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RUSSIAN LITERATURE AND ITS DEMONS

Edited by Pamela Davidson

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Chapter 5

The Muse and the Demon in the Poetry of Pushkin, Lermontov, and Blok

Pamela Davidson

Он звал прекрасное мечтою;
Он вдохновенье презирал;

[He called the beautiful a dream;
He held inspiration in contempt;]

Pushkin, "The Demon" (1823)[1]

И муза кротких вдохновений
Страшится неземных очей.

[And the muse of gentle inspirations
Fears his unearthly eyes.]

Lermontov, "My Demon" (1829)[2]

Я пронесу тебя над бездной,
Ее бездонностью дразня.
Твой будет ужас бесполезный –
Лишь вдохновеньем для меня.

[I will carry you above the abyss,
Tantalizing you with its infinite depth.
Your futile terror will be
Only an inspiration for me.]

Blok, "The Demon" (1916)[3]

Following the survey of cultural and historical approaches to art which concluded part I, this chapter considers one of the ways in which the view of art as demonic shaped by these contexts took root in the Russian literary tradition. In verse, the notion of art as demonic crystallized around the muse's relations with the Demon, giving rise to a rich collection of interrelated poems, through which one can trace the evolution of this theme. By considering a triad of authors pivotal to the whole tradition, I hope to uncover the path which led from Pushkin's "holy lyre"[4] through the "magic voice" of Lermontov's Demon[5] to Blok's assertion that "art is *Hell*,"[6] and thereby to illustrate the progression of the notion of art as demonic from nineteenth-century Romanticism into early twentieth-century modernism.

The distance that separates perceptions of the demonic in these two periods is far more than one of just time. The dark forces which threaten the journey undertaken by the traveller in Pushkin's "The Devils" (Besy, 1830) are presented through the prism of a guiding human consciousness which, however disorientated it may be, still strives to maintain a sense of direction. By the turn of the century, however, demonic forces have infiltrated literary representations of human consciousness to such an extent that this sense of direction or broader perspective is often submerged or lost. Sologub's novel *The Petty Demon (Melkii bes*, 1907) evokes a totally enclosed demonic world, and the lyric hero of Blok's poem "There is No Way Out" (Net iskhoda, 1907)[7] is trapped in a "charmed circle" (ocharovannyi krug), where death is welcomed and the call to rise from the dead rings hollow. In the same year a memorable iconographic image for this new type of static, circumscribed hell can be found in Mstislav Dobuzhinsky's depiction of the devil as a giant spider (Illustration 12), trapped within prison walls, at whose feet huddles a group of barely distinct human beings, condemned to trudge round and round in an endless circle.[8] Although the stars can be seen shining in the sky through the prison windows, they are so remote and inaccessible (high above the human heads and invisible to the spider's gaze) that they only intensify the horror of this powerful image of the solipsistic and demonic nature of modern art, cut off from any meaningful contact with the created universe. This essay will attempt to uncover the demonic trail which led from Pushkin's threatened journey into such a dark impasse.

Pushkin: The Muse's Encounter with the Demon

Although Pushkin was eminently capable of light-hearted references to the demonic qualities of art, describing himself when he was a seventeen-year-old student at the *litsei* as a "poor hermit of Tsarskoe

12. M. Dobuzhinsky, *The Devil*, 1907. First published in the journal *Zolotoe runo*, which organized a competition for literary and artistic representations of the devil.

Selo ... harassed by the maddened demon of graphomania" (beshenyi demon bumagomaraniia),[9] or referring to his lyre in a poem of 1821 as a "sinful gift of fate" (greshnyi dar sud'by) which, in typical Russian fashion, he has swopped for some dried mushrooms,[10] his fundamental attitude to the poetic vocation was undoubtedly based on a deep reverence for the "spirit of pure beauty" (genii chistoi krasoty)[11] which inspires the poet's "holy lyre" (sviataia lira), and on a full recognition of the "sacred sacrifice" (sviashchennaia zhertva) which this divine gift requires.[12] The innate purity of the artistic impulse is constantly stressed throughout his early verse. In "To Zhukovsky" (Zhukovskomu, 1818),[13] for example, the poet's journey to the world of dreams is inspired by his "elevated soul" (vozvyshennaia dusha) and can only be shared with like-minded friends of the "sacred truth" (sviashchennaia istina). "Enjoyment of the beautiful" (naslazhdenie prekrasnym) is the ultimate aim and art inspires an

"ardent and clear delight" (vostorg plamennyi i iasnyi). The only hint at a darker dimension comes in the reference to the poet's visions which "change ... in an enchanted gloom" (smeniaiutsia ... v volshebnoi mgle); inconstancy, enchantment, and darkness are attributes of the demonic view of the creative process which Blok and Bely were later to develop, but in Pushkin's poem they are only a passing detail, which barely impinges on the general mood of lofty idealism. In a poem of 1824, the muse is described as a "wayward enchantress" (svoenravnaia volshebnitsa), who roams a world of pagan spirits with total freedom. She is the poet's "innocent, simple / And somehow sweet" (nevinnuiu, prostuiu / No chem-to miluiu) friend (podruga),[14] and her status as *neporochnaia* (pure, chaste)[15] remains inviolate, beyond contamination.

One is entitled to ask, therefore, what sort of connection can exist between a muse as pure as this and the concept of the demon. Can the muse's innocence in any way be tainted by demonic influence? The answer to this question is complicated by the fact that, as we shall see, Pushkin associated his muse with not one, but two quite different demons, whose subsequent confusion was the source of a fruitful and enduring tradition of art as demonic in Russian literature.

Pushkin's first type of demon makes his initial appearance in "The Demon" (Demon, 1823).[16] This early and influential poem is well known as a personal statement of the way in which the demon, described as a "wicked genius" (zlobnyi genii), insinuates himself into the soul and poisons all pure aspirations and feelings. What is particularly interesting for our purpose, however, is to determine whether this demon also corrupts artistic inspiration. A close reading indicates that the demon strikes precisely at the time when sensory impressions of existence and elevated emotions culminate in a heightened receptivity to art:[17]

Когда возвышенные чувства,
Свобода, слава и любовь
И вдохновенные искусства
Так сильно волновали кровь, –
Часы надежд и наслаждений
Тоской внезапной осеня,
Тогда какой-то злобный гений
Стал тайно навещать меня.

[When elevated feelings,
Freedom, glory, and love,
And inspired arts,
So strongly stirred my blood, –
Hours of hopes and delights
Overshadowing with sudden anguish,
Then did a certain wicked genius
Begin to visit me in secret.]

Even before he appears or is named, the demon's shadow has already fallen. By placing the gerund clause before the key syntactical turning-point of *togda* (then), Pushkin underlines the insidious nature of the demon, who steals up on the soul and spreads his pervasive poison. In his apologue "The New Demon" (Novyi demon, 1824), V.F. Odoevsky rightly commented that Pushkin's personification of "those incomprehensible feelings which chill our soul in the midst of the most ardent delights" revealed a remarkably deep grasp of the most secret recesses of the human heart.[18]

The key lines

Он звал прекрасное мечтою;
Он вдохновенье презирал;

[He called the beautiful a dream;
He held inspiration in contempt;]

reveal the indissoluble link for Pushkin between faith in pure ideals and artistic inspiration – when the first is corrupted, the second is also tainted. The closing couplet

И ничего во всей природе
Благословить он не хотел.

[And nothing in all nature
Did he desire to bless.]

leads one to conclude that the effect of this demon on the pure source of inspiration is either to destroy it entirely (blessing being the original power of the word and source of poetry), or to corrupt it through his main weapon, his "poisoned speech" (iazvitel'nye rechi), in itself a demonic art form, later developed by Lermontov and Blok, as we shall see below.

In 1825 Pushkin wrote a brief commentary on his poem to counter an incorrect interpretation, which was in circulation, and to reassert its essentially "moral" purpose.[19] The passage, like the poem, highlights the intrinsic connection between pure faith in an ideal and poetic inspiration. The heart is at first tender and "open to the beautiful" (dostupno dlia prekrasnogo),[20] but the contradictions of life gradually give rise to painful doubts. The demon is the personification of this "spirit of negation or doubt" (dukh otritsaniia ili somneniia), regarded by Goethe as the eternal enemy of mankind. In a variant, Pushkin also uses the term *razlad* (disintegration) to denote the resulting moral collapse. Eventually the feeling of doubt passes, but only after it has "destroyed forever the best hopes and *poetic predisposition* of the soul" (unichtozhiv navsegda luchshie nadezhdy i *poeticheskie predrassudki* dushi; emphasis mine). The demon therefore saps and corrupts both faith in the ideal and the pure sources of poetic inspiration – the result

is not so much "demonic art" as the destruction of art, which cannot survive when faith in the ideal which nurtures it has been corrupted.

The word "forever" in this fragment has a terrible ring of finality. However, "The Demon" was not Pushkin's last word on this score, nor did it in fact fundamentally alter his original view of the muse's intrinsic purity. Zhukovsky, with whom, as we saw above, Pushkin associated his faith in the close alliance of purity and poetic inspiration,[21] was quick to recognize this. In a letter of 1 June 1824, written on the eve of Pushkin's name-day (den' angela), he thanks him for "The Demon" and continues, as if anxious to ward off any malevolent influence, by reminding Pushkin of the divine nature of his poetic genius: "I embrace you for your 'Demon.' To hell with the devil! This is your motto for now. You were made to join the gods – go forward. The soul does have wings! It will not fear the heights, its true element is there! Give those wings freedom, and the heavens are yours. This is what I believe. When I begin to think what sort of a future you can concoct for yourself, my heart glows with hope for you. Farewell, little devil, be an angel."[22]

Zhukovsky was right: Pushkin's muse was not inherently demonic; the demon represented a moral threat to the individual, not an essential aspect of the creative process. This is an important distinction because, as we shall see later, in the modernist period art was often viewed as intrinsically and unavoidably demonic, and the figures of the muse and demon merged into a new androgynous being of ambivalent morality. Pushkin's treatment of the problem is different. His first type of demon is a force threatening the moral integrity of the individual, and therefore only indirectly, through this channel, able to affect the inspiration which informs art.

Despite this distinction, Pushkin's "The Demon" came to be regarded as the source text for the view of art as inherently demonic. This creative "misreading" of Pushkin began very early: with Lermontov's poem of response of 1829, as we shall see in the next section of this essay, and also with Gogol's short story "The Portrait" (Portret, 1835, second version 1842), one of the first prose works in the Russian tradition to develop the idea of art as tainted by the demonic. Significantly, as noted by Julian Graffy in his discussion of this story in this volume, Gogol describes Chartkov, the Petersburg demonic artist, as a personification of Pushkin's demon, thereby effecting the fusion of artist and demon (Gogol's enthusiasm for Pushkin's "The Demon" apparently even extended to joking that he had written the poem himself).[23]

Although Pushkin would not have equated his demon with artistic inspiration or the figure of the artist, he may nevertheless have unwittingly contributed to the formation of the tradition of the

"demonic muse" by introducing a second type of demon, who subsequently became confused with features of the first. This second demon makes a brief appearance together with the muse in "The Conversation of a Bookseller with a Poet" (Razgovor knigoprodavtsa s poetom, 1824),[24] written just one year after "The Demon." In this dialogue in verse a poet recalls the time when, carefree and full of hope, he would invite the muse to a "feast of the imagination" (pir voobrazhen'ia). At such times, a certain demon would take full possession of his creative fantasy:

Какой-то демон обладал
Моими играми, досугом;
За мной повсюду он летал,
Мне звуки дивные шептал,
И тяжким, пламенным недугом
Была полна моя глава;

[A certain demon possessed
My games, my leisure-time;
After me everywhere he flew,
Whispered wonderful sounds to me,
And with a heavy, fiery sickness
My head was full;]

This second type of demon is more akin to the amoral Greek concept of *daimon* than to Pushkin's earlier demon of corruption, loosely based on Christian tradition; he personifies the poet's guiding spirit and is linked with what Plato extolled as the "possession and madness" from the Muses which arouse a "tender, virgin soul … to a Bacchic frenzy of expression" without which true poetry cannot exist.[25] Such a demon is the natural ally and companion of the muse, aiding her in the production of her "sweet gifts" (muzy sladostnykh darov), mentioned by the poet later on in his speech; the "fiery sickness" is a positive indication of inspiration, not a threatening danger. In this respect the second type of demon has little but his name in common with the first type described in "The Demon."

"The Conversation of a Bookseller with a Poet" was first published as a preface to the opening chapter of *Evgenii Onegin* in February 1825. This link is significant for our subject because the next stage in Pushkin's view of the relations between his muse and the demon can be found in the veiled encounter which he engineers between them in the last chapter of *Evgenii Onegin*. However, on this occasion, it is not the benign demon of poetic inspiration who appears, but the old, negative demon of doubt, whose memory is evoked by the return of Evgenii.

The eighth chapter of *Evgenii Onegin*, composed in 1829–30, begins with an extended description of the poet's muse, through

which Pushkin offers a profound interpretation of his own creative development. Significantly, the opening of the first stanza is directly modelled on the beginning of "The Demon," but instead of the demon, the muse appears.[26] This deliberate echo serves two purposes: it indirectly prepares the reader for the later appearance of the demon, and it reinstates the supremacy of the muse, who, from here until stanza 7, is described at length in the various guises which she has assumed throughout Puskhin's peregrinations and changes of poetic style and subject. After detailing her movements from revelries in Petersburg to the Caucasus and Crimea, on to the wilds of Moldavia, and back to the garden of Mikhailovskoe, Pushkin brings her to the scene of the ball, where Evgenii, newly returned from his travels abroad, is about to meet Tat'iana once more, and this time to be spurned by her. The muse disappears at the first appearance of Evgenii (four lines into stanza 7) and the narrator then moves on to a series of musings about Evgenii and the reader's opinion of him, culminating in stanza 12, which enumerates various views of human lives and pointedly juxtaposes a reference to the demon with the name of Onegin:

> Несносно (согласитесь в том)
> Между людей благоразумных
> Прослыть притворным чудаком,
> Или печальным сумасбродом,
> Иль сатаническим уродом,
> Иль даже Демоном моим.
> Онегин (вновь займуся им),
> (*Evgenii Onegin*, 8:12.2–8)

> [It is unbearable (you will agree with that)
> Among sensible people
> To pass for a sham eccentric
> Or a sad crackbrain,
> Or a Satanic monster,
> Or even for my Demon.
> Onegin (let me take him up again)][27]

The immediate switch back to Evgenii, coupled with the fact that in the previous chapter Tat'iana herself had thought of Evgenii in similar terms as an eccentric or arrogant devil (7:24.6–8), makes it possible to read into this scene a meeting not just between the muse and Evgenii, but between the muse and the erstwhile source of her threatened corruption, the demon, now exposed as a hollow mask. Is Pushkin not suggesting by this final confrontation between his muse and the demon that the former has triumphed over the latter? She moves on and survives, while the Evgenii-demon figure is bid a firm "farewell," along with the other characters, as signalled in the epigraph from Byron which heads this last chapter – not unlike the

way in which Akhmatova's muse revisits the scene of turn-of-the-century symbolist demonism in *Poem Without a Hero* (*Poema bez geroia*) in order to mark a final break with it.[28]

The lyric fragment, "At the beginning of my life I remember a school ..." (V nachale zhizni shkolu pomniu ia ..., October 1830), which we discussed in the concluding section of the previous essay, forms an interesting sequel to the vision of the pure muse triumphing over the demon with which *Evgenii Onegin* concludes. It probes deeper into the underlying issue from a philosophical and historical perspective and explores an alternative scenario: if the demon had gained the upper hand, the connection between art and faith in the ideal would be severed, and art itself would become a form of demonic idol worship.[29]

In a lecture of January 1836 Pushkin returned once more to the subject of the relationship between art and the ideal. He was responding to the views of Mikhail Lobanov (1787–1846), a dramatist and translator, who decried the immoral content of recent Russian literature, ascribing it to the pernicious influence of foreign writers, particularly of the French.[30] As well as defending French literature from this charge, Pushkin went further and defended the right of literature to deal with any subject, however improper, without overt moralizing. However, he drew the line at a significant point. In his view, as a reaction to their previous, narrowly moral and utilitarian approach to literature, the French had espoused an opposite but equally misguided view: that the sole aim of literature was henceforth to be the pursuit of an indeterminate "ideal," no longer bound by moral strictures. In such a case, Pushkin comments, even "moral depravity can be the aim of poetry, that is to say an ideal." Pushkin regards this new brand of writing as a transient literary fashion which will not last, referring to it as a "literature of despair" (slovesnost' otchaiania) or "Satanic literature" (slovesnost' satanicheskaia) – phrases which he attributes to Goethe and Southey respectively.[31] This is essentially, in a different form, a projection of his own personal experience of "overcoming" the demon and conveys a similar message to that suggested by the ending of *Evgenii Onegin*, where the fashionable demon of yesterday is left behind, unmasked and exposed as an empty parody, and the muse moves on, unscathed.

It is perhaps an irony of literary history that Pushkin, who entertained such a pure vision of the muse, and whose work reflects a profound understanding of the dangerous process of inner corruption by which art can degenerate into a form of idol worship, should have laid the foundation for the tradition of art as demonic in Russian literature. This came about through the later merging of his two

types of demons: the benign demon, an ally of the muse, closely associated with the sacred madness of poetic inspiration, and the destructive demon, a spirit of doubt and negation, who undermines the pure faith which sustains art. Although these two demons were distinct for Pushkin, we shall see below in our discussion of Lermontov and Blok that they subsequently fused into a single composite figure, with the result that the muse's demon of artistic inspiration ended up being seen as a potent force for spiritual and moral perdition. This superimposition of one type of demon on another echoed and transferred into the Russian literary tradition the Christian tendency to "demonize" all pagan gods, including the morally neutral *daimon* of classical tradition. It is also consonant with the innate Russian tendency, highlighted in the introduction to this volume, to endow aesthetic demons with moral value.

Lermontov: The Muse's Seduction by the Demon

Although Pushkin provided the initial impetus, it was Lermontov's development of the image of the Demon which served as the main springboard for later modernist views of art as demonic. This was no doubt in the first instance because, as Merezhkovsky commented, Lermontov was the first figure in Russian literature to raise "the religious problem of evil."[32] Indeed, according to Vladimir Solov'ev, whereas Pushkin drew inspiration from a mere "playful baby devil" (igrivyi besenok) or "joker gnome" (shutnik gnom), Lermontov was possessed by a "true demon of impurity" (nastoiashchii demon nechistoty).[33] His magnificent Demon provided a commanding figure of evil to fill the void left by the relative lack of emphasis "on a towering figure of Satan in splendour"[34] in Russian Orthodox tradition. A second reason for Lermontov's impact was his particular focus on the artist's subjective personality with all its inherent contradictions. Pasternak saw this emphasis on the individual personality as the essence of Lermontov's contribution to Russian literature: for him, Lermontov was the very "personification of creative adventure and discovery."[35] It was this combination of an interest in the metaphysical problem of evil, together with a focus on the contradictions of the individual personality, which led Lermontov to explore the demonic potential inherent in the creative process.

Lermontov's vision of the human condition was fundamentally divided. In his verse man is presented as a split, dual creature; his soul binds him irrevocably to the world of the spiritual, while through his bodily existence he remains rooted in the domain of the material. As the spiritual realm is his true home, in this earthly world

he can never be more than a prisoner or exile. Although such a world-view is positive in so far as it rests on an underlying belief in the existence of a Supreme Being and higher spiritual world, there is a negative, tragic aspect to its portrayal of the condition of man, who remains excluded from this world; his only link with it is through past memory, present intuition, or future hope. There are two possible responses to the quandary of this split existence. The first is the path of ascent or reversal, trying to regain the lost paradise, the spiritual homeland. Nature, love, faith, and prayer all provide different avenues. However, the upward striving contains the germ of its own dissolution. When frustrated, its own inner momentum can lead to a reverse swing of the pendulum, to a dynamic embracing of evil. This is the second common response: the path of descent.

These factors directly inform Lermontov's view of art and its potentially demonic qualities. On a simple thematic level, art will of course reflect all the conflicts of the condition outlined above, including the demonic descent into sin or negative spiritual state which results. On a more complex level, however, can it be said to be intrinsically demonic? In a sense, it cannot, as the creative impulse originates in the divine.[36] However, as in Lermontov's general view of the human condition, this ideal source and level is in fact impossible to achieve. Art may have its roots in the upper realms, but it is forced to take form in a material way which is imperfect due to two factors: the inadequacy of language as a means of expression of spiritual insight, and the limitations of the reader's understanding.

A vivid illustration of this is provided by Lermontov's poem "The Angel" (Angel, 1831),[37] which serves as a paradigm of the parallel relationship between the divine Creator and the holy Word on the one hand, and the human soul and human art on the other hand. An angel singing a "holy song" (pesnia sviataia) about God carries a newborn soul to earth; this soul is forever tormented by a "wondrous thirst" (zhelaniem chudnym) and as a result can find no satisfaction in the songs of this world:

> И звуков небес заменить не могли
> Ей скучные песни земли.
>
> [And the sounds of the heavens could not be replaced
> For it by the boring songs of the earth.]

The importance which Lermontov continued to attach to this poem many years later is reflected in the fact that it was the only one of his early works which he published under his name during his lifetime. It is clear that although Lermontov adopted the biblical ideal of divinely inspired art as his model, he regarded it as one which could never be realized on earth. The artist is therefore a fallen angel,

whose deepest intuitions and aspirations are formed in a paradise from which he is irretrievably exiled: poetry cannot fulfil the function of prayer. Among modern poets this attitude finds its fullest development in the work of Blok, who used Lermontov's "The Angel" as a condensed expression of his poetic credo.[38] In his edition of Lermontov, opposite the phrase "wondrous thirst," Blok copied out Lermontov's variant "vain thirst" (zhelan'em naprasnym), emphasizing the impossibility of fulfilment.[39]

There is a further, more sinister dimension, to this issue – one which leads directly on to the symbolists and is already foreshadowed in Lermontov. Since the real intuition cannot be expressed or understood, and since the poet wants to write (like Pushkin, Lermontov refers to himself as gripped by the "démon de la poésie"),[40] he comes to substitute dreams for deeper intuitions, or the expressible for the inexpressible. In "A Russian Melody" (Russkaia melodiia, 1829)[41] the poet's created world of images is exposed as a false delusion:

В уме своем я создал мир иной
И образов иных существованье;

. . . . . .

И рушилось неверное созданье!..

[In my mind I created another world
And of other images an existence;

. . . . . .

And the untrue creation collapsed!..]

A later poem, "Do Not Trust Yourself" (Ne ver' sebe, 1839)[42] advises the young dreamer not to trust his dreams or inspiration:

Не верь, не верь себе, мечтатель молодой,
Как язвы, бойся вдохновенья...
Оно – тяжелый бред души твоей больной[43]
Иль пленной мысли раздраженье.
В нем признака небес напрасно не ищи:

[Do not trust, do not trust yourself, young dreamer,
Like an ulcer, fear inspiration ...
It is the heavy delirium of your ill soul
Or the irritation of a captive thought.
Do not search vainly in it for a sign of the heavens:]

The ending, in which the suffering poet appears to the crowd as a rouged actor waving a cardboard sword, strikingly anticipates Blok's "Puppet Booth" (Balaganchik, 1905) and reveals the extent to which the sources of symbolist demonism are already latent in Lermontov.

This was the general context in which Lermontov's elaboration of the theme of the demon took place. He was only fifteen years old when he composed "My Demon" (Moi demon, 1829)[44] in response to Pushkin's "The Demon" of six years earlier. His poem shows what happens when the "imperfect," limited vision (as that of the fallen angel or demon) is built up into a universal principle or ideal (precisely the process against which Pushkin warned). Here we have the final stage of the masking of the substitution which has taken place. Pushkin's demon was quite chatty and personable by comparison: he spoke, if only in "poisoned speech," and although he takes over completely half way through the poem (the point at which references to the lyrical "I" cease), he is nevertheless described in terms of his interaction with a human protagonist. In Lermontov's poem, this human dimension has entirely disappeared. The Demon has become an abstract deity on his throne, an impersonal cosmic force. Inspiration is no longer simply despised, it withers at source (hence the arid landscape); pure art cannot survive in this climate, as we see from the striking final lines, more explicit than in Pushkin:

И муза кротких вдохновений
Страшится неземных очей.

[And the muse of gentle inspirations
Fears his unearthly eyes.]

The muse, who was only an implied presence in Pushkin's "The Demon," is now openly juxtaposed with the Demon. This marks the beginning of the process by which Pushkin's association of the muse with the benign demon of inspiration was eventually transformed into the symbolists' association of the muse with the demon of corruption or destruction. Significantly, the two key lines from Lermontov's poem cited above were sidelined by Blok in his edition of the poet's works;[45] they clearly influenced his vision of the muse as demonic and formed a bridge linking Pushkin through Lermontov to the symbolists.

The theme of the demon was one which continued to preoccupy Lermontov for many years. In a second, expanded "My Demon" (Moi demon, 1830 or 1831)[46] he developed it in a more personal vein, stating in the last verse that the demon would never release the poet: he will deprive him of happiness by first showing him an "image of perfection" (obraz sovershenstva) and then removing it forever. Blok also marked the whole of this verse;[47] it encapsulates the notion, central to the symbolist experience, that the demonic in art as well as in life has its deepest roots in the soul's aspiration to a perfect, transcendent ideal, frustrated at its source.

The culmination of the theme – and the source of its transformation into a potent and lasting myth – came in *The Demon* (*Demon*,

completed in 1839, published in fragments in 1842, and in full in 1856).[48] For over ten years Lermontov worked on eight successive versions of this narrative poem, essentially a dramatic enactment of the process by which innocence and purity are corrupted. Significantly for our purposes, this process can be extended to the field of art by regarding the Demon's seduction of Tamara as an image of the artist's corruption of the "muse of gentle inspirations" alluded to at the end of the first "My Demon."[49] Because of the centrality of Lermontov's narrative poem to the modernist view of art as demonic, it is worth investigating the basis for such a reading in some detail.

The starting-point lies in the common ground which exists between the predicament of the hero of *The Demon* – a fallen angel, a "fugitive from Eden" (beglets Edema) or exile from Paradise (izgnannik raia),[50] who seeks to recover his lost unity with the divine – and the task of the modern artist, as outlined by Lermontov in poems such as "The Angel" and subsequently elaborated by Vladimir Solov'ev and his disciples. Although the symbolists differed in their individual responses to this view of the artist's predicament, they all shared a common view of its origin which defined their approach to *The Demon*. We saw above that Lermontov's poetry offers three main avenues for the recovery of this ideal union: nature, love, faith or prayer. The Demon tries all three, with particular emphasis on the path of love. When he first glimpses Tamara he recognizes that she alone can offer him the possibility of spiritual regeneration; later, during the climactic scene of seduction, he bases his main argument to her on this plea.[51] Union with Tamara would restore him to oneness with the sacred essence of the universe. For the symbolists this quest for the realization of an ideal through love later became an image of the artist's quest for the embodiment of spiritual intuitions in art.

Although such a reading of *The Demon* undoubtedly reflects modernist preoccupations with the status of art, there is some support for it in Lermontov's text. One of the most striking and explicit passages in this respect comes in the Demon's second main monologue to Tamara, in which he draws a link between his ideal image of his beloved and the Creator's vision of the spirit of the created world before its embodiment in matter:

Люблю тебя нездешней страстью,
Как полюбить не можешь ты:
Всем упоением, всей властью
Бессмертной мысли и мечты.
В душе моей, с начала мира,
Твой образ был напечатлён,
Передо мной носился он
В пустынях вечного эфира.
(*The Demon*, 2:10.645–52)[52]

[I love you with an unearthly passion,
In a way you cannot love:
With all the abandon, with all the power
Of immortal thought and dream.
In my soul, since the beginning of the world,
Your image was imprinted,
Before me it hovered
In the expanses of the eternal ether.]

Following the well-established parallel between the Creator of the universe and the artist-creator, the Demon's ideal image of his beloved and craving for its realization through love can be read as an allegory of the artist's intuition of his created work and desire to embody it through creation. The act of erotic seduction therefore becomes a mirror image of the act of artistic creation. Both derive from an initial yearning for purity and wholeness, but suffer from the concomitant danger of embracing a false, illusory form of embodiment, which could eventually lead to the corruption or destruction of the original impulse.

This view of the Demon as a figure of the artist is reinforced in the text by frequent references to the power and enchantment of his verbal artistry. His evil work in the world is referred to as his "art" (iskusstvo, 1:2.28) and his main tools are those of the poet: his "speech" (rech'), his "words" (slova), and the "sound" (zvuk) of his "magic voice" (volshebnyi golos).[53] In the course of the poem he delivers several long monologues and his voice accordingly comes to assume an increasingly prominent position. Within the conventions of a literary text, this gradual encroachment on the function of the omniscient narrator suggests the artist usurping the role of the supreme Creator. The Demon even takes over some of the narrator's language and words, thereby transposing assumed narrative authority into the realm of subjective, solipsistic rhetoric.[54] His vision of the world replaces the broad landscapes which are sketched in at the beginning of the poem and only return in muted form at its very end; indeed, his proud indifference to nature as "the creation of his God" (tvoren'e Boga svoego, 1:3.57) is based on the "cold envy" (zavisti kholodnoi, 1:4.83) of the impotent exile, who, like the figure of the demonic artist, desires to rival God by supplanting his Creation. His growing dominance is underlined by the extraordinarily powerful musical rhythms and cadences which mark his main monologues, rich in sound effects and replete with repetitions of key words, constructions, and verbal forms.[55] This tendency is also highlighted through a change of metre; during his opening speech the Demon introduces a section in trochees (1:15.329–44), which temporarily overrides the standard iambic metre used in the rest of the poem.

We shall see below how several of these features were later developed by Blok in his poems of 1910 and 1916 on the Demon. In both texts the process of demonic takeover is completed, the narrator's voice can no longer be heard and only the Demon speaks. Furthermore, in Blok's second poem, the path of artistic creation is explicitly portrayed in terms of an ultimately destructive act of demonic seduction.

The role of the Demon's verbal art is also closely linked to a problem of crucial importance in Lermontov's work: the conflict between prayer and poetry. Both use the same medium and may even stem from the same source, but they are essentially different and vie with each other for supremacy. In "The Angel," as we saw, Lermontov suggested that poetry was a form of surrogate prayer, which could never succeed in fulfilling the function of its displaced source. *The Demon* illustrates the destructive dynamics of attempting to effect such a substitution. Throughout the poem words and speech, the language of poetry, are pitted against prayer, the language of faith. A brief prefiguration of the destructive consequences of preferring dream to prayer is offered by the fate of Tamara's bridegroom, whose death is directly linked to the fact that he despised the traditional roadside prayer (which would have ensured his salvation) and gave himself up instead to a private, erotic reverie, instigated by the Demon: the word "prayer" (molitva) is repeated twice and contrasted with the "insidious dream" (kovarnaia mechta) and thoughts inspired by the Demon (1:11.220–31). (We shall see below how Blok later took up these lines as a key image in "The Demon" of 1910.) The Demon usurps the language of prayer and litany, but uses it for unholy purposes. His speech frequently obstructs prayer or attempts to rechannel it. In the second part of the poem, after Tamara has retired to the convent, the Demon's words come to her precisely at the moment of prayer;[56] later, when he seduces her with the "miraculous tenderness of his *speech*" (chudnoi nezhnost'iu *rechei*, 2:6.496; emphasis mine), this not only stops her from praying, but diverts the impulse to Demon worship.[57] Tamara recognizes this danger; she realizes that the Demon's words are a poison, which prevents her from praying,[58] and she fears the temptation of his cunning speech, just as Eve was wary of the serpent's subtle tongue.[59] Finally, a close look at the wording of the lines cited below makes it clear that the act of seduction (symbolized by the burning kiss) is essentially an act of verbal artistry, which displaces prayer by providing a false response to the spiritual impulses of the soul:

И он слегка
Коснулся жаркими устами
Ее трепещущим губам;
Соблазна полными *речами*
Он отвечал ее *мольбам*.
(*The Demon*, 2:11.872–76; emphasis mine)

[And he slightly
Touched with his hot mouth
Her trembling lips;
With *speeches* full of seduction
He answered her *entreaties*.]

Lermontov's Demon is not only carrying out the demon's traditional function (as defined from a Christian perspective) by obstructing the prayers of the faithful,[60] he is also adding a new literary twist by using art or poetic rhetoric to achieve his ends. In this sense he is the true prototype of the modern "literary" demon. It would therefore seem fair to conclude that, although *The Demon* does not deal in explicit terms with the issue of demonic art, there is ample support both in the plot and in the mode of its narration to support a further level of reading in terms of the artist's predicament with specific reference to the problematic relationship between poetry and prayer or, more broadly, between art and religious faith. Ultimately, the Demon's verbal artistry cannot lead to union with the divine, it can only entice and destroy, for art does not represent a path to salvation.

A similarly negative conclusion was reached by Lermontov in an intimate, confessional lyric on the same subject, written in the same year as he began work on *The Demon*. "A Prayer" (Molitva, 1829)[61] is one of Lermontov's most open and direct poems on the conflict between the spiritual path of salvation (service to God) and the artistic drive (sinful and demonic). It opens with a prayer to God:

Не обвиняй меня, Всесильный,
И не карай меня, молю,
За то, что мрак земли могильный
С ее страстями я люблю;
За то, что редко в душу входит
Живых речей Твоих струя;
За то, что в заблужденье бродит
Мой ум далёко от Тебя;
За то, что лава вдохновенья
Клокочет на груди моей;
За то, что дикие волненья
Мрачат стекло моих очей;
За то, что мир земной мне тесен,
К Тебе ж проникнуть я боюсь,
И часто звуком грешных песен
Я, Боже, не Тебе молюсь.

[Do not accuse me, Almighty,
And do not punish me, I beg,
For the fact that the sepulchral gloom of the earth

I love with its passions;
For the fact that the stream of Your living words
Rarely enters my soul;
For the fact that in confusion
My mind wanders far from You;
For the fact that the lava of inspiration
Bubbles on my chest;
For the fact that wild emotions
Darken the glass of my eyes;
For the fact that the earthly world is too narrow for me,
I am afraid to penetrate into You,
And often with the sound of sinful songs
I, Lord, pray not unto You.]

Here we have not only a restatement of the same hierarchical distinction between the two levels of the divine word and human art as in "The Angel," but also a powerful expression of the link between song or poetry and sinful earthly passions; the impulse to human art blocks out the receptivity to the divine word and must be quelled in order to achieve spiritual growth. The poet therefore asks the Creator to extinguish "this miraculous flame" (sei plamen' chudnyi), the lava of his poetic inspiration, and to turn him into stone, concluding with the prayer:

От страшной жажды песнопенья
Пускай, Творец, освобожусь,
Тогда на тесный путь спасенья
К Тебе я снова обращусь.

[From the terrible thirst of poesy
Let me, Creator, free myself
Then on the narrow path of salvation
To You I will turn once more.]

This is in some sense a modern literary version of the problem which faced the eleventh century monk Nikita of Novgorod, whose spiritual salvation depended on a retreat from the world of culture.[62] It is also precisely the same conflict as we find in Blok, who, not surprisingly, marked key sections of this poem in his edition of Lermontov.[63] By endowing Pushkin's demon of negation with a powerful new dimension of verbal artistry and enchantment, Lermontov released the demon's creative potential and laid the foundation for the association between the demons of inspiration and corruption – an association later developed by Blok, in whose verse the muse and the Demon merge into a potent force for spiritual perdition. When Pasternak put into the mouth of Lermontov's Demon the words "Sleep, my friend, – I will return as an avalanche" (Spi, podruga, – lavinoi vernusia), he may well have had Blok's poetry in mind.[64]

Blok: The Muse's Metamorphosis into Demon

Of all the symbolists, Blok was perhaps the most acutely aware of the threat which the artistic vocation could present to life and the pursuit of religious goals. This temperamental predisposition underlay his vision of art as demonic and was reinforced by the strong sense of affinity which he felt with Lermontov, who occupies a central position in his work.[65] His deep inner feeling for Lermontov's verse is well captured in a comment which he jotted down opposite a poem in his edition of the poet's works: "It failed to be said, he wanted to say more, I know about what."[66] This intuitive understanding led Blok to clarify and develop themes and tensions which remained latent in Lermontov's verse. In both his essays and his poems he provided a new interpretation of Lermontov's Demon, refashioned as an image of the modern artist.

Blok's reading of Lermontov was superimposed on his response to the biblical and classical traditions and also drew on the legacy of Vladimir Solov'ev, reinterpreted in a novel manner. All these factors played a crucial role in shaping his understanding of art and its demonic qualities. His essay of 1910 in memory of the recently deceased artist Mikhail Vrubel provides a good starting-point for examining the multi-layered palimpsest produced by these different traditions.[67] It presents a vision of art and its goals directly modelled on the biblical ideals of prophecy and revelation. Genius is defined as the quality of a person, who can hear and form a coherent phrase from the snatched fragments brought by a "muffled wind from other worlds" (5:422–23).[68] Three examples follow: Moses on Sinai, the Virgin Mary at the crucifixion, and the artist in his studio. All three hear the same phrase: "Search for the Promised Land" (5:423). The order in which they are named is significant. The first two figures belong to the Judaeo-Christian tradition and represent the sphere of revealed religion. The artist is presented as their natural successor; in the modern era, he is the chosen channel for the communication of divine messages, a latter-day substitute for the prophet or bearer of divine revelation. All three figures are united by a common endeavour, the search for a promised land. This goal transcends individual needs and requires considerable sacrifice; the artist must be prepared to "burn in the fire of his own inspiration" (5:423).

The framing of the artist's task in this way prepares the ground for the view of art as demonic. The transferring of religious aims to the sphere of literature, coupled with the manifest inadequacy of the artist to the role of the prophet, leads to a situation where the artist is inevitably regarded as a Demon-like "fallen angel and artist-enchanter" (padshii angel i khudozhnik-zaklinatel', 5:424), whose cre-

ations can be no more than a flawed substitute for divine revelation.[69] From the outset the modern artist is therefore in a quandary. Blok compares him to Lermontov's exiled angel: once he has heard the "sounds of the heavens" he can no longer find any satisfaction in the "boring songs of the earth."[70] Although driven by the same impulse (the recovery of the promised land, based on a message of divine revelation), he is denied the necessary tools to achieve this goal. Instead, he must conjure up visions of his own making, a process which involves a dangerous game with demonic forces: "the heart of the prophet awakens in the artist; alone in the universe, understood by no one, he invokes the very Demon in order to enchant the night with the brightness of his sad eyes" (5:423–24). As no other means apart from art are available, this is the path which must be embraced, despite its risks.[71] It follows that Lermontov and Vrubel are among the main models for the contemporary artist to emulate.

In an earlier essay, "Stagnant Times" (Bezvremen'e, 1906),[72] Blok had already made the point that the demonic tendency – for which he then chose the image of the whirlwind (smerch) – is the inevitable accompaniment of the characteristic Russian preoccupation with the mystery of transformation (prevrashchenie) and transfiguration (preobrazhenie).[73] This phenomenon of demonization occurs because of the problematic nature of artistic embodiment (voploshchenie). In searching for appropriate forms for the expression of his vision, the artist comes up against the inadequacy and profound ambivalence of any attempt at artistic realization. The created forms are no more than doubles and masks, demonic mirror images of a deeper intuited truth which eludes expression. There is a further danger. The artist may become so enchanted by the play of his fantasy that he loses sight of his original ideals. Eventually, he may even abandon his faith in their objective existence. If so, he will perish, a victim of his own creative imagination. (Elsewhere Blok interprets the deaths of both Lermontov and Vrubel in this light.)[74] We have already noted this fated progression from unattainable ideal to demonic mask in our discussion of Lermontov's poetry; in his essays Blok is merely clarifying and making more explicit some of the central underlying themes of Lermontov's poetry.

On this basis Blok continues to elaborate a genealogy of Russian demonic authors, variously referred to as demons (demony) or sorcerers (kolduny), and ranked according to the degree of their success or failure in achieving an adequate form of expression for their innermost visions. The greater the urge to transcendence, the greater the risk of demonic fall at the moment of artistic realization. Lermontov and Gogol are depicted as two demons, who failed to fulfil their dreams and perished in the attempt; they lead a third blind and mighty demon, Dostoevsky, whose vision was embodied prematurely, and who therefore sank back into nothingness. Gippius and Sologub carry the legacy of Lermontov and Gogol forward to the present generation. The key question is whether the artist's imperfect images, described as doubles (dvoiniki) and phantoms (prizraki), can ever break through to a higher level of true incarnation. Like a demon high on a mountain peak, Lermontov towers above this literary landscape, mirrored in his work as a double which longs to burst into flower. The poet-demon watches this "icy phantom" (5:77) in horror – will the longed for transformation ever come about?[75]

Blok's response to this question varied according to his mood and medium. As we shall see below, he tended to be more optimistic in his essays than in his verse. However, this was not always the case. An essay written in the following year, "On the Lyric Poet" (O lirike, 1907),[76] gives a generally sombre portrayal of the poet's predicament. Art is described as an intoxicating dark wine which destroys the appetite for pure "transparent water" (5:132). The first lyric poet is a "fallen Angel-Demon" (5:131), who inhabits a "cursed den" (5:131); he is imprisoned within the "enchanted, magic circle" (5:134) of his own solipsistic world of false images (the legend of this fallen angel has been captured by Lermontov in song and by Vrubel in colour). God-fearing Christians pass by, cross themselves, and keep a safe distance. Their attitude illustrates the first of three possible responses to art which Blok outlines. One may refuse to listen (the path of rejection); one may listen and believe (the path of wholehearted acceptance leading to inevitable death); or one may listen but not believe. Whereas the first two options are characterized by an all or nothing maximalism, the last one depends on achieving a difficult balance of involvement and distance – a tightrope which Blok tried to walk, while remaining acutely aware of the attractions of either extreme. In fact, in his essay he classifies the poet together with the one who listens and believes, regarding them both as partners at the same demonic feast: "And here for him is all the tenderness of our cursed lyric soul. And all the cursed victuals from our demonic table" (5:131).

A more positive perspective on the demonic character of art is offered by Blok in "On the Present State of Russian Symbolism" (O sovremennom sostoianii russkogo simvolizma, 1910).[77] According to the somewhat utopian dialectic argument advanced in this essay, the original ideal or paradise (the thesis) has been lost and has given way to the present state of demonic art (the antithesis); however, through this intermediary stage the lost ideal will eventually be recovered (the final stage of synthesis). The dangerous game with doubles and masks is therefore justified as a necessary and inevitable phase on the

way to apocalyptic redemption. The first two stages are encapsulated in the telling phrase: "We were 'prophets,' we desired to become 'poets'" (5:433); they will be followed by a return to the original sacred ideal of theurgic prophecy. Nowhere does Blok explain how this will come about; it is simply posited as an article of faith, following the eschatological pattern of the Book of Revelation.

The fact that this projected resolution became a particularly prominent theme in Blok's writing around the year 1910 was no accident. The anniversary of Vladimir Solov'ev's death ten years earlier coincided with the crisis of symbolism and the deaths of Vrubel and Komissarzhevskaia in 1910; this combination of factors evidently provided a renewed impetus for the reassertion of faith in the eventual triumph of the theurgic ideals of the movement. We will see later, however, that Blok's work as a whole remained firmly grounded in the middle stage of the demonic antithesis; the positive resolution was a superimposed frame, elaborated to a large extent under the influence of Viacheslav Ivanov, and much less marked in his verse than in his essays.

The great attraction of the dialectical scheme was that it provided a model for promoting and understanding the significance of the demonic in contemporary art, and also for interpreting the diachronic development of Russian literature since Pushkin (building on the genealogy of demonic authors set out in "Stagnant Times"). In both areas Blok's reading of the classical tradition exerted an important shaping influence – in particular, his understanding of the Apollo-Dionysus polarity, popularized by Nietzsche and reinterpreted for Russians at the turn of the century by Viacheslav Ivanov.[78] Many of Blok's remarks on the demonic occur in his essays of 1906, a peak period in his cult of the Dionysian, when he came strongly under the influence of Ivanov. Significantly, Blok identified Pushkin, the founder of modern Russian literature, with Apollo. By contrast, he linked Lermontov and Tiutchev with images of the night and *bezdna*, a dark abyss with Dionysian overtones.[79] The Dionysian paradigm was also based on a cyclical progression leading through darkness and death to spiritual rebirth. This lent further support to the view that the demonic was the inevitable prelude to the recovery of the sacred and provided a historical context for the central endeavour of Blok's generation: to carry through the legacy of Lermontov by completing the stage of the antithesis (which could be seen as culminating in the deaths of Vrubel and Komissarzhevskaia) and thereby to bring about a final return to the sacred origins of art.

So far, we have been tracing Blok's attitude to art as demonic through his essays. It is important to remember, however, that Blok was a reluctant theorist and committed his deepest intuitions to

poetry. Although the essays played a significant role in creating a climate of debate for the popularization of new ideas on aesthetics and in providing a context for the verse, they did not constitute the backbone of the demonic tradition which was built up and in the long term survived through the poems.

Ever since Blok abandoned the Beautiful Lady as a subject for his verse (though not as a tenet of faith), the way was opened for demonic themes to enter his work. In renouncing the attempt to create a new poetic language for the expression of his spiritual intuitions, he turned instead to describe that which could be described, using the "masks of speech" (rechi maski).[80] Many cycles of poems written after the *Verses about the Beautiful Lady* (*Stikhi o Prekrasnoi Dame*, 1901–1902, first published in 1905) deal explicitly with demonic images such as the devils of the marshland, the demons of the modern city, masks, doubles, or the snow and ice imagery of the Dionysian whirlwind of erotic passion. However, we are concerned here not with demonic themes as such, but with a more specific area: the expression in verse of Blok's growing awareness of the creative process itself as inherently demonic. We shall therefore consider in detail two particular poems which are crucial to this theme and have played a key role in its development within the Russian tradition. Both eventually came to form part of "The Terrible World" (Strashnyi mir), the opening cycle of Blok's third book of poems, and occupy significant positions within it. "To the Muse" (K Muze, 1912) is the first poem of the cycle and "The Demon" (Demon, 1916), together with one other poem, forms its conclusion.[81]

Before embarking on the discussion of these two poems, it is worth noting that there is in general a significant difference between Blok's treatment of the demonic in his essays and in his verse. The genre of the essay was linked to a culture of public debate involving disputations with formidable opponents such as Viacheslav Ivanov; this led Blok to advance dialectic arguments in prose, which presented a more dogmatic or positive vision of future synthesis than one would normally find in his verse. An interesting example of this difference can be seen in the contrast between the relative optimism of the essay discussed above, "On the Present State of Russian Symbolism" (1910), and his altogether much bleaker poem, "The Demon" (Demon, 1910), written just a few days later.[82]

Blok's essay was originally conceived as a rejoinder to a talk given by Ivanov.[83] His notebook record of this talk indicates that his initial response was fairly sceptical. After summarizing Ivanov's conclusion that the next stage of symbolism would be the great art of myth, he listed some of the questions which he put to him: "1) About the *terrible* (*uzhasnom*) in art – about its curse. 2) Consequently, about

whether that which is desired will be *art* (true theurgy, myth)."[84] Blok's acute awareness of the demonic character of art could not be lightly dispelled by Ivanov's assurance of an imminent new form of theurgic art. Even if one were to accept this promise, would the envisaged ideal in fact count as art? For Blok the distinction between the revealed truth of religion (sacred) and the subjective artistic vision (cursed) was absolute and could not easily be bridged.

These questions were clearly uppermost in Blok's mind. They found their way into his essay in a somewhat watered-down form (5:431), but retained a much stronger presence in his poetry. His essay concluded with a vision of two alternative paths facing the artist: either perdition (gibel') or the recovery of the lost thesis, represented by the golden sword (zolotoi mech). As a striking image of the first path, Blok quoted the lines from Lermontov's *The Demon* on the bridegroom's headlong ride to death, but inscribed them within the dialectic of a promised future synthesis.[85] By contrast, in his poem "The Demon" (19 April 1910)[86] he chose the same image of fated death, but lent it a quite different emphasis. Death has now become the focal point, the key image with which the poem concludes. In the midst of an erotic embrace, the thoughts of the Demon-like narrator are invaded by a vision of the bridegroom's death. Through recollection and dream, an incident from the narrative of Lermontov's poem is transformed into an inexorable law of the human condition; Blok's cryptic final lines suggest that all earthly aspirations are fated to end in death:

> Пусть скачет жених – не доскачет!
> Чеченская пуля верна.
>
> [Let the bridegroom gallop – he will not arrive!
> The Chechen bullet is true.]

As this example indicates, the sense of the demonic and its association with death is generally rendered more intensely in Blok's poetry than in his essays. Although Blok's poem of 1910 on the Demon does not directly raise the question of art (unlike the essay of the same year), it does suggest within a broad context that the fulfilment of an ideal based on individual dreams is doomed. If one recalls the fate of Lermontov's bridegroom, whose dreams, instigated by the Demon, took the place of prayer, one can begin to see the link between the figure of the individual dreamer and the artist.[87]

The application of this theme to the creative process was taken up and developed in "To the Muse," written two years later.[88] The lingering doubts which Blok had voiced at Ivanov's talk are now articulated much more forcefully, not simply as queries or reservations, but as part of a programmatic statement, which comes down firmly on the side of art as either immoral or at best amoral, as not only distinct from religion but as explicitly anti-religious. The muse is portrayed as a Siren-like figure, an intoxicating, Dionysian seductress, who, like the Demon in Blok's poems of 1910 and 1916, leads only one way – to death or perdition.[89] She represents the "curse of sacred precepts" (prokliat'e zavetov sviashchennykh) and evokes the *Neznakomka* (Stranger) of 1906 through the purple-grey radiance which lights up around her when she mocks faith. In fact, when describing the figure of the *Neznakomka* in 1910, Blok confessed that he would have created a Demon if he had had the technical means of Vrubel'[90] (there is an interesting precedent for this association in Lermontov, who used the term *Neznakomets* [Stranger] to refer to the Demon in early drafts of his work).[91] Here, in his poem on the muse, Blok is creating another female incarnation of the Demon, this time directly related to artistic creation. This blurring of boundaries marks a significant departure from the distinction preserved by Pushkin[92] and still maintained, although less rigidly, by Lermontov. There is, however, a clear visual antecedent for Blok's ambivalent image in Vrubel's compelling oil-painting *The Muse* (*Muza*, 1896; Illustration 13), which depicts the muse with the mesmerizing features of the Demon.[93] As in the case of Lermontov's *The Demon*, Blok's poem is

13. Mikhail Vrubel, *The Muse*, 1896. Oil on canvas, 106 × 96 cm.

disorientating, in that the danger which it warns against is partially obscured by the seductive rhythms of its cadences.[94]

The fourth verse places art outside moral categories in a sphere of its own:

> Зла, добра ли? – Ты вся – не отсюда.
> Мудрено про тебя говорят:
> Для иных ты – и Муза, и чудо.
> Для меня ты – мученье и ад.[95]
>
> [Are you evil or good? – You are all from beyond.
> Enigmatically they speak of you:
> For some, you are both Muse and miracle.
> For me, you are torment and hell.]

For some, art may possess a miraculous transforming power (this was a fundamental tenet of the theurgic aesthetics initiated by Vladimir Solov'ev). The poet's personal experience, however, teaches him otherwise. Through an ingenious transmutation of sounds (*Muza* [Muse] and *chudo* [miracle] become *muchen'e* [torment] and *ad* [hell]), the anticipated transformation is reversed and the miracle-working Muse of theurgic aesthetics is moved back into the closed world of a personal inferno.

The central theme at issue here – the ambivalent relation of beauty and art to the moral and religious values of redemption and transfiguration – builds on the well-known discussion of this subject which occurs in *The Brothers Karamazov* (*Brat'ia Karamazovy*, 1879–80):[96]

> Beauty is a fearful (strashnaia) and terrifying (uzhasnaia) thing! Fearful because it is indefinable, and it cannot be defined because God sets us nothing but riddles. Here the shores meet, here all contradictions live side by side. ... Beauty! It makes me mad to think that a man of great heart and high intelligence should begin with the ideal of Madonna and end with the ideal of Sodom. What is more terrible is that a man with the ideal of Sodom already in his soul does not renounce the ideal of Madonna, and it sets his heart ablaze, and it is truly, truly ablaze, as in the days of his youth and innocence. ... What appears shameful to the mind, is sheer beauty to the heart. Is there beauty in Sodom? Believe me, for the great majority of people it *is* in Sodom and nowhere else – did you know that secret or not? The awful thing is that beauty is not only a terrible (strashnaia), but also a mysterious, thing. There God and the devil (d'iavol) are fighting for mastery, and the battlefield is the heart of man.[97]

The points of overlap with Blok's poem are numerous.[98] Both texts share a view of beauty as a fearful mystery which lies beyond rational definition, encompasses unfathomable contradictions, and confuses the boundaries between good and evil. Dostoevsky distinguishes between two aspects of beauty: its spiritual aspect, represented by the ideal of the Madonna, linked with God, and its purely aesthetic aspect, bound up with a deep inner attraction to evil, represented by the ideal of Sodom, and linked with the devil. Both the heart and the mind are sensitive to the spiritual aspect of beauty, but only the irrational impulses of the heart respond to its aesthetic appeal. The purer aspirations of the mind towards holiness or spiritual beauty can therefore be undermined insidiously by the heart's attraction to evil, by the substitution of one ideal for another.

On the surface, this has a great deal in common with Blok's view of the process by which art may come to substitute a false image for an originally pure intuition, leading to its corruption. And yet there is much more to Blok's poem than a simple affirmation of solidarity with Dostoevsky. It contains a strong underlying polemical thrust, directed against a reading of Dostoevsky advanced by Viacheslav Ivanov during the previous year. In 1911, Ivanov published an influential essay which presented Dostoevsky's muse in a Dionysian light: "Dostoevsky's muse, with her ecstatic and clairvoyant penetration into another *I*, resembles both the mindless (obezumevshuiu) Dionysiac Maenad, rushing headlong 'with loudly beating heart,' and the other countenance (lik) of the same Maenad – the daughter of Darkness, the bloodhound-bitch of the goddess of Night, the snake-haired Fury ..."[99]

Ivanov's characterization of Dostoevsky's muse as Dionysian has important implications, which were later incorporated by him into a more extended theory of demonology. According to his view of the process of artistic creation, the initial Dionysian descent (niskhozhdenie) leads to a second stage of Apollonian ascent (voskhozhdenie).[100] The dark, demonic Dionysian aspect of artistic activity is therefore only a prelude to a new stage of renewal. Blok, however, disputes this approach; although he accepts the view of the muse as Dionysian, he no longer agrees that this will automatically lead on to a higher stage. This is made particularly clear in the second verse:

> Будто ангелов ты низводила,
> Соблазняя своей красотой...
>
> [It is as if you brought down angels,
> Seducing by your beauty...]

By using the word *nizvodila* (brought down) Blok is subverting the sense of Ivanov's *niskhozhdenie* (descent). The descent in Blok's poem is not a prelude to ascent, it is merely a *bringing down* of the sacred to the level of art.

Blok's underlying polemic with Ivanov's Dionysian view of artistic creation was even more explicit in the first published version of "To the Muse." This originally concluded with an additional verse describing the destructive power of the muse over the soul:

И доныне еще, безраздельно
Овладевши душою на миг,
Он ее опьяняет бесцельно –
Твой неистовый, дивный твой лик.[101]

[And still hitherto, after totally
Possessing the soul for an instant,
It intoxicates it aimlessly –
Your frenzied, your marvellous countenance.]

The terms used to describe the muse's countenance and its effect on the poet's soul – "frenzied" (neistovyi) and "intoxicates" (op'ianiaet) – are usually associated with the worship of Dionysus. For Ivanov the state of Dionysian intoxication was part of a process which led to a higher goal; for Blok it has no goal (bestsel'no) and leads nowhere – this is a direct refutation of the more optimistic premise of his earlier essay of 1910, "On the Present State of Russian Symbolism," which had suggested that demonic or Dionysian intoxication (the stage of the antithesis) would somehow bring about a new synthesis.

"To the Muse" therefore represents a significant turning-point in the development of Blok's view of art as demonic. On the one hand, he has taken over from Ivanov the view that art is essentially Dionysian and has conflated this with his own Lermontov-inspired view of art as demonic. On the other hand, he no longer accepts Ivanov's attempt to square Dionysus with the theurgic aesthetics of Vladimir Solov'ev by regarding the Dionysian stage as a prelude to spiritual regeneration; this marks his arrival at a more sober recognition of the irreconciliable differences between the paths of art and religion.[102] In this respect the closest antecedent of his poem is perhaps Baudelaire's "Hymne à la Beauté," which conveys a similar mood of willing surrender to the intoxicating power of beauty, coupled with a full awareness of its moral ambivalence and curse.[103]

Blok's approach is clarified by a conversation about art and religion which he had with M.I. Tereshchenko at about the time when he started work on "To the Muse."[104] Blok objected to his friend's view that art could offer the same benefits as religion and recorded his reasons in his diary: "I began in reply to develop my *customary view: what* in art is *infinity*, unclear 'about what,' beyond everything, but empty, destructive (pustoe, gibel'noe), perhaps, *that same thing* in religion is the *end*, clear about what, plenitude, salvation" (7:162–63). In response to Tereshchenko's view that art could bring happiness, Blok's feelings were painfully divided: "I argued because I once knew something greater than art, i.e. not infinity, but the End, not worlds (miry), but the World (Mir); I did not argue, because I have lost That, probably for ever, *I have fallen, betrayed*, and am now, indeed, an 'artist,' I do not live by that which fills life, but by that which makes it black, terrible (strashnoi), which pushes it away" (7:163).[105]

These extracts are extremely relevant to both "To the Muse" and "The Demon" (1916). They reflect Blok's conscious identification with art as his chosen vocation, made in full awareness of its infinite but ultimately "empty, destructive" worlds, distinct from the sphere of religion and life, which was paradoxically perceived as finite by virtue of its relation to a time scale governed by the truth of revelation, past and future. This vision of art as empty and destructive is brought out very clearly in Blok's magnificent late poem, "The Demon," completed on 9 June 1916.[106] His second lyric on this subject provides a much fuller poetic reworking of those elements in Lermontov's narrative poem which, as we saw above, could contribute towards an interpretation of the Demon as artist. It achieves this by building on the interpretation of Lermontov advanced by Blok in his essays and by synthesizing this with elements from the earlier "The Demon" (1910) and "To the Muse."

The immediate source of Blok's poem is the second of the two highly persuasive monologues which Lermontov's Demon delivers to Tamara, now a nun, in order to convince her of his integrity and thereby complete the act of seduction (2:10). His speech leads up to the fatal burning kiss (2:11) after which Tamara's soul is irrevocably lost. Blok has reproduced several aspects of Lermontov's monologue, including its metre, rhyming scheme, central themes, and formal structure.[107] It was evidently for this reason that the manuscript of the poem carried the subtitle of "Exercise" (Uprazhnenie, 3:515). And yet the poem is far more than a simple exercise in imitation: it amounts to a profound interpretation of the story of Tamara's seduction by the Demon in terms of Blok's understanding of the creative process.

Two changes in particular stand out as most significant. Lermontov's Demon paints a purely positive picture to Tamara in order to overcome her last reservations; it is only after he falls silent that the kiss ensues and her spiritual destruction becomes plain. Blok's Demon, however, reveals his innate character from the outset. He not only promises his companion a giddy ascent to the higher regions; he also tells her that at the end of their journey he will drop her "into a shining emptiness" (v siiaiushchuiu pustotu). Thus, the tantalizing ambivalence of Lermontov's Demon (were there genuine elements in his hope of regeneration?) is resolved in Blok's poem into a passionately sincere, but ultimately negative statement by a Demon, who entertains no illusions about the final outcome of his actions.[108]

The second major change concerns the move from the particular to the abstract and universal. One can safely assume that the lyrical voice which speaks in Blok's poem is that of the Demon, but who is the

addressee? Although she is female, she is never actually named as Tamara. This lack of explicit identification invites an allegorical interpretation. One could, for example, see the Demon and his female companion as symbolic of two aspects of the artist's personality. The Demon represents the artist's creative drive; he is a conflated amalgam of Pushkin's two demons: the "daemon" of inspiration and the demon of corruption (this is consistent with Blok's earlier definition of the fallen Angel-Demon as the "first lyric poet" and with his statement that every person involved in cultural activity is a "demon who curses the earth and invents wings so as to fly away from it").[109] His female companion represents the artist's pure spirit or soul (previously allied with the pure muse), striving to regain a lost intuition of the heavenly or infinite.[110] Accordingly, Blok's poem could be read as a dramatization of the fated outcome of an inner conflict between the two divided aspects of his creative personality which he was unable to reconcile (Akhmatova may have had this in mind when she referred to Blok as "the Demon himself with Tamara's smile" (Demon sam s ulybkoi Tamary).[111] This represents a further development of the dilemma articulated earlier in his conversation with Tereshchenko; it also continues the debate over the divergent spiritual and aesthetic aspects of beauty, initiated by Dostoevsky and echoed in "To the Muse."

The same conflict can also be applied to Blok's poetic development. The Tamara figure suggests the early, pure muse of his Beautiful Lady period, subsequently displaced by a darker form of Dionysian inspiration. This later muse, addressed in "To the Muse," gradually merges with the figure of the Demon, whose voice eventually takes over completely in "The Demon" of 1916. This echoes and develops some of the nineteenth-century precedents discussed earlier in this essay, in which such tensions were adumbrated but generally left unresolved. Although Pushkin's muse was brought into a carefully engineered confrontation with the demon, and although Lermontov's "muse of gentle inspirations" even took fright at the Demon's eyes, the two figures always remained distinct and autonomous in the work of both authors. Blok was the first poet in the Russian tradition to recognize that the encounter between muse and Demon might result in the final erosion of the muse's autonomous identity and in the severance of her links with the artist's pure soul.

"The Demon" of 1916 also continues Blok's long-standing polemic with Ivanov's positive reading of the Dionysian roots of artistic inspiration. This can be sensed particularly strongly in the second verse:

Я пронесу тебя над бездной,
Ее бездонностью дразня.
Твой будет ужас бесполезный –
Лишь вдохновеньем для меня.

[I will carry you above the abyss,
Tantalizing you with its infinite depth.
Your futile terror will be
Only an inspiration for me.]

Blok's notion of terror as the source of inspiration is reminiscent of Ivanov's view of *terror antiquus* (drevnii uzhas) as the Dionysian force which fuels true art. Just under a fortnight before Blok completed "The Demon," Ivanov's essay, "The Inspiration of Terror" (Vdokhnovenie uzhasa), was published.[112] It dealt with Bely's recently published novel *Petersburg (Peterburg)* and argued that the spirit of ancient Dionysian terror with which this work was imbued would help to bring about the spiritual regeneration of Russia through Christ. In his poem, Blok has taken up several terms used by Ivanov in his essay ("terror" [uzhas], "inspiration" [vdokhnoven'e], "emptiness" [pustota]),[113] but has shown that Dionysian terror is an end in itself, devoid of any apocalyptic or redemptive dimension, and leading only to emptiness. This was in keeping with his view, expressed in discussion with Tereshchenko, that the apocalyptic dimension belonged only to the sphere of religion, not of art. A similar perspective informs the advice which he gave to O.A. Kaufman, an aspiring poet, in the spring of 1916, warning her not to call poets prophets on the grounds that this demeans a great word. Poets are poets, not prophets, and have their own distinct language and sphere of truth (8:462). This is a clear revocation of the earlier description which Blok had given of the two stages preceding his vision of the ideal future synthesis: "we were 'prophets,' we desired to become 'poets'" (5:433).

Our reading of "The Demon" (1916) has suggested that the intoxicating path of artistic inspiration leads to a spiritual void. If art cannot carry the burden of a displaced religious quest, and is in fact detrimental to the latter, then what is its role and ultimate justification? Blok could no more abandon the initial spiritual premise of his art than he could deny the artist within himself, and yet he came to see the two paths as mutually hostile and incompatible. Perhaps this inner sense of impasse, as well as the more commonly cited personal and historical factors, go some way towards explaining what Nadezhda Pavlovich described as Blok's "feeling of being finished as a poet" towards the end of his life.[114]

Tentative confirmation of this suggestion can be found in one of Blok's rare late essays. In March 1920 he wrote a short piece on Merezhkovsky in which he briefly summed up the attitude which he had come to espouse: that art and life should be kept entirely separate, and that the Russian tendency to harness art to life (i.e. to religion or social causes) was detrimental to both. The fundamental

plight of the Russian artist in Blok's view was the way in which art encroaches on life: "The *curse* which every artist carries on him lies in the fact that art takes too much away from his life. ... In Europe they know about this *curse*; there they *understand* and *respect* this simple and painful human tragedy.[115]

By contrast with Europe, in Russia the artist has traditionally been expected to be a jack of all trades, a prophet, a social activist, a politician. Blok seems to accept this as an inevitable part of the Russian character ("What can we do – we're Russian ...," 6:394) and therefore as the source of the Russian artist's tragic and inescapable predicament. Interestingly, it does not occur to him to challenge this attitude; the displacement of religious ideals into the sphere of art, which, as we argued in the previous essay, was partly a consequence of the reforms of Peter the Great, was evidently accepted by him as a final and binding legacy.

In support of this view of art, Blok quoted the following lines from Lermontov:

> ... Жалкий труд,
> Отнявший множество минут
> У Бога, дум святых и дел:
> Искусства горестный удел!..[116]

> [... A wretched work,
> Taking away a multitude of minutes
> From God, from holy thoughts and deeds:
> The sorry destiny of art!..]

Lermontov, whose maximalist approach to life and art caused him to portray any less elevated substitute as inherently demonic, is now called upon to voice the logical outcome of this line of reasoning: art is a flawed substitute for man's spiritual aspirations, from which it can only detract. By quoting the cited lines out of their original context, Blok is making Lermontov appear as the spokesman for his more sober late view of art as a temptation and distraction – a far cry from his earlier reading of Lermontov as a mystic poet of Sophia.[117]

Blok's Literary Demons and the Demons of Orthodox Tradition

We have seen that Blok was indebted to the biblical tradition (filtered through Vladimir Solov'ev) for his view of the spiritual source and prophetic mission of art, and to the classical tradition (assimilated through Nietzsche and Viacheslav Ivanov) for his view of the Dionysian qualities of the artistic experience. Lermontov was read by him in the light of both traditions; in fact the secret of his particular appeal to Blok probably lay in the fact that, as a poet who was "seraphic ... and at the same time demonic,"[118] he could reflect both traditions in a way that Pushkin could not. However, Blok's reading of Lermontov evolved in the light of his own shifting awareness of the relationship between these two traditions. As he became increasingly aware of their fundamental incompatibility, the figure of Lermontov's "muse of gentle inspirations" was gradually taken over by doubles tainted with features of the Demon, whose guise she eventually assumed.

Lermontov's Demon thus provided Blok with the perfect voice to articulate the triumphant awareness of art in its demonic (and irredeemable) aspect; this perspective "from within" on the artist's espousal of his chosen path in full knowledge of its fatal consequences is conveyed in exhilarating form in "The Demon" of 1916. There is, however, a second possible perspective "from without" on the artist's predicament, judged from the point of view of the spiritual quest which the doomed flight into creativity frustrates. From this angle art is a purely negative diversion, deflecting the soul from its true path; the intoxicating Demon sheds his grandeur and aura of attractiveness and is stripped down to reveal a plainer, unadorned demon of destructive temptation. Although Blok, as an artist, was naturally more given to articulating the first perspective, part of him clearly strove to make room for the second point of view, to find a voice which would reflect the discipline of the spiritual life. This desire is reflected in a note which he made in the spring of 1916: after commenting on the one path of spiritual insight (which he felt that he had abandoned), he remarked that he should stop writing poetry because he found it too easy and needed to bring about an inner transformation of self.[119]

Blok did find a voice for this second approach, but, significantly, only in a non-literary, religious source. Just five days after completing "The Demon," feeling low, he wandered into a secondhand bookshop and bought a copy of the first volume of the Russian translation of the *Philokalia (Dobrotoliubie)*; on the same day he noted that this was perhaps a "great discovery."[120] Two days later he explained the reason for his excitement in a letter to his mother: "the chapters on the struggle with devils contain very simple and useful observations, often, of course, also familiar to artists – of the type to which I too belong. ... Evagrius's attitude to demons is exactly the same as my attitude to doubles, e.g. in my essay on symbolism."[121] We know from Blok's marginalia on his copy of this book that two particular aspects of Evagrius's acute analysis of demons and their manifold wiles caught his attention. One was the way in which a demon, described as a "thought which can suitably be called the wanderer"

distracts and corrupts the mind by drawing it into conversation: "Thus, little by little, it [the mind] falls away from consciousness of God and virtue, and forgets its calling and its vow."[122] Opposite this passage, Blok wrote: "I know, I know it all." The other was the description of the closely related "demon of dejection" (demon pechali), which, unlike the other demons which teach the soul to love pleasure, cuts off every pleasure of the soul and dries it up through dejection: "The symbol of this demon is the viper. When used in moderation for man's good, its poison is an antidote against that of other venomous creatures, but when taken in excess it kills whoever takes it."[123] Opposite this passage Blok noted that "this demon is essential to the artist."[124] (At the time of writing "The Demon" and reading the *Philokalia*, he was suffering from a state of severe depression and apathy.)[125]

One can infer from these various sources that Blok drew a parallel between the insidious thoughts which distract the spiritual seeker from union with God, and the false doubles, generated by the creative process, which divert the artist from his goal and corrupt his original purity of intuition. There are two possible ways of interpreting this parallel, one negative, the other positive. According to the first, artistic activity is a demonic illusion, tempting in its beauty but spiritually destructive. According to the second, just as the early Christian ascetic monks used to go out into the desert and deliberately confront demons in order to rise higher on the ladder of spiritual perfection through such trials, so in the same way the invocation and exorcizing of artistic demons can be viewed as a tool for spiritual growth.[126] The demonic game of art could therefore be a spiritual dead end or a method for self-advancement. Although this latent ambiguity was not clearly resolved in Blok's work, on balance it seems likely that he had the first, negative interpretation in mind when drawing this parallel.

Towards the end of his life Blok gave his copy of the *Philokalia* to Nadezhda Pavlovich.[127] A few weeks after his death she met with Bely in order to show him Blok's comments on the volume. Bely copied out the description of the demon of dejection as a viper, compared it to the Demon of Lermontov and Vrubel, and noted Blok's comment that it is essential to the artist.[128] When he later wrote up these notes for his published memoir of Blok, he gave them an interesting slant, identifying the demon of dejection highlighted by Blok with Emilii Metner's understanding of the "demon of art" as a form of punishment sent to Blok and Bely "for the attempt to go outside the sphere of pure art."[129] This provides a curious further twist to the convoluted history of symbolist interpretations of traditional demons, now seen as instruments of divine punishment for the hubris of theurgic aspirations.[130]

While it may, therefore, not be possible to pinpoint precisely what Blok and Bely meant by identifying the literary demons of symbolist culture with the moral demons which beset the fourth-century Christian monk, Evagrius, one thing is clear. Evagrius may not have known the demon of artistic creativity, but he did know and could describe the reality of the spiritual quest and the factors which detract from it, and this provided a language which Blok and Bely latched on to, particularly at a time when the earlier confident assertions of theurgism were no longer seen as adequate. Their sense of close affinity with Evagrius was symptomatic of their desire to find a language outside the perspective of the artist, by which to describe and evaluate his underlying spiritual quest.

By tracing the complex evolution of the muse's relations with the Demon in the work of three poets, this essay has highlighted one strand in the progression of the notion of art as demonic from nineteenth-century Romanticism into early twentieth-century modernism. We have seen how Pushkin's pure muse was associated with two quite different demons – one evil, linked with the individual's moral corruption, the other benign, inspiring the artist's creative process. These two distinct demons were subsequently merged in the figure of Lermontov's Demon, whose combination of evil intent with verbal artistry overshadowed the poet's gentle muse. From here, it was but one more step to the final metamorphosis of muse into Demon, which we witness in the essays and poetry of Blok. Thus, the purity of art, which, although threatened, was still posited as an ideal at the time of Romanticism, gives way to the modernist perception of art as intrinsically demonic: the muse and the Demon are no longer two separate figures, but have fused into a new, androgynous demonic being. For Blok the artist, there was no way out of this hell; for Blok the man, the only alternative was to equate his literary demons with the demons of Orthodoxy, thus completing the circle from his early theurgic aspirations to their "demonic" negation in religious tradition. The key link in this chain from Pushkin to Blok was Lermontov's Demon, who became for Russian literature what Harold Bloom has argued that Milton's Satan was for Western European literature: the "archetype of the modern poet at his strongest."[131]

Notes

1. A.S. Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. D.D. Blagoi and others, 10 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1974–78), 1:212. Translations throughout this essay are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

2. M.Iu. Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, introd. D.E. Maksimov, ed. E.E. Naidich, Biblioteka poeta, Bol'shaia seriia, 2 vols. (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1989), 1:88.
3. Aleksandr Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. V.N. Orlov, A.A. Surkov, and K.I. Chukovskii, 8 vols. (Moscow and Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1960–63), 3:60–61(60).
4. From "Poet" (1827), in Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 2:110.
5. The reference to the Demon's "volshebnyi golos" occurs in Lermontov's *Demon* (1:15.311), in Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, 2:446.
6. "O sovremennom sostoianii russkogo simvolizma" (1910), in Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 5:433.
7. Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 2:250.
8. *Zolotoe runo*, 1907, no.1, 7. This issue was devoted to a competition on the devil for which Blok was one of the judges. As well as reproducing works of art, it contained poems, stories, and critical essays on the devil in literature, music, and the visual arts. Kuzmin, Remizov, Rozanov, and Bely were among the contributors. Dobuzhinsky's illustration is also reproduced in Michael Raeburn, ed., *The Twilight of the Tsars: Russian Art at the Turn of the Century* (London: South Bank Centre, 1991), 147.
9. Letter to P.A. Viazemsky of 27 March 1816, in Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 9:8. See also the reference to deserting poetry for the "novyi bes" of humble prose in *Evgenii Onegin* (3:13.4), in Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 4:52. Hereafter references to *Evgenii Onegin* will be cited from this edition and given in the text and notes by chapter, stanza, and line number.
10. "V.L. Davydovu," in Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 1:146–47.
11. From "K ****" ("Ia pomniu chudnoe mgnoven'e ...," 1825), in Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 2:23–24(23). The phrase "genii chistoi krasoty" is borrowed from Zhukovsky with whom Pushkin closely associated his ideal of pure art. Zhukovsky used it in "Lalla Ruk" (written in 1821, published in 1827) and in "Ia Muzu iunuiu, byvalo ..." (written in 1822 or 1824, published in 1824); see V.A. Zhukovskii, *Sochineniia v trekh tomakh*, comp. I.M. Semenko (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1980), 1:118–19(119), 300, respectively.
12. The last two phrases are from "Poet" (1827), in Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 2:110.
13. Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 1:59.
14. "O bogi mirnye polei, dubrov i gor ...," in Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 1:593.
15. In a letter to A.A. Del'vig of 16 November 1823, Pushkin uses this term of Baratynsky's muse. Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 9:75.
16. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, ed. V.D. Bonch-Bruevich, 17 vols. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1937–59; reprint, Moscow: Voskresen'e, 1994–97), 2(book 1):267 (text); 2(book 2):760–61 (variants), 1076–77 (note). The poem is dated from October to 10 November 1823 and was first published under the incorrect title of "Moi demon" in *Mnemozina*, part 3 (Moscow, 1824), 11–12. For a brief survey of this and later images of the devil (covering the Romantic demon, folk demons, the demon of ideology, and the demon of decadence) in nineteenth-century Russian poetry, see Andrzej Dudek, "The Devil in 19th Century Russian Poetry," *Slavia Orientalis* 41 (1992), no.1:19–26. Dudek places Pushkin's poem at the start of this tradition; he does not, however, distinguish between Pushkin's two types of demons, or between the concept of the demon and the devil.
17. Exactly the same transition from aesthetic excitement to demonic corruption occurs in Pushkin's "V nachale zhizni shkolu pomniu ia ..." (1830), discussed in the previous essay in this volume, Pamela Davidson, "Divine Service or Idol Worship? Russian Views of Art as Demonic."

18. V.M. Odoevskii, "Novyi demon," in *Mnemozina*, part 4 (Moscow, 1824; not in circulation until October 1825), 35–41(35), cited in Iu. Oksman's note in Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 6:453–54.
19. ["O stikhotvorenii 'Demon'"], in Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 11:30 (text), 300–301 (variants), 531 (note). The fragment is dated 1825, but was not published until 1874. Pushkin was refuting the opinion of contemporary readers who identified his demon with A.N. Raevsky.
20. An early variant emphasized the need for faith by adding at this point: "Emu [serdtsu] nuzhno verit'."
21. See the discussion of "Zhukovskomu" and n.11 above. In the additional stanzas on the muse from the draft of chap. 8 of *Evgenii Onegin* Pushkin later referred to Zhukovsky as the "gluboko vdokhnovennyi / Vsego prekrasnogo pevets" who offered him support and summoned him "k slave *chistoi*" (emphasis mine). Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 4:417.
22. Zhukovskii, *Sochineniia v trekh tomakh*, 3:447. In the letter Zhukovsky plays on the link between his instructions to Pushkin to be an angel ("bud' angelom") and Pushkin's impending name-day ("zavtra zhe tvoi angel").
23. See in this volume Julian Graffy, "The Devil is in the Detail: Demonic Features of Gogol's Petersburg," n.77.
24. Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 1:229–34 (cited on 229–30).
25. Plato, *Phaedrus* (245a), with translation and commentary by C.J. Rowe (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1986), 57, 59. For a fuller discussion of the term *daimon*, see in this volume Davidson, "Divine Service or Idol Worship?"
26. See the identical opening words ("V te dni, kogda ...") and the ensuing parallel between "Togda kakoi-to zlobnyi genii / Stal taino naveshchat' menia" ("Demon") and "Iavliat'sia Muza stala mne" (*Evgenii Onegin*, 8:1.8). Nabokov notes the coincidence of the opening words and intonation as "curious" but does not expand any further. See Aleksandr Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin. A Novel in Verse*, trans., with a commentary, by Vladimir Nabokov, rev. ed., 4 vols., Bollingen Series, no. 72 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975) 3:129. Lotman makes the same observation and develops its significance more fully; see A.S. Pushkin, *Evgenii Onegin. Roman v stikhakh*, ed. Iu.M. Lotman (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Atrium, 1991), 566–67.
27. Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, trans. Nabokov, 1:287.
28. On Akhmatova's "overcoming" of symbolist demonism, see in this volume Michael Basker, "Symbolist Devils and Acmeist Transformation: Gumilev, Demonism, and the Absent Hero in Akhmatova's *Poem Without a Hero*."
29. This parallel is supported by a thread of textual echoes which link "Demon" (1823), chap. 8 of *Evgenii Onegin* (1829–30), and "V nachale zhizni ..." (1830). The various stanzas on the muse, which were subsequently omitted from drafts and the fair copy of chap. 8 of *Evgenii Onegin*, repeat the opening construction of "Demon" ("V te dni, kogda ...") and include a much more extensive description of Pushkin's early encounter with his muse at the *litsei*, many details of which are echoed in "V nachale zhizni ...," composed in October 1830, soon after *Evgenii Onegin* was completed on 25 September 1830 (see Pushkin's chronology of his work on the novel in Pushkin, *Evgenii Onegin*, ed. Lotman, 655). These details include references to the poet's hours of lazy dreaming in the garden of the *litsei*, to his escape into this garden by jumping over the fence, and to his characteristic mood of longing and "smutnaia pechal'." See Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 6:415–17.
30. Pushkin's lecture was delivered on 18 January 1836 at the Imperial Russian Academy and published in the same year in *Sovremennik*. See "Mnenie M.E. Lobanova o dukhe slovesnosti kak inostrannoi, tak i otechestvennoi," in Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 6:120–28.
31. Ibid., 6:124.

32. D.S. Merezhkovskii, "M.Iu. Lermontov. Poet sverkhchelovechestva" (1909), in his *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 17 vols. (St. Petersburg and Moscow: Izdanie T-va M.O. Vol'f, 1911–13), 10:287–334(312). Although Merezhkovsky was anxious to redeem Lermontov from Vladimir Solov'ev's severe condemnation (on moral grounds) of 1899, he admitted that "v Demone byl eshche ostatok d'iavola" (329). His essay was first published in 1909 in *Vesy* and *Russkaia mysl'*. In his (highly debatable) view, Pushkin, unlike Lermontov, was content with a purely aesthetic resolution of the problem of evil.
33. V.S. Solov'ev, "Lermontov" (1899), in *Sobranie sochinenii Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov'eva*, ed. S.M. Solov'ev and E.L. Radlov, 2d ed., 10 vols. (St. Petersburg: Prosveshchenie, [1911–13]), 9:348–67(362).
34. See in this volume Simon Franklin, "Nostalgia for Hell: Russian Literary Demonism and Orthodox Tradition," 35.
35. Pasternak's letter of 22 August 1958 to his American translator, Eugene Kayden, in Boris Pasternak, *Poems*, trans. Eugene M. Kayden (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), ix, cited in Pasternak's original English from Henry Gifford, *Pasternak: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 49.
36. This attitude is expressed in many of Lermontov's lyrics. See, for example, "Poet" (1838), "Zhurnalist, Chitatel' i Pisatel'" (1840), "Prorok" (1841), in Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, 2:27–29, 43–48, 85–86, respectively.
37. Ibid., 1:222 (text), 595 (variants), 658 (note).
38. See, for example, Blok's essay "Pamiati Vrubelia" (1910), in Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 5:423–24.
39. See the detailed record of Blok's notes on his edition of Lermontov, in K.P. Lukirskaia, ed., *Biblioteka A.A. Bloka. Opisanie*, comp. O.V. Miller, N.A. Kolobova, and S.Ia. Vovina, 3 vols. (Leningrad: Biblioteka Akademii nauk SSSR, 1984–86), 2:49 (notes relating to p.284 of Blok's edition of Lermontov).
40. Letter to S.N. Karamzina of 10 May [1841], in M.Iu. Lermontov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. I.L. Andronikov, 4 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1975–76), 4:461.
41. Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, 1:76.
42. Ibid., 2:32–33. For a discussion of this poem's use of several distinct voices see Efim Etkind, "Poeticheskaia lichnost' Lermontova ('Dialektika dushi' v lirike)," in Efim Etkind, ed., *Mikhail Lermontov. 1814–1989*, Norwich Symposia on Russian Literature and Culture, no.3 (Northfield, VT: The Russian School of Norwich University, 1992), 11–38(28–33).
43. This line is slightly adapted from Lermontov's "Posviashchenie" (1838) to the sixth version of *Demon*, in which he refers to his work as "bol'noi dushi tiazhelyi bred" (Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, 2:590). This link is evidence of the intimate connection between Lermontov's own reflections on the creative impulse and the indirect treatment of this theme in *Demon*.
44. Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, 1:88. The poem was not published until 1859.
45. Lukirskaia, ed., *Biblioteka A.A. Bloka*, 2:46 (notes relating to pp.69–70 of Blok's edition of Lermontov).
46. Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, 1:184.
47. Lukirskaia, ed., *Biblioteka A.A. Bloka*, 2:49–50 (notes relating to pp.299–300 of Blok's edition of Lermontov).
48. For the text of the different versions of *Demon* see Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, 2:436–68 (eighth version of 1839), 533–92 (first six versions of 1829–38). References to the final version are given from this edition in the text and notes by part and stanza numbers, followed by the line number within the work as a whole.

49. In this respect the link between Tamara and the muse develops the parallel association in Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin* between Tat'iana and the muse, also both threatened by the figure of the demon.
50. The phrase "beglets Edema" is used of the Demon in the first three and in the fifth versions of the poem; in the final version it is replaced by the broader "izgnannik raia" (1:3.32). In the fourth version, the fact that the Demon is unlikely to regain his lost paradise is given special prominence ("Ne voskresiv dushevnoi chistoty, / Ty ne naidesh' poteriannyi svoi rai!"). See Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, 2:535, 536, 547, 558, 560.
51. "Nemoi dushi ego pustyniu / Napolnil blagodatnyi zvuk – / I vnov' postignul on sviatyniu / Liubvi, dobra i krasoty!.." (1:9.165–68). "Menia dobru i nebesam / Ty vozvratit' mogla by slovom. / Tvoei liubvi sviatym pokrovom / Odetyi, ia predstal by tam, / Kak novyi angel v bleske novom" (2:10.609–13). A similar plea was expressed by Lermontov: in his "Posviashchenie" of 1831 to the third version of *Demon* he compares himself to his Demon, seeking spiritual regeneration through his "madonna," to whom he offers his poem as a gift (Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, 2:545–46).
52. This image was later identified with Sophia by the symbolists who regarded love and poetry as a means of bringing about the realization of Sophia in this world. In his late essay of 1947 on Lermontov (first published in Italian in 1958), Viacheslav Ivanov quoted the last four lines of the passage cited alongside biblical verses on Wisdom (Prov. 8:22–23, 27–28) as an example of Lermontov's nascent intuition of Sophia. See Ivanov, "Lermontov," in Viacheslav Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. D.V. Ivanov and O. Deschartes, 4 vols. (Brussels: Foyer Oriental Chrétien, 1971–87), 4:364–65 (Italian original), 380–81 (Russian translation).
53. When the Demon first speaks to Tamara, the magic of his voice is stressed ("volshebnyi golos," 1:15.311) and later echoed by the "magic word" at which the created world falls silent ("volshebnoe slovo," 1:15.347), thus reinforcing the link between the Demon-artist and the Creator of the universe. It is specifically the lingering sounds of the Demon's words ("Slova umolkli v otdalen'e, / Vosled za zvukom umer zvuk," 1:16.363–64) and his voice ("etot golos chudno-novyi," 1:16.372) which penetrate and poison Tamara's dreams.
54. For example, when the narrator testifies to the beauty of Tamara, he repeats the word "klianus'" twice (1:7.131, 144). Later the Demon takes over this device and amplifies it, using the same word ten times in the opening part of his third and longest monologue to Tamara (2:10.773–92). The narrator's apparently "objective" vow is thereby subsumed into the Demon's rhetoric of seduction.
55. Repetitions are particularly abundant in the central scene of seduction (2:10). The Demon's first monologue opens with a series of majestic self-definitions "Ia tot ..." (2:10.593–603). His third monologue moves from ten vows ("klianus'") to four expressions of the wish for love and faith ("khochu"), and then continues with a series of future perfective verbs and imperatives, starting with "voz'mu" (2:10.814) and ending with "dam" (2:10.871).
56. "Znakomaia, sredi *molen'ia*, / Ei chasto slyshalasia *rech'*" (2:2.424–25; emphasis mine).
57. "Sviatym zakhochet li molit'sia – / A serdtse molitsia *emu*" (2:6.499–500).
58. "Ostav' menia, o dukh lukavyi! / *Molchi*, ne veriu ia vragu... / *Tvorets* ... Uvy! ia ne mogu / *Molit'sia* ... gibel'noi otravoi / Moi um slabeiushchii ob"iat! / Poslushai, ty menia pogubish'; / Tvoi *slova* – ogon' i iad..." (2:10.631–37; emphasis mine).
59. The climactic scene of seduction opens with Tamara's words to the Demon; she specifically identifies his dangerous attractiveness with his use of language ("O! kto ty? Rech' tvoia opasna!," 2:10.589); in her last speech before her death she reiter-

ates her fear of his powers of speech ("No esli rech' tvoi lukava," 2:10.754). In the second version of *Demon* (1830) Tamara's words before her death (addressed to the Demon although spoken in the presence of the confessor) make it plain that it was the Demon's sweet speech which brought a curse upon them and caused their joint spiritual downfall: "Svoimi sladkimi rechami ... / Ty ... bednuiu ... zavorozhil... / Ty byl liubim i ne liubil, / Ty b mog spastis', a pogubil... / Prokliat'e sverkhu, mrak pod nami!"). See Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, 2:544.

60. The word used by Lermontov, "mol'ba," translated here as "entreaty," comes from the same root as "molitva" and is closely associated with the concept of prayer. For Christian sources on demonic interference in prayer, assimilated into the Russian tradition through translation, see the *Philokalia*, a collection of ascetic and mystical writings dating from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries, compiled by two Greek monks in the eighteenth century, first published in Greek in 1782, in a Slavonic translation in 1793, and in Russian in several editions from 1877 (under the title *Dobrotoliubie*). The texts on prayer ascribed to Saint Nilus of Syria (now recognized as the work of Evagrius) offer many cautionary insights on this theme: "The demon is greatly envious of a man who prays, and uses many wiles to disturb his intention; so he does not cease to provoke, through memory, thoughts of various things, while through the body he sets all the passions in movement; his one aim is somehow to spoil the excellence of the man's progress and his ascent (by attention) to God;" "If you strive after prayer, prepare yourself for diabolical suggestions and bear patiently their onslaughts; for they will attack you like wild beasts and will riddle your body with wounds." See the abridged English translation of *Dobrotoliubie: Early Fathers from the Philokalia*, selected and trans. E. Kadloubovsky and G.E.H. Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), 133, 138. On Blok's discovery in 1916 of the demons of *Dobrotoliubie*, see below.

61. Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, 1:96 (I have reinstated the original capitals for terms relating to God). First published in 1859.

62. See in this volume Davidson, "Divine Service or Idol Worship?"

63. Lukirskaia, ed., *Biblioteka A.A. Bloka*, 2:46 (notes relating to p.78 of Blok's edition of Lermontov).

64. Pasternak dedicated his collection *Sestra moia – zhizn'* (written in the summer of 1917, first published in 1922) to Lermontov and opened it with "Pamiati demona," from which I have quoted the closing line. Boris Pasternak, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, ed. L.A. Ozerov, Biblioteka poeta, Bol'shaia seriia (Moscow and Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1965), 110–11(111).

65. For a thoughtful study of Blok's reception of Lermontov, see the chapter "Lermontov i Blok (K postanovke voprosa)," in D.E Maksimov, *Poeziia Lermontova* (Moscow and Leningrad: Nauka, 1964), 247–65. Useful sources include the detailed record of Blok's notes on his copies of Lermontov's works in Lukirskaia, ed., *Biblioteka A.A. Bloka*, 2:44–69, and two related articles, O. Miller, "Pomety Aleksandra Bloka na Polnom sobranii sochinenii M.Iu. Lermontova," in *V mire Bloka: Sbornik statei* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1981), 503–516, and O.V. Miller, "Pomety Bloka na knigakh po istorii russkoi literatury XIX v.," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 92, *Aleksandr Blok. Novye materialy i issledovaniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1987), 4:57–74 (68–71 on Lermontov).

66. Lukirskaia, ed., *Biblioteka A.A. Bloka*, 2:46 (noted opposite "Russkaia melodiia").

67. "Pamiati Vrubelia" was a reworked version of the speech which Blok read at the funeral on 3 April 1910. The text was published in the same year and is reprinted in Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 5:421–26 (references to this edition will hereafter be given in the text and notes by volume and page number). For the draft text of the original speech, see 5:689–91.

68. Blok's image of the muffled wind may be related to Lermontov's description in "Moi demon" (1829) of the Demon sitting enthroned "sred' vetrov onemevshikh," particularly as this phrase was underlined by him in the first volume (printed in March 1910) of his edition of Lermontov: *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii M.Iu. Lermontova*, ed. D.I. Abramovich, Akademicheskaia Biblioteka Russkikh Pisatelei, no.2, 5 vols. (St. Petersburg: Izdanie Razriada iziashchnoi slovesnosti Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, 1910–13), 1:69. See Lukirskaia, ed., *Biblioteka A.A. Bloka*, 2:46.

69. This view is encapsulated in an entry of 26 February 1905 in the diary of Blok's friend, Evgenii Ivanov: "Tragediia bibleiskogo tsaria Saula, lishennogo Dukha, tragediia poeta, pisatelia, lishennogo svoego dara, potomu chto tak nadobno, i tragediia Demona – vse odno." "Vospominaniia i zapisi Evgeniia Ivanova ob Aleksandre Bloke," ed. E.P. Gomberg and D.E. Maksimov, in *Blokovskii sbornik* (Tartu: Tartuskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1964), 392.

70. 5:424, quoted from Lermontov's poem "Angel" (1831), discussed above.

71. "Inykh sredstv, krome iskusstva, my poka ne imeem" (5:424).

72. 5:66–82. The essay was first published in *Zolotoe runo*, 1906, no.11–12, the issue immediately preceding the issue of January 1907, devoted to a competition on the devil for which Blok was one of the literary judges (see n.8 above).

73. 5:76. On demons and the poetics of transfiguration, see in this volume Franklin, "Nostalgia for Hell."

74. In "Bezvremen'e" Blok only hints at this interpretation of Lermontov's death (5:77). In "O sovremennom sostoianii russkogo simvolizma" (1910) he explicitly interprets the deaths of Lermontov, Gogol, Vrubel, and Kommissarzhevskaia in this light (5:434). In "Pamiati Vrubelia" (1910) he attaches the same significance to Vrubel's death (5:424).

75. For a striking poetic treatment of this theme, see Bely's poem "Demon" (March 1908), in Andrei Belyi, *Sobranie sochinenii. Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, ed. V.M. Piskunov (Moscow: Respublika, 1994), 251–52, and the related passage on the poet staring at his reflection in a mirror in Andrei Belyi, *Mezhdu dvukh revoliutsii*, ed. A.V. Lavrov (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990), 287.

76. 5:130–59. This essay is closely related to Blok's poem of the previous year, "Ty byl osypan zvezdnym tsvetom..." (19 March 1906; 2:100), in which he addressed the young German poet, Johannes von Guenther, as an "angel padshii," associated with deception, betrayal, and doubles. This was the first projection of the figure of the Demon onto the image of the poet in Blok's verse. For Guenther's understanding of this poem as an invitation for him to join Blok in the host of Lucifer, see "Iogannes fon Giunter i ego 'vospominaniia'," ed. and trans. K.M. Azadovskii, in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol.92, *Aleksandr Blok. Novye materialy i issledovaniia*, 5 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 1980–93), 5:330–61 (335–36, 342). Azadovsky notes that Guenther later transferred Blok's poetic portrait of him as a Luciferian figure to his own characterization of Blok.

77. 5:425–36. A similar perspective also informs "Pamiati Vrubelia" (1910).

78. On Blok's reception of Nietzsche, filtered through Ivanov, see V.M. Papernyi, "Blok i Nitssche," *Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* 491 (1979):84–106. On the significance of the Apollo-Dionysus polarity for the view of art as demonic, see in this volume Davidson, "Divine Service or Idol Worship?"

79. In a letter of 31 January 1906 to Pertsov Blok interprets M. Tchaikovsky's libretto for *Pikovaia dama* in terms of a transformation into their opposites of the two sources of Petersburg culture: Pushkin, linked with Apollo, and Lermontov, linked with the abyss (8:150). In "Pedant o poete" (1906), a scathing review of N. Kotliarevsky's study of Lermontov, Blok stresses Lermontov's role as the

main source for the revitalization of contemporary literature and links his role in this respect to that of Tiutchev, "samaia 'nochnaia' dusha russkoi poezii" (5:25), who was able to pick up and echo Lermontov's message of inner mystery and chaos.

80. Blok uses this phrase in an intriguing poem on the links between art and life, "Oni chitaiut stikhi" (10 January 1907), 2:245. For a study of the relationship between Blok's love poetry and his rejection of fundamental assumptions about the powers of language, see Gerald Pirog, "The Language of Love and the Limits of Language," in *Aleksandr Blok Centennial Conference*, ed. Walter N. Vickery with Bogdan B. Sagatov (Columbus: Slavica, 1984), 225–36.
81. "Demon" (1916) precedes the last poem of the cycle "Golos iz khora" (1910–14). The final arrangement of poems within the cycle was not fixed until the second and third editions of Blok's *Stikhotvoreniia. Kniga tret'ia* appeared in 1916 and 1921. For further discussion of "K Muze" and the two "Demon" poems see in this volume, Avril Pyman, "The Demon. The Mythopoetic World Model in the Art of Lermontov, Vrubel, Blok."
82. A similar contrast could be drawn between the same essay and the unrelieved pessimism of the poem which follows "Demon," "Kak tiazhelo khodit' sredi liudei..." (1910, 3:27).
83. Ivanov's talk was given on 26 March 1910 and published in essay form as "Zavety simvolizma" in *Apollon*, 1910, no.8 (May-June):5–20 (first pagination); reprinted in Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 2:589–603. Blok's response was delivered as a talk on 8 April 1910; the resulting essay was published in the same issue of *Apollon*, 21–30 (first pagination); reprinted in 5:425–36. In his essay Ivanov elaborated a dialectic scheme which incorporated a brief genealogy of the development of Russian literature and included reference to the places of Lermontov and Blok within this dialectic. Blok took up the structure of Ivanov's argument and illustrated it with examples of his own verse (thereby earning himself the ironic epithet of Ivanov's Baedeker; see Valerii Briusov's rejoinder, "O 'rechi rabskoi,' v zashchitu poezii," *Apollon*, 1910, no.9 (July–August):31–34 (first pagination).
84. Entry of 26 March 1910, in Aleksandr Blok, *Zapisnye knizhki*, ed. V.N. Orlov, A.A. Surkov, and K.I. Chukovskii (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1965), 169.
85. 5:436. The lines from Lermontov's *Demon* (1:13.284–87) are slightly misquoted by Blok.
86. The poem was written eleven days after Blok gave the talk on which his essay was based; it was first published in *Russkaia mysl'*, 1910, no.11, and later included in the "Strashnyi mir" cycle alongside "K Muze" and "Demon" (1916). For the text, early drafts, and Blok's own note on the link between the demons of Lermontov and Vrubel reflected in the poem, see 3:26, 504–6. See also the recent edition: A.A. Blok, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v dvadtsati tomakh* (Moscow: Nauka, 1997–), 3:215–16 (variants), 598–99 (notes).
87. This connection was discussed in the section above on Lermontov's *Demon*.
88. The poem was evidently composed over a period of a few months at the end of 1912; although published versions carry the date of 29 December 1912, the manuscript is dated "Autumn – 29.xii.1912." It was first published in *Russkaia mysl'*, 1913, no.11, and included in the second edition of *Stikhotvoreniia. Kniga tret'ia* (1916). For the text and variants, see 3:7–8, 501. See also the recent edition: Blok, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, 3:201 (variants), 585–86 (notes).
89. The word *gibel'* plays a key role in the two essays of 1910 ("Pamiati Vrubelia" and "O sovremennom sostoianii russkogo simvolizma") and is taken up twice in the poem; it is introduced in the second line as a fundamental characteristic of the Muse ("Rokovaia o gibeli vest'") and recurs in its verbal form in connection

with the suggestion of the poet's death in the fifth verse ("Ne pogib ia, no lik tvoi zametil").

90. "O sovremennom sostoianii russkogo simvolizma," 5:430. For the text of "Neznakomka" (24 April 1906), see 2:185–86.
91. See versions 3 (1831) and 5 (1833–34) of *Demon* in Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, 2:553–54, 564–66. See also the edition owned by Blok: *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii M.Iu. Lermontova*, ed. Abramovich, 2:406–8 (it includes the full text of version 5, identified as version 4).
92. It is possible that Blok's reference in verse 6 to the muse's gift of a "lug s tsvetami" is a deliberate echo of the "tsvetushchii lug," mentioned in Pushkin's "Razgovor knigoprodavtsa s poetom," and serves to mark his relation to and yet distance from Pushkin's treatment of the muse and the demon. In Pushkin's poem, the image of the flowering meadow is associated with the poet's early encounters with the muse of pure inspiration and followed three lines later by the description of the benign demon of inspiration, quoted above. In Blok's poem, the same flowering meadow (the promise of beauty and pure inspiration) becomes the gift by which the muse seduces the poet and condemns him to the curse of beauty, associated with a destructive demon.
93. This painting, originally from the F. Shekhtel collection in Moscow, is now held in the M. Umnova collection in Moscow and is seldom reproduced. It was shown at exhibitions in Moscow in 1902–1903, 1916, and later. For further details, see Mikhail Guerman, *Mikhail Vrubel. Paintings. Graphic Works. Sculptures. Book Illustrations. Decorative Works. Theatrical Designs*, catalogue compiled by Alla Gaiduk and others, trans. John Greenfield and Valery Dereviaghin (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1985), 236 (catalogue no.111).
94. This effect was noted by the poet Naum Korzhavin, who wrote of his failure for many years to grasp the full import of the warning against art expressed in the poem: "Zhivuchest' ego korenitsia v ego dvoistvennosti. V tom, chto ... govorit ono odno, a poet drugoe, priamo protivopolozhnoe." N. Korzhavin, "Igra s d'iavolom (Po povodu stikhotvoreniia Aleksandra Bloka 'K Muze')," *Grani* 95 (1975):76–107(104). I would, however, dispute Korzhavin's view that the poem contains "two" contradictory messages; it conveys a single message, concerning the paradoxical properties of art, which combines spiritual danger with magnetic attraction.
95. These lines recall Tamara's question to the demon at the beginning of the climactic scene of seduction: "O! kto ty? Rech' tvoia opasna! / Tebia poslal mne ad il' rai?" (2:10.589–90). This echo reinforces the implied association in "K Muze" between Tamara and the poet's soul, seduced by a Demon-like Muse. In "Demon" (1916) this pattern of symbolic association is developed further; the poet's pure soul is once more linked with Tamara, while his artistic impulse is represented by the Demon (no longer disguised as Muse).
96. The link between Blok's poem and the passage from Dostoevsky has been pointed out by several commentators. See, for example, V. Zhirmunskii, *Poeziia Aleksandra Bloka* (Petersburg: Kartonnyi Domik, 1922), 28–29 (reprinted as a separate offprint from the collection of articles *Ob Aleksandre Bloke*, Petersburg: Kartonnyi Domik, 1921).
97. F.M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridstati tomakh*, ed. V.G. Bazanov and others, 30 vols. (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972–90), 14:100. The passage occurs in Dimitrii's first confession to Alesha (part 1, book 3, chap. 3) and is cited here in translation from Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. David Magarshack (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 1:123–24.
98. The key words of Dostoevsky's passage, "krasota," "strashnaia," "serdtse," and "um," are all taken up and directly echoed in Blok's poem; see, for example,

Blok's phrase "bezumnaia serdtsu uslada." The dialogue with Dostoevsky runs throughout the poem and is highlighted by numerous other textual echoes (see, for example, Dimitrii Karamazov's words, "popiranie vsiakoi sviatyni, nasmeshka i bezverie," in Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 14:417). Dostoevsky's view of beauty as terrible is also alluded to by Blok in the opening line of a slightly later poem, "'Krasota strashna' – Vam skazhut ..." ("Anne Akhmatovoi," 16 December 1913, 3:143). A discarded variant of the first line, "Krugom tverdiat: 'Vy – demon, Vy – krasivy'" (3:550), makes more explicit the association of the Muse and beauty with the demon, a link which is already suggested in "K Muze" and subsequently developed more fully in "Demon" (1916).

99. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 4:417. For the original Russian essay of 1911, see "Dostoevskii i roman-tragediia," *Russkaia mysl'*, 1911, no.5:46–61 (second pagination) and no.6:1–17 (second pagination). Blok's poem "K Muze" (as previously his "Demon" of 1910) was later published in the same journal. The extract from Ivanov makes a similar distinction between the heart and the mind as the passage quoted from *The Brothers Karamazov*, echoed in "K Muze."

100. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 1:828–29. The link between the Dionysian principle and Dostoevsky was also drawn by Ivanov in "Drevnii uzhas" (1909), which dwells on the need to revive the principle of ancient Dionysian terror in art and to reconcile it with Dostoevsky's promise that beauty will save the world (Ibid., 3:97–98). On Ivanov's related theory of demonology, see Tomas Venclova, "K demonologii russkogo simvolizma," in *Christianity and the Eastern Slavs*, vol. 3, *Russian Literature in Modern Times*, ed. Boris Gasparov and others, California Slavic Studies, no.18 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 134–60, and Andrzej Dudek, "Demonologia Wiaczesława Iwanowa," in *Wizja człowieka i świata w myśli rosyskiej*, ed. Lucjan Suchanek (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1998), 87–106 (article in Polish) and 181–84 (summary in Russian).

101. 3:501. The "lik" is that of the Muse, first mentioned in verse five. This quatrain, subsequently deleted, contains the kernel later developed in Blok's "Demon" (1916).

102. In this sense "K Muze" can be linked to an earlier poem of the same year, "Viacheslavu Ivanovu" (18 April 1912, 3:141–42), in which Blok signals his parting of the ways "na pyl'nom perekrestke" with Ivanov, described as a "tsar' samoderzhavnyi." Significantly, Blok uses lines in this poem which echo Lermontov's "Moi demon," thereby drawing an implicit comparison between Ivanov's role in his artistic life and that of the demon in the life of the pure muse. Compare Blok's "I ia, dichivshiisia dosele / Ochei pronzitel'nykh tvoikh" with Lermontov's "I muza krotkikh vdokhnovenii / Strashitsia nezemnykh ochei" (lines sidelined by Blok in his edition of Lermontov; see Lukirskaia, ed., *Biblioteka A.A. Bloka*, 2:46).

103. Both poems take the form of an address to a female seductress (Beauty or the muse), and use images of erotic love and intoxicating wine to convey her dangerous power. Compare "K Muze" with the opening quatrain of Baudelaire's poem: "Viens-tu du ciel profond ou sors-tu de l'abîme, / O Beauté? Ton regard, infernal et divin, / Verse confusément le bienfait et le crime, / Et l'on peut pour cela te comparer au vin." Also see the lines "Sors-tu du gouffre noir ou descends-tu des astres?", "Que tu viennes du ciel ou de l'enfer, qu'importe," "De Satan ou de Dieu, qu'importe? Ange ou Sirène," in Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, ed. Enid Starkie (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), 21–22. Baudelaire's poem was included in the second edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1861); on Russian responses to this collection, as well as translations from it (dating from 1869), see Adrian Wanner, *Baudelaire in Russia* (Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 1996).

104. Blok's diary entry is dated 11 October 1912. "K Muze" was begun in the autumn of 1912 and finished on 29 December 1912. The link between the poem and the diary extract has been pointed out by Avril Pyman in the excellent notes to Alexander Blok, *Selected Poems*, ed. Avril Pyman (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1972), 234.

105. Blok's use of the words "mir" and "strashnyi" in this passage casts interesting light on the title of the cycle "Strashnyi mir," in which the poems under discussion appeared.

106. For the text, see 3:60–61. The poem was first published in the almanac *Tvorchestvo* (Moscow and Petrograd, 1917), 1:18–19, and included in the third edition of *Stikhotvoreniia. Kniga tret'ia* (1921). Although the published text is dated 9 June 1916, the manuscript is dated "1916.20.iii (-9.vi)," suggesting that "Demon" (like "K Muze") was composed over a period of about three months (3:515). For further details, see the recent edition: Blok, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, 3:259–60 (variants), 633 (notes).

107. In both texts the demon's address is constructed in the form of a rising series of cumulative promises, all voiced in the first person future perfective. Blok has even reproduced (in verse 5) Lermontov's thematic shift to a digression on the inadequacy of human passion.

108. Blok's poem can be read as an extension and answer to a question posed but left open in Lermontov's *Demon*: "Siial on tikho, kak zvezda; / Manil i zval on ... no – kuda? ..." (2:2.430–31).

109. Blok, "O lirike" (June–July 1907), 5:131; "Stikhiia i kul'tura" (December 1908), 5:356.

110. In support of this reading, see two poems by Baudelaire, elements of which are combined and closely echoed in Blok's "Demon." In "Élévation" the poet addresses his spirit as it soars through the air ("Par delà le soleil, par delà les éthers, / Par delà les confins des sphères étoilées, / Mon esprit, ... / Tu sillonnes gaiement l'immensité profonde"); in "Le Vin des Amants" a man invites his lover to join him "dans un délire parallèle" on a flight to an imagined paradise ("Comme deux anges ... / Dans le bleu cristal du matin / Suivons le mirage lointain!"). Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 6–7, 113. "Demon" takes the image of the lovers' intoxicating flight from the second poem, and combines it with the poet's address to this spirit from the first. This reading does not exclude other interpretations; on a biographical level, for example, L.A. Del'mas claimed that Blok's poem was addressed to her. See Blok, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, 3:633.

111. In *Poema bez geroia* (2:312), in Anna Akhmatova, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, ed. V.M. Zhirmunskii, Biblioteka poeta, Bol'shaia seriia (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1976), 364.

112. "Vdokhnovenie uzhasa: O romane Andreia Belogo 'Peterburg'," *Utro Rossii*, 28 May 1916, 5–6; reprinted in Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 4:619–29. Blok received a copy of Bely's *Petersburg* on 4 May 1916 and had met with Ivanov in Moscow a few weeks earlier on 5 April (see Blok, *Zapisnye knizhki*, 297, 294).

113. See, for example, Ivanov's use of the phrases "pustota," "polnoe vdokhnovenie uzhasa," "fleita uzhasa," "gubitel'nyi dukh," "demon," and his description of Bely as a "russkii poet metafizicheskogo uzhasa;" Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 4:619, 623, 627, 629.

114. N.A. Pavlovich, "Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre Bloka," in *Blokovskii sbornik* (Tartu: Tartuskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1964), 495. A similar period of poetic silence affected Viacheslav Ivanov in the 1920s, when he also came to reconsider his view of the relationship between art and religion; after a period of recantation, he eventually returned to poetry. See Pamela Davidson, "Hellenism, Culture and Christianity: The Case of Vyacheslav Ivanov and His

'Palinode' of 1927," in *Russian Literature and the Classics*, ed. Peter I. Barta, David H.J. Larmour, and Paul Allen Miller (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996), 83–116.

115. "O Merezhkovskom" (21 March 1920), 6:393–95(393). The essay was not published until after Blok's death.

116. By quoting a few lines from the original work by Lermontov out of context, Blok has succeeded in imparting to them a broader, more universal significance which fits well within his argument. In the original *Boiarin Orsha* (an early work of 1835–36, first published in 1842), the lines quoted by Blok are more limited in reference; they serve as a passing comment on an incidental background detail, the description of the ceiling of the monastery refectory, painted by an "userdnyi inok." See *Boiarin Orsha* (ll.332–35) in Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, 2:325; here cited in the form quoted by Blok (6:393). These lines had evidently caught Blok's eye; they were sidelined by him in his edition of Lermontov. See Lukirskaia, ed., *Biblioteka A.A. Bloka*, 2:52.

117. The view of Lermontov as a poet of Sophia was widespread among the symbolists who regularly quoted the fifth stanza of Lermontov's "Kak chasto, pestroiu tolpoiu okruzhen ..." (1840) in support of this approach. The tradition was started by Vladimir Solov'ev who incorporated a reworked version of the key lines from this poem in his autobiographical poem on his visions of Sophia, "Tri svidaniia" (1898). Briusov quoted a line from the same poem by Lermontov as an epigraph to his poem "Mon rêve familier" (1903), and Blok discussed this poem and the Lermontov-Solov'ev-Briusov connection in his 1904 review of Briusov's *Urbi et Orbi* (5:543). The same lines from Lermontov are quoted once more by Blok in his 1906 review "Pedant o poete" (5:29) in order to counter N.A. Kotliarevsky's more pedestrian approach to the poet. For Viacheslav Ivanov's view of Lermontov as the first Russian poet of the Eternal Feminine, see his "Zavety simvolizma" (1910), in Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 2:597.

118. Ivanov, "Zavety simvolizma," 4:597.

119. "Vse 'ukhody' i geroizmy – tol'ko zakryvanie glaz, zhelanie 'zabyt'sia' ... krome odnogo puti, na kotorom glaza otkryvaiutsia i kotoryi ia *zabyl* (i on menia). Na dniakh ia podumal o tom, chto stikhi pisat' mne ne nuzhno, potomu chto ia slishkom umeiu eto delat'. Nado eshche izmenit'sia ... chtoby vnov' poluchit' vozmozhnost' preodolevat' mater'ial." Entry of 25 March 1916, in Blok, *Zapisnye knizhki*, 292–93.

120. Entry of 14 June 1916 in Blok, *Zapisnye knizhki*, 306. On the *Philokalia* see n.60 above.

121. Letter of 16 June 1916, 8:463–64. Blok is referring to his essay of 1910 "O sovremennom sostoianii russkogo simvolizma," in which he discusses the artist's struggle with the demons or doubles of his creative fantasy (5:429–30).

122. *Early Fathers from the Philokalia*, ed. and trans. Kadloubovsky and Palmer, 119.

123. This passage was not included in the English version of the Russian *Dobrotoliubie* cited in the previous note. For an English translation from the original Greek, see *The Philokalia: The Complete Text compiled by St Nikodomus of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth*, trans. from the Greek and ed. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, 4 vols. (London: Faber and Faber, 1979–95), 1:45.

124. For both of Blok's comments, see the record of his notes in his copy of *Dobrotoliubie*, 4th ed., vol.1 (Moscow: Tip. I. Efimova, 1905), in Lukirskaia, ed., *Biblioteka A.A. Bloka*, 1:267–69(269).

125. In a letter of 16 January 1916 to S.N. Tutolmina (8:453–55) Blok wrote of his lack of feeling for human relationships and of the emotional aridity which resulted from his maximalist approach to life, causing him to demand either too much or nothing at all from life, and in either case to receive nothing. A few months later, on 29 May 1916, he broke off his diary after noting a feeling of total inertia ("apatiia takaia, chto nichego ne khochetsia delat'"); the diary was not resumed until November 1916 (7:250).

126. *Dobrotoliubie* contains numerous instances of monks strengthening their spirit through demonic trials. See, for example, *Early Fathers from the Philokalia*, ed. and trans. Kadloubovsky and Palmer, 101, 138–39. On the same phenomenon in hagiography, see in this volume Franklin, "Nostalgia for Hell."

127. N. Pavlovich recorded in the book that it was given to her by Blok in the winter of 1921 (i.e. 1920–21); Lukirskaia, ed., *Biblioteka A.A. Bloka*, 1:267. She also noted the fact in her memoirs; Pavlovich, "Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre Bloka," 494.

128. The meeting took place on 31 August 1921. Andrei Belyi, "Dnevnikovye zapisy," ed. S.S. Grechishkin and A.V. Lavrov, in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol.92, *Aleksandr Blok: Novye materialy i issledovaniia*, 5 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 1980–93), 3:803, 807. Bely erroneously attributes Evagrius's description of the demon of dejection to Antony the Great.

129. Andrei Belyi, "Vospominaniia ob Aleksandre Aleksandroviche Bloke" (1922), in *Aleksandr Blok v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov*, ed. Vl. Orlov, 2 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1980), 1:269.

130. This approach was later developed in an unusual article attributed to P. Florensky: "O Bloke," *Vestnik russkogo khristianskogo dvizheniia* 114 (1974):169–92. The author argues that Blok's verse is deeply demonic in that it parodies and undermines the sacred; in support of his view, alongside Blok's poetry (including "K Muze" and "Demon" of 1916) he quotes extracts from *Dobrotoliubie*, suggesting that Blok was himself possessed by various demons (176–77, 183–84). For a discussion of this article and refutation of its attribution to Florensky, see A. Paiman, "Tvorchestvo Aleksandra Bloka v otsenke russkikh religioznykh myslitelei 20–30-kh godov," in *Blokovskii sbornik XII* (Tartu: Izdatel'stvo TOO "TTs-Garant," 1993), 54–70.

131. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, second edition (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19. Bloom offers an experimental reading of *Paradise Lost* "as an allegory of the dilemma of the modern poet, at his strongest. Satan is that modern poet, while God is his dead but still embarrassingly potent and present ancestor, or rather, ancestral poet. ... Poetry begins with our awareness, not of a Fall, but that *we are falling*. ... When this consciousness of self is raised to an absolute pitch, *then* the poet ... comes to the bottom of the abyss, and by his impact there creates Hell. ... There and then, in this bad, he finds his good; he chooses the heroic, to know damnation and to explore the limits of the possible within it" (20–21). Bloom's model only partly fits the Russian literary tradition, which has not usually made of the state of damnation an absolute value, preferring instead to balance it against the sacred. On Milton's influence on Russian literature, including "Milton's Satan and Lermontov," see Valentin Boss, *Milton and the Rise of Russian Satanism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 102–18.