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# The Literary Text—Thematic and Expressive Structure: An Analysis of Pushkin's Poem "Ya vas lyubil . . . "\*

A. K. Zholkovsky

## I. Some Prior Theoretical Considerations<sup>1</sup>

**O**UR APPROACH to the description of a literary text (T) proceeds from a fairly traditional conception of art: cf. Tolstoy's definition, "Art is a human activity which consists in the following: one man deliberately, by means of external signs, conveys to others the sentiments experienced by him, and others are infected [*zarazhayutsya*] by these feelings and experience them." This conception is elaborated in the light of more recent developments in poetics and linguistics, such as:

(a) The concept of device or process [*priyem*] as a *transformation* of a nonartistic ("practical") message into a poetic one, "the renewal" of perception (Shklovsky).

(b) The concept of a *set to expression* [*ustanovka na vyrazheniye*], i.e., a secondary use of "code" to convey "message" (Formalist, Prague, and Tartu schools).

(c) The concept of *invariant function* used for describing a set of similar texts as "one text"—at a certain level of abstraction (the syntactic functions: Shklovsky, Propp).

(d) The view that T *expressively embodies* a semantic *valeur*, or *theme*, and owes its expressiveness to certain universal rules applied to a "raw," nonartistic theme (Vygotsky, Eisenstein); these rules may also be called *devices*, though in a slightly different sense.

(e) The discovery of semantic invariants, or *invariant themes* (the oppositions of Bakhtin, Lévi-Strauss, Lotman, et al.).

(f) The development of "Meaning ↔ Text" models of language, i.e., of sets of rules (= transformations) imitating the speaker's ability

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to express his meaning and/or the hearer's ability to understand texts (generative semanticists, Schank, Mel'chuk-Zholkovsky).

The semantic invariant of all components (parts, levels, images, etc.) of T is called its *theme* (corresponding to the "conveyed feelings" in Tolstoy's formula). Correspondence between T (more precisely, a reading of T) and its theme ( $\theta$ ) is formulated in terms of universal elementary transformations, or *expression devices* (EDs). These are responsible for the heightened expressiveness (Tolstoy's "contagiousness") of T as compared to the "raw," "declarative" theme, but they are semantically equivalent transformations (they do not change the theme). Theme is "nonexpressive"; EDs, "meaningless." A description of T has the form of a *derivation* of T from its theme in terms of EDs.<sup>2</sup> Theme is presumed not actually to exist separately from T in the author's consciousness or subconscious; it is an abstraction. What is being modeled is not literary performance (the history of actual creative processes), but rather literary competence (the artistic logic of the correspondences between themes and texts).

The elementary EDs isolated so far are: CONCRETIZATION, AUGMENTATION, REPETITION, DIVISION, VARIATION, CONTRAST, PREPARATION (including as its varieties PRESENTATION, PRESAGE, and RECOIL), COMBINATION, CONCORD, REDUCTION. In what follows we will have to do with the following three EDs: (1) CONCRETIZATION: a thematic element X transforms into a more concrete element  $X_1$  having all the properties of X plus a new property  $a$ :  $X \xrightarrow{\text{CONCR}} X_1$  ( $X_1 = X_1a$ ), e.g., entrance  $\xrightarrow{\text{CONCR}}$  door. (2) VARIATION:  $X \xrightarrow{\text{VAR}} X_1, X_2, X_3 \dots$  (quite different or even contrasting CONCRETIZATIONS of X), e.g., to touch  $\xrightarrow{\text{VAR}}$  to embrace, to catch, to wound. (3) COMBINATION:  $X, Y \xrightarrow{\text{COMB}} X(Z=\text{CONCRETIZATION of both X and Y simultaneously})$ , e.g., to touch, to cause pain  $\xrightarrow{\text{COMB}}$  to wound.

CONCR and VAR take place not only in the "message" sphere (of things, events, and "real life") but in the "code" sphere (of language and literary techniques) as well; e.g., in Pasternak the thematic element "excessive number" concretizes both through such words as *tysyacha* [a thousand], *kucha* [heap], etc. (message sphere), and through ungrammatical ("excessive") plurals of *singularia tantum*, e.g., *V gromakh drugikh otchizn* [in the thunders of other fatherlands] (code sphere, namely, morphology). The same applies to the levels of phonetics, syntax, rhythm, composition, viewpoint, etc. Since complete isomorphism between a theme and the phenomena of these levels is rare, a *partial code CONCRETIZATION* (= CONCR in the code sphere of a part of a theme only) is usually the case.

The texts of one author usually exhibit a high degree of thematic

similarity (as a linguistic analogy: *not* sentences with the same syntactic structure and different meaning, but rather a synonymous periphrastic set of sentences with different syntactic structures and a common meaning). The most abstract *thematic invariants* of an author's Ts plus the more concrete invariants obtained from them through the application of EDs characteristic of the author (i.e., varieties of themes, invariant situations, characters, objects, e.g., Pasternak's window) form his *poetic world* (PW).

A PW may be likened to the set of (semantically) significant grammatical categories of a language that are obligatorily "added" to any message expressed in it (Boas, Jakobson). Indeed, whatever *local theme* ( $\theta_{loc}$ ) an author elaborates (an emotion he expresses, an object or state of affairs he describes), he will "add" to it some of the invariants ( $\theta_{inv}$ ) forming his PW. Thus a T by an author is derived in two major stages:

- (1) I. ( $\theta_{loc}, \theta_{inv}$ )  $\xrightarrow{\text{COMB}}$   $\theta^T$ ; II.  $\theta^T \xrightarrow{\text{EDs}}$  T.

(A Freudian analogy: a dream results from the invariant neurosis plus recent impressions, or *Tagesreste*.)

Different authors have different PWs. A comparative description of PWs may consist in the juxtaposition of superficially similar Ts involving different invariant themes, i.e., having different derivations in the respective PWs; e.g., in Pasternak the lines

- (2) Spurge  
Wormwood and genista  
Were catching at [his] canehead,  
Impeding [his] steps

go back to such invariants as **close contact**,<sup>3</sup> **man and nature**, **excessive force**, **difficulty**, which, in their turn, concretize the pivotal themes of Pasternak's PW—the **unity and the magnificence of the universe**; in Mandelstam a similar line

- (3) Like ivy, importunate, catching all the time [at everything]

concretizes the invariants **irritation**, **annoyance**, and **capriciousness**, together with **intricacy of forms**—thus representing one of Mandelstam's main themes, that of **instability**, **nonbasicity**.<sup>4</sup>

## II. An Overview of Pushkin's Poetic World

The analysis of a particular text, then, must be preceded by a description, albeit necessarily a brief one, of the PW.

We might formulate the basic thematic constant of Pushkin's poetry by abstracting from the various indirect ways by which he makes it "contagious":

- (4) an interest in the combination, juxtaposition, interaction, or conflict of two opposite poles: on the one hand, everything living, passionate, mobile, light, or fickle; on the other, everything inanimate, cold, immobile, heavy, or unchanging.<sup>5</sup>

For brevity we might refer simply to the constant theme **mutability/immortality**. Of course this is only an abstract "essence," or rather a conventional representation (shown here in boldface) of the most crucial oppositions which might provide the categories—the prism, as it were—through which the world is viewed in Pushkin's works. In the actual texts, the basic opposition (4) appears in an infinite variety (ED VAR), with respect both as to the *material* encompassed by his act of organization and to the *value* the opposing poles acquire in Pushkin's world and, of course, to the *means* by which these poles are COMBINED.

First of all, the material, by being projected onto various spheres of reality (conventionally: the physical, biological, psychological, and social) and combined with the theme **mutability/immortality**, provides the more frequent corresponding oppositions of **motion/stillness, heat/cold, life/death, passion/impassivity, freedom/shackles**, etc.

In terms of value either pole of the theme (or more often some harmonious COMBINATION of both) turns out to be the desired, "victorious" principle, the one being propounded. In other words, Pushkin's evaluation of the opposition **mutability/immortality** is *deliberately ambivalent*. This is precisely what *interests* him—as a problem which he sets himself each time and solves in various ways—often within a single text.

A positive or negative value for either pole of the theme is freely applied to the variations listed above and to COMBINATIONS of them, so that we end up with a rather diverse range of typically Pushkinian motifs. Let us briefly enumerate some of these.

In the *physical* sphere: **joyful or painful peace; headlong movement; a string of such movements; the alternation of movement and immobility** (the sudden halting or rushing of a torrent, a ship, a horse, a deer, a ballerina); **simultaneous peace and movement** ("a stream beneath the ice," dozing on a journey); **superior immobility at some elevated point; excitement at some destructive force** (of the wind, waves, etc.) or, on the contrary, **excitement at miraculous**

**inaccessibility** (of a crag amid a storm); **the stirring into motion of heavy immobile masses** (e.g., of the unshakable bronze horseman); **“the cold beauty” of winter; heat and cold** (“ice and flame,” “frost and sunshine,” etc.); **roses in the snow.**

In the *biological* sphere: various **intermediate states between life and death** (“floated dead, rocking as if alive”; “neither inhabitant of the world, nor dead ghost”); **a dead man killing a live man; abandoning the grave; a voice from beyond the grave; frenzied life on the verge of one’s own death** (fatal intoxication with battle, daring, wine, or love; a night bought “at the cost of life”; “rosemaiden’s . . . breath . . . laden with the plague”; and so on); **love scenes beside a corpse.**

In the *social* sphere: **the praising of freedom, flight from captivity, the breaking of bonds**; the image of “sweet captivity”; **the harmonious combination of captivity and freedom** (“through the iron rails thrust an enchanting foot”); **“a law erected by an awesome liberty”**; **voluntary fetters and bars** (for “the poor knight,” for example); **the acceptance or nonacceptance of standards, curbs, and customs: the superior and detached position of the neutral observer.**

In the *psychological* sphere: **an other-worldly, exalted, or celibate tranquility; a despondent or sweet indifference; cooled passions; pleasant or bitter memories of past passions; love of deathly beauty; assignations with dead loved ones; unrequited passion in the face of indifference; the common herd’s indifference towards the poet and his indifference to their opinion; a superior and alien attitude to passionate involvement; sudden transitions from passion** (in particular from poetic inspiration) **to impassivity and vice versa; tender submissiveness; pleasurable or forced suppression of the passions; passionless love** (“without either hopes or desires”); **sensible self-restraint or frenzied unacceptance of standards.**

Pushkin has a particularly characteristic way of COMBINING the two poles of the basic opposition in the situation:

- (5) a superior peace containing the (unrealized) potential for all kinds of movements or actions (**superior peace**, for short).

From his elevated position, resting on some “summit, level with the eagle, next door to God,” and so on, the poet (or his hero) looks down with detached superiority upon those obstacles and forces which normally oppress and worry him (“here the storm clouds *submissively pass beneath me*”; “I can survey all that is in my power”; “I soared with head unbowed higher than Alexander’s Column”). In this state he is “above all desires,” is “calm,” “the consciousness” of his own superior-

ity “is sufficient” (the Baron in *The Covetous Knight*; Silvio in *The Pistol Shot*; the poet himself—“Satisfied? Then let the crowd abuse your work . . . / And shake your tripod in childish envy” [“To the Poet”]). Related to this range of psychological stances are those more specifically Christian situations where the Tsar offers his subject a forgiving hand or cup of wine, the hermit or the Holy Virgin admit the sinner into Heaven, or such situations as

- (6) Jenny (in Mary’s song from *A Feast in Time of Plague*) and André Chénier (in the poem of that name) in their heavenly reincarnation after death mentally permit their nearest and dearest (the loved one, friends) not to show (at least until “the infection”/“the storm has passed”) any love for their earthly incarnation (“touch not those dead lips”; “beware of arousing suspicion with your tears”).

### III. The Overall Structure of Pushkin’s poem “I Loved You Once . . .”

#### 1. The Text of the Poem<sup>6</sup>

##### Russian Text

1. Я вас любил: любовь ещё, быть может,
2. В душе моей угасла не совсем;
3. Но пусть она вас больше не тревожит;
4. Я не хочу печалить вас ничем.
5. Я вас любил безмолвно, безнадежно,
6. То робостью, то ревностью, томим;
7. Я вас любил так искренно, так нежно,
8. Как дай вам бог любимой быть другим.

##### Accentuated Phonetic Transcription

- Ya vas lyubil: lyubóv’ yeshchĕ, byt’ mózhet,  
V dushĕ moyéy ugásla ne sovsem;  
No pust’ oná vas ból’she ne trévózhit;  
Ya ne khochú pechálit’ vas nichém.
- Ya vas lyubil bezmólvno, beznadézhno;  
To róbst’yu, to révnost’yu tomim;  
Ya vas lyubil tak ískrenno, tak nézhno,  
Kak dáy vám bóg lyubímoy byt’ drugim.

##### Free Translation

1. I loved you. Even now I may confess
2. Some embers of my love their fire retain
3. But do not let it bring you more distress—
4. I do not want to sadden you again.
5. Hopeless and tongue-tied, yet I loved you  
dearly,
6. With pangs the jealous and the timid know.
7. So tenderly I loved you, so sincerely,
8. I pray God grant another love you so.

##### Word-for-word Translation

- I loved you: love still, perhaps,  
In soul my has died out not completely,  
But let it not you any more disturb,  
I not want to sadden you not by anything.
- I loved you speechlessly, hopelessly,  
Now by shyness, now by jealousy tormented;  
I loved you so sincerely, so tenderly,  
As grant to you God loved to be by another.

#### 2. The Thematic Core

The *local* theme of the poem is the “eternal” one of

- (7) unhappy love (in the banal sense).

In “translating” theme (7) into the language of Pushkin’s poetic world, a complex (8) of invariant motifs is drawn in:

- (8) passion in the face of impassivity; the cooling of love; the suppression of passion; passionless love (“without hope or desire”); the memory of past feelings.

One possible COMBINATION of  $\theta_{loc}$  (7) with  $\theta_{inv}$  (8) produces the following *integral theme* of the poem:<sup>7</sup>

- (9) restrained memory, in conformity to a superior peace and love without desire, of a cooled passion (and, perhaps, beneath it all a declaration of a continuing passion) for a cold (or necessarily restrained) woman.

The main feature of the thematic complex (9) is its *ambivalent and indeterminate quality*.

One is struck by the very *indeterminacy of the circumstances* of the romance between the two figures. In the first place this kind of lack of concreteness in the local theme (which seems to dissolve completely in the invariant themes) is characteristic of *abstract lyricism* (philosophical or otherwise) which aims primarily to make manifest the author’s poetic world. Second, this is the reverse side of Pushkin’s famous *laconic manner*, his “vertiginous conciseness” (Anna Akhmatova). Finally, the very fact of this indeterminacy and its relevance to the key components of the theme (a declaration or only a recollection? love has died or is it still alive? coldness or self-restraint or necessity?) help to bring alive the *ambivalent* central motif (**passionless love**). This whole tendency to ambivalent indeterminacy is sustained and developed in the text in all kinds of ways.

Thus, the COMBINATION **declaration** plus **recollections** is used to carry the theme of **passionless love** through two temporal themes (ED VAR). *Everything that tells of this past love* (being tongue-tied, jealousy, supposed cooling of the embers, etc.) is given directly by the structure of the telling itself which incorporates the present state of the hero and of his **love** (by the obliqueness of the confession, by the self-denial for “another’s” sake, and by the hint of jealousy in the last line).

The problem “has it cooled or not?” is developed into a *miniature plot*: first we are told that **love** has passed (“has died out”), then doubt is cast on this (“not completely”), then we are given to understand that this is not the cause of the impassivity anyway (“I do not want to sadden you”).

On the other hand the indeterminacy of the motifs concerning the heroine’s behavior is not “played out” at all in terms of plot, as witness

- (10) the reverential-distant attitude to her of the lyrical hero; one might see other manifestations of this strange passionless veneration in the



polite plural *vy* [you] noted by Shklovsky<sup>8</sup> and the consistent use of only the oblique cases of this pronoun noted by Jakobson.<sup>9</sup>

In any case the emotional stance (10) is itself one of the CONCRETIZATIONS of the motif

(11) the altruistic suppression of love's claims

which is drawn in as a psychologically based COMBINATION of the thematic components **love without desire** and **superior peace** in (9).

In motif (11) this COMBINATION is not built on a compromise, but on the ultimate development of the poles of the theme: **a denial of one's claims out of a desire for the good of the loved one**—at once the greatest possible manifestation of **love** and the **renunciation** of love, **a conscious necessity and a demonstration of freedom and superiority**. It is typical too that in the poem's plot the cause (love) and the consequence (renunciation of claims) do not replace one another in time but *coexist simultaneously*, creating the impression so appropriate to the theme of *an ambivalent mixture of two states*, of an extended presence in the magnetic field of both poles, of a sensation of "sacrificial fire," "a quietly smoldering heat, of sad voluptuousness" (typical Pushkin images).

### 3. The Expressive Resolution of the Theme as a Whole

We will move now from the theme and plot structure to the more concrete levels of the poem. The theme of **love being tamed** determines both the whole tone of the poem—unassertive, restrained, muted—and, by the same token, the basic creative problem which is being resolved—*how to combine the moderate tone with a certain degree of expressiveness* (dictated both by the general artistic requirements and by the inner contrastiveness of a theme which also includes such a "vivid" component as **passion**). None of the elements which make up the poem are chosen in the extreme or most vivid forms, but at their most moderate; the effects are diffused: a point which is "vivid" in one respect remains muted in another, so that we can appreciate how great a role is played by the minutest structural details, the "poetry of grammar."<sup>10</sup>

This overall muted tone makes itself felt, for instance, in what we might call the "*oblique*" mode of exposition. The predominant tense is not the present but the *past* which tinges everything being described with unreality. There are numerous *negative* or *noncategorical* forms and expressions ("not you . . . disturb"; "I do not want . . . by anything"; "still perhaps"; "not completely"; etc.). In addition, there are passives, nominalizations, and other heavy constructions ("by

jealousy tormented,” “loved to be by another”). Also working in this direction are the detached plural *you* in oblique cases and the various manifestations of *indeterminacy* mentioned earlier and the poem’s often-remarked *lack of imagery* (absence of tropes), avoiding, as it were, all rhetoric. Last but not least is the muting effect played by the “*averaging*” *normality* of the *verse structure*.

If there is any deviation from the “norm” in the rhyme scheme it is towards a greater muting and monotony. Out of eight lines there are not four but only three rhyming vowels which form a transition from /ə/ through /je/ to /i/. In all the rhymes, moreover, there is a play of repetition and alternation of the consonants /zh/ and /m/. This consistency of the rhyming syllables creates overall a *flowing transition* through the lines:

/əzh/—/jem/—/əzh/—/em/      /jezh/—/im/—/jezh/—/im/.

#### 4. Composition

However, creating a muted effect is not the sole function of this transition. It also plays an important compositional role, since through its rhyme scheme and its syntax (particularly the periods) and its thematic parallelism (in each stanza the hero first tells the story of his love and then announces his renunciation of it for the heroine’s sake), the poem is precisely divided into *two equal parts*. Meanwhile, it is structured around an *intensification* from stanza I to stanza II: the intensity of each of the poles of the dual situation **love/suppression** is increased; the CONTRAST between them and the closeness with which they are intertwined (see below) is heightened. Moreover, the similarity of the two stanzas is undermined with the aid of the *interweaving of rhyme assonances* we have already noted, which culminates in the *appearance of a new and particularly sharp rhyme on /i/* (line 6). The *anaphoric* “I loved you” also both links stanzas I and II and destroys the symmetry between them by producing an overall scheme 4 + (2 + 2). Hence the two stanzas tend to be *united* into a single construction *which is intensified towards the end*, a kind of eight-line verse. But how is this intensification structured?<sup>11</sup>

On the *plot-theme* level, the intensification of **love** is felt in the way the hero permits himself under the guise of **memories** to talk quite freely about his passion (which has died down?). In a sense his “present” **lover’s claims** are even intensified in the **hint of jealous interest** which forces itself through the eighth line, completely counter to the total restraint and objectivity of the fourth. In parallel with this the **submission** also intensifies: a straightforward renuncia-

tion of his claims on the heroine ("let it not you any more disturb"; "I not want to sadden you") becomes a readiness to give her up to "another."

On the level of *mode of exposition* the intensification of love works as follows. In stanza I the leitmotif phrase "I loved you" *breaks against a pause* in mid-line and is then whittled away in denials and provisos; in the first line of stanza II it syntactically takes charge of the whole line yet reaches the end of the line *shielded*, as it were, *by two negations* ("speechlessly" and "hopelessly"); on its third appearance it at last *bursts through the curtain of denial into open affirmation*: line 7 is the only fully assertive line in the whole poem. The *rhythmic-intonational* intensity also grows as the poem progresses; from stanza I to stanza II there is a simultaneous heightening of both *wholeness* and *fracturing* of the sentences (as a simple comparison of the punctuation shows). But parallel with this the corresponding symptoms of submission—the manifestation of "obliqueness"—gain in power, for it is in the second stanza (line 6) that the most *passive* and *dependent* constructions appear, while the *ultimate in obliqueness* is reached in the eighth line, which combines *subordination*, *a passive*, and a heavy complex *object* construction.

The accentuation of the poles of the theme leads, naturally, to an *intensification* of the CONTRAST between them. Simultaneously, as we have said, there is increasing *interpenetration* (i.e., COMBINATION) of the poles. If at the end of stanza I the COMBINATION of **love** and the **suppression of love** into situation (11) **renunciation because of love** is offered sotto voce ("I not want to sadden you not by anything"), by the end of stanza II this paradox is uttered loud and clear: the lyric hero's love is described in terms of a comparison (a trope, almost!) with the supposed love of "another." And the last line at once incorporates both **love's claims** and a **renunciation** of them.

A rather special vehicle for this greater and greater weaving together of both poles of the theme is the 4 + (2 + 2) compositional scheme (marked by the anaphoric "I loved you"). In principle the range of expressive possibilities offered by this scheme includes such effects as **intensification** (resulting from an increase in rhythmic frequency), **anticlimax** (resulting from a decrease in rhythmic frequency), and **deepening**, sometimes a lyrical **self-absorption** (this is the interpretation, on the content plane, of an intensification *without any development in breadth*). Here it is clearly this last possibility which is realized, harmonizing well with the assertion of (11) of **a sacrificial love without claims**.

An important role in the overall compositional intensification from stanza I to II is played by the *redistribution of the plot-theme material*.

In stanza I there are three temporal planes ensuring a gradual transition from **passion** to **restraint**: *the past* (“loved”), *the present* (“has died out not completely”), and *the future* (“let it not you any more disturb”). Half of the stanza is allotted to the first two stages, the other half to the third. In stanza II the intermediate stage is left out and its place and part of that of the third stage (line 7) are taken by a description of the first stage. This shift involves many consequences.

First, this makes the *growth* of the motif **passion** not merely *quantitative* but *qualitative*: the assertion and development of the motif **love** occurs in the very place (line 3 of the stanza) where, according to the pattern established in the first stanza, one might have expected a bridling of that **love**. This effect helps to sustain the sensation we noted earlier of a **breakthrough** in line 7.

Second, we find an intensification of both the CONTRAST and COMBINATION of the poles of the theme due to their extreme manifestations (**past passion** and **future submission**) now *clashing directly*: they occur as immediate neighbors in the text and even as members of a single syntactic and rhetorical construction (the comparison “so . . . as . . .”).

Finally, the combination of this redistribution of the material with the 4 + (2 + 2) scheme produces a further *important compositional effect* which also strengthens the COMBINATION of the poles of the theme. What happens is that out of the final two lines one (the seventh) is devoted to the **history of love**, and the other (the eighth) to a **program of submission**. In other words, we are presented here in a condensed form with the relationship obtaining between the initial and final episodes within each stanza. Thus the seventh and eighth lines form a kind of *résumé of the whole poem*. Since line 8 also COMBINES both poles of the theme, the composition of the poem as a whole emerges as a series of COMBINATIONS, one inside the other and getting more and more condensed towards the end. Certainly the motifs of **passion** and **impassiveness** run throughout the poem, but are presented more powerfully in the second stanza where the second clause stands out as a *résumé*, and within the final line.

#### IV. Some Details of the Structure

##### 1. The Organization of the Points of View (in Stanza I)

The most intense point in the first stanza is line 3 where on the *plot level* **passion** is overcome by **submission**, while an intense *rhythmic-intonational* growth breaks against a barrier and is replaced by a fall.

Mimicking the collapsing effect in these two planes, the *mode of exposition* seems to extinguish the very intensity of this change.

The *point of view* in line 3 is organized in such a way that attention is focused at this point not on the most “heated” part of what is taking place—the hero’s suppression of his desires, his despair and self-denial—but on the relatively calm putting an end to discomfort for the heroine. By referring to his own love in the third person and by observing as if from afar its negative and somehow insignificant impact on the heroine (“disturb”), the hero seems to be suggesting to her that she should “brush aside” this love.<sup>12</sup> This external view of his own “I” has already been established in the second clause, where the hero regards his own emotion in a detached and alienated way, making cautious, “scientifically objective” comments (“perhaps”)—just as if it had no direct connection with him at all. Grammatically, this is expressed by the parenthesis which serves to separate the author from the content of his utterance. This division of the “I” (into “feeler” and “speaker”) begins surreptitiously even in the first clause due to the latent duality of point of view which characterizes the past tense.<sup>13</sup>

The detached point of view is maintained by the way the love which is mentioned so insistently in each clause of the stanza is *signified lexically*. It gradually becomes more and more oblique and detached, negligent almost: “loved,” “love,” “it,” “not by anything,” i.e., a personal verb, an abstract noun, a third-person pronoun, a negative inanimate pronoun.

The first stanza, then, is built around a pattern of **superior peace**:

- (12) down below is an “I” suffering from unhappy love; above is a cold or restrained heroine; higher still is the “speaking I” which sets about trying to resolve the conflict between the first two characters: “let it not you.”<sup>14</sup>

## 2. The Culmination of the Intensity (Stanza II, sentence 1)

The third quarter of the whole piece (lines 5 and 6) is the natural point for the culmination.

As we have pointed out already, on the level of *theme and plot* the **story of the love** is here told in more detail with all its contradictions and deviations. On the *rhythmic-syntactic* level here at last we reach the full breadth of tone to which the melodic line in stanza I has been tending (with its clauses of ½, 1½, 1, 1 lines in length, but never of 2 lines). The unity of this clause, which takes up half the stanza, is accentuated by the chiasmus: on the outside, the iambic verb forms with stressed *-i/-* describing the hero’s love [*lyùbil, tòmim*], and between them, pairs of equivalent three- or four-syllable descriptions

with stressed /ə/ and /e/ describing the “slowing down” of [*bezmóluno, beznadézhno, / to róbst’yu, to révnost’yu*]. This produces a double chaining effect—both a *join* and a *link*.<sup>15</sup> At the same time the mirrorlike similarity of the lines and the equivalence of the attributes within each of them tend to increase the effect of fracture (six phrasal units). The resulting symmetric arc creates a sense of spaciousness and, at the same time, a faster breathing tempo, an *intense and unbroken sense of movement* from the beginning to the end of the sentence.

This growth proceeds not merely from the contrast with the first stanza but within the sentence itself. On the *plot* level there is clearly a development from the more or less neutral “loved” to its clash with the static and unmistakably negative adverbs (and here too “speechlessly” involves only external manifestations of the “hindrances” to love, while “hopelessly” extends them inwards to the hero’s soul and ahead to his whole future), and from there to dramatic emotional *movements*. Now, “shyness” suggests only an indecisive inner aspiration in the heroine’s direction, while “jealousy” is far more active, working itself from inside outwards, and makes claims to some kind of—albeit imaginary and “negative”—rights over her. From “shyness” to “jealousy,” then, there is a growth not only in the activeness and drama of the emotions but in that egoism of claims which has to be held in check and which is mentioned explicitly here for the first time.

The activation takes place on other levels of the text too. Syntactically, the adverbs of manner (“speechlessly” and “hopelessly”) are replaced by agentive instrumentals, and *rhythmically and intonationally* there is a piling on of equivalent forms<sup>16</sup> and an intensifying switch from the normal word sequence in line 5 to the inversion in line 6, involving at once a switch from a *dividing construction* (where the head word “loved” seems to “split” into two equivalent qualifiers) to the more active *summative construction* (where “by shyness” and “by jealousy” are combined in “tormented”). *Phonetically*, the fifth and especially the sixth lines are among the peaks of the poem. Alongside the precise patterning of vowels (see above), there is a clear play on the consonants (three /b/, two prestress /r/, three prevocalic /t/), with play on /r/ and /t/ (as well as the “sharp” rhyme on /i/ mentioned earlier) appearing for the first time in line 6.

A particularly vivid effect to be noted in line 6 is that created by the interplay of phonetic, rhythmic, syntactic, and semantic elements strengthening the drama in the story line at this point.

The powerful phonetic, rhythmic, and syntactic similarity between *robost’yu* [by shyness] and *revnost’yu* [by jealousy] highlights the distinction between the stressed /ə/ and /e/, which turns out to be

virtually the only substantive expression of the semantic distinction between the two words. The fact of this distinction is accentuated by the semantics of the construction “to . . . to . . .” (**now one thing, now the other**) and of the word *tormented* ( $\approx$ the ebb and flow of feeling, intermittent states). In its turn the syllable “to-” (or rather /ta-/) in *tomím* acquires a semantic of its own, being subconsciously perceived as bearing the element of meaning **alternation of states**. This is then underpinned by the phonetic series “to . . . ó—to . . . é—to . . . í,” where all three stressed vowels are different and happen to be those *very* three different vowels upon which the rhyme scheme of the poem is built.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, if torment is a switch from one state to another and then a return to the first state, etc., then we see something analogous to this on the phonetic level too: different states—/o/—/e/—/i/; similar states—/t/—/t/—/t/, r . . . st’yu—r . . . st’yu, /m/—/m/ (in *tomím*). What is more, the final word, one might say, repeats in condensed form the alternations which had initially been taking place in terms of whole adverbial phrases (if we recall the parallel rhythmic-syntactic summing up of *to róbst’yu*, *to révnost’yu* into *tomím*).

### 3. The Final COMBINATION (line 8)

The last line is a sort of “total” line for the whole poem, and it draws together in a focal point all the motifs which have been running through the text on various levels and in various sections. In the *plot and theme* sphere these are **love, jealousy, and renunciation**; in terms of *mode of exposition* they are the categories of obliqueness and explicitness, negation and assertion; in the *rhythmic-intonational* sphere, the stress patterns which characterize the different lines; *phonetically*, the reversal of the sequence bí—bó—by . . . ó from the first line to bó—bí—bý—í, echoing the reversal of the active “loved” to the passive “be loved” and the replacement of the “I” by “another.”

The play with direct and oblique modes of exposition is particularly intriguing. The final admissions of **love** (for the heroine) and **jealousy** (towards *another*, who literally appears at the very last moment) are wrapped up—appropriately for the motif of **altruistic submission**—in a *thick veil of obliqueness*: a subordinate clause, a full passive (with object in the nominative case and subject in the instrumental), and a dry, almost bureaucratic construction of the accusative and infinitive type (“grant to you . . . to be”). The appearance of the bunch of heavy constructions has been carefully prepared for: (1) by the suppressed causal link between the third and fourth lines; (2) by the participial construction in line 6 (“. . . tormented”); (3) by the instrumentals of means and agent in lines 4 and 6 (“not by anything”; “by shyness”; “by jealousy”); (4) by the mirroring of “I loved” in “tormented” (assisting the changing of the



active verb “to love” into a passive form “be loved”); (5) the weight of the infinitive construction is lightened by the phrasal unity and everyday idiomatic quality of the expression which governs it—“God grant.”

But this obliqueness does not remain impenetrable. Corresponding with the principle of the **ambiguousness of passion**, showing through **impassivity**, it is literally *broken* by the “direct” imperative *day* [grant], which is ungrammatical in a Russian subordinate clause.

To conclude, we might note that many of the features of the last line depend on various properties of the expression *day vam bog* [God grant]—its oblique imperativeness, its unreal affirmativeness, its idiomatic tone, its syntactic governance, the stress on both monosyllables, and, of course, its (imaginary) address to God. It is so much the key to many crucial aspects of the aesthetic structure of the poem that it becomes *irreplaceable*, as it were; it turns into an image which can stand for practically the whole poem. The other equally contentful component is the leitmotif phrase “I loved you,” which even in its first occurrence contains a protoform of both poles of the theme **passion/impassivity**, and on its subsequent occurrences accumulates the effects of their further elaboration.

Both these symbolic fragments occur in the final period of the poem.

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(Translated by L. M. O’Toole)

#### NOTES

1 This theoretical approach is being developed by the author in collaboration with Yu. K. Shcheglov; see Shcheglov and Zholkovsky, “Towards a ‘Theme—(Expression Devices)—Text’ Model of Literary Structure,” *Russian Poetics in Translation*, 1 (1975) 3-50, and “Poetics as a Theory of Expressiveness,” *Poetics*, 5, No. 3 (Sept. 1976), 207-46.

2 Our description of Pushkin’s poem (secs. III-IV) is in the form not of a derivation but of an examination of many separate correspondences between elements of the theme and elements of the text (taken consecutively level by level according to their degree of concrete realization). A complete derivation would be extremely ponderous.

3 Boldface is used in this article to represent typical themes and motifs of Pushkin’s poetic world.

4 For details see my “K opisaniyu odnogo tipa semioticheskikh sistem” [Towards a description of a specific type of semiotic system], *Semiotika i informatika* [Semiotics and information science], VII (Moscow, 1976).

5 Our description of Pushkin’s PW owes a great deal to articles by M. O. Gerschenzon (*Mudrost’ Pushkina* [Pushkin’s wisdom] [Moscow, 1919]) and Roman Jakobson (“La statue dans la symbolique de Pouchkine,” in *Questions de poétique* [Paris, 1973], pp. 152-87), while the analysis of the text which follows owes much to Jakobson, “Poeziya



grammatiki i grammatika poezii" [The poetry of grammar and the grammar of poetry], in *Poetics—Poetyka—Poëtika* (Warsaw, 1961), pp. 397-417.

6 [The translation below the Russian text of the poem is by R. M. Hewitt from J. Lavrin, *Pushkin and Russian Literature* (London, 1947), p. 100. It retains some of the rhythm, rhyme, and euphony of the original. The phonetic transcription and word-for-word translation have been given to assist reference to particular features of the language of the poem discussed in the article. Tr.]

7 The similarity between  $\theta_{loc}$  and the invariant motif is an additional reason for his resorting to this local theme so "dear to the author."

8 V. B. Shklovsky, "Poeziya grammatiki i grammatika poezii" [The poetry of grammar and the grammar of poetry], *Inostrannaya literatura* [Foreign literature], 6 (1969), 222.

9 Jakobson, "Poeziya grammatiki i grammatika poezii," p. 405.

10 Jakobson, "Poeziya grammatiki i grammatika poezii."

11 That the tendency is towards intensification may easily be checked by switching round the stanzas, producing a damping effect at the end, instead of the heightening.

12 Here linguistic elements serve to achieve the splitting of the hero into two hypostases, which typifies the state of superior peace (see formula (6) above).

13 In the context of the subsequent development of this effect in stanza I this potential of the past tense is realized—and perceived through the repetitions of the leitmotif "I loved you"—as an essential part of its meaning.

14 This superiority reaches a peak in the second stanza: I gives orders to all three participants in the love conflict and even God ("God grant")—who, of course, often appears in situations of superior peace.

15 These are terms used by Osip Brik and Victor Zhirmunsky.

16 This piling on begins with the artfully organized rhythmic weighting from *bezmolvo* to *beznadezho*, where the  $\prime$  motif is "stretched out" to  $\prime\prime\prime$ .

17 The culminating sixth line summarizes, as it were, the rhyme vocalism of the poem as a whole.