

Iconicity in Pushkin's Poem *Winter Evening*

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Abstract: Aleksandr [Alexander] Sergeevich Pushkin (1799-1837) is widely considered Russia's greatest poet. His *oeuvre* is extensive, including lyric poetry, prose, historical drama, fairy tales, and the novel in verse *Evgeniĭ Onegin* (*Eugene Onegin*). The poem *Zimniĭ Večer* (*Winter Evening*) is one of his best known lyric poems. It closely captures what may be called the Russian soul – a combination of melancholy and *joie de vivre*, set in the dead of the severe Russian winter. This paper analyzes the iconic structure of the poem in terms of its poetic form, patterns of repetition, sound symbolism, lexical choice, the metaphoric world it creates, and the autobiographical meanings it reveals.

Keywords: Pushkin, Winter Evening, iconicity

1. Historical Background

The historical background of the poem is important for a full understanding of its meaning. The poem was written while Pushkin was under house arrest on his family's country estate in Mikhaĭlovskoe near Pskov, in northern Russia, in 1825. By this time in his life, he was already acknowledged as a great poet. He had been educated for the tsar's service at the Imperial Lyceum at Tsarskoe Selo, a school established by Tsar Alexander I (1777-1825; reigned 1801-1825), but toward the end of Alexander's reign, it was perceived that Pushkin's poetry was playing a fomenting role in the opposition to a conservative turn in the tsar's policies. For this reason, he was confined in August 1824 to his house in the countryside, far away from the capital of St. Petersburg and the social spheres in which he was accustomed to move (he was eventually allowed to return to St. Petersburg in May 1827). Paradoxically, his unhappiness with his isolated social situation resulted in some of his finest writing (Kirpichnikov, 1890-1907).

One of Pushkin's few companions during his confinement in Mikhaĭlovskoe was the serf woman Arina Rodionovna (1758-1828), a longtime servant on his mother's side of the family, who had been his nanny from his earliest childhood, and had also been his mother's nanny (Filin, 2008; Kirpichnikov 1890-1907). Arina Rodionovna is credited with being one of the most formative figures in Pushkin's biography, because up to age 12, in the habit of the cultured aristocracy of his time, he spoke predominantly French at home with his parents (Sergei L'vovich Pushkin, 1767-1848, and Nadezhda Ossipovna *née* Gannibal, 1775-1836), while Arina Rodionovna – as well as his maternal grandmother, Maria Alekseevna Pushkina – spoke Russian, the language of the people. Arina Rodionovna is thus described in the words of one of Pushkin's nineteenth-century biographers, A. I. Kirpichnikov (1890-1907):

[...] *zhenshchina chestnaïa, predannaïa i ochen' umnaïa; ona znala beschislennoe kolichestvo pogovorok, posloviŭs, pesen' i skazok i okhotno soobshchala ikh svoemu pitomŭsu.*

[[She was] an honest woman, [who was] devoted and very clever; she knew a countless number of proverbs, sayings, songs and folk tales and she willingly recounted them to [the boy in] her charge.]

Thanks in part to his nanny, Pushkin from his earliest childhood was in touch with the idioms and melodies of the Russian language, despite the francophone atmosphere prevalent in his home. From her, he learned a wealth of Russian folklore, which he later immortalized in his rhymed fairy tales. The “old woman” in the text of the poem (below) is Arina Rodionovna, and Pushkin’s close relationship with her is reflected in the intimate emotional tone of the poem.

2. The Text of the Poem

The poem describes a winter storm from the perspective of two people huddled inside a small cottage while the storm rages outside. The narrator is the poet and his addressee is the old woman whom we biographically know to be his nanny. The poet feels disturbed by the glum atmosphere inside and the howling of the storm outside. The old woman, by contrast, is totally undisturbed and dozes beside the hum of a turning spindle. The poet tries to wake her up and urges her to drink with him and to sing to him. This exhortation has an emotionally uplifting effect on the poet, even though by the end of the poem it has not been explicitly stated whether the old woman has in fact responded.

Below, the text of the poem is given in Romanized transliteration according to the guidelines of the Library of Congress (Russian Romanization n.d.). The lines have been numbered consecutively, and all strongly stressed syllables (see the discussion of poetic form below) have been underlined. The original Cyrillic version (Pushkin, 1947 [1825]) and the full interlinear gloss (including a list of the grammatical abbreviations used in the analysis given in the interlinear gloss) are included in Appendices 1, 2 and 3. The punctuation of the original has been retained, with the addition of hyphens to indicate some of the morpheme boundaries relevant to the analysis (but not all morpheme boundaries, because of the rich synthetic nature/typology of Russian). Relevant parts of the poem are glossed in the course of the discussion of the text and its iconic structure.

Zimnii Vecher

- (1) *Burĭa mgloŭ nebo kroet,*
- (2) *Vikhri snezhnye kru-tĭa;*
- (3) *To, kak zver', ona za-voet,*
- (4) *To za-plachet, kak ditĭa,*
- (5) *To po krovle obvetshaloŭ*
- (6) *Vdrug solomoŭ za-shumit,*

- (7) *To kak putnik za-pozda-l-yĭ,*
 (8) *K nam v okosh-ko za-stuchit.*
- (9) *Nasha vetkhaĭa lachuzh-ka*
 (10) *I pechal'na i temna.*
 (11) *Chto zhe ty, moiĭa starush-ka,*
 (12) *Pri-u-molk-l-a u okna?*
 (13) *Ili buri za-vyv-an'em*
 (14) *Ty, moiĭ drug, u-tom-l-ena,*
 (15) *Ili dreml-esh' pod zhuzhzh-an'em*
 (16) *Svoego veretena?*
- (17) *Vyp'em, dobr-aĭa po-druzh-ka*
 (18) *Bednoiĭ ĭunosti moiĭ,*
 (19) *Vyp'em s gorĭa; gde zhe kruzh-ka?*
 (20) *Serdĭsu budet vesel-eĭ.*
 (21) *Spoiĭ mne pesnĭu, kak sinifsa*
 (22) *Tikho za morem zhi-la;*
 (23) *Spoiĭ mne pesnĭu, kak devifsa*
 (24) *Za vodoĭ poutru sh-la.*
- (25) *Burĭa mgloĭu nebo kroet,*
 (26) *Vikhri snezhnye kru-tĭa;*
 (27) *To, kak zver', ona za-voet,*
 (28) *To za-plachet, kak ditĭa.*
 (29) *Vyp'em, dobr-aĭa po-druzh-ka*
 (30) *Bednoiĭ ĭunosti moiĭ,*
 (31) *Vyp'em s gorĭa; gde zhe kruzh-ka?*
 (32) *Serdĭsu budet vesel-eĭ.*

3. Poetic Form

The poem has four stanzas of trochaic tetrameter. The choice of poetic form contributes to the iconic sound effects achieved by the poem, because the tetrameter produces a strong beat, an insistent, pounding rhythm, like the howling and pounding of the storm outside. However, because of Russian phonology, which allows one strong stress per word (with a weaker secondary stress possible in some longer words), the rhythm is softened in some lines where fewer than four syllables receive strong stress. Take the first four lines as example (stressed syllables have been underlined):

- (1) *Burĭa mgloĭu nebo kroet,*
 Storm.F fog.INS sky cut.3SG.IMPV
 'The storm cuts the sky with fog'

- (2) *Vikhri snezhnye kru-tiā;*
Winds snowy.PL whirling-ADV.PTCP
'Whirling snowy winds;'
- (3) *To, kak zver', ona za-voet,*
That like beast.M it.F start-howl.3SG.PFV
'Now it starts to howl like a beast;'
- (4) *To za-plachet, kak ditia,*
That start-cry.3SG.PFV like child.N
'Now it starts to cry like a child;'

In lines 1 and 3, the rhythm elicits four strong stresses: in line 1, because each word is a perfect two-syllabic trochee, and in line 3, because the syntax, reinforced by the punctuation, calls attention to each word and results in strong stresses even on the function words *to* ("that/ now") and *ona* ("it/she"). On the other hand, there are fewer strong stresses in lines 2 and 4. In line 2, the three-syllable word *snezhnye* ("snowy.PL") is framed by the words *vikhri* ("strong winds") and *krutiā* ("whirling.ADV.PTCP"), each consisting of two syllables. The last syllable of *snezhnye*, namely, *-e*, is part of its plural ending, and the expected stress (according to the scansion) is weakened or absent. The line ends in the masculine (stressed) rhyming syllable *-tiā*, truncating the trochaic rhythm, with the total number of syllables in the line being seven rather than eight. This creates, in line 2, three unstressed syllables in between the two stressed syllables *snezh-* and *-tiā*, thus varying, and briefly muting, the trochaic rhythm. Similarly, the rhythm is altered in line 4, where the function words *to* ("that/ now") and *kak* ("like") would be either unstressed or weakly stressed in the natural rhythm (scansion) of reading the line. This results in only two strongly stressed syllables in line 4, *-pla* in *za-plachet* ("start-cry.3SG.PFV"/ "starts to cry") and *-tia* in *ditia* ("child"), both of them with the open vowel phoneme /a/, iconically reinforcing the meaning of the child crying out.

As noted above, within the trochaic rhythm, some lines have four full feet (eight syllables), ending in a feminine (unstressed) rhyme, while others have a truncated last foot (seven syllables in the line), ending in a masculine (stressed) rhyme. The overall rhyming pattern is as follows (with the masculine rhymes indicated in capitals):

a B a B c D c D e F e F g F g F e H e H i J i J a B a B e H e H

Moreover, the last stanza (lines 25-32) consists entirely of repetition of previous lines: lines 25-28 repeat lines 1-4, and lines 29-32 repeat lines 17-20. The various patterns of repetition in the poem are discussed in greater detail in Section 4 below.

Out of the sixteen masculine rhymes, ten end in the stressed phoneme /a/ (phonetically realized as [a]). In addition, eight out of the sixteen feminine rhymes end in the unstressed phoneme /a/ (phonetically realized as [ʌ]). These open /a/ phonemes in rhyming syllables throughout the poem reinforce the sound effect of the comparison of the storm to a crying child, which is one of the simile images of the storm introduced in the first stanza.

4. Repetition

In her discussion of the theoretical framework of iconicity, Masako Hiraga (2005, pp. 46-50) emphasizes the significance of repetition for what Roman Jakobson (1960, p. 358, in Hiraga 2005, p. 46) termed the “poetic function” of language, which “projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection onto the axis of combination”. According to Hiraga (2005, p. 46):

When two elements in the sequential configuration are equated due to some kind of formal similarity such as alliterated words, rhymed feet or syntactic parallelism, and when there is also a semantic or conceptual link between the two elements thus equated, then it can be said that they exhibit an iconic manifestation: similarity in form signals similarity in meaning.

Thus the iconic effect of repetition is realized through “the recurrence of equalized forms” (Hiraga 2005, p. 46). Pushkin’s poem is a treasure trove of iconic repetition.

4.1. Repetition of Lines

As pointed out above, the last stanza entirely repeats lines 1-4 and 17-20 of the poem, encapsulating the story line of the poem – the storm is raging outside, so let us drink to gladden our hearts:

(25 = 1)	<i>Burĭa mgloĭu nebo kroet,</i>		
(26 = 2)	<i>Vikhri snezhnye kru-tĭa;</i>		
(27 = 3)	<i>To, kak zver', ona za-voet,</i>		
(28 = 4)	<i>To za-plachet, kak ditĭa,</i>		
(29 = 17)	<i>Vyp'em, dobr-aĭa po-druzh-ka</i>		
	Drink.1PL.IMP kind-F.ADJ over-friend-F.DIM		
	'Let us drink, kind friend'		
(30 = 18)	<i>Bednoĭ ĭunosti moeĭ,</i>		
	Poor.F.ADJ.GEN youth.F.GEN my		
	'Of my poor youth,'		
(31 = 19)	<i>Vyp'em s gorĭa; gde zhe kruzh-ka?</i>		
	Drink.1PL.IMP from grief where EMPH round-F.DIM		
	'Let us drink from grief; where is the cup?'		
(32 = 20)	<i>Serdĭsu budet vesel-eĭ.</i>		
	Heart.N.DAT be.FUT.3SG glad-ADV.COMPR		
	'The heart will be gladder.'		

This juxtaposition of the repeated lines 1-4 and 17-20 brings out a parallelism between the world outside and the world inside. Outside, the storm is crying “like a child” (line 4, *kak ditĭa*), while inside, the poet cries out to the old woman who had been his nanny in childhood and who

continues to be his “kind friend” in his “poor” youth (lines 17/18, *Vyp'em, dobr-aia po-druzhka / Bednoĭ iunosti moeĭ*). The word “poor” here is used in the sense of “wretched, deserving pity”, because Pushkin is feeling the emotional isolation of his house arrest in the countryside, far away from St. Petersburg.

Structurally speaking, the complete repetition of lines 1-4 and 17-20 is similar to a folksong, where often the refrain or part of a song is repeated. Indeed, the poet’s request that he cries out to his nanny, in lines 21-24 which follow in the middle of the poem, is to sing Russian folksongs:

- (21) *Spoĭ* *mne* *pesnĭu, kak* *sini-tsa*
Sing.2SG.IMP me.DAT song how blue.tit-F.DIM
'Sing to me of how the blue tit'
- (22) *Tikho* *za morem* *zhi-la;*
Quietly for sea.INS live-PST.F
'Quietly lived beyond the sea;'
- (23) *Spoĭ* *mne* *pesnĭu, kak* *devi-tsa*
Sing.2SG.IMP me.DAT song how maiden-F.DIM
'Sing me a song of how the maiden'
- (24) *Za vodoĭ* *po-utru* *sh-la.*
For water.INS over-morning.DAT go-PST.IMPV.F
'Went to fetch water in the morning.'

The content of the folksongs, briefly mentioned by the poet, evokes a more beautiful world than that of the raging storm. The storm is howling (line 3, *To, kak zver', ona zavoet*, “Now it starts to howl like a wild beast”), but the old woman is undisturbed, calmly dozing off. The poet wants to awaken her, because she has the capacity with singing to counteract the disturbing effect of the storm’s howling on the poet’s soul.

In the world outside, the storm encroaches on the poet’s world inside, rustling the thatched roof (line 6, *Vdrug solomoi za-shum-it*, “Suddenly [it] starts rustling the straw”) and knocking on the window (line 8, *K nam v okoshko za-stuchit*, “[It] starts to knock on our window”). The inside of the cottage is “both sad and dark” (line 10, *I pechal'na i temna*) but it offers shelter from the storm in both the physical and emotional sense. The physical warmth of the cottage is not mentioned; indeed, the cottage is described (line 9) as *nasha vetkhaia lachuzh-ka*, “our frail old hut”; but the emotional warmth of the nanny’s presence is counterpoised to the depressing atmosphere of the storm. Indeed, her presence makes all the difference in the poet’s world: we can feel that the atmosphere of the poem would have been quite different if she had been absent and the poet had been alone with the storm.

Another iconic effect of the repetition of the lines in the last (fourth) stanza is that they serve to frame the poem (since the first lines of the poem are repeated again in the last stanza). Just like the little cottage, the poem becomes a tiny self-contained world. Like a little house, which is generally square with four corners, the poem has four stanzas, and its meter is trochaic tetrameter – iconically, a cozy containment of the world of the poet’s soul, set against the storm.

4.2. Parallelisms in Syntactic Structure

In the poem, every stanza has repeated parallel grammatical structures. At the same time, there is a variety of different repetitions, like a complicated melody.

4.2.1. Repetition of the Prefix *za-*

In the first stanza, four verbs and one adjective begin with the prefix *za-*, which conveys a perfective aspect. The meaning of *za-* in these verbs, which are all in the 3rd person singular and refer to the actions of the storm, is that of incipient action: *za-voet* “will start to howl”, *za-plachet* “will start to cry”, *za-shum-it* “will start to rustle”, *za-stuchit* “will start to knock”. Although if taken in isolation, these verbs would be in the future tense (and perfective aspect), the repeated constructions with *to* “that” which introduce these verbs, here give them the meaning of recurring and intermittent (iterative) present actions which happen “now and again”: (line 3) *to* [...] *za-voet* “now it starts to howl”, (line 4) *to za-plachet* “now it starts to cry”, (lines 5-6) *to* [...] *za-shum-it* “now it starts to rustle”, (lines 7-8) *to* [...] *za-stuchit* “now it starts to knock”. In addition, three of these actions involve a comparison, introduced by *kak* “like”, and giving various personifications of the storm: (line 3) *kak zver*’ “like a beast”, (line 4) *kak ditia* “like a child”, (line 7) *kak putnik za-pozda-l-yi* “like a belated traveler”. In the adjective (derivationally a past participle) *za-pozda-l-yi* “late/ belated”, the perfectivizing aspect of the prefix *za-* conveys the meaning of completion (“already late”) rather than incipience.

All of these parallelisms in the first stanza create a rich description of the actions of the storm, with progressive comparisons and personifications which at the beginning of the stanza are wild and threatening (line 3, *To, kak zver*’, *ona zavoet* “Now it starts to howl like a beast”), but are brought down to a human and almost friendly scale by the end of the stanza (lines 7-8, *To kak putnik za-pozda-l-yi*, *K nam v okosh-ko za-stuchit* “Now like a belated traveler/ It starts to knock at our window”). In addition, the four verbs and one participial adjective with perfective aspect in lines 3-8 are juxtaposed to the imperfective aspect, indicating ongoing action, of the present-tense verb *kroet* “it cuts” and the present-tense adverbial participle *kru-tia* “whirling” in lines 1 and 2, respectively. Thus, the background action of the storm “whirling snowy winds” and “cut[ting] the sky with fog” continues unabated throughout, and is reiterated in the repetition of lines 1-2 in lines 25-26, while the foregrounded personified actions, like howling and crying, are intermittent/ iterative (perfectivized as completed over and over): now and again, the storm “starts to howl like a beast” (lines 3 and 27) or “starts to cry like a child” (lines 4 and 28). Finally, the intermittent actions of lines 5-8 – rustling the thatched roof and knocking at the window – bring the storm into the human realm, and place its intrusion at the boundary between the outside and the inside of the cottage, thus creating a transition to the next stanza and the description of the nanny dozing inside and the restless poet trying to awaken her.

4.2.2. Repetition of the Conjunctions *i* and *ili*

In the second stanza, the description of the inside of the cottage involves the repetition of conjunctions. In lines 9-10, the *vetkhaia lachuzh-ka* “frail old hut” is *i pechal’na i temna* “both

sad and dark” (note also the repetition of the suffix *-na* in this coordinated structure). In lines 13-16, addressing the nanny, the poet notices that she is dozing off rather than disturbed by the storm:

- (13) *Ili buri za-vyy-an'em*
Or storm.GEN start-howl-ing.N.GER.INST
'[Are you] by the howling of the storm'
- (14) *Ty, moy drug, u-tom-l-ena,*
Thou.2SG my friend.M at-weary-PST-F.ADJ.PTCP
'(Ø) wearied, my friend,'
- (15) *Ili drem-l-esh' pod zhuzhzh-an'em*
Or doze-2SG under whirr-ing.N.GER.INS
'Or are you dozing to the whirring'
- (16) *Svoego vereten-a?*
POSS.REFL.GEN spindle-GEN
'Of your.own spindle?'

Again, this is a coordinated structure, *ili... ili* “either... or”, introducing the possible reasons why the nanny, unlike the storm, is silent. Again, the syllable *-na* is repeated in the endings of *u-tom-l-ena* “wearied” (line 14) and *vereten-a* “of the spindle” (line 16), paralleling the phonology of *i pechal'na i temna* “both sad and dark” and iconically adding a sense of repetition and monotony. Far from the disturbing effect of arousing the the young man (i.e., the poet), the whirling storm and whirring spindle have had a drowsing effect on the old woman, his nanny.

4.2.3. Repetition of the Imperative Verbs *vyp'em* and *spoi*

The third stanza includes the repetition of two key verbs: *vyp'em* “let us drink” and *spoi* “sing.2SG.IMP”. Each verb is repeated twice (lines 17, 19 and 21, 23, respectively), and *vyp'em* is also repeated twice in the repetition of lines at the end of the poem (line 17 = line 29, line 19 = line 31). Like several other instances of fourfold repetition in the poem (trochaic tetrameter, four stanzas, four verbs with the prefix *za-* in the first stanza, four conjunctions starting with the vowel *i* in the second stanza), the pattern of repetition suggests the number four (perhaps, subliminally iconic of the four corners of the house).

The two repeated verbs are similar in structure. Both verbs are in the imperative mood: 1st person plural *vyp'em* “let us drink [together]” and 2nd person singular *spoi* “[thou/you] sing [to me]”. The roots of both verbs are phonetically similar (the infinitives are *pit'* “to drink” and *pet'* “to sing”), and both start with a prefix (*vy-* and *s-*, respectively) which serves to perfectivize the action (the perfective aspect signals the anticipation of the future completion of the action). Also, drinking and singing are often coupled in Russian culture, so the coupling of these actions in the poet’s exhortation is quite natural semantically.

In terms of meaning, this stanza represents the poet’s efforts to rouse his drowsing nanny. Like the storm that cries like a child, the young man cries out to the old woman who had

nursed him from early childhood. The poet's words are not in quotation marks; it is ambiguous whether they are a silent heart-cry, committed to paper only, or a loud cry, like the storm's howl, or a gentle voice, like the storm's knocking at the window. Within the world of the action of the poem, the nanny does not respond; the reader can only surmise the response. The poet's appeal to the nanny to drink with him is repeated again at the end of the poem (lines 29-32 = lines 17-20), with the hope expressed in the future tense in the poet's anticipation of a positive response that will lift the sad mood:

(32 = 20) *Serdfsu budet vesel-eļ.*
 Heart.N.DAT be.FUT.3SG glad-ADV.COMPR
 'The heart will be gladder.'

4.2.4. Repetition of Comparative and Subordinate Constructions with *kak*

The function word *kak* is repeated five times in the poem, in the first and third stanzas. In the first stanza, it is used as a comparative adverbial conjunction: (line 3) *kak zver'* "like a beast", (line 4) *kak ditia* "like a child", (line 7) *kak putnik* "like a traveler". In these lines, *kak* combines with a noun phrase, rendering it into an adverbial phrase which describes the action of the storm – the storm howls like a beast, cries like a child, knocks on the window like a traveler. In the third stanza, on the other hand, *kak* is an interrogative adverb in its relativizing function to form subordinate clauses describing the songs that the poet urges his nanny to sing: (lines 21-22) *kak sini-tsa/ Tikho za morem zhi-la* "how the blue tit [a kind of bird]/ Lived quietly beyond the sea"; (lines 23-24) *kak devi-tsa/ Za vodoi po-utru sh-la* "how the maiden/ Went [used to go] to fetch water in the morning".

In these subordinate constructions, in surface structure the word *kak* is again followed by a noun, but here the noun is the subject of the whole subordinate clause. Thus the syntax of these constructions is slightly different in the first and third stanzas. However, in both stanzas, *kak* transports the reader away from the present moment into the world of the imagination. We imagine the various personas of the storm; and with the poet, we want to escape from the winter storm into the idealized world of folksongs, which evoke a joyful spring or summer mood, e.g., by juxtaposing "water" (line 24) to the "snowy winds" of line 2 = line 26. In addition, the two nouns which follow *kak* in the subordinate clauses are in prominent positions phonetically – they are the rhyming words of lines 21 and 23, thus sticking in the readers' mind with a deeper impression, reinforcing the juxtaposition of an imagined warm summer world to the reality (albeit reinforced by the imaginary personifications introduced by *kak* in the first stanza) of the winter world.

4.2.5. Repetition of the Preposition *za*

Another feature of the songs described in lines 21-24 is the repetition of the preposition *za*. This preposition is etymologically related to the prefix *za-* which was repeated five times in the first stanza. Just as with the repetition of *kak*, we have a syntactic variation on the same theme, an interplay between the first and third stanzas. In the first stanza, the verbs with the prefix

za- described the actions of the storm (and the participial adjective *za-pozda-l-yi* “belated” described the traveler to whom the storm was being compared), while in the third stanza, *za* creates an adverbial prepositional phrase describing the actions in the songs: (line 22) *za morem zhi-la* “lived beyond the sea”, (line 24) *za vodiĭ [...] sh-la* “went [to fetch/ for] water [...]”. Thus, just as with *kak*, the grammatical variation of *za* is part of the juxtaposition between the description of the winter storm in the first stanza and the evocation of summer (or, of a more pleasant world; or, of an imaginary world) in the third stanza.

4.2.6. Repetition of the Particle *zhe*

One more grammatical repetition involves the particle *zhe*, which is an emphatic intensifier. It could be translated into English as “then” or “on earth” or “for heaven’s sake” or “for God’s sake” or “pray tell”; it functions to intensify the utterance and invite a response. There are two instances of the use of *zhe*, both in questions posed by the poet, in lines 11-12 and line 19, and the latter is repeated in line 31 (for a total of three tokens):

- (11) *Chto zhe ty, moiā starush-ka,*
What EMPH thou.2SG my.F old.woman-F.DIM
‘Why pray.tell [have] you, my dear old lady,’
- (12) *Pri-u-molk-l-a u okna?*
Near-at-silent-PST.PFV-F at window.GEN
‘Fallen silent by the window?’
- (19 = 31) *Vyp’em s gorā; gde zhe kruzh-ka?*
Drink.1PL.IMP from grief where EMPH round-F.DIM
‘Let us drink from grief; where is the cup?’

The syntactic structure of these repeated constructions is:

WH-word + *zhe* + Noun Phrase.

In the question in lines 11-12, the subject noun phrase is realized as the personal pronoun *ty* “you/ thou.2SG”, with the apposition (between commas) of the full noun phrase *moiā starush-ka* “my [dear] old woman” identifying the addressee/ subject. In the question in line 19 (repeated as line 31), the subject noun phrase is realized as the noun *kruzh-ka* “cup/ mug/ tankard” (i.e., the drinking vessel), and the question could either be addressed to the old woman or be rhetorical. Thus, the first question can be translated into English as “Nanny, why, *pray tell*, have you fallen silent by the window?” (spoken to the old woman, trying to wake her up), while the second question can be translated as “Where *on earth* is the cup?” (a rhetorical question or exclamation expressing the impatience of the poet). Within the repeated syntactic deep structure there is thus variation in its realization in surface structure and in its pragmatic meaning. Amazingly, as a great poet, Pushkin repeats himself but is never boring! As with the prefix *za-* vs. the preposition *za*, and comparative vs. subordinating *kak*, there is variation in the grammatical use of *zhe* – interrogative vs. exclamatory – which makes the poem lively and interesting.

4.3. Lexical and Morphological Repetition

Beside the lexical repetitions pointed out above (*za-*, *i*, *ili*, *vyp'em*, *spoĭ*, *kak*, *za*, *zhe*) which are constitutive parts of repeated grammatical constructions (phrases, clauses, sentences), there are several instances of lexical and/or morphological repetition that occur as lexemes, rather than as constitutive parts of grammatical parallelisms. These are detailed below. Because of the rich morphology of the Russian language, a Russian word or root occurring in different forms is not readily recognizable as the same to non-Russian readers. Therefore, the English translation of each repeated Russian root is given in the headings of the discussion below, and the root in question is highlighted in bold.

4.3.1. “Storm”: *buria*, *huri*

The key word *buria* “storm” is repeated twice in the nominative case in subject position (line 1 = line 25), and once in its genitive form *huri* in line 13. This is the only content word that is repeated, in and of itself (in line 13), rather than just as part of a repeated grammatical construction, and as the same lexeme (the other repetitions below involve morphological derivation, rather than simply an inflectional difference in case ending). This shows the thematic importance of this key word in the poem.

4.3.2. “Howl”: *za-voet*, *za-vyv-an'e*

The root meaning of “howl” is repeated in different parts of speech. In line 3 it is the verb *za-voet* “it starts to howl”, while in line 13 it is the deverbal noun (gerund) *za-vyv-an'e* “[ongoing] howling”. Since both the prefix and the root are repeated, these two lexemes are very closely related, referring to the same action. Iconically, the repetition reinforces the sense of ongoing howling, especially one that varies in intensity, with the effect of starting over and over again.

4.3.3. “At/on” vs. “at/by” “the window”: *v okosh-ko*, *u okna*

The word *okosh-ko* “little window, accusative case (= nominative in form)” (line 8) is the diminutive of *okno* “window”, which appears in its genitive case in line 12, *u okna* “by the window”. Both lexemes refer to the same window, but to the action on opposite sides of the window pane: on the outside, the storm is knocking at/on (*v*) the window, while inside, the old woman is (by implication) sitting at/by (*u*) the window. The diminutive derivation is very productive in Russian, as in other Slavic languages, but technically speaking, *okosh-ko* and *okno* are different lexemes. From the point of view of iconicity, one reason for the use of the diminutive *okosh-ko* in line 8 is that from the outside, with the huge storm “cutting the sky”, the window and the cottage itself are diminished in perspective. The prepositions used to describe the positional relationship to the window are grammatically parallel and phonetically related (*v* “at/ on” is labiodental and *u* “at/ by” is bilabial in articulation), but they are also different lexemes. Looking in from both sides of the window, as it were (from the outside, the storm is compared to a late traveler knocking, i.e., looking in), the natural world and human world come face to face, as in a mirror image.

4.3.4. “Friend”: *drug*, *po-druzh-ka*

Another root which is repeated and diminutivized is “friend”, in line 14 and 17. In both instances, it is part of an utterance directly addressed to the nanny by the poet, and grammatically is in the nominative case with vocative function (the vocative case is no longer extant in modern Russian, except in Church Slavic). In line 14, although addressed to the old woman, the noun is masculine in gender, *moĭ drug* “my friend”. This usage of the masculine form of *drug* to a female addressee is quite normal, and indicates respect. In lines 17-18, the nanny is addressed as *dobr-aia po-druzh-ka/ Bednoĭ iunosti moeĭ* “kind friend/ Of my poor youth”, using the derived feminine noun *po-druzh-ka*, but with an extended description of the nature of the friendship. In this case *po-druzh-ka*, which derivationally is also a diminutive, can be interpreted as a term of endearment. The description of the relationship makes clear the age difference between the two personages of the poem, removing the possibility of a sexual connotation.

4.3.5. “Round” (Etymologically): *kru-tia*, *kruzhka*

A rather hidden lexical repetition of the same root is the adverbial participle *kru-tia* “whirling/ turning” (line 2 = 26), a form of the verb *krutit’* “to turn”, and the noun *kruzhka* “cup/ mug/ tankard”. Etymologically, both are related to the noun *krug* “circle” and adjective *kruglyĭ* “round”, containing the root *kru(g)*. The idea of the storm “whirling snowy winds” (line 2 = 26) is an important image in the poem, and the clandestine repetition of the same root in *kruzhka* reinforces this image of roundness or turning. Etymologically, *kruzhka* is related to the verb *kruzhit’* “to move around in a circle (e.g., as birds do in the sky)”, perhaps because the roundness of a mug is fashioned on a potter’s wheel. This hidden sense of roundness in the poem nicely counterbalances the squareness of the fourfold repetitions noted in several places (e.g., four stanzas, four repetitions of *to* in the first stanza, four coordinating conjunctions in the second stanza), evoking, perhaps, the fluidity of the storm as against the solidity (albeit *vetkhaia* “old and frail”) of the cottage. We also have here the archetypal geometric figures of the square and the circle, sometimes associated with the earth (human realm) and the sky (divine realm), as in the architecture of the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, or of domed Christian churches. In line 1, the storm is “cutting the sky” (*nebo kroet*) – squaring the circle. *Nota bene*, the word *vetkhaia* could be construed with religious connotations, because of the phrase *Vetkhii Zavet* “Old Testament”, although the religious association is nicely camouflaged here because the adjective *vetkhaia* modifies the colloquial diminutivized noun *lachuzh-ka* “hut”.

4.4. Sound Symbolism

There are very few mentions of color in the poem. The cottage, *vetkhaia lachuzhka* “frail old hut” (line 9) is described as *temna* “dark” (line 10). The only flash of color is hidden in the word *sini-tsa* “blue tit” (line 21) in the content of the imagined song, referring to a blue bird and containing the root *siniĭ* “dark blue” (the color of the evening sky if the sky were clear rather than covered with storm clouds; or the color of the sea). On the other hand, the rich description of the storm in the first stanza is full of sound effects, which continue to be echoed in various

permutations throughout the poem. These sound effects describe the whirling, howling, crying, rustling and knocking of the storm; and the juxtaposed effects of the muting/waning/silencing of sound, and of humming and singing.

4.4.1. Whirling, Howling, Crying, Rustling and Knocking

4.4.1.1. Whirling

In the first two lines of the poem, which are also repeated in the last stanza (line 1 = 26, line 2 = 27), the sounds of the first and last word convey the effect of whirling:

(line 1 = 26) *Buria mgloiu nebo kroet*

(line 2 = 27) *Vikhri snezhnye kru-tia*

BURIA.....KRUTIA

..UR.....RU.....

The middle sounds of *kru-tia*, /ru/, are almost the same sounds, inverted, of the middle sounds of *buria*, /ur'/. If we read these sounds together, /...ur'...ru.../, /...ur'...ru.../, they sound like the howling of the storm. They frame the two lines which introduce the description of the storm. These two lines describe the whirling and turning of the wind, so the palindrome-like inversion of the sounds iconically echoes the meaning of the lines.

Moreover, the last word of the first line, *kroet* “cuts” and the first word of the second line, *vikhri* also contain echoes of these sounds, anticipating *kru-tia*, with /kro.../ and /...xri/ being phonetically similar to /kru.../, because /o/ and /u/ are both back vowels, while /k/ and /x/ are both velar obstruents.

The syllable /kru/ and its sounds /kr/ and /ru/ of “*kru-tia*” then continue to be echoed throughout the poem in different lexical items: (line 5) *po kroyle* “on/over the roof”, (line 6) *vdruk* “suddenly”, (line 11) *starush-ka* “dear.old.woman”, (line 12) *pri-u-molk-la* “have.fallen.silent”, (line 13) *huri* “storm.F.GEN”, (line 14) *drug* “friend”, (line 17 = 29) *po-druzh-ka* “over-dear.friend-FEM”, (line 19 = 31) *kruzh-ka* “cup/ mug/ tankard”, (line 24) *po-utru* “over-morning/ in.the.morning”. The word “*po-utru*”, the last line of the third stanza before the recap (repeated lines) of last stanza, contains an echo of the full inversion conveying the sense of whirling in the first two lines, /u... ru/.

4.4.1.2. Howling

After the first two lines, line 3 of the poem describes the storm’s howling:

(line 3 = 27) *To, kak zver', ona za-voet,*

That like beast.M it.F start-howl.3SG.PFV

‘Now it starts to howl like a beast,’

In this line, the soft (palatalized) /r'/ echoes the /r'/ and /r/ phonemes of lines 1-2, while the new motif of howling is introduced by the lexeme *za-voet* “howls”. The root of this verb is repeated in line 13, *za-vyy-an'em* “start-howl-ing.N.GER.INST”. In line 3, in addition to the repetition of the open vowel /a/ (the stressed syllable containing /a/ is contained in the pronoun *ona* “she/ it”), the motif of howling is evoked by the consonants *z*, *v* and the back vowels *o* (especially when in its stressed form) and *y* (= [i]). This iconic motif of *z*, *v*, *r/r'*, stressed *o*, *y* (= [i]) is echoed throughout the poem: (line 4 = 28) *to* “that/ now”, *za-plachet* “it starts to cry”, (line 5) *krovle* “roof”, *obvetshaloi* “dilapidated/ weathered”; (line 6) *vdrug* “suddenly”, *solomoi* “straw.F.INST”; (line 7) *za-pozda-l-yi* “late/belated”; (line 8) *v okoshko* “at/on the window”, *za-stuchit* “starts knocking”; (line 9) *vetkhaia* “frail.old”; (line 11) *chto* “what/why”, *ty* “you.2SG”; (line 12) *pri-umolk-la* “have.fallen.silent”; (line 13) *huri* “storm.F.GEN”, *za-vyy-an'em* “start-howl-ing.N.GER.INST”; (line 14) *ty* “you.2SG”, *moi* “my”; (line 16) *svoego* (= [svaiyo]) “your.own.POSS.REFL.GEN”, *veretena* “spindle”; (line 17 = 29) *vyp'em* “let us drink”, *dobraia* “kind”; (line 19 = 31) *vyp'em* “let us drink”, *s goria* “from grief”; (line 20 = 32) *vesel-ei* “gladder/ more.joyful”; (line 21) *spoi* “sing.2SG.IMP”; (line 22) *za morem* “beyond the sea”; (line 23) *spoi* “sing.2SG.IMP”, *devi-tsa* “maiden”; (line 24) *za vodoi* “for water”. It is not the case that every one of these phonetic repetitions conveys the meaning of howling in its particular lexeme; rather, they carry the sound motif of *z*, *v*, *r/r'*, stressed *o* [ɔ], *y* (= [i]) introduced in the comparison to a howling beast – (line 2) *To, kak zver', ona za-voet* “Now, it starts howling like a beast”; (line 13) *huri za-vyy-an'em* “the howling of the storm”.

4.4.1.3. Crying

As noted in Section 3, eighteen lines in the poem end in the open vowel phoneme /a/, reinforcing the effect of the comparison of the storm to a crying child. Among the other lines, six end in the voiceless obstruent phoneme /t/ (see the comments on “knocking”, below), two in the nasal sonorant /m/, and the remaining six in *i*, which is phonetically the palatal sonorant [j], with a close phonetic similarity to /i/, i.e., a very vowel-like consonant. Thus, most of the rhyming syllables end in either a vowel or a sonorant, iconically echoing the sounds of crying (and also, of “humming” and “singing”, as discussed in Section 4.4.3 below).

4.4.1.4. Rustling

In lines 5-6, the action of the storm is rustling the thatched roof:

- (5) *To po krovle obvetshaloi*
That over roof decrepit
'Now on the decrepit roof'
- (6) *Vdrug solomoi za-shum-it,*
Suddenly straw.INS start-noise-3SG.PFV
'Suddenly it starts rustling the straw'

The verb *za-shum-it* “starts rustling” is onomatopoeic, containing the phoneme *sh*, phonetically the voiceless retroflex alveopalatal spirant obstruent [ʂ], and the root *shum*

“noise”. The adjectival past participle *obvetshaloï* “decrepit” also contains *sh*. This sound is also present in *okoshko* “little.window” (line 8), *starushka* “dear.old.woman” (line 11), *dremlesh’* “you.are.dozing.SG” (line 15), *sh-la* “went.F.IMPF” (line 24), and phonetically (though not morphologically) present, through devoicing assimilation to the diminutive ending *-ka*, in *lachuz-ka* “hut/ cottage” (line 9), *po-druzh-ka* “dear.friend-FEM” (line 17 = 29), and *kruzh-ka* “cup/ mug/ tankard” (line 19 = 31).

4.4.1.5. Knocking

In lines 7-8, the storm is compared to a belated traveler knocking at the window:

- (7) *To* *kak* *putnik* *za-pozda-l-yï*,
 That like traveler.M start-late-PST-M.ADJ.PTCP
 ‘Now like a belated traveler’
- (8) *K* *nam* *v* *okosh-ko* *za-stuchit*.
 To us. DAT in window-DIM start-knock.3SG.PFV
 ‘[It] starts to knock at our window.’

The sound effects of knocking are reinforced in the following ways in the first stanza, through the repetition of voiceless stops: 1) the rhyming words in lines 1, 3, 6 and 8 end in the voiceless stop /t/; 2) the word *to* “that/ now (now and then)”, which starts with /t/, is repeated four times in the first stanza, like repetitive knocking; the word *kak* “like/ how”, which starts and ends in the voiceless stop /k/, is repeated three times in the first stanza, also sounding like repetitive knocking; 3) lines 7-8 start and end in /t/, and contain several instances of /t/ and /k/, like punctuated knocking; 4) in line 7, the phrase *putnik za-pozda-l-yï* “belated traveler”, contains two instances of the voiceless stop /p/; 5) the word *putnik* itself contains all three possible voiceless stops /p/, /t/, /k/, like different sound variations of knocking. All of these repetitions of voiceless stops contrast with the vowel, sonorant and voiced sounds of whirling, howling and crying.

4.4.2. Muting/Waning/Silencing

The richness of the description of the storm indicates that the sounds of the storm vary in quality and intensity. Also, the sounds inside the hut are muted in comparison with the outside. The sense of muting is in several words carried by the repetition of the sound combination of the phonemes /m/, /l/ or /l’/ with /o/ or /e/ (phonetically realized as stressed [o] or unstressed [ʌ], stressed [e] or unstressed [i]). In the first stanza, this occurs in the words *mgloiu* “with.fog.F.INS” (line 1) and *solomoi* “with.straw.F.INS” (line 6), both suggesting instances of lesser intensity of the storm. In the second stanza, this sound effect occurs in the words *pri-u-molk-la* “have.fallen.silent” (line 12), *utomlena* “wearied/ lulled” (line 14) and *dremlesh’* “you.are.dozing.2.SG” (line 15), all of which are addressed by the poet to his nanny and describe her silence and insouciance to the storm. In addition, the prefix *pri-* “near” of *pri-u-molk-la* further softens the mood (“you have gradually fallen nearly silent”).

One more sound effect which carries a sense of lesser intensity is the soft palato-alveolar affricate *ch*, phonetically [tʃ] or [ç]. This sound occurs twice in the first stanza: (line 4 = 28) *za-plachet* “starts to cry” and (line 8) *za-stuchit* “starts to knock”, crying (line 4) being of lesser intensity than howling (line 3), and knocking (line 8) being a more intermittent sound than the “rustling” (*za-shum-it*) of line 7, because the root of *za-shum-it* is *shum* “noise”, evoking (in Russian) a more noisy and sonorant sound than knocking. In the third stanza, where the description shifts to the muted interior of the hut, the sound *ch* is repeated twice in the first two lines: (line 9) *lachuzh-ka* “hut/ shanty/ cottage” and (line 10) *pechal’na* “sad”, setting the mood of the scene in a minor key (as it were), in harmonic counterpoint to the major key of the grandeur of the raging storm.

4.4.3. Humming/Whirring and Singing

The scene inside the hut is more peaceful and sonorant in tone than the whirling, howling, crying, rustling and knocking outside. The inside is like an iconic echo and harmonic counterpoint to the outside. Two of the “inside” sounds are the (actual) humming of the spindle and the (imagined and/or exhorted) singing of the old woman (if she awakens). They are in counterpoint to the whirling and crying of the storm.

4.4.3.1. Humming

The humming of the spindle is conveyed by the word *zhuzhzh-an’em* in the last lines of the second stanza:

- (15) *Ili dremI-esh’ pod zhuzhzh-an’em*
 Or doze-2SG under whirr-ing.N.GER.INS
 ‘Or are you dozing to the whirring’
- (16) *Svoego vereten-a?*
 POSS.REFL.GEN spindle-GEN
 ‘Of your.own spindle?’

Phonetically speaking, the long “...zhzh...” in the middle of the word *zhuzhzh-an’em* is quite unusual and ear-catching. It is a word that could also be used to describe the humming and buzzing of bees. In English, it could be translated as “buzz”, with a double “zz”, or as “whirr”, with a double “rr” (an alternative spelling to “whir” with a single “r”). Phonetically, this Russian sound is the post-alveolar retroflex fricative [ʒ], which actually combines the phonetic qualities of an English /z/, which is an alveolar fricative, and the English /r/ = [ɹ] or [ɻ], which is a post-alveolar or retroflex approximant. The Russian word *zhuzhzh-an’em* (“whirr-ing.N.GER.INS”; nominative case *zhuzhzh-an’e*) fits the scene perfectly: the spinning wheel of the spindle is spinning inside, just as the wind is whirling and turning outside. The sound of the spinning wheel is loud, yet it is just a soft hum compared to the howling of the storm outside. The stressed syllable in *zhuzhzh-an’em* contains the open vowel /a/, echoing the repetition of /a/ in the rhyming words evoking crying and singing.

4.4.3.2. Singing

The open vowel /a/ carries the sound effect of crying and singing. In both the second and third stanza, six out of eight rhyming words end in /a/. In the second stanza, in lines 9 and 11, the final /a/ is realized as the unstressed [ʌ], while in lines 10, 12, 14, 16 the repetitive rhyming syllable is *-na*, with /a/ realized as stressed [a]. In the third stanza, in lines 17, 19, 21 and 23 the final /a/ is realized as the unstressed [ʌ], while in lines 22 and 24 the rhyming words are *zhi-la* “lived” and *sh-la* “went”, with /a/ realized as stressed [a]. The stressed words *zhi-la* and *sh-la* thematically refer to the main actions of the songs that the poet is exhorting the old woman to sing, evoking an imagined pleasant summer world in counterpoint to the howling and crying of the winter storm (and in counterpoint to the crying inside the poet’s heart, who himself is “like a child” in the presence of his nanny, his lifelong companion and “kind friend”).

5. Lexical Choice

In the poetic function (Jakobson, 1960, p. 358, in Hiraga, 2005, p. 46) of language – as indeed, ultimately, in any language use – the poet makes choices from his mental lexicon. The choices are significant, both in which items are chosen and which alternatives are not. This section discusses three instances of significant word choice patterns in the poem: 1) high style lexical choices vs. 2) the colloquial atmosphere of diminutives; and 3) the sense of familiarity introduced by the use of 2nd person singular pronouns.

5.1. High Style Forms in the First Four Lines

The first four lines of the poem (repeated again in the last stanza) convey the grandeur of the storm through the choice of several forms which are stylistically high style rather than colloquial.

The word used for the storm itself is *buria*, while other alternatives were not chosen: *groza* “thunderstorm”, *v’ūga* “snowstorm”, *metel’* “snowstorm”. The word *buria* can also mean a storm at sea, a tempest. The poet chose this wider meaning of storm rather than the more colloquial alternatives for “snowstorm”, evoking the pure sense of storm itself (unquiet), rather than of thunder or snow, and thus perhaps facilitating the metaphorical transference to the soulful description of the scene inside.

In the second line, the storm is “whirling snowy winds”. The word chosen for “winds” is the elevated form *vikhri* (singular, *vikhr’*) “whirlwind/strong.wind”, rather than the more common word for wind, *veter’* (plural, *vetry*), thus reinforcing the image of strong whirling and turbulence.

The third and fourth lines continue the elevated mood with the word choices *zver’* “beast” (rather than *zhivotnoe* “animal”) and *ditia* “child” (rather than *reb’ēnok* “child”). A beast is savage and menacing; a crying child feels helpless and alone. The high style lexical choices sharpen the emotional intensity of this contrast.

5.2. Diminutives

By the eighth line of the first stanza, the elevated mood becomes muted and scaled down. The storm is compared to a belated traveler who “starts to knock at our window”. The mood also starts to be more tender and playful emotionally. This is achieved through the use of the diminutive *okosh-ko* “little.window” rather than the neutral word for window, *okno*. The first line of the second stanza continues to carry the (somewhat) lightened mood, conveyed by the diminutive *lachuzh-ka* “hut/ shanty/ cottage”. The word *lachuga* (undiminutivized) can mean “hovel”, quite a decrepit and run-down dwelling; however, it is unlikely that Pushkin’s country cottage, a manor house (now a house museum devoted to the poet’s memory) was literally decrepit. The diminutive makes the description a little tongue-in-cheek. The poet feels depressed and the diminutive renders the description lowly, as opposed to the elevated style of the beginning of the poem. Diminutives are a colloquial device; and immediately, the next diminutive is *starush-ka* “dear.old.woman” (rather than the undiminutivized *starukha* “old woman/ hag”), addressed directly to the ordinary Russian peasant woman who is his companion (but who is also his servant, a serf, *de facto* his slave). Pushkin deftly manipulates the style of the language to effectuate the transition to feeling like a powerless child in a peasant’s cottage, comforted only by the old woman’s presence.

By the third stanza, the mood of addressing the old woman becomes very tender: *dobr-aia podruzh-ka/ Bednoĭ ūnosti moeĭ* “kind dear.friend.F.DIM/ [of] my poor youth” (lines 17-18). The diminutive is *podruzh-ka*, rather than the undiminutivized *drug* “friend” (which is used in line 14). This phrase from Pushkin’s poem, “kind friend of my poor youth”, has become famous, immortalizing Arina Rodionovna in history.

5.3. Personal Pronouns

Another aspect of lexical choice in the poem, which is perhaps less obvious (especially in English translation), is the sense of familiarity and intimacy created by the use of 2nd person singular pronouns. This section examines the use of personal pronouns in the poem.

In the order in which they appear in the poem, the personal pronouns are:

(line 3 = 28)	<i>ona</i> “it/ she”	(3SG.F; nominative)
(line 8)	<i>nam</i> “to.us”	(1PL; dative)
(line 9)	<i>nasha</i> “our”	(1PL.POSS.F; nominative)
(line 11)	<i>tŭ</i> “you/ thou”	(2SG; nominative)
(line 14)	<i>tŭ</i> “you/ thou”	(2SG; nominative)
(line 14)	<i>moĭ</i> “my”	(1SG.POSS.M; nominative)
(line 16)	<i>svoego</i> “of.your/of.one’s.own”	(3SG POSS.REFL.N; genitive)
(line 18 = 30)	<i>moeĭ</i> “of.my/ of.mine”	(1SG.POSS.F; genitive)
(line 21)	<i>mne</i> “to.me”	(1SG; dative case)
(line 23)	<i>mne</i> “to.me”	(1SG; dative case)

In the progression of pronouns, which establish the main references of the poem, we

can trace its shifting focus. First there is the storm, referred to as *ona* “it/ she”. Russian has grammatical gender, and hence the storm is lexically feminine; however, the personification of its actions also establish the storm as one of the protagonists of the poem. The other protagonists are Pushkin (the narrator) and the old woman (Arina Rodionovna); they first enter the poem jointly, referred to by the 1st person plural pronouns *nam* “to.us” and *nasha* “our” at the juncture of the first and second stanzas (lines 8 and 9). In the second stanza, the focus is on the old woman and her (amazing) silence in the eye of the storm. The pronoun *ty* is the 2nd person singular “thou” (archaic in English) rather than “you”; it is the form of intimate, familiar address. Being a serf woman, Arina Rodionovna would not under any circumstances have been addressed by her master as *vy* “you” (the deferential, polite form); however, the immediate apposition, in the same line (14), of *ty, moĭ drug* “thou, my friend” (a sentiment reiterated in lines 17-18 as *dobr-aiia po-druzh-ka/ Bednoĭ ūnosti moeĭ* “kind friend of my poor youth”) establishes the emotional value of *ty* not as master to slave but as a young man to his dear friend since childhood. The unified 1st person plural reference of *nam* “to.us” and *nasha* “our” has been bisected into the close apposition of *ty, moĭ drug* “thou, my friend”.

In the third stanza, the poet again addresses the old woman directly, exhorting her to drink with him (*vyp'em*, “let us drink”, 1st person plural imperative) and to sing to him (*spoi*, 2nd person singular imperative). In terms of explicit pronominal reference, however, the focus is now on the poet: (line 18 = 30) *moeĭ* “of.my/ of.mine”; (line 21 and 23) *mne* “to.me”. The poet’s attention is bidirectional: on the old woman for the benefit that the comfort her company and her singing will bring to himself.

The repetitions of the fourth stanza recap the whole poem. In terms of pronominal reference, what is left is *ona* “it/ she”, i.e., “the storm”, and *bednoĭ ūnosti moeĭ* “of my poor youth”. Ironically, when these two pronominal references are brought together, they reveal the theme of the metaphorical layering of the poem: the (tempestuous) storm of the poet’s poor (wretched) youth, so full of promise as Russia’s greatest poet, yet helplessly imprisoned in his own house.

Among the personal pronouns of the poem, one more pronoun stands out as the ‘odd man out’ – in line 16 (the midpoint of the poem), *svoego veretena* “of.your / of.one’s.own spindle”. Here, too, lexical choice was involved, because the poet could have written *tvoego veretena* “of.thy spindle”. Through the use of the reflexive possessive pronoun, the spindle becomes associated with the old woman alone; the poet as co-protagonist has no part of it. This sense of separateness stands in contrast to the joint reference of the 1st person plural *nam* “to.us”, *nasha* “our” (lines 8-9) and the close apposition of *ty, moĭ drug* “thou, my friend” (line 14). Spiritually (and referentially) speaking, everything in the poem – perhaps even the storm – is part of the poet’s world, apart from the spindle.

6. Metaphoric World

According to Hiraga (2005), there is an interplay between metaphor and iconicity. Metaphor is a kind of icon, in that the metaphoric imagery “represent[s] a parallelism in something else” (Peirce, 1962 [1955, 1902], p. 105, in Hiraga, 2005, p. 15), i.e., establishes a relation of similarity. The imagery of Pushkin’s poem, reinforced by the complex layering of recurrent iconic repetitions analyzed above, establishes at least two kinds of metaphorically significant

parallelisms: 1) between the outer world of the storm and the inner world of the hut, and 2) between the whirling storm and the turning spindle. Both of these relational parallelisms become metaphorically expressive of the poet's life and soul.

6.1. Outer vs. Inner World

In the outer world, the storm “whirls snowy winds”, howls and cries, and knocks at the window of the cottage. In the inner world, the poet hears the storm's howl (line 13, *burī za-vyv-an'efm*), and perceives that the interior of the cottage is “both sad and dark” (line 10, *I pechal'na i temna*), and that his nanny has “fallen silent at the window” (line 12, *Pri-u-molk-la u okna*). There is a parallelism between the visual and auditory images outside and inside, the two worlds separated by the windowpane, just like an eye separates the interiority of the soul and the exteriority of one's life. Knowing the circumstances of Pushkin's life, his “poor youth” (line 18, *bedn[aiā] iūnost[']*) was stormy, and yet his prison (and exile from the capital of St. Petersburg) was his comfortable country home.

Just like the traveler (to whom the storm is being compared) knocks at the window, the poet knocks, metaphorically speaking, at his nanny, by trying to awaken her. Arriving at his family estate of Mikhaïlovskoe (deported from his post in 1820-1824 in the South of Russia and forbidden from visiting the capital of St. Petersburg), Pushkin would have been like a traveler, looking for the comfort of home, and his nanny would have been one of the people to receive him. The young man is now also like the child to whom the storm is being compared, crying out to his nanny for comfort.

Winter is a part of life in the magnificent natural landscape of Russia, and the dramatic description of the storm – even the menacing howling of a wild beast – is not quite as threatening as it might seem to a Westerner. On the interior of the windowpane, the nanny has peacefully fallen asleep. The poet is anxious to revive his depressed spirit by drinking “from grief” (line 19 = 31, *s gorīa*), which will “make the heart glad” (*serdtsu budet vesel-ei*), the antonym of “sad”, the antidote to depression. Instead of listening to the howling of the storm, he is anxious to listen to the singing of his nanny, again an antidote. The content of the imagined familiar songs evokes summer, morning, the color blue and water, juxtaposed to the winter, evening, darkness and snow. All of these things – the depressing winter and the glorious summer, the drinking and the singing – are integral parts of Russian culture, and hence the poet's soul.

6.2. The Wheel

The image of the turning spindle inside the cottage parallels the image of the whirling storm outside. The Russian word for spindle, *vereteno*, has the same root as the verb *vertet'* “to turn”. Also, phonetically, in the pattern of repetitions in the poem, *vereten-a* has the /v/ and /r'/ sounds of the howling “beast”, *zver'*. Spiritually, the two images are in juxtaposition – the storm outside is a disturbing presence, while the spindle inside is part of the nanny's world, a comforting presence. At an even deeper level, however, the parallelism evokes an archetype – the wheel, the turning wheel of fortune, the cycle of life (and of the seasons), and perhaps, the archetypal figure of Fate as a woman spinning the thread of life. In Greek mythology, Klotho

(Greek Κλωθώ), “whose name means ‘Spinner’” (Atsma, 2000-2011), was one of the three Fates, and spun the thread of life; Lakhesis (Greek Λάχαισις, ‘Alotter’) measured the thread, and Atropos (Ἄτροπος ‘Unturning’, the Greek equivalent of Roman *Morta* ‘Death’) cut the thread (Atsma, 2000-2011; “Moirai”, 2014).

Whatever the poet’s fate may be, the nanny’s presence is spiritually comforting. There is yet another dimension here, that of the heart (line 20 = 32, *serdtsu budet vesel-eĩ*, “to.the.heart will.be.made gladder”). The old woman is certainly a grandmother figure; she is also a mother figure, nurturing and comforting, a fixed reassuring presence. Interestingly, there is no specific description of the old woman herself. Even her voice is emphatically absent – although it is invoked, as if in an invocation of the Muse. Like the turning spindle, her physical presence is almost an abstraction. It is her spiritual presence that counts. The spiritual presence is that of a woman at the heart and/or hearth of the home, engaged in (though at present, disengaged from) the woman’s work of spinning yarn at the spindle. In calling out to her, the poet connects with her heart, and thereby, with his own heart, through the joy and comfort of friendship, companionship, love. The warmth of home, counterpoised to the cold of winter, is ensured and symbolized by her presence.

Interestingly, the ‘cold’ of winter is nowhere explicitly mentioned in the poem; only the adjectives *pechal’na* “sad” and *temna* “dark” are used of the interior of the hut (line 10), counterbalanced by *vesel-eĩ* “gladder/ more joyful” (line 20=32) as the consequence of drinking and singing. Metaphorically speaking, warmth – especially emotional warmth – is never truly absent, because it is assured by the old woman’s presence.

6.3. Pushkin’s Anagram

The possible identification, hinted at in Section 6.1 above, of the belated traveler with Pushkin himself, in retrospect of his forced return home from the South of Russia and the capital St. Petersburg, points at one more hidden iconic pattern in the poem. That is Pushkin’s anagram or hidden signature, like the signature or face of a painter hidden within a painting. Let us look more closely at the word *putnik* “traveler” (line 7). With the exception of /t/, it is an anagram of Pushkin. If the letter *t* (Cyrillic τ) is replaced with *sh* (Cyrillic ш), then *putnik* becomes **pushnik*. Then if we invert *-nik* to *-kin*, we have *Pushkin* (Cyrillic Пущкин).

Now consider the phonology and symbolism of the lines preceding and following the line containing the word *putnik* “traveler”:

- (5) *To po kroyle obvetshaloĩ*
That over roof decrepit
‘Now on the decrepit roof’
- (6) *Vdrug solomoĩ za-shum-it,*
Suddenly straw.INS start-noise-3SG.PFV
‘Suddenly it starts rustling the straw,’
- (7) *To kak putnik za-pozda-l-yĩ,*
That like traveler.M start-late-PST-M.ADJ.PTCP
‘Now like a belated traveler’

- (8) *K nam v okosh-ko za-stuchit.*
 To us.DAT in window-DIM start-knock.3SG.PFV
 ‘[It] starts to knock at our window.’

As pointed out previously, in lines 5-6 the sound /sh/ (= [ʂ]) is onomatopoeic of the rustling of the straw. In lines 7-8, the sound of the traveler knocking at the window is conveyed by the repetition of voiceless stops, /p/, /t/, /k/. Moreover, throughout the first stanza, there is repetition of /k/ in the repeated word *kak* “like”, and repetition of /t/ in the repeated word *to* “that/ now” and in the final /t/ of the four rhyming verbs, the feminine rhymes *krœet* “cuts” (line 1=25) and *za-voet* “it starts to howl” (line 3=27), and the masculine rhymes *za-shumit* “it starts rustling” (line 6) and *za-stuchit* “[it] starts to knock” (line 8). Thus, throughout the first stanza, the voiceless stop which seems to be most iconic of the knocking sound is /t/, which is also the first and last sound of lines 7-8. On the other hand, the most repeated voiceless stop in lines 7-8 is /k/, with six occurrences. The sound /k/ is repeated twice in *okosh-ko* “little window” (line 8), a word which is almost a perfect palindrome (it would be if it were **okoshoko*), highlighting the middle /sh/. In all of lines 5-8, /sh/ occurs once in each line, except for line 7. But if we were to substitute the middle sound /sh/ of *okoshko* for the middle sound /t/ (iconic of knocking) in *putnik*, we would have **pushnik*, and if we then invert *-nik* to *-kin* by placing the sound /k/ (also iconic of knocking) at the beginning of the second syllable, we have *Pushkin*. Thus, the sound-play of these lines makes possible the hidden anagrammatic wordplay.

Is there any support in the symbolism of the poem for this hidden phonological anagram of Pushkin’s name? Consider yet another hidden pattern, that of the distribution of masculine, feminine and neuter nouns by grammatical gender. Apart from the masculine plural *vikhri* “winds” (line 2=26), and the word *vecher* “evening” in the title, there are only three masculine nouns in the poem: *zver* “beast” (line 3=27), *putnik* “traveler” (line 7) and *drug* “friend” (line 14). The word *drug* “friend” is a masculine noun (grammatically) but refers to the old woman in the poem; the connotation of the masculine usage here is that she is a close and respected friend. *Zver* “beast” refers to the storm in its menacing aspect, while *putnik* “traveler” ostensibly refers to the storm, but in a more playful and friendly way (friendliness is suggestive by the use of the diminutive *okosh-ko* “little.window” in line 8 instead of *okno*), which brings the storm down to human scale and transitions to the interior world on the inside of the windowpane. Now, if *putnik* is also taken as an anagram for *Pushkin*, then the three masculine singular nouns of the poem refer to the poem’s three protagonists: the storm, the poet, the old woman.

There is a balance of masculine and feminine in the poem (like Chinese *yin* and *yang*): the young man and the old woman who is the “friend of [his] poor youth”; an equal number of masculine and feminine rhymes; and (possibly) the triune naming of the protagonists with masculine singular nouns as against the predominantly feminine (and neuter) nouns of the rest of the poem.

The storm, being a force of nature, is all genders at once: *buria* “storm” (line 1=25) is feminine; *zver* “beast” (line 3=27) is masculine; *ditia* “child” (line 3=28) is a neuter noun with the exceptional ending *-a* more usual of feminine nouns; *putnik* “traveler” (ostensibly referring to the storm, though possibly a hidden anagram for *Pushkin*) is masculine. Note that the word for “nature” itself in Russian is grammatically feminine: *priroda*.

The old woman, apart from the word *drug* “friend” (line 14, masculine) is feminine *par excellence*, the grandmother/ mother figure: *starush-ka* “dear old woman” (line 11), *podruch-ka* “dear (female) friend” (line 17=29). Possibly, symbolically, she is also Life and Fate itself/ herself; note that in Russian, both “life” and “fate” are grammatically feminine: *zhizn'* and *sud'ba* (as is “death”, *smert'*). Moreover, she is a Russian peasant woman, symbolic of (Mother) Russia herself; the words *Rossiia* “Russia” and *Rus'* “Russia” are grammatically feminine.

The various nouns of the background storyline in the poem are mostly either feminine or neuter: *nebo* “sky.N.SG.NOM” (line 1=26); *vikhri* “winds.M.PL.ACC” (line 2=27); *po krovye* “over the.roof.F.SG.DAT” (line 5); *solomoi* “straw.F.SG.INS” (line 6); *okosh-ko* “little.window.N.SG.ACC.DIM” (line 8); *lachuzh-ka* “little.hut.F.SG.NOM.DIM” (line 9); *u okna* “at the.window.N.SG.GEN” (line 12); *zavyv-an'em* “howling N.SG.INS.GER” (line 13); *zhuzhzh-an'em* “whirring/humming.N.SG.INS.GER” (line 15); *vereten-a* “spindle.N.SG.GEN” (line 16); *ūnosti* “youth.F.SG.GEN” (line 18=30); *s gorā* “from grief.N.SG.GEN” (line 19=31); *kruzhka* “cup/tankard.F.SG.NOM” (line 19=31); *serdtsu* “heart.N.SG.DAT” (line 20=32); *pesnū* “song.F.SG.ACC” (line 21 and 23); *sini-fsa* “blue.tit.F.SG.NOM” (line 21); *za morem* “beyond the.sea.N.SG.INS” (line 22); *devi-tsa* “maiden.F.SG.NOM” (line 23); *za vodoi* “for water.F.SG.INS” (line 23); *po-utru* “in the.morning.N.SG.DAT” (line 23; here *utru* “morning” is lexicalized as part of an adverb). Overall, among the above background nouns, ten are neuter, nine are feminine (or ten if we count the repetition of *pesnū* “song”), and one is masculine plural.

Perhaps, considered symbolically, the one additional masculine noun in the poem, *vikhri* “strong winds/whirlwinds.M.PL.ACC” (line 2=27), and the masculine *vecher* “evening.M.SG.NOM” of the title, are not incidental after all. The whirling winds of the storm outside are juxtaposed to the whirling/whirring/humming spindle inside. Metaphorically, the storms of external fate/life are the troubles young Pushkin encountered in the world of men. The evening is dark and troubled by the storm, unlike the pleasant world of the nanny’s folksongs. Like a traveler (through Russia and through life), he has come back to the shelter of the home of his childhood. Inside, the mother figure sleeps peacefully undisturbed by the storm. Metaphorically, she holds in hand the spinning wheel of the thread of Pushkin’s life. In the interiority of life, in the closeness of the heart, warmth and continuity are assured, despite the stormy winds outside.

7. Conclusion

Poetic iconicity is the opposite of the principle of arbitrariness of the linguistic sign (Hiraga, 2005; Williams, 1994). In this highly crafted poem, every word and every sound matters. The poem is an organic whole, a symbolic, metaphorical world in which various aspects of form – meter and rhyme, repetition and lexical choice – both reflect and create the meaning. According to Roman Jakobson (1970) such artistic creation may be subliminal – in other words, the rich web of similarity associations between form and meaning may be holistically intuited by the poet rather than consciously put there piece by piece. However, it is precisely this organic quality of intuition that renders Pushkin’s art a work of genius.

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Appendix 1. The Original Russian Text of the Poem (Pushkin, 1947 [1825])**ЗИМНИЙ ВЕЧЕР**

Буря мглою небо кроет,
Вихри снежные крутя;
То, как зверь, она завоет,
То заплачет, как дитя,
То по кровле обветшалай
Вдруг соломой зашумит,
То, как путник запоздалый,
К нам в окошко застучит.

Наша ветхая лачужка
И печальна, и темна.
Что же ты, моя старушка,
Приумолкла у окна?
Или бури завываньем
Ты, мой друг, утомлена,
Или дремлешь под жужжаньем
Своего веретена?

Выпьем, добрая подружка
Бедной юности моей,
Выпьем с горя; где же кружка?
Сердцу будет веселей.
Спой мне песню, как синица
Тихо за морем жила;
Спой мне песню, как девица
За водой поутру шла.

Буря мглою небо кроет,
Вихри снежные крутя;
То, как зверь, она завоет,
То заплачет, как дитя.
Выпьем, добрая подружка
Бедной юности моей,
Выпьем с горя; где же кружка?
Сердцу будет веселей.

Appendix 2. Interlinear Gloss

- Zimnii* *Večer*
 Winter.ADJ Evening
 ‘Winter Evening’
- (1) *Burīa* *mgloīu* *nebo kroet*,
 Storm.F fog.INS sky cut.3SG.IMPV
 ‘The storm cuts the sky with fog’
- (2) *Vikhri* *snezhnye* *kru-tīā*;
 Winds snowy.PL whirling-ADV.PTCP
 ‘Whirling snowy winds;’
- (3) *To,* *kak zver’*, *ona* *za-voet*,
 That like beast.M it.F start-howl.3SG.PFV
 ‘Now it starts to howl like a beast,’
- (4) *To* *za-plachet*, *kak ditīā*,
 That start-cry.3SG.PFV like child.N
 ‘Now it starts to cry like a child,’
- (5) *To* *po* *krovle obvetshaloi*
 That over roof decrepit
 ‘Now on the decrepit roof’
- (6) *Vdrug* *solomoī* *za-shum-it*,
 Suddenly straw.INS start-noise-3SG.PFV
 ‘Suddenly it starts rustling the straw,’
- (7) *To* *kak putnik* *za-pozda-l-yī*,
 That like traveler.M start-late-PST-M.ADJ.PTCP
 ‘Now like a belated traveler’
- (8) *K nam v okosh-ko* *za-stuchit*.
 To us.DAT in window-DIM start-knock.3SG.PFV
 ‘[It] starts to knock at our window.’
- (9) *Nasha vetkhaīa lachuzh-ka*
 Our frail.old hut-F.DIM
 ‘Our frail old little hut’
- (10) *I* *pechal’na* *i* *temna*.
 And sad.F.ADJ and dark.F.ADJ.
 ‘[Is] both sad and dark.’

- (11) *Chto zhe ty moĭa starush-ka,*
What EMPH thou.2SG my.F old.woman-F.DIM
'Why pray.tell [have] you, my dear old lady,'
- (12) *Pri-u-molk-l-a u okna?*
Near-at-silent-PST.PFV-F at window.GEN
'Fallen silent by the window?'
- (13) *Ili buri za-vyy-an'em*
Or storm.GEN start-howl-ing.N.GER.INST
'[Are you] by the howling of the storm'
- (14) *Ty moĭ drug, u-tom-l-ena,*
Thou.2SG my friend.M at-weary-PST-F.ADJ.PTCP
'(Ø) wearied, my friend,'
- (15) *Ili drem-l-esh' pod zhuzhzh-an'em*
Or doze-2SG under whirr-ing.N.GER.INS
'Or are you dozing to the whirring'
- (16) *Svoego vereten-a?*
POSS.REFL.GEN spindle-GEN
'Of your.own spindle?'
- (17) *Vyp'em, dobr-aĭa po-druzh-ka*
Drink.1PL.IMP kind-F.ADJ over-friend-F.DIM
'Let us drink, kind friend'
- (18) *Bednoĭ ūnosti moeĭ,*
Poor.F.ADJ.GEN youth.F.GEN my
'Of my poor youth'
- (19) *Vyp'em s goriā; gde zhe kruzh-ka?*
Drink.1PL.IMP from grief where EMPH round-F.DIM
'Let us drink from grief; where is the cup?'
- (20) *Serdĭsu budet vesel-eĭ.*
Heart.N.DAT be.FUT.3SG glad-ADV.COMPR
'The heart will be gladder.'
- (21) *Spoi mne pesnĭu, kak sini-tsa*
Sing.2SG.IMP me.DAT song how blue.tit-F.DIM
'Sing to me of how the blue tit'
- (22) *Tikho za morem zhi-la;*
Quietlyfor sea.INS live-PST.F
'Quietly lived beyond the sea;'

- (23) *Spoi mne pesnū, kak devi-fsa*
Sing.2SG.IMP me.DAT song how maiden-F.DIM
'Sing me a song of how the maiden'
- (24) *Za vodoi po-utru sh-la.*
For water.INS over-morning.DAT go-PST.IMPV.F
'Went to fetch water in the morning.'
- (25) *Burūa mgloūu nebo kroet,*
Storm.F fog.INS sky cut.3SG.IMPV
'The storm cuts the sky with fog'
- (26) *Vikhri snezhnye kru-tūa;*
Winds snowy.PL whirling-ADV.PTCP
'Whirling snowy winds;'
- (27) *To, kak zver', ona za-voet,*
That like beast.M it.F start-howl.3SG.PFV
'Now it starts to howl like a beast,'
- (28) *To za-plachet, kak ditūa.*
That start-cry.3SG.PFV like child.N
'Now it starts to cry like a child.'
- (29) *Yyp'em, dobr-aīa po-druzh-ka*
Drink.1PL.IMP kind-F.ADJ over-friend-F.DIM
'Let us drink, kind friend'
- (30) *Bednoi ūnosti moeī,*
Poor.F.ADJ.GEN youth.F.GEN my
'Of my poor youth'
- (31) *Yyp'em s gorīa; gde zhe kruzh-ka?*
Drink.1PL.IMP from grief where EMPH round-F.DIM
'Let us drink from grief; where is the cup?'
- (32) *Serdīsu budet vesel-eī.*
Heart.N.DAT be.FUT.3SG glad-ADV.COMPR
'The heart will be gladder.'

Appendix 3. Abbreviations Used in the Interlinear Gloss

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ACC	accusative
ADJ	adjective, adjectival
ADV	adverb, adverbial
COMPR	comparative
DAT	dative
DIM	diminutive
EMPH	emphatic
F	feminine
FUT	future
GEN	genitive
GER	gerund
IMP	imperative
IMPFV	imperfective
INS	instrumental
M	masculine
N	neuter
NOM	nominative
PFV	perfective
PL	plural
POSS	possessive
PST	past
PTCP	participle
REFL	reflexive
SG	singular

- Notes:
1. Stressed syllables are underlined.
 2. Morphological divisions relevant to the analysis are indicated by hyphens.
 3. Syllable divisions do not always coincide with morpheme divisions.
 4. The punctuation of the original is retained.
 5. Romanized transliteration follows guidelines of the Library of Congress.
 6. The glossing abbreviations follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules (2008).