

her grandson not to abandon her. In both, the grandmother's entreaties and the Demon's grand seduction scene, we find a desperate appeal to the beloved object to give a meaning to the addressor's otherwise senseless life.[7] In general, the Demon's situation indirectly reflects some of the complexities of young Lermontov's life with Arsenyeva, the "deity" of the small Tarkhany "paradise". Thus the unresolved conflict between a beautiful, secure but bland heaven (grandmother's paradise) and a conflict-ridden, but emotionally alive earth is echoed in the poem. The Demon, on the one hand, longs for the security of heaven, yet fears the loss of his identity, should he re-enter it. He knows that in return for paradise he must sacrifice his sense of self, becoming once more a humble and submissive angel or child of God. Similarly, young Lermontov must have experienced a choice between independence and disobedience on one hand and childlike blissful existence with the grandmother on the other.

To the narcissistic personality, eminently incapable of integration and synthesis, this choice would lead to a rejection of both alternatives and a total

7) In a letter to P.A. Kryukova, Arsenyeva writes:
 "...он один свет очей моих, все мое блаженство в нем."
 /Лермонтовская Энциклопедия, стр.36/

withdrawal into the self, as the narcissist cannot accept the partial happiness involved in either of these alternatives. The rejection of any compromise is the thematic kernel of all Lermontov's texts, be it the drama "Masquerade", the poems "Mtsyri" and "The Demon" or the lyric "The Sail". As the last text demonstrates, escape into the "storm" (or a whirlwind of events) seems to be the only solution available to the persona who cannot accept either the secure but restrictive shore, or the free but desolate sea. In psychoanalytic terms this opposition may be termed the claustrophobic - agoraphobic conflict; the shore represents emotional security and claustrophobic dependence, whereas the vast sea represents freedom and an agoraphobic threat. As the conjunction "as-if" in the poem indicates however, even this escape into dangerous storms seems dubious to the persona. The storm provides only a temporary relief, but cannot bring real peace and oblivion. The stasis of narcissistic existence can be found only in the containment of the womb representing both self-sufficiency and self-annihilation.

Returning to the role of women in Lermontov's life and work it may be noted that female personages in his texts fall into distinct Romantic types, ranging from the innocent maiden to the devouring

(castrating) witch. This predilection for contrasting types is however in Lermontov's case not just a Romantic convention, but a symptom of his narcissistic disposition as well. It is rooted in the mechanism of splitting which accounts for the narcissistic inability to accept contradictory aspects in women.

Splitting seems to have been a major factor in Lermontov's personal relationships with women. His relationships follow the narcissistic pattern of idealization and subsequent disillusionment. Three women are by biographers usually considered to have played a crucial role in the poet's life. Lermontov's first serious involvement is with Ekaterina Sushkova. He was first captivated by her when he met her in Moscow at the age of sixteen. Being older than he and fully aware of her charms, she ridiculed his youthful enthusiasm for her and rejected his advances. Lermontov never forgot this slight and some five years later repaid her by feigning a romantic attachment to her, only to reject her in turn. This initial humiliation and rejection by Sushkova left a deep distrust of women in the young man. It played into already formulated prejudices, based on his mother abandoning him through death, and the conditional nature of his grandmother's love. This distrust persisted

throughout Lermontov's life and probably was a main factor in his incapacity to commit himself permanently to a woman. In the above quoted letter to Lopukhin we discern a regret in regard to this failure.

Lermontov's distrust of women is "inherited" by most male protagonists in his work. Beginning with the persona's many statements to this effect, proceeding to Arbenin's long monologue "I learned to madden a perfidious charmer" (Act 1, Scene 3) and Pechorin's "lectures" to Grushnitsky, all these texts show how the male protagonist invariably destroys his chances for permanent happiness through his suspicion and distrust.

If we now return to an examination of Sushkova's relationship with Lermontov, it may be noted that her coquetry and ridicule of men apparently so deeply injured young Lermontov that he artistically reconstructed this experience several times, for instance in "Princess Ligovskaya" and, notably, "Princess Mary". It forms the basis of the recurring motif of retaliation, which invariably involves a coquettish heroine who is "punished" by the initially rejected hero. Pechorin's relationship with Mary, particularly clearly, reproduces Lermontov's relationship with Sushkova. Although both in actual life and the novel the

coquettish young woman ultimately yields to the man, the latter cannot forgive her initial indifference. This indicates the extent of the narcissistic split which persists even in the face of a positive change. Having once perceived Sushkova as a coquette, Lermontov came to see her as "a bat whose wings brush against everything that comes her way", as distasteful part of his past and, as such, a creature no longer deserving compassion.

"...il y eut un temps où elle me plaisait, maintenant elle me force presque de lui faire la cour ...mais, je ne sais, il y a quelque chose, dans ses manières, dans sa voix, quelque chose de dur, de saccadé, de brisé, qui repousse;" 4:420

He justifies his sudden dislike of a woman once desired, by recalling that "she had forced a child's heart to suffer". His own behaviour toward Sushkova he saw as "but the torture of an old coquette". This distinction in favour of the male protagonist seems to operate also on the level of fiction, for example in "Princess Mary", where the young princess apparently plays the role of "old coquette" and the experienced Pechorin still reacts as a wounded child. The narcissistic injury cannot be obliterated. Any form of humiliation and rejection opens

the wound anew.[8]

From a psychoanalytic point of view, the seductive coquette is particularly offensive to the narcissistic personality, as she re-evokes the experience of the seductive but abandoning mother. The narcissistic person feels that the mother seduces or lures him into trusting dependence on her, only to disappear leaving him painfully in need of her. The coquette represents the woman who betrays trust.

Shortly after his initial disillusionment with Sushkova, young Lermontov fell passionately in love with Natalya Ivanova whom he met early in 1830. Although flattered by his devotion and valuing his friendship Ivanova did not consider him a serious suitor and consequently did not return his romantic devotion. Having misconstrued her friendship for him, Lermontov once again felt betrayed by a woman. His experience with Sushkova was reconfirmed. An interesting nuance in the Ivanova relationship is

8) A detail in the "Princess Mary" story which brings out the whole pride-humiliation conflict is the carpet incident. The reader will recall that Pechorin covers his horse with an expensive carpet much coveted by Mary for her room. His vendetta against "coquettish woman" bears all the marks of sadistic pettiness. Once more (as in the Bela story) Pechorin wants to convince himself that horses are nobler creatures than women.

that Lermontov almost appears to anticipate rejection and abandonment by a love object and, consequently, interprets the slimmest evidence of betrayal as actual proof. This unconscious pattern is eloquently displayed in the drama "Masquerade" where the protagonist Arbenin poisons his beloved on a mere suspicion, only to be proved unjustified. A similar pattern is discernible in the early play "Menschen und Leidenschaften", where Yuri, an obvious self-portrait, having initially felt betrayed by Lyubov' (note the symbolic name), learns that his suspicions of her were groundless.[9]

It is noteworthy that in Lermontov's fiction as opposed to his biography, the heroines are ultimately justified. This fact could be seen as the author's subconscious realization of his unfairness. The narcissistic author can do what the ordinary narcissist usually is incapable of, namely to transcend himself by creating an alternative and "better" self.

Lermontov's third and most durable attachment was that to Varvara Lopukhina whom he first met in 1827 through family friends when he was only thirteen

9) The drama "The Strange Man" offers yet another example of the pattern.

years old. The friendship with Varvara developed into a deep attachment, and Lermontov seems to have preserved this feeling throughout his life. He saw her as an angelic figure. In fact there exists a painting of her as a Spanish nun made by Lermontov. (See appendix, fig.2). He also dedicated to her the first draft of "The Demon" with the inscription: "Receive my gift, my Madonna". This dedication and his idealized portrait of Lopukhina as a nun should be borne in mind, insofar as the attitude they convey contrasts with the devalued attitude towards Sushkova and Ivanova. The extreme opposites in Lermontov's attitudes towards women are in concordance with a narcissistic splitting, which, as has been frequently mentioned before, prevents an integrated vision of any love object. It should be noted that despite his view of Lopukhina as a perfect love object, Lermontov was unable to commit himself even to her. He finally lost her whilst pursuing Sushkova with feigned affection in order to achieve her ultimate humiliation. On the fictional level, Lopukhina finds her counterpart in the character of Vera in "Princess Mary". Both the fictional heroine and her prototype Lopukhina personify the all-accepting Madonna, angel, perfect Mother. What then prevents the protagonist from finding fulfilment with the ideal woman? In addition to the "claustrophobic" complex (compare

the discussion of "Masquerade" above) there is also the narcissist's fear of his own destructive omnipotence. In view of this fear we better understand why Lermontov dedicated "The Demon" to Lopukhina.

Psychoanalysis views this fear of one's destructive omnipotence as a manifestation of the narcissistic incapacity to mourn constructively. Constructive mourning could have led Lermontov to keep his internalized good object - his mother's and father's love - and thus his own sense of being loved and lovable. Pathological mourning led to his internalizing his parents as dead, moreover "killed" by their son's hatred; he was therefore filled with a keen sense of himself being "dead" as well as a cause of death. The image of self as a source of destruction ultimately leads the hero to the realization that he cannot escape the narcissistic entrapment, as he himself can never change. Pechorin says as much when he declares:

"How many times have I been the axe in the hands of fate? Like an engine of an execution I've descended on the heads of the condemned often without malice but always without pity". V.N: 130

It would seem that Lermontov perceived a similar pattern in his own life. His correspondence testifies to the fact that he too, early recognized the repetitiveness of his existence and his inability to escape his self-made destructive role.

"Je ne sais pas comment ca fait, mais chaque jour donne une nouvelle teinte a ma manière de voir, - ca devait arriver, je le savais toujours.... mais je ne croyais pas que cela arrivât si vite." 4:423

The irony of narcissistic existence is that the scenario mocks all attempts at spontaneous action and life itself becomes an inauthentic game, or play, or "masquerade". As such, life becomes meaningless, boring and empty. Lermontov in his letters persistently complains of the boredom and emptiness of his existence. In a letter to Lopukina he writes :

"...pendant un mois j'ai été à la mode, on se m'arrachait. C'est franc au moins:- Néanmoins je m'ennuie." 4:438

And in another letter to her he likewise writes:

"Je m'ennuie a la mort." 4:434

The poem "Oh, Boredom and Sadness" (1840) reflects the same sentiments. It also expresses the frustration of the persona who is unable to escape the repetitive cycle. It is this sense of irredeemable entrapment that ultimately leads the poet to see death as the only viable escape. Most Lermontov's biographers have noted the poet's death wish [10].

It is a fact that he consistently exposed himself to danger and finally was killed in a duel of his own making. It is worth noting the impressions of people who had contact with Lermontov on the day of his duel with Martynov. His cousin E. Bykhovets wrote that on leaving her for the duel the poet with his eyes full of tears exclaimed: "Cousine, my darling, there will not be a happier day than this in my life!" [11]. A similar comment came from Glebov, Martynov's second. He recalls that on his way to the duel Lermontov "rode as though he were

10) Yanko Lavrin in his book Lermontov asks: "Was his duel with Major Martynov a suicide by proxy?" and answers "It looks more than probable that Lermontov died because he wanted to die".

(Lavrin, Y. Lermontov, London: Bowes & Bowes, 1959 pp.104-5)

11. Quoted from Kelly, L. Lermontov: Tragedy in the Caucasus p.175

going to a feast". [12].

The reader will recall a similar reaction on the part of Pechorin, prior to his duel with Grushnitsky.

"Refreshed and braced up I felt as if I were about to go to a ball". V.N:132

In fact the parallels between the Pechorin-Grushnitsky duel and the Lermontov-Martynov duel cannot be overlooked. [13].

It would seem that Martynov fulfilled very much the same function in Lermontov's life as did Grushnitsky in Pechorin's. Martynov was to Lermontov a ridiculous figure as is exemplified by his calling him "Martyshka" and "montagnard au grand poignard". He furthermore filled his album with "wickedly funny

12. op. cit., p.176.

13. Richard Gregg draws an interesting analogy between Pechorin's presentiment of death and Lermontov's death wish. He writes: "To link this surmise with those premonitions of death which Lermontov himself is known to have harbored is to make the obvious, inevitable inference".
Gregg, R. "The Cooling of Pechorin: The Skull Beneath the Skin". Slavic Review, (1984) vol. 43 no. 43 p.398

caricatures" of Martynov. [14].

The latter apparently was a very good looking, but vain character thus offering the distinctly unattractive Lermontov both something to envy and to ridicule.[15]. The similarities between Martynov and Grushnitsky extend to their manner of dress, which in both cases is ludicrously theatrical. Whereas Grushnitsky wears a thick military coat, even during the peaceful sojourn at the water spa, so Martynov was wont to dress up as a Circassian mountaineer including a long dagger. The most important parallel is however clearly to be found in the fact that both Lermontov and Pechorin choose a

- 14) Lermontov's friend A. Arnoldi recounts that it was common knowledge in Pyatigorsk that Lermontov kept a thick album with caricatures of Martynov. Describing the contents of the album he notes: "Это была целая история в лицах вроде французских карикатур: cryptogram M-r la Lauvisse и проч., где красавец, бывший когда-то кавалергард Мартынов был изображен в самом смешном виде, то въезжающим в Пятигorsk, то рассыпающимся перед какою-нибудь красавицей и проч."

/Э.Герштейн, "Судьба Лермонтова", Сов. пис., М., 1964, 396

- 15) Lermontov's second Vasil'chikov recalls a drawing by Lermontov in which both Lermontov and Martynov appear. Significantly Lermontov depicts himself as a little hunchback while Martynov stands out in all his beauty.

"Поэт изобразил самого себя маленьким, сутуловатым, как кошка вцепившимся в огромного коня длинноногого Монго Стэлыпина, серьезно сидевшего на лошади, а впереди всех красовавшегося Мартынова, в черкеске, с длинным кинжалом."

/П.А.Висковатов, Михаил Юрьевич Лермонтов. Жизнь и творчество", М., Изд. Рихтер, 1891, 404./

simultaneously despised and envied character to function as duellants. This choice evokes the impression that both the writer and his fictional hero want to disown and annihilate a hated aspect of themselves or else be destroyed by it.

In the latter case, their death would have an appropriately ironical twist. Destroyed by the kind of trite personality that they despise they would save their own integrity as Romantic heroes, escaping the fate of ultimate "oposhlenie". Hence the elation marking both Pechorin's and Lermontov's reaction to their imminent duel. One cannot but agree with Blok's verdict of Lermontov's death which is that he "бросился под пистолет своею волей." /16/

Lermontov and Pechorin dramatically escape from the ugliness of old age, the triteness of "byt" and all the other humiliations to which life exposes the narcissistic hero.

"Princess Mary" offers remarkable insights into the close interaction of life and art in Lermontov's biography. Whereas life offered him the raw material for the love intrigues of the story (compare the relationship with Sushkova and Lopukhina related above), the story subsequently

16) Blok, A. Sobraniye sochineniy v 8-i tomakh, Izd. Khud. Lit. 1962. t.5, 434

offered the poet a scenario which helped him to shape the final event of his life. In this merging of art and life Lermontov is a most archetypal Romantic.

It could be speculated that the innermost cause of Lermontov's death was the realization that, as there was no escape from the narcissistic cycle, there could be no renewal of his art. He had exhausted "the narcissistic theme" and hence could but reproduce previous texts, presenting the same narcissistic cycle and psychological progression towards insight all over again. Life and art had ceased to interact.

CONCLUSIONS

My psychoanalytic interpretation of Lermontov's work offers a novel and comprehensive view of it, linking separate texts into an organic whole as it does. Whereas previously the writer's work, particularly the novel A Hero of Our Time, was regarded as disconnected and fragmented, my approach points to the hidden bonds linking text to text. The basic unity of Lermontov's work is not only to be found in a similarity of themes, characters and moods, but also in a complementary aspect where the various texts should be seen as parts of a whole which only in their totality offer a complete picture. This complementary unity is particularly pronounced in the novel A Hero of Our Time, where seemingly independent stories only together offer a total picture of the protagonist.

It is against the background of this unity that a full picture of the Lermontovian persona and protagonist emerges. He is the split and tormented narcissist. It is in the narcissistic syndrome that we discover a consistent set of motivations for his actions and attitudes. The inconsistencies of character and behaviour perceived by social critics dissolve when a psychoanalytic approach to Lermontov's texts is taken. This approach yields a less attractive literary personality than the romantic interpretation of the hero as a

revolutionary rebel and Don Juan. Depriving Arbenin, the Demon and Pechorin of their Romantic aura I instead give them the realism of verisimilitude.

The ultimate unifying principle of Lermontov's oeuvre is to be found in the protagonist's and the persona's narcissistic perception of the world. Seen in this light, purportedly inartistic elements assume vital aesthetic functions. I have in mind for example what Eykhenbaum called "the tiresome and repetitive formulae" of Lermontov's work. This repetitiveness, in my interpretation, becomes a virtue as it expresses the obsessiveness of the narcissistic personality. In conclusion I would like to say that naturally I do not regard Lermontov's oeuvre as illustrations to the narcissistic syndrome. The value of Lermontov's work does not lie in its being case material, but rather in the aesthetic rendering of the narcissistic experience. As an artist Lermontov has not described an illness specific to pathological personalities, but expressed a human experience in which many can share. A narcissistic perception of the world is however the source on which the artist Lermontov draws, wherefore the psychoanalytic perspective is highly relevant for a proper interpretation of his oeuvre.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1

Figure 2





Fig.1



Fig. 2

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Name of thesis Narcissistic Elements In Lermontov's Work. 1985

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