

ARKADY DRAGOMOSHCHENKO'S CORRESPONDENCES

Jacob Edmond, University of Otago, New Zealand

[...] a tongue is never “just a tongue”—it is always someone’s tongue.

—Arkady Dragomoshchenko, letter to Lyn Hejinian, October 26, 1985

How can we reconcile the generalized abstractions of language, culture, society, and history with a particular text and with the person who writes or reads it? The question increasingly preoccupies literary scholars working after deconstruction and cultural studies and in our current era of globalization (e.g. Felski 2008, 4; 2009, 8–9; Chow 303–4). I want to address this question by way of the Russian poet Arkady Dragomoshchenko, whose extensive correspondence and collaboration with U.S. poet Lyn Hejinian between their first meeting in Leningrad in 1983 and the early 1990s not only pose the question but also offer a way to rethink its conceptual suppositions.

As the product of a cross-cultural encounter between two persons, their collaboration occupies the middle ground elided by the oppositions that the question presupposes. It takes the form of a bilingual correspondence that intermingles private letters with poetic texts and that addresses correspondences and non-correspondences between Russian and English, between the Soviet Union and the United States, and between language and the world. Many of Dragomoshchenko’s poems of the 1980s are dedicated to Hejinian, drafts of some poems appear in letters to her, while other poems include extracts from their letters. The poems themselves were written with a view to her translating them into English as part of their joint project “The Corresponding Sky,” which in its original English variant, coined by Hejinian in 1985, after her second visit to the Soviet Union, stresses the place of letter writing in their collaboration.

The Russian version, *Nebo sootvetstvii* [*Sky of Correspondences*], as Dragomoshchenko soon acknowledged (in a letter to Hejinian dated October 19, 1985), lacks this sense, calling to mind instead *correspondence* as a key term in Modernist poetics, especially that simultaneous invocation and negation of correspondence between language and the world which derives from

Baudelaire's "Correspondances."¹ Baudelaire's sonnet might be read as staging either the experience of urban modernity or the endless intertextual correspondences of linguistic signification. Similarly, Dragomoshchenko's poetic contribution to his collaboration with Hejinian has been taken as either a window on late-Soviet culture and its difference from the West or as singularly resistant to representation and interpretation. Caught between ethnographic exoticism and linguistic universalism, these contrasting readings grow in part out of the late-Cold War and early post-Soviet periods as they were experienced on opposing sides of the Iron Curtain.

Dragomoshchenko and Hejinian's previously inaccessible one-thousand-page correspondence, which I draw on here, offers another way to read their collaboration. It highlights the significance of poems that have received little scholarly notice and that in some cases have never been published. It equally transforms our perception of those poems that have already garnered critical attention by underscoring the interpersonal encounters that molded them. When taken as epistolary address and response to a singular other—as *co-response*—Dragomoshchenko's correspondences provide a third term outside the binaries that have constrained readings of his work. These correspondences in turn offer an alternative to the dichotomies that restrict our understanding of the moment of historical change in which his collaboration with Hejinian took place.

Correspondences

In a letter to Hejinian dated June 1, 1984, a year after their first meeting, Dragomoshchenko invokes correspondence in the mimetic sense of a relation of likeness, or equation between language and the world, and between his world and hers. He writes, "the cup of Jamshid. Remember how in it one could see the whole world? I try to 'see' yours." A year later, the "cup" becomes a key figure in Dragomoshchenko's conception of "The Corresponding Sky," which he describes in a letter to Hejinian dated October 26, 1985: "I recall how my part of the 'correspondences' began [...] every evening [Mitya and I] would take a long walk, and along the way I would discuss the 'cup' [...] I would wave my hands and come to life, because the world of objects and ideas that sprung up around the 'cup' was—and now still is—closely connected to you." But, he continues, "at the same time I thought about the *embodiment* of the tongue, about its strange sexuality in its completely simple, first sense, about how a tongue is never 'just a tongue'—it is always some-

1. All letters between Dragomoshchenko and Hejinian remain in the private collections of the authors. I am grateful to them both for permission to cite from them here. The translations of Dragomoshchenko's letters are my own, as are all other translations unless otherwise noted. Dragomoshchenko's *Sky of Correspondences* was published in *samizdat* as Dragomoshchenko 1986 and officially as Dragomoshchenko 1990c. It also appears in Dragomoshchenko 2000. The work was published in Hejinian's English translation as Dragomoshchenko 1990b.

one's tongue" (emphasis in the original). Dragomoshchenko's "cup" implies the idea of finding perfect "correspondences" between language and reality and between Russian and American worlds. By contrast, the word *iazyk* [language/tongue] transforms the search for a correspondence between another "language" or culture and one's own—the desire to bridge the collective otherness that divides the two poets between Russian and English—into a sensual encounter with another's "tongue" (see Sandler 35; Dragomoshchenko 1994d, 89; 1994f, 140).

In opposing the totality of the cup in which one can see the whole world to the singularity of a person's tongue, Dragomoshchenko underscores his later explicit rejection of "the hieratic model of poetry," which seeks "a universal language that can exhaust the coincidence between knowledge of the world and the real world" and which insists on "the possibility of perceiving the concealed unity and continuity [...] of Being" (1995, 231). The title of Dragomoshchenko and Hejinian's collaborative project alludes to the tradition—which has powerfully shaped Western poetics from Aristotle through Romanticism to the present day—of treating the lyric as an attempt to ground the universal and transcendent in sensuous experience. Reflecting both poets' debt to Romanticism (Samuels 116–17; Sandler 30; Wesling 23), "The Corresponding Sky" echoes Wordsworth's "correspondent breeze" and so the Romantic "connection between inner experience and outer analogue" signaled by apostrophic address to the elements themselves, as in Shelley's "To the West Wind" (Abrams 126). Similarly, the Russian version, *Nebo sootvetstvii*, which could be translated as "Heaven of Correspondences," suggests the related notion of vertical correspondence between the earthly and spiritual or heavenly realms as in Swedenborg's correspondences (e.g. Swedenborg 312).² *Sky of Correspondences* invokes but ultimately refuses notions of correspondence that would secure meaning and comparison: correspondence between word and world, the world and the divine; and correspondence between Russian and English, the Soviet Union and the United States. In so doing, it alludes to Baudelaire's "Correspondances," which similarly refers to but rejects Swedenborg's theories and the Romantic notion of nature as a temple ("La Nature est un temple"), a notion which in turn implies a vertical correspondence between nature and the divine (Benjamin 4: 333; Culler 120–21). Instead, "Correspondances" presents "confuses paroles [confused words]," "forêts de symboles [forests of symbols]," and "de longs échos qui de loin se confondent [prolonged echoes mingling in the distance]" in which a "profonde unité [profound unity]" seems only the product of confused and uncertain relations of likeness

2. The allusion to vertical correspondence between earth and heaven is suggested by the way Dragomoshchenko's "cup" resonates with Hejinian's notion of "paradise" as the realm of perfect knowing and perfect correspondence between language and the world. In her poem *The Guard*, completed soon after her first trip to the Soviet Union, the word "cuppings" acts like Dragomoshchenko's "cup" as a figure for paradise in this sense (Edmond 2009a, 258–60).

(“comme [like]”). These relations cannot fix meaning but rather enumerate similarities and differences in a perpetual process of response to one another (“se répondent”). The rhyme confuses (“se confondent”) echoes and responses (“se répondent”), highlighting the structure of the sonnet form and of rhyme itself, which can serve at once as a response, an echo, and a confusion of the two (Baudelaire 1975, 11–12; 1954, 23).

Through the interplay of tongue and cup, Dragomoshchenko emphasizes that “The Corresponding Sky,” like Baudelaire’s “Correspondances,” involves a process of continuous, shifting echoes—of co-response, not correspondence. In a letter to Hejinian dated March 21, 1985, he writes, “When the translation seems finished, it means one thing: translate again and again.” Walter Benjamin suggests that a translation, “instead of imitating the sense of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original’s way of meaning, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel” (1: 260). Recalling Benjamin, in a letter to Hejinian dated June 26–28, 1985, Dragomoshchenko describes how the “*desire* for wholeness and completion (eroticism?)”—Dragomoshchenko’s “cup” or Benjamin’s “vessel”—remains perpetually unfilled. He goes on to explain how the cup, undone by the “contradictory flow toward disintegration” and “dispersal,” appears only in the fragments or echoes found between the embodied tongue and the longing for totality. But by appealing to the “tongue,” and to Hejinian, and, like Baudelaire, linking “unity to an effacement of differences” (Culler 127), Dragomoshchenko more closely resembles Levinas (1989), who goes further, arguing that the “whole vessel” is preceded by a relation to “the other,” a relation that provides the grounds for our experiencing of the world (Eagleton 132). Echoing Maurice Blanchot, whom he has translated and to whom he frequently refers, Dragomoshchenko describes poetry as a mode of “responsibility” born out of the relationship between “I” and “you.”³ Blanchot’s “relation to naked presence, the presence of the other,” as in Levinas, precedes and gives rise to experience and language understood as a whole vessel experienced only in fragments—what Dragomoshchenko calls a “sourceless echo” and Blanchot terms a “plural speech” that “holds itself between” each speaker in a dialogue, but originates with neither (Blanchot 1993, 47, 212, 215; Dragomoshchenko 1990b, 21). Dragomoshchenko’s and Hejinian’s letters, collaborations, and translations involve neither completion nor unity but continuous co-response—an exchange of languages, of tongues. The unfilled cup results not just from the encounter and non-correspondence between one cul-

3. Dragomoshchenko 1990b, 21. Dragomoshchenko refers to Blanchot in 1995, 227–28; 1994c, 3; 1994a, 35, 224–25. His translation of Blanchot’s essay “The Gaze of Orpheus” appears as Dragomoshchenko 1990d. Russian translations of Blanchot were also published in the *samizdat* journal *Predlog* (1984–89), which Dragomoshchenko helped to establish. On the journal, see Dolinin et al. 443–44.

ture and another, nor solely from the endless possible iterations of translation, but from an encounter between two people, who, even if they share the same language, have tongues that can only ever meet for an instant in erotic touch.

Dragomoshchenko's poetics of co-response engages a pressing question for literary studies in our age of globalization: what to do when reading across languages and cultures is ever more important, but when at the same time the notion of cultural unity, totality, or vertical correspondence to a universal ceases to be tenable? Co-response does not conform to the binary structure of particular and universal, local and global, notions around which recent debates about world literature, comparative literature, and cross-cultural reading continue to oscillate even as the idea of universal correspondence is increasingly questioned. Like Rey Chow's Kantian vision for comparative literature, co-response involves "*reflection* on the ability to represent and evaluate [cultural difference] per se," but it differs from Chow's binary "oscillating process of judgement" between singularity and the "movement to reach the universal" (303–4). More than just presenting "the 'transcendental object' of the Kantian tradition" as "unknowable," as others have claimed, Dragomoshchenko rejects the particular/transcendent, singular/universal, local/global dichotomies that inhere in Kant's notion of "*Zusammensetzung*"—the bringing together of fragments in a unified image (Watten 2003, 318; Iampolskii 374; see also Ioffe's and Pavlov's essays in this issue). Dragomoshchenko's poetic correspondences offer an alternative model based on encounters between particulars or fragments that respond to one another but never unify. Just as Baudelaire's poem presents the passerby's encounters with familiar but unplaceable glances ("regards familiers"), Dragomoshchenko stresses the constitutive role of encounters, which highlight the insufficiency of the fragment/whole, local/global, particular/general binary, an inadequacy felt particularly acutely during a period of historical and geopolitical flux and intense personal, cross-cultural, and interlingual exchange.

Like Baudelaire's "Correspondances," Dragomoshchenko's letters to Hejinian emphasize how not just translations but all texts correspond to—or "echo"—other texts, a view that would seem to dismiss the individual subject and historical location but which here emerges out of his response to a singular other. In a letter dated June 1, 1984, Dragomoshchenko writes of translating Hejinian's 1984 long poem *The Guard*: "I called your letters poems—it's amazing, but these two parts from *The Guard* [...] naturally mixed with the letters!—they became a continuation, a foretelling [...], and not only because they hide 'citations,' many of which now sound to me as though *I* had written them—but you too write that the letter has for you become a poem." Here he echoes Barthes's view that "the 'I' which approaches the text is already a plurality of other texts" (16). This statement opens Dragomoshchenko's long poem in 19 sections "Uzhin s privetlivymi bogami" [A Supper with Affable Gods] and is reinforced at the outset of the poem by the insistence:

odization, national literature, and cross-cultural comparison. The letters from Hejinian and Molnar, conspicuously headed "Berkeley" and "London," emphasize the transnational coordinates of Dragomoshchenko's poetics through a complicated triangular correspondence that does not conform to a conventional East/West formula. The letter from Hejinian reveals that both she and Molnar are translating Dragomoshchenko's writing, and both hers and Molnar's letters consider questions of wholeness and fragmentation. Hejinian asks "what does the line mean to you? When for example it is broken?" Molnar's letter suggests his discomfort with Hejinian's "fragments of sense and words." In lacking unity or coherence, Hejinian's poetry risks, Molnar suggests, the "banality of common absurdity" (Dragomoshchenko 1985, 48–49). By showing Hejinian's desire to retranslate the same poems already translated by Molnar, and Molnar's uncertain reaction to reading her poetry, Dragomoshchenko emphasizes major aesthetic differences between the two and so the likelihood of their differing interpretations and translations—or echoes—of his work. Dragomoshchenko's use of fragmentation and echoes provokes a conversation about poetics. This conversation equally highlights the difficulty of placing his work within a varied and multilateral literary field which is itself exemplified by the fragmented, aesthetically contradictory positions of his translators.

The poem also addresses Dragomoshchenko's internal Russian affiliations and the rise of interest in Postmodernism that coincided with his meeting and correspondence with Hejinian.⁴ It does so through its assertion of Western affiliations, the inclusion of a letter from Leningrad writer Boris Ostanin, and its venue of publication. A poem that has come to be seen as marking Dragomoshchenko's "linguistic turn" (Skidan), "A Supper with Affable Gods" appeared in 1985 as the opening work of the first issue of *Mitin zhurnal*, the *samizdat* journal that in the following few years would publish almost all his work and become the flagship for the new Russian literature associated with the term *Postmodernism* (Ivanov 195; Kuz'min). Writing also in 1985, the editor of *Mitin zhurnal*, Dmitry Volchek, described the journal as engaged in "a secret war" with the "realism" promoted by Boris Ivanov, a leading unofficial writer, on behalf of the "playful culture" [*igrovaia kul'tura*] of writers such as Dragomoshchenko. With its appeal to transnational and Western affiliations through cross-cultural correspondence, and its highly unconventional style and structure, "A Supper with Affable Gods" typifies the new writing's resistance to placement within the boundaries of a national literary tradition and its tendency to provoke a heated response. In December 1983, using a recording of Hejinian reading her work, Dragomoshchenko presented an irreverent multi-

4. On June 8, 1983, just two days before Hejinian arrived in the Soviet Union for the first time, a poetic evening took place in Moscow that has subsequently been mythologized by Mikhail Epstein as the originating moment of "metarealism," a tendency in Russian poetry that Epstein associates with Postmodernism and links to Dragomoshchenko (2).

media recital that antagonized not only the KGB but also the more aesthetically conservative members of Leningrad's unofficial literary community (Michael Molnar to Hejinian, Feb. 13 [1984], Hejinian Papers, box 27, folder 7; Aleksandr Kan to Hejinian, Jan. 30 [1984], Hejinian Papers, box 5, folder 8). Similarly, one disgusted reader of an issue of *Mitin zhurnal*, perhaps prompted by Dragomoshchenko's unconventional poetry, went so far as to burn her copy in her bath (Dmitry Volchek to Hejinian, Oct. 27, 1985, Hejinian Papers, box 36, folder 28). "A Supper with Affable Gods" highlights the aesthetic conflict within unofficial literary circles through a reference to the "Silver Age" poetry associated with more conservative members of the *samizdat* community, by anticipating criticisms that those who write poetry of this kind "don't know how to write normally," and by the inclusion of a letter from Ostanin, who in 1986 would publish a highly influential essay on the rift between the conservative aesthetics dominant in unofficial culture and the new developments exemplified by Volchek's *Mitin zhurnal* (Dragomoshchenko 1985, 10, 18–19; Ostanin and Kobak).

In underscoring this split within unofficial culture, Dragomoshchenko's poem illustrates more than the binary logic of late-Cold War poetics in the Soviet Union: such internal differentiations and the poem's staging of a complex series of personal interactions—including with Hejinian, Molnar, and Ostanin—belie monolithic accounts of official and unofficial late-Soviet culture and its relation to Western Postmodernism. Hejinian's visit to Russia in 1983 with her husband's Rova Saxophone Quartet, for example, was only possible because of the interrelationship between unofficial Soviet culture and the authorities. Rova's concert in Leningrad took place only because of Club-81, a grouping of unofficial writers, supervised by the KGB but supposedly "independent in aesthetic matters," who were allowed to meet regularly to discuss their work at the Dostoyevsky Museum.⁵ Dragomoshchenko played a role in establishing Club-81; the club itself was seen as an example

5. An account of the establishment of Club-81, and the club's statutes, including this statement regarding aesthetic independence, were printed in the *samizdat* journal *Chasy* ([Account]). Exactly why the KGB allowed the initiative to go ahead and whose idea it was to set up the club remain matters of some historical controversy. As Mikhailichenko documents, both the writers and the KGB officers involved claim it was their idea. As head of the KGB at the time of the club's establishment, Andropov may have had some role in the initiative as part of his concurrent campaign against Brezhnev's supporters, including Grigory Romanov, the Party boss of Leningrad and a member of the Politburo (Solovyov and Klepikova 164). In 1983 the Rova Quartet performed at the museum under the club's auspices after the Leningrad authorities refused to allow the concert to go ahead at the planned venue. Hejinian's diary entry from June 14, 1983, after Brezhnev had died and Andropov had assumed the position of General Secretary, supports the theory that the club served to undermine Romanov's authority: "The City Council of Leningrad, under the directorship of a powerful Party Member and member of the Politburo named Romanov, has refused to give permission for a concert, so an unofficial concert is to take place at the Dostoevsky Museum, which is where Club 81 meets. The Club is sanctioned by the KGB, which runs the Dostoevsky Museum" (Notebook, June 7–15, 1983, Hejinian Papers, box 47, folder 1).

of his and some of his contemporaries' self-styled indifference to politics, an indifference that Ostanin and Kobak also singled out in describing the new literature associated with *Mitin zhurnal* (18).⁶

Despite his multifarious personal and poetic engagements within and beyond the Soviet Union, when Dragomoshchenko's work attracted the attention of U.S. critics in the late 1980s and early 1990s, these critics read his work for what it revealed about the differences between Russian and U.S. culture and poetry. Responding to his connection with Hejinian and the excitement surrounding political and cultural changes in the Soviet Union, they echoed the binaries of Cold War rhetoric through references to "our two poetries," insisting Western "postmodernism" and Dragomoshchenko's work were "incommensurate" and suggesting that "Russian Postmodernism" was an "oxymoron" (Perloff 1993; Watten 2003, 320). Implicitly or explicitly opposing these socially, historically, and culturally located readings in ways that reflect their own historical, social, and political location, several Russian critics have approached his poetry outside such contexts, as an engagement with language as such.⁷ Their critical approach insists on the independence of aesthetics from politics and reflects a desire to avoid easy placement within a Russian tradition. Just as U.S. readers have seen Dragomoshchenko through dichotomized American and Russian contexts, so Russian critics have tended to privilege language as a universalized force outside history, society, and politics. In both cases, they largely ignore how the embodied, personal encounter between Dragomoshchenko and Hejinian and the broader context of multilateral interconnections together unsettle the views of culture and language upon which their readings are respectively based.

6. Dragomoshchenko later claimed, "I wasn't considered a dissident because I didn't know how to do it properly" (qtd. in Sakina 241). Elsewhere, he describes literature as offering him at this time a "tiny sanctuary of power," separate from its social, political, and historical context (Dragomoshchenko 1999a). Dragomoshchenko's position maintained the notion of independence from official culture, which was "a consciously developed and defining myth of the Leningrad scene" (Komaromi 605). See also Savitskii 5; and Ostanin's (2002) strongly expressed belief in the independence of Leningrad unofficial culture in which he participated and with which he contrasts the situation in Moscow. Yet Dragomoshchenko departed from the views of more aesthetically conservative *samizdat* writers such as Viktor Krivulin and Boris Ivanov in emphasizing indifference rather than opposition. By contrast, Ivanov describes the *samizdat* writers of the 1970s and early 1980s in heroic terms as "a generation of authors who had *never* crossed the threshold of the Writers' or Artists' Union, and who had *never* submitted their manuscripts to state, that is Party, publishers" (196–97; emphasis in the original). For more on the unofficial literary scene in Leningrad during this period, see Edmond 2009b.

7. Pavlov argues against the social and political framing of Dragomoshchenko's poetics (1998). Berezovchuk describes Dragomoshchenko the sociocultural figure and Dragomoshchenko the poet as "two completely different people" (206). Similarly, Iampolsky discusses Dragomoshchenko's work as presenting the capacity of language in general to resist the establishment of place (361). Even Dmitry Golynko-Volfson—who does discuss Dragomoshchenko's poetry through its encounter with the American "other" and notes sociocultural differences between the two—emphasizes common understandings of language.

Arkady Dragomoshchenko's Correspondences 535

<p>В ожидании письма в сентябрь превращается август. Снег сходит утром с лица, снились туман, апрель, поля, в словах — дыхание.</p>	<p>In anticipation of a letter August turns into September. Snow falls from the face in the morning, fog, April, fields are dreamed in words—breath.</p>
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(2000, 315)

The poem opposes the bodily proximity of the “face” and “speech,” implied here by “breath” and the breath-like “fog,” to the distance marked by the word *pis'mo*, which here seems best translated as “a letter,” in the pair’s long-distance, cross-cultural, and multilingual correspondence, but which can also mean “writing” and so links the cultural, linguistic, and geographic divides between them to the distancing effected by written language as opposed to “speech.” “Breath” functions as a visceral marker of fogginess, non-correspondence, indeterminacy, dreams, and yet also stands for embodied closeness against the distance of letters, telephone conversations, and written language. The poem links proximity to distance, personal correspondence to the totality of language and culture—the latter through the clichéd references to “snow” and “fog” here and elsewhere in Dragomoshchenko’s contributions to “The Corresponding Sky.” Dragomoshchenko locates the link “in words.” “Words” mark the poem’s distance from its subject—the gap between “words” on the page and the “snow falls” and “fog” they describe. But they are also viscerally proximate: the poem’s “words” can be touched or breathed upon by both correspondents, by writer and reader.

Writing about translating Hejinian’s poetry in his June 1, 1984, letter to her, Dragomoshchenko merges the immediacy of face-to-face encounter with the mediation of language. “‘Becoming used to’ [Hejinian’s] *writing* [*pis'mo*]” again means becoming used to her “letter [*pis'mo*]” to him and even to her face: “My tongue, my eyes, my hearing, skin, sense of smell, reactions are fully subordinate to you, to your lines, to that which lies between them and that must arise in the Russian language in my feelings.” In the same letter, Dragomoshchenko writes that his translation aims to resist “conscious interpretation [...] filling the cup of the text with content that is pure in its inexpression.” Yet Dragomoshchenko appeals to the abstraction of “pure [...] inexpression” through an explicitly erotic image. The image upsets the totality of the cup and of language as an abstract force. *Iazyk* as singular, bodily “tongue” in the mouth of each poet again unsettles *iazyk* as “language.” “Breath” and “tongue” transform an abstracted cross-cultural reading (in “words” or “language”) into a face-to-face encounter.

Dragomoshchenko’s poem “Obuchenie chistote v smeshannom” [Instructing Clarity in a Confusion], written for “The Corresponding Sky,” also blends text and body, language and face, but complicates his own use of the cup as a figure for perfect correspondence:

The poem stages the desire for “response” from the other, a desire which “separates us” but allows “us” to encounter each other face-to-face, eye-to-eye, though always through a “distorted [...] glass.” The reader seeking the world of the implied speaker through the “cup” of the poem finds instead the “spark” and “flash” of fragmented meaning, just as the speaker sees or hears (“Listen”; “Unseen”) the “mouth” [*rot*] of the other through a glass cup: “as if someone’s ant-like mouth / were distorted on the glass [*budto / murav'inyi rot / kogo-to, / iskrivlennyi na stakane*].” While the image of the cup in Dragomoshchenko’s poetics promises perfect apprehension of the other’s “world,” the distorted mouth suggests that language, translation, and cross-cultural encounter affect how one perceives and remembers, so that “the floor changes places with the ceiling” and “memory is no more than a flaw”—a pun Hejinian introduces in her translation, underscoring how language resists “stagnant meaning.” Like the “glass,” the poem fragments the other’s face into “mouth,” “eyes” [*glaza*], “eyelashes” [*resnitsy*], “eyelids” [*veka*], “lips” [*guby*], and “forehead” [*lob*], transforming the concrete body into isolated, “disembodied” [*bestelesnyi*] body parts and, in the case of *gub* and *lob*, shared sounds. Wordplay makes the “bare” or “naked” [*gol*] body a “hum” [*gul*]. Dragomoshchenko chooses a *stakan* [glass cup] that distorts, intoxicates (“in a [...] drunken daze [*v [...] khmel'nom chadu*]”), and turns the world upside down (“the floor changes places with the ceiling”), rather than a *chashka* [cup] that contains its contents opaquely. Here he perhaps alludes to his March 21, 1985, letter to Hejinian, in which he writes about how to translate the word *chashka*, after she proposed her own key term “cuppings.” The whole “vessel” becomes a myriad of imperfect containers—*stakan*, *chashka*, “glass,” “cup,” and “cuppings”—which fragment into myriad meanings, like a face seen through a faceted glass.

The poem that prompted Dragomoshchenko and Hejinian’s correspondence over translating the word *chashka*, “Primechaniia” [Footnotes], conflates not just the body and language, but also letter writing and poetry. Dragomoshchenko’s “Footnotes” calls for the reader to respond to the interplay between direct address and cultural and linguistic otherness with multiple readings that would match the poem’s many versions. Differing versions of the poem appear in Dragomoshchenko’s first English-language collection (1990b, 79–80; in Hejinian’s translation), in an anthology (1999b, 268–71; in Russian and in another translation by Hejinian), and in his selected poems *Opisanie* [Description] (2000, 308–9). Yet while “Footnotes” itself has been discussed in relation to Hejinian and Dragomoshchenko’s translations between their two languages and cultures (Edmond 2002, 556–61; Perloff 1991, 218–19), another, less discussed poem by Dragomoshchenko, which includes a four-line quotation from “Footnotes” (also noted by Skidan), suggests an alternative reading of his collaboration with Hejinian that would foreground instead personal, embodied encounter and letter writing over the abstractions

538 *Slavic and East European Journal*

of interlingual and intercultural exchange. This fifteen-line poem opens *Pod podozreniem* [*Under Suspicion*] (first published as Dragomoshchenko 1994e) and his selected poems. The lines that overlap with the various versions of “Footnotes” are included in the following:

март ежегодно	March yearly
разворачивает наст сознания,	scatters the snowcrust of consciousness,
перестраивая облака	transforming the clouds
в иное, опять в иное письмо:	into another and again another letter:
вновь невнятно.	unintelligible once more.
Меня больше там,	There is more of me where
где я о себе забываю.	I forget about my self.
Нагие,	Naked,
как законы грамматики,	like the laws of grammar,
головы запрокинув.	heads thrown back.
(2000, 15)	

The line “another and again another letter” emphasizes many versions and invites multiple readings, though the line itself appears only in this version. Dragomoshchenko again exploits the ambiguity of the Russian word for both “letter” and “writing” [*pis'mo*] to fuse particular and general readings by alluding to the letters from Hejinian, their collaborative writing project that emerges from these letters, and written language as an elemental force, like “snow” and “clouds.” Letters fly like “clouds” across the “corresponding sky” that separates and unites the two, punctuating the year (“*ezhegodno* [yearly]”), just as “in anticipation of a letter / August turns into September” above. The differing letters (“another and again another letter”) mark time passing but also suggest that the “writing” is “*inoe* [other],” written in another language or tongue, *inoiazychnyi*, by a foreigner, *inostranets*, and so “unintelligible [*nevniatno*].” In one interpretation, I take “unintelligible” to refer to the foreign letter and so read the lines as a personal reference to Hejinian and Dragomoshchenko’s friendship. But in “another [*inoe*]” reading, the poem generalizes the personal and cross-cultural encounter, presenting “writing” as “*inoe* [other],” and the foreign language as ultimately a product of language in general, which is an “unintelligible,” impersonal force, like the weather.

The four lines that the poem shares with the other versions immediately follow this ambiguous assertion of unintelligibility. These lines describe and enact how language unsettles the boundaries of self and other, so that the pronouns “I” and the implied “you” and “we” (the grammatical subject of “naked” in other versions of the poem) become “naked,” disembodied elements of a “grammar.” This “other writing” resembles what Blanchot calls the “speech of detour, the ‘poetry’ in the turn of writing, [...] wherein time turns”: that is, language that moves away from any fixed correspondence between word and world and between one world and another (Blanchot 1993,

23; Bruns 122). The iterating “another and again another writing” suggests Blanchot’s turning of time, which turns “the world [...] upside down,” an image literalized in “Instructing Clarity in a Confusion,” “when the floor changes places with the ceiling” (Blanchot 1982, 216; Dragomoshchenko 1990c, 26; 1990b, 50). Language’s strange force “scatters [...] consciousness,” unsettling its “snowcrust” [*nast*] rigidity, pluralizing “me” (“there is more of me”), and transforming the lyric “I” into impersonal “writing.” Like Baudelaire’s “forests of symbols,” the poem here invokes an analogy with the natural world only to collapse correspondence between words and world under the force of language’s relentless signification, staged through the repetition of another poem—“another writing.”

In transforming lyric address into linguistic play, the poem invites yet “another [*inoe*]” reading attuned to the erotic self-exposure of the “naked” [*nagoi*] lyric “I,” suggesting “there is more of me where / I forget about my self,” and “transforming” a generalized reading back into a particular one. The plural adjective “Nagie [naked]” realizes the multiplying “I” (“more of me”) and suggests a link between the “I” and the “you” who is implied by the “I” and by the letters. Their shared upward gaze mediates their face-to-face encounter through the sky, weather, and language, in “The Corresponding Sky.” The gaze skyward returns the reader to the “clouds” that transform into writing or letters between the “I” and the “you,” setting writing and their relationship into endless motion. Because the final sentence lacks a subject, “naked” might refer to any plural noun or pronoun and so alternates between uniting the “I” and “you” and eliminating the poem’s personal address. Other versions read “mother stands over us at the foot of the bed, / we are naked in bed like the laws of grammar,” heightening the erotic lyric self-exposure by suggesting a sexual encounter that links the “scene of writing” in the poem to Freud’s “primal scene” and to the “even more ‘primal’ [...] biblical scene of ‘knowledge,’” when Adam and Eve became cognizant that they were “naked” (Dragomoshchenko 1999b, 268; 2000, 308; Skidan). In translating the line, Hejinian implies their location by mentioning a “bed” in the previous line, but she does not include the words “in bed,” reinforcing the interplay between exposing and concealing or unsettling the lyric self (1999b, 269). By removing the pronoun and the bed, Dragomoshchenko also shifts the poem’s personal lyric address toward impersonal linguistic play, but by leaving the plural subject suggestively undefined, he equally lets the poem oscillate between revealing and concealing its own “naked” lyric self.

Moving between self-referential, echoing language and the contrary correlation of words to nature, Dragomoshchenko presents a “naked” autobiographical encounter, while “transforming” it into writing, which the iterative power of language divorces from a single primal scene (“naked”), and from the limits of the natural world (“clouds”) and personal experience (“consciousness”). Rewriting the poem, from his letter to Hejinian, to her transla-

tion, to the multiple versions he “scatters” across his books, he links the varieties of the weather to his iterating linguistic method—“another and again another writing”—and to the recursive everyday act of letter writing—“another and again another letter.” He thus undermines a reading of the poem that stresses either the intertextual correspondences of language, or the search for correspondence between language and the world, over personal address and lyric self-exposure. The poem points skywards, but should we seek in that sky natural signs to be read, a rhetorical gesture toward language’s infinite plurality, or a conduit through which his and Hejinian’s letters and poems journey to and from Russia, as they come to us even today? Dragomoshchenko en-folds generalized deconstructive readings and readings that relate language to the world by inviting the reader to partake in his poetics of co-response, producing “another and again another” reading.

Dragomoshchenko’s “Accidia” presents itself as deriving from multiple readings, or misreadings, connecting letter and poetry writing, the body, reading, language, and translation to explore the relationship between generalized cross-cultural and linguistic readings and personal face-to-face encounter (1990a, 216–21; 1990b, 83–90). If “Footnotes,” the immediately preceding poem in his English collection *Description*, can be read as a footnote to Dragomoshchenko and Hejinian’s letters, “Accidia” presents the letters as a footnote to the poem. Dragomoshchenko frames the poem as extending his and Hejinian’s letter writing by including a lengthy note to the poem taken from a letter to Hejinian. In the note, he explains how “Accidia” began with his misreading of a phrase from Hejinian, which he took to be “everything begins as an error of vision.” His personal and interlingual reading produces the generalized (“everything”) and uncontainable play of language and translation that, like Blanchot’s “plural speech,” replaces the subject’s ordinary intended meaning with impersonal “error.” Underscoring the personal, embodied encounter, Dragomoshchenko quotes extensively from the letter where he discusses his misreading.

A part of the same letter (dated Feb. 23–24, 1984) not quoted in the note describes the sensuous pleasure of receiving a letter from Hejinian, transforming disembodied writing into embodied speech: “How happy I am to hear you again, to guess—perhaps mainly made up by me—at your intonation, your speech, reading it [the letter] again and again.” Inverting how his note moves from intimate encounter to generalized language, Dragomoshchenko produces an embodied encounter by misreading or mistranslating writing into speech, recalling how, in a poem discussed above and sent as a letter to Hejinian, “writing” or a “letter” becomes “breath.” He produces an “error of vision” in two senses, not just mistranslating Hejinian’s English phrase but confusing sight and hearing, text and body, impersonal linguistic play and intimate face-to-face encounter. Dragomoshchenko’s note explains that he subsequently removed his mistranslation of Hejinian’s line from the

Arkady Dragomoshchenko's Correspondences 541

beginning of the poem, presenting the poem itself as an error, an error he underscores by excluding the poem from his Russian collections (Sandler 40). The generalized "error" erases the singular encounter and lyric disclosure, finally eliminating the poem altogether, but the resultant ghost text continues to haunt his writing (he reuses the title in Dragomoshchenko 2005), inviting both autobiographical and generalized linguistic and cross-cultural readings.

"Accidia" oscillates between the general and particular through its refrain "one should break / the mirror / of language":

следует
разбить
зеркало

языка. Плохая примета—разбитое зеркало. Как-то в летнее утро я был разбужен нечеловеческим воем: кричала мать: повесился дед.

Поднимался жаром пышущий день, мотыльков стаи в то лето метались без устали над огородами. Путался шелест в аравийских черепах мака. Все начинается с ошибки зрения, с распыления вещи, замершей в обреченном единстве (учиться сквозь сон, как другое, распознавать предметы и вещи,—таково обручение).

(1990a, 216)

one should
break
the mirror

of language. A broken mirror is a bad sign. One morning in summer I was awakened by an inhuman howling: my mother was crying: my grandfather had hanged himself.

The seething day formed in its own heat. That summer swarms of butterflies bustled ceaselessly above the vegetable gardens. In the Arabian skulls of poppies their rustling was confused. Everything begins as an error of vision, with the disintegration of the thing arrested in its doomed unity (learn through dreaming, identify subjects and things, as other—such is an exchange of rings).

(1990b, 83; modified translation)

Like Dragomoshchenko's "cup," his "mirror" suggests mimesis: holding a mirror up to reality. But the mirror also describes, as elsewhere in his writing, the illusionistic qualities of language (Dragomoshchenko 1994b, 127; Edmond 2002, 556) and, here especially, how language reflects one's own image. The poem's "mirror / of language" appears to reflect the unspeakable real and show the lyric subject disclosing his innermost secrets. Read in this way, the poem describes a lyric subject haunted by the memory of the moment when his "mother" discovered that his "grandfather," perhaps her father, "had hanged himself." While the poem's language reflects the world and the lyric subject's memory, "Accidia" also associates the memory with the mirror's shattering and the shift from lyric poetry to prose. Beginning the shift to prose layout, the sentence "A broken mirror is a bad sign" immediately precedes the shocking news. The poem breaks the "mirror," registering language's failure to represent the moment when a life shatters, a moment conveyable only through "inhuman howling," "crying," and, in the poem's final word, a "scream [vizg]." The shocking encounter with the real ruptures lan-

guage and shifts the subject from narcissism into an encounter with the other. The final line quoted above suggests that breaking the mirror not only draws language's transparency into question but also places the self and the generalizing notion of language in doubt through a singular encounter with the "other" [*drugoe*], implicitly here not just "things" but also the speaker of another language, Hejinian, to whom the poem is dedicated.

"Accidia" presents a breathless, intimate encounter with memory and translator, but also generalizes the visceral embodied cry, questioning how to relate language to the world. Errors and mirrors reveal the ghosts that haunt language and the psyche, ghosts visible only through "the mirror / of language," which breaks to reveal "the disintegration of the thing arrested in its doomed unity"—exposed in the wordplay between *obrechennyi* [doomed, inevitable] and *obruchen'e* [the exchange of rings in a wedding]. Here two words signifying binding are also linked by their similar-sounding roots, *rech'* and *ruk*, "speech" and "hands." These semantic and phonemic resemblances at once connect the spoken word to the hand's touch and, like Baudelaire's "Correspondances," disperse language in a play of similarities that refuses the unity of mimetic correspondence. Addressing and incorporating the words of the other—be it Hejinian or the mother—the poem's broken mirror reflects the abstracting otherness of language and translation in the face of a singular encounter.

Windows

Dragomoshchenko's final poem in *Sky of Correspondences*, "Nasturtsiia kak real'nost'" [Nasturtium as Reality], oscillates between an intimate, personal poetics and a principled resistance to location. Describing a nasturtium viewed through a rain-spotted windowpane, the 12-part poem appeals to an immediate object and to its faraway dedicatee, Hejinian. Yet it resists reifying object and addressee, meaning and place, highlighting instead the frames, slip-pages, and translations through which language represents "reality" and through which the poem is read. The observer-nasturtium relationship becomes a metaphor for the reader and writer and for views from inside and outside a given context, including the differing views engendered by Hejinian and Dragomoshchenko's cross-cultural encounter and translations, which, like the rain-spotted windowpane, produce "an error of vision." By questioning the "window" through which the world is described—or, as in "Accidia," "the mirror / of language"—the poem unsettles the cross-cultural reader, who, like the reader of lyric poetry, looks, in the poem's repeated phrase, "over someone else's shoulder," seeking an intimate window on another's reality. "Nasturtium as Reality" demands a comparative poetics that negotiates between location and non-location—between reading literature for what it says about a particular place, time, and culture, and for its dislocated play of language. The poem complicates generalizing cross-cultural framing and linguistic readings—the

window through which one reads the cultural or linguistic other —by depicting singular critical, poetic, and personal encounters.

“Nasturtium as Reality” shuttles between language and embodied, often erotic, encounter, prompting contrasting generalizing readings that emphasize either cultural and historical location or the dislocating power of language. The poem concludes both Dragomoshchenko’s first and only Soviet collection, *Nebo sootvetstviu* [*Sky of Correspondences*] (1990c), and his first English-language collection, *Description* (1990b). Due to its placement within each collection and its appearance not long before the breakup of the Soviet Union, it came to be read in the West as expressing a “post-Soviet subjectivity” that differed fundamentally from Western Postmodernism: whereas Dragomoshchenko’s poetry was said to be grounded in a place and time, Postmodernism was placeless and globalized (Perloff 1993; Watten 2003, 303, 316–20). For Russian critics writing after the fall of the Soviet Union, however, his poetry was not “a representational practice specific to a given context, and thus [...] something [...] determined by, or reducible to, a habitual set of national attributes current at a given moment” (Pavlov 1998). Where, for example, Marjorie Perloff argued that Dragomoshchenko’s “Footnotes” presented a strange but reified poetic “vision,” Mikhail Iampolsky described a poetics of “non-place” that negated vision in favor of touch and refused any position, frame, or location (Perloff 1991, 218–19; Iampolskii 357–78).

The title “Nasturtium as Reality” invites and complicates these contrasting readings. It suggests the desire to address reality, which U.S. poet and critic Barrett Watten takes to be “post-Soviet subjectivity,” defined as “a reconciliation of collective memory and empirical truth,” in which “subjectivity is constituted in its immanent horizons of lyric continuity, collective memory, and scientific objectivity” (2003, 303, 318). But the title also represents a humorous riposte to the idea that the poem might encapsulate reality. The preposterous act of taking a nasturtium as reality might parallel the act of taking a poem to provide a window on another world, such as post-Soviet subjectivity. As with the title, the poem as a whole unsettles generalizing cross-cultural, historical, located readings and dislocated, linguistic readings through intersecting relationships between observer and nasturtium, writer and reader, Russian and American poets.

The poem highlights and unsettles its own linguistic play through embodied autobiographical and cross-cultural encounter. Although Watten argues that “cultural and personal memory are fragmented and recombined in the form of a material text rather than the embodiment of the poet,” the poem nevertheless highlights bodily encounters and invites readings that connect the poem to the literal body of the poet (2003, 295). “Nasturtium as Reality” employs the figure of chiasmus, transforming embodied experience into language and back again, in a ceaseless movement that “continuously introduces the subtext motif of correspondence” (Iampolskii 372–74). By intertwining language and body,

544 *Slavic and East European Journal*

the poem presents a phenomenological reality arising through the interactions between perceiver and perceived. Recalling Levinas (1989), who argues that the ethical relationship or co-response precedes ontology and epistemology, “Nasturtium as Reality” insists on mutually constituting relationships with others as the precondition of “reality,” on co-response before correspondence.

The poem undermines the quasi-scientific objective discourse of its opening lines not only through textual play but also by appealing to embodied relations between self and other:

Опыт
описания изолированного предмета
определен предвосхищением итога—
взглядом через плечо другого.

Настурция состоит
из дождливой прорвы окна
для себя самой «до»,
для меня— «за». Кому достоянье
рдеющей
дрожи
спрессованного обнажения
в проеме обоюдоострых предлогов
у
створчатой плоскости,
прозрачность
разящей
стекла?

(1990c, 52–53)

An attempt
to describe an isolated object
determined by the anticipation of the resulting whole—
by a glance over someone else’s shoulder.

A nasturtium composed
of holes in the rain-spotted window
to itself it’s “in front,”
to me, “behind.” Whose is the property
of the gleaming
tremor
of compressed disclosure
in the opening of double-edged prepositions
in
a folded plane
which strikes
the transparency
of the glass?

(1990b, 93; modified translation)

The poem responds to the other, undermining any straightforward correspondence to the world—denying Benjamin’s “whole vessel,” or Dragomo-

shchenko's "cup," or here "the resulting whole," "sum," or "answer" [*itog*]. Through "anticipation" or "*predvoskhishchen'e*," the poem's "object" or "*predmet*" becomes subjective and relational. The two words' shared, "double-edged" prefix *pred*—which also functions as a preposition signifying "in front of," "before," or "prior to"—links the words, suggesting relation precedes object and subject. The "glance over someone else's shoulder" further implies that description depends on interpersonal relations, on "someone else," or "the other [*drugogo*]," and that the writer is glancing over his shoulder, conscious that the text addresses an audience who helps constitute the poem as "object." Just as the describer's "anticipation" undermines the attempt to describe an "isolated object" outside its relation to the describer, so the poem refuses to be "isolated" by anticipating multiple readings and diverse readers—Russian and English-speaking since the text was written to be translated by Hejinian.⁸ Neither poem nor "description" produces an "*itoga*" ("resulting whole," "sum," "answer") because its half-rhyme partner, "*drugogo* [the other]" (pronounced *drugova*), always undermines "the whole" by suggesting someone or something else outside the object, the self, the poem, or the window.

The nasturtium becomes one figure for that other, and the poem a metaphor for embodied cross-cultural encounter. The feminine noun *nasturtsiia* [nasturtium] confronts the implied male poet figure across the neutral—and, in Russian, neuter—space of the "window" [*okno*], suggesting a parallel between the encounter of the describer and the nasturtium through the windowpane and Dragomoshchenko and Hejinian's cross-cultural correspondence across the half-transparency of cultural and linguistic difference. Dedicated to Hejinian, the poem forms part of "The Corresponding Sky," and its male poet figure is later named "Arkady Trofimovich" and "A. T. D.," Dragomoshchenko's first name and patronymic and initials, respectively. The window is a commonplace figure for the relationship between Russia

8. It seems reasonable to assume that Dragomoshchenko wrote "Nasturtium as Reality" with the idea that Hejinian would translate it. As part of the "Corresponding Sky" collaboration initiated in May 1985, they had been sending poems to each other for over a year by the time Hejinian reported in her September 6, 1986, letter to him that she had received his "new" poem "Nasturtsiia"—or what she translates in the letter as "A Nasturtium Like Reality." At this time, Hejinian's role as a translator of Dragomoshchenko's work was already well established: she wrote in the same letter that she and her co-translator, Elena Balashova, had "a rough draft [translation] of half *The Corresponding Sky*" and suggested that the "Sun & Moon book" of Dragomoshchenko's poems in English translation (which would be published as *Description*) might include "both works." Although Hejinian writes of "The Corresponding Sky" and "Nasturtium as Reality" as separate works here, Dragomoshchenko clearly thought of the latter as part of the former since he included it in *Nebo sootvetstviu* when it was first published that year. Dragomoshchenko's dedication of the poem to Hejinian, which appears in this original 1986 publication in *Mitin zhurnal*, supports the view that he wrote it with Hejinian and her translations in mind.

and the West that derives from Pushkin's famous description of Peter the Great founding St. Petersburg, Dragomoshchenko's adopted hometown, in order to "cut a window through to Europe" (4: 274). In *The Bronze Horseman*, Pushkin contrasts the desire for an overnight Westernization of Russia through the creation of a new city with the less-than-utopian and deeply unsettled result. A number of writers, artists, and filmmakers found that Pushkin's poem articulated the uncertain relation between Russia and the West with renewed resonance during the late-Soviet and early post-Soviet periods, as, for example, in the 1993 film *Okno v Parizh* [*Window to Paris*], in which the occupants of a Petersburg apartment discover a magical window that transports them directly to Paris (Mamin; see also Chances). Written on the cusp of Russia's opening up to the West, Dragomoshchenko's poem anticipates this broader cultural moment.

Reflecting their uncertain relations, both the "I" and the "nasturtium" occupy only relative positions: they exist behind "prepositions" [*predlogi*], as well as each being positioned through the prepositions *do* and *za* "behind" and "in front" of the window. Relation undermines entity and identity in bodily, sensuous, even sensual terms. *Obnazhenie* [disclosure] derives from the word for nakedness, linking the Russian-Formalist "baring of the device [*obnazhenie priema*]" to sensual, sexualized relations. The sexualized nature of the imagery centers around the flower, which guards but also displays its sexual organs, and is reinforced by the "tremor" [*drozh'*] as well as the "disclosure" and the "opening" [*proem*]. Such imagery recurs in part 3, where the nasturtium is "vibrating" as a result of the "immersion / of a bumblebee in the still unconsumed confusion of wings." (The bumblebee is gendered masculine in Russian.) In the opening section, the letter *u*, or "y" in Cyrillic, isolated on its own line, links this sensuality to language not only through its marking of a prepositional, relational state but also through its shape, which resembles a stem attached to the cup-like opening of a flower. Moreover, this "u [in]" in the middle of the stanza is the middle letter in the word *nasturtsiia*, literalizing in another sense the "opening" in the middle of the flower. Dragomoshchenko's comments about the word *nasturtsiia* further link the sensuous use of language to sexualized encounter with the other:

Из своего окна я видел настурцию на балконе, таившую в словесном своем составе, словно в слепом стручке, новые завязи, соотношения новые меры, коим в точности было предписано повторить бывшие ... словно в сумрачном стечении согласных — в смерти — где нарастающие, смыывающие друг друга, возникающие дрожат бесчисленные связи реальности. (1987)

From my window I saw a nasturtium on a balcony. The nasturtium was concealing in its verbal composition, as if in its blind pod, new ovaries, new measures of interrelationship, for which it was precisely prescribed to repeat former measures ... literally in the twilight confluence of consonants — in death — where growing, washing one another away, and springing up, the innumerable links of reality tremble.

The sensuous, sibilant (15 words in the quoted passage begin with the *s* sound) language in this description accompanies a more explicit focus on the nasturtium's sexual organs ("its new ovaries"), underscoring the interplay between linguistic and embodied encounter. Dragomoshchenko reinforces this linguistic and bodily relationship through the *so* prefix in *sootnoshenie* [interrelationship] and *soglasnye* ("consonants" as letters—but also "those who are consonant or in agreement," or literally those who are "co-voiced"). The alliteration—the shared consonant—enacts the correspondence or interrelationship between words, even as the phenomenological description of the nasturtium is staged as an erotic heterosexual encounter—a moment of consonance—between people. The *so* prefix and sex emphasize co-response, or coming into being through mutual response.

The wordplay underscores the collaborative, co-voiced text that emerges out of the "interrelationship" not just between the lyric subject and the nasturtium but between reader and writer, writer and translator, addresser and addressee. The window can be read as "the language of the poem, through [which...] occurs the possibility of description; on the surface of language, description is 'in front,' though from the point of view of subjectivity in the poem the nasturtium is 'behind' language" (Watten 1993). Equally, one might take the page of the poem to be the window so that the reader becomes the viewer of the spotted, word-covered page behind which lie the writer and the nasturtium. The window as page separates not only the describer and described, nor only Russia and the West, but two persons. The window-page becomes a figure not just for linguistic and cross-cultural mediation, but for the encounters between Dragomoshchenko and Hejinian, and between the reader and the text.

"Nasturtium as Reality" further impels the reader to recognize how the encounter between describer and nasturtium and between lovers parallels his or her own encounter with the text, by returning to the opening glance over the shoulder in part eight:

А здесь, на сорок первом жизни,
дураковатый баловень холодных облаков,
[...] «все, что видишь через плечо другого,
уже—есть ты,
и вновь плечо другого;
(1990c, 62)

And here, in the forty-first year of life,
a pampered fool of the cold clouds
[...] "all that you see over another's shoulder
already—is you
and another's shoulder again;
(1990b, 106)

The encounter with "you"—the relation to "another" or "the other" [*drugoi*]
—impels the poet to reveal himself (Dragomoshchenko was forty-

one at the time he wrote the poem) and the “Corresponding Sky” project (“cold clouds”) to which he contributed the poem. This moment of self-revelation recalls the poem’s opening, which discloses (“compressed disclosure”) how the objective attempt to describe the nasturtium as “an isolated object” is “determined” by subjective “anticipation” and the lyric subject’s relation to the other—the poem’s first “glance over someone else’s shoulder.” The poem reveals and conceals by playing between multiple possible readings: on the one hand, it bifurcates and distances the subject; on the other, its erotic and amorous allusions suggest an intimate face-to-face encounter. The quotation marks distance the glance over the shoulder, presenting it as the reported speech of another. The lines “all that you see over another’s shoulder / already—is you” further distance the subject by bifurcating “you” into a “you” who sees and a “you” who is seen, so that the glance over a shoulder both recalls and hides the lover’s cliché, “all I saw in the crowded room was you.” But the line could also be read as stating that all the “you” sees in the other is a mirror-image of the self. These multiple readings underscore how language is prepositional: it mediates between persons, between self and other, and between subject and object, just as the glance moves “over the shoulder,” and the nasturtium is seen through and “in” [и] the windowpane.

The poem performs and invites “a glance over someone else’s shoulder,” but, as with the nasturtium in the window, whether one glances from “behind” or “in front” makes all the difference. From behind, the reader peers voyeuristically at the lyric subject’s conventional self-exposure and at a self-consciously constructed window on Russia. From in front, the writer and lyric subject look beyond their apparent addressees to another, perhaps the reader, underscoring the lyric’s “doubled ‘I’” and “doubled ‘you’” (Stewart 47). The poem implicates the reader, rejecting the tendency to situate reading outside the text. As Dragomoshchenko writes elsewhere, “As we read [...], blinded by our ability to see, we are at times utterly unable to admit that we too are included in the endless weave of meanings” (1995, 242). Building on his iterative poetics of correspondence—“another and again another letter” or “writing”—Dragomoshchenko’s “Nasturtium as Reality” situates the reader in the “endless weave” by offering him or her multiple views, windows, or repeating glances over “another’s shoulder,” and so extends the interplay between disembodied language and embodied speech to include the reader.

The desire to frame the world and language, to imagine them as a “whole vessel,” cup, or glass, motivates and shapes readings across cultures that seek a world other than one’s own, or a world we hold in common. In my framing, Dragomoshchenko’s writing enacts and invites embodied, sensuous, singular encounters, while exploring the frames and empty spaces, absences, and transitions that these encounters produce. In his poetic correspondences, the encounter with the other does not arise from reading, writing, interpretation, and comparison, but constitutes the ground of these activities. By emphasizing the embodied relations through which we conduct cross-cultural reading, Drago-

moshchenko's writing shows us that the window through which we look is distorted not just by the glass but by our own reflection, our own breath.

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Реферат

Джейкоб Эдмонд

Correspondences: Соответствия и переписка Аркадия Драгомощенко

Эта статья занимается проблемой, которая все больше и больше привлекает внимание литературоведов, работающих в нынешней эпохе глобализации, после деконструкции и после культурных исследований: как мы можем примирить обобщенную абстракцию языка, культуры, общества и истории со специфическим текстом и с человеком, который пишет или читает это? Обширная переписка и сотрудничество русского поэта Аркадия Драгомощенко с американским поэтом Лин Хеджинян между 1983-м и началом 1990-х годов не только ставят этот вопрос, но и предлагают путь к переосмыслению его концептуального предположения.

Результатом этой кросс-культурной встречи между двумя людьми является то, что их сотрудничество стоит на среднем месте, которое не учитывает возражения предполагаемые этим вопросом. Ранее недоступная тысяча страниц двуязычной переписки Драгомощенко и Хеджинян, на которую я здесь опираюсь, смешивает частные письма с поэтическими текстами и обращается к соответствиям и несоответствиям между русским и английским языком, между Советским Союзом и Соединенными Штатами, и между языком и всем миром. Многие стихи Драгомощенко 1980-х годов посвящены Хеджинян, наброски стихов появляются в письмах к ней, а другие, такие как его важная, но в основном заброшенная поэма «Ужин с приветливыми богами», включают в себя отрывки из их писем. Стихи сами были написаны с расчетом, что Хеджинян переведет их на английский язык, как часть их совместного проекта «Небо соответствий». В первоначальном английском варианте, “The Corresponding Sky”, подчеркивается, такое написание писем было очень важно в их совместной работе.

В русской версии, «Небо соответствий», нет такого смысла переписки. Вместо этого, «Небо соответствий» напоминает соответствие, как основной термин в модернистской поэтике, особенно тот одновременный вызов и отрицание соответствия между языком и миром, которые выводятся из стихотворения “Correspondances” Бодлера. Сонет Бодлера может быть прочитан, либо как опыт городской современности, либо как бесконечные интертекстуальные соответствия языкового значения. Точно так же, как поэтический вклад Драгомощенко в сотрудничество с Хеджинян можно прочитать через противоположности холодной войны и постмодернистской теории, также на него можно посмотреть или как на окно в позднесоветскую культуру и ее отличия от Запада или как на разбитое зеркало языка, которое сопротивляется репрезентации и интерпретации. В то же время, если мы посмотрим на “correspondences” (переписка и соответствия) Драгомощенко как на письменное обращение и ответ единственному человеку—как со-ответ—они дают третий смысл, который стоит за пределами противоположностей, которые затрудняли понимание его работ. Эти correspondences, в свою очередь, предлагают альтернативу дихотомиям, которые ограничивают наше понимание момента исторических перемен, когда состоялось его сотрудничество с Хеджинян.