

# ‘Pushkin Was a Live Volcano . . .’

## The Poet, As Seen by His Contemporaries

by E.S. Lebedeva

*Pushkin was a live volcano, whose  
inner life burst from him like  
a column of fire.*

—F. Glinka (I, 245)<sup>1</sup>

*Poetry is the exclusive passion of those  
few, who are born poets.*

—A.S. Pushkin

Pushkin lived his life in a big and noisy crowd—not in isolation, but surrounded by many people who had the opportunity to see him. We can hear the chorus of his contemporaries, with its great range of voices, in their reminiscences about him.

These memoirs have a certain peculiar feature. The people closest to the poet found it difficult to speak, and they did not do so right away. Alexander Sergeevich’s friend S.A. Sobolevsky expressed the reason for this constraint, in his own way, in 1855: “In order not to retell what is superfluous, or fail to tell adequately what should be told, every friend of Pushkin ought to remain silent. . . . Let those who didn’t know him, write about him.” (I, 38)

Be that as it may, memoirs about the poet ultimately filled two large volumes.

The degree of his closeness to the memoir writers varies—friendship of many years, blood kinship, literary

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*Manuscript sketch, 1820, self-portrait (lower left)  
with members of the Rayevsky family.*

collaboration, chance meetings on the post roads, or in some Cossack settlement, or on the Georgian Military Highway. People of different levels of culture gave testimony about him, and there is a great range of variety in how they perceived the personality of the poet: from tender solicitude at the sight of a missing button on his jacket, to amazement at the scope of the phenomenon that was Pushkin.

All social layers are represented on the list of people who have said what they had to say about the poet—from the Emperor to the serf, from the fashionable fortune-teller to the old Cossack woman, who remembered Pushkin. The richness of these memoirs is a natural response to

the character of his genius, open as it was to the world and to people: In Pushkin’s own words (as related by A.O. Smirnova), he saw his own mind in every person, and every conversation partner was interesting for him—“from the police watchman, to the Tsar.”

I.I. Pushchin, the “first friend, . . . priceless friend,” sketched the far from simple relations among the Lycée classmates. “From the very beginning, Pushkin annoyed many people, and therefore did not inspire general sympathy; that is the lot of an eccentric being, among people.” (I, 82) Even earlier, his perceptive and loving grandmother had worried, as she observed the unusual child: “He rushes from one extreme to another. He has no middle ground. God only knows, what it will all end in.” (Ver., 33)<sup>2</sup>

P.A. Pletnyov, whom the poet described as the possessor of “a beautiful soul, full of sacred dreams, living and

clear poetry, lofty thoughts and simplicity,” formulated his amazement at Pushkin, in this way: “The ardent nature of his soul, fused with his clarity of mind, made him an extraordinary, even strange being, in whom all qualities took an extreme form.” (II, 254)

In 1820, I.A. Capodistria, chief of the Collegium of Foreign Affairs, wrote upon sending Pushkin to General Inzov in the South: “There is no extreme, into which this unfortunate young man would not fall, nor is there any degree of perfection, which he could not attain, highly gifted as he is.” (Ver., 90)

Count Benkendorf recorded the paradox of Pushkin, from his own point of view: “Pushkin united in himself two unique beings: He was a great poet, and a great liberal, hating any authority.”

Adam Mickiewicz saw the uniqueness of his Russian fellow writer, in his combination of poetic genius and civic, historical thinking: “The bullet that felled Pushkin inflicted a terrible blow against intellectual Russia. Now Russia has excellent writers . . . . But nobody will replace Pushkin. Only once is it granted to a country, to produce a person, who unites in himself to such a degree such diverse and, seemingly, mutually exclusive qualities.” (I, 143)

Russian religious philosophy has remarked upon Pushkin’s antinomic nature, from an ontological standpoint.<sup>3</sup>

The comments cited above are sweeping statements about the poet’s personality. Other observers record more particular, but very striking contradictions in the poet’s character, actions, and psyche.

“I knew Alexander Sergeyevich as a quick-tempered person, sometimes to the point of frenzy,” testified his Kishinyov acquaintance, Lt. Col. I.P. Liprandi, “but at a moment of danger, specifically, when he came face to face with death, at which moment a person completely reveals himself, Pushkin was to a high degree imperturbable. . . . When things reached that barrier, he was as cool as ice. . . . In such cases, I have rarely encountered such a nature as Pushkin’s. These two extremes, united as they were in Alexander Sergeyevich, must be very rare.” (I, 316)

The poet’s brother recalls: “Pushkin was not good-looking, but his face was expressive and animated; he was short

. . . but slim, strong and well-built. Women liked Pushkin; he fascinated them, and he inspired more than a few passions in his time. When he was flirting with a woman or when he was genuinely engaged with her, his conversation became unusually alluring. It should be noted that one rarely meets a person, who can express himself as indifferently and insufferably as Pushkin used to, when he was not interested in the topic of discussion. But he would become brilliantly eloquent, when it had to do with something close to his heart. Then he was a poet, and rather more inspired than in any of his compositions.” (I, 63)

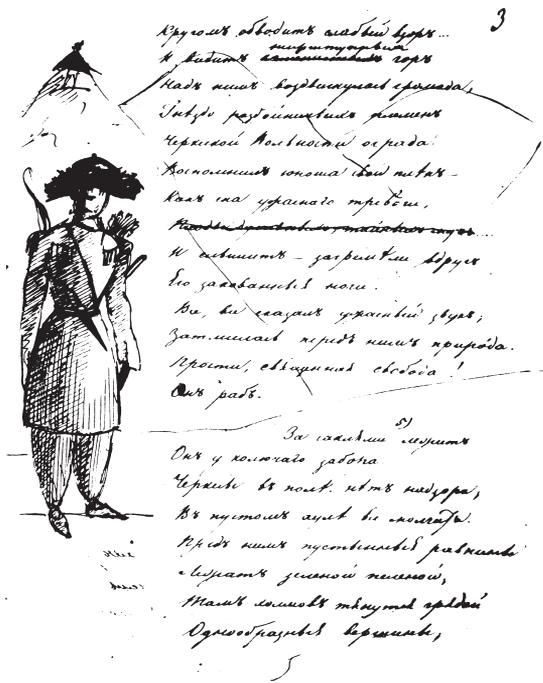
The remarks of A.N. Vulf, “the Lovelace of Tver,” are well known: “He knows women like nobody else. For that reason, though lacking any of the external attributes, which always influence the fairer sex, he wins their favor with the sheer brilliance of his mind.” It is interesting to contrast yet another “male” view of Pushkin with these opinions—the less popularized statement by A.A. Mukhanov (in a letter to his brother, May 1827): “Alexander Pushkin, who is setting off into the night, will bring you this letter. Try to get to know him better; it is impossible to value highly enough the pleasure of passing time with him, thinking about the impressions which his unusual gifts awake in us. He is a hundred times more interesting in male company, than with women, when he makes

himself comprehensible to the females by constantly dissipating himself into pettiness.” (Ver., 235)

A.P. Kern, who observed the poet in quite varied circumstances, noted: “He was very uneven in his manners: sometimes loudly merry, sometimes sad, sometimes shy, sometimes bold, sometimes inexhaustibly gracious, sometimes exceedingly boring—and there was no way to guess what mood he would be in a minute later.”<sup>4</sup>

These states, coming in frequent and rapid succession, sought an outlet, and Pushkin’s artistic nature expressed them not only in his creative work, but in life.

“The Arabian Devil” [*“Bes-Arabsky,”* a pun on “Bessarabian”—RBD] Petersburg friends of the poet called him among themselves, when he was exiled to Bessarabia. One rather air-headed Kishinyov lady saw him like this: “Pushkin was still very young. He wasn’t exactly black,



Manuscript page, “The Prisoner of the Caucasus,” 1834.

but swarthy, or sun-burned. He was kind, well-mannered, but a mischief-maker. I would tell him, ‘You’re such a child!’ And he called me a rose in the sweetbriar. I would say to him, ‘You’ll be jealous.’ And he’d say, ‘No! No! Never.’ He would improvise verses for us. Pushkin would often walk in the city park. But every time, he put on a different costume. You’d look, and there would be Pushkin as a Serb or a Moldavian. Ladies of his acquaintance gave him the clothes. The Moldavians were wearing cassocks at the time. Another time, you’d look, and Pushkin would be a Turk. . . . When he walked about in ordinary clothes, in his overcoat, then he’d always have one side over his shoulder, and the other dragging on the ground. He called this ‘general-style.’ . . .” (Ver., 25) In imitation of Byron, he amused himself with ethnic costuming in Kishinyov. Later, while living at Mikhailovskoye, he appeared in Russian peasant dress at the fair outside the Svyatogorsk Monastery.

In research on Pushkin’s drawings, A. Efros has shown convincingly that his numerous self-portraits are a brilliant graphic record of the various states of his sensitive nature, his habit of adopting various historical roles, or, at times, playing a game with time, when he would assume an age that was still ahead of him, or identify himself with his adversaries and opponents, or with great fellow writers—Dante, Griboyedov, or Mickiewicz.

His contemporaries did not see the world of his manuscripts [decorated with the drawings—RBD], but they did not fail to notice the internal contradictions in his nature, as captured in the portrait by O.A. Kiprensky,\* which gained popularity at an Academy of Arts exhibition. “There is the poet Pushkin, don’t bother looking at the caption: Having seen him in person even once, you will immediately recognize his penetrating eyes and his mouth, which has the shortcoming of ceaseless trembling. . . .” (Ver., 239) “If you look at his face, starting from the chin, you will seek in vain for some expression of the poetic gift, until you reach the eyes. But his eyes will stop you without fail: You see in them rays of the fire, which heats his verses.” (Ver., 237) “Pushkin’s

physiognomy is so special and expressive, that any good painter can capture it, but at the same time, it changes and shifts so much, that it is difficult to imagine that any portrait of Pushkin could give a true idea of him.” (Ver., 232)

That was said in 1827. After Pushkin’s death, his acquaintance V.A. Nashchokina recalled, “I have seen many portraits of him, but sadly I must admit that not one of them conveyed even one-hundredth of the spiritual beauty of his face—especially his amazing eyes. . . . In my whole long life, I have never seen any other eyes like that.” His eyes were light blue, or sometimes dark blue.

In 1827, when Pushkin was at the zenith of his fame, O.A. Kiprensky saw his task as the creation of an ideal image of the genius of Russian poetry. Pushkin’s poetic message to Kiprensky refers to this, joking:

As in a mirror-glass I see  
Myself; the mirror flatters me . . .  
In Paris, Dresden, and in Rome,  
Thus will my look henceforth  
be known.

The possibility of including the Russian genius in the context of European Romanticism could have been realized, had the portrait been toured with the Orest Kiprensky exhibition. European culture was elaborating the canon of the “Great Poet.” In *The Romantic School*, Heinrich Heine summarized the process:

In Goethe, the coincidence of the personality with the gift, which is demanded of extraor-

inary people, was experienced in all its fullness. . . . His outward appearance was just as weighty as the word that lived in his creations, and his image was harmonious, clear, joyful, nobly proportioned, so that one could have studied Greek art from him, as from a Greek statue. . . . When I visited him in Weimar, standing in front of him, I must say that I involuntarily looked to the side, to see if the eagle with lightning in its beak were there by him. I nearly started speaking to him in Greek. . . . Goethe smiled. He smiled with those same lips, with which once he kissed the beautiful Leda, Europa, Danae, Semele, and so many other princesses and mere nymphs.<sup>5</sup>

Russia picked up from Europe the Romantic myth of the poet as “ruler of souls.” Pushkin was compared with Goethe, although rarely, and with Lord Byron constantly,



Manuscript title page, “The Golden Cockerel,” 1834.

\* See inside front cover, this issue.

by his admirers and persecutors alike. Ecstatic devotees named the author of “The Prisoner of the Caucasus,” the Northern Byron. “Half-Milord”<sup>\*</sup> Vorontsov didn’t give a hoot for either of them: “He is a weak imitator of Byron, who is a disreputable model.” After the death of the great Russian poet, Thaddeus Bulgarin spitefully characterized Pushkin’s mode of behavior: “He posed as Byron.” Let us not, however, exaggerate the Byronism of Pushkin, who, into whatever framework or convention or cliché he was inserted, always broke it.

Readers of Pushkin were often confronted with surprises and paradoxes, upon comparing the lyric hero of his works, with the living, real Alexander Sergeevich.

M.P. Pogodin recorded in his diary his first meeting with Pushkin: “He stayed for five minutes, a fidgety and outwardly indifferent person. . . .” But the same Pogodin also witnessed the author’s reading of *Boris Godunov* at the Venevitinovs’ house on Krivokolenny Alley:

The high priest of majestic art, whom we expected, was a slight, almost puny person, fidgety, with long hair, curly at the ends, without pretensions, and with lively, quick eyes and a quiet, pleasant voice, wearing a black frock-coat, a black vest buttoned all the way up, and a carelessly knotted tie. Rather than the lofty language of the gods, we heard simple, clear, ordinary, and, at the same time, very poetical, engaging speech! The first parts were received quietly and calmly, or, perhaps, with some perplexity. But as he continued, the sensations intensified. The scene of the chronicler with Grigori stunned everybody. And when Pushkin reached Pimen’s story about Ivan Grozny visiting the Kirillov Monastery, and the novices’ prayer, “And may the Lord send down peace to his soul, suffering and stormy,” we practically lost consciousness. . . . Our hair was standing on end. It was impossible to restrain ourselves—one person jumped from his seat, another shouted aloud. One moment there was silence, the next a burst of exclamations, for example at the False Dmitri’s verses: “*Ten Groznogo menya usynovila.*” [“The shade of Grozny adopted me as his son.”] The reading finished. We looked at each other for a long time, and then threw ourselves upon Pushkin. There were embraces, a roar arose, laughter broke out, tears flowed, and congratulations. . . . Oh, what a marvelous morning that was, leaving an impression for my entire life. (Ver., 212)

S.P. Shevryov thought Pushkin looked handsome, when he was reading *Boris Godunov*. Somewhat earlier, at Mikhailovskoye, Anna Petrovna Kern had listened with

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<sup>\*</sup> Pushkin’s superior during his Foreign Ministry assignment to Odessa, M.S. Vorontsov was a member of the Anglophile aristocratic Vorontsov family. The poet mocked him as “Half-Milord” in a famous epigram translated on page 45 of this issue.—RBD

delight to the author’s reading of “The Gypsies.” “. . . He had a singing, melodic voice, just as he says about Ovid in ‘The Gypsies’: ‘A voice like the sound of waters.’”

Witnesses relate to us the inimitable features of Pushkin’s mode of behavior, from childhood until his death—his pronounced emotionality, his expressiveness, and, in his youth, extravagance and attempts to shock those around him. He might crawl under the table to retrieve a rough draft, discarded by Zhukovsky: “What Zhukovsky throws away, we may yet put to good use.” Sitting in a theater box, he fanned himself with his wig, removing it from his shaven head; like Onegin, he went “between the chairs among the feet.” He “applauded” on the bald head of a self-satisfied official, sitting in front of him. At the Turgenevs’ house, he jumped onto the table and, sprawling out, wrote his ode “Liberty,” while looking out the window at the tyrant’s empty monument, the Mikhailov Castle. On another occasion at the same house, taking Ivan Pushchin by surprise, he sneaked up behind him and whispered to his Lycée friend, who had concealed from him his membership in a secret society, “I’ve caught you at last. Is this a meeting of your society?”

He issued a challenge to Baron Korf, when the latter beat one of his servants; in the duel with Kyukhelbeker, who in anger had aimed at his forehead and missed, Pushkin fired into the air and then offered Kyukhla his hand, with the words: “Enough of this foolishness, dear friend; let’s go drink tea!” (Ver., 74)

In Kishinyov, Pushkin beat some Moldavian boyars with candlesticks, for which that “good mystic,” General Inzov, put him under house arrest and took away his boots. Then he wrote his verses all over the whitewashed walls of his cabin, and carpeted the floor with rough drafts. “The Russian community in Kishinyov was chiefly military. Pushkin stood out because of his peculiar clothes, his head, which was shaved after a fever, and his red skullcap. At dinners, the servant waiting on the table usually skipped him, for which he was merrily indignant at Kishinyov.” (L.S. Pushkin)

In Odessa, he had a pirate friend whom he called “retired corsair Morali,” i.e., the Moor Ali [but also, in Russian, “of morals”—RBD]. He called him his “kinsman,” and liked to sit on this giant’s lap. (Ver., 138)

When he was misunderstood or did not want to explain himself, he would act in ways that were quite unexpected for the person he was speaking with. For example, when Ivan Pushchin in 1820 reproached him for playing up to the lions of society at the theater, he didn’t object, but simply . . . tickled him. In 1828, he was all eyes for the author of a play about the Time of Troubles, who had managed to omit the False Dmitri

(this was reported by Baron Rozen).

He expressed sympathy and friendship openly and demonstratively. Anna Kern says that he and Delvig would kiss each other's hands when they met. In 1826, he cried to V.P. Zubkov, a friend of Pushchin, "I cannot live without you!"

He loved to repeat verses that he liked, both his own and those of others. In the fall of 1828, for example, visiting A.P. Kern in a room at Demutov's Tavern, he entered with the words, "The battle has struck. Poltava's battle!" He was writing "Poltava" at the time.

In 1836, he fell on his knees before Karl Bryullov, begging him for a picture that he liked. (Tatyana Galushko suggests that it was a caricature of Louis de Heeckeren, the Dutch ambassador.)

He shocked the Emperor with his free behavior at an audience in the Kremlin, Sept. 8, 1826. Fetched by a Feldjäger from Mikhailovskoye and brought directly to the palace, half frozen on the road, the poet warmed himself by standing with his back to the fireplace, then leaned against a table and nearly sat on it.

His tears and laughter were almost always unexpected for those around him. The Decembrist I.D. Yakushkin recalled tears springing into Pushkin's eyes at Kamenka, when a conversation about the secret society was turned into a joke. N.M. Karamzin showed P.Ya. Chaadayev a sofa, drenched with the tears of the young poet (after a misunderstanding about a note, which had fallen into the hands of the historian's wife, Katerina Andreyevna). He cried when Gogol read aloud *Dead Souls*, and exclaimed, "God, how sad our Russia is!"

Many people remembered his open, white-toothed, unpretentious laugh. At a visiting Frenchman's lectures on literature, Pushkin laughed, almost aloud, and people said it spoiled the lecture. (Ver., 227)

A gypsy woman from a Moscow chorus remembered this person, who looked so unlike others: "Slight, with thick lips and curly hair. . . . The minute he saw me, he was dying with laughter, with white teeth, big teeth, that sparkled. . . . I burst out laughing, too, except he seemed very ugly to me.

And I said to my friends in our gypsy language, 'Dyka, dyka, ne na lacho, tako vasheskeri!'—'Look,' it means, 'Look how ugly he is, just like a monkey!' " (II, 209)

"What are they saying about *Onegin*?" he asked K. Polevoy. "They say you're repeating yourself: They discovered that you mentioned fly-swatting twice." He burst out laughing, "No! Is that really what they're saying?"

N.M. Yazykov reports that the poet I.I. Dmitriyev, during one of his visits to the English Club on Tverskaya, noted that there could be nothing stranger than the name of this club: the Moscow English Club. Pushkin, overhearing, laughed and told him that we have even stranger names of things. "Like what?" asked Dmitriyev, surprised. "The Imperial Philanthropic Society," answered Pushkin (whose relations with the Court were strained at the time). Adam Mickiewicz reports another of Pushkin's jokes. Running into him on the street, Pushkin stood aside and said: "Out of the way, deuce, the ace is coming!" Mick-

iewicz replied, "The deuce is a trump, and beats the ace!" (I, 139)

P.A. Vyazemsky recalled how Pushkin would blush: "I remember, and can even still hear, how Princess Zinaida Volkonskaya sang his elegy, 'The light of day has dimmed,' in his presence on the very first day of their acquaintance. Pushkin was keenly touched by the flattery of this refined and artistic flirtation. As usual, the color rushed to his face. This childlike or feminine sign of great sensitivity was unquestionably an expression of internal turmoil, or joy, or annoyance, or any tremendous feeling." (I, 148)

He expressed negative emotions in terrible ways. "Once, in a fit of jealousy, he ran five versts under a blazing sun, bareheaded" (L.S. Pushkin). Rage, or suspicion that he was being insulted, would provoke an outpouring of bile. When his request to be assigned to the Army in action against the Turks was refused, he "fell into morbid despair, lost his appetite, and could not sleep; bile welled up, and he became seriously ill." (Ver., 255) V.A. Sollogub was shaken by Pushkin's state in November 1836: ". . .



Manuscript sketches for "Tale of the Priest and of His Workman Balda," 1830.

He read me his famous letter to the Dutch ambassador, in its entirety. His lips were trembling, his eyes bloodshot. He was so terrible, that I did then understand that he really was of African extraction. How could I object against such a crushing passion?" (II, 304)

Two years earlier, the same Count V.A. Sollogub saw Pushkin carrying out his onerous duties at the party at Peterhof, held each year in honor of the Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna. "He was riding in the court carriage, with the court suite. His well-known, somewhat worn Spanish scarf was draped over his Kammerjunker's uniform, with lace. Under the three-cornered hat, his face seemed sorrowful, stern, and pale. Tens of thousands of people saw him not in the glory of the national poet, but in the garb of a courtier just starting out."<sup>6</sup>

Pushkin considered the physical expression of passions to be a rather complex matter for a writer. As for his own mimicry and expressions, they were, evidently, impossible to reproduce. At any rate, the Lycée musician and mime Mikhail Yakovlev, nicknamed "Clown of the Two Hundred Faces," was unable to include Pushkin in his repertoire. Alexander Pushkin's own repertoire of amazing roles exceeded two hundred by far. It was created in his work and life, and comprised both those conceived by the author, and the unintentional, seen by a reader or viewer—everything that was within the style of romantic behavior, as well as what broke out of that framework, and both what was written down in words or drawings by the poet, and what memoir writers witnessed.

Research remains to be done on literary parallels and the author's identification with his heroes, but here is an incomplete list of the poet's ethnic and socio-political masks: Turk, Serb, Moldavian, Greek, Gypsy, Jew (in Kishinyov). He calls himself "a stern Slav," but also "descendant of ugly Negroes," and "kinsman" of the Odessa Moor. "Moorish blood, which mixed soot into our Slavic milk," was the impression one Pole had about his external appearance (Ver., 252). He was also "the Frenchman"—his nickname at the Lycée; "the foreign-

er," as a noble lady in Tver saw him; "a peasant," at the fair by the Svyatogorsk Monastery, where he made an impression on Archbishop Yevgeni of Pskov; a petty official, whom Count Vorontsov could dispatch to monitor a locust infestation; a half-educated fellow (his own notation about himself, in a travel record during a journey with Rayevsky); or, a waiter in a hotel in Chernigov, as A.I. Podolinsky from Petersburg thought, seeing him at the bar. A strange horseman in a felt cloak and a round hat with an off-center peak, tearing off to do battle with the Turks in the Erzurum campaign ("Rayevsky's soldiers,

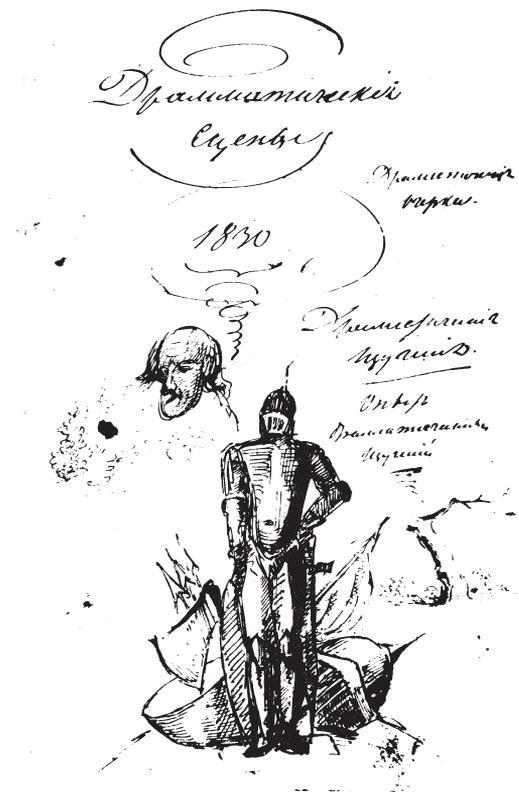
seeing him in his black frock-coat and with a shining cylinder on his head, took him for the regimental priest and called him Father of the Dragoons"—M.V. Yusefovich). The Governor of Nizhny Novgorod suspected he was an inspector general, when he was travelling around places linked with Pugachov; on the same journey, Pushkin's servant would call him sometimes "Count" and sometimes "General," when they stopped at the postal way-stations. He was a monk, in his jesting self-portrait as a novice, tempted by a devil.

Aristocrat, man of society, Kammerjunker, titular counselor—this was the range of his real-life lines of work. After the death of Karamzin, he was titled Russia's historiographer.

Some of his favorite items of attire testify to his interest in international political events: an American cape, a Spanish scarf, a Moldavian red cape, a "broad Bolivar," a shaggy moun-

taineer's hat, a Turkish fez, and the hat of an Italian carbonari.

He had a great repertoire of comical and satirical masks. "Monkey," "Cross between a Monkey and a Tiger"—these were his nicknames at the Lycée. "Crick-et" was his nickname in the literary society, Arzamas. "Nephew-imp" (nephew of the poet Vasili Lvovich Pushkin). "Devil," "shaitan" (the opinion of Ossetians, frightened by his cries on the Georgian Military Highway); "madman" (in the view of an adolescent girl in Kamenka); "jester" (his fear: "what Mashka and especial-



Manuscript title page, "Dramatic Scenes," 1830. Plays include "Mozart and Salieri" and "The Stone Guest," a treatment of the Don Juan story.

ly what Sashka will say; there will be little consolation for them in papa-daddy's having been buried as the court jester and their little mama's having been terribly pretty at the Anichkov balls"); "the Antichrist" (from the report of Berdsky Cossacks to the Military Governor of Orenburg V.A. Perovsky: "Yesterday a strange gentlemen arrived, not tall, with dark and curly hair, and a swarthy face, inciting a new 'Pugachovshchina' [Pugachov Revolt—RBD] and offering gold; he must have been the Antichrist, because he had claws on his fingers instead of nails." (Ver., 125) (He liked to grow long fingernails, in the fashion of Chinese scholars.)

In 1820, A.I. Turgenev said that the poet Pushkin was a historical figure for the Petersburg gossips. The double, and the shade of legend and gossip, accompanied him until his death. Before he was exiled in 1820, it was said that he had been cut to pieces in the secret chancellory; later, that he had fled from Kishinyov to Greece or to America; that he had shot himself in Odessa; in 1824, that he beat up his own father at Mikhailovskoye; that he had disappeared from Pskov, abroad; in 1831, it was said in Moscow that he had died of cholera in Tsarskoye Selo and left his poor wife pregnant. He was suspected of being an adventure-seeker, an informer, an agent of the Third Section, of wanting to have the key of a Kammerherr, and even of being offended that d'Anthès was not paying more attention to his wife (a poisonous remark by Prince P.A. Vyazemsky).

His answer was a nervous reaction in life, and bitter words in verse: "What is fame? A bright patch on the bard's tattered rags . . ."

Pushkin's character as an artist, like his calling as a poet, rebounded against him in the small world of the court, where he was forced to live. There was the intrinsic danger of constant attempts to assume a multitude of different images and roles, and the threat to his health as a consequence of the accentuated sense of the multifaceted character of his "I" and the multi-dimensionality of life. (This phenomenon, as applied to the type of the romantic poet, was described in the article, "The Fate of Apollon Grigoryev," by A. Blok, who made the famous sacramental statement, "Pushkin is our all.")

The unity of the personality of the genius Pushkin, its coherence and spiritual health, was guaranteed by the character of his creative work:

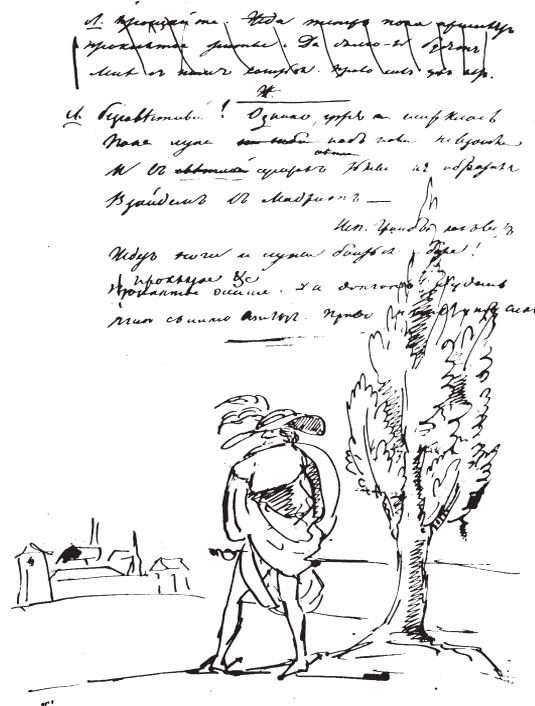
There was a protective and saving moral force, deep within him. . . . That force was the love for work, the need to work, the irrepensible need to express something creatively, to bring out of himself sensations, images, and feelings, which were asking to come from his heart into the wide world and there be clothed in sounds, colors, and enchanting and instructive words. Work was most sacred for him; it was the font, where wounds were healed, where the feebleness of despair recovered audacity and freshness, and weakened forces were restored. When he felt inspiration

alight, when he began to work—he would grow calm, find courage, and be as if born again. (P.A. Vyazemsky) (I, 150)

From the disharmony of his outward life, and the internal contradictions of his nature, was born the divine harmony of Pushkin's poetry.

Outside of poetry, this harmony, in which the personality and the gift coincided, happened once for Pushkin—as the shaken V.A. Zhukovsky reported in his hexameters ("He lay without motion . . ."), and in his letter to the poet's father after his death: ". . . never on his face had I seen an expression of such profound, grand, and solemn thought. Of course, it had flitted across his face in the past. But in its purity it was

revealed only when everything earthly had separated from him, as he was touched by death." (Ver., 293)



Manuscript page, "The Stone Guest."

1. *Pushkin v vospominaniakh sovremennikov*, (Moscow: 1974), Vols. I, II. Citations in text are indicated as "I" or "II."
2. V. Veresaev, *Pushkin v zhizni*, Vol. 1. (Moscow-Leningrad: Academia, 1932). Citations in text are indicated as "Ver."
3. F.A. Stepun, "Dukhovnyi oblik Pushkina," in the anthology, *V kraiu chuzhom . . .*, ed. by M.D. Filin (Russkii mir, 1998).
4. A.P. Kern, *Vospominaniia. Dnevnik. Perepiska*. (Moscow: 1989), p. 32.
5. Heinrich Heine, *Collected Works* (in Russian), Vol. 4 (Moscow: 1980-83), pp. 389-390.
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—translated from the Russian by Rachel Douglas