

**Title:** Heterodoxy and Heteroglossia: Poets and Prophets on the Threshold of the Russian Empire  
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This paper investigates how three poems: Mikhail Lermontov's "Smert poeta" (1837) Aleksandr Pushkin's "Prorok" (1826), and the Azeri writer Mirza Fatali Akhundov's "Na smert Pushkina" (1837) present the figure of the prophet in order to challenge the boundaries between Self /Other and secular/religious on the frontier of the Russian Empire. The space of the Caucasus during the early nineteenth century was a center of movement of people and ideas across the newly acquired space of the empire. The simultaneous annexation of colonial territory and expulsion of political exiles forged a space for a heteroglossic discourse of identity in the literature produced by both Russian and Caucasian poets. Mirza Fatali Akhundov who worked as a translator for the Imperial administration in Tbilisi encountered writers like Lermontov in person and Pushkin through exposure to Russian literature. Just as the poetic figure of the prophet in these poems experienced spiritual enlightenment in the liminal space between sleep and waking, so too did the threshold space of the Caucasus challenge the geopolitical and cultural binaries between East/ West, Self/Other, Colonizer/Colonized etc. The conceptual framework of this paper, the notion of the threshold as an intertextual and semiotic phenomenon, engages in dialogue with Edward Saïd's *contrapuntalism* and the work of Mikhail Bakhtin.

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