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On the Threshold of Eurasia:

Intersecting Discourses of Empire and Identity in the Russian Empire

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Satisfaction of the

Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

In Comparative Literature

by

Leah Michele Feldman

2013

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

On the Threshold of Eurasia:

Intersecting Discourses of Empire and Identity in the Russian Empire

by

Leah Michele Feldman

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Aamir Mufti, Co-Chair

Professor Azade-Ayse Rorlich, Co-Chair

This dissertation considers the foundation of discourses of Orientalism and Postcolonialism in representations of the Caucasus in the literature of Russians and Muslims of the empire from 1828 through 1920. From the mid-nineteenth century through World War I, the Russian empire continued an era of expansion, colonizing the diverse ethnic and cultural territories of the Muslim Caucasus and Central Asia. The oil boom, the creation of an international Turkic language press, the spread of Russian language education and the construction of the Transcaspian Baku-Batumi Railroad during this period all contributed to the development of a cosmopolitan literary and artistic scene in the administrative and industrial capitals of Tbilisi and Baku. While discussions about the destiny of the Russian Empire – its relationship to the European Enlightenment, Byzantium and its own imperial acquisitions percolated in Moscow and Petersburg, debates about the role of Islam and language politics as well as Pan-Turkic, Pan-Islamic and proletarian discourses of identity dominated discussions

among writers and thinkers in the Caucasus. Russian writers imagined a civic identity amidst an expanding empire, and in so doing, they represented the Caucasus as a space of freedom, heroism and spiritual enlightenment. I trace the ways in which Muslim writers and thinkers of the Caucasus translated and transformed this imaginary, debating the role of Islam and language politics in the construction of supranational discourses of cultural, ethnic and political identity. Building on Edward Said's theory of Orientalism and Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of narrative discourse, I present a portrait of the intellectual milieu between a series of intertextual encounters across Europe, Russia and the Turkic Muslim world.

My dissertation is organized into four chapters, each of which addresses intertextual encounters in these diverse literary traditions. My first chapter, "Heterodoxy and Heteroglossia: Axundov on the Threshold of Russian Literature" discusses Mirzə Fətəli Axundov's (Mirza Fatali Akhundov) contribution to the foundation of a modern Azeri literary tradition through his invocation of Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin's orientalist literary legacy. Drawing upon Pushkin's representation of the Caucasian imaginary as a prophetic legacy of freedom, Axundov generates supranational texts that incorporate diverse Islamic, Russian and European theological, philosophical, cultural and political discourses. My second chapter, "Prisoners of the Caucasian Imaginary: Lermontov and Kazy-Girei's Heroes in Exile" examines the idea of heroism in Russian Romantic representations of the Caucasus through the Caucasian tales of Mikhail Iur'evich Lermontov and a Russophone story by the Adyghe writer Sultan Kazy-Girei. I illustrate the ways Kazy-Girei contests and expands the ideas of heroism embedded in Russian representations of the Caucasus through his foundational contribution to Muslim Russophone literature. My third chapter, "Textual Deviance in Russian Empire: Gogol' and Məmmədquluzadə's Parodic Innovations," discusses the comedic space of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. Comparing the works of Nikolai Vasil'evich Gogol' and the Azeri writer Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə (Jalil Mammedquluzadeh) I discuss the role of textual deviance in Russian

literature. Though Gogol's work entered a supranational Soviet literary space through his appropriation by Formalist literary critics, this chapter highlights the importance of his work in the literature of the Muslims of the Russian empire more broadly, as well the early twentieth century in the Caucasus. My final chapter, “Translating Early Twentieth Century Baku: The Romantic Poetic Futures of the Russian and Azeri Avant-gardes,” examines the role of Romantic poetics in the emergence of revolutionary and early Soviet politics. I compare the works of Russian writers in Baku, including Velimir Khlebnikov, Aleksei Eliseevich Kruchenykh, Viacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov, and Vladimir Vladimirovich Maiakovskii to the works of the Azeri writers Abbas Səhhət (Abbas Sahhat), Məhəmməd Hadi (Mehammed Hadi), and Mikayıl Rəfilı (Mikayil Rafili). In so doing, this chapter illustrates the role of the Baku avant-garde in shaping Soviet hegemony, as well as diverse forms of anti-imperial agency. This moment in the formation of the Soviet Union, envisioned from the vantage point of the Caucasus, frames my discussion of the architecture of a supranational literary tradition informed by Russian Orientalism, anti-imperial Soviet hegemony, and postcolonial politics.

The dissertation of Leah Michele Feldman is approved.

Ali Behdad

Anindita Banerjee

David MacFadyen

Aamir Mufti, Co-Chair

Azade-Ayse Rorlich, Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2013

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My interest in Comparative Literature as well as the literature of the Russian empire began during my undergraduate studies at the University of Texas at Austin. My work is indebted to and inspired by my mentors Elizabeth Richmond-Garza and Thomas Garza. Thomas Garza's unparalleled knowledge of Russian language and culture, as well as his interest in the Caucasus introduced me to the complex historical and cultural problems surrounding the Russia empire's role in shaping contemporary geopolitics. Elizabeth Richmond-Garza's nuanced understanding of literary theory, world literary networks, and the long nineteenth century, inspire my approach to reading literature in a comparative and global context. As mentors and friends, their scholarship and support have had a foundational impact on my academic career.

UCLA provided a stimulating intellectual community and I thank the faculty and staff who inspired and supported me throughout my graduate career: Kirstie M. McClure, Françoise Lionnet, Ronald Vroon, Alexander Ospovat, Eleanor Kaufman, Stathis Gourgouris, Gil Hochberg, Lia Brozgal,

Michael Cooperson, Kenneth Reinhard, Katherine King, Courtney Klipp, Michelle Anderson and Michelle Lambarena. I could not have completed this project without the linguistic and cultural expertise of: Güliz Kuruoglu, Javad Efendi, Sabina Aliyeva and Rena Salekhova. I am particularly indebted to my outstanding doctoral committee. Ali Behdad helped me explore postcolonial theory. Anindita Banerjee at Cornell University enriched my understanding of the placement of Russian studies in Comparative Literature, providing invaluable insight into both fields. David MacFadyen provided guidance in Russian and Soviet literature and criticism. Aamir Mufti helped shape my understanding of Orientalism, Secular Criticism and Islamic Modernism, as well as my approach to critical analysis more generally. Azade-Ayse Rorlich at USC helped shape my understanding of the history and literature of the Muslim peoples of the Russian empire and tirelessly and patiently edited my transliterations and translations. As a pioneer in the field, her influential and committed work inspired this project. I would also like to remember the great teacher, translator, and member of my committee, Michael Henry Heim (1943-2012), who helped formulate my understanding of translation.

I would like to extend my thanks to my colleagues and friends in the graduate program in the Department of Comparative literature and the Department of Slavic Languages at UCLA, who provided intellectual stimulation, professional advice, and good company over the years: Sasha Razor, Boris Dralyuk, Naomi Caffee, Avram Lyon, Spencer Jackson, Katherine McCloone, Lisa Felipe, Neetu Khanna, Talar Chahinian, Marian Gabra, Simchi Cohen, Noa Bar, Peter Lehman, Kirk Sides, Myrna Douzjian, Tamar Boyadijan, David Fieny, Jordan Smith, David Gabriel, Carol Viers and Simona Livescu. I have been lucky to have had the opportunity to engage with a larger network of scholars in my field through academic conferences and exchange, who have helped me formulate ideas and for whom I have great admiration: Bruce Grant, Katya Hokanson, Harsha Ram, Rebecca Gould, Nergis Ertürk, Altay Göyüşov, Jala Garibova, Nasrin Rahimieh and Dragan Kujundzic.

My graduate years would not have been as memorable without all of my fellow academics and

friends in California who shared food, ideas, laughter and tears with me over the years. I am particularly indebted to Kyle Wanberg, Hassan Hussein, David Bennett, Emily Selove, Sina Rahmani, Nahrain al-Mousawi, Awad Awad, Ahmed Alwishah, Sharareh Frouzesh, Mohammad Rafi, Shervin Emami, Nasser Mufti, Alice Mandell, Vivian Alcalay, David Simpson, Su-Rmi Givens, Stephen Sykes, Angie Smith, Sharon Cech, Sarah Bryant Cargo, Robin Baral, Carla Blair, Anil Baral, Peter Geantil, Eric Wang, Karim Wahba, Amr Assaid, Eliza Shamshian, Douglas Nakazaki, Gabriel Plunk, Matt Fuller and Walter Clark. To my global network of fellow academics and friends who have made travel feel like home, and supported my research on the road: Sara Brinegar, Krista Goff, Marcy McCullaugh, Michelle Ann Brady, Aleksei Lund, Julian Gantt, Kent Babin and Haley Sweetland Edwards.

I am exceptionally grateful for my family and friend's unending patience, support and love. For standing by me and raising my spirits, I have deep gratitude for Nassie Elzoghby and Leila El Shakry. To Omnia El Shakry and Nadeem Haj, for inspiring me with their courage, humility, and wisdom. I am deeply grateful for Katherine Hamby Goodson, for her support, encouragement, and company over many years. To my dear friend Cetta Mainwaring, thank you for ever inspiring me to be courageous and kind in politics, love and life. My deepest gratitude to my mentors and family Hetta Malone, Carol and Douglas Anderson, Suwana Gauntlett, Sandee and Terry Willis, Rita and Reese Orland, Michele and Don McCormick, Jon and Lili Feldman, Worthy Martin, Nedelyn and Britt Kauffman, my cousins Brooke Feldman, Erin Kauffman, Robin Kauffman, Melissa Malone Lusk, Brittany Malone Thompson, Erik and Lily Anderson, my grandfather Ned Martin. In loving memory of my grandfather Harold Feldman and grandmother Evelyn Martin. I am deeply indebted to my dialogic interlocutor and dear friend Hoda El Shakry, who has been by my side through the entire journey – over dinners, late night edits, and celebratory toasts. She continually inspires me with her unending generosity, brilliance of spirit and intellect. To my sister Jessica Feldman, thank you for being my confident and friend always, and for reminding me of the necessity of worlds outside of books. Finally, to my parents Betty and

Henry Feldman for encouraging my creativity and teaching me patience and professionalism. My mother's contributions to the field of architecture and my father's work in hospitality have inspired my approach to community and life.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

**Leah Michele Feldman**

### Education

B.A. University of Texas, Austin, Russian , French, and Humanities Honors  
*summa cum laude*, August 2002 –May 2006

### Publications

“Orientalism on the Threshold: Reorienting Heroism in Late Imperial Russia.” *Boundary 2* 39.2  
(2012): 161-180.

“Abraham Lincoln Vampire Hunter (2012).” *Directory of World Cinema: Russia*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Birgit Beumers. Ed. Bristol: Intellect, forthcoming 2013.

### Teaching Experience

Teaching Fellow, Department of Comparative Literature, UCLA, 2011-2012

Teaching Associate, Department of Comparative Literature, UCLA, 2007-2009

### Conference Papers

“Resurrected Dinners: The Infinite Oralities of Proust, Chekhov, and Gogol.” American Comparative Literature Association. Princeton University, Spring 2006

“Unknown *Terroirs*: Revealing the Crisis-Proof Form in Synaesthesia in Aleksandr Blok’s *Neznakomka*.” American Comparative Literature Association. Puebla, Spring 2007.

“Tremblements du Terroir: Political Aesthetics in the Landscape of the Créole Conte.” American Comparative Literature Association. Longbeach, Spring 2008.

“Orientalism on the Threshold: Identity and Modernity in the Intersecting Discourses of Late Imperial Russia.” Orientalism and the Invention of World Literatures. UCLA, Spring 2010.

“Heterodoxy and Heteroglossia: Poets and Prophets on the Threshold of the Russian Empire.” American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages. Seattle, Winter 2012.

“Modernism on the Threshold: The Russian and Azeri Avant-Gardes.” Towson University, Baltimore, Winter 2013.

“Imagining the Caucasus in Revolutionary Politics and Poetics.” 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UC Humanities Initiative: Humanities in Circulation. UCLA, Spring 2013.

### Conference Organization

Panel Co-Chair, “Savoring the Human/Tasting New Worlds.” American Comparative Literature

Association. Puebla, Spring 2007.

Panel Co-Chair, “‘Neutral’ Grounds: Rethinking the Limits of Hybridity,” American Comparative Literature Association. New Orleans, Spring 2010.

### Research and Professional Experience

Baku Representative, American Research Institute of the South Caucasus (ARISC), Baku, Azerbaijan 2010-2011.

Research Assistant, Professor Sarah Melzer, Department of French and Francophone Studies, UCLA, 2008.

### Academic Honors and Awards

UC President’s Society of Fellows in the Humanities, 2012-2013.

UCLA Dissertation Year Fellowship, 2012-2013.

American Research Institute of the South Caucasus (ARISC) Graduate Fellowship for research in Tbilisi, awarded but declined, 2012.

Fulbright Fellowship for research in Baku, Azerbaijan, 2010-2011.

UCLA Center for European and Eurasian Studies (CEES) Dissertation Fellowship for research in Baku, 2010.

UCLA Comparative Literature Departmental Fellowship for coursework completion, 2009-2010.

UCLA Graduate Summer Research Mentorship (GSRM) Fellowship for faculty-mentored research, 2009.

Horst Frenz Prize Nominee for best graduate student paper at the annual conference for the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA), 2007.

UCLA Center for European and Eurasian Studies (CEES) Language Enhancement Fellowship for language study in Moscow, Russia, 2007.

ACTR Fellowship for summer study at the International Institute in Moscow, 2007.

UCLA Comparative Literature Departmental Fellowship for coursework completion, 2006-2007.

## 0. Introduction

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In Russia the center is at the periphery.<sup>1</sup> – Kliuchevskii

Much of the scholarship on the history of the Russian empire and the formation of the Soviet Union continues to echo the words of the nineteenth century Russian historian Vasilii Osipovich Kliuchevskii. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the discipline of Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies has begun to introduce the literature of the former Soviet Union into world literature debates – specifically in the fields of Orientalism and postcolonial studies. In particular, scholars have considered the applicability of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) to the Russian context (Hokanson, Khalid, Knight, Layton, Todorova), explored the similarities between Soviet Orientalism and anti-imperialist discourses (Layton, Tolz), or highlighted Said's omission of the second world from his geopolitical map (Etkind).<sup>2</sup> While many of these critiques

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<sup>1</sup>Cited in Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), 97. Vasilii Osipovich Kliuchevskii (1841-1911), one of the most famous nineteenth century historians in the Russian empire, was of Mordovian origins.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization*; Katya Hokanson nuances the discussion of discourses of center and periphery in literature about the Russian imperial expansion in the Caucasus. Hokanson, *Writing at Russia's Borders* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Adeeb Khalid argues that given the influence of European thought in Russia beginning in the eighteenth century, Russian Orientalism could be better understood as “variations on a pan-European theme than as inherently different.” Khalid, “Russian History and the Debate over Orientalism,” in *Orientalism and Empire in Russia*, eds. Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, and Alexander Martin (Bloomington: Slavica, 2006), 29; Nathaniel Knight highlights the role of discourses of Russia’s national uniqueness in shaping orientalist discourses. Knight, “On Russian Orientalism: A Response to Adeeb Khalid,” in *Orientalism and Empire*, 37; Maria Todorova notes that the debate over Russian Orientalism highlights a major problematic in Russian historiography. Much like other non-Western historiographies, in the case of Russia there is a tendency to either rely on a standard model of empire and account for the necessary deviations from it or to focus on creating local categories of knowledge. She favors “the universalist idiom (tempered, of course, by a strong grounding in historical specificity).” Todorova, “Does Russian Orientalism Have a Russian Soul?: A Contribution to the Debate between Nathaniel Knight and Adeeb Khalid,” in *Orientalism and Empire in Russia*, 48–49; Vera Tolz argues that Said’s conceptual framework as well as the work of authors such as Anouar Abdel-Malek, on which his work relies, remains close to the work of the Russian orientalist Sergei Fedorovich Ol’denburg’s in their conception of a “unified European/Western identity” with its origins in Ancient Greece. Tolz, “European, National, and (Anti-)Imperial: The Formation of Academic Oriental Studies in Late Tsarist and Early Soviet Russia,” in *Orientalism and Empire in Russia*, 132; Susan Layton's study is one of the first to discuss the relevance of the Saidian framework to the Russian context. Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from*



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among writers and thinkers in the Caucasus. Russian writers imagined a civic identity amidst an expanding empire, and in so doing, they represented the Caucasus as a space of freedom, heroism and spiritual enlightenment. I trace the ways in which Muslim writers and thinkers of the Caucasus translated and transformed this imaginary, debating the role of Islam and language politics in the construction of supranational discourses of cultural, ethnic and political identity. Building on Edward Said's theory of Orientalism and Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of narrative discourse, I present a portrait of the intellectual milieu between a series of intertextual encounters across Europe, Russia and the Turkic Muslim world.

My dissertation is organized into four chapters, each of which addresses intertextual encounters in these diverse literary traditions. My first chapter, "Heterodoxy and Heteroglossia: Axundov on the Threshold of Russian Literature" discusses Mirzə Fətəli Axundov's (Mirza Fatali Akhundov) contribution to the foundation of a modern Azeri literary tradition through his invocation of Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin's orientalist literary legacy. Drawing upon Pushkin's representation of the Caucasian imaginary as a prophetic legacy of freedom, Axundov generates supranational texts that incorporate diverse Islamic, Russian and European theological, philosophical, cultural and political discourses. My second chapter, "Prisoners of the Caucasian Imaginary: Lermontov and Kazy-Girei's Heroes in Exile" examines the idea of heroism in Russian Romantic representations of the Caucasus through the Caucasian tales of Mikhail Iur'evich Lermontov and a Russophone story by the Adyghe writer Sultan Kazy-Girei. I illustrate the ways Kazy-Girei contests and expands the ideas of heroism embedded in Russian representations of the Caucasus through his foundational contribution to Muslim Russophone literature. My third chapter, "Textual Deviance in Russian Empire: Gogol' and Məmmədquluzadə's Parodic Innovations," discusses the comedic space of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. Comparing the works of Nikolai Vasil'evich Gogol' and the Azeri writer Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə (Jalil Mammedquluzadeh) I discuss the role of textual deviance in Russian

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UCLA provided a stimulating intellectual community and I thank the faculty and staff who inspired and supported me throughout my graduate career: Kirstie M. McClure, Françoise Lionnet, Ronald Vroon, Alexander Ospovat, Eleanor Kaufman, Stathis Gourgouris, Gil Hochberg, Lia Brozgal,

Michael Cooperson, Kenneth Reinhard, Katherine King, Courtney Klipp, Michelle Anderson and Michelle Lambarena. I could not have completed this project without the linguistic and cultural expertise of: Güliz Kuruoglu, Javad Efendi, Sabina Aliyeva and Rena Salekhova. I am particularly indebted to my outstanding doctoral committee. Ali Behdad helped me explore postcolonial theory. Anindita Banerjee at Cornell University enriched my understanding of the placement of Russian studies in Comparative Literature, providing invaluable insight into both fields. David MacFadyen provided guidance in Russian and Soviet literature and criticism. Aamir Mufti helped shape my understanding of Orientalism, Secular Criticism and Islamic Modernism, as well as my approach to critical analysis more generally. Azade-Ayse Rorlich at USC helped shape my understanding of the history and literature of the Muslim peoples of the Russian empire and tirelessly and patiently edited my transliterations and translations. As a pioneer in the field, her influential and committed work inspired this project. I would also like to remember the great teacher, translator, and member of my committee, Michael Henry Heim (1943-2012), who helped formulate my understanding of translation.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

**Leah Michele Feldman**

### Education

B.A. University of Texas, Austin, Russian , French, and Humanities Honors  
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### Publications

“Orientalism on the Threshold: Reorienting Heroism in Late Imperial Russia.” *Boundary 2* 39.2  
(2012): 161-180.

“Abraham Lincoln Vampire Hunter (2012).” *Directory of World Cinema: Russia*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Birgit Beumers. Ed. Bristol: Intellect, forthcoming 2013.

### Teaching Experience

Teaching Fellow, Department of Comparative Literature, UCLA, 2011-2012

Teaching Associate, Department of Comparative Literature, UCLA, 2007-2009

### Conference Papers

“Resurrected Dinners: The Infinite Oralities of Proust, Chekhov, and Gogol.” American Comparative Literature Association. Princeton University, Spring 2006

“Unknown *Terroirs*: Revealing the Crisis-Proof Form in Synaesthesia in Aleksandr Blok’s *Neznakomka*.” American Comparative Literature Association. Puebla, Spring 2007.

“Tremblements du Terroir: Political Aesthetics in the Landscape of the Créole Conte.” American Comparative Literature Association. Longbeach, Spring 2008.

“Orientalism on the Threshold: Identity and Modernity in the Intersecting Discourses of Late Imperial Russia.” Orientalism and the Invention of World Literatures. UCLA, Spring 2010.

“Heterodoxy and Heteroglossia: Poets and Prophets on the Threshold of the Russian Empire.” American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages. Seattle, Winter 2012.

“Modernism on the Threshold: The Russian and Azeri Avant-Gardes.” Towson University, Baltimore, Winter 2013.

“Imagining the Caucasus in Revolutionary Politics and Poetics.” 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UC Humanities Initiative: Humanities in Circulation. UCLA, Spring 2013.

### Conference Organization

Panel Co-Chair, “Savoring the Human/Tasting New Worlds.” American Comparative Literature

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Panel Co-Chair, “‘Neutral’ Grounds: Rethinking the Limits of Hybridity,” American Comparative Literature Association. New Orleans, Spring 2010.

### Research and Professional Experience

Baku Representative, American Research Institute of the South Caucasus (ARISC), Baku, Azerbaijan 2010-2011.

Research Assistant, Professor Sarah Melzer, Department of French and Francophone Studies, UCLA, 2008.

### Academic Honors and Awards

UC President’s Society of Fellows in the Humanities, 2012-2013.

UCLA Dissertation Year Fellowship, 2012-2013.

American Research Institute of the South Caucasus (ARISC) Graduate Fellowship for research in Tbilisi, awarded but declined, 2012.

Fulbright Fellowship for research in Baku, Azerbaijan, 2010-2011.

UCLA Center for European and Eurasian Studies (CEES) Dissertation Fellowship for research in Baku, 2010.

UCLA Comparative Literature Departmental Fellowship for coursework completion, 2009-2010.

UCLA Graduate Summer Research Mentorship (GSRM) Fellowship for faculty-mentored research, 2009.

Horst Frenz Prize Nominee for best graduate student paper at the annual conference for the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA), 2007.

UCLA Center for European and Eurasian Studies (CEES) Language Enhancement Fellowship for language study in Moscow, Russia, 2007.

ACTR Fellowship for summer study at the International Institute in Moscow, 2007.

UCLA Comparative Literature Departmental Fellowship for coursework completion, 2006-2007.

of Said highlight the eurocentrism of his project, they crucially avoid his discussion of contrapuntalism and its aims to place into dialogue, “both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it.”<sup>3</sup> This project instead engages both with critical debates about Orientalism, as well as the important scholarship that has brought the writings of Muslim intellectuals of the Russian empire – particularly the Crimea, the Volga region, the Caucasus and Central Asia – to the fore of discussions of cultural production in Eurasia (Altstadt, Grant, Gould, Haber, Khalid, Rorlich, Swietochowski, Tyrrell).

The most recent scholarship on Russia's imperial legacy tackles the conceptualization of Russia as a liminal space, which emerged from a series of fragmented and contested ideas across diverse cultural spaces in the empire. Ronald Suny and more recently Alexander Etkind trace the ways in which the fashioning of Russian national identities was imbricated in the economic and political processes of imperial expansion. As Suny argues, “Russian historiography's contribution to the national imaginary...coincided with the development of an ideology of imperialism, in journals like *Vestnik Evropy* and *Russkii vestnik*, the emergence of Russian schools of ethnography and geography, and the flowering of poetry, novels and short stories, music, and the visual arts.”<sup>4</sup> To this end, Francine Hirsch's fascinating history highlights the role of the

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*Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 66. This critique of eurocentrism is in part directed at the totalizing singularity of Said's model, which as Ali Behdad argues, “leaves no room for the possibility of differences among the various modes of orientalist representation and in the field of power relations.” Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 11. However, Said develops the figure of contrapuntality as a means of destabilizing the eurocentrism of Orientalism. As Aamir Mufti argues, contrapuntality “enacts a complex relationship with the notion of tradition—linguistic, national, civilizational—that it both takes seriously and puts into question by opening up any particular tradition to interaction with other such purportedly discrete entities.” Aamir Mufti, “Global Comparativism,” *Critical Inquiry* 31.2 (2005): 472-489, 474, 477.

<sup>4</sup>Harsha Ram echoes this point in his analysis of what he terms the poetics of empire in Ram, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003); See Etkind, *Internal Colonization*, 93-122; Ronald Grigor Suny, “The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, “National” Identity, and Theories of Empire,” in *A State of Nations*, eds. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 24-66.

institution of orientalist ethnography in imperial governance and the formation of the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> Etkind traces the history of the term colonization to the Russian reflexive verb construction *kolonizatsiia*, or self-colonization. He argues that the term emerged in response to the shift from a fur-based economy to a dependence on grain, silk and oil, that resulted in “the import of the European enlightenment and the institution of a formal empire.”<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, he contrasts the shift in the meaning of the term, which in the late nineteenth century “was still perceived as progress; in the Soviet Union, it was reactionary and Russia's history was supposed to have little to do with it.”<sup>7</sup> However complex and particular Russia's imperial history, the Russian empire and Soviet Union impacted the geographical, political and social space of the former imperial territories, as well as Eurasia more broadly.

This dissertation focuses on a series of literary encounters between Russian and Muslim writers in order to understand the ways in which they contributed to imagining the Russian empire and the Bolshevik revolution in the Caucasus. The key concept of the threshold informs the geopolitical setting of my study and sustains my critical framework. It is in this context that I address discourses of liminality and hybridity, which emerge in the bodies of literature produced by Russian and Muslim writers in the Caucasus. I am particularly interested in understanding the degree to which the politics of empire and culture (Persian, Ottoman, or Russian) influenced the development of languages, religions and cultural traditions in the region. The threshold is a concept that I borrow from the literary scholar Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin to frame my

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<sup>5</sup>Hirsch defines ethnography [*etnografiia*] as “a broad field of inquiry, which included under its umbrella the disciplines of geography, archaeology, physical anthropology, and linguistics” and which shared similarities with European cultural anthropology. Hirsch argues that ethnographers also “developed a standardized vocabulary of nationality.” Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Cornell University Press, 2005), 10 and 63-98.

<sup>6</sup>Etkind, *Internal Colonization*, 90.

<sup>7</sup>Etkind, *Internal Colonization*, 71.

semiotic reading methodology, which situates texts between the constellations of power that underlie orientalist, imperialist and anti-imperialist discourses.<sup>8</sup> My dissertation intervenes in historical discussions about Russian national identity in order to illustrate its relationship to imperial expansion and orientalist production. In doing so, it not only accounts for the contributions of the Muslims of the Caucasus to imperial and revolutionary politics, but it also identifies critical yet lesser known discourses of Turkic and Muslim identities. Most crucially, my comparative literary methodology contests national boundaries and by extension the idea of national literatures. By rejecting the singular model of national literature, I trace the formation of what I call supranational literary traditions that engaged writers and thinkers across the Eurasian space including the Persian empire, the Ottoman empire, the Russian empire, and Europe.<sup>9</sup>

Networks of identity in the Russian empire were complex and I refer to the terms *Russian* and *Muslim* to signify ethno-religious markers of identity. Indeed, for Russians, Orthodox Christianity played a major role in defining cultural, ethnic and civic identity through the early twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> The word Russian can be expressed by either the term *russkii*, signifying an ethno-religious identity, or *rosiiskii*, signaling a civic identity. Since *Rossia* referred to Russia's

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<sup>8</sup>The idea of constellations of power refers to Foucault's theorization that the individual subject "is not a pre-given entity which is seized on by the exercise of power," but rather "is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces." See: Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. C. Gordon, L. Marshal, J. Mephram and K. Sober (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 74.

<sup>9</sup>I use the term supranational to distinguish my description of the social and political histories of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union from western notions of cosmopolitanism and Marxist notions of internationalism. The term "internationalism" served a crucial Marxist-Leninist ideological role, particularly during the formation of the Soviet Union. Stalin mobilized "cosmopolitanism" to an indictment of dubious cultural or economic loyalties abroad. In his fascinating study on cosmopolitanism in Soviet and Post-Soviet Baku, Bruce Grant highlights the social and official histories of the terms "internationalism" and "cosmopolitanism." Grant argues that after cosmopolitanism's recuperation in the Brezhnev era, in Baku it began to signify ascribed notions of hierarchy and social mobility within the state related to Russification. Indeed, the acquired significance of the term resonates with the introduction of the ideologies of internationalization in the former imperial space of the Caucasus. See: Bruce Grant, "Cosmopolitan Baku." *Ethnos* 75.2 (2010): 123-147.

<sup>10</sup>One of the most famous debates about the role of religion in the civic life of the Russian intelligentsia can be found in the 1909 collection *Landmarks* [Вехи] (1909). See: Boris Shragin and Albert Todd, eds. *Landmarks*.

status as an empire, *rosiiskii* also encompassed the non-Russian subjects of the empire.<sup>11</sup>

Russians referred to Muslims of the Caucasus as *Caucasian* [*kavkazets*] or *mountaineers* [*gortsy*] to emphasize a connection between the physical topography of the Caucasus and the character of its people. However, the term Muslim was used by Russians in order to distinguish religious otherness, and by the people of the Caucasus as a means of self-identification. While the term Muslim did not account for Sunni, Shi‘i and Sufi religious differences or ethnic distinctions, it expressed a unified sense of belonging to a creed.<sup>12</sup> The term *Türk* was also used by Muslims throughout the empire who were Turkic speakers. As with the term Muslim, it did not account for regional linguistic or cultural differences, but rather referred to points of cultural cohesion. Similar to the parallel terms *russkii* and *rossiiskii*, the term *Azeri* described an ethnic identity and the term Azerbaijani [*Azərbaycanlı*], a civic one. Indeed, while the latter appeared in the press at the turn of the century, it did not gain circulation in official documents until the mid-twentieth century, between the 1920s and the 1930s.<sup>13</sup>

## **The Literature of the Russian Empire and the Caucasus**

This dissertation takes up the burgeoning Russian literary tradition amidst the processes of imperial expansion in the Caucasus, and its relationship to the works of Muslim writers and

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<sup>11</sup>The legal term, *inorodtsy*, was used to refer to non-Slavic and non-Orthodox peoples of the empire.

<sup>12</sup>Sunni and Shi‘i Islam historically differ on the question of the succession of the Prophet as the caliph of the Islamic community. While, Sunnis believe that Muhammed appointed Abu Bakr, Shi‘a believe that he instead appointed Ali. Many other distinctions can be made between the groups, including the interpretation of the hadith – or the sayings of the Prophet, observations of practice, and the return of the Mahdi – the redeemer of Islam in Islamic eschatology, which the Shi‘a call the Twelfth Imam. Sufism is a mystical form of Islam. Practicioners known as *şūfī* belong to different *turuq* (pl.) or groups, such as the Naqshbandiyya tariqa, which is discussed in the first chapter.

<sup>13</sup>To this end, Harun Yilmaz argues that the term was artificially created by the Soviet government to delimit ties with Persia and Turkey. Yilmaz, “The Soviet Union and the Construction of Azerbaijani National Identity in the 1930s,” *Iranian Studies: Journal of the International Society of Iranian Studies* 46.5 (2013): 1-23.



thinkers in the region. I examine intertextual exchanges between Russians and Muslims of the Caucasus and the ways in which imperial and Bolshevik politics from 1828 through the 1920s shaped literary forms produced in this period in the former Russian imperial territories. My literary selection encompasses works written by members of the Russian intelligentsia who participated in the architecture of the idea of a Russian nation in the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, many of these figures traveled to the Caucasus as political exiles, in the service of the imperial administration, or to participate in revolutionary politics and intellectual exchange. I analyze poetry, short prose and essays written by Russian writers, who have since become integral to the Russian Romantic, Realist and Modernist literary canons, and who write about the imperial territories – specifically the Caucasus. These include: Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, Mikhail Iur'evich Lermontov, Nikolai Vasilevich Gogol', Vladimir Vladimirovich Maiakovskii and Velimir Khlebnikov. Attempting to displace the imperial authority of these texts, I examine the ways in which they are referenced, parodied, translated and transformed by their Muslim interlocutors, including: the Adyghe writer Sultan Kazy-Girei, and the Azeri writers Mirzə Fətəli Axundov (Mirza Fatali Akhundov), Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə (Jalil Mammedquluzadeh), Abbas Səhhət (Abbas Sahhat), Məhəmməd Hadi (Mehammed Hadi) and Mikayıl Rəfili (Mikayil Rafili). These intertextual encounters not only reveal the manner in which the Russian orientalist literary canon was read by Muslim writers and thinkers from the Caucasus, but it further renders legible how their engagement with the Russian literary imaginary shaped their own discussions of the relationship between reform, modern forms of governance, and Islam.

I argue that the Caucasus in particular was an important ideological, geopolitical and

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<sup>14</sup> The intelligentsia was a group of civic-minded intellectuals [*intelligenty*] both of noble and non-noble birth, which began to develop in Russia at end of the eighteenth century under the reign of Catherine the Great. Particularly during the nineteenth century, the ideas of the Russian intelligentsia were in many ways shaped by the influence of French, British, and German culture. See: Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (New York: Penguin, 1979), *passim*.

economic site in the Russian empire – during the revolutionary period as well as the formation of the Soviet Union. Located between the Ottoman and Persian empires, the Caucasus region functioned as a historic trading post on the Silk Route and, at the turn of the twentieth century, became the second largest producer of crude oil in the world.<sup>15</sup> After the signing of the Treaty of Turkmenchay in 1828, which ended the Russo-Persian wars (1804-1828), the Russian empire annexed the Caucasian territories north of the Araz river.<sup>16</sup> Russian writers consequently began to travel more frequently to the Caucasus. Members of the Russian intelligentsia were exiled to the Caucasus for criticizing the autocratic power of the tsar, or sent to serve in military campaigns. Writers began to set their literary works in the Caucasus and ethnographers, linguists and geographers produced information about the terrain and peoples.<sup>17</sup> In this dissertation, I argue that Russian orientalist representations of the Caucasus from the nineteenth century through the Bolshevik revolution emphasized its ideological function as a place where the very notion of freedom was being redefined. The portrait of Muslims shifted from the nineteenth century idea of the individual, Muslim freedom-fighter and mountaineer, to a Marxist inspired collective vision of oil workers as the epitome of the “eastern proletariat.” Representations of the topography highlight visions of a sublime landscape, beginning with the plunging mountains of Byron's Alps, and evolving into a mystification of the technological sublimity of the oil fields.

While the story of Russians in the Caucasus is well known, literary works by Muslim

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<sup>15</sup>See: Bruce Grant, “Cosmopolitan Baku,” *Ethnos* 75.2 (2010): 123-147.

<sup>16</sup>While the first diplomatic and military ventures in the Caucasus began under the reign of Ivan IV in the sixteenth century, major military campaigns and the appointment of the first Russian viceroy of the Caucasus, Prince Grigori Aleksandrovich Potemkin, occurred under the reign of Catherine II during the late eighteenth century.

<sup>17</sup>This group of orientalists includes the writers Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, Mikhail Iur'evich Lermontov, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Bestuzhev-Marlinskii, as well as the historian Vasilii Vladimirovich Bartol'd, the linguist Nikolai Iakovlevich Marr, and those writers who worked for the *Imperial Geographical Society* [*Imperatorskoe russkoe geograficheskoe obschestvo*] (1850-1917). The group was one of the major organs of Russian orientalist studies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For a discussion of lesser known orientalists see, Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy*.

writers and thinkers in the Caucasus were largely written in Turkic languages through the mid-twentieth century, and thus remain underrepresented in contemporary Anglophone scholarship.<sup>18</sup> However, the scholarship and literary production of Muslim intellectuals in the Caucasus influenced the development of discourses of Islamic Modernism in Turkey, Central Asia, Iran, Egypt and Algeria during the twentieth century. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, the literature of the Caucasus, which was primarily written in Persian, was increasingly written in Azeri Turkish as well as Russian.<sup>19</sup>

While the terms *Muslim* and *Turkic* primarily reference culturally inscribed signifiers, they acquired political valences as they entered public fora, such as in the press, the theatre, and political demonstrations. In this way, the notion of supranational Pan-Turkic and Pan-Islamic discourses in the Caucasus primarily functioned as cultural signifiers that were interpolated in civic contexts. In this regard, the historian Audrey Altstadt outlines two forms of Pan-Turkism. On the one hand, a “political ideology of world domination” was developed by European orientalist, including the Hungarian Arminius Vambery and the Frenchman Léon Cahun in order to justify the imperial expansion of the Russian and British empires in Central Asia.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, the idea of an ethno-linguistic form of self-identification was created by the Turkic peoples of the Russian empire as a cultural movement.<sup>21</sup> That is, while Vambery theorized the

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<sup>18</sup>Some of the most notable discussions of the literature of the Muslims of the Caucasus in Anglophone scholarship include Bruce Grant, *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Rebecca Gould, “Topographies of Anticolonialism: The Ecopoetical Sublime in the Caucasus from Tolstoy to Mamakaev,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 50.1 (2013): 87-107; Erika Haber, *The Myth of the Non-Russian: Isgander and Aitmatov's Magical Universe* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003); Maliheh S. Tyrrell, *Aesopian Literary Dimensions of Azerbaijani Literature of the Soviet Period, 1920-1990* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2001).

<sup>19</sup>Persian poetic and theatrical traditions were highly influential during the development of Azeri Turkic literature.  
<sup>20</sup>Audrey Altstadt, “Azerbaijani Turks' Response to Russian Conquest,” *Studies in Comparative Communism* 19.3 (1986): 267-286, 280.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

creation of a Pan-Turkic state from the Adriatic to China, Azeri authors instead emphasized the creation of a community of readers and a body of literary texts. While this historiographical distinction is necessary, these supranational signifiers participated in the creation of a literary corpus that generated its own history of impact and influence within and beyond the borders of the former imperial territories.

During the nineteenth century, the increased access to Russian language education among local elites made Russian and European literature available in translation. The city of Tbilisi [Tiflis], the current capital of Georgia, served as the administrative center of the Russian Caucasus and brought together Russian and Azeri writers in local literary salons. In the nineteenth century, Tiflis became the center for publications, art, music, and theatrical productions.<sup>22</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, the oil boom channeled resources to Baku, which led to the emergence of a Muslim entrepreneurial class that lent its support to the movement of Muslim cultural reform. Some of the tangible results of the reform movement included the emergence of an international Turkic language press, the internationally touring Tağıyev theatre company – named after its benefactor the entrepreneur and intellectual Zeynalabdin Tağıyev – and the joint Azeri-Russian Azerkino film company.<sup>23</sup>

In the writings of the Muslims of the Caucasus, as well as throughout the empire more broadly, Islam served as a signifier of cultural and political reform. My use of the terms Pan-Islamism and Islamic Modernism does not refer only to Islamic scholarship, but rather to an entire project of civic reform that at many points intersected with the work of Islamic scholars

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<sup>22</sup>Tiflis is the Russian name for the city Tbilisi which was used under Russian imperialism.

<sup>23</sup>See: Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 31-62; Takhira Gashamkyzy Mamed, *Azerbaidjanskaia natsionalnaia dramaturiiia* (Tbilisi: Iskusstvo, 2001), *passim*; Michael G. Smith, "Cinema for the 'Soviet East': National Fact and Revolutionary Fiction in Early Azerbaijani Film" *Slavic Review* 56.4 (1997): 645-678.

within the Russian empire known as the *new method* or *jadid* movement, as well as the work of global reformers such as the Persian/Afghani scholar Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī.<sup>24</sup> The *jadids* were a cultural reform movement that sought to reconcile Islam with modernity, relying on Qur'anic scripture to legitimize the use of European technology, and drawing upon the critical faculties of *ijtihad* to prove the compatibility of Islam with European thought.<sup>25</sup> Citing J.O Vall Azade-Ayse Rorlich argues, “The search for ‘self’—individual and national – echoed the challenges of *tajdid* (renewal) and it enriched the meaning of *islah* (reform) since *jadids* were increasingly mindful of the importance of the ‘tradition of revitalizing the Islamic faith and practice from within, (as) an authentic part of working out the Islamic revelation in history.’”<sup>26</sup> In this way, I argue that literature and essays written in the Caucasus attempted to inscribe a space for Muslims and in some cases Islamic revelation in the history of the Russian empire and the formation of the Soviet Union.<sup>27</sup> My use of the term Islamic Modernism also implies connections between the discourses produced in the Caucasus and the work of writers and thinkers in Iran,

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<sup>24</sup>Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), *passim*.

<sup>25</sup>*Ijtihad* refers to the faculty of critical thought or independent reasoning in Islamic law. For a discussion of the role of *ijtihad* in Islamic revivalist thought see, A. Dallal, “The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought, 1750-1850,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113.3 (1993): 341-359.; The origins of the term *jadid* can be traced to the reforms of the Muslim school and the introduction of the phonetic method [*usul-u-jadid*] for teaching the alphabet. Ismail Gasprali was launched the first of these schools in the Crimea. See the Azade-Ayse Rorlich’s introduction in Ismail Bey Gasprali, *French and African Letters, 1887-1891*, trans. Azade-Ayse Rorlich (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2008), 19; For a discussion of Jadidism in the Russian empire see also Rorlich, *The Volga Tatars: A Profile in National Resilience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986); Ingeborg Baldauf, “Jadidism in Central Asia within Reformism and Modernism in the Muslim World,” *Die Welt des Islams* 41.1(2001): 72-88.

<sup>26</sup>Azade-Ayse Rorlich, “Intersecting Discourses in the Press of the Muslims of Crimea, Middle Volga and Caucasus: The Woman Question and the Nation,” *Gender and Identity Construction: Women of Central Asia, the Caucasus and Turkey*, eds. Feride Acar and Ayse Gunes-Ayata (Boston: Brill, 2000), 144-145; J.O. Vall, “Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: *Tajdid* and *Islah*,” *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, ed. J.L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 32-48.

<sup>27</sup>Altstadt also notes the function of “Islamic precedent(s) to support reforms” such as “the Koran’s provision for the consultation by the ruler with other responsible members of the community...to demonstrate that constitutional government was provided for in the Koran and therefore must be accepted by the contemporary Muslim populations and rulers.” Altstadt, “Azerbaijani Turks’ Response to Russian Conquest,” 281.

Algeria, Latin America, and China.<sup>28</sup> Altstadt summarizes the role of these cultural signifiers in the Caucasus as the force of “a pre-nationalist or proto-nationalist 'localism'” that was generated by local authors.<sup>29</sup> Specifically, she distinguishes the orientalist production of ideas of Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turkic doctrine from local historical, linguistic and literary efforts. While Altstadt includes the figure of the historian and linguist Mirzə Kazım bəy [Aleksandr Kasimovich Kazembek / Mirza Kazim bey] among her examples of local authors, as she notes, his work was produced at Kazan University and thus also participated in a tradition of Russian orientalist scholarship. This dissertation highlights the ways in which intersections between Russian and Muslim scholarly and literary production throughout the empire was, if not global, certainly supranational.

### **The Threshold as a Reading Practice**

Writing from internal exile in Kazakhstan, the twentieth century literary theorist Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin implicitly framed discourse, or more appropriately, the social history of the word [*slovo*], in the intellectual, historical and geopolitical context of the Russian empire.<sup>30</sup> One of the first representative novels written in Russian, Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* [*Geroi nashego vremeni*] (1841), was also produced on the southern frontier of the empire in the Caucasus. Bakhtin's exile, while nearly a century after Lermontov's, was the result of his anti-secular politics, notably his participation in a Bolshevik Orthodox Christian group.<sup>31</sup> The

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<sup>28</sup>See the discussion of the global impact of the Tatar intellectual Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev in Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, *Sultan Galiev, le père de la révolution tiers-mondists* (Paris: Fayard, 1986), 274-279.

<sup>29</sup>Altstadt, “Azerbaijani Turks' Response to Russian Conquest,” 281.

<sup>30</sup>See: Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 259-422.

<sup>31</sup>Bakhtin was exiled to Kustanai for his involvement in the Bolshevik Orthodox Christian group *Resurrection*

biographies of these two members of the imperial and Soviet intelligentsia reflect broader preoccupations with the role of the empire and Russian Orthodoxy in shaping Russian social and literary discourse. Indeed, the literary and philosophical writings of members of intelligentsia were informed by Orthodox theology from the eighteenth through the early twentieth century.<sup>32</sup> Bakhtin's biography thus provides a belated example of enduring features of Russian culture of the imperial period. As Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist argue in their important critical biography *Mikhail Bakhtin*, the battle between Christian thought and the challenge to traditional theology by the developments in science after the Enlightenment remain central to Bakhtin's understanding of authorship.<sup>33</sup> Clark and Holquist's biographical sketch of Bakhtin exposes the tensions between his ideas about authorship and the intellectual history of the Russian empire. In this way, Bakhtin's writings make it possible to decipher the literature of the Russian empire through his work's linkages to imperial geopolitics, as well as philosophical inquiries that addressed the hybrid, spiritual and social dimensions of language.

My readings focus on the ways in which texts participate in national and supranational literary traditions. These texts, which emerge from a series of imperial encounters with the Persian, Ottoman and Russian traditions, require an attentiveness to the semiotic value of discourse, that is, systems of social and historical meaning in language. My analysis aims to highlight the function of grammatical forms, vocabulary, genres, and symbols in the life of the text on the threshold of multiple 'national' traditions. This reading strategy aims to critically

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[*Voskresenie*] that met between 1918 and 1928. See Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 126-132.

<sup>32</sup>For a discussion of the relationship between the work of Bakhtin and Nikolai Aleksandrovich Berdiaev see: David Patterson, "Dostoevsky's Poetics of Spirit: Bakhtin and Berdyaev," *Dostoevsky Studies* 8 (1987): 219-231. The collection of works philosophical works, *Landmarks* [Вехи] (1909) provides an example of Berdiaev and other's insistence on the necessity of the Orthodox tradition. See: Boris Shragin and Albert Todd, eds. *Landmarks*, trans. Marian Schwartz (New York: Karz Howard, 1977).

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid*, 82.

assess how representations of the Caucasus rely on the form and content of the idea of empire.

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* [*Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo*], Bakhtin's explicit focus is on the life of the word in the novel, and specifically Dostoevskii's innovations to the genre. However, his major intervention is his portrait of the incompleteness, multiplicity, and mutability of the self and the word in literature. His contributions to semiotic analysis have become particularly influential in Comparative Literature studies over the last two decades. Specifically, his location of meaning in polyphonic discourse has resonated with postcolonial theorists interested in questions of hybridity and liminality. However, unlike hybridity studies, the necessity of dialogism for Bakhtin is rooted in spiritual and psychological inquiries in addition to cultural and political debates. It is precisely for this reason, that I would argue that Bakhtin's work is particularly relevant to understanding literary representations in the context of the Russian empire. Both Russian and Muslim writers emerged from intellectual traditions that attempted to imagine the coexistence between religious scholarship and the sciences of the European Enlightenment. Bakhtin's literary theory, in this way, offers a vision of the *word* that participates in multiple linguistic and cultural, as well as secular and spiritual systems of meaning.

Bakhtin's discussion of the figure of the threshold first appears in his work on Dostoevskii, pointedly located in the marginalia of his own work in footnotes and appendices. He discusses dialogic discourse as the externalization of a crisis between consciousnesses. Similarly, he describes the threshold as, “(n)ot that which takes place within, but that which takes place on the boundary between one's own and someone else's consciousness, on the threshold. And everything internal gravitates not toward itself but is turned to the outside and dialogized,



every internal experience ends up on the boundary, encounters another, and in this tension-filled encounter lies its entire essence.”<sup>34</sup> The crisis of consciousness about which Bakhtin writes epitomizes the crisis in the idea of language as an object of political and social study that also has a spiritual dimension.<sup>35</sup> While the social features of language are explicitly discussed in Bakhtin's work, the spiritual features of discourse are often implied.<sup>36</sup> The threshold is thus a meeting point for a vision of the word in crisis, between languages, cultures, literary traditions, as well as political, psychological and theological consciousnesses or systems of meaning.

The figure of the threshold as a crisis in consciousness within discourse provides a compelling interlocutor to Edward Said's comparative (contrapuntal) mode of reading. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said writes that “we must be able to think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence and system of external relationships, all of them co-existing and interacting with others.”<sup>37</sup> Reading contrapuntalism alongside Bakhtin's threshold, I not only emphasize this *co-existing* system of relationships but also the act of representing identity intertextually, within the heteroglossia presented by texts rather than through the identification of authorial polemics. Bakhtin's notion of the internal dialogicity of the textual utterance here strengthens the argument for Said's contrapuntalism by

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<sup>34</sup>Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 287.

<sup>35</sup> Caryl Emerson poses this debate in terms of Foucault's discussion of the nineteenth century revolution in linguistics in *The Order of Things*, in her fascinating discussion of the relationship between Bakhtin's work and contemporary debates in linguistics and psychology. See Emerson, “The Outer Word and Inner Speech: Bakhtin, Vygotsky, and the Internationalization of Language,” *Critical Inquiry*. 10.2 (1983): 245-264.

<sup>36</sup>See: David Patterson, “Dostoevsky's Poetics of Spirit: Bakhtin and Berdyaev,” *Dostoevsky Studies* 8 (1987): 219-230.

<sup>37</sup>Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 36. Said develops the idea of contrapuntality as a response to the critique of his model's Eurocentrism. As Aamir Mufti argues, Contrapuntality “enacts a complex relationship with the notion of tradition—linguistic, national, civilizational—that it both takes seriously and puts into question by opening up any particular tradition to interaction with other such purportedly discrete entities.” Aamir Mufti, “Global Comparativism,” 474, 477.

not only situating the text between “both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it” but within a matrix of individual, social and spiritual meaning systems.<sup>38</sup> While Said's model relies on an explicitly Foucaultian model of discourse that exposes relations of power embedded in forms of knowledge, Bakhtin's dialogism articulates new modes for understanding these hierarchies of power through the social and spiritual functions of language. In other words, Foucault's idea of discourse relies on a critical approach to the epistemological foundations the language, while Bakhtin understands discourse through the social life and creative power of the word. In dialogue with Bakhtin and Said, these threshold spaces reveal discursive networks that animate literature produced by Russian and Muslim authors in the imperial context, between epistemological and spiritual systems of meaning.

My dissertation is organized into four chapters, each of which addresses intertextual encounters between Muslim writers from the Caucasus and their Russian interlocutors, in addition to exploring connections to Anglo-French philosophical and literary traditions. The chapters highlight symbols and formal features that were crucial to the production of the idea of Russian literature by tracing their translation and transformation in the works of Muslim writers from the Caucasus. This dissertation traces two related modalities of critical interpretation. The first two chapters examine the dialogicity of discourse as it manifested in the circulation of words, symbols and ideas between Russian, Azeri and Russophone works during the nineteenth century. The second two chapters address the collapse or breakdown of nineteenth century Russian imperial forms and structures of language as they were contested during the twentieth century. In this way, the chapters trace the cultural history of the late imperial period, through the 1905 revolution and the formation of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan in 1920.

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<sup>38</sup>Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 66.

The first two chapters discuss the symbolic figures of Pushkin and the Caucasian hero as foundational myths that accompanied Russia's entry into cultural modernity and its discourses of Eurasian identity respectively. I illustrate the ways in which these myths of Russianness were adapted to produce more diverse subjectivities. The final two chapters discuss how forms of cultural reproduction such as parody, translation and transliteration both established and contested the idea of empire amidst a period of revolution and civil war. Probing into the dialogue between the works of Muslim writers of the Caucasus and those of Russian writers, I argue, transforms our understanding of cultural production in the Russian empire. The comparative framework of the threshold affords insight into the crisis in consciousness, which in turn exposes the role that literary forms and their corresponding semiotic valences play in the production of imagined communities.

My first chapter, “Heterodoxy and Heteroglossia: Axundov on the Threshold of Russian Literature,” examines the idea of literary modernity through the mythologization of the figure of Pushkin. I argue that Axundov, who was among the first to write in a contemporary form of Azeri Turkic, envisions modern Azeri literature through his invocation of Pushkin. In his poem honoring the death of Pushkin written as a *matəm qəsidə*, a mourning poem in the Arabo-Persian tradition, Axundov revisits the Romantic idea of national literature, and gives it shape in the *qəsidə* or *qaşīdah* form.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, I address the ways in which Axundov's experimental theatrical and philosophical works draw upon ideas and forms that range from French and Islamic philosophy to Russian Romanticism, in order to create a supranational and eclectic linguistic space. Much of the existing scholarship on Axundov from the Soviet era to the present

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<sup>39</sup>The *qaşīdah* is a form of lyric poetry usually written as a panegyric, as praise to a king or noble person. It generally opens with a description of nature and closes with an address to the writer's pen name. It was famously used by the Arabic and Persian philosophers Ibn ‘arabī and Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna).

has read his interest in Russian literature and the European Enlightenment, as well as his active critiques of the corruption of Persian Islamic institutions, rather simplistically as proof of his renunciation of Islam. However, I argue that his remythologization of Pushkin reflects instead an interest in according a spiritual consciousness to literary works. In this way, he investigates the possibilities of engaging the critical faculties of literature and philosophy as a means of reinvigorating the spiritual power of the word. The image of Pushkin as a prophet, for example, becomes a way of announcing a new Azeri literature that investigates the relationship between literary and spiritual prophesy.

My second chapter, “Prisoners of the Caucasian Imaginary: Lermontov and Kazy-Girei’s Heroes in Exile” examines the role of Romantic representations of the landscape of the Caucasus and the figure of the exiled freedom fighter in the construction of an idea of Russian civic [*rossiiskii*] identity. I connect Lermontov’s Caucasian tales to Byron’s orientalist legacy, and examine the relationship between Russian and European orientalist traditions – specifically the role of faith and fate in defining Lermontov’s ideas of freedom. Placing a Russophone short story by the Adyghe writer Kazy-Girei in dialogue with Lermontov’s works, I illustrate the ways in which Kazy-Girei re-envision the orientalist mythology of the Eurasian hero and the liminal landscape of the Caucasus. Particularly considering the prominent role of language as a cultural signifier in the Russian empire, Kazy-Girei’s decision to write in Russian and publish his text in Pushkin’s literary journal aimed to broaden notions of Russian civic identity.<sup>40</sup> Kazy-Girei’s manipulation of images and phrases from the Russian Romantic orientalist tradition and his account of personal memories, challenge the limits of the idea of the hero in the Russian literary

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<sup>40</sup>The daring choice for a non-Slavic Muslim to publish in Russian was confirmed by Pushkin’s racist editorial remarks, which described Kazy-Girei as a “wild son of the Caucasus.” Sultan Kazy-Girei, “Dolina Azhitugai,” *Sovremennik* 1 (1836): 155-169, 169.

imagination. Kazy-Girei places Lermontov's vision of Eurasian cultural hybridity into crisis, revealing its dependence on European forms of national identity. The relationship between Kazy-Girei's and Lermontov's texts reveals how representations of the exiled hero in the Caucasus tested the limits of a supranational Eurasian literary space, by constructing foundational myths of imperial hegemony, as well as those of difference and resistance. This chapter thus considers interventions into global debates about Orientalism and postcolonialism from the vantage point of the Russian Caucasus.

My third chapter, “Textual Deviance in the Russian Empire: Gogol' and Məmmədquluzadə's Parodic Innovations,” traces the form of parody as a mode of representing identity. I examine Məmmədquluzadə's reinvention of Gogol's prose as well as the function of his *mise en scène* of Gogol's work in the Caucasus in 1906. I highlight the tensions between national and cultural identity as well as foreign acculturation by French and Russian hegemonic forces respectively in Gogol's and Məmmədquluzadə's prose. This chapter approaches representations of linguistic, cultural and religious alterity through an examination of the forms of repetition and parody that connect the prose worlds of Balzac, Gogol' and Məmmədquluzadə. Gogol's self-exoticized performance of Ukrainian culture in his prose has been read in Slavic studies, since the work of the early twentieth century Formalists, as an exemplary form of Russian literature's hybrid character. I discuss parody as a mode of generating hybridity in Russian literature, particularly as it is conceived by early Soviet Formalist critics. Then I trace the ways in which similar modes of parody acquired a new life in Məmmədquluzadə's work. For Məmmədquluzadə as for the Formalists, Gogol's parodic prose participated in a revolutionary spirit as well as notions of hybridity that were instrumental in the creation of an authoritative

Soviet multiculturalism.

My final chapter, “Translating Early Twentieth Century Baku: The Romantic Poetic Futures of the Russian and Azeri Avant-Gardes,” traces the role of translation in the formation of early Soviet politics and poetics. I discuss the translation of Russian Romanticism in the work of the Russian and Azeri avant-garde poets as well as Bolshevik politicians in Baku during the revolution and civil war. Translations of Russian works into Azeri became popular during the early twentieth century with the expansion of the Turkic language press. For the Bolshevik politicians and avant-garde poets who traveled to the Caucasus during the revolutionary period, Baku became an example of the power of translation to spread Bolshevism to the Muslim regions of the former empire. Most notably during the 1920s, Baku attracted politicians attending The First Congress of the People of the East, as well as poets and philosophers such as Klebnikov, Kruchenykh, Ivanov, and Maiakovskii. As these Russian writers imagined supranational revolutionary spaces through the cultural topography of the Caucasus, their Azeri counterparts – Səhhət, Hadi and Rəfilı also drew upon Romantic poetics to create Azeri subjectivities that envisioned connections between Islam and Marxist politics. My epilogue engages with the Latin script reforms of 1923 and 1929 and the ways in which it changed both the shape of Azeri poetry, as well as its shifting relationship to Arabo-Persian and Russian poetic forms.

By tracing literary forms in the Russian empire, my dissertation aims to provide a historical portrait of cultural life in the empire, as well as to generate connections to global debates about national identity, empire, Orientalism, and Islamic Modernism. In the chapters that follow, I aim to understand these works through their participation in a world literary economy of

forms and symbols that intersected in this historical moment of empire and revolution in the Caucasus. A semiotic understanding of language and its simultaneous engagement with multiple cultural registers of meaning is crucial to placing these discourses on a comparative threshold. This critical threshold exposes the crises in consciousness that characterizes the Russian empire's expansion into the Caucasus and local writers and thinkers' roles in shaping the early Soviet space. This dissertation consequently aims to create new vantage points for understanding networks of literary exchange by highlighting the shifts in the hegemony of the Russian literary canon, and by bringing critical works of Muslims of the Caucasus into discussions about the cultural space of Eurasia.

## 1. Chapter One

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### Heterodoxy and Heteroglossia: Mirzə Fətəli Axundov on the Threshold of Russian Literature

He left his native threshold  
And flew to a far corner  
With the happy ghost of freedom.  
Freedom! Still only you  
He sought in the desert world.

Покинул он родной предел  
И в край далекий полетел  
С веселым призраком свободы.  
Свобода! Он одной тебя  
Еще искал в пустынном мире.

Pushkin, "The Prisoner of the Caucasus," ["Kavkazskii plennik"]<sup>41</sup>

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The old white-haired Caucasus answers your howling in the songs of Sabukhi's  
verses.

Старец седовлавый Кавказ отвечает на песни твои стоном в стихах  
Сабухия.

Axundov, "On the death of Pushkin," ["Na smert' Pushkina"]<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Aleksandr Pushkin, "Kavkazskii plennik" *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii v 10 tomakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1979), 4: 93-94.

<sup>42</sup>Sabukhi is Axundov's penname. All citations of Mirzə Fətəli Axundov, "Na smert' Pushkina" are taken from his



These short lines by Mirzə Fətəli Axundov and Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin were written in the Caucasus more than a decade apart, during which time Russia had annexed the territory north of the Araz river with the signing of the Treaty of Turkmenchay.<sup>43</sup> The bifurcation of Azeri Muslims across the new border with Persia and the introduction of Russian cultural and political hegemony changed the intellectual as well as physical geography of the Caucasus.<sup>44</sup> Pushkin's speaker's disembarkment onto this "desert world" is shrouded in the discursive trappings of a European orientalist fantasy – a freedom achieved in the boundlessness of the desert topography. His poem "The Prisoner of the Caucasus" ["Kavkazskii plenik"] recounts the story of a young Russian soldier who finds himself a prisoner of war in the Caucasus and is cared for by a beautiful young maiden, who drowns herself after helping him escape from captivity. Pushkin represents his speaker as at once an agent in Russia's conquest and a captive, trapped between the geopolitical borders of Russia and Persia, as well as the ideological binaries of Occident and Orient.<sup>45</sup> Axundov commemorates Pushkin's death by challenging these very

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original Russian translations collected in Shikhali Kurbanov [Şixəli Qurbanov], *A.C. Pushkin i Azerbaidjan*. (Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe izdatel'stvo detskoi i iunosheskoi literatury, 1959 ), 103-108.

<sup>43</sup>This treaty changed the political, physical and cultural geography of the region dividing the Azeri people between Persia and Russia along the Araz river. In particular, the Turkic cultural center of Tabriz was separated from the rest of the Azeri cities.

<sup>44</sup>By Azeri I refer to the Turkic-speaking people, a majority of which are Shi'i, who inhabit the territory between modern day Iran and Daghestan, flanked by the Caspian Sea. I use the term Azeri to emphasize the porous national boundaries between various cultural identities in the region: the cultural center of Tbilisi, and the shared cultural heritage with the Persian, Russian and Ottoman empires. However, the territory of Azerbaijan, which held one brief period of statehood under the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic between 1918 and 1920 and after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, is populated by many ethno-linguistic groups including Tats – or mountain Jews, Avars, and the Lesghians – who also inhabit much of the North Caucasus, Chechnya and Dagestan. Moshe Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan* (Abingdon: Frank Cass & co., 1993), 1-29.

<sup>45</sup>This shifting geopolitical discourse is outlined perhaps most clearly by Katya Hokanson in her critical reading of Edward Said's *Orientalism* as a series of power relations marked by the formula of center and periphery. See Katya Hokanson, *Writing at Russia's Borders* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 3-22; Mark Bassin, "Russia between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geographic Space," *Slavic Review* 50 (Spring 1991): 1-17.

binaries. He announces the creation of a new literary tradition in his celebration of heteroglossic and heterodoxic literary discourse on the Russian imperial frontier. The “white haired Caucasus” inscribes a new life for Pushkin’s literary legacy in Axundov's fusion of Russian and classical Persian verse.

This chapter describes the ways in which Axundov's poetry, theatre and philosophy envisions Azeri literary discourse on the threshold of a supranational literary economy. Specifically, in my analysis of Axundov's engagement with Pushkin, I examine discourses of Russia's liminality produced by the Russian intelligentsia in the Caucasus. I also situate Axundov's work in a series of supranational literary exchanges by tracing the intellectual and social history of his language, literary forms and symbols. Axundov's work, written in Persian, Azeri Turkic, and Russian, is not only *polyglossic* – that is written in multiple languages – but also *heteroglossic*, in that it contains many different cultural registers of speech. His work's relationship to forms of spiritual and secular enlightenment also renders his texts heterodoxic, in so far as they participate in multiple secular and religious discursive registers. In his essay, “Discourse in the Novel” [“Slovo v romane”], Bakhtin describes the relationship among cultural systems of meaning as centripetal and centrifugal forces of language, at once universalizing and particularizing speech.<sup>46</sup> He states that, “Every utterance participates in the 'unitary language' (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces).”<sup>47</sup> For Bakhtin, historical, critical, and theoretical discourses are not divided according to ethical or aesthetic functions, but rather remain coexistent dialogic forces.<sup>48</sup> This mode of reading ethical and aesthetic functions together,

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<sup>46</sup>See Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, 259-423.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid*, 272.

<sup>48</sup>*Dialogism* is, in a sense, this act of co-being, which animates the forces of novelistic discourse, an internalization

in turn, informs my analysis of Axundov's literary and philosophical corpus, as well his significance in contemporary scholarship.

The biographies of Axundov and his contemporaries – the poet Mirzə Şəfi Vazeh (1794-1852) and the poet, linguist, and historian Abbasqulu ağa Bakıxanov Qüdsi (1794-1847) – articulate a divided homeland mentalité, forced to reconcile with the repartition of the lands of Tabriz from the territories north of the Araz river.<sup>49</sup> Under the Safavid dynasty, particularly from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, Persian language and culture played an integral role in the poetic tradition in the Caucasus. However, in the nineteenth century Russian began to gain currency as a dimension of civic identity among intellectuals who sought to gain access to the ideas and literature of Europe, as well as Russia. Vazeh and Bakıxanov carried on their classical training in the Safavid poetic and philosophical traditions, writing largely in Persian. However, Axundov was among the first writers to author works in modern Azeri Turkic, as well as to translate and publish in Russian.<sup>50</sup> Axundov was born in 1812 to a wealthy Molla in Nukha (today Sheki), a historic trading post located in the northern region of the South Caucasus. After continuing his education in Tabriz, Axundov began preparing for religious work under the guidance of his uncle, until he met Vazeh. Inspired by Vazeh's interest in European thought, in

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of the compositional form of dialogue. Bakhtin differentiates between dialogic discourses and the form of the dialogue. “Dialogue is studied merely as a compositional form in the structuring of speech, but the internal dialogism of the world (which occurs in a monologic utterance as well as in a rejoinder), the dialogism that penetrates its entire structure, all its semantic and expressive layers, is almost entirely ignored.” Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, 279. In their glossary Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson define dialogism as “the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as a part of a greater whole—there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others.” Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 426.

<sup>49</sup> Mirzə Fətəli is referred to by many names: Axundov in Soviet and Russian scholarship, Akhundzadə in Middle Eastern and Iranian studies, and variations of both in Azerbaijani scholarship.

<sup>50</sup> Axundov's first works in Azeri Turkic include: the play, “The Story of Monsieur Jordan the Botanist, and the Famous Dervish Mastali Shah” [“Hekayəti-müsyö Jordan həkimi-nəbatat Dərviş Məstəli şah caduküni-məşur”] (1850) and his novella, *The Deceiver of the Stars* [*Aldanmış Kəvakib*] (1857). There were also thinkers from the Caucasus who made their name in Saint-Petersburg through their contributions to the creation of Russian orientology (see Chapter Two).

1834 he moved to Tbilisi – the administrative center of the Caucasus – to work as a civil employee and translator in the Russian imperial bureaucracy.

The contemporary historian Ali Abasov describes the movement of writers and reformers during the early nineteenth century as the “Azerbaijani Enlightenment.”<sup>51</sup> For Abasov, this movement of thinkers committed to critical thought and reform arose in response to the “socio-cultural shock” of the collision of Russian and Azerbaijani culture. While his analysis implies the existence of discrete and cohesive national identities more than a century before an Azerbaijani state was formed, Abasov nonetheless highlights a crucial moment in the formation of the intellectual geography of the Russian empire. In this way, I argue that Axundov's interest in Russian and European literature as well as his engagement with Islamic philosophy was in part mediated by his interaction with the Russian intelligentsia in the Caucasus. Axundov's concern with civic issues of reform shaped a new generation of Azeri intellectuals in the Caucasus. His writings critique the domains of education, women's rights, and language reform.<sup>52</sup> His public service further included promoting the foundation of an Azeri theatre scene in Tbilisi and aiding in the creation of the Gori seminars.<sup>53</sup>

The Russian presence in the Caucasus was diverse. Exiled poets and orientalist gathered in literary salons in the imperial administrative center of the Caucasus in Tiflis [Tbilisi]. The writings of the exiled members of the intelligentsia, including the Decembrist sympathizers, were particularly influential.<sup>54</sup> In 1841 Vazeh organized a literary salon known as the “Court” or

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<sup>51</sup>Ali Abasov, “At the Original Sources of National Consciousness: The Azerbaijani Enlightenment,” *Today and Tomorrow: Azerbaijan in Focus* 1 (2008): 54-83, 60.

<sup>52</sup> Axundov's 1857 treatise on language reform was entitled *The New Alphabet* [Əlifba-yi cədid].

<sup>53</sup> The Gori seminars were a program to educate teachers in Georgia. At the school, young men from the Caucasus (including Azeris, Armenians and Georgians) were instructed in Russian language and culture, as well as literature and religious studies in their native languages.

<sup>54</sup> The term the *Decembrists* [Dekabristy] refers to members of the intelligentsia who organized an uprising in December of 1825 to overthrow the tsar and establish a constitutional monarchy. They idealized “ancient Russian

“House of wisdom” [“Divanı Hikmət” or “Hikmət Evi”], where Russian and German orientalists including Friedrich Martin von Bodenstedt (1819-1892) and Adol’f Petrovich Berzhe (1828-1886) met with local writers and thinkers.<sup>55</sup> For many Russian writers and orientalists, the culture of the Caucasus affirmed Russia’s status as an emerging world empire with its own oriental object of study. Berzhe highlighted the importance of Caucasology in a short article published in the popular newspaper *The Caucasus* [*Kavkaz*] in 1868:

...the Azerbaijani dialect... in general resembles Ottoman most closely, though it is much more vulgar. Like the Arabs, Persian and Turks the aforementioned peoples possess their own national literature, certainly not as vast or rich, though even still deserves the full attention of European orientalists. Becoming acquainted with it would still be important because it would fulfill one of the most visible gaps in the field of the study of the East...<sup>56</sup>

For Berzhe, the study of the Muslim people of the Caucasus played an important role in Russia’s orientalist economy, supplying forms of knowledge about the “East” for European imperial consumption. However, for Berzhe the cultures and languages of the Muslims of Caucasus were

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liberties” refashioned according to European Enlightenment values. However, I use this term to refer more broadly to sympathizers with the Decembrist critiques of the autocratic power of Tsar Nicholas I, particularly the exiled poets Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, Mikhail Mikhailovich Lermontov and Aleksandr Bestuzhev-Marlinskii. The work of this group of intellectuals was marked by the Napoleonic invasion and an interest in awakening a distinctive native principle or *samobytnost’* of Russian nationhood. See Andrzej Walicki, *A history of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 67. Pushkin and Lermontov were exiled after the publication of their poems: “Ode to Liberty [“Oda Volnost’] (1820) and Lermontov’s “The Death of the Poet” [“smert’ Poeta”] (1837).

<sup>55</sup>Boldenstedt was infamous for publishing the works of Vazeh under his own name in “Songs of Mirzə Şəfi Vazeh” [“Die Lieder des Mirza Schaffy”] (1851); Berzhe’s most notable work was *Chechnya and the Chechens* [*Chechniia i chechentsy*] Tbilisi, 1859.

<sup>56</sup> Adol’f Petrovich Berzhe, “Neskol’ko slov o Zakavkazskikh musul’maskikh poetakh,” *Kavkaz* (1868) cited in Samir Gachizade, *Russkaia i evropeiskaya pechat’ o M.F. Axundove* (Baku: Iazchy, 1987), 87-88.

also “more vulgar” and “less vast and rich” than those of the Near East. His depreciation of the Russian imperial oriental subject emphasizes his views of Russian cultural hegemony. His inaccurate ethnographic categorization of the diverse group of Muslim peoples of the Caucasus as Tatar descendants of Mongol invaders, further emphasizes a binary and unequal power relationship between Turkic Muslim and Orthodox Slavic speakers. His representation indeed echoes a common imperial discourse in which Russia served as the protectorate of a monotheistic Christian civilization in the west.<sup>57</sup>

Many members of the Russian intelligentsia, who were exiled for their opposition to tsarist autocracy, replicated discourses of Russian cultural hegemony. In his famous letter to the philosopher Petr Iakovlevich Chaadaev, Pushkin articulated his vision of the mission of the Russian empire.<sup>58</sup> Acknowledging that while Russia was separated from the “the rest of Europe” by the schism and other “great events” in which it did not participate, it fulfilled its role as the protectorate of Christian nations.<sup>59</sup> He writes: “It is Russia, its immense territory that absorbed the Mongol conquest. The Tatars did not dare to cross our western frontiers and to give their back to us. They withdrew to their deserts and the Christian civilization was saved” [“C’est la Russie, c’est son immense étendue qui a absorbé la conquête Mongole. Les tartars n’ont pas osé

<sup>57</sup> This image of Russia as the protectorate of the West is also taken up in the work of the nineteenth century poets and philosophers: Aleksei Stepanovich Khomiakov (1804-1860), Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (1821-1881), Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok (1880-1921), and Andrei Belyi (Boris Nikolaevich Bulgakov) (1880-1934). Khomiakov championed a race theory that divided the peoples of the world into two groups – Aryan and Kushite – distinguished by their respective monotheistic and polytheistic beliefs. Unlike the popular ethnolinguistic distinction of the Aryans and Semites by the famous French linguist, Ernest Renan (1823-1892), Khomiakov’s categorization of the Aryan race included Arabs and Persians. See: Soojung Lim, *East Asia in Russian Thought and Literature: 1830s- 1920s* (PhD diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2006), 166-167.

<sup>58</sup> Petr Iakovlevich Chaadaev (1794-1856) was a Russian philosopher and friend of Pushkin. His most famous work, *Lettres philosophiques adressées à une dame*, written between 1829 and 1830, critiqued Russian backwardness in the face of western progress. His letters’ unflattering portraits of Russian society as isolated and backward resulted in the denunciation of his sanity. See: James Billington, *The Icon and the Ax: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 315-316.

<sup>59</sup> The Schism [*Raskol*] was a division within the church between two reform parties under the reign of Tsar Alexis. Many of the reforms were sponsored by patriarch Nikon to bring order and uniformity to church rituals. The reforms were formally approved in 1667 after Nikon was deposed. See Billington, 116-135.

franchir nos frontières occidentales et nous laisser à dos. Ils se sont retirés vers leurs déserts, et la civilisation chrétienne a été sauvée”].<sup>60</sup> Pushkin places Russia within the ranks of the European empires, as an ally in the struggle against the non-Christian nations of the East. He envisions Russia as a defender of the west by romanticizing battles of resistance against the Mongol empire in 1380 at Kulikovo Field as well as the Great Standoff on the Ugra river in 1480, which marked the end of Mongol rule. In another sweeping generalization, he describes the Turkic peoples of the Russian empire as Tatar descendents of Mongol warriors. By homogenizing the Tatars as opponents to Christian civilization, and notably writing in French, Pushkin positions the Russian empire and its Slavic Christian character as an exemplary of western culture in Eurasia.

### **The Caucasian Poetic Garden**

Axundov entered the international literary sphere with a poem composed in Persian. While he wrote the poem originally in the Persian classical poetic tradition, his subject reflected a popular current in Russian Romanticism, the death of Pushkin. “On the Death of Pushkin” [“Na smert' Pushkina”] was composed as a mourning *qaşīdah* [*matəm qəsidə*]. Axundov's translation of his text from Persian preserved symbols from the classical tradition, though it rendered the work in prose. The *qaşīdah* form is a classical poetic genre in the Arabic, Persian and Ottoman traditions used to pay homage to a prophet or a king.<sup>61</sup> Throughout the work,

Axundov blends elements from Russian Romanticism with symbols from classical Persian

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<sup>60</sup>Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 10 tomakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1979), 10: 464. Ironically during the seventeenth century many western writers identified Russians as Tatars. See Billington, 119.

<sup>61</sup> For an introductory discussion of the genre see, Zaman Əsgərli, *XIX əsr Azərbaycan şəri antologiyəsi* (Baku: Şərq-Qərb, 2005), 2-23.

poetics.

His poem draws upon the image of the garden as a symbol for a community of spiritual and cultural texts, in order to memorialize the significance of Pushkin's death. Indeed, the figure of the Caucasian garden served as the central symbol for Bakıxanov's history of the Caucasus *The Heavenly Rose Garden [Golestan-e Eram]* (1845).<sup>62</sup> The opening of the work describes a poet struggling to find inspiration in the obscurity of night, “Not surrendering my eyes to a dream I sat in the dark night and spoke to my heart: Oh, the spring of the pearl of mystery!” [“He предавая очей сну, сидел я в темную ночь и говорил сердцу: О родник жемчуга тайны!”].<sup>63</sup> This image replicates both a state of prayer or trance and evokes the poet’s existential crisis of creation. The poem continues by describing a garden of flowers. Indeed as the contemporary literary critic Zaman Əsgərli writes in his introduction to a nineteenth century Azeri poetic anthology that natural imagery is often used in Azeri poetry to function as a mirror reflecting the internal strivings of the poet.<sup>64</sup> Nature, depicted in the form of a flower garden represents social life and the humanistic ideals that surround the figure of the poet.<sup>65</sup>

Perhaps, unaware of this world, you have never heard of Pushkin, head of the council of poets. Of that Pushkin for whom a hundred-fold praise thundered from all of the ends (of the earth) when he playfully poured out his dreams. Of that Pushkin, for whom paper thirsted to loose its whiteness, if only his plume would drive the line along its face. In his dreams, like in the movements of a peacock,

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<sup>62</sup>The text was originally written in Persian. See: Willem Floor and Hasan Javadi, *The Heavenly Rose-Garden: A History of Shirvan and Daghestan by Abbas Qoli Aqa Bakikhanov* (Washington: Mage Publishers, 2009).

<sup>63</sup>Axundov, “Na smert’ Pushkina” 103.

<sup>64</sup>Əsgərli, 21.

<sup>65</sup> Əsgərli, 13.



there appeared a thousand marvelous colors of literature. Lomonosov adorned the abode of poetry with the beauty of genius, but his dream was validated through it. Though Derzhavin conquered the orb of literature, he (Pushkin) was elected for its direction and organization. Karamzin filled the cup with the wine of knowledge and he drank the wine of this overflowing cup. The glory of his genius traveled throughout Europe, just as the might and majesty of Nicholas did from China to Tataria. His luminous mind made him a model dear to the North, just as the crescent moon, which is so dear to the East.

Разве ты, не ведающий мира, разве не слышал о Пушкине главе собора поэтов. О том Пушкине, которому стократно гремела хвала со всех концов когда он игриво изливал свои мечтания. О том Пушкине, от которого бумага жаждала потерять белизну свою, чтобы только перо его проводило черты по лицу ея. В мечтах, его, как в движениях павлина являлись тысячи дивных цветов литературы. Ломоносов краскою гения украшал обитель поэзии, но, его мечта в ней утвердилась. Хотя Державин завоевал державу литературы, но для управления и устройства ея избран бы он (Пушкин). Карамзин наполнил чашу вином знания, он выпил вино сей наполненной чаши. Распространилась слава его гения по Европе, ка могущество и величие Николая от Китая до Татарии. По светлому уму своему был образцом на Севере, подобно молодой луне, которой вид дорог Востоку.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Axundov, "Na smert' Pushkina," 106-7.

In Axundov's verse, the image of Pushkin awakens the speaker from this sleep. The inspiration of the poem is traced to the spiritual and creative awakening of this tradition of Russian Romanticism. In this way, Axundov incorporates Pushkin into a new canon of poets emerging through his dual language text. He traces the history of classical Russian poetry including Lomonosov, Derzhavin and Karamzin – presenting Pushkin as the culmination of the Russian literary tradition. The image of the garden depicts the social sphere of Russian literature from which both Pushkin and Axundov's own poetic inspirations spring. While on the one hand, Axundov seems to root his poetic inspiration in the nurturing verses of Lomonosov, Derzhavin, Karamzin, and Pushkin, the garden itself supplies the foundation for his introduction to Russian literature. Inverting the imperial narrative of progress from enlightened Russia to wild Caucasia, the garden signifies the ordered and cultured space of the Azeri/Persian tradition that does not emanate from, but rather coexists with Russian Romanticism. Placing Pushkin within the garden, Axundov describes Pushkin as a young tree. He writes: “with the merciless axe the gardener cut the height of that young tree from the surface of the garden” [“Сей старый садовник секирою безжалостно срубил его стан, как молодую ветвь с террасы сего цветника”].<sup>67</sup> Axundov envisions Pushkin's work as part of a more expansive vision of the poetic garden.

After composing the poem in Persian, Axundov translated it into Russian prose with the help of the Russian orientalist I.I. Klementev and Bestuzhev-Marlinskii. Klementev sent the poem to be published in *The Moscow Observer* [*Moskovskii nabliudatel'*] in 1837 with the additional subtitle “an oriental poem.” The Russian version of the poem marked the first publication of Axundov's work and his entrance into the literary scene as a “young Eastern poet”

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<sup>67</sup>*Ibid*, 107.

of “an amazing Persian poem.”<sup>68</sup> Using Bestuzhev-Marlinskii’s revised translation, the poem was republished in 1874 in the journal *The Russian Antiquities* [*Russkaia starina*]. The introduction by Berzhe praised Axundov’s positive “impression on her (Russia’s) Muslim population in one of the remote outskirts of Great Russia.”<sup>69</sup> Berzhe reminds his readers that Axundov writes from the periphery of the Russian empire. However, for Axundov, the subject of the death of Russia’s national poet becomes an occasion to give a new voice to that same Caucasian landscape that had been the object of Pushkin’s orientalist imagination.

While the poem was published in Russian, its simultaneous existence in Persian renders the work a multi-lingual object. The poem’s polyphonic quality – that is its polyglossic and heteroglossic composition – facilitates its participation in both Russian and classical traditions. Drawing upon the classical poetic structure of the *qaṣīdah*, Axundov generates a series of similes, which construct overlapping layers of meaning in the text. Describing Pushkin’s fame, he writes: “the glory of his genius traveled through Europe, just as the might and majesty of Nicholas did from China to Tartary.” Axundov compares Pushkin’s poetic legacy to the expansion of the Russian empire in the lands of China and “Tatary.”<sup>70</sup> Appropriating the orientalist term – Tatary – to describe the Muslim regions of the empire, Axundov places Pushkin within a lineage of European orientalists whose literature about empire generated a hegemonic western literary canon. Axundov continues: “his luminous mind made him a model dear to the

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<sup>68</sup> See Murtuz Sadykhov. *M. F. Axundov i Russkaia literatura* (Baku: Iazychy, 1986), 58.

<sup>69</sup> Kurbanov, 115-116.

<sup>70</sup> The term “Tatary” is a geographic designation used by Russian and European orientalists from the middle ages through the twentieth century to designate the steppe from the Caspian sea and Ural mountains to the Pacific Ocean. The term was also used by Russian orientalists to refer to the Muslim population of this area as the Turkic descendents of the Mongols. This geographic, ethnic, religious, and linguistic categorization misrepresents what is a diverse group of Muslims (Shi’i, Sunni, and Sufi) who speak distinct dialects of a Tatar language group (Crimean Tatar, Volga Tatar etc.) as well as other languages with related grammatical structures and word borrowings including Azeri, Turkmen etc.

North, just as the crescent moon, which is so dear to the East.” Employing the classical poetic structure, which articulates a parallel between the earthly and celestial realms, Axundov compares Pushkin to the moon. As a model for Russian literature, Pushkin provides both physical and spiritual illumination, like the crescent which emits moonlight and serves as the symbol of the Islamic *Ummah*, or the international community of Islamic believers. In this way, Axundov draws upon the image of Pushkin as the spiritual patriarch of Russian literature.

In the final lines of the poem, Axundov relates Pushkin’s work to his own role as a leader in a new poetic tradition in the Caucasus. Akhudov calls to the ancient lands of the Caucasus and the Crimea to answer the writings of Pushkin. In this verse, the lands of the Crimea and Caucasus assert their existence before Pushkin's poetic discovery and endurance after his death. He writes: “The fountain of Bachisarai sends your ashes with a spring zephyr of two roses. The old white-haired Caucasus answers your howling in the songs of Sabukhi’s verses” [“Фонтан из Бахчисарая посылает праху твоему с весенним зephyром благоухание двух роз твоих. Старец седовлавыи Кавказ ответствует на песни твои стоном в стихах Сабухия”].<sup>71</sup> Axundov references two of Pushkin’s most famous orientalist works about the Muslim territories of the Russian empire: “The Bakhchisarai Fountain” [“Bakhchisaraiskii fontan”] and “Prisoner of the Caucasus” [“Kavkazskii plennik”], which describe the landscapes of the Crimea and the Caucasus. Anthropomorphizing the landscape, he emphasizes the active role of the Caucasus in answering Pushkin's verse, as well as its wisdom symbolized by the snowcaps of the “white haired” mountains.

In Axundov’s translation, the figurative image of the Caucasus “responds” to Pushkin’s poetry [“otvetstvuet”]. However, the original Persian version of the final stanza differs from the

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<sup>71</sup> Axundov, “Na smert' Pushkina,” 108.

translation. In Persian, Axundov writes that the Caucasus “declared (cries of) mourning” [“obiavil traur”]for Pushkin.<sup>72</sup> Axundov's translation emphasizes the active role of the Caucasus, engaging in dialogue with Pushkin in his Russian native tongue. Indeed, when the poem was republished in 1880 in the journal *The Petersburg Leaflet* [*Peterburgskii listok*], the free-verse translation by A.A. Sokolov omitted this image of the Caucasus' response.<sup>73</sup> The omission of this line, perhaps the most crucial turning point in the tone of the poem, severs Axundov's text from its context, written less than ten years after the south Caucasus was annexed by the Russian empire.

In a gesture common to Azeri and Persian poets, Axundov marks the beginning of a new literary tradition by designating himself with his pen name as the storyteller of the Caucasus, *Səbuhi*, mis-transliterated into Russian as *Sabukhi*. The word in Persian and Turkish means “one who awakens early,” and in Azeri “the man of tomorrow.” Both Axundov's appropriation of this traditional type of Azeri-Persian pseudonym, and his interest in European Enlightenment philosophy, likely influenced his decision to designate himself with this title. Considering his role in generating new types of literary texts in Azeri, Axundov's name also serves as a fitting representation for a man ahead of his time. After describing his own awakening to Pushkin's verses, Axundov designates himself as *Səbuhi* in the end of the poem, awakening the literature of the Caucasus to a new beginning inaugurated by Pushkin's death. The symbolic death of Pushkin, remembered as the father of the Russian orientalist canon, gives birth to a new literary genealogy in Axundov's verse.

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<sup>72</sup> For a discussion of the Persian original, see: Kurbanov, 118.

<sup>73</sup> Kurbanov, 119.

## The Death of the Prophet

Axundov's interactions with the Russian intelligentsia in Tbilisi contributed to his literary success under Russian imperial rule. In particular, his selection of the subject of Pushkin's death for his poem grew out of his relationship with the Decembrists and exposure to their writings about Pushkin. One of his most direct poetic influences was likely Lermontov's "Death of the Poet" ["smert' poeta"], which Bestuzhev-Marlinskii shared with Axundov before its publication in 1837. The poem became famous in part because Tsar Nicholas I's fear of the work's "call to revolution" sent Lermontov into exile in the Caucasus.<sup>74</sup> In his poem, Lermontov describes Pushkin as a Christ figure, whose death serves as an example of the injustices of the tsar and the corruption of Russian society. The imagery in the poem locates it within a body of Decembrist poetry that presented Pushkin as a prophetic figure.

Envisioning Pushkin as a prophet, the Decembrists articulated both the spiritual and revolutionary force of Russian poetic discourse. Literary scholar Pamela Davidson argues that "the Decembrist poets turned to the figure of the prophet as a powerful rhetorical image to buttress their authority as the proponents of radical social and political reform."<sup>75</sup> Beginning with Gogol' and Belinskii's critical essays in the 1830's, the figure of Pushkin was identified in Russian letters as the poet-prophet par excellence.<sup>76</sup> While Pushkin described himself in these terms, the literary trope of his prophesy became associated with the Decembrists' political

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<sup>74</sup> See Mehrad Kia, "Mizra Fath Ali Akhundzade and the Call for Modernization of the Islamic World," *Middle Eastern Studies* 31.3 (1995): 422-448, 427.

<sup>75</sup> Pamela Davidson, "The Moral Dimension of the Prophetic Ideal: Pushkin and His Readers," *Slavic Review* 61.3 (2002): 490-518, 490.

<sup>76</sup> See Nikolai Vasil'evich Gogol', "Neskol'ko slov o Pushkine," in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 14 tomakh* (Moscow: Akademii nauk SSSR, 1937-52) 8:50-55. Vissarion Grigor'evich Belinskii, "Literaturnye mechtaniia: elagiiia v proze," in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 13 tomakh* (Moscow: Akademii nauk SSSR, 1953-59), 1:48.

pursuits for freedom and enlightenment. In a letter to the poet Petr Andreevich Viazemskii, Pushkin described the experience of leaving behind his cycle of poems “Imitations of the Qur’an” [“Podrazhanie koranu”] during his journey from Odessa to Mikhailovskoe as being analogous to the Prophet’s journey from Mecca to Medina.<sup>77</sup> In so doing, he equated his own verse with the spiritual authority of the Qur’an. Indeed, the spiritual force of the word was an element of Russian orientalist discourse, which proved integral to the authority of Russian poetic discourse more broadly. In his compelling analysis of the Russian poetics of empire, literary scholar Harsha Ram traces the trope of the poet-prophet to the eighteenth century Russian odic tradition. Ram argues that one cannot underestimate “the constitutive role of the sovereign, figured in his or her relationship to the sacred, in shaping, negatively or positively, the space of literary discourse, and even the writer himself.”<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, he argues that “Empire itself [...] becomes the defining context and primary theme of the ode.”<sup>79</sup> Similarly, Davidson highlights the role of the nineteenth century tradition in shaping the political value of the spiritual and moral authority of the Russian poet. She writes:

The exaggerated adulation of writers as a source of moral and spiritual authority lent undue weight to their literary prophecies, which were often used to define the retrospective reading of history as well as visions of the future. The eschatological expectations cultivated by the symbolists in literature, for example, undoubtedly contributed to the climate of opinion that made it possible for the

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<sup>77</sup> See: Davidson, 495. Pushkin’s ignorance of the history of the scripture of Islam is evident, as the Qur’an was said to have been revealed to the prophet Mohammad over a period of 23 years, the last of which occurred during his final pilgrimage.

<sup>78</sup> Harsha Ram, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 55-62.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

revolution to be welcomed by sections of the intelligentsia as the realization of the nation's messianic destiny.<sup>80</sup>

The figure of the prophet expressed the intelligentsia's civic role in contributing to the spiritual and moral values of Russian society. Indeed, Gogol' reasoned that Russian literature was poetic in spirit because, "its poets were potential successors to the Hebrew prophets, filled with the 'spiritual nobility' [*dukhovnoe blagorodstvo*] that he (Gogol) regarded as the true hallmark of Russian writers."<sup>81</sup> In this way, the adaptation or transposition of the trope of prophesy shaped the political role of Russian poetic discourse, particularly written in the context of empire.

The role of the poet-prophet as enlightener appears in both Pushkin's "The Prophet" ["Prorok"] of 1826 and Axundov's poem. In Pushkin and Axundov's poems the notion of spiritual awakening is embodied in a physical vision. Pushkin depicts his speaker wandering in the desert, where he meets an angel who awakens his senses and tasks him with spreading God's word to the people. Pushkin writes:

And a six winged seraph  
At the crossroad appeared to me.  
With light fingers like a dream  
My pupils he touched.  
Like a corpse in the desert I lay,  
And God's voice called to me:

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<sup>80</sup> Davidson, 517-518.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 504.



"Rise up, prophet, and see and hear,  
And wander sea and earth  
With words burn the hearts of people."

И шестикрылый серафим  
На перепутье мне явился.  
Перстами легкими как сон  
Моих зениц коснулся он.  
Как труп в пустыне я лежал,  
И Бога глас ко мне воззвал:  
"Восстань, пророк, и виждь, и внемли,  
Исполнись волею моей,  
И обходя моря и земли,  
Глаголом жги сердца людей."<sup>82</sup>

The angel touches the pupils in his speaker's eyes, transforming a dream into a spiritual vision. The image of "light fingers like a dream" touching the speaker's pupils describes the physical experience of hallucination, exposure to extreme light, and carnal excitement. Pushkin evokes the spiritual experience of enlightenment through the physical awakening and resurrection of the speaker. Indeed, his description lying "like a corpse" emphasizes a parallel with Christ. Instead, in Axundov's poem the speaker lies consciously in the dark, addressing his heart. He reflects: "Not surrendering eyes to a dream I sat in the dark night and said to my heart: Oh the spring of

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<sup>82</sup> Pushkin, "Prorok," in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii v 10 tomakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1979), 2: 338-339.

the pearl of mystery!” [“Не предавая очей сну, сидел я в темную ночь и говорил сердцу: О родник жемчуга тайны!”].<sup>83</sup> Axundov’s speaker does not “surrender his eyes to a dream” as Pushkin’s does, but rather struggles with his own personal poetic and spiritual sources of truth. Indeed night is a classical symbol embodying the search for spiritual truth in Persian classical poetry. The spiritual element of enlightenment for Axundov is rooted in a classical symbol, not the divine force of God. Unlike Pushkin's Romantic and mystical experience, Axundov's speaker envisions enlightenment as the recognition of the beauty of the poetic garden – the symbolic vision of Caucasian society.

Lermontov’s poem takes on the civic and prophetic role of the intelligentsia by critiquing tsarist autocracy. In his poem, Pushkin is not described as a visionary, but rather as Christ in the moment of his sacrifice.

And having removed the former wreath – a crown of thorns

Entwined with laurels, set upon him:

But the hidden needles sharply

Pierced his glorious brow;

И прежний сняв венок - они венец терновый,

Увитый лаврами, надели на него:

Но иглы тайные сурово

Язвили славное чело;”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Axundov, “Na smert' Pushkina,” 103.

<sup>84</sup> Mikhail Iureevich Lermontov, “smert' Poeta,” in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii v 20 tomakh* (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1941), 157-158.

In this image, the poetic crown of laurels is removed from Pushkin's head and replaced by a crown of thorns, whose upturned spines draw blood from the poet-prophet's fallen forehead. Lermontov's prophet remains immortalized in the moment of death, before the spiritual resurrection of Pushkin's speaker and the poetic awakening of Axundov's speaker. For Lermontov, the moment of the poet's death emphasizes the injustice of tsarist society. Lermontov decries "the illustrious fathers" ["proslavlennykh ottsov"], the tsar, and his court of powerful nobles as the "executioners of Freedom, Genius and Glory" [Svobody, Geniia i Slavy palachi!].<sup>85</sup> For Lermontov, Pushkin functions as the savior of the realm of the ideal and pure, whose poetic corpse embodies the execution of freedom, genius, and glory.

All three poems share an understanding of prophesy as fulfilling the civic duty to spread the enlightened word to their respective societies. In Pushkin's poem the prophet is commanded by God to make his "words burn in the hearts of people," while in Axundov's poem Caucasian society responds to the work of Pushkin. The Caucasus, lead by the enlightened *Səbuhi*, "the man of tomorrow," carries on the poetic legacy after Pushkin's death. Both Pushkin and Lermontov's visions of the trope of prophetic vision are reimagined by Axundov in a dynamic fusion of the Decembrist prophetic trope and classical Azeri-Persian poetry. Axundov weaves together these two poetic movements by reimagining the Russian trope of the poet-prophet through the classical night and garden symbols, as well as the dualist structure of the *qaşīdah* form. Pushkin's death served as a central trope in the Russian intelligentsia's creation of a canon of prophetic images of revolution during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Axundov, in turn, drew upon this revolutionary image of Pushkin in order to signify a new poetic tradition

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

and perhaps a space of reform in the Caucasus. The rhetorical symbol of Pushkin as a prophet provided a vehicle for the Decembrists and Axundov to mediate the relationship between the civic and spiritual enlightenment as well as poetry and politics.

### **Dialogue and the Dialogic in Axundov's Theatre and Philosophy**

Axundov's theory of criticism is most clearly laid out in the collection of fragments of his letters, *The Science of Critique* [*Fann-e Kritika*].<sup>86</sup> While the term *fann* originates in an Arabo-Persian tradition of criticism and polemics, the term *kritika* is a Persian borrowing of the French *critique* and the Russian *kritika*. Axundov notes that he takes this method of reading from European philosophers including Voltaire and Buckle. However, he most likely also became familiar with his Russian contemporaries' theories of critical thought, particularly the famous Russian literary critic Vissarion Grigor'evich Belinskii. Indeed, Belinskii published Axundov's poem and may have introduced him to the works of Voltaire.<sup>87</sup> *The Art of Criticism* (*The Science of Critique*) is a collection of Axundov's ideas on critique taken from his personal letters. In these writings, Axundov expounds on the effectiveness of the form of critique over sermon or didactic essay in "the fact that it [critique] is written as mockery, parody, and reproach, hence the avidity to read it."<sup>88</sup> According to Axundov "critique" functions by performing content in parodic form rather than delivering truth through sermon. Both his plays and philosophy employ the

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<sup>86</sup> While the term *Fann* in Arabic and Persian signifies both Art and Science, I select the latter here to emphasize the role that this critical tradition played in the articulation of an order and method for the act of criticism. See: Axundov, "The Art of Criticism," in *A History of Literary Criticism in Iran: 1866-1951*, ed. trans. Iraj Parsinejad (Bethesda: IBEX Publishers, 2003), 316-320.

<sup>87</sup> See Maryam Sanjabi, "Reading the Enlightenment: Akhundzada and his Voltaire," *Iranian Studies* 28.1-2 (1995): 39-60.

<sup>88</sup> Axundov, "The Art of Criticism," 316.

forms of humor and dialogue. The relationship between the compositional form of dialogue and its internal, reciprocal, discursive form exposes a connection between the social history of language and forms of enlightenment. In particular, the epistolary form is an intriguing example of the dialogue genre that has produced both religious and secular doxy. Axundov is explicitly concerned with epistolary forms found in the exchanges of the French philosophes with Islamic mysticism. In this way, his works expose the internal dialogism of his heteroglossic and heterodoxic discourse.

One of the most important articulations of these multiple registers of speech occurs in Axundov's first play, "The Story of Monsieur Jordan the Botanist, and the Famous Dervish Məstəli şah" ["Hekayəti-müsyö Jordan həkimi-nəbatat Dərviş Məstəli şah caduküni-məşhur"].<sup>89</sup> His play is one of the first theatrical works inspired by French and Russian theatre and composed in the Islamic world. It is also the first Azeri work to feature a European figure in the personage of Monsieur Jordan the botanist. The play was written in Azeri Turkic, translated into Russian, and published in the newspaper *Kavkaz* [The Caucasus].<sup>90</sup> It was first staged in Saint-Petersburg in 1852 and then shortly afterward in Tbilisi, Tabriz, Baku, Dagestan, and Central Asia<sup>91</sup>

Contemporary Anglophone scholarship underplays the complexity of Axundov's construction of selfhood. Mehrdad Kia reads Axundov's work as an internalization of the "European notion that the rational and progressive Occident was simply an antithesis of the irrational and religious minded Orient."<sup>92</sup> Similarly, Juan Cole argues that Axundov's work

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<sup>89</sup> Mirzə Fətəli Axundov, "Hekayəti-müsyö Jordan Həkimi-Nəbatat Dərviş Məstəli şah caduküni-məşhur," in *Əsərləri 3 cildə* (Baku: Şərq-Qərb, 2005), 1: 45-68.

<sup>90</sup> For a publication history see Kurbanov, 95-102.

<sup>91</sup> Sevinc Zeynalova, "M.F Axundzadə və Avropa mədəniyyəti" *Azerbaijan* 1 (2008), <http://www.azyb.net/cgi-bin/jurn/main.cgi?id=325>.; For a history of the play's publication see Samir Gachizade, *Russkaia i evropeiskia pechat' o M.F. Axundove*, 164-174.

<sup>92</sup> Mehrdad Kia, "Mizra Fath Ali Akhundzade and the Call for Modernization of the Islamic World," 444.

presents multiple visions of an “Iranian Self,” all of which employ the same paradigm of a progressive west and a backward east.<sup>93</sup> His understanding of selfhood in Axundov's work elides the civic, political, cultural dimension of identity, through its staging of “reactionary” and “progressive” binaries.

Instead, I argue that the interaction between the two main characters, the patriotic French botanist Monsieur Jordan and the apologist for feudal Caucasian society Hatəmxan ağa, dramatizes debates about identity during this period. The character of Monsieur Jordan is not only an archetype, but was based on the historic personage of the French botanist Aleksis Jordan (1814-1879), notably criticized for his idealism by materialist philosophers. Axundov's self-proclaimed interest in materialist thought reveals the relative ambiguity of this character's relationship to progressive ideals in the play. Furthermore, Hatəmxan ağa, while embracing the feudal social system, is presented as a highly educated person with reading knowledge of Arabic, Persian, and Azeri, who is well traveled within the region, and who indeed welcomes Monsieur Jordan into his house to educate his son. Hatəmxan ağa's son Şahbaz embodies the future of Azeri society, blending elements from the ideas and teachings of his father and the scientist to formulate his worldview.

Axundov most clearly expresses an ambivalent attraction to western thought in his description of Monsieur Jordan's scientific work in Karabakh. In a discussion with Hatəmxan ağa about the importance of travel, Monsieur Jordan boasts, “If I had not come to Karabakh (takes out a pocket notebook, opens it and produces a few herbs, neatly stacked in it)... If I had not come to Karabakh, who would know that in the Karabakh pastures these herbs exist.” [Əgər,

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<sup>93</sup> Juan R.I. Cole, “Marking Boundaries, Marking Time: The Iranian Past and the Construction of the Self by Qajar Thinkers,” *Iranian Studies* 29.1-2 (1996); 35-56.

məsələn, mən Qarabağa gəlməsəydim (əlini uzadıb cibindən bir dəftər çıxarıb, açıb, içində səliqə ilə düzölmüş bir nəçə oları göstərib),...Əgər mən Qarabağa gəlməsəydim, kim biləcəkdir ki, Qarabağın yaylaqlarında bu otlar mövcuddur”].<sup>94</sup> Monsieur Jordan's studies of the Caucasian plants, ordering them according to French scientific principles, provides a metaphor for the application of scientific principles to local culture, epitomized again by the figurative garden. His act of ordering transforms the plants through their application to French scientific categories. However, the stage directions, which mime the idea of “classification,” require the compression of the live plants in a flat pocket notebook. The act of archiving the plants in this way destroys the life of these unique herbs, which Monsieur Jordan presumes to have created. Monsieur Jordan's self aggrandizement appears more humorous in the context of his interlocutor's ignorance of the value of his scientific accomplishment. Hətəm xan ağa responds:

I understand absolutely nothing of what you have said, Mr. Doctor. Who is Clifford? Who is Linnay? Who is Turnef? Why do they trouble themselves by giving categories to plants? And what is Germania, who is kartoffel, and from what did he fall ill; and why was he such an important person that his entire homeland was interested in his health and well being?

Həkim sahib, vallah başa düşmədim ki, nə danışdınız. Qlliford kimdir? Linney kimdir? Turnefor kimdir? Niyə olar zəhmət çəkib otlara dərəcə qərar veriblər? Germanı nədir, kartofl kimdir, o niyə azarlamişdır, o, nə böyük şəxdir ki, vətən bu

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<sup>94</sup> Axundov, “Hekayəti-müsyö Jordan,” 52; Axundov, “The Botanist Monsieur Jordan and The Sorcerer-Dervish Mastali Shah,” trans. Sanan Aliyev (London: Neptune Press, 2010), 33.

mərtəbədə onun etidalı-məzəcəna və tuli-ömrünə talibdir?<sup>95</sup>

Hatəmxan ağa neither understands the method of French scientific classification, which he describes as “determining the rank/grade of herbs” [“otlara dərəcə qərar veriblər”] nor its aims. Axundov's humorous depiction of Hatəmxan ağa's ignorance critiques both Monsieur Jordan's arrogance and the absence of European scientific education among Azeri elites. Hatəmxan ağa also confuses the the Russian/German word for potato “Kartofel” with a person and the “Germans” with objects. This linguistic slippage highlights both the landowner's ignorance of European language, geography and science, as well as the eurocentrism of Monsieur Jordan, who assumes that botany and potatoes are universal world commodities. The scene exposes a crisis in consciousness between the experience of the physical world of the Karabakh flora, the symbol of the Caucasian social garden, and the European system of scientific classification.<sup>96</sup> The idea of botany as a method of creating hybrid plants also informs this fusion of the material and social world of the Caucasus with the ordering principles of the French Enlightenment.

The play “Monsieur Jordan” not only evokes to the context of the French Enlightenment, but perhaps more importantly, the figure of the French revolution. Setting his play in the context of the events leading up to the 1848 revolution in France, Axundov implies the possibility of revolution in the Caucasus. The play ends when Şəhrəbanu xanım, wife of Hatəmxan ağa and mother of Şahbaz bey, attempts to prevent her son from traveling to France to study with Monsieur Jordan. To do so, she hires a dervish to blow up Paris and cut off Monsieur Jordan's

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<sup>95</sup> Axundov, “Hekayəti-müsyö Jordan,” 53; Axundov, “The Botanist Monsieur Jordan,” 35.

<sup>96</sup> Indeed, the setting of Karabakh holds particular importance in the development of Azeri culture. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Karabakh khanate, and the city of Shusha in particular, became an epicenter of musical and literary production for writers like Molla Pənah Vaqif (1717-1797), Qasım bəy Zakir (1784-1857), and particularly Xurşidbanu Natəvan (1832-1897) who maintained literary salons there.



head the moment they cross the Araz river. Though the dervish plans to take the women's money and flee the territory, before he is caught, news of the French revolution arrives to court and the women believe his spell has come true. Indeed, the importance of this final twist is evident in the selection of the title of the 1976 film adaptation, *The Dervish Blows-up Paris* [*Dərviş Parisi partladır*]. It is also noteworthy that the dervish's spell is said to unfold the moment the two cross the newly established border between the Russian and Persian empires, that is, officially enter into the geopolitical space of the west. When the dervish, Mastəli şah, reveals his corrupt plan, Axundov writes his speech in Persian, on the one hand, so that the women cannot understand him, and on the other, to emphasize the dervish's association with the sphere of tradition.<sup>97</sup> In this way, the destruction of Paris can be read as a critique of the superstitiousness of the people of the Caucasus and the corruption of traditional Islamic authorities. The notion that the dervish is the presumed culprit for the destruction of Paris also reiterates the Russian imperial administration's fear of the Naqshbandiyya Sufi freedom fighters' declaration of war against Russia.<sup>98</sup>

When Paris breaks out in revolt, Şəhrəbanu xanım, her daughter, and the nurse all believe that they have caused the destruction of Paris. The nurse addresses Şəhrəbanu in awe at this supernatural act and, in so doing, echoes Tsar Nicholas' fears of the spirit of revolution spreading throughout Europe. “Didn't I say my Lady that nothing escapes from this Dervish's power? I am also afraid that the magic he used to destroy Parij [*sic*], can affect other cities as well...” “Xanım, mən sənə demədim ki, bu dərvişin əlindən heç zad qurtarmaz? Mən hələə ondan qorxuram ki, Parijin yıxılmağının zərbindən özfə şəhərlər də bərbad ola”].<sup>99</sup> Axundov critiques both the

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<sup>97</sup> Axundov, “Hekayəti-müsyö Jordan,” 62.

<sup>98</sup>This was a particularly salient fear after the revolution in Poland in 1831, during which Russian forces stationed in the Caucasus were sent to Poland, leaving Imam Ghazi Muhammad to gain strength for his forces in a series of surprise attacks. Moshe Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan* (Abingdon: Frank Cass and Co., 1993), 53.

<sup>99</sup> Axundov, “Hekayəti-müsyö Jordan,” 68; Axundov, “The Botanist Monsieur Jordan,” 62.

superstitiousness of the women and, in a Decembrist like move, the paranoia of autocratic tsarist rule.<sup>100</sup> As an advocate of the principles of rational thought held by the French philosophes, Axundov draws a parallel between two types of irrational fears – the women's fear of the dervish's magic and the tsar's fear of revolution spreading like a magic curse. In this way, he reads superstition as a danger not only to the Muslim people of the Caucasus, but to Russia and Europe as well.

Axundov closes the play by delivering social criticism, like many works of French, British and Russian theatre, through the voice of the seemingly insignificant nurse character. In the final lines of the play the nurse declares, “Oh, my Lady! If men had any brains how could we manage to deceive them at every step of the way and get what we want in the manner that we do?” [“Eh xanım, kişilərin əgər ağılı var, niyə biz oları hər qədəmdə min yol aldadırıq. öz bildiyimizi edirik?”]<sup>101</sup> The curtain falls on the three women – silent and terrified. Axundov's final gesture sets up an entire series of deceptions mobilized throughout the play. The women, themselves deceived by the dervish, believe they have caused the destruction of Paris, caused Şahbaz to stay in Karabakh, and sent Monsieur Jordan back to France. However, the eruption of the French revolution at the climax of the play exposes absolute monarchical power in crisis, highlighting the necessity to combat it, whether in France, Russia or Persia. Furthermore, the nurse's aside implicates the viewer in the series of deceptions of the male characters in the play. Throughout the play, truth remains elusive as the words of the characters constantly lead one another astray. Indeed, this phrase “leading astray” or “off of the correct path” recurs throughout the play. The function of dramatic irony, the dialogues between characters (and the partial

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<sup>100</sup> While assuming an orientalist posture, Axundov ignores the irony of the fact that many of these kind of gendered discourses were employed by thinkers of the European Enlightenment themselves.

<sup>101</sup> Axundov, “Hekayəti-müsyö Jordan,” 68; Axundov, “The Botanist Monsieur Jordan,” 62.

information of each) together present dialogue as a critical mode for generating meaning in the work. In the play's dramatic slippages, as in Bakhtin's notion of discourse, ideas emerge in the space between dialogic exchanges on the threshold of multiple languages and consciousnesses.

Axundov's philosophical treatise, *Three Letters from the Indian Prince Kəmalüddövlə to the Persian Prince Cəlalüddövlə* [*Tri pis'ma Indiiskogo printsa Kemal-ud-Dovle k Persidskomu printsu Dzhelal-ud-Dovle*](1860-1864) similarly contributes to the creation of a heterodoxic discourse of enlightenment in Axundov's work. However, *Three Letters* has been noted in Anglophone, Russian and Turkic scholarship for its contribution to the birth of a secular intellectual tradition in the Russian imperial Caucasus.<sup>102</sup> The treatise takes the form of the epistolary correspondence between two fictional princes, the Indian prince Kəmalüddövlə and the Persian Prince Cəlalüddövlə. The voice of the character Kəmalüddövlə and his denunciation of the backwardness of Qajar monarchy and Shi'i religious hierarchy are cited as proof of Axundov's rejection of religion.<sup>103</sup>

While I have cited Axundov's treatise in Russian, its manuscript form contains parallel texts written in both Russian and Azeri Turkic. However, Axundov insisted that his work was a translation of an existing set of Persian manuscripts. Ironically, Axundov's emphasis on the historical authority of the text has, since the Soviet period, instead encouraged readings of the text as his personal confession of atheism. While, a similar correspondence existed between two personages of the same name, it markedly does not contain the same discussions of religion

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<sup>102</sup>See: Juan R.I. Cole, "Marking Boundaries, Marking Time: The Iranian Past and the Construction of the Self by Qajar Thinkers," 35-56; Mehrad Kia, "Mizra Fath Ali Akhundzade and the Call for Modernization of the Islamic World," 422-448; Shikhali Kurbanov, *A.C. Pushkin i Azerbaidjan*; Murtuz Sadykhov, *M. F. Akhundov i Russkaia literatura*; Maryam Sanjabi, "Reading the Enlightenment: Akhundzada and his Voltaire," *Iranian Studies* 28.1-2 (1995): 39-60; Sevinc Zeynalova, "M.F Axundzadə və Avropa mədəniyyəti."

<sup>103</sup> While Mehrad Kia describes the role of Axundov's religious education in shaping his philosophy, he describes Axundov's critique of religion as if he "turned his back on Islam." Kia, 427.

present in Axundov's work.<sup>104</sup> Rather, Axundov poignantly writes, “Look I do not say these words, Kəmalüddövlə says them.”<sup>105</sup> While it is certainly possible that Axundov denied authorship of the work simply to avoid censorship, the act of giving a separate existence, historical or otherwise, to the character of Kəmalüddövlə diminishes the complexity of his work.<sup>106</sup> Kəmalüddövlə is both a historical personage and a character whose discourse has its own coexistent space and time within the literary text. *Three Letters* should not be read only biographically or historically, but rather, like his theatrical works, through the dialogic interplay between the characters' speech.

While Axundov's work generally critiques religious figures, teachings, and institutions, he also recommends a reformation of Islam, which he calls “Islamic protestantism.” In his autobiography, Axundov expressed an interest in “protestantism” in Islam during the time when he was writing *Three Letters*. He explains: “I began to write 'Kəmalüddövlə' with an overwhelming desire to undermine the foundations of this faith, deal a blow to fanaticism, and awaken the peoples of Asia from slumber, and on the other hand, to demonstrate the necessity of protestantism in Islam.”<sup>107</sup> In a nuanced analysis of Axundov's work, Ali Abasov points out that Axundov's critique focuses specifically on the corruption of the “social institution of religion.”<sup>108</sup> Axundov's interest in “protestant Islam,” Abasov explains, can be understood as a confession of

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<sup>104</sup> Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə, “Mirzə Fətəli Axundov dinlər haqqında” in *Əsərləri 4 cildə* (Baku: Öndər Nəşriyyat, 2004), 1: 279.

<sup>105</sup> Cited in Məmmədquluzadə, “Mirzə Fətəli Axundov dinlər haqqında,” 279.

<sup>106</sup> This is precisely Bakhtin's point when he writes about Fyodor Dostoevsky's characters in *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics* as “free people, capable of standing *alongside* their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him.... *not only objects of authorial discourse but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse.*” Bakhtin, *Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 6-7.

<sup>107</sup> Cited in Geidar Guseinov [Hedar Heydər Huseynov], *İz İstorii obschestvennoi i filosofskoj mysli v Azerbaidzhane XIX veka* (Baku: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk Azerbaidzhanskoi SSR, 1949), 275.

<sup>108</sup> Abasov, 64.

religious belief mediated by science.<sup>109</sup> However, Axundov goes no further to elaborate on this religious philosophy. He describes his interest in the concept of protestantism only in terms of the historical example of American and European Protestants, in order to emphasize the corrupt authority of clericalism.<sup>110</sup> However, his discussion of “protestantism in Islam” not only provides an example of the coexistence of multiple planes of thought in his work, but offers an introduction to a vision of reformist Islam. Kəmalüddövlə argues that the social and cultural backwardness of the Persian people resulted from the loss of their ancient national characteristics of truth, bravery, and democracy. In this way, the statement idealizes the pre-Islamic Sassanid empire as a utopian society and a model for rational and efficient institutions that fell under corrupt leadership after the conversion to Islam. Axundov presents a vision of the recovery of pre-Islamic wisdom, and in so doing, engages with an intellectual tradition that became popular among both European orientalists and Islamic modernist reformers during the nineteenth century.<sup>111</sup> It is possible to think of Axundov's readings of Islam, in this way, as a precursor to similar concepts underpinning Islamic reformist movements. In particular the *jadid* [*cədid*] cultural reform movement relied on Qur’anic scripture to legitimize the use of European technology, and drew upon the critical faculties of *ijtihad* to prove the compatibility of Islam with European thought.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Axundov mentions American and European Protestantism in *Three Letters* and his autobiography. See: Abasov, 64-65.

<sup>111</sup> David Fieni argues compellingly for the centrality of a romantic rhetoric of decadence in the work of the French Orientalist Ernest Renan and the Islamic scholar Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī. Fieni, *Decadent Orientalisms: Configuring the Decay of Colonial Modernity in French and Arabic* (PhD diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2006), *passim*. For a more detailed discussion of the romantic elements of German Orientalism see Susan Marchand, *Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), *passim*.

<sup>112</sup> The origins of the term *jadid* [*cədid*] can be traced to the reforms of the Muslim school and the introduction of the phonetic method [*üsuli-cədid*] for teaching the alphabet. Ismail Gasprali launched the first of these schools in the Crimea. See: Azade-Ayse Rorlich’s introduction in Ismail Bey Gasprali, *French and African Letters. 1887-1891*. trans. Azade-Ayse Rorlich (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2008), 19. For a discussion of Jadidism in the Russian empire see

Perhaps the most nuanced analysis of Axundov's theory of religion was made by the Azeri writer and reformer Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə (1866-1932), who served as the editor of the internationally renowned satirical journal *Molla Nəsrəddin*. Məmmədquluzadə's article, "Mirzə Fətəli Axundov: On Religions" ["Mirzə Fətəli Axundov dinlər haqqında"], was first printed in a 1928 issue of the reformist women's journal *The Eastern Woman* [*Şərq Qadını*].

Məmmədquluzadə points out that Axundov's work was not considered atheistic until Soviet critics appropriated an excerpt from *Three Letters* for their own ideological aims. In an elliptical argument typical of Məmmədquluzadə's rhetorical style, he traces Axundov's correspondence in order to illustrate the internal incongruities within it. In his letters, Axundov refuted the charge of atheism lodged by a figure by the name of Şeyx Mohsun for Kəmalüddövlə's statements in *Three Letters*. Angered, Axundov wrote that Şeyx Mohsun would be charged for his slander on the Day of Judgement. Məmmədquluzadə argues that Axundov's reliance on the existence of the Day of Judgement as an arbiter of final justice illustrates his personal investment in his faith. Tracing inconsistencies in Axundov's work, Məmmədquluzadə illustrates that atheism poses a far too absolute or transcendental a notion of truth to participate in Axundov's critical process.

In *Three Letters*, Kəmalüddövlə discredits Sufi, Sunni and Shi'i religious leaders, the sayings of the Prophet, and various selections from the Qur'an. Finally, he makes a famous declaration that all religions are an empty fiction.<sup>113</sup> Kəmalüddövlə says, "Hey Cəlalüddövlə! Don't assume from these words that maybe I prefer some other religion and sect to Islam. I

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also Rorlich, *The Volga Tatars: A Profile in National Resilience*; Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); For a discussion of the role of *ijtihad* in Islamic revivalist thought see A. Dallal, "The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought, 1750-1850," 341-359.

<sup>113</sup> Axundov, *Tri pis'ma Indiiskogo printsa Kemal-ud-Dovlə k Persidskomu printsu Dzhelal-ud-Dovle i izbrannye filosofskie proizvedeniia 1850-64*, ed. M. Kasumova (Baku: Akademiia Nauk Azerbaidzhanskoi SSR, 1953), 107.

*regard all religions to be empty and legends.*”<sup>114</sup> However, Məmmədquluzadə contextualizes this statement within the work as a whole by citing the second letter in the collection. In this selection, Kəmalüddövlə argues that his philosophy of religion is based on the works of the Persian scholar and Sufi poet Nur al-Dīn Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī (1414-1492), the Persian Sufi poet Mahmūd Shabistārī (1288-1340), the Italian scholar and poet Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374), and the French writer and thinker Voltaire (1694-1778). Kəmalüddövlə addresses Cəlalüddövlə and all Muslims in general:

Until you have become informed about astronomy and natural sciences you will always believe in extraordinary miracles, angels, and these sorts of superstitions: since you will not be able to know that the whole universe is one perfect unity of energy...and its law that individuals appear and that the seed of the tree that is underground becomes a tree after sun, air, and water lend it their care and all in heaven and earth that is visible and invisible to you with your five-senses, and all sorts of objects are just fragments and pieces comparing to the being-whole [*vücudi-vahid*] and all of those fragments are whole and that wholeness is the being-whole [*vücudi-vahid*]. And it is this whole-being which is itself creator and itself creation.<sup>115</sup>

The quotation can be divided into three major arguments: (1) a critique of superstition – miracles and other ritualized practices (2) an emphasis on the study of natural sciences and particularly

<sup>114</sup> Cited in Məmmədquluzadə, “Mirzə Fətəli Axundov dinlər haqqında,” 279.

<sup>115</sup> Cited in Məmmədquluzadə, “Mirzə Fətəli Axundov dinlər haqqında,” 279. See Also Axundov, *Tri pis'ma Indiiskogo printsa Kemal-ud-Dovlə k Persidskomu printsu Dzhelal-ud-Dovle i izbrannye filosofskie proizvedeniia*, 105-108.

materialist philosophy and (3) a reference to the concept of the wholeness of being that is central to many mystic teachings rooted in Arabo-Persian philosophical traditions. These three points can be extended more broadly to Axundov's work as a whole. The critique of superstitions is a common point throughout *Three Letters* and a central thematic in *Monsieur Jordan*. The analysis of the universe as a unity of energy, the references to the five senses of perception, and the growth cycle of the tree clearly emphasize Axundov's interest in Materialism. The quotation also equates the wholeness of the natural world with a unity of being, literally a “being-one” [“*vücudi-vahid*”]. *Vücud* is taken from the Arabic *wajūd*, “being” or “existence,” while *vahid* is taken from the Arabic *wahid*, “one” or “oneness.” *Vücudi-vahid*, thus, literally translates as “being-one,” and is a form of the Arabic *waḥdat al-wujūd*, or the Sufi metaphysical concept of the Unity of Being most often attributed to the thirteenth century Islamic philosophers Ibn Sab‘īn and Ibn ‘Arabī.<sup>116</sup> The concept in Islamic philosophy refers to the unity of truth and existence within God. It is noteworthy that while Axundov does not embrace any religious institutions, his work contains many references to Islamic philosophy and culture. His pen name in “On the Death of Pushkin” is the word *Səbuhi*, which derives from the root *S-B-H*, or sunrise, but can refer to a short form for *sālāt al sub*, or the morning prayer.<sup>117</sup> While these examples do not prove Axundov's piety, crucially they inform a layer of signification in his rich discourse.

Directly following this quotation, Kəmalüddövlə addresses his interlocutor’s skepticism. This aside to the reader emphasizes the importance of the form of dialogue to the process of critique. It also provides Axundov with the opportunity to expand on the concept of unity. Axundov writes: “Here you address me ‘Dear Kəmalüddövlə! From where does the human

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<sup>116</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy From its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 156.

<sup>117</sup> Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J Milton Cowan (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1980), 500.



embryo or the seed of the tree emanate?”<sup>118</sup> Kəmalüddövlə answers by describing the perfect unity of the universe. Indeed, he alludes to the Qur’anic surah, 112, *al-Ikhlās* or *al-Tawhīd*, replacing the figure of God with the natural world.<sup>119</sup> Axundov continues: “This universe is one being, powerful and perfect. In the beginning he was not preceded and in the end he did not follow.”<sup>120</sup> Particularly the fourth verse of the surah is relevant, declaring that God is the one, eternal and perfect one ‘who neither begetteth nor is begotten.’<sup>121</sup> This sense of unity is expressed both in the wholeness of God as a transcendent non-corporeal being, as well as through the wholeness of time, which here extends beyond the concept of human reproduction or ancestry.

In these passages, Axundov resignifies the concept of divine unity in the context of his discussion of a materialist philosophy of the universe. Axundov thus works within the internal logic of the text. While he does not argue explicitly for the compatibility of Islam and materialism, he presents multiple registers of speech from these two discourses in his treatise. He argues that the world is revealed to man through the five senses, though the things that are sensed are only fragments in comparison with the *unity of being*. If the *unity of being* could also be understood as truth, then this truth can signify both the discussion of the natural world that Kəmalüddövlə has laid out for us in the previous lines, or perhaps a new genealogy of Islamic philosophy. The possibility of reading this text both ways distinguishes the multiple registers of speech in Axundov's heteroglossic discourse. Simplifying Axundov’s work as an outright critique

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<sup>118</sup> Axundov, *Tri pis'ma Indiiskogo printsa Kemal-ud-Dovlə k Persidskomu printsu Dzhelal-ud-Dovle i izbrannye filosofskie proizvedeniia*, 107.

<sup>119</sup> A surah is a division of the Qur’an, which could be likened to a chapter. There are 114 in total. “1. Say: He is God, / The One and Only; 2. God, the Eternal, Absolute; 3. He begetteth not, / Nor is He begotten; 4. And there is none/ Like unto Him” *The Holy Qur’an: 112*, trans. Yusuf Ali (Maryland: Amana Corp., 1983), 1806.

<sup>120</sup> Axundov, *Tri pis'ma Indiiskogo printsa Kemal-ud-Dovlə k Persidskomu printsu Dzhelal-ud-Dovle i izbrannye filosofskie proizvedeniia*, 107.

<sup>121</sup> *The Holy Qur’an: 112*, trans. Yusuf Ali (Maryland: Amana Corp., 1983), 1806.

of the principles of religious belief suppresses the complex vision of intertwining narratives in his work. Reading Axundov's work on the discursive threshold between Russian literary discourse, European thought, and Islamic philosophy, in this way, reveals the complex and unique geopolitical and historical contexts that generated these literary works.

My choice to compare the work of Axundov and Pushkin not only aims to understand a historical moment of contact. Axundov, like Pushkin became an icon for the formation of an Azerbaijani national identity during the early Soviet period, and has remained a symbol of Azerbaijani and Persian literary modernity in contemporary scholarship. Indeed, most Anglophone scholars consider Axundov a Persian writer, though he lived in the Caucasus for most of his life. It would be equally problematic to consider Axundov an Azerbaijani nationalist, as there was no Azerbaijani nation-state during Axundov's time. Writing in multiple languages and spending most of his time living in Tiflis, his works participates in a series of intersecting literary traditions. Soviet literary critic and historian Lidiia Ginzburg's described Pushkin as "The pivot on which Russian culture turns, he connects the past to the future. Take away the pivot and the connections will disintegrate."<sup>122</sup> Similarly, the mythologization of the figure of Axundov in Soviet and contemporary scholarship is central to the construction of the idea of literary production in the Caucasus, as well as to the systems of power in the Russian empire and the Soviet Union.

During the Soviet Union, Axundov was read as atheist and anti-imperialist, while today he is often considered a westernizer and apologist for Russian colonialism. Axundov's most famous critics, remain the Soviet scholars Şıxəli Qurbanov, Mikayıl Rəfili, and Heydər

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<sup>122</sup> Cited in Stephanie Sandler, "Pushkin and identity," *National Identity in Russian Culture: An Introduction*, eds. Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis (New York: Cambridge, 2004), 197.

Hüseynov. Qurbanov and Hüseynov, though both members of the Communist Party, were criticized for their support of Azerbaijani nationalism.<sup>123</sup> Hüseynov was removed from his position in the Academy of Sciences for his alleged sympathy with a Sufi sect, and as a result committed suicide. While marginalized during the Soviet Union, these critical writings still emphatically express the accepted Soviet position that Axundov was an atheist. They further expound on the crucial role that Russian literature played in shaping his work, as well as serving as inspiration for the foundation of an Azerbaijani literary tradition. For example, quoting Lenin on the subject of national culture, Qurbanov writes,

“There are yet undeveloped elements of democratic and socialist culture, for in every nation there are toiling and exploited masses whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism.” In this way, the advanced Russian culture contributed to the development of these raw materials of democratic culture in the national culture of the people/nation of Azerbaijan.<sup>124</sup>

Both Rəfili and Hüseynov echo this rhetoric of the progressive influence of Russian thought on the development of Azerbaijani culture. Unfortunately, there have been few efforts to provide alternative models of literary history in contemporary Azerbaijani scholarship. In 2008 Sevinc Zeynalova outlined the historical significance of Axundov's work, “M. F. Axundov and his followers [N. Vəzirov, E. Haqverdiyev, C. Məmmədquluzadə, N. Nərimanov etc...] took the examples they studied from European and Russian culture and brought forth the essence of the

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<sup>123</sup>Qurbanov's strange death, caused by shock during a dental visit, has been suspect to theories of intentional poisoning.

<sup>124</sup>Kurbanov, 47.

criticism of enlightened-realist literature.”<sup>125</sup> Zeynalova includes Russia as part of a continuous European whole, whose literature, as if by combatting the ills of Azeri feudalism, was able to generate a modern Azerbaijani identity in the creation of the hybrid figure of Axundov.

Perhaps one of the most memorable monuments to Axundov was Rəfili's screenplay for the 1941 film *Səbuhi*, dedicated to life of the great writer and reformer. In his important history of Early Soviet Azeri film, Michael G. Smith recounts Stalin's request that the film depict the “historically progressive significance of the unification of the Caucasus peoples with Russia' and the 'vanguard role of the Russian intelligentsia.’”<sup>126</sup> In this way, Rəfili and the film's director Amo Bek-Nazarov, “transformed Axundov into an active, class-conscious figure, an eager student of the early Russian revolutionary movement and admirer of Pushkin's poetry.”<sup>127</sup> The heteroglossia and heterodoxia of Axundov's poetry locate it within the politics of a series of emerging and colliding imperial, national, and Soviet discourses of power. As Axundov memorialized Pushkin's contributions to the Russian legacy of imperial progress, so too was Axundov's own work read as a monument to a new Azerbaijani national epic. Rəfili's revised Stalinist portrait of Axundov as a Soviet icon, in turn, contributed to his own memorialization as a modern literary critic. In his biography, the contemporary scholar Nazif Ələkbərli wrote that Rəfili envisioned his role as the first writer to create a comprehensive historical narrative of Azerbaijani literature and thought.<sup>128</sup> Simply in the act of studying Axundov, Rəfili by proxy gained status as the first modern literary historian. In this way, the creation of the Soviet idea of Axundov, as much as his own work, replicated the imperial power of the Russian hegemonic

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<sup>125</sup>Zeynalova, “M.F Axundzadə və Avropa mədəniyyəti.”

<sup>126</sup>Michael G. Smith, “Cinema for the 'Soviet East': National Fact and Revolutionary Fiction in Early Azerbaijani Film,” *Slavic Review* 56.4 (1997):645-678, 673.

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Nazif Ələkbərli, *Mikayıl Rəfili: Həyatı və yaradıcılığı* (Baku: Qartal, 1998), 25-27.

narrative during the Soviet period as it seemed to decry cultural and political imperialism.

### **Prisoners of the Caucasian Imaginary: Lermontov and Kazy-Girei's Heroes in Exile**

By the way, there exists a strange but widespread legend about this cross, that it was set there by Emperor Peter I when he was traveling through the Caucasus. In the first place, though, Peter was only in Dagestan, and secondly, written on the cross in large letters is an explanation that it was placed at the order of General Ermolov, and specifically in 1824. But the legend, despite the inscription, has taken such firm root that indeed you don't know which to believe, especially since we are not used to trusting inscriptions.<sup>129</sup>

Кстати, об этом кресте существует странное, но всеобщее предание, будто его поставил император Петр I, проезжая через Кавказ; но, во-первых, Петр был только в Дагестане, и, во-вторых, на кресте написано крупными буквами, что он поставлен по приказанию ген. Ермолова, а именно в 1824 году. Но предание несмотря на надпись, так укоренилось, что, право, не знаешь, чему верить, тем более что мы не привыкли верить надписям.<sup>130</sup>

In this quotation from his 1840 novel, *A Hero of Our Time* [*Geroi nashego vremeni*], Mikhail Iurevich Lermontov describes a reader's encounter with the Russian historiography of imperial expansion. The novel recounts the exploits of a young Russian anti-hero, Grigorii Aleksandrovich Pechorin, during his exile in the North Caucasus. Lermontov highlights the role of a collective

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This chapter is based on the following article: Leah Feldman, "Orientalism on the Threshold: Reorienting Heroism in Late Imperial Russia," *Boundary 2* 39.2 (2012): 161-80. Copyright, 2012, Duke University Press. All rights reserved. Selections have been reprinted by permission of the present publisher, Duke University Press. [www.dukeupress.edu](http://www.dukeupress.edu).

Mikhail Iurevich Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time*, trans. Marian Schwartz (New York: Modern Library, 2004), 30.

<sup>130</sup> Mikhail Iurevich Lermontov, *Sobranie sochinenii v 4 tomakh* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo akademii nauk SSSR, 1962), 4:174.

imaginary, and in turn, his own authorial myth-making, in the process of (in)scripting the history of the Russian conquest of the Caucasus. His description of a faded inscription exposes the implied Russian “we,” as the uncertain descendents of the myths of westernization and modernization embodied in the figure of Peter the Great. The image of the palimpsest traces an entire archive of Russian writings about the Caucasus, which shaped not only the imagined geography of the region, but also that which has been erased. Despite his efforts to make visible the limits of representation, the force of inscription in his novel nonetheless remains grafted onto ideologies of imperial power. While Lermontov’s exiled hero finds himself trapped in the Caucasus, Lermontov’s Muslim subjects become the true textual prisoners in the novel.

This chapter invites Lermontov’s uncertain Russian reader to excavate the layers of lost inscriptions in representations of the figure of the heroic exile in the Caucasus. By examining his work alongside a short story, “The Azhitugai Valley” [“Dolina Azhitugai”] (1835), written by the Adyghe soldier Sultan Kazy-Girei, the idea of the hero in the Caucasus is placed on a discursive threshold, between myths of imperial expansion and the personal memories of an imperial subject. Kazy-Girei and Lermontov’s descriptions of the Caucasus transcribe the experiences of their heroes in exile onto the topography of imagined and remembered landscapes. Lermontov highlights the instability of sign systems by exposing the imagined geography of the Caucasus.<sup>131</sup> Indeed as he suggests in this citation, the practice of reading imperial history, like his novel, requires act of *belief*. In “The Azhitugai Valley,” Kazy-Girei describes his narrator’s attempts to represent his own memories of childhood in the language of imperial power. His narrative rewrites the Caucasian landscape instead, by blending Russian Romantic tropes with personal memories. Lermontov’s work highlights the role of the geopolitical space of the Caucasus, on the threshold of Eurasia, as a defining ideology of nineteenth century Russian discourses of heroism. His works also contribute to generating a paradigmatic Muslim

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<sup>131</sup> See: Edward Said, “Invention, Memory, and Place,” *Critical Inquiry* 26. 2 (2000):175-192, 179.

figure in Russian literature. Kazy-Girei attempts to erode an imagined Caucasus, by integrating his own childhood memories of the space into his account. His own sense of alienation resulting from his cultural displacement, generates a new understanding of the Russophone text as an experience of exile. Read together, these works expose the way in which literary representations of the Caucasus as a space of freedom were tied to the mapping of civic identity in the Russian empire.

The imagined space of the Caucasus was outlined by the topographical borders of the Kuban river and the Caucasus mountains. On the one hand, this border demarcated “civilized” Christian Russia from the “wild” peoples of the north Caucasus, who Russians referred to under the general term Circassian [*Cherkes*], a term that evoked their ‘savage valor’ in the Russian imagination.<sup>132</sup> The Russian intelligentsia’s preoccupation with its own liminality – or as Aleksander Herzen famously wrote, this “Janus-faced” position between “Asian” and “European” influence – acquired new significance amidst Russia’s imperial conquest of the Caucasus.<sup>133</sup> In this way, the Caucasus served as a source of ethnographic and poetic inspiration for Russian writers, contributing to the formation of a dimension of Russian civic identity and a heroic ideal. These geographic markers not only identify the territories that Russia colonized, but also trace the contours of an imagined space. Lermontov and Kazy-Girei’s heroes, in turn, challenge the boundaries of the literary imagination as they traverse geopolitical borders and their attendant semiotic spaces.

Russian literary narratives about exile in the Caucasus were written amidst a period of invasion, violent displacement, and deportation of local Muslim communities, as well as the political exile of members of the Russian intelligentsia. However, the Russian Romantics represented their desires for political and social freedom in the sublime features of the Caucasian landscape and the figure of the

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<sup>132</sup> The term was used by Russian imperial officials and Orientalists to describe disparate ethno-linguistic groups that occupied the geographic areas: Kabardino-Balkaria, Adyghe, and Karachai-Cherkessia who were united by their supposed lack of a written history and warlike nature. See Austin Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier 1845-1917* (Ithica: McGill-Queens University Press, 2003), 82.

<sup>133</sup> On Herzen’s Janus faced intelligentsia, see: Billington, *The Icon and the Ax: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture*, 188-190.



Muslim mountaineer [*gortsy*]. The sublime object of the Caucasian landscape was both an aesthetic and political project. At once, it epitomized the philosophical struggle to extend the limits of the cognitive capacities of perception and to represent the unimaginable, as well as political efforts to envision Russia's relationship to Europe and identity as an empire. Similarly, the figure of the hero emerged through the tension between an individualist notion of freedom and bravery and a collective idea of Russia's hybrid Eurasian culture. In this way, the act of writing the Caucasus and its inhabitants laid claims to both geopolitical and philosophical debates central to imagining a Russian civic [*rosiiskii*] identity.

The figure of the exiled hero in the Caucasus served to trace the limits of the creative capacities of the human, as well as the limits of the Russian imperial territory. Alain Badiou nuances this relationship between the function of the hero as an embodiment of both the creative capacities of human thought and a collective imaginary. He defines the hero as “the luminous appearance, in a concrete situation, of something that assumes its humanity beyond the natural limits of the human animal.”<sup>134</sup> He describes the role of the imagination, and in particular the cognitive encounter with the sublime, as extending the limits of the human to create a hero.<sup>135</sup> However, Badiou places these ethical questions in the domain of literary representations, specifically the figures of the warrior and soldier in poetry. In this way, the figure of the hero for Badiou illuminates the infinite creative capacity of critical thought to extend the limits of the human *in its appearance in literature*. Indeed, if Badiou were in dialogue with Bakhtin, a *chronotope*, the image of man in literature, might rejoin his description of the hero’s “luminous appearance.”<sup>136</sup> However, unlike Bakhtin, the hero in Badiou’s rendering stages a

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<sup>134</sup> Alain Badiou, “The Contemporary Figure of the Soldier in Politics and Poetry” (paper presented at UCLA, Los Angeles, January, 2007): <http://www.lacan.com/badsold.htm>. A version of this talk was also published as “The Figure of the Soldier” in *Philosophy for Militants*, trans. Bruno Bosteels (London: Verso, 2012), 41-60.

<sup>135</sup> Badiou refers to Jean-François Lyotard’s discussion of the Kantian sublime. For Lyotard, the postmodern artist or writer is in the position of the philosopher, that is, in the domain of critical thought, while the unrepresentable subject cannot be evoked except as empty content. See: Lyotard, “Answering the Question, What is the Postmodern?” in *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence 1982-1985* (Sydney: Power Publications, 1992), 1-17.

<sup>136</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, “Forms of Time of the Chronotope in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, 84.

confrontation between aesthetics and politics. He writes that: “this artistic transformation of the figure of the soldier is important, because in fact it is also a political gesture” and in particular has been “paradigmatic during all the revolutionary sequence of politics.”<sup>137</sup> I argue that the construction of the hero in the Eurasian geopolitical space becomes imbricated in the act of imagining freedom and human agency in Russian and Russophone works.

This chapter reads the idea of the hero of the Caucasus through the figure's inscription into a collective imaginary about the Caucasus alongside the history of Russian imperial expansion. While Lermontov's and Kazy-Girei's texts represent incommensurable experiences of exile, they coexist within the same “luminous appearance” in literary space-time. Placing these narratives in dialogue, I expose the ways in which the ideas of fate, free will, memory and history outline the contours of the Russian literary imagination of the Caucasus and shape ideas of freedom. In this way, the exile traces the limits of Russian ethnic [*ruskii*] and civic [*rossiiskii*] identity as well as the role that figure of the Muslim of the Caucasus played in their construction.<sup>138</sup>

### **The Caucasus Imagined**

Sent to the Caucasus by Tsar Nicholas I for the revolutionary spirit of his poem “Death of a Poet” [“Smert' poeta”] (1837), Lermontov created his heroes during his own exile in the Caucasus. His representations of the Muslims of the Caucasus, however, contributed to a century-old discourse of Russian orientalist production, including ethnographic, linguistic, and literary works about Russia's Muslim imperial territories. Pushkin's canonical work, “The Prisoner of the Caucasus” [“Kavkazskii

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<sup>137</sup> Badiou, “The Contemporary Figure of the Soldier in Politics and Poetry.”

<sup>138</sup> Indeed Edward Said's description of the vantage point of the exile facilitates a better appreciation of the double regard of these interlocking texts, illustrating Kazy-Girei's experience of the present and past, as well as pointing to Self and Other as coeval narratives. See: Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 60 and “Reflections on Exile,” *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 173-186.

plennik”] (1822), and his collection, “Imitations of the Qur’an” [“Podrazhaniia Korany”] (1826) serve as examples of two common themes – the Romantic freedom-fighter in exile and the spiritual authority of the Russian word – in the body of Russian orientalist literary narratives about the Caucasus. For the Russian writer, an interest in Islam and Muslim culture became a defining marker of the cultural identity of the space of exile. Lermontov’s writings about the Caucasus were characterized by a sense of civic consciousness, which manifested itself in an appreciation of the wide expanse of the steppe as the site on which faith, freedom, and bravery were staged. As Isaiah Berlin wrote, the work of the intelligentsia, “made conscious that he was on a public stage, testifying.”<sup>139</sup> In this way, Lermontov provided a psychological portrait of mid-nineteenth century Russia testifying on the stage of a sublime, imagined Caucasian geography.<sup>140</sup> The Russian interest in the figure of the Muslim in the Caucasus, in this way, aimed to extend the capacities of the Russian hero to reflect a supranational Eurasian literary space.

The figure of the exile in the Caucasus demarcates the boundaries between his homeland and the unknown, as well as the Russian self and the Muslim other. The journey of the literary exile outlines a similar preoccupation with identity conceived in terms of the cartography (East/West) and topography (mountains/steppe) of the imagined space. Lermontov’s representations of the Russian exile, Pechorin in *A Hero of Our Time* and the Circassian hero, Garun in his late 1830s poem “The Deserter” [“Beglets”], together dramatize the exile of the hero as a search for freedom and free will. While the Russian soldier Pechorin is placed in exile by the imperial power, the Circassian is separated from his homeland and its history by the violence of imperial expansion. However, Pechorin and Garun are mapped onto the collective imaginary of the exile in Russian literature.

The continuity between the Russian annexation of the Caucasus and its function as a destination

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<sup>139</sup>Cited in Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, 13.

<sup>140</sup>Lermontov’s works about the Caucasus include: “The Deserter” [“Beglets”](1830s); “The Caucasus” [“Kavkaz”](1830); “Izmail-Bei” (1832); “Demon”(1841); “Valerik” (1841); *A Hero of Our Time* [*Geroi nashego vremeni*](1840).

for political exiles after the failure of the Decembrist revolt of 1825, contributed to the imagining of the space as a site of anti-authoritarian struggle and imperial power.<sup>141</sup> As Harsha Ram writes, “A symbol of heroic resistance *and* of inevitable conquest, the Caucasus (and the regions to the south) became the object of what might be called an oppositional imperialism.”<sup>142</sup> The stylistic expression of this “aspect of the civic strain in Russian Romantic poetry,” or “oriental style” [“vostochnyi stil'”] functions, as Ram suggests citing G.A. Gukovskii, as a “coded form of political opposition” constituting a “singular image of the East” that “had the status of a slogan in the struggle of nations against tyranny.”<sup>143</sup> The ideals of *freedom* [*vol'nost'*, *svoboda*], faith, bravery, and a close connection to nature authored a particularly Russian portrait of the Muslim mountaineer, which nonetheless remained in dialogue with the European trope of the noble savage.<sup>144</sup> The idea of freedom, *vol'nost'*, connected most often to the perception of open space, derives from *volia*, a form of the Latinate *voluntas*, emphasizing the role of human cognition in its determination. In this way, the civic strain in Russian poetry was set in the sublime landscape of the Caucasus and offered a vision of a Circassian freedom fighter engaged in battle against the very idea of tyranny. The connection between the space of the north Caucasus, freedom, and revolution shaped the Russian orientalist idealization of a collective Caucasian bravery and spirit. Indeed, a century later, these tropes were taken up by Chechen poets themselves. Harsha Ram describes their writings as acts of self-Orientalization, citing the poet and former president Zelimkhan Iandarbiev's definition of *Caucasianness* [*Kavkaznost'*] as “an exclusive attachment to the

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<sup>141</sup>The generation of intellectuals, also known as “the children of 1812,” was involved in or sympathetic to the Decembrist Revolt of 1825. See Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1979), 67–68.

<sup>142</sup>Ram argues that the fact that the development of modern Russian poetry coincided with the expansion of the Russian empire linked the thematics of empire to formal innovations in language, genre, and style and the ideological implications of Russian writers' connection to an autocratic state. Ram, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire*, 132.

<sup>143</sup> Ram, *The Imperial Sublime*, 132. See also, G.A. Gukovskii, *Pushkin i Russkie romantiki*, ed. S.V. Putilov (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo zhudozhestvennaia literatura, 1965), 258-259. At the heart of Ram's reading is not only a tension between imperialism and a challenge to the tsars' authority, but the futility of the young generation's attempts to effect social change after the Napoleonic wars and the failed Decembrist revolt.

<sup>144</sup>See Susan Layton, “Nineteenth Century Mythologies of Caucasian Savagery” *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917*, eds. Daniel Brower and Edward Lazzarini (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 88-89.

ideal of freedom, both personal and national, that refuses to recognize even conditional frameworks that might delimit it.”<sup>145</sup> For Lermontov, staging this discourse of freedom through the figure of the Muslim offered a means of authenticating his literary innovations as part of a Russian literary tradition.

Perhaps one of the most famous lyric treatises on the Russian exile in the Caucasus was Lermontov’s 1841 poem, “Farewell, to Russia’s Unwashed Features” [“Proschai, nemytaia Rossiia”].<sup>146</sup> The short, passionate work represents the autocratic state of the empire as a “Country of slaves, country of lords” [“Strana rabov, strana gospod”]. It is only during the lyric subject’s exile in the Caucasus in 1841 that he finds refuge from the oppressive power of the state. The mountains provide protection, “Perhaps beyond the wall of the Caucasus/ I will hide from your pashas” [“Byt mozhet, za stenoï Kavkaza / Sokroius' ot tvoikh pashei”]. Lermontov highlights the abusive power of the tsar by referring instead to “pashas.” Orientalizing the tsar as an ‘oriental despot,’ Lermontov aims his critique at the backwardness of issues of class, governance, and free speech in the empire. The distance afforded by exile facilitates his idealization of the topography of the Caucasus as an ideological space of freedom.

Lermontov’s 1830s poem “The Deserter” [“Beglets”] illustrates the tension between exile in the Caucasus and the search for freedom and liberty in the Russian state.<sup>147</sup> “The Deserter,” describes the story of a Circassian fighter, Garun, engaged in battle against the Russian army alongside his family and community. As he witnesses the death of his brothers and father, he flees the battlefield, only to be turned away at his own door for dishonoring his family and community.

Garun ran faster than a deer,

Faster than a rabbit from an eagle;

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<sup>145</sup> See Zelimkhan Iandarbiev, *Kavkazskost', Checheniia - Bitva za svobodu* (Lviv: Svoboda narodiv, 1996), cited in Ram, “Prisoners of the Caucasus: Literary Myths and Media Representations of the Chechen Conflict,” *The Berkeley Program in Post-Soviet Studies Working Papers Series* (1999): 1-29, 20.

<sup>146</sup> Lermontov, “Proschai, nemytaia Rossiia” *Sobranie sochinenii v 4 tomakh*, 1:524.

<sup>147</sup> Lermontov, “Beglets,” *Sobranie sochinenii v 4 tomakh*, 2:454.

He ran in terror from the field of battle,  
Where Circassian blood flowed;  
His father and his two brothers  
Laid there for honor and liberty,  
And beneath the heel of the foe  
Lie their heads in the dust.  
Their blood flows and asks for vengeance,  
Garun forgot his duty and shame;  
Amidst the heat of battle, he lost  
His rifle, sword – he runs.

Гарун бежал быстрее лани,  
Быстрее, чем заяц от орла;  
Бежал он в страхе с поля брани,  
Где кровь черкесская текла;  
Отец и два родные брата  
За честь и вольность там легли,  
И под пятой у супостата  
Лежат их головы в пыли.  
Их кровь течет и просит мщенья,  
Гарун забыл свой долг и стыд;  
Он растерял в пыли сраженья  
Винтовку, шашку — и бежит!

In the first stanza of the poem, Garun is described as helpless prey, fearfully running from the bloodied battlefield. The gruesome death of his father and brothers is confined to the past tense, while vengeance remains alive in their flowing blood. The repeated image of his flight, preserved in the present tense at the end of the stanza, suggests that he is perpetually attempting to escape the memory of his desertion. His flight leaves him haunted by the heroic ideals of honor and liberty [*chest' i vol'nost'*], which here seem almost anthropomorphically laid to sacrifice in the stead of his father and brothers. Indeed, throughout the poem he is marked by the death of his heroism as “a deserter of (the idea of) freedom” [“beglets svobody”]. Garun is rendered without agency even in his desertion, which is compared to the animalistic flight of a deer or rabbit facing a predator. He emerges from the battle alive, and yet is unable to alter his fate.

Lermontov’s portrait of Garun, indeed shares the disempowerment of the figure of Pechorin in *A Hero of Our Time* who relinquishes his post in the imperial guards to wander in the Caucasus until his death. However, while Pechorin remains conscious and indeed proclaims his own fate, Garun’s character, remains but a sketch of the figure of the exile in a short work of verse. Certainly, there is also an important distinction between Garun’s confinement as a result of Russian imperial force and Pechorin’s bourgeois *ennui*. However, I read both figures as Lermontov’s visions of Russian heroism. In this way, Garun’s exile from battle, his community, and his faith parallels the liminal stasis characteristic of the post-Decembrist sentiment among exiles in the Caucasus. Lermontov’s portrait of Pechorin epitomizes the generation of disaffected youth caught in a perpetual state of political and social exile in the Caucasus.<sup>148</sup> Pechorin’s location in the Caucasus highlights his position as captive to

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<sup>148</sup> The superfluous man is a Byronic-style hero. The term is taken from Turgenev’s “Diary of a Superfluous man” [“Dnevnik lishnego cheloveka”] (1850) and has been applied by scholars retrospectively to refer to an archetypal figure that emerges in nineteenth century Russian literature. Ellen B. Chances defines the figure as “an ineffectual aristocrat at odds with society... dreamy, useless... an intellectual incapable of action, an ineffective idealist, a hero who is sensitive to social and ethical problems, but who fails to act, partly because of personal weakness, partly because of political and social restraints on his freedom of action.” Chances, “The Superfluous Man in Russian Literature,” in *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature*, ed. Neil Cornwell (London: Routledge, 2001), 112.

his own political and social impotence. Similarly, Garun wanders the landscape of the Caucasus, forced into deeper states of exile as first his community, family, and then mosque turn him away.

Lermontov's image of the Caucasian hero draws upon a body of ethnographic data that contributed to Russian imperial knowledge about the Caucasus.<sup>149</sup> However, ethnographic efforts were not only confined to the Caucasus. The work of Russian writers and thinkers in Moscow and Petersburg during the mid-nineteenth century identified peasants as symbolic vessels for the spirit of the Russian nation.<sup>150</sup> Thus, the burgeoning field of ethnography was invested both in contributing to the Russian national idea as well as to generating information about the non-Slavic peoples of the empire.<sup>151</sup> The term *narodnost'*, which denotes a popular national identity, was used to refer both to peasant or folk culture and to civic identity.

*Narodnost'* first appeared in discussions of literature and later served as a foundation for discourses of nationality in ethnographic studies.<sup>152</sup> The term was introduced as an aesthetic concept to distinguish Russian literature's emphasis on the peasant masses (*narod*) from European literary traditions. Translating from the French *nationalité*, Prince Viazemskii coined the term in an 1819 letter to Aleksandr Ivanovich Turgenev, signifying the popular folk nature "of certain of our native gestures."<sup>153</sup> For Viazemskii, as well his contemporaries such as Pushkin, *narodnost'* referred to style over content, emphasizing a universal aesthetics. Pushkin wrote that *narodnost'* was the expression of a "specific [national] physiognomy which is reflected to greater or lesser extent in the mirror of

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<sup>149</sup>Lermontov studied Turkic languages, most likely Azeri specifically, under the tutelage of Axundov. Mehrdad Kia, 426.

<sup>150</sup>Christopher Ely, *This Meager Nature: Landscape and Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002), 3–27.

<sup>151</sup>I rely on Francine Hirsch's definition of ethnography [*etnografiia*] as "a broad field of inquiry, which included under its umbrella the disciplines of geography, archaeology, physical anthropology, and linguistics" and which shared similarities with European cultural anthropology. Hirsch argues that ethnographers also "developed a standardized vocabulary of nationality." Francine Hirsch, 10.

<sup>152</sup>See Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 35–37.

<sup>153</sup>Cited in Nathaniel Knight, "Ethnicity, Nationality and the Masses: *Narodnost'* and Modernity in Imperial Russia," *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices*, ed. David L. Hoffman and Yanni Kotsonis (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 50.



poetry.”<sup>154</sup> Viazemskii and his contemporaries drew upon discussions of the national idea in European thought, particularly Madame de Staël’s *De l’Allemagne*, Frederic Ancillon’s “Analyse de l’idée de littérature nationale,” Friedrich Schelling’s philosophy of history, and Johann Herder’s notion of the *Volksgeist* – or the unique spirit in the language and culture of the people.<sup>155</sup> Emphasizing Herder’s romantic concept, the prominent orientalist Nikolai Nadezhdin argued that Russian ethnographers should adopt the term *narodnost’* as a means of categorizing or ordering the peoples of the Russian empire.<sup>156</sup> He described the term as the “totality of all traits, external and internal, physical and spiritual, mental and moral out of which is composed the physiognomy of the Russian person, distinguishing him from all people.”<sup>157</sup> Thus the search for a national idea was at the heart of both the development of a ‘modern’ literary style and in the creation of the science of ethnography.

In her discussion of the function of the institution of ethnography in the Russian imperial administration in the Caucasus, Dana Sherry argues that colonial officials employed a strategy of “social alchemy.” This pseudo-scientific discourse, Sherry argues, identified the ethnic make-up of the population in order to assess ways in which these ‘raw materials’ could be transformed and harnessed to strengthen imperial industry.<sup>158</sup> Indeed, these studies echoed a civilizing mission, not unlike that of the Anglo-French imperial administrations. However, the work of the *Imperial Russian Geographical Society* [*Imperatorskoe russkoe geograficheskoe obschestvo*] (1850-1917), one of the most influential

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<sup>154</sup>Cited in Knight, “Ethnicity, Nationality and the Masses,” 51. The term was also used in the 1830s by Sergei Uvarov, an advisor of Tsar Nicholas I and minister of education, as part of an official state ideology. The slogan: “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality [*Narodnost’*]” dictated the Tsar as the embodiment of the Russian *narod*. See Knight, “Ethnicity, Nationality and the Masses,” 54. Hirsch notes that Uvarov’s choice of the term *narodnost’* reflects his effort to distinguish Russia from other European states. Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 37.

<sup>155</sup>Knight notes that Russians embraced Herder’s notion of a national spirit but in line with Schelling’s thought insisted that a nation’s existence must be defined in the context of a unified world historical narrative. See: Knight, “Ethnicity, Nationality and the Masses,” 48-53.

<sup>156</sup>See Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers, 114-139*. Nikolai Nadezhdin (1804-1856) was one of the founding members of the ethnographic division of the Imperial Geographical Society, one of the major organs of Russian orientalist studies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See: Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 36-37.

<sup>157</sup> Indeed, the renowned orientalist Sergei Ol’denburg and his colleagues continued to foreground this term in their work with the Imperial Geographical Society. Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 21-61.

<sup>158</sup> Dana Sherry, *Imperial Alchemy: Resettlement, Ethnicity, and Governance in the Russian Caucasus, 1828-1865* (PhD diss., University of California at Davis, 2007), 5.

orientalist institutions, relied on a system for classifying the population in terms of the physical landscape they inhabited. Sherry writes that “in short, geography functioned for Caucasus officials much as race functioned for British officials in India.”<sup>159</sup> Fostering this connection between the colonized peoples of the Caucasus and their landscape further solidified the connection between Romantic literary tropes and ethnographic studies, blurring the boundaries between “science” and “art.”

As a contribution to the development of contemporary Russian poetry and a source of information about the legends of the mountaineers, works about the Caucasus blended ethnography and literature. In this way, they also attempted to expand the linguistic and cultural lexicon of the Russian literary language. Lermontov’s “The Deserter” illustrates this trend. He wove cultural artifacts into the work by titling the poem, “a mountain legend,” and glossing the Turkic words “town” [“aul”] and “unbeliever or infidel” [“gyaur”]. Similarly, Russian historians and ethnographers of the period described the region through interdisciplinary literary, historical, and ethnographic studies. The editor P. Nadezhdin announced the objectives of his edited volume to describe the Caucasus through “the stories of travelers, poetic works by Pushkin, Lermontov, and Polonskii, as well as the research of scientists.”<sup>160</sup> Making explicit the inspiration of the European Romantic tradition on his work, he cites Chateaubriand: “The only means of seeing a country for what it is by seeing it through its traditions and relics of memory.”<sup>161</sup> The allusion to French Romanticism offers a telling analogue for Russia’s search for a national idea. The work contains chapters organized by geographic regions, each containing articles on topics ranging from literary descriptions of the landscape including: Lermontov’s poem “The Deserter” and Aleksandr Dumas’s “Legend about the Origins of the Caucasian Mountains,” [“Legenda o proiskhozhdenii Kavkazskii gor” from *Voyage to the Caucasus*; translated from the original French *Le Caucase: Impressions de voyage; suite de En Russie*] to descriptions of the

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<sup>159</sup>Sherry, *Imperial Alchemy*, 5.

<sup>160</sup>P. Nadezhdin, ed., *Priroda i liudi na Kavkaze i za Kavkazom* (Saint-Petersburg, 1869).

<sup>161</sup>“Le seul moyen de voir un pays tel qu’il est, c’est de le voir avec ses traditions et ses souvenirs.” P. Nadezhdin, ed., *Priroda i liudi na Kavkaze i za Kavkazom*, 1.

development of the oil industry and ethnographic descriptions of the region's inhabitants. The opening of the chapter entitled "Caucasian mountains and mountaineers" begins with the phrase "the Caucasus, (is) standing along a stone wall between Asia and Europe..." ["Kavkaz, stoischii kamennoiu stenoiu mezhdou Aziei i Evropoi..."]<sup>162</sup> Indeed, Pushkin echoes this description in his journey through the Caucasus, *Journey to Arzrum* [*Puteshestvie v Arzrum*]. He states, "The transition from Europe to Asia is more perceptible with every hour."<sup>163</sup> Similarly, at the end of the narrative when the narrator reaches Arzrum he designates it as "the main land-route for trade between Europe and the Orient."<sup>164</sup> Pushkin's *Journey to Arzrum* and "The Prisoner of the Caucasus" along with Lermontov's "The Deserter" appear in this eclectic handbook about the people and nature of the Caucasus, flanked by various ethnographic materials including an essay by the orientalist A. Pavlovskaya entitled "The Effects of the Mountain Topography on the Development of Man" ["Vliianie gornago rel'efa na razvitie cheloveka"].<sup>165</sup> The contemporaneous efforts to define a national idea and acquire information about the peoples of the empire contributed to Romantic fusions of the Russian self with the peoples of the empire. In this way, while Garun and Pechorin are radically different characters, in Lermontov's Romantic imagination they share a Russian exilic hero's frustrated preoccupation with freedom.

The figure of the Muslim Circassian emerged in ethnographic works as a radical combination of a ruthless and bloodthirsty barbarian and a freedom fighter. Orientalist works identified provincial Muslim groups such as the *Naqshbandiyya* Sufi order, which radically challenged the urban *ulema*, as freedom fighters.<sup>166</sup> Russian orientalists focused on a movement they termed *Muridism*, composed of

<sup>162</sup>E. P. Kovalskaia, "Kavkaz: ocherki etnografii kavkaza," *Priroda i liudi*, 54.

<sup>163</sup>Aleksandr Pushkin, *Journey to Arzrum*, trans. Birgitta Ingemanson (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1974), 17.

<sup>164</sup>Pushkin, *Journey to Arzrum*, 79.

<sup>165</sup>Similarly, the *Imperial Russian Geographical Society* echoed Western European-style imperial missions of civilizing the local population, but strongly relied on a Herdorean-like theory that classified ethnic identity according to its natural evolution in the physical environment. Cited in Sherry, *Imperial Alchemy: Resettlement, Ethnicity, and Governance in the Russian Caucasus*, 4.

<sup>166</sup>Despite any efforts by the imperial government to co-opt Muslim religious figures into the Russian civil-military system, the military administrators' approach to Islam was marked by apprehension toward non-orthodox sects, specifically those they identified as sufi by their *tariqah*, or order, and public displays of worship such as the *zikr*. Timothy Blauvelt, "Military-Civil Administration and Islam in the North Caucasus 1853-83," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian*

sects that performed the *zikr* and were “students or followers” [“murid”] of the “teacher” [“murshid”] Imam Shamil.<sup>167</sup> The performance of the *zikr* as well as their location in the Caucasus politicized an image of the freedom-fighting Muridist in the Russian imagination. In this way, Russian orientalists elided diverse Sufi groups throughout the Caucasus with those in Chechnya whose “religious-political character and its propagators had the goal of arousing the people to overthrow Russian power.”<sup>168</sup> The idea of these groups' anti-imperial crusade for freedom, in turn, both appealed to many Decembrist sympathizers in the Caucasus and incited fear among members of the imperial administration.

The biography of the orientalist Mirzə Kazım bəy [Aleksandr Kasimovich Kazembek] was itself an example of the fluid permutations of national and ethnic identity in imperial Russia.<sup>169</sup> Born in the South Caucasus, he grew up in Daghestan, converted to protestant Christianity, moved to Saint-Petersburg, and then finally to Kazan, where he became an established contributor to the institution of Russian oriental studies. In the role of a Russian orientalist, in 1859 he published his famous leaflet “Muridism and Shamil” [“Muridizm i Shamil”] in the journal *The Russian Word* [*Russkoe Slovo*]. Like its contemporaneous scholarship, the work blends the disciplines of history and fiction, announcing its

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*History* 11. 2 (2010): 244- 250; Austin Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain People and the Georgian Frontier*, 20.

<sup>167</sup> Imam Shamil (1797–1871) was a Dagestani-born Avar political and religious figure who mobilized resistance to the Russian conquest of the Caucasus during the nineteenth century, fighting the armies of Aleksandr I, Nicholas I, and Aleksandr II. He also held the post of the third Imam of the Caucasian Imamate. See: Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar*, 39–46, 69–80.

<sup>168</sup> Semen Esadze, *Istoricheskaya zapiska ob upravlenii Kavkazom v 2 tomakh* (Tbilisi: Guttenberg, 1907), 1: 216. Cited in Blauvet, “Military-Civil Administration and Islam in the North Caucasus,” 244.

<sup>169</sup> Mirzə Kazım bəy [Aleksandr Kasimovich Kazembek], (1802-1870) was born in southern Azerbaijan/northern Iran. After receiving a religious education during his early years in Derbend (present day Dagestan) he met Scottish Presbyterian ministers who convinced him to convert to Christianity, taking his new name Aleksandr. Kazım bəy was one of the first lecturers who taught Russian orientalism in Russian (previously Latin and German were the only available languages). He held appointments at both the Kazan and Petersburg schools and worked to make Petersburg the center for Russian orientalism. Like Axundov and Bakıxanov, Kazım bəy held a double identity as an imperial bureaucrat, scholar, and writer. Kazembek's most influential works include: *General Grammar of the Türco-Tatar Language*, trans. Julius Theodor Zenker (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1848); “Muridizm i Shamil” *Russkoe Slovo*, December 1859, 182-242; “Bab et les Babis, ou le soulèvement politique et religieux en Perse de 1845 à 1853” *Journal Asiatique*, April-May 1866, 329-84; August-September 1866, 196-252; October- November 1866, 357-400; December 1866, 473-507; David Schimmelpenninck van de Oye, “Mirza Kazem-Bek and the Kazan School of Russian Orientology” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 28.3 (2008), 443-458.

task to “recount recollections of Muridism” [“rasskazat povest’ o miuridizme”].<sup>170</sup> Throughout these recollections, or this story – as the ambiguity of the term *povest’* would have it – the author reports dramatic dialogues between himself and Imam Shamil, as well as his own experiences in the Caucasus. Indeed, the convention of blending the genres of historical writing and fiction became popular with Nikolai Karamzin’s *History of the Russian State* [*Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskogo*] (1816-1826), which cited literary works to authenticate the history of the formation of the Russian empire.<sup>171</sup>

Kazembek contributed to many of the same tropes of Caucasian bravery and valor in the orientalist archive. He traced Muridism to the idea of *da’vat*, which he defined as an “invitation to the people to revolt against hated authority and to protect religious rights.”<sup>172</sup> He noted the “strong spiritual meaning” and the “cold, unshakeable bravery” of the people of Daghestan.<sup>173</sup> Suspected of supporting Shamil in his writings on Muridism, Kazembek was treated with apprehension by the tsarist government. He was repeatedly denied clearance to leave the Russian empire for fear that he would rally revolutionary support for the Muslim communities of the Caucasus in Europe.<sup>174</sup> However, Kazembek's censoring by the tsarist authorities made the circulation of his recollections of Shamil particularly relevant for Russian political exiles. His synthesis of history and memory further contributed to the construction of an idea of Russian identity as a hybrid fusion of the myths and folk culture of its colonies in the Caucasus.

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<sup>170</sup>Kazembek, “Muridizm i Shamil,” *M. Kazem-Bek izbranye proizvedeniia*, ed. Rzaev (Baku: Elm, 1985), 22.

<sup>171</sup>Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin, *Istoriya gosudarstva Rossiyskogo* (Saint-Petersburg, 1818-1829).

<sup>172</sup>“приглашение людей к восстанию против ненавистной власти и к защите законных или религиозных прав.” Kazembek, *Muridizm i Shamil*, 33.

<sup>173</sup>Kazembek, “Muridizm i Shamil,” 40.

<sup>174</sup> Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, “Mirza Kazem-Bek,” 452. Indeed, one hundred years later, under the Soviet Union, Heydar Huseynov was removed from the Academy of Sciences and stripped of his awards for his 1949 book, *From the History of Social and Philosophical Ideas in Azerbaidjan During the Nineteenth Century* [*Iz istorii obshestvennoj i filosofskoj mysli v Azerbaidzhane XIX veka*] and its alleged idealization of Muridist principles. Huseynov was criticized in particular for the following statement: “As is known, Muridism had a place in Azerbaijan. As a social movement, Muridism was directed against the colonial oppression of tsarism, and also against Azerbaijani feudalism.” Drawing the same historical continuity between anti-authoritarian sentiment and Sufi ideas, Huseynov like many Azerbaijani writers and thinkers during the Russian empire and the Soviet Union was accused of supporting revolutionary sentiment and critiquing authoritarian regimes. Guseynov, *Iz Istorii obschestvennoj i filosofskoj mysli v Azerbaidzhane XIX veka*, 288.

Nadezhdin's work, however, also contains a different image of the Caucasian fighter. A short encyclopedia-like entry describes the term *abrek* as a vagabond or bandit, “Abrek, a word invented by Kabardians, means sworn foe... And the abrek in truth is the most terrible mountain beast, dangerous to his own and others. Blood is his poetry, the knife – his inseparable friend; he himself is the true and eternal servant of Satan.”<sup>175</sup> While this description of the *abrek* highlights the features of the demonic, his very transgression of humanity, as both a “mountain beast” and “Satan” vests him with the symbolic qualities of a Romantic anti-hero. In a similar turn of phrase, Pushkin writes in *Journey to Arzrum*, “the dagger and the sword are parts of their body, an infant begins to master them before he can prattle.”<sup>176</sup> The instruments of battle are imagined as an extension of the body of the Caucasian fighter as well as part of his educational development. His physicality becomes the symbolic instrument of his transgression. His connection to the demonic also highlights his liminal position between the human and the inhuman. In particular, the *abrek* is compared to Satan, the ultimate Romantic fallen hero. Though Lermontov’s hero Garun is not noble like the descriptions of Shamil, nor brave like the description of the *abrek*, he struggles to reconcile his exile with his community, faith, and freedom. It is only in his departure from the battlefield to wander the endless expanse of Russian colonial territory that he acquires a symbolic power, albeit as a fallen hero. His desertion casts him into a state of exile like the *abrek*, symbolized by his otherworldly, or mythical quality as a “mountain beast.” It is this otherworldly or inhuman element, which in turn, places him in the creative space of literary imagining.

Lermontov represents the spectral figure of Garun through his description of the mysterious and spiritual landscape of the Caucasus. He animates the moonlit desert by describing it as a spiritual space, “on the desert of the prophet” [“nad pustyneyu proroka”]. Indeed, much of Lermontov’s poetry anthropomorphizes the Caucasian landscape as characters in his orientalist drama. In other works, he

<sup>175</sup>Dmitrii Dmitrievich Semenov, “‘Abrek’ iz Otechestvovedenia” *Priroda i liudi na Kavkaze i za Kavkazom*, 115–16.

<sup>176</sup>Semenov, “*Abrek’ iz Otechestvovedenia*,” 23.

describes the Kazbek mountains as the “sentry of the Orient” and as “Allah’s eternal throne.”<sup>177</sup> The multiple references to the moon and its light contribute to the mysterious tone of the poem, and introduce Garun as a ghostlike figure, exiled even by the daylight. The “quiet golden moon” [“tikho mesiats zolotoi”] looms over the battlefield and only “under its light [“pri lunnom svete”] can he recognize the contours of “the village of his birth” [“aul rodimyi”]. The moonlight provides a foil for his life in the community, as the space he once traversed under the sun now illuminates his path in exile. Though Garun has survived battle, the moment he deserts his brothers he is transformed into a ghostly shadow, described as “paler than the moon” [“blednei lunny”]. After wandering in the moonlight, he is rejected by his dying friend whose words expel him “across the unfriendly (or gloomy) threshold” [“za neprivetlivyi porog”]. Lermontov’s representation of Garun’s liminal status, trapped in moonlit exile between life and death, reaffirms his role in the Russian literary imagination.

While the poem disguises itself in its epigraph as a “mountain legend” [“gorskaia legenda”], it transforms the alleged ethnographic subjects of the freedom fighter and *abrek* into a literary figure. The crossing of the threshold marks the beginning of Garun’s heroic, or anti-heroic transgression beyond the limits of the human into the space of literature. His path into exile traces his transformation from a collective imaginary to a literary subject, as he is forced to individuate himself by continuing his journey “alone” [“odin”]. Even upon returning home, he is rejected by his mother for leaving his fallen blood behind. Lermontov voices the mother’s rebuke, “You could not die gloriously, so withdraw, live alone” [“Ty umeret’ ne mog so slavoi, tak udalis’, zhivi odin”]. Garun shares the lonely exile of the Romantic hero.

Garun’s badge of shame, the “deserter of freedom,” becomes his representative function in the text. As a fallen hero, Lermontov locates Garun’s story within a tradition of superfluous Russian

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<sup>177</sup>Mikhail Lermontov, “Hastening Northward from Afar” (1837), cited in Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 163.

heroes, who like himself were exiled in the Caucasus with the shame of the failure of the Decembrist revolt. In so doing, the Circassian subject becomes trapped within a Russian literary archetype. Divested of his identity as a member of the community, Garun is forced into a physical, emotional, and spiritual state of exile. Not only does his mother reject her son for his cowardice, but she calls him “a deceiving gaour” [“giaur lukavyi”]. The term is a Turkic derivative from the Arabic *kāfir*, meaning unbeliever, and was used to describe the Russian invaders. In this way, he is alienated from his own community and compared to the Russian soldiers exiled in the Caucasus. Even Garun's soul finds no rest when his dead body is left uncovered and prey to dogs. His shadow is expelled by the recitation of the Qur'an at the dawn prayer, as Lermontov notes, “in the mountains of the East” [“v gorakh vostoka”]. Garun is stripped of both his religious and cultural connections to his community. Lermontov's story affirms Garun's “shame and loss” [“pozor i gibel”] as a way of immortalizing him “in the legends of freedom” [“v predaniiakh vol'nosti”]. Indeed, this phrase highlights the capacity of legends to imagine, and in so doing create freedom [vol'nost']. In the guise of a “mountain legend,” Lermontov's represents a Circassian hero through a Romantic aesthetic of exile, in order to emphasize a Decembrist anti-imperial politics.

### **The Caucasus Remembered**

While both ethnographic and Romantic representations of anti-authoritarian freedom fighters dominated the Russian imagination of the Caucasus, these were not the only narratives that circulated in the Russian literary space. In 1834, a short story entitled “The Azhitugai Valley” [“Dolina Azhitugai”], which describes the landscape of the north west Caucasus through the eyes of a returning Adyghe soldier, appeared in Pushkin's literary journal *The Contemporary* [Sovremennik].<sup>178</sup> Writing in

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<sup>178</sup>Sultan Kazy-Girei, “Dolina Azhitugai,” *Sovremennik* 1 (1836), 155–69.



his non-native language, Sultan Kazy-Girei described his return home as an imperial soldier and his relationship to the Russian language. His short story traces the narrator's alienation – caught between his identity as a Russian soldier and his childhood in the Caucasus. The narrative also exposes the tensions between autobiographical writing and the conventions of the genre of the Russian Romantic Caucasian tale. In his editorial notes, Pushkin emphasizes his impression of the state of exception of Muslim Russophone writers, “an unexpected occurrence in our literature” in which its author, “the son of a half-wild Caucasian stands beside our writers” [“явление, неожиданное в нашей литератур...силь полудикаго Кавказа становится в ряды наших писателей”].<sup>179</sup> Though the text presents a rare example of a published work during this period, it initiates a tradition of Russophone literature that became increasingly widespread during the twentieth century.<sup>180</sup>

Kazy-Girei indeed did not fulfill either of Pushkin's Orientalist projections, being neither “half-wild” nor the royal “progeny of the Crimean Gireis.” Little is known about his life before and after his military service. However, between 1830 and 1840 he was stationed in Saint-Petersburg as a cadet in the Caucasian-Mountaineer squadron, where he learned Russian, attended literary salons, and frequented the theatre.<sup>181</sup> Kazy-Girei's friendly correspondence with Aleksandr Nikolaevich Murav'ev, who he met through military service, acquainted him with the literary milieu, in particular with the work of Pushkin.<sup>182</sup> After publishing two short stories in Pushkin's *Contemporary* he was moved to a military division in Georgia. His correspondence with Murav'ev during this time suggests that the latter attempted unsuccessfully to convert him to Christianity.<sup>183</sup> However, in 1855 he married a Cossack

<sup>179</sup>Kazy-Girei, “Dolina Azhitugai,” 169.

<sup>180</sup>Some of the most well known twentieth century Muslim Russophone writers include the Kyrgyz writer Chinghiz Aitmatov (1928-2008), the Azeri writer Chingiz Huseynov (1929-), the Uzbek writer Hamid Ismailov (1954-).

<sup>181</sup>The Caucasian-Highlander squadron in Saint-Petersburg was an initiative that sought to create a favorable impression of Russian culture among princes, sultans and the local aristocracy. Turchaninov, Sultan Kazy Girei – Korrespondent Pushkinskogo *Sovremennika*, “*Vremennik Pushkinskoi komissii*” (Leningrad: Nauka, 1970), 34

<sup>182</sup>Andrei Nicholaevich Murav'ev (1806-1874) served in the Russian imperial forces and participated in the Decembrist millieu. He was a poet, historian of religion and travel writer.

<sup>183</sup>Indeed in 1848 Murav'ev wrote “Letters on Muhammadism” [“Pis'ma o magometanstve”] which details the “superiority of the Christian faith over the Muhammadian (Islam).” Turchaninov, “Sultan Kazy Girei – Korrespondent Pushkinskogo *Sovremennika*,” 39.

woman and converted to Russian Orthodoxy, taking Murav'ev's name in his baptism as Andrei Andreevich Sultan Kazy Girei. Kazy-Girei, like his narrator, became a soldier in the Russian imperial forces.<sup>184</sup> After joining in 1825, he was awarded a medal for his service in the Persian Campaign in 1826-1827, which led to the signing of the treaty of Turkmenchay in 1828. Indeed, the imperial expansion into the northern Caucasus not only killed hundreds of thousands, but resulted in the deportation and displacement of more than a million North Caucasian Muslims to the Ottoman empire from 1828 through the 1860s.<sup>185</sup>

Kazy-Girei's autobiography reverses the paradigm of the Russian exile, who 'goes native' during his wandering on periphery of the empire. However, his decision to inscribe or perhaps transcribe his memories in Russian forced him to reconcile his homeland through construction of the Caucasus in the Russian literary imagination. In this way, the narrator describes his relationship to his homeland through a detailed account of the topography of the landscape. His vision of the Caucasus in "The Azhitugai Valley" blends elements from the Russian imaginary with his own personal memories of the valley "across the Kuban river" ["za Kubaniu"].<sup>186</sup> The narrator relates the emotional experience of returning to his homeland through the sensory experience of riding through the landscape on horseback. The story relates the narrator's return to a familiar valley of his youth, changed by his experience in the imperial guards. Contrasting his Russian narrative with the narrator's fractured identity, Kazy-Girei writes, "All of the war games I practiced while racing across this field were always assault drills against Russians and yet now I found myself standing here as a Russian officer" ["все воиские приемы, к которым я принаравливался во время скачек на этом поле, всегда были примером нападения на Русских, а теперь я сам стою на нем Русским офицером"].<sup>187</sup> The

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<sup>184</sup>Turchaninov clarifies that Pushkin confuses Sultan Kazy-Girei with his sergeant Sultan Khan Girei. For all biographic references see Turchaninov, "Sultan Kazy Girei – Korrespondent Pushkinskogo *Sovremennika*," 33-46.

<sup>185</sup>See: Stephen Shenfield, "The Circassians: A Forgotten Genocide?" *The Massacre in History*, eds. Mark Levene and Penny Roberts, (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999), 149-162.

<sup>186</sup> Kazy-Girei, "Dolina Azhitugai," 155.

<sup>187</sup>Kazy-Girei, "Dolina Azhitugai," 160.

narrator describes his identity through the dislocation of the past and present. While the landscape remains unchanged, he creates a disjuncture between his childhood memories and Russification in the military by emphasizing temporal shifts in his narrative.

The childhood voice of the narrator, who recounts his war games, cannot be separated from his adult reflection in the trappings of a Russian officer. Indeed, a self-Orientalizing Russian voice confesses, “Everything spoke to me of the wild and warlike life of the local inhabitants. How strange it is to suddenly find oneself in such a place as this straight from the capital, instead of the straightly (aligned) streets to see the boundless steppe and in place of dandy carriages to see some bold highlander with his faithful horse” [“все и все говорило мне о дикой и воинственной жизни здешних обитателей – и как странно попасть вдруг в подовня места прямо из Стоицы; видеть вместо правильных улиц необъятная степи и вместо щегольских экипажей какого нибудь удалого Горца с своим верным конем”].<sup>188</sup> In this passage, a polarized worldview emerges, contrasting straight streets and dandy carriages with the boundless steppe and the wild and warlike highlanders on horseback. Memories of home and the narrator’s fellow countrymen are represented in a tone reminiscent of the Russian ethnographic studies of the ‘wild’ local inhabitants. However, this orientalist voice is interrupted by the narrator’s temporal disorientation as he penetrates deeper into the valley of his youth. The sharp descent and a flash of memories causes him to fall into such a state of reverie that he no longer distinguishes space, “I daydreamed so that I did not notice this distance” [“zamechtalsia, tak, shto i ne zametal etogo razstoiania”].<sup>189</sup>

The narrator’s Romantic vision of the landscape becomes intertwined with his own awareness of his transformation as a Russian soldier. Indeed, he recounts, “this strange and rebellious life is not comprehensible to the European mind and themes about the emergence of nations, which have been and are still discussed came to my mind” [“не Евроейскому уму представилась эта странная,

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<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

мятежная жизнь, и мне прияшли в голову теории образования народов, о которых так много толкуют и толковали”].<sup>190</sup> Assuming the position of the “European mind,” the narrator recognizes his past life through the eyes of an orientalist, as “strange” and “rebellious.” Yet, he also remains outside of this ‘European self,’ encountering colonial plots as the overheard voices of an anonymous “many.” Repeating the voice of the colonizer, he creates a space for the voice of the “non-European mind” within the Russian language.<sup>191</sup> The narrator continues to articulate the difference between his fractured halves by emphasizing a temporal shift, “Was it long ago that like a tempest I crisscrossed this rebellious land on horseback, while now I am ready to submit a thousand plans for its development” [“давно-ли я сам вихрем носился на коне в этому разгульном краю, а теперь готов представить тысячу планов для его образования”].<sup>192</sup> The narrator’s journey traces his transgression from familiar, private spaces to the public sphere of Russia’s colonial development, linking the two images of the Caucasus in his narrative.

Reading Lermontov’s “The Deserter” and Kazy-Girei’s “The Azhitugai Valley” together dramatizes the history of the Russian Orientalist literary tradition through a kaleidoscopic fracturing of identity. Like Lermontov’s Garun, Kazy-Girei’s narrator occupies the position of an internal exile as an Adyghe soldier in the imperial forces, who also finds himself wandering the expanse of the Caucasian steppe. While Garun, helplessly torn from a foreign legend, is subject to the purgatory-like exile of his author’s rendering in the third person, Kazy-Girei’s narrator carves his own story in the first person, between the past and present. Kazy-Girei confronts the dissonance between his experiences as a Russian soldier and his memories of childhood. In so doing, his text exposes the Romantic idealization of the Russian exile.

Kazy-Girei’s narrative time, reminiscent of a Proustian or Bergsonian compressed temporality

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<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> For Kazy-Girei “European” would signify Russian in this context.

<sup>192</sup> Kazy-Girei, “Dolina Azhitugai,” 160.

that is joined by interior monologue, is indeed striking in its early innovations of Russian prose.

However, Kazy-Girei was not alone in his innovation of genre. Five years later, Lermontov published his *A Hero of Our Time*, often considered to be one of the first Russian novels in prose. Lermontov and Kazy-Girei present their narratives through multiple, fragmented perspectives, and non-linear time. In this way, both works approach the figure of the hero in exile by highlighting the role of authorial inscription in shaping the space-time of exile. While Lermontov doubts the authority of the act of inscription in shaping history, Kazy-Girei challenges the capacity of the Russian language to describe the Caucasus.

### **The Caucasus and the 'Russian' Prose Tradition**

Stylistically, Lermontov's works locate their heroes in a foreboding mountainous landscape. While the characters travels through the unfriendly, or gloomy mountains is part of a Romantic elegiac tradition in Russian poetry, they also allude to the French and British Orientalist traditions.<sup>193</sup> While Harsha Ram argues that Lermontov's work is connected to the "elegiac response to empire," he notes that Lermontov also "strove to individuate a consistent and recognizable lyric persona, molded by a specific fate rather than by generic convention."<sup>194</sup> What is particular about Lermontov's lyric personae is his commentary on his own performativity, a rhetorical strategy that prefigures the hero of the modernist novel. The fate of the character, indeed the subject of the novel's drama, is at the hands of the author. Lermontov describes one of Pechorin's fellow soldiers, Gruzhinskii, "His goal is to become the hero in a novel...His arrival in the Caucasus is also a consequence of his romantic fanaticism" ["Его цель – сделаться героем романа...Приезд его на Кавказ – также следствие его

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<sup>193</sup>See: Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire*, 36-54

<sup>194</sup>Ram, *The Imperial Sublime*, 198

романтического фанатизма. ”].<sup>195</sup> Lermontov self-consciously highlights his own appropriation of the orientalist cliché of the Russian exile. While he undermines the authority of these forms, his narrative nonetheless depends on them. The characters are as if actors, who cannot continue without following a script. The Romantic style, as well as his discussion of fate, like an aside, serves to remind the reader of the authenticity and authority of this heroic narrative, despite the fallibility of inscriptions.

Lermontov’s discussion of fate in *A Hero of Our Time* and “The Deserter” provides a crucial element driving the narrative.<sup>196</sup> Pechorin and Garun are unable to escape the Caucasus. Garun suffers a symbolic death alongside his brothers in the opening stanza and Pechorin dies en route to Persia, as if in attempt to escape his confinement in the Caucasus. Pechorin’s state of perpetual exile is authored by fate. His character is described as *nechastnyi*, which implies both “unhappy” and “unfortunate” or “unlucky.” His boredom and unhappiness are part of his fate and his structure as a character. He is described as literally scripted into a tragic play: “I’ve been the essential character of the fifth act; without meaning to, I have played the wretched part of executioner or traitor. What has been fate’s purpose?” [“Я был необходимое лицо пятого акта; невольно я разыгрывал жалкую роль палача или предателя. Какую цель имела на это судьба?”].<sup>197</sup> Furthermore, Pechorin’s self-conscious location in the fifth act, highlights the form of the Aristotelian tragedy as a structuring principle in the narrative. In this way, Lermontov’s portrait of heroism emerges in the haunting figure of Pechorin’s fate, which is foretold by the narrator and, in turn, the author himself. Lermontov offers the reader a clue, when he writes that the fate of the novel is not only written “in the heavens,” but in Lermontov’s literary predecessors: Byron, Goethe, and Greek tragedy, whose work he performs.

The final section of the novel entitled “The Fatalist” [“Fatalist”] stages an explicit discussion of the relationship between predestination and free will in a tavern in the Caucasus. This chapter, in

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<sup>195</sup>Lermontov, *Geroi nashego vremeni*, 206; Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time*, 78.

<sup>196</sup>For a discussion of the connection between the idea of fate and the narrative structure see: R. L. Kesler, “Fate and Narrative Structure in Lermontov’s *A Hero of Our Time*,” *University of Texas Press* 32.4 (1990); 485-505.

<sup>197</sup>Lermontov, *Geroi nashego vremeni*, 237; Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time*, 113.

marking the conclusion of the story also implicitly plays on the double signification in Islam of the writing of fate as both predestination and the process of inscription. After a group of frontier officers debate the role of fate in Islamic practice, Pechorin predicts the death of a Serbian lieutenant, Vulich. Indeed, a connection between fate and writing exists in the cultural tradition of, *maktūb*, which means “what is written” in Arabic.<sup>198</sup> In this case, Vulich’s fate is written [*maktūb*] “in the heavens” and in Pechorin’s journal.<sup>199</sup> In the final lines of this section, Pechorin asks Maxim Maximich his opinion on the matter of free will. The latter describes Vulich’s death: “thus for him it was written from birth” [“tak u nego na rodu bylo napisano”].<sup>200</sup> The expression highlights the act of writing literally “on (his) birth,” that is the day. However, it invites a slippage, signifying both the birth of the fictional body and the authorial act of inscription. Furthermore, the reader encounters this final scene out of chronological order, framed by the narrator’s story and, in turn, Lermontov’s novel. Pechorin’s fate to die en route from Persia has already been written in the narrator’s foreword to his journal, before he has the chance to narrate it. In this way, the true hero(es) of the novel are also the narrator and the author, who record and archive the separate fates of the characters. Lermontov’s portrait of his ill-fated heroes – Pechorin and Garun – presents an image of the Caucasus as a space that attempts to represent the writer’s disenfranchisement from the autocratic state.

The discussion of fate in Lermontov’s novel, however, does not find its final resting place in the Caucasus. As Priscilla Meyer argues, Lermontov’s work positions itself in dialogue with multiple French and European literary models including François-René de Chateaubriand’s *René* and *Atala*, Alfred de Musset’s *La Confession d’un enfant du siècle*, Honoré de Balzac’s *La Comédie humaine*, Georges Sands’ *L’Orco* and Denis Diderot’s *Jacques le fataliste et son maître*.<sup>201</sup> “The Fatalist” indeed

<sup>198</sup>Kesler observes the linguistic parallel between the Russian predestination [*predopredelenie*], was written [*bylo napisano*] and the Arabic terms *qadar* and *maktoub*. R. L. Kesler, “Fate and Narrative Structure in Lermontov’s *A Hero of Our Time*,” n.4, 503.

<sup>199</sup>Lermontov, *Geroi nashogo vremeni*, 276 ; *A Hero of Our Time*, 157.

<sup>200</sup>Lermontov, *Geroi nashogo vremeni*, 275.

<sup>201</sup> Priscilla Meyer, *How the Russians Read the French: Lermontov, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin

evokes Diderot's famous 1796 philosophical inquiry into free will. Priscilla Meyer argues for the philosophical and structural similarities between Jacques's and Pechorin's ethics of indeterminacy and paradox.<sup>202</sup> However, Lermontov's engagement with *Jacques* also draws upon the structure of the text and the form of the dialogue. *Hero* and *Jacques* both envision narrative time from the fractured perspectives of their characters. Furthermore, the literal interchange between characters in *Jacques* and the collection of alternate narrative voices in *Hero* unify the works as novels. Pechorin's story is retold by the narrator, who then archives Pechorin's journal for the reader. Similarly, Jacques's journey emerges through his dialogue with *son maître*, who serves as both his literal master and the 'master of his destiny.' The unfolding of the plot through these voices in dialogue further articulates the parallel between the authorial role of inscription and the characters' individual fates. Pechorin coexists within the same space-time as Jacques, as heroes caught in their own authors' acts of writing. While Lermontov often exposes the fallibility of inscriptions, his text generates new layers of meaning in its references to Diderot's work. Alluding to this discussion of free-will in a canonical text from the European Enlightenment, Lermontov emphasizes the civic role of the exiled writer, who like the author himself, controls the fate of his characters in the imaginary Caucasus.

While *A Hero of Our Time* stages a dialogue about the Caucasus under Russian imperial rule, the absence of the perspectives of its Muslim subjects has largely been unaddressed in contemporary scholarship.<sup>203</sup> Kazy-Girei's "The Azhitugai Valley" revisits the Romantic Caucasian imaginary from the perspective of both the Russian canon and the Muslim subject. His manipulation of narrative time

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Press, 2008), 34-87. Lermontov's engagement with other contemporary Russian writers has also been noted by Susan Layton, "Lermontov in Combat with Biblioteka dlia chteniia." *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 35.4 (1994): 787-802; Boris Eikhenbaum, *Lermontov: Opyt istoriko-literaturnoi otsenki* (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1924), 15.

<sup>202</sup>Meyer notes that this argument can also be traced to David Powelstock's discussion of the literary resonances of the two novels in *Becoming Mikhail Lermontov: The Ironies of Romantic Individualism in Nicholas I's Russia* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 329-397

<sup>203</sup>Scholarship comparing Russian literature with the literature of the Muslim peoples of the Caucasus includes: Bruce Grant, *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2009); Rebecca Gould, "Topographies of Anticolonialism: The Ecopoetical Sublime in the Caucasus from Tolstoy to Mamakaev," *Comparative Literature Studies* 50.1 (2013): 87-107.



attempts to accommodate his two realms of experience as a Russian soldier and his childhood in the Caucasus. In so doing, he humanizes the Caucasus, representing it as not only a gloomy and haunting landscape, but one full of memories of childhood freedoms. Indeed, Kazy-Girei's vision of the free space of the Caucasus is grounded in the opposition between his education in the Russian imperial urban center and his youth spent in the Azhitugai valley. Unlike Lermontov's idea of creative and political freedom, Kazy-Girei instead renders the space through a language of love. The narrator's description of the descent into the valley of his youth parallels his interior monologue about his childhood memories, evoking images of family and community. When he descends into the valley, Russian Romantic idioms diminish in his narrative, as he is confronted with memories that cannot be represented in the ideologies of Russian Romanticism.

The narrative frame of the "The Azhitugai Valley" presents the perspectives of the narrator's past and present through a single journey on horseback. Like the non-linear space-time of the dialogue, which serves as the cohesive structuring principle of Lermontov's text, the power of memory transposes the narrator's past into the present moment. In this way, his arrival to his homeland awakens the memory of his depart. The topography of the land mirrors the narrator's experience as he describes a panoramic view of the valley at its peak, the sensation of diving into a river, and the experience of riding across the endless steppe. The narrator attempts to locate his identity from each vantage point in this landscape bordered by the Kuban river.

The story begins and ends with references to important topographies in Russian literature about the Caucasus, placing Kazy-Girei's memories in dialogue with the imagined geography of Russia's and Europe's 'Orient.' Kazy-Girei opens the story by locating the narrator next to the Kuban river, and by extension –Pushkin and Lermontov's works about the Caucasus. The story ends with a quotation of Konstantin Nikolaevich Batiushkov's loose translation of Byron's *Childe Harold*. The quotation reads: "There is delight in the wildness of forests;/ There is happiness in the sandy banks;/ And there is

harmony in this uttering of the waves/ Splintering in their desert flight” [“Есть наслаждение и в дикости лесов;/ Есть радость на песчаном берегу;/ И есть гармония в сем говоре валов,/ Дробящихся в пустыном беге”].<sup>204</sup> Batiushkov’s version modifies Byron’s description of the waves of the sea, as a metaphor for sand dunes “splintering in their desert path.” In this move, he recasts Byron’s Romantic verse in the desert steppe of the North Caucasian landscape. Citing Batiushkov’s verse, Kazy-Girei authorizes his work within the Russian canon, famous for its preoccupation with the Byronic sublime.

The narrative presents contrasting images of the landscape. At moments, the text seems to mimic Russian descriptions of the Caucasus by personifying the landscape and repeating key Romantic words such as “gloomy” [“ugriumyi”] and “mysterious” [“tainstvennyi”], for which Lermontov was famous. He describes the night in Romantic idioms as an “intoxicating” [upoitel’no] “weightless twilight” [“легким сумраком”] shrouded in a “mysterious silence” [“тайнственную тишью”].<sup>205</sup> However, Kazy-Girei also presents a more tender vision of the landscape. Unlike Lermontov’s works, the hills do not serve as ideological symbols of a warlike and politicized Islam, but rather as familiar and beloved figures, “a grandfather among his grandchildren” [“ded mezhdv vnuchatami”], “a charming maiden” [“prelestnaia deva”], “the tender breast of a beauty” [“nezhnaia grud' krasavitsa”], or “a shy beauty” [“robkaia krasavitsa”].<sup>206</sup>

Similarly, he does not describe the natural setting as a hostile space of exile – lonely and demonic. Rather, the narrator relates his homeland to the experiences of his armchair traveling readers, “charmed by the lovely pictures of my wild motherland... I felt as if I were sitting in the armchairs of a

<sup>204</sup>Kazy-Girei, “Dolina Azhitugai,” 168. See: Konstantin Nikolaevich Batiushkov “Est naslazhdenie i v dikosti lesov . . .” *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii* (Leningrad/Moscow: Izdatelstvo akademii nauk SSSR, 1964), 237. The poem is a loose translation of Lord George Gordon Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*: “There is a pleasure in the pathless woods, / There is a rapture on the lonely shore, / There is society where none intrudes, / By the deep Sea, and music in its roar: / I love not man the less, but Nature more.” Byron, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (Boston: Samuel E. Cassino, 1893), 178. Konstantin Nikolaevich Batiushkov (1787–1885) was a Russian Romantic poet. Kazy-Girei most likely became familiar with his work through his correspondence with Muravyev.

<sup>205</sup>Kazy-Girei, “Dolina Azhitugai,” 161-2.

<sup>206</sup>*Ibid.*, 156, 157, 164.

Petersburg theatre, being carried away by the lovely sets of an enchanting opera” [“очарованный прелестными картинами моей дикой родины...будто сижу в креслах Петербургского театра, увлекаясь прелестными декорациями волшебной оперы”].<sup>207</sup> Describing his homeland as a stage, Kazy-Girei inverts the idea of Orientalist performance, relating the narrator’s experience in the imperial metropole to those of Russian spectators (or readers) searching for entertainment. He explicitly addresses his narrative’s distinction from Romantic works when the narrator juxtaposes two different representations of a river. Kazy-Girei writes,

Let others have conversations with the stormy waves of the seas. Let their sight roam on the immeasurable surface of the ocean. I am conversing with the shapely bouncing waves of the familiar banks where, for me, everything breathes of memories; where I, the only child of my tender mother tasted the bliss of love and heartfelt caresses at her dear bosom.

пусть другие беседуют с бурными волнами морей, пусть взор их блуждает в неизмеримой поверхности океанов; я беседую со стройно текущими волнами знакомых берегов, где все для меня дышит воспоминанием; где я, единственный отрок нежной матери моей, вкушал блаженство любви и сердечныя ласки на груди родной.<sup>208</sup>

These “others” presumably refer to Romantic poets of the European and Russian traditions, for whom the storm and horizon were important recurring tropes for expressing the inaccessible and sublime power of nature. Instead, Kazy-Girei describes the narrator as the child of “familiar banks,”

<sup>207</sup>*Ibid*, 161.

<sup>208</sup>*Ibid*, 164.

“memories” and family. The river awakens primal memories of love, tucked away in his mother’s breast. Kazy-Girei confronts the Russian Romantic voice by translating the Caucasus into a space of memories and love.

The narrator's descriptions of nature throughout the story juxtapose Romantic idioms against symbols of family and community. Along the road the narrator meets an “old friend” [“starogo znakomtsa”] who the reader discovers is in fact a “giant granite” [“velikan granit”] stone.<sup>209</sup> Kazy-Girei personifies the stone as “featureless old man” [“bezobraznyi starik”] who “stood gloomily, bent over toward the west” [“stoial ugriumo, nagnuvshis' k zapadu”].<sup>210</sup> Unlike Lermontov’s use of the anthropomorphic poetic technique as a form of exoticizing the landscape, Kazy-Girei’s image also highlights the natural world’s relationship to community.<sup>211</sup> While the description of the stone echoes Russian Romantic rhetoric in its gloomy contenance and its ceremonial bow to the European tradition “to the west,” it also reminds the narrator of an “old friend.”

The description of the stone intertwines the narrator’s private memories with the very public space of history. On the stone’s “grim forehead” [“mrachnoe chelo”] hangs “a roughly cut cross” [“grubo-izsechennym krestom”], which the narrator describes as “a gonfalon of Europe and enlightenment” [“khorugviiu Evropi i prosvescheniia”].<sup>212</sup> However, the cross also appears to him as “a coat of arms for some ancient Caucasian family hidden on the hill under this granite” [“гербом какой нибудь древней фамилии Кавказа, скрытой на холме под этим гранитом”].<sup>213</sup> The inscription on the stone speaks to historical and personal pasts, signifying both European conquest and a local family lineage.

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<sup>209</sup>*Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>210</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup>Rebecca Gould highlights the ways in which the image of writing on stone is used in the 1960s by the Chechen poet Mamakaev To reclaim the eco-poetic power of the mountains from their role as symbolic obstacles to the imperial civilizing mission, but instead resignifying stone with a local ethical value. See: Gould, “Topographies of Anticolonialism: The Eco-poetical Sublime in the Caucasus from Tolstoy to Mamakaev,” 87-107.

<sup>212</sup>Kazy-Girei, “Dolina Azhitugai,” 167.

<sup>213</sup>*Ibid.*

Kazy-Girei's description of the stone conveys both the monumentality of imperial history and the impermanence of human civilization. The narrator muses that the inscription is perhaps "a sign of the influence of belief or that of victory" ["znak torzhestva very ili pobedy"], and yet it still only marks one strike in a series of conquests.<sup>214</sup> He recounts how "this granite witnessed...the crowds of Huns, Madzhars, Avars, Pechenegs, Turks, and other uninvited guests from the ancient world" ["этот гранит видел толпы Гуннов, Маджаров, Аваров, Печенегов, Турков и других незванных гостей древняго мира"].<sup>215</sup> The granite, as a timeless public witness, inscribes the history of multiple conquests. Yet also serves as a gateway, for as Kazy Girei writes, "the Caucasus was the threshold of Europe" ["Kavkaz byl porogom Evropy"].<sup>216</sup> Kazy-Girei's landscape positions itself in dialogue with a famous Russian imperial adage, "the threshold of Europe." However, it also recounts the history of "uninvited guests," which parallel the contemporary Russian imperial claims. Markedly, none of these human passages make an impression on the stone. Instead, it remains "unresponsive" ["bezotveten"], as Kazy-Girei insists that "a man's hand could not carve out any inscription on it" ["ruka cheloveka ne vyrezala na nem nikakoi nadpici"].<sup>217</sup> The final image in the story traces this unresponsive stone as it is transformed into sand that is blown across the desert. The failure of civilizations to leave their mark contrasts the eternal movements of the sand in the wind, effacing the inscriptions over time.

Reading Kazy-Girei and Lermontov together reveals their contemporaneous yet divergent construction of an idea of the hero in exile in the Caucasus. Lermontov and Kazy-Girei draw upon the Caucasian archive to reimagine the boundaries between self and other as well as literature and history. Lermontov's poem illustrates an unwelcome human and topographical landscape, while Kazy Girei's story provides a moment of contact for its wandering narrator in a landscape replete with memories. While Garun and Pechorin die alone in their spectral state of mountainous exile, Kazy-Girei's narrator

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<sup>214</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup>*Ibid.*

finds quiet communion with the image of the grandfatherly stone. Indeed, Garun's journey mirrors Kazy-Girei's narrator's in reverse. Garun emerges from the surface of the bloody battlefield only to have his ghost expelled by this same land. However, Kazy-Girei's narrator begins his journey from the precipice of a mountain peak and is finally grounded by the timeless materials of the earth – stone and sand. While Garun's shadowy ghost retreats from the sound of the Qur'an, the narrator recognizes the markings of religion and civilization on the stone as fleeting forces in an eternal earthly existence. While Lermontov authors an apocalyptic vision of the Russian 'Orient,' haunted by spectral creatures, Kazy Girei's landscape recovers his homeland from its "uninvited guests," by rewriting his childhood memories into the Russian imagined landscape. The granite functions as a palimpsest, in which the marks of empire are subject, quite literally, to the sands of time, creating a space for infinite possibilities of rewriting. In the same way, Kazy-Girei contests a singular authority of inscription in his citation of Batiushkov's translation, and the doubled marking of the cross as both a sign of empire and a local family lineage.

While Kazy-Girei abbreviates Batiushkov's verse in the end of the story, he alludes to its final lines in the narrator's dialogue with the grandfather granite. Batiushkov's and Byron's stanzas compare their love of man to a deeper love of "Nature." Both authors personify nature as the poetic beloved, capitalized in Byron's version and rendered "mother nature" in Batiushkov's. For Kazy-Girei, nature is not only the grandfather, but the very force of history that despite "the sad consequences of deadly war" inscribes and effaces human markings in the creative space of his rewriting. Kazy-Girei's description of the inscription of the stone returns our discussion to Lermontov's note about the cross in *A Hero of Our Time*, cited at the opening of this chapter. Indeed, both passages, which recount the divergent experiences of a Russian soldier and an Adyghe author enlisted in the Russian imperial forces, challenge the authority of writing systems. Lermontov highlights the disconnection between truth and writing, while Kazy-Girei exposes the illegibility of the form itself. For Lermontov, the

fallibility of inscription resonates with the same, and somewhat ironic, challenge to authority embodied in the spirit of oppositional imperialism. In so doing, he highlights the marginality of a secular model of history that has not yet become *habit*.

The conquest of the Caucasus provided the “imaginary means” for the making of both of Lermontov’s and Kazy-Girei’s heroes of war. Indeed, the context of imperial expansion, as a site of war, defines the paradigm of heroism in these texts. Badiou’s essay aims to recuperate the figure of the hero by creating new paradigms beyond war and, in this way, generating “new symbolic forms for our collective actions...in the context of local affirmation and endless conflicts.”<sup>218</sup> While the face of Badiou’s new hero remains unclear, his emphasis on “local affirmation” and “endless conflict” requires a reexamination of the national literary paradigm. Similarly, *A Hero of Our Time* highlights an exiled soldier’s confinement in the empire and Lermontov’s own inability to escape the Russian orientalist archive. While Kazy-Girei’s work revisits the context of imperial expansion, it transposes the site of war onto the narrator’s consciousness. Indeed, in the final lines, the traces of authorial inscription are erased when he concludes, “the dust covered my traces” [“pyl’ zanesla sled’ moi”].<sup>219</sup> Kazy-Girei’s text instead generates a unique figure of heroism from within the Russian archive that reinscribes the idea of the Caucasus beyond the limits of Russian literature.

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<sup>218</sup>Badiou, “The Contemporary Figure of the Soldier in Politics and Poetry.”

<sup>219</sup>Kazy-Girei, “Dolina Azhitugai,” 169.

### 3. Chapter Three

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#### Textual Deviance in the Russian Empire: Gogol' and Məmmədquluzadə's Parodic Innovations

Perhaps it's that we still discover a realm of our *invention* here, a realm where we can still be original too, as parodists of world history or buffoons of God, or something like that, – perhaps it's that, when nothing else from today has a future, our *laughter* is the one thing that does!

– Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*<sup>220</sup>

The relationship between originality and imitation has become a critical framework for understanding discourses of imperial power in postcolonial studies.<sup>221</sup> Caught between the processes of imperial expansion, anxieties about western European influence, and emerging anti-imperial national movements, the literature of the Russian empire presents a compelling context for understanding the relationship between innovation and mimicry. Laughter offers a mode of reading literature relationally, that is, its ability to overturn or invert structures of power and reimagine relationships among signs. In the vein of Nietzsche's words, this movement of Russian Formalists and semioticians offered new possibilities for parody beyond imitation, as a revolutionary discourse of the future. Reading the critical tradition of Russian Formalism in dialogue with the history of Russian Nietzscheanism offers new ways of understanding parody not only as a formal feature of literary texts, but one that lays bare the very modes of its production.<sup>222</sup> During the early twentieth century, the Russian Formalists, or the

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<sup>220</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, eds., Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 114.

<sup>221</sup>Homi Bhabha discusses colonial mimicry in terms of a doubled signification. My model seeks to further pluralize this notion of difference. See Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 85-92.

<sup>222</sup>See Dragan, Kujundžić, *The Returns of History: Russian Nietzscheans After Modernity* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 1-23; Ann Lane, "Nietzsche Comes to Russia: Popularization and Protest in the 1890s," ed. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *Nietzsche in Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 51-68; For a discussion of Nietzsche



Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPOYAZ), and their contemporaries from Iurii Tynianov to Mikhail Bakhtin highlighted parody as a form through which literary change and exchange could be understood.<sup>223</sup> Both the Formalists, whose work shared an interest in the materiality of language, and Bakhtin, whose work instead focused on the social nature of language, experimented with parody as a form of textual and cultural deviance. These notions of political and cultural deviance animated discourses of both imperialism as well as anti-imperialism among Russians and non-Russians in the space of the empire. Particularly during the revolutionary period and formation of the Soviet Union, literary critics and authors performed forms of textual deviance, creating multiple levels of meaning in their texts. Drawing upon the traditional archetypes of the holy fool and buffoon, they challenged the authority of secular law.<sup>224</sup> However, in the Caucasus, the tradition of satire also drew upon Persian and Ottoman archetypes related to local folk traditions. The emergence of the figures of deviance in folk traditions blurs the boundaries between the performance of collective laughter and the construction of national ethnographic traditions. In this way, textual deviance can be read as both a universalizing mode of political and social critique that came to mark a Russian imperial civic identity, as well as contributing to the construction of particular ethnic nationalist discourses.

While the Formalists may have claimed distinctive sources for their work, their theories of language reflected a common formation of the idea of textual deviance as both an element of Russian

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and Bakhtin see, Yelena Mazour-Matusevich, "Nietzsche's Influence on Bakhtin's Aesthetics of Grotesque Realism," *Comparative Literature and Culture* 11.2 (2009): <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol11/iss2/7>.

<sup>223</sup>Bakhtin, though a contemporary of the Formalists, is not often read alongside them. Caryl Emerson, for example, categorizes Bakhtin as belonging to the Dialogic school. However, she highlights the acts of distancing as a prerequisite for art in both Viktor Shklovsky and Mikhail Bakhtin's work. See Emerson, "Shklovsky's *ostranenie*, Bakhtin's *vnenakhodimost'* (How Distance Serves and Aesthetics of Arousal Differently from an Aesthetics Based on Pain)," *Poetics Today* 26.4 (2005): 637-664; Also See Yuri Tynianov, "Dostoevsky and Gogol: Toward a Theory of Parody," in *Dostoevsky and Gogol: Texts and Criticism*, eds., Priscila Meyer and Stephen Rudy (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979), 101-118.

<sup>224</sup>Ivan Esaulov writes that "Both carnival buffoonery and serious-comic holy foolishness parodied the nature of the official Soviet world-order. (Of course, as is 'customary' for buffoons and holy fools, they often employed the clichés and stereotypes of the dominant culture, for example the use of Marxist terminology not only by writers but also by the Formalist critics, and by Losev, and Bakhtin.)" See: Esaulov, "Two Facets of Comedic Space in Russian Literature of the Modern Period: Holy Foolishness and Buffoonery," in *Reflective Laughter: Aspects of Humor in Russian Culture*, ed., Lesley Milne (London: Anthem Press, 2004), 84.

and Soviet civic identity, as well as a critique of political, religious, and social institutions. As Ivan Esaulov argues in his important discussion of comedic space in Russian literature, these forms of textual deviance are tied to the archetypes of holy foolishness and buffoonery in Russian culture that were “inscribed in the invariant opposition between Law and Grace.”<sup>225</sup> The absorption of these archetypes into the modern tradition of parody, indeed popularized during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, attributed a crucial critical function to the parody of religious, cultural and legal institutions in the Russian empire.

Parody and its cathartic laughter at once create the potential for invention and originality as they establish a sense of continuity with the authorities of the past – history, tradition and a literary canon. The power of parody lies not only in its ability to simultaneously formulate a sense of continuity with historical tradition, but its ability to create a space of critical distance that exposes the authoritative structures at work in the process of inscription.<sup>226</sup> This chapter takes up the mode of parody in order to understand the ways in which discourses of imperial sovereignty were maintained and challenged in the Russian empire. I discuss the figure of the fool and his performance of forms of textual deviance in two prose works by the Russian/Ukrainian writer Nikolai Vasil'evich Gogol', whose work indeed served as inspiration for the Formalist's theory of parody, and the Azeri writer Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə, an avid reader of Gogol's work.<sup>227</sup> In both the Russian and Azeri comedic traditions, the figure of the fool can

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<sup>225</sup>Esaulov traces the history of holy foolishness and buffoonery in Russian culture. During the Schism, patriarch Nikon attempted to eradicate holy foolishness as an institution, for its alliance to the Old Believers. Buffoonery, based on deviancy of the Law, instead gained popularity in the Petrine period. However, he writes that modern parody “actualize(s) the memory of these archetypes” and often elides them. Esaulov, “Two Facets of Comedic Space in Russian Literature of the Modern Period,” 75.

<sup>226</sup>See also Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth Century Art Forms* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 102.

<sup>227</sup>Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə (1866-1932) was a dramatist, poet, prosaist, and literary critic. In 1887 he graduated from the Gori Pedagogical Seminary and taught at local schools. In 1903 he moved to Tbilisi to work as a correspondent to the Azeri language newspaper *Eastern Russia* [*Şərqi Rus*] and then founded the Azeri language satirical paper *Molla Nəsrəddin* in 1906. His most notable works include the short stories: “The Events in the Danabash Village” [“Danabaş kəndinin əhvalatları”], “The Russian Girl” [“Rus Qızı”], “Freedom in Iran” [“İranda hüriyyət”], “Qurbanəli bəy” [“Qurbanəlibəy”], and “The Post-box” [“Poçt qutusu”], as well as the plays: “The Dead” [“Ölülər”] and “My Mother's Books” [“Anamın kitabı”].

be traced to buffoonery, as well as to religious traditions of foolery – The Fools in Christ [*iurodivye Khrista radi*], a form of Eastern Orthodox asceticism – and in the Azeri case, the Seljuk Sufi figure Molla Nəsrəddin.<sup>228</sup> These forms of deviance, served to both authenticate and undermine Russian civic, as well as local religious and ethnic forms of identity.

Gogol's "The Carriage" ["Koliaska"] (1836) and Məmmədquluzadə's "Qurbanəli Bəy" ["Qurbanəli Bəy"] (1906) critique the class pretensions of provincial landowners who fail to impress a group of Russian officers with the status and wealth of their estates.<sup>229</sup> Both texts situate discussions of identity in the context of the relationships between hosts and guests in the bourgeois imperial space, where issues of class and ethnic identity, in particular, become manifest. I compare the case of the westernized landowner Chertokutskii in "The Carriage" with the Azeri Muslim landowner Qurbanəli in "Qurbanəli Bəy," who is westernized à la russe. In both stories, the failure of the figure of the landowner to present himself as a host illustrates the irrelevance of his wealth to his social status. The nearly identical plots of the two stories follow a landowner who attends a feast held by a group of visiting Russian officers. The landowner boasts about his mode of transport (in Gogol's text – his carriages and in Məmmədquluzadə's text – his horses), subsequently becomes intoxicated at the party, and returns home, forgetting that he has invited the officers to his home the next day to visit his estate. When the landowner awakens and finds his guests at his gates, he hides in his carriage and barn respectively only to be discovered and humiliated by the officers. The objects of both Gogol's and Məmmədquluzadə's critiques are figures of class and imperial power – the landowning westernized or Russified elite and the Russian imperial authorities. These political critiques, however, are cast in terms

<sup>228</sup> For a discussion of the "Fools in Christ" see Sergei A. Ivanov, *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-11, 285-359. Molla Nəsrəddin is a folk figure based on an actual medieval Seljuk Sufi personage. The wise fool is the subject of stories that were popular throughout the Turkic world, Persia, India, China and beyond.

<sup>229</sup> Interestingly Gogol's story was originally published in Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin's journal *The Contemporary* [*Sovremennik*] alongside the Adyghe writer's Sultan Kazy-Girei's second short work "The Persian Anecdote" ["Persidskii anekdot"], itself a satire of a Persian Shah. See: Gogol', "Koliaska," in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 7 tomakh* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo akademii nauk SSSR, 1937-1952), 3:177-189. Məmmədquluzadə's story was originally published in a booklet form by the publisher Qeyrət in Tbilisi, Georgia. See: Məmmədquluzadə, "Qurbanəli Bəy," in *Əsərləri 4 cildə* (Baku: Öndər Nəşriyyat, 2004), 1:174-193.

of class, ethnic and civic identity.

Critical discussions of Gogol's work among his contemporaries as well as in the writings of the Russian Formalists in the early twentieth century, including Iurii Tynianov, Boris Eikhenbaum, Dmitri Chizhevskii and Mikhail Bakhtin, focused primarily on his use of parody. Bakhtin wrote that parody was "a representative of creative memory in the process of literary development."<sup>230</sup> For Bakhtin, the parodic tradition, which he considered to be one of the major lines of development in modern novelistic discourse, was characterized by its *heteroglossia*, diverse layers of interacting meaning, and its *dialogicity*, the relationships within and between signs.<sup>231</sup> In addition to the historical antecedents of parody in holy foolery and buffoonery, the importance of parody at the turn of the century, can in part be explained by a renewed preoccupation with the historical tensions between the Slavophiles and Westernizers in the nineteenth century. The function of parody evokes nineteenth century debates about whether the Russian writers' role was to *imitate* the literature and philosophy of western Europe, or to *innovate* unique Russian cultural products that reflected its status as a world empire. Thus, for Soviet literary critics, the creation of a canon of Russian parodic prose held significant political stakes in the cultural legacy of imperial Russia and the Soviet Union.<sup>232</sup> Gogol's work in particular is often likened to the development of the genre of Russian Realism or Romantic Realism, which prefigured Dostoevsky's work.<sup>233</sup> Gogol's prose and its emphasis on parody, in the eyes of his contemporaries and critics, dramatizes the history of the antagonistic relationship between Russia and Europe. In this way, Gogol's work participates in a supranational economy of parodic repetitions from Məmmədquluzadə's

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<sup>230</sup>Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans., Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), 106; See also Yuri Tynianov, "Dostoevsky and Gogol: Towards a Theory of Parody," in *Dostoevsky and Gogol*, 101-118; Boris Eikhenbaum, "How Gogol's 'Overcoat' is Made," in *Dostoevsky and Gogol*, 101-118; Dmitri Chizhevsky, "On Gogol's 'The Overcoat,'" in *Dostoevsky and Gogol*, 137-160.

<sup>231</sup>For Bakhtin's discussion of parody and Menippean satire see Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 101-180.

<sup>232</sup>See Ronald LeBlanc, "A la recherche du genre perdu: Fielding, Gogol, and Bakhtin's Genre Memory," in *Russian Subjects: Empire, Nation, and the Culture of the Golden Age*, eds., Monika Greenleaf and Stephen Moeller-Sally (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 101-122.

<sup>233</sup>See: Priscilla Meyer, *How the Russians Read the French: Lermontov, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy*, 3-14; Donald Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Dickens and Balzac* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 3-28.

depiction of the Caucasus in 1906 to the conceptualization of textual deviance as a form of social and political critique.

Məmmədquluzadə dedicates “Qurbanəli Bəy” to the memory of Gogol’, by appropriating the traditional Islamic expression recited in the name of the dead: “Gogol, May Allah have mercy on you!” [“Qoqol, Allah sənə rəhmət eləsin!”].<sup>234</sup> Indeed, in a similar manner to Mirzə Fətəli Axundov’s *matəm qəsidə* “On the Death of Pushkin,” Məmmədquluzadə memorializes the figure of Gogol’, albeit through his contribution to the comedic space of a supranational literary tradition, as I discuss extensively in Chapter One. Məmmədquluzadə’s *‘qəsidə’* to Gogol’ opens with a parody of Gogol’s short story “The Carriage” and culminates with a *mise en abyme* of the death of the author himself in the final scene. While it might be tempting to read this metaphor as the death of a literary canon, or the formation of a canon on the idea of memorial, the monumentality of Məmmədquluzadə’s parody lies in the network of textual deviance between his and Gogol’s prose. At once the story repeats and reimagines Gogol’ian parodic critique, as it engages with discourses of ethnic, cultural and civic identity as they were imagined in the Caucasus in 1906.

### **Deviant Fool’s Play: Rudy Pan’ko and Molla Nəsrəddin**

The fool, in his sacred foolery and buffoonery, profanes earthly hierarchies and world orders.<sup>235</sup> Often a folk or popular figure, the fool’s reversal of power structures is attributed to his lack of self-consciousness, intent or awareness of the existence of structures of power – frequently manifested in madness. The fool contributes to the creation of a heteroglossic literary space in which meaning is envisioned as the dialogue between the self and its internal otherness through acts of mockery and repetition. Bakhtin describes the “carnivalistic nature of *parody*” as the “creation of a *decrowning*

<sup>234</sup>Məmmədquluzadə, “Qurbanəli Bəy,” 174.

<sup>235</sup>Esaulov, “Two Facets of Comedic Space in Russian Literature of the Modern Period,” 74.

*double*.<sup>236</sup> In an atmosphere of debasement, the figure of the king is replaced with the fool and hierarchies are restructured, thereby becoming relational. While Bakhtin’s notion of the carnivalesque is tied to the grotesque body, Gogol’s and Məmmədquluzadə’s texts instead entail an inversion of the very idea of selfhood in the fool’s performance of otherness. Indeed, meaning for Bakhtin is determined through the speaker’s relationship to various others, including: others’ selves and other words in the literary space time.<sup>237</sup> The “doubles” can also be deceiving, for Bakhtin they indicate an overturning and reconfiguration of power that is not binary, but rather multivocal and heterogeneous. The comparison between these texts relies on my understanding of Bakhtin’s model of the interconnected nature of discourse, which facilitates an intertextual encounter between Gogol’s dimensions of Russian and Ukrainian identity, as well as Məmmədquluzadə’s notion of Muslim and Turkic identities.

In their work more broadly, Gogol’ and Məmmədquluzadə challenge a fixed, or monologic narrative of identity through their pseudonymic masks – Rudy Pan’ko and Molla Nəsrəddin. Both writers and thinkers were born in the imperial territories of the Russian empire – Ukraine for Gogol’ and Nakhchivan for Məmmədquluzadə. In his collection of short stories about his homeland, *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikan’ka* [*Večera na khutore bliz Dikan’ki*] (1831-1832), Gogol’ casts Rudy Pan’ko, the fictional editor of the collection, to perform the “sly *khokhol*” or Ukrainian peasant figure.<sup>238</sup> In this way, both the personage of the fictional editor from the colony, and the author from the Saint-Petersburg cosmopolitan capital co-animate the text. Similarly, Məmmədquluzadə appropriates the legendary folk figure of Molla Nəsrəddin as both his pseudonym and the title of his literary journal. As

<sup>236</sup>Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 126.

<sup>237</sup>Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 324.

<sup>238</sup>Indeed, the first edition was attributed to the fictional editor. For a discussion of the figure of the *khokhol* see Yuliya Ilchuk, “Nikolai Gogol’s Self-Fashioning in the 1830s: The Postcolonial Perspective,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* LI.2-3 (2009): 203-221; Ilchuk, *Gogol’s Hybrid Performance: The Creation, Reception and Editing of Večera na khutore bliz Dikanki* [*Evenings on a Farm Near Dikan’ka*] (1831-1832) (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2009), 1-20; See also Roman Koropeskyj and Robert Romanchuk, “Ukraine in Blackface: Performance and Representation in Gogol’s ‘Dikan’ka Tales,’ Book 1,” *Slavic Review* 62.3 (2003): 525-547.

storytellers, Pan'ko and Nəsrəddin signify non-Russian cultural traditions linked to popular Ukrainian and Muslim folk culture respective; however Molla Nəsrəddin is also central to Sufi mystic philosophy. In this way, both authors draw upon the narrative technique of *skaz*, inscribing formal elements from the oral or folk traditions into their literary narratives.<sup>239</sup> This use of *skaz* both identifies local forms of national cultural identity and simultaneously appropriates the folk narrative as an exoticized cultural object, presented for the consumption of the literary elite.<sup>240</sup> For Gogol' in the 1830s, the *khokhol* subject provided an exotic enticement to his Russian readers, hungry for details about life in Russia's imperial domains. However, for Məmmədquluzadə in 1906, the wise folk fool figure embodied the daily life [*byt* in Russian] of the everyman, and in so doing, served as a cultural touchstone for local readers.

In *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikan'ka*, Gogol' weaves elements from Little Russian culture (as the Ukraine was called) into his tale. He includes Ukrainian words that described local customs, provincial beliefs, foodstuffs and articles of clothing, which he famously collected in his correspondence with his mother. These elements of local color, which supplement a Russian literary prose style, supplied his Saint-Petersburg audience with details about the empire's Little Russian others.<sup>241</sup> Indeed, accompanying the publication of an early version of a story from the Dikan'ka cycle in the literary journal *Annals of the Fatherland* (or *Patriotic Notes*) [*Otechestvennye zapiski*], Pavel Petrovich Svin'in famously compared Ukrainians to the 'Asian' peoples of the empire, writing: "[Ukrainians] more [than Russians] resemble a magnificent Asian people...by their appearance, frame, slender stature, laziness and carelessness...they do not have such an ungovernable character that the adherents of Islam have."<sup>242</sup> While Svin'in includes the Ukraine in Russia's eastern empire, when

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<sup>239</sup>One of the first descriptions of the narrative form *skaz*, which comes from the verb to tell ["skazat'"] can be attributed to Boris Eikhenbaum. See Eikhenbaum, "How Gogol's 'The Overcoat' is made," 101-118.

<sup>240</sup>This argument draws upon the description of *skaz* offered by Koropeskyj and Romanchuk in "Ukraine in Blackface," 527.

<sup>241</sup> See Gogol's letter to his mother on March 24, 1827 quoted in Ilchuk. For a discussion of Gogol's treatment of Ukrainian language and culture see Roman Koropeskyj and Robert Romanchuk, "Ukraine in Blackface," 525-547.

<sup>242</sup>Quoted in Ilchuk, *Gogol's Hybrid Performance*, 63.

compared with Russia's Muslim subjects in the Caucasus, its Christian population nevertheless occupied a liminal space between the familiar and the exotic.

Gogol's narrator, Rudy Pan'ko is the product of the author's divided personae as a member of the intelligentsia and an ethnographer – a provider of the Ukrainian 'type,' as well as a contributor to a Ukrainian cultural identity. Gogol's work was positioned between Russian national discourses that contested Ukrainian otherness and Ukrainian national discourses that insisted on the Ukraine's unique cultural identity. The early figures of the Ukrainian national movement include, the poet Taras Shevchenko (181-1861) and the ethnographer Mykola Kostomarov (Nikolai Ivanovich Kostomarov) (1817-1885). In his seminal Ukrainian nationalist ethnography, "Two Russian Populations" [ "Dve russkie narodnosti], Kostomarov distinguished the autocracy and collectivism of *Northern* or Great Rus' (Russia), from the liberty and individualism of *Southern* or Little Rus' (Ukraine).<sup>243</sup> In this way, the idea of the Ukraine in Gogol's work signified both the recovery of a primordial Rus' as well as the introduction of an exotic other.

Gogol's character mocks the pretensions of formal education, particularly the written word, and at the same time extends the limits of Russian prose by including elements of Ukrainian language and culture in his text. Rudy recounts an anecdote about a young student who, "had been studying grammar with some scholar, returned to his father and became such a Latin enthusiast that he forgot our Orthodox tongue" ["учившийся у какого-то дьяка грамоте, приехал к отцу и стал таким латыньщиком, что позабыл даже наш язык православный"].<sup>244</sup> The boy's education literally causes him to lose his native tongue and culture, his Eastern "Orthodox faith" ["pravoslavnyi"] tied to his native "language" ["iazyk"]. Gogol then externalizes this image of cultural violence, recounting how the boy cannot recall the word for "rake" until one literally hits him in the face. The boy's loss of his

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<sup>243</sup>See: Nikolai Ivanovich Kostomarov, "Dve russkie narodnosti," *Osnova* 3 (1861): 33-80 and Mykola Kostomarov, "Two Russian Nationalities," in *Towards an Intellectual History of Ukraine: An Anthology of Ukrainian Thought from 1710 to 1995*, eds. Ralph Lindheim and George S. N. Luckyj (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 122-45.

<sup>244</sup>Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v 23 tomakh* (Moscow: Nauka, 2003) 1:70.



local language is connected both to a disappearance of the cultural self – his Orthodox faith – as well as physical injury – a blow to the face. The stories insist on the fusion of oral elements of Ukrainian language and culture, perhaps the Ukrainian body, with the dominant Russian literary tradition.<sup>245</sup> However, arguably Rudy's identity is condensed into mere flourishes, or mocked as foolery in an otherwise elevated literary Russian prose. Furthermore, the distance between the readership and the performance of Ukrainianness is sustained throughout the work. In an aside, Rudy recognizes his readers' reaction to the oddly titled tale, namely its use of the Ukrainian word for “farmstead” [“khutor”]. The text emphasizes enjoyment as Rudy insists that, if nothing else, the reader will enjoy the food in Dikan'ka. While Gogol' performs his own hybrid identity, the Ukraine is nonetheless, at moments, quite literally presented for the consumption of its Russian readership.

Məmmədquluzadə's character *Molla Nəsrəddin* is not offered as an exotic stranger, but rather serves to entice his reader with memories of childhood. Indeed, his journal by the same name quickly became one of the most influential publications of the early twentieth century in the Russian empire, distributed throughout the Muslim world in Persia, Turkey and Egypt.<sup>246</sup> Məmmədquluzadə's work addresses the loss of Azeri language and culture among the acculturated Azeri landowning class. The second issue of Məmmədquluzadə's journal *Molla Nəsrəddin* includes an anecdote entitled “Our

<sup>245</sup>Koropeskyj and Romanchuk argue that, “through Gogol's use of ‘parody, subversion, provocation, ambiguity and decentering,’ that a specifically Ukrainian comic discourse made its way into, and forever changed, Russian literature,” in “Ukraine in Blackface,” 547.

<sup>246</sup>*Molla Nəsrəddin* was an Azeri language satirical journal edited by Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə. It was published 1906- 1917 in Tbilisi, in 1921 in Tabriz and 1922-1931 in Baku. Jala Garibova summarizes the major issues of reform covered in the journal, “(1) the precarious geographic location of Azerbaijan as a buffer between Russia and Iran; (2) the colonialist attitudes of Persian shahs and Russian tzars towards Azerbaijan; (3) the disdainful attitude of the intelligentsia towards anything “Azerbaijani” whether related to culture, the education system, or language; (4) the abusive treatment of women in a male-dominated society; (5) the lack of safety, health and financial well-being for the average worker and citizen; (6) the hypocrisy of fanatic clergy; (7) the corruption and abusiveness of people in high positions; (8) the ignorance and naiveté which made people vulnerable to being cheated and abused by all of these social ills because they refused to become educated; and finally (9) advocacy for an alphabet that would foster literacy.” Garibova, “Molla Nasreddin – The Magazine: Laughter that Pricked the Conscience of a Nation” *Azerbaijan International* 4.3 (1996): [http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/43\\_folder/43\\_articles/43\\_mollamag.html](http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/43_folder/43_articles/43_mollamag.html); See also Əziz Mirəhmədov, *Azərbaycan Molla Nəsrəddini* (Baku: Yazıçı, 1980), *passim*; Alexandre Bennigsen, “Molla Nasreddin’ et la presse satirique musulmane de Russie avant 1917” *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 3.3(1962), 505-520; Alexandre Bennigsen et Chantal Lemercier-Quellejey, *La presse et le mouvement national chez les musulmans de Russie avant 1920* (Paris: Mouton, 1964), *passim*.

educated ones” [“Bizim ‘obrazovanni’lar”] about a friend who speaks only in Russian because he considers it beneath his social status to speak in “Tatar.”<sup>247</sup> The friend returns home to ask his mother to cook for him. Məmmədquluzadə writes:

They say that while my friend was in Russian school, one day he says to his mother:

-- Mother! Pojalusta svarit me something (that is, cook)!

His mother answers:

--My child what did you say?

My friend answers:

Oh, Oh, you don't understand anything; I said cook something.

--My child, what shall I cook?

--hort ego iznaet. I forgot...Its round; minced and cooked in a (clay pot) or on a grill...

It has some kind of name...

--My child, do you mean kufta?

--yea...yea...qofta, qofta.

Deyirlər ki, həmin mənim rəfiqim rus şkolunda oxuyan vaxt bir gün anasına deyib:

--Ana! Pajaluysta, mənə bir şey svarit elə! (yəni bişir!)

Anası cavab verib:

--Bala, nə dedin?

Rəfiqim cavab verib:

--Ox ox! Siz heç bir zad qanmırsınız! Mən deyirəm: bir zad bişir.

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<sup>247</sup>The term Tatar language was used by Russian officials and orientalists to refer generally to Turkic Muslims of the Russian empire. However, the term designates distinct ethno-linguistic groups of Turkic Muslim communities inhabiting the Crimea, the Volga region, and Siberia.

--Bala, nə bişirim?

--Çort ego znaet!.. Yadımdan çıxıb... Yumru olur, əti döyüb salırlar çölməyə, ya qazana... Bir cür adı var...

--Bala, küftə deyirsən?

--Hə... hə... qofta, qofta!<sup>248</sup>

The school child's Russian inflected speech asking his mother to "please cook something" ["pojalusta isvarit"] is reflected in the mutual unintelligibility between the child and his mother, as well as his inability to remember the classic Azeri dish. Like Gogol's description of the boy who cannot remember the word "rake" until it strikes him in the face, a link in the chain of signification is broken by the introduction of a foreign, in this case Russian tongue. In this short anecdote, Məmmədquluzadə emphasizes the maternal and nourishing elements of his native tongue, as well as its psychic and material loss. The title of the short anecdote reveals the multiple linguistic registers interacting in this text, connecting the Azeri "our" to the Russian term for education [*obrazovannia*], meaning cultural formation or generation. Creating a hybridized text of unknown or appropriated foreign words, Məmmədquluzadə offers his parodic critique of the new generation's Russian acculturation in his materialization of the multiple registers of speech in the imperial space of the Caucasus.

The first issue of the journal introduces the title character and offers a short address to the readers, as well as a description of the broad objectives of the journal. Məmmədquluzadə sketches a portrait of his readers,

Hey, I came to talk about you my Muslim brothers. I am talking about the people who don't like my discourse and make excuses to run from me, such as: going to have their

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<sup>248</sup>Məmmədquluzadə, *Əsərləri 4 cildə*, 2: 11-12.

horoscopes read, (watching) a dog fight, listening to the tales of dervishes, sleeping in the bathhouse, and others of these types of important desires. But the powers have ordered: say these words to those people who do not lend an ear. Hey my Muslim brothers! There were times when you heard some of my humorous words, opened your mouths to the sky, closed your eyes as the “ha-ha!” of laughter almost tore your intestines, wiped your faces and eyes with the hems (of your caftans), and said “curse Satan!” Don’t assume that you are laughing at *Molla Nəsrəddin*. Hey my Muslim brothers! If you want to know at whom you laugh, then put a mirror in front of you and take a careful look at your own faces.

Sizi deyib gəlmişəm, ey mənim müsəlman qardaşlarım! O kəsləri deyib gəlmişəm ki, mənim söhbətimi xoşlamayıb, bəzi bəhanələrlə məndən qaçıb gedirlər, məsələn, fala baxdırmağa, it boğuşdurmağa, dərviş nağılına qulaq asmağa, hamamda yatmağa və qeyri bu növ vacib əməllərə. Çünki həkəmakar buyurublar: “Sözünü o kəslərə de ki, sənə qulaq vermirlər”. Ey mənim müsəlman qardaşlarım! Zəmani ki, məndən bir gülməli söz eşidib, ağzınızı göyə açıb və gözlərinizi yumub, o qədər “xa-xa!..” ətəklərinizlə üz-gözünüzü silib, “lənət şeytana”! dediniz o vaxt elə güman etməyin ki, Molla Nəsrəddinə gülürsünüz. Ey mənim müsəlmən qardaşlarım! Əgər bilmək istəsəniz ki, kimin üstünə gülürsünüz, o vaxt qoyunuz qabağınıza aynanı və diqqətlə baxınız camalınıza.<sup>249</sup>

Məmmədquluzadə’s call to his readership requires a brief outline of the social-political space of the South Caucasus in 1906. He occasionally refers to the identity of his readers as Turkic speakers, those

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<sup>249</sup>*Molla Nəsrəddin* 1(1906) cited in Məmmədquluzadə, *Əsərləri 4 cildə*, 2: 4.

whose mothers “told you lullabies in the Turkic tongue” [“sizə türk dilində lay-lay deyirdi”].<sup>250</sup>

However, he also uses the term “Muslim” [“müsəlman”] to address the diverse communities of Turkic-speaking Muslims across the Russian empire.<sup>251</sup> Indeed the figure of the Azeri Muslim participates in a relational series of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic discourses. He or she is both an insider and outsider among other Muslims of the Russian empire such as Uzbeks and Tatars, the irrevocable outsider for the Russian, and yet also an political insider as a subject of the empire. The term “my Muslim brothers” [“müsəlman qardaşlarım”], in turn, operates on multiple planes of speech, both as a form of address and as an ethno-cultural signifier. On the one hand, the term signifies membership in the *Ummah*, or the international community of Islamic believers. However, an added class marker is evoked in its contextual usage in the Caucasus in 1906, emphasizing the status of the workers. In this way, the phrase recalls the figure of the Muslim worker in the Baku oil workers revolt of 1903.<sup>252</sup> The appellation refers at once to the everyman, the community of believers, and the populist cause of the workers in the Caucasus.<sup>253</sup> The term was also used in discussions of civic reform. In 1906 the Conference for Muslim Teachers, which was held in Baku, addressed the issue of Russification and the promotion of Azeri-language instruction and textbooks. The conference preferred the term “Muslim language” [“müsəlman dili”], because an Azeri identity outside of the realm of Muslim culture was not conceivable.<sup>254</sup>

*Molla Nəsrəddin's* eponymous guide, like Rudy Pan'ko, appropriates a conversational style of

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<sup>250</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>251</sup>For instance, to a Persian an Azeri might be called “Turk” whereas for a Georgian, Armenian or Russian an Azeri speaker would be called “Muslim.” This shift was particularly relevant after the Russian annexation of the Caucasus brought more “gaurs” or unbelievers (as Russians were called) to the region. The term Muslim would have also been used to speak to both Sunnis and Shi'a. Russians often erroneously used the ethnonym “Tatar” to refer to all of the Muslim peoples of the empire.

<sup>252</sup>For more information about the mobilization of oil workers in the Caucasus and the recognition of the Hümət – the first all-Muslim Social-Democratic party – at the Sixth Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party in 1906, see: Alexandre A. Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union: A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 14; See also Lutz Kleveman, *The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia* (New York: Grove Press, 2003), 11-30.

<sup>253</sup>The journal, among many other social issues including women's rights and education, supported worker's rights.

<sup>254</sup>See Audrey Altstadt, “The Azerbaijani Bourgeoisie and the Cultural-Enlightenment Movement in Baku: First Steps Toward Nationalism,” *Transcaucasia, Nationalism, and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983), 199-209.

address. Nəsrəddin the folk character possesses a symbolic value as a popular idiot savant, who unknowingly critiques established figures of authority and structures of power. Drawing upon the famous figure's legacy, Məmmədquluzadə's journal appeals to a diverse group of Muslim peoples in the Persian empire, the Ottoman empire, the Caucasus, and Central Asia who were educated by the stories of Molla or Xocə Nəsrəddin.<sup>255</sup> Drawing upon the fool archetype, Məmmədquluzadə conceals multiple levels of meaning in the simple appellation, "Muslim brothers." Appropriating this figure as both his pen name and journal title, Məmmədquluzadə not only parodies Gogol's performance of the exoticized Ukrainian *khokhol*, but fosters a space for repetition and parody in his literary and political critique.

The style of this preface indeed sets the tone for the journal's contents. Məmmədquluzadə mocks the "important desires" that occupy his audience's attention, particularly their taste for magic and entertainment such as horoscopes, dog fights, and dervish tales. He addresses the reader directly, as a colonial subject rooted in traditional culture, who enjoys simple pleasures, and does not carry a handkerchief. The grotesque description of intestine-tearing laughter and the expression "curse Satan" lend the passage an oral folk quality. However, the image also overturns the authority of the Russified intellectual by appropriating the mask of the peasant subject. The image of the tearing of bowels embodies a grotesque style of realism that Bakhtin attributes to a carnival spirit. Indeed, this externalization of the author's caustic truths, as Məmmədquluzadə warns, could destroy digestion. The tone of the passage recalls Gogol's use of *skaz*. However, Məmmədquluzadə inverts Gogol's technique, appropriating the *skaz* style to direct both his popular and intellectual audiences to the same cause – reform and the conditions of the traditional peasant in the imperial Caucasus.<sup>256</sup> It is noteworthy

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<sup>255</sup>The writer Leonid Vasil'evich Solov'ev (1906-1962), who was born in Tripoli to Russian parents, wrote a novel inspired by the folk character. Solov'ev, *The Tale of Hodja Nasreddin: Disturber of the peace* [*Povest' Khoja Nasreddin: Vozmutitel' spokoistviia*](1940).

<sup>256</sup>Məmmədquluzadə's "The Events in the Danabaş Village" ["Danabaş kəndinin əhvalatları"] also shares many common features with Gogol's *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikan'ka* [*Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki*]. Gogol' and Məmmədquluzadə suffered the same dismissive criticism of the oral quality of their works. Both "Koliaska" and "Qurbanəli

that Məmmədquluzadə often read his journal aloud in the teahouses in Tbilisi and Baku. In this way, he performed the fool Nəsrəddin in his readings, as he embodied his pseudonym in ink.<sup>257</sup> Indeed, both fools – Pan’ko and Nəsrəddin – generated multiple potential audiences for their texts. In the process of reading the stories, the intricately woven semantic layers reveal the various figures: the Ukrainian storyteller, the Saint-Petersburg *intelligentsia*, the Azeri intellectual, and the traditional Azeri Muslim peasant.

The satirical gesture Məmmədquluzadə employs in the final line of this quotation is also not coincidental. He writes, “If you want to know at whom you laugh, then put a mirror in front of you and take a careful look at your own faces.” The passage recalls one of the most famous lines of Gogol’s tragicomedy “The Government Inspector” [“Revizor”], which was performed six times in Tbilisi in 1906.<sup>258</sup> Gogol’s line completes his satire of the provincial imperial bureaucracy when the governor breaks the fourth wall to address the audience. He inquires of the audience, “What are you laughing at? You are laughing at yourselves!” [“Chemu smeeset’? Nad soboiu smeeset’!”].<sup>259</sup> In a fit of madness, uncovering the truth of the imposter inspector’s identity, he recognizes his own foolish ways. His frantic speech’s fluid alternation between confession and asides of dramatic irony explodes the distance between appearance and reality, as well as theatre and life. The notion of the self-reflection also alludes to the play’s epigraph, which reads, “There is no blaming the mirror if your face is crooked” [“na zerkalo necha peniat’, koli rozha kriva”].<sup>260</sup>

When Məmmədquluzadə offers the mirror of critique to his community of readers, he addresses

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Bəy” were not introduced as literary works, but rather labeled: a *joke* [*shutka*] in the case of Gogol’ and a *tale* [*hekəyə*] in the case of Məmmədquluzadə. While Gogol’s work was admired by Pushkin, Turgenev, Dostoevskii, and Chekhov, the influential critic Vissarion Grigor’evich Belinsky and his literary followers asserted that while it offered a keen portrait of society it nonetheless remained a mere joke [*shutka*]. See John G. Garrard, “Some Thoughts on Gogol’s ‘Kolyaska,’” *PMLA* 90.5 (1975), 849.

<sup>257</sup>Audrey Altstadt, “The Azerbaijani Bourgeoisie and the Cultural-Enlightenment Movement in Baku: First Steps toward Nationalism,” *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change*, 199-209.

<sup>258</sup>Takhira Gashamkyzy Mamed, *Azerbaidzhanskaia natsional’naia dramaturgiia* (Tbilisi: Iskusstvo, 2001), 91.

<sup>259</sup>Gogol’, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 14 tomakh*, 4:94.

<sup>260</sup>Gogol’, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 14 tomakh*, 4: 4.

his “Muslim brothers,” in turn, as the objects of a Gogol’ian critique. Indeed, he addresses Gogol’s work directly in his article “Qogol” printed in a 1909 issue of *Molla Nəsrəddin*.

That is to say, our critics have forgotten something, all at once forgotten that the headline written concerning Gogol will carry this “warning”: hey Muslim brothers, a hundred years ago in Russia a man was born who wrote a comedy against the Russian officials, such that the man, after reading it also believes that a ‘revisor’ (inspector) is coming on behalf of the government to Nachivan, Susha and to all of the Caucasian villages and small cities.

Demək, məqalə sahiblərimiz bircə şeyi yaddan çıxardıblar, bircə bunu yaddan çıxardıblar ki, Qoqqolun barəsində yazdıqları məqalənin başında gərək bir belə “xəbərdarlıq” eləyədilər ki, ey müsəlman qardaşlar, yüz il bundan qabaq Rusiyada bir şəxs anadan olub və rus məmurlarının barəsində bir elə komediya yazıb ki, onu də adam oxuyanda elə bilir ki, Naxçıvana Şuşaya və bütün Qafqaz kəndlərinə və balaca şəhərlərə hökumət tərəfindən ‘revizor’ gəlir.<sup>261</sup>

Mocking the population’s ignorance of the Russian writer, Məmmədquluzadə evokes the hysteria of a local reader of “The Government Inspector” awaiting the immanent arrival of a Russian official. Yet, he also emphasizes the very translatability of Gogol’s work, that is, the consistent social reality of a corrupt authority, which transcends the metropole into the “Caucasian villages and small cities.” The arrival of the government inspector also highlights the theme of mistaken identity, the very idea of the Gogol’ian fool’s mask. As Məmmədquluzadə repeats the image of the mirror and the self-mocking

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<sup>261</sup>*Molla Nəsrəddin* 14 (1909), see Məmmədquluzadə, *Əsərləri 4 cildə*, 4:183-184.



gesture, he extends the laughter of Molla Nəsrəddin to the folk world of Gogol's Ukraine, and further into a Russian prose tradition. However, the union of these worlds also represents a disjuncture. Molla Nəsrəddin remains at once specific to the image of the bowel-torn, teary-eyed, traditional, Muslim peasant as he is to the class of workers in the Caucasus, and the international community of Muslim believers.

### **Going Global: Gogol's and Məmmədquluzadə's Repetitions**

Məmmədquluzadə's reinvention of the folk fool as his pen name as well as the title of his satirical journal, frame his parody of Gogol's "The Carriage." Reading Gogol' from the vantage point of Məmmədquluzadə's work, I aim to illustrate how forms of parody in Gogol's prose acquire new significance in the Caucasus in 1906. The structure of Gogol's prose and its inscription of oral folk forms, *skaz*, parallels Məmmədquluzadə's depiction of the Russification of the Azeri landowning class. My discussion of Gogol's prose style, particularly his use of *skaz*, highlights what Boris Eikhenbaum described as "devices of verbal mimicry and gesture" whereby in a sort of "play-acting" "words and sentences are selected and ordered not according to the principle of mere logical speech, but more according to the principle of expressive speech, in which a special role is played by articulation, mimicry, sound gestures, etc."<sup>262</sup> For Eikhenbaum, meaning is governed by the rules of sound instead of signs. Both Eikhenbaum and Tynianov highlight the performative aspect of *skaz*, that is, the way in which language exposes itself as a mask. If indeed, as Eikhenbaum and Tynianov argue, Gogol's work developed a style for representing oral forms of laughter and parody, they not only imitated speech, but also innovated the comedic space in the Russian empire.

This school of early Soviet Formalism emphasized the materiality of language, sound, and the

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<sup>262</sup>Eikhenbaum describes this in particular as "imitative *skaz*" See Eikhenbaum, "How Gogol's 'The Overcoat' is made," 119-121.

role of performative expression in the creation of meaning. Bakhtin's work, by contrast, relied both on the forms within the text and the function of external social realities embedded in these linguistic forms. However, these famous critical readings of Gogol's mimicry and performance of laughter cannot be separated from the politics of early Soviet linguistics and philology.<sup>263</sup> In this way, Eikhenbaum's, Tynianov's and Bakhtin's readings of Gogol' aimed to outline a space for a Slavic-centric supranational philological tradition. Gogol's contributions to the comedic space of the literature of the Russian empire occurred most memorably through his appropriation by the Formalists. However, I argue, his work entered a supranational network of texts much earlier in 1906, with his appropriation by Məmmədquluzadə. Məmmədquluzadə's performance of Gogol'ian parody, in this way, contributed to a series of global semiotic resonances, embedded in each repetition.

Following this trail of parodic exchanges leads to Gogol's own engagement with the early French Realist tradition. Just as Məmmədquluzadə delighted in Gogol's *skaz* at the turn of the twentieth century in Tbilisi, Gogol' had studied the work of Honoré de Balzac nearly a century earlier in Saint-Petersburg. Priscilla Meyer discusses the impact of the French Realist tradition on the development of the modern Russian prose style, which emerged in the early nineteenth century.<sup>264</sup> Tracing the influence of the stories published in the *Revue étrangère*, Meyer writes that "the eruption of French realist prose in the 1830s provided material for constructing a modern Russian prose language...indeed, all three Russian authors (Pushkin, Gogol, and Lermontov) found material in the

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<sup>263</sup>The Soviet linguists and philologists acted as ethnographers of sound, studying the social dimensions of speech (see chapter 4). For a discussion of the ways in which linguistic and philological studies of the languages of the non-Russian peoples of the empire and Russian peasants were used as techniques of state and nation building by the Soviet government see, Michael G. Smith, *Language and Power in the Creation of the USSR: 1917-1953* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1998), 59-102.

<sup>264</sup>Scholars often attribute a 'modern' Russian literature and a 'modern' Russian prose tradition to the poetic, literary and linguistic innovations of Pushkin, Gogol' and Dostoevskii in the nineteenth century, principally the rejection of Old Church Slavonic and development of the genre of the novel during this period. However, this division is overly simplistic and misleading. I include this point about the texts' 'modernity' here to emphasize their relative importance in the canonization of Russian literature. For a discussion of this argument see, Andrew B. Wachtel and Ilya Vinitsky, *Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 1-6.

*Revue étrangère* to move from poetry to prose, Romanticism to Realism and short story to novel.”<sup>265</sup>

Meyer argues that Gogol’ drew upon elements of Honoré de Balzac’s fiction as material for his descriptions of city life, combining elements from Balzac’s psychological sketches with supernatural and fantastic traces of German Romanticism and Ukrainian culture when writing the Petersburg tales.<sup>266</sup> Among the formal features of Balzac’s prose, his metonymic description of the carrick in *La Comédie humaine* (1815-1830), as Meyer argues, forms the basis for Gogol’s “The Overcoat” [“Shintel”] (1842).<sup>267</sup> If Russian literature came out from under Gogol’s “The Overcoat,” as Dostoevskii famously wrote, it would seem that the coat was manufactured in a global literary marketplace. Indeed, Gogol’s relationship to European literature is complex. For his Russian readers, Ukrainian culture not only signified a provincial corner of the empire, but one associated with the ‘primordial cradle’ of the Great Russians since medieval times. This Romantic notion, which disregarded the historical reality that Rus’ was a distinct entity, emphasized the influence of the Kievan variant of Old Church Slavonic – the language of Russian high culture through the seventeenth century – on the modern Russian language.<sup>268</sup> Reading Gogol’s Realism not only requires understanding his representation of the world outside of the text, but depends on an almost cannibalistic consumption of the textual world itself. As Gogol’ repeats Balzacian idioms he generates a ‘new Realism,’ which remains intimately tied to its hidden parody of Balzac, as it is to its more available performance of the Ukrainian figure.

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<sup>265</sup>Priscilla Meyer, *How the Russians Read the French*, 14.

<sup>266</sup>Meyer notes that elements of Gogol’s work can also be traced to E.T.A. Hoffman and Victor-Joseph Jouy. See Meyer, *How the Russians Read the French*, 26-33. See also Donald Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Dickens and Balzac*, 101-129.

<sup>267</sup>Meyer, *How the Russians Read the French*, 28-31.

<sup>268</sup>Old Church Slavonic was considered the first Slavic literary language. The Byzantine missionaries Saints Cyril and Methodius are credited with its standardization in the ninth century. It was used through the seventeenth and in some cases eighteenth century and remains the language of the Orthodox Church. See: Dmitrij Cizevskij, *Comparative History of Slavic Literatures*, trans. Richard Noel Porter (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971), 27; The early Soviet scholar Nikolai Sergeevich Trubetskoi contributed to this Romantic myth in “The Ukrainian Problem” [“К украинской проблеме”] (1927), “at the turn of the eighteenth century the intellectual and spiritual culture of Great Russia was Ukrainianized. The differences between the West Russian and the Muscovite variants of Russian culture were eliminated through the eradication of the latter...Ukrainianization became a bridge to Europeanization.” See: Trubetzkoy, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia’s Identity*, ed. Anatoly Liberman (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991), 252.

In “The Carriage,” Gogol’s *skaz* does not draw upon the importation of Ukrainian words, but rather relies on the function of poetic devices including sound repetitions and metonymy to emphasize strangeness – in this case the Russian officers’ arrival in the provincial town. The story shares Gogol’s interest in highlighting the foolishness and corruption of the landowning gentry demonstrated in his play “The Government Inspector” and his 1842 novel *Dead Souls* [*Mertvye dushi*]. He uses wordplay to create a sense of upheaval in his prose, juxtaposing the provincial setting and the arrival of the officials. Gogol’ represents the arrival of the officials as figures of authority in the Russian empire through the introduction of authoritative discourse into the prose passage. The confrontation of these diverse prose styles causes an unraveling of order in the sentences, which elicits the reader’s laughter. For instance, animals are replaced with people. Treating the word *Frenchmen* as a derogatory term for pigs, the narrator describes how the streets of the town “fill up with those burly animals, which the local mayor calls Frenchmen” [“наполняются теми дородными животными, которых тамошний городничий называет французами”].<sup>269</sup> The mayor’s confusion of the animal and the nation both superficially satirizes the French people, while it unhinges a chain of signification. The sentence forms a structure of sound meaning, linking the “burly animals” [“dorodnymi zhyvotnymi”] and the “local mayor” [“tamoshnii gorodnichii”], whereby root pairs are formed from the repetition of the sounds of the first and last words *dorod/gorod* and *zhyvot/tamosh*. Thus, Gogol’ also suggests a likeness between the animals, the mayor, and the Frenchmen he critiques.

Similarly, Gogol’ describes the drunkenness that ensued at the feast in the following fashion, “A long conversation continued around the table, but somehow it was conducted strangely. One landowner who served in the campaign of 1812 recounted a battle that had never been and later for completely unknown reasons removed the stopper from a decanter and stuck it into a pastry” [“Разговор затянулся за столом предлинный, но, впрочем, как-то странно он был вѣден. Один помещик, служивший

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<sup>269</sup>Gogol’, “Koliaska,” 177.

еще в кампанию 1812 года, рассказал такую баталию, какой никогда не было, и потом, совершенно неизвестно по каким причинам, взял пробку из графина и воткнул ее в пирожное”].<sup>270</sup> The battle of 1812, marking Napoleon’s campaign in Russia and one of the pivotal historical moments in Russian intellectuals’ rejection of French cultural influence, here marks a turning point in the order of both the party and the creation of meaning in the story. The landowner’s story’s displacement from historical record is replaced by the order of sound repetition. The landowner places the bottle stopper inside a pastry combining the *p* sound of *probka* or stopper with that of the *pirozhnoe* or pastry.

The use of the title figure of the carriage is also a persistent theme in Gogol’s work, particularly in *Dead Souls*, that serves as a symbol of modernity as well as Russia’s destiny. Here, the carriage also highlights a shift in the poetics and politics of the narrative. Gogol’ draws upon the use of foreign words along with the carriage to sketch a satirical portrait of modernization. In the story, two words are used to signify “carriage” – *ekipazh* from the French borrowing and *koliaska* from the Russian root. While *équipage* denotes a more general term, signifying a team or crew, Gogol’ prefers the French borrowing in order to highlight pivotal moments in the story. The carriage introduces the main character in the story, Pifagor Pifagorovich Chertokutskii, whose name evokes both order – Pythagoras – and chaos – Chertokutskii being a combination of the word devil [*chert*] and dock-tailed or short [*kutsy*]. The provincial landowner’s influential status is denoted by his arrival in the foreign *mot-de* transport: “creating more noise than anyone at the elections and arriving there in a dandy *équipage*.” [“более всех шумевший на выборах и приезжавший туда в щегольском экипаже”].<sup>271</sup> The use of the French borrowing highlights the artificiality of Chertokutskii’s appearance and contrasts with his inelegant and noisy presence. Finally, at the end of the story when Chertokutskii’s wife notices the guest’s arrival to their estate, they are first recognized by their *ekipazh*, indeed foreshadowing the

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid*, 185.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid*, 179.

confusion caused by their unexpected arrival. The disorder that follows the *ekipazh*, whether semantic – in the case of Chertokutskii’s name – or narrative – in the case of the unexpected guests – emphasizes the confused destiny of the empire, or perhaps more literally, a sense of ambivalence toward European technology.

The arrival of the imperial officers also has a strong impact on the space of the provincial town. Emphasizing animation in his prose through the use of metonymy, Gogol’ contrasts the appearance of the town before and after the officers’ arrival. His description of the “sad look” [“pechal'nyi vid”] of the town entails a list of objects including: a stone building, a plank fence, wattle fences, pretzels, a old woman in a red kerchief, a crate of soap, and a few pounds of bitter almonds.<sup>272</sup> When the officer’s regiment arrives suddenly, “the streets blossomed, came to life – in short, they took on a completely different look” [“улицы запрестрели, оживились – словом, приняли совершенно дрогой вид”].<sup>273</sup> The town *blossomed* with metonymic descriptions of the officers’ soldier’s caps, gray overcoats and mustaches. Like flowers “these mustaches could be seen in all places” [“usy eti byli vidnyi vo vsekhn mestakh”].<sup>274</sup> Even their hats are represented by the almost anthropomorphic term for a plume [*sultan*], which like the English cognate also signifies an “eastern monarch.”<sup>275</sup>

Gogol’ demarcates a shift in the town as the presence of the officers animates his language. Their mustaches metonymically intrude into the daily lives of the townspeople, “If the tradespeople gathered at the market with their scoops, there were sure to be mustaches peering over their shoulders” [“соберутся ли на рынке с ковшиками мещанки из-за плеч их, верно, выглядывают усы”].<sup>276</sup> While Gogol’ draws attention to the officers’ arrival, he also mocks their authority by reducing them to their most recognizable features. Their entrance fosters a state of disorder whereby objects suddenly

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<sup>272</sup>*Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>273</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>274</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>275</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>276</sup>*Ibid.*

acquire animation and anthropomorphic qualities, which emphasize a state of chaotic animation in the provincial town.

Similar to Gogol's description, Məmmədquluzadə's portrait of a similar town in the Caucasus highlights the disorder caused by the Russian officer's presence. His prose style draws upon sound repetitions and emphasizes lists of objects. In his description of the police chief's wife's name-day celebrations, he highlights the excessive consumption and labor devoted to the amusement of the Russian officers. The feast preparations require the procurement of an almost grotesque number of four or five hundred eggs.<sup>277</sup> Paralleling Gogol's substitution of military authority with linguistic order, Məmmədquluzadə represents a state of disorder as a critique of Russian figures of authority, and the Russian language as an authoritative discourse. He describes the noise and commotion at the police chief's house, "In the police chief's yard a dog wouldn't recognize its master" ["Pristavın həyətində it yiyəsini tanımırdı"].<sup>278</sup> The police chief's estate, compared with ineffectual dog-masters, illustrates the state of semantic and political upheaval at this public celebration.

Məmmədquluzadə parodies Gogol's description of the feast preparations. In "The Carriage" the cooking is described through the onomatopoeic "stook of cooks' knives" ["stuk povarennykh nozhei"] which could be heard from the gates of the town.<sup>279</sup> In "Qurbanəli Bəy," the sound of men's voices and meat cleavers is conveyed through the same "tap-tap," while the sounds of the Russian officers mimic the chickens, producing the same "howls." This description of the yard noise is repeated several times, "Again the tack-ing of the meat (mincing) knives, the tack-ing of people, the neighing of horses, the howling of chicks, hens, and (Russian) officers, as well as the haff-ing of hounds mixed with one another" ["Genə katlet bıçaqlarınln taqqıltısı, adamların tappıltısı, atların kişnəməsi, cücə-

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<sup>277</sup>Məmmədquluzadə, "Qurbanəli Bəy," 175. The name-day is a tradition in Russian Orthodoxy that corresponds to the days of celebration for the Orthodox saints.

<sup>278</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>279</sup>Gogol, "Koliaska," 179.

toyuqların və qlavaların bağırtısı və tulaların hafiltısı qarışdı bir-birinə.”].<sup>280</sup> Məmmədquluzadə confuses the sounds of people and things to represent the state of commotion in the yard as well as to subversively connect the Russian officers to the noise of animals coming to slaughter. Indeed, the word used to signify the officers is a Russified invention. The word *qlavalar* combines the Russian word for head [*glava*] with the Turkic plural form. Thus, the strangeness of the word in Azeri renders it indistinguishable from the other objects and animals listed in the paragraph. Məmmədquluzadə reduces the officers to mere background noise in this bustling scene. Drawing upon the wordplay in “The Carriage,” he provides a Gogol’ian parody that not only contests the authority of the Russian officers, but unhinges systems of meaning.

Məmmədquluzadə’s portrait of the Russian officers also emphasizes the artificiality of their appearance, which further highlights the gaze of the other. When the Russian party travels to the Azeri landowner Qurbanəli’s estate, their arrival is announced according to their clothing accessories. The officer’s clothing functions as a signifier for their otherness. Like the officers who are introduced at the name-day celebration in a grocery list, these guests are similarly recognized at Qurbanəli’s estate as inanimate objects. When his servant spots the riders from the kitchen rooftop he notes that from within a group of horses he “clearly recognized the officer’s and police chief’s buttons and the wives’ hats” [“naçalnik və pristavların düymələri və xanımların şlyapaları”].<sup>281</sup> The focus on the minute details of dress from the servant’s rooftop vantage point highlights their prominence in the text. These markings visually distinguish the Russians’ clothing from local styles of dress. Additionally, a Russified term is used to refer to the womens’ hats [“şlyapaları”], again creating a parallel between the semantic and narrative functions in the text. Məmmədquluzadə’s repetition of this Gogol’ian technique renders the Russified terms as foreign or strange accessories, just as he emphasizes the otherness of the Russians

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<sup>280</sup>Məmmədquluzadə, “Qurbanəli Bəy,” 175. The term “meat (mincing) knives” is a translation of a knife used for preparing a *katlet*. A *katlet* is a hamburger-like dish made of ground meat, formed in a patty and pan-fried. These knives were used as opposing forces to mince the meat – the historical predecessor to the meat grinder.

<sup>281</sup>*Ibid.*, 191.



themselves. Indeed, Məmmədquluzadə uses a similar strategy to illustrate the Russians' vision of Qurbanəli's otherness. When Qurbanəli invites the officers to dine at his house, the officer's wives agree, if only so that they can see what the bəy's wife will wear.<sup>282</sup> The officers' wives' curiosity about the dress of their Muslim hostess is reversed when their arrival is described in terms of their Russified hats and military buttons. Like Gogol', Məmmədquluzadə externalizes otherness, bringing the reader's attention to objects and forms of dress in order to illustrate the strange materiality of language. For Məmmədquluzadə in particular, this strangeness centers around the use of Russified discourse.

In "Qurbanəli Bəy," the shift in the usage of Azeri and Russian words highlights the transformations in the identity of Qurbanəli. The view of the street is described from inside the Russian police chief's apartment "from an open windows a horse's whiney rose from the street" ["küçədən açıq akoşkalardan bir at kişnəməyə qalxdı"].<sup>283</sup> While facing the same windows from the street side the townspeople observe the police chief's apartment: "The villagers arranged themselves in front of the window(s) to look at the police chief's windows" ("Akoşkanın qabağında kəndlilər düzülüb pristavın akoşkalarına baxırdılar).<sup>284</sup> The window provides the frame through which both the Russian officials and local villagers are connected in a reciprocal gaze. The word used for window is a transcription of the diminutive form of the Russian word ["akoshka"]. Məmmədquluzadə's use of the Russian word emphasizes the Russian cultural space of the apartment. Additionally, the function of the Russian word in its diminutive form indicates a mocking tone, belittling of the Russian gaze through which the village street enters the narrative. Similarly, the arrival of the Russian party is announced when Qurbanəli's wife looks out her window: "The lady ran inside and from the window looked out onto the street and saw that the street was filled with horsemen" ("Xanim qaçdı içəri və pəncərədən küçəyə baxıb gördü ki, küçə doludur atlılarla").<sup>285</sup> When the wife recognizes the Russian horsemen, the Azeri

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<sup>282</sup>*Ibid*, 185.

<sup>283</sup>*Ibid*, 177.

<sup>284</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>285</sup>*Ibid*, 191.

word for window [*pəncərə*] is preferred. Furthermore, once the drinking begins, Azeri and Russian words are used interchangeably to refer to drinking vessels including “a shot glass” [“rumka”] “a bottle” [“butulka”] and “matches” [“spiçka”]. Presented with his first drink, the bey refuses the Russian shot glass [“rumka”] and insisting that “for us” [“bizdə”], representing his identity as an Azeri Muslim, it would be considered a thimble for sewing.<sup>286</sup> He instead drinks from a tea glass, though here he fills it with vodka – fusing the two traditions.

Gogol’ recalls the Balzacian metonymy in a humorous rejection of French prose through its ‘arrival’ in the foreign term for the carriage – *ekipazh*. However, though the carriage peaks the interest of the Russian officers, upon careful inspection both it and its owner appear lacking. Gogol’ links the authority of the Russian officers and the grandeur of the carriage to a wordplay that unhinges and recombines chains of signification, producing new orders of meaning in his prose. In so doing, he dethrones politically authoritative structures of power in his poetic use of language. In “The Carriage” Gogol’ continues his early efforts in the *Dikan’ka* tales to diversify Russian literary language. However, unlike Gogol’'s brush with Balzac, Məmmədquluzadə more overtly engages with Gogol’'s story. The choice to set the narrative in the colonial context of the Caucasus further unravels the authority of Russian prose. However, the historical moment of the inscription of Məmmədquluzadə's text also emphasizes a movement of expansion from an ethnically Russian [*russkii*] literature, to imagining a diverse comedic space of literary production and contagion within the Russian empire.

Məmmədquluzadə's text at once critiques Russian acculturation and seeks to expose a new cultural space to the reading public. Unlike Gogol’'s efforts to entertain a Russian metropolitan elite, Məmmədquluzadə's text memorializes the death of Russian national literature through his vision of the opening of new cultural spaces during the early revolutionary period. Məmmədquluzadə's major departure from Gogol’ takes the form of his representation of hospitality as a metaphor for the imperial

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<sup>286</sup>*Ibid*, 178.

encounter.

### **Intoxicated Words: Revealing the Masks of Otherness**

In both “Qurbanəli Bəy” and “The Carriage” the figure of the proud landowner fails to fulfill his role as a host, forgetting about his invitation and hiding from his guests. Məmmədquluzadə’s story, however, highlights Qurbanəli’s excessive drinking as a crucial element driving the narrative. Drinking scenes in literature can be read materially – as cultural critique, or poetically – as a mode of shifting meaning in which signs are deconstructed and reconfigured.<sup>287</sup> Bakhtin understands this process through what he terms the “crisis of consciousness” of the hero in the genre of confession. The bəy’s intoxication fosters a “crisis in consciousness,” a turning point that connects the hero with his other selves, and in so doing reveals the “truth” of his self-consciousness.<sup>288</sup> Indeed, states of hallucination and intoxication have served as symbols of spiritual enlightenment in traditions as diverse as the Eucharist, the work of the Greek philosopher Plotinus in his conception of “sober intoxication” [“sobria ebrietas”], as well as in the Sufi mystical tradition.<sup>289</sup>

Qurbanəli’s name, like Məmmədquluzadə’s pseudonym, participates in a Muslim cultural tradition, signifying the greatest or highest [əli] sacrifice or victim [*qurban*]. The *qurban* is, in particular, an animal sacrifice. In Shi‘i communities in the Caucasus as well in Sunni communities throughout the Middle East, lamb is given to the poor at the feast of the sacrifice *qurban bayram*. The

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<sup>287</sup> For a discussion of the semiotics of food and dining see James Brown, “On the Semiogenesis of Fictional Meals,” *Romanic Review* 69:4 (1978): 332-346; Ronald D. LeBlanc, “Food, Orality, and Nostalgia for Childhood: Gastronomic Slavophilism in Mid-nineteenth Century Russian Fiction,” *Russian Review* 58.2 (1999): 244-267.

<sup>288</sup> Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 53-56.

<sup>289</sup> The ninth century Sufi mystic Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī or simply Bāyazīd expressed an openness and oneness with God through a state of intoxication or drunkenness. This openness, which led Bāyazīd to declare, “Glory to me! How great is my majesty” and “beneath my cloak there is nothing but God” can be understood as an expression of his spiritual intoxication – being inhabited by the divine spirit. See: Abdol-Hosein Zarrinkoob, “Persian Sufism in Its Historical Perspective,” *Iranian Studies* 3.3 (1970) 139-220, 169. See also, Michael Anthony Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur’an, Miraj, Poetic and Theological Writings* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1996), 212-232.

intoxicated Qurbanəli is, in this way, served as a ‘sacrificial lamb’ to satisfy the Russian audience in the story as well as to provide a warning to the reader. In this state of drunkenness, Qurbanəli performs a Russian orientalist trope of an abusive and aggressive Muslim patriarch. He subsequently further alienates his own household by abusing his social status as a landowner. As Qurbanəli experiences a crisis in consciousness, he awakens the mask of the patriarchal and victimized others within. In so doing, Məmmədquluzadə reveals the colonial structures of power that underlie representations of identity in the Russian empire.<sup>290</sup>

Qurbanəli’s state of drunkenness facilitates his perceived social integration into the party of Russian officers. However, it also reflects his performance of Russian acculturation, his failure to host, and his performance of a Russian idea of Muslim patriarchy. The scene begins when it becomes apparent that Qurbanəli is not joining in the crowd’s toasts. A Russian officer, taunting him for refraining from drink reasons, “unless you’re a Muslim fanatic and that’s why you don’t drink” [“Yoxsa sən də fanatik müsəlmanlardansan, üçün içmirsən?”].<sup>291</sup> Seeking to disprove this allegation connecting his sobriety, Muslim identity and perceived savagery, Qurbanəli attempts to contest these claims by offering to drink from increasingly larger glasses. Drinking becomes a point of identification with the Russian guests until it results in the bəy’s fulfillment of the party’s orientalist expectations. Once intoxicated, Qurbanəli performs the idea of a fanatic Muslim patriarchy by threatening to stab his servant, and then, performing the victim, he hides from his guests wrapped in a sheet. His drunken speech externalizes the expectations of the Russians and, in turn, illustrates the performative nature of identity in Məmmədquluzadə’s text.

While both “The Carriage” and “Qurbanəli Bəy” critique the landowning gentry,

Məmmədquluzadə reflects the imperial as well as classed dimensions of hospitality by reimagining

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<sup>290</sup>Indeed, Məmmədquluzadə, like Gogol, often employs food and drink to externalize repressed unconscious thoughts and desires. See Roman Koropeskyj and Robert Romanchuk, “Ukraine in Blackface,” 539; Ronald D. LeBlanc, “Food, Orality, and Nostalgia for Childhood,” 244-267.

<sup>291</sup>Məmmədquluzadə, “Qurbanəli Bəy,” 178.

Chertokutskii as the Azeri Muslim Qurbanəli. Qurbanəli's authority as a landowning host presumably derives from Russian imperial policies. The imperial administration aimed to foster a Russophile landowning elite among local bəys and ağas. In the December Rescript of 1846, the administration in the Caucasus privatized historically state-owned lands by granting them to locals of so-called "noble birth" and, in turn, contributing to a feudal infrastructure.<sup>292</sup> Thus, the implied noble birth and economic status of the bəy was linked to Russian efforts to create new systems of authority in the Caucasus, which increasingly relied on co-optation as a device to 'tame' the other. Qurbanəli's liminal social status stems from his otherness as a Muslim in the company of his Russian hosts and as a colonial agent within the local community. This class dynamic becomes evident when the intoxicated bəy returns to his estate. His drunkenness serves as a reminder of his acculturation into Russian society as well as his displacement from both communities. After returning home from the celebration at the official's house, Qurbanəli, dagger in hand, harasses his doorman and his wife's domestic servant or "qaravaş." The woman responds to his threats, "As you will it, lord!" ["İxtiyar sənindi, ağa!"], exposing the bəy's abuse of his newfound lordship.<sup>293</sup> Confronted with the simple words of the domestic servant, Qurbanəli as a landowner is dethroned as a drunken fool.

The series of bouts of drinking in the form of lengthy toasts covers almost a third of the short story. Qurbanəli's drunken speech reveals imperial power structures that are otherwise concealed by this deceptively simple story. At the height of his drunkenness after a series of toasts to the Russian officials, Qurbanəli makes a final toast to the enemy of the Russian state. Indeed, this toast becomes his refrain for the rest of the evening. He honors the power of the Russian police force, "Thanks to your state, I fear no one" ["Sizin dövlətinizdən mən heç bir kəsdən qorxmuram"].<sup>294</sup> Indeed, it is thanks to the Russian police force that the bəy has found his drunken fearlessness. He declares proudly, "No

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<sup>292</sup>See: Swietochowski, *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition*, 12-13.

<sup>293</sup>Məmmədquluzadə, "Qurbanəli Bəy," 187.

<sup>294</sup>*Ibid*, 184.

matter what bravery an enemy shows, would he be dare cross me?! This dagger, I'll plunge into his side!" ["Hansi düşmən cürət eləyib mənim qabağıma çıxıb bilər?! Bu xəncəli mən soxaram onun qarnına!"].<sup>295</sup> I have preserved the word order to illustrate the emphasis placed on the dagger.

Qurbanəli's weapon of choice is indeed no mere blade. The Azeri *xəncər* is a short curved dagger that played a role in the Russian orientalist imaginary of the Muslim peoples of the Caucasus.<sup>296</sup> In Russian orientalist literary and ethnographic work, the body of the Circassian freedom fighter was envisioned as an extension of the curved knife that was popular in the Caucasus, as I discuss in Chapter Two. The bəy's devotion to the curved dagger and the Russian state are but drunken masks that reveal the relationship between colonizer and colonized at the gathering.

Məmmədquluzadə offers a parody of the idea of the fanatical Muslim patriarch that was made infamous by Lermontov's poem "Kinzhal" (1838). Lermontov writes, "I love you, my Damacine dagger / Cold and glowing comrade/ Forged for vengeance by a brooding Georgian/ Sharpened in deadly battle by a free Circassian." ["Люблю тебя, булатный мой кинжал,/ Товарищ светлый и холодный. / Задумивый грузин на мечь тебя ковал,/ На грозный бой точил черкес свободный"].<sup>297</sup> A similar image appears in "Cossack Lullaby" ["Kazach'ia kolybel'naia pesnia"] (1840): "The cruel Chechen crawls onto the shore, / Sharpens his dagger" ["zloi chechen polzet na bereg,/ Tochit svoi kinzhal"].<sup>298</sup> Lermontov here inhabits the figure of the arms bearer as he narrates the story of the dagger through the history of its linguistic evolution. The word joined the Georgian language where the blade was forged. Crucially, in Lermontov's verse as in Məmmədquluzadə's story, it is wielded by the Muslim Circassian, whose aggressive fighting literally sharpens the blade. Qurbanəli continues to repeat the phrase on more than five occasions: once to an unnamed foe, once about his

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<sup>295</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>296</sup>I compare the term *kinzhal* to general term for knife in Russian, *noz*, also knife or dagger. The Russian word is most likely a borrowing from the Georgian *Khanjali*, which itself was derived from the Persian *khanjar*.

<sup>297</sup>Lermontov, *Sobranie sochinenii v 4 tomakh*, 1:392.

<sup>298</sup>Lermontov, *Sobranie sochinenii v 4 tomakh*, 1:470.

own self-sacrifice, repeatedly to his servant on the way home, once to his doorman, once to the housemaid, and finally – in a phallic gesture – to his sleeping wife as he stands above her before collapsing from intoxication. While Qurbanəli is neither a Georgian nor a Circassian, at the height of his drunkenness, he performs the image that his hosts expect from a Muslim from the Caucasus – the fanatic sharpening his sword. Qurbanəli’s performance of his Russian affectation is here conceived in a self-orientalizing gesture.

If intoxication serves as a symbolic mask, Məmmədquluzadə humors this notion in the final scene of the story with a literal unveiling. Caught in a sleepy, drunken stupor, Qurbanəli hides from his guests in a bed sheet. He disguises himself first as if in a kind of *charshaf* or *chador*, and then as if in a burial shroud.<sup>299</sup> Məmmədquluzadə specifies that these robes serve as masks, worn “as if” Qurbanəli were in *chador*, or a burial shroud. Exiting his bedroom, the veil genders him as a woman, dressed “as if in *chador*” [“çarşav kimi”]. Lying in the stable manger, the cloth is placed “as if a burial shroud” [“guya kəfənə”]. Both masks present relationships of otherness and opposition – man and woman, as well as life and death.

Məmmədquluzadə memorializes Gogol’, not only in his dedication to the author, but in his performance of his death at the end of the story. In so doing, he highlights the function of parody as he performs it. When the Russian officer discovers Qurbanəli lying in the stable in a burial shroud, he curses in Russian. The juxtaposition of the image of Qurbanəli wrapped in a sheet and the Russian curse recalls the opening dedication to Gogol’'s death. Qurbanəli rests in the manger of the stable as symbolic sacrifice to Russian imperialism. The unveiling of the mask of the bed sheet elicits surprise from the Russian officer who utters a most Gogol’ian curse, “Let the devil take it” [“çort vozmi”].<sup>300</sup> The common Russian expression of surprise or annoyance expressed at this pivotal moment in the story recalls Gogol’'s figure of chaos par-excellence – the devil – as well as Qurbanəli’s double, the “Dock-

<sup>299</sup>Məmmədquluzadə, “Qurbanəli Bəy,” 191,193.

<sup>300</sup>*Ibid.*, 193.

tailed Devil” – Chertokutskii. The reader indeed finally uncovers Chertokutskii, and by extension Gogol’ hiding beneath Qurbanəli’s sacrificial shroud.

In this final gesture, Məmmədquluzadə unveils his text’s Gogol’ian mask, revealing the tensions between self and other in the colonial space of the Russian empire beneath the folds of parody. His work simultaneously creates a space for a supranational literary tradition, as it critiques the influence of Russification. Similarly, his text both introduces the work of Gogol’ to his reader and reinvents this prose tradition in the space of the Caucasus in 1906. While Məmmədquluzadə’s work attempts to capture the everyday experiences of the Azeris of the Russian empire, entrenched in traditional Muslim culture, it also offers a critique of the elite pretensions of the landowning class. Gogol’’s work also acquires new meaning in this comparison. Gogol’’s fusion of Russian literature with Ukrainian cultural elements, in turn, assumed an authoritative role in the history of the development of Russian philology. In this way, Gogol’’s discourse of otherness is repeated, refracted, and reinvented in the mirror of Məmmədquluzadə’s prose. The death of the Russian author thus becomes an occasion for the repetition of his textual deviance, and the fashioning of a new literary space amidst emerging discourses of supranational and ethnic identity in the Caucasus.



### **Translating Early Twentieth Century Baku: The Romantic Poetic Futures of the Russian and Azeri Avant-gardes**

Paul Klee's 1920 painting *Angelus Novus* famously inspired Walter Benjamin's description of the angel of history staring at the wreckage of the past as he was propelled into the future by the storm of progress.<sup>301</sup> In that same year, when Bolshevik politicians and Futurist poets found themselves in Baku – one of the eastern frontiers of Soviet ideals of progress – they too could not look away from the wreckage of Russian imperialism. Romantic poetics haunted the work of the Russian avant-garde. Katerina Clark describes the ways in which the Saint-Petersburg avant-garde responded to anti-capitalist revolutionary politics with Romantic utopian poetics. Clark writes that, "Romantic Anticapitalism" as "the quest for the authentic," a Romantic model of society, in the face of capitalism's "alienation, individualism, and the commodification...of culture," in its turn, "was often played out in terms of class."<sup>302</sup> Similarly in Baku, the Russian Romantic sublime and local traditions of classical Islamic poetry translated and transformed the space of revolution.

This chapter examines the Romantic anti-capitalism of the Russian avant-garde in Baku, including the poetry of Velimir (Viktor Vladimirovich) Khlebnikov, Aleksei Eliseevich Kruchenykh and Vladimir Vladimirovich Maiakovskii, as well as their Azeri contemporaries – Abbas Səhhət, Məhəmməd Hadi and Mikayıl Rəfili. These poetic innovations both shaped and were shaped by revolutionary class politics, as well as discourses of ethnic and supranational identity. In this way, I also investigate the ways in which early Bolshevik politics, particularly at the First Congress for the Peoples of the East, translated a Russian imperial tradition of Romantic poetics into the contemporary moment.

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Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 257.

<sup>302</sup>Katerina Clark, *Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 16-17.

Both Russian and Azeri poets had rich archives to draw upon, including nineteenth century Russian Romantic works set in the Caucasus and classical Ottoman poetic forms.<sup>303</sup> Russian Futurists encountered the Caucasus as the site of Decembrist poetry and its civic oppositional imperialist aims. For Azeri writers and thinkers, the influence of Bolshevik, Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turkic discourses contributed to redefining the territory of Azeri poetry.

While Tbilisi had been the administrative capital of the Russian empire and a center for Transcaucasian culture during the nineteenth century, in the early twentieth century Baku became a site of cultural production, world revolution, and its accompanying discourse of Romantic idealism. By 1905, Baku was producing half of the world's crude oil. Situated between the Russian, Persian and Ottoman empires as well as Central Asia, the Caspian sea city quickly became an influential economic and social capital, as well as a strategic site during Soviet expansion. This chapter examines poetry written by Russians and Azeris in Baku during this revolutionary period from 1905-1929. During these years Baku experienced the fall of the Russian empire, a brief period under The Baku Commune and The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, followed by the creation of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic in 1921. The imperial past, which motivated both local self-determination movements and the Soviet expansion east shaped modern poetry and politics in Baku.

Amidst civil war and competing British and Ottoman interests, the Bolsheviks attempted to garner support in the Caucasus by championing an anti-imperialist rhetoric, which they linked to the Soviet ideological platform. Lenin argued for the necessity of fostering national consciousness as a step in the historical evolution of class consciousness as well as to combat an emerging Great Russian chauvinism.<sup>304</sup> The 'nationalities policies,' which emerged from these debates, included the creation of

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<sup>303</sup>Many of these forms are used in the Persian and Arabic poetic traditions, however my analysis specifically discusses the function of the forms in the Ottoman tradition, due to their direct influence during this period. Until the late nineteenth century, however, many Azeri poets wrote in Persian.

<sup>304</sup>*Terry Martin, The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2001), 1-9.

organizations such as The People's Commissariat of Nationalities [Narkomnats], which worked to install local pro-Bolshevik leaders and create alliances with national self-determination movements.<sup>305</sup> The increasingly Moscow-centric, Communist International [Comintern] organized The First Congress of the Peoples of the East in 1920 and the Council of Propaganda and Actions of the Peoples of the East in 1921 to spread world-wide communist revolutions from Baku through Central Asia and India. The groundwork for Bolshevik ideologies, however, was paved a decade earlier. Labor gained public attention in the Muslim Caucasus. The first autonomous unit within the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party – the Muslim Hümmeät party – was recognized in Baku in 1904 and the Union of Petroleum Workers was established in 1906.

The brief period of Azeri independence, however, was characterized by ethnic conflict. In his discussion of the rise of Azeri nationalism between 1907 and 1920, Michael G. Smith argues instead that during the period of independence, governance was driven by responses to ethnic tension and violence and that “the Muslim masses...identified themselves by those very religious sensibilities more than any politicized nationalism.”<sup>306</sup> In this environment of political chaos and violence, the supranational ideals of Bolshevik anti-imperialism, Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism instead gained popularity among the intellectual elites.

Baku also became an influential cultural center in the region, generating an international press, the Azerkino film company and the Taghiyev theatre company. From 1919 to 1923, it attracted Russian avant-garde artists, poets and thinkers including Vladimir Vladimirovich Maiakovskii, Velimir Khlebnikov, Aleksei Eliseevich Kruchenykh, Vasilii Vasil'evich Kamenskii and Viacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov. Whether they came for work, such as Ivanov or Maiakovskii, or en route to more distant travels

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<sup>305</sup>See: Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 63-97.

<sup>306</sup>In particular Smith highlights the violence between Bolsheviks, Armenians and Muslims during the March Events of 1918 in which the number of deaths of Muslims ranged from 3,000-12,000. See Michael G. Smith, “The Russian Revolution as a National Revolution: Tragic Deaths and Rituals of Remembrance in Muslim Azerbaijan (1907-1920)” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 49.3 (2001), 363-388.

east, such as Khlebnikov, their work mystified the spectacle of Baku as a monument to supranational Soviet ideals and technological sublimity. The avant-garde literary scene in Baku developed in response to the dramatic period of revolutions and World War I. During this period Russian and European poetry also became increasingly available in translation through the international expansion of the Azeri press.<sup>307</sup> Romantic poetry including works by Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoi, Dumas, Proudhon and Byron filled the pages of journals such as *Abundance* [*Füyuzat*], *Eastern Russia* [*Şərqi rus*] and *The Dervish Bowl* [*Kəşkül*].

The multiethnic, multilingual and multiconfessional composition of early twentieth century Baku rendered the terrain of language both a political and literary space of conflict. As Russian language continued to influence the epistemologies in the new society, the supranational Turkophone readership garnered by the international press motivated the local intellectuals to continue to write in Azeri.<sup>308</sup> The institution of translation and its complementary process of literary canonization consequently gained currency in Baku.<sup>309</sup> Translation fulfilled both Bolshevik ideologies to create a supranational and universally intelligible body of literature, as well as local efforts to decenter the authority of the Russian language by rendering Russian and western European works into Azeri. Azeri poetry of this period invoked modes of cultural and linguistic translation to address the configuration of the markers of a Pan-Islamic and Azeri cultural identity, as well as to explore their articulation through the experimental aesthetic forms of Modernism. For these writers, translation was not only a means of making foreign material accessible in Azeri, but for creating new linguistic and imagined spaces that

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<sup>307</sup> *The Dervish Bowl* [*Kəşkül*] also published translations of Armenian and Georgian classics, including a version of Ilia Chavchavadze's famous "Spring." See: *Kəşkül* (1887), 58.

<sup>308</sup> In 1923 linguistic nativization policies [*korenizatsiia*] made Azeri and Russian both functional languages of the state. For a discussion of the *korenizatsiia* policies in the Caucasus, Central Asia, Siberia, the Crimea, and the Volga, which included the promotion of locals in Soviet posts and the institutionalization of local languages in government and education sectors, see: Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 129-181.

<sup>309</sup> Not only did the 1920s usher in a demand for translations, but the need to create written systems for oral languages transformed Soviet linguistics. This new form championed by the linguists N.F. Jakovlev (1892-1974), E.D. Polivanov (1891-1938), A.M. Sukhotin (1888-1942), and L.V. Ščerba (1880-1944) paid "attention to the social dimension in the study of sounds... considering "speech as a social fact... as a physiological and acoustic process." Elena Simonato, "Social Phonology' in the USSR in the 1920s" *Studies in East European Thought* 60.4 (2008), 341.

drew upon the potential for translation to bridge different poetic universes. In this way, the manipulation of language and indeed often the subordination of translated words, symbols and alphabets to a Bolshevik political project, shaped the social and political space of revolutionary Baku.

In his “Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organizations of the Peoples of the East” in 1919, Lenin highlighted the importance of translation in ensuring victory for the Soviet troops. The strength of the Soviet word was in the fact that, as Lenin wrote, “the word *soviet* is now understood by everybody, and the Soviet constitution has been translated into all languages and is known to every worker.”<sup>310</sup> For Lenin, the true success of a supranational Soviet, that is, one that transcends nationalism, was harnessed in the worldly universality of the word *soviet*. In Lenin’s framing, the translation of the word *soviet* as a metonymy for the multilingual nation provided the technology necessary for Soviet soldiers to defeat imperialism. Indeed, he ventured so far as to describe the success of the peoples of the east as a “miracle” [“chudo”].<sup>311</sup> This rhetoric, which promises the performance of miracles through the power of translation, confuses the spiritual act of incantation with the linguistic act of translation.

Lenin was more right than he knew. The word *soviet*, or *council*, was so widely accepted by Muslims in the former Russian empire precisely because of its translation into Turkic as *şura*. *Şura* not only denotes a council, but specifically refers to the representative democratic sociopolitical organization of Islam. It emphasizes justice, equality and dignity and is the name of surah 42 in the Qur’an. The Islamic scholar Fazlur Rahman writes that, “To carry on their collective business (government), the Qur’an asks them (Muslims) to institute *shura* (a consultative council or assembly)

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<sup>310</sup>Vladimir Il’ich Lenin, “Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organizations of the Peoples of the East” *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920 – First Congress of the Peoples of the East*, ed. John Riddell (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1993), 259; Lenin, “Doklad na II Vserossiiskom s’ezde kommunisticheskikh organizatsii narodov Vostoka 22 noiabria 1919” *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 55 tomakh* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1958-65), 39:329.

<sup>311</sup>Lenin, “Doklad na II Vserossiiskom s’ezde kommunisticheskikh organizatsii narodov Vostoka 22 noiabria 1919,” 39:329

where the will of the people can be expressed by representation.”<sup>312</sup> The translation of the Soviet word referred both to the Soviet government, as well as to Pan-Islamic ideals of justice. In the zone of translation it acquired ideological power in its heteroglossia, or participation in multiple social registers of meaning. In this way, translation forged global constellations of power, which contributed to the creation of a close relationship between Islam and Marxist ideals in the former imperial territories.

### **Baku’s Russian Romantic Politics**

A year after Lenin's speech, The First Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku put his verbal cannon to the test, employing translation to make the *soviet* word travel across the former Russian and British imperial territories from Central Asia to India. The diverse congress organizers included Muslim, Jewish and Eastern Orthodox Bolshevik figures from the Ukraine, the Volga region, the Caucasus, and over 2000 delegates comprised of more than 20 Asian peoples.<sup>313</sup> While the dominant language of the congress was Russian, translations into Turkic, Persian and other Caucasian languages occurred simultaneously, producing a polyglossia of multiple and certainly incomplete translations. The translations of the speeches worked toward both centrifugal and centripetal movements, at once centralizing the authority of Russian as a universal tongue, and facilitating the transference of recurrent ideas and images at the congress into local languages.

In accordance with the 'nationalities policies,' The Congress championed Bolshevik ideologies and the injustice of imperialism through the institution of translation. Indeed, speakers argued that the success of the Soviet Union was dependent on the economic and political power of the 'east' to eradicate imperialism and ensure the rise of an international proletariat. In this way, the

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<sup>312</sup>Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 43.

<sup>313</sup>The congress organizers included Grigorii Evseevich Zinov'iev, Grigol (Sergo) Ozhanikidze, Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, Anastas Mikoyan, and Nəriman Nərimanov. For details about the conference organization and proceedings see, John Riddell, ed., *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920 – First Congress of the peoples of the East*, 164.

homogenization of the 'east' in the Soviet imagination was tied to the idea of the awakening and unification of nations under the Soviet adage. As the Bolsheviks began to focus on the former empire's Muslim 'east,' Azeri writers and thinkers employed Marxist ideas and Romantic symbols to make their case for self-determination.<sup>314</sup> Uniting these two interests, the speeches at The First Congress for the Peoples of the East promoted Romantic images of the landscape of the Caucasus and Islam as vehicles for collective political mobilization. Drawing upon the Decembrist archive of anti-tsarist "oppositional imperialism" and its fascination with the Islamic Orient, the speeches imagined a collective Muslim-Soviet future in the eastern outpost of Baku. While the Congress accomplished little in terms of organizing Soviet policy, it staged an instrumental fusion of Romantic aesthetics with a vision of a supranational Soviet future in the East. In this way, The Congress was important both for the Russian Futurists' portrait of the age as well the construction of a Soviet Azerbaijani national narrative. The rhetorical features of the speeches drew upon the spirit of Romanticism and the power of translation to represent Romantic anti-capitalist ideals to a diverse audience.

Romantic intertextual references appear in the speeches in the form of allusions to and citations from the works of the Russian Romantic oppositional imperialist poets par excellence – Pushkin and Lermontov. The personification of the landscape as both wise and active, employed by Pushkin and Lermontov to depict the image of the Caucasian freedom fighter of the previous century, were revived in a new context to highlight the completion of the east's emergence. The Congress' chairman, the Azeri author, playwright and statesman Nəriman Nərimanov, appropriated a short but famous epithet in his opening speech to The Congress. Nərimanov called out to "The grey-haired East" ["sedovlasyi Vostok"], which simultaneously evoked Mirzə Fətəli Akhundov's "white haired Caucasus" ["sedovlasyi Kavkaz"] from his "On the Death of Pushkin" ["Na smert' Pushkina"] of 1837 and

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<sup>314</sup>See Audrey L. Altstadt, "Azerbaijani Turks' response to Russian conquest," 279; Alexandre A. Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union: A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World*, 3-16; Michael G. Smith, "Anatomy of a Rumour: Murder Scandal, the Musavat Party and Narratives of Revolution in Baku, 1917-20," 211-240.

Lermontov's "The Argument" ["Spor"] of 1841-1842.<sup>315</sup> Axundov translated his poem into Russian with the help of Bestuzhev-Marlinskii and likely shared it with Lermontov while instructing him in Azeri. Lermontov, in turn, perhaps recalled the epithet when he depicted Elbrus in "The Argument." The verse finally appeared in Nərimanov's speech, through the double refraction of the poetic worlds of the leading figures of Azeri and Russian literature of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Lermontov's poem appeared elsewhere in the congress proceedings, as well as in the speech of its non-Russian chairman.

Ahmed Matushev, chairman of the Bukhara delegation, cited the lines from Lermontov's "The Argument" in his vision of a Soviet future in Central Asia, "I don't fear the East,/ Answered Kazbek,/ There the race of men has slept deeply,/ Already for nine centuries" ["Не боюсь я Востока,/ Отвечал Казбек,/ Род людской там спит глубоко,/ Уж девятый век"].<sup>316</sup> While Lermontov's poem participated in a tradition of oppositional imperialism, which I discuss in Chapter Two, Lermontov's famous portrait of the Kazbek and Elbrus mountains arguing over the destiny of the east still remains a curious referent for a new vision of postcolonial Central Asia. Citing the work, Matushev argues that, "Today we can say with pride that the East is awakening from its centuries-long sleep and coming out onto the common human road of social construction in fraternal unity and contact with the proletariat of the West, embodied in Red Russia."<sup>317</sup> Recalling Lermontov's canonical orientalist image of the sleeping east, Matushev contrasts it with the beginning of a new era. The awakening east of Matushev's Central Asia also echoes many of the Islamic modernist reformers' responses to their orientalist interlocutors of the nineteenth century from the Persian/Afghani religious scholar and reformer Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, to the twentieth century Azeri thinker Əhməd bəy Ağaoğlu [Ağaev]. Specifically for Matushev, the "proletariat of the West" and "Red Russia," serve as agents in this process of awakening.

<sup>315</sup> Mirzə Fətəli Axundov. "Na smert' Pushkina" in Shikhali Kurbanov [Şixəli Qurbanov], *A.C. Pushkin i Azerbaidjan*. (Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe izdatel'stvo detskoi i iunosheskoii literatury, 1959 ),103-108.

<sup>316</sup> Mikhail Iur'evich Lermontov, "Spor" in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 5 tomakh* (Leningrad: Academia Nauk, 1935-1937) 2: 123.

<sup>317</sup> Ed. John Riddell, *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920 – First Congress of the peoples of the East* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1993), 164.



Lermontov and his poem's imperial past are reimagined as the historical antecedents of Decembrist oppositional imperialism to a new "Red" canon of Soviet anti-imperialist literature. Indeed, the return of Decembrist verse was an important feature of the Soviet canon well into the 1930s.<sup>318</sup> The orientalist archive, in this way, united the idea of revolutionary Russia with the proletarian masses of the west. In "The Argument," Lermontov pinpoints the slumber of the east in the ninth or tenth centuries, a period during which the process of conversion to Islam began in the Caucasus, in the aftermath of the Arab conquest of the seventh century.<sup>319</sup> Lermontov's 'east' thus bears an explicitly Islamic character, which only now in Matushev's repetition, is awakened by the force of the proletariat. Marxism as the agent of progress unites anti-imperialist politics with proletarian class-consciousness. Indeed, Muslim modernists throughout the Russian empire – particularly the Tatar thinker Sultan-Galiev – who inspired the work of Algerian and Egyptian thinkers in the mid-twentieth century such as Ahmed Ben Bella and Anouar Abdel-Malek [Anwar 'Abd al-Malik], argued for the compatibility of Islam and Marxism.<sup>320</sup>

Romantic representations of the landscape of the Caucasus in the speeches at The Congress extended beyond poetic intertexts. A sublime image of surging oceans recurs throughout the speeches. Both the chairman of the Communist International Grigorii Evseevich Zinov'ev and the Soviet orientalist and soon-to-be leader of the Council for Propaganda and Action in Baku – the Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich – invoked the topographical metaphors of estuaries and confluences in their

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<sup>318</sup>For a discussion of Pushkin's revival in the Soviet canon of the 1930s see Katerina Clark, *Moscow the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture: 1931-1941* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 307-344.

<sup>319</sup>Varied dates are given for conversion ranging from the eighth through the tenth centuries. However, conversion was not an event, but rather a process that unfolded between the eighth and nineteenth centuries. See: Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 48.

<sup>320</sup> Ben Bella references Sultan-Galiev in his notes. Alexandre A. Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, *Sultan Galiev, le père de la révolution tiers-mondiste* (Paris: Fayard, 1986), 277-278; See also: Alexandre A. Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union: A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World*, 41-70. When Abdel-Malek ['Abd al-Malik] outlined the "the novel contribution of contemporary Arab thought" he mentioned the Russian case among the "the systems and ideologies of industrial, capitalist or socialist societies and information from the national ground" that created "the novel contribution of contemporary Arab thought." ["les systèmes et ideologies des sociétés industrielles, capitalistes ou socialistes, et les données du terrain national"]. See Anouar Abdel-Malek, "Introduction à la pensée arab contemporaine" *Institut de Sociologie de l'Université de Bruxelles* 15.1 (1965): 45-72, 61.

speeches. For Pavlovich, the rivers signified the cultural achievements of various national groups combining in a “common international ocean of poetry and learning of toiling humanity.”<sup>321</sup> This “international ocean” rivals the “old monuments of Russian and Ukrainian literature, such as the works of Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy, Gogol, and Shevchenko” as well as “classical Greece” and the “civilization of the medieval and capitalist epochs.”<sup>322</sup> Pavlovich seems to suggest in this parallel that these minority groups, united in the ocean of socialism, could themselves become an empire to rival the Greeks, Russians, kingdoms and capitalist nations of Europe.

Zinov’ev, on the other hand, preferred biblical rhetoric. He described the worker’s proletariat in Russia and the movement of the oppressed nationalities as two streams that “if cleansed of national prejudices” could be “merged into one single tumultuous, powerful stream that, like the sea, will sweep all obstacles from its path, clearing the land of all the evil from which we have suffered so long.”<sup>323</sup> This great flood of socialism aims to destroy landownership and, like in the great biblical flood of Noah’s ark, destroy evil to prepare the world for a new era of harmony and good. In this instance, socialism quite literally replaces the church in shielding the workers from the evil floods of capitalism. Common to both speakers’ rhetoric is the return to a nineteenth century Russian discourse of Eurasian dominance that emerged from Russian imperial politics. The necessity of the Orthodox faith to restore the empire, is here transformed by the ideological concerns of the Communist International.

The Congress not only drew on biblical imagery, famously Zinov’ev championed an Islamic holy war in an attempt to rally the largely Muslim crowd. The term “Holy war” [“Sviaschennaia voina”] appears throughout the text, however the Russian term was likely substituted for *jihad* or *ghazavat* in the speech’s performance, attributing an orientalist vision of Islamic holy war to the Soviet cause.<sup>324</sup> Indeed, the term *ghazavat* was used during the nineteenth century by the Muslim freedom

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<sup>321</sup>John Riddell, ed., *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920*, 143.

<sup>322</sup>John Riddell, ed., *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920*, 143.

<sup>323</sup>*Ibid*, 73.

<sup>324</sup>Michael Kemper notes this slippage, tracing it to the publication of “Manifesto to the Peoples of the East” that same year

fighter, Imam Shamil and his followers in the North Caucasus to mobilize a campaign against Russian imperialism, as I discuss in Chapter One. The use of the term is corroborated by John Riddell's introduction to the English edition of the congress transcription. Riddell cites the testimony of a young Azeri soldier, "inspired by the 'declaration of holy war against the enemy of revolution,' he explains, 'thousands of people, convinced there was no contradiction between being a Bolshevik and a Muslim, joined the Bolshevik ranks.'" <sup>325</sup> The announcement for The Congress also invokes the notion of religious pilgrimage: "Formerly you traveled across deserts to reach the holy places." <sup>326</sup> These attempts to rouse support from the Muslim population were not reduced to rhetorical flourish. Riddell notes that local newspapers reported that The Congress was honored with the slaughter of a hundred sheep and goats. <sup>327</sup> The political efforts to appropriate Islamic symbols for the Soviet cause mirrored the allusions to nineteenth century Romantic orientalist tropes of Decembrist poetry, conferring the political force of the canon of Russian Orientalism on the political ideologies of The Congress.

### **Transcaucasian Politics and *Zaum* Poetics**

Politicians were not only approaching fiction, but the Russian Futurists drew upon the political events in the Caucasus as inspiration for poetry. Velimir Khlebnikov incorporated elements from the speeches at The Congress, most clearly Pavlovich's address, into his poems. <sup>328</sup> Pavlovich's discussion of the transportive powers of the railroad system, which would connect cities beginning with the same letter: Berlin, Byzantium, and Baghdad, as well as Cape Town, Cairo, and Calcutta, and finally

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in *Kommunisticheskii international* 15 (Dec 1920): 3141-3150. See Kemper, "Red Orientalism: Mikhail Pavlovich and Marxist Oriental Studies in Early Soviet Russia," *Die Welt des Islams* 50 (2010): 435-476; The calls for *jihad* at the congress also featured in Warren Beatty's 1981 film *Reds* about the American Journalist John Reed.

<sup>325</sup> John Riddell, ed., *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920*, 30.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>328</sup> In her discussion of Khlebnikov's Baku poems, Andrea Hacker highlights Khlebnikov's repetition of consonants that can be traced to Pavlovich's speech. See: Hacker, "To Pushkin, Freedom, and Revolution in Asia: Velimir Khlebnikov in Baku," *The Russian Review* 65.3 (2006): 440-468, 456.

Petersburg and Persia, delighted not only Khlebnikov, but the Russian avant-garde more broadly. Similarly, the theme of electrification made its way into The Congress in the leader of the Communist International Karl Radek's speech at the opening rally, "From here will flow an electric current of political awareness."<sup>329</sup> However, it was not only the technological advancements in transportation and electrification that impressed writers and artists in Moscow and Baku, for Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh the transrational language [*zaum*] found its full expression in the Transcaucasus, first in Tbilisi and then in Baku.<sup>330</sup>

One year following the conference, Kruchenykh published a pamphlet in Baku entitled "The Declaration of the Transrational Language" ["Deklaratsia zaumnogo iazyka"].<sup>331</sup> While the avant-garde's interest in multilingualism and wordplay, which were defining features of *zaum* poetry, developed largely in Tbilisi, Baku was not without its own inspiration. In the manifesto, like Khlebnikov's observations about a world inter-connected through a mass railroad system, Kruchenykh calls for a worldly poetic language: "The transrational [*zaum*] creations can yield an all-worldly poetic language, born organically and not artificially like Esperanto" ["Заумные творения могут дать всемирный поэтический язык, рожденный органически, а не искусственно, как эсперанто"].<sup>332</sup> The "all-worldly" character of *zaum* is deceiving, because for Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov, it relied on the hegemonic position of Slavic languages, or rather sound units, as bearers of meaning. The Congress in Baku also attempted to provide a spectacle of all-worldly meaning created through modes of translation. Indeed, if he attended the conference, Kruchenykh too might have praised the "organic" creation of a worldly language through the experience of empire and the ideological union of the

<sup>329</sup>For Pavlovich's speech see, John Riddell, ed., *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920*, 137; for Radek's speech see *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920*, 54.

<sup>330</sup>For a discussion of the representation of Soviet electrification in the work of the Russian avant-garde see, Anindita Banerjee, "Electricity: Science Fiction and Modernity in Early-Twentieth-Century Russia," *Science Fiction Studies* 30.89 (2003): 49-71. It is noteworthy that the nineteenth century Esperanto Project's author was a Jewish subject of the Russian empire, L.L. Zamenhof, who published his treatise *Unua Libro* in 1887 in Russian.

<sup>331</sup>Aleksei Eliseevich Kruchenykh, "Deklaratsia zaumnogo iazyka," in *Manifesty i programmy russkikh futuristov*, ed. Vladimir Markov (Munich: Fink, 1967), 179-181.

<sup>332</sup>*Ibid.*, 181.

proletariats of east and west.

While *zaum* entailed a rejection of rational sense, it by no means openly praised similar manifestations in Romanticism. Indeed, the Futurist manifesto of 1912, “Slap in the face of public taste” [“Poshechina obschestvennomu vkusu”] famously ordered that the Russian canon of poets including Pushkin, Dostoevskii and Tolstoi must be thrown off of the “steamship of contemporaneity” [“s parokhoda sovremennosti”].<sup>333</sup> However, this rejection of the canon also resulted in the avant-garde’s very fascination with it. Just as The Congress echoed Lermontov’s revolutionary Caucasus of 1840, Khlebnikov’s Baku writings exposed his preoccupation with Pushkin’s Caucasian imaginary. The image of the Romantic poet himself provided a key for the ways in which Khlebnikov envisioned space and time on the Soviet Union’s eastern frontier. In particular, the resemblance of his *carmen figuratum* to Pushkin’s self portrait has been noted by scholars.<sup>334</sup> Given Khlebnikov’s evocation of Pushkin, himself a sympathizer with the Decembrist revolution, it is not surprising that the poem’s subject is an ideal revolution centered in the Caucasus and a critique of British imperialism. The poem pays particular attention to the alliteration of the consonant “B,” echoing “Baku,” “Bombay,” “fight” [“boi”] and the “boom” of the cannon fire. These images of revolution across the Red east are paired with religious “B” images, including references to the Babist Islamic sect through its leader Mirza Bab and the historic Baku mosque Bibiheybat, named after the daughter of the seventh Imam Mūsá al-Kādhim [Kazim], who fled to Baku to escape the persecution of the Abbasid caliph. Both of these symbols signal a spiritual rupture or revelation from the ruling caliphs and local Islamic institutions.<sup>335</sup> Less than ten years after Pushkin was thrown from the “steamship of contemporaneity,” the revolution in the

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<sup>333</sup>David Burliuk, Aleksandr Kruchenykh, Vladimir Maiakovskii, Viktor Khlebnikov, “Poshechina obschestvennomu vkusu” Vladimir Vladimirovich Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 12 tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozh. Lit., 1939-1949) 1: 402-403.

<sup>334</sup>Hacker, “To Pushkin, Freedom, and Revolution in Asia: Velimir Khlebnikov in Baku,” 446.

<sup>335</sup>Babism’s creation of a new revelation signified a rupture from Islamic institutions. Citations from this poem are taken from Andrea Hacker’s transcriptions of the manuscripts in “To Pushkin, Freedom, and Revolution in Asia: Velimir Khlebnikov in Baku,” 452-469. Translations are based on Hacker’s but have been altered.

east was cast back into the image of the father of the Russian Romantic canon. Indeed, Pushkin's description of himself as a "prophet" of the age – as discussed in Chapter One – is central to Khlebnikov's *carmen figuratum*. Khlebnikov relies on Pushkin's self-portrait in order to authorize his own place in the ranks of prophets of Russian literature.<sup>336</sup> Placing the revolution inside Pushkin's self-portrait – and figuratively, his imagination – Khlebnikov secures his own role as a prophet by realizing Pushkin's foretold vision of the anti-tsarist and anti-imperialist revolution booming in the Caucasus. The image of the prophet that occurs in Khlebnikov's poem not only directly evokes a Russian orientalist fascination with biblical and Qur'anic images, but also relates to Khlebnikov's utopian vision of the power of technology to unite world languages, connecting space and time through an expansion of the forms in language and the material world.<sup>337</sup>

The Symbolist poet and philosopher, Viacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov, also living in Baku in 1920, developed his own theory of universal poetics in his lectures delivered at Baku State University from November 1920 through June of 1924.<sup>338</sup> Ivanov's history of the development of world poetic forms and aesthetic analysis of their construction fueled his theory of universal poetic forms. In her analysis of the unpublished course material, Anna Tamarchenko describes the lecture notes as discussions of poetics through literary historical analysis, "the genetics and evolution of poetic forms," the philosophical tradition of aesthetics and a discussion of the canon as an obligatory code of poetic forms and genres.<sup>339</sup> In particular, Ivanov devotes great attention to his discussion of strophes as "the basis of metrical composition" and "simultaneously a finished syntactic and thematic whole" rooted in "speech, consolidated and bound together by the external sound patterns of language."<sup>340</sup> It is indeed no

<sup>336</sup> For a discussion of Khlebnikov and the image of Pushkin as prophet see, Betsy F. Moeller-Sally, "Masks of the prophet in the work of Velimir Khlebnikov," *Russian Review* 55.2 (1996): 201-225.

<sup>337</sup> See: Ram, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire*, 142-176.

<sup>338</sup> In her article on Ivanov's lectures, Anna Tamarchenko analyses the content of his unpublished lecture notes. Tamarchenko, "The Poetics of Vyacheslav Ivanov: Lectures Given at Baku University," in *Vyacheslav Ivanov: Poet, Critic and Philosopher*, Robert Louis Jackson and Lowry Nelson Jr., eds. (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1986), 82-95.

<sup>339</sup> Tamarchenko, "The Poetics of Vyacheslav Ivanov: Lectures Given at Baku University," 85.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, 87, 92-93.

coincidence that this vision of poetry bears striking similarities to Bakhtin's discussion of the *utterance* and the *chronotope*, as Bakhtin was a great admirer of Ivanov's work. The strophe, like the *utterance* is a complete unit of meaning, and like the *chronotope* provides an image of man throughout the ages of world literature.<sup>341</sup> Unlike Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh's vision of the word, poetry for Ivanov does not entail a rejection of rationality, but rather its balance with creative intuition, which he casts in terms of Dionysian and Apollonian principles.<sup>342</sup> However, like Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh, he believed that poetry possessed the power to transform life, albeit not through the inner logic of Slavic sounds, but rather through the synthesis of world poetic canons, or styles rooted in speech. The interest in the synergetic and synthetic possibilities of the word through its participation in worldly poetic traditions were common to both the Russian and Azeri avant-garde visions of the language.

Ivanov's interest in creative intuition and Khlebnikov's transrational apprehension of meaning can also both be traced to the work of Henri Bergson. Somewhat paradoxically, what is most compelling about Bergson's philosophy is not his influence on the Russian avant-garde, but rather his work's resonance with Russian Orthodoxy.<sup>343</sup> Understanding Bergsonian intuition's resonances with Orthodox theology, thus illustrates the multiple epistemologies underpinning the spiritual character in the Symbolists and Futurists' work. Both philosophical traditions reject rational "knowing" and share a common vision of unity through the synthesis of multiple states of consciousness. In both systems, the "I" of the cognizant subject is joined with the "non-I," or object through intuitive knowledge, in turn causing the "I" to exist in harmony with the world.<sup>344</sup> The subject thus subordinates to the object in order to understand it through the spiritual faith or creative force of intuition.

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<sup>341</sup>The utterance is a speech act that is specifically social, historical and dialogic. See: Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 433-434; The chronotope is "the image of man in literature" that "defines genre and generic conventions." See Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," 84-85.

<sup>342</sup>In *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) Nietzsche argues that the fusion of Dionysian and Apollonian *Kunsttreiben* or *artistic impulses* serves as the foundation for the great Greek tragedies, until the turn he identifies in Euripides use of Socratic rationalism. See: Adrian Del Caro, "Dionysian Classicism, or Nietzsche's Appropriation of an Aesthetic Norm," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50.4 (1989): 589-605.

<sup>343</sup>See Hilary Fink, *Bergson and Russian Modernism, 1900-1930* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 27-41.

<sup>344</sup>Fink, *Bergson and Russian Modernism*, 30-31.

Returning to Khlebnikov's Baku poems, the existence of these states of transrational intuitive consciousness is revealed in his poem's parallel structure. In his Pushkin portrait, Khlebnikov creates an internal logic of meaning based on sound patterns. The following segment from the work also echoes the "b" sound in the poem, connecting Baku to the sounds of revolution and religious sites and figures. However, the stanza also reveals a juxtaposition between the realm of poetry and that of war.

and they gave him a fight

Where that word of mine howled

Horror <howls>

The howl of cannons – a nightingale

и дали ему бой

Где выло слово мой

Жуя <воет>

Вой пушек соловей

The "fight" occurs at the same location where the "word" is given. The "cannons" also stand alongside the "nightingale." The "howls" connect the two worlds, the "horror" of "fight" and "cannons" with the world of the "word" and the "nightingale," which echo the same sounds ["slovo," "solovei"]. In the archival notes surrounding the portrait poem, the following verses echo the figure of the nightingale, "After all, Pushkin, the tender-throated nightingale brought out his flute from the throat of the cannon" [ведь Пушкин нежногорлый соловьиный вел свой свирель от горла пушки] and "sang the armed nightingale" [pel solovei orudinyi].<sup>345</sup> The nightingale is tied to the poetic voice of Pushkin as well as

<sup>345</sup>These passages can be found in lists 37 and 35 respectively of Hacker's translation of the archival notes in Andrea Hacker, "To Pushkin, Freedom, and Revolution in Asia: Velimir Khlebnikov in Baku," 465-466.



weaponry, “cannons” and “artillery” [“pushki,” “orudie”].

Pushkin’s recurrence as a nightingale both echoes his symbolic personae as a literary prophet, but further articulates his relationship to the orientalist literary tradition. The nightingale’s song, as a common symbol of classical Islamic and pre-Islamic poetry, represents the poet’s songs to the beloved. However, perhaps more relevant to Khlebnikov’s portrait of Pushkin is the image of the nightingale which appears in one of his orientalist works from 1824, “The Fountain of Bakhchisarai” [“Bakhchisaraiskii fontan”]. The story recounts the life of Qirim Giray, ruler of the Crimean khanate (1758 -1764, 1768-1769), and his unrequited love for a Polish prisoner of war in his harem.<sup>346</sup> While the poem, one of Pushkin’s most famous works, is set in the Crimea rather than the Caucasus, it is replete with references to Islamic poetic symbols including the songs of nightingales. Indeed, the very first lines offer a quotation from the thirteenth century Persian poet Sa‘dī. Furthermore, Pushkin’s source material for this citation has been attributed to Thomas Moore’s *Lalla Rookh*, implying a tertiary level of orientalist intertextuality.<sup>347</sup> Perhaps most fascinating, the recurrent parallels of poetry and war in both Moore and Sa‘dī’s texts, like Khlebnikov’s work, oppose the transience of earthly might over the eternal force of poetry. Khlebnikov’s portrait of revolution in the east repeats Pushkin’s Romantic evocation of Sa‘dī and Moore and in so doing illustrate this enduring force of poetry. Both spiritual and creative intuition are evoked in the figures of the nightingale and Romantic poet, which for Khlebnikov endure after the cannon-fire has settled. Khlebnikov’s vision of intuition is not only reliant on the symbols of a single great religious text. Like Ivanov’s canons, it refers to the synthesis of worldly symbolic forms from European and Russian Orientalism, to Islamic (and pre-Islamic) poetry. While

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<sup>346</sup>Pushkin, “Bakhchisaraiskii fontan” in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 17 tomakh* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Aademii nauk SSSR, 1937-59), 4: 235.

<sup>347</sup>Katya Hokanson, points out that the reference could have come either from a translation of Saadi’s “The Garden” [“Bustan”], which appeared in 1796 or Moore’s text. For a discussion of Pushkin’s poem’s orientalist themes see, Hokanson, “Pushkin’s Captive Crimea: Imperialism in *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*” *Russian Subjects; Empire, Nation and the Culture of the Golden Age*, eds. Monika Greenleaf and Stephen Moeller-Sally (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 123-150.

this fusion may not have been as “organic” as Kruchenykh had hoped, Baku, or the Transcaucasus more broadly, inspired a return to Romantic poetics, which facilitated the synthetic creation of a transnational worldly poetic language.

### **The Gifts and Challenges of Translation**

Baku not only provided a theatre for Russian political and artistic demonstrations, but the wealth of the oil boom during the first two decades of the twentieth century funded the expansion and relocation of the Azeri press and theatre to Baku. The opening of the Baku-Batumi Railroad in 1881 and the support of Ottoman forces in the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918-1920) strengthened ties with Ottoman Turkey. A shared Islamic and Turkic linguistic heritage along with the cultural ties that it generated, began to feature more prominently during this period in a new Romantic movement of Azeri poetry. While the movement of satirical Realism by Azeri and Persian language authors such as Axundov and Məmmədquluzadə had existed since the nineteenth century, a new Romantic movement developed in the international Turkic journals at the turn of the century.<sup>348</sup> Inspired by the idea of a Pan-Turkic language, poets such as Abbas Səhhət and Məhəmməd Hadi’s work drew upon Turkic forms of classic Islamic and pre-Islamic poetry (including the genres of the *ghazal* and *qasīdah*) as well as a renewed interest in Russian Romanticism. Less than a decade later, the aesthetics of the Russian avant-garde also began to influence, in particular, the free verse experiments of literary critic and poet Mikayıl Rəfili. For both Romantics and avant-garde traditions, translations generated a corpus of new poetic forms and symbols. Local Azeri poets invoked an intuitive poetic tradition that resembled their Russian counterparts. However, instead of reinscribing imperial politics and poetics, they imagined another kind of supranational cultural and religious collective. In this way, I

<sup>348</sup>One of the major architects of the creation of a Pan-Turkic language was the Crimean writer and thinker Ismail Gasprali [Gasprinskii] who edited the dual-language Islamic reformist journal *The Interpreter* [*Tercüman-Perevodchik*].

argue that early twentieth century translations facilitated both the subjugation of language to Soviet ideologies of progress, as well as the creation of heteroglossic Azeri poetics – which transcended the very imperial poetics it translated.<sup>349</sup>

The intuitive poetic traditions of the *ghazal*, *qaşīdah* and related forms in Ottoman poetry, drew upon symbols from Islamic theology. In his analysis of Ottoman *divan* poetry, Walter Andrews argues that religious ideas and images, which form the center of Islamic theology rely on a “mystical pattern.”<sup>350</sup> Similar to the synthesis of Bergsonian and Russian Orthodox intuition in avant-garde poetry, Islamic and pre-Islamic poetry appropriates the notion of the existence of two worlds, material and celestial, “accessible only through the powers of intuition or insight.”<sup>351</sup> Reason alone does not provide a gateway to knowing the world, but rather “the power to perceive the world of reality manifests itself in those states that our this-worldly judgment deems most un-reasonable.”<sup>352</sup> In this system, the terrestrial object has an otherworldly counterpart that transcends a metaphorical relationship.<sup>353</sup>

The influence of this mystical pattern introduced some of the first translations of Romantic poetry into Azeri. The journal *Abundance* [*Fiyūzat*], edited by the Azeri writer and essayist Əli bəy Hüseynzadə, began to publish articles about European literature and translations of Byron and Hugo as early as 1906. Hüseynzadə used his journal to promote a common ethno-linguistic identity among the journal's international Pan-Turkic readership. In his poem “Turan” Hüseynzadə refers to the community of Pan-Turkic peoples across Hungary, the Ottoman empire and Central Asia.<sup>354</sup> He writes:

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<sup>349</sup>Indeed, this vision of translation also resembles the Formalists’ vision of parody and repetition, which repeats imperial poetics in its very act of debasement, as I discuss in Chapter Three.

<sup>350</sup>See: Walter G. Andrews, *Poetry’s Voice Society’s Song: Ottoman Lyric poetry* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 63.

<sup>351</sup>*Ibid*, 66.

<sup>352</sup>*Ibid*, 67.

<sup>353</sup>*Ibid*, 69-70.

<sup>354</sup>Max Müller defines the Turanian language group alongside the Semitic and Indo-European groups as “comprising the dialects of the nomad races scattered over Central and Northern Asia, the Tungusic, Mongolic, Turkic, Samoyedic and Finnic, all radii from one common centre of speech.” Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in April, May, and June, 1861* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1862), 43.

Hey you nation of the Magyars (Hungarians), you are our brothers

Turan is our common origin

All of us, God-lovers are of one religion

Could the Gospel and Qur'an divide us?

They made the Genghises tremble

And subdued the Timurs to the shahs of the shahs

And the kingdom of the Tsars moved to conquer them all.<sup>355</sup>

Sizlərsiniz ey qövmi-macar bizlərə ixvan

Əcdadımızın müştərəkən mənşəyi Turan

Bir dindəyiz biz, həpimiz həqqpərəstan

Mümkünmü ayırsın bizi İncil ilə Quran?

Cingizləri titrətdi şu afaqı sərəsər

Teymurları hökm etdi şəhinşahlara yeksər

Fatihlərinə keçdi bütün kişvəri-qeysər

In this model, the common Turkic linguistic origin of Turanians powerfully unites against the common enemy of Russian imperial rule. Tracing the linguistic and cultural ties of Turan outlines the journal's agenda to discuss identity and reform. In 1907, Hüseyinzadə announced the journal's objectives to "Turkify, Islamicize, and Europeanize," elaborating that, "It follows that our system of thought seeks guidance from Turkic life and from the worship of Islam. It also calls for acquiring the benefits of civilization from contemporary Europe."<sup>356</sup> From this point of view, *Abundance's* efforts to translate

<sup>355</sup>Əli bəy Hüseyinzadə, "Turan," in *Seçilmiş əsərləri* (Baku: Şərq-Qərb, 2007), 32.

<sup>356</sup>From *Fiyüzat* 23(1907), cited in Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition*, 59.

European Romanticism into a common Turkic tongue and poetic canon emerged from a local Islamic modernist project as from a Pan-Turkic linguistic and cultural project.

Strongly influenced by Hüseyinzadə, in 1912 Səhhət published a series of translations from French and Russian nineteenth century Romantic poetry including works by Hugo, Musset, Prudhomme, Pushkin, and Lermontov entitled *The Western Sun* [*Qərb günəşi*]. The poems return from the west to acquire a new life in the Azeri language, and figuratively, a new dawn in the east. Included in this collection are some of the most famous Russian orientalist poetic works about the Caucasus: Pushkin's "The Caucasus" ["Qafqaz"], "The Prophet" ["Peyğəmbər"] "The Gypsies" ["Qaraçılar"] and Lermontov's "Mtsyri" ["Mtsiri"] "The Circassians" ["Çərkəşlər"], "The Prophet" ["Peyğəmbər"], "The Argument" ["Mübahisə"], "The Gift of the Terek" ["Terekin sövqatı"] and "Hadji Abrek" ["Hacı Abrek"].<sup>357</sup> Səhhət's selection of texts not only highlights his interest in Russian portraits of the Caucasian landscape, but also the figure of the Muslim hero. Seizing the voice of the Russian orientalist, he renders the dignity and heroism of the Muslim Other in his native tongue. The institution of translation provides a forum for generating a Muslim hero under the auspices of spreading imperial culture. Both the Russian Romantic canon and their translations indeed share the trope of the poet's reflection on nature. However, the landscapes of poetic reflection diverge. Səhhət's translations render Pushkin and Lermontov's Caucasus through the figures of classical Islamic poetry, such as the gazelle and the Simurgh, as well as through Turkic grammatical inflection. His vision of poetic intuition participates in both the Russian Romantic work and its resonances within the classical tradition.

Səhhət's vision of Pushkin's "The Caucasus" shifts the relationship of the poet to his natural world. Both works place a lonely poet in the first line gazing down at a mountain from its summit. The reader follows the poet's eye down the mountain, describing the scenery. Structurally, Pushkin's poem is divided into verse stanzas while Səhhət shifts most of the rhyme scheme to accommodate the poetic

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<sup>357</sup>Abbas Səhhət, *Seçilmiş əsərləri* (Baku: Lider Nəşriyyat, 2005), 450-451.

convention of the *bait*, a complete syntactic unit composed of two rhymed half-lines, or *mişrā*.<sup>358</sup> This unit can stand freely as a complete poem, though is most often combined with other *bait*s to produce a longer work. The material symbolism of this poetic form, *bait* meaning house or tent and *mişrā* meaning door or tent flap is relevant to the symbolic vision of the poem as a “bundle of pieces” [“parça bohçası”].<sup>359</sup> Also, the pairing of home and door or threshold parallels the relationship of the poet to spiritual intuition and the simultaneous existence of the physical and celestial worlds. Səhhət’s *bait*s provide a new structural significance to Pushkin’s verse. Pushkin’s work is organized into stanzas, each of which describes a stratum of life on the mountain, moving from the poet’s position in the clouds into the fierce waters of the Terek beating against the rocks. The reader travels alongside Pushkin from the site of poetic inspiration to the angry, indeed beastly waves of the river. As the reader descends with the gaze of the poet, the poem creates a sense of wonder, gazing at the wildness and animalism of nature and sharing the author's distant viewpoint from the heavens.

While the poem provides a vision of nature for the reader, it remains somewhat unthreatening when viewed from this height. While Səhhət’s verse form varies in the beginning and ending of the poem, the greater part of the verse draws upon the *bait* form to create moments that parallel the experience of the poet and the natural world. For example, the fourth line reads, “From here I see the bubbling of the springs / And in their first movements (I see) the frightening, questionable precipices” [“Buradan mən görürəm çeşmələri qaynamada / Şübhəli, qorxulu uçqunları ilk oynamada”].<sup>360</sup> The movement of water emerging from the spring seems to foretell the signs of avalanches, indeed proof of the warming of ice in spring. Pushkin’s stanza instead describes a list of things that can be viewed from the central point of the poet. The comparable line reads, “From here I see the birth of streams / And the first movements of terrible avalanches” [“Отселе я вижу потоков рождение/ И первое грозных

<sup>358</sup>See: Andrews, *An Introduction to Ottoman Poetry*, 131-173

<sup>359</sup>*Ibid*, 133-35.

<sup>360</sup>Səhhət, “Qafqaz” in *Seçilmiş əsərləri*, 342.

обвалов движенъе”].<sup>361</sup> The symbolic description of the “birth” of springs describes the poet witnessing a godlike power of creation and a sense of the terror and beauty of the natural world. While both verses describe the movement of water in a spring, Pushkin’s verse suggests divine involvement, while Səhhət’s translation highlights the change of the seasons and the coming of spring.

In addition to this ecological vision of a Romantic encounter with the sublime force of nature, Səhhət’s *bait* structure also allows for a narrowing of the distance between the poet and his setting that does not appear in Pushkin’s work. In one of the *baits* positioned in the center of the poem, Səhhət describes the shepherds descent into the valley as an experience mirroring the poet’s appreciation of nature, “Down from the mountains, there shepherds walk to the valley./ A man falls in love with this beautiful scenery,” [“Yürüyür dağ aşağı orda çoban da dərəyə./ İştə məftunlaşır insan bu gözəl mənzərəyə”]. The second line, indeed does not appear in Pushkin’s work, however, it fulfills the two-line *bait* in Səhhət’s work. The beautiful setting causes the man to literally “become a lover” or be in the state of being a lover [“məftunlaşır insan”], referencing one of the classical mystical symbols for the search for spiritual enlightenment – the poet as a lover searching for his beloved. The movement down the mountain, which mirrors the poet’s descending gaze in Pushkin’s work, for Səhhət produces the transformation of the human through his becoming a lover of nature, and in this way, becoming a poet. Səhhət requires the poet to descend the mountain in order to appreciate its beauty, rather than remaining in the clouds as Pushkin’s poetic voice does. Pushkin’s image of poetic inspiration resides in his sublime images – from the poet’s distant location on the precipice to his perception of the divine “birth” of streams. Səhhət instead relocates Pushkin’s Caucasus in his series of *baits* that perform poetic inspiration in the poet’s immediate and sensual love of nature that comes with the warming of the streams in spring.

Two years after completing his translation of Pushkin’s “The Caucasus,” Səhhət returned to the

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<sup>361</sup>Pushkin, “Kavkaz” in *Sobranie sochinenii v 10 tomakh* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo, 1956-1962) 2: 266.

landscape of the Caucasus in his poem “Homeland” [“Vətən”].<sup>362</sup> “Homeland” emphasizes the relationship of the poet to nature and more specifically the Caucasus. However, as the name of the poem implies, Səhhət's return to the subject of the Caucasus attempts to retrieve a collective identity. The first *bait* describes the poetic and physical space of the Caucasus as the poet's home: “The fragment of the Caucasus is my homeland,/ Because of the Simurgh it is my dwelling” [“Qafqaz qitəsidir mənim vətənim,/ Simürğün sayəsində məskənim”]. The Caucasus is imagined through the dual signification of “qitə” as both a poetic fragment and a piece of land, or a continent. The term implicitly connects the space of the Caucasus to Səhhət's project to create a textual homeland. The Simurgh is a giant bird of prey that features in both Persian and Turkic myths depicted with the head of a dog and claws of a lion, including the tenth century Persian poet Hakīm Abu'l-Qāsim Ferdowsi's *Book of Kings* [*Shahnameh*], the twelfth century Persian poet Farīd al-Dīn al-'Attar *The Conference of the Birds*, as well as throughout Turkic folklore. As a benevolent or often divine force, the Simurgh here serves a similar role in granting the poet his homeland. The poet's indebtedness to the myth could be read as both his reverence for the divine force, and as his appreciation of the creature as a shared symbol of both *qitə-s* – fragments of land as well as fragments of Persian and Turkic literary traditions. Səhhət dedicates this tribute to his homeland and to his celestial and transcontinental “dwellings.”

In the poem, each of the first three *baits* parallels the spiritual, mythic and real spaces that form the poet's homeland:

The fragment of the Caucasus is my homeland,

Because of the Simurgh it is my dwelling.

In that country I came into being,

I prostrated myself facing my people.

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<sup>362</sup>Səhhət, “Vətən” *Seçilmiş əsərləri*, 81.



In that place of the black bird and hawk –  
The sultan of the Qaf mountains was named.

Qafqaz qitəsidir mənim vətənim,  
Simürğün sayəsində məskənim.  
O məmləkətdə mən vücüdə gəldim,  
Xalqıma qarşı sücudə gəldim.  
O yerdə kim qara quşu, tərlandı –  
Adlanmışdır Qaf dağının sultanı.

Səhhət's emphasis on the fragmented space articulates the contested nature of his homeland. The linguistic and symbolic fragments tell the history of multiple imperial rules in the Caucasus. He describes his own birth and the lineage of sultans in spiritual and mythic terms respectively. Drawing upon multiple mythic and literary traditions, he constructs a homeland that exists beyond the physicality of Pushkin's vision. His state of being and prayer are connected through the parallel “doors” of the *bait*, though his prayer and birth are connected to the “country” and “my people.” This highly spiritualized poetic language refers to the connection between Səhhət's celestial and terrestrial homelands. The mythic space of the Qaf mountains are home to the Simurgh as well as the trans-continental poetic traditions from Ottoman Turkey through the Caucasus, the Persian empire, and Central Asia. This space at once represents a physical home to black birds, hawks and the sultan as well as the mythic space of the Simurgh. Crucially, it is also the Qaf mountains, that very space of mythic and spiritual power, which endows the sultan with his authority in Səhhət's vision.

The location, or dislocation of Səhhət's homeland into fragments of mythic literatures, not only articulates a connection between his homeland and this borderless space, but provides a set of portable

symbols in his work more broadly. The pieces of his homeland, particularly the divine symbols of the Simurgh and the gazelle appear both in “Homeland” and in his translations of Pushkin’s “The Caucasus” and Lermontov’s “The Argument.” In “The Caucasus” the “gazelles” [“ceylanlar”] roam in place of Pushkin’s “deer” [“oleni”]. Səhhət’s insistence on the figure of the gazelle places the work within a distinct Arabo-Persian poetic register.<sup>363</sup> Similarly, his reference to the Simurgh in “The Argument” imports an entirely new landscape into Lermontov’s work. Lermontov describes caravans of camels and a king eagle flying in the clouds: “The caravans are already passing through/ across your rocks,/ Where carried through the clouds/ The eagle tsar” [“Уж проходят караваны/ Через те скалы,/ Где носились лишь туманы/ Да цари-орлы”]. Səhhət embellishes this image, extending it to fill two *bait*s:

This is the Qaf mountain, sultan of birds,  
 Only the rock percher Simurghs --  
 Who is enveloped in thick black clouds,  
 Now from here the caravans pass

Qaf dağdır bura, quşlar soltanı,  
 Ancaq simürğlər qonan qayanı –  
 Kim çulğayır qalın qara dumanlar,  
 İndi burdan gəlib keçir karvanlar.

In the first *bait*, the Simurghs replace the tsar eagle, reinstated as sultans of the mythic Qaf mountains. The second *bait* conveys the parallel movement of the sky and earth. The Simurghs are enveloped in

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<sup>363</sup>The gazelle is a common trope in Arabo-Persian poetry signifying the figures of the beloved and the divine.

the clouds as terrestrial time passes with the caravans. Səhhət imagines a mystical, poetic and mythic space from within Lermontov's description of the Caucasus. While these symbols serve as foreign additions to Pushkin and Lermontov's works, they remain reminders for Səhhət of his ever-present and portable textual home, as well as the complex and contested history of his homeland.

While Səhhət's verse displays Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turkic attributes, other "Romantic" Marxist poets such as Məhəmməd Hadi embraced a Pan-Islamic cultural worldview alongside a conscious appeal to the working masses. In his "The Voice of (Our) Time and the (Wise) Sayings of Life" ["Vaxtin səsi və həyatın sözü"] (1909), Hadi combines a series of wise sayings, many of which refer to Islamic philosophy or the Qur'an. However, Hadi places these sayings in the context of the need for education among the masses.<sup>364</sup> Speaking of the blindness of ignorance he writes, "You will not see what is free on this earth,/ A beautiful woman is busying tongues" ["Sən görməyəcəksən yerin üstündə nədir hur,/ Bir nimmigəhlə ediyor dilləri məşur"]. Hadi contrasts the invisibility of the spirit of freedom to the banality of physical beauty. He describes an occupation with earthly pleasures – praise given to a beautiful woman – as a distraction from invisible freedom. Indeed, freedom refers both to the intangible realm of the divine and the political state of liberation. The final two *bait*s in the poem reveal the relationship between the divine and political, specifically Marxist, rhetoric. Hadi writes:

Those masses have the right to live –  
To get out to the intellectual war at the frontlines of ignorance.  
From now on the world wants a great, wise and brave man,  
So if you want to live, show your knowledge!

İştə yaşamaq haqqına haizdir o kütlə--

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<sup>364</sup>Məhəmməd Hadi, "Vaxtın səsi və həyatın sözü" *Seçilmiş əsərləri* (Baku: Şərq-Qərb, 2005), 285.

Bir hərbi-münəvvərlə çıxıb cəbheyi-cəhlə.  
Bundan belə dünya böyük ürfanlı ər istər,  
Sən də yaşamaq istər isən, bilgini göstər!

The “rights” of “the masses” are won on the battleground of ignorance. However, read in the context of the poem as a whole, the spiritual and political state of freedom provides the cure to this ignorance. The life and rights of the masses are elevated to an important role in Hadi’s compilation of the “Wise Sayings of the Time.” The life of these sayings, Hadi insists, is as relevant in this time of the awakening “masses” as their participation in trans-continental or supranational Islamic philosophic and cultural traditions.

Both Səhhət’s poetic homeland and Hadi’s life of the masses transcend the very notion of national boundaries. In so doing they provide a portrait of the shifting geopolitics in the early twentieth century Eurasian space. Səhhət’s poems connect Russian orientalist and Pan-Turkic myths through the translation of Russian Romantic verse. His appropriation of the *bait* form in his translations illustrates the coexistence of Romantic and Islamic spiritual forms of intuition. Similarly, Hadi transforms political freedom into the realm of the invisible universe of the divine. Səhhət and Hadi’s reliance on a collective Islamic and pre-Islamic past can be understood as a Romantic impulse. However, unlike their Futurists contemporaries’ Russian Romantic returns, Səhhət and Hadi’s work evoke multiple temporal and spatial registers that contest the singularity and monumentality of the Russian imperial experience. The collection of symbols and forms present in Səhhət’s translations in particular, offers a portrait of a truly heterogeneous body of literature, that transcends 'rational' space and time, and in so doing, national difference. Beginning with Pushkin and Lermontov’s legacy, he reimagines Pushkin’s orientalist inspiration in the Caucasus through a worldly translation of Russian content and Ottoman forms. While this group of writers is often read exclusively through their efforts to generate an

international Pan-Turkic readership,” Səhhət’s translations of Russian Romanticism and Hadi’s Marxist Islamic verse reveal more heterogeneous, worldly designs for the poetic word.

### **EPILOGUE: Art in the Streets: New Words in the Windows**

Səhhət, Hüseynzadə and Hadi envisioned a transcontinental poetic homeland united through Islam, a common Turkic tongue, and an interest in the political and literary movements of the West. However, these were not the only visions of hybridized space in twentieth century Azeri poetry. Influenced by Maiakovskii’s poetry of the streets, Mikayıl Rəfilı depicted a new Soviet space through his use of the Latin alphabet. Maiakovskii was also living in Baku during this time, where he composed his sequel poem “Order Number 2 to the Army of Arts” [“Prikaz №2 po armii iskusstv”].<sup>365</sup> His first “Order” directed at the arts was delivered in 1918 following the October Revolution. This second “Order” followed three years later, in the revolutionary and newly Soviet Baku of 1921. Unlike the Futurists’ transrational vision of an all-worldly language of poetry, Maiakovskii translated the space of the streets and Baku’s industrial landscape into his verse.

At each river’s source,  
lying with a hole in the side,  
the steamship howled through the docks:  
“Give (us) oil from Baku!”  
while we drag it out and argue,  
in search of secret meaning:  
“Give us new forms!” –

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<sup>365</sup>Maiakovskii, “Prikaz po armii iskustv” in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 13 tomakh*, 2.86-88.

the things resound a cry.

У каждой реки на истоке,

лёжа с дырой в боку,

пароходы провыли доки:

«Дайте нефть из Баку!»

Пока канителим, спорим,

смысл сокровенный ища:

«Дайте нам новые формы!» -

несётся вопль по вещам.

While the poem is not fashioned around Maiakovskii's memorable stair-step form, the voices of the workers and poets emerge from within its body in short interjected orders. Maiakovskii's style in this period reflects his work for the state news agency, in 1919 The Russian Telegraph Agency [Rosta] produced propaganda posters that were displayed in shop windows called the Satirical Rosta Windows [Okna satiry Rosta]. The image of the street that Maiakovskii provides reflects the style of these short slogans. The first actor in this stanza is a steamship, a common image in the avant-garde's poetic lexicon for describing technologies of the twentieth century. Here, the steamship is located alongside a generative Romantic symbol, the river's source. However, Maiakovskii's river is not animated with the spiritual powers of creation like Pushkin's spring, but rather provides steam power and oil from the newly Soviet colony. The stanza constructs a parallel between two images – the thoughtful poet and industrial power. The inspirational and life-giving source of the river yields the steamship, which in turn, calls out for oil. The order for the colonial product parallels the order for “new forms.” These poetic forms must be developed, engineered, or extracted, however crucially the poem locates these

powerful creative processes in imperial expansion. For Maiakovskii, the technological advancement of the Soviet Union imagined through its imperial expansion must be directed by art. Indeed, the “new forms” that the world of things cries out for possesses the power, literal and figurative, to “pull the republic out of the mud” [“vyvoloch' respubliku iz griazi”].

The industrial face of revolutionary Baku from the streets was also one of Rəfili's primary preoccupations in his first collection, “The Window” [“Pəncərə”], composed during the 1920s and published in 1929. Among Rəfili's innovations in Azeri verse forms, perhaps most striking are his appropriation of the stair-step form, his use of free verse, and his fascination with the new Latin script. Completing his collection in 1929, Rəfili was among the first generation of writers to publish in the Latin script.<sup>366</sup> The script reform not only changed access to written texts, rendering both works in the old and new scripts illegible to parts of the population, but literally changed the shape of poetry. It required the translation of letters as well as the transformation of poetic forms themselves, shifting the reading order from right-left to left-right and creating a distance from the classical *bait* form and its system of creating poetic meaning in rhymed half-line couplets. While the series of script reforms left traces of Soviet epistemologies on Azeri verse, the new reliance on internal sound patterns and the visual effect of verse in print also influenced a remapping of the cultural space of Baku.

“The Window” envisions the city through a staccato style that recalls Maiakovskii's window slogans, dragged across the page in the stair-step form. Sometimes utterances call out, as if voiceless orders to an uncertain audience. The first work in the collection and the title poem, “The Window” [“Pəncərə”] describes the city viewed through the poet's window,

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<sup>366</sup>The first Latin alphabet was introduced by The New Turkic Alphabet Committee [Yeni türk əlifba komitəsi] in 1922, but was re-standardized in 1929 after the Turkish script reforms to create a common system. Then in 1939 it was replaced by the Cyrillic alphabet to repress cultural ties with Turkey. Rəfili's collection, which was published the year of the second round of reforms, seems to rely on the unstandardized version of 1922, eliding some of the letters k, q, g and ğ. One of the first publications to introduce a page in the Latin script was the women's journal *The Eastern Woman* [Şərq qadını].

Today the Gilavar wind is a little quiet;  
The fluttering of the leaves isn't heard...  
But the city, the big city,  
Has turned,  
    midnight, yet still  
        doesn't sleep,  
A hallway  
    was opened white  
        from the window,  
My thoughts are like a handle bound to a shining  
        dagger...  
In front of me the big city  
A window...  
  
Gilavar bu gün bir az sakit;  
Yaprakların titrəməsi duyulmayı...  
Lakin şəhər, böyük şəhər,  
    Gəcə yarı,  
        olmuş, fəqət  
            uyumayı,  
Bir koridor  
    açılmış aq  
        pəncərədən,  
Fikrim bir sap kibi ilişmişdir parıldayan bir



xəncərə...

Önümdəki böyük şəhər

Bir pəncərə...<sup>367</sup>

The city emerges as if through a window frame in an interrupted panorama of frozen images. The poem begins and ends with two Romantic symbols – the Gilavar wind, a local wind that blows across the Caspian Sea, and the curved dagger [“xəncərə”]. However, the bustling city obscures the natural images that were once the focal points of poets such as Səhhət and Hadi during the previous decade. The wind and the leaves are hushed by the repeated references to this “big” city. The stair-step structure of the poem literally creates a distance between the natural world, poetic thought and the images envisioned through the window. Indeed, the structural element of the window, which brings the “white” of light into the hallway, eventually becomes not only the source of vision but synonymous with the city itself. Rəfili, as if answering Maiakovskii’s order for “new forms” creates a window in the Latin alphabet, through which the “big city” of Soviet Baku emerges.

The most dramatic example of Rəfili’s use of the stair-step pattern occurs in his poem about the revolution, “When the World was Crumbling” [“Dünya paralanırkan”].<sup>368</sup> In this work, not only does the force of the revolution break up the city of Baku, but it literally does violence to his verse, striking out single words in the stair-step form. The first section contains a series of floating fragments, as if torn window signs lost in the rebellion,

Revolution:

Rebellion!

The workers

<sup>367</sup>Mikayıl Rəfili, “Pəncərə,” in *Pəncərə* (Baku: Azərneşr, 1929), 7.

<sup>368</sup>Rəfili, “Dünya paralanırkan,” in *Pəncərə*, 11-13.

Of the whole universe

Unite! –

they said,

The sea was tumultuous,

They were united,

They awoke,

They shouted:

Citizen,

Comrade,

Are you a friend? Or stranger?

İnqılab:

İsyandır

Cümlə cahandır

İşçiləri

Birləşiniz!—

dedilər,

Dalğalandı dəniz,

Birləşdilər,

Oyandılar,

Bağırtdılar:

Vətəndaş,

Yoldaş,

Dostsan? Yad?

The calls to the workers stand alone as if strangers in an unidentified mass, such as the third person singular “(they) said,” with its implied subject. The next stanza begins with the Romantic image of the tumultuous sea as a metaphor for the crowd. Indeed, the stair-step form resembles a series of waves of lonely words caught in a confusing and tumultuous mass. The disorder is emphasized in the third stanza, in which the utterances speculate who is a friend and who – an enemy. The term “vətəndaş,” meaning compatriot, derives from the term “homeland” [“vətən”] and is used by both Səhhət and Hadi to refer to a supranational spiritual, linguistic and cultural home. Here it parallels the form “comrade” [“yoldaş”] which became the most common translation for the Russian “comrade” [“tovarish”]. Rəfili’s stanza seems to question the relationship between the homeland and the Soviet state, confusing friend and foe in the fight.

Rəfili draws upon this fragmented structure as well as sound repetition, like Maiakovskii and Khlebnikov, to suggest new relationships among the words and images. The repetition of “q” creates a flood of blood and snow.

Snow: Blood

Will flow

Will color

The white quilt

Qar: Qan

Aqar

Boyanar

Ağ yorgan...

The sound repetitions create a new logic in the free verse style to replace the rhymed *bait* form. The drawn-out stream of words also visualizes blood flowing out from the “Snow.” Elsewhere in the poem Rəfili returns to the rhymed couplets to create an internal rhythm of chaotic movement. Recalling the image of the Simurgh opening its wings he writes,

Boom, bam, bang...

Rebellion:

Opened its wings,

Life!

Bum, bom, pat...

Açdı qanat,

İsyan:

Can!

The words, “opened its wings” [“Açdı qanat”] seem to fall down the stair-step line in the onomatopoeic “Bum, bom, pat...” Rəfili imagines the opening of the wings of revolution and perhaps also recalls the Romantic’s Simurgh, emerging through a new sound and form. Rəfili’s image of the poetic past here descends the stairs into a new space of revolution. Indeed the “revolution” [“isyan”] rhymes with the old Azeri-Persian word for “soul” or “life” [“can”], emphasizing the co-existence of these two worlds.

The final two stanzas of the poem draw a conflicted portrait of the revolution in which the two worlds are suddenly thrown into shock. The red flag rises, designating the victory of the Soviets,

The flag rose:

Its color is blood...

The Azan was called:

Hey bourgeois

This is our feast!

\*\*\*

The sun rose:

Those who rose were many.

Yüksəldi bayraq:

Rəngi qan...

Çəkildi əzan:

Ey burzhui,

Bizimdür bu toy!

\*\*\*

Günəş doğdu:

Yüksələn çoxdu.

While the tone of Rəfili's work is celebratory, revealing his pro-Soviet orientation, a sense of the somewhat fractured nature of this victory persists in these final dislocated lines. In a shift away from the stair structure, these last verses seem relatively static, devoid of the chaos of tumultuous oceans and flowing blood in the poem's body. The blood-colored flag also lends the victory an ominous tone. In Azeri, the two pairs of internal lines rhyme, linking "The color of blood" ["Rəngi qan"] and "The Azan was called" ["Çəkildi əzan"] as well as "Hey bourgeois" ["Ey burzhui"], an Azeri transliteration of the Russian term for bourgeois, which in the original Latin script mirrors "This is our celebration"

[Bizimdür bu toi”]. The Latin script facilitates this rhymed couplet, which imagines the celebration of the rise of Soviet power in Baku through the Islamic call to prayer and local feast “toy/toi.” In the final lines, the image of the rising sun, a popular Soviet cliché, indicates the rising of a new regime. The crumbling of the world, which Rəfili so carefully renders in the broken lines of the new script, announces a new era of poetry under the Soviet sun. However, as the bloody flag and call to prayer mark the new era, they remind us of the traditions of the past that fight to exist alongside these new poetic worlds.

Rəfili’s, Səhhət and Hadi’s works all share an interest in envisioning a collective future through the multiplicity of a contested past. Their engagement with the Russian Romantic tradition and its attendant Orientalism, contests its singular authority. While Səhhət and Hadi’s work approaches a fusion of poetic spaces through translation, Rəfili instead relies on the poetic and political force of the script reforms. While Rəfili’s self-translation into the Latin script forces his verse into fragments that distance themselves from the poetic *bait*s of Səhhət and Hadi, he creates new spaces for imagining Azeri poetry.

Only a few years later, the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers further pushed to institutionalize an official Azerbaijani Soviet national canon. Unlike The Congress of 1920, by 1934 the Russian language was established as the dominant language of cultural production. The Congress attributed literary greatness to a text’s accessibility to Russian and western readerships. It also facilitated the Soviet Union’s role in creating new writing systems.<sup>369</sup> From this vantage point, the creation of works such as Rəfili’s free verse stair-step style in the new Soviet sponsored Latin script supported Soviet claims to literary modernization.

While the 1920s represent a brief period in Soviet history, it nonetheless illustrates a

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<sup>369</sup>See: Kathryn Schild, *Between Moscow and Baku: National Literatures at the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers* (PhD diss. University of California at Berkeley, 2010), 126-130. For a discussion of the role of script and language reform in shaping the literature of early twentieth century Turkey, see: Nergis Ertürk, *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), *passim*.

foundational moment in the poetics and politics of the emerging Soviet literary canon. The popularity of Russian Romanticism in Bolshevik anti-imperial discourses inspired the cultivation of a Turkic, Islamic and often Marxist Azeri voice through literary translation and transcription. From this vantage point, Səhhət's critical practice of translation unmasked the anti-imperialist façade of the Romantic poetics of Soviet expansion in the Caucasus. In turn, the introduction of the Latin script and its role in distancing Azeri verse from a trans-continental body of classical poetic forms provided an occasion for Rəfili's reimagination of his poetic homeland. The impact of the recurrence of the poetic history of the Russian empire during the formation of the Soviet Union illustrates the ways in which Azeri poetic resistance to imperialism also relied on its rejection of a singular, monumental national narrative. Despite their attempts to throw the Romantic canon from the steamship of modernity, the Russian avant-garde could not turn their gaze from the wreckage of their own imperial past. It was, rather, this brief moment in Azeri poetry, in the confusion of form and subject between languages and traditions that produced the very sort of "organic" synthesis and worldly poetic experiment that the Russian Futurists had imagined.

## 5. Conclusion

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The broad historical timeline discussed in this dissertation (1828-1920) aims to untangle a series of intertwining political and social discourses that defined hegemonic structures of power and resistance in literature produced by Russians and Muslims in the Caucasus. In so doing, I reveal the ways in which the formation and transformation of discourses of imperialism, Orientalism and anti-imperial resistance produced supranational networks of literary exchange in the space of Eurasia. Placing Muslim writers from the Caucasus in dialogue with Russian writers and Bolshevik politicians, I remap the intellectual geography of the region to include voices that have been previously excised from Anglophone scholarship. In particular, the Marxist-Leninist discourse of anti-imperialism associated with the formation of the Soviet Union in the Caucasus and Central Asia, has brought attention to the influence of the region on global postcolonial debates. In Robert Young's important study *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction*, he traces the history of anti-colonial struggles to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. Young argues that the international character of postcolonialism, which he calls *tricontinentalism*, is predicated on its independence from nationalist reliances on bourgeoisie class domination.<sup>370</sup> This understanding of postcolonialism through the “the fundamental reliance between the proletariat exploited within an imperialist nation and the colonized peoples exploited by that nation,” is one that developed in Lenin's writings on national self-determination.<sup>371</sup> Young defines postcolonial critique as the “historical moment of the theorized introduction of new tricontinental forms and strategies of critical analysis and practice” that “looks back to the political commitment of the anti-colonial liberation movements.”<sup>372</sup> In this way, my dissertation analyses the ways in which the imperial

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<sup>370</sup>The term tricontinental offers an alternative to the label 'Third World,' which Young appropriates from Anouar Abdel-Malek's speech at the first conference of the Organization for the Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America at Havan in 1906. Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 5.

<sup>371</sup>Young, *Postcolonialism*, 125.

<sup>372</sup>Young, 5, 10.



past provided inspiration for the architecture of supranational discourses of freedom in Eurasia. The role of Muslims in the Caucasus in shaping these revolutionary and early Soviet postcolonial discourses, as I have attempted to demonstrate, was the product of supranational ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural ties.

The archive of Russian orientalist works of ethnography, history and literature about the Caucasus shaped the idea of the region in the Russian imagination. In particular, discourses of freedom, critiques of autocratic state power, the spiritual character of the Russian language, and the hybrid and liminal character of the empire, emerged in these narratives as Russian civic [*rossiiskii*] ideals. However, participating in a supranational literary network, they also shaped and transformed forms of ethnic, linguistic, religious and civic identity in the literature of the Muslims of the Caucasus. In this way, the literary figures of the Russian imperial past left a lasting impression on the politics and literature of the Soviet Union. Similarly, drawing upon the symbols and figures of the Russian imaginary of the Caucasus, local Muslim writers and thinkers were able to evade censorship and express their own civic, religious and cultural ideals in dialogue with Pan-Turkic, Pan-Islamic and Bolshevik supranational communities.

The first half of the dissertation illustrates the role of the poetry and prose of the imperial period in shaping an idea of the Caucasus in the writings of Russians and local Muslims. The works of the Azeri writer Mirzə Fətəli Axundov and the Adyghe writer Sultan-Kazy-Girei engage with the canonical works of their contemporary Russian writers Mikhail Iur'evich Lermontov and Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin. In these networks of texts, the idea of the Caucasus emerges as a space of freedom and discursive authority. The image of Pushkin as a literary prophet and the spiritual authority of the Russian word formed a crucial element in Russian civic identity. This spiritual authority, in turn, shaped the ideological significance of the Caucasus in the imperial imagination. Axundov's invocation of Pushkin in his literary debut in the Russian press, drew upon the sacred memory of Pushkin's

Caucasus to shape his vision of the heteroglossia and heterodoxia of literary discourse. Lermontov and Pushkin's notion of freedom is predicated on the attachment of the Russian civic ideal to the writer's consciousness of the sublimity of the space of the steppe and mountains of the Caucasus. In this way, the orientalist construction of a free Caucasus, motivated Kazy-Girei's critical refashioning of the topography of his homeland, through the dimension of personal memory. Indeed, both Kazy-Girei and Axundov's works, written in Russian and published in contemporary journals, reached a multilingual and multiethnic audience in the Russian empire. The circulation of these symbols through these diverse Russophone literary texts, shaped both visions of Soviet hegemony and anti-colonial Muslim writings in the Caucasus.

The second half of the dissertation discusses the postcolonial or perhaps intercolonial period between the 1905 and 1917 revolutions, as well as a short period of independence between 1918 and 1920 that led to the formation of the Soviet republics in the Caucasus. The literature of this period revisits modes of “oppositional imperialism” of the nineteenth century, characterized by the figures of the Russian exile and Muslim subject. The work of the influential satirist, critic and editor Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə, illustrates the crucial role of textual deviance, embodied in the figure of the fool, in constituting a space of criticism in both Russian and Azeri literature. Reading Məmmədquluzadə's parody of the Gogol'ean fool's archetype, exposes the ways in which textual deviancy impacted both the Azeri tradition, as well as early Soviet philology, particularly in the works of the Formalists and Bakhtin.

The story of the Baku avant-garde frames this discussion, by tracing the translation and transformation of the Romantic archive on the formation of Soviet policy and avant-garde poetry. At The Congress of the Peoples of the East, Bolshevik politicians performed Romantic visions of the Caucasus in order to emphasize an indigenous anti-colonial discourse. In so doing, they monumentalized the role of the Russian Romantic canon in shaping Russian and Soviet cultural

hegemony, as well as anti-colonial agency. In this way, the popularity of the symbols of the orientalist archive created a space for Azeri writers to engage with the imperial legacy and simultaneously re-envision the Caucasus through their use of traditional poetic forms. The writings of Velimir Khlebnikov, Aleksei Eliseevich Kruchenykh and Viacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov introduced the idea of a supranational Eurasian Soviet body of linguistic and literary forms. Their aims to form global, or at least supranational literary traditions, however, were limited by their reliance on the Russian canon. The works of Abbas Səhhət and Məhəmməd Hadi, instead transformed these orientalist images through their use of Pan-Turkic and Pan-Islamic images. Unlike their Russian counterparts, these poetic experiments were driven by shared ethnic and linguistic ties across the Eurasian space, through the imperial and cultural influence of the Ottoman, Persian and Russian empires. In this way, their construction of a supranational space did not rely on national or imperial ideologies. Finally, my epilogue anticipates the ways in which these supranational networks manifested in the Soviet period. Comparing the works of Vladimir Vladimirovich Maiakovskii and Mikayıl Rəfilı, I discuss the role of the Latin alphabet reforms in changing the shape of Azeri poetry and obscuring the complex supranational political and social meanings embedded in its form. As the script offered new opportunities for free verse style experiments, it rendered the function of many traditional poetic archetypes invisible. In this moment of transition, Rəfilı generates new modes of visualizing this collision of words in the shape of his verse.

The literature of the Muslims of the Caucasus traces a series of supranational networks that engaged with Russian, Persian, French and British literature. While this body of texts is relatively undocumented in Anglophone scholarship, it played a significant role in shaping the Eurasian literary space. It also provides a crucial vantage point for exposing the hegemony of Russian imperial and Soviet culture, despite the seminal role that anti-imperial discourses played in the construction of Russian and Soviet civic identity. In this way, the relationship between the literature of the Russians

and Muslims of the Caucasus highlights a crucial moment in the emergence of the postcolonial tradition, by placing into dialogue Russian and Soviet ideals of freedom with the anti-imperial writings of Muslims in the Caucasus.

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