

# Resounding Sound: The Poet Marina Tsvetaeva and her Translator Elke Erb

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## Abstract

The repetition of sound patterns on different linguistic levels is a dominant characteristic of the Russian writer Marina Tsvetaeva's poetry and recalls elements of both folk poetry and avant-garde texts. Tsvetaeva's German translator, Elke Erb, not only considers the sonic dimension as being especially important for poetry in general, but also emphasizes the complex sound structures in Tsvetaeva's poetry in particular. In this paper, I use Erb's translation of the poem "Sad" ["The Garden"] to illustrate the ways in which the sonic dimension of the source text and the poem's references to both the literary avant-garde and folk poetry can be preserved.

*Keywords:* poetry translation, Russian poetry, Marina Tsvetaeva, Elke Erb

## 1. Introductory remarks: the sonic dimension of Tsvetaeva's poetry

Repetitions of sound structures, such as rhymes, alliterations, and sound symbolism, are an important feature of a great deal of poetry. Indeed, according to Reuven Tsur, "[m]usicality seems to be the most salient—if not *the* distinctive—property of poetry" (Tsur, 2008, p. 209, emphasis in original). Complex repetitions on different linguistic levels are particularly striking in folk poetry and poems of the European literary avant-garde (cf. Schlaffer, 2012; Jakobson and Waugh, 1986). Typical elements of the literary style of the Russian Futurists, as well as formulaic patterns such as incantations, are characteristic features of the poetry of the Russian writer Marina Tsvetaeva (cf. Lauer, 2000, p. 574), even though she herself never belonged to any of the Futurist literary groups. In this context, critics emphasize the crucial role that structural repetitions play in Tsvetaeva's poetry: "[Э]нергия повторов в цветаевских стихах не знает ничего подобного или сравнимого в русской (и не только русской) поэзии." [In Russian poetry (or poetry in any language), there is nothing similar or comparable to the energy created by the repetitions in Tsvetaeva's verses.] (Etkind, 1991, p. 309).

Some of these repetitions will be demonstrated through the example of Tsvetaeva's poem "Sad" (Engl. "The Garden"), written in 1934 during her Parisian exile and only published after her death. Tsvetaeva had

left Russia in 1922 to follow her husband, Sergei Efron, who fled Russia after the Revolution and spent the subsequent seventeen years in exile. As with many other poems by Tsvetaeva, “The Garden” has been interpreted in light of her life experiences. In considering her difficult circumstances in Paris, for example, critics have regarded the literary garden of the poem as a place that could metaphorically “shelter her” (Schweitzer, 1993, p. 323) from her misfortune. During these years, however, Tsvetaeva was not only isolated in political and ideological terms—one reason being her husband’s development of sympathy for the Soviet regime and his beginning to work as a spy for the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD)—but also as a poet. In view of the many cataclysms in Russia and Europe, the influential poet and critic, Georgij Adamovič, exhorted young writers of the Parisian emigration to cultivate simplicity and immediate truthfulness (cf. Lauer, 2000, p. 570; Schweitzer, 1993, p. 272), rejecting so-called verbal mannerisms. In this context, however, Tsvetaeva’s language was identified with the innovative tendency of Russian literature in the Soviet Union—notably associated with Mayakovsky and Pasternak (cf. Ševelenko, 2002, p. 312)—that was completely alien to the authors gathered around Adamovič. Furthermore, the title word *sad* [garden], repeated several times in the course of the poem, as well as the words *ad* [hell] and *tot svet* [afterworld], all have Christian connotations. In reference to the diction’s religious connotations and its repeated request *Pošli mne sad* or *Mne sad pošli* [Send me a garden], it has been remarked that the poem resembles a prayer (Schweitzer, 1993, p. 323).

While some of the critics around the Parisian émigré circles called Tsvetaeva’s poetry “höchst musikalischer Unsinn” [highly musical nonsense] (Osorgin, cited in Wytzens, 1981, p. 21), Elke Erb makes the competing claim that, in Tsvetaeva’s poetry, “der Sinn scheint ganz aus dem Klang zu kommen” [the sense seems to come entirely from the sound] (Erb, 1989, p. 180). In an interview, Erb foregrounds the sonic dimension of the language over its semantics: “Es ist nicht ablesbar von irgendeinem Inhalt, was ein Gedicht macht. Die Laute sind entscheidend.” [What makes a poem cannot be read from any content. The sounds are decisive.] (Erb, 1995a, pp. 220–1).<sup>1</sup>

While Tsvetaeva’s poetry has received much scholarly attention (e.g. Karlinsky, 1966; Etkind, 1991), the translation of repetitions of sound structures of “The Garden” has not yet been examined. This undertaking is the focus of this paper, which examines Erb’s translation for its highlighting of sound. Furthermore, the repeated patterns in Erb’s translations of Tsvetaeva’s poems are, in contrast to many other renderings, similarly complex.<sup>2</sup> Erb not only writes a rhymed translation but also considers the specific characteristics

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<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to my editor Síomón Solomon (Dublin) for his assistance with some of these translations.

<sup>2</sup> Translators differ in the way they deal with Tsvetaeva’s sound structures, e.g. David McDuff’s English translations are rhymed, while those of Elaine Feinstein are not.

of Tsvetaeva's rhymes and other sound repetitions.<sup>3</sup> By considering the source text's sonic dimension in her translation, Erb is also able to retain many of the similarities with texts of the literary avant-garde as well as folk poetry.

The question arises if and in what way it is possible to preserve the sonic dimension of the source text in translation and what kind of shifts on other linguistic levels would follow. Shifts between the source text and the translation thereby "result from attempts to deal with systemic differences" (Bakker, 2011, p. 269) between the source and target languages. Such shifts are not faults; rather, a "[t]ranslation involves the transfer of certain values of expression or content across a semiotic border; and shifts are concomitant with this transfer" (p. 269). In different translations of the same source text, the kinds of shifts can differ from each other because "the way the transfer is carried out is not determined a priori" (p. 269). In the following section, the way Erb deals with Tsvetaeva's specific writing style—which is for its part closely related to specific properties of the Russian language and metrics—will be examined.

## 2. "The Garden" and its translation

Since repeated patterns on different linguistic levels are a dominant characteristic of Tsvetaeva's style in general, they will serve as a *tertium comparationis* when comparing Tsvetaeva's source text with Erb's translation. Karlinsky lists the following types of parallelisms in Tsvetaeva's poetry: "the anaphora, refrains of various sorts, periodic repetitions of passages, verbatim or with significant minor alterations, and finally, parallel syntactic and grammatical structures" (Karlinsky, 1966, p. 166).<sup>4</sup> "The Garden" features several repeated patterns that can also be found in other poems by Tsvetaeva and that can be considered as characteristic of Tsvetaeva's poetry. The focal points of the following sections will be repetitions of speech sounds (section 2.1), words, and syntactic structures (section 2.2).

### 2.1 Repetitions on the level of speech sounds

In Tsvetaeva's poetry, repetitions of speech sounds occur in both the first and last syllables of lines and within lines. In "The Garden," end rhymes also play an important role, though they are not always pure rhymes.

#### 2.1.1 Similar sound structures in line endings

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<sup>3</sup> Tsvetaeva's poem and Erb's translation can be found in the appendix of this paper.

<sup>4</sup> On the different types of parallel structures in Tsvetaeva's poetry, see also A. Filonov Gove's article "Parallelism in the Poetry of Marina Cvetaeva."

The first three stanzas of “The Garden” have the following rhyme scheme: ABAB / BBBB / BABA. In the first and third stanzas, the lines are connected by the same alternate rhymes, whereas the second stanza is held together by a monorhyme that chimes with two line endings in the first and the third stanzas. Some of these rhyme words are identical: the word *sad* [garden] occurs in the first and third stanzas; six of the twelve rhyme words are *let* [years] and are distributed throughout the three stanzas. The line endings of these stanzas (and of the whole poem) are masculine, all of which are monosyllabic nouns. Since a great part of the vocabulary of Russian is polysyllabic, short words may be more eye-catching in a Russian text than in one written in another language.<sup>5</sup> In addition to their length, all of these words end with the voiceless plosive consonant [t],<sup>6</sup> whose dominant distinctive feature is abruptness. Together with the shortness of the lines and words, these plosives create an impression of a sudden ending. The similarity of the phonological structure of the words *ad* [hell], *bred* [delirium], *sad* [garden], *let* [years], *bed* [trouble], and *klad* [deposit] in the first three stanzas of the poem goes beyond the similarity of words in conventional rhymes, inasmuch as they coincide not only sonically but also syllabically. Some of these words have an almost identical sound structure and differ from each other by only one additional speech sound in the longer word. This applies to *ad* and *sad*, as well as *bred* and *bed*.

Through the accumulation of words with very similar sound structures, the aforementioned similarities between certain patterns in Tsvetaeva’s poetry and linguistic elements occurring in experimental texts by the Russian Futurists, Tsvetaeva’s contemporaries, are audible. In his essay addressed to Velimir Khlebnikov’s language, Roman Jakobson states that certain sound structures in texts by Futurist writers are similar to the formulaic patterns in incantations and nursery rhymes. Among other similarities, word pairs comparable to the rhymes in “The Garden” occur in both folk and Futurist poetry, e.g. in the counting-out rhyme *ani-bani* (Jakobson, 1972, p. 111), the incantations *achalaj-machalaj*, and the famous *abra-ca-dabra*. Like the words in Tsvetaeva’s poem, they differ from each other by only one speech sound.

Words with very similar sound structures also occur in the (likewise masculine) line endings of the first three stanzas of Erb’s translation, even though the rhyme scheme is less regular than in the source text.<sup>7</sup> As in Tsvetaeva’s poem, the similarities are based on the shortness of the words on the one hand and on their sound structure on the other. In addition, the first sounds of the rhyme words are often similar, as in *-witz*

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<sup>5</sup> According to Fucks (1968, p. 91), an average Russian word consists of 2.2 syllables, whereas English and German words are substantially shorter, containing only 1.4 and 1.7 syllables respectively.

<sup>6</sup> The voiced plosives in the word endings are subject to terminal devoicing, so that the letter d in *ad*, *bred* etc. is pronounced as [t].

<sup>7</sup> Exceptions are the compound nouns, consisting of words that also occur as single lexemes, *Aberwitz* and *Hundelos*, so that the respective lines likewise end, in a certain sense, with a monosyllabic word.

and *Frist* ([v] and [f] are both fricative consonants), or identical, as in *Letzt* and *Last* or *Rest* and *Rast*. In the same article, Jakobson gives examples of words (and sound sequences without a semantic meaning) that are related to each other in a similar manner, such as *turja-burja* or *šert-vert*, whose first sounds are similar ([t] and [b] are plosive consonants; [ʃ] and [v] are fricative consonants) and whose subsequent phonological material is identical (p. 111).

By rendering a similar structure in the translated poem, Erb retains patterns that recall elements of poems written in relation to Futurism and Dadaism. In the context of German Dadaism, poets were, like the Russian Futurists, interested in linguistic experiments, and similar features can be found in German Dadaist and Russian Futurist texts. In sound poems by the German Dadaists and the Dadaists' precursors, similar pairs of sound sequences can be found, e.g. *quasti basti* in Christian Morgenstern's "Das große Lalulā" [The Great Lalulā] (1983, p. 20) or *tressli bessli* in the beginning of Hugo Ball's sound poem "Seepferdchen und Flugfische" [Seahorses and Flying Fish] (2007, p. 72). Words with identical first sounds frequently occur in phrases such as *nach Lust und Laune* [on a whim] or *ohne Rast und Ruh* [without rest and calm]. In general, alliterative patterns are frequent in Erb's translation, whereas very little alliteration occurs in the Russian poem. These patterns recall the alliterative verse that had a long history in Germanic poetry before its alliterations were replaced by rhymes, e.g. the Old High German "Merseburg Incantations" based on alliterative verse (*ben zi bena, bluot zi bluoda, / lid zi geliden, sose gelimida sin* [Bone to bone, blood to blood, / joint to joints; so may they be glued]).<sup>8</sup>

The similarities in the rhymes between Tsvetaeva's poem and Erb's translation also go hand in hand with differences on the semantic level, e.g. the literal translation of *starost' let* would be *Alter der Jahre* [age of the years] or *hohes Alter* [old age]. Neither *Alter* nor *Jahre* end with a plosive consonant, however. Moreover, both consist of two syllables—the first stressed, the second unstressed—which means that with these words the lines would not end with a masculine rhyme. The words *Letzt* [end], *Last* [burden], and *Frist* [time limit] consist of only one stressed syllable, all of which end with a plosive consonant. Even though these expressions are semantically related to the corresponding expressions in the source text, they differ in connotation from the more neutral *starost' let*: *Jahre Last* emphasizes the difficulty of getting older; *Letzt* and *Frist* evoke the passing of time.

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<sup>8</sup> Cited in Beck & Cottin (2010), p. 16; English translation cited in Fortson (2010), p. 369. A further parallel between incantations on the one hand, and Erb's translation and Tsvetaeva's poem on the other, is the imperative voice of the predicate. According to Gumbrecht (2007), the subjunctive mood and imperative voice are characteristic of texts used in conjuration rituals (p. 29). In the second "Merseburg Incantation," the predicate is in the subjunctive mood.

The rhymes in this poem go beyond the conventions of nineteenth century Russian poetry not only in their sound structure but also in their rhyme scheme. As has already been mentioned, in the line endings of the first three stanzas, not only are two words with similar sound structures found together, as in alternate rhymes or rhyming couplets, but the twelve lines are connected by two similar rhymes, consisting of four and eight rhyme words. In these line endings, there are twelve similar words in succession. In her article addressing Tsvetaeva's poem "Molodec" [The Fine Fellow], Zubova points out the similarities between the poem and folk poetry, calling the sequences of words with similar sound structure "цепочки" [chains]. As an example, she names, among others, the following word sequence: *šarom, žarom, žigom, graem* [ball, heat, gigot, noise]—all of which are words in the instrumental case (Zubova, 1996, pp. 213–15). In folk poetry, such chains can indeed be found, e.g. in the lullaby "I jačnaga, i smačnaga, / Javsjanaga, prasjanaga." [And mash, and fat, from oat, from millet] (Afanas'ev, 2014, p. 137). The word sequence in Tsvetaeva's poem not only contains similarities with patterns of folk poetry, but this word sequence is also once again a feature that recalls features of Russian Futurist poems. The use of several words with similar sound structures was also an experimental technique of the literary avant-garde. In Khlebnikov's poem "Tebe poem rodun" [We sing for you, Rodun], for example, the following word chain occurs: *rodun, byvun, radon, vedun, sedun, vladun, koldun*. (Khlebnikov, 2000, p. 21).<sup>9</sup> In Erb's translation, the words at the endings of lines 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 can also be read as a chain: *-witz, Letzt, Last, Rest, Frist* and *Rast*. Although this word sequence is shorter than in the source text, it has similarities with Futurist and Dadaistic experiments on language.

The remaining line endings of the three stanzas are held together by other rhymes. The words in the line endings 1 and 3 (*hier* and *mir*) and 9 and 10 (*-los* and *Schoß*) form an alternate rhyme and rhyming couplet. The two words in line endings 11 and 12 not only form a rhyme but also alliterate: *Glühn* and *Grün*. Together with *Glück* in the fourth stanza, they form another word sequence. In contrast to the Russian poem, however, the German translation has no identical rhyme words. On the one hand, this is due to Erb's tendency to modify repetitions of the source text in her translation; on the other hand, the less regular rhyme scheme in the translation is caused by the different relation between the sound structure and the semantics of the two languages.

### 2.1.2 Similar sound structures within the lines

Similar or identical sounds occur not only in the line endings of Tsvetaeva's poems, but are also often employed within the lines. In conventional Russian rhymes, the phonological material of two words is

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<sup>9</sup> Koldun means magician in Russian; Perun is the name of a Slavic god, from which the other words are derived. Cf. Jakobson, 1972, p. 87.

identical from the last stressed vowel to their end; if the rhyme is masculine, the consonant before the last stressed vowel (the so-called supporting consonant) also belongs to the rhyme syllable (cf. Isačenko, 1973, p. 206). In Tsvetaeva's poem, sound structures preceding the last stressed syllable are often identical or similar. Here, Etkind refers to "des rimes riches, encore jamais vues" [rich rhymes that have never been seen before] (Etkind, 1982, p. 14). In the fifth stanza of "The Garden," this is exemplified by the following words in the line endings: *šažka*, *glazka*, *smeška* and *svistka* [step, eye, peep and whistle].<sup>10</sup> In each of these words, the last syllable (-ka) is the stressed one; in syllables before -ka, these words have additional common sounds (i.e. identical or similar), including the initial sounds of *smeška*, *svistka*, and *šažka*. In his article on the topic of "new rhyme," Isačenko describes rich rhymes in the poems of the Futurists Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov, and Pasternak, stating that, in contrast to Western (English, French, and German) literatures and their free verse, Russian poetry has not abandoned end rhyme, but its repertoire of rhymes has been enlarged with the introduction of new rhymes, such as rich rhymes, in which the corresponding sound structures are not always identical (cf. Isačenko, 1973, pp. 212–27).

In Erb's translation, the corresponding line endings contain monosyllabic words, meaning that there are very few additional common sounds before the rhyme syllables (apart from the consonant [R] in *Schritt* and *Griff* and the similar initial sounds in *Blick* and *Griff*). However, words forming the anaphora in these lines contain four syllables in the translation (*Garten: Keines*), whereas in the source text they consist of two syllables (*Sad: ni*). In this example, the recurrences within the lines are based mainly on the anaphora in the translation. In other cases, sound recurrences within a line take the form of alliteration in Erb's translation of "The Garden," e.g. *Hölle hier* (line 1) and *Garten-Glück* (line 14). Even though there are no rich rhymes in the translation, the sound repetitions are by no means limited to pure rhymes in the line endings. In fact, the alliterations form repetitions of sounds within the lines. Furthermore, repetitions of initial sounds occur in Futurist (cf. Lauer, 2000, p. 503) and Dadaistic poems, e.g. again in Ball's "Seepferdchen und Flugfische" [Seahorses and Flying Fish]: *zack hitti zopp* or *zikko di zakkobam* (2007, p. 72).

In her translations of other poems by Tsvetaeva, Erb uses rich rhymes in a similar way to Tsvetaeva. For example, lines 1 and 3 of the poem "Obnimaju tebjā" ["I embrace you"] end with the words *krugozorom* [as the horizon] and *razgovorom* [with a conversation]. In the corresponding line endings of Erb's translation, the words *Gesichtskreis* [horizon] and *Geschichten* [stories] occur (cf. Zwetajewa, 2002, p.

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<sup>10</sup> In the Russian text, these rhyme words are all diminutives. Since diminutives occur far more often in Russian than in German and have a larger spectrum of significations, it is not always appropriate to translate them from Russian into German.

142).<sup>11</sup> The terms *Gespräch* [conversation], *Unterhaltung* [entertainment], or *Konversation* [conversation] would be semantically closer to the Russian *razgovor*, whereas *Geschichten* is more similar to *Gesichtskreis* in its sound structure, without completely deviating from the semantic meaning of *razgovor*.

## 2.2 Repetitions on the word- and line-level: anaphoras and syntactic parallelisms

The four rhyming words in the fifth stanza—*šazka*, *glazka*, *smeška*, and *svistka*—also form a sequence of words with similar sound structures. In addition, the syntactic structures of these lines are not only parallel but, beginning with the same two words, form an anaphora: *Sad: ni šazka!* / *Sad: ni glazka!* / *Sad: ni smeška!* / *Sad: ni svistka!* [Garden: no step! / Garden: no eye! / Garden: no chuckle! / Garden: no whistle!] Similar patterns can be found in Russian fairy tales, e.g. *V nekotorom carstve, v nekotorom gosudarstve* [In a certain kingdom, in a certain state],<sup>12</sup> where the two phrases with the same syntactic structure begin with the same two words and whose last words form a rhyme. In the German translation, this pattern is preserved, in which the line-ending words are linked not only through pure rhyme, but also through assonance: *Garten: Keines Schritt!* / *Garten: Keines Blick!* / *Garten: Keines Pfiff!* / *Garten: Keines Griff!* [Garden: Nobody's step! / Garden: Nobody's glance! / Garden: Nobody's whistle! / Garden: Nobody's grip!] Again, similar patterns occur in German fairy tales, e.g. in *Aschenputtel* [Cinderella]: *Die Guten ins Töpfchen, die Schlechten ins Kröpfchen* [The good ones into the pot, the bad ones into your crop] (Grimm, 2017, p. 133). By rendering the structures similar to formulaic patterns, Erb retains the reference to folk poetry in the translation. Preserving the structure is again accompanied by deviations on the lexical level. The rhyme word *Griff* [grip] that appears at the very end of the stanza—a highly exposed place in the poem—has a menacing connotation and does not correspond semantically with any word in the source text. Moreover, the repeated indefinite pronoun *Keines* in the same stanza, referring to a person, gives the translation a more disturbing connotation than the source text, while *Keines Schritt* [nobody's step] suggests an absence of an undefined human being. This is not the case with *ni šazka* [not a step] in the source text. This so-called *individual shift* is, unlike a system-bound *constitutive shift*, “prompted by the stylistic propensities and the subjective idiolect of the individual translator” (Bakker et al., 2011, p. 272). The indefinite pronoun *keines* could be interpreted with regard to *dušok*<sup>13</sup> in the sixth stanza of the source text, the only word in the poem which is emphasized by italics. *Dušok* can be translated as *musty smell* or *smack*; figuratively, it means *a barely registered sign of something* (cf. Ožegov, Švedova 2002, p. 184). In the larger context of “The Garden,” these presences recall the poem “Toska po Rodine” [“Homesickness”] (1934), where Tsvetaeva writes,

<sup>11</sup> The underlined vowels are stressed.

<sup>12</sup> This pattern is a conventional phrase that typically occurs at the beginning of Russian fairy tales (cf. Afanas'ev, 2014, p. 546).

<sup>13</sup> Here in the genitive: *duška*.

*самый зоркий сыщик / Вдоль всей души* [the sharpest spy / could go over my whole spirit] (Zwetajewa, 2002, p. 128; translation in Tsvetaeva, 1994, p. 102).

Chodasevič, a contemporary of Tsvetaeva's, states that Tsvetaeva's poetry is sometimes similar to those *Pričitanija* or Russian laments (cf. Lauer, 2000, p. 574) whose characteristic linguistic features include parallel syntactic structures and prepositions at the beginning of syntactical unities (cf. Arant, 1973), e.g. *Na bolote byla ssečena. / Za tri goda byla smenena* [On the swamp she was whipped. / Within three years she was changed.] (cf. Zueva, 2002). The first two lines of "The Garden" include a parallel syntactic structure as in the quoted example of a *Pričitanija*; moreover, the preposition *za* [for] at the beginning of the two syntactical unities forms an anaphora: *Za etot ad, / Za etot bred* [For this hell / For this nonsense]. This time, Erb does not preserve the pattern but replaces the anaphora of the first two lines, *Za etot ad / Za etot bred*, with alliteration: *Für die Hölle hier / All den Aberwitz*. This shift from the source text is again caused less by the differences between the Russian and German languages and their metrics than by Erb's individual style of translating, in which she here changes the structure but keeps the reference of the source text—namely, folk poetry.

Finally, entire lines are repeated in "The Garden": *Na starost' let* occurs in lines 4, 5, and 9. The numerous repetitions recall "conversations" with mystical creatures. For example, in the opera *The Magic Flute*, Papageno sings twice to summon Papagena: *Klinget, Glöckchen, klinget, / Schafft mein Mädchen her!* [Ring, little bells, ring, send my girl here!] (Schikaneder, Mozart, 2005, p. 70)<sup>14</sup>, while Mephisto tells Faust explicitly: "Du mußt es dreimal sagen." [You must say it three times.] (Goethe, 1986, p. 576). In Erb's translation, there is again another type of repetition: in lines 4 and 5, *Schick zu guter Letzt* and *Zu der Jahre Last*, the preposition *zu* is repeated and the nouns *Letzt* and *Last* are alliterated. Line 9 contains very few similarities with lines 4 and 5 on the sound level: *Diesem Hundelos*. These variations of the identical lines in the translation are again *individual shifts*. In McDuff's translation of the same poem, the identity of the lines 4, 5, and 9 is preserved; all three lines are identical: *Toward my life's end* (Tsvetayeva, 2010, p. 111). The almost identical lines 3 and 14, *Pošli mne sad* and *Mne sad pošli*, are translated by Erb as *Einen Garten mir / Schick [...]* (lines 3–4) and *[...] schick / Mir den Garten – Glück* (lines 13–14). In Erb's translation, *Glück* [joy/luck] is an addition that not only emphasizes the expectation of the persona towards the garden but also, together with the preceding word *Garten*, forms yet another alliteration.

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<sup>14</sup> The imperative voice—in Tsvetaeva's poem, *pošli* (send), and in Mozart's opera, *klinget* and *schafft*—also typically occurs in incantations. Cf. footnote 8.

The shortness of the lines in the first six stanzas—which consist of two consecutive iambs—as well as the elliptical syntax, together with the many dashes and colons, give the impression of condensation.<sup>15</sup> In addition to these shorter lines, the elliptical syntax in the fifth stanza is preserved in the translation, although the lines in the translation are one syllable longer than in the source text, consisting of five syllables based on a trochaic meter. The two meters are similar, as both of them consist of one stressed and one unstressed syllable, whereupon the iamb is an alternating meter with an upbeat and is often associated with dynamism; trochees, on the other hand, alternate without an upbeat and seem to evoke a quiet atmosphere. Burdorf gives a few examples but concedes at the same time that it would be easy to find examples to demonstrate the opposite (1997, p. 78). In the case of “The Garden,” what seems to have a greater impact than the two different meters on the text as a whole is how, in the translation, the lines both begin and end with a stressed syllable, so that from one line to the next there is a double stress, i.e. – v – v – / – v – v – etc., whereas the movement from one line to the next is continuous in Tsvetaeva’s poem, i.e. v – v – / v – v – etc. In the translation, the movement is blocked in the passage from one line to the next; as a consequence, the lines are more isolated from each other.

### 3. Conclusion

There are “several simultaneously moving parallel devices” (Karlinsky, 1966, p. 167) in Tsvetaeva’s poetry. In “The Garden,” repetitions of words and sounds occur everywhere in the lines: at the beginning (anaphoras), at the end, and in the middle. The recurrences in Erb’s translation are similarly complex, e.g. in the second stanza:

Source text	Transliteration	Erb’s translation
На старость лет,	Na starost’ let,	Zu der Jahre Last:
На старость бед:	Na starost’ bed:	Zu der Armut – Rest,
Рабочих – лет,	Rabočich – let,	Der Gebeugten Frist,
Горбатых – лет...	Gorbatych – let...	Alter Arbeit – Rast.

Every word is connected with at least one other word in this stanza by recurrences on the sound level. This is also the case in Erb’s translation of the stanza (except for the word *Gebeugten*, which correlates with no word with a similar sound structure, but alliterates with other g-words in the poem), even though the types of sound recurrences sometimes differ from the source text.

The complexity of Tsvetaeva’s patterns led Etkind to make a normative statement about the importance of preserving rhymes while translating Tsvetaeva’s poetry: “Traduire Tsvétaiéva sans rimes n’est légitime

<sup>15</sup> In lines 17–20, the predicate is omitted and replaced by colons. According to Karlinsky, omitting the verb is typical of Tsvetaeva’s practice: “The part of the speech most likely to be subjected to ellipsis is the verb, and critics have occasionally mentioned the phenomenon of Cvetaeva’s ‘verbleness’ [...]” (Karlinsky, 1966, p. 133).

qu'en de très rares occasions: quand Tsvétaiéva aussi écrit en vers blancs" [Translating Tsvetaeva without rhymes is legitimate only on very rare occasions: when Tsvetaeva is also writing blank verse] (Etkind, 1982, p. 14). In her translation of "The Garden," Erb goes even further. By retaining the parallelisms, rhyme words and rhyme schemes, and by using a similar meter, she not only writes a rhymed German version, but also acknowledges specific structural characteristics of the sonic dimension of Tsvetaeva's poem. Shifts between the source text and its translation, e.g. when syntactic parallelisms and repeated words are replaced by alliteration, are a function both of the differences between the two languages and the personal style of the translator. The latter is exercised when the identical lines of Tsvetaeva's poem are modified in the translation. On the other hand, due to the structural differences between Russian and German, it is not possible to preserve all the anaphoras, parallelisms, and monosyllabic rhyme words. The way the translator deals with these differences depends on her individual choices. Comparing passages of Erb's translation with analogous passages in other translations of the same poem makes Erb's style of translation evident, in which context other translators tend to retain parallelisms and repetitions of words. When the linguistic structures are varied in Erb's translation, the function of her structures is analogous to those in the source text: both point to folk poetry and the literary avant-garde. In short, Erb accepts shifts on the lexical level to preserve the sound structure. However, even if some words in the translation have different meanings, they are in most cases still semantically related to the corresponding words in the source text. This coincides with Tsvetaeva's own emphasis on the importance of the sonic dimension of a poem, in which connection, as she states in her essay "Poet i vremja" ["The Poet and Time"], "Есть нечто в стихах, что важнее их смысла: – их звучание." [In poetry, there is something more important than its meaning: its sound.] (Cvetaeva, 1994, p. 333).

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## Appendix

### Marina Tsvetaeva

### Transliteration (bolded vowels are stressed)

#### Сад

#### Sad

1 За этот ад,  
2 За этот бред  
3 Пошли мне сад  
4 На старость лет.

Za **etot ad**,  
Za **etot bred**  
Pošli mne **sad**  
Na starost' **let**.

5 На старость лет,  
6 На старость бед:  
7 Рабочих – лет,  
8 Горбатых – лет...

Na starost' **let**,  
Na starost' **bed**:  
Rabočich – **let**,  
Gorbatych – **let**...

9 На старость лет  
10 Собачьих – клад:  
11 Горячих лет –  
12 Прохладный сад...

Na starost' **let**  
Sobač'ich – **klad**:  
Gorjačich **let** –  
Prochladnyj **sad**...

13 Для беглеца  
14 Мне сад пошли:  
15 Без ни-лица,  
16 Без ни-души!

Dlja begleca  
Mne **sad** pošli:  
Bez ni-lica,  
Bez ni-duši!

17 Сад: ни шажка!  
18 Сад: ни глазка!  
19 Сад: ни смешка!  
20 Сад: ни свистка!

Sad: ni šažka!  
Sad: ni glazka!  
Sad: ni smeška!  
Sad: ni svistka!

21 Без ни-ушка  
22 Мне сад пошли:  
23 Без *ни-душка!*  
24 Без ни-души!

Bez ni-uška  
Mne **sad** pošli:  
Bez *ni-duška!*  
Bez ni-duši!

25 Скажи: – Довольно муки, – на  
26 Сад одинокий, как сама.  
27 (Но около и сам не стань!)  
28 Сад одинокий, как я сам.

Skaži: – Dovol'no **muki**, – **na**  
Sad **odinokij**, kak **sama**.  
(No **okolo** i **sam** ne stan'!)  
Sad **odinokij**, kak ja **sam**.

29 Такой мне сад на старость лет ...  
30 – Тот сад? А может быть – тот свет? -  
31 На старость лет моих пошли –  
32 На отпущение души.

Takoj mne **sad** na starost' **let** ...  
– Tot **sad**? A **možet byt'** – tot svet?  
Na starost' **let** moich pošli –  
Na otpuščenie **duši**.

1 октября 1934

1 oktjabrja 1934

**English translation**<sup>16</sup>

**Garden**

For this hell,  
For this nonsense,  
Send me a garden  
For old age.

For old age,  
For old woes:  
Working – years,  
Hunchback – years...

For old age  
Dog-like – treasure:  
Hot years –  
A cool garden...

For a fugitive  
Send me a garden:  
Without any-face,  
Without any-soul!

Garden: no step!  
Garden: no eye!  
Garden: no chuckle!  
Garden: no whistle!

Without any-ear  
Send me a garden:  
Without *any-odor*!  
Without any-soul!

Say: enough of torment, – here  
A garden – lonely, like myself.  
(But don't stand near it!)  
– A garden, lonely, like yourself.

Such a garden for my old age...  
– That garden? Or perhaps – next world?  
For my old age send –  
For the absolution of the soul.

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<sup>16</sup>Many thanks to Dr. Tony H. Lin, Department of Eastern, Slavic, and German Studies, Boston College, for this translation of Tsvetaeva's poem "Garden."

## Translation by Elke Erb

### Der Garten

1 Für die Hölle hier,  
2 All den Aberwitz,  
3 Einen Garten mir  
4 Schick zu guter Letzt.

5 Zu der Jahre Last:  
6 Zu der Armut – Rest,  
7 Der Gebeugten Frist,  
8 Alter Arbeit – Rast.

9 Diesem Hundelos –  
10 Eines Gartens Schoß.  
11 Dem ergrauten Glühn  
12 Frisches, kühles Grün ...

13 Für den Flüchtling schick  
14 Mir den Garten – Glück:  
15 Und kein Kein-Gesicht,  
16 Keine-Seele – nicht!

17 Garten: Keines Schritt!  
18 Garten: Keines Blick!  
19 Garten: Keines Pfiff!  
20 Garten: Keines Griff!

21 Ohne Ohren auch  
22 Schick den Garten du:  
23 Keines *Übels Hauch!*  
24 Und von Menschen Ruh!

25 Sprich: – Qual genug! – den Garten, sieh:  
26 So einsam, wie du selbst bist – nimm!  
27 (Doch steh auch selbst nicht neben ihm!)  
28 Er sei so einsam, wie ich bin.

29 Solch einen Garten – als Entgelt ...  
30 Einen Garten? – Jenen, jene Welt?  
31 Schick auf mein Alter ihn – zur Rast,  
32 Daß ich die Seele gehen laß.