

Classic Poetry Series

**Yevgeny Abramovich
Baratynsky
- poems -**

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Yevgeny Abramovich Baratynsky(2 March 1800 – 11 July 1844)

Evgeny Abramovich Baratynsky was lauded by Alexander Pushkin as the finest Russian elegiac poet. After a long period when his reputation was on the wane, Baratynsky was rediscovered by Anna Akhmatova and Joseph Brodsky as a supreme poet of thought.

Life

Of noble ancestry, Baratynsky was educated at the Page Corps at St. Petersburg, from which he was expelled at the age of 15 after stealing a snuffbox and five hundred roubles from the bureau of his accessory's uncle. After three years in the countryside and deep emotional turmoil, he entered the army as a private.

In 1820 the young poet made his acquaintance with Anton Delvig, who rallied his falling spirits and introduced him to the literary press. Soon Baratynsky was transferred to Finland, where he remained six years. His first long poem, *Eda*, written during this period, established his reputation.

In January 1826, he married the daughter of the Major-General Gregory G. Engelhardt. Through the interest of friends he obtained leave from the tsar to retire from the army, and settled in 1827 in Muranovo near Moscow (now a literary museum). There he completed his longest work, *The Gipsy*, a poem written in the style of Pushkin.

Baratynsky's family life seemed to be happy, but a profound melancholy remained the background of his mind and of his poetry. He published several books of verse that were highly valued by Pushkin and other perceptive critics, but met with the comparatively cool reception of the public, and violent ridicule on the part of the young journalists of the "plebeian party". As the time went by, Baratynsky's mood progressed from pessimism to hopelessness, and elegy became his preferred form of expression. He died in 1844 at Naples, where he had gone in pursuit of a milder climate.

Poetry

Baratynsky's earliest poems are punctuated by conscious efforts to write differently from Pushkin who he regarded as a model of perfection. Even *Eda*, his first long poem, though inspired by Pushkin's *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*,

adheres to a realistic and homely style, with a touch of sentimental pathos but not a trace of romanticism. It is written, like all that Baratynsky wrote, in a wonderfully precise style, next to which Pushkin's seems hazy. The descriptive passages are among the best — the stern nature of Finland was particularly dear to Baratynsky.

His short pieces from the 1820s are distinguished by the cold, metallic brilliance and sonority of the verse. They are dryer and clearer than anything in the whole of Russian poetry before Akhmatova. The poems from that period include fugitive, light pieces in the Anacreontic and Horatian manner, some of which have been recognized as the masterpieces of the kind, as well as love elegies, where a delicate sentiment is clothed in brilliant wit.

In his mature work (which includes all his short poems written after 1829) Baratynsky is a poet of thought, perhaps of all the poets of the "stupid nineteenth century" the one who made the best use of thought as a material for poetry. This made him alien to his younger contemporaries and to all the later part of the century, which identified poetry with sentiment. His poetry is, as it were, a short cut from the wit of the 18th-century poets to the metaphysical ambitions of the twentieth (in terms of English poetry, from Alexander Pope to T. S. Eliot).

Baratynsky's style is classical and dwells on the models of the previous century. Yet in his effort to give his thought the tersest and most concentrated statement, he sometimes becomes obscure by sheer dint of compression. Baratynsky's obvious labour gives his verse a certain air of brittleness which is at poles' ends from Pushkin's divine, Mozartian lightness and elasticity. Among other things, Baratynsky was one of the first Russian poets who were, in verse, masters of the complicated sentence, expanded by subordinate clauses and parentheses.

Philosophy

Baratynsky aspired after a fuller union with nature, after a more primitive spontaneity of mental life. He saw the steady, inexorable movement of mankind away from nature. The aspiration after a more organic and natural past is one of the main motives of Baratynsky's poetry. He symbolized it in the growing discord between nature's child — the poet — and the human herd, which were growing, with every generation, more absorbed by industrial cares. Hence the increasing isolation of the poet in the modern world where the only response that greets him is that of his own rhymes (Rhyme, 1841).

The future of industrialized and mechanized mankind will be brilliant and glorious

in the nearest future, but universal happiness and peace will be bought at the cost of the loss of all higher values of poetry (The Last Poet). And inevitably, after an age of intellectual refinement, humanity will lose its vital sap and die from sexual impotence. Then earth will be restored to her primaeval majesty (The Last Death, 1827).

This philosophy, allying itself to his profound temperamental melancholy, produced poems of extraordinary majesty, which can compare with nothing in the poetry of pessimism, except Leopardi. Such is the crushing majesty of that long ode to dejection, Autumn (1837), splendidly rhetorical in the grandest manner of classicism, though with a pronouncedly personal accent.

A Bard's Sweet Song

A bard's sweet song mends ailing constitution.
The harmony's ever-mysterious reign
Will compensate the cumbersome illusion
And curb the sense that's passionate and strained.
The poet's soul, in a verse poured out,
Will be released from all her heavy pines;
And holy poetry will give the world around
And all its purity - to its girlfriend, at once.

Yevgeny Abramovich Baratynsky

Don'T Imitate...

Don't imitate: the gift is special here,
And with its own greatness it is great;
Either Doratov or the new Shakespeare -
You are not liked: they hate returning, yet.
The law of a bard and Israel's the same:
To make the idol is the crime and shame!
And when, Mickiewicz, oh, my bard, elated,
I saw you by the Byron's feet - I thought:
Rise, rise immediately, a priest humiliated!
Rise and remember: you're yourself a god!

Yevgeny Abramovich Baratynsky

I Love You, Goddesses Of Singing

I love you, goddesses of singing,
But your invasion, so fine,
That tremor of the spirit thrilling,
Is a herald of the future pines.

The Muses' love and Fortune's striking
Are one. I'm silent. I'm afraid:
My fingers, casting on the light strings,
Might here awake these storms and lightnings
In which my sleeping fate was laid.

And, with strong torments ever wound,
I leave the Muse, who favours me,
And say: "Till tomorrow, sounds,
Let the day expire quietly."

Yevgeny Abramovich Baratynsky

Love

Poison, we drink in love - the sweetest one,
But that's the poison, what we drink,
And always pay for joy, that's briefest one,
With sadness of the long days' link.
"The flames of love are flames of happiness",
Everyone says; but what's a fact?
It empties, in its fierce craziness,
The every soul, it attracts!
Who will be able to stifle the memories,
Of days of suffering and happiness,
Of your enchanting days, oh love?
Then I'd return to life, to joy and fun,
And put my soul before your bright one
For golden dreams my youth above.

Yevgeny Abramovich Baratynsky

Muse

I did not blinded with the Muse, my dear:
She'll not be called the beauty, charming heart,
And throngs of youths, when sought her passing here,
As crazy lovers, will not run behind.
She has not any wish or gift to raise desires
By plays of eyes, by elegant attires,
Or by the clever and sarcastic speech;
But, the high world could sometimes be bewitched
By singularity of whole her expression,
By simple structure of her quiet phrase;
And, rather than with biting alienation,
It'll honour her with the negligent praise.

Yevgeny Abramovich Baratynsky

The Sculptor

When fixed his gaze upon the stone,
The artist saw a nymph inside,
And fire ran through vein his own -
He flew to her in all his heart.

But though full of strong desire,
He's now overcome the spell:
The chisel, piecemeal and unhurried,
From his high goddess, sanctified,
Removes a shell after a shell.

In the sweet and vague preoccupation
More than a day or a year will pass;
But from the goddess of his passion,
The fallen veil will not be last,

Until, perceiving his desire,
Under the chisel's gentle caress,
And answering by a gaze of fire,
Sweat Galatea brings entire
The sage into a first embrace.

Yevgeny Abramovich Baratynsky

To Imitators

When, by sorrow inspired,
The poet sings his own pine,
Whose soul will be cold and tired
To give not him the answer, fine?
Who, greedy for the old damnation,
Will dare to scoff at sadness, else?
But all are cold to execration,
The imitated cry's vexation,
Affected wailing is a jest!
The poet, stirring every soul,
Has reached the sufferers' mysteries,
Without worm of somewhat boiling,
Complaisant labored musings' tricks.
In struggle with fate's severe pressure
He took the measure of high strengths,
And bought their rudiment expression
At the price of painful hearty cramps.
Therefore his image is encircled
By rays of the unfading light,
And, like a martyr, he is honored
By people of the different kind.
But your Muse, so meretricious,
Which dreams to raise emphatic wishes
In humane hearts by loaned pine,
Is like a beggar outrageous,
Who begs for contributions gracious,
Keeping a child, who isn't her one.

Yevgeny Abramovich Baratynsky

Two Fates

Wise Providence gave our perception
The choice between two different fates:
Either blind hope and agitation,
Or hopelessness and deadly rest.

Let him trust to seductive hopes,
Who's sure with his unpracticed mind,
Who knows mocking fortunes slopes,
Only through rumour, spread behind.

Have hope, young people, brave and ardent!
Fly with your pairs of strongest wings;
For you the projects, great and sudden,
And young heart's ever burning dreams!

But you, who've now tried and measured
All humane fate, deep grief and strife,
And vanity of humane pleasure -
Who doomed to knowledge of the life!

Away with those crowds tempting!
In quiet peace, live your days, last,
And guard the coldness, safely saving
Your now apathetic heart.

Just like the dry dead peoples' corpses,
Which blessed with senseless of disease,
Waked up by spells of lords of forests,
Rise from their graves, gnashing their teeth,

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So you, if kindle in hearts desire
And trust to the deceptive moods,
Will be awaked only for mire,
For fresh pain of the former wounds.

Yevgeny Abramovich Baratynsky

We Diligently Watch

We diligently watch the world,
We diligently watch the people -
Wait for the wonder in their middle.
And what are fruits of the long years' plots?
What will, at last, discern the eyes, sharp-sighted?
What will cognize the ever-lofty mind
On a top of the experience and finds? ...
The essence of a proverb, always cited.

Yevgeny Abramovich Baratynsky

You'Re Useless, Days

You're useless, days! The earthly world will never
Change its used games!
We know them all, and our future, clever,
Predicts the same.

And not in vain you seethed and tossed in hurry
To live and grow,
Before the body, you engraved your fit, so starry,
My frenzied soul!

And having closed long ago the narrow circuit
Of worldly sense,
You drowse under breathe of dreams, recurrent;
But the body, else

Observes the day's dawn, aimlessly supplanting
Again the night,
The fruitless evening, dully plunging, -
The day's end, blunt.

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