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THE SOUND AND THEME IN THE PROSE OF  
A. S. PUŠKIN: A LOGO-SEMANTIC STUDY  
OF PARONOMASIA<sup>1</sup>

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I zvukov, i smjaten'ja poln  
— "Poèt"

In his 1923 study "Put' Puškina k proze" (Puškin's Path to Prose), B. Èjxenbaum maintains that prose and poetry were for Puškin two entirely different forms of artistic language: "the laws functioning within one category are not suited for the other."<sup>2</sup> The poetics of French Classicism which served as Puškin's literary primer insisted upon a rigid differentiation between poetry and prose. Devices typical for one were not tolerated in the other genre, and Puškin's first experiments in the new medium seem to attest to the poet's conscious effort to keep his prose well at distance from the norms which ruled poetry. Thus from its very conception Puškin's prose struck the reader with its lack of typical poetic devices which were once so prominent in his own poetry, and which were still dominant in the prose of his contemporaries. For Vissarion Belinskij the famous Boldino Autumn of 1830 was the "barren, muddy, drizzly" season of the *Tales* after the "glorious, bountiful, redolent" Spring of Puškin's verse.<sup>3</sup>

Notwithstanding the scarcity of standard poetic devices in Puškin's prose works, various twentieth-century critics attempted to read the poet's prose according to the norms germane to verse. The usual method was to isolate from the prose text customary poetic features such as rhythm, meter, rhyme, or stanzaic organization.<sup>4</sup> Such studies, while testifying to Puškin's innate poetic sense, failed, however, to establish any direct or permanent links between Puškin's two different techniques of writing poetry and prose, and as such these comparisons remain a mere analogy.

The question which I would like to raise concerns the role of the sound devices such as alliteration and anagrammatism, once so skil-

fully employed in Puškin's poetry.<sup>5</sup> Does Puškin shy away from them in his prose, as was the case with the other poetic devices, or is the sound patterning perhaps the only poetic technique which both his poetry and prose were allowed to share? While there exist a number of articles devoted to sound-orchestration in Puškin's verse,<sup>6</sup> there is, to my knowledge, no study that has investigated the role of sound in the poet's prose. Moreover, there seems to be sufficient evidence to substantiate the claim that the sound devices, once so prominent in his verse, not only survived the autumnal migration to prose in Boldino 1830, but actually were to enjoy in the new environment an unexpected further development.

Apparently the first to take notice of the alliterative quality of the poet's prose was the hero of V. Nabokov's novel *Dar (The Gift)*, Fedor Godunov-Čerdyncev. Fedor, himself a poet, is about to make his own transition to prose whereby Puškin's example serves as a model for Fedor's own prose style: "Learning the accuracy of the words and the absolute purity of their conjunction, he carried the transparency of prose to the limits of blank verse (*do jamba*), undermining it in turn. As living example served:

'Ne privedi Bog videt' russkij bunt  
bessmyslennyj i bespoščadnyj.'

The short samples from Puškin's prose which Fedor quotes or paraphrases have all in common a distinct alliterative quality. Reading the sentence from "Putešestvie v Arzrum"—"*žatva struilas', ožidaja serpa*"—Fedor comments: "opjat' ètot božestvennyj ukol." In another place Fedor paraphrases the tight staccato of Puškin's sentence: "Krovat', na kotoroj umer Šoning, kuplena byla Karolinoj Šmidt, devuškoj sil'no narumjanennoj, vidu skromnogo i smirennogo."

There are, of course, many instances where Puškin is purely alliterative in his prose, but there are definitely other instances where Puškin deliberately exploits the sound for a very specific purpose. Therefore, in discussing the sound patterns in Puškin's prose, I will not dwell on the conventional type of "disinterested" alliteration (such as "*poest', popit', poigrat' po pjati kopeek v boston s ego ženou . . .*" ["Metel'"], to take an example based on "p"), which has purely ornamental—euphonic or rhythmical—function.<sup>8</sup> Instead I will focus on the less apparent but more intriguing cases when the function of the alliteration transcends the ornamental boundaries and affects directly the sphere of meaning and theme. These are the cases of anagrammatism and anaphony (words made by transposing the letters or sounds of other words), onomancy (divination by the letters of a name),

etymolograms (puns based on true or false etymology), logogriphs (word-riddles), logograms (word-signs), and other cases known under the general name of logomachy.<sup>9</sup> The intent of this study is to demonstrate how the sound in Puškin's titles, names, and various minor motifs is correlated to the larger semantic and thematic design in the stories "Stacionnyj smotritel'" and "Metel'," and in the novel *Kapitanskaja dočka*. However, before turning to these prose works, I will marginally touch upon Puškin's use of some of these devices in his verse.

In his pioneering study "Zvukovyje povtory" (1917), O. Brik calls certain cases of alliteration "zvukoobraznyje sočetańia" (sound-image combinations). These are the words which usually appear in Puškin's poetry in customary pairs such as "temno – tuman, plač – pečal', klonit' – koleni, grob – gerb."<sup>10</sup> In addition to the similarity of sound, the so called "zvukoobraznyje sočetańija" metonymically complement each other on the level of meaning or image, accentuating their common theme. In the early twenties, D. Vygodskij developed further Brik's notion and coined the term "zvukoobraz" (sound-image) which I would like to use in what follows. The "sound-image," as Vygodskij defined it, is 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."<sup>11</sup> It has been also noted that proper names (particularly foreign) and titles are an exceptionally rich source of sound-images. D. Vygodskij convincingly argued that the three passages which introduce the three protagonists of "Baxčisarajskij fontan"—Girej, Zarema, and Marija—are marked by a high incidence of the sounds "g," "z," and "m" respectively and form three distinct sound-images.<sup>12</sup> Thinking further along these lines, one can add that the three names—phonetically linked to their textual environment—actually mimic their physical environment. The setting of the *poëma*—*garem* (harem)—is anagrammatically mirrored in the names—Girej – Zarema – Marija—and as the drafts to "Baxčisarajskij fontan" reveal, Puškin intended to use "Garem" as the title.

Similarly, D. Blagoj demonstrated how the entire poem "Ančar" was generated from the sounds contained in the title. The subsequent stages of the poem in the drafts show Puškin substituting one epithet for another, often leaving a blank space, until the word needed to match the sound-image was found.<sup>13</sup> The most significant was the substitution of "car" (czar) for "knjaz" (prince) in the last stanza, resulting in an ominous echo between the opening and the concluding stanza of the poem:

"Ančar, kak groznyj časovoj . . ."  
"A car' tem jadom napital . . ."

With this final touch the sound-image was at once transformed into a highly significant semantic figure, linking and simultaneously contrasting the two central themes of the poem—the poison in nature and in the hands of men.

The technique of constructing sound-images around titles and proper names in his poetry plays an important role also in the poet's prose. How keenly Puškin's ear was tuned to this propinquity of names can be seen already in his first attempt at prose, the unfinished fragment "Naden'ka" (1819): "Ne xočeš- vmeste otužinat',—sprosil Viktora vetrennyj Vel'verov." The alliteration in Puškin fulfills a variety of functions. In the story "Kirdžali" the unusual name of the protagonist, like a musical key, colors the tonality of the text and at the same time provides the story with a compositional frame. The name Kirdžali is the first and the last word of the story, and likewise, its second and the penultimate paragraphs end with a rhyme generated by this name: "Oba kričali: 'Kirdžali. Kirdžali.' Vse selenie razbežalos'."—"Ostal'nye šest', uvidja Kirdžali vooružennogo dvumja pistoletami, razbežalis'." The three characters of "Pikovaja dama"—*German-grafinja-graf St. Germain*—are linked not only by the mystery of the three cards but also by the anagrammatic string running through their names. The similarity in these names leads J. T. Shaw to suggest that "St. Germain is in a sense the spiritual father of German, and the Countess his spiritual mother."<sup>14</sup> An analogous case, Shaw suggests, can be made also for *Čaplickij*—presumably the Countess's lover—and *Čekalinskij*—presumably their illegitimate son. *Nomen est omen*; names beg for paranomasia, for anagrams, for puns. "Krovat', na kotoroj umer Šoning" had to be bought by "Karolina Šmidt" according to the "laws" of phonetic magnetism that surrounds these names.

\* \* \*

If this assumption is correct, the story entitled "Stacionnyj smotritel'"—with the two "s's" in initial position—promises a wealth of alliterative sound-images. The story introduces a hero whose first name Samson (rejected variant "Simeon") is a resonant counterpart to the title. The title and the name set the phonetic key to the entire tale. The "s"—sound becomes a leitmotif which accompanies the stationmaster on every step. His first sentence in the story is: "Èj, Dunja! . . . postav' samovar da sxodi za slivkami." In conversation the stationmaster has the habit of adding the subservient particle "s" (Èto tvoja dočka? . . . Dočka-s"). Samson Vyrin serves in the district of S—presumably Smolensk (rejected variant "Tambovsk")—a town from which the abductor arrives. In St. Petersburg the stationmaster introduces himself

to Minskij as "staryj soldat." He prays at the church of "Vsex Skorbjaščix" (rejected variant "v cerkve Utolenija pečali").

In the tale he is referred to as "stancionnyj smotritel', smotritel', starik, or Samson Vyrin." Whenever one of these phonetically "contagious" words appears it permeates the immediate text with "s"—sounds in initial position.

... покамест скажу только, что сословие станционных смотрителей представлено общему мнению в самом ложном виде. Сии столь оклеветанные смотрители вообще суть люди мирные, от природы услужливые, склонные к общежитию, скромные в притязаниях на почести и не слишком сребролюбивы.

(For the present I will only say that the class of postmasters is presented to the public in a very false light. These much-calumniated officials are generally very peaceful persons, obliging by nature, disposed to be sociable, modest in their pretensions to honors and not too greedy.)

Это был точно Самсон Вырин; но как он постарел! Покамест собирался он переписать мою подорожную, я смотрел на его седину, на глубокие морщины давно небритого лица, на сторбленную спину...

(It was certainly Samson Vyrin, but how aged! While he was preparing to register my traveling passport, I gazed at his gray hair, the deep wrinkles upon his face, that had not been shaved for a long time, his bent back...)

Старик не снес своего несчастья; он тут же слез в ту самую постель, где на кануне лежал обманщик.

(The old man could not bear his misfortune: he immediately took to that very same bed where, the evening before, the young deceiver had lain.)

"Нужды нет,—возразил смотритель с неизъяснимым движением сердца,—спасибо, что надоумил, а я свое дело сделаю."

("That doesn't matter," replied the postmaster, with an indescribable emotion. "Thanks for your information. I shall do as I was told.")

The incidence of the initial "s" in the passages surrounding his name is three times higher than elsewhere in Puškin.<sup>15</sup>

To a certain degree, Vyrin's ruin is brought about by his gross misinterpretation of the Scriptures. As J. T. Shaw has convincingly argued, Vyrin confuses two contrasting parables, that of the Prodigal Son—illustrated by the four pictures on the walls—and that of the Good Shepherd—alluded to in the text.<sup>16</sup> In the Biblical context also the name Samson lends itself to a thematic pun. Abandoned by Dunja, Samson Vyrin proves to be the opposite of the Old Testament's strong man, betrayed by Delilah and blinded by the Philistines (Judges 16). Moreover, the man who ought to be the "smotritel'" (watcher) of his daugh-

ter's good name is at the decisive moment afflicted by sudden blindness: "Bednyj *smotritel'* ne ponimal kakim obrazom mog on sam pozvolit' svojej Dune exat' s gusarom, kak našlo na nego *osleplenie*, i čto togda bylo s ego rozumom."<sup>17</sup>

While Vyrin's misfortune is largely self-afflicted, a certain share of responsibility falls also to the sympathetic narrator. Ironically, the "tituljarnyj sovetnik" A.G.N., whose heart seems to be particularly receptive to the stationmaster's tears (the words "serdce" and "slezy" belong to the most frequent nouns of this mock-sentimental tale), happens to be the unwitting "corrupter" of both the father and the daughter. During his first visit he offers the father "punš" and coaxes the fourteen year old lass into an elliptical kiss ("Mnogo mogu ja nasčitat' poceluev, 'S tex por, kak etim zanimajus", no ni odin ne ostavil vo mne stol' dolgogo, stol' prijatnogo vospominanija.") During his second visit the narrator plies the broken father with more rum, thereby hastening what seems foreordained. With the clinical cause of Vyrin's death, Puškin adds one more ironical and alliterative touch to the vita of the "prodigal father": "Otčego ž on umer?" asks the narrator during his last visit. "Spilsja, batjuška," answers the stout brewer's wife who now lives in the stationhouse. Thus what began for the narrator as an idyllic romance with the daughter, deteriorated into a tragic tale of the father. However, the story concludes with a happy ending. The narrator learns about Dunja's visit to her father's grave and no longer regrets the "sem' rublej" (rejected variant "20 rublej, 17 rublej") spent for this last of his three journeys which Puškin orchestrated with such an alliterative mastery.

\* \* \*

During the same Boldino Autumn Puškin wrote the poem "Besy" (The Devils) which begins: "Mčatsja tuči, v'jutsja tuči / Nevidimkoju luna / Osveščает sneg letučij; / Mutno nebo, noč mutna." These lines describing the maddening effects of a blizzard were written not long before Puškin wrote his winter tale "Metel'." "Metel'" introduces three protagonists whose names—*Mar'ja* – *Vladimir* – *Burmin*—are linked by the sound "m-r". In addition, the two suitors of *Mar'ja* Gavrilovna share a common sound-theme "m-i-r." The names *Vladimir* and *Burmin* each engender an onomantic image which is closely related to one of the two contrasting plot-lines—the first ending in total misfortune, the second bringing incredibly good luck.

The name *Vladimir* is a thematic pun similar to the one Puškin used in the case of the ill-fated *Samson Vyrin*. In "Metel'" Puškin exploits the incongruity between the etymology of the name *Vladimir* (deriving from "mighty ruler, the master of the universe"), and the

actual fate of its bearer.<sup>18</sup> The sub-lieutenant Vladimir, instead of gaining the upper hand, becomes a helpless pawn in the hands of a capricious Fate that leads him away from Mar'ja, and into the blizzard, madness, war, and death. In addition to the contrastive use of this true etymogram, Puškin seems to exploit the name Vladimir also as a false etymogram. Following the onomantic link between the sound and the theme, one can argue that Vladimir's untimely death is adumbrated not only in Mar'ja's ominous dream, but to a certain degree, also by the sound-image (based on false etymology) contained in his name:

... [Марья] летела стремглав с неизъяснимым замиранием сердца; то видела она Владимира, лежащего на траве, бледного, окровавленного. Он, умирая, молил ее пронзительным голосом поспешить с ним обвенчаться ...

(... she fell headlong with an indescribable sinking of the heart. Then she saw Vladimir lying on the grass, pale and bloodstained. With his dying breath he implored her in a piercing voice to make haste and marry him ...)

The same sound-image contained in the phrase "Vladimir uexal v armiju" does not necessarily suggest the link between the hero's name and his tragic destiny. However, the significant addition to this phrase of "Èto bylo v 1812 godu" makes such an outcome more than likely. Vladimir is wounded at Borodino and dies. With the fulfillment of the lethal prophecy Puškin returns to the initial sound-image: "Vladimir uže ne suščestvoval: on umer [umir] v Moskve ...". Vladimir's story-line is thus concluded with an elegant thematic rhyme on "mir," linking the hero's name to his destiny. Hence in a manner contrary to the etymology of his name, from the beginning to the end of this tale death seems to be inscribed on Vladimir's name; "peace" rather than "world" reads its homonymic portent.<sup>19</sup>

The same capriciousness of "sud'ba-metel'" (Geršenzon)<sup>20</sup> which so skillfully concocted the sub-lieutenant's ruin brings to his carefree rival, the colonel Burmin, incredibly good fortune. *Burmin*—his name onomatopoeically reverberates "burja" and "buran" (tempest, blizzard)—seems to be destined by virtue of his sonorant name to be a more adequate match for the snowstorm, the war, and Mar'ja Gavrilovna. It is hardly fortuitous that the blizzard, when described from Vladimir's perspective, is referred to invariably as "metel'," whereas when the same blizzard is observed from Burmin's viewpoint, the word "*burja*" steps into place.

It might come as a surprise that in the story entitled "Metel'" the most frequent noun is neither "metel'" (8x) nor "burja" (2x) nor "veter" (3x) but, somewhat unexpectedly, "minuta" (11x) and its derivates "pom-inutno" (8x). There is no need to list all the instances. The few excerpts



from the passage relating Vladimir's erratic journey should sufficiently demonstrate the point:

Дорога была ему знакома, а езды всего двадцать минут. . . . В одну минуту дорогу занесло; окрестность исчезла во мгле мутной и желтоватой . . . лошадь ступала наудачу и поминутно то въезжала на сугроб, то проваливалась в яму; сани поминутно опрокидывались. . . . Прошло еще около десяти минут; роши все было не видать. . . . Лошадь начинала уставать, а с него пот катился градом, несмотря на то, что он поминутно был по пояс в снегу. . . . Но он ехал, ехал, а полю не было конца. Все сугробы да овраги; поминутно сани опрокидывались, поминутно он их подымал. Время шло . . .

(He knew the road well, and it was only a twenty-minute ride. . . . In one minute the road was completely hidden; the landscape disappeared in a thick yellow fog . . . His horse went on at random, and at every moment climbed either a snowdrift or sank into a hole, so that the sledge kept turning over every minute. . . . Another ten minutes elapsed—still no wood was to be seen. . . . The horse began to grow tired, and the sweat rolled from Vladimir in great drops, in spite of the fact that he was constantly being half buried in the snow. . . . But on and on he went, and still no end to the field—nothing but snowdrifts and ravines. The sledge was constantly turning over, and as constantly being set right again. The time was passing . . .)

The otherwise very perceptive reader of Puškin, Fedor Godunov-Čerdynceŭ in Nabokov's novel *Dar* attributes this "repeating [of] the phrase 'every minute' (*pominutno*) five times within sixteen lines in 'The Blizzard'," <sup>21</sup> to the few stylistic flaws found in Puškin—a statement I would like to refute. Indeed the density of the word "pominutno" is striking (the relatively short tale contains close to 1/10 of all the instances this word is used by Puškin). <sup>22</sup> Also the alliteration in the words "metel' – minuta – pominutno" seems to be a rather insufficient pretext for putting one's stylistic propriety on the line. Puškin, with his remarkable sense of measure, would not abuse a device were it not for a more congenial purpose, and so perhaps only by looking to a larger design in the orchestration of the tale can we discover what lies behind this amassing of a few words within a small space of text.

W. Lednicki described the peculiar situation in "Metel'" in the following way:

Masha, Burmin, and Vladimir were . . . aiming from three different "positions" toward the same goal. But the dice sent Masha and Burmin to Zhadrino, while Vladimir fatally missed . . . the place particularly "magnetized" by fatum. <sup>23</sup>

M. Geršenzon attributed this topographical confusion to the actions of the inconstant "sud'ba-metel'." The other agent besides the "metel'" through which Puškin separates Vladimir from Mar'ja and unites Burmin with her instead, is, in my opinion, of a temporal order. By declaring at the beginning of the quoted passage that "ezdy [bylo] vsego

dvadcat' minut," and by closing the passage with the words "Vremja šlo," Puškin has actually wound the inner clock of the tale. In the story in which the skeining of topographical and temporal circumstances plays such a decisive role, the synchronization of events is at stake. Each mention of the words "minuta" or "pominutno" brings Vladimir further away from his destination and closer to his destiny. Initially twenty minutes is needed to bridge the distance from Nenaradovo to Žadrino, but when Vladimir finally arrives a whole night "eloped." While losing his way in the blizzard Vladimir has lost the race against the clock, wound by Puškin at the onset of this winter anabasis. Thus the persistent repetition of the words "minuta" and "pominutno," which the otherwise perceptive hero of *Dar* qualifies as a stylistic flaw, is in fact the ticking of a meticulous metronome, one that Puškin set in motion with such alliterative skill in the story entitled "Metel'."

Unlike his rival the colonel Burmin has an extraordinary rapport with the same fatal forces that put in Vladimir's way the ominous "sugroby da ovragi," and brought about his ruin.<sup>24</sup> Answering the inexplicable "vetrennost'," Burmin seems to be in perfect tune with the elements; the blizzard and the clock do not present an obstacle to him. Quite the contrary, Burmin is carried with amazing ease through their snowy and ticking medium, into the church, to the altar, and through the turbulent Winter of 1812. After all, both "burja" and "minuta" are Burmin's natural elements. By the onomantic power vested in his name, the colonel *Bur-min* was destined to become the conqueror of both "burja" and "minuta," and thus to fulfill in the "toy-denouement" of the tale its proverbial wisdom: "Suženogo konem ne ob'edeš'" (You cannot escape the destined one even on horseback).<sup>25</sup>

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Entire plot-lines in Puškin, hidden or openly developed, seem to be constructed around various sound-images such as alliteration, anagrams and anaphons, true or false etymolograms, and other kinds of logomachic patternings. In one of the preliminary plot outlines of *Kapitanskaja dočka*, Puškin introduces, for example, two anagrammatic protagonists: "Bašarin dorogoju vo vremja burana spasaet baškirca (le mutilé). Baškirec spasaet ego po vzjatii kreposti."<sup>26</sup> The several encounters between *Bašarin* and *baškirec* set in motion the main peripeties of the plot. The actual version of the novel which evolved from this miniature outline has preserved a similar anagrammatic link between the protagonists. The sound-theme "r-i-n" from the name *Bašarin* migrated to the name of the eventual hero *Grinev*, and is echoed also by the names of other characters—*Zurin*,

Švabrin, Ekaterina II, Mar'ja Mironova, while *Petr* Grinev and the false *Peter* III, alias Pugačev, find themselves in an analogous situation as *Bašarin* and *baškirec*. In the case of *Kapitanskaja dočka* I will not, however, deal with the sound-images engendered by names—they seem to be of purely ornamental nature here. Instead I will focus on several seemingly insignificant objects which reappear during the numerous encounters between Grinev and Pugačev.

L.N. Tolstoj, in his oft-quoted statement about Puškin's prose, noted that "In Puškin and other great poets the harmonious *regularity in distribution of objects* is brought to the point of perfection."<sup>27</sup> What I intend to do is to follow the development of the novel's main plot-lines through the prism of several object-motifs which emerge and submerge in the meandering plot with a striking persistency. The appearance of these objects either directly motivates the unexpected twists in the plot or simply coincides with the novel's turning points. These meticulously distributed objects belong to two categories—one consisting of items of *clothing*, the other, *money*.

In Chapter One Petr Grinev leaves his parents' home, where he has spent the carefree childhood of a typical Russian "nedoros!" (minor), to begin a career in the army. Instead of Peterburg, Petr is sent to Orenburg. For his journey he is given an old servant, Savelič ("i *deneg*, i *bel'ja*, i del moix račitel'"), "zajačij *tulup*," and a final moral admonition from his aging father: "beregj *plat'e* snovu, a čest' smolodu."

After losing a *hundred rubles* at billiards, Grinev wanders astray in an ominous snowstorm. He is rescued by a black-bearded muzhik who has pawned his *tulup* in a tavern. Once in safety, the grateful Grinev attempts to give the stranger "*poltinu* na vodku" However, the keeper of his "money, linen, and affairs" refuses to pay the sum to the rogue. Grinev orders him: "Esli ne xočeš dat' *poltinu*, to vyn' emu čto-nibud' iz moego *plat'ja* . . . Daj emu moj zajačij *tulup*." The muzhik stretches the *tulup* (s barskogo pleča) over his "accursed shoulders," bursting its seams, and thanks his benefactor: "Spasibo, vaše blagorodie! . . . Vek ne zabudu vašix milostej" (Ch. 2). This episode, which sets in motion the novel's main peripeties, clearly elaborates upon the theme of money and clothing introduced in Chapter One. Moreover, the series *PolLTina* – *PLaT'e* – *TuLuP* share a common sound-theme P-L-T which will become the dominant sound-image of the novel.<sup>28</sup>

In Chapter Seven the fortress in which Grinev is stationed, falls into the hands of the rebels. Gallows are erected in the middle of the fortress and the rebel leader Pugačev directs the execution. Each time Pugačev waves his "belyj *PLaTok*" another officer is hanged. It is Grinev's turn. His head has already been placed in "*PeTLja*" when his servant Savelič prostrates himself at Pugačev's feet and begs for mercy.

Grinev is miraculously saved because Pugačev recognizes in him the benefactor who once offered him a *poltina* and gave him a *tulup*. Grinev "could not help marveling at the strange concatenation of circumstances"—"detskij *TuLuP*, podarennyj brodjage, izbavil menja ot *PeTLi*" (Ch. 8).

When Grinev is about to leave the rebels' camp, his meddlesome servant interferes again. The keeper of Grinev's "money and linen" presents Pugačev with a lengthy catalogue of all that the villains have stolen from his master. The "reestr barskomu dobru" continues the theme of clothing and money. It lists in meticulous detail each of the items of Grinev's clothing with their corresponding prices.

The chief secretary began reading aloud, syllable by syllable: "Two dressing gowns, one cotton and striped (*polosatyj*) silk, worth six rubles. . . . A uniform coat of fine green cloth, worth seven rubles. White cloth trousers, worth ten rubles. Twelve fine linen shirts (*polotnjannyx gollandskix*) with frilled cuffs, worth ten rubles. A tea set worth two and a half rubles (*na dva rublja s poltinaju*) . . . A cotton bedspread, a silk eiderdown, worth four rubles. A red cloth coat lined with fox fur, worth forty rubles. Also a hareskin jacket (*zajačij tulupčik*) given to your honor at the inn, worth fifteen rubles. (Ch. 9)

Savelič's faux pas incenses Pugačev: "Zajačij *tulup*! Ja-te dam zajačij *tulup*! Da znaješ' li ty, čto ja s tebjja živogo kožu velju sodrat' na *tulupy*?"

However, Savelič's blunder, which could have brought the novel to an abrupt end at this point, miraculously results in no lethal consequences. Not only are Grinev and Savelič allowed to leave the fortress unharmed, but Pugačev sends after them a Cossack, carrying a generous gift of "baškirska ja lošad", ovčinnij *TuLuP*," and "*PolTina*." The cossack claims to have lost the last part of the gift on the way. Grinev sends his thanks to Pugačev and advises the Cossack to collect the fifty kopecks on his return and keep them for vodka. Grinev then dons his new *tulup* and, with Savelič, mounts the new horse (Ch. 9).

With this last *poltina* Puškin evens the first balance of payments between the two male protagonists and concludes the first cycle of events. Like the first *poltina*, which Grinev offered to Pugačev at the beginning of the novel, so the second one, which Grinev leaves with the Cossack, is well-invested. It will yield plenty of interest, as the same Cossack, in gratitude for this *poltina*, will in Chapter Ten deliver to Grinev the crucial letter from Mar'ja Mironova. Once again, fifty kopecks have set in motion a new chain of events in which Pugačev returns favors to Grinev several more times: he frees the "fair maiden," guarantees safe conduct for the betrothed, and even offers to stand in as "posaženyj otec" at their wedding (Ch. 12). However, once the narrative crosses from rebel to imperial territory, the *poltina* and *tulup* which delivered Grinev from *petlja* and the Captain's daughter from captivity have an opposite effect upon their fates. They now initiate the chain of

catastrophes which leads to Grinev's arrest, and are used as incriminating evidence at the trial in which he is sentenced to death (Chs. 13, 14).

In his article "Idejnaja struktura *Kapitanskoj dočki*," Ju. Lotman has defined the central theme of the novel as "milost" (mercy).<sup>29</sup> Not unlike the peasant-Czar, the Empress spares Grinev's life, ("Gosudarynja . . . rešilas' *PomiLovaT* prestupnogo syna"). However, changing the death penalty to life-sentence in Siberia is of little relief for Mar'ja Mironova. The rebellion has left her without parents and without a dowry; the Royal tribunal has deprived her of her fiancé. It is now Mar'ja's turn to enter the scene. She sets out for Carskoe Selo to seek "*PokroviTeL'stvo*" (protection) for the "mnimoe *PresTupLenie*" (alleged crime) of Petr Grinev. The two women meet under the newly erected monument to Petr Rumjancev—Mar'ja Mironova in her "dorožnoe *PLaT'e*," the incognito Empress "v belom utrennem *PLaT'e*, v nočnom čepce i v dušegrejke" (Ch. 14). Mar'ja tells her story and asks, not for justice, but for mercy. Her Majesty receives the poor orphan graciously, gives her a letter which should free her betrothed, and, most importantly, pays her debt: "Znaju, čto vy ne bogaty, . . . no ja v *dolgu* pered dočer'ju kapitana Mironova. Ne bespokojtes' o buduščem. Ja beru na sebja ustroit' vaše sostojanie." Thus the story which balanced so dangerously on the brink of tragedy concludes after all with a happy ending, and this generous gift from the Empress can be seen as the last dividend earned by the *poltina* and *tulup* which Grinev (and Puškin) so wisely invested at the beginning of the novel.<sup>30</sup>

If one were to reduce the moral of this novel to a simple idea, expressed in a single sentence, one might say with Pugačev: "Dolg *PLaTežom* krasen" (Payment makes a debt beautiful, or One good turn deserves another) (Ch. 11).<sup>31</sup> No doubt, as far as the masculine protagonists are concerned, Pugačev and Grinev lived up to this maxim. Pugačev has superabundantly repaid his debt to Grinev, and Grinev is also ready to pay in kind: "No Bog vidit, čto žizniju rad by ja *zaPLaTit'* tebe za to, čto ty dlja menja sdelal" (Ch. 12). The same can be said about the two feminine protagonists. The Empress also paid off her debt to the captain's daughter who lost her parents in the service to Her Majesty. The last accounts which remain to be balanced are those of the two main "benefactors" of the novel—the peasant-Czar and the Empress. However, on this supreme level of the narrative (the mixed masculine-feminine line) there is no room for mercy or generosity. The only asset Pugačev has left to pay his outstanding debt for the damage he has brought upon the Empire is his own head.

Meanwhile, the emergency council of war debates various strategies for Pugačev's capture. Ironically, the best advice comes not from

the generals but from an old civil customs official ("staričok v glazetovom *kaftane*"), who hastily finishes his third cup of tea, "considerably diluted with rum," and offers the most sober assessment of the situation.

"I think, your Excellency, we need not take either the offensive or the defensive (ni nastuPaTeL'no, ni oboronitel'no)."

"How so, sir?" the General retorted in surprise. "No other tactics are possible; one must either take the offensive or be on the defensive . . ."

"Your Excellency, take the way of bribery (*dvigajtes' podkuPaTeL'no*)."

"Ha! ha! ha! Your suggestion is very reasonable. Bribery (*dviženija podkuPaTeL'nye*) is permitted by military tactics and we will follow your advice. We can offer *seventy rubles* . . . or, perhaps, a *hundred* for the rascal's head . . . to be paid from the secret fund." (Ch. 10)

Besides the proverb "Dolg platežom krasen" Puškin mentions in the omitted chapter another Russian saying: "Čužaja golovuška *poluška*, . . . svoja šejka *kopejka*" (Somebody else's head is worth half a kopeck, one's own neck—a whole). Pugačev, versed in the proverbial wisdom, is aware of the danger: "Pri pervoj neudače [moi rebjata] svoju šejju vykupjat mojeju golovoju" (Ch. 11). The poetic justice in this novel is actually very prosaic—Pugačev is betrayed for the ransom money by his own accomplices. At the execution scene Grinev and Pugačev meet for the last time. The situation is familiar, but their roles are reversed. Pugačev again "uznal ego v *ToLPe* i kivnul emu golovoju, kotoraja čerez minutu, mertvaja i okrovavlenaja, pokazana byla narodu."<sup>32</sup> The epilogue also concludes the series of executions which accompanied the several encounters between Grinev and Pugačev. In Grinev's prophetic dream, at the onset of the novel, the lethal instrument was "topor," at the mid-point of the novel it is "viselica," and at the close it is again "topor."<sup>33</sup>

When L. Tolstoj spoke of the "perfect harmonious distribution of objects" in Puškin's prose, he was referring to the *Tales of Belkin*, but the observation pertains equally to *The Captain's Daughter*. All of the novel's peripeties and denouements, all its "zavjazki" and "razvjazki," evolve from and revolve around a few carefully chosen and evenly distributed motifs. Most prominent among them are the motifs of *clothing* and *payment*. The entire novel, indeed, might be seen as an elaborate extension and illustration of two Russian proverbs: "Beregi *PLaTe* snovu, a čest' smolodu" and "Dolg *PLaTežom* krasen." By giving his *tulup* to a tramp, Grinev, like a fairy-tale hero, trespasses against the proverbial interdiction imposed by his father. But by the same token, the hero unleashes the force of the second proverb—the maxim of his "posażenyj otec"—and successfully overcomes all the obstacles without compromising his honor.<sup>34</sup> While Puškin neutralizes the contradiction between the two proverbs on the level of plot, the history of the Russian language resolves this opposition on the level of etymology,

attesting to the propinquity of the novel's two central motifs. *Clothing* and *payment* have a common etymological origin in Russian. Such words as *platit'*, *plata*, *platež*, *plat'e*, *platok*, *polotno* are closely related because pieces of fabric were once commonly used as means of payment, and Puškin makes ample use of this fact by exploiting the motifs of clothing and payment as a structural etymogram in his text.

In no other work has Puškin accumulated a larger and more diverse collection of clothing items. The vast collection of costumes in *Kapitanskaja dočka* is partially motivated by the choice of the genre—the historical novel. The other reason for this wardrobe full of costumes is related to the technical task of staging history as a comedy of errors and mistaken identities. In *Kapitanskaja dočka* everybody and everything pretends to be something else. A fetus is enlisted as sergeant of the Guards. The village where hens and pigs ramble around poses as a fortress. Twenty old invalids with long braids under their three-cornered hats, in green uniforms mended with blue patches, simulate the army. An old man “v kolpake i kitajčatom xalate,” and under the thumb of his wife, is the Commandant of the fortress. The runaway criminal impersonates the Emperor Peter III. His red Cossack caftan, a tall sable cap with golden tassels, together with tatoos or pock marks on his breast, are the insignia of his royalty. An armchair serves as his throne, a hut decorated with golden paper—as his palace. Copper coins pass for golden. A black bearded muzhik usurps the place of Grinev's father. In his dream, Grinev finds him in his father's bed. The Russian nobleman and officer Švabrin grows a beard and shaves a circle on his head to pass for a Cossack. Grinev travels as “gosudarev kum.” The Captain's daughter, disguised in a peasant dress, passes for the niece of the “popad'ja.” Neither Her Majesty the Empress—whom Puškin once called “Tartjuf v jubke i korone”—is excluded from this quid pro quo play. Promenading incognito in a white morning dress, a nightcap, and “dušegrejka,” the Empress feigns to be an ordinary lady. The last meeting between the Captain's daughter and the Empress takes place, significantly, in the royal dressing room. Her Majesty—in the process of changing her clothes in front of her dressing table; the Captain's daughter—still in her traveling dress (there was no time to send for the midwife's yellow “robron”). It seems only appropriate that in staging this comedy of errors, in which costumes and hairdo continuously change, Puškin engages his stage assistants in minor roles—the French hairdresser Beaupré comes to Russia “pour être outchitel”; the regimental tailor, armed with scissors and cutting off the soldiers' braids, doubles as hairdresser.

The theme of clothing and payment (*PLaT'e* – *PLaTež*), which Puškin exploits on so many semantic and thematic levels, is, in ad-

dition, accompanied by a number of other key words which also share the sound-theme P-L-T. It should not come as a surprise that in the text depicting "russkij bunt—bessmyslennyj i bespoščadnyj" the word *ToLPa* is one of the most frequent nouns (19x); its incidence in *Kapitanskaja dočka* stands second only to the *Istoria Pugačevskogo bunta* (27x). This alliterative series includes also the words *PLuTovstvo* and *PLuTovskoe* which Grinev and Puškin use to describe the *plut* Pugačev ["Vot moj Pugač: pri pervom vzgljade / On viden—PLuT, kazak prjamoj. / V peredovom tvoem otrjade / Urjadnik byl by on lixoj." ("D.V. Davydovu")],<sup>35</sup> and *PokroviTeL'stvo* and *PomiLovaT'*, applying to both Pugačev and the Empress ["milost" is the novel's central theme (Lotman)]. The permutation of the consonantal group P-L-T in the novel's key words such as *TuLuP*, *PLaT'e*, *PoLTina*, *PLaTok*, *PeTLja*, *PLaTež*, *zaPLaTit'*, *podkuPaTeL'no*, *PLuTovstvo*, *ToLPa*, *presTuPlenie*, *PokroviTeL'stvo*, *PomiLovaT'*, produces a perfect logogram. Unlike anagram or anaphony, a logogram, according to F. de Saussure, "is not a 'phonic 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."<sup>36</sup> The intricate logogram in *The Captain's Daughter*, constructed around the consonantal sound-image P-L-T, thus links several levels of the narrative at once. As such, it may be seen as the phonetic and semantic, as well as thematic "marrow" running through the more tangible "vertebra" of the novel's sinuous plot.

\* \* \*

Unlike other poetic devices, the sound patterning once so prominent in Puškin's verse did not disazZear when the poet descended to "prezrennaja proza." In his prose Puškin generally refrains from purely ornamental (sound for sound's sake) alliteration which was dominant in his poetry, and instead exploits the semantic and thematic value of the sound pattern. It is known that under the spell of inspiration the poet was "replete" not only with "perturbance" but also with "sounds"—"Bežit on, dikij i surovij, / I zvukov, i smjaten'ja poln," ("Poèt"). However, it is often difficult to determine which of the sound-images were conceived intentionally, and which were the result of subliminal patterning. While the high incidence of these devices testifies to Puškin's innate poetic sense, the analysis of the drafts and the rejected variants reveals that the poet was consciously working to unite sound, meaning, and theme in his prose. The consistency of Puškin's method suggests that the sound patterning might well be the only poetic device which survived the autumnal migration to prose, and enjoyed in the new



environment an unprecedented development. As a stylistic phenomenon, sound patterning provides the link with Puškin's past—by establishing the continuity between his poetry and prose, and at the same time it anticipates the future development of Russian prose—by supplying the direct link to the experimental prose of Andrej Belyj who once said: "Vnešnee inogda vnutrennej vnutrennego . . . Ja, naprimer, znaju proisxoždenie soderžanija 'Peterburga' iz *l-k-l-pp-ll* . . ." As one might expect, Belyj's extravagant claim raised protests: "Net, vy fantazirujete!" Whereupon Belyj replied: "Pozvol'te že, nakonec: *ja* ili ne *ja* pisal 'Peterburg'?"<sup>37</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 A part of this paper was presented at the AATSEEL Meeting 1981 in New York. I would like to thank J. Thomas Shaw and Lauren G. Leighton for their interest and valuable suggestions at the various stages of work on this paper.
- 2 *O proze* (L.:GIXL, 1969), 220.
- 3 *PSS* (M.: AN SSSR, 1953-59), I, 139-40.
- 4 A. Belyj read Puškin's prose as a rhythmical text possessing a distinct metrical impulse ("O xudožestvennoj proze," *Gorn* II-III, [M., 1919], 49-55). However, the metrical lines which we do find in Puškin's prose are purely accidental, and B. Tomaševskij declares them "pseudo verses" (*pseudostixi*) in his "Ritm prozy ('Pikovaja dama'), *O stixe* (L.:Proboj, 1929), 282. B. Ejxenbaum offered a stanzaic reading of two prose passages which he breaks up into verse-like "*articula*" ("Problemy poetiki Puškina," *O poezii* [L.: Sov. pis., 1969], 32-34). P. Bicilli viewed Puškin's paragraph as a derivative of a stanza ("Putešestvie v Arzum," *Belgradskij Puškinskij sbornik* [Belgrad, 1937]).
- 5 A few random examples of alliteration and anagrammatism should suffice as evidence: "I pal'cy prosjatsja k peru, pero k bumage . . . Pora: pero pokoja prosit . . . Pastux pletja svoj pestrjy lapot', / Poet pro volžskix rybarej . . . Pečal'nyj pasynok prirody . . . Prezrennyj palokoj palača . . . Puški spristani paljat . . . Pir Petra Pervogo . . . Potešnyj polk Petra titana . . . VeZuVij ZeV otkryl . . . Pod sen'ju MIRNOJU MIneRviNOJ ěgidy . . . V TAVRIdu VozVRATIl'sja xan . . . Ot finsKIX XLaDnYX sKaL do plamennoj KOLXIDY . . . I poučitel'noj LOZoj/ZOiLa xleščet—mimoxodom. . . . Kak ljubopytnyj SKIF aFInSKomu SoFistu. . . . Ja znaju: nežnogo PaRNI / kPeRo NE v mode v naši dni. . . . Doč ego RODRig poxital, / Obesčestil DRevnij ROD; . . . StaMBuL dlja SLadostej proroka / MoL'Be i SaBLE izmenil. . . . Gde, v garemax naSLaždajas', / Dni provodiT muSuL'Man, / TaM volšebNica, LaSkajas', / mne vručila TaLiSMAN. . . . DeLiBAŠ na vsem skaku / Srežet saBLEju krovaju / S pleč uDaLuju BAŠku."
- 6 O. Brik, "Zvukovyje povtory" (1917), rpt. *Two Essays on Poetic Language*, Michigan Slavic Materials, 5 (Ann Arbor: Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literatures, 1964), 3-45; D. Vygodskij, "Iz ěvfoničeskix nabljudenij ('Baxčisarajskij fontan')", *Puškinist*, IV (1923), 50-58; V. Brjusov, "Zvukopis' Puškina," *Moj Puškin* (M-L: Gos. iz., 1929), 229-47; D. Blagoj, "Mysl' i zvuk v poezii," *Slavjanskije literatury*, VII International Congress of Slavists (M., 1973), 99-139.
- 7 *Dar* (New York: Iz. im. Čexova, 1952), 100-11.

- 8 This passage was even more pronounced in the drafts: "poest', popit', poigrat' s Par.[askov'ej] Pet.[rovnoj] po 5 kop. v boston." (*Polnoe sobranie sočinenij*, 17 vols. in 21 [M.: AN SSSR, 1937-59], VIII, 605), hereafter cited as PSS.
- 9 For a discussion and definition of logomachy, cryptography, and gematria see L. G. Leighton, "Gematria in 'The Queen of Spades': A Decembrist Puzzle," *Slavic and East European Journal* 21 (1977), 455-69.
- 10 Brik, 22-24.
- 11 Vygodskij, 51.
- 12 Based on a measurable coefficient of 1,000 syllables, the distribution of the sounds in the three passages gives the following results:

	g	z	m	line	
Girej	70	47	33		1-25
Zarema	47	70	47	"	135-154
Marija	18	39	103	"	161-193

- (Vygodskij, 56).
- 13 "V pustyne (mračnoj, mertvoj) ČAxloj i skupoj . . . Gustoj (jantarnuju, blagouxannoju) prozRAČnoju smoloju . . . I tigr ne idet: liš' vixor' (gornyj) ČoRNyj . . . I (pRoČ letit) mČitsja pRoČ uže tletvornyj . . . Bluždaja list ego (visjaščij) dRemučij . . . Stekaet dožd' v pesok (kipjaščij) goRjuČij . . . Poslal (ko drevu) k ANČARU vlastnym vzgljadom . . ." (Blagoj, 121-24).
- 14 "The 'Conclusion' of Pushkin's 'Queen of Spades,'" *Studies in Russian and Polish Literature* (In Honor of Waclaw Lednicki), ed. Z. Folejewski ('S-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1962), 125n.
- 15 My calculation is based on 50 randomly selected samples of the same length from Puškin's prose. The initial "s's" in the words "stacionnyj smotritel', smotritel', starik, Samson" were excluded from the calculation. All English translations are cited according to *The Captain's Daughter and Other Stories*, trs. T. Keane and N. Duddington (New York: Vintage, 1936) with minor corrections of my own.
- 16 "Pushkin's 'The Stationmaster' and the New Testament Parable," *Slavic and East European Journal* 21 (1977), 3-29.
- 17 Moreover, Puškin's punning slip of the pen in the manuscript, transforming "diktator" of the epigraph into "didaktor," seems to be an intentional pun for it is in full accord with the overall strategy of paradox surrounding the patriarchic protagonist (PSS, VIII, 639).
- 18 Cf. M. Vasmer, *Ėtimologičeskij slovar' russkogo jazyka*.
- 19 That the name Vladimir portends misfortune is made clear also in the remark of Maša's maid. Mistaking Burmin for Vladimir, she exclaims: "Slava Bogu, . . . nasilu vy priexali. Čut' bylo vy baryšnju ne umorili."
- 20 M. Geršenzon, *Mudrost' Puškina* (M.: Knigoiz. pis. v M., 1919), 136.
- 21 *Dar*, 285; *The Gift*, 267.
- 22 Including his poetry, letters, critical articles, and unfinished works, the word "pominutno" appears 88x in Puškin. If we narrow the selection to prose alone, the proportion would be close to ¼ (36x). The mere force of these numbers excludes any possibility of chance.
- 23 "The Snowstorm," *Bits of Table Talk on Pushkin, Mickiewicz, Goethe, Turgenev and Sienkiewicz* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1956), 38.
- 24 The morbid pun on "sugrob-grob" Puškin used already in "Uedinnenyj domik na Vasil'evskom" (1829): ". . . -vse pogrebleno v sedye sugroby, kak budto v mogilu."
- 25 Several of the sound aspects in "The Stationmaster" and "The Blizzard" were touched upon in D. Bethea's and my article "Pushkin's Saturnine Cupid: The Poetics of

- Parody in *The Tales of Belkin*," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 96 (1981), 8-21.
- 26 PSS, VIII, 929.
- 27 From a letter to Goloxvastov (1873), PSS (M.: GIXL, 1928-58), LXII, 22.
- 28 For some of the P-L-T themes I am greatly indebted to Omry Ronen, who also suggests that the word *viselica* (gallows) is an incomplete anagram of the name Savelič.
- 29 *Puškinskij sbornik* (Pskov, 1962), ed. M. Efimov, 3-20.
- 30 Puškin too made a good profit from Pugačev whom he calls "moj obročnyj mužičok." In his letter from Boldino (15-17 Sept. 1834) Puškin complains to his wife Natalie about his financial situation: "Oh! If I only had a hundred thousand! How I would get all that settled. But Pugačev, my little peasant on quitrent, won't bring me even half of that, and, besides, you and I will squander every kopeck he brings in, won't we?" (J.T. Shaw, *The Letters of Alexander Pushkin* [Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1967], No. 533). Puškin has in mind the royalties from his *Istorija Pugačevskogo bunta* for whose publication he has received an interest-free loan of 20,000 rubles from the Emperor Nicolas I himself.
- 31 Apparently Puškin liked to play with the proverbial wisdom of Russian idioms on both the literal and figurative levels. In "Stacionnyj smotritel'" the saying "Čto s vozvu upalo, to propalo" expresses the basic situation of the tale while "Suženogo košem no ob"edeš'" captures the essence of "Metel'."
- 32 In a similar way Puškin depicts this scene in the final chapter of *Istorija Pugačevskogo bunta*. After Pugačev's last words, "Prosti, narod pravoslavnyj. . . palači brosilis' razdevat' ego; sorvali belyj baranij *TuLuP*; stali razdirat' rukava šelkovogo malinovogo *PoLukaŤan'ja*. Togda on splešnul rukami, povalilsja navznič', i v mig okrovavlennaja golova uže visela v vozduxe . . ." The execution and the subsequent quartering of Pugačev took place at *Boloto* in 1775. Puškin's detailed description of the disrobing of the pretender can be seen as a semantic realization of the word "razoblačenje" (disrobing and debunking) in its literal and figurative sense.
- 33 In the omitted chapter of the novel, a "floating phantom" turns out to be yet another "viselica": "Vdrug luna vyšla iz-za oblaka i ozarila zrelišče užasnoe. K nam navstreču plyla *viselica*, utverždennaja na *PLoTu*, tri tela viseli na perekladine." The floating gallows seem to fit this symmetrical pattern: *topor – viselica – viselica – topor*.
- 34 The device of letting two contrasting wisdoms play against each other was used, though with a different result, already in "The Stationmaster" (the parable of the Prodigal Son and that of the Good Shepherd).
- 35 These lines, written in a hussar style, accompanied the copy of *Istorija Pugačevskogo bunta* which Puškin sent to his friend in 1836, i.e., at the time when he was writing the novel. The proverb "Beregi plat'e snovu, a čest' smolodu"--a part of which Puškin has used as the lead epigraph for this novel--was the courtesy of Denis Davydov.
- 36 Jean Starobinski, *Words upon Words: The Anagrams of Ferdinand de Saussure*, tr. Olivia Emmet (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), 19.
- 37 Quoted in K. Močul'skij, *Andrej Belyj* (Paris: YMCA, 1955), 180.