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A Pushkin Quotation in Ivan Karamazov's Poem

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Abstract. The aim of the study is to determine the functions of a quotation from Alexander Pushkin's tragedy *The Stone Guest* in Ivan Karamazov's poem *The Grand Inquisitor*. The author argues with previously expressed versions regarding the semantic potential of this quotation. Methodologically, the approach of the article is rooted in the idea that the quotation from Pushkin in the poem about the Grand Inquisitor is not only a form of expression of the author's position (Dostoevsky's), but also the position of the literary character, portrayed as the author and subject of the quotation (Ivan Karamazov's). A hypothesis is put forward that the quotation from *The Stone Guest* can be regarded as a polemical argument against the inquisitorial concept of man, which Ivan Karamazov insists on. In light of the quotation from Pushkin, Ivan's position is revealed as characterised by a profound duality and contradictions, which he himself directly denies. This hermeneutic hypothesis is based on an analysis of the genre specificity of the tragedy, which formed as a result of Pushkin's reconceptualization of the comedic version of the Don Juan story; an analysis of the image of Don Juan as a tragic hero; an analysis of the philosophical integrity of *The Little Tragedies* cycle; and, finally, an analysis of the receptive structure of the tragedy *The Stone Guest*. The specificity of the latter is regarded as a task implicitly present in the text for the reader to overcome the inertia of the comedic stereotype in reading Pushkin's version of the "eternal" plot. As a result of the study, the following conclusions have been made: the involvement (by the hero – Ivan and the author – Dostoevsky) of Pushkin's quotation from *The Stone Guest* into the poem *The Grand Inquisitor* is significant for its meaning in the novel; its main function is to exacerbate the philosophical contradictions of the poem, the clash of opposing ideas about man; the quotation can be defined as an interpretant of Ivan's position: in its light, that deep duality, which the hero denies, becomes obvious.

Keywords: *The Little Tragedies*, *The Stone Guest*, Ivan Karamazov, poem *The Grand Inquisitor*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, tragic hero, image of Don Juan, Ivan Karamazov as an author

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Пушкинская цитата в поэме Ивана Карамазова

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Аннотация. Цель исследования – определить функции цитаты из трагедии А.С. Пушкина «Каменный гость» в поэме «Великий инквизитор» Ивана Карамазова. Полемически описываются ранее высказанные версии относительно смыслового потенциала данной цитаты. Методологически исследование опирается на идею о том, что пушкинская цитата в составе поэмы о великом инквизиторе является не только формой выражения авторской позиции (Достоевского), но и позиции литературного героя, изображенного в качестве сочинителя и субъекта цитирования (Ивана Карамазова). Выдвигается гипотеза о том, что цитата из «Каменного гостя» может быть прочитана в качестве полемиического аргумента против инквизиторской концепции человека, на которой настаивает Иван Карамазов. Данная герменевтическая гипотеза опирается на анализ жанровой специфики трагедии, оформившейся в результате пушкинской переработки комедийной версии сюжета о Дон Жуане; анализ образа Дон Гуана как трагического героя; анализ философской целостности цикла «Маленькие трагедии»; анализ рецептивной структуры трагедии «Каменный гость». Специфика последней связывается с имплицитно присутствующим в тексте заданием для читателя по преодолению инерции комедийного стереотипа в чтении пушкинской версии «вечного» сюжета. В результате исследования сделаны следующие выводы: введение (героем – Иваном и автором – Достоевским) пушкинской цитаты из «Каменного гостя» в поэму «Великий инквизитор» носит концептуальный характер; ее основная функция – обострение философской противоречивости поэмы, столкновение противоположных представлений о человеке; цитата может быть определена как интерпретанта позиции Ивана: в ее свете становится очевидной та ее глубинная двойственность, которую герой отрицает.

Ключевые слова: «Маленькие трагедии», «Каменный гость», Иван Карамазов, «Великий инквизитор», «Братья Карамазовы», трагический герой, образ Дон Гуана, Иван Карамазов как сочинитель

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Introduction

The “Dostoevsky and Pushkin” theme has been thoroughly explored thanks to the efforts of both Russian and foreign literary studies, and the results of this examination seem to have yielded a comprehensive solution. It appears that every single Pushkin motif present in the poetic structure of Dostoevsky’s novels and novellas has been noted. At the same time, the analysis of Pushkin’s words as

referred to by Dostoevsky's characters is a distinct subject within this field of study. Many of Dostoevsky's characters discuss their experience reading Pushkin. However, only four of Dostoevsky's characters directly quote Pushkin: Aglaya Epanchina, reciting the poem *There Was Once a Poor Knight*...; Rodion Raskolnikov, quoting Pushkin's *Imitations of the Koran*; Arkady Dolgoruky, a character from *The Adolescent*, who, in stating his idea, refers to the monologue of *The Miserly Knight*; and, finally, Ivan Karamazov, drawing a quotation from the tragedy *The Stone Guest* in the poem about the Grand Inquisitor.

The quotations used by Aglaya, Arkady, and Raskolnikov have been exhaustively interpreted in scholarship. These interpretations have focused on the characterological and symbolic potential of the quotations, their correlation with the philosophical scope of the novels, and their plot function. However, the same cannot be said of the quotation by Ivan Karamazov. It is positioned at the beginning of Ivan's poem regarding the Grand Inquisitor. "The day is over, the Seville night comes, dark, hot, and 'breathless'". The air is "fragrant with laurel and lemon. In the deep darkness, the iron door of the prison suddenly opens, and the old Grand Inquisitor himself slowly enters carrying a lamp"¹. Ivan incorporates elements of Laura's monologue from *The Stone Guest* into his poem, making minor alterations to them:

How calm the sky is,
The air is warm and still, the night is fragrant
With scents of lime and laurel...²

Analyses of the artistic function of this quotation do not actually emphasise the importance of the fact that it is undertaken by a *literary character* and that it is part of a *literary character's* plot. This quotation is often discussed as a reminiscence by Dostoevsky, and therefore as a form of expression that reflects the author's perspective rather than that of the character.

According to I.L. Almi's (1999, p. 173) study, quotations from Pushkin in Dostoevsky are characterised as lyrical images of the writer's artistic philosophy, including the quotation from *The Stone Guest*. "In this quality, they transcend the level of individual characters' consciousness (even those entrusted with citing) and reveal the synthesis of the author's point of view".

In some studies, scholars attempt to interpret the Pushkin quote in question as a marker of genre specificity of the poem composed by Ivan. Supporting Almi's idea about the allusive character of the quotation from Pushkin, A.B. Krinitsyn writes: "In form, Ivan's work is very similar to Pushkin's *The Little Tragedies*. <...> Thus, Ivan's poem poetically continues the tradition of mythologising poetic allusion in [Dostoevsky's] 'pentateuch' and is a logical development of this stylistic device where it reaches its peak. The image of the Grand Inquisitor, compared to its

¹ Dostoevsky, F.M. (1992). *The Brothers Karamazov* (Richard Pevear, & Larissa Volokhonsky, Trans., pp. 211–212). New York: Millennium Library.

² Pushkin, A.S. (2000). *The Little Tragedies* (N.K. Anderson, Trans., p. 75). New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

analogues, is extremely expanded <...>. Thanks to the challenge to Christ himself, the image acquires the form of a mystery, which Dostoevsky could not find in the poetic texts known to him” (Krinit syn, 2016, p. 84). Rightly emphasising the belonging of the genre definition of the story about the Grand Inquisitor to Ivan, Krinit syn nevertheless analyses its place in the composition of the *author’s* intent.

E.A. Fedorova (2020, p. 50) offers another perspective on the function of the quotation from *The Stone Guest*. She treats it as a marker of Dostoevsky’s aesthetic reflections on the correlation between poetry and reality: “Pushkin’s discourse between Laura and Carlos regarding the essence of life <...> is further elaborated in Ivan Karamazov’s poem. Additionally, Laura performs a song composed by Don Juan. The spatio-temporal code switches to the aesthetic level, and the system of double coding includes the reader in the author’s reflections on the correlation between poetry and reality”.

It is important to note that none of the above analyses emphasises the subject behind the quotation, i.e., the fact that Dostoevsky assigns it to a character, which consequently makes it a form of expression that reflects not only the author’s position but also the position of the character, who is also an author. This fact is crucial for researchers interpreting the quotations used by Raskolnikov, Aglaya, and Arkady. Therefore, it would be appropriate to consider A.B. Krinit syn’s commentary on Raskolnikov’s quotation of Pushkin:

“In *Crime and Punishment*, quoting is kept to a minimum: Raskolnikov recalls the way in which in Pushkin’s *Imitations of the Koran*, all humankind is branded a “trembling creature” <...>. This reminiscence is placed <...> in the second inner monologue, which is crucial for understanding the character’s mental conflict. From this, we can conclude that Rodion was pondering Pushkin’s lines the whole time he was delving into his idea and was probably inspired by them <...>. This reminiscence is the first one to reveal that Raskolnikov’s idea was also rooted in religion, as evidenced by his self-comparison to the “prophet” Mohammed. Raskolnikov’s ultimate objective was to establish a new moral framework, waging war against God” (Krinit syn, 2016, p. 77).

Criticism of the Interpretation of Don Juan as an “Ungodly” Seducer

T.A. Kasatkina’s work represents the most detailed rumination on the Pushkin quotation in Ivan Karamazov’s poem (2007). However, in this analysis, similarly to other works, the quotation is regarded as “a way of existence of the author’s position”, although it is noted that “the author is limited in his rights here, because he finds himself in the space of a text created by his character” (Kasatkina, 2007, p. 295). Nevertheless, Kasatkina’s analysis aims to unravel the author’s, i.e., Dostoevsky’s, intent, as manifested through the quotation from Pushkin. However, it does not delve into the intent of the character portrayed by the writer as the author of the poem.

According to Kasatkina (2007, p. 296), the quotation from *The Stone Guest* indicates that Ivan's actions are similar to those of Don Juan, as Ivan uses seduction to gain Alyosha's trust by admitting his rightness: "Both there and here we observe the strategy of a seducer, and both there and here the evil one, the demon, the devil stands behind this strategy and is directly named in the text". On this basis, Don Juan is also likened to the Grand Inquisitor, who deceives humanity by offering it the promise of happiness. Kasatkina's analysis of Dostoevsky's use of Pushkin's works indicates that the author identifies Ivan Karamazov, Don Juan, and the Inquisitor as seducer characters.

This idea is even more definite in another article by the researcher, *The Words and Kiss of Christ in The Grand Inquisitor*: "Christ is the bridegroom of the church and humanity, while the Grand Inquisitor is Hades, Don Juan, and Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov...", "the Inquisitor behaves like a rival in a romance novel", he insists that "the bride-church has rejected Christ, and addresses the words of a happy rival to Christ, saying 'I will manage what you have not'" (Kasatkina, 2012). Kasatkina thus views Ivan's poem as one about the rivalry between the bridegrooms of the bride-church with the Inquisitor challenging Christ in a similar way as Don Juan challenges the Commander. In Kasatkina's analysis, the quotation from Pushkin is used by Dostoevsky to substantiate this perspective.

As part of a polemic with this analysis, it is essential to examine the interpretation of Don Juan's character as presented in Kasatkina's article. It is evident that the author perceives the character in the spirit of the comedy tradition that preceded Pushkin's interpretation of this "eternal" image. That is to say, the character may be considered an analogue of Tirso de Molina's as part of a polemic with this analysis, it is essential to examine the interpretation of Don Juan's character as presented in Kasatkina's article. It is evident that the author perceives the character in the spirit of the comedy tradition that preceded Pushkin's interpretation of this "eternal" image. That is to say, the character may be considered an analogue of Tirso de Molina's, Molière's Don Juan, and Don Giovanni of Lorenzo da Ponte, the librettist of Mozart's opera. Therefore, the image of Pushkin's character is reduced exclusively to a "lecherous, godless, unscrupulous" seducer who is deservedly punished. The framework of such a reduction makes the chain of correspondences constructed in Kasatkina's works possible: Hades, Don Juan, the Inquisitor, Fyodor Karamazov, and Ivan Karamazov.

It is worth noting that Pushkin wrote the tragedy crafting the character to embody a tragic essence, engaging in a clear polemic with the comedic portrayal of Don Juan. This thematic element has been proved through numerous comparative studies of this "little tragedy" (Akhmatova, 1958; Bagno, 2004; Klimova, 2013; Makogonenko, 1974; Tomashevsky, 1936; Vetlovskaya, 2024). Their common message is as follows: Pushkin reconsiders the comedic interpretation of the image, assigning to his Don Juan the features of a tragic hero. For example, B.V. Tomashevsky (1936, p. 119) discusses this in his *Pushkin's Little Tragedies and Molière*: "Replacing the comic with the tragic, Pushkin quite naturally departed from Molière's plays, as the plane of comedy with its traditional forms of intrigue could

not be clad in tragic forms. Conversely, the main character had to undergo psychologization to meet the standards of artistic individualism in creating a ‘living’ image, contrasting with Molière’s abstract schematization”.

T.A. Kasatkina cites his monologue about his rebirth in love with Doña Anna as irrefutable confirmation of the demonic nature of Pushkin’s Don Juan:

No doubt he’s been described to you
As a criminal, a monster. Do a Anna,
The stories, it may be, are partly true,
My weary conscience, may be, bears the burden
Of a heavy load of evil. Indeed, I have
Long followed willingly the path of vice,
But since the moment when I first saw you,
It seems to me that I have been reborn.
In loving you, I’ve come to love the good,
And humbly, for the first time in my life,
I bend my trembling knees before it³.

However, this monologue may be interpreted not only as evidence of a sophisticated seduction strategy but also as an expression of a sincere experience of a “weary conscience”. It is this understanding of Don Juan’s character as a repentant criminal that we find in A.A. Akhmatova (1958), whose interpretive sensitivity is widely acknowledged in Pushkin studies. The interpretation of the internal plot of *The Stone Guest* as a plot of repentance is confirmed by the following plot elements: initially, Don Juan seduces Doña Anna under a false name, but in the process of “rebirth”, he renounces the name Diego, confesses to Doña Anna the murder of her husband, and opens his chest to pay the price.

Finally, we would like to cite what we believe to be the most important argument in support of the interpretation of Pushkin’s Don Juan as a criminal who becomes reborn under the influence of love. It is the inclusion of *The Stone Guest* in the cycle, the protagonist of each tragedy of which differs from the previous one by an increasing degree of self-consciousness, which is a key element to understanding *The Little Tragedies* as a “tetralogy of humanisation” (Zyryanov, 2023). According to the O.V. Zyryanov (2023, p. 51), “Pushkin’s cycle <...> is an attempt at examining the phenomenon of tragic consciousness itself: its genesis (*The Miserly Knight*), stages of development (up to murderous and suicidal consequences: *Mozart and Salieri*, and partly *The Stone Guest*) and, finally, the possibilities of its overcoming (*The Stone Guest* and, especially, *A Feast during the Plague*)”.

In this respect, understanding the character of *The Stone Guest* in the spirit of the comedic tradition, i.e. as a criminal who deservedly receives retribution, violates the integrity of the dramaturgical cycle, largely provided by the movement of the author’s thought in reflections on freedom and responsibility (Zhitkova, 1992).

³ Pushkin, A.S. (2000). *The Little Tragedies* (N.K. Anderson, Trans., p. 91). New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

The Implicit Reader in *The Stone Guest*: Overcoming the Comedic Stereotype

In the final phase of his creative work, Pushkin focused on the question of freedom and necessity (Chumakov, 1975). However, this question is approached differently in Pushkin studies. Yu.N. Chumakov (1975, pp. 26, 27) writes that Don Juan's freedom is imaginary: "The [character's] personality is distorted, and when individualism is taken to its extreme, it leads to a self-destructive outcome". Don Juan failed to "understand the necessary and remain internally free".

However, there are also interpretations in Pushkin studies that regard *The Stone Guest* as a drama about finding freedom and independence through repentance (Turysheva, 1998, 1999; Zhitkova, 1992; Zyryanov, 2023). In this case, its tragic potential is associated with the inexorable power of fate. Furthermore, the concept of fate's influence in Don Juan's story is explicitly articulated in the narrative of the tragedy. Firstly, the stereotype of his perception by other characters is personified: all the characters refer to Don Juan's reputation as a criminal and an immoralist. Don Juan acknowledges the validity of their statements to some extent but insists that he has undergone a personal transformation.

Additionally, Pushkin's concept of fate, in which the character is subject to its influence, is evident at the receptive and aesthetic levels of text organization. From the outset, the reader is introduced to a specific perspective of the perception of the tragedy, as the character's name immediately evokes the comedic tradition of the Don Juan plot, and in keeping with the tradition of comedy, Don Juan is a criminal who must receive his just punishment in the end. It might appear that the character is destined to be interpreted in this manner, with his image being shaped by the author's decision to adhere to a plot that has been repeatedly interpreted from a comedic perspective. However, the text of *The Stone Guest* succeeds in prompting a standard, traditionally appropriate perception of the character while simultaneously compelling the potential recipient to reject the comedic stereotype. The stereotype is overcome because Pushkin portrays Don Juan as a character with a "weary conscience", i.e. as a bearer of tragic guilt, which he tries to redeem through virtuous love. The examination of Pushkin's original approach to the development of the comic plot and the motif of repentance makes it evident that the traditional interpretation of the character is not upheld. The motif in question is the sole factor that distinguishes *The Stone Guest* from a comedic work and serves to establish its tragic nature. Therefore, the punishment of the repentant character does not seem logical, incredibly intensifying the tragic purport of Pushkin's drama and finally transforming it from a comedic story about retribution into a story about the confrontation of necessity. For this reason, I. Altman's (1937, p. 94) interpretation of the finale of *The Stone Guest* as "the supreme expression of tragic hopelessness" is not without basis.

Pushkin employed similar techniques in other works, exploring the reader's perception through various patterns. In *Eugene Onegin*, he directly blames the reader for the "oblique inertia" of old aesthetic preferences (Grekhnev, 1979, p. 105).

But if in the novel, communication with the simple-minded reader is embodied in the familial and ironic tone of the author's speech, in *The Stone Guest*, the author encourages readers to move beyond the confines of their past experiences through the transformation of the character's image and the genre.

We have deliberately cited the opposite interpretations of the tragedy existing in Pushkin studies. However, regardless of the interpretation, it is evident that the thematic elements of the tragedy revolve around the concepts of freedom and necessity.

Hypothesis about the Function of the Pushkin Quotation in Ivan Karamazov's Poem

Regarding the aforementioned points, we propose a new reconstruction of the presence of the quotation from Pushkin in *The Grand Inquisitor*. Methodologically, this interpretation is based on the necessity to consider the fact that the subject of quotation in the poem about the Grand Inquisitor is Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov. In this case, the Pushkin code is realised not only by the author of the novel, but also by the character to whom the author entrusts the quotation.

According to our hypothesis, Ivan Karamazov's use of Pushkin's words serves as a form of Pushkin's mediation, offering readers a way to understand his perspective. The author of the poem establishes a clear direction for the reader from the outset. This is the vector of understanding Ivan's poem through the prism of the tragic story of Pushkin's Don Juan.

We maintain that it is this perception of *The Stone Guest* that is reflected in Ivan's poem. It is because of this perception that Ivan marks the situation of the dialogue between the Inquisitor, who denies the spiritual autonomy of man, and Christ, who believes in his capacity for free self-determination, by quoting from *The Stone Guest*, a tragedy about the experience of free and responsible self-determination. In this regard, when integrating the image of Don Juan into Ivan's poem, it is essential to identify him not with the Inquisitor (as in T.A. Kasatkina's article), but rather with the image of a man who contradicts the logic of the Inquisitor. This is due to the fact that he proves to be capable of free self-determination (contrary to what is believed by other characters in the tragedy, and contrary to the artistic tradition through the prism of which the reader initially perceives the character and whose power they overcome while reading).

Importantly, the receptive reaction of the potential reader of Ivan's poem is directly depicted in the novel. It is Alyosha's reaction. His response to his brother's composition challenges the direct message it communicates: "Your poem praises Jesus, it doesn't revile him ... as you meant it to"⁴. It is not without reason that Ivan must persuade Alyosha that he is on the side of the Inquisitor: it is not at all obvious to Alyosha. Does Pushkin's code support the interpretation of Ivan's poem as a statement that is not monolithic, but, on the contrary, full of contradictions, prob-

⁴ Dostoevsky, F.M. (1992). *The Brothers Karamazov* (R. Pevear, & L. Volokhonsky, Trans., p. 221). New York: Millennium Library.

lematising Ivan's confidence in the Inquisitor's rightness, which is revealed in Alyosha's reaction?

A key argument in favour of the proposed version is the correlation between the plot of rebirth in *The Stone Guest* and Dostoevsky's central problem, i.e. the problem of the rebirth of a great sinner, which suggests that in *The Stone Guest*, Dostoevsky might have been interested not so much in the image of shameless seduction as in the image of rebirth under the influence of a "weary conscience" and virtuous love.

Another correlation has been identified that has not yet been designated. Just as in Dostoevsky's novel, there is a character who is the bearer of a receptive reaction to Ivan's poem, so in Pushkin's tragedy, there is a character who is the bearer of a reaction to Don Juan's "love song". In the former, Alyosha becomes aware of the incongruity in his brother's thought process. In the latter, Doña Anna evolves from holding Don Juan responsible to developing trust and understanding. Her reaction may be perceived as the implicit reader's reaction encoded in the text.

Conclusions

In summary, the reference to the tragic image of Don Juan implied in the quotation from Pushkin can be interpreted as an argument against the Inquisitor's philosophy of man as a weak creature who dreams of relinquishing his freedom to another. It is important to note that Ivan Karamazov presents this argument prior to granting the Inquisitor a chance to share his perspective. The potential reader is immediately reminded of the precedent text whose character solves the question of freedom not at all in the way the Inquisitor interprets it.

Essentially, Ivan completes his poem in the same way, i.e. with a gesture of recognition of human freedom on the part of Christ. Ivan's poem thus acquires a circular integrity; it begins and ends with semantically similar motifs: at the beginning, an appeal to Pushkin's character, the bearer of the event of self-determination; and at the end, the kiss of Christ, the bearer of the idea of freedom. It appears that Ivan perceives Don Juan as a symbol of a man capable of achieving what the Inquisitor refuses to acknowledge for humanity. In the quotation from Pushkin, Ivan demonstrates doubt about the perception of man that his character will develop.

According to T.A. Kasatkina, Ivan quotes a line from *The Stone Guest* "recklessly". It is quite possible that this is an unconscious quotation, and Ivan does not consciously associate the meanings in question with it. This may be the case, particularly in light of Ivan's strong conviction in the accuracy of his beliefs (Fokin, 2007). Although Ivan may have quoted Pushkin "recklessly", it is important to acknowledge that his memory prompts him to cite a quotation that establishes a polemical context for his conception of man. It is as if Pushkin were debating with Ivan; Pushkin's quotation enters into a polemic with the content of his poem. P.E. Fokin (2007, p. 133) writes: "The miracle of the poem is that it is not confined to the author's will <...>. The poem in the space of the novel is not limited by Ivan's

consciousness”. The researcher is referring to Alyosha, Ivan’s listener. It should be noted, however, that the poem also incorporates Pushkin’s consciousness as the author of *The Stone Guest*.

If we emphasise the belonging of the altered quotation from *The Stone Guest* to the author of the poem about the Grand Inquisitor and consider the tragedy genre nature of Pushkin’s play, its complex philosophical problematics, and its relationship with tradition, we may confidently state that Ivan’s introduction of a quotation from Pushkin into his poem is of conceptual nature (or the fact that Dostoevsky’s appropriation of it for Ivan is of conceptual nature), where it is introduced for the sake of accentuating its philosophical inconsistency and the dialogical clash of opposing conceptions of man. Consequently, in this respect, *The Stone Guest* turns out to be a means of interpretation of Ivan’s position: in light of the Pushkin quotation, its underlying duality is revealed, despite his own denial of it.

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