

Title: “There like vast waters flowed together sea and sky”: “Finland” and Finland in the work of E. A. Baratynsky

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Baratynsky is often seen as a poet of irreconcilable binary oppositions (see, for example, Dora Burton’s discussion of the “dichotomy of his poetic vision” (60) or Geir Kjetsaa’s claim that «Творчество Баратынского основывалось на его остром сознании непримиримых противоречий бытия» (vi), as well as many others), and his poetry about Finland expresses mixed feelings: it was both the place of his exile and the place he was able to be a poet. It is therefore fitting that his poem «Финляндия» is one of the few places in his poetry where he achieves a positive synthesis of opposites, reaching what Benjamin Dees calls a “higher plane of synthesis and harmony” (12) in his work. Dees explores this largely in connection with Baratynsky’s later, post-Finnish period, but «Финляндия» foreshadows the developments of Baratynsky’s mature creativity. In this paper I will examine Baratynsky’s use of poetic technique to achieve affects of melding, merging, and synthesis in «Финляндия», and discuss how his use of rhyme underscores the transformation that takes place in the natural world of the poem and the consciousness of the lyrical “I.” I will then discuss how «Финляндия»—the poem and the country—seem to signify for Baratynsky both the possibility of happiness and the primacy of poetry, a high point of poetic purpose that he would struggle to recapture in the decades to come.

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