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**Decoding Puškin: Resurrecting some readers' responses to
"Egyptian Nights"**

Tracy, Lewis Mashburn, Ph.D.

The Ohio State University, 1994

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DECODING PUŠKIN: RESURRECTING SOME READERS' RESPONSES TO
EGYPTIAN NIGHTS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Lewis Mashburn Tracy, B. A., M. A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1994

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To Susan

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Chapter I

Reading Puškin's *Egyptian Nights*. What Does it Mean to Read?

Reading is not an
innocent activity.
Jonathan Culler

If reading is not an innocent activity, then documenting one's reading is even less so. Culler's negation implies guilt. But what is the reader guilty of? The object of this chapter is to discuss that very point. Its purpose is to define how the activity of reading is seen in this dissertation. This is important because the subject of this work has been approached from the point of view of the reader and what occurs during the act of reading.

My topic is specifically concerned with three interpretations of Aleksandr Puškin's unfinished tale *Egyptian Nights* (hereafter EN). I am referring to the readings of Fedor Dostoevskij, Valerij Brjusov and Modest Gofman. Their interpretations of this tale were not greeted with wide acclaim. Brjusov, for example, was accused by Žirmunskij of turning Puškin's poem about Cleopatra into an erotic ballad.¹ Gofman's version of EN, in turn, was criticized in a contemporary review for its final chapter, which in the reviewer's opinion "does harm to the poet," i.e., Puškin, because it presents EN as a logically complete work.² Perhaps even

harsher was Boris Tomaševskij's appraisal of Dostoevskij's 1880 speech on Puškin. He characterized it as a brilliant speech that is extremely characteristic of the speaker and yet which "completely misses Pushkin."³ Although this comment is apropos of the 1880 speech rather than Dostoevskij's 1861 article on EN, nevertheless the approach in both the speech and the article is similar and it is precisely that that Tomaševskij's reproach is concerned with. Time has not made these interpretations any more acceptable to scholars of Russian literature. Joan Delaney Grossman, for example, comments that although Brjusov "complained of the 'magnifying glasses' placed between his generation and the 'true' Pushkin," he could himself be implicated in having "inserted a tinted lens of his own."⁴ In a similar vein, Leslie O'Bell dismisses Brjusov's and Gofman's efforts to complete the poetic and prose sections, respectively, of EN as "more creations of the modernist period than extensions of Pushkin's work."⁵

My aim is not to posthumously redeem the reputations of Dostoevskij, Brjusov or Gofman as interpreters of Puškin or to debunk the criticisms that have been offered. Indeed, it is fair to say that each of them viewed Puškin through a "tinted lens."

Dostoevskij wrote one article on EN. The article was entitled "Otvét russkomu vestniku." He wrote his interpretation of EN in 1861 in a period when Puškin was under attack and his relevance for contemporary Russian society seriously in question. Dostoevskij's reading of EN is aimed in part, at

least, to respond to those attacks.

Brjusov, as Grossman has pointed out, sought the "true" Puškin in his many articles on the poet. We are principally concerned with Brjusov's 1910 article "Egipetskie noči" and his 1916-17 poem entitled "Egipetskie noči," in which he presents his version of how EN might have continued. Both his article and his poem on EN serve to bolster the image of Puškin that Brjusov was attempting to create.

Gofman's professional life was dedicated to establishing the authoritative canon of Puškin's works. He came to apply his knowledge and skill as a textologist on EN and, based upon his study of the manuscripts associated with EN, made certain decisions as to how the plot should continue to develop. He wrote several articles on EN, namely "'Kleopatra' i 'Egipetskija noči'," "Iz 'Egipetskix nočej'," and "Les 'Nuits égyptiennes' de Pouchkine et leur héroïne." Gofman also wrote his own version, entitled Egipetskie noči, of how EN might have continued. Many of his opinions were disputed by other textologists (eg. S. Bondi) and his completion of EN could be viewed as an effort to substantiate the conclusions he had drawn in various works over the course of twelve years.

Returning briefly to the criticisms of Grossman, et. al., we will notice a certain resemblance between them. The first is that they are all predicated upon an objective understanding of interpretation. Grossman's critique of Brjusov that he has possibly used his own "tinted lens" in his interpretation of Puškin is her way of invalidating Brjusov's work. The "tinted lens" implies that Brjusov failed to be

objective. The problem with this is that after thirty years of reader-response theory it is no longer sufficient, perhaps not even interesting, to object to an interpretation purely on the basis of a perceived lack of objectivity. Indeed, one of the objects of this chapter is to discuss the fact that everyone, Grossman included, reads with a "tinted lens," if by "lens" we mean the methodological approach that a reader has chosen to employ. This is not to deny the existence of standards that we as a professional community feel obliged to uphold and assert; We can still sit in judgement of one another. We might, however, want to speak of the relative clarity of our respective lenses. Perhaps the tint of Brjusov's lens is so strong that what is seen through it is a Puškin that only Brjusov would recognize.

Even if we grant, however, the weakness of a particular reading, this does not mean that it has little or nothing to offer us. This leads us to a second similarity among the criticisms, which is a presence of a tone of complete dismissal. O'Bell's opinion of Brjusov's and Gofman's efforts to complete EN is a case in point. The recipient of such an appraisal is likely to be disregarded by the rest of the scholarly community, perhaps without much thought. However, I would suggest that it is not in our interest to ignore even "poor" readings. Paul B Armstrong quotes Barbara Herrnstein Smith on this point, namely that "any evaluation... is 'cognitively substantial' in the sense of being potentially informative about *something* ." ⁶ In other words, even "invalid" readings can be informative, both about the observer and the

object.

Thus rather than object to the modernist slant of Brjusov's and Gofman's work, I submit that it is more intriguing to inquire as to why and in what manner their readings qualify as modernist and what, if anything, there is to Puškin that could be considered modernist. If Dostoevskij has "completely" missed Puškin, then this raises a question that should be explored. Is there truly nothing of Puškin within Dostoevskij's interpretation of him? As we shall see in this introductory chapter, reader-response theory proposes that reading is an interaction between the reader and the text. If this is so then the documentation of that reading should reveal this interaction, i.e., Dostoevskij's 1861 interpretation of EN should properly reveal something of both Dostoevskij and Puškin.

The object of my study, then, is to explore Dostoevskij, Brjusov, and Gofman as readers of Puškin through their respective documented readings of EN. The interaction of text and reader within these readings should be illuminating about both, since there is a common point of intersection around which all these readings revolve. This point is dictated by EN and it is defined by the concept of the *moment* (*mig*). The interpretations that our readers come up with are directed by the text up to this point and are then heavily influenced by their own comprehension of the idea of *mig*.

Dostoevskij views *mig* as a point of critical decision. It represents, for Dostoevskij, a moment of insight in which the Dostoevskian character recognizes the need to choose

between two possible courses of action. Moreover, this choice is always of a fundamentally moral nature. The character must choose between good and evil. His or her choice will have irrevocable consequences, both for himself or herself and for others. Of principal interest, however, is the change that can take place within the character who is faced with the moment of choice. The character's choice can radically change both the course of his or her life and, indeed, his or her very nature. How does this compare with Puškin's idea of *mig*? Certainly, he also understands *mig* as an instant of insight, but is his understanding of the concept the same as Dostoevskij's? Is the element of existential free will implicit in Dostoevskij's idea present as well in Puškin's? These are the type of questions I will explore in chapter three. There is also in Dostoevskij's interpretation of EN a historical sense of the moment. This will also be examined.

Brjusov savors the intensity inherent in *mig*. For him the moment has, in some respects, come to define the essence of the poet himself. The poet, in Brjusov's opinion, is either always a poet or never. It is his duty to strive, therefore, to make every moment a poetic one. Where does Puškin stand on this? Does he have more of a dualistic concept of the poet in which he views the poet as both a servant of Apollo and as a common man? Their views on *mig* have implications for both the poet and poetry. Both recognize that the moment has an inherent aesthetic potential. In some respects, the question becomes one of how this aesthetic potential can be fulfilled.

Gofman's reading of EN is also predicated upon *mig*. Specifically, he hinges his interpretation upon his belief that the intense and passionate life experience that Cleopatra offers is of central importance to Puškin. In this view, *mig* represents for Puškin an exploration into the value of life and death. What is the value of life? Can it, i.e., life, be equated by a moment of unequalled passion? The question, of course, is whether Gofman has superimposed his own understanding of *mig* on Puškin's. Moreover, when we read Gofman the issue will not be one of simply comparing his concept of *mig* with Puškin's. We will find that we also need to take Brjusov into account for the ending that Gofman composed for EN betrays an ironic reading of Brjusov's view of *mig*.

Grasping the differing concepts of *mig* that we come upon will help reveal the codes of the interpreters and the text at their point of intersection. In a process of shuttling back and forth between the original text and each reading we can attempt to discern where the codes of the text and those of each respective reader end and begin. It is *mig* and the differing perspectives encountered that give us the informative 'something' we are looking for.

Since my approach is reader-oriented it is necessary to discuss the idea of the reader as it has been explored over the last thirty years. A great deal of attention has been addressed to the issue of interpretation and what the role of the reader might be. Indicative of this critical trend is the title of Umberto Eco's book *The Role of the Reader*. This introductory chapter is dedicated to discussing these matters

in order for the general context of the dissertation to be understood.

A primary order of business for reader-centered theorists has been to define the reader. Consequently, there are as many designations for the reader as there are theorists. "The concept 'audience' or 'reader' may be anything from an idealized construct to an actual historical idiosyncratic personage, including the author. Personifications- the mock reader (Gibson), the implied reader (Booth, Iser), the model reader (Eco), the super-reader (Riffaterre), the inscribed or encoded reader (Brooke-Rose), the narratee (Prince), the ideal reader (Culler), the literent (Holland), the actual reader (Jauss), the informed reader or the interpretive community (Fish)- proliferate."⁷

Despite such a multitude of names the above categories can be generally assigned to two categories: 1. infers an intellectual, idealistic construct; 2. infers a "real" reader. To the first category belong such designations as Iser's implied reader and Riffaterre's super reader. The latter, for example, posits that the super reader responds only to "poetically significant linguistic features."⁸ Riffaterre's concept is an amalgam of readers that he has chanced to come across, nevertheless it is an idealistic construct because no one reader can hope to respond always and consistently in the manner that Riffaterre's super reader does. In the latter category of reader would fall Jauss' actual reader and Fish's informed reader. Fish gives a fairly specific set of criteria in order to define who can qualify as an informed reader:

"The informed reader is someone who 1. is a competent speaker of the language out of which the text is built up. 2. is in full possession of "the semantic knowledge that a mature... listener brings to his task of comprehension." 3. has *literary competence*." Fish's definition describes what we could more generally call a critic. He gives one reason why his model should be based upon this type of person: "It is only when readers become literary critics and the passing of judgment takes precedence over the reading experience, that opinions begin to diverge."¹⁰ Indeed, it is the divergence of opinions that helped to spur the trend in reader-theory criticism. If Fish is correct that opinions begin to differ when the reader metamorphoses into a literary critic, then he gives a plausible reason for his definition and why a model of the reader should be based on it. Furthermore, his definition has the advantage of accurately describing the three readers represented in this work. However, although it describes a group of readers and perhaps the group of readers that we should be principally concerned with, it does not tell us much about what the reader actually does. The idealistic concepts of the reader attempt to do precisely this, i. e., define the process of reading. Riffaterre's super reader fails, to my mind, in this respect, whereas Iser's implied reader is more successful. However, we need to discuss other aspects of this problem before we can decide on a model that will serve the purposes of this dissertation.

This brings us back to our three "readers," Dostoevskij, Brjusov and Gofman, and to the question of what it means to

read. Jonathan Culler says that "'to read is to play the role of a reader and to interpret is to posit an experience of reading...'"¹¹ In this sense, then, Dostoevskij is a reader who has posited his "experience of reading" in an article, in which he gives his interpretation of EN. But what of Brjusov and Gofman? After all, in part we are dealing with artistic efforts in which they completed a literary work that they felt should have been or at least deserved to be completed. Are they readers in the same sense of the word as Dostoevskij? In short the answer is yes, because before they ever set down to write their own versions of EN both Brjusov and Gofman had written several scholarly articles on the subject and as we shall see their artistic efforts reflect the interpretive decisions they had made in their earlier articles. Therefore, in their response to EN they were first readers, who subsequently wrote down how they, as readers, imagined EN should end. Roland Barthes has been described as "the reader who wrote his readings."¹² We should think of Dostoevskij, Brjusov and Gofman in the same light. It is, of course, possible to analyze Brjusov's and Gofman's completions of EN as the products of writers, but then we would achieve an analysis similar to Žirmunskij's landmark study of Brjusov's work on EN: *Valerij Brjusov and the Heritage of Puškin*. I feel that approaching them as readers offers new possibilities.

Even if we concede that it is legitimate to view Dostoevskij, Brjusov and Gofman as readers, is there a need to differentiate between them? Only Gofman could be

considered a literary critic and scholar in the sense that we accept it today. Brjusov wrote many articles of literary criticism, but he, like Dostoevskij, would be thought of as primarily a writer. Should artists, even if they are involved in the interpretation of someone else's work, be viewed in the same way as a literary critic? The question is prompted by the issue of objectivity. Even if we acknowledge that objectivity is beyond anyone's grasp, there is still the question of aspirations. Scholars at least aspire to be as objective as possible in their approach, i.e., they presumably avoid grinding their ideological axes. Artists, however, may not feel that they are under any such compulsion, hence the accusation that they are innately subjective in their approach to literature and other writers. To answer this question more fully we need to consider the act of interpretation and the role of the reader in this act. This question has occupied much of the attention of reader-centered criticism for the past thirty years.

Umberto Eco states that historically there have been two ideas of interpretation: "On one side it is assumed that to interpret a text means to find out the meaning intended by its original author or- in any case- its objective nature or essence, an essence which, as such, is independent of our interpretation. On the other side it is assumed that texts can be interpreted in infinite ways."¹³ With the rise of Russian Formalism and then, later, New Criticism, the former definition prevailed in twentieth century literary theory. Both Formalism and New Criticism devalued the "extrinsic approach"

implied by the search for the meaning intended by the author (although critics such as Wolfgang Iser would argue that "the old values still manage to come creeping through"). Instead, they emphasized studying the literary features of a work. New Criticism argued that such features represent the objective essence of the text and are independent of interpretation. In this approach the text is seen as having an objective status. For New Criticism the critic's role is to analyze precisely those objective features of the text, with the implication that as the methodology employed becomes more sophisticated the analysis of the text will itself become more and more accurate. The most famous dismissal of the relationship between text and reader was given by W. K. Wimsatt in his article "The Affective Fallacy."

Elizabeth Freund characterizes Wimsatt's picture of the relationship between text and reader as being "rigidly hierarchical": "The poem itself, enshrined as the prime mover of all meanings and emotions, governs the hierarchy. Subject to its dominion is the disinterested critic who performs the task of giving an 'account' by approximating the meaning and mediating the textual properties... Since response, in this benevolently despotic arrangement, is not a property of the reader at all but something inscribed in and controlled by 'the poem itself', the reader need only be taken for granted."¹⁵ The worst sin that could be committed, Freund continues, was the sin of intrusiveness, i.e., the critic's personality intruding itself upon the reading of the text. "If New Criticism frowned upon categories of analysis 'extraneous' to

the object, it positively bristled with contempt for anything so brazen as a personality in the critic.... Cooler but no less firm was Wimsatt's repudiation of the carnal nature of 'affective' criticism. 'The report of some reader.. that a poem or story induces in them vivid images, intense feelings, or heightened consciousness, is neither anything which can be refuted nor anything which it is possible for the objective critic to take into account. The purely affective report is either too physiological or it is too vague' (1970a, p. 32, first published 1954)."¹⁶

Although not a new critic, Tomaševskij's critique of Dostoevskij's interpretation of Puškin is predicated upon the above view of interpretation and the reader's role in it. The ontological status of the text as an objective "thing" and the minor role that the reader plays in determining the meaning of a text are fundamental propositions of the faith of New Criticism. Recent literary theory has in large part been propelled by reactions and objections to this hierarchal view of the relationship between text and reader. To return to Eco's historical review, the pendulum has swung away from the first definition of interpretation and for the last twenty years has been swinging back in the direction of the second definition, i. e., that the text can be interpreted in an "infinite" number of ways. A brief review of this more recent trend in literary theory is necessary in order to further our understanding of the various ways in which the reader has been perceived. This, in turn, will enable us to specify the concept of the reader that will guide this dissertation.

In the introduction to her book *Reader-Response Criticism*, Jane P. Tompkins writes that the essays presented therein "eventually destroy" the concept of the "objectivity of the text." She goes on to add that this is perhaps an unintentional result, but nevertheless an inevitable one because of the displacement of the text by the reader as the center of intellectual interest.¹⁷ This displacement began innocently enough. Critics who were formalists in their approach to literature began to allow a place for the reader at their table for important elements of the literary process. The text still sat at the head of the table but concepts such as the Mock Reader (Walker Gibson)¹⁸ and the Narratee (Gerald Prince)¹⁹ opened up a spot for the reader. The reader began to move up slowly closer to the head of the table when Wayne C. Booth in his book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) questioned whether the reader should or could remain objective and emotionally uninvolved when reading a text.²⁰ Perhaps the objective status of the text received its first serious blows with Roman Ingarden and Georges Poulet. Ingarden spoke of the reader concretizing the text.²¹ Poulet believed that the reader's consciousness is invaded by the author's.²² The good reader, in Poulet's view, lets down his defenses and accepts the invasion of the author's consciousness. However, until the reader begins to read the book nothing happens. The book, as it were, is inert until it comes into contact with a reader. Thus, with both Ingarden and Poulet the reader exercises an important degree of control. Until the reader begins to read, a book does not have an existence in the same way that

an object of nature does. A tree or a rock exist independently of man. They can be affected by us in various ways, but they do not depend upon us for their existence. A book, however, is made by man with the intent that it should be read by others. Hence, its existence is predicated upon an interaction with and dependence upon human beings.

From here the supplanting of the text by the reader as the center of attention follows a swifter course. Wolfgang Iser sees the reader as performing the active role of "filling in the gaps" that the author purposely leaves in the text.²³ In other words, the imagination of the reader is stirred and supplies the information that the author leaves out. This does not mean that the reader is able to make meaning and impose his interpretation on the text. Iser believes that the reader attempts to develop an idea of the text that is consistent with it. If the text presents information that contradicts the idea of the reader, then the reader is forced to alter his idea so that it is once again consistent with the text. Thus the reader's understanding of the text is directed by the text itself. Nevertheless, he plays an active role in the process in the sense that a multitude of interpretations is possible. The most far-reaching and radical expressions of the role of the reader have been made by Norman Holland, David Bleich and Stanley Fish.

Holland takes a psychoanalytic approach to the question of the reader. He sees the reader as having an identity theme which the reader uses to process the world.²⁴ In other words, how the reader understands the world is in large part due to

how his identity theme is comprised. The same is true vis-a-vis the reader and text. In other words, how a reader reads a text will be dictated in large part by the reader's own identity theme. The text still exists as an object other than the reader, but Holland's approach grants the reader an unprecedented degree of importance in making meaning. Bleich grants that the text is an object in the sense that it has a physical existence but asserts that its true status is that of a symbol. Thus, meaning "depends entirely on the process of symbolization that takes place in the reader's mind."²⁵ Fish is perhaps the apex of this drive to question the objectivity of the text. He labels such objectivity as blatantly an "illusion."²⁶ In Fish's view there is no choice between objectivity and interpretation. There is only interpretation because one's "interpretive principles" control what one is "permitted to see."²⁷ The critic's assumption of objectivity and neutrality is regarded as a "pose" that is "as fictitious as the philosopher's."²⁸ Fish brings us to the point where "the reader's activities are at the center of attention, where they are regarded, not as leading to meaning, but as *having* meaning."²⁹ With Fish, the reader has finally reached the head of the table and some question whether he has not banished the text to the kitchen. Holland, Bleich and Fish seem to be in agreement with the basic proposition that the reader shapes the meaning that he sees. If taken in a limited sense their position would agree with that of René Wellek's and Austin Warren's, who wrote, albeit in a different context, that "value judgements are implied in the very choice

of materials."³⁰ In other words, the reader's choices, even of ostensibly objective features in the text, imply value judgments on the part of the reader. However, our reader-response critics have taken this idea far beyond the limit that Wellek and Warren would accept. Wellek and Warren objected to a "relativism" that is "equivalent to an anarchy of values, a surrender of the task of criticism."³¹ Fish, at least, has been accused of indulging in precisely that. Fish himself saw the possibility of relativism as a flaw in his argument and came up with the concept of a "community of readers" which sets the standards by which interpretations are judged. It is this community which decides if any particular interpretation is acceptable or not. Fish's "community" seems to bear a strong resemblance to the semiological view "which holds that our categories of perception are not unique, individual or idiosyncratic, but conventional and communal."³² Community standards notwithstanding, it is clear that Fish wishes to invest meaning in the reader and this represents for many the "false relativism" that Wellek and Warren warned against.

Despite their profound disagreements I think it is possible to discern an area of common ground between the above theorists. Wellek, Iser, Holland and Fish would agree that the reader attempts to shape the text. Wellek and Warren would argue that each period has its own "perspective" that it can legitimately bring to bear on a work of art but that ultimately the work of art itself remains the object which determines meaning. Iser suggests a greater degree of equality between text and reader in determining meaning but comes

down more weightily on the side of the text because the text resists the efforts of the reader and is ultimately the controlling factor. Holland and Fish, however, would grant the reader the greater degree of control. The basic area of agreement, however, is important and will factor into our model of the reader.

The erosion of the objective status of the text did not occur without resistance. It is important to consider this other side of the argument for it will demonstrate a point that I wish to make. The most vociferous critic of the above trend has been E. D. Hirsch, who continues to argue for the objective status of the text. Hirsch argues that anything less than a stated goal of consensual agreement about what is truth is to deny ourselves the status of a discipline: "The theoretical aim of a genuine discipline, scientific or humanistic, is the attainment of truth, and its practical aim is agreement that truth has probably been achieved. Thus the practical goal of every genuine discipline is consensus-the winning of firmly grounded agreement that one set of conclusions is more probable than others-and this is precisely the goal of valid interpretation."³³ One problem with this position is the equality it presupposes between scientific and humanistic fields. Juri Lotman discusses the differences between the genius of Einstein versus that of Dante or Dostoevskij that is analogous to the doubt I have about the equality between scientific and humanistic fields: "But if Dante or Dostoevsky had died in childhood their works would not have been written and the development of literature and

of the general history of mankind would have been different. We can say this without altering our opinion that Einstein was as much a genius as Dante was. The principal difference between them is that the ideas of a scientist can be extracted from the text they are expressed in and consequently can be translated; whereas the ideas of an artist are a *text*, and a text is created once only."³⁴ In other words, if Einstein had not lived, then some one else would have come up with the same ideas for they were there to be translated. Thus, a scientific field has a reason for having consensual agreement about objective truth as a stated purpose. However, in literature the reader is not in the same position vis-a-vis a literary text as the scientist is vis-a-vis a physical law. Just as a literary text is a unique product of a genius, so too will the reading of that text be a unique product. Other readers will not be able to hope to reproduce precisely another person's reading, and yet that is the standard by which scientists judge one another. One scientist's claims can only be verified if other scientists can reproduce precisely the results the initial scientist has declared.

Like the arguments of his reader-response foes, Hirsch's argument for the objectivity of the text rests as much upon moral as it does intellectual grounds. Bleich's argument, for example, is based upon his desire to uphold the primacy of the individual. Hirsch's argument is a version of Pascal's wager: "Let us weigh the practical gain and loss in calling heads- that is, that objective historical truth exists. Let us estimate the two chances. If you win, you win something,

If you lose, you lose nothing. Do not hesitate then, gamble on the existence of objective truth."³⁵ Hirsch shows that the proponents on either side of this issue may discuss the question of the objectivity of the text in intellectual terms, but their basic position is determined by nothing less profound than faith in their particular moral structure of the universe. The point is that all readers process a text, indeed the world, in this way, i. e., beginning from a fundamental belief as to how the world is structured. It is not a question, as Hirsch would have it, of gambling on objective truth. We can say that objective truth exists, just as we can say that God exists, but then we realize that there are many different versions of objective truth. For our purposes what is important to understand is that just as it "is simply not possible to stop being men of the twentieth century while we engage in a judgement of the past,"³⁶ so too is it not possible for a reader to read without trying to shape the text just as he tries to shape the world in general. Indeed, this is the next point that we need to discuss.

In his book on the ontological status of the text, Paul B. Armstrong also discusses the reader. For him interpretative assumptions are the choice of each individual critic and "this choice is always a leap of faith, which logic alone cannot dictate and which can never be completely and conclusively justified."³⁷ As I mentioned above, when the intellectual superstructure, which Hirsch, Bleich, Fish, and others, construct to help support their arguments, is stripped away, a foundation is revealed which reflects the fundamental

presuppositions they have about the world. Avoiding one's presuppositions in one's interpretation is impossible because "there is no interpretation without presuppositions about the being of the work and the world. If we seek to understand without preconceptions, we do not escape them. Instead, we reproduce them in our interpretations, but without recognizing them for what they are-our own assumptions, not independent facts in the text."³⁸ Thus, although Tomaševskij's opinion of Dostoevskij's interpretation of Puškin is predicated upon his belief that Dostoevskij was not objective in his approach to the topic, it can be said that Tomaševskij was not, nor could he have been, objective in his approach either. This does not mean that Tomaševskij was wrong. Dostoevskij's interpretation might well be illegitimate, but the assumption of objectivity by the critic, upon which Tomaševskij's opinion was based, is wrong.

Another way to discuss the presuppositions that we all have about the world and which enter into our interpretations is to talk about the reader (and the author) as being replete with codes. As Robert Scholes puts it the reader is never "free" to interpret. Rather: "the 'free' reader is simply at the mercy of the cultural codes that constitute each person as a reader, and of the manipulative features of the text, the classroom, and the whole reading situation as well."³⁹ This all sounds very manipulative and posits the human being as a puppet of the cultural codes of which he is made. But the codes that we consist of are at least partially the product of choice, or perhaps inclination might be the better

word. Scholes states that "we read as we have been taught to read and until we have been taught to look for certain things we will not see them."⁴⁰ This is true, but we can amend his statement slightly to include the notion that we also read as we have taught *ourselves* to read. In other words, the new critic or the semiotician have chosen their interpretive strategies from an array of possibilities. It was not inevitable that Robert Scholes became a semiotician. He could well have followed in the footsteps of Hirsch. However, Scholes was no doubt inclined to pick the interpretive strategy that he did for the same reason we all are inclined to pick the strategies that we do, namely because they reflect our fundamental beliefs about the being of the world. Thus human beings are not entirely puppets. We are a complex puzzle that we as individuals have at least had a part in piecing together, but neither are we as free as we would like to think and that is the point that Scholes, Armstrong and others want to make. We cannot escape ourselves, however much we have been made or are self-made. Our interpretive strategies privilege the meaning we find in texts: "Hermeneutic critics seek authorial or intentional meaning; the New Critics seek the ambiguities of "textual" meaning; the "reader response" critics allow readers to make meaning."⁴¹ This is why Jonathan Culler insists that we must study the manner in which we read because otherwise we will "neglect a principal source of information about literary activity."⁴²

We have finally reached a point where we can summarize our model of the reader. The reader is "real" and is defined

in the terms delineated by Fish (p. 7 in this dissertation); he has preconceptions about reading (i.e., interpretive strategies) which help to direct the meaning that he finds in the text. Thus in a limited sense Harold Bloom is right when he says that "Poets' misinterpretations or poems are more drastic than critics' misinterpretations or criticism, but this is only a difference in degree and not at all in kind."⁴³ In other words, Harold Bloom is right in the sense that since both critics and poets bring their preconceptions to bear on a text, we can speak of a difference in degree but not kind. Thus by the model of the reader that I am proposing the scholar Gofman (or Tomaševskij for that matter) and the writers Dostoevskij and Brjusov should not be differentiated. It is true that scholars are, or should be, more aware (or wary) of their own preconceptions than artists are, but this cannot be perceived as a fundamental difference in kind. However, we have addressed only half the issue. What readers read, of course, is a text. Up to this point views of the text have ranged from seeing it as having an objective status to being a configuration in the reader's mind. A determination about the nature of the text needs to be reached in order to progress farther. For that I rely upon the thought of Armstrong, who I feel presents a clear and lucid definition of the text.

One answer to the contradictory choices of objective text versus a view that would hold that meaning is within the purview of the reader is to take something of a middle road. One such path is to define the text as being "heteronomous."

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines heteronomous as a state of being "subject to the rule of another: opposed to autonomous." Armstrong argues precisely this point in his book *Conflicting Readings: Variety and Validity in Interpretation*. What Armstrong wants to account for is the reality that a text can sustain a multiplicity of interpretations and yet not be completely subject to the interpreter's whim because a text can and does often resist a particular reading, thus forcing the reader to reassess his line of reasoning. Because of this reality, Armstrong argues that we must think of the text as "paradoxically both dependent and independent, capable of taking on different shapes according to opposing hypotheses about how to configure it, but always transcending any particular interpreter's beliefs about it."⁴⁴

What this presents is a picture of the text as a bounded field of possibilities, similar to Jurij Lotman's statement that "an artistic text creates a field of possible interpretations, sometimes a very wide one,"⁴⁵ and to Umberto Eco's concept of the open text. To use a baseball metaphor, a critic who comes up to the plate and hits the ball into deep left field just within the foul line has produced an interpretation that falls within the field of play. However, someone who hits the ball outside the foul line has hit a ball that cannot be played. It is the equivalent of an interpretation that is "private and unshareable." These interpretations are ruled as fallacious. Armstrong admits that the line between the interpretation just within the field (i.e., legitimate) and one just without (i.e., illegitimate) is difficult to

discern and arguments will ensue as to the validity or lack thereof of a specific interpretation. Nevertheless, the line exists and thinking of the text as a field of possibilities justifies us as professionals accepting the idea that there can be a multiplicity of interpretations (which seems to be a generally held position in the profession) and saying at the same time that this or that particular interpretation is wrong (which we also clearly want to be able to do). Or as Armstrong puts it, thinking of the text as heteronomous explains "both the variability and the otherness of texts."⁴⁶

From our definitions of the reader and the text it would seem that meaning is not exclusively within the purview of either. In fact, the implication of Armstrong's argument is that meaning is an event that happens between the text and the reader. Scholes speaks in the language of a semiotician but his answer is very compatible with the answer that Armstrong provides. In other words, the reader is not free to make any meaning but he can create an interpretation that the text will allow (i.e., that falls within the field of possibilities): "As semiotic interpreters we are not free to *make* meaning, but we are free to *find* it by following the various semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic paths that lead away from the words of the text. That is, we can't bring just any meanings to the text, but we can bring all the meanings we can link to the text by means of an interpretive code."⁴⁷ Thus, we are simultaneously guided by the text, which will allow some readings but not others, and by our own codes, which will determine what we see in the text. Or as Lotman puts it:

"the text shapes its readers and at the same time the readers shape their text."⁴⁸

Meaning is achieved by the interaction of the reader and text. This interaction between the codes of the text and those of the reader, or to put it differently, between the dictates of the text and the guiding strategies of the reader defines the motivating impulse of this dissertation. Two German scholars, namely Wolfgang Iser and Jauss, have been the principal forces behind the study of this interaction. Jauss has concentrated on the reception of literature, claiming that "Only the reception, i.e., the historical life of the work in literature, reveals its structure, in an open series of aspects, through the active interrelationship between the literary work and the literary public."⁴⁹ "Revealing its structure" means that it is only through reception that we see "the successive unfolding of the potential for meaning that is embedded in a work."⁵⁰ It is also only through reception that we are able to witness the interrelationship between text and reader. The text may "dictate" to the reader, but it is not a sentient being that we can interrogate. The only evidence of its effect on the reader is in the reader's interpretation, i.e., reception of the work. It is there that we can examine the interaction between text and reader. In a sense we will observe a limited "unfolding" of the meaning inherent in Puškin's EN. It will be limited in the sense that Jauss implies because this dissertation is dedicated to a very small branch, as represented by Dostoevskij, Brjusov and Gofman, of EN's reception, although in chapter two I will

cursorily review the scholarship done on this work.

Iser, on the other hand, has been primarily concerned with formulating a theory of aesthetic response, which he believes should be analyzed "in terms of a dialectic relationship between text, reader, and their interaction." Iser characterizes the difference between response and reception in the following manner: "A theory of response has its roots in the text; a theory of reception arises from a history of readers' judgments."⁵¹ Iser's theory is rooted in the text in the sense that I described earlier in this chapter, where he defines the reader's role as developing a "consistency" about the text he is reading. In other words, the reader tries to maintain as consistent a reading of the text as possible and that this consistency-building is guided by the text. In that sense, then, Iser's theory is rooted in the text. However, Iser does not argue that there can be only one consistent reading of the text. He states that typically there are "many different consistencies," which, if guided by the text, are nevertheless a "projection" of the reader.⁵² The similarities are evident between his description of the reading process and those of Armstrong's, Scholes and Lotman's. The reading process that they and Iser describe has been given the name "wirkungsästhetische" by Iser. According to Iser it is something of a "game." This, at least, is how he has characterized Laurence Sterne's idea of a literary text: it is "something like an arena in which reader and author participate in a game of the imagination."⁵³ If we agree with this characterization, which Iser uses to buttress his description of

the reading process as an interaction between the text and the reader, then observing this "game" should be possible in the reception history of any text.

I would suggest that incomplete texts or fragments magnify the "game" aspect of the process and make the observation of text-reader interaction more readily accessible. The logic behind this is that the fragment grants to the reader a greater largess for the play of his own imagination, thereby implying that the question of interaction between text and reader should stand out more sharply.

Puškin created many fragments in his life, both intentional and unintentional. Joost Van Baak has speculated that many of Puškin's prose fragments might have been motivated by narrative demands for a *"new density of detail ."*⁵⁴ Puškin's succinctness gave the text the quality of openness, i.e., its brevity gives a sense of the text's "world picture" but "without completing it."⁵⁵ Whether EN was meant to be an intentional fragment or not we do not know and will probably never know. Be that as it may, the reality is that it has been received as a fragment. If fragments do give the reader's imagination more play it is because they violate the reader's desire for "the answers to questions raised by the text." By denying him answers, the reader is encouraged to come up with his own. By being given merely a sense of the "world picture," the reader is encouraged to fill in details in order to make the picture more concrete.

The details that Dostoevskij, Brjusov and Gofman have chosen to make the picture "more concrete" are the object of

this dissertation. They reflect the interaction, the "game," between themselves and EN. They are the informative "something" that Barbara Herrnstein Smith's reminds us can be discovered in any reading. In short, it is the details that will help reveal the interaction between reader and text as it is played out in the interpretations of our readers. They will aid and assist in quantifying and identifying the level of interaction. Dostoevskij, Brjusov, Gofman and their interpretations of EN will be the laboratories in which I will examine the process of this interaction. As I indicated in the beginning there is a point of intersection around which all these readings revolve. It is defined by the concept of the *moment (mig)*. By observing this concept as it is reflected in our designated readings my hope is that we will learn something about the "literary activity" of each of our subjects. Indeed, in the course of this study we shall see that *mig* serves as a unifying thread which links Puškin to Dostoevskij to Brjusov to Gofman in a long string of Romantic thought.

¹ V. Žirmunskij, Valerij Briusov i nasledie Puškina (Peterburg: El'zevir, 1922), p. 8.

² Jules Legras, rev. of Egipetskijska noči, by Modest Gofman, Le Monde Slave 4 (1935), p. 159.

³ B. V. Tomaševskij, "Interpreting Pushkin" in Modern Critical Views: Alexander Pushkin, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 126.

⁴ Joan Delaney Grossman, "'Moi Pushkin': Briusov's Search for the Real Aleksandr Sergeevich" in Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism, ed. Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 82.

⁵ Leslie O'Bell, Pushkin's Egyptian Nights (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984), p. 3.

⁶ Paul B. Armstrong, Conflicting Readings: Variety and Validity in Interpretation (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p. 178.

⁷ Elizabeth Freund, The Return of the Reader. Reader-Response Criticism (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 7.

⁸ Jane P. Tompkins, "An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism" in Reader-Response Criticism, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. xiii.

⁹ Stanley E. Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics" in Reader-Response Criticism, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 86-7.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 89.

¹¹ Freund, p. 87.

¹² Roland Champagne, Literary History in the Wake of Roland Barthes: Re-Defining the Myths of Reading (Birmingham, Alabama: Summa Publications, Inc., 1984), p. 31.

¹³ Umberto Eco, The Limits of Interpretation (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 24.

¹⁴ Wolfgang Iser, The Act of Reading (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 15.

¹⁵ Freund, p. 4.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Tompkins, p. x.

¹⁸ Walker Gibson, "Authors, Speakers, Readers, and Mock Readers" in Reader-Response Criticism, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 1.

¹⁹ Gerald Prince, "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee" in Reader-Response Criticism, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 7.

²⁰ Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 147.

²¹ Roman Ingarden, The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and the Theory of Literature (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973),

²² Georges Poulet, "Criticism and the Experience of Interiority" in Reader-Response Criticism, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 45.

²³ Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach" in Twentieth Century Literary Theory, ed. Vassilis Lambropoulos and David Neal Miller (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 386.

²⁴ Norman N. Holland, "Unity Identity Text Self" in PMLA 90, No. 5 (October 1975), p. 814.

²⁵ David Bleich, "Epistemological Assumptions in the Study of Response" in Reader-Response Criticism, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. xx.

²⁶ Fish, "Literature... ", p. 82.

²⁷ Stanley E. Fish, Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 12-13.

²⁸ Walter Benn Michaels, "The Interpreter's Self: Peirce on the Cartesian 'Subject'," in Georgia Review 31 (Summer 1977), p. 402.

²⁹ Stanley E. Fish, "Interpreting the Variorum," in Reader-Response Criticism, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 172.

³⁰ René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1984), p. 40.

³¹ Ibid, p. 43.

³² Freund, p. 107.

³³ E. D. Hirsch Jr, Validity in Interpretation (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. viii-ix.

³⁴ Yuri M. Lotman, Universe of the Mind (London and New York: I. B. Tauris & Co., 1990), p. 267.

³⁵ E. D. Hirsch Jr, "The Politics of Theories of Interpretation" in The Politics of Interpretation, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 329.

³⁶ Wellek, p. 42. Lotman makes a similar claim: "We may have forgotten what Shakespeare and his spectators knew, but we cannot forget what we have learnt since their time." See Lotman, p. 19.

³⁷ Paul B. Armstrong, Conflicting Readings: Variety and Validity in Interpretation (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p. xii.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 5.

³⁹ Robert Scholes, Semiotics and Interpretation (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 14.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 6.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 110.

⁴² Jonathan Culler, "Literary Competence" in Reader-Response Criticism, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 116.

⁴³ Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence (London, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 94.

- ⁴⁴Armstrong, p. x.
- ⁴⁵Yuri Lotman, Analysis of the Poetic Text (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1976), p. 122.
- ⁴⁶Armstrong, p. x.
- ⁴⁷Scholes, p. 30.
- ⁴⁸Lotman, Universe, p. 61.
- ⁴⁹Hans Robert Jauss, Toward an Aesthetic of Reception (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 73.
- ⁵⁰Ibid., p. 30.
- ⁵¹Wolfgang Iser, The Act of Reading (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. x.
- ⁵²Ibid., p. 17.
- ⁵³Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), p. 275.
- ⁵⁴Joost Van Baak, "Puškin's Prose Fragments: Between Lyrical Nucleus and Societal Chronotope" in Russian Literature XXVI (1989), p. 437.
- ⁵⁵Ibid.

Chapter II

The History and Reception of *Egyptian Nights*

The historical life of a literary work is unthinkable without the active participation of its addressees...

Hans Robert Jauss

EN has a long history of scholarship associated with it. As I mentioned in the introductory chapter my concern is with three specific readers of Puškin. Each of them must and will be understood within their own immediate personal and social context. However, they are also members of a broader cultural and critical trend, which is reflected in their writings on EN. Part of the purpose of this chapter, then, is to illuminate and identify this broader trend of which Dostoevskij, Brjusov and Gofman could each be considered as members. Achieving the above, however, will solidify our understanding of only one branch of the reception of this work. Just as Dostoevskij, et. al., must be placed within a context, so too must that context be set (or perhaps offset) within the overall reception for EN. This frame within a frame fortunately has its limits. In fact as an organizing principle there is some justification to classifying the research on EN as falling within three broad trends: 1. the romantic tradition, lasting from the 19th century into the early 20th; 2. the

realistic tradition, beginning in the early 20th century; 3. the historical tradition. In one sense I must denounce my own attempt to neatly structure the reception of EN. Such schemes are inherently crude and distorting if we take them too literally for there is rarely a neat and clear division between categories. For example, P. V. Annenkov contributes to the development of the history of EN, but he also belongs, and more importantly so, to the Romantic tradition. Similarly, S. Bondi could be seen as an adherent to a more realistic appraisal of the story, but his research efforts unquestionably belong with those that attempt to establish EN's history. However, in terms of helping to define and establish the milieu from which a literary or critical work stems such organizational schemes are indeed helpful.

As far as Dostoevskij, Brjusov and Gofman are concerned, I believe that they should be viewed from the context of the romantic tradition. This is a critical reception of EN that began in the 19th century and then was largely supplanted by the realistic tradition in the early 20th century. These two broad trends are distinguished by the emphasis they place on the prose or poetic sections of the work. Reconciling the prose narrative with the Cleopatra improvization that ends the work has always been problematic. In the romantic tradition of the reception of this work, the Cleopatra poem has been perceived as the basis of the work, whereas in the realistic tradition the prose narrative with its clearly identifiable meta-poetic themes has been considered to be of central import. I should note at this point that when I discuss

the realistic tradition I do not distinguish between the Western and Russian traditions and I frequently go back and forth between the two. I do not mean to equate the two traditions or to suggest that there is no difference between the two in the way that they have respectively interpreted EN. My only point is that in terms of their orientation to EN, i.e., in claiming that it is the prose narrative and not the Cleopatra poem that forms the basis of EN, they are similar; therefore for the purposes of this chapter and dissertation they do not need to be separated. The tradition of scholarship on EN is quite rich. In order to make this chapter a manageable one I have had to be selective about which works to discuss. I chose those works which to my mind most clearly help to illustrate the three trends that I enumerated in the beginning of this chapter.

I would first like to survey the third major trend in EN scholarship, i.e., the efforts to establish the history of its development. By that I mean those scholarly works which address what the canonic form of EN should be, which fragments are directly related to it and the chronological ordering of those fragments. EN is an editorial reconstruction and its precise form has been a matter of scholarly debate and controversy since its initial publication up to the present day. In one sense this aspect of the history of EN is peripheral to the central interest of this dissertation, which is the interaction between our three readers and the text. In the 19th century and into the early 20th century there was only one published form of the text and this is the text that

our three readers reacted to. Nevertheless, it is clear that context in its narrower and broader forms is important to my argument. Thus, it seems relevant to provide the context of the text itself.

EN was first published in *The Contemporary* (*Sovremennik* vol. VIII, pp. 5-24, N° 161) in 1837. The editors were P. A. Vjazemskij, V. A. Žukovskij, A. A. Kraevskij, V. F.

Odoevskij, and P. A. Pletnev.¹ The prose narrative was found in Puškin's notebooks in a largely legible form and has never been the subject of much dispute although, as we shall see, which prose fragments should be associated with EN has been a topic of debate. The controversy lies with the two improvisations of the itinerant Italian poet. Within the narrative Puškin placed two ellipses to indicate where the improvisations should go, but the improvisations themselves were not provided. In the case of the first ellipsis the original editors did not seek to insert a poem in the designated spot. Annenkov, in his 1855 study on Puškin was the first to suggest that the rough draft beginning with the line "The poet approaches-his eyelids open" ("Poët idet-otkryty veždy") was intended to serve as the first improvisation.² This suggestion was by no means adapted immediately. A cursory review of published collections of Puškin's prose from 1871, 1882, 1903 and 1914 indicates that in the 19th century and well into the 20th EN was published without a first improvisation. Many of the above publications marked the first ellipsis with an asterisk and indicated that the verses meant for this place had never been found. However, by 1921 P. I. Novickij published

EN with not only the above lyric, based upon an edition of Tomaševskij's, but also with another variant that was possibly intended for use as the first improvisation ("Why does the wind swirl in the ravine" ["Začem krutitsja vetr v ovrage"], based upon an edition by M. L. Gofman).³ Both of the above are reworkings of stanzas taken from "Ezerskij" (See Appendix A). In 1931 the textologist S. Bondi published his famous *New Pages of Puškin* (*Novye Stranicy Puškina*). Bondi disputes whether either rough draft alone could be used as the first improvisation. Bondi argues for a later and more complete reworking of the first example ("Poët idet, otkryty veždy"), in the middle of which he believes the second draft ("Začem krutitsja vetr v ovrage") should be inserted.⁴ This is the variant that Soviet publications have been using ever since and it is reflected with some very minor changes in the *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij v desjati tomach*, v. 6, 1978 p. 250 (See Appendix B).

The second improvisation has proved to be controversial as well and the subject of subsequent editorial reconstruction. The original editors were faced with a difficult choice. It seemed clear that verses on the theme of Cleopatra were meant to be used for the second improvisation. The problem lay in which version of the Cleopatra theme to choose. Puškin initially wrote a poem on this theme in 1824. He returned to this poem in 1828 (Bondi dates it at 1827) and substantially revised it. When he began to seek a prose frame for the Cleopatra theme he began to rewrite the 1828 poem for the purposes of inserting it into a prose fragment. However,

this 1835 attempt did not proceed very far. Since the 1835 version was unusable due to its incompleteness, the editors decided upon the 1828 poem. It is generally agreed that Puškin intended a different version of the poem to be used, but as Bondi puts it, this was the "best way out" of a difficult dilemma.⁵ Some have never agreed with this position and insist that placing any verse in EN is an "arbitrary editorial decision" and that to put the 1828 version of "Cleopatra," an "independent, finished work," in EN is simply "incorrect."⁶ Despite such objections EN existed until the early 1920's in the following form for readers: a three chapter prose narrative with the first improvisation absent and the second one occupied by the 1828 version of the Cleopatra poem (See Appendix C). Thus, for all those readers EN abruptly ends with the last stanza of the Italian's improvisation:

And look, already the day had passed,
 And the gold-horned moon shone;
 Alexandria's halls
 Were covered by a delightful shadow;
 Fountains bubbled, lamps were alight,
 A light incense burned,
 And a voluptuous coolness
 Was being prepared for the earthly gods;
 In a luxurious golden peace,
 Admidst seductive wonders,
 Under a canopy of purple curtains
 Glittered a golden bed...

.....

I vot uže sokrylsja den', / Vosxodit mesjac zlatorogij, /
 Aleksandrijskie čertogi / Pokryla sladostnaja ten'. / Fontany
 b'jut, gorjat lampady, / Kuritsja legkij fimiam, / I sladost-
 rastnye proxlady / Zemnym gotovjatsja bogam. / V roskošnom
 sumračnom pokoe, / Sred' obol'stitel'nyx čudes, / Pod sen'ju
 purpurnyx zaves / Blistaet lože zolotoe... /

In the 1920's it is this very last stanza that came to be suspect. In the 1922 edition of *Contemporary Notes*

(*Sovremennyya zapiski*), v. XIII, Gofman writes in his article "'Kleopatra' i 'Egipetskija noči'" that the above stanza leaves the mistaken impression that EN abruptly ends at that point.⁷ Gofman's point is that Puškin intended to continue EN by repeating the Cleopatra anecdote in contemporary St. Petersburg. However, in making this particular point he also hints that the second improvisation should end not with the above stanza but with the stanza that immediately precedes it:

"I swear that in unheard-of fashion,
Great Mother, I shall play my part,
Serving the bed of lustful passion
With all a common strumpet's art.
Your help, O mighty Cypriot, lend me;
Ye kings who rule the realms of night
And all the gods of hell, befriend me:
I swear, until the morning light,
To tire my masters' lusts, to ply them
With every sweet endearment, till
The secrets of my kisses cloy them,
My harlot's wiles exhaust their will.
But this I also swear: whenever
Undying dawn shall streak again
The purple east, the axe shall sever
The heads of all these happy men."

"Kljanus'...- o Mater' naslaždenij/ Tebe neslyxanno služu,/ Na lože strastnyx iskušeni/ Prosto naemnicej vsxožu -/ Vnemli že, moščnaja Kiprida/ I vy, podzemnye Cari,/ I bogi groznago Aida,/ Kljanus' - do utrennej zari/ Moix vlastitelej želan'ja/ Ja sladostno utolju/ I vsemi tajnami lobzan'ja/ I divnoj nego/ itomlju -/ No tol'ko utrennej porfiroj/ Avrora večnaja blesnet/ Kljanus' - pod smertnoju sekiroj/ Glava sčastlivcev otpadet." (Trans. Gillon R. Aitken)

In fact the next-to-last stanza ("And look...") turns out to be a possible continuation to the Cleopatra poem that Puškin had worked on either in the late 1820's (according to Bondi)⁸ or as late as 1835 (according to Tomaševskij),⁹ but which one of his original editors, specifically Žukovskij in 1841, had

somewhat arbitrarily attached to the 1828 poem.¹⁰ By a 1929 edition of EN that stanza had been expunged from the work (Although it continues to appear in a footnote in the official edition as a possible continuation). Expunging this stanza ("And look...") from EN did not end the changes made to the last improvisation.

Bondi writes that among the differences that existed between the 1824 and the 1828 versions, the most significant was the transposition of Cleopatra's vow to the end of the poem, thus displacing the description of the three lovers from the end of the poem to the middle.¹¹ Until Tomaševskij's 1955 article "The Text of Puškin's Poem 'Cleopatra'" ("Tekst Stixotvorenija Puškina 'Kleopatra'") on this very subject, that was the order in which the reader received the second improvisation, i.e., the description of the three lovers (which ends with Cleopatra tenderly resting her gaze on the unnamed youth) comes as the fourth stanza and is immediately followed by her vow to cut off their heads in the morning (See Appendix C). Tomaševskij believed, however, that this arrangement of the verses was the result of yet another arbitrary decision by the first publisher of EN. Whereas Bondi characterizes this transposition as resulting from Puškin's decision (based upon his mark of transposition next to the stanza consisting of Cleopatra's vow), Tomaševskij argues that this transposition is an editorial misinterpretation of Puškin's intentions. His argument has essentially two facets to it: 1. if Puškin had really wanted to move the stanza in question to the end of the poem then he could have quite

easily written a second mark of transposition to indicate where the designated stanza should be moved to, but Puškin never did this; 2. the description of the three lovers provided a solid and enduring ending to the first poem, and Tomaševskij finds it difficult to comprehend why Puškin would want to forsake the sense of closure that that stanza provided by moving it to a position within the poem. Tomaševskij argues that Cleopatra's vow should be transposed not to the end of the poem, but rather to its beginning. In his ordering of the poem, the vow comes immediately after her offer and is subsequently followed by the reaction of the crowd and the acceptance of the three lovers, which then once again ends the poem with Cleopatra's tender and prolonged glance on the youth.¹² Tomaševskij's reasoning was accepted and all subsequent editions of EN and the 1828 poem reflect his ordering of the stanzas (See Appendix D).

The above represents an editorial history of the changes that have occurred to EN over the years. Equally important have been efforts to establish both a chronology for the various manifestations that the Cleopatra theme underwent over the years and a canon of those fragments that properly belong to and eventually culminated in EN. Before I do that, however, I would like to briefly address the changes that Tomaševskij ushered in from the perspective of what that implies about his manner of reading. Since in chapters three, four, and five I will be addressing Dostoevskij's, Brjusov's, and Gofman's manner of reading, I think it would be instructive to consider this question vis-a-vis Tomaševskij.

In chapter one, relying upon the work of Jurij Lotman, Wolfgang Iser and others, I described the reading process as an interaction between the text and reader in which the reader tries to mold the text and the text tries to mold the reader. In chapter three I will argue that it is Dostoevskij's understanding of *mig* as a critical moment for a character to decide upon whether to do good or evil that leads him to read Cleopatra's moment of wavering in precisely those terms. However, if we return to the ordering of the second improvisation that Dostoevskij knew, in which Cleopatra's tender glance at the youth is immediately followed by her ferocious vow to execute them, then we see that the text allowed Dostoevskij to interpret this brief moment of tenderness on the part of Cleopatra as a flickering of humanity which is quickly doused by the animalistic passion that characterizes her age. Tomaševskij, on the other hand, prefers to read the poem as a psychological portrait of Cleopatra. Such a reading does not make sense with what had become the traditional ordering of the stanzas, but it does make sense with the revised order that Tomaševskij suggests: Cleopatra's vow should come before the description of the three lovers, leaving the latter to end the poem with the long gaze of Cleopatra on the youth.¹³ For Tomaševskij this would provide an exquisite and psychologically intriguing moment and therefore be the perfect ending for the poem. O'Bell characterizes Tomaševskij's reading of EN as that of a person who consistently "read realistic cues where others would read romantic."¹⁴ I do not dispute Tomaševskij's scholarship on

the question at hand. However, I think it is evident that his manner of reading, i.e., to "read realistic cues" where others might not, led him to quite literally reshape the text to fit his perception of it. If we return briefly to Tomaševskij's argument we will see certain flaws in his logic. If Puškin had intended to transpose Cleopatra's vow to the end, he argues, then he could have easily placed a second mark of transposition to indicate that.¹⁵ Where Tomaševskij's logic fails is that this same line of reasoning would seem to be applicable to moving the stanza to the beginning; if Puškin had intended to move that stanza to the beginning, then he certainly could have easily placed a second mark of transposition to indicate that. Fortunately for him, Tomaševskij's argument did not depend strictly upon his faulty logic, but if we are to look for the genesis of his argument, then it seems clear to me that it is his manner of reading that led him in the direction that resulted in his 1955 article.

As I continue this survey of textologists' efforts to establish both the history and canonic form of EN, it would be well to keep in mind my comments concerning Tomaševskij. Textology is not a discipline in which purely technical matters are at issue. I argued above that Tomaševskij's ordering of the stanzas of "Cleopatra" was based at least as much upon his interpretation of the poem as it was on more technical questions such as the proper placement of a mark of transposition. The same is true for other textologists and their work. We will see that S. Bondi, for example, has a more limited

view as to which fragments and drafts belong to what we might term the EN cycle than does Leslie O'Bell. What lies at the heart of this matter is that they interpret EN differently. Bondi's interpretive strategies lead him to include fewer fragments within the EN cycle than would O'Bell's. Bondi and other textologists have played critical roles in forming the version of EN and the EN cycle that we read today. It can be said, then, that whereas readers attempt to reshape the text to fit their interpretive strategies and thus interact with the text on a metaphorical level, textologists provide us with examples of a literal interaction on the part of a reader with a text.

The Cleopatra theme is an idea that captivated Puškin periodically over a span of ten years. During that span of time this theme manifested itself in various forms and eventually culminated in EN. A great deal of effort has been expended to establish precisely which texts are linked to EN and thus comprise the EN cycle, and what their proper chronology should be. The EN cycle consists of those texts in which the Cleopatra theme is touched upon or which bear some other relationship to EN. Thus the prose fragment "Otryvok," for example, does not deal with the Cleopatra theme but its similarity to chapter one of EN have led some to conclude that it might be a variant of that chapter. As we shall see, it has not been an easy matter deciding precisely which texts should be considered as belonging to the EN cycle. A brief survey of the texts and the principal figures involved in this effort follows.

Annenkov in 1855 was the first to establish a history of EN. In addition he published a number of fragments that he believed were associated with the story and that had not been published yet. Puškin's attempts to incorporate the Cleopatra theme into a prose frame begin, Annenkov believes, with "The Guests Gathered at the Dacha" ("Gosti s"ezžalis' na daču"). After that came "Caesar was Traveling" ("Cesar' putešestvoval"), "We Spent an Evening at the Dacha" ("My provodili večer na dače"), "Fragment" ("Otryvok", i.e., "Nesmotrja na velikie preimuščestva"), and then eventually EN itself. Annenkov published as fragments related to EN, "Cesar' putešestvoval," "Im upravljaj staryj otpuščennik" and "Solnce klonilos' k zapadu" (The latter two are usually considered to be related to "Cesar' putešestvoval"). Annenkov believed that all of these prose fragments were written in 1835.¹⁶ P. I. Bartenev followed in Annenkov's footsteps by publishing in "Russian Archive" ("Russkij Arxiv") the fragment "Ah, tell us, tell us" ("Ax, razskažite, razskažite"), which is actually part of the fragment "My provodili večer na dače" although Bartenev did not recognize this at the time. With the exception of "Gosti . . .," the above fragments (including as well "My provodili... " and "Otryvok," both published posthumously by P. A. Pletnev) came to be published by P. O. Morozov in the latter part of the 19th century as "Preparatory Fragments" ("Podgotovitel'nye otryvki") to EN.¹⁷ However, as scholarship in Puškinian texts continued to progress, Annenkov's historical and publishing work with EN came under increasing criticism. V. E. Jakuškina wrote in

"Russkaja Starina" in 1884 that Annenkov mistakenly published the beginning of one fragment with the end of another and that Bartenev made similar errors in his publication of "Ax, razskazite, razskazite."¹⁸ Bondi added in his 1931 book that Annenkov was also mistaken to include "Gosti..." and "Cesar putešestvoval" among those fragments to be associated with EN.¹⁹

After Annenkov, Bondi represents the next formidable scholar of EN that other scholars must refer to. Bondi divides the works that can be associated with EN into three categories: 1. the poems on Cleopatra; 2. the fragment "My provodili ..." ("Ax, rasskazite, rasskazite" is included with this fragment); 3. the three chapters with the improviser, i.e., EN itself (This includes the fragment "Nesmotrja na velikie preimuščestva," which Bondi notes is usually considered to be a variant of the first chapter of EN).²⁰

Bondi's main concern with the above works is to establish a proper chronology. The first verses on Cleopatra were written in 1824, according to Bondi with due reference to the work of Ja. Bagdasar'janc on this matter.²¹ He dates the second poem on Cleopatra to 1827, acknowledging that a more conservative estimate would put it between 1827 and 1829. As far as the fragments "My provodili..." and the three prose chapters of EN are concerned Bondi asserts that one can only claim that they were written no earlier than 1834. The fragment "Nesmotrja..." Bondi observes, is usually dated as having been written in 1835. Previous to Bondi, most scholars held that it was written just before the three prose chapters

of EN and could even be considered as a rough draft for the first chapter. Bondi, however, disputes this. He asserts that the fragment was written "much earlier and without the least connection to the story about Cleopatra and her nights."²² Bondi, in fact, places "Nesmotrja..." as being written on September 26, 1830, during Puškin's Boldino autumn.²³ Its relation to EN is that Puškin returned to it around 1835 and considerably reworked it in order for it to serve as the beginning to his new prose story EN. Thus Bondi believes that the following chronology represents Puškin's occupation with the Cleopatra theme. In 1824 he writes the first poem on Cleopatra. In 1827 he rewrites the previous poem. In 1835 he returns to the Cleopatra theme but this time with the intention to insert it in a prose frame. He begins "My provodili..." but then abandons it and begins a new prose story, the three chapters of EN. For the characterization of Čarskij, Puškin reworks the fragment "Nesmotrja..." (1830) and uses it as the basis for the first chapter of the new story. This, then, stood as the authoritative history of EN for some time.²⁴ EN, however, has been, in many respects, a work in progress. Its history, and even form, have been adjusted or added to as different scholars have continued to examine it. I have already mentioned Tomaševskij's article of 1955, which resulted in changes for the second improvisation. The next significant step in establishing the history of EN came in the early 1980's with Leslie O'Bell's book *Pushkin's Egyptian Nights*.

O'Bell agrees with Bondi that the Cleopatra theme is first given life in the 1824 poem and that Puškin first returns to it in 1828 (Bondi put the second poem at 1827) and considerably reworks the earlier poem. O'Bell diverges from Bondi, however, disputing his opinion that 1835 represents the next stage in the development of the Cleopatra theme into EN. For her, 1828 remains a significant year beyond Puškin's rewriting of the 1824 poem. 1828 is when the fragment "Gosti..." was written and thus represents the first instance in which a prose narrative bears some significance for the Cleopatra theme. Bondi discounted the idea that "Gosti..." belongs to the development of EN. O'Bell agrees that there is no proof that the 1828 poem was intended for "Gosti...". However, O'Bell notes a link between "Gosti..." and "My provodili...", which itself is unquestionably linked to EN. Furthermore, O'Bell points out that the opening of "Gosti..." is strikingly similar to the physical setting of Cleopatra's feast in the 1828 poem and that the heroine of "Gosti...", Vol'skaja, "is certainly related to Cleopatra." With "Gosti...", O'Bell sees the Cleopatra theme developing "along the lines of biography and social criticism."²⁵

In 1830 Puškin returns to "Gosti..." to add some new dialogue. In this new dialogue we see the first reference to Egypt in a prose setting. The reference is not to Egyptian nights but to Egyptian tombs. For O'Bell this dead Egypt "is the negative element into which the story of 1835 is plunged."²⁶ Puškin returns to the Cleopatra theme in 1833 when he begins work on "Cesar putešestvoval." Bondi disputes that

this fragment belongs to the EN cycle, but for O'Bell the inclusion of the Cleopatra theme is plain. The difference is that it has lost "plot value" for the fragment and instead has become the topic of philosophical discourse. The Cleopatra theme regains its plot value when Puškin begins work on "My provodili..." in 1835. Puškin also starts to rewrite the 1828 Cleopatra poem for the purpose of including it in "My provodili..." but neither the verses nor the prose fragment progressed very far. Shortly after abandoning "My provodili..." Puškin began work on EN. Thus, O'Bell describes a creative process which is episodic, but by no means with the lengthy gaps that Bondi supposed. He provides a chronology which postulates that Puškin worked on the Cleopatra theme in 1824 and 1827 and then finally returned to it in 1835. O'Bell, on the other hand, includes two fragments that Bondi purposely excludes and thereby sees a chronology in which the creative work flows from 1824 to 1828 to 1830 to 1833 and finally to 1835.

From establishing the main outline of the text's editorial history we must now turn to reviewing the reception that the text of EN has received over the years. Dostoevskij, Brjusov and Gofman represent a broad part of that reception, from the 1860's to the 1930's. Moreover, they are representative of the neo-romantic reception of EN that was prevalent in the 19th century. When Gofman was writing his completion to EN in the 1930's, a new pattern of reception had already developed and largely taken over. This was a realistic reception of the work. It is to some of the other readers of EN

that I now want to turn.

The reception of any given work differs from reader to reader. This is one of the reasons for the growth of the reader-response criticism of the last few years. However, no man is an island. A better image is to picture each individual as a branch spreading out from a tree. The trunk of the tree represents the shared cultural, religious and social heritage of the branches. Thus, each individual reception is also part of a larger trend. I have already written that in relation to EN I see two primary trends in reception, a romantic and a realistic trend. It is the former that I first wish to address.

The three most important readers of EN within the romantic trend are Annenkov, Dostoevskij, and Brjusov. Since the latter two are a major focus of this dissertation they will only be cursorily mentioned in this section. If there is a pattern in their reading that links the individuals that fall within the romantic reception, it is that they begin with the Cleopatra poem and work backwards to the narrative. In other words, the poem reigns, as Cleopatra herself once did in Egypt, over the rest of the work. As we shall see later, this pattern of reception did not maintain itself in the 20th century.

Vissarion Belinskij was probably the first to give critical acclaim to Puškin's unfinished work. As with most things in Russian letters, the romantic tradition of scholarship on EN begins with Belinskij. He acclaimed EN, along with "The Bronze Horseman" and "Galub," as one of Puškin's greatest

works.²⁷ However, it is Puškin's first biographer, Annenkov, who is considered to be the "founder of studies on Puškin"²⁸ and whose commentary on EN became the first standard by which all readers since have judged or compared their own interpretations.

It was Annenkov's opinion that Puškin was attempting to produce a "strong romantic effect" in the contrast between the ancient and contemporary worlds that he depicts in EN.²⁹ Cleopatra and the selling of her love for the price of one's life were meant as a commentary on the mores of contemporary society.

Annenkov, however, did not feel that Puškin's sole aim in this contrast between Cleopatra's Egypt and contemporary St. Petersburg was to create a strong romantic effect. Puškin's other intention, and perhaps more significant one, was to show the false attitude to death that existed in the pagan world of Antiquity. Annenkov bases this not upon the text of EN, but upon an earlier related fragment ("Cesar' putešestvoval") which Annenkov includes as belonging to the whole idea of EN. Puškin begins this fragment with a description of the way of life ("byt") of Alexandria. This and the consistent thematic interest in death that was present in all the various fragments that are connected to Cleopatra and EN convince Annenkov that the false pagan attitude to death is meant to be compared with the Christian perspective.³⁰ Annenkov cites the insertion of a Christian slave in the fragment "Cesar' putešestvoval" as evidence for this comparison. As I mentioned earlier, Annenkov published this fragment

in his 1855 book *Materials for a Biography* (*Materialy dlja biografii*).

Annenkov's observation is specifically related to the above fragment and not to EN, however it is also clear that he has a broad definition of what constitutes EN. For him the idea of EN began in 1825 with the first Cleopatra poem. Every related text that followed can be thought of, by Annenkov's definition, as an idea of EN, even though the prose narrative by that name was not begun until 1835. Thus, even though there is no Christian slave in EN, Annenkov's implication is that the comparison in attitudes to death is at least implicit in EN as well. Moreover Annenkov is not the only one to see that Puškin intended to draw a similar comparison in the latter story. Dostoevskij, for one, had a very religious reading of the text, which I will discuss in greater depth in the chapter on Dostevskij. Annenkov's depiction of death as a major theme in EN reflects the dominance that the Cleopatra poem has in his reading of the work. It is an emphasis that is shared among other readers in the nineteenth century but which is devalued as the realistic trend in criticism takes over in the twentieth century.

The next serious wave of interest in EN began with the rise of decadent and symbolist poetry in Russia at the turn of the century. Valerij Brjusov is of course the most famous reader of the story from the period of decadence and symbolism. He placed an emphasis in both his article and his adaptation of "Cleopatra" on the three nights of love each followed by a morning of death. This proximity of death and

bliss did not go unnoticed by other symbolist readers of Puškin either.

Merežkovskij likens this closeness of death and bliss to such "a fullness of life" that it is "liberated from good and evil."³¹ Indeed, passion is celebrated in this work for the fact that it can free the soul from the "limits of human nature." Cleopatra acknowledges that at this moment these three men who accept her challenge are acting "like gods" by maintaining a solemn visage, crossed only by a smile of tenderness.³² Geršenzon, writing in 1919, also sees passion as playing a pivotal role. Not only does passion inspire these men to transcend their human limits but Puškin would rush to join them, running to the fateful urn in order to take part.³³

Where Annenkov has seen Puškin's treatment of death in *EN* as evidence of condemnation of a pagan world view, Merežkovskij sees that same treatment as a celebration. These three men by their actions have transcended human limitations. Cleopatra's smile of tenderness illustrates her appreciation of the magnitude of their feat. It is that same smile which sends Dostoevskij into a religious rapture. There is no question that they are seeing the same things but they are understanding them in very different ways. C. S. Lewis once said much the same thing about himself and Dr. Leavis: "It is not that he and I see different things when we look at *Paradise Lost*. He sees and hates the very same things that I see and love."³⁴ What these differences reflect about the reader and the original text are part and parcel of this dissertation. Their general interest in death and passion and

the weight that the Cleopatra poem bears in their interpretations identifies all of them as belonging to the general trend of romantic criticism. However, their individual differences begin to show when they focus on a moment, such as the instant of Cleopatra's smile. As I indicated in the first chapter it is the concept of the moment which contributes significantly to how the individual readings of Dostoevskij, Brjusov and Gofman are shaped. In the above we have seen how the moment of death and the moment of Cleopatra's smile have received different treatments from readers who otherwise share a kinship in literary-cultural terms. The orientation that the above readers shared, to start with the Cleopatra poem and work backwards to the narrative, did not maintain itself in the 20th century. As our century progressed readers began to approach the work from the narrative first, leading forward to the second improvisation. This is the realistic trend in the reception of EN.

P. I. Novickij published EN in 1921 along with commentary. In his commentary he stated that EN is a novel on the theme of the poet and the mob.³⁵ Novickij does make a distinction between the terms "society" and "life". Life can and does give themes to the poet who must then strive to make these his own,³⁶ but society can only be an oppressive force. Society in fact is equivalent to "byt" and art must be used in rebellion against both.³⁷

The isolation from society that Puškin saw as necessary for the poet, according to Novickij, prompted thoughts of death.³⁸ The three suitors of Cleopatra, by accepting her

challenge, show that they have overcome the fear of death.³⁹ Thus, the theme of this part of EN revolves around the value of an individual life and the overcoming of the fear of the end of that life. This, then, is how Novickij progresses forward from the prose to the poetry. The prose section is about the poet's rebellion against and isolation from society. Art is the vehicle by which the poet attempts to fight the oppressive nature of society/byt. However, the need for isolation from society also prompts thoughts of death. In this view, the poem of Cleopatra becomes an expression of the poet conquering the fear of death that lives within him in his isolation from society.⁴⁰

In his 1941 book *Puškin and World Literature* (*Puškin i mirovaja literatura*), I. Nusinov articulates an argument that EN is structured around four contrasts: 1. the contrast between Antiquity and contemporary St. Petersburg; 2. the contrast of the poet and the crowd; 3. the contrast of the poet-aristocrat and the poet-plebian; 4. the contrast of the poet himself between the moment of inspiration and the moment when he is without inspiration.⁴¹

Of the four contrasts Nusinov coalesces the first three into their similarities. The court of Cleopatra and St. Petersburg are bound by the vapidness and meaninglessness of their existence. The poet and the crowd remain distinct and cut off from one another. Nevertheless, Čarskij is bound to society to the extent that he is unable to rebel against it. Finally, despite the external differences between Čarskij and the improviser they are united by their common calling as

poets.⁴²

The last contrast becomes the key and unifying factor. The acceptance of Cleopatra's challenge by the three men is a rebellion against the oppressive emptiness of their world. Similarly, the improvization represents the poet's rebellion against his world. But in both cases the rebellion is only for a moment (*na mig*). Flavius, Crito and the youth escape the limits of their lives only for a night. The inspiration of the improviser lasts for only the briefest of moments, after which the poet must again fall from the "heights of poetry to below the clerk's counter." Both of these rebellions unite to suggest a work that is an "expression of protest against those" who live contented with this world.⁴³ Despite the differences in Novickij's and Nusinov's interpretations I think they reveal a shared orientation in their reading. Novickij progresses from the poet's isolation to a fear of death which the Cleopatra poem then serves as an attempt by the poet to overcome that fear. Similarly, Nusinov follows a path that begins with the themes that can be identified in the prose narrative, i.e., the isolation and rebellion of the poet from society, and which leads to a reading of the actions of the three men in the Cleopatra poem as being acts of rebellion.

As the tendency to proceed from the narrative forward to the second improvisation becomes more pronounced, so too does the inclination to read EN as a metapoetical work. The thematic significance of the Cleopatra poem seems to grow less and less important. A case in point is Ralph E. Matlaw's 1955

article "Poetry and the Poet in Romantic Society as Reflected in *Egyptian Nights*." Matlaw determines that there are three themes in EN: 1. the relation of the poet to the crowd; 2. the creative experience or moment; 3. the difference between the exotic (Alexandrian) past and contemporary society.⁴⁴ In Matlaw's reading the poetry seems to serve merely as an echo of the themes already developed in the narrative. This is something of a reverse mirror image of Brjusov's reading in which he states that it is the narrative which serves to reflect the events in the poem. Specifically, Matlaw describes Cleopatra's attitude as "fundamentally poetic" and the crowd's reaction to it as evidence of their inability to appreciate the "higher pleasures."⁴⁵ Significantly, Matlaw acknowledges that the subject matter of the Cleopatra poem is different from that of the narrative but then immediately dismisses that as unimportant. Matlaw's summary confirms the weight that the narrative bears in his interpretation: EN is a "statement about poetry and a protest against the society that forced a particular position on the poet."⁴⁶

N. N. Petrunina emphasizes the social implications of the division between poet and society. She examines the relevance of the Russian short stories of the 1830's to EN. In this connection Petrunina saw a great deal of interest in Odoevskij's "Johan Sebastian Bach" and "Improvizator," Polevoj's "The Painter" ("Živopisec") and Gogol's "The Portrait" ("Portret"). The common theme of the artist and his art binds these stories. In each of them there is an opposition between two different artists. But whereas in

Odoevskij's "Improvizator," for example, the improviser's skill and ease at forming verses makes him something of cheap magician, in Puškin the opposition of two artists is not meant to show the falseness of one compared to the other but rather to show the common link that binds artists of different talents.⁴⁷ Puškin's improviser is there to demonstrate the artistic freedom that exists even for an artist dependent upon the crowd for both money and themes. For Petrunina, Puškin is exploring "the border between a true creator and a literary type for sale."⁴⁸ This go-between of rejection of and dependence on society posits a dual existence for the artist which Petrunina suggests is the primary conflict and interest in EN. Less than a picture of inner division, it is more a picture of the social rupture the artist must endure.⁴⁹ Her manner of reading has relegated the Cleopatra poem to serving as proof of the improviser's ability to create despite his dependence upon society.

L. S. Sidjakov is adamant about the significance that should be placed on the prose narrative. For him the social level of the story, in which the artist is depicted in a society hostile to art, is the only realistic path of study that one can take with this story.⁵⁰ In his 1962 article "Towards a Study of *Egyptian Nights*" ("K izučeniju *Egipetskix nočej*"), Sidjakov does not touch upon the significance of the Cleopatra poem but rather deals strictly with the prose narrative. Like Matlaw before him, he sees the overriding theme in the position of the poet within society. And like other scholars as well, Sidjakov supports his argument by resorting

to an examination of other Puškin works that involve the same theme. Sidjakov invokes the cycle of poems on the poet, such as "Poèt i tolpa," but he finds special significance in "Otryvok" and "Otvèt anonimu." "Otryvok" is the foundation for the character of Čarskij and broaches the dual nature of the poet that is then more fully explored in EN. "Otvèt anonimu" addresses the "loneliness of the poet in society" and is yet another lyrical expression within Puškin's cycle on poetry and the poet.⁵¹ Moreover, since "Otvèt anonimu" was written a month before "Otryvok" and since both touch upon a similar topic, Sidjakov feels that the latter should probably be viewed as a development in prose of the former.⁵²

Like Petrunina, Sidjakov comments upon the relationship of the romantic prose stories on the poet that were prevalent in the 1830's. Sidjakov also sees this comparison as illustrating the realism of Puškin. Whereas the other stories tend to present "idealized images" of the poet, EN underscores the gritty reality that is the poet's constant companion.⁵³ Thus the thematic issues of Puškin's cycle on the poet are transferred to a prose environment but one which retains the lyric essence of its poetic progenitor. This style of a lyrical prose would later be cause for Sidjakov to label EN as experimental in nature, an example of Puškin's search for a new prose style.⁵⁴

I close this section with Paul Debreczeny. He is not quite as unequivocal as Sidjakov, but he too continues the trend in 20th-century criticism to emphasize the narrative in EN. He acknowledges that if it had been continued EN might

well have become a novel in which "the mores of contemporary society" were explored but that since this did not occur Debreczeny feels, like Sidjakov, that the themes of the narrative are a more proper area of study.⁵⁵ Thus, Debreczeny represents a logical extension of the reading pattern of EN that developed in the 20th century. For 19th century readers the Cleopatra poem was the paramount feature in EN. In many cases it seemed to overwhelm the prose narrative and to blind the readers to the potential inherent within the three prose chapters. In the 20th century the reception of the work changed. At first this meant simply a new orientation, in which the reader interpreted the Cleopatra poem based upon the preceding prose frame. From there it progressed to more recent suggestions that the prose narrative, in fact, is the most valid object of study.

My point with the above has been to not only present a necessary review of the important scholarship on EN, but also to demonstrate how this scholarship reflects the manner of reading of the subject. Comments by the most recent critics reveal a rejection of the mode of reading Puškin that was prevalent in the 19th century. For example, Wiktor Weintraub argues that EN is "in opposition to the whole preceding romantic tradition."⁵⁶ Victor Terras proposes the view that Puškin may have been "on his way to full-fledged romanticism"⁵⁷ but that a "check of the features of Puškin's œuvre shows that his worldview was not essentially romantic,..."⁵⁸ Indeed, if Puškin has been thought of as a romantic it is only because romantic critics, like Annenkov, Belinsky,

Grigoriev and Dostoevsky, have "projected their own attitudes upon his work."⁵⁹ Terras' and Weintraub's comments reveal an awareness of the manner of reading of their 19th century predecessors and an unawareness of their own. By claiming that romantic critics have "projected" their views onto the works they interpreted, Terras's unwritten assumption is that he, of course, is not guilty of the same indiscretion. It is precisely this casual assumption of objectivity which I found questionable in the introductory chapter. Such an assumption is tantamount to ignoring one's own manner of reading. It is an assumption that wishes to make the claim that whereas others' mode of reading may have led them astray, it is not true in the present case. I hope in my review of the literature on EN I have shown that the manner of reading is always a relevant factor in the interpretation of the reader.

- ¹ E. I. Ryskin. Žurnal A. S. Puškina Sovremennik 1836-1837 (Moskva: Kniga, 1967), p. 22.
- ² S. Bondi. Novye Stranicy Puškina (Moskva: Mir, 1931), p. 192.
- ³ P. I. Novickij. Egipetskie Noči (Leningrad: Academia, 1927), pp. 21-22.
- ⁴ Bondi, pp. 195-196.
- ⁵ Ibid, p. 192.
- ⁶ El'vira Čirpak-Rozdina. "'Egipetskie noči' A. S. Puškina" in Studia Slavica XIX (N° 4, 1973), p. 388.
- ⁷ M. Gofman. "'Kleopatra' i 'Egipetskie noči'" in Sovremennye Zapiski XIII (1922), p. 170.
- ⁸ Bondi p. 178.
- ⁹ B. V. Tomaševskij. "Tekst Stixotvorenija Puškina 'Kleopatra'". Učenyje Zapiski LGU N° 200 (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1955), pp. 221-222.
- ¹⁰ B. V. Tomaševskij. Puškin. Kniga vtoraja, materialy k monografii (1824-1837) (Moskva-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo akademii nauk SSSR, 1961), pp. 62-63.
- ¹¹ Bondi, p. 178.
- ¹² Tomaševskij, "Tekst... ", pp. 225-226.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Leslie O'Bell. Pushkin's Egyptian Nights (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984), p. 71.
- ¹⁵ Tomaševskij, "Tekst...", p. 225.
- ¹⁶ P. V. Annenkov. Materialy dlja biografii A. S. Puškina (Sankt-Peterburg: Annenkov, 1855), pp. 394-396. See also Bondi, pp. 150-151.
- ¹⁷ P. O. Morozov. Sočinenija i pis'ma A. S. Puškina (Sankt-Peterburg: Prosveščenie, 1903), pp. 538-549.
- ¹⁸ Gofman, "'Kleopatra'", p. 173.
- ¹⁹ Bondi, p. 151.
- ²⁰ Ibid, p. 153.
- ²¹ Ibid, p. 156. See also Ja. Bagdasar'janc "K istorii teksta 'Egipetskix nočej'" in Puškin. Stat'i i materialy, ed. M. P. Alekseev (Odessa: Odesskij dom učen'nyx, 1925), p. 89.
- ²² Ibid, pp. 197-198.
- ²³ Ibid, p. 199.
- ²⁴ Ibid, pp. 202-205.
- ²⁵ O'Bell, pp. 39-40. The character Vol'skaja is based on Agrafena Fedorovna Zakrevskaja, a woman Puškin was fascinated with. O'Bell reminds us that in 1828 Puškin also wrote two poems "The Portrait" and "The Confidant" about Zakrevskaja (p. 37).
- ²⁶ Ibid, p. 58.
- ²⁷ V. G. Belinskij. Sočinenija Aleksandra Puškina (Moskva: Prosveščenie, 1961), p. 433.

- ²⁸ B. V. Tomaševskij Puškin. Kniga vtoraja, materialy k monografii (1824-1837) (Moskva-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo akademii nauk SSSR, 1961), p. 450.
- ²⁹ Annenkov, p. 394.
- ³⁰ Ibid, p. 396.
- ³¹ D. S. Merežkovskij. Večnye sputniki (S.-Peterburg: Obščestvennaja Pol'za, 1910), p. 314.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ M. Geršenzon. Mudrost' Puškina (Moskva: Knigoizdatel'stvo pisatelej, 1919), p. 44.
- ³⁴ C. S. Lewis. A Preface to Paradise Lost (London, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 134.
- ³⁵ Novickij, p. 50.
- ³⁶ Ibid., p. 66.
- ³⁷ Ibid., p. 70.
- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 63.
- ³⁹ Ibid., p. 78.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ I. Nusinov. Puškin i mirovaja literatura (Moskva: Sovetskij pisatel', 1941), p. 327.
- ⁴² Ibid., pp. 346-347.
- ⁴³ Ibid., p. 348.
- ⁴⁴ Ralph Matlaw. "Poetry and the Poet in Romantic Society as Reflected in Pushkin's *Egyptian Nights*" in The Slavonic and East European Review 33 (1954-55), p. 103.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 113.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 118-119.
- ⁴⁷ N. N. Petrunina. "'Egipetskie noči' i russkaja povest' 1830-x godov" in Puškin: Issledovanija i materialy, IV (Moskva and Leningrad: Akademija Nauk SSSR, 1962), p. 42.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 41.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 50.
- ⁵⁰ L. S. Sidjakov. "K izučeniju 'Egipetskix nočej'" in Puškin: Issledovanija i materialy, IV (Moskva and Leningrad: Akademija Nauk SSSR, 1962), p. 174.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., p. 176.
- ⁵² Ibid., p. 175.
- ⁵³ Ibid., p. 179.
- ⁵⁴ L. S. Sidjakov. Xudožestvennaja proza A. S. Puškina (Riga: Redakcionno-izdatel'skij otdel lgu im. petra stučki, 1973), p. 55.
- ⁵⁵ Paul Debreczeny. The Other Pushkin (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1983), p. 293.
- ⁵⁶ Viktor Weintraub. "The Problem of Improvisation in Romantic Literature" in Comparative Literature, XVI (1964), p. 137.

⁵⁷ Victor Terras. "Puškin and Romanticism" in Alexander Puškin Symposium II, ed. Andrej Kotjak, Krystyna Pomorska, and Kiril Taranovsky (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, Inc., 1980), p. 56.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 51.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 52.

Chapter III

Transcending the Moment: Dostoevskij on Puškin

Dostoevskij is the first in the history of Russian Puškin studies to understand that "Egyptian Nights" contains within itself a profound meaning.

V. Kirpotin

Tomaševskij points out that Puškin was often slighted for a perceived lack of ideas in his work.¹ Since "ideas" came to occupy an increasingly central place in Russian literature of the 19th century Puškin admirers deemed it necessary to attribute profundity to Puškin. Tomaševskij sees Dostoevskij's 1880 speech on Puškin in this light, as an attempt to depict Puškin as a great thinker. That Dostoevskij wrote his speech with the intent of rehabilitating Puškin as a profound and original mind is not to be doubted. After all, the only thing that Dostoevskij wishes to add to Gogol's description of Puškin as an "exceptional and perhaps unique phenomenon of the Russian soul" is the word "prophetic."² This comes at the very beginning of his 1880 speech and sets the tone for its entirety. The speech itself has been perceived as the crystalization of Dostoevskij's thoughts on Puškin. In many respects it has eclipsed everything else that Dostoevskij wrote about Puškin. However, Dostoevskij wrote about Puškin well before his famous speech. It is to one of

those earlier writings that I now wish to turn.

In 1861 appeared in the journal "Vremja" an anonymous article entitled "Otvét Russkomu Vestniku." This article has been attributed to Dostoevskij. 1861 is considerably before Dostoevskij's most fruitful period as a novelist. Although anonymous, the article contains passages in it which are later paraphrased in the 1880 speech with very similar wording. This enables us to attribute its authorship to Dostoevskij. In the 1861 article Dostoevskij refers to the society of Cleopatra as one without faith ("Uže utračena vsjakaja vera;"), with no hope in the future ("V buduščem net ničego;") and in which the most monstrous inclinations and abnormal phenomena became normal ("Samye čudoviščnye uklo-nenija, samye nenormal'nye javlenija stanovjatsja malo-pomalu obyknovennymi"). Over this society rules a Cleopatra beset by the spiritual malaise of boredom ("Ej teper' skučno") and who hides within her the soul of a spider that would consume its own mate in the moment of their joining ("... v prekrasnom tele ee kroetsja duša mračno-fantastičeskogo, strašnogo gada: èto duša pauka, samka ktorogo s"edaet, govorjat, svoego samca v minutu svoej s nim sxodki.").

In his 1880 speech, Dostoevskij rephrases the above in the following fashion:

"And look at antiquity, look at "Egyptian Nights," look at those earthly gods, who saddled their own people with gods, who disdained the people's genius and its aspirations, who no longer believed in it [people's genius], who had really become isolated gods, and having become mad in their own solitude, in their deathly boredom and melancholy, they amused themselves with unbelievable atrocities, with the voluptuousness of insects, with the voluptuousness of a female spider that devours its mate."

"A vot i drevnij mir, vot Egipetskie Noči, vot èti zemnye bogi, sevšie nad narodom svoim bogami, užè prezirajuščie genij narodnyj i stremlenija ego, užè ne verujuščie v nego bolee, stavšie vprjam' uedinennymi bogami i obezumevšie v ot"edinenii svoem, v predsmertnoj skuke i toske tešaščie sebja fantastičeskimi zverstvami, sladostrastiem nasekomyx, sladostrastiem paukovoju samku s"edajuščej svoego samca (ed. my italics)."

The above similarities between the 1861 article and the 1880 speech have assisted scholars, for example, V. Komarovič, in coming to the conclusion that the 1861 article should be attributed to Dostoevskij.³ The article shows the depth of Dostoevskij's thinking about Puškin and EN. Moreover, since it was written before his famous novels, it offers us the opportunity of observing the influence of Dostoevskij's reading on his later novels.

The 1861 article was prompted by a column written by Katkov, editor of the journal *The Russian Herald* (*Ruskij Vestnik*), in which he pilloried EN. As I mentioned in the beginning, Puškin had fallen into disrepute by this time. The attacks by the political left, for example, Pisarev, on him are well known. The Slavophiles, however, also joined in the attack and Katkov was, in Kirpotin's words, "the most evil ideologue" of the reactionaries.⁴

Katkov's complaints about EN were essentially two: firstly that the incomplete nature of the text prevented one from discovering any idea or inner sense in it, and secondly, Katkov considered EN to be nothing less than a pornographic work.⁵ Both complaints fall into the context of seeing Puškin as a poet without ideas. In his reply to these accusations Dostoevskij argues forcefully that EN is an artistic whole

with a well defined and identifiable idea. What Katkov saw as pornography, Dostoevskij viewed as essential to the presentation of the idea of the work. Indeed, this was not the first dispute between Katkov and Dostoevskij on the subject of ideas and their manifestation in Russia. Their argument went beyond literature to include the state of the Russian people and Russian culture. Katkov at one time criticized the level of Russian science. Dostoevskij responded that if science was insufficiently developed in Russia, one of the reasons was probably the existence of public figures such as Katkov, "who are pushing Russian scientists in the direction of imitative dilettantism."⁶ On yet another occasion Katkov asked the question "What is Russian literature, Russian art, Russian thought?" The implication of his question ("Čto takoe russkaja literatura, russkoe iskusstvo, russkaja mysl'?") is that they do not exist to any meaningful degree. Dostoevskij, of course, disagreed and argued vehemently that Russian thought was richly reflected in Russian literature and that Russian literature began with Puškin.⁷ Thus, it is clear that the context of Dostoevskij's response to Katkov's comments on EN comprises larger dimensions than EN per se. Dostoevskij is placing his faith in the greatness of Russian thought, culture, and literature all on Puškin, making him its guarantor.

The above has helped to clarify the social and intellectual environment and context within which Dostoevskij wrote his article. But that is only a part of the picture. The argument that Dostoevskij gives in his article also betrays much about his manner of reading. Specifically, I would like

to point out Dostoevskij's emphasis on the *moment*. It is the concept of *mig* and how it is reflected in Dostoevskij's interpretation of EN that will, in turn, reflect upon Dostoevskij and his codes as a reader. As I have already stated, reading in this dissertation is perceived as an interaction between reader and text. It is my contention that the concept of *mig* is at least one point of intersection around which the codes of the text and those of Dostoevskij revolve. Thus *mig*, as best we can discern it in EN and Dostoevskij's interpretation of EN, is a point through which we will travel to explore both Puškin and Dostoevskij.

In his essay, Dostoevskij focuses on the *moment* in two senses. He thinks that it is not inconsequential that Puškin should write about Cleopatra, whose reign effectively falls between the Ancient world and the new Christian era. He emphasizes that Puškin's artistic problem in EN is the presentation of a single historical moment: "Puškinu imenno bylo zadačej (...) predstavit' moment rimskoj žizni, i tol'ko odin moment,..."⁹ It is a moment of history in which the old order was crumbling but a new one had yet to arise. Consequently, people were without faith of any sort and their lives were meaningless: "uže utračena vsjakaja vera... žizn' zadyxaetsja bez celi. V buduščem net ničego; nado trebovat' vsego u nastojaščego... Vse uxodit v telo..."⁹

Before continuing the discussion about Dostoevskij, it might be helpful to understand why Puškin was interested in this historical moment. It would perhaps be informative to begin from the beginning, from what is generally regarded to

be the source and inspiration behind the Cleopatra poem. Puškin is well known for his avid interest in Latin poetry and history. One of his favorite readings was the Latin historian Tacitus, who, Puškin wrote, made him feel more kindly disposed to the Roman emperor Tiberius.¹⁰ However, it was not Tacitus that proved to be the historical source that inspired the Cleopatra poem. Rather, it was Aurelius Victor, who has been graciously described as being "far from the first rank of literary giants."¹¹ Aurelius Victor is best known for his biography of the Roman emperors entitled *The Caesars*. Perhaps it was this work which first attracted Puškin's attention, for in it Victor wrote that a tyrant attacks a literary work in vain because such attacks will only increase the praise for the work and the tyrant himself will be condemned.¹² Certainly this is a position that Puškin would have sympathized with. However, it was not *The Caesars* but another work of Victor's, *De viris illustribus*, in which Puškin found an account of Cleopatra. What Puškin read was little more than a one line anecdote which said that Cleopatra "was so lustful that she often prostituted herself and so beautiful that many men paid with their lives for a night with her."¹³

From this anecdote sprang Puškin's first attempt to write on this theme, namely the 1824 poem "Cleopatra." In the 1824 poem and the subsequent 1828 revision of it, the time frame is strictly within Antiquity. It is only with the first halting steps to connect this theme with a prose frame that we see a deliberate attempt to address this theme within a

contemporary setting. I have already noted the relevant prose fragments. One is the 1828 fragment, "The guests gathered at the dacha." In this fragment Cleopatra's feast is "displaced by society occasions"¹⁴ and Cleopatra herself is replaced by the character Vol'skaja. Like Cleopatra, Vol'skaja "fell into a reverie" and her "appearance enlivened society";¹⁵ she also chose her own lovers. In 1834 came the fragment "We spent an evening at a dacha" in which the Cleopatra conditions, a night of love for the price of one's life, were played out in contemporary St. Petersburg. Later in 1834 came EN itself. A Cleopatra figure is only hinted at in EN in the form of a young beauty who fearlessly selects from the urn the Cleopatra theme for the Italian improviser. Nevertheless, the parallels in EN between the description of the hall in St. Petersburg where the Italian improviser performs and Cleopatra's hall in the improvisation scene, between the guests gathered to hear the performance and those gathered to attend Cleopatra, and between the role that an urn plays in St. Petersburg (the theme of the improvisation is chosen by picking lots from an urn) and in the improvisation itself (the order of the lovers is chosen by lots drawn from an urn) all suggest that there is a link between Cleopatra's time and the present.

Returning to Dostoevskij, there can be little question that EN draws a parallel between the period of Cleopatra and contemporary St. Petersburg society. Dostoevskij was not the first nor the last to make such an observation. But what is most interesting is how his observation is revealing about

both the text and his manner of reading. Dostoevskij emphasizes that Cleopatra's is a time bereft of moral guidance. Having lost their connection with the past and without any faith in the future, the people of Cleopatra's time must live in the present. One symptom of this is that worship of the body and physical passion replace spiritual worship. What Dostoevskij is essentially describing is a period of decadence. It would be difficult to deny the above as a legitimate characterization of that historical period or that this reality was lost on Puškin. Furthermore, it would be difficult to reject the supposition, implicit in Dostoevsky's view, that by injecting an account of an historical period of decadence into a story of contemporary St. Petersburg, Puškin is suggesting that he is living in yet another period of decadence. Dostoevskij's emphasis on the significance of this historical moment for EN is justified by Puškin's text and the other related fragments. However, this particular aspect of Dostoevskij's reading is also shaped by the context of Dostoevskij's own time.

As V. Kirpotin points out, Dostoevskij saw his society as being in a time of crisis not unlike that of ancient Rome, a parallel which socialists such as Herzen, Černyševskij and Saltykov-Ščedrin were also proclaiming in various articles. Whereas they hoped for a transition to a socialist society Dostoevskij believed in an answer with deeper historical roots. The solution for the crisis in contemporary Russian society could be found in the answer that already Ancient Rome had turned to: that of Christianity.¹⁶ In other words,

the significance that Dostoevskij sees in the particular historical moment that Puškin chose for EN also had its echo in the contemporary situation in Russia as Dostoevskij understood it. The transparency of this ahistorical approach in Dostoevskij's readings of Puškin led Tomaševskij to accuse him of viewing Aleko and Onegin as products of his own time and not Puškin's.¹⁷ If Dostoevskij were here to defend himself he would no doubt argue that he was led in the direction he followed by the text: he would not be altogether wrong. I illustrated earlier that Puškin did mean to draw a parallel between his society and that of Cleopatra's and that it is unlikely that the fact that Cleopatra's was a society at a moment of historical eclipse could have been an incidental point for him. Where Dostoevskij's personal codes most clearly imprint themselves on his interpretation is his suggestion that Christianity is the answer that Puškin was offering to his contemporaries. Does EN justify this at all?

If we refer back to Puškin's prose fragment "A Tale of Roman Life" we will note that it is set during the time of Nero and had possibly been intended as a frame for the Cleopatra poem. In this fragment Puškin strongly contrasted, in Annenkov's opinion, Christianity with Roman paganism by inserting the figure of a Christian slave. Annenkov noted as well in the same book that "Western legendary poetry" appealed to Pushkin for its "religious content."¹⁸ Furthermore, Puškin, not Dostoevskij, once wrote that Christianity is "the great spiritual and political upheaval of our planet."¹⁹ However, this is still not sufficient. I

have shown that both the text and his contemporary situation led Dostoevskij to conclude that the particular historical period that Cleopatra represents was significant to the meaning of EN. His further extrapolation that Puškin was proposing Christianity as an answer to the decadence of both Rome and St. Petersburg is manifestly influenced by Dostoevskij's own time; Christianity was the answer that Dostoevskij believed the Russia of his time must turn to. With this turn in his interpretation, it is easy to say that Dostoevskij is shaping the text to fit his world view. Nevertheless, I have pointed out at least one textual reference in the "EN cycle" that gives at least some support to his interpretation. Perhaps the text allowed him to shape it to this extent. To answer that we need to consider further the question of Puškin and Christianity.

A. M. Pančenko wrote in a 1990 article entitled "Puškin i russkoe pravoslavie" that the theme of Puškin and religion "is touched upon in Puškin studies extremely rarely," although it is possible to detect a recent trend that goes against this tradition.²⁰ Indeed, the reason for this, which Pančenko goes on to state, is that for a long time Puškin has been considered a "poor Christian" at best and that as far as his religious beliefs were concerned there was "nothing to even discuss."²¹ The silence on this topic has been noted by others, namely by S. L. Frank in his 1957 book *Studies on Pushkin*, in which he cites Merežkovskij and Geršenzon as also having complained about the lack of attention given to the question.²² The field has been largely left to those who hold

an extreme position on the issue. Konstantin Leont'ev, for example, summarized the general complaint to Dostoevskij's 1880 speech on Puškin when he objected that Puškin was made out to be a "meek Christian." Frank notes that Leont'ev is guilty of a similar extreme by depicting Puškin as a paganistic figure.²³

My object in this regard is not to arrive at a definitive answer, but rather to discuss the legitimacy of this question to Puškin in general and then specifically to EN. Dostoevskij, after all, believes it is significant that Cleopatra was a figure who lived right before the coming of the Christian era. Does the text, in our narrow and broad meaning of the word, support or at least allow for his position?

When an argument has been given concerning Puškin's non-religious nature it has usually offered the following facts: 1. the blasphemous "Gavriiliada"; 2. His famous letter to Vjazemskij in which he writes that he is "taking lessons in pure atheism"; 3. The lycee poem "Unbelief" ("Bezverie") from which is often cited the line "The mind searches for a Divine being but the heart cannot find him" ("Um iščet Božestva a serdce ne naxodit"). Elena Kislicyna, in her 1913 article "About the Matter of Puškin's Relationship to Religion" ("K voprosu ob otnošenii Puškina k religii"), is the rare exception who has presented a formal argument to support the general consensus that religion was not a positive, personal force within Puškin's life.

Like others, Kislicyna cites both the blasphemous "Gavriiliada" and the letter to Vjazemskij as proof of Puškin's fundamental indifference to religion.²⁴ She accounts for his indifference as being due to Puškin's absorption of the 18th century French intellectual struggle with religion.²⁵ Kislycina does not deny that Puškin occasionally used religious themes in his poetry. However, poems such as "The Prophet" and "Imitations of the Koran," in her opinion, merely show that Puškin recognized religion as a potent source for poetry. Similarly, his request to his brother for a bible, "which is for a Christian the same as history is for a people" and his statement in his third article on the history of Polevoj about Christianity as the great revolution of the planet (cited above) are treated by Kislicyna as examples of Puškin the historian at work. In other words, she depicts him as recognizing the significance of religion within the context of poetry or history, but claims that he never had any personal faith.

S. L. Frank is one of the few scholars who take the opposite view. He argues that Puškin did indeed have an inner spiritual life tinged by specifically Christian traits. What Kislicyna saw as evidence that Puškin was intellectually intrigued by religion, Frank views as proof of Puškin's inner spiritual life. For example, Puškin, in Frank's opinion, was ardently opposed to 18th century French intellectualism because in Puškin's words "nothing could be more opposed to poetry than that philosophy which the 18th century gave its name to, [for] it was directed against the prevailing

religion which is the eternal source of poetry for all peoples."²⁶ Nor was Puškin kind to those who deny the existence of God because "... that means to be yet even more stupid than those peoples who believe that the world rests on a rhinoceros."²⁷

Frank's argument becomes more interesting when he turns to Puškin's poetry. He believes that Puškin had a religious understanding of beauty and art.²⁸ Frank supports his assertion by citing Puškin's use of religious terminology whenever he talks about poetry. He quotes an epistle from Puškin to Žukovskij as an example of this:

Can I forget the hour, when I stood
Mute before you, and like a bolt of lightning
My soul flew to your sublime soul
And, mysteriously joining, burned with delight,

Mogu l' zabyt' ja čas, kogda pered toboj/ Bezmolvnyj ja stojal, i molnijnoj struej/ Duša k vozvyšennoj duše tvoej letela/ I, tajno s"edinjas', v vostorgax plamenela, ("K Žukovskomu", 1816)

He also cites numerous other examples about the poet striving "to a world of dreams" ("k mečtatel'nomu miru") "like a sublime soul" ("vozvyšennoj dušoj") "and [where] the sudden cold of inspiration raises the hair on one's brow" ("i bystryj xolod vdoxnoven'ja vlasy pod'emlet na čele"). Poetic inspiration for Puškin, according to Frank, is a "religious discovery."²⁹ The poet is a "servant of the altar" ("služitel' altarja") who stands ready to receive with his "sensitive ear" ("slux čutkij") the "divine word" ("božestvennyj glagol"). And if the poet is a servant of the "divine word" then poetry is a "prayer":³⁰ "We are born... for sweet sounds and prayers" ("my roždeny... dlja zvukov sladkix i molitv"). The

poet's role is like that of the prophet's for they both have "only one goal: having fulfilled the will of God, 'to burn the hearts of people with the word'." Frank could have gone even further with this statement, for it is only by fulfilling the role of prophet that the poet can hope to achieve eternity. Puškin has raised a monument to himself and will forever be remembered because, as he puts it: "... in my cruel age I have gloried freedom/And called for mercy for the fallen." One senses in this poem, one of Puškin's last, that the roles of poet and prophet are intertwined and indistinguishable from each other.

Perhaps even more interesting to my topic is Frank's identification of themes, perceptions, or aesthetic genres that are religious in nature because of certain associations that Puškin has with them. Frank's approach is similar to that of B. Gasparov and I. Paperno's in their article "Towards a Description of the Motif Structure Puškin's Lyrics" ("K opisaniju motivnoj strukture liriki Puškina"). In this article Gasparov and Paperno associate a bundle of elements with a motif and argue that the appearance of any one element "carries with it the memory of the context, the meaningful halo of all its previous uses."³¹ Frank is trying to establish motifs that carry with themselves a halo of religious connotation. One such motif is the motif of solitude, which is "connected with the cult of the 'domestic hearth' and is therefore symbolized by Puškin in the ancient concept of the 'Penates'." Moments of solitude are moments of "spiritual concentration" and therefore suggest a religious

perception on Puškin's part.³²

The Penates are a repeated reference in Puškin. They are the invisible protectors and helpers of the poet. In "The long-awaited moment has come" ("Mig voždelennyj nastal", 1830) the poet laments the end of his labors when he was a friend of "the saintly Penates." Puškin calls his poem "Yet one more majestic and important song" ("Ešče odnoj vysokoj važnoj pesni", 1829) a "hymn to the Penates," to his love for them and their "secret powers."

So, I loved you for a long time! I call you
To witness, with what holy emotion
I left... the human tribe,
In order to watch over your solitary fire,
conversing with itself. Yes,
The hours of inexplicable joys!
They allow us to know a warm-hearted depth,
They teach me to love and cherish
Immortal, mysterious feelings.
And they teach us the basics
Of honoring oneself. O no, I never
Stopped praying reverently
To you, the domestic gods...

Tak, ja ljubil vas dolgo! Vas zovu/ V svideteli, s kakim
svjatym volnen'em/ Ostavil ja... ljudskoe plemja,/ Daby
stereč' vaš ogn' uedinenyj,/ Beseduja s samim soboj. Da,/ Časy neiz"jasnimyx naslaždenij!/ Oni dajut nam znat' serdečnu
glub',/ Oni menja ljubit', lelejat' učat/ Nesmertnye, tain-
stvennye čuvstva./ I nas oni nauke pervoj učat/ Čtit' samogo
sebja. O net, vovek/ Ne prestaval molit' blagogovejno/ Vas,
božestva domašnie...

"Immortal" ("nesmertnye"), "mysterious" ("tainstvennye"), and "inexplicable" ("neiz"jasnimyx") usually convey spiritual connotations. P. B. Struve follows the use of "neiz"jasnimyj" in Puškin in his 1929 article "'Neiz"jasnimyj' i 'nepostižnyj'." Struve notes the use of this adjective in connection with both the sky and the human soul, suggesting that in both of them there is hidden something

"inexplicable, mysterious."³³ In reference to the human soul Struve quotes from "A Feast during the Time of the Plague" ("Pir vo vremja čumy") and in the quotation is the expression "indescribable delights" ("neiz"jasnimy naslažden'ja") which we also saw in the poem "Yet one more majestic and important song" above. Struve traces the word "neiz"jasnimyj" back to its Greek roots, finding that it bears as a secondary meaning the sense of pointing to something "mysterious, mystical." Furthermore, Struve notes that the first author to use it in Russian letters was Deržavin, who in his ode "God" described God as "Inexplicable, incomprehensible" ("Neiz"jasnimyj, nepostižnyj").³⁴ Puškin would have been unquestionably aware of this secondary meaning of "inexplicable."

Frank offers Mixajlovskoe and Carskoe Selo as physical embodiments of the "altar of the Penates" and suggests that in poems such as "Reminiscences in Carskoe Selo" ("Vospominanija v Carskom Sele") the return of the poet to the physical embodiment of the altar to the Penates incorporates within itself the biblical theme of the prodigal son.³⁵ In the article referred to above, Gasparov and Paperno observe that solitude, which includes linked to itself havens from the outside world such as Mixajlovskoe and Carskoe Selo, is but one element and sign of the motif "eternity." Eternity does not necessarily have a religious element to it but it is at least suggestive of one.

The second motif which Frank believes has religious implications is the motif of eroticism. Eroticism is a hymn to "perfect female beauty" which is itself an element of

divinity ("božestvo"). Frank notes that in the famous poem to Kern ("I remember a wondrous moment", 1825), the appearance of her "pure beauty" ("čistoj krasoty") is linked with "inspiration, life, tears and love" and "divinity" ("Božestvo"). Moreover, such beauty is beyond the mundane and worldly:

"Everything in it is harmony, everything is wonderful, everything is higher than the world and passions" ("Vse v nej garmonija, vse divo, vse vyše mira i strastej"). Yet even more interesting is the connection that Frank observes between poems about a woman and thoughts of the "afterlife." Frank includes "There lived in this world a poor knight" in this group as well as "Recollection," in which two shadows of former lovers appear before Puškin "like two angels" and speak to him "with a dead tongue about secrets of eternity and the grave."³⁶ Frank's observation is supported by Savely Sendorovich, who writes that "shades turn into angels and bearers of hidden knowledge about life and death. Moreover, speech about mysteries of happiness and of the grave belong to them."³⁷

The possible parallel to EN and Cleopatra's promise to share "secrets of love" that will lead to the grave and whose "erotic flight" is defined as a "religious act"³⁸ becomes intriguing when considered in connection with the above. However, my only concern for the moment has been to address Dostoevskij's fixation on the historical moment as significant because it comes just before the Christian era. Brjusov supported Dostoevskij on this point to the extent that he thought it was precisely Puškin's increasing "Christian

mysticism" which drew him to the time of Cleopatra.³⁹

Certainly he could point to mystical poems such as "Mirskaja vlast'," "Podražanie Ital'janskomu," and "Otcy-pustynniki i ženy neporočny" (1836) to support his claim that Puškin was drawn to mysticism.

Specifically related to EN we must remember that Dostoevskij was almost certainly familiar with Annenkov's work of 1855 and thus knew about the fragment "Caesar was travelling..." and the intended use of the Christian slave within that work. Dostoevskij, like all readers, is a summation of his previous reading experience. Thus, when he read EN, he was also a man who had read a great deal else of and about Puškin. Knowing that Puškin had intended to insert a Christian slave within a fragment related to EN and which was also situated in Antiquity and knowing of the historical significance of Christianity for Puškin, Dostoevskij made, to his mind, a logical connection. As far as our larger text, i.e., Puškin himself, is concerned one could say that his aesthetic understanding of beauty and creation seems to be linked to some concept of the eternal which in turn could include a religious component to it. Certainly, when Dostoevskij read Puškin it seems that he was reading the Puškin of "The Prophet," "There lived in this world a poor knight," "Imitations of the Koran," etc. At any rate, there is at least a possibility that the historical moment as Dostoevskij defines it may have some validity. I would like at this point to return to his reading of EN and the second sense of *mig*.

In addition to the historical moment, there is the individual "crucial moment" in the Improviser's poem when Cleopatra tenderly rests her eyes upon the youth. The moment is critical because it is the sole occasion in which she demonstrates some sort of compassion and Dostoevskij writes about it with an exclamation mark: "Ona ešče mogla umiljat'sja!" Her glimmer of humanity, however, quickly passes, for although Cleopatra softens, it is only for a moment: "tol'ko na odno mgnovenie čelovečeskoe čuvstvo ugaslo, no zverskij dikij vostorg vspyxnuł v nej ešče sil'nejšim plamenem." It is in the brief flickering of human feeling and its rapid replacement by a wild animal delight that Dostoevskij finds the significance of the text:

"From the expression of the Queen's hellish delight the body grows cold, the spirit dies... and it becomes comprehensible to one, to what sort of people our divine redeemer arrived at that time."

"Ot vyraženiya ètogo adskogo vostorga caricy xolodeet telo, zamiraet dux...i vam stanovitsja ponjatno, k kakim ljudjam prixodil togda naš božestvennyj iskupitel'." ⁴⁰

It is in this statement on the crucial "personal" moment that Dostoevskij's unique individual codes of interpretation emerge. For Dostoevskij critical moments are filled with psychological import. His characters are faced with a choice and the choice made reflects upon their psychological and spiritual state: "In their moments of spiritual crisis they see before them, as if illumined by a flash of lightning, the only two ways open to mankind: the way of acknowledgment of God, and the way of refusal to acknowledge Him." ⁴¹ Either they reaffirm the dignity that God granted them as human

beings, or by their choice they revert back into man's animal origin. This choice is forced upon Dostoevskij's characters by a social system that ignores "man's essential spirituality" and concentrates "on physical needs alone."⁴² Such a system, claims Alex de Jonge, "can only degrade man, turn him back into an animal and create a wilderness of boredom."⁴³ That is Dostoevskij's contemporary world and Dostoevskij sees a mirror image of the present in Cleopatra's world. Certain phrases in his article on EN confirm this impression. There is no sense of man's spiritualness in Cleopatra's world, therefore the body is the only receptacle that holds any meaning for the inhabitants ("vse uxodit v telo"⁴⁴). Cleopatra herself is bored ("Ej teper' skučno"⁴⁵) and this "wilderness of boredom" prompts her to make her challenge. It is when she eyes the unnamed youth with tenderness that Dostoevskij sees that her moment has arrived. Cleopatra can either acknowledge her human feeling ("čelovečeskoe čuvstvo") or reject it. She chooses the latter course, signifying that the victory belongs to her animal passions ("zverskij dikij vostorg vspyxnul v nej ešče sil'nejšim plamenem"). This is how the Dostoevskij of 1861 reads EN. This Dostoevskian view of the world and of *mig* is repeated throughout his later novels and stories with varying outcome. To fully appreciate Dostoevskij's understanding of *mig* and how that led to his interpretation of EN it is necessary to review *mig* as it is expressed in certain of Dostoevskij's novels.

In *Crime and Punishment*, Svidrigajlov always opts to follow his animal passions. He confesses to his debauchery

and liking for women. He has murdered his own wife and has been implemented in the death of a young girl and a male servant. His obsession for Raskol'nikov's sister, Avdotja Romanovna, began "with an uncontrollable fit of sensual passion."⁴⁶ Nevertheless, he, like Cleopatra, is given yet another moment of choice where he can decide to follow his baser side, or not. It is when Dunja confronts him with a pistol but loses her will to kill him after she misses the first time and the gun misfires the second. Svidrigajlov approaches her:

He went up to Dunya and gently laid his arm round her waist. She did not resist, but her whole body shook like a leaf and she looked at him with imploring eyes. He tried to say something but, although his lips moved, he could not speak.

"Let me go!" implored Dunya. Svidrigaylov started, struck by the sudden difference in her tone.

"So you do not love me?" he asked softly.

Dunya shook her head.

"And... you cannot?... Not ever?" he whispered in despair.

"Never!" whispered Dunya.

In Svidrigaylov's soul there was an instant of terrible, silent struggle. He gazed at Dunya with an indescribable expression. Suddenly he took away his arm, turned round, and walked quickly away to the window, where he stood for a moment in silence. "Here is the key!" (He had taken it from the left-hand pocket of his overcoat and laid it behind him on the table, without looking or turning round.) "Take it; leave quickly!..." (my italics)

The "instant of terrible, silent struggle" is resolved in favor of a magnanimous impulse of mercy.⁴⁷ It is the lone instance that we know of where Svidrigajlov's animal passions are not victorious. However, it does not lead to a spiritual regeneration on his part. Svidrigajlov is too far gone for redemption. Instead, his one moment of mercy leads directly

to his suicide. Perhaps he is not capable of facing such a struggle again or perhaps he does not want to experience such a moment and choose, as he always has before, his baser instincts. Either way the moment proves decisive for Svidrigajlov's personal fate, which ends in a kind of redemption.

Stavrogin is another Dostoevskian character mired in debauchery. His debauchery is due to ennui and an inability to feel. He would like to be able to do good and such a thought even gives him "a feeling of pleasure," but his "desires are never strong enough" and are incapable of guiding him. Instead, he has chosen "wild debauchery" in an effort to feel but he discovers that he has "no desire for it" either.⁴⁸

His one true desire is to experience a strong emotion, preferably the feeling of love. This leads him to his liaison with Lisa. Their conversation after their night together is riddled with references to experiencing the "moment." Lisa begins by explaining that they will "be only a short time together,..." because she has had her "hour, and that's enough."⁴⁹ Stavrogin objects to the possible loss of "so much happiness" and his "new hope" for which he has paid "with life."⁵⁰ The "new hope" of which Stavrogin speaks is the hope he has always harbored, i.e., to experience a strong emotion, in this case the love he believes he feels for Lisa. However, Lisa disabuses Stavrogin of his naive belief in the possibility of an eternal union between them.

"Didn't you know yesterday that I'd leave you to-day? Did you or didn't you? Don't lie. Did you or didn't you?"

"I did," he said softly.

"Well, then, what more do you want? You knew, and you

reserved that '*moment*' for yourself. What else is there left for us to settle?" (my italics)

"Neuželi včera vy ne znali, čo ja segodnja ot vas ujdu, znali il' net? Ne lgite, znali ili net?
 - Znal... - tixo vymolvil on.
 - Nu tak čego že vam: znali i ostavili "mgnovenie" za soboj. Kakie že tut sčety?"

Lisa convinces Stavrogin that he always knew there could never be anything more lasting for them than a moment and that he chose to experience that moment for purely selfish reasons. Stavrogin finally acknowledges this.

"I knew I did not love you, and I ruined you. Yes, 'I've kept the moment 'for myself'. I had a hope- I've had it a long time- my last hope... I could not resist the bright light that flooded my heart when you came to me yesterday of your own accord, alone, first. I suddenly believed that I loved you. Perhaps I believe it even now."

"Ja znal, čo ja ne ljublju tebjja, i pogubil tebjja. Da, "ja ostavil mgnovenie za soboj"; ja imel nadeždu... davno uže... poslednjuju... Ja ne mog ustojat' protiv sveta, ozarivšego moe serdce, kogda ty včera vošla ko mne, sama, odna, pervaja. Ja vdrug poveril... Ja, možet byt', veruju ešče i teper'."

Stavrogin realizes that in his "last" and most critical moment he has once again chosen to ruin someone. It is perhaps tempered by his "hope" but the reality remains the same as it had always been in the past. Like Svidrigajlov before him, Stavrogin's last "moment" proves decisive for his personal fate. Aware that he is beyond redemption, that there is no more hope, Stavrogin wonders if he "ought to kill [himself], to brush [himself] off the earth, like some loathsome insect."⁵¹ Suicide plays a similar role in the fates of both Svidrigajlov and Stavrogin. Svidrigajlov's last hope is lost and in an instant of "bitter struggle" decides against

ruining Dunja. Stavrogin knows that he does not love Lisa but convinces himself otherwise. He decides to "reserve the moment" for himself and thereby ruins Lisa. For both of them the "moment" has been a crucial and decisive one. It has confirmed their complete bankruptcy. Exhausted by debauchery, both Stavrogin and Svidrigajlov realize that they have neither the opportunity (i.e., hope) nor the ability to experience anything else. The last logical act is to destroy the body, i.e., to take one's life, since the possibilities of physical sensation have been exhausted and there is nothing else to live for.

The love that is denied to Svidrigajlov and Stavrogin is granted to Raskol'nikov. He, too, must face a critical moment in which his fate hangs in the balance, dependent upon his decision. In a sense, there are three such moments for Raskol'nikov, although it is really only the second one that is truly dramatic and decisive.

The first moment, of course, is his decision to kill the old woman. A critical feature of Dostoevskij's conception of the "moment" is choice. A social structure that emphasizes only the physical will degrade man, according to de Jonge, thereby making it more likely that he will live according to his animal passions. However, in Dostoevskij's literary universe there are always those "moments" when one is faced with a choice. At such an instant it is the individual that chooses. Raskol'nikov's first moment, however, seems bereft of that feature.

Raskol'nikov has been mulling over the idea about killing the old woman and has just finished a trial run when he overhears two men discussing the very same idea that Raskol'nikov was thinking about. The coincidence is too striking to be pure chance for Raskol'nikov.

"But why must he listen at this particular moment to that particular talk and those particular ideas when there had just been born in his own brain exactly the same ideas? And why, at the very moment when he was carrying away from the old woman's flat the germ of his idea, should he chance upon a conversation about that same old woman?... This always seemed to him a strange coincidence. This casual public-house conversation had an extraordinary influence on the subsequent development of the matter, as if there were indeed something fateful and fore-ordained about it."

No počemu imenno teper' prišlos' emu vyslušat' imenno takoj razgovor i takie mysli, kogda v sobstvennoj golove ego tol'ko čto zarodilis'... *takie že točno mysli?* I počemu imenno sejčas, kak tol'ko on vynes zarodyš svoej mysli ot staruxi, kak raz i popadaet on na razgovor o staruxe?... Strannym vseгда kazalos' emu èto sovpadenie. Ètot ničtožnyj, traktirnyj razgovor imel črezvyčajnoe na nego vlijanie pri dal'nejšem razvitii dela: kak budto dejstvitel'no bylo tut kakoe-to predopredelenie, ukazanie...

It is almost as if fate decides here, and not Raskol'nikov, although in reality fate is just an excuse that Raskol'nikov uses to minimize his personal responsibility. Raskol'nikov, therefore, must expiate his sin for which he solely was responsible. This leads to the second "moment."

In order to expiate his sin, Raskol'nikov must first confess it. Sonja persuades him that he must make an open confession to the police. He goes into the police office but Zametov and Nikodim Fomič are not in. Only the Squib, Ilja Petrovič, is in and Raskol'nikov thinks that it must be "fate." His acceptance of fate allows Raskol'nikov to

postpone the moment of choice and he exits the office. But waiting outside the building is Sonja and when their eyes meet it becomes clear that Raskol'nikov's moment has arrived and can no longer be delayed.

"There, not far from the entrance, stood Sonya, deadly pale; she looked at him wildly, desperately. He stopped before her. Her face expressed pain, weariness, and despair. She threw up her hands. He forced himself to smile, a *lost, hideous smile*. He stood there *for a moment*, smiled again, and turned back to the office." (my italics)

"Tut na dvore, nedaleko ot vyxoda, stojala blednaja, vsja pomertvevšaja, Sonja i diko, diko na nego posmotrela. On ostanovilsja pered neju. Čto-to bol'noe i izmučennoe vyrazilos' v lice ee, čto-to otčajannoe. Ona vsplesnula rukami. Bezobraznaja, poterjannaja ulybka vydavilas' na ego ustax. On postojal, usmexnulsja i povorotil naverx, opjat' v kontoru."

Raskol'nikov's lost and hideous smile reflects what the state of his soul would be if he decided to continue to walk away from the building. For the moment that Raskol'nikov stands and stares at Sonja his soul wavers between the two choices before him. Salvation is possible with only one choice, the path of confession, which begins in the police office. To walk away from the building would have meant accepting a fate similar to Svidrigajlov's. This, then, is indeed the critical moment in Raskol'nikov's life. His decision to kill is made under the false pretenses of fatalistic impulses. Similarly, the third and final instance of decision-making lacks the drama and tension of indecision that characterizes the second moment. This is because when Raskol'nikov stands outside the police office and stares at Sonja it is the only instant when he is poised precisely between two alternatives.

During the third moment, like the first, Raskol'nikov has in many respects already made his decision but has not yet recognized this fact. Raskol'nikov and Sonja are in Siberia and he has yet to acknowledge his feelings for Sonja. But one day he catches sight of Sonja outside the window and he responds "as if something pierced his heart at that moment."⁵² The very next day they are together and Raskol'nikov's actions are again more passive in the sense that the moment is less one of active choice as it is a moment of recognition of a choice already made.

"How it happened he himself did not know, but suddenly he seemed to be seized and cast at her feet. He clasped her knees and wept. For a moment she was terribly frightened, and her face grew white. She sprang up and looked down at him, trembling. But at once, in that instant, she understood, and she no longer doubted that he loved her, loved her for ever, and that now at last the moment had come..."

"Kak èto slučilos', on i sam ne znal, no vdrug čto-to kak by podxvatilo ego i kak by brosiló k ee nogam. On plakal i obnimal ee koleni. V pervoe mgnovenie ona užasno ispugalas', i vse lico ee pomertvelo. Ona vskočila s mesta i, zadržav, smotrela na nego. No totčas že, v tot že mig ona vse ponjala. V glazax ee zasvetilos' beskonečnoe sčast'e; ona ponjala, i dlja nee uže ne bylo somnenija, čto on ljubít, beskonečno ljubít ee i čto nastala že nakonec èta minuta..."

Moreover, the moment stays. This is an important attribute of the moment for Dostoevskij. The decision made in that instant will have irrevocable repercussions. For Svidrigajlov and Stavrogin the result was their eventual suicides. For Raskol'nikov it is a chance at a new future, "a perfect resurrection into a new life."⁵³ Thus the moment is transcended and extends into the future.

Another such moment of decisive moral choice occurs in *The Brothers Karamazov* when Aleša agrees with Rakitin to go and see Grušenka. Aleša's elder Zosima has recently died and Aleša is profoundly disturbed and spiritually shaken both by the death and by the abuse leveled at Zosima's memory when his corpse begins to stink. Aleša has already acquiesced to eat sausage and drink vodka, a sign that his resistance to sensual desires is weakening. Rakitin agrees to take him to Grušenka's, hoping for nothing less than "the downfall of the righteous."⁵⁴ Dostoevskij hardly leaves us in doubt as to the urgency of the moment for Aleša. The chapter in which the above has taken place is entitled "A Critical Moment" ("Takaja minutka") and Dostoevskij repeatedly refers to this time of trial as "that strange, vague moment in the life of the young hero," "an exceptional moment," and "this fatal moment."⁵⁵ The moment is no less critical for Grušenka. For her part she has planned to seduce Aleša, as she freely admits to him: "I wanted to ruin you, Alyosha, that's the holy truth. I quite meant to. I wanted to so much, that I bribed Rakitin to bring you."⁵⁶ However, despite her design, Grušenka relents, realizing that this "is not the moment."⁵⁷ She has been touched by Aleša because he truly loves her, unlike most men who desire her with only "lustful love." Aleša is similarly moved. He went to Grušenka's "looking for [his] ruin," but instead of meeting a morally depraved individual, Aleša finds in Grušenka a "true sister" who raises his "soul from the depths."⁵⁸ Rakitin is aware of the significance of the event he has just witnessed. Not only has Aleša survived the

moment, thereby avoiding his ruin and reviving his spiritual fortitude, but Grušenka has changed as well because of the meeting. Rakitin asks snidely "Have you turned the Magdalene into the true path?"⁵⁹ With Aleša literally in her grasp, Grušenka was confronted with a choice, to save or to ruin. She chose to save, or in her words "to give an onion,"⁶⁰ and thereby not only saved Aleša from peril but also began down a "path" that ultimately redeems both herself and Dmitrij.

Aleša and Grušenka are of course not the only characters in *The Brothers Karamazov* to be faced with such a choice in the heat of a "super-charged"⁶¹ moment. It is less a device than it is an integral facet of Dostoevskij's world-view; it is the human condition, when existing in a system that is cognizant only of man's physical needs, to ultimately be confronted by such choices. Thus crucial points in the lives of major characters are inevitably phrased in the language of the super-charged moment. Dmitrij talks with the investigators about the instant that he faced his father with a pestle in his hand: "Whether it was someone's tears, or my mother prayed to God, or a good angel kissed me at that moment, I don't know. But the devil was conquered. I rushed from the window and ran to the fence."⁶² Aleša even thinks about the fate of others in the either/or terminology of the moment. About Ivan he thinks that "Ivan will either rise up in the light of truth, or... he'll perish in hate, revenging on himself and on everyone his having served a cause he does not believe in."⁶³ Katerina with her testimony in court is in a position to save or destroy Dmitrij, depending upon what she

intends to say. However, she herself apparently did not know prior to the trial which way she would turn. The narrator tells us that she "may have waited for the inspiration of the moment."⁶⁴

Let us go back to EN and reread the version of it that Dostoevskij was familiar with. In the second improvisation Cleopatra has presented her offer of a night of love for the price of one's life. Three rise to accept. The first is Flavius the bold warrior ("voin smelyj"). The second is Crito, an Epicurean devoted to pleasure. The third is an unnamed youth.

This third- but none can tell, because
The record leaves his name uncited.
The first soft down was fresh upon
His cheek; his eyes with rapture shone;
Ardent, undisciplined devotion
Was surging in his youthful breast;
On him the queen, with tender emotion,
Allowed her glance to rest.

Poslednij imeni vekam/ Ne peredal. Ego lanity/ Pux pervyj
nežno ottenjal;/ Vostorg v očax ego sijal;/ Strastej neopyt-
naja sila/ Kipela v serdce molodom.../ I s umileniem na nem/
Carica vzor ostanovila. (Trans. Gillon R. Aitken)

Until the youth approached, Cleopatra's glance had registered only contempt for those surrounding her (I vzor prezritel'nyj obvodit/Krugom poklonnikov svoix...). Suddenly it seems as though her heart has softened. As I noted before, Dostoevskij underscores the significance of this one sign of emotion with an exclamation mark. However, her tenderness does not last long, for immediately after the description of the three men comes her vow that their heads will fall in the morning:

I vow, that the axe shall sever
The heads of all these happy men!

Kljanus', pod smertnoju sekiroj/ Glava sčastlivcev otpadet!

Her bloody and terrible vow proves to Dostoevskij that the same bestial spirit that prompted Cleopatra to make her offer in the first place has returned in even greater strength (zverskij dikij vostorg vspyxnul v nej ešče sil'nejšim plamenem). Thus one can see that the elements for the "super-charged" moment are there for Dostoevskij to read. The softening of Cleopatra's atrophied heart as she glances at the youth is a sign of her wavering between two opposite poles of human behavior: to save or ruin (for Dostoevskij this is the bestial side of human nature) another human being. Puškin himself, according to Dostoevskij, could not bear the picture he had drawn of Cleopatra as heartless animal and so Puškin "for a moment humanizes his hyena."⁶⁵ Her humanity, however, lasts "only for one moment."⁶⁶ Her vow to cut off the heads of the willing victims substantiates that the struggle in her soul is over. She reverts to bestiality.

Cleopatra's drama is the drama that Svidrigajlov, Grušenka, Nastasja Filippovna and others are to play within Dostoevskij's literary world. Is this, however, the drama that Puškin had in mind? We can acknowledge that the text allows for Dostoevskij's reading of the moment, for after all the "dramatic moment in "Egyptian Nights" is the moment of choice."⁶⁷ Dostoevskij's choice, however, may not be Puškin's. I have demonstrated how Dostoevskij's interpretation of EN reflects his sense of the moment. It is now time to pursue whether it reflects as well Puškin's sense of the moment. To do that we must begin with the idea of "tenderness" or

"umilenie" in Puškin, since it is because Cleopatra glances at the youth "with tenderness" in EN that Dostoevskij is able to assert that she is oscillating between her bestial and human sides.

The term *umilenie* is used most often by Puškin to express the exalted feeling or impression that is experienced by an observer of beauty. Beauty can be personified by nature, or a woman, or a madonna or angel figure, and its effect is a spiritual one. "Spiritual" should be understood as comprising both an aesthetic and religious sense of the word; it is opposed to the purely physical and mundane part of our human existence. Furthermore, as Gasparov and Paperno indicate, the above are all elements of the eternal in Puškin, which is itself a spiritual (as opposed to physical) reality that cannot be comprehended, I believe, in either exclusively aesthetic or religious terms. Thus when we speak of beauty in Puškin we are also talking about an attribute of the eternal and the effect which that has on us.

In his poem "I do not value dearly celebrated rights" ("Ne dorogo cenju ja gromkie prava" 1836), Puškin devalues issues that are usually at the public forefront: taxes, warring tsars, and censorship. Instead it is the right to freely partake of the "divine beauty of nature" or to "tremble joyously in the throes of emotion (*umilen'ja*)" before creations "of art and inspiration" that is regarded as a genuine happiness and privilege. In this poem it is the beauty of nature and art that most powerfully moves the human observer, who is seen to be "in the throes of emotion" (*v vostorgax*

umilen'ja). Often, of course, *umilenie* is used to describe the poet or artist in the instant of inspiration. Thus in "Who knows the land, where the heaven shines with an inexplicable blue," (Kto znaet kraj, gde nebo bleščet...", 1828) the question is asked about who the singer or artist might be who could, "while burning with tender rapture" (gorja vostorgom umilennym), depict the "heavenly features" of Ljudmila? Her beauty rivals that of the Madonna and other past sources of inspiration for artists such as Raphael. She is offered as the new inspiration, displacing the others. As a source of inspiration she is clearly to be associated with the eternal, since she is obviously herself a Madonna figure and because of the presence of other elements of the eternal, such as the sky and the adjective "inexplicable" (neiz"jasnimoj), the secondary meaning of which I discussed earlier in the chapter; her effect on the poet or artist is defined in terms of *umilenie*. Similarly, in "To Čaadaev (Why such cold doubts?)" ("Čaadaevu" 1824) *umilenie* describes the creative moment, for the poet writes "in an inspired tenderness" (v umilen'e vdoxnovenom).

Visions of the eternal and their effect on the observer are perhaps most starkly portrayed in the 1827 poem "Angel." Here a demon is "flying above a hellish abyss" when it perceives the "pure spirit" of an angel. The result is that for the first time the demon experiences "the involuntary warmth of tenderness" (žar nevol'nyj umilen'ja). The eternal represents perfection or *sovershenstvo*. There are many attributes of the eternal present in this three stanza poem. There is

the angel itself, but there is also the fact that the angel is shining, motionless, and standing with bowed head; the latter are all attributes of the eternal according to Gasparov and Paperno.⁶⁸ The demon represents the opposite to the angel. Thus he is imperfection or *nesovershenstvo*. The meeting between the angel and the demon is therefore a meeting between two opposed and fundamental principles of the universe. The effect is the same as we have witnessed before: the demon, which is the epitome of imperfection and unfilled life, is moved by a vision of beauty. What is important is that that is the only effect. The demon does not strive to become its opposite or to overcome its own nature. A vision of perfection can have a profound affect on the imperfect (i.e., demon, human observer, artist), but only a temporary one. Geršenson is correct when he describes Puškin as a "fatalist" who believes that the human soul "is governed by its own inner laws" and which cannot be changed by "phenomena of the outside world."⁶⁹ For that reason "Angel" ends with *umilenie*. Puškin would not think to go any farther for in his world-view *umilenie*, profound though it may be, is already the most that can be achieved by a vision of perfection.

If we return to EN we can see a relationship between Cleopatra and the unnamed youth that is analogous to the relationship between the angel and demon in "Angel." The youth has some attributes of the eternal, principally those of beauty, gentleness, and "shining": his appearance is "pleasant to heart and eyes" like a "spring flower"; his face is

"gently shaded" by the first downy feathers of a beard; delight "shines" in his eyes. And Cleopatra, the image of imperfection in EN just like the demon was in "Angel," glances at this vision of perfection with a feeling of tenderness.

Dostoevskij's observation is that the pure love of the youth humanizes Cleopatra but that she then reverts back even more strongly to her bestial nature. By suggesting that Puškin humanizes Cleopatra, if only briefly, Dostoevskij is implying that the fundamental nature of Cleopatra is changed or that the potential for this change exists, but is then subsequently lost. That potential for change that Dostoevskij read in the above moment in EN inspired him to write that "it makes one understand to what sort of people our savior came": savage yet with a seed of new life. However, if I (and Geršenson) have understood *umilenie* in Puškin correctly, then this is the wrong inference to make. *Umilenie* is the feeling experienced due to a "temporary meeting"⁷⁰ (*mgnovennaja vstreča*) between the perfect and the imperfect, inspiration and the artist, art and the human observer. However, it will not inspire one to change one's nature since this is a concept alien to Puškin's comprehension, as the title to one of his poems aptly demonstrates: "Such as I was before, so am I now" (1828). Dostoevskij's reading of *umilenie*, however, certainly stems from the Puškin tradition in a line that flows from Puškin to Lermontov to Dostoevskij. For it was Lermontov's demon that was unwilling to rest simply with the good feelings evoked by *umilenie*. His demon actively sought "to overcome his nature," although he proved unable to do

so.⁷¹ Dostoevskij's demons, it seems to me, are a natural progression in this evolution: they can overcome their nature and eternalize the moment.

Puškin's concept of the moment, i.e. *mig*, is similar to *umilenie* in that it also reflects the attitude of a fatalist who knows that "he cannot remake his soul."⁷² From the very beginning of his poetic career, Puškin wrote of the roles and lives that individuals were fated to play. A device that Puškin often used was to compare the fate of a friend versus the fate that Puškin as a poet was doomed to live out. There was a conscious purpose behind this device, namely the creation of a personal mythology for the poet. The image of fate as a controlling entity is a consistent one within Puškin's œuvre and is not limited to an impact on just the poet. In an 1817 poem "To Prince A. M. Gorčakov," Puškin frames the scene as a moment of transition when not only a friend ("For the last time, perhaps, I am with you") but also youth must be bid farewell ("Where are you, years of recent carelessness?"). They must enter a new world, leaving childhood friends and youth. Within this new world, however, their destinies have already been determined and they are not the same: "But the lot appointed for us there is not equal." The poet's fate is to be denied happiness: "My path is sad and dark." "At life's feast" his lot is to be alone, to be the "gloomy guest." Even his last moment of life will be like those that preceded it, determined by his fate.

And the unforgettable friend of my heart will not come
At the last moment to close my languid glance,

I ne pridet drug serdca nezabvennyj/ V poslednij mig moj tom-
nyj vzor somknut',

Diversion from the path of one's life, i.e., the possibility of free choice, is not even hinted at. The only consolation is to reconcile oneself with one's fate. This is Puškin's solution at the end of the poem:

And my comfort in this life will be
My modest gift and the happiness of friends.

I v žizni sej mne budet utešen'e/ Moj skromnyj dar i sčastie
druzej.

Fate as the determining factor in one's life is an image that Puškin frequently employs: "For a long separation/ Mysterious fate has perhaps determined for us!" and "Different paths have been designated for us by cruel fate" ("October 19", 1825) are but two examples. The poet's only consolation continues to be his gift and the joy that it can give to others, as his 1825 poem "To Kozlov" attests:

And I, if my lone verse
Has given you a moment of delight,
I do not want another reward:
Not in vain have I traveled by my dark path
through the desert of the world,
O no, not in vain have life and lyre
Been granted to me by fate!

A ja, kol' stix edinyj moj/ Tebe mgnoven'e dal otrady,/ Ja ne
xoču drugoj nagrady:/ Nedarom temnoju stezej/ Ja proxodil
pustynju mira,/ O net, nedarom žizn' i lira/ Mne byli vvereny
sud'boj!

The poetic gift grants a "moment of delight." That is its power. It cannot, however, do more. It does not change anything, neither the fate of the poet nor that of the listener. The innate character of a person is essentially static:

But man is everywhere either a tyrant or a flatterer,
Or the dutiful slave of prejudices.

A čelovek vezde tiran il' l'stec,/ Il' predrassudkov rab
poslušnyj. (V. F. Raevskomu, 1822)

That a change does occur within the poet is not to be denied, but that change is encompassed by the moment itself. The moment becomes the moment of inspiration when the poet is transformed. However the poet's metamorphosis into a figure on a higher plane is brief. He must inevitably become a member of common humanity again. In the 1826 poem "Poët," the poet is "among the insignificant children of this world, perhaps, the most insignificant." But when the "divine word" touches his ear, the "poet's soul starts like an eagle that has been roused." This state of being, however, lasts only as long as the inspiration. The poet will become insignificant again. The muse's gifts are forever characterized as brief and fleeting: "... the ephemeral gifts of peaceful muses" ("V. F. Raevskomu" 1822). In his 1825 poem "K***", the poet's inspiration is the vision of a beautiful woman. Significantly, the first line of the poem is "I remember a wondrous moment." Once the spell of that vision (i.e., moment) wears off life becomes dark and despairing. The days pass:

Without God, without inspiration,
Without tears, without life, without love.

Bez božestva, bez vdoxnoven'ja, / Bez slez, bez žizni, bez ljubvi.

It is only with the reappearance of this wondrous vision that the above attributes of a poetically inspired moment return.

Any change is characterized as fleeting. In an early poem ("Bliss", "Blaženstvo", 1814) a despondent shepherd is urged to drink and upon doing so the world instantly takes on a new appearance:

Suddenly torment and grief fly away,
 The soul's gloom has in an instant disappeared!
 As soon as the goblet is raised to the lips,
 Everything is instantly changed,
 All of nature is enlivened,
 The youth is happy in dreams!

Vdrug sokrylis' skorbi, muki,/ Mrak duševnyj vmig isčez!/
 Liš' fial k ustam podnes,/ Vse mgnovenno premenilos',/ Vsja
 priroda oživilas',/ Sčastliv junosa v mečtax!

Wine, like inspiration, has the power to radically alter
 one's perception of the world. The shepherd, however, soon
 realizes that maintaining his new state is not possible:

"...How can I struggle with fate?
 How can I be happy? '
 I do not have the strength to forever drink."

"...Kak mogu borot'sja s rokom?/ Kak mogu sčastlivym byt'?/
 Ja ne v silax večno pit'."

Love, too, is only able to give the briefest of respites from
 the cold and unforgiving world ("Love alone is the joy of a
 cold world" 1816): "She grants but a single moment of de-
 light." This fundamentally deterministic attitude to life is
 maintained in Puškin's dramatic and prose works as well.
 Characters follow already designated paths. The "super-
 charged" moment which for the Dostoevskian character would
 imply the need to make an instant decision with personally
 and morally significant consequences is largely absent in
 Puškin. Thus Hermann in *The Queen of Spades* is a man of
 "strong passions and a fiery imagination" who is directed to
 the Countess' house by "some unknown power." There he sees
 Lizaveta Ivanovna's face and "his fate" is "decided" by this
 "moment."⁷³ In *Mozart and Salieri*, Salieri is "selected" by
 fate to murder Mozart and it is pointless "to resist any

longer" in Salieri's opinion.⁷⁴ In *A Feast During the Time of the Plague* the chairman of the feast is urged by a priest in the name of the chairman's deceased wife to end the blasphemous affair. Although the wishes of his deceased wife represent a powerful motivation for the chairman, there is never a sense of struggle to decide whether to stay or not. Not once but twice he tells the priest to go away and leave him be. Pugačev is perhaps one of Puškin's most psychologically complex characters. In *The Captain's Daughter* he is faced with a moment in which Grinev asks him to choose between his current path and that of asking for the Empress' mercy. But there is no hesitation, no drama to the moment for Pugačev sees little choice but in "continuing as he has begun."⁷⁵

Puškin's characters may evolve (Tat'jana, for example) but they do not change or waver in the dramatic and radical fashion that Dostoevskij favors. This difference is not merely a stylistic one but one which reflects varying world-views. Emphasizing the personal moments of psychological and spiritual crisis enables Dostoevskij to illustrate the possibilities of change and personal renewal inherent in his Christian outlook. Whatever the eventual verdict on Puškin and his religious views it is doubtful that a similar emphasis will ever be confirmed in his works. To be sure, the moment can be transforming in Puškin. As I noted earlier, with the arrival of inspiration the poet is instantly changed from being "insignificant" to becoming a prophet. But such metamorphoses are only temporary, albeit repeatable, whereas in

Dostoevskij they at least have the potential of transcending the temporary, if the changes in Grušenka, Dmitrij and Raskol'nikov in the epilogue of *Crime and Punishment* are any indication. It is in this sense of the *moment* as holding the potential for radical and perhaps permanent change in one's personal fate that we see a divergence between Dostoevskij and Puškin.

Nevertheless, one can argue that the tiniest seeds that were later to come to full fruition in Dostoevskij are apparent in Puškin. To return to Hermann in *The Queen of Spades*, there is a moment when he is waiting in the Countess' room and he hears the footsteps of Lisaveta Ivanovna. This is a moment in which he has an opportunity to renounce his intention. If Dostoevskij had been the author, an intense struggle would have ensued within Hermann's soul. There is a struggle, but it is ever so slight, ever so understated: "In his heart there echoed something like the voice of conscience, but it grew silent, and his heart once more turned to stone."⁷⁶ Salieri thinks of himself as an agent of destiny but immediately after he throws the poison into Mozart's cup and Mozart drinks the contents there is the barest suggestion of a struggle taking place within Salieri. Mozart toasts to their mutual health and then drinks the wine, whereupon Salieri says, and there is a distinct sense of urgency felt in his words: "Stop, Stop, Stop!.. You drank... without me?"⁷⁷ The two pauses, as represented by the consecutive periods, are more convincing than the cries of "stop!" that Salieri possibly wanted to turn from his appointed path at that moment.

Circumstances, however, are not created for there to be any true sense of inner tension within Salieri; he says nothing until after Mozart drinks.

Perhaps the two most intriguing of these seeds are the poor knight of the 1829 poem of "There lived in this world a poor knight" and Don Žuan of *The Stone Guest*. I have written that the potential for fundamental change within a character was essential to Dostoevskij's comprehension of the moment and foreign to Puškin's. The demon in "Angel" is touched by his vision of the angel, yet he remains a demon. He faces no struggle, no critical juncture at which he must decide which way to turn. However, the two following examples must at least be discussed within the framework of the argument of this chapter.

Like the demon in "Angel," the knight in "There lived in this world a poor knight" has a vision. Gasparov and Paperno argue that the Madonna is an important attribute of the eternal in Puškin and that this image includes not just the Madonna but can also be represented by an angel or even a beautiful woman. The latter is a particularly common vision in Puškin and I have already commented on the most famous example of that type: "I remember a wondrous moment." I would only suggest that perhaps there is a hierarchy within the bundle of Madonna images that Gasparov and Paperno postulate, with the figure of the Madonna residing at the apex. I suggest this as a possibility simply because unlike the other visions that have already been cited, the vision in "There lived on earth a poor knight" seems to have produced a

radical and irrevocable change within the observer. One key to the image is the modifier "nepostižnyj" or "inexplicable" in reference to the vision. I mentioned earlier P. B. Struve's work on the origins of the word *neiz"jasnimyj*. In the same article he also discussed the origins of the word *nepostižnyj*, noting both its distinctly biblical genesis and the fact that the sole use of this word by Puškin comes in this very poem.⁷⁰ The other key is the phrase "S toj pory" or "From that time." This is in reference to the vision and the subsequent change in behavior on the part of the knight. From that time the knight refuses to look at or speak with women, ties rosary beads instead of a woman's scarf around his neck, and prays not to God or Christ or The Holy Ghost but instead spends "whole nights" in front of Her image. Previous to this vision we know only that the knight had a "bold and frank spirit" and was "quiet and simple." The knight was certainly not a demon. There cannot be a question here of one principle of the universe attempting to convert itself into the opposite principle. Nor can there be a question of this approximating the "super-charged" moment of Dostoevskij for such moments imply a struggle and this element is absent in the poem. Nevertheless, it does present an example in Puškin of an inspired moment which manages to "break out" of its temporal boundaries. I have written and provided examples of how Puškin's characters do not deviate from their path. But in this case, the knight, who was "on the road" when his vision occurred, was at least able to change his direction.

My second example is Don Žuan from *The Stone Guest*.

Unlike the knight, Don Žuan is a demonic personality. We have Dona Anna's word for it: "You are an utter demon. How many poor women have you ruined?" Thus, Don Žuan is a representative of the primal force of evil. For him to attempt to become his opposite, to overturn his entire nature, this would be a significant development and call into question any definitions of Puškin as a fatalist. At first Don Žuan follows the pattern we have become familiar with. He acknowledges that he has already been "judged for life" and that "fate has foreordained something different" for him. Don Žuan, however, just like the knight and just like the demon in "Angel" has had a vision. Dona Anna has a "wondrous beauty" which Don Žuan has looked upon everyday (an action which mimics the greedy observation by the demon in "Angel") since he has taken to dressing as a monk and hiding in the cemetery where her husband's grave is. He calls her "angel Dona Anna" and confesses that "from that time" (*s toj pory*) that he first saw her, he "has been entirely reborn."⁷⁹ Thus from the instant of the vision Don Žuan claims that his nature has utterly changed. This would certainly come closer to a Dostoevskian concept of the moment. This is especially true if we accept that Don Žuan sees in Dona Anna his ideal and yet chooses to conquer her much as he conquered his previous victims, "not one of whom" he loved. It would also suggest that to define Puškin as a fatalist, one consequence of which would be that this aspect of his world-view is reflected in

his understanding of the moment, might well be too simplistic. There is, of course, the question as to whether or not we are to believe Don Žuan. Dona Anna resists at first but then relents and agrees to yet another meeting with the man she knows to be the murderer of her husband. However, Dona Anna "is weak at heart" and has perhaps allowed herself to be deceived. His sincerity and thus his believability is attested by his manner of death. As Savely Sendorovich has pointed out "The statue, in the developed sculptural myth, is the bearer of death."⁶⁰ Don Žuan's meeting with the Commendatore ends with his own demise. It has been noted that Don Žuan's end is bitterly ironic, coming as it does just after he has become aware of the meaning of true love. In other words, Don Žuan is simply too late in his change of heart; he must die of love just as his victims have. This approximates Anna Axmatova's view for she is convinced that Don Žuan is reborn and that the "entire tragedy of it is that in that instant ("v ètot mig") he loved and was happy."⁶¹ If we accept this point of view then the Commendatore is acting as an agent of fate, interrupting the attempt "to be completely reborn" because such an attempt violates the natural order. There is also the possibility that the Commendatore is an agent of vengeance; Don Žuan is punished because he has treated his ideal as he treated all other women. The latter would mean that it is not Dona Anna who was deceived but perhaps Don Žuan himself. He believed in his rebirth, so much so that Dona Anna's name is the last word he pronounces, yet his

behavior would argue that a renewal did not in fact take place. If so, then Puškin's fatalist view of the world is not significantly altered. Don Žuan was never "reborn" because such a phenomenon is not possible in Puškin's universe. His downfall, then, is perhaps due to believing in the impossible. Even if Axmatova is right, her view only supports the interpretation of *mig* for Puškin that I have been putting forth. Don Žuan, the "improviser of love songs," is happy only for an instant. In other words, there is still that temporal restriction represented by *mig*. Happiness can be encompassed only within the moment. It does not happen in Puškin that happiness, or any other positive emotion or feeling such as poetic inspiration, can transcend the instant.

At the very least the poor knight and Don Žuan add complexity to the image of Puškin as a fatalist. That is all to the good. It is perilous to insist on extremely narrow interpretations of a writer. I have tried to show that certainly in comparison with Dostoevskij, Puškin could be considered a fatalist and that their divergent view of the world in this respect is reflected in their respective uses of *mig*. Since I have noted that the poor knight and Don Žuan in relation to the moment and change bear at least a resemblance (and possibly share a genetic relationship) to later Dostoevskian characterizations (is it so far from Puškin's Don Žuan to Dostoevskij's Svidrigajlov?), then it is worthwhile to at least mention Dostoevskij's use of them in his own works.

Donald M. Fiene, in his 1978 article "Pushkin's 'Poor Knight': The key to Perceiving Dostoevsky's *Idiot* as Allegory" comments extensively on the correspondences between the poor knight and prince Myškin: the knight has a vision on the road to Geneva and Myškin has a "relationship with the peasant girl Mary in Switzerland"; they are both pale of face; both eventually become mad; "the phrase 'poor knight' is used more than twenty times in part II" of the *Idiot*.⁸² As far as Don Žuan is concerned he is certainly at least one model for Stavrogin. They are both womanizers who come to idealize one woman and their reaction to her. I have suggested that Don Žuan is perhaps guilty of self-deception in his belief that he is "entirely reborn" and truly loves Dona Anna. With Stavrogin we have his own confession that he convinced himself that he was "in love" with Lisa. They both attempt to possess their ideal, with irrevocable consequences for them both.

I would like to end this chapter with a brief account of the effect that the poem of Cleopatra, and more specifically the image of Cleopatra, had on Dostoevskij's poetics. His 1861 article grants us the luxury of looking at Dostoevskij not as the great novelist who wrote about Puškin late in life but as a reader of Puškin who subsequently wrote his "great" novels. One measure of Puškin's effect on Dostoevskij is the recurring patterning of Dostoevskij's characters in the image of Cleopatra. The Egyptian queen, if we remember, glances with a contemptuous eye at the crowd that has gathered at the feast. She offers a night of her love for the price of one's

life, thereby inspiring both "fright" and "passion" within the audience. These attributes are frequently to be met with again in many of Dostoevskij's characters.

Raskol'nikov's sister, Avdotja Romanovna, in *Crime and Punishment* is one example. Dunja has many attributes which evoke a comparison with Cleopatra. She is, for example, "remarkably good-looking" and "self-assured" and her face has a "rather self-willed look" to it. Dunja is also rather composed and unfazed by the attention of others. When she first met Razumixin "his eyes devoured Avdotya Romanovna," but she was "not at all disconcerted by this." Just as Cleopatra is characterized as capricious and contemptuous of others so too does Dunja's mother ascribe similar qualities to Dunja:

"...you are the absolute image of him [Raskol'nikov], not so much in face as in mind; you are both of a melancholic temper, both moody and hasty, both arrogant, both generous..."

There is even a reference to Dunja's inability to love.

Immediately after commenting that Raskol'nikov "does not love anyone," Razumixin exclaims that Dunja is "terribly like" her brother, "in every way." Cleopatra may offer a night of her love but it is questionable that she can emotionally experience love and this is precisely what Razumixin is questioning about Dunja. There is the even more important consideration of Dunja's proposed marriage to Lužin. Dunja claims that she is marrying for her own sake, because her own life is difficult, and that for the material benefits Lužin will offer she is "prepared to fulfil honourably all that he expects."

Raskol'nikov's response is that she is "selling" herself "for

money." Thus, whereas Cleopatra had been willing to sell herself for the price of one's life, Dunja's price is money. And just as Cleopatra vows "to quench" and "satisfy" the desires of her lovers, so too does Dunja rather more primly pledge "to fulfil" all that Lužin might want. Although Dostoevskij saw a similarity between 19th century Russia and Cleopatra's court in their emphasis on the material, he recognized, nevertheless, a difference in the expression of this emphasis. For Cleopatra and her court the material is represented by the body; passions, therefore, are palpable, bold and dramatic. For the capitalist age, however, the material can only be represented by money; passions, emotions, etc., are more muted than in Cleopatra's time. Thus Cleopatra is capricious, as for example when she offers her love for the price of one's life: Dunja is simply moody and hasty. Instead of life, Dunja accepts money. Cleopatra vows to the Gods of love and death to do all that her lovers might wish: Dunja, as befits her age, is not nearly so dramatic.

There is also a crucial scene where Dunja threatens Svidrigajlov with a revolver. The proximity between death and passion clearly elicits a resonance between this scene and the one from ancient Egypt. Roles are reversed and intermixed by Dostoevskij; Cleopatra offered to be a slave for a night, but here it is Svidrigajlov who offers to be Dunja's "slave" for life. Dunja, however, pulls out a pistol, threatening to kill him. She reminds Svidrigajlov that she has always hated him but he disputes this: "Ah, Avdotya Romanovna! You seem to have forgotten how you softened towards me in the heat of

propaganda and grew tender... I could see it in your eyes."⁸³ Cleopatra had rested her eyes on the unnamed youth "with tender emotion" and now Svidrigajlov wants to claim a similar response on Dunja's part. Is Svidrigajlov a modern perversion of the youth from EN? The youth stepped boldly forward to accept from the beautiful queen an offer intermingled with love and death.

Delight shone in his eyes;
The inexperienced power of passion
Seethed in his young heart...

Dunja raises her pistol, aiming at Svidrigajlov's head, and at that moment he "had never seen her look so beautiful. The flame that shone in her eyes as she raised the revolver seemed to set him on fire, and his heart contracted with pain."⁸⁴ She misses and Svidrigajlov continues to stare at her, "...inflamed with passion. Dunya realized that he would rather die than let her go."⁸⁵

Although Svidrigajlov seems to be in a position analogous to that of Puškin's youth, he is there because he also has many of the attributes of Cleopatra. What Dostoevskij particularly noted about Cleopatra was the fact that she was bored. Her boredom stemmed from being spiritually empty and physically satiated. Svidrigajlov is also bored and for the same reasons. His quest to feel leads him to Dunja. Like Cleopatra, Svidrigajlov essentially poses a challenge to Dunja. By forcing the situation he increases the tension, thereby creating the conditions necessary for the "super-charged" moment of choice. In fact there are two such moments, for Dunja must decide to kill or not and then

Svidrigajlov must decide to ruin or not. Both choose to do good, rather than evil, and both are rewarded. Dunja's "generosity" vanquishes her Cleopatran "arrogance," enabling her to choose Razumixin over Svidrigajlov and love over hate. Svidrigajlov is able to release himself from the physical existence that had become a torment.

A very similar transposition of Cleopatran elements to two different characters takes place in *The Devils*. In *The Devils*, Lisa runs away from Maurice to Stavrogin and spends the night with him. The morning after they engage in a conversation in which their night together is characterized in terms that are strikingly reminiscent of Cleopatra's deal: a night of love to be followed by the taking of one's life at dawn. I have already discussed this scene in order to demonstrate the Dostoevskian moment, but now it is necessary to view it as a modern equivalent of the Cleopatra anecdote.

Lisa sets the tone by anxiously and impatiently waiting for the dawn to arrive: "By the calendar it should have been daylight an hour ago, but it's still almost dark." For Lisa, everything is confirmed; she and Stavrogin will "be only a short time together." It is Stavrogin who does not understand and Lisa who must explain. She reminds him that she came to him speaking of herself "as a dead woman." "I've had my hour" she adds, referring to their night as a sort of exchange with which she is satisfied. He on the other hand speaks of her coming to him and their subsequent night as a "present" of "so much happiness." Lisa, then, is the one who has made an offer, i.e., "present," but who has applied the terms to

herself. When Stavrogin continues to object she becomes even more explicit and adamant: "Look, I've told you already: I've exchanged my whole life for one hour, and I'm content."⁹⁶ The Cleopatra exchange has taken place but within a 19th century context; Here it is the woman who is ruined and by her own volition.

Even the facade of a challenge and acceptance is echoed. Earlier Lisa accused Stavrogin of being related by marriage to Lebjadkin. As the narrator explains there "was a fearful challenge in those words - everyone realized that." Stavrogin seems to accept the challenge and replies "to the *fatal question* simply, firmly, and with an air of absolute readiness" (ed. my italics).⁹⁷ While Lisa is explaining why they have such a short time together she refers back to the instant of her challenge and his reply as a "beautiful moment" (*krasivoe mgnovenie*) which precipitated her subsequent "whim" to run to him. Thus the "moment" continues to exert its power within the Dostoevskian universe. Lisa forces a confession from Stavrogin that his motives were not as pure as the youth with Cleopatra. The youth acted out of sincere love and this is what Stavrogin would like to believe himself but he is forced by Lisa to admit that he "kept the moment" for himself. Yet Stavrogin, like Svidrigajlov before him, also has some important similarities to Cleopatra. He, too, is satiated and therefore bored. He committed outrages because of this boredom, just as Cleopatra issued her outrageous challenge because of her boredom. He also has his suitors, or at least his affairs. If we exclude Mary Lebjadkin, since her

relationship with Stavrogin was never consummated, then they would number three, namely Lisa, Daša and Mrs. Šatov.

Lisa and Stavrogin face each other as victim and henchman, youth and devouring mate combined. Both Lisa and Stavrogin have their "super-charged" moment. For Lisa the choice was to be ruined or not, for Stavrogin it was to ruin Lisa or not. They both choose the negative, destructive options and the consequences follow soon thereafter. Lisa is aware that she has exchanged her "whole life for one hour" and is shortly beaten to death by a mob enraged by the deaths of Lebjadkin and his sister. Stavrogin, as I discussed earlier in the chapter, has by his own action lost his "last hope." Having already lost his appetite for debauchery and incapable of experiencing anything beyond the physical, Stavrogin's only option, like Svidrigajlov before him, is to be released from his earthly existence. In its way, Stavrogin's suicide fulfills his part of the bargain with Lisa, i.e., not to have "one hour more" than she.

Diana Lewis Burgin has pointed out yet another correspondence between Puškin's Cleopatra and a heroine of Dostoevskij's. In her 1985 article "The Reprieve of Nastasja: A Reading in Verse," Diana Burgin identifies Nastasja Filippovna "as an underground Cleopatra of the nineteenth century."⁸⁸ The parallels are many. She cites the scene in part 4 of the *Idiot* when Nastasja Filippovna "is identified, by one of the gapers outside the church on her wedding day, as Puškin's Cleopatra: 'A princess! I'd sell my soul for a princess like that... one night for the price of my life'

(8:492)." Those, of course, are the terms that Cleopatra had offered at her feast. Even the feast is replayed, but debased by 19th century materialism, for "the asking price is actual cash, not death."⁸⁹ Just as Cleopatra has three takers, so too does Nastasja- "Ganja, Rogożyn and Myškin." Also seemingly in imitation of Cleopatra, Nastasja "takes pity on the last and most innocent of the three, Myškin."⁹⁰ One could argue about whether pity is the emotion that guides Cleopatra's reaction to the youth, nevertheless for Nastasja, according to Burgin, pity is simply "a mask for her ironical self-contempt and a device to insure his continued suit."⁹¹

I would argue that something other than pity or trying to insure that Myškin continues his suit is what motivates Nastasja. Rogożyn explains that her odd behavior, i.e., the fact that she has several times gone off with Myškin but has been unable to carry out the marriage, is due to the fact that "she thinks she would disgrace you and ruin your whole life." This is not pity being used as a "device" in order to insure that Myškin will continue his suit. This is the Dostoevskian moment that Nastasja replays on several occasions: an instant in which she must decide to ruin or not another person. Nastasja chooses not to ruin Myškin, at least not directly, for as we know all three, Nastasja, Rogożyn and Myškin, are ruined in the end. Indeed, up to the very end Nastasja is terrified of meeting Myškin, perhaps unsure of herself. Instead, even though she can be sure of her own destruction by this step, she runs away with Rogożyn, insisting that they stay at his place instead of her lodgings because

Myškin would find her there "as soon as it's daylight." This modern-day Cleopatra, however, is unable to escape the consequences of her literary predecessor's deal: it is Nastasja who dies early in the morning after having spent, significantly enough, a single night with Rogożyn.

The means of her death (Rogożyn stabbing her in the breast) indicates that Dostoevskij had yet another literary Cleopatra in mind as well, namely Shakespeare's. In his *Antony and Cleopatra*, the latter takes an asp to her breast. In *The Idiot*, the sting of the asp is replaced by Rogożyn's knife. Nevertheless, it is the parallels with Puškin's Cleopatra that are most striking. Just as striking are the changes that Dostoevskij makes in order to fit the Cleopatra anecdote into the modern age: the consequences of the "trade" are inevitably felt by all concerned and not just Cleopatra's suitors.

Nastasja Filippovna is not the only one to mimic the feast of Cleopatra. Grušenka in *The Brothers Karamazov* is holding court at Mokroe. Both Dmitrij and her Polish officer regard her as their queen. What Dmitrij says upon entering the room both unannounced and unexpected confirms Grušenka's status as his sovereign lady and reiterates the already familiar cries of "last hour" and "last day": "I flew here... I wanted to spend my last day, my last hour in this room, in this very room... where I, too, adored... my queen..."²² The Pole, too, acknowledges her hegemony: "What my queen commands is law!" However, it is not Grušenka, the center of this feast (later, upon the Pole's departure, it is described as

"almost an orgy, a feast to which all were welcome"), but rather Dmitrij who comes up with the idea of an offer. We witness the birth of his idea, coming as Dmitrij looks at Grušenka's face: "... and at the same moment something new flashed into his mind - a strange new thought!"⁹³ It is then that he thinks of offering the Polish officer three thousand roubles if the officer will leave forever and forget about Grušenka. Grušenka finds out and indignantly asks "Am I for sale?" Like Nastasja Fillipovna's offer of 100,000 roubles, the nature of Cleopatra's original transaction has been altered to fit a capitalist world. Nevertheless, Dmitrij succeeds in vanquishing his rival, although for different reasons, and Grušenka begins to look at him "with caressing and passionate eyes" which "followed him wherever he went."⁹⁴ Dmitrij's new found joy is dampened by the realization that he quite possibly has Gregory's death on his conscious. This guilt prompts thoughts of suicide which in turn underscore and echo the original transaction of a night of love for one's life: "He ran back into the room- to her, to her, his queen forever! Was not one moment of her love worth all the rest of life, even in the agonies of disgrace? This wild question clutched at his heart. 'To her, to her alone. To see her, to hear her, to think of nothing, to forget everything. If only for that night, for an hour, for a moment!'"⁹⁵

Grušenka, however, offers more than just a moment, for unlike Cleopatra who denies her feelings for the youth, Grušenka listens to her heart: "'Fool! that's the man you love!' That was what my heart whispered to me. You came in

and all grew bright.... Dmitri, how could I be such a fool as to think I could love anyone after you?" Like Cleopatra, Grušenka offers to be a "slave," not for a night, but "for the rest of [her] life."⁹⁶ By finally obeying her heart, rather than denying it, Grušenka is able to overcome her "spite" and to demonstrate a spiritual love that Cleopatra could not have aspired to, for her age was bereft of spirituality. Grušenka and Dmitrij replay Puškin's scene between Cleopatra and the youth, but within Dostoevskij's Christianized context.

Dmitrij, however, represents more than just the youth from EN. As I mentioned earlier, Burgin identifies Nastasja's suitors as three, namely Ganja, Rogožin and Myškin, who correspond in number and type to the three suitors in EN. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, however, we have the familiar Dostoevskian doubling of roles. Dmitrij is Grušenka's successful suitor but a parallel can be drawn not just between him and Puškin's youth, but also with the soldier and the epicurean. As an ex-officer Dmitrij displays the sense of honor and duty that served as the primary motivation for the behavior of Puškin's Roman soldier. Particularly with regards to Dmitrij's behavior concerning the three thousand roubles that Katja had leant him do we see how his sense of honor and duty torment him. Like Crito, Dmitrij is a sensualist, driven by his passions and desire to consume the earthly beauty that is Grušenka. Dmitrij, however, is not purely a soldier or a sensualist. There remains an innocence within his soul, as testified to by his dream about the babe, and it is this that

touches Grušenka and which links him with Puškin's youth.

As I said, however, there is a doubling of these roles. Dmitrij contains aspects of the soldier, the sensualist and the innocent youth within him. There are as well other suitors of Grušenka's. Her "first and rightful lover" is the Polish officer, yet another variant of the Roman warrior. Puškin's Roman soldier responded to Cleopatra's challenge out of a sense of honor and duty. As we see it is precisely the Polish officer's sense of honor and duty which have been debased by Dostoevskij; He sought Grušenka's hand for the sake of her money, contemplated Dmitrij's offer of three thousand roubles and cheated at cards. Dmitrij's father is yet another suitor and like Crito, he is ruled by his passions; He is a sensualist, just like Dmitrij (Ch. nine of book three, part one is entitled "The Sensualists" and refers to both Dmitrij and his father). There is even an innocent youth, namely Aleša. He does not seek her hand as the others do but in the crucial scene that I described earlier in the chapter he does go to her in a moment when he is vulnerable and she lies in wait, ready to seduce him. In fact, it is through his innocence that Grušenka is able to experience the good that resides within her. This moment of Christian impulse allows her to eventually conquer her spite and to truly read her heart. Dmitrij succeeds because he combines within himself all the characteristics of Cleopatra's three suitors. In a similar vein, all of Nastassja Felipovna's suitors fail because they are too pure (Myškin) or too passionate (Rogožin). Dmitrij stands before Grušenka as an honorable,

passionate and innocent man, and she is left, as a contemporary Cleopatra, to choose between her bestial and noble impulses. However, unlike her Egyptian predecessor, Grušenka chooses the latter, thereby redeeming herself and Dmitrij.

The Christianization of the moment, making it a moment of moral choice and imbuing it with psychological tension is a quintessential distillment of Dostoevskij's poetics. It is not surprising, therefore, that Cleopatra's seemingly momentary wavering between human and bestial inclinations would be interpreted by Dostoevskij in a manner that reflects his pre-suppositions about literature and the world. For him the inspiration of the moment can transcend its temporal bounds, unlike in Puškin where inspiration may come and come again, but always within the frame of the moment. Dostoevskij's concept of *mig* governed his reading of EN and shaped the text to fit his world-view. However, as we have seen, the text also shaped the reader Dostoevskij, for the Cleopatra image continued to haunt him and reappeared in various guises as he wrote his great novels.

¹B. V. Tomaševskij. Puškin: Sovremennye problemy istoriko-literaturnogo izučeniia (Leningrad: Obrazovanie, 1925; rpt. The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1970), p. 91.

²Veniamin Sapelkin. Puškin i Dostoevskij (San Paulo, Brazil: luč, 1956), p. 79.

³V. Komarovič. "Dostoevskij i 'Egipetskie noči' Puškina" in Puškin i ego sovremenniki, XXIX-XXX (1918), p. 38.

⁴V. Ja. Kirpotin. Mir Dostoevskogo (Moskva: Sovetskij pisatel', 1983), p. 457.

⁵V. Ja. Kirpotin. "Dostoevskij o 'Egipetskix nočax' Puškina" in Voprosy Literatury, 11 (1962), p. 117.

⁶Ibid., p. 113.

⁷Ibid.

⁸F. Dostoevskij. "Otvét Russkomu Vestniku" in Polnoe sobranie sočinenij v 30-x tomax, 19 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1979), p. 133.

⁹Ibid., p. 135.

¹⁰A. Malein. "Puškin, Avrelij Viktor i Tacit" in Puškin v mirovoj literature, ed. N. V. Jakovlev (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdanie, 1926), p. 12.

¹¹Ibid., p. 11.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Paul Debreczeny. The Other Pushkin (Stanford University Press: Stanford, California) 1983.

¹⁴Leslie O'Bell. Pushkin's Egyptian Nights (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984), p. 40.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Kirpotin, "Dostoevskij o ...", p. 121.

¹⁷B. V. Tomaševskij. Kniga vtoraja, materialy i monografii (1824-1837) (Moskva-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1961), pp. 462-463.

¹⁸P. V. Annenkov. Sočinenija Puškina (Sanktpeterburg, 1855), p. 387.

¹⁹Aleksandr Puškin. Polnoe sobranie sočinenie v desjati tomax, 7 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1978), p. 100.

²⁰This topic has seen an increase in interest in recent years, including S. S. Davydov "Puškin and Christianity", (Paper read at Berkeley, 1988); A. M. Pančenko "Puškin i russkoe pravoslavie (stat'ja pervaja)" Russkaja literatura 2 (1990); I. V. Nemirovskij "Biblejskaja tema v 'Mednom vsadnike'" Russkaja literatura 3 (1990); and Vladimir Golstein "Puškin's Mozart and Salieri as a Parable of Salvation" Russian Literature XXIX-II (1991). In the latter for instance, Golstein asserts that Puškin's play is governed by the "biblical system of values and judgements".

²¹A. M. Pančenko. "Puškin i russkoe pravoslavie" in Russkaja literatura 2 (1990), p. 32.

²²S. L. Frank. Étjudy o Puškine (rpt. Letchworth-Herts-England: Prideaux Press, 1978), p. 9.

²³Ibid., p. 21.

²⁴Ibid., p. 246.

- ²⁵ Ibid., p. 247.
- ²⁶ Ibid., p. 16.
- ²⁷ Ibid., p. 17.
- ²⁸ Ibid., pp. 21-22.
- ²⁹ Ibid., p. 21.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ B. Gasporov and I. Paperno. "K opisaniju motivnoj struktury liriki Puškina" in Russian Romanticism: Studies in the Poetic Codes, ed. Nils Åke Nilsson (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1979), p. 10.
- ³² Frank, pp. 24-25.
- ³³ P. B. Struve. "'Neiz"jasnimyj' i 'Nepostižnyj'" in Puškinskij sbornik (Prag: Politika, 1929), p. 259.
- ³⁴ Ibid., p. 260.
- ³⁵ Frank, p. 25.
- ³⁶ Ibid., pp. 22-23.
- ³⁷ Savely Sendorovich. "On Puškin's Mythology: The Shade-Myth" in Alexander Puškin: Symposium II, ed. Andrej Kodjak, Krystyna Pomorska, and Kiril Taranovsky (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, Inc., 1980), p. 109.
- ³⁸ S. V. Šervinskij. Ritm i Smysl (Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR: Moskva, 1961), p. 153.
- ³⁹ Valerij Brjusov. Moj Puškin (Moskva-Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1929), p. 108.
- ⁴⁰ Dostoevskij, "Otvét..." p. 137.
- ⁴¹ Vjačeslav Ivanov. Freedom and the Tragic Life (New York: The Noonday Press), p. 112.
- ⁴² Alex de Jonge. Dostoevsky and The Age of Intensity (London: Secker & Warburg, 1975), p. 69.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Dostoevskij, "Otvét..." p. 135.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 136.
- ⁴⁶ F. Dostoevskij. Crime and Punishment (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975), p. 402. This and all subsequent citations from Dostoevskij's novels are from the translations cited in the bibliography. With the exception of the above and citations from EN, translations are my own. I have made exceptions where translations were readily available that far surpassed my own efforts. While all translations can be criticized I found the Coulson translation of Crime and Punishment to be particularly felicitous. That and the other translations certainly facilitated the citing of the relevant passages from Dostoevskij's novels. I am greatly indebted to their efforts.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 420. The original can be found on p. 382 of the Polnoe sobranie sočinienij v tridcati tomov and runs as follows: "On podošel k Dune i tixo obnjal ee rukoj za taliju. Ona ne soprotivljalas', no, vsja trepešča kak list, smotrela na nego umoljajuščimi glazami. On bylo xotel čto-to skazat', no tol'ko guby ego krivilis', a vygovorit' on ne mog.

- Otpusti menja! - umoljaja skazala Dunja.

Svidrigajlov vzdrognul: èto ty bylo uže kak-to ne tak progovoreno, kak davešnee.

- Tak ne ljubiš'? - tixo sprosila on.

Dunja otricatel'no povelala golovoj.

- I.. ne možeš'?.. Nikogda? - s otčajaniem prošeptala on.

- Nikogda! - prošeptala Dunja.

Prošlo mgnovenie užasnoj, nemoj bor'by v duše Svidrigajlova.

Nevyrazimym vzgljadom gljadel on na nee. Bdrug on otnjal ruku, otvernul-sja, bystro otošel k oknu i stal pred nim.

Prošlo ešče mgnovenie.

- Vot ključ! (On vynul ego iz levogo karmana pal'to i položil szadi sebja na stol, ne gljadja i ne oboračivajas' k Dune.) Berite; uxodite skorej?..

⁴⁸ F. Dostoevskij. The Devils (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1960), p. 666.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 517-518.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 519.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 667.

⁵² Dostoevskij, Crime, p. 462.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 463.

⁵⁴ F. Dostoevskij. The Brothers Karamazov (New York: The New American Library, 1957), p. 315.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 311, 313.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 325.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 320.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 323.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 330.

⁶⁰ This is in reference to the biblical story that Grušenka recounts. A wicked old woman died and went to hell but her guardian angel persevered on her behalf and in evidence of her goodness told how she once gave an onion to a starving passerby. The angel was then instructed to try to pull her out of a pool of hell with an onion. As the old woman was being pulled out others in the pool grabbed onto her and she kicked at them saying that the onion was hers. The part of the onion that she was holding onto broke off and she fell back into the pool.

⁶¹ de Jonge, p. 131.

⁶² Dostoevskij, The Brothers, p. 432.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 594.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 616.

⁶⁵ Dostoevskij, "Otvét...", p. 137.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ O'Bell, p. 102.

⁶⁸ Gasparov, p. 13.

- ⁶⁹ M. Geršenzon. Mudrost' Puškina (Moskva: Knigoizdatel'stvo pisatelej, 1919), p. 75.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 74.
- ⁷¹ Ibid.
- ⁷² Ibid.
- ⁷³ Alexandr Puškin. "The Queen of Spades" in The Complete Prose Tales of Alexandr Sergejevitch Pushkin (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1966), p. 286.
- ⁷⁴ Alexandr Puškin. "Mocart i Sal'eri" in Dramy (Moskva: Russkij jazyk, 1985), p. 108.
- ⁷⁵ Alexandr Puškin. The Captain's Daughter in The Complete Prose Tales of Alexandr Sergejevitch Pushkin (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1966), p. 435.
- ⁷⁶ Puškin, "The Queen...", p. 292.
- ⁷⁷ Puškin, "Mocart", p. 111.
- ⁷⁸ Struve, p. 262.
- ⁷⁹ Alexandr Puškin. "Kamennyj gost'" in Dramy (Moskva: Russkij jazyk, 1985), p. 138.
- ⁸⁰ Sendorovich, p. 107.
- ⁸¹ A. A. Axmatova. "'Kamennyj gost'" Puškina" in Puškin: Issledovanija i materialy, II (Moskva-Leningrad: Akademija nauk SSSR, 1958), p. 190.
- ⁸² Donald M. Fiene. "Pushkin's 'Poor Knight': The Key to Perceiving Dostoevsky's Idiot as Allegory" in International Dostoevsky Society 8 (November 1978), pp. 13-14.
- ⁸³ Dostoevskij, p. 419.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 420.
- ⁸⁶ Dostoevskij, The Devils, p. 521.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 456.
- ⁸⁸ Diana Lewis Burgin. "The Reprieve of Nastasja: A Reading of a Dreamer's Authored Life" in Slavic and East European Journal 29 (No 3, Fall 1985), p. 260.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 261.
- ⁹¹ Ibid.
- ⁹² Dostoevskij, The Brothers, p. 383.
- ⁹³ Ibid., p. 392.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 397-398.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 401. David M. Bethea in The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction quotes Straxov on the experience of the epileptic seizure. The wording is very similar to the way Dmitrij expresses himself about sharing a moment with Grušenka: "For several moments I experience a happiness that is impossible in a normal condition and that other people can have no understanding of. I feel complete harmony in myself and in all the world, and this feeling is so strong and sweet that for several seconds of such bliss one could give ten years of one's life, perhaps one's entire life". The circumstances of Cleopatra's exchange may vary but the conditions continue to have life: a moment of bliss for one's life.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 402.

Chapter IV

Complicating the moment: Brjusov and Puškin

Beauty and Death
are unchangeably
one.
Brjusov

For Mandelstam the
death of an artist
is the culminating
creative act.
Nadežda Mandel'stam

Brjusov's relationship with Puškin was complex. As a young poet and hopeful leader of the Symbolist movement in Russia, Brjusov rejected at least the language of Puškin for the needs of the modern age: "What if I tried to write a treatise on spectral analysis couched in the language of Homer? I wouldn't have the words or expressions. The same thing if I try to express *fin de siècle* sensations in Pushkin's language. Yes, Symbolism is necessary!"¹ Yet, Brjusov was to change his mind. This 1893 diary entry is subsequently followed by the discovery in 1897 of a Puškin that Brjusov had never known. In that year he first read Annenkov's 1855 *Materials for a Biography of A. S. Pushkin*. Brjusov was crushed to realize that here was a Puškin that he had not even imagined. In his diary for February 17 he wrote "I'm destroyed." We do not know if Annenkov's biography presented Brjusov with his first encounter with EN. However,

Annenkov's reading of EN set the initial standard by which subsequent readings were judged. It is intriguing that Brjusov's rediscovery of Puškin would be instigated by Annenkov's book. It seems that from this moment Brjusov began to reassess Puškin's relevance as a poet for the contemporary age. Although Brjusov wrote many articles about Puškin we are concerned primarily with his 1910 article "Egipetskie noči" and his 1916-17 adaptation and completion of EN. In the course of my analysis of Puškin and Brjusov I will have cause to review many of their poems. These poems will be cited in turn as we come upon them.

In conjunction with his reassessment of Puškin as poet, Brjusov began to alter his perception of Puškin as a man. We must remember that for a Decadent, the poet and the man are one and inseparable. The predominant image of Puškin was that of a heroic and tragic, i.e., romantic figure. Brjusov was not the first to challenge this vision of the poet. This image was already being reshaped by Merežkovskij and Vladimir Solov'ev, whose writings on this topic Brjusov became aware of at about the same time that he discovered Annenkov's book.

Joan Delaney Grossman notes that Merežkovskij began the "Decadent approach to Pushkin."² If we turn to Merežkovskij's *Eternal Companions* we will find that Puškin's interest in passion, as far as Merežkovskij is concerned, is quite similar to that of the Decadents': "Any passion is wonderful in that it opens the soul up to disturbance, to running beyond the hated limits of human nature."³ Merežkovskij brings up the example of Cleopatra in EN as a character who evokes not

only death but along with it "what bliss, what untroubled fullness of life, free from good and evil."⁴ Moreover, he adds that Tat'jana loves horror just as much as Cleopatra does, citing as evidence a couplet from *Evgenii Onegin*: "No tajnu prelest' naxodila/ I v samom užase ona." If Brjusov still had doubts about Puškin's relevance to the modern age, then Merežkovskij clearly did not: "In his *terzini*, filled with the mystery of the early Florentine Renaissance, the poet expressed the charm of evil, of pagan voluptuousness and pride... Here Pushkin is close to us, the people of the end of the nineteenth century."⁵

Vladimir Solov'ev, on the other hand, revisited Puškin the man and found him to be anything but a heroic and tragic figure, who was "pursued by a hostile fate."⁶ Instead he saw a man who "was brought to ruin by his moral weakness."⁷ Brjusov takes up the lead of both Merežkovskij and Solov'ev. In reference to the latter it must be pointed out that Brjusov follows Solov'ev only in his biographical investigation that revealed a Puškin who defied the received myth about him. In terms of the significance that they derive from the biographical details, Brjusov and Solov'ev differ substantially; Solov'ev "draws a sharp line between Pushkin in moments of inspiration and Pushkin in everyday life,"⁸ whereas for Brjusov the man and the poet, as I mentioned above, cannot be separated.

In his 1903 article "From the Life of Pushkin," Brjusov relies heavily upon contemporary memoirs in order to paint a portrait of Puškin as an individual who tended to behave

either "in an unseemly manner" or "somewhat arrogantly" and who "was anything but graceful in his manners."⁹ The characterizations of Puškin that Brjusov cites are hardly complimentary. M. P. Pogodin wrote in his diary that it's "exasperating that Puškin arrived at Volkov's in a dissipated condition." A. V. Nikitenko commented on Puškin's gambling, writing that the poet "lost at cards. They say, that he squandered 18,000 rubles in the course of two months. His behavior does not correspond to that of a person who speaks with the language of the gods." Finally, Count M. A. Korf wrote that "There ruled in him only two elements: satisfaction of fleshly passions and poetry, and in both he -- went far."¹⁰

According to Joan Grossman, Nikolaj Minskij, "made Pushkin in effect a natural Decadent" by claiming that Puškin "crossed all thresholds placed by human law, precept, morality..."¹¹

Brjusov followed Minskij's lead but without going quite so far. Nevertheless, for Brjusov, according to Grossman, "Pushkin the man and Pushkin the poet lived in inseparable unity", as was characteristic of "early Symbolism and Decadence."¹² Thus even a restrained Brjusov, who was determined to remove the distorting "magnifying glasses" that others had placed between his generation and Puškin, was viewing Puškin through a decadent lens. The full flowering of Brjusov's image of Puškin as Decadent came to fruition with a series of articles in 1909 and 1910 that dealt with "interpretation directly."¹³ I would like to consider one of those articles, specifically his 1910 article on EN.

By 1910 Brjusov had largely retired from his self-appointed role as the leader of Russian Symbolism. He entered a time of his life that K. Močul'skij refers to as his "study period."¹⁴ Brjusov's activity as a scholar of Puškin intensifies in this period. He was among the growing number of textologists who were working on deciphering Puškin's manuscripts. His methods, however, were less than orthodox and he was never acknowledged as a true textologist in the same sense that Bondi, Tomaševskij, Gofman and others were. Brjusov, in fact, carried on a running polemic with Gofman about the validity of his work on Puškin.

In 1920 Brjusov published a collection of Puškin's verse, which, in his opinion, should have been considered as an important contribution to the study of Puškin. The reason for this was that his collection included poems that had never been published before, as well as unpublished variants of stanzas, and corrections of mistakes from earlier editions. Gofman, however, wrote that the edition "gave evidence of Brjusov's extremely liberal treatment of Puškin's text."¹⁵ Gofman's basic complaint stemmed from the condition of the manuscripts. It was very difficult to discern how a poem should be read; much would be crossed out or simply missing and sometimes it was difficult to distinguish a fair copy from a draft. Brjusov's approach to these problems was to fill in any blank or illegible spots with his own words and phrases. As he put it in his commentary to his collection: "Much has been restored by guesswork."¹⁶ For Gofman, this was taking undue liberties, but for Brjusov it simply meant

providing the reader with a readable work. In a way, Brjusov's subsequent adaptation and completion of EN was a continuation, if on a grander scale, of the approach that he used in his 1920 edition of Puškin's verse. Many of the principles of his analytical guesswork that were to subsequently lead Brjusov to complete EN were formulated in the already mentioned 1910 article on EN. It is to this article that I would now like to turn.

In his article, Brjusov states that in EN Puškin attempts to oppose two world views- the ancient and modern. He demonstrates how this opposition of ancient and modern worlds manifests itself in various ways in the text. For example, both in the poem about Cleopatra and in the prose part the setting is a hall. The descriptions of these two halls echo one another: both halls are brightly lit, there is music, and there is an urn that plays a role in both the scenes, ancient and contemporary. Brjusov also feels that the personalities we meet from the ancient and contemporary worlds are meant to oppose one another. There is a certain wholeness to the characters of the Ancient world, a refreshing sincerity and awareness of who and what they are, whereas those of the contemporary world suffer from an inner disharmony ("duševnyj razlad").¹⁷ This positive portrayal of the three men who accept Cleopatra's challenge in Puškin's EN would find agreement from Dostoevskij. He characterizes Flavius's acceptance of Cleopatra's challenge as proof that he at least was "a man and not a slave," unlike the others in the audience.¹⁸

To return to Brjusov, at one point ("v odin mig"), namely when the improviser steps up to begin his improvisation, the contemporary world and Antiquity merge and the border between our two halls is erased. It is on this moment and the improvisation that follows that Brjusov focuses his attention. The contemporary setting that has preceded the improvisation scene is reduced by Brjusov to a point of irrelevance. He believes that it was merely a framing device in which to inset the jewel, i.e., the poem about Cleopatra; scenes from the modern world serve only to set off the events of the ancient world: "Sceny sovremennoj žizni tol'ko ottenjajut sobytija drevnego mira."¹⁹ Thus the chief interest of EN, Brjusov believes, is the Ancient world as Puškin depicts it in the Italian's improvisation.

According to Brjusov, Puškin saw the hallmark of Antiquity's sensibility in its cult of the flesh;²⁰ in this cult two ideas dominated, namely the ideas of *naslaždenie* and *smert'*, and these two ideas become the dominant in EN. Cleopatra pledges herself to "moščnaja Kiprida" and "bogam groznogo Aida," i.e., to the gods of love and death. The three men who accept her challenge represent the three possible attitudes to passion that were known in Antiquity. Flavius is a stoic, the personification of Rome and its bravery, equal at facing both death and passion. Crito is an epicurean, pleasure is his god. The youth represents sincere, first love, that burns with a special ardor and passion. Cleopatra herself embodies the two ideas of *naslaždenie* and *smert'*; she represents passion, sensuality, and death.

Passionate sensuality, then, is the best that life has to offer, worthy of the sacrifice of one's life in order to experience it. Whereas death is the highest price that one can pay for anything.²¹

Since Cleopatra, Queen of passion and death, is the center of EN, Brjusov concludes that these two ideas and their further elucidation represent the true focus of the work. Brjusov, of course, does not know how Puškin would have continued EN and he ponders precisely that question at the end of his article. One possibility that he envisioned was that Puškin intended to describe the three nights when passion and death were to be played out.²² Although Brjusov has been much criticized for precisely this supposition²³ it is not an unreasonable conjecture, for the themes of love and death were clearly of interest to Puškin. Barbara Heldt Monter argues, for example, that all of Puškin's *Little Tragedies*, and not just "The Stone Guest," are concerned with passion and death. In each tragedy there exists an extraordinary passion for persons, things or abstractions and this passion runs its course until it "finally consumes either its object or itself."²⁴ Certainly the "motif of the relationship to death" is central to "A Story of Roman Life" and other works of Pushkin.²⁵ Monica Dudli Frenkel points out that the moment before death is unquestionably a thematic interest of Puškin's. Specifically, she asserts that "... the quotation of poetic 'last words' a moment before execution recurs in Pushkin with striking regularity:..."²⁶ Furthermore, Puškin, by turning to the time of Cleopatra is clearly describing a

period of decadence, which "broadly understood, is not just a decline and fall, but a time of transition and break with the past."²⁷

Like Brjusov, Dostoevskij is keenly aware of this phenomenon of decadence and also of the role that passion plays in Puškin's scene from Antiquity ("uže vse uxodit v telo"). Perhaps Brjusov as a Decadent is intuitive, then, when he settles on the idea that the continuation of the work should properly focus on the three successive nights.²⁸ Actually, it would be more accurate to say that Brjusov chooses to concentrate on the three moments when passion and death are most closely intertwined and tension is at its highest point, i.e., the time right before Cleopatra's servants come to take away the lover to his death. After all, Mandel'stam affirms that "there has never been a poet who, . . . , did not have an impulse for death."²⁹

Whatever a poet's impulse for death may be, Brjusov's fascination with the theme of passion and death in his article on EN represents, for Grossman, Brjusov's introduction of the "'Decadent' Pushkin."³⁰ It would hardly be possible to deny the effect that his own time, milieu and personal codes had on Brjusov's interpretation of Puškin as man and poet. Gasparov writes that Modernism "superimposed" the present "upon the national past."³¹ Another way of saying this in Brjusov's case is that he clearly brought his preconceptions to bear on Puškin. It is Brjusov's preconceptions that I am interested in examining. In what way do they "shape the text" and account for the interpretation that Brjusov gives of EN?

There is, of course, the reverse of that question. In what way does the text, both EN and all the other works by Puškin, shape Brjusov? In other words, what is there in Puškin that accounts for Brjusov's interpretation? Is Brjusov's fascination with "Pushkin's treatment of the closeness between death and sensuality" predicated solely upon his decadent precepts or is Brjusov perhaps more insightful than he has been given credit?²²

Let us turn to the version of EN, still basically the same Dostoevskij read, that Brjusov was familiar with. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, the ordering of the stanzas in the second improvisation allowed for Dostoevskij's reading. The lingering of Cleopatra's gaze on the youth followed precipitously by her vow to cut off the heads of all three suitors could be read as a hesitation on her part between two possible poles of behavior. That same ordering of stanzas allows for the reading that Brjusov prefers, namely that Puškin intended to describe the three nights of love. Cleopatra's vow to cut off the lovers' heads did, after all, not end the improvisation in the version that both Dostoevskij and Brjusov knew. There was yet one more stanza which Dostoevskij seemingly ignored but which attracted Brjusov's attention.

And look, already the day had passed,
And the gold-horned moon shone;
Alexandria's halls
Were covered by a delightful shadow;
Fountains bubbled, lamps were alight,
A light incense burned,
And a voluptuous coolness
Was being prepared for the earthly gods;
In a luxurious golden peace,
Admidst seductive wonders,

Under a canopy of purple curtains
Glittered a golden bed...

.....
I vot, uže sokrylsja den', / I bleščet mesjac zlatorogij; /
Aleksandrijskie čertogi / Pokryla sladostnaja ten'; / Fontany
b'jut, gorjat lampady, / Kuritsja legkij fimiam, / I sladost-
trastnyja proxlady / Zemnym gotovjatsja bogam; / V roskošnom
zolotom pokoe, / Sred' obol'stitel'nyx čudes, / Pod sen'ju pur-
purnyx zaves / Blistaet lože zolotoe...

.....
Thus in the 19th century version that Brjusov was familiar with a continuation is implied by Puškin's use of the ellipsis at the end. If we refer to just one other famous use of this device we can recall that in "Osen'" Puškin had at one time actually specified several locations to sail to at the end of that poem but then omitted them in favor of the ellipsis. Therefore in that example the ellipsis certainly beckoned to the reader to employ his imagination, while behind the ellipsis there also lay the reality and specificity of designated, albeit never verbally realized locales.

Similarly, in EN the ellipsis is certainly there to encourage the reader's imagination and the last words "Glittered a golden bed" ("Blistaet lože zolotoe") certainly point to one direction where Puškin might want our imaginations to go.

Tomaševskij adds that given this ending, then "Brjusov was not so very wrong";³³ Of course, Tomaševskij believed that the ending was wrong and therefore Brjusov's conclusions as well.³⁴ Nevertheless, based upon this ending one can see how Brjusov arrives at his conclusion. He might well have thought that although Puškin opted for the open, as opposed to closed, ending in "Osen'," it is possible that in EN he would have made the opposite choice. Even if that had been Puškin's

decision there is still the question of Brjusov's treatment of these three nights. Thus in his 1910 article on EN Brjusov makes the determination that Puškin might well have intended to describe the three nights of love and death. In his 1916-17 completion of EN he proceeds to describe those three nights. Both Brjusov's conviction that the three nights were meant to be portrayed and his description of those three nights are at least as revealing of his poetics as they are of Puškin's. In order to evaluate Brjusov's interpretive decisions and distinguish between his and Puškin's poetics on this matter, i.e., to see how much Brjusov is shaping or following the text of EN, it is necessary to compare them on the two points I outlined above.

I would like to discuss first Brjusov's suggestion that Puškin might have intended to describe the three nights. The implication by Brjusov is that Puškin would not have been satisfied with the hints and innuendos given to us by the identities of the three men and the nature of Cleopatra's offer. Narrative detail, rather than suggestive hints, is the method that Puškin would have employed according to Brjusov. Indeed, Brjusov's only aim in finishing EN is "to help the reader, based on the hints that Puškin himself left, to more fully imagine one of his most profound creations."³⁵ The Puškin that is generally acknowledged, however, is precisely one who relishes, like Laurence Sterne, in leaving the reader "something to imagine."³⁶ Joost Van Baak has characterized Puškin's economy of style as a principle that Puškin rigorously applied to all his work. Žirmunskij characterized this

economy of style as Classical in origin whereas Brjusov's style is inescapably Romantic and "profoundly foreign to the spirit of Puškin's poetry."³⁷

There are some comparisons that we can make between Brjusov's and Puškin's poetics on this point. EN was not the only work of Puškin's that Brjusov responded to with changes that reflect his preoccupation for explicit details that leave little unsaid. Puškin wrote a translation of a poem by the Brazilian poet T.A. Gonzaga in which a shepherd and his song for his beloved fulfill major functions. The poem is mostly taken up by the narrative frame for the song of the shepherd. In Puškin's version "moments of intimacy" between the shepherd and his beloved are "only implied."³⁸ Brjusov wrote his own version on this theme. In his treatment, Brjusov ignored a narrative frame and instead concentrated chiefly upon the moments of intimacy themselves. In other words, in Brjusov's understanding if a narrative is leading up to a moment of intensity, in this case the meeting between the shepherd and his beloved, then that moment becomes the central feature of the poem and will have to be rendered in detail. It is a matter of Brjusov's poetics of savoring the intense moment coming to the fore and dominating the poetic event.

The Armenian Puškin scholar D. A. Garibjan offers a comparison between Puškin's treatment of the execution in "Andrej Šen'e" and Brjusov's description of the execution of Cleopatra's second lover, giving us thereby yet another example of how Brjusov's poetics emphasizes the savoring of the

intense moment. Puškin's description "is distinguished by its lyrically dramatic, dense, energetic style: ...: 'The procession is silent. The executioner waits... There is the executioner's block. He ascends. He calls glory. Weep, muse, weep!...'." ³⁹ Leonid Grossman has commented on the above description in the following manner: "Two words are enough for the portrayal of the most shocking external event. With what amazing density the moment of execution is portrayed by Puškin... Neither a torn off head, nor streams of blood, nor an executioner, nor the body of the guillotine, nor the impassioned crowd..." ⁴⁰ This, however, is Brjusov's depiction of the execution of Cleopatra's second lover: "And he bowed his head to the blade. The executioner struck once and twice; the head fell to the ground, And streams of scarlet raced, and the square was filled with blood... But still, it seemed, that the lips of the lifeless head smiled." As Garibjan points out: "Here we already see both the executioner, and the severed head, and a square filled with blood and other foregrounded details." ⁴¹

The moment of death is typically given a restrained depiction by Puškin. In *The Stone Guest*, Don Juan's death is a model of sparse detail: "Leave me, let go -- let go of my hand.../I'm perishing -- it's all finished -- o Dona Anna!" There is also of course the famous duel scene in *Evgenii Onegin* between Lenskij and Onegin in which the dominant image is that of the steps drawing them ever closer:

Still not aiming, two enemies
With firm step, quietly, evenly
Traverse four paces,
Four deadly steps.

Еще не целја, два врага/ Походкој тврдој, тixo, ровно/
 Четыре perešli šaga,/ Четыре smertnye stupeni.

Abram Lezhnev elaborates on Puškin's use of detail in a comparison with Balzac: "Pushkin knows how to evaluate and select a detail as well as Balzac does. But in him each detail is the same as an aphorism in an article: it is a concise expression of a whole series of details, their deputy, their ambassador."⁴² In other words, one detail is sufficient to evoke a series of other details. Brjusov, however, had to express *fin de siècle* emotions, or, more accurately, he had to arouse the emotions of those living at the end of the century, a period of time in life and art about which Dostoevskij might have said the same as he did about Cleopatra's time: "Everything is spent on the body." The ability to shock, arouse, and surprise a jaded audience requires a saturation of detail, much like violence for a modern movie viewer is seemingly only effective in direct proportion to its graphic representation. In this respect, then, Brjusov's desire to describe the three nights reflects the intrusion of his *fin de siècle* codes.

Certainly Puškin was not unaware of the fact that repetition of lexical items, for example, "is a means of intensifying emotion."⁴³ However, he used even this device sparingly, although interestingly enough this type of repetition is the primary device in one of the EN fragments uncovered by Gofman in the A. F. Onegin library in Paris.⁴⁴ Repetition of a similar event, however, and with the graphicness that Brjusov uses (witness Crito's execution or the death of the youth) is even less common in Puškin. Brjusov, though, lived in an age

when sparing use of this device was no longer viable for symbolist poets. Thus on the question of Brjusov's belief that Puškin would have described the three nights it seems likely that this facet of his interpretation reflects more of his poetics than those of Puškin's.

However, Brjusov's decision to describe these three nights is also based upon his belief that the theme of passion and death was of primary importance to Puškin. Joan Grossman is certainly right in her suggestion that Decadents such as Merežkovskij and Brjusov were trying to coopt Puškin, as it were, as one of their own on this issue. The Decadents were fascinated with passion and death for they represented "extremes of experience" that the Decadents believed could be used to penetrate "the world's secret substructure."⁴⁵ I have already given some indication that at least on a superficial level the Decadents have a basis for believing that Puškin was similarly interested in such "extremes." However, we must delve beyond the superficial.

This will lead us to the second point that I indicated earlier needs to be discussed, namely Brjusov's actual description of the three nights in his rewrite of EN. This, in turn, will introduce into our discussion of Brjusov and Puškin the concept of *mig*. As in the discussion about Dostoevskij and Puškin, *mig* will serve as our lens to evaluate both Puškin's and Brjusov's poetics. For example, Frenkel opines that Puškin's interest in the moment before death is motivated by its potential for the last word of the poet. The poet is given a chance "in a last burst of inspired

creativity, to die an artist - that is, immortal."⁴⁶ I, on the other hand, have already suggested that Brjusov has turned to the three moments in EN when passion and death are most closely intertwined and tension is at its highest point precisely for the potential they represent as extremes of experience. It is through such moments that Decadents hoped to discover the world's secrets. How different are these two propositions? By exploring Puškin's and Brjusov's respective understandings of the "extreme moment," as it is reflected in their works, I hope to shed some light on the underpinnings of their poetic universes. It is through our preconceptions that we view the world. They represent an integral facet of our being as individuals. They are not a coat that we can take off when we read a text. Brjusov's preconceptions are evident in his reading of EN. I will examine these first in reference to the concept of *mig* and then proceed to a comparison with Puškin's comprehension of the idea.

It was the Decadents, more specifically Brjusov and Bal'mont, who developed "a complete theory of 'the instant' (*mig*)."⁴⁷ Georgette Donchin states that Brjusov understood living to mean "to live in moments" and that this "intense enjoyment of every minute of life" summarizes Brjusov's general attitudes.⁴⁷ Aage A. Hansen-Löve demonstrates that Brjusov's "complete theory" of *mig* was more involved than simply living every moment to its fullest, although this is not an insignificant part of the Decadent concept.

Hansen-Löve asserts that there is both a positive and a negative value to the Decadents' concept of *mig*. Positive

values of *mig* are given designations such as *mig-kniga*, *mig vospominanija*, and *mig zabvenija*. Negative values are labeled *mig obmana* and *mgnovenyj* (i.e., the brevity of the moment as a negative value).⁴⁸ Brjusov himself thought about *mig* in terms of categories. In discussing Vladimir Solov'ev's idea of Time versus Eternity, Brjusov writes about "memory" (*pam-jat'*) as one form of the battle against Time: "By preserving unchanged in the memory the moments that have flashed past we defeat Time, which endeavors to take them away from us." "Memory" (*pamjat'*), however, is but one way to fight Time. There are other types of the "moment" which are even superior to *pamjat'*: "Higher than minutes of remembrance (*"minuty vospominanij*) stand the minutes of enlightenment and ecstasy (*"minuty prozrenij i ékstaza"*), when man somehow leaves the conditions of his world..."⁴⁹ Brjusov's EN illustrates the complexity of his conception of *mig* and Hansen-Löve's categories are invaluable in discussing Brjusov's concept.

However, other factors must be taken into consideration as well. It is possible, for example, to relate in different ways to *mig*. This can be based upon one's age, beliefs, etc. In Puškin's EN we have three characters, i.e., Flavius, Crito and the unnamed boy, who present three different reactions to *mig*. Their differences are based upon the philosophical point of views they represent (Flavius could be considered a stoic; Crito is an Epicurean), as well as their respective ages: Flavius has the perspective of an older man, Crito that of a young but experienced man, and the boy that of naive and innocent youth. Intermixed as well in all of the above is

Brjusov's understanding of what it means to be a poet.

Flavius is a warrior who has grown grey in the service of Rome's legions. He is the epitome of Stoicism, equally fearless when faced with either death or passion. These are the lines about Flavius from Puškin's second improvisation in EN:

And first -- Flavius, a warrior bold,
In the Roman armed forces grew old;
He couldn't bear to take from a woman
Such arrogant contempt;
He accepted the challenge of pleasure,
Like he accepted in the days of war
The challenge of raging battle.

I pervyj -- Flavij, voin smelyj, / V družinax rimskix
posedelyj; / Snesti ne mog on ot žen'y / Vysokomernogo
prezren'ja; / On prinjal vyzov naslažden'ja, / Kak prinimal vo
dni vojny / On vyzov jarogo sražen'ja.

It is clear from Puškin's text that Flavius perceives Cleopatra's offer as a challenge and accepts it as he used to accept the challenge of battle. Cleopatra's challenge, therefore, is transformed into an affair of duty. Duty is also an important motif in some of Brjusov's works. Indeed, adherence to duty is an essential quality for the poet to have. For example in Brjusov's "To the Poet" ("Poëtu"), the poet is exhorted to perform his duty of observing things dispassionately:

Be a cold witness of everything,
On everything fixing your glance.
But it will be your virtue --
To be prepared to ascend the pyre.

Vsego bud' xolodnyj svidetel', / Na vse ustremljaja svoj
vzor. / Da budet tvoja dobrodetel' -- / Gotovnost' vzojti na
koster.

Even during a moment of passion the poet should restrain his emotions:

In the minutes of passionate embraces
Force yourself to impassiveness,
And in the hour of merciless crucifixion
Glorify the ecstatic pain.

V minuty ljubovnyx ob"jatelj/ K besstrast'ju sebja prinevol',/
I v čas bespoščadnyx raspjatelj/ Proslav' isstuplennuju bol'.

In "V Damask" passion is seen as a religious duty necessary to traverse the path to Damascus or Insight:

My lips come closer
To your lips,
Secrets are again in progress,
And the world is like a cathedral.

We, like priests,
Perform the rite.
Severely in the great dwelling place
Resound words.

/.../

We are seized by a whirl
Of last caresses.
There it is, appointed by the age,
Our path to Damascus!

Guby moi približajutsja/ K tvoim gubam,/ Tainstva snova
sveršajutsja,/ I mir kak xram./ My, kak svjaščennoslužiteli,/
Tvorim obrjad./ Strogo v velikoj obiteli/ Slova zvučat./.../
Vodovorotom my sxvačeny/ Poslednix lask./ Vot on, ot veka
naznačennyj,/ Naš put' v Damask!

In order to achieve the "minutes of insight" the poet must adhere faithfully to the duty of his calling even during the height of passion and even at the risk of crucifixion. It is not surprising, therefore, that Brjusov's Flavius should come to view his acceptance of Cleopatra's offer of passion and death as an affair of duty. Faithful performance of this last duty serves as Flavius's chief motivation. Cleopatra

even summons Flavius in terms of duty in Brjusov's version:

-- "I wait for you, brave warrior:
The hour has rung to fulfil the vows!

-- "Ja ždu tebjā, otvažnyj voin:/ Ispolnit' kljatvy probil
čas!

Flavius responds in like terms when the night is nearly over
and he feels that he has accomplished what he intended to:

"... What I promised,
I have honorably fulfilled this night:"

..."Čto obeščal,/ ja v ètu noč' ispolnil čestno:" (III, 446).

The positive value of *mig* that Hansen-Löve labels the *gespeicherter Augenblick* (*mig-kniga*) involves filling the moment to its limit, which for the early Symbolists is valid as the "real object of poetic production."⁵⁰ The early Symbolists, and Brjusov in particular, believed in the superiority of art over life: life should be like art, not the other way around. For this reason Hansen-Löve has termed this particular aspect of *mig* as *mig/knig(a)*, i.e., a moment like art, as symbolized by the word for book (*kniga*). Such precious moments are distinct from one another and are "braided together," thereby forming the essence of one's "life-text" (*Lebens-Text*).⁵¹ The preservation in memory of such moments, i.e., the creation of art, becomes an objective of the Symbolists; it is one way in which life and art are inextricably mixed. For example, in Brjusov's poem "Evening" ("Večer", 1896), night becomes the stage for a creative moment:

The thought is full of indistinct presentiments,
The voice hears the future...
Either in stanzas, or in art
Let this moment breathe for ever!

Mysl' polna gluxix predčuvstvij,/ Golos buduščego slyšit.../
 Pust' že v strofax, pust' v iskusstve/ Ètot mig naveki dyšit!

Mig in this poem is the instant of creation. The preservation of the moment is equivalent to the preservation of that heightened sense of revelation that initial inspiration represents. Preservation is called for, even insisted by the poet, and will be achieved by the work of art created by the moment.

The temple of passion in "To Damascus" is a recurrent image in Brjusov, returning once again in "The Mysteries of the Night" ("Tainstva nočej", 1902). Passion is an "extreme" and is used by Brjusov and others to test the boundaries of what is experientially possible. Thus the moment of passion exists in Brjusov's poetic universe as comparable to the moment of poetic inspiration, for that too goes beyond boundaries. The preservation of the moment of passion is invariably phrased by reference to artistic creations, such as books.

Preserved in the memory, like in a sombre book,
 The mysteries of nights just past,
 Those, alien to life, sacred moments,
 When I was both given away and no-one's.

I remember the smell of darkness and the body,
 The intense heat and curvatures of shuddering limbs,
 The world, breathing with a wish for the boundary,
 Is formless, imageless, different.

/.../

That this delirium, with a tormenting ebb
 Baring the naked depths of the soul,
 Will for ever die with a dwindling rush,
 And everything will be buried in an instant!

Xranjatsja v pamjati, kak v temnoj knige,/ Sveršivšiesja
 tainstva nočej,/ Te, žizni čuždye, svjatye migi,/ Kogda ja

byl i otdan, i ničej./ Ja pomnju zapax t'my i zapax tela,/ Drožaščix členov vygiby i znoj,/ Mir, dyšaščij želan'em do predela,/ Besformennyj, bezobraznyj, inoj./ .../ Čto ètot bred, mučitel'nym otlivom/ Vskryvajuščij duši nagoe dno,/ Navek umret s rastajavšim poryvom,/ Čto v mige budet vse pogrebno!

Thus the "sacred moments" of passion are to be preserved in the memory like one would preserve the instant of inspiration in a book. They are sacred because the limit ("To the limit" ["do predela"]) of what is experientially possible and the revelation that follows ("Baring the naked depths of the soul" ["Vskryvajuščij duši nagoe dno,"]) are both suggested.

In the poem "Severe, cold and commanding..." ("Strogij, xolodnyj i vlastnyj", 1900) night has been replaced by the time between night and morning; night has ended but the sun has yet to rise. Passion, however, is still intimated by the last line of the third stanza: "It is enough, that you -- are with me." ("Dovol'no, čto ty -- so mnoj."). Thus this instant before the morning light becomes a time of reflection of what has occurred and what might be.

Something has begun... Like children,
We will recognize the fulfilled moment.
Morning in a cold light,
You are better than songs and books!

Nastalo čto-to... Kak deti,/ Soznaem my ispolnennyj mig./
Utro v xolodnom svete,/ Ty lučše pesen i knig!

The chain of heightened, fulfilled moments that Hansen-Löve suggested comprises the essence of life for the early Symbolists is alluded to by the temporal placement of this poem; the poem occurs between night and day, and also between past ("Something has begun" ["Nastalo čto-to"]) and future ("We'll recognize the fulfilled moment" ["Soznaem my

ispolnennyj mig"]) events, which are themselves suggestive of the heightened moment that Hansen-Löve speaks of. Finally, we once again have the comparisons to art with the last line ("You are better than songs and books!" ["Ty lučše pesen i knig!"]).

The moment as representative of making life like art, then, is the significance of Flavius's achievement in Brjusov's version of EN. Flavius says to Cleopatra that he has "honorably fulfilled" ("ispolnil čestno") the duty that he took upon himself. The line "ispolnil čestno" indicates that Flavius has created the "fulfilled moment" ("ispolnennyj mig" from Brjusov's poem "Severe...", cited above). He has created a moment of his life that is like the art a poet creates in the instant of inspiration. This may seem to be in contradiction to Flavius's character. By all appearances Flavius is a pedestrian and plodding soldier who displays at best the "obtuse pride, ... of a warrior's honor"⁵² and little else. In other words, he does not strike one as the image of a poet. However, we must keep in mind the equivalence in Brjusov's poetics of moments of passion and inspiration as "extremes." More will be said about this equivalence later in the chapter but for now it is sufficient to note that in the figure of Cleopatra, Flavius has indeed experienced an extreme. Furthermore, Flavius has displayed at least one important attribute of the poet, i.e., a faithfulness to duty even at the risk of "merciless crucifixion." The "fulfilled moment" (*ispolnenny mig*), however, is not the sole indicator of Brjusov's concept of *mig* in his portrait of Flavius.

Flavius, we must remember, is an elderly man, having grown grey in Rome's legions. His age and accomplishments affect his relationship to *mig*. Having achieved the "fulfilled moment" there is nothing else, at this point in his life, that Flavius could hope for or want to accomplish. Cleopatra offers to entertain him during his remaining moments ("poslednie mgnoven'ja" III, 445) with more of her love:

I will treble your pleasures,
I will satiate with new caresses
Your final moments!

Ja naslaždenija utroju, / Presyšču novoj laskoj ja / Tvoi poslednie mgnoven'ja!

Flavius, however, rejects her offer because there is nothing new in it. At the same time his rejection confirms the dispassionate distance that he has maintained from Cleopatra, a characteristic which Brjusov insisted in "Poètu" that the poet should develop ("Force yourself to impassiveness"):

But the strange guest answered, sternly
Preserving his proud impassiveness:
"Do you really think it is new to me--
Everything that you are enticing me with?"

No strannyj gost', v otvet, surovo, / Besstrast'e gordoe xran-
ja: / "Užel', ty dumaeš', mne novo- / vse, čem prel'ščaeš' ty menja?"

Flavius goes on to reminisce about past liaisons with women and in particular about the bliss he experienced with one Gaulish girl:

While preserving forever the memory
Of days of blissful meeting
With one of the proud Gaulish girls!

Xranja vseгда vospominan'ja / O dnjax blažennogo svidan'ja / S odnoj iz gordyx gall'skix dev!

"Bliss" ("blažennogo") is a key word in the Decadent lexicon. It signifies achievement of the type of heightened moment that Decadents sought in their lives. Indeed, they sought and conceived of their lives as a connected string of such moments. The words of Flavius reflect this way of seeing the world. As Hansen-Löve indicated, such moments are preserved in memory and woven together to form the consecutive string of experiences. Flavius preserves ("xranja") forever the memory of one girl, including her in a list of conquests (girls from Spain, Brittany, a Thracian girl), which ends with Cleopatra herself. Cleopatra's caresses may lack the charm of previous partners, but she represents the ultimate challenge, i.e., an extreme, and Flavius has acquitted himself well. He, in fact, is satisfied with his life and seeks nothing more: "I have lived in this world enough," ("Ja dovol'no v mire žil.").

To Brjusov's concept of *mig* we must add the related Symbolist image of *zabvenie*. Oblivion in its positive aspect is something to be earned, as these lines of Bal'mont show:

You haven't reached your limit,
You wanted tranquility,
But oblivion must be earned

Ty ne ispolnil svoj predel,/ Ty zaxotel uspokoien' ja,/ No
nužno zaslužiti' zabven'e (111).

Flavius represents the attitude of an individual who has fulfilled his personal limits ("ispolnil svoj predel") by transforming a moment of his life into art and who has therefore earned oblivion. Hansen-Löve emphasizes, as I indicated above, the discreteness of each moment in Brjusov's

comprehension of the idea.⁵³ Flavius is an individual who is willing at this point of his life to simply sever the line of discrete moments. Thus, preservation of the moment in memory, creating the "fulfilled moment," carrying out in an impassive manner one's "duty" (a significant attribute for the poet), all of these elements are present in Flavius's portrayal. Without protest and without regret Flavius goes to the executioner as Brjusov would have poets do ("To be prepared to ascend the pyre").

Cleopatra's second lover is far different from the first. Flavius was a warrior, a man of action. Crito is a philosopher, an Epicurean. This is how Puškin describes him in the second improvisation of EN.

After him came Crito, a young wise man,
Born in the groves of Epicurus,
Crito, worshipper and singer
of the Graces, Venus and Cupid.--

Za nim Kriton, mlađoj mudrec,/ Roždennyj v roščax Èpikura,/
Kriton, poklonnik i pevec/ Xarit, Kipridy i Amura.--

Epicureanism began from the principle that the "good is pleasure and that pain is evil" and eventually evolved into a simple way of life in which desires were minimized.⁵⁴ The popular conception, however, of this philosophy is centered on the first part of the adage quoted above: "good is pleasure." Epicureans came to be regarded as essentially sensualists who are interested primarily in their own physical pleasure. Thus in Puškin's verse, Crito is a worshipper of the god of love. Brjusov, too, emphasizes the pleasure-seeking sensualism of Crito.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Brjusov's *Crito* reflects the attitude to *mig* that we have come to accept as quintessential for the Decadents' position. Hansen-Löve refers to this facet of *mig* as the "visionary or creative state of the immediateness of the moment," elucidating further that the *moment* "means... an excess in greater intensity of life for the impressionistic early Symbolists."⁵⁵ This attitude is epitomized by the line Brjusov felt most faithfully expressed the spirit of both Bal'mont and Decadence: "I am consumed every minute" ("ja každoj minutoj sožžen").⁵⁶ Brjusov's poem "Frenzied Intoxication" ("Xmel' isstuplen'ja", 1901) also evokes this spirit.⁵⁷ In the last four lines the poet rejoices in the intensity of his senses:

I revel in the drunkenness of frenzy,
It intoxicates the heart sweeter than sharp wines.
I'm -- in a storm, in chaos, in the smoke of enthusiasm!

Ah! To be like a divine being! if only for one moment!

Ja naslaždajus' xmelem isstuplen'ja, / P'janjaščim serdce
slašče ostryx vin. / Ja -- v bure, v xaose, v dymu goren'ja! /
A! Byt' kak božestvo! xot' mig odin!

Intensity is the measure of creativity. To be like a god would presumably mean to be at the apex of intense life experience, therefore the poet's wish to reach that state. The desire to attain that state hearkens back, of course, to the wish to break through the bounds of normal existence. This in turn brings us back to "... the minutes of insight and ecstasy ("minuty prozrenij i ékstaza"), when man somehow leaves the conditions of his world..." that I mentioned earlier. If Brjusov's *Flavius* has gone beyond his conditions because of his faithfulness to duty then *Crito* shows us yet another

critical attribute for Brjusov's idea of the poet, and that is always to seek the moment of intensity. Such moments are surrounded by mystery and the word for secret and mystery (tajna) is often associated with *mig*. In the poem "Gold" ("Zoloto" 1899), the poet is a kind of alchemist, transmuting the sun and grains of sand into gold.⁵⁸ He also transmutes life:

As all words are extraordinary,
So is every instant full of mystery.
Out of pale and incidental life
I made endless trembling!

Kak vse slova neobyčajny, / Tak každyj mig ispolnen tajny. / Iz
žizni blednoj i slučajnoj / Ja sdelal trepet bez konca!

"Endless trembling" is yet another euphemism to describe the intensity of the moment that the Decadents hoped would define their lives.

Crito is faithful to this attitude of seeking for the most intense experience possible. Flavius has no interest in filling his remaining minutes of life with meaningless love because his relationship to *mig* is entirely different; the limit of the moment has been reached and any further caresses by Cleopatra are superfluous. Crito, however, savors the intensity of the experience. Thus in his last minutes, even as dawn is approaching, he continues to pursue Cleopatra, "kissing her every step."⁵⁹

-- "Linger a bit! You see, I won't waste
a single moment of the gift! I'll drink to the bottom
This bliss!"

-- "Pomedli! Vidiš', ja ne traču / Ni miga darom! P'ju do dna /
Blaženstvo!"

All of Crito's actions conform to the image of a man in the throes of intoxicating frenzy. Crito is indeed like a divine being for this one night.⁶⁰

He -- is happy, he -- is crazed with passion,
He entreats the darkness to linger,
So that he can revel to the end in the power,
Of the period granted to him;

On -- šťastliv, on -- bezumen strast'ju,/ On medlit' zakli-
naet t'mu,/ Čtob do konca upit'sja vlast'ju,/ Na srok
darovannoj emu;

These verses are echoes of previous lines of Brjusov's. In the poem "Every Instant" ("Každyj mig", 1900) wonder, i.e. mystery, and madness are inherent to each moment.⁶¹

Every moment has wonder and madness,
Every tremble is inexplicable to me,
All the intricate paths of thought,
How is one to know, what is in life, what is in a dream?

/.../

We will reach the miraculous on all paths!
This world- is a shadow of another world.
These thoughts are suggested from there,
These lines -- are the first step.

Každyj mig est' čudo i bezum'e,/ Každyj trepet neponjaten
mne,/ Vse zaputany puti razdum'ja,/ Kak uznat', čto v žizni,
čto vo sne?/ .../ My na vsech putjax dojdem do čuda!/ Étot mir
-- inogo mira ten'./ Éti dumy vnušeny ottuda,/ Éti stroki --
pervaja stupen'.

Indeed, the moment in its latent potential for mystery and miracle represents the bridge to the paths to the world beyond rational thought. Intensity of experience is one of those paths. For that reason the poet says in yet another poem ("The Future Century," 1899):⁶² "I want/.../ to revel in every moment" ("Ja xoču/.../ Každym migom nasladit'sja"). Crito, like Flavius before him, is faithful to his calling

and belief. He quite literally dies with a smile on his lips. His willingness to die, however, is caused by other factors than those that motivated Flavius.

Crito's attitude is not that of a mature man who has accomplished everything and has nothing new to experience. Crito is an implied "lyric" poet (*pevec*) as well as an Epicurean and understands that there are moments which, when once past, will not return, or even be recalled, since recollection cannot recapture the original intensity. This reflects the fleetingness of the moment, which Hansen-Löve categorizes as a negative component of *mig* ("Moment as 'transitoriness', 'brevity'"). As I have discussed earlier, the moment embodies the temporal reality when the secrets of the universe can be discovered. Even if, however, such secrets are revealed, that same temporal reality becomes burdensome, for the instant of revelation vanishes as quickly as it appeared. For example there is Brjusov's 1895 two stanza poem, in the last stanza of which the poet tries to grasp the universe:⁶³

And I struggled anew, and anew searched for the universe
Outside of time, outside of any feelings of mine.
It appeared to me, but like an instantaneous spark,
Flashing in eternity and living only an instant.

I ja borolsja vnov', i vnov' iskal vselennoj/ Vne vremeni,
vne vsjakix čuvstv moix./ Ona javljalas' mne, no iskroju mg-
novennoj,/ Mel'knuvšej v večnosti i živšej tol'ko mig.

This negative aspect of *mig* is expressed in other Brjusov poems as well. In his 1897 poem "Spring Poem" ("Vesennjaja poëma") the revelation of nature's secret comes in the form of a sparkly snow-like veil seen in the electric

light, but when the poet looks again the apparition has vanished.⁶⁴

I looked, and then it was gone.
The moment of mystery is so strange, so brief,
-- But here it is, it is in the heart -- the answer!

Ja videl, i vot ego net./ Mgnovenie tajny tak stranno, tak kratko,/ -- No zdes' on, on v serdce -- otvet!

Even though a remembrance of the vision seems to remain in the heart of the poet it is not a source of comfort. In fact, in the next stanza we see that it is rather a source of torment.

I have languished ever since that time,
It is impossible for me to live.

I tomljus' ja s tex por,/ Nevozmožno mne žit'.

This same regret for the brevity of the instant was expressed as well in his cycle "Moments" ("Mgnovenija") from *Me Eum Esse*, but with the additional nuance of regret that the heart will not even recall the instant.⁶⁵

The moments of mystery, like mystery, are brief,
And the heart won't recall them.

Mgnovenija tajny, kak tajna, mgnovennoy,/ I serdce ne vspomnit ob nix.

Sometimes the burden of the moment is precisely the poetic objective of glimpsing into the depths of the universe: a coin with two sides. The revelatory aspect of the moment and all its positive and negative connotations was an integral part of how Brjusov understood the world. If we can return to Puškin's EN we can see that Puškin's Cleopatra does indeed promise to reveal secrets:

I swear, until the morning dawn
The desires of my rulers
I will voluptuously quench,

Both with all the mysteries of love
And with a marvelous bliss weary them!

Kljanus', do utrennej zari/ Moix vlastitelej želan'ja/ Ja
sladostrastno utolju,/ I vsemi tajnami lobzan'ja/ I divnoj
negoj utomlju!

It is not surprising that Brjusov would understand the above to imply a realization of the revelatory moment. Hansen-Löve describes such moments in Brjusov and Decadents in general as "the unrepeatable moment; the moment that is irretrievably dead."⁶⁶ The implication is that, since such a moment cannot be repeated nor even fully recalled, life could degenerate into a hopeless longing for that moment. It is this logic that impels Brjusov's Crito to willingly step up to the executioner.⁶⁷

Who, like I, has spent a night like this,
Two together with a divine queen,
Cannot and should not live:
I could not love anyone anymore!
While you shine in this world,
Say radiantly, that it is impossible
To be more blessed, than I am now!

Kto ètu noč', kak ja, provel,/ vdvoem s božestvennoj
caricej,/ ne možet i ne dolžen žit':/ Mne bol'she nekogo lju-
bit'!/ Poka ty svetiš' v ètom mire,/ Glasi sijan'em, čto
nel'zja/ Blažennej byt', čem nyne ja!

Familiar elements are present in the last words of Brjusov's Crito. A state of bliss has been achieved (blažennej); Crito, the Epicurean, has not "wasted a single instant of the gift." The moment in its greatest possible intensity has been lived as befits a poet and an Epicurean philosopher, and Crito realizes that such a night with the most beautiful and powerful woman of the world could never happen again. Having achieved the epitome of an Epicurean's

dreams, Brjusov's Crito knows that love with another woman would be impossible; the experience would pale in comparison and comparison is what Crito would be incessantly engaged in. Having lived the "unrepeatable" moment, Crito knows that one's life should be curtailed at that point.

Brjusov's Flavius has honorably met Cleopatra's challenge and fulfilled his duty and to his Crito have been revealed secrets of love and the mysteries of inspiration. Both of them display, therefore, two critical attributes for the poet in his relationship to *mi*g. The motivation for the unnamed youth to experience the moment is different. His love is pure and his only wish is to be loved. This is Puškin's description of him in EN:

Pleasant to heart and eyes,
Like a budding flower of spring,
The last has not passed on
To the centuries his name. His cheeks
were gently shaded by the first soft down;
Rapture shone in his eyes;
The inexperienced strength of passions
Was surging in his youthful heart...
And with tender emotion the queen
Rested her glance on him.

Ljubeznyj serdcu i očam,/ Kak vešnij cvet edva razvityj,/
Poslednij imeni vekam/ Ne peredal. Ego lanity/ Pux pervyj
nežno ottenjal;/ Vostorg v očax ego sijal;/ Strastej neopyt-
naja sila/ Kipela v serdce molodom.../ I s umileniem na nem/
Carica vzor ostanovila.

To Tomaševskij, Cleopatra's glance in Puškin's EN proves that her cold resolution and equally cold heart are almost vanquished by the purity of the youth. Dostevskij says much the same, claiming that the youth's innocence causes the queen to waver from her original bestial inclinations. Brjusov also sees Cleopatra as being softened by the

innocence of the youth. Just as Dostoevskij's particular comprehension of *mig* affected how he interpreted Cleopatra, so too does Brjusov's understanding of *mig* affect his description of this third and final night. In Brjusov's EN, the youth wakes from his sleep and recollection (*vspominan'ja*) of the night briefly (*na mig*) flickers through his mind.⁶⁸

Memories of the burning caresses
For an instant inflamed his face; then
The color fled from his cheeks:
He was pale, frightful in the face.
And the heart of the royal whore
Suddenly was painfully constricted,
And feelings, asleep for a long time,
Were aroused in the queen's soul,

Vospominan'ja žgučej laski/ Na mig lico zažgli; potom/ S ego
lanit sbežali kraski:/ On bleđen, strašen on licom./ I serdce
carstvennoj bludnicy/ Vnezapnoj bol'ju stesneno,/ I čuvstva,
spavšie davno,/ Oživleny v duše caricy,

I have so far spoken of recollection (*vspominan'e*) in two senses: firstly, there is the artistic moment (i.e., creative inspiration) that is preserved in memory (i.e., artistic work), and secondly, there is the negative connotation of the brevity of the instant. Something of both of these aspects are to be seen in the lines cited above. The glow of the youth's face is evidence of the moment's potent force, but the fleetingness (and perhaps also the recognition that death will soon cut short the moment) is reinforced by the rapid cooling of the warmth of remembrance. It is precisely this brevity of the instant, i.e., the youth's recollection of the night before rapidly followed by his awareness of what is soon to come, that seems to have affected the queen. Like in Tomaševskij's and Dostoevskij's interpretations, the feelings of Brjusov's Cleopatra are awakened.

Uncharacteristically, Cleopatra takes pity on the youth and offers him a secret (tajnyj) path of escape.⁶⁹

My young boy! Get up and follow me!
I'll show you a secret path!
I want to save you! Run!

Moj mal'čik! vstan', idi za mnoju! / Ja tajnyj put' tebe
otkroju! / Xoču spasti tebja! Begi!

An unexpected hope suddenly appears before the youth, for he realizes there is a possibility that the purity of his ardor has touched the haughty queen. Perhaps she loves him as he loves her! This indeed would be bliss (blaženstvo) as the youth understands it.⁷⁰

But if... if I am loved!
What amazing bliss!

No esli... esli ja ljubim! / Kakoe divnoe blaženstvo!

"Bliss" is once again an important element. But whereas for Crito "bliss" could be encapsulated by the moment, for the youth it properly belongs beyond the moment. He hopes to prolong their love, but this is in contradiction to Brjusov's Decadent aesthetics which suggest that love is only for an instant.⁷¹

The speech of shy confessions,
The quiet speech of love --
Its meaning is unclear and strange,
Its mystery -- the mystery of the soul.

/.../

Hearken with head and heart,
Listen with the trembling of the soul --
Faithful only for an instant
Is the quiet speech of love.

Reči nesmelyx priznanij, / Tixie reči ljubvi -- / Smysl ix ne-
jasen i stranen, / Tajna ix -- tajna duši. /.../ Vslušajsja
dumoj i serdcem, / Slušaj trevogoj duši -- / tol'ko na mig dos-
toverny / tixie reči ljubvi.

The unnamed youth, however, believes that the moment they have shared can continue indefinitely if only Cleopatra would escape with him.⁷²

We will live together, never parting,
Until the longed-for end!

I žit' vdvoem, ne rasstavajas' / do voždennogo konca!

Prolonging the moment, however, is neither desirable nor possible, at least in Decadent aesthetics, as these lines of Brjusov (I, 101) and Bal'mont (307) attest:

I can tarry the instantaneous instant,
But up I go along a certain path.

Mogu ja medlit' mig mgnovennyj, / no vvys' idu odnoj tropoj

Even to extend the meeting is forbidden to us.

I prodlit' nam svidan'e nel'zja.

The youth's desire to extend the moment is so opposed to Decadent aesthetics that it is defined as childish gibberish.

What could the queen say in answer
To such childish, incoherent raving?

Čto možet otvečat' carica / na detskij, na bessvjaznyj bred?⁷³

Cleopatra is not a child. Moreover, she is a Decadent and shares Brjusov's aesthetics; rather than wait for the executioner to come she ends both the moment and the boy's life with a goblet of poisoned wine.

In the version of EN with which Brjusov was familiar it is possible to see how a reader's imagination might drift to those three nights of fatal love; the ending invited us to turn our thoughts in that direction.⁷⁴ Brjusov took up the hint readily, but even though he no doubt sincerely tried to

remain within the spirit of Puškin, his "theory of the instant," fundamental to his perception of the universe, shines through. The question now is whether that "theory" is utterly foreign to Puškin or if there is possibly a genetic relationship.

Gasparov and Paperno argue that "one of the important transparent themes in Puškin's creative work -- is the theme of *eternity*."⁷⁵ They identify an entire complex of associated images and motives that fall under the rubric of this theme. For my purposes it is not necessary to delve very deeply into Gasparov's and Paperno's idea. It is sufficient to note that the idea and conditions of eternity are necessary for poetic inspiration and creativity. Opposed to this theme is the theme of existence ("bytie").⁷⁶ If "silence" and "peace" represent the conditions of eternity, then "noise" and "bustle" represent those of existence. As existence is generally considered to be oppressive, so too are its external representations: noise and bustle. In order to create there must be the opposite: silence and peace. From this stems the motif of escape "from the world of existence -- to eternity."⁷⁷

Čarskij's description in EN gives us an excellent demonstration of this motif:

However, he was a poet, and his passion was insuperable: when he found that his "silly mood" (so did he term his inspiration) was on him, Charsky would shut himself up in his study and write from morning until late at night. To his genuine friends he confessed that it was only on these occasions that he knew real happiness. /.../

One morning Charsky felt that happy state of soul when one's imaginings take bodily shape in one's mind, when one finds bright, unexpected words to incarnate the visions, when verses flow easily from one's pen and sonorous rhythms fly to meet harmonious thoughts. Charsky was mentally plunged in sweet oblivion... and the world and the opinions of the

world and his own personal whims no longer existed for him. He was writing verses. (trans. Gillon R. Aitken)⁷⁸

Čarsky both physically, by locking his door, and mentally, by plunging into a state of oblivion, escapes from the world in order to write poetry. Eternity is inevitably a poetic construct for Puškin. In other words, art is an expression of eternity. And since the artist can experience eternity only during the moment of creation, *mig* becomes for Puškin the temporary respite that connects the poet with eternity.

Since *mig* is inextricably linked with eternity it is not surprising that we can discern a connection between *mig* and the various motifs of eternity that Gasparov and Paperno have established. For example, the concept of *mig* in Puškin often seems to be yet another variation of the motif of escape from the oppressive world. It can be an escape to another reality, i.e. poetic inspiration, but often it is simply an escape from existence and valued for its qualities as a respite. In his 1815 poem "To Puščin" ("K Puščinu"), the poet arrives as a guest, heedless of the etiquette of society:

He is a guest without etiquette,
Doesn't demand the greeting
Of cunning worldliness;

On gost' bez ètiketa,/ Ne trebuet priveta/ Lukavoj suety;
What is dear to the newly arrived guest is drink. Through
drink they will be oblivious to all else, if only for awhile,
yet even a momentary eclipsing of the world is highly valued.

We'll forget for an hour.
Let the lamp of the mind
Extinguish in us now,
/.../
Every instant of loss is dear to us
Even if only in amusement!

Zabudemsja na čas./ Puskaj uma svetil'nik/ Pogasnet nyne v nas,/ .../ Nam dorog mig utraty/ V zabavax liš' odnix!

Drinking is associated with oblivion for Puškin (Puskaj uma svetil'nik/ Pogasnet nyne v nas,), with positive connotations for both. Specifically, it is reason that is temporarily suspended, for it is through our rational faculty that the world makes itself felt. Suspension of reason, through whatever means and for whatever length of time, becomes valued for the respite provided from the world. Similar sentiments about drinking are conveyed in the poems "The 19th of October" ("19 oktjabrja", 1825), "Bliss" ("Blaženstvo", 1814), "To Kaverin" ("K Kaverinu", 1817), and "Stanzas for Tolstoj" ("Stansy Tolstomu", 1818).

For a similar reason the poet claims that he would not regret the loss of his reason in the 1833 poem "God don't let me go insane" ("Ne daj mne bog sojti s uma").

It's not that I highly value
My reason; or that I wouldn't be glad
To part with it:

Ne to, čtob razumom moim/ Ja dorožil; ne to, čtob s nim/
Rasstat'sja byl ne rad:

It is through our rational faculty that the world exerts its control and just as the poet welcomes a temporary suspension of it through drink, so too would he not mind a permanent separation. Unfortunately for the poet, loss of his reason would be cause for society to take even greater control over his life, thus the plea at the end not to become insane. From Voltaire, Puškin takes the idea that reason and its role in our lives can be expressed in terms of the moment:

We live for two moments in the world --
One we give to reason.

Živem my v mire dva mgnoven'ja --/ Odno rassudku ot dadim.

The poem "Stanzas" posits a world of opposition. If one moment is given to reason from the context of the poem it seems that the other is given to feelings. We are also fated to die twice. The first death is the passing of our youth, which represents the moment of our feelings. The rest of our life is presumably the moment we give up to reason.

To return to the argument of *mig* as temporary respite: inebriation is not the only state that can provide a momentary escape from the world. Love, too, is sometimes depicted in that vein. In the 1819 poem "O. Masson" the poet is inflamed with love for the heroine Ol'ga, who is possibly a literary predecessor to Cleopatra for she is called a "priestess of delight" ("Žrica naslažden'ja") and is urged by the poet to appoint "the secret hour of tempting happiness." A night of love with her is characterized not only as a "night of delights" ("Noč' vostorgov"), but also as a "night of oblivion" ("noč' zabven'ja"). In "Love alone -- is the meriment of cold life," ("Ljubov' odna -- vesel'e Žizni xladnoj," 1816), the poet confesses that love "grants only one comforting moment" in an otherwise hostile environment. Love serves as well as drink to render one oblivious to the world.

In the 1825 poem "To Kozlov" ("Kozlovu") it is the actual fruit of the poetic gift, poetry, which serves as the device of a momentary diversion from existence.

And I, if my single verse
Has given you a moment of joy,
I do not want another reward:

A ja, kol' stix edinyj moj/ Tebe mgnoven'e dal otrady,/ Ja ne
xoču drugoj nagrady:

Once again *mig* is represented in terms which suggest that a part of its value is its standing as a temporary escape from the oppressiveness of the world, which is why both the improviser and the act of improvisation seem to be particularly graced from above and not at all devoid of "spiritual significance" as Weintraub would have us believe."

This quality of *mig* as a temporary respite from the deluge of life lends itself readily to the idea of experiencing as many such respites as is possible. In Puškin's early years this facet of the concept is urged repeatedly, especially in relation to wine and love, since they are often the vessels that carry one to oblivion. In "Bliss" ("Blaženstvo", 1814) a young shepherd is despondent because he has lost the favor of his love. A Satyr arrives and advises wine as a restorative. It works, but after the third cup the shepherd realizes that he cannot drink forever. The Satyr gives him the following advice:

Catch an *instant* of bliss during your *lifetime*;
Remember this admonition of friendship:
Without wine there isn't any gaiety here,
There also isn't any happiness without love;
So leave your hangover now
And reconcile with Cupid;
Forget his offenses
And in the embraces of Dorida
Rejoice again in happiness!

Mig blaženstva vek lovi;/ Pomni družby nastavlen'ja:/ Bez
vina zdes' net vesel'ja,/ Net i sčast'ja bez ljubvi;/ Tak
podi ž teper' s poxmeln'ja/ S Kupidonom pomiris';/ Pozabud'
ego obidy/ I v ob"jatijax Doridy/ Snova sčast'em nasladis'!

The first line captures the oppressiveness of life in its aspect of *byt*. A moment of bliss is perhaps the most one can hope for in one's life. The message is unambiguous. If such a moment presents itself, seize it. *Mig*, then, is highly valued. In EN the question becomes just how highly should a moment of bliss be valued. In this early stage Puškin has yet to ask this question. He is still proclaiming the intrinsic worth of *mig*. In "To Kaverin" ("K Kaverinu", 1817) wine and love are again advised by the poet.

To everything its time, to everything its moment;
A frivolous old man is absurd,
Absurd too is a middle-aged youth.
While we are alive, live,
Make merry in my memory;
Pray to Bacchus and to love

Vsemu pora, vsemu svoj mig;/ Smešon i vetrenyj starik,/
Smešon i junošča stepennyj./ Poka živetsja nam, živi,/ Guljaj
v moe vospominan'e;/ Molis' i Vakxu i ljubvi

The exhortation is to live as youth understands life: to be merry with the help of wine and love. The similarity, of course, is to Brjusov's *Crito*, to the Decadent belief that one should compose one's life of as many moments like those involving wine and love as is possible. Absent, however, from this intensification of life is the aesthetic component that was so important to the Decadents. This is a youthful and carefree Puškin, not the later 19th century Russian Decadents who turned their deeper enjoyment of *mig* into a philosophical stance. Nevertheless, the intensity is there. This call to intensify life comes in other poems as well. In "19th of October," "Stanzas for Tolstoj," and "Anacreon's Grave" advocacy comes in the imperative form.

Fuller, fuller! and, the heart burning,
Again to the bottom, to the last drop drink up!
/.../

Celebrate, while we're still here!

Polnej, polnej! i, serdcem vozgorja,/ Opjat' do dna, do kapli
vypivajte!/.../ Pirujte že, poka ešte my tut!

and

Drink pleasure to the last drop,
Live carefree, indifferent!
Be obedient to a moment of life,
Be young in your youth!

Do kapli naslažden'e pej,/ Živi bespečen, ravnodušen!/
Mgnoven'ju žizni bud' poslušen,/ Bud' molod v junosti tvoej!

Catch playful happiness;
Revel, revel,
Fill up more often the cup,
Become fatigued by ardent passion
And rest behind the cup.

Sčast'e rezvoe lovi;/ Naslaždajsja, naslaždajsja,/ Čašče
kubok nalivaj,/ Strast'ju pylkoj utomljajsja/ I za čašej ot-
dyxaj.

In a later poem Puškin reworded the last line to read
"Blessed is he who in youth was young." Brjusov quoted that
line in his diary entry of May 8, 1898. To be young meant for
him to give in to passions. Puškin's line became, along with
the couplet "The ways of perfection are endless,/ O, preserve
each instant of being", Brjusov's "New Testament": a holy
sacrament that Brjusov was determined to follow.⁹⁰

As aware as he is that a moment of love or revelry can
dispell the omnipresent boredom of existence, Puškin is
equally aware of the fleetingness of such moments. Epithets
such as "short" ("kratkij"), "quick" ("bystryj"), and
"ephemeral" ("letučij") are common descriptions for *mig*. For
example, bliss is forever a brief instant that the poet

exhorts his listeners to catch as if it were a bird on the wing. It often comes in the form of advice to friends, who, unlike the poet, are fated to be happy.

But you, innocent one, are born for happiness.
Believe it carefreely, catch the ephemeral moment:
Your soul is alive for friendship, for love,
For kisses of sweet passion;

No ty, nevinnaia, ty roždenna dlja sčast'ja./ Bespečno ver'
emu, letučij mig lovi:/ Duša tvoja živa dlja družby, dlja
ljubvi,/ Dlja poceluev sladostrast'ja;

Just as love and friendship are characterized as brief, so too are the moments of inspiration. Puškin refers to them as the "momentary gifts of the peaceable muses" in his poem "To V. F. Raevskij" ("V. F. Raevskomu", 1822). Even more emphatic is Puškin's stipulation in "K ***" (1817) that bliss is awarded for a fleeting moment only: "For a short instant is bliss given to us" ("Na kratkij mig blaženstvo nam dano"). Nevertheless, despite its brevity it is still bliss and fortunate is he who is able to catch the instant (in this case, of love) as it flies by:

A hundredfold blessed is he who in charming youth
Catches this quick instant on the fly;

Stokrat blažen, kto v junosti prelestnoj/ Sej bystryj mig pojmaet na letu;

In "Enjoyment" ("Naslažden'e", 1816), happiness is a phantom that the poet chases, but without success. The poet is left to wonder if it is his lot to ever experience the feeling: "Will the rapid instant of happiness come?" ("Nastanet sčast'ja bystryj mig?"). Whether it be the happiness of love or the happiness of poetic inspiration, the poet is aware, often painfully, of the ephemeral reality of the

moment. This painful aspect is reflected in yet another facet of the moment: the fact that it does not repeat itself. "Ah, youth does not ever return!" is how the sentiment is typically expressed in Puškin. Where Puškin has wondered if happiness will ever be his, it is in his darker moments when the unrepeatability of the moment is expressed:

Who has known happiness, will not know happiness again.
For a short instant is bliss given to us:

Kto sčast'e znal, už ne uznaet sčast'ja./ Na kratkij mig
blaženstvo nam dano:

For Puškin, the brevity of the moment is a metaphor for life; just as bliss will leave as suddenly as it comes, so can life itself be abruptly interrupted. For example, in "19th of October 1825" everyone is exhorted to drink to the Tsar because he too "is ruled by the moment ("im vlastvuet mgnoven'e"), i.e., he is as mortal as anyone else. Man's very mortality, then, becomes cause to celebrate life. This is even more true when life is immediately threatened by death. In "A Feast During the Time of the Plague" the chairman drinks in honor of the death that surrounds them. He sings: "And we will drink in the scent of a young girl-rose,-- /Perhaps... full of Plague." ("I devy-rozy p'em dyxan'e, - /Byt' možet... polnoe Čumy."). The presence of death heightens the "inexplicable joys" (neiz"jasnimy naslažden'ja) of everything that is endangered. Puškin comes to emphasize the aesthetic potential inherent within the moment before death.

In "I will soon grow silent!" ("Umolknu skoro ja!", 1821), the poet presages his own death but sets the conditions that would result in his final burst of creative

energy.

But if I am loved, -- allow me, o dear friend,
 Allow me to animate the farewell sound of the lyre
 With the sacred name of a beautiful lover.
 When deathly dreams have taken me for ever,
 Whisper with tenderness over my urn:
 He was loved by me, he was indebted to me
 For the final inspiration of both songs and love.

No esli ja ljubim, -- pozvol', o milyj drug,/ Pozvol'
 oduševit' proščal'nyj liry zvuk/ Zavetnym imenom ljubovnicy
 prekrasnoj./ Kogda menja navek obymet smertnyj son,/ Nad
 urnoju moej promolvi s umilen'em:/ On mnoju byl ljubim, on
 mne byl odolžen/ I pesen i ljubvi poslednim vdoxnoven'em.

"If I am loved" is a line that Brjusov puts in the mouth of the unnamed youth in his version of EN. For him it meant that his moment with Cleopatra could extend indefinitely. For the poet in the Puškin lines quoted above it means that the moment before death will be poetically transformed if the poet's love is returned. Often the final moment is brought about by other than natural causes: the poet is sentenced by the world he condemns. Monika Dudli Frenkel cites a list of these "poetic last words" that occur a "moment before execution":⁸¹ "'André Chenier;' Lensky's last elegy on the eve of his duel (a parody of the motif); Kočubej's last night in prison before execution in 'Poltava'; 'Feast in the Time of the Plague;' Mozart's playing of his 'Requiem' before he is poisoned in 'Mozart and Salieri;' 'Scenes from Chivalrous Times,' a dramatic fragment in which the troubadour's improvisation helps to commute his execution to life-imprisonment; Maria Schoning's last words on the scaffold; and above all, the two evenings of story-telling and poetry organized by Petronius as he pre-empts Nero's order for his execution by committing suicide himself."

In Frenkel's words, this moment before death allows the poet a final opportunity "to die an artist - that is, immortal." In "Andrej Šen'e," the poet's last words are in fact cut off in their middle just as his head "falls prematurely." In "Scenes from Chivalrous Times" Franc's improvisation succeeds in forestalling the moment of death; His sentence of death is commuted. Indeed, death has been put off indefinitely since Franc has been sentenced to "eternal," i.e., "life imprisonment" ("večnoe zaključenie).

It is interesting to note that in "Andrej Šen'e" the poet's final words are spoken during the night with his end coming just at the morning's first light. This pattern is not uncommon in Puškin: witness Lenskij, Andželo's near execution, Kočubej in "Poltava," and Petronius in "Caesar was travelling..." Let me also cite at this point Puškin's comments on Griboedov's death: "His death was instantaneous and beautiful" ("Smert' ego byla mgnovenna i prekrasna").⁹² As Frenkel points out, the theme here is not "the fear of death itself, but concern with the manner of it."⁹³ Brjusov's decision to explicate the three nights of love and death becomes more interesting when viewed from the above reference points. With each night inexorably proceeding to its predestined bloody dawn Brjusov is following a pattern already set by Puškin and one which is certainly suggested by the text of the second improvisation in EN itself. Each night could be seen as an examination of the "manner" of death, i.e., how each individual meets his death. Brjusov could certainly be said to be faithful to this aspect. Indeed, it is his

principal interest. Moreover, the image of love and death intermingled at the very moment of one's death, a textual hint in EN that Brjusov so readily follows, was not an uncommon one for Puškin, especially early in his literary career.

In "Love Alone..." ("Ljubov' odna...", 1816) the poet depicts the perfect end for the singers of love: to die in the embrace of a lover.

Singers of love! Sing of youthful joy,
Having bowed lips to burning lips,
Die in the embraces of lovers;
Sigh quietly verses of love!..

Pevcy ljubvi! mladuju pojte radost', / Skloniv usta k
pylajuščim ustam, / V ob"jatijax ljubovnic umirajte; / Stixi
ljubvi tixon'ko vozdyxajte!..

The poets are exhorted to artistically raise their own deaths by creating their final songs while in their lovers' embraces. Their deaths are not only to be centered on passion, already an appealing image for Romanticism, but they are also to be framed by a poetic creation. "Desire" ("Želanie", 1816) and "A Letter for Lida" ("Pis'mo k Lide", 1817) both exemplify this desire to intermingle death and love. In "Desire" the central image is not as vivid as that of dying in a lover's embrace. The poet welcomes death, but a death mollified by the existence of love: "Allow me to die, but let me die in love!" ("Puskaj umru, no pust' umru ljubja!"). In "A Letter to Lida" Puškin once again resorts to the romantic image of two lovers dying together.

O Lida, if we could only die
From bliss, delight and love!

O Lida, esli b umirali/ S blaženstva, negi i ljubvi!

In Frenkel's opinion, it is the manner of death that is the issue for Puškin. A death from bliss (s blaženstva) is artistically compelling and beautiful. It is even desirable; the poet is cognizant of his pending demise but willingly embraces it.

This is the passion that I am burning up with!...
I am fading, perishing in the flower of my life,
But I do not desire to be cured...

Vot strast', kotoroj ja sgoraju!../ Ja vjanu, gibnu v cvete let,/ No iscelit'sja ne želaju... ("And I heard...", 1818)

Perhaps the poetic potential of the moment before death so attracted Puškin because it coalesced within its restricted temporal frame the essence of what it means to be a poet. It is not coincidental that Puškin's love was for autumn, and not spring as would be more common in the poetic tradition. In "To Prince A. M. Gorčakov," Puškin compares his life to his friend's.

Your dawn -- is the dawn of marvelous spring;
Mine, my friend -- is a dawn of autumn.

Tvoja zarja -- zarja vesny prekrasnoj;/ Moja ž, moj drug -- osennjaja zarja.

Of all the guests at life's feast, Puškin is fated to appear only briefly: "For an hour I'll appear" ("Javljus' na čas"). In "Autumn" ("Osen'", 1833) the poet rhapsodizes about the brief and gentle beauty of the season:

But it is dear to me, dear reader,
For its quiet beauty, shining meekly.

No mne ona mila, čitatel' dorogoj,/ Krasoju tixoju, blistajuščej smirenno.

The only comparison that the poet can find is that of a consumptive girl and it is here that the link between death

and beauty comes to the fore. In other words, it is precisely the idea of a beauty that is here today and gone tomorrow that appeals to the poet.

How can I explain? I like it,
Like you, undoubtedly, a consumptive girl
At times will like. Doomed to die,
/.../
A crimson color still plays on the face.
She is yet alive today, tomorrow not.

Kak èto ob"jasnit'? Mne nravitsja ona,/ Kak, verojatno, vam
čaxotočnaja deva/ Poroju nravitsja. Na smert' osuždena,/ .../
Igraet na lice ešče bagrovij cvet./ Ona živa ešče segodnja,
zavtra net.

The poet returns to the beauty of autumn, which like the consumptive girl is doomed to quickly fade. The quality of fading (uvjadan'e) is a prominent one in Puškin's work.

Your parting beauty is pleasant to me --
I love the luxuriant fading of nature,
Its reddish and gold dressed woods,

Prijatna mne tvoja proščal'naja krasa --/ Ljublju ja pyšnoe
prirody uvjadan'e,/ V bagrec i v zoloto odetye lesa,

Autumn, a consumptive girl, a passionate death, etc., are all metaphors for the poet's doomed life. They are brief bursts of beauty only to be rapidly followed by death. Indeed, it is their brevity in close approximation with death that heightens the beauty of the moment; it is all the more precious because it will soon be gone. The moment before death is not just a last and final opportunity for the poet "to die an artist," as Frenkel states, but also the distillment of a poet's very nature. The poet is the autumn, he is the consumptive girl, he is that brief flourishing of splendid beauty that must be valued for the moment because in the next he will be gone. It is not for nothing that Puškin

wrote: "Our fatal moment will be bright" ("Smertnyj mig naš budet svetel" in "Krivcovu" 1817).

Mig, in many respects, defines the poet's existence. Cleopatra's offer, in this view, could be seen as nothing less than an offer to die the death of a poet. Why the Decadents, and in particular Brjusov, would have been drawn to this aspect of Puškin is clear. Certainly, some of the aspects of *mig* in their heritage which I discussed in the section on Brjusov could be traced back to Puškin: the moment as representative of intense life experience, its fleetingness, its unrepeatability, the intertwining of love and death, the interest in the instant before death, etc. Most especially in this last aspect do we see a kinship. In Puškin we can see that, like in Brjusov, death does indeed heighten the "inexplicable joys" of life as it is expressed in Val'singam's song. Nevertheless, for Puškin this final moment must be but the stage for the poet's inspiration. In other words, it is the final moment to experience poetic insight. Thus, Lenskij sits down and writes his final elegy. Val'singam composes a song in honor of death. Mozart performs his requiem. And through translations of Anacreon and Horace, i.e., through art, Petronius and his youthful friend discuss death and the fear of death on the night before Petronius' own demise. In Puškin, *mig* has an aesthetic potential that can be fulfilled by the artist's creation. In Brjusov's presentation of the three nights, however, we have seen that the aesthetic component is inherent within *mig* itself. In other words, insight can be experienced because of the extreme of that moment

itself rather than through a creative experience that occurs within the moment. In other words, a moment of life becomes like art. Thus the emphasis, on the part of Brjusov, on the behavior of the three individuals.

In many respects, Brjusov is following in the footsteps of Dostoevskij's Kirilov. In chapter three I defined Dostoevskij's understanding of *mig* as a moment of insight in which a character must choose between good and evil. He also created two characters that represent pure types of the Dostoevskian moment, i.e., the "good" moment of insight vs. the "evil." I am referring to Myškin and Kirilov.⁹⁴ In the course of an epileptic seizure Myškin experiences a blinding clarity and unity with the universe. It is a moment that is visited upon him by God. Myškin neither chooses nor controls his moment of insight. Kirilov hopes to experience insight through the extreme of suicide. Unlike Myškin, Kirilov intends to take the matter into his own hands. He will experience "insight" at a time of his own choosing and by his own means. It is in his acceptance of the idea that insight can come through the experience of physical extremes that Brjusov seems to be connected to Kirilov. Both the decadent artist and Kirilov seek to rival God. Rather than wait for the moment of insight that God brings, both Brjusov and Kirilov want to manufacture that instant.

To sum up: Although there was an awareness of *mig* within the Romantic consciousness, it did not attract the degree of attention that the Decadents were later to shower upon it. They systematized the concept; they constructed a "complete

theory of the instant," as Donchin expressed it and as Hansen-Löve has demonstrated. By creating a theory they elevated the concept of *mig* beyond what it registered for the poets that came before them. For Brjusov the concept became his "New Testament," i.e., he took from Puškin the inspiration "Blessed is he who in youth was young" and melded with it the line "O, preserve each instant of being" to create a quasi-religious comprehension of the idea of *mig*.⁸⁵ This led, as I have tried to indicate, to a fundamental difference between Brjusov's and Puškin's respective understanding of *mig*. In order to further demonstrate this distinction I would like to refer to two of Puškin's poems, Solov'ev's notion of time, and a scholarly article of Brjusov's.

In "The Poet" ("Poët", 1826) Puškin depicts the poet in two states: 1. the poet is actively engaged in fulfilling his vocation; 2. the poet is not so engaged. In the latter state the poet is a pathetic figure:

And among the insignificant children of the world,
He is, perhaps, the most insignificant.

I mež detej ničtožnyx mira,/ Byt' možet, vse ničtožnej on.

But when he serves Apollo, the poet's soul soars like an eagle:

But no sooner does the divine word
Touch his keen hearing,
Than the poet's soul starts,
Like an eagle that has been roused.

No liš' božestvennyj glagol/ Do sluxa čutkogo kosnetsja,/ Duša poëta vstrepenetsja,/ Kak probudivšijsja orel. (Trans. Dmitrij Obolenskij)

For Puškin, then, the poet has two lives (or "two states"): one in which he is a part of the physical world

like any other person (the "state of absence of inspiration"), and another in which he is a prophet, spiritually in tune with a higher order than our mundane existence (the "state of inspiration").⁸⁶ Or, as he put it in a poem I cited earlier, the poet belongs to two moments (dva mgnoven'ja): one moment is reason (i.e., our physical world), and the other is feelings (i.e., poetic reality).⁸⁷ The other poem that expresses this reality is "K ***, I recall a wondrous moment." The "wondrous moment" is a fleeting vision that appears before the poet. Biographically this vision "of pure beauty" refers to A. P. Kern, a woman that Puškin was in love with. But poetically the moment corresponds to artistic inspiration. When the vision is not before the poet his days pass despondently:

Without divinity, without inspiration,
Without tears, without life, without love.

Bez božestva, bez vdoxnoven'ja, / Bez slez, bez žizni, bez ljubvi.

However, when the poet sees the vision, all of the above, which comprises that which is most dear to the poet, returns; the poet is again a creature of two moments. Puškin's story EN also reflects this dual aspect of the poet. The Italian improviser alternates from being among the most inspired of human beings (during his improvisations) to among the greediest (when he calculates the profit he might earn from his show). Čarskij as well fluctuates between being a pathetic fake (he affects being a lover of horses, a gambler, a refined gastronome, etc.) and being a true poet (when his "silly mood" strikes him). The poet is a person who leads a

"double existence."⁸⁸

The above brings us to Solov'ev's conception of time and also back to Gasparov's and Paperno's discussion of eternity in Puškin. Solov'ev opposed "... time to eternity. Believing that space and time had existence only in the material world, Solov'ev associated time with all the negative members of the oppositions cited above. Space and time implied change, movement, corruption, death. Eternity, on the other hand, could either be panchronic and 'external' or 'zero time', and this was expressed by the words for 'moment' - *mir* and *mnogovremenie*." The word, of course, for "eternity" in Russian is *večnost'*. Gasparov's and Paperno's analysis of the theme of *večnost'* in Puškin clearly has its resonance in Solov'ev's idea of time. For example, they discuss the motif of "passing time" (*beguščee vremja*)⁸⁹ as a motif of the theme of existence in Puškin. In other words, the passage of time is symbolic for Puškin, as it was for Solov'ev, of our mortality and our steady progress towards death. Just as Solov'ev opposed time to eternity so too do Gasparov and Paperno see within Puškin's œuvre an opposition of existence (*byt'e*) to eternity (*večnost'*). They logically contend that Puškin associated the poetic with *večnost'*. As a poet, then, Puškin sought the conditions of *večnost'*, for it was only in such conditions that poetry could be created. Thus along with all the attributes of *večnost'* (eg., motionlessness, peacefulness, shining, statue, Madonna figure, etc.) that Gasparov and Paperno identify they also acknowledge the theme of escape, i.e., from *byt'e* to *večnost'*, in Puškin and which I have already

discussed earlier in the chapter. It can be said, I think, that the "zero time" that Solov'ev saw in *mig* can also be discerned in Puškin's work. The progress of time is an attribute of *byt'e* and as such is not present during the moment of creation. Thus that moment sees a suspension of time, i.e., it is a moment of "zero time." Certainly the moments before death in Puškin, eg., Lenskij's and Andrej Šen'e's, have a quality of time being suspended since we are unaware of the night passing until the morning actually arrives, bringing with it an end both to the poetic moment and the poet. And of course the theme of escape that Gasparov and Paperno identify confirms that Puškin welcomed the suspended moment, the *mig* of creation. His character Čarskij is never more whole as a person than when isolated from the world in his study while writing poetry. Nevertheless, in both Puškin's and Solov'ev's comprehension of the world there are two basic and opposed principles: time vs. eternity. Puškin never saw the poet as capable of existing in just one principle to the exclusion of the other. The poet is also a man and thus subject to the principle of time, even though he is also blessed to experience the other principle of eternity.

It is this dual aspect of the poet that Brjusov would most object to and which in the end most clearly distinguishes him and his contemporaries from their predecessors, including, of course, Puškin. Brjusov was an avid student of poetic tradition and had a keen awareness of the tradition of Russian poetry and the personal role that he played in it. In an article on Afanasij Fet, Brjusov quotes Fet on how the

burdens of everyday life would force him "to punch a hole in the humdrum everyday ice, in order to be able to breathe, if only for a moment, the pure and free air of poetry." Brjusov goes on to quote Fet as to why one could not always breathe such air: "we understood very well, that, firstly, it's impossible to permanently live in such a stimulating atmosphere, and secondly, that to persistently conscript each and everyone in it is both not sensible and absurd."⁹⁰

Fet is essentially describing the same understanding of the poet's life that Puškin had; it is given over to two moments, that of daily life and that of poetry. It is precisely this duality that Brjusov and his contemporaries disputed. Life and art were fused for the Decadents because they strove to make life in the image of art. Brjusov states his objection to Fet immediately upon quoting him: "We on the other hand suppose, that the entire goal of the earthly development of mankind should consist in everyone being able to permanently live 'in such a stimulating atmosphere', so that it becomes the standard air for humanity."⁹¹ For Brjusov, there are not two moments but only one. The poet is forever a poet and should strive to make every instant a poetic one. This is his quality of *slijanie*, i.e., merging, where "the sphere of life and the sphere of poetry are inseparably merged."⁹²

Brjusov was familiar with Solov'ev's idea of time and his belief that the poet should always be a poet is seen once again in the interpretation that he gives of Solov'ev's poetry. The "world of time" and the "world of eternity" are also the "world of evil" and the "world of good" according to

Brjusov. "To find an exit from the world of time to the world of eternity -- such is the problem standing before every person. To defeat time, so that everything became eternal, -- such is the final goal of the cosmic process."⁹³ This is how Brjusov characterizes Solov'ev's poetic universe. It is a repetition of his sentiments in his article on Fet that everyone should be able "to permanently live" in a poetic atmosphere. Furthermore, it is instructive to observe how Brjusov defines, or does not define, the world of time. It is not, he insists, "matter" such as "the body." "Both the spirit and the body" can properly be subject to either basic principle.⁹⁴ Since the body can belong to the world of timelessness/good it follows that the "zero time" of Solov'ev, i.e., *mir*, can be experienced either materially (the body) or spiritually (poetry). Thus, unlike Puškin, for whom the moment is purely an opportunity of poetic expression, the moment for Brjusov can be either materially or spiritually filled. In other words, as Paperno puts it, not just "poetry, but also practical life turn out to be arenas for the application of creative energy."⁹⁵ This is the equivalence between a moment of passion and poetic inspiration that I spoke of earlier. Therefore, Flavius, Crito and the unnamed youth strive in a material manner for the art-like instant of life in Brjusov's version of EN. In other words, their behavior in that instant before their deaths, rather than the words they might express, can itself be the poetic moment. The result is an equivalence between action and words (the material and the spiritual), an equivalence demonstrated by Brjusov's 1899

poem "Cleopatra." In this poem Cleopatra addresses the poet and compares her fame to his.

You are immortal due to the marvelous authority of art,
But I am immortal due to charm and passion:

Bessmerten ty iskusstva divnoj vlast'ju, / A ja bessmertna
prelest'ju i strast'ju:

The poet's art and Cleopatra's passion are equated; the two principles of life and art are one. Puškin, on the other hand, distinguished between the two principles of a poet's existence. His interest in the moment before death was predicated upon its relevance as a metaphor for the poet's life and for its potential for poetic last words, but not for the moment itself as a materially expressed instant of one's life. Cleopatra's offer in Puškin's EN may have been an offer to die the death of a poet and it is possible to see how this could have been easily twisted to fit more readily a Decadent conception. Nevertheless, for Puškin, the deaths of Flavius, Crito and the youth could only have been artistic achievements if accompanied by poetic inspiration. It is the "poeticization of those who know how to die" that becomes "the defining moment for Pushkin's depiction of death in Antiquity."⁹⁶ For Brjusov, however, the manner of death no longer required "inspiration" in order for it to be artistic since he claimed that they "will reach the miraculous on all paths!" The two distinct principles of existence for a poet, i.e., that as a man and that as a poet, had been fused by Brjusov into one. *Mig* no longer represented only the latter. This is the fundamental distinction between Puškin and Brjusov and one that Brjusov reveals in his reading of EN.

¹Valerij Brjusov. The Diary of Valery Bryusov, ed. Joan Delaney Grossman (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1980), p. 36.

²Joan Delaney Grossman. "'Moi Pushkin': Briusov's Search for the Real Aleksandr Sergeevich" in Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism, ed. Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press), p. 74.

³D. S. Merežkovskij. Večnye sputniki (Sankt-Peterburg: Obščestvennaja Pol'za, 1910), p. 315.

⁴Ibid., p. 314.

⁵Grossman, "'Moi..." , p. 74.

⁶Ibid., p. 75.

⁷Ibid.

⁸William Mills Todd III. "Vladimir Solov'ev's Pushkin Triptych: Toward a Modern Reading of the Lyrics" in Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism, ed. Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press,) p. 256.

⁹Valerij Brjusov. Moj Puškin (Moskva-Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1929), p. 19.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 17-18.

¹¹Grossman, "'Moi..." , p. 81.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁴K. Močul'skij. Valerij Brjusov (Paris: YMCA Press, 1962), p. 151.

¹⁵M. L. Gofman. Puškin: Pervaja glava nauki o Puškine (Peterburg: Atenej, 1922), p. 62.

¹⁶Valerij Brjusov. "Po povodu odnoj kritiki", p. 154.

¹⁷Brjusov, Moj, pp. 109-110.

¹⁸Dostoevskij, "Otvét..." , p. 136.

¹⁹Brjusov, Moj, p. 112.

²⁰Despite his protestations to the contrary, most scholars have viewed Brjusov's elucidation of Puškin's thought on Antiquity as really a matter of Brjusov imposing his own beliefs on Puškin. Certainly it can at least be said that Puškin was an avid student of Antiquity and in some respects was sympathetic to Antiquity's ideal of beauty (*Antičnye motivy v poezii Puškina* p. 38) and even absorbed within himself Antiquity's world-view as Ljudomudrov' asserts by citing Puškin turning to "the mythological images of Apollo and Dionysius" in "V načale žizni školu pomnju ja". If we refer to that poem we will notice that the epithets for Dionysius (effeminate image, voluptuous, wonderful) and Apollo (angry, full of terrible pride), then we might see some inkling of the *naslaždenie* and *smert'* that Brjusov insists is Puškin's understanding of what comprises the two ideals of Antiquity (Ibid., p. 15.).

²¹Brjusov, Moj, p. 113.

²²Ibid., p. 116.

²³ M. L. Gofman. Egipetskie noči (Paris: Sergej Lifar', 1935), p. 9. Gofman wrote in reference to the three nights that "no description of them is even necessary". See also V. Žirmunskij, Valerij Brjusov i nasledie Puškina, p. 8.

²⁴ Barbara Heldt Monter. "Love and Death in Pushkin's 'Little Tragedies'", in Modern Critical Views: Alexander Pushkin, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 67.

²⁵ N. N. Petrunina. "'Egipetskie noči' i russkaja povest' 1830-x godov" in Puškin: Issledovanija i materialy, VIII (Leningrad: Nauka, 1978) p. 24.

²⁶ Monika Dudli Frenkel. "V malen'koj ramke": Fragmentary Structures in Pushkin's Poetry and Prose (Diss. Yale 1984. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1984), p. 318.

²⁷ O'Bell, p. 87.

²⁸ Marcus C. Levitt has said something very similar. He wrote that "the Symbolists' conscious or unconscious myth-making may itself confirm the deep affinities between the two literary periods." See Levitt, "Pushkin in 1899" in Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

²⁹ Nadežda Mandelstam. Mozart and Salieri (Ann Arbor: Ardis 1973), p. 88.

³⁰ Grossman, "'Moi..."", p. 84.

³¹ Boris Gasparov. "The 'Golden Age' and Its Role in the Cultural Mythology of Russian Modernism" in Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism, ed. Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press), p. 3.

³² Olga Muller Cooke. "The Symbolists' Reception of Pushkin: Bryusov and Bely on 'The Bronze Horseman'", p. 29.

³³ B. V. Tomaševskij. "Tekst stixotvorenija Puškina 'Kleopatra'" in Učenyje Zapiski (LGU 200, 1955), p. 225.

³⁴ I discussed Tomaševskij's treatment of this topic in chapter two. Essentially he believed that the stanza beginning "And look..." was written much later than the 1828 Cleopatra poem and was arbitrarily attached to it by an earlier editor.

³⁵ Valerij Brjusov. Sobranie sočnenij v semi tomach, III (Moskva: Xudožestvennaja literatura, 1974), p. 621.

³⁶ Wolfgang Iser. "The Reading process: A Phenomenological Approach" in Twentieth-Century Literary Theory, ed. Vassilis Lambropoulos and David Neal Miller (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 382.

³⁷ V. Žirmunskij. Valerij Brjusov i nasledie Puškina (Peterburg: El'zevir, 1922), p. 7.

³⁸ Joan Delaney Grossman. Valery Bryusov and the Riddle of Russian Decadence (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 38.

³⁹ D. A. Garibjan. "Nekotorye stilističeskie nabljudenija nad tekstami 'Egipetskix nočej' Puškina i Brjusova" in Brjusovskie čtenija 1962 goda (Erevan: Armjanskoe Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1963), p. 238.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Abram Ležnev. Pushkin's Prose (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1983), p. 142.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 35.

⁴⁴ M. L. Gofman. "Iz 'Egipetskix nočej'" in Neizdannyj Puškin (Peterburg: Atenej, 1922), p. 104. The relevant section is believed by Gofman to be related to Puškin's 1835 attempt to rewrite the Cleopatra poem once more for insertion into EN. Gofman believed that the passage below was intended as a lyrical prose segue into the Italian's improvisation.

Svetly i šumny čertogi Ptolomeevy: Kleopatra ugoščaet svoix družej; stol obstavlen kostjanyimi ložami. Tri sta junošej služat gostjam, tri sta dev raznosjat im amfory polnyja grečeskix vin; trista černyx Ėvnuxov nadzirajut nad nimi bezmolvno.

Porfirnaja kolonada otkrytaja s juga i severa ožidaet dunovenija Ėvra;-- No vozdux nedvižim-- ognennyja jazyki svetil'nikov gorjat nedvižno. Dym kuril'nic vzosnositsja prjamo nedvižnoju strueju-- more, kak zerkalo ležit nedvižno u rozovyx stupenej polukruglago kryl'ca...

⁴⁵ Grossman, Valery, p. 237.

⁴⁶ Frenkel, p. 319.

⁴⁷ Georgette Donchin. The Influence of French Symbolism on Russian Poetry (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1958), p. 96.

⁴⁸ Aage A. Hansen-Löve. Der Russische Symbolismus System und Entfaltung der Poetischen Motive, I Band (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1989), p. 286.

⁴⁹ Brjusov, Sobranie VI, p. 224.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 297.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Dostoevskij, "Otvet...", p. 136.

⁵³ Brjusov, Sobranie VI, p. 297.

⁵⁴ The World Book Encyclopedia, vol. 6 (Chicago: Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1967), p. 263.

⁵⁵ Hansen-Löve, p. 298.

⁵⁶ Brjusov, Sobranie VI, p. 251.

⁵⁷ Ibid., I, p. 322.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 234.

⁵⁹ Ibid., III, p. 449.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 447.

⁶¹ Ibid., I, p. 225.

⁶² Ibid., III, p. 258.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 227.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 246.

⁶⁵ Ibid., I, p. 107.

⁶⁶ Hansen-Löve, p. 303.

⁶⁷ Brjusov, Sobranie VI, p. 449.

⁶⁸ Ibid., III, p. 451.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 452.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 243.

⁷² Ibid., p. 452.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ I am referring to the stanza that begins with the line "And look, already the day had fled" and which has subsequently been judged to be a much later text than the 1828 Cleopatra poem and therefore should not have been added to that poem by the original editors of EN.

⁷⁵ B. Gasparov and I. Paperno. "K opisaniju motivnoj struktury liriki Puškina" in Russian Romanticism: Studies in the Poetic Codes, ed. Nils Åke Nilsson (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1979), p. 11.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 20.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 31.

⁷⁸ The original text runs as follows: Odnako ž on byl poët, i strast' ego byla neodolima: kogda naxodila ne nego takaja drjan' (tak nazyval on vdoxnovenie), Čarskij zapiralsja v svoem kabinete i pisal s utra do pozdnej noči. On priznavalsja iskrennim svoim druž'jam, što tol'ko togda i znal istinnoe sčastie. /.../

Odnaždy utrom Čarskij čuvstvoval to blagodatnoe raspoloženie duxa, kogda mečtanija javstvenno risujutsja pered vami i vy obretaete živye, neožidannye slova dlja voploščenija videnij vašix, kogda stixi legko ložatsja pod pero vaše i zvučnye rifmy begut navstreču strojnoj mysli. Čarskij pogružen byl dušoju v sladostnoe zabvenie... i svet, i mnenija sveta, i ego sobstvennye pričudy dlja nego ne suščestvovali. On pisal stixi.

This passage is on p. 245 in the Polnoe sobranie sočinenij v desjati tomax.

⁷⁹ Wiktor Weintraub. "The Problem of Improvisation in Romantic Literature" in Comparative Literature XVI (No 2, Spring 1964) p. 137.

⁸⁰ Grossman, The Diary, p. 60.

⁸¹ Frenkel, p. 318.

⁸² Aleksandr Puškin. "Putešestvie v Arzrum" in Polnoe sobranie sočinij v decjati tomax VI (Leningrad: Nauka, 1978), p. 452.

⁸³ Frenkel, p. 327.

⁸⁴ In reference to Kirilov I do not mean that he is evil in the sense that he is a Satanic figure, but rather that his act is evil. Vladimir Golstein wrote the interesting article "Puškin's 'Mozart and Salieri' as a Parable of Salvation" that I referred to in a footnote in chapter three. In his article, Golstein discusses the biblical values of time. What is essential is that one should submit to and obey the will of God. The will of God can be expressed in many ways, including time. Thus to obey the "biddings of time" is also to obey God. Golstein goes from there to divide Puškin's characters into two groups, those who obey the "biddings of time" and those who either do not or fail to recognize them. To obey means to respond appropriately to those opportunities that time brings. Those who refuse or fail to recognize those opportunities are those individuals who attempt to usurp the dictates of time. In other words, they attempt to designate the moment for their action rather than wait. Golstein lists Salieri and Don Žuan as examples of this type. Kirilov, then, would also seem to fall into this group. He wants to choose his moment of insight, as opposed to Myškin who must wait until he is called, as it were.

⁸⁵ By religious I mean in the sense of the fervor with which Brjusov regarded it and the significance that it held for him.

⁸⁶ Savely Sendorovich. "On Puškin's Mythology: The Shade-Myth" in Alexander Puškin: Symposium II, ed. Andrej Kodjak, Krystyna Pomorska, and Kiril Taranovsky (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, Inc. 1980), pp. 104-105.

⁸⁷ Puškin's contemporaries also understood the poet to be of a dual nature. In his "Beethoven's Last Quartet", Odoevskij's Beethoven says that "... when the minute of delight (minuta vostorga) comes to me... I anticipate time and sense according to some inner laws which go unnoticed by simple people and are incomprehensible even to me in a different minute..." See N. N. Petrunina "Egipetskie noči i russkaja povest' 1830-x godov", p. 28.

⁸⁸ L. Ja. Ginzburg. O Lirike (Moskva-Leningrad: Sovetskij pisatel', 1964), p. 187.

⁸⁹ Gasparov, p. 25.

⁹⁰ Brjusov, Sobranie VI, p. 217.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Irina Paperno. "Puškin v Žizni čeloveka serebrjanogo veka" in Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism, ed. Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press), p. 25.

⁹³ Brjusov, Sobranie VI, p. 221.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 222.

⁹⁵ Paperno, p. 25.

⁹⁶ B. Val'be. "Egipetskie noči" in Zvezda (No 3, 1937), p. 148.

Chapter V

The Final Modernist Moment? Gofman and Puškin.

In the pursuit for
moments, the personality
was crushed and
dissipated.
Vjačeslav Ivanov

Modest Gofman (1885-1959) was a productive literary scholar whose research dealt with Tolstoj, the Symbolists and, above all, Puškin. He belonged to the wave of scholars that swelled the ranks of Pushkinists at the turn of the century. Not only was there a growth in numbers, but also in terms of the sophistication of their critical approach. This generation turned their backs on the biographical approach in criticism that was prevalent during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and instead began to direct their attention onto the text.

Perhaps the spiritual father of this generation of Pushkinists was Semen Afanas'evič Vengerov, who conducted a series of seminars on the poet from 1908 to 1916. Tomaševskij chronicles the names of some of the famous participants of the seminars: "S. M. Bondi, V. V. Gippius, A. S. Dolinin, N. V. Izmajlov, V. L. Komarovič, Ju. G. Oksman, A. S. Poljakov, A. L. Slonimskij, Ju. N. Tyrjanov, B. M. Ėjxenbaum, B. M. Ėngel'gardt, N. V. Jakovlev, D. P. Jakubovič and others."¹ Tomaševskij neglects to mention himself and Gofman, however,

although they were contemporaries who worked closely with each other and with many of the scholars listed above. For example, the work *Unpublished Puškin*, based on the manuscripts in the collection of A. F. Onegin, was largely a collaboration between Gofman and Tomaševskij, as well as the above mentioned Izmajlov, Jakovlev, and Engel'gardt.

According to Tomaševskij, Vengerov's greatest contribution may well have been the emphasis that he placed on the importance and relevance of philology in the study of literature, an emphasis which Tomaševskij considers true of that particular historical period in general: "Vengerov's seminars [were], of course, a symptom of the times."² Among the results of the seminars and the accompanying interest in philology was a significant improvement in the development of textual criticism (textology). Vengerov certainly did not initiate textual criticism within Russian letters but he, along with his students, played "a leading role in raising textual criticism to an independent discipline in the humanities."³ Along with other students from the seminars, Modest Gofman became a central figure in the field of textual criticism, especially as it was applied to the study of Puškin. We will be considering many of his articles and books and it probably would be advisable to list the principal ones: 1. *Sobornyj individualizm* (1907); 2. *Poëty Simvolizma* (1908); 3. *Pervaja glava nauki o Puškine* (1922); 4. "'Kleopatra' i 'Egipetskija noči'" (1922); 5. "Iz 'Egipetskix nočej'" (1922); 6. *Puškin. Psixologija tvorčestva*. (1928); 7. "Les 'Nuits égyptiennes' de Pouchkine et leur héroïne" (1933); 8.

Puškin-Don-Žuan (1935); 9. *Egipetskie noči* (1935).

Gofman's most important book in the area of textology and Puškin was his 1922 monograph *Basics of the Study of Pushkin*. This book initiated a "lively discussion" on the topic of textual criticism and eventually led to Vinokur's *A Critique of the Poetic Text* and Tomaševskij's *The Writer and The Book: A Survey of Textology*.⁴

Brjusov also weighed into the fray with the article "On the Matter of a Certain Criticism." The crux of the dispute between Brjusov and Gofman and a point that was a matter of some controversy among textologists in general was the manner in which Gofman formalized the methods of textual criticism in his *Basics of the Study of Puškin*. In his book, Gofman pays most attention to detailing the multitude of sins that have been committed with Puškin's manuscripts, often resorting to citations from Brjusov's recent publication of Puškin's complete works for examples of the more egregious errors.

One such sin involves Puškin's use of the device of omitted stanzas. When editors restore "to their rightful place" those omitted stanzas for which there did exist a text, they are in fact distorting Puškin's "compositional plan, his artistic conception."⁵ The only exceptions to this objection are if the stanzas in question were omitted due to the censor or because material circumstances prevented Puškin from carrying out his artistic will. A second and even more serious editorial mistake, according to Gofman, is when editors combine different variants of a piece (most often

intermixing a draft with a final copy) into one piece.⁶ Yet a third objection revolves around editors giving a title to a piece if Puškin had failed to do so. Since a title and poem constitute a "single organic artistic whole," editors could be distorting the effect of a piece by creating a title where none had existed or been intended, according to Gofman.⁷ The most grievous error on the part of editors, however, was to read "between the lines" and insert "their own words" or to choose from among the numerous crossed-out words or variants "those words and those variants which for some reason" they liked.⁸ This was otherwise known as conjectural reading and it was (and remains) a widely used device.

Brjusov's conjectures, we will recall, involved "guessing" what words, phrases, etc., Puškin might have used in poems that existed in an incomplete form in the manuscripts. Brjusov then published these poems, in which he had guessed some of the content, as complete poems. Despite Brjusov's honesty as to his procedures, Gofman nevertheless disapproved altogether. He did not believe in conjectural reading and condemned it, although, as Tomaševskij wryly notes, this "did not prevent Gofman himself from occasionally making conjectures."⁹ Gofman's objection to conjecture as well as some of the other flawed editorial practices that I have outlined above (eg. intermingling different texts) is interesting given his subsequent history with EN. As we shall see, Gofman resorts to many of the same editorial practices in his version of EN that he objected to so strenuously in *Basics of the Study of Puškin*. Nevertheless, his study proved to be a

needed and timely one because "errors in the texts due to many generations of both censorship and incompetent editing compounded the already ponderously difficult technical and methodological problems of interpreting Pushkin's manuscripts."¹⁰

Thus Gofman started off as a textologist examining Puškin's manuscripts and evaluating others who did likewise. 1922 proved to be a critical year for him both professionally and personally. In that year he left Saint Petersburg for Paris in order to work (along with others) on the Puškin manuscripts in the collection of A. F. Onegin. Unlike the other scholars who participated in this assignment (Tomaševskij for one), Gofman was never to return to the Soviet Union. He remained in Paris where he joined the faculty of the Slavic department at the Sorbonne. 1922 also proved to be a particularly prolific year for Gofman in terms of publications. He published his book on Puškin (*Basics of the Study of Puškin*), a collection of Del'vig's works (*Unpublished Verses*); he collaborated with Tomaševskij and others on the Puškin manuscripts in the Onegin collection (*Unpublished Puškin*), and wrote an article on verses that were not included in *Evgenij Onegin* ("Omitted Verses of *Evgenij Onegin*"). As can be seen by these titles Gofman's work principally involved examining the original manuscripts and notebooks for excerpts, omitted phrases, variants, mistakes that previous editors had made with the manuscripts, etc. The motivational force behind this effort was to display Puškin's creative work in as canonic a form as possible.

Indeed, the "matter of the text should precede all other problems about the study of the creative work because it is impossible to study a writer, it is impossible to debate about his creative work without knowing the text of his works, without having his canon."¹¹

Given Gofman's interest in deciphering the riddle of Puškin's manuscripts, it is not surprising that he also became interested in yet another riddle that Puškin posed. I am referring to those texts in which Puškin, either purposefully or otherwise, did not provide an ending, i.e., the fragments. For example, Gofman wrote a brief article entitled "The ending of the elegy 'A foul day has ended'" that was published (also in 1922) in a collection of articles (*A Puškin Collection*) dedicated to the memory of Professor Vengerov. In this article Gofman printed the elegy in the form in which Puškin published it in 1826 and 1829. Gofman highlighted the end with its evocative "But if....." as being especially compelling. The use of the repeated ellipses and the fact that the manuscript for this elegy did not survive intrigued Gofman. He pondered whether this "finished-unfinished" elegy was meant to be precisely in the form that we are familiar with or if a continuation was planned.¹² Gofman pointed to the 1826 edition in which the elegy was subtitled "Fragment," and suggested that the printed version was only part of a whole. Gofman suggested that a stanza, which he characterized as an "ending of a piece," that was found in the library of P. A. Efremov makes the question an even more interesting one. The found stanza begins where "A foul day

has ended" left off, with the words "But if":¹³

But if it [jealously] righteously began to boil,
But if not in vain jealous pangs
And the cover from treachery
A trembling hand removed....

Then goodbye love - a band has been removed from the
eyes;

The blind man recovers his sight, having rejected embar-
rassment and adulation,

Instead of love, revenge is fostered in the soul
And a raised dagger is the outcome of this story.-

No esli pravedno ona zaklokotala,/ No esli ne votšče revniva-
ja toska/ I s verolomstva pokryvalo/ Snjala drožaščaja
ruka..../ Togda prosti ljubov'-s glaz sbrošena povjazka;/
Slepec prozrel, otvergši styd i lest',/ Vzamen ljubvi, v duše
leleet mest'/ I, vstočennyj kinžal toj povesti razvjazka.-

For various reasons Gofman questions the validity of the above excerpt, doubting that it even could be ascribed to Puškin. However, even if it could be indisputably identified as Puškin's and as an ending to the elegy, a basic fact would not be changed: Puškin excluded it in favor of the ellipses. Gofman points out that Puškin similarly excluded four and a half lines of verse in the elegy "To the sea" and replaced them with ellipses ("The world was deserted....."). For Gofman the question must revolve around the issue of canonicity of form: "The fundamental, canonic text of the elegy was established by Puškin..."¹⁴ I mention this brief article for two reasons: 1. to reiterate how establishing the canonic text of a work is a principal motivating force behind Gofman's work; 2. to illustrate the difference in response between this article and Gofman's work on EN.

In 1922 Gofman wrote two articles on EN. One article appeared in the aforementioned *Unpublished Puškin*. This article concerns a previously unpublished excerpt of EN. The excerpt

consists of both a prose and a poetry section (See Appendix E) and is dated 1834-35. This is generally accepted as Puškin's attempt to revise yet again the Cleopatra poem for the purpose of inserting it in the prose frame "We spent the evening at the dacha." Most of the article deals with the publication of the transcript of the actual manuscript and elucidates the procedure that Gofman followed in preparing the excerpt for publication. We need not concern ourselves with this aspect of the article. What is more interesting here is the claim that Gofman would later make for this fragment.

In his book *The Psychology of Puškin's Creative Work*, Gofman suggests that Puškin intended this part prose, part poetry fragment as the beginning of the second improvisation in chapter three.¹⁵ S. Bondi objected to this proposal saying that "it is hardly believable because the entire art of the improviser consists of being able to instantly improvise in verse, not in prose."¹⁶ Gofman, however, argues in his 1935 book on EN that Puškin "rewrote the beginning" of EN and in the manuscript in the Rumjancevskij museum the third chapter ends with the words "The music grew silent... The improvisation had begun." The improvisation itself, Gofman claims, is in the manuscript that he discovered in the Onegin collection. To prove that it is indeed the improvisation that Puškin intended should follow this new version of EN, Gofman cites the fact that it is written "on the same dark blue paper, with the same handwriting and with the same manner of writing (on one half of the page)" as the fair rewritten copy

of EN that he refers to above.¹⁷ You can tell by the printed fragment in Appendix E that Puškin did not get far with it. Gofman proposes a hypothetical solution in the article that I discuss below.

The second article appeared in *Contemporary Notes* (*Sovremennyya zapiski*), a monthly political and literary journal published in Paris. This article was entitled ,
 "'Kleopatra' and 'Egyptian Nights'. Puškin's Unrealized Design." In fact, in a footnote the article is presented as an "introduction" to a work on the "history of the creation and text" of EN.¹⁸ This broader study was to be published in 1923 in Petrograd, but it never was. This was almost certainly due to Gofman's failure to return to the Soviet Union. Even though his immediate plans had to be foregone for personal reasons, Gofman would not forget EN and he eventually returned to it in the 1930's.

In this second article, Gofman addresses the question of EN's form. In 1837 P. A. Pletnev and others published EN in "Sovremennik" and their version continued to be accepted and published as the official version throughout the 19th century and indeed up until Gofman's time. Gofman was perhaps the first to directly question the validity of the 1837 text that Pletnev published. In his words Pletnev printed "not Puškin's, but his own personal, very clever composition from various manuscripts of Puškin's--from rough drafts and final copies and even from various years (1825-1835)."¹⁹ In other words, Pletnev cobbled together disparate texts and published them as a story by Puškin. In Gofman's opinion, however, EN,

in the form that Pletnev printed it, could not be considered as representative of Puškin's intent. It could not, in other words, be considered the canonic form of EN, although it had been accepted as such since its initial publication in 1837.

As an example of the errors that Pletnev made, Gofman cites the verse that begins with the line "And look, already the day had passed," and ends with "the golden couch glitters..." Gofman admits that this is a "continuation" (dated 1824-1825 by Gofman) to the Cleopatra poem (1824), but claims that Puškin abandoned and rejected it when he rewrote the Cleopatra poem in 1825 (this would be the version that is usually dated 1828).²⁰ This stanza ended the second improvisation and thus the story in Pletnev's original publication and therefore in all subsequent ones. Gofman was by no means alone in asserting that adding that verse to the Cleopatra poem is a contamination of texts; I indicated in chapter two that Tomaševskij makes the very same point. Because of this "contamination" both readers and scholars have been under the impression that Puškin "did not manage to complete" EN.²¹ The tone of Gofman's words suggest that in his opinion this is a misimpression on everyone's part.

Gofman provides in his second 1922 article a brief history and commentary on the development of the text of EN. I have already noted in a previous chapter the roles that P. V. Annenkov and P. I. Bartenev played in the history of EN. Gofman takes them both to task for their inability to correctly decipher Puškin's manuscripts. P. O. Morozov is also criticized for publishing as "preparatory excerpts" to EN the

excerpts that Annenkov and Bartenev had originally published and for continuing to print Pletnev's version of EN as the basic text.²² Gofman refers to Pletnev's text as a "pseudo-Puškin composition" and Tomaševskij characterizes Morozov's collections of Puškin's works as having "definitively obscured and confused the texts."²³ Morozov, too, was under the misconception that Puškin "did not manage to finish either the poem about Cleopatra or the story."²⁴ This continued misconception led to such literary tragedies, in Gofman's opinion, as Brjusov's effort to finish the second improvisation of EN. A thorough examination of the history of EN by Brjusov and other scholars would have led them, in Gofman's opinion, to the following conclusion: Puškin's intention was to replay Cleopatra's challenge in contemporary times but that the difficulty of this task caused Puškin to forgo continuing the story. Thus, it is not the case that Puškin "did not manage" ("ne uspel") to finish but that he either "did not want to or could not" ("ne zaxotel ili ne mog") finish it.²⁵ Brjusov's mistake was to neglect to study the history of EN.²⁶ Only by following such a course could one hope to discover Puškin's design. Gofman therefore provides us with this first necessary step, a correct history, as he sees it, of EN.

This history begins in 1824 with Puškin's poem about Cleopatra. Gofman stresses that this was "not the beginning of a poem, but an entirely finished piece of verse."²⁷ In other words, this was an artistically complete work and any thought that Puškin intended to continue this poem should be dismissed. It is only eleven years later that Puškin even

returns to the theme of Cleopatra.

In 1835 Puškin first sought to use the Cleopatra theme in an episodic fashion in his novel about ancient Rome. The novel, however, was abandoned. In the same year (1835) Puškin sought to make the Cleopatra theme "the center" of a story. The basic plan of the story, according to Gofman, was to follow a parallel structure: "a poetic retelling of the Egyptian anecdote (episodic part) and the embodiment of that anecdote... in contemporary life (the central, main part of the exposition of the story)."²⁸ There were, however, two artistic problems which followed from the proposed parallel structure. One problem was how to introduce the poetic retelling of the anecdote. This problem became so severe that in Gofman's opinion Puškin decides to forego the poem entirely in his first draft of the story about the contemporary Egyptian nights. As evidence Gofman cites a line (from the fragment "We spent the evening at the dacha," which Gofman considers as the above first draft of EN) of the narrator's when he mentions having told a poet friend about the Egyptian anecdote of Aurelius Victor: "I suggested to make of it a poem. *He began but gave it up.*"²⁹ The second problem was an even more serious impediment: how to introduce the conditions of Cleopatra's offer into contemporary life along with all the requisite repercussions. Puškin could not resolve this problem either in the first draft and ended the draft in the same place that he ended his 1824 poem, with the offer (by the contemporary Cleopatra) and an acceptance of it.³⁰

The first problem (introducing the verse on Cleopatra) was overcome by Puškin with the introduction of the figure of the Italian improviser. However by introducing the Dionysian figure of the improviser, Puškin was forced, in Gofman's opinion, to balance that character with an Apollonian figure, namely Čarskij. In these two figures, Puškin combines both the episodic and central functions of the Cleopatra anecdote. Thus, the first three chapters of EN as we have come to know it is only, for Gofman, an introduction necessitated by Puškin's solution to his first problem. Still absent is both the contemporary Cleopatra and the "development of the contemporary story."³¹

Gofman believes that the difficulty or even impossibility of overcoming this artistic problem (developing the contemporary aspect of the story) struck Puškin when it came to composing the improvisation. The improvisation, according to Gofman, should have combined the 1825 (commonly dated 1828) Cleopatra poem with the 1835 fragment that Puškin began for the improviser.³² Puškin did not complete this improvisation in the sense that he never fully integrated the two texts that Gofman refers to. And in this Gofman sees a sign of the artistic frustration that Puškin was experiencing with the central problem (i.e., how to develop the Cleopatra anecdote in St. Petersburg).

Nevertheless, Gofman suggests that since we know the beginning of the improvisation (the 1835 fragment) and the end (the 1825 poem) it is possible, for at least hypothetical purposes, to print the most likely variant of the

improvisation. Thus Gofman, who railed against those who indulged in "conjectural reading" of manuscripts and who in the very article I am discussing ridiculed Annenkov and Bartenev for intermingling different drafts, combines two pieces widely separated in time into one work. Gofman admits to the "arbitrariness" of his device but insists upon its possibilities as a "working hypothesis."³³ Others were not so gracious in their opinions about this hypothesis. I have already quoted Bondi's opinion of Gofman's belief that the 1835 fragment which consists of both poetry and prose is meant for the improviser. The improviser's skill, according to Bondi, was to be able to burst into verse, "and not prose."

Gofman, however, defends his idea by arguing that the prose introduction is in fact highly lyrical and rhythmic as evidenced by the repetition of several words ("tri sta" [3 times]; "nedvižno" [3 times]; "grust'" [3 times]). In his book *The Psychology of Puškin's Creative Work*, Gofman even goes to the extent of providing a metrical analysis of the prose introduction. Although by no means a consistent meter, the prose, when broken down into its constituent parts, does reflect a mix of iambic and trochaic meters with some dactyls.³⁴ If Gofman's analysis seems forced it would be well to recall that Brjusov makes a very similar observation about the prose in the third chapter leading up to the improvisation: "In this place Puškin's very language changes, and in the prose he begins to speak in the same concise, strong, slightly elevated tone that he speaks for the most part in verse."³⁵

What should follow, according to Gofman's version of the second improvisation, is the further development of the Cleopatra anecdote in contemporary St. Petersburg between the modern-day Cleopatra and Čarskij. Gofman, of course, develops the plot along these lines when he undertakes to complete EN. Gofman's version of EN consists of Puškin's original three chapters, a fourth chapter which Gofman has stitched together from various Puškinian fragments and a fifth chapter of which Gofman is solely the author. However, in Gofman's opinion, Puškin is never able to overcome the difficulty of how to further develop the plot and "rejects continuing" EN.³⁶ The final word on this topic, however, is not EN, but rather a small piece entitled "Fragment," which involves the first theme in EN, i.e., the question of poetry and freedom of inspiration. Gofman argues that Puškin turned to this piece after dropping EN. He quotes from Puškin's introduction to "Fragment" to bolster his position that Puškin had in fact by this point abandoned EN: "This fragment probably makes up the foreword to a story that is either not written or is lost." The "story" referred to is most likely EN in Gofman's opinion.³⁷

The above represents Gofman's version of the history of EN. Its inadequacies are evident. For example, the 1824 Cleopatra poem was not rewritten in 1825 but in 1828; the verse "And day had already hidden itself" is dated by Bondi as late 1820's and by O'Bell as 1835 and not 1825 as Gofman suggests; "Fragment" is dated as 1830 and not 1835. These problems are of no great interest for us in and of

themselves. Rather, their interest lies in what they reveal about Gofman.

Gofman's motivation is to find the most canonic version of EN that is possible. This is why he rejects the 1837 version by Pletnev. This is why he allows himself to indulge in practices that he rejected in others, i.e., combining two very different manuscripts because he believed that this is what Puškin intended to do himself. This is why he argues that the only continuation of EN that is feasible is the projection of the Cleopatra anecdote into modern St. Petersburg, a logical if not decisive argument. It is very important to note at this point that Gofman refers to the fragment "We spent the evening..." as if it is an earlier draft of EN, whereas it is normally viewed as a separate attempt on Puškin's part to provide a prose frame for the Egyptian anecdote.

Gofman's quest for the canonic form of the text also explains why he argues that Puškin's inability to artistically overcome the challenge of continuing the anecdote into modern times is why he abandoned EN. In other words, a final and complete canonic text of EN is not possible but we can reconstruct it to the point where Puškin left it, and where he left it is not where Pletnev's 1837 edition would suggest. Thus the need, in Gofman's view, for an accurate history of the text of EN in order to reveal Puškin's creative process. In his article, Gofman proceeds as far as the available manuscripts allow him. Near the end of the article, however, Gofman suggests going beyond the text. The plot of the

continuation of EN, i.e., the Cleopatra anecdote in modern St. Petersburg, is so intriguing, Gofman asserts, that a contemporary poet should attempt "the development of this plot." It is a suggestion that Gofman himself would later take up.³⁸

The next published record by Gofman on this topic comes in 1933 in the French journal *Le Monde Slave* with an article entitled "Les 'Nuits égyptiennes' de Pouchkine et leur héroïne." Before this, however, I would like to consider two other books that Gofman wrote on Puškin in the 1920's and 30's, namely *The Psychology of Puškin's Creative Work* (1928) and *Puškin-Don Juan* (1935).

The former work is characterized by Gofman as continuing the one begun in his 1922 book *Basics of the Study of Puškin*. Whereas in *Basics* Gofman wished to establish both the necessity for working on Puškin's manuscripts in order to create an authoritative canon and the procedures that one should follow in carrying out that mandate, *Psychology* strives to delve into Puškin's creative process itself.

Gofman depicts Puškin as an Apollonian poet who must labor ceaselessly over his poetic creation. Not only is labor the defining essence of his creative process but the Dionysian act of instantaneous creation is foreign to Puškin: "Puškin not only could not write spontaneously after a received impression, but he even saw something miraculous and puzzling in such an immediate (mgnovennom), spontaneous creation."³⁹ If there is one of Puškin's literary creations that Gofman most often turns to in order to characterize Puškin as a poet (and Gofman is by no means alone in this respect), it

is to the figure of Čarskij. Čarskij is an Apollonian figure who can write only when he has isolated himself from the world in his study and who is amazed by the Italian improviser's ability to create instantaneously: "What! Another's thought barely touches your ear -- and it has already become your very own as if you had carried, fostered and developed it ceaselessly. So, for you there exists neither labor, nor cooling, nor this agitation, which precedes inspiration?.. Amazing, amazing!..." Labor (trud), cooling (oxlaždenie), and agitation (bespokojstvo) come to symbolize the three stages of the creative process for Puškin, according to Gofman.⁴⁰ Yet another triad that Gofman takes from Puškin to describe Puškin's own creative process is peace (spokojstvie), constant labor (postojannyj trud), and a plan (i.e., plot). Gofman takes this notion from Puškin's ruminations on the distinction between inspiration (vдохновение) and ecstasy (vostorg):

The critic confuses inspiration with ecstasy. Inspiration is the predisposition of the soul to the liveliest acceptance of impressions and to the consideration of ideas, hence also to the explanation of the above. Inspiration is necessary in geometry as well as in poetry. Ecstasy excludes peacefulness -- a necessary condition of the wonderful. Ecstasy does not assume the strength of the mind, which is arranged by parts in relation to the whole. Ecstasy is of short duration, inconstant, consequently incapable of producing a sincere, great perfection. Homer is immeasurably greater than Pindar. The ode is on the lowest levels of creativity. It excludes constant labor, without which there cannot be the sincerely great. Tragedy, comedy, satire -- all demand more creativity, fantasy, imagination, knowledge of nature. And there cannot be a plan in the ode. The single plan of Dante's "Hell" is already the fruit of lofty genius! What plan is in Pindar's odes? What plan is in "The Waterfall", which is the best piece by Deržavin?"⁴¹

In the 1820's Puškin "loved to put together plans of his future pieces," but he just as often strayed "far from the original plan."⁴² Putting together the plot was not Puškin's strongest skill. Karamzin complained of *Ruslan and Ljudmila* that "there isn't any clever disposition of the parts" and of "Prisoner of the Caucasus" he said that "the composition is poor: just like in his soul, there isn't any order in his verse."⁴³ By the 1830's, however, the poet "became a master ... of plot..."⁴⁴ Similarly, just as it is "possible to speak of real torments in his creative process" so too do these torments seem to ease in the 1830's: Puškin's notebooks reveal fewer corrections in the 30's than in the 20's.⁴⁵ Yet another process of evolution within the poet is the degree to which he brings his life experience to his creative work. In his early stages "personal impressions of life do not exist, or almost do not exist... Really, Puškin's Lycée poetry represents to a much greater degree a reflection of what had been read, than what had been experienced."⁴⁶ His creative work, however, becomes more and more an artistic expression of "personal, individual and subjective impressions and experiences."⁴⁷

Thus in Gofman's mind, Puškin is an Apollonian poet who values constant labor (as evidenced by the many corrections in his notebooks), and a well-conceived plan. Puškin resorts to his "creative memory" ("tvorčeskaja pamjat'") in order to create. What Gofman means by this term is that Puškin quite commonly resorted to previously written drafts of poems, plays, etc., in order to use various expressions and phrases

for new works and that this was an instrumental part of his creative process. However, Puškin evolves as a poet and although he forever remains an Apollonian poet in Gofman's opinion, his mode of writing becomes more improvisational (Gofman uses this word and points to the greater fluidity, i.e., "quickness of impression,"⁴⁸ with which Puškin wrote in the 30's) and his poetic sources are increasingly from life as opposed to the museum of art. Thus although Gofman describes Čarskij in EN as an Apollonian poet and aligns Puškin with him, nevertheless in this study he describes a Puškin who is both Čarskij and the Italian improviser. Improvisation may be a "riddle" to Puškin, but one that forever fascinates him and to which he grows ever closer. This is the Puškin that Gofman portrays and it is a Puškin that bears a striking resemblance to the image that Modernists in general had of him: "In Pushkin, Modernists found a combination of Dionysian and Apollonian principles, a harmonious blend of creative spontaneity with logical ordering, a mingling of the 'Thracian' and 'Attic' substrata of Greek culture, to which Russia was heir and follower."⁴⁹

In *Puškin-Don Žuan* it is yet another Puškin that Gofman discloses. This is the Puškin that Solov'ev and Brjusov had begun to reveal, i.e., the man with a powerful, even insatiable sexual appetite. Gofman comments that "for Puškin's Don Žuan love is not only a higher value but even the sole, exclusive value. Love is a higher but not sole value of life for Puškin as well." In "The Stone Guest" Laura's first guest summarizes Puškin's "deeply held and constant thought" on the

matter of love, according to Gofman:⁵⁰

— — — Of the pleasures of life
Music gives way only to love,
But love is also a melody — — —

Iz naslaždenij Žizni/ Odnój ljubvi muzyka ustupaet;/ No i ljubov' melodija...

Love and music are "one" and "there is not anything higher in life than love and music." Music (i.e., art) and love are the "sincere and sole happiness in life."⁵¹ Just as Puškin glories in the "joys of art" and in the equality of love and music, so too does Don Žuan. He is even a poet like Puškin, for the verses that Laura sings to her guest were written by Don-Žuan. Puškin may write that he "does not value the stormy pleasures," but Gofman agrees with Chirpak-Rozdina that "for Pushkin love is the most complete expression of the spiritual life of the hero."⁵²

Puškin-Don Žuan, the "enemy of marriage," begins to think of marriage in 1826 but he still seeks for a woman "not with a cold, but with a fiery, burning, passionate beauty."⁵³ The elemental power of Don Žuan remains a potent force in Puškin's soul, even when he considers marriage. This, at any rate, is the portrait that Gofman paints. Or perhaps it is a puzzle that Gofman is piecing together as the years go by. To the Puškin who synthesizes the Apollonian and Dionysian elements, Gofman now adds the Puškin for whom love and art are on equal ground.

Gofman's depiction of Puškin as a Don Žuan figure is by no means an idiosyncratic one on his part. It certainly is in

keeping with the modernist view of Puškin, but even others who were not at all infused with the decadent spirit saw a connection between Puškin and Don Žuan. Anna Axmatova, for example, wrote that Don Žuan "is similar to Onegin. And both of them, of course, are similar to Puškin himself."⁵⁴ It is an image that needs to be kept in mind when I finally turn to Gofman's reading of EN.

According to the bibliography printed at the end of *The Psychology of Puškin's Creative Work*, Gofman had already prepared for print a book that was to be on the topic of Cleopatra and EN. It was to have appeared in 1928. However it was not until 1935 that Gofman was actually able to publish. Whether the 1935 book represents the same material that Gofman had intended to publish earlier is difficult to say although it would seem that we are dealing with a delay.⁵⁵ In fact, as I indicated above, his first published record on EN since 1922 came in 1933 with an article in *Le Monde Slave*. The title of the article, "Les 'Nuits égyptiennes' de Pouchkine et leur héroïne," would indicate that the central figure of interest is Cleopatra herself. But this is only partially true. As always, Gofman's principal interest is with the question of the authenticity of the text.

From a general statement that Puškin's manuscripts have been printed with both minor and major mistakes and that some have even been printed with mistakes that lead to "false or absurd" conclusions Gofman proceeds to EN as an example of the latter.⁵⁶ Gofman then reiterates the points that I have already discussed in relation to his 1922 article: the second

improvisation should be a combination of the 1835 and 1828 texts on Cleopatra and that the stanza that begins with the line "And look, already the day had passed" represents a contamination of texts and gives the false impression that Puškin intended to describe the three nights (an impression that Brjusov acted on). Gofman also returns to the questions that he broached in his earlier article, namely why did Puškin not complete this work and precisely what part of the projected novel remained unrealized?

To answer these questions Gofman covers very much the same ground in "Les 'Nuits égyptiennes' de Pouchkine et leur héroïne" that he did in "'Kleopatra' i 'Egipetskija noči'" in 1922. The continuation of EN is easily imagined, according to Gofman: "its realization (i.e., the Egyptian anecdote) in the conditions of modern life." As to why Puškin did not complete this work, Gofman's tone has changed somewhat from his 1922 article. In that article he argued convincingly that the artistic problem of executing the design of the anecdote within a contemporary setting was never overcome and Puškin therefore abandoned the project. In this article Gofman argues that extenuating circumstances may well have been the reason why, as Dostevskij put it, Puškin "went to his grave with a great mystery." His mother's illness in 1835 caused Puškin to abandon all his work, including EN, and leave for Petersburg. Yet another reason that Gofman gives is the troubled state of Puškin's soul in the autumn of 1835; tranquility is required for Puškin to be able to write and domestic affairs hardly allowed for such a state.⁵⁷ Aside from his

generosity in assessing the cause for why EN remained incomplete, the only new piece of scholarship that Gofman adds to his previous work on EN is a summary on the biographical model for the contemporary Cleopatra. Gofman uses this information to justify his version of EN.

The Cleopatra of the Neva is patterned after, Gofman believes, the Countess Agrafena Fedorovna Zakrevskaja. Gofman notes that mention is made of a Cleopatra of the Neva in the eighth chapter of *Evgenij Onegin* in a stanza concerning Tat'jana. He adds that this individual is also described in a stanza that was not included in the final version of *Evgenij Onegin*. Gofman follows the literary trail to the Puškin fragment "The guests gathered at the dacha" ("Gosti, s'ezžalis' na daču"). The heroine of this fragment, Vol'skaja, is, in Gofman's opinion, a more complete portrait of the Cleopatra of the Neva mentioned in *Evgenij Onegin* and serves as the foundation for the portrayal of the contemporary Cleopatra that was meant to dominate the second part of EN. As to why the "great passions" of Vol'skaja were thought to be modeled after Zakrevskaja's, Gofman refers to the fascination that both Puškin and Baratynskij had for her. Baratynskij wrote several poems inspired by Zakrevskaja, the most famous being "The Ball." Besides the pieces I have already mentioned, Puškin also wrote poems about Zakrevskaja, most notably "The Portrait."⁵⁸ Many others have since concurred with this opinion, including N. N. Petrunina, N. L. Stepanov and A. Čičerin.⁵⁹ Gofman's intent was not so much to determine that a biographical model existed (since this was a

critical activity that he did not approve of), but rather to substantiate his claim that a literary Cleopatra of the Neva did exist and would have been the female protagonist of any continuation of EN. Gofman did not include the 1830 fragment "The guests gathered at the dacha" in his history of EN in 1922, but in his French article of 1933 he goes so far as to say that "from a certain point of view we can consider this incomplete work as preparation for the novel *Egyptian Nights*."⁶⁰ At this point, if we look at everything that he has written on EN, Gofman has established three things: 1. the proper history of the text of EN; 2. the direction that the novel would have followed if Puškin had returned to it; 3. the existence of a literary (and biographical) model for the Cleopatra of the Neva that would have been the subject, in Gofman's opinion, of the continuation of EN. He now was ready (in 1935) to take up the suggestion that he made in passing in 1922, i.e., to continue the plot of EN.

Gofman's final word on EN comes with the publication in 1935 of his completion of EN. As I mentioned earlier, in order to complete EN Gofman adds two chapters to the original three chapters of Puškin's EN. The fourth chapter is composed almost entirely of various Puškinian fragments from the EN cycle that Gofman puts together. The fifth chapter consists of entirely original material written by Gofman. To explain this I need to very briefly return to the history of EN that Gofman gave in his 1922 article "'Kleopatra' i 'Egipetskija noči'." Gofman argues that after abandoning his plans for a Roman novel, Puškin began to write in the fall of 1835 a

contemporary prose setting for the Egyptian anecdote. This first attempt has become known by its first sentence "We spent the evening at the dacha." Gofman agrees with most scholars that this fragment was written before the text of EN.⁶¹ However, Gofman significantly differs from his colleagues when he suggests that the above fragment is an earlier draft of EN and should not be viewed as a separate frame. The traditional argument is that Puškin began the fragment "We spent the evening in a dacha" but became dissatisfied with it and abandoned it in favor of what has become known as EN. Gofman argues that Puškin was faced with an artistic problem in the course of writing "We spent...", namely the problem of how to introduce the poem about Cleopatra. Puškin solved this problem when he created the character of the Italian improviser. However with the introduction of a Dionysian poet, Puškin felt the need, according to Gofman, to balance this with an Apollonian poet, i.e., Čarskij. Thus the three chapters of EN represent Puškin's solution to this artistic problem and the development that was necessitated by the solution. It, however, does not mean that Puškin had abandoned or rejected the draft known as "We spent..."

By following his logic one can see Gofman's rationale that the fragment "We spent ..." actually represents the main body of Puškin's story, i.e., the Egyptian anecdote in contemporary times, and that Puškin would have continued along those lines after the improvisation. This is the argument that Gofman uses to justify intermingling the texts of EN and "We spent..." and has led others to conclude that "this takes too

much liberty with the text" and is simply evidence of Gofman's "tendentiousness" in overrating the "connection between *Egyptian Nights* and "We spent..."⁶² Nevertheless, Gofman does have intratextual support to bolster his position that a parallel development of the anecdote, i.e., the episodic treatment of it in the improvisation and the more central exposition that was to occur in Saint Petersburg, is suggested by the text of the improvisation itself.⁶³ Certainly, Gofman is not alone in his observation of these obvious parallels (eg., see O'Bell).

To continue Puškin's plot of EN, Gofman creates a chapter four which he has created principally out of the two fragments "We spent..." and "The guests..." Gofman does not suggest that this is how Puškin would have composed the fourth chapter, but he does insist that Puškin would have based any fourth chapter on the very same material that Gofman here appropriates.⁶⁴ Gofman further justifies both his use and his combination of these two disparate, albeit related, fragments by referring to Puškin's creative process as defined by himself in *The Psychology of Puškin's Creative Work*. His creative process is typified by frequent use of "material from his unfinished and unprinted works."⁶⁵

In this fourth "montage" chapter, Zinaida Vol'skaja, the contemporary Cleopatra and presumably the "majestic beauty" who picked the topic of Cleopatra from the urn, and Čarskij come to discuss the conditions that the Cleopatra of Antiquity had set for her lovers. Their discussion revolves around the possibility of such an occurrence in contemporary

times. Čarskij's comments suggest that he is spiritually linked with the three individuals who chose to consort with Cleopatra at the price of their lives. Like Crito, the Epicurean, he finds the idea of passion more important than life. When others, for example, scoff at the idea that someone would pay with his life for a night of love Čarskij objects: "Is life really such a treasure that for the price of it [such a night] one would be sorry to buy happiness?" ("razve žizn' už takoe sokrovišče, što eja cenoju žal' i sčastie kupit'?").⁶⁶ Čarskij even strikes a pose of cynicism by denying the necessity for mutual love: "And as far as mutual love is concerned... I don't demand it" ("A što kasaetsja do vzaimnoj ljubvi... to ja ne trebuju").⁶⁷ However, in reality, Čarskij, like the youth in ancient Egypt, is sincerely in love with Vol'skaja and is attempting to hide his feelings behind a veneer of cynicism. And like Flavius before him, Čarskij sees a woman's contempt (Vol'skaja's charge that modern men are passionless: "sliškom xladnokrovny") as a challenge that must be accepted.⁶⁸ The fourth chapter ends with the conditions set and the bargain agreed to.

I cannot answer definitively, nor can anyone else, whether Puškin intended the above material to serve as a continuation of EN or as a different frame for the Cleopatra poem. There are two issues of interest here. One is the manner in which Gofman has decided to use this material. In chapter two I argued that Tomaševskij's interpretation of the 1828 Cleopatra poem was in many respects the motivating force behind his argument that the stanzas of the poem should be

rearranged. Where others read romantic clues, Tomaševskij read "realistic" ones. The traditional ordering of the stanzas, however, did not support Tomaševskij's reading. It could be said, therefore, that Tomaševskij literally restructures the text (by suggesting that the two last stanzas should be inverted) in order for it to coincide with his interpretation. I say this not to discredit Tomaševskij or to debunk his argument but to reiterate the influence of our preconceptions on our interpretations. It is impossible to separate Tomaševskij's "realistic" reading of the Cleopatra poem and his belief that the poem should end with Cleopatra resting her eyes upon the youth rather than her vowing to cut off their heads: the two are intertwined.

Monika Frenkel Greenleaf makes a comparable claim about Tynjanov's work on Puškin. She writes that she "will show how Tynianov's Modernist investigation into the syntagmatics of both verbal and cinematic art, and his historical, 'documentary' study of the Pushkin period would reciprocally shape each other, until Pushkin's oeuvre came to exemplify every aesthetic and theoretical criterion Tynianov held dear."⁶⁹

Similarly, one cannot extricate Gofman's preconceptions from the various textual arguments that he has presented. Puškin as an Apollonian poet with Dionysian characteristics, an artistic process which relies upon his "creative memory" to recall and use material that had not been finished or printed for a new work, even Puškin's Don Žuan tendencies, all of these facets of Puškin's literary personality that Gofman has elucidated over the years are consistent with his

textual decisions on EN.

The other matter of interest at the moment is the fact that Puškin did unequivocally broach the idea of a modern-day Cleopatra in contemporary St. Petersburg society and whether or not a man could be found who would accept the conditions of Cleopatra's challenge. Gofman has unquestionably manipulated the arrangement of the material to coincide with his reading but he has not invented the theme itself. The question of contemporary man's lack of passion (*xladnokrovnost'*) was explored by Puškin in other literary figures, notably Eugene Onegin. There is also the issue of death and life and how to assess their respective values. Leslie O'Bell notes that Puškin had underlined a passage in an essay entitled "On the Fear of Death." The passage exhibits a contemptuous attitude towards a life that is motivated chiefly by the fear of dying. It is very similar to Čarskij's point of view outlined above: "The effeminate clinging to life as such, as a general or abstract idea, is the effect of a highly civilized and artificial state of society. Men formerly plunged into all the vicissitudes and dangers of war, or staked their all upon a single die, or some one passion, which if they could not have gratified, life became a burthen to them..."⁷⁰

"No price is too dear to pay" for the gratification of one's passion - this clearly is a stance towards life that Puškin was intrigued by. If the above passage expresses a contempt for an "effeminate clinging" to life, it also expresses a mocking and challenging attitude to death. The writer of this passage is both mocking death and denying that

he feels any fear. Challenging death is not uncommon in Puškin. In "The Bronze Horsemen" Eugene casts his eyes up at the statue of Peter the Great and shouts "I'll show you!," only to be chased figuratively, if not quite literally, to his death. In "The Stone Guest" Don Žuan brazenly invites the statue of the Commendatore to stand guard over Don Žuan's tryst with the Commendatore's wife; the statue keeps faith and kills Don Žuan with a hand shake. For his part, Don Žuan, although unable to deny death, at least refuses to give into the fear of it.

Statue

Let her go, everything is finished. You are trembling,
Don Juan. (Bros' ee, / Vse končeno. Drožiš' ty, Don Guan.)

Don Žuan

I? No. I summoned you and I'm glad to see you. (Ja? net. Ja zval tebjā i rad, čto vižu.)

Once in death's grasp, however, Don Žuan experiences what could be described as a moment of fear and regret: "Let go of me, let go--- let go of my hand... I'm dying-- ." ⁷¹ Anna Axmatova feels, however, that Don Žuan "does not fear death" at all and that in this last moment his fear is of "losing happiness." ⁷²

In "A Feast During the Time of the Plague" Val'singam sings a paeon in praise of the plague. Praise is due because the plague has granted them the opportunity to show that they do not fear death:

We aren't frightened by the darkness of the grave,
Your summons does not disturb us!

Nam ne strašna mogily t'ma, / Nas ne smutit tvoe priz-
van'e!

As Savely Sendorovich and others have noted, the statue in Puškin's symbolic lexicon exists as a bringer of death, often as an act of retribution. Eugene's challenge is more a moment of rebellion against the forces that have ruined his life than it is an effort to deny death. Don Žuan and Val'singam, on the other hand, are actively engaged in denying the fear of death itself and one senses that the poet admires the moment when they overcome that fear. With Eugene and Don Žuan that moment of overcoming the fear of death is metonymically conveyed by the raising of their glances upward to behold the authority of death. Gasparov and Paperno characterize the bowed, motionless head as evocative of a Madonna or angelic figure and thus one more element of the eternal.⁷³ Perhaps another quality we could attribute to the image of the bowed head that would be consistent with the above is that of meekness in the positive Christian sense. The raised head, therefore, would be its opposite and as one of its qualities convey the opposite of meekness, i.e., boldness.

In "Andrei Šen'e" the poet is praised for not giving in to the pressures brought against him:

Be proud and rejoice, poet:
You did not bow your obedient head
To the shame of our years;

Gordis' i radujsja, poët:// Ty ne ponik glavoj poslušnoj/
Pered pozorom našix let;

Eugene and Don Žuan must both raise their glances upward to the statues since they are raised both physically and ontologically above the level of man. Eugene and Don Žuan's gesture is a daring presumption of equality since it

symbolically raises them to the same level as the statues.
Similarly, Cleopatra's offer is an offer of equality

Heed me: I can reestablish
Equality between you and me.

Vnemlite mne: mogu ravenstvo/ Mež vami ja vozstanovit'.

and the three who accept rise up from their positions in the crowd and with "bright eyes" meet Cleopatra's glance. In other words, like Eugene and Don Žuan, their physical gesture dares to assert a degree of equality. By their very ascendance they deny the fear, if not the reality, of death.

Gofman, in *Puškin-Don-Žuan*, highlights the question of fear in Don Žuan's flirtation with death: "Don-Žuan plays with death in the name of love and perishes... But is death frightening before love? -- 'Is all life, one or two nights'?"⁷⁴ The latter is a quote from Puškin's "A Conversation between a Book Seller and a Poet" (1824) and Gofman uses it again as the epigraph to the chapter five which he wrote to complete Puškin's unfinished tale. For Gofman it epitomizes Puškin-Don-Žuan's orientation to life and death. Moreover, it is the same orientation that is in operation in EN, Gofman believes, for immediately after citing the above line he quotes from "a rough draft" of EN the line "Is life really such a treasure, that one would be sorry to buy happiness for the price of it?"⁷⁵ This leads us to chapter five where Gofman must finally resort to his own original material in order to complete the EN plot line. Up to this point Gofman has used Puškin's drafts to assist him in completing the prose frame. Although the manner in which

he has manipulated this material is revealing, it is in this fifth chapter by Gofman that his own contemporary codes emerge clearly. Like Dostoevskij and Brjusov before him, Gofman bases his reading on the significance of a specific moment. His reading of *mig* reflects his own contemporary codes.

In this fifth prose chapter we see that Čarskij is pleased with himself after his acceptance of Vol'skaja's challenge. However, on the next day he begins to regret his impulsive action and even decides to refuse her. Clearly the "moment" is important for decisions; Čarskij, the modern man, can be powerfully affected by passion, but when the moment passes he begins to exhibit symptoms of contemporary man's lack of passion (*xladnokrovnost'*).

Nevertheless the modern man has proven himself susceptible and Čarskij, in his doubt, begins to muse about both Cleopatra and Vol'skaja. The effect is the same as when the Italian improviser begins to recite his verses: the border between the ancient and modern worlds vanishes. Vol'skaja comes and Čarskij the modern man is once again vulnerable to the moment of passion. Vol'skaja gives him a last warning and reiterates yet again the central question of whether "one moment of happiness is worth... your glorious life?" ("stoit li odin mig sčast'ja... vašej slavnoj žizni?").⁷⁶ Čarskij agrees to end his life for a moment of happiness.

Thus, the ancient exchange of one's life for a single moment of passion is found to still have currency in the modern world. But Čarskij has yet to be fully tested. In a twist

that perhaps Puškin would have admired, Čarskij awakens after the night of blissful passion to realize that Vol'skaja gave him a goblet of drugged, not poisoned wine. And like the youth in Brjusov's version he realizes that he is loved. He is furthermore in the fortunate position that before him lies the possibility of a life of happiness. In Brjusov's version this dream is short-lived because Cleopatra knows that the moment cannot be prolonged. In Gofman's version, Čarskij commits suicide, cutting short the dream because it is *he* who believes that the moment cannot be extended. He gives several reasons to justify his suicide: in his moment of happiness he experienced an eternity- *večnost'*; such a moment is worth the price of an otherwise stagnant life; he had sworn to pay such a price; and would it even be possible to live knowing that one would never again be able to experience what was, after all, a moment of unique bliss ("nepovtorimoe blaženstvo"?)? Such are the thoughts of Gofman's Čarskij as he puts his pistol to his head. But is it fair to write "Gofman's Čarskij"? Given what we have examined to date can we state that Gofman's contemporary codes have noticeably established themselves within the text? The answer in short is yes, as I indicated above, but the similarities between Gofman's and Puškin's (and Brjusov's, as we shall come to see) codes at this point require further explanation.

After all, we have only to return to Don Žuan in "The Stone Guest" to find sentiments similar to those expressed by Čarskij. Dona Anna fears for Don Žuan's life if he is recognized, but Don Žuan dismisses the possibility of death as

irrelevant:⁷⁸

What does death mean? For a sweet instant together
I would without complaint give away my life.

Čto značit smert'? za sladkij mig svidan'ja/ Bezropotno otdam
ja žizn'.

From the above to Čarskij's statement about willingly dying for a moment of happiness to the line "Is all life one or two nights?" there exist many references in Puškin which accept or at least certainly contemplate the idea of an exchange of one's life for an instant of supreme pleasure. Moreover, there is the issue of overcoming the fear of death. I have already written that this question was of considerable importance for Puškin. In many respects he lived his life with the constant awareness that each passing hour brings one closer to one's end, as is witnessed in the following lines:

Every day, every year
I am accustomed to follow with my thought,
Attempting to guess during them
The anniversary of my coming death. ("Brožu li ja" 1829)

Den' každyj, každyju godinu/Privyk ja dūmoj provoždāt',/
Grjaduščeij smerti godovščinu/Mež ix starajas' ugađāt'.

or

Celebrate while we are still here,
Alas, our circle is thinning out hour by hour;
Fate has seen to those who are sleeping in the grave,
Or have long been orphaned; we are fading; the days run;
Invisibly bending and growing colder,
We come closer to our beginning... ("19 Oktjabrja" 1825)

Pirujte že, poka ešče my tut!/ Uvy, naš krug čas ot času re-
deet;/ Kto v grobe spit, kto dal'nyj siroteet;/ Sud'ba glja-
dit, my vjanem; dni begut;/ Nividimo sklonjajas' i xladeja,/
My blizimsja k načalu svoemu...

or

The soul grows mute hour by hour; ("Raevskomu" 1822)

Duša čas ot času nemeet;

Shortly before his death Puškin confessed to Smirnova that he had always thought a great deal about death: "Since the time of my mother's death, I have thought a lot about death, even in my first youth I thought a lot about it."⁷⁹ The thought of a "final death, of disappearance without trace, terrified Pushkin," according to Sendorovich.⁸⁰ Gofman's ending, then, could be seen as fulfilling Puškin's desire to overcome that fear. Gofman's Čarskij vanquishes his fear of death not once (when he drinks the proffered wine) but twice (when he shoots himself). Merežkovskij also noted the significance of this question in EN. He considered Cleopatra's three suitors to have "'transcended the boundaries of human existence, becoming like the gods' who have overcome the fear of death."⁸¹ The reasons that Čarskij gives to justify killing himself also have their antecedents in Puškin, many of which I have already discussed in chapter three. The manner in which one dies helps to transcend the banal reality of death itself and transform it into something precious: "Our moment of death will be bright;" ("Smertnyj mig naš budet svetel;"). By having his hero overcome the fear of death in the fullest moment of his life it is possible that Gofman saw the end that he gave Čarskij as the sort of "bright" death that Puškin would have wanted for his hero.

Gofman, as befits a textologist, was familiar with Puškin's manuscripts and had been very careful to propose an answer to the riddle of EN with clear textual analogies and references to Puškin's text in the broad sense of that term.

Thus, the concept of giving one's life up for an instant of happiness (usually embodied by physical love), of a moment that will not return, and even the fatalistic sense of honor so common in Puškin's day is utilized by Gofman to compose his ending.⁸² Nevertheless, there remains the dominant impression that this is a reading of the modernist age. As one anonymous observer of this dissertation has said: "Suicide is not a particularly Puškinian gesture." Although this statement is basically true, it must be qualified in relation to EN and the fragments connected to it. Petronius, after all, does kill himself and it could be said that the three suitors in EN are motivated by a suicidal impulse. Petronius, however, realizes that Nero intends to execute him. Petronius, then, is merely anticipating Nero's wishes just as others view Cleopatra's suicide as "anticipating the wish of Octavius."⁸³ As far as our three suitors are concerned we must remember that although they are aware that their actions will lead to their deaths, they are acting with the intent of achieving something. The difference in the manner of Petronius' death or those of the three suitors and Gofman's Čarskij is once again to be found within the concept of *mig*.

As was noted earlier, *mig/mgnovenie* as a motif may be seen in Puškin's work, but it took Brjusov, Bal'mont and other Decadent poets to construct an entire theory around the notion of *mig*. Similarly Puškin's romanticism allowed for the contemplation of the possibility that life can be summarized by one or two nights, as well as the idea of life becoming a burden if one's passion is not gratified (i.e., one should be

willing to risk everything to fulfill one's passion, otherwise one is living a life emasculated by the fear of death). However, it took the Decadent movement to expand this to include the possibility that life could become a burden when one has in fact gratified one's passion.

What returns us to *mig* is Gofman's phrase "unique bliss" (*nepovtorimoe blaženstvo*). It betrays a Modernist origin and returns us not only to *mig*, but also to the related concept of oblivion (*zabvenie*). *Blaženstvo*, or bliss, is a limited phenomenon and if it occurs it does so only once. *Zabvenie*, or oblivion, becomes the desired status after one has experienced bliss (*blaženstvo*), since otherwise life will become burdensome as one hopes to reexperience a moment one knows will not return.⁸⁴ By committing suicide, Gofman's Čarskij has taken the only genuine option open to him according to the ethics of Russian Decadence. He is essentially repeating Brjusov's Crito when Crito states that if one has experienced a night as he has that "one could not and should not continue to live" ("...ne možet i ne dolžen žit'"). The intensity of the life experience in the moment and the cessation of that experience are both at the command of the individual. To at least this degree, then, it would seem that Gofman shares part of Brjusov's Decadent codes.

I have already noted that Gofman's depiction of Puškin throughout his many books was compatible with the image of Puškin that was generally prevalent in the modernist period in Russia. Therefore, the above conclusion should not come as a surprise. However, Gofman was a contemporary more of the

second generation of Symbolists than of the first and it may seem strange that as late as 1934, which is when he published his conclusion to EN, he should hew so closely to the codes associated with the first generation of Symbolists, i.e., with those writers who like Brjusov define the Decadent movement in Russia. When Gofman's Čarskij puts a pistol to his head because he has experienced a "unique moment" he is merely aping Brjusov's Crito. Certainly in terms of age and perhaps in temperament as well, Gofman had more in common with the second generation of Symbolists than with the first. Therefore it might seem strange that his ending to EN would reveal nothing of the codes of the second generation. The answer to this is the probability that Gofman deliberately crafted an ending that utilizes the logic of Russian Decadence. In this event what we are faced with is Gofman the writer taking over from the reader. The latter attempts to shape the text but he does not deliberately seek to create a new text; that is the function of the writer. Brjusov, for example, remained within the realm of the reader. He attempted to imagine more fully what he believed to be Puškin's intent. Gofman, however, has intentionally violated this principle.

There are two aspects to this question that must be examined. The first is whether Gofman's ending truly represents a deliberate use of the codes of Decadence and the second is why he might do this. As far as the first aspect of the question is concerned I have already mentioned the similarity between Gofman's Čarskij and Brjusov's Crito. However, there is

more to it than that. Most important in this regard is Gofman having his Vol'skaja use a goblet of drugged wine to send Čarskij to sleep. Brjusov had his Cleopatra use a goblet of poisoned wine to kill the youth. The parallel is obvious and is unlikely to be accidental on Gofman's part. Furthermore, it is precisely the use of this device that allows Čarskij to subsequently wake up and rather pointedly mimic the words of Brjusov's Crito before he finally shoots himself. Gofman could have had his protagonist simply shoot himself in the first place. Such an ending would probably have been more in keeping with Puškin.⁸⁵ By inserting the goblet of wine, Gofman betrays a borrowing from Brjusov. What remains to be answered is why Gofman would do this.

Ending EN with a deliberate borrowing from Brjusov would seem to be in contradiction to Gofman's lifelong goal of establishing the authoritative canon of Puškin's works. Of course, the object of his book on EN does go beyond Gofman's scholarly goal of establishing a canon. Perhaps a hint is given us by Gofman himself. In his 1922 article "'Cleopatra' and 'Egyptian Nights'" Gofman first states how he believes the intended plot of EN should go: "The plot of 'Egyptian Nights', as it was indicated by Puškin, is entirely clear, but the development of this plot, although it also is clear by its own schematic lines, presents a truly great difficulty, although it would be curious to see an attempt at the development of this plot even if at the hand of a contemporary writer."⁸⁶ I would suggest that Gofman's statement is ambiguous as to its meaning. His curiosity to see this plot

developed even by a contemporary writer leaves open the possibility that Gofman perceived this task to be a wedding of Puškin's plot line with the modern aesthetics of a contemporary writer. In other words, Gofman may have felt free to develop the plot line as he desired. But why then would Gofman choose Brjusov as a model? After all, as Pushkinists Gofman and Brjusov were professional rivals and since Brjusov had already written his version of EN it seems unlikely that Gofman would be seeking to validate Brjusov. Gofman's borrowings from Brjusov's version of EN are hardly an example of a disciple being influenced by his master. Gofman has his own purpose in mind. I believe that his ending is intentionally ironic. It is a purposeful effort on Gofman's part to debunk precisely the sort of logic that his Čarskij uses at the end. In other words, Gofman desires to repudiate the logic of Brjusov and the Decadents, a logic which he views as essentially negative and destructive. He made his thoughts clear on the destructiveness of decadent culture in an early work.

Gofman wrote a religious, philosophical tract entitled *Congregational Individualism (Sobornyj individualizm)* in 1907. It is dedicated to Fedor Dostoevskij and Vladimir Solov'ev and in the introduction the author directly challenges the reception even the title of his book is likely to have from those immersed in the modernist culture: "... , for those of whom the last names in art and philosophy are Fr. Nietzsche, Osk. Wilde, our individualistic romanticism of the 90's, or, as it is often called-- decadence;... ,-- for that

person it may seem strange and hardly modern to talk in our present time about *Congregational Individualism*."⁸⁷

Congregational individualism seeks to promote the individual as a unique personality but with the understanding that the individual is a member of a social group with obligations to every other member, i.e., the individual cannot even be correctly perceived outside of the context of the social group. This idea of individualism is opposed to that prevalent in the West, which Gofman characterizes as completely ego-centered. As an example of that Western type of individualism in Russia, Gofman usually cites the Decadents: "...; but the difference between us is summed up in the fact that the 90's spoke of 'my' individuality, whereas we speak about everyone's individuality."⁸⁸ In other words, the Decadents thought only of their own "I" and if they thought of others at all it was only as a "means" for their own purposes. For the Decadents, then, individuality is necessarily "isolated" and "solitary."

As proof of his claim that the Decadents' individuality is necessarily "solitary," Gofman cites the poetry of Merežkovskij, Gippius, Sologub, Bal'mont and Brjusov. Gofman goes on to make the analogy that it is precisely this type of individuality that reigned in Antiquity when "the whole rest of the world could only be a means for the satisfaction of the whims of this 'I'." The egocentric "I" led to the burning of Rome and the fall of Antiquity in general. Many of the "best people" could not function or "find themselves a place" in such conditions and "voluntarily took their own lives."⁸⁹

The egocentric "I" of the Decadents led them to lock the door to their study or "like the Puškin-type of poet, to run 'to the shores of deserted seas, into spacious and resonant forests'." Gofman does not pointedly equate the desire of the Decadents to escape from society in order to develop their "I" with the frequent occurrence of suicide by those choosing to escape the chaos that was the fall of Antiquity. Nevertheless, it seems that a parallel can be made.

As a philosophical and religious thinker Gofman clearly aligns himself with the tradition of Dostoesvskij and Solov'ev in proclaiming a uniquely Russian comprehension of individualism. He frequently quotes Father Zosima's statement from *The Brothers Karamazov* that "in the name of truth before all we are guilty for everyone and everything" as a kind of motto that symbolizes the spirit of Gofman's congregational individualism. The Decadents, on the other hand, represent the egocentric "I," which led to the downfall of Antiquity and which is contributing to the spiritual collapse of Western Europe in Gofman's opinion. Thus Gofman insists on the inherently destructive nature of the egocentric "I."

If we return to Gofman's EN it is easy to see how the above might have contributed to the ending that he contrived for it. The tendencies that he saw in the modernist culture had their antecedents in Puškin. Puškin's need, for example, to isolate himself from society found its avid, even morbid, imitators in the Decadents. Puškin's Don Žuan list, which is evidence of his own tendency to view others as a "means" to satisfy his whims, is emulated in the sexual excesses of many

of the Decadents, Brjusov included. Brjusov and Nina Petrovskaja, for example, even "played out a whole series of situations which were connected with the name of Cleopatra."⁹¹ The Decadents, then, took Puškin's own egocentric tendencies to the logical extremes that the ego-centered "I" could afford. Consequently, the Decadents desire to "escape" society was a constant one and everyone and everything existed for them. In Antiquity these same extremes led to suicide as a common act in order to escape. Gofman saw similar traits that linked his modernist era with Antiquity and Puškin, and in his modernist retelling of EN uses Brjusov to expose those interconnections. Thus Čarskij, as a Puškin-type poet, demonstrates the self-destructive potential that Gofman saw in the Puškin-type poets of the 90's and which some have suggested defines the behavior of Cleopatra's three suitors.⁹²

This self-destructiveness is a result of the Decadents' concept of *mig*. Whereas Puškin, for example, sought isolation only during those moments of inspiration when his calling as a poet was evoked, Brjusov believed that "there were no special moments when the poet becomes a poet: he is either always a poet, or never."⁹³ From this followed his efforts to fuse the two moments of "life and creative work into one."⁹⁴ This is where Brjusov and the Decadents made their mistake. Gofman believed in the strict division between man and poet. The egocentric tendencies in Puškin became a virulent disease in the Decadents. The result of their quest was that "the history of symbolists turned into a history of broken lives."⁹⁵

Aleksandr Blok also wrote on the topic of Symbolists and the wayward course they took. It is perhaps particularly appropriate to consider his contribution on this matter because in his book *Poëty Simvolizma*, Gofman ranks Blok as closest among the Symbolists to being on the same level as Puškin. Gofman is far from suggesting that Blok either imitates or closely resembles Puškin, but he does suggest that there is an affinity. For example, the poem "Free Thoughts" ("Vol'nyja mysli") reminds us of Puškin in certain respects "for its simplicity, often even naiveness, its transparent clearness, its sober smile" ("... prostotoj, často daže naivnost'ju, svoej prozračnoju jasnost'ju, svoej 'ulybkoj razsuditel'noj'").⁹⁶

Blok wrote not only about symbolism but also about Cleopatra. O'Bell reminds us that in his 1910 article "On the Present State of Russian Symbolism" Blok makes a connection between these two. In his words both Cleopatra and symbolism chose a "submissive death rather than heroic struggle."⁹⁷ Perhaps Gofman saw in the plot line of EN the possibility to comment on this "submissive death." If we may turn to the ending of Gofman's version of EN we will notice the "influences" of Brjusov. Cleopatra in Brjusov's version brings to the youth a goblet of poisoned wine with a "deceptive smile" on her face. Gofman's Vol'skaja has a "slight ironical smile" as she hands a goblet of drugged wine to Čarskij. He awakes from this drug induced sleep to realize that Vol'skaja has "given him both love and life" and that he could "perhaps be happy..." This is what Brjusov's youth would have liked to

have experienced with Cleopatra, i.e., both love and life "until the longed-for end." Čarskij is faced with precisely such an opportunity of a life of happiness. It is important to note that it is at this point that Gofman's Čarskij, in rather belabored fashion, lists the reasons why that cannot be. Moreover, the rationale used could have come from the mouth of Brjusov's Crito: "Yes, and isn't this happiness [i.e., the night of love with Vol'skaja] really worth the remainder of a dismal life? And is it really possible to remain in this rat race after he had experienced such full and unique bliss?" This is not a Čarskij who is confronted with either overcoming the fear of death or of achieving a moment of happiness at the price of his life. These moments, both of which would have been acceptable within a Puškinian context, have already past. This, rather, is a Čarskij who cannot face his second challenge, the possibility of a life of happiness with Vol'skaja. He cannot face it because Gofman has imbued him with the logic of Russian Decadence. Čarskij uses the reasoning of the Decadents to justify passively submitting to death, rather than heroically struggling with life in its aspect of *byt*. In other words, he "escapes" from that struggle, thereby determining for himself what the moment should hold for him just as the egocentric "I" of the Decadents and those from Antiquity would dictate that he do.

¹B. V. Tomaševskij, Puškin: Kniga vtoraja, materialy k monografii (1824-1837), (Moskva-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo akademii nauk SSSR, 1961), pp. 467-468.

²Ibid.

³Nina Perlina, "Textual Criticism," in Handbook of Russian Literature, ed. Victor Terras (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 468.

⁴Ibid.

⁵M. L. Gofman, Pervaja glava nauki o Puškine, (Peterburg: Atenej, 1922), pp. 63-64.

⁶Ibid., p. 75.

⁷Ibid., p. 86.

⁸Ibid., p. 96.

⁹B. V. Tomaševskij, Puškin: Sovremennye problemy istoriko-literaturnogo izučeniia, (Leningrad: Obrazovanie, 1925. rpt. Mouton: The Hague, Paris 1970), p. 43.

¹⁰Marcus C. Levitt, "Pushkin in 1899," in Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism, ed. Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press), p. 187.

¹¹Gofman, Pervaja, p. 49.

¹²M. L. Gofman, "Okančanie èlegii 'Nenastnyj den' potux'," in Puškinskij sbornik, ed. N. V. Jakovlev (Moskva and Petrograd: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1922), p. 230.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 231.

¹⁵M. L. Gofman, Puškin: Psixologija tvorčestva, (Paris, 1928), p. 61.

¹⁶S. Bondi, Novye stranicy Puškina, (Moskva: Mir, 1931), p. 189.

¹⁷M. L. Gofman, Egipetskija Noči, (Paris: Sergej Lifar', 1935), p. 16.

¹⁸M. L. Gofman, "'Kleopatra' i 'Egipetskija noči'," in Sovremennyya Zapiski, 13 (1922), p. 169.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 169-170.

²⁰Gofman, Egipetskija, p. 9.

²¹Gofman, "'Kleopatra' i...", p. 170.

²²Ibid., p. 173.

²³Ibid., p. 174.

²⁴Ibid., p. 175.

²⁵Ibid., p. 177.

²⁶Gofman adds that even those who correctly criticized Brjusov, eg., Žirmunskij, were guilty of the same error.

²⁷Gofman, "'Kleopatra' i...", p. 179.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., p. 180.

³⁰Gofman cites a conversation between Lidina and Minskij, whom he renames Vol'skaja and Čarskij when he incorporates this fragment into his version of EN. See "My provodili..." in Polnoe, vol. 6, p. 410.

³¹ Gofman, "'Kleopatra' i...", p. 182.

³² I mentioned this fragment earlier when I discussed Gofman's first article of 1922. He was the first to have published it. His article was based upon his work on A. F. Onegin's collection of Puškin manuscripts in Paris.

³³ Gofman, "'Kleopatra' i...", p. 182.

³⁴ Gofman, Puškin., pp. 62-63.

³⁵ Valerij Brjusov, Moj Puškin, (Moskva and Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdaltel'stvo, 1929), p. 112.

³⁶ Gofman, "'Kleopatra' i ...", p. 186.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 187.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Gofman, Puškin., p. 18.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 51-52.

⁴² Ibid., p. 77.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 77-78.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 82.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 59.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 163-164.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 217.

⁴⁸ D. N. Ovsjaniko-Kulikovskij, Sobranie sočinenij, vol. IV, (Sankt-Peterburg: Izdanie I. L. Ovsjaniko-Kulikovskoj, 1912), p. 145.

⁴⁹ Boris Gasparov, "The 'Golden Age' and Its Role in the Cultural Mythology of Russian Modernism," in Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism, ed. Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press), p. 7.

⁵⁰ M. L. Gofman, Puškin-Don-Žuan, (Paris: Sergej Lifar', 1935), p. 9.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 10.

⁵² El'vira Čirpak-Rozdina, "'Egipetskie noči' A. S. Puškina," in Studia Slavica, 19 (No.4, 1973), p. 374.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 70, p. 90.

⁵⁴ Anna Axmatova, O Puškine, (Leningrad: Sovetskij pisatel', 1977), p. 189.

⁵⁵ Either sometime after 1928 or possibly after 1922, since his 1922 article on EN was meant as an introduction to a larger work that was to be published shortly.

⁵⁶ M. L. Gofman, "Les 'Nuits égyptiennes' de Pouchkine et leur héroïne," in Le Monde Slave, 4 (1933), p. 346.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 359.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 353-354.

⁵⁹ N. N. Petrunina, "'Egipetskie noči' i russkaja povest' 1830-x godov," in Puškin: Issledovanija i materialy, vol. 8, (Moskva-Leningrad: Akademija Nauk SSSR, 1978), p. 24. A. L. Vajnštejn, and V. P. Pavlova, "K istorii povesti Puškina 'Gosti s'ezžalis' na daču'," in Vremennik Puškinskoj Komissii, (Leningrad: Nauka, 1966), p. 38.

⁶⁰ Gofman, "Les 'Nuits...'), p. 355.

⁶¹ Axmatova, p. 204, p. 198. Not everyone likes this term in association with "We spent..." Anna Axmatova argues that it is "not a fragment", but rather has a "strong and decisive ending". She also insists that "We spent..." could well be "the last word" about Cleopatra, i.e., that it was written after EN.

⁶² L. S. Sidjakov, Xudožestvennaja proza A. S. Puškina, (Riga: LGU, 1973), p. 138. Paul Debreczeny, The Other Pushkin, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 292-293.

⁶³ To briefly repeat an observation of Brjusov's from chapter three, the action in the poem about Cleopatra and the contemporary setting in which the poem is read both occur in halls whose respective descriptions echo one another; both halls are brightly lit, there is music, and there is an urn that plays a role in both scenes, ancient and contemporary. There is also the figure of Cleopatra and her distant relation in the contemporary audience in the person of the "young, majestic beauty...[who] without the slightest embarrassment and with all possible sincerity dipped her aristocratic hand into the urn and pulled out a roll of paper."

⁶⁴ Gofman, Egipetskija, p. 23.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 53.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 54.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 55.

⁶⁹ Monika Frenkel Greenleaf, "Tynianov, Pushkin and the Fragment: Through the Lens of Montage," in Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism, ed. Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press), p. 268.

⁷⁰ Leslie O'Bell, Pushkin's Egyptian Nights, (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984), p. 94.

⁷¹ A. S. Puškin, Polnoe sobranie sočinenij v desjati tomach, vol. V, (Leningrad: Nauka, 1978), p. 350.

⁷² A. A. Axmatova, "'Kamennyj gost' Puškina," in Puškin: Issledovanija i materialy, vol. II, (Moskva-Leningrad: Akademij nauk SSSR, 1958), p. 191.

⁷³ B. Gasparov, and I. Paperno, "K opisaniju motivnoj struktury liriki Puškina," in Russian Romanticism: Studies in the Poetic Codes, ed. Nils Åke Nilsson (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1979), p. 13.

⁷⁴ Gofman, Puškin-Don-Žuan, p. 11.

⁷⁵ Ibid. Puškin-Don-Žuan

⁷⁶ Gofman, Egipetskie, p. 60.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 63.

⁷⁸ Puškin, p. 348.

⁷⁹ D. S. Merežkovskij, Večnye sputniki, (Sankt-Peterburg: Obščestvennaja Pol'za, 1910), p. 276.

⁸⁰ Savely Sendorovich, "On Puškin's Mythology: The Shade-Myth," in Alexander Puškin: Symposium II, ed. Andrej Kodjak, Krystyna Pomorska, and Kiril Taranovsky (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, Inc. 1980), pp.104-105. An example of this fear can be seen in the line "And everything then will die with me" from the poem "War", 1821.

⁸¹ Olga Matich, "Dialectics of Cultural Return: Zinaida Gippius' Personal Myth," in Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism, ed. Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press), p. 54.

⁸² Gofman, Egipetskie, p. 63. "...he should pay the full price for the full honor granted to him by Vol'skaja."

⁸³ B. Val'be, "Egipetskie noči," in Zvezda, No. 3 (1937), p.147.

⁸⁴ The following lines from Sologub and Solov'ev illustrate these ideas. Sologub: "Bliss occurs in life only once/ A mad path, -/ To forget oneself in a sea of kind eyes/ And to drown" ("Blaženstvo v žizni tol'ko raz,/Bezumnyj put',-/Zabyt'sja v more milyx glaz/ I utonut'" [Hansen-Löve, 314]). Solov'ev: "I regret that instant, that has perished forever,/ It will not be resurrected, and slowly will plod on/ After the moment the wearisome years of eternity./.../ And for that which will not return runs streams of tears" ("Togo mgnoven'ja žal', što sgiblo navsegda,/ Ego ne voskresit', i medlenno pletutsja / Za migom večnosti tjaželye goda. /.../ I k nevozvratnomu begut potoki slez" [303]).

⁸⁵ In "My provodili..." the protagonist says that a man who has agreed to the Cleopatra conditions could simply shoot himself the day after (zastreliť'sja). See Polnoe sobranie, vol. 6, p. 408.

⁸⁶ Gofman, "'Kleopatra' i...", p. 187.

⁸⁷ M. L. Gofman, Sobornyj individualizm, (Sankt-Peterburg: Kružok molodyx, 1907), p. 9.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 21.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

⁹¹ Irina Paperno, "Puškin v žizni čeloveka serebrjanogo veka," in Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism, ed. Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes and Irina Paperno (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: The University of California Press, 1990), p. 36.

⁹² Debreczeny, p.283. He writes that "the men rise to meet her destructive flame with their own self-destructive pride or sexual passion." It should also not be ignored that, although they were not Decadents, the suicides of Majakovskij and Esenin might also have served as models for Gofman of this potential for destruction. Boris Gasparov writes that "the mythological theme of the 'death of the poet' was powerfully reincarnated in the fate of Maiakovskii, whose suicide was perceived by many as a symbolic event embodying the crisis of the Age." See "The 'Golden Age' and Its Role in the Cultural Mythology of Russian Modernism," in Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism, ed. Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes and Irina Paperno, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: The University of California Press, 1990), p. 12.

⁹³Valerij Brjusov, "Svjaščennaja žertva," in Polnoe sobranie sočinenij, vol. 6, (Moskva: Xudožestvennaja literatura, 1975), p. 99.

⁹⁴Paperno, "Pushkin v ...", p. 26.

⁹⁵V. F. Xodasevič, Nekropol', (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1976), p. 8.

⁹⁶M. L. Gofman, Poëty simvolizma, (Petersburg: T-VA M. O. Vol'f, 1908. rpt. Wilhelm Fink Verlag München, 1970), p. 308.

⁹⁷O'Bell, p. 128.

CONCLUSION

I began from a premise of Reader-Response criticism. My object was to engage in a close analysis of three readers' interpretations of EN. I wanted to demonstrate the interaction between each of my three readers and the text EN. I also wanted to show the worth of reading interpretations that have been regarded as at best somewhat idiosyncratic. The strategies of the text guide the reader along in his interpretation. However, the reader also has his own strategies or preconceptions which guide and direct him in his reading. It is possible for the strategies of the reader to overwhelm those of the text. The result is a private reading, i.e., one that cannot be shared. This also means that the text has failed to communicate with its reader. I believe that our three readers have produced interpretations that have something in common with each other and with EN and which show that communication between the text and reader has indeed taken place. In each case, we have dealt with an interpretation in which the reader's understanding of *mig* has decisively influenced their efforts to solve the riddle of the unfinished text. *Mig* serves as the point around which the text and our readers interact.

Dostoevskij sees the key to the riddle of EN in Cleopatra's instant of tenderness. He believes that she is

being confronted with a moment of choice. Her response to the demands of the moment reflect not only upon the state of her soul but also upon the condition of mankind in general before the coming of the savior. For him the moment implies a "super-charged" instant of insight in which the Dostoevskian character sees clearly the need to choose between good and evil. The choice will result in consequences that will transcend the actual instant of time. For Puškin, however, the moment cannot transcend its temporal barrier. The moment is one of insight for Puškin as well. However, the moment must inevitably end. Consequently, we do not see a Puškinian character struggle between two basic principles such as good and evil. His demon remains and could only remain a demon. His Cleopatra also could only remain a demon. She does not face the choice that Dostoevskij implies. However, we do see the smallest of seeds in Puškin that were later to flower in Dostoevskij. I refer to the characters of Hermann and Don Žuan that were discussed in chapter three.

Brjusov believes that the question being posed in EN is different from the one that Dostoevskij saw. For Brjusov, it is not a question of being tested by a moment of choice, but rather of being tested by the moment of your choice. Cleopatra's three suitors have chosen to experience a moment of passion at the price of their lives. It then becomes a question, in Brjusov's eyes, of how they face the moment they have selected. Brjusov accepts Puškin's idea of the moment as insight. However, he rejects Puškin's concept of the poet as existing in two moments. The poet is always a poet and should

strive to make every moment a poetic one. As a result, to repeat Paperno, "not only poetry, but also practical life turn out to be spheres for the application of creative energy." As a result, Brjusov gives us a reading of EN in which an extreme in real life can exist as an aesthetic moment. Puškin, however, keeps separate the two moments. The aesthetic moment remains tied to the artistic. Certainly, decadent themes are present in Puškin and perhaps never more so than in EN, but the nuance of *mig* in Brjusov's thought is absent in Puškin's. What Brjusov relishes is the intensity inherent in *mig*. He, therefore, naturally gravitates to a solution for EN that results in exploring three moments of exquisite intensity.

Gofman, on the other hand, believes the question is how to place a value on a moment of bliss. For Brjusov, this question is asked and answered. Gofman, however, believes that it is the key to the riddle. To answer it he weaves together various Puškinian strands into a fourth chapter and then writes his own fifth chapter in order to be able to pose and answer this question within the context of Puškin's contemporary St. Petersburg. In his completion of EN, Gofman is also an observer of his own contemporary times. He views the Decadents' belief that both the spiritual and physical moments are appropriate vehicles for experiencing an aesthetic insight has resulted in the "broken lives and broken history" of symbolism. In other words, by fusing these two moments, Decadents have taken Puškin's egocentric "I" to its logical extreme. Furthermore, Gofman draws a connection between Antiquity and his own era and therein sees an opportunity to

comment on his own age in his completion of EN. Čarskij, as a Puškin-type poet, becomes in Gofman the Puškin-type poet of modernism. He deliberately confronts his Čarskij with the challenge of life. The "unique moment," however, has too strong of a hold on Čarskij. He uses the logic of Russian Decadence to escape and avoid the challenge of life. With the death of his hero Čarskij, Gofman has provided us with an ironic comment on the Decadent concept of *mig*.

Although Dostoevskij's, Brjusov's and Gofman's understanding of *mig* is not the same as Puškin's, nevertheless they share a common heritage. The point in EN around which their concepts of *mig* revolved came in the poem about Cleopatra. Their emphasis on the Cleopatra poem in EN identifies them as members of a broad Romantic trend. They all sought to explain EN in terms of the Cleopatra poem. In the 20th century a Realistic trend in criticism of EN developed and the society tale aspect and meta-poetic themes of the first three chapters of EN came to have the greater weight in critics' estimations of the story. The Cleopatra poem was factored into an interpretation in terms of how it could be reconciled to the themes of the first three chapters. Our three readers begin with the Cleopatra poem in their interpretations of EN.

The Cleopatra theme affected our three readers in different ways. Dostoevskij wrote about EN in an 1861 article. He remained haunted by the image of Cleopatra the rest of his life and incorporated it within his own novels, essentially rewriting the figure and theme of Cleopatra to fit his own

artistic designs. Brjusov and Gofman were so moved by EN that they felt compelled to complete it. Their versions could be considered as not just completions, but also as revisions, since any attempt to add to the original must necessarily end up changing its original message. That was not their stated intent. Brjusov wanted to remain within the spirit of Puškin and believed that his completion of EN proceeded along a line that Puškin might have developed. Gofman wanted to prove that Puškin intended to continue the Cleopatra anecdote of EN into contemporary St. Petersburg.

I have approached their completions of EN as if they were an uncommon form of interpretation. The reader attempts to construct an interpretation of a text. He may document that reading in different ways. The writer, however, will deliberately attempt to create a new text. Both Dostoevskij and Brjusov remain within the hypostasis of the reader. True, Brjusov does create new text in order to complete EN, but it follows the interpretation that he develops in his article and as such can be viewed as simply another account of his reading of EN. Gofman, too, remains within the hypostasis of the reader except for at the very end of his completion of EN. Until then his articles and his version of EN reveal a consistent reading that reflect his interpretative decisions. At the end, however, we see a deliberate effort on his part to veer away from his reading and create a new text in order to comment on his own age.

In the end, perhaps the fairest evaluation of our three readers comes from Oscar Wilde. He once wrote that criticism

which "treats the work of art simply as a starting-point for a new creation [is] criticism of the highest kind [because] the meaning of any beautiful created thing is, at least, as much in the soul of him who looks at it, as it was in the soul of him who wrought it."

APPENDIX A

Gofman's and Tomaševskij's Versions of the First Improvisation

1. Variant No. 1: Gofman.

Začem krutitsja vetr v ovrage
Volnuet step' i pyl' neset
Kogda korabl' v nedvižnoj vlage
Ego dyxan'ja žadno ždet?
Sprosi ego. Za čem ot bašen
Letit orel, ugrjum i strašen
Na pen' gniloj? Sprosi ego,
Za čem Arapa svoego
Mladaja ljubit Dezdemona
Kak mesjac ljubit noči mglu?
Za tem čto vetru i orlu
I serdcu devy net zakona -
Gordis': takov i ty poët
I dlja tebja uslovij net.

Ispolnen mysljami zlatymi
Neponimaemyj nikem
Pered kumirami zemnymi
Proxodiš' ty, unyl i nem.
S tolpoj ne deliš' ty ni gneva
Ni nužd, ni xoxota, ni reva
Ni udivlen'ja, ni truda.
Glupec kričit: *kuda? kuda?*
Doroga zdes'. No ty ne slyšiš'
Ideš' kuda tebja vlekut
Mečtan'ja tajnye. Tvoj trud
Tebe nagrada; im ty dyšeš',
A plod ego brosaesh' ty
Tolpe, rabyne suety.

2. Variant No. 2: Tomaševskij.

Poët idet - otkryty veždy
I on ne vidit nikogo -
A meždu tem za kraj odeždy
Tixon'ko dergajut ego! -

Glupec, kuda? On, verno, dremljet,
Tolkujut èti gospoda:
Doroga zdes' - stupaj sjuda -
Naprasnyj trud - poèt ne vnemlet.

Takov poèt: kak Akvilon
Čto xočet, to i nosit on -
Orlu podobno, on letaet,
I ne sprosjaš' ni u kogo,
Kak Dezdemona izbiraet
Kumir dlja serdca svoego.

APPENDIX B

S. Bondi's Version of the First Improvisation

Poèt idet - otkryty veždy,
No on ne vidit nikogo;
A meždu tem za kraj odeždy
Proxožij dergaet ego...
"Skaži: začem bez celi brodiš'?"
Edva dostig ty vysoty,
I vot už dolu vzor nizvodiš'
I nizojti stremiš'sja ty.
Na strojnyj mir ty smotriš' smutno;
Besplodnyj žar tebja tomit;
Predmet ničtožnyj pominutno
Tebja trevožit i manit.
Stremit'sja k nebu dolžen genij,
Objazan istinnyj poèt
Dlja vdoxnovenных pesnopenij
Izbrat' vozvyšennyj predmet".
- Začem krutitsja vetr v ovrage,
Pod"emlet list i pyl' neset,
Kogda korabl' v nedvižnoj vlage
Ego dyxan'ja žadno ždet?
Začem ot gor i mimo bašen
Letit orel, tjažel i strašen,
Na čaxlyj pen'? Sprosi ego.
Začem arapa svoego
Mladaja ljubit Dezdemona,
Kak mesjac ljubit noči mglu?
Zatem, čto vetru i orlu
I serdcu devy net zakona.
Takov poèt: kak Akvilon,
Čto xočet, to i nosit on -
Orlu podobno, on letaet
I, ne sprosjaš' ni u kogo,
Kak Dezdemona, izbiraet
Kumir dlja serdca svoego.

APPENDIX C

Nineteenth Century Version of the Second

Improvisation

Čertog sijal. Gremeli xorom
Pevcy pri zvuke flejt i lir;
Carica golosom i vzorom
Svoj pyšnyj oživljala pir.
Serdca neslis' k eja prestolu;
No vdrug nad čašej zolotoj
Ona zadumalas' i dolu
Ponikla divnoju glavoj..

I pyšnyj pir kak budto dremlet;
Bezmolvny gosti; xor molčit;
No vnov' ona čelo pod"emlet
I s vidom jasnym govorit:
"V moej ljubvi dlja vas blaženstvo;
"Blaženstvo možno vam kupit'...
"Vnemlite mne: mogu ravenstvo
"Mež' vami ja vozstanovit'.
"Kto k torgu strastnomu pristupit'?
"Svoju ljubov' ja prodaju;
"Skažite: kto mež' vami kupit
"Cenoju žizni noč' moju?"

Rekla - i užas vsej ob"emlet,
I strast'ju drognuli serdca...
Ona smuščennyj ropot vnemlet
S xolodnoj derzost'ju lica
I vzor prezritel'nyj obvodit
Krugom poklonnikov svoix...
Vdrug iz tolpy odin vyxodit,
Vosled za nim i dva drugix:
Smela ix postup', jasny oči;
Ona navstreču im vstaet.
Sveršilos': kupleny tri noči,
I lože smerti ix zovet.

Blagoslovennye žrecami,
Teper' iz urny rokovej
Pred nepodvižnymi gostjami

Vyxodjat žrebii čredoju:
 I pervyj - Flavij, voin smelyj,
 V družinax rimskix posedelyj;
 Snesti ne mog on ot ženy
 Vysokomernago prezren'ja;

On prinjal vyzov naslaždenja,
 Kak prinimal vo dni vojny
 On vyzov jarago sražen'ja.
 Za nim Kriton, mladoj mudrec,
 Roždennyj v roščax Ėpikura,
 Kriton, poklonnik i pevec
 Xarit, Kipridy i Amura. -
 Ljubeznyj serdcu i očam,
 Kak vešnyj cvet edva razvityj,
 Poslednij imeni vekam
 Ne peredal. Ego lanity
 Pux pervyj nežno otenjal;
 Vostorg v očax ego sijal;
 Strastej neopytnaja sila
 Kipela v serdce molodom...
 I s umileniem na nem
 Carica vzor ostanovila.

"Kljanus'... o, mater' naslaždenij!
 "Tebe neslyxanno služu:
 "Na lože strastnyx iskušenij
 "Prostoj naemnicej sxožu!
 "Vnemli že, moščnaja Kiprida,
 "I Vy, podzemnye cari,
 "I bogi groznago Aida!
 "Kljanus', do utrennej zari
 "Moix vlastitelej želan'ja
 "Ja sladostrastno utolju,
 "I vsemi tajnami lobzan'ja
 "I divnoj negoj utomlju!
 "No tol'ko utrennej porfiroj
 "Avrora večnaja blesnet,
 "Kljanus', pod smertnoju sekiroj
 "Glava sčastlivcev otpadet!"

I vot, uže sokrylsja den',
 I bleščet mesjac zlatorogij;
 Aleksandrijskie čertogi
 Pokryla sladostnaja ten';
 Fontany b'jut, gorjat lampady,
 Kuritsja legkij fimiam,
 I sladostrastnyja proxlady
 Zemnym gotovjatsja bogam;
 V roskošnom zolotom pokoe,
 Sred' obol'stitel'nyx čudes,
 Pod sen'ju purpurnyx zaves

Blistaet lože zolotoe...

.

APPENDIX D

Tomaševskij's Version of the Second Improvisation

Čertog sijal. Gremeli xorom
Pevcy pri zvuke flejt i lir.
Carica golosom i vzorom
Svoj pyšnyj oživljala pir;
Serdca neslis' k ee prestolu,
No vdruk nad čašej zolotoj
Ona zadumalas' i dolu
Ponikla divnoju glavoj...

I pyšnyj pir kak budto dremlet;
Bezmolvny gosti; xor molčit;
No vnov' ona čelo pod"emlet
I s vidom jasnym govorit:
"V moej ljubvi dlja vas blaženstvo;
"Blaženstvo možno vam kupit'...
"Vnemlite mne: mogu ravenstvo
"Mež' nami ja vozstanovit'.
"Kto k torgu strastnomu pristupit?
"Svoju ljubov' ja prodaju;
"Skažite: kto mež' vami kupit
"Cenoju žizni noč' moju?"

"Kljanus'...- o, mater' naslaždenij,
"Tebe neslyxanno služu,
"Na lože strastnyx iskušeni
"Prostoj naemnicej sxožu.
"Vnemli že, moščnaja Kiprida,
"I Vy, podzemnye cari,
"O bogi groznago Aida,
"Kljanus' - do utrennej zari
"Moix vlastitelej želan'ja
"Ja sladostrastno utomlju,
"I vsemi tajnami lobzan'ja
"I divnoj negoj utolju.
"No tol'ko utrennej porfiroj
"Avrora večnaja blesnet,
"Kljanus' - pod smertnoju sekiroj
"Glava sčastlivcev otpadet."

Rekla - i užas vsech ob"emlet,
 I strast'ju drognuli serdca...
 Ona smuščennyj ropot vnemlet
 S xolodnoj derzost'ju lica,
 I vzor prezritel'nyj obvodit

Krugom poklonnikov svoix...
 Vdrug iz tolpy odin vyxodit,
 Vosled za nim i dva drugix.
 Smela ix postup'; jasny oči;
 Ona navstreču im vstaet;
 Sveršilos': kupleny tri noči,
 I lože smerti ix zovet.

Blagoslovennye žrecami,
 Teper' iz urny rokovej
 Pred nepodvižnymi gostjami
 Vyxodjat žrebi i čredoju.
 I pervyj - Flavij, voin smelyj,
 V družinax rimskix posedelyj;
 Snesti ne mog on ot ženy
 Vysokomernogo prezren'ja;
 On prinjal vyzov naslaždenja,
 Kak prinimal vo dni vojny
 On vyzov jarogo sražen'ja.
 Za nim Kriton, mladoj mudrec,
 Roždennyj v roščax Èpikura,
 Kriton, poklonnik i pevec
 Xarit, Kipridy i Amura...
 Ljubeznyj serdcu i očam,
 Kak vešnyj cvet edva razvityj,
 Poslednij imeni vekam
 Ne peredal. Ego lanity
 Pux pervyj nežno otenjal;
 Vostorg v očax ego sijal;
 Strastej neopytnaja sila
 Kipela v serdce molodom...
 I s umileniem na nem
 Carica vzor ostanovila.¹

1. The stanza below was rejected by Tomaševskij as a continuation to EN, but his argument was not entirely accepted by the Academy and it continues to appear in the *Polnoe Sobranie* as a footnote.

I vot, uže sokrylsja den',
 Vosxodit mesjac zlatorogij.
 Aleksandrijskie čertogi

Pokryla sladostnaja ten'.
Fontany b'jut, gorjat lampady,
Kuritsja legkij fimiam,
I sladostrastnye proxlady
Zemnym gotovjatsja bogam.
V roskošnom zolotom pokoe
Sred' obol'stitel'nyx čudes
Pod sen'ju purpurnyx zaves
Blistaet lože zolotoe.

APPENDIX E

1834-35 Fragment of EN Published by Gofman

Temnaja, znojnaja noč' ob'emlet Afrikanskoe nebo;
Aleksandrija zasnula; eja stogny utixli, doma pomerkli.
Dal'nyj Foros gorit uedinenno v eja širokoj pristani kak
lampada v izgolov'i spjaščej krasavicy.

Svetly i šumny čertogi Ptolomeevy: Kleopatra ugoščaet
svoix družej; stol obstavljen kostjanyimi ložami. Tri sta
junošej služat gostjam, tri sta dev raznosjat im amfory
polnyja grečeskix vin; trista černyx Ėvnuxov nadzirajut nad
nimi bezmolvno.

Porfirnaja kolonada otkrytaja s juga i severa ožidaet
dunovenija Ėvra; - No vozdux nedvižim - ognennyja jazyki
svetil'nikov gorjat nedvižno. Dym kuril'nic voznositsja
prjamo nedvižnoju strueju - more, kak zerkalo ležit nedvižno
u rozovyx stupenej polukruglago kryl'ca. Storoževye sfinksy v
nem otrazili svoi zoločenyja kogti i granitnye xvosty...
tol'ko zvuki kifary flejty potrjasajut ogni vozdux i more.

Vdrug Carica zadumalas' - i grustno ponikla divnoju
golovoju; svetlyj pir omračilsja eja grustiju kak solnce
omračaetsja oblakom.

O čem ona grustit?

Kakaja grust' ee gnetet?
Čego čego nedostaet
Prekrasnoj sladostnoj Carice?
V eja [blistatel'noj] stolice
Vesel'e, blesk i tišina
Sud'boju vlastvuet ona.
Pokorny ej Zemnye bogi
Polny čudes eja čertogi.
[Gorit-li Afrikanskij den',
Svežeet li nočnaja ten'
Vsečasno roskoš' i iskustva

Ej tešat dremljuščija čuvstva]
Vse zemli, volny vsej morej
Smirenno dan' prinosjat ej
Vsečasno pred eja glazami

Piry smenjajutsja pirami
Postig-li kto v duše svoej
Nemyja tajnstva nočej?....

Votščě! v nej serdce gluxo straždet -
Odnex utex bezvestnyx žaždet -
Utomlena, presyščena
Bol'na bezčuvstviem ona....

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