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edited by

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THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: ROMANTICISM, 1820–40

The decades between 1820 and 1840 witnessed simultaneously the zenith of Russian romanticism and the first stages of Russian literature's greatest period, which extended from approximately 1820 to the time of the First World War. In terms of genres, Russian romanticism began with a strong emphasis on poetry (it is appropriate that *Ruslan and Lyudmila* of 1820 should be a narrative poem), but in the course of its development shifted toward prose. Thus Pushkin, though he never abandoned poetry by any means, turned definitely toward prose in 1830 with the composition of his *Tales of Belkin*, a cycle of works which laid the foundations of the Russian short story yet to come; Gogol began his literary career with a poetic failure but soon found his place as a writer of elaborate prose; and Lermontov, in numerous ways the most characteristic figure of the romantic period, remained not only a fine poet – many think him second only to Pushkin among nineteenth-century poets – but became an excellent prose-writer as well, and it is proper that his novel, or cycle of short stories, *A Hero of Our Time* (1840), should mark the end of Russian romanticism, and rather decisively at that. The transition from *Ruslan and Lyudmila* to *A Hero of Our Time* marks not only a shift from an early romanticism based upon national folklore to a romanticism oriented toward the extraordinary individual, the "superfluous man," in a social context, but also a shift from poetry to prose. And yet both works are plainly romantic in their thrust.

By around 1820, and certainly by 1825, neoclassicism had receded into the past: though Pushkin's literary approach retained many classical elements, few were to be found in Gogol or in Lermontov. The new literature emphasized the individual spirit, generally the extraordinary man who stood in some way above society, who had something peculiarly his own to offer. Ivan Turgenev, who lived through the height of Russian romanticism in the 1830s as a very young man, in 1870 deftly outlined what he called the "Marlinsky type" of that time:

> What was lacking in that type? There were Byronism and romanticism; reminiscences of the French revolution and of the Decembrists – and adoration of Napoleon; a belief in fate, in one's lucky star, in one's strength of character; a pose and a phrase – and the anguish of emptiness; the trembling anxieties of a shallow self-love – as well as genuine power and courage; noble aspirations along with ignorance and poor upbringing [. . .]

There was, in short, something admirable about the romantic hero with his exotic dreams, even though he could be comic too. A romantic like the Gogol of the 1830s could overdo things considerably, with his tales of wizards, incestuous fathers, great sinners; Lermontov loved the exotic settings of the Caucasus, although he was considerably more sober than Gogol in his approach. But no doubt the Marlinsky type as Turgenev describes him was most characteristic of the romantic mind.

It was also during the romantic period that the Russian writer began to view himself as normally an adversary of the existing order. This frame of mind came into being especially after the suppression of the Decembrist uprising of 1825 and the execution or exile of many of its participants. Nicholas I, who came to the throne then, found little sympathy from intellectuals and writers, and in turn entrusted them with little authority. Where only a few years before writers like Karamzin and Derzhavin had been influential in high government circles or held lofty official positions, now writers rarely obtained anything more than modest government positions, and certainly had little to do with the formulation of high government policy. The writer thus adopted a posture of hostility to the government, and viewed himself as primarily a critic of his society.

During the romantic period another important change occurred in the writer's status. Earlier authors did not expect to gain a living from their writing, or even to receive much in the way of income from it, but now literature became more commercialized. In order to support himself the writer had to produce things the reading public would accept and therefore pay for, but this meant that he was more than ever dependent upon the tastes of his audience. During the eighteenth century writers had been members of the landowning aristocracy or else supported by the government in some fashion, but as the nineteenth century wore on they became more and more dependent upon the reading public.

In an effort to reach that public the so-called "thick journals" were created. The first important such journal was Osip Senkovsky's *Library for Reading*, founded in 1834; it was followed in short order by Pushkin's *The Contemporary* in 1836 and *Fatherland Notes* in 1839. All of these lasted at least until into the 1860s. Such journals published writing of various sorts: poetry, prose, history, commentary, in a

volume the size of a book which appeared monthly and provided general intellectual fare for the reader. Among the writing included in the "thick journals" was literary criticism, which developed quickly now that there was some original literature to write about. Vissarion Belinsky, the most outstanding critic of the century, began his career in the 1830s, and in the subsequent decade would exercise a profound influence upon Russian literature. Before Belinsky Russian criticism was a feeble reed; after him it laid just claim to an important place in the history of Russian culture.

The "thick journals" also had another significant function. With the virtual disappearance of the literary societies which had been so vital at the beginning of the century, they supplied focal points for literary life: now writers might run into one another at the editorial offices of the journals in which they published rather than at evening gatherings at Derzhavin's home, for example. But the journals also reinforced the spirit of faction in literature, for each journal generally espoused a certain approach and gathered to itself writers who agreed with that approach. Thus they sowed division as well as unity among writers.

OUR TENDENCY to think in terms of schools and movements suggests that literature consists of discrete blocs of artistically homogeneous works. Of course, that is not the case, since literature is constantly evolving, and every period, in addition to its exemplary figures, has its epigones from past movements and precursors of things to come. Thus, it is difficult to place even approximate limits on a movement or a school. Given this caveat, we may say that Russian romanticism begins to emerge from sentimentalism around 1815, that it gains the high ground in the 1820s and 1830s, and by the early 1840s is on the verge of displacement by realism, whose harbingers have appeared over the previous decade.

Works in verse formed the centerpiece of Russian romantic literature: so brilliant and rich was the product of that period that by general acceptance it has been termed "The Golden Age" of Russian poetry. The poetry of Baratynsky, Tyutchev, Delvig, Yazykov, along with that of some less well-known talents, would justify that appellation even were one to exclude all of Pushkin's contribution, as unthinkable as that might be.

With some justification literary historians extend the final limit of the Golden Age until the death of Lermontov in 1841. Be that as it may, poetry as the dominant literary form began to be displaced

by prose at the end of the 1820s, quite probably because the reading public had simply become sated with an abundance of good verse. By 1830 prose was preeminent, and even poets *par excellence* such as Pushkin increasingly turned to fiction.

Some social considerations must be taken into account in any survey of romanticism, for to a degree they affected prevailing literary themes and their treatment. Almost without exception, the romantic poets belonged to the gentry class. Accordingly, most of them had some formal education, which put them in touch with the more important examples of ancient poetry and of classicism, foreign and domestic. Most knew French at least as well as Russian, and used French in conversation, in correspondence, and sometimes in their compositions. The new generation of romantics devoted considerable effort to Anacreontic and fugitive verse celebrating the pleasures of friendship and the good life. If a change of mood seemed appropriate, the elegy was a favorite form. When protest motivated them, they inveighed against restrictions on personal freedom, rather than seeking equality for the masses. Most of them accepted serfdom: however liberal or democratic their political orientation, they were not vocal proponents of emancipation.

Since personal freedom was at issue, it was natural that Byron enjoyed a vogue in the early 1820s. But the banner of protest which the Englishman had raised and which seemed destined to be grasped by eager Russian hands after his death in 1824 was dropped summarily after the suppression of the Decembrist uprising of 1825. A number of writers were exiled, including Küchelbecker and Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinsky; the poet Kondraty Ryleev was hanged; and everyone else, including Pushkin, came under suspicion. From then on poets sought to keep away from the gaze of officialdom.

Meanwhile, men of a new social class were entering the literary arena, not only as writers but as journalists, publishers, and critics. Although not exactly from the lower strata of society, they were hardly prepared to join the so-called St. Petersburg "mandarins," for whom literary activity was an endeavor for which remuneration had seldom been expected or provided. This new group of *littérateurs* were professionals who sought – often with pathetic results – to gain a livelihood from their efforts, and that injected a

new note of economic necessity into the general literary scene. At this point we begin to see literary criticism, never noted for its gentility, acquiring acrimonious tones and slanderous overtones. Literary piracy became common as publishers and booksellers sought to outsmart and outsell their competition.

With political protest strictly proscribed, and certainly unappealing in view of the fate of the Decembrists, social protest was nonetheless implicit in some of the poetry and prose of the late 1820s. This was particularly true of prose after it began to dominate literature in the early 1830s. This protest was made on behalf of painters, musicians, and other persons of artistic talent, who because of their plebeian, or even serf, origins were scorned or unappreciated by a vacuous society. But again, the protest was most often voiced on behalf of their unrecognized talent, not on behalf of the class from which they had emerged.

The dominant figure of this period was the poet Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), who even as a student at the lyceum for gentry youth at Tsarskoe Selo had displayed uncommon poetic ability. In fact, when Derzhavin visited the school in 1815 and heard him declaim his own verses, he had announced: "This is he who will replace Derzhavin." His prediction quickly proved correct, for within four years Pushkin's *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (*Ruslan i Lyudmila*) appeared.

Ruslan and Lyudmila is conventionally called a "mock epic," but it has many more prototypes than merely, for example, Voltaire's *La Pucelle*. One may find in it stylistic features of diverse European and Russian origins, such as medieval fabliaux, the *Orlando Furioso*, the Russian *bylina*, or modern efforts to imitate folklore, such as Zhukovsky's "Twelve sleeping maidens." High adventure, magic, spells, and a giant disembodied head which speaks are involved as three champions seek to recover Lyudmila, kidnapped by the hideous dwarf-magician Chernomor. There is considerable erotic suggestiveness in this comedy, which in the end ingeniously unites Lyudmila with her rightful beloved, Ruslan.

Conservatives were (at least publicly) disturbed by the eroticism and other "low" features of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, and faulted Pushkin for failing to provide a *bona fide* epic, a feat beyond their own powers. Others were perplexed by the eclectic nature of the work and the heterogeneity of its language, which ranged from

Church Slavic to vernacular Russian. Discerning critics saw it as a demonstration of the triumph of innovations begun by Karamzin, and Zhukovsky sent Pushkin a portrait of himself generously inscribed "To the victorious student from his vanquished mentor."

Pushkin had no use for Alexander I, whom he considered a usurper, and upon graduation from the Tsarskoe Selo lyceum he wrote several poems with political implications, including "Liberty" ("Volnost," 1817), an ode calling for the lawful punishment of tyrants, and "To Chaadaev" ("Chaadaevu," 1818), in which he pledges himself to the cause of freedom. These and other poems, as well as an incendiary epigram directed at the tsar's favorite, Count Alexey Arakcheev, came to the attention of the authorities, and Pushkin was exiled to the south of Russia. *En route* he fell ill and was aided by the Raevsky family, with whom he traveled across the Crimea. Alexander Raevsky, somewhat older than Pushkin and a hardened cynic, seems to have influenced the young poet, at least if one interprets "My demon" ("Moy demon," 1823) as alluding to their relationship. Less ambivalent were Pushkin's feelings about Maria Raevskaya, the seventeen-year-old daughter of the family, who seems to have become a muse for Pushkin, or at least the addressee of several lyrics.

Three narrative poems form the so-called southern cycle, *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* (*Kavkazsky plennik*), *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* (*Bakhchisaraysky fontan*), and *The Gypsies* (*Tsygany*). All show Byron's influence in setting, theme, and character types. They exploit the exoticism of the remote Circassian *aul*, the Crimean palace of the Tatar khans, and the gypsy camp; unrequited love and violence are common to all three. The prisoner is a disaffected Russian officer whose devoted Circassian lover frees him from his captors and drowns herself. In *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* a jealous odalisque slays her rival. By the time Pushkin finished *The Gypsies*, he presumably had overcome the Byronic influence, for the protagonist, Aleko, is depicted as inherently selfish and desirous of freedom only for himself: when his gypsy lover leaves him for another, he murders her. He is then banished by the tribe.

While still in the south, Bessarabia, Pushkin began his most famous work, the "novel in verse" *Eugene Onegin* (*Evgeny Onegin*). Completed seven years later, in 1830, the work combines features of the mock epic with those of the free poem or Byronic poem.

Pushkin remarked that it was "in the manner of *Don Juan*," although it more closely resembles *Beppo*. There are eight chapters or cantos, each containing around fifty stanzas of sonnet-like "Onegin stanzas": fourteen lines of iambic tetrameter ending in a couplet. The humorous and effervescent verse of the early cantos later gives way to a more serious tone, a development that reflects the growing maturity of Pushkin's "lyric I."

Interwoven with the story of Eugene, a jaded member of the St. Petersburg *jeunesse dorée*, and Tatyana Larina, a naive provincial miss, are extensive digressions, some of many stanzas, containing the author's *ars poetica*, *ars amatoria*, autobiography, literary criticism and parody, and social commentary. Over one hundred persons are mentioned by name, including authors, literary characters, and acquaintances. Settings range from provincial Russia to Moscow and St. Petersburg, the seasons are described, social customs are depicted, and food, dress, education, and current events are discussed. The characters are presented in an unusual manner, for while Onegin and Tatyana are represented in ways that later became standard for realist literature, and their portraits are in fact psychological ones, the secondary characters – Tatyana's fickle sister Olga and her poet-fiancé Lensky – are purely satirical. Pushkin tells us the girl is a typical blonde, and urges us to complete her portrait for ourselves; Lensky, imbued with German romantic philosophy, is as foggy as his elegies.

At first encounter Onegin appears a bored fop, though good-hearted and intelligent, who hopes to overcome his ennui when he inherits his uncle's country estate. Among his neighbors is Tatyana, a solitary dreamer under the spell of European preromantic literature, who instantly identifies Onegin as her fated lover. Defying convention, she writes him a poignant letter declaring her love, to which Onegin responds with a stern lecture on the dangers of imprudent behavior. After a senseless duel in which he kills Lensky, Onegin leaves the provinces. Tatyana, happening upon his estate and its library, seeks clues to his enigmatic personality among his books and their marginal notes, but remains uncertain whether he is heaven-sent, a demon, or simply a Byronic poseur. At the end of the seventh canto she is packed off to Moscow to be married, and we are left to guess, when we encounter her again in the final canto, how this simple country girl became the wife of a

prince and a leading figure of the St. Petersburg *beau monde*. Onegin, just returned from aimless travels, encounters her at a ball, is instantly enthralled, and importunes her with his advances and letters of devotion. Ultimately they meet alone, and he beseeches her to respond to his love. She remains aloof, though admitting she is unhappy and would gladly give up everything to return to the modest surroundings where first they met, but "I have married. . . . I love you, why dissemble, but I have been given to another. I will be faithful to him forever."

As the story unfolds we sense a diminution of the author's sympathy for Onegin, but there is no doubt about his sustained attachment to Tatyana, who embodies an ideal Russian ethos. From her peasant nurse she has assimilated a rich heritage of native folklore, and she has an abiding love for the serene beauty of her rural surroundings. Eschewing social frivolity, she is withdrawn and wistful, impulsive and instinctive, and morally unfaltering.

In his *History of Russian Literature* D. S. Mirsky noted that "Onegin and Tatyana are the forefathers of a whole race of characters in Russian fiction." Indeed, the opposition of the morally strong woman and the "superfluous man" – an individual who can find no productive role in society despite intellect, education, and even wealth – became typical for the Russian novel of psychological realism.

Throughout the 1820s an often acrimonious debate raged over the meaning of romanticism and its companion term *narodnost*, roughly translatable as "national identity" or "national culture." Indicative of the confusion was Alexander Voeykov's identification of Pushkin's *Ruslan and Lyudmila* as "romantic" owing to its mixture of comic and epic. Pushkin himself held that verse forms known to the ancients were "classical," while those new on the literary scene were "romantic," a simple but scarcely helpful distinction. Some light was cast on the subject by Orest Somov's three-part essay of 1823 entitled "About romantic poetry" ("O romanticheskoy poezii"), which appeared in *The Emulator* (*Sorevnovatel*), the widely-read journal of the Free Society of Russian Letters. The first two parts paraphrased (with credit) Madame de Staël's *De l'Allemagne* (1813), while in the final part Somov exhorted his countrymen to find sources for an original Russian romanticism in their chronicles, history, landscape, ethnic types,

and language. Somov's essay was not a definition, but it did isolate ingredients which might contribute to a romanticism based upon *narodnost* and incorporating *mestnost*, or national locale.

Baron Anton Delvig (1798–1831) is remembered almost as much for his friendship with Pushkin and his publishing ventures as for his poetry. He attended the Tsarskoe Selo lyceum with Pushkin, where he, along with Küchelbecker, shared that poetic ambiance. After leaving school, Delvig lived in St. Petersburg, for a time sharing an apartment with Baratynsky. His talent and good relations with gentry poets made him one of the "literary mandarins" of St. Petersburg, and in 1824 he had no difficulty in mobilizing his friends to contribute to the almanac *Northern Flowers for 1825* (*Severnye tsvety na 1825 god*). His house became a gathering place for St. Petersburg *literati* and ultimately a center of opposition to the "literary shopkeepers" Nikolay Grech and Faddey Bulgarin.

Delvig's poems are largely of the kind termed "occasional," such as epistles to his poet friends or elegies. Many pieces are entitled simply "A romance," and deal with personal circumstances and intimate thoughts. A number of poems display an original combination of meters, evidence of the experimentation typical of romantics, but Delvig's constant allusions to classical mythology in much of his verse (except the popular songs) reveal an orientation toward the *Greek Anthology* not typical of his contemporaries. His use of hexameters in much of his mature poetry was also unusual.

Delvig's mature poetry includes a number of idylls and sonnets, not ordinary for Russian romantics, and imitations of popular songs, some so "authentic" as to have been accepted as the real thing. Many of these are titled "A Russian song" ("Russkaya pesnya"), and share the features of this folklore genre: an abundance of diminutives, repetition, apostrophe, particles with no meaning inserted for emphasis or the meter, and parallel constructions:

Ach thou, night thou,	Akh ty, noch li,
Nightlet!	Nochenka!
Ach thou, night thou	Akh ty, noch li
Stormy!	Burnaya!

A number of these songs have been set to music, along with many other poems by Delvig, which testifies to their general appeal.

Delvig was not inclined toward politics, and seems to have had

no relations with the Decembrists other than those based on personal friendship. There is a story that on 14 December 1825, he blithely crossed Senate Square oblivious of what was going on. In 1826 Delvig enlisted the aid of Orest Somov as managing editor for *Northern Flowers*, and from that point on Somov became a fixture of the almanac's editorial staff. With the support of the finest contemporary writers, in 1830 Delvig launched *The Literary Gazette* (*Literaturnaya gazeta*), an eight-page newspaper which appeared every five days.

Several of Delvig's idylls have become anthology pieces, among them "The bathing women" ("Kupalnitsy," 1825), which D. S. Mirsky called "the highest achievement in Russian poetry in the more purely sensuous vision of classical antiquity." Also noteworthy are "The end of the golden age" ("Konets zolotogo veka," 1829) and "The retired soldier" ("Otstavnoy soldat," 1829), which employs the idyll as a vehicle for the tale of a wounded veteran of the war with Napoleon.

Eugene Baratynsky (1800–44) is in the good company of poets second only to Pushkin. Although he is indisputably a romantic, his poetry is highly intellectual, and he has been called "the poet of thought."

Baratynsky's life was marred by an incident in his youth which prevented him from enjoying the privileged status to which his gentry descent entitled him. At the age of sixteen he was dismissed from the Corps of Pages for involvement in a prank which aroused the ire of Alexander I. Three years later he was permitted to enroll as a common soldier with private quarters. Then followed four years of not too arduous service in Finland. In 1825 he became an officer, and that December he was in Moscow on extended furlough. Despite his many friends among the Decembrists, he seems not to have had any connection with the conspiracy, nor any deep political convictions.

Baratynsky is known for his narrative poetry and for his lyrics, all permeated by a pervasive pessimism. *Eda* (1825) is the tale of a naive Finnish girl who is abandoned by her Russian officer lover. Except for some excellent descriptions of the Finnish landscape and a touching portrait of the heroine, the work is not unusual, and critics have not unjustly seen it as a Finnish variant of Karamzin's "Poor Liza" or Pushkin's *Prisoner of the Caucasus*. Two later narra-

tive poems – *The Ball* (*Bal*, 1828) and *The Concubine* (*Nalozhnitsa*, 1831) – concern contemporary society and are closer in concept to *Eugene Onegin*: that is, they present psychological portraits of the central characters and satirical depictions of society. In *The Ball* Princess Nina, abandoned by her Byronic lover Arseny, takes poison. In *The Concubine* (in later editions retitled *The Gypsy Woman* [*Tsyganka*]), the title character, a prostitute, finds her lover Eletsky is devoted to another woman. Hoping to regain his affections, she gives him a love potion which turns out to be a fatal poison.

While it would be wrong to ignore Baratynsky's narrative poems, his lyric poetry is much more original and distinctive. His early mastery of the elegy caught the attention of Pushkin, who wrote Vyazemsky in 1822 that "he will outdo both Parny and Batyushkov if he keeps on advancing as he has until now." Pushkin's comment identifies two important influences upon Baratynsky, to whom must be added Millevoye, a number of whose poems he translated.

Pessimism about poetry, the poet's lot, love, culture, and the future is a common denominator of these lyrics. In "A complaint" ("Ropot," 1820) the poet expresses his inability to respond to joy; in "An admission" ("Priznanie," 1823) the lyric "I" declares itself unable to love again. Even the epistles to friends strike a somber note, as "To Delvig" ("Delvigu," 1821), which begins:

In vain, Delvig, we dream of finding
Happiness here in this life;
The gods of heaven will not share it
With Prometheus' mundane children.

All of Baratynsky's poetry has a forcefulness of expression which elevates it above the usual trite words about jaundiced emotions and premature disillusionment typical of much other occasional verse of the period.

After 1826 Baratynsky left the service, married, and moved to Moscow, where he associated with members of the disbanded Lovers of Wisdom Society. Though he was never a disciple of Schelling, who was, after all, an optimist, Baratynsky's poetry now acquires a philosophical quality which reflects careful thought about art, the poet's role, the fate of civilization. Death becomes an

overt theme, as in "The last death" ("Poslednyaya smert," 1827), a vision of a world devoid of life; "The last poet" ("Posledny poet," 1834–5), which casts the poet in the role of a superfluous and ridiculous member of society; and "Autumn" ("Osen," 1837), an ode of 160 lines finished just after Baratynsky learned of Pushkin's death: autumn is the time of harvest, and winter effaces all, but for you [Pushkin] there is no future harvest. The last two of these poems appeared in Baratynsky's final collection, *Twilights* (*Sumerki*), which contained poems written between 1834 and 1841.

Baratynsky parted company with most of his Moscow literary friends at the end of the 1830s, unable to share their Slavophile enthusiasms. In the fall of 1843 he began a tour of Europe during which he met a number of famous French writers. In the spring of 1844 he left Paris for Italy, and died unexpectedly in Naples in June of that year.

Today Baratynsky's reputation is secure, but during his lifetime he did not enjoy the fame he deserved. His poetry of ideas, psychological and philosophical, was too serious for a public accustomed to album verse, and although he enjoyed the respect of his fellow poets he found the critics rather severe. Many viewed the subject matter of his narrative poems as uncouth and even Belinsky, while recognizing Baratynsky's talent, criticized his relentless pessimism (in the 1830s Belinsky was an optimistic disciple of German romantic idealism).

Nikolay Yazykov (1803–46) is the third charter member of the Pushkin Pleiad. While most of the writers of the romantic period improved as they grew older, Yazykov was an exception, for the verses of the first decade of his creative life are generally recognized as superior to those of the final two decades. Commenting upon his move from Dorpat (now Tartu) to Moscow at the end of the 1820s, Yazykov said that he had "gone straight from the tavern to the church": he had also gone from being a university student majoring in revelry and a writer of excellent occasional poetry to a militant Russian-Orthodox-Slavophile and author of excessively tendentious verse.

Yazykov's surname was fully appropriate, since *yazyk* means "tongue" in Russian, and no poet surpassed him in verbal felicity. The inspiration for the poetry of his Dorpat period came mostly from wine, women, and song, which he celebrated enthusiastically

and incessantly. In endless epistles and works he called elegies (though their subject matter was atypical of the genre) he lauded friendship, drinking, feasting, and amorous adventures (in explicit language). These verses, many of which could circulate only in hand-written copies, reveal unusual craftsmanship, but their beauty is superficial, for there is nothing conceptually new about them and they display no particular intellectual content. Yazykov is more serious in his verse devoted to freedom, which, of course, he enjoyed fully at Dorpat, far removed from the center of autocracy and the pale of serfdom. At that time the poet was an outspoken enemy of the tsar and his minions, and like contemporary "civic" poets, he turned to Russia's heroic past for examples of patriotic virtue. "Boyan to the Russian warrior during the time of Dimitry Donskoy" ("Bayan k russkomu voinu pri Dimitrii donskom") presumably is the exhortation of a patriotic bard to the troops combatting the Tatars, but it might also be relevant to contemporary circumstances:

An end to tyrants' reign:
The Tatar khan was fearsome,
But the Russian sword killed him!

In poems such as this we find a reflection of the romantic ideal of the poet as seer or prophet, the bearer of truth, the leader of the people.

During the summer months of 1826 Yazykov had the good fortune to stay at Trigorskoe, an estate adjacent to Mikhaylovskoe, where Pushkin resided at the time, and the two poets became fast friends. For Yazykov Pushkin was a "free-thinking poet, an heir to Voltaire's wisdom." The cycle of poems connected with this summer (usually referred to as the Pushkin cycle) represents the best of Yazykov, who was perhaps on his mettle. These verses include epistles to Pushkin and to other friends, and a tribute to Pushkin's nurse, Arina Rodionovna, who provided the young poets with food and drink and entertained them with folk tales. Also among them is "Trigorskoe," one of the most highly regarded of his works, a long reminiscence of his visit to that estate which ranges widely from allusions to the freedom of the past to a vivid description of a summer storm, the latter rather unusual in the work of a poet not noted for his attachment to nature.

Yazykov's association with the Slavophiles was not accompanied by any intellectual maturation on his part. In fact, some of his verses attacking the westernizers Peter Chaadaev and Alexander Herzen were so abusive as to offend even those of his own persuasion. He spent his final years traveling about Europe in the vain hope of finding a cure for his progressively poorer health. After his death he was largely forgotten until rediscovered by the symbolists, who saw in him the ability to express the inexpressible.

The Pushkin Pleiad may be expanded to include many poets of talent and accomplishment. Some must be mentioned, because they were important in their own right and because they contributed to the heritage of the Golden Age. Dmitry Venevitinov (1805–27) during his brief career was recognized by his fellow *literati* as a poet of considerable potential and was a leading figure in the Lovers of Wisdom in the early 1820s. His entire work consists of less than fifty poems. The last ones, dealing with unrequited love and hinting at suicide, strengthened the aura of romantic fatalism which surrounded his untimely death (due, however, to a most unromantic case of pneumonia). Ivan Kozlov (1779–1840) is remembered for his accomplishments as a translator, which rivaled those of Zhukovsky. By the age of forty he was blind and paralyzed, but he learned English and German (he already knew French and Italian) and began translating Scott, Byron, and Moore. His Byronic narrative poem *The Monk* (*Chernets*, 1825) produced a large number of imitations. His original lyrics are marked by a feeling of religious resignation and are notable for their vivid nature descriptions. Alexander Polezhaev (1805–38) achieved notoriety in 1825 for *Sashka*, a parody of the first cantos of *Eugene Onegin*. Tsar Nicholas was outraged by its salacious content and sent Polezhaev to the Caucasus as a common soldier, where he continued writing. He is remembered today for his protest verses and his narrative poems which seek to deromanticize the Caucasus.

Fyodor Tyutchev (1803–73) is often ranked next to Pushkin and sometimes even higher than Lermontov. While Lermontov was clearly a disciple of Pushkin and Byron, Tyutchev was oriented toward Derzhavin, Goethe and Schiller. His early association with the Lovers of Wisdom Society while a student at the University of

Moscow and his reading of Schelling permanently influenced his world view. During the period of romantic dominance he spent most of his time in Germany and Italy as a diplomat, and did not return permanently to Russia until the mid 1840s. While abroad he attended Schelling's lectures in Munich, where he was also close to Heine. Since he remained active as a poet for many decades after the end of romanticism's supremacy, much of his later poetry was out of touch with prevailing tastes.

Tyutchev never took himself seriously as a poet, and because of his own indifference many of his compositions simply disappeared. His typical form is the short poem, a casual effort to assuage boredom, jotted down on whatever was available. The romantic concept of the poet-prophet did not infect him, and, although he was consistently didactic, he apparently was unconcerned about seeing his poems in print. When Pushkin "discovered" him in 1836 and printed several of his poems in *The Contemporary* (*Sovremennik*), they were signed only with his initials.

Tyutchev's thoughtful content, his rhetorical quality, and his somewhat archaic diction make him seem much more formal than any of his romantic contemporaries. But he was typically a romantic in his attraction to nature: the sea, the sky, night, stars, the seasons, brooks and streams, and other natural features are constant elements in his poetry. In Tyutchev nature is always anthropomorphized, living, providing clues to the meaning of a perplexing universe.

The appellation "metaphysical poet" has been applied to Tyutchev because his constant theme is the dilemma of man caught between Cosmos and Chaos, good and evil, day and night, in his personal vision of Manichean dualism. But this philosophical content is not categoric, and his system, if such it be, is susceptible to multiple interpretations. Accordingly, his poems more often provoke questions than answer them.

Perhaps Tyutchev's most quoted line is from "Silentium" (1830), "A thought once spoken is a lie," an idea which appealed to the symbolists, who recast it as: "Only that is true which one heart can say to another in mute greeting." "Silentium" – three stanzas of six lines each – exhorts us to live within ourselves, for in our souls is a whole world of secret magical thoughts. We are advised

to attend to their song – and be silent! This poem offers several examples of Tyutchev's innovative metrics, with amphibrachs injected into the iambic patterns. Later editors saw fit to correct these illicit lines and force them into the conventional mold.

An unusual figure on the Russian romantic Parnassus was Alexey Koltsov (1809–1842), often called the Russian Robert Burns, though not by those familiar with both authors. He was the son of a domineering cattle merchant, who frustrated his son's endeavors to acquire an education. Koltsov's discovery by the Stankevich–Belinsky circle in Moscow in the early 1830s led to ten years of recognition by the literary community, though Koltsov did not enjoy happiness in his personal life, which was marred by his father's autocratic control and destruction of the poet's marital intentions.

There is little point in winnowing the wheat from the chaff in Koltsov's occasional verse, and even less in his efforts to poeticize his philosophical musings, which, although earnest, reveal his absence of a formal education. Of importance are his Russian songs, themselves imitations of folk forms, though, owing to his direct contact with peasants as drover and cattle dealer, less artificial than Delvig's. Lyric songs come in many forms: dance, harvest, marriage, love, recruitment and others linked to pagan or Orthodox celebrations. Many of these are laments at a personal loss, such as the death of a lover, the departure of a bride from her father's house, the recruit's farewell. Koltsov's songs are those of individuals who face the reality of their hard lot with fortitude, as, for example, the rejected fiancé in "The betrothed's betrayal" ("Izmena suzhenoy," 1838). Something new in Russian literature at that time was Koltsov's depiction of peasant life as a not unsatisfying combination of toil and fulfillment, and there is quiet optimism in his "Song of the plowman" ("Pesnya pakharya," 1831), in which the peasant cheerfully delivers to his horse a monologue extolling labor and the cooperation of beneficent nature. "The harvest" ("Urozhay", 1835) recounts the labors leading to the harvest and voices the peasants' confidence in God's grace. These poems convey a feeling of the wholeness of a life which submerges the individual identity in an integration of nature, the peasant, and toil.

Koltsov's songs are not strictly canonical, for he uses stanza

divisions and sometimes employs a thrice accented unrhymed line rather than the traditional folksong line of two accents. However, they do reproduce the effect of the popular song and provided new perspectives on a world little known to the educated public.

Paul Katenin (1792–1853) was an important figure on the literary scene during the 1810s and 1820s. Of the well-to-do gentry, he took part in the Napoleonic wars and reached the rank of colonel, but in 1822 he was summarily exiled to his family estates. Later he resumed his military career, and ultimately retired with the rank of general.

The critic Yury Tynyanov classifies Katenin, along with Griboedov and Küchelbecker, as a "young archaist," a literary nationalist who inveighed against slavish imitation of foreign models and style and who advocated classical traditions with their roots in Lomonosov and Derzhavin. His first efforts were in the field of drama, with translations from Corneille and Racine, original comedies (he collaborated with Griboedov on *The Student*), and a classical verse tragedy entitled *Andromache* (1828). One of his most popular works was "An old tale" ("Staraya byl," 1828), a ballad set in Kiev during the time of Prince Vladimir. The setting and content reflect contemporary romantic interests, but the language has a sinewy quality absent from the ballads of the Zhukovsky school.

Katenin's *Princess Milusha* (*Knyazhna Milusha*), a verse fairy tale, was finished in 1833. Again set in Vladimir's time, its action prompts comparison with *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. The hero, Vseslav, a knight of martial and erotic prowess, must prove his suitability to marry Vladimir's daughter Milusha by remaining chaste for an entire year. The work describes the traps laid for him by the witch Proveda, Milusha's guardian, who assumes various disguises in her attempt to cause the libidinous Vseslav to fail the test. The tale is withal rather amusing, with its tongue in cheek attitude toward romantic clichés associated with folklore, the good old days of Vladimir, and its well meaning but weak protagonist. The verses are marked by archaic diction and syntax, but Katenin achieved a *tour de force* by incorporating a multitude of Russian proverbs and sayings into his work appropriately and seemingly without effort.

Although many of the poets commonly associated with the Pleiad shared liberal ideals, for the most part they were not directly

engaged in what might be called revolutionary activities. Such was not the case, however, with Alexander Bestuzhev, Kondraty Ryleev, Wilhelm Küchelbecker, and Alexander Odoevsky, who used their pens to advance their political ideas overtly and covertly.

Wilhelm Küchelbecker (1797–1846) is remembered today for his literary theory and criticism, a small corpus of poems, and for his attractive eccentricity. From a Russified German family he was educated at the Tsarskoe Selo lyceum along with his close friends Pushkin and Delvig. His unusual name (Küchelbecker means "cupcake baker"), odd appearance, and animated, Quixotic behavior drove his coevals to tease him, but they also admired him for his lofty aspirations, his enthusiasm, and his intelligence. After graduation from the lyceum, he took a post in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, when he apparently established contact with the future Decembrists. From 1820 to 1822 he served first in Paris and then Tiflis. On his return to Russia, he gravitated towards the Lovers of Wisdom society (*Lyubomudry*), with whom he shared an enthusiasm for the romantic idealism of Schelling; he and Vladimir Odoevsky became co-editors of *Mnemosyne* (*Mnemosyna*), the group's unofficial almanac. There Küchelbecker published "On the direction of our poetry, especially lyrical, in the last decade" ("O napravlenii nashey poezii, osobenno liricheskoy, v poslednee desyatiletie"), in which he criticized his friends Zhukovsky, Baratynsky, and Pushkin for imitativeness and repetitiousness in their poetry, which he felt was typified by indefiniteness, standardized imagery, bogus landscapes, tasteless personification of such abstract concepts as Peace, Joy, Sadness, and Labor, and inevitable *fog*, "fog over the pine copse, fog over the fields, and fog in the writer's head."

Küchelbecker's literary position was idiosyncratic: he called himself "a romantic in classicism." Küchelbecker found his model in Derzhavin: in an age when the elegy had triumphed he called for a revival of the ode, which he considered the loftiest of genres. For him the poet was the bearer of truth, the eloquent citizen-patriot who scorned the crowd, a frivolous mob of pleasure seekers without vital concerns of the spirit, such as a thirst for freedom. Küchelbecker's poetry occasionally suffers from exaggerated emotionalism and declamatory pomposity, although he was no doubt quite sincere in his manner of expression.

The Argives (*Argivyane*), an unfinished dramatic tragedy in verse, was a typical effort in a "civic" vein which encouraged the quest for freedom from tyranny. *Ado*, published in *Mnemosyne* in 1824, is a prose tale of the tribulations of Ado, a pagan Livonian priest who leads a resistance movement against the Teutonic Knights, who are subjugating his people. Ultimately he and his followers are saved by Prince Yaroslav, and Ado becomes a Christian. The characters are puppets, the plot banal, and the ethnographic material largely the author's invention.

Küchelbecker was on the Senate Square on 14 December 1825, where he attacked two high officials. On both occasions his pistol misfired. He escaped to Warsaw, was captured, and spent the final two decades of his life in Siberia. He continued to write, and some of his work done in exile – for example his reminiscences of Griboedov and Ryleev and a poem on Pushkin's death – have an affective power.

Polar Star (*Polyarnaya zvezda*), a literary annual published by Ryleev and Bestuzhev, appeared in 1823, 1824, and 1825. Its contributors represented the best of Russia's writers, including those from the Pleiad and those of an earlier generation such as Zhukovsky, Gnedich, Fyodor Glinka, and Batyushkov. Also included were works by Faddey Bulgarin, Osip Senkovsky (1800–58) and Nikolay Grech (1787–1867), the group which later attained almost monopolistic control over St. Petersburg periodical publications. Since Ryleev and Bestuzhev were both involved in secret political activities, it was natural that their publication should to the greatest possible extent serve their liberal ideals and disseminate their concepts of civic virtue. In this respect their almanac followed the pattern set by *The Emulator*, the monthly publication of the Free Society of Lovers of Russian Letters (1818–25), which sought to inculcate ideals of civic responsibility and self-sacrifice in a gentry largely concerned with self-gratification and status. The success of *Polar Star* led to a proliferation of literary almanacs, of which the most prestigious and the best was Delvig's *Northern Flowers*. It was so successful that the editors of *Polar Star* decided to withdraw and conclude their venture with a final issue, smaller than the previous three and thus to be called *Little Star* (*Zvezdochka*). However, before it could appear the events of 14 December took place, and it never came out.

Kondraty Ryleev (1795–1826) was educated in the Corps of Pages, took part in the final campaign against Napoleon, and accompanied the army occupying Paris. His subsequent service on the Don River engendered a deep affection for the Ukrainian land and its culture within him, and a large part of his mature poetry is patterned on Ukrainian historical songs, or *dumy*. In 1818 he retired from the army and settled in St. Petersburg, serving first in the judiciary and subsequently as a director of the Russian-American Company. In 1820 he published "To the favorite" ("K vremenshchiku"), a denunciation, though not by name, of the tsar's advisor Count Arakcheev so scathing that officialdom was powerless to punish its author, because that would have required acknowledging that Arakcheev was the addressee.

Ryleev worked on his historical songs in 1821–3, completing almost a score of them. From Karamzin's *History of the Russian State* Ryleev chose figures notable for their patriotism, love of freedom, steadfastness in adversity, and courage, such as Oleg, Svyatoslav, Dmitry Donskoy, Ermak, Ivan Susanin, and Bogdan Khmelnitsky. These heroic types speak the language of romantic heroes: his patriot Artemy Volynsky, executed by the Empress Anna at the instigation of Count Biron, goes to his death proclaiming that he has served "sacred truth, and my execution will be my triumph." Those were prophetic words from the pen of one soon to be hanged for his role in the Decembrist conspiracy.

Ryleev's *Voynarovsky* (1824) is a long narrative poem in which the title figure, the nephew of Mazeppa, describes the anguish of his uncle after he has betrayed Peter the Great and joined forces with Charles I of Sweden, only to suffer defeat and bring retribution upon his beloved Ukraine. The work resembles the author's historical songs by its inflated rhetorical style and the adaptation of history to suit its moralistic purposes. Ryleev presents extensive descriptions of the harsh Siberian landscape, the site of Voynarovsky's exile, to intensify the emotional content.

In the early 1820s Ryleev became deeply involved in clandestine political activities, and soon acquired a prominent position in the Decembrist organization. His part in recruiting conspirators, planning the revolt, and inciting the troops to rebel, along with

his presence on Senate Square on that fateful 14 December, made it clear he was a central figure in the uprising. For that he was executed.

Northern Flowers was not designed to serve any cause other than that of literature *per se*. In general, the Pushkin–Delvig circle in St. Petersburg was committed to art for art's sake: Pushkin declared that "the aim of poetry is poetry." Orest Somov's annual surveys of Russian literature, which appeared from 1827 to 1831, stressed the importance of developing high literary standards and, most particularly, a literary language purged of foreign borrowings and rude vernacular and adequate for fiction, essays, and technical exposition. He also called for "verisimilitude" in fiction, by which he seems to have meant a concern for description in accordance with reality.

Somov's critical essays reflected the confused circumstances in which prose found itself during the 1820s. While poetry had a long tradition and established (even clichéd) means of expression, prose was still in a developmental state. Many authors, including Pushkin, complained that prose expression was incondite, imprecise, unsuited for the conveyance of ideas. Others noted that there was no tradition for the representation of conversation in Russian, since conversations in society were usually conducted in French. So one of the main tasks of Russian authors in the 1820s and even in the 1830s was the forging of a viable prose language.

The genre pool available to prose writers at the beginning of the 1820s included travel notes, the intensified anecdote of adventure, the military memoir, the historical tale, the "psychological novel," the supernatural tale, and the eastern tale. These categories were not mutually exclusive, and so one finds combinations of them, such as an adventure anecdote interpolated in travel notes. Travel notes, in fact, were a favorite choice, for their flexible format permitted "adaptations" of real experience to exploit suspense or add pathos which bridged autobiography and fiction. Thus *The Inn Stairs* (*Traktirnaya lestnitsa*) by Nikolay Bestuzhev, the seafaring brother of Alexander, employs travel notes to frame a "psychological" novelette, the fatuous confession of a soul gone astray.

Alexander Bestuzhev (1797–1837) is known also by his pseudonym Marlinsky, a name derived from the village of Marli near

Peterhof, where he served as an officer of Dragoons in 1817. His first prose was a travel sketch, "A Journey to Revel" ("Poezdka v Revel"), which appeared in *The Emulator* in 1821, signed Marlinsky. This long sketch filled with all manner of historical, anthropological, and geographical information about Estonia and Revel also included poetry and anecdotes. Bestuzhev then published a number of historical tales, the longest and most important of which was "Roman and Olga" ("Roman i Olga"), which came out in the first issue of *Polar Star* in 1823. This didactic tale focuses upon the civic virtues and heroism of Roman, a citizen-soldier of old Novgorod, who sacrifices his personal happiness to undertake a dangerous mission on behalf of that city-state when its independence is threatened by Muscovy. Ultimately he leads Novgorod to victory and is reunited with his Olga. This tale displays stylistic qualities widely associated with this author (hyperbole, metaphorical saturation, sentimental rhetoric), features which came to be known as "Marlinisms." At the same time, the author advanced the art of fiction by his obvious employment of (some) dialogue as a means of characterization.

Bestuzhev wrote three historical tales with castles in their titles: "Wenden Castle" ("Zamok Venden," 1823), "Neuhausen Castle" ("Zamok Neygauzen," 1824), and "Eisen Castle" ("Zamok Eyzen," published in 1826 anonymously under the title *Blood for Blood*). These stories of villainy in Baltic climes feature bloody acts worthy of *l'école frénétique*. "The Tournament at Revel" ("Revelsky turnir," 1825) is a comic work attacking the prejudices of the Estonian knights, who stubbornly refuse to adapt to new economic circumstances or to recognize the importance of a developing merchant class. The work features witty dialogue, like much of Bestuzhev's work.

Following his arrest and exile, Bestuzhev did not appear again until 1830, when his society tale "The Test" ("Ispytanie") was published in *The Son of the Fatherland* (*Syn Otechestva*) over the initials "A. M." As a convicted Decembrist then serving as a common soldier in the Caucasus, he could not use his own name, so his works appeared either anonymously or over the Marlinsky pseudonym.

The year 1829 saw the publication of the first Russian historical novel in the manner of Walter Scott. The Scots bard had enjoyed a

fantastic popularity in France, and the Russian reading public was well aware of the Waverley series through French translations or the scores of French imitations. Mikhail Zagoskin (1789–1852) was the first to provide his audience with a Russian historical novel, *Yury Miloslavsky, or the Russians in 1612* (*Yury Miloslavsky, ili Russkie v 1612 godu*). This was a lively tale of the Russo-Polish conflict from the Time of Troubles, employing the usual Scottian formula of lovers separated by the fortunes of war against a colorful canvas of past events and historical figures. Yury himself was rather on the lines of Marlinsky's Roman ("Roman and Olga"), but, coming as he did just four years after the Decembrist catastrophe, he must have seemed a welcome paragon of courage, devotion, patriotism, and self-sacrifice. Pushkin congratulated Zagoskin on his triumph, saying: "Everyone is reading it. The ladies are in ecstasies. Zhukovsky spent an entire night with it." In conclusion, Pushkin wished Zagoskin a long life so that he might produce many more novels. Zagoskin's initial success encouraged him to produce a whole series of historical novels. *Roslavlev, or the Russians in 1812* (*Roslavlev, ili Russkie v 1812 godu*) appeared in 1830, and he was still writing in this genre by the end of the 1840s. Meanwhile *Yury Miloslavsky* had set a pattern for his compatriots, and some quite respectable Russian historical novels shortly appeared.

One of the best story tellers was Ivan Kalashnikov (1797–1863), the scion of a merchant family from Irkutsk. His *The Daughter of the Merchant Zholobov. A Novel Drawn from Irkutsk Legends* (*Doch kuptsa Zholobova. Roman izvlechenny iz irkutskikh predaniy*), published in 1831, had the attraction not only of an exotic Siberian setting but an involved plot with separated lovers. It has no participating historical figures, but boasts all the other ingredients of the novel *à la Scott*. There are also numerous ethnographic details connected with the pagan Buryats, sociological information on the life of the merchant class, and geographical descriptions of the region around Lake Baikal. The characters are flat and simply serve to act out the complicated plot. Kalashnikov's *The Kamchatka Girl* (*Kamchadalka*) came out in 1833. Set in the previous century, it offers an interesting picture of Eskimo life and customs, and again employs the separated-lovers formula.

Probably the best of these works, excluding Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter*, were the novels of Ivan Lazhechnikov (1792–1869), who styled himself "the grandson of Walter Scott." Known originally for a military memoir of the campaign of 1812, he published his first historical novel, *The Last Novik* (*Posledny Novik*), in 1831–3. It deals with Peter the Great's conflict with Sweden. *The Ice Palace* (*Ledyanoy dom*, 1835) details intrigues at the court of Empress Anna (reigned 1730–40) and features horrors derived from *l'école frénétique*. Lazhechnikov's *The Infidel* (*Basurman*), set in the time of Grand Prince Ivan III, and *The Bodyguard of Ivan the Terrible* (*Oprichnik*) continued the tradition. Bulgarin catered to the fad with *Dmitry the Impostor* (*Dmitry samozvanets*) and *Mazeppa*, in 1830 and 1833 respectively, while Nikolay Polevoy's *The Oath at the Lord's Tomb* (*Klyatva pri grobe gospodnem*) came out in 1832. Other popular authors were Konstantin Masalsky and Rafail Zotov, who each produced several historical novels in the late 1830s.

It is difficult today to explain the extraordinary popularity of Faddey Bulgarin's (1789–1859) *Ivan Vyzhigin*, which in 1829 became Russia's first best-seller, with over 6,000 copies sold. Bulgarin was not unknown to the public as an author, for a number of his military anecdotes, eastern tales, and historical tales had been published in *The Polar Star* and *Northern Flowers*. Parts of *Vyzhigin* began appearing as early as 1825, when the book was titled *Ivan Vyzhigin, or a Russian Gil Blas*, and fanciers of these selections were doubtless moved to purchase the complete work when it appeared in four volumes. The absence of the name of Lesage's hero from the final version of the title is significant, because in his foreword Bulgarin insisted that "*this is the first original Russian novel of its kind. I dare to assert that I imitated no one*, copied no one, and wrote that which was conceived in my mind alone" (italics in the original). This puffery is the more amusing if one knows that Bulgarin had also borrowed significant episodes from Bishop Ignacy Krasicki's *Pan Podstoli*, a picaresque work of 1778.

Vyzhigin is an amorphous work with a vast setting both inside and outside Russia. Bulgarin's stated intention was to reform society through satire (to those who know the man, this was hilarious!), and thus he sought to forestall criticism of his hero, whose transgressions the author graciously pardons because the

lad is well-meaning but has a weak spirit. Vyzhigin undergoes all manner of adventures as he moves from childhood as a despised gooseherd to manhood as the scion of an illustrious father. Occasionally his escapades are entertaining. Orest Somov damned the work with faint praise but criticized the author for several scenes which revealed his lack of knowledge of St. Petersburg and Moscow high society. This criticism must have galled Bulgarin, who suffered from an inferiority complex in his relations with the literary mandarins of St. Petersburg.

The literary mandarins were enthusiastic about a novel of manners written by one of their own, Alexey Perovsky (1787–1836), whose pseudonym was Antony Pogorelsky, entitled *The Smolny Institute Graduate* (*Monastyrka* [sometimes translated *The Convent Girl*]). The 17 May 1830 issue of *The Literary Gazette* referred to this work as "probably the first real novel of manners in Russia," doubtless an allusion to Bulgarin's self-serving assessment of his *Vyzhigin* as "the first original Russian novel." Perovsky's novel is set in the provincial Ukraine, to which the heroine, Anyuta, newly graduated from the Smolny convent in St. Petersburg, returns. In a lightly ironic tone the narrator describes her efforts to adjust to the rustic manners of her home area after she has received a refined education. The first volume, which consists of Anyuta's letters to a cousin and the omniscient narration of a relative, a certain Antony Pogorelsky, promises some psychological development in the depiction of the heroine, but the hero, the officer Blistovsky, a model of rectitude, is quite flat and rather tedious. This is not true of the secondary figures, especially Anyuta's outspoken aunt, the girl's sanctimoniously perfidious guardian Klim Dyundik and his terrifying wife, a shrew of epic proportions. (This work is a precursor to Gogol's *Dead Souls*, for Dyundik and his wife are stylized in a Gogolian manner and Dyundik equals Chichikov as a schemer and purveyor of banality.) Unfortunately, the second volume of this work, albeit engaging, focused primarily upon Anyuta's attempts to escape from her guardian, and the delineation of her psychology is scanted.

The Literary Gazette was conceived by the Pushkin–Delvig camp as a means of competing with the influence of Grech and Bulgarin, which they considered deleterious to literature and culture. Earlier efforts to foster rival periodicals, such as Prince Vyazemsky's

support of Nikolay Polevoy's bi-weekly *The Moscow Telegraph* (*Moskovsky telegraf*) or Pushkin's collaboration with Mikhail Pogodin's *The Moscow Herald* (*Moskovsky vestnik*), had proved disappointing. Polevoy showed poor judgment in permitting criticism of Karamzin's *History of the Russian State* to appear in his periodical; even worse, his polemical *History of the Russian People* (*Istoriya russkogo naroda*) was seen as an inept insult to Karamzin. *The Moscow Herald*, inaugurated in 1827, fared somewhat better, and it enjoyed contributions from the St. Petersburg literary mandarins. However, its Moscow contributors' interest in German romanticism was not shared by the Pushkin circle, and when the poet Venevitinov and Vladimir Odoevsky, who had been closely involved with it, moved to St. Petersburg, Pogodin's scholarly interests increasingly dominated the periodical. Possibly the unprecedented success in 1829 of *Ivan Vyzhigin* emphasized the urgency of finding ways to curb the expanding influence of Bulgarin and his cohorts.

The Literary Gazette began publication on 1 January 1830. Delvig was editor-in-chief, Orest Somov filled a post analagous to that he held on *Northern Flowers*, and Vladimir Shchastny, a poet of limited range, was secretary. *The Gazette* appeared every five days in eight pages for its eighteen months of publication. Each of the pages was in two columns. The first four pages were devoted to prose, with poetry generally confined to one or two short pieces. The "Bibliography" section announced new works, some of which were reviewed. "Miscellany" occupied the last pages with a hodge-podge of anecdotes and brief notes on literary matters.

Even as word of the venture spread through literary circles, doubts arose as to its feasibility. Vyazemsky wrote to Pushkin that it was unlikely that the paper would succeed: "There is little hope for *The Literary Gazette*. Delvig is lazy and writes nothing, and he relies exclusively *sur sa bête de somme ou de Somoff*." In a letter to Pogodin, Yazykov rephrased Vyazemsky's doubts and also alluded to the competition the paper would face from Grech and Bulgarin: "Delvig is excessively lazy and Somov is enthusiastic but incapable. It is not likely they will succeed against those names who have somehow already entrenched themselves on our Parnassus." Yazykov was correct in anticipating opposition from

Bulgarin's *The Northern Bee* (*Severnaya pchela*), for even before the first issue of *The Gazette* appeared, Bulgarin was attacking it in his paper.

The Gazette opened as scheduled, with prose by Perovsky-Pogorelsky, literary history by Paul Katenin, and contributions by Pushkin and the extended Pleiad. Matters proceeded smoothly until March, when Delvig printed a very negative review of Bulgarin's *Dmitry the Impostor*. The paranoid Bulgarin attributed the review to Pushkin, and in retaliation published a scathing commentary on Canto VII of *Eugene Onegin*. The tone of this review so offended the tsar that he told the chief of his Third Section, Count Benckendorff, to forbid Bulgarin to publish literary criticism, and threatened to prohibit criticism in general.

The 28 October edition of *The Literary Gazette* contained a brief poem by Casimir Delavigne which alluded to the heroes of the July revolution. Benckendorff then threatened Delvig with exile to Siberia along with Pushkin and Vyazemsky, a reprimand so insulting to Delvig that he totally lost interest in all his literary activities, including *Northern Flowers*. He was not allowed to continue as editor of *The Gazette*, but the paper itself was not banned in order not to disappoint the prepaid subscribers. Somov assumed the editorship, and served in that capacity until the periodical closed in the summer of 1831.

Perhaps the most popular form of fiction in the 1830s was the society tale, short novels describing the lives and loves of the *haut monde*. A taste for this type of literature had been created by Balzac's many stories about French provincials and Parisiennes which had appeared in Russia in the original or in excerpts and translations. An early attempt in this genre was Orest Somov's "The Fool in Christ" ("Yurodivy", 1827), which combined a physiological sketch of a typical mendicant holy fool with a plot involving features which were to become standard for the society tale: a ball, arrogant officers, an insult, a challenge, a duel, an innocent victim. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky is usually credited with the first society tale, but his "The Test" ("Ispytanie"), published in 1830, followed not only Somov but also an interesting epistolary society tale entitled "Coquetry and Love" ("Koketstvo i lyubov"), the work of a certain Peter Sumarokov which appeared in *The Moscow Telegraph* in 1829. One of the most prolific practitioners of

the genre was Ivan Panaev (1812–62), whose "The Boudoir of a fashionable lady. An episode from the life of a poet in society" ("Spalnya svetskoy zhenshchiny. Epizod iz zhizni poeta v obshchestve," 1824) introduces an element of social protest in the person of the poet scorned by an insensate society.

In general, the society tale in its canonical form satirized high society, exposing its frivolity, false values, and moral vacuity. The typical plot involved an illicit affair between someone from outside the *haut monde* and a countess or princess, unhappily married to an older, stupid, and rich husband. A common variant genre took as its protagonist a young man of unusual sensitivity and ability, often a poet, painter, or musician, always poor. Here the society tale merged with the so-called *Kuenstlernovelle*, which had as its hero an artist or would-be artist scorned by the unfeeling upper classes. A well-known example is "The Name Day Party" ("Imeniny," 1835) of Nikolay Pavlov (1805–64), which chronicles the unhappy love of a serf musician for the daughter of a gentry family. This story is marred by sentimentalism, a mistake not repeated in Pavlov's "Yataghan" ("Yatagan") (both works were collected in the volume *Three Tales* [*Tri povesti*, 1835], a suspenseful and psychologically engaging tale of violent revenge stemming from a false sense of honor and class prejudice.

Several women writers published society tales. The best-known of them was Countess Evdokia Rostopchina, *née* Sushkova (1811–58), who entered the lists in 1838 with two works, "Rank and Money" ("Chiny i dengi") and "The Duel" ("Poedinok"), both of which feature self-sacrificing heroines who are victims of rigid rules of behavior and lack any power to alter their social circumstances. Rostopchina's championing of the rights of women earned for her the title of "the Russian George Sand," with whom she also shared a propensity for hyperbole and prolixity. Elena Gan, *née* Fadeeva (1814–42), also concerned herself with the plight of the intelligent woman in circumstances which stifle her interests and instincts. "The Ideal" ("Ideal") is unusual in its depiction of the oppressive atmosphere and stultifying routine of life in a provincial garrison town from which its heroine seeks to escape, but otherwise the story is improbable and the style sententious. Gan travelled widely, and some of her other works are set in remote regions with plots involving love affairs between Russians

and natives, such as Kalmyks and Tatars. She has been called "the female Lermontov," but except for their nearly coincident dates of birth and death, their extensive travels, and their choice of exotic settings, they have little in common.

Nadezhda Durova (1783–1866) is in a class by herself owing to her unusual biography. Outraged at the submissive behavior which her domineering mother and society required of her, she fled her home. She entered the army disguised as a man, and after training as a cavalryman took part in several battles during the campaign of 1807, for which she received a medal from Tsar Alexander. Later she saw action at Borodino, was wounded, and subsequently served as orderly to General Kutuzov. She retired from the cavalry in 1816 with the rank of junior captain and returned to her home in a remote province east of Kazan. Some years later Pushkin became acquainted with her brother, learned of her exceptional experience, and encouraged her to write her memoirs. She brought them to him in St. Petersburg in 1836, and he published excerpts in *The Contemporary* under the title *Notes of a Cavalry Maiden* (*Zapiski kavalerist-devitsy*). They occasioned considerable comment, as did their author, who wore male attire and spoke of herself using masculine forms. However, despite their renown, the *Notes* did not sell well. Durova then turned to fiction, over the next four years producing a number of society tales and a novel, none of them very noteworthy. In 1840 she abruptly ceased publishing.

Soon after its advent the society tale acquired what might be called formulaic characteristics, and it was not long before parodies on it began to appear, Pushkin's "The Queen of Spades" ("Pikovaya dama," 1834) being the most famous. One of the most amusing – and far fetched – is from the pen of the prolific Alexander Veltman (1800–60). His "Erotida" (1835) describes a vain and unfaithful officer, a certain G., who forgets his first love Erotida, seeks an affair with her several years later when she appears at Carlsbad disguised as Emilia, a widow, and then kills her in a duel when she, further disguised as a young man, appears to be G.'s rival for Emilia's affections. Although many a society tale concludes with sentimental effusions, in this case the narrator informs us that G. simply threw his victim's body into the river

(there were no seconds at the duel) and returned to town to continue his pursuit of yet another young lady.

One author whom we may categorically label a romantic is Prince Vladimir Odoevsky (1804–69), co-founder of The Lovers of Wisdom Society and one of the principal figures behind its publication, *Mnemosyne*. Odoevsky is often linked to E. T. A. Hoffmann, with whom he shared an almost obsessive curiosity about the supernatural, an affinity for music and musicians, and pessimism as to the artistic spirit's ability to flourish in the philistine atmosphere of modern life. He created his own unique *Kuenstlernovellen* in which, with intentional disregard for biographical accuracy, he mobilized Beethoven, Bach, and the Venetian architect and engraver Piranesi to exemplify his own ideas on creativity, the lonely mission of the artist, the effect of music on the human spirit. Odoevsky's Beethoven is a frenetic, deranged, and decrepit ancient who hammers out his last quartet on a stringless harpsichord, oblivious to the world around him. "Beethoven's Last Quartet" ("Posledny kvartet Betkhovena," 1831) concludes with a scene in which society indifferently notes the musician's death. The story of Piranesi ("Opere del Cavaliere Giambatista Piranesi," 1832) combines the supernatural with the sublime in describing the madness of the Venetian's scheme to build an arch joining Mt. Vesuvius and Mt. Etna and his jealous effort to destroy his rival's work (to topple the tower of Pisa by hanging on to it). The Hoffmannesque combination of genius and insanity is absent from "Sebastian Bach" ("Sebastyan Bakh," 1835), an overtly didactic work which emphasizes the spiritual nature of Bach's creation as opposed to the destructive sensuality of Italian music.

Motley Fairy Tales (*Pestrye skazki*, 1833), a cycle ostensibly presented by the impecunious philosopher Ireney Modestovich Gomozeyko, contains several didactic pieces with engaging titles, such as "The Fairy Tale About the Corpse Which Belonged to Who Knows Whom" ("Skazka o mertvom tele, neizvestno komu prinadlezhashchem") or "The Fairy Tale About Why It Is Dangerous for Young Ladies to Walk in a Crowd Along Nevsky Prospect" ("Skazka o tom, kak opasno devushkam khodit tolpoyu po Nevskomu prospektu"). In the latter a young girl is detained by the evil owner of a dress shop, turned into a fashionable doll, and

sold to a young man. Later he discovers that she is alive, but her modish existence has rendered her unfit to be the companion of a thinking individual. "The Sylph" ("Silfida," 1837) suggests that retreat to an ideal world of insanity is preferable to a conventional life. Odoevsky's typical didacticism is represented in less fantastic settings by his two society tales, "Princess Mimi" ("Knyazhna Mimi," 1834) and "Princess Zizi" ("Knyazhna Zizi," 1839). The former chronicles the human suffering caused by the vicious gossip of the spinster Mimi, who dominates her circle by her slander. The work follows the standard pattern of the genre, except that the preface suddenly appears in the middle of the story – so we will pay attention to it, as the author explains.

Russian Nights (*Russkie nochi*, 1844) is a collection of ten tales, nine of which had already been published, arranged within the frame of a dialogue among four friends. Functioning as a chorus, the friends discuss the philosophical content of the stories, with the principal commentator, Faust, serving as the author's *porte parole*. The discussions range far and wide in an effort to find some principles unifying science and art, while at the same time maintaining credence in the world beyond the five senses. The general criticism of western thought and behavior and hints at the superiority of Russian moral nature reflect Odoevsky's Slavophile beliefs, which became more pronounced as he grew older. However, Odoevsky never adopted the chauvinistic postures typical of the more conservative Slavophiles, like Yazykov.

Nikolay Gogol (1809–52) is one of the "big three" of Russian romantic writers. Born into a Ukrainian family of the petty gentry, he began his career inauspiciously with the idyll *Ganz Kuechelgarten* (1829), derived from Voss's *Louise*. A chapter of an unfinished historical novel, *The Hetman* (*Getman*), an effort combining Scott and *l'école frénétique*, appeared in *Northern Flowers for 1831*. He achieved success with *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka* (*Vechera na khutore bliz Dikanki*, 1831–2), a collection of stories introduced by a folksy Ukrainian beekeeper, Rudy Panko. Derived from the puppet theatre and folklore, the eight tales range from somber treatments of demonic entrapment to ribald slapstick. Devils, witches, river spirits, boisterous villagers combine with elements of popular superstition, including huts on hens' legs and fires marking buried treasure, to produce improbable but

entertaining tales, narrated in a style ranging from effusive descriptions of nature to uncouth dialogue. One might suppose that these stories reflected Gogol's romantic interest in the folklore of his native region, but more probably he was merely responding to the literary market: Somov had already published several tales derived from Ukrainian folklore.

One of these eight tales, "Ivan Fyodorovich Shponka and His Aunt" ("Ivan Fedorovich Shponka i ego tetushka"), presages the classic Gogol, the unmasker of *poshlost*, a term peculiar to Russian suggesting, among other things, banality, self-satisfied mediocrity, phony sentiment, and vegetative existence. Gogol believed in the devil, and saw his hand behind any human behavior which seemed unworthy of man's high mission, with *poshlost* as his instrument. In "Shponka," *poshlost* manifests itself in Shponka's total passivity, his lack of any passion or drive, his mental vacuity. The method of characterization used here becomes typical for Gogol's later prose: he stylizes all aspects of the hero to conform to an essential quality, in this case the total lack of any significant physical or mental activity. Shponka, a military officer, spends his life lying on his bed, setting mouse traps and polishing his buttons. In like manner the hallmark of the mature Gogol would be the depiction of *life as it should not be*.

Gogol later enlivened the romantic prose scene with another collection, *Mirgorod* (1835). "Viy" is a horror story featuring a folklore monster of Gogol's invention with eyelids falling to its feet. Less fanciful but still imaginative is the pseudo-historical novel *Taras Bulba*, an exotic pageant uniting features of the Scottian novel, the Ukrainian historical song, and *l'école frénétique*. Set in an indeterminate century, the work glorifies the good old days on the Russian frontier when Cossacks from the republic of Sech-Beyond-the-Falls (on the Dnepr River) used to slaughter infidel Jews, Tatars and heretical Poles as much for the sport of it as to punish the enemies of Orthodoxy. Though morally unappealing, the work is colorful and has an exciting plot.

Mirgorod also included "Old World Landowners" ("Starosvetskie pomeshchiki"), which externally is a nostalgic reminiscence of the quiet pleasures of rural gentry life but in fact attacks the *poshlost* of a spiritless existence devoted to gourmandizing and self-gratification. The same irony pervades "The Tale of How

Ivan Ivanovich Quarreled with Ivan Nikiforovich" ("Povest o tom, kak possorilsya Ivan Ivanovich s Ivanom Nikiforovichem"), which recounts how the two estimable gentlemen of the title ruin themselves through an extended and nonsensical lawsuit. Gogol here depends in part upon Vasily Narezhny's work of 1825, *The Two Ivans* (*Dva Ivana*), a didactic satire on Ukrainians' devotion to self-destructive litigation.

The year 1835 also saw the appearance of *Arabesques* (*Arabeski*), a collection which included, among some thematically related essays, stories forming part of Gogol's St. Petersburg cycle: "Nevsky Prospect" ("Nevsky Prospekt"), "Diary of a Madman" ("Zapiski sumasshedshego"), and "The Portrait" ("Portret"). To this cycle we must add "The Nose" ("Nos"), published in Pushkin's *Contemporary* in 1836, and "The Overcoat" (1842). All of these stories raise problems for the reader, who may find himself deceived should he accept the narrator's implied sentiment or empathize too quickly with the protagonists.

"Nevsky Prospect" chronicles the dire fate of a naive painter, Piskaryov, who believes he has discovered his ideal woman only to learn that she is a vulgar prostitute. Emotionally destroyed, he seeks refuge in opium and ultimately commits suicide. This pathetic version of the *Kuenstlernovelle*, which seems to reflect Hoffmann's philanthropic treatment of the sensitive artist defeated by the mundane world, is contrasted in the same story with an account of the adventures of an officer, Pirogov, whose attempt to seduce the wife of a drunken tinsmith (whose name is Hoffmann and whose cobbler friend is named Schiller) results in his being beaten, vowing revenge, and then forgetting the whole thing by dancing the mazurka at a banal *soirée*. The officer's easy acceptance of a mortal insult at the hands of the drunken artisans contrasts sharply with Piskaryov's essentially pompous idealizations and his suicide.

The plot of "The Nose" involves the snobbish affectations of the eponymous organ after its separation from the face of a Major Kovalyov, a social climber who needs that appendage to find a wife with a large dowry. In this story we find both the *Doppelgänger* theme from Hoffmann and the nose from *Tristram Shandy*'s Slawkenburgius, yet further indications of Gogol's familiarity with western European themes and his readiness to appropriate them for his own purposes.

"The Portrait" caused Gogol difficulties – later to be shared by his commentators – and he considerably altered the initial version of 1835 for publication in 1842. The tale chronicles the disintegration of Chartkov, a poor but promising painter, whose downfall begins when he purchases the forbidding portrait of an Asiatic money-lender and later finds a considerable sum of money hidden in its frame. Now able to dress fashionably, Chartkov becomes an enormously successful society painter, but pandering to his clients erodes his talent, and he becomes incapable of creating anything of value. In jealous despair he buys up works of true artists and slashes them to ribbons, ultimately to die destitute and insane. In the second part of the story the reader learns of the malevolent portrait's origin and how the artist overcame its pernicious effects by retreating to a monastery. Presumably the reader is to understand that talent may be destroyed if an artist seeks easy success, although in fact Chartkov seems to be a victim of some supernatural force associated with the subject of the portrait. The reworked version, considerably longer, places excessive emphasis upon the story's didactic and moralistic content.

In 1836 appeared Gogol's play *The Inspector General* (*Revizor*), usually categorized as a satire upon corrupt officials. The "hero," a brainless young clerk named Khlestakov, is mistaken for a government inspector travelling *incognito* by the worthies of a provincial town, who give him bribes to overlook their many transgressions. The insouciant clerk is initially oblivious to their error and assumes that their toadying is the natural result of his charm and his hyperbolically mendacious account of his position in St. Petersburg. In the end Khlestakov's servant suggests they take French leave while they can. The officials then learn to their chagrin of their self-deception, and the play concludes with the stunning news that a real inspector has arrived.

In *The Inspector General* Gogol seems deliberately to have violated the conventions of classical comedy: his "hero" arrives in Act Two and leaves in Act Four, he proposes almost simultaneously to the mayor's wife and daughter, and the play has no positive characters. Reportedly the tsar himself was amused by the play, which he saw as a satire against corruption; others interpreted it as an indictment of the governmental system. Its real value, however, lies in its grotesque characters, the creative lies of Khlestakov, the incomprehensible "reasoning" which afflicts the towns-

people, and the agglomeration of nonsense which motivates their actions.

Despite the tsar's approbation, political conservatives attacked the play, and the hypersensitive author sought refuge abroad. For much of the next twelve years he lived principally in Rome, and it was there he composed his masterpiece, *Dead Souls*, a primary work of the 1840s.

While still in exile at Mikhaylovskoe, Pushkin had expanded his creative horizon to include drama, a move prompted by a growing general interest in Shakespeare. *Boris Godunov*, which Pushkin called "a romantic tragedy," was the fruit of an effort which extended over the better part of 1825. Informed by Karamzin's account of the reign of the "usurper" Boris and inspired by Shakespeare's freedom of composition, Pushkin combined blank verse, prose, lofty rhetoric and vernacular, the somber and the comic, in chronicling the inevitable disaster facing Boris and his family. In Pushkin's treatment of the conflict between Tsar Boris and the pretender to the throne, the false Dmitry, the former proves incapable of mastering his own destiny, while the usurper succeeds almost without effort. Boris's psychological disintegration contrasts sharply with the naive confidence of the pretender and provides the reader – the play is seldom staged – with a depth not found in Karamzin's account. In 1826, when Pushkin favored his literary friends with readings of his drama, they were astonished at its apparent innovations and gave it the highest praise, but after it was published in 1830 the critics and public reacted otherwise: they complained about its violation of the classical unities and preferred the more traditional treatment of historical subjects found in the contemporary novel in the manner of Walter Scott.

Pushkin remained at Mikhaylovskoe following the Decembrist uprising until the following September, when he was summoned to Moscow by Nicholas. The tsar apparently persuaded Pushkin of his good will and proposed to serve as his personal censor. In fact, however, the poet was still regarded with suspicion and remained under police surveillance. Still, his exile was over. He was now famous, free to enjoy the accolades of the public, and able to renew the bachelor pursuits denied him at Mikhaylovskoe. His somewhat irregular life (wine, women, and gambling) did not keep him

from writing, but now he moved toward prose. *The Moor of Peter the Great* (*Arap Petra velikogo*), begun in 1828, was a fictionalized account of the youth of the poet's great grandfather, Abraham Hannibal, an Abyssinian who became a favorite of Peter the Great. The effort consisted of seven chapters, the last unfinished, and was only published completely in *The Contemporary* in 1837. In 1829, among other prose efforts, Pushkin tried his hand at an epistolary novel, *A Novel in Letters* (*Roman v pismakh*), now also unfinished but nevertheless a rich source on the author's ideas on the obligations of the gentry, particularly as regards their serfs. It also reveals a strong interest in the psychology of the protagonists, and had it been completed and published it doubtless would have contributed much to the emerging genre of the society tale.

Pushkin's developing interest in history, and in particular in Peter the Great, was further manifested in the long narrative poem *Poltava*, completed in 1828. The work's originality caused difficulties for the critics: it combined features of the Byronic poem, though without a subjective authorial voice, and the epic, though without a central heroic figure, and lacked the traditional intervention by supernatural powers. The poem is in three parts, with the first a family drama in which Maria, daughter of the nobleman Kochubey, declares her love for the aged Mazeppa, Hetman of the Ukraine, who is also her godfather and thus forbidden by church law from marrying her. She flees to him, so angering her father that he reveals to Tsar Peter Mazeppa's plan to betray Russia. In part two, Kochubey has been imprisoned and tortured by Mazeppa, who hides from Maria his intention to execute her father. She learns of his plan and seeks to intercede, but is too late. She flees, and the distraught Mazeppa cannot find her. The historical implications are broadened in the third and final part describing the battle of Poltava (1709), in which Peter defeated the Swedish king Charles XII and his turncoat ally Mazeppa. Charles and the distraught Hetman flee the field of battle, and in a remote village Mazeppa encounters Maria, who has gone insane.

In general the historical details of *Poltava* are correct, although the final encounter between the crazed Maria and her treacherous husband was doubtless poetic license. Oddly, although the hero of the piece is Peter, until the battle itself the poem focuses upon Kochubey, Maria, and in particular upon Mazeppa, depicted as a

gloomy and perfidious tyrant prepared to sacrifice his devoted wife and his beloved homeland to avenge a petty insult Peter had inflicted on him years before.

Atmospheric nature descriptions, intriguing dialogues between Maria and Mazeppa, and an effective impressionistic description of the battle of Poltava are highpoints of this work, but the absence of a unifying central character, the shifting of scenes from the domestic to the international, and the range of tones and diction make the work appear episodic rather than organic and bespeak its experimental essence.

In the summer of 1829, following the rejection of his marriage proposal to Natalya Goncharova, Pushkin set off for Persia to view the Russo-Turkish conflict at first hand. He crossed the Caucasus and witnessed combat at Ezerum. His account of this adventure, "A Journey to Ezerum" ("Puteshestvie v Arzrum"), is an excellent example of the literary travelogue, one of those genres popular with aspiring prose writers since the days of Karamzin.

The fall of 1830 found Pushkin, now officially engaged to Natalya Goncharova, quarantined at his paternal estate of Boldino owing to a cholera epidemic. Here he wrote his *Tales of Belkin* (*Povesti Belkina*), five short stories ostensibly recorded by a provincial gentleman who had heard them from various narrators. The pieces are ironical treatments of romantic types, situations, and styles. Efforts to discover some organizing principle uniting the pieces have not proved convincing.

As a student of human behavior, Pushkin was intrigued by what has been termed the "psychological impostor," a person lacking natural leadership qualities who strives to maintain ascendancy by calculated role playing. "The Shot" ("Vystrel"), the most psychological of the Belkin tales, treats the obsession to dominate of a mysterious Byronic type, Sylvio, who finds his preeminence in his regiment challenged by a certain Count, a natural leader who effortlessly arouses the admiration of his fellow officers. Sylvio provokes him to a challenge, relying upon his skill in duelling to kill his adversary. After the Count has fired, he awaits Sylvio's fatal bullet with such insouciance that the frustrated Sylvio decides to postpone his own shot until such time as the Count shall fear death. Five years later, upon learning that the Count has just married, Sylvio appears at his estate and demands his shot. When

the Count exhibits agitation and anxiety, Sylvio is satisfied that he has proven his superiority and spares his life, confident that the Count will suffer untold agonies at this "defeat." Of course, the mental anguish with which Sylvio seeks to poison the Count's life is based on a reading of how he, Sylvio, would react in the Count's place, and the Count behaves otherwise. Ironically, the diabolic revenge to which Sylvio devotes years of preparation proves worthless. Pushkin's story, which cleverly combines multiple narrators to exploit suspense and mystery, stands in sharp and deliberate contrast to Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's anecdote in "An Evening on Bivouac" ("Vecher na bivuake," 1823), which also treats the theme of the postponed shot but is withal an insipidly sentimentalized tale.

"The Stationmaster" ("Stantsionny smotritel") is in part a parody of "Poor Liza" (1792), Karamzin's sentimental tale of the spiritually beautiful flower girl deceived by a morally weak young officer, Erast. Pushkin's narrator, a naive traveller, recalls three visits to a provincial posting station. The first introduces a robust and cheerful stationmaster whose pride and joy is his flirtatious daughter Dunya. The report of the second visit depicts a now demoralized and alcoholic stationmaster, whose "poor Dunya" has run off with a hussar officer and is living with him in St. Petersburg. In his account of the third visit, the narrator ruefully reports the stationmaster's premature death, but also informs us that a beautiful lady had recently visited his grave: Dunya is obviously alive and well in St. Petersburg.

The critic Mikhail Gershenzon was intrigued by the fact that in this otherwise laconic narrative there is a long digression describing four panels in the posting station depicting the story of the prodigal son. He concluded that "The Stationmaster" was not, as many believed, a compassionate tale of a poor father whose daughter had been seduced by an insensate officer, but rather an ironic depiction of a man misled by the biblical parable who needlessly drank himself to death because he believed his daughter would inevitably end up badly. Many of the lamentations of the broken stationmaster recall "Poor Liza," and there is even a scene in Pushkin's work which parallels one in which Erast seeks to "buy off" his deceived mistress.

The remaining three tales are less complex and more obviously

ironical in their treatment of romantic clichés. "The Undertaker" ("Grobovshchik") is ostensibly an account of a supernatural visitation by the clientele of an undertaker, who rashly invites his "customers" to a housewarming. It turns out that the visitation is a nightmare caused by overindulgence. "The Squire's Daughter" ("Baryshnya-krestyanka") and "The Blizzard" ("Metel") develop the theme of mistaken identity. In the former, a provincial miss masquerades as a peasant girl to capture a blasé young nobleman. "The Blizzard" plays with the theme of star-crossed lovers: a couple determined to marry without parental permission plan to meet at a remote church, but the young man is delayed by a blizzard and his bride, swooning from anxiety, is mistakenly married to a passing hussar, who lightheartedly accepts the role of groom. Years later the couple meet by chance, fall in love, and then discover that they are already married.

Pushkin returned to the dramatic form that fall of 1830 in Boldino when he composed his so-called "little tragedies," succinct studies of obsessive personalities in unrhymed iambic pentameter. Three of these took their origins from the poet's stay at Mikhaylovskoe, as his notes indicate, and their perfection may be owing to a long period of gestation. "The Covetous Knight" ("Skupoy rytsar") dramatizes the conflict between an impecunious knight, Albert, and his egregiously covetous father, the Baron. The son is desperate for funds to enable him to take part in activities at court, and the father is relentlessly determined to protect his arduously acquired wealth. The pathology of the miser is wonderfully represented in the second scene (there are three), in which the Baron communes with his hoard and recalls the circumstances accompanying the acquisition of each coin. The play concludes melodramatically, as Albert accepts a challenge from his father. The Baron then suffers a fatal seizure and dies calling for the keys to his chests of gold.

"Mozart and Salieri" ("Motsart i Saleri") is based on a rumor that Salieri poisoned the great composer. Here again we have the theme of the individual gifted by nature for whom all things come easily in conflict with the person who must strain every nerve to enjoy only modest success. With no apparent effort Mozart achieves sublime heights of composition, which Salieri cannot remotely approach for all his desire and endless effort. Deeply

affronted by Mozart's preeminence, his nonchalance about his talent, and his indifference to his calling, Salieri poisons him. However, his revenge is undermined by Mozart's dictum that genius and villainy are incompatible.

"The Stone Guest" ("Kamenny gost") is a variation of the Don Juan theme. Here the exiled voluptuary returns to Madrid to visit his favorite Laura, only to find her consorting with Don Carlos, the brother of the Commander, whom he had earlier slain. Don Juan kills Don Carlos, and in a defiant mood decides to court Dona Anna, the widow of the Commander. To this end he disguises himself as a monk and waits for her at her husband's grave, which is adorned by his granite statue. Confronting her, he identifies himself as Don Diego, an ardent admirer, and gains an invitation to her house. Don Juan's fearful servant, Leporello, notes that the statue appears angry, but his master remains unperturbed and commands Leporello to invite the Commander to guard the door during his tryst with the widow. The statue nods acceptance. At his meeting with Dona Anna, Don Juan discloses his true identity and overcomes her objections and sense of guilt. A noise is heard, the statue appears, takes Don Juan's hand, and both sink into the earth. Notwithstanding this work's supernatural element and legendary origins, there is a strong element of realism in its dialogue and in the psychological portrait of Don Juan, an egomaniac who views life as a game and others as his playthings. Don Juan's audacious behavior and his readiness to challenge fate make him an engaging villain, whose descendant we shall shortly meet as the protagonist of Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*.

"The Feast During the Plague" ("Pir vo vremya chumy") is a translation of a portion of John Wilson's *The City of the Plague*, a scene in which a group of those still surviving the plague are banqueting on the street. The original is significantly altered only by the interpolating of two songs: a touching one in which the plague-stricken Jenny admonishes her lover Edmond to stay away from her to save his own life, and "The hymn in honor of the plague." Like the feast itself, the hymn is a gesture of anguished bravado, a toast to death-dealing pestilence in defiance of sense and religion.

"The Queen of Spades" ("Pikovaya dama") was the product of yet another productive Boldino autumn. Written in 1833, it was

published in *The Library for Reading* (*Biblioteka dlya chteniya*) the following year. Like "The Stationmaster," the story has a history of misinterpretation. This is not a tale of the supernatural in which the protagonist falls victim to a ghost, but a parody of both the supernatural tale and the society tale. Here again Pushkin treats the psychological impostor, the individual who rashly seeks to play a role beyond his abilities.

Hermann, a prudent officer of Engineers, seeks to discover the secret of three winning cards, which he is told had saved an old countess from bankruptcy at the gambling tables many years before. Obsessed by the possibility of obtaining instant wealth, Hermann gains access to the old lady's mansion by pretending infatuation with her abused ward Elizabeth. When he confronts the Countess, she denies there is any secret, and then dies of fright. The superstitious Hermann attends her funeral to seek forgiveness, only to faint when she winks at him from her coffin. That night, after drinking more than usual, he is visited by her ghost, which reveals the sequence of the three cards – three, seven, and ace – in exchange for his promise to marry Elizabeth. Hermann then stakes his savings on the three and wins, puts the total on the seven and wins, but in the final round selects the queen of spades instead of the ace. As his mistake is revealed to him, the card assumes the features of the Countess. He loses all, and goes mad. The highly ironic epilogue describes the fates of the various characters, among them Elizabeth, who has acquired affluence through marriage to the son of the Countess's embezzling bailiff, and now has a ward of her own! Hermann is hospitalized, reduced to muttering the winning and losing card sequences.

The story has many levels of interest, including a host of covert references to Masonic symbolism and play with numbers, but its basic contribution is the revelation of the obsessive personality of Hermann, an impecunious and cautious man who, inspired by an anecdote which others dismissed, aspired to instant wealth on the grounds, as he declared to the Countess during their fatal confrontation, that he deserved the fortune to which she held the key. But he is innately weak, and, unstrung by his own audacity, his overwrought nerves, his superstition and anxiety, he breaks down at the critical moment to become his own victim. This story was a seminal one for Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, whose pro-

tagonist, Raskolnikov, is also a would-be superman defeated by his own inadequacies. One must reject a common misinterpretation which sees Hermann as destroyed by the Countess's supernatural intervention, for if this is correct the whole psychological significance of the story is vitiated and Pushkin is deprived of his proper claim to have introduced a significant theme into Russian fiction.

Pushkin's interest in history intensified in 1832 when he was granted permission to work in the historical archives. There he researched the uprising led by the illiterate Cossack Emelyan Pugachov, who, pretending to be Peter III, seriously threatened the rule of Catherine the Great in 1773–4. In the late summer of 1833 Pushkin visited important sites of the conflict, and that fall, once again at Boldino, finished his *History of the Pugachov Rebellion* (*Istoriya pugachevskogo bunta*). Meanwhile, he was working on a historical romance based on the same event, *The Captain's Daughter* (*Kapitanskaya dochka*), published in 1836. This is probably the best of the Russian historical novels in the style of Walter Scott, with whose works it shares certain plot-features, though it differs from them in its lack of sociological and anthropological baggage. Pushkin's story focuses upon character, especially that of Pugachov, whose extraordinary leadership abilities made his rebellion so successful. As with "The Stationmaster" and "The Shot," Pushkin utilizes a naive narrator, in this case a young officer, Grinyov, whose fiancée Marya is abducted by the rebels after they kill her parents, Captain Mironov and his wife. The use of a naive narrator here made it possible for Pushkin to show some of Pugachov's charismatic qualities without falling afoul of the censorship. Grinyov and Marya are somewhat colorless, but Pugachov's portrait is engaging, albeit enigmatic. Particularly attractive are the portraits of Marya's parents, the simple but heroic Captain Mironov and his domineering wife, who abjure allegiance to the pretender and pay for their steadfastness with their lives, and Grinyov's obstinate but faithful servant, Savelich. Mironov became a prototype for Tolstoy's self-effacing Captain Tushin (*War and Peace*), the unsung hero of the battle of Borodino.

History once again is central to what many consider Pushkin's finest verse work, the narrative poem *The Bronze Horseman* (*Medny vsadnik*), yet another fruit of the Boldino harvest of 1833. The

setting is essentially contemporary – the disastrous flood of 1824 in St. Petersburg – but the theme is historical, for the poem explores the conflict between the individual, represented by the poor clerk Eugene whose fiancée drowns in the flood, and Peter the Great, the embodiment of *la raison d'état*, who established a city on the marshes of the Neva river with apparent unconcern for the thousands of victims his project claimed. The demented Eugene identifies as his enemy the equestrian statue of Peter which dominates Senate Square, and he dares to threaten it, then flees hopelessly from its merciless pursuit and dies. The work has the unusual quality of simultaneously lauding the vision and will of Peter while treating his victim compassionately: in effect, both are right. This attitude perhaps reflected Pushkin's own frustrations in his relationship to Nicholas I, who for personal and state reasons kept the poet in physical and economic bondage.

As with *Poltava*, this narrative ranges from the individual to the international, from the powerless Eugene and his poor Parasha to Peter and his creation of a city intended to thwart the "haughty neighbor" Sweden and break through a window to Europe. The opening apotheosis to St. Petersburg is also a rebuttal of the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz's harshly critical vision of the city (and of Russia and Peter as well) in his *Forefathers' Eve Part III*. The polemics between the two poets, who knew and admired each other, arose not because of differing tastes for climate and urban landscapes but over their opposing views on the fate of Poland, long a restless thrall of Russia's. This answer to Mickiewicz represents a "personal" element in *The Bronze Horseman* not found in *Poltava*.

Despite Pushkin's defense of St. Petersburg and his rationalization of its human cost, his poem presages a new assessment of the city, which theretofore had enjoyed poetic adulation as the Venice of the north and the eighth wonder of the world. In the eyes of the crazed Eugene, the city is a sinister and threatening place, a haunted house dominated by a demonic force. This interpretation captured the imagination of Russian authors, and almost immediately this new image of St. Petersburg was developed by other writers, notably Gogol in "Nevsky Prospect," in which the Devil lights the city's street lamps at night to deceive mortals.

The estate at Boldino was particularly congenial for the pro-

duction of fairy tales, and Pushkin completed several of them on each of his sojourns in the autumns of 1830 and 1833. It was generally believed that these works originated with Arina Rodionovna, the poet's nurse, who used to entertain him with Russian folk tales during his exile at Mikhaylovskoe, but several of them share common features with tales from western Europe. This does not, however, detract from their apparent Russianness and charming simplicity. The first of them "The fairy tale of the priest and his manservant Balda" ("Skazka o pope i o rabotnike ego Balde," 1830), was prohibited by the censorship during the poet's lifetime and appeared, with alterations, only in 1840. The story is based on the traditional folklore theme of the simpleton getting the best of a deceitful and venal master, and is striking for its uneven lines with rhymed couplets, which impart an atmosphere of crudeness suiting the protagonists and their actions. "The fairy tale about the fisherman and the fish" ("Skazka o rybake i rybke," 1833) exploits the theme of the greedy wife who is never satisfied with the gifts a thaumaturgical fish grants her husband, until ultimately she gets nothing. "The fairy tale about the dead princess and the seven champions" ("Skazka o mertvoy tsarevne i o semi bogatyryakh," 1833) is a variant of the Snow White theme, replete with an evil stepmother who interrogates her mirror seeking flattering responses. "The fairy tale about Tsar Saltan" ("Skazka o tsare Saltane," 1831) and "The fairy tale about the golden cockerel" ("Skazka o zolotom petukhe," 1834) are by common agreement considered the best of this genre. The first, narrated in lilting trochaic tetrameter couplets, recounts the cruel deception of Tsar Saltan by his wife's two envious sisters and an evil matchmaker, who report to the tsar, then on campaign, that the tsarina has given birth to a monster, and then set her adrift in a cask with her newborn son Gvidon. The castaways survive on a foreign island, and thanks to the youth's having saved an endangered swan with magical powers, he can return to his father's kingdom as a mosquito, a fly, and a bee. On each occasion he stings or bites one of the evildoers. Meanwhile, the swan bequeaths to Gvidon such marvels as a squirrel that eats nuts with golden shells and emerald kernels, and a personal guard of thirty-three champions led by Chernomor. The third wonder is a beautiful maiden who turns out to be the swan itself, and Gvidon marries her. Learning of this last

marvel from marine traders, Tsar Saltan fulfills his wish to visit the island, where he rediscovers his wife and son, and in his joy forgives the evil sisters and the conniving matchmaker. "The golden cockerel," linked to one of the legends included by Washington Irving in his *Alhambra*, contains certain indications that Tsar Dadon, the foolish and lazy ruler who entrusted the safety of his kingdom to a watchbird, the golden cockerel, refers to Alexander I, but it is difficult to substantiate this on internal evidence. One should simply enjoy the couplets of trochaic tetrameter and take pleasure in the poet's wit.

Although some may hold that Pushkin's narrative poetry, especially *Eugene Onegin* and *The Bronze Horseman*, are his most significant achievements, he possibly made his greatest contribution to Russian literature through his lyrics. Their range is extensive, from casual and flippant epigrams to serious statements of the lyric "I," from album verses of transitory importance to scenes of nature striking in pictorial vividness and mood, from anniversary verses to expressions of friendship and solidarity. Contemporary critics generally agree that Pushkin's verse is more classical than romantic, for it does not display the high passion and unsublimated emotion, the lack of control, or the exuberance one usually associates with romantic poetry. Moreover, if one maintains that poetry is "thinking in metaphors," it is difficult to explain the completely unornamented "I loved you once . . . ," ("Ya vas lyubil . . . ," 1829), which contains only the already dead metaphor of "extinguished love." Pushkin's verse, when compared with some of the colorful and highly ornate vessels of his romantic contemporaries, resembles a crystal goblet, elegant, symmetrical, and transparent, which gives forth a clear and resonant sound when struck. And while we may feel that some of Pushkin's poems bear the mark of pure inspiration, his manuscripts reveal that their ease of expression and apparent effortlessness were the result of careful revision.

A significant part of Pushkin's lyrics have to do with affairs of the heart, displaying the anticipated range of emotions from tender concern and joy to jealousy and despair. Despite the kaleidoscopic nature of his erotic attachments, Pushkin seems to have been deeply affected by them.

Pushkin's lyrics ordinarily express ideas and feelings in an

uncomplicated manner, without philosophical overtones. In this respect he is poles apart from his contemporaries Baratynsky and Tyutchev, both "metaphysical" poets. By nature Pushkin was neither a dreamer nor a seer, but rather a pragmatist. A fine example of his Voltairean rationalism is his comment about Richardson's Clarissa Harlowe, who willed her own death after having been dishonored by Lovelace: Pushkin's assessment was: "What a ninny!" Of course he never cared for the abstractions of the Lovers of Wisdom or their flights into romantic Schellingian idealism.

As for his poetic vocation Pushkin could adopt many views. In his "Conversation between a bookseller and a poet" ("Razgovor knigoprodavtsa s poetom," 1824), the poet at first recalls his early days of inspiration, his happy isolation from the crowd, his lofty indifference to fame; but in the end he concedes that without money there is no freedom and starts to negotiate a price for his work. Although Pushkin here expresses a thoroughly unromantic view in treating the poet as an artisan or tradesman, he in fact had a high opinion of his calling. The lengthy poem "André Chénier" (1825) lauds the heroism of the martyred poet-patriot, and in "The prophet" ("Prorok," 1826) a seraphim transforms a mortal into a prophet and admonishes him to "burn the hearts of men with the word." While not indulging in the romantic fantasy of the poet as a kind of divine being who in moments of inspiration might glimpse the *truth*, Pushkin considered the poet superior to the "crowd," which for him consisted of the gentry, sycophants and toadies, the hypocrites and intellectual Yahoos of society. "To the poet" ("Poetu," 1830) admonishes the poet to disdain popularity: "You are a tsar. Live alone." If he had harsh words for the crowd, Pushkin was even more contemptuous toward Alexander I, the man responsible for his six-year exile. In his famous Horatian variation "Exegi monumentum" (1836), the poet proudly claims to have raised a miraculous (*nerukotvorny*, literally "not made by human hands") monument to himself, which is higher than the Alexander Pillar, the monument to the tsar erected in St. Petersburg in 1834.

Pushkin was at his most romantic in his choice of works to translate or imitate, such as the Psalms or the Koran, whose exoticism captivated him. We may also note his translations of Prosper Merimée's *Songs of the Western Slavs*, to which he added his

own imitations of south Slavic folk poetry. One of the most romantic of his original works is the poignant "God grant I don't go mad!" ("Ne day mne Bog soyti s uma," 1833), in which the poet longs for the oblivion and freedom of madness, but finally concludes that madness means incarceration, where the song of the nightingale and the rustle of the oaks will be replaced by the cries of inmates, the curses of the guards, and the sound of chains. The pragmatic Pushkin can find no joy in madness.

Pushkin's poems containing nature descriptions are most engaging, perhaps owing to their pictorial effect. They are filled with details of specific landscapes, as, for example, "Once again I visited" ("Vnov ya posetil . . . ," 1835), written upon a return visit to Mikhaylovskoe. Thoughts of his earlier exile there mingle with circumstantial descriptions of the setting, including references to actual trees. "The rainy day has ended . . ." ("Nenastny den potukh . . . ," 1824) starts with a description of dreary nature at Mikhaylovskoe and the poet's anguish before turning to thoughts of his beloved pining on a distant shore beneath blue skies. Nature has a more ominous quality in "The Upas tree" ("Anchar," 1828), which paints a picture of a solitary tree growing in a pestilential desert, exuding its poisonous resin and shunned by bird and beast. But a tsar sacrifices a servant to get the poison, which he puts on his arrows to kill his neighbors. The poem is powerful and suggestive, as Turgenev demonstrated in his story "A Quiet Spot," where knowledge of these verses catalyzes the heroine's suicide.

Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinsky resumed publishing in 1830 following his release from prison to serve as a soldier in the Caucasus, and he became one of the most popular authors of the 1830s. Three of his stories have nautical settings, and all are saturated with technical terms connected with ships, a reflection of their author's experiences aboard ship with his naval-officer brothers. "Lieutenant Belozor" ("Leytenant Belozor," 1831) is an adventure love story in which the title figure, stranded in Holland during the continental blockade, wins the daughter of his Dutch protector and escapes the traps of his French adversary. "The Frigate 'Hope'" ("Fregat 'Nadezhda,'" 1832) is a society tale of an illicit and ultimately tragic affair between Captain Pravin and Vera, the unhappily married wife of a St. Petersburg magnate. The names of the protagonists and the ship may allude to the

Decembrist catastrophe. However, stripped of its allegorical potential, the work is overly long and filled with Marlinisms. "Nikitin the Sailor" ("Morekhod Nikitin," 1834) is a fictionalized version of an actual adventure in which Russian merchant sailors captured by the English took over a ship and escaped. Marlinsky's most famous work is "Ammalat Bek" (1832), the story of a Tatar warrior befriended by a Russian officer, whom he later kills, mistakenly thinking the Russian has betrayed him. The work was an excellent vehicle for Marlinsky's hyperbolism, overdone metaphors, exaggerated character types, harangues, descriptions of untamed nature, and embellishment with Caucasian languages and ethnography. At the same time the work is highly moralistic, seeking to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity, as exemplified by the cheek-turning Russian, to Islam, represented by the vengeful Ammalat. Despite its occasionally engaging narrative, which is colorful and suspenseful, the characters are quite flat. Vissarion Belinsky correctly noted in a long critical essay of 1834 that all of Marlinsky's heroes somehow resemble one another, be they Novgorodian soldiers or Caucasian tribesmen.

In 1837 Marlinsky disappeared during a Russian landing at Cape Adler on the Black Sea, presumably killed by the mountaineers led by the prophet Shamil. Whether his life reflected his fiction or his fiction reflected his life is difficult to say, but in either case as a person and as an author he epitomized the romantic era.

Much less colorful, but of almost equal importance, was Orest Somov (1793–1833), whose name has already been mentioned in connection with *Polar Star*, *Northern Flowers*, and *The Literary Gazette*. Somov was an innovator, one of the first writers of society tales, the author of numerous tales of the supernatural and variations on legends derived from his native Ukraine, the author of many anecdotal stories presented as tales of a traveler (in the tradition of Washington Irving), and several quite competent novellas of manners. Among the latter are "A Novel in Two Letters" ("Roman v dvukh pismakh," 1832), a lightly facetious treatment of Ukrainian provincial society; "Matchmaking" ("Svatovstvo," 1832), a humble clerk's poignant account of frustrated happiness; and the amusing "Mommy and Sonny" ("Matushka i synok," 1833), a spoof on provincial pretensions. In the last work an ignorant but obdurate proprietress addicted to

Gothic novels seeks to dominate her milksop son, whose reading of sentimental tales has distorted his already limited capacities. Somov should also be remembered for his efforts to improve Russian prose, his broadening of fiction to include plebeian types, his success in using his characters' speech as keys to personality and emotional states, and his faithful service to literature as a critic and journalist.

If one were to seek the author who best fits the stereotype of "the romantic poet," Mikhail Lermontov (1814–41) would win without question. The child of an ill-matched marriage, while still an infant he lost his mother. Through adolescence he was sensitive and alienated, and suffered from the strife between his improvident father and his maternal grandmother, his guardian. At the University of Moscow he was aloof and contemptuous of his fellow students and the faculty. He left, or was dismissed, to enter the School of Cavalry Junkers and Ensigns of the Guard in St. Petersburg. There his denigration of authority led to periods in the guardhouse, but he was commissioned a cornet in the Life Guard Hussars in 1834. His frivolous and dissolute life changed suddenly in January 1837, when Alexander Pushkin was slain by Georges d'Anthès. Overnight Lermontov became the conscience of Russian liberals with his poem "Death of a poet" ("Smert poeta"), an elegy excoriating d'Anthès and blaming the aristocrats of the Imperial court for Pushkin's death. Subsequent exile to the Caucasus, heroism in battle, a duel with the son of the French ambassador, along with a rapidly developing literary reputation, enhanced his position. His somber and disquieting gaze, which everyone noted, his premonitions of an early death and his poem describing its circumstances, all of this reinforced the image of Lermontov's romantic genius, the *poète-maudit*, the rebel, the God-fighter, the judge and the prophet.

Customarily little attention is paid to Lermontov's work before 1837, but only because what followed was so truly outstanding. He produced a number of lyrics (many derived from his unrequited summer romances while a student), some dramas redolent of Lessing and Schiller, and narrative poems patterned on Byron and Pushkin. An unfinished historical novel – customarily titled *Vadim*, from the name of its demonic hunchbacked protagonist – was set against the background of the Pugachov Rebel-

lion and revealed a close acquaintance with Hugo's *Bug-Jargal*, Balzac's *Les Chouans*, and Scott's *The Black Dwarf*. Less derivative were *The Masquerade* (*Maskarad*, begun 1835), a melodrama satirizing society and exploiting the Othello theme, and the unfinished society tale *Princess Ligovskaya* (*Knyaginya Ligovskaya*), which offered a bold step toward the delineation of individual psychology in the characterization of the protagonist, Grigory Pechorin.

Lermontov's maturation as a poet to some extent paralleled that of Byron. Early narcissistic exaggeration of personal feelings was gradually replaced by condemnation of contemporary society, particularly vitriolic in the poem "Meditation" ("Duma," 1838). "1 January 1840" ("Pervoe yanvarya 1840") concludes with an expression of the poet's desire to "throw an iron verse" into the face of the "motley crowd." But his caustic remarks about society did not prevent the poet from loving the Russian land and its people. In "When billows the yellowing grain" ("Kogda volnuetsya zhelteyushchaya niva," 1837) contemplation of nature leads the poet to a vision of God, and in "Homeland" ("Rodina," 1841) it is not the glory of Russia which he loves but its land and its people, exemplified by the raucous dancing of drunken peasants. "Borodino" (1837) ascribes the victory of the Russian over the French in 1812 to the courage of the common soldier, a theme later developed by Tolstoy. "The prophet" ("Prorok," 1841) stresses the isolation of the poet-prophet, and the theme of alienation recurs in a number of other pieces, such as "Alone I set forth upon the road" ("Vykhozhu odin ya na dorogu," 1841) or the lyric beginning "I am bored and sad and there's no one to take my hand" ("I skuchno i grustno i nekomu ruku podat," 1840). There are hints of impending death in the 1837 lyric "Do not mock my prophetic anguish" ("Ne smeysya nad moey prorocheskoy toskoyu"), while "The dream" ("Son," 1841), written just before his final exile to the Caucasus, outlines in graphic detail his actual death scene.

Three narrative poems of Lermontov's mature period are of particular significance. *The Song of Tsar Ivan Vasilevich, The Young Oprichnik and the Audacious Merchant Kalashnikov* (*Pesnya pro tsarya Ivana Vasilevicha, molodogo oprichnika i udalogo kuptsa Kalashnikova*, 1837) is a stylization of the Russian historical song, a folk genre with involved metrical features and other unique prosodic requirements. The poem relates how the merchant avenged an insult to

his wife by slaying the *oprichnik* (member of the tsar's bodyguard) at a boxing match in the presence of Ivan the Terrible. For this act of *lèse-majesté* the merchant is sentenced to death, though the merciful tsar promises to protect his wife and orphans. Lermontov wrote only one work of this sort, and he composed it while confined to bed with rheumatism immediately after his arrival in Piatigorsk in 1837 during his first exile to the Caucasus. The work is recognized as probably the best "literary" attempt by any Russian poet at imitating the historical song. What many fail to recognize is that it is an allegorical treatment of Pushkin's domestic and court tribulations, as its many overt anachronisms and numerous cryptic allusions suggest. Smarting over his punishment for his poem on Pushkin's death, Lermontov took his secret revenge with this work, which not only told the whole story of Pushkin's frustrations at d'Anthès' attentions to his wife but "corrected" fate by making the bodyguard the victim of the merchant's single blow (each of the antagonists strikes the other once, as in a duel each fires once). Incidentally, the cynical Nicholas I sent the dying Pushkin assurances that he would look after the poet's wife and children, much as Ivan promises Kalashnikov to protect his family.

Lermontov worked on his narrative poem *The Demon* (*Demon*) from 1829 until 1840, producing no fewer than eight redactions of it. The theme of a fallen angel's love for a mortal was not new with Lermontov: Goethe, Moore, Byron, Alfred de Vigny and others had dealt with it. Lermontov's version, originally set in Spain, was moved to the Caucasus, and the mortal, a nun, originally suffered damnation for her effort to rescue the suffering demon with her love. In the final version the nun's guardian angel saves her soul, while the demon is condemned to suffer eternal solitude. Somewhat more original, although perhaps based upon a story Lermontov heard in the Caucasus, is *Mtsyri* (*The Novice*, 1840). Set against the grandiose background of the Caucasus, it depicts the ecstasy and agony experienced by a novice during three days of freedom from his monastery. Presented as a confession or *profession de foi*, a form Lermontov favored, the tale is wonderfully romantic: the beauty of the mountains, the joy of freedom, the majesty of a storm, inchoate feelings of love, a mortal battle with a snow leopard, and the hero's final insistence that his brief escape was worth the price of death – all this captivates the reader.

While working on *The Demon* and *Mtsyri*, Lermontov also

indulged his sense of satire by writing narrative poems set in contemporary Russia. The most notable of these is the humorous and slightly ribald *The Tambov Treasurer's Wife* (*Tambovskaya kaznacheysha*, 1837–8), in which a hussar wins a provincial official's wife at cards. The triviality of society and its abysmal moral values are amusingly depicted. Some other satirical narrative poems – such as *Sashka* (1835–9) and *A Fairy Tale for Children* (*Skazka dlya detey*, 1840), which appears to have a basis in the poet's own biography – remained unfinished, and, to judge by the extant versions, could not have been published in the Russia of Nicholas I.

A Hero of Our Time (*Geroy nashego vremeni*, 1840), Lermontov's prose masterpiece, is unique in that, although it employs the forms and clichés of romantic fiction, the result is the first fully developed novel of psychological realism in Russian literature. Travel notes, the physiological sketch, the adventure story (a variant of the military memoir), the society tale, are combined to present an increasingly intimate portrait of the protagonist, Grigory Pechorin, an intelligent but totally egocentric young officer who affects the role of an innocent fated to destroy the happiness, even lives, of others.

We are introduced to Pechorin through Maxim Maximych, an old Caucasus veteran who picturesquely relates to a chance traveling companion the tale of Pechorin's abduction of a Chechen maiden, unaware that the theme of the tragic love of a *giaour* and a native girl is hardly new. His interlocutor, an author, has an opportunity to meet Pechorin, for whom he provides a "literary" evaluation on the basis of external appearance. Thus armed with a "hearsay" and then a first-hand account of Pechorin, we are finally provided "autobiographical" materials in the form of three selections from Pechorin's Journal, two of which are anecdotes of adventure and the central one a fully developed society tale set in Piatigorsk. As the reader becomes better acquainted with Pechorin, he is both attracted by the man, who is analytical, aloof, and clearly superior to his social milieu, and at the same time repelled by his arrogance, cruelty, and moral ambivalence. When we finish the final tale, we are still faced with an enigma: is Pechorin a victim of hostile fate, or is he a demonic personality determined to dominate others at whatever cost?

Pechorin has a rich ancestry. Domestically, of course, he derives

from Eugene Onegin. As usual in Russian literature throughout the nineteenth century, the heroes' names are significant: the Pechora River is wild and turbulent, the Onega River placid and slow. In European literature Pechorin's origins may be found in Richardson's Lovelace, Chateaubriand's René, de Senancour's Obermann, Benjamin Constant's Adolphe, and the protagonist of Alfred de Musset's *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*. The device of the veteran who relates a tale of tragic love to a traveller duplicates the method in Alfred de Vigny's "Laurette, ou le cachet rouge" from *Servitude et grandeurs militaires*, and there are some situational parallels between the society tale in Lermontov's novel ("Princess Mary") and Charles de Bernard's *Gerfaut* as well as Walter Scott's *Saint Ronan's Well*.

A Hero of Our Time appeared in 1840 and was soon republished with an author's preface in which he denied that Pechorin was a self-portrait or that he approved of his behavior: "Our public is still so young and naive that it fails to understand a fable unless it finds a lesson at its end," he wrote. Pechorin was a composite figure embodying the vices of his generation for which he, Lermontov, had no intention of providing remedies.

While Lermontov's Pechorin was being denounced as a model of immorality, others promenaded on the streets of Piatigorsk claiming to be his prototype. More modest impostors assumed the identity of Grushnitsky, the Byronic *poseur* of "Princess Mary," whom Pechorin unceremoniously dispatches to his death with the epitaph "Finita la commedia!" Several ladies vied for the honor of having inspired either Princess Mary or Vera, both victims of Pechorin's vicious machinations.

Lermontov's death in 1841 marks the end of the Golden Age of Russian poetry, which only someone of his spectacular powers could have extended after Pushkin's death. The 1840s saw the rapid development of the "natural school," a by-product of Gogol's presumed concern for "the little man" and his interest in sordid environments. By the end of the decade Turgenev and Dostoevsky were already on stage, and Tolstoy was in the wings. All of them owed a great debt to their romantic forebears, who had contrived a prose literary language and developed the genres and devices which were to serve them so well.