

Title: Creation *ex* Anxiety: Exile, Influence, and Creative Power in Tsvetaeva's "The Lute"

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Tsvetaeva's final book of lyric poetry comprises poems she wrote after emigrating from Russia in 1922. Appropriately titled *After Russia*, this volume is a work of exile literature not only because it was created during the poet's emigration, but also because in it Tsvetaeva frequently turns to themes of exile (e.g. the Jews, Aeneas) and uses exile as a creative stimulus. In discussing Brodsky's poetry, David Bethea suggests that the poet must embrace or even create the condition of exile in order to take control of his creative voice. Tsvetaeva herself proclaimed that "all poets are Jews" (*Poem of the End*), and Bethea calls Tsvetaeva "an exile among exiles" (46). This paper will examine Tsvetaeva's uses the theme of exile as a tool to overcome the "anxiety of influence" in her 1923 lyric "The Lute."

"The Lute" can be read as a Bloomian response to Rilke's 1906 lyric cycle "David Sings Before Saul." Though most scholarship has focused on the 1926 correspondence between Rilke and Tsvetaeva, the poets broadly share "striking similarities in poetic themes [and] concerns" (Dinega 257), and "The Lute" forms a matrix of the themes of exile, influence, and the power of the creative voice. Rilke's version of the David and Saul story unites these themes, and Tsvetaeva reads the tale as one of the insufficiency of the younger poet before the elder. In "The Lute" she recommends exile to David as the solution, and by casting him off, she rewrites Rilke and removes herself from her predecessor. She thus creates her own exile, both from Rilke and from the constraints of her past, and empowers her own poetic creation. Tsvetaeva's exile, therefore, becomes not an "impingement.... [but] a positive mission" (Bethea 44), one which she employs throughout *After Russia*.

References

- Bethea, David. *Joseph Brodsky and the Creation of Exile*. Princeton UP, 1994.
Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence*. Oxford UP, 1973.
Dinega, Alyssa. *A Russian Psyche: The Poetic Mind of Marina Tsvetaeva*. U of Wisconsin P, 2001.