

“Wartime Letters” by Valery Gavrilin: a Dialogue with the Romantic Tradition

Composer Valery Gavrilin (1939-1999) was called by one of his contemporaries “the last of the Romantics in music.” A. Tevosyan in his book “Ringing Chimes: the Life, Artistic Work and Views of Valery Gavrilin” attempts to substantiate the validity of this thought by indicating at the characteristic points of convergence of the Romanticist aesthetics with the composer’s musical aesthetics: 1) the presence of “tragic conflict, discord between the ideal and the real in Gavrilin’s compositions”; 2) Gavrilin’s interest in “history and ‘exoticism’ and in national folklore”; 3) “an inclination towards mixed and synthetic genres”; 4) “an inclination towards chamber-vocal genres and, primarily, towards the genre of the art-song” (as S. Banevich wrote: “This was a Russian Schubert”). K. Ryabeva in her work “The Theater of Dreams” accentuates this somewhat schematic interpretation, stressing that Gavrilin’s Romanticism is present not in the musical forms, genres and language, but in the relation to humanity and to reality, in the attempt to express the inexpressible, to recreate the multidimensional complexly constructed world of human feelings in their interaction with the visible world. “Following the 19th century Russian novel prose, he connects ‘the world of ‘internal man,’ discovered by the Romantics’ with the psychological insight rejected by them,” as Ryabeva writes, basing herself on E. Etkind’s study of Romanticism (“Psychopoetics. ‘Internal Man’ and External Speech”). Further on, she writes: “Gavrilin’s music demonstrates that point at which the German Romantic tradition intersects with the Russian critical, psychological tradition, as represented by such names as Goncharov, Turgenyev, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy and Chekhov.”

K. Ryabeva’s position is in many ways true, and her assertion that Romanticism *did not become the leading trend* in Russian culture is beyond doubt. However, in connection with the music of Gavrilin, as it seems, it would be legitimate to count among the direct influences not only the German Romantic tradition and not only the novel prose of the second half of the 19th century, but also the transitional period of the Pushkin era in which *Russian Romanticism* adjoined closely with the aesthetics of the forming *realist school*.

Indeed, both the external and the internal traits of Gavrilin’s music make it possible to examine his musical output particularly in the context of extreme *originality* of the Russian Romantic tradition, which already during the 1820s-1840s had been radically transformed by Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol and Glinka. The framework of this tradition, as it is well-known, included the still vivid motions of European Romanticism, which made it possible to reveal the multidimensionality of the “internal man”: life as a voyage (the symbolism of the “road” and the “post-chaise”), self-irony, double-worldliness (the symbolism of mirror reflections), childhood as a sign of the “golden age,” etc. They permeate the poetics of Russian artistic culture of the Pushkin era, but sometimes, as a result of their rejection, also obtain a characteristic anti-Romantic specificity. For instance, in Pushkin’s “Eugene Onegin”, the Romantic sensuousness and exaltation of Lensky in Onegin’s eyes is already perceived as an anachronism, whereas romantic speech finds only a parody reflection on the pages of “Eugene Onegin” (incidentally, just as in the long poems “Count Nulin” and “The House in Kolomna”). In Lermontov’s famous novel “The Hero of our Time” the “internal man” and “romantic hero” Pechorin under the impact of social conditions becomes an “unnecessary” person, an outcast, ironically named “The Hero of our Time.” The Romantic image of the “traveler” in Gogol’s “Dead Souls” is substituted for the figure of the cheat, Chichikov, whereas Russia, metaphorically identified with Chichikov’s light carriage (that is, with the romantic post-chaise), rushes along the boundless spaciousness of time, managed particularly by that character. Moreover, Pushkin’s heroes are frequently “humble people” with children’s eyes, suppressed by society, whose life is ordinarily prosaic and does not contain anything heroic (as in Pushkin’s “The Postmaster” and Gogol’s “The Overcoat”). Nonetheless, it is this type of life in particular which becomes the object for social and spiritual generalizations in literature.

The paradoxical quality of the method utilized by Pushkin and his contemporaries is especially interesting not only because it is untypical, but also because it yields results. After all, those contradictions which arise in their works between the content, which distances itself from Romantic models (for instance, those related to genre), and the expressive means which still represent traits of the Romantic style, turn out to be foundations for subsequent formation of the specific artistic space of both 19th and 20th century Russian culture.

The penetrating Russian lyricism stemming from Pushkin, Lermontov and Gogol, the profound immersion into the inner world of the literary characters and, simultaneously, the sense of compassion towards them are subsequently to become objects of profound spirituality and humanism of the Russian artistic tradition. On the other hand, there is the social pathos, the “tearing off the masks,” the psychological qualities, the subtle portrayal of society, etc. become objects of interest to the maladies of the native country.

Thereby, the essence of the problem of Russian Romanticism turns out to be not its “ambiguity” in the context of Russian culture, but in the specificity conditioned by a sudden turn of the evolution set by the genius of Pushkin and of his great contemporaries. As a result, Russian Romanticism, which had gone along the path of psychologization and social determination, did not cease its development even at the time when the historical and aesthetic causes which generated it remained in the distant past.

All the aforementioned also fully pertains to Russian music, including the Romantic music, which cannot be evaluated adequately without accounting for the tradition set up by Pushkin and his circle, primarily Pushkin himself.

It is known that composition of musical works by Russian composers on the texts and literary subjects of Pushkin has been unprecedented in respect of quantity. Nevertheless, the reasons for popularity of Pushkin’s artistic heritage should be sought for not only in the aesthetical perfection and the elevated, romantic tone of his poetry, but also the highest degree of paradoxical qualities, the multilayered quality of his artistic world, not limited to the confines of the Romantic aesthetics. For instance, in the 19th century almost any contiguity of the Romantic musical model (pertaining to genre, language or form) with Pushkin’s texts invariably presented particularly a “paradoxical” artistic result. For instance, in Dargomyzhsky’s “Stone Guest” the romantic love intrigues with the participation of Don Juan, in the depiction of which the composer does not avoid operatic clichés, obtain the feature of genuine living tragedies as the result of appearance of psychological alternatives in the person of Leporello. After all, particularly on the basis of the profoundly individualized and extremely emotional speech of Leporello, the listener has the opportunity of apprehending the integral picture of the story of Don Juan (we shall permit ourselves to conjecture that the composer’s attitude towards the text is “exposed” in Leporello’s monologues). Pushkin’s anti-romantic “doubles” (which Leporello should also be considered) also play the plot-, genre- and style-determining roles in Moussorgsky’s opera “Boris Godunov.” Moreover, this happens on two levels at once. On one hand, it could be observed in the folk and genre scenes (including those which were characteristic, for instance, to the scene with St. Basil the Blessed, in the tavern scene, etc., in the First Scene of the Prologue), the alternative to the plot of the “Grand French Opera” (just as Shakespeare’s tragedy in Pushkin’s work itself). On the other hand – the place of the romantic “hero-lover” in the opera is taken by a figure which is both tragic and ambiguous in its own way, becoming stratified from within into two opposite sections (Grigory – the Imposter). At that, the first one, viewed through the prism of the conversation, is the psychologically vivid image of a resolute, resourceful opportunist (as demonstrated in the scenes in the cell and in the tavern). Meanwhile, the second is more neutral due to its typical nature in terms of genre. The Imposter lying at the feet of Marina – this already presents a tribute to romantic opera (and, on the part of Pushkin, – a tribute to Schiller’s dramas).

Pushkin’s paradoxical counterpoint has also exerted its influence on the image content of Tchaikovsky’s “romantic” operas (“Eugene Onegin, “The Queen of Spades”). For instance, in “Eugene Onegin” Pushkin’s parody on the Romantic style (“What will the coming day prepare for me”) is used effectively by Tchaikovsky in a way corresponding absolutely with the original poetic novel. One of the most popular opera arias – Lensky’s aria – in reality presents nothing other than a stylization, almost a parody on the “harsh” art-song which appeared on the basis of a “crisis of intonation” of the romantic vocal tradition. However, this type of stylistic “demarche” was, undoubtedly, stipulated by artistic motivation. The adopted, “kitsch” intonation content of Lensky’s aria made it possible for Tchaikovsky to create not only the heart-warming appearance of the “Russian Werther;” but also to create a vivid, memorable image of an infatuated youth who had not yet learned to speak “in his own language” (which is something one cannot reproach someone like Onegin of up to the last scene of the opera).

The traces of Pushkin’s specific influence can be also noticed in the works of other composers who had turned to the works of the great poet at any time (Rimsky-Korsakov, Rachmaninoff, Stravinsky, Shostakovich, Sviridov, etc.). In their Pushkin-derived plots the characteristic ambiguity appearing between the text and its musical intonation manifestation and the image-bearing contrapuntal, multilayered quality bear witness to both a profound mastering of Pushkin’s creative method, as well as the *universality* of the method itself.

Indeed, in the history of Russian music Pushkin has exerted a tremendous influence, and not merely by his texts. Pushkin's aesthetics in itself presented that ground on which musical aesthetics could rely upon (see, for instance, the brilliant analysis of Pushkin's influence on Stravinsky in Mikhail Druskin's book "Igor Stravinsky"). In this sense, Gavrilin's work does not present an exception. It is noteworthy that Gavrilin had never turned to the poet's verse in his vocal works. But if one is to compare the methods of Pushkin and Gavrilin, one could come up with the conclusion that the composer's "Romanticism" (or rather, "Neoromanticism") "discerned" in his music by his contemporaries has more in common not with the traditions of musical Romanticism (whether the Russian or the European type) but with the Pushkin tradition, which is transitional between Romanticism and psychological realism.

Valery Gavrilin's vocal-symphonic poem "The Wartime Letters" set to the text of A. Shulgina (composed in 1975) presents one of the most enigmatic and at the same time revealing examples in this regard. The allusions to the romantic "speech" are simultaneously apparent and concealed here, just as in Pushkin's works (such as "The House in Kolomna," "Count Nulin," "The Queen of Spades," "The Bronze Horseman," etc.). This vocal-symphonic poem consisting of twelve movements contains in itself a characteristic duality of aesthetics and semantics. The secrecy of the "internal man" is set off against the openness of expression of feelings and thoughts, the events of the real world constantly intersect with the conditionality of their subjective, unreal perception; the author's monologue and the narrative of a personal experience is mediated by the "collective" contemplation of the people.

The work opens with a spoken Epigraph, the significance of which is very important in the context of the cycle's dramaturgy. Here in particular the key theme appears: the theme of memory, which reconstructs not only the events themselves, but also the *past life of feelings*. Thus, the dialogue of the mother with the child (The Boy and She) demonstrates psychological instability at the boundary between rational and emotional perception, which is capable to transform an event instantly into the analogy of a dream and vice versa: "How old was he, mama? – I don't remember, I don't remember anything, I remember only a striped shirt, green against a white background!"

The first movement "Why are my Bright Eyes" (performed by a chorus of basses with an orchestral accompaniment) begins to develop the conflicting drama set in the Epigraph. The reality of the events turns out to be almost imperceptible here. The poetic text demonstrates the image of a girl who had read a letter from somebody else sent from the battlefield. The listener could only guess about the letter's content. It becomes clear that "she read it and started weeping." But why was that? The tragedy seems to remain behind the scenes. Its traces are reflected only indirectly, for example, in the intentional impersonality of utterance: the male chorus sings in unison, thereby latently generating a frightening image. This collective solo becomes similar to the sign of death, the sign of an "unknown soldier." All of a sudden, the chorus chant is interrupted by a heartwarming instrumental episode. Thus, the movement is divided into the choral epigraph proper (we learn about the terrible letter at the present time) and a miniature orchestral "overture," forestalling the narrative about the past life of the main characters (the soldier, his wife and child). [See Example 1.]

The second movement – "My Dear, My Sweet One" (for unaccompanied solo soprano) intensifies the effect of "pertaining to the world beyond" created in the first movement as the result of incompatibility of the intonation content of the vocal line with that of the poetical text. The quadrille intonations "thrown across" from the previous section gradually develop in the vocal line into a chant-like melodic figure and then a lamentation. At the same time the verbal text demonstrates extremely contrasting images: "rain, rain, cease from pouring, I shall go to Yaroslavl," "sun, sun, a clear day," "the cornflowers have blossomed, our beautiful flowers," "wake up, little friend." The contradictions between the music's genre and content of intonation with the meaning of the texts make it possible to imagine with the greatest acuteness the distance between real experience (within) and its outer expression. The call "wake up, little friend," addressed by the heroine either to herself, or to her friend who is "lifelessly asleep," sounds all the more tragic, as a result. [See Example 2.]

The third movement – the "Teasing Rhyme" (sung by a children's chorus accompanied by percussion instruments) could at first be perceived as a dismissal of genre within the dramatic groundwork of the plot. Meanwhile, the entire movement is permeated with the same tragic meaning hidden under the outward appearance of a naïve song with a brisk rhythm. This meaning is revealed to a moderate degree at the words "Oh, you evil, evildoer, do not throw yourself at people" and "accursed war, you devil, devil." The children seem to call persistently and tease death itself. And how! "Go dance, go dance!" [See Example 3.]

Example 1

The musical score is divided into three systems, each with five staves. The instruments are Timp., Camp., Arpa, Canto Voce f., and Archi. The vocal line includes Russian lyrics: "Что мо - ло - то не - та о - ш - ил - ла", "... - то - ла о - ш - е - дыт", and "че - рез ре - зю - сы - ку не - со - до - мой вы - ст, (10)".

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The sixth movement, “Where are you going, dear?” (for a vocal duo of the soprano and baritone accompanied by the orchestra) presents what seems to be the next genre intermezzo after the children’s “Teasing Song.” There seems to be an inherent need in such an intermezzo to drive out the effects of the “negative information.” Nonetheless, the lyrical playing dialogue (at the core of which lies the well-known Russian song “My darling, take me with you) does not fulfill this task. The reemerging second musical layer (in the form of the rhythmical ostinato in the percussion) brings in a powerful alternative of image. Love and the beautiful past is contrasted with the irreversibility of time and the inevitability of the road as a symbol of fate (the ostinato, reminding of the ticking of the clock in the kitchen throws an arch across towards the menacing ostinato-march figures from the “dance of death”, as well as to the subsequent section in which the slow and regular beats of the bass drum symbolize the “road to nowhere”). [See Example 5.]

The seventh movement – “The soldier went on” (sung by the chorus of basses accompanied by percussion and wind instruments) presents the last “echo” of the image of the “unknown soldier” in the poem. The musical interpretation of this image is distinguished, once again, with the characteristic ambiguity. In particular, the genre of the dynamic marching song is interpreted by the composer in an untypical way. The slow tempo transforms the initial genre model, filling it with a different type of semantics (i.e. a funeral procession). Moreover, the poetic text also creates a specific contrast in regard to the musical text. As the result, the tragedy of life, just as the story of feelings loses its connections with reality once and for all. The triumphant world of the absurd is personified in the “mirror aspect of the ages.” The soldier had not died yet, but he was already foreseeing his death in the image of his wife: “The soldier went on, yet he looked back: his wife was running on the grass. His wife was stretching out his hands, with her black kerchief on her head.”

The eighth movement – “My dear little friend” (for a vocal duo of a soprano and baritone accompanied by the orchestra) – presents the cycle’s lyrical culmination, which absorbs into itself the basic thematic lines of the main heroine. Here the delightful “rosy” world of the past obtains the meaning of the tragic nuance of the present. The listener knows already that the soldier will not return home, whereas the woman imagines the past to be identical with the desired future. As the result, the duo “My dear little friend” (with the usage of the same textural combination as in the fifth movement), generating the association with wedding photographs fastened forever to the walls of peasants’ log huts, sounds like the dream itself of unattainable happiness.

The ninth and tenth movements seem to return the ray of hope into this “parallel” world, but only for the heroine, since the soldier is *no longer* alive. In the ninth movement – “The Post-Lady” (for unaccompanied soprano) – the heroine waits for a letter which is delayed in its arrival for a lengthy period of time. However the woman’s expectation of it arouses her hope. As the result, the entire movement is built on interrogative intonations of speech (“Has the post-lady ever come?”). In the tenth movement – “The Letter” (for solo baritone and orchestra) – the long expected letter “from him” finally arrives. Here the semantic culmination of the poem occurs, since (as we are clearly made to understand) the letter comes with a delay, as frequently happened in times of war, as if canceling the news of the soldier’s death and enhancing the hope for his return. It is not by chance that the intonation features of a vivid genre-related thematicism of the entire composition is concentrated particularly in this movement, generating the image of eternal hope, in reality being the eternal past, which now becomes more real for the main heroine than the present and the future. Nonetheless, just a few measures prior to the following movement, the wonderful dream dissipates. The expressive line of the solo baritone transforms into a speech-recitation. And the terrible answer is presented in the soprano’s lamentation “My dear one, my good one.”

The eleventh movement – “The wartime letters” – presents the quintessence of the plot. This short orchestral episode, permeated with passionate and painful feelings, carries the function of the composition’s main dramaturgical climax. This is true not only in connection with the emotional quality of the musical syntax. The absence in this number of the verbal element speaks much explicitly about the story than any poem which may have been present here. The pain of bereavement seems to rise in the manner of a wave to a level when words are no longer needed. Thus, the listener learns of the death of the main character not from the poetic narrative but from its logical outcome in the form of the instrumental interlude.

Last of all, the Finale – “The month of May” (for children’s chorus accompanied by orchestra) – reviving the visions of the past, presents the image of a romantic “Paradise,” in the context of which war is perceived merely as a “distant thunder,” where everybody is always alive, and where the road – similarly to the road of life – seems to be endless.

Thus, the dramaturgical outline and the aesthetics of Gavrilin's "Wartime Letters," as follows from all the above-stated, concentrates within it characteristic allusions with both Romantic and anti-Romantic poetics.

The references to Romanticism could be seen:

- a) in the demonstration of the tragic irreversibility of time despite its reversibility in the realm of thought and feeling;
- b) in the conflict between the internal and external worlds;
- c) in avoiding a straightforwardness of transmission of the hidden semantics, by such means as, for example, appearing discrepancies between the musical and verbal texts;
- d) in the "mirror qualities" of the subject matter and the form (the glance from the future into the past);
- e) in the characteristically Romantic metaphoric space of the text: the symbolism of the road, sleep, letters as signs of eternal parting and unattainable happiness, dancing death and childhood (after all, the tragedy of war unfolds through the prism of perception of a child and its mother).

The counterpoint of the "anti-Romantic" features, the aesthetic alternative is present:

- a) in the folk music sources of the *entire* musical material, which presumes a high level of supra-individuality of utterance and simultaneously abates the heightened emotionality present in the subject matter;
- b) in the peculiar "absurdity" of the events described, since part of the action seems to unfold in the imagination of the common person, as a result of which the negative imagery appears in a simply "frightening" quality (it suffices to "close one's eyes" and it will disappear), while the positive imagery obtains diminutive, primitivistic qualities, which are, nonetheless, no less poignant in their emotional effect;
- c) in the generalized interpretation of the chief images: the mother, father and child; the folkloristic intonation context makes their inner world concealed, while at the same time creating a "derivative," typified meaning: the composition shows not only the tragedy of personality but also that of society and the country as a whole;
- d) in the appearance of the complementary sense in addition to both the external and internal plots, namely – the memory of the composer himself who, essentially, had imprinted in his work the experiences of his childhood (in some ways the method of their expression becomes similar to Andrei Tarkovsky's great film "The Mirror");
- e) finally in the ordinariness, the prosaic quality of the description of the tragedy of war; the asceticism of language (the song and dance sources of the thematicism, the tonal distinctness, the simplicity of the texture, etc.) and of orchestral means (of the twelve movements half are written without any orchestral accompaniment or with the use of a minimal amount of instruments) seems to enter into a contradiction with the chosen pathetic patriotic theme, which in all ages has been a source for heroic and epic imagery. In other words, in the traditional sense (for instance, within the framework of Soviet aesthetics) the "Wartime Letters" turn out to be a "Poem without a Hero," which indicates at the composition's main discrepancy: the chosen heroic-epic cantata-oratorio model does not correspond to the type of dramaturgy or the means of expression.

Is this dramaturgical counterpoint changing the "rules of the game" in relation to the genre prototype not similar to that found in Pushkin's works?! Incidentally, the "altered rules" create an immediate impact on the exceptionality of the form of the "Wartime Letters," which could also be correlated with Pushkin's method. The outline of Gavrilin's cycle is "discontinuous" (similarly to the way it also is in Gavrilin's most well-known compositions, for instance, in the symphony-act "Chimes"). Similarly to "Eugene Onegin," "The Tales of Belkin," "The Bronze Horseman," etc., it consists of the action proper and a sort of "counteraction" which denotes the author's text, genre scenes and episodes digressing from the central subject line. Formally breaking up the narrative line into constituent segments, the counteraction, nonetheless, also contains a uniting factor for the narrative – namely, *the force of the composer's emotional perception*. The composer's involvement, similarly to that of Pushkin, brings into the plot features of genuine credibility and documentary quality, making it possible to view the characters of the action as real people whom the author knew personally (it suffices to remember the line: "Onegin, my good friend..."). In its turn, the authenticity brought into the plot "pushes in" the past history of romantic feelings into contemporary everyday life, making it possible for the human being to elevate to the level of the greatest excellence in himself. In this sense, Gavrilin's world perception passes beyond the level of aesthetics and language to the level of the interrelations between man and the world, creating a symbol of ethical integrity.

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Santrauka

Valerijaus Gavrilino „Karo meto laiškai“: dialogas su romantine tradicija

Kompozitorių Valerijų Gavriliną (1939–1999) vienas iš jo amžininkų pavadino „paskutiniuoju romantiku muzikoje“. A. Tevosianas knygoje apie Gavriliną tą teiginį mėgina pagrįsti pabrėždamas romantizmo estetikos ir kompozitoriaus muzikinės estetikos panašumus: 1) Gavrilino kūriniais būdingas „tragiškas konfliktas, idealo ir realybės disharmonija“; 2) Gavrilino domėjimasis „istorija ir egzotika“, nacionaliniu folkloru; 3) jo „potraukis mišriems sintetiniams žanrams“; 4) „kamerinio vokalinio žanro“, ir pirmiausia dainos, pomėgis. K. Riabeva stiprina tą kiek schematišką traktuotę pabrėždama, kad Gavrilino romantizmas – tai ne forma, žanras ir kalba, o požiūris į žmogų ir tikrovę, tai bandymas išreikšti neišreiškiamą, atvaizduoti daugiamatį, daugialypį žmogaus jausmų pasaulį ir jo sąveiką su realiuoju pasauliu. Riabeva rašo: romantikų užkariautą žmogaus vidaus pasaulį jis, kaip ir rusų XIX a. romanas, sujungia su jų atmestu psichologiškumu. Tačiau, kalbant apie Gavrilino kūrybą, matyt, būtų tikslinga į tiesioginės įtakos eilę statyti ne tik XIX a. romaną, bet ir A. Puškino laikų pereinamąjį laikotarpį, kai romantinė tradicija glaudžiai lietėsi su besiformuojančios realistinės mokyklos estetika.

Apskritai ir išorinės, ir vidinės Gavrilino muzikos savybės leidžia jo kūrybą nagrinėti būtent *rusų romantinės tradicijos savitumo* kontekste. Šią tradiciją jau 1820–1840 metais radikaliai transformavo Puškinas, Lermontovas, Gogolis, Glinka, bet pirmiausia – Puškinas, kuris, remdamasis vaizdine ir žanrine romantizmo sistema, sukūrė savo nepakartojamą meninį pasaulį, atmetęs romantinius modelius.

Puškinos kūrinuose romantiškieji personažai dažnai turi alternatyvius antrininkus, kurie, viena vertus, susiaurina romantinį jausminį patosą, kita vertus, praplečia psychologizmo sferą (Lenskis–Oneginas, Don Žuanas–Leporelis). Kitas būdingas Puškino kūrybos bruožas – ypatingas lyrizmas ir savo personažų atjauta, išreikšti per autobiografiškumo, nuolatinio autoriaus dalyvavimo pasakojimo tekste prizmę.

Lyginant Puškino ir Gavrilino kūrybos metodus, galima daryti išvadą, kad kompozitoriaus „romantizmas“ (arba „neoromantizmas“) remiasi ne tik muzikine tradicija (beje, tas ryšys ne visada akivaizdus), bet ir Puškino modeliu – nuo romantizmo prie psichologinio realizmo sukančiu modeliu, kai estetinė paradigma pakyla iki filosofinio, dvasinio pasaulio pažinimo lygio.

Gavrilino vokalinė-simfoninė poema „Karo meto laiškai“ – vienas mįslingiausių ir kartu tipiškiausių pavyzdžių minėtoju požiūriu. Aliuzijos su romantine tradicija čia akivaizdžios ir neakivaizdžios tuo pačiu metu, kaip ir Puškino kūryboje.

Romantizmo požymiai:

- a) parodytas tragiškas laiko negrįžtamumas;
- b) išorės ir vidaus konfliktas;
- c) netiesmukas užslėptos prasmės perdavimas, pavyzdžiui, pasitelkus tarp verbalinių ir muzikinių tekstų kylančius prieštaravimus;
- d) siužeto ir formos „veidrodiškumas“;
- e) romantiniams tekstams būdingos metaforos: kelio, laiškų kaip amžino išsiskyrimo ir nepasiekiamos laimės, šokančios mirties, vaiko paveikslas simbolika (juk karo tragedija atskleidžiama per jos suvokimo prizmę).

Antiromantinių ypatumų kontrapunktas, estetinė alternatyva:

- a) visos medžiagos folklorinės ištakos, lemiančios ryškų antindividualumą;
- b) apibendrintas pagrindinių paveikslų – motinos, tėvo, vaiko – traktavimas; dėl folklorinio intonacinio konteksto jų vidinis pasaulis pasidaro užslėptas;
- c) antro plano atsiradimas paviršiniame siužete, konkrečiai – paties autoriaus atmintis, kūrinyje užfiksavusi savo vaikystės išgyvenimus;

d) galiausiai – subuitinimas, karo tragedijos aprašymo paprastumas; išraiškos priemonių ir orkestruotės asketizmas lyg ir pradeda nebeatitikti tos patosiškos patriotinės temos, kuri visais laikais buvo epinio herojinio įvaizdžio šaltinis.

Lyginant Gavrilino ir Puškino kūrybos metodus, įsidėmėtina ir ciklinė „Karo meto laiškų“ forma. Gavrilino ciklo dramaturgija netolydi. Kaip ir „Onegine“, „Grafe Nuline“ ir kt., šiai dramaturgijai būdingi autoriaus nukrypimai, žanrinės scenos, atskiri paveikslai. Tačiau pasakojimo liniją skaidant į sudedamuosius segmentus, dėl *autoriaus dalyvavimo vyksme* tie epizodai susijungia į visumą. Į siužetą įterptas dokumentiškumas, autentiškumas tragiškų ir todėl pakilių išgyvenimų pasaulį paverčia kasdienybe. Čia romantizmas iš tikrųjų pereina į žmogaus ir pasaulio savitarpio santykių lygmenį ir tampa dorovinio imperatyvo ženklu.