

*Puškin*

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TODAY

*Edited by*

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## Puškin's Easter Triptych

"Hermit fathers and immaculate women,"  
"Imitation of the Italian," and "Secular Power"

During the last year of his life, Puškin wrote relatively few poems. The most important were completed on Kamennyi ostrov (Stone Island) in the summer of 1836 and included "Mirskaja vlast'" (Secular Power; 5 July), "Podražanie italijskomu" (Imitation of the Italian; 22 June), "Iz Pindemonti" (From Pindemonte; 5 July), "Otcy pustynniki i ženy neporočny . . ." (Hermit fathers and immaculate women; 22 July), "Kogda za gorodom, zadumčiv, ja brožu . . ." (When I, pensive, roam beyond the city; 14 August), and "Ja pamjatnik sebe vozdvig nepokojnomu . . ." (Exegi monumentum; 21 August). By the end of July, Puškin had marked the first four poems with roman numerals. He intended to publish them separately, as a lyrical cycle, perhaps in his own journal, *Sovremennik* (The Contemporary). However, Puškin's numeration reveals that the entire Stone Island cycle should have consisted of six poems:

- I unknown
- II "Hermit fathers and immaculate women"
- III "Imitation of the Italian"
- IV "Secular Power"
- V unknown
- VI "From Pindemonte"

The two empty positions and their precise location leave no doubt that the cycle took a very concrete shape in Puškin's mind. It should also be noted that when Puškin conceived the idea of this cycle and sketched its outline, two major poems, "When I, pensive, roam beyond the city" and "Exegi monumentum," were not yet written; they were completed in August.<sup>1</sup>

Leaving aside for the moment the speculation on the place of the missing poems and the hypothetical shape and unity of the entire cycle, I would like to focus on the three middle, contiguous poems which Puškin marked with roman numerals II, III, and IV. "Hermit fathers . . ." "Imitation of the Italian," and "Secular Power" form a micro-cycle of their own, sharing a number of common features. None of the three poems is Puškin's origi-

nal creation; they are based either entirely or partially on some text of foreign origin. "Hermit fathers . . ." contains a paraphrase of the "Prayer of St. Ephraem the Syrian," "Imitation of the Italian" is based on Francesco Gianni's sonnet about Judas, which Puškin knew from a French translation by Antoni Deschamps, and "Secular Power" partially reproduces the New Testament account of the Crucifixion, interspersed with motifs from the Easter liturgy. All three poems are lyrical meditations on the relationship between the powers and laws that rule this world, the *jus humanum* and *jus divinum*.<sup>2</sup> The cycle is also formally unified: the poems are written in Alexandrine lines, with a caesura after the third foot, and with alternating feminine and masculine pairs of rhymes. Most important, the three poems are united by the theme of Easter. Projected on the calendar of Paschal events, "Hermit fathers . . ." with its Lenten prayer, falls on the "mournful days of Lent" (dni Velikogo posta); "Imitation" brings us to Holy Thursday, the betrayal of Christ, and the suicide of Judas, while "Secular Power" re-enacts the Crucifixion scene of Good Friday and exposes the subsequent betrayal of the divine mystery by secular powers.<sup>3</sup>

Written as the last of the three poems, on 22 July, "Hermit fathers . . ." opens the Easter cycle:

- II
- 1 Отцы пустынники и жены непорочны,
  - 2 Чтоб сердцем возлетать во области заочны,
  - 3 Чтоб укрепить его средь дюльных бурь и битв,
  - 4 Сложили множество божественных молитв;
  - 5 Но ни одна из них меня не удивляет,
  - 6 Как та, которую священик повторяет
  - 7 Во дни печальные Великого поста;
  - 8 Всех чаще она мне приходит на уста
  - 9 И падшего крепит неведомою силой:
  - 10 Владыко дней моих! дух праздности унылой,
  - 11 Любоначала, змеи сокрытой сей,
  - 12 И празднословия не дай душе моей.
  - 13 Но дай мне зреть мои, о Боже, претрешенья,
  - 14 Да брат мой от меня не примет осужденья,
  - 15 И дух смирения, терпения, любви
  - 16 И целокудрия мне в сердце оживи. (PSS III: 421)

Hermit fathers and immaculate women,  
so as to soar in their heart to remote realms,  
and strengthen it in the midst of earthly storms and battles,  
composed a multitude of divine prayers.

But none moves me more  
than that which the priest repeats  
during the mournful days of Lent;  
it comes to my lips more often than the rest  
and bestows the fallen one with mysterious strength;

Lord of my days! Do not grant my soul  
the spirit of despondent idleness,  
ambition, that concealed snake,  
and vain talk.

But grant me to see, O Lord, my trespassings,  
may my brother be not condemned by me,  
and the spirit of humility, patience, love,  
and chastity revive in my heart.

Projected on the calendar of Easter events, this poem falls on the days of Lent. The last seven lines of the poem paraphrase the prayer of the fourth-century church father and saint Ephraem the Syrian, which is said during the weeks of Lent until the Wednesday of Holy Week:

Господи и Владыко живота моего, духъ праздности, уныния, любозачадия и празднословия не даждь ми. Духъ же целомудрия, смиренномудрия, терпения и любви, даруй ми рабу Твоему. Эй, Господи Царю, даруй ми зрети моя прегрешения, и не осуждати брата моего, яко благословенъ еси во веки вековъ. Аминь. (Molivoslov 1907: 139)

Lord and Master of my life, grant me not a spirit of slothfulness, despondency, ambition, and vain talk. Bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love. Yea, Lord and King, grant that I see my own sins, and not judge my brother, for you are blessed forever and ever, Amen.

In "Hermit fathers . . ." Puškin revisited for a moment an old theme from his blasphemous youth, only to retell it in a very different key. In Puškin's first narrative poem, "Монах" (The Monk, 1813), the fourteen-year-old disciple of Parny and Voltaire teased the hermit father Pankratij with a woman's skirt, eventually corrupting him. The same "mournful days of Lent" which inspired Puškin's pious meditation provoked in 1821 only a gastronomic rebellion, a veritable "crie de ventre":

А мой ненабожный желудок  
"Помилуй, братец,—говорит,—  
Еще когда бы кровь Христова  
Была хоть, например, лафит . . .  
Иль кло-д-вужо, тогда б ни слова,  
А то подумай, как смешно!—  
С водой молдавское вино".  
Но я молюсь—и въздыхалю . . .  
Крепуясь, не внемлю сатане . . .  
А все невольно вспоминаю,  
Давдлов, о твоём вине . . . ("V. L. Davudov")  
[To V. L. Davudov], 1821; PSS II: 179)

And my impious stomach  
says, "Have mercy, my dear,  
if only the blood of Christ

were, let's say, Lafite . . .  
or Clos de Vougeot, then there'd be no question,  
but here—think of it, how ludicrous!—  
Moldavian wine diluted with water."

But I pray, and sigh . . .  
cross myself, do not heed Satan . . .  
Though I can't help but remember,  
Davudov, your wine . . .

In a letter to Del'vig of the same year, we find a direct parody of St. Ephraem's prayer:

I wish him [Kuxel'beker] in Paris the spirit of chastity, in the chancellery of Naruškin the spirit of humility and patience; I am not worried about the spirit of love, he will not be lacking in that: I say nothing of the idle talk—a far-off friend cannot be too talkative. (23 March 1821; PSS XIII: 24; Shaw 1967: 82)

Keeping in mind the spiritual distance between the young Puškin of the blasphemous *Gavriiada* and the poet in the last year of his life, I return to the prayer "Hermit fathers. . . ."

"Djia molitivy post est' to že, što djia pticy krylja" (Fasting is to a prayer what wings are to a bird)—Puškin copied down this sentence in 1836 from a sermon of the Russian Archbishop Georgij Koniskij (PSS XIII: 14). In the last year of his life, Puškin frequently turned to religious subjects in his journalistic ventures also. The articles "Sobranie sočinenij Georgija Koniskogo, Arхиепископа Белорусского" (The Collected Works of the Belorussian Archbishop Georgij Koniskij), "Ob obzannostjax čeloveka: Sočinenie Sil'vio Pellico" (On Man's Obligations: The Works of Sylvio Pellico), and "Slovar' o svjatyx" (Dictionary of Saints), published anonymously that year in *The Contemporaries*, testify to Puškin's new interest in the Christian tradition and his admiration for the fathers of the church, the Russian saints, and the Book of Books: "That book is called the Gospel and its eternally new charm is such that when we, oversatiated with the world or overcome with despondency, chance to open it, we no longer are capable of resisting its sweet attraction and spiritually immerse ourselves in its divine eloquence" (PSS XII: 99)

Christ's preaching receives the highest praise: "There were few chosen ones (even among the first shepherds of the Church) . . . whose meekness of spirit, sweetness of eloquence and infant-like simplicity of heart would approximate the sermons of our heavenly teacher" (PSS XII: 99).

The prayer of St. Ephraem had for Puškin similar appeal. Its incorporation into his own poem is Puškin's way of paying homage to the spiritual and poetic gifts of the church father. Puškin reproduced the prayer almost verbatim and without quotation marks. By doing so, the poet subscribed to the ancient principle of sacred writing where *imitatio* rather than *innovatio* is the ideal. Puškin eloquently justified this time-honored principle in his defense of Sylvio Pellico's religious writings:

One of the most common charges of the critics is: "That is no longer new, that has already been said." But everything has already been said, all ideas have been expressed, and repeated, in the course of the centuries—what follows from that? That the human spirit no longer produces anything new? No, we aren't going to slander it; the mind is as inexhaustible in the assimilation of ideas [*v sobraženii poniatii*] as language is inexhaustible in the combination of words [*v soedinenii slov*]. All words are in the dictionary; but the books which are constantly being published are not mere repetitions of the dictionary. (PSS XII: 100)

The same words can be applied to Puškin's rendering of St. Ephraem's prayer. Although Puškin faithfully paraphrased its text, his poem differs from the model in several respects. Some changes were motivated by simple stylistic considerations. Old Church Slavonicisms have been replaced with contemporary words: "ne dažd'" with "ne daj," "daruj'" with "daj," the composite word "smirenomudrija" with the simple "smirenija"; the change of "života moego" to "dnej moix" avoids the comical effect. Other changes, such as the addition of three metaphors—"zmei sokrytoj sej" (qualifying "jubonacalie"), "duše moej" (instead of "ne dažd' mi"), and "v serdce oživi" (instead of "daruj mi")—are genuinely liturgical and as such do not present a major distortion of the prayer; they interrupt its enumerative sequences. The prayer's coda—"jako blagosloven esi vo veki vekov. Amin'"—was also dropped, as it is a standard formula and thus not peculiar to St. Ephraem.

The reduction of the double address "Gospodi i Vladyko" and "Gospodi Carju" to a single "Vladyko" or "Bože" is less significant than the omission of "rabu Tvoemu." Puškin once proudly declared (paraphrasing Lomonosov): "I can be a subject, even a slave [*daže rabom*],—but I won't be a bondman and jester even to the heavenly Lord" (Diary 10 May 1834; PSS XII: 329). Puškin's delicate personal touch has also altered St. Ephraem's sequence of the Christian virtues. In Puškin's version, "love," as could be expected, precedes "chastity," which comes as the last of the four virtues.

The sin of idle talk ("prazdnostlovie") calls to mind the words "A moljas', ne govovite lišnego, kak jazycniki: ibo oni dumajut, čto v mnogoslovii svoem budut uslyšany" (When ye pray say nothing superfluous as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking) (Matt. 6:7). Moreover, the vice of "idle talk" has far-reaching implications for the poet's use of words. Puškin disclosed its biblical and poetic meaning in the 1826 poem "Prorok" (The Prophet), based on Isaiah 6:1-13, in which a six-winged Seraph appears before a dying man and "tears out of his throat the sinful, idle, and deceitful tongue." It is important to stress that after this poem, the frivolous treatment of religious themes disappears entirely from Puškin's works. In this sense, "The Prophet" can be seen as a watershed separating the deluge of "idle talk" of Puškin's blasphemous youth from the verbal terseness of his later lyrics. To reproduce verbatim an ancient prayer in one's own poem is, no doubt, a

safe method of avoiding the sin of idle talk. Yet, whatever loss of originality Puškin incurred on the surface, he fully compensated for on the deeper level of the poem's structure.

"Hermit fathers . . ." has an intricate poetic form. Although the poem is not divided into stanzas, it consists of three thematic segments: lines 1-4 address the creators of the various prayers; in lines 5-9, marked by the conjunction "no," Puškin singled out one prayer among many; while lines 10-16 contain the prayer itself. The poem is characterized by a progression from impersonal to personal mode, revealed on the pronominal level. The first segment lacks any reference to the lyrical subject; the second has two: "menja" and "mne," while the third, the most personal segment of the poem, containing the prayer itself, has seven: "moix," "moej," "mne," "moim," "moj," "menja," and "mne." In this process the prayer becomes internalized, the "alien word" becomes one's own.

Puškin's Alexandrines are regular, even monotonous, as befits the solemnity of the prayer. But the regular rhythmical pattern is interrupted in line 10 where four stresses meet (iamb and spondee, separated by a caesura): "Vladyko dnei moix! Dux prazdnosti unyloj. . . ." The unexpected stress marks the beginning of the prayer, making line 10 with its six stresses the most highly stressed line of the entire poem. Significantly, the prayer concludes with the lowest stressed line of the poem (three stresses): "I celomudrija mne v serdce oživi." Thus, after the initial staccato, the prayer ends on a calm line pronounced as if in one breath.

The impression produced by the poem's sound is one of an uninterrupted flow resembling liturgical reading. The sound orchestration of the stressed vowels, however, divides the poem into three distinctive segments corresponding to the threefold thematic division. Each of the segments is successively dominated by one stressed compact vowel, "o," "a," or "e," while the frequency of the remaining two drops significantly. Contrasted with the neutral distribution pattern of Russian stressed vowels, the results are as follows:

I	a	+81.4%	"o"-segment (lines 1-4)
	e	-64.6%	
		-42.9%	
II	a	+107%	"a"-segment (lines 5-9)
	o	-45%	
	e	-39%	
III	e	+67.4%	"e"-segment (lines 10-16) <sup>4</sup>
	a	-38%	
	o	-70%	

The sound and theme in this poem are linked in one more meaningful way. The transition from silent meditation to the actual articulation of the prayer is paralleled on the level of sound by the shift from the back vowel

"o" to the mid "a," and to the front "e." Significantly, this vocalic shift is accompanied by an increase of the bilabial consonant "m" (447.6% in the entire poem, +110.7% in the prayer section). Thus the sound orchestration enhances the transition from meditation to articulation and beautifully illustrates what Puškin stated in line 8: "Vsex časce mne ona prixodit na usia" (It comes to my lips more often than the rest).

For the Romantics, who often perceived art as a form of religion, a poem was equivalent to a prayer. In "Hermit fathers and immaculate women . . ." Puškin almost verbatim and without quotation marks reproduced St. Ephraem's prayer. By doing so, the poet was following the medieval canon of sacred art, the principle of imitation, while the hidden and highly intricate structure of the poem's rhythm and sound reveals the full extent of Puškin's creative innovation. Having faithfully reproduced the ancient words, and while letting the non-verbal elements of the poem speak so meaningfully from within, I believe, Puškin avoided the sin of "idle talk" without betraying his poetic calling.

Prayers, Puškin states at the beginning of his poem, were composed to strengthen the human heart for earthly storms and battles, and for the spiritual ascent to heavenly realms: "čtož serdem vozletat' vo oblasi zaošny, / čtož ukrepjat' ego sred' dol'nix bur' i bitv." But, since prayers are offerings in addition to being spoken, they have to be received. In his article on the Archbishop Georgij Koniskij, written not long before this poem, Puškin quoted a passage about a prayer said amidst a storm at sea by a godless man:

When during a strong and dangerous storm all sailors turned to prayer and one godless man began to articulate something too, the helmsman stopped him with these words: "You had better keep silent; perhaps God does not know you are among us and therefore there is hope in despair, but once He hears your holy prayer, we are lost." (PSS XII: 16)

Is Puškin's prayer any different? I believe so. The fact that "Hermit fathers . . ." (which Puškin himself referred to as "Molitva" [Prayer]) does not stand alone in his oeuvre is, together with its highly intricate structure, the best refutation of the alleged "organic inability for religion" which, according to D. S. Mirskij (1934: 111), Puškin preserved until his last days:

Along with his conformism in matters of daily life and ideology, Puškin made attempts to "master" religion. But his nature found it more difficult to reconcile itself with god than with the tsar. And while the court could claim *Polnava* for its own, Puškin's religious verses (such as the once famed "Prayer") stand out for their low quality. (Mirskij 1934: 112)

Puškin did not undergo a spiritual conversion, like Gogol', Dostoevskij, or Tolstoj; his path from the Parnassian atheism of his youth, which culminated in 1821 with *Gavriilada* (Gavriilada), toward the religious spir-

itality of the 1836 cycle was a gradual one. The most significant landmarks on this path were "Podzaniča Koranu" (imitations of the Koran, 1824), "Protok" (1826), "Angel" (1827), "Vospomnianie" (Recollection, 1828), "V časny zabav . . ." (In hours/times of amusement, 1830), and "Strannik" (Pilgrim, 1834). If one were to telescope the development of the religious theme in Puškin, one might choose these three quotations:

Ум ищет божества,  
А сердце не находит.

The mind seeks divinity  
but the heart fails to find it.

("Bezverie" [Unbelief], 1817; PSS I: 243)

И внемлет арфе серафима  
В священном ужасе поэт.

And to the Seraph's harp  
the poet harkens in sacred awe.

("In times of amusement . . ." 1830; PSS III: 212)

Веленью Божию, о Муза, будь послушна . . .

ObeY God's will, o Muse . . .

("Pamiatnik" [Monument], 1836; PSS III: 424)

The development of the religious theme culminated in the cycle written during the last year of Puškin's life. With the poem "Ocy pustynniki i ženy peroročny," Puškin has humbly added to the "multitude of divine prayers" created by the hermit fathers and immaculate women a prayer of his own making, thus repeating in his inspired art their spiritual feat.

### III

(Подражание италийскому)

- 1 Как с древа сорвался предатель ученик,
- 2 Дьявол прилетел, к лицу его приник,
- 3 Дхнул жизнь в него, взялся с своей добычей смрадной
- 4 И бросил труп живой в торганы геенны глальной . . .
- 5 Там бесы, радуясь и плеща, на рога
- 6 Призвали с хохотом всемирного врага
- 7 И шумно понесли к проклятому владыке,
- 8 И сатана, привстав, с веселием на лике
- 9 Лобзанием своим насквозь прожет уста,
- 10 В прегатальскую ночь лобзавшие Христа. (PSS III: 418)

(Imitation of the Italian)

When the traitor-disciple fell from the tree,  
the devil flew in, pressed himself against his face,  
breathed life into him, [then] soared up with his stinking booty  
and cast the living corpse into the maw of starved Gehenna . . .  
There demons, rejoicing and clapping,

took with guffaws the universal foe on their horns  
and noisily carried him to their accursed lord.  
And Satan, half-rising, with glee on his countenance,  
charred with his kiss the lips  
which on that treacherous night had kissed Christ.

Although he wrote it before "Hermit fathers . . ." Puškin marked "Imitation of the Italian" with the roman numeral III. "Imitation" continues the theme begun in "Hermit fathers . . ." through contrast between humility and hubris: the faith and devotion of the "hermit fathers and immaculate women" are opposed to the lack of faith and the betrayal of the disciple Judas—lips soothed by prayer as opposed to lips burned through in Satan's kiss. Projected on the calendar of the Paschal events, "Imitation" moves us to Thursday of Holy Week, to the betrayal of Christ and the suicide of Judas (Matt. 27:1-5).

As the title indicates, "Imitation of the Italian," like the rest of the poems in this cycle, is based on a foreign subtext. The poem is rooted in Catholic tradition. In 1855, P. V. Annenkov identified its source as the sonnet "Sopra Iuda" by the Italian *improvvisatore* Francesco Gianni (1760-1822).<sup>5</sup>

Allor che Giuda di furor satollo  
Pionbò dal ramo, rapido si mosse  
L'instigator suo Demone, e scontrollo  
Battendo l'ali come fiamma rosse;  
Pel nodo che al felon rettorse il collo  
Giù nel bollor delle roventi fosse  
Appena con le scabre ugne rotollo  
Ch'arser le carni, e sibilaron l'osse;  
E in mezzo al vampa della gran bufera  
Con tiro ghigno Satana fu visto  
Spianar le rughe della fronte altera:  
Poi fra le braccia se recò quel tristo,  
E con la bocca fumigante e nera  
Gli rese il bacio, ch'avea dato a Cristo.  
When Judas, satiated with fury,  
plunged from the bough,  
his Demon tempter moved quickly against him,  
beating red wings like a flame.  
By the noose that wrung the felon's neck,  
he hurled him down with his ragged claws  
into the boiling red-hot pits  
that burned his flesh and made his bones sizzle.  
At the center flame of this fire-storm,  
with dire grimace, Satan was seen

to smooth the furrows of his proud brow.  
Then [Judas], that wretched one, entered [Satan's] embrace  
and with his smoldering and black mouth,  
returned to him the kiss he had given unto Christ.

However, as B. V. Tomaševskij has demonstrated, Puškin was familiar not with the Italian original of the sonnet but with a French translation by Antoni Deschamps (1800-69), who was best known for his 1829 translation of Dante (Tomaševskij 1930: 79-80). Puškin had Deschamps's translation of Dante in his library as well as his *Dernières Paroles* (Paris, 1835) (Modzalevskij 1910: #218, 867), where in the section "Études sur l'Italie" we find "Sonnet de Gianni: Supplice de Judas dans l'enfer":

Lorsqu'ayant assouvi son atroce colère  
Judas enfin tomba de l'arbre solitaire,  
L'effroyable démon qui l'avait excité  
Sur lui fondit alors avec rapidité.  
Le prenant aux cheveux, sur ses ailes de flamme,  
Dans l'air il emporta le corps de cet infâme,  
Et descendant au fond de l'éternel enfer  
Le jeta tout tremblant à ses fourches de fer.  
Les chairs d'iscariote avec fracas brûlèrent  
Sa moëlle rotit et tous ses os sifflèrent.  
Satan de ses deux bras entourra le damné,  
Puis, en le regardant d'une face riante,  
Serein, il lui rendit de sa bouche fumante  
Le baiser que le traître au Christ avait donné.

Deschamps appended to his translation of Gianni the concluding lines of the Italian original, and Puškin could have formed an impression of the Italian improviser's style. However, Tomaševskij, who compared all three versions, has convincingly shown that Puškin was following Deschamps rather than Gianni (Tomaševskij 1930: 78-81). I would like to add to Tomaševskij's comparison several observations about Puškin's version of the Judas sonnet.

In Gianni and Deschamps, the infernal forces were represented by the Demon and Satan. Puškin added to them a third force, devils (*besy*), thus creating an "infernal trinity" consisting of *besy*, *diavol*, and *satana*.<sup>6</sup> Although all three are emanations of the same principle, there is a clear hierarchy among them, and Puškin distributed their respective roles accordingly.

The lowest rung on Puškin's ladder is occupied by the grotesque creatures *besy*. The terror of Satan was so great that the imagination of medieval man had to cut him down to size and occasionally endowed him with comic, carnivalesque features. Thus the Satan of demonology became the devil prankster of folklore. Puškin was most original in the depiction of

these playful imps in league with the *diavol* and *satana*. There is nothing glamorous about them; they perform menial tasks and chores. Their appearance and antics introduce a grotesque note into the poem, which was absent in Gianni and Deschamps, but can be traced back to Dante, Goethe, Hoffmann, and folklore. These thoroughly unmajestic "devilkins" are often found in Puškin's early poetry. In "Nabroski k zamyslu o Fauste" (Sketches to a project on Faust, 1825) they are Satan's domestic servants preparing the celebration of their master's saint's day [*sic!*]:

—Сероля бал у сатаны—  
На именины мы званы—  
[Смотри, как эти два бесенка  
Усердно жарят поросенка],  
А этот бес—как важен он,  
Как чинно выметает вон  
Опилки, серу, пыль и костки. (PSS II: 381)

—There is a ball at Satan's today,  
we are invited to his saint's day—  
Look how these two devilkins  
are diligently frying a piglet,  
and this devil—what an important air he puts on,  
how ceremoniously he sweeps out  
the sawdust, sulphur, ashes, and bones.

In the fragment "I dale my pošli!" (And we went further, 1832), written in *terza rima* and calling to mind Dante's vivid imagination, Puškin presented his *besy* at their most impish:

Бесенок, под себя поджав свое копыто,  
Крутил ростовщика у алеского огня.  
Горячий капал жир в конченное корыто,  
И лопал на огне печеный ростовщик. . . .  
И бесы тешились проклятою игрою . . . .  
А бесы прыгали в веселии великом. . . . (PSS III: 281-82)

A little devil, squatting on his hoof,  
was turning a rawbroker on a spit at the hellish fire.  
The hot lard dripped into a soot-caked trough,  
and the roasted rawbroker burst in the fire.  
. . . . And the devils were enjoying their accursed game:  
. . . . And the devils were leaping in great merriment.

Puškin's introduction of these cheerful creatures into the "Judas sonnet" provides for comic relief before the wretched denouement, a device employed, for example, by Dante in Canto XXII of the *Inferno*, where a squabble among the devils ensues. However, their merry nature should not obscure the fact that they are inflictors of pain. "There demons [*besy*],

rejoicing and clapping, / took with guffaws the universal foe on their horns / and noisily carried him to their accursed lord."

The more solemn tasks, such as the communication between this and the nether world, Puškin entrusted to the *diavol*. Puškin did not equip this hypostasis with material attributes such as claws (Gianni), pitchfork (Deschamps), or flaming wings (both). Nor does his *diavol* inflict physical pain; his tasks are of a spiritual rather than a menial nature: he *resurrects* Judas. Puškin's diction is accordingly dignified where the *diavol* is concerned: "Diavol priletej, k licu ego prinik, / Dxnul žižn' v nego, vzviljsja s svojej dobyčej smradnoj / I brosil trup živoj v gortan' geeny gladnoj" (The devil flew in, pressed himself against his face, / breathed life into him, soared up with his stinking booty, / and cast the living corpse into the maw of starved Gehenna).

At the top of the infernal hierarchy presides the "prokljatyj vladyka": *satana*.<sup>7</sup> Puškin depicted "the accursed lord" of the universe, rising from his throne, in full satanic splendor. The "mirth" on his countenance is a remote and solemn echo of demons' lowly "guffaws." "I satana, privstav, s veselim na lke / Lobzaniem svoim naskvoz' prožež usta, / V predatej skuju noč' ljubzaviše Xrista" (And Satan, half-rising, with glee on his countenance, / charred with a kiss the lips / which on that treacherous night had kissed Christ).

The introduction of the infernal trinity enabled Puškin to present the events in three steps, each intensifying the ordeal. First, Puškin resurrected Judas, before subjecting him to torture. In Deschamps, Judas remains a corpse throughout the ordeal. Next, Puškin replaced Deschamps's "iron pitchfork" (absent in Gianni) with the less threatening and more familiar "horns." Puškin also spared Judas the infernal flames: no roasting of flesh, no hissing bones; there is even laughter in Puškin's Hell, which was absent in Gianni and Deschamps. While Puškin underplayed the pyrotechnic effects in the first two episodes, he raises the heat in the final scene. Puškin's Satan "charred with a kiss the lips," whereas Gianni's and Deschamps's Satan merely kisses Judas. To Judas, after having been transported on flaming wings, impaled on a pitchfork, and had his flesh, bones, and marrow incinerated, Satan's kiss must have come as a relief at the end of Gianni's and Deschamps's poem. In Puškin, common sense and good measure prevail. Had Puškin followed his predecessors, his Judas would have had no lips left for the final kiss. In projecting the excruciating physical pain into Satan's kiss, Puškin perhaps followed Dante, whose Satan chews Judas's head in the last canto of the *Inferno*.

Where Puškin mostly departs from Gianni and Deschamps is in the intricate dualistic structure of his poem. "Imitation of the Italian" is based on an oxymoron in which the infernal and the divine orders are continually juxtaposed. Puškin exploited this duality on several levels. Judas's suicide, resurrection, and descent to Hell repeat in a perverted form the mystery of the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. It suffices

to replace Judas with Christ, the Demon with the Angel, Hell with Heaven, Satan with God, death with life, and the sinister mirror image of the divine mystery becomes evident.<sup>8</sup>

In "Imitation" Puškin and Satan enact a pseudo-divine mystery, embellished with sham attributes of genuine mystery. In doing so, Puškin followed the Orthodox teaching of the Antichrist, the false Christ who claims to act in the name of Christ. (For similar reasons, Milton had his Satan quote from the Gospels.) The oxymoron of the infernal and the divine perhaps goes back to the belief that Satan is a fallen angel who dared to raise his brow against his creator (Isa. 14:11-15, Luke 10:18, Rev. 12:9). Satan too desired to create, but he was not a true creator. In his demirgic hubris, Satan plagiarized the divine creation, but the result was a perversion of the original act, a caricature of it. In Satan's creation everything becomes its opposite: a kiss becomes the instrument of betrayal, ascension becomes descent, life is turned into death, reward into punishment, love into hatred.

This paradox affects even the smallest elements of the poem. Phrases, words, even morphemes seem to belong to two realms at once, simultaneously pointing to both antonymic referents, the satanic and the divine. Such word combinations as "predatel' učeník," "trup živoj," "prokliatyj vladyka," and "lobzaniem prožeg" (traitor-disciple, living corpse, accursed lord, charring kiss) carry within themselves their own negation. The use of words in an improper context results in a diabolic perversion of the sacred meaning. The word "Vladyka" (Lord), which referred in "Hermit fathers . . ." to God ("Vladuko dnei moix!"), is applied to Satan. Satan's face, for example, is referred to as "lik"—a term usually reserved for the countenances of saints on icons. The word "drevo," referring to the tree on which Judas hanged himself, will be used in the next poem of the cycle to designate the Holy Cross: "Togda po storonam životvorjašča dreva . . ." (then, by the sides of the life-bearing tree). Likewise, the words "predatel', predatel'skaja" (traitor, treacherous), applying to Judas, reappear in the next poem in an opposite, positive meaning, referring to Christ's self-sacrifice: "Xrista, predavšego poslušno plot' svoju" (Christ, who meekly surrendered/betrayed his flesh). Likewise, the cacophonous word "dxnul" (breathed into) can be seen as another diabolic perversion of the sacred meaning contained in such words as "dux, duša, vdoxnu" (spirit, soul, inhale), and by implication "vdoxnovenie" (inspire) ("I, priznak Boga, vdoxnoven'e" [And the sign of God, Inspiration] from "Razgovor knigoprodavca s poetom" [Conversation between Bookseller and Poet]). It is fitting that in a poem about betrayal, words continually betray their original, positive meaning.

The corruption of the divine harmony can already be observed on the sub-lexical level. In a poem entitled "Imitation of the Italian" one would expect euphony to dominate the sound structure, as was the case in so many Italianate stylizations of Puškin's time. Puškin, too, admired the melodious quality of the Italian language. Commenting on Baťjuškov's line "Ijubvi i

oči, i lanity," with the characteristic hiatuses on the vocalic word boundaries, Puškin exclaims: "Zvuk i Italijanski! čto za čudovorec čtot Baťjuškov" (Italian sounds! What a miracle worker is this Baťjuškov) (PSS XII: 267). Baťjuškov, who was renowned for his dislike of harsh Russian sounds, strove to avoid consonantal clusters in his poetry: "čto za Y, čto za šč, šlj, ščlj, PRI, TRY? O varvary!" (Baťjuškov 1934: 30). However, in Puškin's "Podražanie Italijanskomu," only the title lives up to Baťjuškov's mellifluous ideal, whereas in the poem itself, Puškin accumulated more consonant clusters (triple and quadruple) than perhaps anywhere else in his poetry. The effect is definitively cacophonous: "Kak s dreva . . . diavol priletel/ k licu ego prinik, dxnul žizn' v nego, vzvilja s svoej dobyčeji smradnoj . . . brosil trup živoj v gortan' geeny gladnoj . . . s xoxotom vseimnogo vraga . . . k proklijatomu vladyke . . . privstav, s veseljem . . . lobzaniem svoim naskivoz' prožeg usta . . . v predatel'skiju noč' . . ." Lines 3-4, in which the satanic resurrection takes place, stand out as the most cacophonous of the entire poem; Puškin accumulated here seven clusters of three consonants, followed by a triple alliteration: "Dxnul žizn' v nego, vzvilja s svoej dobyčeji smradnoj / I brosil trup živoj v gortan' geeny gladnoj."

These two lines of seven and six icluses are also the most heavily stressed in a poem whose lines average four icluses. Significantly, the only supranumerical stress falls on the hunchback of a word "dxnul" (breathed into), which consists of four consonants and the dark vowel "u." This spondee is responsible for the only metrical deviation in the entire poem.

In passages such as this, Puškin's language seems to have descended to the very "cerchi di Giuda"—"that is the lowest and most dark place of all, / Farthest from the Heaven that moveth all" (*Inferno* 9: 27-29). Dante, too, resorted to cacophony in many passages of *Inferno* to produce a similar effect. This device of deliberately corrupting the euphonic norm is present to a degree in Gianni (line 8) but, surprisingly, is entirely missing in Deschamps, who was the translator of Dante. In this sense, Puškin's "Imitation" stands closer to the original Italian poetic tradition than to the French version which he used as a model.

It should not come as a surprise that in the poem about Hell, the word "ad" (Hell) reverberates in a number of key words: "smrADnoj, glADnoj, rADujas', xoxOTom, proklijATOMu vladyke," and most importantly in "sADTana." Including the title, "PODražanie Italijanskomu" contains eight anagrams of the word "ad."<sup>9</sup> In some words such as "smrADnoj, glADnoj, proklijATOMu" (sinking, starved, accursed) we deal with a semantic parallelism between the word and the anagram. But in words such as "rADujas'" and "vladyka" (rejoicing, lord), the anagram has an oxymoronic effect, corrupting the positive meaning of the host word.<sup>10</sup>

Dissecting Puškin's "Imitation of the Italian" reveals how the central theme of betrayal has penetrated the smallest components of the poem's anatomy. On a higher level of meaning, the poem is a philosophical meditation on the relationship between the powers of man, Satan, and God, and on the nature of evil. Christian theology opposes Manichaean dualism;



Satan too is a creation of God, and as such possesses free will from which evil originates. Satan first betrayed God and then seduced men into doing the same. Judas betrayed Christ and was in turn betrayed by Satan. By returning to Judas the kiss he had given to Christ, Satan, paradoxically, punishes his disciple. Free to pursue his own aims and influence man's choices, Satan cannot help but fulfill his part in a universal design. By his returning the kiss, the circle of justice is completed; Satan fulfilled the will of God, rather than his own.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps even more important for Puškin the poet is that Satan was denied the gift of creation. All he is capable of doing is plagiarizing and temporarily corrupting the divine design by bringing discord into that harmony. "Imitation of the Italian," whose intricate structure so faithfully reproduces the mechanism of the satanic subversion, concludes by affirming the primacy of the supreme design. The apostasy is turned into theodicy: the last word of the poem about Judas is "Xristos."

Christ is the central theme of the next poem, "Mirskaja vlast'" (Secular Power), which concludes the Easter trilogy. Although it was written as the first poem that summer (on Friday, 5 June), Puškin marked it with the Roman numeral IV.

## IV

## "Мирская власть"

- 1 Когда великое свершилось торжество
- 2 И в муках на кресте кончалось Божество,
- 3 Тогда по сторонам животворяща древа
- 4 Мария-трешница и Пресвятая Дева
- 5 Стояли две жены,
- 6 В неизмеримую печаль погружены.
- 7 Но у подножия теперь креста честнаго,
- 8 Как будто у крыльца правителя градскаго,
- 9 Мы зрим поставленных на место жен святых
- 10 В ружье и кивере двух грозных часовых.
- 11 К чему, скажите мне, хранительная стража
- 12 Или распятие казенная поклажа?
- 13 И вы боитесь воров или мышей?
- 14 Иль мните важности придать Царю Царей?
- 15 Иль покровительством спасаете могучим
- 16 Владыку, тернием венчанного колючим,
- 17 Христа, предавшего послушно плоть свою
- 18 Бичам мучителей, гнозям и копью?
- 19 Иль опасаетесь, чтоб чернь не оскорбила
- 20 Того, чья казнь весь род Адамов испулила,
- 21 И, чтоб не потеснить гуляющих господ,
- 22 Пускарь не велено сдать простой народ?<sup>12</sup> (PSS III: 417)

## "Secular Power"

When the fulfillment of the great triumph drew near,

and God lay dying on the cross in agony, then, by the sides of the life-bearing tree—the sinner Mary and the Blessed Virgin—there stood two women, immersed in immeasurable grief. But now, at the foot of the hallowed cross, as if at the porch of the city mayor, we see in place of the holy women two fearsome sentinels with rifles and in shakos. Tell me, what is the purpose of this guard? Can it be that the crucifixion is the property of state, and you are afraid of thieves or mice? Or do you imagine you add status to the King of Kings? Or are you saving with your mighty patronage Our Lord, whose head is wreathed in a crown of thorns, Christ, who meekly surrendered his flesh to the tormentors' whips, nails, and spear? Or are you vexed that the rabble might offend the one whose death redeemed the tribe of Adam, and so as not to crowd the masters in their revelry, it was decreed to bar the common folk?

"Imitation of the Italian" and "Secular Power" are complementary poems juxtaposing sin and virtue, hubris and humility. The former opened with the tree on which Judas hanged himself, the latter opens with the "life-giving tree," the Holy Cross. Projected on the calendar of the Paschal events, "Secular Power" brings us to the hours of the Crucifixion on Good Friday.

Both poems are meditations on the betrayal and death of the traitor and the betrayed. "Imitation" traces the posthumous ordeal of Judas and his subsequent betrayal by Satan; "Secular Power" traces the postmortem betrayal of Christ and of the symbol of the Crucifixion. Each poem challenges and judges the transcendental and secular powers involved in that betrayal. Thus Judas, whom Puškin calls "vsemirnyj vrag" (universal foe), is linked to "mirskaja vlast'" (worldly power) in more than just an alliterative sense.

As Prince Vjazemskij pointed out, "Secular Power" is a poetic reflection on a concrete event. The poem was written "because in the Kazanskij Cathedral on Good Friday, armed soldiers stood guard at the shroud of Christ" (PSS 1959–62 II: 749) to preserve order. However, the presence of the sentinels at the sacred place at such a moment provoked Puškin's invective against this, albeit unintentional, profanation of the divine mystery by secular forces. The poem dramatizes the conflict between the two powers and underscores its pointlessness.

Like the previous two poems, "Secular Power" has a threefold structure. The first segment (lines 1–6) re-enacts the original moment of triumph: "Kogda velikoe sveršalos' toržestvo / I v mukax na kreste končalos'".

božestvo." Both verbs "sveršalos'" (was coming to fulfillment) and "končalos'" (was dying) designate finiteness, yet their imperfective aspect paradoxically creates the impression of something non-finite and atemporal. Also the unusual "Kogda . . . togda" (when . . . then), expressing simultaneity rather than sequentiality of the events, has a similar effect of atemporality. Unlike mystery, which takes place in eternity, history takes place in time. The second segment (lines 7-10) transfers us into the present, into history proper ("teper" . . . my zrim" [but now . . . we behold]), where the corruption of the mystery occurs. The third segment (11-22) contains Puškin's invective in which the discrepancy between the worldly and the divine power is heightened through a series of mocking rhetorical questions, all implying negative answers.

Like the rest of the poems of this cycle, "Secular Power" is based on a subtext from the Gospels and from the text of the Paschal service. But in contrast to the canonic texts, where three Marys appear by the cross (John 19:25), Puškin leaves out the third woman. The omission is a deliberate one, motivated by the considerations of symmetry. The place of the two holy women will be usurped in the second segment of the poem by the two sentinels. Ironically, the achieved symmetry is purely formal, and no true equation between the two events exists. The disproportionate length of the two segments (6 lines vs. 4 lines) reveals the disparity between the authentic event and its sham version. At the same time Puškin's two women evoke the visit to the Holy Sepulcher by "Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary" (Matt. 27:61, 28:1). The armed guards, placed at the entrance to the sepulcher, were to prevent the disciples from "stealing away" Christ's body and saying to people "He is risen from the dead" (Matt. 27:64), cf.: "I vy boitesja vorov ili myšej?" (Or is it thieves or mice you fear?)"

The attempt of secular power to protect or usurp the divine triumph is mocked by Puškin in a series of ironic similes and metaphors in which the holy symbols are desecrated by profane images. "Krest čestnoj" (hallowed cross) is mockingly compared to the mundane "kryl'co" (porch), while God (Božestvo, Car' Carej, Vladačka, Xristos) is reduced to "city mayor" (gradskoj pravitel'). The two holy women are replaced by two sentinels, calling to mind the Roman guards or the two thieves. "Raspjatie" (Crucifixion), which is also referred to as "kazn'" (execution), is reduced to "kazennaja poklaža" (state property). (Both words call to mind the Kazanskij Cathedral, where the profanation took place.)

Puškin's rhymes also participate in the expose of this sham substitution. In the first segment which reproduces the genuine event, all rhymes semantically harmonize and are enriched by alliteration, thus producing a certain homophonic effect: "toržestvo-božestvo, deva-deva, ženy-pogrženj" (triumph-God, tree-Virgin, women-immersed). The rhymes in the second and third segments which deal with the sham version are all non-alliterative and produce a semantically dissonant effect, bordering on grotesque: "kresta čestnago-pravitelja gradskago, svjatyx-časovyx, myšej-

carej, mogučim-koljučim, ploč' svoju-kopiju, oskorbila-iskupila, gospodnarod" (hallowed cross-city mayor, holy women-sentinels, mice-King, mighty-thorry, flesh-spear, offend-redeem, masters-folk).

Like the other poems of this cycle, "Secular Power" is written in regular Alexandrines. The only verse that deviates from this pattern is the truncated line 5, which Puškin graphically isolated in the text. This elliptic line from which the third Mary is missing is actually a hemistich. Its isolation within the poem can be seen as a graphic metaphor for the abandonment, while its incompleteness evokes a sense of loss. The only other metrical irregularity found in the poem is the supranumeric stress in line 10: "V ruže i kivere *dvux* gróznyx časovyx." The ostentative spondee rhythmically marks off the two poised sentinels, and links this line to the only other irregular line, the hemistich "Stojali dve ženy," whose place has been usurped by the sentinels.

The third segment (lines 11-12) shifts into direct speech, which consists of rhetorical questions. It differs from the rest of the poem through its intonation, and it introduces a new rhythmical pattern, characterized by pyrrhics before the caesura (lines 11-19). The column of pyrrhics divides the third segment vertically, as it were, into two rhythmical and intonational columns. Each rhetorical question in this segment presupposes a negative answer: "K čemu?" "Ni k čemu!" The sarcasm of the questions in combination with the implied negative answers completes the expose of the sham event. The liturgical lines "Vse xraši grob, kustodie, / Ne uderžit bo raka Samosuščuju žizn'" (In vain are you guarding the tomb, custodian, / The shrine won't keep the Self-sustaining life) characterize best the failure of the secular powers to usurp the sacred event.

"Secular Power" concludes Puškin's poetic liturgy which I call the Easter triptych. Its last two poems are directly linked to the sin of Judas, hubris and betrayal. In "Imitation" Christ was betrayed in life, in "Secular Power" he is betrayed in death. Both poems share the theme of death: the suicide of the traitor, and the Crucifixion of the betrayed. More important, the attempts to subvert the divine order backfire in both poems, and the hubris is punished. The kiss which Satan gives Judas is a punishment meted out in accordance with a higher design. Likewise, the attempt by the secular powers to usurp the divine triumph fails, and the primacy of *civitas Dei* over *civitas mundi* is upheld in accordance with Christ's words: "My kingship is not of this world" (John 18:36).

It can be added that Puškin's poem about the crucifixion flanked by two sentinels turned out to be fateful. It calls to mind the circumstances surrounding his own funeral, only a few months ahead. Prince Vjazemskij described this event:

It may be said without exaggeration that more police than friends collected about the bier. I do not speak of the soldiers picketing the streets. But against whom was arrayed this military force which filled the home of the deceased

during those minutes when a dozen of his friends and closest comrades gathered there in order to render him their last homage? (Simmons 1971: 426)

Admission to the funeral service at the Royal Stables Church was restricted to those who held tickets. From there, at midnight on 3 February, the sleigh with the poet's body hastily departed for the Sviatogorskiĭ Monastery in the Pskov province. The infamous role of the sentinels fell to the gendarme Rakcey, who accompanied the sleigh (and 25 years later came to arrest N. G. Černyševskij), whereas the place of the two Marys was taken by Puškin's friend A. I. Turgenev and Nikita Kozlov, the poet's old valet.

The last question that remains to be answered concerns the hypothetical shape and unity of the entire "Stone Island" cycle, which was to consist of six poems. There can be little doubt that the three contiguous poems marked by Puškin II, III, IV and straddled by the two empty slots, I and V, form a thematically unified minicycle which I have called the Easter triptych. However, when by the end of July Puškin sketched the outline of this cycle, two major poems, "Kogda za gorodom, zadumčiv, ja brožu . . ." (When I, pensive, roam beyond the city . . .) and "Ja pamjatnik sebe vozdvig . . ." (Exegi monumentum), were not yet written; they were completed only on 14 and 21 August, respectively.

Puškin did not live to realize his project, but the eventual shape of the cycle has become the subject of an engaging academic discussion. N. V. Izmaĭlov (1954: 555; 1958: 29), for example, proposed "Exegi monumentum" as the opening poem of the cycle, while "When I, pensive, roam . . ." was to fill the fifth place. N. L. Stepanov (1959: 32) and M. P. Alekseev (1967: 124) were against the inclusion of "Exegi monumentum" in this cycle, though Stepanov accepted Izmaĭlov's suggestion that "When I, pensive, roam . . ." might be the fifth poem of the cycle.

In my opinion the hypothetical place of "When I, pensive, roam . . ." and "Exegi monumentum" should be determined according to the same principle which governed the inner triptych. The remaining two poems seem to continue the hours of the Easter week: after the Lenten prayer (II) and the poems about Judas's suicide (III) and the crucifixion (IV) could follow Puškin's sepulchral meditation in "When I, pensive, roam . . ." Projected on the Paschal calendar, "When I, pensive, roam . . ." would correspond to the time of the tomb (Saturday). The contrast between the death of Judas and Christ which was established in the previous poems is echoed in "When I, pensive, roam . . ." in the opposition of two postmortem abodes—the obnoxious, grotesque public (city) cemetery, reminding one of Hell, and the heavenly ancestral (country) graveyard. Christ's descent to Hell on Saturday would be a befitting context. The entire cycle would then conclude with "Exegi monumentum," in which Puškin proudly raised the claim of his poetic immortality, while humbly subordinating his

Muse to the will of God. Projected on the Easter calendar, "Exegi monumentum" points toward the day of Resurrection (Sunday).

In order to complete the hypothetical shape of the cycle, one last conjecture is necessary. If "Exegi monumentum" were to conclude the cycle, then "From Pindemonte" would have to be shifted to the unfilled first position. The two poems have several features in common: the proud declaration of independence before the secular powers and the rejection of the *vox Caesaris* and *vox populi* in favor of some supreme power. In "From Pindemonte" it is the "divine beauty of nature and the creations of art," in "Exegi monumentum" it is the poet's Muse and the will of God. However, there is a substantial difference between the two poems which would justify the shift. The invocation of the divine in "From Pindemonte" has polytheistic overtones, which places the poem into the pagan tradition of the Roman republic: "Ja ne toršču o tom, čto otkazali bogi, / Mne v sladkoj učasti osporivat' nalogi" (I do not fret because the gods refuse / to let me wrangle over revenues). The grammatical plural in this crucial word disqualifies "From Pindemonte" as the concluding poem of the cycle, which by now had taken a distinctly Christian turn. Moreover, in "From Pindemonte" the divine beauty of nature stands on equal footing with the man-made beauty of art:

По прихоти своей скитаться здесь и там,  
Дивясь божественным природу красотам,  
И пред созданными искусства и вдохновенья  
Тремеща радостно в восторгех умиленья.  
—Вот счастье! Вот права . . . (PSS III: 420)

At one's own whim to roam here and there,  
at nature's divine beauties to marvel,  
[all the while] trembling joyously in tender ecstasies  
before works of art and inspiration.

—This is happiness! These are rights . . .

In the quasi-Christian "Exegi monumentum," this equation is shifted in favor of the divine: "velen'ju Bož'ju, o Muza, bud' poslušna" (obey God's will, O Muse). It therefore makes more sense to see the aloof, whimsical ("po prixoti svoeĭ"), and definitely pre-Christian "From Pindemonte" as a poem preceding the Easter triptych, which "Exegi monumentum" would then conclude on a rather humble note: unlike Horace in his "Exegi monumentum," Puškin is not demanding Delphic laurels from his Muse. Instead the poet submits his Muse, and through her his poetic immortality, to the will of God.

"Exegi monumentum" thus beautifully reflects the internal movement of the entire cycle, which alternated between the expressions of hubris and humility. In "From Pindemonte" the poet aloofly rejects the "much vaunted" democratic rights and freedoms offered by society yet reverts to

rapture and "umilenie" when facing creation, divine and human. In "Hermit fathers . . ." the poet, following the example of saintly men and women, creates a prayer through which he asks that the spirit of humility ("dux smirenija") be revived in him. The poem about Judas and Satan represents supreme hubris. It is followed by the example of Christ and the two Marys, whose meekness is contrasted with the hubris of the secular powers. The meditation over the graves in "When I, pensive, roam . . ." juxtaposes posthumous hubris to humility, the pretentiousness of the public urban cemetery to the humbleness of the ancestral country graveyard. The last poem of this cycle brings us from the two cemeteries to Puškin's own monument in "Exegi monumentum." The contemplation about one's posthumous destiny in "Exegi monumentum" proceeds from hubris toward humility, from "Net, ves' ja ne umru" (Not all of me shall die) to "Yelen'ju Bož'ju, o Muza, bud' poslušna" (Obey God's will, O Muse). "Exegi monumentum" thus repeats and concludes the inner development of the entire Stone Island cycle, whose hypothetical arrangement I propose as follows:

- (I) "From Pindemonte"
- II "Hermit fathers and immaculate women"
- III "Imitation of the Italian"
- IV "Secular Power"
- (V) "When I, pensive, roam beyond the city . . ."
- (VI) "Exegi monumentum"

The Horatian subtext of "Exegi monumentum" gives additional support to my arrangement, since Puškin might have wanted to conclude his cycle not only with a Horatian ode but also in accordance with Horace's compositional design: Horace placed his "Exegi monumentum" at the end of the third book of his *Carmina*.

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### Bestužev-Marlinskij's *Journey to Revel* and Puškin

Aleksandr Bestužev (1797–1837) acquired his literary reputation as a romantic critic and fiction writer during the years 1822–25 when, jointly with Kondratij Ryleev, he edited the annual miscellany *Pollarnaja zvezda* (North Star). A participant in the Decembrist rebellion, he was exiled first to Siberia, then to the Caucasus. National fame as the foremost Russian romantic novelist came to Bestužev during those years in exile, when he signed his work with the pen name A. Marlinskij (after a pavilion called Martyr in Peterhof where he once lived). During the 1830s and early 1840s, multi-volume collections of his stories, novels, and essays appeared in numerous printings (Muratova 1962: 162). He was the first Russian writer whose work was widely translated into foreign languages (Vengerov 1892 III: 176–77). Then, by circa 1850, the murderous reviews by Vissarion Belinskij of 1840, 1842, and 1847 (Muratova 1962: 165) gradually turned the general admiration into contempt for what came to be termed "Marlinskism." Semën Vengerov was the only commentator of the late nineteenth century to assert that the Belinskij-derived view of Bestužev-Marlinskij as the epitome of everything false, verbose, and stilted was neither fair nor true (Vengerov 1892: 148–49).

Belinskij's curse was lifted from Bestužev's name only after the 1930s, when the Decembrists were admitted into the revolutionary pantheon of the USSR. Unpublished in his country since 1847, Bestužev's fiction made a comeback in 1937 (Bestužev-Marlinskij 1937). The year 1948 saw the appearance of his collected poetry in the *Biblioteka poëta* series (with a second edition in 1961). In 1958 a two-volume collection of his novels, stories, essays, and poetry was published. None of these editions included Bestužev's first major publication, the travelogue in prose and verse *Pozzdka v Revel* (Journey to Revel) (though the first six lines of its prefatory poem were cited by Nikolaj Mordovčenko in his introduction to the *Biblioteka poëta* collection of verse). The travelogue was published in February 1821 in the journal *Sorennovatel'* (Contender) (Golubov 1960: 78), and it appeared in book form in the summer of that year (the authorization to publish, signed by the censor Ivan Timkovskij and dated June 25, 1821, is reproduced on the reverse of the title page in Bestužev 1821).