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Tsvetaeva's Onomastic Verse

—Что в имени тебе моем?

In her artistic philosophy Marina Tsvetaeva insists on the precedence of the word over what it stands for. "Slovo ved' bol'she veshch', chem veshch': ono samo veshch', kotoraiia tol'ko znak."¹ The signifier comes first and the signified trails after it, for the acoustic properties of the word expand its capability beyond mere denotation to poetic creation. The proper name too, far from being a mere representation in Tsvetaeva's view, draws its bearer into a broad range of associations and creates a complex personal universe that can be discovered by means of the poet's "khozhdenie po slukhu."²

From general observations on the importance Tsvetaeva ascribed to names in a variety of works, this paper will proceed to an examination of her 1916 dedication to Aleksandr Blok, "Imia tvoe—ptitsa v ruke." Analysis of this remarkable poem demonstrates vividly Tsvetaeva's realization of the creative potential of Blok's name. This specific example will provide the basis for a discussion of the broader implications of naming in Tsvetaeva's art.

Released from the restrictions of linear temporality, a name, seed-like, contains simultaneously origin, development, and end and not only determines the eventual fate, but also creates the very source of its bearer. Thus it is in her marine given name that Tsvetaeva finds her own beginning:

Я, выношенная во чреве
Не материнском, а морском!

insists the refrain of the 1920 poem "I chto tomu koster ostylyi."³ Tsvetaeva's comparison of herself with Aphrodite and the Nereid here and in other poems is prompted by this nominally determined origin.

Origin determines nature:

Кто создан из камня, кто создан из глины,—
А я серебрюсь и сверкаю!

1. Tsvetaeva to Boris Pasternak, 25 May 1926, *Neizdannye pis'ma*, ed. Gleb Struve and Nikita Struve (Paris: YMCA, 1972), p. 296.

2. Alexander Sumerkin, ed., *Marina Tsvetaeva: Izbrannaia proza v dvukh tomakh 1917–1937* (2 vols.; New York: Russica, 1979), I:396. All quotations of Tsvetaeva's prose are taken from this edition. In subsequent references, the volume and page numbers will appear in parenthesis within the text.

3. Alexander Sumerkin, ed., *Marina Tsvetaeva: Stikhotvoreniia i poemy v piati tomakh* (5 vols.; New York: Russica, 1980–), II: 288. All quotations of Tsvetaeva's poetry are taken from this edition; the volume and page numbers will hereafter appear parenthetically within the text.

Мне дело—измена, мне имя—Марина,
Я—бренная пена морская.

Tsvetaeva exclaims in the opening of another 1920 poem (2: 286). Circumventing the two qualities she despised—horizontality and formlessness—Tsvetaeva concentrates on the dynamic verticality of surging waves to demonstrate that her character, like her name, is of the sea—shimmering, willful, and undaunted. Rhythmic support for the comparison is sensed clearly in the amphibrachs of her name that course through the poem.

Tsvetaeva claims that it is her marine name that sets her apart from the world around her. Already in the early poem “Dusha i imia” from *Vol'shebnyi fonar'* (1: 122) she equates her name with her soul and insists that it determines her uniqueness, shapes her dreams, and is, above all, the source of her restlessness and the longing to be elsewhere, which even the festive excitement of the setting—a ball—cannot drown out. The refrain of the first stanza,

Но имя Бог мне иное дал:
Морское оно, морское!

develops in the subsequent stanzas:

Мечты иные мне подал Бог:
Морские они, морские!

and

Но душу Бог мне иную дал:
Морская она, морская!

Such association of the name with dreams and spirit by no means precludes its power over the physical world; as mediator between these two realms, the word, in Tsvetaeva's philosophy, is equally at home in both. Therefore a name can suggest also physical traits of its bearer. Thus, for example, the acoustic associations marshalled by his name help to determine Sten'ka Razin's appearance, as Tsvetaeva maintains in her 1918 “Vol'nyi proezd” (1: 39):

Пугачев черен, Разин бел. Да и слово само: Степан! Сено, солома,
степь. Разве черные Степаны бывают? А: Ра—зин! Заря, разлив,—
рази, Разин! Где просторно, там не черно. Чернота—гуща.

While Tsvetaeva emphasizes the aural perception of the name's acoustic clues, she also responds to the physiological gesture involved in its utterance. In “Geroi truda,” for example, both of these elements contribute to Tsvetaeva's contrast of two poets (1: 211):

Бальмонт. Брюсов. Только прислушаться к звуку имен. Бальмонт:
открытость, настежь—распахнутость. Брюсов: сжатость (ю—полу-
гласная, вроде его, мне, тогда, закрытки), скупость, самость в себе.
В Брюсове тесно, в Бальмонте—просторно.
Брюсов: глухо, Бальмонт: звонко.

Бальмонт: раскрытая ладонь—швыряющая, в Брюсове—скрип ключа.

Of the wide range of potential associations concentrated within each name, Tsvetaeva considered the link created between people bearing similar or identical names one of the most significant. The importance she ascribed to this link is evident, for example, in her desire to name her son Boris. Although she eventually gave in to her husband's wishes and christened the child Georgii, her original intention stemmed from a serious desire to establish a closer personal link with Pasternak in a characteristic application of her artistic philosophy to her own life. Indeed, the giving of the name Boris could have taken the place of conception, creating for the child the Pasternakian origin Tsvetaeva desired for him.⁴

The nominal relationship is not limited to contemporaries but can extend through time. By virtue of her own name Tsvetaeva sensed a strong tie (to which her Polish blood contributed) to Marina Mnishek, after whom she claims to have been named (2: 242). Thus the line cited earlier, "Mne delo izmena. Mne imia Marina" suggests not only the fickleness of the ever-changing sea, but Marina Mnishek's disloyalty as well, a disloyalty that is the central theme of Tsvetaeva's 1920 cycle *Marina*.

Elsewhere Tsvetaeva describes more explicitly her relationship to her namesake, demonstrating in verse the remarkable significance she ascribes to this link (1: 214):

Марина! Царица—Царю,
Звезда—самозванцу!
Тебя пою,
Злую красу твою,
Лик без румянца.
Во славу твою грешу
Царским грехом гордыни.
Славное твое имя
Славно ношу.

Правит моими бурями
Марина—звезда—Юрьевна,
Солнце—среди—звезд.

The 1916 poem in which these lines appear centers on another nominally determined relationship, one fated both rhythmically and paronomastically and borne out historically (1: 213):

Димитрий! Марина! В мире
Согласнее нету ваших
Единой волною вскинутых,

4. Concerning Tsvetaeva's naming of her son see, for example, her letters to O. E. Chernova-Kolbasina dated 3 December 1924, 27 December 1924, 8 February 1925, and 14 February 1925, *Neizdannye pis'ma*, pp. 98, 106, 129, 132.

Единой волною смытых
Судеб! Имен!

Once again, Tsvetaeva establishes an equivalence between names and fates. The wave that carries both suggests which of the characters Tsvetaeva considered to be the stronger.

The relationship established by a name can also assume an exclusively transpersonal historical significance. In her 1929 essay about the painter Natal'ia Goncharova, Tsvetaeva also introduces Pushkin's wife who bore the same name, and her juxtaposition of these nominal twins reveals them to be complementary opposites, the remarkable vision of the painter atoning for and counterbalancing the figurative blindness of the first Natal'ia Goncharova (1: 305).

The revelation of the universe shaped by the name became for Tsvetaeva analogous to the writing of a poem. A profound statement of this conviction opens the first letter Tsvetaeva sent to a poet she loved intensely and in whose name she found a close link to her own.

Rainer Maria Rilke!

Darf ich Sie so anrufen? Sie, die verkörperte Dichtung, müssen doch wissen, dass Ihr Name allein, ein Gedicht ist. Rainer Maria, das klingt kirchlich—und kindlich—und ritterlich. Ihr Name reimt nicht mit der Zeit—kommt von früher oder von später—von *jeder*. Ihr Name hat es gewollt, und Sie haben den Namen gewählt. (Unsere Namen wählen wir selbst, was kommt—das folgt).

Ihre Taufe war der Prolog zum ganzen Ihnen, und der Priester, der Sie taufte, wusste wahrlich nicht, was er tat.⁵

Tsvetaeva considered the poetic tracing of acoustic associations a creative process of discovery and not invention. A poet, in her view, must follow an acoustically dictated path in order to recreate the poetic realm to which it leads. The selection of his name, with which Tsvetaeva credits Rilke in this passage, is to be interpreted as his decision to accept his fate as a poet.⁶

It is in the light of the special relationship of name, poet, and poetry described by Tsvetaeva in her letter to Rilke that her most remarkable onomastic poem, "Imia tvoe—ptitsa v ruke," (1916) is best considered. Written to the poet she regarded more highly than any other—Aleksandr Blok—the poem opens the collection *Stikhi k Bloku* (Berlin: Ogon'ki, 1922) (1: 227):

- 1 Имя твое—птица в руке,
- 2 Имя твое—льдинка на языке,
- 3 Одно единственное движение губ,
- 4 Имя твое—пять букв.
- 5 Мячик, пойманный на лету,
- 6 Серебряный бубенец во рту,

5. Tsvetaeva to Rainer Maria Rilke, 9 May 1926, in Evgenii Pasternak, Elena Pasternak, and Konstantin Asadovskii, eds., *Rainer Maria Rilke, Marina Zvetajewa, Boris Pasternak: Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt, a.M.: Anton Kippenberg, 1983), p. 105.

6. Tsvetaeva was not aware that Rilke had adopted the name Rainer (in place of René) at the suggestion of Lou Andreas-Salomé.

- 7 Камень, кинутный в тихий пруд,
 8 Всклипнет так, как тебя зовут.
 9 В легком шелканье ночных копыт
 10 Громкое имя твое гремит.
 11 И назовет его нам в висок
 12 Звонко щелкающий курок.
- 13 Имя твое—ах, нельзя!—
 14 Имя твое—поцелуй в глаза,
 15 В нежную стужу недвижных век,
 16 Имя твое—поцелуй в снег.
 17 Ключевой, ледяной, голубой глоток . . .
 18 С именем твоим—сон глубок.

Tsvetaeva's examination of the acoustic properties of Blok's name reveals an entire universe concentrated within it.⁷ The name leads the poem through life and death and beyond, as the playfulness of the first verse gives way to the somber tone of the second, and finally to the relief of the conclusion.

The first stanza reflects Blok's concise name in a series of brisk, quickly listed metaphors. The anaphorae, the caesuras, and the absence of enjambments support the lively nature of the images and enhance the legerity of this stanza. Its energy is focused on making Blok's name palpable. Although the motivation for the metaphors is primarily acoustic, all the senses are engaged in a synaesthetic participation in the name.

The cutting off of the blossoming *Blo-* of the poet's name by the final *k* is transformed in lines 1 and 5 into images of arrested flight. In them Blok's name is not only heard in the fluttering wings and pounding heart of the bird and in the round plop of the ball, but also felt in the hands. Attention is drawn to the articulation of the name as it is sensed on the tongue in line 2, on the lips in line 3, and in the mouth in line 6. Line 2 suggests the brevity of the name that disappears as rapidly from the tongue as a bit of ice. Moreover, during articulation, the words "l'dinka na iazyke" engage the tongue before slipping back to the throat in much the same way as the bit of ice. The third line reflects the monosyllabic property of Blok's name. Because, like the name Blok, the line contains only one bilabial, it too is pronounced with only one movement of the lips. ("Oдно edinstvennoe dvizhen'e gub.") Although this line has the greatest number of syllables of any in the stanza, it remains unbroken by a caesura. Its length forces an acceleration, while its pyrrhic feet, which leave relatively few stressed syllables, erode its metrical divisions, permitting the utterance of this line, like that of the name, to be accomplished in one gesture. In the sixth line the image of the sleigh bell fills the mouth with the *o* of Blok, while the entire name is heard repeated in its muted clicking. The images of the mouth and the spherical bell fuse as both reverberate with Blok's name. In contrast, line 4 draws attention to the mute hard sign thus insisting that the name be seen as well as heard.

7. For a detailed discussion of the acoustic characteristics of this poem from a different approach see L. V. Zubova's insightful article, "Semantika khudozhestvennogo obraza i zvuka v stikhotvorenii M. Tsvetaevoi iz tsikla 'Stikhi k Bloku'" in *Vestnik leningradskogo universiteta*, no. 2 (1980), pp. 55–61.

The entire stanza focuses on brief contact with Blok's short name. Although a number of the descriptions are simultaneously metonymical in that they draw attention to individual letters, it is their metaphorical demand that the entire name be fully sensed in each line that dominates the stanza. A similar relation between metonymic and metaphoric functions obtains in the poem as a whole, for the images in it represent Blok's name both individually, each comprising it fully, and collectively, in that the whole of the poem is Blok.

The brevity of the name depicted in the first stanza takes on a grave aspect in the second. The images are now motivated predominantly by the *k* that terminates Blok's name. This final velar triggers imagery of solitude, irretrievable loss, and parting and becomes associated ultimately with the moment of death. A marked deceleration and gravity are sensed as the descriptions now extend across two lines and the anaphoric *imia tvoe* ceases. Indeed, the noun *imia* disappears entirely from the stanza, as do its metaphoric representations. Eluding the tentative contact suggested in the first stanza, Blok's name demonstrates itself in verbs. It is no longer being formed but is now itself resounding—sobbing, thundering, and clicking. A distancing is effected as it continues to be heard but is no longer touched. The hand now releases and the name disappears like a sobbing stone in a pond. This image, together with the paronomastic presence of the verb *kanut'* ("Kamen' kinutyi") makes it difficult not to associate this line (7) with Blok's own "I krik, kogda ty nachnesh' krichat', / Kak kamen' kanet," an association that intensifies the somber mood of the stanza.⁸

The noun *name* becomes now the verb *to name* as the imperfective "kak tebia *zovut*" culminates with the foreboding future perfective of the single click of the released gun cock in its final utterance of the name. It is telling that Tsvetaeva includes among such images Blok's rumbling fame ("Gromkoe imia tvoe gremit"), for fame, as she believed, is inimical to poetic concerns.

The solemnity of the second stanza is relieved by the third, which leaves behind both the fleeting life of the first and the moment of death of the second stanzas. Images engendered by associations with Blok's name now become the means for Tsvetaeva's translation of the poem into that third creative realm that in her artistic philosophy encompasses death, sleep, dreams, and poetry.

A transition to the eternal is indicated already in the first line in which Tsvetaeva suggests an equivalence between Blok and Bog but stops ambiguously just short of sacrilege and leaves to the reader the realization of the line. Death is presented with soothing gentleness as the earthly signs of stanza 1 are now reinterpreted as indicators of the beyond. That something follows the *k* of Blok's name has, after all, already been suggested by the reference to the hard sign in line 4. Signaled immediately by the resumption of the *imia tvoe* pattern, a link is established between the first and third stanzas. The snow that appears in line 16 has already been suggested by the silvery sleigh bell of line 6. The kiss of lines 14 and 16 is that very movement of the lips of line 3. The "ledianoi glotok" of the seventeenth line is the inevitable aftermath of "I'dinka na iazyke" of line 2.

Yet an important change has taken place, and the similarity of pattern and related imagery serve to emphasize the significantly different character of the

8. Blok's poem "Golos iz khora" was originally published in *Liubov' k trem apel'sinam*, no. 1 (1916). Tsvetaeva doubtless read this journal during her visit to St. Petersburg in the winter of 1915–1916.

final stanza. While the rapid tempo of the first stanza is resumed, its childlike images are replaced now by those associated with Blok's poetry. The light staccato nature and dynamic assortment of metaphors of the opening stanza give way to smooth transitions from one image to the next, the flowing quality enhanced by increasing acoustic homogeneity.

The metaphor for Blok's name in line 14, "potselui v glaza" is elaborated in line 15, which by the coolness and, more importantly, by the strong underlying acoustic presence of the adjective *snezhnykh* among the words describing the eyelids ("V nezhnuiu stuzhu nedvizhnykh") prepares the transformation of the name into a kiss of that most Blokian of images—snow (line 16). This kiss of snow then becomes the icy gulp of water from what the acoustic promptings of the line suggest to be a source of poetic inspiration sacred to Apollo and the Muses—the Castalian Fountain—*kastal'skii kliuch* or *kastal'skii tok*, as Tsvetaeva refers to it elsewhere (4: 250).⁹

That a change takes place as the water is swallowed is signaled by the acceleration clearly felt in this line (17) as a result of the caesura-less accumulation of epithets and the anomalous introduction of a series of regular anapests into the logoaedic meter of the poem ("kliuchevoi, goluboi, ledianoi"). That the transition has been accomplished is suggested by the ellipsis at the end of this line, which in Tsvetaeva's poetics often signals a departure from the mundane. The transition is confirmed in the final line of the poem as Tsvetaeva herself follows Blok's name into the creative realm of sleep, her "liubimyi vid obshcheniia."¹⁰

Demonstrated in "Imia tvoe" is the creative power Tsvetaeva ascribed to the name, which resounds not only in the mouth, but also in the larger sphere where *něbo* is replaced by *nebo*, and an entire universe is commanded by Blok. In realizing the potential of his name, Tsvetaeva has created not only a depiction of a poet, but a metapoetic work, a poem demonstrating poetry itself. "Ibo poeziia ne drobitsia ni v poetakh, ni na poetov, ona vo vsekh svoikh iavleniakh—odna, odno, v kazhdom—vsia" (2: 7).

Perhaps one of the most remarkable elements of this poem dedicated to such an exhaustive consideration of a name is that the name itself does not appear. In a sense, of course, specific mention of Blok's name would be superfluous, for it is omnipresent. The entire poem and each image in it is evoked by the name, and even the most casual reading cannot fail to reveal its ubiquitous acoustic presence, particularly in the two closing lines that culminate in the anagrammatical embedding of the name Blok in the final word of the poem.

Still, in the poem that immediately follows the 1916 section of the Blok cycle Tsvetaeva maintains (1: 231)

Руки люблю
Целовать и люблю
Имена раздавать

and in the cycle following this poem she does not hesitate to include the name

9. I am grateful to Antonina Gove for her suggestion that Tsvetaeva was referring to the Castalian Fountain in this line.

10. "Moi liubimyi vid obshcheniia—potustoronni: son: videt' vo sne." Tsvetaeva to Boris Pasternak, 19 November 1922, *Neizdannye pis'ma*, p. 271.

of the poet to whom it is dedicated: “Anna/Akhmatova! Eto imia—ogromnyi vzdokh” (1: 232). Further, in the poem immediately after the Akhmatova cycle, Tsvetaeva explains (1: 237)

Руки даны мне—протягивать каждому обе,
Не удержать ни одной, губы—давать имена,

Why, then, her reluctance to pronounce the name Blok? Tsvetaeva’s reasons for this—and there appear to be several—demonstrate of course the unique nature of her regard for Blok, a subject outside the scope of this article. Inasmuch as these reasons are a vivid testament to the power Tsvetaeva ascribed to the name, it is necessary now to trace the course no longer of the name but of its absence.

In the entire Blok cycle, his name appears only once (and even then in the genitive). The lines, “Predstalo nam—vsei ploshchadi shirokoi!— / Sviaet serdtse Aleksandra Bloka” (2: 84), close the only poem Tsvetaeva wrote in response to having actually seen Blok. The absence of his name from all the other poems could thus be interpreted as a reflection of Blok’s physical absence from Tsvetaeva’s life.

“Nazvat’—oveshchestvit’, a ne razvoplotit’.”¹¹ The name summons its bearer into physical reality and to name Blok would be to translate him into the mundane that is, as has been demonstrated, contrary to the movement of “Imia tvoe.” Furthermore, to name Blok would be to disrupt the unity with him she achieves at the end of the poem, for as Tsvetaeva wrote in “Plennyi dukh,” “imia razgranichivaet, imia eto iavno—ne-ia” (2: 116). Tsvetaeva’s omission of Blok’s name is also her fulfillment of that promise she makes to him in the third poem of the cycle: “I po imeni ne okliknu, / I rukami ne potianus’” (1: 228). In calling him by name, Tsvetaeva would have drawn his attention to herself, thus altering the stance of anonymous worshipper she adopts in the cycle. The divine nature she ascribed to Blok is stressed by the fact that she cannot bring herself to utter his name, any more than she can say that of God.

On Tsvetaeva’s part this restraint is a genuine sacrifice, as she chooses to refrain from stating the name so as not to force herself on the consciousness of its bearer. A distinct echo of this attitude, to cite a further example, can be perceived in an incident on which Tsvetaeva comments in her letter of 25 May 1926 to Pasternak. The passage refers to the fact that Pasternak was hurt because Tsvetaeva, in forwarding a letter from Rilke to him, had enclosed no message of her own.

Борис, ты меня не понял. Я так люблю твое имя, что для меня не написать его лишний раз, сопровождая письмо Рильке, было настоящим лишением, отказом. То же, что не окликнуть еще раз из окна, когда уходит....

Борис, я сделала это сознательно. Не ослабить удара радости от Рильке. Не раздробить его на два. Не смешать двух вод. Не превратить **твоего события** в собственный случай. Не быть ниже себя. Суметь не быть.¹²

11. Tsvetaeva to Boris Pasternak, 25 May 1926, *Neizdannye pis'ma*, p. 296.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 293.

In the poem to Blok her relinquishment of stating his name is motivated by a similar determination to avoid intruding into a poem exclusively about him.

All of these related reasons for omitting Blok's name are pertinent to "Imia tvoe," yet the absence carries a further implication as well. Here it is necessary to recall another of Tsvetaeva's works in which not naming is of primary significance. In *Mólodets*, the *poema* apropos of which Tsvetaeva remarked "do chego o sebe,"¹³ the heroine, despite grisly consequences, cannot bring herself to the one action that could save her from the vampire, and it is this very aspect that attracted Tsvetaeva's attention to the fairy tale on which *Mólodets* is based, as she elaborates in "Poet o kritike" (1: 240):

Я прочла у Афанасьева сказку «Упырь» и задумалась, почему Маруся, боявшаяся упыря, так упорно не признавалась в его виденном, зная, что назвать—спастись. 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 . . .

Although in "Imia tvoe" the consequences are less dire, and earthly passions are sublimated into poetic ones, a parallel is evident between Marusia and Marina, for Tsvetaeva's not naming of Blok is also an ultimate expression of love, a sacrifice of her self to Blok as in his name she ceases to be.

This sacrifice of love is attested to by the anonymity she insists on throughout the cycle and receives specific support in the poem immediately following "Imia tvoe." In it Tsvetaeva pleads to be released from the spell Blok has cast over her (1: 228):

Милый призрак!
Я знаю, что всё мне снится.
Сделай милость:
Аминь, аминь, рассыпья!
Аминь.

Like Marusia, however, she too stops short of the act that would free her, and the final "So be it" must be read as her acceptance of Blok's spell from which she, in fact, does not want to remove herself.

Here emerges another aspect of the power of the name that has already been suggested among the various explanations for Tsvetaeva's forbearance. In part 2 of *Mólodets*, it is her anonymity that protects Marusia and it is only by calling out her forgotten name that the vampire recreates her history and regains control over her. Its very profundity, its scope, and the revelations contained within it make the name not only a vital creative force, but also a sort of Achilles heel through which power can be gained over the individual.

13. Letter to Boris Pasternak, 10 July 1926, *Neizdannye pis'ma*, p. 293.

Although in the case of Blok, Tsvetaeva chose not to exercise this power, she was not always so reticent. In the first poem of the 1916 cycle, *Stikhi k Akhmatovoi*, appear the lines (1:232):

Анна
Ахматова! Это имя—огромный вздох,
И в глубь он падает, которая безымянна.

The *akh* of delight in Akhmatova is transformed into the *okh* of burden in *vzdokh*. This sigh, used in the poem interchangeably with Akhmatova's name, is of course Tsvetaeva's own ("I vot etot moi vzdokh tiazhelyi," 1: 236), for Akhmatova's overwhelming poetic presence was difficult for a young poet to overcome. Yet in the cycle Tsvetaeva found a way to establish a subtle, but personally significant, primacy over her northern competitor. While purporting to give herself entirely to Akhmatova, Tsvetaeva rather deviously retains for herself the one privilege that in the beginning of creation had given Adam ascendancy over the newly created world around him. Having relegated Akhmatova's name to the abyss of rhyming namelessness (*Anna-bezimianna*), Tsvetaeva claims for herself the credit for giving her a new name (1: 233):

Ах, я счастлива! Никогда заря
Не сгорала чище.
Ах, я счастлива, что тебя даря,
Удаляюсь—нищей,

Что тебя, чей голос—о глубь, о мгла!—
Мне дыхание сузил,
Я впервые именем назвала
Царкосельской Музы.

It may well be this bit of poetic chicanery that Tsvetaeva has on her conscience when she concludes the final poem of the cycle with an indication of a need for forgiveness.¹⁴

14. Tsvetaeva concludes her cycle to Akhmatova with the following poem (1: 237):

Ты солнце в выси мне застишь,
Всё звезды в твоей горсти!
Ах, если бы—двери настезь—
Как ветер к тебе войти!

И залепетать, и вспыхнуть,
И круто потупить взгляд,
И, всхлипывая, затихнуть,
Как в детстве, когда простят.

It is interesting to observe that in the cycle *Stikhi k Pushkinu* (1931) there is no hint of reticence on Tsvetaeva's part in naming the poet she had loved since childhood. Far from suggesting any irreverence, this can be seen as a reflection of her regard for her fellow-poet as an equal rather than a deity or an adversary, an attitude clearly stated in the third poem of the cycle in the lines, "Pushkinskuiu ruku/Zhmu, a ne lizhu" (3: 52). Indeed, the cycle is not so much a superfluous glorification of Pushkin as it is a defense of the poet and an invective against both his and Tsvetaeva's uncomprehending contemporaries. It is to this purpose that in the seventy-three lines of the opening poem of this cycle Pushkin's name is invoked twenty-four times. The point of the exaggerated repetition of the name, particularly in the last four-line stanza in which it occurs seven times, is scornfully to mimic those who have made Pushkin a household word. In the coarse realm of *byt*, where poetry is perceived only in terms of banal clichés, the name is of no consequence.

On the other hand, Tsvetaeva is guarded with her own name. In her poetry, despite frequent allusions to herself in the marine terms and associations prompted by her given name, she appears reluctant to apply the name *Marina* to herself. When the name does surface, it appears for the most part not as Tsvetaeva's own, but as a name either belonging to someone else—*Marina Mni-shek*—or being completely impersonal. In “*Vstrecha s Pushkinym*” it appears, for example—with the epithet “irrepeatable”—camouflaged in a long list of favorite things (1: 148):

Как я люблю имена и знамена,
Волосы и голоса,
Старые вина и старые троны,
—Каждого встречного пса!—

Полуулыбки в ответ на вопросы,
И молодых королей . . .
Как я люблю огонек папиросы
В бархатной чаше аллея,

Комедиантов и звон тамбурина,
Золото и серебро,
Неповторимое имя: Марина,
Байрона и болеро.

In the poem “*Maska—muzyka*” (2: 236) the circumvention of the name *Marina* can be explained by the implied adultery that, as is frequently the case where taboo subjects are concerned, is presented as a riddle with the answer (in this case obviously *Marina*) paronomastically encoded. For the other *Marina*-less poems there is, however, no such explanation, and the one poem in which she does claim her name outright is a daring one. Her exclamation, “*Mne delo—izmena, mne imia—Marina / Ia brennaia pena morskaiia,*” is, in effect, a challenge that is soon followed by several boasts that nothing can contain her. “*Skvoz' kazhdoe serdtse, skvoz' kazhdye seti / Prob'etsia moe svoevol'e*” (2: 286).

For Tsvetaeva the power of the name exists in a very real sense. Her regard for the name as omnipotent reaches back to a source that antedates or, more accurately, underlies the biblical source that can be adduced in “*Imia tvoe.*” As it is in the creation myths of nearly every known culture, the name is for Tsvetaeva also not a mere representation but itself the very essence of being. The name is not only a poetic device, a catalyst for far-flung associations, but also a natural force—potentially creative or destructive—that, like poetry itself, permits transcendence of the mundane. Tsvetaeva draws on that complete interpenetration of language and myth that lies at the heart of all mythic thinking and informs lyric poetry.¹⁵ Not only can the name be found in all things, but all things are concentrated within the name.

15. Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover, 1946), provides a penetrating examination of the origin and significance of this interpenetration, which he convincingly depicts as the essence of lyric poetry. His discussion is particularly illuminating in regard to Tsvetaeva's frequently noted yet insufficiently explained mythologization.

“Liubite *mir*—vo *mne*, a ne *menia*—v *mir*e. Chtoby ‘Marina’ znachilo: mir, a ne mir—‘Marina.’”¹⁶

16. Letter to A. Bakhrakh, 25 November 1923, “Pis'ma Mariny Tsvetaevoi,” *Mosty* 5 (1960): 313.