

Title: The Train Home to Exile
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In his biography of Marina Tsvetaeva, Simon Karlinsky remarks of her collection *After Russia* that “railroad imagery in particular is put to a variety of uses, [...] and it is also connected to the theme of homesickness for Russia” (19697). Karlinsky, however, makes no further comment on Tsvetaeva’s railroad imagery. Images of the railroad—rails, trains, and stations—occupy a unique place in Tsvetaeva’s work, for they entail a complex of symbols that distinctly marks Tsvetaeva’s first years in emigration. In fact, railroad imagery is “practically not encountered [in Tsvetaeva’s work...] neither before this period nor after it” (El’kina, 1). Between October, 1922, and October, 1923, Tsvetaeva writes five poems using railroad imagery that deserve attention: “Dawn on the Rails,” “Rails,” “The Cry of Stations,” “The Train of Life,” and “Flight.” In these poems, Tsvetaeva addresses her homesickness and her position as an exile poet, and this paper will discuss how Tsvetaeva’s perspective on her exile, presented in these poems, changes. Her approach shifts from expressing an exilic “desire for home [that] becomes a substitute for home” (Seidel, 11) to articulating an “ambiguous relation with both the place of remove and the place of resettlement” (Seidel, 12). Finally, the last of these poems shows a further stage in the process of “exilic imagining,” where the railroad becomes an allegory of Tsvetaeva’s quest for the beyond, creating what Seidel calls “an image of the future as a prologue, [...an] exile which conjures up imaginable territory” (13).

Karlinsky, Simon. *Marina Tsvetaeva: Her Life and Art*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: U California P, 1966.
El’kina, Tat’yana. “Poezd i rel’sy v poëticheskom mire Tsvetaevoi” (October 18, 2006). PolitNN.ru.
Seidel, Michael. *Exile and the Narrative Imagination*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1986.

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