Contents

Introduction to the English Edition 6
Preface. In Search of a Metaphor: In Place of an Introduction 10

Part I. Magic Lantern (Projection)

Chapter 1. A Text in Performance 30
Shadows Only 41
"Pregnant Moments" 45
An Attempt in the Dramatic Field 48
Chapter 2. Lanterns and Lanternists 55
Laterna Magica 55
Citizen Robertson 60
The Fantasmagoria 62

Part II. Rainbow (Refraction)

Chapter 1. Unweaving the Rainbow 76
The Meteorological Cycle 76
From Allegory to . . . Allegory 79
Magic Made Simple, or Do-It-Yourself 84
Chapter 2. The Limits of Imitation 94
The Artist 94
The Dark Heart, or the Camera Obscura 95
The Child of Thaumas 103

Part III. Garden of Memory (Reflection)

Chapter 1. The Keys to Zvanka 108
"Beatus, My Brother" 108
Essay on Man 111
The Art of Memory 122
A Peculiar Vision: Approaches to the Text 126
Chapter 2. Nine Views 128
Pleasures of Imagination 128
Choral Vision 160
Fifteen Stanzas of Solitude 197
Chapter 3. The Poet's House 217
The Bard Lived There... 218
Zvanka's Echo 223
Pindar, Derzhavin, and the Twenties: In Place of a Conclusion 232
Notes 253
References 292
Index 307

Introduction to the English Edition

I put the finishing touches on this book in New York City in July 2016, precisely two hundred years after Gavrila Romanovich Derzhavin passed away at Zvanka, his beloved estate in the Novgorod region of Russia. If the widely commemorated centennial of the poet's death—in the middle of World War I, on the eve of the Revolution—brought Derzhavin back from a period of relative obscurity, the bicentennial passed almost unnoticed. And yet, this chronological "rhyme," two hundred years separating the moment when Derzhavin scribbled his last words on the slate on his deathbed and the moment when I finished editing my conclusion on the computer and headed to the maternity ward to deliver my third child, was extremely meaningful to me.

Derzhavin wrote his late poetry in the first decade and a half of the nineteenth century; I worked on my book about him in the early years of the twenty-first. As it turned out, these two periods had more in common than one might suppose: not merely their difficult parting with the previous century but also the rise of state-sponsored jingoism and the attendant anti-Western sentiments not infrequently held by quite educated people yet fundamentally at variance with the very essence of a culture built on Western models. In Derzhavin's time, such sentiments were explained and to some extent justified by Russia's war with Napoleon; their rampant blossoming in Russia in our own century has been a sadder spectacle. In my book, I trace one example of the struggle between official ideology and the internal logic of a culture's development. I wanted to show how, even when that struggle takes place within a single person, as happened with Derzhavin, cultural momentum prevails over dogma. Looking at the early nineteenth century as a chapter in the contradictory development of Russian modernity, at once "progressive" and "regressive," helped me better understand my own time. It was important to share this sense of the ultimate predominance of culture over ideology with my non-Slavist friends, colleagues, and students. This, at least in part, is why I decided to publish my book in English.

Another reason was my humble hope to contribute to an important series of publications that began in 1998 with David Bethea's *Realizing Metaphors: Alexander Pushkin and the Life of the Poet*, the first book in English to show so explicitly that neither Pushkin nor the rest of nineteenth-century Russian literature can be read without glancing back at Derzhavin. Four further titles from the first decades of the new millennium have been particularly helpful in making the poet accessible to English readers. *Derzhavin's Poetic Works: A Bilingual Album* (2001), by Alexander Levitsky and Martha Kitchen, was the first comprehensive English-language version of Derzhavin's poetry—a remarkable achievement, given how difficult his vocabulary, syntax, and imagery can be. The very title of Anna Lisa Crone's study *The Daring of Derzhavin*, also from 2001, showed the right perspective to take on his art. Angela Brintlinger's excellent translation of Vladislav Khodasevich's *Derzhavin: A Biography* (2007), prefaced with her profound and subtle essay on the author of the biography and its subject, played a crucial role in introducing Derzhavin's personality, refracted through another poet's eye, to an English-speaking readership. Last but not least, Luba Golburt's *The First Epoch: The Eighteenth Century and the Russian Cultural Imagination* (2014) did a wonderful job of contextualizing "Derzhavin's moment" in the history of Russian culture. My work was informed and inspired by all of the abovementioned books and their authors.

The main difference between this translation and the Russian edition is that the English version is half as long. With an English-language audience in mind, I took out many of the Russian version's numerous "excursions" explaining various names and concepts from the European Enlightenment, which followed the eighteenth century's own ramified modes of thinking yet risked distracting the reader. In the course of its abridgment, the book naturally reshaped itself, each of its three parts coalescing around one of the key metaphors Derzhavin "lived by" in his later years, and the book as a whole around the use of metaphor, "the shorthand of the spirit," as Boris Pasternak once defined it. This reshaping and rethinking provided new titles for parts and chapters of the book, as well as a new title for the whole. This is also why the concept of metaphor, its treatment by Derzhavin, and its reception and understanding by the Russian culture of the 1920s became the focus of the concluding chapter, the only substantial addition to the book and the only part originally written in English. I have included

this discussion of the parallels between Derzhavin's poetry and Russian modernism to help readers better contextualize my subject, placing him within the larger map of Russian culture.

It is impossible to name all the colleagues and friends who have helped me in the long process of preparing the Russian and English versions of this book. I would like to mention three people who are no longer living, but who played a crucial role in my formation as a scholar. Alexey Mikhailovich Peskov, with whom I studied at Moscow State University, kindled my interest in the eighteenth century and the Russian ode. My mentor Mikhail Leonovich Gasparov taught me how to read poetry (and so much more). Lastly, reading and conversing with Ilya Zakharovich Serman, with whom I've never had a chance to study, helped me to understand and appreciate Derzhavin, especially his late works. I would also like to thank Andreas Schönle, Andrey Zorin, and Bill Todd for their steady collegial help and friendly support over the years. I am deeply grateful to my colleagues and students from the three universities where I have worked, Harvard, Columbia, and the University of Toronto. The translation and publication of this book wouldn't have been possible without generous grants from the Harriman Institute and Columbia University Schoff Publication Fund.

My very special thanks go to Ronald Meyer of Columbia University, who was the first to believe in this project and fearlessly took on the task of translating the book, and to Nancy Workman, also of Columbia, who joined us later, but whose participation in translating and editing the text has been invaluable. I will never forget the hours we spent together on the interlinear translations of Derzhavin's intricate, subtle, and, at times, bone-rattling verse, which I now understand better even in Russian due to Nancy's translator's gift and poetic sensitivity. This book would never have seen the light of day without the incredible patience and support of David Bethea, Kira and Igor Nemirovsky of Academic Studies Press, and their wonderful, thoughtful and devoted editors Meghan Wicks and Faith Wilson Stein.

I would also like to thank my friend the eminent Russian architect Alexander Brodsky for offering me his painting for the cover. This painting, inspired by the architecture of Andrea Palladio, fulfills the main requirement of an ideal illustration as formulated by Derzhavin's friends Nikolai Lvov and Alexei Olenin, who claimed that the image should never repeat, but rather complement the text, "fleshing out with the artist's

pencil" something that was implied, but never explicitly stated. Brodsky's image of a cypress alley leading, at the vanishing point, to a tiny, almost invisible Palladian villa gives an immediate evocative sense of Derzhavin's self-awareness in his later years, which the three hundred pages of my book attempt to explicate.

I dedicated the Russian version of my book to my son. Since then, my two daughters have joined the family, but it doesn't feel quite right to dedicate an adaptation, new only in part, to such wholly new and original creatures. Needless to say, however, my work would never have been possible without the love and support of those closest to me – my husband, our three kids, my father, and, first and foremost, my mother, who read me my first poems and taught me my first English, who was happy to see the Russian version of my book published and who passed away shortly after. The chain of births and deaths that marked my own life while I worked on this book affected the way I saw Derzhavin's late poetry, and vice versa.

Preface

In Search of a Metaphor

In Place of an Introduction

> By far the greatest thing is to use metaphors.
>
> —Aristotle, *Poetics,* 1459ab

I

The turn of the nineteenth century in Russian history was Russia's first *turn of a century* in the literal sense of the expression, at least as it was understood in Europe. While it somehow seems right that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* first appeared on the stage in the momentous year of 1601—the first year of a new century, the coeval memorable events in Russia derived no extra significance from their place in the calendar: in pre-Petrine chronology Europe's 1601 was Russia's 7109 (usually reduced to simply 109 in all the documents of the time). If 1701 marked an absolute *beginning* dictated by legislative and mythological considerations, a move "from nothingness into being" (*iz nebytiia v bytie*), to use the expression formulated by Peter the Great's chancellor Gavrila Golovkin, then 1801 became the first pivotal moment in Russia's history that was recognized as such by contemporaries. This did not take place right away: the idea of a chronologically defined marker and the experiences that went with it, not to mention the rhetorical appeal to celebrate this designation, were imported from Europe and took root on Russian soil only gradually, during the course of the first decades of the new century.

In the life of Gavrila Romanovich Derzhavin this "boundary between the two centuries" fell during the winter of 1803–4, one of the saddest winters in his life. On October 8, 1803, Derzhavin was forced to resign his ministerial post in the government of Alexander I, "the beloved son of the sweet heavens," in the poet's own words, whose birth he had hailed a quarter century earlier and on whose happy rule so many hopes had been pinned

just a short time ago. Five days after Derzhavin's resignation, on Tuesday, October 13, the *St. Petersburg News* (Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti) published a notice of His Imperial Highness's decree to the Senate:

> 1. Deigning to grant the petition of Actual Privy Counselor and Minister of Justice Derzhavin, We most graciously relieve him of all duties, with the retention of his full salary and a 6,000-ruble annual allowance for provisions. 2. We hereby order that Actual Privy Counselor Prince Lopukhin shall be minister of justice or general-procurator.[1]

A few months later, in December, Derzhavin's friend and relative, Nikolai Lvov, the eminent Russian architect and poet and a true "Enlightenment man," died. Derzhavin responded with bitter words of disillusionment, which did not apply to "dear Lvov" alone:

> Друг мой! Увы! озлобясь Время
> Его спешило в гроб сокрыть,
> Что сея он познаний семя,
> Мнил веки пользой пережить . . .[2]
>
> ❧
>
> My friend! Alas! Embittered Time
> Hurried to hide him in the grave;
> By sowing seeds of knowledge
> He thought to live out his life usefully.

Overwhelmed with feelings of "embittered time," of not being able to live a useful life in the new century, Derzhavin was now a retired government official, a poet living on a pension, and he found his new status as a person "most graciously relieved of all duties" intolerable. From an active and energetic participant in the historical process—for so he saw himself—Derzhavin had become a silent observer, not only unable to influence the course of events but gradually ceasing to understand what was actually taking place.

What words can describe this feeling? What images can be deployed to express it? Admiral Alexander Shishkov's *Discourse on the Old and New Style of the Russian Language* (Rassuzhdenie o starom i novom sloge rossiiskogo iazyka), one of the most notorious books in Russian history, appeared in 1803. The fundamental thrust of the "Discourse" centers on

a contrast between the spiritual richness of Old Church Slavonic literature and the anarchic spirit of foreign literature, French in particular.[3] At first Derzhavin was relatively restrained in his response to the admiral's work, but over time he came to realize that Shishkov's linguistic patriotism spoke to his own sense of injury and bewilderment. Derzhavin's rapprochement with the archaists took place gradually: by 1805 he had become rather close to them; by 1807 he was hosting gatherings of the future "Lovers of the Russian Word" in his own residence on the Fontanka Embankment, and the group's first official Reading took place in his grand hall on March 14, 1811.[4]

This story of Derzhavin's entry into the Shishkov camp has political and aesthetic aspects as well as purely mundane ones. The aesthetic side is characterized by a shift from the cultural "universalism" of the so-called "Derzhavin-Lvov Circle," a Renaissance-spirited community of poets and artists, musicians and architects, to the logocentric orientation of the Shishkovists.[5] By the mid-1810s, the desire to "flesh out with the artist's pencil that which the poet could not or did not wish to say in words" (the basis for the large-scale semiotic project of illustrating Derzhavin's *Works*, which was launched and developed by his "interdisciplinary" friends in the 1790s but not realized in full until Iakov Grot's marvelous edition of the 1860s[6]) was replaced by the desire to comment on and disseminate words by means of other words.

Derzhavin was eager to tell his audience that he was not to blame for the situation in which he now found himself. He wanted to make sure everyone knew that he had always been a faithful and true servant of the State, treating his verse as merely a secondary endeavor (at least so he claimed), and hence he had been unjustly insulted. A suitable opportunity to tell his side of the story offered itself in 1805 when His Grace Evgeny (Evfimii Bolkhovitinov), who would later become the metropolitan of Kiev but was at that time bishop of Staraya Russa and vicar of Novgorod, asked Derzhavin for biographical information for his dictionary of Russian writers.

One of the best-educated people of his time, Bolkhovitinov combined the qualities necessary for his confident ascent up the hierarchical ladder of the Russian Orthodox Church with a curiosity, wit, and skepticism worthy of the French Encyclopedists.[7] His biographical dictionary was the first attempt to collect and systematize information about religious and secular

authors who wrote in Russian: "The history of writers is a vital part of literature, as they compose its epochs and periods," wrote Bolkhovitinov in the introduction. "Knowing foreign writers is a side issue for us; but not to know our native writers shames us." Short extracts of a page or two from the dictionary appeared on a monthly basis in the *Friend of Enlightenment* (Drug prosveshcheniia), a conservative periodical published by Count Dmitry Khvostov.[8] In the spring of 1805 Evgeny wrote to the publisher:

> You're an intimate of Gavrila Derzhavin. But I don't have a single thing about his life. The letter "D" is fast approaching. . . . Do me a favor, write to him and ask him in the name of all the writers who admire him to communicate to you some notes on his life [. . .]. And perhaps he would also communicate some personal Stories that touch on literature. He now lives forty versts from Novgorod, but he never comes here, and I'm not acquainted with him.[9]

The count carried out the bishop's request: Derzhavin sent Evgeny a detailed "Note" (Zapiska, sometimes translated as "Memorandum"), in which he answered the questions that had been put to him and added quite a lot of his own accord. ("He sent me a detailed *Viography* [*sic*!] and extensive commentary on the circumstances and allusions in his odes," Evgeny wrote to Khvostov on September 30, 1805. "This is an invaluable treasure for Russian literature.")[10] The article on Derzhavin appeared in the first issue of the *Friend of Enlightenment* in 1806;[11] the friendship between the poet and the priest continued for ten years, right up to Derzhavin's death in 1816. In summer they would meet at Zvanka, Derzhavin's estate in the Pskov region of central Russia, which belonged to Evgeny's diocese. Derzhavin also visited Evgeny at the Khutynsky Monastery. In winter it was more difficult to meet: Derzhavin would return to Petersburg, while Evgeny lived in Novgorod. They did the best they could and corresponded.

The "Note" prepared at Bolkhovitinov's request inspired Derzhavin to compose more extensive explanations of his deeds and texts.[12] Since his contemporaries had already experienced difficulties interpreting his poems, he feared that it would be even harder for future generations. The poet therefore took up the task himself, having decided not to leave the "finer points [. . .] to the reader's own understanding."[13] In the early years of the nineteenth century, Derzhavin began work on multiple variants

of commentaries and explanations "on his own compositions," which in time came to form a kind of multifaceted and heterogeneous text.[14] The fundamental thrust of this text is the affirmation of the authenticity behind his writings, "the feelings experienced during the creation of one poem or another," assuring present and future readers that everything had happened "just so" in the life of the poet and his milieu.

My focus in this book is Derzhavin's lyric poetry of 1803 to 1808. The constant flow of auto-explications and prose paraphrases of his own poetry did not exclude the birth of new allusions (often even more convoluted than the earlier ones), the search for new metaphors, and the creation of unprecedented allegories. Quite the contrary: Derzhavin experienced a particularly strong need for these new means of expression. A characteristic trait of his work during these years, therefore, came to be a combination of the archaic "Russian style" with unprecedented metaphors and similes that expressed the new European outlook.

Even as he became sympathetic to Shishkov and his followers, mining the Time of Troubles for noble and patriotic subjects, outfitting his lyrics and dramas with images from Russian folklore and tedious archaic vocabulary, Derzhavin shared the latest enthusiasms and obsessions of his contemporaries, Europeans as well as Russians. One might call the Derzhavin of the first decade of the new century "a European in spite of himself" (to rephrase the title of Molière's famous play), the generally accepted picture of his arch-Russianness notwithstanding. Shishkov's linguistic ideas proved insufficient for Derzhavin's needs: the admiral's militantly archaic lexicon and folkloric imagery could not adequately embody the poet's obstinate agitation. Now it was a matter of developing a completely different rhetoric, a "rhetoric of the turn," which had gradually come to Russia from the West along with the philosophical interpretation of the turn of the century.

II

Europe, still reeling from the revolutionary shocks of the previous decade, bore witness to a war that was both old and new. Half a year before Derzhavin's retirement, in the spring of 1803, Napoleon broke the short-lived armistice with England, and the two countries were once again at war. In 1804 the first consul became emperor; in 1805 the French army was

proclaimed the Great Army (*la Grande armée*). England, for its part, had gathered the Third Coalition against France, joined this time around by Russia, which was nevertheless still unable to express her feelings, including her patriotic feelings, in any language but French. In August 1806, Franz II of Hapsburg renounced the German crown and title of emperor, and the Holy Roman Empire ended its almost nine-hundred-year existence (the famous portrait by Ingres of Napoleon on the Imperial Throne, a pictorial apotheosis of imperial grandeur, dates from this same year). The Berlin Decree of November 1806 laid the foundation for the Continental blockade of the British Isles; during the course of 1807 some countries that had earlier belonged to anti-French coalitions were forced to join the blockade—including Russia, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Tilsit. Separated from the Continent by the invisible wall of embargo, England became a symbol of resistance to Bonaparte, which could not but elicit some interest in this country and its culture even, or, perhaps especially, within the nations that had joined the blockade.

In 1805 the journal *Northern Herald* (Severnyi vestnik), edited by Ivan Martynov, an eminent Russian classicist also known for his progressive views, published *An Essay on Great Britain* (Opyt o Velikobritanii), an apologia for the British governmental structure, national consciousness, and liberal values. The anonymous author of the "Essay" characterized the British thus:

> In my opinion, no other people in our time deserve our attention more than the people of Great Britain. All the beneficial results of the observations of thousands of years have been incorporated into its governmental structure: a positive appreciation of man has been incorporated [. . .]. But when, on top of all this, he [the Briton] indeed ascertains that in this residence one can enjoy all the best comforts, pleasures, and advantages for one's moral and bodily existence, then of course there arises in him a boundless attachment to and partiality for his country, albeit a praiseworthy one, for it is founded on truth, as comprehended by common sense. The love of every true son for his Fatherland ought to consist of the same: it does not tolerate exception.[15]

The British citizen's "praiseworthy attachment" to his country is posited in the article as a model for any and all kinds of "rational patriotism."

One cannot *imitate* patriotism: one must and ought to *learn* it, after first relinquishing the habit of blind imitation. This is the call the author issues to his fellow countrymen:

> To you, Russians, to you, my dear fellow countrymen, I now address my words. [. . .] But oh! The spirits of Dmitry, Alexander, Pozharsky, and Minin groan—the shades of the Dolgorukys, Matveevs, and Sheremetevs weep when they now see Russians flying more swiftly than an eagle past alien peoples! Only luxury, dissipation, and thoughtlessness attract them. The brilliant dress, spectacle, and cosmopolitanism of the foreigners, in the eyes of their [i.e., Dmitry's, Alexander's, et al.—TS] fellow countrymen, have the appearance of national virtues. Whenever the noble shades of these unforgettable men appeared among us, could they hear with indifference the incessant, corrupted, half-French conversation of the Slavonic Russians, whose native language surpasses the sheer abundance and variety of Nature herself? Her variety, pleasantness, and unexpected turns do not surprise, delight, astonish as instantaneously and sweetly as the flexible, luxurious, and ever-changing Slavonic-Russian language.[16]

Most of the "Essay" dealt with the rights and freedoms of citizens of "all classes" and seemed quite bold to Russians of the time. The passage hymning the "Slavonic-Russian language," however, held some appeal for conservative circles of society, even though less than a year earlier, in 1804, the *Northern Herald* had famously published an article denouncing Shishkov's *Discourse* and overturning its ideas. The "Essay's" mingling of notions attractive to Russians of the most diverse views is typical of the Russian approach to England in the Mid-1800s. Fascinated by the country and its political experience, many Russians attempted to engage with its cultural heritage directly, bypassing the linguistic and cultural intermediacy of the French, inescapable in the previous century.[17]

The importance of England's status as the birthplace of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), the text that laid the foundations for enlightened conservatism in Europe, should also not be underestimated. Published in enormous print-runs in London in the 1790s (released eleven times in the course of a single year), and immediately translated into all the major European languages, the *Reflections* not only defined the perception of what was happening but actually influenced the

course of events.[18] At the turn of the nineteenth century this text endured as an inexhaustible source of metaphors and similes for those thinking and writing about the hidden and manifest sources of revolution, as well as about the direct and indirect consequences of radical political change, chief among them the headlong rise of Napoleon.

The graphic and at times shocking imagery of Burke's arguments tied his views to an important weapon of political struggle: the art of caricature—a "'hyperrealist' answer to the 'hyperidealist' longing to attain the calm realms of the Beautiful," as Jean Starobinski defined it. [19] England was the source not only of concrete representations disseminated throughout Europe at the turn of the century but also of the very phenomenon of "caricature vision," mastered by the British long before the events of the 1790s and exemplified in works stretching from William Hogarth's mid-century pictorial narratives to the devastating satire of James Gillray's revolutionary caricatures. But what was most important, and characteristically British, about British caricature was not the specific nature of "caricature vision" as such but the very fact of its coexistence with fundamentally different views and types of representation, all within a single culture. The fact that it was the visual component of British culture that came to the forefront and was first perceived and "digested" in Russia in the early years of the nineteenth century can be explained in part by Russians' wish to reduce French intermediacy and in part—and this is perhaps the main reason—by England's reputation as the legislator of visual fashion, a reputation consolidated in the preceding century.

III

Eighteenth-century England became the center of a new "visual idiom" that was not immediately grasped and assimilated by continental Europe.[20] In addition to Hogarth's satirical canvases, the components of this idiom included the timeless classicism of John Flaxman, the multifaceted antiquity of the Palladian villa, a trademark of English architecture in the 1720s and 1730s, and the famous "conversation pieces," group portraits of people engaged in conversation or some activity (a genre that can be traced to Dutch painting of the seventeenth century but which was made famous by the British and considered an especially English phenomenon).[21] The British "visual dominant" in Europe included the English garden and the

culture of the *picturesque* largely engendered by it, the amazing theater of optical effects known as the "Eidophusikon," invented by Philippe-Jacques de Loutherbourg, a Frenchman who gained his fame as a British artist, and last but not least, the first panoramas of cities, patented in the late 1780s by the Scotsman Robert Baker.[22]

By the time panoramas became widespread, first in England and then on the Continent, the "panoramic view," capable of encompassing an enormous space all at once and reconciling multiple points of view with the laws of perspective, as well as the "bird's eye" view, were no longer abstract concepts: at the turn of the century people could survey boundless space on board hot-air balloons. The theory and practice of air navigation had received scant treatment in the pages of Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*—it had finished publication three years before the Montgolfier brothers' balloon went up, in the fall of 1783, at first carrying a rooster, a goose, and a sheep, and later piloted by the fearless Jean-François Pilâtre de Rozier. Had the *Encyclopédie* not been completed, this subject, so well suited to the spirit of their intellectual enterprise, would surely have inspired the Encyclopedists. The balloons, however, did succeed

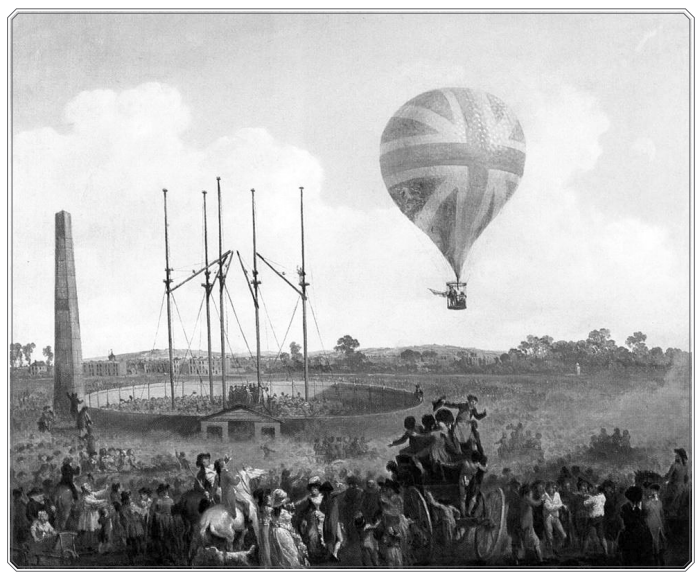

Figure 1. Julius Caesar Ibbetson, George Biggins' Ascent in Lunardi's Balloon, 1785. Neue Munich.

in inspiring the last poets of the Enlightenment. Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of the great naturalist, dedicated to the balloon the following lines of *The Botanic Garden* (1791), a poem that enjoyed great popularity in the 1790s:

> The calm Philosopher in ether sails,
> Views broader stars, and breathes in purer gales;
> Sees, like a map, in many a waving line
> Round Earth's blue plains her lucid waters shine;
> Sees at his feet the forky lightnings glow,
> And hears innocuous thunders roar below.
> —Rise, great MONGOLFIER! Urge thy venturous flight
> High o'er the Moon's pale ice-reflected light;
> High o'er the pearly Star, whose beamy horn.
> Hangs in the east, gay harbinger of morn.[23]

In these lines of Darwin, a doctor, biologist, and poet, flight in a hot-air balloon is transformed into a metaphor for all-encompassing knowledge. In the same year Darwin wrote these lines, 1789, in far-off Russia, Derzhavin compared the Montgolfier brothers' invention with human happiness ("To Happiness" [Na schast'e, 1789]):

> Но ах! как некая ты сфера
> Иль легкий шар Монгольфиера,
> Блистая в воздухе, летишь.
>
> (Derzhavin 1:255)

❧

> But oh! You, like some sphere
> Or the light balloon of Montgolfier,
> Fly, shining in the air.

During the last years of the eighteenth century Xavier de Maistre and Prince Deligne ascended into the skies, and in the early 1800s one could see the balloons of the French aeronaut André-Jacques Garnerin and the Belgian physicist Etienne-Gaspard Robertson fly over the rooftops of Moscow and St. Petersburg. The visiting balloonists often took curious natives on board. The ability to look down and see the world spread out below made the terrain seem like a map made real—a sensation otherwise most closely associated with war.

The spherical vision of an aeronaut was just one of the new "types of vision" mastered at the turn of the nineteenth century, when all of Europe was seized by an "opticomania" that had spread mainly from England. The mass enthusiasm for optical instruments that equipped the human eye with properties and possibilities exceeding those granted by nature can be understood as a result of a certain *intensification* of reality itself. One consequence of the initial impulse to explore "applied" optics was a renewed interest in Isaac Newton's *Opticks,* published a century earlier, in 1704. The revived debate on the nature of light and color famously engaged Goethe in creating his own theory of the spectrum, later expounded in his treatise *Theory of Colors* (Farbenlehre, 1810). Goethe was also interested in "applied" optics: for a production of *Faust* he proposed using a magic lantern, and provided detailed guidelines for employing it to create supernatural effects.[24]

During this same period the physiology of vision and the nature of optical illusions, the theory of refraction and other theories set forth in Newton's *Opticks* also excited the imagination of the English Romantic poets, above all William Wordsworth.[25] Wordsworth employs optical imagery in both his early lyrics and his mature works, namely in *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*, but his scientific interests were not limited to optics: in 1802 he and Coleridge were often seen at Humphry Davy's public lectures on chemistry.[26] Coleridge is often quoted as admitting that he had attended those lectures "in order to renew [his] stock of metaphors." In all likelihood, Wordsworth was pursuing similar aims, if one is to judge by the voluminous preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800):

> The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings.[27]

The Lyrical Ballads, one of the manifestoes of English Romanticism, was Wordsworth's and Coleridge's joint "project." Wordsworth saw the goal of this undertaking as the description of "incidents and situations from common life" in ordinary language, conveying the sublimity of an object without recourse to lofty style:

> The principal object, then, which I proposed to myself in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men; and at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way [. . .]. There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; I have taken as much pains to avoid it as others ordinarily take to produce it.[28]

Wordsworth's renunciation of "poetic diction" in favor of "ordinary language," like Coleridge's appeal to the world of chemistry in his search for new metaphors, marked the end of the rhetorical era, which coincided with the end of the eighteenth century. With the new century came a break with the old idea of tradition as a stable state—the notion that every new text came into being as part of a pre-existing corpus. This shift secretly accumulated new possibilities for the word, especially the poetic word, which was liberated from its systemic connections, redeemed, as it were, from complete isolation in a system of meaning based on and inseparably tied to ancient models. Now, it seemed to the innovators, the word could arise from situation and subject, from the here and now, and touch directly upon reality.

Metaphors too, and not only chemical ones, are capable of overcoming stability as a form of existence for language and, to a certain extent, easing the perception of a new, unstable, apparently incomprehensible world. At the turn of the nineteenth century Goethe and Wordsworth, Louis-Sébastien Mercier and the Brothers Grimm all took part, each in his own way, in this "search for metaphors"—not necessarily specific expressions, but, more broadly, unexpected combinations of meanings that would have seemed incompatible before.

IV

At the turn of the nineteenth century, news reached Russia with variable speed. Radio waves had yet to be discovered, the telegraph would be created quite soon, but the attitudes of the time crisscrossed the world like waves, penetrating each and every person. Wartime tend to intensify these

processes. And here we return to the subject of this book—the paradoxes of the late Derzhavin.

Despite his own ideological stance, Derzhavin found himself nearly in the mainstream of Western aesthetics. Of course, he was far from renouncing "poetic diction," the absence of which Wordsworth warned his readers about in the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, but, likewise, he was constantly in search of words that belonged to reality (as mentioned above, the connection of his works with "real life" marked the spirit and novelty of Derzhavin's multiple "Explanations"), and yet represented "ordinary things [. . .] in an unaccustomed aspect."[29] Like Goethe, Derzhavin was interested in optics and meteorology; like Coleridge, he wanted to renew the current "stock of metaphors"; like Wordsworth, he sought to expand the parameters of what can be called "poetic subjects." Derzhavin followed the latest achievements in industry, science, and technology with keen interest. Cutting-edge optical devices and spinning machines, imported to Russia from England, occupy as important a place in his poetic "husbandry" as in the real husbandry of Zvanka. But learning how to use new metaphors and similes in poetry is as hard as mastering new contraptions in everyday life: one does not get the hang of them all at once.

It is no coincidence that the poems with the most irregular stanzaic structure and the most complex language are the same ones in which one finds images "removed from the obvious province of poetry" (to quote Anna-Laetitia Barbauld's words on Darwin's "Botanic Garden"). Yet, surprisingly, the old-fashioned style of Derzhavin's later poems comes to seem like a whimsical affirmation of his up-to-date interests. Thus, for example, "Magic Lantern" (Fonar', 1804), the modernity of whose worldview is striking, features a rare profusion of archaisms (the intricate gerundives "catching sight of a meek lamb" [*ozetia agnitsu smirenny*] or "making fertile the furrows with dung" [*i tukom ugobzia brazdy*], phrases barely intelligible to Derzhavin's own contemporaries). As Alan Richardson has demonstrated in his studies of the poetic diction of the British Romantics, Wordsworth, too, after renouncing lofty style, did not disregard the modernizing potential of archaisms but made wide use of them.[30]

In his "Explanation" of the poem "Monument" (Pamyatnik, 1795), Derzhavin writes about himself (in the third person, as was his custom in his autobiographical prose):[31]