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"The Shot" by Aleksandr Pushkin and Its Trajectories

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"One does not judge a bullet according to its color, taste, and smell. It should be judged from the point of view of its dynamics."

In. Tynianov, "The Literary Fact."

While other poetic devices disappeared from use when Pushkin descended to *surovaiia proza* in the 1830s, his use of alliterative and anagrammatic sound patterning enjoyed an unprecedented development and acquired new characteristics in the new environment. In his prose the poet generally refrained from the purely ornamental (euphonic) use of sound that dominated his poetry, and exploited instead the semantic and thematic possibilities of the sound pattern. As a result, Pushkin's prose is permeated with highly meaningful "sound-images" (Vygodskii) or "logograms" (Saussure), the study of which offers new possibilities for reading and interpretation of his prose. D. Vygodskii, who applied this method to Pushkin's poetry, defined the "sound-image" (*zvukobraz*), as a "specific set of sounds which at a given moment fills the poet's consciousness and impels him to select for his work sounds which are identical or analogous to those found in the basic set."¹ F. de Saussure defines "logogram" as follows: "[A logogram] is not a 'phonetic word,' not even a 'word': it is a 'gram' (Greek *gramma*), constructed around a subject which inspires the whole passage, and is more or less its 'logos,' its rational unity, its function."²

An examination of various alliterative, anagrammatic, logogrammatic, and etymological patterns often leads to the discovery of meticulously orchestrated sub-themes and sub-plots in Pushkin's prose. Titles, proper names, and certain recurrent motifs whose appearances either directly motivate the development of the narrative or simply coincide with the plot's turning points are particularly productive sources of meaningful "sound-images" or "logograms."³ The present study is a further elaboration of this method. It focuses on several tight assimilative series generated by the sounds of the title, the proper names and several key motifs in Pushkin's "The Shot." At the same time, the study tests the

hypothesis that simultaneously to this assimilative process a counter process takes place which dissimilates the all too obvious series. Both processes are treated here as riddles presented by Pushkin on the level of sound, word, text, and subtext.

There is little doubt that the key motif of this duelist tale (*breiterskaia povest'*) entitled "Vystrel" is the "shot." Pushkin distributed an array of shots evenly throughout the symmetrically composed tale.⁴ A "shot" appears in the title, in the two epigraphs (each corresponding to one part of the tale), in both parts of the tale proper, and in the off-stage epilogue. The title, "Vystrel," together with the two epigraphs—"Sretialis' my" and "Ia poklialisia zastrelii' ego po pravu dueii (za nim ostalsia eshche moi vystrel'" —establish an initial sound theme endowed with remarkable "alliterative energy" which sets off a series of highly semanticized and thematized "sound-images," all related to the title. The following passage describing Sil'vio's marksmanship is an apparent elaboration on the consonantal theme contained in the title "Vystrel":

Glavnoe uprazhnenie ego soStoialo V STRel'be iz piSToLeta. STenyy ego komnaty byli VSe iSToCheny puliami, VSe V SKVazhinakh, kak SoTy pchelinye. Bogatoe sobranie piSToLetoV bylo edinSTVennoi roskosh'u bednoi mazanki, gde na zhii. IskusSTVo, do koeogo doSTig on, bylo neimoverno!...⁵

Sil'vio's own description of his rabid character reverberates the key sounds of the title even more faithfully, as does the off-stage epilogue, in which the last shot of the story is fired:

Kharakter moi vann izVeSTen: ia priyuk peRVenSTVovat' no smolodu eto bylo vo mne STRaSTiin. V nashe vremena buiSTVo bylo v mode: ia byl pervym buianom po armii. My khVaSTalis' p'ianSTVom: ia perepil SlaVnogo Burtsova, VoSpeTogo Denisom Davydovym. Dueii v nashem polku sluchalis' pominutno: ia na vsekh byval SVideTeLem, iii deiSTVuiushchim litsom.

Takim obrazom uznal ia konets poVeSTi, koei nachalo nekogda tak porazilo menia. S gerceom onoi uzhe ia ne VSTRechal'sia. SkazyVaiuT, chto Sil'Vio, vo vremena voz-mushcheniia Aleksandra Ipslantii, pREdVoditel' STVoVal' otriadam eteRiSToV i byl ubit V SRazhenii pod Skulfianami.

Although "v-s-t" is among the more common consonantal groups in Russian, its incidence in the quoted passages is four times higher than

elsewhere in Pushkin.⁶ Such a concentration of these sounds leaves little doubt that these passages were executed according to the artistic code of alliterative and thematic patterning generated by the title of this duelist tale.

Next to the titles, the names of Pushkin's protagonists are, as a rule, very productive in forming similar sound-images or logograms. This is even more true of foreign names such as "Sil'vio." As if to intensify the enigma of his demonic hero, Pushkin envelops his name with a cloud of mystery. The reader never actually learns Sil'vio's real name. He is first referred to as "odin chelovek" (one man), then we are told that his name was foreign, and it is only after a long pronominal overture that he is given a name: "Sil'vio (tak nazovu ego)" ("Sil'vio—so I will call him"). However, when Pushkin finally baptizes his hero, the name Sil'vio [Sil'via] already sounds familiar to our ear. The passage introducing the yet unnamed hero into the story not only contains all the necessary phonetic ingredients for his name, but Pushkin marks the beginning and the end of this anagrammatical passage by words "imeli" and *imia*," thus signaling the actual act of naming:

... ego obyknovennaia ugrinost', krutoi нрав i zloi iazyk
imeli SIL'noe VIIIAnie na molodye nashi umy. Kakaia-to
tainstvennost' okruzhala ego sud'bu; on kazalsia russkim, a
noSIL'inostrannoe ImIA.

The assumption that this effect is intended by Pushkin is further supported by the stability of this configuration of sounds. In another passage Sil'vio's name attracts similar words which produce a double anagram of his name:

Odnako zh malo-pomalu vse bylo zabyto, i SIL'VIO snova
priobrel prezhee Svoe VIIIAvle. Odin ia ne mog uzhe k
nemu priblizitsia. *Imia* ot prirody romanticheskoe
voobrazhenie, IA Vsekh SIL'nee prezhe vsego byl priviazan
k cheloveku, koego zhizn' byla zagadkoiu i kotoryi kazalsia
mne gercom tainstvennoi kakoi-to povesti.

Thus in addition to the mystery surrounding Sil'vio's life, the origin of his name is presented as an onomastic conundrum to be solved by the reader. Sound and meaning are ideally matched in the anagram: SIL'noe VIIAnie—SIL'VIO, and the demonic hero as well as his sonorous name exert a remarkable influence on their physical and phonetic environment.

The observations made about Sil'vio are equally applicable to his adversary. The introduction of the Count parallels with contrapuntal precision the introduction of Sil'vio. The Count is first referred to as

molodoi chelovek, then later as *izvesnaia osoba*; we are told that he bears a "famous name" which is not revealed ("ne knochu nazvat' ego"). The parallelism between the protagonists is also sustained on the level of sound. The appearance of the Count alliteratively activates the surrounding text and evokes a similar sound-image, linked to the title "Vystrel":

"Orodu ne VSTREchAL schASTLIvsa STOL'
blISTatel'nogol' Voobrazite sebe molodoST', um,
kRASoTLu, VeSeloST' samuiu beshennuiu, khrabROST'
samuiu bespechnuiu, gromkoe imia, den'gi, kotorym ne znal
on scheta i kotorye nikogda u nego ne peReVodil's', i
pRedSTaV'te sebe, kakoe deISTVie dolzhen byl on
pRoizVeSTi mezhdu nami. PeRvenSTVo moe
pokolebalos'."

In the light of the close parallelism between the adversaries on the various levels of plot and sound, it would be only legitimate to expect some direct anagrammatic link between Sil'vio and the Count. The fact that the Count's name is not mentioned invites speculation concerning the other forms of address used in the tale. In Part One the Count is referred to simply as *on* (he). In Part Two, where we first learn his title, he is referred to as "the Count" (15 times), or he is formally addressed by the narrator as "Your Excellency" (11 times). The latter form, *vazhe siiiatel'svo*, contains a complete anagram of the name Sil'vio. In the crucial scene of recognition, where the link between the protagonists is re-established, the two appellations appear side by side:

—Eto udivitel'noi skazal graf, — a kak ego zvali?
— SIL'VIO, vashe Siiatel'stVO.
— Sil'viol! — vskrichal graf, vskochiv so svoego mesta; — vy znali
Sil'vio?

The synonymic substitution of one form of address for another produces a perfect anagram in which the name of the sullen, plebeian Sil'vio is masterfully reflected in the bright title of his genteel adversary. Both appellations, "SIL'VIO" and "Siiatel'stVO" echo, in turn, the story's title "Vystrel."⁷

The salvo of shots which Pushkin dispersed evenly throughout the symmetrical composition of this tale forms a series of its own. A closer examination of the trajectories of these shots reveals several peculiarities. Contrary to the ominous expectation created by the two epigraphs, the shots are actually misses; instead of striking the adversaries, the bullets pierce substitute targets: a card, a cap, and a picture.

The bullet-riddled *card* in Part One is the result of a squabble over a game of faro at Sil'vio's, during which a young lieutenant had hurled a brass candlestick, narrowly missing the host. Knowing the code of honor and Sil'vio's marksmanship, everyone considered the lieutenant a "dead man." But time passed and to everyone's disappointment the lieutenant was alive, while Sil'vio, instead of fighting a duel, was found in the courtyard "shooting bullet after bullet into an ace pasted upon the gate."⁸ Sil'vio would not challenge the lieutenant until his more important duel with the Count is resolved. The bullet-riddled *tuz* (ace) is thus a stand-in for the other *tuz* (big shot), the Count.⁹ The motif of shooting at an ace present in Part One resurfaces in a slightly dissimilated form in Part Two. Here, shooting at a card becomes the subject of a conversation between the narrator I. L. P. and the Count in which the links among all three participants as well as between the two parts of the tale are established.

The second object on this trajectory is Sil'vio's red *cap*, which is punctured "about an inch above the forehead." Sil'vio dons this souvenir of his first duel at the beginning of his monologue, and throws it on the floor at the end, thus putting a temperamental full stop to his demonic confession which concludes Part One. Sil'vio reappears in this cap before the Count in Part Two. In contrast to the Count's cap in Part One, from which, during the first duel, the Count picked the "ripest cherries," spitting the stones at his adversary, Sil'vio's cap, at the beginning of the second duel, contains two lots which will decide the Count's destiny. Moreover, Sil'vio warns that his pistol is loaded not with cherry stones but with heavy bullets.

The third object, which completes the series, is the twice perforated *picture* in the Count's house. Pushkin reinforces the parallel between the painting and the ace by a similar formulation: "kartina byla prostrelena dvumia pulliami, vsazhenymi odna na druguiu" and "My poshi k Sil'vio i nashli ego na dvore, sazhaushchego puliu na puliu v tuza..." All three objects are pierced by a shot, and all three pose as surrogate inanimate targets: the pierced cap stands in for Sil'vio, the bullet-riddled ace for the Count, and the twice-punctured picture for both men.

Trusting the precision of Pushkin's hand in drafting the trajectories and the three targets on the level of plot, I am tempted to look for some clues that would link the card, the cap, and the picture on the level of sound as well. The words "card" and "picture" produce in Russian a perfect anagram, KARTA—KARTINA. Both words are mentioned several times in the story. The difficulty lies in the nonconforming "furazhka" (a military cap). However, when Pushkin introduces Sil'vio's red cap for the first time, he does not refer to it as "furazhka": "Sil'vio vsial i vynul iz kartona krasnuiu shapku s zolotoiu kist'iu, s galunom (to,

chto frantsuzy nazyvaiut *bonnet de police*)..." But in the subsequent text, Pushkin indiscriminately refers to the cap as *furazhka*. The initial substitution of two synonyms for *furazhka* seems puzzling; neither *shapka* nor *bonnet* match the anagrammatic series *karta-kartina*. Could it be that the initial synonymic substitution is Pushkin's clue to the reader to search for yet another synonym that would restore the series as an anagrammatic triplet, just as the substitutions of *Vashe sial'ishvo* for *graf* and *karta* for *tuz* resulted in perfect anagrams? The Russian word for a uniform cap with a cap-band and a peak is *kartuz*. This word, though not mentioned in the text or in the drafts, could be the missing piece from the perfect anagrammatic puzzle: KARTA/[KARTuz]/KARTINA.¹⁰ This conjecture is not ill-founded, for Pushkin has hidden in his text additional clues pointing to just such an anagram. If we recall that the bullet-riddled card was actually *tuz* (ace), the implied anagrammatic reading becomes more compelling, for it would transform this series into an ideally knit anagrammatic triplet: KARTA Tuz/[KARTuz]/KARTINA. Even the circumstances surrounding Sil'vio's cap suggest that all three punctured objects were pulled by Pushkin from the same alliterative "box": "Sil'vio... vynul iz KARTona KRAsnuiu shapku."

Why did Pushkin dissimilate one member of this triple series and present it in the form of an anagrammatic conundrum based on synonymic substitution? One of Pushkin's poetic rules was "not to spell everything out—this is the secret of arousing interest."¹¹ For Pushkin, known for his sense of measure, an explicit rendering of the delicate triplet as "karta-[kartuz]-kartina" would be artistically inferior. Such a rendering would degrade his artistic method to the level of the heavy-handed puns which the narrator, Lieutenant Colonel I. L. P., seems to relish:

Prinatsia ia bylo za nepodslaschennuiu nativku, no ot nee boilela u menia golova; da priznaius', poboiatsia ia sdelat'sia *p'ianitseiu s gort'a*, to est samym *gor'kim* p'ianitseiu, chemu primerov mnozhestvo videl ia v nashem uезде. Blizkikh sosedei okolo menia ne bylo, krome dvukh ili trekh *gor'kikh*, koikh beseda sostoiala bol'sheiu chast'iu v ikote i vozdykhaniakh. [The italics are Belkin's.]

[I tried drinking unsweetened home brew, but it made my head ache; and moreover, I confess I was afraid of becoming a *drunkard from mere embitterment*, that is to say, the *bitterest* kind of drunkard, of which I had seen many examples in our district. I had no near neighbors, except two or three *bitter* ones, whose conversation consisted for the most part of

hicups and sighs.]

Such an overt rendering of Pushkin's delicate triplet would deprive us not only of the pleasure of recognition but also of the unique sense of complicity with the author, which Pushkin so generously offers his reader.

Pushkin's dissimulative strategy is not limited to the lower strata of the text. This device is actually more common on the higher levels which involve literary context and subtext. An adequate reading of a dissimulated literary association often requires a substitution of textually equivalent elements. Thus, the following sentence could be recognized as an allusion to the famous archer Wilhelm Tell:

The skill [Sil'vio] had acquired with his favorite weapon was simply incredible, and if he had offered to shoot a pear (*grushu*) off somebody's cap, not a man in our regiment would have hesitated to expose his head to the bullet.¹²

As the drafts reveal, Pushkin even considered substituting a sour cherry (*vshnia*) for the classical apple, in order to camouflage even more ironically the all too obvious literary allusion.¹³ In its turn, the Swiss landscape in the Count's house may cue the reader to the setting of Wilhelm Tell (Byron, too, had used Switzerland as the backdrop for his poems *Manfred* and *Childe Harold*), while Sil'vio's red bonnet, a true fetish in the story, may allude to Gessler's hat which the Swiss were ordered to venerate as if it were the Austrian crown.¹⁴ Schiller's and Pushkin's marksmen each take part in a struggle for the independence of a subjugated nation: Wilhelm Tell for Switzerland, and Sil'vio for Greece. (The Italian Romantic poet and rebel against the Hapsburg crown, the Carbonaro Silvio Pellico, would be in good company among these freedom fighters: Byron translated his *Francesca da Rimini*, and Pushkin reviewed his *Dei doveri degli uomini* in 1836.) Thus the various shots fired in the tale unmistakably target a work of the Romantic tradition.

French Romanticism also left its mark on Pushkin's tale and tinged the name of its hero. In Hugo's play *Hernani*, the old Duke de Silva spares the life of his rival in love, the young Count Hernani, who pledges his life to his savior. But de Silva's magnanimity was only a more diabolical form of vengeance. De Silva, who is often compared to a "tiger hungering for his prey," waits until the nuptial night of Hernani and Doña Sol to claim his rival's life. Hernani keeps his word, the lovers drink poison together and die in each other's arms, whereupon the repentant de Silva kills himself too. Sil'vio's postponed shot, his well-timed appearance before the honeymooning couple, his would-be magnanimity, and finally his

name, point to the sadistic de Silva in more than just an onomastic sense. However, the discrepancy between Pushkin's denouement and Hugo's frenetic finale suggests that "The Shot" is a parody of the fifth act of Hugo's play.¹⁵

Perhaps an even more important prototype of the Russian "homme sans mœurs et sans religion" comes from Britain. Nineteenth-century readers viewed Sil'vio as a "demonic figure" thoroughly embedded in the Byronic Romantic tradition which Pushkin almost singlehandedly introduced to Russia in the early 1820s. Dostoevski claimed that, with Sil'vio, whom Pushkin borrowed from Byron, "entered into our literature a whole series of 'evil men,' including Pechorin."¹⁶ Consumed with a single passion, the thirst for revenge, Sil'vio can be linked directly to Byron's *Glaucou*, whose hero also waited until Hassan's wedding day to take revenge on his adversary.¹⁷ However, the irony with which Pushkin treats in the 1830s the themes of his youth and the possibility that Sil'vio might have been a caricature of the Byronic hero were lost on Pushkin's contemporaries.

The literary allusions in "The Shot" point to the metapoetic level of text which was beyond the grasp of either the narrator I. L. P. or Belkin, and which the editor of the *Tales*, A. P. (Aleksandr Pushkin), reserved for his polemic with Russian Romantic prose. Six years before writing *The Tales of Belkin*, Pushkin drew a rather grim picture of the domestic literary scene: "We do not yet have either verbal art or literature. From childhood on, we have drawn all our knowledge and all our notions from foreign books; we are used to thinking in a foreign language...."¹⁸

The prose epigraph from Marinskii points to the more specific domestic target of Pushkin's parody, the Romantic duelist tale (*braterskaia povest'*) in which the narrative method of Byronic verse-tales, the Byronic pose and demonic characters continued to proliferate. In an often quoted letter to Marinskii, Pushkin admonishes his friend for uncritically imitating foreign models and challenges his concept of prose:

... enough of your writing rapid tales [*bystrye povesti*] with romantic transitions—that is all right for a Byronic poem. But a novel requires *chatter* [*roman trebuet boltovnj*]: say everything out plainly. Your Vladimir ["The Traitor"] speaks the language of German drama....¹⁹

"The Shot" dramatizes some of the anomalies plaguing Russian prose of this time. At the opening of the tale Pushkin stresses that Sil'vio "had the appearance of a Russian, although his name was a foreign one." We are introduced to his collection of books on "military matters and novels," and Pushkin mentions Sil'vio's peculiar habits as a bibliophile: "He

willingly lent [his books] to us to read, and never asked for their return; on the other hand, he never returned to the owner the books that were lent to him." The narrator I. L. P., whose "romantic imagination" (*romanticheskoe voobrazhenie*) was perhaps nourished by the very romances "borrowed" from Sil'vio's library, sees Sil'vio as a "hero of some mysterious tale." His description of Sil'vio in Part One is full of platitudes borrowed from foreign and domestic Romantic lore: Sil'vio's "sullen pallor" (*mnachnina blednost'*), "sparkling eyes" (*sverkanishchie glaza*), his "truly diabolical appearance" (*vid nastoiashchego divovola*), his thirst for vengeance, or his "pacing up and down the room like a tiger in his cage" are all much-abused clichés which Pushkin would have liked to eradicate from Russian prose. Significantly, the narrator's speech in Part Two, which takes place some five years later, comes much closer to that good-natured "chatter" (*boltovnia*) through which Pushkin hoped to enliven Russian prose. In comparison to this voice, Sil'vio's speech is manneristic and bookish.

During the Boldino autumn of 1830 Pushkin completed his transition to prose. *The Tales of Belkin* were his first finished work in this genre. Each of the five tales targets some established canon in the Sentimental or Romantic tradition, challenges the foreign models and their domestic epigones, and parodies the most jarring stylistic excesses and mannerisms which plagued Russian prose. As such, each tale amounts to a sobering lesson in literary common sense. It seems that Pushkin intended to create in *The Tales* a poetic primer, whereby Russian prose, still a relatively new genre, could outgrow its adolescent dependence on foreign models and attain maturity.²⁰

While the narrator of "The Shot," the retired Lieutenant Colonel I. L. P. (in collaboration with Belkin), provides the tale with good-natured "chatter," the enigmatic editor A. P. (A. Pushkin) takes care of the other ingredient of prose: "thoughts, and once more thoughts."²¹ It is only on the cryptic level of the tale, full of anagrams, riddles, and complex literary parody, that the scope of the authorial intelligence is fully revealed.

If at the outset of my argument I referred to the various shots fired in "Vystrel" as misses, it was because I followed their trajectories only within the narrow context of the story. But once we place "The Shot" in the context of Pushkin's challenge to Russian prose, the same shots become bull's-eyes. The bullets fired by Pushkin in "Vystrel" are not only well distributed, but perfectly aimed. In addition to the genre of the Romantic duelist tale, the bullets hit the typical accessories used in the staging of such tales: the red bonnet suggests a costume, the card a prop, the Swiss landscape a typical Romantic setting (Schiller, Byron). The last shot of the tale is reserved for the romantic protagonist, Sil'vio himself.

Chekhov once said: "if in a story a rifle hangs on the wall, then this rifle has to fire." But "in the mystery novel," adds V. Shklovskii, "it is not the rifle that hangs on the wall that fires, but a different rifle."²² Pushkin's last shot, announced in the title and in the story's epigraph, "I swore to shoot him, as the code of duelling allows (it was my turn to fire)," will be fired by the author himself according to the code of his own duel with the Romantic tradition and its domestic perpetrators. In the epilogue of "The Shot" Sil'vio is doomed by artful fate to re-enact the *fiasco* of Byron, the idol of the Romantic era. Both joined the Greek insurgents in their struggle for independence and died: Byron, in his custom-made hoplite helmet, of uremic fever in Missolonghi in 1824, and Sil'vio in the Battle of Skulyani in 1821. (Pushkin again dissimulates this clear literary association by having the mimic die three years before the model).

However, even this heroic deed, which many critics claim redeems the diabolical Sil'vio, is not without a strain. There is nothing in the tale that would motivate Sil'vio's engagement in the freedom struggle of the Greeks, and his final act can be seen as just another test of valor under fire, another one of his absurd duels fought in his pierced red bonnet "with a gold tassel and galloon." The unconfirmed rumor of Sil'vio leading a handful of heterists to certain death against the regular Turkish army is very much in the vein of Pushkin's own enthusiasm toward the heterist movement, which he glorified in his youthful poem "Voina" ("War," 1821): "Uvizhu krov', uvzhu prazdnik mestn;/ Zavishech vkrug menia gubitel'nyi svinets" ("Blood I'll behold; I'll see the feast of vengeance:/ The fatal bullets whistling about my head"). The first entry of Pushkin's diary, written in Kishenev in 1821, reads: "I am firmly convinced that Greece will triumph and that 25,000,000 Turks will surrender the flowering land of Hellas to the legitimate heirs of Homer and Themistocles."²³ However, Pushkin's mature attitude toward Byron and the cause he died for casts a very different light on Sil'vio's valorous deed. Shortly after Byron's death in 1824, Pushkin formulated his assessment of the idol of his youth in a letter to Viazemskii:

By your letters... I see that you too are Kyrukelbekery and nauseated; you too are sad about Byron, but *I am glad of his death*, as a sublime theme for poetry. Byron's genius paled with his youth... He was created completely topsy-turvy, there was no gradualness in him, he suddenly matured and attained manhood, sang his song, and fell silent; and his first sounds did not return to him again... Greece has [been] defiled... for me. About the fate of the Greeks one is

permitted to reason, just as of the fate of my brothers the Negroes—one may wish both groups freedom from unendurable slavery. But it is *unforgivable puerility* that all enlightened European peoples should be raving about Greece. The Jesuits have talked our heads off about Themistocles and Pericles, and we have come to imagine that a nasty people, made up of bandits and shopkeepers, are legitimate descendants and heirs of their schoolfame. (24-25 June 1824)²⁴

"The Shot" is the last echo of Byron in Pushkin's work. If in the epigraph to this tale Pushkin cocked the hammer, then in the epilogue he pulls the trigger. With this last shot Pushkin adds to the bullet-riddled costume, prop, and setting, the central cliché of the fading Romantic lore, the demonic hero. The sullen Sil'vio is the last victim of the tale's poetic justice, executed with unflinching, ironic marksmanship.

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Notes

¹D. Vygodskii, "Iz evfoniceskikh nabliudenii (Bakhtchisaraiskii fontan)," *Pushkinia*, IV (1923), pp. 50-58.

²In J. Starobinski, *Words upon Words: The Anagrams of Ferdinand de Saussure*, tr. O. Emmet (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 19. In the course of this article I will use the terms "sound-image" and "logogram" interchangeably.

³I have found a number of meaningful "sound-images" or "logograms" in "The Stationmaster," "The Blizzard," and *The Captain's Daughter*; see "The Sound and Theme in the Prose of A. S. Pushkin: A Logo-Semantic Study of Paronomasia," *Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 27, no. 1 (1983), pp. 1-18.

⁴The compositional symmetry was analyzed by M. Petrovskii, "Morfologija pushkinskogo 'Vystrela,'" in *Problemy poetiki*, ed. V. Britusov (Moscow-Leningrad, 1925), pp. 173-201; by D. Blagoi, *Masterstvo Pushkina* (Moscow, 1955), pp. 223-40; and P. Debrezenny, *The Other Pushkin: A Study of Alexander Pushkin's Prose Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), p. 112.

⁵For the sake of the "tightness" of the alliterative series, I deal with consonants only, disregard their sequence, and have limited the scope to one word and its boundaries. My marking follows both graphic and phonetic principles and disregards palatalization.

⁶The calculation is based on 40 randomly selected samples of the same length from Pushkin's prose.

⁷Pushkin liked to link the names of his heroes in this fashion. In *The Captain's Daughter*, Grinev—Shvabrin—Zurin—Ekaterina II, Maria Mironova, all share the theme "r-i-n." In "The Blizzard" the antagonists Burnin and Vladimir share the

theme "n-i-r"; in "The Queen of Spades" the theme "g-r-n" unites Germann, St. Germain, and grafnia, while *Chaplitskii* and *Chekalskii* form a group of lucky winners.

⁸Cf.: "Zaretskii nekogda buian / Kartezhnoi shalki ataman, /... / Byvalo, Istivio golos sveta / V nem zluin khrabrosti vykhvalial: / On, pravda, v tuz iz pistoleta / V piati sazheniakh popadal..." (*Evgenii Olegin*, Six, IV, 7-8; V, 1-4).

⁹In Russian *tuz* refers to "ace" as well as to a person of rank and wealth.

¹⁰For us charades and logographs are children's games, but in Karamzin's time, when lexical detail and play with devices were in the foreground, such games were a literary genre" (Iu. Tynianov, "Literaturnyi fakt," in *Poetika, istoria literatury, knio* [Moscow, 1977], p. 257). Tynianov's point can be demonstrated by the following example, which shows that the reader of *Damskii zhurnal*, published by Pushkin's friend Shal'kov in the 1820s, had, apparently, no problems with solving complex charades involving bilingual puns and synonymic substitutions. Thus in a poem entitled "Sharada" the ladies were asked to add the Italian word *cara* (dear) or the Russian word *kara* (punishment) to the word *kolpak* (cap)—which had to be obtained through a synonymic substitution of *chepchik* (cap)—in order to produce the name of the Asian nomadic tribe *karakalpak*. See "Sharada" from *Damskii zhurnal* (1824) in *Russkaja stikhovonnaja parodiia (XVII-XIX vv.)* (Leningrad, 1960), pp. 200, 708n. In addition, this charade contains an acrostic (presumably not for the ladies) in which a "fool's cap" is placed on the head of the editor: "Shal'kov glup kak telenok. Da" ("Shal'kov is as dumb as a calf. Yes?").

As other examples from Pushkin attest, *kartuz* is the most natural synonym for *furazhka*, *shopka*, and *bonnet*: "Moi brat dvoimurodnyi, Buianov / V pukhu, v kartuze s kozyr'kom" (*Evgenii Olegin*, Five: XXVI: 9-10); "Tam v vide zerkal i karin, / Korotkii plashch, kartuz, rapira / Viseli na stene riadkom" ("Poslanie Del'vigu," 1827): "A o kakom sosed'e pishesh' mne lukayve pis'ma? kem eto menia ty strashhaesh'?" Osele vzhnu, chto takoe. Chelovek let 36; otstavnoi voenyi... S puzom i v kartuze" (letter to his wife, 14 July 1834). As these examples suggest, the word *kartuz* is endowed with a remarkable alliterative power and seems to be in a good company with such words as *karina*, *rapira*, or the notorious ruffian Buianov, from *buian* (ruffian). As a matter of fact, Sil'vio characterizes himself as *buian*.

¹¹From Pushkin's letter to Viazemskii, 6 February 1823 (A. S. Pushkin, *The Letters of Alexander Pushkin*, 3 vols. in 1, trans. with preface, introd. and notes by J. Thomas Shaw [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967], p. 110).

¹²Cf. U. Busch, "Puschkin und Sil'vio (Zur Deutung von 'Vystrel'; eine Studie über Puschkins Erzählkunst)," in M. Braun and E. Koschnieder, eds., *Slawistische Studien zum V. Internationalen Slawistenkongress in Sofia, 1963* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1963), pp. 401-25; and A. Kodjak, "O povesti Pushkina 'Vystrel'; *Mosy*, vol. 15 (1970), pp. 190-212. In a letter of 22-23 April 1825 Pushkin asked his brother to send him *Oeuvres dramatiques de Schiller*, and there is little reason to assume that Pushkin had not read *Wilhelm Tell* or heard about Rossini's opera *Wilhelm Tell*, performed in Paris in 1829, i.e., a year before "The Shot" was written.

¹³PSS, vol. 8/2, p. 592. Pushkin borrowed the cherry motif in the story from his own duel with Zubov in Kishinev in 1822: "na poedinok s Zubovym Pushkin iavilsia s

cheshniami i zavtrakal imi, poka tot streliak. Zubov streliak peryi i ne popal. — 'Dovolny vy!' — sprosil ego Pushkin, kotoromu prishel chered streliat'. Vmesto togo, chtoby trebovat' ystrela, Zubov brosilisa s ob'yatiami. — 'Eto lishnee,' — zametil emu Pushkin i, ne streliata, udalistsia" (Bartenev, *Pushkin v tuzhnoi Rossii*, 2nd ed. [Moscow, 1914], pp. 101-103, quoted in Vereasev, *Pushkin v zhizni*, I [Moscow, 1936], p. 188).

¹⁴"Ihr sehet diesen Hut, Männer von Uri! / Auftrichen wird man ihn¹⁷ auf hoher Säule, /... / Man soll ihn mit gebogenem Knie und mit / Entblösstem Haupt verehren - Daran will / Der König die Gehorsamen erkennen" (Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell*, I/3).

¹⁵Pushkin read *Hernani* prior to writing "The Shot" and considered Hugo's play, whose première in February 1830 occasioned one of the major romantic *batilles*, "un des ouvrages du temps que j'ai lu avec le plus de plaisir" (Pushkin's letter to Kihirovo, 19-24 May, 1830). The parallel to Hugo's play was first suggested by N. O. Lerner, "K genezisu 'Ystrela,'" *Zven'ia*, vol. 5 (1935), p. 133; and was later developed by N. Ia. Bertovskii, "O 'Povestakh Belkna': Pushkin 30-ku godov i voprosy narodnosti i realizma," in *Stat'i o literature* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1962), pp. 281-283.

¹⁶*Dnevnik pisatel'ia*, February, 1876; cited in Lerner, p. 126.

¹⁷See Jan van der Eng, "Les récits de Belkna: Analogie des procédés de construction," in *The Tales of Belkna* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), pp. 13-14.

¹⁸O prichinakh, zamedlyvshikh khod nashet slovesnosti" (1824).

¹⁹May/June, 1825; *Letters*, p. 224. Marinskii's tale, "Vecher na blyvake" is a good example of the "rapid tale" which would be better served if couched in verse form. Baratskii's narrative poem "Bal"—the source of the other epigraph—is a good example of such a romantic verse tale.

²⁰For a discussion of Pushkin's parody of foreign and domestic models in all five tales see D. Betha and S. Davydov, "Pushkin's Saturnine Cupid: The Poetics of Parody in the *Tales of Belkna*," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 96, no. 1 (1982), pp. 8-21.

²¹"[Proza] trebuat myslei i myslei" ("Prose demands thoughts and thoughts"), "O Russkoi proze," 1822.

²²V. Shklovskii, *O teorii prozy* (Moscow, 1929), p. 135.

²³From "Kishinev Diary," 2 April 1821.

²⁴*Letters*, p. 161; my emphasis. On the first anniversary of Byron's death, Pushkin allegedly ordered a mass "for the repose of God's servant the Boyar Gregory" and sent to Viazemskii a part of the host. See Pushkin's letter to Viazemskii, 7 April, 1825; *Letters*, p. 213.

"Bez Skotov Oboidensia": Gogol' and Sir Walter Scott

Judith Deutsch Kornblatt

In the 1953 novel by Dmitrii Petrov (pseudonym Biriuk) called *Smy stepei donskikh* (Sons of the Don Steppes), an elderly Cossack goes to England and has the occasion to meet Sir Walter Scott. "'I'm delighted to see you,' the famous writer says through the interpreter. 'I have heard a great deal about the Cossacks. They are a brave, manly people.'"¹ With this rather gratuitous meeting between the writer and the Cossack, on an equally gratuitous trip to London, the author informs his audience that the Cossack would make a great subject for a historical novel, and here, Petrov seems to say, is just that novel. In Russia, Scott's name was synonymous with the historical novel. A meeting with him could evoke but one set of associations.

In point of fact, the Cossacks certainly can, and often did serve as leading characters in so-called historical novels, from Bulgarin to Danilevskii to Chapygin and Zlobin. But the works that best describe the Cossacks, in all their lively, if horrific splendor, have little in common with the historical novel, and of those works that *do* conform more or less to the genre, the more fascinating parts are also scarcely if at all reminiscent of Walter Scott. The Cossack character's own reaction to the name of Scott when his servant announced him in Petrov's novel gives perhaps a more appropriate impression. His servant pleads: "'Mister Val'ter Skot has come to you! Don't you understand, Mister Val'ter Skot!' — 'We can get around without these beasts [skot: *Bez skotov oboidensia!*],' the old man puns, no doubt out of ignorance, rather than cleverness. "'Don't you see, I'm resting. I'm really tired out.'"

Much misreading has taken place, particularly of Nikolai Gogol's Cossack work, *Taras Bul'ba*, by trying to force it into the confines of the genre called the historical novel. Soviets read *Taras Bul'ba* as a historical account — albeit with a fictional main character — of the Russian past, and of the *true* origins of revolutionary spirit.² Reading the story through numerous novels and plays about Razin and Pugachev written in the early Soviet period, they see Gogol's work also as an example of the