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Lermontov's 'The Dream', Chekhov's 'Dreams': at the Brink of Life and Death

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Abstract

This text offers a comparative analysis of a lyric poem, *The Dream* (1841) by Mikhail Yurievich Lermontov and a short story, *Dreams* (1886) by Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, two major Russian authors embedded in the rigid Russian imperial structures. I examine their dream concepts and figurations, and their representations of various structures that permeate the human existence and human experience of the empire, as well as their poetic irony that comes as their brink. Further, I elucidate the meaning and function of the poetics and aesthetics of the written dream in the societal and political reality of life. The texts is outlined with the paradigmatic Shakespeare's words from "The Tempest:" "We are such stuff as dreams are made *on*, and our little life is rounded with *a sleep*".

My analysis involve multiple semiotic references, specifically, a dialogue between the theories by Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Jean Laplanche, Samuel Weber, and more recent feminist theories by Shoshana Felman, Theresa de Lauretis, Judith Butler, Adriana Cavarero. Within the dynamics of the other and otherness that un-folds in any dream or awakening, any language or writing, I discuss emotional, social, sexual, spatial transferences, and the complexity of transferential structures in these two short artworks. The connective focus is the "I" of the dream, its singularity and vulnerability, which as such emphasize the concept of relationality as inherent in any dream. And further, the concept of ability which, depending on one's circumstances, shifts from one register to another, introducing compar-ability as the unity of dream and life – in the sense that the realities of both are limited. Or, they are "rounded with sleep" (sur-rounded or rounded off), rounded with death, and rounded socio-historically with a cruelly variable unfairness of a position or role assigned to one' s life.

Introduction

This text discusses dream writing in the cultural framework of two major writers of the mid and later 19th century Russian literature, embedded in the rigid Russian imperial structures. I analyze their dream concepts, dream figurations, and the representations of various structures that permeate the human existence and human experience of the empire, as well as poetic irony coming as their brink. Further, I elucidate the meaning and function of the poetics and aesthetics of the written dream in the societal and political reality of life. This is comparative analysis of a lyric poem by Mikhail Yurievich Lermontov and a short story by Anton Pavlovich Chekhov; it is outlined with paradigmatic Prospero's words from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: "We are such stuff as dreams are made *on*, and our little life is rounded with *a sleep*".[1] In the reality of life, humans are given names which, usually, they leave behind, in a form of a trace. In dream, which figures as both life and death, or as a *brink* between the two, names are not necessarily given or they are disguised, muddled, or missing. In the history of world literature, the names of William Shakespeare, Mikhail Lermontov, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, have grown "larger than life". Yet, all these writers question the tropes of name and namelessness. The last two authors, Lermontov in *The Dream* (written in 1841)[2] and Chekhov in *Dreams* (written in 1886)[3] focus on namelessness related to narratable, writeable, aesthetic or representational structures of the dream, their causes and consequences.

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[1]Shakespeare, William: The Tempest. Act 4, scene 1 (148-158). Quoted per The Stratford Shakespeare, all 37 plays. London: Chancellor Press 1982.

[2] Mikhail Lermontov (1814–1841); "The Dream", trans. Yevgeny Bonver 1996.

The glen of Daghestan, at noon, was hot and gleaming;
I lay on sand with lead sent to my heart,
My deadly wound was deep and easily steaming;
And, drop by drop, was oozing out blood.

I lay on sand of this small glen, alone;
High cliffs surrounded my motionless head.
The sun was scorching their yellow stone
And scorching me; but I was sleeping, dead.

And I daydreamed of homeland and evening:
A feast was glittering with celebrating lights;
Young women, garlanded with flowers, were sitting,
With gaily talk about me all night.

But one of them sat there, sunk in musing
Not taking part in this light-hearted talk,
Her youthful soul, the world of real loosing,
In jungles of dreams sorrowfully walked.

She dreamed of Daghestan: the glen was hot and gleaming –
And someone, familiar, lay on the ground, dead,
The fateful wound was black and easily steaming,
And cooling blood was spreading on the sand.

[3] Chekhov, Anton Pavlovich (1860-1904); the summary of this 1886 story in the main text.

Within the dynamic of the Other/other[4] and otherness that unfolds in the dreams and awakening, language, and writing, I will discuss transference as a major device in and by which these dreams are written out. That is, transference as formal, and also emotional, sexual, social, and spatial. In both texts, the written dream is true and real as the reality itself is real, while transference is a component of both dream and the reality. The connective focus of my discussion is the "I" of the dream, its singularity and vulnerability which, probed as such, emphasizes the concept of relationality both in dreaming and in narrating and writing the dream. It also emphasizes irony constitutive of relationality, irony as another major device by which the dreams in these two texts are written out. It also emphasizes the concept of ability, which keeps shifting from one register to another, introducing compar-ability of the dream and life – in the sense that realities of both are limited. That is, "rounded with a sleep" (sur-rounded or rounded off), rounded with death, and rounded culturally and socio-historically with variable positions or roles assigned to one's life, thus to one's body and mind; therefore determining possible ways or technics of one's representing or figuring of the dreamed, and of the writing the dream.

In the Romantic literary era of Lermontov, dream is both a desired and chosen form as well as the "essence" of life, dream being life more than life itself. In the poem *The Dream*, through staging a multiply extended metaphor, Lermontov writes a dream within a dream within a dream. His poetic impersonator *is* dreaming of a wounded dying man who *was* dreaming of a far-away woman who *was* dreaming of his death. Lermontov is offering this to his reader's semiosic interpretation. In the (pre-)early modernism of Chekhov, dream is reality in the sense that it attributes to one's life an ambiguous, (un)bearably dignifying "I". In Chekhov's story, the dreams dreamt by the "I" of a nameless man unfold on the screen of the "I"'s two immediate, physically surrounding, and censuring listeners – as a daydreaming compensatory imaginary re-collection of his both past and future. The transference necessary for the dreamer's narration is established to two constables, who are escorting him as a tramp to the authorities of a district town. This twofold transference comes as an externalized, repeated yet re-signified "Law"-framework of the initial parental knot of the two actants who caused the tragedy of the dreamer's life-story. Nevertheless, both censors cannot but recognize the tramp's dreams as trustful, since his dreams prove indispensable not only to the dreamer's but also to their own bleak societal lot and human finitude.

[4] Lacan differentiates the Big Other (mastering) and small other. Lacan, Jacques: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, trans. Dennis Parter. New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company 1992.

However, in both Lermontov's and Chekhov' texts, dreams are sharpened, if not entirely written by the irony's edge[5] and at the irony's edge, the irony serving as a basic tropological structure, and a call for interpretation. As such, and also cutting into the ironic existential consciousness, the dreams establish both a formal and real connection to the waking life, the affirmation of the dreaming "I", and the remaining trace of the "I" in the reality. With the understanding that different literary periods are built into each other, intertwining their traces in writing, the elements and tendencies looming in these two 19th century texts on dreams can be found also today. Hence, this analysis employs some more contemporary critical and semiotic concepts, trying to read back two different 19th century ways of writing in which *life* and *dream* coincide.

Namelessness as transference

If "What is in a name?" (*Romeo and Juliet*)[6] echoes in Lermontov's "The Dream", the question could read as: what is in a transference? – if the Shakespeare's verse about the name reads as that the content is the same even if words are different. However, usually, transference implies a real person, but the one who is only temporarily, yet still variably lending her/himself to the convertible function of a name. Hence transference implies not only the same but also a variable emotion, and hence a variable "content"; a new emotion brings a new content.

Transference comes as a basic technical and poetic means in this poem; and only as such it comes as an interpretative means. Per its definition, transference denotes the act, instance or process of transferring something, or the state of being transferred. Since Sigmund Freud, and his understanding of the psyche as text, transference is recorded in psychoanalytical sense (*übertragung*)[7] as the redirection of attitudes and emotions towards a substitute. Jacques Lacan furthers the understanding of transference as a kind of *love* (true *as* deceiving), where the analyst is to witness to the lost cause of the unconscious as the ever-avoided encounter that comes as repetition. As Lacan says, the split "I" is helped to accept that [it] is incapable of self-grounding, and is given the access to the primary position of the unconscious that is articulated as constituted by the indetermination of the "I". Transference gives one the opportunity of depicting the structure of love as a deception that

[5] Hutcheon, Linda: Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony. Routledge 1994.

[6] See Shakespeare, William: Romeo and Juliet, in: The Stratford Shakespeare, ibid.

[7] Freud, Sigmund: Interpretation of Dreams. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Trans. James Strachey, Anna Freud. London: The Hoggarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis 1978.

succeeds.[8] In an analogous way, Jean Laplanche sees the relation of the writer and of the reader to cultural texts: transference comes as translation of the enigma of the other, a trans-position and a renewal of the (traumatic) relation of the primal seduction.[9] As Judith Butler puts it, the confrontation with our finitude is a result of our intersubjectivity, and it can also be a cruelly private experience; it is a willingness to become undone by the address of the other to us that constitutes our chance to become human.[10] This also implies the ability to dream and to be dreamed, or be dreamable. All these theorists formulate what has already always been written in literature, and what is writing itself out in dream, which itself comes as accessible to (the reality of) life through a transference.

Lermontov's poem tells the dream constructed as a connection through "love" at the brink of life and death that is a fragile and irretrievable border. In his beloved oriental Caucasian area, some months before his own death in a duel there at the age of less than 27 (whether the premonition of it or not), Lermontov envisions a dream and narrates it in the past tense: the heat of the sun was scorching and narrowing the circle of the raising mountain cliffs and the sand valley in Dagestan. In the center there was the "I", alone, a deadly-wounded man, his heart bleeding out his own departure from life, literally. However, in transference, the wound in his heart was taking him into the dead sleep and dream of the cool evening feast in his homeland in the Russian capital, young women gathered there, talking of him joyfully. One woman was sitting apart though, "sunk in her musing", "her youthful soul the world of real loosing". She was grieving for him as she saw the dark wound in his corpse in the valley in Dagestan, his blood getting cooler and cooler. In the poem's text, "she" remains in the third person, indeed "It" – as if placed to dream the dream projected onto her by the dying man, her other-ness supporting his "I". This seems to be true, even if the transference reveals their relation as their mutual independence, or a mere coincidence.

In the poem, no proper name is mentioned, besides the name of the geographical region; the landscape, the discourse, the gender structure common in romantic poetry. So, it is transference that speaks and thus establishes the "I" of the dream, life, and death, the "I" that indeed is doubled or split into the "I" alive and the "I" dead(-dreaming). Both "I-s" are male: the "I" seeing the "I"

[8] Lacan, Jacques: XI Seminar. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis. Trans. Alain Sheridan. New York, London: Norton and Company 1998.

[9] Laplanche, Jean: Seduction, Translation, Drives. A dossier compiled by John Fletcher, Stanton, Martin. Trans. Martin Stanton. London: Psychoanalytic Forum, Institute of Contemporary Arts 1992.

[10] Butler, Judith: Giving an Account of Oneself. New York: Fordham University Press 2005.

seeing the "I" seeing the "her" seeing the "I" as "him" who is the "I". The three dreams describe a spiral by bringing the reader back to the first stanza of the iambic pentameter, and to its "I", which is Lermontov himself, yet also, I would say, the "I" of the reader.

In my interpretation, I use the expression the "I" (of the dream, narrating, life) instead of the "subject" or "self", the way the "I" is used in Lermontov's poem. The same way the peers of contemporary gender and narrative theories, as Theresa de Lauretis, Judith Butler, Adriana Cavarero use the "I",[11] as well as Samuel Weber, psychoanalytic philosopher, who recently retranslated to English the Freud's second topic as "I, It, over-I" (instead of ego, id, super-ego). To Weber, "what takes the place of the 'subject – in part, at least, for no one thing takes its place entirely, and that is precisely the point – involves a so-called 'personal pronoun' but one that designates an impersonal gender, 'it'."[12] In her "Relating Narratives, Cavarero explicates that it is always "you" who relates the narratives of the "I".[13]

Vulnerable Affect-ability

The question "What is in a transference?" in Lermontov's poem first points to Lermontov's return to himself, or such seems to be the structure of this dream poem. In 1899, Lermontov's critic Vladimir Solovyov said: "With Lermontov, even when he speaks about someone else, one feels that his own thought is striving, even from an enormous distance, to return to himself." Solovyov saw Lermontov as a Western genius with "utter concentration on one's own subjectivity and thus an exception in the history of Russian letters."[14] However, if the utter ironies of Lermontov's romantic "individualism" are not immediately displayed, they are reflected in further readings. Therefore, in my early 21th century reading, the writer Lermontov is all about *singularity*, rather than about individuality with its often troubled claim to self-identity. He lucidly exposes the "historically

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[11] E.g. see Cavarero, Adriana: Relating Narratives: Story-telling and Selfhood. Abingdon: Routledge 2000 (Tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti: Filosofia della narrazione. Milano: Feltrinelli 1997).

[12] Weber, Samuel: "Anxiety: The Uncanny Borderline of Psychoanalysis," in: Konturen 3 (2010), http://konturen.uoregon.edu/vol3_Weber.html; p. 47.; Weber, Samuel: "The Politics of Protection and Projection," in: de Vries, Hent (ed.): "Religion Beyond a Concept". New York: Fordham UP 2008; pp. 626-646.

[13] Cavarero 2000, ibid.

[14] Solovjev, Vladimir, quoted per: A History of Russian Literary Theory and Criticism: The Soviet Age and Beyond. Ed. Evgeniĭ Aleksandrovich Dobrenko, Galin Tihanov. U of Pittsburgh Press: 2011; "War, Progress, and the End of History. Three discussions". London: Hodder, Stoughton, the U. of London Press, Ltd. 1915.

produced" yet "singularly experienced" body as "a zone of vulnerable affect-ability," in the sense Cavarero explains that term.[15]

In both Lermontov and Chekhov, and specifically in their dream writing, irony is a key poetic device. According to its classic definition, irony conveys a difference between the appearance and reality, incongruity between what might be expected and what actually occurs. As antiphrasis, often for emphatic effect, it technically indicates, as through character or plot development, an intention or attitude opposite to that which is actually or ostensibly stated. Or, as recently defined more thoroughly, irony is a semantically complex process of relating, differentiating, and combining said and unsaid meanings – and doing so with an evaluative edge.[16] As the process of differentiation and relation, irony involves a rapid oscillation between two different meanings: denotation and connotation cannot be seen simultaneously but are also inextricable from each other.[17] And often there is a vital relationship between ironist, interpreter and cultural context that allows irony to happen. Either way, it is a manner of *organizing* a work so as to give full expression to contradictory or complementary impulses, attitudes, etc., especially as a means of indicating detachment from a subject, theme, or emotion.

In dream-writing, the use of irony points to both similarity and difference, attachment and detachment, the sayable and unsayable of the dreamed, in the dynamic of the "I" and the Other-/ other-ness, assuming a kind of an extension of transference or supplement to transference. Lermontov writes a powerfully beautiful image of a dreamed love only to show love's fundamentally deceptive construction that keeps deceiving further also about the nature of desire, hence also of dream. Both love and desire are written as per to be complemented by the other, producing a "reality" of transference, thus keeping to misunderstand precisely that what is lacking. The heat of the sun could not bring the dying man back to life, so in transference he sets off his dying dream into which he "awakens". The bond between the dream and reality is desired in the poem as the brink of life and death and at the brink of life and death, hence it is recorded as such. If the bond of the dream and reality stages, directs and enacts what David Powelstock formulates as merely "the coincidence of two wholly subjective projections", "an intersection of reciprocal

[15] Cavarero 2000, ibid.

[16] Reference to discourses of literature and discourses of philosophy

[17] Hutcheon1994, ibid.; p. 89.

attentive actants' projections," of only "seemingly a telepathic character",[18] the bond of the dream and reality also comes as a pertinent formal and critical question.

As the doubled or split "I" of the poet and the dead-dreamer related in dreaming to the "she" dreamer, the "I" of dream-writing is opening toward an "I" of reading. The dream of death came true indeed for Lermontov-the-writer as the function of the formal finitude, both aesthetic and human. In Lermontov's case, it is the "aesthetic-human" finitude; but the poem itself is even more powerful when it acknowledges through a transference that the love it imagines is only a dream, hence that the content only borrows from the form, or from the poetic device. My question is slightly different than Powelstock's. I address both finitude and the role which is or is not allotted to one's "I" in the reality of the dream and life and poem, which crucially determines techniques in which one's dream could be recalled, re-narrated, or written down. The persistence of the man's "I" in the face of death to transcend space and time – and death – dreaming of "love", which remains only a dream, in the poem still involves a woman reified, textually, in the third person. Yet, the "she" who feels the man's deadly wound "telepath(-et-)ically", and on her own *pen*sively escorting him to death. In the poem, Lermontov ascribes singular to the man, as its "bodily corporeal uniqueness."[19]

However, the man's vulnerability is displayed not simply as susceptibility to be wounded, what vulnerability usually implies, but also as power to wound, or power to permit himself to be wounded. In the woman, vulnerability is displayed as the repetitive performance of her own being affected, culturally "dreamily"; looking for the inscenation of it, she stages her "dream" in her daydreaming. Thus, the Who? of the poem is disclosed through the transference in a dreamily writing of which the man is the "I", but not strictly the sole author. Because, singular is that what one can know only by what is not, by its traces: as a relational notion, singular implies radical separability.[20] Desiring the dream of one's own life, the "I" perceives itself as open to an other's dream, as a protagonist of a coherent, irreplaceable dream-life. Hence, the dream in the poem and the dream as the poem come as the written self-affirmation and completion of the "I", from both sides or on both sides.

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[18] Powelstock, David: Becoming Mikhail Lermontov: the Ironies of Romantic Individualism in Nicholas I's Russia. Evanston, Il: Northwestern UP 2005. P. 412.

[19] Cavarero 2000, ibid.

[20] Weber The Politics of Protection and Projection, ibid.

Still, interpreting further, referring to Cavarero's theory, it would be "the other from the point of affectability, the 'you', who recognizes the ontological roots of this desire", as the only one who can re-cognize such dream, and who can narrate the dream and write it down. In Lermontov's poem, such (affecting or recognizing) other remains literally "she or it"; not "you" of the dream, as being ironically detached. In this poem, along with irony or prior to irony, as a structure or device in depicting the dream, transference shows its real character. The one nameless, standing for the recognizing "you" is only lending itself to the nameless "I" (by the poetic impersonator of Lermontov) – for cognizing in the "I"'s internal dynamic both the "It"/she and "I" as the components of the "I". The reading transference of my own "I" does the same.

The wider context of the dream would read that the man's "I" wished immortality through mortality which the event of "dying young" approximates. Hence, he caused the trouble to himself: in his "spirited irreverence" he provoked a duel that was forbidden by the Tzarist Law in Russia (serving as the "Over-I"), already in Lertmontov's time.[21] Shot dead, he fell into the abyss, the same way Lermontov got to die a few months later, and while dying he initiated the dream. In his dream, a "maiden's soul lost in musing" is seduced by the symbolic range of the masculine romantic discourse; the irony of "It" clear to interpretation.

In the poem, there is a dictating extimacy (the "interior presence of the exterior" per Lacan),[22] with the inside of the dream unfolding as the outside of the dream. However, one could also say that a woman did let herself to be seduced in order to cause the man's deadly wound, implicitly shaking the layered "Over-I", and changing the disposition of the transference. As more restricted by cultural frameworks, the woman's body was certainly more exposed to the romantic "ideal of love". How-ever, the woman is not simply estranged from the form of "subject" and deported to the place of "object"; Lermontov the writer is more ingenious than that. Because, to tell one's dream means to distance oneself from oneself and from what is real, with a reciprocal desire of a dream-able dream, so also with the "you", forming a part of the dream. In the poem, the man's dreaming-to-death-and-through-death and the woman's thinking

[21] On the Tzarist Law, see Powelstock, David 2005 ibid.

[22] On Lacan's term "extimacy", see Lacan, Jacques: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis. Trans. Dennis Parter. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co. 1992.

-out-*his*-death-or-through-his-death are integrated into a dynamic that sets the stage for the poem. In "Romeo and Juliet", it says, "by a name, I know not how to tell thee who I am."[23] In "The Dream", "I" am the dream.

The whole dream is written in the past tense, from the impersonator's present vantage point, and through contrasting yet reversible images, as:

1. dead, but dreaming of life-joy-love;
2. the sensing-perceptual-phenomenal world within the real world –
   the scorching sun of the noon and the celebratory lights of the night;
3. Caucasus and the Russian Capital;
4. the circling stony cliffs and the garland of flowers;
5. man's loneliness and the young women's gaily talk, personifying heat or cold.

Also, the dream is written in oppositional yet interacting terms: the man producing the dream while losing conscious in dying versus the active consciousness of the daydreaming woman. In the poetic transmutation of the organic attributes into the inorganic ones, the dream also unfolds both through the ellipses and in the acting out, at the brink of life and death. There is a coincidence of 1. the imaginative poetic power intensified by the ironizing pathos of a seemingly "wish-fulfilling" of the dream and 2. the dream of the woman's dreaming power for compensating for her self-alienation within the romantic cultural imaginary, as well as for the object of love. Therefore, one can interpret wish-fulfilling as if taken over from the side of the women.

In his recent text on anxiety as the uncanny border of psychoanalysis, Samuel Weber points out that "It" – a so-called "personal pronoun" which designates an impersonal gender – introduces a third dimension that opens up the binary structure of gender to an irreducible alterity and heterogeneity.

> There is the essential but impossible effort of the "I" precisely to mediate not just between inside and outside, between "it" and "world," but to mediate within, between "It" and "over-I". Therefore, the I is not just the surface through which the psyche confronts the world, but the surface on which the contradictory messages and impulses of "It" and "over-I" collide with one another. The "I" is itself essentially and inescapably a "borderline" function, or borderline being, seeking to mediate between "World and It."[24]

[23] Shakespeare, William: Romeo and Juliet (Balcony scene, act 2) in: The Stratford Shakespeare 1982, ibid, p. 708.

[24] Samuel Weber 2010, ibid.; p. 47

This is very recognizable in Lermontov's poem, where the "I" establishes "Itself" through a transference. Consequently, the omitted "I" of the woman's dream is transferred to the reader, the "you" who can thus constitute a "renewed bond of gender" on her side.[25] Lermontov the writer alone could not know the woman's desire in the dream, pervasively striving to return his voice to himself: such is the structure of the irony of writing the dream in this poem. Like Freud, who admitted that he could not know "what a woman wants"[26], Lermontov recognizes that he does not know "It" (or not know that kind of "excess" or "surplus"); with this, he proves his distinct literary quality. "God knows for what", says Lermontov, she was seduced into such a "gloomy dream" of life as "to love death". So, indeterminacy (of the unconscious) comes as nameless-ness, in transference, further transferring to the reader, to "you", the question: "for what?"

Certainly, what a woman wants is 1. to write the dream, 2. "reading and sexual difference", 3. her own significance in handling and rewriting the romanticist dream of colonizing other territories as much as other bodies, minds, and sexes. The woman in the dream wants her significance that brilliantly cuts through and into the repetitively structured verses of this poem. The transference in this dream-poem conveys the romanticist language-body coding, where the dictum of the Law, or the over-I, or the Imperial world, still organize both the dream and awaking, as well as the fact of the murder within both. What is shown is the dream as approximating reality, yet also the power of the "It" or impersonal gender in it. The poetic "I" returns to Lermontov's "I" and to Lermontov's death, as witnessed by the reader, the "you"; love remaining but a figure, deception, repetitive real, or a dream.

Chekov claimed…

… "I know of no language better than that of Lermontov."[27] And Lermontov could only intuit that Chekhov would proceed with his own language as good or better than Lermontov's. The unconscious closed, yet placed outside to be reopened, if only to lead to another closing, that is what Chekhov's short story "Dreams" is about. Within the formal impasse of remembering or

[25] See Felman, Shoshana: What Does A Woman Want?: Reading And Sexual Difference. London: The Johns Hopkins UP 1993.

[26] Freud, Sigmund: Letters of Sigmund Freud. Ed. Ernest L. Freud, Trans. Tania and James Stern 1960, p. 142.

[27] A common saying: Chekhov recommended Lermontov to all young writers. See, e.g. John Mersereau: Mikhail Lermontov. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP 1962.

forgetting that sustains the loop of the nameless character's both reality of life and reality of dreams, at the beginning of the story, he is a homeless man who refuses to remember his name. At the end of the story, he is a man who forgot his name.

The story within the main story is remarkable: the tramp is an illegitimate son of a peasant-woman, who, working as a house serf with the local gentry conceived him with her master. She remained the master's mistress to maintain a more "noble" social position or sexual affection, providing the child with a fine environment, manners, sensibility, faith, basic education. When the master found another mistress, the mother poured arsenic in his drink, incidentally or not; then, via the child, she sent it to the master to drink it up. She was sentenced to twenty years of penal servitude in Siberia, the son to seven years as her accomplice, even if he was only an unknowing transmitter of his mother's murderous gift, a conveyer of the message of the punishment to the "sinner-father".

The story line is tenable depending on the reader's trust to the narrating of a weak, pious story-teller with utterly genuine and heartfelt tone. Described by Chekhov's third person's narrator as a "frail, little man of extremely indefinite features," the tramp was roaming as a fugitive for some years, and developed a powerful, self-protective art of dreaming. His dreaming or dream narrating, a performative "artistic" practice, is functioning as a mental vehicle that keeps him still alive physically and spiritually.

The story tells of the sin and the crime of both the father and the mother, paid off also by their child, who is subsequently *nameless*, himself turning into a transference. Almost dying of exhaustion, he dreams of a future "norm-ality" of the everyday. Half-peasant, half-gentry, the problem or motive of his namelessness is first the problem or motive of the illegitimacy of his origin, and then of his being a fugitive. His dreams make up for his life, on two planes:

1. The dream of his being of "finer blood" according to his recounting is true, and it sounds veritable, as he appears more refined and imaginative than the two clumsy, peasant officers moving with him through the vast, muddy and foggy Russian fields.
2. His dreams of going to East Siberia (which has the same God and Tsar as "here"), to some settlement-commune, the compensatory reversal of the horrors of the penal colony; the "Government would help him" to establish his life, property, family, where he would find a pleasure in the nature and the art of fishing in the river, keeping the axis mamma-God in his prayers for her to him.

In the cruelty of the imperial societal constellation, he has barely known his living "I", but his dreaming "I" as his "unique corporeal given" keeps asking for meaning, on and on. Reading books, he weeps out all along. "He *is* but the *stuff* the dreams are made *on*", the singular of his dreams coming as relational, himself a wound whose body has exceeded any particular meaning-given system.

Dream Poetics: Language, the Unconscious

The son is an unwilling product of an unclear relation. Was it the affection-or-abuse between the "parents"? Was it the mother's mistake-or-her-murder of the father? The son could only dream of the better of the two to retain his human dignity, deprived of any better reality, as he is caught in yet another impenetrable structure of the ruling system which sees in him a murderer although he is a victim. Then he gets involved into the third, narrative structure supported by the transference to two listeners to whom it is clear how worn out he is, yet still passionately dreaming the way that they were never able to, so they cannot but believe him.

According to Cavarero, it is the form which is vital to the revelation of the "who", "I or you", a unique life-story that has a pattern which is legible to others, while the content is secondary.[28] Same is with dreams, as well as with daydreaming, yet another liminal state of consciousness: the form is what narrates the dream and writes the dream. The tramp's distressed, neat body requires the other as "you", physically and emotionally, to enable the transference for telling the story. Transference is materializing through a gradually raised attention in the constables addressing him as "br-other".

In Chekhov's story, the written dreams compose a transference as much as they come enabled in a transference or as they are made of transference or as transference. The writer Chekhov's irony, paradigmatic in the history of world literature, in this story on dreams reaches its peak in rendering the content of the dream through its subversion by the very form of the retold dream. Surely, the transference opens as namelessness, lending itself as a never reachable ground for dreams to be related and narrated in Chekhov's word, yet never entirely. In this story, the transference opens intriguingly in reverse, emphasizing the complexity of repetitiveness. The transference for retelling the tramp's dreams works towards the two constables, who both are fully named, Andrey Ptaha and

[28] Cavarero, Adriana Relating Narratives 2000, ibid.

Nikandr Sapozhnikov; while the tramp is the one who is "nameless", so "dreamable". Hence, in reverse, the tramp makes for the real transference that makes possible the narrating and writing of the story's dreams: the dreams of all persons mentioned, also of those non-mentioned, and the dreams of their author-writer, even the reader. The weight of the transference is placed on the nameless weak tramp, who is escorted by "two constables" to the "district juridical authorities" – transference being the technical vehicle and the poetic device making the poetic structure of this story of retelling the dreams of "them all". More-over, the transference clarifies itself only through irony as the structure of figuration through subversion in the story, enabling the narrating and writing of the dreams.

The post-Chekhov postmodernist terms that can arise in a contemporary poetics' debate of this topic, as undecidability, indeterminacy, liminality, fall back into this irony-shaped deadlock of remembering and forgetting, and of repeating – as a layout for writing any narrative, any dream. That is the deadlock which formally so well pre-conveys also the hermeneutics of the constitutive irony of "some settlement commune" in the East Siberia. The very region, into which in the harsh reality the later 19th century the physician-writer Chekhov[29] really travelled to study the cases and write on the mental activity of the dreams of the "inmates". Chekhov's writing the "dreams" reveals the complex connection between the (Imperial) Law, the human physical condition and human emotions as well as the origin, consistency, psycho-physical effects of dreams. And, clearly, the dreams show the efforts of the "I" to mediate from within, between "It" and "over-I". As the borderline-being, "I" is the "surface on which the contradictory messages and impulses of "It" and "over-I" collide with one another."[30] However, the "I" can function only in relation to "you".

The law of the tramp's dreams is more legitimate – also in juridical sense – than the Law ruling the outside and Imperial reality, which is a parable of many socio-political structures, including the immediate "transferring" authority of the two officers in whose hands the tramp is. The tramp's dreams are "written" through rejecting a fixed, invariable symbolic order, as much as the "Law" of the unconscious rejects that order. Or, as much as Chekhov's language rejects that order – with Chekhov's emblematic emphasis on silences enveloping and breaking through tragicomedies of human existences.

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[29] For biographic details, the link between Chekhov's two vocations, see Malcolm, Janet: Reading Chekhov, a Critical Journey. London: Granta Publications 2001.

[30] Weber, Samuel 2010, ibid.

The timeless question arises: is an unconscious or unknowing act – a murder?

Let us recall Lacan who has formulated such question pertinently in his equaling the structure of the unconscious with the structure of language.[31] In Chekhov's story, like in the dream, such unknowing or unconscious act reflects the legalized murder by the power hierarchy in the reality; the dream stands for its parable. "It" is nameless, because it is not committed, either the act or the person. "It" cannot be identified, and remains in the desired realm of freedom, choice, disrupting the paradigm and hierarchy of the inside and outside. Thereby "It" transforms the notion of the "border," if not of the line, or the brink, so as to confirm "It-self" as the "I" – yet the "I" who is narrating only in relation to "you". The same way the tramp did escape from the penal colony: he projected himself on the "you" and then was taken along with the "you" of the group of organized fugitives.

Weber claims that the border (-line) no longer separates the inside from the outside, or one inside from another. Rather, "it traverses what has previously been considered to constitute a homogenous domain – that of the "psyche," thereby fracturing it as a force-field in which conflicts play themselves out but are rarely resolved in a unified manner."[32] The same traversing of the "homogeneity" of the "psyche" happens in Lermontov's writing the dream, where the dreamed woman did establish a difference from herself: the one who was dreamed and the one dreaming. For, also in Lermontov, the border-line does not separate the two self-contained and self-identical units; it separates a unit from itself, one from oneself. The *brink* is internal, but only insofar as it dislocates the interior, spacing it out as a stage on which conflicts place themselves out.
"Another man's soul is a sleeping forest!" says the tramp about his "mamma", and to "you".

Refusing to remember the name denotes a classic anthropologic and literary trop, hence also the dream trop (when one's name is known, one is dead, as said already in Egyptian mythology). However, it is not simply that the man refuses to tell his name in his *appearance* to two constables, who tell him their names. He refuses to remember the name, thus actively asserting the uniqueness of his "I" as transference or in transference that opens with the ironic cut of his rewriting the silence. Hence, his dream's resignification comes as (a requirement for) a more human or "natural"

[31]Lacan, Jacques: The Seminar 11, ibid.

[32] Samuel Weber 2010, ibid.

law, and freedom. Helplessly, the two escorting peasants become a part of his dreams as his accomplices, both in the formal processing of the dream-narrative and in witnessing to the indispensability of the dream, performed live to them, perhaps for the first time in their lives that were committed to the Imperial Law. Still, with the reality-principle or reason at work, they redirect the wretch's dreaming to yet another closure within the imminent present, again stepping along the muddy road. Warning him of his frail condition, they dissolve his dreams, and implicitly their own dreams, too. He starts recalling the past and recent hardship of the penal colony, shivering with fear and "guilt". Stating in a sentence that the man forgot his name, Chekhov lets silence of all three close the story and the dreams for good.

Conclusion

In my analysis of these two variants of dream writing from mid and later 19th century Russian literature, a romanticist lyric poem and a pre-modernist short story, I have pointed out the ways and elements in which the dreams are presented. In both texts, it is transference that functions as a key device or structure in rendering the dreams; and along transference, as its supplement or extension, the irony as a specifically literary structure of figuration. In my reading of the topical and dynamic perspectives through which the dreams are written in both the poem and the story, I find that they correspond to Freud's theory of the "I" and his second topic of the "I", "It", "Over-I" (from the late 19th/earlier 20th century). Since Freud's psychoanalytic thought comprise literature and arts as its "borderlines" or exteriority precisely through disrupting the paradigm interior/exterior, dream-writing of any period can be related also to Freud's cultural categories.

In the dream-writing of Lermontov and Chekhov, such dynamic designates the conflictual force-fields with dual tendencies, and it was possible to depict it only in spatial and topic categories. Placing themselves outside, the conflicts are still not resolved by the effects they bring forth; they have to resort to some specifically literary and artistic devices, or to the required "you" that Cavarero ingeniously emphasizes. In both texts, (the trop of) namelessness comes as the "It"-turned-"I", who needs "you" as the substance of "I"'s transference. Such namelessness is related to narratable, writeable, aesthetic, representational structures of the dream, their causes and consequences. In Lermontov's poem, the "It" as an "impersonal gender" assumes the field of not knowing (also Lermontov's not knowing) the woman who has her own dream in which the "man dies". Hence, the lyricism takes this further from what was the unwritten of the dream.

In the story, the “It” is only seemingly known to Chekhov, whose third person narrator and the tramp’s “I” tell the story within the story. Chekhov is not sparing himself of the knowledge of a woman murdering a man, nevertheless admitting that the “It” cannot be known fully. Since “the ‘other’ man’s soul is the sleeping forest”, the “It” only gets “transposed” into the tramp’s “artistic” dreaming, and to Chekhov’s silences that technically resemble Lermontov’s lyric ellipses. The finitude that shapes every dream, every text and every life as well as every emotion, relation, or action is simply brought to conscious, to the “I” as the surface, nameless transference of the “you”, and then the irony.