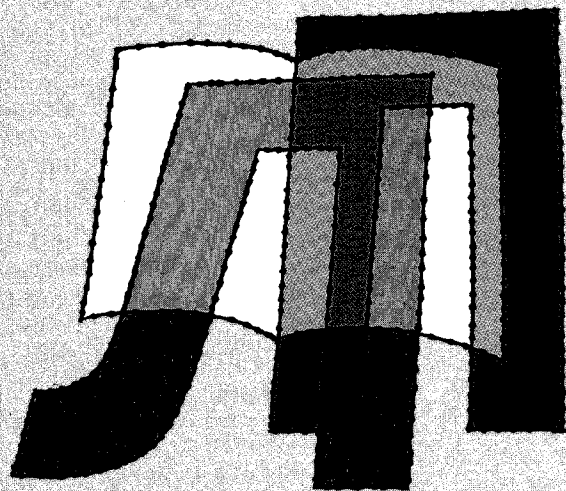


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# TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF PUSHKIN

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# Pushkin and the Poetry of Grammar

by

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Originally, this chapter, which now borrows a title from Roman Jakobson,<sup>1</sup> was called 'The Music of Morphology'. That title was abandoned when I realized that to notice grammatical structure in Pushkin's poems was to make them stop flying past like music in time and begin standing still, as if in a kind of space. For some time, I mentally subtitled the chapter 'How Foreigners Read Russian Poetry' and saw it as part of a future book called 'In Praise of Russian'. I still believe that something should be written under both these titles. Meanwhile - this short reflection on the semantic suggestiveness of case in Russian poetry, with examples from Pushkin, consummate manager of case and its effects.

A great deal can be said about, for example, the opening lines of *The Prophet* - 'Духовной жаждою томим, / В пустыне мрачной я влачился' ('Tormented by spiritual thirst, / I dragged myself through a gloomy desert') - about allegory, diction, sound, metre and rhythm, balances and doublings, chiasmus, the unhesitant start *in medias res*, the implicit expectation of interruption ... But there is also something more elementary, or more elemental: the presence of cases. Мрачной (gloomy) and духовной (spiritual), despite same-looking, same-sounding endings, embody casual sensations as different from each other as are the visible and audible differences in their two nouns. But in respect of what do they differ? In strength, status, concreteness, mobility, some kind of inner tension in the reading mind? It is easy enough to note the pleasing way the two pairs of oblique-case words, as well as variously contrasting with each other, together contrast with the Nominative (N), the so-called *casus rectus*, that comes in line three ('И шестикрылый серафим ...' [And a six-winged seraph ...]). Narrationally, this is the expected irruption of something more important than wandering in a desert; grammatically, it is an indubitable and foregrounded N taking over from the obscured N of томим (exhausted) and the unstressed N я (I [first-person pronoun]). But still - what *is* it about the N? Do we actually sense it as 'rectus', as vertical, upright, somehow right? And the 'oblique' cases as just that: slanting, diverging from an imagined plumb line? And how does Pushkin use the elusive associations of cases, whether it be these (upright ... slanting ...) or some other kind, even harder to sum up?

Sometimes he enrols them in an exercise of mere melody, as in *The Nightingale and the Rose* (*Соловей и роза*): 'В безмолвии садов, весной, во мгле ночей -' ('In the soundlessness of gardens, in Spring, in the darkness of nights - '). Here, the pattern of sound made up of four 'v' sounds and an interweaving of 'o' (three times stressed, then twice unstressed) with 'e' or 'i'

(four times unstressed, then twice stressed), is enhanced, not only by the arrangement of repeated consonants, but also by the supporting structure of cases: two Locative (L), then Genitive (G) phrases placed around a central contrasting Instrumental (I) which contains precisely those three main melodious sounds: *v, e, o* (as well as echoing the 's' of *садов* [gardens] and anticipating the 'n' of *ночей* [nights]).

Sometimes he draws our more cerebral attention to the function of cases, in a bold way that might be called 'laying it bare'. The half-line 'Ко звуку звук нейдет' ('Sound will not go to sound'), from *Winter (Зима)*, contradicts itself in a paradox that firmly points up the powers of Russian inflexion. 'Sound will not go to sound': in English 'will not go to' is a single unit, with nouns on either side like equal columns flanking a low castellated gate. But the Russian creates a more dynamic relationship between N and Dative (D), the latter implicitly directional and receptive to movement, the former self-contained, able to move but not moving. Discussing this half-line, A.D.P. Briggs has interestingly noted that it is sound, not idea, image or theme, that Pushkin worries about when he finds he cannot write; and he calls Pushkin 'a musical poet *par excellence*'.<sup>2</sup> But it seems to me that Pushkin here neatly enacts the potential dullness of mere sound (u-u-u) and composes a conspicuous grammatical shape whose interest is wider than that. The concept 'musical' needs to expand beyond the phonic.

In these lines from *The Upas Tree*, the casual changes are rung: 'Но человека человек / Послал к анчару властным взглядом' ('But man sent man / To the upas with imperious look') - as there are four nouns in four cases: Accusative (A), N, D, I - as occurs again in the two following lines. Each case, moreover, is used in its primal meaning: the named (and naming) actor; the object acted upon; the D of giving; the I of instrument. Yet the dominant effect is from the juxtaposing of the A and the N of one and the same noun in such a way that the very grammar induces a moral thought. Elsewhere, of course, Pushkin uses a similar device more light-heartedly. In the line 'Глухой глухого звал к суду судьи глухого' ('A deaf man summoned a deaf man to the court of a deaf judge') an intellectual pleasure arises when the first *глухого* (deaf man), an A, is echoed in the second, a G; as happens in these lines from *The Little House in Kolomna* - 'Но что же делает супруга / Одна в отсуствии супруга?' ('But what does the wife [lit. female spouse] do / Alone in the absence of the husband [lit. male spouse]?') when the first *супруга* (spouse), a feminine N, turns out to be identical with the second, a masculine G. Lacking cases, English cannot do this, and the occasional attempt to do it, as in these lines by Thomas Dekker - 'Dost thou laugh to see how fools are vexed / To add to golden numbers, golden numbers?'<sup>3</sup> - instead of producing a subtle case contrast (here it would be D/A) produces only a jingle.

A third kind of casual effect is the one with which I am most concerned in this chapter, and of which I will use the phrase 'semantic

aureoles', a phrase Mikhail Gasparov introduced to name the connotations not of cases but of the various metres.<sup>4</sup> This kind is more delicate than that of either sound or paradox, and may easily miss one's conscious attention. It is what Jakobson meant by 'shadowy' features that were yet able to be 'expressive' and 'significant', when he wrote that '[t]he network of grammatical categories determines the entire composition of our language, and the characteristic features of this network, which remain shadowy in our everyday language, become infinitely more expressive and more significant in poetry'.<sup>5</sup>

Jakobson compares the role of grammar in poetry to the role of geometry in painting: it is something you cannot get away from and must make use of, a 'beautiful necessity'.<sup>6</sup> His theory of the 'semantic invariants'<sup>7</sup> of Russian cases leads to illuminating analyses of poems by Pushkin, among them his unforgettable demonstration of how, in 'Нет я не дорожу мятежным наслаждением', ('No, I do not value restless enjoyment') Pushkin describes two different acts of love-making largely through the use of different grammatical cases.<sup>8</sup> In Pushkin, says Jakobson elsewhere, 'a masterful variation of grammatical figures becomes a device of thick dramatization. There can hardly be an example of more skillful poetic exploitation of morphological possibilities!'<sup>9</sup>

A glance at the history of the concept 'case'<sup>10</sup> may help explain the power and fervour of Jakobson's semantic invariants theory, which I shall give a brief account of before returning to Pushkin. When the Stoics, who were the first to separate grammar from philosophy, developed a system of speech (and it seems that the Greek for 'parts of speech' is *stoikheia* [*ta stoikheia tos lexeos*], pronounced 'stikhiia'), they adopted the word *ptosis*, 'a fall', for the noun-function I am discussing; this was translated into the Latin for 'fall', *casus*, as, much later, into Russian as *падеж*.

No one seems sure why these forms were called 'falls' or 'fallings'. To link them with Wordsworth's indefinable sensation of 'fallings from us, vanishings'<sup>11</sup> may well be going too far, although perhaps not a lot too far; for when I turned for heavy relief from my pondering of Pushkin to poems by R.S. Thomas, I found him saying, in one poem: 'Kierkegaard hinted, Heidegger / agreed: the nominative is God, a clearing / in thought's forest where truth / breathes ...'<sup>12</sup> and, in another: 'It is the nominative / that is important. This was the spirit / brooding on the face of the waters ...'<sup>13</sup>

The Danish linguist Louis Hjelmslev (admired by Jakobson) accepted, however, that 'fall' came from the game of dice: when the die falls, one number is on top, upright, the others oblique to it. So the N became the 'upright' case, from which the other cases 'decline'.<sup>14</sup> Alternatively, 'fall' may be as in the verb 'to befall' and mean the various chances and changes which may befall any noun, its available fates (this could again, though, fit with the game of dice). Some early grammarians characterized the N as energetic or independent or concrete, the other cases as passive or dependent

or abstract. Some called the G the case of distancing, the A that of approaching, the D - of resting between the two.

Other views of case meanings have been put forward. Some are related to the commonest function of each case or to its name: thus dative suggests giving, locative - placing; others are more fanciful, the product of individual conceptual habits. For, just as people give different answers to the question as to how they visualize time (the future, say, or the shape of a year), so they give different accounts of their sense of the spatial or figurative qualities of the grammatical cases. Some, for instance, sense in the I a typical curving or waving, a kind of lavish divergence from the centre, or tend to see the G as a rising or suspension, the L as a grounding; the N, along with terminally indistinguishable As, as poor but strong with the other cases rich but diffuse, or naked while the others are clothed, or standing still while the oblique cases gesture, even dance. Just how subjective these associations are it is hard to say. But after some centuries of quite vigorous scholarly debate about the matter, mostly using ideas of space and location, we have Jakobson's attempt at a firm and demonstrable theory.<sup>15</sup>

Jakobson identifies three main qualities. These are 'directionality' ('направленность'), 'marginality' ('периферийность') and 'quantification' or - more imaginably - 'scope' ('объемность'). Every case except the N, he writes, is marked by one, or by two, of these qualities. The A is directional; it denotes an object towards which an action is directed and indicates that the object is completely controlled by the action. The D is directional too, and also marginal; it suggests that the object towards which the action is directed exists independently of the action - at its margin - and is less controlled than in the A. ('Учу детей французскому языку' is not the same as 'Преподаю детям французский язык'). The G is scopal; it 'always indicates the limits of the referent's involvement in the content of the utterance'.<sup>16</sup> This means, adds the linguist van Schooneveld, that an entity in the G has somehow an extra-literary existence, an existence 'independent of the verbal process'.<sup>17</sup> (In my own gradual understanding of this, I take it to mean the G has some quality of being hard to hold down, to get hold of.) The I is marginal; it attributes a 'peripheral' role to the entity (or, adds van Schooneveld, a transitory one).<sup>18</sup> The L is both marginal and scopal. Meanwhile, the N is unmarked, it is 'primordial' and 'leading'; it names things, whereas all other cases are - 'in Aristotle's apt definition, not names, but "cases of the name"'.<sup>19</sup> In the hierarchy of cases the A is lower than the N. ('Солдата ранило в бок' is not the same as 'Солдат ранен в бок'.)<sup>20</sup>

Of course there are many uses for each oblique case. But what is meant is that at least a faint tinge of the primary meaning identified here adheres to every use of a given case, or can adhere to it - and that this is especially true in poetry, where it is like an echo of that case's original accompanying music, or like a recollection of the landscape in which we first made its acquaintance. Thus to every I will adhere some tinge of 'by means

of', and some sense of the entity's being marginal to the main utterance; to every G will adhere some quality of not being wholly held down in the utterance, belonging partly elsewhere; to every A some sense of a direct approach or attack or of a complete envelopment by an action.

A noun's or adjective's shadows, then, or - more brightly - aureoles, are those of direction, of movement or stasis, of immersion, of influence and control, separateness or involvement, centrality or marginality, inclusion or exclusion, kinds of connectedness, and of higher or lower positions, not in respect of value but in respect of - what? Of freedom, one could almost answer, hence also of captivity. Of leading or following. Above all, of markedness: the aureolic qualities, that is to say, are those of being either noticeably defined in some colourful, limiting, way, or of being undefined and open. Most of these features imply space and many imply structure. One glimpses a pale architecture. Possibly they are related to the kinds of awareness that underlie dreams and tenuously accompany the waking mind, as shadows do bodies. Certainly they are used - how deliberately? - for shadow effects by the poets who write in inflected languages.

How may such qualities be taken account of when one reads a poem? And are they indeed the same as those we experience when reading other inflected languages, such as Latin? It is interesting that van Schooneveld describes Jakobson arriving on the 1930s linguistic scene, where everyone was steeped in Latin and Greek, like this: '... suddenly, in the same decade, there appears this native speaker of Latin (because, as far as case is concerned, Latin and Greek are similar to Russian) who states that to him there is in his native language an invariant meaning for each case'.<sup>21</sup> This may seem an over-confident assimilation of one language to another; all the same there is a simple truth in it. Take, for instance, this characteristic passage from Catullus:

an patris auxilium sperem? quemne ipsa reliqui,	G Ac Ac N
respersum iuvenem fraterna caede secuta?	Ac Ac AbAb N
coniugis an fido consoler memet amore,	GAb Ac Ab
quine fugit lentos incurvans gurgite remos?	N Ac N Ab Ac
praeterea nullo litus, sola insula, tecto,	Ab N N Ab
nec patet egressus pelagi cingentibus undis:	N G Ab Ab
nulla fugæ ratio, nulla spes: omnia muta,	N G N N N N N
omnia sunt deserta, ostentant omnia letum. <sup>22</sup>	N N N Ac

(Shall I hope for the aid of my father, whom I myself deserted  
to follow a youth stained with my brother's death?  
Or console myself with the faithful love a spouse  
who is fleeing, curving his tough oars in the wave?  
Besides, the lone island is unfurnished with any dwelling;  
no way to depart opens for me in the encircling waters of the sea;  
no means of flight, no hope: all things are dumb,

all are desolate, all show death.)

We find the poet filling several lines with, in the main, oblique cases before resolving the mode of this part of his poem into the N, which comes in as if in waves, bringing a short breathing-space or moment of clarity (albeit here the clarity and stillness of desolation), something like the relief when a piece of music that has modulated into other keys ends with a cadence of chords in its original key.

Pushkin often does something very like this, as in:

В крови горит огонь желанья,  
 Душа тобой уязвлена,  
 Лобзай меня; твои лобзанья  
 Мне слаще мирра и вина.  
 Склонись ко мне главою нежной,  
 И да почию безмятежный,  
 Пока дохнет веселый день  
 И двинется ночная тень.

(In my blood burns the fire of desire,  
 My soul has been wounded by you,  
 Kiss me: your kisses  
 Are sweeter to me than myrrh and wine.  
 Incline your gentle head to me,  
 And may I rest serenely,  
 Until happy day takes its first breath  
 And night's shadow moves away.)

Here the N strengthens towards the end, letting the turbulent statement conclude on a note of peace and straightforwardness. In such examples one may well agree that the N is the *casus rectus*. A further straightforward example of this is the little poem *Inezilia* (*Инезилля*) where a basic pattern of N + I (primordial namer / leader plus its peripherals) digresses into gestures of A, D, G, in order to return to the basic N and to close on it. A subtler and more elaborated instance of the affirmative emergence of the N is the poem *The Prisoner* (*Узник*; see Appendix) which, unusually, contains no G or D at all. In stanza one, the N is imprisoned within oblique cases, predominantly the I; then it is wholly absent from stanza two which, still building the casual prison and not yet arrived at the release and affirmation, has 3 x A and 3 x I, i.e. six objects acted upon or peripherally engaged. But in stanza three all is transformed. Except for *за тучей* (beyond the cloud), a passing reminder of the prison, everything is N: *мы* (we), *птицы* (birds), *брат* (brother) (I am unproblematically putting the problematic Vocative, as another naming 'case',

in with the N), *верев* (wind), *я* (I [first-person pronoun]); even the objects of the action of seeing have become N: *гора* (mountain), *края* (regions).

'Under the blue sky' ('Под небом голубым': see Appendix) may be called an opposite to *The Prisoner* for the relative paucity of N in it and for the way its second half is weighty with the prolonged presence of two oblique cases. These are announced in advance, in line one, and, having read the whole poem, we can attribute an instrumental peripherality to 'blue sky' here, and a genitival quality of being real-elsewhere-but-difficult-to-pin-down to 'her own country' - or do we sense these qualities, as we read this first line, even without advance knowledge of the poem? In the following seven lines, the N does occur but is variously weakened, all three occurrences of *я* (I - first-person pronoun) being necessarily unstressed, for example, while *она* (she) is ambivalent as regards stress; and the two stressed Ns, *тень* (shade) and *черта* (boundary), lose power (I would like to argue) not so much because they denote things that are inconceivable (in another context they could be conceivable) as because the theme of this poem requires that they be inconceivable here. When the I arrives to fill lines 10-13, and the G takes over lines 15-17, these cases do indeed appear to embody the Jakobsonian qualities. For the passions recalled in five nouns in the I (twelve I words altogether) are indeed, the poem says, marginal to the poet's life; and then - after two Ns, *муки* (torments), *любовь* (love), have reminded us of the 'rectitude' of emotional presences while being themselves syntactically denied it by the interrogation that encloses them - the row of five nouns in the G (nine G words altogether) is indeed a list of things real elsewhere but having in the poet's present life only a partial, partitive, disengaged, unattainable quality.

Lastly, I wish to look at the poem *The Caucasus* (*Кавказ*; see Appendix). Dmitri Blagoi devotes five pages to it in his book<sup>23</sup> and I will make my points in relation to some of his. As he notes, while in *The Prisoner* an eagle asks the poet to fly away with it, in *The Caucasus* this has happened.<sup>24</sup> I would add that in *The Prisoner* they look across horizontally from window to imagined mountain, sea and wind, and all these three spatial phenomena are in the N with its hint of verticality; and the eagle, the desirer, only gradually emerges into the N; while in *The Caucasus* poet and eagle are high up in a vertical dimension and are as N as the Caucasus, i.e. as nature and space, from the very beginning. Moreover, the thematic verticality is reinforced by the three Ns at the start of the poem, all of them iambic and each one opening a separate statement: *Кавказ* (Caucasus); *один* (alone); *орел* (eagle). Meanwhile, the four Gs in this stanza (three of them adnominal, the kind attached to a noun, which Jakobson calls the most typical form of the G) increase both the airiness and the poem-free reality of the location: *стремнины* (precipice), *потоков* (streams), *обвалов* (avalanches) - the last two noticeably removed from the controlled and directed quality of their connected As (which are contrastingly abstract to boot - birth, motion); and *стремнины* is linked to a noun which is itself in the G.

I realize it is somewhat arbitrary to talk of the G's 'airiness', even in relation to Jakobson's suggestion that a G noun is not wholly *in* the utterance; but it is objective enough to note the interesting use of the N here. For in this stanza, which defines the position of the speaker in the landscape (and perhaps in the world), the grammar itself makes clear that, despite the glorious freedom suggested by statements about being above everything, that freedom depends on acknowledging one's own secondary status. Frances Cornford's translation of this poem starts 'I stand above the Caucasus'. But the poet does not say this; he says 'The Caucasus is below me'; with 'me' in the I, the case of marginality, *подо мною* (below me). Nor does he say 'I am on a par with the eagle', but: 'the eagle is level with me' - again an I, again 'I' am peripheralized. The one N word describing 'me' is *один*, (alone) an adjective. Clearly *я* (I [first-person pronoun]) is being avoided, and when it does enter, it is placed in a position where it cannot possibly receive a stress.

Blagoi notes that there is no figurative language in the first seventeen lines.<sup>25</sup> Presumably the anthropomorphic *грозных* (dread: line 6) and *веселом* (happy: line 15), as well as the zoomorphic *гнездятся* (nest: line 13) count as non-figurative because half-erased by use. My comment is that the lack of imagery makes the poem's grammar the more perceptible and important. It is important that the first stanza, in addition to the prominence and subtlety of the Ns I have drawn attention to, contains as many as five noun cases (all the cases except the D), possibly suggesting multi-relationality of poet to landscape, and certainly giving this stanza its special character even if we do not or cannot precisely define its case-semantics.

Blagoi points out that the poet here is not that arrogant or demonic type high above ordinary life whom we met in *Captive of the Caucasus*, but is one who now looks downward benignly.<sup>26</sup> To extend this, I think that the only way to make sense of the unexpected concentration upon the angry, frustrated behaviour of the River Terek in stanza four is to associate it with the passionate captive person the poet once was, and to see stanzas one (about poet) and four (about river) as linked opposites.

The two middle stanzas are different from the first and the last, and above all in the pattern of cases distinguishing them. After the dramatic isolation among dangerous elements (stanza one) comes (stanzas two and three) an optical descent through clouds, cascades, cliffs, then moss, bushes, groves, past glimpses of animate beings other than the stark eagle (birds, deer, the Aragva, a rider) - all moving into the landscape by virtue of the scopal, spatial L and the directional D. A few oblique cases mark the stormy clouds, falls and cliffs of lines 7-9, but lines 10-12 are entirely N, and lines 13 - 18 show a simple regular pattern of N plus L, along with two words in the D - which was the sole case missing from stanza one, so that the D is now felt to be the case of low-level absence of drama, the case of slow movement. But the entry of the howling Terek in the deceptive last line of stanza three (casally a repetition of the preceding lines but with cunning introduction of a

notion of fierceness) suggests partial identification with the poet, first because, as with him, an internal life is hinted at after all the external forms in stanzas two and three, and, second, because of the collocation of all the cases in the last stanza, echoing the collection of nearly all of them that we noted in the first. This is surely the peak-stationed poet's meditation on the turbulence he once felt and still could feel. He is like the Terek too in that just as he was grammatically marginalized among the mountains, so the river, in the poem's last line - (as well as being mentioned in the A, the case of being directly controlled) - is subordinated to the concluding assertive N of '*немые громады*' ('dumb bulks'). The raging river is not free. The poet on the peak has become free only by recognizing (as is reflected in the grammar) that he is subordinate.

Pushkin wrote another four lines to this poem which he did not include in the published version, lines associating the captive river with the oppressed people of the Caucasus. Blagoi argues that scholars who think these lines ought to be printed as part of the poem are wrong since Pushkin's leaving them patently unfinished was not due to the censorship but to the fact that, despite his admiration for Krylov's fables, he was opposed to giving a poem a didactic, 'applied', conclusion, a moral.<sup>27</sup> I suggest that another reason why they ought not to be included is that, through its grammar, the poem is aesthetically complete without them.

Almost everything that can readily be said about Pushkin's use of the 'beautiful necessity' of the grammatical aureoles of meaning tends again and again towards the thematic. The selection and arrangement of cases either supports or complicates the poem's story, idea or picture. Yet there does remain something beside this, something which can probably only be mentioned and admired, not fully said, let alone proved or analysed. The effect of the cases' presence as such is comparable to the effect music can have on us (once we stop thinking of music as melody). Here Schopenhauer's account of music is helpful. Music, he says, represents not the world's phenomena, as the other arts do, but the mysterious *Wille* without mediation through appearances, so that:

suitable music played to any scene, action or event or surrounding seems to disclose to us its most secret meaning and to be the most accurate commentary upon it ... Also, whoever gives himself up entirely to the impression of a symphony seems to see all the possible events of life and the world take place in himself, nevertheless upon reflection he can find no likeness between the music and the things that passed before his mind.<sup>28</sup>

Grammatical harmonies surely do this too, seeming to disclose secret meanings, even while issuing, like symphony or fugue, from a firm, complex, quasi-geometrical system of elements.

## APPENDIX

Here I shall take up briefly my earlier suggestion that an oblique-case noun not showing a changed ending has further connotations than are covered by the simple N A G D I L categorization. I will say something about the poem *Arion* in this connection. If, in that poem, the unchanged As (neuter and inanimate-masculine) are grouped together with the Ns and called Group 1, while all cases that *show* their obliqueness are called Group 2 - so that Group 1 contains words that look N and suggest direct action of a subject upon an object, while Group 2 contains words that are and look oblique and suggest multiple other relations - then we find that to Group 1 belongs everything concerning persons other than the poet (or his persona), except for the first word 'нас' ('us'), which rapidly loses its genitivity, however, to the N of 'много'; while the poet and the elements, though not without a share of Group 1 words (лоно; вихорь, певец and four times 'я'), possess *all* the poem's visibly and audibly oblique nouns and adjectives, those of Group 2. This conclusion elegantly supports the idea that the poet at once belongs and does not belong to the nautical/political action and that he is, like the elemental turbulence, mainly oblique to the verticality of those 'иные, другие' and their 'casus rectus'. (I have not discussed the four Ls, tacitly seeing them as setting the scene for all participants).

*Арион*

Нас было много на челне;  
Иные парус напрягали,  
Другие дружно упирали  
Вглубь мощны весла. В тишине  
На руль склонясь, наш кормщик умный           5  
В молчанье правил грузный челн;  
И я - беспечной веры полн -  
Пловцам я пел ... Вдруг лоно волн  
Измял с налету вихорь шумный ...  
Погиб и кормщик и пловец!                   10  
Лишь я, таинственный певец,  
На берег выброшен грозою,  
Я гимны прежние пою  
И ризу влажную мою  
Сушу на солнце под скалою.                   15

(1827)

*Arion*

There were many of us in the boat;  
Some were trimming the sail,  
Others were together pressing  
The powerful oars into the deep. In the quiet,  
Leaning on the tiller, our clever helmsman           5  
In silence steered the laden boat;  
And I - full of carefree faith -  
I sang to the sailors ... Suddenly the bosom of the waves  
Was crumpled by a noisy swooping whirlwind ...  
Helmsman and sailor both perished!           10  
Only I, the mysterious singer,  
Plunged out on to a shore by the storm,  
I sang my former hymns,  
And my wet garment  
I dry in the sun under a rock.                   15

*Ушник*

Сиджу за решеткой в темнице сырой.  
Искормленный в неволе орел молодой,  
Мой грустный товарищ, махая крылом,  
Кровяную пиццу клюет под окном,  
Клюет и бросает, и смотрит в окно,           5  
Как будто со мною задумал одно.  
'Зовет меня взглядом и криком своим  
И вымолвить хочет: 'Давай улетим!  
Мы вольные птицы; пора, брат, пора!  
Туда, где за тучей белеет гора,           10  
Туда, где синеют морские края,  
Туда, где гуляем лишь ветер ... да я! ...'

(1822)

*Prisoner*

I sit behind bars in a damp prison.  
A young eagle reared in captivity,  
My sad comrade, waving its wing,  
Pecks its bloody food under the window,

Pecks and pauses, and looks through the window,  
As if it had had the same thought as I [had].  
It calls me with its look and its cry  
And means to say: 'Let's fly away!' 5

We are free birds; it's time, brother, time!  
To where the mountain beyond the cloud is white,  
To where the regions of the sea are blue,  
To where only the wind walks ... and I! ...' 10

'Под небом голубым ...'

Под небом голубым страны своей родной  
Она томилась, увядала ...  
Увяла, наконец, и, верно, надо мной  
Младая тень уже летала;  
Но недоступная черта меж нами есть. 5

Напрасно чувство возбуждал я:  
Из равнодушных уст я слышал смерти весть,  
И равнодушно ей внимал я:

Так вот кого любил я пламенной душой  
С таким тяжелым напряженьем, 10  
С такою нежною, томительной тоской,  
С таким безумством и мученьем!

Где муки, где любовь? Увы! В душе моей  
Для бедной, легковерной тени,  
Для сладкой памяти невозвратимых дней 15  
Не нахожу ни слез, ни пени.

(1826)

'Under the blue sky ...'

Under the blue sky of her native land  
She pined, faded ...  
Faded away at last and, surely, above me  
Her young shade was already flying;  
But there is an inaccessible boundary between us. 5

In vain I tried to awaken [my] feeling:  
From indifferent lips I heard the news of [her] death,  
And indifferently I listened to it.  
So that is whom I loved with flamy soul  
With such heavy intensity, 10  
With such tender, painful yearning,

With such madness and torment!  
Where are the torments, where is the love? Alas! In my soul,  
For the poor credulous shade,  
For the sweet memory of irrecoverable days, 15  
I find neither tears nor blame.

*Кавказ*

Кавказ подо мною. Один в вышине  
Стою над снегами у края стремнины;  
Орел, с отдаленной поднявшись вершины,  
Парит неподвижно со мной наравне.  
Отсюда я вижу потоков рожденье 5  
И первое грозных обвалов движенье.

И здесь тучи смиренно идут подо мной;  
Сквозь них, низвергаясь, шумят водопады;  
Под ними утесов нагие громады;  
Там, ниже, мох тощий, кустарник сухой; 10  
А там уже роицы, зеленые сени,  
Где птицы щебечут, где скачут олени.

А там уж и люди гнездятся в горах,  
И ползют овцы по злачным стремнинам,  
И пастырь нисходит к веселым долинам, 15  
Где мчитя Арагва в тенистых берегах,  
И индий пиедник таится в ущелье,  
Где Терек играет в свирепом веселье;

Играет и вост, как зверь молодой,  
Завидный пицу из клетки железной; 20  
И бьется о берег в вражде бесполезной,  
И лижет утесы голодной волной ...  
Вотще! Нет ни пици ему, ни отрады:  
Тешит его грозно немые громады.

(1829)

*The Caucasus*

The Caucasus is below me. Alone in the height  
I stand above the snows at the edge of a precipice;  
An eagle, risen up from a distant peak,  
Sours motionless on a level with me.



From here I see the birth of streams  
And the first movement of dread avalanches.

5

Here thunderclouds move humbly beneath me;  
Through them, rushing down, waterfalls sound;  
Under them are the naked bulks of cliffs;  
There, lower, is scraggy moss, dry bushes;  
And there, already, groves, green canopies,  
Where birds twitter, where deer leap.

10

And there people, too, nest in the hills,  
And sheep crawl along lush precipices,  
And a shepherd goes down to happy vales,  
Where Aragva rushes [between] its shady banks,  
And a poor rider hides in the gorge  
Where Terek plays in fierce merriment;

15

Plays and howls, like a young animal  
Which from its iron cage has caught sight of food;  
And beats against its bank in futile enmity,  
And licks the cliffs with hungry wave ...  
In vain! There is no food for it, no joy:  
It is pressed by threateningly dumb bulks.

20

## NOTES

- 1 Roman Jakobson, 'Poezii grammatiki i grammatika poezii', *Selected Writings* III, Mouton, The Hague, Paris, New York, 1981, pp.63-86; 'Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry', *ibid.*, p. 87-97.
- 2 A.D.P. Briggs, *Alexander Pushkin: A Critical Study*, Croom Helm, London and Canberra, 1983, p. 40.
- 3 From 'The Song' in *The Non-Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker in Five Volumes*, Russell and Russell Inc., New York, 1963, V, pp. 121-2.
- 4 M.I. Gasparov, 'Metr i smysl: k semantike russkogo trekhstopnogo khoreia', *Izvestiia Akademii Nauk SSSR, Seriya literatury i iazyka*, XXXV, 4, 1976, pp. 358-66.
- 5 Roman Jakobson and Krystyna Pomorska, *Dialogues*, Cambridge University Press, London and New York, 1983, p. 122.
- 6 Jakobson refers to C.Bragdon, *The Beautiful Necessity*, Rochester, New York, 1910.
- 7 Roman Jakobson, 'Morfologicheskie nabliudeniia nad slavianskim skloneniem (Sostav russkikh padezhnykh form)', *Selected Writings* II, Mouton, The Hague, Paris, 1971, pp. 154-81, 'Morphological Observations on Slavic Declension (Structure of Russian Case Forms)', in *id.*, *Russian and Slavic Grammar (Studies 1931-1981)*, Mouton, Berlin, New York, Amsterdam, 1984, pp. 105-33; Roman Jakobson, 'Contribution to the General Theory of Case: General Meanings of Russian Cases', *ibid.*, pp. 59-103.
- 8 Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings* III, op. cit., pp. 366-77.
- 9 Roman Jakobson, *Pushkin and His Sculptural Myth*, translated by John Burbank, Mouton, The Hague, Paris, 1975, p. 48.
- 10 R.H. Robins, *Ancient and Medieval Grammatical Theory in Europe*, G. Bell and Sons, Ltd, London, 1951; *id.*, *A Short History of Linguistics*, Longmans, London and New York, 1947; G.L. Bursill-Hall, *Speculative Grammars of the Middle Ages*, Mouton, The Hague, 1971; Louis Hjelmslev, *La catégorie des cas: étude de grammaire générale*, *Acta Jutlandica*, VII, 1, Universitetsforlaget, Aarhus, 1935.
- 11 William Wordsworth, 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood', for example in Donald Davie, *Selected Poems of William Wordsworth*, Harrop, London, 1962, p. 125.
- 12 R.S. Thomas, *Mass for Hard Times*, Bloodaxe Books, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1992, p. 58.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- 14 Louis Hjelmslev, op. cit., p. 6.
- 15 See note 7.
- 16 Jakobson, *Russian and Slavic Grammar*, op. cit., p. 12.
- 17 C.H. van Schooneveld, 'Jakobson's Case System and Syntax' in *Case in Slavic*, ed. R.D. Brecht and J.S. Levine, Slavica, Columbus, Ohio, 1986, pp. 373-85 (378).
- 18 *Ibid.* p. 377.
- 19 Jakobson, *Russian and Slavic Grammar*, op.cit., p. 67.
- 20 *Ibid.* p. 69.
- 21 van Schooneveld, op.cit., p. 374.

22. 'Poem No. LXIV' in *Catullus, Tibullus, Pervigilium Veneris*, edited by G.P. Goold, The Loeb Classical Library, Heinemann, London and Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1918; second edition 1988, p. 110, lines 180-7 [translation by Francis Warre Cornish, p. 111, considerably modified by myself]. (Ac = Accusative; Ab = Ablative.)
23. Dmitrii Blagoi, *Tvorcheskii put' Pushkina 1826-30*, Sovetskii pisatel', Moscow, 1967, pp. 364-9.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 366.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 367.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 366.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 369-70.
28. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, I, quoted by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, translated by Francis Golffing, Doubleday, New York, 1956, p. 99.