

Walter N. Vickery

M. Ju. Lermontov

His Life and Work

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Walter N. Vickery
**M. Iu. Lermontov:
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FOREWORD

When my father died in 1995, he left behind the first draft of a manuscript on the great Russian poet and novelist, Mikhail Lermontov. He had been working on the manuscript for eight years and, given the distinction of my father's previous scholarly works, it seemed a terrible waste not to have it published. But how? Although my sister, Helen Vickery, had typed the entire manuscript into a computer, none of Dad's six children have an academic background in Russian literature, and we did not know how to proceed. We soon contacted Hugh McLean of the University of California, Berkeley, Dad's long-time friend and colleague. Hugh was good enough to read the manuscript and felt strongly that it should be published, although he recognized that it needed substantial editing. With his encouragement, we agreed to move ahead on this project. Once again, through Hugh's efforts, Ellen Rosenbaum Langer, herself a qualified Slavist as well as a skilled editor/typographer, agreed to undertake the responsibility of editing my father's manuscript, despite her own research and need to finish her dissertation. Ellen's thoughtful questions during this exercise displayed a keen understanding of Dad's work, and I thank her for her careful, delicate editing, which has clearly improved the manuscript.

Paul Debreczeny, my father's former colleague at the University of North Carolina, found a publisher, and we are grateful to the Slavistische Beiträge for making this volume available to scholars and interested readers of Lermontov.

It is impossible adequately to express my deep appreciation to Ellen and Hugh for the enormous amount of time and diligence they have spent on this book. My father could not have wished for a better outcome.

Peter D. Vickery
Richmond, Maine

INTRODUCTION

It is an honor and privilege to introduce to the reading public this *magnum opus* by my esteemed friend and colleague, the late Walter Vickery. I am especially pleased to acknowledge the support of Vickery's family, and especially of his sister Anne, in making this publication possible.

* * *

Walter Neef Vickery was born on 14 September, 1921, in London, where he grew up. An excellent humanistic education gave him a good command of Latin and ancient Greek, near native fluency in French, and some knowledge of other European languages, notably German and Italian. Like most men of his generation, he had a large chunk of his youth swallowed up by the Second World War. He enlisted in the Royal Navy in 1940, serving until 1945 as a gunner, partly on Norwegian vessels. Returning at last to civilian life, he read Russian at Oxford, undertaking to add that language and its literature to the considerable list of those he had already mastered. He received the A.B. with First-Class Honours in 1948. He remained at Oxford as a lecturer from 1948 until 1953, except for the year 1951-52, which he spent in Moscow, assigned to the U.S.-British Joint Soviet Press Reading Agency, a combined effort by the two allies to discover some inklings of truth about Russian life through the murky glass of Soviet publications. This was one of the darkest periods of Soviet history, the last years of Stalin's malignant and xenophobic reign, and opportunities for exploration in Russia by foreigners were drastically limited. The U.S.-British press enterprise focussed primarily on political and economic matters, but Vickery early developed a fascination with literature. What could Russian fiction and poetry, despite the straitjacket of propaganda they were obliged to wear, tell us about the realities of Soviet life, the real feelings of its citizens? It was an interest that would bear much fruit later.

Returning first to England, Vickery emigrated to Canada in 1953. A man of enormous physical vigor—before he died he had climbed all the 14,000 ft. peaks in Colorado—for a time he thought of giving up the intellectual life for the simpler one of physical labor. But his energetic and inquisitive brain would not be denied for long. By 1955 he was enrolled as a graduate student at Harvard, studying for the Ph.D. in Slavic. He obtained that degree in record time, in 1959, with a dissertation that later was transformed into his first book: *The Cult of Optimism: Political and Ideological Problems of Recent Soviet Literature* (1963, reprinted 1976). A year earlier he had published his translation of a famous novel by Viktor Nekrasov, *Kira Georgievna*, one of the first attempts to deal with the sensitive topic of reassimilation into Soviet society of returnees released from the labor camps. Vickery and I had become friendly during his (and my) Harvard period. Since I shared some of his interests in current Soviet literature, we decided to collaborate on a volume of selections of revealing texts that had appeared during the "thaw" year of 1956, the year Nikita Khrushchev made his famous "secret speech" denouncing the crimes of Stalin. The volume, entitled *The Year of Protest, 1956*, appeared in 1961 (reprinted 1974).

During those years Vickery moved rapidly through a series of academic positions: Assistant to Associate Professor at Indiana University (1958-64); Professor at the University of Colorado (1964-69); and finally, Professor at the University of North Carolina, which remained his academic home until his retirement in 1992.

From his early scholarly writings one might have expected that Vickery would remain a committed literary Sovietologist, keeping his finger on the literary pulse of contemporary Rus-

sian society. Such an expectation proved quite false. Soon he moved his career to an entirely different track. He had long had an interest in poetics, especially versification, manifested early by his edition, with Edward Stankiewicz, of an English translation of Viktor Zhirmunskii's *Introduction to Metrics* (1966). Vickery's interests, however, went far beyond the technical aspects of versification, important as these are. In the last three decades of his life he devoted himself as a scholar almost exclusively to the study of classical Russian poetry, first Pushkin and finally Lermontov. Vickery's Pushkin studies resulted in many articles and two books, the biographical *Death of a Poet* (1968) and the more comprehensive *Alexander Pushkin in the Twayne series* (1970; second, revised edition, 1993). Vickery's engagement with Lermontov likewise generated many valuable articles and culminated in the present formidable book.

* * *

The "life and works" genre to which this book belongs has a long and honorable tradition in Russian, as in other literary studies. We all like to know something about the authors whose works we admire and enjoy, especially when, as in Lermontov's case, the life is itself a sort of "poem," full of dramatic events. Displaying his characteristic balance between sympathy and detachment, Vickery has first provided a concise, but richly detailed account of Lermontov's brief and tragic life. His approach is above all sensible—down-to-earth and fair. Lermontov was a romantic, really the only Russian poet who fully fits that designation. Vickery understands very well the romantic ethos, but he is no romantic himself. He treats with tolerant but ironic amusement the adolescent posturing of Lermontov's early Byronism. He is less tolerant of the frequent arrogance and even cruelty in Lermontov's behavior toward those close to him, especially women. On the other hand, Vickery recognizes Lermontov's genuine longing for intimacy and affection and credits his capacity for friendship and generosity. He also effectively traces all these conflicting impulses in Lermontov's poetry.

Perhaps the most notable manifestation of Vickery's unsentimental, "common sense" approach to Lermontov's life--and also his politically charged works--is his treatment of the poet's long struggle under the oppressive regime of Nicholas I. Beginning with his furious poem on the death of Pushkin, Lermontov cast himself in the role of moral avenger, denouncer of such parasitic foreign adventurers as the assassin of Russia's greatest poet. Lermontov's indignation had larger resonance, however, than the single episode of Pushkin's death. He loved his country, as he said, but with a strange, non-conformist love. Though publication of the frankest dissident poems was impossible, he could at least record for posterity his disgust with "unwashed Russia, land of slaves, land of masters," habitat of uniformed "pashas," i.e., spies, with "all-seeing eyes." Vickery recognizes the genuine courage and vitality of Lermontov's protest and on the other side demonstrates the petty vindictiveness of the tsar, who twice personally denied Lermontov decorations for military bravery he had clearly earned. At the same time Vickery firmly refuses to be drawn into typically Soviet conspiracy theories, which perceive in the last years of Lermontov's life a sinister plot by the tsar and his henchmen to get rid of this annoying rebel. The tsar, they maintain, sent Lermontov to the Caucasus hoping he would be killed in the wars there. (In fact, Nicholas several times acceded to the pleas of the poet's grandmother and summoned him back to St. Petersburg or postponed his reassignment to the war.) Lermontov's actual death in a duel, as Vickery clearly shows, had nothing to do with politics or the court. It was the result of Lermontov's own foolhardy bravado and malice, as by cruel taunts he goaded an erstwhile friend into fury and the fatal challenge that ended his life. Vickery's account of all these events has the ring of sober truth. He is fully aware of the stifling political atmosphere of Nicholas's reign. He laments the pointless destruction of this tremendous young talent, which

might have accomplished so much more had he lived a full life. Yet he demonstrates clearly that the poet's death was very much his own doing.

Following the biography, Vickery takes up Lermontov's work, genre by genre, with chronological order within each genre. With regard to the lyric poetry, he is immediately confronted with the major anomaly of Lermontov's oeuvre: the mature work is so short by comparison with the large body of derivative and often sophomoric juvenilia. Wisely, Vickery does not consider himself bound to comment on every single effort by the fourteen- and fifteen-year-old would-be Russian Byron. Rather he singles out those that in quality, theme or form in some way anticipate characteristic features of the mature work. All the lyric poetry, longer narrative poems, and prose written after 1836, however, receive full analysis, encompassing both biographical context, literary models and antecedents, and, in the case of poems, comment on versification, tropes, and structure. Vickery is also refreshingly willing to pass judgment on the quality of the texts he analyzes.

Every significant work by Lermontov is thus confronted and given a revealing explication. Vickery's book could thus serve as an English-language version of the "Lermontov Encyclopedia," a famous collectively authored reference work in Russian, with separate entries covering every detail of the poet's life and works. In Vickery's book one could likewise look up any individual work and find it illuminatingly interpreted. On the other hand, unlike the "Encyclopedia," Vickery provides a coherent, consecutive narrative; his book can be read with pleasure and profit from beginning to end, as a well grounded and engaging "course" on Lermontov, a thorough and systematic study of the man and all his works.

As in any first-rate piece of criticism, the critic reveals himself as he explores his subject. Particularly in his summarizing final chapter Vickery shows his own characteristic qualities, human as well as intellectual. He emerges as a man of broad erudition and culture, widely read in many literatures, meticulous and thorough in his research. He is sturdily independent in his views, respectful of established authorities, but not afraid to take issue with them when the occasion requires it. Most of all, Vickery shows himself endowed with real human wisdom, keen-eyed in his perceptions, tolerant of his subject's foibles, and sad that so great a talent was snuffed out so young.

In his original preface Vickery expressed his gratitude to several individuals who had aided him in his efforts. It is a pleasure to record these tributes here: J. Thomas Shaw of the University of Wisconsin; Helena Goscilo of the University of Pittsburgh; and Josephine Woll of Howard University. Vickery also wished to express particular thanks to a longstanding Russian friend and colleague, the distinguished Mikhail Leonovich Gasparov of the Institute of World Literature in Moscow. Finally, Vickery wanted to note his deep debt of gratitude to his daughter Helen, "for her comments, wide-ranging advice, and encouragement."

Hugh McLean, University of California, Berkeley

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword by <i>Peter Vickery</i>	v
Introduction by <i>Hugh McLean</i>	vi
Abbreviations and Conventions Adopted	2
Biographical Introduction:	
I. Antecedents, Birth, and Early Years	3
II. Tarkhany and The Caucasus	12
III. To Moscow	21
IV. Petersburg Society and the First Exile	36
V. Petersburg and the Barante Duel	50
VI. Second Exile	60
VII. The Second Duel	70
I. Early Lyrics (1828-1835)	79
II. Lyrics (1836-1839)	132
III. Lyrics (1840-1841)	189
IV. Narrative Poems	248
V. Dramatic Works	321
VI. Prose	347
VII. Conclusion	387
Appendices:	
I. Lermontov's Works by Genre (1828-1841)	409
II. Lermontov's Travels	410
III. Lermontov's First-Term Grades, December 1828	412
IV. Incidence of the Attributive Adjective in Lermontov's Poetry	413
Bibliography.....	415

ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS ADOPTED

Frequently Cited Collections Of Lermontov's Works:

Ak. nauk = *Sochineniia v shesti tomakh*. Moscow-Leningrad: Izd. Akademii nauk, 1954-1957
Eikhenbaum = 1935-37. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*. Redaktsiia teksta i kommentarii V. M. Eikhenbauma. Moskow, Academia. 1935-37. (Also referred to as *Academia*)

4-vol. Ak. nauk 1961-62. *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh*. Moscow: Akademiia nauk.
Khud. lit. 1983-1984 1983-84. *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura.

Names of Cities in Publication Data:

Leningrad = L

Moskva = M

Other Abbreviations:

GIKhL = Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury

IRLI = The Institute of Russian Literature

LIM = M. P. Alekseev, A. Glasse, V. E. Vatsuro, eds. *M. IU. Lermontov: Issledovaniia i materialy* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1979).

LN = *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*

LNMB = P. A. Vyrypaev, *Lermontov: novye materialy k biografii* (Voronezh: Tsentral'no-chernozernoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1972)

LVVS = *M. Iu. Lermontov v vospominiakh sovremnikov* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1972)

Letopis' = V. Manuilov, *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva M. Iu. Lermontova* (Moscow-Leningrad: Nauka, 1964)

TsGALI = Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva Sankt-Peterburga (TsGALI SPb)

Conventions Regarding Citations of Russian Literary Works:

The first citation of a Russian literary work is given in Russian transliteration, with a translated title provided in parentheses. Subsequent references are to the transliterated Russian title alone.

Transliterated titles of shorter poetic works are given in italics without quotation marks, although quotation marks are used to distinguish the English titles.

However, transliterated titles of articles appear in roman type set off by quotation marks to avoid confusion with the italicized titles of journals or compilations in which they appear.

BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

I. Antecedents, Birth, and Early Years: 1814-1817

October 1814. Moscow. Two peasant women, both nursing mothers, have been brought to Moscow from a place some 350 miles to the southeast, as part of the preparations for a birth which takes place in the early hours of October 3.¹ It appears to have been without complications. The newborn male child will be christened Mikhail Iurevich Lermontov. One of the two peasant women, Luker'ia Alekseevna Shubenina, is chosen by the doctors to become Lermontov's wet-nurse. She will live for a long time in the house, and even as an adult Lermontov will visit her and take her presents.²

Having two peasant women brought in as wetnurses was not remarkable in early nineteenth-century Russia. But it implies that Lermontov's family was not just technically nobility, but landed nobility, with estates and serfs, able to take certain things for granted: to rely on and to command others, to get its way.

Also present in the house in Moscow awaiting the birth was the future poet's grandmother, Elizaveta Alekseevna Arsen'eva. It was from her estate, and on her instructions, that the two serf women had been brought to Moscow. She was to play a very significant role in her grandson's life.

Elizaveta Alekseevna Arsen'eva, a devout Christian, was a very formidable woman. She used the familiar second-person-singular appellation (*ty*) to everyone. One of four daughters of Aleksei Emel'ianovich Stolypin, she loved power and money and had the Stolypin tendency to see things her own way. According to the ever-generous assessment of P. A. Viskovatov, the first biographer of Lermontov, Elizaveta Alekseevna softened with age and the burden of personal loss. But as Viskovatov himself notes, Lermontov's young comrades in the cadet school he attended (1832-34) dubbed her Marfa Posadnitsa³. Even at around 60, she must have still cut an impressive figure.

Her father, Aleksei Emel'ianovich Stolypin, was a landowner with estates in the Simbirsk and Penza areas. He had greatly increased his fortune in the eighteenth century by making and supplying liquor, especially to the military. He was a friend of Aleksei Orlov Chesmenskii, one of the famous Orlov brothers of Catherine II's reign, and shared with him a taste for hard drinking, boxing, hunting, and other physical pursuits. Stolypin had other, more cultural interests. He had one of the best serf theaters in Russia, with seventy or so actors on his Simbirsk estate. His

¹ V. Manuilov, *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva M. Iu. Lermontova* (M.-L.: "Nauka," 1964), 13-14. Henceforth referred to as *Letopis'*. Manuilov's *Letopis'* supports the facts given by numerous references to secondary sources; when these relate to undisputed events, these sources will not, as a rule, be given. The Russian reader interested in additional verification or amplification is therefore advised to consult the *Letopis'* for guidance.

² P. A. Viskovatov, *Mikhail Iur'evich Lermontov. Zhizn' i tvorchestvo* (M.: Sovremennik, 1987), 37. The 1987 edition, containing a valuable introduction by G. M. Fridlender (3-30), is based on the original 1891 biography, which, together with a number of articles by Viskovatov, constitutes a landmark in Lermontov scholarship. Henceforth referred to as Viskovatov 1987, followed by page references.

³ The widow of the governor of Novgorod, Marfa Posadnitsa was a militant opponent of the encroachments of Moscow in the fifteenth century.

daughters performed alongside the serfs. Stolypin would from time to time bring his theater to Moscow, where the performances were widely admired.⁴

Life in eighteenth-century Russia was full of conflicting tendencies. The patriarchal, traditional, feudalistic, and xenophobic ways of Muscovite Russia clashed with Western culture and manners. The nobility had, in just a few decades (starting with the 1762 decree of Peter III), achieved complete self-emancipation and in many cases enormous self-aggrandisement, as the Stolypins did with their monopoly of spirits. At the same time, the freedom of the serfs had been steadily eroded, so that by the second half of the eighteenth century the institution of serfdom had reached its culmination. While there were many small and medium-sized estates worked by a modest number of serfs, estates with several thousand "souls" (souls being the number of the adult male serfs) were not rare. Finally, the estate owner was in every sense the proprietor of his serfs, whose very minimal legal rights could be easily disregarded. These factors: the still-feudal outlook, the swift accumulation of wealth, the total domination over the lives of many others, and, most important, the great distance of places like Simbirsk and Penza from the administrative center of Petersburg bred an independent-minded, authoritative type, believing implicitly in his own rights and expecting others to yield to his wishes. Aleksei Emel'ianovich Stolypin, his five sons and four daughters appear to have been of this type. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century the Stolypins represented in Penza something loosely equivalent to what the Orlov brothers had represented in Petersburg a few decades before: a force to be reckoned with.

In a world increasingly restrained, the uninhibited freedom and boundless self-assurance of the Stolypins exercise a certain charm. One senses warmth and sympathy in Viskovatov's attitude toward the Stolypins. This attitude was far from universal, particularly among those who saw the Stolypins at first hand.⁵

Lermontov's Stolypin heritage consists of three important factors: a powerful, clanlike relationship behind the clearly inadequate family unit, his grandmother's inbred self-assurance, and the extraordinarily high value she placed on education. Aleksei Emel'ianovich had studied at Moscow University, and Elizaveta Alekseevna and the other children received a good education.

Elizaveta Alekseevna was born in 1773.⁶ She fell in love with and married a junior guards officer, Mikhail Vasil'evich Arsen'ev (born 1768), member of a large family from the Tula area. On November 13, 1794, she and her husband bought an estate about 70 miles west and slightly south of Penza for only 58,000 rubles.⁷ This was Tarkhany, where Lermontov spent most of his early years. It is known today as Lermontov.

Tarkhany was recorded as the property of Elizaveta Alekseevna, since her dowry had been used to buy it. Her husband had no vested property interest in Tarkhany in his own name, except for eleven serfs he acquired at various times. Elizaveta Alekseevna must therefore have felt at ease assuming control of the estate. She changed the agricultural-administrative system from quit-rent (normally a less despotic system), on which the previous owner had run the estate for 30 years) to *corvée*, to increase the income: the peasants worked three days a week for themselves and three for the owners. Since a dowry was a gift to the husband, it is odd that the estate

⁴ Viskovatov 1987, 31-35; N. L. Brodskii, *M. lu. Lermontov: Biografiia* (M.: OGIZ, 1945), 5.

⁵ F. F. Vigel', *Zapiski* (M.: Krug 1928, republished by Oriental Research Partners, 1974), 115, 137. The author is hostile toward the Stolypins for what he regards as their arrogance and scornful of the quality of the Stolypin theater.

⁶ E. M. Khmelevskaia, "Arsen'eva," *Lermontovskaia entsiklopediia* (M.: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1981), 36-37. Henceforth referred to as *L. E.*

⁷ P. A. Vyrypaev, "Tarkhany," *L. E.*, 562-63.

was recorded in Elizaveta Alekseevna's name. This and the switch from quit-rent to corvée contribute to the picture of a woman very interested in money and power.⁸

It is impossible to assess with precision either the exact nature or the exact force of her impact on Lermontov's life or to determine the degree to which Elizaveta Alekseevna's attitude to her daughter, her son-in-law, and her grandson was influenced by the tragic outcome of her own marriage. Psychological approaches and diagnoses are inherently speculative. Nevertheless, the facts of her husband's suicide should be mentioned.

Mikhail Vasil'evich had fallen in love with a neighbor, Princess Mansyreva. His infatuation led to a quarrel or quarrels with Elizaveta Alekseevna. The climax came on New Year's Day, 1810. The Arsen'evs had invited the neighbors to Tarkhany. There was to be a New Year's masquerade, dances, and, the *pièce de resistance*, the performance of a new translation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Mikhail Vasil'evich was to play the part of the gravedigger. He was continually running out on the porch to see if his beloved princess was arriving. In a stormy scene before the guests' arrival, Elizaveta Alekseevna had sworn that the princess would never again set foot in Tarkhany. Goaded presumably beyond endurance by her husband's constant attention to the front porch and the road beyond, she dispatched messengers to intercept the Princess. The Princess turned back, sending a note to Mikhail Vasil'evich telling him what had happened. After playing his role in the fifth act, Mikhail Vasil'evich poisoned himself in the changing room. He was found dead, the note clutched in his hand.⁹ He was buried at Tarkhany, and Elizaveta Alekseevna had a marble stone placed over his grave, but she allegedly left Tarkhany for Penza rather than attend the burial. According to one source, by no means infallible, she remarked: "A dog deserves a dog's death" ("*Sobake sobach'ia smert'*"). Later, she would insist that the marriage had been a happy one.¹⁰

The marriage had produced one child, a daughter named Mar'ia Mikhailovna, born March 17, 1795. She was physically fragile and prone to illness. Her worldview, typical for a young Russian country lady, was rooted in sentimental novels and the sentimental songs she sang, accompanying herself on the clavichord. Predisposed to emotional intensity and self-will, she was a creature of imagination and fantasy, with notions of ideal romantic love. She would copy into her album tender elegies on love, friendship, parting. She has been compared with Pushkin's young Tat'iana.¹¹ As with Tat'iana, when the great instant of recognition came and the irrevocable choice of soul-mate was made, the choice was a bad one. At least in the eyes of her family, Iurii Petrovich Lermontov was not an ideal match in terms of wealth or social standing.

The Lermontov family was descended from George Lermont, a Scotsman who had taken service with the Poles in the seventeenth century. He had been captured by or surrendered to the Muscovites and entered their service in 1613. He received an estate in the Kostroma area in 1620, attained the rank of captain, and gave his life fighting for his new country in the Second Polish War. His son Peter's conversion to Orthodoxy in 1653 marked the Russification of the family. For some generations, the Lermontov family did well in various branches of the service. But by the late eighteenth century their fortunes had declined. Some time in the eighteenth century, the poet's grandfather exchanged the original estate for a small one near Tula called Kro-

⁸ Ibid. Also Vyrypaev, *Lermontov: novye materialy k biografii* (Voronezh: Tsentral'no - chernozemnoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1972), 75 (henceforth *LNMB*).

⁹ Viskovatov 1987, 33-34.

¹⁰ P. K. Shugaev, "Iz kolybeli zamechatel'nykh liudei," *M. Iu. Lermontov v vospominiakh sovremenikov* (M.: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1972), 56 (henceforth *LVVS*).

¹¹ Brodskii, 7-9.

potovo, about 100 miles south of Moscow. The Lermontovs become neighbors and friends of the Arsen'evs. Tula lies near the direct route from Penza to Moscow. Elizaveta Alekseevna and her daughter would stop off at the Arsen'ev place on journeys to and from Moscow. Mar'ia Mikhailovna met and fell in love with the attractive, recently-retired Captain Iurii Petrovich Lermontov at the Arsen'evs', probably in late 1811 or early 1812.

He was born December 26, 1787, and received an education in the first cadet corps. Upon graduation, October 29, 1804, he entered military service. He served in Petersburg to the rank of lieutenant. In 1811 he suddenly retired with the rank of captain. His performance seems to have been exemplary, for he received three commendations. In 1812, the year of Napoleon's invasion, Iurii Petrovich joined the militia. It is not clear where he served, but he is reported convalescing in a military hospital in Vitebsk in November and December, 1813.¹² His marriage must have taken place in early 1814, probably in Tarkhany, possibly in Petersburg. During the two-year engagement, Mar'ia Mikhailovna withstood family pressure to abandon the match.

Following the wedding, the newlyweds were in Petersburg and Moscow between February and May 1814. Then they left, with Elizaveta Alekseevna, for Tarkhany. Iurii Petrovich settled there with his bride and mother-in-law and took over the management of Tarkhany.

The marriage was less than happy. Blame for their incompatibility cannot be laid entirely on Elizaveta Alekseevna. As Elizaveta Alekseevna expressed it, her daughter "married for passion" ("*po strasti vyshla zamuzh*"), but she, Elizaveta Alekseevna, "had but little joy of her daughter's married life" ("*malo uteshalas' semeinoi zhizn'iu docheri*").¹³ The primary reason for conjugal disharmony seems to have been Iurii Petrovich's non-conjugal desires. He liked wine, gambling, and other women. Specifically, he had an affair with his wife's young German companion. The companion, Iulia Ivanovna, had been living in the Arsen'ev family. But one of the young Arsen'ev males there had become enamored of her, so she had been transferred to Tarkhany.¹⁴ Iurii Petrovich also pursued the serf women within reach. The inequality of the marriage also caused discord: Iurii Petrovich was a poor cousin, and he was in Stolypin territory.

We have seen that Mar'ia Mikhailovna had unrealistically high expectations of romantic love. Her vitality, always limited, had declined after the birth of her son. And now she was a neglected wife. On one occasion when she reproached Iurii Petrovich, he is said to have struck her. She pined. And he sought solace in various ways.

Elizaveta Alekseevna almost certainly aggravated an already sorry situation. She must have frowned on Iurii Petrovich's *bon vivant* adventures: he did not personally have the money for them. And his infidelities could not have failed to remind her of her own marital humiliation. Elizaveta Alekseevna, not really an Arsen'ev, but to her finger tips and the soles of her feet a Stolypin, undoubtedly thought not of her daughter having married into the Lermontov family, but of Iurii Petrovich having been "admitted," due to her daughter's unfortunate "passion," into the Stolypin-Arsen'ev clan. This becomes obvious in the naming of the child. In the Lermontov family, first sons had been using alternately from generation to generation two names, Iurii and Petr. Therefore, the future poet should have been Petr Iur'evich. But at Elizaveta Alekseevna's insistence, he was christened Mikhail, in honor of his maternal grandfather, her late husband!¹⁴

¹² Brodskii, 10-11.

¹³ Brodskii, 12, gives as source for this comment *Literaturnyi arkhiv*, I. Izd. Akademii nauk, 1938, 227.

¹⁴ Viskovatov 1987, 37-38.

¹⁴ Brodskii, 12.

The chronology of the marital troubles between Iurii Petrovich and Mar'ia Mikhailovna is not clear. As late as August 1816, he was still writing to her in verse, albeit in response to verse she had written him. She clearly still missed him when he was away in Moscow or visiting his own estate of Kropotovo, writing, in correctly alternating rhymed four- and three-foot iambs:

Кто сердцу может быть милее,
 Бесценный друг, тебя?
 Без воздуха могу скорее
 Прожить, чем без тебя!
 Всю радость в жизни, утешенье,
 Имею от тебя,
 С тобой повсюду наслажденье,
 И мрачность без тебя.

Who can be dearer to the heart
 Than you, invaluable friend?
 I can live better without air
 Than without you!
 From you I have all joy
 In life, all consolation,
 With you all delight,
 Without you darkness.

Iurii Petrovich replied on August 26 from Kropotovo, repetitively but with admirable clarity:

Я не скажу тебе *люблю*,
 Всеобщей моде подражая:
 Как часто говорят *люблю*,
 Совсем о том не помышляя.
 И слово ли одно *люблю*
 В себе всю нежность заключает,
 Нет, мало говорить *люблю*,
 Коль сердце тож не повторяет.
 Кто часто говорит *люблю*,
 Тот редко и любить умеет,
 Иной не вымолвит *люблю*,
 А чувством только пламенеет,
 Так я не говорю *люблю*,
 Храня молчанье осторожно,
 Но верно так тебя *люблю*,
 Как только мне любить возможно.¹⁵

I will not say to you *I love*.
 Imitating the universal fashion:
 How often do people say *I love*,
 Without thinking about it at all.
 And do the mere words *I love*

¹⁵ Ibid., 12-13.

Perforce contain all possible tenderness?
 No, it means little to say *I love*
 If this is not echoed by the heart.
 Someone who often says *I love*
 Is rarely capable of loving;
 But someone may not say *I love*
 While blazing with feeling.
 So I will not say *I love*,
 Cautiously remaining silent,
 But you assuredly *I love*,
 As only I can love.

The exchange arouses compassion. Clearly, in late August, 1816, the two were still trying to maintain the relationship.

But the situation, biographers agree, was injurious to Mar'ia Mikhailovna's health. She had or contracted consumption and went into a rapid decline. There were stories of her, again like Pushkin's Tat'iana, visiting sick peasants. Presumably after her health had further deteriorated, she is reported dejectedly walking from one room to another in Tarkhany, her hands clasped behind her back. She died February 24, 1817, less than a month from her twenty-second birthday. Her husband had been in Moscow but returned the day before her death, with a doctor. The young Lermontov was at that time less than two and a half years old.

The significant role of sounds in Lermontov's writings has been pointed out by scholars in the past and will be more fully discussed below. Interestingly, his only clear, lasting memories of his mother were of her singing and playing to him. "When I was three years old," he wrote in 1830, "there was a song which used to make me cry: I can no longer remember it now, but I'm sure that if I heard it, it would produce the same effect on me. My late mother used to sing it for me." He remembered how his mother would put him on her lap and start to play, and how he would snuggle close to her, and the tears would course down his cheeks.¹⁶

Nine days after his mother's death, his father left Tarkhany and went back to his own mother and three sisters at Kropotovo. He must therefore have left on or about March 5. Before he left, on February 28, 1817, Elizaveta Alekseevna signed a promissory note for a debt incurred with Iurii Petrovich to the tune of 25,000 rubles; she promised payment within a year. The deed was recorded in the Chembar district court, witnessed by one of Elizaveta Alekseevna's brothers and a brother-in-law. The register shows, too, that Elizaveta Alekseevna paid the note in full. Poor as Iurii Petrovich was, it is unlikely Elizaveta Alekseevna could have incurred a debt to him of 25,000 rubles. Moreover, a second promissory note, identically worded and also for 25,000 rubles, had been signed on August 21, 1815, not long after the young couple arrived in Tarkhany, and long before Mar'ia Mikhailovna's death. Viskovatov and Brodskii conclude that these fictitious debts were in fact a euphemistic device which enabled Iurii Petrovich to extract money from Elizaveta Alekseevna, with the threat, on the first occasion of removing wife and child from Tarkhany, and on the second of taking the child with him on leaving.

The most convincing interpretation of the "debts" allegedly incurred by Elizaveta Alekseevna is that offered by Vyrypaev, from 1946 to 1966 an employec at the Lermontov Estate-Museum in Tarkhany, and from 1954-66 director of the museum. Probably no Lermontov scholar is more conversant than he was with the personalities of the Stolypin-Arsen'evs and Lermontovs

¹⁶ Viskovatov 1987, 39; M lu. Lermontov, *Sochineniia v shesti tomakh* (M.-L.: Izd. Akademii nauk, 1954-1957; henceforth referred to as *Ak. nauk*), VI, 386.

and with the documents relating to them. Vyrypaev's explanation of the "debt" can be summarized as follows. Iurii Petrovich Lermontov was entitled to a dowry. The dowry amounted to 25,000 rubles. The 25,000 rubles came from the Arsen'ev side of the family and represented all or most of the entitlement of Mikhail Vasil'evich Arsen'ev, Lermontov's maternal grandfather, to the Arsen'ev holdings. Mar'ia Mikhailovna was his sole heiress. The approximately 300,000 rubles of the Arsen'ev estate, divided among ten different heirs would have amounted to some 30,000 roubles. The division took place in 1811, and Mar'ia Mikhailovna's mother, Elizaveta Alekseevna, must have had charge of her daughter's portion.

It seems probable that Elizaveta Alekseevna, reluctant to relinquish control of the money, did not pay out the dowry at the time of the wedding. Since they would all be living together, and Iurii Petrovich would be manager of the Stolypin-Arsen'ev estates, a reckoning might have been put off. But by 1815 relations between husband and mother-in-law had already deteriorated. The still relatively young Elizaveta Alekseevna, about 42 years old, probably found it difficult to surrender the reins of the estate to her son-in-law and frowned on the way he spent money, and he presumably resented her interference. It is logical that he would have eventually asked to have in writing an acknowledgement of the dowry owed him. This would account for the 1815 promissory note, with its stipulation that the "debt" be paid within one year.

The debt or dowry was not paid within that time. It was due August 1816. But no liquidation of the debt is recorded in the Chembar district records. However, all three parties shared a common roof, and Iurii Petrovich had the assurance of the 1815 promissory note. The death of Mar'ia Mikhailovna and the projected departure of her husband changed the situation radically. He was leaving his son in the care of Elizaveta Alekseevna, with whom he had been at odds. His son's future was uncertain. The wife on whose behalf the dowry had been pledged was dead. He would want the money or at least a renewed recognition of the debt. This accounts for the second, February 28, 1817, promissory note, which Elizaveta Alekseevna felt obliged to give him. Thus, there was only one sum of 25,000 rubles involved. The second promissory note reactivated the first. Strictly speaking, there was no debt in the sense of borrowing. Rather the 25,000 rubles represented the dowry due Iurii Petrovich, so he should be cleared of any charge of extortion. This version, put forward by Vyrypaev not as a hypothesis but as fact (he had consulted documents not seen by Viskovatov or by Brodskii, nor at that time by other Lermontov scholars), seems entirely convincing.

Iurii Petrovich departed, leaving behind him a son he was uncertain how to provide for. We do not know whether, in the nine days between Mar'ia Alekseevna's death and her husband's departure, her husband and her mother discussed the disposition of the child. Certainly no decisions were reached. A few months later, however, it seems that Iurii Petrovich indicated he wanted custody of his son.

The well-known statesman Mikhail Mikhailovich Speranskii was governor of the province of Penza from 1816 to 1819. He was a good friend of the Stolypins, especially of one of Elizaveta Alekseevna's brothers, Arkadii Alekseevich Stolypin, then serving in Petersburg. Speranskii wrote regularly to Arkadii Alekseevich. On June 5, 1817, he wrote: "There is a cross of another sort which Elizaveta Alekseevna will have to bear: Lermontov [i.e. the poet's father] is asking for his son and has only reluctantly agreed to leave him [with her] for another two years. He's a strange and, they say, unpleasant person; that has to apply at least to anyone, who could bring himself to hurt (*delat' oskorblenie*) Elizaveta Alekseevna, who is the incarnation of gentleness (*krotost'*) and patience." As Viskovatov comments, Speranskii's reasoning is strange:

that the father had no rights and that by asking for his son he was merely inflicting an injury on the grandmother. But Speranskii was invariably attentive to Stolypin interests and viewpoints.¹⁷

However that may be, within a few days of Speranskii's June 5 letter "the incarnation of gentleness and patience" took her own decisive measure to prevent her grandson going to live with his father and to solidify her own rights as, in effect, his guardian. On June 13, she made a will which she had certified and witnessed in the civil court in Penza. She refers to an earlier will in which she had left half her estate to her husband, half to her daughter. Surviving her daughter is the daughter's lawful son, "my grandson, Mikhailo Iur'evich Lermontov, for whom by virtue of family sentiments I feel unbounded love and attachment, as the sole object of joy for my remaining days and the sole source of comfort in my sorrowful situation and wishing to bring him up in these days of his youth in my care and to prepare him to serve His Imperial Highness and to preserve the honor appropriate to the title of nobleman, I therefore hereby declare my new will and leave upon my death to my own grandson, Mikhailo Iur'evich Lermontov, the movable and immovable property described above and belonging to me... 496 souls with their wives, their children of both sexes, and children to be born in the future... but on this condition, that my grandson will during my life, until he attains his majority, remain with me to be educated by me and cared for by me without any interference on the part of his father, my son-in-law, or Mr. Lermontov's relatives, nor should he in the future make any attempt to claim my grandson while he is still a minor; I for my part guarantee the father and his relatives that I will see to the placing of my grandson in the service of His Imperial Highness and will maintain him there in a manner appropriate to my means, fully expecting that my cares as guardian (*popecheniia moi*) will show not only due esteem but complete respect for his father and for the honor of his family..." In the event of her death the guardianship of young Lermontov was to be entrusted to a younger Stolypin brother, Afanasii Alekseevich, in the event of his death to one of the other Stolypin brothers or to her brother-in-law, Grigorii Danilovich Stolypin. Never would it pass to his own father. On the contrary, she continues, "But if my grandson's father or on his behalf his near relatives claim my grandson (which would, I do not conceal my feelings, cause me the greatest possible offense), then I, Arsen'eva, leave upon my death all my movable and immovable estate not to my grandson, Mikhailo Iur'evich Lermontov, but to the Stolypin family and therewith exclude my grandson from all and every participation in the property remaining at my death..." The will was witnessed by a number of people, including Speranskii.¹⁸

There seems little doubt that Vyrypaev is correct in his assessment that Iurii Petrovich Lermontov must be exonerated from all charges of indifference to his son or of cupidity. The 25,000 ruble promissory notes discussed above clearly did not involve extortion. Position was not used to get money; money was used to get position. By the conditions of her will Elizaveta Alekseevna bought out Iurii Petrovich in the sense only that he felt forced to withdraw for the sake of the material welfare of his son; to have insisted on his rights as a father would, given his own obscure position and relative poverty, only have penalized his son in terms of the quality of his education, the influence which could be brought to bear to further his career, and the amount of his inheritance. Elizaveta Alekseevna was to pay 3,000 rubles a year alone to Lermontov's English teacher. The child became heir to a medium-sized estate. Gone was the lavish and reckless spending that had characterized the high-rolling days of Elizaveta Alekseevna's father. The serf theater had been sold to the state in 1806. Aleksei Emel'ianovich had overspent, and there

¹⁷ Viskovatov 1987, 40.

¹⁸ Vyrypaev, 49-61.

had been five sons and four daughters to provide for. But 496 male souls was not a negligible quantity, and it was far beyond anything that Iurii Petrovich could have provided for his son.

So, the necessary deeds were signed and witnessed, the struggle for custody concluded. To a significant degree, Lermontov's life course was set by these events. Symbolically, as an infant he slept in the same room as his grandmother, but not in the big house. Impelled no doubt by sorrow, since in seven years both her husband and her only child had died in that house, Elizaveta Alekseevna had it razed and had a church dedicated to St. Mary of Egypt (Mariia Egipetskaia) built in its place. Close to the church she built a much smaller wooden house with a mezzanine. This was the house that Lermontov was to know and love as home.¹⁹

In 1836 Elizaveta Alekseevna was to write to a distant female relative: "his temperament and character [i.e. Lermontov's] are exactly like Mikhail Vasil'evich's; God grant that his virtue and his intellect are too." Later in the same letter, she said: "There is nothing worse than a love beyond rhyme or reason (*pristrastnaia liubov*), but I have my excuse, he's the one and only light of my eyes (*on odin svet moikh ochei*), my entire happiness (*blazhenstvo*) is in him."²⁰

¹⁹ Vyrypaev, in *L. E.*, 562-63. For pictures see, *L. E.*, 562-63.

²⁰ The relative was Praskov'ia Aleksandrovna Kriukova. See L. B. Modzalevskii, "Pis'ma E.A. Arsen'evoi o Lermontove," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vols 45-46, 641-60, esp. 648, letter dated January 17, 1836. *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* is hereafter referred to as *LN*.

II: Tarkhany and the Caucasus (1817-1827)

Lermontov's mother died on February 24, 1817. On February 28, Elizaveta Alekseevna signed the new promissory note for Iurii Petrovich, who left for his own estate near Tula on or about March 5. Those Stolypins who had come to the funeral had departed, though some were to make their visits and offer their condolences later. By March 13, a Speranskii letter reports Elizaveta Alekseevna planning a visit to Kiev. She must have left in late March, possibly taking Lermontov with her: neither appears to have attended Easter service at Tarkhany that year, although both names are recorded for all other years from 1815 through 1825.²¹ However, this may only indicate the grandmother's absence. She almost certainly went to Kiev to seek solace and spiritual comfort at the famous Monastery of the Caves (*Kievo-Pecherskaia lavra*).

At about the same time, a large party of Stolypins was proceeding slowly south for a visit to the Caucasus, where they had many ties, including an estate, Stolypinka, near Piatigorsk. Elizaveta's sister, Ekaterina, lived nearby in the vicinity of Vladikavkaz, married to an Armenian named Khostatov (also spelled Khastatov). Presumably, the grief-stricken Elizaveta Alekseevna had been asked to go, but chose to go to Kiev instead. Circumstantially, this argues for her goal being the monastery.

Her ailing father, Aleksei Emel'ianovich, he of the strong drink, wild living, and serf theater, died on the journey and was buried in the Northern Caucasus. Elizaveta Alekseevna, meanwhile, did not linger in Kiev. By May she was back at Tarkhany, and by June 12 she was in Penza, taking Lermontov with her. While looking for her own establishment, she stayed with one of her sisters, Nataliia Alekseevna, married to a G. D. Stolypin (evidently not related). In August Speranskii reports she had taken the house of a G. L. Dubenskii. Here, she and her grandson lived for seven or eight months, returning to Tarkhany in early 1818. Why Elizaveta Alekseevna wanted this does not seem to be documented, but plausible reasons include getting away from Tarkhany and having the companionship of relatives and friends. She may even have been advised by spiritual counselors in Kiev to seek out other people. Finally, there was the purely practical consideration of the work going on at Tarkhany: the demolition of the big house, the construction of the new house, and the building of the church on the site of the old house.

Immediately following the death of her daughter, Elizaveta Alekseevna "ages" herself of 15 years in the space of two. In 1816 she appears in the church record at Tarkhany as 41, though she was actually about 43, but in 1818 she is 58! Elizaveta Alekseevna was only 14 years older than her son-in-law, according to her pre-1817 figures only 12 years older. But she transformed herself into a member of an older generation. From now on she was universally spoken of as a grandmother (*babushka*). Presumably, she deliberately assumed the role of an older woman, encouraging people to think of her primarily as a grandmother. While the role fit well with the powerful matriarchial figure she already presented, it also indicated what she herself now conceived to be her sole function in life: being the grandmother and guardian of Mikhail Iur'evich Lermontov. Vyrypaev has written interesting descriptions of life in Penza. He quotes Speranskii: "I confess I did not expect ... so much ability to live." And again: "Charming Penza holds me in its enchantment ... In Petersburg they serve, here they live..." (Speranskii often wrote the most predictable, lifeless, and saccharine letters.) Vyrypaev may also be influenced by local pride. And one cannot help smiling when he refers to these months as Lermontov's "Penza period": Lermontov had his third birthday in Penza and must have been oblivious to the things which impressed Speranskii. Nonetheless, a brief mention of one Penza resident is in order.

²¹ Vyrypaev 1972, 46, 215-16

Afanasii Gavrilovich Raevskii, one of the best-educated men of his day, was at this time a senior instructor in the Penza high school (*gimnasia*). He was a friend of Elizaveta Alekseevna; in fact, his mother-in-law had been educated with her. His oldest son, Sviatoslav, was then nine years old, and the father, deeply involved in the practice of teaching, was educating him himself at home in preparation for his entering the *gimnasia*, which he did in 1818. Vyrypaev is almost certainly right in conjecturing that the father, A. G. Raevskii, was influential in planning the pedagogical strategies followed by Elizaveta Alekseevna, strategies which were to provide him at 13 years with an excellent grounding in languages, literature, music, and painting. The oldest Raevskii son, Sviatoslav Afanas'evich, though six years older than Lermontov, was to become an intimate lifelong friend of the poet's, suffering with him the difficult period following Lermontov's 1837 poem on the death of Pushkin.²²

Lermontov's life at Tarkhany during the next 10 years (early 1818 through the summer of 1827) is almost totally undocumented. On the other hand, there are numerous verbal accounts and reports from those, often serf men and women, living on the estate, filtered through the prism of later scholars, notably Viskovatov, to whom students of Lermontov remain heavily indebted. There are other accounts from firsthand witnesses based on memories. To the scientifically-minded reader, these sources might at first glance appear insufficiently reliable. However, while some of the details may be inexactly represented, the sum total of the evidence is overwhelmingly convincing, and the researcher cannot but receive a very vivid impression of life at Tarkhany during those years and of what it must have meant for the development of this sensitive, highly-talented, not very robust child, growing up with neither mother nor father.

The overwhelming impression and only conclusion to which all reports contribute is that Lermontov was the focus not only of his grandmother's affections and concerns, but of the entire household. While the house serfs had their general duties, everything would be dropped to satisfy his needs. He was not a robust child and suffered from scrofula. He had frequent rashes and scabs and was often sick. His grandmother watched over him anxiously. If he did take ill, the household serf girls were taken off their normal chores and instructed to pray to God for the recovery of the young master.

In winter they would play with young Lermontov, Misha, in the snow. Among other things they would build a small snow slope, and send him down in his toboggan. Between Christmas and Twelfth Night, every evening they would dress up and dance, sing, and play for him. Those who did so were relieved of some of their routine duties. In general, holidays were observed in the traditional oldtime fashion, and the household serf girls played a major role in the preparation and celebration. According to Viskovatov, it was enjoyable for everyone. He reports talking much later with the participants, by now old women, who recalled: "Oh, what a great time we had. We had so much fun, and played so many games. It's impossible to give an idea of what went on. It's a wonder that she, Elizaveta Alekseevna, God rest her soul, could put up with it all!" In summer, they would all walk into the woods, led by Lermontov, and picnic there. Elizaveta Alekseevna would sit by the drawing-room window watching the path into the woods.²³

In all this one must inevitably see Lermontov as a spoiled young prankster, glorying in the affection lavished upon him by so many attentive females. The sense of his own importance must have become second nature. But there is another aspect to these childhood experiences which deserves mention. Lermontov seems from his early years to have had a strong sympathy for the

²² *Ibid*, 61-70.

²³ Viskovatov 1987, 40-44; A. P. Shan-Girei, "M. Iu. Lermontov," *LVVS*, 32-33; P. K. Shugaev, "Iz kolybeli zamechatel'nykh liudei," *ibid*, 58-60.

serf, and a strong awareness of the injustices to which the serf was subject. Presumably, this sympathy and this awareness stemmed, in part, from the close, uninhibited contact he had with the household serf girls. With the sure instinct of the child, he must have recognized the socially-inferior position of the girls, which could only have increased his own sense of importance and power. But he must also have observed their humanity. Alone with the young master in the woods, for example, they would have laughed and joked without inhibition, and he would have heard them talking to each other. They were not simply his servants, but his companions.

At the risk of overinsisting, let us imagine a different setting: a house full of members of the nobility, family and guests, adults and children, going on a picnic. They would be attended only by those servants needed to feed them and minister to them. The games would be played by themselves alone: the servants would never participate. Conversation would be limited to members of the nobility; the servants would speak only when spoken to or to ask for instructions. Such a picnic encourages a young child to see the servants as no more than faceless ciphers, there only to satisfy the needs of the noble picnic participants. But the situation, as we know, was altogether different for Lermontov. The servant girls played, conversed, and ate. In fact, they ran the show. Lermontov's isolation with his grandmother may have given him understandings which under more normal circumstances he could not have obtained.

Presumably to help counteract the effects of Lermontov's isolation, Elizaveta Alekseevna persuaded her niece, Mariia Akimovna Shan-Girei to move from the Caucasus and settle (on her new estate of Apalikha) close to Tarkhany. In 1825, her son, Lermontov's second cousin, Akim Pavlovich Shan-Girei (1818-83), was brought in to study and play with Lermontov. Akim Pavlovich was the grandson of Elizaveta Alekseevna's sister who lived in the Caucasus. He was four years younger than Lermontov, but became a lifelong friend. Two cousins from his father's side, Nikolai and Mikhail Pogozhin-Otoshkevich, also lived in Tarkhany for a couple of years. Viskovatov reports that at one time there 10 youngsters there. Elizaveta Alekseevna's concern that Lermontov's social life be made as normal as possible is evident in these arrangements.²⁴

Another influence on the child was that of his German nanny or governess. He had originally had a Russian nanny, presumably a serf woman, Marfa Maksimovna Konovalova. But she apparently did something which displeased Elizaveta Alekseevna and was exiled to the nearby estate of Mikhailovka. She was replaced by Khristina Osipovna Remer. Khristina Osipovna was strictly religious and seems to have been strongly imbued with an aspect of Christ's teaching probably not in the forefront of Elizaveta Alekseevna's religious mind: she believed strongly in loving her fellow man, even when that fellow man was no more than a serf. And this precept she imparted relentlessly to her young charge, never allowing him to be rude or insulting to his social inferiors. She was, it seems, highly respected by all in the household. Viskovatov credits her with having had a beneficial restraining influence on a child whose very position in the household threatened to make him capricious, headstrong, and stubborn. She probably also stimulated and gave direction to Lermontov's childish imagination, having been brought up on the ideas of German Romanticism, since German Romanticism is a strong element in Lermontov's early fantasies: "When I was still very small, I loved to look at the moon and at the clouds with their different shapes, like knights in their helmets, clustered around it..."²⁵ He could see there also giants, dragons, monsters, sorcerers. Lermontov was to write in 1830, when he was only 15 or 16 years old: "What a pity that my nanny was a German, instead of a Russian

²⁴ Viskovatov 1987, 45.

²⁵ *Ak. nauk*, VI, 386.

—I didn't get to hear the Russian folk tales."²⁶ But in this complaint there may have been an element of posturing. Lermontov's youthful years at Tarkhany undoubtedly brought him very close to Russia's folklore, a factor in his development which cannot be too strongly insisted on. Brodskii is almost certainly right in stating that the German literary tradition was fused with the Russian oral tradition in his early years.²⁷ Lermontov himself has left some interesting indications of his development. His posthumously-named fragment "I wish to tell you" (*Ja khochu rasskazat' vam*), tentatively dated 1835 or 1836, is an attempt at literary narrative. As such, it cannot be taken as word-for-word documentary evidence. But, like so much of Lermontov's writing, it has an autobiographical turn, and it gives information about his upbringing. The use of the name Sasha Arbenin, which appears in a number of works, is invariably an indication that he is writing about himself. This excerpt describes the character development of young Sasha Arbenin, who lives in the country, surrounded by females, in the charge of his nanny. The nanny supervises the household, and Sasha tags along behind her through the female servants' quarters, just as the serf girls also come into the nursery. "Sasha had a great time with them. They would caress him and tell him tales about Volga robbers, and his imagination was full of miracles of bravery, pictures of gloom, and asocial imaginings. He fell out of love with his toys, and started to fantasize. At the age of six, he would stare at the sunset jotted with ruddy clouds, and an inexplicably sweet feeling would agitate his soul when the full moon shone through the window on his little child's bed. Sasha was totally spoiled, totally headstrong. At seven he knew how to bawl out a disobedient lackey. He knew how to assume an arrogant look and to smile contemptuously at the fat housekeeper's words of flattery. At the same time a destructive tendency, inborn in all of us, was developing in him to an unusual degree. In the garden he would sometimes break down the bushes or break off the best flowers, and strew them over the pathways. He took genuine pleasure in squishing an unlucky fly, and he was happy if a stone he threw knocked some poor hen off her feet. God knows what direction his character would have taken, had it not been for the fortunate intervention of the measles—at his age a dangerous disease. His life was saved, but the severe illness left him extremely weak: he couldn't walk, he couldn't lift his feet from the ground. For three whole years he remained in the most wretched, desperate situation; and if nature had not endowed him with an iron constitution, he would certainly have departed to a better world. His sickness affected his mind and character: he learned to reflect. Deprived of the ability to enjoy normal children's games, he started to look for his enjoyments within himself. Imagination became his new toy.... During periods of tormenting insomnia, suffocating between his hot pillows, he was developing the habit of overcoming his physical sufferings by the fantasies of his heart. He would imagine himself a Volga robber, amid the cold blue waves, in the shade of the deep forest, in the noise of battle, in night attacks, amid the sound of songs, in the shrieking of the Volga storm."²⁸

Another example of how the world at Tarkhany continued to turn around Lermontov as he approached adolescence concerns the recruitment of a band of young household serf boys of his age for him to lead. His grandmother paid to have them all fitted out with uniforms. Lermontov drilled them, and they all played war games and carried out bandit raids. Sometimes relatives, most notably his cousin Akim Pavlovich Shan-Girei, participated in these war games. One is reminded of Peter the Great, who as a lad played war games with his regiment of youngsters (*poteshnyi polk*). It is reported, too, that Lermontov would organize fist-fights, dividing the

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 387.

²⁷ Brodskii, 16.

²⁸ *Ak. nauk*, VI, 192-93.

available young males up into two groups, and giving prizes (food and/or vodka) to the winning team. Fistfights between villages are attested in Russia and England, lending credibility to the account. The same source states that Lermontov's grandmother had brought in from Moscow a deer and an elk to please the boy. As the deer grew bigger, he grew more and more aggressive and would attack the peasants with his antlers. They contrived to get rid of both animals by subterfuge, starving the deer, till his legs gave way. Elizaveta Alekseevna, fearing that the elk might contract the same disease, had both animals slaughtered and used for meat. Finally, there is the story, authentic or apocryphal, that as young Lermontov approached manhood, his grandmother would bring good-looking young girls into the household to work. If any of these became pregnant, she would marry the girl off to the husband of her choice, meaning the husband of Elizaveta Alekseevna's choice. At that time in Russia, this was not that unusual, which may be why it appears in Lermontov's biography at all.²⁹ On the basis of Lermontov's subsequent relationships with women, I remain very skeptical of the idea that in early adolescence he more or less regularly enjoyed the favors of a succession of young peasant women.

The physical scenery of Tarkhany also influenced Lermontov. Throughout his childhood, he saw the meadows and woods, the pond before the house, the village, and he both saw and heard animals, wild and domesticated. Lermontov always had a sensitive eye and a sensitive ear, and these impressions of nature are reflected in his writing.

Nature also played a significant role in Lermontov's childhood response to the Caucasus. Due to his poor health, he became acquainted with the Caucasus early in life, since his grandmother was firmly persuaded of the Caucasus's curative powers. In 1818, 1820, and 1825, Lermontov visited the Caucasus with his grandmother. These repeated early visits, at an impressionable age, must have helped breed a sense of familiarity, which would have been augmented by family ties. When he and his grandmother went to the Caucasus, they did not go as so many Russians did when they took the waters, as outsiders, wondering which Muscovites or Petersburgers they might run into. They were a part of the Caucasus. These family ties and the Khostatov estate might have produced no such effect had Lermontov gone there when he was older, or only once. But with repeated visits and strong personal ties, it is difficult to believe that he did not come to regard the Caucasus as a second motherland (*vtoraiia rodina*) and second home, one he had visited during the summer on three occasions before he started attending school.³⁰

Compare him with Pushkin. Pushkin was 21 years old when he first saw the Caucasus. Commentators rightly stress its enormous impact on him. But he was there all too briefly and only saw it again once, nine years later. Lermontov was exiled, twice, to the Caucasus, each time striving to make his way back to the capitals. He was to die in the Caucasus. Yet Lermontov's relationship with the Caucasus was infinitely closer and more productive than Pushkin's.

Something of his early and easygoing familiarity with the Caucasus may be seen in the following story. As a child, Lermontov had become adept at modeling with wax. Even as an adolescent, he continued making wax figures. With these he peopled his puppet theaters, the making of puppet theaters being at that time a popular pastime. Old-timers in Tarkhany recalled the child coming back from the Caucasus and modeling mountains and Circassian hillmen. With these he would "play Caucasus" ("*igrat v Kavkaz*"). "Blue mountains of the Caucasus," he was to intone nostalgically at the age of 16, "I greet you! You nurtured my childhood, you carried me on your wild crests; you shrouded me in your clouds; you lifted up my eyes to the heavens; and

²⁹ P. K. Shugaev, "Iz kolybeli zamechatel'nykh liudei," *LVS*, 58-59.

³⁰ Manuilov, *Letopis'*, 19, 20, 21.

from that time forward I have always dreamed of you and of the heavens....”³¹ In Viskovatov’s view there was scarcely another passion in Lermontov’s heart more powerful than his passion for the Caucasus: “Upon it (the Caucasus) he poured out all his love, he breathed it in with his every breath. The Caucasus opened its embraces to him, no less sublime than the soul of the poet, and its embraces replaced for him the caresses of his dead mother, and later the love of a sister soul, the friendship of close friends, and his distant fatherland.”³² In the same notebook a few pages after the above-quoted prose invocation to the Caucasus, Lermontov launches into amphibrachs:

Хотя я судьбой на заре моих дней,
О южные горы, отторгнут от вас,
Чтоб вечно их помнить, там надо быть раз,
Как сладкую песню отчизны моей,
Люблю я Кавказ.

В младенческих летах я мать потерял.
Но мнилось, что в розовый вечера час
Та степь повторяла мне памятный глас.
За это люблю я вершины тех скал,
Люблю я Кавказ.

Я счастлив был с вами, ущелия гор;
Пять лет пронеслось: всё тоскую по вас,
Там видел я пару божественных глаз;
И сердце лепечет, вспомя тот взор:
Люблю я Кавказ.!

Although I by fate, in the dawn of my days,
Ye peaks of the southland, am sundered from you!
To be there just once, you’ll recall them forever.
Just like a sweet song from my fatherland home,
The Caucasus love I so well.
No more than an infant, I lost my dear mother,
But yet when the evening grew pink it would seem that
The steppe echoed back the dear voice I recalled.
And therefore I love the tall peaks of the mountains,
The Caucasus love I so well.
You mountain ravines, I was happy with you!
Five years have passed by, yet I grieve for you still.
‘Twas there that I saw two dear God-given eyes.
My heart is a-tremble recalling that gaze:
The Caucasus love I so well.³³

As the poem shows, the Caucasus had one more claim on the heart of the young poet. It provided the background for his first love. Lermontov recalled this emotionally in 1830:

³¹ *Ak nauk*, II, 26.

³² Viskovatov 1987, 47.

³³ *Ak nauk*, I, 74.

Who would believe that I experienced my first love when I was only 10 years old? At the Caucasian waters we were a large family: my grandmother, my aunt, my cousins. Some lady visited my cousins with her daughter, a girl of about nine; that's where I saw her. I don't remember if she was pretty or not. But even now I still retain her image in my mind. It is dear to me, I myself don't know why. One time, I recall, I ran into a room. She was there playing dolls with a girl cousin. My heart started to tremble, my legs grew weak. I had at that time no idea of anything. Just the same, this was a powerful passion, though a childish one. It was true love. I have never since then loved anyone in that way. This first moment of awakening passion will torture me to my grave. And so early!...I was laughed at and teased, for the agitation showed on my face. I would weep in secret, with no reason; I wanted to see her. But when she was there, I didn't want to or was ashamed to go into the room. I wouldn't talk about her, and I'd run away when I heard her name (which I've now forgotten), as though I were afraid that my heartbeat and trembling voice would betray to others a secret which I didn't understand myself. I don't know who she was or where she came from...And even now it would be somehow embarrassing for me to ask: they might ask me how I remember when they have forgotten; or they might think I was imagining things, and not believe in her existence, and that would cause me pain... Blond hair, blue alert (*bystrye*) eyes, an easy naturalness... No, I've never since seen anyone like her, or so it seems to me, because I've never since loved as I did then. The mountains of the Caucasus are for me sacred.... And so early! At the age of ten! O, this mystery, this paradise lost will torture me to my grave! Sometimes it seems strange, and I'm ready to laugh at this passion! But more often I feel like crying. They say (Byron) that an early passion is a sign of a soul which will love the arts (*iziashchnye iskusstva*). I believe that in such a soul there is much music.³⁴

First love means different things to different people. It may leave no memory at all. For others it may merit a shrug of the shoulders. For Lermontov, it was obviously more, including an opportunity to put himself on a level with Byron. For a short while, Lermontov was preoccupied with following in all possible ways in the footsteps of the English poet. If Byron had had a precocious first love, should not Lermontov have had one too? A comparison of Lermontov's reminiscences quoted above with Byron's recollections of his love for Mary Duff before he was eight shows points of similarity: the same insistence that he was "at an age when I could neither feel passion, nor know the meaning of the word"; and again, "I certainly had no sexual ideas for years afterward"; being teased: "my mother used always to rally me about this childish amour"; the feeling that beside that experience all subsequent experiences paled: "my misery, my love for that girl were so violent, that I sometimes doubt if I have ever been really attached since;" the focus on hair and eyes, though of different hues: "how very very pretty is the perfect image of her in my memory — her brown, dark hair, and hazel eyes"; the same inability to explain the mystery: "the more I am bewildered to assign any cause for this precocity of affection." In 1830, Lermontov had become an avid reader of Thomas Moore's *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, which had come out that year.³⁵

But to reduce Lermontov's avowal to posturing would be a gross mistake. Imitation of the behavior and habits of some chosen model is not necessarily a proof of insincerity, ostentation, and pretense. The choice of a model involves recognition of some affinity in terms of situation,

³⁴ *Ak. nauk*, VI, 385-386.

³⁵ Thomas Moore, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron* (London: John Murray, 1830), I, 17-19.

character, or goals. Ostentation, posturing, exaggeration, and tailoring one's memories to fit a desired pattern are not excluded. But we should not dismiss Lermontov's first-love avowals as mere byronizing. The significance of a first love lies not in what actually happened or didn't happen at the time; it lies in the value ascribed to it by the lover in subsequent years. And Lermontov was given to holding fast his memories. Byron notwithstanding, Lermontov's insistence on his precocious first love may not have had much to do with love of the fine arts, but may be symptomatic of a specific type of personality or upbringing, with real attendant problems. The outstanding Byron scholar, Leslie A. Marchand, comments on this score: "It is strange how little account has been taken of Byron's plain statement that his passions were developed very early and that this 'caused the anticipated melancholy of my thoughts — having anticipated life'...the premature sexual awakening caused disillusionment, the melancholy which springs from physical disgust and the failure of the real experience to measure up to the ideal." In Byron's case the problem of early first love was complicated by the additional problem of early sexual initiation.³⁶ There is no doubt that Byron grew to manhood in some way maimed, not by his clubfoot, but in personality and his ability to enjoy life. The same must be said of Lermontov. We will examine what seem to be the main causes and symptoms of Lermontov's melancholy. In this connection, we shall touch again on this first love and its precocity, though it is difficult to say whether it is a cause or a symptom. If we are to take Byron's view seriously, as Marchand thinks we should, then we should also take seriously Lermontov's expressed wish, in an 1839 poem, that his friend's new-born child not know—*precociously*—the torments of love.³⁷

Let us sum up the formative years at Tarkhany. Lermontov had lost his mother and, for all practical purposes, his father, too. The break between Iurii Petrovich Lermontov and his son at Tarkhany was not complete, they saw each other from time to time, but it was not a guiding or nurturing relationship. And it is safe to assume that he was not spoken of by Elizaveta Alekseevna, the authority figure in Lermontov's life, with any of the love and respect which might, his absence notwithstanding, have built up an image to which his son could look for sustenance. On the other hand, he could rely on his grandmother implicitly for love and all manner of caring. With her, he was at the center of a mostly female and certainly adoring household. But it may be that too much love was accorded him too unquestioningly. It is tempting to compare his upbringing with Pushkin's. Both Pushkin and Lermontov were effectively, in different ways, deprived of their fathers. But there the similarity ends. Of the three Pushkin children, the poet—younger than his sister, older than his brother—was the least loved, certainly by his mother. Little attention seems to have been paid to his doings. He was reportedly unprepossessing. If he was to be someone, he would have to find his own way. The exact opposite was true of Lermontov. He had little or no competition from other children. And when he did anything, it was immediately noticed and applauded. At Easter, the serf girls would bring in their painted eggs, and when little Lermontov eventually won in the egg rolling, he would run with joy to his grandmother: "Grandmother, I won!" "God be praised," Elizaveta Alekseevna would say. "Take your basket and play some more."³⁸ He was truly surrounded by love. Not that Pushkin's less happy childhood produced a balanced character. He, too, was maimed. Pushkin was starved; Lermontov was surfeited.

Commentators have rightly drawn attention to Lermontov's nostalgia, his inability to forget. Life for Lermontov has been likened to a vale of tears, in which the sojourner has indistinct

³⁶ Leslie Alexis Marchand, *Byron: A Biography* (N. Y.: Knopf, 1957), I, 62.

³⁷ *Ak. nauk*, I, 120: *Rebenka milogo rozhden'e*.

³⁸ Viskovato, 1987, 41.

but haunting memories of some earlier paradise, now lost, some garden of Eden from which he is now banished. This is exactly right, and it is difficult to fault his reasoning. He really did have a paradise, a garden of Eden. How could the realities of adolescent and adult life, its frictions, trivialities, disappointments, and deceptions, measure up to the warmth of his childhood years in Tarkhany and the Caucasus?

Something of this recollection of past bliss as opposed to earthly reality, of memories of his mother singing, is admirably conveyed in one of his more effective early poems, the 1831 *Angel*:

По небу полуночи ангел летел
И тихую песню он пел;
И месяц, и звезды, и тучи толпой
Внимали той песне святой.

Он пел о блаженстве безгрешных духов
Под кущами райских садов;
О Боге великом он пел, и хвала
Его непритворна была.

Он душу младую в объятиях нес
Для мира печали и слез;
И звук его песни в душе молодой
Остался — без слов, но живой.

И долго на свете томилась она,
Желанием чудным полна;
И звуков небес заменить не могли
Ей скучные песни земли.

Across the midnight sky an angel flew.
He was singing a gentle song;
The moon and the stars and the clouds together
Listened to that sacred song.

He was singing of the bliss of souls without sin
Beneath the shade of the gardens of paradise
Of God Almighty he sang, and his praise
Was praise that came from the heart.

He bore in his arms the soul of a child
To the world of sorrow and tears;
And the sound of his singing remained in the heart
Of the child — without words, but alive.

And for long on this earth the child anguished in pain,
Filled with a yearning unknown;
And the wearisome songs of this earth could not vie
With the sound of that heavenly song.³⁹

³⁹ *Ak. nauk*, I, 230.

III. To Moscow!

When the decision to have Lermontov educated in Moscow was made is not known. The idea may have originated as early as 1817-18, when Arsen'eva and her grandchild wintered in Penza. During that winter Arsen'eva had close contact with A. G. Raevskii, senior instructor at the high school of Penza, and it is likely that she sought his advice.⁴⁰ In any event, some time during the summer of 1827 the move was made. By fall grandmother and grandson were installed in Moscow in the home of Arsen'eva's uncle, Peter Afanas'evich Meshcherinov, where they spent the first winter of 1827-28.

Either on the way to or from Moscow that same summer, Lermontov stayed for a while at Kropotovo, his father's place near Tula. Only one thing is known of this summer visit, that Lermontov experienced at Kropotovo his "second love." There has been some confusion about the identity of the girl. There has been speculation that it was Anna Grigor'evna Stolypina (1815-92), a second cousin of Lermontov's mother, or, perhaps, another Stolypin second cousin, Agaf'ia Aleksandrovna Stolypina (1809-74). But what would a young Stolypin girl be doing on Lermontov's father's estate? A consensus seems now to favor Sof'ia Ivanovna Saburova (1816-64), sister of Mikhail Ivanovich Saburov, Lermontov's colleague-to-be at both the *pansion* and later at the cadet school in Petersburg. Saburova was to become one of Moscow's foremost beauties. She was married in 1832 to a D. Klushin and settled in Orel.

Arsen'eva and her grandson stayed only one winter in the Meshcherinov house in Moscow, but contacts with the household endured. Both husband and wife were warm-hearted, cultured people. He was interested in painting and sculpture. The household art collection must have made an impression on Lermontov, who had developed an enthusiasm for drawing and modeling. In their excellent library, Lermontov found "not only seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Russian and foreign classics, but also contemporary authors, Russian journals and almanacs."⁴¹ The wife, Elizaveta Petrovna, was widely read and well-educated. On her initiative, Aleksei Zinov'evich Zinov'ev was invited to act as house tutor to supervise Lermontov's preparation for the entrance examination to the Moscow University Boarding School for the Nobility (*Moskovskii universitetskii blagorodnyi pansion*). He was to play a positive role in Lermontov's studies.

This visit may also have contributed to Lermontov's later openness to a military career. The military dominated Lermontov's adult life, but scholars tend to see him as out of place in a military setting and to consider his 1832 entry into the cadet school as an almost fatal strategic error. While a good case can be made for these views, and while opting for cadet school was something of a desperate move on his part, military influences actually appeared early in Lermontov's life. His French tutor, Jean Capet, had served in Napoleon's guard and been captured in 1812. He was a member of Arsen'eva's household from at least 1825 (he was with Arsen'eva and Lermontov on their visit to the Caucasus in 1825), and he inspired the youth with tales of Napoleon and of military glory. Petr Afanas'evich Meshcherinov provided another such source, frequently trading war stories with his friend P. M. Melikov, who had served with him in the same regiment and been wounded at Friedland (1807) and again at Borodino (1812). The great Ermolov, famed for his role in 1812 and in the Caucasus, was a frequent visitor in Melikov's home, and Lermontov may well have seen the great man in the Meshcherinov home.

In the family Lermontov found friends in the three sons: Vladimir, Afanasii, and Petr Meshcherinov. They took classes together preparing for school, and Vladimir (born 1813) was

⁴⁰ Vyrypaev 1972, 64-66.

⁴¹ Manuilov, *M. Iu. Lermontov: Biografiia* (M.: Prosveshchenie, 1964), 34 (Manuilov 1964b).

enrolled in the same (fourth) class as Lermontov. Afanasii was musically gifted, and Vladimir and Petr both had a strong interest in literature. Cultural activities were encouraged in the household. Lermontov himself was taking drawing lessons from a promising young artist, A. S. Salonitskii, as well as piano and violin lessons.⁴²

Years later, Melikov's nephew, M. E. Melikov (1818-96), who became an artist, was to characterize young Lermontov as follows: "As a child Lermontov's appearance inevitably caught the eye: he was short but sturdily built (*prizemisty, malen'kii rostom*) with a large head, pale, and he had large brown eyes whose power of attraction remains for me a mystery to this day. Those eyes, made more pronounced by the intelligent, dark eyelashes, exerted a charm on those well disposed toward Lermontov. During a fit of anger they looked terrifying. I could never have painted a portrait of Lermontov because of the irregularities in his facial contours; and, in my view, only K. P. Briullov would have been up to the task...."⁴³

M. E. Melikov offers an interesting insight into the two ladies of the Meshcherinov household: "E. A. Arsen'eva was a woman of despotic and unbending character who was accustomed to giving orders; she possessed a remarkable beauty, came from long-established landowner stock (*iz starinnogo dvorianskogo roda*), and was a typical example of the old-style aristocratic owner, who, moreover, took pleasure in telling anyone the truth to their faces, even the bitterest of truths. E. P. Meshcherinova, a no less typical personality, was, in contrast to Arsen'eva, outstanding by virtue of her accessibility, understanding and kindness (*sniskhoditel'nost'*), and sensibility."⁴⁴

It was Zinov'ev's task to supervise Lermontov's preparation for his entrance examination. Zinov'ev (1801-84) was rapidly acquiring a scholarly reputation. He was a supervisor and instructor in Russian and Latin at the *pansion* (school). And he was authorized to engage other instructors to assist in preparing Lermontov. Prospective candidates for the *pansion* were required to undergo examination in Arithmetic, Algebra (as far as equations of the second degree), Latin and German etymology, Russian syntax, ancient and world history, and world geography. By the time he entered the fourth class of the *pansion*, in September, 1828, Lermontov was without doubt well-grounded in the essentials, and much more besides, thanks to his vigorous pursuit of wide cultural interests and to the help he received from various instructors. Of these latter, Jean Capet has already received mention. He died in 1827 and was replaced by Jean Pierre Gendrot, also much liked and respected by Lermontov. Gendrot regaled Lermontov with tales of historical events going back to the French Revolution. He died in 1829,⁴⁵ and his place was taken by an English tutor, Frederick Winson (mistakenly called Windson by some biographers), to whom Lermontov never felt close, but who nevertheless had him reading Shakespeare, Byron, Coleridge, Moore, Scott, and Fenimore Cooper. Arsen'eva paid Winson the very high salary of 3,000 roubles a year. She took very seriously her promise to assure Lermontov a good education and acquitted herself admirably in this respect.

Lermontov did not initially take to Zinov'ev, either, but he quickly learned to like and esteem him. The feeling was mutual. Zinov'ev speaks of "the early development of his [Lermontov's] independent and firm character." "He drew very well, loved fencing, horseback riding, and

⁴² Manuilov 1964b, 38.

⁴³ *LVVS*, 70; for an abridged version of Melikov's reminiscences see 68-71; for a full version see *Russkaia starina*, 1896, v. 86, 645-49.

⁴⁴ *LVVS*, 69.

⁴⁵ Viskovatov, 416, n.23. The belief that Gendrot was let go for inculcating in his pupil an overly hedonistic approach to life is unfounded.

dancing, and there was nothing clumsy about him: he was a thick-set (*korenastyi*) youngster, who gave every indication of developing into a strong and powerful man (*sil'nogo i krepkogo muzha*)." Zinov'ev remained his tutor for the two years he attended the *pansion* (he was a "day-boy," not a boarder). It was perhaps to Zinov'ev that Lermontov showed his first efforts in verse and from Zinov'ev that he first received encouragement and instruction as an aspiring poet.⁴⁶

The two years that Lermontov spent in the *pansion* were, academically, entirely successful. He received various prizes and awards at the end of the different terms. He numbered among his excellent teachers Aleksei Fedorovich Merzliakov (1778-1830), a poet in his own right, who gave Lermontov personal tuition in the home, and who undoubtedly furthered him in his poetic endeavors. No less helpful was Semen Egorovich Raich, an expert on Classical and Italian poetry, who helped Lermontov in his understanding of poetic techniques and in general gave him a grounding in world poetry.

Lermontov's easy progress in scholarly subjects cannot be attributed to any desire to please his grandmother, his instructors, or anyone else. He simply found the subjects offered worthwhile, pursued them with ease and diligence, and by the end of the two years had attained an exceptional level of knowledge in a number of fields, particularly Russian, several foreign languages, poetry, and poetic techniques.⁴⁷

All this came to an end in 1830. On March 11, 1830, Nicholas I decided to make an unheralded visit to the *pansion*. He arrived when classes were changing. The attendant chaos offended his sense of law and order. The *pansion* became, on March 29, by order of the Senate, a *gimnaziia*! A number of important factors had given the *pansion* a highly privileged position. With the founding of the University in 1755, a two-track university *gimnaziia* had originally been set up: one track for the nobility, another for the *raznochintsy* (other ranks). In the late 70's or early 80's the nobility had been transferred to a separate building at a nearby location (where the Central Telegraph Building stands today). This marks the real beginning of the *pansion*.

That the *pansion* was exclusively for the nobility might be held to be furthering undemocratic, unprogressive ideas, promoting a sense of caste privilege and exclusiveness. In fact, it worked more in the opposite direction. One contemporary conservative tenet held that education was dangerous for the lower orders, since it gave them ideas far above their station. Obviously, the thinking went, this was less of a danger for members of the nobility. To have them thus isolated was to make permissiveness slightly more tolerable. In fact, the Moscow University *pansion* provided, along with the Tsarskoe Selo lycee attended by Pushkin, the best education for a male child available in Russia.

Instruction was given in law, theology, mathematics, physics, geography, the natural sciences, military science, drawing, music, and dancing. Prominent among instructors and important for Lermontov's development as a poet were, as noted above, A. F. Merzliakov, S. E. Raich, and A. Z. Zinov'ev. There was a large library and a literary society in which Lermontov played an active role. The overall atmosphere reflected a liberal outlook nurtured on the humanities. The *pansion* numbered among its alumni Zhukovskii, Griboedov, and Tiutchev, plus a considerable number of guards officers and Decembrists, including N. M. Murav'ev, I. D. Iakushkin, P. G. Kakhovskii (hanged), N. I. Turgenev and V. F. Raevskii. Benkendorf, chief of the secret police, saw it as a hotbed of opposition sentiment. Following the Decembrist uprising Nicholas I had replaced the *pansion's* administration, which did not however substantially alter the institution's character. The Tsar's visit of March 11, 1830, and the ensuing Senate decree did just that.

⁴⁶ Leonid Grössman, "Stikhovedcheskaia shkola Lermontova," *LN*, 45-46, 262-65.

⁴⁷ For Lermontov's first-term grades (December 1828) see Appendix III in this volume.

Arsen'eva immediately authorized the withdrawal of her grandson, who went on to Moscow University. On September 1, 1830, he was admitted, after an oral examination. No details of the examination have survived. But I. A. Goncharov, best known for his novel *Oblomov*, who met Lermontov at the University, has left the following account of the proceedings:

On the evening of the appointed day, we showed up for the exam, which took place, I recall, in the conference room. There were quite a few of us, and we huddled together in an ill lit, adjacent room, pressing up to the walls, waiting our turn like men condemned to be executed.... Several candidates were called together, because the exam was to be completed at one go. Seated in the conference room was a tribunal of examining professors, headed by the rector. There were seven or eight of them. Those summoned went up to each examiner in turn.

The latter would ask several questions or give the candidate a problem, for example in Algebra or Geometry which had to be solved on the spot. The professor of Latin would without words open a book and point to the lines to be translated, pausing at some phrase to ask for an explanation. The French examiner didn't even do that: he would simply say something in French, and if he received a fluent reply, wrote down a grade and with a friendly nod dismissed the candidate. The German had the student read and translate two or three lines, and if the student had no difficulty, he would be dismissed in similar fashion. I had scarcely the time to look around, and the exam was over.

Another Lermontov contemporary, P. F. Vistengof commented: "My exam was made more than easy. The professors themselves were giving the answers under their breaths...."⁴⁸

Although admitted in September, 1830, Lermontov did not actually begin his university studies for several months, since cholera reached Moscow in that September. Military cordons were thrown up. While Lermontov and his grandmother remained in the city, university activities came to a halt. The same cholera epidemic and the same fall in which Pushkin, eager to return to his fiancée in Moscow, was obliged to remain on the remote estate of Boldino, where he had the most creative period of his entire writing career. Moscow University reopened on January 12, 1831, but for a while lectures were given and attended irregularly.

Lermontov seems to have been a voracious reader all his life, and his time at the university was probably not misspent. However, it is difficult to pinpoint what he actually did. This was the great decade of student philosophical and social discussion groups, the so-called "circles" (*kruzhki*) to which Belinskii, Herzen, Ogarev, Stankevich and other young liberals belonged. One senses in commentators like Manuilov a certain malaise: it would be so much more reassuring if Lermontov could be identified with a progressive group. If he was progressive, wouldn't he want to be part of a progressive *kruzhok*? Manuilov concedes reluctantly that he was not closely acquainted with either Belinskii or Herzen. But he hastens to assure the reader that, as Herzen testifies, the students "expressed in the auditorium anything that came into their heads; notebooks of forbidden verses passed from hand to hand, forbidden books were read along with the commentaries." Manuilov continues, "Lermontov had his own close circle of friends: A. D. Zakrevskii, V. P. Gagarin, N. S. Shenshin, all three of them university students, and non-students N. I.

⁴⁸ I. A. Goncharov, *Sobranie sochinenii* (M.-L.: Goslitizdat, 1954), VIII, 198. P. F. Vistengof, "Iz moix vospominanii," *Istoricheskii vestnik*, 1884, XVI, kn. 5, 332. Both cited in *Letopis'*, 34.

Polivanov and V. A. Shenshin.”⁴⁹ Maybe so. But the larger truth is that Lermontov was somewhat reclusive and definitely unenthusiastic about student circles. In fact he is on record as having labeled philosophical circles as “literary masturbation.”⁵⁰ This did not prevent his being abreast of the latest liberal trends of thought.

Reportedly, Lermontov rarely attended lectures, and when he did, sat at a distance from his classmates, reading a book and not listening to the lecturer. This behavior provoked resentment and curiosity. Induced by fellow students to try and break the ice, Vistengof, not himself well-disposed toward Lermontov, went up and asked the latter what he was reading. Lermontov’s response is a perfect testimony to his high opinion of his own intellect, his aloofness, and unwillingness to meet anyone halfway: “Why do you want to know that? If I were to satisfy your curiosity, it wouldn’t do any good. The contents of this book can’t interest you at all; you wouldn’t understand anything even if I decided to tell you the contents.” As he retreated, Vistengof did not get the title, but he could see that the book was written in English. Another Vistengof anecdote about Lermontov shows the latter no less abrupt in responses to professors. Pobedonostsev, a literature professor, asked Lermontov a question. Lermontov started to answer in a lively, self-assured manner. The professor listened to begin with, but then stopped him and said: “That’s not what I gave you; I want you to answer just what I gave you. Where did you get this information?” “It’s true, professor, that you didn’t give us what I was just answering, and couldn’t have given us, because it’s too new and you don’t yet have it. I use sources from my own library, which contains everything that is up to date.”⁵¹

The level of instruction seems in Lermontov’s time to have been low: worse than it had been, worse than it would shortly be. And the most laggard faculty performers tend to be equated by commentators with reactionary views. This is logical enough. Here was an age of rapidly changing philosophical and social thought: those who did not keep up with the times and repeated established truths would be unlikely to hold the attention of an audience eager for new things. M. Iu. Malov, professor of criminal law, was apparently one of the worst. So much so that on March 16, 1831, his students demonstrated against him and effectively hounded him out of the auditorium. Lermontov was involved and expected to be punished.⁵² However, only the two ringleaders, Herzen and Ia. I. Kostenetskii, were punished, and they were locked up for no more than a week. Nicholas I, convinced of Malov’s inadequacy, had him retired on pension.⁵³

However, Lermontov was not destined to remain at the university. His unconcealed contempt for professors can scarcely have endeared him to them or the administration. And by the spring of 1832 he rarely attended lectures; he was apparently writing his 2,289-line narrative poem *Izmail-Bei*. He was not idle, but his absences worked against him. He was advised to ask for a discharge. Whether absences from lectures, and worse, from examinations, and his arrogant contempt were the only reasons for such advice is difficult to say. Accounts often imply that his rebellious liberalism was a major factor. Lermontov requested his discharge “for domestic reasons.” He was duly discharged and received the necessary certificate for transfer to St. Petersburg

⁴⁹ Manuilov 1964b, 69. Also I. M. Solov’ev, “Poeziia odinokoi dushi,” *Venok* (M.-Petrograd, 1914), 111-17.

⁵⁰ N. P. Ogarev, quoted in L. Ginzburg, *Tvorcheskii put' Lermontova* (L.: Khudozhestvennoe literatura, 1940), 28.

⁵¹ P.F Vistengof, “Iz moikh vospominanii,” *LVVS*, 104-5.

⁵² See his 1831 lyric *Poslushai! vspomni obo mne* (“Listen! Remember me”).

⁵³ Manuilov 1964b, 69-70.

University. Belinskii was expelled that same year “for lack of aptitude” (“*za malye sposobnosti*”).⁵⁴ Lermontov and Arsen’eva left for Petersburg in July or early August, 1832.

Before moving on to Lermontov’s experiences in St. Petersburg, let us look at other aspects of the Moscow years. Lermontov started to write poetry in 1828. An 1827 notebook contains his copies first of French poetry, then of Pushkin’s *Bakhchisaraiskii fontan* and Byron’s *Prisoner of Chillon* in Zhukovskii’s translation. By the following year, he is writing his own. He starts in two genres, the lyric and the narrative poem. 1828 shows only four lyrics, but 1829 has 46! The narrative poem obviously attracts him from the beginning: in 1828 there are three, written in the tradition of Pushkin’s southern poems and Byron’s oriental tales; three more follow in 1829, as does the first redaction of his *Demon*. In 1830, primarily under the influence of Schiller, drama appears, with two plays written in 1830 and one in 1831. Not until 1833, in Petersburg, does Lermontov try writing prose and start work on his first novel, the unfinished *Vadim*.

The summers Lermontov spent in Serednikovo also played a significant role in his development. In the summer of 1828 Lermontov and Arsen’eva visited Tarkhany, where his first narrative poem was written.⁵⁵ The three following summers were spent in Serednikovo, and there was a probably brief visit there in the summer of 1832 as well.

Serednikovo was an estate situated about 20 versts northwest of Moscow. It belonged to the widow of Dmitrii Alekseevich Stolypin, Arsen’eva’s brother. He had been, along with Ermolov, Speranskii, and others, regarded by the Decembrists as a candidate for the temporary government in the event of a successful uprising. He died suddenly and mysteriously at the time of the post-Decembrist arrests in 1826. He had provided Serednikovo with an excellent library, so that Lermontov found good reading material here too.

Manuilov tends to extrapolate from Serednikovo’s undoubted scenic beauty to beauty in Lermontov’s poetic descriptions of nature. But Lermontov’s descriptions are the work of a juvenile inexperienced apprentice. One can easily forgive Lermontov his *Dva sokola* (“Two Falcons”). But it is wanton to praise it as a reflection of Serednikovo’s beauty or as an experiment in the adaptation of folk songs. The theme which attracted his attention goes back to “The Two Corbies,” part of Walter Scott’s collection *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802, 1803). Pushkin had developed it into *Voron k voronu letit* (“One Raven Flies to Another Raven”) and had passed it on in excellent shape. It was the youthful, Weltanschauung-bemused Lermontov who fumbled. Who ever heard of two falcons bemoaning the immorality of contemporary society?⁵⁶

I also remain skeptical about the lessons in folk song allegedly learned from the Serednikovo peasants. It seems to me that Lermontov’s feeling for the folk, which was undeniably strong, far stronger than that of Pushkin at a comparable age, was developed more in the comparative stillness of Tarkhany than in the adolescent agitation of Serednikovo, when Lermontov was less interested in the folk than in his own unrequited love, Byronic spleen, and overall Weltschmerz. Indeed, Serednikovo is associated with romantic and usually unconsoling imaginings and with young women (actually, Muscovite acquaintances come, like Lermontov, to spend the summer). But somehow there is a tendency to transfer the relationship to the ampler spaces and less demanding daily routines of Serednikovo.

Chronologically, Anna Grigor’evna Stolypina (1815-92), the second cousin of Lermontov’s mother, was the first of these women. She was to marry A. I. Filosofov (1800-74), who

⁵⁴ Manuilov, 1964b, 70.

⁵⁵ See *Letopis*, 24.

⁵⁶ For additional comment on the dynamics of this minor catastrophe, see below Chapter I, “Early Lyrics (1828-35).” For Manuilov, see 1964b, 60.

later published at his own expense the 1856 and 1857 Karlsruhe editions of *Demon*. Though she was not Lermontov's "second love," there seems no doubt that Lermontov did, in 1828 or 1829, find her attractive. His 1829 *K.....* ("To....."), *Ne privlekai menia krasoi!* ("Do Not Seek to Attract Me With Your Beauty!") was marked subsequently with Lermontov's comment: "(A. S.) (Although I didn't think it then) (*Khotia ia togda etogo ne dumal*)," evidently indicating confusion about his feelings at the time of writing. And there is an 1830 poem, *K derevu* ("To a Tree"), describing a beloved tree, once flourishing, now dead, under which the poet will be buried, his immortal genius hallowing its branches. On the following page in the notebook is the comment: "My testament. (About the tree where I sat with A.S.)." Antonia Glasse has pointed out an interesting parallel with Byron. Lermontov's comment continues: "Bury me beneath this dried-up tree, that two images of death may present themselves to your eyes; beneath this tree I loved, and heard the magic words 'I love you' ... and made the following testimony: 'Bury my bones beneath this dried-up apple-tree; put down a stone over me; and let nothing be written upon it, if my name alone is not enough to provide its immortality!'"⁵⁷ Glasse points out that this freely reproduces Byron's "A Fragment," found in Moore's *Life and Letters of Lord Byron*, Lermontov's favorite reading at the time:

If that with honour fail to crown my clay,
Oh! may no other fame my deeds repay!
That, only that, shall single out the spot;
By that remember'd, or with that forgot.⁵⁸

Glasse's observation that Lermontov took pleasure in finding or creating parallels between himself and Byron is not new. The value of her contribution to the discussion lies in her pointing to specific, hitherto-unexplored literary parallels. In view of Lermontov's ambiguous "Although I didn't think it then," one must wonder how much is due to Anna Grigor'evna, how much to Byron? I opt for Anna Grigor'evna, partly because there is talk of earlier, i.e. pre-1830, trysts beneath the tree. But surely it was Byron who shaped the thoughts on immortality.

Pursuing such parallels, Antonia Glasse pairs Byron's "third love," Mary Chaworth, with Lermontov's 1830 "love," Ekaterina Aleksandrovna Sushkova (1812-68). The parallel is in one respect perfect. Mary Chaworth and Sushkova were both two years older than their respective admirers, whom they saw as clumsy adolescents rather than the fascinating beaux Byron and Lermontov would have liked to appear. Lermontov made Sushkova's acquaintance through his distant relative and good friend, his Moscow cousin Aleksandra Mikhailovna Vereshchagina. Their three summer places were within four versts of each other, and in the summer of 1830 Lermontov frequently escorted the two young women on walks and expeditions. Sushkova's condescension and indifference to his infatuation inevitably pricked his vanity, but both she and Vereshchagina did encourage Lermontov's poetic endeavors. He produced a number of 1830 lyrics addressed to Sushkova. She inspired conflicting emotions in him: devotion at one moment, at another pique. He was to take his "revenge" in 1834, when, the differences in age being from Sushkova's viewpoint erased, he was to court her quite cynically and win her love or affection, only to turn on her abruptly and inform her that it had been no more than a game.

Sushkova, who herself had had a difficult adolescence, was probably not a bad person. But she has earned the ill-will of Lermontov's biographer by writing about him in her memoirs.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ *Ak nauk*, VI, 387.

⁵⁸ A. Glasse, 95. Lermontov's comments had originally started "My epitaph," but he scratched it out and wrote "My testament."

These are well written, and recent scholarship has shown that in spite of some unfounded claims (e.g., her claim that she served as a stimulus to the writing of the 1841 *Son* ["The Dream"]) the memoirs are on the whole true and add significantly to our knowledge of Lermontov. They show, moreover, a certain sense of humor. The following well-known anecdote is from 1834 in Petersburg. Sushkova and Lermontov have danced the mazurka. The guests stand waiting for supper. Meanwhile, they are being entertained by a singer singing musical romances.

"When he started [Pushkin's]:

Я вас любил; любовь еще, быть может,
В душе моей угасла не совсем;

I loved you once, love still within my heart
Has not entirely been extinguished...

Michel whispered to me that the words clearly expressed his feelings at that moment. [They had been discussing A. A. Lopukhin, Lermontov's friend and a favored contender for Sushkova's hand]:

Но пусть она вас больше не тревожит;
Я не хочу печалить вас ничем.

But let my love no longer trouble you,
I would not wish in any way to grieve you.

'Oh, no,' Lermontov went on in a low voice, 'let it trouble, that's the surest way of not being forgotten.'

Я вас любил безмолвно, безнадежно,
То робостью, то ревностью томим,

I loved you silently, and without hope,
Anguished now by shyness, now by jealousy,

'I don't understand shyness or silence,' he whispered, 'and hopelessness is strictly for women.'

Я вас любил так искренно, так нежно,
Как дай вам Бог любимой быть другим.

I have loved you so sincerely, so tenderly,
As God grant you be loved by another!

'That needs to be completely changed. Is it natural to wish for the happiness of a beloved woman, *with someone else*? No, let her be unhappy; my understanding of love is such that I would prefer her love to her happiness; her being unhappy through me would bind her to me forever! But shallow, sugar-coated characters like L[op]ukhin, at the drop of a hat they're off wishing for the happiness of their women! Nevertheless, I do regret that I didn't write those verses, only I'd change them a bit. Baratynskii has a poem which I like still more... and he started to recite it....'

'Mikhail Iur'evich, you don't have to be envious of these verses, you have yourself expressed it better:

Так храм оставленный — всё храм,

⁵⁹ E. Sushkova, *Zapiski Ekateriny Sushkovoï* (L.: Academia, 1928).

Кумир поверженный — всё бог!

Thus, a temple abandoned is still a temple,
An idol cast down is still a god!

'You remember my poems, you've kept them? For God's sake let me have them, I've forgotten some of them, I'll correct them, and dedicate them to you.'

'Absolutely not, on no account shall I let you have them, I prefer them the way they are, with their mistakes, but fresh in feeling; they're not perfect, but if you correct them, they'll lose their authenticity, that's why I hold dear your first attempts.'

He continued to insist, while I defended my property — and carried the day...⁶⁰

The early love which caused Lermontov the keenest anguish was for Natal'ia Fedorovna Ivanova (1813-75). She was the daughter of a playwright, F. F. Ivanov, and Lermontov seems to have made her and her sister's acquaintance in Moscow in 1830. That is the date of his first poem to her, the quite remarkable *N. F. Iv...voi*. This poem was followed in 1830-32 by a great many poems, most of them far inferior to the first one, the so-called Ivanova cycle, some 30 poems in all, the dominant themes of which are jealousy, woman's fickleness, and betrayal. These themes are counterbalanced by the poet's pride in his worth, his genius, his destiny. Something of this anguish is expressed in his 1831 play *Strannyi chelovek (A Strange Man)*.

We know far less about Lermontov's relationship with Ivanova than was the case with Sushkova. There were very few details to know, and Ivanova wrote no memoirs. Apparently, Ivanova felt little or nothing for Lermontov. True, he recalled a kiss to which he attached, obviously, far more importance than did she. He seems to have believed that his timing was at fault, that he had failed to seize his opportunity when the tide was at the flood. More likely there was no tide, but this is not to belittle the pain he felt.

Ivanova, as far as we can judge, had little interest in literature. There was no real ground on which a relationship could develop. Sushkova, while treating Lermontov as a mere adolescent, had encouraged his poetic endeavors, and even the one 1834 anecdote recounted above (relating to Pushkin's famous *la vas liubil...*) indicates clearly the lively rapport of which these two were capable. With Ivanova there was nothing.

There is an irritating tendency of literary biographers, with which I take issue, to imply that there was something defective about the spouses, lovers, or objects of affection of literary figures if these displayed no understanding of literature. Nataliia Nikolaevna Goncharova, Pushkin's wife, is a classic case. Pushkin, 13 years her senior, presumably noticed this lack, dismissing it as unimportant in his choice of a wife. No one suggests that Goethe was attracted to Christiana Vulpius by her understanding of literature! Thus no blame should attach to Ivanova. She married sometime between 1833 and 1836, and settled with her husband (Obreskov) in Kursk. In spite of her lack of literary interests, she did preserve an album containing Lermontov's poems to her, and she published some of these, along with poems from her sister's album.

The last of these important early loves is Varvara Aleksandrovna Lopukhina (1815-51). This is undoubtedly the most serious attachment. "While he was a student," A.P. Shan-Girei was to recall, "he was passionately in love.... with the young, sweet, intelligent as the day is clear, and in the full sense of the word enchanting (*voskhitiitel'nuiu*) V. A. Lopukhina; hers was an ardent, exalted, poetic, and in the highest degree likeable (*simpatichnaia*) nature.... Lermontov's feeling for her was without real thought of the future (*bezotchetno*), but true and powerful, and he

⁶⁰ Sushkova, 175-76.

retained it right up to his death....⁶¹ Initially, it must be said, Lermontov seems to have been slow to recognize the strength of his feelings or to encourage Varvara Aleksandrovna. She was not a beauty in the conventional sense, and we catch Lermontov in his poetry wondering how and why he feels about her as he does.⁶² Her sincerity, warm-heartedness, and the overall charm of her personality made a deep impression, and not on Lermontov alone.

Their budding relationship was halted by Lermontov's 1832 move to Petersburg, followed by his two years in the cadet school. In 1834 he emerged in Petersburg as a guards officer and a young man about town determined to make a name for himself. These social preoccupations, perhaps, and more particularly Lermontov's late 1834-early 1835 pursuit of Sushkova, now also in Petersburg, convinced Varvara Aleksandrovna that she must forget him. He, for his part, was apparently upset when Shan-Girei conveyed to him Varen'ka's "*poklon*," i.e., her greetings. He felt that *poklon* (literally *bow*) was cold and insufficiently intimate. Shan-Girei gives the following account:

I brought him Varen'ka's greetings. In his absence she and I had often talked about him; to both of us he was, in different ways, equally dear. When we said good-bye, she gave me her hand and with moist eyes, but smiling, said to me: "Give him my greetings; tell him that I have peace of mind and that I am happy." I was very vexed with him when he listened to my words with apparent coldness, and didn't ask about her at all; I reproached him, he smiled, and replied: "You're still a child, you don't understand anything." "And you, you understand a lot, but you're not worth her little finger!" I retorted, getting really angry. This was our first and only quarrel; but we soon made it up.⁶³

In 1835 Varvara Lopukhina, presumably under pressure from her parents, married the significantly older N. F. Bakhmetev (1798-1884). Whether Lermontov's Petersburg occupations or the insufficient warmth of Varvara's greeting played a role in all this we are unlikely ever to discover. The story has important missing pieces. The few facts we have here do not in themselves explain or justify a willingness to write off this great love.

It may be, too, that its greatness was magnified in Lermontov's mind subsequently, when he realized that marriage had put Varvara irretrievably beyond his reach. Two facts relating to their parting are in any case beyond dispute: Varvara's marriage was not happy, and Lermontov never forgot her. He continued to keep her abreast of those literary endeavors which were to him most meaningful. Thus, he sent her a copy of the 1838 sixth redaction of *Demon*, and the reworked redaction of 1839, the so-called court redaction. He continued to feature her in his poetry: his 1840 *Valerik*, of which he also sent her a copy, is almost certainly, and by consensus, addressed to her. And his 1841 *Net, ne tebia tak pylko ia liubliu* ("No, it's not you whom I love so ardently"), his last poem of love, addressed to Ekaterina Bykhovets, almost certainly has in mind Varvara in its references to a love of the past. In 1836, Lermontov had written of Varvara's "betrayal" in his unsuccessful drama, *Dva Brata (The Two Brothers)*, and in his unfinished novel, *Princess Ligovskaia*.

After her marriage, Varvara and Lermontov seem to have met only twice: once around Christmas, 1835, when Lermontov passed through Moscow on his way to Tarkhany and again, briefly in June 1838, when she, her husband, and her daughter passed through Petersburg on their

⁶¹ *LVVS*, 36.

⁶² See his 1832 *Ona ne gordoi krasotoiu* ("Not by proud beauty does she....").

⁶³ Shan-Girei, in *LVVS*, 38.

way to the West. Shan-Girei reports her looking poorly, in obvious ill health.⁶⁴ She died in 1851. Her husband destroyed Lermontov's letters, written to her before the marriage. In 1839, at some German watering place, she had given Vereshchagina (now Baroness Hügel) the Lermontov materials she still had for safekeeping.

One more major emotional conflict disturbed Lermontov's adolescent years: the conflict between his father and grandmother. The exact details are far from clear. But the pain is readily apparent when we read Lermontov's two plays of 1830-31, *Menschen und Leidenschaften* and *Strannyi chelovek (A Strange Man)*. We left Iurii Petrovich Lermontov when, very shortly after his wife's death, he left Tarkhany for his own estate, Kropotovo, near Tula. He had surrendered to the grandmother, Arsen'eva, all guardianship rights relating to his son's upbringing in exchange for her making the child her sole heir and providing his education. But while Iurii Petrovich was careless in matters of conjugal fidelity, he seems to have been affectionate toward his son and concerned about his welfare. With the adolescent Lermontov living in Moscow, father and son were within reasonable visiting distance of each other. Young Lermontov visited Kropotovo in 1827, the occasion of his "second love." In 1828 his father visited him in Moscow, probably in December.⁶⁵ Such visits continued, reportedly on an annual basis.⁶⁶ The longstanding conflict between father and grandmother appears to have become aggravated because the father felt that, his son now being 16 years old, he should once more assume paternal rights. The quarrel did not last long, since the elder Lermontov died on October 1, 1831, i.e. on the eve of his son's seventeenth birthday. But it took its toll and almost certainly detracted from young Lermontov's performance at the university. More importantly, it wore him down mentally and spiritually. Needless to say, his father's death was in general unsettling, as evidenced by several lyrics written both on their relationship and on the father's death.

The father's will and testament to his son, dated January 28, 1831, is interesting:

Although you are still young, I can see that you are gifted with intellectual abilities, — do not neglect them, and above all beware of using them to any harmful or useless purpose. This is the talent of which you will some day have to give account to God! You possess, my most dear son, a good heart, — do not allow it to become hardened even by people's injustice and ingratitude, for if your heart is hardened, you will fall into the very vices you despise. Believe that true unfeigned love of God and of your neighbor is the only way to live and die in peace.

I thank you, my priceless friend, for your love shown to me and for your tender consideration which I've been able to observe, though deprived of the consolation of living together with you.

You know the reasons for our separation, and I am sure that you will not reproach me on this score. I wanted to preserve the legacy that would be coming to you...⁶⁷

Before leaving Moscow for Petersburg (with his grandmother), in August, 1832, Lermontov had begun writing poetry, had fallen in love several times, and had lost his father. On November 4, Lermontov took and passed the entrance examination for the School of Guards En-

⁶⁴ Ibid, 44.

⁶⁵ See Lermontov's letter ("about December 21") to his "aunt," actually his second cousin once removed, M. A. Shan-Girei, *Akad. nauk*, VI, 404.

⁶⁶ O. P. Popov, "Lermontov, Iu. P.," *L. E.*, 242.

⁶⁷ From P. E. Shchegolev, *Kniga o Lermontove* (L.: Priboi, 1929), vyp.I, 66.

signs. By mid-November the admission formalities had been completed, and Lermontov was a cadet or Junker.

But the original intention had been to seek admission to the University of St. Petersburg. The switch to the military did shape the course of Lermontov's life and thus merits discussion. While the decision to go through military school has been seen as an act of desperation, it may not have been. The choice of careers was very limited for a young Russian nobleman of the era: civil service or military service. Lermontov had never shown any inclination toward civil service, whereas he had, thanks to Jean Capet, and thanks to Meshcherinov and his good regimental friend, P. M. Melikov, felt the appeal of a military career.

Nevertheless, Lermontov would probably have transferred without ado to Petersburg University, had it not been for the obstacles he encountered. There is an amusing exchange of letters which sheds light on the problem. His relative and good friend, Aleksandra Mikhailovna Vereshchagina, writes to Lermontov October 13, 1832: "Annette Stolypina writes. . . that you're having trouble (*"vous avez un desagrément"*) at the University, and that it's made my aunt [Arsen'eva] ill, for God's sake write and tell me what's happening. Here everyone is making a mountain out of a molehill, so please set my mind at rest,—to my misfortune I know you too well not to be worried, I know you're capable of cutting your throat at the drop of a hat, and on the most ridiculous pretext. Fie on you! You should be ashamed! You'll never be happy with that vile character of yours." To which Lermontov responds at the end of October or early November: "Unjust and credulous woman (and note that I have every right to call you that, dear cousin). You believe the words of a young girl without analyzing them; Annette says she never wrote that I'd had an unpleasantness, but that they wouldn't transfer my Moscow years (as they have done for many others), because there's a reform being instituted in all the universities, and I'm afraid that Alexis [Lopukhin] will have the same misfortune, because they're adding a fourth year to the present three — intolerable — years." The residence requirement was being extended from three to four years, and St. Petersburg refused to accept his two years from Moscow. Whether this latter decision was, as Lermontov scholars like to think, because Lermontov had been marked as a liberal and a trouble-maker or whether it was a logical consequence of his attested absenteeism in Moscow is hard to decide. We have to recognize that while Lermontov during his two years at the *pansion* showed himself an exemplary pupil, the reverse had been the case at the University. Impatient with the quality of the instruction, absorbed in writing his longest narrative poem, *Izmail-Bei* (2,289 lines), and distracted with worry about his father, Lermontov had performed poorly. The St. Petersburg University ruling would make him start at the beginning again, meaning he would not finish until 1836. This was unacceptable to an impatient Lermontov eager for the freedoms of adulthood. Moreover, attendance at the University would have obligated Lermontov to enter the civil service, for which he had no enthusiasm.⁶⁸

Lermontov's transfer was not a unique or unheard-of move: it was quite normal for students to transfer to military school from either of the two capital universities or from the *pansion*. His good friend from the *pansion*, Mikhail Shubin, entered the school a year ahead of Lermontov. Nikolai Polivanov came at the same time from the University. And in Lermontov's class were Aleksei (Mongo) Stolypin, a cousin, Nikolai Iur'ev, also related, and, from Penza, Mikhail Martynov, who was to be Lermontov's killer.⁶⁹ Mikhail Saburov and Konstantin Bulgakov transferred from the *pansion* to military school.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ The obligatory character of civil service is noted by G. M. Fridlender; see Viskovatov, 15-16.

⁶⁹ Viskovatov, 136. See also 137-42 for an excellent account of the transferred episode.

⁷⁰ *LVVS*, 439.

Lermontov's decision to enter the military school cannot be seen as a totally wayward or desperate aberration. However, it must be conceded that Lermontov himself was quick to react to his new life as a farewell to literature and culture, and some of his relatives—especially his grandmother—had decidedly adverse reactions. In the same letter to Vereshchagina cited above, Lermontov writes: “You must already know, madam (*notre dame*), that I'm entering the Guards School; which will unfortunately deprive me of the pleasure of seeing you in the near future. If you could guess all the chagrin this causes me, you would have pitied me; so don't scold me any more, and console me if you have a heart.”⁷¹ Somewhat earlier, on October 15, writing to Mariia Aleksandrovna Lopukhina (1802-77), Varvara's older sister and his confidante, the poet had discussed his prospects in somewhat melodramatic terms. “I can't imagine what effect my big news will have on you; I, who up to this time had always lived for a literary career, after having sacrificed so much for my ungrateful idol, well now I'm going to be a soldier (*guerrier*); perhaps this is a special will of Providence! Perhaps this is the shortest path; and if it doesn't lead me to my original goal, perhaps it will lead me to everyone's final goal. To die with a ball of lead in the heart is better than an old man's long agony. . . .”⁷²

We have noted Vereshchagina's disquiet and concern. The following is from Aleksei Lopukhin's letter of January 7, 1833, from Moscow: “You should have heard how you've been vilified and are even still being vilified for going into the military. I assured them, though with difficulty, that these unreasoning people might view this matter with fairness, assured them that you had not wished to grieve your grandmother, but that the transfer was a necessary one. No, sir, Kikin [Aleksei Andreevich, (1772- ?) a friend of Arsen'eva's but ill-disposed toward Lermontov] decided that you had deceived everyone, and that that had been your sole desire, and even asked my aunt to write you and give you his opinion. And so all these noble souls went their ways shouting: ‘just see what he's come to (*tot khorosh konets sdelat*), and he doesn't love anyone, ‘poor Elizaveta Alekseevna,’ they keep repeating it. I know in advance that you will laugh, and won't take it to heart.”⁷³

Elizaveta Alekseevna, Lermontov's grandmother, did take to her bed, although it is hard to say whether her illness was linked with Lermontov's fateful decision. Her total hostility to Lermontov's involvement in war can be seen from the following anecdote. The episode dates from later in Lermontov's training as a Junker (cadet). He had become sick in camp at Peterhof (*Petrodvorets*). His grandmother came to see his commanding officer, Colonel Gel'mersen, to ask him to allow the sick Lermontov to go home. Gel'mersen thought that unnecessary and tried to convince her that her grandson was in no danger. In the course of the conversation he said:

“What will you do if your grandson gets sick in wartime?”

“Do you think then,—the grandmother, as is generally known, always used *Ty* (the familiar form) in addressing people — do you think then, that I'll let him go like this in wartime?!” she replied with irritation.

“Then why is he doing military service?”

“Because for the moment we have peace, my good friend! What else could you think?”

The anecdote attains its full savor in the Russian:

⁷¹ *Ak. nauk*, VI, 421.

⁷² *Ak. nauk*, VI, 419.

⁷³ *Ak. nauk*, VI, 466.

Во время разговора он сказал:

— Что же вы сделаете, если внук ваш захворает во время войны?

— А ты думаешь, — бабушка, как известно, всем говорила «ты», — а ты думаешь, что я его так и отпущу в военное время?! — раздраженно ответила она.

— Так зачем же он тогда в военной службе?

— Да это пока мир, батюшка!.. А ты что думал?⁷⁴

As Major Parker was wont to remark with World War I shells falling around, "it [the life of a soldier] is a very hard life, sometimes mixed with real dangers."⁷⁵ The first danger to catch up with Lermontov was an injury below the right knee inflicted on November 26 or 27 when Lermontov, incited by older colleagues to show his mettle, mounted a young, unbroken horse which started to prance around other horses, one of which kicked the rider, removing the skin down to the bone. Lermontov was carried off unconscious. He spent two months recovering, this time in his grandmother's home, and limped slightly ever after.⁷⁶

Lermontov spent almost two years in military school. The discipline was apparently stultifying.³⁸ On the other hand, A. M. Miklashevskii (1814-1905), yet another transfer from the *pansion* to military school, writing more than 50 years later, provides a probably idealized recollection of the school, insisting on the extremely humane treatment received. Miklashevskii refutes Viskovatov's assertion that cadets were awakened every morning by a drum.⁷⁷ Moreover, it is not conceivable that any military school can function without *mushtra*, without regimentation, regulation and discipline, often of a sort that must appear pointless and absurd. However, the school, founded in 1823 by then Grand Duke Nikolai Pavlovich, remained liberal under his aegis because of the excellent relationship between him and Pavel Petrovich Godein, the school's director. When Nikolai Pavlovich became Tsar in 1825, the responsibility for the school fell to his younger brother, Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich, and a gradual shift took place, with increasing emphasis on the parade ground and the minutiae of regulations. Worse yet, Godein departed in 1831.⁷⁸ However, the picture is not altogether bleak: By an ironic twist of fate, a number of excellent pedagogues, formerly with the St. Petersburg University, ended up teaching in the military school. In 1822 the University had dismissed instructors held to be overly liberal. Following 1825 and Nicholas I's accession, pardons began to be granted and some of those dismissed, notably V.T. Plaksin (1795-1869), found their way back into teaching, in some cases in the military school. Plaksin, for example, a specialist in Russian literature recalled Lermontov's prose exercise "Panorama of Moscow" and an early draft of *Demon*. These points were made in a recent well-documented and perceptive article by L. N. Nazarova. While she does not suggest that it was an idyllic cultural atmosphere, Nazarova concludes that in non-military subjects, i.e. subjects

⁷⁴ Viskovatov 1987, 138, who heard it from the Colonel's wife, who was present at the exchange.

⁷⁵ André Maurois, *Les silences du Colonel Bramble* (Paris: Grasset, [1937]), 414.

⁷⁶ *Letopis'*; 46. A. M. Merinskii, "Vospominanie o Lermontove," *LVVS* 1972, 130.

³⁸ This is roughly the position taken by Viskovatov, 162-82, especially his account of Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich's efforts to tighten the reins and eliminate all laxity.

⁷⁷ *LVVS*, 111; Viskovatov 1987, 163.

⁷⁸ Viskovatov 1987, 162-66.

of general cultural import, Lermontov and his contemporaries were not ill-served. The military school cannot be written off as a cultural wasteland.⁷⁹

Philistinism existed, of course, fostered to some extent by the administration, but also by the cadets themselves, who felt impelled to display an unrelenting hussar bravado, regarding women and wine. Lermontov himself was not averse to women or wine. But he had been raised in a cultured, largely feminine household. To feel obliged to pay tribute to a mindless and reckless hedonism must have imposed a severe strain on him. Lermontov did pay his dues. This is the period when, partly to curry favor with his companions, he composed his pornographic verses. Moreover, he wrote virtually no lyric poetry. However, his literary efforts did not come to a halt. He worked on several narrative poems, and he started on his (never completed) first novel, *Vadim*.

⁷⁹ See L. N. Nazarova, "Lermontov v shkole iunkerov," In M. P. Alekseev, A. Glasse, V. E. Vatsuro, eds. 1979. *M. IU. Lermontov: Issledovaniia i materialy*, Leningrad: Nauka, 139-149 (Henceforth *LIM*).

IV. Petersburg Society and the First Exile

On November 22, by an order of His Imperial Majesty, Lermantov (sic) of the Lifeguards Hussar Regiment was promoted from Junker to cornet, the lowest commissioned rank in the cavalry, equivalent to second-lieutenant (*podporuchik*) in the infantry, following graduation. The appointment was confirmed in a December 4 order from the school, and on that same day Lermontov appeared at a ball, resplendent in his new uniform, there to encounter Ekaterina Aleksandrovna Sushkova for the first time since 1830.⁸⁰

The Hussars were quartered in Tsarskoe Selo (now Pushkin), 23 versts from Petersburg. His grandmother provided him with four of his serfs from Tarkhany: a cook, two coachmen, and a personal servant. She gave him an income of 10,000 roubles a year. This arrangement would enable him, with prudent fiscal management, to hold his own in the regiment, but no more.⁸¹ The Stolypins were wealthy, and Arsen'eva a landowner of substance, only by the standards of Tarkhany and the Penza area, not those of the capitals, particularly Petersburg. In the cadet school, Lermontov's fellow-cadets had been amused at the run-down appearance of Arsen'eva's carriage and her emaciated horses.⁸² Worse predicaments had faced Pushkin in Petersburg, and his ineffectual pleas to be allowed to remove to the country showed sound economic thinking. To cut a figure in society, as his wife wished to do and did, required an enormous outlay. Lermontov also wished to cut a figure. There is no indication that he was financially in trouble, but he was living with young officers some of whom had at their disposal enormous incomes. Measured against these, Lermontov's 10,000 roubles, augmented by sporadic supplements, was not impressive. His father's family, also, gave him neither wealth nor social position. Lermontov knew that if he was going to "arrive" in society, something would be required from him.

Ekaterina Aleksandrovna Sushkova had been both the object of Lermontov's infatuation and a source of exasperation when he had spent time with her and his cousin A. M. Vereshchagina during his 1830 visit to Serebnikovo. She had treated him as a child but read his poetry sympathetically and encouraged him to write. Now she was 22 years old.⁸³ Lermontov, just turned 20 was no longer a child: "...he'd scarcely changed during these four years, had grown up a bit, but had not grown taller or more handsome, and was still awkward and clumsy...."⁸⁴ she wrote. Lermontov immediately set about belittling the man Sushkova was considering marrying, Lopukhin, and Sushkova's feelings for him. The relationship between the two had not developed very far in terms of genuine intimacy, but they were obviously attracted to each other, and each had signaled their intentions through a third party. Aleksei Aleksandrovich Lopukhin (1813-72) was an old friend of Lermontov's, a fellow student at the Moscow University *Pansion*, and the brother of Varvara Lopukhina, his lifelong love, and her older sister, Mariia Aleksandrovna, Lermontov's confidante. Lopukhin was expected to arrive shortly from Moscow, and Sushkova expected him to ask formally for her hand. Belittling Lopukhin, Lermontov at the same time pressed his suit. From December 4 through December 26, Lermontov and Sushkova met not less than eight times. Lopukhin had meanwhile arrived from Moscow on December 21. Sushkova hesitated and agonized, and on December 26 she gave in to Lermontov's eloquent insistence and confessed her love for him.

⁸⁰ *Letopis'*, 58-59.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁸² A. F. Tiran, "Vospominaniia Lermontova," *LVVS*, 111-12.

⁸³ She was born March 18, 1812, and Viskovatov, 193, is wrong in giving her age as 23.

⁸⁴ Sushkova, 169.

How was the unprepossessing Lermontov, who was not particularly physically attractive to women in general and whose appearance Sushkova criticized more than once in her subsequent memoirs, able to carry off this victory, all the more remarkable because Sushkova, insecure because of a difficult childhood and adolescence and beyond the ideal age for marriage for that time, had also a wealthy, decent, eager suitor whom she was now obliged to reject?

Lermontov worked his way into Sushkova's heart using a series of ploys. According to her memoirs, he attacked on four principal fronts: Lopukhin's wealth as opposed to his own poverty (he is twice quoted as referring to Lopukhin's 5,000 souls); Lopukhin's intellectual insignificance; questions regarding Sushkova's love for Lopukhin, which she herself recognized as lacking passion and resting mainly on his love for her, his decency, and dependability; fourthly, and undoubtedly strongest, the nomination of Sushkova for the role of Lermontov's spiritual salvation, the key to his faith in life and in God:

But there is another young man who is far from rich, not distinguished, not good looking, but intelligent, ardent, susceptible, and deeply unhappy; he is standing on the edge of an abyss because he believes in no one and nothing, does not know what reciprocity is, a mother's caress, the friendship of a sister, and if this poor fellow decided to turn to you and to say to you: save me, I worship you, you'll make of me a great man, love me and I'll believe in God, you alone can save my soul. If he said that, what would you do?

I hope never to be in that difficult situation; my fate is almost decided, I am loved, and I will love him.

Will love! What a materialistic way of thinking (*Kakoe poshloe vyrazhenie*), but something women understand; love on command, love as a duty! I wish you every success, but I somehow don't believe that you've fallen in love with Lopukhin; and nor will that happen!

Following Lopukhin's arrival from Moscow on December 21, Lermontov told Sushkova that Lopukhin was aware of his courtship and was threatening a duel: "If you won't make the decision, then leave it to fate or more exactly, to a pistol shot."

On December 26 Sushkova admitted to Lermontov that she loved him. On January 5, Lopukhin started back to Moscow without proposing. And on that same day Lermontov wrote Sushkova an anonymous letter, intercepted by her uncle and aunt, in which she was warned that Lermontov was a scoundrel and was only trifling with her.

This is Sushkova's account. Her sister Liza (E. A. Ladyzhenskaia) tells a different story.⁸⁵ Sushkova was undoubtedly an insecure, romantic, imaginative young woman.⁸⁶ But Lermontov himself substantiates her account of his motivations and modus operandi. On December 23,

⁸⁵ "Zamechaniia na Vospominaniia E. A. Khvostovo-Sushkovoï," Sushkova, 306-42.

⁸⁶ See G. Martianov's comment: "E. A. Khvostova [i.e., Sushkova] speaks here with all the fascinating eloquence of a victim of love, among other things recording the personal relationship between her and the poet. She is a brilliant narrator, with a knowledge of narrative craft, but is not distinguished by sincerity.... This is no more and no less than a brilliant piece of self-deception, a mirage of her fervid imagination." From "Poet Lermontov po zapiskam i rasskazam sovremennikov," *Vsemirnyi trud*, IV, (1870) oktiabr, 581; quoted here from Viskovatov, 196. Martianov has noted one thing which in the fury of taking sides is apt to escape attention, namely that Sushkova possessed considerable narrative skills. He is probably too harsh in his strictures on her content. In any case Sushkova is not the principal object of investigation here.

shortly after Lopukhin's arrival in Petersburg, Lermontov writes to his Moscow confidante, M. A. Lopukhina, Lopukhin's older sister. The letter is first and foremost the expression of an adolescent's insecurity on making his first steps in society. The letter reads in part:

...I am making my way in the world now...to make myself known, to prove that I can find pleasure in society; — ah!!.. I declare my love, and follow up my declaration with impertinent remarks: that still amuses me somewhat; and although it's not entirely original, it is at least rare!. You might think that after that I'd really be given my walking papers...well no, on the contrary,...that's how women are; I'm beginning to have some self-assurance with them! nothing upsets me, not anger, not tenderness: I am always zealous and ardent, with a fairly cold heart, which beats only on great occasions: don't you agree, I've progressed!.. and don't suppose that I'm boasting: I am now the most modest of men—and too I know that what I'm telling you won't enhance me in your eyes; but I'm telling you because it's only with you that I dare be sincere....I was in Tsarskoe Selo when Alexis [Lopukhin] arrived; when I heard the news, I was almost mad with joy; I found myself talking to myself, laughing, shaking my one hand with the other; it all brought me back in an instant to my past joys, I leaped over two terrible years, finally.... Tell me, I thought I noticed that he has a soft spot for Mademoiselle Catherine Souchkoff...do you know about this? — Mademoiselle's uncles would have liked to get them married!...God forbid!...this woman is a flittermouse whose wings grasp at anything they encounter!...at one time I found her attractive, now she's almost forcing me to court her...but I don't know, there's something in her manner, in her voice, something hard, abrupt, sharp, which repels one; while trying to please her, at the same time one finds pleasure in compromising her, in seeing her catch herself in her own nets....⁸⁷

Note that Lermontov speaks with considerable frankness of attempts to increase his self-assurance with women. But he does not give any indication that he engaged in the manipulation imputed to him in Sushkova's memoir, simply a very bleak picture of her character. A letter to his cousin Vereshchagina, another confidante who had been a close friend of Sushkova, is infinitely franker and more revealing. Sushkova had identified her as intermediary between Lopukhin and herself. The letter, written in the spring of 1835, reads in part:

... Alexis may have told you something of my way of life, but nothing interesting unless it was the beginning of my little love affair with Mademoiselle Souchkoff, the end of which is far more interesting and amusing.... On entering the world of society, I noticed that everyone has his own pedestal: a fortune, a name, a title, a patron.... I realized that if I could get one woman interested in me, the others would unwittingly become interested too, first through curiosity, then through rivalry.

With Mademoiselle S. wanting to 'catch' me (*m'attraper*, a technical term), I understood that she would easily compromise herself for me; and so I compromised her as much as possible, without compromising myself with her. Treating her in public as though she were mine, making her feel that this was the only way to conquer me.... When I saw that I'd succeeded in this, but that one step further would ruin me, I launched a bold maneuver (*je tente un coup de main*): in public I became colder, alone with her more tender, in order to show that I no longer loved her, whereas she adored me (which is basically untrue); and when she started to notice this and tried to cast off the yoke, I publicly abandoned her

⁸⁷ *Ak. nauk*, VI, 426-28.

first. I became cruel and impertinent, mocking and cold with her in public. I ran after other women and told them (under pledge of secrecy) that part of the story which showed me in a favorable light. She was so nonplussed by this unexpected behavior that.... But this is the amusing part of the story. When I saw that I must break with her in the eyes of the world and still seem faithful to her in private, I quickly came up with a charming method: I wrote an anonymous letter: 'Mademoiselle, I'm a man who knows you and whom you don't know etc.... I warn you to watch out for this young man, M. L. — he'll seduce you — etc.... here are the proofs (nonsense) etc.... ' four pages! I skillfully made sure the letter would fall into the aunt's hands; thunder and lightning in the house! Next day I go there early in the morning in order at all costs not to be received. That evening at a ball I inform Mademoiselle with great surprise that I was not admitted. Mademoiselle tells me the terrible and incomprehensible news. We speculate. I attribute it all to secret enemies (non-existent). Finally she tells me that her guardians have forbidden her to speak or dance with me. I'm in despair, but I'm careful not to infringe the aunt's and uncles' prohibition. Thus was conducted this touching adventure which is certain to give you a very good opinion of me! Anyway women always forgive the harm one does to another woman (La Rochefoucauld's maxims). Now I'm not writing novels — I'm making them.

Finally, you can see that I've thoroughly avenged the tears that Mlle S.'s coquetry caused me to shed 5 years ago. But our score is not yet settled. She caused suffering in a child's heart; whereas I have merely tortured the amour-propre of an old flirt who is perhaps more than that....⁸⁸

It will be seen that Lermontov's account of his actions and Sushkova's memoirs are on essentials mutually reinforcing. What motivated Lermontov to act as he did? Was it, as he claims, to "save" Lopukhin from Sushkova? Sushkova's sister Liza seems to have believed that Vereshchagina was herself in love with Lopukhin and for this reason incited Lermontov to bring about a break between him and Sushkova.⁸⁹ It seems unlikely that Vereshchagina was in love with Lopukhin. But both she and the Lopukhin family did oppose the match. Lermontov's letter to Vereshchagina (spring, 1835), just quoted, indicates that he is telling her of events unknown to her up to that time; but that does not exclude the possibility, indeed the strong likelihood, that her attitude and probably her active instigation influenced Lermontov's behavior. He could not have written his maliciously gleeful letter to her if he had believed, as Sushkova at that time believed, that Vereshchagina was Sushkova's loyal friend and intermediary.

At the same time, Lermontov would have been unlikely to take upon himself the role of spoiler simply to render service to the Lopukhin family and Vereshchagina. He was, presumably, personally involved. His own hostility to Sushkova (evident in the letter to Vereshchagina and in his unfinished novel *Princess Ligovskaia*) undoubtedly influenced his actions, revenge mingling with the desire to prove himself a successful womanizer and to "establish" himself, in his terms, to find his "pedestal".⁹⁰

It is useless to attempt to excuse Lermontov's conduct, as commentators such as Viskovatov, do on the ground that society had low standards and viewed such "escapades" with toler-

⁸⁸ *Ak nauk*, VI, 429-32.

⁸⁹ Sushkova, 337.

⁹⁰ This whole episode has been carefully researched and well analyzed by Antonia Glasse, "Lermontov i E. A. Sushkova," in *LIM*, 101-21.

ance. Seduction and conquest did occupy Lermontov's Petersburg society more than it does most Western societies today: these were people who had read with fixed attention *Les liaisons dangereuses* and other "dangerous novels." So much of Lermontov's greatness as poet and prose-writer stems from his repudiation of society's values, his moral superiority to society. When he stumbles, the fault cannot be sloughed off on society. However, we should remember his openly-expressed need to make his name in society, as well as his awareness that he didn't have great immediate appeal for women. This explains why these maneuvers were so important to him. He reproduces them in *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*, where Sushkova appears as Negurova. And in the longest section of his *Geroi nashego vremeni* (*A Hero of Our Time*) (primarily 1837-38), the hero spends an inordinate amount of time planning the conquest of a young woman he doesn't love.

Lest we wax overly sanctimonious concerning Lermontov's conduct, let us conclude by sharing the robust merriment of Countess Evdokiia Petrovna Rostopchina, Sushkova's cousin. She was a poetess and was to become Lermontov's close friend in 1841 (they first met in Moscow in 1830). In 1858, the year of her death, she wrote a letter to Alexandre Dumas (the father) containing recollections of Lermontov. It is an interesting and important letter, and we shall have occasion to return to it below. Referring to Lermontov's Don Juanic exploits, she writes:

His gay bachelor life did not prevent him from frequenting society, where his amusement was to drive women mad with the purpose of then abandoning them and leaving them to wait in vain; another of his amusements was to break up matches which were in the process of being formed, to achieve which he would over a period of several days play the lovelorn; all of this, apparently was an attempt to prove to himself that he could be loved by women notwithstanding his small stature and unprepossessing appearance (*nekrasivuiu naruzhnost'*). I heard the confessions of some of his victims, and I could not help laughing, even right in their faces, at the sight of their tears. I couldn't help laughing at the original and comic denouements he would succeed in imparting to his villainous Don Juan exploits. I remember once, for amusement's sake, he decided to replace a wealthy suitor, and when everyone thought that Lermontov was about to take his place, the young woman's relatives suddenly received an anonymous letter, advising them to expel Lermontov from the house and retailing all sort of horror stories about Lermontov. He'd written the letter himself, and after that time he no longer visited that house.⁹¹

A few words need to be said in defense of Sushkova. Her version of the episode is naturally biased in her own favor, but by writing it she revealed an important fact about Lermontov's outlook, closely linked with his literary output. And she has not, essentially, accused him of anything he himself had not gleefully acknowledged in his spring, 1835, letter to Vereshchagina.

Viskovatov, usually balanced and sensitive in his understanding of Lermontov and his contemporaries, is in this case totally unfair in his comparison of the two accounts, Lermontov's and Sushkova's: "Lermontov speaks with simplicity and truth, in no way trying to absolve himself or obtain sympathy.... Khvostova's (her married name) account is entirely different in manner and is clearly intended to arouse sympathy for her, unfortunate, loving girl, deceived by a philandering hussar, an intelligent and talented person, the genius Lermontov, who so abused his advantages...."⁹² Viskovatov falls into the fallacy of the binary opposition: good against evil, the

⁹¹ Sushkova, 346-347.

⁹² Viskovatov, 198. Incidentally, Viskovatov inexactly renders a phrase in Lermontov's Vereshchagina letter: "je n'écris pas de romans — j'en fais" is not "*ia ikh perezhivaiu*" but "*ia ikh delaiu*" — "I'm not writing novels — I'm making them." (197).

evil of the adversary serving as proof of one's own virtue. The more common situation, as Gogol's Sobakevich instinctively saw, is that both are bad. Or at least, as here, neither is blameless. Sushkova may have been over-imaginative; but Lermontov's account is not simple at all, it is sneeringly self-congratulatory.

One of Sushkova's harshest critics was her sister, E. A. Ladyzhenskaia, who faults her for factual errors in her account. But, as the noted scholar Iu. G. Oksman points out, some of the mistakes Ladyzhenskaia notes are trifling, even on the level of misprints. Moreover, Ladyzhenskaia is largely motivated by anger at Sushkova's betrayal of the family honor (the greater part of her memoirs are not about Lermontov) and by personal animosity. However, as Oksman again points out, Ladyzhenskaia made some pertinent and interesting points.⁹³ Most significantly, Sushkova allowed her imagination to inflate the dimensions and duration of her relationship with Lermontov.

Arsene'va, who knew nothing of the maneuvers and intrigue attendant on the Sushkova affair, writes to a friend on December 31, 1834: "My hussar is roaming the city, and I'm glad that he likes to go to balls: he's very young, and in good company he'll learn good things, but if the only people he knows are young officers, he won't learn good sense from them."⁹⁴

Against this reassuring assessment we must set the news that Varvara Lopukhina became engaged during this period to N. F. Bakhmetev (1798-1884) whom she was to marry that May. A causal relationship between the engagement and Lermontov's Petersburg antics has often been suggested, even by Lermontov himself in *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* (V, last paragraph), but it has not been proven.

For the next two years Lermontov's life was divided roughly between Petersburg and Tsarskoe Selo. His activities fall under four main headings: regimental duties; a bachelor life shared with fellow officers; society functions; and the pursuit of literary goals, with all that entailed in writing and reading.

In the spring of 1835, his grandmother left Petersburg to return to Tarkhany. "I can't tell you," Lermontov writes to Vereshchagina, in the informative letter cited above, "how much Grandma's departure has saddened me. The prospect of remaining completely alone for the first time in my life alarms me" (VI, 431-432). Arsen'eva fell ill in Moscow, and remained there some time, arriving in Tarkhany July 25 (VI, 469).

Lermontov went on leave in December 1835, spent Christmas in Moscow where he saw again his love, Varvara Bakhmeteva (nee Lopukhina), whose wedding had taken place May 25. He arrived in Tarkhany on New Year's Eve, to Arsen'eva's joy: she sent for the priest and ordered him to perform a thanksgiving service (*blagodarnyi moleben*) "after that I started to cry and felt better."⁹⁵ While in Tarkhany Lermontov wrote all or most of a very indifferent play, *Dva brata* (Two Brothers) — which derived from his recent meeting with Varvara. With the help of a letter from a doctor he extended his leave. But he left on March 13, and rejoined his regiment later in the month.

Arsen'eva was reunited with him in Petersburg in May or June. As he wrote to his friend, S. A. Raevskii, he had himself persuaded her to make the move because she was so wretched ("*ona sovsem isterzalas*"), and "there's now plenty of money" — a reference to the estate's now

⁹³ Sushkova, 306, note.

⁹⁴ The letter is to P. A. Kriukova, an old friend distantly related by marriage. See Modzalevskii in "*Novye materialy ob E. A. Arsen'evoi, II*," *LN*, 45-46, 646. In section I (above) Kriukova is mentioned as the recipient of Arsen'eva's thoughts on her inordinate love for her grandson.

⁹⁵ *Letopis'*, 65.

improved finances following the widespread 1833 crop failure and famine (VI, 433-434). Lermontov selected the apartment they would share and the carriage his grandmother would need in Petersburg: "but we are now all the time in Tsarskoe Selo; the Emperor is here, and the Grand Duke; everyday we have exercises, sometimes twice a day" (VI, 436, early May).

In May-June of 1836 Lermontov was ill, though apparently not incapacitated, after which he was given leave to take a cure of the waters in the Caucasus. He declined, surely partly because his grandmother had just arrived or was due to arrive in Petersburg.

Lermontov seems not to have allowed his various activities to divert him from literary pursuits. His good friend Sviatoslav Afanas'evich Raevskii (1808-76) supported him in these. The Raevskii family lived in Penza, and we noted in Section I their close ties with Arsen'eva. Raevskii's grandmother had been brought up in the Stolypin household and educated alongside Arsen'eva. The father was a geography teacher in the Penza district school system, an outstanding pedagogue who, as suggested above, must have been consulted on Lermontov's education when Arsen'eva and her grandson, following his mother's death, spent the 1817-18 winter in Penza. S. A. Raevskii visited Tarkhany, and, notwithstanding the difference in age, became a close friend of Lermontov in Moscow in 1827-30. A graduate of Moscow University, Raevskii moved in 1831 to Petersburg where he became a civil servant in the Ministry of Finance, later transferring to the War Ministry. He was politically liberal, well-read, a devotee of Russian folklore, and a constant sympathetic supporter of Lermontov's endeavors. In 1836 he introduced Lermontov to A. A. Kraevskii (1810-89), whom he had known as friend and fellow-student at Moscow University; Kraevskii was to prove a good friend to Lermontov and the principal publisher of his works. From 1832, when Arsen'eva and her grandson moved to Petersburg, Raevskii lived first with her, Lermontov being a boarding student of course at the military school. On the latter's graduation the three lived together whenever Lermontov was in Petersburg. When Arsen'eva left Petersburg in 1835, the two men shared quarters; and when she returned, the new apartment accommodated the three of them. Raevskii was an intimate member of the family. His presence or participation in Lermontov's undertakings was an important factor. This arrangement lasted to early 1837, when the two men were both sent into exile, Lermontov to the Caucasus, Raevskii to Petrozavodsk on the western shore of Lake Onega, about 185 miles Northeast of Petersburg.

In late July or early August, 1835, the 443-line narrative poem *Khadzhi-Abrek* (1833), submitted for publication by a fellow-cadet unbeknownst to Lermontov, appeared in *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*. According to one source, Pushkin read and admired the poem: "That youngster will go far," he is reported to have said.⁹⁶ Unaware of any such praise from the revered Pushkin, Lermontov was initially angry about its publication.

He showed an extreme reluctance to publish, generally, certainly his early lyrics, and even the far superior mature lyrics. Diffidence and fear of criticism is one explanation. But he seems also to have felt that he would return to a work and improve it, which he did successfully many times. There was one notable exception to this general reluctance. Lermontov put a great deal of time in 1835 into working on a verse drama called *Maskarad* (*The Masked Ball*). He tried in every way to get it past the censor. On November 8, it was returned from the drama censorship office under the Third Department (secret police) "for necessary changes." Going on leave in December to Tarkhany, Lermontov charged Raevskii to steer *Maskarad*, now enlarged by a fourth act, past the censor. This, too, was turned down, in January 1836.⁹⁷ Lermontov then made significant changes, added a fifth act, and changed the title to *Arbenin*, the hero's name. This third

⁹⁶ See L. N. Nazarova, "Khadzhi Abrek," *L. E.*, 601, and M. I. Gille'son, "Vasil'ev," *L. E.*, 80.

⁹⁷ For details, see *Ak. nauk*, VI, 741-45.

version was rejected on October 28, 1836. One reason why Lermontov was so eager to have *Maskarad* published was that it presented a sensationally negative view of high society. Its publication or, better, its presentation, would have made Lermontov the talk of the town, a veritable Petersburg Byron. The intense satire caused the censors to reject it.

In 1835-36 Lermontov also wrote his long (1065 lines) narrative poem, *Boiarin Orsha*, and probably most of another long (1639 lines) narrative poem, *Sashka*. In 1836 he worked, with Raevskii's participation, on his second novel, like the first never completed, *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* (*Princess Ligovskaia*). His first two years in the regiment and in society reveal no neglect of his writing.

Lermontov's wish to become the talk of the town, the Petersburg Byron, was amply realized in early 1837. On January 27 Pushkin fought a fatal duel with d'Anthès, an immigrant guards officer whose attentions to Pushkin's wife had compromised the poet's honor. Lermontov responded with *Smert' Poeta* ("Death of a Poet"), which made him famous overnight.

Lermontov probably wrote his *Smert' Poeta*, all but the last 16 lines, on January 28. The rumor of Pushkin's death was already current, although he actually died the next day. His death and the manner of his death naturally aroused deep feelings of grief and indignation: Pushkin was, after all, Russia's undisputed foremost poet, Russia's national poet. But this grief and indignation were not really the attitude of high society, many of whose members sympathized with Pushkin's very slightly wounded opponent and blamed Pushkin for precipitating the duel.

Not so Lermontov. His *Smert' Poeta* roundly denounces d'Anthès, and bitterly regrets Pushkin's ill-fated entry into society. Somewhat later, in the face of society's pro-d'Anthès attitude, and goaded by disagreement on this score with his cousin A. A. (Mongo) Stolypin, Lermontov adds the final sixteen lines, which constitute a vituperative indictment of the moral turpitude of high society and the court. This happened on February 7. On February 18 Lermontov was placed under arrest and confined in one of the upper-floor rooms at Staff Headquarters. On February 19 or so Benkendorf, Chief of the Third Section, addressed a memo to Nicholas I informing him that General Veimarn had been ordered to interrogate Lermontov and to search his apartments in Petersburg and Tsarskoe Selo. Nicholas I ordered that "the senior Guards doctor visit this gentleman and ascertain if he is insane (*"udostoverit'sia, ne pomeshan li on"*); and then we'll deal with him in accordance with the law."

Probably on February 22 Lermontov wrote his deposition or "explanation." It is an interesting piece, not from any legal standpoint, but for the way in which in style and tone it is so redolent of official Petersburg of that time:

An involuntary but powerful indignation flared up in me against those who were attacking a man who had already been struck down by the hand of God, someone who had never done them harm and whose praises they had at one time sung; and an instinctive urge in my inexperienced soul to defend anyone unjustly condemned stirred up in me all the more strongly on account of my inflamed nerves [presumably a reference to Lermontov's having been unwell at the time of Pushkin's death — WNV]. When I asked these people on what grounds they so loudly proclaimed the dead man to be in the wrong they would reply, probably to lend themselves authority, that high society was of the same opinion. I was surprised. People laughed at me.... After I had written my lines on Pushkin's death (which I did unfortunately with excessive haste), my good friend Raevskii, who had, as I had, heard many incorrect accusations, and who - due to insufficient reflection saw nothing in my verses contrary to the laws, asked me to copy them; he probably showed them to someone as of current interest (*kak novost*), and in that way they

came to be disseminated. I was still not up and about, and could not, therefore, find out what impression they had produced, could not get them back in time and burn them. I had myself given these verses to no one else, but could not disavow them, although I recognized the thoughtlessness of my act: truth was for me always something sacred, and now, as I offer my guilty head to judgment (*prinostia na sud svoiu povinnuiu golovu*), I unhesitatingly have recourse to truth, as the sole defense of an honorable person in the face of the Tsar and in the face of God.

Mikhail Lermantov (sic), Cornet of the Lifeguards Hussar Regiment.⁹⁸

The reader will have noted that Lermontov's "explanation" implicates his friend S. A. Raevskii. But Raevskii was already implicated, since it was he who had caused *Smert' Poeta* to be distributed. Raevskii himself seems not to have blamed Lermontov. Lermontov himself had some bad moments. On February 27 he writes to Raevskii as follows:

Today they let me go home to make my farewells. You cannot imagine my despair when I learned that I was to blame for your misfortune, that you — wishing only my good — would suffer for that note. Dubel't [Police Chief of Staff] says that Kleinmikhel is also to blame... To begin with I didn't mention you, but then they interrogated me in the name of the Tsar: they said that nothing would happen to you, but if I refused to speak, I would be reduced to the ranks (*to menia v soldaty*).... I thought of my grandmother.... and I couldn't help it. I sacrificed you for her.... What was going on inside me at the time, I can't tell you—but I'm certain that you understand and forgive me and consider me still worthy of our friendship.... It all seems like a dream!... I'll visit you without fail. Burn this letter.

Your M.L. (VI, 436-37)

The note mentioned by Lermontov is a note by which Raevskii tried to get his and Lermontov's accounts to agree with each other. Lermontov refers to the fact that the note, along with a rough draft of Raevskii's own "explanation," was intercepted. As a result of the interception, consistency between the two accounts was not achieved. A major discrepancy relates to the dissemination of the poem. While Lermontov claimed, as we saw, that he had shown the poem only to Raevskii, and then somehow copies of it had got away from them, before they realized how ill-advised their release could be, Raevskii chose to be more casual and represented the 16 last lines as an attack on those not subject to Russian law — diplomats and foreigners....

Owing Lermontov the dues of friendship and reciprocity for his kindness to me, and seeing that he was very happy at the thought that at the age of 22 he had become universally known, I listened with pleasure to all the congratulations showered on him by those receiving copies.

We had not at the time and it is impossible that we could have had political thoughts, least of all thoughts contrary to an order established by law over very many years.... Moreover, we are both Russian in soul (*russkie dushoiu*) and true subjects, to boot.

Raevskii both mitigates the offense and strengthens the loyalty plea by citing another occasion on which he had distributed a poem by Lermontov, one directed against French slander

⁹⁸Viskovatov 1987, 227-29.

uttered against the Tsar.⁹⁹ This was a shrewd maneuver, for Nicholas I was anti-French and hated Louis-Philippe.

One delightful touch in Raevskii's interesting "explanation" is his reference to the anonymous letters which aroused Pushkin's jealousy and "prevented him working on his literary creations during October and November (the months, according to rumors, in which Pushkin habitually did nothing but write)," a reference to Pushkin's known high productivity during the fall.¹⁰⁰

Incidentally, Lermontov in his explanation had also apparently tried his hand at a rhetorical device: with heavy-handed condescension he wrote with gratitude of how the Tsar, "notwithstanding his earlier mistakes," had extended a helping hand to Pushkin's widow and orphans; and went on to underline the contrast between the Tsar's magnanimous act and the malicious attitude toward Pushkin of certain high society members; it was this attitude which had carried him away and produced the "exaggerated, incorrect words" of the last 16 lines.

Both Raevskii and Pushkin had correctly sensed that it was the last 16 lines which caused the authorities to take action. In Benkendorf's words (part of his February 19/20 report to the Tsar), "the opening of this work is audacious, but the ending is shameless free-thinking, worse than criminal."¹⁰¹

Raevskii, as noted, seems not to have blamed Lermontov. Many years later, on May 8, 1860, he wrote to A. P. Shan-Girei, Lermontov's cousin and a good friend of both, that he had always been convinced that Lermontov was wrong in attributing exclusively to himself Raevskii's 1837 "small catastrophe"; like Dubel't, mentioned above, Raevskii put the responsibility on Kleinmikhel. P. A. Kleinmikhel (1793-1869) was at the time Raevskii's superior in the Department of War, a general, and in charge since 1835 of the much hated military settlements founded by Arakcheev in Alexander I's reign.¹⁰² Kleinmikhel bore ill will toward Raevskii, and it was he who had ordered his arrest. He was also ill-disposed toward Lermontov and on at least two occasions played a distinctly negative role in the poet's life.

Meanwhile shrewd maneuvers and rhetorical devices proved of no avail. The case of "the impermissible verses written by Cornet of the Lifeguards Hussar Regiment Lermontov and their dissemination by Provincial Secretary Raevskii" began officially on February 23, though proceedings appear to have been under way as early as the 20th. On February 25 the following order was sent to Benkendorf in the name of the Tsar: "Cornet of the Lifeguards Hussar Regiment Lermontov, for composing the verses known to Your Excellency, to be transferred without change of rank to the Nizhegorodskii Dragoon Regiment; and Provincial Secretary Raevskii, for disseminating those verses and particularly for attempting to secretly pass information to Cornet Lermontov on his deposition, to be held under arrest for one month, and then sent to Olonetsk Province for service at the discretion of the Civil Governor."

⁹⁹ The reference is to *Opiat' narodnye vitii* ("Once more demagogic orators") which was a response to French criticisms and threats in connection with the Russian suppression of the Polish uprising. Raevskii quotes the last seven lines of the poem, dating it tentatively 1835.

¹⁰⁰ Raevskii's deposition, also his note, alongside Lermontov's deposition, is to be found in Shchegolev, I, 261-67. Lermontov's deposition is reproduced in part in *Letopis'*, 73.

¹⁰¹ *Letopis'*, 72. The "opening" probably has in mind the epigraph in some copies starting "Vengeance, o Tsar, Vengeance.... Be just and punish the killer....," i.e., apparently an appeal to Nicholas I to punish d'Anthès. The epigraph is from the tragedy *Venceslas* by the French playwright Rotrou (1609-50).

¹⁰² *Ak nauk*, VI, 728-29; also Shchegolev, I, 268-69; also Eikhenbaum, II, 177-79.

Nicholas I's order to have Lermontov's sanity checked by the senior doctor of the Guards recalls the diagnosis of Chaadaev as mad only a year earlier, and suggests that the Tsar may have at one moment thought of this as a solution. But it did not prove suitable. Lermontov's philosophic thinking had much in common with Chaadaev's, and Benkendorf's response to the latter's negative portrayal of Russia sheds light on the attitude Lermontov confronted: "Russia's past was admirable; her present is more than magnificent; as to her future, it is beyond anything the boldest imagination can conceive; this.... is the point of view from which Russian history must be formulated and written."¹⁰³ In the face of such an attitude, Lermontov's poetic sallies against the court and those close to it could hardly pass without repercussions.

On February 27 Lermontov was allowed home to make his farewells. He remained there under house arrest till he left for Moscow on March 19. From March 23 through April 10, he stayed in Moscow, leaving on April 10 for the Caucasus. By January 3, 1838, he was back in Moscow and toward the end of January he arrived in Petersburg. Raevskii left for Petrozavodsk on April 5, 1837. On December 7, 1838, he was pardoned and permitted to resume his service on a normal basis. For their swift retrieval both men owed much to the energetic efforts of Elizaveta Alekseevna Arsen'eva, who had written on July 13 to Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich.

If Lermontov's first tour of duty in the Caucasus was of no military significance in terms of expanding the frontiers of the Russian Empire, it did give him a number of personal experiences. He got the grand tour of the Russian Caucasian line from the Black Sea (Taman') to the Caspian (Kizliar, close to but not actually on the Caspian Sea), which consisted of a series of fortresses, fortified points and settlements, manned by both Cossack and regular troops.

During this time Lermontov met a number of exiled Decembrists who had been permitted to return from exile in order to fight in the Russian ranks as soldiers. Most notable of these new acquaintances, from the literary standpoint, was the poet and former Horse Guards officer, Prince Aleksandr Ivanovich Odoevskii (1802-39). Odoevskii had served seven years' hard labor (*katorga*) and three years' enforced settlement in Siberia. In November 1837, he was assigned to the Nizhegorodskii Dragoon Regiment, the same regiment to which Lermontov had been transferred as a second lieutenant (the rank equivalent to a cornet in the hussars). He and Lermontov became good friends. In Moscow, Lermontov also met the great critic Belinskii, who was unfavorably impressed; Lermontov was in one of his more abrasive and obnoxious moods.¹⁰⁴

Let us follow Lermontov's path through the Caucasus. In late April or early May, he arrived in Stavropol', gateway to the Northern Caucasus. He was sick, "having caught cold on the journey,"¹⁰⁵ and, after a brief stay in hospital in Stavropol', he went into hospital in Piatigorsk. Indeed, we frequently encounter sickness in the story of his life: he had been sick, for instance, at the time of Pushkin's death; he was sick in camp at Peterhof when he was in cadet school; and as a child he had been afflicted with scrofula. As an adolescent and adult, notwithstanding his obviously abundant energy, he seems to have been susceptible to disease.

From late May through August 5-10 Lermontov remained at Piatigorsk (or nearby Zheleznovodsk), then continued treatment in Kislovodsk, also close, till the first half of September. He was not incapacitated during most of this time, having evidently made a quick and complete recovery, and by his own account he did a great deal of walking: "I roam the mountain [presumably Mashuk —WNV] every day," he writes May 31 to M. A. Lopukhina, "and it's this alone that has restored the strength to my legs." His lodgings afforded him a view of Mt. Elbrus,

¹⁰³ Mikhail Lemke, *Nikolaevskie zhandarmy i literatura 1826-1855 gg.* (SPb., 1909), 411.

¹⁰⁴ *Letopis'*, 84

¹⁰⁵ *Letopis'*, 79.

highest mountain in the Caucasus (VI, 438-439). In the first half of September he left the mineral waters, retraced his steps to Stavropol', and from there traveled west to Taman' on the eastern shore of the Black Sea, intending to proceed from there to either Anapa or Gelendzhik (both also on the Black Sea, south and east of Taman') to join his particular unit, which was to be inspected by Nicholas I. On September 29, a punitive expedition having been canceled, he left Taman', and, under orders now to join his regiment in Tiflis, returned to Stavropol', where he remained till October 22. He had been robbed on the way to Stavropol' and arrived with little more than the clothes on his back. He did not immediately report, for he wanted to have a fresh uniform made and replace other missing articles. He was reprimanded for this delay.¹⁰⁶

While in Stavropol' Lermontov was a constant visitor in the house of a distant relative. Major-General Pavel Ivanovich Petrov (1790-1871) was Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Caucasian Line and Black Sea area; he had served in the Caucasus from 1818, initially under Ermolov; and, after the latter's enforced retirement, Petrov continued to maintain friendly relations with the famous general. In 1836 Petrov had lost his wife (née Anna Akimova Khastatova), also one of Lermontov's relatives. Lermontov is reported to have done everything he could to console the widower and to have received very genuine pleasure from the Major-General's company, warm hospitality, and cultured interests. It was either at this time, while he was very temporarily based in Stavropol', or a couple of months later on his way north from Tiflis, that Lermontov traveled eastwards along the Caucasian line to Kizliar and back.

Meanwhile, in Tiflis and in his absence, the poet's immediate fate was decided. On October 10 Nicholas I reviewed Russian troops just outside Tiflis. The troops included four squadrons of the Nizhegorodskii Dragoon Regiment, which the Tsar found to be in excellent shape. On October 11 he gave the order that "Lieutenant Lermontov was to be transferred with the rank of cornet to the Grozdnenskii Hussar Regiment." It is natural enough that V. Potto, the regimental historian, was inclined to see a causal link between the excellent shape in which the Tsar found the regiment and the ensuing order transferring Lermontov back to the guards. But any such link is suspect. Count A. F. Orlov (1786-1861), who was close to the Tsar, had received two letters from Benkendorf promoting Lermontov's cause, twice asking him to report to the Tsar that he would regard forgiveness for the young man as a personal reward.¹⁰⁷ Lermontov's new regiment was stationed in Novgorod. The first Caucasian exile was therefore for practical purposes at an end.

Lermontov remained for a while in Tiflis. He left in early December heading North. He could have detoured east to Kizliar at this point, as it was close to the Khastatov estate, Shelkovo. Whether he went now to Kizliar or earlier, in October, he cannot have stayed long. After staying for a short time again in Stavropol', he seems to have traveled pretty much without interruption to Moscow, which he reached January 3, 1838. Toward the end of January he reached Petersburg, and on February 26 he joined his new regiment in Novgorod.

Something of the flavor of Lermontov's thinking about his Caucasian experience can be glimpsed in a letter from Tiflis to his friend Raevskii, written in the second half of November or early December:

... Finally I've been transferred back to the guards, but to the Grozdnenskii Regiment, and if it weren't for Grandma, I would, to tell the truth, gladly stay here [i.e. in the Cauca-

¹⁰⁶ Shchegolev, I, 314.

¹⁰⁷ *Letopis'*, 85, notes Potto's suggestion. But see too *Letopis'*, 83, under September 1, with an excerpt from a letter from A. I. Filosofov to his wife reporting Benkendorf's intercessions.

sus—WNV], for settlement duty [a reference to the hated military settlements of Western Russia] can hardly be said to be any more enjoyable than Georgia.

Since I left Russia [European Russia], you'd scarcely believe it, I've been up to now constantly on the move by stage coach and on horseback; I've covered the entire Line from Kizliar to Taman', crossed mountains, been in Shusha [probably a misreading for Nukha? See VI, 733], Kuba, Shemakha, and Kakhetiia, dressed in the Circassian manner [Lermontov has in mind the campaign uniform of the Nizhegorodskii Dragoons— long, collarless Circassian coat, and a felt cloak],¹⁰⁸ with a rifle slung across my back; spent nights out in the open, gone to sleep to the howling of the jackals, eaten *churek* [a Caucasian bread], even drunk Kakhetinian wine....

I caught cold on the way down, and when I reached the watering place, I was all rheumatic; I had to be carried from the carriage, I couldn't walk. In a month I was cured, thanks to the waters; I've never been so healthy, but then I am living an exemplary life; I only drink wine when I get frozen at night in the mountains, then when I get back, I warm myself up.... Apart from the conduct of the war, routine military service doesn't exist; I reached my unit too late, for the Tsar had canceled for now a second expedition, and I heard only two or three shots;¹⁰⁹ but twice in the course of my travels I exchanged fire: once at night there were three of us out on horseback, from Kuba, I, an officer of our regiment and a Circassian — one of those on our side, of course (*mirnyi, razumeetsia*), and we nearly ran into a band of Lezgins [a Dagestani mountain tribe]. There are a lot of good fellows here, especially in Tiflis there are some very decent people. A really great source of enjoyment is the Tatar baths! I made quick sketches of all the noteworthy places I've visited, and I now have quite a collection I'm transporting with me; in one word, I am now a traveler (*ia voiazhiroval*). As soon as I got over the top of the pass into Georgia, I gave up the wagon, and took to horseback; I climbed the snow-covered summit of Krestovaia, which is not altogether easy; from the top you can see half of Georgia as though it lay in the palm of your hand, and really I won't try to explain or describe this truly surprising feeling: for me mountain air is pure balsam; to hell with depression, you can feel your heart beating, and the lungs inhale deeply, and for the moment you could not wish for anything, you could just sit there looking all your life.

I started to learn Tatar [Azerbaijani], which is here and in most places in Asia as necessary as French in Europe. Now unfortunately I'll not be able to learn it properly, and it might have proved useful in the future. I had already been making plans to travel to Mecca, to Persia, and other places; now the only thing possible would be to ask to join Perovskii's expedition to Khiva.¹¹⁰

You can see that I've become a terrible wanderer, and truly I have a strong inclination for that sort of life.... it's annoying to be going to a new regiment, I've grown quite unused to

¹⁰⁸ For a water-color self-portrait of Lermontov in this uniform, see *Ak nauk* II, frontspiece.

¹⁰⁹ Military actions were suspended on September 29 because of the arrival of Nicholas I; that was about the time Lermontov reached his unit on the Black Sea near Taman'.

¹¹⁰ The Khiva campaigns took place under V. A. Perovskii in 1839-40 and were failures. Lermontov did not apparently apply. Khiva, which is in Uzbekistan, is south of the Aral Sea, northwest of Bukhara. It eventually became Russian in 1873.

routine service and drills. I'm seriously thinking of resigning my commission.... (VI, 440-41).

This was, we believe, the first time that Lermontov had spoken of retirement, and the thought was inspired not by the rigors and dangers of war but by the prospect of peacetime barracks duty. In general, the letter reflects considerable interest in and enthusiasm for new experiences and opportunities: the outdoors, hard living, physical challenges, the appeal of the East.

Lermontov was not destined to remain long with his new regiment. On March 24, Benkendorf made a request through the Minister of War, A. I. Chernyshev, that Lermontov be pardoned and transferred back to his original regiment, the Lifeguards Hussar Regiment. And on April 9 the Imperial order for the transfer was made public. Lermontov had come full circle; he was to go back where he had been before Pushkin's death provoked "the impermissible verses."

Benkendorf's request was, of course, at the instigation of Arsen'eva; it must be emphasized that Benkendorf had helped Lermontov greatly. Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich, as Guards Commander, had been consulted on his attitude to the proposed transfer of the poet back to his original regiment and had concurred. He, too, had up to this point been unfailingly helpful to Lermontov.¹¹¹

Among works written by Lermontov during the period just examined, i.e., from early 1837 through April 1838, we record some 20 excellent lyrics, two highly impressive narrative poems (*Pesn' pro tsaria Ivana Vasil'evicha* [*The Song of Tsar Ivan Vasil'evich*] and *Tambovskaiia kaznacheisha* [*The Wife of the Treasurer of Tambov*]) and the delightful short prose piece, *Ashik-kerib*, an Azerbaijani folk tale which Lermontov had taken down in writing late in 1837, before his return to the North.

¹¹¹ For Benkendorf and the Grand Duke up to this point see Lemke, 91-92.

V. Petersburg and the Barante Duel

Lermontov reached his new regiment near Novgorod on February 26. Between then and April 19, his official and other activities may be chronicled as follows: He "was eight times duty officer for the second half of the regiment, twice on church parade, one of those times in command of platoon, and twice was on leave in Petersburg, for eight days each time."¹¹²

On April 18 he reported sick, which for a short while delayed his departure from the regiment. But on May 14, 1838, he arrived back at the Lifeguards Hussar Regiment near Tsarskoe Selo. For the next nearly two years his life appeared to be without major upheaval. It was a period of very rapid and significant maturation, as well as a period of high productivity, although Lermontov seems never to have been unproductive. Between his return to the regiment and early 1840 Lermontov's output includes some of his greatest lyrics and the sixth redaction of his best known (though not best) narrative poem, *Demon*. The sixth redaction was also the first Caucasian redaction, i.e. the first in which the drama is played out against a Caucasian background. This is also for many, for Belinskii and a number of twentieth-century scholars, including myself, the definitive text. He also wrote a later redaction, the so-called "court" redaction, which is normally, with one addition, printed today as the definitive text. He wrote *Mtsyri (The Novice)*, another narrative poem with a Caucasian background. And he wrote his only completed novel, *Geroi nashego vremeni*.

From the diaries and memoirs of such men as the poet Zhukovskii (1783-1852) and A. I. Turgenev (1784-1845), a prominent man of letters, one obtains a picture of the people and salons Lermontov frequented. Apart from Zhukovskii and Turgenev, Lermontov became well acquainted with Pushkin's good friend P. A. Viazemskii (1792-1878), another poet, and with S. N. Karamzina (1802-1856), Karamzin's daughter by his first wife, a highly cultured lady-in-waiting, who, with her stepmother, headed the Karamzin salon; as well as with A. O. Smirnova (1809-1892), yet another friend of Pushkin, a beauty and a woman of high culture, who had intervened on Lermontov's behalf when he was exiled in 1837. We should not forget A. A. Kraevskii, Lermontov's principal publisher and friend; also fellow-writer and friend V. F. Odoevskii (1803/04-69) whose salon Lermontov visited along with Smirnova's and the Karamzins'. Except for Kraevskii and Smirnova, all were closer in age to Pushkin than to Lermontov. They were all very intelligent, with highly developed critical faculties, and Lermontov could not have held his own across a dinner table or in salon discussion with them had he habitually persisted in posing, pouting, sulking, gibing, and generally acting up. Presumably, individually and collectively, they exerted a beneficial formative influence on the young, uppity, and uneven Lermontov. They provided a sounding board and a yardstick for his own creative thinking. They offered an equal intellectual companionship to which Lermontov had, with a few exceptions such as Raevskii, seldom enjoyed. Lermontov, at times so objectionable, seems invariably to have felt a genuine interest and warmth when confronted with older people whose achievements and views inspired his respect and to have left his interlocutors with feelings of equal warmth.

During these years Lermontov also participated in the "circle of sixteen." This was a secret group of young people who met almost nightly to sup lightly and discuss their doings and news of the day; it provided to all of them a forum and outlet without which the reactionary Petersburg atmosphere would have been even more stifling.

Turning to outside events: in June, 1838, Varvara Lopukhina (now Bakhmeteva), with her husband and small daughter, passed through Petersburg bound for Western Europe. This was the

¹¹² *Letopis'*, 92.

last time Lermontov saw her face to face. It was also the occasion which provoked Shan-Girei to comment on her sadly altered appearance.¹¹³ We noted above that Lermontov continued episodically to send her works to which he himself attached importance or which he felt to be relevant to her, e.g., the sixth and “court” redactions of *Demon* (he had much earlier, in 1831, dedicated to her the third redaction: “*Primi moi dar, moia Madona*” (“Accept my gift, my Madonna”), also *Valerik*, the 1840 description of a battle in which he was engaged and after which he was recommended, unsuccessfully, for a decoration.

On September 22, 1838, by order of the Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich, Lermontov was arrested and confined in the guardhouse at Tsarskoe Selo for turning out on parade with a saber shorter than regulation, not by a couple of modest centimeters, but laughably and provocatively shorter. The Grand Duke gave the toy sword to his nephews (sons of the Tsar) to play with. While in the guardhouse Lermontov did an oil painting “Caucasian View,” which he gave to his cousin, Aleksandra Mikhailovna Vereshchagina (recently married abroad to a Baron Hugel). He was released on October 10. Another time the Grand Duke sent him home under arrest from a ball at Tsarskoe Selo for being improperly dressed. Such Hussar escapades did not prevent his promotion to lieutenant (*poruchik*) on December 6, 1839. But they also gained him no favor.¹¹⁴

In the second half of March or early April, 1839, Raevskii arrived in Petersburg from Petrozavodsk; Lermontov hastened to greet him, rushing into the room where he was talking to his mother and sister, who had come from Saratov to meet him. They embraced eagerly. “I remember,” the sister wrote, “how Mikhail Iurevich was kissing and stroking my brother, and how he kept saying: ‘forgive me, dear friend, forgive me!’ I was a child and didn’t understand what it all meant; but I can see to this day Lermontov’s agitated face and his large tear-filled eyes. My brother was also moved to tears and kept trying to calm his friend.”¹¹⁵

In the first half of November, 1838, Sushkova married a longtime admirer, A.V. Khvostov, a diplomat recently back from America. Lermontov was best man, and his grandmother was the groom’s proxy mother.¹¹⁶ During 1839 and early 1840 Lermontov had a love affair with Princess Shcherbatova (née Shterich), an important episode in his life. Mariia Alekseevna Shcherbatova (1820-1879) was a young widow, originally from Ukraine. She seems to have been somewhere between beautiful and not really beautiful but absolutely enchanting.¹¹⁷ Lermontov described her to his cousin Shan-Girei as being “such that no tale can tell, no pen describe” (“*ni v skazke skazat’, ni perom napisat’*”). He wrote two of his finest poems to her: *Molitva* (“A Prayer” “*V minutu zhizni...*”) (1839) and *M. A. Shcherbatovoi* (“To M.A. Shcherbatova” “*Na svetskie tsepi*”).¹¹⁸ She was a great social success but apparently preferred the quieter pleasures of salon companionship and discussion. She probably drew close to Lermontov at the Karamzins’. It was after a reading of *Demon* in her home that Shcherbatova reportedly said to Lermontov: “I like your *Demon*: I would like to go down with him to the depths of the sea and soar with him above the clouds.”

This perhaps exaggeratedly far-fetched fantasy was not unusual among the remarks Lermontov was now beginning to hear a propos his *Demon*. Another beauty, Mariia Petrovna Solo-

¹¹³ *LVVS*, 44.

¹¹⁴ M. N. Longinov, “Zametki o Lermontove,” *LVVS*, 156-57.

¹¹⁵ *Letopis’*, 101; *LN*, 45, 320; Shchegolev, II, 12.

¹¹⁶ *Letopis’*, 97.

¹¹⁷ Sushkova describes her as “a beautiful and very well educated woman”: *Zapiski*, 225.

¹¹⁸ Eikhenbaum thinks also *Otchego* (“Because”) (1839); my reason for disagreeing with him is given at the appropriate place in Chapter II.

mirskaia (1811-59), informed the poet: "You know, Lermontov, I'm quite enamoured of your Demon.... His oaths are captivating to the point of rapture (*obaiatel'ny do vostorga*).... I believe I could fall in love with a being as mighty, commanding and proud as that, believing from my heart that in love as in anger he really would be unchanging and great."¹¹⁹ Lermontov's *Demon* was becoming known. It was read on February 8 and 9 in the palace before the Empress Aleksandra Fedorovna. It had been read before a small circle at the Karamzins'. And there must have been a reading at Shcherbatova's house. The figure of the Demon was beginning to exert a spell-binding magic on the women of Petersburg society, to the vexation of many of the men who resented the lionization, albeit perhaps not on a Byronic scale, of the young guards officer without background or wealth who carried himself so arrogantly and gave himself such airs. But for the moment Lermontov's star continued to rise. Though his *Demon* was unable to make its way past the censors, every month and every week brought fresh poems to the public. The novelist Ivan Turgenev has recorded his first view of Lermontov as follows:

In the home of Princess Shakhovskaia I, who am a rare and unaccustomed participant in social soirées, from afar, from the corner in which I'd taken refuge, was able to observe the poet who had so quickly achieved fame. He had seated himself on a low stool in front of a couch occupied by one of the capital's beauties, dressed in black —the blond-haired Countess Musina-Pushkina, a really charming creature who died young. Lermontov was wearing the uniform of the Lifeguards Hussar Regiment; he had not removed either his saber or his gloves, and — hunched over and frowning — stared glumly at the countess. She conversed with him but seldom, more often addressing Count Shuvalov, also a hussar, who was sitting next to him. There was in Lermontov's appearance something ill-omened and tragic; some sort of gloomy and evil power, a meditative contemptuousness and passion emanated from his swarthy face, from his large and unmoving dark eyes. Their heavy gaze in some strange way did not accord with the almost childishly tender protruding lips. His entire stocky, bowlegged body, with its large head on broad, sloping shoulders, evoked an unpleasant feeling; but the innate power was at once apparent to one and all. It is well known that to some extent he depicted himself in the character of Pechorin [hero of *Geroi nashego vremeni*]. The words: "His eyes didn't smile when he smiled" etc. really fitted him well. I recall that Count Shuvalov and the countess suddenly laughed at something and continued laughing for a long time; Lermontov laughed too, but at the same time he was looking at them both with a sort of insulting expression of surprise. In spite of this it appeared that he liked Count Shuvalov as a comrade, and was amicably disposed toward the Countess. There was no doubt that, following the fashion of the time, he was affecting a certain type of Byronic manner, seasoned with other worse caprices and extravagances. And dearly he paid for them! Inside, Lermontov was probably profoundly bored; he felt stifled in the tightly circumscribed sphere into which fate had thrust him.¹²⁰

Lermontov was without doubt greatly captivated by Shcherbatova. He was also much taken with the fair-haired Musina-Pushkina mentioned above, to whom he addressed an amusing eight-line poem:

¹¹⁹ For these comments see D. A. Stolypin and A. V. Vasil'ev: "Vospominaniia," *LVVS*, 166.

¹²⁰ *Letopis'*, 110-11; I. S. Turgenev, *Sobranie sochinenii v 12 tomakh* (M.: Goslitizdat, 1956), X, 330-31.

Графиня Эмилия —
 Белее, чем лилия,
 Стройней ее талии
 На свете не встретится.
 И небо Италии
 В глазах ее светится.
 Но сердце Эмилии
 Подобно Бастилии.

Countess Emilia's
 Whiter than a lilia,
 On earth you'll not find
 A shapelier figure.
 And the blue skies of Italy
 Shine in her eyes.
 But the heart of Emilia's
 Like the Bastiglia.

But his feelings for Shcherbatova clearly went deeper. Lermontov felt tenderness, concern, intimacy, understanding, and respect for her, and probably love. Certainly she loved Lermontov. But nothing came of it, partly because Shcherbatova's grandmother hated Lermontov. But other events interposed themselves between Shcherbatova and Lermontov and changed the whole course of the latter's life.

A brief digression about the role of money is in order. Money in Petersburg in the reign of Nicholas I is in its own right a fascinating topic. Lack of money reduced Pushkin to desperation. And though Lermontov was never in comparable straits, lack of money was a stigma in high society, and certainly a strike against a potential suitor. A letter written by Vereshchagina's mother to her daughter abroad, now Baroness Hugel, sheds light on this:

Our revered Elizaveta Alekseevna [Arsen'eva] is crushed (*sokrushen'e*). She keeps on thinking that someone will catch Misha and marry him. He rode in the carousel [a horse-back riding display] with the Karamzins. But they're not Katen'ka Sushkovas. Those people are after men who have money or service rank. In their eyes Misha is poor. What is his 20,000 (sic) income to them? They would reckon 100,000 as small potatoes (*malo, govoriat, petite fortune*). But the old lady is anxious, she's afraid of high society.¹²¹

Whether or not Arseneva's fears would have been justified will never be known. For other events, also a product of her grandson's social activities, intruded dramatically and decisively. On February 18, 1840, he fought an inconclusive duel with Ernest de Barante (1818-1859), the son of the French ambassador. Some of the events leading up to this duel are well-known, others are not. In particular, the motives remain unclear, as they were for many contemporaries. Whatever triggered de Barante's challenge two days before the duel, relations between Lermontov and de Barante had been strained for some time, as is clear from a letter written on March 28 (April 9) by Baron d'André, Secretary of the French Embassy in Petersburg. He was not in Petersburg at the time, and writes to the Ambassador from Paris: "... When I left, their relations were already very strained. I tried several times to persuade Ernest to make a small effort not to attach too much importance to the not altogether cultured manners of Mr. Lermontov

¹²¹ *Letopis'*, 96; Arkhiv Vereshchaginoi, 43-44.

whom he was seeing too often...."¹²² Both Lermontov and de Barante were in fact capable of acting like insufferable young pups, and they aggravated each other. Still, the immediate cause is unclear. It seems likely that Princess Mariia Alekseevna Shcherbatova may have been unwittingly involved. Baron M. A. Korf (1800-76), who headed the Committee of Ministers, noted in his diary for March 21, 1840:

After her mourning period was over [she had lost her husband], she naturally began to appear in society, and just as naturally there appeared suitors for her hand, and simply young people making advances. Belonging to the first group was the hussar officer Lermontov, just about the best of our modern poets; belonging to the second group was the son of the French ambassador Barante, who arrived recently to be appointed a secretary in the embassy. But this fickle Frenchman had at the same time been running after the wife of our consul in Hamburg, Bacheracht. She has been living here for over a year and is a notorious flirt, and even — according to widespread rumors — a *femme galante*. In a fit of jealousy she somehow contrived to produce a quarrel between Barante and Lermontov, and it ended in a duel.... The whole affair was kept so secret that for some weeks it remained unknown both to the public and the government, until Lermontov himself let the cat out of the bag, and the Tsar got to hear of it....

Whether Korf has covered all the bases is hard to say. The degree of Bacheracht's culpability has been debated. Meanwhile, Korf offers a coherent account. He concludes his diary entry:

Now he [Lermontov] is under military arrest, young Barante will probably have to leave Petersburg, Shcherbatova has gone to Moscow, and meanwhile her child who remained here with the grandmother has died [March 1]—which will probably give many of her suitors cold feet: for she has nothing of her own, the entire property was her husband's, to be inherited by the son, with whose death it reverts to the father's family....¹²³

And Bacheracht went back to Hamburg. A. I. Turgenev who seems invariably privy to the doings, feelings, and motivations of contemporaries, reported in his diary: "She is laughing through her tears. She loves Lermontov."¹²⁴

Viazemskii, a usually well-informed observer, thought the situation less clear: "There's a lot of things been said about the duel, but it's impossible to make sense out of it all, to find out the reason for the quarrel."¹²⁵ Political considerations added another complication. D'Anthès, who had killed Pushkin in a duel, was French. Lermontov's *Smert' poeta* had castigated d'Anthès, in part, for his foreignness, his lack of understanding and indifference to what Pushkin represented for Russia and the Russian people. Could the Lermontov-Barante clash be seen as a sequel to the Pushkin-d'Anthès clash? The evidence for this line of thought, narrowly interpreted, is slender. True, some two months before the duel the French Ambassador, de Barante, père, had, before inviting Lermontov to a ball, discretely inquired of A. I. Turgenev whether Lermontov's poem had been directed against d'Anthès alone or against the entire French nation. Reassured by Turgenev, the Ambassador issued the invitation.¹²⁶ I do not think, as has been suggested, that someone, presumably a Russian, was seeking to provoke enmity between the Russian poet and

¹²² E. G. Gershtein, *Sud'ba Lermontova*. (M. Sovetskii pisatel', 1964), 19-20.

¹²³ See Gershtein, 21-22.

¹²⁴ Gershtein, 22; *Dnevnik A. I. Turgeneva*, IRLI, f. 309, No. 319.

¹²⁵ Gershtein, 19; TsGALI, f. 195, on. I, No. 327 ll. 153 ob.- 154, 156.

¹²⁶ *Letopis'*, 112-13.

the French Embassy.¹²⁷ De Barante senior was knowledgeable about Russian culture, had reported to Paris with insight on Pushkin's death, and was aware of Lermontov's reaction. His inquiry comes under the heading of normal diplomatic precautions.

While dismissing the Pushkin-d'Anthès duel as a cause of Lermontov's February 18 duel, we cannot overlook the fact that there were political overtones. Ironically, while Pushkin received little sympathy from high society in 1837, and d'Anthès a great deal, the reverse was true in 1840. Lermontov gained popularity as a defender of Russian honor. There was a strong anti-French current in Petersburg, most prominently represented in the person of the Tsar, who resented French support for the still recent Polish uprising and personally disliked Louis-Philippe, whom he regarded as a usurper. However, the Tsar's antipathy and the general anti-French current could very well not have extended to d'Anthès, a onetime royalist and now a Russian guards officer. The main reason for the difference seems to lie with the two poets. By the time he fought his duel, Pushkin had forfeited the support and sympathy of many members of high society who had never truly accepted him as one of them and who found his behavior in his last months unmannerly and ridiculous. Lermontov, on the other hand, obnoxious though he could be, was a young guards officer who was not so out of harmony with society as to alienate its members. In addition, de Barante was the second Frenchman to offend. And there may well have been reports about differences between Lermontov and de Barante on the issue of national customs.

What happened? In a March letter of explanation to his Commanding Officer, N. F. Plautin, Lermontov writes as follows:

In response to your Excellency's order to explain to you the circumstances of my duel with Mr. Barante, I have the honor to report to Your Excellency that on February 16 at a ball at the house of Countess Laval Mr. Barante demanded an explanation of something I had allegedly said; I answered that everything he had heard was incorrect, but since this did not satisfy him, I added that I did not intend to give him any further explanation. He responded in a caustic manner, and I then answered in similarly caustic vein. He then said that if he were in his own country he would know how to settle this matter. I then answered that in Russia the rules of honor were observed no less strictly than elsewhere, and that we least of all permit ourselves to be insulted with impunity. He challenged me, we agreed on the arrangements and parted. On Sunday the 18th at noon we met at Chernaia rechka (Black River) on the Pargolovo road. His second was a Frenchman whose name I don't remember, and whom I had never seen before. Since Mr. Barante considered himself the offended party, I gave him choice of weapons. He chose swords, but we had pistols with us as well. We had scarcely crossed swords when the end of mine broke off, and he wounded me slightly in the chest. We then took to pistols. We were supposed to fire at the same time, but I was a bit slow in firing. He missed, and I fired to the side. After which he shook my hand, and we parted company.

This, Your Excellency, is a detailed account of all that took place between us.¹²⁸

The account is, of course, less detailed than Lermontov claims and is particularly uncommunicative about the source de Barante's initial discontent. His account covers adequately the events of the duel itself. It avoids mentioning Lermontov's second. The duel was fought at or close to the place where Pushkin and d'Anthes duelled.

¹²⁷ Gershtein, "Duel's Barantom," *L. E.*, 149.

¹²⁸ *Letopis'*: 116-17; *Ak. nauk*, VI, 451.

It did not become known until March that a duel had taken place. From Baron Korf's account, Lermontov was probably to blame for this. Dueling was a criminal offense in Russia at the time, and not only the antagonists but seconds were subject to punishment: for not dissuading the two parties and reconciling them or for not reporting the intention to duel to the authorities. However, no damage had been done, and well-placed and knowledgeable people had hopes that, given the Tsar's negative attitude toward France, Lermontov would be treated indulgently. The great critic Belinskii writes on March 15 to his friend, V. L. Botkin, in Moscow: "... The Tsar has said that if Lermontov had fought with a Russian, he'd know what to do with him, but since it was a Frenchman, that takes away three quarters of the blame."¹²⁹ On April 12 the normally well-informed Smirnova writes to Zhukovskii that "Lermontov is under arrest for his foolish indiscretion and imprudence. We must hope that at Easter or the [April 23] name-day [of the Empress Aleksandra Fedorovna] his case will be decided favorably.... Sof'ia Nikolaevna [Karamzina] is with him wholeheartedly, to the point of tears, naturally."¹³⁰ Lermontov's lack of consideration is severely censured by E. A. Vereshchagina in a letter to her daughter, Baroness Hugel, Lermontov's cousin and confidante from Moscow and Serednikovo days: "Misha Lerm <ontov> is still under arrest, and it's so annoying — he's ruined everything. It was going all right, but now God knows how it will end. He has an unbearable character — highly intelligent and acts like a fool. His grandmother is wretched — he spares her nothing.... They won't allow anyone to visit him except his grandmother, and she drags herself [she was sick at the time] to visit him, and he shouts at her, but she always says — Misha is irritable when he's upset. Young Barante has left."¹³¹ Finally, a few words from a March 21 letter of Viazemskii to his wife and daughter in Paris: "I'm sending a pound of tea and the Odessa almanach by young Barante. The talk about his affair is still not clear. It's the complete opposite of the d'Anthès story. Patriotism is now involved. People are making a hero out of Lermontov and are happy that he taught the Frenchman a lesson. But who's right and who's guilty — who acted more correctly in this matter — is not known, only gossip."¹³²

Lermontov, meanwhile, had been under arrest and interrogated. There had been a sequel to the duel itself — a sequel which in no way improved Lermontov's chances of receiving a very light punishment. De Barante had been upset by Lermontov's testimony that he had fired in the air or to the side. This detail seemed to him prejudicial to his honor, and he claimed to be seeking a second duel. Lermontov invited de Barante to visit him in the guardroom where he was detained. The meeting, on March 22 at 8 p.m., appears to have passed amicably enough — and any plans for continuing the duel were laid to rest. A day earlier, March 21, the French Ambassador had requested the Foreign Minister, K. V. Nesselrode, to issue a passport to his son so that he could leave for Paris on the following day, March 22. But young Barante met with Lermontov on March 22 at 8 p.m., and seems not to have left Petersburg before March 23 or March 24.¹³³ And even then his departure seems to have been hastened by an order from Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich that a deposition be taken of Barante.

The deposition casts an interesting light both on frictions and differences between highly-placed Petersburg dignitaries and on the personality of the Grand Duke. Mikhail Pavlovich's thinking, obscure to us, and probably deliberately concealed from contemporaries, seems not to

¹²⁹ Belinskii, XI, 496; *Letopis'*, 119.

¹³⁰ *Letopis'*, 125.

¹³¹ *Letopis'*, 124-125.

¹³² *Letopis'*, 121; TsGALI, f. 195 kn. Viazemskikh, op. 1, g. No. 3271, l. 158.

¹³³ *Letopis'*, 122.

have been circumscribed by his attention to parade-ground and regulation trivia. The military commission rendering judgment on Lermontov fell under his jurisdiction. On March 17, he ordered the commission to interrogate Mongo Stolypin, Lermontov's second, without showing him Lermontov's testimony. And on March 23 Nesselrode received an order to have a deposition taken from Barante, perhaps prompted by a report of de Barante's visit to Lermontov: the duty officer should almost certainly not have permitted the meeting. But I take it also to have been an expression of the Grand Duke's impatience at de Barante's sheltering behind his diplomatic immunity to avoid depositions and interrogations. Strictly speaking de Barante did not have diplomatic immunity, being merely the French Ambassador's son, but holding no official appointment. The Ambassador was seeking appointment of his son as Secretary. The duel threatened those plans, for one thing because the would-be appointee would have to leave the country. This probably explains why de Barante, though warned unofficially, had been slow to send his son home. But on March 18, the commission had prepared questions for Barante. On March 21 the Ambassador had requested a passport. Now the Grand Duke's deposition order precluded further tarrying, if this had been envisioned. Foreign Minister Nesselrode ordered that the Grand Duke be informed that young de Barante "has left" ("uekhal"), which either was just barely true, or very soon made true.

In fact Nicholas I had early in the affair decided that Lermontov would have to be disciplined and de Barante sent out of the country.¹³⁴ On April 13, the Tsar signed the following order: "Lieutenant Lermontov to be transferred to the Tengin Infantry Regiment at the same rank; retired Lieutenant Stolypin and Mr. Branitskii to be absolved of responsibility, the former to be informed that with his rank [i.e. his being a member of the *dvorianstvo*] and at his age it is useful to serve and not be idle."¹³⁵

This was neither a light nor an overly severe sentence, and it most certainly was not a vindictive one. In evaluating the authorities' decisions, we must beware of attributing too much importance to Lermontov or overemphasizing the intensity of their feelings toward him. Commentators sometimes forget that Russo-French relations were of far greater importance to Nicholas, Benkendorf, and Nesselrode. This is an error into which Emma Gershtein is prone to fall. Regarding this episode we find her quoting an observer: "... Our most august monarch, who is always emotionally against Louis-Philippe and the French, is undoubtedly happy to have a valid reason for showing his displeasure, and Barante-father will perhaps also go on leave for a spell." But Gershtein then adds: "But, correctly interpreting Nicholas I's attitude to Louis-Philippe, contemporaries had no conception of the extent (*ne predstaviali sebe vsei nenavisti russkogo imperatora k Lermontovu*) of the Russian Emperor's hatred for Lermontov."¹³⁶ Gershtein's assertion is gross overstatement. It was Nicholas I who, going against the thinking of Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich and others, had Lermontov transferred directly to his new regiment — without an intervening period of three months' detention.

¹³⁴ Gershtein, 40-42.

¹³⁵ *Letopis'*, 125-26. A. L. Veinberg's claim that Lermontov's transfer to the Tengin Infantry Regiment was engineered by K. K. Danzas, Puskin's second in his fatal duel is therefore untenable; see "K. K. Danzas....i K. A. Bulgakov," *Zven'ia* (M.-L.: Academia, 1932), I, 75. However, it is true that Danzas managed to have Lermontov assigned to his battalion, in which Lermontov nevertheless did not serve since he was reassigned by Grabbe to serve under Galafeev on the eastern sector of the line (see below Section VI). Regarding Danzas' involvement see V. B. Sandmirskaia, "Danzas," *L. E.*, 126.

¹³⁶ Gershtein, 40.

Nevertheless, this second “offense” was to weigh more heavily against Lermontov than his “impermissible verses” of 1837. One unfortunate consequence was the loss of Benkendorf’s good will and support. We have noted instances of Benkendorf’s helpfulness toward Lermontov. Why did this suddenly reverse itself? There are no clearcut answers. But it is not difficult to suggest plausible reasons. First, in 1837 Benkendorf had not so much been doing Lermontov a favor as Arsen’eva. At that time, he must have known very little about Lermontov. But during 1838-1840, Lermontov had become more visible in Petersburg society, the outlines of his personality more sharply silhouetted. Benkendorf was not the sort of man to take kindly to Lermontov’s mannerisms. There was also an incident involving a clash between Lermontov and two female members of the imperial family at a masked ball. Lermontov’s alleged impertinence and a poem of his which seemed to be related to the incident almost certainly helped to turn Benkendorf against him.¹³⁷ In addition, this was now a second “offense,” and Lermontov could now be viewed no longer as an erring youth but as a persistent troublemaker; moreover, the fact that a foreign embassy was involved did not predispose Benkendorf kindly toward Lermontov.

Indeed, it was in his eagerness to protect de Barante’s sensitivities that Benkendorf’s hostility to Lermontov first manifested itself. It had been, we recall, the Ambassador’s hope that his son would receive an appointment as Secretary in the Embassy. This hope received a setback when on March 23 or 24 young de Barante was obliged to leave for Paris. But his parents continued to work for the appointment. They apparently felt that their son’s hand would be strengthened and the danger of a fresh conflict eliminated if Lermontov could be induced to write to his opponent a letter of apology admitting having given false testimony, i.e., about firing to the side. Benkendorf supported the de Barante position. In fact, he even called Lermontov in and insistently demanded that he write the required letter.¹³⁸ Lermontov refused and appealed for help to Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich. Between April 20 and 27 he wrote:

Your Imperial Highness!

Fully admitting my guilt, and most respectfully submitting to the punishment imposed on me by His Imperial Majesty, I have up to now drawn courage from the hope of having the possibility through dedicated service of expiating my offense.

But after being summoned to appear before the Adjutant-General, Count Benkendorf, I came to understand from what was said to me by His Grace that there is against me an additional charge of giving false testimony, the gravest charge that can be brought against someone who holds his honor dear. Count Benkendorf proposed that I should write a letter to Barante, asking forgiveness for having incorrectly testified at my hearing that I fired in the air. I could not agree to this, for it was against my conscience; but now the thought that His Imperial Majesty and Your Imperial Highness perhaps also have doubts as to the truthfulness of my words, this thought is so intolerable that I decided to appeal to (*obratit'sia k*) Your Imperial Highness, knowing Your magnanimity and sense of justice of which I have more than once been the beneficiary (*buduchi uzhe ne raz oblagodetel'stvovan Vami*), asking you to defend and vindicate me in the opinion of His Imperial Majesty, for otherwise I, though without guilt, will be losing irretrievably my good name.

¹³⁷ Viskovatov 1972, 281-83.

¹³⁸ According to P.A. Viskovatov’s information, “Benkendorf insisted in the most energetic terms” (299-300).

Permit me, Your Imperial Highness, to say with complete frankness: I sincerely regret that my testimony offended Barante: I had not presupposed this nor intended it; but I cannot now correct a mistake by lying, to which I have never lowered myself. For in saying that I had shot into the air, I was telling the truth, and am ready to support this with my word of honor; and proof of this is the fact that at the place of the duel when my second, Retired Lieutenant Stolypin, handed me my pistol, I told him that I would fire into the air—which he will himself confirm.

Fully aware of my audacity, I nevertheless dare to hope that Your Imperial Highness will deign to take note of my lamentable situation and by Your intercession to restore my good name in the mind of His Imperial Majesty and yours.

With respectful devotion I have the happiness to remain Your Imperial Highness's most devoted

Mikhail Lermontov.
Lieutenant in the Tenginsk Infantry Regiment.

By any standards this is a good letter. It was shown by the Grand Duke to his brother the Tsar. No written reaction is known or probably ever existed. But Benkendorf dropped his demands. This episode reveals the new, hostile Benkendorf. It shows also that the Romanov brothers were not always on the wrong side, especially when the honor of a Russian officer was at issue.

But the time for departure was at hand. Lermontov was given a farewell evening at the Karamzins, at which he allegedly improvised his famous lyric, *Tuchi* ("Clouds"), in which he characterizes the clouds as exiles driven like himself by forces outside them, but, unlike him, free and without feeling. He left Petersburg between May 3 and May 5. On May 8 he arrived in Moscow and visited A. I. Turgenev. On May 9 he was present at the celebrated Gogol' dinner in the garden of Mikhail Petrovich Pogodin's home. Pogodin (1800-75) was a writer, publisher, historian and Moscow University professor. He had been a friend of Pushkin's. The dinner was "celebrated" because a number of notables were present, including A. I. Turgenev and P. A. Viazemskii. At the dinner Lermontov read or declaimed by heart an excerpt from his new narrative poem, *Mtsyri* (*The Novice*).

Lermontov remained in Moscow till late May, leading a very active social life. Some time after May 25, after another farewell dinner, he left for the Caucasus. He spent three nights in Novocherkassk, not far from Rostov on the Don, and arrived in Stavropol' on June 10.

VI. Second Exile

Arriving in Stavropol' on June 10, 1840, Lermontov reported to General Pavel Khristoforovich Grabbe (1789-1875), Commander of the Armed Forces of the Caucasian Line and Black Sea area. Before 1825, he had been a member of the pre-Decembrist Union of Welfare (*Soiuz blagodenstviia*) and still maintained relations with the great Ermolov, who had been retired in disfavor in 1827, and for whom he was to entrust Lermontov with a letter in early 1841 when Lermontov was heading north on leave. As one becomes acquainted with Russians in the Caucasus at this period, one gains the impression of a wide spectrum of liberal or once liberal sentiment abroad on this advancing frontier of the Russian Empire, ranging from Decembrists like A. I. Odoevskii serving as soldiers in the line to "troublemakers" like Lermontov, who might or might not win their way back to the glittering halls of Petersburg, to people like Grabbe who really wielded authority. The Caucasian liberal network was a reality.

Grabbe did not send Lermontov to his new regiment, the Tenginskii Infantry, the units of which were located south west of Stavropol', on or near the Black Sea. He sent him in the other direction, toward the Caspian Sea, to take part in one of the so-called "expeditions," i.e., raids, this one under the command of Lieutenant-General Apollon Vasil'evich Galafeev (1793-1853), to whose staff Lermontov was attached.

Why did Grabbe not obey orders and send Lermontov to his regiment? It is impossible to know his precise reasons, but it is tempting to speculate that Grabbe was motivated by a desire to give Lermontov an opportunity to distinguish himself, since distinguished service could be a path to redemption and pardon. And Chechnia, the area to which Lermontov proceeded, was then the scene of frequent, often very costly Russian raids; it was consequently the ideal area for "the seekers of citations and decorations" ("*iskatelei otlichii i nagrad*").¹³⁹

This was Grabbe's decision. Nicholas, when he learned that Lermontov was not with his regiment, became angry.¹⁴⁰ Yet Nicholas has been accused of flinging Lermontov into the forefront of the battle so that he might be killed. Actually, such dispositions were practical possibilities: the great Ermolov was, only some 12 months later, to fantasize with frustrated savagery the pleasure he would have derived from putting Lermontov's killer in precisely that position: "I wouldn't have let this gentleman get away with it. If I'd been in the Caucasus I'd have helped him on his way; there are situations of a sort which make it possible to send a man in, take out your pocket watch, and reckon how soon he'll be dead...."¹⁴¹ He seems to have overlooked the fact that the killer, Martynov, was already retired. In any case such a maneuver was not part of Grabbe's appointing Lermontov to the left-flank "expedition."

"The Tsar chose for the poet the Tenginskii regiment, which was operating on the most dangerous sectors." So says the Soviet scholar, S. N. Malkov, seeking to bolster the charge that during Lermontov's second exile the Tsar was "merciless" toward him. And at the moment that Nicholas assigned Lermontov to that regiment, it may indeed have been the potentially most dangerous sector. But Malkov asserts that *because* it was the most dangerous sector, *therefore* Nicholas chose it for Lermontov. Nicholas chose the Tenginskii regiment, we have every reason to assume, because the serious depletions caused by earlier losses had to be replenished and made good. The choice was dictated by military considerations rather than by personal vendetta. Moreover, by the time of Lermontov's arrival in Stavropol' in June, 1840, the Tenginskii regi-

¹³⁹ See "Vospominaniia G. I. Filipsona," *Russkii arkhiv*, 1884, kn. 1, 370.

¹⁴⁰ S. N. Malkov. "Voennaia sluzhba," *L. E.*, 87-90, esp. 89.

¹⁴¹ Manuilov 1981, *L. E.*, 157. Reported by P. I. Bartenev.

ment sector was certainly not the most dangerous. The 1840 Russian plan had called for a push south on the right (Black Sea) flank, i.e. the Tenginskii front, and the settlement of the newly acquired territory with Cossacks. But, as Malkov himself points out, these plans had to be shelved, for in the spring of 1840 the enemy, led by Shamil', seized the initiative and launched successful offensive operations at various points along the Caucasian line from West to East.¹⁴² The Russian response, which events showed to be ill-conceived, was to carry out a number of punitive raids burning villages and laying waste fields. The main thrust of such raids was on the left (Caspian) flank, the Chechnia area, which in the second half of 1840 has to be seen as the most dangerous section. So we have the ironic situation that, yes, Lermontov *did* go to the most dangerous sector, but without the knowledge of his Tsar who, when he subsequently discovered how laxly his imperial order had been implemented, was greatly vexed. Kleinmikhel was to write that "His Majesty, having taken note of the fact that Lieutenant Lermontov was not with his regiment, but was serving in an expedition in charge of a special-forces Cossack detachment, has been so good as to order me to convey to you, gracious sir, an order that Lieutenant Lermontov without fail should serve with his own regiment and that the command on no pretext remove him from regular regimental service" ("*ne pod kakim predlogom udaliat' ego ot frontovoi sluzhby v svoem polku*").¹⁴³

It might well be imagined that Russian troops advancing in strength on their mission of destruction would suffer few losses. Not so. One contemporary writes of Grabbe's "last unsuccessful operations in which we lost four or five thousand men each time."¹⁴⁴ Lermontov's specific duties exposed him to more than average danger. The staff officers or adjutants were normally attached to specified units, whose actions they observed and reported back, if need be themselves assuming command and initiating maneuvers. This was a duty which called for courage, cool-headedness and the power of decision. In the major engagement of this Grabbe raid (the battle at the River Valerik), casualties among officers serving in the line, i.e. as integral parts of their units, were eight percent; while casualties among adjutants were 20%, one in five!

Lermontov left Stavropol' on June 18 and joined Galafeev's command in the vicinity of the fortress of Groznaia. On July 1 and 2 the 37th and 39th Don Cossack regiments trampled all crops along the Sunzha River banks for 30 versts. Between July 6 and July 10 the Russian and Cossack troops advanced, first south and then westward, burning villages and crops, engaging in cross-fire with the enemy, and on one occasion using bayonets. On July 10 they came to the Valerik, and there, on the 11th, a major engagement took place. Lermontov performed admirably. He was recommended to receive the Order of Vladimir fourth class, which was reduced at the corps level to the Order of Stanislav third class, and was refused in Petersburg at the instance of Nicholas I. Here is an excerpt of what was written in Galafeev's citation:

During the storming of enemy entrenched positions on the Valerik River his assignment was to observe the operations of the advance assault column and to inform the commander of its progress — an assignment which was extremely dangerous because of the presence of enemy forces concealed behind nearby trees and bushes; but this officer — without consideration of risk — performed his mission with exemplary courage and cool-

¹⁴² "Voennaia sluzhba," *L. E.*, 88.

¹⁴³ See Shchegolev, II, 125-26, also *Letopis'*, 163.

¹⁴⁴ "Vospominaniia G.I. Filipsona," *Russkii arkhiv*, 1884, kn. 1, 370. These losses, he goes on, "gave to the operations the dimensions of a European war, but had no positive results because the people in Tiflis did not know the country and were unable to come up with a reasonable plan for its subjugation."

headedness, and was among the first — along with the front ranks of the bravest — to enter the enemy defensive positions.¹⁴⁵

Galafeev continued west and then circled east back to Groznaia on July 14, having won at the Valerik, but with little else to show for his losses. On July 17 he set out again, southeast to help out Russian forces threatened by Shamil', and returned about three quarters of the way to Groznaia, at Gerzel-aul, where he started to build fortifications, abandoning for the moment his military operations. While the fortifications were being built, Lermontov and other officers went on leave to Piatigorsk and Kislovodsk. Thus ended Lermontov's first campaign.

He was back again around September 20, and on September 27 set out on his second campaign, which lasted till October 18. On October 10 R. I. Dorokhov (1801-1852), commanding a crack volunteer partisan cavalry unit, was wounded. Lermontov replaced him, and it became known as the "Lermontov detachment" ("*Lermontovskii otriad*"). This was a very signal honor. For Dorokhov was an old Caucasus hand, a highly experienced cavalry commander, who had gained a deserved reputation for his skill and daring. In this he was following in his father's footsteps: I. S. Dorokhov had greatly distinguished himself playing a similar role in the 1812 campaign. To some extent Tolstoi modeled the Dolokhov of *War and Peace* on this Dorokhov of the Caucasus: among other shared traits, both had been more than once reduced to the ranks for dueling or other colorful misconduct and then promoted again for outstanding service. Dorokhov had the deep respect of his men, most of whom were also seasoned fighters. To replace him with Lermontov, barely blooded at the Valerik, showed recognition of Lermontov's natural aptitudes and confidence in his ability to hold his own on the path of his famous predecessor. Lermontov, who so easily incurred the dislike, even enmity of some, was well liked by Dorokhov: "A fine fellow," he wrote; "an honest upright soul — he's not long for this world ("*ne snosit' emu golovy*"). He and I became friends, and we parted with tears in our eyes."¹⁴⁶ Dorokhov was killed fighting in the Caucasus in 1852.

As leader of Dorokhov's elite partisan unit, Lermontov enjoyed considerable freedom of action, participated in several engagements, and earned high praise for his exceptional daring. He also took pains to see to the well-being of his subordinates, and in every way shared the hardships of campaigning.¹⁴⁷ As a result of his prowess and exemplary service in the second campaign Lermontov was recommended for the award of the golden saber "for courage" and for transfer back to the guards. This recommendation too, made to General Galafeev on December 24 by V. S. Golitsyn, commanding the left-flank cavalry regiment, would be turned down in Petersburg. Meanwhile, on or before December 11, 1840, Nicholas I had authorized two months' leave for Lermontov to visit with his grandmother. On about January 14 Lermontov left Stavropol' traveling north to Moscow and Petersburg. In the forefront of his mind was the hope of receiving permission to retire from military service.

But any hopes of graceful retirement were dashed immediately upon Lermontov's arrival in Petersburg. Arriving during the first week of Lent ("*na polovine maslenitsy*"), February 5-8, probably the eighth, he relates that he, "on the very next day went to a ball at the house of Madame Vorontsova [Countess A. K. Vorontsova-Dashkova, a 22-year old beauty, who with her husband hosted balls and receptions attended by Petersburg's elite], and this was considered improper and impertinent. "What can I do? If I'd known, I'd have acted more prudently (*Kaby znal,*

¹⁴⁵ Eikhenbaum, II, 223-30; Shchegolev, II, 100; Malkov, "Voennaia sluzhba," *L. E.*, 89.

¹⁴⁶ M. I. Gillel'son, S. K. Kravchenko, "Dorokhov," *L. E.*, 143. *Letopis'*, 139-40. A. V. Popov, *Lermontov na Kavkaze* (Stavropol', 1954), 155.

¹⁴⁷ M. I. Gillel'son, S. K. Kravchenko, "Dorokhov," *L. E.*, 143.

gde upast' solomki by podostlal); but I was very well received by society....” (VI, 457-58). Lermontov's presence had been seen as “improper and impertinent” by none other than Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich, himself a guest at this ball. To avoid overt scandal the hostess was obliged to escort Lermontov out through the back way.

Lermontov's “sin” was twofold. First, he had not taken the precaution of reporting his arrival to a superior officer. Secondly he was officially “in disgrace” (“*opal'nyi*”), and should not therefore have been present at a function attended by a member of the imperial family.

The same Lermontov letter cited above to his friend A. I. Bibikov in Stavropol' conveys the consequence of the poet's misdemeanor: “...I am leaving here March 9 to earn my retirement in the Caucasus....” (VI, 458). It seems that General Kleinmikhel, at one time Raevskii's superior, and possibly also Benkendorf, were ready and eager to send Lermontov quickly back to where he had come from. But the Grand Duke, a martinet where regulations were concerned, whose initial displeasure had directed a special sort of attention to Lermontov's presence at the February 9 ball, failed to prefer charges, and his silence made it difficult for Kleinmikhel or anyone else to take the initiative in bringing Lermontov to book. In this episode, the enigmatic Grand Duke, martinet, at the same time a man of integrity often strangely vulnerable to human considerations, played the pivotal role. “We all of us, and I in particular,” the cultured and influential A. O. Smirnova was to recall, “vied with each other in pleading with the Grand Duke on Lermontov's behalf. And he, who was very favorably disposed toward Arsen'eva, gave in. I kept telling him that a son who was good to his mother can't be a bad son to the fatherland, and Lermontov was for his grandmother more than a son.” The same picture of pressure brought to bear on the Grand Duke is given by the author Countess Evdokiia Petrovna Rostopchina, whom Lermontov had known since 1830, and to whom he was to draw very close during this last stay in Petersburg. March 9 came and went, Lermontov remained.¹⁴⁸

Meanwhile Benkendorf's and Kleinmikhel's hostility toward Lermontov had not gone away. Since it was to prove crucial in deciding his fate, let us briefly review the position of these two dignitaries. Lermontov's compassionate leave had been instigated, as we would expect, by his grandmother: “...my grandmother requested that I be pardoned, and they gave me leave,” Lermontov had written in that same letter to Bibikov. But whereas previously Arsen'eva had worked through Benkendorf, she must have become aware that his support and good offices were no longer available. Her requests therefore followed a regular administrative chain — through Kleinmikhel, also of course ill disposed toward Lermontov but who did nothing at this point to block Arsen'eva's entreaties. They went to the Tsar, who did not grant the sought-for pardon but did authorize two months' leave for the poet. Benkendorf's role in this particular episode was inimical to Lermontov. This can be in part explained by his obvious attachment to the de Barante cause. In spite of the duel, the Ambassador had received the French government's approval for the son's appointment as second secretary (although the appointment did not in the end materialize). However, at the time Lermontov received compassionate leave, it seemed probable that young de Barante would also be back in Petersburg. The de Barante parents were concerned that another clash might occur. Swayed by their fears, Benkendorf promised that Lermontov would be made to meet with his grandmother in central Russia. But the Tsar — for the second time in the Barante affair — failed to go along with Benkendorf.¹⁴⁹ None of which alters the fact that Lermontov, by appearing at the February 9 ball, had weakened his position and his case for retirement. Meanwhile Lermontov resumed his Petersburg life.

¹⁴⁸ Viskovatov, 328-331; *Russkaia starina*, 1882, No. 9.

¹⁴⁹ Gershtein, “Duel' s Barantom,” *L. E.*, 150.

According to Viskovatov, friends found Lermontov changed. He seemed to have found a direction, a life course. The desire to retire from military service had taken firm hold. At the same time, he had decided to make writing his career.¹⁵⁰ When one reflects that Lermontov's total artistic texts at this time (including drafts) already accounted for more words than did Pushkin's artistic texts (excluding letters, historical writings, criticism, etc. which would put Pushkin far ahead of Lermontov), it seems ridiculous to talk of his opting for writing as a career.¹⁵¹ But unlike Pushkin who knew himself a writer from an early age, Lermontov had never fully acknowledged being a writer, had never mentally traced the implications of that fact. He was first and foremost a member of the *dvorianstvo* and a guards officer, albeit transferred to an infantry regiment. Up to now he could justifiably congratulate himself on having managed to keep writing in spite of other occupations and preoccupations; now he was beginning to see writing, and publishing, as something central which would describe and identify him.¹⁵²

Or at least he was becoming increasingly capable of seeing himself thus, when in close proximity to Karamzina, Smirnova, Rostopchina, Zhukovskii (in spite of the ideological gulf between them), V. F. Odoevskii, and others. For it was primarily as a writer that these people viewed and respected Lermontov. Furthermore, they inspired in Lermontov a measure of awe and fear; they offered him something he did not care to forfeit. Thus, they ensured for themselves the best and most palatable sides of Lermontov's personality. Separated from them, in society, with his brother officers, Lermontov was capable of quickly reverting, of becoming once more his well-practiced obnoxious self, whereas in the intimacy, good fellowship, and the affection prevailing among the salon elite he was calmer and more even in mood, without thereby sacrificing liveliness and wit. This new-found more modest pleasure in simple friendship and relaxed social intercourse found expression in a poem written at this period in the album of Sofia Karamzina. In the poem Lermontov speaks of how formerly he had loved "both the noisy storms of nature, and passions' noisy storms." Now he has learned to love "clear weather, in the morning, in the evening quiet conversation." He loves Karamzina's paradoxes, and the ha-ha-ha's and hi-hi-hi's. This 16-line lyric is invariably mentioned as heralding abandonment of the stormy romanticism of youth in favor of a more deliberate, more receptive, more philosophically realistic attitude to life — which, to a degree, it is.

During this last stay in Petersburg Lermontov renewed and strengthened his friendship with Prince V. F. Odoevskii (1803/4?-69). The two apparently first met in 1838, but their friendship dates from 1839. Arriving in the capital, probably on February 8, Lermontov visited Odoevskii that evening. While their views were not identical, the two men shared an interest in religion, which apparently provoked lively discussion between them. Largely stimulated by Odoevskii's preoccupation with the fantastic element in life and by his *Sil'fida* and other prose stories treating

¹⁵⁰ Viskovatov 1987, 324-25. The professionalism envisaged gains credence from Lermontov's expressed interest in publishing a journal. Not surprisingly he speaks of this to his friend and publisher Kraevskii, as reported by Viskovatov, and also to V.A. Sollogub, for whom see "Iz vospominanii," *LVVS*, 27.

¹⁵¹ This, comparison is based on "*Chastotnyi slovar' iazyka M.Iu. Lermontova*," *L. E.*, 717. This article puts Pushkin's word count at over 313,000 words, and Lermontov's at 326,000 words. The count is for his entire life. But we have nearly reached its end; in early 1841 only *Shtoss* and a handful of lyrics are to come. The comparison is skewed in an important sense: Pushkin often worked and reworked drafts, whereas Lermontov's "drafts" were often in the form of poems, published separately as "early" poems, and are therefore included in the count.

¹⁵² Viskovatov 1987, 324-27.

the subject, Lermontov wrote his own contribution to the now firmly established Petersburg tradition of the fantastic, the never completed *Shloss*. The Odoevskiiis hosted their own salon, and association with Odoevskii reinforced Lermontov's steadily growing social intercourse with men and women of letters. When Lermontov left Petersburg for the Caucasus in April, Odoevskii gave him a notebook with the following inscription: "I give to the poet Lermontov this my old and much loved notebook with the condition that he should return it to me himself, completely filled with his writing (*i vsiu ispisannuiu*)."¹⁵³ Odoevskii got his notebook back in December 1843, returned to him by one of Lermontov's Caucasian cousins, A. A. Khastatov. Lermontov had been carrying out Odoevskii's instructions, and by the time he was struck down in July of that year, Odoevskii's notebook contained fair copies of some of Russia's greatest poems, including *Utes* ("The Cliff"); *Son* ("The Dream"); *Tamara*; *Vykhozhu odin ia na dorogu* ("I go out alone upon the road."); *Net, ne tebia tak pylko ia liubliu* ("No, it's not you I love so ardently"); and *Prorok* ("The Prophet"). Odoevskii went to work, in response to an appeal from Kraevskii, to "save" these and other posthumous Lermontov writings.

Lermontov's friendship with Countess Rostopchina (1812-58) also ripened rewardingly during this last Petersburg sojourn. He had first met her in 1830 in Moscow, and his 1831 New Year madrigal, *Dodo*, clearly shows that he had singled her out as exceptional. The easy flow of the well-executed iambic album verses conceals only partly an underlying serious vein which is not to be found in the other madrigals written at the same time. She possessed something which seldom failed to get Lermontov's attention and inspire his respect: strength of character. By 1841, Rostopchina had established herself as a poetess. She was an accepted member of salon society, and a frequent visitor at the Karamzin home, a good friend, too, of Odoevskii's. She had also in 1836 become closely acquainted with Pushkin. The earlier Moscow acquaintance between her and Lermontov developed rapidly and significantly during these two Petersburg months February through April. They were probably not in love. On the other hand, their relationship seems to have extended beyond the conventional limits of casual friendship. When Lermontov left Petersburg, he gave her an album containing his lyric *Grafine Rostopchinoi* ("To Countess Rostopchina"). She had already given him her *Na dorogu!* ("Bon Voyage!"), dated March 8. One wonders about the early date, perhaps indicating that it was written when Lermontov still believed he would be on his way out by March 9, possibly as early as March 2.¹⁵³ After Lermontov's departure, Rostopchina gave to Arsen'eva and then asked her to forward to Lermontov Rostopchina's newly published *Stikhotvoreniia* (*Poems*).

It has been pointed out that Lermontov apparently never expressed any clear ideas about the logistics of producing the journal he was beginning to talk about. But any new project normally starts as talk and day-dream before clear methods of implementation take shape in the initiator's mind. Moreover, Lermontov was an army lieutenant on leave, not as yet at liberty to formulate concrete plans. Meanwhile, the prospect of publishing a journal did prompt him to express important thoughts about the ideological direction he thought it should take to his principal editor and good friend, Kraevskii. Kraevskii later passed some of Lermontov's remarks on to Viskovatov, who gives the gist as follows:

We must live our own independent life and contribute our own special originality to all mankind. Why should we drag along behind Europe and the French? I have learnt a great deal from the Asians, and I would like to penetrate the mysteries of the Asian Weltanschauung, the first seeds of which are even for the Asians themselves and for us little un-

¹⁵³ This is the date given in *Letopis'*, 149.

derstood. But, believe me,” — and he would turn toward Kraevskii — “it is there in the East that there lies a treasure trove (*tainik*) of valuable revelations.

This is not really new thinking on Lermontov’s part. As early as 1831, in his drama *Strannyi chelovek* (*A Strange Man*), Moscow students — clearly with the author’s approval — raise the question of Russia’s destiny and the need for Russian independence of thought. But the Eastern facet has been added, clearly as a result of recent Caucasian experiences.¹⁵⁴ Rejection of Western Europe as the shining example was not of course a Slavophile *trouvaille*. It goes back at least to Derzhavin’s odes and the characterization of Europe as “decrepit” (“*vetkhaia*”). It was an ingrained reaction and inevitable act of self-assertion. Thus it would be entirely wrong to attempt to push Lermontov into the Slavophile camp. Nevertheless, he and the great Slavophile, Iurii Fedorovich Samarin (1819-76), invariably got along well. The two men’s mutual trust and relaxed association obviously owed much to compatibility, but also something to their understanding of each other’s thinking. A. P. Elagina, mother of the two Slavophile Kireevskii brothers, who met Lermontov in Moscow in 1841 and found him unlikeable, partly because he failed to share her enthusiasm for Zhukovskii, nevertheless remarked to Viskovatov: “It’s a pity that Lermontov never became closely acquainted with my son Petr [known chiefly as a collector of Russian folk poetry] — they had certain opinions in common.”¹⁵⁵ Lermontov was no Slavophile (an ideology deeply indebted to German philosophical thought). He was also, versed though he was in three European literatures, no believer in the West European way. Above all, he was passionately Russian. This is probably one of the surest keys to his poetic personality.

“In our journal,” he tells Kraevskii, “we will not offer the public anything in translation, but our own work. I undertake to provide something original for each issue — not like Zhukovskii, who always feeds them on translations, and then to boot doesn’t say where he’s getting them from.” Still, Lermontov learned a lot from Zhukovskii about poetic technique, especially about the narrative poem and the ballad. The two men saw each other frequently and got on well. Zhukovskii had helped to have *Pesnia pro tsaria Ivana Vasil’evicha* passed by the censor, and he had been one of those to intercede for Lermontov in 1840 when he had been exiled the second time. No malice or hostility is therefore to be read into Lermontov’s comments. The two poets belonged to different generations (Zhukovskii was born 1783, and incidentally Elagina in 1789) and were indeed far apart in *Weltanschauung*.¹⁵⁶

As the days passed, Lermontov shifted back and forth between pessimism and optimism. Would “one deferment after another” eventually lead to retirement?¹⁵⁷ On or about April 11, early in the morning, Lermontov was awakened and told to report immediately to General Kleinmikhel. Kleinmikhel informed him that his leave was over and that he had 48 hours to leave the capital. According to Viskovatov, this was “on the insistence of Count Benkendorf, who was displeased by the attempts to have Lermontov pardoned and allowed to retire.”¹⁵⁸ Gershtein believes that the order was initiated by the Tsar himself. Lermontov’s leave had been extended once beyond the early March 9 deadline, and Lermontov was probably, by April 11, overstaying a sec-

¹⁵⁴ Lermontov mentions the appeal of Eastern ways of thought in his 1840 *Valerik*.

¹⁵⁵ Viskovatov 1987, 325.

¹⁵⁶ Viskovatov 1987, 324-25. Lermontov also talked to Count V. A. Sollogub (author of, among other things, *Bol'shoi svet* (*High Society*) which satirized Lermontov) about a journal which they planned to publish together when he returned from the Caucasus. “Iz vospominanii.” *LVVS*, 268-71.

¹⁵⁷ Viskovatov, 330-33.

¹⁵⁸ Viskovatov, 331.

ond deadline in the hope of being among those to be “pardoned” on April 16 when the Tsarevich, the future Alexander II, was to be wed.¹⁵⁹

Whoever the initiator of the 48-hour order, it was not to be trifled with. On April 12 there was a farewell party for Lermontov at the Karamzin home. And at about 8 A.M. on April 14 Lermontov left Petersburg for the last time, en route for Moscow, and from Moscow for the Caucasus. Rostopchina’s sensitive pen captures some of the atmosphere prevailing at the poet’s departure. In 1858, on the eve of her death from cancer, she wrote an excellent summation of Lermontov’s life and death for Alexandre Dumas père, who was visiting Russia at the time:

Lermontov did not want to leave at all, he had all sorts of bad premonitions. Finally, around the end of April or the beginning of May we all met for the farewell supper to wish him bon voyage. I was one of the last to shake his hand. There had been three of us together at supper, at a small table, Lermontov and some friend who also died a violent death in the last war. Throughout the entire supper and the ensuing farewells Lermontov spoke incessantly about the death which soon awaited him. I tried to hush him, to laugh at his apparently unfounded presentiments, but I couldn’t help being affected by them and they made my heart sink. Two months later they came to pass, and for the second time a pistol shot had robbed Russia of a precious life which was our national pride. Worst of all, on this occasion the blow came from the hand of a friend.¹⁶⁰

A number of others reported Lermontov’s premonitions as well.¹⁶¹

Lermontov apparently arrived in Moscow on the evening of April 17. He spent about 5 or 6 days there, leaving around April 23. He made the rounds of Moscow friends and relatives and was warmly received. The most important event of this last Moscow stay was Lermontov’s meeting the German poet, Friedrich Bodenstedt, whom he saw on two occasions. The acquaintance was not in itself important, but gains importance because Bodenstedt recorded his impressions of these two meetings in an articulate and compelling manner, demonstrating admirably Lermontov’s volatility and the contradictory effects he could produce on new acquaintances. Friedrich Bodenstedt (1819-1892) was a relatively minor German poet, but was to earn the gratitude of Russian literati by translating works by Derzhavin, Zhukovskii, Batiushkov, Pushkin, Kol’tsov, Fet and others, including Lermontov, into German. In 1841, he still knew little Russian. He was 22 years old. This is what he wrote later, in 1852:

.... I was dining with Pavel Olsuf’ev, a very intelligent young man, at a French restaurant.... We were joined during dinner by several more acquaintances.... We were already drinking champagne....

“Ah, Mikhail Iur’evich!” called out two or three of my companions looking at a young officer who had just entered.

He greeted them with a short “Good evening,” patted Olsuf’ev lightly on the shoulder and, turning to the prince [A. I. Vasil’chikov], said: “Well, how are you doing, clever fellow? (*umnik*)”

¹⁵⁹ Gershtein 1964, 107-108.

¹⁶⁰ See Sushkova, 352-353. The original French is in *Russkaia starina*, 1882, kn. 9, 615-20. It first appeared in 1859 in *Le Caucase, journal de voyages et de romans*, No. 19, 147-50.

¹⁶¹ E.g. Iu. F. Samarin and former fellow cadet P. A. Gvozdev; see A. S. Andreev-Krivich, *Vsevedenie poeta* (M.: “Sovetskaia Rossiia,” 1978), 218.

The newcomer had a proud, natural (*neprinuzhdennaia*) bearing, was of medium height, and was remarkably supple in his movements. On entering he pulled out his handkerchief to wipe off his wet moustache, and dropped his wallet or cigar case; he bent down to pick it up with such agility as though he were boneless, although his shoulders and chest were fairly broad.

His straight, fair hair, curling slightly on both sides, left completely visible his unusually high forehead. His large, pensive eyes had no part in the derisive smile playing on the handsomely shaped lips.

He was not in dress uniform: a black kerchief was carelessly knotted round his neck; his military coat was not new and not fastened all the way up, revealing underwear of a dazzling whiteness. He was wearing no epaulettes.

We had been speaking French up to then, and Olsuf'ev introduced me to the newcomer in French. After exchanging a few phrases with me, the officer sat down with us to dine. In selecting dishes and talking to the waiters, he used expressions which were much used by many — perhaps all — Russians, but which on the lips of the newcomer struck me unpleasantly. Unpleasantly because this was none other than Mikhail Lermontov.

During the meal I noticed that Lermontov did not conceal his soft, well tended hands under the table. After tasting some of the dishes and drinking off two glasses of wine he became very talkative, and, I presume, very witty since his words were several times interrupted by loud laughter. Unfortunately, his sallies remained incomprehensible for me because he was purposely talking Russian, and talking extremely fast, and at that time I did not understand Russian well enough to follow the conversation. I noticed too that his witticisms were often personal; but after being skilfully rebuffed a couple of times by Olsuf'ev, he decided it would be better to make only the young prince his target.

For a while the prince good-naturedly absorbed Lermontov's gibes; but finally he'd had enough, and he checked Lermontov's onslaught with dignity, saying that limited though his intellect might be, he had the same sort of heart as everyone else.

Lermontov appeared to be genuinely vexed at having offended the prince, and he did everything possible to make his peace with him — peace being quickly effected.

At the time I already knew and loved Lermontov because of the collection of his poems which had come out in 1840. But that evening he produced such an unfavorable impression that I lost all desire to get to know him better. The entire conversation, from the moment he arrived, sounded in my ears like someone scraping on glass.

I had never been able, the loss being perhaps mine, to make the first step to get closer to a provocative person, whatever his station in society. I was never able to forgive the excesses of well-known people and men of genius just on the grounds of their being well-known and possessing genius. I had often had occasion to observe that it is possible to be a real scholar, poet or writer and at the same time a socially unbearable person. As a rule I base my opinion of people on the first impression; but in Lermontov's case my first, unpleasant impression was soon completely effaced by a good impression.

Only one evening later, meeting Lermontov again at Madame M.'s salon, I was able to see him in the most attractive light. Lermontov knew very well how to make himself charming.

When he gave himself over to someone, it was wholeheartedly; only that didn't happen often. His closest and most firmly established bond of friendship was with the intelligent Countess Rostopchina, who could therefore better than anyone else give a true understanding of his character.

But people who knew him insufficiently well to forgive him his shortcomings in deference to his noble, endearing qualities were repulsed rather than attracted by him because he gave all too free rein to his somewhat caustic wit. However, he could at the same time be gentle and tender as a child, and the prevailing trait in his character was a pensive, often melancholy temper.

Serious thought was a dominant characteristic of his noble face, as well as of all his more significant works, to which his light, jocular works are related in the same way as his contemptuous, delicately formed mouth was related to his large, thoughtful eyes.

Many of Lermontov's fellow countrymen shared his Promethean lot, but in none of them did sufferings produce the same precious tears, which in life afforded him relief and gave him after death a never fading crown of glory.¹⁶²

Bodenstedt's account shows considerable power of observation and understanding, and his experiences of Lermontov must have struck a chord with other contemporaries who had witnessed at first hand the extremes of conduct to which Lermontov was prone.

While in Moscow, Lermontov uttered a significant pronouncement on the state of Russia, during a visit to his good friend Samarin, who reports as follows: "Worst of all is not the fact that a number of people are patiently suffering, but the fact that a vast number of people are suffering without realizing it."¹⁶³

Lermontov was to travel to the Caucasus with his cousin and comrade of old, Aleksei Arkad'evich (Mongo) Stolypin. Mongo had been Lermontov's second in the duel with de Barranté. He had on his own initiative confessed his role to Benkendorf and had not been punished. The same imperial order of April 13, 1840, which transferred Lermontov to the Tenginskii infantry regiment, decreed that Retired Lieutenant Stolypin be absolved of responsibility, but it conveyed the imperial opinion that "given his rank and age it is useful to serve and not be idle."¹⁶⁴ Stolypin had accordingly returned to active service. He had, like Lermontov, been on leave in Petersburg, and had also been ordered by the Tsar to return to the Caucasus.¹⁶⁵ For some reason, Stolypin left Moscow about one day ahead of Lermontov, who caught up with him in Tula. They were now on their way to Stavropol' and the Caucasus.

It remains to add one rather sorrowful footnote to the episode. Lermontov's request to retire having been turned down, the extended leave had been granted instead, as a concession, a compassionate leave, to visit with his ailing grandmother. Thus Arsen'eva became officially the main purpose and justification of his coming to Petersburg. But they never saw each other. The bad state of the roads prevented Arsen'eva from traveling to the capital. So, in fact, the last time Arsen'eva ever saw her grandson was in May, 1840. She arrived in Petersburg shortly after his departure.

¹⁶² Essentially the same passages are found in Viskovatov 1987, 334-36; and *LVVS*, 288-91.

¹⁶³ E.g., *Letopis'*, 156-57.

¹⁶⁴ *Letopis'*, 125.

¹⁶⁵ Viskovatov, 451, note 46.

VII. The Second Duel

Lermontov and Stolypin arrived in Stavropol' on May 9. The going had been very slow because of the condition of the roads.¹⁶⁶ The town was full of wounded officers. Lermontov was to be sent once more to the left flank to take part in an "expedition."¹⁶⁷ The imperial order tethering Lermontov to his regiment, cited above, was not sent by Kleinmikhel until June 30.¹⁶⁸ It seemed that Lermontov could expect action and responsibilities similar to those he had encountered the previous fall. But for the immediate future, Lermontov had other plans. He induced an apparently reluctant Stolypin to go to Piatigorsk. There they busied themselves with getting medical attestations and then found a modest but eminently decent little house which they rented.¹⁶⁹

The two of them then settled comfortably into the social routine of the watering-place. With their medical certificates, they knew they would not be sent to front-line duty overnight. Something of the state of limbo between permanence and transience is conveyed in a June 28 letter from Lermontov to his grandmother, a letter which also reveals some of his immediate plans for reading. It is also the last letter he wrote which has been preserved:

I am writing you from Piatigorsk where I am again and where I'll spend some time resting. I received your three letters all together, and also the paper from Stepan [the steward at Tarkhany] about the sale of the serfs, which has to be witnessed and signed here; I'll do that and send it off. I'm really sorry that you didn't send on Countess Rostopchina's book [of her poems]. Please send it at once here to Piatigorsk. Also, dear Grandma, please buy the last edition of Zhukovkii's complete works and send it here at once. I'd ask you also for a complete Shakespeare, in English, but I don't know if it's to be found in Petersburg; have Ekim [A.P. Shan-Girei] look for it. Only please as soon as possible; if it's soon, I'll still be here to receive it....

The rest of this revealing letter concerns the chances of success of a request to retire (VI, 461-462).

On July 8 a highly successful ball was given by the young people taking the waters, and Lermontov played a leading part in organizing the event. All this came to a brutal and tragic end when on July 15 Lermontov was shot and killed in a duel with Retired Major Nikolai Solomonovich Martynov

This duel, almost no less than Pushkin's duel with d'Anthès, has given immense trouble to biographers. As with the Pushkin duel, all sorts of underlying causes have been advanced and charges preferred. In the name of fairness and to give to the reader all pertinent information, such theories will be mentioned briefly, but some of them deserve to be given very short shrift.

The conflict between Lermontov and Martynov arose from Martynov's unwillingness to put up with the ridicule Lermontov persisted in heaping on him. Lermontov's gibes were particularly painful to Martynov in the presence of the ladies, and he seems to have asked Lermontov to desist several times, to no avail. True, Martynov's fopperies made him an almost irresistibly inviting target, but his pain must have been that much greater. Martynov came from a Moscow family with land in the Penza area. They were acquainted with Lermontov's family, i.e.

¹⁶⁶ See his letter to Arsen'eva of May 9 or 10.

¹⁶⁷ *Letopis'*, 159.

¹⁶⁸ *Letopis'*, 163.

¹⁶⁹ This "*domik*" is now a Lermontov museum and is very well worth a visit in terms of gaining some degree of feeling for Lermontov and his work.

with Arsen'eva, before Lermontov and his grandmother moved to Moscow in 1827,¹⁷⁰ and their estate outside Moscow was close to Serebnikovo.¹⁷¹ Nikolai Martynov (1815-75) went through the cadet school in Petersburg with Lermontov, graduating in 1835, one year after the poet. His slightly older brother, Mikhail (1814-60), graduated in 1834 in Lermontov's class. There were at least four Martynov sisters: to one of them, back in Moscow, Lermontov had dedicated a New Year madrigal, part of his 1831 madrigal series. Another in the series had been written for Rostopchina (Dodo). Lermontov paid court to another Martynov sister, Natal'ia (born 1819), in 1837 and 1840 in Moscow, his affections being apparently reciprocated. These details establish Lermontov's fairly close acquaintance with the Martynov family.

Without being really close friends, Lermontov and Martynov had known each other for a number of years, getting along tolerably well. Certainly there had been no hint of the antagonism which was shortly to bring them to the barriers. Why did they quarrel now? The answer lies in the new environment in which they found themselves and, possibly but not certainly, in the disturbed state of Martynov's mind. Martynov was vain, egotistical, narcissistic, and attractive to women. He had come down to the Caucasus in 1837, certain that a brilliant military career awaited him. In February, 1841, he retired, apparently disillusioned, with the rank of major. Why he should have given up and retired so soon is not clear. He seems to have retired under a cloud.¹⁷² But in any case Piatigorsk was full of serving and wounded officers. To remain there when retirement had put him outside the reach of the dangers of war was foolish, a foolishness compounded by his affecting liberalism and wearing Circassian dress with an enormous Circassian dagger.¹⁷³ His very presence risked exposing him to hostility from active-duty officers. And his outré attire, so completely unrelated to anything he was or was not doing at the time, risked exposing him to the barbed sarcasms of any wit with an eye for the incongruous. Moreover, officers' social activities at the watering places were normally focused on women, so, predictably, any ridicule he attracted would take place before an audience of women. Finally, if Martynov had been obliged to retire under a cloud, or even if he was only deeply disappointed in the failure of his military career, he was presumably more than ordinarily thin-skinned at this juncture.

But these considerations do not excuse Lermontov. He cannot be said to have been purely unlucky, to have innocently run afoul of an aroused Martynov at a low point in the latter's life. Lermontov's own psychic problems played a role as well. There are two important factors to be considered. First, Lermontov was blatantly misbehaving and had succeeded in alienating a number of people who had not been predisposed against him. On the one hand, his witticisms could make him the life of the party. On the other, they could leave bruised feelings and earn him ill-will. Lermontov's Janus-like personality has already been presented, witness the episode with Vasil'chikov in a Moscow restaurant, followed by his penitent peacemaking. And we recall how

¹⁷⁰ Eikhenbaum, I, 499-500.

¹⁷¹ A. P. Kovalenko, L. N. Nazarova, V. B. Sandomirskaja, "Martynovy," *L. E.*, 272.

¹⁷² L. M. Arnshtein and V. A. Manuilov in "Duel' Lermontova s N. S. Martynovym," *L. E.*, 150, state that Martynov was "obliged" ("vynuzhden") to retire — but without explanation. The nearest I have been able to come to one is in Gershtein 1964, 401: "There are vague indications ("glukhie ukazaniia") that Martynov's retirement in February 1841 was brought about by some ugly episode relating to card playing." And (309) she speaks of his military career as having been "smashed" ("razbita"). Since these Russian scholars are obviously not unbiased, it is regrettable that they failed to lay out all the evidence.

¹⁷³ Martynov in all his glory may be seen in a drawing of him (by G. Gagarin?) reproduced in T. Ivanova, *Lermontov na Kavkaze* (M.: Detskaia literatura, 1968), 207.

the German poet, Bodenstedt, was repulsed by his behavior, only to be charmed by a very different Lermontov on the following day. Why, though, was the provocative Lermontov so clearly uppermost during these Piatigorsk days? Our answer is admittedly speculative, but it fits the situation. The Petersburg salons and the people like V.F. Odoevskii, Rostopchina, Smirnova and Sof'ia Karamzina, who frequented them and whom he respected, had a profound impact on Lermontov. Had all or some of these people been present in Piatigorsk, he would probably have been more restrained. But he had been torn away from them. The termination of his leave meant the interruption of his intercourse with literati he respected; and it meant an indefinite postponement of any plan to launch a journal and be a professional writer in the full sense. Perhaps he had been overly sanguine, but there had been times when he had really believed that he would be pardoned and allowed to retire. But this whole new beginning had been denied to him. Like Martynov, but for very different reasons, Lermontov had himself reached a low point in life. His response to disappointment seems to have been an aggravated petulance, which frequently expressed itself in caustic comments.

The other important factor is a constant which we have had occasion to note before. Physically Lermontov was not all that appealing to women. To some extent he tended to exaggerate the problem. He obviously could and did attract women; only, like the hero of his prose piece, *Shtoss*, he had to work at it. Martynov, despite his invidious position as an officer retired under a cloud, for all his emptiness, vanity, and foppishness, had success with women, doubtless a constant irritant to Lermontov. This underlying hostility is normally overlooked by commentators, at least in connection with Martynov. But it was not missed by Leonid Semenov. Semenov points out how Lermontov invests his male heroes with his own qualities, including his physical shortcomings. Thus, Vadim in the unfinished novel *Vadim* is ugly, a hunchback. He hates Iurii, because Iurii is handsome, but he can't help admiring his good looks. Pechorin in *The Princess Ligovskaia* is "not at all attractive"; he "admired the noble handsomeness of Krasinskii's face, but when the woman who had engaged all his thoughts and hopes paid particular attention to that handsomeness, he understood that she had unconsciously made a comparison which was devastating for him, and it almost seemed to him that he had for a second time lost her forever, and from that moment he started to hate Krasinskii." On Martynov, Semenov has the following perceptive insights: "One of the reasons for the differences between Lermontov and Martynov was the fact that the latter had greater success with women than did the poet. Martynov had a handsome face, was tall, well built, careful about clothes, and appealed to women. This wounded Lermontov's self-esteem, and he found a certain satisfaction in thinking up nicknames for his rival and drawing him as a freak."¹⁷⁴ Accepting Semenov's insight as valid, we see the assault of wit to which Lermontov subjected Martynov not as overboisterous, good-natured, childish playfulness, but as expressions of an underlying hostility.

These considerations, both those applying to Martynov and those applying to Lermontov, explain obviously and adequately the hostility between the two men. That it erupted in Martynov and persisted is due to the fact that in any verbal exchanges he was invariably bested and outmaneuvered by Lermontov, and Lermontov showed no sign of granting him peace. If Lermontov

¹⁷⁴ L. Semenov, *Lermontov i Lev Tolstoi* (Moscow, 1914), 187. A roughly similar line of thought; more bluntly, indeed cruelly expressed, comes from V. I. Annenkova, a very distant relation of Lermontov's by marriage: "He possessed a morbid sensitivity which caused him intense suffering. I believe that he could not adjust to the fact that he was not handsome, captivating, elegant. And this made his unhappiness. The soul of the poet did not feel at home in the short, stocky frame of a dwarf." "Iz vospominanii," *LVS*, 124.

disliked and to some extent feared Martynov's good looks, we can be sure that Martynov hated and feared Lermontov's caustic tongue.

Various possible contributing factors have been advanced. Both may have been pursuing Emiliia Aleksandrovna Klingenberg (1815-91), "the rose of the Caucasus," or her half-sister, Nadezhda Petrovna Verzilina (1826-63). This is possible. But if there is any truth in this suggestion, it would fuel same fire. Certainly, there was rivalry about who came off better in the eyes of the youthful members, especially the women, of the society which frequently met in the Verzilin home.¹⁷⁵ Another suggestion is that Martynov was defending the honor of his sister, Natal'ia Solomonovna, to whom Lermontov had been attracted, and whom Martynov allegedly thought had been portrayed in *Geroi nashego vremeni* as Princess Meri or even Vera. But if any such thought existed in Martynov's mind, it would have been quickly put to rest by Lermontov. Similarly, Martynov could, it is claimed, have seen himself as portrayed in the same novel as Grushnitskii. As Emma Gershtein comments: "This version cannot be upheld because of the chronology." But, she adds, "psychologically it is accurate."¹⁷⁶ Indeed, she is perfectly right. But Martynov would have felt no less tormented by Lermontov even if there had been no novel, and no Pechorin to torment Grushnitskii or mock his attire.

Another pretext for the duel has been seen in an episode going back to 1837. The Martynov family had entrusted to Lermontov a package of letters for Martynov. Being interested in their opinion of him, perhaps especially in Natal'ia's, Lermontov allegedly unsealed the package. He found in it 300 roubles for Nikolai, which he gave to him, saying that the package had been stolen. But Lermontov was highly intelligent, and 300 roubles was not a huge sum for either of them. If he really had unsealed the package and discovered the 300 roubles, the lesser evil would have been simply to keep it and say the package was stolen. Martynov's mother, in a letter written in that year, voices her suspicion that Lermontov opened the package. We do not know whether this matter was ever resolved, or even if Lermontov was ever aware of the mother's suspicion. Certainly, we have no conclusive indication as to whether Lermontov did or did not unseal the package. But by 1840 his relationship to the family was basically a good one. In an 1840 letter from Martynov's mother in Moscow, she tells her son that Lermontov is a frequent visitor and that she finds his visits unpleasant because of his "cruel tongue." She also reports that the two unmarried daughters, Natal'ia and Iuliia, find "great pleasure in his company."¹⁷⁷ The episode of the package must be dismissed as a factor bearing on the 1841 events. Moreover, P. I. Magdenko, whom Lermontov and Stolypin had met for the first time on the way to and who arrived with them in Piatigorsk, reports Lermontov's obvious pleasure on hearing that Martynov is in Piatigorsk: "Rubbing his hands with pleasure, Lermontov said to Stolypin: 'And Martyshka, Martyshka is here. I've told Naitaki [the innkeeper] to send for him'."¹⁷⁸

The theory that the duel was the result of a deliberate plot persists, taking different forms. It can implicate directly or indirectly the Tsar. Benkendorf and War Minister Aleksandr Ivanovich Chernyshev (1785/6-1857) may play larger or smaller roles. Or, making the plot a less organized affair, elements in Piatigorsk high-society are said to have urged Martynov on, impelled themselves by the thought that they were rendering a service which would be acknowledged with gratitude by highly-placed persons in the capital.

¹⁷⁵ Shchegolev, II, 218-19; L. M. Arnshtein, V. A. Manuilov, "Duel' Lermontova s N. S. Martynovym," *L. E.*, 151.

¹⁷⁶ Gershtein 1964, 401.

¹⁷⁷ Gershtein, "Lermontov i semeistvo Martynovykh," *LN*, 45-46.

¹⁷⁸ *LVVS*, 305. Also Viskovatov 1987, 340.

There are several reasons for profound skepticism. First, Martynov needed no urging; his cup had overflowed. Secondly, dueling was at the time so much a criminal act that it is highly unlikely that people would crowd in with advice and encouragement before the event, thus making themselves accessories, or that they even knew what was afoot, since the protagonists and their seconds would for the same reasons have been bound to keep quiet about their plans. Lermontov had certainly aroused enough ill-will for Martynov to be able to count on sympathy, but that is far removed from cold-blooded plotting. He could also probably count on a measure of official lenience, but no more.

As to the more serious charges of deliberate plotting by officials, the facts are as follows. There was security surveillance in Piatigorsk at the time, but not specifically brought in for Lermontov's benefit. Reporting to Benkendorf was Lieutenant-Colonel A.N. Kushinnikov (1799-1860), who had been ordered to Piatigorsk in April; i.e., before Lermontov himself had any idea he would be going to Piatigorsk. Reporting to Grabbe in Stavropol', and ultimately to Chernyshev in Petersburg, was Grabbe's Chief of Staff, Aleksandr Semenovich Traskin (1804-55). Grabbe himself was extremely well-disposed toward Lermontov. Through Grabbe, with whom Traskin was on terms of friendship, the latter was brought into contact with followers of the "disgraced" ("*opal'nyi*") Ermolov. Through Petersburg literary ties he knew at least Lermontov's name as a poet, had been involved in forwarding recommendations for Lermontov's decoration, met the poet personally at Grabbe's home in Stavropol', and had been instrumental in sanctioning Lermontov's and Stolypin's Piatigorsk sojourn. He arrived in Piatigorsk on July 12, and news of the duel took him by surprise.¹⁷⁹

On July 16 he sent a telegram informing Chernyshev of the duel and of Lermontov's death. He also influenced the activity and composition of the commission of inquiry, making Kushinnikov a member. Any omissions in the commission's findings seem to have been motivated by the desire of its members to mitigate the guilt of those involved in the duel; thus, of the four seconds, two never reported their participation. The commission passed over this in silence, although commission members must have known they were involved. Other inaccuracies can be attributed to the accounts given by the three participants who remained to testify: Martynov and the two admitted seconds.

To return to Kushinnikov and Traskin, the former of whom sent his report to Benkendorf and the latter to Grabbe. In their well documented, carefully weighed, and commendably objective article "Duel' Lermontova s N. S. Martynovym" ("Duel Between Lermontov and N. S. Martynov"), L. M. Arnshtein and Manuilov evaluate these reports, which, by their confidential nature, could be expected to be more outspoken than documents destined for public reading. Of Kushinnikov's report: "no indications of the existence of a plot can be extracted from these materials." Of Traskin's report to Grabbe, they say: "His letter not only does not provide grounds for accusing Traskin of plotting, but rather provides evidence of the Chief of Staff's sympathy for a young officer who, incidentally, with his, Traskin's, written authorization was not then under enemy fire in the Tenginskii regiment, but undergoing treatment in Piatigorsk."¹⁸⁰ Helen Michailoff's "The Death of Lermontov" (The Poet and the Tsar) is another article which introduces some very salutary common sense into this vexed question.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ A. V. Shishkin, "Traskin," *L. E.*, 579.

¹⁸⁰ *L. E.*, 151.

¹⁸¹ *Russian Literature Triquarterly*, 1974, No. 10, 279-97.

The eruption which led to the duel came on the evening of July 13 at the Verzilin home, where, as so often, the young people had congregated to enjoy each other's company. E. A. Klingenberg, the hostess's daughter, describes the scene as follows:

... M <ikhail> Iu <revich> promised not to make me angry any more [with his sarcastic humor], and after waltzing, we sat down to converse peacefully. We were joined by L. S. Pushkin [Pushkin's younger brother], who also had a sharp tongue, and the two of them went at it vying with each other in caustic wit... Nothing very bad was said, and they were very funny; but then they caught sight of Martynov talking very pleasantly to my younger sister Nadezhda; he was standing by the piano at which Prince Trubetskoi was playing. Lermontov couldn't contain himself and started to exercise his wit at Martynov's expense, calling him "montagnard au grand poignard" ("mountain man with the big dagger") (Martynov was wearing a Circassian coat and a dagger of enormous proportions). It just had to happen that when Trubetskoi struck the final chord the word "poignard" ("dagger") carried across the whole drawing room. Martynov turned pale, bit his lips, and his eyes flashed anger; he approached us and in a very controlled voice said to Lermontov: "How many times have I asked you not to joke in front of the ladies," and turned away and walked off so quickly that Lermontov had no time to collect himself. I said: "my tongue is my worst enemy," and he calmly responded: "It's nothing; tomorrow we'll be good friends again." The dancing went on, and I thought that that was the end of the quarrel. Next day Lermontov and Stolypin were due to go to Zheleznovodsk. I was told later that on the way out from our place, in the entrance hall, Martynov repeated what he'd said, whereupon Lermontov asked: "What, do you want to challenge me to a duel for that?" and Martynov replied firmly: "Yes, I do," and they fixed the time then and there. All their comrades' attempts to bring about reconciliation proved vain. It's true, Lermontov had really been getting under Martynov's skin with his gibes; he had an album of drawings depicting Martynov in all sorts of guises and poses.¹⁸²

On the following day, July 14, Lermontov went, as he often did, to nearby Zheleznovodsk. On the morning of July 15, his distant cousin, Ekaterina Grigor'evna Bykhovets (1820-80), paid him a visit. She came in a carriage with her aunt, accompanied by L. S. Pushkin, A. P. Benkendorf (a cousin of the Third Department chief), and M. V. Dmitrevskii, a civil servant from Tiflis, the three men on horseback. They had left at 6 A.M., and breakfasted on the way, making a journey of 14 versts or a little more than 9 miles. Lermontov had most insistently asked Bykhovets to come. They all walked in the woods, she arm in arm with her cousin. "In front of the whole company," she later recalled,

he was cheerful and joking, but alone with me he was very sad... but the idea of a duel never occurred to me. I had known the cause of his sorrow (i.e. his love for Lopukhina) and I thought that this was the same on that day, so I tried to persuade and console him as well as I could, and with tear-filled eyes he thanked me for coming and begged me to come to his place to eat, but I refused; we all started back, and he came with us.

Halfway back to Piatigorsk they ate, and then on parting

he kissed my hand several times and said: 'Cousin, dearest one, there will never again in my life be a happier moment than this.' I was still laughing at him. And so we left. That

¹⁸² *Letopis'*, 165; Shchegolev, II, 201-3.

was at 5 o'clock, and at eight we were told that he was dead.... You won't believe how his death distressed me, even now I can't bear to think of it....¹⁸³

Lermontov's mood seems to have vacillated during the day: at times he cannot have believed the duel would really take place, at other times he was in the throes of ugly forebodings. He was very strongly attracted to Bykhovets, to whom he addressed one of his last lyrics, *Net, ne tebia tak pylko ia liubliu* ("No, it's not you whom I love so ardently"). As Bykhovets comments in the same August 5, 1841, letter cited above: "he was passionately in love with V. A. Bakhmet'eva (Varvara Lopukhina); she was his cousin; I think he loved me too because he could see a similarity in us, and his favorite conversation was about her."

The duel took place about four versts out of Piatigorsk, at the foot of Mashuk, in a clearing just off the road to Shotlandka at about 7 o'clock in the evening. Lermontov was wounded in the right side, the bullet passing through his body and out (*navylet*). He never regained consciousness and died at the scene of the duel. At about the time of the duel a very heavy storm broke, with torrential rain. One of the seconds, Vasil'chikov, galloped into town to bring a doctor. But two doctors refused because of the heavy downpour. Two other seconds rode into town to get transport; they also had trouble, but eventually managed to get the use of a droshky, and Lermontov's body was brought into town fairly late at night, and taken into the house he was sharing with Stolypin.

There is a great deal that is unclear. In part, this stems from the efforts of Martynov and the four witnesses to minimize their guilt. First, only two of the four reported having acted as seconds: Mikhail Pavlovich Glebov (1819-47) and Prince Aleksandr Illarionovich Vasil'chikov (1818-81). Glebov had been severely wounded at the River Valerik in the same battle in which Lermontov fought. He was killed in action in 1847. Vasil'chikov was probably a member of the "Circle of Sixteen" in Petersburg. He was Lermontov's second, though the close relations among all those involved blurred somewhat the normally clear distinction of who acted as whose second. Indeed, in an 1841 letter Glebov names himself as Lermontov's second.¹⁸⁴ The other two witnesses were Mongo Stolypin (1816-58), cousin and long-time friend, member of the "Circle of Sixteen," and Prince Sergei Vasil'evich Trubetskoi (1815-59), possibly a member of the "Circle of Sixteen," who had campaigned in 1840 with Lermontov and Glebov and, like the latter, been wounded at the Valerik. He was in disfavor with Nicholas I, who struck his name along with Lermontov's from the list of those recommended for decorations. After the duel, Traskin sent him out of Piatigorsk. The strong ties of friendship between Mongo and Lermontov were, according to some commentators, weakening at the time of the latter's death. Had it not been for Lermontov, Mongo would not have been forced back into service by the Tsar. But more importantly, while the two had been perfect foils for each other in their early escapades and hussar exploits, by 1840-41 each was beginning to find himself, and they were growing apart. Stolypin and Trubetskoi had both incurred imperial displeasure, and by acting as seconds they risked more severe penalties than did Glebov or Vasil'chikov, which is presumably why their participation in the duel was suppressed.¹⁸⁵

The conditions for the duel were altered to obscure the fact that they were calculated to produce a bloody outcome: the barriers were said to have been at fifteen paces, whereas they were probably at ten paces, as in the Pushkin-d'Anthès duel; and the investigating commission was not told that up to three shots would be allowed to each of the two adversaries. This last ap-

¹⁸³ *LVVS*, 346-48.

¹⁸⁴ "Duel' Lermontova s N. S. Martynovym," *L. E.*, 152.

¹⁸⁵ S.I. Nedumov, *Lermontovskii Piatigorsk* (Stavropol', 1971).

peared in Martynov's rough draft of his testimony. After reading it, Glebov wrote him: "I must however tell you that I tried to persuade you to agree to less severe conditions.... For now at least don't mention the three shots; but if later there is a question on that point, then there's nothing to be done: you will have to tell the whole truth." The specific question was in fact not asked.¹⁸⁶

We do not even know exactly what took place during the duel proper. Did Lermontov fire or did he not? Traskin, who personally interrogated Glebov and Vasil'chikov before the commission went to work, reported to Grabbe: "Lermontov said that he would not fire and would await Martynov's shot."¹⁸⁷ Vasil'chikov declared that some time after the duel he had fired Lermontov's still loaded pistol, a normal enough safety precaution. Meanwhile, the rumor was rampant in Piatigorsk that Lermontov had categorically refused to fire at Martynov and had fired in the air. Whether he fired or not, Lermontov's manner of proceeding seems to indicate that he had no intention of aiming at Martynov. The angle at which Martynov's bullet passed through Lermontov's body shows, according to medical experts, that he was presenting his right side to his opponent in the normal dueling stance but leaning back toward his left side, i.e. that he had his right arm raised pointing upward, and that therefore at the moment he was shot, he had either just fired over Martynov into the air or was preparing to do so. This gives rise to the most serious charge that can be leveled against Martynov as a human being. It seems nearly certain, though the seconds did not express it, but rather did what they could to conceal it, that Martynov took aim at Lermontov and fired, knowing that Lermontov was not aiming at him, and had either just fired in the air or was clearly about to do so.¹⁸⁸

According to some testimony, not necessarily reliable, Lermontov was still alive in the droshky, and actually expired on the way back to Piatigorsk.¹⁸⁹

Dueling was considered a crime on a par with suicide, which meant problems about the burial and the burial service. One priest refused to participate and then put in a report against his fellow churchman, who had with difficulty been persuaded to accompany the body to the grave. The Decembrist N. I. Lorer describes the situation as follows: "In accordance with the law, the priest wanted to refuse to accompany the poet's remains. But he gave in, and the burial was carried out with all the Christian rites and military rituals. In sorrow we lowered the coffin into the grave, tearfully flung in our handfuls of earth, and it was over."¹⁹⁰ Additional details are given by Emilia Klingenberg:

Next day, when everyone had collected together for the funeral service, we had to wait a long time for the priest, who agreed only with great reluctance to bury Lermontov, yielding to the persuasive and insistent requests of Prince Vasil'chikov and others — and only on condition that there be no music and no parade. Finally, Father Pavel arrived, but seeing the musicians waiting outside, at once turned back; the musicians were immediately dispersed, but then it took a great deal of effort to get Father Pavel back. Finally, everything was settled, the service was held, and the dead man was accompanied to the burial ground; the coffin was carried by his comrades; there was a large crowd, and they all fol-

¹⁸⁶ *L. E.*, 152, quoting from *Russkii arkhiv*, 1872, No. 1, 211, and from *Russkii arkhiv*, 1893, No. 8, 600.

¹⁸⁷ V. E. Vatsuro, "Novye materialy o dueli i smerti Lermontova," *Russkaia literatura*. 1974, No. 1, 124-25.

¹⁸⁸ *L. E.*, 153.

¹⁸⁹ Shchegolev, II, 217.

¹⁹⁰ Shchegolev, II, 223.

lowed the coffin in a sort of reverential silence. This surprised me: they didn't all know him and not all of them liked him!¹⁹¹

Lorer's report picks up on the military aspect: "Representatives of all the regiments in which Lermontov had willingly or unwillingly served during his short life were present to render the last honors to the poet and comrade.... We carried the coffin on our shoulders out of the house [Lermontov's body was not permitted inside the church] to a remote grave site in the cemetery, on the lower slopes of Mashuk."¹⁹²

At Arsen'eva's request, Lermontov was disinterred, brought home to Tarkhany and, on April 23, 1842, buried there beside his mother.

Elizaveta Alekseevna Arsen'eva had had much sorrow to experience in her personal life: her husband had committed suicide; her daughter had died very young of consumption; and now her grandson, also very young, had died in a foolish duel. Elizaveta Alekseevna herself died in 1845 and was buried in the same vault as her grandson.

Martynov died in 1875. The military court recommended that he be deprived of his ranks and of his property rights, but, following a time-honored Russian procedure, the sentence was reduced by the Tsar to three months in the guard house in the fortress at Kiev, and then that he be committed to clerical penitence. Martynov requested clemency, and the Holy Synod reduced the penitence from 15 to 5 years. And in 1846 Martynov was completely absolved of *epitimesis* (censure).

Vasil'chikov was pardoned on the grounds of his father's distinguished services to Russia, Glebov out of respect for the severe wound he had received at the Valerik. Mongo Stolypin and Trubetskoi would certainly not have escaped that lightly: Trubetskoi was in disfavor, and, strictly speaking, he had no right to be in Piatigorsk, since he was not officially on leave; as for Stolypin, he had already once before been faulted for acting as Lermontov's second.

The reticence of Martynov and of the four seconds does not of course help us to resolve the question of whether it was a fair duel, which seems unlikely; a killing; or a reluctant suicide, the two latter possibilities being by no means mutually exclusive.

¹⁹¹ Shchegolev, II, 224. According to Shchegolev it was Stolypin who persuaded the priest. Traskin has also been mentioned in this connection.

¹⁹² Shchegolev, II, 223.

CHAPTER I

Early Lyrics (1828-1835)

1

First let us describe the critical approach to Lermontov's lyric output used here. I take the primary task of any critic whose goal is interpretation to be scrutinizing the texts and, to the best of one's ability, separating the good from the bad, the wheat from the chaff. We then focus attention on the wheat, not forgetting that wheat and chaff are organically linked, and that therefore we are not at liberty to ignore the chaff entirely. Focusing nevertheless with greater deliberation on the wheat, we then attempt to sort out its best qualities, to explain, to interpret, to make accessible to all what we take to be the more noteworthy features, esthetic or literary-historic.

These general objectives can be applied equally to any genre in which Lermontov, or any other writer from Homer to Hamsun, has written. But they are especially relevant to developing a perspective on the relationship between Lermontov's early and later lyric output. It is generally accepted that Lermontov's lyrics can be divided into two main periods: 1828-1835 and 1836-1841 or 1828-1836 and 1837-1841.¹ The earlier period is held to be one of immaturity and apprenticeship, the second period one of outstanding achievement. Lermontov himself would seem to have endorsed this downplaying of his early lyrics, since in his first and only published book of poetry (*Stikhotvoreniia*, 1840) he included nothing that was written before 1836.²

The accepted division of Lermontov's lyric into early and late, immature and mature, and Lermontov's own apparent endorsement of such a division do not, however, justify dismissal of the early period. The practice of printing first Lermontov's lyrics starting from 1837 and then picking up at 1828 and proceeding through 1836 is a reprehensible one. It has the effect of

¹The years 1833-35, included in the early period, yield negligible lyric output. Not more than ten, probably fewer, lyrics can be attributed to these three years — as against 51 for 1832. The abrupt "lyric silence" or near silence is explained, in part, by his two-year exposure to the Philistine rigors of the cadet school in Petersburg, and in part, by his heavy involvement and experimentation in prose and drama.

²In fact, the only pre-1836 lyrics published in his lifetime were *Vesna* ("Spring") (1830) in *Atenei* (1830, Part 4, 113), and *Angel* (1831) published in *Odesskii al'manakh na 1840*. (Odessa, 1839), 702-3. For those consulting Eikhenbaum's five-volume *Academia* edition, Eikhenbaum (I, 506) correctly gives the second publication of *Vesna* as 1843 but has simply overlooked its first 1830 appearance. The dating of *Rusalka* ("The Water-Nymph") is debatable. In his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia* Lermontov dated it 1836. Eikhenbaum (*Academia* II, 164-66) followed Lermontov's dating. But he voiced at that time his suspicion that *Rusalka* properly belonged to Lermontov's 1832 ballad cycle. The discovery of the so-called "Kazan" notebook proves him right. However, minor changes made by Lermontov at some time before submitting *Rusalka* to *Otechestvennye zapiski* in 1839 may have been made in 1836. See Eikhenbaum, *Academia* II, 164-66; *Sobranie sochinenii v 4 tomakh* (M.: Khud. lit., 1983), I, 391. This latter edition and the six-volume Academy edition (*Ak. nauk*) put *Rusalka* under 1832.

It seems ironic that what is Lermontov's best known lyric today, his 1832 *Parus* ("The Sail"), remained unknown during his lifetime; it was first published in 1841 in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, v. 18, No. 10, III, 161.

picking up at 1828 and proceeding through 1836 is a reprehensible one. It has the effect of relegating his early lyrics to the status of an appendix. For better or worse, and in some instances very much for the better, these lyrics are a part of his literary corpus, and should be acknowledged as such. True, some of these early lyrics are unredeemably bad. Lermontov was aware of this: he labeled his 1829 *Pis'mo* ("The Letter") nonsense ("*Eto vzdor*"). But good or bad, these early poems are interesting for what they tell us of Lermontov's point of lyric departure in terms of the formal aspects of his verse, points of poetic reference and allusion, influences, themes, and outlook on life. Furthermore, downplaying the early lyrics (which outnumber the later lyrics by a ratio approaching three to one) means obscuring the development of his lyric, for there is in the so-called mature period almost nothing for which an embryo in the earlier period cannot be found. Finally, the date of a poem does not always serve as a reliable measure of quality. For while in the later period most, but not all, is gold, there are among the often mediocre poems of the early period a number of lyrics of very high quality. For example, *Nishchii* ("The Beggar") (1830) and *Parus* ("The Sail") (1832).³

None of this meddling with chronological order occurs, as far as I am aware, in editions of Pushkin's works. And the fact that it does not occur with Pushkin and does occur with Lermontov is revealing for what it tells us of the very different lines of development of the two poets. The following excellent comparison made by P. Bitsilli points directly to this difference and helps us assess much of what Lermontov wrote:

Lermontov's youthful verses are a torture to read en masse. They seem just plain ugly. One has the impression that for Lermontov the immense artistic movement from Lomonosov to Pushkin had never taken place, as though before Lermontov no one had ever tried to write Russian verse. But that is an illusion. Lermontov's youthful verses really are heavy, often extraordinarily clumsy and somehow naively constructed, rough, tiresome. But that is by no means always the case. We are being too critically severe, because one forgets that they were written by a boy of 14 or 15: they are so unchildish, so serious, so profound, they possess such enormous spiritual power.... With Pushkin [from the start]there is, maybe, no absolutely bad verse....but until the end of his lycee period there is also no absolutely good verse: Pushkin's esthetic development was a steady process which kept pace, neither lagging behind nor running ahead of the development of his soul. Lermontov, while still no more than a child, wrote "*Nishchii*" ("The Beggar," 1830), "*Angel*" (1831), "*Nebo i zvezdy*" ("The Sky and Stars," 1831).... Therefore, the idea of poetic development, applied to Lermontov, acquires a very special meaning.

Lermontov progressed only in his ability to govern himself, his inspiration, his creative power....His own *individual* style made its appearance from the very moment he started to write. His "*The Beggar*" and "*The Angel*" [1830, 1831] are in no way inferior

³ The practice of printing first the 1837-41 lyrics and then the 1828-36 early lyrics is followed in various *Khudozhestvennaia literatura* editions between 1948 and 1984, most recently in the otherwise excellent *Khudozhestvennaia literatura* edition of 1983-84. This practice was not followed in, e.g., Abramovich's 1910-13 five-volume edition, nor in Eikhenbaum's 1936-37 five-volume *Academia* edition, nor yet in the 1954-57 *Academy* six-volume edition. Nor, for the reason given in our text, is it an acceptable procedure either for the lyrics or for the other three genres into which Lermontov's works are traditionally divided.

to "Son" ["The Dream," 1841] or "Spor" ["The Quarrel," 1841]....He [Lermontov] was so to speak born in full armor....⁴

Our argument against relegating Lermontov's juvenilia to obscurity is not weakened, but reinforced, by his poetic development and the methods by which he started to master poetic techniques. There is a blue velvet-bound notebook in the Saltykov-Shchedrin Library in Saint Petersburg, received by young Lermontov as a gift. Following a custom of that era, "the youngster started to copy into the notebook verses he particularly liked." With the help of this first 1827 notebook and others, as P. A. Viskovatov observes, "we can follow in detail how from simply copying he gradually progresses to reworking or rearranging the works of well-known poets, and then to imitating, and finally to writing his own original works." Some of his earliest copyings are from French authors of the late eighteenth century (La Harpe, Delille and others), from Pushkin's , *Bakhchisaraiskii fontan* (*Fountain of Bakhchisarai*), and Zhukovskii's *The Prisoner of Chillon*. As Viskovatov rightly remarks, not of specific copyings but of the whole process,

strictly speaking, in Lermontov's case this was not imitation. On the contrary, he altered other people's writings, giving them a character appropriate to his individual needs. Really the only imitation was limited to the fact that the young poet would take a theme or here and there a line, but even a theme he treated in his own way, giving his own characterization to characters and events. And the lines he took from other poets took on a changed coloring, recalling the original only by their purely outward form, and not at all by their inner meaning.⁵

Bitsilli was thinking along similar lines when he rejected the commonly held wisdom that Lermontov was influenced by Byron. "Assimilate was one thing that Lermontov was not able to do, and there can be no talk of Lermontov's 'Byronism', at least in the sense in which we speak of Pushkin's 'Byronism.' The difference here is not in the *degree* of influence, but in the *nature* of that influence." Lermontov could, in fact, make a number of borrowings from Byron, but they related to aspects of Byron which were not primary either for Byron or for Lermontov. Lermontov was always his own man. Like Byron, Lermontov knew the meaning of protest, revolt (*bunt*). But it was never the center of gravity of Lermontov's spiritual make-up as it was for Byron. For Lermontov the center of gravity was, we shall see, to be diagnosed as Sorrow (*grust*).⁶

2

Two features of the very early lyrics attract immediate attention: 1) use of Classical mythology; and 2) use of short-ending adjectival forms. Both features virtually disappear early in Lermontov's career, but they deserve comment.

In Lermontov, the classical world plays a significantly smaller role than in Pushkin. In the latter's case the mediating influence of French neo-classical *poésie fugitive*, instruction in the lycée, and the example of Batiushkov gave his early verse a lightweight, erotic, Anacreontic and

⁴ P. M. Bitsilli, *Etiudy o russkoi poezii*. (Prague: Plamia, 1926), 231-37.

⁵ See P. A. Viskovatov, 1987, 61-62, 418. Also V. B. Sandomirskaiia, *Lermontovskii al'bom, Lermontovskii sbornik* (L.: Nauka, 1985). The blue notebook is *GPB, fond 429, No. 37*.

⁶ Bitsilli, 233-36. *Grust*, as Bitsilli was quick to acknowledge with praise, was first formulated as Lermontov's psychic cornerstone by the distinguished historian V. O. Kliuchevskii (1841-1911). See his *Grust', Sochineniia* (M., 1958), vol. 8, 113-32. Kliuchevskii viewed *Grust* as a characteristically Russian trait. Certainly it was basic to Lermontov's view of life.

Epicurean direction. And then, around 1820, he found André Chenier, whose classical influence is reflected in a new plastic and visual quality. Doubtless in Pushkin, too, the classical presence diminishes over the years. But it never vanishes. In his last years, 1835 and 1836, his lyrics contain not only references to such mythological figures as Zeus and Apollo, but adaptations and translations from Anacreon, Juvenal, and Horace. In Lermontov there is only a limited number of early allusions to classical mythology, and we have no evidence of its having had any meaningful impact. The relative weight of classicism for Pushkin and for Lermontov can be seen in the following frequency differences based on 313,000 Pushkin words against 326,000 Lermontov words — i.e. closely equivalent quantities of artistic text. For the words *Amur*, *Apollon*, *Venera*, *Gimenei* (Hymen), *Zevs* (Zeus), *Parnas*, *Feb* (Phoebus), *Erot* (Eros), and *nimfa* (nymph). Pushkin's frequencies exceed Lermontov's by ratios of approximately 43:4, 32:2, 19:2, 20:0, 15:0, 21:1, 21:1, 18:0, 18:0. And such conventional classical female names as *Lila*, *Khloia*, *El'vina*, and *Laisa* are entirely missing in Lermontov.⁷

The most significant difference in terms of classicism between Pushkin and Lermontov was 15 years: the years that separated their births. By the time Lermontov reached his poetically formative years, romanticism was at the flood.

Classical influence was available to Lermontov at his Moscow school (*Blagorodnyi universitetskii pansion*). S. E. Raich (1792-1855), mentioned earlier (see Biography III), was a specialist in and translator of classical and Italian literature, and a poet in his own right. Raich instructed Lermontov and his fellow pupils in Russian literature, emphasizing its history as well as poetic technique. No less significant was contact with A. F. Merzliakov (1778-1830), poet, translator, critic, and Moscow University professor of rhetoric and poetry, who lectured in the school on Russian literature and also tutored Lermontov individually at home. Traces of the works of both Raich and Merzliakov have been found in Lermontov's poetry,⁸ but not, ironically, primarily in relation to classicism. What little classical influence there is in Lermontov appears to the mainstream reader to be indebted to Batiushkov and to Pushkin in his lycée period.⁹

Some neoclassical themes appear briefly in Lermontov's early lyrics. Redolent of the affected cynicism and shoulder-shrugging light-heartedness of one Batiushkov-Pushkin vein is Lermontov's 1828 *Zabluzhdenie Kupidona* ("Cupid's Mistake"). This trivial 10-line piece amounts to the proposition that the women gave Cupid a rough time, and that he then took vengeance—not on the women, but on the men! It concludes with the fable-like "moral:"

Которые смирней, на тех падет вина! [I, 10]

It is the submissive ones who get the blame!

Pan (1829) is subtitled "*V drevnem rode*," i.e., in the ancient genre or style. Its 12 lines describe how the slightly inebriated god Pan, his glass in one hand and his pipe in the other, comes at dusk, and teaches the poet the art of song:

⁷ *L. E.*, 717. See, however, Lermontov's 1831 *K Neere* ("To Neaera"), discussed below.

⁸ For Raich and Merzliakov see, e.g., Viskovatov 1987, 57-60; N. L. Brodskii, *M. Iu. Lermontov. Biografiia*, (M.: OGIZ, 1945), esp. 74-88; M. F. Mur'ianov, *Raich, L. E.*, 461-62; V. N. Stepanov, *Merzliakov, L. E.*, 278-79.

⁹ This point was ably demonstrated by V. E. Vatsuro, "Ranniaia lirika Lermontova; poeticheskaiia traditsiia 20-kh gg., Russkaia literatura," 1964. No. 3, 46-56. See also Brodskii 74-100; while detailing the activities of Merzliakov, Raich, and others, Brodskii (80) insists on the importance of Lermontov's already having read Zhukovskii, Batiushkov, and Pushkin.

Он учит петь меня: и я в тиши дубравы
Играю и пою, не зная жажды славы. [I, 48]

He teaches me to sing ; and I in the stillness of the grove
Play and sing, and feel no thirst for glory.

Indifference to fame and power is one of the attributes of the both Epicurean and almost demonstratively sequestered life style espoused in this type of light antiquity-related verse.

For Lermontov, the transition between self-sufficient isolation and an elegiac sense of loss is not difficult, witness the 20-line *Tsevnitsa* ("The Pipe") from 1828, written like *Pan* in 6-foot iambs, one of the meters commonly used to purvey antiquity. *Tsevnitsa* is directly inspired by Batiushkov, whose *Besedka muz* ("The Refuge of the Muses") itself possesses a nostalgically elegiac character.¹⁰ Lermontov brings into play in this poem the traditional accoutrements of antiquity: muses, graces, zephyr, pipe. The onetime altar of the muses and graces, beneath the acacias, once adorned by roses and cherry trees and caressed by the spring zephyr, has vanished. There in days past his last love brought him joy. Now only memory is his consolation and salvation. He concludes:

Мое веселие, уж взятое гробницей,
И ржавый предков меч с задумчивой цевницей! [I, 11]

My merriment, snatched from me by the grave,
And my rusted ancestral sword and my pensive pipe!

The "rusted ancestral sword" is a leaf out of a different book — Ossian's. When one thinks of the implications of the pre-Romantic Ossianic outlook taken to their logical conclusion, it is clear that Ossianism is at odds with neo-classicism. But the two strains often coexisted amiably enough in the same author, witness Parny, the early Byron, Batiushkov, and the early Pushkin. Ossianism was still a part of the literary atmosphere in Lermontov's school. And thoughts of his Scottish ancestry were to foster in the young Russian poet an interest in the "Celtic bard."

A standard neo-classical gambit is the invitation to a meal or feast, issued normally in a light-hearted, jaunty manner. This tradition goes back beyond Catullus (poem 13) to the Hellenistic poetry of Greece. Lermontov's 1829 12-line *Pir* ("The Feast") has some of the same conventional accompaniments we noted in the preceding poem: cherry trees, acacias (he reproduces exactly the *Evgenii Onegin* line parodying Batiushkov "*Pod sen' cheremukh i akatsii*"), the muses and the graces. The invitee is told that he won't be lavishly wined and dined:

Но за столом любимца Феба
Пирует дружба и она;
А снедь — кусок прекрасный хлеба
И рюмка красного вина. [I, 36]

But at Phoebus' favorite's table
Friendship sits feasting, she is there;
To eat — a small loaf of the best bread,
And a glass of good red wine.¹¹

¹⁰ 1817. Parodied by Pushkin in *Evgenii Onegin*, VI, 7.

¹¹ This verse-epistle invitation was addressed to Lermontov's school friend, M. I. Saburov. The girl, the wine, even the bread, not to mention the cherry trees, acacias, muses and graces, clearly

The 1829 12-line trochaic *K druž'iam* ("To My Friends") extolls the poet's delight in friendship, conviviality over a bottle, his enthusiasm for love and poetry, and his indifference to fame. But in the third and final stanza a more somber mood intrudes:

Но нередко средь веселья
Дух мой страдает и грустит,
В шуме буйного похмелья
Дума на сердце лежит. [I, 19]

But often amid the merriment
My spirit suffers and is sad,
Amid the noise of turbulent intoxication
A thought lies heavy on my heart.

The transition from convivial high-spirited companionship—no less than that from self-sufficient isolation—to introspective melancholy is a commonplace of sentimentalist-tinged neoclassical *poésie fugitive*, and several examples of this mood shift are found also in Pushkin's early lyrics.¹²

Another feature of Lermontov's 1828-29 verses was the fairly frequent use of short (nominal) adjectival forms, most often in the non-oblique cases:

Всегда он с улыбкой веселой,
Жизнь любит и юность румяну,
Но чувства глубоки питает, —
(*Portrety*) [I, 25]

He always has a cheerful smile,
Loves life and ruddy youth,
But he has deep feelings. . . .
("Portraits")

By 1830, these short adjectives used attributively have virtually disappeared. Here again a comparison with Pushkin is interesting. In Pushkin's poetry the forms are more common than in Lermontov's from the outset. And, although in Pushkin their frequency diminishes, they never entirely disappear. They are to be found as late as 1836:

И нет его — и Русь оставил он,
Взнесенну им над миром изумленным, [Была пора:...]

.... and Russia he left,
By him raised up above the astonished world....

The difference here between the two poets is not one of technical virtuosity. Nor does it lie in any feeling on Pushkin's part that short-ending forms were natural; these forms were no more a part of the normal language for Pushkin than for Lermontov. The difference is surely to be found in the two poets' differing attitudes toward poetry. For Pushkin a poem was always an artifact: as such it was subject to certain rules. But these were rules imposed by the nature of poetry, by artistic rules and standards; they were not necessarily the rules and standards of normal linguistic

belong to poetic tradition rather than to the real life of a child not yet fifteen. However, the "girl" may perhaps be S. I. Saburova (1816-64), most probably Lermontov's "second love."¹² E.g., his 1816 *Razluka* ("Parting").

usage. Lermontov would, in general, have endorsed this view; but he responded to very different considerations and a different goal: the need, more obviously felt in some lyrical sub-genres than in others, to raze the boundaries between art and life. For him the emphasis was not so much on the concept of the artifact, but more on the poem as an utterance, with meaning paramount. Clearly, the shift in emphasis—again, in some sub-genres more than in others—imposes the requirement of approximation to everyday speech. And this is to become one of the central and most revolutionary features of Lermontov's poetic art. As with the classical legacy in Lermontov and Pushkin's work, the 15-year difference between the two poets is here again very significant.

While classical mythology and short adjectives are stylistically archaic, there is another aspect of Lermontov's early lyrics which is unmistakably innovative. We have in mind his cavalier attitude to the metrical constraints of the syllabotonic system. Let us not overstate the case. It is not suggested that Lermontov is playing fast and loose with the accepted principles of syllabotonic versification. But the efforts of these early years show clearly that from the start Lermontov's ear was attuned to other-than-syllabotonic metrical possibilities. The following example leaves no doubt on the score of deliberate intent. For what we have here is unabashedly tonic, modeled on German tonic verse, the German ballad, specifically Schiller.

Perchatka ("The Glove") (1829) is Lermontov's rendering of Schiller's ballad, "Der Handschuh." Here is Schiller's second stanza:

Und wie er winkt mit dem Finger,
 Auf tut sich der weite Zwinger,
 Und hinein mit bedächtigem Schritt
 Ein Löwe tritt,
 Und sieht sich stumm
 Rings um
 Mit langem Gähnen,
 Und schüttelt die Mähnen,
 Und streckt die Glieder,
 Und legt sich nieder.

And he gives a sign with his finger,
 And the wide pit is opened,
 And in with circumspect step
 Walks a lion,
 And looks silently
 Around
 With a prolonged yawn,
 And shakes his mane,
 And stretches his limbs,
 And lays him down.

As may be seen from the German original, Schiller's lines do not fit into any recognized syllabotonic metrical scheme. The unstressed intervals between stresses vary from one to two syllables (what in Russian versification is called *dol'niki*). The equivalent Lermontov stanza starts off with two regular amphibrachs (v/v), a meter frequently used in Russian for the ballad, i.e., as an equivalent to German or English tonic verse. However, it does not maintain regularity, and this stanza, like the remaining six, must be classified as tonic verse (*dol'niki*), having, like the original, unstressed intervals of from one to two syllables between stresses:

Вот царскому знаку внимают,
 Скрыпучую дверь отворяют,
 И лев Δ выходит степной
 Тяжелой стопой.
 И молча Δ вдруг
 Глядит Δ вокруг.
 Зевая лениво,
 Трясет желтой гривой
 И, всех обозрев,
 Ложится Δ лев. [I, 69]

In obedience to the royal command,
 The creaking gate is opened,
 And a wild lion emerges,
 With heavy step,
 And silently, quickly
 Looks around,
 Yawning lazily,
 Shakes his yellow mane,
 And, having looked the people over,
 The lion lies down.¹³

There is no possibility of the uneven intervals between stresses being the result of inexperience, as is made clear by the fact that shortly before writing *Perchatka* Lermontov had, with his *Ballada*, produced a very free, although weak, rendering of Schiller's "Der Taucher" ("The Diver") in perfectly regular four-foot amphibrachs. In *Perchatka* he rejected this typical Russian solution, and went a step farther, into tonic verse (*dol'niki*).

Lermontov's early closeness to German models, especially Schiller, is not only the first step on the road to one of his masterpieces, *Pesnia pro tsaria Ivana Vasil'evicha, molodogo oprichnika i udalogo kuptsa* (*The Song of Tsar Ivan Vasil'evich, the Young Retainer, and the Brave Merchant Kalashnikov*), dated 1837, and other lesser compositions, but, within the syllabotonic framework, doubtless helped promote key elements of his mature style: the wide range of different metrical forms employed, freedom in the use of rhythmic variations, and an overall readiness to seek poetic expressiveness through technical means. P. M. Bitsilli, an astute observer, regarded Lermontov as having greater claim than Tiutchev to be seen as a major nineteenth-century innovator in the field of versification.¹⁴

3

Lermontov's early classicism, however limited in scope, and his use of short adjectival forms were, as noted above, two features destined to fade from his poetry. But the themes of his early lyric by and large stayed the course — suffering sea changes, but recognizably present to the

¹³ The triangles (Δ) are inserted in the Lermontov stanza to mark the occasions on which stresses are separated by intervals of not two but one syllable.

¹⁴ Bitsilli, 225-32. Needless to say, Lermontov was not working in a vacuum. His predecessors include Sumarokov, N. Kh. L'vov, A. X. Khvostov, Zhukovskii, and Pushkin.

end. We turn to a selective overview of Lermontov's 1828-35 lyrics, calling attention to those themes which continued to be central to his metaphysical and artistic vision of life.

The cornerstone of any writer's work is his *Weltanschauung*, his gut feeling about life and its meaning. It is significant (though not amazing, when we recall Lermontov's precocious spiritual growth commented on above by Bitsilli) that at least from 1829 on, Lermontov sought consciously to express his feelings about life to a far greater extent than did Pushkin at the same age. Lermontov was *par excellence* a metaphysical, in the broadest sense a religious thinker.¹⁵

In seeking to understand a writer's *Weltanschauung*, it is not so important where we start. Which is cause and which effect? Did the writer's overall outlook on life color, for instance, his attitude toward women? Or did his attitude toward women determine his attitude toward life in general? In terms of his work, this may not be so very important. More important is that the two are interconnected, as are other aspects of his outlook on life. What we will be dealing with then is a sort of complex of interrelated emotional attitudes.¹⁶

The four lyrics of 1828 reveal very little of Lermontov's *Weltanschauung*. There is the rather delightful *Osen'* ("Autumn") in four-foot trochees, only 12 lines of which have survived. One commentator speculates that in the continuation, the picture of dying nature would have climaxed in an outpouring of the hero's sufferings.¹⁷ But for better or worse (probably for better) the second page was torn out of the notebook. There are two neo-classical lyrics, already discussed, *Zabluzhdenie Kupidona* and *Tsevnica*, the latter, true, reflecting a measure of Ossianic nostalgia, but not particularly revealing. And there is the 20-line four-foot iambic *Poet*, which, following a then current romantic myth, has Raphael ecstatically inspired as he paints the Virgin Mary, before sinking in weariness, the "heavenly flame" forgotten. So, too, the poet, as, enchanted, he sings of the "idols of his soul." The fire dies down in him too, but for a long time his mind retains the primary impress. This poem's orientation is significant, but it is best seen as a reflection of the interests of the poetry group in his Moscow school.¹⁸

While 1828 yields little, 1829 is rewarding. We obtain a picture of problems which will remain unsolved or only partially solved at the time of Lermontov's death. Lermontov's early outlook seems comprised of: 1) a sense of individual superiority and potential for high destiny; 2) an embittering recognition of the wide gulf separating the ideal and the real, heaven and earth; 3) an awareness that he is in the process of abandoning the narrow path to religious salvation in favor of the multiple paths of turbulent passion, passion not so much in terms of the flesh, as of the Promethean intellect and overall wayward emotional stance. These attitudes emerge more or less clearly in his 1829 poems.

The first is embitterment, less a cause than an effect. Embitterment is at the root of his 16-line four-foot iambic *Moi demon* ("My Demon"). In approved romantic fashion Lermontov's demon inhabits the clouds, the storms, the raging rivers, the sound-filled forests. And his element is evil:

¹⁵ Bitsilli, 225-75.

¹⁶ The pioneer in tracing Lermontov's thematics is V. M. Fisher. No one today can undertake anything similar without incurring a debt to his excellent "Poetika Lermontova," *Venok M. Iu. Lermontovu* (M.-P., 1914), 196-236 (hereafter *Venok*).

¹⁷ I. S. Chistova, *Osen'*, *L. E.*, 356-57. Also Anatoly Liberman, *Mikhail Lermontov: Major Poetical Works* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 466.

¹⁸ M. Iu. Lermontov, *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh*. (M.-L.: Ak. nauk, 1961-1962), I, 611-12.

Собранье зол его стихия.
 Носясь меж дымных облаков,
 Он любит бури роковые
 И пену рек, и шум дубров. [I, 57]

His element is the gathering.
 Borne among the smoky clouds.
 He loves fateful storms
 And the foam of rivers, and the sound of leafy groves.

Like the demon of Pushkin's 1823 poem, Lermontov's is no believer in positive values: he likes to implant mistrust, despises pure love, rejects entreaties, looks with indifference on bloodshed, and, significantly, crushes lofty emotions with passions:

Он недоверчивость вселяет,
 Он презрел чистую любовь,
 Он все моленья отвергает,
 Он равнодушно видит кровь,
 И звук высоких ощущений
 Он давит голосом страстей. [I, 57]

*He inspires mistrust,
 He despises pure love.
 He rejects all prayers.
 He regards blood with equanimity,
 And the sound of elevated feelings
 He crushes with the voice of passion.*

[translation supplied by copy editor]

Again like Pushkin in his 1823 *Demon*, Lermontov uses the same anaphoristic line-opening *On* ("He"). The choice of the hero cannot be dismissed as an adolescent aberration. For Lermontov was to work on his best known narrative poem, *Demon*, the first redaction of which he wrote in this same year, 1829, for most of the remainder of his life.

The early choice of the Demon figure as an object of intense preoccupation indicates a number of character traits: a more than cursory involvement with religion; a rebellious attitude to God's ordering of the Creation; a Titanic view of himself. But Lermontov's religious thinking also ran to more conventional themes of misgivings over his tendency to pursue earthly passions rather than to seek heavenly salvation. And it is in this area that he wrote what was not only his greatest poem to date, but was a religious poem or poem on religion fit to stand in any company, his *Molitva* ("A Prayer"), the last lyric for 1829:

Не обвиняй меня, всесильный,
 И не карай меня, молю,
 За то, что мрак земли могильный
 С ее страстями я люблю;
 За то, что редко в душу входит
 Живых речей твоих струя,
 За то, что в заблужденье бродит
 Мой ум далеко от тебя;
 За то, что лава вдохновенья

Клокочет на груди моей;
 За то, что дикие волненья
 Мрачат стекло моих очей;
 За то, что мир земной мне тесен,
 К тебе ж проникнуть я боюсь,
 И часто звуком грешных песен
 Я, Боже, не тебе молюсь.

Но угаси сей чудный пламень,
 Всесожигающий костер,
 Преобрати мне сердце в камень,
 Останови голодный взор;
 От страшной жажды песнопенья
 Пускай, Творец, освобожусь,
 Тогда на тесный путь спасенья
 К тебе я снова обращусь. [I, 74]

Do not reprove me, Almighty One,
 Nor chastise me, I pray,
 For my loving the sepulchral darkness
 Of this earth with its passions ;
 For the fact that only rarely does the stream
 Of Thy living speech enter into my soul ;
 For the fact that my mind wanders
 In error, far from Thee ;
 For the fact that the lava of inspiration
 Boils within my breast ;
 For the fact that wild agitations
 Darken the surface of my eyes ;
 For the fact that this world is too narrow for me,
 And I am afraid to bring myself to Thee,
 And often with my sinful songs,
 I pray, O God, not unto Thee.

But extinguish this wondrous flame,
 This all-consuming fire,
 Turn my heart to stone,
 Remove from my eyes their hunger,
 From the fearsome thirst for song-making
 Let me be freed, Creator;
 Then upon the narrow way of salvation
 I will once more turn to Thee.

The poet's creativity and his coming close to his Creator can be two opposing poles, a remarkable concept to appear in the lyrics of a not-yet-fifteen-year-old. He recognizes in this work that the life which generates his poetry is at odds with the salvation of his soul. For the age of Romanticism, the poet's ability to create poetry often endowed him with a certain divinity, and he was seen as the mouthpiece of a divine power. That Lermontov was able to recognize that for him art and religion were poles opposed betokens a very high degree of analytical insight.

Most Russian critics pay tribute to the depth (*glubina*) of Lermontov's thinking in *Molitva*. But they then tend to shy away from the poem's basic import. Either they exaggerate the poem's alleged theomachistic content, or they align it with such 1829 satirical pieces as *Zhaloby turka* ("A Turk's Complaints") and *Monolog*, two poems which carry powerful messages on the political and social level, but not primarily on the religious level. But *Molitva* is an incontestably and crucially religious poem. It centers on the dilemma of the perceived conflict between art and religion. It does not really represent one of Lermontov's theomachistic moments, it is not God-defying. It is, rather, a recognition of the incompatibility between Lermontov's way and God's way. True, there is no intent on the poet's part to mend the situation. True, in the second paragraph a note of self-justification appears. But, in the context, this does not constitute defiance. It is the sober recognition of a tragic standoff. It reveals, moreover, a rarely-shown intensity of religious feeling. It comes very close to a *mēa culpa*, an act of contrition. And therein lies the poem's pathos, its emotional center of gravity.¹⁹

In rejecting the term theomachy as inappropriate for this poem, we have no intention of playing down its overall importance for Lermontov. Lermontov's quarrel with God manifests itself infrequently, but consistently, throughout his life and will be referred to periodically. Here, we can consider briefly what it is, or at least what it is not. Theomachy in Lermontov is not a political or social thrust against a reactionary church. Nor, theologically, is it doubt about the reality of God; on the contrary, Lermontov recognized an all-knowing and all-powerful God. His rebellion boils down to a question he and others have had difficulty answering: why, since God is all-knowing and all-powerful, did he not create a less flawed, a perfect world? But this outraged, emotional response, this almost gut reaction is not the issue of *Molitva*.

Molitva establishes beyond doubt Lermontov's involvement with religion and formulates one painful, unanswerable problem religion entails for him. However, we find similar issues raised in an earlier poem, the five-foot iambic 24-line *K drugu* ("To A Friend") from 1829, written to his school friend, D. D. Durnov (1813-?), the addressee of several of his youthful poems:

Я не пленен небесной красотой,
Но я ищу земного упоенья...
И я к высокому, в порыве дум живых,
И я душой летел во дни былые;
Но мне милей страдания земные;
Я к ним привык и не оставляю их... [I, 59]

I'm not in thrall to heavenly beauty,
But I seek the exaltation of earthly things.

...

I too in days gone past in spirit soared
To lofty goals, in the surge of my animated thoughts;
But dearer to me are earthly sufferings:
I've become accustomed to them, and I won't abandon them.

As to the earthly passions which hold Lermontov's attention, something of their wayward and deviant nature can be seen in the 15-line mixed iambs of *Elegiia* ("Elegy") ("*O! esli b dni moi tekli*"), apparently written immediately after *K drugu*. If his days had been spent, the poet tells

¹⁹ Eikhenbaum's introduction of the notion of sarcasm is quite inappropriate and very wide of the mark. See his 1961 *Stat'i o Lermontove* (M.-L.: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR), 338-39. For other comments see D. P. Murav'ev, *Molitva*, *L. E.*, 283-84.

the reader, in peace and solitude, he would have had a cheerful and simple personality. But, as things are, he is condemned to seek his pleasure in more complex, less wholesome emotions:

Но для меня весь мир и пуст и скучен,
 Любовь невинная не льстит душе моей:
 Ищу измен и новых чувствований,
 Которые живут хоть колкостью своей
 Мне кровь, угасшую от грусти, от страданий,
 От преждевременных страстей!.. [I, 60]

But for me the whole world is empty and wearisome,
 Innocent love has no appeal for my soul:
 I seek betrayals and new feelings,
 Which, by their burning sting at least,
 Bring to life my blood worn down by sorrow and sufferings,
 And by over-early passions !...

The phrase “over-early passions” in the last line is significant. The idea that throughout his life he paid an emotional penalty for having known love at a very early age was, as noted in the biographical introduction, a fixed idea no less with Lermontov than with Byron. And Lermontov no less than Byron deserves credence when he makes this claim. He experienced first love at the age of 10 in the Caucasus (1825). Lermontov clearly felt satisfaction in being able to draw a parallel between himself and Byron. Yet this is not affectation. The appearance of “over-early passions” in an 1829 poem arouses curiosity, since Lermontov did not read the first volume of Thomas Moore’s *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, in which Byron’s first love was recorded, until 1830. Either he had gleaned the thought from elsewhere, or Lermontov’s own insight had independently warned him that his “premature” experience would for him prove prejudicial to his subsequent approach to love. Whatever the origin of the thought, the complaint about “over-early passions” was to become an enduring component of Lermontov’s thinking. Moreover, his attitude to women and to love was neither straightforwardly sensual nor idealistically elevated; as early as 1829 it reveals a dangerous leaning toward destructive and self-destructive complexity.²⁰

One of the most persistent themes is women’s perfidy: women are fickle and unreliable. In an early 1829 10-line verse epistle to his school friend, Durnov, *K D. . . .vu*, Lermontov claims to have traveled the Russian lands as a poor wanderer and found only deception; in Durnov, a true friend, he can confide, but not in perfidious maids:

С тобою чувствами сливаюсь,
 В речах веселых счастье пью;
 Но дев коварных не терплю —
 И больше им не доверяюсь!.. [I, 59]

*I am at one with you in sensibilities,
 Happiness I drink in merry conversations;
 But I cannot abide perfidious maidens.—
 And I shall no longer confide in them.*

[translation provided by copy editor]

²⁰ For his first love, see Lermontov, *Avtobiograficheskie zametki (3)*, *Ak. nauk*, VI, 385-86. For Byron’s first love, see Thomas Moore, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, (London: John Murray, 1830), I, 17-19.

His 1829 *Dva sokola* ("The Two Falcons") is a singularly inept reworking of Pushkin's *Voron k voronu letit* ("One Raven Flies to Another Raven"), first published in that same year. In Pushkin's ballad one raven's report to another recreates the narrative of a warrior slain and lying in the field while his lady awaits his killer. Lermontov rendered the theme anemic by removing all narrative and having his two denatured falcons merely comment on evil and on people's inhumanity, capped by women's infidelity:

Но измена девы страстной
Нож для сердца вековой!...» [I, 54]

But the betrayal of a passionate maid
Is a life-long knife in the heart! .²¹

Lermontov's next 1829 poem, the 32-line *Gruzinskaia pesnia* ("A Georgian Song"), has sexual betrayal as its central theme. A young Georgian woman is pining away in the harem of an old Armenian. She finds a lover. This restores the color to her cheeks. The old Armenian has her executed. The story was not original with Lermontov. He noted that he had heard such a tale in the Caucasus, presumably in 1825, when he and his grandmother visited Piatigorsk.²² The tone is not accusatory, either because its source was not or due to the protagonists' disparity in age.

More typical of his embittered and mistrustful attitude to women are two reworkings of Schiller ballads. What was taken from Schiller is, thematically, as far as Lermontov is concerned, Schiller's. However, Schiller wrote a number of ballads, in most of which Lermontov showed no interest. His choice of the two ballads in question may therefore be seen as significant. Moreover, the change he wrought in one of the two ballads seems prompted by this insistent mistrust of women.

Perchatka hews closely to the narrative line of Schiller's "Der Handschuh." Set in the age of knights and ladies, the ballad describes how a lion, a tiger, and in Schiller, but not in Lermontov, two leopards, are admitted to the arena where they will be goaded into fighting. Suddenly a glove is dropped from the balcony, and the beautiful Kunigund asks her knight to prove his love by retrieving it. He steps between the animals, picks up the glove, returns to applause, and flings it in the lady's face.²³ As noted above, Lermontov's version is of technical interest as an early venture into tonic verse, matching Schiller's tonic lines, which, like Lermontov's, have a varying number of stresses per line.

Ballada reworks and drastically shortens Schiller's "Der Taucher" ("The Diver"). It also changes the background circumstances and the dramatic thrust of the original. In Schiller, a king stands on the cliff with his knights, squires and ladies. He throws a golden goblet into the raging waters below: "Who is the brave man, I ask again, who will dive into the depths below?" Silence! Horror! But a young squire dives and, after an agonizing pause, reemerges safely with the goblet. The king challenges him again. To the goblet already won will be added a ring. The

²¹ Both the Pushkin and the Lermontov poems are in four-foot trochees. Pushkin's first appeared in 1829, i.e., the year of Lermontov's writing, first in *Severnye tsvety* (*Northern Flowers*), and then in his 1829 poetry collection, *Stikhotvoreniia*, where it is entitled "Scottish Song." It is one of a ballad collection assembled by Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802, 1803), and, according to B. V. Tomashevskii, came to Pushkin in French translation. See the 1963 10-volume Puskin, III, 490-91. The original English is "The Two Corbies."

²² *Ak. nauk*, I, 393.

²³ See Eikhenbaum, I, 436-37. The story is of French and/or Spanish provenance. Versions in English are Leigh Hunt's "The Glove and the Lions," and Browning's "The Glove."

king's daughter turns pale and attempts to stop the cruel game ("das grausame Spiel!"). But the king throws out the goblet, promising now his daughter's hand as well. Fired with love, the squire dives but doesn't return.

Lermontov has completely dismantled the Schiller narrative. There is no king and no retinue. The action is triggered solely by the cruel caprice of a beautiful maid. She has let fall a necklace into the water; her "friend" can prove his love by retrieving it, the same setup as in *Perchatka*. But the sequel is very different. The young man retrieves the necklace, but his legs are now weary, his gaze sorrowful. Yet she sends him off again to find a piece of precious coral. He dives, despairingly, and fails to return. Lermontov accentuates the heartlessness of the woman, but he deprives his ballad of the dramatic intervention of the king's daughter and the moving irony of the sparked mutual attraction of diver and daughter a moment before the diver's death.

Another 1829 poem, only loosely indicative of Lermontov's thinking about woman, is *Zhena severa* ("Woman of the North"). It is on the theme of *the femme fatale*. The mysterious central character lives in the far north (Finland), where she in ancient times would not infrequently make appearances. She was an object of worship to young Finns, and the skalds of the northern forests sang her praise. To see her was to die. Only the skalds could view this maiden from afar, their songs having earned them this brief moment of ardent rapture. Pushkin's *Portret* was published in 1829, and this short poem is frequently treated as the stimulus to *Zhena severa*.²⁴ But Pushkin's *Portret* features A. F. Zakrevskaia, a passionate society belle who defiantly flouted sexual conventions. But she was from the south, and primarily an indoor creature, whereas Lermontov's *femme fatale* is clearly a daughter of the north and of its crags and forests. So, despite its 1829 date, the Pushkin reference is unhelpful. The poem can be loosely characterized as a reflection of Lermontov's early interest in Ossianism and the north. But no specific source or point of origin has been established. We reproduce it in its entirety:

Покрыта таинств легкой сеткой,
 Меж скал полуночной страны,
 Она являлася нередко
 В года волшебной старины.
 И Финна дикие сыны
 Ей храмины сооружали,
 Как грозной дочери богов;
 И скальды северных лесов
 Ей вдохновенья посвящали.
 Кто зрел ее, тот умирал.
 И слух в угрюмой полуночи
 Бродил, что будто как металл
 Язвили голубые очи.
 И только скальды лишь могли
 Смотреть на деву издали.
 Они платили песнопеньем
 За пламенный восторга час;
 И пробужден немym виденьем
 Был строен их невнятный глас!.. [I, 58]

²⁴ E. g., by V. E. Vatsuro, "Zhena severa," *L. E.*, 163. Zakrevskaia is also generally regarded as the central character in Baratynskii's *Bal (The Ball)*, 1828.

Covered by a light web of mysteries
 Between the crags of the northern country,
 She oft appeared
 In the years of magical antiquity.
 And the wild sons of Finn
 Built temples unto her,
 As to the terrible daughter of the gods,
 And the skalds of the northern forests
 Dedicated their inspirations to her.
 Whoer' beheld her died.
 And rumor roamed in the sullen northland
 That like to metal
 Did her blue eyes wound.
 And even the skalds could only
 Look on the maiden from afar.
 They paid with poesy
 For the fiery hour of ecstasy:
 And wakened by the silent apparition,
 Their mysterious voice was harmonious.

[translation provided by copyeditor]

The theme of the *femme fatale* appears elsewhere in Lermontov's poetry, most notably in his 1841 ballad, *Tamara*.

Another theme broached in 1829 is that of the fallen woman. Lermontov's youthful age and sheltered life exclude the possibility of the 48-line four-foot trochaic *Pokaianie* ("Repentance") in any way reflecting personal experience. However, the choice of theme is interesting. The "lyric confession" was at the time a popular sub-genre which could combine epic, dramatic, and lyric elements and which normally highlighted some critical passage in the speaker's life.²⁵ *Pokaianie* involves a confrontation between the fallen woman and the priest to whom she confesses. It does not quite fit one Romantic stereotype, according to which the unrepentant character defiantly rejects censure from the established order. The young woman here recognizes her transgressions, but her repentance is not of a nature to earn absolution. Or, more precisely, she does not desire absolution. As the priest says:

Если таешь ты в страданьи,
 Если дух твой изнемог,
 Но не молишь в покаяньи:
 Не простит великий Бог!..

If you languish in suffering,
 If your spirit is drained,
 But you do not pray with repentance:
 Great God will not forgive!..

²⁵ The "lyric confession" was made popular by Byron's "eastern tales" and came to Lermontov also through, e.g., Pushkin and Ryleev. See L. M. Arnshtein, *Pokaianie, L. E.*, 423-24.

Lermontov was to return to the theme of the “fallen-woman” on several occasions.²⁶

The poet’s tribute to the then-popular concept of primitive feminine charms is contained in the 15-line four-foot iambic *Cherkeshenka* (“The Circassian Maid”).

The presence of yet another contemporary theme, that of the revenant, must, reluctantly, be noted in the 1829 *Pis'mo* (“The Letter”), a 56-line poem in five-foot iambs. Lermontov here suffered from an adolescent urge to insist on the beloved’s presence at his death; he insisted he would come back to visit her after death. This is a form of vengeance: let the beloved anguish at his death, and let him persecute her after death, since she had failed to take him sufficiently seriously in life. It is heartening to note that Lermontov subsequently wrote next to this poem: “This is nonsense!” (“*Eto vzdor!*”). Unfortunately, this did not lay the revenant theme to rest. It reappears as late as 1841 in *Liubov' mertvetsa* (“A Dead Man’s Love”).

Thus, as early as 1829, Lermontov adopted a pessimistic attitude to woman and love. The hopelessness of the situation is well expressed in *Otvet* (“The Answer”). *Otvet* is not perhaps a strikingly original lyric, but it is well turned. And if it is characteristic of an elegiac sentimental disillusionment typical of the era, it also has a certain ring of truth:

Кто муки знал когда-нибудь
И чьи к любви закрылись вежды,
Того от страха и надежды
Вторично не забьется грудь.
Он любит мрак уединенья.
Он больше незнаком с слезой,
Пред ним исчезли упоенья
Мечты бесплодной и пустой.
Он чувств лишен: так пень лесной,
Постигнут молнией, догорает,
Погас—и скрылся жизни сок,
Он мертвых ветвей не питает,—
На нем печать оставил рок. [I, 52]

Whoever has once known anguish,
Whose eyes have closed to love,
His heart will not beat again
From fear and hope.
Dear to him the dark of solitude,
He can no longer shed a tear,
Gone for him are the raptures
Of futile and empty dreaming.
No more can he feel: 'tis thus a stump,
Struck by lightning, burns out,
Is dead—life’s sap is gone;
No longer can it nourish the dead branches,
On it fate has left its mark.

²⁶ His 1832 *Deviaty chas; uzh temno; bliz zastavy* (“It’s after eight; it’s dark; and near the gate”); his 1832 *Prelestnitse* (“To a Charming Lady”); his 1841 *Dogovor* (“The Pact”); and the narrative poem *Sashka* (1835-36?).

Where is the robust confidence and joy of the Goethe of “Willkommen und Abschied”: “Und doch Welch Glück, geliebt zu werden!/Und lieben, Götter, Welch ein Glück!”? Alas! Wrong poet, wrong time, wrong country!

Lermontov’s political and social thinking matured early. Two lyrics from 1829 admirably illustrate the young poet’s recognition of the connection between the sociopolitical situation and the personal happiness of the individual. As its title suggests, *Monolog* (1829) has the quality of a dramatic monologue. Its kinship with drama is reinforced by the fact that its 16 lines are unrhymed, save for the last four “scene-closing” lines. It is predominantly in five-foot iambs, with three six-foot and one four-foot iamb. Its main theme is the deadening, depressing, and stultifying effect of Russian life on the young generation. In its entirety, it reads:

Поверь, ничтожество есть благо в здешнем свете.

К чему глубокие познания, жажда славы,

Талант и пылкая любовь свободы,

Когда мы их употребить не можем?

Мы, дети севера, как здешние растения,

Цветем недолго, быстро увядаем...

Как солнце зимнее на сером небосклоне,

Так пасмурна жизнь наша. Так недолго

Ее однообразное течение...

И душно кажется на родине,

И сердцу тяжело, и душа тоскует...

Не зная ни любви, ни дружбы сладкой,

Средь бурь пустых томится юность наша,

И быстро злобы яд ее мрачит,

И нам горька остывшей жизни чаша;

И уж ничто души не веселит. [I, 65]

Believe me, insignificance is a blessing in this world.

What good are profound knowledge, the thirst for glory,

Talent and the ardent love of freedom,

When we cannot put them to use?

We, children of the north, like northern flowers,

Bloom only for a short while, quickly wilt...

As the winter sun on the gray horizon,

So somber is our life. So short

Its monotonous course...

And in one’s native land it’s hard to breathe,

Heavy the heart, the soul pines in vain...

Knowing neither love nor sweet friendship,

Our youth languishes amid empty storms,

And quickly anger’s poison brings darkness on it,

And the cup of life grown cold takes on a bitter taste,

And soon nothing brings joy to the soul.

Even at 15 Lermontov shows the capacity to see problems and sufferings in a wider context. The concern expressed in *Monolog* extends to his entire generation. As has been repeatedly pointed out, *Monolog* to some extent anticipates Lermontov’s 1838 *Duma* (“Meditation”).

The same link between the sociopolitical situation and the development of the individual psyche is again to the fore in the short 1829 *Zhaloby turka*. Turkey was at the time the epitome of tyranny. But for “Turk” we should read “Russian.”

Ты знал ли дикий край, под знойными лучами,
Где рощи и луга поблекшие цветут?
Где хитрость и беспечность злобе дань несут?
Где сердце жителей волнуемо страстями?

И где являются порой
Умы и хладные и твердые как камень?
Но мощь их давится безвременной тоской,
И рано гаснет в них добра спокойный пламень.
Так рано жизнь тяжка бывает для людей,
Там за утехами несется укоризна,
Там стонет человек от рабства и цепей!..

Друг! этот край... моя отчизна! [I, 49]

Did you know the wild land beneath the sun's hot rays
Where meadows and woods live withered?
Where cunning and unconcern pay tribute to evil?
Where the inhabitants' hearts are torn by passion?
And where from time to time are born
Minds cold and firm as rock?
But their power is crushed by early anguish,
And the steady flame of goodness is early extinguished.
Early there life weighs heavy on people,
There censure follows hard on pleasure,
There man groans from slavery and chains!
My friend! That land is my land!

The overall mood of much of Lermontov's lyric output is accurately conveyed in the despondent lines of the verse epistle *К Р ну*, addressed to Lermontov's school friend Dmitrii Vasil'evich Peterson. It consists of 20 lines of iambic melancholy of varying length:

Забудь, любезный П<етерсо>н,
Мои минувшие сужденья;
Нет! недостойн бедный свет презренья.
Хоть наша жизнь минута сновиденья.
Хоть наша смерть струны порванной звон.
Мой ум его теперь ценить иначе станет.
Навряд ли кто-нибудь из нас страну узрит,
Где дружба дружбы не обманет,
Любовь любви не изменит.
Зачем же всё в сем мире бросить,
Зачем и счастья не найти:
Есть розы, друг, и на земном пути!
Их время злобное не все покосит!..
Пусть добродетель в прах падет,
Пусть будут все мольбы творцу бесплодны,

Навеки гений пусть умрет,—
 Везде утечи есть толпе простонародной;
 Но тот, на ком лежит уныния печать,
 Кто, юный, потерял лета златые,
 Того не могут услаждать
 Ни дружба, ни любовь, ни песни боевые!.. [I, 13]

Forget, dear Peterson,
 My former judgments;
 No! this poor world is unworthy of contempt,
 Although our life is but a moment in a dream,
 Although our death is but the sound of a broken string.
 My mind will now judge the world differently.
 Scarcely will any one of us see the land,
 Where friendship will not deceive friendship,
 Where love will not betray love.
 But why cast away everything in life,
 Why not find happiness:
 There are roses, friend, on the earthly path too!
 Ill-wishing time will not cut down all of them!
 Let virtue turn to dust,
 Let prayers to our Maker go unanswered,
 Let genius die for ever,—
 Still there are pleasures for the common crowd ;
 But he on whom the seal of despondency lies,
 Who in youth lost his golden years,
 That one can't be rejoiced
 By friendship, love or songs of war !..

The main features of Lermontov's *Weltanschauung* illustrated in the lyrics discussed here are not original; they are, rather, the commonplaces of a generation affected by the twin malaises of political repression and romantic pessimism. Had Lermontov put all this behind him in later years, it could be dismissed as no more than a youthful bow to the spirit of an age, of no greater consequence than his short-lived classical allusions or his use of short adjectives. But he did not abandon it. With hindsight, we are justified in saying that the 46 lyrics attributed to 1829 indicate with reasonable accuracy the tenor of Lermontov's thoughts and feelings and the problems with which he contended throughout his life. Yet, while Lermontov never did entirely put behind him the problems he confronted in adolescence, he was in the years ahead to do a great deal with them. He was, first and foremost, to modify them; and he was to find the technical ability to express his changed assessments of life in incomparably affective and effective poetry.

4

Taking the 1829 lyrics as indicating the train of Lermontov's thought, we shall now look at individual poems and discuss new topics as they arise. The year 1830 witnesses a considerable advance in his poetic development. Even the very casual reader must, I believe, become aware of a greater technical virtuosity and ease of manner. And while this improved level of poetic

performance is neither consistently maintained nor readily discernable at all times, there are two general observations which can be made.

First, in this year Lermontov significantly increases his assimilation of foreign authors. "Our literature is so poor," he remarks somewhat sententiously, "that there is nothing I can borrow from it."²⁷ In the fall of 1829 he starts to study English seriously. By 1830 he is enthusiastically immersed in Byron, including Thomas Moore's *The Life and Journals of Lord Byron*, the first volume of which appeared in that same year. Byron produced a deep impression. Lermontov reads Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloise*, which he finds inferior to *Werther*. He reads Goethe's *Faust*. Schiller, as we know, he had been acquainted with earlier as a writer of ballads. Now he presses Schiller, Lessing, and possibly Victor Hugo, into service in writing his early dramas.

The second observation regarding 1830 is that Lermontov's lyric poetry tends increasingly to be directed toward specific people and events. Rather than woman in general, we often encounter specific, identifiable women. And there are poems dealing with concrete events, such as the 1830 cholera epidemic and the July Revolution in France. Symptomatic of this greater focus on specifics is Lermontov's newfound habit of titling some of his poems with dates: *1830. Maiia. 16 chislo, 1830 god. Iiulia 15-go, 30 iiulia.*—(*Parizh*) *1830 goda*. Of these three poems, only the last refers to a specific historical event: the abdication in Paris of Charles X. The other two are autobiographical. The dating invests them with some of the quality of a diary entry, giving speculative thoughts an authenticity and reality by anchoring them in time. The first of the three poems may be criticized for its adolescent attitudinizing, posing, and affectation; but with its prose-like precision, down-to-earth directness and clear-cut outspokenness, it possesses attributes which anticipate Lermontov's mature epistolary lyric manner:

Боюсь не смерти я. О нет!
 Боюсь исчезнуть совершенно.
 Хочу, чтоб труд мой вдохновенный
 Когда-нибудь увидел свет;
 Хочу—и снова затрудненья!
 Зачем? что пользы будет мне?
 Мое свершится разрушенье
 В чужой, неведомой стране. [I, 135]

I fear not death. O no!
 I fear to disappear altogether.
 I wish that my inspired work
 May at some time see the light of day;

I wish—a difficulty once more!
 Why? What use will this be to me?
 My destruction will come to pass
 In a foreign, unknown land....

His destruction presumably will be "in a foreign, unknown land" simply because the age favored the exotic. The exotic became early a standard part of Lermontov's poetic accoutrement, to be used in conjunction with other stock themes, such as cosmos and paradise lost.

For Russians in the first half of the nineteenth century the Caucasus represented the wished-for exotic. What Bernardin de St. Pierre had discovered on the Ile de France, what

²⁷ *Avtobiograficheskie zametki, Ak. nauk*, VI, 387.

Chateaubriand had discovered in Louisiana, above all what Byron had found (harems and Moslem faith included) at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, was available to Russians in the primitive life and unspoiled beauty of the Caucasus. Lermontov's sense of the exotic also found nourishment in Scotland.²⁸

Kavkaz, the first lyric listed for 1830, was not Lermontov's first evocation of the Caucasus. He already had behind him two 1828 narrative poems, *Cherkesy (The Circassians)* and *Kavkazskii plennik (The Prisoner of the Caucasus)*, whose point of departure had been Pushkin's *Kavkazskii plennik* and, to a lesser extent, *Bakhchisaraiskii fontan*. And in 1829 Lermontov had written his 15-line *Cherkeshenka*, extolling the primitive, heavenly beauty of a Circassian maid. There was also *Gruzinskaia pesnia*, discussed above. But if not his first venture on the theme, *Kavkaz* represents certainly the first occasion on which Lermontov gives expression to the strength of his feelings for the Caucasus. The Caucasus is not treated as a new-found wonder, but as the land from which the poet has been driven:

Хотя я судьбой на заре моих дней,
О южные горы, отторгнут от вас,

Although I was, in the dawn of my days,
O southern mountains, driven from you by fate,

The poem, given also above in Section II of the biographic introduction, continues:

Чтоб вечно их помнить, там надо быть раз:
Как сладкую песню отчизны моей,
Люблю я Кавказ.

В младенческих летах я мать потерял.
Но мнилось, что в розовый вечера час
Та степь повторяла мне памятный глас.
За это люблю я вершины тех скал,
Люблю я Кавказ.

Я счастлив был с вами, ущелия гор;
Пять лет пронеслось: всё тоскую по вас.
Там видел я пару божественных глаз;
И сердце лепечет, вспомя тот взор:
Люблю я Кавказ!.. [I, 75]

To be there just once, you'll recall them forever.
Just like a sweet song from my fatherland home
The Caucasus love I so well.

No more than an infant, I lost my dear mother;
But yet when the evening grew pink it would seem that
The steppe echoed back the dear voice I recall
And therefore I love the tall peaks of the mountains,
The Caucasus love I so well.

You mountain ravines, I was happy with you!

²⁸ In this he was following in Byron's footsteps. For Byron-Lermontov parallels see the excellent observations in A. Glasse, "Lermontov i E. A. Sushkova," *LIM*, 92-95.

Five years have passed by, yet I grieve for you still.
 'Twas there that I saw two dear God-given eyes.
 My heart is a-tremble recalling that gaze:
 The Caucasus love I so well.

The theme of Paradise Lost features prominently in Lermontov's *Weltanschauung*. And the Caucasus is the Garden of Eden. In the first stanza it is recalled and loved as a sweet song of "my fatherland," and the nostalgic theme of song leads naturally into the second stanza, in which his dead mother's singing is tied in with the Caucasus. The third stanza recalls, on the background of the Caucasus, "a pair of divine eyes," his first love, also lost and gone forever. So that each of the poem's three stanzas presents a different facet of irretrievably lost paradise: the Caucasus itself; the dead mother; the lost first love, the Caucasus serving as a unifying backdrop to the whole.

Angel (1831) is a much-acclaimed early lyric, one of only two early poems published in the poet's lifetime.²⁹ It broaches a matter of primary importance for Lermontov: the existence of two basically opposed realities, heaven and earth. Heaven is conceived of less as a place of future reward or punishment, than as a place of past bliss from which we on earth have been exiled. Thus the heaven-and-earth theme is of a piece with the paradise-lost theme of *Kavkaz*. Whether the locale is the Caucasus, Heaven itself, or, as in the next poem, Scotland, these are gardens of Eden from which we have been banished, but which we remember, with greater or lesser clarity, and which aspire to nostalgia.

This poem's original title, *Pesn' angela* ("The Angel's Song") reinforces the cardinal significance of song as a stimulus to memory. The amphibrachs and exclusively masculine rhymes further proclaim kinship with the earlier poem. In fact, while in *Kavkaz* song provides a strong stimulus, here it alone constitutes the poem's dynamics, establishing the crucial demarcation line between "the sounds of heaven" and "the wearisome songs of the earth":

По небу полуночи ангел летел
 И тихую песню он пел;
 И месяц, и звезды, и тучи толпой
 Внимали той песне святой.

Он пел о блаженстве безгрешных духов
 Под кущами райских садов;
 О Боге великом он пел, и хвала
 Его непритворна была.

Он душу младую в объятиях нес
 Для мира печали и слез;
 И звук его песни в душе молодой
 Остался—без слов, но живой.

И долго на свете томилась она,
 Желанием чудным полна;
 И звуков небес заменить не могли
 Ей скучные песни земли. [I, 239]

An angel flew through the midnight sky,
 And a gentle song he sang;

²⁹ See note 2, this chapter.

And the moon and the stars and the clustered clouds
Listened to that sacred song.

He sang of the bliss of sinless spirits
Neath the trees of the heavenly gardens;
Of God Almighty he sang, and his praise
Came from the heart.

In his arms he bore a young soul
To the world of sorrow and tears;
And the sound of his song remained
In the young soul—with no words, but still vibrant, alive.

And the young soul languished on earth a long time,
Filled with a wondrous desire;
And the wearisome songs of the earth could not replace
For the soul the heavenly sounds.

Lermontov did not include *Angel* in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*. Belinskii's negative criticism is often advanced to explain its omission. We are inclined to agree half-way with Belinskii. *Angel* is not a bad poem, the use of alternating 4/3 amphibrachs is well-suited to the theme of song, or of flight; but it does have something of a sugar-sweet ring to it.³⁰ However, it does appear among the lyrics Bitsilli praises highly.

The 1831 *Zhelanie* ("Desire") is formally and thematically linked with *Kavkaz* and *Angel*. Note the use once again of ternaries, here amphibrachs (~ ~ ~) alternating with anapests (~ ~ ~), and of exclusively masculine rhyme. Sound here plays a lesser role, but it is still present in "the string of the Scottish harp" (stanza 4). And the flight performed in *Angel* by the angel bearing the infant is here paralleled by the flight of the raven, symbol of longed-for freedom. Scotland takes the place occupied by the Caucasus in *Kavkaz*: the exotic, better place. The poet has never lived in Scotland, nor does the poem claim he has. It is thus not strictly a paradise lost, but a paradise denied, his true spiritual home, but inaccessible:

Зачем я не птица, не ворон степной,
Пролетевший сейчас надо мной?
Зачем не могу в небесах я парить
И одну лишь свободу любить?

На запад, на запад помчался бы я,
Где цветут моих предков поля,
Где в замке пустом, на туманных горах,
Их забвенный покоится прах.

На древней стене их наследственный щит
И заржавленный меч их висит.
Я стал бы летать над мечом и щитом
И смахнул бы я пыль с них крылом;

³⁰ See *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1840, IX, No. 3 For the heaven-earth theme P. N. Sakulin, "Zemlia i nebo v poezii Lermontova," *Venok*, 1 -55; also I. B. Rodnianskaia, *Zemlia i nebo*, under "Motivy," *L. E.*, 302-305.

И арфы шотландской струну бы задел,
 И по сводам бы звук полетел:
 Внимаем одним, и одним пробужден,
 Как раздался, так смолкнул бы он.

Но тщетны мечты, бесполезны мольбы
 Против строгих законов судьбы.
 Меж мной и холмами отчизны моей
 Расстилаются волны морей.

Последний потомок отважных бойцов
 Увядает среди чуждых снегов;
 Я здесь был рожден, но нездешний душой...
 О! зачем я не ворон степной?.. [I, 199]

Why am I not a bird, not that raven of the steppe
 Who just flew past above me?
 Why can I not soar in the heavens,
 And love only freedom?

Westward, westward I'd fly from here,
 To where my ancestors' fields flourish,
 To where in an empty castle, on the misty mountains,
 Their dust, forgotten, rests.

On the ancient wall the ancestral shield
 And the rusted sword still hang.
 I would fly above sword and shield,
 And brush away the dust with my wing.

I would touch the string of the Scottish harp,
 And the sound would echo through the vaults;
 Produced by one awakened, and by another,
 The sound would ring forth and fall silent.

But vain are my dreams, unavailing my prayers
 Against the severe laws of fate.
 Between me and the hills of my homeland
 The waves of the sea roll on.

This last descendant of brave warriors
 Perishes amid alien snows;
 Here I was born, but my soul does not belong here...
 O! Why am I not that raven of the steppe?

There is no doubt about the legitimacy of the Lermontov family claim to have come originally from Scotland. Less easy to substantiate is the claim that the Lermontovs could count as their forebear the renowned Thomas the Rhymer (Thomas Learmont of Erceldoune, fl. 1220-1297). Thomas the Rhymer lived in his castle in the Melrose area, close to the River Tweed, and close to where Walter Scott's Abbotsford mansion would one day stand, southeast of Edinburgh. He kissed the Queen of the Faeries, which meant that he was obliged to live with the faeries for seven years. There he learned the twin arts of poetry and prophesy. Returning after seven years,

he won fame as bard and seer. Among a number of prophesies of primarily disastrous events in Scottish history, the most dramatic is his foretelling the imminent death of Alexander III, for that king shortly thereafter rode his horse too close to the edge of a cliff, fell, and was dashed to pieces on the rocks below. Eventually two shining white stags came to summon Thomas back to the land of the faeries; sadly he went with them and was seen no more.

Lermontov thus claimed not only Scottish, but poetic blood in his veins. Exotic provenance can serve to set a person apart from his fellow countrymen, which, to someone with Lermontov's belief in his own uniqueness, may have been a source of comfort. But there was most probably an additional reason for his 1830-31 interest in Scotland. Viskovatov points to the extreme sense of rejection and discomfort suffered by Lermontov (and equally or more so by Pushkin) as a result of coming from an impoverished family (*zakhudalyi rod*). In Lermontov's case this applies to his paternal side only, on which he was only an eighth generation Russian. But in 1830-31 in particular Lermontov was greatly concerned for his father. He rightly felt that his father, who died in 1831, had been written off by many as a no-account drunkard, not least by the Stolypins. But his "Scottish" father came of warrior stock, as did he, "this last descendant of brave warriors." The tie between Scotland, his father, and his father's impoverished family amounts, therefore, to more than an adolescent affectation, as Viskovatov very convincingly shows. Returning to the poem in question, we see Scotland as an unattainable refuge from surrounding sorrows.³¹ The "rusted sword" appeared previously in the very early 1828 *Tsevnitsa*, where, as in the present poem, it and other possessions of his ancestors are to be loosely identified as attributes of Ossianism.

A step away from the theme of paradise lost represented in the last three lyrics, but emotionally at no great remove, is the 1831 *Nebo i zvezdy* ("The Sky and Stars"), another early poem which Bitsilli praised highly. The kinship between this and the three lyrics preceding it is shown by the poet's preoccupation with the unattainable: sky and stars. The stars, in particular, serve Lermontov consistently as an "emblem of ethical idealism, striving for the 'far-away' and the 'beautiful'." Here they are seen not as complementary to man's noblest aspects, but as removed, alien, and superior.³² The poet envies the stars and wishes to take their place:

Чисто вечернее небо,
Ясны далекие звезды,
Ясны как счастье ребенка;
О! для чего мне нельзя и подумать:
Звезды, вы ясны, как счастье мое!

Чем ты несчастлив?—
Скажут мне люди.
Тем я несчастлив,
Добрые люди, что звезды и небо —
Звезды и небо! — а я человек!..

Люди друг к другу
Зависть питают;
Я же, напротив,
Только завидую звездам прекрасным.
Только их место занять бы хотел. [I, 228]

³¹ Viskovatov 1987, 86-95.

³² I. B. Rodnianskaia, *Nebo i zvezdy*, L. E., 337-338.

Pure is the evening sky,
 Clear are the far-away stars,
 Clear as the happiness of a child;
 O! Why can I not even think:
 Stars, you are clear as my happiness!

Why so unhappy?
 People will say to me.
 I'm unhappy, good people,
 Unhappy because the stars and the sky
 Are the stars and the sky — whereas I am but man!

The one toward the other,
 People feel envy;
 But I on the contrary
 Am envious only of the stars in their beauty,
 Would only wish to be taking their place.

This is an unrhymed poem. Mainly on these grounds I. N. Rozanov considers that it was “not intended, obviously, for publication.”³³ We disagree. It is true that Lermontov never attempted to publish it. But the same can be said about *Parus*. The failure to rhyme is, we believe, motivated by a feeling, detectable among other Romantics, e.g., Zhukovskii, that lack of rhyme produces a sense of indeterminateness, distance, infinitude, as opposed to rhyme, which more often conveys precision, finiteness, resolution.³⁴

The use of ternaries, here dactyls, enhances the cosmic nature of the stars. The indeterminateness gains from the variety in line lengths, three short and two long in each stanza (three 3-foot and two 4-foot lines in the first stanza, three 2-foot and two 4-foot in the succeeding stanzas) and from the predominance of feminine line-endings (only the final lines marking closure are masculine in each stanza).

Noteworthy also is the use in the third line of a simile which juxtaposes and brings together two entirely unrelated planes of reality: the clearness of the stars is likened to a child's happiness. This is, I believe, the first time Lermontov uses this distinctively characteristic device. But we shall see it from time to time in later poems.

The four lyrics just discussed are clearly indicative of a nostalgia which, while at times during Lermontov's life activated by specific events, was also an inborn, inbred condition.

5

One of Lermontov's most impressive lyrics is his 1831 *Kogda b v pokornosti neznan'ia* (“If in the submissiveness of ignorance”). Like his 1829 *Molitva*, this poem stands outside any theomachistic religious verse tradition. It is a triumphant assertion of man's rightness in aspiring to knowledge, striving, searching; had the Creator wished us to remain submissively ignorant, He would not have placed these quickening seeds in our hearts:

1

³³ I. V. Rozanov, *Lermontov master stikha* (M.: Sovetskii pisatel', 1942), 153-54.

³⁴ E.g., Zhukovskii's *K nei* (“To Her”), where the indeterminateness is further strengthened by the question marks.

Когда б в покорности незнания
 Нас жить создатель осудил,
 Неисполнимые желанья
 Он в нашу душу б не вложил,
 Он не позволил бы стремиться
 К тому, что не должно свершиться,
 Он не позволил бы искать
 В себе и в мире совершенства,
 Когда б нам полного блаженства
 Не должно вечно было знать.

2

Но чувство есть у нас святое,
 Надежда, бог грядущих дней, —
 Она в душе, где всё земное,
 Живет наперекор страстей;
 Она залог, что есть поныне
 На небе иль в другой пустыне
 Такое место, где любовь
 Предстанет нам, как ангел нежный,
 И где тоски ее мятежной
 Душа узнать не может вновь. [I, 231]

1

If in the submissiveness of ignorance
 The Creator had condemned us to live,
 He would not have placed in our souls
 Unattainable aspirations,
 He would not have allowed us to aim
 At things not destined to be achieved,
 He would not have allowed us to seek
 Perfection in ourselves and in the world,
 If for all time we were condemned
 Never to know complete bliss.

2

But within us there is a sacred feeling,
 Hope, the god of future days, —
 Hope is in the soul where
 everything earthly
 Lives in defiance of passion;
 Hope is the pledge that there still exists
 In heaven or in some other bourn
 A place where love
 Will appear before us as a tender angel,
 And where the soul can no longer know
 Love's rebellious anguish.

Here again, as with *Molitva*, critics and scholars have been reluctant to see what is before them. They are so possessed by Lermontov's image as a metaphysical rebel that they fail to see other sides to his character. They forget that where there is hate, there is also love. True, Lermontov does not consistently maintain the outlook on life expressed in this poem. Moreover, Prometheanism may be only a step away from rebellion. But on the evidence of this poem alone, taken in isolation, Lermontov's attitude must be characterized as optimistic and trusting. Far from being bitter or theomachistic, the poem comes close in spirit to the happier worlds of Goethe and Schiller. I have in mind specifically Goethe's superb lyric "Was war ein Gott der nur von aussen stiesse" ("What sort of God would it be who only pushed from the outside") and Schiller's "An die Freude" ("Ode to Joy"). There are in fact some rather astounding parallels between Lermontov's poem and these two German poems, parallels it would be difficult to view as entirely fortuitous. In "Was war ein Gott" Goethe, like Lermontov, is proving a point, polemizing. It is remarkable that both poets launch their respective arguments with a negative proposition, i.e. a proposition conceived as impossible and as therefore affirming its opposite: "What sort of God would it be who only....," and "If the Creator had condemned...." As to Schiller's "An die Freude," we note that Lermontov follows Schiller in using an odic stanza. However, whereas Schiller follows one accepted odic German tradition in trochaic meter, Lermontov uses the iambic-odic 10-line stanza (AbAbCCdEEd), equally accepted in Germany, where it was introduced from France by Gottsched in the eighteenth century, as it was shortly thereafter introduced into Russia by Lomonosov. Schiller apart, Lermontov's odic stanza would seem a suitable instrument for triumphant affirmation rather than the reverse. Another point of similarity between Schiller's and Lermontov's poems: in the former Joy is promoted to the level of a religious concept, and in the latter Hope receives similar treatment. It is, moreover, like Joy in Schiller, personified: "the god of future days" ("*Nadezhda, bog griadushchikh dnei,*" cf. "*Tochter aus Elysium*"). Finally, both poets posit the existence of some loftier realm, where Joy or Hope can be completely fulfilled, where love is perfect ("*Droben uberm Sternenzelt,*" "*Na nebe il' v drugoi pustyne/Takoe mesto, gde liubov'....*"). Whether these similarities are deliberate or fortuitous, they are certainly meaningful. Goethe republished "*Was war ein Gott*" (written 1812-13) in 1827. And Lermontov can be safely presumed to have been familiar with Schiller's 1786 "*An die Freude.*" It is refreshing to hear in this excellent Lermontov poem a note of confidence from an earlier age, which is all too rare in Lermontov's religious musings, in fact, all too rare in Lermontov. The rub will come later, alas, we shall see, when Lermontov's searchings and probings fail to evoke a response.

6

In the years 1830-32 Lermontov developed attachments to three young women, each of whom inspired in him different feelings; but feelings which could, certainly in two cases, probably in all three, be classified as love. In the summer of 1830 he became very strongly attracted to Ekaterina Aleksandrovna Sushkova (in marriage Khvostova) (1812-68), who was older than he and who treated him like a child, while recognizing and encouraging his poetic talent. In 1834 in Petersburg Lermontov was to take his revenge by courting her insincerely and successfully. Varvara Aleksandrovna Lopukhina (in marriage Bakhmeteva) (1815-51) inspired in him a love which endured to the end of his life. In this case the feelings appear to have been reciprocal. Her marriage to the considerably older N. F. Bakhmetev in 1835 in Moscow at a time when Lermontov was in Petersburg is held by some to have resulted from a series of misunderstandings between the two. More probably it simply resulted from a decision by her

parents. The greatest immediate pain Lermontov experienced in 1830-32 was that inflicted by Natal'ia Fedorovna Ivanova (in marriage Obreskova) (1813-75). Lermontov felt that she had betrayed him: a stolen kiss seems to have meant less to her than to him. Also, he felt that he had committed an error of timing, failing to recognize her affection when she was prepared to give it. This may have been wishful thinking. Unlike Lopukhina and Lermontov, even Sushkova and Lermontov, Ivanova and Lermontov seem to have had little in common. This did not prevent Lermontov from feeling strongly attracted to her and experiencing pain and bitterness.

For some of the early lyrics the addressees have still not been established with certainty. The confusion is usually between Sushkova and Lopukhina. For example, the 1831 *Zovi nadezhdu snoviden'em* ("Call hope a dream") raises questions as to the text, the dating, and the addressee, Lopukhina or Sushkova. And the addressee of the 1831 *K L*. ("To L") is also uncertain.³⁵ But in many cases there can be no uncertainty. For the three women produced in the poet very different feelings.

Lermontov wrote more than 30 poems to Ivanova during this period. They make tedious reading, ringing with the pain of her betrayal. But a few of these poems are truly excellent and deserve attention for themselves, not merely for the anticipatory light they shed on later acknowledged masterpieces. Before turning to these, let us first examine one of the less successful products of this cycle.

For obvious reasons, the more felicitous Lermontov poems always receive attention, while the weaker ones tend to be dismissed with a few condescending and uncomplimentary epithets. We will examine one of these latter, ill-starred ventures, which will enable us to understand better why the young poet could have believed, as he must have believed, that he had a worthwhile theme going, and enable us to understand what went wrong. I have chosen for this "experiment" his 1831 *Videnie* ("A Vision"). It offers several advantages: not altogether worthless, it is certainly no success; and its shortcomings are similar to those which mar a good many other failed early lyrics.

Videnie describes two dreams. In the first the poet dreams of a young lover's night ride to his beloved's home. She is not there, and he gallops off, suffering terribly. In the second a young maid and the young man sit silently in a room, both trying to conceal their suffering. The young man is apostrophized for having failed to respond to the maiden's love at the right time, but rather only after he had lost it forever, lost it to some flatterer.

The attachment to Ivanova undoubtedly caused Lermontov intense suffering. But suffering does not necessarily translate into good poetry. Let us look more closely at the first dream. It is not without dramatic promise. The fearless rider (whose first appearance is reminiscent of the first appearance of Byron's *Giaour*) gallops through the gathering darkness. The bridge over the fast-flowing river is down. Undaunted, horse and rider breast the waters, emerging safely on the other side. He gallops up to the house! She is not there! He gallops off into the night!

Several defects combine to mar the effect of this lively sequence of events. First, his *Giaour*-like appearance is melodramatic, and we wonder why, as he gallops, does his "black gaze" constantly search for something in the misty distance? Why, too, does the past, worse, the past as an evil omen, seize hold of his mind at this anticipated moment of reunion? From the narrative point of view, and again in Byron's footsteps (*The Corsair*), it focuses his chance of happiness on one last hope, his beloved. Her absence is obviously not just unfortunate, but a

³⁵ See e.g., T. P. Golovanova, *Zovi nadezhdu — snoviden'em*, *L. E.*, 177-78, 209-10; Glasse, 98; 4- vol. *Ak. nauk*, 1961, I, 643-44.

significant blow. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the hyperbole in the description of his suffering produces an uncomfortable and jarring effect:

— О! когда б
Я мог изобразить его страданье!
... Века ужасных мук равны
Такой минуте.... [I, 211]

— O! Could I but
Describe his suffering!
... Aeons of awful torments are the equal
Of such a minute....

The hero gallops aimlessly till dawn, then bursts out crying, not unlike Pechorin after Vera's departure in *Geroi nashego vremeni*, though here the horse is apparently spared. The narrative is followed by a simile characteristic of Lermontov's early lyrics, a labored comparison of the rider's unrefreshing tears to a noxious dew which stains the leaves. It ends with several pretentious and inconclusive lines of reflection on the possible significance of his dream.

At this stage of his development, the "dream" device, influenced by Byron, unfailingly produced pretentious, usually catastrophic, results. Unrhymed verse focuses attention on semantics. The lack of rhyme in Lermontov's five-foot iambic monologs significantly augments their pretentiousness. The same combination of dream or night meditation, blank verse, and pretentiousness appears in two other 1830 monologs, *Noch' I* ("Night I"), and *Noch' II* ("Night II"). They are actually far worse than *Videnie*, to which, albeit at some remove, they are related. All three show the influence of Byron's "The Dream" and his "Darkness," both unrhymed.

The above scrutiny of parts of *Videnie* will serve to reinforce, by contrast, the truly exceptional qualities of another Ivanova poem, the first in the cycle, *N.F. I....voi*. At this early point in his relationship with Ivanova the theme of betrayal is absent. The central theme of the poem is the poet's disappointed expectation that Ivanova's understanding will enable her to mediate between him and an alien milieu, bridging a gap that he has himself set up:

Любил с начала жизни я
Угрюмое уединенье,
Где укрывался весь в себя,
Бояся, грусть не утая,
Будить людское сожаленье;

Счастливы, мнил я, не поймут
Того, что сам не разберу я,
И черных дум не унесут
Ни радость дружеских минут,
Ни страстный пламень поцелуя.

Мои неясные мечты
Я выразить хотел стихами,
Чтобы, прочтя сии листы,
Меня бы примирила ты
С людьми и с буйными страстями;

Но взор спокойный, чистый твой
В меня вперился изумленный,

Ты покачала головой,
Сказав, что болен разум мой,
Желаньем вздорным ослепленный.

Я, веруя твоим словам,
Глубоко в сердце погрузился,
Однако же нашел я там,
Что ум мой не по пустякам
К чему-то тайному стремился,

К тому, чего даны в залог
С толпою звезд ночные своды,
К тому, что обещал нам Бог
И что б уразуметь я мог
Через мышления и годы.

Но пылкий, но суровый нрав
Меня грызет от колыбели...
И в жизни зло лишь испытав,
Умру я, сердцем не познав
Печальных дум печальной цели.

[I, 79-80]

From life's start I loved
Gloomy isolation.
In which I completely took cover,
Fearing that by failing to conceal my sorrow,
I would awaken people's pity;

Those happy ones, I thought, won't understand
What I myself can't figure out,
And neither the joys of friendship
Nor the passionate flame of a kiss
Will carry away my black thoughts.

I had wished to express in verse
My vague dreams,
So that you, reading these pages
Would reconcile me
With people and with stormy passions;

But your calm, pure gaze
You fastened on me in amazement,
You shook your head,
Saying that my reason ailed me,
Blinded by nonsensical desire.

I, believing your words,
Examined with deep attention my heart,
But there I found
That not for trivial causes my mind
Aspired to something mysterious,

To something as a warrant for which
 We are given heaven's vault and the many stars,
 To something which God has promised us,
 Which I would understand
 After much thought and many years.

But my passionate, severe temperament
 Has gnawed me from the cradle...
 And having experienced only evil in life,
 I shall die, not having in my heart discovered
 The sad purpose of my sad thoughts.

The principal qualities which make this poem so effective are not difficult to pinpoint, especially when we compare them with the failings in *Videnie*. The risk of sounding pretentious is lessened by the presence of rhyme and the use in *N.F. I...voi* of the shorter four-foot iamb. Moreover, the dominant quality of this poem is the speed of the narrative, achieved with the help of certain identifiable formal features: the infrequent use of attributive adjectives, those used being most often semantically essential; a preponderance of finite verbs and gerunds, with past perfectives used to advance the action (*primirila, vperilsia, pokachala, pogruzilsia, nashel*); and, last but not least, the use of an aBaaB rhyme scheme in combination with an appropriately run-on syntax. This last requires a word of explanation. The aBaaB scheme frustrates the expectation of a stanza-concluding B in the fourth line, impelling the reader forward to seek resolution, a process facilitated by the close syntactic linking of lines 4 and 5. This occurs throughout, but is especially striking in *primirila ty/S liud'mi; ne po pustiakam/K chemu-to; urazumet' ia mog/Cherez myshleniia i gody; ne poznav/ Pechal'nykh dum pechal'noi tseli*.

A propos narrative speed: in this relatively short poem, the action starts with the poet-narrator's extreme youth and concludes with a prediction of what will have failed to be achieved by the time of his death, i.e. 35 lines span his spiritual saga. And, parenthetically, the poem's end brings the narrative back to its beginning: in earliest childhood the narrator knew sorrow ("*grust*"), and at the end he will not have plumbed "the sad purpose of my sad thoughts (*Pechal'nykh dum pechal'noi tseli*)."

Narrative speed is typically an asset. But it obviously is not in itself a guarantee of successful poetics. Yet here it contributes significantly to the felicitous result. Narrative speed has a natural concomitant in emotional restraint. If we pass rapidly over a series of events, not embellishing, not amplifying, not dwelling on their pathetic aspects, we are likely to leave an impression of impersonal, objective, matter-of-fact narrative. This dispassionate tone eliminates or minimizes traces of bitterness, resentment, and self-pity. And so it is in *N.F. I...voi*. The sparseness of Lermontov's account of his predicament imparts to the narrative a playfulness of tone reminiscent of Mercutio. Further, the poet shows a remarkable awareness of his own responsibility.

In fact, *N.F. I...voi* bears comparison to his very last poem, the 1841 *Prorok* ("The Prophet"). It may seem farfetched to set *Prorok* side by side with one of his juvenilia. But this is not unfounded, as we shall show. For almost any late Lermontov poem is likely to be foreshadowed, although often embryonically and inexactly, in his early lyrics.

We shall confine ourselves for now to noting the similarities of the narrative lines in the two poems:³⁶

³⁶ *Prorok* is reproduced in its entirety in Russian and English in Chapter III, on pages 243-45.

- 1) *N.F. I . . . voi* starts with birth, or infancy ("*s nachala zhizni*"), "*Prorok*" with rebirth ("*S tekh por kak . . .*");
- 2) Both protagonists are affected by the distance separating them from other people ("*Schastlivtsy, mnil ia, ne poimut. . .*") ("*V ochakh liudei chitaiu ia/Stranitsy zloby i poroka*");
- 3) Both protagonists seek rapprochement with people: one through the mediation of a beloved woman, the other through his preaching ("*liubvi/I pravdy chistye uchen'ia*");
- 4) Both are rejected ("*Skazav, chto bolen razum moi*") ("*V menia vse blizhnie moi/Brosali besheno kamen'ia*") and by people who are or should be close to them;
- 5) Both, so to speak, take flight ("*Gluboko v serdce pogruzilsia*") ("*Iz gorodov bezhal ja nishchii*");
- 6) Both flee to a world which is not the world of men, a world where God prevails and the stars play;
- 7) And both flourish in their new worlds;
- 8) But when they again confront the everyday world, both are discomfited: one will never understand the purpose of his sorrow, while the other is jeered at and treated with contempt.

Moreover, the two lyrics have in common a number of lexical items; they both display a marked ability to fuse the lyric element and the narrative element; and they owe their admirable emotional restraint, which brings both of them close to irony, if not at times humor, to an assumed narrative viewpoint which takes it for granted that things will go wrong, rather than the reverse e.g., "*No vzor/V menia vperilsia izumlennyi. . .*" and (with no adversative needed) "*Provozglashat' ia stal ljubvi. . . /V menia vse blizhnie moi/Brosali besheno kamen'ia.*"

The kinship of these two poems, notwithstanding the gap of more than 10 years between them, is beyond doubt. *Prorok* is the better poem, but both are excellent.

N.F. I . . . voi is, finally, the first Lermontov poem to break the mold of poetic cliché. A great deal of the emotion expressed in lyric poetry makes use of such clichés. We speak here neither of plagiarism nor of insincerity, but of the existence of traditional modes of expression which invite the poet to reshape slightly the experience to fit the mode rather than creating new words and syntax to express an unprecedentedly new emotion or convey a unique experience. Lermontov is one of the few poets who, at his most exciting, can give the illusion of bringing into the world a new creation to express a new feeling. And this 1830 poem is, probably, the first occasion on which he accomplishes this feat.³⁷

Betrayal can make for tedious reading both in verse and prose. But two more Ivanova poems merit attention. Both are written in four-foot iambs. As with *N. F. I . . . voi*, above, it is difficult not to feel that the relative shortness of the lines helps make the perfect vehicle for the expression of rapid forward movement, forceful argument, as it might be set down in a letter written in haste. Parts of the two poems in question foreshadow the epistolary parts of Lermontov's 1840 *Valerik*. They are also reminiscent of the Onegin-Tat'iana exchanges in *Evgenii Onegin*, but less poetic, more prosaic, less ornate, less expansive and diffuse, more directly to the point. The first is the 1831 *K N. I . . .* ("To N. I. . ."). Some of its carefully weighed reproach may strike the reader as too blatantly adolescent. We will cite therefore only the first six lines as an illustration of the point made above with regard to forceful epistolary argumentation:

³⁷ Walter N. Vickery, "Narrative Speed in Lermontov's Four-Foot Iambs," *O Rus! . . . in honorem Hugh McLean* (Berkeley Slavic Specialities, 1995), 208-18.

Я не достоин, может быть,
 Твоей любви: не мне судить;
 Но ты обманом наградила
 Мои надежды и мечты,
 И я всегда скажу, что ты
 Несправедливо поступила. [I, 217]

I am not worthy, perhaps,
 Of your love: it's not for me to judge;
 But with deception you rewarded
 My hopes and dreams,
 And I shall always say that you
 Acted unjustly.

(Lermontov's Russian original is more forceful and effective than the English translation.)

The second poem, dated 1832, K*, is also to a degree marred by adolescent pique. We give it in full:

Я не унижусь пред тобою;
 Ни твой привет, ни твой укор
 Не властны над моей душою.
 Знай: мы чужие с этих пор.
 Ты позабыла: я свободы
 Для заблужденья не отдам;
 И так пожертвовал я годы
 Твоей улыбке и глазам,
 И так я слишком долго видел
 В тебе надежду юных дней,
 И целый мир возненавидел,
 Чтобы тебя любить сильней.
 Как знать, быть может, те мгновенья,
 Что протелки у ног твоих,
 Я отнимал у вдохновенья!
 А чем ты заменила их?
 Быть может, мыслию небесной
 И силой духа убежден
 Я дал бы миру дар чудесный,
 А мне за то бессмертье он?
 Зачем так нежно обещала
 Ты заменить его венец,
 Зачем ты не была сначала,
 Какою стала наконец!
 Я горд!—прости! люби другого,
 Мечтай любовь найти в другом;
 Чего б то ни было земного
 Я не соделаюсь рабом.
 К чужим горам, под небо юга
 Я удалюсь, может быть;
 Но слишком знаем мы друг друга,

Чтобы друг друга позабыть.
 Отныне стану наслаждаться
 И в страсти стану клясться всем;
 Со всеми буду я смеяться,
 А плакать не хочу ни с кем;
 Начну обманывать безбожно,
 Чтоб не любить, как я любил, —
 Иль женщин уважать возможно,
 Когда мне ангел изменил?
 Я был готов на смерть и муку
 И целый мир на битву звать,
 Чтобы твою младую руку —
 Безумец!—лишний раз пожать!
 Не зная коварную измену,
 Тебе я душу отдавал;
 Такой души ты знала ль цену?
 Ты знала — я тебя не знал! [I, 348-49]

I will not humble myself before you;
 Neither your greeting nor your reproach
 Has power over my soul.
 Know this: we are strangers from now on.
 You've forgotten: freedom
 I'll not surrender for error;
 As it is, I have sacrificed years
 To your smile and to your eyes,
 As it is, for too long I saw
 In you the hope of my youthful days,
 And learned to hate the whole world
 In order to love you the more.
 How can we know, perhaps those moments
 I spent at your feet were moments
 I stole from inspiration!
 And with what did you replace them ?
 Perhaps, swayed by divine thought
 And the power of the spirit,
 I would have given the world a wondrous gift,
 And the world would have repaid me with immortality ?
 Why did you so tenderly promise
 To be a substitute for glory's crown,
 Why weren't you at the start
 What you finally became!
 I'm proud! . . .farewell! go love another,
 Dream you can find love in another ;
 I will never be the slave
 Of any earthly thing whatever.
 To the alien mountains beneath the Southern sky

I shall remove myself, perhaps;
 But we know each other too well
 To forget one another.
 From now on I'll start to take my fill of joy,
 Swear passionate love to one and all,
 With all of them I'll be laughing,
 With none do I wish to weep ;
 I'll practice godlessly deception,
 So's not to love as I have loved ;
 Or could I have respect for women
 When I've been deceived by an angel ?
 I was prepared for death and torment,
 Prepared to challenge the whole world to battle
 In order to — madman I — to squeeze
 Your youthful hand,
 Not knowing your cunning betrayal,
 I surrendered to you my soul ;
 Did you know the worth of such a soul? You knew —
 It was I who didn't know you.

Some passages in this lengthy tirade cannot but provoke the reader's tolerant or impatient smile. There may even be a touch of intentional humor here. At least as a harbinger of things to come, the poem has merit: it is forcefully argued; it has a prosaic but not unpoetical touch; it displays Lermontov's habitual gift for epigram and the telling point ("*Kogda mne angel izmenil?*"). Finally, it has a quality which is best labeled *vigor!*

Sushkova did not perhaps inspire any lyrics to rival the first of the Ivanova lyrics discussed above. But the feelings the poet expressed toward her supply further evidence of his growing powers of observation, including self-observation.

Vesna ("Spring") (1830) was, according to Sushkova, addressed to her. If so, its content is appropriate. Sushkova's advantage over Lermontov in age and experience made it impossible for her to take him seriously as a suitor. But Lermontov did not take kindly to this. His riposte, assuming the poem was written with Sushkova in mind, was the time-honored threat of poets to their foot-dragging mistresses: "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may..." "Cueillez dès aujourd'hui les roses de la vie..." The traditional nature of the theme leads one to expect a clichéd ending. Lermontov avoids the almost inevitable fast-fading roses (though they will appear in the excellent 1831 *K Neere* ("To Neaera"), not associated with Sushkova). But he does use another cliché, fast-fading cheeks (*lanity*). However, he combines them with the unliterary and surprising epithet *spokoinykh*, which I shall translate inadequately as "healthy" (literally, "calm," "tranquil"):

Когда весной разбитый лед
 Рекой взволнованной идет,
 Когда среди полей местами
 Чернеет голая земля,
 И мгла ложится облаками
 На полуюные поля,
 Мечтанье злое грусть лелеет
 В душе неопытной моей.
 Гляжу, природа молодеет,

Но молодеть лишь только ей;
Ланит спокойных пламень алый
С собою время уведет,
И тот, кто так страдал, бывало,
Любви к ней в сердце не найдет. [I, 82]

When in the Spring the broken ice
Flows downriver in violent tumult,
When in the fields, in places,
The dark naked earth shows through,
And the mist comes low in clouds
Over the half-southern fields,
Then sorrow nourishes an angry thought
In my inexperienced soul.
I can see, Nature grows young again,
But only Nature gets to grow young:
Time will carry away
The rosy glow of healthy cheeks,
And he who at one time suffered so deeply
Will find no love for her in his heart.³⁸

This little poem does contain some appealing features. Along with the clichés, we find images which appear to arise from first-hand observation. Thus while the cheeks are traditional, and strongly reminiscent of French eighteenth-century erotic poetry, the other images are Russian: the ice breaking up, the patches of black earth showing, the enshrouding mist. This gives a plastic freshness to a theme which in itself is trite.

K Su<shkovoï> ("To Su<shkova>," 1830) also exemplifies Lermontov's power of exact and realistic observation, employed both in picking out external objects and facts, and in examining the workings of his own heart:

Вблизи тебя до этих пор
Я не слышал в груди огня.
Встречал ли твой прелестный взор —
Не билось сердце у меня.

И что ж? — разлуки первый звук
Меня заставил трепетать;
Нет, нет, он не предвестник мук;
Я не люблю — зачем скрывать!

Однако же хоть день, хоть час
Еще желал бы здесь пробыть,
Чтоб блеском этих чудных глаз
Души тревоги усмирить. [I, 132]

Up to now, near to you as I've been,
I have felt no fire in my bosom.

³⁸ Another poem, probably also to Sushkova, in which *lanity* (cheeks) fulfill a similar function is the 1830 *Prosti, moi drug!... Kak prizrak ja lechu...* ("Farewell, my friend!...").

If I met your charming gaze,
My heart did not beat.

And yet? The first sign of parting
Has caused me to tremble;
No, no, this is no harbinger of torment;
I don't love you — why conceal it!

However, for at least a day, at least an hour
I'd like to stay on here,
In order to still my soul's alarms
With the shining of those wondrous eyes.

The poem has a humorous, playful ring. And Lermontov himself called it a "joke" ("*shutka*"). It really belongs to the sub-genre known as *al'bomnye stikhi*, i.e., verses designed to be written in a young lady's album and often enough to be taken with a grain of salt. But the very freedom this gallant, but not too ambitious nor too deeply felt type of poetry affords makes it an excellent vehicle for Lermontov's self-analytical gifts.

One felicitous little tour de force is the well known poem, *Nishchii*. According to Sushkova, the poem arises from an episode which took place in August, 1830, when a group of young relatives and friends, but including Arsen'eva, was on pilgrimage to the Troitse-Sergiev monastery about 60 versts NE of Moscow. A blind beggar told them how some other young people had placed stones instead of coins in his begging cup. Lermontov draws a lesson from the incident and applies it to his relationship with Sushkova:

У врат обители святой
Стоял просящий подаянья
Бедняк иссохший, чуть живой
От глада, жажды и страданья.

Куска лишь хлеба он просил,
И взор являл живую муку,
И кто-то камень положил
В его протянутую руку.

Так я молил твоей любви
С слезами горькими, с тоскою;
Так чувства лучшие мои
Обмануты навек тобою! [I, 154]

At the gates of the sacred monastery
A poor dried-up beggar, half dead
From hunger, thirst, and suffering,
Stood begging for alms.

He asked only a piece of bread,
And his gaze revealed his keen torment,
And someone placed a stone
In his outstretched hand.

Thus did I implore your love
With bitter tears, with anguish;

Thus were my best feelings
Deceived for all time by you!

This poem makes use of a device Lermontov was very fond of, especially in his early poetry: the simile. We note that the first and third lines of the final stanza begin with *Tak* (*Thus*). At its most conventional the simile, often introduced by *Tak*, draws an image from a sphere unrelated to the narrative and uses that image to put the narrative in perspective. Here we have a sort of reverse simile. The main narrative, the two stanzas describing the beggar's experience, is not placed in perspective by the concluding stanza introduced by *Tak*. On the contrary, the two stanzas are used to clarify and reinforce the poet's reproach in the final stanza.

Just as in *Prorok*, above, the unexpected evil deed (beginning line 7) is not preceded by an adversative *No* (*But*), but by *I* (*And*). What this suggests in the context is that the evil deed was in the nature of things, rather than a dramatic break from the anticipated almsgiving.

One 1832 lyric whose addressee is unmistakable is *Ona ne gordoi krasotoiu* ("Not by proud beauty does she"). It can only be Varvara Aleksandrovna Lopukhina. Lopukhina seems at this time to have provided a focus for Lermontov's youthful deliberations about which female attributes are important. He favors three cardinal areas of feminine beauty: the voice (whether for speaking or singing); the eyes; and the way of moving, slighting the bust. As the lyric states clearly: "And her bosom does not swell forward like a wave" (line 6). The poem does not specify the eyes, though it mentions smiles, and it is difficult to smile warmly without the endorsement of the eyes. It mentions "movements" (though not necessarily, as elsewhere, the woman's gait), and the voice:

Она не гордой красотою
Прельщает юношей живых,
Она не водит за собою
Толпу вздыхателей немых.
И стан ее не стан богини,
И грудь волною не встает.
И в ней никто своей святыни,
Припав к земле, не признает.
Однако все ее движенья,
Улыбки, речи и черты
Так полны жизни, вдохновенья,
Так полны чудной простоты.
Но голос душу проникает,
Как вспоминанье лучших дней,
И сердце любит и страдает,
Почти стыдась любви своей. [I, 384]

Not by proud beauty does she
Attract the lively young men,
She doesn't trail behind her
A crowd of awestruck suitors.
And her figure is not that of a goddess.
And her bosom does not swell forward like a wave,
And no one, falling prostrate,
Recognizes her as a sacred object.
But all her movements,

Her smiles, her words, her features
 Are so full of life, of inspiration,
 So full of wondrous simplicity.
 But her voice penetrates the soul,
 Like some memory of better days,
 And the heart loves and suffers,
 Almost ashamed of its love.

Note here in line 13 the adversative *No* is used not to rebut, rather to single out the voice as the all-important soul-penetrating attribute, and as a mnemonic instrument as elsewhere, e.g., in the 1830 *Kavkaz*, discussed above. The theme from *Ona ne gordoi krasotoiu* will reemerge in a lyric of late 1837 or early 1838, *Ona poet — i zvuki taiut* (“She sings, and the sounds melt”). The eight-line lyric will specifically mention song, speech, looking, and walking, although it will eliminate the poet as a participant. At best he becomes a presence with hearing and sight. It is a better poem, as we will argue in the next chapter. Missing in the later poem, however, is something human and touching, which appears in the concessions the young poet-protagonist makes: “She doesn’t trail behind her/A crowd of awestruck suitors...Her bosom does not...And no one...” and in his heart’s love and suffering, “Almost ashamed of its love.”

In a few poems addressed to Lopukhina Lermontov tries to combine two themes: his sincerity and his demonism. The dedication (20 lines) of the third draft of *Demon* proceeds along these lines:

Как демон, хладный и суровый,
 Я в мире веселился злом,
 ... Теперь, как мрачный этот Гений,
 Я близ тебя опять воскрес
 Для непорочных наслаждений,
 И для надежд, и для небес. [II, 566-67]

Like the Demon, cold, severe,
 I took delight in evil in this world,...

Now, like that somber Spirit,
 Close to you I’m again reborn
 For pure delights,
 For hopes and for the heavens.

The same basic duality underlies his 1832 *K**: the togetherness or separation of their two paths of destiny, and the poet’s sense that he must either “triumph” or be destroyed:

Мы случайно сведены судьбою,
 Мы себя нашли один в другом.
 И душа сдружилась с душою;
 Хоть пути не кончить им вдвоем!

Так поток весенний отражает
 Свод небес далекий голубой
 И в волне спокойной он сияет
 И трепещет с бурною волной.

Будь, о будь моими небесами,

Будь товарищ грозных бурь моих;
Пусть тогда гремят они меж нами,
Я рожден, чтобы не жить без них.

Я рожден, чтоб целый мир был зритель
Торжества иль гибели моей,
Но с тобой, мой луч-путеводитель,
Что хвала иль гордый смех людей!

Души их певца не постигали,
Не могли души его любить,
Не могли понять его печали,
Не могли восторгов разделить. [I, 366]

We by chance were brought together by fate,
We found each other —the one in the other,
And our two souls were joined together in one,
Though destined each to end our paths alone!

Thus a Spring stream reflects
The distant, blue vault of the heavens,
And in its calm flow shines,
But is agitated when the wave is stormy.

Be, O be my heavens,
Be the companion of my dreadful storms;
Let them then rage between us,
I was born so that I can't live without them.

I was born so that the whole world should see
My triumph or my destruction,
But with you, my guiding light,
People's praise or proud laughter means nothing.

Their souls have not fathomed the singer,
They could not love his soul,
Could not understand his sorrow,
Could not share his triumphs.

There is an interesting link between theme and meter: The theme of the path or way is expressed in five-foot trochaic verse, a correspondence which has been plausibly argued.³⁹

As noted in the preceding chapter, poetic references and contacts with Lopukhina continue throughout the poet's life, whereas contacts and poetic mentions of Ivanova seem to die out by 1832. Although there is to be another passage with Sushkova in 1834-35, reflected in the novel *Kniaginia Ligovskaia (Princess Ligovskaia)*, the poetry connected with her seems to die out in about 1831. References to Lopukhina, by contrast, are still there, most scholars believe, to

³⁹ For this specific relationship between theme and meter see K. F. Taranovskii, "O vzaimo-otnoshenii stikhotvornogo ritma i tematiki," *American Contributions to the Fifth International Congress of Slavists* (The Hague: Mouton, 1963), 287-322.

the very end, as in Lermontov's 1841 poem *Net, ne tebia tak pylko ia liubliu* ("No, it is not you so passionately I love") which will be discussed in Chapter III.

7

The 1831 *K Neere* ("To Neaera") is the last of Lermontov's lyrics to make use of classical mythology and classical themes. Neaera, in Greek mythology the beloved of Helios, the sun god, is a name used in the Russia of Lermontov's day to designate a young, beautiful, beloved woman. The poem's theme is precisely what was discussed above in reference to Sushkova; the threat of age to the youthful beauty, and again the archaic *lanity* (cheeks) receive mention. The poem is written in 3-foot amphibrachs:

Скажи, для чего перед нами
 Ты в кудри вплетаешь цветы?
 Себя ли украсишь ты розой
 Прелестной, минутной как ты?
 Зачем приводить нам на память,
 Что могут ланиты твои
 Увянуть; что взор твой забудет
 Восторги надежд и любви?
 Дивлюсь я тебе: равнодушно,
 Беспечно ты смотришь вперед;
 Смеешься над временем, будто
 Нэру оно обойдет.
 Ужель ты безумным весельем
 Прогнать только хочешь порой
 Грядущего тени? ужели
 Чужда ты веселью душой?
 Пять лет протекут: ни лобзаньем,
 Ни сладкой улыбкою глаз
 К себе на душистое ложе
 Опять не заманишь ты нас.
 О, лучше умри поскорее,
 Чтоб юный красавец сказал:
 «Кто был этой девы милее?
 Кто раньше ее умирал? [I, 255]

Say, why before our eyes do you weave
 Flowers into your curls?
 Do you wish to make yourself beautiful with a rose
 As charming and fast-fading as you?
 Why do you remind us
 That your cheeks can
 Wither; that your eyes will forget
 The raptures of hope and love?
 I'm surprised at you: with equanimity,
 Carefree, you look ahead;
 You laugh at time as though

It would pass Neaera by.
 Can it be that with mad merriment
 You wish at times to chase away.
 The shades of the future? Can it be
 That at heart you care not for merriment?
 Five years will go by: nor your kisses
 Nor the sweet smile of your eyes
 Will entice us again to you
 On your fragrant couch.
 O, better you'd die right away,
 That the handsome youth might say:
 "Who was sweeter than this one?
 Who died younger than she?"

This is a remarkably well-crafted poem. The three-foot amphibrachs alternate between feminine and masculine endings. Thus the lines alternate between 9 and 8 syllables, the same number of syllables as in the all-purpose four-foot iamb. The number of stresses per line (three) is also that most commonly found in the four-foot iamb, but here the stress positions are constants (2,5,8), and the ternary rhythm is unmistakable. But it is never allowed to become too insistently obtrusive. Militating against this are the syntactic pauses which crop up within lines, and the frequent syntactic carry-overs at the ends of lines, all of which is reminiscent of classical meters and reinforces the theme's classical provenance. The classically loose structure of the lines is supported by the rhyme scheme, which calls for consistent cross-rhyming of the even lines while the odd lines are unrhymed, left to their own devices. Yet, not quite to their own devices, for as the poem progresses there occurs a gradual firming up with near-rhyme and rhyme (ll. 9, 11: *ravnodushno, budto* — ll. 13, 15: *vesel'em, uzhe* — and very appropriately in the final quatrain, ll. 21, 23: *poskoree, milee*). In fact, this poem alone suggests that Lermontov's metrical-syntactic solution is in general more appropriate to classical themes than the six-foot iamb encouraged by Chenier's Alexandrines. The withering of cheeks and the fast-fading of roses are commonplaces of this type of poetry. But the theme is neatly worked out by Lermontov, with a slow but steady and inevitable progression from the initial wreathing of roses into the hair to the failure at the end to attract lovers and the thought of death's desirability.

8

For a masked ball New Year's eve, in 1831, Lermontov wrote 17 so-called madrigals and epigrams for different acquaintances. They were intentionally flippant, but one deserves attention. It shows Lermontov's powers of observation and his ability to seize on unusual but revealing details. It is addressed to "Dodo," Evdokiia Petrovna Sushkova, a cousin of Ekaterina Alexandrovna Sushkova, in marriage Rostopchina (1811-58), a poetess with whom Lermontov was to establish a very real and rewarding bond of friendship in the last year of his life:

Умеешь ты сердца тревожить,
 Толпу очей остановить,
 Улыбкой гордой уничтожить,
 Улыбкой нежной оживить;
 Умеешь ты польстить случайно
 С холодной важностью лица

И умника унизить тайно,
 Взяв пылко сторону глупца!
 Как в *Талисмане* стих небрежный,
 Как над пучиною мятежной
 Свободный парус челнока,
 Ты беззаботна и легка.
 Тебя не понял север хладный;
 В наш круг ты брошена судьбой,
 Как божество страны чужой,
 Как в день печали миг отрадный! [I, 267]

You know how to disturb people's hearts,
 To stop a crowd of eyes,
 To annihilate someone with a proud smile,
 With a tender smile to bring them life;
 You know how to flatter by chance,
 A cold seriousness on your face,
 To put down in secret the knowall
 Taking with fervor the side of the fool!
 Like *Talisman's* easy-flowing line of verse,⁴⁰
 Like a boat's free-roving sail
 Above the sea's tumultuous waves,
 You are carefree and light.
 The cold north has not understood you;
 You were cast into our circle by fate,
 Like a goddess from a foreign land,
 Like an instant of joy on a day of sorrow.

9

One very important event in Lermontov's overall development was his discovery of the possibilities afforded by the non-caesural five-foot iamb for light, humorous verse. This he owed to Byron. The non-caesural five-foot iamb was a relatively new arrival in Russia. And before Byron's impact made itself felt, it was used primarily for drama and for the related meditative elegy. Zhukovskii, so often a technical innovator, was in the forefront here, too, with his *Orleanskaia Deva (Maid of Orleans)* (1817-22), and his 1816 elegies *Derevenskii storozh* ("The Country Watchman") and *Tlennost'* ("Transitoriness"). But it was Byron's *Beppo* and *Don Juan* and his Italian Renaissance-influenced *ottava rima* which revealed to Lermontov this meter's comic potential and its suitability for the humorous-lyrical digression. As early as 1830 ("early," because Lermontov started to study English seriously only in the fall of 1829) he writes such poems as *Bulevar*, a humorous and satirical description of the Tverskoi Boulevard and its habitues. This is not a first-class poem. But it has great significance, since it points the way to the narrative poems to come, *Sashka* and *Skazka dlia detei (A Children's Fairy Tale)*. It is in *ottava rima*, with all rhymes masculine, an indication, as noted above, that English models are present in Lermontov's mind, though here he has out-Byroned Byron, for neither *Beppo* nor *Don Juan*

⁴⁰ Lermontov here refers to *Talisman*, a Rostopchina poem published without her permission in 1831 in *Severnnye tsvety (Northern Flowers)*.

has exclusively masculine rhymes. Of *Bulevar*'s 12 stanzas we cite one, the tenth, to give the reader an idea of the meter's rambling potential:

Но для чего кометами я вас
 Назвал, глупец тупейший то поймет,
 И сам Башуцкий объяснит тотчас.
 Комета за собою хвост влечет;
 И это всеми признано у нас,
 Хотя—что в нем, никто не разберет:
 За вами ж хвост оставленных мужьев,
 Вдыхателей и бедных женихов! [I, 147]

But why I called you [the beauties of Moscow]
 Comets, the greatest fool of fools can understand this,
 And Bashutskii himself will explain forthwith.
 A comet trails a tail behind it;
 And this is recognized by all of us,
 Though no one knows what's it:
 You trail behind you a tail of abandoned husbands,
 Sighing suitors and wretched fiancés!

It is not exactly powerful, even in the original Russian. But note the jocular, conversational, self-interrupting tone and think of works this new meter will eventually help to spawn.

10

I have, with some exceptions, e.g. the *Bulevar* passage just above, concentrated mainly on the poet's inner feelings and particularly his feelings toward women. This is partly because such current events as cholera epidemics are likely to lose interest and appeal as the decades roll by. Moreover, Lermontov's coverage of current events does not really include his most outstanding early poetry. We will, however, mention some of the issues he tackled.

First came the cholera in 1830. This provoked two third-rate introspective and macabre poems.⁴¹ However, a third poem commands greater interest. The cholera led to a great deal of peasant unrest, and some uprisings, events reflected in his 18-line five-foot iambic *Predskazanie* ("Prediction"):

Настанет год. России черный год,
 Когда царей корона упадет;
 Забудет чернь к ним прежнюю любовь,
 И пища многих будет смерть и кровь;
 Когда детей, когда невинных жен
 Низвергнутый не защитит закон;
 Когда чума от смрадных, мертвых тел
 Начнет бродить среди печальных сел,
 Чтобы платком из хижин вызывать,
 И станет глад сей бедный край терзать;
 И зарево окрасит волны рек:

⁴¹ *Chuma v Saratove* ("Plague in Saratov") and *Chuma: Otryvok* ("The Plague: An Excerpt").

В тот день явится мощный человек,
 И ты его узнаешь—и поймешь,
 Зачем в руке его булатный нож:
 И горе для тебя!—твой плач, твой стон
 Ему тогда покажется смешон;
 И будет всё ужасно, мрачно в нем,
 Как плащ его с возвышенным челом. [I, 140]

The year will come, Russia's black year,
 When the tsars' crown will fall;
 The throng will forget its former love for them,
 And many will sup on death and blood;
 Then law, overcast, no longer will defend
 Children and innocent women;
 Then the plague from the stinking, dead bodies
 Will invade the wretched villages,
 Signaling to have the dead brought from their poor homes,
 And famine will assail this poor land;
 A bloody sky will light the rivers' waves:
 And on that day a mighty man will come,
 And you will recognize him, understand
 Why in his hand he holds a keenblade knife:
 And woe! And woe! Your weeping and your groans
 Will seem laughable to that man;
 And everything in him will be horror, darkness,
 As too his cloak and lofty brow.

There are two fairly traditional themes in this poem, both present in Pushkin's 1817 *Vol'nost'* ("Ode to Freedom"): concern about the possibility of another bloody Pugachev-type uprising and fear that peasant uprisings will be followed by the tyranny of some Napoleon. Napoleon was, of course, of great interest to Lermontov, as he was to most of his contemporaries. Lermontov's 1832 *Dva velikana* ("The Two Giants") depicts Napoleon's defeat at Russian hands. The patriotic theme was dear to him, as attested by *Pole Borodina* (1830-31) and *Borodino* (1837). But so also was the enigma of Napoleon's allegedly tragic fate and alleged grandeur of spirit. This can be found in Lermontov as early as 1829.⁴² Further and more detailed discussion on Napoleon will be offered in the following chapters in connection with *Borodino*, with the 1840 *Vozdushnyi korabl'* ("The Phantom Ship") and the 1841 *Poslednee novosel'e* ("Last Resting Place").

Lermontov reacted to the 1830 French Revolution in his *30 iulia. —(Parizh), 1830 goda* (July 30, 1830 (Paris)), in which he roundly condemns Charles X for his failure to rule France with understanding and humanity.

In another poem he takes Pushkin to task for what was generally seen as his courtier-like flattery of the magnate N. B. Iusupov. And in 1834 or 1835 he comes out on the side earlier taken

⁴² *Napoleon*, 1829; *K xxx* ("To xxx"), 1830; *Napoleon*, 1830; *Epitafiia Napoleona* ("Napoleon's Epitaph"), 1830; *Sv. Elena*, ("St. Helena"), 1831.

by Pushkin against the Polish independence fighters.⁴³ So Lermontov was never introspective to the point of being passively indifferent to outside events.

11

No survey of the 1828-35 period would be complete without mention of the poet's 1832 pronouncement on differences between himself and Byron. In his 1830 "Autobiographical Memoirs" he had been eager to emphasize similarities. This 1832 about-face is not to be interpreted as a rejection of Byron, but as an awareness of his own different situation and independent personality. We allow the poem to speak for itself:

Нет, я не Байрон, я другой,
Еще неведомый избранник,
Как он, гонимый миром странник,
Но только с русскою душой.
Я раньше начал, кончу ране,
Мой ум немного совершит;
В душе моей, как в океане,
Надежд разбитых груз лежит.
Кто может, океан угрюмый,
Твои изведать тайны? Кто
Толпе мои расскажет думы?
Я—или Бог—или никто!

No, I'm not Byron, I'm another,
A still unknown chosen one,
Like him, a wanderer pursued by this world,
But with a Russian soul.
I started earlier, I'll finish earlier,
My mind will not accomplish much;
In my soul, as in the ocean,
A load of shattered hopes is lying.
Who can, gloomy ocean,
Plumb your secrets? Who
Can relate my thoughts to the crowd?
I — or God — or no one!

Lermontov certainly must have identified to some extent with Byron in the following 1832 poem which sees the poet's renown as something achieved only through pain:

Я жить хочу! хочу печали
Любви и счастья назло;
Они мой ум избаловали
И слишком сгладили чело.
Пора, пора насмешкам света
Прогнать спокойствия туман;

⁴³ *O polno izviniat' razvrat* ("No more condone depravity"), 1830-1831, and *Opiat' narodnye vitii* ("Once more the populist rhetoricians").

Что без страданий жизнь поэта?
 И что без бури океан?
 Он хочет жить ценою муки,
 Ценой томительных забот.
 Он покупает неба звуки,
 Он даром славы не берет. [1, 372]

I wish to live! I wish for sorrow
 In despite of love and happiness;
 These two have softened up my mind
 And left my brow too free of wrinkles.
 It's time, it's time for the world's mockery
 To chase away this mist of calm;
 What without suffering is the poet's life?
 And what without storms is the ocean?
 He wishes to live at the price of torment,
 At the price of depressing worries.
 He must pay for the sounds from heaven,
 He cannot win glory without cost.

But this recalls not only Byron. The link between suffering and poetic creativity was a Romantic-Age cliché. Witness, for example, Pushkin's Delphic 1830 pronouncement: "*Ia zhit' khochu, chtob myslit' i stradat*" ("I wish to live that I may think and suffer"); *Elegiia* was not published until 1834 (*Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, T. VI (kn. X), otd. 1, p. 16); so borrowing is excluded. We note parenthetically that for once Pushkin's mood was here far heavier than Lermontov's. The year 1832 sees repetition of certain themes: the merits of suffering, true, but also an indifference to or rejection of happiness. This is the year when Lermontov took the perhaps ill-considered step of entering the cadet school in Petersburg, impelled thereto, it is true, by circumstances beyond his control, such as his forced withdrawal from Moscow University, but nevertheless a drastic move. A highly ambivalent attitude to happiness may be seen in the 1832 *Kak v noch' zvezdy paduchei plamen'* ("As in the night the flame of a falling star"):

Как в ночь звезды падучей пламень,
 Не нужен в мире я.
 Хоть сердце тяжело, как камень,
 Но всё под ним змея.

Меня спасало вдохновенье
 От мелочных сует;
 Но от своей души спасенья
 И в самом счастье нет.

Молю о счастья, бывало,
 Дождался наконец,
 И тягостно мне счастье стало,
 Как для царя венец.

И все мечты отвергнув, снова
 Остался я один—

Как замка мрачного, пустого
Ничтожный властелин. [I, 347]

As in the night the flame of a falling star,
I am unneeded in this world.
Although my heart is heavy as a stone,
There lies beneath it a snake.

Inspiration at one time saved me
From trivial pursuits;
But salvation from my soul
I cannot find even in happiness.

I used to pray for happiness,
And finally I found it,
And happiness became to me a burden,
As for the tsar his crown.

And, rejecting all dreams, once more
I remained alone—
Like the paltry lord
Of a dark, empty castle.

Another 1832 poem following roughly the same line with regard to happiness is *Potseluiami prezhde schital* ("By my kisses I formerly reckoned"):

Поцелуями прежде считал
Я счастливую жизнь свою,
Но теперь я от счастья устал,
Но теперь никого не люблю.

И слезами когда-то считал
Я мятежную жизнь мою,
Но тогда я любил и желал—
А теперь никого не люблю!

И я счет своих лет потерял
И крылья забвенья ловлю:
Как я сердце унести бы им дал!
Как бы вечность им бросил мою! [I, 367]

By my kisses I formerly reckoned
My life happy,
But now I've grown weary of happiness,
But now I love no one.

And by my tears I once reckoned
My life a life of revolt,
But then I loved and desired,
But now I love no one!

And I've lost count of my years
And I seek the wings of forgetfulness:

How willingly I'd allow them to carry away my heart!
How willingly I'd fling at them my eternity!

A final example of this outlook, this 1832 pattern of rejecting happiness, perhaps Lermontov's best known lyric, is *Parus*:

Белеет парус одинокой
В тумане моря голубом!..
Что ищет он в стране далекой?
Что кинул он в краю родном?..

Играют волны—ветер свищет,
И мачта гнется и скрипит...
Увы!—он счастья не ищет
И не от счастья бежит!

Под ним струя светлей лазури,
Над ним луч солнца золотой...
А он, мятежный, просит бури,
Как будто в бурях есть покой! [I, 390]

White is the sail and lonely
On the misty, infinite blue;
Flying from what in the homeland?
Seeking for what in the new?

The waves romp, and the winds whistle,
And the mast leans and creaks;
Alas! He flies not from fortune,
And no good fortune he seeks.

Beneath him the stream luminous, azure,
Above him the sun's golden breast;
But he, a rebel, invites the storms,
As though in the storms were rest.⁴⁴

By 1832 Lermontov sometimes, as here, avoids first-person lyric self-revelation.⁴⁵ His role here is played by the sail. Strictly speaking, a sail is inanimate. But the whole bent of the poem forces us to invest it with human characteristics.

Apart from the obvious use of anaphora ("*Chto ishchet on...*," "*Chto kinul on...*," "*on schastiia ne...*," "*I ne ot schastiia...*," "*Pod nim...*," "*Nad nim...*,"), we should note the symmetrical patterning between stanzas: in each of the three stanzas the first two lines contain descriptions of external things and happenings which can be seen or heard; and the third and fourth lines dwell on and bring to light the protagonist's motives. Further, in the third and fourth lines there is a progression from stanza to stanza: in the first stanza there are two contrasting but not logically irreconcilable questions; in the second two mutually exclusive negations of the

⁴⁴ This admirable translation is by Max Eastman, *The Nation*, New York, 1925, vol. 121, No. 3130, 32.

⁴⁵ Vatsuro, "Ty molod, tsvet tvoikh kudrei," *L. E.*, 585.

protagonist's motivation. In the final stanza these make up a single positive affirmation, paradoxical in the bringing together of storm and rest.⁴⁶

12

We have insisted strongly above, in discussing *Molitva* (1829) and the 1831 *Kogda b v pokornosti neznan'ia*, that Lermontov's attitude to God was not consistently hostile. There is no cycle or other body of lyrics showing the poet in an unmitigatedly theomachistic stance. This is not to suggest that his defiance of God is imaginary, but it manifested itself in isolated lyrics. So far no examples of this embitterment have been included, so we conclude this chapter with the 1831 lyric *Chasha zhizni* ("The Cup of Life"). The statement made owes much of its force to the simple, deliberate syntax and the flip-flops executed in the final four lines:

1

Мы пьем из чаши бытия
С закрытыми очами,
Златые омочив края
Своими же слезами;

2

Когда же перед смертью с глаз
Завязка упадет,
И всё, что обольщало нас,
С завязкой исчезает;

3

Тогда мы видим, что пуста
Была золотая чаша,
Что в ней напиток был — мечта,
И что она — не наша! [I, 214]

We drink from the cup of existence
With closed eyes,
Wetting the cup's golden rim
With our tears;

When before death the blindfold
Falls from our eyes,
And everything that once seduced us
Disappears with the blindfold;

Then we see that the golden cup
was empty,
That the drink that filled it was a fantasy,
And that the cup wasn't ours!

⁴⁶ V. M. Markovich, *Stikhotvorenie M. Iu. Lermontova, 'Parus', Analiz odnogo stikhotvoreniia* (L.: Izd. Leningradskogo universiteta, 1985), 122-31.

What, in conclusion, should be said of the years 1828-35 from the lyric standpoint? First, Lermontov's poetic personality and poetic world were defined by 1829, but the years between 1828 and 1832 (we recall the extreme paucity of lyrics in 1833-35) witnessed an impressive advance in modification of initial attitudes and in technical improvement. What we have is not so much a clearly defined development from year to year (1830 was, for some lyrics, a very good year). There is a sort of coexistence, with some good poetry appearing side by side with the youthfully immature. But overall progress is apparent. The early Titanism does not diminish. But by 1832 first-person effusions tend to be replaced by third-person descriptions. Rhetoric is yielding to fast-paced, bare narrative and vigorous argumentation. Cliches are making way for appropriate, telling, realistic detail. Symptomatic of these trends is the steadily diminishing frequency of attributive adjectives between 1828 and 1832.⁴⁷ Lermontov does not cast off his early melancholy. In fact, it may well have deepened around 1832. But his power of self-analysis enables him to express it with restraint. And at no time does he lapse into passive introspection; his eye is always alert to catch the outside issue, affair, event. He has, indeed, learned a great deal, and this will bear fruit in the lyrics of his last years. I hope something of this development has been made apparent to the reader, and, equally, that the reader has felt at first hand the appeal of some of that early poetry.

⁴⁷ Walter N. Vickery, "On the Incidence of the Attributive Adjective in Lermontov's Poetry," *Russian Verse Theory*, ed. Barry P. Scherr and Dean S. Worth (UCLA Slavic Studies, vol. 18) (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1989), 441-54.

CHAPTER II

Lyrics 1836-1839

1

It would be satisfyingly if our study of the 1836-41 lyrics (i.e., the “mature” lyrics discussed here and in the following chapter) revealed thematic or other dividing lines to separate the materials and to establish development and evolution. But we do not find this in Lermontov. The concept of genre has, by 1836, lost its eighteenth-century vitality and effectiveness. And, as V. E. Vatsuro rightly notes, categorization by cycles is an imperfect tool for analyzing Lermontov’s lyrics. We can speak of the Sushkova cycle or the Ivanova cycle (Chapter I) or the Napoleon cycle or the prison cycle. But that leaves far more territory uncharted than charted. We do not receive a clearly delineated picture such as that offered by Goethe (e.g., his “Balladen,” “Anakreontik,” “Romische Elegien,” “Vermischte Epigramme,” “Sprüche,” “Westöstlicher Divan,” etc.). Nor do Lermontov “cycles,” which, as Vatsuro notes, were not established by Lermontov but “discovered” by critics, possess the cohesiveness of, for example, a Blok cycle.¹ Rather in Lermontov we find the appearance and reappearance of a number of themes (briefly outlined in the preceding chapter). This is because the poet’s work presents a reasonably consistent, well-ordered *Weltanschauung*. He was, to use Isaiah Berlin’s distinction, a hedgehog rather than a fox.² But his interests were wide-ranging, and his eye keen. If one reads chronologically through his 1837-41 lyrics, the dominant response is surprise at the wealth and diversity of theme.

We will group together, where appropriate, thematically-related materials. If there is a distinction between 1837-39 and 1840-41, it is one of emphasis: the 1837-39 lyrics place greater emphasis on political questions and less on personal issues than do the lyrics of Lermontov’s last 18 months. Even then the distinction is only partial, for the so-called political lyrics are far from being entirely impersonal, and the emphatically personal lyrics reflect political issues.

Either in my text or in the footnotes I will indicate if a poem is included in the 1840 *Stikhotvorenniia M. Lermontova*, the only poetry collection where the choice was the poet’s and where we can therefore safely say that the author endorsed and stood behind his work. This unofficial test cannot of course be applied to the 1840-41 poems, written too late for inclusion.

2

1836 produced only four lyric poems. Of these, three hark back to Byron. This in itself is noteworthy, for Byron is very much a part of Lermontov’s early years,³ prompting one to speculation that the 1836 “return” to Byron marks a resumption of earlier lyric endeavor.

¹ V. E. Vatsuro, *Tsikli*, L. E., 610.

² Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (N. Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1953), 1. Hedgehogs “relate everything to a single central vision, one system less or more coherent or articulate,” whereas foxes “pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory....” Berlin regards Shakespeare and Pushkin as foxes, Dante and Dostoevsky as hedgehogs.

³ B. M. Eikhenbaum, *Khudozhestvennaia problematika Lermontova, M. Iu. Lermontov: Stikhotvorenniia* (L.: Sovetskii pistol’, 1940), I, 4-5.

The first of Lermontov's 1836 lyrics, *Umiraiushchii gladiator* ("The Dying Gladiator") has as its epigraph the famous line of Byron, "I see before me the gladiator lie" — the first line of stanza 140, Canto IV, of *Childe Harold*. And the main body of the poem (the first 21 lines) is a free adaptation of stanzas 139-141. As in Byron, we have the barbarian gladiator butchered to make a Roman holiday. He remembers his Danube home, his father, his children, as he lies mortally wounded. But there is a significant difference between Lermontov and Byron. The pathos of Byron's lines lies not only in the revulsion against the unfeeling butchering of the victim but also in the admiration Byron evokes for the victim's courage and stoicism in meeting death: "...his manly brow/Consents to death but conquers agony.... He reck'd not of the life he lost nor prize." This admiration Lermontov denies us. He sentimentalizes and trivializes by inserting "*I molit zhalosti naprasno mutnyi vzor*" ("And his dimming gaze prays for pity"), which has the effect of diminishing the dying man. A close imitation of Byron is not necessarily a criterion of excellence, but Lermontov's changes reduce the effectiveness of the piece.

The last two paragraphs (of 6 and 9 lines respectively) draw a parallel between the loosely similar decrepitude of Ancient Rome and the decrepitude of Modern (i.e. nineteenth-century) Europe. This equation is in itself acceptable. It is indeed one of the central themes of the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*. But in Lermontov's poem, these last 15 lines, while not strictly at odds with the preceding 21, have the effect of blurring their focus. Who is the dying gladiator? He is a barbarian. He is a member of those tribes who will destroy Rome. He perishes, but his fellow barbarians will shortly triumph. In this sense he symbolizes the vigorous new force which will sweep away the old. Byron puts it: "Shall he expire/And unavenged? — Arise, ye Goths, and glut your ire!" And this being so, it is a tactical error on Lermontov's part — one which obscures his meaning and weakens his message — when he draws parallels between the expiring gladiator and decrepit Europe. Like the gladiator, Europe is seen "inclining your inglorious head to the grave." Both are derided by the crowd:

Что знатным и толпе сраженный гладиатор?
Он презрен и забыт... освистанный актер. [I, 403]

What to the nobles and to the crowd is a stricken gladiator?
He is despised and forgotten...an actor whistled off the stage.

And Europe is

Осмеянный ликующей толпою!

Mocked by the exultant crowd!

All this, while not actually contradictory, invites confusion. The last nine lines do not improve the situation: Europe is depicted indulging in romantic escapism, reliving the past. Both paragraphs thus move the reader further and further from the dying gladiator.

Lermontov never attempted to publish this poem. When it appeared in 1842, someone had deleted the last two paragraphs. This may have been Lermontov's own decision, for they were removed also at some point in the authorized copy. But it may have been done by someone involved in the editing of *Otechestvennyye zapiski*. In either case, in our view it was justified.

This flawed poem is of interest for Lermontov's development. Ideologically, it aligns him with those who saw Europe as a spent force and who took a negative view of European Romantic preoccupation with the past. In it, also, Lermontov begins to make use of "declamatory style": note in particular the iambs of uneven length, the civic theme emotionally charged, a generous

use of epithets, especially condemnatory epithets. Stylistically these last two paragraphs foreshadow the concluding lines of Lermontov's 1837 *Smeri' poeta* ("Death of a Poet").⁴

The second 1836 poem, *Evreiskaia melodiia*, ("Hebrew Melody"), subtitled "From Byron," is a free translation of one of Byron's *Hebrew Melodies*, "My soul is dark — Oh! quickly string...." (1815). It consists of two eight-line stanzas. Byron's masculine-ending four-foot iambs are rendered by six-foot masculine-rhyming iambs with caesura alternating with four-foot (in one case three-foot) feminine-rhyming iambs.

The poet's "soul is dark." He calls on the singer to pluck forth from the golden harp "the sounds of paradise" ("zvuki raia"). Any hopes still alive in his bosom will be reawakened within him, and his tears will flow. Let the singer's song be savage ("Pust' budet pesn' tvoia dika"), he needs no songs of mirth, he needs tears or his heart will break from torment, it is full—like death's goblet—full of poison. The concluding lines:

Страданиями была упитана она,
Томилась долго и безмолвно;
И грозный час настал — теперь она полна,
Как кубок смерти яда полный. [I, 405]

It was swollen with suffering,
It languished long and silently;
And a terrible hour struck — now it is full,
Like the goblet of death full of poison.

[translation provided by copy editor]

The theme is clearly one with which Byron and Lermontov could equally feel at home. And in Lermontov's case the poem could well have been written in 1830-32.⁵

One of the most popular of Byron's poems in Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century was the 1809 "Lines written in an Album at Malta." It was translated by Viazemskii, Kozlov, Tiutchev, and others. It was also reflected in Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin* (I,50): "Gde ia stradal, gde ia liubil/Gde serdtse ia pokhoronil" and his 1830 *Chto v imeni tebe moem?*⁶ And it was twice reworked by Lermontov, once in his 1830 *Net, ia ne trebuiu vniman'ia* ("No, I do not demand attention"), and now in 1836 in *V al'bom* ("In an Album"). The original goes as follows:

As o'er the cold sepulchral stone
Some name arrests the passer-bye;
Thus, when thou viewst this page alone,
May mine attract thy pensive eye!

⁴ First published, minus the last two paragraphs, in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1842, XXI, No. 6, 378, and in its entirety in *Rus'*, 1884, No. 5. The authorized copy is dated February 2, 1836. Note also a French source, "Le gladiateur" by Charles-Julien Lioult de Chenedolle (1769-1833), published in 1806-7 and again in 1820 in *Études poétiques*. Lermontov had very probably read "Le gladiateur." Eikhenbaum hypothesizes that Lermontov had not read Chenedolle, but that Byron had; thus all three poems had much in common. See Eikhenbaum, II, 162-163. Also M. Breitman, *Lermontov, Bairon i Shendolle*, *Vestnik literatury*, 1922, No. 2-3, 9-10.

⁵ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1839, IV, No. 6, 80, and then in Lermontov's 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.

⁶ A. A. Il'in-Tomich, "Pushkin; Stikhotvorenie Bairona 'Written in an Album,'" *Pushkinskie chteniia v Tartu* (Tallinn, 1987), 37-41.

And when by thee that name is read,
Perchance in some succeeding year,
Reflect on me as on the dead,
And think my heart is buried here.

In 1830 this was covered by Lermontov in 16 lines (as in Byron, in four-foot iambs). In the 1836 reworking, he shortens it nine lines and comes much closer to the original. He starts with the image of the grave, the “lonesome” grave, which catches the traveler’s eye; “so too let this pale page catch your sweet eye; and if after many years you read the poet’s meditation, and recall how he loved you, reflect then that he is no more, and that this is where he buried his heart:”

Как одинокая гробница
Вниманье путника зовет,
Так эта бледная страница
Пусть милый взор твой привлечет.

И если после многих лет
Прочтешь ты, как мечтал поэт,
И вспомнишь, как тебя любил он,
То думай, что его уж нет,
Что сердце здесь похоронил он. [1, 406]

Byron’s lady has a “pensive eye,” while Lermontov’s has a “sweet gaze” (“*milyi vzor*”). And Lermontov’s extra line asks her to “recall how he loved you,” whereas in Byron this is merely implied. Note that he has in fact used Pushkin’s rhymes from *Evgenii Onegin*: “... *Gde ia stradal, gde ia liubil/Gde serdtse ia pokhoronil.*”

All in all, Lermontov’s nine lines are a graceful contribution to the Maltese album theme in Russia. It is noteworthy that Lermontov reaches back to 1830 for his content.⁷

The last of the 1836 lyrics, *Velikii muzh* (“The Great Man”) presents a problem: Who was the great man? The page on which this poem was written in Lermontov’s hand has been torn off at the top. We are probably therefore missing the first stanza and some indication of the addressee. The surviving three stanzas read:

Великий муж! Здесь нет награды,
Достойной доблести твоей!
Ее на небе сыщут взгляды,
И не найдут среди людей.

Но беспристрастное преданье
Твой славный подвиг сохранит,
И, услышав твое названье,
Твой сын душою закипит.

Свершит блистательную тризну
Потомок поздний над тобой
И с непритворною слезой
Промолвит: «он любил отчизну!» [1, 407]

⁷ First published in *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, 1839, III, No. 4, 131-132, and in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.

Great man! Here there's no reward
 Worthy of your courage!
 It will be found in heaven,
 Not here among people.

But an unbiased posterity
 Will preserve your glorious deed,
 And, hearing your name,
 Your son will feel his soul afire.

Your distant descendant will celebrate
 For you a magnificent funeral feast,
 And with an unfeigned tear will say:
 "He loved the fatherland!"

The main points are clear: the great man addressed has been denied the national acclaim to which he was entitled, but posterity will bring in a fairer verdict, recognizing his merit, his courage, and his love of Russia.

The two main candidates for the part of great man are P. Ia. Chaadaev (1793-1856) and M. B. Barklai de-Tolli (1761-1818). In 1836, both were very much in the public eye. The publication in September in *Teleskop* of Chaadaev's first *Philosophical Letter* had provoked a furor directed at his alleged lack of patriotism. His *Letter*, seeking to place Russia among the family of nations in terms of the forward movement of mankind, was a strong indictment of her past and present and held that her role in history was meaningless and nonexistent. In his *Apology of a Madman*, Chaadaev was to protest his love of Russia but insist that he could not love her with closed eyes. Meanwhile, he had already been pronounced mad by order of Nicholas I, placed loosely under house arrest, and subjected to daily doctor's visits. Nicholas probably saw this as the most humane solution available: less than 50 years earlier Radishchev's *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* had earned him exile in Siberia. It is also ironic that in a very short time, on February 19 or 20, 1837, Lermontov's sanity would also be questioned by Nicholas. Meanwhile, Lermontov's own love of and fury against Russia made Chaadaev's form of patriotism perfectly understandable and acceptable to the poet.⁸

Barklai de-Tolli was also much in the public eye in 1836. Preparations were underway to celebrate the twenty fifth anniversary of the battle of Borodino. There had been calls for a reassessment of Barklai's role in the 1812 campaign. Pushkin's 1835 *Polkovodets* ("The Commander") is but one example. Barklai-de-Tolli's policy of scorched-earth withdrawal in the face of Napoleon's advance into Russia had been highly unpopular. War hysteria and his non-Russian sounding name had provoked charges of betrayal. He had been superseded as commander-in-chief by Kutuzov, whose indisputable Russianness had made it possible for him to pursue the same strategy. Although in 1813 Barklai de-Tolli had been restored to his command and had served with distinction through 1815 (when he was promoted marshal), he could nonetheless be viewed as a maligned patriot who had "loved the fatherland."

Other possible addressees are A. N. Radishchev (1749-1802), mentioned above in connection with his 1791 *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*; K. F. Ryleev (1795-1826), and P. I.

⁸ I. Andronikov's argument that because Lermontov was shortly to write *Borodino* (1837), he could not share Chaadaev's pessimistic critical attitudes is untenable; there are many different levels on which one can approve or disapprove of one's country, and Lermontov clearly had mixed feelings. See Andronikov, *Lermontov* (M.: Sovetskii pisatel', 1951), 91-102.

Pestel' (1793-1826), two of the five Decembrists hanged in July, 1826. But unlike Chaadaev and Barklai-de-Tolli, they were not in the public eye in 1836, and they are thus unlikely candidates.

Failure to establish the identity of the great man does not detract from the poem's impact. Even with one stanza presumably missing, possibly torn off for reasons of prudence, the poem may be regarded as complete. The three four-foot iambic stanzas we have convey adequately and admirably the crux of the issue.

Looking at the four poems dated 1836, it is clear that this year does not really mark the beginning of Lermontov's new lyric poetry. It is, rather, a picking up of the past, including a harking back to Byron. There are four-foot iambs with feminines and masculines alternating smoothly, coincidence of line units with semantic units, the tendency for nouns to be qualified by an appropriate, attributive adjective. These characteristics, present in *Val'bom* and *Velikii muzh*, are reminiscent of early Lermontov and of Pushkin and his contemporaries. With reference specifically to *Val'bom*, it should be noted that album verse in this era is nearly always in four-foot iambs with alternating crisscross feminine and masculine rhymes. These are the preferred formal features of a genre which flourished before Lermontov, in Pushkin's heyday and by virtue of its studied effortlessness, lightness, and conventionality was necessarily conservative in form rather than experimental. Meanwhile, if 1836 is held to constitute the break in Lermontov's lyric silence, it must be reckoned a small break. He is still a long way from finding his true lyric voice. The only signs of new development are, ironically, to be found in the least satisfactory of the four poems, *Umiraiushchii gladiator*, which provides the earliest example of the declamatory style.

3

The 1837 *Borodino* provides a 98-line eyewitness account of the 1812 battle: first the withdrawal before Napoleon's advance; then the decision to make a stand at Borodino; the preliminaries; finally, the battle itself. Like *Val'bom*, this is a highly successful reworking of an earlier lyric, the 66-line 1830-31 poem entitled *Pole Borodina* ("The Field of Borodino").

Both versions have a fine brave ring to the lines, achieved by the alternation of four-foot with three-foot iambs, by the rhyme scheme of both poems, and by the avoidance of enjambement. The earlier version is arranged in 11-line stanzas, that of 1837 in 7-line stanzas. The earlier version has the following rhyme scheme: A(4), b(4), A(4), b(4), C(4), C(4), d(3), E(4), E(4), E(4), d(3). Note in particular the short seventh and eleventh lines, linked by a masculine rhyme that encloses three feminine-rhymed lines. The later poem follows the same pattern, except that the initial crisscross feminine-masculine rhymed quatrain is missing, which inevitably gives greater play to the shorter three-foot lines. But the basic principle of sound and effect is the same in both poems. How this works may be seen by looking at any stanza. Here from the 1837 poem is the second:

— Да, были люди в наше время,	A(4)	
Не то, что нынешнее племя:	A(4)	
Богатыри — не вы!	b(3)	
Плохая им досталась доля:	C(4)	
Не многие вернулись с поля...	C(4)	
Не будь на то господня воля,	C(4)	
Не отдали б Москвы!	b(3)	[I, 408]

Yes, in our day there were real people,
Not like today's generation:

Heroes — and not you people!
 A harsh lot fell to them:
 Not many returned from the field...
 If it had not been God's will,
 We wouldn't have surrendered Moscow!

The two short lines with their masculine rhymes enclosing the smoothly flowing triple four-foot feminine rhymes provide a powerful climactic release at the stanza's end.

Whole lines are lifted from the earlier version, but there are important differences. In 1830-31 the narrator is an artilleryman ("*la golovu podnial s lafeta...*"—"I raised my head from the gun-carriage..."), whether officer or soldier is not clear. The 1837 version brings his identity and personality into sharper focus: he is an artilleryman, an old soldier, narrating the Borodino events to younger soldiers. The younger generation is in his eyes vastly inferior to the heroes who fought at Borodino. Along with the change of narrator, the sometimes odaic Lomonosovan language ("*la vspomnia ledeneiu ves'.*" "*Zhivye s mertvymi sravnialis*") of the 1830-31 version has been replaced by the lively, folksy intonations of the old soldier.

This is one of the great patriotic poems of the Russian language. Inevitably Russians tend to rate it higher than foreigners. But it is wrong to quibble about degrees of high quality. *Borodino* is a very impressive poem. However, so is the 1830-31 poem. To put the two in historical perspective, while the earlier poem pays a limited but legitimate tribute to the tradition of the ode, the later poem renders that tradition inoperative and unviable as a Russian poetic means of portraying battle: Lomonosov's odes and Derzhavin's, even Pushkin's *Poltava*, are made forever dated, relegated to the past history of Russian poetry: where the traditional battle ode offered a commanding general's overview of the battle, *Borodino* presents the limited view of a non-commissioned artilleryman amid the smoke and confusion. This view will be further developed in Lermontov's 1840 *Valerik*. It points the way for L. N. Tolstoi, most notably in *War and Peace*.

The commonly expressed view is that the old soldier's criticisms of the younger generation extend to Lermontov's Petersburg contemporaries. The 1838 *Duma* ("Meditation") is, indeed, an indictment of Lermontov's generation. But to push *Borodino* in that direction is misguided. The old soldier is by no means atypical in his belief that the younger generation of soldiers is inferior to his own. And in that context his criticisms have their meaning.⁹

4

Smert' poeta won a prominent place among his contemporaries for the previously unknown Lermontov. Pushkin was mortally wounded in a duel with the guards officer, d'Anthès, a French-Alsatian immigrant, on the afternoon of January 27, 1837. On January 28 premature reports of Pushkin's death circulated. These reports prompted Lermontov to write 56 of the poem's eventual 72 lines. Pushkin died on the afternoon of January 29. Several days later, February 7, goaded by the support for d'Anthès in high society, Lermontov added the final 16 lines, a bitter indictment, no longer of d'Anthès alone as an unfeeling fortune-seeker, but of the whole corrupt court apparatus. It was these 16 lines which tipped the scales against Lermontov, persuading Nicholas I to have him arrested on February 18. On March 19 he was sent from

⁹ First published in *Sovremennik*, 1837, VI, No. 2, 207-211. The 1830-1831 *Pole Borodina* was first published in the 1860 edition of Lermontov's works, II, 102-5. The critical viewpoint rejected here is found in Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, IV, 504-5, 503, and is apparently endorsed in Eikhenbaum 1961, 84.

Petersburg to the Caucasus. Moreover, on February 19 or 20 the order was given that Lermontov should be checked out medically to see if he was out of his mind ("ne pomeshan li on").

One envisions *Smert' poeta* being written in anger and at speed. It does not therefore surprise us to see that Lermontov has made use of borrowing and allusions. Among several borrowings from Pushkin, the most pertinent relates to the French poet, André Chenier. Chenier, who was quite rightly viewed by Pushkin as a champion of free and independent thought, was guillotined in 1794, a poet-victim therefore of tyranny. In 1825 Pushkin wrote his *Andrei Shen'e* in the French poet's honor. The syntactic contours and overall semantic thrust of four Pushkin lines are clearly echoed in Lermontov. Pushkin writes:

Зачем от жизни сей, ленивой и простой,
Я кинулся туда, где ужас роковой,
Где страсти дикие, где буйные невежды,
И злоба, и корысть!

Why from this life, leisurely and simple,
Did I fling myself to where fateful horror thrives,
And wild passions, and violent ignoramuses,
And malice, and self-interest!

And in *Smert' poeta* we have:

Зачем от мирных нег и дружбы простодушной
Вступил он в этот свет завистливый и душный
Для сердца вольного и пламенных страстей?¹⁰

Pursuing this same line of thought, Lermontov makes similar use of Zhukovskii writing about V. A. Ozerov, the sentimentalist playwright (1769-1816). In an 1814 verse epistle Zhukovskii had championed the poet-playwright Ozerov as the victim of malicious criticism from conservative literati:

Зачем он свой сплестать венец
Давал завистникам с друзьями?
Пусть Дружба нежными перстами
Из лавров сей венец свила —
В них Зависть терния вплела;
И торжествует: растерзали
Их иглы славное чело —
Простым сердцам смертельно зло:
Певец угаснул от печали.

Why did he allow not only friends, but the envious
To weave for him his poet's wreath?
Though Friendship with loving fingers
Did from the laurels weave this crown,
Yet Envy added thorns;
And triumphed: the thorns
Bloodied his glorious brow —
For simple hearts evil is deadly:

¹⁰ Translated below with the remainder of *Smert' poeta*.

The poet perished from his sorrow....¹¹

But the most significant influence, conscious or unconscious, on *Smert' poeta* comes from a poem written in 1825 entitled *Na smert' Chernova* ("On the Death of Chernov"). It does not just affect individual lines, insights, or arguments. Rather, it determines the very spirit and thrust of the poem, its emotional coloring. It was written by one of two Decembrist poets, either V. K. Kiukhel'beker or K. F. Ryleev, the former shortly to be exiled, the latter hanged. The authorship need not concern us here. The poem's subject is a duel in which both participants were killed, and it expresses very clearly an insufficiently recognized aspect of Decembrist psychology, the tendency to see honesty, integrity and forthrightness as characteristically Russian virtues, while depravity and duplicity are equated with foreigners. In the poem, Chernov, a poor guards officer, dueling to protect his sister's honor, embodies Russian virtue. His opponent, Novosil'tsev, a very wealthy guards officer and no less Russian, is, because of his ties to a cosmopolitan high society and the court, identified as foreign — and consequently both base and contemptuous of things Russian. This is precisely the pattern of values which leaves its impress on Lermontov's *Smert' poeta*. Lermontov indites d'Anthès, the foreigner and fortune-hunter, on the grounds of contemptuous indifference to Russian values. And though the appended final 16 lines make no mention of foreigners, they, like the Chernov poem, condemn the cosmopolitan high society and court for their toadying, greed, and overall baseness of character.¹²

Lermontov's *Smert' poeta* set the course for a tradition of scholarly and nonscholarly xenophobic attitudes which, in varying degrees, have persisted up to the present day.

Because of the extremely important role in both Lermontov's career and Russian literature, the poem is reproduced here in its entirety:

Погиб поэт! — невольник чести —
 Пал, оклеветанный молвой,
 С свинцом в груди и жадной мести,
 Поникнув гордой головой!..
 Не вынесла душа поэта
 Позора мелочных обид,
 Восстал он против мнений света
 Один как прежде... и убит!
 Убит!.. к чему теперь рыдания,
 Пустых похвал ненужный хор,
 И жалкий лепет оправдания?
 Судьбы свершился приговор!
 Не вы ль сперва так злобно гнали

¹¹ For the details of this borrowing process, the following sources will be helpful: B. T. Udodov, *M. Iu. Lermontov* (Voronezh: Izdatel'stvo Voronezhskogo universiteta, 1973), 192-208; I. Andronikov, *Lermontov: Issledovaniia i nakhodki* (M.: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1968), 9; E. Gershtein, *Sud'ba Lermontova* (M.: Sovetskii pisatel', 1964), 285-90; I. Borichevskii *Pushkin i Lermontov v bor'be s pridvornoii aristokratiei, Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, No. 45-46, 323-362; Eikhenbaum, *Academia II*, 180, and his *Lermontov: opyt istoriko-literaturnoi otsenki* (L., 1924), 107-8.

¹² For a study of the parallels between Chernov's poem and *Smert' poeta* see Walter Vickery, "Kiukhel'beker's 'On the Death of Chernov' and Lermontov's 'The Death of a Poet': The 'Foreigners'" *Studies in Honor of Vsevolod Setchkarev* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica 1987), 255-273.

Его свободный, смелый дар
 И для потехи раздували
 Чуть затаившийся пожар?
 Что ж? веселитесь...— он мучений
 Последних вынести не мог:
 Угас, как светоч, дивный гений,
 Увял торжественный венок.

Его убийца хладнокровно
 Навел удар... спасенья нет:
 Пустое сердце бьется ровно,
 В руке не дрогнул пистолет.
 И что за диво?.. издалека,
 Подобный сотням беглецов,
 На ловлю счастья и чинов
 Зброшен к нам по воле рока;
 Смеясь, он дерзко презирал
 Земли чужой язык и нравы;
 Не мог щадить он нашей славы;
 Не мог понять в сей миг кровавый,
 На что он руку поднимал!..

И он убит — и взят могилой,
 Как тот певец, неведомый, но милый,
 Добыча ревности глухой,
 Воспетый им с такою чудной силой,
 Сраженный, как и он, безжалостной рукой.

Зачем от мирных нег и дружбы простодушной
 Вступил он в этот свет завистливый и душный
 Для сердца вольного и пламенных страстей?
 Зачем он руку дал клеветникам ничтожным,
 Зачем поверил он словам и ласкам ложным,
 Он, с юных лет постигнувший людей?..

И прежний сняв венок — они венец терновый,
 Увитый лаврами, надели на него:

Но иглы тайные сурово
 Язвили славное чело;

Отравлены его последние мгновенья
 Коварным шопотом насмешливых невежд,
 И умер он — с напрасной жаждой мщенья,
 С досадой тайною обманутых надежд.

Замолкли звуки чудных песен,
 Не раздаваться им опять:
 Приют певца утрюм и тесен,
 И на устах его печать.—

*

А вы, надменные потомки
 Известной подлостью прославленных отцов,
 Пятою рабскою поправшие обломки
 Игрою счастья обиженных родов!
 Вы, жадною толпой стоящие у трона,
 Свободы, Гения и Славы палачи!
 Таитесь вы под сению закона,
 Пред вами суд и правда — всё молчи!..
 Но есть и Божий суд, наперсники разврата!
 Есть грозный суд: он ждет;
 Он не доступен звону злата,
 И мысли и дела он знает наперед.
 Тогда напрасно вы прибегнете к злословью;
 Оно вам не поможет вновь,
 И вы не смаете всей вашей черной кровью
 Поэта праведную кровь!

The rhetorical impact of the first two paragraphs (through line 33) rests on a skillfully balanced alternation between rapid expository advance and regular emphatic returns to the one incapable and irremediable truth, Pushkin's death. Notwithstanding the arrangement into two paragraphs, there is an underlying stanzaic structure, consisting of seven autonomous quatrains and one autonomous five-line sequence. The basic division into autonomous segments is secured, first, by the rhymes, which never stray outside their own quatrains; through line 24 we have always crisscrossing AbAb, i.e. alternating feminines and masculines, then one enclosing-rhyme AbBA quatrain, and finally the five-line enclosing aBBBa, in which the additional enclosed rhyme lends majesty and finality to this whole four-foot iambic sweep. The same autonomy is further secured by the strong syntactic pauses at the end of each four-line segment or in one case five-line segment — !!! ? . . ; ! Rhetorically, this segmentation enables the poet to add one more tersely expressed article of indictment in each quatrain, always returning on the fourth line to the theme of irreparable loss. Inevitably, the English rendering can give only a pale shadow of these formal characteristics which make the force of the original:

The poet has perished — a captive of honor —
 Has fallen, slandered by malicious talk,
 With lead in his heart and the thirst for vengeance,
 Bowing his proud head!...
 The poet's soul could not abide
 The shame of small-minded insults,
 He rebelled against society's opinions,
 Alone as formerly... and he was killed!
 Killed!... for what now idle tears,
 The useless wave of empty praise,
 The wretched self-justifying babble?
 Fate's sentence has been carried out!
 Was it not you who first harassed
 With malice his courageous mind
 And for amusement fanned the flame
 Scarce visible to human eye?

Be happy then, he was not able
 To stand the final agonies:
 His far-shining genius, like a light,
 Went out, his poet's crown all sere.

Cold-bloodedly his killer aimed
 His pistol... there is no escape:
 The empty heart beats evenly,
 The pistol hand's untrembling, firm.
 What wonder!... from an alien land,
 Like many, many fugitives,
 In search of fortune and success,
 He was by fate cast in our midst;
 He, laughing and insolent, despised
 Our foreign tongue, our alien land;
 He would not spare our glory, nor
 Could see, when the bloody moment came,
 What he was aiming to strike down!...

The poem at this point breaks into "free" iambs, from 6- to 4-foot iambs, and adopts for the moment a more elegiac tone:

 And he is dead, — claimed by the grave,
 Like that unknown poet, dear to the heart,
 The prey of ignorant envy,
 Of whom he sang with wondrous power,
 Struck down as he was by an unsparing hand.

The unknown poet here mentioned is generally thought to be Lenskii, killed in a duel by the main hero in Pushkin's great work, *Evgenii Onegin*:

Why from peaceful pleasures and openhearted friendship
 Did he move into that world — envious, suffocating
 For the free spirit and for ardent passion?
 Why did he give his hand to worthless slanderers,
 Why did he give his trust to false words, false caresses,
 He who from his youth had fathomed human hearts?..

They took his former wreath; instead, a crown of thorns,
 Entwined with laurels on his head they placed:
 But the harsh thorns, invisible,
 Bloodied his glorious brow;
 His final days were poisoned
 By the perfidious whisperings of mocking fools,
 And he died with a vain thirst for vengeance,
 With hidden vexation at his hopes deceived.
 Silent the sounds of wondrous song,
 Never again shall they ring forth:
 The poet's rest is dark and narrow,
 And his lips forever sealed.

And so to the last 16 lines, still “free” iambs, in one case a three-foot line, and to a heightened level of invective and vituperation:

But you, you arrogant descendants
 Of fathers famed for their well-known baseness,
 Who with your servile heels ground in the dust
 Those remnants of families ill used by fortune’s turn!
 You, standing — a greedy throng — beside the throne,
 You butchers of Freedom, Genius, and Renown!
 You shelter yourselves beneath the law;
 You trample justice, stifle truth!
 Friends of depravity, there is still God’s judgment,
 His wrathful justice: it awaits;
 Unmoved by the false ring of gold,
 And all your thoughts and deeds knows in advance.
 In vain will then be all your false-tongued talk:
 It will not help a second time,
 And all your black blood will never wash away
 The poet’s righteous blood!

Along with the not entirely successful *Umiraiushchii gladiator* of the previous year, *Smert’ poeta*, and in particular its last 16 lines, marks the advent of Lermontov’s so-called “declamatory” style. The style is admirably adapted to satirical exposure, and its chief weapon is the semantically-loaded, highly condemnatory epithet. Indeed, the enhanced role of the epithet is the principal formal characteristic of this rhetorical approach, designed to arouse indignation. Comparing the first 33 lines (four-foot iambs) with the last 16 (57-72), it becomes apparent that in the former group the epithet plays a relatively modest role, while the frequent and powerful verbs produce the impact. But, in the last 16 lines the power shifts to the epithet: in the first six lines of this group, apostrophizing the miscreants, there is not a single finite verbal form, but there are full-blooded adjectives in abundance: note the following noun-adjective or near-adjectival combinations: “*nadmennye potomki*” (arrogant descendants); “*izvestnoi podlost’iu*” (well-known baseness); “*piatoi rabskoiu*” (servile heels); “*zhadnoi tolpoi*” (greedy throng); and in the concluding lines “*Bozhii sud*,” (divine judgment); finally “*vashei chernoii krov’iu*” (your black blood) contrasted with the poet’s “*pravednuiu krov’*” (righteous blood). The middle paragraphs (lines 34-56) provide a transition to the last 16. At one point they had brought the poem to an end, and they contain the same abundance of pejorative epithets: e.g., “*Svet zamistlivyi i dushnyi*” (envious and suffocating world); “*klevetnikam nichtozhnym*” (worthless slanderers); “*kovarnym shopotom nasmeshlivykh nevezhd*” (By the perfidious whisperings of mocking fools). In a number of these combinations the noun, too, is innately pejorative.

Such then are the main weapons employed in *Smert’ poeta*: the rapid exposition followed by a return in the fourth line of each quatrain to the bitter fact of Pushkin’s having been killed and the condemnatory noun-adjective combination of the new declamatory style. Even viewed from our considerable distance in time and place, it is easy to envisage the influence that Lermontov’s lines must have had on his contemporaries of 1837.¹³

¹³ See also, especially for the declamatory style, Eikhenbaum 1924, 107-113. The high incidence of the epithet not only in the declamatory style but at this period is explained largely by French models, in verse and prose; see Walter N. Vickery, “On the Incidence of the Attributive

In his 1840 collection, *Stikhotvoreniia*, Lermontov dates *Vetka Palestiny* ("The Palm Branch from Palestine") 1836. But the consensus of opinion today dates it early 1837 and ties it in with events surrounding the writing of *Smert' poeta*. According to A. N. Murav'ev (1806-74), writer, friend of Lermontov, and well-connected civil servant, Lermontov turned to him for help in the face of the imminent threat arising from his having written "impermissible verses" on Pushkin's death. He wanted Murav'ev to enlist the aid of his cousin, A. N. Mordvinov, executive director of the Third Section. As Lermontov waited for Murav'ev to return home, he became taken with some palm-leaf branches placed in the icon-and-prayer room (*obraznaia*) in front of the icons and wrote *Vetka Palestiny*. The palm had been carried by Murav'ev at matins in 1830 on Palm Sunday in the Holy Land. Murav'ev gave the palm branch to Lermontov, who had originally dedicated the poem to him.¹⁴

Vetka Palestiny is most directly connected with Pushkin's 1828 *Tsvetok* ("The Flower"). But both poems derive from a tradition associated with Zhukovskii, which Eikhenbaum calls the school of melancholic meditation. Its principal formal characteristic is a sequence of questions which drive it. The system of questions *does* have, *pace* Eikhenbaum, an obvious semantic and thematic significance, but also, as he rightly stresses, an intonational significance.

A valid and important distinction between Lermontov and Zhukovskii helps shed light on a difference in their poetics. While Zhukovskii tends to use sequences of questions in order to produce a feeling of mystery, unknowability, uncertainty, Lermontov uses questions also to advance the narrative. As Eikhenbaum expresses it, "in place of Zhukovskii's abstract-lyric meditation we have something approaching a ballad and having the hint of a plot."¹⁵

There is also an important difference with Pushkin's *Tsvetok*. Let us start by giving the first stanza of the Pushkin poem in order to show how, in general, the system works, and, specifically, to gain something of a feeling for *Tsvetok*:

Где цвел? когда? какой весною?
И долго ль цвел? и сорван кем,
Чужой, знакомой ли рукою?
И положен сюда зачем?

Where did it grow? When? Which spring?
Was it long in bloom? Who plucked it?
An alien or familiar hand?
And why was it placed here?

The questions remain unanswered here, as they remain unanswered in the Lermontov poem also: Where did you grow? What hill or vale did you adorn? Was it by the clear waters of the Jordan

Adjective in Lermontov's Poetry," ed. Barry P. Scherr and Dean J. Worth, *Russian Verse Theory (UCLA Slavic Studies, vol. 18)* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1989) 441-454.

¹⁴ A. N. Murav'ev, *Znakomstvo s russkimi poetami* (Kiev, 1871), 23-25. As to the 1836 dating, Murav'ev himself muddied the waters here, for in 1872, ignoring his 1871 statement, he wrote that Lermontov's poem was written in 1836 (*Opisanie predmetov drevnosti.... Description of Objects of Antiquity....* Kiev, 1872). His memory is not considered reliable. Lermontov's 1840 collection gives 1836 as the date, but it also contains some incorrect dates. The poem is today generally thought to have been written in Murav'ev's house, probably February 17 or 18, 1837.

¹⁵ Eikhenbaum 1924, 106.

that the Eastern sun caressed you? Or did the night wind on the heights of Lebanon buffet you angrily?

Скажи мне, ветка Палестины:
Где ты росла, где ты цвела?
Каких холмов, какой долины
Ты украшением была?

У вод ли чистых Иордана
Востока луч тебя ласкал,
Ночной ли ветер в горах Ливана
Тебя сердито колыхал?

And when Jerusalem's poor sons were intertwining your leaves, were they reading a silent prayer? Or singing songs of ancient times?

Молитву ль тихую читали
Иль пели песни старины,
Когда листья твои сплетали
Солима бедные сыны?

And does your parent palm still live, still in the summer heat entice with broad-spread leafy crown the one who in the desert passes by?

И пальма та жива ль поныне?
Всё так же ль манит в летний зной
Она прохожего в пустыне
Широколиственной главой?

Or disconsolate, alone, did she wither as you withered? And does the valley dust hasten to cover her yellowed leaves?

Или в разлуке безотрадной
Она увяла, как и ты,
И дольний прах ложится жадно
На пожелтевшие листья?..

Say: who, with reverent hand, brought you to this country? Did he often times grieve over you?

Поведай: набожной рукою
Кто в этот край тебя занес?
Грустил он часто над тобою?
Хранишь ты след горючих слез?

Or, best of warriors in the divine ranks, with cloudless brow, was he—as you are—always worthy of the heavens, before man and God?

Иль, Божьей рати лучший воин,
Он был, с безоблачным челом,
Как ты, всегда небес достоин
Перед людьми и божеством?..

The questions are based on a series of oppositions, constantly offering a choice of two alternatives: In the hills or in the valley? By the Jordan or on the heights of Lebanon? Reading

prayers or singing songs? Alive or dead? So pervasive is the sense of opposition that the last two stanzas quoted are presented as opposed alternatives (note the //), whereas there is no true opposition. Even the first two lines, also without an opposition, have a binary arrangement (rosla, tsvela). The pattern of question and opposition is set and given emphasis by the syntactic parallelism of the first two stanzas: at least one question to each half stanza, with verbal endings for all the even lines (*tsvela? byla? laskal, kolykhal?*).

In the last two stanzas there is a clearly marked switch, not merely of intonation but of narrative development and denouement, from apparent questioning to positive statement and affirmation:

Заботой тайною хранима
 Перед иконой золотой
 Стоишь ты, ветвь Ерусалима,
 Святыни верный часовой!
 Прозрачный сумрак, луч лампы,
 Кивот и крест, символ святой...
 Всё полно мира и отрады
 Вокруг тебя и над тобой. [I, 415]

Preserved by someone's unseen care,
 Before the golden icon
 You stand, palm branch of Jerusalem,
 A true guardian of sanctitude!

Transparent, dim religious light,
 Icon-case, cross, symbol of Grace. . .
 Full of peacefulness and joy
 Is all around you, all above you.

In the comparison with Zhukovskii, above, we noted the balladic element in Lermontov's poem, "the hint of a plot." Lermontov's questions, although circumstantial, have a distinctly narrative function. Despite the fact that we never get any firm answers to them, from the seven "question" stanzas we learn: where the palm branch grew to maturity; that it was plaited in Jerusalem; that (introduced by questions about the parent palm) the palm branch withered, i.e. it is a victim; that the palm branch is without sin ("*Kak ty*," stanza 7); that the palm branch has been carried by a loving hand to Russia. In both geographical and narrative terms, the story has moved significantly. The questioning technique, though it obviously advances the narrative more slowly than would bold statements of fact, never actually brings it to a halt.

Finally, in the two last stanzas we have the happy ending: a homecoming or finding a home. The palm branch, carried by a loving hand, has found its place of rest, peace, beatitude. This sense is reinforced by the whole structure of the poem: there are multiple possibilities for the palm's place of origin and for various circumstances in its life and travel: but there is only one possible final resting place. The serenity of the ending is conveyed by the presence of only one verb in the penultimate stanza: "*stoish*," a static, motionlessness, verb and by the absence of any verb at all in the final stanza.

The poet takes no part in the religious sense of beatitude at the poem's ending. He is at most a silent participant. The story is the story of the palm branch.

And this brings us to the comparison with *Tsvetok*. We know that Lermontov's *Vetka Palestiny* in some respects follows closely Pushkin's *Tsvetok*. But it also differs from it in several

important respects. First, in *Tsvetok* the questions are impersonal, casual, disinterested, almost a game, and they are expressed in an appropriately bald, prosaic, unadorned style. In *Vetka Palestiny* the questioner is interested, involved, concerned, as is reflected both in the nature and length of the imaginative speculations and in the consequently more elaborate, image-laden style. Second, in *Tsvetok* the narrative dimension is minimal; in *Vetka Palestiny*, it is significant. Third, in *Tsvetok* the poet's limited interest is focused on the human beings involved with the flower; the flower is, even in the last line, "*Kak sei nevedomyi Tsvetok*," little more than a pretext. In *Vetka Palestiny* the poet's interest is firmly focused on the palm-branch: all questions are addressed to the palm-branch in the second person.¹⁶

One other aspect of this poem should be mentioned. It has been suggested that a parallel must be drawn between the events described in the poem and the fate of the poet. In view of the circumstances believed to have surrounded the poem's composition, this is not unreasonable. Lermontov had every reason to be concerned and alarmed about his future. But if the poet is to be considered present in the background, then he must be thought of more as a counterpoise than as a parallel. It is the insecurity of his position that stands in contrast with the security at the end and the serenity of the palm branch. As Anatoly Liberman expresses it, "toward the end all is again tranquil, and the poet looks at the branch almost surprised that such perfection is possible.... He himself is too far from the ideal land of the branch."¹⁷ If we accept the partial inclusion of the poet, it can only be as a psychological insight into Lermontov's state of mind, not as adding any aesthetic dimension: the poem already has its central character. It is not surprising that Lermontov published this excellent lyric in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.

6

The next three poems, *Uznik* ("The Prisoner"), *Sosed* ("The Neighbor"), and *Kogda volnuetsia zhelteiushchaia niva* ("When the Yellowing Grain-Field Billows"), are apparently no less closely linked to Pushkin's death than *Vetka Palestiny*. According to Shan-Girei, they were written while Lermontov was under arrest following the investigation into what had been dubbed officially "the impermissible verses." Shan-Girei reported *Molitva* ("A Prayer") also being written under arrest; but in this case there are serious doubts, discussed below.¹⁸

Of these three poems the first, *Uznik*, is the expression of a prisoner's longing to escape captivity. This was a fairly common Romantic theme, coming to Russia from the West.¹⁹ Lermontov had in a way paid his dues to that tradition in an earlier, 1832, poem *Zhelan'e* ("Wishing"). The first four lines of the 1837 *Uznik* reproduce exactly the first four lines of the 1832 *Zhelan'e*. But at that point the two poems diverge. Shan-Ghirei was wrong in writing, as he later did, that the 1837 poem was basically a rework of the 1832 poem, with one stanza added. Examination of the essential differences between the two reveals the merits of *Uznik*.

Both poems are written in four-foot trochees and have a somewhat folkloristic ring. This is true lexically, as well, e.g. in *Zhelan'e* "*po siniu poliu*" ("over the blue field"), in *Uznik* "*v zelenom pole*" ("in the green field"). *Zhelan'e* consists of three 9-line stanzas, and *Uznik* of three

¹⁶ See Bitsilli, *Etiudy*, 249-50.

¹⁷ Liberman, *Mikhail Lermontov* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 511. See also V. I. Korovin, *Vetka Palestiny*, L. E., 85.

¹⁸ See E. Sushkova, *Zapiski E. A. Sushkovo* (L.: Academia, 1928), 380. The relevant passage is quoted in Eikhenbaum, *Academia* II, 184.

¹⁹ Eikhenbaum, *Academia* II, 184-85.

8-line stanzas. The first stanzas of both express the prisoner's desire for a black-eyed maid and a black-maned horse; *chernoglazuiu* and *chernogrivogo* force the reader to make the equation between maid and horse. Then, in mid-stanza, the significant divergence between poems takes place. In *Zhelan'e* the prisoner desires to experience life and freedom more fully, foreshadowing the outlook later expressed in *Mtsyri* (1839): following the horse and the maiden the hero wants a boat (with, oddly, a half-rotten bench) in which to challenge merrily the high seas (note that *Parus* ["The Sail"] was written in the same year); he wants a palace, a garden, and an ever-playing fountain to lull and wake him. This is a succession of unconnected fantasies, related to the central wish to experience more things more closely, more fully, but unrelated to any central theme of imprisonment.

Uzник is very different. The first word of the second stanza is *No* ("But"). And then we are given the realities of the hero's situation which make the fantasies of the first stanza impossible. "But" the window is high, the door bolted, the black-eyed maid far away, the fine horse cavorting free across the steppe. The prisoner is (stanza 3) alone, the lamp is low. And then the last four lines: all he can hear is in the darkness the regular footsteps of the unanswering sentry—a truly excellent ending, since it conjures up the very reverse of the first fantasies of responsive maid and responsive horse:

Отворите мне темницу,
 Дайте мне сиянье дня,
 Черноглазую девицу,
 Черногривого коня.
 Я красавицу младую
 Прежде сладко поцелую.
 На коня потом вскочу,
 В степь, как ветер, улечу.

★

Но окно тюрьмы высоко,
 Дверь тяжелая с замком;
 Черноокая далеко,
 В пышном тереме своем;
 Добрый конь в зеленом поле
 Без узды, один, по воле
 Скачет весел и игрив,
 Хвост по ветру распустив.

★

Одинок я—нет отрады:
 Стены голые кругом,
 Тускло светит луч лампы
 Умирающим огнем;
 Только слышно: за дверями,
 Звучномерными шагами,
 Ходит в тишине ночной
 Безответный часовой.

Open wide the prison door,
 Give to me the light of day,
 Give a black-eyed maiden,

And a black-maned horse.
 The young beauty first
 I will sweetly kiss,
 Jumping then upon the horse,
 Like the wind I'll fly into the steppe.

♦

But the prison window's high,
 And the prison door fast bolted;
 The black-eyed maiden's far away
 In her splendid tower-chamber;
 The brave horse in the green field,
 Free, unbridled and alone,
 Gallops, mettlesome and merry,
 Tail stretched out upon the wind.

♦

I am lonely — there's no comfort:
 Round me stand the naked walls,
 Dimly shines the lantern now
 With its dying light;
 All I hear: beyond the doors,
 With his ringing measured tread,
 The unanswering sentry marches
 In the silence of the night.

Belinskii, normally a staunch champion of Lermontov's, did not like this poem, which he felt to be unworthy of Lermontov. I do not agree. It is for me a perfectly structured piece which, in a vivid but relatively restrained manner, sets the starkness of the prisoner's reality against the impetuosity of his escape dream. Lermontov himself apparently liked *Uznik* enough to have it included in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.²⁰

Sosed, first published in the same collection, conveys in a different way the conditions and emotions experienced by the prisoner. His field of vision is limited, his impressions of what is around him auditory. The only visual image is the ruddy half-light of dusk as day dies. He never sees his neighbor, from whom he is separated by a wall, nor can he see the sentry. But he hears them. He hears, reminiscent of *Uznik*, the ringing of the sentry's rifle butt on the hard floor. He hears the singing of his neighbor in the darkling silence. The sound of the singing kindles anew in him "the hopes and love of better years" ("*luchshikh let nadezhdy i liubov*"). His thoughts are borne far afield. He is filled with desires and passions. His blood seethes, tears flow:

Кто б ни был ты, печальный мой сосед,
 Люблю тебя, как друга юных лет,
 Тебя, товарищ мой случайный,
 Хотя судьбы коварною игрой
 Навеки мы разлучены с тобой
 Стеной теперь—а после тайной.

²⁰ See Belinskii's Letter to V. P. Botkin of February 24, 1840, *Pis'ma*, II, 70. Also *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1840, No. 2, in his review of *Odesskii al'manakh*. *Uznik* was first published in *Odesskii al'manakh na 1840 god* (Odessa, 1839) 567-68.

Когда зари румяный полусвет
 В окно тюрьмы прощальный свой привет
 Мне умирая посылает,
 И опершись на звучное ружье,
 Наш часовой, про старое житье
 Мечтая, стоя засыпает,

Тогда, чело склонив к сырой стене,
 Я слушаю—и в мрачной тишине
 Твои напевы раздаются.
 О чем они—не знаю; но тоской
 Исполнены, и звуки чередой,
 Как слезы, тихо льются, льются...

И лучших лет надежды и любовь
 В груди моей всё оживает вновь,
 И мысли далеко несутся,
 И полон ум желаний и страстей,
 И кровь кипит—и слезы из очей,
 Как звуки, друг за другом льются.

This poem, all sound and song, stands out even among Lermontov's lyrics for its musicality. One factor contributing to this musicality and to the dominance of auditory impressions is the rhyme structure. Each stanza consists of two iambic five-foot masculine-rhymed couplets, the second couplet enclosed by four-foot feminine-rhymed lines: aa B(4) cc B(4). In addition, lines 1-2 rhyme with 7-8 (-*ét*), and form near rhymes with lines 13-14 (-*e*) and to lines 22-23 (-*éi*), and 4-5 rhyme with 16-17 (-*oi*), coming close to 10-11(-'e); while in the shorter lines we have lines 3-6 (-*ainyi-ainoi*) close to 9-12 (-*aet*), and lines 15-18 (-*utsia*) identical with 21-24. The reader's ear is filled and overwhelmed by an outpouring of similar sounds. Note the liquefaction of *razda-iutsia/l'iutsia/nesutsia/l'iutsia*. It is also significant in each stanza the shorter third and sixth lines are feminine; this reinforces the impression of unfinished flow. The equation of sounds with primarily nonauditory phenomena is characteristic of Lermontov's work.²¹ In the third stanza of *Sosed* the sounds of the neighbor's singing "flow out gently like tears." And in the fourth this procedure is reversed: "and tears from my eyes, like sounds, flow out one after another." *Sosed* achieves a perfect fusion of the sounds of song released and the emotions (i.e., tears) released.

Assuming that Shan-Girei was right and that *Kogda volnuetsia zhelteiushchaia niva* was written while Lermontov was under arrest, it does reflect the emotions of one confined, whose imagination draws him to the world outside, where he had been able to find happiness on earth and God in the heavens. If he was wrong, are we not all to some extent prisoners anyway, and is this not a poem for all seasons and places?

Когда волнуется желтеющая нива,
 И свежий лес шумит при звуке ветерка,
 И прячется в саду малиновая слива
 Под тенью сладостной зеленого листка;
 Когда, росой обрызганный душистой,

²¹ See, e.g. 1837 *Kak nebesa tvoi vtor blistaet; Ona poet — i zvuki taiut*, and earlier the 1831 *Nebo i zvezdy* (Chapter I).

Румяным вечером иль утра в час златой,
Из-под куста мне ландыш серебристый
Приветливо кивает головой;

Когда студеный ключ играет по оврагу
И, погружая мысль в какой-то смутный сон,
Лепечет мне таинственную сагу
Про мирный край, откуда мчится он, —

Тогда смиряется души моей тревога,
Тогда расходятся морщины на челе, —
И счастье я могу постигнуть на земле,
И в небесах я вижу Бога...

When the yellowing grain-field billows
And the fresh forest rustles in the wind,
And the raspberry hides in the garden
Beneath the sweet shade of a green leaf;

When sprinkled by the fragrant dew,
in the rosy evening or in the golden dawn,
From beneath a bush a silvery lily-of-the-valley
Nods to me its head in welcome;

When the cold spring plays along the ravine
And, plunging the mind into some confused dream,
Babbles to me a mysterious saga
Of the peaceful land from which he hastens —

Then my soul's disquiet is put to rest,
Then the wrinkles on my brow are smoothed away —
And I can fathom happiness on earth,
And in the heavens I can see God...

The source of this poem is Lamartine's "Le cri de l'âme," although his influence was not established until 1974, in a short but truly impressive piece of writing by the outstanding Soviet scholar, M. L. Gasparov.²² I reiterate here some of its salient points.

One essential feature of the poem has always impressed readers: the anaphoric *Когда* (When), which launches each of the first three stanzas into four lines of temporal subordinate clause, building up to a culminating point. The tension is released and resolved in the fourth and final stanza, whose first two lines begin with an answering *Тогда* (Then). Gasparov provides extremely useful and convincing insights into the nature and implementation of this build-up.

Since his explanations rest to a considerable degree on a comparison with the Lamartine poem, a few words should be devoted to it. "Le cri de l'âme" is a hymn to the deity. It achieves its effect through a series of image-laden statements which, taken together, convey the message that the poet's every experience brings him closer to God. These statements are in the first seven four-line stanzas introduced by the conjunction *Quand* (When). The final two stanzas represent

²² M. L. Gasparov 1974, *Lermontov i Lamartin. Semanticheskaia kompozitsiia stikhotvoreniia 'Kogda volnuetsia zhelteiushchaia niva...'*, *Istoriko-filologicheskie issledovaniia* (M.: Nauka), 113-20.

an intensification of this process, heralded by the attention-getting exclamation "*Jéhovah! Jéhovah!*," which opens the first line of stanza eight. Formulaically, it is an avowal of deep emotion before God, repeated seven times with variations, culminating in two final stanzas which sum up and intensify the foregoing. Here are the first, eighth and ninth stanzas:

Quand le souffle divin qui flotte sur le monde
S'arrête sur mon âme ouverte au moindre vent
Et la fait tout à coup frissonner comme une onde
Ou le cygne s'abat dans un cercle mouvant! —

Jéhovah! Jéhovah! ton nom me soulage!
Il est le seul écho qui répond a mon coeur!
Ou plutôt ces élans, ces transports sans langage,
Sont eux-memes un écho de ta propre grandeur!

Tu ne dors pas souvent dans mon sein, nom sublime!
Tu ne dors pas souvent sur mes lèvres de feu:
Mais chaque impression t'y trouve et t'y ranime,
Et le cri de mon âme est toujours toi, mon Dieu!

When the divine breath which floats,
over the world
Pauses over my soul, open to the lightest breeze,
And makes it suddenly tremble like a wave
On which the swan, circling, descends —

Jehovah! Jehovah! Thy name alone gives me relief!
It is the only echo to answer to my heart!
Or rather, these surges of emotion, these transports
without words,
Are themselves an echo of Thy greatness!

Thou dost not often sleep in my breast, sublime name!
Thou dost not often sleep upon my fiery lips:
But every impression finds Thee there and gives Thee life,
And the cry of my soul is always Thou, my God!

As Gasparov points out, in "*Le cri de l' âme*" God's presence is a given. There is no need for persuasion or revelation. The poet accepts God and worships Him from the beginning. Moreover, in each of the seven *Quand* stanzas the poet himself, or man in general, is involved in experiencing something, e.g.: "*....la fait tout à coup frissonner [mon âme]....mon regard se plongeQuand je roule en mon sein mille pensées sublimes,*" etc. The semantics of Lermontov's poem demand a different resolution. God is not there from the start. Revelation and persuasion are needed. Lermontov's images in his three *Kogda* stanzas must, as Gasparov notes, "be arranged in such a way that they of themselves lead....up to the concept 'God'." How is this done?

First, natural objects acquire increased animation as the poem progresses. In the first stanza animation is minimal: "... *Volnuetsia.... shumit.... priachetsia....*" (".... billows.... rustles.... hides...."). In the second stanza the lily-of-the-valley nods its head in welcome. In the third stanza the spring plays (play is always a sign of Lermontov's approval in his treatment of nature) and babbles a mysterious saga. Not only do we have progressive animation, to the point where an

inanimate spring is capable of speech, but also an increasingly favorable message. There is no message in the first stanza, a welcome in the second, news in the third of a land of peace.

Second, the figure of the poet progressively emerges. Lamartine's poet was very active in the course of the seven *Quand* stanzas. Lermontov's poet does not reach that level of activity until the poem's final two lines. But his presence increases through the early stanzas: in the first stanza he is totally absent, in the second he receives a welcoming nod, in the third he receives a favorable message. His emergence goes hand in hand with the increasingly favorable images mentioned above.

Third, time becomes progressively less precisely indicated. In the first stanza, everything appears to be happening simultaneously, at a fixed moment in time. In the second stanza, time becomes vaguer: not only does a sign of spring (the lily-of-the-valley) follow the harvest imagery of the first stanza, but also Lermontov is ambivalent about when the event might take place: "*Rumianym vecherom il' utra v chas zlatoi*" ("In the rosy evening or in the golden dawn"). And the third stanza has no time indicators—the "confused dream" ("*smutnyi son*") and the "mysterious saga" ("*tainstvennaia saga*") carry us outside the framework of knowable time.

Finally, space itself changes. In the first stanza, space is depicted as broad, as though, to paraphrase Gasparov, field, forest and garden represented three different directions. In the second stanza, there is a significant narrowing of the spatial component, the focus is on the lily-of-the-valley and the bush, located in a single place. In the third stanza, the same sort of "breakdown" occurs as that observed for the concept of time in the preceding paragraph: the cold spring plays; for the first time there is movement, as opposed to the rooted and stationary natural objects hitherto described; and "the peaceful land" serves equally to take the reader beyond the confines of the immediate surroundings and to convey the impression of far distance and space.

Approaching the final stanza, nature becomes increasingly animate, to the point of developing human speech, and, increasingly well-disposed, welcoming the poet and conveying the good news about the peaceful land. The poet himself is brought from the nothingness of the first stanza to the modest role of passive recipient of good news. In cosmic terms, the precise notion of time is blurred; space is first narrowed, then broadened and nullified by the emergence of a world of the distant unknown. A number of factors combine a) to bring the poet closer to nature, and b) to make nature, his surroundings, steadily less concrete, less material, more unsubstantial. Everything is poised, awaiting the signal for the emergence of the poet in the final stanza. The signal comes: "*Togda...*" perfectly responding to the three *Kogda* of the preceding stanzas. And again: "*Togda...*" Nature drops away, her role fulfilled. The poet gradually takes center stage. In the first two lines of the final stanza, the negative tensions of his preceding state of mind are removed (note the forms *smiriaetsia*, *raskhodiatsia*), allowing him to assume an active role for the first time in the two final lines. But the activation of the poet is not the poem's apotheosis. Reversing the spatial narrowing noted above, the poet "can fathom happiness on earth," and, further broadening his field of vision, beyond time and place to infinity, "in the heavens I can see God." "*I v nebesakh ia vizhu Boga.*" With this, the first mention of "God" in this poem, we reach the true conclusion. Lamartine, in whose poem the deity is omnipresent, also uses the word "*Dieu*" only once: he, too, reserves it for final word in the poem.

Concerning the formal aspects of the poem, Gasparov's commentary cannot be bettered: "The poem's metrics to some extent serve as an accompaniment to its structure. The first stanza, the most 'inanimate' and 'material,' is entirely six-foot iambic, leading one to assume that the whole poem will be written in this austere meter. The second and third stanzas nullify this expectation — they offer a free alternation of six and five-foot iambs, the increased metrical flexibility coincides with the increased flexibility in the use of imagery. The concluding stanza is a return to

the original six-foot iamb with two important differences: firstly, the last line, about God, is truncated (a four-foot iamb and the only one in the poem); second, the rhyme scheme (also for the first time) is not crisscross, but enclosing (AbbA): both of these features emphasize the closure.”

This deeply moving religious poem was published by Lermontov for the first time in the 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.

Shan-Girei’s linking of these four poems receives strong support from consideration of the lexical and syntactic ties among them. There is ample evidence that *Vetka Palestiny*, *Uznik*, *Sosed*, and *Kogda volnuetsia* were written within a relatively short time, even without this. Examination of these factors affords some insight into Lermontov’s creative process.

Uznik and *Sosed* both involve incarceration. The similarity in theme leads to a sharing of lexical items, as many have noted.²³ But the themes of *Vetka Palestiny* and *Kogda volnuetsia* are remote both from each other and from the two incarceration poems, their other similarities largely unremarked. A notable exception is B. T. Udodov’s admirable comparison of *Sosed* and *Kogda volnuetsia*.²⁴

We take first the lexical items found in both *Uznik* and *Sosed* (the numbers in parentheses indicate line numbers in the poems):

<i>Uznik</i>	<i>Sosed</i>
Стены голые (line 18)	Стеной (6)
	к сырой стене (13)
Умирающим огнем (20)	Мне умирая посылает (9)
Только слышно (21)	Я слушаю (14)
Звучномерными шагами (22)	на звучное ружье (10)
в тишине ночной (23)	в мрачной тишине (14)
Безответный часовой (24)	наш часовой (11)

It will be noted that in *Uznik*, where the first two stanzas largely project attention to the outside, into the open spaces of freedom, the shared items are all in the third and final stanza.

The lexical bridge between *Sosed* and *Kogda volnuetsia* is established by Udodov with the following two items:

<i>Sosed</i>	<i>Kogda волнуется</i>
зари румяный полусвет (7)	Румяным вечером (6)
прощальный свой привет (8)	Приветливо кивает головой (8)

A similar type of bridge can also be established between the first of the four poems, *Vetka Palestiny*, and the second, *Uznik*:

<i>Vetka Palestiny</i>	<i>Uznik</i>
Востока лух (6)	Луч лампы (19)
луч лампы (33)	Одинок я — нет отрады (17)
в разлуке безотрадной (17)	
Все полно мира и отрады (35)	
Святыни верный часовой (32)	Безответный часовой (24)

²³ See, e.g., I. S. Chistova, *Sosed*, *L. E.*, 523, and others noted there in Chistova’s bibliography.

²⁴ Udodov, B. T. 1973. *M. lu. Lermontov: Khudozhestvennaia individual'nost' i tvorcheskie protsessy*. Voronezh: Izdatel'stvo Voronezhskogo universiteta, 181-87.

Whereas in the first two short lists juxtaposed above the items were either neutral (“*Tol’ko slyshno*”/“*LA slushaiu*”) or thematically similar (“*Zvuchnomernymi shagami*”/“*na zvuchnoe ruzh’e*”), the present items are opposed in terms of comfort versus pain, positive against negative. Thus, in *Vetka Palestiny* “*luch lampady*” (33) is a part of the poem’s reassuringly warm atmosphere at the poem’s end; whereas in *Uznik* “*luch lampady*” (19), casting a dull light, is one of the factors contributing to the depressed mood at the poem’s end. And the same opposition can be seen in “*Sviatyni vernyi chasovoi*” (32) and “*Bezotvetnyi chasovoi*” (24).

The four poems under discussion do not provide a common pool of items to be randomly shared. The “borrowing”, the bridging, just described, operates rather (with one exception, the word *chasovoi* appearing in the first three poems) between the first and the second, the second and third, the third and fourth poems. It can be represented as a series of steps:

<i>Ветка Палестины</i>	<i>Узник</i>	<i>Сосед</i>	<i>Когда волнуется</i>
Востока луч (6)			
луч лампы (33)	луч лампы (19)		
в разлуке безотрадной (17)	Одинок я—нет отрады (17)		
Все полно мира и отрады (35)			
Святые верный часовой (32)	Безответный часовой (24)		
	Стены голые(18)	Стеной (6)	
	Умирающим огнем(20)	Мне умирая посылает (9)	
	Только слышно (21)	Я слушаю (14)	
	Звучономерными шагами (22)	на звучное ружье (10)	
	в тишине ночной (23)	в мрачной тишине (14)	
	Безответный часовой (24)	наш часовой (11)	
		зари румяный полусвет (7)	Румяным вечером (6)
		прощальный свой привет (8)	Приветливо кивает (8)

There are two principal syntactic links worth mentioning:

1) In *Kogda volnuetsia* there is the *Kogda/Togda* combination— a *Kogda* to open each of the first three stanzas, answered by *Togda* twice in the fourth and final stanza. As Udodov points out, this process is anticipated in *Sosed*, stanzas 2 and 3: “*Kogda zari rumiany polusvet*” and “*Togda, chelo skloniv k syroi stene.*” In both poems the process involves release of tension and happiness gained by improved understanding, in the one an awareness of God, in the other renewed ability to feel and love.

2) The questions constituting the main operative formal characteristic of *Vetka Palestiny* are either open in that no answer is suggested (“*Gde ty roslo, gde ty tsvela?*”) or they suggest mutually exclusive alternatives: “*Kakikh kholmov, kakoi doliny...?*” (Which hills? Which val-

ley?"). An attenuated version of this second form of question occurs in "*Kogda volnuetsia*," in the second stanza: "*Rumianym vecherom il' utra v chas zlatoi*" ("In the rosy evening or in the golden hour of dawn"). This is not syntactically a question, but the mutually exclusive alternatives suggested by the *il'* (or) automatically create one: was it evening or morning? Yet the effect is not exclusionary but cumulative: either alternative is possible, but on different occasions.

These two syntactic arrangements then (the *Kogda/Togda* combination and the question or implied question) substantiate what was said about lexical similarities between these poems. Together they lend credence to the view that the four poems are written within a short period of time. Moreover, the next poem, *Molitva*, uses the same syntactic pattern as *Kogda volnuetsia* to offer an alternative between morning and night: "*V utro li shumnoe, v noch' li bezglasnuiu.*" And in veiled form the opposition between morning light and nighttime occurs in *Vetka Palestiny*: "*Vostoka luch tebia laskal,/Nochnoi li vetr v gorakh Livana...?*"

These observations all suggest that in Lermontov, irrespective of theme, there was a tendency to continue to use in successive, especially in closely following poems, lexical items and syntactic patterns which had given his ear satisfaction.²⁵

7

Shan-Girei in his memoirs gives *Molitva* as another of the poems written under arrest. But the memoirs were not written till 1860 and are not always accurate on points of detail. Other evidence indicates it was written somewhat later. Lermontov sent a fair copy of the poem (with two very minor differences) in a letter written to M. A. Lopukhina on February 15, 1838, when he had returned from his first exile and was preparing to leave Petersburg for Novgorod to join his new regiment. This copy bears the title *Molitva strannika* ("A Traveler's Prayer"). The poem itself speaks of its author as a traveler (line 6). In his letter to Lopukhina Lermontov speaks of it as a poem "which I happened to come across in my traveling papers...." Based on this circumstantial evidence, the poem is now generally believed to have been written shortly after Lermontov's release, when he was on his way to the Caucasus, possibly during his stopover in Moscow (March 23-April 10). The exact dating seems in this particular instance to be of no moment. In his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*, Lermontov dated it 1837.²⁶

A poem so unusual in content and so clearly inspired by deep feeling very naturally arouses curiosity about the addressee. Eikhenbaum favors Varvara Lopukhina, basing his conjecture in part on the fact that in Lermontov's Chertkov notebook *Molitva Strannika* appears on the same sheet as the 8-line lyric *Rasstalis' my, no tvoi portret* ("We parted; yet your portrait"): "We must assume that both these lyrics refer to V. A. Lopukhina." But this is not conclusive proof. Furthermore, not everyone believes that *Rasstalis' my* was written to Lopukhina.²⁷

Lopukhina can certainly not be rejected out of hand. While Eikhenbaum's arguments are less than convincing, there is strong support for her as the addressee. The only voice crying in the

²⁵ The credit for initially pointing out most of these items and patterns belongs to Sandra Schue, formerly a student of the University of North Carolina.

²⁶ For place of writing and dating see Shan-Girei's memoirs in *Russkoe obozrenie*, 1890, No. 8, 740, reproduced in Sushkova, 355-400, esp. 380; for Lermontov's February 15, 1838, letter to Lopukhina, see *Ak. nauk*, VI, 442-45.

²⁷ Thus, Vatsuro discusses this lyric in the context of the Sushkova cycle, though he is also aware that it could have been remade and readdressed to V. A. Lopukhina; see his *Rasstalis' my; no tvoi portret*, *L. E.*, 462-63. For Eikhenbaum here, see *Academia* II, 186-87.

wilderness appears to be that of Anatoly Liberman, who writes: “A rather unsuccessful attempt has been made to connect ‘A Prayer’ with V. A. Lopukhina.... The context is too vague for identifying the addressee.” I add my voice to that of Anatoly Liberman and offer the following reasoning. There is one half-line (line 11) which makes it nigh impossible to accept Lopukhina:

Молодость светлую, старость покойную,

A joyous youth, peaceful old age....

Old age counterbalances carefree youth. For women, between these two extremes lie the years of marriage, child-bearing, child-rearing, perhaps estate management. The “innocent maiden” of the poem has the right, the poem suggests, to look forward to her entire youth ahead; but Lopukhina is already married, has one child, is pregnant with a second. There is no reason why the addressee should be of the poet’s age and the recipient of his love. It is very much in character that Lermontov bestow his heart-felt good wishes on a child, especially on Varvara Aleksandrovna’s daughter. Why not speculate that it is addressed to Ol’ga Nikolaevna Bakhmeteva?²⁸

The appeal and impact of the poem rest largely on the timelessness and universality of the plea, which lift it out of the context of 1837 and place it in the mainstream of traditional church prayer, in the calm and proud procession of eternal things. There is a simple monumentality in the noun-adjective and noun-noun combinations which is a noteworthy part of this impression:

Молодость светлую, старость покойную,

Сердцу незлобному мир упования.

A merrisome youth, peaceful old age,

A world of fair hope for a heart without malice.

These combinations unfailingly occupy either the first or the second half of the four-foot dactylic 12-syllable line, divided in the middle by the caesura; this creates the impression of predictability, an integral ingredient of prayer.

The unusual rhythmic effects achieved by the poet should be noted. The poem seems about to burst its dactylic seams. It is, in fact, metrically impeccable. But the episodic placement of stressed words within the metrically unstressed two-syllable intervals between stresses (hypermetrical stress) and the periodic omission of stresses on the metrically stressed first and seventh syllables produces an alternation between retardation and acceleration. The only constants in the line are the stresses on the fourth syllable in each hemistich, creating a long-sweeping line with a sort of see-saw effect, and a constant tension between rhythm and meter. This point can be illustrated by citing the poem with stress and non-stress marks on the significant places:

Я, мать Божия, ныне с молитвою	/ / ~ / ~ ~ / ~ ~ / ~ ~
Пред твоим образом, я крим сиянием,	~ ~ / / ~ ~ / ~ ~ / ~ ~
Не о спасении, не перед битвою,	~ ~ ~ / ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ / ~ ~
Не с благодарностью иль покаянием,	~ ~ ~ / ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ / ~ ~
Не за свою молю душу пустынную,	~ ~ ~ / ~ / / ~ ~ / ~ ~
За душу странника в свете безродного;	/ / ~ / ~ ~ / ~ ~ / ~ ~

²⁸ For Liberman see *Mikhail Lermontov: Major Poetical Works* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 515; for Lopukhina’s child and second pregnancy see letter to A. M. Vereshagina (Hugel) from her mother in V. Manuilov, *Letopis’*, 93.

Но я вручить хочу деву невинную / / ∪ | / ∪ / | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪
Теплой заступнице мира холодного. / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪

Окружи счастьем душу достойную; ∪ ∪ / | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪
Дай ей спутников, полных внимания, / / ∪ | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪
Молодость светлую, старость покойную. / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪
Сердце незлобному мир упования. / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪

Срок ли приблизиться часу прощальному / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪
В утро ли шумное, в ночь ли безгласную — / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪
Ты воспрять пошли к ложу печальному / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ / | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪
Лучшего ангела душу прекрасную. / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪ | / ∪ ∪

I, Mother of God, with prayer on my lips,
Before thy image, bright radiance,
Not for salvation, not before battle,
Not with gratitude, not with repentance,

Not for my own soul do I pray,
The soul of a wanderer, kinless and orphaned;
But an innocent maiden I wish to entrust
To the warm-hearted intercessor in the cold world.

Surround with happiness this worthy soul;
Give her companions,—attentive, considerate
A merrisome youth, peaceful old age,
A world of fair hope for a heart without malice.

When the hour of parting draws near —
On some loud-sounding morning, or in the silent night —
Send thou to her bed of sorrows
The best of angels to receive her fair soul.

It is not always easy to pinpoint the precise role of formal features in creating the overall impact of a poem. Here, the tensions help create a sense of difficulty and effort, as though the words were being dragged out of the poet. Notwithstanding what was said above about predictability, difficult and effort can also be important ingredients of prayer, and they are important here to the overall impression the poet sought to create. This is true particularly of the difficult and involuted syntax of the last two lines.

Molitva affords, in my view, an important insight into Lermontov's ambivalent attitude to religion and to God. When Lermontov thinks of God in relation to the creation, to himself and to his personal sufferings, the two are often at war; when Lermontov intercedes for others, they both speak the same language.

It was first published in *Otechestvennye zapiski* and again the 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.²⁹

²⁹ *Otechestvennye zapiski*, XI, No. 7, 1.

The next poem, *Rasstalis' my, no tvoi portret* has one of the most famous two-line closures in Russian poetry. The poem follows fairly closely an earlier 1831 poem, *la ne liubliu tebia; strastei* ("I do not love you; passions"), which the poet wrote in Sushkova's album, presumably to her. As noted above, the addressee of the 1837 poem *Molitva* is unclear, but Eikhenbaum and others believe it was written to V. A. Lopukhina:

Расстались мы, но твой портрет
Я на груди моей храню:
Как бледный призрак лучших лет,
Он душу радует мою.

И, новым преданный страстям,
Я разлюбить его не мог:
Так храм оставленный—все храм,
Кумир поверженный—все Бог!³⁰

We parted; yet your portrait
I carry next to my heart:
Like some pale shadow of better years,
It gives joy to my soul.

And, given over now to new passions,
I could not unlove it:
A temple abandoned is still a temple,
An idol thrown down is still a god.

This piece resembles Pushkin's neat, easy-flowing album verse. It differs from that model in at least one important respect: instead of the conventional alternating feminine-masculine rhymes it has, like the earlier 1831 poem, exclusively masculine rhymes, giving it a crisper, more matter-of-fact quality. This perfectly structured and delightful small poem, first published in Lermontov's 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*, is characteristic of his style: it moves logically and rapidly from point to point, each new thought occupying two lines, and closes with a striking simile.

The same expository technique just noted in *Rasstalis' my* is equally evident in *la ne khochu, chtob svet uznal* ("I do not wish the world to know"):

Я не хочу, чтоб свет узнал
Мою таинственную повесть;
Как я любил, за что страдал,
Тому судья лишь бог да совесть!..

Им сердце в чувствах даст отчет,
У них попросит сожаленья;
И пусть меня накажет тот,
Кто изобрел мои мученья;

Укор невежд, укор людей
Души высокой не печалит;

³⁰ The last two lines are a poetic cliché. The same images are to be found in Chateaubriand and Lamartine. See E. Duchesne, *Poeziia M. Iu. Lermontova* (Kazan', 1914), 128-129; Eikhenbaum 1924, 44; V.E. Vatsuro, *Rasstalis' my; no tvoi portret*, in *L. E.*, 462-463. See, e.g., Lamartine's "Le solitaire": "Ainsi plus le temple est vide,/Plus l'écho sacre retentit."

Пускай шумит волна морей,
Утес гранитный не повалит;

Его чело меж облаков,
Он двух стихий жилец утрюмый,
И, кроме бури да громов,
Он никому не вверит думы...³¹

I do not wish the world to know
My secret story;
Of how I loved and what I suffered
Let God and my conscience be the witness!..

To them the heart will make report,
Of them the heart will ask a tear;
And let that Being punish me,
He who devised my torments;

Foolish people's vain reproach
Will not grieve my lofty soul;
Let the sea's waves roar on amain,
The granite cliff they'll not destroy;

Its brow is up amid the clouds,
Sad creature of two elements,
And only to the storms and thunder
Will it entrust its secret thought.

As in the previous poem, every two lines advance the reasoning one clear step forward. The tone here is different, polemical and defiant. Also, here the simile is more extended and less dramatically climactic than in the previous poem. The content of *Ia ne khochu, chtob svet uznal* is unlikely to have a very compelling appeal in the present age, when theomachy tends to be replaced by indifference, and the cult of the superior being, if still with us, has changed its character from the days of Byron and Lermontov.

Ne smeisia nad moei prorocheskoi toscoiu ("Do not laugh at my prophetic sorrow") is tentatively dated 1837, some time after Lermontov had been sentenced to exile for his "impermissible" verses, because its 15 lines are full of lexical items and ideas also present in *Smert' poeta*. The two poems have a common theme: youthful genius struck down before its time by cunning, underhand intrigue ("cunning enmity" in the poem under discussion and "false embrace" in *Smert' poeta*).³²

At the same time, *Ne smeisia* is anticipated by a number of earlier poems with similar themes involving the young hero's untimely end, to which is added the hero's prophesy of his

³¹ First published in 1845 in *Vchera i Segodnia*, I, 94.

³² For parallels in the two texts see: "*I ia pogibnu*" (cf. "*Pogib poet*"); "*udar sud'by*" ("*Sud'by svershilsia prigovor*"); "*I ia padu*" ("*Pal*"); "*moikh muchenii*" ("*on muchenii*"); "*moikh nadezhd*" ("*obmanutye nadezhedy*"); "*golova liubimaia toboiu*" ("*Poniknuv gordoi golovoi*"); "*venets*" "*Venets pevtsa, venets ternovyi*" ("*torzhestvennyi venok*," "*venets*," "*venok*," "*venets ternovyi*"); "*Khitraia vrazhda*" ("*laskam lozhnym*"); "*chas krovavyi*" ("*v sei mig krovavyi*"); "*S ulybkoi ochernit*" ("*Kovarnym shopotom nasmeshlivykh nevezhd*").

own doom. Emma Gershtein sees this poem as “the last variation on a series of poems written under the impact of Pushkin’s *‘Andrei Shen’e’* (‘André Chenier’).”³³ Its closest forebear is *K xxx* (*Kogda tvoi drug s prorocheskoi toscoiu,*) (To xxx [When your friend with prophetic sorrow]), of uncertain date, but attributed to 1830 and certainly early.³⁴ Looking forward to 1841 and what is now printed as Lermontov’s last lyric, we shall see the same themes of giftedness, isolation, rejection, persecution. The present poem thus touches a theme which was no passing mood, but a solidly established part of the poet’s outlook on life:

Не смеяся над моей пророческой тоскою,
 Я знал: удар судьбы меня не обойдет;
 Я знал, что голова, любимая тобою,
 С твоей груди на плаху перейдет;
 Я говорил тебе: ни счастья, ни славы
 Мне в мире не найти; настанет час кровавый,
 И я паду, и хитрая вражда
 С улыбкой очернит мой недоцветший гений;
 И я погибну без следа
 Моих надежд, моих мучений,
 Но я без страха жду довременный конец.
 Давно пора мне мир увидеть новый;
 Пускай толпа растопчет мой венец:
 Венец певца, венец терновый!..
 Пускай! я им не дорожил.

Do not laugh at my prophetic sorrows;
 I knew: fate’s blow could never pass me by;
 I knew that my head, my head by you beloved,
 Would from your breast be placed upon the block;
 I’d say to you: nor happiness nor glory
 Are in this world my lot; the bloody hour will come,
 And I shall fall; and cunning enmity
 Will blacken with a smile my genius ‘fore its bloom;
 And I shall perish without trace
 Of all my hopes, my torments all;
 But with no fear I wait my untimely end.
 Long since it’s time I saw another world;
 The crowd may trample as it will my crown:
 A poet’s crown, a crown of thorns!..
 Tramp on! I did not hold it dear.

The final line is unrhymed, and therefore the poem is often characterized as unfinished. However, as Gershtein remarks, it “produces an impression of completedness, since the theme has run its course.”³⁵ The *puskai* of two lines up receives its answer: And so what? The non-rhyme serves as a dismissive brush-off.

³³ *Ne smeisia nad moei prorocheskoi toscoiu, L. E., 337.*

³⁴ M. Iu. Lermontov, *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh* (M.: Khud. lit., 1983), I, 374. See also 1831 *Stansy* — written to Ivanova: “*Ne mogu na rodine tomit’sia.*”

³⁵ Gershtein, *Ne smeisia nad moei prorocheskoi toscoiu, L. E., 337.*

Gershtein feels that *Ne smeisia nad moei prorocheskoi toskoiu* shows an advance over preceding efforts in its metric flexibility and more lively conversational intonations. It is written in “free iambs” as opposed to the regular five-foot iambs of the 1830 *Kogda tvoi drug s prorocheskoi toskoiu*. Its rhymes are also more freely distributed; the earlier poem is stanzaic with all three stanzas following an AbAbAb pattern. But *Ne smeisia nad moei prorocheskoi toskoiu* is not conversational; it comes close stylistically to the new-found declamatory style of parts of *Smert' poeta*. It was first published in 1845 in *Vchera i segodnia*, 1, 94.

9

Spesha na sever iz daleka (“Hastening north from far away”) was almost certainly written late in 1837, when Lermontov, reprieved from his first exile, was preparing to return north from the Caucasus. He greets Kazbek, praying to the mountain for cool temperatures so he can rest comfortably at midday and for no storm to break over him and his exhausted horse in the Dar'ial gorge. But above all he prays (with poetic exaggeration) that “after so many years” he may not have been forgotten in his homeland. If he has been forgotten, he asks Kazbek to bring down the storm and scatter his dust over the gorge.

The possibility of being forgotten or of finding dear ones dead on return is a natural and common enough theme, particularly in the age of Romanticism. One has only to think of Byron in the first canto of *Childe Harold* or Pushkin in the first chapter of *Evgenii Onegin*. The innovation which sets Lermontov's poem apart from Byron's and Pushkin's expressed anxieties is the introduction of the mountain. Kazbek will convey his prayer to the eternal throne of Allah. Lermontov's use of nature, especially nature in the Caucasus, as a player on the human stage is a prominent feature of the poetry of his last four years. Nature emerges not as a humanized player, but as a Rousseauesque contrast with mankind, over whom it possesses one kind or another of moral superiority. In the second stanza:

Чалмою белою от века
Твой лоб наморщенный увит,
И гордый ропот человека
Твой гордый мир не возмутит.

A turban, white from age to age,
Enfolds your wrinkled brow through time,
And mankind's arrogant complaint
Shall not disturb your lofty peace.

Not only superiority, but immutability, invulnerability characterize nature for Lermontov. At the same time it provides refuge for man's loftier thoughts and aspirations. The following stanza has been rightly singled out for its perfection:

Но сердца тихого моленье
Да отнесут твои скалы
В надзвездный край, в твое владенье
К престолу вечному Аллы.

But may your cliffs bear up on high
The heartfelt prayer of silent heart,
To where above the stars you rule,

To Allah's everlasting throne.³⁶

The poem consists of nine four-foot iambic four-line stanzas, with feminine-masculine alternating crisscross rhymes. The three final stanzas concern the storm, the fear of being forgotten, and, finally, the invitation to Kazbek, if the poet has been forgotten, to scatter his homeless dust over the gorge:

Молю, чтоб буря не застала,
Гремя в наряде боевом,
В ущелье мрачного Дарьяла
Меня с измученным конем.

Найду ль там прежние объятья?
Старинный встречу ли привет?
Узнают ли друзья и братья
Страдальца, после многих лет?

О, если так! своей метелью,
Казбек, засыпь меня скорей
И прах бездомный по ущелью
Без сожаления развей.³⁷

There are a small number of epigrams and other trivia which are generally assigned to 1837. Since they have no poetic value nor contemporary interest we pass over them in silence. We next come to five poems which have traditionally been listed under 1837-38, i.e. late 1837 or early 1838. The 1983 *Khudozhestvennaia literatura* edition now prints them, justifiably, under 1838.

10

The image of the dagger in the poem *Kinzhal* occurs in Lermontov's early lyric poetry, where it is probably, as here, connected with Pushkin's 1821 *Kinzhal*.³⁸ In Pushkin's poem the dagger symbolizes vengeance against injustice and is a guardian of freedom. Both poets apostrophize the dagger. In Pushkin:

Лемносский бог тебя сковал
Для рук бессмертной Немезиды,
Свободы тайный страж, карающий кинжал,
Последний судия позора и обиды.

The Lemnos god [Hephaestus, in Greek mythology
god of fire, divine smith, patron of craftsmen] forged you

For the hand of immortal Nemesis,
Secret guardian of freedom, punishment-dealing dagger,
Final judge of shame and wrong.

³⁶ L. P. Semenov, *Blagotvornoe vozdeistvie prirody na miatezhnuiu dushu cheloveka. M. Iu. Lermontov: Ego zhizn' i sochineniia* (M., 1916), 117-20.

³⁷ First published in *Vchera i segodnia*, 1845, No. 1, 23, under the title *Kazbeku*.

³⁸ See in 1830 *Noch'* ("Night") (*Prezren'ia zhenskogo kinzhal*, "Dagger of female contempt"), and 1830 *K xxx* ("Kogda k tebe molvy rasskaz" "When to you rumor's story"); ("*rasskaian'ia kinzhal*," "the dagger of remorse").

Lermontov starts in a loosely similar vein, going also into the dagger's origin:

Люблю тебя, булатный мой кинжал,
Товарищ светлый и холодный.
Задумчивый грузин на месть тебя ковал,
На грозный бой точил черкес свободный.

I love you, my sharp-steeled dagger,
Clear-bright and cold friend.
A pensive Georgian forged you for revenge,
A free Circassian honed you for the dread fight.

But the two poems develop very differently. Pushkin, at the high tide of his political radicalism, mingles with his mythology a number of historical figures connected with the issue of freedom and tyranny: Brutus and Caesar, Charlotte Corday and Marat, Karl Sand, the radical student-assassin of the playwright Kotzebue. Lermontov's poem, however, features himself and the loving woman who gave him the dagger as a parting gift. The dagger is viewed by the poet as a token of silent love, which provides him with a standard he can never betray. The last of Lermontov's four stanzas goes as follows:

Ты дан мне в спутники, любви залог немой,
И страннику в тебе пример не бесполезный:
Да, я не изменюсь и буду тверд душой,
Как ты, как ты, мой друг железный.

You have been given me as a companion, a token of silent love,
And for the wanderer you bring a fitting example:
Yes, I will not betray, I will be firm in spirit,
Like you, like you, my friend of steel.

The main differences between the two poems are: Pushkin's is highly political, Lermontov's primarily personal; Pushkin's operates through Greek mythology and historical allusions, Lermontov's through the mystique of the Caucasus; Pushkin's starts with legend and concludes in 1819, but is actually static; Lermontov's contains a mini-narrative, though to speak of a "novella," as Eikhenbaum does, is an exaggeration.³⁹ Both poets use a conservative metrical arrangement, four-, five-, and six-foot iambs in no particular pattern, with caesuras where appropriate.

Used in Lermontov's *Kinzhul* as a symbol of integrity, the dagger will shortly make another appearance, appropriately enough, in connection with the role of the poet. *Kinzhul* was first published in 1841 in *Otechestvennyye zapiski* while Lermontov was still living; it was not included in his 1841 *Stikhotvoreniia*.⁴⁰

11

Gliazhu na budushchnost' s boiazn'iu ("I look with fear upon the future") could be passed over as either a throwback to Lermontov's early lyrics or a case of misdating. But there are several reasons, not least of them the superb poetry, why we should give to *Gliazhu na budushchnost'* its full measure of attention.

³⁹ Eikhenbaum 1924, 114.

⁴⁰ *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, 1841, XVI, No. 6, 234.

On the question of misdating, Gershtein has pointed out regarding this poem that the positioning of poems in Lermontov's notebooks provides no reliable indication of date. Lermontov is known to have etched new verses on old sheets. The dating of this particular poem is further complicated by the fair copy having been pasted into the so-called Chertkov notebook. Gershtein would herself like to date this poem and four others as early as 1835-36. She proposes that the five lyrics in question be recognized on thematic grounds as a poetic cycle, the remaining four being: *Ne smeisia nad moei prorocheskoi toscoiu; la ne khochu, chob svet uznal*, these two discussed above under 1837; *Nikto moim slovam ne vnemlet* ("No one harkens to my words"), very probably belonging to 1835-36, and *Moe griadushchee v tumane* ("My future is in cloud"), thematically an early, less closely-constructed and more juvenile version of *Gliazhu na budushchnost' s boiazn'iu* (probably also belonging to 1835-36). Gershtein seeks to draw all five poems into Lermontov's 1835-36 production and to view them as a reaction to a spiritual-artistic crisis induced by the apparent lack of response to the unwanted publication, without the poet's approval, of the narrative poem, *Khadzhi-Abrek*, and by failures to get his play, *Maskarad (The Masked Ball)* past the censor.

While relegating these intimately personal poems to an early period allows the later Lermontov to emerge all-of-a-piece as the civic poet who in 1838 wrote *Duma*, thus pursuing the path of social critic he had launched himself on with the 1837 *Smert' Poeta*,⁴¹ Gershtein's proposal has not been accepted, and is treated as "unconvincing" by, e.g., G. P. Makogonenko.⁴² There are several obstacles to its acceptance. First, the themes of the five lyrics in question are so characteristically Lermontovian that it is difficult to assign all these lyrics to 1835-36 without strong supporting evidence. There is some evidence, though not conclusive, for *Ne smeisia nad moei prorocheskoi toscoiu* and *la ne khochu, chob svet uznal* having been written in 1837, *Nikto moim slovam ne vnemlet* and *Moe griadushchee v tumane* in 1835-36, and *Gliazhu na budushchnost' s boiazn'iu* in early 1838 or late 1837 (this on the basis of its having been glued into the Chertkov notebook alongside *Kinzhalt* and the dedication to *Tambovskaia kaznacheisha (The Wife of the Treasurer of Tambov)*.⁴³

Assuming that late 1837 or early 1838 is the correct date permits comparison of Lermontov's *Gliazhu na budushchnost' s boiazn'iu* side by side with Pushkin's *Stansy* ("Stanzas"). Freed from his exile in a personal interview with Nicholas I on September 8, 1826, Pushkin on December 22 vented his first impressions on return and his early assessment of what awaited Russia under Nicholas. Lermontov arrived back in Moscow from his first Caucasian exile on January 3, 1838; thus *Gliazhu na budushchnost' s boiazn'iu* would be the expression of his first impressions and assessments. Pushkin's *Stansy* expressed a buoyant optimism, shared by a significant part of society in those early months of the reign, which could not be sustained. Lermontov's mood, much more narrowly personal, is one of unmitigated pessimism. Pushkin is focused mainly on the future development of Nicolaevan Russia, Lermontov on the whole of earthly existence, but as lived under Nicholas I. They do not proceed on parallel lines. But both are returning from exile and confronting something new: Pushkin post-Decembrist Russia in the capitals and Lermontov the destiny he had so greatly both trumpeted and agonized over, for Pushkin's death and *Smert' Poeta* brought not only fame but opportunity and the necessity of choice. In details and in lexical items, the two poems have little in common, but the first lines of

⁴¹ Emma Gershtein, *Ob odnom liricheskom tsikle Lermontova, Lermontovskii sbornik* (L.: "Nauka", 1985), 131-51.

⁴² *Lermontov i Pushkin* (L.: Sovetskii pisatel'; 1987), 39.

⁴³ Dated early 1838 in the 1989 two-volume *Sovetskii pisatel'* edition, Leningrad, 1989, II, 605.

each poem indicate clearly that Lermontov here had his eye on Pushkin. The latter had written: *Gliazhu vpered ia bez boiazni* ("I look forward without fear"). Lermontov's opening line appears as a response: *Gliazhu na budushchnost' s boiazn'iu* ("I look at the future with fear").

Comparison with another poem, Lermontov's own 20-line *Kogda b v pokornosti neznan'ia* ("If in the submissiveness of ignorance") of 1831, is even more rewarding. Both concern the meaning of our earthly life. But whereas the earlier poem, discussed in Chapter I, constitutes a veritable paean of praise, full of confidence in the Creator's design, the 1838 poem answers the great question with pessimism. It is a response to the 1831 poem,⁴⁴ as is made clear by the formal similarities between the two: both use the same four-foot iambs; both consist of two 10-line stanzas; and the two stanzas have the same rhyme scheme (AbAbCCdEEEd), which is that of the "Lomonosov" ode, and before him of Johann Christian Günther (1695-1723) and Boileau (1636-1711). Lermontov uses this rhyme scheme nowhere else except in *Moe griadushchee v tumane*, already identified as a preparatory draft for *Gliazhu na budushchnost' s boiazn'iu*. The use in both poems of the odaic stanza not only corroborates the relationship between the two poems but endows both with more than average significance.

For comparison's sake the two poems are reproduced here, with the 1831 poem on the left hand side, the 1838 poem on the right:

1

Когда б в покорности незнания
Нас жить создатель осудил,
Неисполнимые желанья
Он в нашу душу б не вложил,
Он не позволил бы стремиться
К тому, что не должно свершиться,
Он не позволил бы искать
В себе и в мире совершенства,
Когда б нам полного блаженства
Не должно вечно было знать.

Гляжу на будущность с боязнью,
Гляжу на прошлое с тоской
И как преступник перед казнью
Ищу кругом души родной;
Придет ли вестник избавленья
Открыть мне жизни назначенье,
Цель упований и страстей,
Поведать — что мне бог готовил,
Зачем так горько прекословил
Надеждам юности моей.

2

Но чувство есть у нас святое,
Надежда, бог грядущих дней, —
Она в душе, где всё земное,
Живет наперекор страстей;
Она залог, что есть поныне
На небе иль в другой пустыне
Такое место, где любовь
Предстанет нам, как ангел нежный,
И где тоски ее мятежной
Душа узнать не может вновь.

Земле я отдал дань земную
Любви, надежд, добра и зла;
Начать готов я жизнь другую,
Молчу и жду: пора пришла:
Я в мире не оставлю брата,
И тьмой и холодом объята
Душа усталая моя;
Как ранний плод, лишенный сока,
Она увяла в бурях рока
Под знойным солнцем бытия.

1.

If in the submissiveness of ignorance
The Creator had condemned us to live,
He would not have placed in our souls

I look upon the future with fear,
I look upon the past with anguish,
And, like a criminal before execution,

⁴⁴ See I. V. Rodnianskaia, *Gliazhu na budushchnost' s boiazn'iu*, *L. E.*, 113-14, and N. I. Os'makova, *Tsel' zhizni* under *Eticheskii ideal*, *L. E.*, 635-36.

Unattainable aspirations,
 He would not have allowed us to aim
 At things not destined to be achieved,
 He would not have allowed us to seek
 Perfection in ourselves and in the worlds,
 If for all time we were condemned
 Never to know complete bliss.

2.

But within us there is a sacred feeling,
 Hope, the god of future days,—
 Hope is in the soul where everything earthly
 Lives in defiance of passion;
 Hope is the pledge that there still exists
 In heaven or in some other bourn
 A place where love
 Will appear before us as a tender angel,
 And where the soul can no longer know
 Love's rebellious anguish.

Craving I seek a kindred soul;
 Will the herald of deliverance come?
 Reveal life's destined aim and goal?
 The object of aspirations, passions?
 Reveal what God's prepared for me
 And why he so painfully annulled
 The hopes of my youth,

To earth I gave the earthly tribute,
 Of love, and hopes, of good, and bad;
 Ready to start my life anew,
 Silent, I wait: the time has come;
 In this world I'll leave no brother,
 My weary soul is held and clenched
 By darkness and cold;
 Like an early bud, denied the sap,
 My soul before the storms of fate
 Has withered beneath the blistering sun.

Besides the sense of optimism turned to wasteland, there is one more crucial difference between the two poems. In the optimistic 1831 poem, the human race appears consistently in the plural, as a collective (*nas, v nashu dushu, nam, u nas, nam*), in the discussion of the compact between the Creator and mankind. In the pessimistic 1838 poem, by contrast, the human side of the equation is represented by the poet alone (*gliazhu, ishchu, mne, mne, iunosti moei, ia otdal, gotov ia, molchu i zhdu, ia...ne ostavliu, dusha ustalaia moia*). This switch from plural to singular serves to intensify the impression of desolation, abandonment, isolation.⁴⁵

12

The next three poems, *Slyshu li golos tvoi* ("When I hear your voice"), *Kak nebesa tvoi vzor blistaet* ("Like the heavens, your gaze shines"), *Ona poet — i zvuki taiut* ("She sings — and the sounds melt"), all written at the end of 1837 or early in 1838, are thematically linked.

The order in which they were written is in dispute. The authoritative 1954-1957 six-volume Academy of Sciences edition gives them in the order above. So does Eikhenbaum's authoritative 1936 five-volume *Academia* edition.⁴⁶ But the well-documented 1983-1984 four-volume *Khudozhestvennaia literatura* edition now lists the three poems in order *Ona poet, Kak nebesa tvoi vzor blistaet, Slyshu li golos tvoi*. I have not encountered an explanation for the change. It could not have been motivated by the position of the poems in the Chertkov notebook, since they, following the new order, appear respectively on sheets (*listy*) 43, 63, and 46. Nor could their relative positioning have determined the earlier arrangement, where they are on *listy* 46, 63, and 43. I prefer, at least for the time being, to stay with the earlier order, which has the advantage of providing an example of Lermontov's method of composition: instead of the rough drafts we could expect to find in Pushkin, we are likely to find in Lermontov earlier poems, to which improvements have been made. Of the three poems here, *Ona poet* is, in my view, the best, so I cannot help thinking of the other two as, in a sense, preparatory drafts,

⁴⁵ First published in *Vchera i segodnia*, 1845, I, 95.

⁴⁶ *Ak. nauk*, II, 110-12, and Eikhenbaum, *Academia*, II, 31-33.

although it must be conceded that significant stylistic differences actually set them apart and make them independent poems.

There is one other poem which has to be taken into account. Whatever its exact relationship with *Slyshu li golos tvoi* and *Kak nebesa, Ona poet* is very clearly connected with a poem from 1832, *Ona ne gordoi krasotoiu* ("Not by proud beauty does she"). This poem was referred to in the preceding chapter in connection with Lermontov's relationship to Varvara Lopukhina.

All four poems involve a woman. All dwell on those female attributes which most compel the poet's own attention and admiration, revealed in the 1832 poem. The three attributes on which the four poems dwell are: the eyes, the gaze; the gait or the way the woman moves (including non-walking movements); and the voice, both speaking and/or singing. Lermontov in his youthfully naïve 1832 poem informs the reader that neither the figure (presumably the waist) nor the bust ranks high in his admiration.

И стан ее — не стан богини,
И грудь волною не встает.

And her figure is not a goddess' figure,
Her bosom does not swell upward like a wave.

He then lists what does appeal: her movements; her smiles and facial features (an approximation of the gaze, i.e., the way she looks at people and objects), and first and foremost her voice:

И в ней никто своей святыни,
Припав к земле, не признает.
Однако все ее движенья,
Улыбки, речи и черты
Так полны жизни, вдохновенья,
Так полны чудной простоты.
Но голос душу проникает,
Как вспоминанье лучших дней,
И сердце любит и страдает,
Почти стыдаясь любви своей.

*And in her, prostrating himself on the earth,
No one will acknowledge his object of devotion.
However, all of her movements,
Smiles, speech and features
Are so full of life, of inspiration,
So full of wondrous simplicity,
While her voice penetrates the soul,
Like the memory of better days.
And the heart suffers and loves,
Almost ashamed at feeling love.*

[translation provided by copy editor]

This delightful two-line ending is almost an apology, since her excellence lies not in conventional beauty, but in her actions and her personality. This provides insight into Lermontov's thinking about women, both in 1832 and apparently throughout his life. It also

demonstrates his willingness and ability to break the mold of an established genre by making a glaringly simple and truthful observation.⁴⁷

The first two poems, from 1837-38, address the woman directly, i.e. in the second person. The first poem, *Slyshu li golos tvoi*, with its near-dactylic two-foot lines, unrhymed, is close to a romance song, with suggestions of folklore. It focuses on the voice and the eyes:

Слышу ли голос твой
Звонкий и ласковый,
Как птичка в клетке
Сердце запрыгает;

Встречу ль глаза твои

When I hear your voice,
Resonant and heart-warming,
Like a little bird in a cage,
My heart begins to leap;

When I meet your eyes....

So too the following poem, *Kak nebesa tvoi vtor blistaet*:

Как поцелуй звучит и тает
Твой голос молодой;

За звук один волшебной речи,
За твой единый взгляд,
Я рад отдать красавца сечи,
Грузинский мой булат;

....Like a kiss, your young voice
Sounds forth and melts;

For one sound of your bewitching voice,
For one glance alone of yours,
I'd gladly give the battle's beauty,
My Georgian battle steel....

Here, the voice is equated with the primarily non-auditory kiss, as it is also in *Ona poet — i zvuki taiut*.⁴⁸ This final poem reverts to the third person and in many ways harks back to the 1832 *Ona ne gordoi krasotoiu*. But it is superior to the earlier poem and to the two 1837-38 poems. In comparison to the 1832 poem, it eliminates the “negatives,” i.e., the lack of young lovers dancing attendance, the imperfection of her figure, the inadequacy of her bosom. These references, admittedly, give meaning to the excellent final line, commented on above, about his near shame at his love: “*Pochti stydias' liubvi svoei*.” The economical style of *Ona poet* brings the woman herself into sharper focus. The entire eight lines are devoted to her, not to others' reactions to her, save the poet's description.

⁴⁷ See *Demon*, I, VIII; also *Pesnia pro tsaria Ivana Vasil'evicha*, which was written in 1837.

⁴⁸ See above the comments on *Sosed*.

Again, *Ona poet* gains a sort of dynamism by using verbs only to introduce the appealing attributes and gains flexibility and directness by conveying “When she....” in three different ways without resorting to the conjunction.

Она поет—и звуки тают,
Как поцелуи на устах,
Глядит—и небеса играют
В ее божественных глазах;

Идет ли—все ее движенья,
Иль молвит слово—все черты
Так полны чувства, выраженья,
Так полны дивной простоты.

She sings— and the sounds melt
Like kisses on the lips,
She looks— and the heavens play
In her divine eyes;

She walks— all her movements,
Or speaks a word— all her features
Are so full of feeling, of expression,
So full of wondrous simplicity.

A minor but not insignificant improvement over *Kak nebesa* (against the major improvement of eliminating his Georgian steel) consists in changing the simile *Kak nebesa* into a main clause: “*Gliadit — i nebesa igraiut...*” The almost conversational, not highly poetic style, entirely appropriate here, is promoted by a device, rarely exploited in Pushkin’s day but present from time to time in Lermontov, which we may tentatively label *delayed syntactic resolution*. I have in mind lines 5 and 6:

Идет ли—все ее движенья,
Иль молвит слово—все черты

After line 5: “When she walks, all her movements....” we expect to find out about her movements. But the poet reaches for an additional attribute (“*Il’ molvit slovo*”) (“Or speaks a word”) and only then offers his main-clause resolution. This creates a sense of hesitation in delivery, as though an afterthought had intruded. Notwithstanding the careful structuring of the poem, this puts the poetry at one remove from the organization normally associated with verse and one step closer to everyday thought processes and the improvisation and immediacy of conversation.⁴⁹

The rhymes in the second quatrain of this 8-line poem, *dvizhen’ia*, *cherty*, *vyrazhen’ia*, *prostoty*, provoke comparison to one more poem, Pushkin’s famous 1825 Anna Kern poem, *Kxxx* (“To xxx”). In his second stanza, Pushkin rhymes *suety*, *cherty*, in the third *mechty*, *cherty* (elsewhere the same rhyme: *ty*, *krasoty* twice, and *moi liubvi*), and using the —*en’e* rhyme in four out of his seven stanzas, i.e. in eight lines. It is hard to imagine that Lermontov was not

⁴⁹ But see in *Puteshestvie Onegina* the switch in thought: “*Poroi dozhdlivoiu namedni/la zavernuv na skotnyi dvor.../T’ fu! prozaicheskie bredni...*” Note that Pushkin breaks off and then launches into something new.

aware of echoing Pushkin.⁵⁰ The two poems are thematically quite different, but one specific comparison highlights an essential quality of Lermontov's poem: whereas Pushkin's poem is focused on the poet, in Lermontov's the poet is absent except for writing the poem.

Comparison of these poems offers insight into Lermontov's creative process. Ordered as above, they show development culminating in a minor *chef-d'oeuvre*, *Ona poet — i zvuki taiut*.⁵¹

13

There are seven remaining poems for 1838. Of these, three are verse epistles to friends; the fourth to A. G. Khomutova on her relationship to the blind poet I. I. Kozlov; the fifth a free translation of one of Mickiewicz's Crimean sonnets. The two other poems are among Lermontov's most famous, *Duma* and *Poet* ("The Poet").

The three verse epistles are lightweight, humorous, and refreshingly warm. The first, in four-foot trochees, eight lines, is to M. I. Tsejdlar, a comrade from cadet school, who regretted being transferred from the Grozdnenskii regiment near Novgorod to the Caucasus. It must have been written about March 3, which was the day Tsejdlar left. The other two epistles, four and 16 lines respectively, are to a senior officer, N. I. Bukharov (1799?-1862?), colonel of the Life Guard Hussar regiment, Lermontov's original pre-exile regiment, and the regiment to which he was restored in April 1838. Bukharov was greatly respected by junior officers, and in Lermontov's epistles he is depicted as the embodiment of hussar virtues: courage, comradeship, and companionable drinking.

A. G. Khomutovoi is inspired by the deep mutual attachment which existed between that lady and her cousin, the poet Kozlov. The two had been separated by circumstances, and he had married another. After more than 20 years they met again. By then Kozlov was ailing, paralyzed, and blind; but the strong feelings they once shared persisted. Kozlov expressed his emotions in a poem to Khomutova entitled *K drugu vesny moei posle dolgoi, dolgoi razluki* ("To the Friend of my Spring after Long, Long Separation"). Kozlov's poem, apparently shown to Lermontov by Khomutova, moved him in his turn to address to her the poem discussed here.

Written in four-foot iambs, Lermontov's remarkably moving 26-line poem describes the significance of Kozlov's and Khomutova's reunion in terms of the comfort she brought the ailing Kozlov. It concludes:

Но да сойдет благословенье
На вашу жизнь, за то что вы
Хоть на единое мгновенье
Умели снять венец мученья
С его преклонной головы.

But may a blessing descend
On your life because,
Even though for a short moment,
You were able to lift the crown of torment

⁵⁰ The 1832 Lermontov poem actually contains the Pushkin poem's *vdokhnoven'e*.

⁵¹ The 1832 *Ona ne gordoi krasotoiu* was first published in the *Saratovskii spravochnyi listok*, 1876, No. 1; *Slyshu li golos tvoi* in *Vchera i segodnia*, 1845, I, 92, under the title *Neotdelannoe stikhotvorenie; Kak nebesa* in *Bibliograficheskie zapiski*, 1859, II, No. 1, 22; *Ona poet* in *Bibliograficheskie zapiski*, 1859, II, No. 1, 23.

From his bowed head.⁵²

Lermontov again shows a remarkable sensibility to the deepest feelings of others.

Vid gor iz stepi Kozlova (“View of the Mountains from the Steppe round Kozlov”) is a translation of a poem from Mickiewicz’s *Crimean Sonnets* cycle. It is hard to see what Lermontov’s purpose was in writing it. He was probably prompted to do so by his interest at the time in the blind poet, Kozlov, see *A. G. Khomutovoi*, above. Kozlov had translated this Mickiewicz poem, and his translation had been published no less than four times. Kozlov is not only the name of the blind poet but also the former name of what is now Evpatoriia, on the West coast of the Crimea, with views of the mountains to the southeast, the highest of which, Chatyrdag, mentioned at the poem’s end, is just under 5,000 feet. The Pilgrim asks whether Allah raised up these mountains as a habitat for his angels or whether evil spirits (*divy*) erected the wall to block the stars moving from East to North. The moon lights up the sky. Is Tsargrad on fire? Or did God nail the moon to the vaults of heaven as a beacon to guide the stars on their course over the sea? The *Murza* (High Dignitary) replies that he has himself been up in the mountains, where the snow storms howl everlastingly, where the streams begin their course, where the breath freezes: higher than the eagle. And where above his turban there shone one star alone—Chatyrdag. The Pilgrim then says “Ah!” — expressing amazement. Lermontov’s four-foot iambs appeal by virtue of a sort of cosmic austerity. Yet the poem feels unfinished and thus frustrates the reader. Here are the final six lines of the Pilgrim’s speech:

Вот свет всё небо озарил:
То не пожар ли Царяграда?
Иль бог ко сводам пригвоздил
Тебя, полночная лампада.
Маяк спасительный, отрада
Плывущих по морю светил?

*Now light has lit up the whole sky
Can it be a fire in Constantinople?
Or has God nailed to the vaults
Thee, o midnight lamp.
Salvo for lighthouse, joy
Of sailing heavenly bodies?*

{translation provided by Hugh McLean}

The poem was not published in Lermontov’s lifetime.⁵³

14

We come next to *Duma*, one of Lermontov’s most famous and significant poems:

Печально я гляжу на наше поколение!
Его грядущее—иль пусто, иль темно,
Меж тем, под бременем познания и сомненья.

⁵² First published in *Molodik*, 1844, 19. The 1838 dating is tentative, as also the 1841 suggested by Eikhenbaum. Khomutova (1784-1856) was the sister of M.G. Khomutov, commander of the Life Guards Hussar regiment, i.e. Lermontov’s commanding officer during two periods.

⁵³ First published in *Vchera i segodnia*, 1846, II, 153-54.

В бездействии состарится оно.
 Богаты мы, едва из колыбели,
 Ошибками отцов и поздним их умом,
 И жизнь уж нас томит, как ровный путь без цели,
 Как пир на празднике чужом.
 К добру и злу постыдно равнодушны,
 В начале поприща мы вянем без борьбы;
 Перед опасностью позорно-малодушны,
 И перед властью—презренные рабы.
 Так тощий плод, до времени созрелый,
 Ни вкуса нашего не радуя, ни глаз,
 Висит между цветов, пришлец осиротелый,
 И час их красоты—его паденья час.

Мы иссушили ум наукою бесплодной,
 Тая завистливо от ближних и друзей
 Надежды лучшие и голос благородный
 Неверием осмеянных страстей.
 Едва касались мы до чаши наслажденья,
 Но юных сил мы тем не сберегли:
 Из каждой радости, бояся пресыщенья,
 Мы лучший сок навеки извлекли.

Мечты поэзии, создания искусства
 Восторгом сладостным наш ум не шевелят;
 Мы жадно бережем в груди остаток чувства—
 Зарытый скупостью и бесполезный клад.
 И ненавидим мы, и любим мы случайно,
 Ничем не жертвуя ни злобе, ни любви,
 И царствует в душе какой-то холод тайный,
 Когда огонь кипит в крови.
 И предков скучны нам роскошные забавы,
 Их добросовестный, ребяческий разврат;
 И к гробу мы спешим без счастья и без славы,
 Глядя насмешливо назад.

Толпой угрюмою и скоро позабытой,
 Над миром мы пройдем без шума и следа,
 Не бросивши векам ни мысли плодovitой,
 Ни гением начатого труда.
 И прах наш, с строгостью судьи и гражданина,
 Потомок оскорбит презрительным стихом,
 Насмешкой горькою обманутого сына
 Над промотавшимся отцом.

With sorrow I look upon our generation!
 Its future is either empty or dark,
 Meanwhile, beneath the burden of knowledge and doubt
 It will grow old in inactivity.

Almost from our cradles, we are rich
 With the mistakes of our fathers and their belated wisdom,
 And life wearies us like an even path with no end,
 Like a feast at someone else's celebration.
 Shamefully indifferent to good and evil,
 At the outset of life's path we wither without struggle;
 Shamefully faint-hearted in the face of danger,
 Before authority most abject slaves.
 Thus a sickly fruit, ripe before its time,
 Bringing no joy to either our taste or sight,
 Hangs 'mid the healthy fruits, an orphan out of place,
 And the hour of their full flower is the hour of its death!

We have dried up our minds with learning without profit,
 Concealing enviously from near ones and from friends
 The finest hopes and the noble voice
 Of passions we have mocked with unbelief.
 We scarcely touched our lips to pleasure's cup,
 But did not thereby keep our youthful strength;
 From every joy, in fear of satiety,
 We rooted out the choicest part.

Poetic dreams and works of art
 Do not touch our minds with sweet, enchanting rapture;
 And greedily we hoard what once was feeling,
 A useless treasure, stifled by our meanness.
 We hate and love at random,
 With nothing sacrificed to anger or to love,
 And in our souls there reigns a secret chill
 While fire burns in our blood.
 Wearisome to us the lavish vices of the past,
 Our fathers' conscientious, childish sins;
 To our graves we hasten with neither happiness nor glory,
 Looking derisively behind us.

A gloomy crowd and soon to be forgotten,
 Over this world we go with neither noise nor trace,
 Having bequeathed the ages not one fertile thought,
 Nor yet one work by genius conceived.
 And our descendants, judging sternly, will
 With what contemptuous words insult our dust,
 With the bitter gibing of a son deceived,
 Mocking his spendthrift, bankrupt sire.

Duma was published in 1839 in *Otechestvennye zapiski* and again in Lermontov's 1840 *Stikhorvoreniia*. Lines 11 and 12 were removed by the censor, line 12 being especially and obviously sensitive: "*I pered vlastiu — prezrennye raby*" ("Before authority, most abject slaves"). In their place appeared two lines of dots. Despite this, *Duma* had an enormous impact on the

reading public. Some criticized *Duma* as subjective and exaggerated, but others hailed it as a cry from the heart which exposed the frustrations and hopelessness of a whole lost generation.

Lermontov scholars rightly emphasize that in *Duma* Lermontov's personal, individual hurt has become merged in the larger hurt of his generation. This is no longer the Byronic hero, whose superior qualities the crowd of average men and women fail to understand and who is consequently doomed. The poet does indeed stand apart from the crowd to criticize it. But he also recognizes himself as part of it.⁵⁴ As recently as the year before, Lermontov had taken the position of the ill-treated lone outsider in his unfinished *Ne smeisia nad moei prorocheskoi toskoiu*. The new stance assumed in *Duma*, the ability to identify with the crowd, can justifiably be seen as a significant development. Still, its roots can be traced back to a very early poem, the 1829 *Monolog* ("Monologue").⁵⁵

The opening of *Monolog* appears set up to usher in the typical complaints of the superior individual. But then Lermontov moves to the plural, identifying himself with the problems of the "children of the north":

Мы, дети севера, как здешние растенья,
Цветем недолго, быстро увядаем...
Как солнце зимнее на сером небосклоне,
Так пасмурна жизнь наша. Так недолго
Ее однообразное течение...
И душно кажется на родине,
И сердцу тяжело, и душа тоскует...
Не зная ни любви, ни дружбы сладкой,
Средь бурь пустых томится юность наша,
И быстро злобы яд ее мрачит,
И нам горька остылой жизни чаша;
И уж ничто души не веселит.

We, children of the north, like these plants,
Bloom briefly, quickly wither...
Like the winter sun on the gray horizon,
Our life is gloomy. Not for long
Its monotonous course...
And our native land is suffocating,
The heart is heavy, and the soul longs in vain...
Knowing neither love nor sweet friendship,
Our youth drags on through empty storms.
And quickly the poison of malice darkens it,
And bitter to us is the cup of our life turned cold
And no longer does anything give joy to our souls.

[translation of last three lines provided by Hugh McLean]

⁵⁴ Eikhenbaum, *Academia II*, 195; Lidiia Ginzburg, *Lirika 1836-1841, Tvorcheskii put' Lermontova* (L., 1940), 70-102.

⁵⁵ Eikhenbaum, *Academia II*, 195. Notwithstanding the similarities between *Duma* and *Monolog*, there are also considerable differences, as noted by Anatoly Liberman, 466.

Here Lermontov is thinking of himself, yet not of himself alone, but of his generation. *Duma* does not arise in a vacuum. It pulls together much that was written before, and foreshadows much still to be written.

Duma was not a cry in the wilderness. On the contrary, it succeeded in part because it struck a chord. Commentators point to Chaadaev's first *Philosophical Letter* published in 1836 in Nadezhdin's *Teleskop* and to other articles, especially in *Teleskop*, on the ineffectiveness and futility of the younger generation. The influence of the French poet, Henri-Auguste Barbier (1805-82), whose 1831 *Iambes* and 1833 *Il pianto (Lament)* were eagerly read by Lermontov and other educated members of society, should also be noted. The success of *Duma* was due primarily to Lermontov's ability to put current ideas into powerful and moving verse.

The poem itself consists of 44 lines, primarily six-foot iambs, but with the admixture of eight five-foot and four four-foot iambs. It is divided into four paragraphs. The first paragraph (lines 1-16) describes the present abysmal state of Lermontov's generation. The second (lines 17-24) switches into the past tense, and, while continuing to recount present inadequacies, provides something of a causal background to the first. The third paragraph (lines 25-36) reverts to the present tense, relates further defects and concludes with the image of the present generation hastening to its grave "with neither happiness nor glory." The final paragraph (lines 37-44) moves into the future tense, looking back with contempt on the generation's failure to embrace or accomplish any worthwhile end.

Besides the logical thematic and temporal division into four paragraphs, there is another compositional principle at work. The 44-line poem may also be divided into eleven four-line feminine-masculine crisscross-rhyming stanzas. The presence and vitality of the stanzaic principle is reinforced by the poem's major syntactic pauses. These (periods, exclamation marks, question marks) occur at the end of the following lines: 1,4,8,12,16,20,24,28,32,36,40,44. Further reinforcement is provided by the positioning of the shorter (i.e. five- and four-foot) lines. Of 12 shorter lines, eight occur at the end of a quatrain: 4, (5), 8, (9), (13), 20, (22), 24, 32, 36, 40, 44. Thus, the shorter line is not merely obeying the dictates of semantics and syntax; it is performing the time-honored function of marking stanzaic closure.

The poem's underlying stanzaic structure is important for our understanding of how Lermontov produces his effects. In examining *Smert' poeta*, I insisted on the cumulative effect produced by the poet's constant harking back to the central incontrovertible fact of Pushkin's passing ("Pogib.... Pal... ubit... Ubit.... Ugas.... Uvial... Ubit... Umer..."). The same technique of reiteration is employed in *Duma*, but with an obvious difference. Instead of being directed inward toward one central event, it is directed outward toward various facets of the predicament of his generation. This is where the stanzaic structure becomes significant, for the ending of every "stanza" in *Duma* constitutes one more fresh four-line disaster.

Another characteristic device employed in *Duma* is the use of paired words. Sometimes they are complementary: "il' pusto il' temno.... ot blizhnikh i druzei.... Mechty poezii, sozdaniia iskusstva.... bez schast'ia i bez slavy.... bez shuma i sleda...;" sometimes disparate and even contradictory: "... poznan'ia i somnen'ia.... K dobru i zlu.... I nenavidim my i liubim my.... ni zloby, ni liubvi...." But they are always complementary, contributing as a pair to the bleak impression. The use of pairs is reinforced in *Duma* by the consistent caesural division of the line into hemistichs, the caesura coming after the third foot in six-foot lines, after the second in five-foot lines.

Skillfully constructed, in a rhetorical-declamatory, but with a hint of conversational intonations, it is not surprising that *Duma* produced a strong impact on Lermontov's con-

temporaries. But to think of it as a poem relevant only to the late 1830's in Russia is to underrate it. It will only become dated when we can say that the sense of frustration and futility it articulates has been eliminated from life.⁵⁶

15

Poet consists of eleven four-line stanzas, with regularly alternating crisscross rhymes, the odd lines consisting of six-foot iambs (masculine), and the even lines of four-foot iambs (feminine). The poem is divided into two parts: the first six stanzas recount the history of the writer's dagger; and the last five apply the lessons of that history to the problem of the lot and role of the poet.

By 1838 the poet and his role had been a favorite topic in Russia for some years. But Lermontov was probably, as in the 1838 *Kinzhalt*, indebted mostly to Pushkin's 1821 *Kinzhalt*. Like Pushkin, Lermontov describes the changing fate of the dagger as it passes from hand to hand. As in *Kinzhalt*, the action takes place in the Caucasus. The dagger passes from some unidentified hillman to a Cossack, then to an Armenian trader. The dagger has a proud past, but now, neglected, has fallen on hard times:

Теперь родных ножен, избитых на войне,
Лишен героя спутник бедный;
Игрушкой золотой он блещет на стене—
Увы, бесславный и безвредный!

This is precisely the fate of the poet:

В наш век изнеженный не так ли ты, поэт,
Свое утратил значение,
In our decadent age have you not, poet, in the same way
Lost your function....

At one time, you fired the warrior for battle; your voice was needed by the crowd as a cup is needed at the feast, as incense in the hour of prayer; your voice rang out like a bell in the assembly tower ("*na bashne vechevoi*") on days of triumph or disaster:

Твой стих, как Божий дух, носился над толпой;
И отзыв мыслей благородных
Звучал, как колокол на башне вечевой,
Во дни торжеств и бед народных.

But your simple, proud voice is no longer needed. We ask for tinsel and deception. Like an elderly beauty ("*Kak vetkhaia krasa*"), our elderly world has covered its wrinkles with make-up. Will you, derided prophet, awake again, or will you never again pull out from its sheath your blade covered with the rust of contempt ("*Pokrytyi rzhavchinoi prezren'ia*")?

Belinskii, understandably, complained of the last three words. Our own age, familiar with Symbolist and post-Symbolist poetry, probably finds it easier than Belinskii's to take in stride such totally un-Pushkinian expressions. I. N. Rozanov insists that the expression fulfills

⁵⁶ First published, with lines 11 and 12 removed, in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1839, I, No. 1, 148-49 and then in Lermontov's 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.

the admirable poetic function of pulling together the two parallel themes of the poem, the dagger and the poet, in its closing line.⁵⁷

This poem is important for the light it sheds on Lermontov's sense of the poet's role. The last five stanzas, with Lermontov's perfect ability to pick the most salient and meaningful functions for the poet and the stately progress of his alternating six- and four-foot lines (the former with a syntax-reinforced caesura), are unsurpassed. Lermontov is often seen as seeking to put distance between himself and Pushkin. Yet we should remember that Pushkin's vision in his 1826 *Prorok* ("The Prophet") is markedly different from that in his 1833 *Poetu* ("To the Poet"). And we may wonder what Pushkin might himself have written in 1838 or later.

Lermontov did not publish *Poet* in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*. Was this because he himself did not greatly like it? Did he find the comparison with the dagger contrived? Was its place simply pre-empted by *Ne ver' sebe* ("Don't Believe Yourself"), on the same theme but more specific, carrying his "argument" further?⁵⁸

16

Rebenka milogo rozhden'e ("The Birth of a Dear Child") was enclosed in a letter to Lermontov's friend A. A. Lopukhin, brother of Varvara and Mariia Lopukhina. He had come to Petersburg in December 1834 to propose to Sushkova. The poem, celebrating the birth of Lopukhin's son, Alexander, was written in late February or early March, 1839.

Sixteen lines in length, the poem is in regularly alternating four-foot (feminine) and five-foot (masculine) iambic lines. It expresses the wish that the child grow up truthful and upright, not prematurely experience the torments of love or the thirst for glory, and emerge from society's murky snares white in soul, and with heart unscathed:

Пускай не знает он до срока
 Ни мук любви, ни славы жадных дум:
 Пускай глядит он без упрёка
 На ложный блеск и ложный мира шум;
 Пускай не ищет он причины
 Чужим страстям и радостям своим.
 И выйдет он из светской тины
 Душою бел и сердцем невредим!

Particularly significant, albeit familiar, are Lermontov's mention of the false values and false attractions of society, and his warning about the misfortune of falling in love at too early an age, a misfortune he felt he shared with Byron.⁵⁹ Lermontov's remarks on the poem in his letter to Lopukhin are studiously light and humorous. But it is clear that the poem is written very much in earnest. The fact that it is written about a child makes it easier for the poet to write freely, without irony, without fear of embarrassment.⁶⁰

This poem prompts mention of three points which are central to understanding Lermontov's poetic — and non-poetic — personality. Lermontov's art may be characterized as

⁵⁷ I. N. Rozanov, *Lermontov master stikha*, 92-93.

⁵⁸ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1839, II, No.3, 163-64.

⁵⁹ See the autobiographical prose piece, *Ia khochu rasskazat' vam* and the *Biographical Introduction* in the present volume.

⁶⁰ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1843, XXXI, No, 12, 342.

an art of self-expression, of self-revelation. He likes to tell us about himself, because he thinks he has something important to tell. And very often, notwithstanding the limitations imposed by society's fashions and the image he seeks to project, he succeeds admirably. But he succeeds no less well, and more reliably, in revealing himself when he writes about others for whom he feels affection. In expressing his fondest wishes for the child's development, he emphatically makes clear the values he most cherishes.

These basic values are most easily, because less pretentiously, set on paper when the tone is light. We have already pointed to the greater freedoms of album verses. They may be taken as seriously or as lightly as the recipient pleases. So, too, this ritualized greeting on the child's birth provides a perfect vehicle for the utterance of basic beliefs.

Lastly, *Rebenka milogo rozhden'e* is an example of a tendency which will gain strength during the remainder of the poet's life, the tendency to see an irreconcilable conflict between positive virtues and a society which threatens to stifle them. Society is repeatedly portrayed, as here, as an evil empire to be shunned or guarded against.

These are not strikingly new notes, hitherto unheard. As in all things pertaining to Lermontov there is continuity, but in this case also development. And to hear Lermontov's poetic voice aright, we should pay close attention whenever one or more of the three factors just mentioned appears.

A. A. Oleninoi ("To A. A. Olenina") was written on her birthday, August 11, 1839, to the daughter of A. N. Olenin, the Director of the Public Library and President of the Academy of the Arts. Pushkin had paid court to Olenina briefly and without success in the late 20's. The eight-line part-Russian part-French poem is a joke, an example of Lermontov's light verse.

И что сказать не знаю,
А мне кричат: "Plus vite!"
Я счастья вам желаю
Et je vous félicite.

What to say I don't know:
People shout at me: "Hurry up!"
So I wish you happiness,
And congratulate you.⁶¹

17

Ne ver' sebe also focuses on the poet's role and his relationship to the common crowd. Its genetic link with the 1838 *Poet* is evident in the use of the identical meter and rhyme scheme: six-foot iambs (masculine) alternating with four-foot feminines, though in this poem instead of four-line stanzas we have two quatrains together, i.e. eight-line stanzas. In Pushkin the 6/4 alternation signals recollection (e.g., *Vospominanie* ("Remembrance"), 1828). In Lermontov the 6/4 alternation is from Barbier, who quite frequently alternates Alexandrines with eight-syllable lines, an alternation well-suited to the theme of the poet's role. As in *Poet*, Lermontov again rejects the characteristic Romantic view of the poet as superior to the crowd. While in *Poet* the crowd can still be said to be to a degree blameworthy:

Как ветхая краса, наш ветхий мир привык
Морщины прятать под румяны...

⁶¹ First published in 1954 in the 6-volume Academy edition *Ak. nauk*, II, 121.

Like an aging beauty, our aging world is wont
To cover its wrinkles with make-up....

in *Ne ver' sebe* this demeaning image is transferred to the poet:

Поверь: для них смешон твой плач и твой укор.
С своим непевом заучённым,
Как разрумяненный трагический актер,
Махающий мечом картонным...

Believe me: your weeping and reproaches are for them ridiculous,
With your well-worn chant,

Like a painted tragic actor,
Waving a cardboard sword...

Ne ver' sebe favors the crowd over the poet. The crowd, as seen by Lidia Ginzburg, though not idealized, has about it an element of tragedy and therefore dignity; while the dreaming, self-important, tearful, reproachful, in-turned poet arouses impatience and ridicule. Yet in Ginzburg's view, the poet is also tragic. Both crowd and poet are culpable. And both are in a hopeless situation.⁶² But the crowd emerges in a more favorable light, for its courage and ability to conceal its hurt puts the poet to shame:

А между тем из них едва ли есть один,
Тяжелой пыткой не измятый,
До преждевременных добравшийся морщин
Без преступления иль утраты!

But there's hardly a one of them
Who has not been wracked by painful torture,
Acquiring premature wrinkles,
Without crime or loss!...

Morshchiny (wrinkles) appear in both poems, as attributes of the crowd. Their functions are, however, diametrically opposed. In *Poet* they are covered by make-up, and therefore a sign of the deceptive facade; in *Ne ver' sebe* they are a badge of courage.

The last four lines in both poems deal with the poet: *Poet* asks whether the "derided prophet" can awaken once more; in *Ne ver' sebe* the poet is told how ridiculous his weeping and reproaches seem to the crowd. He is ridiculed in both poems, given as weapons a rusted dagger and a cardboard sword.

In both poems (the message is most probably from Barbier) the poet is criticized for his pursuit of money: "zlato" ("gold") in *Poet*, and in *Ne ver' sebe* "*Stydisia torgovat*" ("be ashamed to make a profit from...."). Finally, Lermontov changed the epigraph from Barbier's *lambes* in *Ne ver' sebe* from singular to plural, a further indication of his growing tendency to identify with the crowd.⁶³ This tendency, mentioned by us in connection with the 1838 *Duma*, is

⁶² Lidia Ginzburg, *Lirika 1836-1841, Tvorcheskii put' Lermontova* (L., 1940), 70-102.

⁶³ In Lermontov the Barbier lines read as follows:

Que nous font après tout les vulgaires abois
De tous ces charlatans qui donnent de la voix,
Les marchands de pathos et les faiseurs d'emphase
Et tous les baladins qui dansent sur la phrase?

a significant part of his post-1837 outlook, though in fact it was discernible, we know, much earlier. But rare indeed among Lermontov's early lyrics are such lines as the following:

Какое дело нам, страдал ты или нет?

На что́ нам знать твои волненья.

What is it to us if you suffered or not?

Why should we have to know of your agitations?

Lermontov published *Ne ver' sebe* in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.⁶⁴

18

Tri pal'my ("The Three Palm Trees"), an eastern tale as the sub-title indicates, is related by setting, theme, and meter to the ninth and last of Pushkin's 1824 *Podrazhaniia Korany* (*Imitations of the Koran*). Both poems have the desert as background, and the action in both takes place at a watering-hole. In Pushkin, the weary traveler grumbles against God. As punishment, he is put to sleep for many years. He awakes an old man, his donkey dead, the palm tree withered, the well dry. However, God relents. The traveler is rejuvenated, the revived donkey's bones are again covered with flesh, and the traveler proceeds on his way, having learned his lesson. In Lermontov's *Tri pal'my*, it is the palm trees who complain. They also receive a lesson, but one from which they cannot profit. They perish. Once again, in his dialog with Pushkin, Lermontov propounds the darker and harsher point of view.

The meter of both poems is four-foot amphibrachs. This, together with the strong narrative element, gives them both a balladic quality. The three palms stand tall in the desert, their foliage protecting the spring from sun and sand. But no weary traveler ("*No strannik ustalyi*" against Pushkin's opening "*I strannik ustalyi*") comes by, and their leaves are beginning to dry up:

И стали три пальмы на Бога роптать:

«На то ль мы родились, чтоб здесь увядать?»

And the three palm trees started to complain against God:

"Is this what we were born for, to wither away here?"....

They have scarcely finished their complaint when a caravan appears. The description of the advancing caravan's approach is truly magnificent, unsurpassed in Russian poetry:

И шел, колыхаясь, как в море челнок,
Верблюд за верблюдом, взрывая песок.⁶⁵

And, swaying like a small boat on the sea,

Camel upon camel advanced, churning up the sand.

Night comes, and the palms are cut down for firewood. The departing caravan leaves behind only gray, cold ash, soon dispersed by the wind. And the spring asks in vain for the shelter the palms once gave. The Pushkin narrative has a very clear point. But Lermontov's also contains a lesson:

⁶⁴ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1839, III, No.5, 277.

⁶⁵ Stressing the musicality of these lines, Leonid Grossman comments: "It is difficult to pick out lines capable in this respect of rivaling Lermontov's." *Stikhovedcheskaia shkola Lermontova, Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 45-46, 287.

Do your duty, however modest, even if no more than sheltering a spring; and do not demand an unfittingly ambitious role.

Tri pal'my foreshadows the mature Lermontov's fondness for the use of the balladic form for narratives in which objects and forces of nature are protagonists. We will see this new trend in *Dary Tereka* ("The Gifts of Terek"), *Spor* ("The Dispute"), and *Listok* ("The Little Leaf"). Lermontov published this poem in 1839 in *Otechestvennye zapiski* and again in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.⁶⁶

19

Molitva is a delightful, three-stanza, twelve-line poem, written in three-foot iambs, with the odd dactylic-ending lines and the even masculine-ending lines in a crisscross rhyme. It resembles album verse, and while it may reflect strong religious feeling, it refers to a situation which intimates viewed with light-hearted amusement. At this time Lermontov was much attracted to the young widow, M. A. Shcherbatova, who may have unwittingly been the cause of the duel between Lermontov and Barante. She had told Lermontov that when he was downhearted ("*Kogda u nego toska*"), i.e., a prey to sexual desire, he should pray. *Molitva* was Lermontov's response:

В минуту жизни трудную
Теснится ль в сердце грусть:
Одну молитву чудную
Твержу я наизусть.

Есть сила благодатная
В созвучье слов живых,
И дышит непонятная,
Святая прелесть в них.

С души как бремя скатится.
Сомненье далеко —
И верится, и плачется,
И так легко, легко...

In a moment when life is hard
And sorrow weighs on the heart,
I say by heart
A wonderful prayer.

There is a beneficial power
In the harmony of living words,
And an incomprehensible,
Holy charm breathes in them.

Doubts roll far away
Like some burden from the soul —
And one believes, and weeps,
And everything feels light and easy....

⁶⁶ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1839, V, No. 8, 168-170.

The power of repetition has often been observed in connection with prayer. And the poem should probably be read on two levels, as light-hearted album verse, and in a more serious, straightforward, religious fashion.

Lermontov included the poem in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.⁶⁷

20

Dary Tereka, like *Tri pal'my*, is an example of Lermontov's new type of ballad. Eikhenbaum calls it a "Caucasian ballad." Actually, it requires a very loose definition of ballad to include *Dary Tereka* in the genre. Only its meter, four-foot trochaic, would seem to favor its inclusion. But Eikhenbaum seems to have had in mind the poem's use of local folklore. He quotes a thematically related, indisputably folkloric song of the Greben Cossacks.⁶⁸ And certainly *Dary Tereka*, ballad or no, is an example of Lermontov's growing tendency to animate the objects and forces of nature and make them protagonists in his stories.

The poem describes three gifts offered by the river Terek to the Caspian Sea. In return Terek wants to be allowed to rest his waves in the Caspian. The first gift has the apparent weakness of having already been made:

Я, сынам твоим в забаву,
Разорил родной Дарьял
И валунов им, на славу,
Стадо целое пригнал».

I, for your sons' delight
Tore through my native Dar'ial
And, for their greater glory,
Brought them wave on wave.

The old Caspian is quite unmoved and feigns sleep. Terek then offers him a dead young brave, with no response. Finally, Terek offers the body of a young Cossack woman who has been killed:

И старик во блеске власти
Встал, могучий, как гроза,
И оделись влагой страсти
Темно-синие глаза.

Он выиграл, веселья полный—
И в объятия свои
Набегающие волны
Принял с ропотом любви.

And the old one in his gleaming strength
Arose, mighty, like the storm,
And his dark-blue eyes
Were covered with moist passion.

⁶⁷ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1839, VI, No.11, 272.

⁶⁸ Eikhenbaum, *Academia II*, 201-202; L. P. Semenov, *Lermontov i L. Tolstoi* (M., 1914) 425; N. M. Mendel'son, *Narodnye motivy v poezii Lermontova, Venok Lermontovu* (M., P., 1914), 194-95. Eikhenbaum regards as literary sources of this "ballad" Benediktov's *Orellana* and V. Hugo's *Les orientales*, specifically "Le Danube en colère."

He rose in play, full of delight—
 And into his embrace
 He took the onrushing waves
 With a roar of love.

This poem is beautifully written. Every line is in the right place. Yet it is hard to share wholeheartedly the enthusiasm of Belinskii, who took this poem as evidence that Lermontov was Pushkin's successor.⁶⁹ But we cannot, if we are to impute to nature the acts, words, and motivations of humans, avoid investing the narrative with its human equivalence. For example, in Lermontov's 1841 rework of Heine's "Fichtenbaum" it is perfectly natural and acceptable that a pine tree in the north should dream of a palm tree. But there is then something unpalatable in the Caspian Sea displaying eroticism over a corpse (*trup*). Moreover, there are other Lermontov poems (*Prorok*, to name one) which do a great deal more to establish him as Pushkin's successor. Still, Lermontov thought well enough of it to publish *Dary Tereka* in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.⁷⁰

21

Pamiati A.I. Odoevskogo ("To the Memory of A.I. Odoevskii") was written in honor of Odoevskii, ex-Decembrist, serving in the ranks in the Caucasus, who died there of a fever on August 15, 1839. Odoevskii, in Siberia, had volunteered to serve in the Caucasus, and from November 1837 was in the Nizhegorodskii dragoons regiment — the same regiment to which Lermontov had been transferred following the matter of the "impermissible verses." It was there that the two became friends. Lermontov left the Caucasus in December 1837. He must have heard of Odoevskii's death in about September, 1839.

The poem, even for Lermontov, is an incredible mixture of borrowings and reminiscences going back to 1829/1830, 1832, and 1837. These links are well worked out in the five-volume Eikhenbaum Academia edition and in the four-volume 1961-1962 Academy edition.⁷¹

The poem is written in the Spenserian stanza, i.e. eleven-line five-foot iambs, with a six-foot closing line (aBaBcDDccEE), except for the sixth and last stanzaб which is ten lines long, i.e., two quatrains and a final rhymed couplet.

Lermontov starts by establishing his tie:

Я знал его: мы странствовали с ним
 В горах Востока, и тоску изгнанья
 Делили дружно;

I knew him: we journeyed together
 In the Eastern mountains, and we shared
 In friendship the sorrow of exile....

But I returned, he goes on, whereas he remained and died. He was born for inspiration, hope, poetry and happiness. But, madcap, he tore himself away, and cast his heart into the sea of noisy life. And the world did not spare him, nor did God save him!

⁶⁹ Letter to Botkin of February 9, 1840.

⁷⁰ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1839, VI, No. 11, 272.

⁷¹ See Eikhenbaum, II, 202-7; Lermontov 1961, I, 689. *Pamiati A. I. Odoevskogo* derives lines and whole passages from earlier poems. See *Kogda tvoi drug s prorocheskoi tosksiu* (4-vol. Academy 1961, 552); 1832 *On byl rozhden dlia shchast'ia, dlia nadezhd*; 1837 *Ne smeisia nad moei prorocheskoi tosksiu*; and in *Sashka* stanzas III, IV, CXXXVI, and CXXXVII.

И свет не пощадил—и Бог не спас!

But he retained his proud faith in people and in another life. Yet he died far away, ununderstood. No one can know his last thoughts. He loved the sea and the mountains. And he is buried where steppe and mountain and sea are near at hand, and he can hear the sea. But, in a superb final line, the Black Sea goes on with its unceasing noise:

И море Черное шумит не умолкая.

A word about that final line. It must of course have been suggested by the last line but one of Pushkin's *Puteshestvie Onegina*. How can so obvious a borrowing be considered a superb line? This is an excellent example of how something taken from someone else can in Lermontov's poetic semantics assume a totally new and different function. Let us briefly examine the Pushkin and Lermontov lines. The determining factor, in terms of different functions, is context. In Pushkin, the opera comes to a close. Little by little Odessa falls silent. The moon rises. All is quiet:

Тихо спит Одесса;
И бездыханна и тепла
Немая ночь. Луна взошла,
Прозрачно-легкая завеса
Объемлет небо. Всё молчит;
Лишь море Черное шумит...

And the final line of the stanza merely reinforces that fact. Only the waves continue on the shore. His Black-Sea line is therefore factual, and is designed to signal the end of the Odessa day. It is therefore appropriate that it should be a short four-foot masculine ending iamb—which of course we know it had to be to fit the Onegin stanza. Lermontov's semantic needs are different. He has Odoevskii reposing in nature, and like some giant, harkening to the sound of the waves. This prepares us for the final line and shapes its character. For for we are encouraged to feel the wave coming in. And it is functionally and poetically appropriate that the long six-foot line with feminine ending helps us to get a feeling for the on-rolling wave which should stop, but no, it keeps rolling up the beach, beyond expectations. Who on the shore in real life has not seen this? And this Lermontov's thirteen-syllable line does. It fulfills therefore a totally different task from that discharged by the Pushkin line. And, given Odoevskii's death, and the importance for him of nature, and the poetic accomplishment of grasping this in an as near to physical way as possible perhaps explains the grandeur of Lermontov's last rolling line.

The pathos of this poem is in the picture it paints of Odoevskii as loving beauty, decency, and nature: an innocent misunderstood and destroyed by a philistine and indifferent world. The poem is a moving tribute to integrity.

Lermontov published *Pamiati A. I. Odoevskogo* in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.⁷²

22

E. K. Musinoi-Pushkinoi ("To E. K. Musina-Pushkina") is an eight-line (two-foot amphibrachic) poem written to Emilia Karlovna Musina-Pushkina (1810-46), one of the capital's society beauties, to whom Lermontov was strongly attracted. It reveals the poet in light-hearted vein:

⁷² First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 189, VII, No. 1, 209-10.

Графиня Эмилия—
 Белее, чем лилия,
 Стройней ее талии
 На свете не встретится.
 И небо Италии
 В глазах ее светится,
 Но сердце Эмилии
 Подобно Бастилии.⁷³

Countess Emilia's
 Whiter than a lilia,
 On earth you'll not find
 A shapelier figure.
 And the blue skies of Italy
 Shine in her eyes.
 But the heart of Emilia's
 Like the Bastiglia.

A summation of the 1836-39 period must refer to civic themes, which, though far from new in Lermontov, play here a far more prominent role. And the so-called declamatory style which becomes his instrument for civic castigation is truly new. The defining feature of this style is the high incidence and condemnatory character of its epithets, primarily of its attributive adjectives. These latter, in certain lyrics, now play a prominent role. Lermontov has deservedly won the reputation of being the most distinguished promoter of a prosaic conversational style in the Russian lyric. This achievement is naturally enough associated with his last years. But in the preceding chapter, dealing with his 1828-32 lyrics, we were able to show examples (e.g. the 1830 *N. F. I... voi*) attesting to his early mastery of a lean and prosaic narrative style. This presupposed a very modest role for the attributive adjective, which was indeed the case. Bearing in mind that Lermontov starts from Pushkin and that Pushkin's school made ample use of the attributive adjective, it was reasonable to suppose that Lermontov would start with an incidence for the attributive close to Pushkin's, which would diminish with the years. And initially these expectations are admirably fulfilled: from 1828-29 through 1832 there is a steady diminution of the role of the attributive adjective. We then have the three years (1833-35) of lyric silence. But when Lermontov reemerges as a lyricist, it becomes immediately clear that the evolutionary line of development has been severed: the role played by the epithet has grown to a level beyond that of 1828-29. A radical change has taken place.

Whence comes this influx of attributive adjectives? The answer is to be sought in both poetry and prose. In poetry we note, with Eikhenbaum, a new interest in odaic stylistics as represented by, e.g., Ryleev (one of the points of contact between Lermontov and the Decembrists); and at the same time a shift away from the stylistics of Byron and the English in favor of the French, especially the Alexandrine.⁷⁴ Among the French, Lermontov had early become acquainted with Lamartine and Victor Hugo. Now we add the name of Henri-Auguste Barbier (1805-82), whose extolling of virtue, love of poetry, civic indignation, contempt for bourgeois money-grubbing, concern for the shriveling of the soul in a generation of Frenchmen, whose search for moral integrity largely paralleled Lermontov's feelings toward Russian society

⁷³ First published in *Russkii vestnik*, 1860.

⁷⁴ Eikhenbaum 1924, 101-4, 109-13.

and Russian life. Not that Barbier's Alexandrines or for that matter other-length lines are exceptional for their use of attributives. But the Alexandrine attracts noun-adjective and (often loosely equivalent) noun-noun combinations (eg. "*enfant de la Bastille...ses allures de fille*").

As to prose, we recall that Lermontov's lyric silence overlapped with his first attempt at a novel, *Vadim* (1832-34?). As generally acknowledged, Lermontov's early prose reflected to a degree his poetic style.⁷⁵ But the influence also flowed in the opposite direction, i.e. from prose to poetry. And when, in 1836, Lermontov started his return to the lyric genre, he must have found that he had acquired habits and thoughts from his work on *Vadim*. And those habits would definitely encourage a high incidence of attributive adjectives. Foreign prose models, mainly French, as B. V. Tomashevskii pointed out, influenced the stylistics of *Vadim*. A. de Musset (*Confessions d'un enfant du siècle*), Merimée (*La vision de Charles XI*), V. Hugo (*Notre Dame de Paris*) and Balzac (*Les chouans*), as well as Chateaubriand's earlier *Atala* and *René*, are all recognizable in *Vadim*, and all accord a prominent role to the attributive adjective.⁷⁶ These factors encourage use of the attributive adjective and thus also the declamatory style,⁷⁷ which serves as an instrument for two interrelated genres: the civic and the meditative.

A second important feature of these years is the relative downplaying of the closely personal. Not only has Lermontov now learned to identify with others, to see himself as a part of a larger whole, but, in comparison with 1828-32, there is a lack of emphasis on his own personality, his own individual emotions, his own unique problems. After his return from exile in early 1838, with *Kinzhal*, *Gliazhu na budushchnost' s boiazn'iu*, *Ona poet*, and a few others, there is virtually nothing intimately personal through the end of 1838 or in 1839. This represents both increasing self-restraint and the fact that Lermontov was also using other outlets for personal self-expression: reworking *Demon*, working on *Mtsyri* (*The Novice*) and *Geroi nashego vremeni*.

Finally, the third important feature of the 1836-39 period, not entirely absent in earlier years, but now increasingly to the fore, is his poems of friendship and affection: *Molitva*, 1837; the two 1838 poems to Bukharov; the 1838 poem to Khomutova; *Rebenka milogo rozhden'e*; and, finally, with the poet himself also present in this poem, *Pamiati A. I. Odoevskogo*.

⁷⁵ V. V. Vinogradov, *Stil' prozy Lermontova. Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 43-44 (M., 1941), Reprinted by Ardis, 1986, 519.

⁷⁶ B. V. Tomashevskii, *Proza Lermontova i zapadnoevropeiskaia literaturnaia traditsiia*, LN, 44-44, 469-516, esp. 473.

⁷⁷ Walter Vickery, "On the Incidence of the Attributive Adjective in Lermontov's Poetry," *Russian Verse Theory* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1989) 441-453.

CHAPTER III

Lyrics 1840-1841

1

There is a shift in tone and emphasis in Lermontov's 1840-41 lyrics: the civic theme and thus also the declamatory style have a reduced role; personal themes return to prominence. The civic theme tends to be subordinated to and judged by standards based on personal ideals. This tone can be found in lyrics written before 1840, but never consistently, defining the character of a period. January 1840 sees the publication of two powerful lyrics which admirably set the new tone: *Kak chasto pestroiu tolpoi okruzhen* ("How often surrounded by the many-colored crowd"), and *I skuchno i grustno* ("Wearisome and Sad").

Kak chasto pestroiu tolpoi okruzhen was once thought to have been written on the occasion of a masked New Year's ball. Recent scholarship shows fairly conclusively that this could not have been so.¹ From a literary standpoint and at a remove of 150 years, it does not seem crucial which ball and whether it was a masked ball or not, since the masks mentioned can be either genuine masks or a reference to the artificial veneer with which members of society concealed their true natures: in either case the connotation is pejorative.

The poem consists of seven six-line iambic stanzas, each containing two 6-foot rhymed couplets (lines 1-2 and 4-5), the second couplet enclosed by two shorter, 4-foot iambs (lines 3 and 6) (aa B cc B)" the meter and rhyme scheme employed in the 1837 *Sosed*. Lermontov makes skillful use of the shorter lines for emphasis, and, with the enclosing rhyme, for closure:

Как часто, пестрою толпою окружен,
 Когда передо мной, как будто бы сквозь сон,
 При шуме музыки и пляски,
 При диком шопоте затверженных речей,
 Мелькают образы бездушные людей,
 Приличьем стянутые маски.

How often, surrounded by the many-colored crowd,
 When before me, as though in dream,
 To the sound of music and dancing,
 Of barbaric whispering of phrases learnt by heart,
 There pass by people's soulless images,
 Masks held in place by rules of etiquette....

The poet is at the ball. The masked beauties are unfeeling and artificial. But the poet, while appearing to give himself over to social interactions, escapes into elegiac reminiscences of his childhood and his childhood home:

Когда касаются холодных рук моих
 С небрежной смелостью красавиц городских
 Давно бестрепетные руки,—
 Наружно погружась в их блеск и суету,

¹ See, e.g., *Khud. lit.* 1983, I, 339.

Ласкаю я в душе старинную мечту,
Погибших лет святые звуки.

When the accustomed and untrembling hands of the city's beauties
Touch with careless boldness
My cold hands, —
To all appearances giving myself over to their glitter and animation,
I cherish in my soul an ancient dream,
The sacred sounds of perished years.

His cherished memories focus specifically on the “sounds” of perished years. He recalls his childhood (“*I vizhu ia sebja rebenkom*”): the tall house, the garden with the dilapidated greenhouse, the pond, the mist over the fields, the yellow leaves:

И странная тоска теснит уж грудь мою:
Я думаю об ней, я плачу и люблю,
Люблю мечты моей создание
С глазами, полными лазурного огня,
С улыбкой розовой, как молодого дня
За рощей первое сиянье.

And a strange anguish constricts my heart:
I think of her, I weep, I love,
I love the creature of my dreaming,
With eyes full of an azure fire,
With a smile as rosy as the first radiance
Beyond the trees, of a dawning day.

He sees himself as the powerful lord of a magic kingdom. But the inevitable awakening comes:

Когда ж, опомнившись, обман я узнаю,
И шум толпы людской спугнет мечту мою,
На праздник нѣзванную гостью,
О, как мне хочется смутить веселость их,
И дерзко бросить им в глаза железный стих,
Облитый горечью и злостью!..

But when coming to myself, I realize that I've been deceived,
And the crowd's noise frightens away my fantasy,
An uninvited guest at the ball,
Oh, how strongly I wish to put to rout their merriment.
And boldly to cast in their teeth a harsh line of verse,
Impregnated with bitterness and anger!

Lermontov consistently harks back to earlier, better things: here in a social context, in his 1831 *Angel* in a cosmic one. The essence of the present poem lies in the intertwining and contrasting of the elegiac and the satirical, looking back to something pure and ideal from a shoddy, meaningless present.

As previously noted, this poem and the 1837 *Sosed* use the identical stanza. The two are also thematically linked. Both are poems of imprisonment: the ball of 1840 is no less a prison than the four walls of 1837. The protagonist of 1840 fantasizes: “*Lechu ia volnoi pitsei*” (“I fly

as a free, free bird”), making use of a prison metaphor. In both poems the hero seeks refuge in a happier, better, idyllic past. The 1840 poem features an awakening in the last stanza to the harsh reality of the ball; the 1837 poem has no specific awakening, but the whole poem is based on the contrast between the reality of prison and that other world, in the past, to which the prisoner is transported by his neighbor’s singing.

In *Sosed* sound plays the preeminent role, but in *Kak chasto* it is also important. In the former, with the exception of the sentry’s ringing rifle butt (“*zvuchnoe ruzh’e*”), sound, centering on the singing, is entirely positive. In the latter it is ambivalent. The noises of the ball, music included, must be reckoned negative. But there is also the rustling of the leaves under the woman’s feet (“*zheltye listy/Shumiat pod robkimi shagami*”). And, as already noted, sound is associated with the sacred things of the past (“*Pogibshikh let sviatye zvuki*”).

In *Sosed*, color is used to fix the time of day. Contrast is also established between the “dusk’s ruddy half-light” (“*zari rumiany polusvet*”) outside, “the gloomy silence” (“*v mrachnoi tishine*”) inside the cell. *Kak chasto* uses color even more. It establishes eventide (“*vechernii luch*”). Its associations are mostly pleasant, conjured up by his native home and the imagined woman. *Lazurnyi* and *rozovaia* inject not only a dreamlike but a feminine quality into the description:²

С глазами, полными лазурного огня,
С улыбкой розовой, как молодого дня
За рошей первое сиянье.

With eyes full of an *azure* fire,
With a smile as *rose-colored* as the first radiance
Beyond the trees of a dawning day.

This poem illustrates how the idealism of personal experience emphasizes the insincerity of society. Lermontov published *Kak chasto* in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.³

2

I skuchno i grustno is one of Lermontov’s finest achievements. His greatest contribution to the development of Russian poetry is the introduction of prose into poetry. To be sure, he was indebted to Krylov’s fables and Griboedov’s *Gore ot uma* (*Woe from Wit*). But these writers tend to either be folksy or demonstratively Russian, not to mention studiously epigrammatic. Lermontov developed something new, a style which reflects the language of his own educated class, without coloration and with absolutely no pretensions. It is straightforward and unclever, as though an educated Russian were quietly and carefully reviewing for himself the main issues,

² See L. Golumbievshaia, “Tsvetovaia palitra Lermontova,” *Problemy mirozreniia i masterstva M. Iu. Lermontova*, (Irkutsk, 1973), 147-149; E. M. Pul’khrudova, “Stilistika,” *L. E.*, esp. 532. Other “positive” colors are “*goluboi*” (blue) and “*zelenyi*” (green), according to Pul’khrudova; also “*zolotoi*” (golden). The juxtaposition of “rose-colored” and “smile” is striking, though characteristic of Lermontov. Indeed the entire simile contained in the last two of the three lines cited is striking. The blue of *lazurnyi* has to be brilliant; here we have fire (*ogon*), and in the 1839 poem to Odoevskii, brilliance (*blesk lazurnykh glaz*). *Rozovyi* and *lazurnyi* in Lermontov generally indicate positive values.

³ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1840, VIII, No. 1, 140.

moving carefully from point to point, indifferent to his manner of expressing himself, instinctively espousing simplicity and clarity, as in this monolog:

И скучно и грустно, и некому руку подать

В минуту душевной невзгоды...

Желанья!.. что пользы напрасно и вечно желать?..

А годы проходят — все лучшие годы!

Любить... но кого же?.. на время — не стоит труда,

А вечно любить невозможно.

В себя ли заглянешь? — там прошлого нет и следа:

И радость, и муки, и всё там ничтожно...

Что страсти? — ведь рано иль поздно их сладкий недуг

Исчезнет при слове рассудка:

И жизнь, как посмотришь с холодным вниманьем вокруг —

Такая пустая и глупая шутка...

Wearisome and sad it is, and there's no one

whose hand one can grasp

In moments when the soul is sick...

Desires!.. What's the use of vainly and eternally desiring?

And the years pass by—the best years!

To love...but whom?..for a brief time — it's not worth the labor.

And to love for ever is not possible.

If one looks at oneself? — not a trace of the past can you find:

And joy and torment and everything there is so insignificant...

And passions? — sooner or later their sweet sickness

Will disintegrate before one word of reason;

And life, when you look around coldly and carefully,

Is such an empty, foolish joke...

The prosaic impact of the poem is reinforced by the pauses (...) within the lines, as though the poet (recall the 1837-38 *Ona poet — i zvuki taiut*) were suspended in his thoughts, not quite certain of his next point or its implications. The uneven, 5-4-3-foot amphibrachs reinforce the prosaic sense of metrical uninhibitedness.

The metrical uninhibitedness is in fact illusory. In *Duma* (1838) we found an underlying stanzaic structure. So here we find that lines which are apparently longer or shorter to suit the semantics are in fact strictly patterned. Thus, the amphibrachic lines (a B a B) are in the three stanzas arranged 5354, the shorter lines used for emphasis and closure; in fact, the shorter lines, as in *Duma* carry the weight of truth and finality.

There is an obvious kinship between *Duma* and *I skuchno i grustno*: both poems speak for the poet's generation and for the poet himself. Equally instructive are the differences. *Duma* focuses on the generation more and the poet less; whereas *I skuchno i grustno* is a personal lament which expands to embrace contemporaries. As to style, *Duma* is justifiably included by Eikhenbaum among his examples of the declamatory style.⁴ But this is only half so, as seen from its lower-than-average (for declamatory poems) incidence of attributives. *Duma* is modified

⁴ Eikhenbaum, *Lermontov*, 1924, 101-2.

declamatory, with a hint of the prosaic and conversational intruding. *I skuchno i grustno* is, in fact, a good example of the conversational. The differences between the two poems illustrate admirably the differences between the 1836-39 and 1840-41 periods.

The poem presents a picture of despair. The first stanza establishes the poet's spiritual isolation and the fact that his best years are passing him by. The second stanza insists on the non-viability of love. And the third stanza, dismissing passion — concludes that life is an "empty, foolish joke." Each stanza progressively darkens the picture, leaving no way out.

This poem was published by Lermontov in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.⁵

3

Clearly, not everything in this final period illustrates Lermontov's increased attention to intimately personal themes. He had always, even at his most self-preoccupied youthful stage, had a good eye for the outside world. *Kazach'ia kolybel'naia pesnia* ("Cossack Lullaby") is one of his most popular poems. It owes its appeal to the lively trochaic rhythms of its alternating 4- and 3-foot lines and to Lermontov's sure touch in selecting details: he picked precisely those aspects of a mother's pride and anxiety which have a specifically Cossack heroic intonation and quality and which can at the same time be applied in general to any and all mothers.

Kazach'ia kolybel'naia pesnia has its roots in Cossack folklore, but in Lermontov's version the folkloric stylistics have been eliminated. The theme of mother cradling child is found also in the literary tradition, for example in Gogol's *Taras Bulba* and in Walter Scott's "Lullaby of an Infant Chief."⁶

Here the mother bids her infant son sleep. The hillman, she sings, is climbing the bank, sharpening his dagger; but your father is a skilled warrior. Be reassured, and sleep. The time will come when you will be a warrior too, a true Cossack. She will embroider his saddle and see him on his way, but she will weep and worry about him far away. She will give him an image to pray before. He must remember his mother. For now let him sleep. The last of the six stanzas reads:

Дам тебе я на дорогу
 Образок святой:
 Ты его, моляся Богу,
 Ставь перед собой;
 Да готовясь в бой опасный,
 Помни мать свою...
 Спи, младенец мой прекрасный,
 Баюшки-баю.

I will give you for your journey
 A sacred image;
 When you pray to God,
 Place it before you;
 When you ready yourself for battle,
 Remember your mother...
 Sleep, my handsome baby,
 Baiushki-baiu.

⁵ First published in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1840, No. 6 (20 January), 133.

⁶ Pointed out by S. P. Shevryev. See *Moskvitianin* 1841, II, No. 4, 534.

Lermontov included the poem in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.⁷

4

M. A. Shcherbatovoi is addressed to the same young Ukrainian widow, Princess Maria Shcherbatova, who provoked his 1839 *Molitva (V minutu zhizni trudnuiu)*, the woman who was possibly the unwitting cause of Lermontov's 1840 duel with Barante. This love poem is also very much a poem of admiration; admiration based on her positive qualities.

Consisting of eight four-line stanzas, the poem has an unusual metrical arrangement. The odd lines are 2-foot, and the even lines 3-foot amphibrachs — with crisscross rhymes, all feminine. The greater length of the even lines, combined with minimal syntactic pauses, impart a lilt, a sweep, a musicality, which is very much a part of the poem's charm.

Its emotional power and impact derive a great deal from its semantics, from the selection of those positive qualities which the poet sees as central to Shcherbatova's personality. Though she has exchanged her native Ukraine for the wearisome glitter of Petersburg's tawdry balls and for the constraints of high society, she has retained her Ukrainian qualities: her faith in God, her independence, her emotional restraint, and her loyalty. The poet sees her moral and physical attributes reflected in the beauties of southern nature. The final stanza represents a summation:

От дерзкого взора
В ней страсти не вспыхнут пожаром,
Полюбит не скоро,
Зато не разлюбит уж даром.

A provocative look
Will not set her passions afire,
She will fall in love not readily,
But she won't lightly cease to love.

The limited nature of the poem's theme should not lead one to take it lightly or underestimate its qualities. Lermontov has learned to ignore poetic clichés and to express his own thoughts precisely. One imagines him enumerating Shcherbatova's qualities matter-of-factly and jotting them down on a list. This gives the poem an enormous sense of reality and conviction. Lermontov excels in conveying this impression of almost prosaic simplicity and straightforwardness, yet he sacrifices none of the poem's musical qualities. Shcherbatova's moral qualities serve also to characterize Lermontov's morality and his condemnation of society's values.⁸

5

Eikhenbaum states that *Est' rechi — znachen'e* ("Some words there are whose meaning") was written while Lermontov was under arrest following his duel with Barante. However, it has been more recently dated to 1839. The confusion has probably been caused by the fact that two variants existed. Apparently, Lermontov wrote a first draft in M. A. Barteneva's album on September 4, 1839, and then in 1840, but before his February 18 duel with Barante, another

⁷ First published in *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, 1840, VIII, No. 2, 245-46.

⁸ First published in *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, 1842, XX, No. 1, 126.

version for publication. The six-volume Academy edition gives the date as 1840.⁹ The exact date is not important. The theme, the idea that certain sounds, irrespective of the meaning (which the poem states may be “vague or insignificant,” produce strong emotional reactions, was common in the age of Romanticism; and Lermontov himself wrote two youthful poems on this theme.¹⁰

Est' rechi — znachen'e, like the preceding poem to Shcherbatova, is in amphibrachs: 2-foot amphibrachs, crisscross feminine rhymes, five four-line stanzas. In this poem, too, aided by an absence of strong syntactic pauses, the amphibrachs produce a flowing lilt, though obviously a different one from that produced by the 2- and 3-foot alternations of the Shcherbatova poem:

Не встретит ответа
Средь шума мирского
Из пламя и света
Рожденное слово;

Note the total absence of syntactic pauses and the inversion, which has the effect of catapulting the stanza toward closure. Note, too, the grammatical error in the third line quoted above — “*plamia*” for genitive “*plameni*”—which Lermontov apparently tried to but could not correct (that is, not without making unwanted changes causing damage elsewhere). There are several examples in Lermontov of this same error in the neuters ending in *-mia* (*vremia* etc.).¹¹

Est' rechi — znachen'e had an obvious appeal for Russian Symbolists, and other twentieth-century poets. We have more than once had occasion to note the extraordinary importance of sound for Lermontov. Sounds were for him an integral part of his vision of life.¹²

6

Zhurnal'ist, chitatel' i pisatel' (“The Journalist, the Reader, and the Writer”) was one of probably five poems written under arrest following Lermontov’s duel with Barante. Dating from March 20, it offers a statement of Lermontov’s view of contemporary Russian literature. It harks back to Pushkin’s 1824 *Razgovor knigoprodavtsa s poetom* (“Conversation between a Bookseller and a Poet”) and to the *Prolog in the Theater* at the beginning of Goethe’s *Faust*.¹³ It is written in the freely rhymed alternating masculine-feminine 4-foot iambs used by Pushkin in his *Razgovor* and is 163 lines in length.

The poem does not have that clarity and focus found in *Poet* (1838) and in *Ne ver' sebe* (1839) and again in the 1841 *Prorok* (“The Prophet”). The presence of three protagonists impedes the development of a clear focus: *Poet*, *Ne ver' sebe*, and *Prorok* are monologs. Nonetheless, there are some interesting, important, and superbly written passages, noted below.

⁹ Eikhenbaum, II, 212; L. G. Frizman, *Est' rechi — znachen'e*, *L. E.*, 158; *Ak. nauk*, II, 346; *Khud. lit.* 1983, I, 47, 337-38. The latter edition and *L. E.* give the poem as 1839. I prefer the 1840 *Akademiia* date, but the point is minor. The two-foot amphibrachs and feminine rhymes seem to bring the poem closer to the preceding poem to Shcherbatova.

¹⁰ *K D.* (“To D.”) (1831), and *K* (1832), starting “*Prosti — my ne vstretimsia bole.*”

¹¹ I. I. Panaev, *Literaturnye vospominaniia* (M., 1950), 134-35.

¹² First published in 1841 in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, XI, No. 1, 2; the earlier redaction was first published in *Vchera i segodnia*, 1846, II, 168.

¹³ For other works in the same genre see Eikhenbaum, II, 215-16, and Vatsuro, “*Zhurnal'ist, chitatel' i pisatel'*,” *L. E.*, 170, and for further discussion Anatoly Liberman, *Mikhail Lermontov: Major Poetical Works* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1983), 540-41.

The Journalist starts the discussion by telling the Writer that he is glad to see that the latter is ill. In the hurly burly of life, the Journalist feels, a writer's mind loses its powers:

Зато, какая благодать,
Коль небо вздумает послать
Ему изгнание, заточенье,
Иль даже долгую болезнь:

But what a blessing
If heaven should think to send
Him exile or imprisonment
Or even a long illness....

The Journalist takes a position akin to that taken by the Bookseller in Pushkin's poem. His demands are similarly vulgar and tasteless. He is a target of the poet's irony. The Writer's response consists of the assertion that romantic literary themes have become trite and worn out:

О чем писать? Восток и юг
Давно описаны, воспеты;
Толпу ругали все поэты,
Хвалили все семейный круг;
Все в небеса неслись душою,
Взывали с тайною мольбою
К N. N., неведомой красе, —
И страшно надоели все.

What should I write about? The east and south
Have long since been described, extolled;
All poets have reviled the crowd;
All have praised the family circle;
All have been borne heavenward in their songs,
Have with secret prayer addressed
N.N., an unknown beauty,—
All have become thoroughly boring.

The Reader has his turn. He finds the journals, both prose and verse, in a lamentable state. He sums up his complaint in four electrifying lines:

Когда же на Руси бесплодной,
Расставшись с ложной мишурой,
Мысль обретет язык простой
И страсти голос благородный?

When in unfertile Russia,
Eschewing tawdry tinsel,
Will thought find a simple language
And passions a noble voice?

Why, one may ask, "in unfertile Russia"? What has fertility to do with it? But it is exactly right: it perfectly conveys the picture of a forlorn land where nothing can be expected to work. The Writer has the final word. There are times, "days of inspired labor, when mind and heart are full," "when for the poet the world is purified and washed clean by a noble dream:"

Но эти странные творенья
 Читает дома он один,
 И ими после без зазренья
 Он затопляет свой камин.

But these strange creations
 He reads at home
 And later without compunction
 Uses them to fuel his fireplace.

He labels these feelings “childish” (“*rebiacheskie chuvstva*”) and fears the world’s ridicule.

Also, “there are tortured nights, the eyes burn and weep, and on the heart lies avid anguish.” He relives the bitter moments of passion and vice....But these thoughts also he cannot bring himself to convey to the public:

Но, право, этих горьких строк
 Неприготовленному взору
 Я не решусь показать...
 Скажите ж мне, о чем писать?

The writer’s final position is ambiguous. He feels he cannot show his spontaneous outpourings to the public. Whether this is because, the moment of inspiration having passed, he himself finds them wanting or whether the “unprepared” crowd is not capable of appreciating their force and sincerity is not clear. But his animosity is reserved for the crowd, which is called “underhand” and “ungrateful.” The poem appears to move back in time: while *Ne ver’ sebe* castigated the writer, this poem seems to lay the blame more squarely on the crowd.

Lermontov published it in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.

Vozdushnyi korabl’ (“The Phantom Ship”) was written in March, 1840, also while Lermontov was under arrest. The subtitle “From Zedlitz” refers to the Austrian poet J. C. Zedlitz (1790-1862) whose 1832 ballad on Napoleon, “Geisterschiff,” inspired Lermontov’s poem. Another ballad about Napoleon by Zedlitz, his 1827 “Nächtliche Heerschau” (“Night Parade Review”), translated in 1836 by Zhukovskii as *Nochnoi smotr*, is also a presence in *Vozdushnyi korabl’*. In the 1820s and 1830s, Napoleon was a popular Romantic theme. Lermontov had written his first poem about him in 1829, followed by four more in the next two years, and *Poslednee novosel’e* (“Final Resting-Place”) followed in 1841. *Vozdushnyi korabl’* has affinities with the ballad. It is written in 3-foot amphibrachs, and its four-line stanzas have odd-line feminine endings, unrhymed, and even-line masculine endings, rhymed. It has 72 lines.

The poem tells of a sort of Flying-Dutchman which every year on the day of Napoleon’s death approaches the island of St. Helena. Napoleon, buried there “without military honors,” arises from the grave, goes aboard, and takes his place at the wheel. He is transported to “his dear France,” where he left behind his glory, his throne, his son and heir, his Old Guard. With beating heart and flashing eyes he strides ashore. He calls his fighting men and his marshals. But the men are dead. The marshals have either perished in battle or betrayed him. And his son, whom he then calls, has also died. The Emperor waits in vain. As the East grows lighter, he sheds bitter tears on the cold sand, reboards his ship, his head sunk on his chest, and waving his hand, starts on the return journey.

The poem starts in a fairly traditional Romantic manner. The image of the mysterious ship, with neither captain nor crew, borne along with no wind straining the masts, is followed by a stereotyped Napoleon with three-cornered hat, whose eyes flash as he sights his “native land.”

But the closing stanzas go beyond the tradition. Lermontov succeeds in making the reader feel the poignancy of a human Napoleon's sorrow, not only bereft of power, but abandoned by or separated from those he held dear. The poem, though it does not strictly fit the satiric pattern outlined above, does show the interplay of personal and political themes characteristic of Lermontov's last years. We get a sense of isolation and hopelessness: "dear France," "his native land," has turned her back on him. Above all, the recognition of his aloneness is moving: the bitter tears, the resigned wave of the hand, the departure. The last eight lines, laconic and understated, elicit our sympathy and give meaning to what has gone before:

Стоит он и тяжело вздыхает,
Пока озарится восток,
И капают горькие слезы
Из глаз на холодный песок.

Потом на корабль свой волшебный,
Главу опустивши на грудь,
Идет и, махнувши рукою,
В обратный пускается путь.

He stands and sighs deeply,
As dawn lights up the East,
And bitter tears flow
From his eyes on the cold sand,

Then aboard his phantom ship
He goes, head on breast,
And waving his hand
Starts on the journey back.

Lermontov published this poem in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.¹⁴

Sosedka ("The Neighbor Woman") was also written while Lermontov was under arrest, as reflected in the theme. The neighbor woman in the poem is the jailer's daughter. The prisoner insists he would die if she were not there to exchange looks with him through the window. He talks of her in the third person for six of the nine anapestic four-line stanzas. Then in the last three he addresses her directly with a request to help him escape, to help them both escape.

The reality was different. According to Shan-Girei, there was no jailer and no jailer's daughter; but there was a female figure who did indeed have window communication with the prisoner, and she was probably the daughter of a civil servant working in the building.¹⁵ The figure of the jailer's daughter was a Romantic cliché. André Chénier ("La jeune captive"), Zhukovskii, and Kozlov had all made their contributions to the theme.

Looking back to Lermontov's earlier prison cycle of 1837, we note that the present poem, *Sosedka*, is closer to *Uznik* than to *Sosed*: in *Sosed* there is no talk of escape, the entire focus being on sound, in particular the neighbor's singing, whereas in *Uznik*, as in the present poem, the thought of escape is central. The major difference between the two lies in the role of the woman: in *Uznik* the woman is outside and free: she, "*chernoglazaia devitsa*," is part of the prisoner's fantasy of freedom; whereas in *Sosedka* she may be outside, but she is not free, she is herself a prisoner of the tedium of life:

¹⁴ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1840, X, No. 5, 1-3.

¹⁵ A. P. Shan-Girei, "M. Iu. Lermontov," *LVVS*, 48.

Но бледна ее грудь молодая,
И сидит она долго вздыхая,
Видно, буйную думу тая,
Всё тоскует по воле, как я.

But pale is her young bosom,
She sits and emits long sighs,
Clearly concealing her stormy thoughts,
She longs for freedom, just as I do.

Beyond its literary sources, mentioned above, *Sosedka* has an unmistakeable folkloristic quality, not only thematically, but in such linguistic features as the use of the infinitive (e.g. lines 1,5) to indicate something destined to happen in the future, the use of *kaby* (line 6), and the use of *da* in place of *no* and *i* (lines 12,34,35), e.g.:

- (1) Не дожидаться мне видно свободы,....
(5) Умереть бы уж мне в этой клетке,
(6) Кабы не было милой соседки!....
(12) Да с двойною решеткой окно;....

I wait, but freedom won't come for waiting....
I would die in this cage
If it weren't for my sweet neighbour....
But the window has a double bolt....

The poem consists of nine four-line stanzas, each line consisting of 3-foot anapests, a feminine-rhyming couplet followed by a masculine-rhyming couplet:

Не грусти, дорогая соседка...
Захоти лишь—отворится клетка,
И как Божии птички, вдвоем
Мы в широкое поле порхнем.

Do not grieve, dear neighbor...
If only you want it, the cage will open,
And, like the little birds of God, the two of us
Will hop out into the broad, open field.¹⁶

Plennyi rytsar' ("The Captive Knight") was also probably a part of Lermontov's second prison cycle, and so written in March, 1840. It consists of 4-foot dactyls.

The captive knight is another popular Romantic theme. However, Lermontov's poem differs from the balladic tradition and from his normal style in that there is no narrative element: the poem is pure monolog and meditation, and various pieces of knightly equipment are made to symbolize different aspects of his prison and imprisonment.¹⁷ The knight's armor, which in stanza 2 is made of iron, reappears in stanza 3 as stone pressing upon him, and in stanza 4 as the high walls of his cell or prison. His helmet, first mentioned in stanza 3, is made of stone and crushes his head, and in stanza 4 the visor of his helm is equated with the grating of the embrasure. His shield is equated in stanza 4 with the iron doors of his prison. His horse is the swift passage of time. One can see in these metamorphoses and equivalences a skilfully implemented

¹⁶ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1842, II, No. 2, 127-28.

¹⁷ Vatsuro, *Plennyi rytsar'*, *L. E.*, 421.

process of metaphorization.¹⁸ But detailed and conscientious analysis is likely to find them far-fetched, labored, contrived. It is better to accept them without probing. The poem possesses genuine pathos: whereas in *Uznik* and *Sosedka* the protagonist wishes for freedom, in *Plennyi rytsar'* death is seen as the only release. And the heroic manner in which the knight will face death is a fitting climax to the poem. I shall here give lines 1-4, 12, and the last stanza, 17-20:

Молча сижу под окошком темницы;
Синее небо отсюда мне видно:
В небе играют всё вольные птицы;
Глядя на них, мне и больно и стыдно.

Конь мой бежит, и никто им не правит.

Мчись же быстрее, летучее время!
Душно под новой броней мне стало!
Смерть, как приедем, подержит мне стремя;
Слезу и сдерну с лица я забрало.

Silent I sit beneath the prison window;
From here I can see the blue sky:
Everywhere above the free birds are wheeling
Looking at them, I feel pain and shame....

My horse runs at random, with no one to ride him....

Hasten more swiftly, fleeting time!
Beneath the new armor it has become suffocating!
Death, when we arrive, will hold my stirrup
I will dismount, and pull up my visor clear of my face.

While this poem cannot be considered a complete success, we must note its daring and its compactness, its sense of effort, tension, tightness, which are effective and impart an heroic quality.¹⁹

M. P. Solomirskoi ("To M. P. Solomirskaia") consists of four four-line stanzas, 4-foot iambic, with alternating feminine-masculine rhymes (AbAb). It is addressed to Mariia Petrovna Solomirskaia, whose brother, P. D. Solomirskii was a colonel in the Lifeguards Hussar regiment in which Lermontov was then serving. Lermontov met her socially, and she was apparently a fervent admirer of his poetry. When he was under arrest, Mariia Petrovna had written him an "anonymous" letter of encouragement. The present poem, written in Solomirskaia's album on his release, was a response to her letter. Its formal structure, conventional iambic 4-foot epithet-laden three-stress line of the Pushkin school, with alternating feminine-masculine rhymes, probably results from its being album verse. But the poem contains a serious, deeply felt emotion:

Над бездной адскою блуждая,
Душа преступная порой
Читает на воротах рая
Узоры надписи святой.

Wandering above the pit of hell,
The erring spirit sometimes reads

¹⁸ K. M. Chernyi, *Plennyi rytsar'*, L. E., 421.

¹⁹ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1841, XVII, No. 8, 268.

On the gates of paradise
The patterns of a sacred script....

And the final stanza:

Залогом волности желанной,
Лучом надежды в море бед
Мне стал тогда ваш безымянный,
Но вечно-памятный привет.

A pledge of desired freedom,
A ray of hope in a sea of sorrows:
This is what your unsigned
But ever-memorable letter became for me.

This poem provides yet another example of the effectiveness of rapid verse flow unretarded by syntactic pauses. Witness the two stanzas cited and the inversion of the final stanza which, with its closely linked third and fourth lines, speeds the stanza to its end in the manner observed in *Est' rechi — znachen'e* of the same year.²⁰

7

Otchego ("Because") consists of three rhymed couplets, six-foot iambs. Eikhbaum speculates that it may have been addressed to M. A. Shcherbatova. It contains the same negative assessment of society as *Na svetskie tsepi* (see above). But the addressee seems even younger and less experienced than Shcherbatova (a widow, though indeed no more than 20), who in *Na svetskie tsepi* is praised for preserving her integrity in the face of society. *Otchego* reads:

Мне грустно, потому что я тебя люблю,
И знаю: молодость цветущую твою
Не пощадит молвы коварное гоненье.
За каждый светлый день иль сладкое мгновенье
Слезами и тоской заплатишь ты судьбе.
Мне грустно... потому что весело тебе.

I am sad because I love you,
And I know: your blossoming youth
Will not be spared by rumor's sly attack.
For every happy day or sweet moment
You will pay fate with tears and sorrow.
I am sad...because you are so merry.

As often in Lermontov's nonnarrative poetry, particularly in his early years, the thought is laid out in a series of complementary and opposed pairs. The big oppositions are clearly the first and last lines, because they contain an element of surprise. Normally, one should not be sad because one loves a woman and because the woman is merry. The intervening lines explain the reason for

²⁰ First published in *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, 1842, XXIV, No. 10, 320. Solomirskaia's admiration is noted in I. L. Andronikov (*Khud. lit.* 1983, I, 343). He believes Solomirskaia may also have inspired *Est' rechi — znachen'e* ("Some words there are whose meaning"), *op. cit.*, 338.

sorrow. And there are further pairs and oppositions: “*svetlyi den*” and “*sladkoe mgnoven'e*” opposed to the complementary pair “*slezami i tosnoi*.”

This clearly heartfelt poem was published in the 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.²¹

8

Blagodarnost' (“Thanksgiving”) is a bitter little eight-line poem, consisting of two quatrains of 4-foot iambs with crisscross feminine-masculine rhyming. It is a poem of religious rebellion, questioning God’s ordering of life. What makes it, well constructed though it is, an inferior poem is its sarcastic tone. It seems to belong to an earlier period of Lermontov’s career. The poem makes extensive use of anaphora to produce a cumulative affect:

За всё, за всё тебя благодарю я:
 За тайные мучения страстей,
 За горечь слез, отраву поцелуя,
 За месть врагов и клевету друзей;
 За жар души, растроченный в пустыне,
 За всё, чем я обманут в жизни был...
 Устрой лишь так, чтобы тебя отныне
 Недолго я еще благодарил.

For everything, yes everything I thank Thee:
 For the secret torments of passions,
 For the bitterness of tears, the poison of a kiss,
 For the vengeance of enemies and the slander of friends,
 For the soul’s heat wasted in the wilderness,
 For everything by which in life I’ve been deceived...
 Only order things so that from this time on
 I should not for long have to thank Thee.

The anaphora (6 out of the 8 lines begin with the preposition “*Za*”) establishes a connection with the vastly superior 1829 poem, *Molitva*, in which the line-opening “*Za to chto...*” (“For the fact that...”) occurs 6 times. The 1840 *Blagodarnost* expresses sarcastic gratitude for things unrelated to the subject matter of *Molitva*. The tone resembles that of Lermontov’s equally inferior 1830 poem, *Blagodariu* (“I give thanks”). And it echoes a passage in *Evgenii Onegin* VI, 45, where the narrator gives thanks to his youth, for sorrow, indeed, but mainly for more positive gifts:

О юность легкая моя!
 Благодарю за наслажденья,
 За грусть, за милые мученья,
 За шум, за бури, за пиры,
 За все, за все твои дары....

O, my light-footing youth!
 I thank you for the pleasures,
 For sorrow, for sweet torments,
 For liveliness, life’s storms, for feasts,
 For everything, for all your gifts...

²¹ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1840, X, No. 6, 250.

It is interesting and slightly surprising that Lermontov published this poem in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*. For the censor's benefit, the capital letters usual in addressing the deity were not employed, the small letters making it possible to imagine the addressee as a woman.²²

9

Iz Gete ("From Goethe") is a free rendering of the second "Wanderers Nachtlied" — "Über allen Gipfeln." In fact, Lermontov has given an exact translation of Goethe's first and last two lines. The intervening lines (3-6) have been reworked very freely. Still, it is remarkable how close Lermontov has come to conveying the overall message and atmosphere of the original (not that fidelity to an original is necessarily a requirement or a hallmark of excellence). But in the present case it seems clear that Lermontov made a very deliberate attempt to do justice to Goethe, and a brief comparison of the two poems will enable us to follow his endeavors.

We start by setting down the two poems:

Über allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch.

Goethe's tonic verse (*dol'niki*) is rendered in Lermontov by 3-foot trochees, feminine and masculine rhymes alternating:

Горные вершины
Спят во тьме ночной;
Тихие долины
Полны свежей мглой;
Не пылит дорога,
Не дрожат листья...
Подожди немного,
Отдохнешь и ты.

The mountain tops
Are asleep in the darkness of night;
The silent valleys
Are full of fresh mist;
There is no dust on the road,
No trembling in the leaves...
Wait a while,
You too will be at rest.

²² The woman interpretation finds support from V. Arkhipov, *M. Iu. Lermontov. Poeziia poznaniia i deistviia* (M., 1965), 91-92. But as V. I. Korovin (*L. E.*, 63) points out, Lermontov's handwritten copy uses capitals. First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1840, X, No. 6, 280.

The poems share a common theme and setting. Goethe's title, "Wanderers Nachtlied," suggests a traveler who has fallen short of his planned resting place for the night, although he is close and presumably knows the way. There is no hint of anxiety. And the gathering dark contains no menace. On the contrary, this seems to be one of those idyllic moments when the heat of the day is past, the day's activities are over, and Nature herself seeks her rest.

Goethe draws the veil of night upon the reader, casting an eye first on the mountains looming above (*Gipfel*), then on the surrounding treetops, then below them the silent, roosting birds. He moves, as Elizabeth M. Wilkinson has pointed out, "from the mineral, through the vegetable, to the animal kingdom... and so inevitably to man."²³ Lermontov achieves a similar effect: first the mountain tops, asleep ("spiat," cf. in Goethe "Ist Ruh"); and then the refreshingly mist-filled valleys at eye level. Lermontov appears to have no birds sleeping silently, although his "Ne drozhat listy," which most probably renders "Spurest du/Kaum einen Hauch," could also be covering the birds, for with the birds asleep there will be no trembling in the leaves. Lermontov conveys the cessation of daily activity in a different way. "Ne pylit doroga" implies not merely a lack of wind, but a lack of humans, animals, and carts to stir up the dust. Lermontov thus covers the same points as Goethe. The last two lines of the two poems are identical.²⁴

In both poems the poets, as well as the two travelers addressed as "du" and "ty," are felt to be close to Nature and to her nighttime restfulness. The desire to emulate Nature in going to rest is plainly evident. This is in part the healthy desire for sleep of any weary traveler. At the same time both Goethe and Lermontov are aware that Nature offers also the restfulness of death. If we read Goethe's closely connected "Wanderers Nachtlied," which Lermontov said he had tried without success to translate,²⁵ we see that the poet's agitations call for more than simple physical rest. "Sweet peace," which Goethe invokes, has death as one of its solutions.

Iz Gete, which is one of Lermontov's outstanding small-canvas achievements, was published in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.²⁶

10

Rebenku ("To a Child") consists of 32 6-foot iambic lines, alternating feminine and masculine rhymed couplets. Addressing the child, the poet tells of the deep love he feels for it:

— Не правда ль, говорят,
Ты на нее похож? — Увы! года летят;
Страдания ее до срока изменили,

Isn't it true? They say,
You're like her, -Alas! The years fly by:
Sufferings have changed her prematurely....

²³ Elizabeth M. Wilkinson, "Goethe's Poetry," Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby, *Goethe: Poet and Thinker* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd.), 23.

²⁴ I cannot share the view of the distinguished scholar V. M. Zhirmunskii and others who see Lermontov's poem as independent of Goethe. Would Lermontov have authorized the title *Iz Gete* in the 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia* had he not been keenly appreciative of a relationship? See Zhirmunskii, *Gete v russkoi literature* (L., 1937), 439.

²⁵ Eikhenbaum, II, 218-19.

²⁶ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1840, XI, No. 7, otd. 3, 1.

The poet wonders if he has expressed his love for the child too demonstratively. He wonders if the mother has taught the child to include him in its prayers. Better the child not know his name. But if you should by chance recognize it, remember childish days and do not curse my name. The genuineness of the poet's emotion and the depth of his feeling for the mother are beyond question. Nevertheless, the poem is marred by a sickly-sweet, maudlin quality.

The identity of mother and child has not been established. Varvara Lopukhina-Bakhmeteva and her daughter are likely candidates. The mention of sufferings having changed her prematurely fits the impression she produced on Shan-Girei when she passed through Petersburg on her way abroad in June, 1838: "Pale, thin, and not a shadow of the former Varen'ka," he recalls; "only her eyes had retained their lustre and were as warm as before."²⁷ But this is not conclusive. Another possibility is the son of General P. Kh. Grabbe. The masculine (e.g., "pokhozh") is in grammatical agreement with "rebenok" and gives no indication of the child's gender.

Lermontov published this poem in his 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.²⁸

11

A. O. Smirnovoi ("To A. O. Smirnova") is an album poem, which accounts for its being written in 4-foot iambs, with crisscross feminine-masculine rhymes in the first two quatrains (the last quatrain has feminine rhymes enclosing a masculine couplet). This lightweight piece describes the poet's difficulties in getting closer to Smirnova, the well-know, highly-cultured hostess of a salon which included among its intimates writers like Zhukovskii, Viazemskii, Pushkin, Gogol', Khomiakov, and others. Though an album piece, written by Lermontov in Smirnova's album, it was not an improvisation; there were several copies and variants circulating.²⁹

We note the characteristic Lermontov oppositions ("Bez vas.... Pri vas.... No molcha.... molchu!... Vse eto.... smeshno/Kogda by.... tak grustno"):

В простосердечии невежды
 Короче знать вас я желал,
 Но эти сладкие надежды
 Теперь я вовсе потерял.
 Без вас—хочу сказать вам много,
 При вас—я слушать вас хочу:
 Но молча вы глядите строго,
 И я, в смущении, молчу!
 Что делать? — речью безыскусной
 Ваш ум занять мне не дано...
 Всё это было бы смешно,
 Когда бы не было так грустно.

With the simpleheartedness of an ignoramus,
 I wanted to get to know you more closely,
 But these sweet hopes
 I've now completely abandoned.
 Without you—I wish to tell you much,

²⁷ A.P. Shan-Girei in Sushkova 1928, 385-86; or in *LVVS*, 44.

²⁸ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1840, XII, No. 9, 1-2.

²⁹ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1840, XII, No. 10, 229.

With you—I wish to listen:
 But in silence you look at me so severely,
 And I in confusion remain silent!
 What am I to do? With unskilled speech
 I cannot interest your mind...
 All this would be amusing,
 If it were not so sad.

When first published, the poem did not include the first quatrain, perhaps at Smirnova's request. The style is light, but it gives the impression that Lermontov was a bit afraid of Smirnova.³⁰

K portretu ("On a Portrait") was inspired by an 1840 lithograph of the Duchess Aleksandra Kirillovna Vorontsova-Dashkova, (1818-56) of the Naryshkin family, the same family from which Peter the Great's father, Aleksei Mikhailovich, took his second wife, Peter's mother. *K portretu* has something in common with the preceding poem, *A. O. Smirnovoi*: neither is quite as lightweight as it appears at first sight to be. *K portretu*, written in smooth-flowing three-foot amphibrachs, with masculine-feminine alternating crisscross rhymes, obtains its effect by a series of comparisons: Stanza One contains two *kak* (like,as), Stanza Two three *kak*, Stanza Three two *kak*, and only the final stanza is without a *kak*. Here are the last two stanzas:

Таит молодое чело
 По воле — и радость и горе.
 В глазах — как на небе светло,
 В душе ее тёмно, как в море!
 То истиной дышит в ней всё,
 То всё в ней притворно и ложно!
 Понять невозможно ее,
 Зато не любить невозможно.

Her young brow conceals
 At will both joy and sorrow.
 Her eyes are light like the heavens,
 Her soul is as dark as the sea.

At times everything, in her breathes truth,
 At times everything's falsehood, pretense!
 To understand her is impossible,
 But not to love her is impossible.

We note the characteristic Lermontov oppositions at work.³¹

12

Tuchi ("Clouds") conforms to Lermontov's later tendency to fit the manifestations of nature into a human context. Sometimes these actually duplicate human emotions; sometimes, as here, they serve to emphasize nature's lack of feeling compared to human beings, condemned to

³⁰ T.G. Dinesman, *A. O. Smirnovoi*, *L. E.*, 513-14.

³¹ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1840, XII, No. 12, 290.

suffer.³² The relevance to events in Lermontov's life is clear: the poem was written just before his departure to his second exile. It consists of three four-line stanzas, 4-foot dactylic with crisscross dactylic rhymes. The dactylic meter and endings convey movement and a certain cloudy fleeciness and unsubstantiality, clearly intended by the poet. Another significant formal feature is the division of the lines into two regular hemistichs. The caesura is not absolutely maintained, as it was in the 1837 *Molitva*. But it is sufficiently consistent and prominent to be felt as a structural component: out of 12 lines the "caesura" occurs after the second dactylic foot in nine lines, and there are syntactic pauses in the middle of eight of the 12 lines. The hemistich is an integral part of the rhythm; the only two lines which really run counter to this hemistich division are lines 7-8:

Или на вас тяготит преступление?
Или друзей клевета ядовитая?

Or on you does a crime weigh heavy?
Or the poisonous slander of friends?

Another feature marking a formal link between this poem and *Molitva* is the insistent use of noun-adjective and noun-noun combinations. In only 12 lines there are 13 such combinations, all except two (lines 5, 8) reinforce the caesura, as in *Molitva*. Their prominence is foregrounded from the start by use of the maximum possible number (four) of such combinations in the first two lines:

Тучки небесные, вечные странники!
Степью лазурною, цепью жемчужною
Мчитесь вы, будто как я же, изгнанники
С милого севера в сторону южную.

Кто же вас гонит: судьбы ли решение?
Зависть ли тайная? злоба ль открытая?
Или на вас тяготит преступление?
Или друзей клевета ядовитая?

Нет, вам наскучили нивы бесплодные...
Чужды вам страсти и чужды страдания;
Вечно холодные, вечно свободные,
Нет у вас родины, нет вам изгнания.

Clouds fleeting heavenly, wand'ring eternally!
Across the blue steppe, a pearl-streaming chain,
You hasten on ever, as though exiles as I am
From the dear northland, down to the southland.

Who is it driving you? Fate's firm decree, is it?
Envy concealed? Open hostility?
Or on you does a crime weigh heavy?
Or the poisonous slander of friends?

No, it's the fields infertile have wearied you....
Passions you feel not, nor suffering know you;

³² The clouds are depicted in similar fashion, immune to feeling and suffering, in *Demon*, I, XV.

Eternally cold and eternally free,
You have no homeland and you know no exile.

The formal characteristics frequently noted as shared by *Tuchi* and *Molitva* are given above. But Lermontov scholars seem to have neglected the thematic closeness of the two poems. At first sight what could the unfeeling, impersonal clouds and the heartfelt plea to the Mother of God on behalf of a beloved young woman have in common? Yet both poems deal with the ultimate question of human fate, human destiny. In *Molitva* the woman's destiny in death is the crux. How adequately will her soul be received? In *Tuchi* the clouds have no destiny, only an eternal roaming and roving. But since the poem rests on a comparison between the clouds and the seemingly lesser figure of the poet, his own lack of a destiny is for him a tragic impasse. In effect, the rapprochement of these two poems provides an apt illustration of one of the basic truths about Lermontov's *Weltanschauung*: the fact that for him natural manifestations and religion can comfortably be ranged side by side, each is a part of the other, with no clear separation.

Underpinning the rapprochement is the presence in both poems of the poet. In *Molitva* he has two obvious functions: he is the intercessor, and he is the foil to the young woman, worthlessness contrasted with great worth. His self-characterization here is very much in line with the figure which emerges in the 1840 *Tuchi*: he is a "wanderer, kinless and orphaned" (".... *strannika v svete bezrodnogo*"); in *Tuchi* he is identified with the clouds, "wand'ring eternally....exiles" ("*vechnye stranniki....izgnanniki*"), but, unlike the exiled poet, the clouds have no sense of exile: "You have no homeland, you feel no exile" ("*Net u vas rodiny, net vam izgnaniia*"). He, the poet, feels keenly his exile. Recall that *Tuchi* was written as Lermontov prepared to leave for the Caucasus to start his second exile. It was first read in early May on the occasion of his farewell dinner at the Karamzin home.

Tuchi was included in the 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*.

13

Valerik, "the river of death," is the name of a river which flows into another river, the Sunzi, which in its turn flows into the Terek. It was also the site of a battle which took place on June 11, 1840, between Russian and Chechen forces. Lermontov took part in the action. His primary mission was scouting and liaison, but he seems to have also taken part in an assault. For his conduct on June 11 he was recommended for the Saint Vladimir fourth class but was turned down by Nicholas I. Here is an excerpt from what was written in General A.V. Galafeev's citation: "During the storming of enemy entrenched positions on the Valerik River his assignment was to observe the operations of the advance assault column and to inform the commander of its progress — an assignment which was extremely dangerous because of the presence of enemy forces concealed behind nearby trees and bushes, but this officer — without consideration of risk — performed his mission with exemplary courage and cool-headedness, and was among the first — along with the foremost and bravest — to enter the enemy defensive positions."³³

Three months later, writing to his friend Lopukhin, Lermontov states: "I have found war to my taste, and I'm sure that for someone who has become accustomed to strong sensations of this type there are not going to be found many pleasures which he won't find insipid." He seems

³³ Eikhenbaum, II, 223-230. Also Viskovatov, "*M. Iu. Lermontov v deistvuiushchem otriade Gen. Galafeeva.*" *Russkaia starina*, 1884, No.1, 83-92, and *Rechka smerti, Istoricheskii vestnik*, 1885, No.3, 473-83; D. Rakovich, "*Tenginskii polk na Kavkaze.*" (Tiflis, 1900), 240-46, L. P. Semenov, *Lermontov i L. Tolstoi* (M., 1914), 56-74 and 428-31.

to have been carried away by the physical excitement of battle, while remaining intellectually opposed to war, for in *Valerik* he wrote lines which amount to one of the strongest and most eloquent condemnations of man for being alone among living creatures to engage in the folly and futility of war. The lines are cited below in the course of our examination of the text of the poem.

When this poem was first published in 1843, after Lermontov's death, the publishers gave it the name *Valerik*. Eikhenbaum prefers to use a first-line title: *Ja k vam pishu* ("I am writing you"), since the poem can generically be labeled a verse epistle. Eikhenbaum sees it as a greatly expanded version of the small album pieces of which Lermontov wrote a number in 1840-41: to Shcherbatova, Solomirskaia, Vorontsova-Dashkova, Khomutova, Karamzina. Its extreme, almost prosaic simplicity establishes its kinship with the best of those pieces.³⁴ It can be divided into three parts: a verse-epistle introduction (54 lines); the description of the action (186 lines); and the conclusion (29 lines), which is a return to the genre of the verse epistle. The addressee is believed to have been Lermontov's longstanding love, Varvara Lopukhina. The poem opens with a plea to be heard, which is simultaneously an admission that his letter can serve no purpose:

Я к вам пишу случайно; право
 Не знаю как и для чего.
 Я потерял уж это право.
 И что скажу вам? — ничего!
 Что помню вас? — но, Боже правый,
 Вы это знаете давно;
 И вам, конечно, всё равно.

I'm writing you — by chance; indeed
 I know not how or for what purpose.
 I long ago lost that right.
 And what can I tell you? — nothing!
 That I remember you? — but, good God,
 You've known that for a long time;
 And, of course it makes no difference to you.

Lermontov is using a deliberately low-key, prosaic, almost elementary expository style, moving with indisputable logic from one point to the next. The verse is effortless, and one might erroneously believe it is as childishly easy to write as it sounds. Precisely this unadorned, prosaic, logical approach which makes some of the poems of Lermontov's last years so convincing and so moving. He goes on in the same emotionally fatigued and resignedly hopeless key to speak of their being spiritually alien to each other: Does kinship of the soul really exist? And are not all feelings no more than temporary?

Но я вас помню — да и точно,
 Я вас никак забыть не мог!

Во-первых потому, что много,
 И долго, долго вас любил,
 Потом страданьем и тревогой
 За дни блаженства заплатил.
 Потом в раскаяньи бесплодном
 Влачил я цепь тяжелых лет;

³⁴ Eikhenbaum, *M. In Lermontov: Stikhotvoreniia* (L.: Sovetskii pisatel', 1940), I, 325.

И размышлением холодным
 Убил последний жизни цвет.
 С людьми сближаясь осторожно,
 Забыл я шум молодых проказ,
 Любовь, поэзию, — но вас
 Забыть мне было невозможно.

But I remember you — perfectly,
 I was never able to forget you!

First, because I had loved you
 Greatly and for a long, long time,
 Next because by suffering and anxiety
 I paid for my days of bliss;
 Next because in useless remorse
 I have dragged a chain of heavy years;
 And have by cold reflection
 Destroyed life's last blossom.
 Cautious now toward people,
 I have forgotten the boisterous play of youthful pranks,
 Forgotten love and poetry — but you
 I never could forget.

He will carry his cross without complaint. He has learnt eastern resignation and subservience to fate. But his heart is asleep, his imagination has no play, his mind nothing to occupy itself with.

A description of the engagement on the Valerik follows. The details will hardly interest the modern reader, but certain aspects of Lermontov's battle descriptions are significant for the development of Russian poetry and Russian literature. The folksy intonations of the 1837 *Borodino* had made old-fashioned and dated what Eikhenbaum calls "the old battle romanticism," i.e., the odic tradition which dominated battle descriptions from Lomonosov and Trediakovskii to Pushkin's *Poltava*. *Valerik* takes the process one step further. The narrator is not an old soldier. He is not folksy in manner or speech. His speech is the speech of the educated Russian, of Lermontov. In *Valerik* we have descriptions which are not only non-odic, but prosaic, factual, and straightforward, written in the same language as his other late poems. The battle descriptions are outstanding examples of the prosaic style which characterizes some of Lermontov's late poetry and which is probably his biggest stylistic contribution to Russian verse.

The lowered tone of the battle descriptions is produced largely by the limited perspective of the narrator. The action is seen not from the vantage point of the historian or the spy-glass of the general but from the inevitably restricted view of the participant. Consequently, the overwhelming impression is of confusion. Events appear disjointed and unrelated to each other. The narrative style, of paramount importance in emphasizing the confusion of battle, is elliptical and disjointed, with shouted commands interrupting short bursts of narrative, and vice versa:

Но в этом странном ожиданье
 Забилось сердце не одно.
 Вдруг залп... глядим: лежат рядами,
 Что нужды? здешние полки
 Народ испытанный... В штыки,
 Дружнее! раздалось за нами.

Кровь загорелася в груди!
Все офицеры впереди...

But in this strange waiting business
More than one heart starts to race.
Suddenly a shot...we look: there are rows of men on the ground,
It'll be all right, these regiments
Know how to go about it...Fix bayonets!
All together! We hear the shout behind us.
The blood pounds in the chest.
All officers to the front!

Many have rightly observed that Lermontov, in his battle descriptions, is the immediate predecessor of L. N. Tolstoi.

The engagement over, the carnage in the immediate vicinity of the participant is described in detail. Then, as he raises his eyes, the calm, proud magnificence of the high mountains impels the combattant-narrator to a comparison, and he pronounces his famous verdict:

И с грустью тайной и сердечной
Я думал: жалкий человек.
Чего он хочет!.. небо ясно,
Под небом места много всем,
Но беспрестанно и напрасно
Один враждует он — зачем?

And with a secret, heartfelt sorrow
I thought: pathetic, wretched Man.
What does he want!.. The sky is clear,
Beneath the sky there's room for all,
But endlessly, to no avail,
Alone Man wages war — for why?

Lermontov concludes by returning to his verse epistle.

Но я боюсь вам наскучить,
В забавах света вам смешны
Тревоги дикие войны;

Теперь прощайте: если вас
Мой безыскусственный рассказ
Развеселит, займет хоть малость,
Я буду счастлив. А не так? —
Простите мне его как шалость
И тихо молвите: чудак!..

But I'm afraid of boring you:
In the midst of society's diversions
You must find funny war's wild alarms....

Farewell: if my untutored narrative
Brings cheer, interests you even slightly,
I shall be happy. And if that's not so?

Then forgive me for a stupid prank,
And say quietly: What a character!...³⁵

Zaveshchanie ("The Testament") has certain things in common with *Valerik*. First, it describes not a battle, but the result of a battle: a dying officer or soldier. Second, it is stylistically simple, prosaic, conversational. Third, it revolves around a message: not here a letter, but a message to be conveyed orally by a friend going home on leave.

Zaveshchanie was inspired by another campaign, following the *Valerik* engagement, in which Lermontov took part in the fall of 1840. After the campaign Lermontov was again recommended for a medal and again turned down. The decision not to give him a medal was dated June 30, 1841, and arrived after his death.³⁶

As far as one can judge from this 4-stanza 32-line poem, the dying man, officer or soldier, is not as well-educated as the main protagonist and letter-writer of *Valerik*. This explains the debate that has centered around the question of whether the hero of *Zaveshchanie* is an officer or a soldier. I favor a soldier, because a soldier could write home, only with the help of a literate comrade or priest, but it would be pointless to insist.

This lesser education, plus the fact that he is not composing a letter but giving a verbal message, plus the fact that he is gasping out his life, impart to *Zaveshchanie* a very direct, uncalculated, unpolished, abrupt, and staccato intonation, as opposed to the simple, but elegantly finished clauses of *Valerik*. But the theme which brings these two poems together, over and above the three points listed above, is the sense of distance, of being abandoned and forgotten. Neither hero believes he still has a secure place at home. The tragic factor is not distance alone, but in conjunction with the inability of people to love, truly and forever:

Наедине с тобою, брат,
Хотел бы я побыть:
На свете мало, говорят,
Мне остается жить!
Поедешь скоро ты домой:
Смотри ж... Да что? моей судьбой,
Сказать по правде, очень
Никто не озабочен.

А если спросит кто-нибудь...
Ну, кто бы ни спросил,
Скажи им, что навывлет в грудь
Я пулей ранен был;
Что умер честно за царя,
Что плохи наши лекаря,
И что родному краю
Поклон я посылаю.

Отца и мать мою едва ль
Застанешь ты в живых...
Признаться, право, было б жаль
Мне опечалить их;

³⁵ First published in *Utrenniaia zaria* for 1843, 66-77.

³⁶ Eikhenbaum, II, 228-29; A. P. Beliaev, *Russkaia starina*, 1881, No. 10, 264-74.

Но если кто из них и жив,
Скажи, что я писать ленив,
Что полк в поход послали,
И чтоб меня не ждали.

Соседка есть у них одна..
Как вспомнишь, как давно
Расстались!.. Обо мне она
Не спросит... всё равно,
Ты расскажи всю правду ей,
Пустого сердца не жалеи;
Пускай она поплачет...
Ей ничего не значит!

I want to be alone with you,
A moment quite alone.
The minutes left to me are few,
They say I'll soon be gone.
And you are going home on leave,
Then say...but why? I do believe
There's not a soul, who'll greatly care
To hear about me over there.

And yet if someone questions you,
Whoever it may be, —
Tell them a bullet hit me through
The chest, — and did for me.
And say I died, and for the Tsar,
And say what fools the doctors are: —
And that I shook you by the hand,
And spoke about my native land.

My father and my mother, both,
By now are surely dead —
To tell the truth, I would be loth
To send them tears to shed.
If one of them is living, say
I'm bad at writing home, and they
Have told the regiment to pack, —
And that I shan't be coming back.

We had a neighbor, as you know,
And you remember I
And she.... How very long ago
It is we said good-bye!
She won't ask after me, nor care,

But tell her ev'rything, don't spare
Her empty heart; and let her cry; —
To her it doesn't signify.³⁷

Apart from other literary ties, *Zaveshchanie* may owe something to folklore, specifically to Cossack folklore. This possibility seems persuasive. The late Lermontov appears to have been developing two possible types of poetry based on folklore, primarily Cossack folklore: one reproduces it as folklore, the other brings it into the framework of the Russian literary tradition. Clearly, this poem involves the latter alternative. Because we believe that the following Cossack folkloristic piece possesses great intrinsic merit, we present it here.³⁸

Уж как пал туман на сине море,
А злодей тоска в ретиво сердце.
Не сойдет туман со синя моря,
И не выйдет грусть зла из сердца вон.
Не звезда блестит во чистом поле,
Во чистом поле огонек горит.
У огня постлан ковер шелковый:
На ковре лежит добрый молодец:
Он прижал платком рану смертную:
Унимает кровь молодецкую.
Подле молодца стоит добрый конь:
Он копытом бьет по сырой земле,
Будто молвить он хочет молодцу:
«Ты вставай, вставай, добрый молодец!
«Ты седлай, седлай коня доброго:
«Послужу тебе верой, правдою,
«Отвезу тебя в нашу сторону,
«К отцу, к матери, к роду племени,
«К милым детушкам, к молодой жене». —
Тяжело вздохнул добрый молодец:
Его крепка грудь подымается:
Руки белые опускаются:
Рана смертная растворяется:
Кровь горячая полилась ручьем.
Тут промолвил он своему коню:
«Ох ты, конь, мой конь, лошадь добрая,
«Ты товарищ всей моей участи,
«Добрый пайщик ты службы Княжеской!
«Ты ступай один в нашу сторону:
«Ты отдай поклон отцу матери,
«Милым детушкам, роду племени.—
«Ты скажи моей молодой вдове,

³⁷ First published in *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, 1841, XIV, No. 2, 157. The fine translation is by Maurice Baring, *Have you anything to declare?* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1937), 243.

³⁸ I am grateful to James Bailey, University of Wisconsin, for pointing this out. See P. A. Khreshchatitskii, *Voiska donskogo kazach'i pesni*, 2nd ed. (M., 1906), No. 38, 53.

«Что женился я на другой жене,
 «Что за ней я взял поле чистое:
 «Нас сосватала сабля острая:
 «Положила спать калена стрела».

The mist has come down over the blue sea,
 And wicked anguish has descended on the mettlesome heart.
 The mist will not lift from off the blue sea,
 Nor will evil anguish depart from the heart.
 It is not a star shining in the open field,
 In the open field a small fire burns.
 A silken rug is spread before the fire,
 On the rug there lies a brave warrior:
 With his kerchief he has stanch'd the mortal wound,
 He has slowed the flow of his noble blood.
 Near the warrior stands his noble horse:
 He strikes with his hoof on the damp earth,
 As though he seeks to address the warrior:
 "Get up, get up, brave warrior!
 Saddle your noble horse:
 I will serve you loyally, and truly,
 I will carry you back to our own country,
 To your father, your mother, to your own people,
 To your dear children, to your young wife."
 Heavily sighed the brave warrior:
 His mighty chest rose and fell:
 His white hands sink low:
 The mortal wound opens up:
 The hot blood started to stream forth.
 So he addressed his own dear horse:
 "You are my own dear horse, my brave steed,
 You have been companion in all my endeavors,
 My good portion, my reward for service to my prince,
 Return alone to our own country:
 Give greeting to my father and mother,
 To my dear children, to our own people.
 And inform my young widow
 That I have taken another wife:
 That I followed after her into the open field,
 That we were brought to wedlock by the sharp saber,
 And laid to sleep by the tempered arrow."

Lermontov aside, this Cossack poem must be accounted a deeply tragic, highly moving piece, which brings out as nowhere better the ultimate isolation that awaits us all.

1841

Lermontov was killed on July 15, 1841. Although he lived barely more than half the year, it was an extremely productive one for his lyrics, partly because he was not engaged in any other long-term undertakings, except for some work on *Shtoss*. He seems to have truly found his lyric voice. Such 1840 masterpieces as *I skuchno i grustno*, *Valerik*, and *Zaveshchanie* indicate this clearly. He had learned two very important things: how to make album verse realistic and meaningful in the prose of life, and how to integrate folkloristic themes into the Russian literary mainstream. He knew that he was capable of writing first-class lyric poetry—on a level with Pushkin's, but in a manner outside Pushkin's ken. Pushkin had had one message, suited to his era; Lermontov, with his different poetic personality and in a later time, had a different one.

At the same time, at least half his 1841 lyrics either hark back to past works or break no new ground. I will deal with these briefly and devote more space to the more impressive poems. I would like to justify my procedures by sharing with the reader my impressions as I worked my own way through Lermontov's lyrics. Starting with 1836 or 1837, I was struck by the feeling that, notwithstanding the fact that his lyrics reflect a few dominant recurring themes, there is an enormous diversity in the lyrics themselves as to specific topics, addressees, genres etc. It seems therefore appropriate to proceed chronologically, making it possible for the reader to gain that same impression of the poet's diversity. But by 1841 this approach risks the danger of becoming repetitious, mechanical, and unrewarding. The time for a change in procedure has come. There is a vast difference between a late Lermontov *chef d'oeuvre* whose origins can be traced to earlier years and an elegant reworking of old models. This can be illustrated by two examples: there is nothing in Lermontov's early years which could render redundant his 1841 *Iz-pod tainstvennoi kholodnoi polumaski* ("From out beneath a mysterious semi-cold mask"); whereas the 1841 *Opravdanie*, as we will see, is very clearly a throwback to two 1831 lyrics.

15

First, my prime *bête noire* in Lermontov is the revenant, *Liubov' mertvetsa* ("Love of a Dead Man"). The dead man addresses his beloved: though dead, he is still with her; heaven means nothing to him; he still desires, weeps and is jealous — as in life; she must not love another, she is betrothed to a dead man. This poem was apparently a response to a poem by Alphonse Karr (1808-92) published in 1841. The basic difference between Karr and Lermontov is that in "Le mort amoureux" the dead lover prays for his beloved's earthly happiness, whereas in Lermontov's poem, characteristically, he threatens her. *Liubov' mertvetsa* was foreshadowed in Lermontov's work by no less than three other poems on this theme.³⁹

16

Two poems involving women clearly resuscitate earlier works. As noted above, *Opravdanie* ("Justification") goes back to two 1831 lyrics, *Romans k I'* ("Romance to I."), one of the N. F. Ivanova cycle, and a poem appearing in the 1831 tragedy *Strannyi chelovek* (*A Strange Man*) (Scene XII). And *Dogovor* ("The Agreement") is a reworking of the 1832 *Prelestnitse* ("To

³⁹ First published in *Utrenniaia zaria*, 1842, 44-46. Eikhenbaum, II, 237-38; K. M. Chernyi, *Liubov' merstvetsa*, L. E., 268.

A Charming Woman"). These two poems are characteristic of a tendency, much in evidence particularly in Lermontov's early lyrics, to dwell on a woman not so much as an object of love alone, but as fulfilling a function in the poet's life. As B. A. Starastin discerningly notes: "...in Lermontov's lyrics, love themes are almost never worked out as self-sufficient themes. The theme of love inevitably encroaches upon poems dealing with basic questions relating to 'the purpose of life'."⁴⁰ In *Opravdanie* with the poet's lofty destiny ignobly ending in death, will the beloved woman join the chorus of mockery and scorn, or will she defend her lover asserting that the suffering she has endured from him gives her the sacred right to forgive?

Despite the link with the two earlier 1831 poems, *Opravdanie* displays a new structural feature which attests to Lermontov's growing confidence as a patterner of syntactic mosaics:

Когда одни воспоминанья
О заблуждениях страстей,
На место славного названья,
Твой друг оставит меж людей,—

И будет спать в земле безгласно
То сердце, где кипела кровь,
Где так безумно, так напрасно
С враждой боролась любовь,—

Когда пред общим приговором
Ты смолкнешь, голову склоня,
И будет для тебя позором
Любовь безгрешная твоя, —

Того, кто страстью и пороком
Затмил твои молодые дни,
Молю: язвительным упреком
Ты в оный час не помяни.

Но пред судом толпы лукавой
Скажи, что судит нас иной,
И что прощать святое право
Страданьем куплено тобой.

When memories — not of some great deed —
When memories to the world of men
Your friend shall leave of but one thing, —
Of passion's errors and mistakes;

When silent lies beneath the sod
That heart in which the blood once pulsed,
In which so madly, and for naught,
Contended enmity and love;

When you — the people having spoken —
Stand silent with your head bowed down,
For you when there is only shame
Rewarding you for sinless love, —

⁴⁰ *Liubov'*, under *Motivy*, L. E., 311.

Then speak not ill of him whose sin
 And love made dark your days of youth,
 Speak not with venomous reproach,
 I beg, of him upon that day.

But when the cunning crowd has spoke,
 Say that Another judges all,
 That to forgive's your sacred right:
 You suffered, say you paid the price.

The first three stanzas contain four temporal subordinate clauses: *Kogda* (l. 1), *ĭ* (l. 5), *Kogda* (l. 9) and *I* (l. 11) (*When* (l. 1), *And* (l. 5), *When* (l. 9) and *And* (l. 11) (plus in stanza 2 (ll. 6,7) two subordinate clauses introduced by *gde, where*). We thus have a 12-line anticipatory build-up which will require resolution. The resolution is ushered in with an object (*Togo, The one*) requiring an explanatory relative clause, followed by a parenthetical *Moliu (I pray)*, followed in its turn by two adverbial clauses (ll. 15, 16), and only then do we finally get the operative transitive verb *ne pomiani (do not speak of)*. The final stanza, which is the poem's thematic climax, provides an easy-flowing run to the end, following the tension created by the protracted buildup and release of the first four stanzas. The poem's highly inverted order, combined with the placid harmonizing of syntagmas and line units, impart to the poem something of the nature of a slow stately, graceful minuet in which couples advance, mingle, and withdraw, and in which each couple finally comes to rest in its preordained place.

We will not here take time and space to compare the 1841 *Opravdanie* with its 1831 precursors; but anyone undertaking this quest will without difficulty understand the enormous strides Lermontov had made in the intervening ten years.

Dogovor pits hero and heroine, in unlawful union, against the condemnation of the despised crowd: the lovers' love has been without joy, their parting will be without sorrow; the mood is one of both defiance of convention and skepticism regarding love.

In both poems the criss-cross rhymes of the four-foot lines in the four-line stanzas confirm formally the conventional character of the themes and their origins in Lermontov's early lyrics. It is curious that neither of these poems apparently corresponds to or expresses his circumstances or states of mind in 1841.⁴¹

17

1841 includes one four-line epigram against the Polish reactionary O. I. Senkovskii (Sękowski), who had criticized Lermontov's poetry and *Geroi nashego vremeni*. It contains two jocular little pieces, one of 12 lines to the salon poet I. P. Miatlev (1796-1844), who wrote macaronic verse, i.e., verse mixing several languages, the other of 8 lines, itself a macaronic piece, written in the album of a distant relative, A. A. Uglitskaia (1822-62), who was preparing to get married. We reproduce it as an example of the lighter vein:

Ma chère Alexandrine,
 Простите, же ву при,
 За мой армейский чин
 Всѣ, что je vous écriis;

⁴¹ "Opravdanie" first published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1841, No. 3, 44; "Dogovor" *ibid.*, No. 3, 1-2.

Меж тем, же ву засюр,
 Ich wünsche счастья вам,
 Surtout beaucoup d'amour,
 Quand vous serez *Мадам*.

My dear Alexandrine,
 Forgive me, I beg you,
 For my army rank [as opposed to the guards]
 Everything I write to you;

Meanwhile, I assure you,
 I wish you happiness,
 Above all much love,
 When you become Madam.⁴²

There are two poems, *Lileinoi rukoi popravliaia* ("Setting straight with a lily hand," four lines) and *Na burke pod ten'iu chinary* ("On his felt coat beneath the shade of the plane tree," eight lines), which promise interest by their reflection of Lermontov's new, Caucasian, background. The three-foot tonic lines, leaning toward amphibrachs, seem to indicate ballads in the making. Unfortunately, they remain no more than beginnings.⁴³

18

Having taken note of those poems which, by virtue either of genre, of the deliberately self-limiting nature of the endeavor, or rootedness in Lermontov's early lyrics, encourage only cursory attention, I pass on to a number of poems most of which can claim a place in any anthology and which are rightly acclaimed as among his greatest.

Most, but not all merit this praise. *Poslednee novosel'e* is not a bad poem, but it is most certainly dated. It was a response to the transfer of Napoleon's remains from Saint Helena to Paris. This move provoked what to today's observer might seem to have been unwarrantedly strong reactions. To think thus is, however, to underestimate the emotional importance of two issues: the spellbinding appeal of Napoleon's seemingly more than human qualities and personality and the greatness or non-greatness of France; in a word, Nietzsche and Hegel. Let us proceed directly to an analysis of Lermontov's thinking as reflected in *Poslednee novosel'e*.

He scorns French jubilation at the bringing home of Napoleon's remains:

Негодование и чувству дав свободу,
 Помяв тшеславне сих праздничных забот,
 Мне хочется сказать великому народу:
 Ты жалкий и пустой народ!

Giving free rein to indignation and to emotion,
 Understanding the vainglory of these festal rites,

⁴² These three poems were first published in *Bibliograficheskie zapiski*, 1861, III, No. 18, 556; *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1842, XXIV, No. 9, 174; *Raduga*, II, 1922, 111. The second of the three is believed by E. L. Bel'kind to have been written in 1840, not 1841. See *L. E.*, 328.

⁴³ The two were first published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1844, XXXII, No. 1, 200, and *ibid.*, XXXII, No. 3, 203.

I wish to say to this great people:
You are a contemptible and empty nation....

France is taken to task for betraying the leader, "designated by the Divine finger," who rescued her from destruction and gave her strength, might, glory. When he was himself in desperate straits, France abandoned him:

Как женщина, ему вы изменили,
И, как рабы, вы предали его!

Like a woman, you were unfaithful to him,
And, like slaves, betrayed him!

Но годы протекли, и ветреное племя
Кричит: «Подайте нам священный этот прах!
Он наш;

But the years passed, the fickle throng
Calls out: "Give us that sacred dust!
It's ours...."

He is lavishly buried, to great rejoicing, but the poet is sad, feeling that Napoleon would be angry at being moved from his island:

Где сторожил его, как он непобедимый,
Как он великий, океан!

Where he was watched over by the ocean,
Invincible and great as he.

It might seem odd that this poem could be written by the author of *Borodino*. I am not defending the poem, which I regard as below Lermontov's best. But this poem is less about Napoleon than about France. True, Napoleon is treated as a superman. But it is important to remember that many people, some of whom had actively fought Napoleon or castigated him as tyrant, villain, usurper, came to see him as great, largely because they felt that succeeding rulers and ministers in France and elsewhere were such pygmies by comparison. In a way his performance, enlarged by legend, seemed to expose the puniness of his successors.⁴⁴ This is where Hegel comes in, in his condemnation of France for the superficiality of her thinking, her rationalism, materialism, rejection of revelation, of Christianity. Lermontov's poem does not go so far. Lermontov's criticism is of France's alleged betrayal of greatness. But the link with Hegel is clear. If France failed to honor and defend greatness, then she revealed her small-mindedness.⁴⁵ The modern reader will tend probably to agree with what Belinskii said in a letter dated June 28, 1841: "What rubbish Lermontov wrote about Napoleon and the French, and it's a pity that that was Lermontov and not Khomiakov."

The poem is written in mixed iambs arranged in paragraphs of uneven length, 76 lines in all. Its style is the epithet-laden rhetorical, declamatory style. Characteristic of that style, the adjectives are often used to award blame and praise, e.g. "*usluzhivoi khvaloiu*" ("self-serving praise"), "*pozdnego raskaian'ia*" ("belated repentance"), "*vzdornaia tolpa*" ("foolish crowd"),

⁴⁴ J. Christopher Herold, *The Age of Napoleon* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 420-57.

⁴⁵ For an excellent summary of the link between this poem and Hegel's thinking see Eikhenbaum, II, 234-36.

and so on. The rhetoric is very much that of 1836-39, but in 1840-41 the declamatory style was still the preferred language of political satire and invective. Napoleon's body arrived in France December 15, 1840, and the poem was written in March-April 1841.⁴⁶

19

Morskaia tsarevna ("The Sea Princess") is part of a long tradition of works, usually balladic, in which the main protagonists are a man, fisherman or prince, and an underwater maiden or princess. The meeting of the two is fatal. In Goethe's ballad, "Der Fischer," an early example, the fisherman is lured to his death. In Pushkin's 1832 *Rusalka*, uncompleted, it looks as though the miller's daughter, now underwater princess, will in the same way lure her former lover, the prince, to his death. In Lermontov's 1832 *Rusalka*, the water-nymph sings of a warrior, not necessarily enticed but a victim of the waves, who sleeps unresponding beneath the water, presumably dead.

In *Morskaia tsarevna*, the sea princess seeks to entice the prince with a night of love. He grabs her by the hair and hauls her triumphantly on shore. Looking back, he sees with horror that she is in the throes of death. Here are the last two couplets:

Бледные руки хватают песок;
Шепчут уста непонятный упрек...

Едет царевич задумчиво прочь.
Будет он помнить про царскую дочь!

Her pale hands grip the sand;
Her lips whisper an incomprehensible reproach...

The prince rides up wondering
He will remember the tsar's daughter!

(copy editor's translation)

The poem as narrative poetry is not altogether convincing. One sees the point: the sea princess would probably have destroyed the prince, but he inadvertently destroys her. *Morskaia tsarevna* was one of Lermontov's last lyrics. But its four-foot dactyls and, especially its paired masculine rhymes are characteristic of the Russian thirties, Lermontov included.⁴⁷

20

Spor ("The Argument") presents the two tallest peaks in the Caucasus, Mt. El'brus (18,336 feet) and Kazbek (16,357 feet) taking opposing sides in an argument as to whether man constitutes a threat. El'brus warns Kazbek that man will subdue nature: "Already the caravans are passing through those high peaks where once there were only clouds and eagles.... Beware! highly populated and mighty is the East!" Kazbek replies that he has no fears of the East; for

⁴⁶ Letter not to Botkin, as Eikhenbaum (II, 234) erroneously states, but to P. N. Kudriavtsev; see Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, XII, 57. Khomiakov presumably came easily to Belinskii's mind since, as Eikhenbaum notes, Khomiakov had been the first to comment in verse on the transfer of Napoleon's body, in his "Nebo iasno, tikho more," *Moskvitianin*, 1841, No. 1. *Poslednee novosel'e* was first published in *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, 1841, XVI, No. 5, 1-2.

⁴⁷ First published in *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, 1843, XXVIII, No. 5, 1-2.

more than eight centuries man there has been asleep.... "No! the decrepit East is not going to subdue me!" El'brus calls his attention to the North, and Kazbek sees in amazement that from the North troops are advancing, and they are being led by a gray-haired general, battle-hardened, eyes flashing, i.e., Ermolov (1772-1861), who commanded the Russian forces in the Caucasus from 1816 through 1827:

И томим зловещей думой,
 Полный черных снов,
 Стал считать Казбек угрюмый —
 И не счел врагов.

And anguished by an ominous thought,
 Full of black dreams,
 Mournful Kazbek started to count his enemies —
 But they were too many to count.

The thought behind this poem may strike the reader as sound but hardly original, particularly the modern reader with ecological consciousness. The great contemporary critic Belinskii was, contrary to his usual enthusiasm, unimpressed.⁴⁸ And the argument is prolonged over 96 lines. But the sheer magic of the poetry lifts this piece far above the level of its content. How it achieves its effects defies total and all-embracing analysis, as does all great poetry. But some of the factors which produce these effects can be pinpointed.

For example, we are familiar with Lermontov's keen eye for the striking detail, noted particularly in the 1838 *Poet* and the 1840 *Kazach'ia kolybel'naia pesnia*. Thus, as Kazbek looks out over the somnolent East, his gaze lights on one object after another:

Дальше, вечно чуждый тени,
 Моет желтый Нил
 Раскаленные ступени
 Царственных могил.
 Бедуин забыл наезды
 Для цветных шатров
 И поет, считая звезды,
 Про дела отцов.

Further, ever without shade,
 See, the yellow Nile
 Washes, laves the burning steps
 of the royal tombs.
 Raids forgot, the Bedouin
 In his festive tent
 Counts the stars and sings about
 Deeds his father wrought.

As elsewhere, Lermontov demonstrates here his complete mastery of synecdochic statement.

Most remarkable and original how he combines meter, rhyme, and syntax, particularly syntax. Metrically innovative, Lermontov used the alternating four-foot three-foot trochee with

⁴⁸ Eikhenbaum, II, 250.

crisscross rhyming only twice, here and in the 1840 *Kazach'ia kolybel'naia pesnia*. But over and above meter and rhyme-scheme, syntactic patterning gives the present poem a unique impact:

Как-то раз перед толпою
 Соплеменных гор
 У Казбека с Шат-горою
 Был великий спор.
 Somehow once before a crowd
 Of their fellow mountains
 Mount El'brus and Mount Kazbek
 Had a great debate.

The first four lines illustrate perfectly the syntactic pattern. Each quatrain closes with a major syntactic pause. Between the four lines constituting a quatrain there is no or very little syntactic pause. Consequently, each quatrain consists of a single flowing sweep. Not all quatrains reproduce this pattern as well as the opening quatrain. But the eight lines depicting the Nile and the Bedouin reveal the same pattern, which dominates the piece throughout. A combination of longer odd and shorter even lines, the use of trochees, the crisscross rhymes which counterpoint the overriding flow of the syntax make reading the poem an electrifying experience.

The deliberately easy flow of the syntax of *Spor* stands out more clearly when compared with that of *Kazach'ia kolybel'naia pesnia*, where, given a different poetic function, the individual lines, while operating within the quatrain, also retain their independence as autonomous units.

Written in April, 1841, in Moscow, too late clearly for inclusion in the 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*, "Spor" was left with Lermontov's good friend, Iu. F. Samarin, who submitted it to *Moskvitianin* for publication.⁴⁹

21

Svidanie ("The Tryst") consists of 84 lines, written in three-foot iambs with crisscross alternating dactylic and masculine rhyming. It was among several poems written between May and the beginning of July, 1841. The action takes place in Tiflis, reflecting its southern origin. It may be far-fetched to attempt to find thematic closeness between this poem and the *Taman'* episode in *Geroi nashego vremeni*. A more obvious comparison is with Pushkin's 1820 *Chernaia shal'* ("The Black Shawl").⁵⁰ As Eikhenbaum points out, the first-person hero's narrative of events and the actual course of events take place at the same time, in the present tense, and this gives to the poem the character of a dramatic monolog delivered in a lively, folksy style.⁵¹

The hero waits for the promised tryst. He describes his anticipations and the surrounding scene, including the veiled Georgian women going home from the baths. He waits in vain and finally realizes that the young Tartar, who yesterday galloped triumphantly through the streets nearby, must be the fortunate lover. He will take his gun and wait in ambush beyond the city gates. He hears the sound of hoofs.... Here is the last stanza but one:

Прочь, прочь, слеза позорная,
 Кипи, душа моя!
 Твоя измена черная

⁴⁹ *Moskvitianin*, 1841, 3, No. 6, 291-94.

⁵⁰ Both comparisons are from Eikhenbaum, II, 259.

⁵¹ For meter see Eikhenbaum, 1924, 117-19.

Понятна мне, змея!
 Я знаю, чем утешенный
 По звонкой мостовой
 Вчера скакал как бешеный
 Татарин молодой.
 Недаром он красуется
 Перед твоим окном,
 И твой отец любит
 Персидским жеребцом.

Away, away—no shameful tear,
 seethe, my soul!
 Your black betrayal, snake,
 I have understood!
 I know now why so happy,
 Along the echoing street,
 A young Tartar yesterday
 Galloped crazily.
 Not for nothing he shows off
 Before your window,
 While your father admires
 His Persian stallion.

The combination of narrative, description, and reflection, together with the fast-moving balladic meter, makes this a very effective piece, a different rendering of a tale of love unconsummated and love betrayed.⁵²

22

Rodina ("Fatherland") is an example, syntactically, of the declamatory-rhetorical style we noted developing back in 1836 with *Umiraiushchii gladiator* and in 1837 in *Smert' poeta*. It is a poem with potential for high rhetoric. But unlike the two earlier examples, which take conventionally emotional themes, the death of a gladiator, the death of a poet, to create high pathos, Lermontov's *Rodina* develops in the opposite direction, working its way "down" from the conventional tokens of high pathos and patriotism to a love of fatherland based on the very simple things of Russian life. And as the poet proceeds to enumerate the things he loves, his manner of expressing himself takes on their modest coloration and his tone of voice reflects a sober restraint, the very opposite of the rhetorical and declamatory style.

There is no change of tone. At no point in the poem's semantics is there any trace of excessive emotionalism or rhetorical flourish: the opening paragraph detailing the conventional phrases of patriotism is shot through with negatives:

Люблю отчизну я, но странною любовью!
 Не победит ее рассудок мой.
 Ни слава, купленная кровью,
 Ни полный гордого доверия покой,

⁵² First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1843 xxxii, No.1, 198-200.

Ни темной старины заветные преданья
 Не шевелят во мне отрадного мечтанья.

I love my fatherland, but with a strange love!
 A love my reason cannot conquer.
 Not glory bought by blood,
 Not the tranquility of proud confidence,
 Not the cherished traditions of the distant past:
 None of these stir in me warm, happy thoughts.

Having buried the conventional motives for patriotic fervor under a pile of negatives, Lermontov proceeds to a positive affirmation of the things which really move him. Here we note a stance which helps to impose emotional restraint and ensure a low-key approach: concession. In line 7, he reiterates a concession initially made in line 1, where we had "but with a strange love" ("*no strannoju liubov'iu*"), telling the reader he himself cannot really explain his love:

Но я люблю — за что, не знаю сам —
 But I love — why I don't know myself....

This low-key, almost apologetic, approach not only imposes restraint: it prepares the reader for the unexpected, and adds poignance and force to what is coming. Lermontov then proceeds to list the prosaic things he loves. And here mention must be made of Pushkin and of his move from poetry to prose, as described in *Puteshestvie Onegina (Onegin's Journey)*:

И в поэтический бокал
 Воды я много подмешал.

*

Иные нужны мне картины:
 Люблю песчаный косогор,
 Перед избушкой две рябины,
 Калитку, сломанный забор,
 На небе серенькие тучи,
 Перед гумном соломы кучи
 Да пруд под сенью и в густых,
 Раздолье уток молодых;
 Теперь мила мне балалайка
 Да пьяный топот трепака
 Перед порогом кабака.
 Мой идеал теперь—хозяйка,
 Мои желанья—покой,
 Да шей горшок, да сам большой.

.... And in my poet's wineglass
 I've mixed a lot of water.

*

Other pictures now I need:
 I love a sandy hillside slope,
 Two rowan trees before a hut,

A wicket-gate, a broken fence,
 Gray clouds upon the sky,
 Straw piled before a threshing-floor,
 A pond under thick willows' shade,
 Young ducks at ease upon its waters;
 Dear now to me is a balalaika,
 The drunken pounding of the dance
 Outside the tavern door.
 My ideal's now a wife, my wish
 For peace, a bowl of cabbage soup,
 And for a house I call my own.

Pushkin's highflown dreams have been toned down. He has mixed a lot of water in his wine. He needs pictures of a different kind, everyday as opposed to romantically ideal: simple objects from rural Russia, a balalaika, the drunken pounding of a Russian dance (*trepak*), his ideal now a woman in his home, peace, and a bowl of cabbage soup.

This passage, as commentators have pointed out, provides the inspiration for Lermontov's *Rodina*. Just as Pushkin turns to the simple things of Russian life and away from romanticism, so Lermontov gives the same preference to these simple things over the claims of conventional patriotic rhetoric. He loves the cold silence of Russia's steppes, the swaying of her boundless forests, her flooding rivers, the trembling lights of her mournful villages. Having opened with 14 lines of mixed (six-, five-, and four-foot) iambs, Lermontov switches in response to the Pushkin line to four-foot iambs, continuing his list of things loved. Here are his last 12 lines:

Люблю дымок спаленной жнивы,
 В степи ночующий обоз,
 И на холме средь желтой нивы
 Чету белеющих берез.
 С отрадой многим незнакомой
 Я вижу полное гумно,
 Избу, покрытую соломой,
 С резными ставнями окно;
 И в праздник, вечером росистым,
 Смотреть до полночи готов
 На пляску с топаньем и свистом
 Под говор пьяных мужичков.

I love the smoke from the burnt harvest stubble
 The line of carts spending the night in the steppe,
 And on a small hill amid the yellow grain
 A pair of white birch trees.
 With a joy unknown to many
 I contemplate a full threshing-floor,
 A straw-thatched cottage,
 A window with carved shutters;
 And on feast-days in the dewy evening,
 I'm happy to watch till midnight
 The dance with stamping and whistling,
 Amid the talk of drunken peasants.

Some of Pushkin's items appear in *Rodina*: "Pered izbushkoi"/"Izbu;" (hut); "solomy kuchi"/"pokrytuiu solomoi" (straw); "Pered gumnom"/"polnoe gumno" (threshing-floor); "pianyi topot trepaka" "Na pliasku s topan'em....pianykh" (drunken pounding of the dance.... pounding dance.... drunken peasants).

Lermontov makes no attempt to conform to the Onegin stanza. His last 12 lines consist of three quatrains with crisscross feminine-masculine rhymes. Each quatrain contains a verb indicating his positive attitude to what is being described: "Liubliu....S otradoi mnogim neznakomoi/la vizhu....Smotret' do polnochi gotov...." ("I love....With a pleasure unknown to many/I see.... Ready to watch till midnight"). The first two quatrains describe inanimate things, viewed pictorially; the last describes humans and their human activities.

There are differences between Pushkin and Lermontov here as elsewhere. Pushkin is describing himself as *changing* his preferences; Lermontov does not claim *change* within himself, only *difference* in the sense that the objects of his affection are not traditionally thought of as evoking love of fatherland. Pushkin catalogs his objects of love matter-of-factly, but with the main focus on himself; whereas Lermontov, though clearly also talking about himself, is at the same time trying to win the reader to his thinking by depicting almost visually the scenes he lists. From any standpoint, this is a deeply moving poem. To some extent, it set the course for Tiutchev's and Blok's poetic conceptions of Russia.⁵³

It would seem appropriate to place immediately after *Rodina* another equally famous Lermontov comment on his native land from 1841. *Proshchai, nemytaia Rossiia* ("Farewell, unwashed Russia") is not the other side of the coin to *Rodina*. On the contrary, it complements the earlier poem:

Прощай, немытая Россия,
Страна рабов, страна господ,
И вы, мундиры голубые,
И ты, им преданный народ.

Быть может, за стеной Кавказа
Сокроюсь от твоих пашей,
От их всевидящего глаза,
От их всеслышащих ушей.

Farewell, unwashed Russia,
Land of slaves, land of masters,
And you, blue uniforms,
And you, you people devoted to them.

Perhaps beyond the wall of the Caucasus,
I will find concealment from your pashas
From their all-seeing eyes,
From their all-hearing ears.

These lines claim attention, since they record Lermontov's antipathy to the surveillance of a police state. The "blue uniforms" are the uniforms of the tsarist police. The original handwritten copy of this poem, obviously not published in that decade, has not survived. And there are several variants to the text, the most important of which is the substitution of *tsarei* for *pashei* (line 6), i.e., tsars for pashas. But that would not be a helpful change. First, there was only *one* tsar, i.e.

⁵³ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1841, XV, No.4, 283.

tsar should not be plural. Second, the tsar was a given in the Russian empire at that time. Thirdly, “pashas” is far more effective, since it conjures up the image of the vast repressive bureaucracy which stifled freedoms. An important point, true to Lermontov’s thinking, is that people concur in their own thralldom: the problem is not only the blue uniforms, but “*ty, im predannyi narod.*”

Lermontov obtains his effect in part, as he often did, especially when using 4-foot iambs with crisscross alternating feminine-masculine rhymes, by means of pairs, either complementary or in opposition: *Strana rabov, strana gospod; I vy...I ty; Ot ikh vsevidiashchego glaza, ot ikh vseslyshashchikh ushei.*

Eikhenbaum believes the poem to have been written in 1840, early in the year, as Lermontov left for the Caucasus following his duel with Barante. More often it is dated April, 1841, and believed to have been written as Lermontov prepared to leave for the last time. It was first published in 1887.⁵⁴

23

Grafine Rostopchinoi (“To Countess Rostopchina”) is an album piece, lightly fashioned but with serious content. It is written, as we could have anticipated, in 4-foot iambs and is divided into two twelve-line stanzas. The now familiar album pattern of alternating feminine-masculine rhymes is maintained in the three quatrains making up the first stanza; the consistency of the pattern breaks down in the second stanza, where the rhyme scheme is varied.

If one looks in Lermontov’s life for a relationship with a woman in which there was equality and mutual respect, no better example can be found than that which developed between him and Evdokiia Petrovna Rostopchina (1811/12-58) in 1841 during his last visit to Petersburg. Rostopchina’s maiden name was Sushkova, and she was a cousin of E. A. Sushkova, whose person and memoirs are well known to us already. She was also the sister of S. P. Sushkov, Lermontov’s school-mate in Moscow. Lermontov seems to have been attracted to her at that time: he wrote her a remarkably fine madrigal for the New Year of 1831, the *Dodo* madrigal discussed in Chapter I. In 1832 Lermontov moved to Petersburg, and in 1833 Evdokiia Petrovna got married. There was no meaningful contact between the two till Lermontov’s last visit to the capital, when they met frequently either at the Karamzins’ home or Rostopchina’s. Rostopchina had meanwhile established herself as a poet. On leaving for the Caucasus, Lermontov gave her an album with the present poem, *Ja veriu: pod odnoi zvezdoiu*, written in. Rostopchina responded, probably just after his departure, by giving Lermontov’s grandmother a copy of her just published *Stikhotvoreniia* for transmission to him “as a token of my admiration for his talent and sincere friendship for him.” I do not suggest that Lermontov was in love with her. But his feelings were more than casual. Let the poem, here given in its entirety, speak for itself:

Я верю: под одной звездюю
Мы с вами были рождены;
Мы шли дорогою одною,
Нас обманули те же сны.
Но что ж! — от цели благородной
Оторван бурсю страстей,
Я позабыл в борьбе бесплодной
Преданья юности моей.

⁵⁴ In *Russkaia starina*, 1887, No. 12, 738-39. For Eikhenbaum’s view, see Eikhenbaum, II, 222-23. For the 1841 view, see Lermontov 1961, I, 705.

Предвидя вечную разлуку,
 Боюсь я сердцу волю дать;
 Боюсь предательскому звуку
 Мечту напрасную вверять...

Так две волны несутся дружно
 Случайной, вольною четой
 В пустыне моря голубой:
 Их гонит вместе ветер южный;
 Но их разрознит где-нибудь
 Утеса каменная грудь...
 И, полны холодом привычным,
 Они несут брегам различным,
 Без сожаленья и любви,
 Свой ропот сладостный и томный,
 Свой бурный шум, свой блеск заемный,
 И ласки вечные свои.

I believe that you and I
 Were born beneath the same star;
 We traveled the same road,
 Were deceived by the same dreams.
 And then!? — from a noble cause
 Torn away by passion's storms,
 I forgot in the futile struggle
 The lessons of my youth.
 Foreseeing eternal separation,
 I fear to give freedom to my heart
 I fear to expose a hopeless vain dream
 To betrayal by the spoken word...

Thus, two waves are borne along together,
 Free, brought together by chance,
 In the sea's blue expanses,
 Both driven by the South wind.
 But somewhere they are separated
 By a rocky cliff...
 And, full of habitual coldness,
 Without love and without regret,
 They carry on in to different shores
 Their sweet and languorous complaints,
 Their stormy pounding, borrowed glint,
 And their eternal caresses.

This poem, belonging as it does to the sub-genre of album verse, has a Pushkinian ring. Not only is it laden with epithets, not only are there eighteen three-stress and one two-stress lines out of 24, but there are echoes of Pushkin's 1828 *Predchuvstvie* ("No, *predchuvstvuia razluku*") and his 1825 *Ia pomniu chudnoe mgnoven'e* ("...*Bur' poryv miatezhnyi/Rasseial prezhnie mechty, / I ia zabyl....*"). The poem is a masterpiece of restraint and understatement.

Incidentally, if we look back at late 1831 and compare the *Dodo* madrigal with other madrigals written at the same time to other women, we cannot fail to be struck by the difference: the *Dodo* madrigal has none of the flippancy attendant on the other New Year messages. Rostopchina is praised not only for her beauty but for an unmistakeable firmness of character, and, as later in Lermontov's 1840 poem to M. A. Shcherbatova, a line is drawn between the addressee's southern origin and the cold, insensitive North. Though Lermontov and Rostopchina became close only in 1841, there must then have been something about her in 1831 that commanded Lermontov's attention and respect.⁵⁵

Iz al'boma S. N. Karamzinoi ("From S. N. Karamzina's Album") consists of four four-line four-foot iambic stanzas, feminine and masculine rhymes alternating, which we have come to regard as the most standard meter of Pushkin's time. Bitsilli has pointed out that metrically Lermontov consistently works away from this meter. And so he does. But when he writes album verse, he reverts to the traditional. This is entirely appropriate, for verses written in a lady's album are not supposed to overwhelm by force of metrical originality or intricacy. They are supposed to be written in an easily recognizable, unexceptional form. The fiction is maintained, and sometimes it may be true, that they are tossed off more or less impromptu, without undue effort.

The apparent lack of effort and the lightness of tone do not preclude serious content. This sixteen-line poem is a declaration of Lermontov's "descent to prose," i.e., of his rejection of a high-tension, high-flying romantic approach to life and poetry, and of his turn to simpler, more everyday pleasures. It is roughly equivalent in Lermontov's work to Pushkin's *Puteshestvie Onegina* (*Onegin's Journey*), XVI, discussed above in connection with *Rodina* (1841):

Любил и я в былые годы,
В невинности души моей,
И бури шумные природы,
И бури тайные страстей.

Но красоты их безобразной
Я скоро таинство постиг,
И мне наскучил их несвязный
И оглушающий язык.

Люблю я больше год от году,
Желаньям мирным дав простор,
Поутру ясную погоду,
Под вечер тихий разговор,

Люблю я парадоксы ваши,
И ха-ха-ха, и хи-хи-хи,
С<мирновой> штучку, фарсу Саши
И Ишки М<ятлева> стихи...

I too loved in past years —
In the innocence of my soul —
The noisy storms of nature
And the secret storms of passions.

⁵⁵ *Krest na skale* ("Cross on the Cliff") dated 1830 by Eikhenbaum, dated as uncertain by the Academy editions, is dedicated to either Rostopchina or E. A. Sushkova. *Grafine Rostopchinoi* was first published in *Russkaia beseda* (SPb., 1841), II, 94.

But I soon came to understand
 The mystery of their formless beauty,
 And I became bored by their incoherent
 And deafening language.

More I like, from year to year,
 Giving free play to peaceful desires.
 Clear weather in the morning,
 In the evening peaceful conversation.

I love your paradoxes,
 And ha-ha-has, and hee-hee-hees,
 Smirnova's wit, Sasha's farce,
 And the verse of Ishka Miatlev.

Sof'ia Nilolaevna Karamzina (1802-56), in whose album this poem was written, was the very intelligent and educated oldest daughter of N. M. Karamzin (1766-1826), the writer and historian. The Karamzin salon, in which she was a leading figure, was the arbiter of literary taste and literary success in Petersburg society. Lermontov, especially in 1840 and 1841, was a regular participant in the salon. Particularly in those last years, the ties of friendship between him and Karamzina were strong. She had also been a good friend of Pushkin's. Aleksandra Osipovna Smirnova (1809-82), mentioned in the last stanza, was a no less distinguished member of the literary and social world. She was a beauty and had verses written to her by Pushkin, Viazemskii, Tumanskii, Khomiakov, Sobolevskii, and Rostopchina, as well as Lermontov (see his 1840 *A. O. Smirnovoi*). Sasha was Aleksandr Nikolaevich Karamzin (1815-88), the half-brother of S. N. Karamzina. Miatlev was the witty writer of macaronic verse discussed in connection with two intentionally light-weight poems early in this chapter.⁵⁶

24

There are five poems in this period with unrequited love as their unifying theme. Such poems appear elsewhere, particularly in Lermontov's early verse, which contains many more lyrics on the theme than have been discussed here. Unrequited love or betrayal is central in the 1841 *Svidanie*, above. And the five discussed below show that in Lermontov's last year this theme regained an intensity it had not had in his lyrics since about 1832. Of the five poems, one is in French, two are translations or adaptations from Heine, two are entirely original. These two and one of the poems from Heine use stories from nature to handle the central theme.

"L'attente" ("The Wait") is one of at least four poems by Lermontov written in French. It was presumably written in his last months, since it was sent to Sof'ia Nikolaevna Karamzina as part of a letter dated May 10.⁵⁷ Its 18 octosyllabic lines are in three stanzas.

The hero waits for his beloved; in the dim light he thinks he sees her coming, but no.... He listens; he can hear her coming, but no.... He falls asleep; and trembling he awakes, he has heard her speaking into his ear, and her lips kissed his forehead. This sad dream fits perfectly into the picture we have of unfulfilled love. Here is the final stanza:

Rempli d'une amère tristesse,
 Je me couche dans l'herbe épaisse

⁵⁶ First published in 1841 in *Russkaia beseda*, II, without the final stanza (replaced by dots).

⁵⁷ *Ak. nauk*, VI, 460-61.

Et m'endors d'un sommeil profond...
 Tout-à-coup, tremblant, je m'éveille:
 Sa voix me parlait à l'oreille,
 Sa bouche me baisait au front.

Filled with a bitter sorrow,
 I lie down in the thick grass
 And fall into a heavy sleep. . .
 Suddenly, trembling, I awake:
 Her voice was speaking in my ear,
 Her lips were kissing my forehead.⁵⁸

The tension here between dream and reality is loosely reminiscent of the same phenomenon in the 1840 *Kak chasto, pestroiu tolpoi u okruzhen*.

The next poem, *Oni liubili drug druga...* ("They loved each other...") is metrically interesting. It is a translation of Heine's "Sie liebten sich beide" ("They loved each other"). The eight lines of the original read as follows:

Sie liebten sich beide, doch keiner
 Wollt es dem andern gestehn;
 Sie sahen sich an so feindlich,
 Und wollten vor Liebe vergehn.

Sie trennten sich endlich und sahn sich
 Nur noch zuweilen im Traum;
 Sie waren längst gestorben,
 Und wußten es selber kaum.

They loved each other, but neither
 Would admit it to the other;
 They looked at each other with such enmity,
 And were almost dying of love.

They parted at last and saw each other
 Only at times in dreams;
 They were both long since dead,
 And scarcely knew it themselves.

The German has a strong ternary cadence, but the regularity is less than perfect. For example, line 7 has only one-syllable unstressed interval between stresses and could be classified as an iamb: "Sie waren längst gestorben." Heine's meter should thus be characterized as 3-foot tonic (*dol'niki*). Lermontov opted for a longer line. His line has five stresses and is basically a consistent 5-foot dactyl, in which the second syllable rather than the first is stressed throughout:

Они любили друг друга так долго и нежно,
 С тоской глубокой и страстью безумно-мятежной!
 Но как враги избегали признанья и встречи,
 И были пусты и хладны их краткие речи.

⁵⁸ First published in *LN*, No. 19-21, 1935, 514.

Они расстались в безмолвном и гордом страданье
 И милый образ во сне лишь порою видали.
 И смерть пришла: наступило за гробом свиданье...
 Но в мире новом друг друга они не узнали.

They loved each other so long and tenderly,
 With deep longing and madly surging passion!
 But, like enemies, they avoided avowals and meetings,
 And the brief words they exchanged were empty and cold.

They parted in unexpressed and proud suffering,
 And only at times in dream saw their beloved's image.
 And death came: beyond the grave they met,
 But in that new world they didn't recognize each other,

Here is another example of love gone wrong, in this case mishandled, botched, mistimed, and finally, in the next world, unrecognized.⁵⁹

Another, and far more effective, translation from Heine is *Na severe dikom stoit odinoko* ("In the wild North there stands lonesome"). Like Heine's original, Lermontov's translation contains two four-line stanzas. Heine's three-foot tonic verse has, after hesitations in the draft, been rendered by alternating four and three-foot amphibrachs. In Heine the even lines of each stanza are rhymed, the odd lines not; Lermontov uses the unusual rhyme scheme AbCb AdCd, i.e. the masculine-ending even lines are crisscross rhymed as in Heine, the odd feminine-ending lines rhyme the first with the second stanza.⁶⁰

Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam
 Im Norden auf kahler Höh'.
 Ihn schläfert; mit weißer Decke
 Umhüllen ihn Eis un Schnee.

Er träumt von einer Palme,
 Die, fern im Morgenland,
 Einsam und schweigend trauert
 Auf brennender Felsenwand.

На севере диком стоит одиноко
 На голой вершине сосна
 И дремлет качаясь, и снегом сыпучим
 Одея как ризой она.

И снится ей всё, что в пустыне далекой —
 В том крае, где солнца восход,
 Одна и грустна на утесе горючем
 Прекрасная пальма растет.

The Lermontov translation is close enough to Heine for us to be able to offer only a translation of his version, without doing appreciable violence to the German original:

⁵⁹ First published in *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, 1843, XXXI, No. 12, 317.

⁶⁰ Rozanov, 193-94.

In the wild North there stands lonesome
 A pine-tree on a bare top.
 Swaying he slumbers, and with powdery snow
 He is covered, as with a cloak.

He dreams constantly that in a distant desert —
 In the land where the sun rises,
 Alone and sorrowing on a burning cliffside
 There stands a beautiful palm.

This poem, though a translation, is clearly an example of Lermontov's later tendency to fit non-human nature into a human context. We recall the example of the 1840 *Tuchi*, discussed above. The idea of one type of tree sighing for another type of tree, far away, who is herself sorrowing and alone, is an essentially Romantic fiction and could become ridiculous if sustained. As it is, laid out austere, the short eight-line statement has considerable poignancy: the distance makes rapprochement impossible, and this is a dream. There is a kinship between this poem, involving two trees, and the Romantic longing for an unattainable woman; "moi," de Musset tells us, "moi j'aime la princesse lointaine," "I love the faraway princess."

Commentators rightly mention one problem. In Heine *Fichtenbaum* (pine) is masculine, and *Palme* (palm) is feminine; whereas in Russian *sosna* (pine) and *pal'ma* (palm) are both feminine. "This," according to Eikhenbaum, "imparts to Lermontov's translation the character not of love anguish, but of meditative anguish."⁶¹ Nonsense! To suggest so is to take the poem quite out of context. Heine clearly saw the problem as love and not meditation, and there is no reason to believe that Lermontov sought to strike out on his own, parting company with the original. Entirely in thrall to Heine's poetic vision, he may simply not have seen this as a problem. Tiutchev had seen and solved the problem by substituting for *sosna* the masculine *kedr* (cedar) in his translation, published in 1827 in *Severnaia lira*. But Lermontov could very easily not have read Tiutchev's version. Fet also used *kedr*. But neither his nor Tiutchev's versions are all that effective.⁶² Lermontov, despite the *sosna/pal'ma* issue, wrote an excellent poem.⁶³

In *Utes* ("The Cliff") nature has again been invested with human emotions and motives. And, again, there is a narrative element:

Ночевала тучка золотая
 На груди утеса-великана;
 Утром в путь она умчалась рано,
 По лазури весело играя;
 Но остался влажный след в морщине
 Старого утеса. Одиноко
 Он стоит, задумался глубоко
 И тихонько плачет он в пустыне.

A golden cloud rested for the night
 On the breast of a giant cliff;
 In the morning the cloud whirled away early on her course,

⁶¹ Eikhenbaum, II, 247. Also L. V. Shcherba, "Opyty lingvisticheskogo tolkovaniia.... v sravnenii s ee nemetskim prototipom," *Izbrannye raboty po russkomu iazyku* (M., 1957), 97-109.

⁶² For Tiutchev and Fet see Eikhenbaum, II, 247.

⁶³ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1842, XX, No.1, 124.

Cheerfully playing in the azure blue.

But there remained a damp track in the cleft
Of the aged cliff. Alone
He stands, deep in thought,
And silently weeps in the wilderness.

The use of the feminine rhymes throughout is striking, producing a softness and lack of sharp contour; and the use of the 5-foot trochee, a meter often associated with the theme of the journey, "put", is significant here, since the cloud is on her way somewhere.⁶⁴ The fact that the cloud spends one night with the cliff, going merrily on her way and leaving the aged cliff weeping, marks this as another poem of love unfulfilled.⁶⁵

The last of these five poems dealing with unrequited love, *Listok* ("The Leaf"), follows the now familiar pattern of endowing natural phenomena with human emotions. The idea of a leaf thus tossed along by wind and storm was at that time in Russia and Europe a not infrequent symbol of human destiny and of persecution.⁶⁶

Torn from his native tree, the oak leaf is storm-tossed across the steppe in heat and cold. Finally he reaches the Black Sea and shelters at the roots of a flourishing young plane tree. He asks that she allow him to join with her emerald leaves: he has been blown around for a long time; he offers her tales of wonder. But the plane tree is unmoved: she tells the leaf that he is dusty and yellow.... and she has no need of his tales. Let him go on his way:

Иди себе дальше; о странник! тебя я не знаю!
Я солнцем любима, цвету для него и блистаю;
По небу я ветви раскинула здесь на просторе,
И корни мои умывает холодное море.

Be gone on your way, o you stranger, for you I don't know!
I am loved by the sun, and I bloom for the sun and shine bright;
Across the broad sky I have spread out my branches at ease,
And my roots they are washed by cold waters that come from the sea.

The poem consists of six four-line stanzas. The long five-foot amphibrachic line, with feminine-ending rhymed couplets, fits the central image of the leaf ceaselessly tumbled along. The oak leaf can no more come close to the plane tree than could the fir tree to the palm.⁶⁷

This renewed focus on love unfulfilled produces some wonderful poetry. But, turning to the biographical side of our interest, it does not bode well for Lermontov's immediate future. It betokens his adult entry into a world of sorrow. Nor can this truly be laid at the feet of Nicholas I, Benkendorf, or Kleinmikhel'. Surely the troubles of exile did not help. But something was happening within Lermontov himself, leaving him troubled and vulnerable.

25

Some of his predicament is revealed not only in his unfinished story *Shtoss*, but also in *Iz-pod tainstvennoi kholodnoi polumaski* ("From out beneath a mysterious cold semi-mask"). It is

⁶⁴ See Chapter I, note 28.

⁶⁵ First published in *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, 1843, XXVII, No.4, 331.

⁶⁶ *Khud. lit.* 1983, I, 358.

⁶⁷ First published in *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, 1843, XXVIII, No. 6, 193.

addressed to a masked figure met at a ball and is an extremely revealing poem. It provides almost incontrovertible evidence that, as late as early 1841, when the poem was probably written, Lermontov was fantasizing an ideal woman. B. T. Udodov has pointed out the link between the woman half-seen in the poem and Lugin's search for an ideal woman in *Shtoss*. In the poem, he creates his ideal woman on the basis of incomplete half-observations (she is masked), and then, returning somewhat to reality, since he had met the woman in the flesh, he feels that there was something familiar about her voice, and that on their next meeting they will treat each other as old friends. This twist saves the poem from adolescent immaturity and gives it warmth. We know from Lermontov that high society is glittery and false, that its women reflect its insincerity; and yet in that treacherous environment he expects they will meet not as lovers but as "old friends":

Из-под таинственной холодной полумаски
Звучал мне голос твой отрадный, как мечта,
Светили мне твои пленительные глазки,
И улыбались лукавые уста.

Сквозь дымку легкую заметил я невольно
И девственных ланит и шеи белизну.
Счастливец! видел я и локон своевольный,
Родных кудрей покинувший волну!..

И создал я тогда в моем воображеньи
По легким признакам красавицу мою:
И с той поры бесплотное виденье
Ношу в душе моей, ласкаю и люблю.

И всё мне кажется: живые эти речи
В года минувшие слышал когда-то я;
И кто-то шепчет мне, что после этой встречи
Мы вновь увидимся, как старые друзья.

From out beneath a mysterious cold semi-mask
I heard your warm comforting voice, like some dream,
Your captivating eyes shone out on me,
And your mischievous lips smiled.

Through your light scarf I involuntarily saw
The whiteness of your maidenly cheeks and of your neck.
And happy me, I saw a rebellious lock,
Which had escaped the ordered wave of curls!

'Twas then I created in my imagination,
From the little that I saw, my woman beautiful,
And from that time I carry in my soul,
Caress and love that fleshless vision.

And I keep on thinking: sometime in past years
I heard that lively vibrant voice;
And someone whispers to me, that now we've met,
We'll meet again—next time as old friends.

Lermontov loved things from the past, real or imagined, more readily. This preoccupation with the past is even more strongly emphasized in Lermontov's first 1840 lyric, *Kak chasto pestroiu tolpoiou okruzhen*. The two poems have clear affinities: in both, society provides the background; in both a ball is in progress; in both a woman, contrasting with the cold glitter of the environment, takes hold of the poet's memories and thoughts. In the 1840 poem, it is not clear whether he is fantasizing a real woman or whether he has implanted an imagined woman on the familiar background of his childhood home ("Liubliu mechty moei sozdan'e;" "I love the creature of my dreaming"). In the present poem, the masked ball is already in the past, the recent past, and the poem concludes with thoughts of the future and hopes of meeting the woman again. There is nothing abnormal about the male protagonist in the poem (as compared with *Shtoss*, where the hero is sick). But excessive dwelling on an ideal woman to the exclusion of all others carries its dangers; Dante, after all, had a wife. Psychologically at least, this poem must be associated with the five poems just discussed above.

The use of 6-foot iambs is admirably suited to conveying the slow but steady progress of the poet's thoughts, culminating in the last two lines and the hope of their seeing each other again as "old friends." As so often with Lermontov, it is her voice which above all attracts him, the warmth of her voice.⁶⁸

26

Tamara is certainly Lermontov's best ballad, perhaps his only perfect ballad. The theme of the *femme fatale* who offers her lovers one night of indescribable sexual bliss and has them executed at dawn is both romantic and time-honored. Here, Pushkin seems the obvious predecessor. Pushkin took from Aurelius Victor (fourth century A.D.) the story that Cleopatra had made precisely the offer described. Pushkin was sufficiently fascinated by the story's narrative and psychological potential to write his poem *Kleopatra* in 1824 (unfinished, revised in 1828), intended for inclusion in *Egyptian Nights*, also unfinished, but published after Pushkin's death in 1837 (*Sovremennik VIII*). Lermontov's immediate inspiration came from the Caucasus, from a Georgian legend which exists in several variations, all of which involve a woman comparable to the one described by Lermontov. There was a queen named Tamara, who lived and ruled successfully in the twelfth and thirteenth century. She did not comport herself like Lermontov's Tamara, but a variant of the legend or Lermontov himself attached the theme to her name.

The first stanza gives the background, the ancient tower above the Terek in the deep gorge of Dar'ial, *black* against the *black* cliff:

В глубокой теснине Дарьяла,
Где роется Тerek во мгле,
Старинная башня стояла,
Чернея на черной скале.

In the deep gorge of Dar'ial,
Where the Terek hollows its path in the mist,

⁶⁸ First published in 1843 in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1841, No. 5, otd. III, 1-2. For Udodov's comment, see his *M. Iu. Lermontov* (Voronezh, 1973), 648-49. This poem is normally dated 1840 or early 1841 "probably" or "in all probability"; the 1983-1984 *Khud. lit.*, with smug purism and an irritating lack of comment, prints it under "Poems of unknown years." We follow the traditional dating.

There stood an ancient tower,
Black against the black cliff.

The fourth line merits attention. Who other than Lermontov would have had the courage to repeat the “black,” to write “*Cherneia na chernoï skale*”? Tamara lives in the tower. She entices travelers in by magic. She awaits the guest, two goblets of wine sparkling before her:

На мягкой пуховой постели,
В парчу и жемчуг убрана,
Ждала она гостя. Шипели
Пред нею два кубка вина.

On a soft and downy bed,
Adorned with brocade and with pearls,
She awaited her guest. And there
Before her two goblets of wine sparkled.

The night of love follows, with “strange, wild sounds” emanating from her chamber. But comes the dawn, there is silence, broken only by the sound of the Terek roaring through the gorge. The silent body is borne out, something white is glimpsed in the window, and the sound of a farewell. And the sound of the farewell sounds so tender, as if the voice were promising renewed delights and caresses:

И было так нежно прощанье,
Так сладко тот голос звучал,
Как будто восторги свиданья
И ласки любви обещал.

And so tender was that farewell,
So sweet was the sound of the voice,
As though the delights of new meetings
Were being promised, new caresses of love.

Lermontov thus brings together at the end the themes of love and death: the corpse goes to its death, as though on its way to fresh love-making.

The three-foot amphibrachs used are common in the ballad tradition. But Lermontov’s magnificent handling of this meter makes it a perfect instrument to convey the atmosphere of voluptuousness and inevitable disaster.

Tamara was written between May and early July, 1841.⁶⁹

27

Son (“The Dream”), consisting of five four-line stanzas, is from the formal standpoint a very conservatively-structured poem: five-foot iambs, alternating crisscross feminine-masculine rhymes, with the traditional “French” caesura after the fourth syllable observed throughout. The caesura is syntactically reinforced, in a manner familiar to us, by placing attributives and their nouns in one or the other hemistichs, or by doing the same thing with nouns and their possessive genitive nouns. These two arrangements are found in the first line:

В полдневный жар в долине Дагестана

⁶⁹ First published in *Otechestvennyye zapiski*. 1843, XXVII, No. 4, 229-30.

These formal aspects are entirely appropriate to the content, in that they allow the narrative to develop in a slow, almost inevitable manner, and then to return to what seems to have been its appointed end: the beginning. The end is, as commentators have frequently pointed out, a mirror-image of the beginning.⁷⁰ The first-person protagonist, lying wounded in a valley in Dagestan, dreams of an evening party in Petersburg at which young women are enjoying a merry conversation about him; but there is one young woman who does not join in; she sits pensively, dreaming of him lying bleeding to death on the valley floor:

В полдневный жар в долине Дагестана
С свинцом в груди лежал недвижим я;
Глубокая еще дымилась рана,
По капле кровь точилась моя.

Лежал один я на песке долины;
Уступы скал теснились кругом,
И солнце жгло их желтые вершины
И жгло меня — но спал я мертвым сном.

И снился мне сияющий огнями
Вечерний пир в родимой стороне.
Меж юных жен, увенчанных цветами,
Шел разговор веселый обо мне.

Но в разговор веселый не вступая,
Сидела так задумчиво одна,
И в грустный сон душа ее младая
Бог знает чем была погружена;

И снилась ей долина Дагестана;
Знакомый труп лежал в долине той;
В его груди дымясь чернела рана,
И кровь лилась хладеющей струей.

In the midday heat, in the vale of Dagestan,
With a bullet in my chest, I lay unmoving;
The deep wound still smoked,
My blood oozed out drop by drop.

I lay alone on the valley's sandy floor;
The walls of the cliffs crowded around me,
And the sun burned their yellow summits,
And burned me — but I slept the sleep of the dead.

And in dream I saw — with shining lights —
An evening banquet in my native land.
Young women there, adorned, bedecked with flowers,
Conversed in merry tones, talking of me.

But, taking no part in all this merry talk,

⁷⁰ Eikhenbaum, II, 252. See also, for his excellent analysis I. N. Rozanov, *Lermontov master stikha* (M.: Sovetskii pisatel', 1942), 115-23.

One woman there sat pensive and alone,
Her youthful soul immersed
In God knows what heavy thought.

And in her dream she saw the vale of Dagestan;
On the valley's floor, familiar, lay a corpse;
In his chest, smoking, a black wound,
And the blood oozed forth, cooling as it flowed.

There has been inevitable speculation as to where Lermontov got this interesting device? Did he simply invent? Was it an act of prophesy? Eikhenbaum suggests two plausible sources, not mutually exclusive. It appears that General M. Kh. Shul'ts, who took part in the Caucasian war, had told Lermontov in Stavropol in 1840 how after a battle he had lain wounded for a whole day among the dead until he was brought in. The other source is a Cossack song, in which a Cossack dreams of himself lying dead. Recall the possible link between the 1840 *Zaveshchanie* and the Cossack song which well may have inspired it. As noted in the discussion of that work, Lermontov seems to have discovered a new and original use for these songs. He does *not* reproduce them in a stylized folkloric form, as he did in his 1840 Cossack lullaby, but remakes them in an entirely nineteenth-century Great Russian, non-Cossack mold.

The presence of a woman in Lermontov's poem is entirely in keeping with his wish, clearly and frequently expressed in his early verse, that a beloved woman be made to be a witness to and a sufferer in his pain, up to and including the pain of death. To have her present in *her own* fantasy in this excellent poem is an improvement over earlier efforts, and at the same time lays to rest the wretched revenant. We note also a thematic tie with *Valerik* and *Zaveshchanie*: the poet is in action/wounded/dying in the Caucasus, and he communicates by letter, messenger, or perhaps telepathy with a woman back in Russia, in two of the three cases in the capital. It is by any standard a remarkably fine and unusual piece.

Son was written between May and the beginning of July, 1841.⁷¹

28

One of Lermontov's deservedly best known poems is *Vykhozhu odin ia na dorogu* ("I go out alone on to the road"). It consists of 20 lines, divided into four-line stanzas and is written in five-foot trochees. We noted above, in connection with *Utes*, that this meter is often associated with the theme of the road, of journeying.⁷² The theme is here at least adumbrated by the poet's going out on to the road, though as has been pointed out, he does not appear to travel along it, merely to stand and contemplate the night scene.⁷³ But the whole poem concerns a spiritual journey, a spiritual quest, which has, alas, been in vain.

There are occasions when the poet, through Nature, has been able to still his disquiet, to glimpse happiness, to see God. Witness his 1837 *Kodga volnuetsia zhelteiushchaia niva*. But he is troubled again at the time of writing this poem. He emerges to contemplate the night. The desert ("*pustynia*") listens to God. Star speaks to star. The heavens soar, still ("*torzhestvenno*") and wondrous. The earth sleeps in blue radiance. But he feels the heaviness of pain:

⁷¹ First published in *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, 1843, XXVII, No. 4, 183. For earlier Lermontov poems related to *Son* see Udodov, 169-71.

⁷² See Chapter 1, note 28.

⁷³ Vladimir Veidle, "Vykhozhu odin ia na dorogu," *Embriologiya poezii* (Paris, 1980), 214-25.

Выхожу один я на дорогу;
 Сквозь туман кремнистый путь блестит;
 Ночь тиха. Пустыня внемлет Богу,
 И звезда с звездою говорит.

В небесах торжественно и чудно!
 Спит земля в сияньи голубом...
 Что же мне так больно и так трудно?
 Жду ль чего? жалею ли о чем?

Уж не жду от жизни ничего я,
 И не жаль мне прошлого ничуть;
 Я ищу свободы и покоя!
 Я б хотел забыться и заснуть!

Но не тем холодным сном могилы...
 Я б желал навеки так заснуть,
 Чтоб в груди дремали жизни силы,
 Чтоб дыша вздымалась тихо грудь;

Чтоб всю ночь, весь день мой слух лелея,
 Про любовь мне сладкий голос пел,
 Надо мной чтоб вечно зеленея
 Темный дуб склонялся и шумел.

I come out alone upon the road;
 Through the mist the flinty road shines white;
 Silent night. The desert harks to God,
 Star speaks quietly with its fellow star.

In the heavens all is solemn wonder!
 Radiant blue, the earth is wrapt in sleep...
 Why do I feel pain and heaviness?
 Do I wait for something? Feel regret?

Now from life there's nothing I await,
 And regret I feel none for the past;
 Freedom and tranquility I seek!
 Wishing to forget and go to sleep!

Sleep, but not that cold sleep of the grave...
 I would wish forever so to sleep
 That in me the powers of life might slumber,
 That my breast might, breathing, rise and fall;

That all night, all day, my ear caressing,
 A sweet voice might sing to me of love,
 That forever greening overhead
 The dark oak might lean down and make sound.

A comparison of this poem with *Kogda volnuetsia* is interesting. In the earlier poem, the poet observes and receives increasingly meaningful communication from various objects in nature,

until in the final stanza the message penetrates and fills his mind. All the objects mentioned are modest, concrete, and earthy, but the message is big, climaxing in the final line: "*I v nebesakh ia vizhu Boga*" ("And in the heavens I see God"). *Vykhozhu odin* starts with the big aspects of nature: the night, the desert, the stars, the heavens, the earth. All these aspects of Nature are cosmic. But in the end, he wishes for the more modest, concrete things of earth, the sweet voice singing of love, the eternally green oak rustling, though these two are of the earth-poetic, not the earth-"earthy". Again, in the earlier poem, truth is gradually revealed, understanding gained ("*Kogda*" and "*Togda*"). In the later poem, there is no real process of unfolding: the presence of God is recognized without ado in the first stanza. But whereas in the earlier poem, the unfolding leads to revelation and an optimistic conclusion, in the later poem contemplation of these cosmic objects produces pain and fatigue, the desire for rest, and a certainly not optimistic, though perhaps resigned, ending. We do not seek to distill from this comparison any general conclusions as to an increasing disenchantment or fatigue. But the differences in the two poems are remarkable, and each poem helps to delineate the poetic contours of the other.

Vykhozhu odin was written between May and early July, 1841.⁷⁴

29

What was to prove to be Lermontov's last poem of love was *Net, ne tebia tak pylko ia liubliu* ("No, it's not you whom I love so ardently"). On the basis of its place in the album given to Lermontov by V. F. Odoevskii, scholars believe the poem was written in the Caucasus in the late summer of 1841. There is now little doubt that the addressee is Ekaterina Bykhovets, a distant relative of Lermontov's, who appealed to him strongly, at least in part because she reminded him of Varvara Lopukhina. Lopukhina "was his favorite topic of conversation," Bykhovets was to recall. Bykhovets spent a significant part of his last day with Lermontov.⁷⁵

At the same time the attraction to the woman whose company he presently shares, i.e. Bykhovets, is very apparent, and the poem's dramatic tension rests on the interplay between present and past attachments. Stylistically effective is the initial disavowal or rebuttal ("No, it's not you") which gives the impression of a response in mid-conversation:

Нет, не тебя так пылко я люблю,
 Не для меня красы твоей блистанье:
 Люблю в тебе я прошлое страданье:
 И молодость погибшую мою.

Когда порой я на тебя смотрю,
 В твои глаза вникая долгим взором:
 Таинственным я занят разговором,
 Но не с тобой я сердцем говорю.

No, it's not you I love so ardently,
 Not for me the radiance of your beauty:

⁷⁴ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1843, XXVII, No. 4, 332. Eikhenbaum (II, 260-61) follows I. M. Boldakov (*Sochineniia M. Iu. Lermontova*, 1891, II 405-6) in making a connection between Lermontov's *Vykhozhu odin* and Heine's "Der Tod, das ist die kuhle Nacht" (*Buch der Lieder*).

⁷⁵ *Russkaia starina*, 1892, No. 3, 767.

In you I love the suffering of my past,
And my ruined youth.

When at times I look at you,
Searching with long gaze into your eyes:
I am engaged in mysterious conversation,
But not with you I'm speaking in my heart.

Я говорю с подругой юных дней;
В твоих чертах ищу черты другие;
В устах живых уста давно немые,
В глазах огонь угаснувших очей.

I'm speaking with a friend of youthful days;
In your features I seek those of another—
In living lips lips silent long ago.
In living eyes the fire of eyes extinguished.

Lopukhina did not die until 1851. The thought cannot be dismissed entirely that it was not she whom the poet had in mind. More probably we have either a *mistifikatsiia* or poetic licence; she was for all purposes out of Lermontov's life.

Not original in thought, the poem's impact is strengthened by its very clear, unruffled, almost unemotional disclosure of facts.⁷⁶

30

Prorok ("The Prophet") ranks among Lermontov's greatest poems. It is in part a response to Pushkin's great 1826 poem by the same name. Lermontov's view of the poet's role (*Poet, Ne ver' sebe*) was far less optimistic than Pushkin's, at least than Pushkin's in his more sanguine moments, as is clear from comparison of Lermontov's *Prorok* with Pushkin's *Prorok*. Unlike Pushkin's prophet, instructed to go forth and "with the Word burn the hearts of man," Lermontov's prophet is stoned by his neighbors, lives alone in the desert, and when he comes to town is pointed out by parents to their children as an object of derision.

The content itself does not render the poem great. However, the manner of presentation makes use of techniques developed in Lermontov's last years which have increasingly claimed our attention. I will mention two.

First and foremost, I would note the superbly restrained, objective, unemotional narrative tone. As an example, let us look with some care at the second stanza. In the first stanza, the first-person prophet tells of the ill-will he reads in people's eyes, since he was given the gift of prophecy. Then:

Провозглашать я стал любви
И правды чистые ученья:
В меня все ближние мои
Бросали бешено камня.

He started to proclaim the pure teachings of love and truth. And then without warning, with no comment, with no adversative "but," almost as though it were the expected result: "all my near

⁷⁶ It was first published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1843, XXVIII, No. 6, 194.

ones frenziedly cast stones at me.” So inevitable is the action, so dispassionately presented, that one cannot but think that there is here an underlying humor, or at least irony.

Secondly, I would mention the poem’s narrative speed which is achieved by simplicity, by the abundance of verbal forms, the almost total lack of attributive adjectives, and the use of very few but very telling details. Take the fourth stanza describing his life in the desert:

Завет предвечного храня,
Мне тварь покорна там земная;
И звезды слушают меня,
Лучами радостно играя.

Two well chosen details give us metonymically his entire situation: the animals are obedient to him; and the stars, favorite components of the cosmos for Lermontov, listen to him. Note that the stars “play joyfully,” play (*igra*) being one of Lermontov’s most positive endorsements of the activities of nature and the cosmos. Note, too, that with the animals and the stars there is communication, a relationship, with man virtually none, and that entirely negative.

Lexically, there is a significant difference to be made between Lermontov’s and Pushkin’s *Prorok*. Pushkin’s is a direct descendant of the eighteenth-century genre of adaptations of the Bible, making lavish use of Church Slavonicisms. And these are an integral part of the text, to be taken at face value. The use of such forms or expressions in the Lermontov poem is severely restricted: perhaps “*kamen’ia*” (“stones”), “*Posypal pepлом ja glavu*” (“I covered my head with ashes”), “*grad*” (“city”). But treating these forms as Biblical, the point is that they are not to be taken here at face value; their role is to contribute to Lermontov’s irony, which, precisely by virtue of the restraint mentioned above, pervades the entire poem. Never was Lermontov more in control of his materials than in his *Prorok*.

Prorok is the last entry in the V. F. Odоеvskii album and is a fitting close to Lermontov’s poetic work:

С тех пор как вечный судия
Мне дал всеведение пророка,
В очах людей читаю я
Страницы злобы и порока.

Провозглашать я стал любви
И правды чистые ученья:
В меня все ближние мои
Бросали бешено каменья.

Посыпал пеплом я главу,
Из городов бежал я нищий,
И вот в пустыне я живу,
Как птицы, даром Божьей пищи;

Завет предвечного храня,
Мне тварь покорна там земная:
И звезды слушают меня,
Лучами радостно играя.

Когда же через шумный град
Я пробираюсь торопливо,

То старцы детям говорят
С улыбкою самолюбивой:

«Смотрите: вот пример для вас!
Он горд был, не ужился с нами:
Глупец, хотел уверить нас,
Что Бог гласит его устами!

Смотрите ж, дети, на него:
Как он утрюм, и худ, и бледен!
Смотрите, как он наг и беден,
Как презирают все его!»

From the time the Eternal Judge
Gave me the seer's omniscience,
I look into men's eyes and read
The hidden hatred, hidden vice.

I started then to preach the Word
Of Truth, of Goodness and of Love:
And all my neighbors frenziedly
Cast their rocks and stones at me.

I sprinkled ashes on my head,
I fled, a beggar, from the town;
Now in the wilderness I dwell,
God feeds me as he feeds the birds;

Observing the Eternal Law,
All Creatures great and small obey;
The stars as well give heed to me,
Their rays of light dance merrily.

But when in noisy city streets
I seek in haste to thread my way,
The old folks tell their children this,
Self-satisfaction in their smile:

“Just look: there's an example for you!
So proud, he could not live with us:
The fool, he wanted us to think
That God was speaking through his lips!

Look, children, look upon this man:
How downcast is he, thin, and pale!
See him uncovered, naked, poor,
See how by all he is despised!”

Prorok reveals one aspect of Lermontov's poetic personality which it is very hard not to admire: his courage, his defiance, his wry irony, his grim sense of humor, his innate toughness.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ First published in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1844, XXXII, No. 2, 197.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter and elsewhere, in 1840-41 personal themes acquire a prominence not attested before, not with the same level of consistency, certainly not in the immediately preceding years. What did the personal factor amount to? What sort of *Weltanschauung* emerges from those 1840-41 Lermontov lyrics which are oriented toward the self?

The overall message can be characterized as one of sorrow, the overwhelming cause of which must be identified as failed love or nonexistent love. Even a quick look at these intimate lyrics shows that, one way or another, they paint the same picture. Take first that small group of poems in which inanimate players represent animate roles. The first in this period, *Tuchi*, simply emphasizes the indifference of nature to human emotions, a theme touched on before by Lermontov (e.g., in the angels' song in *Demon*, Part I). This is not the interesting material. But take the other three (all from 1841), and a very clear pattern is at once discernible. *Na severe dikom*, *Utes*, and *Listok* tell a similar story with three main points. First, there is an impossible, unfulfilled love. Second, the proposed love is between different species, underscoring the distance between the two protagonists. Thirdly, the male component bears the main brunt of the suffering: in the Heine translation the female, the palm-tree, is characterized as "*grustna*" ("sad"), but she is still the object of the dream, not the dreamer; in the other two the female is either unaware (*Utes*) or contemptuous (*Listok*).

This echoes perfectly what we find in *Valerik* and *Zaveshchanie*. In both, the love is impossible, the lovers are geographically and spiritually distant, and it is the man who bears the burden of suffering. A variant of this failure to meet in love is the adaptation from Heine, *Oni liubili drug druga...*, in which the ultimate failure is based on non-recognition.

The tension created by either the compelling need for love or the absence of love predictably produces fantasy. Examples of this appear in *Kak chasto pestroiu tolpoiou okruzhen* and *Iz-pod tainstvennoi kholodnoi polumaski*. An example of fantasy proved unsubstantial is the French "L'attente." Lermontov's enthronement and reworking of past loves is fairly consistent. Among the poems discussed here, it may be found in *Valerik*, *Zaveshchanie*, *Kak chasto...*, and most explicitly in *Net, ne tebia tak pylko ja liubliu*. The overall sad picture is admirably summed up in the desolate lines of *I skuchno i grustno*.

There is only one poem of these last two years which does not conform to the pattern I have just outlined. *M. A. Shcherbatovoi* strongly emphasizes the poet's admiration for Shcherbatova. In this respect, it could be interpreted as the expression of sentiments loosely parallel to those produced in Lermontov by Rostopchina. But the words "*zhgut ee laski*" ("her caresses burn") clearly give the lie to any such limited emotional relationship. One does not, on the basis of admiration and respect alone, even in the interests of Russian poetry, acquire the right to use the phrase "her caresses burn," a phrase which clearly was in no way offensive to Shcherbatova, since it was she who was responsible for having the poem posthumously published.⁷⁸

The exact nature of Lermontov's feelings for Shcherbatova cannot be measured. Clearly they were strong.⁷⁹ And the cluster of sentiments expressed, combining love, admiration, and respect, gives grounds for thinking Lermontov might have become capable of forming a constructive relationship with a woman, of which there is no very reassuring evidence in any of his earlier lyrics: the truly delightful *Ona poet — i zvuki taiut* tells the reader nothing more about constructive relationships than does Pushkin's *Ia pomniu chudnoe mgnoven'e* ("The wondrous moment I recall"), in fact, nothing at all.

⁷⁸ See L. N. Nazarova, "Shcherbatova," *L. E.*, 628.

⁷⁹ See Shan-Girei, *LVVS*, 46.

Stepping back from the Shcherbatova poem, dropping one of its very essential ingredients, love, one sees another facet of Lermontov's outlook which gives cause for optimism. Even young, obnoxious, and self-absorbed, Lermontov had revealed a capacity for well-wishing tenderness and affection. 1840-41 does not in this respect introduce a new persona. Rather it continues an ongoing state or process, already revealed in such poems as *Otchego, M. P. Solomirskoi*, and *A. G. Khomutovoi. Rebenku* (1840) might seem a candidate for inclusion in this category; but it is unfortunately merely mawkish and maudlin. What the other poems betoken is the abundance in Lermontov's make-up of the milk of human kindness, a capacity for compassion. We will meet with this same trait again in his prose. This is not the most obvious of Lermontov's themes. Rather, it forms a powerful undercurrent, which, we believe, would eventually have assumed a larger function in his poetic outlook and in his life.

Note the virtual eclipse in the 1840-41 lyrics of the declamatory style. Eikhenbaum is inclined to overstate its continued vigor. He rightly mentions for these years the 1841 Napoleon poem, *Poslednee novosel'e* and the 1840 *Kak chasto, pestroiu tolpoiu okruzhen*.⁸⁰ And though it is true that the declamatory style retains a function as a favored weapon of political invective, direct political invective no longer retains the prominence it enjoyed in 1838-39. *Kak chasto pestroiu tolpoiu okruzhen* is elegiac. While undoubtedly an example of the declamatory style, it is itself symptomatic of the new trend of using personal themes as a stepping-stone to political indictment. Actually, the declamatory style never sat quite comfortably with Lermontov. Its severely reduced role is not cause for regret. *Smert' poeta*, courageous, sincere, moving though it is, important though it was in Lermontov's life and no less so in the Russian assessment of Pushkin's death, is not really among his best poems. Friend and fellow poet Rostopchina describes it as "a mediocre but inflaming poem" ("*posredstvennoe, no zhguchee, stikhotvorenie*").⁸¹ It does not represent the true nature or the most important quality in Lermontov's poetic voice, his lyric genius. This latter is can be found, rather, in the lean, prosaic narrative and expository style which announces itself as early as his 1830 *N. F. I....oi* and achieves its full expression in *Valerik, Zaveshchanie*, and *Prorok*. Not that, in speaking of the nature of Lermontov's lyric genius, we would wish to exclude such fine poetry as is to be found in the last four stanzas of the 1838 *Poet* or in the 1839 *Ne ver' sebe*, and other poems. Lean, prosaic verse is not in itself a passport to immortality. Nor are we presuming to prescribe it as the only acceptable style. However, Lermontov, more than anyone else, established that style, and it seems eminently suited to the expression of Lermontov's own most heartfelt beliefs. Perhaps Lermontov himself puts it best in his 1841 *Zhurnalist, chitatel' i pisatel'* when he has the reader ask:

Когда же на Руси бесплодной,
Расставшись с ложной мишурой,
Мысль обретет язык простой
И страсти голос благородный?

But when in unfertile Russia,
Eschewing tawdry tinsel,
Will thought find a simple language
And passions find a noble voice?

The simple language and noble voice were precisely what Lermontov at his best was providing.

⁸⁰ See Eikhenbaum 1924, 115.

⁸¹ In Sushkova, 347.

CHAPTER IV

Narrative Poems

The narrative poem is Lermontov's preferred apprenticeship genre. If we count his surviving lyrics, we have only four for 1828. It is not till 1829 that his lyric output amounts to a significant quantity (46). He does not produce drama (excepting the 1829 *Tsygany* fragment) till late 1830. And his first novelistic prose efforts are not till 1833-34. But in the domain of the narrative poem, we count three for 1828, three for 1829, five for 1830, and four for 1831!

Not only in terms of quantity is the *poema* the principal genre of Lermontov's apprenticeship. His early work on the narrative poem is an initiation into the Lermontov art of borrowing mosaic segments of the work of other poets and structuring them to his own creative ends. B. M. Eikhenbaum comments on his early narrative poems: "These poems represent a peculiar exercise in the business of sticking together ready-made [other writers'] passages of verse (*kuski*)." And he further comments: "We will see that he later does the same thing with his own verses, creating new out of old segments."¹

His early narrative poems are also noteworthy because in this genre Lermontov's debt to Byron is clear and overwhelming. Eikhenbaum describes this well. While insisting that the extent of a given foreign literary influence is circumscribed by the conditions prevailing in the receiving country, Eikhenbaum asserts the cardinal importance of such influence for the establishment of a new genre or school. "Byron," he writes, "was primarily utilized to launch the new Russian narrative poem, which was in the process of being transformed from the eighteenth-century 'heroic' ode into the lyric verse tale." He points out that while Zhukovskii and Pushkin made scant use of Byron for the lyric, they were greatly drawn to him as a model for narrative poetry.² Thus Byron's influence is most strongly felt in Russian literature in the realm of narrative poetry. Lermontov absorbed Byron not only from the English original, but, particularly at the outset when he did not know English, from Russian models, first and foremost from Pushkin.

I

Early Narrative Poems

Lermontov's early narrative poems leave one with two very disparate impressions: on the one hand they often have a dated, juvenile character, and on the other, individual lines and passages demonstrate excellence, vitality, and promise. How much attention should these early poems receive? We would do better to err on the side of brevity rather than that of excessive detail. There are two principal reasons for this: first, by and large, though very uneven, though thematically different from each other for the most part, they can be loosely grouped together as all reflecting Byronism; and secondly, a considerable number of them anticipate and prepare the way for later narrative poems which we shall be examining with some care.

Lermontov's first surviving narrative poem is called *Cherkesy (The Circassians)*. It was written in the summer of 1828 and runs to 267 four-foot iambic freely rhymed lines. It provides among Lermontov's early narrative poems the only exception, albeit partial, to the dominance of

¹ B.M. Eikhenbaum, *Lermontov: opyt istoriko-literaturnoi otsenki* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1967), 24-27.

² B. M. Eikhenbaum, *Lermontov: opyt istoriko-literaturnoi otsenki*. L.: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1924, 28-29.

Byron's influence in this genre. Byron can indeed be felt, and his *Bride of Abydos* in Kozlov's translation is one of Lermontov's sources. But *Cherkesy* is an exception in that it contains no *Weltschmerz* and no dilemma of love, the conflicts of love being constants in the Byronic poem. The conflict here is between the heroic Circassian hillsmen and the Russian military. The Circassian prince's brother is a prisoner of the Russians. The Circassians vow death to the Russians or to themselves. In the ensuing battle the prince is killed and the Circassians defeated. There is no effort to counterpose the "noble savages" to the decadent Europeans. On the contrary, the latter are characterized as "fearless sons of the Don, whom the Rhine, the Loire, and the Rhone have had occasion to see on their banks."

The next three poems, all in four-foot iambs, bring us, largely through Pushkin, into the world of Byron's romantic tales. The first, 605 lines, takes its title straight from Pushkin: *Kavkazskii plennik* (*The Prisoner of the Caucasus*). Lermontov's poem recreates the situation and sequence of events described by Pushkin: the Russian prisoner — torn by thoughts of freedom and of his native land — cannot respond to the love of the Circassian maid. The main difference between Lermontov's and Pushkin's version is that whereas in Pushkin the prisoner returns to freedom and the maiden drowns herself, in Lermontov prisoner and maid both perish, shot by her father. The greater complexity of plot and the death of both lovers reflect the intention to introduce an additional narrative component into a work short on narrative.³

Korsar (*The Corsair*) (1828) and *Prestupnik* (*The Transgressor*) (1829) may be described as representing the two sides of the romantic Corsair's personality — the good corsair and the evil corsair (*blagorodnyi razboinik* and *geroi-prestupnik*). The prototype of the good corsair is, of course, Byron's *The Corsair*, and the second poem has been linked to Pushkin's *Brat'ia razboiniki* (*The Robber Brothers*).⁴

The hero of *Korsar* (400 four-foot iambs) never knew his parents. His younger brother died. This latter loss made him disillusioned and suspicious of betrayal by his fellow man. He leaves his native region: "here my joy was forever buried," travels to Greece, finding "only suffering remaining in that land where Greeks once sang of courage and freedom." He eventually joins up with corsairs, becomes their leader (*ataman*), but his physical pleasure in sailing and other activities is undermined by his nostalgic memory of "the golden years of my youth." In a storm they save a Greek woman who is suffering from some great sorrow:

и она

С тех пор печальна и грустна.
С тех пор, друзья, и я стенаю.

The hero's life is darkened by the woman's sorrowful unresponsiveness, recalling the situation of Girei in Pushkin's *Bakhchisaraiskii fontan*, resulting from Mariia's melancholy.

The Byronic poem is by its format exposed to the danger of inconsistency. Fully developed, the format has three different sorrows in the hero's life:

³ See Pushkin's own criticism of this work in his 1830 unpublished "Oproverzhenie na kritiki." ("Rebuttal of Criticisms") (XI, 143-63).

⁴ *Korsar* also makes use of Pushkin's *Brat'ia razboiniki*, *Kavkazskii plennik*, *Bakhchisaraiskii fontan*, of Marlinskii's *Andrei, kniaz' Pereiaslavskii*, of Kozlov's *Kniaginia Nataliia Borisovna Dolgorukaia* and his translation of Byron's *Bride of Abydos*, even of seven lines from Lomonosov's 1747 ode "Na den' vosshestviia na prestol Imperatritsy Elisavety Petrovny." See T. A. Nedosekina, *L. E.*, 232.

- 1) Some misfortune (or crime), specified or not, in his past, perhaps his childhood, which explains his mistrust and disillusionment;
- 2) An additional catastrophe dictated by the needs of the narrative, i.e., the author's need and desire to have something happen, which will bring the story to an end.
- 3) Between these two mishaps there is likely to be flight, exile, or something similar to move the hero from his original environment to new crimes and a new environment. Here he will have the opportunity of regretting his homeland and joys of the past.

But if the first setback was so traumatic, how can he reminisce fondly and nostalgically about the first period of his life? And how can the final catastrophe be built into a fifth-act climax? Was not the hero already too disenchanted, his ability to feel too atrophied?

Such pitfalls can be avoided. Byron's *Corsair* does not indulge nostalgic reminiscence and insists that Medora's love is the hero's one remaining joy; so that her death does constitute an additional and irremediable blow. Pushkin, in his *Kavkazskii plennik*, avoids the problem by having freedom be the one thing the hero still cherishes. But Lermontov in *Korsar* does not do so well. The hero's orphaned state apparently robs his life of cheer. His brother's death brings disillusionment, mistrust, and suffering. But when he takes leave of the familiar places, he bids farewell to joy. And later he recalls "the golden years of my youth." But why carp at a young poet who was not yet or had perhaps barely turned fifteen?

Prestupnik (The Transgressor), from 1829, told in 192 four-foot iambs, is a murky story of a Byronic hero's darker sides. An ataman tells his life story to his comrades. He has a love affair with his stepmother, with whom he plots his father's destruction. But instead of pursuing their plan, he flees from home and takes up with two robber Jews. They kill a passerby: his father. Then one of the Jews kills his stepmother and is hanged by the hero. The hero is left without joy or passion. He retains only his love of freedom and a certain contemptuous defiance. The poem presents a deliberately folkloric element not previously in evidence and which certainly appears in Pushkin's *Brat'ia razboiniki (The Robber Brothers)*.

It is worth noting that while *Cherkesy* and *Kavkazskii plennik* use third-person narrative, the other two, *Korsar* and *Prestupnik* are first-person dramatic monologs, affording the narrator-heroes all possible opportunities to explore and expound their inner feelings.

It is generally agreed that what we have of *Oleg* (1829), a total of 121 four-foot iambs, consists of three abandoned attempts at a poem about Oleg, the great military figure who significantly strengthened the Kievan Russian state, threatened Byzantium in 907, and concluded with Byzantium an advantageous treaty in 911, then dying in 912. These first attempts by Lermontov at a historical narrative poem are so fragmentary (28, 52, and 41 lines) as to make critical commentary all but out of place. But even on the basis of limited evidence, we should reject scholars' attempts to establish parallels with Pushkin or Ryleev: *Pesn' o veshchem Olege* ("Song of Oleg the Wise") and Ryleev's meditation *Oleg veshchii* ("Oleg the Wise") are excellent clearcut ballads, the former describing Oleg's death, the latter his 907 attack on Byzantium; Lermontov's *Oleg* versions break off before any real narrative can begin.⁵

Dva brata (The Two Brothers) (1829) (67 four-foot iambs) is also an unfinished fragment set in medieval Finland. In Russian romantic poetry Finland played a lesser but similar role to that of the Caucasus as an exotic background. It centers on the love-turned-to-hate of two brothers who both love the same woman. Byron is not really a presence here. Some suggest Schiller's *Die Braut von Messina (The Bride of Messina)* or his *Die Rauber (The Robbers)*; and, strictly in

⁵ P. V. Vladimirov, *Istoricheskie i narodno-bytovye siuzhety v poezii M. Iu. Lermontova*. (Kiev, 1892), 5-6.

terms of the theme, this is plausible, though enmity between brothers is a theme that goes back to Aeschylus and to the Book of Genesis. The friendship-turned-to-hostility between Onegin and Lenskii (*Evgenii Onegin*, VI, 28) is loosely reflected in Lermontov's lines 41-48. And Batiushkov and Baratynskii are pressed into service in the descriptions of the northern landscape.⁶ This fragment launches a theme which Lermontov will develop in his 1832 narrative poem *Izmail-Bei* and in his very indifferent play *Dva brata* (*The Two Brothers*), written mainly in 1836.

Dve nevol'nitsy (*The Two Women Prisoners*), tentatively dated 1830, consists of 77 four-foot iambs. It is a short tale of jealousy within the harem, owing a debt to Pushkin's *Bakhchisaraiskii fontan*. The two types of woman of Pushkin's narrative poem (the unresponsive Polish woman Mariia and the passionate, jealous Georgian Zarema) appear in Lermontov as the Greek Zaira and the Spanish Gul'nara (her name taken from Byron's *Gulnare* in *The Corsair*). Zaira rejects the advances of the elderly sultan. Gul'nara sits, pale, at her window. A cry, a splash, and Zaira has been killed, whether on the Sultan's orders or, by analogy with Pushkin, by Gul'nara is not clear. Gul'nara picks up her guitar and wildly plays a song from happy Spain, triumphant in her revenge. The epigraph is from *Othello*.

Dzhiulio is one of Lermontov's "confession" poems. It consists of 526 lines. Approximately 45 lines have been lost close to the end, following line 516. *Dzhiulio* is in non-caesural five-foot iambs, and is written in rhymed couplets, Lermontov's first such poem. It contains one of his rare references to classical culture, eight lines of free translation from Horace's odes, Book II, Ode XVI, to the effect that cares and the pangs of conscience attend us everywhere (lines 212-219). It is dated 1830 and faithfully reflects the influence of Byron and the presence of the Byronic hero. The confession is in the form of a scroll which Dzhiulio hands to the "receiver" somewhere up in Sweden's goldmining country. The scroll gives an account of Dzhiulio's past sufferings in Italy and Paris, his betrayal of Lora, his Byronic spleen, his unintentional killing of Lora years later, and his pangs of remorse.

Ispoved' (*A Confession*) (1829-30) and *Boiarin Orsha* (1835-36) both belong to a sub-genre of the "confession" poem, namely the confession made from a monastery cell. The theme is subsequently developed in *Mtsyri*, and all three poems are connected. The first two will be discussed therefore below in conjunction with the last.

Kally, subtitled *Cherkesskaia povest'* ("Circassian Tale") (152 four-foot iambs) (1830-31) deals with a question which obviously interested Lermontov — and Pushkin too, as we see from *Tazit* — the question of blood vengeance. In *Kally* (from the Turkish for *bloody*) a mullah instructs the youthful Adzi on his duty to avenge his father, mother, and brother. Adzi goes to the hut of his prey, kills the son, with some hesitation kills the father, and then agonizes over the sleeping seventeen-year-old daughter. Tormented, groaning, Adzi kills her and returns to the mulla with her hair in his hand. He plunges his dagger into the mullah. The latter is buried in a manner indicating that he awaits vengeance. His wife, no longer fearing his jealousy, has taken a lover. Adzi lives a solitary wandering life, avoiding people, incapable of caressing a woman.

Poslednii syn vol'nosti (*Freedom's Last Son*) (1831 early?) is basically in the Decembrist tradition. Its hero Vadim, "the last free Slav," is a legendary figure, mentioned in the Chronicle under 864 (he is killed by Riurik, the incoming Scandinavian conqueror, first of a line of Russian rulers which lasted to 1598). The poem has 865 lines. Of these, 16 are in non-caesural five-foot iambs, a dedication to Lermontov's friend at Moscow University and in the cadet school in Petersburg, N. S. Shenshin; 45 are in basically four-foot trochees, considered a folkloric and "Rus-

⁶ 4-vol. Academy 1961-1962, II, 661.

sian" line, with a preponderance of dactylic endings; the remainder are the familiar four-foot iambs, freely rhymed.

The Novgorod Slavs have been defeated by the Scandinavian Varangians. Vadim and six associates are forced to flee. Riurik, the conqueror, holds Novgorod. He rapes Leda. Vadim returns to avenge Leda and to free his country. However, he offers himself in battle rather as a sacrificial victim, and Riurik kills him.

Vadim's exact role in Russian history has not been satisfactorily determined. But for most eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russian writers (excluding Catherine II and Kheraskov) Vadim was the supreme Slavic patriot. As such he figures in Ia. V. Khiazhnin's tragedy *Vadim Novgorodskii* and, much closer to Lermontov, in the Decembrist Ryleev's unfinished narrative poem, *Vadim*, in which he is depicted as the symbol of Russian aspirations for political freedom. *Poslednii syn vol'nosti* is one of the clearest indications of the youthful Lermontov's overall sympathies for Decembrist political aspirations.

Azrail (1831) and *Angel Smerti* (*The Angel of Death*) (1831) are both linked thematically with Lermontov's work on *Demon*. The former is a curious hybrid, made up of four-foot iambs freely rhymed; non-caesural five-foot iambs (masculine rhymed couplets); eight lines of folkloristic, syntactically parallel, mainly two-foot dactylic song; four-foot iambs (masculine only rhymes), 191 lines in all. There are also two prose sections of, respectively, just over a page and nearly half a page. Like the demon, Azrail is a fallen angel who seeks redemption through love. But, in an unexpected and ironic turn, the object of his love suddenly announces that, at her mother's bidding, she is marrying a "glorious warrior."

Angel Smerti, with a 12-line dedication to his cousin Aleksandra Mikhailovna Vereshchagina, consists in all of 550 lines of four-foot iambs, freely rhymed. At one time a well disposed angel who brought consolation to the dying, the Angel of Death has changed, and now inspires fear and horror. His fall from grace occurred when, out of the goodness of his heart, he restored the beautiful dying Ada to life. But her lover, the inconstant Zoraim, insists on leaving Ada to be a warrior. He is killed. His folly embitters the Angel of Death toward the human race.

Moriak (*The Seafarer*), 1832, is Lermontov's first venture with the Onegin stanza, which consists of 14 four-foot iambic lines with the following rhyme scheme: AbAbCCddEffEgg, i.e. basically three quatrains and a closing couplet. There are eight of these, 112 lines altogether, plus one additional line "Sic transit gloria mundi," in Lermontov's handwriting. The epigraph is from Byron's *The Corsair*, and *Moriak* is conventionally romantic in extolling the sea as an element embodying freedom. But the sea is also seen as a mindless force, without purpose, which dulls the senses and emotions:

И бесполезный этот шум,
И эту жизнь без дел и дум,
Без родины и без могилы,
Без наслажденья и без мук;

And this purposeless sound.
And this life without action or thought,
Without fatherland or grace,
Without enjoyment or torment...

Moriak is less a narrative poem than a monolog of meditation and reminiscence.

Izmail-Bei (subtitled an "Eastern Tale") is the longest of Lermontov's narrative poems, with 2,285 lines, most of them four-foot iambs freely rhymed, but also, a far lesser number, sections of non-caesural five-foot iambs. There is a three-stanza 24-line Circassian song in four-foot

trochees, each stanza's refrain containing two three-foot trochees. This song advises the young warrior to use his money on a horse rather than a wife. And there is a 27-line song in amphibrachs (predominantly two-foot, some three-foot) extolling fidelity in love and predicting dire and inglorious consequences for the warrior who plays false to his love.

Written in 1832, *Izmail-Bei* is an ambitious undertaking not only in length but in scope and complexity. It is subtitled "an eastern tale" ("vostochnaia povest"). But it differs from Byron's traditional eastern tale or from Lermontov's own early Byronic narrative poems by not focusing solely on the personality of the hero to the exclusion of everything and everybody else. Instead, there is a degree of interplay between characters, and an attempt, rightly emphasized by Soviet commentators, to make a connection between the personality and problems of individuals and the historical background against which events take place. The perennial Romantic question of the viability of primitive societies based on close ties to nature in the face of the advance of culturally, economically and militarily more aggressive and advanced societies casts its shadow over the entire work. The dichotomy between two opposed answers had been evident to many. Pushkin, for example in *Kavkazskii plennik*, presented the traditional Romantic view upholding the superiority of the primitive in the main body of the poem, then extolled Russian imperialist expansionism in a chauvinistic epilog. In *Izmail-Bei*, Lermontov presents the opposed viewpoints as a conflict within the individual. Thus the main protagonist, Izmail-Bei, has been educated in Russia. But he is a Circassian patriot, a mighty warrior who kills many Russians. This does not prevent him from giving help to a lone Russian in the mountains. He senses the futility of the struggle; he feels contempt for the dissembling, lying, cheating, and banditry it involves:

Но в бурях битв не думал Измаил
 Сискать самозабвенья и покоя.
 Не за отчизну, за друзей он мстил, —
 И не пленялся именем героя;
 Он ведал цену почестей и слов,
 Изобретенных только для глупцов!
 Недолгий жар погас! душой усталый,
 Его бы не желал он воскресить;
 И не родной аул, — родные скалы
 Решился он от русских защитить!

But not in the storm of battles did Izmail
 Hope to find self-forgetfulness and peace.
 He took vengeance not for his fatherland, but for his friends, —
 And was unmoved by the renown of being a hero;
 He knew the value of honors and words,
 Fabricated only for fools!
 His short-lived flame was dead! Weary in soul,
 He did not wish to fan it back to life;
 And not his native village, but his native mountains
 He had decided to defend against the Russians.

The last two lines say in essence while the patriarchal village way of life is no longer viable, that does not give the Russians the right to spread themselves through the mountains of the Caucasus. Izmail-Bei is not therefore the clearest symbol of pristine, primeval virtue. He is a complex figure, something of a Byronic hero, whose conflict is both external and internal. When his dead body is washed for burial, a lock of blond hair and a Christian cross are found around his neck.

What is the purpose of the division into four-and five-foot iambs? What are their respective functions? The distinction is by no means as clear-cut as that which sets off, for example, the pronouncements of the chorus of Greek tragedy. However, the following observations are generally valid. The bulk of the actual narration of events is carried by the four-foot iambs. Of the more specialized functions of the numerically inferior five-foot iamb the main ones are: openings and closings of the poem's three chapters (the closing of Chapter II excepted); first-person narrator intrusions on a restrained and limited scale; apostrophes directed to characters ("O Zara, Zara!...", I, 37) and to things, e.g., the Caucasus ("Kak ia liubil, Kavkaz moi velichavyi," I, 2); descriptions and explanations designed to enlarge the reader's understanding of characters, their motivations, and social-historical developments; and general comments on life and its ways ("Legko narodom pravit', esli on....," II,3). In fact, the functions of the five-foot iamb here are comparable to but not equal to the functions of the digression in *Evgenii Onegin* or Lermontov's own later *Sashka*. Not equal to, because they are more unobtrusive, the personality of the narrator is never allowed to emerge as fully distinctive, it remains on the subdued level observable in, for example, the "Introduction" to *The Bronze Horseman* ("Liubliu tebia, Petra tvoren'e....").

Lermontov's poetic speech has been divided into two styles: the style of inexact words ("netochnykh slov"), and the style of exactness ("stil' tochnosti"); the former can be associated with the non-caesural five-foot iamb. While Lermontov's four-foot iamb is admirably equipped not only for narrative speed but also for logical well-constructed exposition of rational thought, his five-foot iamb is often a meter of thought in development, with the attendant hesitations, equivocations, elaborations, deviations, questions, and similes. The non-caesural five-foot iamb is thus appropriate for the functions indicated in the preceding paragraph.⁷

Izmail-Bei, like so many of Lermontov's works, contains borrowings worth noting. The epigraphs of two of the chapters are from Byron, from *The Giaour* and from *Lara*. *Izmail-Bei* possesses the conventional traits of the disenchanting Byronic hero; and Zara, his faithful love, owes something to Leila in *The Giaour* for the description of her beauty and for her role as disguised page-companion to Kaled in *Lara*. *Manfred* and *Parisina* can also be regarded as sources. The epigraph to the second chapter is from Walter Scott's *Marmion*. And the episode involving *Izmail* and the lone Russian is reminiscent of James V and Black Roderick in his *Lady of the Lake*. Mickiewicz's *Konrad Wallenrod* also offers a significant parallel. Wallenrod is Lithuanian by birth. Kidnapped by the Teutonic Knights, he is baptized and reared as a German. But, under the tutelage of a Lithuanian bard, he remains a staunch patriot, flees to his own people, fights extremely well against the Teutonic Knights, falls in love, marries, but "did not find happiness at home, since it was absent from his fatherland." After a long absence, during which he takes part in a crusade and fights the Moors in Spain, Wallenrod returns to the Order, is elected Master of the Order, but leads the Knights to destruction at the hands of the Lithuanians. He is condemned as a traitor to the Knights and drinks poison. Like Samson, he has destroyed the temple and perished beneath its ruins. His wife, who has been living walled up as an eremite dies at the same time. The parallels lie in the situations rather than in the events, the same questions of feigning a role (*Izmail* had served the enemy, the Russians, presumably in a military capacity), of recognition of the adversary's human qualities, of inability given the politico-social situation to achieve personal happiness are present in *Konrad Wallenrod* and *Izmail-Bei*.⁸

⁷ This division into the two styles of inexactness and exactness is very well set forth by L. Pumpsianskii in his "Stikhovaia rech' Lermontova," *LN* 43-44 (M.: Izd. Ak nauk, 1941), 389-424.

⁸ See Eikhenbaum, III, 583-44; Duchesne, 37-38.

One delightful contribution Lermontov made to a longstanding literary tradition is his comparison of the moon and the stars (II,7):

Земные звезды; но луна,
 Когда не землю взор наводит,
 Себе соперниц не находит,
 И, одинокая, она
 По небесам в сиянье бродит!

The earthly stars...but the moon,
 When she on earth her gaze directs,
 Can find no rivals to herself,
 And she — alone —
 Across the heavens resplendent roams.

Lermontov, never slow to turn a borrowing to his own ends, here has surely in mind a physical phenomenon of nature, namely the extinguishing of the stars by a bright moon. Traditionally, the moon and the stars are used to extol the beauty of one person, usually a woman, over her companions, as Pushkin does in *Evgenii Onegin* (VII, 52), or as we find in the *Nibelungenlied*, once for Kriemhilde, once for Siegfried. This simile goes back to Ovid and beyond Ovid to Sappho.

A few further words are in order regarding Lermontov's descriptions of nature. It is relevant to start with mention of Pushkin's not wholly successful *Kavkazskii plennik*, held to be redeemed by its descriptions of nature. These, taken in isolation, cannot alone tip the scales in favor of his first southern poem. And Lermontov describes nature as well as Pushkin does, in this poem and elsewhere, especially when the Caucasus forms the background. It is worth considering the two together. Like *Kavkazskii plennik*, *Izmail-Bei* is not wholly successful. But in arriving at this conclusion, we should not base our argument, as does Lidiia Ginzburg, on the fact that the issue of freedom is encumbered and tainted by personal issues and unhappy loves. Ginzburg is focusing on *Mtsyri*, contrasting it with the early poems of which *Izmail-Bei* is but one, and she wishes to emphasize the singlemindedness of the hero's struggle for freedom in *Mtsyri*.⁹ Her point with regard to *Mtsyri* is valid and well taken. But we need to understand that in *Izmail-Bei* Lermontov was seeking complexity, not simplicity. He was attempting to move away from the single-focus Byronic "eastern tale" (subtitle notwithstanding) toward a wider canvas, to something in the nature of a novel in verse. There is, not only in Lermontov but in literature as a whole at this period, an evolutionary tendency to move from the verse tale to the novel in verse to the novel in prose. If we think of *Konrad Wallenrod*, or even of *Hermann und Dorothea*, we have something of a framework in which to evaluate *Izmail-bei*. It may not be a success, but it must be recognized as an ambitious and well-executed partial success.

Litvinka (The Lithuanian Maid), from 1832 and consisting of 524 non-caesural 5-foot iambs in masculine-rhymed couplets, takes place in the fifteenth or sixteenth century during the Russian-Lithuanian conflicts. The chief male protagonist, the Russian Arsenii, is the reclusive lord of a castle, a feared warrior, a born leader, with total contempt for his fellow men, fitting the mold of the Byronic hero. Married, and with a son, he brings home from war a young Lithuanian captive woman, Klara. Arsenii's wife has fled to a nunnery. The homesick Klara finds herself reluctant mistress of the castle. But she cannot love Arsenii. Two Lithuanians, disguised as travelers, obtain hospitality for the night. Klara knows and apparently loves one of them. Killing the sentry, the three escape. Arsenii is devastated and undergoes a typically Byronic transformation:

⁹ Lidiia Ginzburg, *Tvorcheskii put' Lermontova*. L.: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1940., 55-58.

И прежде презирал уж он людей:
Отныне из безумца — стал злодей.
И чем же мог он сделаться другим,
С его умом и сердцем огненным?

He had formerly despised people:
Now from madman he became a villain.
What else could he have become,
With his keen mind and fiery heart?

The final episode involves a battle. Arsenii hurls back the Lithuanians. But he advances so far that he becomes isolated and finds himself surrounded by Lithuanians, headed by Klara. She promises herself to whoever kills him. His grave is visited by one person only, a nun, his abandoned wife and widow. The insistence on Arsenii's keen mind (*um*, twice repeated) provides unneeded assurance that this ultra-Byronic poem is also an inward-directed juvenile fantasy.

Aul Bastundzhi (Bastundzhi Village) (1833-34) consists of 640 lines of non-caesural five-foot iambs, ottava rima, in 80 stanzas. It is a narrative poem almost entirely without merit. For some reason which I have not fathomed, since Lermontov himself was without siblings, the theme of rivalry and hostility between two brothers seems to have had a considerable hold on him. It is present in *Izmail-Bei*, in the unfinished *Dva brata (The Two Brothers)* of 1829, and in the drama by the same name of 1834-36. Schiller's *Die Braut von Messina* does not really explain the repeated appearances of this theme. Ironically, except where it appears in muted form in *Izmail-Bei*, the theme produced nothing but poor results in Lermontov's work.

The name of the present work derives from a village in the Piatigorsk area which was, as a result of steady Russian encroachments, abandoned by its inhabitants around 1804. They took to the hills, a phenomenon already attested in *Izmail-Bei*. The two brothers are presumably far apart in age: the older strong, active and warlike, the younger weak, tender and in horror of violence. Devoted to each other, they live estranged from their fellows. The older, Akbulat, eventually brings home a wife, Zara, with whom the younger, Selim, falls hopelessly in love. His passion consumes him. He confesses and begs forgiveness of his brother. He flees the home, but nevertheless confronts Zara when she goes to bathe. She swears loyalty to her husband. Some time later, her body is returned: she has been shot dead, her body lashed to her horse. The village burns, presumably because Akbulat sets fire to his hut, from whence the flames spread.

Ottava rima, essentially European in character, does not seem well-matched with the Caucasus and Caucasians. Moreover, it seems odd that recent scholarship attributes both its use by Lermontov and his alleged reading of Tasso and Ariosto to Shevyrev's 1831 "On the Possibility of Introducing the Italian Ottava rima into Russian Verse." After all, Lermontov had shown familiarity with the *ottava rima* in 1830, in *Bulevar*, where his source was obviously Byron.¹⁰

Khadzi Abrek (1833) is in freely rhymed four-foot iambs, in 443 lines. An old man has had his only surviving child, his daughter Leila, abducted by Bei-Bulat. He asks the men of the village Dzhemat to help him. Khadzhi Abrek undertakes the mission. But Khadzhi Abrek's brother had been treacherously killed by Bei-Bulat, and he is also seeking vengeance. He finds Bei-Bulat's home, where Leila, alone, hospitably welcomes him, feeds him, and dances for him. She is happy, she tells him. He kills her and cuts off her head. He returns to the village and rolls out the head to her father who embraces it and dies. A year later, two bloody interlocked corpses

¹⁰ S. P. Shevyrev, "O vozmozhnosti vvesti ital'ianskuiu oktavu v russkoe stikhoslozhenie," *Teleskop*, 1831, Nos. 11, 12; Lermontov 1961-62, II, 672; L. N. Nazarova, *Aul Bastundzhi*, L. E., 40.

are found, one that of Bei-Bulat, the other unidentified. Those finding them imagine they could still detect the threatening anger of the dead men. *Khadzhi Abrek* was Lermontov's first narrative poem to be published, submitted, unbeknownst to him, and to his apparent chagrin, to *Biblioteka dlia cteniia* in 1835.¹¹

As we see, Lermontov's early narrative poems bear the marks of his indebtedness to Byron, with the latter's penchant for violent emotions, but also reflect Lermontov's fondness for the exotic non-Christian Caucasus.

II Later Narrative Poems

I

Passing for the moment over *Boiarin Orsha*, to be discussed along with *Mtsyri*, we come now to *Sashka*. This is the first of three commonly called "ironic" poems," i.e., humorous and satirical. *Sashka* consists today of 149 11-line non-caesural five-foot iambic stanzas (1639 lines), and is the longest of Lermontov's later narrative poems. It used to be longer. As recently as 1954-1957, in the authoritative Academy of Sciences edition, *Sashka* appeared, as it had since first being published, with cuts, in 1882, with an unfinished second part, consisting of eight stanzas. Eikhenbaum was the first to point out that the fragmentary second part (the so-called *vtoraia glava*) was not a continuation of the first, but the beginning of a different work. In 1983, in the four-volume *Khudozestvennaia literatura* edition, the second part was separated from the first, and printed in the section *Drafts, Fragments, Unfinished Works* (*Nabroski, Otryvki, Nezavershennoe*). We are discussing only the 149 stanzas mentioned above.¹²

Another problem with *Sashka* has been the dating. The date normally given was 1836, based on information given to Viskovatov by Lermontov's cousin, neighbor, and close friend, Shan-Girei. He told Viskovatov that Lermontov was writing *Sashka* during his stay in Tarkhany in early 1836. But Eikhenbaum came to believe that 1839 was probably the correct date, based on two main pieces of evidence: 1) there is a reference in stanza 31 to the harsh spring weather:

Неаполь мерзнет, а Нева не тает.

Naples is freezing, and the Neva is still iced over....

(conditions which obtained in 1839; and 2) Stanzas 3-4 and 136-137 were transferred more or less *in toto* to the poem, "Pamiati A. I. Odoevskogo" ("Tribute to the Memory of A. I. Odoevskii"), written in late 1839.¹³ Eikhenbaum considers the transfer would be easy if the stanzas were fresh in the poet's mind. The 1839 date was rejected by M. F. Nikoleva in an unpublished work on *Sashka*. She pointed out that the spring was also late in 1835, the ice late in breaking up, and that late severe cold in the south, including Italy, was reported for that year (*Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 1835, No. 113).

There are other arguments to support an 1835-36 dating. Eikhenbaum's argument about the transfer of lines from *Sashka* to *Pamiati A. I. Odoevskogo* can be turned against him: it can be argued that it is less likely that Lermontov would have transferred passages thus if both poems

¹¹ 1835, XI, otd. 1, 81-94.

¹² See *Russkaia mysl'*, 1882, (kn.), 68-102. For Eikhenbaum's contribution, "Literaturnaia pozitsiia Lermontova" in *LN* 43-44 (1941), 58-61, and in *Stat'i o Lermontove* (M.-L., 1961), 100-1.

¹³ *Academia*, III, 602.

were completed at about the same time, i.e., in 1839; and more likely if *Sashka* had been completed earlier, in 1836, but if the thought of publishing it had been abandoned.

There is one further piece of evidence as to the date. The poem (stanza 149) concludes:

... стихам,
Которые давно уж не звучали,
И вдруг с пера Бог знает как упали!..

... verses
Which have not for a long time been heard.
And suddenly from my pen have fallen, God knows how!

Nikoleva pointed out that in 1839 Lermontov, having finished *Demon* and *Mtsyri*, and with his shorter poems appearing in almost every issue of *Otechestvennye zapiski*, would have been unlikely to write that his verses had not been heard for a long time, whereas in 1835-36 this was the case: he had been writing very little verse. These arguments have persuaded some scholars to return to 1836 as the date of completion. The 1983-84 *Khudozhestvennaia literatura* edition, with its commentaries done by I. L. Andronikov, has 1835-36 as the date (II, 529-31). So, with rather more hesitation, does E. E. Naidich in *Lermontovskaia entsiklopediia* (498-99).

The dating of *Sashka* is not just a matter of idle curiosity. The period between 1835 and 1839 was an important one in terms of the rapid changes taking place in Lermontov's understanding of his metier. Unfortunately it is not really possible to establish the date convincingly. There are, we have seen, good reasons for believing Lermontov worked on *Sashka* in 1835-36, perhaps even as early as 1834. On the other hand, there are lines which make sense only if we believe that work continued to a much later date. For instance, in stanza 33:

«Сашка» — старое название!
Но «Сашка» тот печати не видал
И нездоровый он угас в изгнание.

"Sashka" is an old name!
But that "Sashka" never got printed,
While he himself — still but a youth — expired in exile.

This is a reference to A. I. Polezhaev's *Sashka* and to Polezhaev's death, which occurred in 1838. Nikoleva's points may be well taken but apply only to the relevant lines. It seems likely that work was in progress, with interruptions, from 1835 through 1839.

A more important issue is whether or not *Sashka* is a completed work. The eight-stanza second "chapter" made this an impossibility; story and reader were left dangling in mid-air. But the removal of this second chapter does not make the work necessarily complete; it only renders this conceivable. There are two principal factors involved in deciding the question of completion. Does the structure of the plot as we now have it (in the 149 stanzas) indicate completion or non-completion? In the genre to which *Sashka* belongs, what makes a work complete?

In terms of narrative development, the 149 stanzas divide as follows:

- 1) Stanzas 1-9 constitute the introduction, in which the reader is informed of the hero Sashka's early death.
- 2) In stanzas 9-49, Sashka visits two young Moscow women, makes love to and sleeps with one of them, Tirza. Parts of this are described in restrainedly erotic, risqué fashion.

- 3) Stanzas 50-120 are in the form of a flashback to Sashka's childhood and upbringing in Simbirsk, with references also to his father and mother (who, like Lermontov's, dies). The narrative highlight of this section comes when Sashka, in love with a peasant girl, finds his father preparing to bed her. But the father, unable to consummate the act, retreats discomfited, the son then making good his sire's omission.
- 4) Stanzas 121-36 return to the main narrative line begun in stanzas 9-49. Sashka and Tirza awake; he leaves, but he has carelessly promised (in stanzas 44-45) to take her, a woman of low repute, to the theater. Sashka returns home and charms money out of his aunt to buy Tirza's theater outfit: at this point (stanza 130) the reader is introduced to a negro (*arap*, to use the correct term of that time), the hero's servant and intimate, who now receives money from him and is sent on some unspecified mission.
- 5) Stanzas 137-49 consist of thoughts on Sashka's early death abroad and on the contemporary generation. The concluding lines of the final stanza (149) read as follows:

Я кончил... Так! дописана страница,
Лампада гаснет... Есть всему граница —
Наполеонам, бурям и войнам,
Тем более терпенью и... стихам,
Которые давно уж не звучали,
И вдруг с пера Бог знает как упали!..

I've finished. . . Yes, I've written to the bottom of the page
The lamp burns low. . . To all there is a term —
To Napoleons, to storms, to wars,
And even more to patience and. . . to verses,
Which for a long time have not sounded forth,
And suddenly from my pen have fallen, God knows how!

These six lines suffice to determine genre: *Sashka* is in the tradition of *Evgenii Onegin*, *Domik v Kolomne* (Pushkin again), de Musset's *Namouna*, and of course in first place Byron's *Beppo*. *Sashka* is in the domain of auctorial digression, the humorous tone, and the use of irony. Lest there be any doubt, let us, following Eikhenbaum, quote the concluding lines of *Beppo*:

My pen is at the bottom of the page,
Which, being finished, here the story ends;
T'is to be wished it had been sooner done,
But stories somehow lengthen when begun.¹⁴

We shall discuss genre in more detail later. The present discussion raises the issue of genre for its ability to help determine whether or not the work is to be seen as completed. Tying *Sashka* to Pushkin's two works, as well as to *Namouna* and *Beppo* is important precisely because that type of poem admitted a loosely-structured narrative and the possibility of an ambiguous or inconclusive ending. Driving home that point, the small Academy of Sciences four-volume edition (II, 679) gives the *Beppo* ending as a precedent: "*Beppo* breaks off all of a sudden."

Where do these considerations leave us? Naidich considers *Sashka* a "finished work."¹⁵ The editor of *Khudozhestvennaia literatura* (publishing, as noted, the "second chapter" sepa-

¹⁴ Eikhenbaum 1924, 123.

¹⁵ "Sashka," *L. E.*, 498-99.

rately, among the unfinished works) also considers it a “finished work”.¹⁶ In my view, it may be a finished work, but it was hastily finished, and more needs to be said.

First, in favor of its being “finished” we have the concluding lines, cited above, which were seen to have followed in Byron’s footsteps as he brought *Beppo* to an end. But it is not good enough to say: “*Beppo* breaks off all of a sudden.” Ergo *Sashka*... *Beppo*, notwithstanding the admittedly loose structure permitted in this “ironic” genre, has a perfectly clear and normal ending: *Beppo* returns to Venice, regains his wife. Laura, becomes good friends with the Count, and, not stated, but implied, some sort of a *ménage à trois* satisfactory to the three of them is established. The structure is impeccable, which *Sashka*’s is not. The introduction of the hero’s aunt at a comparatively late stage in the story (stanza 114) can perhaps be overlooked from the standpoint of structural appropriateness, on the grounds that she is a secondary character, a target for a few satirical barbs, and the instrument for providing *Sashka* with money he now needs. But the negro cannot be dismissed so lightly. He is immediately built up (stanzas 130-35) as a potentially significant character, apparently destined to play an important role, at least in the Tirza episode. Why else is he given the money? What does *Sashka* whisper to him in stanza 132? Why does *Sashka* trouble to extract the money from his aunt if Lermontov is nearing his conclusion? We are aware of the theoretical possibility of the author tantalizing the reader by arousing his curiosity and then deliberately failing to satisfy it. But that, I believe, was not Lermontov’s style. Yet the concluding lines, though not conclusive evidence, point to the author’s desire to make an end. How do we reconcile these two opposing thoughts? The only solution that seems to me to fit the facts is that Lermontov at one point intended to write something considerably longer than the 149 stanzas we have, for some reason changed his mind, and brought the work to a hasty conclusion.

If we accept this as likely, then we must ask what could have caused the change. We do not have enough information to answer this. But it is not difficult to suggest plausible reasons. Lermontov could have become discouraged at the thought of how difficult it would be to *get Sashka* past the censor. Or *Sashka* could have been shouldered aside by other literary undertakings; in 1836 he was working on his novel *Kniaginia Ligovskaia (Princess Ligovskaia)*, and in 1839 he worked on another novel, *Geroi nashego vremeni*. It may be that either one of these two works, more probably the latter, eclipsed *Sashka*. But all this, the censorship hypothesis included, is no more than speculation. We simply do not know.

Sashka’s antecedents include *Beppo*, *Namouna*, *Evgenii Onegin*, and *The Little House in Kolomna*, mentioned above. For Byron, we should add *Don Juan* and for Pushkin *Graf Nulin (Count Nulin)*. *Opasnyi sosed (A Dangerous Neighbor)* by V. L. Pushkin (1770-1830), himself a poet and uncle to a more famous nephew, should also be noted. It is a delightful description of an ill-starred visit to a brothel with the “dangerous neighbor,” Buianov. A fight breaks out, and the narrator flees the house, arriving home wet, cold, and despairing. Much of the humor, as is also true of *Sashka*, derives from the felicitous choice of details or speech which tellingly characterize the surroundings and their inhabitants. The narrator goes upstairs to his lady’s room:

Огарок в черепке, рогожью пол обитан,
Рубашки на шестах, два медные таза,
Кот серый, курица мне бросились в глаза.

....A burned down candle in a broken piece
Of pottery, a bast-covered floor,
Slips on a bar, two metal basins,

¹⁶ II, 531.

A grey cat, a hen — that's what I saw....

My favorite piece of incongruity relates to the wall decorations:

С широкой задницей, с угрями на челе,
 Вся провонявшая и чесноком, и водкой,
 Сидела сводня тут с известною красоткой;
 Султан Селим, Вольтер и Фридерик Второй
 Смирненно в рамках висели над софой;

A broad-beamed butt, with blackheads on her brow,
 Smelling to beat high heav'n of garlic and of vodka,
 Madame was seated there, beside a well-known beauty.
 Sultan Selim, Voltaire, and Frederick the Great
 Hung meekly in their frames above the sofa there.

Needless to say, the fact that the three great men fit perfectly into a rhymed six-foot iambic line helps to determine and enhance the humor.

One other source of *Sashka* is Lermontov's so-called Junker poems. Three of these are short and are published by Eikhenbaum in the first of the two *Stikhotvoreniia* volumes, three of them are not long, but of narrative-poem length, and are published in the third volume. *Mongo*, which was written later in 1836 and is sometimes not treated as a Junker poem, is included by Eikhenbaum in volume III with the three other narrative Junker poems. All of the above-mentioned are listed as supplements.¹⁷

These Junker poems rest on the cadets' fondness for wenching and hard drinking. And their most immediate appeal is salacious. They were written in 1833-34 (*Mongo* in 1836), and some were "published" in a weekly "journal," *Shkol'naia zaria*, produced by the cadets for readings on Wednesday evenings.¹⁸ It is not difficult to see that sallies which produced loud merriment among the cadets were not necessarily appropriate for reading by a wider public. The erotic poem (Voltaire's *La Pucelle* or Pushkin's *Gavriiliada*) is a legitimate literary genre. But Lermontov's Junker poems frequently overstep the boundary between the wittily erotic and the coarsely pornographic. For Eikhenbaum they are "not literary works, but a psychological document...." Whether they are to be regarded as a harmless exercise designed to gain prestige in a philistine and adolescent environment or whether they reflect, as Eikhenbaum believed, the self-doubt and disillusionment experienced by the poet during his Junker years is difficult to determine. They probably were, in part, sops to Cerberus. But, Eikhenbaum could have reflected, what is so exceptional about a teenage poet having a fling at pornography?¹⁹

Meanwhile, their connection with *Sashka*, as well as with *Tambovskaia kaznacheisha*, is probably worth mentioning in terms of Lermontov's apprenticeship. They actually offered him nothing he could not have found in *Opasnyi sosed* or some of the other comic poems mentioned. However, it is reasonable to suppose that they helped to sharpen his eye for the amazing episode and for the small but telling detail.

But, as D. D. Blagoi rightly contends, the influence of *Evgenii Onegin* is the most significant, primarily in structure and design. Whatever Lermontov's original intent, Blagoi believes, *Sashka* "had begun to develop into a large verse novel." "*Sashka*," he points out,

¹⁷ Eikhenbaum 1935-37 Academia edition, I, 405-7; and III, 533-53.

¹⁸ Viskovatov reckoned that there were not more than seven issues of *Shkol'naia zaria*.

¹⁹ Eikhenbaum 1924, 102-3.

is not a one-episode story from the hero's life, it is his entire life that is in the process of being laid before us: just as in *Evgenii Onegin*, we have a detailed account of his past, of his parents..., their family life, which is described in no less detail than goes into the family life of the Larins; just as Onegin's upbringing is described in some detail, so equally is Sashka's — his French tutor, his sexual initiation with a peasant girl, his fashionable school, his student years, etc. One can best get an idea of the enormous scope of the projected work when one considers the outsize proportions of the first chapter: it contains 1641 lines, i.e. one more than any other Lermontov poem except *Izmail-bei*, and almost half as many as *Evgenii Onegin*.... *Sashka*, like *Evgenii Onegin*, is divided into chapters (*glavy*).... Just as in the case of *Evgenii Onegin*, for *Sashka* Lermontov created a special long stanza: eleven five-foot iambic lines with a fixed rhyme scheme.²⁰

We noted above that *Sashka* is one of three narrative poems, the other two being *Tambovskaiia kaznacheisha* and *Skazka dlia detei*, which are often called Lermontov's "ironic" poems. As Lidiia Ginzburg points out,

the image of the grandiose demonic hero permeates numerous youthful Lermontov works right up to *Boiarin Orsha* and *Maskarad* (1835-1836). This unbroken chain of Byronic dramas and narrative poems is broken at this point.... beginning in 1838, ever fresh Lermontov epic and prose projects (*Tambovskaiia kaznacheisha*, *Skazka dlia detei*, *Sashka*, *Geroi nashego vremeni*) mark a sharp turn away from romanticism's 'pathetic side'.²¹

As an "ironic" poem *Sashka* inevitably meets with approval for its more realistic approach to life and, in particular, for replacing the highly unusual Byronic hero with an "ordinary man" ("*dobryi malyi*"). But this is a generalization about Lermontov's "development" or of the "development" of Russian literature and does not address the specific qualities of this work, its dominant theme, its own peculiar, considerable but elusive merits.

First, we maintain, with Blagoi, that *Sashka* reflects the influence of *Evgenii Onegin*. Particularly with regard to Sashka's upbringing, the parallels with *Evgenii Onegin* can be traced point by point. But in one basic respect, we should look back beyond *Evgenii Onegin* to Byron's *Don Juan*. Here we find a hero who shares several important characteristics with Lermontov's Sashka. First, instead of the "exceptional" hero we find an "ordinary man" ("*dobryi malyi*"). Closely linked to this ordinariness are a number of other shared qualities, foremost among which is a lack of ontological curiosity, an intellectual passivity, and consequently a freedom from any sense of possessing a special destiny. Not surprisingly, in view of the qualities mentioned, neither Juan nor Sashka is to any significant degree, unlike Onegin, judgmental of his fellows. Both emerge as decent enough, with no real moral pretensions: hedonistic and mildly opportunistic.

Naidich's claim that the relationship between Sashka and Tirza, "two loners.... sanctions a love based on natural feelings and not on self-interest and deception" is an exaggeration. While the feelings are natural, the two do not really love each other. They are drawn together by physical attraction. The unrealistic, romantic love of, e.g., Tat'iana in *Evgenii Onegin*, is not replaced in *Sashka* by a more reasonable, realistic love but by the hedonistic pursuit of physical pleasure.²²

The subtitle to *Sashka, Nravstvennaia poema (A Moral Poem)*, should not be taken too seriously. Lermontov sprinkles the term *moral* around quite liberally in defining his works, and

²⁰ Blagoi, "Pushkin i Lermontov," *Zhizn' i tvorchestvo M. Iu. Lermontova* (M.: Goslitizdat, 1941), 388-89.

²¹ Ginzburg, 128-29.

²² "Sashka," *L. E.*, 498.

there is often a share of irony in such claims of his.²³ Lidiiia Ginzburg believes that “*Sashka* is indeed a moral poem in which what is depicted is subjected to evaluation....” This is almost certainly true. The issue arises when one asks questions as to the methods employed and the conclusions drawn from any such evaluation.

The main satirical weapon and key to the narrator’s attitude is humor. Ginzburg writes: “But the coarse eroticism of *Sashka* is not the poem’s style — for style embodies the writer’s attitude to life; it is the poem’s raw materials (*material*). The cynicism of the love scenes is an expression of the essential immorality of human relationships under serfdom.”²⁴ Lidiiia Ginzburg would like what she believes to be true. But let us review one humorous sexual episode, the most obvious episode, that which takes place in Simbirsk when the father is unable to consummate his lechery with Mavrusha, in which Sashka replaces him.

The build-up to the climactic sex act is orchestrated to perfection. Sashka has fixed on Mavrusha as the object of his fourteen-year-old virginal affections. His love is as pure as the snow on the Caucasian summits, as warm as the Southern sky (stanza 87):

Его любовь, как снег вершин Кавказа,
Чиста, — тепла, как небо южных стран...

Desire and modesty are at war within him, but he must do something (stanza 89):

Боролись в нем желание и стыд;
Он долго думал, как в любви окрыться, —
Но надобно ж на что-нибудь решиться.

Stanza 90 enables the narrator to digress to his own sufferings at fourteen. Then in stanza 91 Sashka finally decides to have it out with Mavrusha:

И положил с Маврушей объясниться.

It is a hot summer day. In the garden

Лежал полураздетый наш герой
И размышлял о тайне съединенья
Двух душ, — предмет достойный размышленья.

(stanza 92)

Lay our half-undressed hero
And reflected on the mystery of the union
Of two souls — a subject worthy of reflection.

He suddenly hears sounds beyond the bushes, leaps through them, and finds his father Ivan Il’ich shamelessly caressing Mavrusha. But the father’s powers fail him. He sighs, adjusts his pants, and goes on his way.

Оставив тут обманутую деву,
Как Ариадну, преданную гневу.

Leaving behind the disappointed maid,
Like Ariadne, anger’s prey.

An amazed and petrified Sashka hesitates:

²³ E.g., *Skazka dlia detei*, stanza 2, and the introduction to *Geroi nashego vremeni*.

²⁴ Ginzburg, 153.

Но вдруг удар проснувшихся страстей
 Перевернул неопытную душу,
 И он упал как с неба на Маврушу.

(stanza 95)

But suddenly a surge of awakened passions
 Quite overwhelmed his inexperienced soul:
 He flung himself, as from the sky, upon Mavrusha.

Explaining humor invariably sounds pedantic. The reader will himself or herself no doubt be fully alert to what is funny in this episode. But a brief analysis is necessary to the development of my general argument. There are then at least two main aspects of this story which provoke mirth. The first is the father's failure to consummate, the son doing his work for him. The second, less immediate, is the irony of the son's apprenticeship: reflections on the purity of his love, his timidity, his thoughts on the union of two souls are followed by the lightning implementation of a purely fleshly act. A similar descent from the sublime to the carnal attends Juan's initiation in *Don Juan* (I, 117). A moment's reflection will tell us that the humor here is situational, and any satire here is directed against the foibles and vices of human nature, not against the institution of serfdom. If serfdom were here to be the narrator's target, then the reader would have the right to expect at least some hint of Mavrusha's being victimized. But this is not Pushkin's 1819 *Derevnia* ("The Countryside"). Mavrusha obviously does not herself feel that she is victimized. We recall that we are being given a flashback of Sashka's upbringing and that this episode marks an important step in Sashka's education. What then does he learn? From the narrator's presentation, we conclude that the main lesson for Sashka is not to seek to impose an unreal idealism on his sexual impulses, but to take things more simply. Sexual permissiveness is the dominant mood here, and no less so in the Sashka-Tirza relationship.

More satirical is the narrator's treatment of the father, Ivan Il'ich. Primary targets are his philistinism ("*On byl vragom pisatelei i knig*" — "He was an enemy of books and writers"), and his deferential submissiveness to his superiors:

Однако же пред знатью горделивой
 Умел он гнуться скромно и учтиво.

(stanza 51)

But before proud notables
 He knew to bow with modest courtesy.

Ivan Il'ich was sad on the morning after his wedding, but the narrator has little sympathy for such husbands:

По мне они большие эгоисты, —
 Всё жен винят, как будто сами чисты.

(stanza 52)

I think they are enormous egoists —
 Blaming their wives, as though they themselves had remained pure.

This is a rare thought in the Russia of 1835-39, but not uncharacteristic of Lermontov's pre-Tolstoyan insights. The narrator, however, is quick to tone down any programmatic force in such a statement, claiming that he is the Demosthenes of the gentle sex, and urging women to follow the example of Ivan Il'ich's wife.

More specifically opposed to serfdom is the narrator's description of Ivan Il'ich's extra-marital forays:

хоть правом дворянина
Он пользовался часто, но детей,
Вне брака прижитых, злодей,
Раскиывал по свету, где случится,
Страшась с своей деревней породниться.

(stanza 61)

.... although he often put to use
The rights of the seigneur, the villain
Spread any children that were out of wedlock
Far and wide, and randomly — he feared
To establish ties of kinship with his village.

Prostitution and the theme of the "fallen woman" provide admirable material for satire and social criticism. But here again the narrator is permissive rather than accusatory. Ginzburg sees Lermontov as a pioneer in this field: "Anticipating Dostoevskii, Lermontov was the first in Russian literature to portray the 'fallen woman' with sympathy." Perhaps he does in some of his lyrics, but not here.²⁵ Ginzburg continues: "But if Sonechka Marmeladova is the passive victim of social injustice.... Lermontov's Tirza is prepared to throw down a challenge to society:"

Она была затейливо мила,
Как польская затейливая панна;
Но вместе с этим гордый вид чела
Казался ей приличен. Как Сусанна,
Она б на суд неправедный пошла
С лицом холодным и спокойным взором;
Такая смесь не может быть укором....

She was engagingly sweet,
Like an engaging Polish lady;
But also a proud forehead
Seemed appropriate for her. Like Susanna
She would have stood before the judgment of
the unrighteous
With cold face and tranquil gaze;
Such a mixture cannot invite censure....

Certainly Tirza faces life with resilience and courage. But from there to the idea espoused by Ginzburg that hers is a "demonic nature" and that her courage conceals an anguished and rebellious heart is to read more into the narrator's portrayal of Tirza's character than the text warrants. The narrator actually moves back and forth between the near-serious and the jocular. The Susanna passage above, quoted by Ginzburg, is immediately followed by a light-hearted reference to Tirza's parent. We are then told that Tirza after six days grew tired of her first lover:

И с этих пор, чтоб избежать ошибки,

²⁵ E. g., *Pokaianie* ("Repentance") (1829); *Deviatyi chas; uzhd temno* ("It's after 8, already dark") (1832); *Prelestnitse* ("To a Charming Lady") (1832); *Dogovor* ("The Pact") (1841).

Она дарила всем свои улыбки...

(stanza 18)

And from that time to avoid mistakes,
She bestowed her smiles on one and all...

Stanza 19, quoted by Ginzburg, informs us that Tirza's dreams of love had vanished, and that her eyes would sometimes wander aimlessly, languorously, "and, of course that was a sign of silent, heartfelt anguish." Whether the narrator intended that to be taken at face value is questionable. Certainly, in stanza 20 any unfathomed sorrow is replaced by a fevered merriment: "a rising bosom, flushed cheeks... a leg bared shamelessly to the knee."

Sexual mores and irregularities are not castigated with any satirical consistency — no more than in Byron's *Don Juan*. And, as in *Don Juan*, the truly venomous satirical barbs are directed against such vices as hypocrisy and sycophancy. The prevalent mood seems to be one of a life-affirming and permissive hedonism. It is possible that some gap exists between the worldly-wise and at times cynical narrator and Lermontov, the author. But that is speculation.

It must be clear that with his *Sashka* Lermontov adds a new string to his bow, the *Beppo*-type comic epic. And since that genre in particular affords its pleasures piecemeal, there is a very great deal to be enjoyed in the 149 stanzas we have. But looking at the poem in its entirety, as narrative, we can only feel the frustration of not knowing how the story ended.

2

Standing quite apart from his other longer poems is Lermontov's *Pesnia pro tsaria Ivana Vasil'evicha, molodogo oprichnika i kuptsa Kalashnikov*. This poem owes nothing to Pushkin and nothing to Byron, neither the Byron of the "eastern tales," nor the later Byron of *Beppo* and *Don Juan*. It belongs to the tradition of Russian folk poetry, in particular the historical epic, but it transcends that tradition. Lermontov was undoubtedly familiar with the 1818 Kirsha Danilov collection of folklore poems, and of these *Pesnia o Mastriuke Temriukoviche (The Song of Mastriuk Temriukovich)* bears a loose resemblance to our Lermontov poem.

S. A. Raevskii deserves mention here. In 1837 he was sharing quarters with Lermontov. He had a great attachment to Russian folklore and collected it. It is difficult to believe that in the present case Raevskii did not provide either encouragement or sources, or both.²⁶

Metrically the poem follows the tradition of the historical epic poems, the *byliny*. These have lines with an irregular number of syllables, normally ranging between nine and 13. The meter is tonic, i.e., the basic regulating principle in the line is the number of stresses. This is normally four, or rather three stresses plus (in song or recitation) an obligatory stress on the final syllable, making four. The final syllable carries stress whether or not it would normally do so. Translated into the literary-epic tradition, this means three stresses with either a fourth final stress or more often a dactylic ending. Neither in the folk tradition nor in Lermontov's poem is meter maintained with absolute regularity. But in both we find a high degree of consistency if allowance is made for phrase stressing, i.e., for placing two related words under a single stress. The following two lines are by any standard uncontroversial:

А боярыня его белолицая...

A boiarynia ego belolitsaia...

²⁶ For specific similarities between the folklore *Mastriuk Temriukovich* and Lermontov's poem see N. M. Mendel'son, "Narodnye motivy v poezii Lermontova," *Venok*, 165-95.

В удовольствии свое и веселие....

V udovól'stvie svoé i vesélie...

But no less satisfactory with phrase stressing is

Сидит грозный царь Иван Васильевич....

Sidít groznyi tsár' Ivan Vasil'evich....

if we group *groznyi* and *tsar'* under one phrase stress, and again *Ivan* and *Vasil'evich*.²⁷

If the first allegiance of *The Song* is to the historical epic, its second and more important is to the genre of tragedy, or rather to the spirit of tragedy. By tragedy we mean not merely a tragic outcome but the awareness that a tragic outcome is inevitable, that there is no way in which it can be avoided. We mean tragedy as the very core of life. In Lermontov's *Song* the outlines of a tragic outcome become discernible at an early stage, and the stylistics of the narrative, as I shall try to show, conspire constantly to remind the reader of this.

The Song of Tsar Ivan Vasil'evich was first published in 1838, and then again in Lermontov's 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*, where it is dated 1837.

It had a difficult first passage through the censorship. The censor "found it quite impossible to publish the poem of someone who had just been exiled to the Caucasus for his liberalism." It is pleasant to record that at this juncture Zhukovskii performed one of his numerous services to Russian literature and to his younger literary colleagues by recommending publication. S. S. Uvarov, Minister of Education, in charge of the censorship, then authorized publication on his own responsibility, though he expressed agreement with the censor's misgivings and refused to have the author's name appear in print.²⁸

The Song of Tsar Ivan Vasil'evich is set in the Moscow of Ivan the Terrible (ruled as tsar 1547-1584).²⁹ It purports to have been sung "in the old style" ("*na starinnyi lad*") before the boyar Matvei Romodanovskii and his guests. The boyar brought the singers meat, and his wife gave gifts. And they and the guests derived great pleasure from the singers. This fiction is maintained by means of brief apostrophes exhorting the singers to entertain well the boyar and his wife. These apostrophes occur at the end of the three sections into which the tale is divided.

The opening setting is a conventional one for the historical epic, a feast presided over by the prince or ruler. Tsar Ivan orders that wine be poured for his guests. All drink except for one of his retainers, Kiribeevich. Kiribeevich is plunged in thought. Displeased, the Tsar asks what ails him. And Kiribeevich eventually confesses that he is sick from love of a woman. Tsar Ivan laughs and gives Kiribeevich gifts for the matchmaker to take to his beloved: "If she likes you, have a wedding; if she doesn't like you, don't be angry." But Kiribeevich, the narrator comments, has deceived the Tsar; he hasn't told him the woman is married. In the second section, the story

²⁷ See V. M. Zhirmunskii, *Vvedenie v metriku* (L.: "Akademia," 1925), 243-49; ed. E. Stankiewicz and W. N. Vickery, *Introduction to Metrics* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 223-29. For a more complete analysis of the Lermontov line, see M. L. Gasparov, "Russkii narodnyi stikh v literaturnykh imitatsiiakh," *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics*, 1975, XIX, 77-107, esp. 96-98. Gasparov finds M. D. Chulkov's historical songs to be the closest model for Lermontov's *Pesnia*.

²⁸ See the 1961-62 *Academia* edition, II, 682-83; V. A. Manuilov, "Lermontov i Kraevskii," *LN*, 45-46, 365.

²⁹ It was probably based on an incident in Karamzin's *History* (SPb., 1834) IX, 160, relating to Ivan IV's time, in which the wife of a clerk was dishonored by *oprichniki* (Ivan's retainers). See P. V. Vladimirov, *Istoricheskie i narodno-bytovye siuzhety v poezii M. Iu. Lermontova* (Kiev, 1892), 16-26.

shifts to the woman's husband, the young merchant Kalashnikov. Kalashnikov goes home after work to find that his wife is not there, the table is not laid for the evening meal. His wife, Alena Dmitrevna, comes home upset, pale, disheveled. On her way home from evensong, she was waylaid by Kiribeevich. He grabbed her and kissed her. And the neighbor women saw them, pointed their fingers at them, and laughed. Kalashnikov summons his two younger brothers and tells them of the dishonor: tomorrow is a feast-day, and there will be boxing on the Moscow River. Before the Tsar he will challenge Kiribeevich and box to kill; but if he dies, the brothers are to take his place. They promise to do so. In the final section, on the following day Kiribeevich challenges all comers. Kalashnikov kills him. Outraged at the death of his retainer, Tsar Ivan asks Kalashnikov whether he killed Kiribeevich by accident or on purpose. Kalashnikov replies that he did so on purpose, "But as for why that I won't tell you." Kalashnikov is duly executed. He lies in a nameless grave, and the winds blow loudly over it.

This bare outline conveys some hint of the narrative's starkness. A closer examination reveals the specific features of this poem which create its overall effect of both starkness and inevitability. These features are largely culled from the traditions of folklore. Foremost among them, consistently employed throughout the poem, is delay: the accumulation of "unnecessary" detail, the painstaking itemization of "all" the links in the narrative chain. This procedure fulfills a function in its own right, for the details and the items, while not strictly essential to the narrative, are normally chosen with a purpose. The numerous details have the effect of slowing down the narrative, imparting to it an unhurried, measured tread, an impression to which the impersonal tone of the narrator only adds.

This may be seen at the very beginning in the use of the negative simile which launches the first scene:

Не сияет на небе солнце красное,
 Не любуются им тучки синие:
 То за трапезой сидит во златом венце,
 Сидит грозный царь Иван Васильевич.

It is not the beautiful sun shining in the sky,
 It is not the blue clouds admiring the sun:
 It is the dread Tsar Ivan Vasil'evich
 Sitting at the table with his golden crown.

Those around Tsar Ivan are then indicated: the cup-bearers behind him, the nobles and princes opposite, the retainers on either side. This description gives order, symmetry, and decorum to the feast, which is no chaotic, spontaneous drinking session. The feast, indeed, has a ritual quality:

И пирует царь во славу Божию,
 В удовольствии свое и веселие.

And the Tsar feasts to the glory of God,
 Feasts for his own pleasure and his joy.

When Kiribeevich alone of those present fails to drink of the sweet wine from overseas, the Tsar's displeasure and Kiribeevich's unawareness of his surroundings receive eleven lines before the Tsar intones his interrogation:

«Гей ты, верный наш слуга, Кирибеевич,
 Аль ты думу затаил нечестивую?»

Али славе нашей завидуешь?
Али служба тебе честная прискучила?

O, true servant that you are of ours, Kiribeevich,
Are you concealing a dishonorable thought?
Or do you envy us our glory?
Or has your noble service grown wearisome to you?

There are eight more lines of interrogation besides. But the Tsar is wide of the mark. He tries again, this time resorting to negative questions.

Не истерся ли твой парчевой кафтан?
Не измялась ли шапка соболиная?
Не казна ли у тебя поистратилась?
Иль зазубрилась сабля закаленная?
Или конь захромал, худо кованный?
Или с ног тебя сбил на кулачном бою,
На Москве-реке, сын купеческий?»

“Is it not that your brocaded caftan is worn out?
Is it not that your sable cap is rumpled?
Is it not that your money is all spent?
Or has your tempered saber become notched?
Or has your horse, ill shod, begun to limp?
Or in a boxing bout on the Moscow River
Has some merchant’s son knocked you off your feet?”

Kiribeevich carefully replies to these questions in inverse order:

«Не родилась та рука заколдованная
Ни в боярском роду, ни в купеческом;
Аргамак мой степной ходит весело;
Как стекло горит сабля вострая,
А на праздничный день твоей милостью
Мы не хуже другого нарядимся.

“The enchanted hand has not been born,
Nor in boyar family, nor in merchant;
My steppe-born argamak moves merrily, unlimping;
My sharp saber shines like glass,
And on feast days, thanks to your bounty,
We shall dress no whit worse than any other.”

Note the Tsar’s misplaced question about boxing. No, Kiribeevich has not been floored, nor does he believe he can be floored. But in the third section he will fight Kalashnikov and die. This is one of several examples of Lermontov’s apparently fortuitous introduction of themes which are later revealed to be significant. Meanwhile, Kiribeevich proceeds, for 45 unhurried lines, to tell his Tsar of his love. He begins by explaining that when he rides his swift horse over the Moscow River, all the beautiful girls and young women gaze at him admiringly and whisper together. Only one of them won’t look or admire; she covers her face with a veil (10 lines). And then:

«На святой Руси, нашей матушке,
 Не найти, не сыскать такой красавицы:
 Ходит плавно — будто лебедушка;
 Смотрит сладко — как голубушка;
 Молвит слово — соловей поет;
 Горят щеки ее румяные,
 Как заря на небе Божием;
 Косы русые, золотистые,
 В ленты яркие заплетенные,
 По плечам бегут, извиваются,
 С грудью белою целуются.
 Во семье родилась она купеческой,
 Прозывается Алёной Дмитревной.

“In all our Holy Mother Russia
 There is no equal beauty to be found:
 When she walks — she floats smooth as a swan;
 When she looks with sweet gaze — she’s like a dove;
 She speaks — and it’s like a nightingale singing;
 Her ruddy cheeks burn red
 Like the dawn in God’s heaven;
 Her fair golden tresses
 Braided with bright ribbons
 Run down over her shoulders, meandering,
 Exchanging kisses with her white breasts.
 She is of merchant family,
 And her name is Aliona Dmitrevna.”

We are given, in detail the overwhelming effect she has on Kiribeevich:

«Как увижу ее, я и сам не свой:
 Опускаются руки сильные,
 Помрачаются очи бойкие;
 Скучно, грустно мне, православный царь,
 Одному по свету маяться.
 Опостыли мне кони легкие,
 Опостыли наряды парчевые,
 И не надо мне золотой казны:
 С кем казною своей поделюсь теперь?
 Перед кем покажу удалство свое?
 Перед кем я нарядом похвастаюсь?
 Отпусти меня в степи приволжские,
 На житье на вольное, на казацкое.
 Уж сложу я там буйную головушку
 И сложу на копье бусурманское;
 И разделят по себе злы татаровья
 Коня доброго, саблю острую
 И седельцо браное черкасское.
 Мои очи слезные коршун выключет,

Мои кости сырые дождик вымоет,
И без похорон горемычный прах
На четыре стороны развеется...»

“When I see her, I am not myself:
My strong hands hang limp.
My bold eyes grow dark:
I feel weary and sad, Orthodox Tsar,
That I must toil and pine alone on earth.
I have no longer pleasure in fast horses,
I have no longer pleasure in brocaded garments,
I have no need of gold in my chest:
With whom will I now share my treasure?
Before whom now shall I show my bold courage?
Before whom shall I display my fine garments,
Let me go my way to the Volga steppes,
Go to the life of freedom, the Cossack life.
There I will lay down my reckless head,
Lay it down before the infidel’s spear;
And the evil Tatars will divide between themselves
My good horse, my sharp saber,
And my patterned Circassian saddle.
The kite will peck out my tear-filled eyes.
The rains will wash my orphaned bones,
And with no burial, my hapless dust
Will be blown north, south, east and west.”

The Tsar laughs, gives Kiribeevich gifts, and tells him to try his luck:

Ох ты гой еси, царь Иван Васильевич!
Обманул тебя твой лукавый раб,
Не сказал тебе правды истинной,
Не поведал тебе, что красавица
В церкви Божией перевенчана,
Первенчана с молодым купцом
По закону нашему христианскому...

O Tsar Ivan Vasil'evich!
Your cunning slave has deceived you,
Has not told you the real truth.
Has not told you that his beautiful lady
Has been wedded in God’s church.
Wedded to a young merchant
In accord with our Christian law...

This is the first and only auctorial comment, and it strikes an unmistakably ominous note.
The second section opens with the husband at work. Once again the narrative moves un-
hurriedly forward, from one little detail to the next:

За прилавкою сидит молодой купец,
 Статный молодец Степан Парамонович,
 По прозванию Калашников;
 Шелковые товары раскладывает,
 Речью ласковой гостей он заманивает,
 Злато, серебро пересчитывает.
 Да недобрый день задался ему:
 Ходят мимо баре богатые,
 В его лавочку не заглядывают.

The young merchant sits at his counter,
 Stately, impressive Stepan Paramonovich,
 With the family name of Kalashnikov;
 He spreads out his silk wares,
 With inviting voice he seeks to attract passers-by,
 He counts over his gold and his silver.
 But this has turned out no good day for him:
 The rich boyars walk past:
 They do not so much as glance into his store.

The bells have stopped ringing for evensong, there is a lurid red dusk behind the Kremlin, clouds hurry across the sky, a storm is brewing, and Kalashnikov closes his store. Every step of this is detailed in the poem. Returning home, he finds no wife, no children, no evening meal laid. The candle before the icon is barely alight. He is told that the priest and the priest's wife have long since passed by on their way back from church and are at table. At last his wife returns:

Вот он слышит в сенях дверью хлопнули,
 Потом слышит шаги торопливые;
 Обернулся, глядит — сила крестная!
 Перед ним стоит молода жена,
 Сама бледная, простоволосая,
 Косы русые расплетенные
 Снегом-инеем пересыпаны;
 Смотрют очи мутные, как безумные;
 Уста шепчут речи непонятные.

And he hears the door slam in the entranceway,
 Then he hears hurried footsteps;
 He turns, he looks — Almighty God!
 He sees before him his young wife standing
 Pale, bare-headed,
 Her fair tresses are unbraided,
 Are powdered with snow and frost;
 Her eyes are confused, disordered, mad-looking;
 Her lips whisper things unintelligible.

Kalashnikov interrogates his wife in the kind of detail we now expect. He is suspicious, reproachful, threatening (13 lines). And, distraught though she is, Alena Dmitrevna responds, not merely at length, but with clarity and precision (59 lines), recalling accurately what the accosting Kiribeevich whispered to her. This is in part:

„Отвечай мне, чего тебе надобно,
 Моя милая, драгоценная!
 Хочешь золота али жемчугу?
 Хочешь ярких камней аль цветной парчи?
 Как царицу я наряжу тебя,
 Станут все тебе завидовать,
 Лишь не дай мне умереть смертью грешною:
 Полюби меня, обними меня
 Хоть единый раз на прощание!”

«И ласкал он меня, целовал меня;
 На щеках моих и теперь горят,
 Живым пламенем разливаются
 Поцалуи его окаянные...
 А смотрели в калитку соседушки,
 Смеючись, на нас пальцем показывали...»

“Answer me, tell me what you want,
 My dear one, my precious one!
 Do you want gold or pearls?
 Do you want bright stones or colored brocade?
 I will array you like a queen, like a tsaritsa,
 Everyone will envy you.
 Only don't let me die a sinful death:
 Love me, embrace me —
 Just one single time in farewell!”
 And he caressed me and kissed me...
 On my cheeks which still burn,
 His accursed kisses
 Spread like a live flame...
 And the neighbor women looked through the gate at us,
 Laughing and pointing at us with their fingers...”

She had torn herself free, but she had left in his hands a patterned kerchief (her husband's gift) and her Bokhara veil, the same one, presumably, that she had used in the first section to avoid seeing or being seen by Kiribeevich. This provides another example of Lermontov's skillful introduction of apparently trivial details which later assume significance. She has lost the veil she used to protect herself from Kiribeevich. She stands dishonored by his advances. Kalashnikov summons his brothers, tells them what happened and his plans for the next day, enlisting their support (34 lines). We pass over the details of this passage.

The opening of the second section described the close of Kalashnikov's inauspicious work day: the ruddy dusk behind the Kremlin, clouds moving in, the approaching storm, create a mood of ill omen in anticipation of the mischief that is afoot on the streets of Moscow that night. At the beginning of the third section nature is again enlisted to produce a sense of foreboding. At first everything seems all right. The storm has gone over, the dawn is bright and clear:

Над Москвой великой, златоглавою,
 Над стеной кремлевской белокаменной
 Из-за дальних лесов, из-за синих гор,

По тесовым кровелькам играючи,
 Тучки серые разгоняючи,
 Заря алая подымается;
 Разметала кудри золотистые,
 Умывается снегами рассыпчатыми,
 Как красавица глядя в зеркальцо,
 В небо чистое смотрит, улыбается.

Over great golden-crowned Moscow,
 Over the white-stone Kremlin wall,
 From the far forests and the blue mountains,
 Moving playfully over the shingled roofs,
 Driving away the gray clouds,
 Rises the crimson dawn;
 The dawn shakes free her golden locks,
 Bathes herself in light loose snow,
 And, like a beauty gazing in her mirror,
 Looks into the clear sky and smiles.

But then comes the reversal. All this good weather does not, the reader is now told, betoken a lightening of the mood, a removal of the imminent threat:

Уж зачем ты, алая заря, просыпалася?
 На какой ты радости разыгралася?

But why, crimson dawn, have you awoken?
 To what sort of joy have you displayed yourself, cavorting?

Meanwhile, the brave Muscovites, the Tsar, his boyars, and his retainers all have collected on the Moscow River for the boxing. The Tsar orders that an area be measured off (four lines) and that a proclamation be made (17 lines):

«Ой, уж где вы, добрые молодцы?
 Вы потешьте царя нашего батюшку!
 Выходите-ка во широкий круг;
 Кто побьет кого, того царь наградит,
 А кто будет побит, тому Бог простит!»

“Where are you then, good men of strength?
 Give pleasure now to our tsar, our father!
 Come forward into the wide circle;
 Whoever wins, the Tsar will reward him,
 And whoever loses, God will forgive him!”

So the brave Kiribeevich comes forward, bows low and silently to the Tsar, flings his velvet coat from his mighty shoulders, puts his right hand above his hip, with his left straightens his crimson cap, and waits for an opponent to come forward. Three times the challenge is proclaimed. But no one comes forward: they only stand and push each other. Kiribeevich taunts them and promises that in honor of the feast-day he will let his opponent get off with his life, “just so long as I may give pleasure to our Tsar, our father.” Suddenly the crowd parts, and Klashnikov comes forward.

The reason for the delay is not clear: Kalashnikov had declared his plan the evening before. The reader is certainly not supposed to surmise that he had a temporary change of heart or that he had a moment of fear. The delay serves a purpose: it causes Kiribeevich to taunt the crowd, with words he will shortly rue, and lets the reader know that Kiribeevich is not insisting on mortal combat, a good fight to give pleasure to the Tsar will satisfy him. When both strong men are dead as they will and must be, this will increase that sense of waste. Perfectly motivated or not, the delay is in complete harmony with the poem's logistics of tragedy: no one can be deterred from his course of action, but no one is in any hurry. Kalashnikov will never be deterred from his vengeance. But he will allow it to be accomplished in an orderly, ritualistic manner.

Kalashnikov, too, bows to the Tsar, then to the white Kremlin and the holy churches, and then to all the Russian people. His hawk-like eyes burn, he looks fixedly at his opponent, takes up his position opposite him, rolls up his sleeves, shakes his mighty shoulders, and strokes his curly beard. Kiribeevich addresses him:

«А поведай мне, добрый молодец,
Ты какого роду, племени,
Каким именем прозываешься?
Чтобы знать, по ком панихиду служить,
Чтобы было чем и похвастаться».

“Tell me, good man and brave,
From what family are you? What clan?
What name do you call yourself by?
So that we should know for whom the
funeral service should be performed,
So that I should have something to boast about?”

This time, we note, Kiribeevich appears to see his opponent's death as a likely outcome. Maybe he is not totally consistent. Maybe it is part of the effort to intimidate. Certainly, it provides an excellent lead for Kalashnikov:

Отвечает Степан Парамонович:

«А зовут меня Степаном Калашниковым,
А родился я от честнова отца,
И жил я по закону Господнему:
Не позорил я чужой жены,
Не разбойничал ночью темною,
Не таился от свету небесного...
И промолвил ты правду истинную:
Об одном из нас будут панихиду петь,
И не позже, как завтра в час полуденный;
И один из нас будет хвастаться,
С удалыми друзьями пируючи...
Не шутку шутить, не людей смешить
К тебе вышел я теперь, бусурманский сын,
Вышел я на страшный бой, на последний бой!»
И услышав то, Кирибеевич
Полбледнел в лице, как осенний снег:
Бойки очи его затуманились,

Между сильных плеч пробежал мороз,
На раскрытых устах слово замерло...

“They call me Stepan Kalashnikov,
And I was born of an honorable father,
And I’ve lived by the law of the Lord:
I’ve not done dishonor to another man’s wife,
Have not roamed like a robber in the dark night,
Have not hidden from the light of heaven...
But you spoke a truth that is very true:
For one of us they will sing the funeral chant,
And no later than at noon tomorrow,
And one of us there’ll be who’ll be boasting
As he feasts with his brave friends...
Not to make a joke, not to amuse people
Have I come out to you, infidel son,
I have come out to fight a fearsome
fight, a fight to the end!”

And hearing that, Kiribeevich
Grew pale in his face, like autumn snow:
His bold eyes clouded over,
A frosty cold ran between his strong shoulders,
And on his opened lips the word died away...

Here again we note a near echo from an earlier scene. Describing the overwhelming effect Alena Dmitrevna has on him, Kiribeevich had in the first scene spoken of his bold eyes growing dark; the image is repeated here, using a similar but not identical verb (*zatumanilis’* in place of *porachaiutsia*), but now it is the husband’s threat that works the change.

Kiribeevich strikes the first blow, a punch to the chest which bends the bronze cross on Kalashnikov’s neck and buries it in his chest, causing the blood to flow, staggering him. Kalashnikov strikes Kiribeevich on the left temple:

И опричник молодой застонал слегка,
Закачался, упал замертво;

And the young retainer groaned a little,
Staggered, and fell dead.

When he sees what has happened, Tsar Ivan frowns with his dark brows:

Как возгóворил православный царь:
«Отвечай мне по правде, по совести,
Вольной волею или нехотя,
Ты убил на смерть моего верного слугу,
Мого лучшего бойца Кирибеевича?»

«Я скажу тебе, православный царь:
Я убил его вольной волею,
А за что про что — не скажу тебе,
Скажу только Богу единому.
Прикажи меня казнить — и на плаху несть

Мне головушку повинную;
 Не оставь лишь малых детушек,
 Не оставь молодую вдову,
 Да двух братьев моих своей милостью...»

The Orthodox Tsar spoke:

“Answer me in truth, in accordance with your conscience,
 Of your free will or unintentionally
 Did you kill my true servant,
 My best fighting man, Kiribeevich?”
 “I will tell you, Orthodox Tsar,
 I killed him of my own free will,
 But as for why — that I won’t tell you.
 That I will tell only to God alone.³⁰
 Order me to be executed — on the block to lay down
 My guilty head;
 Only do not abandon my young children,
 Do not abandon my young widow,
 Nor my two brothers with your mercy. . .”

Kalashnikov is adamant in his refusal to tell the Tsar why he killed Kiribeevich. But he does not hesitate to ask a favor for his family, assuming almost a filial role before a powerful father. In another repetition, Kalashnikov invites the Tsar to have him beheaded (using the imperative form of the verb “*Prikazhi*”), just as Kiribeevich had done at the opening, when his failure to drink incurred the Tsar’s anger. The Tsar Ivan Vasil’evich now makes his final dispensation:

«Хорошо тебе, детинушка,
 Удалой боец, сын купеческий,
 Что ответ держал ты по совести.
 Молодую жену и сирот твоих
 Из казны моей я пожалую,
 Твоим братьям велю от сего же дня
 По всему царству русскому широкому
 Торговать безданно, беспошлинно.
 А ты сам ступай, детинушка,
 На высокое место лобное,
 Сложи свою буйную головушку.
 Я топор велю наточить-наострить,
 Палача велю одеть-нарядить,
 В большой колокол прикажу звонить,
 Чтобы знали все люди московские,
 Что и ты не оставлен моей милостью...»

“Good for you, my child,
 Brave warrior, merchant son,

³⁰ Cf. the 1837 lyric *Ia ne khochu, chtob svet uznal* (“I do not wish the world to know”), especially the line “Tomu sud’ia lis’ Bog da sovest” (“That is to be judged only by God and my conscience.”).

That you made answer according to conscience.
 Your young wife and your orphans
 I will take care of from my coffers.
 I will order that from this day forth your
 brothers
 May trade without paying taxes,
 Through the length and breadth of the broad
 realm of Russia.
 But for you, child, you shall mount
 On the high place of execution.
 You shall lay down your reckless head.
 I will order that the axe be finely sharpened,
 That the executioner be correctly dressed,
 And I will order that the large bell be rung,
 So that all of Moscow may know
 That you too were not abandoned by my mercy.”

That ends the basic story, but the “ritual” must still be played on to its close:

Как на площади народ собирается,
 Заунывный гудит-воет колокол,
 Разглашает всюду весть недобрую.
 По высокому месту лобному,
 Во рубахе красной с яркой запонкой,
 С большим топором наостренным,
 Руки голые потираючи,
 Палач весело похаживает,
 Удалова бойца дожидается,
 А лихой боец, молодой купец,
 Со родными братьями прощается:
 «Уж вы, братцы мои, други кровные,
 Поцалуемтесь да обнимемтесь
 На последнее расставание.
 Поклонитесь от меня Алёне Дмитриевне,
 Закажите ей меньше печалиться,
 Про меня моим детушкам не сказывать.
 Поклонитесь дому родительскому,
 Поклонитесь всем нашим товарищам,
 Помолитесь сами в церкви Божией
 Вы за душу мою, душу грешную!»

The people collect together on the square,
 Mournful the bell tolls, groans,
 Proclaiming to all the evil hour.
 On the high place of execution,
 In a red shirt with shining collar-stud,
 With a large axe finely sharpened,
 Rubbing his bare hands,
 The executioner merrily walks up and down,

Awaiting the brave fighter.
 While the fine fighter, the young merchant,
 Takes his leave of his blood brothers:
 "O you my blood brothers, kin, companions,
 Let us kiss and embrace
 At this the final parting.
 Bow for me before Alena Dmitrevna,
 Instruct her to moderate her grief,
 And about me say no word to my children.
 Bow to our family home,
 Bow to all our comrades
 And pray in the church of God
 For my sinful soul."

So Kalashnikov is executed. He is buried beyond the Moscow River, where three roads meet (from Tula, Riazan, and Vladimir) out in the open fields ("*na chistom pole*"), beneath a mound of earth with a maple cross on it. And the loud winds blow over the grave.

What then are the salient features of this poem, features without which its conception is unthinkable, its impact impossible? The impersonal, uninvolved tone of the narrator is characteristic of folk poetry, as is the step-by-step unfolding of the narrative, the painstaking itemization of all links in the narrative chain, implemented by the accumulating of details often appearing less than essential. We find this narrative technique in the Russian epic and in Homer.

In Lermontov, whose work is literary epic, much further divorced from the oral tradition than Homer, this narrative technique performs several functions. One is to give the reader the constant illusion that he is within the realm of oral poetry, or at least within the folk tradition. This is a very important function, since it makes the reader flexible and willing to accept things against which he might rebel, were he not persuaded that a folk element is present, demanding a specially receptive attitude on his part.

The delays and enumerations also impart a slightly rigid, ritual character to the entire narrative, first to those parts bearing on everyday routines, the framework of the protagonists' existence, and second to the specific acts which disrupt that routine and thus bear the burden of the tale. This colors our perception of both protagonists' daily existence and their conduct as the action unfolds. Do we need to know the seating arrangements for Ivan's feasting, the type of wine, or the vessel into which it is decanted? Of course, because these details tell us that the normal rituals for the Tsar's feasting are being correctly observed. When Kalashnikov closes his store, do we need to know that his door is of oak, that he has a spring-operated German bolt, and that his final act in closing is to attach the mean guard-dog to his iron chain? Any one of these details taken in isolation could be omitted or replaced. But taken together, they paint an admirable picture of the merchant methodically and meticulously going through the necessary precautionary measures as he is accustomed to do every evening. Do we need to know when Kalashnikov arrives home that the oak table is not covered with its white tablecloth or that the candle before the icon is scarcely burning? Of course, for these are clear indications, central to the household routine, of the wife's presence or absence.

Turning to disruptive events, i.e., to the main narrative line, do we need to know all the details given by Kiribeevich to his Tsar? We do. For Kiribeevich's description of his love pains help to characterize him and make understandable his motivation, his compulsion. Does Alena Dmitrevna need to tell her husband every detail of her being waylaid? This is the only way the

reader gets to know the extent of the wrongdoing, what really happened. It tells us also about Alena Dmitrevna's attitude toward Kiribeevich and toward her husband. But does the reader really need to know about the executioner: his axe, his dress, his bare hands, his walking merrily ("veselo") up and down? Indeed yes, for the Tsar had promised the axe would be sharp, and it is; that the executioner would be properly dressed, and he is. But over and beyond these several functions, the enumeration of such details one on top of the other imparts to the narrative a slow, inexorable, irreversible movement, an inevitability.

This sense of inevitability is strengthened by another factor relating to the enumeration of details. There is a tendency, mentioned above, for details to repeat themselves, to crop up again in the poem in different circumstances. The most obvious immediate "echoes" are in the form of dialog: the question-and-answer exchange between Ivan and Kiribeevich, the pre-fight exchange between Kiribeevich and Kalashnikov, and the Tsar's response to Kalashnikov's last request. In all these exchanges, details brought forward by the first speaker appear in the second speaker's response. But there are also examples of apparently fortuitous details acquiring added significance when they reappear later in the narrative: Ivan's question to Kiribeevich in the first section foreshadows the fatal encounter in the final section; Alena Dmitrevna's veil, which she uses, in Kiribeevich's narrative, to cover her face from him and which, during their nighttime encounter is left in his hands as she flees; Kiribeevich's recounting how his bold eyes grow dim in Alena Dmitrevna's presence and the narrator recording that same phenomenon later when Kiribeevich is threatened by Kalashnikov; Kiribeevich's invitation to the Tsar to have him beheaded, in the opening scene, and the Tsar's order at the end to have Kalashnikov beheaded.

Repetitions of this sort not only give a certain compactness and symmetry to the work, they also create a sense of an order to the events beyond mere chance, of things proceeding on course to a predestined end. Repetitions are very much a feature of Homeric language.³¹ If we take, for example, those passages toward the end of the *Odyssey* which describe the trapping and killing of the suitors, passages where repetition is more than ordinarily pronounced, we get precisely this same impression of purposeful and irreversible ritual action.

The *Song* is unthinkable without Ivan. He plays a crucial role, far beyond simply ordering Kalashnikov's execution at the end. His autocratic power is in evidence throughout. It is he who presides at the feast, he who grows angry when Kiribeevich fails to drink with the others. And it is to him that the "crier" announcing the boxing match refers as "our father" ("*nashego batiushku*"). Kiribeevich addresses two invitations to him: to have his head cut off or to send him to his death against the Tatars. In the second section, from which Ivan is absent, Kiribeevich, importuning Alena Dmitrevna, tells her: "I am no thief.... I'm a servant of the Tsar, of the dread Tsar." In the third section Ivan again presides. He is angry at Kalashnikov, as in the first section he was momentarily angry with Kiribeevich, and he orders Kalashnikov's head cut off, a punishment that Kiribeevich had suggested for himself in the first section. Ivan's pervasive presence makes itself felt throughout, finally bringing the tragedy to its conclusion by having Kalashnikov executed. But apart from this primary and obvious role, Ivan plays another, less obvious one. He is not only the tsar of all the Russias, he is also the father of all the Russians. Kiribeevich refers to him as "our father," and Ivan calls Kalashnikov "child" ("*detinushka*"). Ivan is not simply Ivan the Terrible, the autocratic tyrant. He is a father-figure and a moral arbitrator, following in part the stern dictates of a code whose logic may be unclear to the modern Western reader. Thus, he calls Kalashnikov "child," recognizes his bravery, applauds his honesty, and rewards him for

³¹ See, especially, Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse* (N.Y., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

that with everything except his life, to grant which would have been apparently unthinkable. Kasha-nikov knows this, for he, too, understands the code.

This particular episode derives from folklore, from the tradition of the robber folk poem. The captured robber is pictured imagining the morrow when he will be questioned by the Tsar:

Еще станет государь-царь меня спрашивать:
 Ты скажи, скажи, детинушка крестьянский сын,
 Уж как с кем ты воровал, с кем разбой держал,
 Еще много ли с тобой было товарищей?
 Я скажу тебе, надежа православный царь,
 Всеё правду скажу тебе, всю истину,
 Что товарищей у меня было четверо:
 Еще первой мой товарищ темная ночь,
 А второй мой товарищ булатный нож,
 А как третий-то товарищ, то мой добрый конь,
 А четвертый мой товарищ, то тугой лук,
 Что рассыльщики мои, то калены стрелы.
 Что возговорит надежа православный царь:
 Исполать тебе, детинушка крестьянский сын,
 Что умел ты воровать, умел ответ держать!
 Я за то тебя, детинушка, пожалуйю
 Среди поля хоромами высокими,
 Что двумя ли столбами с перекладиной.

And the sovereign Tsar will begin to question me:
 Tell me, tell me, child, peasant son,
 With whom did you do your thieving, with whom
 did you go raiding,
 And did you have many comrades?
 I will tell you, bright hope, Orthodox Tsar,
 I will tell you the whole truth, nothing but the truth.
 My comrades were four, four in number:
 First of my comrades was the dark night,
 Second of my comrades was my sharp knife,
 Third of my comrades was my good horse,
 And fourth of my comrades was my taut bow,
 And my messengers were my steel-tipped arrows.
 And what will our bright hope, the Orthodox Tsar, then say?
 Thanks be to you, child, peasant son,
 That you knew how to steal, and knew how to make answer!
 For that I will reward you, child,
 With lofty mansions out in the field,
 With two upright poles and a cross-piece.³²

³² Pushkin gave the source of this piece as *Novoe i polnoe sobranie rossiiskikh pesen (New and Complete Collection of Russian Songs)*, 1780, part I, 147. He uses it as Pugachev's favorite song in *Kapitanskaia dochka (The Captain's Daughter)*, Ch. VIII.

There are a number of sources from which Lermontov could have had access to this song. "He could have known it," N. M. Mendel'son writes, "from the song book collections [*pesen-niki*].... and from the *Novyi Zhivopisets (New Painter)*, No. 8, 1830.... and from Pushkin's *Kapitanskaia dochka* [just published in *Sovremennik (The Contemporary)*, IV, on December 22, 1836, [Mendel'son has a misprint when he writes 1833 — WNV]]...."³³ The original twist Lermontov gives to the situation is important. Traditionally, the robber is an avowed robber and deserving of punishment; but Kalashnikov is no robber and does not really deserve punishment. And traditionally, the guilty robber's "true" confession is designedly evasive; while Kalashnikov, pronouncing his act to be deliberate, refuses to reveal what motivated him.

Ivan derives his moral authority not only from his position as supreme monarch but also from his position as head of the Orthodox Church and God's representative on earth. He is several times addressed as "Orthodox Tsar." This brings us to two other elements which make themselves felt throughout — the Orthodox Church and Muscovite Russia. These two are so indissolubly linked as to form, here at any rate, a single concept. Not only is Ivan the "Orthodox Tsar," the people are described as "Orthodox." The Tsar feasts "to the glory of God." When he tells the Tsar of his love, Kiribeevich claims that not "in Holy Russia" can her equal be found. Kalashnikov's working day drawing to a close is marked by the bells that have now ceased ringing to evensong. Alena Dmitrevna is accosted on her way home from evensong. The loser in the boxing will be forgiven by God. When he comes forward to fight, Kalashnikov does not omit to bow to the Kremlin and the holy churches. When Kiribeevich seeks to taunt and intimidate Kalashnikov, he speaks of a funeral service for him. And Kalashnikov, responding, picks up the image; also claiming to have lived according to the law of the Lord. With Kiribeevich dead, Kalashnikov refuses to tell the reason for the killing which he will reveal "only to God alone." And the last thing Kalashnikov requests of his brothers is that they pray for his sinful soul in the church of God. The Orthodox Church and the Mother Russia of sixteenth-century Moscow form a single concept, the latter impossible without the former. And together they frame the *Song*, enhancing the feeling of history and adding to the ritual aspects of the poem.

Nature plays a small but significant role in the poem. The incoming storm of the evening and the clear skies of the following dawn bode ill. Birds are a part of nature, and birds of prey play an ominous role. Ivan's keen eyes gazing in anger on Kalashnikov are likened to the eyes of a hawk (*iastreb*) looking down from the high heavens at a young pigeon. Kiribeevich imagines himself lying dead, with a kite (*korshun*) pecking out his tear-filled eyes. And Kalashnikov, whose threatening stance toward Kiribeevich loosely parallels Ivan's earlier threatening stance toward him, looks at his opponent with burning falcon-like eyes ("*goriat ochi ego sokolinye*"). Finally, the blustering winds that blow loud over Kalashnikov's grave have a message, although a cryptic one. Certainly this is not reconciliation with a consoling and peaceful nature, such as

³³ *Venok M. Iu. Lermontovu* (M.-P., 1914), 189-90. Though Lermontov was almost certainly acquainted with other sources, *Kapitanskaia dochka*, in which Pugachev (VIII) declares this song his favorite, seems in view of dates the most probable direct stimulus to Lermontov's including his variant. 1837, though not an absolutely undisputed date, was the one given in Lermontov's 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*, and Lermontov had no apparent reason to wish to mislead his readers. We may also speculate that the favor asked by Kalashnikov that the Tsar take care of his children, widow and brothers may well have entered Lermontov's consciousness following a somewhat similar favor granted by Nicholas to the dying Pushkin, a favor of which Lermontov was very much aware, for he mentions it approvingly in his February, 1837, "explanation" of his "impermissible verses" on Pushkin's death.

Turgenev brought to Bazarov's last resting place in *Fathers and Sons*. If there is a reconciliation or fusion with nature, it is with a nature as harsh and savage as the events of the tale.

No less harsh and savage is the moral outlook which informs this epic. It guides the actions of Ivan and Kalashnikov. I spoke above of a code. It is not the code of the Orthodox Church, nor of any truly Christian church. It would be difficult and probably misguided to attempt to construct for this "code" a systematic and consistent philosophy. Our text is not entirely consistent, or rather it allows conflicting views to exist side by side. Ivan claims that the tolling bell will inform the people that he has not abandoned Kalashnikov with his mercy. And this is not sarcasm. But when the bell tolls for the execution, the narrator states that it is to proclaim the "evil hour" ("*nedobruiu vest'*"). Again, Ivan treats Kalashnikov with something approaching honor; but when Kalashnikov dies, it is described as a cruel and even a shameful death ("*smert'iu liutoiu, pozornoiu*"). The action is almost mechanistic, although we, modern readers, are not entirely privy to its workings. It is like a mechanism which we almost understand, but of which one piece eludes our rational comprehension. But it does not baffle Kalashnikov or Ivan. They know what they have to do. And, in his lesser role, so does Kiribeevich.

Kiribeevich is clearly a braggart: vain, spoiled, inconsiderate, and used to having his way with women. But he is not a thoroughly evil man. When he dies with a slight groan, from a single blow to the temple, the reader must surely feel some sort of shock, a sense of waste. Was his death really a necessity? But within the context of the poem's harsh mores, it was. Before the reader has time to ponder this, his attention, sympathy and concern are transferred to Kalashnikov. He has acquitted himself well: surely he, too, doesn't have to die? Was it not a fair fight? But he has killed the Tsar's man. And that means death. Or does it? If he explains his just cause to the Tsar, will he not be reprieved? Presumably so. But this is something Kalashnikov cannot and will not do. He knows the role he must play. He answers the Tsar's question: he killed Kiribeevich intentionally; and then, without waiting for the inevitable second question, he declares defiantly that he will not tell the Tsar why he is going to meet his death.³⁴

Where, in conclusion, does *The Song of Tsar Ivan Vasil'evich* belong among Lermontov's works? I rank it very high, not that it has normally been really neglected. But the attention and praise it has received have often been grossly misdirected. Some critics seem to believe that the highest praise that can be lavished on this work is to affirm that it has accurately caught the spirit of the folk poetry to which it is related, as though the *Volk* could do no wrong. But by no means all folk poetry is of high quality. So let us boldly assert that there is not a piece in the Kirsha Danilov collection that can hold a candle to Lermontov's poem. The reason for the uncritical adulation of the *Volk* is clear. The Romantic age found a commendably large place for the *Volk*, and twentieth-century Russian and Soviet criticism often tends to reinforce what Romanticism set up. It is essential that a work like Lermontov's *Song* catch the spirit of folk poetry. If it fails to do so because of stylistic aberrations or anachronisms, the reader is shaken from the folk context in which he is receiving the poem, the illusion is lost, and the poem cannot fail to forfeit its effectiveness. Therefore folk spirit is the foundation on which Lermontov must build.

But to limit critical evaluation to the degree of approximation to the *Volk* is to do the work an injustice. It means neglecting analysis of the poem's esthetic qualities. The poem must be brought out onto the broad arena of literature and judged and felt for what it really is, for that central quality which determines, orders, and gives meaning to other contributing qualities, traits, aspects, for its tragic spirit. This poem is one of the great tragic works of literature. If in world

³⁴ John Mersereau "The Song of the Merchant Kalashnikov': An Allegorical Interpretation," *California Slavic Studies*, I (1960), 110-33; also Eikhenbaum 1961, 86.

literature, we are to look for a kindred tragic spirit, then I suggest we look to Homer's *Iliad*. Among works belonging to the modern Western literary tradition, I cannot pass by Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*, although it is not a tragedy. However, it exhibits the same leisurely dialog and the same attention to small detail, helping to create the image of a meaningful patriarchal world. And Goethe was, of course, also coming from the Greeks.³⁵

3

Tambovskaia kaznacheisha (*The Wife of the Treasurer of Tambov*) is the second of the so-called comic or ironic poems. Written in four-foot iambs, it consisted originally of 756 lines. A number of these have been excised, whether by Zhukovskii, Pletnev, or the censor is not certain. P. A. Pletnev (1792-1865), Russian critic and poet and rector of Petersburg University, was also, like Zhukovskii, a tutor of the imperial family and the editor of *Sovremennik*, in which journal *Tambovskaia kaznacheisha* was published in 1838. His position as mentor of the imperial children seems to have made Pletnev more than usually circumspect about admitting even remotely risqué materials to the pages of *Sovremennik*. The substitution of the letter T for Tambov, the change of title to *Kaznacheisha*, and the removal of the author's name were probably decisions of the censor. Lermontov was visibly and audibly outraged.³⁶

Tambovskaia kaznacheisha cannot be dated with precision, but it must have been completed after Lermontov's departure for exile in 1837 (stanza XXIX expresses his wish to rejoin his original regiment, the Life Guard Hussars) and before February 15, 1838, when he wrote M. A. Lopukhina from Petersburg that it would be published in the next issue of *Sovremennik*. Its conception may go back to 1836, when Lermontov visited Tambov en route to Tarkhany.³⁷

The most visible and significant formal characteristic of *Tambovskaia kaznacheisha* is that it is written in the fourteen-line Onegin stanza with the following rhyme scheme: AbAb CCddEffEgg. In all, 54 stanzas. Over the eight chapters of *Evgenii Onegin* Pushkin demonstrated the wide variety of syntactic patterns and lexical levels his Onegin stanza could be made to bear, as well as the stanza's versatility in terms of emotional range and shifting moods. Lermontov's poem amounts to approximately only one of Pushkin's chapters. Its mood is more consistently, though not wholly, comic. In style, it is closest to Pushkin's first chapter, in which the wit, the ebullience, the eye for the incongruous, the instinct for the amusingly significant detail, the sensation of total ease in both narrative and description are as yet undarkened by the more somber and sadder moods to follow. These characteristics are picked up admirably in *Tambovskaia kaznacheisha*. Lermontov's poem may be seen as a parody of one aspect of *Evgenii Onegin*. But more than a parody, it is a declaration of support for Pushkin's style and outlook in that work:

Пускай слыву я старовером,
Мне всё равно — я даже рад:

³⁵ Eikhenbaum is, where the *Song* is concerned, totally disoriented. In 1924 his attention is on the *Song* as an attempt to remedy the inadequacies of *Boiarin Orsha*, and the *Song* is "a characteristic symptom of his evolution." In 1961 he is hopelessly imbroiled in Belinskii's fallen-angel musings linking Ivan the Terrible and the Demon. Good for Belinskii, but not calculated to shed light on the esthetic merits of Lermontov's poem. See Eikhenbaum 1924, 119, and 1961, 84-86.

³⁶ Published in *Sovremennik*, 1838, XI, No. 3, otd. VIII, 149-178. For Pletnev's probable role in the cutting see Emma Gershtein, *Sud'ba Lermontova* (Moscow, 1964), 66-67. Lermontov's fury is described by I. I. Panaev, *Literaturnye vospominaniia* (GIKhL, 1950), 135.

³⁷ *Ak. nauk*, VI, 442-44.

Пишу Онегина размером;
Пою, друзья, на старый лад.

I may be called an old believer,
I don't care — I'm even glad:
Employing the Onegin stanza,
I sing, my friends, in the old style.

I would not go so far as Soviet commentators, who like to see here a polemical stand in favor of a now unfashionable realism and against romantic pretentiousness.³⁸ This literary partisanship cannot be read into the four lines quoted. What the lines and use of the Onegin style in general constitute is an expression of Lermontov's determination to align himself with the recently deceased Pushkin, whose popularity was and from 1830 had been at a low ebb.³⁹ *Tambovskaia kaznacheisha* was also more than an imitation. It had a certain quality peculiar to Lermontov. The glowing accolades listed above for Pushkin's first chapter apply no less forcefully to his young follower. But there is a difference emanating from a difference in poetic personality. While Pushkin in *Evgenii Onegin* is not slow to castigate stupidity and baseness, he does not quite give us, for such is not his intent, the benighted provincial Russia that we glimpse in *Tambovskaia kaznacheisha*. Lermontov has moved us one step closer to Gogol': to *Revizor* (*The Inspector General*) and *Mertvye dushi* (*Dead Souls*); closer to Valentin Kataev's *Rasstrachiki* (*The Embezzlers*).

Evgenii Onegin is not the only antecedent worthy of note. There is Pushkin's incomparable *Graf Nulin*. And some commentators also point to *Domik v Kolomne*. In terms of overall literary provenance and of genre, they are right. But the non-caesural five-foot iamb is a very different tool from the rapier-like four-foot iamb. And *Domik v Kolomne* is, pace Pushkin, so undistinguished a work that I make the comparison reluctantly.⁴⁰ There are other, less distinguished works which deserve mention: V. L. Pushkin's *Opasnyi sosed*, Lermontov's own *Mongo* (1836), and his erotically pornographic Junker narrative poems (1833-34). All these poems can be considered to have served a purpose, as noted in the discussion of *Sashka*, in developing Lermontov's use of the scabrous but amusing episode and the small but telling detail.

As an example of Lermontov's ability with a few bold strokes of detail to put together a complex and amusing picture let us take his first-stanza description of Tambov:

Тамбов на карте генеральной
Кружком означен не всегда;
Он прежде город был опальный,
Теперь же, право, хоть куда.
Там есть три улицы прямые,
И фонари и мостовые,
Там два трактира есть, один
Московский, а другой Берлин.
Там есть еще четыре будки,
При них два будочника есть;
По форме отдают вам честь,

³⁸ E.g., V. A. Manuilov, *Tambovskaia kaznacheisha*, L. E., 561.

³⁹ *Khud. lit.* 1983-84, II, 495.

⁴⁰ Without sharing my low opinion of *Domik v Kolomne*, B. V. Tomashevskii insists on the great difference separating the two works: a difference not only in meter but in tone. See his *Pushkin* (M.-L.: Ak. nauk, 1961), II, 394-95.

И смена им два раза в сутки;
 [Там зданье лучшее острог.]
 Короче, славный городок.

Tambov on our country's maps
 Does not always rate a small circle;
 It was once in official disfavor,
 But is today doing just fine.
 It possesses three straight streets,
 Some street-lamps and carriage-ways,
 It has two inns, one the Moscow,
 And the other the Berlin.
 It has also four sentry-boxes,
 With — at hand — two sentries;
 They will salute you in regulation manner,
 And they are relieved twice in every 24-hour period;
 [The best building there is the jail.]
 In short, a glorious little town.⁴¹

The central episode in the poem starts with the arrival of a regiment of uhlans who are to winter in Tambov. The main protagonist is Captain Garin, who is quartered in the Moscow, directly opposite the home of the elderly treasurer of Tambov. Through their respective windows Garin and the treasurer's comely wife conduct a flirtation. Eventually Garin is invited to the treasurer's home and finds the wife, Avdot'ia Nikolavna, extremely attractive. He returns next morning to press his suit, and the treasurer surprises them with Garin compromisingly on bended knee before Avdot'ia Nikolavna. Garin leaves. He receives a note from the treasurer: not the anticipated challenge, but an invitation to an evening of cards! The treasurer, who cheats at cards, engages with Garin in a late-night card duel. The treasurer loses all his possessions. Finally he bets his wife and loses. Avdot'ia Nikolavna flings her wedding ring in his face and faints. Garin picks her up and carries her off, and the story ends.

We have emphasized the importance for *Tambovskaia kaznacheisha* of strategically chosen detail. The poem is characterized by the high quality of its graphic precision, its clarity, the pointedness of the narrator's observations and characterizations and of the comments and reflections contained in his digressions, the laconic succinctness of the style. Here are some examples of these attributes. In the third stanza Tambov has received news of the arrival of the uhlans. Excitement runs high among the mothers and daughters, who speculate on balls and betrothals:

Зато, несносные скупцы,
 Неумолимые отцы
 Пришли в раздумье: сабли, шпоры
 Беда для крашенных полов...
 Так волновался весь Тамбов.

(III)

⁴¹ The penultimate line is one of those excised. Some of these lines were restored, thanks to Shan-Girei's memory. Since, years later, this is not always impeccable, and no manuscript survived, they are not included in the canonical text. However in the present instance and in brackets, it is worth noting. See Lermontov 1983-84, 495-96.

But, unbearable misers,
The unmoved fathers
Pondered: sabres and spurs
Damage polished floors....
Thus all Tambov was agog.

One early morning the regiment rides in:

Уланы справа по-шести
Вступили в город; музыканты,
Дремля на лошадях своих,
Играли марш из *Двух слепых*.

(IV)

The uhlans in rows of six from the right
Came into town; their bandsmen,
Half asleep on their horses,
Were playing a march from *Les aveugles*.⁴²

Roused from sleep the young ladies watch them through their windows:

И любопытно пробегают
Глаза опухшие девиц
Ряды суровых, пыльных лиц.

(V)

And the girls with swollen eyes
Inspect with curiosity
The ranks of stern and dusty faces.

Но полк прошел. За ним мелькает
Толпа мальчишек городских,
Немытых, шумных и босых.

(VI)

But the regiment is past. Behind it scattered,
Run the young urchins of the town,
Unwashed, noisy, and barefooted.

The epithets used to describe the young boys (*nemytykh, shumnykh i bosykh*) are more than simply adequate, they are extremely funny; in the final line of the stanza, they highlight both the impressive and unimpressive aspects of the regiment's entry.

The nature of the plot makes it unnecessary to emphasize the prosaic, conversational tone which characterizes the poem throughout. One example will suffice to make the point. Avdot'ia Nikolavna is described (stanza XI) as a very tasty bit, piece, or morsel, the same expression as that used in *Sashka* (stanza 55):

И впрямь Авдотья Николавна
Была прелакомый кусок.

⁴² *Les Aveugles de Tolède* was a then-popular opera by Etienne Mehul (1806).

This vein of lighthearted, slightly deprecating, amusedly satirical banter is not maintained consistently to the poem's end. The wife's flinging her wedding ring in her husband's face is not reported as one more funny but endearing incident of Russian provincial life. The very baldness of the narrator's account makes this a disturbing turn of events:

Тогда Авдотья Николавна,
Встав с кресел, медленно и плавно
К столу в молчаньи подошла —
Но только цвет ее чела
Был страшно бледен. Обомлела
Толпа. Все ждуть чего-нибудь —
Упреков, жалоб, слез... Ничуть!
Она на мужа посмотрела
И бросила ему в лицо
Свое венчальное кольцо —

И в обморок.

And then Avdot'ia Nikolavna
Got to her feet, and slowly, smoothly,
Advanced in silence to the table —
Her brow was pale, too pale indeed,
And stupefied the crowd fell back —
Ye gods, and what is coming now?
Reproaches? Tears? Complaints? No way!
She looked her husband in the eye
And flung into his face
Her wedding ring —
And fainted....

Everything in the style emphasizes the dramatic, unfunny nature of Avdot'ia Nikolavna's action: the short, abrupt phrases; the enjambments; the allocation to the stanza's final rhymed couplet of the climax ("*I brosilu emu v litso/Svoe venchal' noe kol'tso*"); and finally the carryover into the following stanza of the compressed and in Russian verbless "*I v obmorok*" ("And fainted..."). To lovers of *Evgenii Onegin* it can only recall a roughly similar carryover as Tatiana flees Onegin (III, 38-39).

Lidiia Ginzburg's comments I find out of place and, though strictly true, very misleading: "It was, by virtue of the essential nature of Lermontov's poetic personality, out of keeping for him to simply joke. Joking is almost completely absent from his lyric poetry. His epigrams and album verses are not very successful. His *Kaznacheisha* was conceived as a comedy ("v shutochnom plane") which, in spite of the Onegin stanza, ... owes less to *Onegin* than to *Graf Nulin*. But as distinct from *Graf Nulin*, his *Kaznacheisha* concludes not on a light joke, but with a rather gloomy grotesquerie."⁴³ True, but surely Ginzburg is forgetting that at this stage in literary development the mirthful and the sad are often two sides of the same coin; it requires only the work of an instant to flip the coin over and reveal its other side. For her, it is as though Lermontov alone among others was lacking in a good sense of humor. But Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin* starts on a mirthful note and ends in tragedy. What about Byron and *Don Juan*? As Elizabeth Boyd remarks:

⁴³ *Tvorcheskii put' Lermontova* (L., 1940), 153.

"Don Juan begins in fun but ends in bitterness and sadness."⁴⁴ What we have at the end of *Tambovskaia kaznacheisha* is, *mutatis mutandis*, something akin to what Gogol' has created at the end of the quarrel of the two Ivans: "*Skuchno na etom svete, gospoda*" ("Life, gentlemen, is wearisome on this earth"), to the final scene of *Revizor (The Inspector General)*, or to the scene in *Shinel'* when Akakii Akakievich turns in protest on his persecutors, and one young man realizes that what he had thought funny was really sad.

Ginzburg rightly points to *Graf Nulin* as an example of pure laughter, unadulterated comedy. And this is made possible by the fact that Pushkin consistently refrains from probing beneath the surface. His characters are presented in a designedly superficial manner. But one hint about Natal'ia Pavlovna's inner frustrations, one move in the direction of psychological complexity, and we would find ourselves where we found ourselves with Akakii Akak'evich or with Avdot'ia Nikolavna. And we must acquiesce in Lermontov's wish to make that move. He resolutely keeps everything on the surface, tells us nothing of inner motivations or psychological complexities. He is for most of this work perfectly in the spirit of *Graf Nulin*, making the climax an abrupt change, not only with the flinging of the ring, but in the stanza preceding, in which, though the narrator does not describe the heroine's feelings, he warns us that if we understood her sufferings we would be ready to weep, and then masterfully, contrarily, and ironically tells us that sympathy is ridiculous and should be suppressed:

Что в ней тогда происходило —
Я не берусь вам объяснить;
Ее лицо изобразило
Так много мук, что, может быть,
Когда бы вы их разгадали,
Вы поневоле б зарыдали.
Но пусть участия слеза
Не отуманит вам глаза:
Смешно участие в человеке,
Который жил и знает свет.
Рассказы вымышленных бед
В чувствительном прошедшем веке
Не мало проливали слёз...
Кто же в этом выиграл — вопрос?

What then was taking place inside her
I won't undertake to explain;
Her face expressed
So many torments that perhaps,
If you could guess them,
You would have to break out sobbing.
But let not the tear of sympathy
Becloud your eyes:
Sympathy is laughable in someone
Who has lived and knows the world.
Stories of invented misfortunes
In the sentimental century past

⁴⁴ Byron's *Don Juan* (New Brunswick, 1945), 31.

Produced no little crop of tears....
But who gained therefrom is the question.

So we are confronted with the other side of the coin. Let us then enjoy the lightheartedness of the bulk of this delightful work. But at the end we must confront reality and incorporate the end into our reception of the whole and admire the superb handling of the realities of life.

One footnote should be added. The narrator has not, it is evident, told us how everything ended. He has, he confesses, "stopped at the best moment." Since the question of completedness arose with *Sashka* and will arise again shortly with *Skazka dlia detei*, we should simply say that in *Tambovskaia kaznacheisha* there was completion. The episode ended with the carrying off of Avdot'ia Nikolavna. We may have been frustrated, have wished that the narrator had taken us further. But he took us as far as he wished. This is the only one of the three "ironic" poems about which we can say that, artistically, there was an end, the end of an impressive poem.

4

The short semi-narrative poem *Beglets (The Runaway)*, which consists of 11 four-foot iambs freely rhymed and 21 lines of ternaries, of which 17 are amphibrachic, four are dactylic; the 21 lines, being a Circassian song, cannot be dated with any precision. But it was written in the late 1830's, probably 1837-38, and not before Lermontov's 1837 visit to the Caucasus following his poem on Pushkin's death.

It is subtitled *Gorskaia legenda* ("A Mountain Legend") — and there was a legend circulating in the Caucasus on the theme of cowardice; according to the legend a young Circassian flees from an engagement with the Russians and returns as a sole survivor. This happens in *Beglets*. The young warrior leaves his father and two brothers dead on the field. He returns to his village as sole survivor. He is spurned by his friend, indirectly by his beloved, for he hears a patriotic warlike song coming from her hut, and by his mother. Someone stabs him to death, and his mother averts her eyes in contempt. His spirit wanders the mountains, returning to his village in the early dawn, only to flee again as he hears the reading of the Koran. *Beglets* can be interpreted as a call to freedom and patriotism. It has been suggested that it has a connection with Pushkin's unfinished 1829-30 *Tazit*, published in 1837 in *Sovremennik*. Perhaps, but it should be pointed out that *Tazit* was not a coward; *Tazit*'s "inadequacy" came from an inability to accept the blood-thirsty way of life of his fellow Circassians, in particular his failure to avenge his brother's death.

5

Lermontov wrote his first draft of *Demon* in 1829 at the age of fourteen. He worked on it intermittently until 1839.⁴⁵ Over no other work did he linger so long. This reinforces the impression that *Demon* involved a theme close to his heart, man's relationship to God and the Creation. It is worth keeping in mind that *Demon* was originally conceived when Lermontov was very young. Commentators, tracing the poem over the years, rightly emphasize the improvements. But this tends to create the impression that the final version of *Demon* brings it into line with the

⁴⁵ Not, as previously reckoned, 1841. See *Khudozhestvennaia literatura*, II, 498.

work of Lermontov's last, mature years. Actually, the conception of the final version was not far removed from the initial conception of 1829. *Demon* looks backward rather than forward.⁴⁶

Demon consists of 1132 lines, all four-foot iambs, except for 16 lines of a song sung for the heroine's benefit, which is in four-foot trochees. The poem is divided into two parts. The Demon, long since banished from heaven, is flying apathetically over the Caucasus. He sees the Georgian princess, Tamara, dancing for the last time before her wedding. Her bridegroom is on the way. The Demon falls in love with Tamara. He distracts the traveling bridegroom with lustful thoughts of imminent lovemaking. The latter neglects to pray at the wayside shrine and is ambushed by robbers. He arrives dead on his horse. Tamara flings herself sobbing on her bed. Other suitors woo her in vain. The Demon now has her ear, he visits by night, and she hears his magic ("volshhebnyi") voice. At her request, her father places her in a convent, but she finds no peace of mind. The Demon continues his visits, pleading his love and wishing now to embrace virtue, gain redemption. Tamara's guardian angel tries to intervene, provoking the Demon to fury and a return to his former evil ways. Eventually he kisses the by now inflamed Tamara. The touch is lethal. She dies. The Demon tries to prevent an angel carrying her soul to heaven: "She is mine!" The angel rebuffs him, saying, "She has suffered and loved — and paradise has opened for love!"

The number of different drafts of *Demon* is normally reckoned at eight. A truly detailed investigation of these redactions is for our purposes unnecessary. But a look at the main stages through which the redactions passed can provide rewarding insight into the creative process.⁴⁷

The first redaction (1829), unfinished, consists of 93 four-foot iambic lines on top of two somber little dedications, the second of which is a second draft of the first. It focuses on the rivalry between the Demon and an angel who has fallen in love with a mortal woman, apparently, according to one of two short prose paragraphs laying out the plan, a nun. The Demon seduces her by demonstrating that God is unjust. Her soul goes to hell. What there is of this fragmented and incomplete first redaction more or less sets the tone for the first five redactions.

In the second redaction (1830), consisting of 442 lines, a lute-playing nun in a Spanish convent by the sea is seduced by the Demon, and her soul, too, goes to hell. The Demon acts at times like a timid and very idealistic lover. But the intrusion of the angel causes him to revert to evil and deliberately destroy the nun.

The story line of the third redaction (1831), which has 476 lines, plus a 20-line dedication addressing Varvara Alekseevna Lopukhina as his Madonna (a thought presumably inspired by Pushkin's 1830 *Madonna*), plus a 20-line song alternating 3-foot amphibrachs and anapests, crisscross rhyming, sung by the nun, hews closely to that of the second. One feature of interest is the inclusion of a brief exchange between the nun and the Demon which was later to cause some hesitation both for Lermontov and his posthumous editors:

Она

На что мне знать твои печали,
Зачем ты жалуешься мне?
Ты виноват...

⁴⁶ This point is repeatedly made by Eikhenbaum. See, e.g., *Lermontov: opyt istoriko-literaturnoi otsenki* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1967), 92-93. Also Eikhenbaum; "Khudozhestvennaia problematika Lermontova," *M. Iu. Lermontov* (L.: Biblioteka poeta, 1940), I, 7-28.

⁴⁷ For a detailed investigation see B. T. Udodov, *M. Iu. Lermontov* (Voronezh: Izd. Voronezhskogo universiteta, 1973), 294-332; Margareta Thompson, "The Genesis of Lermontov's *Demon*," unpublished M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1978.

Незнакомец
Против тебя ли?

Она
Нас могут слышать...

Незнакомец
Мы одне!

Она
А Бог?

Незнакомец
На нас не кинет взгляда!
Он небом занят, не землей.

Она
А наказанье, муки ада?

Незнакомец
Так что ж? — ты будешь там со мной!

Nun
Why should I have to know your sorrow?
Why do you complain to me?
You are guilty...

Unknown Man
Before you?

Nun
Someone will hear us...

Unknown Man
We're alone!

Nun
But God?

Unknown Man
He'll not so much as cast a glance on us!
He's interested in heaven, not in earth.

Nun
But punishment, the torments of hell?

Unknown Man
So what? You'll be there with me!

The derisive attitude toward hell and, more so, toward a God interested only in heaven could give offense. When, in 1839, Lermontov was interested in presenting a less controversial *Demon*, he removed it. When *Demon* was first published in 1856 in Karlsruhe by A. I. Filosofov, related to Lermontov through his Stolypin wife, the exchange was missing simply because the 1856 edition was based on a version that did not contain it. In 1857, Filosofov republished *Demon*, again in

Karlsruhe, with the exchange now included. Its survival in subsequent “definitive” editions has, however, been problematical. Eikhenbaum included it in his 1935 five-volume Academia edition (III, 477). The six-volume 1954-1957 Academy of Sciences edition prints it in parentheses (IV, 206-207, lines 742-749). The small four-volume 1961-1962 Academy of Sciences edition omits it. But with its presence in the 1983-1984 *Khudozhestvennaia literatura* edition (II, 64-65), in the four-volume 1979 - 1981 Leningrad “Nauka” edition, and in the four-volume Moscow “Pravda” edition (1986) it seems established.

The fourth redaction (1831) consists of seven 8-line stanzas. It is a fragment, and a mere beginning. Its interest lies only in the fact that it is written in non-caesural five-foot iambs (with exclusively masculine rhymes) — as opposed to the familiar four-foot iambs of all the other versions. And it is noteworthy how this very different meter produces altogether different syntactic patterns and intonations.

The fifth redaction (1833-34) of 520 lines not only restores the four-foot iambs, but returns to the now-familiar story of the nun seduced. Whether or not her soul goes to hell is not specifically stated. But in the concluding lines, as in the third redaction, an angel is praying to the Creator for the soul of “the young sinner.” So, apparently, her soul has not at that time arrived in heaven. The exchange between the nun and the unknown man (the Demon) introduced in the third redaction is retained. The fifth is the last of the early redactions.

The sixth redaction of 986 lines does not appear till about four years later and is dated September 8, 1838. This is a radically different version. It reflects Lermontov’s enforced stay in the Caucasus following his writing *Smert' poeta* (“Death of a Poet”). The action now takes place in the Caucasus. The heroine is a Georgian princess whose father is preparing to give her in marriage to a prince. The princely bridegroom is now the Demon’s main rival. The same lethal seduction takes place. But laid out in her coffin, Tamara does not, as in earlier versions, show the ravages of her death. On the contrary:

Белей и чище покрывала
 Был томный цвет ее чела.
 Навек опущены ресницы —
 Но кто б взглянувши не сказал,
 Что взор под ними лишь дремал
 И, чудный, только ожидал
 Иль поцелуя иль денницы?

Whiter and purer than the cover
 Was the languid color of her brow.
 Her eyelashes are forever closed —
 But what observer would not say
 That beneath them the eyes only slumbered
 And, wondrous, awaited
 Either a kiss or the touch of dawn?

In the sixth version, in the copy sent to V. A. Lopukhina, now married to Bakhmetev, the song sung by the demon for Tamara, *Na vozdushnom okeane*, appears for the first time. It consists of 16 lines in four-foot trochees. The so-called Erevan copy, discovered only in the Soviet period, also dated September 8, 1838, has a song at the same point in the poem but in four-foot iambs and beginning “*Vzgljani na svod nebes shirokii*” (“Look upon the broad vault of the heavens”). Both songs urge Tamara to imitate the indifference of the clouds and the heavenly bodies:

IAMBIC (EREVAN)

Взгляни на свод небес широкий,
Там беззаботно, как всегда,
Блуждают в синеве высокой
Светил небесные стада;
О скалы хладные цепляясь,
Все так же бродят облака, —
На них роскошно колебаясь,
То развиваясь, то свиваясь
Как будто перья шишака, —
И пляской заняты воздушной,
На землю смотрят равнодушно;
На них, красавица, взгляни,
Будь равнодушна, как они.

Look up at the heaven's wide vault above:
Across the vast expanse of sky,
Now and forever, without care,
There wander flocks of heavenly stars;
And clinging to the frozen cliffs,
Now and forever roam the clouds,
Unraveling now, once more rolled small,
Like feathers in a helmet's plume;
Engaged in dance above the ground,
They look on Earth unfeelingly;
On them, fair maid, lift up your eyes,
And be unfeeling as are they.

TROCHAIC (VI)

«На воздушном океане,
Без руля и без ветрил,
Тихо плавают в тумане
Хоры стройные светил;
Средь полей необозримых
В небе ходят без следа
Облаков неуволвимых
Волокнистые стада.
Час разлуки, час свиданья —
Им ни радость, ни печаль;
Им в грядущем нет желанья
И прошедшего не жаль.
В день томительный несчастья
Ты об них лишь вспомяни;
Будь к земному без участия
И беспечна, как они!

On the ocean of the skies,
Without rudder, without sail,
Quietly swim through the night's mist
The well-ordered choirs of stars;
Through the wide Elysian fields,
With no trace upon the sky,
Fleecy flocks of all-elusive
Clouds pass on their silent way.
Hour of parting, hour of meeting
Bring to them nor joy nor sorrow;
And the future makes no wish,
And the past wakes no regret.
In the anxious day of sorrow
Bear in mind the star and cloud;
For this earth no feeling feel,
Be unfeeling as are they.

The 16-line trochaic song (VI) is generally, and with complete justification, felt to be one of Lermontov's lyric masterpieces: not a word is excess, not a word out of place. Every word is made to count. And the perfect picture is presented of an inexorable heavenly progress. Meanwhile, it is difficult not to acknowledge also the merits of the 13-line iambic piece (Erevan). Nevertheless, the switch to trochees was artistically sound: a change of meter foregrounds the switch from sound to song; and the song's cosmic character renders advisable or at least good sense the move away from the more general -purpose four-foot iambs.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ For his excellent discussion of the Erevan copy see Udodov, 333-57, and indeed for his overall treatment of *Demon*, 213-448.

The shift to the Caucasus and the changes just noted bring *Demon* close to what will be generally accepted as the final version. The shift is held to have been suggested by a Kazbek legend, according to which the evil mountain spirit god falls in love with a young woman and then in jealousy persecutes her betrothed. The shift also brings *Demon* closer to the genre of the Byronic "oriental tale," and "eastern tale" in the poem's subtitle. Specifically it brings *Demon* closer primarily to *The Giaour*, but also to *The Bride of Abydos* and *The Corsair*. This has been ably demonstrated by Joseph T. Shaw. Shaw and others point also to the presence in *Demon* of Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* and his *Loves of the Angels*, and to Vigny's *Eloa*.⁴⁹

There was a seventh redaction, from December 4, 1838; no fair copy of this has survived. The text has, however, been reconstructed by Udodov.⁵⁰ "The one most important addition", as Margareta Thompson notes, "is the long oath in the second part in which the Demon promises to seek reconciliation with God."⁵¹ No fewer than 10 lines in this passage start with *Klianus' / Klianusia* (I swear) and three with *Khochu* (I wish), including the line: "*Khochu ia s nebom primit'sia*" ("I wish to become reconciled with heaven") (lines marked 779-804).

The desired reconciliation with heaven is part of a new-found drive to clean up the text and make it more suitable for publication. A new solution now offered itself. The Empress had expressed a desire to have at court a private reading of *Demon*. If it were well received by the Empress, perhaps the censor would pass it? In preparation for this event Lermontov made revisions which brought into being the so-called "court" version. The nature of the author's changes will be reported below. Meanwhile, the "court" version was read by the Empress February 8 and 9, 1839. On March 7, it was submitted to the censor by V. N. Karamzin (1819-79), youngest son of the distinguished historian, poet and prose writer, who had died in 1836. It was returned to him on March 11, having passed the censor. But A. V. Nikitenko, who had taken upon himself the personal responsibility of approval, had also, understandably seeking to protect himself, made significant cuts which were apparently not acceptable to Lermontov, since he did not go ahead and publish. Almost immediately, the climate in censorship took a change for the worse. At the end of March there was an unrelated censorship scandal, provoked by the ill-judged permission granted to publish a portrait of the deceased Decembrist writer A. A. Bestuzhev-Marlinskii (1797-1837), as a result of which the Third Department director, A. N. Mordvinov, was relieved of his duties. At the end of August an order came down that any materials related to the sphere of the spiritual were from now on to be submitted to ecclesiastical censorship. This would apply directly to *Demon*. Though once passed, it would now have to be submitted again, with slim chances of a successful outcome. The window of opportunity had closed.⁵²

What had been submitted, cut, and approved was the "court" version read by the Empress, and it proved to be the final version. The main differences between the sixth and the court versions are as follows:

⁴⁹ See Joseph T. Shaw, "Lermontov's *Demon* and the Byronic Oriental Verse Tale," *Indiana Slavic Studies* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1958), II, 163-80.

⁵⁰ See Udodov, 671-89.

⁵¹ M. Thompson, 52-53.

⁵² By far the most informative and the clearest account of this episode is that given by V. E. Vatsuro, "K tsenzurnoi istorii "Demona,"" *LIM*, 410-14. See also A. V. Nikitenko, *Dnevnik* (M., 1955), I, 207; M. Lemke, *Nikolaevskie zhandarmy i literatura* (SPb., 1907), 119-20; E. E. Naidich, "Posledniaia redaktsiia "Demona,"" *Russkaia literatura*, 1971, No. 1, 76 H; A. P. Shan-Girei, *LVVS*, 46.

- 1) Above, we noted that the exchange between the woman (then the nun) and the Demon, originally appearing in the third redaction, and beginning "*Zachem mne znat'....*" ("Why should I have to know...."), showed an unseemly attitude toward God and was removed in the court version. At the same time, the passage appears to contradict the Demon's expressed desire to seek goodness and be reconciled with heaven. Consistency in an aroused lover should not perhaps be insisted on. But it must be conceded that the point is debatable. Was the exchange removed for artistic reasons?
- 2) The oath ("*Klianus'....*"), promising a new life and reconciliation with heaven, first appearing in the seventh redaction, is retained. And this has the effect of offering a gentler Demon and providing an excuse for Tamara's imminent surrender.
- 3) In the court version Tamara is portrayed as more maidenly, virginal, childish, and immaculate than she was in the sixth redaction:

И улыбается она,
Веселья детского полна.

And she smiles,
Full of childish merriment.

Her childishness is not entirely absent in VI. For in both these versions she is characterized as

Свободы резвую дитя,
A frolicsome child of freedom....

But when in VI she dances, she is a fullblooded, full-bodied woman, sensual, wanton, shameless, a woman aroused:

как волна,
Нескромной думою полна,
Грудь подымается высоко;
Уста бледнеют и дрожат,
И жадной страсти полон взгляд,
Как страсть палящий и глубокий!

....like a wave,
Filled with an immodest thought,
Her bosom rises high;
Her lips grow pale and tremble,
And her gaze is full of hungry passion,
Burning and deep like passion's self.

These lines are absent from the court version.

- 4) When later Tamara is lying in her coffin, the sixth redaction contains a 26-line passage which dwells on the meaning of "a strange smile" on her face.

Непобедимое ль сомненье?
Иль к жизни хладное презренье?
Иль с небом гордая вражда?

An unconquerable doubt?
Or cold contempt for life?
Or proud enmity toward heaven?

This last line, a favorite of Belinskii's, and most of the lines from this passage have been removed for the court version, though the "cold contempt" remains, although without an object.

Inserted here in the court version, presumably with the purpose of purifying Tamara again, are the following lines:

И ничего в ее лице
Не намекало о конце
В пылу страстей и упоенья;

And nothing in her face
Gave a hint of the way she died
In the heat of passion and ecstasy.

5) Finally, while the sixth redaction ends with the Demon flying past and reproaching the angel "with a bitter smile," the court version has the discomfited Demon rebuffed by the angel, and Tamara is able to observe his evil nature revealed on his unmoving face. In the court version, she is finally saved.

Not only have the different redactions been something of a shifting sand for academic inquiry, but there remains the more important question of a definitive text. I will not take the reader through the various ramifications and opposed views on this issue. From Belinskii on, there have been partisans of the sixth redaction because of its outspokenness and because of the belief that it, rather than the court version, represented the poet's genuine intentions.⁵³ There is much to be said for this view. Meanwhile, what is now treated as the definitive text is basically the court version (as reflected in the 1856 Karlsruhe edition), with the addition of the 8-line Tamara-Demon exchange (which was included in the 1857 Karlsruhe edition). Even on the basis of our summary account of the different redactions, the reader will now understand that the choice between the sixth and the court redactions is not a matter of hairsplitting, of a line here or a line there; the two versions are at odds on such basic issues as characterization, tone, and outcome. It would seem unlikely that this question has now been settled once and for all. However, on the basis of scholarly procedure and artistic result, I believe the sixth redaction has to be recognized as definitive.

What about the poem's artistic merits? Let us begin by noting that, in the established tradition of the Byronic poem, there is a great deal of emphasis on the problems and personality of the hero. The Demon is not really Satanic in the majestic Miltonian sense but has a very human side. He has been compared with the Pechorin of *Geroi nashego vremeni* and with Arbenin, the hero of *Maskarad*. Though he is supposed to be a prince of darkness, we learn:

Он сеял зло без наслажденья.

He sowed evil without enjoyment....

He is ready, too, given good reason, to become reconciled and embrace goodness and love again:

И вновь постигнул он святыню
Любви, добра и красоты!..

Once again he understood the sanctity
Of love, goodness and beauty....

⁵³ D. A. Gireev, *Poema M.Iu. Lermontova "Demon"* (Ordzhonikidze, 1958); T. A. Ivanova, *Po-smertnaia sud'ba poeta* (M., 1967), *Iunost' Lermontova* (M.: Sovietskii pisatel', 1957), 314-18.

This presents a characteristic romantic situation in which the disenchanting hero can be redeemed by love of a woman. But the confrontation with the angel causes the Demon to revert to his former self. Tamara dies. And he is left embittered, contemptuous, apathetic; at the poem's end his face contorts with evil anger.

The philosophical and theological issues raised by the Demon's rebellion are incalculable and unresolvable. Nor are they the cornerstone on which the poem's artistic merits rest. However, they should not be written off. Without them, the poem would not be possible. To take an exact analogy. No one claims that Raskolnikov's ideas are what makes Dostoevskii's *Crime and Punishment* a great novel, but neither would anyone contend that the novel could get by without them. The Demon's attitudes and ideas play a similar role.

There is a literary-critical cliché that in the Byronic poem or other related Romantic works, the story exists only to foreground and frame the hero's personality.⁵⁴ This, first, ignores the fact that Byron was on the whole an excellent storyteller. And, where *Demon* is concerned, Lermontov, despite some youthful gaffes, quickly developed into one of the best. The story of *Demon*, well told, moves convincingly from point to point and possesses an essential element: suspense. We have only to think back to the different dénouements offered in the earlier redactions to realize that the fates of Tamara and the Demon's are not a foregone conclusion. The story itself must receive some measure of recognition for its contribution to the impact of the poem as an artistic whole. While *Demon* is not Lermontov's greatest narrative poem, it is nevertheless one of Russian literature's outstanding works in this genre, due to the structuring of such components as character, ideas, and narrative, and the actual lines of verse in which the whole is expressed.

Any tendency to overemphasize the hero's personality is significantly toned down by the skilful blending and overlapping of lyrical-rhetorical (the hero's feelings), dramatic (the hero's speeches in which he woos Tamara), narrative, and descriptive elements. For example, the opening lines provide excellent examples of these transitions:

Печальный Демон, дух изгнания,
Летал над грешною землей,
И лучших дней воспоминанья
Пред ним теснились толпой;
Тех дней, когда

The sad Demon, spirit of banishment,
Was flying over the sinful earth,
And memories of better days
Thronged, crowding in upon him;
Of those days when....

"*Vospominan'ia*" ("memories") and "*Tekh dnei, kogda....*" ("Of those days when....") make possible the transition from the straight narrative of lines 1-2 to represented or narrated speech as a means of conveying feelings. This runs to the end of line 18. And then:

И много, много... и всего
Припомнить не имел он силы!

And much besides. . .but everything
He had not the strength to recall!

⁵⁴ E.g. Eikhenbaum 1924, 74-75: "The narrative poem is transformed into a lyrical confession where the narrative and especially the descriptive part plays a secondary role...."

Line 21 brings the reader back, not to a recounting of what the Demon is actually doing at the moment, but to a static description of his habitual activities:

Давно отверженный блуждал

For a long time past the outcast had wandered....

This shades into a description of reactions:

Он сеял зло без наслажденья.

He sowed evil without enjoyment....

Line 31 picks up again with what he is actually doing at the moment:

И над вершинами Кавказа

Изгнанник рая пролетал:

And above the peaks of the Caucasus

This exile from paradise was flying....

This introduces a fairly extended description of the physical beauties of the Caucasus (lines 33-55). Description acquires an important function in the narrative here, for the reader is told that the beauty of the Caucasus has no effect on the Demon (lines 55-59):

но гордый дух

Презрительным окинул оком

Творенье Бога своего,

И на челе его высоком

Не отразилось ничего.

....but the proud spirit

Cast a contemptuous glance

Upon his God's creations,

And on his lofty brow

There was nothing reflected.

Lermontov's Demon remains unmoved by the Caucasian scenery, whereas Pushkin's "prisoner," similarly apathetic in many ways, does show some reaction to nature:

И бури немощному вою

С какой-то радостью внимал.

(II, 222-23)

And to the whining howl of the storm, undaunted,

Gave heed with a certain joy.

Meanwhile the beauties of Georgia infused the Demon with no positive feelings whatever:

Но, кроме зависти холодной,

Природы блеск не возбудил

В груди изгнанника бесплодной

Ни новых чувств, ни новых сил;

И всё, что пред собой он видел,

Он презирал иль ненавидел.

(II. 83-88)

But apart from cold envy
 Nature's radiance did not awake
 In the exile's barren breast
 Either new feelings or new powers;
 And everything he saw before him
 He either despised or hated.

Thus, the transition from one mode to another is most often effected inconspicuously from one line to the following within a given passage.

More rarely, at the major turning points in the story, Lermontov employs a different method: he simply launches, without preamble, a new topic at the beginning of one of his numbered paragraphs. The new paragraph signals a new chapter, and most Russian commentators call these sections chapters (*glavy*). So far, we have examined four paragraphs, involving only situation. The beginning of Paragraph V sets the scene for the narrative proper. It gives a brief description of Gudal's home, including the steps leading down to the river, preparing the next transition, for down these steps Tamara goes to fetch water (ll. 89-100). And in Paragraph VI she is dancing her prenuptial dance. The background to the plot is laid out for the reader, more certainly so when (line 162) the Demon catches sight of her dancing. The only mode not exemplified so far is the dramatic, which appears later in the dialogs between the Demon and Tamara.

Another cardinal stylistic characteristic of *Demon* is its narrative speed. This is achieved primarily by syntactic patterns which impel the reader forward, creating syntactic suspense. The essential condition of such patterning is that the reader not know the answer, not be able to satisfy his curiosity, not achieve semantic resolution until the last line, as in the following passage:

- (1) И над вершинами Кавказа
- (2) Изгнанник рая пролетал:
- (3) Под ним Казбек, как грань алмаза,
- (4) Снегами вечными снял,
- (5) И, глубоко внизу чернея,
- (6) Как трещина, жилище змея,
- (7) Вился излучистый Дарьял,
- (8) И Терек, прыгая, как львица
- (9) Ревел, — и горный зверь, и птица,
- (10) С косматой гривой на хребте,
- (11) Кружась в лазурной высоте,
- (12) Глаголу вод его внимали;
- (13) И золотые облака
- (14) Из южных стран, издалика
- (15) Его на север провожали; (ll.31-45)

In the first sentence, the adverbial clause takes up line 1, leaving the following line to complete the sense with subject and predicate verb. In line 3 we have adverbial clause and subject and simile, and in line 4 adverbial clause and — the final word — the predicate verb. Similes in particular, if they come *after* the main clause, tend to retard the flow; this is here avoided with *kak gran' almaza* in line 3 and *siial* as the last word in line 4. In the following sentence (lines 5-7), the subordinate gerund occupies line 5, the simile line 6, and the subject (with adjective) and predicate line 7. The same pattern obtains throughout the remainder of these 15 lines; thus *revell* (line 10), *vimali* (line 12), and *provozhali* (line 15) are form the final word in a sentence. All are sense-completing predicate verbs, forcing the reader to hasten forward in order to find out.

Here is an example showing the opposite effect, retardation:

Поныне возле кельи той
 Насквозь прожженный виден камень
 Слезою жаркою, как пламень,
 Нечеловеческой слезой!..

(ll. 543-46)

The subject and predicate occur in the second of these four lines, while the third line contains an explanatory instrumental noun and adjective, followed by a simile, followed in line 4 by an amplifying instrumental noun-adjective combination. Syntactic retardation is here entirely appropriate, for these four lines are not narrative-advancing in character; they are, rather, in the nature of a backward-looking epilog, an explanatory historical footnote:

Even today close by that cell
 One may see a rock burnt through
 By a tear as hot as fire,
 An inhuman tear!..

But more characteristic of Lermontov's syntax in *Demon* is the 15-line passage above. Another arrangement Lermontov uses to create semantic suspense is anaphora:

Я тот, которому внимала
 Ты в полуночной тишине,
 Чья мысль душе твоей шептала,
 Чью грусть ты смутно отгадала.
 Чей образ видела во сне.
 Я тот, чей взор надежду губит;
 Я тот, кого никто не любит;
 Я бич рабов моих земных,
 Я царь познания и свободы,
 Я враг небес, я зло природы,
 И, видишь, — я у ног твоих!

(ll. 593-603)

I am the one whose voice you heard,
 You heard in the silence of the night,
 Whose thoughts were whispered in your soul,
 Whose grief you partly understood,
 Whose image in your dreams you saw.
 I'm he whose gaze destroys all hope;
 I'm he whom there's not one who loves;
 The scourge of all my earthly slaves,
 I am the king of knowledge, freedom,
 The foe of heaven, nature's bane
 Yet, see, I kneel before your feet.

Tot, as used here, must introduce a relative clause, and *chei/ch'ia*, etc. are incomplete until we find out *whose what?* The last four lines provide an interesting example of forward impulsion. Each of the first three is a simple statement ("*la bich... la tsar'... la vrag...*"), appearing neither to retard or accelerate. But the anaphora suggests that there is more to come. He is a scourge....

And? The king.... And? The enemy...? These impressive titles emphasize his power solely to accentuate the contrast with his position at Tamara's feet: "*I vidish*", — *ia u nog tvoikh!*" The climax of that last line is reinforced by the aBBa enclosing rhyme scheme, which demands the resolution afforded by the fourth, i.e., the enclosing rhyme *tvoikh*. In similar vein, the anaphoric series of lines beginning *Klianus*/'*Klianusia* (lines 773-792) are surely designed to create the impression of build-up (what will he swear by next?) and suspense (what will he swear?).

In concluding this section on narrative speed and reader suspense, it is worth pointing out that there is in *Demon* a nearly total absence of one indisputably retardant factor, the digression. It may seem odd to discuss what is not there. But the digression had with both Pushkin and Lermontov become so much a part of the narrative poem that its absence is noteworthy and clearly significant in terms of narrative.

What purpose does narrative speed serve? First, it is not a universal blessing. Its usefulness and effectiveness depend entirely on context. In the present context, I would posit two functions. The first and the lesser of these is that, in conjunction with other factors discussed above, it works toward a reduction of any undue emphasis on the personality and credo of the Demon; it discourages lingering and urges the reader onward, thus emphasizing the narrative aspect of the work. The second function is that it imparts to the verse a vigor, a dynamism, a flow, a forward movement, which constitutes a cardinal attribute of this narrative poem. These are advantages which were at work in such lyrics as the 1830 *N. F. I...voi* (*Liubil s nachala zhizni ia*).

I have deliberately postponed till this point mentioning the judgments passed on *Demon* by Eikhenbaum. He stands at the pinnacle of Lermontov scholarship. It is difficult to think of anyone who has done more for Lermontov or helped more to elucidate the nature of Lermontov's genius. His opinions are not infallible, but neither can anything he has written be taken lightly. As noted at the outset of this *Demon* essay, *Demon* represents the culmination of a long process, not of course confined to its different redactions, but present in much of Lermontov's previous work. And in this sense it looks more backward than it does forward. Eikhenbaum's insistence on this way of looking at *Demon* is undoubtedly sound and helpful.

He is also helpful in the field of stylistics, where he notes the difference between Pushkin's clarity, the appropriateness of his every word, and Lermontov's infinitely more cavalier attitude to semantics. Where he is in our view less helpful is in his obvious disparagement of Lermontov's licences. For both Pushkin's and Lermontov's qualities are largely determined by their different literary epochs, changed standards, and changed tastes. Let us then profit from Eikhenbaum's observations without following him in what seems for him an unusual bias.

Eikhenbaum notes that while Pushkin's basic unit is the individual word, Lermontov's mind tends to reach for combinations, phrases, and formulas which are emotionally and phonetically arousing but which close analysis may reveal to be logically untenable. Eikhenbaum points, perhaps his best known example, to the first line in *Demon*: "*Pechal'nyi Demon, dukh izgnan'ia*" ("The sad Demon, spirit of banishment"). This originates, of course, with Pushkin's short 1827 poem, "Angel": "*Dukh otritsan'ia, dukh somnen'ia*" ("Spirit of negation, spirit of doubt"). But whereas Pushkin's two combinations here are crystal clear, Lermontov's is certainly less so. "What does this mean?" Eikhenbaum complains, "*banished spirit or banishing spirit?*" Actually, as Margareta Thompson appropriately observes, "it seems immediately obvious that the '*dukh*' is a spiritual being who is an exile and who represents all those who are exiled from the community of men".⁵⁵ This seems to take care of Eikhenbaum's objection, though it does not invalidate his point that Lermontov and Pushkin often reveal differing approaches to language.

⁵⁵ M. Thompson, 12.

Another comparison Eikhenbaum makes between the two is inspired by Lermontov's fondness for indeterminate epithets:

Inexplicable agitation....
 Inexpressible confusion....
 Irresistible dream....
 Inhuman tear....
 And to forget the unforgettable....
 Indestructible mausoleum....
 Unbearable torture....
 Unattainable delights....

Eikhenbaum contrasts these combinations with Pushkin's "*velikolepnymi kovrami*" and "*shirokoshumnye dubrovy*," which have "a different stylistic significance, because the epithets retain their autonomous meanings and therefore the combinations are not turned into emotional fusions but remain as semantic couplings".⁵⁶ To the post-Symbolist observer, such proclivities of Lermontov's do not seem particularly revolutionary or astounding; to us it seems acceptable to make qualities appear elusive or indescribable. And if we look at the eight combinations listed above, we have no trouble arriving at their meaning and function within their respective contexts.

Eikhenbaum is also regrettably harsh in his discussion of the background against which *Demon's* action takes place. "In the early versions," he complains,

the poem is completely abstract — there is no time, no place of action, no names. Cliffs, the sea, even the ocean — that's the background. At one point there is mention of a Spanish lute, but why Spanish remains unknown.... A Pushkin narrative poem cannot be imagined in any other than its own setting, — the background material really becomes a part of the narrative form. In Lermontov this organic tie, this two-way interweaving of form and background is lacking.... Of course Georgia is here just as artificial and operationally decorative as it was in *Mtsyri*. This is a far cry from the Petersburg of *The Bronze Horseman* or the Ukraine of *Poltava*.⁵⁷

Several responses are appropriate. First, regarding Pushkin and the "organic tie," does Eikhenbaum seriously contend that the background in either *Kavkazskii plennik* or *Bakhchisaraiskii fontan* was more authentic than in *Demon*? Secondly, *The Bronze Horseman* and *Poltava* were both based on historical events. But is not the main fault of *Poltava* the lack of such an organic tie between historical events and the fates of individual characters? Thirdly, why should realistic, clearcut background be held a necessary condition for all narrative poems? What price *Paradise Lost*? As to the "organic tie" in *Demon*, Lermontov skillfully blends the celestial aspects and the Georgian aspects of the poem. Our discussion above of the transitions from one mode to another, though not designed to prove the point presently under review, may persuade the reader that Lermontov was able to move effortlessly and unobtrusively from background to narrative and back, in a manner more "real" and effective than in, e.g., *Kavkazskii plennik*. Nor is Spain, the earlier choice, inappropriate. Put to good use by both Schiller and Victor Hugo, Spain had a reputation for strict monastic orders calculated to shut out the world and the flesh.

Eikhenbaum appears to regard the tendency to what he calls lyric formulas, to antitheses, maxims, the conclusion of paragraphs with *pointes* as a defect, complaining "and some of them

⁵⁶ Eikhenbaum 1924, 100.

⁵⁷ Eikhenbaum 1924, 93-94.

are taken from his own former writings, and some from other authors.”⁵⁸ But Lermontov worked this way all his life. It is connected with his cavalier attitude to individual words and with his eye for the larger units discussed above. He took from others and he took from his own earlier works, which he treated as draft material to be mined. Where other writers are concerned, he usually takes with a difference, i.e., he puts a ready-made phrase or formula to some different use from that which it had served in the original. Scholars are aware of this *modus operandi*, which does not detract from Lermontov’s own voice, his originality. Eikhenbaum, with his extensive reading, has been one of the foremost in pointing out sources. He has generally been tolerant, but here he lists this as though it were one more defect. The cases Eikhenbaum mentions are: 1) the lofty-brow quotation from *Kavkazskii plennik*, mentioned above; 2) a quotation from *Maskarad*, Lermontov’s drama in verse; 3) some lines reminiscent of an 1832 and an 1837 poem; 4) two lines reminiscent of Byron’s *The Prisoner of Chillon*; 5) the notion of a temple without its god (“*khram bez bozhestva*”), which appears in at least two of Lermontov’s lyrics, an earlier narrative poem, *Boiarin Orsha*, and his unfinished first novel *Vadim*. But why is this cause for worry?

As to the stylistic aspect itself, aphorisms, antitheses, parallelisms, and *pointes* figure very prominently in Lermontov’s early lyrics, which is perhaps why Eikhenbaum appears to treat them somewhat disparagingly. This is a question of personal taste. For me they have a certain charm, and there is a pleasure in seeing such turns of speech safely fitted into the constraints of meter and rhyme. It is the same sort of pleasure that is derived from seeing the same sort of thing achieved with the Alexandrine in Racine’s dramas.

Eikhenbaum does not seem happy with the Demon’s oath (the long series of lines dominated by the anaphoristic *Klianus’/Klianusia*, “I swear,” lines 773-799):

The Demon’s ‘oath’ is an extended rhetorical formula (its model is in Alfred de Vigny’s *Eloa*) which is constructed as it were under its own steam, mechanically — by a continuous production of antitheses: the first day — the last day; the shame of crime — the triumph of truth; the bitter torment of the fall — the brief dream of victory; meeting — parting; heaven — hell; last glance — first tear; bliss — suffering.

It does indeed sound mechanical. But antitheses of this sort have the advantage of covering a great deal of time and space, sometimes all of it, e.g., first day — last day. This, in addition to their glaring opposition, gives strength and even majesty to the oath. Incidentally, *Eloa*, though it has an abundance of anaphora, does not really have anything very close to the “*Klianus’*” series.⁵⁹ It seems more likely that Lermontov took his lead from *Podrazhaniia Koranu*, (*Imitations of the Koran*), where Pushkin makes truly excellent use of antitheses:

Клянусь четой и нечетой,
Клянусь мечом и правой битвой,
Клянуся утренней звездой,
Клянусь вечернею молитвой:

The odd and the even embrace all numerals, and the morning star and the evening prayer embrace any 24-hour period. As Pushkin notes (note 2), Allah also makes use of antitheses.⁶⁰

One respect in which Eikhenbaum’s evaluation is wholeheartedly favorable is his recognition of the poem’s “dramatic power and expressive energy.” But his preference for the Pushkin narrative poem is clear: “He [Lermontov] attaches importance to the overall emotional effect; he

⁵⁸ Eikhenbaum 1924, 94.

⁵⁹ Eikhenbaum 1924, 96.

as it were posits a fast reader who will not linger over semantic or syntactic details, but will merely seek for the effect of the whole."⁶¹ Perhaps narrative speed equals fast reader.

Demon has to be considered a juvenile poem. Its 1829 date of conception guarantees that. At the same time, the questions posed remain, as they are not exclusively the preoccupation of children. They are questions which engaged the minds of such men as Byron and Nietzsche. Lermontov can scarcely be faulted for the fact that they continue to exercise him as a man. What is juvenile, in the disparaging sense, is the plot, the seduction of Tamara, nun or princess. After not reading *Demon* for some time, one may wonder why it gets so much attention and recall it with little enthusiasm. But pick it up and begin to reread it, and all is forgiven, all doubts swept away. It is the energy, the power, the drive, the surge of the fast-moving verses which make *Demon* a great Russian poem. As Eikhenbaum notes with reference to Lermontov's *Maskarad*, verse is very well suited to expressing the pathetic element in his language, for in verse "rhetoric appears less melodramatic than in prose, because it is justified by the very form of the speech."⁶²

6

Mtsyri (The Novice); Ispoved' (Confession); Boiarin Orsha (The Boyar Orsha).

Mtsyri consists of 748 lines, four-foot iambs, freely rhymed, with the exception of 16 lines of a song sung to the delirious hero by a water-nymph. The song, with criss-cross rhyming, alternates between four- and three-foot iambs, and is arranged in four stanzas. An important formal feature of this poem is the use, following the example of Byron's *Prisoner of Chillon*, with which our poem has not much in common, of exclusively masculine rhymes. This imparts a certain harshness, abruptness, and energy to the lines. Commentators invariably quote Belinskii's pronouncement: "This four-foot iamb with exclusively masculine endings, as in *The Prisoner of Chillon*, produces the effect of abruptness, like sword strokes beating down their victim. Its elasticity, energy, and sonorous, monotonous beat harmonize surprisingly well with the intensity of feeling, the unconquerable strength of a powerful nature, and the tragic situation of the poem's hero. And at the same time, what diversity in the scenes described, the images, the feelings!"⁶³ The abruptness and energy noted by Belinskii result from the use of the masculine rhyme and from the character of the syntax. The latter at times resembles that seen in *Demon*: it achieves narrative speed and urges the reader forward to "find out," by using the same technique, i.e., by holding up the main clause or a semantically essential part thereof to the end of a series of lines:

Ребячий лепет... Лишь змея;
Сухим бурьяном шелестя,
Сверкая желтою спиной,
Как будто надписью золотой
Покрытый донизу клинок,
Браздя рассыпчатый песок,
Скользила бережно; потом,

(ll. 618-624)

⁶⁰ B. V. Tomashevskii considers that *cheta* and *necheta* should be translated the *combinable* and *non-combinable*, or *conjunction* and *division*. If he is right (I prefer *odd* and *even*), the concept is equally all-embracing; for all of Creation is either combinable or non-combinable.

⁶¹ Eikhenbaum 1924, 97.

⁶² Eikhenbaum 1924, 82.

⁶³ V. G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (M.-L., 1953-59), IV, 543.

The childish babble.... One lone snake,
Rustling its way through the dry grass,
Its gleaming back a yellow streak,
As though gold letters were inscribed
The full length of a dagger's blade,
Furrowing the light crumbly sand
Warily glided; and then....

But overall the rhythmic-syntactic structure of the verse differs from what is found in *Demon*. First, the rhyme in *Mtsyri* bears more insistently on the ear for two reasons: masculine rhymes are inherently more emphatic; this emphasis is increased by their being adjacent (not criss-cross and not enclosing), and indeed we sometimes find not couplets, but triple and quadruple rhymes:

И смутно понял я тогда,
Что мне на родину следа
Не проложить уж никогда.

(ll. 575-577)

Мне стало страшно; на краю
Грозящей бездны я лежал,
Где выл, крутясь, сердитый вал;
Туда вели ступени скал;
Но лишь злой дух по ним шагал,⁶⁴

(ll. 282-286)

Thus, rhyme and rhyme scheme clearly give prominence to the line ending. At the same time, another characteristic of the *Mtsyri* line is the high incidence of syntactic pauses within the line:

Я молод, молод... Знал ли ты
Разгульной юности мечты?

(ll. 132-133)

Я знал одной лишь думы власть,
Одну — но пламенную страсть:

(ll. 88-89)

Between the strongly marked line endings and the high incidence of syntactic pauses within the line, the line acquires a jerky, abrupt tension-filled rhythm. As Eikhenbaum remarks, "in this line the phrases are fragmented into short segments, which replace each other in rapid succession and thus form a chain composed of small links. Characteristic of this line are its strong enjambements between the short segments, and the peculiar energy in the words marking line endings."⁶⁵

The epigraph was originally in French: "On n'a qu'une seule patrie" ("We all have only one fatherland"). But Lermontov changed this to a quotation from the First Book of Kings (the First Book of Samuel), 14, verse 43: "*Vkushaia, vkusikh malo meda, i se az umiraiu.*" Which in King James is rendered: "I did but taste a little honey [with the end of the rod that was in my hand], and, lo, I must die." This epigraph is, incidentally, misinterpreted or misleadingly interpreted in the *Lermontovskaia entsiklopedia*, where it is held to symbolize the hero's love of life

⁶⁴ Adjacent rhymes are used in *Boiarin Orsha*, predominantly in *Ispoved'*, in Podolinskii's *Nishchii*, and in Zhukovskii's *Shil'onskii uznik*.

⁶⁵ See Eikhenbaum 1924, 89-92.

("zhizneliubie"). Certainly he loves life, but only in the sense of reluctance to die. The speaker is Jonathan, who has unknowingly flouted his father Saul's injunction against eating and now stands condemned to die. In the context of *Mtsyri*, it refers to the very small amount of life the hero has experienced ("a little honey") and, lo, he must die.⁶⁶

The generally accepted date for the completion of *Mtsyri* is August 5, 1839. It was included in the 1840 *Stikhotvoreniia*, where it is dated 1840. The later date may be motivated by the few changes made between August, 1839, and the actual publication. Thus *Mtsyri* was completed after *Demon*.

Mtsyri is the story of a young male child, from one of the Caucasian mountain peoples, who in early life is deposited in a Georgian monastery just north of Tiflis. Here he is brought up by the monks, and at the time the events described in the poem take place he is a novice (*mtsyri* being Georgian for novice). The young man thinks of the monastery as a prison and longs for his native land, which he identifies with freedom. He breaks out, traveling north toward his own land. His experiences include a dramatic fight to the death with a snow-leopard. Unwittingly he makes a circle and finds himself back at the monastery, weak and wounded. He makes his confession to the fathers, describing his three days of wandering, and then dies.

The first two sections of the poem (75 lines) describe, first, the now ruined remains of the monastery, then the six-year old child's arrival, his flight, and his return. The remaining 24 sections (673 lines) are given over to his confession.

The confession in verse was at that time a fairly common genre. *The Prisoner of Chillon* was available to Lermontov in the original English and in Zhukovskii's translation, *Shil'oniskii uznik* (1821). There is one line, "As to young eagles, being free" (IV) which is not in Zhukovskii but is reflected in Lermontov (line 96), "Gde liudi vol'ny, kak orly." This suggests that Lermontov made use of the original. Kozlov's 1825 *Chernets (The Monk)* and Podolinskii's 1830 *Nishchii (The Beggar)* also had affinities in genre and theme.⁶⁷

The final version of *Demon* (whether we take it to be the sixth or the eighth redaction) incorporates many lines found in earlier redactions, representing a body of preparatory work. An analogous but somewhat different process occurred before *Mtsyri* was written. But here the preparatory work was done not in early redactions but in other poems bearing their own distinct titles. *Ispoved'* was written in 1830-31 and *Boiarin Orsha* in 1835-36. The former recounts the confession of a young monk in a Spanish monastery in the Guadalquivir region: the monastery here, too, appears as a prison; the hero has been condemned for a sin, his love for an unnamed woman. But he fears not heaven nor hell. His only regret is to be parted from his beloved. *Boiarin Orsha* represents a fusion between two genres, the confession and the historical poem. It contains folkloristic stylistic elements. The setting is no longer Spain but sixteenth-century Muscovy, the Dnieper area during the Lithuanian war (1558-83). Boyar Orsha's great pride and joy is his daughter. Her heart is seduced by Arsenii, another monastery orphan and now a noble brigand. Orsha locks her in her room to die. Arsenii goes on trial before a group of monks. He makes his confession: more defiance and self-assertion than confession. He is condemned but escapes. An unspecified time later Arsenii and Orsha find themselves on opposing sides in battle. Orsha is fatally wounded. Before dying he tells Arsenii where his daughter may be found:

⁶⁶ L. N. Nazarova, "Mtsyri," *L. E.*, 326.

⁶⁷ For an excellent account of the position of *Ispoved'*, *Boiarin Orsha*, and *Mtsyri* in the Byronic poem tradition, see Joseph Thomas Shaw, "Byron, The Byronic Tradition of the Romantic Verse Tale in Russian, and Lermontov's *Mtsyri*," *Indiana Slavic Studies* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1956), I, 165-90.

Там дочь моя; ни ночь, ни днем
 Не ест, не спит, всё ждет да ждет,
 Покуда милый не придет!

There is my daughter; nor night nor day
 Does she eat or drink, she waits and waits
 Until her lover comes again!

Arsenii finds the daughter's skeletal remains. He leaves, not knowing himself where he will go. As Eikhenbaum notes, *Boiarin Orsha* has thematic affinities with Byron's *Parisina*, from which the epigraph to the first chapter is taken.⁶⁸

It will be readily seen that the thematic kernel of the three poems *Ispoved'*, *Boiarin Orsha* and *Mtsyri* is already fully formed in the first. It is also expressed in one of Lermontov's 1831 work projects: "Write the memoirs of a young seventeen-year old monk. He has been in a monastery since childhood; he has read no books except sacred books. His passionate soul is languishing. Ideals..."⁶⁹

Just as the decision to move *Demon* to the Caucasus came after Lermontov's enforced 1837 stay there, so the present theme was moved following that same stay and to the same part of Georgia. As in the case of *Demon*, the switch appears motivated, this time by a meeting and a story heard. According to Viskovatov, who based the anecdote on the authority of Shan-Girei and Khastatov, Lermontov, while traveling the old Military Georgian Highway in 1837, "in Mtskheta came upon... a solitary monk... Lermontov... learned from him that by birth he was from a [Caucasian] mountain people and had been made a prisoner as a child by General Ermolov.... The general had taken him with him and, when he got ill, had turned him over to a monastic order. He had grown up there; for a long time he had been unable to get used to the monastery, had pined and made attempts to escape to the mountains. One such attempt resulted in a prolonged illness which nearly killed him...."⁷⁰ Ermolov was commander-in-chief in the Caucasus from 1815-27. Not all commentators endorse the authenticity of this story. But it certainly fits.

Looking again at our three "confession" poems, there is another evolution to observe. The first and third are by and large pure confessions. But the far longer *Boiarin Orsha* (1065 lines) attempts to incorporate the confession into a historical and folkloristic fabric. Belinskii was extremely enthusiastic about *Boiarin Orsha*.⁷¹ But there may well have been something which didn't satisfy Lermontov. For in effect *Mtsyri* is a retrenchment and a return to the single-genre concept of *Ispoved'*. But it is not simply a retracing of footsteps. *Mtsyri* differs in a significant manner from either *Ispoved'* or *Boiarin Orsha* and other early ventures. Lidiia Ginzburg takes note of the fact that in these early works there is great emphasis on the fight for freedom, but that in most cases the message is fragmented and vitiated by the fact that the hero's fight for freedom is personally and narrowly motivated, usually by unhappiness in love. This produces an internal contradiction. Thus, Izmail-Bei, while leading his people's liberation struggle, is a spiritually ravaged personality who does not believe in the feasibility of the ideal of freedom and conceives the national struggle in individualistic terms. In the novel *Vadim*, the hero is a leader of the insurgent popular masses; but not only is he basically alien to them, most of his actions are motivated by incestuous love and the desire for vengeance, purely personal issues. So too the Vadim

⁶⁸ The other two chapters take their epigraphs from *The Giaour*.

⁶⁹ "Plany. Nabroski. Siuzhety", *Ak nauk*. VI, 375.

⁷⁰ *Russkaia starina*, 1887, kn. 10, 124.

⁷¹ V. G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (M.-L., 1953-1959), XII, III.

of *Poslednii syn vol'nosti*, also a freedom fighter, is to a considerable degree acting under the influence of love, despair and the desire to take vengeance or lay down his life. So too in two of the three poems which are here our primary concern. In *Ispoved'* the hero's revolt against monastic oppression is mainly motivated by love. In *Boiarin Orsha* "the conflict is rendered more complex by the social protest (Arsenii being a poor orphan who becomes a 'noble bandit') and by the demand for freedom, but love is nevertheless the dominant theme." When it comes to *Mtsyri* these defects have been removed; gone are the love motive and in general narrowly personal motives:

«Ты хочешь знать, что делал я
На воле? Жил — и жизнь моя
Без этих трех блаженных дней
Была б печальней и мрачней
Бессильной старости твоей.
Давным-давно задумал я
Взглянуть на дальние поля,
Узнать, прекрасна ли земля,
Узнать, для воли иль тюрьмы
На этот свет родимся мы.

You wish to know what I did
While free? I lived, and my life
Without these three blessed days
Would have been sadder and more gloomy
Than your impotent old age.
For a long time past I had planned
To look upon the distant fields,
To find out if the earth is beautiful,
To find out whether for freedom or the prison
We are born upon this earth.

These lines contain the poem's entire point. The hero's actions are determined exclusively by his drive for freedom and fatherland. The theme, with its single focus restored and purged of all contamination from outside factors, is raised to a new ideological level."⁷²

In principle, there is no reason whatever, as Ginzburg herself points out, why a freedom fighter should not at the same time experience love. But in the context of the practical aspects of Lermontov's work and development, one must concede that love has up to now tended to muddy the waters and that a more unified poetic as well as ideological message emerges without it. Lidiia Ginzburg's points are well taken and extremely helpful. We must at the same time bear in mind that her views here cited are aimed at showing what encumbrances Lermontov got rid of in *Mtsyri*, the negative side of the coin rather than the positive side of what *Mtsyri* offers.

Let us examine what Lermontov, with his and his hero's focus deliberately narrowed, was able to accomplish with the two concepts of fatherland and freedom. These are, for the purpose of *Mtsyri*, equivalents. Fatherland means freedom, and freedom, for the novice hero, means fatherland. This has been frequently noted.

But there is a third magnet which draws the hero and which I do not recall seeing mentioned, let alone emphasized. I refer to his desire to test his courage and test his muscle. This drive goes hand in hand with his love of nature. But it cannot be simply identified and equated

⁷² Ginzburg, 55-58.

with a love of nature. It is a facet of that love. And it is an essential part of the hero's understanding of nature. But it has its own identity; it is its own emotion.

Let us go back to the monk's cell in which the hero feels himself a prisoner. Part of that feeling may be simple homesickness. The novice yearns, as he himself makes clear, for mother and father and surroundings of childhood. If those yearnings were not in themselves justification enough, then we can say that they are ennobled by the ideal of freedom with which the concept of fatherland is indissolubly linked. But put crudely, the hero also wants to get outdoors:

Я знал одной лишь думы власть,
 Одну — но пламенную страсть:
 Она, как червь, во мне жила,
 Изгрызла душу и сожгла.
 Она мечты мои звала
 От келий душных и молитв
 В тот чудный мир тревог и битв,
 Где в тучах прячутся скалы,
 Где люди вольны, как орлы.
 Я эту страсть во тьме ночной
 Вскормил слезами и тоской;
 Ее пред небом и землей
 Я ныне громко признаю
 И о прощеньи не молю.

(ll. 88-101)

I knew the power of one thought alone,
 One burning passion:
 Like some worm, it lived within me,
 Gnawed and consumed with fire my soul.
 It called my dreams away
 From suffocating cells and prayers
 Into that wondrous world of alarms and battles,
 Where the cliffs are lost in the clouds,
 Where people are free as eagles.
 I nourished with tears and longing
 That passion in the dark nights;
 I confess it now aloud,
 Before the heaven, before the earth,
 And I pray for no forgiveness.

The monastic life did not merely keep the hero indoors, keep him reading sacred books and praying. It deprived him of the right to go out and prove himself in a different way. Only by meeting the challenge offered by nature and by life outside the monastery could he test his strength and his courage, make himself a part of life. A key phrase in the passage just quoted is "mir trevog i bitv" ("world of alarms and battles"). The hero addresses the old monk:

«Ты хочешь знать, что видел я
 На воле? — Пышные поля,

(ll. 150-151)

You wish to know what I saw
While free? — Luxuriant fields.... “

And he enumerates the many beautiful aspects of nature (from valleys to streams to trees to mountains and to clouds) he has *seen*. The description shades off naturally enough into nostalgic memories of home and his own people. He then asks the second half of the question:

«Ты хочешь знать, что делал я
на воле?

(ll. 219-220)

You wish to know what I did
While free?.... “

So the outdoors, *nature*, offers her beauties for contemplation and provides also the arena for participation, struggle, and the fight for survival. Extremely significant for this poem, the hero treats animals with deference, logical enough, since they are closer to nature. A snake slithers between the rocks:

Но страх не сжал души моей:
Я сам, как зверь, был чужд людей
И полз и прятался, как змей.

(ll. 261-263)

But no fear compressed my heart:
I myself, like a wild animal, was alien to humans,
And crawled and concealed myself like a snake.

The defeated and dying snow-leopard elicits the hero's admiration:

Он встретил смерть лицом к лицу,
Как в битве следует бойцу!..

(ll. 520-521)

He met death face to face,
As a warrior battling should!....

And when later, the hero realizes that he has after all his efforts only circled back to the imprisoning monastery and that he has failed, he chides himself:

«Да, заслужил я жребий мой!
Могучий конь в степи чужой,
Плохого сбросив седока,
На родину издалека
Найдет прямой и краткий путь...
Что я пред ним?

(ll. 578-583)

Yes, I deserved my fate!
A powerful horse in the unfamiliar steppe,
Throwing off his inept rider,
Will find the direct, the shortest way
Back to his homeland from afar...
I am nothing compared to him....

Much of *Mtsyri* amounts to an affirmation of the superiority of instinct over... over what? .presumably over reason, since man, allegedly the repository of rational thought, is consistently belittled. The better the animals, the worse the human beings. The hero and the snake both felt alienated from man. Again, as he listens to the chorus of nature's voices:

И все природы голоса
Сливались тут; не раздался
В торжественный хваленья час
Лишь человека гордый глас.

(ll. 305-308)

And all nature's voices there
Were merged; alone unheard
In the solemn hour of giving praise
Was the proud voice of man.

Но верь мне, помощи людской
Я не желал... Я был чужой
Для них навек, как зверь степной;

(ll. 440-442)

But believe me, human help
I did not wish.... I was alien
To them forever, like a wild animal of the steppe....

Along with affirmation of instinct, goes an underlying sense of shame at the monk's life he is forced to lead. This is not what his people are brought up to do; they are brought up to fight. It is significant that when he thinks of his father, he thinks of him fully accoutred for battle (ll. 198-202), in contrast to his own monkish garb. The importance of this point becomes very clear if we look at a whole passage eventually excluded from the final text:

Но скоро вихорь новых грез
Далече мысль мою унес
И пред собой увидел я
Большую степь... Ее края
Тонули в пасмурной дали,
И облака по небу шли
Косматой бурною толпой
С невыразимой быстротой;
В пустыне мчится не быстреей
Табун испуганных коней,
И вот я слышу: степь гудит,
Как будто тысячу копыт
О землю ударялись вдруг.
Гляжу с боязнию вокруг.
И вижу: кто-то на коне
Взвивая прах летит ко мне,
За ним другой, и целый ряд...
Их бранный чуден был наряд!
На каждом был стальной шелом

Обернут белым башлыком,
 И под кольчугою надет
 На каждом красный был бешмет.
 Сверкали гордо их глаза;
 И с диким свистом, как гроза,
 Они промчались близ меня.
 И кажды<й>, наклонясь с коня,
 Кидал презренья полный взгляд
 На мой монашеский наряд
 И с громким смехом исчезал...
 Томим стыдом, я чуть дышал,
 На сердце был тоски свинец...
 Последний ехал мой отец.
 И вот кипучего коня
 Он осадил против меня.
 И тихо приподняв балшык,
 Открыл знакомый бледный лик:
 Осенней ночи был грустней
 Недвижный взор его очей,
 Он улыбался — но жесток
 В его улыбке был упрек!
 И стал он звать меня с собой,
 Маня могучею рукой,
 Но я как будто бы прирос
 К сырой земле: без дум, без слез,
 Без чувств, без воли я стоял
 И ничего не отвечал.

But soon a whirl of fresh fantasies
 Carried forward my thoughts
 And I saw
 The broad steppe. Its edges
 Faded on the gloomy horizon,
 And clouds moved across the sky
 In a shaggy stormy cluster
 With inexpressible speed:
 In the far wilds no faster gallops
 A herd of frightened horses,
 And then I hear it: the steppe throbs,
 As though a thousand hoofs
 Were suddenly pounding the earth.
 I look around in fear,
 And I see: a rider,
 Churning up the dust, approaches,
 Another, more and more. . .
 Each of them wore a steel helmet
 With a white hood,

And on each beneath his shirt of mail
 Was a red quilted coat.
 Proudly their eyes flashed,
 And with a whistle savage as the storm
 They galloped past me.
 And each, leaning out from his horse,
 Cast a contempt-filled look
 At my monk's garb
 And with loud laughter galloped off...
 O'ercome with shame, I scarce could breathe,
 My heart was sickened with a leaden weight...
 My father was the last to come.
 He brought up his quivering horse
 In front of me,
 And quietly raising his hood,
 He revealed to me his pale familiar face:
 His unmoving gaze was sadder than
 An autumn night,
 He smiled — but in his smile
 Cruel was his reproach!
 He started to call me to go with him,
 Beckoning with his mighty hand,
 But I seemed fixed
 To the damp earth: without thought or tears,
 Feelings or will I stood,
 And made no reply.

(following l. 688)⁷³

We insisted above that the hero sees nature as a challenge and an arena. Therefore, though he flees the monastery, he is not fleeing to some refuge where he can rely on protection, but proceeding to a testing ground where he will have to and where he wishes to prove himself. That is why to talk of nature's hostility is to impart an erroneous emphasis. Thus Iu. V. Mann characterizes the turn for the worse in the hero's fortunes as follows: "Alien to the world of people with which he is surrounded, the novice — notwithstanding all the strength of his desire to fuse himself with the world of nature to which he feels related — remains alien to that world also; imperceptibly changing her position, nature turns from being a friend to being an enemy."⁷⁴ Obviously the novice cannot be expected to welcome the failure of his efforts. And he doesn't. But the message of *Mtsyri* becomes distorted if we imagine that successful fusion would have brought success, while failed fusion brings hostility and failure. I believe that the novice comes to understand that, notwithstanding his inferior sense of direction compared with the imaginary horse, nature never switched from friendship to hostility, nature's attitude remained unchanging. The Eskimo, aware of the harshness of Arctic nature, does not repine as in old age he sits on the ice awaiting death by cold, starvation, or polar bear. He knows that this is the same nature which brought him formerly his strength and skill as a hunter, his women, his children. The difference

⁷³ *Ak. nauk*, IV, 363-64.

⁷⁴ *Mtsyri*, L. E., 325.

is that the novice did not “live” enough. Therein lies his tragedy. Nature was never an easy solution. Nature in *Mtsyri* is synonymous with fate (*sud'ba*), or, more precisely, it overlaps with fate.

There is one other point about nature. The novice flees from the monastery, not from God. He flees from the confinement of the monastic life, but God awaits him outside the monastery walls. This is clear from the way in which descriptions of nature are interlaced with references to God or to some power above. Thus, the novice can guess the thoughts of the cliffs:

Мне было свыше то дано!

(I. 159)

This was given me from above!

The novice hears the birds whispering in the bushes

Как будто речь свою вели
О тайнах неба и земли;

(II. 303-304)

As though they were speaking
Of the mysteries of heaven and earth...

Again:

В то утро был небесный свод
Так чист, что ангела полет
Прилежный взор следить бы мог;

(II. 313-315)

That morning the heavenly vault
Was so pure that a diligent eye
Could have followed an angel's flight....

The presence of Goethe is always worth noting. L. N. Nazarova rightly sees the influence of “Erlkönig” (1782) and “Der Fischer” (1779) in the song sung to the hero in his delirium by the golden fish (lines 673-88); and also the lines from “Willkommen und Abschied”:

Wo Finsternis aus dem Gesträuche
Mit hundert schwarzen Augen sah.

In our text:

И миллионом черных глаз
Смотрела ночи темнота
Сквозь ветви каждого куста...

(II. 428-430)

And with a million dark eyes
The night's darkness looked out
Through the branches of every bush...

We can propose one further instance of borrowing. The fight with the snow leopard is based on Georgian folkloric themes. There exist no less than 14 versions of a Georgian song “The Young Man and The Tiger,” as well as the great Georgian Rustaveli's remarkable epic, “The Warrior in the Tiger Skin.”

What, in conclusion, shall we say of *Mtsyri* as a work of art? We can begin by recording that Eikhenbaum considered it, like *Demon*, a work which looked backward in time, to previous works, of which it is therefore a culmination. Where *Demon* was concerned, we agreed without protest. But with *Mtsyri*, we should note that not all scholars are in agreement with this assessment for either of these two poems.⁷⁵ We will not here go into the grotesque discussion which at one time exercised Soviet scholarly minds: did Lermontov become a romantic or a realist writer? But one's attitude toward Eikhenbaum's position will depend largely on where one wishes to place the emphasis. For obviously, if we so much as recall *Ispoved'* and *Boiarin Orsha*, and reflect that many of their lines survived into *Mtsyri*, the links with the past are going to be difficult to negate. The latter marks an improvement, a culmination, but nevertheless linked to the past. On the other hand, there are features of *Mtsyri*, more so than *Demon* demonstrates, which appear to mark new departures. We will indicate these in the course of our evaluation.

Let us start by noting with Lidiia Ginzburg that we are not here dealing with the typical apathetic Byronic hero. This may seem a self-evident and therefore unnecessary observation. But it is important. For whereas the Byronic hero is by definition self-defeating, the novice in this poem is a fighter for positive values. There is no prior reason he should be expected to fail. And this, and his courageous efforts to achieve his goal, make his defeat and death far more significant and tragic than that of a hero disillusioned at the start and more disillusioned at the end.

We insisted strongly above that it would be incorrect to think of nature as at first friendly and later hostile to the hero. Both nature and fate, which play equivalent roles here, are capable of great harshness. And the tragic in this poem consists not in the fact that this is so and that the hero is destroyed, but in the fact that he comes to realize that this is so and to accept it with a minimum of bitterness: "*I nikogo ne proklianu*" ("And I shall damn no one"). This is the main justification for stating that there is a new element in *Mtsyri*. Eikhenbaum believes the hero's attitude, which does not consider one of "reconciliation," is "an expression of the lofty though tragic state of his consciousness," and in this respect he places *Mtsyri* with *Duma*, *Pamiati A. I. Odoevskogo*, and *Fatalist*, the last episode in *Geroi nashego vremeni*.⁷⁶ I would say that even more appropriate than the works mentioned by Eikhenbaum is *Pesn' pro tsaria Ivana Vasil'evicha*, finished in 1837 and therefore antedating *Mtsyri* by some time. In both these poems there is a sense of waste, and waste is one of the ingredients of tragedy. There is also in both, and here I disagree with Eikhenbaum, who thinks of the novice as primarily an unbowed freedom fighter, a degree of understanding, of acceptance of the tragic, of reconciliation (*primirenie*), without which the tragic is probably not conceivable. There is a symmetry between the two deaths, that of the snow leopard and that of the hero. The snow leopard's death can surely not have failed to be instructive to the hero. Neither really did anything wrong or committed any great sin. Both died bravely and with a measure of acceptance of the inevitable and the tragic. It is this element of the tragic, which, I am increasingly inclined to think, is to a degree present in any serious art (we should not be looking for the tragic in *Graf Nulin*) which makes it really worth our while to read *Mtsyri* with careful attention, patience, and forbearance. For it is long (only 748 lines), or at least it seems long, because the narrative is all located in past time, and because it is a monolog with no dramatic give-and-take, no dialog to break up and give variety to the monotone.

⁷⁵ For Eikhenbaum see note 2 (1) of the *Demon* section. For opposing views, see Udodov, 458-59; A. Gurevich, "Symptomny novogo," *Voprosy literatury*, 1964, No. 10, 93.

⁷⁶ Eikhenbaum 1961, 87-91.

Skazka dlia detei (*A Fairy Tale for Children*) has up to very recently been printed before *Demon*.⁷⁷ With the redating of the latter, now seen as completed in 1839, the position of these two works is reversed. In fact, *Demon* is placed earlier than *Mtsyri*.⁷⁸ *Skazka dlia detei* (1839-40, and certainly not earlier than the second half of 1839) becomes chronologically the last of Lermontov's narrative poems. Not too much importance need be attached to this change. The *pathétique* and the ironic are, as was argued above, two sides of the same coin. And there is in Lermontov's mature narrative poetry movement from one side to the other and back again, rather than a neat division into two distinct periods. However, the significance of the change is likely to have been more than purely symbolic. For *Skazka dia detei* presents an altogether new and different type of demon on the more familiar and realistic background of Petersburg. In this limited respect *Skazka dlia detei* must be regarded as a parody of *Demon*. And the logical moment for parody is after the completion of the work parodied. It was, in fact, logical, after so many years of preoccupation with *Demon* to see the poem through to its end, and then turn to spoofing. But we think the idea of a less reverent treatment of the demon theme was in Lermontov's mind as early as 1831: "napisat' dlinnuiu satiricheskuiu poemu: prikliucheniia demona" ("write a long satirical poem: the adventures of the demon").⁷⁹

Skazka dlia detei is, like *Sashka*, an unfinished work. It gives promise, like *Sashka*, of being the beginning of a far longer work. In fact there is far less than there is of *Sashka*, only 297 lines. And *Skazka* makes use of the same non-caesural five-foot iambic eleven-line stanza and the same rhyme scheme (aBaBaCCddEE) observed in *Sashka*, and in these two poems only. This coincidence in meter and rhyme in itself suggests adherence to the same genre as that of *Sashka*, i.e., among Lermontov's satirical, comic, or "ironic" poems.

But *Skazka dlia detei* speaks for itself. The tone is from the start ostentatiously deflated. The early mentions of epic verse and selection of his hero recall loosely Byron's comments at the beginning of *Don Juan*: Most epic poets plunge in medias res.... (I,VI) and: I want a hero: an uncommon want.... I'll therefore take our ancient friend Don Juan (I,I): In Lermontov:

Умчался век эпических поэм,
И повести в стихах пришли в упадок;

The age of epic poetry has passed,
And tales in verse today are in decline....

The author himself no longer reads poetry.... It would be foolish to waste golden time in reading poetry.... in our mature age, you know, we are all busy, busy.

в нашем веке зрелом,
Известно вам, все заняты мы делом.

But the hero is different: this devil is of a quite different kind, he is an aristocrat and not like a devil at all:

⁷⁷ *Ak nauk*, IV.

⁷⁸ *Khud. lit.*, 1983-84, II.

⁷⁹ *Ak nauk*, VI, 379, #14.

Но этот чорт совсем иного сорта —
Аристократ и не похож на чорта.

The demon flies no longer through unspecified space, over Spain, over the Caucasus. He flies over Petersburg, and, with satirical eye, observes the scene below:

Я стал ловить блуждающие звуки,
Веселый смех и крик последней муки:
То ликовал иль мучился порок!
В молитвах я подслушивал упрек,
В бреду любви — бесстыдное желанье;
Везде — обман, безумство иль страданье!

I started to catch the wandering sounds,
Merry laughter and the cry of the final agony:
Vice triumphant, vice in torment!
In prayer I heard the undertone of reproach,
In the delirium of love I discerned shameless desire;
Everywhere deception, madness, suffering!

And, paralleling the story of the Demon and Tamara, this demon flies in and whispers his enchantment to the fourteen-year-old Nina in her sleep. Nina lives in a large run-down house with her elderly, old-fashioned, stern father, whom she fears the same way Princess Maria was to fear her elderly father in *War and Peace*. Nina's adolescent fantasies and development are sketched. At length, now seventeen, she is to go, like Natasha in *War and Peace*, to her first ball. Her dress is prepared, her nervousness described, and she arrives, enters: a whispering greets her entry, indicating that society has taken note of Nina. Follows one stanza in which the narrator bitterly criticizes the falsity of society:

Улыбки, лица лгали так искусно,
Что даже мне чуть-чуть не стало грустно.

The smiles, the faces lied with so much skill
That even I felt sad in some degree....

And that is where the poem ends. This is a pity, since the introduction of Nina had begun to bring a semblance of plot. In very embryonic form, it is true, we were beginning to obtain a picture of the young heroine's psychology and developing emotional needs. Which, given parallel situations, is probably what makes one think of Tolstoi's heroines.

Skazka dlia detei was lavishly praised by such prominent literary figures as Belinskii, Gogol', and Ogarev.⁸⁰ Its main appeal in the 1840s was its treatment in verse of the everyday features of Russian life, its "naturalism," its realist orientation. It was an indication that Lermontov (dead by 1842 when the poem was published),⁸¹ had been heading in the right direction. But we should not overemphasize the importance of a poem that was not only unfinished, but of which so little got written. We have some excellent lines and passages and additional cause for regret that Lermontov did not live to fulfill the potential revealed in *Skazka dlia detei*.

Skazka dlia detei has two as yet unmentioned points in common with *Sashka*. First, the eight surviving stanzas of what was once thought of as the second chapter of *Sashka*, discussed

⁸⁰ *L. E.*, 506-7 for exact references.

⁸¹ *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1842, XX.

above, describe a run-down once lively home in Moscow. This parallels the similar home in Petersburg occupied by Nina and her father, which has led commentators to speculate that the rejected *Sashka* second chapter and *Skazka dlia detei* both represent beginnings of one and the same literary project. Second, as with *Sashka*, it is unclear whether *Skazka dlia detei* was finished or not. The main argument for its being finished we have met before. It rests on genre: the diminished importance of the narrative in this type of comic tale in verse is held to permit an unfinished story. We are skeptical of this approach. It was put forward in favor of *Sashka* also being finished. And we pointed out then that *Beppo* provides the reader with a completed event. By the same token, *Domik v Kolomne*, with which *Skazka dlia detei* has easily recognizable and generally acknowledged points in common, also provides a completed event. Nor does the presence of dots following the twenty seventh and final stanza demonstrate that Lermontov considered his poem finished in the normal sense of the word. It may well indicate, as we suggested for *Sashka*, that he "did not intend to continue the narrative."⁸² But that would not indicate that his 27 stanzas represent the work as initially conceived. It would more probably indicate abandonment rather than completion. And if we accept this likelihood, then it is interesting to speculate what might have brought about this decision.

It is possible, as Eikhbaum suggests and as noted for *Sashka*, that the attraction of the prose genres, in particular the novel, caused Lermontov to turn his back once and for all time on the narrative poem.⁸³ *Geroi nashego vremeni* (*A Hero of Our Time*) was of course already behind him. And Lermontov did not undertake *Shtoss*, his also unfinished story in prose, till February 1841. So Eikhbaum's conjecture remains just that.

Meanwhile, both *Skazka dlia detei* and *Shtoss*, notwithstanding the one being in verse and the other in prose, attempt to combine a realistic approach with the supernatural, the fantastic. This combination must present not insoluble but very special problems for the author. It may be that Lermontov, skillful narrator though he undoubtedly was, was not well adapted to handle this particular problem. What was he to do with *Shtoss*? With the ephemeral beauty? With Lugin? Destroy him? And what was he to do with the demon in *Skazka dlia detei*?

In *Skazka dlia detei* Lermontov created for himself a structural problem. He made the demon into the narrator. It is the demon who tells us all about the developing young Nina, not the original narrator who is definitively eclipsed at the beginning of stanza 13, when the demon starts to describe the old house. What has occurred can be likened to a bold move, a gambit, in chess. Lermontov, an experienced player, decided that he would hand over the narrative function to his demon. Like any gambit, it was obviously offered with the expectation of ultimate reward. Meanwhile the immediate sacrifice was the loss of the possibility of describing the demon in the third person. The demon-turned-narrator is to some degree immobilized, sidelined. He can describe what has happened to Nina in the past. But he cannot carry her beyond the moment in which he is presently in the act of narrating without also moving himself forward. This presents a new problem in narration: he must refer to himself in the first person, which is excellent for reflection but clumsy for narrative. Maintaining the chess analogy, even excellent players can on occasion open with the wrong gambit, and by the same token they can hope to extricate themselves from threatening positions. What we have here is the threat of narrative gridlock. Not that the narrator's situation is hopeless to the point of being forced to resign; but he has certainly complicated his narrative task.

⁸² *Khud. lit.*, 1983-84, II, 509.

⁸³ Eikhbaum 1924, 126.

The narrator makes a bow in the direction of *Domik v Kolomne* by going, as had Pushkin's narrator, into the technical aspects of verse:

Я без ума от тройственных созвучий
И влажных рифм — как например на ю.⁸⁴

I am enchanted with threefold rhymes,
And liquid rhymes — as for instance in *iu*....

And secondly, as in *Sashka*, a feature of this poem is the prosaic, conversational intonational flow of much of its language, a product of the down-to-earth character of the genre and the appropriate flexibility of the noncaesural five-foot iamb.

Lermontov's work in the narrative poem must by any standards be accounted an impressive achievement, and one not diminished by the fact that he was writing at a time when the narrative poem was on its way out, on the point of being eclipsed by the novel. Such wisdom had greater meaning, no doubt, in 1850 than in 1990. We are now far enough away in time to read with something of a historical eye and to accord Lermontov or any other nineteenth-century writer the same courtesy we extend to Homer, Shakespeare, or Goethe. Not that the historical eye is equally easy to achieve for all Lermontov's narrative poetry. But *Tambovskaia kaznacheisha* is good in any company. *Sashka* and *Skazka dlia detei* disappoint only because they break off unfinished. And the real jewel in this crown, regrettably unique in its type, is *The Song of Tsar Ivan Vasil'evich, the Young Retainer and the Brave Merchant Kalashnikov*.

⁸⁴ In *Domik v Kolomne* the first six stanzas of its *ottava rima* deal with such matters as the poet's weariness with the four-foot iamb, his desire to try the *ottava rima*, his ability to deal with threefold rhymes, and his fondness for the caesura in the five-foot iamb which he is in the very process of abandoning.

CHAPTER V

Dramatic Works

Only in one genre, that of drama, does the Lermontov scholar feel defensive. In lyric and narrative poetry, and in his prose works, Lermontov is not without flaws, which can and should be discussed. But one can do so with the calm assumption that the pedestal on which he rightly stands cannot be shaken. In drama, on the other hand, there is perhaps the need to make a case.

There is nothing in Lermontov's makeup which would justify our concluding that the drama was, for him, an uncongenial field. We observe in his dramatic writing the same rapid development and improvement that can be attested in other genres. I have little doubt that had Lermontov, like Shakespeare, lived in Elizabethan London, and had he, like Shakespeare, been writing to make his way in life, his achievements in the field of drama would have been more considerable than they are. But the Petersburg of the 1830s was not Shakespeare's London. Lermontov's age was not the age of the drama; it was, rather, the age of the novel.

Lermontov's endeavors in the dramatic genre began with a quickly abandoned attempt to write an operatic libretto. His *Tsygany* (*The Gypsies*) written 1829, runs to only three pages, barely enough to permit meaningful comment. But it is not without interest in terms of Lermontov's apprenticeship. Here, as in other genres, he shows himself eager to avail himself of the work of predecessors. His *Tsygany* is much indebted to Pushkin's poem by the same name, written in 1824, with excerpts published in 1825. The Pushkin *Tsygany* had in its entirety come out in book form as recently as May, 1827. Another stimulus was the composer A. N. Verstovskii's opera, *Pan Tvardovskii*, which was first performed at the Bol'shoi Theater on May 24, 1828. Lermontov's opening chorus reproduces, with alterations, the words from a song from that opera written by its librettist, the writer M. N. Zagoskin (1789-1852). The song, sung by the gypsy chorus, extols the virtues of the free gypsy life.¹ A gypsy woman then sings a song conveying a similar message: the gypsies are poor, but song fills their lives with joy and happiness. The song was by S. P. Shevyrev (1806-64), poet, critic, historian, and literary theorist.² An old gypsy then complains that Zemfira, his daughter, is late and his dinner will soon be cold. As in the Pushkin poem, Zemfira then arrives with a young man, Aleko, whom she introduces in eight lines borrowed word-for-word from Pushkin, and the old man takes three and one-half Pushkin lines to welcome him. This concludes the fragment.

It is clear that in three small pages Lermontov went heavily into debt. It would be ludicrous to impute plagiarism to the fifteen-year old dramatist. *Tsygany* offers an excellent example of the ways in which Lermontov's precocious, questing young mind worked and created. His is the approach of the producer-director. And indeed this is the period when, sometimes with the stimulus, sometimes without it, of the Bol'shoi Theater productions, Lermontov staged various dramatic scenes and narratives with his puppet theater. Extended beyond drama and opera, the poet's approach, as was equally evident in other genres, reveals an early awareness of the total

¹ Whether or not Lermontov saw the opera, he clearly read Zagoskin's song in *Dramaticheskii al'manakh dlia liubitelei i liubitel'nits teatra* (SPb., 1823), 133.

² Strictly speaking, Lermontov simply left in his manuscript a space for a song indicating *Moskovskii vestnik* as its source. Shevyrev's *Tsyganskaia pesn'* ("Gypsy Song") appeared in *Moskovskii vestnik*, 1828, part 10, No. 15, 320.

mosaic, of the sculptural and architectural aspects of writing. Moreover, the theme of *Tsygany* and the Pushkin quotations confirm Lermontov's early interest in Pushkin.

Apart from the *Tsygany* libretto fragment, Lermontov wrote five plays, all complete or virtually complete. Of these one, *Maskarad (The Masked Ball)*, 1835, is an impressive work which has received insufficient recognition. This is not to belittle the other four. They would not in themselves justify the high acclaim generally accorded to Lermontov. But they are serious endeavors, especially considering Lermontov's youth and inexperience at the time of writing. And they provide interesting evidence not only of Lermontov's rapid development, but of the way in which his work as a dramatist links up with work in other genres. The five plays, all tragedies, are: *Ispantsy (The Spaniards)*, 1830; *Menschen und Leidenschaften (People and Passions)*, 1830; *Strannyi chelovek (A Strange Man)*, 1831; *Dva brata (Two Brothers)*, 1835-36; and *Maskarad*, 1835. They fall chronologically into two groups: the three earlier ones written in 1830-31 and the two later in 1835-36. Two of them, *Ispantsy* and *Maskarad* are in verse, the other three in prose.

As the title suggests, *Ispantsy* takes place in Spain. It is said that two factors pushed Lermontov to a Spanish background. One was the prestige of Spain in the minds of Russian and European liberals as a result of the 1820-23 revolutionary struggle. The other was the dubious Lermontov family legend according to which the Lermontovs were descended from a Spanish grandee named Lerma, who had been forced to flee to Scotland during the struggle with the Moors.³ Neither of these explanations is in any way reflected in Lermontov's treatment of Spain in this play. All notion of revolutionary struggle is notably absent from the text of *Ispantsy*. The play's social protest is directed against the pretensions and arrogance of the aristocracy and the hypocrisy and intolerance of the clergy. And these are the social protests of an earlier age, of Lessing's *Nathan der Weise (Nathan the Wise)*, 1779. As to Lermontov's attested interest in a probably apocryphal Spanish ancestry, pride in blue blood is precisely what the play most forcefully attacks. And the young hero, Fernando, appearing in draft variants as a bastard or a Spaniard without lineage or substance, turns out in the final version to be the son not of a blue-blood Spanish grandee, but of a wealthy Jew. Other Lermontov works involving a Spanish background or Spanish origin, *Dve nevol'nitsy (The Two Captive Women)*, 1830?, *Ispoved' (The Confession)*, 1831?, and the second redaction of *Demon*, 1830, also have nothing to do with the themes of revolutionary struggle or blue blood. The most likely reason for Lermontov's choosing Spain as a background for the present work was his reading of Schiller's *Don Carlos*, 1787. He was greatly taken with Schiller, who was clearly a strong influence in encouraging the idealistic rhetoric which determines the play's overall tone. Victor Hugo's *Hernani*, also located in Spain, may also have encouraged Lermontov's choice of background, though Hugo's play, written in 1830, may not have been known to Lermontov at the time of his writing *Ispantsy*.

References to the *realia* of Spanish history place the action of *Ispantsy* somewhere in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, though there is obviously no attempt at chronological exactness. The main outlines of the story are as follows. The Spanish nobleman Don Alvarets has a daughter, Emiliia. Living in the same house is Fernando, a foundling brought up by

³ See P. A. Viskovatov, 72, 90. Also I. V. Lermantov, "Kak pisat' familiiu Lermontova?" *Russkaia starina*, 1873, vol. 7, kn. 3, March, 392, and V. V. Nikol'skii, "Predki M. Iu. Lermontova," *Russkaia starina*, 1873, vol. 7, kn. 4, April, 558.

⁴ M. A. Iakovlev is skeptical as to any Hugo influence precisely on account of the probability of Hugo's text being unavailable to Lermontov, certainly at the time he was making preliminary drafts. See *Lermontov kak dramaturg* (L-M: *Kniga*, 1924) 117-18. For a detailed study of influences, supported by textual comparisons, see Iakovlev, 76-125.

the family. Emilia's stepmother, Donna Mariia, warns Emiliia that she can never hope to marry Fernando and forbids her to have anything to do with him. The same warning is issued to Fernando by Don Alvarets. The two men quarrel, Alvarets orders Fernando out of the house, and the latter rushes out enraged. The next scene is a night meeting between Emiliia and Fernando. She reproaches him for his lack of restraint in dealing with her father. But they must take leave of each other. Where will he go? He has no kin. She has been for him the whole world. They hear a noise, and she goes back up onto her balcony and disappears. Fernando discovers the noise is made by the elderly Jew, Moisei, who is being tracked by men of the Inquisition. Fernando contemptuously throws him cloak and hat to disguise himself and tells him to follow him to safety.

In Act II the hypocritical and lascivious Jesuit, Sorrini, begins to hatch plans to have Emiliia abducted. Meanwhile, he has his band of rogues attack Fernando. They overwhelm him and leave him for dead. Moisei, who has watched the attack, brings Fernando home wounded. His daughter, Noemi, tends him. It is clear that she finds him attractive.

In Act III Donna Mariia, who has been enticed by Father Sorrini into betraying her stepdaughter, Emiliia, persuades Emiliia that she can lead her to Fernando. She leads her into a trap, and Emiliia is abducted by Sorrini's band of rogues. Moisei reports this to Fernando, who rushes off to save her or to take vengeance.

In Act IV Emiliia is brought in to Father Sorrini, who pretends that he has saved her and tries to persuade her to yield to him. At the crucial moment enter Fernando, disguised. He seizes Sorrini by the throat. But Sorrini, refusing to yield Emiliia, tells him that his servants will stop them leaving. Enter servants, armed. This is a stand-off. Fernando embraces and stabs Emiliia, picks up and carries out her body. Father Sorrini has an indictment for heresy written against him for action by the Inquisition.

In the fifth act, Fernando comes to the house of Don Alvarets, carrying Emiliia's body. He explains that he committed a "heroic crime" ("*geroiskoe prestuplen'e*"). Men of the Inquisition enter and arrest him. Moisei tries to intercede for him. Sorrini, after taking money from Moisei, has Fernando led off and threatens Moisei because he is a Jew. The final scene reveals that Fernando has heroically stood up to torture and is to be burnt at the stake. Noemi, now knowing he is her brother, falls unconscious in the street. It is unclear, as the manuscript breaks off, whether she is dead, will die shortly, or will recover. The Inquisition's pursuit of her father remains unresolved. But Moisei and Fernando have recognized each other as father and son.

Even our short recapitulation makes it clear that the sequence of events in *Ispantsy* is melodramatic. The action is punctuated by hyperbolic emotionalism and highflown rhetoric. It would not be difficult to treat this drama with condescension and a certain amount of disdain. But then we would have to ask ourselves why it is possible to treat, for example, *Don Carlos* with respect and at the same time belittle *Ispantsy*. Is it purely a matter of timing? If *Don Carlos* had been written in 1830 instead of 1787, would it have received similarly low acclaim?

The most productive way of looking at *Ispantsy* is in the light of the learning process, inevitable in the life of any young artist, and in the light of Lermontov's need to make his entry into the European dramaturgical tradition. For *Ispantsy* does reproduce the most salient features of Schiller's early plays: idealism and protest, violent action, highflown rhetoric. Lessing's contribution is no less important. It manifests itself most clearly in situation and plot. Thus, the relationships between Fernando, Moisei, and Noemi are reminiscent of those between Nathan, his adopted daughter Recha, and the Knight Templar in *Nathan der Weise*. And Emilia's abduction by Sorrini's men and her ensuing death at the hands of her lover recall similar motives and events in *Emilia Galotti*, 1772, though in Lessing's play Emilia dies at the hands of her father.

The idea of protest against injustice, embodied mainly in the character and pronouncements of Fernando, is accompanied by the idea of destruction. Fernando destroys what he most cherishes. This aspect of the action and of Fernando's character derives from the then current idea put forth by Schelling of the contradictory nature and close affinity of good and evil. Precocious though he was, Lermontov may well not have read Schelling. But Schelling's recognition of the destructive principle was part of the currency of the day in Moscow; and this fusion of good and evil underlie Fernando's characterization of his killing of Emiliia as "a heroic crime."⁵

One aspect of *Ispantsy* which has been insufficiently brought out is its versification. It is written in blank verse. An aspiring young author, writing a play set back some centuries in history, could reasonably be expected to utilize something approaching the versification system embraced by Pushkin in his *Boris Godunov*. But when Lermontov was writing *Ispantsy*, *Boris Godunov*, written in 1825, had still not found its way into print. Lermontov bypassed the Franco-Shakespearian line represented by Pushkin's play. By Franco-Shakespearian I mean the five-foot iamb, normally unrhymed but occasionally rhymed, with the "French" caesura after the fourth syllable, as well as the cohesiveness of that line, with syntactic groups largely conforming to the contours of the line end and the caesura, and therefore with relatively restricted and restrained use of enjambement. This is not Lermontov's style. Probably thanks to the influence of Schiller's poetic line in *Don Carlos*, as A.V. Fedorov suggests, Lermontov from the outset avails himself of a number of "freedoms."⁶ He does not confine himself to the five-foot iamb. While that is indeed the basic line of the play, Lermontov freely introduces lines of other lengths, most often six-foot iambs (which may or may not have the caesura after the third foot) or four-foot iambs, but also three-foot iambs, and even two-foot and seven-foot iambs. Also his five-foot (10-syllable) iambs sometimes have dactylic endings. His enjambements are frequent and at times forcefully disruptive of the line ending, e.g.,

Тебя суду предать за эту
Обиду

Tebia sudu predat' za ètu
Obidu

Also, while he does not exactly break with the norms of the iambic stress system, he at times pushes that system to the outer limits of its tolerance. Note, for example, the positioning of *eto* in the following line

Емилля
За что это?

Фернандо
За то, что не могу...

Finally, in this connection, let us note the use of ellipsis and of brief exclamations which, again, work against the autonomy of the line. It is not overly fanciful to suggest that the varied length of lines in *Ispantsy*, their dramatic choppiness, and their bold enjambements constitute a form of preparation for the apparently uncontrived, conversational intonations of some of Lermontov's late lyrics. There is a long way to go and much to be done before Lermontov will arrive at the intonations of *I skuchno i grustno* (1840) or *Zaveshchanie* (1840), specifically the lowering of the rhetorical level. And there are a number of influences and developments involved in this process. Meanwhile, the lessons of using the dramatic genre as Lermontov used it in the lines of *Ispantsy* must be accounted a factor. We will return to this theme when we discuss *Maskarad*.

⁵ See N.M. Vladimirskaia, "Dramaturgiia," *L. E.*, 145.

⁶ "Shiller," (i.e., Schiller) *L. E.*, 624-25.

At about the same time he wrote *Ispantsy* Lermontov was working on his first play in prose, *Menschen und Leidenschaften*. The three prose works are sometimes called his “autobiographical” plays. There was of course a strongly autobiographical element in most of what Lermontov wrote, throughout his life and in whatever genre. But “autobiographical” is here used to indicate not only a remove from abroad (Spain) to Russia, but a plot emanating from a situation which more or less duplicated Lermontov’s own.

With *Menschen und Leidenschaften* he moves from exotic Spain and past centuries to the contemporary Russian countryside. Like Schiller, he sought to bring high tragedy into a family context. The German title evokes Schiller’s *Kabale und Liebe*, 1784, and follows German practice of the time: e. g., Klinger’s *Sturm und Drang* and Kotzebue’s *Menschenhass und Reue*.

The move to the Russian countryside brought with it almost inevitably something of Fonvizin, specifically his comedy *Nedorosl’* (*The Adolescent*) and in particular the character of Prostakova, very loosely reflected by Gromova in Lermontov’s tragedy, *ein Trauerspiel*, as he subtitled it. Lermontov’s use of symbolic names to characterize his protagonists, Gromova, Volin, and Liubov’ is in the Fonvizin tradition, the eighteenth-century tradition of comedy. The switch from verse to prose is consistent with the switch to the contemporary Russian countryside.

This play should be noted as a first attempt to depict something of the *realia* of Russian life. Lermontov chose a theme with which he himself was painfully familiar, the quarrel between a young man’s grandmother and his visiting father. In his own life the quarrel between his grandmother and his father had intensified around 1830. In the play the grandmother plays a very unsympathetic role. Commentators tend to think that Lermontov made no attempt to draw the characters close to their real life models, but did reproduce fairly realistically a situation with which he was familiar. But such detachment and objectivity seem unlikely. There are other references in the play to real-life situations. Mention is made of the school (*pansion*) he had recently attended, to its carefree buoyant companionship, and to injustices perpetrated by the school administration.

The hero is Iurii. He is unhappy and disillusioned. The most immediate cause of his depression is a quarrel about him between his grandmother and father. But he feels in general that he is not understood: “My love of freedom for humanity has been seen as rebellion (*vol’nodumstvo*).” He is in love with his cousin Liubov’. But he is convinced that his love is hopeless. He plans to travel abroad. The plot centers around his old friend, Zarutskii, who is attracted by Liubov’'s cheerful, superficial, unfeeling sister, Eliza. After making some progress with Liubov’, Iurii is horrified to see her apparently having a tryst with Zarutskii. In fact, she is simply mediating Zarutskii’s suit with Eliza. This “betrayal” unhinges him. Meanwhile, as a result of a series of machinations perpetrated both by his uncle and by his grandmother’s maid, Daria, Iurii quarrels with his father, who curses his son. This is the last straw. Iurii takes poison and discovers only as death approaches that Liubov’ had not been unfaithful to him. There are thus two driving forces to this drama: betrayal in love and the father-grandmother conflict. The dramatic force of the action and the ultimate tragic ending are undermined by the basically weak and passive nature of Iurii’s psyche. He really is too good for this world. And one has the impression that it will take very little to blow him away, which is one reason why it is difficult to rate *Menschen und Leidenschaften* very high as theater. In terms of our understanding of Lermontov’s life and writing, Iurii’s inner nobility of spirit, humanity, sincerity and lofty ideals are significant.

Some of the same critical remarks can be made with no less validity about *Strannyi chelovek* (*A Strange Man*) and its hero Vladimir. This prose play, subtitled *Romanticheskaiia drama* (*A Romantic Drama*), was written in 1831. Instead of acts and scenes, *Strannyi chelovek* is arranged in thirteen scenes, each one dated, spanning a nine-month period of time. The action moves to Moscow. Again, we find a family at odds with itself, the son a victim of psychological

and social conflicts and pressures. In *Strannyi chelovek*, the family conflict stems from a quarrel between husband and wife. The wife had been briefly unfaithful, and the husband had cut her adrift. Now she is back in Moscow, wishing to be reconciled with him before she dies. But the husband, greatly preoccupied with what society might think, only feels vengeful toward her. Vladimir, their son, intercedes for his mother, who is poverty stricken, but to no avail. Later he begs his father to come with him to visit her, since she is dying. But the father remains unrelenting. Vladimir expresses his indignation, and, as in *Menschen und Leidenschaften*, the father curses his son. Just as in *Menschen und Leidenschaften* Iurii is brought low by two factors simultaneously, his father's curse and his belief that his beloved has betrayed him, so here Vladimir is undone by his father and by betrayal in love, this time more or less real. He has an incipient and promising love affair, his only love and the one thing that could restore his faith in life, with Natasha. But quite coldbloodedly and for mercenary ends, his friend Belinskii woos Natasha and wins her hand. Vladimir goes mad. He dies, and his funeral is to take place on the same day that Natasha and Belinskii are to be wed.

The similarities between *Menschen und Leidenschaften* and *Strannyi chelovek* are obvious, and indeed one scene has been transferred almost bodily from one play to the other.⁷ A significant difference between the two plays is the toning down in *Strannyi chelovek* of some of the rhetorical excesses of the earlier play. At the same time the criticisms of serfdom, present in both plays explicitly and implicitly, have been considerably sharpened in the second play. In particular, the peasant who appears briefly in Scene V reports a whole series of gross abuses: unjustified whippings; a cruel overseer allowed free rein to tyrannize; physical torture to the point of permanent maiming — all without the possibility of redress, since the landowner has the judges bribed. On a neighboring estate, however, the peasant reports, all is justice and harmony.

Lermontov's merciless exposure of serfdom's abuses has been rightly noted with approval. At the same time we must point out a curious aspect of Vladimir's response to the peasant's report. Vladimir is predictably indignant: "People! People! And such terrible wrongdoing can be perpetrated by a woman, a creature sometimes so close to the angels [the landowner in question is a woman].... Oh, I curse your smiles, your happiness, your wealth — all bought with bloody tears. Breaking arms, stabbing, whipping, cutting, pulling out the beard hair by hair!... O God!... The mere thought makes me ache in all my limbs. I would crunch with my feet every bone in the body of this crocodile, this woman!... Just hearing about this enrages me!..." So far so good. Shortly thereafter, however, Vladimir's thoughts return to his own predicament: "There are people more deserving of pity than this peasant. External sorrows pass. But the one who carries the entire cause of his sufferings deep in his heart, the one in whom there lives a worm which swallows up the smallest sparks of pleasure... the one who wishes without being able to hope... the one who is a burden to all, even to those who love him.... But why speak of such people? No one can sympathize with them: No one understands them." To which his friend Belinskii rejoins: "There you go again! What an egotist! How can you compare illusory unhappiness with genuine misfortunes? How can you compare a free person with a slave?" I cite this passage for the evidence it may or may not offer of Lermontov's own scale of values. Did he agree with Vladimir that the misunderstood superior soul was suffering more than the abused peasant? Or was Belinskii's rejoinder also Lermontov's? I am inclined to think that he agreed with Vladimir. But at least he saw, condemned, and exposed the physical abuses of which serfdom was capable. Only

⁷ Scene XI in *Strannyi chelovek* reproduces a dialog from *Menschen und Leidenschaften* between Iurii and Ivan, his servant, as does also the ensuing monolog by Iurii.

Dmitrii Kalinin, by the famous critic V. G. Belinskii, was as outspoken as Lermontov's Scene V of *Strannyi chelovek* among contemporary works.

The play contains one scene in which Moscow students discuss obviously emotional and politically connected issues: Russia's destiny, the significance of 1812 and the Moscow fires, the mutilation by the censor of Schiller's *Die Rauber*.

Strannyi chelovek obviously owes a debt to Griboedov's *Gore ot uma* (*The Misfortune of Being Clever*). Vladimir berates the foibles of society in a manner reminiscent of Chatskii. Even before Vladimir actually goes mad, there is a sort of whispered consensus abroad that he is mad, also reminiscent of *Gore ot uma*. The very title of Lermontov's play may be a reference to Griboedov. Chatskii says: "*Ia stranen, a ne stranen ktozh? Tot, kto na vsekh gluptsov pokhozhd....*" ("I'm strange, but who is not strange? The one who is just like all the idiots").

Both *Menschen und Leidenschaften* and *Strannyi chelovek* depict the conflict between the superior, more or less Byronic soul (the epigraph in *Strannyi chelovek* is from Byron's *The Dream*) and a Philistine, venal society. The Byronic hero is of course both victim and victimizer. Disappointed in his love of and belief in good, he is very apt to become destructive. Of these two sides to his nature, Iurii and Vladimir represent rather the victim than the victimizer. They succumb in a milieu which is too unfeelingly harsh for them to survive.

Finally a propos *Strannyi chelovek*, we note that individual characters are at times made to speak with a voice which is clearly the voice of the author, a necessity imposed by the limitations inherent in stage production. Thus, in the final scene (XIII) the observations of the third guest fulfill precisely this function: his remarks embody the wisdom of the author: "Now they're sorry," he comments in response to the news of Vladimir's death. "People are just in their attitude to those who have perished. But what is that regret worth? One tear of friendship is worth more than all the outpourings of the crowd! But such a tear is unlikely to fall on Arbenin's grave: he left behind him pangs of conscience in people's hearts, where he had wished to instil love." This technique is carried over into Lermontov's first narrative prose work, *Vadim*.

Dva brata was written in 1835-36. On January 16, 1836, Lermontov writes to his friend, S. A. Raevskii, as follows: "... I'm writing the fourth act of a new drama, based on something that happened to me in Moscow." Lermontov had been in Moscow at the end of December, 1835, on his way from Petersburg to Tarkhany, where he spent a leave. In Moscow he met V. A. Lopukhina again, whom he had once loved and presumably continued to love. She had married N. F. Bakhmetev in May, 1835. This marriage, a betrayal as Lermontov saw it, was almost certainly the basis for the high drama that takes place in *Dva Brata*. Lermontov arrived in Tarkhany on December 31, 1835. He seems therefore to have completed three acts and some of the fourth act (out of a total of five acts) in a very short space of time.

Dva brata is the third prose play. It is, notwithstanding its five acts, the shortest of Lermontov's five dramas, taking up about one third the pages of *Ispantsy* and *Maskarad*, and one half the pages of *Menschen und Leidenschaften* and *Strannyi chelovek*. As in *Strannyi chelovek* the action takes place in Moscow.

The two brothers in this drama represent, roughly, two aspects of the Lermontovian romantic hero: in part, the victim and the victimizer, as mentioned in our discussion of *Menschen und Leidenschaften* and *Strannyi chelovek*, and even more, the extrovert and the introvert. Both brothers are in love with Vera. Both are romantic in the manner characteristic of Lermontov: they both believe that Vera is the only woman in the world who can bring them happiness. At that point the similarity ends. Iurii is open-hearted, naive, basically generous, and impetuous; Aleksandr scheming, secretive, manipulative, embittered, vindictive. Vera has been at one time Iurii's great love. But he has been away for four years, during which time she has married an af-

fluent older man, a prince, and had a love affair with Aleksandr. She and her husband, the prince, occupy an apartment in the house of Iurii and Aleksandr's ailing father.

Returning to Moscow, Iurii is dismayed at Vera's marriage and convinced that she cannot be happy with her husband. Aleksandr observes with hidden anxiety and fury the transfer of Vera's feelings back to his warm-hearted brother, Iurii. He tells his father what is afoot, and his father warns the prince. The prince agrees to take his wife out of Moscow on the following day. Outraged at such betrayal and interference, Iurii swears he will have Vera before she leaves. He writes her a note demanding a meeting that night; if she doesn't agree, he will duel with her husband. But the note is intercepted by the vigilant Aleksandr. He shows up and in the darkness she mistakes him for Iurii. He kisses her. The moonlight reveals his true identity. Iurii then arrives. Vera eventually escapes. The brothers quarrel, and Aleksandr upsets Iurii by claiming that Vera had another lover during Iurii's absence. In the fifth act, the prince tells Vera that, far from spoiling her as he has hitherto done, he will insist on her being entirely submissive; she will be confined in the remote countryside where *she* will obey *his* every wish. They leave. The brothers scuffle. The ailing father dies after blessing Iurii, but not Aleksandr. At the play's end the brothers are left at impotent cross-purposes: Iurii unconscious and Aleksandr commenting: "Weak soul... even that he couldn't tolerate."

Dva brata is the only Lermontov work which sets side by side two different aspects of the Lermontov hero. The contrasting of two brothers who are opposed to each other as rivals in love has, of course, something to do with Schiller's *Die Braut von Messina* (*The Bride of Messina*). In the first stage, the Lermontov hero is open, trusting, spontaneous. But the world abuses his confidence and deceives his hopes; he moves into the second stage, in which he is secretive, mistrusting, calculating and vengeful. Something of this evolution is conveyed by Aleksandr in a famous passage when he tells Vera:

Yes...such was my lot from the day of my birth...everyone read in my face signs of bad qualities which did not exist...but they were presumed to be there — and they were then in fact given birth. I was modest, I was accused of being cunning — and I became secretive. I had a strong feeling for good and evil — no one showed me affection — everyone insulted me — I became vindictive. I was gloomy — my brother cheerful and open — I felt myself to be his superior — people rated me below him — I became envious. I was ready to love the whole world — no one loved me — and I learned to hate.... My colorless youth was a struggle against fate and the world. Afraid of being laughed at, I buried my finest feelings in the depths of my heart... and there they died; I became ambitious, put in a long time in service.... I was passed over; I launched myself in high society, became an expert in the science of life, — but I saw how others, without making the effort to achieve expertise, were successful; despair arose in my heart, not the despair which can be cured with the muzzle of a pistol, but the despair for which there is no cure, either in this or the life to come; and then, last of all, I made my final effort, — I decided that I must at least once know what it is to be loved...and for that I chose you!...
(Act II, Scene 1)

The movement from the first stage, trusting and victimized, to the second stage, mistrustful and victimizer, is somewhat schematically reflected in Lermontov's dramatic works. The first stage is represented in *Menschen und Leidenschaften* (1830) and *Strannyi chelovek* (1831); both stages are present in *Dva brata* (1835-36), and the second stage is dominant in *Maskarad*. Lermontov's prose work got under way at a later date than his drama; it is not therefore surprising that the main romantic heroes belong more to the second than the first stage: Vadim, Pechorin in

Kniaginia Ligovskaia, and Pechorin in *Geroi nashego vremeni*. But of course the second stage is a harvesting of the seeds of the first stage; so that Vadim and Pechorin in *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* are also victims, and Pechorin in *Geroi nashego vremeni* recognizes these two sides of his make-up. Lugin in *Shtoss*, the last prose work, is more victim than victimizer, which merely shows that the two stages are two parts of the same malady, inseparably intertwined.

Action-packed though it is, this short play cannot really be considered gripping or effective. Apparently Lermontov himself was dissatisfied. He made no attempt to publish it, and transferred elements of plot and character to his projected novel, *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*, written mainly in 1836, the year in which *Dva brata* was completed. And not long after, the long "confession" cited above went, with few alterations, into *Geroi nashego vremeni*, where it was presented by Pechorin to Princess Mary as a ploy to win her sympathy (June 3 diary entry). The origins of this speech in Lermontov are actually to be found in *Vadim* (Chapter V).

Before leaving this play, let us note Aleksandr's complaint that he can only achieve his ends with women by employing expertise (*iskusstvo*), i.e., by practicing the tactical ploys advocated in Ovid's art of love. This is a Lermontov complaint right to the end, with Lugin in *Shtoss*. And of course in *Geroi nashego vremeni* we have an example of a successfully waged Ovidian campaign, the type of campaign whose beginnings are adumbrated in *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*.

We come now to *Maskarad*, which represents Lermontov's only solid claim to be viewed as a serious dramatist.

On November 8, 1835, the manuscript of *Maskarad* was rejected by the censor. It was returned to Lermontov with the comment: "Returned for necessary changes. November 8, 1835." Censorship involvement alerts us immediately to the fact that we are here dealing with a situation very different from any so far encountered in Lermontov's dramaturgy or for that matter in his work in any other genre. Lermontov had been consistently reluctant to publish his early work. His newfound eagerness with regard to *Maskarad* is significant. It clearly shows that on this occasion, Lermontov was ready and willing to stand up and be judged. We recognize that not only literary self-evaluation but social ambition was a factor: had *Maskarad* been published and staged, Lermontov would have become the sensation of the capital, the Byron of Petersburg.

Lermontov submitted for censorship not one but three versions of *Maskarad*. In early October, 1835, he submitted a three-act version, which was turned down on November 8. Before going on leave to Tarkhany in late December, Lermontov had ready a fresh version (now four acts), which was submitted on his behalf by S. A. Raevskii. In January, 1836, this version also was rejected. In October, 1836, Lermontov submitted a third version. The play now consisted of five acts, and the changes made represented substantial concessions to the censor's views. The changes were mainly designed to shift as much emphasis as possible to personal character traits and to mitigate the play's satirical indictment of society. But the censor, though his judgment was now less harsh, remained intransigent: "Reject. October 28, 1836." It is the second version submitted to the censor, the four-act version rejected in January, 1836, which is the source of the now accepted text of *Maskarad*.

The conception of *Maskarad* is generally dated late 1834 or early 1835, shortly after Lermontov, having graduated on November 22 from the cadet military school, had entered society in Petersburg and had had an opportunity of observing it at first hand. In the accepted text (the four-act redaction), the hero, Arbenin, at one time disenchantedly Byronic and an expert gambler, has now abandoned cards and sexual intrigues to devote himself to his wife, Nina, whom he loves and who has restored his belief in happiness. When, however, in the first act Prince Zvezdich loses a catastrophically high sum at the table, Arbenin, on impulse, wins the money back for him. The two then go on to a masked ball. Zvezdich there has a fleeting sexual encounter at her invi-

tation with Baroness Shtral', who is masked and therefore incognito. Pressed by the now enamored Zvezdich to reveal her identity, the baroness throws him off her trail by giving him as a keepsake a bracelet she had picked up off the floor and which belongs, alas, to Nina, who has dropped it. Zvezdich shows the bracelet to Arbenin. When it becomes clear that Nina has lost her bracelet, Arbenin's suspicions are aroused.

In Act II Zvezdich mistakenly comes to believe that Nina is his masked love. He has seen her shopping for a bracelet identical to the one she has lost. The baroness, who wishes to safeguard her own reputation, promotes the idea that there is something between Zvezdich and Nina. Arbenin then intercepts a letter which Zvezdich has in his error sent to Nina. Arbenin is now doubly upset, for not only has his wife been unfaithful, but Zvezdich apparently knows the identity of his casual sex partner. Seeking revenge, Arbenin visits Zvezdich, who is asleep; he considers killing him, since this would obviate the scandal of a duel, but cannot bring himself to do it. The baroness confesses to Zvezdich that she was his masked partner in love. Pursuing his revenge, Arbenin accuses Zvezdich of cheating at cards, throws the cards in his face, but refuses to duel. The story circulates that it was Zvezdich who had refused to duel. Zvezdich is dishonored.

Act III opens with another ball, not masked. Baronessa Shtral' has quit society and left for her country estate. Zvezdich is considered no longer socially acceptable, since he is wrongly held to have been unwilling to fight ("*Strelialsia?* — *Net, ne khotel;*" "Did he fight?" — No, he didn't want to") and is leaving for the Caucasus. He warns Nina that her husband is dangerous. Nina and her husband return home from the ball, and she dies from the poison he has put in her ice cream at the ball.

In the fourth and final act, people come to pay their last respects to Nina. Zvezdich tells Arbenin that Nina was innocent; and an unknown man tells him that he has hated him for years because of an old gambling loss that Arbenin had inflicted on him; furthermore he tells Arbenin that he saw Arbenin put poison in Nina's ice cream. Arbenin goes mad. Zvezdich is left dishonored, envying Arbenin his retreat into the haven of madness.

The first redaction of *Maskarad* to be submitted to the censor contained three acts. This version has not survived. But the summary of the plot made by the censor, Ol'dekop, gives us every reason to believe that its three acts paralleled exactly or nearly exactly the first three acts of the surviving four-act redaction. Ol'dekop's verdict on the three-act first redaction: "I do not know if this play will be able to pass, even with changes; certainly the scene in which Arbenin throws the cards in the prince's face must be changed entirely." He also takes strong exception to remarks by Baronessa Shtral' at masked balls, which were regularly held in the home of V. V. Engel'gardt, a wealthy retired colonel and a gambler. "How," the baroness asks, "can a decent woman bring herself to go there, where any riffraff, any frivolous prankster may insult and mock her?" On this point Lermontov undoubtedly took a risk, for the ladies of the imperial family, the Tsar's wife and daughters, sometimes attended Engel'gardt's masked balls.⁸

Ol'dekop's quarrel with the second (four-act) redaction is that Lermontov has failed to make necessary changes: "The new edition contains the same improper attacks on costume balls at the Engel'gardt home and the same impertinences directed against the ladies of high society. The author did, indeed, add on a different ending, but it was not the one that had been indicated." This observation brings us to the part played in the original censorship by A. Kh. Benkendorf, Chief of the Third Department. Benkendorf had found fault with the first redaction as "a glorification of vice." "For had not Arbenin poisoned his wife and remained unpunished?" Benkendorf

⁸ Ol'dekop's summary both in the original French and in Russian translation is in *Ak nauk*, V, 736-38; in Russian translation only in Eikhenbaum, IV, 517-18.

had expressed “the wish that the play be altered so as to finish with a reconciliation between M. and Mme. Arbenin.” The tacking on of a very short fourth act was therefore a gesture presumably intended to meet Benkendorf half way: the Unknown Man is a sort of Nemesis figure, though more interested in personal revenge than in the poisoning. Arbenin goes mad, a somewhat ambiguous form of punishment, for, as noted above, Prince Zvezdich actually envies him his escape into madness; but there is no reconciliation between husband and wife, and Nina dies as before. Ol’dekop comments in part: “Arbenin poisons his wife. An unknown man witnesses the poisoning. Mme Arbenin dies. Her death had concluded the first-version play.... Dramatic horrors have ceased in France. Do we have to introduce them here? Do we have to introduce poison in our households? Parisian ladies’ fashions have been adopted by us; there is no harm in that, but to import the dramatic horrors on which even Paris has turned her back, that is worse than awful, it defies description”.⁹

This second, four-act version has one obvious demerit in its now accepted role as the definitive text of *Maskarad*: it reflects changes made by the author to accommodate the censor. But the earlier three-act redaction has not survived. And the third redaction, modified even further to pass the censor, is so blatantly removed from Lermontov’s initial conception as to be virtually unrecognizable. But the effects of censorship are impossible to calculate with any degree of precision, for it exerts its influence not only *ex post facto* but before the event, by obliging the writer, in attempting to anticipate the censor, to make needed changes in advance. We must settle for the accepted second redaction.¹⁰

Before passing on to a discussion of literary influences in *Maskarad* and an attempt at a critical evaluation, we digress briefly to summarize the third redaction submitted to the censor. Returning from Tarkhany to Petersburg in March 1836, Lermontov faced a need for basic revision if he wanted to see his play on the stage. During 1836 he apparently devoted considerable time to this task. And on October 28 he submitted to the censor a third redaction, which in fact undermined the original conception. The main changes were as follows. The title was changed from *Maskarad* to *Arbenin*; this conformed to the idea of greater emphasis on personal traits, e.g., Byronic idiosyncrasies, and less of a consistently satirical exposure of society’s worthlessness and depravity. There is no longer a masked ball, one of the major earlier stumbling blocks. This renders superfluous Baroness Shtral’s function, and she is dropped. It also changes the affair of the bracelet, which is now simply wrenched from Nina’s wrist by Prince Zvezdich. Nina is no longer the immaculately innocent heroine of the accepted redaction: she is seen to be volatile, disenchanted with Arbenin, and exasperated with the role she feels he forces her to play in society; her affair with Zvezdich has not yet been consummated, but that appears imminent, since she has confessed she loves him. The card-throwing, a scene Ol’dekop had found particularly distasteful, is eliminated, being unnecessary since Zvezdich flaunts Nina’s bracelet before Arbenin, and the latter promptly challenges him. Arbenin’s revenge on his wife becomes no more than a simulated poisoning, designed to elicit her admission of partial guilt, and when Zvezdich arrives to duel with him, Arbenin refuses on the ground that Nina is not worth dueling over, saying that at the very next ball she will replace either husband or lover with a new claimant to her affections. Arbenin leaves, never to return, but not before bidding farewell to Olen’ka, Nina’s penni-

⁹ For the French original and its Russian translation see *Ak. nauk*, V, 742-43, and for the Russian only Eikhenbaum, *Academia* edition, IV, 518-19.

¹⁰ The most vigorous objections to the accepted four-act version came from Eikhenbaum, “Piat’ redaktsii ‘Maskarada’,” *Maskarad Lermontova* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1941). The problem will be further discussed below.

less but virtuous companion (he calls her a “*prekrasnoe sozdan'e*”), whose future well-being he has now undertaken to ensure.

It must be clear that the conception and entire thrust of Lermontov's *Maskarad* has in *Arbenin* undergone radical transformation. What we now have is a new play.¹¹ But, though changed in the interplay of emotions beyond recognition and renamed *Arbenin*, Lermontov's play, now in five acts, still did not pass the censor. It was submitted in late October and read by the same censor, Ol'dekop. His summary of the plot recognizes that the play has “been completely remade” and notes that “there is now no poisoning; all the repulsive parts (*gnusnosti*) have been removed.” But this more benign assessment did not alter the previous verdicts: “Rejected. October 28, 1836.”¹²

The failure of *Maskarad* to reach the stage or even be published at the time it was written was a fact of considerable significance for the play itself and for the public's evaluation of Lermontov as a dramatist.¹³ When *Maskarad* was eventually staged in Moscow in 1862, its time was past. The natural school had superseded romanticism and itself passed into history. On the stage Ostrovskii's merchant plays had been staged for nine years. *Maskarad* was totally out of tune with the new times and as a result was harshly received. And, to a great extent, the initially negative evaluation of *Maskarad* has left an imprint on what critics have had to say about the play even in our day. It is ironical that Lermontov's preeminence in other genres has encouraged critics to award him his full meed of praise as lyric and narrative poet and as prose writer, while shaking their heads disparagingly over *Maskarad*. Had *Maskarad* been staged in 1836, it would have been a huge success. And the corrective demanded of today's critic would have consisted in toning down the enthusiasm of 1836. For *Maskarad* is very much a product of its decade, a decade starting in 1828, when Victor Ducange's (and Prosper Goubaux's) *Trente ans ou la vie d'un joueur* (*Thirty Years or the Life of a Gambler*) was produced in Russian in Petersburg, and “Romanticism came, saw and conquered the Russian stage — from that moment dominated by robbers, villains, poison, knives, killings and betrayals.”¹⁴ This is the age of melodrama, largely though not exclusively French melodrama, correctly identified and characterized by the censor,

¹¹ This view is discussed and sustained in I. I. Shneiderman, “Nauchno-tvorcheskaia konferentsiia, posviaschchennaia drame Lermontova “*Maskarad*”, *Maskarad Lermontova* (M.-L.: VTO, 1941), 185-86.

¹² *Ak. nauk*, V, 754-55.

¹³ A much attenuated version of *Maskarad* cleared the censor in 1842, after Lermontov's death, thanks to the good offices of A. A. Kraevskii and the scholar, critic, and censor, A. V. Nikitenko. As written, and without censorship changes, *Maskarad* was not published until 1873. As to its production in the theater, it is interesting that the famous tragic actor of the day, P. S. Mochalov, twice (in 1843 and 1848) fought to have it staged, to no avail. Scenes from the play were given in an amateur performance in aid of the poor in Galich on January 13, 1847, on the initiative of P. I. Petrov, a relative by marriage and friend of Lermontov. In 1852 the Malyi Theater produced the play with a number of omissions and distortions. The play was first produced in Moscow at the Malyi Theater in 1862, and in Petersburg in January, 1864, at the Aleksandrinskii Theater. See Ia. L. Levkovich, “Teater,” *L. E.*, 568-72.

¹⁴ Quoted from Z. S. Efimova, “Iz istorii russkoi romanticheskoi dramy: ‘*Maskarad*’ M. Iu. Lermontova,” *Russkii romantizm* (L.: Academia, 1927), 27.

Ol'dekop, when in his second rejection letter (January, 1836) he complained of French dramatic horrors being introduced into Russia.¹⁵

French melodrama goes hand in hand with the masked ball and the gaming table, both of which were heavily featured as background and motif. Victor Ducange's *Trente ans* has already been noted. Elsewhere in Europe, there was August von Kotzebue's *Die Masken* (1813), a one-act piece with a happy ending, in which husband and daughter unmask themselves at a ball, revealing that they are both alive, not drowned, safely returned from abroad, in time to save the wife and mother from an unwanted marriage. It is difficult to disagree with the judgment of the French scholar Charles Rabany, who found this piece to be "d'une insignificance rare."¹⁶ Turning to Russia, brief note may be made of A. A. Shakhovskoi's *Igroki* (*The Gamblers*), 1828, two acts of which were read in 1827 to a limited audience (including Pushkin and S. T. Aksakov), on whose advice and with whose encouragement the play was left unfinished.¹⁷

Ispytanie (*The Trial*), 1830, a story by the Decembrist writer, A. A. Bestuzhev-Marlinskii (1797-1837) deserves more attention. The story of a love conflict resolved and a duel obviated is, its discursive auctorial style notwithstanding, closer in theme and tone to Pushkin's 1830 *Vystrel* (*The Shot*) or *Metel'* (*The Snowstorm*) than to *Maskarad*. Nevertheless there is a connection with Lermontov's drama. The names Shtal' and Zvezdich were taken from Bestuzhev's story: von Shtal' is a cavalry captain mentioned briefly as a guest at a ball and playing no role in the plot; but Zvezdich, again the gender is reversed, is a countess and the principle heroine. The anonymity afforded by masks at the ball, as in Lermontov, produces a confusion as to identity which is augmented here too by a piece of jewelry, a ring. There is the same play with frivolous but satirically effective social gossip, extending even to textual correspondences. And here, as in Lermontov, the simple, constructive rural life is held up in contrast to the false glitter of society life in the capital. The link is there. But mood and tone are at variance. Pushkin's *Pikovaia dama* (*The Queen of Spades*) should probably also be mentioned; but there is little in either narrative or tone to warrant any attempt to treat it as a serious influence.

G. P. Makogonenko imputes too much weight to Pushkin as a mentor who enables Lermontov to obtain a clearer and more realistic picture of the shortcomings of the Romantic hero, here exemplified by Arbenin.¹⁸ Both men were traveling the same trail of discovery, but at a distance in time of 15 years. And just as, inevitably, Pushkin could not and would not remain faithful to his *Prisoner of the Caucasus*, neither could Lermontov stand immobilized by the early heroes of *Menschen und Leidenschaft* or *A Strange Man*. That Pushkin provided some assistance in this direction is true and unsurprising when we consider Pushkin's enormous importance for Lermontov. But in *Maskarad* this influence should not be overemphasized. Here, as in other instances where the organic link between Pushkin and a Lermontov work is not strong, we still find a number of textual correspondences, in this case from *Evgenii Onegin*.¹⁹ Finally Gogol's *Igroki*

¹⁵ For thoughts on the effect on critical assessment of *Maskarad* of the time lag in its staging see Efimova's perceptive article, cited in note 14. We shall have occasion to make further references to this excellent article below.

¹⁶ Kotzebue: *Sa vie et son temps; ses oeuvres dramatiques* (Paris-Nancy, 1893), 490.

¹⁷ A. A. Shakhovskoi, *Komedii, Stikhotvoreniia*, 2nd ed. (L.: *Bol'shaia seriia*, 1961), 790-91. As did Griboedov in *Gore ot uma* (*The Misfortune of Being Clever*), Shakhovskoi here writes in mixed iambs, i.e. iambs of varying length.

¹⁸ *Lermontov i Pushkin* (L.: Sovetskii pisatel', 1987), 103-72.

¹⁹ See B. V. Neiman, *Vliianie Pushkina v tvorchestve Lermontova* (Kiev, 1914), and M. A. Iakovlev, *Lermontov kak dramaturg* (L.-M.: *Kniga*, 1924). The correspondences are as follows:

1) In *Maskarad* (III, Sc. 1, 1.1538):

Не гнется гордый наш язык,

In *Evgenii Onegin* (III, 26):

Доныне гордый наш язык

2) In *Maskarad* (I, Sc. 2, 11.241-245):

Ты! бесхарактерный, безнравственный, безбожный,
Самолюбивый, злой, но слабый человек;
В тебе одном весь отразился век,
Век нынешний, блестящий, но ничтожный.

This is an echo of *Evgenii Onegin* (VII, 22):

Да с ним еще два-три романа,
В которых отразился век
И современный человек
Изображен довольно верно
С его безнравственной душой,
Себялюбивой и сухой.

3) Kazarin's memories of a former lifestyle echo features of Onegin's early Petersburg days.

In *Maskarad* (II. Sc. 2, 11.1046-1053 and 1056-157):

Вот было время... Утром отдых, нега,
Воспоминания приятного ночлега...
Потом обед, вино — Рауля честь...
В граненых кубках пенится и блещет,
Беседа шумная, острот не перечить:
Потом в театр — душа трепещет
При мысли, как с тобой вдвоем из-за кулис
Выманивали мы танцовщиц и актрис...
Вот пьеса кончилась... и мы летим стрелой
К приятелю... взошли... игра уж в самой силе;

Against this we have the following excerpts, all from the first chapter of *Evgenii Onegin*:

a) Stanza 36:

И утро в полночь обратя,
Спокойно спит в тени блаженной
Забав и роскоши дитя.

b) Stanza 15:

Онегин едет на бульвар
И там гуляет на просторе,
Пока недремлющий брежет
Не прозвонит ему обед.

c) Stanzas 16, 17:

К *Talon* помчался: он уверен....
Вошел: и пробка в потолок,
Вина кометы брызнул ток,...

Еще бокалов жажда просит

d) Stanza 17:

Театра злой законодатель,
Непостоянный обожатель
Очаровательных актрис,
Почетный гражданин кулис,
Онегин полетел к театру,

is sometimes mentioned in discussions of *Maskarad*, although it is difficult to see why, since this one-act play was not published until 1842.²⁰

Other examples of melodrama associated with gambling and the use of masks could be adduced.²¹ But it is more rewarding to look further afield at authors whose works more accurately give a measure of Lermontov's development. We have in mind Shakespeare, Schiller, Griboedov and Victor Hugo. First we take Shakespeare, because his presence can be clearly traced in specific details of plot. In doing so we must, however, be aware that incidents in Shakespeare's tragedies paralleled in *Maskarad* may not have come directly from Shakespeare but from others who were themselves following in his footsteps, such as Schiller. We will come to this problem below.

The Shakespeare play we instinctively look at first, given the theme of *Maskarad*, is another drama of male conjugal jealousy, *Othello*, and the first coincidence is that in both plays an important function in engendering suspicion of infidelity is an object, in one case a handkerchief, in the other a bracelet, both gifts from the respective husbands. We note next that both husbands reached the top rungs in their professions, Othello as a military man, Arbenin as a gambler; both are older than their spouses; both have in marrying entered a new and hitherto unknown emotional world (to enter which Arbenin has abandoned gambling) and both have everything to lose by a breach in the marriage. One obvious difference between the two plays is that in the accepted

Залить горячий жир котлет....

e) Stanzas 27, 28:

Мы лучше поспешим на бал,
Куда стремглав в ямской карете
Уж мой Онегин поскакал....

Вошел. Полна народу зала:

4) In *Maskarad* Arbenin reflects on how ill suited he is to family life (II, 2):
The question is taken from Onegin's answer to Tat'iana, *Evgenii Onegin*, IV, 13:

Когда б мне быть отцом, супругом

5) In the fourth act the Unknown Man reflects on the dead Nina with dubious sincerity (Scene 1):

Кто б думать мог, что этот цвет прекрасный
Сомнет минутная гроза.

A similar thought is expressed on Lenskii's untimely death (VI, 31):

Дохнула буря, цвет прекрасный
Увял на утренней заре.

6) Finally, an almost exact correspondence. In *Maskarad* (III, i, 1.1550):

Вот всё, на чем вертится свет!

In *Evgenii Onegin* (VI, 11):

И вот на чем вертится мир!

²⁰ A. M. Dokusov mentions *Igroki* in connection with *Maskarad*; see *Maskarad*, L. E., 273.

²¹ E.g., A. Iakovlev, *Igrok v bank (The Faro Player)*; D. I. Beigichev, *Semeistvo Kholmiskikh (The Kholmiskii Family)*. See A.M. Dokusov, L.E., 273.

redaction of *Maskarad*, there is no one character equivalent to Iago to prod Arbenin's suspicions; these arise as the result of a combination of circumstances, exploited by several characters, but persuasive mainly because of Arbenin's predisposition to suspicion. In the final redaction, *Arbenin*, Kazarin assumes the role of Iago-like villain.

The extent of correspondence between the two heroines' death scenes is quite remarkable. In both, a female companion-assistant lingers, disturbed, on the fringe of the action, the murder in both cases having already been committed: Emilia discovers the murder in one, and the maid is dismissed from the room by Arbenin. In both deaths there is a question of time remaining: Desdemona begs "let me live tonight!", and then "But half an hour!"; and Nina is told "not yet," i.e., for the poison to take effect "*ostalos' polchasa*" ("there's half an hour to go"). Incidentally, in *Hamlet* (V, Sc. 2) the hero is also given half an hour or less; he is told by Laertes: "In thee there is not half an hour of life." Both murderers tell their victims to pray. In Othello:

I would not kill thy unprepared spirit.
No, heavens forbid! I would not kill thy soul!

This concern is also present in *Hamlet*: Hamlet's father was murdered:

Unhous'led, disappointed, unaneled,
No reck'ning made, but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head. (I,5)

And Hamlet balks at killing Claudius while he is at prayer (III,3), for in doing so he would be sending him to heaven. In *Maskarad*, the victim is told: "Teper' molit'sia vremia" ("Now its time to pray"). Both husbands kiss their wives: Othello before killing Desdemona, Arbenin before the poison takes effect. Both women protest their innocence, and both husbands recognize their innocence when it is too late. Madness is involved in both plays, though differently handled, since Othello's madness precedes the killing, whereas Arbenin's follows it, though his behavior before the killing is not normal.

The number of parallel narrative items brought into play by the two dramatists is striking. At the same time, some of these same parallels can be established elsewhere, with Schiller, whose enormous influence on Lermontov in general, and especially on his first three dramas, has been made clear above. The relevant play is *Kabale und Liebe* (*Cabal and Love*), 1784, which is also a story of male jealousy and poison. Points in common are not difficult to find. Just as in *Maskarad*, a letter arouses suspicion, so in *Kabale und Liebe* a letter arouses Ferdinand's suspicions against Luise, and there are similarities in its delivery and receipt. And as in *Maskarad*, where Arbenin's bitter disillusionment provokes him to inveigh against the foolishness of seeking paradise in one woman,

Ты прав — глупец, кто в женщине одной
Мечтал найти свой рай земной.

You're right — He's a fool who in one single woman
Has dreamt of finding earthly paradise

so in *Kabale und Liebe* Ferdinand's bitterness finds an identical outlet: "Thoren sind's, die von ewiger Liebe schwatzen" ("They are fools who babble of eternal love") (V, Sc.7). But of still greater interest from our standpoint are those occasions on which all three dramatists share points in common. We noted above that in Shakespeare and Lermontov the heroines protest their innocence and are heeded too late; this is equally so in Schiller. We noted that the heroines were instructed to pray before death; this too occurs in Schiller; "Sorge für deine unsterbliche Seele,

Luise!" ("Have a care for your immortal soul, Luise!") (V,7). Ferdinand takes poison and dies, just as Othello dies by his own hand, and Arbenin perishes in madness. All three heroines at the end express their longing to live: "No ia — ia zhit' khochu!" ("But I — I want to live!") (III, Sc. 2); "Mein junges Leben — und keine Rettung" ("My young life — and no escape") (V, Sc.7);

O banish me, my lord, but kill me not!...

Kill me tomorrow; let me live tonight...

But half an hour...

But while I say one prayer...(V, Sc.2)

Finally, the most fascinating juxtaposition of all, Luise's death in *Kabale und Liebe* is, like Nina's in *Maskarad*, wrought by poison. While Nina's poison was sprinkled on her ice cream, Luise's is mixed in a glass of lemonade. Othello smothers Desdemona. But if we think of the use of poison in an equally climactic killing in Shakespeare, we think of Laertes and Hamlet: poison administered by the point of the sword. Symbolically and synechdochically the move from violence to lemonade illustrates the move from Shakespeare's high to Schiller's so-called bourgeois tragedy. And though, strictly speaking, Lermontov's Petersburg in *Maskarad* differs significantly from Schiller's Stuttgart of Mannheim, Lermontov is chronologically and sociologically closer to Schiller than to Shakespeare. Thus, in his role as intermediary, Schiller is clearly responsible for suggesting here the more civilized method of administering poison, hence Lermontov's ice cream. And, note, in the final redaction, *Arbenin*, the simulated poisoning is with the help not of ice cream but of lemonade, the change, we suspect, not on esthetic grounds, but because ice cream would be less likely to be available in a private house in the morning than at a ball in the evening. But the influences of Shakespeare and Schiller are clear.²²

Another influence on *Maskarad* is Griboedov's *Gore ot uma* (*The Misfortune of Being Clever*, more often rendered in English somewhat forlornly as *Woe From Wit*). The great common link between the two plays is their harsh satirization of contemporary society. Largely as a result of this shared orientation, we find some not very significant similarities in situation, in one case even in the characters, and in the utterances. But the most important area in which Griboedov must be accounted helpful to Lermontov was that of stylistics and versification.

We take first the less significant resemblances. First, we find two examples of similar situations. Arbenin's conversation with Kazarin on the habitués of the gambling house (Act I, Sc. 1) is vaguely reminiscent of Chatskii's exchanges with Gorich at Famusov's ball (Act III, Scenes 6 and 9). And Arbenin's monolog on returning from the masked ball (Act I, Sc. 3) echoes loosely Chatskii's monolog (Act IV, Sc. 3) just outside the Famusov home. Both heroes are oppressed by the general tone of the functions they have attended. Second, two of the minor characters undoubtedly have points in common. In Griboedov, one of the sleazier characters is Zagoretskii: without being really acceptable in society, he is tolerated because of the offices he performs, his dexterity in financial dealings, his inside information on anyone and anything, his knowledge of scandal and skill in intrigue. Basically the same character appears in *Maskarad* under the name of Shprikh, where he plays, as had Zagoretskii in *Gore ot uma*, an invidious but not negligible role in fanning the scandal, which in one play leads speedily to society's declaring Chatskii mad and in the other to the hero's conviction that his wife has been unfaithful. This despicable character is in both plays, as has been frequently pointed out, drawn from a real life minor literary figure who translated from the great Italian poet and tragedian Alfieri (1749-1803) and had connections with

²² For both Shakespeare's and Schiller's presence in *Maskarad* see M. A. Iakovlev's excellent study, *Lermontov kak dramaturg* (L.-M.: *Kniga*, 1924), 197-234.

the Third Department. It has to be nevertheless accounted also a literary influence. The similarity of the two characters led to points of closeness in the two texts of minor import.

M. A. Iakovlev sees another example of Griboedov's influence in the role of rumor, in the card-playing episode when Prince Zvezdich receives the face cards thrown by Arbenin: "Here too we must recognize the influence of *Gore ot uma*."²³ What Iakovlev must have in mind is that in both plays a rumor (Chatskii's alleged madness and Zvezdich's alleged cowardice) once started spreads and grows like wild fire. There is, however, a difference between the two situations, and the Zvezdich rumor will be further discussed below.

Iakovlev mentions several other valid but insignificant similarities between the two texts. A more meaningful debt is found in the conversational intonations and freewheeling stylistics of the two works, particularly the breaking up of the line into often uneven segments as one speaker takes over from or interrupts another. This is a normal device in dramatic dialog, present in less developed form in *Ispantsy*. Neiman points to a particular form of this "interrupted" speech: one speaker picks up the syntax of a half-finished phrase from the other speaker, and finishes it but imparts a new twist and an ending far different from that originally intended. Neiman illustrates his point by comparing the two following dialogs. In *Gore ot uma*:

Молчанин.

Какое личико твое!

Как я тебя люблю!

Лиза.

А барышню?

Молчанин.

Ее

По должности, тебя...

(Хочет ее обнять.)

Лиза.

От скуки.

Прошу подальше руки!

Molchanin.

What a sweet face you!

How I love you!

Liza.

And my mistress?

Molchanin.

Her I love in the line of duty, but you...

(tries to embrace her)

Liza.

From boredom.

Please take your hands off me...

And in *Maskarad*:

²³ Ibid. 218.

Князь.

Ах, никогда мне это не забыть...
Вы жизнь мою спасли...

Арбенин.

И деньги ваши тоже.

Prince.

This I will never forget...
You saved my life...

Arbenin.

And your money too...

(Act I, Sc. 1)

Not only can speaker be interrupted by speaker, but one speaker can in both Griboedov and Lermontov leave a thought unfinished, a device which not only gives insight into a speaker's thought processes but enhances the illusion of real-life dialog.²⁴

Griboedov's highly aphoristic style in *Gore ot uma* has been many times noted, and it is not surprising that he is often held responsible for the same phenomenon in *Maskarad*. In part this connection is justified, for it is inconceivable that the younger man was not impressed by Griboedov's aphoristic flare, so well-designed to score telling points in what purported to be comedy. However, Lermontov had from the outset of his career, and most particularly in his early lyric verse, cultivated the art of the epigrammatic twist, the symmetrical phrase, the antithesis, the *pointe*. Furthermore, in literature the aphorism had never been confined to epigram, comic verse, or comedy. To give one example, the French Alexandrine, with its midway caesura, had always proved admirably suited to aphorism, for tragedy no less than for comedy. It is remarkable to what degree a great tragedian like Racine finds himself never very far from an exploitable aphorism. There is, moreover, one noteworthy difference between Griboedov's aphoristic style and that of Lermontov in *Maskarad*. Whereas Griboedov's aphorisms frequently approach the pithy, pungent, almost substandard stylistics of an uneuropeanized Russian people (*narod*), those of Lermontov reflect the wit, elegance, and European quality of Petersburg society. They thus constitute a development of a tendency much in evidence in Lermontov's early lyrics. However, Griboedov's example cannot have failed to spur Lermontov.

The final influence to be touched on here is that of Victor Hugo, the doyen of French romanticism, whose melodramatic action-packed *Hernani* undoubtedly opened new perspectives for Lermontov. Victor Hugo's presence in *Maskarad* is more difficult to characterize than that of Shakespeare, Schiller, or Griboedov, largely because there are few episodes in *Hernani* that can be neatly juxtaposed with equivalent ones in *Maskarad*. An indication of Hugo's lesser recognition is the absence in the *Lermontovskaia entsyklopediia* of all mention of *Hernani* or any other Hugo play in connection with *Maskarad*, either in the short entry devoted to Hugo (L. I. Vol'pert) or in the longer entry devoted to *Maskarad* (A. M. Dokusov).²⁵

²⁴ B. V. Neiman, "Iazyk p'es Lermontova." *Maskarad Lermontova* (M.-L.: Izd. VTO, 1941), 109-20.

²⁵ Respectively pages 124 and 273-75. Nor does the "Dramaturgiia" entry by N. M. Vladimirskaia make the connection, see pages 144-46.

Hugo's influence exerts itself, primarily but not exclusively, in its tone, its emotional intensity, and a certain air of mystery. Neiman, who recognizes *Hernani* unerringly and without hesitation, speaks of "its enigmatic quality and poetic atmosphere of mystery," which he sees as "permeating Lermontov's play and imbuing it with a peculiar charm." He is also quick to see that the play's unique quality rests largely on an unlikely but highly effective fusion of what he calls the "Griboedov" element with the French romantic, i.e., Hugo's attributes of mystery and emotional intensity. Lermontov's drama "combines," according to Neiman, "the sparkle of this (Griboedovan) style with other characteristics emanating from an entirely different source; the rapier sharpness of the dialogs, the scintillating aphorisms are extinguished and overwhelmed (*potukhaiut*) in the gloomy majesty of high romanticism, which is the dominant principle governing the entire play."²⁶ Incidentally, while we noted a lack of specific episodes to demonstrate the relationship between *Hernani* and *Maskarad*, there are parallels worth mentioning. There are masks in abundance. It is a mask which enables Doña Sol's elderly suitor to play a role somewhat analogous to that of Lermontov's Unknown Man; but when in *Hernani* Don Ruy Gomez un.masks himself, it is to demand that Doña Sol's bridegroom, Hernani, kill himself, as he had earlier promised to do whenever Don Ruy Gomez should claim his life (Act III, Sc.7). Don Gomez in the final scene persists in his demand, and both Doña Sol and Hernani drink the poison, whereupon Don Gomez kills himself. Though the plot is different, poison plays a vital role also.

Maskarad has not fared well among literary critics. We noted above how it had suffered by delay in publication and staging, reaching the Moscow stage only in 1862, by which time the public was unreceptive and ill-disposed toward plays of its kind. But the years that followed did not produce a corrective. It was rejected by such diverse critics as Apollon Grigor'ev (1822-69), D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii (1853-1920), N. A. Kotliarevskii (1863-1925), V. P. Sipovskii (1872-1930), P. A. Viskovatov (1842-1905), and more recently Eikhenbaum.²⁷ Of these, Eikhenbaum's criticisms are among the harshest. Two of his most serious charges are leveled against *Maskarad*'s alleged lack of dramatic movement and, related to that, against "the conventionalized and ornamental nature" of the secondary characters who, Eikhenbaum claims, can easily be replaced by other secondary characters. Eikhenbaum's criticisms have not gone unchallenged. No one has rebutted them more effectively than Z. S. Efimova, and we cannot do better than to summarize her points. For Efimova, *Maskarad* marks a significant step forward in dramatic quality by comparison with the three earlier plays. She notes in *Ispantsy* and *Menschen und Leidenschaften* the excessive use of monologs unrelated to action. Seeking to correct this defect, Lermontov has introduced in *Strannyi chelovek*, following Griboedov's example, a number of group scenes, but these, e.g., Scene 4, the student party, do no more than the monologs before them to advance the action. Nor does the interesting conversation with the peasant on landowner abuses in Scene 5. In *Maskarad*, by contrast, crowd scenes and scenes in which secondary characters are prominent are invariably related to plot advancement. Therefore, as Efimova rightly insists, the secondary characters are not "ornamental" nor interchangeable. Indeed, Eikhenbaum picked a very poor example in suggesting that Olen'ka in *Arbenin* somehow replaces Shtral': "Thus in the second redaction of *Maskarad* [here meaning *Arbenin*] there is no Baroness Shtral', and in her place (!) we find another character — Olen'ka, whose role is just as weakly fitted into the play as was that of the baroness."²⁸ But Olen'ka is Nina's poor, virtuous, self-sacrificing

²⁶ Neiman, 113-40, here 116.

²⁷ See I. I. Shneiderman, "Nauchotvorcheskaia konferentsiia, posviashchennaia drame Lermontova 'Maskarad'," *Maskarad* (M.-L., 1941), 179-80; Z.S. Efimova, 26-29.

²⁸ Eikhenbaum, 1924, 80-83.

companion, who does at one juncture (Act III, Sc. 2) make a significant contribution to plot development by making Arbenin believe that it is she, not Nina, to whom Zvezdich has been paying court. The play *Arbenin* is not, in any case, in question here. But in the accepted version of *Mas-karad Shtral'* plays an essential role: she is Zvezdich's sexual partner at the masked ball, and she tells the gossipy Shprikh that Zvezdich is having an affair with Nina (Act II, Sc. 1). What is interesting in terms of Lermontov's structuring is that, with the changed plot in *Arbenin* and with *Shtral'* bereft of her former function, she is simply removed; had she been as ornamental as Eikhenbaum suggested, she could presumably have remained.

A few words are in order about the monolog form. By the theatrical conventions of the age it was a permissible device. Lyric in nature, it serves to reveal facts about a given situation and about a character's outlook and feelings. Its too-frequent use is, however, clearly a blemish. We have above noted as such the rhetorical tirades in which Fernando indulges in *Ispantsy*. And we shall have a similar complaint with *Vadim* in the next chapter. Rhetorical tirades can also occur in dialog. The real test is whether they are static or dynamic, whether they are simply outpourings of feeling or a means of advancing the plot, and how long sustained and how frequent is their use. For example, no one will complain of Hamlet's virtual monolog "To be or not to be." Nor in *Richard II* do Gaunt's poetic words on "this scepter'd isle," addressed to the Duke of York but longer than dramatic function demands, raise objections. Many of Chatskii's pronouncements directed at Moscow and Muscovites advance the action not one whit; yet criticism (Pushkin's strictures excepted)²⁹ has been muted. Why then cavil at Lermontov's limited use of a less bombastic form of monolog?

Eikhenbaum's complaint about the Unknown Man is in itself legitimate. It is echoed by many critics, including Efimova. But the manner in which the complaint is motivated is unacceptable and unfair: "It was natural, given the basically monologistic character of the drama, that its denouement should create difficulties for Lermontov. There is here no genuine dramatic plot: Arbenin has nothing further to add to earlier utterances, and the remaining characters are not really connected to the plot, and their fate is a matter of indifference. A new character is needed to end the play; and that is the role of the Unknown Man." But Eikhenbaum was well aware that in the first redaction presented to the censor, the three-act version rejected on November 8, 1835, Lermontov had, without the Unknown Man's help, brought the play to an end with Nina's death. Eikhenbaum also knew that the appearance of the Unknown Man in the newly added fourth act was motivated by the hope of propitiating the censor. Whether the Unknown Man, who seems to have been suggested by Hugo, adds to the play is a quite different question. And many, including Efimova, agree with Eikhenbaum's contention that he is no asset, his motive for revenge is weakly presented, and he is a "mysterious, semi-fantastic" figure. Indeed he is, and that strikes a new and perhaps awkwardly uncomfortable note in a drama purporting to be oriented toward realistic portrayal. Lermontov's revised version in response to the first rejection by the censor was completed in about one month (in the first half of December, 1835), and it seems not far-fetched to surmise haste, petulance, and inferior execution.

With all this critical imbroglio, I feel no hesitation in injecting my own viewpoint and solution. The Unknown Man represents a weak point and should be removed. The play should end after the third act, with, however, one episode taken from the fourth act: Zvezdich should, as he does in the fourth act, inform Arbenin of Nina's innocence; then let Arbenin lapse into a madness so total that Zvezdich is in no way tempted to envy him his retreat into some haven of ref-

²⁹ Pushkin's reservations, especially relating to Chatskii's folly in casting pearls before swine, are in his letter of late January, 1825, to A. A. Bestuzhev. See *Ak. nauk*, XIII, 137-39.

uge. You have a more realistic, better dramatic ending. Whether that would have satisfied Ol'dekop and Benkendorf is something else. Even had they approved, it would not have remedied a flaw to which we now come, Arbenin's character.

Eikhenbaum also complains, and others support him, about the character of Arbenin. It is difficult to disagree with this chorus of criticism. There is something decidedly unlovable about Arbenin. We are ourselves no strangers to evil, nor do we dispute the then popular doctrine of Schelling's about the coexistence of good and evil in the human breast. Recognizing the villainy of a Richard III or a Macbeth, who among us has not felt admiration for Richard or regretted Macduff's single-combat triumph over Macbeth? It is not the presence of evil that repels us, but rather the nature of the evil and the attendant personality traits which make Arbenin unacceptable. Of these, the most repulsive is Arbenin's narcissistic assumption of his own superiority to others, an assumption which the other characters and especially the author strengthen and encourage. Commentators rightly point to a similarity between Arbenin and the Demon. But the difference is also instructive, even decisive. And the difference is one of context. While we are *a priori* ready to concede a Satanic grandeur to the Demon, immortal, timeless, rebellious on a cosmic scale, we are not inclined to be similarly indulgent toward a member of Petersburg society of the 1830s, whom we measure with a less charitable yardstick. To question the esthetic appeal of the main character is to undermine the very foundations of this tragedy, but not to dismiss it lightly. Albeit flawed, *Maskarad* deserves our admiration.

Before going on to justify this, we shall discuss what seems to be a technical mistake. There are, it seems to me, problems relating to the vengeance Arbenin takes on Prince Zvezdich. Convinced of Nina's guilt both by the missing bracelet and by the letter, Arbenin decides in Act II, Scene 3, not to challenge Zvezdich, since by doing so he would expose himself to society's mockery, but to kill Zvezdich, making it appear that he had died of a stroke. He cannot bring himself to do it. Instead, in Act II, Scene 4, he throws the cards in Zvezdich's face, then refuses to duel, thus, he claims, dishonoring him. Zvezdich accepts this and is in despair. But there are several questions the reader or audience is entitled to ask. Why, if Zvezdich is ready and eager to duel, is he dishonored? Three codices belonging to a then popular French dueling manual are here relevant:

- 1) The insulted party should demand satisfaction, i.e., issue a challenge. Not to demand satisfaction for an insult was to dishonor oneself (Zvezdich demanded satisfaction).
- 2) The one who had given offense should give satisfaction, i.e. accept the challenge (Arbenin refused the challenge).
- 3) If the insulted party had challenged the offending party and his challenge had not been accepted, then he was considered permanently dishonored (in which Zvezdich concurred).³⁰

The conflict between the second and third point is obvious.

Be that as it may, the accusation which circulates against Zvezdich at the ball (Act III, Sc. I) is not that Arbenin dishonored him by refusing his challenge but that Zvezdich, after receiving what amounts to a slap, failed to challenge Arbenin. But how could such misinformation circulate? We cannot here postulate what happened to Chatskii in Griboedov's Moscow. For there were, apart from Arbenin and Zvezdich, only the host and Kazarin present when the cards were thrown. And if these two chose to distort the story, then what was the point of Arbenin's elabo-

³⁰ Quoted from N. S. Ashukin, "Istoričeskoye kommentarii k drame Lermontova *Maskarad*," *Maskarad Lermontova* (M.-L.: VTO, 1941), 238. The French source is Brillat Savarin, *Essai historique et critique sur le duel* (Paris, 1819).

rate “revenge” in refusing to accept Zvezdich’s challenge? Nor is there any hint that the host or Kazarin undertook to put out a false version of what happened: one evening there is Arbenin’s refusal to accept Zvezdich’s challenge, which Zvezdich regards as robbing him of his honor; on a later occasion, at the ball, his honor is lost in the eyes of society on totally new, and false, grounds. Moreover, Arbenin’s objective has been only imperfectly achieved. For his own honor, which he had once thought to save by killing rather than dueling Zvezdich, has been impugned:

Я сомневался? я? а это всем известно;
 Намеки колкие со всех сторон
 Преследуют меня... я жалок им, смешон!
 И где плоды моих усилий?

I had my doubts? But everybody knows;
 Snide innuendo from every side
 Pursues me... To them I am pitiable, absurd!
 And where are the fruits of my efforts?

In an earlier incomplete redaction, not yet mentioned here, the so-called “Iakushkin” text, discovered only in the 1930s and written probably in early 1835, there are a number (“*mnogie*”) of unnamed players present when, at Arbenin’s invitation, Zvezdich arrives to play cards. With these players Arbenin concludes a conspiratorial pact; they agree to let him work his will with Zvezdich. But, by contrast with the accepted redaction, the object here is simply to make Zvezdich lose all his money. There is no card-throwing, no dishonor, no challenge, and consequently in the ensuing scene at the ball no talk of Zvezdich’s reluctance to duel. However, the presence of “many” unnamed players has obviously tempted directors, who have quite naturally felt that there is a “missing link” in the misinformation put around in the accepted redaction. Numbers (as in *Gore ot uma*) encourage distortions. The additional unnamed players are made to be present when in the accepted version Arbenin throws the cards. In an article entitled “Maskarad on the Soviet Stage,” G. G. Shtain has rightly labeled as negligence on the part of actors and producers alike the practice of having the same youthful officers with their little black “moustaches” who had been present at the card-throwing scene later register surprise at the ball when they hear, apparently for the first time, of the quarrel between Zvezdich and Arbenin; if they were to register any surprise, it should have been on hearing a version they had to know was false!³¹

But even setting right this gaffe, i.e., keeping the card-players of the card-throwing scene separate from the guests of the ball scene, does not solve the problem. If Arbenin’s refusal to duel Zvezdich was such a triumphant vengeance and sensational success, why weaken the story with the allegations of Zvezdich’s cowardice? And, also, why do the allegations succeed?

This latter question has largely been passed over in silence. Iurii Mann confronts it in an interesting article on the concept of play in *Maskarad*.³² He writes: “Arbenin’s refusal to duel is a uniquely important move, almost unthinkable in both real life or as part of a literary plot.... Both Prince Zvezdich and those present clearly recognize that Arbenin’s act is not an act of cowardice.... And behind the act they feel the cold calculation, not only to push his opponent to the depths of despair by rendering him incapable of restoring his honor by ‘lawful’ means, but also to inflict damage on those very (society) laws....” But Arbenin’s object is really not to make a point

³¹ G. G. Shtain, “‘Maskarad’ na Sovetskoi stsene,” *Maskarad Lermontova* (M.-L., 1941) 137-79, esp. 148-49 and 155-56.

³² “Igrovyie momenty v ‘Maskarade’ Lermontova,” *Izvestiia AN SSSR. Seriiia literatury i iazyka*, 1977, vol. 36, No. 1, 27-38.

against society's laws as they relate to dueling. Nor did he effect this, since society came to believe that Zvezdich had lacked the courage to challenge him. Nor, if society had known the truth, would it have convinced me and surely others that Zvezdich was to be despised because Arbenin refused to duel him. Are we perhaps to believe that Arbenin's planned vengeance went awry? And that being exposed to people's "snide innuendo," he was only then obliged to go one step further and poison Nina? I frankly doubt it, since Lermontov was surely determined on a poisoning from the start, and it is therefore more probable that a few loose ends were left untied.

Another anomaly is found in Nina's role. She had saved Arbenin from his long-felt savage disenchantment with life. This supposes an intimacy between the spouses, an intimacy which Nina would have liked to develop further by their withdrawal from society. It would therefore have been natural, given this intimacy, for Nina in the course of daily communication to have informed her husband of her intention of going to the masked ball, as Arbenin himself points out (Act I Sc. 3). This would not have avoided her loss of the bracelet, but it might have predisposed Arbenin to a less suspicious and accusatory stance from the start.

How are we to redeem a work in which the central character is held to have been conceived awry and whose accepted version reflects the censor's pressure? Let us start by rejecting what Efimova calls "the *a priori* view that Lermontov, like all 'subjective' poets, lacked the essential ingredients (*zadatkov*)," as had Byron, "to be a genuine dramaturgist."³³ Essentially Efimova demolishes this notion by emphasizing the rapid advances in dramatic technique made by Lermontov from one play to the next, in particular the development from static monolog, too often divorced from the action, to the action-advancing speech of *Maskarad*. To base a defense on Lermontov's rapid mastery of technique may seem to be damning with faint praise. But technique here extends to character portrayal, for it involves a toning down of the hero's total fixation on self, rodomontade and general rhetorical flourish. To convince oneself of this truth, one has only to look at *Vadim*, the uncompleted novel on which Lermontov worked immediately before tackling *Maskarad*. At the same time, it would be idle to pretend that Lermontov ever succeeded in weaning himself entirely of this obnoxious literary Doppelgänger, either in drama or the novel. What can be said is that in *Maskarad*, Arbenin has sufficient restraint not to ruin the play, not to vitiate or impair our pleasure in its redeeming features and principal merits, the orientation and stylistic excellence of the verse and the dramatic speed of the action.

Eikhenbaum remarked, with *Maskarad* specifically in mind, though his thought has general application, that in verse "rhetorics appear less melodramatic than in prose since they are motivated by the form of speech itself."³⁴ This is undoubtedly true; *Maskarad* would fare far less well if it were written in prose. But the verse is not simply a mitigating factor nor a defense strategy. At its best it is representative of one of Lermontov's principal strengths as a poet. In dealing with his lyric and narrative poetry we more than once commented on his outstanding talent for clear, concise, expository poetic statement. It is a gift which on the surface might seem to run counter to the "melodramatic," romantic substance of his thinking. But in fact the two strains constitute an admirable fusion. For the highflown, outré ranges of Lermontov's emotional gamut are by this fusion distilled into sane, sober, down-to-earth, prosaic statements, elevated by rhyme and rhythm to high poetry.

A very few examples will serve to illustrate our point. Thus Arbenin is introduced to Shprikh, to whom he takes an immediate dislike. Kazarin explains Shprikh's versatile qualities and how useful he can be. To which Arbenin responds:

³³ Efimova, 26.

³⁴ Eikhenbaum 1924, 82.

Портрет хорош, — оригинал-то скверен!

The portrait is a good one — it's the original that's so obscene!

(Act I, Scene 1)

This certainly does not transport us to the upmost slopes of Mount Parnassus, but it does display a pithiness and gift for antithesis which Griboedov would have appreciated. Note also the Krylovian concision of Kazarin's characterization to Shprikh of the "new" Arbenin:

Теперь?

Женился и богат, стал человек солидный;

Глядит ягнечком, — а право, тот же зверь..

Мне скажут: можно отучиться.

Натуру победить. — Дурак, кто говорит:

Пусть ангелом и притворится,

Да чорт-то всё в душе сидит.

Now?

He's married and he's rich, a solid citizen;

Looks like a lamb, — deep down, he's still the same wild beast...

They say a man can mend his ways,

Surmount his nature, change. Only a fool speaks so:

He may act like an angel, but

Inside the self-same devil lurks.

(Act I, Scene 1)

Or hear Arbenin, former rake, gambler, bretteur, who has returned alone from the masked ball (Act I, Scene 3):

Бог сспаведлив! и я теперь едва ли

Не осужден нести печали

За все грехи минувших дней.

Бывало, так меня чужие жены ждали,

Теперь я жду жены своей...

Yes, God is just! I almost now indeed

Am damned, condemned to bear these sorrows

For all my sins of earlier days.

When wives of other men waited for me;

For my own wife I'm waiting now...

or Nina rejecting Arbenin's suspicions over the missing bracelet (Act I, Scene 3):

Так вот какое подозренье.

И этому всему виной один браслет;

Поверьте, ваше поведенье

Не я одна, но осмеет весь свет!

So that's what you suspect. Indeed!

And all of that because a bracelet has been lost;

Believe me, your behavior

Not I alone, but all the world will mock!

In our final example, part of Baroness Shtral's soliloquy (Act II, Scene 1), she bemoans woman's unenviable status:

Подумаешь: зачем живем мы? для того ли,
 Чтоб вечно угождать на чуждый нрав
 И рабствовать всегда! Жорж Занд почти что прав!
 Что ныне женщина? создание без воли,
 Игрушка для страстей иль прихотей других!
 Имея свет судьей и без защиты в свете,
 Она должна таить весь пламень чувств своих
 Иль удушить их в полном цвете....

В груди ее порой бушует страсть,
 Боязнь, рассудок, мысли гонит;
 И если как-нибудь, забывши света власть,
 Она покров с нее уронит,
 Предается чувствам всей душой —
 Тогда прости и счастье и покой!

One thinks about it: what? what are we living for?
 Always to oblige someone other's will,
 And always be a slave! George Sand was almost right!
 What is a woman now? A being without will,
 A toy for others' passions and caprice!
 The whole world her judge, defenseless in the world,
 She must conceal the ardor of her wants
 Or stamp and crush them in full bloom....

In her breast at times will passion rage,
 And put to flight reflection, reason, fear;
 And if somehow, forgetting the world's power,
 She drops the veil that shields it from men's view,
 Surrenders heart and soul to her desire,
 Then happiness farewell! And farewell peace!...

The directness and simplicity of the language; the adroitness of the rhyme (in Russian); the ordering of the syntax to bring out parallelism, contrast, antithesis; the aphoristic lightness of touch; the expository restraint and control: these qualities combine to produce pleasure, amusement, empathy, satisfaction, and, along with the fast-paced action on which we insisted above, to make *Maskarad* not a *Hamlet*, a *Macbeth*, nor an *Uncle Vania*, but a lively play, one of the best products of the Russian stage, and a source of some truly excellent poetry.

CHAPTER VI

Prose

The pattern commonly followed by writers in the second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century was to start with poetry and turn to prose. With exceptions, this pattern holds good from Goethe to Lermontov, although Goethe continued throughout his long career to return to poetry. So, throughout his short life, did Lermontov. Pushkin shifted his main effort from poetry to prose, though he wrote some poems in the fall of 1836, shortly before his death. Turgenev, a later arrival, never came back to poetry. This was a period in which prose, obliged for many centuries to play second fiddle, eventually came into its own.

Prose had everything going for it in this period. There was — and these remarks apply in varying degrees and in different ways to both the Romantic and the Realist movements — an enormous surge of interest in both social conditions and the human character, not only the exceptional personality, but also the average human character, its motivation and behavior in light of social conditions. These issues can be explored in greater depth in prose than in poetry. Lermontov's prose reflects an interest in both social conditions and character portrayal.

During his lifetime Lermontov had only one prose piece published, his novel, *Geroi nashego vremeni*.¹ But this one novel earned Lermontov a distinguished place in the history of the development of Russian prose. To him is generally, if not quite accurately, credited the honor of having established the "metaphysical" language of Russian prose literature. "Metaphysical" language, a term first used by Pushkin, means merely the language of abstract analysis and character portrayal. His one complete work was much admired by, among others, L. N. Tolstoi. More importantly, it has been enjoyed by generations of Russians and non-Russians. We will return to *Geroi nashego vremeni*. But we start at the beginning, with Lermontov's first prose work, *Vadim*.

1

Vadim is the name given to this unfinished first novel: the first sheet of the surviving manuscript, containing Lermontov's title, is missing. It was first published in 1873. Lermontov worked on *Vadim* during 1833 and 1834, while at the cadet school. He completed 24 chapters.

Vadim is in part a historical novel. It is set in the reign of Catherine II, and has as its specific background the 1773-75 uprising against the government, led by the Don Cossack Emel'ian Pugachev. Pugachev claimed to be Peter III, Catherine's dead husband, whose murder in 1762 had made Catherine the sole and undisputed ruler of Russia. The basic causes of the uprising were the poverty and ill treatment of the peasants. Pugachev steadily gained supporters and territory. At one point he held a large area to the south and east of Moscow. After several defeats suffered at the hand of regular army troops, support for his movement waned, and Pugachev was eventually handed over to the authorities by his own people. He was taken to Moscow and hanged. The events described in *Vadim* take place in the summer of 1774, when Pugachev's star is still in the ascendant. His marauding followers, many of them Cossacks, are approaching the area in which the novel is situated. As Pugachev's troops advance, the local peasantry is rebelling, mob rule prevails, and a number of landowners and their families are being killed.

It may have been social concern that prompted Lermontov to tackle this alarming episode belonging to Russia's relatively recent past. His 1830 lyrics demonstrate a keen social awareness.

¹ *Ak. nauk*, VI, 649-50.

But there are likely to have been two other reasons. First, his choice of an armed uprising as the background for the novel made available to him, a prose writer without experience, certain helpful literary models. Secondly, Lermontov almost certainly had had the benefit of hearing oral reports about the uprising from people living in the Tarkhany area, his grandmother included; a significant part of the province of Penza had been invaded by rebel detachments in the summer of 1774, and there had been casualties among the Penza landowners. Thus the Pugachev uprising offered Lermontov an assurance of historical authenticity, along with the sort of literary-technical guidance that any inexperienced young author would be likely desire.²

The help Lermontov received in handling the historical theme came mainly from Walter Scott's *Rob Roy* and Balzac's *Les chouans*, two novels which deal with armed revolt. True, the narrator in *Vadim* complains of the slowness of Scott's narrative style (XIV). And Scott differs radically from the author of *Vadim* in outlook; Scott's eighteenth-century rationalism would have been deeply at odds with Lermontov's focus on Vadim as an exceptional and superior individual. In Lermontov, the Gothic converges with the historical.³ Vadim, a hunchback, owes something too to the non-Gothic, gentle Quasimodo in Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*.

Perhaps because their popularity peaked somewhat earlier, Chateaubriand's *Atala* (1801) and *René* (1802) tend to be insufficiently acknowledged. But Tomashevskii points to their incontrovertible influence on *Vadim* in descriptions of nature, the theme of incest, and the practice of interspersing narrative with poetical elegiac aphorisms.⁴ These two works were quite certainly enormously important. Lermontov did not particularly look to Russian prose writers for help. Pushkin's historical novel *Kapitanskaia dochka* (*The Captain's Daughter*) had not been written. But to Bestuzhev-Marlinskii Lermontov undoubtedly owes a debt.⁵

The novel's main character is Vadim, a bandy-legged young hunchback. His father, a landowner, had been dispossessed and thus condemned to poverty and an early grave by his neighbor, Boris Petrovich Palitsyn. Palitsyn initially for appearance's sake took in and raised as his ward Vadim's sister, Ol'ga, who is unaware of her origin or background. Now grown into a beautiful young woman, she is being relentlessly pursued by the lecherous Palitsyn. Vadim, first introduced to us incognito as a beggar among beggars, volunteers to work for Palitsyn. He is in liaison with the advancing rebels. But his consuming motive is revenge on Palitsyn. He reveals his identity to his sister, as well as her origin and their father's fate. The two agree to work together to exact vengeance. Ol'ga shows great tenderness toward her brother. But things go awry for Vadim with the return from Petersburg of Palitsyn's handsome son, Iurii, with whom Ol'ga falls in love. This proves the undoing of Vadim, who has all his life been starved for affection. As becomes increasingly clear, he now nurses an incestuous love for his sister. She, in love with Iurii, has lost most of her earlier interest in vengeance and has conceived a horror of Vadim. The closing chapters of the unfinished novel leave the situation as follows. Rebel units have entered the area. Landowners and their families are being hunted down and killed. Palitsyn's wife has

² See I. Andronikov, *Lermontov: Issledovaniia i nakhodki* (M.: Khudlit, 1967), 94-116.

³ The basic differences in outlook between Scott and Lermontov and the Gothic element in *Vadim* are presented with insight and clarity in Helena Goscilo, *Vadim* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984), 12-28. See also B. Tomashevskii, "Proza Lermontova i zapadno-evropeiskaia literaturnaia traditsiia," *LN*, 43-44, 471-73.

⁴ Tomashevskii, 476-80; Vinogradov, 560-61.

⁵ For stylistic and other literary affinities Tomashevskii, 469-516; Vinogradov, "Stil' prozy Lermontova," *LN*, 43-44, 517-628; also published as a book (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1986). Page references to this Vinogradov work are to the *LN* edition.

been killed. He is in hiding in a cave. To the same cave, by chance, come Iurii and Ol'ga, also seeking escape. Vadim is talking of vengeance against all the main characters: against Palitsyn, who has been his target from the beginning; against Iurii, of whom he is obsessively jealous; and against Ol'ga, his incestuous love for her inspiring in him fury, frustration, and hatred.

This could have been a suspense-filled situation. Unfortunately the novel is marred by a number of defects which reduce the reader's ability to sympathize and render him impatient. The problem centers on the main character, Vadim. Lermontov has tried to invest him with the Satanic spirit of the Byronic hero. There is nothing inherently wrong in this. But he has permitted Vadim such prolonged rhetorical outbursts as to render him ridiculous. And he has also carried him beyond the pale of all sympathy by allowing him to switch the main thrust of his hatred from Palitsyn, the "legitimate" target, to Ol'ga and Iurii, who have harmed no one. A blatant example of rhetorical overkill occurs in Chapter XX. Ol'ga is escaping from a bath-house by night. She is assisted by the peasant Fedosei, who is to bring her to where Iurii is waiting. Mistaking Fedosei for Iurii in the dark, Vadim kills him with an axe. We have the following description:

...over him [Fedosei], with an axe in his hand, on the very threshold, stood someone who was more horrifying than the dying man: he was standing stock still, looking at Ol'ga with the eyes of a kite and pointing his finger at the bloodied ground; he was exulting triumphantly, like Hercules when he killed the hydra: a smile, a venomously sweet smile played across his red lips: it breathed now pride, now contempt, now pity — yes, the pity of an executioner who has delivered the mortal blow not of his own free will, but at the bidding of a higher power.

Vadim then directs at Ol'ga the following paean of satisfied vengeance:

"You see," Vadim finally said, with a muffled laugh, "I kept my promise!... It's him! Fear not to look upon the distorted features of a once youthful shining face. It's him, the very person whose head has rested on your bosom, who has been transported by ecstasy on your lips. Who for the sake of one tender look from you abandoned duty, father and mother — for whom you also would have abandoned father and mother if you'd had them... It's him, the poor stupid youth! Who took such pride in his noble origin, who wore with such self-congratulatory vanity his green, gold-braided uniform, who — surrounded by flattery — threw away money at his flatterers, not even asking for gratitude, who had only to blink an eyelid to have women flinging themselves into his embrace. Yes, and what has he now become? bloodied dust! a soulless clod, not capable even of feeling an insult." And Vadim thrust with his foot at the cold corpse and went on.

He goes on for another page before he realizes that he has killed the wrong man. The reader has known this from the start. Worse, some of the rhetorical hyperbole is the author's, for example the description of Vadim standing over his victim.

Lermontov has committed himself, leading the reader to believe that Vadim would be both the single most interesting, spell-binding personality and the prime mover of the plot. It was too late to drop Vadim and make it a simple story of Iurii and Ol'ga happily surviving while the vile Palitsyn gets killed in the uprising, along the lines of Pushkin's *Kapitanskaia dochka*. And Vadim is by now beyond the sympathy of even the most generous reader. This dilemma was probably the single most compelling reason for dropping the novel. In addition, Lermontov had started work on *Vadim* just at the moment when the *roman pathétique* had passed its apogee. Also, his entry into society in 1834 presented him with fresh objects of study.

It is easy enough to criticize this first attempt as juvenile. But it is more meaningful to see what insights it offers into Lermontov's attitude toward life and his development as a writer.

We look first at some of his narrative techniques. In *Vadim*, Lermontov, like other writers of his time, manipulates the reader on a purely superficial and impersonal level by giving instructions. The reader is asked to focus his attention, to shift his attention, to imagine. Thus, Palitsyn is introduced with the following words: "Picture to yourself a man of about fifty, tall, still healthy, but with gray hairs and..." (Chapter II). The fourth chapter ends with a digression on the nature of the Russian people and the position of the nobility; the next one opens: "But let us return to our story. The house of Boris Petrovich stood..." (V) Or: "But let us return to our story and hasten to finish the chapter" (XI). Again: "I will ask my dear reader or readers to transport themselves in their imagination to that small settlement in the woods where..." (XVI). The narrator on one occasion justifies the inclusion of an upcoming scene: "Vadim's behavior... defied understanding, because no one knew his purpose; I will explain this behavior as far as possible by means of the following conversation; two peasants were sitting..." (IV). A switch in the narrative is effected: "But let us leave them on the narrow forest trail...and see where Iurii had got to..." (XVIII). Or a switch can be made by asking a question: "But what meanwhile was Vadim doing? O, Vadim did not like to be idle. He..." (XXII). In these examples, we see no effort to establish any rapport with the reader, to share with him the narrator's way of looking at things. The device is purely mechanical, turning the reader's attention in the desired direction.

Still impersonal, though less mechanical, since it aims to create an emotional response in the reader, is the device of having the narrator cast in the role of painter, making him talk about what he is describing as a scene or picture. Lermontov could have found this technique in Scott or Balzac, certainly in Hugo. He himself uses it sparingly, but even so gratuitously and ineffectively. Thus, introducing Ol'ga, he praises her various charms, finally arriving at her white long-fingered hand: "a hand like that could be the subject for an entire picture" (III). Elsewhere, addressing the reader, the narrator says: "With this picture before your eyes, you would easily be able to distinguish each individual part of it; but the whole would produce..." (XIV). Describing the beginnings of uprising and violence outside the local monastery, the narrator writes: "[The beggars] made up the foreground of the picture.... it was as if an unknown painter had awarded these beggars, these repulsive rags, a place of honor...." (XV). "There emerged... another head, feminine, rosy, a fantastic head, worthy of Raphael's brush..." (XXII). The avowed analogy between painting and writing, little though it achieves, is a mannerism of the time, which both Eikhenbaum and Vinogradov link with the Rembrandt chiaroscuro effects of the Romantic horror novel and novel of the fantastic.⁶ Another such mannerism is the use of similes, often borrowed and hackneyed, to render clearer, more vivid, more meaningful the action or scene described. Vadim is described as "like a vampire watching his expiring victim" (VIII). His "iron will" is compared to the restless wave which relentlessly eats away at the granite cliff till it collapses, "and the joyous waves dance and roar above its grave" (XX). Iurii and his father, both trying to escape, are delighted at their chance meeting, and the narrator comments: "even the she-wolf skips and whines and waves her bushy tail when she finds her lost cub." Ol'ga, understandably less enthusiastic at meeting her lecherous persecutor, looks on weeping, "as a banished cherub weeps, watching the bliss of his brothers through the doors of paradise" (XXI).

With cherubim and paradise we move one step further to the simile culled from literature. We recall that Vadim exulted like a triumphant Hercules (XX). Iurii casts over in his mind past memories and the feelings he's experienced: "but alas, these feelings had brought forth no fruit;

⁶ Vinogradov, 18-20; and Eikhenbaum 1924, 132.

some like the seeds in the parable....” (XIX). Explaining the great difficulties in the way of anyone trying to reach the cave mentioned above, the narrator tells us: “...Centuries-old lime trees like sentinels stretched out enormous branches to block the way; it seemed that on the gnarled bark of their trunks there had been patterned in letters of hell the well-known Dante line: ‘Abandon hope all ye who enter here!’ (XVIII). Finally, Ol’ga is trying to conceal even from herself her love for Iurii: “...horror gripped her heart whenever she plucked up the courage to interrogate it, because then past and future made their appearance before her distraught imagination; such was the horror of Macbeth when, preparing to seat himself on the royal throne, amid the noise of the feast, he saw upon the throne Banquo’s ghost... But this horror did not diminish his ambition which became an obsession; the same thing happened with Ol’ga’s love” (XI). The danger of this device turning into affectation must be apparent.

Very sparing use is made in this novel of apostrophe. The purpose is the usual purpose of apostrophe, to raise the emotional level in the reader. Thus, it is used to accentuate the terrible aspect of the killing of a guiltless young noblewoman by the insurgents: “Divine, sweet maiden! So you have perished, perished with no return.... one stroke — and this fresh flower bowed her head.... Not one sob, not one word of peace or love softened the flight of your soul... innocent as the first sigh of an infant...” (XXIII). And apostrophe is used to address the readers: “Who among you has been on the banks of the clear Sura? Which of you has gazed into her waves, poor in history, but rich in their own natural radiance! Reader, were these waves not witnesses to your happiness, or to the bloody destruction of your ancestors? But no! — the wave watered by the tears of your happiness or by your ancestor’s blood is by now far away in the sea — wandering without aim or hope, — or in a moment of anger shattered against some granite cliff! On its journey it has lost all trace of human passion, it mocks at the changing centuries....”(IX).

A traditional feature of a certain type of novel, going back to Henry Fielding and earlier, in Lermontov’s case going back more probably and directly to Chateaubriand, is the maxim-like authorial pronouncement on life and people, the generalized pearl of wisdom.

Tomashevskii distinguishes between lyric aphorisms and worldly-wise aphorisms.⁷ The lyric aphorisms play a larger role in this early work, and their role diminishes in later works as his prose moves away from romanticism in the direction of realism. But at best the distinctions are not consistently clear-cut. Even in this first novel the worldly-wise aphorism is, not surprisingly, well-represented. For the maxims inserted in the narrative are designed to imbue the reader with an outlook on events similar to that entertained by the narrator. They serve as an ideological frame of reference for the events described.⁸ They prepare for an upcoming act or pass judgment on an act just completed. At the same time, they project an image of the narrator. Almost inevitably, since wise saws are the currency we are dealing in, that image contains a strong measure of worldly wisdom. Certainly it does in *Vadim*. The narrator emerges as observant, intelligent, experienced, and somewhat condescending toward humanity’s foibles, a latter-day La Rochefoucauld, as the following examples show: “Base souls are envious of everything, even insults--so long as they indicate attention on the part of their master” (II); “...who failed to understand that where virtue is concealed, there may equally well be vice concealed” (II); “People suffering are normally submissive; but if once they succeed in casting off the yoke, the lamb becomes a tiger: the persecuted becomes the persecutor and pays his persecutor back a hundredfold--and then woe to the vanquished” (IV); at one point, early in the story, Vadim begs Ol’ga to have pity on him, and

⁷ Tomashevskii, 479-93.

⁸ Indeed, Vinogradov discusses them almost entirely in terms of their function in producing satire and irony. See 534-37.

the narrator comments with a favorite thought of Lermontov's, which he was to use again in *Geroi nashego vremeni*: "Such words will sometimes touch a woman's heart" (V). Women, it may be noted, do not in general come off well in these general comments; the narrator has a score to settle. When Ol'ga pushes away the lecherous Palitsyn, the narrator comments that "her action was too noble for an ordinary woman" (III), leaving the impression that noble acts are beyond the reach of the "ordinary" woman. Sometimes the narrator is merely condescending: "Clothes are as essential to woman's happiness, as flowers to the spring" (X).

Invariably interesting for narrative technique is how strong emotion is expressed, typically through physical changes relating to the face and mouth. For example, when Ol'ga makes a disparaging remark about Vadim, she hears "something like the gnashing of teeth" (III). Elsewhere, Ol'ga "turned pale because the fateful moment had come" (V). After a typical emotional exchange with Ol'ga, Vadim "turned away, wanting apparently to add something, but the voice died away on his lips, which had turned blue" (XVII) (In *Notre Dame de Paris* Esmeralda's lips turn blue when she is on trial for murder). Finally, when the Cossack Orlenko told Vadim he was a monster, Vadim "turned pale, cast upon the Cossack the look which was his main weapon, stamped his foot, gnashed his teeth, and turned away in order that his fury not be seen in his purple cheeks" (XXII). One is tempted to smile. But we remember that Lermontov was only 19 or 20 years old when he wrote this and that this was the common coin of romantic descriptive technique. Let the reader count how many times in *War and Peace*, the work of a mature writer of a later age, the characters in moments of strong emotion have a "trembling lower jaw" ("*drozha-shchaia nizhniaia chel' iust*'")!

What points can be made specifically bearing on *Weltanschauung*? The narrator clearly disapproves of Man's law, which is seen as an intrusion and an affront to the law of Nature. Objects in Nature are indifferent to human passions and suffering, a thought Lermontov often repeats. Yet on this universal order, Nature's law, Man somehow seeks to impose his own code. Man is therefore, a familiar Romantic attitude, at odds with Nature: "... If anything can be envied, it is the blue cold waves, subject only to the law of Nature, a law which has lost its validity for us since we invented our own laws" (IX).

Not only is Man and his law at odds with Nature and Nature's law. Man's law, whether we talk of the legal system or the law of human survival, is a direct reversal of generally accepted moral precepts and values. The evil triumph, and the righteous are persecuted. When first introducing Ol'ga, the narrator comments: "She was an angel banished from paradise for having felt too much pity for humanity" (III). Nothing in the subsequent account of events confirms this angelic quality in her personality. But banishment from paradise is part of Lermontov's emotional outlook. The same pattern of good values reversed may be seen in the triumph in this world of Palitsyn, an obviously vile undesirable, who, by exploiting man's legal system, has brought his one-time friend to poverty and death.

Related to this injustice, this overturning of precepts and values, is the sense of ambiguity, the closeness of apparently irreconcilable opposites such as virtue and vice, happiness and sorrow, of which Chateaubriand and Balzac were aware. Thus Vadim ponders the great difference which separates him from his sister: "What a difference!... Those angelic traits and this demonic appearance.... But then after all didn't angel and demon originate from one single source?" (VI). Again: "...deep down in this pleasure there stirs an inexplicable sorrow, like a venomous crocodile in the bottom of a pure, transparent American well" (IX). The destructive crocodile in the pure water of the well is a symbol of the contradictory nature of life. It is taken from Cha-

teaubriand's *Atala* ("Le Récit" and "Les Funerailles").⁹ Finally, Vadim is philosophizing: "...perhaps the most sacred feelings are no more than habit, and if evil were as rare as good, and the latter common, then our crimes would be considered the most outstanding examples of human virtue!" (XIV). The logic of this position may not be defensible. But one thing is sure: the confusion between good and evil, is the first step toward the relativism of Dostoevskii's Napoleon problem in *Crime and Punishment* and toward Nietzsche. Schelling is also very much an influence in regard to good and evil.

Byronism being concerned with the superior nature, we are not surprised to find the superior nature extolled and the ordinary, average nature correspondingly despised. When Vadim is first introduced as a beggar among beggars, he stands out; though his fellows do not know who he is, "strength of soul reveals itself anywhere: they were afraid of his voice and his gaze; in him they felt respect for some enormous vice, not for his boundless unhappiness, for the demon, not for the human being..." (I). Shortly, thereafter when Vadim and Ol'ga are getting to know each other, and he is in the process of revealing to her her origin and her father's fate: "'I've guessed,' exclaimed the young girl, '[the villain] is Boris Petrovich...' She had indeed guessed: lofty souls have the special advantage of being able to understand each other" (V).

Lermontov tends to create some correspondence between the outward appearance of a human being and the inner personality. The hunchbacked Vadim is an extreme example. His physical deformity is paralleled with what eventually is seen to be a totally warped personality. Vadim himself, obviously cruelly aware of the effect his physique produces, seems to understand the link: "'Listen,' he says to Ol'ga 'What if my soul is worse than my exterior? But surely I'm not to blame? I never asked of people anything more than food, it was they who added to that their contempt and derision...'" (V). Later he says to Ol'ga: "'O, I understand' he bit his lips, 'you were frightened of me'..." (V). And Quasimodo: "'I frighten you,' he said [to Esmeralda]. 'I am very ugly, am I not?'" But there's a difference. Quasimodo is good at heart; the Esmeralda-Quasimodo relationship is a variation on the Beauty-and-the-Beast theme. Vadim, when all the literary allowances have been made, is evil.

Another constant for Lermontov (witness *Demon*) is the idea of the male being redeemed through love. In Vadim, just as Ol'ga is beginning to suspect his incestuous urge, we read: "'Listen,' said Vadim...he took her damp hand and trying to soften his voice, went on, 'listen, there was a time when I hoped through your love to sanctify my soul.... there were moments when, looking at you, at your heavenly eyes, I wanted to cast off my terrible design, when I hoped on your breast to forget all the past as though it had been a fairy tale.... But you didn't wish it, you deceived me, you were captivated by a handsome youth.... and the ugly hunchback was left.... alone...'" (XVII).

The erotic, anything to do with sex, anything that titillates the reader's interest in things related to sex, is by definition an important and revealing sphere of activity for the writer. Lermontov's story revolves in large part around sex. Will the lecherous Palitsyn have his way with Ol'ga? Where will Vadim's incestuous passion take him and Ol'ga? With Palitsyn it is touch and

⁹ Tomashevskii (476) points out what seems to be the first appearance in Russia of the Chateaubriand crocodile image in Batiushkov's poem *Schastlivets*:

Сердце наше кладезь мрачной;
Тих, покоен сверху вид
Ты спустись ко дну... ужасно!
Крокодил на нем лежит!

(1810)

Our hearts are a well of darkness:
On top all seems calm and quiet,
But upon the bottom — horror!
Lies a fearsome crocodile!

go. Drunk and inflamed by Ol'ga's dancing, he follows her to her room. "Now you won't get away from me," exclaimed Boris Petrovich with a laugh.... he took her by the hand; she tried to pull free, but couldn't; sitting on the bed he pulled her to him and started to kiss her neck and bosom; she lacked the physical strength to defend herself; turning her head away, she was in the process of succumbing to his stormy embraces. A few more minutes, and she would have been undone ("*ona by pogibla*"). But there was a sudden noise, and in dashed the mistress of the house" (VII). Vadim's passion is presumably physical, too, but he wants her body and soul: "he wanted to possess her, he was afraid to leave her for a single minute" (VI). Another facet of the erotic is brought into play in one of the scenes of mob violence involving two young noble women: "their hair was all in disorder, their breasts were naked, their clothes tattered.... a crowd of drunken Cossacks was subjecting them to insulting compliments and insulting jokes...." (XXIII). Lermontov uses the traditional depiction of an attractive woman in a moment of distress or powerful emotion: she is oblivious to appearance, and her hair and clothing will be in disarray, revealing a naked shoulder or more. "O what charms! And what distress!" (XXV) Ol'ga at one point believes herself abandoned by Iurii. She is lying on the damp floor of a barn. The light is dim. She is only half conscious: "...her pale lips looked green; a half-undone braid cast a greenish shadow on her round, smooth shoulder which, freed of its normal prison, invited a kiss; her jacket, rumped beneath her, failed to conceal the upper part of her generously proportioned bosom; two soft globes, white and cold as snow, and almost completely naked, no longer rose and fell normally." All of which earned the somewhat ungallant explanatory comment from the narrator: "only when she loses hope can a woman lose her modesty, that unfathomable, innate feeling, that involuntary recognition by woman of the inviolability and sanctity of her secret charms" (XX). At other points, too, the narrator demonstrates that he is on the side of morality and opposed to lust and promiscuity. Palitsyn's desire for Ol'ga is characterized as "criminal" ("*prestupnoe zhelanie*") (VII). But the narrator does at times stoop to suggestiveness. The late return home of Palitsyn obliges the servants to turn out for him, "smiling, yet inwardly cursing the master for whom they had abandoned their warm beds, and maybe something else even better" (III). In describing Ol'ga, who has been forced to change clothes and prepare to dance, the narrator mentions admiringly the "roundness and whiteness of her neck," and then, having recourse to the great living master on little feet: "A small foot made its appearance from time to time, promising the concealed perfections which young people seek, looking on woman as an instrument of their pleasures; moreover, a small foot has one additional meaning which I would reveal to you if I were not afraid to wander too far from my narrative" (VII).

What has *Vadim* to tell us about the Pugachev uprising, its causes and perhaps justification? Lermontov handles this problem with a great deal of skill and restraint. He does not allow the narrator to indulge at length in historicosocial ruminations. What is conveyed is what is needed for the purposes of the narrative. It is logical that Palitsyn and his son Iurii see only evil in the uprising (XXI). At the same time, admirably blended with the narrative, Palitsyn delivers a Radishchevan indictment of his own bad treatment of his serfs. Seeking escape, Iurii asks his father if he does not have a serf he can count on for help. Fot'ka Atuev? "Today I beat him half to death, the swine!" Tereshka? "He's been wanting to put a knife in my ribs for a long time, because of his wife.... Brigands, Antichrists...." (XVI). The narrator does at one point comment that in the eighteenth century the nobility had lost its unlimited power and the means of enforcing it, but had failed to make the necessary changes in its own conduct (IV). But, more important from the standpoint of the narrative to which it is skillfully fused, is the narrator's insistence on the complete failure of the nobility to foresee the uprising: "This sort of unconcern was the undoing

of many of our ancestors; they could not imagine that the people would dare to call for their blood, so accustomed had they become to Russian obedience and loyalty!" (XIV).

We have talked about Vadim's personality as presenting an artistic problem. A few words need to be said about Ol'ga. Her character is filled with unmotivated inconsistency. She is introduced as an angel. Yet only one page later she makes some extremely insensitive remarks about Vadim's appearance: "A monster ("urod")!... you seem to like bringing back these scarecrows" (III). When she then fends off Palitsyn's advances, the reader is told that this is an act too noble for an "ordinary" woman (III); so the heroine is apparently to be spared the indignity of being seen as "ordinary". But her character does seem to alternate between being "ordinary" and being Byronically "superior." Thus, Ol'ga on the one hand readily rises to Vadim's "superior" level of understanding: she penetrates his gloomy soul and sees him for a time as a great, i.e., superior person (IV, V, VII). She also, taking a leaf from Atala's book, has Cassandra-like premonitions of ultimate disaster and damnation; in responding to Iurii's advances and declaring her love, she tells him: "let the torments of hell threaten me...I must pay my debt to fate" (XII). On the other hand, and on other occasions, Ol'ga emerges as an average young woman who fantasizes about young men, large cities with stone houses, and gold-crowned churches (VII). And she is envious listening to Iurii's stories of lavishly dressed women "as any eighteen-year old girl would have been" (X). It is perfectly reasonable for a person to have more than one facet to their personality. But these different sides of Ol'ga's make-up demand to be explained and motivated. We may add that, in spite of difficulties, especially that posed by her menacing brother, Ol'ga's premonitions of disaster are not really justified to the degree that Atala's are.

The prose style of this first novel has been characterized as approximating that of poetry.¹⁰ We have already noted that Lermontov did not follow in Pushkin's footsteps as a prose writer. Especially in *Povesti Belkina (The Tales of Belkin)*, 1830, Pushkin makes a deliberate effort to avoid poetic effects, to create an austere prosaic language with few subordinate clauses and few epithets. This is not Lermontov's style. In *Vadim*, we look for influence rather to Bestuzhev-Marlinskii and Chateaubriand. The poeticized elements in Lermontov's prose are particularly in evidence in his rhetorical passages (Vadim's fulminations), in his Chateaubriand-like observations on life (normally those of the narrator, but sometimes of Vadim and even Iurii or Ol'ga) and in descriptions of nature and physical objects. Only when the socially inferior characters express themselves does a more down-to-earth, folksy, Russian style come to the fore.

Descriptions of nature are never so obtrusive as to become tedious. Lermontov seems to have mastered from the start the art of fusing them with the purely narrative passages. Moreover, in them Lermontov indulges in his noted propensity for colors, for light and shade, for the Rembrandt effect.

It is interesting to note, following Vinogradov, that Lermontov's first prose effort reflects his early mastery of a technique that was at that time making itself increasingly felt in prose and verse narrative, that of represented or narrated speech. This technique permits the narrator, without breaking stride by resorting either to direct speech (with quotation marks) or indirect speech (involving a subordinate clause), to pursue his uninterrupted narrative, making use of the speech

¹⁰ Vinogradov notes: "The style of romantic prose of the thirties constituted a complex mixture of methods of expression, partly inherited from Karamzin and his school, from the romantic narrative poem of the twenties, from social and moral sketches of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, from Russian and translated tales and novels of the preceding epoch, partly also formed on the basis of the influence of West European romantic literary styles and also on the basis of an increasing familiarity with living Russian speech and its dialects." (523)

habits and stylistics of the character whose thoughts and emotions are being depicted. Apart from its economy, this technique opens up stylistic possibilities, permitting the narrator either to come close to and temporarily identify with the character or to create a distance between himself and his character, producing an effect of irony. In either case, it conveys the flavor of the character's thought processes. This device was in modern Russian literature first used by Pushkin in his 1820 narrative poem *Kavkazskii plennik*, and in other narrative poems including *Evgenii Onegin*. Pushkin also used it in prose. Its use in *Vadim* permits the narrator to move at will between the level of narrative exposition and the character's emotional world, his interior monologue. As Vinogradov remarks, "the figures of the author and the romantic hero become doubles (*dvoynikami*)." In the following example the respective roles are, however, up to a point clearly delineated: "The blood rushed to Vadim's head, in a whisper he repeated his fateful oath and thought about its implementation; he could wait.... *he could put up with anything.... but his sister! if... oh! then she too would help him....* and without fear he accepted the thought: he decided to draw her into his designs, to use her as a tool.... decided to ruin an innocent heart, which could feel more than it understood.... strange! he loved her, or was it rather that he respected as a virtue her hatred [for Palitsyn]?" (VI). The phrases in italics are regarded by Vinogradov as represented speech. But, illustrating the complex fusion sometimes achieved in represented speech, it is impossible to say that parts of what follows the italics are not also Vadim's thoughts, his interior monolog, rather than narrative pure and simple. The advantages offered by this technique are obvious.¹¹

We have already discussed what went wrong with this novel. *Vadim*'s inadequacies can be further clarified by a brief comparison with Byron. Notwithstanding the fact that Byron's own heroes are dated and not immune to criticism, they were protected by their author in a way that *Vadim* is not. First, Byron presented them in poetry rather than prose, and poetry tends to predispose the reader to greater tolerance and indulgence where character portrayal is concerned. Second, Byron often placed some of his most fulsome rhetoric in the mouths of others: the narrator (in *Conrad*) or an acquaintance of the hero (in *The Giaour*); exaggerated rhetoric becomes very quickly intolerable when it is being mouthed by the hero himself in the first person. Third, Byron while making his hero disillusioned, awesome, and fear-inspiring, always made sure that women and the reader knew that deep down the hero was good. Take *Conrad*: his pirates fear him, others fear him, but his women love him. Ol'ga, however, recoils from *Vadim* in horror.

Actually, I would suggest that Lermontov was learning fast. A marked change in the reader's perception of *Vadim*'s rhetoric takes place. In the early chapters it is, so to speak, unopposed. Worse, it is contagious, and Ol'ga not only understands but herself intones something of the same idiom (VII). But as the story progresses, hyperbolic rhetoric runs into increasing opposition. When Iurii, before he really begins to take part in the action of the novel, is betrayed by a woman and decides in more or less Byronic vein to take vengeance on all women, it is the narrator who opposes this line of thought, commenting sarcastically: "a most sound and intelligent solution" (XIX). More often representatives of the uneducated people are used to deflate rhetoric. And as, with the uprising taking place, the uneducated people play an increasing role, so it becomes more difficult to sustain rhetoric and to have it taken seriously. Thus Ol'ga: "God will not allow us to be parted. No. He's mine.... I paid for him, bought him with my bloody tears, entreaties, heartache..." To which the uncomprehending peasant Fedosei responds that "buying" will be up to her and the master, but they must go quickly (XX). When *Vadim* makes a Byronic outburst about wishing to be the one and only one to take vengeance on Palitsyn, to enjoy it to the full, the Cossack detachment commander Orlenko comments: "You're a monster. Who would

¹¹ Vinogradov, 533-37.

have expected that filth from you! Ha! Ha!" (XXII). So while Byronic rhetoric goes unchecked in the early chapters, the logic of events as the story progresses makes it increasingly unacceptable and Vadim's position increasingly untenable.

Enough has been said to give an idea of the content, stylistics, and overall emotional tone of *Vadim* and also to make clear how easy it would be to pillory this youthful first attempt at a novel. But, as John Mersereau remarked, *Vadim*, "irrespective of the value," is one of several "necessary and important steps forward in the development of his [Lermontov's] talent."¹²

2

Lermontov's next prose undertaking was begun in 1836. Compared to *Vadim*, *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* represents a wholly different novelistic tradition. This shift is in keeping with a general shift then taking place in Russian prose writing. As Vinogradov notes: "At the beginning of the thirties a crisis in Russian romantic culture becomes imminent. A reevaluation of romanticism's achievements takes place. The 'frenzy' characteristic of techniques of description gradually disappears. Methods facilitating psychological portrayal of character are expanded and transformed...The general crisis of romantic poetics is also to be found in Lermontov. Without abandoning romanticism's artistic values, Lermontov enters on a new path, that of the social, everyday psychological novel."¹³ Like *Vadim*, *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* remained unfinished. It was written in collaboration with Lermontov's good friend from Penza, his grandmother's godchild, S. A. Raevskii (1808-76). Lermontov and Raevskii had become fast friends in Moscow in 1827-30. In 1831 Raevskii moved to Petersburg, entering service in the Ministry of Finances. In the fall of 1832, Lermontov and his grandmother had also moved to Petersburg, Lermontov entering the cadet corps, and Raevskii took up quarters in the house. In 1836 he was sharing quarters with Lermontov. And during 1836 the two collaborated on *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*. Work came to a halt in early 1837 when they were both arrested, Lermontov for writing and Raevskii for promulgating Lermontov's poem on the death of Pushkin. Lermontov was then transferred to the Caucasus and Raevskii to Petrozavodsk in the north. The exact extent of Raevskii's collaboration in this novel is not known. It is believed that Raevskii, himself a civil servant, must have been responsible for information about the civil service, important for the passages involving one of the two main male protagonists, Krasinskii, also a civil servant. True, Lermontov knew little or nothing of the civil service. But then, as far as the unfinished surviving text goes, no great knowledge of the intricacies of civil service administrative procedures was required. So it is difficult to determine precisely which passages must be attributed to Raevskii.¹⁴ On the other hand, Raevskii was a highly educated, widely read individual, and there is no reason to deny him participation in passages having nothing to do with Krasinskii's work. It seems unlikely that either author would have undertaken any major portion or decision without consulting the other. Lermontov's brief mention of their joint endeavor in a letter to Raevskii of June 8, 1838, gives no indication of any

¹² *Mikhail Lermontov* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), 11.

¹³ Vinogradov, 540-41. For a detailed exposé, based on contemporary Russian prose works, see Helena Goscilo's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Indiana University), *From Dissolution to Synthesis: The Use of Genre in Lermontov's Prose*, 163-67.

¹⁴ See Eikhenbaum, V, 455. For the skeptical view of the equation of Raevskii's role with Krasinskii see Mersereau, 165, n.9.

hierarchical imbalance. A significant portion of the manuscript was in Raevskii's handwriting, under dictation from Lermontov, according to Raevskii's subsequent account.¹⁵

The completed portion of *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* comes to an end in the middle of or at the end of the ninth chapter. In length it is about two-thirds of what was completed for *Vadim*. In terms of Lermontov's development, the obvious differences between *Vadim* and *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* are interesting. These follow the general lines laid down above in Vinogradov's comments on the changed character of Russian prose writing. Whereas *Vadim* was to be an historical novel, with the Pugachev uprising as its background, *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* is set in contemporary Petersburg society. This transition was prepared by Lermontov's drama *Maskarad*, 1835-36, also set in contemporary Petersburg. Another obvious difference is in the style. The bombastic rhetoric of *Vadim* has been toned down. And there has been a change in the guiding literary influence, although not all past influences have been cast aside. But the dominant influence of Gogol', in particular of *Nevskii prospekt (Nevskii Avenue)* and to a lesser degree of *Portret (The Portrait)*, is new. Also, in this novel the materials are loosely autobiographical. They deal with Lermontov's own first impression of Petersburg society and with two important episodes in Lermontov's life, his relations with Sushkova and the marriage of Lopukhina to Bakhmetev.

The novel starts in December, 1833. A young civil servant, Krasinskii, is on his way home to dinner from work. He is hit and thrown to one side by the sled of a guards officer, Grigorii Aleksandrovich Pechorin. He is not injured. Some of the drivers in the vicinity take off after the guilty party, but the sled eludes pursuit. Arriving home, Pechorin reads a visiting card from Prince and Princess Ligovskaia. They are visiting from Moscow. He is visibly affected, because, as becomes clear in the course of the ensuing narrative, there had at one time been a serious relationship between Pechorin and Verochka, now Princess Ligovskaia. Pechorin goes to the theater. He sees there Lizaveta Nikolaevna Negurova. She is obviously attracted to him, but Pechorin has lost interest in her and has sent her an anonymous letter warning her that he, Pechorin, has been amusing himself at her expense. She has not yet received the letter. As the crowd leaves the theater, Pechorin catches a glimpse of Princess Ligovskaia. He is clearly agitated. Earlier, during an intermission, Pechorin had gone out to drink tea. He jokingly told his two companions how he had run over a man that day, how funny the man had looked lying on the sidewalk and how his own horse had been too fast for the pursuit. Sitting at the same table is Krasinskii. He accosts Pechorin on the way back to the theater. Pechorin is willing to duel; but Krasinskii, though not a coward, refuses because he is his mother's only support. He is in great despair and starts to sob. Pechorin looks at him "with commiseration" and returns to his seat.

Next day Pechorin makes a call on Negurova; she has received the anonymous letter, and she tells the footman to say no one is at home and next time he comes not to admit him. Pechorin then calls on Vera Dmitrevna (Ligovskaia) and meets her husband, who is older than she is and does not cut an impressive figure. The narrator then moves back in time to Moscow, where Pechorin and Vera had fallen in love. Pechorin had left Moscow to take part in the Polish campaign. At his departure Vera had sworn she would never belong to anyone else. After the capture of Warsaw, Pechorin had been transferred to the guards and stationed in Petersburg. His love for Vera had grown. But on receiving her "greeting" ("*poklon*"), he had been much upset by what he felt to be the cold inadequacy of the term and had started to flirt with Negurova. Word of the flirtation must have gotten back to Moscow, influencing Vera's decision to get married.

¹⁵ 4-vol. *Ak. nauk* 1961-62, IV, 642, retelling Raevskii's report to V. Kh. Khokhriakov, made some time in the fifties.

The husband is in Petersburg trying to settle a property dispute with the treasury. Krasinskii is or will be involved in the case, and Pechorin offers to put Krasinskii and the husband in touch. With difficulty he finds the obscure apartment and meets Krasinskii's mother. Meanwhile, he is making some sort of an impression on Vera: she feels guilt at not having waited for him, and she knows she is not indifferent to him.

The final scene takes place at a ball. Negurova has a conversation with Pechorin in which she tells him that she has received the anonymous letter. Enter Princess Ligovskaia with her husband. The princess barely acknowledges Pechorin, but greets Negurova warmly. Some time later in the evening the two women renew their acquaintance.

That is as far as the narrative goes. Three issues remain unresolved. What will eventually happen between Pechorin and Vera? Will Negurova have any future role in the novel? And how will the unresolved tensions between Krasinskii and Pechorin be resolved?

Mention was made above of the new and dominant influence of Gogol. This is reflected in the nature of some of the episodes narrated, e.g., the running over of Krasinskii. It is felt more immediately in the manner of narration, in the style. And clearly no spare summary of the plot can hope to give an idea of the style in which much of *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* is written. We will therefore be examining some of the more prominent features of Lermontov's Gogol-style and the consequences implicit in the act of borrowing stylistically from Gogol. The borrowed style is playful, a bantering narrative in which the actual events recounted appear at times less important than the rapport that is being built up between narrator and reader. The reader is asked to share and enjoy the narrator's bemusement at the foibles of the human race. This narrative playfulness is most often and quite correctly identified with *Tristram Shandy*. On the eighteenth and nineteenth-century scene, Sterne is the grand master of the meandering and to all appearances insufficiently motivated narrative technique.

The art of the narrator's digression goes back of course well beyond Sterne: to Fielding, for example, whose digressions are, however, more closely tied to his plot than those of Sterne. And recalling Fielding's characterization of the novel as comic epic in prose, we can think of the variations on the comic epic tradition wrought by Pushkin, Byron, Voltaire, Pope, Lafontaine, all the way back to the Italian Renaissance of Pulci, Boiardo, and Ariosto. But for the nineteenth century, Sterne was the mentor. It was his narrative and digressive techniques that were mastered by Gogol and Gogol whose lead Lermontov followed in *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*.

Evidence pointing to Gogol's presence are not hard to find. One is the description that doesn't really describe. Lulled by the impeccable syntax, the reader for a moment thinks that he is getting a detailed description of Krasinskii, in the manner of Walter Scott. To some extent he is: he learns, for example, that Krasinskii is wearing a blue felt overcoat with an old beaver collar. But he is also told that Krasinskii's cap is "of indeterminate shape" and that because of "the cap peak, the collar, and the gathering dusk" "it was difficult to make out his features;" the reader's normal reading expectations are thus frustrated rather than satisfied (I). In addition, the reader finds himself given a relatively minor piece of information, which the narrator insists is important and should be carefully noted. The story begins in 1833, December 21, at 4:00 p.m.: "take note of the day and the hour because on this day and at this hour there occurred an event which started a succession of various happenings which involved all my heroes and heroines, whose story I have promised myself I would give to posterity--provided of course posterity reads novels" (I). In a way the narrator is right; for Krasinskii is about to be run over. But the day and hour are scarcely deserving of this meticulous attention. The ploy comes from *Tristram Shandy*, and, closer to Lermontov, from Gogol's *Nos (The Nose)*.

There is the unfounded generalization which assures the reader that all people of a certain class or occupation act predictably in the same way. Thus Krasinskii fantasizes, "for all civil servants fantasize" ("mechtaiat") (I). Pechorin's horse is called by the driver Vas'ka: "We have to take note that all drivers call their favorite horses Vas'ka, even in defiance of their master's wishes...." (I). We observed in *Vadim* the use of generalized pearls of wisdom, designed to tune the reader's perceptions to those of the narrator and to testify to the narrator's shrewd powers of observation. The type of generalization we have here cited is at only one remove from what we found in *Vadim*. But it has here a very different effect, because it is so clearly not the result of shrewd observation and can readily be seen to be unfounded. In one final example of this technique. Negurova, returning from the theater, calls for her maid. The maid plays no role in the text and seems highly unlikely to play a role in the unwritten sequel. Yet she is not only described in some detail, but her physical characteristics serve as a pretext to initiate an incoherent diatribe: "a fat, pockmarked girl!... That's a bad sign!... I wouldn't want my wife or my fiancée to have a fat, pockmarked maid!... I can't stand fat, pockmarked maids.... A maid like that, sitting at her work in the rear room of a decent home is like a crocodile on the bottom of a clear American well.... O, dear friends, God grant you do not fall in love with a girl who has such a maid, if you're of the same opinion as I am, that will destroy forever your infatuation." (III).¹⁶

There is too the practice of identifying people by one physical feature of a piece of clothing they are wearing. Pechorin is identified as a "white plume," conveying the limited view obtained by Krasinskii and the bystanders as Pechorin escapes pursuit (I). A passing woman is identified as a "pinkish little hat" (I). And in the second chapter Vera is a "pinkish *salop*" (woman's coat), as glimpsed by Pechorin when she leaves the theater. There is a general tendency to mechanize and dehumanize should be noted. Also like Gogol', in *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* Lermontov makes liberal use of apostrophes and exclamation marks, often with "O."

Gogol's presence in *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* is revealed in another, not primarily stylistic, way. In Pechorin's study hangs a portrait of an unknown man by an unknown Russian painter. The painter was unaware of his own genius, "and no one had bothered to so much as hint to him of this." There was a frightening gleam in the portrait's eyes which "followed you in every corner of the room," obviously very reminiscent of Gogol's *Portret*. The portrait has no function in the plot, as far as the plot goes. Pechorin does, however, in moments of loneliness and meditation, converse with the portrait, whom, as an admirer of Byron, he calls Lara (I).

A lesser presence is Pushkin. Pechorin as a young bachelor in Petersburg inevitably makes one think of *Evgenii Onegin*. It made Lermontov, too, think of Pechorin's literary precursor. Shades of *Evgenii Onegin* (I, 20-21) are to be found in the theater scene, before the overture, with Pechorin directing his lorgnette at the boxes (II). Later, in the final ballroom scene (IX), we have a mention of "little feet" ("*malen'kie nozhki*") (*Evgenii Onegin* I,30-34). But stylistically there is little of Pushkin in either of these passages, and in the latter we recognize Gogol' in a satirical, but effervescent vein. Another faint echo of *Evgenii Onegin* (VIII, 31) is to be found in the narrator's remark (I) that society does not tolerate anything powerful... anything that might display character or will: Lermontov uses the phrase "svet ne terpit," which is clearly an echo of the same phrase in *Evgenii Onegin* (VIII, 31), though what society does not tolerate there is, according to Pushkin, flirtation. The epigraph to the first chapter is from *Evgenii Onegin* (I, 16): "*Podi!--Podi! razdalsia krik!*" ("Let's go! — the shout rings out — let's go!"), clearly with the imminent running over of Krasinskii in mind. And finally, though it is not in the canonical text, perhaps the most revealing: in one place in the manuscript of his first chapter Lermontov made a

¹⁶ We have seen Chateaubriand's crocodile put to more earnest use in *Vadim* (IX).

slip and wrote "Evgenii" instead of "Pechorin," a clear indication of a link he had no wish to conceal. A tenuous link between Krasinskii and Pushkin's Germann in *The Queen of Spades* has been posited, based on the importance of money to both.¹⁷

Stylistically, Vinogradov notes as Pushkinian Lermontov's use of the "compressed phrase," but at the same time he insists on the Gogolian divergence: "The complexity of the stylistics of *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* is reflected in the use of the basic grammatical categories. Adopting Pushkin's compressed prose technique, Lermontov at the same time intersperses his short, verb-dominated narrative constructions with extended descriptive phrases. The verb does not in Lermontov's style occupy the same preeminence over the qualitative adjective that it does in Pushkin."¹⁸ In fact, characterization methods, authorial interpolations and digressions, and indeed all leading indicators point away from Pushkin and toward Gogol.

Alert to differences between Lermontov and Gogol, Vinogradov seems inclined to underplay the decisive effect of the latter's influence. To give one example, he gives the first sentence of *Nos* mentioned above, which fixes March 25 as the date of the occurrence of "an unusually strange event." To this he adds the opening of *Shinel' (The Overcoat)*, where Gogol's playfulness is triggered not by the date but by the dilemma (16 lines) of whether or not he should name the administrative department in which the hero serves; he finally settles for "in a certain department." Vinogradov comments: "A comparison of these openings indicates that Lermontov's style merely approximates (*"lish' sblizhaetsia s"*) that of Gogol, but basically it remains at a respectful distance." True, Lermontov's opening, also emphasizing the importance of time, day, month, year, is more restrained, less developed than that of Gogol. But here, as elsewhere in *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*, the differences are less significant than the similarities. What Lermontov takes from Gogol is his nonsensical playfulness. Our thesis is that Gogol's prevarications, ambiguities, playfulness, and the resultant relationship with an amused but not suspense-filled reader must have given rise to problems and conflicts in developing the more serious aspects of the narrative, particularly with regard to the autobiographical aspect (Pechorin's story) and the problem of money.¹⁹

The serious nature of the autobiographical element in the novel is not open to doubt. In 1836, the time of writing, Lermontov still felt a great deal of love and affection for Lopukhina-Bakhmeteva (Vera). These strong feelings lasted probably to the end of his life. It was almost certainly to her that he addressed his *Valerik*, written in late 1840. In late 1838 he had sent her a copy of the sixth (first Caucasian) redaction of *Demon*, with an emotional and moving dedication, and in 1840 or 1841 he sent her a copy of the final version. Clearly, she was present in his mind when important issues were involved. Her marriage in 1835 to Bakhmetev was for Lermontov a source of lasting grief and chagrin. The emotional interplay and maneuvering that goes on in *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* between Pechorin and Vera undoubtedly reflected the complex, ambivalent, and deeply intimate feelings that Varvara Lopukhina still aroused in him.

Sushkova meant considerably less to Lermontov, certainly at this time. However, strong vestiges of pique and hostility did remain from his relationship with her. This may be seen from the unflattering and ungallant descriptions of Negurova. At the theater: "the daughter would have been not bad looking, had not her paleness, thinness and age (*"starost'"*), an almost universal defect of Petersburg girls, not dimmed the radiance of two enormous eyes and destroyed the harmony between her fairly regular features and her intelligent expression" (II). Sushkova's large

¹⁷ Vinogradov, 554.

¹⁸ Vinogradov, 554-56.

¹⁹ Vinogradov, 555-58.

eyes were one of her attractive points. Negurova undressing that night with the help of her fat, pockmarked maid: "...but I won't go on with the description: no one is interested in admiring the faded charms, the skinny leg, the scrawny (*"zhilistoi"*) neck, the bony (*"sukhimi"*) shoulders... pallor and thinness are interesting... because French women are pale, and English women are thin... we should point out that the charms of pallor and thinness exist only in the imagination of the ladies and that our men merely support this opinion to please the ladies and to avoid at all costs reproaches of being impolite and insensitive (*"kazarmnosti"*)" (III).

The serious side of the autobiographical element, the closeness of the narrator to Pechorin, is reinforced by the fact that Lermontov has not made Pechorin's appearance impressive but has given it something of a resemblance to his own. He speaks of Pechorin's appearance as "unfortunately far from attractive; he was short of stature, broad in the shoulder and in general not very gracefully proportioned; he seemed strongly built, unlikely to suffer from hypersensitivity or weak and easily irritated nerves; his walk was somewhat deliberate for a cavalry man, his gestures were abrupt, although they frequently expressed laziness and a carefree apathy which is today fashionable and in accordance with the spirit of the age—if that's not a pleonasm." (I).

The issue of money appears primarily by the confrontation between Krasinskii and Pechorin, triggered by the hit-and-run episode in which Krasinskii is knocked sprawling. At the heart of the conflict is money, easy affluence (3,000 souls) against poverty. It is poverty and the concomitant necessity of supporting his mother which cause Krasinskii to avoid Pechorin's offer to duel. When, drinking tea during the intermission, Krasinskii overhears the "amusing" account of his being run over, in his frustration he deliberately knocks the tray, teapot, and cups off the table. A scene threatens. But Pechorin averts a scene by calling the waiter and paying (three times too much) for the broken china. The money spent represents nothing to Pechorin. Waylaying Pechorin, Krasinskii puts his finger on the difference between them: "... you nearly killed me today, me who now stand before you... and you boast about it, you find it funny! By what right? Because you have a trotting horse and a white plume? And gold epaulettes? Am I not just as much a nobleman (*"dvorianin"*) as you are? I'm poor! Yes, I'm poor! I go on foot. And now after this I'm not even a human being, let alone a nobleman! And you find it funny! You thought I would humbly listen to your effrontery because I don't have money to throw on the table! Never! Never! I'll never forgive you!" Rejecting Pechorin's challenge, Krasinskii says in part: "... My life is bitter. I have no future... I'm so poor that I buy cheap seats [in the theater]... If she [his mother] lost me, she would either die of sorrow or of hunger... " Pechorin makes a "conciliatory" offer: "I promise you I'll give my driver a whipping tomorrow," to which Krasinskii retorts, "O, you make me lose my patience." When Krasinskii then breaks down and runs off, Pechorin, "looks at him with commiseration" (II). There can be no doubt that Lermontov in this novel is treating money or the lack of it as an important issue. Its importance is reinforced elsewhere, in a conversation between Negurova and Pechorin in the final ball-room scene (IX).

I have been at pains to emphasize the serious nature of the autobiographical element in *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*, and the seriousness of money and poverty. But how does the bantering, playful style borrowed from Gogol handle and resolve these serious issues? Gogol's prose does not preclude the serious. The traditional critical wisdom about laughter through tears (*"smekh skvoz' slezy"*) retains its validity. But Gogol's "serious" conclusions are not reached by in-depth psychological study of individuals. Gogol's way of writing is ideally suited to the treatment of minor or irrelevant characters who can be categorized, satirized, ridiculed, rather than examined closely. This does not mean that comic and superficial character portrayal cannot produce a tragic and profound insight: "it's wearisome in this world, gentlemen!" (*"skuchno na etom svete, go-*

spoda!"), but this is not a probing psychological analysis. Rather, it gives a sense of the overall irrationality, nonsensicality, and forlornness of living! But that was not Lermontov's way.

Everything goes well with minor characters, where distancing is appropriate. All civil servants dream. All drivers call their horses Vas'ka. Fat, pockmarked maids are intolerable. But when we come to more important characters and more serious issues, the Gogol narrative style is alien to Lermontov. He wants to go more deeply into the character's emotional lives. Civil servants all act one way, but Krasinskii is on his way to becoming a person, an individual. He cannot be simply parodied. Nor can Vera or Pechorin be treated with flippancy. We read, above, part of the description introducing Pechorin. The description is very revealing. He was short, broad-shouldered, and so forth. Then the narrator permits himself a Gogolian quip about fashion and the spirit of the age, "if that's not a pleonasm." But the narrator must still indicate Pechorin's superior personality. And quips in the style of Gogol are not in order here. Lermontov must abandon Gogol. Instead, he turns to Balzac. He wishes to avoid the melodramatic exaggerations and excesses lavished on Vadim in the first novel, while still making his point. What better than a French aristocrat disguised, but whose disguise cannot conceal his innate nobility? Such is the Marquis de Montauran in *Les chouans*. He is of medium height. "With one look Mademoiselle de Verneuil was able to see through his somber clothing to a certain elegance (*"des formes élégantes"*), a *je ne sais quoi* which bespeaks an innate nobility. Unremarkable at first glance, the young man's face soon revealed an ordering of certain traits indicative of a soul capable of great things... everything in him revealed a life guided by lofty sentiments and the habit of command...." And Lermontov writes of Pechorin: "Through his cold exterior his true nature often emerged. One could see that he didn't follow the universal fashion, but kept a rein on his feelings and thoughts from mistrust or pride... there could be read on his face the deep marks of the past and the great promises of the future. People said that in his smile and in his strangely shining eyes there was a *je ne sais quoi (est' chto-to)*" (I). De Montauran also had "shining blue eyes."

Also not in the style of Gogol is the moment when Pechorin reads the visiting card from the Princess Ligovskaia, the first indication that she and her husband are in Petersburg: "he turned pale, trembled, his eyes flashed, and the card flew into the fireplace" (I), the same sort of physical reaction seen in *Vadim*. When Krasinskii waylays Pechorin, "the civil servant's voice was trembling from fury, the veins bulged on his forehead, and his lips turned pale" (II). In fact, there occurs a near reversion to the style of the earlier novel. Thus we cannot escape the conclusion that when situation and characters are important, Gogol's stylistics will not do, either for psychological portrayal or for the depicting of strong emotion.

Yet another problem arises with Gogol's stylistics. They admit at times a suspension of belief in logic and causality, an acceptance of the outrageous and the grotesque. They make possible a contextually unacceptable incident like the running over of Krasinskii. It is not difficult to see how the intrusion of Gogol with his grotesquerie upon the serious narrative could have happened. Gogol offers a ready model to two high-spirited friends enjoying their joint venture. His manner gives so much scope to wit, ingenuity, and inventiveness! How shall we start? With a bang! And lo, Krasinskii is spredeagled on the sidewalk! Very funny! And it could indeed be very funny and totally innocuous! But it ceases to be funny when Krasinskii explains to Pechorin something of his predicament at the theater. It is interesting that Lermontov and Raevskii anticipated the about-face later achieved by Gogol in *Shinef*: everyone in the department regarded it as hilariously and innocuously funny to tease the poor clerk... until one day... came realization..., and it couldn't be funny anymore.

Of course, the hit-and-run could have occurred. But notwithstanding the Russian propensity for rapid, reckless, and ruthless driving, Pechorin's handling of the consequences runs coun-

ter to his character. His “indifference and insensitivity to the sufferings of others” in this episode brings him close, in Tomashevskii’s view, to the melodramatic perversity of Vadim in the earlier novel. Tomashevskii’s view is that the two characters have much in common and are differentiated primarily by stylistics.²⁰ But, notwithstanding a number of parallel traits, the two are very different, and it is on the contrary stylistics, those of Gogol, which have here pushed Pechorin into a position of apparent proximity to Vadim. Having run down a stranger and torn off to elude pursuit, both well within the realm of the possible, Pechorin is forced by the impetus of the narrative to joke tastelessly about the scene and then to offer to give satisfaction by having his driver whipped. This is out of character and thus unconvincing. Not that we consider Pechorin as a paragon of virtue, as the following situations make clear. Pechorin treats Negurova shabbily; but his ill treatment of her is in character. Or, a later Pechorin in *Geroi nashego vremeni* coldbloodedly executes Grushnitskii in a duel. But that killing is in character and is well-motivated and prejustified. The hit-and-run of the present novel does not fit the profile, and the offer to whip his driver only makes matters worse and Pechorin more foppishly despicable. The spredeagling of Krasinskii raised an artistic problem from the very start. It got the story off to a fine start, but on a course which would prove impossible to maintain. I am not the first commentator to suggest that even if Raevskii and Lermontov had not been prevented by exile from continuing collaboration, they would have shortly found themselves at an impasse. Gogol and his complications apart, there was probably too much narrative to be pulled together before a novel could emerge.

There is here genuine cause for regret. *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* does mark a tremendous step forward from *Vadim*. While traces remain of the excessively florid, romantic rhetoric of the first novel, especially in descriptions of Krasinskii’s emotions, the narrative is on the whole characterized by a relative restraint. The author has demonstrated considerable skill in handling a contemporary theme. And genuine interest and suspense have been created.

3

Ia khochu rasskazat' vam (“I wish to tell you”) is the approximately five-page opening of what was intended as a Petersburg tale. Tomashevskii believed it was written between *Vadim* and *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* (1835-36), but it is generally dated 1837 and published after *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*. The narrator expresses the belief that only exceptional emotions and moments of high crisis can give the key to an individual’s personality, which normally remains unknown to other people. He clearly plans to provide such a critical moment by producing against the background of Petersburg society some sort of erotic confrontation between hero and heroine. The latter is now thirty years old and “buried” in the country. But at twenty she had been the most talked of and controversial woman of Petersburg, in the sense that opinions of her appearance and personality varied so widely. The male protagonist, Arbenin, is thirty at the time of the story. The narrator claims that he is an exception to the general rule that “our apathetic age” does not produce interesting or passionate people. He gives a short summary of Arbenin’s life. Shortly after his birth in Moscow his parents had separated. Arbenin had gone to live with his father on his Simbirsk estate on the Volga. Neglected by his father and spoiled by the serf women, Arbenin grew up a loner and a dreamer. His imagination was fired by tales of the Volga robbers and of bold exploits. At the same time he was destructive: he would break down shrubs, pull out flowers, crush insects, and throw stones at the chickens. He was nearly killed by measles, and his three-year-long convalescence intensified his introspection and tendency to fantasy.

²⁰ Tomashevskii, 487-88.

At this point the manuscript breaks off. It is difficult to pass judgment on a five-page fragment. The style is on the whole terse and to the point, admirably suited to generalized comment on the human race, to introducing the two main characters, and to shedding light on Arbenin's childhood years. The main significance of the piece lies in the clearly autobiographical passages. Though there is no attempt to reproduce exactly the details of Lermontov's young life (he did not live with his father, Tarkhany was not on the Volga) the general picture of his grandmother's estate and of his early development must be regarded as basically accurate, most notably the excessive indulgence in the workings of the imagination.

4

Ashik-Kerib: Turetskaia skazka (Ashik Kerib: A Turkish Fairytale) is dated 1837 and is a product of Lermontov's first Caucasian exile. It is based on a popular Turkish fairytale and was copied down by Lermontov, probably at the dictation of an Azerbaijani, M. F. Akhundov. The tale had wide currency in the Transcaucasus, Central Asia, and the Near East. But the motif of the absent husband or fiancé returning is not confined to one area or tradition. Variations on the theme are to be found in the *Odyssey*, the *Decameron*, and Maupassant, among others.

Many years ago in Tiflis, the beautiful daughter of a rich Turk was loved by the poor singer Ashik-Kerib. Refusing to marry her while poor, he wanders abroad in search of riches: if he does not return in seven years (a common folk motif), she will be free to marry Kursud-bek, who has long sought her hand. Through the protection of a great pasha in Aleppo (Syria), who is delighted with his singing, Ashik-Kerib becomes wealthy. He lives a fine life, forgetting his former love. Reminded, he realizes with horror that only three days remain for him to make it back to Tiflis. He is miraculously aided by a mysterious stranger on a white horse, who enables him to arrive on time. As proof of the miraculous journey he is told to take from the horse's hoof a clod of earth with which he will anoint the eyes of a woman who has been blind for seven years. Horse and rider vanish. Ashik-Kerib enters Tiflis in time to sing at the preliminaries to the wedding feast of his beloved, who plans to kill herself rather than become the bride of Kursud-bek. Recognizing first Ashik-Kerib's voice and then his face, she flings herself on his neck, and both of them fall down unconscious. Ashik-Kerib rubs the earth on the eyes of his mother, who has been blind ever since his departure seven years before, and her vision is restored. Kursud-bek cedes his bride. But Ashik-Kerib gives him his sister, who "is not worse than your former betrothed." And all ends happily for both couples.

The narrative is characterized by an almost total absence of any but the absolutely essential epithets, and also of subordinate clauses:

Many years ago in the city of Tiflis there lived a rich Turk; Allah had given him gold in abundance, but dearer to him than gold was his only daughter Magul'-Megeri: fine are the stars in the heaven, but beyond the stars live the angels, and they are even finer, and in this same way Magul'-Megeri was the best of all the maidens of Tiflis. There lived too in Tiflis the poor Ashik-Kerib; the prophet had given him nothing except a lofty heart — and the gift of song; playing his balalaika and singing the praises of the ancient heroes of Turkestan, he went from marriage feast to marriage feast to give joy to the rich and happy; at one marriage feast he saw Magul'- Megeri, and they fell in love. The poor Ashik-Kerib had little hope of obtaining her hand — and he became sad as the winter sky.

The narrative is punctuated and carried forward by short decisive pieces of dialog. On one occasion these pieces are put to humorous effect. Ashik-Kerib has arrived in Aleppo and is singing in the coffee shop. The pasha's men hear his remarkable voice:

"Come with us to our great pasha," they shouted, "or you will answer with your head." "I am a free person, a traveler from the city of Tiflis," Ashik-Kerib says; "if I want to come I'll come; if I don't want to come, I won't; I sing when I sing, and your pasha is not my master." Notwithstanding which, they seized him and took him to the pasha. "Sing," said the pasha, and he started to sing.

This is of course not an original work in the conventional sense. But the choice of theme is Lermontov's and is indicative. It is very much in line with the simple, strong narrative he was to produce in his *Pesnia pro Tsaria Ivana Vasil'evicha*, also an unconventional story from the modern literary standpoint and also possessing ties with folk literature. This simplicity of plot development and style, characteristic of folk literature, is also to be found in such prose pieces as "Ia xochu rasskazat' vam," parts of *Shtoss*, and parts of *Geroi nashego vremeni*, especially of *Taman'*. It is also present in some of Lermontov's verse, both earlier and later than this piece.

When critics talk of Lermontov's verse style being reflected in his prose, they usually refer to what Vinogradov discussed: the ornate, epithet-rich style of Lermontov's early prose, which finds a parallel in his verse. But it is also true that his leaner prose, exemplified in *Ashik-Kerib* and elsewhere, also finds a parallel in the leaner, "prosaic" style of his poetry, from 1830 poems to N. F. Ivanova to the 1840 poems "Valerik" and "Zaveshchanie" ("The Testament").

5

Geroi nashego vremeni, as noted above, is the only one of Lermontov's prose pieces published during his lifetime. It is also his only completed novel. Some 200 pages in length, it is made up of four different episodes in the hero's life. It is by any standards an impressive achievement, and it gains by comparison with its predecessors *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* and especially *Vadim*. Lermontov had, in Tomashevskii's words, found that new style and new system which caused him to abandon *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*: "Having found that style, he writes his most perfect prose work *A Hero of Our Time*, a novel which is no longer experimental."²¹ It was first published, as noted above, in April 1840, and a second edition followed early in 1841. This second edition contained a short *Predislovie* (Foreword)" allegedly written to rebut criticism and misunderstanding produced by the first edition. Shortly before *Geroi nashego vremeni* appeared as a novel, three of the chapters covering three episodes, *Bela*, *Fatalist*, and *Taman'*, appeared independently in different issues of *Otechestvennye zapiski* (*Notes of the Fatherland*).²² They were presented as excerpts from *Zapiski ofitsera o Kavkaze* (*Notes of an Officer about the Caucasus*). To *Fatalist* was attached the following editorial note: "With special pleasure we take this opportunity of informing our readers that in the near future M. Iu. Lermontov will be putting out a collection of his tales, published and unpublished. This will be a new and handsome contribu-

²¹ Tomashevskii, 495.

²² *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1839, vol. 2, No. 3, otd. III, 167-212; 1839, vol. 6, No. 11, otd. III, 146-58; 1840, vol. 8, No. 2, otd. III, 144-54.

tion to Russian literature.”²³ *Taman’* followed shortly after, but alone, not as part of a collection. And in April, 1840, there appeared not a collection of tales, but the first edition of the novel. These facts will be seen to have relevance to the way in which the novel was put together.

The events of the novel take place in the Caucasus. From the appointment as commander-in-chief of A. P. Ermolov in 1815, the Caucasus had been the scene of almost incessant warfare, varying in intensity, between the Caucasian mountain tribes and an expanding Russia. On the Russian side were both regular Russian army regiments as well as Cossacks, who were settled in the area and who, like other frontiersmen, had adopted some of the ways of their adversaries. The episodes making up *Geroi nashego vremeni* take place either in the “line,” which extended with gaps from Taman’ on the Black Sea to Kizliar close to the Caspian, or behind the line in or near two of the several spas, Piatigorsk and Kislovodsk, which had sprung up in the region in the early years of the nineteenth century.

The “Foreword” attached to the novel’s second edition affords the reader an immediate insight into the issues raised by the novel. It is a two-page position statement in answer to charges and criticisms which the author claims had been leveled against the first edition of the work. Some people, we are told, have been greatly upset at having so immoral a person as Pechorin, the central character, presented to the public as an example; after all, the title does designate him as a “hero.” With these people, the author remonstrates for taking the title too literally. Then there are those who insist that in the figure of Pechorin Lermontov has painted a self-portrait and the portraits of his acquaintances. *Geroi nashego vremeni*, he responds, is indeed a portrait, but not a portrait of any one person: “it is a portrait made up of the vices of our entire generation, in their most fully developed form.” But surely no one can be that bad? “If,” the author retorts, “you have been able to believe in the possibility of the existence of all the tragic and romantic villains, why would you not be able to believe in the reality of Pechorin? If you could admire far more horrible and ugly creations of fiction, why are you so merciless toward this character — even as a creation of fiction (“*vymysel*”)? Can it be because there is more truth here than you would have desired?” But too many writers have sugar-coated their offerings to the public; what is needed are bitter medicines and biting truths. However, the author has not entertained the lofty hope of setting right people’s vices. He has simply taken pleasure in depicting “contemporary man as he understands him and as he, to his and your misfortune, has too often found him. It is enough that the disease has been identified; as to the cure, that is something that God alone knows!”

While we must be wary of Lermontov, as of other authors going back through the eighteenth century, when he talks of a work of fiction in terms of its moral effect, his “Foreword” does convey something of his feelings about his novel and what he considers his achievement to amount to. We take with a grain of salt his protestation that Pechorin is in no way a self-portrait. In this work, as in many others, while the exact details of Lermontov’s life are not reproduced, the hero’s thinking and feeling reflect a great deal of what went on in the author’s heart. From his other remarks, it appears that he did try to make Pechorin about as true to life as possible.

One final thought provoked by the “Foreword”. Although Lermontov has come a long way from his early preoccupation with the Byronic hero, though his switch of genre to the novel permits him to place his hero and other characters on a specific social background (army frontier life and the social routines of the watering place), it is still the character of the hero that is at the

²³ Ibid., 1840, vol. 8, no. 2, *otd.* III, 144-54. For a clear presentation of the sequence of events in the novel’s publication B. T. Udodov, *Geroi nashego vremeni*, *L. E.*, 108. Also *Ak nauk*, VI, 649-50.

center of his attention. This is very evident from the title, from what the critics chose to focus on, and from the author's avowed intent in his "Foreword".

Focusing in part on his own inner world and in part on what he saw as peculiar to and typical of the mentality of his age, Lermontov was following a distinguished Romantic tradition. Among its predecessors, scholars point to Rousseau's *Confessions*, Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, Chateaubriand's *René*, Senancour's *Oberman*, Childe Harold, Constant's *Adolphe*, Stendhal's *Le rouge et le noir*, Musset's *La confession d'un enfant du siècle* (on the grounds of both substance and title), and in Russian first and foremost *Evgenii Onegin*, but also the often overlooked *Rytsar' nashego vremeni* (*A Knight of Our Time*) of Karamzin, which, Musset notwithstanding, may have suggested Lermontov's title.²⁴

Let us briefly summarize the events described in Lermontov's novel. In *Bela* the narrator, an unnamed young officer, is traveling north from Tiflis. He meets Maksim Maksimych, a staff-captain and old Caucasus hand about fifty years old. Maksim Maksimych tells the young officer the story of Pechorin and Bela. Pechorin had served as Maksim Maksimych's subordinate officer in one of the "line fortresses" some five years earlier, when he had abducted a young Circassian princess named Bela and after much wooing won her love. But he soon wearied of her. She remained totally dedicated to him. Increasingly, Pechorin absented himself from the fortress on hunting expeditions, while Bela, neglected, pined. She is killed by Kazbich, a Circassian, who had had his eye on her before Pechorin's arrival and who had been deceived by Pechorin and Bela's brother in a complicated deal involving the theft of Kazbich's greatly-loved horse and who had helped Pechorin to abduct Bela. Her death is a great blow to Pechorin and to Maksim Maksimych, who has befriended Bela with fatherly affection. Pechorin's behavior can be labeled typical of the Byronic hero who is not really capable of loving wholeheartedly and whose contact is therefore painfully lethal to the woman he is involved with.

The next episode, *Maksim Maksimych*, takes place two days later in Vladykavkaz. Maksim Maksimych catches up with the young officer at the inn. Pechorin comes in from the north on his way to Persia. Despite the fact that they had been close friends in the fortress five years before, Pechorin brushes Maksim Maksimych off with bare courtesy and no warmth at all. Maksim Maksimych is deeply chagrined and offended. He has been keeping some papers, including a Caucasian diary left behind by Pechorin at the fortress. In his vexation he hands the papers over to the young officer whose curiosity about Pechorin has been aroused.

This episode is followed by a foreword to Pechorin's journal. In this one-and-a-half page foreword, the same unnamed officer informs the reader that he has recently heard that Pechorin has died on his way back from Persia; this pleases him, since it gives him the freedom to publish Pechorin's memoirs, the same papers handed over to him by Maksim Maksimych, or rather those parts of them relating to his life in the Caucasus. These amount to three separate episodes.

In the first of these, *Taman'*, Pechorin describes his enforced stay in *Taman'*, which is on the eastern shore of the Black Sea. The only available lodging appears to be a rundown place of evil omen ("*tam nechisto*") by the shore, the only occupant of which appears to be a blind boy. During his stay Pechorin unintentionally, motivated by curiosity, finds he has stumbled on a smuggling operation. There's an attractive young girl, described by Pechorin as a water nymph (he uses two terms, *rusalka* and *undina*), who waits with the blind boy for a sailing vessel coming in in very heavy weather. Next day, convinced that the operation is compromised by Pechorin, she lures him into a rowboat off shore (he imagined he was to have a romantic interlude with

²⁴ B. T. Udodov, *M. Iu, Lermontov: Khudozhestvennaia individual'nost' i tvorcheskie protsessy* (Voronezh, 1973), 511.

her) and tries to drown him. He survives by throwing her into the water. Again the sailing boat comes in, and the girl tells the smuggler-owner the operation has been discovered and they must leave. She sails off with him, leaving the blind boy weeping. Pechorin discovers he has been robbed. The following day transport is available, and Pechorin is happy to leave Taman'.

The next episode, taking up about half the book, is entitled *Kniazhna Meri (Princess Mary)* and takes place in Piatigorsk and Kislovodsk, two resort spas where people drink and bathe in the waters. This episode consists really of three episodes, of which the story lines are skillfully intertwined. One of these involves Pechorin's "textbook" pursuit of an attractive young woman taking the waters, Princess Mary. He succeeds in winning her heart. Despite some uncertainties committed to his diary about whether after all he loves her, Pechorin has never loved her. One motive for the courtship is Pechorin's desire to score off a fellow officer, Grushnitskii, who is depicted as a sort of caricature of the romantic-Byronic personality; the antagonism between the two officers leads to a duel, the second story line. A second motive for Pechorin's courtship of Princess Mary is to camouflage a deeper, longstanding love for a certain ailing and consumptive Vera, to whom he was irrevocably attached back in Petersburg and who is married. The three narrative threads, skillfully intertwined, all reach breaking point at the same time. Frustrated in his courtship of Princess Mary and feeling himself outwitted and outmaneuvered by Pechorin, Grushnitskii is foolish enough to be conned by fellow-officers into fighting a duel against Pechorin in which Pechorin's pistol will not be loaded. The original intent had been to prove Pechorin a coward. But as the antagonism intensifies, the intention has changed. Against his better instincts, Grushnitskii fires to kill, merely scratching his opponent's knee. Pechorin, aware of the duplicity, demands to have his pistol examined, then loaded, and, after giving Grushnitskii one final chance to confess and ask forgiveness, shoots him dead. Returning from the duel, he finds that Vera, in despair at once again becoming embroiled in a love she cannot resist, has left. He gallops out in despairing pursuit, succeeding only in riding his horse to death. Arriving back at five in the morning, he sleeps through the day and on the following day informs Princess Mary that he has been fooling with her ("... *ja nad vami smeialsia*"). Her "I hate you" ("*Ja vas nenavizhu*") brings this whole Piatigorsk-Kislovodsk episode to a close. The duel with Grushnitskii has been cleverly camouflaged as an accident. But Pechorin's superior officer has very grave doubts about it, and Pechorin is ordered for duty at the fortress of N.

The final episode in the book, *Fatalist (The Fatalist)*, takes place in a Cossack settlement on the left flank of the "line" (i.e., toward the Caspian Sea). The officers while away the evenings playing cards. One evening the conversation turns to predestination, specifically when a person will die. Lieutenant Vulich, a Serb and an inveterate gambler, makes a bet with Pechorin. Pechorin claims that there is no such thing as predestination, Vulich, the reverse. To prove his point and win the bet, he takes a pistol at random from the wall, aims it at his head, and pulls the trigger. It misfires. He then aims it at a cap hanging over the window. The cap gets a hole in the center, and the bullet is deeply embedded in the wall. Vulich wins the bet. But Pechorin had (anticipating Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*) discerned some sign of imminent death on his pale face and had told Vulich: "You'll die today." He turns out to be right. Going home, Vulich is cut down by a drunken Cossack. His last words: "He was right!" refer to Pechorin's prediction.

The arrangement followed in the above summary is the arrangement of the novel's definitive text. But it is not in accordance with the chronological order of the different events in Pechorin's life. Let us first set forth the correct chronological order in terms of real time and of Pechorin's biography and then examine the problem of how and why this order was violated.

A reading of *Geroi nashego vremeni* makes it clear that first in time was the episode with the smugglers in *Taman'*. After leaving *Taman'*, Pechorin must have served on active duty for an

unspecified length of time, for it was while on active duty that he met Grushnitskii, as he notes under May 11 of his diary at the beginning of *Kniazhna Meri*. Grushnitskii, he notes, received a bullet in the leg and left for Piatigorsk about a week ahead of Pechorin. The two have been in action together, for Pechorin makes an adverse comment on Grushnitskii's way of handling himself: "Grushnitskii has the reputation of being very brave; I've seen him in action: he waves his sword about, shouts and flings himself forward with eyes closed. His bravery is somehow not a Russian bravery!" The second episode in time is then *Kniazhna Meri* which, among other things, produces Grushnitskii's death and Pechorin's transfer to the fortress designated as "N." Pechorin notes his transfer almost at the very end of the chapter: he has killed Grushnitskii, ridden in vain after Vera, and he has himself received news of the transfer by the time he goes for his final showdown with Princess Mary. Fortress N is the one which, in the first episode in the book, he occupies with Maksim Maksimych and where his tragic affair with Bela unfolds. It is during this time that Pechorin goes on a brief assignment to a Cossack settlement and the events of *Fatalist* take place. The *Bela* episode was, we know, narrated by Maksim Maksimych to the traveling officer some five years after the events described had taken place. A couple of days after that, in Vladykavkaz, Pechorin pulls in on his way to Persia, is seen by the traveling officer, cold-shoulders Maksim Maksimych, and leaves. Maksim Maksimych hands over Pechorin's diary to the traveling officer. Finally, the "Foreword" to Pechorin's diary informs us that Pechorin has died on his way back from Persia, leaving the officer free to publish his diary, of which the first chapter is *Taman'*. Thus *Kniazhna Meri*, which occupies in pages just over half the entire novel, is also a flashback which helps to explain what has brought Pechorin to where he is in *Bela*. And *Bela* is his last recorded fling at happiness, though we can imagine other sterile or disastrous relations with women in the five-year period between the *Bela* events and Pechorin's final brief appearance at the inn in Vladykavkaz or during his time in Persia.²⁵

The novel's structure is one of its most interesting and significant features. To understand how the definitive structure was arrived at is to gain insight into both the creative process and the artistic qualities of the definitive text. We have to start by recognizing that there are two clearly distinct genres in *Geroi nashego vremeni*. One is the travelog-adventure or travelog-love story. *Taman'*, *Fatalist*, and *Bela* fall into this category. The second, represented by the long *Kniazhna Meri* chapter, may be described as the genre of the socio-psychological and philosophical novel. Second, we must recognize that Lermontov did not have the shape of the future novel in mind at the start of his work and follow a preconceived plan. He changed the ordering of his episodes. And there is little room for doubt that he did not start out with the idea of writing a novel.

Lermontov started with the travelog-adventure or travelog-love story. A draft of *Taman'* was almost certainly under way in 1837.²⁶ It is likely that Lermontov's first exile to the Caucasus would have encouraged him to try his hand at a genre then gaining popularity, the travelog set against an exotic background ("*putevye zapiski*"). Only later, in 1838, did the idea arise of combining these short genre pieces and attaching them to a longer piece; *Kniazhna Meri* was by then either at the stage of conception or perhaps already in progress, and though itself not very long, bears the essential hallmarks of the novel or novella. There is insufficient evidence to establish with certainty the order in which the different chapters were written. But this is less important than the changes made by Lermontov in his overall design, and these can be clearly documented.

²⁵ This chronology of events as they took place in Pechorin's life can be deduced from the novel. But see also *Khud. lit.*, IV, 468-69.

²⁶ *Ak. nauk*, VI, 663-64.

We noted at the beginning of this chapter that *Bela*, *Fatalist*, and *Taman'* appeared as independent stories in different issues of *Otechestvennye zapiski* in 1839 and 1840. That fact alone demonstrates clearly that the travelog-adventure genre had precedence in time. We noted further the editorial note attached to *Fatalist* promising the early publication of "a collection of his tales" and that what actually was published was not "a collection of tales" but the first edition of a novel. That clearly indicates a change in the author's conception of his work.

Once committed to the idea of a novel, Lermontov went through several stages in his thinking about how the completed work should be structured to form an artistic whole:

1) In the earliest redaction it consisted of two parts, first *Bela* and *Maksim Maksimych*, subtitled *Iz zapisok ofitsera (From an Officer's Notes)*, followed by *Kniazhna Meri*.

2) Probably in August-September 1839, Lermontov revised all his "chapters" except *Bela*, which had already been published, and ordered them as follows: *Bela*, *Maksim Maksimych*, *Fatalist*, *Kniazhna Meri*. Entitled provisionally *Odin iz geroev nachala veka (One of the Heroes of the Beginning of the Century)*, the novel was again divided into two parts, the first part containing the notes of the unnamed traveling officer, the second part the hero's diary.

3) At the very end of 1839, Lermontov arrives at a definitive arrangement. *Taman'* is included for the first time, and takes the place occupied in the previous stage by *Fatalist* (before *Kniazhna Meri*), *Fatalist* assuming its position at the end. Lermontov eliminates the end of *Maksim Maksimych*, and writes a brief foreword to Pechorin's diary. There is again the division into two parts. But the division is no longer by fictive author, i.e., the unnamed officer's travel notes as opposed to Pechorin's diary. The newly included *Taman'*, now the lead-off chapter in the diary, is placed in the first rather than the second part. This may have been done to bring the two parts more nearly into balance in terms of length. Whatever the reason, *Geroi nashego vremeni*, apart from the foreword to the entire novel, to be added in the second edition, has now assumed the shape with which we are familiar: *Part I: Bela, Maksim Maksimych, Predislovie* (the foreword to the diary), *Taman'*; *Part II: Kniazhna Meri, Fatalist*.

Critics generally agree that the final version provides a felicitous solution to the problem of structuring. What motivated Lermontov to manipulate and rearrange the natural chronology? I suggest a very simple answer. The *pièce de resistance* of the novel is *Kniazhna Meri*. Not only does this chapter occupy more than half the pages, but it is the part which most surely enables *Geroi nashego vremeni* to qualify as a novel. And its narrative line and overwhelming final pages rank among the most exciting and suspenseful in literature. But if we adhere to the natural chronology, *Kniazhna Meri* comes second. Surely any author looking at his work would see the advantage of positioning this climactic episode late in the novel.

What the critics almost unanimously point out, rightly, is that Lermontov's final arrangement has the advantage of providing the reader with an increasingly in-depth view of the hero: first from the outside, as described by Maksim Maksimych, who has a less than perfect understanding of Pechorin's psychology; then from the more sophisticated viewpoint of the traveling officer-narrator, who incidentally provides the physical description; and finally from the inside, as revealed by Pechorin's diary. One additional advantage which also follows from the structure is that Maksim Maksimych's question as to what drives Pechorin comes at the beginning of the novel, allowing the later parts to provide what can be offered by way of an answer.

I have gone into the question of the story of the novel's composition at some length. The point in demonstrating mixed genres and changed goals should be clear: we should beware of crediting Lermontov with vision which, in this particular instance, he could not have had.

To credit him thus is not merely to bestow some counterfeit and quite unneeded praise. It causes critics to bend interpretation out of shape. This is particularly evident in the treatment ac-

corded by some critics to *Fatalist*. Because it comes last in the definitive text, it must be shown, they believe, to have the weight of some final answer, some wise pronouncement. But this it does not possess. And to seek it is to run contrary to the evidence. Did not Lermontov himself at one time place *Fatalist* before and not after *Kniazhna Meri*? *Fatalist* in terms of ideological weight, could come anywhere in the book. It is a self-contained episode. And it asks one specific question, of interest to active-duty fighting men. Is our death “written in the heavens”? Is it predetermined, no matter what we do? But this is not the central question of the novel. That question is roughly: What do I do to make my life meaningful, given my exceptional qualities and given the stiflingly repressive conditions in which I have to operate? And for that Lermontov, as he himself emphasizes in his “Foreword,” does not claim to provide an answer.

My insistence on the fortuitous element and the lack of an initial plan for *A Hero of Our Time* is in no way intended to belittle Lermontov. He should, rather, be commended for coming up with the best possible solution available, generally acknowledged to be highly effective.

Turning now to look at the novel’s stylistic features, we can see that *Geroi nashego vremeni* represents a significant advance over *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*, and even more so over *Vadim*. The advance is closely tied to the novel’s structure. The advantage obtained from the chronological rearrangement in the progressive disclosure of Pechorin’s psyche has been touched on above.²⁷ This rearrangement more or less precludes any notion of development, imparting to the work a certain static quality and emphasizing the hopelessness of the hero’s situation.²⁸

At the same time, the replacement of an omniscient narrator by three different narrators opens up two important possibilities on the stylistic level. First, it offers the opportunity to view events through several different prisms, not just Pechorin. The narrative baton is not simply passed from the simple Maksim Maksimych to the sophisticated traveling officer to the equally sophisticated Pechorin writing his intimate diary. For example, right in the middle of Maksim Maksimych’s simple, soldierly account of the relations between Pechorin and Bela we read Pechorin’s sophisticated and rhetorical explanation of his *mal du siècle*, his inability to find happiness (231-33). Maksim Maksimych is able to report the highlights of what Pechorin told him because “his words are engraved on my memory.” Or has the traveling officer touched up what Maksim Maksimych was able to recall? The answer is not in itself important, but it highlights the fact that Lermontov’s structuring allows him to ring the changes more or less at will in narrative mode, to insert Pechorin’s account of his problem in the narrative of Maksim Maksimych, who could not have himself provided the analysis, and then to restore Maksim Maksimych and his simple narrative. Not understanding the import of what his phenomenal memory has retained, Maksim Maksimych seeks help from the traveling officer. But to little avail:

“Well, then, I suppose the French introduced the fashion of being bored?”

“No, the English.”

“Aha, so that’s it,” he replied. “Well, they always were out-and-out drunkards, weren’t they?”

But Maksim Maksimych’s simplicity does not make him a third-string narrator. He is able to offer the reader a number of insights which would otherwise have been unavailable. His

²⁷ For a view diametrically opposed see E. N. Mikhailova, *Proza Lermontova* (M.: Gos. izdat. khud. lit., 1957), 204-5: “the work was conceived and written as an integral novel.” However, we find convincing the opposed view which sees *Taman’* and *Fatalist* as originally forming no part of any plan for *Geroi nashego vremeni*; see Udodov, 482-97.

²⁸ E.g. Eikhenbaum 1924, 147-48; Mikhailova, 213.

long Caucasian service allows him to provide appropriate and authentic (i.e., not romanticized) ethnic details about the various inhabitants of the region, not merely from the outside observer's standpoint, for Maksim Maksimych understands intimately the outlook and ethical code of the peoples he deals with: "Of course, by their way of thinking," said the staff captain, "he was perfectly right," commenting on Kazbich's killing of Bela's father.

Since the traveling officer and Pechorin have similar educations and backgrounds, it is Maksim Maksimych who most often provides the original or, rather, different viewpoint. At times he reveals literary stylistic abilities beyond the reader's expectations. But if the reader is looking for perfect consistency he can postulate touching up by the traveling officer.²⁹

It has been correctly pointed out that on one occasion Lermontov appears to be at least skirting inconsistency. When in *Maksim Maksimych* Pechorin comes in from the north on his way to Persia, Maksim Maksimych is excited and delighted; but his warm feelings are not reciprocated by Pechorin. Maksim Maksimych is understandably vexed. The sequence of events and remarks is so organized by the narrating traveling officer that the reader's sympathies are engaged on Maksim Maksimych's behalf, and the reader finds Pechorin's conduct callous and unappealing. It strikes, therefore, a curious note when the narrator, who is after all responsible for shaping our attitudes, apparently does an about-face, reproaches Maksim Maksimych for his admittedly self-demeaning words and goes to Pechorin's defense:

We bade each other a rather cold farewell. The good Maksim Maksimych had turned into a stubborn, quarrelsome staff-captain! And why? Because Pechorin out of absent-mindedness or for some other reason had offered his hand when Maksim Maksimych had wanted to fling his arms about him! It is a sad sight when a young man loses his best hopes and dreams, when the rose-colored veil through which he has viewed human acts and feelings is removed from before his eyes, although there is the hope that he will replace his old illusions with new illusions, no less transitory but no less sweet.... But how can one hope to replace them at Maksim Maksimych's age? Inevitably the heart will have grown harder and the soul grown closed.... I departed alone.

"It is a sad sight when a young man...." The reflection sounds like a throwback to the wordly-wise generalizations we met with in *Vadim*.

Clearly without Maksim Maksimych, without too the traveling officer, with the narrative put together by Pechorin alone, the presentation of events through various voices and viewpoints is at an end. However, it is well worth noting that Pechorin can himself ring the changes pretty well, from careful psychological analysis to straight narrative. The diary format is consistently and plausibly maintained throughout the long episode, *Kniazhna Meri*. But it is not confined to analysis: it contains some of the finest dramatic narrative passages in literature. *Taman'* and *Fatalist* are first-person narrative, although Pechorin himself does not really play the principal role; he is as much observer as protagonist, and as observer is free to analyze and philosophize.

Finally, an inconsistency has been noted in *Fatalist*. On his way home Vulich is killed by a drunken Cossack, and a brief exchange between victim and killer is reported. But there was no one on hand to overhear the words exchanged! How was Pechorin able to report them in his

²⁹ Vinogradov, 57-77. Also Robin Aizlewood, "Geroi nashego vremeni as Emblematic Prose Text," *From Pushkin to Palisandria* (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 39-51.

journal? But how, one might ask, was the narrator of *Evgenii Onegin*, a friend of the hero's, able to report the details of Tatiana's dream?³⁰

A word of caution is in order. The scholar may be tempted to overplay his hand in sleuthing his way through the polyphonic maze. He should remind himself that while some detective work has a place, in general the author will have taken care to call the reader's attention to what he, the author, regards as significant, and that, polyphony or no polyphony, "in literary criticism the most significant relationship is that between the reader and the data of the text."³¹

We claimed above two advantages gained by the replacement of the omniscient author by three narrators. The first has been discussed at some length. The second consists in the fact that the personalities of the three narrators and the contexts in which they narrate are factors favoring a low-key, workaday, non-rhetorical prose style, in thrall to no literary tradition. Thus, Maksim Maksimych we know for a straightforward, not highly educated frontier officer, quite without literary pretensions, whose narrative is presented orally and punctuated by pieces of simple dialog. The traveling officer is educated and sophisticated, well read and a writer of poetry, but he insists that he is writing travel notes ("*putevye zapiski*"), not a story ("*ne povest*"), a position which frees him from obligations to any but the simplest of literary traditions, allowing him to be natural and simple in style. And Pechorin, also educated, sophisticated, well read, claims to be writing his diary, a private document, "for myself" ("*dlia sebja*"), a circumstance which has the effect of absolving his narrative also of any but the most minimal tributes to literary convention. The writer is never free of literary tradition. But certain literary traditions themselves mandate everyday simplicity and the illusion of harboring no "literary" afterthoughts.

At the same time, since the unnamed traveling officer and Pechorin are both gifted writers, it is perfectly appropriate for them on occasion to insert a simile or negligently let fall a literary allusion, without the tortured excessives of *Vadim*; nor is there anything incongruous about their occasional use of poetic language to describe nature's beauty nor even about the traveling officer's translating Kazbich's song into verse: "I ask the reader's forgiveness for having rendered in verse Kazbich's song, which of course was conveyed to me in prose; but habit is second nature"(214). And if at times Maksim Maksimych writes "above his station," we ascribe this to the editing of the traveling officer. What the author gains therefore from his three narrators and the conditions under which they narrate are everyday stylistic simplicity and a flexibility which enables at least two of the three narrators to venture at will and for short periods into "literary" waters. Maksim Maksimych is normally less articulate than his fellow narrators when it comes to expressing lofty thoughts. But the author has made sure that the reader is aware that he harbors such thoughts. Thus, the traveling officer asks: "You, I imagine, have become used to these magnificent pictures [of nature]?" i.e., meaning unresponsive to their beauty. Maksim Maksimych agrees, but a few lines later interrupts himself to exclaim: "'Look,' he added, pointing toward the east, 'what a country!' And it was true, I scarcely expect to see another such panorama."

The rhetoric which was so objectionably obtrusive in the mouth of *Vadim* and others is mercifully toned down in *Geroi nashego vremeni*. Grushnitskii is compulsively given to rhetoric, but here it characterizes him in a negative way, exposing his affectedly romantic manner. On June 3 in Piatigorsk, walking with Princess Mary, Pechorin is himself guilty of rhetoric. But

³⁰ For these points relating to Pechorin's journal see Eikhenbaum 1924, 152-53; also Helena Goscilo, "From Dissolution to Synthesis: The Use of Genre in Lermontov's Prose," Ph.D diss., Indiana University, 1976, 262.

³¹ C. J. G. Turner, *Pechorin: An Essay on Lermontov's A Hero of Our Time* (Birmingham: Birmingham Slavonic Monographs, No. 5), 1.

having unloaded on the Princess the mournful tale of his childhood, he congratulates himself with the thought: "Pity (*"sostradanie"*), a feeling to which women so easily yield, had inserted its claws into her inexperienced heart." This is rhetoric used as a ploy in the game of seduction. Curiously, since *Vadim* is seen as a naive rather than a sophisticated work, in Chapter V in that novel something similar occurs. Vadim makes a speech to Ol'ga, and the narrator comments: "Such speeches sometimes touch a woman's heart." The Pechorin speech of June 3 is almost word for word lifted from *Dva brata*, Act II. Pechorin also sails dangerously close to the wind in *Bela* when, in reply to Maksim Maksimovich's pleading, he tries to explain his inability to treat Bela with more warmth and attention. But all in all, rhetorical declamation plays a mercifully smaller part in *Geroi nashego vremeni* than it did in *Vadim*.

Gone too are the elaborately formal instructions and questions addressed to the reader and noted in our discussion of *Vadim*: "Picture to yourself...;" "But let us return to our story and hasten to finish the chapter...;" "But what meanwhile was Vadim doing?" Only the unnamed traveling officer addresses the reader. And he never uses the word *reader* (*chitatel'*). His manner approximates that of an informal narrator addressing at most four or five listeners: "But perhaps you wish to know the ending of the Bela story? First, I'm not writing a travel story, but notes...;" "However, these are my own comments based on my own observations, and I don't at all wish to oblige you to believe in them blindly... you may have noticed this strange phenomenon in some people? It's a sign of"

Also missing from the pages of *A Hero of Our Time* is all trace of Gogol's stylistic influence. It must be clear from our lengthy discussion of this problem in *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* that Gogol's stylistic qualities are ill-suited to carry forward a plot which rests on adventure and romance, takes seriously its characters, and leans toward both psychological analysis and philosophical inquiry. To this we may add that the styles and manners of the three narrators effectively block all possibility of Gogol's entry into the narrative.

Maxim-like generalizations about life and human nature were in *Vadim* voiced by the narrator and occasionally by Vadim. In *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* they were, often in Gogol's manner, again voiced by the narrator, occasionally by Pechorin. In *Geroi nashego vremeni* they are expressed by the individual narrators, most often, but not exclusively, by Pechorin in his diary. The somewhat inarticulate Maksim Maksimych is less given to generalization than the other two narrators. His forte is to come across with an occasional shrewd observation on a specific issue. He tells of himself and Pechorin boar-hunting. They come up empty, and Maksim Maksimych wants to give up. But Pechorin doesn't want to go back without making a kill: "That's the sort of person he was: whatever he took a fancy to, he expected to get it." And then, unexpectedly: "Obviously his mother spoiled him when he was a child."(233)

The manner in which strong emotion is expressed physically also improves. The hyperbole of *Vadim* was discussed above. This has in the present novel been eliminated or greatly reduced, and the characters react to severe emotional strain more normally, most often by weeping. Thus Kazbich, when his horse is stolen, "howled, broke his rifle over the rock, fell to the ground, and wept like a child." Pechorin sits for hours by the side of the dying Bela. When she dies, he brushes off Maksim Maksimych's attempt to talk to him by bursting into laughter, to Maksim Maksimych's horror, but he then falls ill for a long time and loses weight. When Pechorin learns that Vera has left, he rushes out on to the porch "like a madman." After then riding his horse to death, he tries to walk, but his legs give way from exhaustion (he has had a sleepless night and fought a duel), he falls on the wet grass and starts to weep, to his own great shame. Finally, as Grushnitskii starts to take aim at Pechorin's forehead, "an inexplicable fury raged in my heart." But there is no physical accompaniment to this powerful fury. Obviously, the dueling code and

the need to concentrate imposed restraint. But so, in general, did Pechorin's entire personality. Vadim, by contrast, knew no such self-restraint. But even more important, Lermontov had learned a great deal about writing in the five or so years between the two novels.

We have seen how the presence of three narrators gives Lermontov the advantages of stylistic simplicity and stylistic flexibility, which he puts to excellent use. At the same time elimination of the omniscient narrator does create certain problems which are minor but deserve mention. The omniscient author knows, unquestioned and unchallenged, everything or as much as, for narrative purposes, he wishes to know; the character-narrator's knowledge is limited and has to be justified. Was he there when it happened? Who told him? How did he find out? V. Nabokov has pointed out that for the plot of *Geroi nashego vremeni* to move smoothly forward required an improbably high number of overhearings and other coincidences to make it possible for essential pieces of information to be conveyed to the protagonist-narrator.³² Thus, in *Bela*, Maksim Maksimych witnesses and overhears an exchange between Pechorin and Bela because "I was going past and looked in at her window: Bela was sitting..."(220) Shortly thereafter, he witnesses a scene through a crack in the door. (221) In *Taman'*, Pechorin, who has, admittedly, his fair share of curiosity, follows the blind boy down to the shore (i.e., Pechorin is himself actively seeking information) and overhears his conversation with the water-nymph: "The wind at times carried their conversation to me..." And on the following night, Pechorin deliberately watches and overhears the final scene when Ianko and the girl depart, leaving the blind boy weeping on the shore. In *Kniazhna Meri*, the overhearing increases in frequency and importance. There is a plot against Pechorin, and Pechorin is the narrator: only through overhearing can he become aware and be able to convey to his diary that a plot is under way: "I dismounted and climbed up to the window: a loosely closed shutter made it possible for me to see the celebrants and to hear what they said. They were talking about me..." Four days later, June 16, what Pechorin overhears actually triggers the duel: "For the second time fate gave me the opportunity to overhear a conversation, a conversation which was to decide his destiny." Pechorin must overhear in order to remain apprised of how his adversaries are plotting to cheat on him: "I stopped a minute in the hallway to take off my galoshes. They were making a lot of noise and arguing..." That was Werner, Pechorin's second, who is reporting what he's overheard to Pechorin, also on June 16.

Another minor problem the omniscient narrator is spared is that of repeating dialog with accuracy. Without the omniscient narrator, protagonists must have excellent memories. Thus, Maksim Maksimych, whose understanding of Pechorin's intellectual and emotional make-up is very incomplete, nevertheless seems to recall Pechorin's long near-rhetorical explanation of his inability to go on loving Bela: "He went on talking for a long time, and his words etched themselves deep in my memory, for this was the first time I'd heard such things from a 25-year-old and God grant it will be the last..." In *Taman'* Pechorin recalls accurately all 20 lines of a song sung by the water-nymph.

But overhearing and feats of memory are minor matters. In all these cases the momentum of a suspenseful narrative carries the absorbed reader buoyantly and obliviously through; it is only later, when he turns analyst, that he begins to wonder whether these aids-to-knowledge devices do not strain the bounds of probability.

Perhaps one other disadvantage should be mentioned. Again it is connected with the lack of an omniscient narrator. It concerns Pechorin's diary. In the diary he reports a number of conversations with various protagonists. Without such reports the plot could not be advanced. But should he be reporting the "clever" exchanges between himself and Werner? Werner plays a use-

³² Vladimir Nabokov, *A Hero of Our Time* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958), X-XII.

ful role as a confidant. He alone in the *Kniazhna Meri* episode (Vera partly excepted) is capable of understanding Pechorin. The “clever” exchanges would be fine if only they could be reported by a third party. But that Pechorin himself takes the trouble to record them in a diary he is allegedly writing for himself alone (*Predislovie*) bespeaks a not altogether laudable tendency to congratulate oneself on the bon mot. But that may be an ungracious quibble.

In pointing out above the restrained style that characterizes so much of *Geroi nashego vremeni*, I have emphasized the importance of genre: the travel note, the oral report, the diary. No less significant are the characters of the different narrators, which also contribute to a restrained style. The unnamed traveling officer is by nature analytical and not close enough to the protagonists to wax overly emotional. Maksim Maksimych is by education, service, and personality not given to stylistic fireworks. And Pechorin is totally opposed to wearing his heart on his sleeve in the manner affected by Grushnitskii; self-restraint and the silently stiff upper-lip are key canons of his behavioral code. The traveling officer explains this to Maksim Maksimych: “Disillusionment, like all fashions, started in the upper layers of society, then descended to the lower... and today those who most of all suffer from *ennui* try to conceal their misfortune as though it were a vice” (232). Thus, in all three narrators character plays a role in stylistics.

But character should be discussed also without reference to style, as one of the components in the overall design of the novel. As noted above, the main focus is on Pechorin. What do we know of him? We know what has already been stated: that he prefers to conceal his deeper emotions rather than lay them bare to the world. We know that he is well liked by women and that he is a skillful wooer; his pursuit of Princess Mary, whom he outmaneuvers at every point, is a textbook example of the Ovidian art of love. But what of his perception of himself in the larger context of life? Pechorin feels that he has enormous powers and abilities and that somewhere, undiscovered, is a lofty destiny which he is condemned never to fulfill.

This brings us to a point commonly emphasized in socioliterary discussion of Pechorin. Was there a fulfillable destiny available to a person of Pechorin’s abilities? What worthwhile goal could he possibly set himself in the repressive atmosphere of post-Decembrist Nicolaevan Russia? And therefore should not Pechorin himself be seen as a victim of social conditions? Pechorin’s defense can be constructed along these lines. And along with the absence of worthy objectives goes the often flawed nature of relations between men and women of his class. Does this not also help to mitigate his conduct and explain his pursuit of trivial and unworthy goals such as the discomforting of Grushnitskii or the cynical arousing of Princess Mary’s love?

It is easy enough to see Pechorin as a more or less typical victim of the Romantic age. His inability to forget the past, his sense of banishment from some Eden, his failure to find in love a solution to emotional hurt, his view of a love relationship as some sort of power struggle between adversaries: these aspects of his spiritual sickness fit adequately the general pattern of Romantic Weltschmerz. And his substitution of trivial for lofty goals can be seen, as Lermontov’s contemporaries Belinskii and Herzen saw it, as a form of protest against unacceptable social conditions and attitudes. Thus, according to Pechorin’s June 3 diary entry, a genius tied to his bureaucratic desk will die or go mad, or a powerful man leading a sedentary life will die of an apoplectic fit. All this and more besides can be said in vindication of Pechorin.

Lermontov himself never suggested that Pechorin was blameless. But it does bring us to a point which is insufficiently made by commentators, a point which has to be seen as central to Lermontov’s Weltanschauung. It may be that Pechorin’s greatest emotional inadequacy lies not in his lack of success in the great ventures and the great love affairs, or certainly not in those alone, but in his callousness, his lack of the milk of human kindness in his dealing with those to-

wards whom he has no justification for feeling resentment or hostility. How do we condone his coldness toward Maksim Maksimych or his pointlessly riding his horse to death?

Leaving for the moment this problem, what, if anything, is our author is trying to tell us about a whole class of people to whom Nature has denied advantages which many take for granted? The most obvious outward and visible sign of such penalization is crippling. One thinks immediately of the blind boy in *Taman*, perhaps not of Werner (though it's interesting that Lermontov gave him one leg shorter than the other), and (notwithstanding the claims of the poetics of the deformed) certainly of Vadim in the novel by that name. But to belong to this class of the disadvantaged, a person does not actually need to have a physical defect. All that is needed is that the person is less than normally capable of inspiring love. For example, Maksim Maksimych tells of a scene between Bela and Pechorin: "But scarcely had he reached the door when she leapt up, burst into sobs, and flung herself on his neck.... 'Yes, I confess,' he went on after a moment, tugging at his moustache, 'I felt chagrined that no woman had ever loved me in that way.'" Later, when Bela is dying: "I admit too that what makes me sad is that before her death she never once so much as thought of me." Once more, five years later in Vladykavkaz, Maksim Maksimych finds himself slighted through the lack of warmth of someone on whom he has bestowed affection, Pechorin. And, incidentally, the narrator makes himself an accessory to Pechorin's cold-heartedness by his disparaging remarks at the expense of the discomforted Maksim Maksimych. In his last prose piece, *Shtoss*, Lugin, the wealthy painter and hero, will be seen to be suffering, if not from the total deprivation of a Maksim Maksimych, at least from his own feeling of being underprivileged. "...I will tell you frankly," he says in Chapter I to the young woman, Minskaia, "that no woman can love me.' 'What about that Italian countess, what's her name, who followed you from Naples to Munich?' '.... If I have succeeded in arousing some feeling in some women, then only at the expense of incredible labor and sacrifice....' 'What nonsense,' said Minskaia, but then, glancing over him rapidly, she involuntarily agreed with him. Lugin's appearance was indeed in no way attractive." The underprivileged in Lermontov are rejected or fear rejection. Their physical defects or unprepossessing appearance are not perhaps in themselves misfortunes, but they are responsible for the misfortune of not being loved and of the crippling effect that must have on the mind. For example, the blind boy in *Taman* does not appear crushed by his blindness. He copes with it very well. What is for him crushing is that Ianko and the girl can unhesitatingly leave him behind: "'What do I need you for?' was the answer." And Pechorin, whose callousness we mentioned above, and who at the outset of the story had confessed to an aversion for cripples, now comments: "I felt sad. Why had fate had to cast me into a peaceful group of *honest* smugglers?" For it was Pechorin's coming that had caused Ianko and the girl to flee, and the blind boy to be abandoned. In *Vadim*, as we saw, the Byronic hero was crippled physically and morally. But even for him there is compassion. Why did Nature have to deal him so lean a hand? That Pechorin, in *Geroi nashego vremeni*, was not himself victimized by Nature in this way offers something of an explanation. In his *Kniazhna Meri* diary, under June 3, Pechorin describes an encounter with Princess Mary: "... an electric spark ran from my hand to hers; it is in this way that almost all passions begin, and we frequently deceive ourselves if we think that a woman loves us for our physical or moral qualities; of course these prepare the ground, predispose her heart to receive the sacred fire — but it is the first touch that decides the matter."

Related to my observations on those blessed and not blessed by Nature and to Pechorin's June 3 entry cited in the preceding paragraph is Lermontov's understanding of life as physically determined, his belief that outward appearance reflects inner qualities or, more accurately, inner qualities are a reflection of outward appearance. This goes back to *Vadim* and is not unique to Lermontov. But it is not the less significant for not being unique. It means that you have to go

with what you have been given, given by some power insufficiently attentive to your welfare and unconcerned by considerations of fairness.

This “physical” view is well illustrated in the impression Pechorin makes on the unnamed traveling officer in Vladykavkaz:

He was of medium height; his well-proportioned, lightly built torso and broad shoulders offered proof of a strong constitution capable of withstanding all the harshnesses of a life on the move and changes of climate, and unbowed by the depravity of life in the capital or by inner turmoil.... He walked in a relaxed, lazy manner, but I noticed that he didn't move his arms when he walked — a sure sign of a degree of secretiveness in the character. However, these are my own comments based on my own observations, and I don't at all wish to oblige you to believe in them blindly.... There was a childish quality in his smile.... In spite of the light color of his hair, his moustache and eyebrows were black — a sign of breeding in a person, just as a black mane and tail indicate breeding in a white horse.... They [his eyes] did not smile when he smiled! You may have noticed this strange phenomenon in some people? It's a sign of either an ill-disposed nature or a permanent deeply felt sorrow.... I'll mention in conclusion that he was in general not at all bad looking and possessed one of those original physiognomies which are particularly well liked by women in society.

Noteworthy in the description, here given in incomplete form, is the frequent use of such words as *sign (priznak)* or *reflection (otrazhenie)*; the outward appearance reveals the inner character.

Breeding in a person and breeding in a horse are also linked. It is the only occasion in the novel on which the human side of the equation is male: the women are frequently compared to horses. The girl in *Taman'* “had a lot of breeding.... breeding in women as in horses is very important.” In *Kniazhna Meri* the unperceptive and artificial Grushnitskii objects indignantly to Pechorin's compliments about Princess Mary: “You're speaking about an attractive woman as though she were an English horse.” And in *Bela Maksim Maksimych* reports that Kazbich's horse “had eyes as beautiful as Bela's.” Women and horses may be bracketed together because the Caucasus sets a high value on horses. But in the context of Lermontov's *Weltanschauung*, that is not all. The human being bracketed with the horse reinforces the primacy of the physical.

There is an interesting difference between the Pechorin of *Geroi nashego vremeni* and the other “autobiographically founded” heroes of his prose works. Vadim is a cripple. Pechorin in *Kniaginia Ligovskaia* is not good looking. Nor is Lugin in *Shtoss*. Only in *Geroi nashego vremeni* has the hero been permitted good looks.

What I have been discussing, Lermontov's distressing perception of himself and his role in life, does not perhaps lend itself to clearly defined patterns of demonstrably logical interpretation. But it brings us far closer than talk of superfluous men, political reaction, and supermen to the core of what Lermontov was about as man and writer.

A few remarks need to be made about the roles of Grushnitskii and Werner. Obviously Grushnitskii is an essential part of the story. If there is to be a duel, Pechorin needs an opponent. But Grushnitskii has an additional function. As others have noted, Grushnitskii acts as a sort of protection for Pechorin. In Grushnitskii almost everything Pechorin stands for is reproduced in an exaggerated, hollow caricature. Grushnitskii is a *poseur*, without inner substance, so that the reader inclined to criticize Pechorin's position will deflect his critical barbs from Pechorin to Grushnitskii. Grushnitskii's empty play-acting and pseudoromanticism expose him to our ridicule and impatience; we thus have no difficulty in believing that Pechorin is the real thing, the genuine article, the authentic Romantic hero, who must command at least our respect.

On one occasion Lermontov may seem guilty of a gaffe in allowing both Pechorin and Grushnitskii to make use of the self-same tired expression. Pechorin's May diary entry tells us that the wives of the local administrators are better disposed to him and his like than the wives of local landowners, for the former have in the Caucasus learnt to "recognize beneath the regimental button an ardent heart and beneath a white service cap a cultured mind." Only four pages later, under the same dateline, Grushnitskii says of the "proud aristocracy:" "And what do they care if there is an intellect beneath a regimental service cap and a heart underneath a thick greatcoat?" But a moment's reflection persuades us that whereas Pechorin is employing a somewhat pompous Piatigorsk cliché with a touch of light irony, Grushnitskii is putting it to pseudoromantic effect in a high-flown rhetorical passage castigating humanity. Two days later (May 13) Pechorin again uses with humorous detachment the image of the soldier's greatcoat and beneath it a passionate and noble heart to lecture Grushnitskii on the vagaries of a woman's heart.³³

Werner too plays a role in the plot as Pechorin's second. He is also Pechorin's confidant, the only one perhaps capable of understanding him. He, too, serves to enhance Pechorin's stature. For in spite of his cynicism and his awareness of Grushnitskii's duplicity, Werner is so horrified by the outcome of the duel that he blames Pechorin and refuses to shake his hand. By the time he has changed his mind, Pechorin has decided to snub Werner: "I remained cold as stone — and he left." Werner has proved himself inconsistent, a weakling who turned back. He provides a contrast to Pechorin's ability to carry through to the end and reinforces Pechorin's strength.

Geroi nashego vremeni is Lermontov's most impressive prose work. And by any standards it must be reckoned a top-flight novel, first of all for the story it tells. Scholarly examinations of novels sometimes tend to downplay the story or plot, but at their peril and at the peril of the well-being of the novel. The story is still the *sine qua non*, the bottom line. Without an interesting story, all the psychological, philosophical, and sociological insights go for naught. And Lermontov's episodes here are all excellent in narrative line, suspense, and their ability to move the reader. *Bela* is not merely a study of Pechorin's Weltschmerz. It is an exciting tale of theft, abduction, wooing, abandonment, and killing. *Maksim Maksimych* moves the reader in a totally different but effective way. *Taman'* spins a fine web of mystery, violence and abandonment. *Fatalist* is filled with excitement and suspense. And *Kniazhna Meri* is technically a masterpiece of plot handling in the way it brings to a head three interwoven narrative strands.

Second, *Geroi nashego vremeni* is impressive for its psychological insights, for the verisimilitude of the picture it paints of the "hero," seen from the untutored viewpoint of a Maksim Maksimych, to some extent through the eyes of the unknown officer, and through the self-analysis provided by Pechorin's diary. And, as an essential component of this realistic examination, the novel is impressive for the manner in which it is structured.

For all these virtues it must be conceded that in one important respect *Geroi nashego vremeni* is a flawed novel. The flaw results primarily from the inadequacy of the hero. We come back to much the same dilemma we met with in *Maskarad*. Are we asking too much? Is it not true that Lermontov himself describes his hero as "a portrait composed of the vices of our generation?" But that does not necessarily absolve his novel from treating the hero with so high a degree of seriousness. It is how the reader is made to feel about Pechorin, not the subsequent disclaimers made by the author (in his second-edition forward), that must be addressed. And, criticisms of Pechorin notwithstanding, there is throughout the novel the attempt to suggest, in keeping with the traditional Romantic-Byronic approach, that there is something awe-inspiring in

³³ *Ak. nauk*, VI, 261, 265, 277. Noted by Eikhenbaum 1924, 155.

Pechorin. However, reflection will suggest to the reader that Pechorin is too lightweight to be accorded that amount of serious and unsmiling attention.

It must of course be recognized that, thanks to an altogether different cultural climate, Pechorin was better calculated to command respect in 1840 than 150 years later. Indeed, a feeling for historical perspective must always incline to flexibility and soften harshness of judgment. And nevertheless, to go to take the waters and to spend all one's time outmaneuvering Grushnitskii and Princess Mary seems, not morally reprehensible, but trivial for someone of Pechorin's alleged stature. Belinskii, Herzen, and Ogarev would have agreed with this. But they would have added that this was exactly the point: reactionary Russia forced trivial activities, *faute de mieux*, on high-caliber individuals. Sociologically they are correct. But this does not invalidate strictures based on literary-esthetic criteria. We suggested above that Pechorin was less to blame for the failure of his really significant relationships (Vera, Princess Mary, Bela) than for his callousness toward such unfortunates as Maksim Maksimych. But it must be recognized that the two are basically all of a piece: he actually loves absolutely no one, including his women. But his women offer him satisfactions that obviously neither Maksim Maksimych, nor the blind boy, nor the horse he rides to death can be expected to offer. They offer feminine beauty, sex appeal and sex, emotional stimulus, an opportunity for conquest. But once Pechorin has tasted these satisfactions, he is inevitably bored and bereft. Flaws notwithstanding, the novel is redeemed by Lermontov's narrative skills and the ingenuity, resourcefulness and courage displayed by Pechorin at various critical moments. Worthy goals or not, the outmaneuvering and killing of Grushnitskii, the captivity of Princess Mary, the abduction of Bela, the dramatic suspensefulness of *Taman'* and *Fatalist* are admirably related; they are superb examples of the yarnspinner's art.

Another component in the reader's reception of *Geroi nashego vremeni* is the issue, discussed above, of those not blessed by nature. There is here an important and, as it were subterranean, theme, one which seems to be organically linked with the author's Weltanschauung. And the reader cannot but wish that it could have been, not resolved, but more fully aired. The fact that it runs through Lermontov's prose from his earliest work *Vadim* to his last work *Shtoss* is sufficient indication of its importance. And the fact that it looms large in *Shtoss* leads one to speculate that Lermontov would eventually, had he lived, have had to come to terms with this issue and find a way to give it its full artistic due.

All in all, *Geroi nashego vremeni* is a remarkable achievement. It not only represents a very significant step forward in Lermontov's prose. Stylistically and psychologically it points a way for Russian prose. And it casts an altogether more realistic light on the exotic Caucasus than anything in Russian writing that had gone before, including (as Belinskii rightly insisted) Marlinkskii. It is in its way a nearly perfect novel, a rare phenomenon. Finally, it continues to be read and reread by readers of all sorts: old and young, sophisticated and naive, disillusioned and optimistic. And a book's readability is the supreme test, the alpha and omega.

6

Kavkazets was probably written in 1841. It was intended for a serial publication known as *Nashi, spisannye s natyry russkimi*, i.e., collections of more or less documentary sketches of Russians by Russians. In the first issue, 1841, announcing the scope and contents of future issues, *Kavkazets* is listed with twenty-one other sketches, none of which are given with author's names. In the sixth issue, on the cover, both article and author are given. But Lermontov's sketch was not approved by the censor and was not published till 1929 (*Minuvshie dni*, No. 4, 1929). The five-page sketch describes a type of Russian officer, a breed apart, whose active life is spent in

the Caucasus, mostly by the frontier, engaged in intermittent fighting against the mountain peoples. The reader is inevitably reminded of Maksim Maksimych, who clearly belongs to this type:

The Caucasian is half-Russian, half-Asiatic; the preference for eastern ways is dominant, but he is ashamed of this when in the presence of outsiders, i.e., people who have traveled in from Russia. He is usually between 30 and 45 years old. His face is tanned and somewhat pockmarked. He is either a staff-captain or a major.

The writer goes on to describe the Caucasian officer's evolution from wildly enthusiastic and recklessly brave new arrival from the cadet school to experienced, "coldly brave," rather lonely and embittered old Caucasian hand. The Cossack women don't really attract him. He had once thought of keeping a captive Circassian woman. Now his consuming passion is for all things relating to the simple way of life of the Circassians: their mores, traditions, legends, folk literature, folk heroes. He rarely marries. If he does he will try to obtain garrison duty and live out his time in some fortress where his wife "preserves him from a habit that is fatal to the Russian."

Kavkazets is an early example of what is called the "physiological sketch," a sort of brief character drawing of a type which became very popular with the "natural school" in the 1840's. Scholars have noted elements of this type of writing in Lermontov's earlier works, both prose and verse: *Sashka*, *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*, *Tambovskaia Kaznacheisha* and *Geroi nashego vremeni*. This is an excellent example of that clean-cut, clear, succinct, precise prose style which was increasingly in evidence in Lermontov's later writing.

7

Lermontov's last prose work is an unfinished story, now entitled *Shtoss*. It was earlier known as *A Fragment* or *Fragment of an Unfinished Tale* (*Otryvok iz nachatoi povesti*), followed by the opening sentence: "At Count V....'s home there was a musical soiree."

Shtoss was written between February and the first half of April, 1841, most probably in late February or early March, during Lermontov's last stay in Petersburg, before he was sent on his final, fateful journey to the Caucasus. It was first published in *Vchera i segodnia* in 1845.³⁴

Lermontov's friend, the poetess Rostopchina recalls in her memoirs:

"On one occasion he [Lermontov] announced that he would read us a new novel entitled *Shtoss*, which he reckoned would need at least four hours. He insisted that we should meet early in the evening and that the door should be closed to keep away outsiders. All these conditions were met, and his select audience of about thirty people duly assembled. Finally enter Lermontov with an enormous notebook under his arm, a lamp was brought, the doors closed, and the reading began. It was all over in a quarter of an hour. The incorrigible prankster had lured us in with the first chapter of some terrible story which he'd started only the day before; he'd written only about twenty pages, and the remaining pages of the notebook were blank. That's as far as the novel went, and it never was finished." The first reading, described by Rostopchina is believed to have taken place in the Karamzin home.³⁵

Shtoss, like *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*, is set in Petersburg. A musical soiree at the house of Count V . . . is in progress. A young woman leaves the room and goes into an adjoining room

³⁴ Кн. 1, 71-87.

³⁵ *Zapiska o Lermontove, Zapiski Ekateriny Sushkovoï* (L.: Academia, 1928), 351-52.

where she talks with the young artist, Lugin, who has returned to Petersburg from Italy two months earlier. Lugin is ailing from some sort of disenchantment with life which is identified with spleen (*splin*) or hypochondria (*ipokhondriia*), perhaps best translated *melancholia*. For two weeks he has been seeing human heads as yellow, and they sometimes look like lemons. He is furthermore convinced that no woman can spontaneously love him, which makes him both hostile to women and at the same time a believer in ideal love. Worse still, he believes he is going mad because someone seems to be constantly whispering a Petersburg address in his ear. The young woman, genuinely concerned for his well-being, advises him to go to the address he hears whispered in order to lay this thing to rest.

Lugin takes her advice. The apartment has been empty for some time; those previously planning to occupy it had for one reason or another never succeeded in carrying out their intention. The janitor shows Lugin the rooms, which somehow appeal to him. He rents the place and makes a down payment. And to make sure that he succeeds in moving in where his predecessors have failed, he has his things brought over from his hotel that very day.

Just as he had decided to take the place he had noticed on the wall a portrait of a man about 40 years old. It is poorly painted. But in the facial expression there is some indefinable enigmatic quality, "an awesome vitality" ("*takaia strashnaia zhizn'*"), an expression which changes between derisive, sad, evil, and tender-hearted.

During his second night of occupancy Lugin is mysteriously visited in his room by an old man who, he realizes, resembles the portrait. They play *Shtoss*, the old man dealing the bank, and Lugin choosing a card he hopes will beat the bank.³⁶ Lugin loses and proceeds to lose night after night. He also, through a confusion in sounds, believes that the old man's name is Shtoss, which is disturbing: not only is that the game they are playing, it is also the name in the address which had been constantly whispered in Lugin's ear. Against Lugin's money, the old man has been wagering a beautiful woman, apparently his daughter, who always accompanies him. The thought of winning her, his ideal love as she has now become, obsesses Lugin completely. He is becoming increasingly unstrung. His considerable assets are now dwindling. He makes a decision.

Here the manuscript breaks off, and we never learn what Lugin has decided. Lermontov did make some notes after the reading reported by Rostopchina, which suggests he planned to continue the story. The notes, while ambiguous, seem to indicate a tragic end for Lugin.³⁷

Unfinished though it is, for the student of Lermontov *Shtoss* has points of considerable interest. Noteworthy is the lean, laconic style which characterizes much of the narrative. An excellent example of this is provided by the first paragraph:

There was a musical soiree at the home of Count V.... The top-ranked performers of the capital had exploited their artistic skills to gain access to an aristocratic home. Among the guests could be seen a number of men of letters and scholars; two or three fashionable beauties; some unmarried girls and old ladies, and one guard's officer. There were perhaps ten would-be social lions posed around the doors of the second drawing room and by the fireplace; everything was proceeding normally; the atmosphere was neither one of boredom nor of good cheer.

³⁶ For an explanation of this simple gambling game, which gives banker and punter equal chances, see Vladimir Nabokov, *Eugene Onegin* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975) II, 260.

³⁷ *Ak. nauk*, VI, 623, 669.

The same rather clipped, understated style is maintained fairly consistently throughout the three chapters of the story. Only occasionally does one sense a somewhat different stylistic element which dwells at greater length on description. For example, Chapter II opens as follows:

A damp November morning hung over Petersburg. The wet snow fell in flakes, the houses seemed dirty and dark, the faces of the passers-by green; the drivers at their cabstands dozed beneath the faded red-brown traveling rugs of their sleds; the wet long coats of their poor nags were done up into small curls; and the fog imbued distant objects with a gray-blue color.

This description has been characterized as realistic. This is only partly true. Note the self-evident quality of the colors (green, red-brown, gray-blue, and in the following sentence, green). Gogol is here. This may be seen from the false generalization as the narrator continues using the type of device already noted above for *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*:

Sometimes there could be heard noise and laughter in a basement beer joint as some drunken hero in a green coarse-wool overcoat and oilskin cap was thrown out (II).

as though green coarse-wool overcoats and oilskin caps were mandatory clothing for drunken heroes being thrown out of beer joints. It is worth noting that in *Shtoss* the occasional use of Gogol stylistics is relatively unobtrusive and does not have the effect of appreciably slowing down the narrative or of diverting the reader's attention from it.

Reminiscent of other writers as well, but here most probably Gogol, is the oafish discourtesy of a cab driver whom Lugin seeks to question and the initially impolite tone of the janitor. Here, as in *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*, the ominous portrait is a reminder of Gogol's *Portret*.

But overall the narrative is characterized by simplicity, straightforwardness, and the rapid progress from event to event that we associate with Pushkin's *Povesti Belkina* or with Lermontov's own *Ja khochu rasskat' vam* ("I want to tell you"), *Ashik-kerib*, or *Kavkazets*.

One point which is important for our understanding of Lermontov's work and development is the author's attitude to his hero. Does Lermontov, maintaining his distance, treat Lugin with irony? Or does he feel close, sympathetic, even in some measure identify with Lugin?

Prerevolutionary scholars generally viewed of *Shtoss* as a romantic work. This left them to explain why it came so late in Lermontov's career, when he was allegedly moving away from romanticism. Then, in 1947, E. E. Naidich advanced the thesis that *Shtoss* was in effect a realist, anti-romantic work. He was followed by others: *Shtoss*'s allegedly ironical treatment of Lugin was held to be an indictment of other-worldly romanticism and/or parody of the fantastic element in the works of V. F. Odoevskii, Zhukovskii, and others.³⁸ This approach eliminated difficulties in bringing *Shtoss* into line with the generally accepted thesis of Lermontov's move away from romanticism. But a careful reading of specific passages made complete adherence to Naidich's belief in the consistently anti-romantic character of the work impossible; scholars, even those in sympathy with Naidich's position, found themselves obliged to concede exceptions and inconsistencies. A more skeptical and sophisticated view has come to prevail.

Udodov has been a leader in the move toward skepticism. Some of the main points on which his position and that of others, e.g., Vatsuro, is based follow. First is the issue of parody, related to but not identical with the romanticism-versus-realism issue. Was Lermontov parodying Odoevskii? A strong argument against such a thesis can be made on the basis of the following

³⁸ See Naidich's commentary in *M. Iu. Lermontov, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 4-x t.* (M.-L., 1947), IV, 468-70; Gershtein, 244-52.

considerations. Odoevskii's basic intellectual concern — and both authors shared an interest in the place of the fantastic in everyday life — was to insist that apparently supernatural phenomena have, on investigation, a natural, logical explanation. Lermontov's *Shtoss*, though suggesting logical explanations, tends to undercut them. For example, Lugin has been seeing faces as yellow and hearing a voice whispering a Petersburg name and address. His conversation in Chapter I with the young woman suggests that he is sick and that there must be a logical, medical explanation. But then why in Chapter II does the address turn out to be meaningful and later the name also appear to be right? Are we after all confronted with the supernatural? As Udodov points out, it would be easier to turn this around and to make a case for Odoevskii parodying Lermontov.³⁹

I stated above that the issue of parody was related to but not identical with the romanticism-versus-realism issue. It is possible to insist on logical, natural explanations of the fantastic and still be a romantic. And it is also possible to allow the reader to entertain the possibility of supernatural explanations, while narrating from a realist standpoint. But obviously, supernatural explanations lean more toward romanticism than realism.

To what extent can Odoevskii, e.g., in his 1837 story *Sil'fida (The Sylph)*, which is Naidich's example of his otherworldliness, be held to be romantically advocating the validity of otherworldly love? And to what extent can Lermontov in *Shtoss* be held to be ironizing over or ridiculing otherworldly love? The picture is far from being clear-cut. The hero of *The Sylph* is eventually cured of his otherworldly illusions. But how effective was the cure? "Subsequently, I know, my friend became a perfectly respectable person: he started a kennel for hounds and hunted, started a potash plant, put his land on the crop-rotation system, and was very successful in acquiring land in several strip-farming lawsuits; his health is excellent, his cheeks ruddy, and he has a very respectable little paunch.... There's only one thing wrong: they say that he drinks rather heavily in the company of neighbors and sometimes even without the neighbors; they also say that he gives the housemaids a very bad time. But who doesn't have some small failings? At least he is now a normal human being." And the narrator in *Shtoss* is equally ambivalent. He characterizes "a rather fantastic love for an ethereal ideal" as "the most innocent love and at the same time the most injurious for someone endowed with imagination" (Chapter III). Yet he does not appear to question Lugin's placing himself on a collision course with disaster.

Moreover, he does not witness Lugin's progress with detachment and irony. The narrator clearly feels close to his hero. There are marked similarities between Lermontov and Lugin. Lermontov, like Lugin, is relatively affluent and has few relatives. Like Lugin, Lermontov has recently returned from the South and has developed as a painter during his southern sojourn. There is in fact too much proximity between author and hero to make probable the view that Lermontov is treating Lugin with irony. A basic similarity between the two is their thirst for a deeply human, completely fulfilling love. Udodov calls attention to the presence of this theme, the completely fulfilling love, in two of Lermontov's late lyrics. In "1 - e Ianvaria," written under the impression of an 1840 New Year's Ball, Lermontov chastizes with his contempt the insincere belles of Petersburg and their artificial environment, to which he opposes his native home, Tarkhany, and:

И странная тоска теснит уж грудь мою:
Я думаю об ней, я плачу и люблю,
Люблю мечты моей созданье
С глазами, полными лазурного огня,
С улыбкой розовой, как молодого дня
За рошей первое сиянье.

³⁹ Udodov, 633-53; V. E. Vatsuro, *Posledniaia povest' Lermontova*, LIM, 223-52, esp. 248-49.

And a strange anguish compresses my heart:
I think of her, I weep and love.

I love the creature of my imagination —
With her eyes filled with azure fire;
Her smile as rosy as the first blush
Through the trees of the young new day.

The same theme of imagination and love is present in his 1841 *Iz-pod tainstvennoi kholodnoi polumaski* in which the partial concealment afforded by the mask enables the poet to fantasize the woman -- a woman he believes he already has met and will meet again as an old friend:

И создал я тогда в моем воображенье
По легким признакам красавицу мою:
И с той поры бесплотное виденье
Ношу в душе моей, ласкаю и люблю.

And I created then in my imagination,
With the aid of what I saw, my beauty:
And from that time on I carry in my heart
A fleshless vision, which I caress and love.

Lermontov's newfound strains of realism have not, in 1840 and 1841, eliminated his desire, which must be characterized as romantic, for an ideal love in a murky base world. As Udodov remarks, "woven together are elements not only of the real and the fantastic, but also of the realist and the romantic." Lermontov's growing sense of realism enables him to analyze Lugin's psychic disorder "with clinical precision"; but Lermontov is not free of Lugin's anguish.

Lugin is of course the reverse of the medal we observed in *Geroi nashego vremeni*: Pechorin makes a deliberate and effective effort to control and conceal his real feelings; Lugin courts imminent disaster with eagerness and compulsion, making no effort to stifle emotion. But if Lugin at one point breaks down and weeps, so does Pechorin. So do all Lermontov's prose heroes. *Shtoss* serves, in part, as a comment on and a key to *Geroi nashego vremeni*.

In at least one respect, physique, Lugin has more in common with the Pechorin of *Kniazia Ligovskaia* than with the later Pechorin of *Geroi nashego vremeni*. Three of Lermontov's four male prose heroes are less-than-averagely appealing physically, and in that respect they are linked, as is Vadim, to the Gothic novel tradition: to the feelings of inadequacy which Lermontov himself seems to have experienced. Only the Pechorin of *Geroi nashego vremeni* is described as positively pleasing in physical appearance, and he alone is credited with being easily appealing to women. So if *Shtoss* can be made to serve as a comment or a key to *Geroi nashego vremeni*, it is also a throwback to what preceded *Geroi nashego vremeni* and testifies to Lermontov's ongoing concern with his own physical appearance and what he felt to be his limited attractiveness to women. Needless to say, Lermontov's inadequacies and misgivings were aggravated, and this is in *Shtoss* an important factor, by his romantic insistence that love should be ideal and complete.

What is the value *Shtoss* as a work of art? Notwithstanding the ingenious, informative, and largely persuasive case made by Vatsuro that *Shtoss*, when read by Lermontov and reported by Rostopchina, was intentionally unfinished, a *mistifikatsiia*, I must fall back on the conventional wisdom of the naive reader and insist that a *mistifikatsiia* does not suffice: there is a limit to the good things that can be said about a suspense story that lacks the resolution of an ending.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Ibid., 249-52.

CHAPTER VII

Conclusion: *Weltanschauung* and Achievement

Lermontov was born with so many conflicts, both innate and rapidly created for him by circumstances beyond his control, and he lived for so short a time that it seems a miracle that he managed to achieve his place as one of Russia's greatest poets. How was it that his enormous talent, his genius, was not simply submerged and overwhelmed by the conflicts? Ironically, the most plausible answer is that without his sorrows he would never have attained the heights he did attain. Sorrows were his context and framework. His best poetic achievements are forged from pain. In verse and prose his best work can be seen as a reflection of his attempts to defy, to deny, to explain, to absorb, to vanquish, to bring to order his pain so as to render it manageable. This striving to order pain provided his creative impulse.

At the root of the pain itself lay Lermontov's powerful religious perceptions. His was not a faith to experience anguished doubts as to the existence of God. His was not a mind to torment itself with the niceties of theology. He knew there was a God. He knew there was a heaven, of which he retained an indistinct but undeniable memory. But, with all that so, why then had God wrought so ill? Why had he created so imperfect a world?¹

The source of Lermontov's pain lay in what he saw as the fundamental cosmological opposition between heaven and earth.² In the 1831 poem *Angel*, we recall (I,4), "the wearisome songs of the earth could not replace the heavenly sounds" of the angel's song, which still lingered in the infant's soul. Heaven is radiant, immutable, timeless, remote; earth is "wearisome." It is also the stage for man's trivial, brief, and too often contemptible activities.

How can man regain a view of heaven? How can he recapture the sounds of the angel's song? The one bridge between Heaven and Earth is nature. Nature is seen as constituting a part of God on earth, a part of God's music of the spheres, in tune with a higher harmony which man, alas, alone disrupts. In *Angel*, as the angel flew across the sky, "the moon and the stars and the clouds all gave ear to his sacred song." But man is banished from the chorus of heaven, from the Garden of Eden. Only at rare moments can man, through Nature, experience God; thus in his 1837 "When the yellowing grainfield billows" (*Kogda volnuetsia...*), the poet, thanks to Nature, "can fathom happiness on earth, and in the heavens I can see God..." (II,6).

But such rare moments are not enough to offset the sense of Paradise Lost and the accompanying hurt and anger.³

2

Lermontov's writings were in general critical of life and of God. Not surprisingly therefore, he himself came under criticism. Apollon Grigor'ev asked disparagingly what great word

¹ P. Bitsilli, *Etudy o russkoi poezii* (Prague, 1926), 235-36.

² I. B. Rodnianskaia, "Zemlia i nebo," listed under "Motivy," *L. E.* 302-4; P. N. Sakulin, "Zemlia i nebo v poezii Lermontova," *Venok* (M.-Petrograd, 1914), 1-55; S. V. Shuvalov, "Religiia Lermontova," *Venok*, 135-64, esp. 137-43.

³ L. Semenov, "Blagotvornoe vozdeistvie prirody na miatezhnuiu dushu cheloveka," *Lermontov i Lev Tolstoi* (M., 1914), 48-53.

Lermontov had bequeathed to mankind.⁴ Vladimir Solov'ev castigated his spiritual pride.⁵ On the other side of the ledger he received disproportionate praise as a rebel. The Symbolist poet, prose writer, and critic, D. S. Merezhkovskii, greatly approved of what he saw as a uniquely unbending spirit of independence and revolt: Russia's people and her writers had been constantly forced to humble themselves; among writers, Lermontov alone had refused to strike the flag:

Humility was taught us by the Russian natural environment — by cold and famine and by Russian history: the monks of Byzantium and the Tartar khans, the rulers of Muscovy and the emperors of Petersburg. Peter taught us humility. So did Biron [1692-1772, favorite and chief administrator of Anna Ivanovna]. So did Arakcheev [1769-1834, dominant administrator for the second half of Alexander's I's reign]. So did Nicholas I... And all of Russian literature reinforces this lesson. If any Russian writer started to rebel, it was only to at once repent and humble himself more deeply. Pushkin started to rebel by writing his ode to "Freedom," then humbled himself and wrote his ode to Nicholas I, giving his blessing to the execution of his Decembrist friends...Gogol' started to rebel by writing Part I of his *Dead Souls*; then humbled himself and burned the second part, and gave his blessing to serfdom. Dostoevskii rebelled and was sent to forced labor; he returned preaching humility. L. Tolstoi rebelled, starting out like the anarchical blue tit who boasted he'd set fire to the sea;⁶ and ended with non-resistance to evil and a curse on the revolution in Russia. The only natural being in Russian literature who never humbled himself was Lermontov.⁷

Merezhkovskii goes on to argue that Lermontov was at the time of his death in the process, not of capitulating as the other writers had done, but of becoming reconciled with God, of abandoning his "demonism." Whether such reconciliation would have come to pass and what it might have entailed are moot points. Certainly, some change was taking place in his last year or two. He seems to have been putting behind him romanticism's loud passions and self-involved individualism in favor of a more sober, down-to-earth, less demanding approach to life, an approach which looks for quiet joys and heartwarming companionship. This moderation is perfectly expressed in Lermontov's 1841 *Iz al'boma S. N. Karamzinoi*, quoted by Merezhkovskii and many others since to substantiate the change, reproduced here on page 237. The last stanza is a reference to the relaxed, companionable exchanges and doings of members of the Karamzin salon. Not only the lowered temperature but especially the satisfactions the poet here derives from other people must be accounted welcome developments in terms of Lermontov's overall well being.

But no change of this sort is likely to have basically altered Lermontov's personality. It would not have altered the fact that Lermontov had been born "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." It would not have changed his fundamentally negative attitude to much of what he found about him. It could have produced the reluctant acceptance of the realist, but never approval or unadulterated support.⁸

⁴ "Russkaia literatura v 1851 godu," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem Apollona Grigor'eva* (Petrograd, 1918) (reprinted Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1962), 1, 96-140, esp. 104, 118.

⁵ "Lermontov," *Sobranie sochinenii V. S. Solov'eva*, 2nd ed. (SPb., 1911), IX, 348-67.

⁶ See Krylov's fables, first book, XV.

⁷ *Lermontov poet svekhchelochechestva*, from *Izbrannye stat'i* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1972), 296. Also *Lermontov, Poet svekhchelochechestva* (SPb.: Prosveshchenie, 1911), 11-12.

⁸ V. O. Kliuchevskii, "Grust'," *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1958), vol. 8, 113-32.

3

Lermontov was critical of both life and God. The tendency, characteristic of Russian nineteenth-century, early twentieth-century, and Soviet approaches, has quite naturally been to view him in one of two lights. He can be seen as a Titanic Antichrist: there is some hint of this in Vladimir Solov'ev's targeting his spiritual pride, and certainly in the past obtuse attitudes of the Orthodox Church. Or he can be seen as an anti-conservative liberal thinker, with compassion for the peasantry and in quest of social change — in Marxist terms a critical realist. Both possibilities make limited sense and are therefore helpful. But from the standpoint of the late twentieth century, certainly from my non-Russian standpoint, it is difficult to see either one as a definitive answer to the related questions of what Lermontov achieved and where he was going.

In the present search the term *definitive* is probably out of place. There simply does not exist the hard-rock evidence for any Lermontov scholar to be able to cry *eureka*. But no one can work on Lermontov without developing a picture of his personality. In writing about him, therefore, we inevitably strive to suggest a picture which will be both persuasive and, within the possible, consistent.

Let us pick up the traces by going back to Bitsilli.

4

Bitsilli emphasizes forcefully that Lermontov was born in full armor, stood up fully made; when he started to write, he would then be fully developed spiritually. This, as Bitsilli also emphasizes, gives a very special and limited meaning to the word development.⁹

Lermontov came in fact already knowing many things which are not known to most of us. He came with the keystone of his psyche already in place. He came with a pain-causing memory of Heaven. In his "Religiia Lermontova" S. Shuvalov reaches a similar conclusion with regard to Lermontov's fundamental problem:

The man who is acquainted with "heaven," with its wondrous sounds, will never accept the "earth" nor be content with the songs of the earth, be they melancholic or cheerful in tone; even if these songs at times cause him to forget his heavenly native land, that will only be for a moment, after which he will again reject the earth and its "seductions," and his sufferings will begin again....

Thus Lermontov's pain is inborn. There is a low ceiling on his earthly happiness. At the same time, there is a degree of immunity against external circumstances, a limit to the amount of damage these circumstances can inflict. And it is logical that Shuvalov should downplay them:

There were of course, other causes of Lermontov's pessimism — of a personal, social and literary character: his mother's early death, a lonely childhood, sickness, the feud between his father and grandmother, unhappy love, the burdensome social conditions of Nicholas I's epoch, the influence of Byron and other men of sorrow; but these external causes have only secondary significance; they merely, drop by drop, added their poison to the cup of suffering which the poet, from the beginning of his conscious life, had always carried within him.¹⁰

⁹ P. Bitsilli, *Etudy*, 231-35.

¹⁰ *Venok*, 163.

These elements describe a static situation: Lermontov's constant awareness of a paradise lost remains with him as his major grief; other external misfortunes are secondary. But this is to omit one or two very important factors: the passing of time and God's failure to give an answer to Lermontov's question about the meaning of life on earth. For somewhat contemptuous though he might be about life on earth, Lermontov did have the expectation that an answer would be vouchsafed both as to its purpose and as to the role he would be called on to play. This latter, certainly in his younger years, was extremely important to him. As we know, he saw himself large on the political scene, on the scaffold, as prophet with a word to preach that would change the world. It cannot for some time have occurred to him that he might never fathom a purpose in earthly life nor find his prominent role to play.

But with his expectations frustrated, with no answer forthcoming, a crisis seems inevitable. Not, presumably, in childhood, when growth itself spells change and to a degree fulfills expectations, not when preparation is under way for school, when school is both change and a preparation for university, when university is a preparation for whatever may come, when the cadet corps is a preparation for the life of a guards officer and member of adult society. All these different steps toward adult life are themselves distractions which avert the gaze from the cold fact that the crucial question has not received an answer. It is surely the property of adolescence that today's dream will be fulfilled tomorrow. But tomorrow came, and, to use Shuvalov's words, "no such herald (*vestnik*) appeared, and the poet could find no answer."¹¹

These considerations make it likely that in a case like Lermontov's, if a crisis is to occur, it will come when physical growth has come to a halt, when the preparatory stages been completed, and the routines of adult life have been experienced, explored, defined, and demarcated. For Lermontov, we believe the point was reached in about 1835-36, when he had turned twenty-one; it would be more acute by early 1841, by which time he will have probed the false glamor of society, the invisible ceiling placed on his own individual position in society, the all-powerful regime imposing his two sentences of exile, life in the Caucasus, battle, and the embittering frustrations of returning to the Caucasus just when he had glimpsed the creative possibilities of living as a writer and editor at work in the capital.

This deepening crisis cannot be documented beyond question. But his desire to retire from military service is clearly attested in surviving letters. It can be traced with reasonable certainty in poetic pronouncements explaining Lermontov's religious thinking. It is well illustrated in a comparison made above (II,12) between the 1831 *Kogda b v pokornosti neznan'ia* and the 1838 *Gliazhu na budushchnost' s boiazn'iu*. While the optimism of the earlier poem is not typical of all 1831, it shows that at that time in moments of serious reflection on life's meaning and the Creator's intentions for us, Lermontov was open to optimism. Note especially the second of the poem's two stanzas (the entire poem is reproduced on page 106 of this volume).

We noted (I,5) the discernible kinship between the robust sentiments expressed in this poem and those of the earlier, more optimistic age of Schiller and Goethe in Germany. We can add here that Beethoven, with whose music Lermontov was acquainted from the *pansion*, had two *Lieder* (opus 32, 1805, and opus 94, 1813) which bore the title, "An die Hoffnung" ("To Hope"), precisely the emotion Lermontov apostrophizes in the second stanza.¹²

¹¹ *Venok*, 158.

¹² See Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven* (N. Y.: Schirmer Books, 1977), 153, 181, 296-97. Both the 1805 and 1813 versions were excerpted by Beethoven from "Urania," written by the minor poet, Christop August Tiedge (1752-1841). Also N. A. Khmelevskaia, "Betkoven," *L. E.*, 59. Also Lermontov's reference to Beethoven in his cadet-corps student essay "Panorama Moskvyy"

The later 1838 Lermontov poem, reproduced on page 167, records in effect God's failure to provide the awaited answer. Hope is again present, but not this time apostrophized; hope is the object of the verb *prekoslovit'*, to contradict, annul; and God is the verb's subject:

The identical formal features of the 1831 and 1838 poems (meter, length, stanza, rhyme scheme), unique in Lermontov except for his unfinished early version of the 1838 poem, put beyond all doubt what their close thematic kinship already suggests: the 1838 poem is a response to the 1831 poem. Whereas in the first, the poet is ready and eager to search for life's meaning, he is by 1838 disabused and downcast.

This disillusionment extends to another facet of his expectations. We recall that his early lyrics abound in the belief in his high destiny, in his role as political mover or prophet God's failure to show the way denies him more than spiritual comfort. Without this knowledge how can he function as teacher and prophet?

The generally accepted precursor of one 1838 poem, *Moie griadushchee v tumane*, is the formally identical unfinished poem mentioned above. In its entirety it need not here concern us, for it conveys essentially the same message as the 1838 finished poem. However, two lines which the poet rejected are revealing:

Огонь в уста твои вложу я,
Дам власть мою твоим словам.¹³

Between your lips I'll place the fire,
And to your words I'll give my power.

This rejected variant echoes Pushkin's 1826 *Prorok*.

Another poem may be added to our equation, *Kogda nadezhde nedostupnyi* ("When inaccessible to hope"), tentatively dated 1835, but written certainly between 1831 and 1835. In this 24-line poem the poet complains to God that he has tried to atone for sin by his suffering, but that what had been sacred and beautiful had become alien, God enjoins him to be less emotional and more patient:

«Чего ты просишь?» он вещал;
«Ты жить устал? — но я ль виновен;
Смири страстей своих порыв;
Будь как другие хладнокровен,
Будь как другие терпелив.
Твое блаженство было ложно;
Глупец! где посох твой дорожный?
Возьми его, пускайся в даль;
Пойдешь ли ты через пустыню
Иль город пышный и большой,
Не обожай ничью святыню,

("Panorama of Moscow"), 1834, *Ak. nauk*, VI, 369-73. Also Belinskii's comparison between the nature of Lermontov's youthful work and that of Beethoven's "mighty spirit" (*Khmelevskaia*), V, 453. The Post-Decembrist situation in Russia strengthened interest in Beethoven's music, the "rebelliousness" of which was seen as promoting *hope* and faith (*Khmelevskaia*). The two *Lieder* in question are in *Beethoven, Sämtliche Lieder* (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1990), I, 70-71 (28), and II, 142-147 (61), opus 32 and 94.

¹³ *Ak. nauk*, II, 309.

Нигде приют себе не строй».

“What are you asking then?” He said;
 “Life wearies you? Am I to blame?
 Restrain your passions’ surge.
 Be like the others feelingless,
 Be patient as others are.
 Your lofty ecstasies were false;
 Do you then so bemoan past dreams?
 Fool! Where then is your pilgrim’s staff?
 Take up your staff, be on your way;
 And when you’re passing through the desert
 Or through the city rich and large,
 Bow down at no one’s sacred place
 Nor seek to build your shelter there.”

Here we have a direct precursor to Lermontov’s final pronouncement on the prophet’s life in the 1841 *Prorok*. We find the same play with the “desert” and the “city;” though in the present poem there is no differentiation between the functions of the two, whereas in *Prorok* the desert is a refuge and the city a place of tribulation. If we compare *Kogda nadezhde nedostupnyi* (1835?), the rejected two lines from *Moe griadushchee v tumane* (1836-37?), and the 1838 (or just possibly late 1837) *Gliazhu na budushchnost’ s boiazn’iu*, we see an erosion of the robust 1831 spirit and an approach to the final rejection and dejection of the 1841 *Prorok*.¹⁴

5

This does not necessarily justify imposing on Lermontov’s problems the imprint of high tragedy. We have tried to show that his frustrated expectations made some sort of crisis almost inevitable. But the weathering of crisis is a part of living. Lermontov would not have been the first to have to lower his sights to survive. And with his untimely death there is no way we can say that he would have been incapable of making some needed adjustment. Nor would we seek to belittle the possible significance of his verses for S. N. Karamzina’s album; this could have marked the beginning of a new phase, of a less ambitious, less demanding view of life and God. Lermontov’s good friend and fellow-writer, Countess Rostopchina, considered the last three months he spent in Petersburg enjoying the companionship of writers and intellectuals to have been “the happiest and the most brilliant of his life....”¹⁵ But just when Lermontov had found a comfortable milieu to operate in and an outlet for his energies which could have assuaged his metaphysical malaise, he was ordered back to the Caucasus, to high-risk battle duties, offset by the superficial diversions of the watering places. There seems little doubt that Lermontov during

¹⁴ I. L. Andronikov comments: “In this poem (*Kogda nadezhde nedostupnyi*) is reflected Lermontov’s gradual move from the dream of a heroic destiny and great exploit which provides the pathos for his youthful verse to a rejection of surrounding reality. Rethinking the theme of Pushkin’s *Prorok*, Lermontov is preparing the image of his own *Prorok*, as expressed in his 1841 poem.... “ See *Khud. lit.* 1983-84, I, 411-12.

¹⁵ *LVVS*, 285; also “Zapiska o M. Iu. Lermontove,” *Zapiski Ekateriny Sushkovoï* (L.: Academia, 1928), 351. Viskovatov quotes enthusiastically from Rostopchina’s commentary; see Viskovatov, 326-27.

this final Caucasus sojourn was at a low ebb and that this influenced his conduct, which ranged from amusingly witty to caustically offensive, thus making him more than his habitual share of enemies and playing an undeniable role in bringing about the fatal duel.

The duel might still have ended without bloodshed. Our greater concerns here must be Lermontov's long-term prospects and what he achieved in his writing.

6

We have noted the inadequacies of the image of Lermontov as Titanic Antichrist and the image of him as the liberal would-be social reformer as frames of reference from which to view his life and work. Let us address the problem from a different angle and look through the lyric poems of his last eighteen months, i.e., 1840 and 1841, to see if any overall impression emerges. The reasons for this focus are several. First, the lyric genre is likely to provide insights into the writer's personal nature and outlook to a greater degree and in a more clearly obvious form than, say, the dramatic or the other genres. This general proposition is strengthened by the shift in emphasis noted in Chapter III from civic to personal themes in Lermontov's 1840-41 lyrics. Third, in 1840-41 Lermontov devoted little time to work in the longer genres; and the sharp drop in demands from outside the lyric genre led to an increased lyric output, yielding in the *Akademia nauk* edition 47 poems.¹⁶ In seeking conclusions from a brief survey of the 1840-41 lyrics, we will inevitably be going over ground covered at the end of the third chapter (III, 31).

We dismiss from the survey two 1841 beginnings (four and eight lines respectively) of what seem to have been conceived as ballads based on Turkish folklore,¹⁷ which reduces the number to 45. We are not here interested in qualitative esthetic judgements, in whether a piece reworks an old theme or not, in whether it is a translation or adaptation, in whether or not it is in Russian ("L'attente" is in French, and the short poem to Uglitskaia is macaronic). Our sole concern is theme: politics — liberal or conservative; religion — Christ or Antichrist; love — happy or unhappy, togetherness or separation. We measure with a crude measure, and of course there will be overlappings, for not all poems submit neatly to thematic compartmentalization.

There is more to both *Rodina* and *Proshchai, nemytaia Rossiia* than the mere heading *Political* would imply. But these two poems do depict two opposed views Lermontov held of his native land, and this is not a place for nuance. In this same column we place "Poslednee novosel'e" expressing his view of Napoleon and France; a four-line epigram against Senkovskii (1800-58), a reactionary writer of Polish origin, who had criticized Lermontov's poetry and *Geroi nashego vremeni*; *Zhurnalist, chitatel' i pisatel'*, which is a statement of Lermontov's view of the contemporary problems of Russian literature, in the final analysis also a political problem. *Spor* legitimately falls under *nature* or *ecology*, but is also very much a political problem. Of these six poems here labeled political, three only can be even loosely regarded as liberal: the four-line sally (unpublished in Lermontov's lifetime) against Senkovskii, *Zhurnalist, chitatel' i pisatel'*, and possibly *Proshchai, nemytaia Rossiia*. Liberalism is not strongly represented.

As to Lermontov in the role of Antichrist, there is only *Blagodarnost'* which could conceivably be thought of as theomachistic.

¹⁶ *Demon*, *Mtsyri*, *Sashka*, and especially *Geroi nashego vremeni* were all completed — or in *Sashka*'s case more probably brought to an end in haste — by the end of 1839; *Skazka dlia detei* (*A Fairy Tale for Children*), only 297 lines in all, was probably written partly in 1839, *Kavkazets* is four pages, and on the unfinished *Shtoss* Lermontov seems to have spent little time.

¹⁷ "Lileinoi rukoi popravliaia" and "Na burke pod ten'iu chinary."

Our next category is *Friendship and Fun*. *Fun* we attach to three poems. *Posredi nebesnykh tel* ("Among the heavenly bodies") and the two album pieces to I. P. Miatlev and A. A. Ug-litskaia respectively. The more serious *Friendship* pieces are to S. N. Karamzina (important in terms of the poet's changed attitude to life and letters) and the delightful heartfelt thanks to M. P. Solomirskaia for her "anonymous" letter of encouragement to Lermontov while under arrest.

Under *Other People*, we have four poems which could also go under *Friendship*: *Rebenku*, *Otchego*, and *K portretu*, and, from folklore and not to someone he knew, the famous *Kazach'ia kolybel'naia pesnia*. One emotion present in all four poems, too much so in the first, is the poet's caring for these other people. By placing *Rebenku* here we bring it somewhat into line with another "child" poem, the 1839 *Rebenka milogo rozhden'e*; but, especially if we regard Varvara Lopukhina Bakhmeteva and her daughter Olga as the addressees, the poem could qualify too under *Love Apart* (see below).

One piece we unimaginitively place under *Miscellaneous*: *Est' rechi — znachen'e*, cannot in the present exercise play any very prominent role.

That leaves us with the remaining 28 poems, all of which are close to the bone, touching deep human emotions.

Four of these we place under *Sorrow and Loneliness*. The first, *A. O. Smirnovoi*, could be seen as belonging to a "lighter" category, since it is an album piece; but, as elsewhere in Lermontov, use of the album approach masks an unavowed serious content. The last two lines provide a clue: "All this would be amusing, / If it were not so sad." *Prorok* is a poem of failure to communicate, to preach successfully, as are *I skuchno i grustno* and *Tuchi*, where the lesser figure of the poet claims sympathy for being like the unfeeling clouds, "wandering.... eternally exiles."

Sosedka, *Iz Gete*, *Plennyi rytsar'*, and *Vykhozhu odin ia na dorogu* come under *Escape and Death*. The first poem clearly aims at escape; death has no place in the poem. The Goethe translation is, like Goethe's original, ambiguous. Does he wish for death or merely peace? But Goethe's first "Wandrer's Nachtlied" makes it clear that sorrow, at least, is envisaged. *Plennyi rytsar'* and *Vykhozhu odin ia na dorogu* obviously have as their subject death.

This leaves twenty poems out of forty-five, all of which fall under the heading of *Love*.

The only poem which qualifies under the rubric of *Happy Love* is *M. A. Shcherbatova*. The poem sparkles with admiration, wonder, and love and a happiness that all Shcherbatova's assets have found their rightful place in the finished woman. The other poem requires a caveat. *Izpod tainstvennoi kholodnoi polumaski* is a happy poem with a happy ending. But it is built on fantasy. Very rightly in his discussion of the realist and fantastic elements in *Shtoss*, Udodov brings up the woman in this poem and the woman fantasied in the earlier 1840 *Kak chasto, pestroiu tolpoi okruzhen* as examples of the ideal, completely fulfilling love (VII,7).¹⁸ *Destructive Love* is represented by two pieces which raise no problems: *Tamara* and *Morskaia tsarevna*. Two poems I place in the category of *Love Betrayed*. One is the very obvious *Svidan'e*, which contains not only love betrayed, but the theme of vengeance. The only other poem in this subcategory may seem surprising, *Vozdushnyi korabl'*. Aboard the phantom ship Napoleon returns to "his dear France." He summons his son, his Old Guard, his marshals. But the son is dead, the Old Guard is dead, some of the marshals are dead, *but others have betrayed him*. The empathy shown for Napoleon in the closing stanzas of this poem is incontrovertible, and it would be difficult to believe that the poet did not himself experience the painful void caused by betrayal.

¹⁸ M. Ju. Lermontov: *Khudozhestvennaia individual'nost' i tvorcheskie protsessy* (Vonezh, 1973), 249-52.

We are left now with 14 poems, all of which come under the heading of love, and all of which I place under the sub-heading of *Love Apart*. The order in which these poems are published in the *Akademiia nauk* edition is as follows: 1) *Kak chasto...*; 2) *Valerik*; 3) *Zaveshchanie*; 4) *Opravdanie*; 5) *Na severe dikom*; 6) *Liubov' mertvetsa*; 7) *Grafine Rostopchinoi*; 8) *Dogovor*, where the emphasis is on the extramarital nature of the bond between two lovers, but where the decisive verdict reads: "Our love was without joy/Our parting will be without sorrow;" 9) *Utes*; 10) *Son*; 11) "L'attente"; 12) *Oni liubili....*; 13) *Listok*; 14) *Net, ne tebia...*

In all these poems the lovers are physically separated by death or by other cogent circumstances; but in most of them, on top of physical separation there is a failure to understand some psychic factor which attends their apartness. Two excellent examples of this are *Valerik* and *Zaveshchanie*; beloved women are not to be expected in the forefront of battle, so physical separation can be taken for granted. Over and above this, the social life led by the woman in the first of these poems will render her incapable of understanding her onetime lover's letter, and love is in any case over; in the second poem the once-loved neighbor will have forgotten him. In *Utes* the cloud remains unaware of the cliff's grieving desire. Only in two poems, both from Heine, is there some sharing of the burdens of love's sorrow: the lonesome pine tree in the North dreams of the palm tree who is "alone and sorrowing"; and in *Oni liubili....* the two lovers share equally the suffering and the responsibility for the impasse. Normally the burden falls on the male.

Byron almost certainly has it right when he tells us:

Kissing is sweet, but be sure of this:
Lips only sing when they cannot kiss.

Even allowing for this propensity to take to the pen more for sorrow than for joy, 14 examples of *Love Apart* is a high figure out of 45. Add two for *Destructive Love* and two for *Love Betrayed*, and we have 18. Add four more for *Sorrow and Loneliness*, and four for *Escape and Death*. Well over half of the lyrics studied are in a distinctly minor key. Though the figures, remembering Byron's dictum, are not staggering, they are certainly no cause for rejoicing. They, and the poems on which they are based, create an overwhelming impression of loneliness and lovelessness.

Two impressions they do not create is either one of energetic theomachy or one of active liberalism. They do suggest that to free himself from his impasse, to get through his crisis, Lermontov needed to find his way back to the capital with its salons, its companionship, its opportunities for greater involvement, not so much in his own writing, which flourished both in the Caucasus and in Petersburg, but in literary activities in general, especially editing and publishing. Perhaps most of all, he needed to find a compatible and tolerant woman. But returning from the Caucasus was out of Lermontov's control. What it would have taken to induce Nicholas I to release him from military service is anyone's guess. "Wish me luck and a light wound, that's the very best thing you could wish me," Lermontov had among other things written to Sofi'a Nikolaevna Karamzina on May 10, 1841, from Stavropol' (VI, 460-61).

7

The Antichrist or theomachistic theme was represented among the 1840-41 lyrics by only one poem, *Blagodarnost'*. This does not mean, as Shuvalov insists, that religious musings, and theomachistic musings, which went hand in hand in Lermontov, were absent from his thoughts during his more mature years, rather the contrary. But they had ceased or nearly ceased to figure in the pages of his late poetry. The main part of Shuvalov's *Religiia Lermontova* article is taken up with the poet's opinions on God, as opposed to his opinions on Christianity, the discussion of

which takes up significantly fewer pages. If we look at the references to Lermontov's works dealing with God (pages 135-52), we find that the two most productive years for Shuvalov's purposes are 1830 and 1831.¹⁹ In his earlier poetry Lermontov is building his case. There he is most specific about his thoughts of God, himself, and the Creation; in his later poetry, religion makes less frequent appearances and is less a self-sufficient subject; it is more likely to fuse with nature or to be a component part of some other theme.²⁰

The overwhelming impression gleaned from the 1840-41 lyrics is a forlorn one, dominated by a pivotal failure, man's failure to love, be loved, to communicate, a failure which dooms man to aloneness: what Kliuchevskii meant by *grust'*, sorrow.

How does Lermontov steer clear of absorption in negative self-pity? We raise this problem again because its successful solution by Lermontov makes it possible for us to see clearly the outlines of a tragic and courageous view of life. Without its successful artistic solution, there could have been no tragic view of life, nothing of sufficient stature to merit the use of that term.

Any writer is apt to find his understanding of sorrow best fueled by his own experiences. Yet to harp consistently on one's own sorrows, in literature as in life, is to court disaster: maudlin sentimentalism about oneself is a recipe for reader disdain or reader fatigue or both. The solution, since sorrow is an essential part of literature, is first, to ration sorrow, giving greater impact to its occasional but crucial appearances; second, to exercise emotional restraint, to objectivize, to put distance between the narrator as observer and the same narrator as sufferer. In this latter respect, we saw above (I,6), the use of narrative speed has a positive function.

There is another obvious recourse: to saddle a third party with the experience of sorrow or the prospect of sorrow. Something close to that begins to make its appearance in the lyrics about 1839. Not that Lermontov was unable to feel for others before; but there is a difference between what is experienced in life and what one knows how to transmit to paper. Long before 1839, Lermontov had written love lyrics to women and verse epistles to friends of both sexes; but those types of poetry are not in themselves what interests us here. The "other" person must normally be somewhat further removed from the poet, and the subject matter should encourage the expression of selfless, disinterested concern. In 1839 we find the first signs of the poet's ability, not to identify completely with the third person, but sufficiently to be able to give warning of events calculated to bring sorrow.

Rebenka milogo rozhden'e begins with what seems a purely conventional pattern of congratulations to the father, A. A. Lopukhin, and good wishes to the newborn son:

Ребенка милого рожденье
Приветсвует мой запоздалый стих.
Да будет с ним благословенье
Всех ангелов небесных и земных!
Да будет он отца достоин,
Как мать его, прекрасен и любим;
Да будет дух его спокоен
И в правде тверд, как Божий херувим.

¹⁹ The figures are: 1829—1, 1830—13; 1831—9, 1832—3; 1833-35—2; 1836—1; 1837—5; 1838—1; 1839—7; 1840—2; 1841—4. Of the seven for 1839, three are from *Demon*, and two from *Mtsyri*, both of which had their inceptions years earlier — 1829 and 1831 (*Ispoved'*).

²⁰ K. A. Kedrov, "Religioznye motivy," *L. E.*, 464-65. The poems of fusion mentioned are: *Vykhozhu odin ia na dorogu*; *Prorok*; and *Kogda volnuetsia...*

The birth of a dear child I greet
 Belatedly; accept my verse.
 May he be blest by all the angels
 Of Heaven, and all Earth's angels too!
 May he be worthy of his sire,
 Handsome, well loved, as is his mother;
 And may his spirit be serene,
 In truth unswerving as God's Cherubim.

But when it comes to the very specific pitfalls the poet wishes the child to avoid, the poem gains additional seriousness and sincerity:

Пускай не знает он до срока
 Ни мук любви, ни славы жадных дум;
 Пускай глядит он без упрека
 На ложный блеск и ложный мира шум;
 Пускай не ищет он причины
 Чужим страстям и радостям своим,
 И выйдет он из светской тины
 Душою бел и сердцем невредим!

May he not know before his time
 Love's torments nor the thirst for fame;
 And may he view without reproach
 The world's false gloss, the world's false stir;
 May he not seek to plumb the cause
 Of others' passions or of his own joys:
 Thus he'll transcend society's base slime
 Immaculate and invulnerable in heart and soul.

Premature love and the thirst for fame had plagued Lermontov; so it would be idle to suggest that much imaginative empathy was required to come up with these two specific warnings. On the other hand, while regrets over his own ailments might simply provoke impatience, attaching these problems to a newborn babe does command attention and elicit an emotional response.

The same area of emotional response is evoked in the 1840 *Otchego* (see page 207). It is again a poem of warning, this time to a young, inexperienced girl or young woman. The stately, slowly advancing six-foot iambic couplets, with the syntax-reinforced caesuras, and the poem's well-defined oppositions and paradoxes (the central paradox being that *her* gaiety evokes *his* sorrow) not only demonstrate a well-contrived album structure but also hint at society's unforgivingly rigid framework, from which the young woman will be unable to escape. The poet, once again, experiences sorrow, but his sorrow is dignified by being on someone else's behalf. The poem's "circular composition becomes a metaphor for a situation allowing no escape," and its "tragic paradoxicality serves both to characterize the reality which determines the heroine's fate, and also as a key feature of Lermontov's outlook on life."²¹

Another poem indicative of a new note sounded in or around 1839 is *Ne ver' sebe*. In its 1838 precursor on the poet-crowd relationship, "Poet," the crowd had received short shrift:

²¹ T. G. Dinesman, "Otchego," *L. E.*, 360.

Как ветхая краса, наш ветхий мир привык
 Морщины прятать под румяны...

Like an aging beauty, our aging world is wont
 To cover its wrinkles with make-up...

In *Ne ver' sebe* this demeaning image of a painted, made-up face is transferred to the poet. The crowd emerges in a more favorable light. Their everyday courage and concealment of hurt put the poet to shame:

А между тем из них едва ли есть один,
 Тяжелой пыткой не измятый,
 До преждевременных добравшийся морщин
 Без преступленья иль утраты!..

But there's hardly a one of them
 Who has not been wracked by painful torture.
 Acquiring premature wrinkles,
 Without crime or loss!

This poem, it must be conceded, contains more censure of the poet than compassion for the crowd. The strain of sympathy is nevertheless undeniable. It is not maintained in the 1840 *Zhurnalst, chitatel' i pisatel'* nor in the 1841 *Prorok*.

Traces of a new compassionate strain emerging about 1839 are to be found in a very different genre, in *Geroi nashego vremeni*. The clearest examples concern the blind boy in *Taman'* (written 1837-39?) and Maksim Maksimych in *Bela* and *Maksim Maksimych* (written 1838-39?). Lermontov gave prominence to these two characters to the degree he felt he needed them to move forward his story. Unfortunately, neither the blind boy nor Maksim Maksimych possesses the personality required to play a leading role in the development of Lermontov's narratives. Their roles are limited to shedding light on the personality of the narrator or on that of other characters (Pechorin's announced dislike of cripples and his treatment of Maksim Maksimych). In the reader they produce compassion.

A group of three 1841 lyrics transfers human sorrow to inanimate and inorganic objects. They are: *Na severe dikom stoit odinoko*, from Heine's "Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam"); *Utes*; and *Listok*. These three lyrics, among Lermontov's finest, are well-known and were discussed above in Chapter III.²⁴ We will confine ourselves here to reminding the reader that in all three mini-narrative lyrics the theme is unrequited love or love that can in no way be consummated (we cannot move a pine tree to the hot south nor a palm tree to the cold north). These lyrics are, on a rather simple level, more moving than if the characters were human, because human emotions tend to be mixed, sometimes contradictory, and of uncertain duration, whereas inorganic or inanimate objects can, for literary purposes, feel only one single emotion, immutable, unending, all-possessing, excluding all others, pure emotion: here, love denied.

8

Enough has been said to establish one of the bases on which Lermontov's *Weltanschauung* rests, that *Weltanschauung* reflected in his writings. We pass on now to a very different aspect of his work, and in Lermontov's case a very important aspect, his treatment of nature.

If the poems above offer a somber, bleak view of human existence, nature in Lermontov most often offers something very different, a contrast, a counterpoise. V. Fisher's "Poetika Ler-

montova" contains some excellent pages on this subject from which no reader can fail to benefit. The burden of Fisher's discussion is that in Lermontov nature is normally charged with light and pulsating life. Lermontov's "imagination", Fisher writes, "is filled with colors, he loves a bright, tropical light, and has little time for the soft, nuanced tones of the north." Sunlight galvanizes the poet's brush, and his gaze is arrested by various bright objects lit up by and reflecting the sun's light: "Everywhere he sees gold, silver, diamonds, pearls, emeralds, coral...." Lermontov addresses himself not only to the visual world; the objects he observes in the outside world appeal to other senses as well. The following example is given by Fisher: (*Demon*, I, 4):

Роскошной Грузии долины
 Ковром раскинулись вдали;
 Счастливый, пышный край земли!
 Столпообразные раины,
 Звонко-бегущие ручьи
 По дну из камней разноцветных,
 И кущи роз, где соловьи
 Поют красавиц, безответных
 На сладкий голос их любви;
 Чинар развесистые сени,
 Густым венчаные плющом,
 Пещеры, где палящим днем
 Таятся робкие олени;
 И блеск и жизнь и шум листов,
 Стозвучный говор голосов,
 Дыханье тысячи растений!
 И полдня сладострастный зной,
 И ароматною росой
 Всегда увлажненные ночи,
 И звезды яркие как очи,
 Как взор грузинки молодой!..

Now Georgia's broad, luxuriant vales
 Spread out, a carpet, far and wide;
 O blessed, bounteous plot of earth!
 High-pillared poplars, gurgling streams
 That course their way above their beds
 Of many-colored sparkling stones;
 And roses where the nightingales
 Sweet-voiced sing songs of longing to
 Their unresponding, silent loves;
 Where plane trees crowned with ivy leaf
 Spread wide their branching canopies;
 And caves, and in the noonday heat
 The timid deer seek refuge there;
 The glitter, rustling sound of leaves,
 A hundred voices' mingled speech,
 The breathing of one thousand plants!
 Midday's voluptuous still heat,

Nights, ever damp with fragrant dew,
 And stars as clear as are the eyes,
 The gaze of a young Georgian maid!...

Fisher comments: "Here we have fused into one, colors, sounds, movements, smell, breathings (*dykhaniiia*) [of the plants]." ²²

The sensuousness and immediacy of these impressions is self-evident. The stars, as we have noted elsewhere, play a very prominent role in Lermontov's nature scenes. But they are light-years away, and assumed to be without life! How can they participate in the orchestra of nature described above? Sometimes, we know, they do not. They are used to create a contrast. The stars, along with the clouds, may be used as a model of passionless indifference, an example to be emulated by human beings, who thrash around and torment themselves, caught in the nets of emotion. This is the function of stars and clouds in the song sung by the Demon to Tamara (*Demon*, I, 15). In this role they are aloof and distant. More often the poet brings the stars closer to earthly activities. In the description of Georgian nature above, this is done by the use of a simile: The stars are "as clear as are the eyes,/The gaze of a young Georgian maid." The young Georgian maid is full of life, beautiful, close, earthly, warm, and therefore softens the cold aloofness of the stars. In his early *Nebo i zvezdy* (1831), the stars are indeed remote: "Clear are the far-away stars." But here the simile, performing one of Lermontov's switches from one plane of reality to another, has the effect of pulling them closer to us: the stars are "as clear as the happiness of a child." At the other end of Lermontov's career, in 1841, in *Vykhozhu odin ia na dorogu*, star speaks to star; in *Prorok* the stars listen to the prophet and *play* with rays of light. The godlike notion of play is a familiar one in Lermontov's nature verse, especially when stars are involved.

Such then is the life of Nature: vital, pulsating, and in its way harmonious. From this great orchestra man alone is excluded. In *Mtsyri*, the novice comments with regret:

И все природы голоса
 Сливались тут; не раздался
 В торжественный хваленья час
 Лишь человека гордый глас.

(para 11, lines 305-308)

And all nature's voices there
 Were merged; alone unheard
 In the solemn hour of giving praise
 Was the proud voice of man.

Nature is then a counterpoise which accentuates the bleakness of human life.

We have seen nature used as a counterpart and reproof to man. It can also be used as a means of bringing man closer to an understanding of the cosmos and God. This function accounts for two of Lermontov's best known lyrics, *Kogda volnuetsia...* and *Vykhozhu odin ia na dorogu...*, discussed above (II,6 and III,28). They are mentioned here to highlight one of the prominent qualities of Lermontov's nature descriptions: while they can possess a certain self-sufficiency, be enjoyed for themselves (e.g., the description of Georgia from *Demon*), they invariably perform a function in terms of human emotion. Since human experience is the true stuff of literature, this is a quality that merits recognition and applause. To illustrate briefly: the Georgian landscape is seen from the perspective of the very human Demon flying above; but the De-

²² See *Venok*, 207-12.

mon is contemptuous of Georgia's sumptuous beauties, which "he despised or hated." This is the same sequence used in the preceding paragraph (I,3), where the magnificent peaks of the Caucasus fail to produce any emotion in him. *Mtsyri's* vivid nature descriptions, animate and inanimate, are totally subordinated to the proposition of Nature's superiority to man. We recall the passages in *Pesnia pro tsaria Ivana Vasil'evicha... i kuptsa Kalashnikov* designed to suggest and underscore the growing threat of catastrophe. The storm in the 1832 *Parus* is not described at all; it is only mentioned, which constitutes a fundamental difference. It is summoned by the hero himself and is only there for the responses it evokes in him, the challenge it offers.

Lermontov is indeed a first-rate designer. As a final example, one mentioned by Fisher, of this eye for composition, let us note how in *Valerik* nature is made to serve as a bridge between two passages: a description of battle carnage, followed by the thoughts on man's folly in waging war. The carnage can logically lead directly to the thought. But Lermontov has done better. He has interposed between the two the high ranges seen by the combattant-narrator looking up from the blood and death around him, and the sight of the high mountains suggests a different perspective, impels him naturally to his famous verdict:

А там вдали грядой нестройной,
 Но вечно гордой и спокойной,
 Тянулись горы – и Казбек
 Сверкал главой остроконечной.
 И с грустью тайной и сердечной
 Я думал: жалкий человек.
 Чего он хочет!.. небо ясно,
 Под небом места много всем,
 Но беспрестанно и напрасно
 Один враждует он – зачем?

And there afar uneven ridges;
 As ever proud, calm and at peace,
 The mountains stretch--and there Kazbek
 Shone bright with its eight-headed peak.
 And with a secret, heartfelt sorrow
 I thought: pathetic, wretched man!
 What does he want! The sky is clear,
 Beneath the sky there's place for all,
 But endlessly, to no avail,
 Alone man wages war---but why?²³

Nature, though at times an aid to man's search for understanding of the creation, is more often than not a rebuke to man, a presence which exposes man's moral failings, his egotism, pettiness, self-seeking, and a demonstration to man of his lovelessness and isolation.

Lermontov's highly effective subordination of nature to a wide variety of functions leads us on to another quality in his writing. Colors in Lermontov's poetry, although they are certainly intended to represent a true picture, often have at the same time a function; they have a strong tendency to act as symbols and to set a tone. As a result, they tend to be patterned and stereotyped. This runs contrary to the accepted norms of much modern literature, in which adjectives, whether denoting color or not, are expected generally to draw attention. One can sympathize with

²³ For Fisher, see *Venok*, 211-12.

A. Liberman's comment: Lermontov's "texts are full of qualifying adjectives, but they are seldom informative. The sea in Lermontov's works is always blue, waves are also blue and constantly chase one another; sand is golden (and only golden), Chechens are angry, and horses raven black. Since in most cases Lermontov does not imitate folklore, these words lack the dignity of 'fixed' epithets and sound repetitive and trivial."²⁴ This is not the complete picture. We will return shortly to the wider question of the epithet. For the moment let us focus on color. E. M. Pul'khritudova, noting that "the epithet in Lermontov's poetry gravitates toward symbolism," goes on: "As a rule, such color epithets as 'blue' ('goluboi'), 'azure' ('lazurnyi'), 'green' ('zelenyi'), 'pink' ('rozovyi'), indicate concepts connected with positive values. The epithet 'yellow' ('zheltyi') acquires mainly the opposite meaning: the color yellow is associated with a peculiar and in the poetic tradition unusual symbolism involving the sun, heat (*zhara*), intense heat (*znoi*) embodying a force inimical and alien to the Lermontov hero: 'And the sun burned their yellow summits/And burned me — but I slept the sleep of the dead' (*Son*)."²⁵ Colors in Lermontov are not mere "fillers," neutral and almost devoid of meaning (*bezrazlichnyi epitet*), though this would not necessarily be a derogation, for as O. M. Brik pointed out, the stylistics of different ages differ, one age and style accepting "filler" epithets and another demanding semantically sharp ones: the Pushkin school showed a great deal of tolerance for the former, though Pushkin's own epithets are normally very precise.²⁶ Finally, Lermontov seems to have been sensitive to reader reaction, and it is undeniable that a nuanced color description in poetry or prose has, other things apart, less impact on the reader than it would in painting. While his color epithets in poetry tend to possess a Mediterranean, Gauguin-like clarity and simplicity, his painting is very different: nuanced and at times close to impressionist. But as a poet, he is closer to post-impressionist.²⁷ Of all contemporary writers, this tone-setting, simple color scheme is to be found most clearly in Heine, especially the *Buch der Bilder*. This is not an influence, since Lermontov seems to have come late to Heine, but a parallelism: both poets not only wrote ballads but were stylistically influenced by the ballad in some of their poetry. And this accounts, at least in part, for the simple straightforwardness of their colors in poetry.

10

Turning back to the wider question of the epithet, we can again start with Liberman, not to dispute with him, for his sensitive comments on Lermontov's poetry have done much to further understanding of Lermontov beyond the borders of Russia, but to attempt a more complete picture. Liberman, while pointing out that Lermontov was sensitive to "other" elements, "so the picture would emerge unexpectedly good," does complain that Lermontov was "indifferent to the epithet."²⁸

This is partly correct. But there are two factors of great significance in Lermontov's handling of the epithet: the stage in his development and the genre or subgenre into which a given

²⁴ Liberman, 11.

²⁵ L.E., 532.

²⁶ O. M. Brik, "Ritm i sintaksis", *Two Essays on Poetic Language*, Michigan Slavic Materials (Ann Arbor, 1964), 60-61.

²⁷ Fisher and Liberman both use impressionist in describing the poetry. See *Venok*, 211 and Liberman, 12. I understand that what Liberman, and probably Fisher, were after was Lermontov's aiming at "the finished canvas" rather than the individual stroke.

²⁸ Liberman, 12.

poem falls. "In Lermontov's youthful 'laboratory' works," Pul'khrudova remarks, "'filler epithets' are indeed to be found. But they arise not as a result of a 'need' to satisfy rhythmic-melodic 'requirements,' but through the force of inertia of the literary tradition." This seems natural enough when we recall that Lermontov's starting point was the Pushkin school. Pul'khrudova continues: "The mature Lermontov has no 'filler epithets,' both by virtue of epithets acquiring additional meaning from the context and by virtue of additional semantic weight based on the expressive qualities of the sound and color patterns."²⁹ This verdict is based rightly enough on qualitative judgments, some of them borderline. But a purely quantitative count of the incidence of the attributive adjective, i.e., irrespective of its quality, of its being a "filler" or not, yields interesting results. If we begin with the not unreasonable expectation that Lermontov's early incidences will be close to those of the mature Pushkin, our expectation is proved correct: Lermontov's 1828-29 and Pushkin's incidences for 1825 and 1827 are almost identical, and high. From 1828-29, Lermontov's incidence figures show consistent annual drops through 1832. We omit 1833-35, since Lermontov's years of virtual "lyric silence" provide an insignificantly small sample. Resuming the count in 1836, we find a total disruption of the earlier pattern: the figures for 1836-39 are the highest yet seen for Lermontov's attributive-adjective incidence, significantly higher than the 1828-29 starting figures; 1840 shows a significant drop; but in 1841 the figures rise again to very close to the 1836-39 starting figures. This disruption of the earlier pattern is accounted for by the entry in 1836-37 into Lermontov's repertoire of what Eikhenbaum called his "declamatory" or "rhetorical" style, suited to the civic theme, satire, and meditation, and influenced by Auguste Barbier, especially thematically, but also in the abundance of epithets commonly found in the Alexandrine; the attributive adjectives are, however, not "fillers", but on the contrary semantically loaded, often highly condemnatory epithets, e.g., in the 1837 *Smert' Poeta* "nadmennye potomki" ("arrogant descendants"), "zhadnoiu tolpoi" ("greedy throng"), "vashei chernoii krov'iu" ("your black blood") in contrast to the poet's "pravednuiu krov'" ("righteous blood"), and many others.³⁰

Smert' Poeta, even allowing for the fact that it is an example of the rhetorical style, has an extremely high incidence of attributive adjectives.³¹ Also showing high rates are album verses or lyrics approaching the album verse, natural enough, considering that album verse was in its heyday in Pushkin's early years and was a conventionalized form which favored the stereotyped epithet. At the other end of the scale the realistic, lean, prosaic, often conversational style which Lermontov triumphantly put on the Russian map shows the lowest incidence of attributive adjectives: in *Valerik* and *Zaveshchanie*, both written in late 1840, there are almost no contextually and semantically "non-essential" adjectives. By "essential" I mean absolutely indispensable if the sentence is to have meaning, e.g., in *Valerik* "teper' ostynuvshim umom," ("by cold reflection") becomes unintelligible without "ostynuvshim" (cold, grown cold): or "Zabyt' ia shum mladychk prokaz" ("forgot the stir of youthful pranks") loses point without "youthful."

²⁹ L. E., 532.

³⁰ Remembering that Lermontov was writing *Vadim* in 1833-34, the influence of French prose models is also a factor in the "declamatory" style: A. de Musset (*Confessions d'un enfant du siècle*), Merimée (*La vision de Charles XI*), Hugo (*Notre Dame de Paris*), Balzac (*Les chouans*), and certainly too Chateaubriand's *Atala* and *René*.

³¹ The other eight poems designated by Eikhenbaum as examples of the rhetorical styles are: *Opiat' narodyne vitii* (1835?); *Umiraiushchii Gladiator*; *Duma*; *Poet*; *Ne ver' sebe*; *Kak chasto...*; *Rodina*; *Poslednee novosel'e*.

Enough has been said to substantiate the claim that Lermontov was, at least as a mature poet, not indifferent to the epithet.³²

11

In discussions of individual works above we have repeatedly emphasized Lermontov's eye for the telling detail. This quality is particularly in evidence in his "ironic" or humorous narrative poems: *Sashka*, *Tambovskaia kaznacheisha*, and *Skazka dlia detei* (IV,1,3,7, above). In this type of poetry, Lermontov's eye for the incongruous, his instinct for the amusingly telling detail commands attention. But his selection of detail is not confined to the humorous or comic. In his *Pesnia pro tsaria...i kuptsa Kalashnikov*, effective detail is used mainly to reinforce the idea of routine ritually performed, of lives framed in familiar and orderly procedures. In the 1838 *Poet* the poet's functions in the days of glory cover perfectly the significant happenings in the life of the people. In the 1840 *Zaveshchanie* the dying man's complaint about the doctors is a detail which stirs up a host of surmises and associations far beyond the one short line in which the thought is expressed. In the 1841 *Spor*, there is nothing which obliges Kazbek to select those objects on which, looking east, his gaze rests. As long as they convey a degree of somnolence, they will fulfill their function. But Lermontov goes far beyond that; his choices are strikingly right, witness the last two things observed, the Nile and the Bedouin:

Дальше, вечно чуждый тени,
 Моет желтый Нил
 Раскаленные ступени
 Царственных могил.
 Бедуин забыл наезды
 Для цветных шатров
 И поет, считая звезды,
 Про дела отцов.

Further, ever without shade,
 See the yellow Nile
 Washes, laves the burning steps
 of the royal tombs.
 Raids forgot, the Bedouin
 In his festive tent
 Counts the stars and sings about
 Deeds his father wrought.

The technical mastery and immaculate expression displayed in these eight lines prompt me to close this section with two points, interrelated and perhaps self-evident. The writer's keen vision is not the only, nor the primary, faculty required to seek out and find the telling detail; a quality of mind, first and foremost, tells him where to look and enables him to know when he has found. Second, the ability to select is not the solution; beyond selection, poetry requires finding the words, meter, rhyme, cadences which will render the selection effective. Lermontov possessed in abundance the vision, the selective ability, and the poetic technical mastery.

³² Walter N. Vickery, "On the Incidence of the Attributive Adjective in Lermontov's Poetry," *Russian Verse Theory* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1989), 441-53. See Appendix IV in the present work.

Let us summarize briefly the findings. I have tried in the immediately foregoing pages to give an accounting of two questions which are inevitably central in the work of any writer. What were the main components of Lermontov's *Weltanschauung*? What were some of the main techniques that enabled him to convey these to the reader?

First, it seems clear that Lermontov's critical bent, his overall discontent, made him essentially a theomachist. He had his quarrel with God and the Creation. That does not mean that the theological aspects of this dissatisfaction found a prominent place in his writings. Certainly in his last years, from 1838 on, they made infrequent though not insignificant appearances. They remained latent, but the seriously interested reader would do well not to dismiss them entirely.

Second, Lermontov was not a liberal or a radical, labels all too readily attached to Russian writers. To call him a critical realist is, by the tenets of socialist realist theory, quite correct. But, theomachy apart, this amounts to discontent with Russian life, a highly critical attitude toward the government of Nicholas I, and a humane view of the oppressed lot of the peasant expressed in *Menschen und Leidenschaftent* and more forcibly in *Strannyi chelovek*. Had Lermontov lived to inherit his grandmother's estate, one can easily see him as a decent, sensitive, humane landowner, but not necessarily as an active opponent of serfdom.

The twelve years following Lermontov's death confronted his contemporaries with the so-called "accursed questions" in a more actual and urgent form than previously. It is possible that, had he lived, Lermontov would have felt obliged to take a stand, and it is certain that, whatever his position publicly in those years of intense censorship, he would have had to answer some of the questions, certainly those relating to serfdom, in his own mind.

One thing seems a legitimate subject for speculation: Lermontov's likely position on the Slavophile-Westerner controversy which dominated the years 1841-53. Lermontov would have or had already rejected Westernism as then presented: he believed Western Europe had run its course. He was interested in seeking eastern "solutions"; but, above all, he was a Russia-First thinker. This can be seen from Scene IV of *Strannyi chelovek*, but more clearly from his ideas in 1841 on the ideological direction he thought a projected journal should take: "We must live our own independent life and contribute our own special originality to all mankind. Why should we drag along behind Europe and the French? I have learnt a great deal from the Asians..."³³

This adversarial attitude to Westerners would seem to push Lermontov toward the Slavophiles. So, too, the obviously cordial relations between him and the Slavophile, Samarin. But one senses in Lermontov's caste of mind a down-to-earth strain which would have made it difficult for him to range himself entirely with the Slavophile camp. As with his great admirer, Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi, one of Lermontov's fortes was his disposition to skepticism (in a very general sense to nihilism) in his treatment of systematized theoretical structures. Lermontov's outlook on life at the time of his death was what we extracted above (section 7) from his 1840-41 lyrics: bleakness, lovelessness, loneliness. Add to that the frustration of not being allowed to retire and of being obliged to return to military duty in the Caucasus, where casualty figures were high. That is the dominant impression to be obtained by the reader of his late lyrics. Sad verse is not a cause for reader complaint, provided there be no descent into self-pity and the changes be rung bravely. Rilke's "Der Panther" is an ineffably, irremediably sad poem; but is it therefore to be neglected? Consider also Sappho's short poem about the moon being down and the night passing and she herself lying alone or Shakespeare's 73rd sonnet ("That time of year thou may'st in me behold"), or Pushkin's *Anchar* ("The Upas Tree"), or, changing genre, Shakespeare's *The*

³³ Viskovatov, 325.

Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, from which the theater crowds proceed home uplifted and elated after witnessing the carnage of the fifth act? Sorrow written, especially someone else's, is not a bad commodity.

But if Lermontov had outlived his melancholy, thanks to the movements of his heart, to his intellect, to new experiences and new circumstances, then surely he had the means to convey his changed emotions to the reader. In the lyric, the reader would have nothing to fear but the poet's silence. As a lyric writer, Lermontov had reached a level of excellence at which he almost could not write badly. His choice would have been to continue writing well or not to write at all.

What of the other genres? The long narrative poem, as known and preached by Lermontov, may well have been on its way out at the time of his death. The era of the Byron-Pushkin melodramatic narrative of the Oriental Tales and Southern Poems (*The Giaour*, *The Corsair*, *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, *The Gypsies*, and others); the historical narrative poem (Scott's *Marmion*, Byron's *Mazeppa*, Pushkin's *Poltava*, and others); and the "ironic" poem (Byron's *Beppo*, Pushkin's *Graf Nulin*, and others) was passing. Coming to the last of these subgenres first, Lermontov had left one out of three abruptly finished and one unfinished (*Sashka* and *Skazka dlia detei*). When the adrenalin was flowing, he would sacrifice narrative poetry for prose. Another *Song of the Tsar Ivan Vasil'evich* would have been enormously welcome and could have come as unexpectedly as it had on the first occasion.

Drama poses a bigger question. There had been no known attempt to write drama since the artistic failure with *Dva brata* (1835-36) and the censorship setback with *Maskarad* (1835 - 36). Drama was never really Lermontov's preferred genre. He had had his highly productive youthful surge under the impulse primarily of Schiller and of personal family discomforts. He had tried again when he had seen an opportunity to establish himself with a satirical tragedy, *Maskarad*. He had rushed to hasty creation of *Dva brata*, under the impulsion of his unhappy love for Varvara Lopukhina-Bakhmeteva. It is not far-fetched to speculate that in the liberal atmosphere following Nicholas I's death (1855) and the conclusion of the Crimean War (1856), Lermontov would have again seen an opportunity and seized it: in October 1856 he would only have been turning 42! Had that occurred, Lermontov would have been well advised to remove or modify any updated version of the Arbenin character, if he was still contemplating such a hero. For Arbenin is the chief stumbling block in *Maskarad*, which contains some first-rate, down-to-earth verse.

If Arbenin is the spoiler in *Maskarad*, then in *Geroi nashego vremeni* it is Pechorin who creates problems, although in a different and less damaging way. First, there is what Pechorin does not do. He does not by his presence, as does Arbenin, skew the plot, the story, the unfolding of exciting, engrossing events. As emphasized above, suspenseful storytelling is one of the strengths of *Geroi nashego vremeni*, in evidence in each episode. However, Pechorin also irritates the reader: certainly in the exaggerated trouble he takes to outmaneuver the preening Grushnitskii while awakening love in the inexperienced and perfectly decent Kniazhna Meri, without having any thought of seducing her. This has to be accounted a trivial pursuit. It is made worse, and this is the crux, by the unacknowledged but unmistakable admiration of the author.

That often vilified Russian literary critic, Nicholas I, who had offered suggestions for Pushkin too while he was still alive, was on the right track in his negative assessment of Pechorin. On June 14, 1840, steaming for Petergof aboard the *Bogatyr'*, he finished reading *Geroi nashego vremeni* and summed up his views in a letter to the Empress. He had found the second part "revolting and very worthy of being in fashion. This is the same depiction of despicable and improbable characters you find in today's foreign novels. Such novels are injurious to morality and coarsen the character.... you finish by getting used to the thought the whole world is full of

such personalities.... People are anyway inclined to become hypochondriacs or misanthropes, so why encourage them or develop such tendencies. So, I repeat, in my view, we're dealing with "a miserable talent which demonstrates the perverted mind of the author." Nicholas liked Maksim Maksimovich, whom he had hoped to see develop into the hero. "Happy journey, Mr. Lermontov," he wrote; let him if he can, clear his head in a milieu where he'll be able to complete the picture of the captain's character if he is overall able to understand and depict him."³⁴ Lermontov was on that day in Stavropol' awaiting assignment. The Tsar was fairly close to what was to be a mainstream of Soviet critical thinking!

The removal of Pechorin from some future novel or his subjection to basic overhaul would have entailed a considerable problem, for Pechorin made things happen: without his curiosity, the smugglers remain undisturbed in *Taman'*; without his meddling, there are no dramatic events to conclude *Kniazhna Meri*; without his selfish amorousness and enterprise, no Bela tragedy. Then, too, Lermontov for obvious reasons felt at home with Pechorin, much more so than with Krasinskii in *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*. Nevertheless something would have had to be done in future prose works to remove Pechorin, change him, or change the relationship between author and characters, not for the sake of morality, as demanded by Nicholas I, but to hold the reader.

There are other possibilities: Krasinskii, the poor clerk in *Kniaginia Ligovskaia*; the blind boy in *Taman'*; Maksim Maksimovich, all of whom reveal a willingness on the author's part to explore emotions other than those displayed by a Pechorin, emotions paralleling those observed in the lyrics from about 1839. But Lermontov never had trouble finding his own way. It is only his youth at the time of his death that tends to encourage such exercises by riveting the eye on his great potential. Lermontov does not need to plead youth. Denied though he was the chance to fulfill his potential, he had with *Geroi nashego vremeni* already written no mean book.

What, finally, should be said of Lermontov's *oeuvre*? What does this achievement amount to? Such questions nearly always prove the most difficult to answer meaningfully. But let us begin with a fairly striking comparison made by Fisher. Speaking of Lermontov's successful elaboration of what he calls the classical style (a skillful blend according to artistic needs of the image-laden, the exotic, and the prosaically simple, leavened with folk elements), Lermontov is "the best in Russian Literature." Fisher goes on: "By comparison Pushkin is archaic, Turgenev is prosaic, Tolstoi and Dostoevskii are heavy, and Gogol' is error-prone (*nepravilen*)."³⁵ Let us dismiss from this discussion Turgenev, Tolstoi, and Dostoevskii: those who come after provide interesting commentary, here in particular Tolstoi's admiration and insights, but they clearly can have nothing to do with the formation of a predecessor. Let us dismiss also Gogol'. We have noted above that his sometime influence on Lermontov was an impediment. This is not to belittle Gogol': it is because when the two sat down to write, their objectives were far apart. This distance between them makes fruitful influence impossible.

But Pushkin is very different. He came *before* Lermontov, and he influenced him profoundly, both as a model of successful poetry and as a compass. How then does Fisher come to think that Pushkin was rendered archaic by Lermontov? First, archaic is here not derogatory. If Pushkin was archaic, so were Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Racine. But in a situation of rapid change and development, fifteen years counts for a great deal. Also, while we constantly remind

³⁴ Emma Gershtein, *Sud'ba Lermontova*, 100-2; *LVVS*, 394-95. Gershtein ungraciously and gratuitously attributes the Tsar's critical insights to Benkendorf. Why? To demean Nicholas, Benkendorf, or both? But Nicholas, for all his shortcomings, was not likely to surrender his rights of independent criticism to a man who, we know from the same letter, was afraid of cats.

³⁵ *Venok*, 214.

ourselves of Lermontov's early demise, we sometimes forget that Pushkin, too, was cut off before his noon. What he would or could have achieved, had he lived, is open; but if Sophocles could produce first-rate tragedy at around 90, Pushkin could surely have been expected to make further contributions after 37.

There are several ways in which Pushkin was outstripped by Lermontov:

1) In his treatment of nature — and nature is not alone a criterion of excellence — Lermontov was Pushkin's superior. Lermontov was a more outdoors poet than Pushkin, in spite of Pushkin's being an enthusiastic rider and a tireless walker. For Pushkin was born with one foot in the rococo. During very formative years his idea of nature was Tsarskoe selo. As a writer he was a creature of the drawing-room, the salon. Lermontov had Tarkhany and the Caucasus. Whatever the causes, Pushkin tends to *mention* nature, Lermontov to *describe* it. Lermontov's treatment is more sensuous, more apparently deeply felt, his emotions more contagious.

2) Though Pushkin's poetic style on occasion is remarkable for its simplicity, Lermontov goes much further in prosaicizing verse.

3) Paradoxically, Lermontov also went further in prose in introducing more complex syntactic structures than Pushkin's. If not Lermontov, someone would have done this, perhaps Pushkin himself had he lived, for his *Pikovaia dama (Queen of Spades)* is clearly a step away from the extreme austerity of *Povesti Belkina (Tales of Belkin)*, by which Pushkin deliberately moves away stylistically from the poeticized Karamzin school and works to establish prose on its own independent footing. But social and psychological themes were beginning to make inevitable a non-Voltairean, more complex stylistics.

4) Pushkin's creation was always an artifact, Lermontov's an equivalent, somehow, of real life. This is not a difference in merit or quality; it is a difference of 15 years, of two different ages and their respective attitudes to art and literature. Nevertheless, since Lermontov is our topic, it deserves mention here.

If we look at Lermontov's oeuvre against the background of Russian literature, we can see that he plays perfectly an allotted part in its development. But if we stand back from this somewhat deterministic scenario and view him in isolation, we see that he is unique. No one has ever written prose like Lermontov's. And if we remove some 50 Russian lyrics (ranging from 1829 *Neobviniai menia, Molitva* to 1841 *Prorok*) we leave Russian poetry infinitely poorer.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Appendix I provides a quick and approximate overview of the directions taken by Lermontov in his creative years (1828-1841), in terms of the four traditional genres in which he worked: the lyric or short poem, the narrative poem, drama, and prose. I use the term *approximate* for two reasons: 1) in some cases we do not know exactly when Lermontov started work on a poem or prose piece; if known with reasonable certainty the years are given, e.g., *Vadim* 1833-34; the year under which a work is placed in the appendix is the year of completion; 2) sometimes, usually in the case of lyric poems, the year of completion is not known; in these cases I use Eikhenbaum's date in his five-volume Academia edition. The date given by Eikhenbaum does not always agree with the conjectures of other sources. But these instances are few among many and not mathematically significant or cause to lie awake.

Year	Lyrics and Short Poems	Narrative Poems	Dramatic Works	Prose
1828		<i>Cherkesy, Kavkazskii plenik, Korsar</i>		
1829	46	<i>Prestupnik, Oleg, Dva brata</i>		
1830-	80	<i>Dve nevol'nitsy (?) Dzhiulio</i>	<i>Ispantsy, Menschen und Leidenschaften</i>	
1830-31	47	<i>Poslednii syn vol'nosti, Kally</i>	<i>Strannyi chelovek</i>	
1831	73	<i>Azrail, Angel smerti, Isповed'</i>		
1832	52	<i>Moriak, Izmail-Bei, Litvinka</i>		
1833-34	4	<i>Aul Batundzhi, Khaldzhi Abrek</i>		<Vadim>
1835	1		<i>Maskarad</i>	
1836	4	<i>Boiarin Orsha (1833-36)</i>	<i>Dva brata (1835?-36)</i>	<"Ja khochu rasskazat' vam">
1837	20	<i>Pesnia pro tsaria Ivana Vasil'evicha</i>		<i>Astrik Kerib, Kniaginia Ligovskaia (1836-37)</i>
1837-38	5	<i>Tambovskaia kaznacheisha (?)</i>		
1838		<i>Beglets</i>		
1839		<i>Demon (1829-39), Mtsyri, Sashka (1835-39)</i>		<i>Geroi nashego vremeni (1837-39)</i>
1840	20	<i>Skazka l'kia detei (1839-40)</i>		
1841	27			<Shtoss> <i>Kavkazets (?)</i>

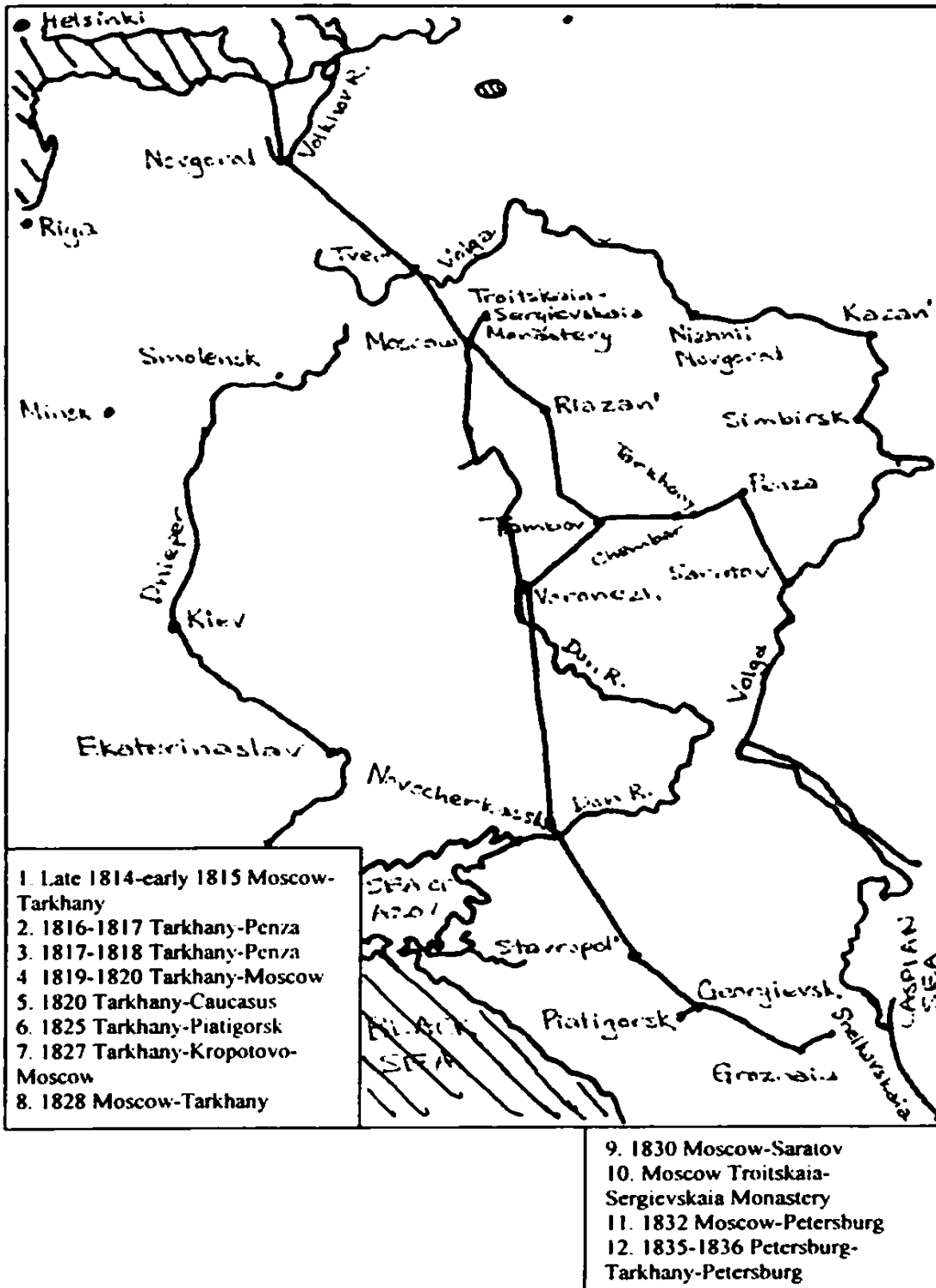
APPENDIX II

Lermontov's Travels

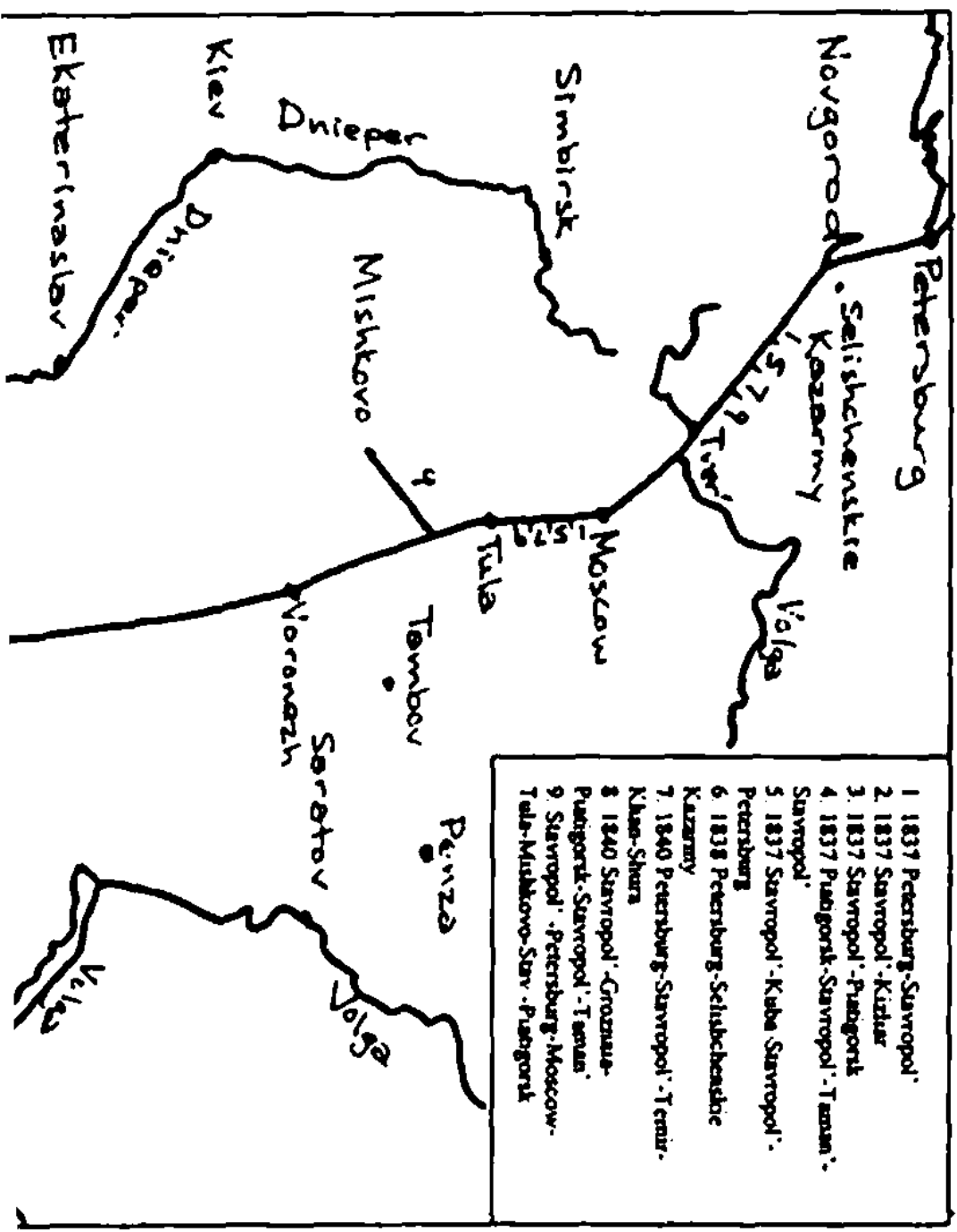
A. 1814-1836

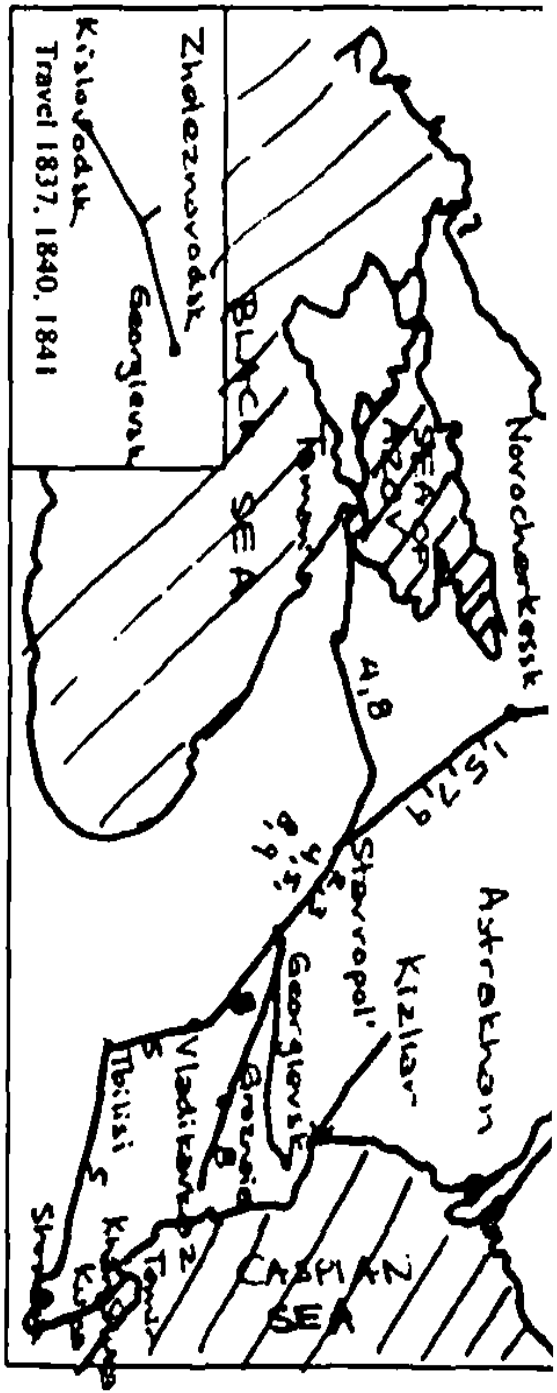
B. 1837-1841

A. 1814-1836



B. 1837-1841





APPENDIX III

Lermontov's First-Term Grades
December 1828

		P	R	O	G	R	E	S	S	
CONDUCT	APPLICATION	RELIGION	MATHEMATICS	RUSSIAN LANGUAGE	LATIN LANGUAGE	HISTORY	GEOGRAPHY	GERMAN LANGUAGE	FRENCH LANGUAGE	SUMMARY
VERY GOOD		3	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	30

Inspector Pavlov

Lermontov entered the Moscow University Boarding School for the Nobility in September, 1828. The grade sheet reflects his first-term performance. This is from a copy in Lermontov's hand sent by him to Mariia Akimovna Shan-Girei (1799-1845). She was the niece of Lermontov's grandmother, Elizaveta Nikolaevna Arsen'eva and the mother of Lermontov's good friend Akim Pavlovich Shan-Girei. She and her son stayed at Tarkhany in 1825 and 1826. Persuaded by Arsen'eva and with her help, she bought a small estate, Aatikha (sometimes Opatikha), about three kilometers south of Tarkhany. Lermontov, for whom Mariia Akimovna to some extent replaced his dead mother, was very fond of her and corresponded with her (four letters of his survive) after he and his grandmother left Tarkhany in 1827. Their last meeting seems to have been in Petersurg, in February, 1838 (*Ak. nauk*, VI, 735).

The letter containing the grade sheet is dated tentatively as close to December 31, 1828. Lermontov wrote in part: "//// I'm sending you my grades, and you'll see that Mr. Dubenskoi gave me a 4 [the highest possible grade, the lowest being 0] for Russian and a 3 for Latin. But he'd been regularly giving me 3 and 2 right up to the exam. He suddenly took pity and changed my grades at the last moment. Which made me second in the class." The December examinations caused Lermontov to be promoted from the fourth to the fifth class (*Ak. nauk*, VI, 404-407, 695-695).

APPENDIX IV

Incidence of Attributive Adjective in Verse

Incidence in Appendix IV is measured in the following way. The total number of syllables in a given poem is noted (excluding syllables occurring, after the last metrical stress, e.g., the ninth syllable in a four-foot iambic line), as is the number of cases in which an attributive adjective is used. The former figure is then divided by the latter figure. What results is the ratio of divisor to dividend. And, clearly, the higher the ratio, the smaller the incidence of the attributive adjective. For example:

<i>Title</i>	<i>Syllables</i>	<i>Attributives</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
Smert' poeta (1837)	500	46	10.8
Valerik (1840)	2088	71	29.4

The figures of 29.4 and 10.8 show that the incidence of attributive adjectives in "Valerik" is very significantly lower than in "Smert' poeta." In fact, 29.4 and 10.8 characterize two sharply contrasting ratios—the former indicating a low, the latter a high incidence of the attributive adjective. Obviously, the procedure here demonstrated for obtaining a ratio within a given poem can equally well be applied to a larger unit—the overall total for a given year or sample of the lyrics for a given year.

If we take our total Lermontov sample, i.e. all the Lermontov lyrics examined for this study, we obtain a mean of 20.29. Figures below this mean are therefore, for Lermontov, low, while figures above it are high.

The following table shows Lermontov's evolution over the years in terms of the incidence of the attributive adjectives.

<i>Years</i>	<i>Syllables</i>	<i>Attributives</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
1828-29	8456	459	18.4
1830	6391	294	21.7
1830-31	9351	387	24.2
1831	8130	337	24.1
1832	9010	354	25.5
1836-39	8457	527	16.1
1840	7079	332	21.3
1841	5550	336	16.5

As our text above indicates, very low ratios marking higher than average occurrences of the attributive adjective are found in the "declamatory" or "rhetorical" styles. This may be seen from the nine poems mentioned by Eikhenbaum as examples of this rhetorical styles:

<i>Poem</i>	<i>Syllables</i>	<i>Attributives</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
Opjat' narodnye vitii (1835!)	304	24	12.7
Umiraiushchii gladiator"	424	29	14.6
Smert' poeta	500	46	10.9
Duma	496	23	21.6
Poet	440	31	14.2
Ne ver' sebe	400	31	12.9
I-e janvarja	448	36	12.4
Rodina	252	21	12.0
Poslednee novesel'e	816	54	15.1
TOTALS	4080	295	13.8

For more detail, see Vickery, "On the Incidence of the Attributive Adjective in Lermontov's Poetry," *Russian Verse Theory* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1989), pp. 441-453.

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