

What Derzhavin Heard When Pushkin Read “Vospominaniia v Tsarskom Sele” in 1815*

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It is a well-known fact, and has become part of the myth and cult of Aleksandr Pushkin as Russia's greatest poet, that Derzhavin proclaimed the adolescent Pushkin his successor in 1815 upon hearing the poem “Vospominaniia v Tsarskom Sele” (1814) at the graduation (from the lower to upper classes) of the Tsarskoe Selo Lyceum. That Derzhavin subsequently considered Pushkin Russia's greatest poet is confirmed by his comments to his friend S.T. Aksakov in 1815, the year before he died: “Soon a second Derzhavin will appear to the world: this is Pushkin, who still at the Lyceum has surpassed all our writers.”¹

What did Derzhavin hear? A very ambivalent and ironic, yet great tribute to his own *past* poetic achievements.

Scholarship on this early important poem has been divided as to whether the overwhelming influence on Pushkin was Derzhavin's, or that of his older contemporaries, Zhukovsky and especially Batiushkov. Vinogradov, Tomashevsky and Blagoi (whose treatment of this poem is more balanced) see the Batiushkovian influence, especially that of the strophically similar “Na razvalinakh zamka v Shvetsii,” as somehow decisive. Earlier criticism in Derzhavin's lifetime and that of Shevyrev in 1841 proclaimed the poem to be written “after the manner of Derzhavin.”² Both these points of view, voiced decades and some more than a century after the fact, are demeaning to Pushkin's achievement in that early poem, perhaps unconsciously, as if “Vospominaniia...” were no more than a genius-like reflection of the poetics of more mature poets. Moreover, the poem is rarely treated outside the developmental context of Pushkin's later work, i.e., it is rarely looked at in its own right. The present study attempts to treat the poem in terms of what “Derzhavin” (in the author's understand-

* The author wishes to thank her anonymous reader for bringing to her attention Grigorii Vinokur's attribution of Pushkin's use of *ozret'sia* to Kapnist in his 1941 article “Nasledstvo XVIII veka v stikhotvornom iazyka Pushkina,” reprinted in *O iazyke khudozhestvennoi prozy* (Moscow: Vysshiaia shkola, 1991), p. 291.

¹ S.T.Aksakov, *Semeinaia khronika i znakomstvo s Derzhavinym* (Moscow, 1856), p. 524.

² V. Vinogradov, *Stil' Pushkina* (Moscow: OGIz, 1941), pp. 120 ff. D. Blagoi, *Tvorcheskii put' Pushkina* (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk, 1950), pp. 98–109. B. Tomashevsky, *Pushkin* (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk, 1952) I, p. 56ff. S.P. Shevyrev, “Vzglyad na sovremennuiu russkuiu literaturu,” *Moskvitianin*, 1841, V, no. 9.255.

ing of this poet, to be sure) heard at that particular point in time in the hope that such a “defamiliarizing” examination of the poem, within the confines of Derzhavin’s life (he died July, 1816) will throw Pushkin’s originality into relief, even at his public poetic debut.

Approaching “Vospominaniia...” in terms of what Derzhavin heard moves this study closer to David Bethea’s recent interpretation, in which he treats Derzhavin as the poem’s first addressee and Del’vig (Pushkin’s dearest friend and an extreme admirer of Derzhavin throughout his life)³ as its second. The question underlying any such treatment is: why was Derzhavin so overjoyed at this recitation and why did he retract his lyre so decisively from Zhukovsky and pass it to Pushkin in the last one and a half years of his life? Like Bethea, I approach the poem in terms of a dialogue with Derzhavin, in the conviction that Derzhavin heard what we, scholars, fail to hear—not only what was Derzhavinian in the poem, and not only what was Batiushkovian, i.e., the increased syntactic smoothness and perhaps variation on the stanzaic structure of this poet’s recent historical elegy. (Derzhavin would perhaps have been pleased at these more contemporary qualities of the piece.) Most importantly, however, Derzhavin, the literary examiner of the day after all, to whose attention and evaluation the poem was undoubtedly addressed, probably was the first to hear what was *not his*—he heard his own poetic oeuvre not rejected, but mastered, incorporated, and creatively and originally used, and by a much younger poet.

Derzhavin would probably have disagreed with Vinogradov’s assessment of Pushkin’s early style, considering it not useful for this poem:

To avoid Derzhavin’s influence both in the Anacreontic and in the high odic genres was difficult, but, here, too, Pushkin filters the phraseology, guided by the styles of Batiushkov, Zhukovsky and Vyazemsky.⁴

Indeed, any concerted effort to “avoid” the influence of Derzhavin or “filter” or “strain” his phraseology, seems conspicuously wanting. Vinogradov’s marshalling of similar “phraseology” in the styles of other predecessors, contemporaries, and from much later poems bespeaks his tendency to view Derzhavinesque phraseology in the early Pushkin as “the general heritage of the poetic language of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.” This is not convincing where “Vospominaniia” is concerned, even at the level of specific wordings. This poem cannot be Derzhavinized in this fashion because the intertextual echoes in it are not

³ David Bethea, *Realizing Metaphors* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), pp. 155ff.

⁴ Vinogradov, pp. 123–24.

vaguely or generally Derzhavinian: they are particularly flattering allusions to many of the greatest moments in Derzhavin's odic oeuvre! They are in fact as flattering as Pushkin's use of Derzhavin's own lines from "Liro-epicheskii gimn na prognanie frantsuzov iz otechestva" ("Lyro-Epic Hymn on the Expulsion of the French from the Fatherland"; 1812) a year later in "Ten' Fonvizina" ("Fonvizin's Shade") was parodic and mocking. It is almost as if Pushkin were undoing his tribute to the elder poet in "Vospominaniia..."

When Vinogradov focusses on the "frazeologizmy" of "Vospominaniia..." more closely, even he is forced to concede: "... of course, from several images and phraseological groups it was impossible to erase the Derzhavinian coloring."⁵ For the most part in this poem Derzhavin is condensed, not strained or filtered through Batiushkov. As the many reminiscences to Derzhavin poems in the Appendix below indicate, the poem is lexically much higher and more archaic (words like *ozret'sia*, found also in the poetry of Derzhavin's very close friend Kapnist, and recently used by Derzhavin in reference to the fleeing French in "Na prognanie"), and maintains higher, more Derzhavinian levels of inversion—not simply transposed words, but larger amounts of interruptive material (for example, the rhetorical question in the final stanza Derzhavin heard, Appendix, stanza 20,⁶ or inverted lines like "Tkh smelym podvigam strashas' divilsia mir") than Batiushkov was wont to do in 1814–15. In the area of grammar of poetry, the strategic repetition of the unidirectional motion verb in stanzas 1 and 1a: "Plyvet, ... plyvet," as an interstanzaic linking device, is a feature typical of Derzhavin's military odes, as we shall see below.⁷

If these linguistic-stylistic features were not enough to justify Derzhavin's hearing *himself* in this poem, Pushkin conducts a direct dialogue with him—and not one mainly about the historical past, but rather about the *poetic past and present*. Here in the presence of the *eminence grise* of Russian poetry, a man who had recently written "Edin est' Bog, edin Derzhavin" ("There is one God, there is one Derzhavin"),⁸ Pushkin answers some of the elder poet's most famous questions: "Chto pered toboiu Ia?" ("What am I [standing before] compared to you?").⁹

How does Pushkin "conduct a dialogue" with Derzhavin? He hybridizes two major modes of Derzhavin's writing and forces the older poet

⁵ Vinogradov., p. 129.

⁶ The Appendix here below gives a fuller picture of the possible allusions to Derzhavin's poetry than anyone has provided hitherto.

⁷ This type of repetition was noted by Vinogradov, pp. 277–78, but in a totally different connection.

⁸ Gavriila Derzhavin, "Privratnik," in *Sochineniia Derzhavina*, Ed. Yakov Grot (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1864) III, pp. 420–24. All references to Derzhavin works herein are to this edition.

⁹ The latter is a famous line from Derzhavin's "Bog" ("God"; 1784).

to “hear” those aspects of the poem that are not his, that constitute an evolutionary alteration/improvement upon his own work. These “modes” of Derzhavinian writing are the Tsarskoe Selo elegy, best exemplified in Derzhavin’s “Razvaliny” (“Ruins”; 1797), (which preceded Batiushkov’s “Ruins” by more than a decade!) and the great military ode, of the type of “Na Vziatie Izmaila” (“On the Taking of Izmail”; 1790). I do not agree that “Vospominaniia...” is a historical elegy in the sense of “Na Razvalinakh zamka v Shvetsii,” a work carried out in a sustained elegiac tonality.¹⁰ It is rather a maverick Tsarskoe Selo elegy,¹¹ like Derzhavin’s “Razvaliny,” but one that strove to be, and in some sense felt that it ought to be, an ode.

The occasion—not the graduation, but the victory over Napoleon, the flight of the French and the heroic burning of Moscow—cried out for an ode. There is always something missing and longed for in Tsarskoe Selo elegies—in Derzhavin’s “Razvaliny” it is the recently deceased Catherine the Great, who had been the animating presence at Tsarskoe: “The Great One is no more.” In Pushkin’s very original piece, what is missing, or partially missing, is the ode that would adequately praise the great achievements of Aleksandr I and his generals. This nostalgia for the largely missing ode is one of the central motifs of Pushkin’s elegiac longing in the poem and certainly crucial to his dialogue with Derzhavin. It is not only that the Catherinian historical past is evoked, as many have noted. More importantly, the kind of verbal art that inscribed it in the national memory is invoked—the heroic ode.

Derzhavin i Petrov geroiam pesn’ bryatsali
Strunami gromozvuchnykh lir.

(Derzhavin and Petrov strummed songs to the heroes
On the strings of their thundering lyres.)

There are many signs in Pushkin’s poem that, given the nature of the victory and the very public occasion at which the poem was read, and even the average middle-to-elderly age of the audience, a group very acculturated to the ode, that a heroic ode was what was called for, *and* what was missing.

¹⁰ In this I concur with Blagoi, see *Tvorcheskii put’*, p. 155.

¹¹ On the characteristic traits of the Tsarskoe Selo elegy see Anna Lisa Crone, “Akhmatova and the Passing of the Swans” in *A Sense of Place*, Ed. Lev Loseff and Barry Scherr (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1993), pp. 92–94. These traits include: 1) Tsarskoe Selo as a sacred place of higher life; 2) of heroism and the glory of the Russian past and of the inner heroism of the anointed poet; 3) the place of a higher self principle; 4) as the place of returns on a regular basis (mental and physical returns); 5) the place of meditation upon what has been lost or what cannot be fully retrieved.

All three poet-participants—Zhukovsky, Derzhavin and Pushkin at his public debut—recognized the absence of the “great heroic ode,” and alluded to it in poetic texts at the time. Vasily Zhukovsky had not written an ode, although “Pevets vo stane russkikh voinov” (“The Singer in the Camp of Russian Warriors”; 1812) is a highly celebratory piece, at times a rollicking, almost toasting song. Zhukovsky is explicitly aware of its non-odic status and in it calls upon Derzhavin to write one last great ode:

O, kamskie dubravy!
 Gordites', vash Derzhavin syn.
 Gotov' svoi peruny,
 Suvorin—chudo-ispolin,
 Derzhavin gryanet v struny.
 O, stareets, da uslyshim tvoy
 Dnej golos lebedinyi
 Ne tshchetnoi slavy pred toboy
 Ne mshcheniia družhiny,
 Prosterli ne k dobycham dlan',
 Begut ne za venkami
 Ikh podvig svyat, to pravyykh bran',
 S zlodeiskimi ordami.¹²

Derzhavin responded with “Na prognanie frantsuzov...”, a ponderous, religiously colored “lyro-epic” hymn with some odic outbursts, instead of the expected and required great ode. The final stanza of the poem is an admission by Derzhavin—unthinkable in earlier years—that the work is a weak performance. In the inversion-ridden concatenation of clauses that ends the piece Derzhavin calls upon younger poets to write the required ode for Aleksandr:

I moi uzh gasnet zhar,
 Kholodna starost'-dukh, u liry glas ot'emlet,
 Ekateriny muza dremlet.
 To iunogo tsaria,
 Dnes' vsled orlov paria,
 Predshestvuiushchikh blag viden'ia,
 Chto mnoiu v den' ego rozhden'ia
 Predrecheno, dostoino pet'
 Ia ne mogu. Mladym pevtsam gremet'
 Moi vveriaiu vetkhi struny,
 Da cherpliut s nikh v svoi serdtsa peruny,

¹² Vasily Zhukovsky, *Sochineniia* (St. Petersburg: Glazunov, 1885) I, 258–81.

Stol' chistykh, revnostnykh ognei,
Kak pel ia trex tsarei.¹³

A close-reading of this begrudging admission¹⁴ reveals that Derzhavin himself can no longer derive sufficient inspiration from his own great past works, something he tries to do in sections of this hymn with meager success.

Pushkin, when he joins this tri-partite colloquy in 1814, recognizes the need for an ode in “Vospominaniia...” in the poem’s explicit reasons for why he is not writing an ode, and perhaps more importantly *in the form of the work*.

His answer is summarized in the last stanza of the version Derzhavin heard, framed as a rhetorical question:

Pochto nebesnykh aonid,
Kak nashikh dnei pevets, slavianskoi bard družhiny¹⁵
Moi dukh vostorgom ne gorit?

We are told within the poem proper that Pushkin’s spirit “burned with futile anger,” rather than odic ecstasy.

Yet Pushkin introduces considerable ambivalence into the issue, ending on a clear note of desire to have been able to write an ode:

O, esli b Apollon piitov dar chudesnyi,
Vliyal mne nyne v grud'! Toboio voskhishchen
Na lire b vozgremel garmoniei nebesnoi,
I vossiyal vo t'me vremen.

Derzhavin would have heard this, I think correctly, as an echo of his exalted metapoem, “Solovei” (“The Nightingale”; 1795), where similar desires are intoned:

¹³ Derzhavin “Liro-èpicheskii gimn na prognoanie franstozov iz otechestva” (1812), in *Sochineniia Derzhavina* II, 137–64.

¹⁴ For such a reading see Anna Lisa Crone, “The Poetics of Ungrammaticality: Impermissible Inversions in the Poetry of the Late Eighteenth Century,” forthcoming. This article treats inversions of larger elements of poetic sentences (subject-verb-complement), thus sentences SCV and CSV, CVS in Lomonosov, Petrov, Derzhavin, and Radishchev, as well as the amounts of interruptive material, distancing the material between parts. On the basis of this study, soon to appear, the most difficult poetic syntax is that of Derzhavin and Radishchev, and the elements in Pushkin’s “Vospominaniia” can be called “Derzhavinian.”

¹⁵ This phrasing refers to Zhukovsky’s call to Derzhavin. The initial version had this reference, although the handwritten version Pushkin sent to Derzhavin, at the latter’s request, replaced it by the line “kak drevnikh let pevets, kak lebed’ stran Elliny.” The collocation “pevets dnei” had originated with Zhukovsky in his call to Derzhavin.

O, esli by odnu prirodu,
 S toboiu vzial ia v obrazets...
 Kakoi by slavnyi byl pevets...

The poem has strong reference to the military ode in the final stanza:

Il' khrabrykh rossiian delami
 Plenias' by, dukhom vozletal
 Geroev polk nad oblakami
 V siian'í zvezd ia sozertsal.
 O, kol' by ikh vospel ia sladko,
 Gremia poeziei moei. ...¹⁶

Pushkin's other ending to "Vospominaniia," added later and referring once more to Zhukovsky, contains an answer to or reprise of Derzhavin's call to young poets: "Da cherpliut s nikh v svoi serdtsa peruny..."

Da snova stroinyi glas geroiu v chest' prol'etsia,
 I struny trepetny posypliut ogn' v serdtsa,
 I ratnik molodoi vskipit i sodrognetsia,
 Pri zvukakh brannogo pevtsa.

Pushkin's first version of the last stanza, the one Derzhavin heard, represents a perfect counterpoint to Derzhavin's statement that he could not fashion a great ode—owing to old age and waning talent. Pushkin's reasons are excessive youth, inexperience, his "exile in time." Born too late for the deeds of Catherine's epoch and too late to be center stage in the Alexandrine age, he experiences as well an "exile in space"—not being *there*, but imprisoned in Tsarskoe while great events were raging elsewhere. Pushkin had said directly in the ending he read at the graduation that had things been otherwise, he would have written the great ode that would have immortalized him.

After hearing the entire complex poem, Derzhavin would have to have seen Pushkin's ambivalence—his professed and motivated "inability," not as a verbal inability, but as *unwillingness* to write a heroic ode in his sequestered circumstances in Tsarskoe, unwillingness to do something totally Derzhavinesque. Derzhavin could not have thought that Pushkin couldn't—the poem makes it obvious that he could—but that he was drawing a line between himself and Derzhavin—that he *wouldn't*.

Pushkin makes this inability/unwillingness (and its motivations) a major poetic subject, the object of elegiac longing. "Vospominaniia" is an

¹⁶ Derzhavin's "Solovei" is a metapoem about the poet's power to dominate nature and man through his art.

elegy which *encapsulates/is pregnant with* a military ode. The “Razvaliny” section (stanzas 1–6.2) surrounds the main odic section (6.3-13.4) with the words “ne zdes’.” In 13.5 the elegy recommences a second time, this time in relation to current history and Pushkin’s predicament, and extends to the last stanzas, 17–19, which are reminiscent of the coda of a military ode, and then in 20, as we have seen, Pushkin points out that this poem is *not an ode*.

Derzhavin’s Tsarskoe Selo elegy “Razvaliny” represents the poet walking past the monuments and locales of the town a year after Catherine’s death and Paul’s removal of his court to Pavlovsk. In it the reminiscing past imperfective is counteracted by the shifters “zdes’” (8 times) and the more immediate “tut” (16 times), all within a total of 119 lines. The repeated demonstrative “sei, siia, sie, sii” also contributes to the temporary effect of bringing back what is missing by the lively immediacy of its evocation.

Pushkin’s stanzas 2–5 re-echo exactly the same past as Derzhavin’s “Razvaliny,” but instead of “zdes’” they do so with “Ne zdes’,” “Ne se l’ Minervy rosskoi khram?”

The passage

Zdes’ kazhdyi shag v dushe rozhdaet
 Vospominaniia prezhnikh let,
 Vozzrev vokrug sebia, so vzdokhom ross veshchaet
 Izchezlo vse, velikoi net! (stanza 5)

answers Derzhavin’s sharp change of mood at the end of his elegy:

No zdes’ ee uzh nyne net.
 Pomerk krasot volshebnykh svet.
 Vse t’moi pokrylos’, zapustelo,
 Vse v prakh upalo, pomertvelo.
 Ot uzhasa vsia stynet krov’:
 Lish’ plachet siraia liubov’.

Though “the great one is no longer here” could be the exclamation of Pushkin personally, this section describes exactly what Derzhavin does in his 1797 poem. His meditative review of the past “v tikhom voskhishchenii dukh,” echoes Derzhavin’s words in “Evgeniiu. Zhizn’ zvanaia” where Derzhavin gazes upon bathing youth “v dushevnom nekom voskhishchenii.” Moreover, the use of a meditative character is frequent in the odes of the late Derzhavin (for example, Romyantsev in “Vodopad”) and their visions, announced by “on vidit,” “on zrit,” are usually followed by a verbal picture (*kartinka*), as here in Pushkin. I allude to these coincidences in

mood, sense and device to show how easily the elder poet could have taken the “ross” in Pushkin’s poem to refer to himself in “Razvaliny.”

But the complexity of “Vospominaniia” increases as we read further. It becomes clear that Pushkin is *not* strolling mainly through Tsarskoe Selo, the place, so much as he is “strolling through” the great past works of Derzhavin. With the aged poet sitting before him, the ironic implication cannot be avoided: “the great one (Derzhavin) is no more.” Like Derzhavin in “Razvaliny,” Pushkin in this survey calls up the great Derzhavin of the past in such a lively fashion that he temporarily appears to live again. But Pushkin can no more bring the “great Derzhavin” back to life than Derzhavin could resuscitate Catherine. The great poetry of the recent past is acknowledged here and its passing is lamented.

In stanza 5 we have the vision of the meditative poet:

On vidit...

Voznessia pamiatnik. Shiriaiasia krylami.

Nad nim sidit orel mladoi,

I tsepi tiazhkie, i strely gromovye

Vkrug groznogo stolpa trikratno obvilis’

Krugom podnozhiiia, shumia, valy sedye

V blestiashechei pene uleglis’.

Compare with Rumyantsev’s vision in “Vodopad”:

On zrit odetu v rizy cherny,

Krylatu nekuiu zhenu. ..

Na shleme u nee orel,

Sidel s perunom pomrachennym,

V nem gerb otechestva on zrel. (stanzas 30–31)

This important transitional passage (from elegy to ode) in “Vospominaniia” is a microcosmic emblem of the structure of Pushkin’s entire poem as we see it. It is an elegiac invocation of the monuments of the Kagula victory and Orlov’s naval victory at Chesma (both mentioned in Derzhavin’s “Razvaliny”) . These heroes and the odists who praised them, Derzhavin and Petrov, are explicitly mentioned in stanza 7, as indicated. Here we have the elegiac treatment of “monuments” whose meaning is heroic, odic, just as in the form of the poem as a whole we have an ode, enclosed largely inside an elegy. The elegiac evocation of events of a heroic/odic nature via “monuments” provides a seamless, very “Pushkinian” (not Derzhavinian) transition to the odic section of “Vospominaniia...” The first elegiac section begins and ends in a tonality of darkness and gloominess. The first line “Navis pokrov ugriumi

noshchi, ” is closely echoed in the final line of this section “V teni gustoi ugriumykh sosen,” forming an elegant frame.

In stanza 6.3 we move to a very different tonality, to the darkness of battle, the brightness of martial lightning and the metallic clamor of combat. This odic section begins in earnest with the apostrophe to the Russian warriors and victories in very Derzhavinian tones, so familiar to us from “Na Vziatie Izmaila,” “Pobediteliu,” and a host of the poet’s other odes.

Pushkin:

Bessmertny vy vovek, o rosski ispoliny,
V boiakh vospitannykh sred’ brannykh nepogod!
O vas, spodvizhniki, druž’ia Ekateriny,
Proidet molva iz roda v rod.

Derzhavin:

O ross! O rod velikodushnyi!
O tverdokamennaia grud’!
O ispolin, tsariu poslushnyi!...
V zime rozhdenny pod snegami!...
Pod molniiami i gromami,
Kotorykh s samykh iunykh dnei
Pitala slava, vernost’, vera. (“Na Vziatie Izmaila”)

The familiar martial themes are struck in a style that Derzhavin unmistakably heard as a reevocation of his own in stanzas 8.3 to 13.3, treating the Napoleonic invasion, the burning of Moscow and the flight of the defeated French troops. First, let us examine battle as a natural catastrophe.

Pushkin:

Vosstal vselennoi bich – i vskore novoi brani
Zardelas’ groznaia zaria. (“Vospominaniia”)

Derzhavin:

Za nim vozhdiei riad pred polkami,
Kak burnykh dnei pred oblakami
Idet ognistaia zaria. (“Na Vziatie Izmaila”)

The repeated motif of darkness (during the daylight hours) of the scene of battle is likewise common to both. Pushkin treats the French army, Derzhavin the Russian.

Pushkin:

Pred nimi mrachna step' lezhit vo sne glubokom,
Dymitsia kroviiu zemlia. ("Vospominaniia")

Derzhavin:

Idut v molchanii glubokom
Vo mrachnoi strashnoi tishine... ("Na Vziatie Izmaila")

The inexorability of the (French) military onslaught which cannot be stopped again refers to important passages in Derzhavin.

Pushkin:

Idut—ikh sile net prepony.
Vse rushat, vse vvergaiut v prakh. ("Vospominaniia")

Rossii dvinulis' syny...
Techet za stroem stroi,
Vse mest'iu, slavoi dyshat. ("Vospominaniia")

Derzhavin:

K tverdyniam rossy tak tekut,
Nichto im put' ne vospiashchaet.
... Idut—kak v tuchakh skryty gromy,
Kak dvignuty bezmolvny kholmy. ("Na Vziatie Izmaila")

Though the explicit theme of the Napoleonic rout was treated in "Na Prognanie frantsuzov iz otechestva," these images and collocations have as their most prominent source Derzhavin's great earlier odes, such as "Na Vziatie Izmaila." For a more complex list of intertextual echoes displayed in parallel with the Pushkin text, which are far too many to include in the body of this article, see the Appendix below.

One of the most prominent grammatical features Pushkin takes directly from Derzhavin is syntactic: in Derzhavin's military odes there is an excessive frequency of the determinate (uni-directional) forms of motion verbs, especially "idti" with "na" (against)+ direct object to express the inexorability of the attack and its carrying through to smite the enemy. In Derzhavin's "Na Vziatie Izmaila", "Na perekhod alpiiskikh gor," and others, "idut," etc., is often the first word in stanzas, repeated within the stanza and used in interstanzaic enjambement to link consecutive stanzas. This exact usage is found in the opening of Pushkin's "Vospominaniia," stanzas 1 and 1a (see Appendix for full poem):

Tikhaia luna, kak lebed' velichavyi,
Plyvet v srebristyykh oblakakh. (Stanza 1)

Plyvet... (Stanza 1a)

The “idut” passages in Derzhavin’s “Na Vziatie Izmaila” begin in stanza 5 which contains three repetitions of the verb. Other favorites are “letit”, used here twice by Pushkin: “letit na groznyi boi,” “letit na derznovennykh.” More notable are the verb forms “begut” and “bezhit,” which Pushkin uses for the flight of the enemy. In “Liro-èpicheskii gimn na prognanie frantsuzov iz otechestva” there is a very striking “Bezhit” section comprising almost fifteen stanzas, each beginning with the word “Bezhit” which is sometimes repeated within the stanza itself. Pushkin does obeisance to this strictly Derzhavinian feature in “Vospominaniia” in stanzas 10 (“idut” repeated twice)—a reference to the many “idut” passages in Derzhavin. Pushkin’s homage to the “Bezhit” section, perhaps the most memorable part of “Na prognanie frantsuzov iz otechestva,” begins in 13: “I vspiat’ bezhit nadmennyi gall” and is reprised clearly in Pushkin’s stanza 17:

Vzgliani, oni begut, ozret’sia ne derzaiut,
I krov’ ne prestaet v snegakh rekami tech’.
Begut—i v t’me nochnoi ikh glad i smert’ sretaiut.
A s tyla gonit russkii mech. (“Vospominaniia”)

The closeness of this echo to “Na prognanie frantsuzov iz otechestva” is striking:

I s sramom vspiat’ pobeg.
Bezhit—i plamennym mechem
Ego v tyl angel pogoniaet.

It should be noted that neither Petrov nor Lomonosov actualizes in grammar the movement in the present of the Russians into battle, or down the path of history with this specific overuse of uni-directional motion verbs, even when their subject is an ongoing assault. No such usage, for instance, is found in “Na Vziatie Khotina” where there are few motion verbs, and those used do not all refer to the Russians or to military movements.

Pushkin, of course, reprises Derzhavin’s bloody battlefield sunrise:

Zardelas’ groznaia zaria.

Derzhavin: (“Na Vziatie Izmaila”)

Idet ognistaia zaria.

Krovavy vsled moria struilis’,
I zarevy po nebu rdilis’.

Pushkin’s stanza 10:

I nebo zarevom odelosia vokrug.

Thus Pushkin’s stanza 10, beginning “Idut” and echoing the word in line 7, “Idut v dali tumannoi,” condenses Derzhavin’s famed “idut” passages, and stanza 17 with its two occurrences of “begut” calls to mind the long “bezhit” section of “Na progkanie frantsuzov iz otechestva.”

With the ambiguous words “Ne zdes’,” the elegiac section of “Vospominaniia” begins a second time. The words are a direct echo of line 2.7 (“ne zdes’ li...”) in the first elegiac portion. The negated shifter has multiple possible references: “not at Borodino,” where Kutuzov’s victory was not final, “not at Moscow,” at neither of which Pushkin was present. And certainly “not at Tsarskoe Selo” where Pushkin was, largely against his will. Inside the “Alas!” section (stanza 14), the most compelling explanatory cause of Pushkin’s not being a Derzhavinian odic bard is contained: he is a non-warrior and non-participant, removed from the center stage of history. But there is another, perhaps more compelling, reason—something that is a nuisance to very young poets: too much mediation of life and history in the poetic texts of their forebears!

Still, as we have seen, Pushkin chose not to shrink from that mediation, but to confront it directly. He bravely expresses his ambivalence towards Derzhavin’s greatness in a very flattering way. Pushkin certainly knew of the great symbolic importance Tsarskoe Selo had for Derzhavin. In “Moi istukan” (“My Bust”; 1794) Derzhavin had expressed a wish that a bust (monument) of himself be placed in the Cameron Gallery,¹⁷ a tribute to be given him exclusively for his service as poet. The town was totally associated for Derzhavin with his immortality as a poet. By quoting Derzhavin’s poetic works of the past so heavily, Pushkin dares to make Derzhavin that Tsarskoe Selo “monument” while Derzhavin is still alive! The irony of this, as Pushkin knows very well, was sadly compounded by the fact that Derzhavin had done this very thing to himself in the closing lines of “Na progkanie frantsuzov iz otechestva.” Pushkin did not elect to say to Derzhavin: “It isn’t so!”

With all that some passages of “Vospominaniia v Tsarskom Sele” do sound Batiushkavian (the evocation of burned Moscow seems to echo the

¹⁷ Derzhavin, “Moi istukan,” I, 608–21.

treatment of the same subject in “K Dashkovu”), Pushkin is making much more in this poem out of *not being Derzhavin than out of not being anyone else*. He draws a line between himself and the elder poet in terms that Derzhavin undoubtedly felt and understood. Not only is Pushkin here not an ode-writer—the greatest one of all, Derzhavin, is no longer one either! Pushkin in this poem has paid a special, if conflicted, tribute to the former Derzhavin, as Derzhavin had paid a less conflicted one to Catherine the Great in “Razvaliny.” Pushkin walks through the remnants of the literary past while the current poetic scene is still the “ruins” of that past—the future has not clearly emerged. Acknowledging Derzhavin, Pushkin chooses to blend, to hybridize two of Derzhavin’s poetic modes—the elegiac and the heroic-odic—for his own purposes. This refusal to try to “be Derzhavin again” so impressed the older poet because it was a refusal which was literally saturated with references to Derzhavin’s greatest poetry. He felt his past effort vindicated and appreciated, and even, to paraphrase his own words, that here “in the work of a greater poet, his monument had crumbled.” Derzhavin had called for just this in “Moi istukan,” his final definitive linking of himself to Tsarskoe Selo as sacred space:

And should a greater poet appear,
My monument/bust will crumble in him/his!¹⁸

The bitterness of the realization that this was happening before his eyes in January, 1815 was tempered because the elder poet heard an evolutionary transformation of his own poetics in which “a large part of him” survived, to live on for a new age.

Of course, Derzhavin did call Pushkin “a second Derzhavin” several times before his death in 1816. I submit that in doing so he knew that Pushkin was a qualitatively different “Derzhavin,” recombining afresh the fragments of Derzhavinian poetics, managing both to relegate Derzhavin to the poetic past *and* to bring him forward for the future in a proto-Acmeist way. Memory of Derzhavin was the hallmark of Pushkin’s poem. For the older poet “Vospominaniia” could be heard in the Latin meaning of the word “reminiscentii”—“recollections of his (Derzhavin’s) greatest poetic achievements, evoked and transformed in the place of his poetic immortality, Tsarskoe Selo.

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¹⁸ “Moi istukan.”

Appendix

Пушкин

“Воспоминания в Царском Селе” (1814)

1. Навис покров угрюмой ночи
 На своде дремлющих небес;
 В безмолвной тишине почили дол и рощи,
 В седом тумане дальний лес;
 Чуть слышится ручей, бегущий въ сень дубравы,
 Чуть дышет ветерок, уснувший на листьях,
 И тихая луна, как лебедь величавый,
Плывет в серебристых облаках.

Державин

“Водопад” (1791–94)

Сошла октябрьска ночь на землю,
 На лоно мрачной тишины;
 Нигде я ничего не внемлю,
 Кроме ревуция волны,
 О камни с высоты дробимой
 И снежною горою зримой.

Пустыня, взор насупя свой,
 Утесы и скалы дремали;
 Волнистой облака грядой
 Тихонько мимо пробежали,
 Из коих трепетна, бледна
 Проглядывала вниз луна.

- 1а. Плывет—и бледными лучами
 Предметы осветила вокруг.
 Аллеи древних лип открылись пред очами,
 Проглянули и холм, и луг.
 Здесь, вижу, с тополем сплелась младая ива
 И отразилась в кристале зыбких вод;
 Царицей средь полей лилея горделива
 В роскошной красоте цветет.

Linkage of stanzas by verb repetition (especially motion verbs):

Ядро казалось раскаленно:
 Се вид, как вшел в Измаил Росс!

Вошел! Не бойся, рек,—и всюды
 Простер свой троугранный штык

See also descriptions in “Развалины” [В Царском Селе] (1797)

2. С холмов кремнистых водопады
 Стекают бисерной рекой;
 Там в тихом озере плескаются наяды
 Его ленивою волной;
 А там в безмолвии огромные чертоги,
 На своды опершись, несутся к облакам.
 Не здесь ли мирны дни вели земные боги?
 Не се ль Минервы росской храм?

Кремнистый холм дал страшну щель
 Алмазна сыплется гора... (Водопад)

- “Развалины” (1797) Вот здесь, на острове, Киприды
 Великолепный храм стоял:
 Столпы, подзоры, пирамиды
 И купол золотом сиял.
 Вот здесь, дубами осененна,
 Резная дверь в него была,
 Зеленым свесом покровенна,
 Во внутрь святилища вела.
 Вот здесь хранилися кумиры,
 Дымились жертвой алтари,
 Сбирались на молитву миры
 И били ей челом цари.

3. Не се ль Элизиум полнощный,
 Прекрасный Царскосельский сад,
 Где, льва сразив, почил орел России мощный
 На лоне мира и отрад?
 Увы, промчасися те времена златяя,
 Когда под скипетром Великия Жены
 Венчалась славою счастливая Россия,
 Цветя под кровом тишины!

4. Здесь каждый шаг в душе рождает
 Воспоминания прежних лет;
 Возрев вокруг себя, со вздохом росс вещает:
 “Исчезло все, Великой нет!”
 И в думу углублен, над злачными берегами
 Сидит в безмолвии, склоняя ветрам слух. (Rumyantsev in “Водопад.”)
 Протекшия лета мелькают пред очами,
 И в тихом восхищеньи дух.

Final stanza
“Развалины” (1797)

Но здесь ее уж ныне нет,
Померк красот волшебных свет,
Все тьмой покрылось, запустело;
Все в прах упало, помертвело;
От ужаса вся стынет кровь,—
Лишь плачет сирая любовь.

5. Он видит: окружен волнами,
Над твердой, мшистой скалой
Вознесся памятник. Ширясь крылами,
Над ним сидит орел молодой.
И цепи тяжкия, и стрелы громовыя
Вкруг грозного столпа трикраты обвились;
Кругом подножия шума валы седые
В блестящей пене улеглись.

“Водопад” (1791–94)

Он зрит одету в ризы черны
Крылату некую жену,
Власы имевшу распущенны,
Как смертну весть, или войну,
С косою в руках, с трубой стоящу
И слышит он: “проснись!” гласящу.

На шлеме у нее орел
Сидел с перуном помраченным,
В нем герб отечества он зрел;

“Развалины” (1797)

А здесь, исполняя важна вида
На памятник своих побед
Она смотрела: на Алкида,
Как гидру палицей он бьет;
Как прочие ее герои,
По манию ее очес,
В ужасные вступали бои
И тьмы поделали чудес:
Приступом грады тверды брали,
Сжигали флоты средь морей,
Престолы, царствы покоряли
И в плен водили к ней царей.

6. В тени густой угрюмых сосен
Воздвигся памятник простой.
О, сколь он для тебя, Кагульский брег, поносен
И славен родине драгой!
Безсмертны вы во век, о росски исполины,
В боях воспитанны средь бранных непогод!
О вас, сподвижники, друзья Екатерины,
Пройдет молва из рода в род.

“На Взятие Измаила” (1790)
О Росс! о род великодушный!
О твердокаменная грудь!
О исполин, царю послушный!
Когда и где ты досягнуть
Не мог тебя достойной славы?
Твои труды—тебе забавы;

Твои венцы—вкург блеск громов:
 В полях ли брань—ты тмишь свод звездный;
 В морях ли бой—ты пенишь бездны,—
 Везде ты страх твоих врагов!

7. О громкий век военных споров,
 Свидетель славы россиян,
 Ты видел, как Орлов, Румянцов и Суворов,
 Потомки грозные славян,
 Перуном Зевсовым победу похищали!
 Их смелым подвигам страхась дивился мир;
 Державин и Петров героям песнь бряцали
 Струнами громозвучных лир.

8. И ты промчался, незабвенный,
 И вскоре новый век узрел
 И брани новья, и ужасы военны:
Страдать есть смертного удел.
 Блеснул кровавый меч в неукротимой длани
 Коварством, дерзостью венчанного царя;
 Возстал вселенной бич—и вскоре лютой брани
 Зарделась грозная заря.

Sententiae of the type: “Но всякий человек есть ложь”:

“На Взятие Измаила” (1790)
 Как бурных дней пред облаками
Идет огнистая заря.

Идут. — Искусство зрит заслугу,...

9. И быстрым понеслись потоком
 Враги на русския поля.
 Пред ними мрачна степь лежит во сне глубоком
 Дымится кровию земля,
 И села мирныя, и грады в мгле пылают,
 И небо заревом оделося вокруг;
 Леса дремучие бегущих укрывают,
 И праздный в поле ржавит плуг.

“На Взятие Измаила” (1790)

К твердыням Россы так текут.
 Ничто им путь не воспящает;
 Смертей ли бледных полк встречает
 Иль ад скрежещет зевом к ним,—
Идут, как в тучах скрыты громы,
 Как двинуты безмолвны холмы;
 Под ними стон,—за ними дым.

Идут в молчании глубоком,
Во мрачной, страшной тишине,
 Собой пренебрегают, роком;
 Зарница только в вышине
 По их оружию играет;
 И только их душа сияет,
 Когда на бой, на смерть идет.
 Уж блещут молнии крылами,
 Уж осыпаются громами;
 Они молчат—идут вперед.

“На прогнание французов
 из отечества” (1813)
Облекшись, русский род
Как исполин встает;
Идет на брань единодушно,
 Монарху своему послушно,
 За трон его, за веру умереть.
 Нигде сей ревности подобной нет!

Martial upbringing:

У тех пылает огонь в сердцах.
 В зиме рожденны под снегами
 Под молниями, под громами,
 Которых с самых юных дней
 Питала слава, верность, вера, —

10. Идут. Их силе нет препоны:
 Все рушат, все свергают в прах,
 И тени бледныя погибших чад Беллоны,
 В воздушных съединясь полках,
 В могилу мрачную нисходят непрерывно
 Иль бродят по лесам в безмолвии ночи...
 Но клики раздались. Идут в дали туманной!...
 Звучат кольчуги и мечи!
11. Страшись, о рать иноплеменных:
 России двинулись сыны!
 Возстал и стар, и младь летят на дерзновенных,
 Сердца их мщеньем возжены.
 Вострепещи, тиран! Ужь близок час паденья!
 Ты в каждом ратнике узришь богатыря;
 Их цель—иль победить, ил пасть в пылу сраженья
 За веру, за царя.

12. Ретивы кони бранью пышут,
 Усеян ратниками дол;
 За строем строй течет, все мезтью, славой дышут,
 Восторг во грудь их перешел.
 Летят на грозный пир; мечам добычи ищут,
 И се—пылает брань; на холмах гром гремит,
 В сгущенном воздухе с мечами стрелы свищут,
 И брызжет кровь на щит.

“Водопад” (1794) Гора с богатствами упала
 Грохочет эхо по горам,
 Как гром гремящий по громам.

13. Сразились: русский—победитель,
 И вспять бежит надменный галл;
 Но сильного в боях небесный Вседержитель
Лучем последним увенчал:
 Не здесь его сразил воитель поседельный.
 О бородинския кровавые поля,
 Не вы нистовству и гордости пределы:
 Увы, на башнях галл Кремля!

Concerning Napoleon:

“На прогнание французов” (1813) И Бог сорвал с него свой луч:

14. Края Москвы, края родные,
 Где на заре цветущих лет
 Часы безопасности я тратил золотые,
 Не зная горестей и бед,
 И бы их видели, врагов моей отчизны,
 И вас багрила кровь и пламень пожирал,
 И в жертву не принес я мщенья вам и жизни.
 Вотще лишь гневом дух пылал!
15. Где ты, краса Москвы стоглавой,
 Родимой прелесть стороны?
 Где прежде взору град являлся величавой,
Развалины теперь одни.
 Москва, сколь русскому твой зрак унылый страшен!
 Исчезли здания вельможей и царей,
 Все пламень истребил; венцы затьмились башен,
 Чертоги пали богачей.

16. И там, где роскошь обитала
 В сенистых рощах и садах,
 Где мирт благоухал и липа трепетала,
 Там ныне угли, пепел, прах.
 В часы безмолвные прекрасной летней ночи
 Веселье шумное туда не полетит;
 Не блещут уж в огнях брега и светлы рощи:
 Все мертво, все молчит.

“На прогнание французов” (1812)

Бежит,—себя сам упреждав;
 За скорыми его шагами
 Лишь поспекает Смерть прыжками,
Тел груды по странам бросав;
 Там медные лежат драконы,
 На кони наваленны кони
 И колесницы друг на друг
 Великаго здесь вождя дух,
 Искусство, смельство видно бранно,
 Что он бежит лишь безпрестанно!
Бежит,—хотя и жажды полн
 К сокровищам нецененным,
 В чертогах, в храмах похищенным;

Вдохнул впервые на неуспех
 И с срамом вспять побег.
Бежит,—и пламенным мечем
 Его в тыл Ангел погоняет,
 Отсюду ужасом смущает,
 След сеет огненным дождем.

17. Утешься, мать градов России,
 Возри на гибель пришлеца!
 Отяготела днесь на их надменны выи
 Десница мстящая Творца.
 Бзгляни: они бегут, озреться не дерзают.
 Их кровь не престаёт в снегах реками течь,
Бегут—и в тьме ночной их глад и смерть сретают,
 А с тыла гонит россов меч.
18. Где ты, любимый сын и счастья, и Беллоны,
 Презревший правды глас и веру, и закон?
 В гордыне возмечтав мечем низвергнуть троны,
 Изчез, как утром страшный сон.
 О вы, которых трепетали
 Европы сильны племена,
 О галлы хищные, и вы в могилы пали!...
 О страх, о грозны времена!

2nd variant responds to “Певец во стане русских воинов” (1812):

20a. О скальд России вдохновенной,
 Воспевший ратных грозный строй,
 В кругу друзей твоих, с душой воспламененной,
 Взгреми на арфе золотой!
 Да снова стройный глас герою в честь прольется,
 И струны трепетны посыплют огонь в сердца,
 И ратник молодой вскипит и содрогнется
 При звуках бранного певца!

Final stanzas of “На
 прогнание французов”
 (1812)

И мой уж гаснет жар,
 Холодна старость—дух, у лиры глас отъемлет
 Екатерины муза дремлет.
 То юного царя,
 Днесь вслед орлов паря,
 Предшествующих благ виденья,
 Что мною в день его рожденья
 Предречено, достойно петь
 Я не могу. Младым певцам греметь
 Мой вверяю ветхи струны,
 Да черплют с них в свои сердца перуны,
 Толь чистых, ревностных огней,
 Как пел я трех царей.