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Narcissistic elements in Lermontov's work

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В младенческих летах я мать потерял.
Но мнилось,что в розовый вечера час
Та степь повторяла мне памятный глас. 1:134

Too early I was of my mother bereft,
But when in the evening the day would decline,
Her voice from the valley would give me a sign.
A.L.:39

Lermontov's identification with nature is however not confined to her benevolent aspects alone, but extends to her destructive elements. These allow the poet to express his own aggressive feelings and to recapture his sense of power in the context of his relationship with nature. One clearly senses the poet's elation in his descriptions of the raging storms, the roaring rivers and his unbounded joy in hunting. Lermontov's description of Mtsyri (in the poem "Mtsyri" 1839) longing to embrace the storms and grasp the lightning well expresses this elation :

... О,я как брат
Обняться с бурей был бы рад.
Глазами тучи я следил,
Рукою молнию ловил. 2:56

...The world's unrest
To me was like my brother's breast.
I saw the clouds that would not calm,
And lightnings danced upon my palm.
A.L:323

The hero feels safe and unthreatened, as, in identifying with an idealized and powerful nature, he feels protected from any danger. However, when confronted with the wholeness of nature, Mtsyri also experiences the impact of his fears of her destructive aspect. He realizes that "Mother-Nature" is not only generous, affectionate and protecting but also withholding and merciless.

This realization leads Mtsyri to the bitter insight, that the blissful union with nature is unattainable. He realizes that nature is an entity separate from him and has an existence independent of his fantasies and longings. Unable to tolerate the reality of nature's essential separateness, the hero wishes to punish and hurt nature for having caused this disillusionment and ultimate alienation. He falls to his knees and angrily bites the "raw breast" of earth.

Тогда на землю я упал,
И в исступлении рыдал,
И грыз сырую грудь земли, 2:62

I fell, bewildered and distraught,
I fell to weep, to gnaw and bite
The breast of earth with all my might.
A.L:333

Viewed from an analytic perspective the hero's encounter with nature closely follows the psychoanalytic mechanism of splitting. As stated previously, the narcissistic process of separation prevents an integrated vision of an object being simultaneously good and bad. In splitting the object, the narcissistic individual idealizes the good which is desirable and aspired to, while the presence of bad is denied and ignored. From this split two primitive aspects of the object, the idealized and the persecutory, and two corresponding attitudes towards them develop. As a result, splitting occurs not only between internal and external reality but also intrapsychically, between the two opposing parts of self. In the poem "Mtsyri" this split is implicit already at the beginning of the poem in the description of the hero who personifies, on the one hand, submission and conformity and on the other, rebellion and anger. Mtsyri is unable to reconcile the two opposing elements of his existence. He hates the gloomy walls of the monastery which he associates with captivity and submission, but at the same time, at the end of his journey, he returns to the protection and safety provided by the cloister walls. Likewise, his emotional response to nature veers sharply from the initial feeling of freedom and potency to a sense of terror and helplessness.

In analytic terms, Mtsyri's pervasive conflict highlights his simultaneous fear of and wish for dependence; it is symbolic of narcissistic fears of separation and loss chacteristic of all Lermontov's heroes. The circular nature of Mtsyri's journey is analogous to the narcissistic psychological cycle in which the hero experiences his dependency as an encroachment on and a threat to his freedom. At the same time, his futile flight to freedom highlights his sense of weakness and impotence. A similar contradiction is present in the poem "The Demon" (1829-1839). Despite his fallen state, the Demon bears within himself his angelic past and hopes to return to heaven. He realizes that the predicament of his existence is linked to incompleteness, but he is unable to resolve the contradiction represented by heaven and earth and therefore remains alienated from both. The split in the Demon is further emphazised in his attitude to mankind. He is filled with contempt for people doomed in his view to a worthless existence, but, at the same time, he longs for human love which he feels would reconcile him with life and return him to the primeval state of bliss and goodness. The unresolved conflict between dependence and freedom emerges as a root cause of the Demon's torments and this opposition between submission and revolt forms a recurring motif in Lermontov's poetry. His persona is consequently

often an outcast spurned by both heaven and earth:

Я меж людей беспечный странник,
Для мира и небес чужой; 1:228

'Mid men, I am a wilful stranger,
In heaven an unbidden guest. A.L:495

Or, he is a solitary ship on a raging sea, a prey to the storms of fate.

А он ,мятежный,просит бури,
Как будто в бурях есть покой! 1:306

Alas! It longs for storms and riot,
As if a storm could bring it peace.
A.L:95

The persona's inability to accept both sides of reality emerges in the antithesis of good versus evil, dependence versus independence, the sacred versus the sinful which pervades Lermontov's poetry. In the abovementioned poem "A Sail" (1832) a contradiction between dependence and freedom is expressed in the symbolism of the opening stanza of the poem which gives the images of the free sea and the safe shore.

Что ищет он в стране далекой?
Что кинул он в краю родном? 1:306

What does it seek 'mid breakers foreign?
What did it leave in native bays?
A.L:95

Another polarity is present in the poem "June 11, 1831" which presents the opposing forces of sacred and sinful struggling within the persona.

Я к состоянью этому привык,
Но ясно выразить его б не мог
Ни ангельский,ни демонский язык:
Они таких не ведают тревог,
Лишь в человеке встретиться могло
Священное с порочным. Все его
Мученья происходят оттого. 1:197

I've grown used to this state,
Neither angelic nor demonic language
Could ever express it clear:
They do not know of such anxiety,
Everything is wholesome in the one, and
all is evil in the other
Only in man the sacred could meet with
the profane
And all man's torments arise from this.
I.B.

And in his famous poem "The Angel" written in 1831, the opposition centers on the suffering of a heavenly soul brought to its birth on dark and sinful earth.

И долго на свете томилась она,
Желанием чудным полна;
И звуков небес заменить не могли
Ей скучные песни земли. 1: 223

It languished on earth, and by sufferings burned,
For things unattainable yearned;
But nothing it heard could destroy or replace
The music of heavenly grace. A.L:55

Unable to resolve the polarities of his tormented existence the poet wishes to slough off the burdens of life and to return to the pre-split state of painless harmony. He wishes to forget all and to find eternal peace in an undisturbed sleep made all the more tranquil by sweet songs of love.

Уж не жду от жизни ничего я,
И не жаль мне прошлого ничуть;
Я ищу свободы и покоя!
Я б хотел забыться и заснуть!-

Но не тем холодным сном могилы...
Я б желал навеки так заснуть,
Чтоб в груди дремали жизни силы,
Чтоб дыша вздымалась тихо грудь;

Чтоб всю ночь,весь день мой слух лелея,
Про любовь мне сладкий голос пел,
Надо мной чтоб вечно зеленея
Темный дуб склонялся и шумел. 1:94

In my bosom not a hope is living,
And my past has ceased to cause regret.
All I need is freedom and oblivion,
And I wish to sleep and to forget.

But I fear the frosty sleep eternal....
I would like to have a peaceful rest
And preserve my life-bestowing kernel
With some breath and warmth within my
breast.

I would like a melody unending
Day and night to sing of happy love
And an oak, its heavy branches bending,
To caress me gently from above. A.L:273

Viewed in analytic terms, the poet's desire for peaceful security in a sleep-like existence represents a return to the complete unity with the Mother and retreat to a 'safe inside' which is felt and fantasized as a return to the womb.

Freud describes the emotion of merging with a maternal principle as "oceanic feeling"; the term symbolizes the limitless extension and oneness of the infant in a blissful union with its mother. He maintains that the feeling of union is no mere illusion, but the correct description of a memory of an infantile state otherwise inaccessible to direct introspection.

The process of splitting, evident in the poet's encounter with maternal nature, is also present in his relationship with the paternal principle of God. The poet is unable to accept the concept of an all-good deity and shows in his attitude towards God, the Father a similar ambivalence of feelings

as he harbours towards Mother-Nature. At one stage he sees the Almighty as the guardian and creator of universal harmony :

И счастье я могу постигнуть на земле,
И в небесах я вижу Бога!.. 1:24

And I perceive on earth both happiness
and truth
And see above the Everlasting. A.L:123

In his poem "Prayer" (1839) he speaks of the invigorating union with God and the life sustaining comfort he derives in emulating God's creative potency in his own artistic work.

Есть сила благодатная
В созвучье слов живых,
И дышит непонятная,
Святая прелесть в них. 1:39

There is a sweet simplicity
In every sacred phrase,
The promise of felicity,
A secret, healing grace. A.L:165

But when God fails to meet his infantile expectations of constant protection and to respond to his every need, he turns away from Him, accusing the Creator of rejecting and abandoning him.

И не слыхал творец моих молений,
И я погиб во цвете лучших дьи.; 1:189

And the Creator did not hear my prayers
And I perished in the prime of my days. I.B.

This repetitive pattern of perceiving himself as being rejected by God and, in consequence, rejecting God was also evident in his relationship with nature. In both instances he feels that his idealized objects are disappointing and he resolves his discomfort by rejecting them in turn.

This rejection enables the hero to deny his need for dependence but precludes his coming to terms with his own sense of weakness and inadequacy.

Ни перед кем я не преклочил колена
То гордости была б измена. 1:81

I never bent my knee before anyone
For it would have been a betrayal of my pride.
I.B.

Typically, a reciprocal narcissistic cycle operates here. On the one hand the persona needs God in whom he can invest all his hopes, but, at the same time, he fears that in submitting to God he will loose his separate identity.

Мир земной мне тесен,
К тебе ж проникнуть я боюсь. 1:43

This earthly world constricts me
Yet I am afraid to get close to you. I.B.

On the other hand, when investing himself with divine omnipotence, he finds that his denial of God reinforces his feelings of futility and despair. Loosing the hope of uniting with God, life looses its meaning for the poet, as he realizes that the promise of bliss felt to have been extended to the child is only an illusion.

Тогда мы видим,что пуста
Была златая чаша,
Что в ней напиток был-мечта,
И что она-не наша!- 1:211

We note that someone else's cup
Distracted us and tempted;
All was a dream, the game is up -
The cup of life is empty. A.L:53

Lermontov's attitude to God, moreover, represents an extension of the ambivalent relationship the poet experienced in relation to his own father. God represents the father figure from whom he needs love and protection, but in relation to whom he experiences rejection and desertion. (cf. the biographical chapter).

It is a tenet of analytic theory that the attitude of man towards God is determined to a large extent by the displacement of the individual's feelings towards his parents. Tracing the personal sources of religious belief to infantile helplessness and father longing, psychoanalysis views religious life as a dramatization on the cosmic plane of the emotions, fears and longings which arise in the child's relation to his parents. This pattern forms the basis for the child's unconscious expectations of God. For Lermontov, bereft of his mother and estranged from his father, the relationship with God is based on similar fears of rejection and loss. The poet perceives God's refusal to gratify his need for total happiness as a personal affront and holds God "personally" responsible for his suffering.

> И пусть меня накажет тот,
> Кто изобрел мои мученья; 1:26
>
> And He, by Whom my pain was sent,
> May judge and punish my transgression.
> A.L:129

The reproaches he levels against God are of a philosphical - subjective nature. He challenges God to account for creating an imperfect world and conditions his return to God on God's mending the imperfections of his creation.

Тогда на тесный путь спасенья
К тебе я снова обращусь. 1:133

Then I shall turn to Thee, Creator,
And seek salvation at Thy feet.
A.L:37

Although this subjectivity in Lermontov's approach to God is often stressed by the critics[3] most of them fail to appreciate the poet's relationship with God as a replication of his relationship with his father. Often it is unclear in his poems whether the persona refers to God the Father or his own father, as is the case in the poem "I saw the shade of bliss" (1831) written immediately after his father's death.

О мой отец! где ты? где мне найти
Твой гордый дух бродящий в небесах?
В твой мир ведут столь разные пути,
Что избирать мешает тайный страх. 1:221

Oh! my father! Where are you? Where can I find
Your proud spirit wandering in the heavens?
So many paths lead to your world
That secret fear hinders my choice. I.B.

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3) In discussing religious motives in Lermontov's work, the authors of Lermontovskaya Entsiklopediya note :

"Можно,по видимому,утверждать,что такая "интимность" в обращении к Богу в русской поэтической традиции свойственна именно Лермонтову:например у В.А Жуковского,А.С.Пушкина,Ф.И. Тютчева этой непосредственной близости в обращении к богу как "соучастнику" личной судьбы нет." стр.464.

A similar unclarity is present in the poems, "Azrail" (1831) and "Epitafiya" (1832) in which the persona rages at God and in the same vein at his father for having brought him into an unfulfilling and unhappy world.

И начал громко я роптать,
Мое рожденье проклинать,
И говорил: всесильный бог,
Ты знать про будущее мог,
Зачем же сотворил меня? 2:290

And I began to grumble aloud
Cursing my birth
And I was saying: Almighty God
You could foresee the future
Why then did you create me I.B.

Прости! увидимся ль мы снова?
И смерть захочет ли свести
Две жертвы жребия земного,
Как знать! Итак прости,прости!
Ты дал мне жизнь,но счастья не дал; 1:289

Farewell! Are we to meet again?
And does death wish to bring together
Two victims of earthly fate?
Who knows! So, farewell!
You gave me life, but happiness you did
not give me. I.B.

A careful reading of Lermontov's work makes it difficult to accept the prevailing view of the religious school of Lermontov critics that the poet's attitudes towards God represent a mature religious quest. On the contrary, the literary texts reflect the demanding attitude of a child

requiring God to attend to all his wishes and be a direct source of his personal satisfaction.

It is against this infantile perception of God that Merezhkovsky's remark regarding the absence of Christ in Lermontov's work should be seen.[4]. The poet's denial of Christ could be explained in psychoanalytic terms by his envy of Christ's sonship. By denying Christ's existence he fails to affirm the sonship of Jesus as he himself wants to be the beloved son of the Heavenly Father.

> "Для чего они любимцы неба,а не я!- о,создатель если б ты меня любил- как сына,нет,- как приемыша...половина моей благодарности перевесила бы все их молитвы...но ты меня проклял в час рождения...и я прокляну твое владычество в час моей кончины... /"Вадим"/ 4:235

> Why are [the more fortunate] the favourites of heaven and not I! Oh, Creator had you loved me as a son, or even as an adopted son, half of my gratitude would have outweighed all their

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4) "Замечательно,что во всей его поэзии...нет вовсе имени Христа.

/Д.Мережковский, Лермонтов.Поэт сверхчеловечества, С.Пб. "Просвещение",1911./

Prideaux Press Reprint,p.54

> prayers ... but you have cursed me at the hour of my birth ... and I shall curse your rule at the hour of my demise.
>
> I.B.

The poet's attitude to people demonstrates the same integrative incapacity as his relationship with Nature and God and is subject to similar processes of idealization and disillusionment. Vacillating between over-idealization and devaluation of others, Lermontov's persona is in constant search for good objects whose all-loving image will be the source of his pleasure and satisfaction.

However, the search for the perfect object is always unsuccessful, as underlying this search, there is an idealized fantasy of a blissful union with the perfect mother of infancy who makes no demands and is unselfish in her care. Consequently the beloved is always identified with the very first vision of Woman, in the infant's life:

> В душе моей, с начала мира,
> Твой образ был напечатлен,
> Передо мной носился он
> В пустынях вечного эфира. 2:155

From the beginning of time
Your image was embossed on my soul
It was appearing before me
In the wilderness of eternity. I.B.

But no person can either live up to this expectation of gratuitous love or match the image of the idealized mother. Therefore Lermontov's persona and protaganist are doomed to a constant search for the perfect and unattainable love.

Покажет образ совершенства
И вдруг отнимет навсегда.
И,дав предчувствия блаженства,
Не даст мне счастья никогда

Perfection's image he will show
Then suddenly withdraw for ever.
Though given joy's foretaste,
Happiness will be denied to me. I.B.

The futility of this search sets in motion a life-long disillusionment with people in general and women in particular :

Предвидя вечную разлуку,
Боюсь я сердцу волю дать,
Боюсь предательскому звуку
Мечту напрасную вверять.

> Ever expecting separation
> I am afraid to give my heart free rein
> I am afraid to entrust a vain hope
> To a betraying sound. I.B.

Trying to deny their significance for him, the Lermontovian protaganist denigrates the initially idealized objects and reduces them to mere items, devaluing for example, his sexual pursuit to gambling. The hero of Lermontov's novel A Hero of Our Time treats women as horses betting on them and viewing them as prized objects he wishes to possess.

> "You talk about a pretty woman as if she were an English thoroughbred", declared Grushnitsky indignantly. "Mon cher!", I replied, trying to capture his tone, "Je mépris les femmes pour ne pas les aimer, car autrement la vie serait un melodrame trop ridicule!"[5] V.N:73

This attitude clearly leads to a depersonalized view of women and people in general and in Pechorin's case even a sadistic delight in wreaking havoc with their lives. He speaks in his journal of his insatiable desire for power, of the pleasure he derives from destroying others' hopes and illusions,

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5) Unless otherwise stated all English quotes from the novel A Hero of Our Time are from: Mikhail Lermontov: A Hero of Our Time trans. by Vladimir Nabokov. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.
These will appear in the text marked V.N followed by page number.

and of his view of other people as food to nourish his own ego.

> I've fed on their feelings, love, joys and sufferings, and always wanted more. I am like a starving man who falls asleep exhausted and sees rich food and sparkling wines before him. He rapturously falls on these phantom gifts of the imagination and feels better, but the moment he wakes up, he dream disappears and he's left more hungry and desperate than before.
> transl. by Paul Foote, Penguin Books, p.157

This imagery is particularly interesting when viewed in analytic terms, as the narcissistic individual constantly feels emotionally hungry and devouring. The reason for this oral greed is that the core of the narcissistic self, being depleted and without inner strength experiences a strong need to attach itself to others and "feed off" them for a sense of strength and value. At the same time the narcissistic individual acknowledges that in the process of replenishing himself he drains others of their very "life blood".

Pechorin openly admits to understanding the vampire when he writes :..."есть минуты,когда я понимаю Вампира."
("There are times when I can understand the Vampire"). Similarly the tragic dilemma of the Demon is that his intense need for a love object is matched by an equally great fear of emptying and

destroying it. This is evident in the climax of the poem when the Demon embraces Tamara and his destructive prophesy becomes self-fulfilling when his kiss kills his beloved Tamara.

Смертельный яд его лобзанья
Мгновенно в грудь ее проник.
Мучительный ужасный крик
Ночное возмутил молчанье. 2:161

His kiss, the poison of creation,
Deep through his victim's bosom went;
Her shriek, by which the night was rent,
Was full of utter desperation, A.L:403

Lermontov often draws on the vampire imagery. His lyrical ego is often afraid to embrace a woman so as not to poison her "living soul".

Страшусь,в объятья деву заключив,
Живую душу ядом отравить, 1:169

I am afraid to embrace a maiden in my arms
For fear of poisoning her living soul
I.B.

and Vadim, the hero of the novel Vadim, is clearly a vampiric figure.

"Вадим тихо захохотал и,стараясь умолкнуть,укусил нижнюю губу свою,так крепко,что кровь потекла; он похож был в это мгновенье на вампира, глядящего на издыхающую жертву." 4:227

Vadim giggled slyly and trying to stifle the sound, bit his lower lip so hard that the blood flowed; at this moment he resembled a vampire gloating over its half dead prey. I.B.

Closely linked to the vampire motif is a tendency on the part of the Lermontov's hero to experience other people as extensions of himself. This tendency may be explained as a result of the process of idealization. By idealizing others the narcissistic individual attributes to the other person a need satisfying quality and consequently sees others not as separate people but as extensions of himself. Thus Tamara's purity in the poem "The Demon" is seen as a quality through which the Demon can regain his own lost sense of worth and value. He associates the girl's innocent beauty with his own past bliss and wants to seduce her in order to regain heavenly paradise.

Меня добру и небесам
Ты возвратить могла бы словом.
Твоей любви святым покровом
Одетый,я предстал бы там
Как новый ангел в блеске новом. 2:154

A word from you and I'll repine,
Forget my hatred, dull and sterile,
And, shielded from revenge and peril,
Shall, as before, 'mid angels shine- A.L:387

The unfinished novel Vadim (1832-34?) contains a similar theme. The hunchback hero seeks to possess his long lost sister as he sees her as his complementary part.

"...Вадим заметил в ней...гордость,сходство с его душой которое обещало ему много...обещало со временем и любовь ее...эта надежда была для него нечто новое; он захотел ею завладеть.Эта любовь была последняя божественная часть его души,и угасив ее он не мог бы остаься человеком." 4:21?

Vadim noted in her .... pride, similarity with his own soul which held much promise for him... It promised in time her love .... This love was the last divine part of his soul and having extinguished it, he could no longer remain a human being. I.B.

Vadim feels justified in his incestuous attempt to possess his sister, as he perceives her as a long lost part of himself to which he is entitled.

"Я твой брат,Ольга,брат! господин,повелитель, царь твой.Нас только двое на свете из всего

семейства;мой путь должен быть твоим;напрасно ты мечтала разорвать слабой рукой то что связала природа." 4:215

> I am your brother Olga, yor brother! Your master, commander, your Tsar. Out of our whole family we are the only two in this world. My path should be yours; in vain you hoped to tear apart with your weak hand that which was joint by nature I.B.

The process of idealization operates in the reverse fashion as well. In order to leave himself good and strong, the narcissistic individual often projects into the other person those evil and weak parts of himself which he wishes to destroy. He then attacks these aspects in the other person, thus attempting to destroy the unacceptable and rejected aspects of himself. This destruction of a person felt to personify unacceptable aspects of the ego forms a major plot-constructing device of the novel A Hero of Our Time and is dealt with in detail below.

This refusal to see other people as anything but extensions of himself precludes the Lermontovian narcissistic hero from experiencing real intimacy and, consequently, removes him from the happiness to which he so desperately aspires. Like the Greek Narcissus punished for falling in love with his image, Lermontov's heroes in replacing their true selves with an image, condemn themselves to a life of non-fulfillment.

Having presented a general outline of narcissistic themes and motifs in Lermontov's oeuvre I now proceed to detailed analyses of separate texts, presented in chronological order. Here I examine the narcissistic theme in its psychological-literary interaction.

2.3.1. The drama "Masquerade"

Lermontov's drama "Masquerade" has been the subject of conflicting literary interpretations both in the Soviet Union and the West.

Western critics on the whole view "Masquerade" as an immature and aesthetically inferior work. The American scholar J. Mersereau[1] sees the play as "a mishmash involving gamblers, mistaken identity and other unrelated themes" linked together in an attempt to satirize Petersburg society. D. Chizhevskv, offers a similar interpretation describing the play as "an eerie drama of jealousy" in which the intricate structure revolves around dramatically weak principal characters[2].

Soviet critics go to the other extreme and highly praise the play both for its dramatic achievement and literary content. A. Fedorov[3] maintains that with "Masquerade" Lermontov brings the development

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1) Mersereau, John Jr. Mikhail Lermontov, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961.

2) Cizevskij, Dmitrij History of Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press 1974, vol.1 p.146

3) Fedorov, A. Lermontov i literatura ego vremeni, Izd. Khud. lit. L., 1967, 306.

of Russian drama to a new stage and regards the play as one of the high points of his creative work. Assessing the play from a literary-historical viewpoint E. Kupreyanova[4] stresses the social significance of the work and views the play as skilfully fusing the moral concerns of Lermontov's generation with a social criticism of his corrupt age.

The character of Arbenin, the main male protagonist of the drama, has likewise caused ramified disagreement. Dismissed by some critics as 'a decidedly inferior Iago'[5] or 'Othello-like figure, who poisons his wife in an obsessive and misplaced mood of jealousy'[6] Arbenin has also been praised as a proud man standing apart from and above his morally corrupt contemporaries.

The psychoanalytic approach offers a new contribution to the understanding of the drama "Masquerade". First it acknowledges the intrapsychic complexity of

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4) Kupreyanova, E. (red.) Istoriya russkoy literatury v 4-kh tomakh, L.. Nauka, 1981 t.2.

5) Goldberg, Leah Russian Literature in the Nineteenth Century

6) Kelly, Laurence Lermontov - Tragedy in the Caucasus, London: Constable, 1977 p.49

the protagonist hitherto ignored by Soviet and Western critics.[7] Secondly, it highlights the psychological change and development of the character and finally it illuminates a progression evident in the character of the Lermontovian literary protagonist. Arbenin stands at the beginning of a progression of increasing insight into his narcissistic condition on the part of the Lermontovian hero.

Viewed from an analytic perspective, the drama "Masquerade", as the title suggests, centers on the difference between the person and his mask, or in psychological terms, the opposition of the self and its image. The tragedy of the participants at the masked ball is that the masks they wear hide not only their identity from others, but above all themselves. This, naturally, is particularly true of the protagonist of the drama, Arbenin. This displacement of identity lies at the root of the narcissistic condition. In displacing his self with the image, thus projecting a false self, - "a

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7) It is noteworthy that Soviet criticism rejects any interpretation centering on the personal tragedy of Arbenin. Instructive in this respect is the literary debate around the article "Tragediya gordogo uma" written by V. Turbin and I. Usok, which concentrated on the personal - philosophical interpretation of the play. The article elicited a negative response and both its writers were accussed of pursuing an anti-Marxist approach.

mask" -, the narcissistic individual avoids the pain of self confrontation. This escape from a painful experience unfortunately precludes the narcissist from confron[illegible] his true self.[8] Freud's choice of the [illegible]rcissism" is thus singularly appropri[illegible] in the myth and the analytic theory falling in love with one's image and avoiding the confrontation with the true self is seen as a form of punishment. It is namely torture to project an idealized self-image while hating the real self.

An image, like a mask, has no existence of its own and is merely an empty and inauthentic façade. Like a mask it has no soul and expresses no real emotion.

> У маски ни души ни званья нет-есть тело!
> Вы можете придать ее словам
> Улыбку,взор,какие вам угодно. 3:20
>
> A mask has neither soul nor name -yet has form!
> You can give its speech
> A smile,a gaze as you wish. I.B.

Lacking the effective force of strong feelings, the narcissistic person strives for power to compensate

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8) The Oxford dictionary definition of the term "masquerade" includes the concepts of "concealment" and "deceit". The deceit it should be noted, operates not only in relation to others, but assumes an added meaning of self deception.

for his emotional deficiency. Power energizes the narcissistic image and gives it a potency it would not otherwise have. Yet, although the power feeds the image it does nothing for the individual's self and his supressed emotions. The sense of contentment which the narcissistic person derives from it, is superficial and illusory. The tragedy of narcissistic existence lies in this self-deceptive and destructive cycle. Translated into the language of psychology the drama "Masquerade" exemplifies this trap of self deception.

Arbenin, the protagonist of "Masquerade" longs for intimacy and love. He commits himself totally to the pursuit of love. Yet he blocks his feelings and projects instead a dispassionate image of indifference. He compares his life to a game of cards and believes that in life, as in a game, one should conceal one's feelings and impartially dissect one's soul in order to control one's emotions:

Вам надо испытать,ощупать беспристрастно
Свои способности и душу: по частям
Их разобрать; 3:13

You should try to pluck out impartially
Your capacity and soul: dismantle them
to pieces. I.B.

Arbenin is a cynical observer of emotional people and sees them as "happy ignoramuses in the science of life". He despises their "mindless" emotional pursuits and attributes his power and success in life to a mastery of his feelings.

Ни в чем и никому я не был в жизнь обязан,
И если я кому платил добром,
То все не потому,чтоб был к нему привязан; 3:18

Neither in anything nor to anyone was I in my life in debt,
And even when I did someone a favour,
Then all the same,to him I was not bound. I.B.

This denial of feeling is manifest in Arbenin's behaviour toward other people. He is unable to acknowledge gratitude and makes every effort to appear insensitive to the suffering of others. Baroness Strahl openly proclaims Arbenin's inhumanity when she says "вы бесчеловечны" /3:72/ and the humiliated prince Zvezdich exlaims in despair "there is nothing sacred in you", thus pointing to Arbenin's narcissistic egocentricity. Also the mysterious Neizvestny accuses Arbenin of destroying his happiness and refers to his heartless character.

Я разбирать не буду твоей души
Ее поймет лишь Бог который
Сотворить один такую мог. 3:112

I shall not dismantle your soul.
God alone can understand it (your soul)
He alone could have created such. I.B.

Arbenin's mask has become his face. Neither Neizvestny's tears nor even his beloved wife's prayers move him. Or does he really love his Nina? Arbenin's attitude to women is highly ambiguous. He constantly complains of their insensitivity and deceit but does not realize that this vision of them stems from his own inability to love.[9] Incapable of any genuine love for them, he projects his own shortcomings into them accusing women of insincerity and infidelity.

В кругу обманщиц милых,я напрасно
И глупо юность погубил.
Любим был часто пламенно и страстно
И ни одну из них я не любил. 3:32

I learned to madden a perfidious charmer
But did not go beyond that start.
Some loved me well,but a protective armor
Would never let me play my part. A.L:427

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9) Alla Marchenko reflects this incapacity in casting doubt on Arbenin's ability to love. She observes that the heroe's inability to sacrifice himself precludes him from experiencing real love. She writes:
"Но любит ли Арбенин Нину?Вроде бы и сомневаться в этом грех.Однако вот фраза,на которую стоит обратить внимание:"Любить ты не умел." Такие себялюбцы как Арбенин и Печорин,любить не умеют,даже если им и кажется,что влюблены до безумия,ибо не умеют жертвовать."
/А.Марченко,"Перечитывая Маскарад",Новый Мир,1984/10/ стр.234

It is true that when Arbenin marries Nina he thinks that he loves her. But soon his narcissistic distrust of the love-object comes to the fore. Unable to acknowledge his vulnerability, he projects even into Nina his own frigidity and deceit. He accuses women of being fickle and demanding of amourous conquests, but chooses to ignore that it was he himself who pursued women "to taste the sweet depravity and vice". He views women as unfeeling and merciless /Пожалуй,плачь,терзайся и моли- Смешон ей вид и голос твой плачевный./
but it is he who behaves precisely in this way to his heartbroken wife. Neizvestny points out: /Ни прощенья ни жалости не знает он./

Having projected all his own inadequacies into women Arbenin still pursues the ideal of love. On meeting Nina he is struck by her angelic beauty /Она была прекрасна и нежна / Как ангел божий /and feels that his entire happiness and even his very life depends on her love.

Твоя любовь,улыбка взор дыханье...
Я человек: пока они мои
Без них нет у меня ни счастья ни души
Ни чувства,ни существованья! 3:40

Your love,your breath,your eyes,your smile and laughter-
While they are mine,I know that I am whole;
Without them,I shall lose my happiness and soul,
My life and my salvation after! A.L:433

But Arbenin is unfortunately committed to a vision of love which seeks to possess all and sacrifice nothing. He can neither moderate his demands for love nor endure imperfection. On learning that Nina lost a bracelet given to her by him, Arbenin realizes that this is the end of their love. Inevitably he sees this loss as a betrayal and he cannot accept her innocence on trust. He feels disillusioned as Nina's losing a gift by him symbolizes a "flawed" love on her part.

...я ошибся! возмечтал,
Что я могу быть счастлив...думал снова
Любить и веровать...но час судьбы настал
И все прошло как бред больного. 3:68

...I was mistaken,allowed myself to dream
That I could be happy...Once more thought
To love and trust...but fate's hour struck
And all passed as a delirium of a sick. I.B.

He holds Nina personally responsible for his crushed dreams of happiness and having initially admired her for her angelic qualities, he now likens her to an hyena feeding off his hurt and injured self. It is interesting to note the choice of imagery on Arbenin's part as it tallies with his view of love as mutual consumption.

The plot of the drama "Masquerade" corresponds closely to the psychoanalytic model of narcissistic idealization. As has been previously stated, the

narcissistic person is in constant search for an "only good object", whose all-loving image should be the source of constant satisfaction. Inevitably the search is unsuccessful, as the love object never can live up to the narcissistic demand for perfection. Therefore the narcissist repeats the search over and over again to the point of compulsion.

There are some interesting parallels between gambling and the compulsive nature of this repetitive search. Both pursuits mark an unconscious attempt to regain the lost infantile feeling of omnipotence by challenging luck or fate. To the narcissistic personality luck and fate are personified in parental terms and seen as forces carrying love and destruction. Consequently, good luck is interpreted as acceptance by fate and thence the narcissist comes to see himself as omripotent, while bad luck implies rejection and impotence. The need for love and acceptance is such a compulsive force that the narcissist must continuously challenge fate in order to confirm the feelings of approval and omnipotence. Therefore the gambler persists in his game of chance even on a loosing streak as he irrationally believes that persistence will ultimately bring reward. This irrational belief in the benevolence of fate operates against all odds and traps the gambler into a no win

situation. Arbenin is the archetypal narcissistic gambler. He deludes himself into feeling favoured by fate. He temporarily stops gambling when he marries Nina believing that fate has given her to him as a sign of special favour.

...Я вижу,что творец тебя в вознагражденье
С своих [illegible]слал ко мне. 3:36

I see,that [illegible]reator has sent you
From his heavens as a reward to me. I.B.

But this state of satisfaction cannot last for long as the hero cannot abandon his fears of deceit. He knows that Lady Luck is fickle and not to be trusted [10]. In order to reassure himself he feels compelled to confirm his luck even on a winning streak. Inevitably the win turns into a loss as the narcissist begins to fearfully seek for signs of betrayal. Significantly, when Arbenin feels betrayed by Nina

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10) It is noteworthy that Lady Luck appears as an ambivalent object both loving and abandoning. This perception confirms the analytic viewpoint which highlights a common trait between the gambling and narcissistic disorders. According to analytic theory, narcissistic personalities like the gamblers never succeed in establishing true object constancy and as a result can never develop a trusting and stable love relationship.

he returns her to fate/...возьми ее,/Как свой залог тебе ее вручаю-/ and resorts once more to gambling. This pattern reveals that the narcissistic gambler subconsciously harbours a desire to win in order to loose.

E. Bergler,[11] one of the leading psychiatric specialists in gambling psychology, stresses the masochistic elaboration present in both gambling and the narcissistic condition. He observes that the masochistic wish to lose is covered up by the "libidinous pseudoaim of pseudolove"[12]. Applied to the drama "Masquerade" this suggests that the same conscious need to win which operates in gambling and propels Arbenin in his overt need for love and success, in fact, masks a deeper and stronger compulsion to lose. The protagonist is driven to pursue happiness and love, but his fear of intimate happiness ultimately sabotages all his hopes for contentment. Knowing that he can never risk an unmasking Arbenin fears the intimacy of a close bond. Aware that sooner or later he has to remove

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11) Bergler, Edmund The Psychology of Gambling, International Universities Press, New York 1970.

12) op.cit., p.81.

his mask and show his face, he feels that his love for Nina renders him vulnerable and insecure.

Я ослабел в борьбе с собой
Среди мучительных усилий...
И чувства наконец вкусили
Как ой-то тягостный,обманчивый покой!.. 3:103

I weakened in the battle with myself
Amid tormented efforts...
And feelings finally made me taste
Some kind of burdensome,deceptive peace! I.B.

Significantly, Nina senses this inconsistency and despite Arbenin's protestations of love she seriously questions his sincerity.

О,если бы я нрав заране знала твой,
То верно б не была твоей женой; 3:96

Oh,if I'd earlier known your nature,
Then truly I'd never be your wife; I.B.

The hero's incapacity to love is echoed throughout the play. Even before Nina loses her bracelet, Arbenin doubts his ability to sustain the intensity of his feeling and fears that a hostile spirit will destroy his happiness.

...мир прекрасный
Моим глазам открылся не напрасно,
И я воскрес для жизни и добра.
Но иногда опять какой-то дух враждебный
Меня уносит в бурю прежних дней,
Стирает с памяти моей
Твои светлый взор и голос твой волшебный. 3:35

...my recovered vision
Again discerned a world without division,
And I was born for confidence and trust.
But every now and then a spirit black and tragic
Will take me back to what I left behind,
And it effaces from my mind
Your smiling glances and your voice of magic.
A.L:429

Arbenin's premonition is proved correct as he himself is the one who harbours a "hostile spirit" and the loss of the bracelet comes as a timely pretext to escape the bonds of marriage.

Беспечность и покой-че для меня они
Мне ль быть супругом и отцом семейства
Мне ль,мне ль который испытал
Все сладости порока и злодейства,
И перед их лицом ни разу не дрожал? 3:104

Security and peace are not for me.
Is it for me to be a spouse and father?
Is it for me,for me who tasted
Sweet depravity and vice,
And before them never quailed. I.B.

It is noteworthy that the lost bracelet in the drama symbolizes both the happiness of intimacy and the

claustrophobic dread of captivit On a symbolic level it signifies the unresolved conflict of the protagonist wishing for and fearing the bonds of emotional dependence.

Nina's tragic death relieves Arbenin of the terrible ambiguity of choice. By poisoning Nina Arbenin denies his need for and dependence on her. His double Kazarin says as much when he urges the hero to take off his mask thus ending the pretence of the masquerade.

> Ну полно,брат личину ты сними,
> Не опускай так важно взоры
> Ведь это хорошо с людьми
> Для публики,- а мы с тобой актеры. 3:104

> That's enough,take off the mask my friend,
> Do not lower your serious gaze
> All this is well with others
> For the world,- for you and I are actors. I.B.

2.3.2. The poem "The Demon"

The poem "The Demon" presents a split and divided protagonist par excellence. This controversial work, written intermittently over a period of ten years[1], still puzzles the literary critics. One of the reasons for critical controversy is that there is a striking discrepancy between the Demon presented by the poet as an individual personality deserving of sympathy and his mythologized aspect as the author of evil and God's antagonist. Robert Reid[2] holds that the Demon in his religio-mythological function is incompatible with the behaviour of the "demonic subject instanced by the plot-predicate".[3] The Demon, as 'the devil' of the Scriptures, personifies the origin and essence of evil. He has no redeeming virtue and stands unambiguously opposed to God and all things good and innocent. Lermontov's Demon on the other hand offers a strange combination of opposites. He is endowed with all the weaknesses of human nature

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1) The poem has a long compositional history. For a detailed historical background see Liberman's commentary on the Demon in Mikhail Lermontov Major Poetical Works, Croom Helm: London & Canberra, 1983 pp.585-602

2) Reid, Robert Hero, Plot and Myth: Some aspect. of Lermontov's Caucasian Poems, The British Journal of Neo-Formalism, 1982 v.7,2

3) Ibid, p.[illegible].

and despite his power to wreak evil, he longs for acceptance and understanding. The difference between the mythical and Lermontovian presentation of the Demon is clearly illustrated in Lermontov's choice of colour for his hero. The Demon appears to Tamara clothed in the ambiguous colours of the setting sun resembling neither darkness nor light [4]

Он был похож на вечер ясный:
Ни день,ни ночь,- ни мрак,ни свет!.. 2:147

He was like twilight: neither darkness
Nor sunshine; neither night nor day ...p.375

The twilight aura of the Demon sharply contradicts the Christian tradition where the blackness of the Demon, the devil, arises naturally from his role as ruler of darkness. But then it may well be argued that Lermontov's Demon has less a religio-mythical function, and more a psychological one. This protagonist, split by irreconcilable qualities is a

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4) Vrubel gave a congenial expression of this colour scheme in his canvases devoted to the Demon.

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