnoi literaturnoi vstreche M. Tsvetaevoi i A. Belogo)” in *Russkaia rech’,* no. 4, 1989, pp. 3-10.

106 It is interesting to compare this with the poem *Krysolov*, which according to Efim Etkind, also incorporates quotations of popular songs, many of which are linked to the Russian Revolution. (Etkind 1992, pp. 128ff).
dances in all its magic intensity. Thus Tsvetaeva also sought to perform the story of the visitation of the element in the poem.

The poet’s invitation to the reader to sing the poem, that is, to perform it as the poet did, is another aspect of co-creating as a play with the reader. The reader is bound to construe the voices of the characters, which are rendered in an obscure poetic flow. Through the explorations of folk poetry in *The Swain*, Tsvetaeva also sought a poetic language to present or make appear magic loci and voices in a more immediate way than the means of representation would otherwise allow for, and sound thus plays a central role. The notion that the poet “heard out” the poem can also be understood with respect to the fact that it abounds in experiments with sound poetry, *zvukopis’*, which is built on different forms of sound repetitions, where the semantic content of words is subordinated to their sound qualities. The poetic language of *The Swain* sometimes even approaches folkloric magic, where the importance is not *what* is said, but *how* it is spoken. In folk art, sound poetry can be a means of avoiding reference, and it was a vital source of inspiration for Russian Futurists such as Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh and their concept of transrational language. Tsvetaeva’s treatment of folk poetry also shows, however, a kinship with the attraction to folk art in German Romanticism and the quest for a language, where sound gives sense to things in a more direct and intense way. The poem was to sound

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108 Elena Levkievskaia points out in the article “Zvuk i golos v slavianskoi apotropicheskoi magii”: “Семантика вербального оберега (впрочем, как и любого другого сакрального текста зависит не от того, что говорится в тексте, но и от того, как он произносится, т. е. какие способы звуковой организации текста.” (Ibid., p. 51).

109 Johann Gottfried Herder argued in his treatise *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (1770/72), that a more original and natural language, which was also a poetic language was to be found in more primitive languages. This language was a language of sound and song. See in particular Chapter three, first part (Erster teil, Dritter Abschnitt) on *Sounds* (*Töne*), where Herder, for instance, writes: “War also die erste Menschensprache Gesang: so wars Gesang, der ihm so natürlich, seinen Organen, und Naturtrieben so angemessen war, als der Nachtigallen Gesang ihr selbst, die gleichsam eine schwebende Lunge ist, und das war – eben unsre tönende Sprache.” (Johann Gottfried Herder, “Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache” in *Werke in zehn Bänden, Band I, Frühe Schriften 1764–1772*. (ed. U. Gaier). Frankfurt am Main und Leipzig: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985, p. 741). I have found nothing that indicates that
itself out through the poet’s mediation, and thus the sublime magic of the fairy tale would have the means to manifest itself in poetic language.

2.1. Performance

2.1.1. Performance through Folk Poetry

The critic Ariadna Chernova asserted that *The Swain* is “soldered together by a chain of songs” (“Zven’iami pesen spaian”) and that the “verse sings” (“poet stikh”)\(^{110}\). There is a polyphony of voices and rhythms in the poem, which is brought out by quoting from and playing with different folk genres, and in the final scene – from the Orthodox liturgy.\(^{111}\) The folkloric genres present a background canvas for the performance of the tale. The poetic language intones voices or dances in a kind of drama in lyrical poetry. The folkloric style is not preserved in its original form, but transposed according to the poet’s explorations of poetic language from any strict identity with the folkloric genres. Instead of describing settings, movement and speech, the poet intones the story through its melody and paces it through its rhythm.

The poem comprises a wide arrange of genres, which is felt both in the figurative language and in the rhythm. There are primarily quotations from and allusions to sung (*pesennyi stikh*) and spoken genres (*skazovyi stikh*), which is telling of the melodic and dramatic character of the poem. Central folkloric genres appearing are dance refrains (*pliasovye pripevki*), spells (*zagovory*) and laments (*plach, prichitaniia*), magnifying songs (*velichal’nye pesni*) and other

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\(^{111}\) By “polyphony” I do not refer to Bakhtin’s theory of the polyphonic novel, but to the diversity of voices and melodic lines.
genres connected with the wedding ritual. Prominent forms throughout the poem are also the riddle (zagadka) and lyrical songs (liricheskie pesni). Zubova comments on elements of lullabies, and in a critical remark on the poem, Khodasevich noticed that there are also tongue-twisters (skorogovorki). An example is found in the first chapter of the second part, in the following lines: “Young is the nobleman’s tooth / Sharp is the nobleman’s temper” (“Mlad u barina zubok / Nrav u barina rezov”) (2.1.302), which is a tongue-twister created by the poet. Finally, there is also the liturgy that appears in the concluding part of the fifth chapter of the second part, which is not folkloric, but which nevertheless forms an important part of the musical performance.

The genres of folk art with their different devices serve as the point of departure in the poem and are used rather freely. As mentioned, certain lyrical segments correlate in a consistent way with a specific folkloric genre, but the folkloric expression is for the most part only the starting point. Therefore we often encounter a blend of genres, as in the first lyrical segment of the poem:

Синь да сгинь — край села,
Рухнул дуб, трость цела.
У вдовы у той у трудной
Дочь Маруся весела.

Как пойдет с коромыслом —
Церкви в звон, парни в спор.
Дочь Маруся румянista —
Самой Троице раззор!

Отпусти-ка меня, мать,
С подружками погулять,
Ленку тонкого попрясть,
Здоровьица порастрясть.

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113 Ibid., p. 159.
114 See quotation in the Introduction, footnote 34.
Заспалась уж очень-то
Под камнем — руда!
— Гуляй, гуляй, доченька,
Пока молода!

The first stanza is constructed according to the typical form of the *chastushka*, both in structure and sound pattern (see discussion of metre on p. 92f). However, in its mode of speech, the stanza does not correspond entirely to the *chastushka*, which is not primarily a narrative, but an expressive popular genre.\(^{115}\) In the opening lines of the poem we find a metaphor that brings to mind a riddle. The first image, meaning roughly: “Blue (and) begone, at the village end / an oak has fallen, but rod intact” (“Sinʹ da sginʹ, krai sela / rukhnul dub, trostʹ tsela”), may refer to the family situation, that is, to the fact that the father is dead (the oak has fallen), but that the family prevails (the rod is intact). The line leads on to a presentation of Marusia and her mother, which is followed by the first dramatic scene. This scene correlates with an interesting feature of several folkloric genres: the possibility of alternating between one narrative voice, dialogue or a polyphony of voices without marked passages. In folk songs, a narrative mode can easily pass over into dialogues, without any preliminary remarks, so that the development of the subject takes place in the dialogue and not in the narration.\(^{116}\) For instance, the second stanza in the first segment praises the outstanding beauty and health of the young girl in a way reminiscent of the magnifying songs.

The subsequent presentation of Marusia as a young girl ready to leave home is reminiscent of the so-called fast, merry lyrical songs (*chastye veselye pesni*), which describe the good sides of life.\(^{117}\) Tsvetaeva takes advantage of the narrative mode in folk songs in her voice performance, in the sense that the lyrical song “sounds out” a dramatic scene between Marusia and her mother. A standard figure in the merry songs is a dialogue between a young girl, full of desire and eager to go out into the world to seek her fortune, and her mother or

\(^{115}\) It almost always corresponds to an emotional expression in the first person (Vladimir Anikin, *Russkoe ustnoe narodnoe tvorchestvo*. Kazan’: Vysshaia shkola, 2004, p. 678).


\(^{117}\) Ibid., p. 119.
father, who answer that the world is awaiting her. Expressions from such merry
songs are replicated here almost word for word, when Marusia asks her mother
to let her go (“otpusti-ka menia, mat’”) and the mother lets her go, urging her to
have fun while she is young “Gulai, gulai, dochen’ka, / poka moloda.”118

The tale is accompanied by songs and dances that give the poem an intense musicality. One of the main loci of the first part is the feast, where the
girls and boys meet to drink and dance. A large part of the text refers to dance
refrains, so called *pliasovye pripevki*,119 which egg the participants on to dance
and movement. We find ourselves in the locus of ritual games, as the poem
starts with the feast, when the girls gather to dance:

Бегут русы,
Бегут круты,
Шелком скрученные —
Эх!
Моя — круче,
Твоя — круче,
У Маруси — круче всех!
(1.1.281)

The dance rhythms more or less set the tone of the first part and convey the
frenzy of the village feast. They are felt continuously in different forms:

Вытирайте, Любки,
Малиновы губки!
Волынь, за погудку!
Сокол, по голубку!
(1.1.282)

118 Ibid.

119 In the scholarship on the poem, the metre of the poem has been compared to the
*chastushka*, for instance by Mikhail Gasparov and by Hauschild. (Gasparov 1997,
p. 273; Hauschild 2004, p. 76.) The features that lead the scholars to conclude that we
are dealing with a *chastuska*, that is, a tendency to trochaic metre with constant stress
shift from the first to the second syllable and the fifth to the sixth also pertain to several
other genres, and amongst them the dance refrains, *pliasovye pripevki*. For instance
The dance rhythms, repeated in each chapter of the first part, are of varying intensity, reflecting the various moods, and they reach their apex in the dance in the fifth chapter, as Marusia gives in completely to her passion for the Swain.

Folkloric incantations also play a prominent role. For instance, in the scene where Marusia follows the thread tied to the Swain, the incantation is replicated and fulfils a double function. In the typical imperative form of incantations and spells, Marusia addresses her heart and the thread at the same time, urging them to stand firm during their journey:

Мое слово верное,  
Мое сердце зрячее.  
Иди, сердце сдерживай,  
Клубок разворачивай.  

(1.2.285)

The first two lines, “My word is true, / My heart is perceptive.” (“Moe slovo vernoе, / Moe serdtse zriachee” are analogous with the opening phrase (zachin) of the spells and incantations, which starts with a declaration of the performer’s readiness for the speech act that is about to be performed. The stanza also imitates the imperative form of the incantations (zaklinaniia), which form a part of the spells or conjurations (zagovory). We find, for instance, the technique of exhaustive repetition in the enumeration of topological features in the depiction of a different, faraway locus, where something is hidden. The exhaustiveness of the spell serves to guarantee that it covers the entire topology it aims to invoke. It may further contain a depiction of movement,120 which is replicated in the poem in order to visualize movement. One example may be found in the second chapter:

По оврагам,  
По задворкам,  
Смётом здравым,  
Оком зорким,  
Полазуркам-  
Закоулкам,

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Вздохом спертым,
Сердцем гулким —
Дружок, не спохватывайся!
Клубочек, разматывайся!  (1.2.286)

Marusia urges the thread and her heart, correlated by analogy, to take her “over the ravines, the by-ways, the loop-holes, the alleyways” (“po ovragam, / po zadvorkam, / […] / Po lazurkam- / zakoulkam”). Instead of an imaginary movement that takes place in a different locus, it is Marusia’s movement that we see. The girl addresses the thread in the typical imperative mode of the spells and incantations, but the enumeration of topological features illustrates her flight. The concentrated sound pattern with the repetitions of the sounds s-z, and the m ending in the instrumental case also enhance the sense of speed and intensity that drives her movement. Thus folk genres are used as a way to visualize action without describing it.

There are also direct conjurations, as in the fifth chapter of the first part, when the Swain casts a spell on Marusia:

— Смекай, румяниста,
Всех кровинок — триста.

Держи, бережлива,
Одну на разживу:

Чтоб той реченькой да вспять
Было нам с чего начать.

Замок да печать.

Свежей прежнего да встать —
Нельзя помнить, велю спать.

Замок да печать.  (1.5.299)

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121 The word “lazurka” appears to be a neologism formed from the word “lazeika” (loop-hole).
The Swain addresses the girl, conjuring her for the life after death that he is about to inflict on her. His speech is filled with exhortations and requests that are followed by the formula “zamok da pechat’”, which is a standard formula in incantations. The intonation is calm, and contains, besides the incantation, elements of lullaby. The Swain is both putting her to sleep and casting a spell over her future life. The harmonious speech reflects the serene moment, and the many repetitions the ritual character of the passage and the resoluteness in the intonation, as he conjures her coming life in the spell.

The poem includes quotations from famous folk songs that reinforce the melodic intonation in the poem, and present dramatic moments in the tale. The song “Long is the dark night” (“Dolga nochka temnaia”) refers to the folk song “Akh ty, nochen’ka, nochka têmnaia”, which forms the setting when the Swain comes to suck the blood of Marusia’s brother, who lies alone in the dark night. The beginning of the second part begins with the intonation “Ei, koni moi” (“Oh my horses”), which is similar to the folk songs “Ekh, seni moi” (“Oh my shelters”) and “Zapriagaite, brattsy, koni” (“Harness the horses”). “Oh my horses” (“Ei, koni moi”) both sets the tone of the opening scene in the second part, and depicts the Nobleman’s flight on his horses at the beginning of the second part.

Dramatic moments from other fairy tales form, in a similar manner, the basis of scenes in The Swain. For instance, the dialogue between the Nobleman and the girl on the way to the church in the final chapter of the second part, is strongly reminiscent of a scene in “Puss in Boots” (“Le Chat botté”) by Charles Perrault. Both scenes present a dialogue in a carriage that moves through a landscape, which consists of questions about the owner of the lands and the lands through which the travellers pass. The scenes with the red flower, burning in the snow, and its subsequent metamorphoses also have correlations with “The Scarlet Flower” (“Alen’kii tsvetochek”) by Sergei Aksakov.

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122 Zubova 1999, p. 159.

123 In the fairy tale “Puss in Boots” there is a similar dialogue consisting of questions and answers, where a king asks the people in the fields, who have been prepared to lie, about the master of the lands they pass through. As in “Puss in Boots” there is a dis-symmetry between the questions and the answers.
2.1.2. Polyphonic Performance

Against this folkloric backdrop, Tsvetaeva seeks to evoke a performance of the tale as if the characters were to speak in an immediate way. The poetic performance presents a blend, not only of folkloric genres, but also of literary genres; the poem evokes the story in a sound narration that is also a lyrical enactment of the tale. It is a co-creating act that shows a certain kinship with the way performance functions in folk art, where a tale is interpreted by a performer who is anonymous and who, according to Dmitry Likhachev, fuses in his (her) narrative style the audience, the storyteller and the fictional characters in a polyphonic oral performance.\textsuperscript{124} The poem can also be aligned with oral performance with respect to the centrality of the notion of voice. The narration in \textit{The Swain} is performed from the point of view of a polyphonic position where the voice of the narrator blends with those of the characters in swift and often unmarked changes. The melodies are interspersed with dialogues and direct speech, often without indications, but there are also some indications that underline the dramatic character of the tale. For instance, there is a commentary in a footnote to the line “(Rolling the eyes)”, [“(Glaza vski – dy – vaet)"], in chapter 3 of part one, p. 289, where the text reads: “Concerns Marusia” [“Otnositsia k Maruse”].\textsuperscript{125} However, for the main part, Tsvetaeva seeks to present characters immediately through the sound of their speech, songs and movements.

In her quest for the characters to speak immediately in the poem, Tsvetaeva explores the Russian language beyond folk poetry to present the speech of her characters. The poem consists of different levels of language and dialectal or historical forms of words, as well as neologisms and different forms of ex-

\textsuperscript{124} “Русская народная лирика не столько ‘создается’, сколько исполняется. Ее ‘лирический герой’ – в известной мере сам исполнитель. Певец поет о себе, слушатель слушает о себе же. Исполнитель и слушатель (слушатель как бы внутренне подпевает исполнителю и с этой точки зрения является до известной степени также её исполнителем) стремятся отождествлять себя с лирическим героем народной песни.” (Likhachev 1971, p. 245).

\textsuperscript{125} The dramatic features are underscored, however, in the French rendition \textit{Le Gars}, where the lines that pertain to the characters are often specified. See for instance 2005, p. 35, where the indication “Le Gars” stands before one stanza and the indication: “Maroussia” before the next.
periments with sound. Besides quotations from genres of Russian folk poetry, a large proportion of the poem is made up of dialectal and vernacular words and expressions that constitute a kind of “folk language” (“narodnyi iazyk”) and clearly pertain to a low style. There is also the Church Slavonic that traditionally marks high style, but which is given in the environment of the people.

For the most part the poem tells itself without either dramatic or narrative indications. Tsvetaeva explores the opportunity in Russian to omit the subject or the copula, and she avoids pronouns and really any form of propositional phrase. Syntax for the most part reveals the gender and number of the speaker, but the reader must construe the identity of the voice. In a roundelay, the perspective shifts within the stanza, when the singing of the girls is interrupted by the entrance of a different voice, probably that of the Swain:

Наше счастье —
Ткать, прясть,
Ладком-в складчину-да в гладь!
— Ходи чаще! —
Двери настежь:
— Добро-здравствовать-гулять! (1.1.281)

In the first three lines, the girls are singing, and they exclaim: “Step faster!” (“Khodi chashche!”). Then there is a line which is descriptive and seems to pertain to a narrative voice: “Doors wide open:” (“Dveri nastezh’:”). The last line presents yet another perspective, which enters with the exclamation: “Good-day-feasting!” (“— Dobro-zdravstvovat’-guliat’!”). It seems to pertain to the Swain: three lines later are we told that the Swain has entered: “If it isn’t the swain-fire” (To l’ ne molodets-ogon’”). The voice of the Swain is thus his first appearance, presented directly without dramatic or narrative indications.

A term that Tsvetaeva used in a letter to Anna Teskova in a remark that concerned Vol’nyi proezd (1994:6, p. 337). It seems, however, also appropriate to describe aspects of the poetic language of The Swain. Tsvetaeva’s daughter, Ariadna Efron, describes in her memoirs how her mother in the post-revolutionary years in Moscow began to listen to what Efron called the “Music of the revolution” (a quotation from Blok’s commentary on The Twelve) and fill her notebooks with expressions and words that she heard on the streets, in trains and train stations etc. (Ariadna Efron, O Marine Tsvetaevoi. Vospominaniia docheri. Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1989, p. 124).
In the lyrical flow of the narrative that for the most part lacks descriptive explanations, the punctuation and emphases instead serve to alternate rhythm and intonation to bring out shifts in perspective and voice. In her notebooks, Svodnye tetradi, in the esquisse to a preface to The Swain, partly quoted above, Tsvetaeva further comments on the oral character of the poem; having asserted that it must be sung, she says that she spelled out the poem through emphases and different punctuation marks: “As far as I could – I indicated with emphases, colons, dashes (the ingenious German word Gedankenstrich, […] that furrow between the eyebrows which here lies horizontally).” (“Chto mogla – ukazala udareniiami, dvoetochiiami, tire (genial’noe nemetskoe Gedankenstrich, […] morshchina mezhdu broviami, zdes’ legshaia gorizontal’no).” (1997, p. 152). The remark suggests the melodic character of the tale, and the poet’s struggle to indicate how it was to be orally performed through punctuation. Through shifts in rhythm and intonation, the poet distinguishes the different voices in the lyrical flow.

The poem is enacted in the narrative act as it is being told and therefore it takes place throughout in the present tense. The immediate performance renders not only the characters’ speech, but also seeks to “sound out” their movements. The following scene is from the struggle between the Nobleman and the flower, who has transformed into an elusive beautiful girl, and is on the verge of transforming back into a flower. He catches the girl in his arms and asks her about her identity, while she tries to escape without revealing who she is:

Лбом об землю — чок!
Да на ветку —
Скок —
Тут к ней барин! Хвать!
— «Говори как звать:

Имя, званье, род!»
Схватил-замер-ждет.

Тут — началось!
(Где и взялось?)
Пламем взмелось!
Змеем взвилось!
Вьется из рук,
Бьется из рук,
Рвется из рук,
Льется из рук.

Сгреб — не даёт.
— Брык-скок-бег-лёт —
Поводом рвет.
Парусом бьет.

Прыгом из рук,
Шибом из рук,
Кидом из рук,
Дыбом из рук. (2.2.310)

In this passage, Tsvetaeva repeats and explores two figures in particular in order to describe movement; verbal stems: *chok*, *khvat’*, *bryk*, *skok*, *beg*; and use of verbal or ordinary nouns in the instrumental case: *plamem* (a reduced form of *plamenem*), *zmeem*, *prygom*, *shibom* etc. In both instances, the expressions present phenomena at the margins of standard Russian lexicography and syntax. Zubova has shown how Tsvetaeva creates ambiguous grammatical forms through her approach to the use of verbs and nouns. For instance *bryk* and *skok* are verbal interjections formed from the verbs *brykat’* and *skakat’*, and *beg* and *lët* are verbal nouns, but they are paralleled as one grammatical form. The words *kidom* and *shibom* represent, moreover, neologisms, formed by analogy, and appear to be substantivized forms of the verbs *kidat’* and *shibat’* in the instrumental singular. Zubova argues that Tsvetaeva thus brings us back to an ancient syncretic language, where noun and verb coincided. The verbal forms can, however, also be considered with respect to the non-descriptive sound narrative, to the extent that they convey sheer movement. The words denote and perform an action as if it was acting out itself in the swift and brisk movement corresponding to the sound of the syllable.

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127 See also Zubova 1999, p. 165.
128 Ibid., p. 161.
129 There is also a correlation in this respect between Tsvetaeva’s experiments with mono-
In the lyrical enactment of the tale, we also see a struggle between different voices and perspectives. For instance, caveats are directed towards the Nobleman’s thoughts or actions:

Так и падаю
С ног, как пьяница...
Эх, и задал бы
Пированьице!

—

(Сласти — шагом,
Страсти — рысью.)
Барин, барин,
Вслух не мысли!

Вести — шаром,
Гости — шастом.
Барин, барин,
Вкось не хвастай!

Шаром-жаром-
Жигом-граем...
Барин, барин, барин, барин!...

(2.3.315)

The Nobleman has become disturbed by the couple’s isolation and cannot contain himself after the birth of their son, and thus thinks to himself “Oh, if (I) only cold / throw a party!” (“Ekh, i zadal by / Pirovan’itse!”). An unknown voice, that could be the narrator’s or the Nobleman’s servant’s, turns to the Nobleman in the imperative, direct form of address and orders him: “Don’t think aloud!” (“Vsluh ne mysli!”) and “Don’t boast before strangers!” (“Vkos’ ne khvastai!”). To invite guests would be a violation of the oath that he swore

syllabic forms and the Romantics’ quest for an *Ursprache*. According to Herder, the first rudimentary language was a language of sounding action that took the form of interjections. There was a debate as to whether these first words were monosyllabic or bisyllabic. Herder argued, however, that these first words were half-inarticulate sounds. (Herder 1985, p. 739).
to the girl, but it is too late, the Nobleman’s voice has already been sounded out, and the fiery creatures are on their way. The news spreads “around” “sharom”, and the guests move “shastom”, a neologism formed from the verb shastat’, which roughly here denotes their movement as they sneak around imperceptibly. As important as the meaning of the words is the alliteration sharom – shastom, which onomatopoetically presents the sound of the swift and imperceptible movements of the guests. The scene ends with strange movements that recall the Swain’s in the end of the third chapter in the first part (see also p. 88). The movements are presented by monosyllabic words without a subject in the instrumental case: “sharom-zharom-/zhigom-graem”, meaning roughly “around-with fire-burning-in a herd”.

For the most part, the voices present the speech or act of a character, but in the final chapter, pure voices appear. Let us remind ourselves that Tsvetaeva remarked in a letter to Pasternak of 22 May 1926 that Marusia and the poet followed a voice that was not their own in the final scene: “heeding the voice, heeding the will of somebody else, not her own.” (“po golosu, po chuzhoi vole, ne po svoei.”). Chapter five of part two begins with a scene where unidentified voices speak both to the Nobleman and to the beautiful girl. The Nobleman is torn between the voices, where one tries to convince him to go and keep his word of honour, while the other tells him that he can ignore it because he was under the influence: “One voice: the word! / The other voice: Drunken!” A completely different dreamlike voice appears before the girl, and tries to convince her to stay:

И еле — как будто бы мысли сказались —
Над барыней — шелест:
— Проснись, моя зависть!

И брежно — как будто слезою колеблясь
Над барыней дребезг:
— Проснись, моя ревность!

(Не ветер ли в травах?
Не пепел ли в золах?
Не баринов навык,
Не баринов голос.)
И дале, и возле,
И звоном, и вязью...
Рассветные сквози,
Рассветные связи...

И резью — как будто бы ветер навстречу —
— Не езди! Не езди!
Младенцем ответишь!

И слёзно — как будто бы женщина плачет —
— Не езди! Не езди!
Блаженством заплатишь!

(2.5.327f)

The voice appears faint (“ele”) as a rustle (“shelest”), “carefully” (“brezhno”) like tinkling glass (“drebezg”), “cutting” (“rez’iu”) as the wind against the face (“kak budto by veter navstrechu”), and “tearful” (“slézano”) as if a woman were wailing (“kak budto by zhenshchina plachet”). She recognizes that it is “Not the Nobleman’s voice.” (“Ne barinov golos.”). The voice seems to pertain to the Swain, who like in the first chapter attempts to convince her not to go, because it will lead to more sacrifices: “You will lose your son” (“Mladentsem otvetish’!”)

In a commentary on the scene in Svodnye tetradi, Tsvetaeva commented on the voice, as follows:


The line of the voice: don’t go, don’t give in, you will pay with your son, and pay with your husband. And if you will – don’t look into the left window, look down throughout the service. Further – is not in my power. Was faithful to you. (Without pronouns, just a voice, cannot be named in any way at all). [Italics mine – T.L.] And if I summon you – refuse – not me. (Not me, not me, I am somebody else’s wife.)
Tsvetaeva’s remarks suggest that the voice has to do with the Swain, and it is indicated in masculine: “Byl tebe veren” (“Was faithful to you”). Of particular interest in Tsvetaeva’s commentary on the voice is her remark that it is “without pronouns, just a voice, cannot be named in any way at all”. The Swain appears in the final chapter as a pure voice, which cannot be represented, or as Tsvetaeva writes, “cannot be named in any way at all”, not even in the form of pronouns. Apart from the appearance of the Swain, the commentary refers to forms in which voices are presented in the poem as a whole, to the extent that pronouns often are omitted. The remarks point ultimately to the poet’s quest in *The Swain* to sound out voices that are beyond representation.\(^{130}\)

In the proposed preface to *Le Gars*, Tsvetaeva depicts the final scene as a struggle between a triad of voices: “A travers la voix du prêtre une autre voix: voix de l’autre répondant a celle du prêtre, opposant à chaque parole sa parole de damné d’amour: tri-voce: le prêtre, l’autre et les fidèles.” (2005, p. 24, 292). There is the voice of the priest, who reads by the book, followed by the voices of the believers or devotees (“fidèles”), and then there is the voice of “the other”, “l’autre”, who contests the words of the priest, from the point of view of someone, damned by love: “opposant à chaque parole sa parole de damné d’amour”. The other is ambiguous and the one who is “damned by love” could really refer to both the Swain and Marusia. The following episode develops as a struggle between these voices:

«От лица нечестивых»,
(На сладость — льстивых!)

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\(^{130}\) The voice presentation and the insistence on voices in Tsvetaeva’s commentaries on the poem can probably be related to the centrality of the notion of voice in Tsvetaeva’s poetry. In several poems she presents the voice as defining for the poet a transcendent category, which is given to him/her. In the article “A Sibyl of Two Voices: ‘Sivilla’ by Marina Cvetaeva and ‘Eine Sibylle’ by Rainer Maria Rilke. A Comparative Reading.” (Lane 2006, pp. 19-34), I tried to show that Tsvetaeva in the poetic triptych “Sivilla” written in 1922–1923, treats the legend of the Sibyl as the story of a transformation into vessel for a divine voice. In a letter to Aleksandr Bakhrakh, she comments on the legend as follows: “(Слова, вложенные Овидием в уста Сивиллы, привожу по памяти) ‘Мои жилы иссякнут, мои кости высохнут, но ГОЛОС, ГОЛОС – оставит мне Судьба!’” (1994:6, p. 561). In the later poem “Est’ schastlivtsy i schastlivtsy” she reflects on the voice as a central category in poetic writing that is given to the poet: “Ибо раз голос тебе, поэт, / Дан, остальное – взято.” (1994:2, p. 324).
«Мою душу острастших»,
(Своей — не спасших!)

«В крове крыл̄ твоя
Покроешь мя...»
(Зорь моя утренняя!
Сокровищница!)

Робок — шаг,
Долу — зрак.
Кровь в ушах:
Знобу звяк.

«Врази мою душу».
(Молись! Не слушай!)

«Мою одержаша»,
(Молись!) «Объяша
мя — тако лев
Готов на лов...»
(Разве уж так
Суров?

Не клейми меня печатью крайней!)
«Тако скимен, обитаи в тайнах». (2.5.335f)

The struggle between the voices takes place as a struggle both for Marusia’s soul and for the depiction of the evil force.¹³¹ The scene is conveyed in a polyphony, where the Church Slavonic Psalm 16 blends with the voice of the “other” while the monosyllabic words that present the voices also convey movements and sounds in the scene. The voice of the priest chanting is given within quotation marks, while the voice of the “other” is rendered as counterpoint in brackets. The

¹³¹ See also Hauschild 2004, pp. 135ff.
psalm, however, is only quoted in fragments so that the meaning is transposed, and the “other's” comments concern this transposed meaning; instead of being addressed to God, they seem to concern him. The fragmentary quotations from the song begin with “Surround my soul” (“Vrazi moiu dushu”), while the voice replies “Pray! Do not listen!” (“Molis'! Ne slushai”), and “holding me in possession” (“Moiu oderzhasha”) while the voice repeatedly entreats her to pray, because she must not ask him to do so. The commentary “as a lion prepared for the prey” (“tako lev / gotov na lov”) evokes a reaction from the other: “Really that fierce?” (“Razve uzh tak / surov?”), who contests the depiction of the demon, or evil enemies in the hymn. Only the final quotation from the psalm is not commented upon by the voice, perhaps, because it befits his image: “a young lion dwelling in secret places” (“Tako skimen, obitaiai v tainakh”). The secret places suggest the locus of the Swain in his presentation.\footnote{The image of the Swain as an ambiguous figure with respect to good and evil converges in many respects with the presentation of the little Devil in the essay “The Devil” (“Chert” 1935). See also discussion in Chapter three, p. 111.}

2.2. Sound Patterns

2.2.1. Leitmotiv and Repetition

The immediacy of the performance is brought out by an intense sound texture, which is created through the technique of leitmotiv or repetition. Several scholars and critics have remarked upon the centrality of the technique of leitmotiv in Tsvetaeva’s longer poems. The term leitmotiv stems from music and refers to a technique that became popular through the works of Richard Wagner and that built on the repetition of certain standard themes. Russian Symbolists explored it as a poetic and narrative principle in their works, and the most famous examples are probably the prose works of Andrey Bely.\footnote{On leitmotiv in Bely’s works, see Ada Steinberg, Word and Music in the Novels of Andrey Bely. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.}

Christiane Hauschild has examined the role of leitmotiv in Tsvetaeva’s poem primarily against the backdrop of Wagner and the reception of his music in Russia, and she understands leitmotiv in terms of order “Verbindung
von Musik, kosmischer Ordnung und Weltgesetz.” As a musical principle in
the poem, it is associated with the presentation of the demonic and element-
al, rather than with the representation of worldly or cosmic order. The tech-
nique was inspired by folk art and its repetition of standard epithets, figures,
paraphernalia, loci or sound patterns, and it is in its folkloric context that the
technique appears in Tsvetaeva’s poem. It is thus characteristic of the poem’s
tendency to explore fusions of literature and folk art and it can be compared
to the attempt by Symbolists and Futurists at a kind of writing on the model
of folk art that does not aim at clarity and cogency, but at a mythical form of
art beyond the boundaries of conventional representation. As in folk poetry,
repetitions structure the narrative and the rhythm. It is vital to the poet’s at-
tempt to make sound and rhythm perform the tale.

The poet develops leitmotifs through repetitions of standard epithets,
clichés and formulaic expressions from folk art, which I will discuss in greater
detail in the following chapter. One of the recurring themes in the first chap-
ter of part one is established for example, by repeated epithets for girls and
boys associated with birds. The boys are referred to as falcons (sokola), hawks
(iastreby), and the girls as doves (golubki), or simply as little birds (ptashki).
The girls are also referred to in relation to their sowing, which is what they
gather to do (“lenku tonkago popriast'” or “volyn’ na pogudku”). The Swain
frequently addresses Marusia in images associated with the organic world and
harvest. She is sap (“sok”), ripe corn (“spelaia rozh’”), red fruit (“alyi plod”),
a fallen tree (“derevtse srublennoe”). More important however is the central
leitmotiv which revolves around blood, fire and the colour red, which I will
discuss in more depth in the following chapter.

The leitmotifs in imagery are correlated with repetitions of patterns of
sound that establish poetic motifs. Different forms of sound repetitions, such
as rhymes, internal rhymes, assonance and alliteration constitute a massive
and variegated sound texture that “sounds out” the poem in different ways.
The poem displays a wide arrange of end rhymes, classical rhymes, instances
of Modernist experiments with rhyme in general as well as experiments with

\[134\] Hauschild 2004, p. 66.

Distinctive of the poem is the overwhelming use of compound rhymes, shadow rhymes, repetitions and internal rhymes, which form the basis of the poet’s sound explorations. Here is an excerpt from the opening of the second chapter of the second part, which illustrates the abundance of alliteration and internal rhyme in the poem:

Что за свет такой в снегах
О двенадцати столбах?
Сугроб-белая гора,
Пра́дедовы мрамора.

По той лестнице — да ввысь:
Взглянуть — ноги отнялись!
Сверкнула — и канула
Стремниною каменной.

Отрешись — хоть раз испей
Мраморных оторопей!
Взглянешь — и вбросятся
Мороком, пропастью.

Впрочем — Богу ли соврём? —
Столб как столб и дом как дом:
С башнями, с банями:
Нашего барина. (2.2.303f)

The example appears to be fairly regular with its rhyming scheme *aabb*, varying masculine and dactylic rhymes, except in the first stanza where all rhymes are masculine. On a closer look internal rhymes and alliteration permeate the whole passage. In the first two lines, alliteration is created by the

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136 The most common is approximate rhyme, which is not to say that the exact rhymes are rare. There are also rhymes on the model of folk poetry. We find for instance in the third chapter of part one: *lezhit-lezhit-lezhit-lezhit*, which forms a series of repetitions. Typical of folk poetry is also rhyme with the particle “to”, as for instance in the rhyme *chtit’-to – pominat’-to*, or in approximate rhymes, e.g. *plachesh’-to – pomashete*, which are used to convey the speech of the characters in the village in the first part.
sounds *sve – sne*, further echoed in *dve*, and the consonants *s-t* are repeated in most words. The rhymes in the segment exemplify Tsvetaeva’s preoccupation with the syllable in writing (see also pp. 113-9). The internal rhymes and alliterations are created by repetitions or variations of syllables. The second two lines repeat the consonants *p-b-r* and there are internal rhymes with the syllables *ra-ora-ro*: *sugrob – gora – pradedovy – mramora*. In the first two lines of the next stanza, there is a constant repetition of the consonants *s-z*: *lestnitse – vys’ – vzglianut’ – otnialis’* and in the second two of the syllables *nu, no*, and there is an alliteration with *ka* and approximate alliteration *sver-stre*: *sverknula – kanula – stremninoiu – kamennoi*. The third stanza echoes the first in its repetition of the syllables *ro-ra* and the consonants *p – b* and *s*. The first word *otreshis’* echoes, moreover, *stremninoiu*. There is a repetition of the words *mramor – mramornych* and *vzglianut’ – vzglianesh’. The last stanza, finally, repeats the consonant *b* throughout. The first two lines repeat in particular the letters *b* and *o* (sometimes phonetically *a*), and the last two lines, the letters *b* and *a*.

In some passages the sound texture becomes completely dominant. At the beginning of the poem there is the intense repetition of sound in the dance refrains:

Ходи шибче,
Ходи выше,
Медом сыщенная —
Эх!
Моя — выше,
Твоя — выше,
У Маруси — выше всех! (1.1.281)

First there are the end rhymes, which are underlined; *shibche – vyshe – syshchennaia – vyshe – vyshe – vyshe* and *ekh – vsekh*. The final end rhyme unites moreover both rhymes in the *vyshe vsekh*. There are internal rhymes: *khodi – khodi – medom*, repeating the syllables *od – do*. In the dance refrain depicting the arrival and presence of the Swain, the assonance is even more prominent:
Дрожи, доски!
Ходи, трёски!
Покоробиться вам нонь!

Под тем — доски,
Под тем — доски,
А под молодцем — огонь!

Огонь там-огонь здесь,
Огонь сам-огонь весь! (1.1.282)

The sound texture in the stanza is created by repetitions of words and sounds. Apart from the parallelistic repetitions of “Pod tem – doski” (“Under some boards”) and repetitions of the word “ogon’” (“fire”), the first stanza repeats the combination of the vowels o–i five times, and the second two more times. The sound texture is further enriched by the repetition of the consonants r and d, drozhi, doski, khodi, pokorobit’sia. The whole stanza repeats syllables in the words molodtsem and ogon’. The second stanza is built on the repetition of the same sounds as in the first, and the repetition of tem, two times as a separate word, and the third in molodtsem. The most important syllables are repeated and inverted: ro-do-od-po-or-mo-em. In the last stanza there is almost no sound in the stanza that does not rhyme either within another sound in the same stanza and with the previous stanzas.

There are many uses of grammatical or syntactical parallelism, a device common to folk art.137 The grammatical form is repeated over a line, as in the following stanzas from the first chapter:

То ль не зга,
То ль не жгонь,
То ль не моло́дц-огонь!

То ль не зарь,
То ль не взлом,
То ль не жар-костер — да в дом! (1.1.281)

The repetition of the words “to lʹ ne” (roughly: “if it isn’t”) aligns the enumerated nouns with each other through negative parallelism, that is, a repletion of negations in similar grammatical forms. Parallelisms establish a correspondence between the lines, without spelling out the logical connection. The parallelisms are made even more intense by the many sound repetitions. The poet repeats the sounds in zgа, first in zhgonʹ and then in zarʹ in the second stanza. Zhgonʹ rhymes with ogonʹ, but is also echoed in vzлом, and then dom. Zarʹ further rhymes with zhar and finds an echo in kostөr. The repetitions express the intensity of the moment; they give intonation to the ecstatic movement, when the Swain enters the locus of the feast with all his fire. The intensity of the sound patterns also paves the way for the poet’s explorations of neologistic forms of words, to the extent that they establish connections based on sound.

2.2.2. Sound Presentation

The different sound patterns enhance the play with leitmotivs in the poem to create a sound poetry, where sound itself is made into a potential carrier of meaning. In an essay on the poetry of the poet and critic, and the poet’s friend Sergey Volkonsky, “Cedar” (“Kedr”) (1924), Tsvetaeva coined the term “sound images” (“обrazy слуховye”) (1994:5, p. 269), while in The Swain she explores sound to convey the story. Enigmatic repetitions and onomatopoetic plays create suggestions that disclose the presence of mythological personalities and the notion of hidden powers at play. This concerns in particular the presence of the Swain in the first part, but also the ghostlike guests who come to visit the Nobleman in the second. Certain sounds associated with the Swain become defining for his presence, as for instance, squeaking and biting sounds, such as liaзg, or stomping movements, while words containing s-z also become denotative of him. For instance, in the first part a formula is repeated to denote the departure of the Swain after his meetings with Marusia:

Зуб о заступ —
Лязг.
Как сказал —
Так сгас. (1.3.289, 1.4.293, 1.5.295)
The stanza has the form of a formula with sound imitation, built on alliterations and internal rhymes that repeat the sounds \(s-z-k\). It brings out the characteristic squeaking sounds of the Swain, which, moreover, for Tsvetaeva had yet another meaning. In the essay “Natalya Goncharova”, Tsvetaeva defined the \(z\)-sound as “the sound of blood in your ears (the mosquito’s \(z-z-z\))” (“shum krovi v usakh (komarinoe \(z-z-z\))”) (1994:4, p. 69), and blood presents one of the figurative leitmotifs in *The Swain*. Thus the sound is also intended to reflect the play of forces in the poem.

Sound patterns interact with metrical patterns to allude to presence. For instance, the trochaic hexameter line is associated with the Swain, because in the first part it almost only appears in relation to him. It is established as a motif when he approaches Marusia:

— Ùж ты ёблочко-некусанное-плóд!
Проводи меня, Маруся,
До ворот. \(1.2.285\)

The Swain’s address to Marusia in terms related to harvest and his exhortation that she follow him to the gates is repeated in the first part in every chapter. It establishes an uncanny leitmotiv that marks the end of the dance and a transition to the *locus horribilis* of the gates, where the two are alone. The sound of this leitmotiv is then echoed further ahead in the poem in other kinds of scenes to convey the presence of the Swain. After he has killed Marusia’s brother, there is a mysterious flight from the scene:

Есть кто? — Чу!
Задуло свечу.
Отдо — вись!
Две разом сдались
И:
С хрíпом-с крýком чéрез пéнь-кол-колей. \(1.3.291\)

Marusia is standing by her brother who is dying. She senses a presence “Someone there?” (“Est’ kto?”), and calls out: “Hark!” (“Chu!”). The candles by her brother’s bed are quenched, which indicates that he is dying. Then a
movement is heard: “S khripom-s krikom cherez pen’-kol-kolei” in a trochaic hexameter line that echoes the established motif. At the end of the third chapter of the second part, there is a line that similarly hints at the movement of the other forces: “sharom-zharom-/-zhigom-graem”, and in the fourth chapter, second part, there is another: “Toropom-shorokhom-vorokhom – morokom!” The length of the line and movement conveyed only by the instrumental case is a distant echo of the ending of the third chapter in the first part. Thus the reader can sense the presence of the Swain, which is conveyed through sound and without him being directly named or described.

In the fourth chapter of the second part, sound also alludes to the nature of the depraved guests. They arrive in a cloud of fire, and introduce themselves through riddles, epithets, and negative parallels. They are uninvited (“nepro-sheny”), “of a different kind” (“netakovskie”), “sharpwinged” (“vostrokrylye”) and they are “Roman – not Roman / Ivan – not Ivan” (“Roman – ne Roman / Ivan – ne Ivan”). It is hinted at throughout the chapter, moreover, that the ghastly guests are aligned with the Swain, and they call themselves “godfathers” (kumov’ia). Their behaviour and speech are also conveyed by means of sound. They are further characterized as follows:

Белки — пучат,
Перстом — тычут.
Тот — по-щучьи,
Тот — по-птичьи.

Христом просят,
Слюной прыщут.
Тот по-пёсьи,
Тот по-крысьи.

(1.4.321)

The two lines are constructed in the form of repetitive parallels. Someone has swollen whites of the eyes, (“belki – puchat”), someone’s finger is pointing (“perstom – tychut”), one behaves like a pike (“po-shchuch’i”), another like a bird (“po-ptich’i”), a third like a dog (“po-pes’i”) and a fourth like a rat (“po-

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138 The main part of the poem consists of shorter trisyllabic or tetrasyllabic lines. See Khvorostianova 1996, p. 55.
krys‘i”). The assonances serve to create a sound picture of depravity. Central are the consonants b-p-shch-k and the vowels y-u-i, a combination that was contrary to the euphonic norms, and therefore popular in the Russian Futurist experiments, as for instance in the poem “Dyr-bul-shchil” by Aleksandr Kruchenykh.  

It is also noteworthy that whereas trochees dominate the poem, we find a large frequency of iambs in the fourth chapter to convey the debased speech of the guests. Finally, as mentioned on p. 53, Tsvetaeva suggests in a letter that the guests can be associated with the Bolsheviks, and perhaps there is a connection between the sound of the debased nature of the language and her association with the Bolsheviks (1995: 7, p. 334).

2.3. Rhythmical Performance

Another sound aspect of the performance of the tale is the astounding variety of rhythms that serves to intone dialogues, dances, ambiance etc. As quoted above, Tsvetaeva asserts in her notebooks that she sought to indicate the way in which the poem should be sung through emphases and punctuation marks. The different rhythms create musical and dramatic phrasing in The Swain; they accelerate and decelerate, flow or are strongly disruptive, indicating pauses, different points of view, dramatic speech moods, movement, ecstasy or serenity. A large proportion of the poem’s rhythmical patterns reveal a kinship both with folkloric rhythms, and with the great variety of metrical innovations brought about by Russian Modernism. When Pasternak concluded a comment on The Pied Piper in a letter from 1-2 July 1926 with the words: “Summa summarum: the absolute and supreme reign of rhythm” (“Summa summarum: absoliutnoe, bezrazdel’noe gospodstvo ritma”) (2004, p. 249), a remark that in several respects also applies to The Swain, the word rhythm most probably signified specific aspects of the poem’s musical and melodic form. The word was marked at the time by the discourse on metrics inspired by the groundbreaking critique

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139 The connection with the Futurist experiments is probably not accidental. Despite her experiments and love for Mayakovsky, Tsvetaeva’s writings do not show any particular interest in Khlebnikov’s transrational language. See discussion by Karlinsky 1966, p. 145.

140 For a table of metrical lines see Khvorostianova 1996, p. 55.
on metre published by Andrey Bely.\textsuperscript{141}

The connection between Bely’s experiments and the rhythms of The Swain seems to go deeper. In September 1922, Bely wrote a manifesto for the new term “melodism” in the preface to his collection After Parting (Posle Razluki) (1922), that is, at the time when The Swain was in the making. He was most likely inspired by Tsvetaeva’s earlier poetry; the two met in Berlin in 1922, and Bely then became acquainted with her collection of poems Parting (Razluka) (1921), where he recognized in her poetry many of the features that he himself had espoused in his own quest for rhythmic and melodic qualities.\textsuperscript{142} His collection included a poem to Tsvetaeva, which ended: “Your invincible rhythms!” (“Tvoi nepobedimye ritmy”).\textsuperscript{143} One of the central ideas behind ‘melodism’ is to use metre and graphical form in such a way as to create a “picture of intonation” to convey voice, just as musical terms mark rhythm in a piece of music.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See for instance Vladislav Khodasevich’s essay “Andrei Belyi” in Nekropol’: “Вот вам четырехстопный ямб. Весь тут, как в ладони. Стихи одного метра разнятся ритмом. Ритм с метром не совпадает и определяется пропуском метрических ударений. ‘Мой дядя самых честных правил’ – четыре ударения, а ’кланялся не принужденно’ – два: ритмы разные, а метр тот же, четырехстопный ямб. Теперь все это стало азбукой. В тот день это было открытием, действительно простым и внезапным, как архимедово.” (Vladislav Khodasevich, “Andrei Belyi” in Nekropol’ – vospominaniia. Literatura i vlast’. Pis’ma B. A. Sadovskomu. (ed. N. A. Bogomolov). Moskva: C.C., 1996, p. 60). Bely showed in a systematic way that rhythm, which was defined at the time as the actual realization of the metre in sound, diverged considerably from the metre in which it was written. Its current meaning in metrics is defined as “the actual pattern of stressing that occurs within the poem” (Scherr 1986, p. 15).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Одну и ту же страницу мы можем выразить в различных интонационных архитектониках; каждая накладывает свой отпечаток на целое. Плох тот художник прозы или стиха, который не слышит интонации голоса, складывающего ему фразу, а наша условная система знаков выражения интонации (тембр голоса, мимика, паузы, ударение) не соответствует богатству мелодии голоса; […] Отсюда стремление их искать интонации в своеобразной манере начертания, передающей зрительно интонацию; музыкант имеет системы выражений (знаки пауз, andante, allegro, allegretto и т.д.), поэт вынужден все мелодические моменты своей песни […] вкупорить в определенные разрезы словесного ряда (в строки, в строфы). 144

We can express the same page in many different forms of the architectonics of intonation; they will all leave their imprint on the totality. It is a bad writer of prose or poetry who does not hear the intonation of the voice composing the phrase, and our conventional system of signs for expressing intonation (voice timbre, mimicry, pauses, stress) does not fully express the rich melody of the voice; […] Hence their attempt to look for intonation in the specific manner of the drawn sketch, rendering intonation visually. The musician has a system of expressions (the pause signs, andante, allegro, allegretto etc.), but the poet must integrate [vkuporit’ – T.L.] all the melodic aspects of his song […] in the various segments of the verbal arrangement (the line, the stanza).

Bely emphasizes the musical qualities of poetry and the significance of voice intonation. He underlines the use of metrical units, “segments of verbal arrangement” to convey timbre, silence and intensity. In other words, he urges poetry to perform melodic intonation similarly to music. His remarks are highly illuminating with respect to The Swain, because its rhythms serve in a similar way to intone the performance and convey a narrative as an intoned and melodic drama of voices. The poem illustrates a combination of Symbolist and Futurist experiments with metre and graphical form that serve to convey

144 Ibid., p. 15.
melody and intonation in the poetic phrasing, which in turn performs folk rhythms that seem to be either spoken or sung, but not written.

2.3.1. Rhythmification of Metre

Michael Makin characterizes the poem’s versification as “aggressively polymetrical”, while Mikhail Gasparov describes the metre of the poem as follows: “[The] measures of the poem, as you might recall, change literally with every step and nevertheless preserve a strong symmetry” (“Razmery v poeme, kak my pomnim, meniautsia bukval’no na kazhdom shagu, vyderzhivaia pri etom stroguiu simmetriiu”). The polymetrical rhythm reveals a kinship with the longer poems of the Russian Modernists, who had also experimented with polymetrical poetry and disruptions in rhythm in order to reflect dramatic intonation. One relevant example is Blok’s *The Twelve*, which is polyphonic and also uses folkloric rhythms.

The abundance and frequency of metrical variations in *The Swain* bring to mind as much the works of the Russian Symbolists as Velimir Khlebnikov’s micropolymetrical experiments, varying the metre line by line, as Hauschild remarks. Many stanzas and episodes are homogenous with regard to rhythm, but the poem is interspersed with disruptions of metre and other metrical experiments to intone the performance. Khvorostianova establishes a metrical scheme for *The Swain* within the confines of the syllabo-tonic system. The scheme presents, however, a highly conditional framework that does little more than indicate general metrical and rhythmic patterns in the poem, which should be read in the light of the oral and melodic qualities through which the poet sought to “sound out” the tale.

Efim Etkind identifies a tendency in Tsvetaeva’s lyrical poetry which he calls the “metrification of rhythm” (“metrifikatsiia ritma”), that is, a tendency to create constant stress patterns that are not conventionally permitted within

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146 Mikhail Gasparov 1997, p. 269.
148 Hauschild 2004, p. 73.
any given metre, in other words, to create logaoedic metres. In *The Swain* we seem, however, to find what can be called a “rhythmification of metre”, in the sense that established metres are explored to their limits in order to create a rhythm capable of intoning the performance. Makin asserts in relation to *The Swain*: “Its metrical effects depend (like its narrative and linguistic effects) upon the disruption of regular and familiar forms, not on the establishment of new ones.” The logaoedic metres are few, while established metres, such as the dominant trochaic form, are filled with rhythmical disruptions, and the metres are further broken through punctuation and graphic form. Thus, we can often establish a metrical pattern from which the poet seems to have worked. This pattern does not correspond, however, to the actual rhythm that renders the poem its oral and melodic qualities, and I will therefore take a closer look at the poet’s different explorations of rhythm.

The general rhythmical pattern displays a kinship with folkloric rhythms. The dominant metres are: trochaic, amphibrachic and dactylic metres, which are all reminiscent of folk poetry. The many dactylic or hyperdactylic endings, as well as the remarkably low percentage of iambics (11.5%) further underline the poem’s folkloric intonation. Gasparov shows that the trochaic metre, which dominates in *The Swain*, allows for greater disruptions in rhythm, precisely because of its proximity to folk poetry. For example, although 31% of the trochaic lines are impure, challenging the parameters of the syllabo-tonic sys-

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150 Makin 1989, p. 131f. Compare with Tsvetaeva’s poetry in general. See for instance Gerald Smith in his article on logaoedic metres in the poetry of Tsvetaeva: “[…] while Tsvetayeva’s rhythmic individuality ‘tears at’ traditional metres, she does not abandon metre itself in favour of free verse; on the contrary, she manifests a persistent tendency to create new metres as much as to make new rhythms on the basis of established metres.” (Gerald Smith, “Logaoedic Metres in the Lyric Poetry of Marina Tsvetayeva” in *Slavic and East-European Review*, vol. LIII, no. 132, 1975, p. 352f.)

151 According to Khvorostianova’s statistical analysis, the trochaic metres correspond to 52.8%, iambic to 11.5%, amphibrachic to 20.7%, dactylic to 13.4%, anapaestic to 2.4%, and logaoedic to 1.7%.

tem, they present themselves, for the most part, as disruptions in the trochaic intonation. An example is the beginning, which I will quote again for the convenience of the reader:

Сінь да стінь — кра́й селá,
Рухну́л дуб, тро́сть целá.
У вдовы́ у то́й у трудной
До́чь Мару́ся весела́.

The first stanza is predominantly trochaic, yet varies the trochaic metre. The stress pattern in the first two lines is: 1.3.4.6 (Сін da сті́н’ – кра́й селá). There is a strong caesura in the middle of both lines, but the caesura marked by a dash or a comma can be counted as a syllable, which would leave us with the stresses on 1.3.5.7 in both cases, in other words – trochaic tetrameter. The third line has stresses on 3.5.7 and the fourth on 1.3.7. A similar trochaic rhythm is repeated in the next stanza, with the exception only of the first line (3.6/1.3.5.7/1.3.7/1.3.7):

Как пойдёт с коромыслом —
Церкви в звон, пáрни в спóр.
До́чь Мару́ся румя́нста —
Са́мой Тро́ице раззо́р!

These two stanzas have an introductory character, which shifts in the third stanza, when the dialogue between Marusia and her mother is presented in a more disrupted form. The metrical pattern now diverges: in the third stanza it is 3.6.7/2.7/2.3.7/2.7:

Отпусти́-ка меня́, ма́ть,
С подру́жками погуля́ть,
Ленкú то́нкого попр́я́сть,
Здоровь́ца порастра́йть.

In the final stanza of this lyrical segment the pattern is 3.5/2.5/2.4.5/2.5:

Trochaic metre allows a greater disruption in metre, and the trochaic intonation is maintained to the extent that the last ictus is realized. In all lines in the fourth stanza, the seventh syllable, corresponding to the fourth foot, and strongest ictus in the trochaic line, is a stress constant.\(^{154}\) The two last stanzas consist of speech and the shifts in the stanza correspond to shifts in intonation. Thus alternations in rhythm are motivated by movements in the dramatic scene.

The kinship with folk art serves both to enhance the folkloric character of the poem and to destabilize metre. The disruptions create an ambiguity in the rhythms of the poem that force the reader to be constantly alert. On the basis of this kinship with folk art, Tsvetaeva also explores alternative stresses. In rare cases, Tsvetaeva marks alternative stresses, for instance sokól instead of sôkol or k shútam instead of k shutám. One could, however, in a melodic oral performance of the poem, realize alternative stresses more. For instance, instead of pronouncing the lines “– Guliai, guliai, dochen’ka, / Poka moloda!” the lines could be “sung” according to the intonation in folk poetry: “Gúliai, gúliai, dóchen’ka, / Poká molodá!” The stresses would fall on 1.3.5/ 2.5, which in other words would produce a purer trochaic intonation. The dance refrains could also be “sung” in a different manner:

\begin{verbatim}
Бегут русы,
Бегут круты,
Шелком скрученные —
Эх!
Моя — круче,
Твоя — круче,
У Маруси — круче всех! \hfill (1.1.280f)
\end{verbatim}

In an enactment that would be more in accord with folk poetry, the stress on the second syllable in lines one and two on begút and three and four on moiá

\(^{154}\) For a table of the stress pattern of the trochaic trimeters and tetrameters in The Swain, see Gasparov 1997, p. 275ff.
would be strongly reduced; they could even be read as bègut and móía. Such a reading would either produce the more melodic anapaestic intonation with a marked stress only on the third, or the trochaic with a slight stress on the first syllable. Additional examples of where the kinship with folk poetry provokes a divergence from the syllabo-tonic system are the other sound features of oral poetry, such as length and emphasis, which for the most part are brought out by graphic means.

2.3.2. Graphic Form

The graphic form is another means of creating a rhythm to intone the performance. An example is the following stanza from the episode in the second chapter of part two, when the flower transforms to a beautiful girl:

Áн:
— дён!
Мóрокам прикáз:
Вспáть!
Вóн!
Утренний закóн:
Звóн:
Чáс.  

(2.2.309)

There is perhaps a parallel with Bely’s metrical experiments with secondary stresses similar to the model of Nebenton in German poetry. He explored the perspective of varying the strength of the stresses, thereby enriching the possibility of musical intonation. There is also a parallel worth remarking on with the metrical experiments of the main hero in Vladimir Nabokov’s novel Dar (The Gift) (1936). Fyodor Godunov-Cherdynstev lives in Berlin and aspires to be a writer, and remarks: “Несколько позже монументальное исследование Андрея Белого о ритмах загипнотизировало меня своей системой наглядного отмечания и подсчитывания полуударений, так что все свои старые четырестопные стихи я немедленно просмотрел с этой новой точки зрения, страшно был огорчен преобладанием прямой линии, с пробелами и одиночными точками, при отсутствии каких-либо трапеций и прямоугольников; и с той поры, в продолжении почти года, — скверного, грешного года, — я старался писать так, чтобы получилась как можно более сложная и богатая схема.” (Vladimir Nabokov, Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda v piati tomatakh (ed. N. I. Artemenko-Tolstaia). Tom 4. Sankt-Peterburg: Simpozium, 2000, p. 332.)
The convulsive, contrastive rhythm is employed to render the ghastly creatures who discover that day is dawning and their ghostly hour has passed. The stanza is built on a stolbik construction, which breaks up the lines and creates a staccato rhythm of monosyllabic words. This converges with the dramatic moment in the stanza. The rhythm first conveys the interjections that the guests produce when they realize that they must quickly leave, and then how the clock strikes.

The stolbik construction was a standard device in Bely’s experiments, and appears several times in The Swain. In the final stanza depicting movement in part one, chapter two, there is an interesting use of the stolbik construction and enjambment to convey another dramatic moment. Marusia escapes from her vision of the Swain biting into the corpse:

Через площадь
— Месяц слева —
Мимо Божья
Мимо гнева,
По канавам
— Жилы гудом —
Сердце справа,
Сердце всюду,
По колдобинам-
Ухабам
Валом-варом.

Уж и хват
Суженый! — Взгляни-ка взад,
Привыкай к своим хоромам:
Вдогон церковь с вором, с гробом,
С Богом, с громом!

(1.2.287)

If we were to remove the stolbik construction, we would have a stanza with a two-stress tonic verse: “Ан: — дён! / Морокам прика́з: / Вспы́ть! Вон! / У́тренний зако́н: / Зво́н: Час.” However, the stolbik construction serves to bring out a different pattern of intonation and a marked break in the melody of the poem.
The stanza could be broken up into two parts, where the first part stretches to line eleven, written according to the column pattern with a dominance of trochaic dimeter. This part conveys Marusia’s flight from the church. There is a consistency in this part, which is produced by the repetitions of words and grammatical forms, as well as by the syntactical parallelisms, and the consistency gives a rhythm that renders her continuous movement. There is an indentation in line twelve, which gives a protracted break. The effect of the indented line is enhanced by a syntactical enjambment between lines twelve and thirteen “Uzh i khvat / Suzheny!”, with an internal rhyme on the syllable *uzh*. The exclamation, meaning roughly “Oh that clever one / your bridegroom!” marks a halt in Marusia’s flight from the crime scene. It is as though the narrative voice intervenes and calls her to stop and turn around: “Vzgliani-ka vzad, / Privykai k svoim khoromam” (roughly, “Turn around, get used to your mansions”). She turns around and experiences how the church appears to be coming after her. The vision is hyperbolic and is expressed by a zeugma: “the church is coming after” “with the thief, the grave, / with God and thunder!” (“Vdogon tserkovʹ s vorom, s grobom / S Bogom, s gromom!”). The enumeration seems to be self-generated through assonance: “vorom – grobom/ bogom – gromom”, while the compact sound pattern underlines the dramatic intensity of the moment.\(^{157}\) The turning point in lines twelve and thirteen presents the moment when Marusia realizes that she cannot escape. Thus the indentation and enjambment mark not only the halt in Marusia’s flight from the scene, but also a decisive dramatic peripeteia in the first part. It seems to give Marusia the premonition that she is doomed.

The final two chapters are interspersed with exclamations that interrupt the general diction and rhythm, and this seems to be a device to render the renewed presence of elemental forces. The rhythm in the scene with the guests in the fourth chapter is interspersed with the exclamations: “na – li –”. There is an omitted syllable, and the line should read “na – li – vai!”, meaning “fill up the glasses”. The exclamations enhance the chaotic atmosphere of the party.

In the fifth chapter, second part, when the Nobleman and Marusia are travelling to church, the breaks in rhythm convey dramatic irony in the dia-

\(^{157}\) Tsvetaeva uses the same device with similar assonances in the first line of the poem *Novogodnee*: “С Новым годом – светом – краем – кровом!” (1994:3, p. 132).
logue, or rather, trialogue, between the “voice”, Marusia and the Nobleman. Marusia experiences visions on the way to the church and responds to them, but the Nobleman believes that she is talking to him. There is the presence of three voices speaking with divergent, confused references. The tangled speech is reflected in shifts in the rhythm as follows:

— Прочь! Не до братьёв!
Что было — прошло!
— «А кто я такой
Сказать на у» —

— Што? (2.5.331)

The dialogue between Marusia and the Nobleman is interrupted several times by the elliptic quotations and references to the first part of the poem. The third “voice” says: “And I can whisper / who I am in your [ear]”. Marusia answers and asks “What?” – “Shto?” out into the open. The expected syllable “-shko” (ushkó) is omitted, and her question fills out the metre and the rhyme: u/shto – proshlo. However, in another stanza the interruption breaks the metre, but fills in the lacking syllable:

Мети выше!
Что свыше — то свято!
— Сплю-не слышу,
Сплю-не слышу, мату —

— Што? (2.5.330)

Lines three and four repeat a quotation from the fourth chapter of the first part, when the Swain came for her mother and Marusia cried out “spliu-ne slyshu, matushka”. Here, however, the quotation cannot be realized in the metre, because the rhyme is sviato–matu. The line “shto” presents a hypermetrical syllable that is marked as an exclamation that breaks the metrical flow. It realizes the unspoken reference to the omitted -shka in matushka.

158 For a discussion of the linguistic aspects of the passage, see Zubova 1999, pp. 154ff.
2.3.3. *Punctuation Marks*

Olga Revzina has shown the rich and varied forms of punctuation in Tsvetaeva’s poetry in general, primarily with respect to syntax and semantics,\(^{159}\) and I will focus here primarily on certain rhythmic and dramatic qualities. I have mentioned brackets earlier as a means of shifting perspective. The exclamation mark, which correlates with expressive modes of intonation in folk art, often indicates the mode of the utterance, for instance in the hectic dances or Marusia’s ecstatic condition. It can also emphasize an action that takes place as if of its own accord, or underline the magic power of the word to perform.

Tsvetaeva also makes frequent use of the dash, which is used in hyphenation to link separate words as in epithets and nouns, or to beat out the rhythm, as for instance in the second episode in the first chapter, when the door opens and the boys exclaim: “Dobro-zdravstvovat’-guliat’”, or in the movement of the other forces in the second part, third chapter: “sharom-zharom-zhigom-graem”. The dash is also used, in contrast, to break up words and separate syllables, and thus to prolong or diminish certain sounds. It also creates spondaic feet, and spondees were of central interest to Andrei Bely’s rhythmical experiments, and he remarked particularly on the spondees in Tsvetaeva’s poetry in his commentary on *Parting* (*Razluka*).\(^{160}\)

The dash presents a central device in the episode in the fourth chapter, when the Swain comes to drink the blood of Marusia’s mother:

Дóл — га нóч — ка,
Дóлгá нóчка скúшная!
— Дóч — ка! Дóч — ка!
Собáки — всё спу́щены?

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\(^{160}\) Saakiants 1988, p. 375f.
As I mentioned earlier in the discussion of Tsvetaeva’s use of folk songs in the performance (p. 71), the excerpt is part of an episode that alludes to a famous folk song, “Akh, ty, nochën’ka, nochka témnaia.” The dashes break up the refrain “Dol – ga noch – ka” (“The night is long”); and the exhortation: “Dy – shi ti – she” (“Don’t breathe so loud”). The dashes render the emphases uncertain and produce a protracted sound. Instead of standard emphases on the second syllable “dolga” and “dyshi”, they either shift and fall on the first syllable or they expand so that both syllables are emphasized. The repetitions also contrast them with similar lines, such as: “Dolga nochka skushnaia!” and “Dolga nochka stradnaia”, and this further enhances the shifts and ambiguities in the intonations. In this scene, as in the killing of the brother, the deed is not named, but only alluded to through what is not done, and in the fearsome intonation of the rhythm.

The rhythm brings out changes in intonation and perspective, and serves, in the poet’s experiments with poetic language, to convey the flow of voices and the wonders that take place in the poem. Through breaking up words Tsvetaeva creates a kaleidoscope of syllables to explore and displace meaning. The punctuation is very important in the following dialogue, for example, which is taken from the second chapter, when the Nobleman is talking to the newly metamorphosed beautiful girl, whose position has to remain ambivalent, because she belongs both to the world of the living and of the dead:

161 For a discussion of the linguistic aspects of the passage see Zubova 1999, pp. 165ff.
— Отку́да сквознáя такáя?
   — Не знáю.

— Лозá привознáя, я чáю?
   — Не знáю.

— Какáя грозá за плечáми?
   — Не знáю.

— Как прéжде в глазá величáли?
   — Не знáю.

Тут как вски́нет ба́рин бро́ви!
— Хóчешь жéть со мнóй в любóви?

— Не знá — ю, нé...

Подступáет ба́рин ти́ше:
— Мóжет, грéх какóй давни́ший?

Óн — да́й, ты — нá...
Ó — нá: «нé знá —

ю, не пóмнё...» Ба́рин зво́ном:
— Не в княжнóй берú, а в жéны!

Жé — нá од — нá!
— Нé — знáю... Нá...

(2.2.311f)

In the dialogue, we find several forms of punctuation that colour the intonation: dash, exclamation mark, question mark, ellipsis and colon. The first part of the
passage is harmonic in even amphibrach tetrameter. The Nobleman asks her who she is and she persistently answers that she doesn’t know: “ne znáiu”. In the fifth couplet, there is a sudden change in the rhythmic intonation, which corresponds to the change in the situation. The rest is predominantly written in four-foot trochaic metre, but it is marked by disruptions of rhythm created by punctuation. His proposal of marriage “Do you want to live with me in love?” (“Khochesh’ zhit’ so mnoi v liubovi?”) arouses a fierce response in the girl. She exclaims: “Zhízn’? – Ná! – Smért’? – Mné!” The rhythm is compelling; all the words are monosyllabic, and all syllables take a stress, whereas the dashes mark pauses in between.¹⁶²

The subsequent lines alter the Nobleman’s questions in a trochaic intonation, while the girl’s answer presents a contrasting intonation, coloured by the many stresses and the protracted “a” before the dash. It should be noted that the whole dialogue echoes the dialogue between Marusia and the Swain in the first part. In the first she did not see, and now she does not know. The girl keeps answering in an evasive tone, but the intonation is entirely altered. The ambiguity in her answer is further illustrated by the alternations between the syllables na (take) and ne (not). In the final stanza, the syllable “ne” (not) turns into the syllable “na” (take), but the difference is, in fact, not so great, but two syllables that echo of the broken down “ne zna-iu”. Through breaking up words into syllables with the dash, the poet conveys an ambiguity in the answer, and this is important for the course of events. Marusia never really becomes the bride of the Nobleman, but stays under the sway of the Swain.

The rhythm also intones the open endings of the two parts to convey Marusia’s movement to the otherworldly. Here is the ending of the first part:

Как на отды́х тóт на гро́зный
Проноси́ли тро́их — рóзно:

Дво́й — в сáдик во крестóвый,
А Мárусю — во простоя́ры.

В те простоя́р — ны́ — й. \(1.5.302\)

Marusia is lying on her deathbed. The intonation is narrative and distant, and less emotionally charged, which is reflected in the more harmonic flow of the metre. The passage is written in trochaic tetrameter with female endings. The last line, however, breaks the rhythm and the perspective. The protracted sound in \(o\-y\-i\) adds a dreamlike quality to the voice. The dash breaks up the sound to give an indefinite length. The protracted sound is further enhanced by the proximity in the last two sounds \(y\-i\), which creates a sound like a diminuendo in music. It shifts the perspective to the wide open space where Marusia is to be buried, which is infinite like the open-ended sound.
CHAPTER 3

Literal and Secret Writing

The attempt to render the sublime through the locus of folk art can be understood as a quest for a language to speak the sublime. This language can be understood in the light of the notion of Poezia umyslov (roughly Poetry of Intent), which Tsvetaeva developed in several entries in her notebooks of 1924 as a prospective title for a collection of poems.\(^\text{163}\) Like the sublime, this notion relates to a phenomenon which is more than our conventional forms of representation can fathom (Vorstellung), and which therefore demands a special form of presentation (Darstellung). In one entry, she develops this idea in opposition to the concept of intention in art (“zamysel”), which, according to her, is the product of the will and something that the poet has, while intent (“umysel”), is something that is concealed in the poet, “a secret motive”: “The secret that never becomes visible […] Intent: a secret motive. Intention: the visible will to… Intent is within us, intention is ours.” (“Tainoe nikogda ne stanoviasheesia iavnym […] Umysel: tainoe pobuzhdenie. Zamysel: iavnaia volia k… Umysel – v nas, zamysel – nash.”) (1997, p. 289) The word “umysel” has negative connotations, often connected with malevolent intent, while the image of something evil and secret in the poet that appears in writing converges with the theme in the poem of the demonic, unutterable force that takes possession of the heroine. In another entry, Tsvetaeva establishes a paradoxical relation between intent and language: “In the literal (pre-lingual) world, intents are the same as secret writing in this world.” (“Umysly – v mire doslovnom (doslovesnom) to zhe, chto tainopis’ v mire sem.”) (1997, p. 298).\(^\text{164}\) The contradictory notion of a world that is “literal”

\(^{163}\) For an account of Tsvetaeva’s reflections on Poezia umyslov, see Shevelenko 2002, pp. 260ff.

\(^{164}\) With a pun on the word doslovnyi (“literal”), which can be broken up in two parts: the prefix do- (before), and the word slovnyi meaning roughly “lingual”, the poet aligns do-slovnyi with the word do-slovesnyi (“pre-lingual”), and suggests that “literal” meaning lies in something pre-lingual.
and “pre-lingual” is not to be understood as a locus beyond language; on the contrary, the passage introduces an image of a more sublime form of language as a locus which is language and something more than language at the same time.\footnote{165}{Jerzy Faryno argues that: “As in the case of a text-code where Tsvetaeva moves beyond its boundaries into the code-creating spheres, she also tries in the case of the language to move beyond and above its frames to the pre-linguistic (pre-articulative) spheres on the one hand and to the extralinguistic ones, requiring no language, on the other.” (Faryno 1985, p. 408). However, it seems that there is no opposition in Tsvetaeva’s poetry between the pre-linguistic spheres and extralinguistic ones, in fact, through bringing out the pre-linguistic spheres in language, she sought to make felt what can otherwise not be conveyed in conventional language.}
The “literal” and “pre-lingual” world is opposed to the present world, where the intents can be presented only in secret writing (“tainopis’”). In other words, only through a secret language, can the “literal” be made present.\footnote{166}{Her poetic language recalls in many respects the Futurists’ experiments with folk art and the transrational speech “zaum’”, and, as Khodasevich remarked, it is not unlikely that the influence came through Pasternak. See footnote 34 in Introduction. The phrase “Poetry of Hidden Intent” (“Poezia umyslov”) had also been used in her essay on Pasternak’s poetry “A Downpour of Light” (“Svetovoi Liven’”, 1922), (1994:5, p. 234). She was also later to use the word “tainopis’” to characterize his poetry in the essay “Epic and Lyric of Contemporary Russia” (Ibid., p. 384).}

In *The Swain* Tsvetaeva explores aspects of folkloric language as a means to attain such a language, which appears to be “literal”, and where sound and meaning stand in a more intrinsic relation to each other.\footnote{167}{Her quest converges in some respects with the quest of certain Romantic writers for an *Ursprache* as a language that is both more natural and more poetic, based on an immediate relation between the name and the thing created through sound. See Lothar Pikulik, *Frühromantik: Epoche – Werke – Dichtung*. München: C. H. Beck, 2000, p. 238: “Die Beschworung der Dinge aber war für Novalis ein Akt, der nicht nur die Sprache als magisches Instrument nutzte, sondern auch auf die Sprache als Seinsgrund zielte.” Her explorations can also be related to a kindred pursuit of a language with magic functions amongst Russian Modernists. See Introduction p. 22f.}

\footnote{168}{Zubova 1999, pp. 160ff.}
interdiction not to name the true nature of the Swain, and it provokes a play
with riddles, puns and paronomasia. In a comment on Tsvetaeva’s later poetry,
Simon Karlinsky points to paronomasia in Tsvetaeva’s later poetry as an “inte-
gral part of her thinking” and relates it amongst other things to the device of
altered stresses in folk songs. The reason, he asserts, is that: “In later Cvetaeva,
we can perceive a belief in a sort of a mystical bond between the shape and the
sound of a word and the object which this word is used to designate.”169 This
not only concerns the later Tsvetaeva, but also The Swain, where paronomasia,
which etymologically means “beside (para) naming (onomasia)”, is paralleled
by a quest for this “literal” language in which words, images and sound seem
to present, in an immediate way, what is too immense to be spoken and there-
fore hidden. This secret and literal language was to render the sublime and
elemental nature of the Swain and the transformation of Marusia, as well as
something much more; for Tsvetaeva, this language made possible the appear-
ance of the sublime, and the poem treats its coming into being.

3.1. The Riddle and Hidden Reference

Zubova maintains that the force of the word to dispel otherworldly magic is a
central aspect of the theme of the The Swain, “widely reflected” in the poetic
language.170 Tsvetaeva employs different ways of not mentioning the presence
and nature of the otherworldly in conventional terms, many of which are
inspired by folkloric forms of avoiding magic in language, that is, of secret
speech. The forms of secret presentation do not, however, simply converge
with the taboo in folk art, but present a form of negative device to convey
the literal and sublime. Aristotle was interested in the riddle as an extreme
case of metaphorical speech, understanding it in terms of a metaphorical, or a
transposed or transferred speech (meta – trans, over; phorein – carry, bear).171

169 Ibid.
170 Ibid., p. 153.
171 Aristotle maintains that the extreme case of clarity is banality, and the extreme case
of the metaphor (transposed image), avoiding banality, is the riddle: “For this is the
nature of the riddle, to attach impossibilities to a description of real things. One can-
not do this by composing with other terms, but one can with metaphors.” (Aristotle,
Press, 1995, p. 111). The riddle formulates an image that is impossible in real terms,
The riddle, and secret writing generally, also enjoyed a certain interest in Russian Modernism as a form of obscure writing, while Shklovsky understood it as an integral part of estrangement or *ostranenie* in poetic speech. In *The Swain* the riddle-like speech provokes a game of transposing speech and thus conveying what is unspeakable or unspoken.

In *The Swain* we find several forms of secret writing that correspond to folkloric riddles, which, as mentioned, are close to the metaphor, but which can also take the form of metonymies and onomatopoeia (*zvukopodrazhanie*). In the poem, the riddles serve to create a tension between two levels of language: the surface, where something is only present in the form of puns and metaphors, and a deeper unspoken level, where the literal meaning of the words appears to lie.

The true nature of the Swain in the first part, and of Marusia in the second, is for the most part conveyed in riddles, puns and forms of sound poetry, which I partly discussed in Chapter two. We find, for instance, riddles in situations when Marusia must answer in order to avoid either direct confirmation or negation. Each time she returns home after her meetings with the Swain, for example, her mother asks her about her fiancé, and Marusia answers in riddles. The following quotation is from the fourth chapter:

Чтоб каждый твой помысел  
Сбылся, моя звездочка!  
— Три дня как знакомы с ним:  
Второй дом возводит уж!

but which nevertheless metaphorically, i.e. in transposed terms, describes a real thing.

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173 See Anikin 2004, pp. 507-11. An example of an onomatopoetic riddle that Anikin quotes is: “Потату, потаты! Токату, токаты! А яички ворохом несутся (молотьба).” (Ibid., p. 510). It is also interesting that alliteration is common in riddles. (Ibid.)
In light of the first riddle, the houses that Marusia refers to here can be construed as graves. When Marusia returned home from the graveyard in the second chapter, her mother had asked her about the Swain’s home and Marusia had answered with the riddle that he lives “with a cross roof” (“s krestovoiu krysheiu”), which alluded to the grave. When she answers that he is erecting a second house at the end of the first stanza (“vtoroi dom vozvodit uzh”), she refers to her brother and hints also at her mother’s imminent death. The ensuing dialogue is then built on the double reference, established in the first stanza. The mother praises his riches and generosity: “Oh generous indeed!” (“Shchedrovit uzh ochen’-to!”), and Marusia answers: “He has more than enough land” (“Zemlitsy dostatochno”). The dialogue probably does not refer to his earthly possessions, but to the infinite sphere to which he belongs. When the mother asks her if she will take her mother with her to their new home, Marusia answers that “I will go myself” (“Sama priudu, matushka!”), because, like her mother, she will face death.

Besides the genre of the riddle, the poetic language is permeated by an ambiguous riddle-like speech. The riddles establish two levels in the poetic language that thereby opens up for a play with metaphors. The following passage from the beginning of the third chapter presents the first meeting between Marusia and the Swain after she has seen him at the graveyard, at the festivities. Marusia is hesitant to approach the Swain, and her friends tease her:

— Аль укусит
Дружок?
(Уж Маруся — шажок).

— Аль удушит
Жених?
(Уж Маруся — от них).
Marusia’s friends are unaware of the Swain’s true nature, and inquire teasingly why she does not approach him: “Do you think your friend will bite?” (“Al’ ukusit druzhok?”) and “Do you think your friend will strangle you?” (“Al’ udushit zhenikh?”). The questions appear ironic, but for Marusia they are true in a literal sense. Marusia knows that the Swain will bite and kill her if she gives herself over to him. The true nature of the Swain and the subsequent course of events, of which Marusia is aware although she cannot name them, have thus been mentioned by the girls. It is as an uncanny unspoken reference that is present in language, however, without the others’ knowledge. The second part of the poem, in which Marusia is a dormant, hidden presence in the beautiful girl, is ripe with allusions to Marusia’s previous existence in the first part. For instance, in the fourth chapter, during the nocturnal feast with the ghoulish guests, Marusia has involuntary reminiscences while singing:

«Твои очи голубые,
Мои мысли вздорные.
Твои очи голубые,
А бывают — черные.

Словно жизнь мою угнали
Верстой, — а я с краю.
Голова моя дурная,
Что пою — не знаю.

У меня ль дружок — не пара,
Уборы — не хитрые?
Точно с лесенки упала,
Упала — не выпрямлюсь

/.../»

(2.4.320)

The refrain of the song “Your eyes are blue” (“Tvoi ochi golubye”) is repeated several times and each time it inspires a series of memories from the past, present in riddle-like hints, which the girl herself cannot understand: “my thoughts are weird” (“moi mysli vzdornye”). Instead of the blue eyes, she remembers black eyes, which is the colour of the Swain’s eyes. In the second
chapter, Marusia says: “eyes-hair like tar” (“glaza-volosy kak smolʹ”) (1.2.285). She has inklings that her true dwelling is actually the borderlands, where she has lost her life, but which is unattainable for the girl. In the fourth stanza, there is a metaphor: “as if I had fallen from the stairs / fallen and unable to rise”, which is a direct allusion to the momentous incident in the first part, when she saw the Swain from the stairs and knocked them over in her flight.

The unspeakable presence of the Swain creates a tension in the poem which isolates Marusia from the others in the story and slowly distances her from them. Marusia’s vision has opened up a double reference in language of which only she is aware, and this is an important aspect of her transformation and parallel with the poet. In a demonic image of the poet, later discussed by Tsvetaeva in her essay “The Devil” (“Chert” 1935), she tells the story of how a devil made her aware of secondary meanings present in language. The riddle thus allows for a different appearance in language, which Marusia senses alongside the poet.

Forms of the riddle appear in elliptical puns and plays with the spoken and unspoken. Karlinsky and Zubova have shown that the roundelay refrains are constructed as guessing games, where the object is not named, but presented through different epithets. The most illustrative examples are, however, a serious of riddles based on omitted syllables, also discussed in

174 There are several parallels between the image of the Swain and that of the little devil in “Chert”, some similar to the parallels with the image of the “Vozhatyi” in “Pushkin i Pugachev”. Svetlana Elnitskaia points out that the devil is “the most secret and burning” (“samaia tainaia, samaia zhguchaia”) and quotes Tsvetaeva’s assonating characterization: “zhari” (fire) and “zhut” (horror) (Svetlana Elnitskaia, “Tsvetaeva i Chert” in Russian Language Journal, vol. XL, 1986, p. 75). Karin Grelz has shown how the lyrical I, little Tsvetaeva, finds the devil in different lingual plays, arguing that language in the essay appears as an “independent force” and poses the question: “One must ask, therefore, whether Tsvetaeva’s childhood devil should not be understood as above all a figure born of the power of language, as an inverting, returning, dialectic movement.” (Karin Grelz, Beyond the Noise of Time. Readings of Marina Tsvetaeva’s Memories of Childhood. Stockholm: Almqvist och Wiksell International, 2004, p. 144). The parallel seems to consist less in the appearance of the demonic as “a dialectical movement”, than as the poetic force of telling by pointing at loci that appear to already be present in a hidden way in language.

175 See also Zubova 1999, pp. 153-61.

depth by Zubova. For instance, Marusia’s brother almost utters the secret word “vampire” (“upyr’”), but through the graphic means of omitting a syllable in the rhyme, the word is only alluded to:

Лют брачный твой пир,
Жених твой у –  

(1.3.290)

The poetic language abides, on the one hand, by the custom of magic, that is, of not naming the evil force, but, on the other hand, the omitted syllables serve as a device to hint at the unspeakable. They attract the attention to the unspoken. In a formula from the first chapter of the first part, the Swain addresses Marusia as they dance together as follows:

Близь — в близь,
Сердь — в сердь,
На — жызть,
На —  

(1.1.284)

The formula is based on a play with words, on the reduction to a stem, and means approximately: “Close – to close / Heart – to heart / For – life / For –” (“Bliz’ — v bliz’, / Serd’ — v serd’, / Na — zhyzt’, / Na — ”). The last line leaves a word omitted, rhyming with “serd”, and the reader fills in the word for death – smert’. The omitted word discloses the true course of their love, that is, their meeting through death. The notion of the unspeakable reference is further enhanced by the sound pattern. The assonance created by the repetition of the s-sound in bliz’- bliz’, serd’ – serd’, zhyzt’ and the omitted smert’, alludes to hissing sounds that form a leitmotiv denouncing the Swain. Here, the hidden level is more or less apparent to the reader, who construes the omitted word, and senses the ominous presence.

The notion of taboo is turned into a device that invites the reader to a play of “co-creating” (“sotvorchestvo”). In one sequence from the last chapter of the first part, Tsvetaeva only omits a verb ending:

Красна свадьба!
Чего краше!
Дочка мать продала, —
Вспля —  

(1.5.296)
In fact, the omitted syllable encourages the reader to guess and utter the omitted syllable, and thus take part in the oral performance of the poem. In “The Poet on the Critic”, Tsvetaeva describes reading as a search for the Rheingold, thus turning reading into a search for the undisclosed (1994:5, p. 278). For the most part, the play with the reader in accordance with “co-creating” invites the reader to join in what appears to be the utterance of the tabooed unspeakable. The ambiguous language opens up for a second, deeper literal meaning, which is present as a language within language.

3.2. Syllabic Writing

Another prominent aspect of Tsvetaeva’s reworkings of language in order to bring out the literal, is syllabic writing. In a letter of 21 September 1928 to the young poet Nikolai Gronskii, Tsvetaeva wrote that the syllable was the poetic unit with which she primarily worked, and that the poetic language of The Swain testifies to a constant preoccupation with the syllable. The syllable is by definition a sound unit that comprises a consonant and a vowel. In the previous chapter, I highlighted the poet’s work with the syllable in her shifts of emphasis, omitted syllables, monosyllabic words, sound repetitions such as internal rhymes and alliterations, and in the use of dashes to break up words. The sound experiments with the syllable point, moreover, to the fact that the poet also addresses the syllable as a potential semantic unit. In fact, in the syllable, the poet explores the meaning of sound to hint at alternative or neologistic meanings or forms of words, which at same time seem to be more “secret” and “literal” meanings.

In the essay “Art in the Light of Conscience”, Tsvetaeva treated the monosyllabic word “Mra” as a kind of name that was at the same time “the sound of death”:


Mра, by the way, I take her as a feminine noun, a feminine ending, the sound of death. Mor (masculine). Mра. Death could have had this name; perhaps at some time, somewhere, it did have this name – Мра. Word-creation, like any creation, only means following the track of the hearing ear of nation and nature. A journey by ear. Et tout le reste n’est que littérature. (ALC, p. 169)

The passage was formulated in 1931, but it can also shed light on Tsvetaeva’s treatment of the folkloric style or the language of the people in The Swain, and her quest in the poem for naming through sound. In the above passage, Tsvetaeva suggests that “Mра” is a name (Livingstone translates “imia” as “noun”, but it appears more correct to translate it as “name”) , which is more than a conventional sign; it is the sound of the thing, and a form, where name and thing coincide. This form is sought in the language of the people as a sound unit, and therefore the poet seeks to establish a relation between meaning and sound through the syllable.

From these observations, one can also gain an insight into how Tsvetaeva worked with the syllable. The dictum “To follow the track of the hearing ear of nation and nature” (or “To follow the track of the hearing ear of the people and nature” – see discussion in the Introduction, p. 26) (“Khozhdenie po sledu slukha narodnogo i prirodnogo”) suggests that she worked through etymology,178 that is, through seeking traces of an archaic meaning, and through sound, that is, through seeking potential meaning through sound association. There is a parallel with Tsvetaeva’s work with the syllable in so-

called folk etymology, which Nikita Tolstoi defines as the “semantic attraction between two assonating words”, which was a crucial part of archaic forms of ritual magic, so-called “etymological magic”. In other words, “etymological magic” does not always follow etymology, but explores sound in order to alter a word or expression and open up new meaning, or simply to alter the rhythm; and this is what Tsvetaeva does in her preoccupation with the syllable as a dynamic unit.

In her linguistic analysis of the poem, Zubova examines the archaizing tendencies in the poetic language, and amongst other things, the work with etymology. She shows, on the basis of the example of the poet’s exploration of the monosyllabic serd’, which is a common stem in both “heart” (serdtse) and “middle” (seredina), how Tsvetaeva creates a language of ambiguous and multiple meanings through hinting at common etymological roots. The word serd’, which is repeated several times throughout the poem unites the two meanings in a sound consisting of one syllable.

Tsvetaeva’s experiments with the syllable as a sound unit go hand in hand with her paronomastic work with individual words. The use of dashes to break up words separates syllables through distancing, while internal rhymes and other forms of repetition, on the other hand, establish approximate relations. A pun on the syllables mor-mer in the final chapter is an example of both disintegration and parallel alignment: “Po – morochilos’ / Pri – mereshchilos” (2.5.330). The word primereshchit’sia means to “appear as a mirage” and is paralleled with the word “pomorochit’sia”, which is a neologism. The neologism is built on the expression “morochit’ golovu”, which means to take pains to understand, often used with a negation, thus meaning roughly “don’t bother your head”. The words are parcelled up, so that the prefixes are distanced from the stem and ending, and the parallel position of the words draws them closer

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179 Nikita Tolstoi writes as follows: “Между тем лежащий в основе народной этимологии принцип семантического притяжения (аттракции) созвучных слов (не зависимо от их этимологического родства) имеет более общий характер и составляет одну из важнейших особенностей ряда архаических фольклорных и ритуально-магических текстов, которую можно называть этимологической магией, смыкающейся с другими, неязыковыми (ритуальными, мифологическими) видами магии.” (Nikita Tolstoi, Iazyk i narodnaia kul’tura. Ocherki po slavianskoj mifologii i etnolingvistike. Moskva: Indrik, 1995, p. 317).

180 Zubova 1999, p. 163.
with respect to both sound and meaning. The writing emphasizes the sound similarity in the syllables of the stems: mor – mer, which hints at contiguity in meaning: what appeared as an image was something that briefly (suffix po-) bothered the head.\(^{181}\) It is possible that the pun conceals an allusion to a kinship between death and mirage in the syllable mor – mer. The mirage that appears is the Swain who belongs to the dead.

The syllable is very important in the riddle-like speech of the poem to convey this sublime presence. Tsvetaeva either omits syllables (-shem, -shka) or words, which are always monosyllabic (for instance, smert’). She breaks up words to create double meanings and to further enhance the notion of something not entirely spoken out loud, or secret. For instance, in the following passage from the Nobleman’s and Marusia’s final trip to the church, the words are broken up to hint at a second meaning:

Чьи хаты? — Бариновы!
Ло — паты? — Бариновы!
За — платы? — Бариновы!
Ре — бяты? — Бариновы! 

(2.5.332)

The questions are Marusia’s, but she is not really referring to the visible world. Instead she talks to the Swain, looming about them as a mirage. By breaking up the words in the questions, Tsvetaeva detaches the anagram lo-za-re, in the words spades (lopaty), patches (zaplaty), children (rebiaty), turning them into harsh sounds: paty, platy, biaty. The anagram seems to hide the name Lazarus and the colour lazur’, azure, which is not only the final locus of the poem Side streets,\(^{182}\) but also an analogy to the blue, sin’, as the ultimate otherworldly

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\(^{181}\) Perhaps Tsvetaeva’s work with the syllable, and other forms of exploration of potential secondary meanings in words and metaphors can be related to what she called “contiguous meanings” or “neighbouring meanings” in her commentary on Volkon-sky’s poetry in the essay “Cedar”: “В словесной области, обратно чем в области человеческой, все дело или почти все дело – в соседстве. Это когда-то отлично знали Романтики.” (1994:5, p. 269. I have taken the translation “contiguous relations” from Grelz 2004, p. 39).

\(^{182}\) The name Lazarus, furthermore, probably hides a symbolism that Jerzy Faryno identifies in his analysis of Sidestreets. It refers to Lazarus of Bethany and alludes to the ascendance through death to the otherworld (Faryno 1985, p. 313). The three poems
locus of the Swain. The immediate meaning of the words becomes ridiculed, while the second, true reference to which Marusia alludes is brought to the fore in the anagram. In a similar move in the same chapter, as the presence of the Swain is magnified, the name Marusia is disguised in an anagram that hints at a central syllable, and also at the potential meaning contained in it. The Nobleman exclaims “Moia Rusʹ-to”, unaware of the sound similarity to the name Marusia. Moreover, this pun on the name Marusia also underlines the connection between Russia and Marusia through the syllable “rus”.

The syllabic writing is also reflected in the monosyllabic words, with which the poem is interspersed. Some of them rely on etymology, as in the above mentioned example serdʹ, some are colloquialisms like the word zhystʹ, which, moreover, Tsvetaeva subsequently spells inaccurately in order to convey its sound. There are also more ambiguous examples of neologisms, as for instance, zhgonʹ.183 As Zubova has asserted, several of the monosyllabic words present ambiguous grammatical forms, as for instance in the first line: “Sinʹ da sginʹ”.184 As discussed in the previous chapter, some neologistic monosyllabic words take the form of verbal interjections, for instance bryk-skok-khvatʹ.

Tsvetaeva’s explorations of the monosyllabic words can also be related to Modernist experiments with folk art as in the poetry of Khlebnikov or Gorodetsky and they function in relation to the immediacy of the performance and of language that speaks itself. Verbal forms based on stems convey at the same time voice and action. The following passage from the final chapter introduces a group of beggars:

Sidestreets, Na krasnom kone and The Swain all have analogical endings. (See also Kor-kina 1987; Saakians 1997, p. 334).


184 Ibid., p. 161ff.
The stanza is from the last chapter, second part, and refers to the beggars standing outside the church, when the Nobleman and the beautiful girl enter. It presents an image of the beggars as much through their broken speech and sound as through the meaning of the words. The word in the first line, kliuka, means crutch, and in the second: bel’mo, means wall eye. Both are in the instrumental case, and so the forms mean roughly “with a crutch” (“kliu – koi”) and “wall-eyed” (“bel’-mom”), and form a synecdochical description of the beggars. When broken up, only the word koi has a potential meaning, presenting an archaic form of kakoi (what, which). These word-divisions are then followed by the three one-syllable words; lai, noi, or that designate the sound of the beggars. Lai is a noun formed from the verb laiat’ (bark) Or is from orat’ (yell), but Noi as a noun is a neologism, formed from the imperative of nyt’ (ache, yammer).

Another example is the passage from the end of the fourth chapter, as the clock strikes one and the ghostly hour has passed:

Ан:
Зга!
Петушинный клич!
Чудь, дичь,
Нежить — в берега!
Ай —
da! (2.4.327)

The stanza conveys the end of the night and the rooster’s call (“petushinyi klich”), which also means that the vile guests must leave. The stanza follows a sound pattern permeated by monosyllabic words: an, zga, chud’, dich’ and the broken up ai/da. The ghoulish guests are presented as “chud’” and “dich’”,

Клю — кой,
Бель — мом.
Лай. — Ной.
Ор. (2.5.335)
which create neologistic forms of nouns that can be translated as “the strange” and “the wild”. The interjections in the form of two one-syllable words in the first two lines: “An: / Zga!” and the last two lines: “Ai – / da!” are also peculiar word forms. An means but; zga only exists in contemporary Russian in the genitive form, in the negation “ni zgi”, which means pitch dark. The lines “Ai – / da!” can both be read as a single interjection “Aida!” (Let’s go!) and as two separate interjections. In isolation the words ai means ouch and da means yes. Both meanings are plausible in the context, which renders the rather simple exclamations ambiguous. These one-syllable words denote instantaneous actions and reactions, because sound presents just as much as it represents.

Zubova argues that Tsvetaeva opts for an archaic language that is “syncretistic”, which she defines as a complex of several forms and meanings in one word. The primary aim of the explorations of the monosyllabic words, and in general, of sound as meaning, would seem to be to convey the sublime nature of the otherworldly presence in the tale. The concept of a syncretistic language based on interjections circulated amongst pre-Romantics and Romantics in their understanding of an Ursprache, and it was discussed whether these original forms of words were monosyllabic or bisyllabic. The concept of Ursprache inspired a quest for an original language that was both more natural and poetic than modern languages, and that could therefore speak things in a different and more magic or mythical way. The move towards an original language in Tsvetaeva’s poetry is linked to a quest to make the sublime present in such a way that it becomes, at the same time, more immediate in sound as well as more immediate in both its secret and “literal” meanings.

185 “Синкретизм слова – это исходная, первичная цельность еще не вычленяе-
186 Herder 1985, p. 739, see also footnote 110.
3.3. Leitmotiv and the Birth of “Literal” Meaning

Tsvetaeva’s explorations of language are linked to the generation of new meaning and to the process that Svetlana Boym calls “metaphorization”, that is, the coming into being of new metaphors. The technique of leitmotiv is an important vehicle for the birth of new meaning and new metaphors. In the previous chapter, I discussed leitmotivs with respect to sound, and sound is one aspect through which Tsvetaeva seeks potential alternative meanings, present in the word. The correspondence on the use of leitmotiv in The Pied Piper in June 1926 between the poet and Pasternak is highly illustrative. Pasternak remarked that leitmotiv is the device that most distinguishes Tsvetaeva, and Tsvetaeva agreed, wondering at the same time, as quoted in the introduction, whether he had noticed the way that she cries, leaps and rolls herself (“dokrikivaiusʹ, doskakivaiusʹ, dokatyvaiusʹ”) to meaning, before meaning takes hold of her and carries her through a series of lines. As I will try to show, the remark equally applies to The Swain, where we see how the process of attaining “meaning”, as Tsvetaeva describes it in the letter, is reflected in the poetic language and in particular in the leitmotivs. She screams and jolts her way to meaning in the sense that she varies, through intense repetitions, the potential meanings of words, standard expressions or epithets and turns them into images and metaphors, or reworks established clichéd metaphors in a quest for the literal sublime that simultaneously seems to aim both at the recovery of lost archaic and the birth of new meaning. This meaning then takes hold of her in the sense that it governs the further development of the themes.

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188 Svetlana Boym identifies in Tsvetaeva’s development of an image in the essay “Natal’ia Goncharova” “the very process of metamorphosis or metaphorization” (Boym 1991, p. 211).


190 In her letter of 26 June 1926, Tsvetaeva answers as follows: “Очень верно о лейтмотиве. О вагнерянстве мне уже говорили музыканты. Да, все верно, ни с чем я не спорю. И о том, что я как-то докрикиваюсь, доскакиваюсь, докатываюсь до смысла, который затем овладевает мною на целый ряд строк. Прыжок с разбегом. Об этом ты говорил?” (Ibid., p. 240). The notion that the poet screams her way to the meaning, which then takes hold of her (“ovladevaet”) suggests an interesting parallel between her technique and the image of art as possession.
I shall now follow the development of a central leitmotiv in the figurative language of the poem: the colour red. Tsvetaeva insisted on the importance of the colour red in the proposed foreword to the French edition of *The Swain*, where she wrote that the poem is also about a Russia that is red, but not in the sense of its Communist flag: “Et voici, enfin, la Russie, rouge d’un autre rouge que celui de ses drapeaux d’aujourd’hui.” (2005, p. 19, 290). The poem develops meanings associated with the colour red, and in particular with respect to fire and blood. She exploits the quality of folkloric language of being clichéd, centred on certain recurring themes and images, and their aptitude for variation or “migration”.

The imagery takes as its starting point the connotations of red, fire and blood in folk belief, but reworks these further in the ambiguous symbolism that *The Swain* develops. In folk symbolism, fire, blood and the colour red are strongly charged notions and linked to each other, all associated

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191 The technique correlates with features of the language of folk poetry, which, according to Nikita Tolstoi, tends to form clichés that can be varied and that pave the way for a “multicoded” language. Images and symbols migrate and can become fixed elliptical phrases or possible double references in words. Thus the expression can make a text “multicoded”, as Tolstoi puts it, i.e. an expression can have a series of references at the same time. According to Tolstoi, the language of folk poetry testifies to a transformation of myths and stories (siuzhet) into fixed phrases or phraseological units, and further into half phrases and words, sometimes on the basis of folk etymology, *narodnaia etimologii*. It is a process of the “migration” of images and motifs, evolution or expansion of words “razvertyvanie slov”, and he identifies this as a substantial aspect of language in folk culture. It results in a specific kind of language, which is “fixed and full of clichés” (“ustoichivyi i klishirovannyi”): “А. А. Потебня в свое время сосредоточил внимание на обратном процессе, на конденсации, на свертывании сюжета до мотива, от мотива до поговорки, фразеологизма. […] От фразеологизма до слова оставался один шаг, и нам известны примеры такой максимальной конденсации. Развертывание слов, как правило, опирается на этимологию или на народную этимологию, вовлекая в ритуальную и обрядовую сферу ‘этимологически’ (чаще ‘народно-этимологически’) связываемые действия, предметы и действующие лица через их называния и имена. […] Народная ‘полуфразеология’, т. е. особый устойчивый и клишированный вид текста, выражающий благопожелания, проклятия, ритуальные констатации и своеобразные императивные побуждения […] или запреты. Значение такой ‘полуфразеологии’ велико, т.к. она функционирует в закральной ситуации, в ‘многокодовом тексте’ где помимо вербального символа, знака или заглавия параллельно и взаимно действует предметная и акциональная символика” (Tolstoi 1995, p. 24f).
both with positive and negative forces.\textsuperscript{192} Red announces beauty and health, but also otherworldly forces, while blood stands for both health and passion, and fire for life, death, passion and danger.\textsuperscript{193} These meanings are all present in Tsvetaeva’s rendition, which plays on clichés, at the same time as it explores them through associations and sound.

The colour red, fire and blood bind Marusia and The Swain to each other as images of their elemental intensity. The appearance of the Swain is associated with red fire. He enters in a red shirt, a so-called kumach, which is on fire: “The red kumach shirt is burning with heat”, (“kumach zharom gorit”). This image was apparently important to the poet; in the proposed foreword to the French edition of \textit{The Swain, Le Gars}, the poet emphasizes that his shirt is red. (2005, p. 20, 291.) The Swain refers to Marusia as “the red fruit” (“alyi plod”). The red of blood and of fire fuse in one of the dance refrains in an image that conveys Marusia’s exceptional character. It magnifies Marusia’s burning cheeks, which are like velvet: “velvet by the heat” (“zharom barkhacheny”):

\begin{quote}
Горят, ярки,
Горят, жарки,
Жаром бархачены —
Эх!
Мои — жарче,
Твои — жарче,
У Маруси — жарче всех!
\end{quote}

(1.1.281)


The linguistic play in the stanza is built on the rather clichéd image of red cheeks burning, declaring that Marusia’s cheeks are the most intensely red or burning. The refrain is built on variations on the word “burning” as a description of the omitted word, cheeks, which is intimated in the expression “velvet by the heat” ("zharom barkhacheny"), alluding in turn to the expression “her velvet skin”, ("barkhat eë kozhi"), and meaning approximately “soft as silk”, in other words, her cheeks become the most desirable because of the heat. Marusia is thus presented as the most “burning” girl, which suggests that the fire of the Swain has found its equivalent in Marusia. They are united in the image of passion and the heat of blood, while Marusia proves to be the most receptive because of her red beauty, the strength of her blood and the fire in her dance.

Tsvetaeva explores the double meaning of the word *krasnaia* as both red and beautiful.\(^\text{194}\) The two meanings offer a potential ambiguity that Tsvetaeva returns to more than once. For instance, in the fifth chapter, Marusia is ready to unite with the Swain in “a beautiful wedding”, a folkloric cliché, which in the context can also be read as “a red marriage” ("krasna svad’ba"): 

Красна свадьба!
Чего краше!
Дочка мать продала, —
Вспля —

То не плат белый вьется —
Душа с телом расстается.

— Очнись! — Не хочу!
Пляша душу испущу! (1.5.296)

It is Marusia, who exclaims “Beautiful wedding! / could there be a better one!”.

The meaning of “*krasna*”, that is, beautiful or red, is rendered ambiguous in the following lines. First of all, the next following line announces that “The girl

\(^{194}\) Zubova argues that the word “*krasnaia*” acquires both an archaic and a contemporary meaning, which is only true to a certain extent. The contemporary meaning of the word, that is, red, is only used metaphorically, and on a metaphorical level the word becomes polysemous (Zubova 1999, p. 170ff).
gave over her mother”, alluding to blood in Marusia’s betrayal of her mother. The allusion to blood and the colour red is further developed in a negative parallelism in the second stanza: “It is not the white kerchief waving / The soul is parting from the body.” In any case, Marusia is not to dress in white, for that is not the kind of wedding that is about to take place. Marusia is about to enter a kind of danse macabre with the Swain, in which she later exclaims: “I dance my death” (“svoi smert pliashu”) (1.5.296). The opposition of white and red is central to the image. It is not the white kerchief, a symbol of purity and chastity, because she is about to enter a red marriage. Marusia knows that she will unite with the Swain only in her death, when he drinks her blood in the beautiful marriage (“krasna svad’ba”), which is also the most red marriage, thus alluding to the consummation of their marriage through blood, to Marusia’s marriage with the element. Through this marriage, Marusia becomes possessed of the red fire, and turns into an elemental force. In her hypostasis in the second part, she is a red flower (tsvetok krasnyi), burning in the snow when the Nobleman passes by: “Flower, flower red / burning, pure-coal!” (“Tsvet, tsvet rumianist / gorit, ugol’-chist!”) (2.1.303).

The double meaning of krasna devitsa then becomes central in the second part, where Marusia metamorphoses into the fairy tale figure, the krasna devitsa, but she is also a “red girl”, according to the symbolism established in the poem. The following quotation is taken from Marusia’s metamorphosis from a flower into a girl, before she has lost her fire. It is midnight and the Nobleman tries to appease her, but she is elemental red fire:

Да с двенадцатым, с последним — в самый бой
Как встряхнется-встрепенется зелень-зной.

Да с двенадцатым, с последним — в самый вал
Как сорвется-оторвется пламень ал.

(Барин как взарится!)
Нá-земь как свеется!
Да как ударится
Красною девицей!
Красное приданое,
Щёчки бесчувственные.
Стан запрокидывает,
Ручки выхрустывает.

Грудками вззгрывает,
Деснами взблестывает,
Полными пригоршнями
Дрёму расплескивает.

Взблёстами! — Искрами!
Бровки-то — в две версты!
Ай да поистину
Красная девица!

(2.2.305f)

The passage revolves around a series of images associated with her elemental nature. The clock strikes twelve and the metamorphosis of the flower begins as a “red blaze” (“plamenʹ al”). This image sets the background for the continuing development of the meaning of the expression “beautiful girl”, which appears in the third stanza. The phrase “beautiful girl” is made ambiguous in the next line, that is, in the first line of the fourth stanza, which reads “krasnoe pridanoe”: beautiful or red dowry. The image arguably refers to the red flower on the surface level, but on the level of a second, deeper meaning the red dowry refers to the elemental nature that she received from the Swain. Her appearance as a human is then filled with magic, and she “splashes out slumber” (“drëmu rasplëskivaet”) by means of sparks (“iskrami”) and glows or glimmerings (“vzblëstami”, a neologistic derivative of the verb pair vzblesnut’/vzblëskivat’).

The exclamation that she is a true “krasnaia devitsa” is marked by italics, because the poetic language has reached the literal meaning of the word, which is polysemous. The exclamation is presented as a consequence, amongst other things, of the image of the sparks and flames. It refers not simply to beauty or to the fairy tale figure, but has the meaning that she is a “red” girl because of her elemental fire. In the development of the image, repetitions of contiguous forms of sound play a central role, for instance, in the sound pattern in the final two stanzas. Besides the repetition of the instrumental case in the plu-
ral, the stanzas revolve around alliterative sound repetitions not only in one line, but also across several lines, repeating in particular the sounds vz, è and p/b: “grudkami vzgyryvaet, / desnami vzblëstyvaet, / polnymi prigorshniami / drëmu rasplëskivaet. / Vzblëstami! – Iskrami! / Browki-to – v dve versty! / Ai da poistinu / Krasnaia devitsa!”

The following sequence continues to develop further the image of red fire, sparks and glows in the repetition of the same words and phrasings, which creates intensity:

Месяц — взблёстами
Звяк — об стеклышки.
Чаркой — по столу:
С милым чокнуться!

Чарка — вдребезги!
Скатерь — краскою!
Знать у девицы
Счастье — красное! (2.2.308)

In the repetitions of the leitmotiv, we can see an illustration of Tsvetaeva’s remark in the letter to Pasternak on the way that meaning, which has been generated by the poet in her intense explorations of language, now carries the poet through several lines. Tsvetaeva continues to play on the double meaning of the word “krasnyi” as both beautiful and red. In these stanzas, the sound pattern is dominated by internal rhymes and the inversed sound combinations ar-kra-cha-cho-ok. The image of the flower metamorphosing into the girl is thus first introduced and then repeated as an echo, where the double meanings are further developed, thus enhancing the intensity of the image.

3.4. Parallelisms: Coincidence of Opposites

Tsvetaeva also uses other forms of folkloric language to play with meaning and create new metaphors or meanings.\(^\text{195}\) Parallelism is a common folkloric

\(^{195}\) Apart from the genres that have been examined in this study, one could also mention epithets, which Zubova analyzes from a linguistic point of view (Zubova 1999,
device, and generally consists in the repetition of affirmations and negations in similar grammatical forms (see also p. 85f). In the previous chapter I attempted to show how parallelisms serve to create a poetic language, where language speaks directly through sound and beyond description. Another use of parallelisms concerns the creation of contradictory images, based on the coincidence of opposites. The poet hyphenates negations and affirmations in order to render the magic nature of Marusia's elemental experiences. At the end of the fifth chapter of the first part, Marusia is lying at home, awaiting the arrival of the Swain and, at the same time, the consummation of their love and her death. She is now on the threshold of the other world of death, about to transform into an elemental being:

Лежит девица
Как в церкву убранная.
Ровно деревце
В цветенье — срубленное.

В три полотнища
Простерлась, в строгостях.
Да нейдет еще
Душа из ребрышек.

Сон-не сон, лежит,
Да плоть-не плоть, лежит,
Ни кость-ни вздох, лежит,
Да ждет-пождет, лежит.

По жилкам — унывая
Жаль, ровно дудочка.
Все такое дивное,
Чудное чудится.

pp. 172-93) and tongue-twisters, which Khodasevich mentions, as discussed in Chapter two, p. 66.

196 Hasty also points out the quest in Tsvetaeva's poetry for the coincidence of all opposites (Hasty 1996, p. XIII).
Ровно не на лавочке
Лежит: в цветах-в шелестах.
Ровно не жила еще:
Дед с бабкой не спелися!

Под горькой осиной,
С ручьями, с пчелами.
Все цветочки синие,
Она — что полымя!

(1.5.298)

The first stanza introduces us to Marusia, who is lying dressed as if in anticipation of both her wedding and funeral. In the second stanza, we are told that she is about to die, but “her soul has not yet left her bones” (“da neidet eshche / dusha iz rebrishek”). The third stanza presents a rather typical form of folkloric negative parallelism:

Сон-не сон, лежит,
Да плоть-не плоть, лежит,
Ни кость-ни вздох, лежит,
Да ждет-пождет, лежит.

The whole stanza is characterized by repetition, underlined by the monotonous rhyme scheme based on the word lezhit (“lying”). The image of Marusia lying, awaiting her beloved, is depicted through hyphenations that alternate between affirmation and negation, and bind them together as one word. She is “dream-not dream” or “sleep-not sleep” (“son-ne son”), “flesh-not flesh” (“plot’-ne plot”), “neither bone-nor sigh” and “waiting-awaiting” (“zhdet-pozhdet”). The parallel affirmations and negations in the first two lines form contradictions that create an image of undecidability and ambiguity on the borders between life and death. Marusia is neither awake nor sleeping, and she is both flesh and not flesh. Marusia is on the threshold of death both in the literal sense that she is about to die, and in the metaphorical sense that she is coming into possession of the Swain’s fire, which takes her beyond life. Two stanzas further on, Tsvetaeva repeats the word “lezhit” and echoes the image of how she is lying through negative parallelisms:
The first two lines constitute the first link in the juxtaposition: Marusia is lying, “as if not on the bench” (“rovno ne na lavochke”), but “in flowers-in rustles” (“v tsvetakh-v shelestakh”), which besides conveying how she lies in flowers before her marriage and burial, anticipates her appearance as a flower. The second line asserts further that it is “as if she hadn’t lived”. She is approaching the realm of death, and distancing herself from life. Her condition on the border between life and death is conveyed through parallel negations and affirmations. They constitute contradictions or coincidences of opposites.

3.5. Appearance: Elements and the Name of Sublime Presence

The poem develops through ambiguity and obscurity a form of “secret writing”, as a means of bringing out a literal meaning. In the final scene of the poem, the forms of “secret writing” are no longer a device for presenting the hidden; here we encounter the “literal” appearance of the Swain and Marusia as elemental beings. In this scene, both naming and sight play a central role, which converges with the interdiction both to name and see according to the conventions relating to evil forces in folk belief. Let us remind ourselves that the Swain entreated Marusia not to go to church, and Tsvetaeva in her comment on the “line of the voice” (“liniia golosa”) asserted that the voice said “don’t look into the left window” (“ne gliadi v levoe okno”), (1997, p. 154) but Marusia looks up and this has fatal consequences in the course of the poem:197

— Гляди, беспамятна!
(Ни зги. Люд — замертво.)

— Гря — ду, сердь рдяная!
Ма — руся!

Глянула. (2.5.339)

The scene is ripe with drama. The voice of “the other”, which appears to be that of the Swain is hovering in the church, and he calls upon the young girl to look at him: “Look, you oblivious” (“Gliadi, bespamiatna!”). In the end he announces that he is coming “Gria – du”. He appeals to her as “red heart” (“serd’ rdianaia”) and calls her by her name: “Ma – rusia!” in a broken up form in order to intone the protracted exclamation and emphasize the syllables. Her elemental being now awakes and looks at him, she: “Looked” (“Glianula”). Naming Marusia marks the end, because it reawakens Marusia as an elemental being with her passion for the Swain. This indicates the end of her earthly appearance, and in a momentary movement the two recognize each other and unite as elements:

Огнь — и в разлете
Крыл — копия
Яростней: — Ты?!
— Я!

Та — ввысь,
Тот — вблизь:
Свились,
Взвились:

Зной — в зной,
Хлынь — в хлынь!
До — мой
В огнь синь. (2.5.339f)

The presentation of the moment when the two elemental beings appear before each other is presented in a highly elliptic language. The Swain appears as fire, in the non-pleophonic, monosyllabic form огн’, and with wings like glaives. The two then recognize each other in the form of personal pronouns. A voice calls with fury: “You?!”, and the other answers: “I!” (“Ty?! / – Ia!”), which

198 The image of the Swain with wings as glaives seems to allude to the Icon of St. George, which correlates with the fact that Tsvetaeva sought to fuse different traditions in the poem.
should be contrasted with the fact that pronouns have been categorically avoided until this moment. They are further named and identified, not in their human appearances, but in the demonstrative pronouns “ta” (she, or that, female form) and “tot” (he, or that, male form).

Their appearances are then conveyed as elemental movement. Besides the words *svilis’* (merge up), which is paralleled to *vzvilis’* (soar up), as an image of their simultaneous flight and fusion, the final two stanzas consist almost exclusively of monosyllabic words. The noun *znoi* (heat) with a male ending is paralleled to the neologic noun *khlyn’* (gush), formed from the verb *khlynut’* (to gush). In the final expression “Home / to the blue fire”, (“Do – moi / V ogn’ sin’”) the word “domoi” (home) is broken down into two syllables: “Do – moi”, so that it is pronounced as “da moi” “yes, mine”. In these altered lingual forms with monosyllabic words that denote both appearance and movement, Marusia and the Swain are presented as immense elemental forces, forces too sublime to be represented in conventional language.

The performance of the visitation of the element has now reached its limits. The end of the poetic drama also reflects the end of the poetic process, in the sense that just as Marusia has gone through negation and suspension in her transformation into an elemental being, the poet has gone through a secret language, before making the unrepresentable sublime appear at the very limits of the poem and of language. Finally, in these forms of presentation of the elements, we see both an image of and a hint at Tsvetaeva’s understanding of a “literal” form of language, where the element can be named, because the word is an element.
Conclusion

In the present study I have aspired to shed new light on Tsvetaeva’s explorations of folk art in The Swain against the backdrop of the attraction to folk art as a locus of the sublime in literary tradition, which originates in German Romanticism, and finds its echoes in Russian Modernism. The poem can be associated with this tradition as a rendering of an uncanny horror tale about an immense and fatal force, where the rendering is permeated by a central and defining quandary related to the aesthetic category of the sublime; namely the question of how to render in art what is too great to be represented. In the light of this tradition, we can approach the poem as a kind of mythical narrative that comprises reflections on poetic language. It presents both an image and an illustration of a poetic quest for a myth in the folk tale and a poetic language to present the sublime aspects of this myth.

In The Swain, Tsvetaeva was co-creating with the people in the sense that the poem presents a creative interpretation of their art. Her reflections on the poem are permeated by the notion that she followed the art of the people and performed a task set by them, but this was not because she sought to imitate folk art, but because folk art, in her eyes, carries traces of the presence of an elemental force. Her rendering of this force is akin to the Romantics’ preoccupation with presentations of the sublime through the uncanny fairy tale, and it testifies in several respects to an attempt to convey this force as something which is “more than art”. She sought, in fact, not only to present an image of art as a story about a “visitation of an element”, as Tsvetaeva was later to portray creation in the essay “Art in the Light of Conscience”, but also to enact this visitation in the poem.

Tsvetaeva sought to enact the visitation in what can be understood as a poetic performance of the folk tale. She is co-creating with the people also in the sense that she takes folk art and what can be considered as a “folk language”
as a starting point for the performance. Folk songs and other folkloric genres set the tune to a lyrical drama, which draws on the folkloric oral polyphonic narrative, and “sounds out” the characters’ speech, songs and movements. The voices of the characters alternate with that of the narrator’s in a melodic lyrical flow, which is intoned in a highly variegated rhythm. The folkloric language serves as a basis for explorations of poetic language, sound and rhythm, which can be further associated with Russian Modernism, and in particular with the metrical innovations of Andrey Bely and Futurist experiments with the semantics of sound in transrational speech. In her performance through folk art she seeks to escape conventional forms of representation in poetry and present the tale in its immediacy through voices and sound.

The performance of the “visitation of an element” is further linked to a quest for a “literal” poetic language to speak the sublime, and she uses different folkloric devices in order to attain it. The poetic language is characterized as a “secret writing” (“tainopis’”); because it can hint at a “literal” meaning through being suggestive. The central interdiction imposed on Marusia not to say that she has seen the vampire, or the taboo on the name, is turned into a pivotal poetic device to suggest the presence of the unspeakable sublime. Tsvetaeva avoids conventional naming in her pursuit of a different kind of naming. She integrates the form of the riddle into the text in order to suggest a secondary meaning without spelling it out. Furthermore, she seeks a secondary meaning in the word through a kind of syllabic writing, in which she explores the syllable not only as a prosodic, but also as a semantic unit. On the basis of these devices, she explores repetition in folk art, or leitmotiv, as a means of reworking metaphors so as to tell the story about a sublime force. In the end, Tsvetaeva’s interpretation of the element behind folk art and her presentation of it in The Swain suggests that it can be understood as the force of a “literal” poetic language, where the name is an element. To perform the myth of the visitation of an element was equivalent to the attainment of this language.

The Swain represents the apex of Tsvetaeva’s Russian folkloric works. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to evaluate the role of The Swain in Tsvetaeva’s entire oeuvre, a few tentative remarks can nevertheless be made in conclusion. It appears that the attainment of a poetic language to speak the sublime in The Swain was to find an echo in several respects in her later writings. Besides the continued use of folkloric technique in her poetic
language, the theme of a demonic and elemental force was present in both her poetry and literary essays also after *The Swain*. Besides the fact that the theme of the “visitation of an element” was central in the essay “Art in the Light of Conscience”, one can establish correlations between Tsvetaeva’s rendering of the Swain and the image of the demonic force of art in some of her literary-biographical essays, for instance “The Devil”. The visitation of fire was also to find an echo in poems that do not have a manifestly folkloric theme, such as the longer poem *Poema Lestnitsy* (*The Poem of the Staircase*), where fire visits the stairs of an apartment building and devours everything, ending with “Ascending-descending / Rainbows” (“Voskhodiashshie-niskhodiashchie / Radugi”). Against the backdrop of *The Swain*, it might be suggested that Tsvetaeva in these writings also treats an image of, and in the poem also performs, the force of a poetic language, where elements are made present in all their sublimity.
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Iakusheva, G. V. 2004. “Obraz i motivy Gete v otechestvennoi slovesnosti


1. УПЫРЬ

В некотором царстве, в некотором государстве был-жил старик со старухою; у них была дочь Маруся. В их деревне был обычай справлять праздник Андрея Первозванного: собираются девки в одну избу, напекут пампушек и гуляют целую неделю, а то и больше. Вот дождались этого праздника, собрались девки, напекли-наварили, что надо; вечером пришли парубки с сопелкою, принесли вина, и началась пляска, гульба — дым коромыслом! Все девки хорошо пляшут, а Маруся лучше всех. Немного погода входит в избу такой молодец — что за поди! Кровь с молоком! Одет богато, чисто. «Здравствуйте, — говорит, — красные девицы!» — «Здравствуй, добрый молодец!» — «Гулянье вам!» — «Милости просим гулять к нам!» Сейчас вынул он кошель полон золота, послал за вином, за орехами, пряниками — разом все готово; начал угощать и девок и ребят, всех оделил. А пошел плясать — любо-дорого посмотреть! Больше всех полюбилась ему Маруся; так к ней и пристает.

Наступило время по домам расходиться. Говорит этот молодец: «Маруся! Поди, проводи меня». Она вышла провожать его; он и говорит: «Маруся, сердце! Хочешь ли, я тебя замуж возьму?» — «Коли бы взял, я бы с радостью пошла. Да ты отколь?» — «А вот из такого-то места, живу у купца за приказчика». Тут они попрощались и пошли всякий своей дорогой. Воротилась Маруся домой, мать ее спрашивает: «Хорошо ли погуляла, дочка?» — «Хорошо, матушка! А еще скажу тебе радость: был там со стороны добрый молодец, собой красавец, и денег много; обещал взять меня замуж». — «Слушай, Маруся: как пойдешь завтра к девкам, возьми с собой клубок ниток; станешь провожать его, в тё поры накинь ему петельку на пуговицу и распускай потихоньку клубок, а после по этой нитке и сведаешь, где он живет».

На другой день пошла Маруся на вечерницу и захватила с собой клубок ниток. Опять пришел добрый молодец: «Здравствуй, Маруся!» — «Здравствуй!» Начались игры, пляски; он пуще прежнего льнет к Марусе, ни на шаг не отходит. Уж время и домой идти. «Маруся, — говорит гость, — проводи меня». Она вышла на улицу, стала с ним прощаться и тихонько накинула петельку на пуговицу; пошел он своей дорогою, а
она стоит да клубок распускает; весь распустила и побежала узнавать,
где живет ее названный жених? Сначала нитка по дороге шла, после по-
tянулась через заборы, через канавы и вывела Марусю прямо к церкви,
k главным дверям. Маруся попробовала — двери заперты; пошла кругом
церкви, отыскала лестницу, подставила к окну и полезла посмотреть, что
tам дется? Везла, глянула — а названный жених стоит у гроба да упокой-
ника ест; в церкви тогда ночевало мертвое тело. Хотела было потихоньку,
sоскочить с лестницы, да с испугу не остереглась и стукнула; бежит до-
mой — себя не помнит, все ей погоня чудится; еле жива прибежала!

Поутру мать спрашивает: «Что, Маруся, видела того молодца?» —
«Видела, матушка!» — а что видела, того не рассказывает. Вечером си-
dит Маруся в раздумье: идти или нет на вечерницу? «Ступай, — говорит
матушка, — поиграй, пока молодежь!» Приходит она на вечерницу, а нечистый
уже там. Опять начались игры, смех, пляска; девки ничего не ведают!
Стали по домам расходиться; говорит нечистый: «Маруся! Поди, прово-
dи меня». Она нейдет, боится. Тут все девки на нее накинулись: «Что с
tобой? Или застыдились? Ступай, проводи добра молодца!» Нечего де-
лать, пошла — что бог даст! Только вышли на улицу, он ее и спрашивает:
«Ты вчера к церкви ходила?» — «Нет!» — «А видела, что я там делал?» —
«Нет!» — «Ну, завтра твой отец помрет!» Сказал и исчез.

Вернулась Маруся домой грустна и невесела; поутру проснулась —
отец мертвый лежит. Поплакали над ним и в гроб положили; вечером
мать к попу поехала, а Маруся осталась: страшно ей одной дома. «Дай,
— думает, — пойду к подругам». Приходит, а нечистый там. «Здравствуй,
Маруся! Что не весела?» — спрашивают ее девки. «Какое веселье? Отец
помер». — «Ах, бедная!» Все тужат об ней; тужит и он, проклятый, будто
не его дело. Стали прощаться, по домам расходиться. «Маруся, — говорит
он, — проводи меня». Она не хочет. «Что ты — маленькая, что ли? Чего
боишься? Проводи его!» — пристают девки. Пошла провожать; вышли на
улицу. «Скажи, Маруся, была ты у церкви?» — «Нет!» — «А видела, что я
делал?» — «Нет!» — «Ну, завтра мать твоя помрет!» Сказал и исчез.

Вернулась Маруся домой еще печальнее; переночевала ночь, поутру
проснулась — мать лежит мертвая. Целый день она проплакала, вот
солныце село, кругом темнеть стало — боится Маруся одна оставаться; по-
шла к подругам. «Здравствуй! Что с тобой? На тебе лица не видать!» —
gоворят девки. «Уж какое мое веселье! Вчера отец помер, а сегодня мать».
— «Бедная, несчастная!» — сожалеют ее все. Вот пришло время прощать-
ся. «Маруся! Проводи меня!», — говорит нечистый. Вышла провожать
его. «Скажи, была ты у церкви?» — «Нет!» — «А видела, что я делал?»
— «Нет!» — «Ну, завтра ввечеру сама помрешь!» Маруся переночевала с
Подругами, поутру встала и думает: что ей делать? Вспомнила, что у неё есть бабка — старая-старая, уж ослепла от долгих лет. «Пойду-ка я к ней, посоветуюсь».

Отправилась к бабке. «Здравствуй, бабушка!» — «Здравствуй, внучка! Как бог милует? Что отец с матерью?» — «Померли, бабушка!» — и рассказала ей все, что с нею случилось. Старуха выслушала и говорит: «Ох, горемычная ты моя! Ступай скорей к попу, попроси его: коли ты помрешь, чтоб вырыли под порогом яму, да несли бы тебя из избы не в двери, а протащили б сквозь то отверстье; да еще попроси, чтоб похоронили тебя на перекрестке — там, где две дороги пересекаются». Пришла Маруся к попу, слезно заплакала и упросила его сделать все так, как бабушка научила; воротилась домой, купила гроб, легла в него — и тотчас же померла. Вот дали знать священнику; похоронил он сначала отца и мать Маруси, а потом и ее. Вынесли Марусю под порогом, схоронили на раздорожье.

В скором времени случилось одному боярскому сыну проезжать мимо Марусиной могилы; смотри — а на той могиле растет чудный цветок, какого он никогда не видывал. Говорит барич своему слуге: «Поди, вырой мне тот цветок с корнем; привезем домой и посадим в горшок: пусть у нас цветет!» Вот вырыли цветок, привезли домой, посадили в муравленый горшок и поставили на окно. Начал цветок расти, красоваться. Раз как-то не поспалось слуге ночью; смотрит он на окно и видит — чудо совершилось: вдруг цветок зашатался, упал с ветки наземь — и обратился красной девицей; цветок был хорош, а девица лучше! Пошла она по комнатам, достала себе разных напитков и кушаньев, напилась-наелась, ударилась об пол — сделалась по-прежнему цветком, поднялась на окно и села на веточку. За другой день рассказал слуга баричу, какое чудо ему в ночи привиделось. «Ах, братец, что ж ты меня не разбудил? Нынешнюю ночь ста-нем вдвоем караулить». Пришла ночь — они не спят, дожидаются. Ровно в двенадцать часов цветок начал шевелиться, с места на место перелетать, после упал наземь — и явилась красная девица; достала себе напитков и кушаньев и села ужинать. Барич выбежал, схватил ее за белые руки и повел в свою горницу; не может вдоволь на нее насмотреться, на красоту ее наглядеться. Наутро говорит отцу, матери: «Позвольте мне жениться; я нашел себе невесту». Родители позволили. Маруся говорит: «Я пойду за тебя только с тем уговором, чтобы четыре года в церковь не ходить». — «Хорошо!»

Вот обвенчались, живут себе год и два, и прижили сына. Один раз наехали к ним гости; подгуляли, выпили, и стали хвалиться своими же-
нами: у того хороша, у другого еще лучше. «Ну, как хотите, — говорит хозяин, — а лучше моей жены во всем свете нету!» — «Хороша, да некрещена!» — отвечают гости. «Как так?» — «Да в церковь не ходит». Те речи показались мужу обидны; дождался воскресенья и велел жене наряжаться к обедне. «Знать ничего не хочу! Будь сейчас готова!» Собрались они и поехали в церковь; муж входит — ничего не видит, а она глянула — сидит на окне нечистый. «А, так ты вот она! Вспомни-ка старое: была ты ночью у церкви?» — «Нет!» — «А видела, что я там делал?» — «Нет!» — «Ну, завтра у тебя и муж и сын помрут!»

Маруся прямо из церкви бросилась к своей старой бабушке. Та ей дала в одном пузырьке святой воды, а в другом живущей и сказала, как и что делать. На другой день померли у Маруси и муж и сын; а нечистый прилетел и спрашивает: «Скажи, была у церкви?» — «Была». — «А видела, что я делал?» — «Мертвого жрал!» Сказала да как плеснет на него святой водою — он так прахом и рассыпался. После взбрызнула живущей водой мужа и сына — они тотчас ожили и с той поры не знали ни горя, ни разлуки, а жили все вместе долго и счастливо. (Afanasiev 1958:3, no. 363)
2. РАССКАЗЫ О МЕРТВЕЦАХ

В одном селе была девка — лежа́ка, лентяйка, не любила работать, абы как погуторить да побалакать! И вздумала она собрать к себе девок на попрядухи. А в деревнях вестимо уж лежа́ки собирают на попрядухи, а лакомогузки ходят. Вот она собрала на ночь попрядух; они ей прядут, а она их кормит, потчует. То, сё, и разговорились: кто из них смелее? Лежа́ка говорит: «Я ничего не боюсь!» — «Ну, ежели не боишься, — говорят попрядухи, — да поди мимо погосту к церкви, сними с дверей образ да принеси». — «Хорошо, принесу; только каждая напряди мне по початку». А это чувство-то в ней есть, чтоб ей ничего самой не делать, а чтоб другие за нее делали. Вот она пошла, сняла образ и принесла. Ну, те видят — точно образ от церкви. Надо теперь несть образ назад, а время уж к полночи. Кому несть? Лежа́ка говорит: «Вы, девки, прядите; я сама отнесу, я ничего не боюсь!»

Пошла, поставила образ на место. Только идет назад мимо погосту и видит: мертвец в белом саване сидит на могиле. Ночь-то месячная, все видно. Она подходит к мертвецу, стащила с него саван; мертвец ничего не говорит, молчит — знать, время не пришло еще ему говорить-то. Вот она взяла саван, приходит домой. «Ну, — говорит, — образ отнесла, поставила на место, да вот еще с мертвеца саван стащила!» Девки — которые спужались, которые не верят, смеются. Только поужинали, легли спать, вдруг мертвец стучится в окна и говорит: «Отдай мой саван! Отдай мой саван!» Девки перепугались — ни живы ни мертвы; а лежа́ка берет саван, идет к окну, открывает: «Ну, — говорит, — возьми!» — «Нет, — отвечает мертвец, — неси туда, где взяла!» Только вдруг петухи запели — и мертвец исчез.

На другую ночь уж попрядухи все по домам разошлись; в тот же самый час опять мертвец приходит, стучится в окно: «Отдай мой саван!» Вот отец и мать лежа́ки отворяют окно, отдают ему саван. — «Нет, — говорит, — пущай она отнесет туда, где взяла!» Ну, как идти с мертвецом на погост? Страшно! Только петухи пропели — исчез мертвец. На другой день отец и мать послали за священником; рассказали ему так и так и просят пособить их горю: «Нельзя ли, — говорят, — обедню отслужить?» Священник подумал: «Ну, пожалуй! Велите ей завтра к обедне выходить». Назавтра пошла лежа́ка к обедне; началась служба, народу много нашло! Только как стали херувимскую петь, вдруг откуда поднялся страшный вихрь, ажно все ниц попадали! Ухватил ее, да осемь. Девки не стало, только одна коса от нее осталась. (Afanasiev 1958:3, no. 351)
Stockholm Studies in Russian Literature

Published by Stockholm University
Founded by Nils Åke Nilsson
Editor: Peter Alberg Jensen

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