Revolt and Suffering in the Lermontov's World and its Reflection by Dostoevsky

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The young Lermontov inherits the literary character of the revolting hero from Byron and Pushkin: we can meet this type nearly in all of Lermontov's epic poems and of course in his novel, The Hero of our Time. It is interesting why Lermontov goes back to the structure of Byronic epic poems built exclusively around the central hero – i.e. to the very masculin world of Byron. Pushkin composed his narrative poems in a dialogic connection of two – feminin and masculin – poles, and developed the whole genre towards a more objective, novel-like forme. In Lermontov's works (Izmail-Bej, The Demon, Mciri etc.) the dominant role is played by the central hero, just like in The Corsaire, Lara, The Giaour, Manfred, Cain of Byron, where women characters are only the appendices, beauty objects of the subjective, suggestive and seductive central figures. Even under the historical costumes of merchant Kalashnikov or boyar Orsha beats a very individualistic heart. But Lermontov rightly defines himself: "Net, ia nie Byron, ia drugoi..." (No, I'm not Byron, I'm another person...) In his works a specific point appears, different from the Byronic and Pushkinian patterns: the consciousness of superiority and simultaneously the self-pity (see The Demon). The revolt against the ordinary, dull world and the suffering caused by solitude make a vicious circle, which surrounds nearly every hero of Lermontov. Vladimir Solov'ev regards these characters as precursors of Nietzsche's Übermensch, but we can recognize some features of Dostoevsky's heroes in them, as well. For example, likeness in the inner and outward appearance both of Pechorin and Raskolnikov (the gentle face with dark eyes reflecting a deep sorrow; the grave, provocative and proud behaviour).
What is followed in this paper are the hidden reception of Lermontov by Dostoevsky and the
treatment of the Übermensch-Sverkhchelovek by Vladimir Solov'ev and Innokentii Annensky
in the end of 19th century.

The analysis and comparison of Lermontov's and Dostoevsky's ouevre became
interesting especially in the turn of the 20th century. Vladimir Solov'ev makes a sharp
distinction between aesthetical and moral message of Lermontov: he identifies the demoniac
heroes with the author or at least he finds in these figures the signs of the tragic aberration of
the genius (Solov'ev 1990: 274-292). On the basis of biographical data he investigates the
appearances of the pride, cruelty, isolation and the consciousness of superiority in
Lermontov's works and life. Although the "sverkhchelovek" (Übermensch; we must note that
this word comes originally not from Nietzsche but from Goethe's Faust: the mighty Spirit of
Earth speaks ironically to Faust "Da bin ich! - Welch erbärmlich Grauen / Faßt Übermenchen
dich!" ; Goethe 1972 : 147) is a positive concept in the philosophy of Solov'ev as we can see
it in his essay "Ideia sverkhcheloveka" (1899). In spite of this fact he defines Lermontov's
version of the "sverkhchelovek" as the main difficulty toward the realisation of the ideal, of
the true representation of a more perfect human being. He approaches from a passionate new
Christian point of view and from Dostoevsky to Lermontov that's why he judges his
individualism somewhat rigorously and unjustly. The second generation of Russian
symbolists, I. Annenskij and A. Blok become a little alienated from their former master, who
saw the demonism of Lermontov only as the appearance of Evil. Annenskij and Blok are
influenced already by the art nouveau or modernist athmosphere of the new century and they
liberate beauty (or the aesthetical aspects of life) from the domination of moral. They can
recognize in Lermontov's "bogoborchestvo" (fighting with God) the creative impulses: the
romantic revolt is a complicated act, it is directed not only against God but for God as we can
read in some poems of Lermontov (Kogda volnuetsia zhelteiuschaia niva..., 1837, Molitva,
1839).

For Innokentii Annenskij challenge is the more characteristic gesture of Lermontov:
he approaches to the whole world as a fighter. Annenskij emphasises the importance of
beauty in the art of Lermontov: the poet challenges to duel beauty, he matches his strength with it and gives this attribute to his revolting heroes as well:

"Symvoli Lermontova voobsche kazhutsia trevozhnymi, i pochti vsegda v nikhi taitsia ugroza i vyzov sil'nomu ili khot' by tol'ko otrovzhnomu vragu. Parus zovet buriu, Kazbek grozit cheloveku, mciri boretsia s barsom... Iz monastyrskoi keliy krasota Tamary brosaet vyzov Demonu" (Annenskij 1988 : 531-533)

Around the main figures of the early epic poems (Dzhulio, Izmail-Bej, Vadim) and the two great symbolic figures of Demon and Mciri waves the same terrible beauty ("uzhasnaia krasota" in Izmail-Bej: "On obladal pylaiuschei dushoiu, / I buri iuga otrazilis' v niei / So vsei svoiei uzhasnoi krasotoiu!" (Lermontov,1989, II. 232)), the revolting, suffering, sinful or innocent beauty. For us it is especially remarkable that Annenskij points to the complicated character of Lermontov's struggle for values: in his denial is hidden a great desire to a more authentic world but he can not believe in its earthly realisation and can not be satisfied with heavenly promise. His soul is like his Demon's: "On byl pokhozh na vecher iasnyi: /Ni den', ni noch, – ni mrok, ni svet!" (Lermontov 1989 II. 448)

The relationship of Blok to Lermontov has different nuances and shows a certain dynamism from the earthly reception to the last period. Russian historians of literature often cite his words on Lermontov-Gogol-Dostoevskij inherency, the most specific element of it being demonism. Blok names these three writers the greatest "demons" or "kolduns" (magics) of Russian literature:

"Peredo mnoi vyrastaiut dva demona, veduschie pod ruki tretiego – slepogo i moguchego, prebyvaiuschego pod strakhom vechnoi pytii. Eto – Lermontov, Gogol i Dostoevskij (...) Potomu zhe nam okonchatel'no poniaten Dostoevskij tol'ko cherez Lermontova i Gogolia." (Blok 1962: 76)

Blok's aesthetical point of view is the inverse of Solov'ev's ethical judgement: in Blok's vision the two precursors have a more wiser position with their impartiality than Dostoevskij. One is hovering above the world (symbolized by Caucasus), the other is contemplating in the immense Ukrainian steppes while calling their visions, burning but not being burnt up: "...oni kasaiutsia krylami k vechnoi garmonii i letiat proch, goria, no nie
The third demon, Dostoevskij is a blind one, who is dreaming about earthly realisation of the ideal, about world harmony (mirovaia garmonia) and is suffering because its impossibility: "Dostoevskomu snitsia i vechnaia garmonia; prosnuvshis', on nie obretaet ee, gorit i sgoraet. (...) On khochet preobrazit' niesbytochnoe, prevratit' iego v bytie i za eto venchaetsia stradaniem" (Blok 1962: 79).

The metaphor "venchaetsia stradaniem" has some biblical associations: it reminds us Jesus' crown of thorns. Altough Blok considers the outstanding position more wiser than the passionate struggling for the ideal in the sense of Solov'ev's philosophy following the Gospel of Matthew "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect". Blok's conception contradicts to Solov'ev's meaning but we shall notice the inner contradiction and tension in his own metaphors: the "blind demon" Dostoevsky suddenly appears with the attribute of Christ. He doubles the figure of Lermontov, too: it splits into two opposite phenomena, the first is a mysterious demon who resides in altitude, the second "ordinary", "little demon" the earthly alter ego of the true one is struggling, seducing, revolting and suffering, wounding and getting wounded. We should add: and he "venchaetsia stradaniem", too, like Dostoevsky.

It is remarkable that Blok's conception about Lermontov–Dostoevskij relationship is very close to Dostoevskij's opinion of Lermontov and Gogol. One can observe the recurrence of demon-metaphor both in Dostoevskij's and Blok's essays. Dostoevskij in his study written 1861 in "Vremia" criticizes the pseudo Byronism of late romantic poets, he treats with great sarcasm on the decay of former revolting heroes, but he excepts from this group Lermontov. Moreover, he associates Gogol with Lermontov as the other "demon" of Russian literature so the charge against successors of Byron does not concern him.

"Byli u nas i demony, nastoiaschie demony; ikh bylo dva, i kak my liubili ikh, kak do sikh por liubim i cenim! Odin iz nich vsio smeialsia; on smeialsia vsiu zhizni' i nad soboi, i nad nami, i my vse smeialis' za nim, do togo smeialis', chto nakonec stali plakat' ot nashego smekha (...) Drugoi demon – no drugogo my, mozhet byt', esche bol'she liubili. (...) Nakonec iemu naskuchilo s nam't; on nigde i ni s kem nie mog uzhitsia; on proklinal nas, i osmeial »nasmeshkoi gor'kogo obmanutogo syna nad promotavshimsia otcom« i uletel ot nas." (Dostoevskij 1983: 102-103)
Now let us cast a glance at the problem of Lermontovian allusions in Dostoevsky's novels. A.I. Zhuravleva and V.I. Levin have dealt already with this theme but I should like to complete their ideas with a few observations and develop the whole question to the problem of contradictions between aesthetics and religion in the culture built on the orthodox basis. (This problem we usually discuss in connection with Kierkegaard.)

Zhuravleva analyses the specific character of intellectual prose fiction by Lermontov and Dostoevskij. She considers the "Crime and Punishment" as the most Lermontovian novel because it focuses on the problem of individuality and experimentation. These are the basic questions in the "Hero of our time" as well, though the version of Lermontov is more subjective than Dostoevskij's one. Like the heroes of epic poems in general, Pechorin's character does not change in the course of the novel, while Raskolnikov must change in the novel step by step until his conversion (metanoia) in the Epilogue. Zhuravleva treats only the common principles and parallels between the two authors, she does not enter into details, into the world of symbols and interferencies of texts. I consider that these allusions and transparencies have also a philosophical message but they are wrapped in poetic forms. One of such a typical Lermontovian moments in Crime and Punishment is the disharmony of Raskolnikov's inner and outer face: the outer beauty covers an inner gloominess. In Lermontov's early epic poems we can meet the leitmotives "pasmurnaia dusha" (gloomy soul), "sumerki dushi" (sunset of the soul), "pasmurnoe chelo" (gloomy forehead). In Razumikhin's words told about Raskolnikov to his mother and Dunia is not difficult to recognize the attributes of several Lermontovian figures, for example Dzhulio, Izmail-Bej, Demon and Pechorin. In the latter the most important motive is the different suggestion of his eyes and face: "...oni nie smeialis', kogda on smeialsia. – Eto prizrak ili zlogo nrava, ili glubokoi, postoiannoi grusti" (Lermontov 1979 : 489). Razumikhin describes Raskolnikov as "ugrium, mrachen, nadmenen i gord"; afterwards in the discussion with Porfirij Raskolnikov himself characterizes the superior man (izbrannyi chelovek) as follows: "Stradanie i bol' vsegda obiaza telny dlia shirokogo soznania i glubokogo serdca. Istinno velikie liudi, mne kazhetsia, dolzhny oschuschat' na svete velikuiu grust'." (Dostoevskij 1969 : 287). This "great sorrow" (velikaia grust') surrounds Lermontov's heroes, too.
The other important symbol is "terrible beauty" (uzhasnaia krasota) surrounding the figures of Izmail-Bej and Demon. It appears in Dostoevskij's world not only as occasional allusion but is deeply built in the philosophy of novels. In "The Idiot" there is Nastasia Philippovna who is connected to this terrible beauty from the beginning to the end of the novel. In the first chapters Mishkin and the Jepanchin sisters talk about the nature of beauty and Mishkin formulates an uncertain opinion: "Krasotu trudno sudit'; ia esche nie prigotovilsia. Krasota – zagadka." Adelaida's words strengthen his resolution: Takaia krasota – sila, (...) s etakoiu krasotoi mozhno mir perevernut' (Dostoevskij 1981 : 75 79). In the end of the novel after the scandalous appointment of Nastasia, Aglaia, Mishkin provoked by Aglaia to prove her power on Mishkin's heart, Evgenii Pavlovich tries to explain the broken prince the motives of his ambivalent feelings toward Nastasia Philippovna: "Vy okoldovany ee krasotoi, fantasticheskoiu, demonicheskoiu krasotoi" – and Mishkin's answer: "ia boius' ee lica!" (Dostoevskij 1981 : 556, 559)

In the next novel "The Possessed" gets the problem of beauty a more radical judgement in the figure of Stavrogin. His beauty is not simply ambivalent but perfectly demonic: his face resembles a mask which shows at the same time the presence of Evil under this surface. It is worth to recall how the treatment of beauty by Dostoevskij waves between reception and refusal: in the figure of Mishkin he tries to create the "polozhit' o prekrasnogo cheloveka", he dreams about that heavenly/sacred beauty but among the earthly circumstances it is condemned to be defeated. V.I. Levin in his study (Izvestia AN SzSzSzSzR...1972) deals with this altering conception of romantic heritage and the problem of revolting individual of Dostoevskij. In the "Notes from the Underground" Levin finds many correspondences with the heroes of Lermontov (mainly with Pechorin). It is interesting that Dostoevskij transforms the originally beautiful revolting figures into a definitely not nice chinovnik. The same tendency can be observed in the novel "The Insulted and Injured" (Unizhennie i oskorblennie) with a little difference: prince Valkovskij is characterised as a flat, unimportant and cynical person who imitates the romantic demons but becomes a "melkij bes". A few years later the prince turns to be a chinovnik, the man of underground (podpolnyi chelovek). But Dostoevskij can not get rid once for all of the magnetic attraction of beauty
and greatness – attributes of the sverkhchelovek! –; this problem turns up in his novels again and again. In "The Raw Youth" revives the question whether the aesthetical and ethical aspects of life can be reconciled? The young hero, Arkadij inherits two basic values (two types of beauty) from his fathers Versilov and Makar and according to the conception of the writer he is destined to alloy these opposite entities. But in the background of the new perspectives of Arkadij the natural father, Versilov breaks the ikon into two parts - which resembles again the gesture of romantic revolters. His longing for the Golden Age gives evidence of the authors anxiety, too: how could the above mentioned opposite values – the spheres of beauty (which is difficult to judge as Mishkin says) and religion – be united? In the hierarchical system of orthodox thinking only heavenly beauty symbolised by Bogoroditsa is recognised (is legal); earthly beauty appears as a dangerous force of nature (stikhia): it must be either baptised, domesticated or remains in the capture of demonic powers.

The question of the relationship between beauty and Dostoevsky requires further investigations.

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