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The Ironies of Romantic Individualism in Nicholas I's Russia

David Powelstock

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To my parents, Lee and Elaine Powelstock,
whose love and support have made so many things possible

Contents

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Notes to the Reader

I have used common anglicized versions of Russian names in the text when such versions exist. I have further anglicized certain other names in the text proper that seemed awkward in rigorous transliteration, but all bibliographic matter in the notes, and all transliterated Russian quotes throughout the book, follow the Library of Congress scheme. In Russian quotations, both Cyrillic and transliterated, I have restored the capitalization of "God-terms" lowercased for ideological reasons in Soviet editions, and indicated this with square brackets, for example, [*B*]*og* and [*M*]*ater'* [*B*]*ozhiia* instead of the Soviet *bog* and *mater' bozhiia*.

Titles of narrative poems (*poemy*) are italicized, whether or not they were published as freestanding works in the author's lifetime. This is to distinguish them from titles of lyric poems (*stikhotvoreniia*), which are given in roman type and enclosed in quotation marks.

Translations are my own throughout, except where indicated. I have tried to echo rhythm and flavor in the English renderings where possible, but when push came to shove sense always took precedence over style, as is appropriate in a scholarly book. It was difficult to decide how to handle the inclusion of Lermontov's original Russian texts, especially since I cite quite a bit of his early poetry purely for thematic content, and since much of this juvenilia has little else to recommend it as poetry. In the end, I opted to provide translations for all texts but to give the Russian only where I deemed it necessary either because the poetry itself deserved it or because my analysis required it. Where the Russian is included but not quoted in the text, it can be found in the appendix, where it is keyed to the text by numbers indicating chapter and sequence: 1.1, 1.2, and so forth. Finally, as an experiment, the Russian originals of *all* literary works I cite in English, whether I have also included the Russian here or not, can be found at http://www.powelstock.org, where they are keyed to the page numbers of their appearance in translation in this book. I hope that readers will find it pleasant and convenient to read the Russian texts online with *Becoming Mikhail Lermontov* in hand.

Throughout the text, the dates I give for literary works refer to when they were written, except where explicitly indicated otherwise. In cases where two or more poems have the same title, I have included the poem's first line in parentheses, without ellipses and within the same set of quotation marks, thus: "To *** (Say not by the lofty alone)." In giving the dates of literary texts, a dash indicates that the work was written over the course of the indicated dates, while a slash indicates an approximate dating. Thus, 1830–31 indicates that the author worked on the poem over that span of time, while a text dated 1830/31 was written in 1830 or 1831, to the best of my knowledge.

When no other edition of Lermontov's works is specifically cited, references—for example, II:124—refer to volume and page in the six-volume Academic *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow-Leningrad: AN SSSR, 1954–57). In addition, the following abbreviations are used throughout the notes to refer to frequently cited sources:

MLVS	M. I. Gillel'son, ed., *M. Iu. Lermontov v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1989).
LE	V. A. Manuilov et al., eds., *Lermontovskaia entsiklopediia* (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1981).
PSS(2)	M. Iu. Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii v dvukh tomakh*, V. D. Bonch-Bruevich et al., eds. (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1989).
Pushkin(19)	A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 19 vols. (Moscow: Voskresen'e, 1994–97). This is the expanded reprint edition of A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, V. D. Bonch-Bruevich et al., eds., 17 vols. (Leningrad: AN SSSR, 1937–59).
ZS	E. A. Khvostova [née Sushkova], *Zapiski, 1812–1841*, edited and annotated by Iu. G. Oksman (Leningrad: Academia, 1928).

Becoming Mikhail Lermontov

Irony and Authenticity

> Pushkin, even when he speaks about himself, speaks as if about someone else; with Lermontov, even when he speaks about someone else, one feels that his thought, even from an enormous distance, is striving to return to himself.
> —Vladimir Solovyov, *Literaturnaia kritika*

> Our reading public still does not realize that in a decent society and in a decent book there can be no place for overt invective; that contemporary enlightenment has discovered a weapon that is sharper, almost invisible, but nevertheless lethal, which under the guise of flattery delivers an inescapable and unerring blow.
> —Lermontov, *Hero of Our Time*

I ARGUE IN THIS BOOK that Mikhail Lermontov's seemingly contradictory life and works can be understood as manifestations of a coherent worldview, a particularly radical version of Romantic individualism. His outlook involved first of all the conviction that the consciousness and desires of the human individual precede in importance any definition of the individual in collective terms. It was Rousseauean insofar as it observed a deep opposition between natural man and artificial society, but it neither sentimentalized natural man nor foresaw any imminent social harmonization among natural men. Lermontov consistently rejected such collectivizing models of the human individual, whether they defined the community in terms of state, society, nationality, religion, or humankind as a whole. In Lermontov's world, the highest values were unique individual identity, self-knowledge, and action in conformity with one's genuine desires. Lermontov remained committed to Romantic individualism throughout his career, but the literary means by which he expressed this outlook changed dramatically.[1] His literary evolution, I argue, can be characterized by following the develop-

ment of his sophisticated irony. His early works are for the most part unironic expressions of the young poet's Romantic hero-worship and his yearnings for love and glory. By contrast, the later works are markedly ironic, often in ways that defy easy decoding. The particularity of Lermontov's mature irony lies in the relation it generates between author and reader. From his earliest writings, Lermontov recognized Russian contemporary readers' tendency to see works and their authors as they wished to see them, to fit them into their rather limited web of signs and meanings. When Lermontov emerged into prominence, the narrowness of readers' expectations of what an author or literary text should be became all the more salient. As a Romantic individualist, Lermontov resisted such constriction of his significance as author and person. He sought ever to expand the field of potential meanings suggested by his work and his life.[2] His irony, I contend, relentlessly challenged the limits of the contemporary reader's imagination, which in Lermontov's view constantly sought to reduce complex personalities and new phenomena to stereotypes that conformed to widely held preconceived notions. What changed in the course of Lermontov's literary evolution was not his commitment to Romantic individualism but the means by which his art embodied and conveyed it.

The turning point in Lermontov's poetic career came within days of the death in January 1837 of Russia's touchstone poet, Alexander Pushkin. Lermontov, then a twenty-two-year-old officer of the guard and aspiring poet, responded swiftly to this news with a fifty-six-line lyric mourning "The Poet's Death" ("Smert' poeta"), which accused members of the court of hounding Pushkin in his last months of life and conspiring to instigate his fatal duel. Within days, Lermontov's poem, copied and recopied by hand, became known throughout Petersburg. A few days later, Lermontov added to it a venomous and politically provocative sixteen-line coda, in which he addressed the offending courtiers directly as "the executioners of Freedom, Genius and Glory," prophesying that if the tsar did not punish them, the "Eternal Judge" would. This new version also circulated widely. Lermontov was arrested and exiled by Tsar Nicholas I to active military duty on the Caucasian front, where the imperial army was engaged in a seemingly endless struggle to subdue native uprisings. The news of Lermontov's exile magnified his fame many times over. Less than a month after Pushkin's death, the name of this previously obscure hussar poet was known to every literate Russian in the empire.

In the eight years prior to these events, Lermontov had written hundreds of lyrics, nearly twenty narrative poems, and several plays. In selecting twenty-eight poems for his first collection in 1840, he ignored most of this vast archive, selecting from it only three short lyrics, two of which were transla-

tions of Byron. Subsequent readers have found little reason to disagree with the poet's own implicit assessment of his juvenilia. For the most part, his lyrics of this period comprise naive, direct outpourings of personal emotions, couched in Romantic language that was already clichéd. In fact, Lermontov had given up writing lyrics almost entirely by the end of 1832. Most of the early narratives and plays are either deeply flawed or ponderously melodramatic. While "The Poet's Death" is arguably more accomplished than most of Lermontov's earlier efforts, at least in its rhetorical effectiveness, the mature lyrics surpass it in every respect. Although the poem enjoyed spectacular success in its day and influenced the mythology of Pushkin's death for generations to come, its cultural resonance and meager literary virtues alone could not have ensured Lermontov a lasting place in the Russian literary pantheon. The poem's greater significance lies in the remarkably sudden and profound change it sparked in Lermontov's literary evolution.

Lermontov's enduring literary value resides in the works written in and after 1837, including his brilliant novel, *Hero of Our Time* (1838–40), on which his international reputation rests. The contrast between the early and post-Pushkinian periods is particularly profound in the lyrics. Those of the later period are energetic, original, and emotionally immediate in surprising ways. They display an intense unity of aesthetic purpose, sophisticated emotional restraint, and unerring poetic instinct. Although critics have long noted the passionate intensity of purpose in the later works, they have been hard pressed to identify its source, describe its literary workings, or explain how such a sophisticated and effective poetic style could have evolved so suddenly from Lermontov's jejune early verse. The style, it would seem, came out of nowhere. Had Lermontov not evolved as profoundly and rapidly as he did, his name today would probably merit little more than an endnote to Pushkin's biography. Why should Pushkin's death have prompted Lermontov's mature talent to emerge all at once, almost miraculously?

This is but one of several puzzles that have intrigued and perplexed Lermontov's readers for more than 150 years. Perhaps the most widely acknowledged of these riddles involves the moral ambiguity with which his single most famous work, *Hero of Our Time*, seems to treat its hero, Grigory Pechorin, a proud and independent man who seduces an ingénue and murders a man yet criticizes his own nature in his journal and seems capable of love and compassion. Some readers, taking the title literally, see in him a heroic figure of great potential, thwarted by his constrictive society. Others view Pechorin as the carrier of a deadly disease, a wickedness born of boredom and soullessness. But what was Lermontov's opinion of his "hero"? Many of Lermontov's lyrics convey a misanthropic contempt for society as great as Pechorin's, but others are among the most touchingly intimate in the

Russian language. This bipolarity was reflected in Lermontov's social behavior as well. Contemporary reports and Lermontov's own letters suggest that he could be by turns witheringly hostile and charmingly kind toward foes, strangers, and friends alike. The vehemence of his contempt for fashionable society was matched only by the ardency of his desire to be recognized by it. If Lermontov wished to be accepted and loved, as he often pleaded in his poems and letters, he often chose a strange way to go about it. There would seem to be two Lermontovs: a vulnerable lover and a bitter cynic. Might one of these identities have been a conscious pose?

Copious evidence exists to attest that Lermontov manifested both sides of his personality in life as well as in art, and in private as well as in public, suggesting that neither was merely for show. The final episode of the poet's life seems nearly suicidal. He died in a duel that he himself instigated over a trivial argument with an old schoolmate. Lermontov's own works seem to foresee, even embrace, such a violent end to his life, a circumstance that dominates the biographical myth constructed around him by succeeding generations. As Vladimir Nabokov has put it, "For the emotional type of reader, much of the poignancy and fascination" of his narrative works "resides in the fact that Lermontov's own tragic fate is somehow superimposed upon" those of his protagonists, and his lyric projections of his own death "acquire an additional strain of pathos when the reader realizes that the poet's dream came true."[3] Did Lermontov predict his own death? Was his death a self-fulfilling prophecy? Or mere coincidence, a simulacrum of fate? And if the latter was the case, have "emotional" readers been misreading Lermontov's works for all this time? Does Lermontov owe his prominent place in Russian literature more to historical coincidence than to literary significance?

In this book I seek to answer these and other questions concerning Lermontov's life and art by articulating them in terms of his radical Romantic individualism. The special character of Lermontov's outlook stemmed from his awareness of the paradoxes inherent in Romantic individualism itself, compounded by the tension between this worldview and a Russian culture that was simultaneously fascinated and repelled by it. Russian individuality has long been imagined in strictly private terms. In the public sphere, where the writer's authority is conferred, the expression of collective values has tended to supplant self-expression. When publicly embracing "great" historical individuals—Pushkin and Lenin, for example—Russian culture has configured their intentions as selfless embodiments of collective values. The polite society that Lermontov himself so tenuously inhabited structured itself in accordance with consensual norms of harmonious sociability that "not only fragmented the social subject but also precluded examination of the inner life, to say nothing of the depths of the psyche as more recent periods have come to know them."[4] This sharp separation between public

and private has remained more or less constant since Lermontov's time[5] and helps to explain Russian culture's traditional rejection of Romanticism's absolute "individuality of uniqueness . . . as against that of singleness" (which is characteristic of Enlightenment liberalism).[6] As a Romantic individualist, Lermontov made it his mission to examine his inner life, and others', and express his findings publicly. Whether overtly or implicitly, he consistently condemned contemporary Russian society and the unexamined lives it encouraged its members to lead. He expressed his scorn not only through literature but also through repeated flagrant transgressions against society's prevailing behavioral norms. Whether expressing his own deepest feelings or unmasking society's hypocrisy, Lermontov's mission always involved making the private public, in direct challenge to social propriety. This impulse toward exposure of self and others rendered Lermontov problematic for both his own generation and succeeding generations of Russian readers. Because Lermontov relentlessly opposed the constriction of the individual in his own day, there is cultural continuity, an unwitting complicity between his own society, and the shapers of his later reputation.

Lermontov's radical individualism ran against the grain of accepted Russian conceptions of selfhood. No writer in the Russian canon has been so harshly condemned or so lovingly and fastidiously misread. Tsar Nicholas I declared Lermontov to be morally corrupt, possibly insane, and in either case a dangerous example to others. After reading "The Poet's Death," he ordered the senior medic of Lermontov's guard unit to "visit this gentleman and ascertain whether he might be mad; after that, we shall proceed with him in accordance with the law."[7] Writing while in exile, Alexander Herzen lauded Lermontov as a talented man whose revolutionary potential was nipped in the bud by autocratic repression. In a lecture delivered almost sixty years later, Vladimir Solovyov accused the poet of "demonism." Responding to Solovyov, Dmitry Merezhkovsky praised the poet as the archetypal prophet of Russia's "future religious populism."[8]

To be sure, ideology has played a role in determining Lermontov's ambivalent reception. The exchange between Solovyov and Merezhkovsky was shaped by their differing religious and moral views. Both anticipated the transformation of humankind through its own activity in accordance with divine principles. However, Solovyov saw Lermontov's "demonism" as a departure from his own divine telos of syzygic "justification and salvation of individuality through the sacrifice of egoism," to be brought about through the individual's realization of the "potentiality of the absolute unity-of-the-all."[9] Merezhkovsky, on the other hand, foresaw humanity's transformation through its Nietzschean struggle with the spiritual meaning of earthly existence, a Promethean agon in the tradition of Abraham and Jacob. He viewed Lermontov as the Russian theomachist par excellence. In a more

secular vein, nineteenth-century Russian intellectuals who were engaged in prescriptive polemics regarding national identity variously characterized Lermontov as either the most "Russian" or the most "European" of Russian writers, and praised or castigated him correspondingly, in accordance with their own Slavophilic or Westernizing affinities.[10]

In the Soviet period, open discussions of Lermontov's moral, religious, and national significance gave way to the official project of defining a new literary canon, ideologically demarcated yet designed to draw on the authority of Russia's major prerevolutionary literary figures by co-opting them. The value of prominent early-nineteenth-century authors was redefined to fit them into a cultural history rewritten to lead ineluctably forward to the revolution. Thus, long after death, the often surreal Gogol was miraculously transfigured as a Realist. Pushkin's and Lermontov's later works came to be framed in terms of their ostensible evolution toward Realism. Even during relatively liberal periods, ideological and institutional constraints limited the directions Soviet scholarship could take. This system especially discouraged radical redefinition of canonized figures. Under these circumstances, scholars were obliged either to steer clear of what was morally or politically problematic in Lermontov's works or to simplify it in order to produce relatively "safe" interpretations.

However, the confusions and silences regarding Lermontov's overarching authorial purpose and significance stem from a Russian cultural resistance to Romantic individualism that is older and more pervasive than that brought about by Soviet political ideologies and institutional constraints. In a certain respect, those nineteenth-century figures who evaluated Lermontov in extreme moral or religious terms—Solovyov, Merezhkovsky, and even Nicholas I—best understood the Romantic individualism that shaped his literary purpose. These men were also, in one way or another, among those closest to the poet. Solovyov and Merezhkovsky, as fellow poets whose work consciously embodied their respective worldviews, were especially sensitive to the sometimes oblique means by which poetry expresses its author's personal outlook. Nicholas had to deal directly with Lermontov's social and literary recalcitrance, which he took as a personal affront to his authority as both Russia's autocrat and the patriarch of court society. Both Nicholas and Solovyov implicitly recognized—and rejected—Lermontov's radical model of the individual, for it starkly opposed both the former's notion of the imperial subject and the latter's idea of a human individuality mediated by divine humility. Merezhkovsky, on the other hand, not only recognized but wholeheartedly endorsed Lermontov's radical selfhood. While Solovyov (and Dostoevsky) called for the "proud man" to "humble himself," Merezhkovsky was at a loss to find among the ranks of Russian writers anyone to whom such an injunction needed to be addressed:

> Where, just where, after all, are we to find in Russia this "proud man" in need of humbling? At times one wishes to answer this eternal call toward humility with this: how much more humility is needed?
>
> As it turns out, the one and only man in Russian literature who did not humble himself completely is Lermontov. . . .
>
> It is precisely this lack and refusal of humility, asserted metaphysically and religiously, for which Russian literature has been unable to forgive Lermontov.[11]

Merezhkovsky, however, was the first and the last unequivocal and outspoken advocate of the poet's Romantic individualism. Romanticism itself was for a long time a taboo subject in Soviet scholarship. When it came up at all in Lermontov studies, it was almost always in order to emphasize the poet's evolution away from it and toward Realism. When this dogmatic tendency faded in the early 1960s, the ensuing debates as to whether Lermontov was a Romantic or a Realist were couched in terms of "artistic method" and "style." The term "individualism," arguably the most constant marker of Romanticism, was rarely invoked, for it retained the exclusively pejorative political connotation associated with "bourgeois individualism." The latter term effectively translates a philosophical concept into the inarguable, "objective," and politically demarcated lexicon of class warfare. The bias against Romantic individualism has been so strong that the term itself has almost never been applied to Lermontov or any other Russian writer of note.[12]

Despite Russian culture's general aversion to Romantic individualism, its fascination with Lermontov has endured for several reasons. For one thing, the artistic accomplishment of Lermontov's mature works simply cannot be ignored. Russian literature has had few enough major writers to begin throwing any overboard. Moreover, the biographical myth noted by Nabokov—the poet's seeming prediction of his own death—casts an irresistible aura of mystery around the poet. Nabokov pretended to distance himself from this allure, distinguishing it from Lermontov's purely artistic merits, but his fascination with it is palpable. Boris Pasternak openly endorsed the intimate intertwining of the poet's persona and art. Some forty years after its publication, he explained why he had dedicated his second book of poems in 1917 to Lermontov:

> Whereas Pushkin is realistic and exalted in creative activity, Lermontov is its living personal testimony. . . .
>
> I dedicated *My Sister Life* not to the memory of Lermontov but to the poet himself as though he were living in our midst—to his spirit still effectual in our literature. What was he to me, you ask, in the summer of 1917?—The

> personification of creative adventure and discovery, the principle of everyday free poetical statement.[13]

What Pasternak celebrated was Lermontov's all-embracing commitment to his personal poetic vision. For some readers, this quality translates as a charismatic power in Lermontov's poetry. Belinsky, who was personally close to Lermontov, sensed in this power a deep and authentic connection between the man and his art. He praised the poet's "deep and mighty spirit,"[14] and further wrote: "I am reading no verse (and only rereading Lerm[ontov], plunging deeper and deeper into the bottomless ocean of his poetry), and when it happens that I have to look over some verse by Fet or Ogaryov, I say: 'That's fine, but how is it they aren't ashamed to waste time and ink on such nonsense?'"[15] Testimony to this mysterious effect issues at times from unexpected sources. The Formalist Boris Eikhenbaum explicitly eschewed the use of metaphors like "musical" in stylistic description,[16] but allowed himself nevertheless to speak about the "powerful . . . emotional hypnosis of [Lermontov's] speech."[17]

Despite readers' fascination with Lermontov's art and personality, even Belinsky, his staunchest contemporary proponent, stopped short of wholeheartedly embracing Lermontov's extreme individualism. Belinsky's return to social radicalism after a brief advocacy of "reconciliation with reality" occurred at the very end of the 1830s and beginning of the 1840s, while deeply involved in reading Lermontov. As a Westernizer, Belinsky placed the idea of humanity above religiosity and nationalism and was thus considerably more sympathetic to individualism than most of his contemporaries. Nevertheless, he expressed deep ambivalence toward the radical Romantic model. "The insane thirst for love devours my insides more and more," he wrote. "The yearning is ever more difficult and stubborn. This is mine, and only this is mine. But I am also deeply concerned with what is not mine. Human personality has become the point over which I fear I will lose my mind. . . . What right does a person like me have to stand higher than humanity?"[18] It was almost certainly Lermontov's compelling embodiment of the Romantic individual, his passionate lyric arguments in defense of the "insane thirst for love"—rather than Western Romantic ideas—that served as the immediate stimulus for Belinsky's troubled musings about the relation of the superior individual to the world.[19] Notably, Romantic individualism was so deeply alien to the Russian cultural imagination that it could provoke similar anxieties in figures as ideologically opposed as Nicholas I and Belinsky, who both associated it with insanity.

The cultural tension between Lermontov and his readers was decidedly a two-way street. The more readers resisted Lermontov's individualism, the more Lermontov, even as he courted them, resisted their resistance,

vigorously and publicly asserting the value, autonomy, and distinctness of his personal vision. The radicalism of Lermontov's Romantic individualism informed a deep ambivalence toward his Russian audiences, both literary and social, and this paradoxical attitude played an enormous role in shaping his literary practices and his behavior in life. In exacerbating his problematic relations with contemporary readers, Lermontov embodied in his own life and works the enigma that would greet generations of readers to come. Given the persistence of Russian anti-individualism, Lermontov's works still appear to resist their readers. The poet purposefully embodied this resistance in his major works, which for this reason have continued to defy even the most dogged efforts to interpret them unambiguously in terms of the Russian political and moral vocabularies that have prevailed at any given time. When read in such a way, these texts surrender nothing but contradictions, moral ambivalence, and seemingly bottomless irony. This interpretive outcome stands out most clearly in discussions of *Hero of Our Time*. Its protagonist, Grigory Pechorin, is a man of undeniable intelligence and resourcefulness who is nevertheless deeply alienated and prone to destructive and self-destructive acts. Is the reader to take the application of the work's title to Pechorin as sincere or ironic? The vast majority of studies of *Hero* have studiously ignored its irony in trying to establish once and for all Lermontov's opinion of Pechorin's moral character. Yet the ironic intention of the novel is unmistakable. The author's introduction explicitly chides the contemporary audience for its inability to "catch a joke or sense irony," even as it invites readers (teasingly, I argue) to interpret the novel in moral terms. The novel is in fact a trap for would-be moralists, in which many readers have been ensnared. William Todd, the novel's most acute reader to date, avoids the trap by observing that the novel's "explicit invitations to contradictory understandings of Pechorin keep the reader moving back and forth in the text, seeking a [moral] resolution which never satisfactorily presents itself."[20] But what is the purpose of this intentional destabilization of the reader's interpretive position?

While readers and critics have agreed that *Hero* and Lermontov's other mature works exude the energy and commitment of an intense purpose—a continuity of intention between the author and his works, despite the paradoxes within both—no convincing, coherent account of this purpose has emerged. It is only natural to seek clarification of this purpose in the author's biography. Unfortunately, biographical documentation is scant. Very few of Lermontov's letters have survived, and these contain almost no direct statements of his literary views, let alone his political, social, or moral opinions. And scholars have not found to their liking the scarce evidence regarding the poet's personality and behavior that have emerged. Biographical critics have largely dismissed or ignored numerous accounts indicating that Lermontov's

personal behavior was every bit as provocative and morally ambiguous as that of his "hero." Prince Alexander Vasil'chikov, Lermontov's friend and a witness to his fatal duel in 1841, is far from alone in noting that despite his "admiration and friendship for the poet, for all his genius, Lermontov was quite clearly a quite insufferable character and a pain in the neck to all those who associated with him, friend and foe alike."[21] Lermontov appeared at balls uninvited, improvised withering epigrams, insulted his admirers (including, notoriously, the tsar's daughters), wrote scandalously violent and sexually explicit poems, staged disruptive pranks, calculatedly seduced and abandoned at least one woman (to avenge himself for her earlier failure to acknowledge his amorous advances), fought two duels over trivial matters, and was exiled twice—all of this in a life that lasted not quite twenty-seven years. Devoid of explicit and acceptable moral or political meaning, such provocative behavior contradicts the poet's "traditionally heroic persona," which Russian critics have labored to protect.[22] Nor does it reside comfortably within the frame of critics' "almost maniacal attachment" to "one and the same 'accursed' question: is the role of [the author's] work in the history of Russia and humanity progressive or reactionary?"[23]

Scholarly aversion to such facts has amounted to a halving of Lermontov's legacy. What does not conflict with the standards of decency befitting a national poet has emerged to the front, while what is ambiguous or outright distasteful has been relegated to the background. In fact, this selective halving of Lermontov occurs along several axes—the man versus his art, early works versus late works, provocateur versus man of feeling—and ultimately reflects resistance to his radical individualism. This book argues that Lermontov's life and art were of a piece. Those "halves" of Lermontov that have been overlooked, especially his social transgressiveness, have a great deal to tell us about his mature art. Putting the multiply-divided Lermontov back together again entails understanding the contradictions in the poet's life and art in terms of his Romantic phenomenology, as extensions of Lermontov's deeply held views regarding the relationship between self and other. Such an approach to Lermontov is complex, for in his maturity the poet was conscious of self-other relations in several dimensions simultaneously. He recognized both self and other in dual roles, as both subject and object. He thus concerned himself with the self as both the self and others see it and with others as the self sees them and as they see themselves. This four-way schema ramifies unendingly when passed through the various prisms of multiple genres (narrative, lyric, dramatic, diaristic) and social settings. It becomes particularly slippery—and aesthetically powerful—when Lermontov's particular irony interchanges and even merges subject and object roles for self (author), character, and other (reader). Moreover, third parties, "they," are sometimes evoked as a complicating, often intrusive, factor in relations between "me" and "you."

These myriad ramifications, which this book will trace, proceeded from Lermontov's self-other phenomenology, which was in turn concretely anchored in the poet's personal desires and ambitions. From his earliest writings, Lermontov persistently expressed two particular longings: the thirst for personal glory (*slava*) and a yearning for intimacy not only with the objects of his affection but with readers. The two-stage process by which Lermontov wrote "The Poet's Death" testifies to his desire for fame. Lermontov added the decidedly more self-assertive coda only in the wake of the first version's emboldening success. That success, recalled Sviatoslav Raevsky, Lermontov's close friend who assisted him in distributing it, "gladdened me because of my love for Lermontov and turned Lermontov's head, so to speak, because of his desire for glory." Of the coda, written later, Raevsky noted, it "stayed put for a while; afterward its existence was imprudently made known, and copies were made; the more people told Lermontov and me that he had a great talent, the more willingly I allowed it to be copied."[24] Through the circulation of the first version Lermontov had acquired an audience, and he seized the opportunity to define himself more sharply in its eyes by addressing it in the stronger, more personal voice of the coda.

Lermontov's refinement of his public persona reflected his desire for intimacy with his audience. It must be noted that, for Lermontov, intimacy was a problematic category. He imagined its ideal form as a reciprocal relationship between two individuals, in which each accepts and loves the other for what he or she is. However, he was deeply pessimistic about the possibility of such a relationship precisely because he predicated it on a quality that he felt that the vast majority of his contemporaries lacked: the ability to recognize others as they were. Such mutual recognition between beings—together with self-knowledge—had to precede any possibility of authentic mutual affection—and, of course, achievement of the former did not necessarily lead to the latter. Lermontov did not believe that all people were inherently good, nor that they were inherently evil, and there is no suggestion of Christian humility in his view. An individual comprised his or her desires and intentions, and to know another individual meant to know his or her genuine desires and intentions as they were, for better or worse. Genuine intimacy could grow only on such a foundation. Thus, for Lermontov, two warriors engaged in the open conflict of hand-to-hand combat might share an intimacy far greater and more meaningful than that between a man and a woman trying to impress each other in an insincere game of courtship.

This skepticism about interpersonal relations cast its shadow over Lermontov's view of fame as well. Even as Lermontov craved an audience, he doubted its ability, or even willingness, to see him as he saw himself. His desire for glory, and for the audience needed to confer it, preceded the serendipitous turn of events by which he acquired them. Even in the years

of his obscurity, Lermontov prepared himself for the day when he would distinguish himself in others' eyes as a unique "man of destiny." He did so in part by initially seeking to convince *himself* that he was such an individual. Paradoxically, even this goal required an audience, if only an imagined one. Remarkably, even this imaginary audience—even when represented solely by the poet's own double in his poetic dialogues with himself—turned out to be hostile, for Lermontov's anxieties were rooted in Romanticism's a priori disjunction between reality and the projected ideal. Thus at times doubt and ambivalence attached even to his most basic desires. From the very beginning, this ambivalence shaped the deepest levels of his consciousness: his conceptions of himself as an individual and as a person in relation to others. Whether they proceeded from temperament, childhood experience, or profoundly internalized literary influence, alienation and critical self-consciousness were deeply rooted in the young poet's personality on an existential level.

Given the unremitting desires for intimacy and fame, for Lermontov, to be a poet meant to express the fullness of self in its dual roles as both subject (poet as author) and object (poet as man of destiny). To attain intimacy in this self-expressive task meant to convey the poet's self-image intact to the other. To be a genuine individual, in Lermontov's view, meant to know oneself and to present this genuine self to others. Counterpoised to this essentially lyric goal, the other side of intimacy required the poet's knowledge of the other. Here Lermontov's skepticism again comes into play, for he saw in his contemporaries a propensity to falsify themselves both privately and publicly. They deceived others while—and often precisely because—they deceived themselves. With respect to knowing the other, the poet's distinctive talent lay in his ability to penetrate others' intentionally deceptive masks and to reveal the unintentional self-deception in their images of themselves. It was the poet's imperative to know others better than they knew themselves. Herein lay the concrete justification of Lermontov's ambivalence toward his contemporary audiences. His contemporaries did not merely misperceive the poet in the inevitable ways in which we all misunderstand one another every day. They did so systemically, because of their pervasive social habits of deception and self-deception. Pushkin's fate corroborated Lermontov's already low opinion of high society, whose attention he nevertheless craved. However, "The Poet's Death" did not merely confirm the fact of society's treachery. It also warned the would-be individual to remain true to himself, to resist society's seductive attempts to redefine him in accordance with its own bankrupt norms. The poem expressed dismay at the naïveté with which Pushkin, despite the poetic gift of seeing into others' souls, had allowed himself to become ensnared in society's web of deceits: Why did Pushkin

enter this society, envious and suffocating. . . .
. . . . . .
Why did he believe the false words and caresses,
He, who had from youthful years so penetrated men . . . ?

The discussion so far has framed the identity of the self as if it were a fixed and unchanging entity. But Lermontov recognized that individual identity exists, not in a fixed state of immanence, but rather in perpetually dynamic imminence, in a process of becoming that takes place in a world of historical and cultural contingencies. As such, identity, whether viewed from a perspective internal or external to the individual, cannot be imagined without taking into consideration the other perspective as well. Thus, "I" is a *construction*, not of "my" mind or will or temperament or history or language alone, but an entity that is *being constructed* simultaneously by *all* of these forces. And this process ends, if it ends at all, only with the individual's death or exhaustion. It follows that self-knowledge cannot be fixed knowledge of a fixed thing but only a characteristic habit of close self-examination, a consistent focus on the self. Lermontov saw the falseness in his contemporaries as the result of their very different, socially conditioned habits of *avoiding* honest self-examination and concealing their true desires and intentions from both themselves and others. Likewise, what the poet can convey of himself can only be either a momentary snapshot of his ever-evolving self-image or, somehow, the habit of self-examination itself. In either case, the self-image has both given and projected aspects, so that what the poet expresses is not only what he is and has been but also what he might possibly become.

The normative aspect of Lermontov's Romantic individualist worldview, in the broadest accounting, can be called an *ethos*. It involves two principles: (1) integrity in the self-conscious process of becoming and (2) correspondence between selfhood as the artist fashions it for himself (self-image) and selfhood as he fashions it for others (persona). Each principle applies to activity in both the sphere of authorship and the sphere of social behavior. The consistent application of both principles in both spheres constitutes the ideal correlation of art and life in the activity of the individual artist. This correlation—as both an ideal goal and the activity that aims at this goal—corresponds to the fusion known in Russian criticism as *zhiznetvorchestvo*. The word itself fuses two Russian words, *zhizn'* (life) and *tvorchestvo* (artistic creation), into a compound that "suggests both [1] the creation of life [i.e., the aesthetic organization of behavior] and [2] a synthesis of the two elements—creation and life."[25] The hyphenated "life-creation" seems best to convey this double meaning in English. Although the term *life-creation* was originally coined to describe a phenomenon of Russian Symbolism, all critics who use it recognize the ori-

gin of the phenomenon itself in Romanticism, and in late Romanticism in particular.[26] Lermontovian life-creation took its particular form from the tensions and ambivalences generated by his pessimistic self-other phenomenology. Indeed, its goal was to restructure the matrix of self-other relations in literature and in life on his own terms, in such a way that he could attract the attention of an audience and convey his selfhood to it, without surrendering self-integrity or allowing the audience to redefine or fragment him in accordance with its preconceptions. Lermontov's adamant insistence on this last aspect distinguishes his life-creative practice from Romantic life-creation more generally.

Romantic life-creation recognized the problematic side of the very relation between author and reader that it had helped to create. Its practitioners, Byron and Pushkin, for example, felt the increasing pressure exerted on them by Romantic readers to "be themselves," that is, to embody one of the stock Romantic heroes that populated their writings. "Even when the poet emphasizes that he is different from his characters, the reader often turns him into one, expecting to see the poet himself in every Romantic hero he creates and judging the poet's life with high Romantic standards."[27] Not wishing to be so identified, these poets "produced [their] own 'cure'" in Romantic irony. This form of irony preempted the reader's identification of the author with narrator or character by inscribing the author's image and perspective as endlessly elusive, changeable, and self-parodic. They produced images of the author in the text only to revoke them or displace them with competing images. They willingly fragmented themselves in order to evade the reader's efforts to finalize them. Such authors, in a sense, went into hiding, leaving behind only a playful, elusive, and self-contradictory alter ego. In this respect, Pushkin's ironic multiplication and division of self were exemplary.[28] His delight in endlessly donning and discarding masks has earned him the traditional epithet "protean," while his oeuvre has been described as a "palimpsest in motion."[29] Pushkin succeeded brilliantly on his own terms. As Todd suggests, Pushkin's Romantic irony embodied the best qualities of the *honnête homme* as contemporary society imagined him—"intelligence, heart, delight, knowledge."[30]

However, Lermontov's radically individualistic life-creative ethos rejected such a socially defined model of the self and would not permit retreat or fragmentation of the self, even as literary devices. Lermontov insisted on inscribing in his works a unitary self that retained a palpable continuity not only between self and persona but also among successive authorial performances. Lermontov certainly used masks, but unlike Pushkin, he was unwilling to allow the mask to replace the man, even temporarily. In the act of writing, Lermontov, even at his most ironic, had always and everywhere to remain Lermontov.

Romantic life-creation in general involved two practical imperatives, overlapping in their concern with the relation between self and other but distinguished by differing perspectives on the literary text and its author. The first imperative, that of self-expression, issued from the author's perspective: the *author's* desire that the image of self that appears in the work and in life correspond to his own experience of selfhood. I will call this *private authenticity*. The second imperative, that of *public authenticity*, inscribed the *reader's* demand for a consistent correlation between the works and the personal biography of their author.[31] Although conscious of both imperatives, Pushkin and Byron were content to sacrifice public authenticity for the sake of self-expression. Their elusive Romantic irony, in particular, frustrated the reader's efforts to impose an authentic self on their life and works. They gained pleasure and freedom by playing with audience expectations. However, Lermontov's insistence on asserting his personality as a unity led him to reject this ludic stance. While the tension between authorial (private) and readerly (public) perspectives was already inherent in Romantic life-creation, Lermontov's radical individualist ethos escalated it into full-blown warfare. For him, the standoff between author and reader was not a game but a duel for the existence of the self, a metaphor that fittingly evokes the confrontational intensity of Lermontov's high-stakes individualism. This intensity explains why Lermontov was not merely conscious but hyperconscious of the reader's interpretive framing, and why he refused to retreat. It would have been dishonorable.

Romantic life-creation was fraught with specific perils. One of these dangers, as we have seen, involved the reductive identification of the author with his characters and public persona. The Romantic poet needed an audience for his performance of selfhood, but audience perception threatened to replace the author with the image it had created for itself by interprojecting the author's life and art in conformity with its own desiderata for that image. The author could satisfy his readers by generating an authentic public persona whose biography and works appeared unified and continuous, in other words publicly authentic, even as the author distinctly perceived this accepted persona as "not himself." Overindulgence of audience expectation risked the reduction of the public persona to pure object, alienated from the self as the author experienced it. This danger was realized in the phenomenon of Romantic epigonism, in which clichés and heroic stereotypes rendered individual poets indistinguishable from one another. Ultimately, epigonism undermined the poet's initial achievement of public authenticity as readers realized that the persona they had been encouraged to perceive as genuine was arbitrary and insincere. Alternatively, the author could project a literary persona that he himself viewed as an adequate reflection of his own unique identity but which his readers might find to be divergent from

their own expectations, unintelligible, or otherwise irrelevant. The poet who overemphasized his unique subjective perspective risked losing his audience entirely, effectively lapsing into cultural solipsism.

Lermontov's uncompromising individualist stance increased his susceptibility to each of these dangers. Moreover, driven by dual desires, both for cultural recognition as a unique individual (fame) and for the adequate expression and reception of unique selfhood (intimacy), Lermontov insisted on the simultaneous fulfillment of both life-creative imperatives. The heightened tension in Lermontovian life-creation between self-expression and authenticity generated the poet's central creative quandary. How was it possible to project one's own personal vision as relevant to the collective expectations of one's readership? Conversely, how was it possible to satisfy the public demand for a unified persona without sacrificing the author's sense of his own unique and persistent selfhood?

The prevailing Russian cultural, social, and political conditions of the 1830s compounded this quandary in ways that exceeded the effects of widespread resistance to Romantic individualism. As in most of Europe, Romanticism in Russia coincided with dramatic historical events and sweeping changes in the institutions of literature. While Romantic genres, the Romantic elegy in particular, appeared on the Russian scene as early as the first decade of the nineteenth century, it was only in the late 1820s—after the introduction of Romantic verse narratives and, later, historical and adventure novels—that Russian Romanticism coalesced into a recognizable popular movement. Several intervening historical events helped to determine the form it would take. Napoleon's invasion of Russia and the Russian army's subsequent occupation of Paris in 1815 boosted national feeling and encouraged the Romantic idea that Russia had a special historical role to play on the world stage. These events helped condition Russian literature's greater affinity in general for national issues—Russian history, the development of a national literature, the codification of a standard literary language—over others in the European Romantic repertoire, such as individualism and the fantastic. The next historical upheaval had an exclusively negative effect. In December 1825, upon the death of Alexander I and the ascension of Nicholas I, a group of Russian noblemen and officers, inspired by patriotic feeling and notions of enlightened monarchy, staged a coup d'état, which was easily suppressed. Nicholas I immediately took steps to bolster autocratic rule. Five of the Decembrists, as they came to be called, were executed, and dozens of others were sent into exile. Nicholas's subsequent policies created a severely repressive atmosphere, especially for intellectuals. He sharply curtailed foreign travel and energetically endeavored to root out "freethinking" wherever he found it, or even suspected it. In 1826, he established an extremely active secret police force—the Third Department—one

of whose most urgent charges was to identify purveyors of dangerous ideas. These measures had a tremendous impact on Russia's relatively small educated elite. They reinforced the Russian nobility's sense that they did not enjoy the rights and liberties afforded the European aristocracies, made it clear that no dissent would be tolerated, and cast a pall of self-censorship and mutual suspicion over even the most innocent of social or intellectual gatherings. Many of the executed and exiled Decembrists had been crucial participants in the network of intimate literary circles that had structured literary activity in the previous decade. The Decembrists' departure dispirited those who remained behind, Pushkin among them, and deeply rent the social culture that had supported literature as their generation had known it.

Official restriction of personal and intellectual freedoms combined with other cultural circumstances to increase the tension between self-expression and public authenticity. During the late 1820s and early 1830s, growing educational opportunities for the nonnoble classes drove a numerical increase in, and social pluralization of, the reading public and a corresponding expansion of the commercial literary marketplace. The number and circulation of journals wholly or partially dedicated to literature increased dramatically.[32] A new class of literary critics arose, dedicated to mediating the relationship between authors and these new readers. If in the previous decades literary amateurs had seen criticism as shoptalk, a friendly discussion among authors aimed at facilitating their creative work, the new professional critics saw themselves as literary guides, dedicated to educating and shaping their readers. The new and relatively unsophisticated readership was more readily swayed by the dictates of fashion, and their tastes tended toward the Sentimental and Romantic. Readers delighted in stories of tragic love, society intrigue, and swashbuckling adventure but lacked discernment, especially in the area of lyric poetry. As a consequence, Russia experienced an unusually prolonged and commercially successful period of Romantic lyric epigonism in the 1830s and 1840s. The older generation of amateur authors, who had assimilated and moved beyond Sentimentalism and Romanticism years earlier, found it difficult to reach this new readership, and some did not bother to try. Their few forays into the burgeoning literary marketplace culminated, for the most part, in resounding commercial failures. They had evolved as artists in intimate connection with one another, had read the same books, and could easily communicate subtle nuances to one another against the background of their shared social and literary experience. But the new readers had never been part of this world. Class and cultural distinctions converged in a war waged by critics of the new school against the "literary aristocracy," a war that widened the rift between the older generation of poets and the emerging cultural mainstream. These critics, the so-called literary plebeians, attacked Pushkin and his peers as elitist and irrelevant

and characterized their poetic works as "golden playthings." The more serious among the new critics—those who saw literature as more than a commercial enterprise—demanded a new literature that would address the new readership's tastes and concerns, over which the critics themselves exerted considerable influence.

Authenticity of the authorial persona was prominent among the new demands placed on literature. Its influence was strong enough that it cut across class boundaries and shaped even members of the educated nobility, mostly the younger ones, who saw poetry as their aristocratic birthright. Thus, the Russian demand for public authenticity in the 1830s was exceptionally high, but the type of authentic hero that readers would accept was circumscribed by specific cultural tastes. The rise and fall of the poet Vladimir Benediktov provide a particularly telling example of both the power and narrowness of these expectations. The success of Benediktov's 1835 collection of verse transcended class boundaries. Benediktov's lyric hero was the very incarnation of the dashing Romantic hero, embodying, in Ginzburg's words, "spontaneous grandeur and the symbolic significance of the forces of nature, the fate of 'humanity's chosen ones,' persecuted by the 'mob,' love for an ideal maiden, etc."[33] In fact, Benediktov's persona represented a particular type of Romantic hero that verged on the Sentimental, one particularly dear to Russian readers of the time. His verses expressed passionate feelings, but these were exclusively of the morally "refined," elegiac type: sublime love, loss, and longing. They expressed alienation ("persecuted by the mob" is perhaps too strong a phrase for it) but in a mournful, passive key befitting the elegist. He did not express contempt for the "mob"—as Pushkin did, particularly in a few unpublished poems of the 1830s[34]—much less the outright hostility toward the other that we often encounter in Lermontov's poetry. The newly heterogeneous Russian audience was interested in the poet's authentic Romantic persona only insofar as it simultaneously conformed to its mild Sentimental expectations of moral propriety and noble sentiment. Benediktov's poetic persona fit this bill perfectly. However, readers who expected the poet's personal appearance and demeanor to incarnate this persona were deeply disappointed when he turned out to be a rather successful midlevel civil servant in frock coat, "a poorly built person, with a long torso and short legs, of less than average height . . . [with] a face pockmarked and of a pale hemorrhoidal color, with reddish spots and whitish light gray eyes, surrounded by a fold of wrinkles."[35] His popularity quickly waned.

Russian readers had long accepted the Sentimentalist connection between noble aesthetic sentiments and moral betterment. Moreover, the ethical significance of authorship was deeply inscribed in the conception of literature's cultural role. No other modern European tradition has so consis-

tently attributed to poets and novelists such a high degree of moral, social, and even religious authority. This circumstance only strengthened Russian resistance to Romantic individualism by framing its provocative ethos as a genuinely formidable threat to the social and moral fabric. Lermontov's especially radical ethos, in the spirit of high Romantic nonconformity, consciously strove to transcend accepted moral systems, just as it rejected all other consensual social ideologies that conceived of the individual as an appendage of the collective. This position added to the conflict between author and society, author and reader. From this standpoint, we can frame Lermontov's creative quandary in terms of cultural value. How could his self-oriented, anticollectivist outlook produce anything that this community could recognize as valuable? Given the perception of his provocations as socially destructive, what, if anything, could their positive purpose be?

It was in response to this conflict, staged as a battle to the death between cultural norms and the radical ethos of Romantic individualism, that Lermontov evolved his mature poetics. This book traces this evolution in terms of the self-other phenomenology outlined above. In order to establish the coherence of this phenomenology, and of Lermontov's Romantic individualist worldview in general, I triangulate among various situations and practices, both literary and social, in which self-other relations inhere. These include the poet's own images of himself and his images of others, especially of readers and social spectators, both real and implied. On the other side of the conflict, I examine the views of Lermontov and his art expressed by contemporary readers, critics, and memoirists. I pay particular attention both to Lermontov's social behavior (as viewed from both sides) and to his literary practices, which can themselves be seen as a form of behavior (and again, from both the reader's and the author's sides). Against this background, I trace Lermontov's evolution as an individual and an artist.

A major finding is that Lermontov's literary evolution was driven by a changing but always hyperconscious conception of the reader. If at the outset he saw the author-reader relationship in purely subject-object terms, his acquisition of a real audience led to an increasing awareness of the reader's consciousness as the ontological equivalent of his own. Most important, this meant acknowledging that the reader's mind, like his own, contained the potential for self-conscious evolution. The consequences for his poetics were twofold. First, realizing that the poet's inner experience of self could not be fully expressed in language, he developed a form of other-directed irony capable of maintaining and conveying the *ethical forms* of self-awareness and integrity by recognizing readers' selves as complete consciousnesses. Second, he evolved an artistic method that allowed him to convey not only the ethical form of his identity but also much more of its content than before, and in a manner at once more palatable to his readers than open scorn

and yet capable of conveying on a deeper level the poet's more controversial truths. I have christened this latter technique "literary seduction," for, like real-world seduction, it involves attracting its targets by "reading" their desires and proposing to satisfy them. Lermontov's literary seduction, however, always leads the reader to an unexpected place, with one or both of two results. In one version, Lermontov replaces the reader's expectations of the authorial persona (or another aspect of content) with his own emphatic image. In the other, he uses the reader's own interpretive desire to draw him or her into a position where this desire can only be satisfied by a radical shift of readerly consciousness toward Lermontov's own ethos, often in the form of heightened self-awareness. Both strategies rely on Lermontov's growing knowledge of his readers and greater optimism regarding their potential for conscious change.

Lermontov sometimes alternated these techniques, but both shaped the seductive irony of *Hero of Our Time*. Even here, Lermontov's dual desires for fame and intimacy continued to play a role, as I will later show. The nature of the novel's intimacy lies in its irony, which recognizes and acts on the reader's consciousness, forcing him or her to take part in the novel's own world of consciousness, which is in fact Lermontov's, in all its perverse individuality. Through this irony, he attempted not only to evade readers' efforts to finalize their perspectives, as does Romantic irony, but also to turn the tables on them, to change their minds. Lermontov's mature irony is perlocutionary, rather than illocutionary or locutionary, to use J. L. Austin's distinctions.[36] That is, it acts upon the reader's consciousness as a form of hidden persuasion or insinuation, rather than explicitly urging or communicating specific actions, ideas, or images. For Lermontov, to become an individual meant to abandon comforting self-deception and to pursue self-knowledge. In creating works of art that covertly seduced his readers toward this imperative, he sought not merely to convince them of his specific opinions but rather to stimulate a transformation in the very processes of their consciousness from within. His irony seduces, teases, and taunts its readers, in order to shock them into candid examination of their own beliefs, actions, and readerly assumptions. Lermontov's greatest artistic achievement lay in his transformation of the initially limited and contradictory viewpoint of the Romantic individualist into a coherent credo of self-examination. Beginning with a strong belief in the value of his own individual consciousness, he cultivated this consciousness in such a way that it generated provocative literary texts, which meditate—and cause the reader to meditate—on the ethical and phenomenological ramifications of thinking for oneself and the role literature has to play in stimulating such thinking. To be relevant to his time, the Russian Romantic individualist had to spread the disease of self-consciousness. Whether or not Lermontov succeeded in converting his contemporaries

to his view, readers were, and are, able to sense the depth of his conviction in his writing, recognizing it as powerfully authentic. This was true even for those readers who saw the work and the man as "demonic" or "insane."

I would like to send the reader off into the book itself with one last discussion of our poet's reception, which both revisits the pivotal salience of Pushkin's death to Lermontov's life and illustrates the ironic continuity between Lermontov's own life and art. Although Pushkin had been criticized from many sides during the last decade of his life, his death silenced these critical voices, at least initially, and marked his transfiguration as Russia's national poet. Lermontov played a central role in establishing this identity. "The Poet's Death" made Lermontov famous and came to define the interpretation of Pushkin's death for generations of Russians to come. However, the dependence of Lermontov's reputation and poetic development on Pushkin's death was no mere accident. "The Poet's Death" does more than immortalize Pushkin. Indeed, the poem is not merely about Pushkin's death but is (as its title suggests) about the Poet's Death, a distinct and archetypal scene that played an essential role in his ideal narrative of the Poet's destiny. In death the Poet relinquished his control over his own image to the other, but at the same time death was necessary in order to frame the Poet's life as a text and prove his immortality in the eyes of the other. The Poet's Death, whether real or metaphoric, but especially when both, represented the defining moment of his transcendence, the ultimate goal of Romantic life-creation.

By the time Lermontov began writing, the icons of Romantic individualism, Byron and Napoleon, were long dead, but for our poet they were immortal by virtue of their respective destinies and achievements. They served as proven models of the immortal life-text Lermontov sought for himself. And Pushkin's death afforded Lermontov the opportunity not only to observe the mythopoetic transformation of the poet firsthand but to participate in it. However, in creating "The Poet's Death" Lermontov did more than immortalize Pushkin or the Poet in general. He committed an act of poetic self-definition. In this respect, this poem is as much, if not more, about Lermontov than about Pushkin. Through it, he established himself not only as Pushkin's successor and avenger but as the successor and avenger of the Poet and of Poetry in general. He established a battle stance in opposition to the enemies of Poetry everywhere. Moreover, especially in the resounding verses of the first-person coda, he issued a universal warning: worship your poets, for they are sacred.[37] This stance in turn came to define the adamant individualism of his own self-projection as the Poet, including his own anticipated transfiguration in death.

The connection between glory, creativity, and death resided deep in Lermontov's consciousness and shaped his approach to life-creation. Thus, it was not really an accident that his own death should resonate with his writ-

ings as a moment of personal apotheosis, for the salilence of death had shaped his life and art from the very beginning. Lermontov's own voice was silenced by a duelist's bullet in 1841, at the age of twenty-six, just four years after writing "The Poet's Death." As in Pushkin's case, his death rendered his life-text a commodity, worth fighting over. Many of Lermontov's unpublished manuscripts were acquired by his longtime friend and publisher A. A. Kraevsky. Within a month of the poet's death, Kraevsky began to publish these in his prominent journal, *Notes of the Fatherland* (*Otechestvennye zapiski*). In 1842, the appearance of the first posthumous edition of Lermontov's works, edited by Kraevsky, sparked a brief but intense debate regarding Lermontov's literary legacy.[38] Organized chronologically, the edition included both the works Lermontov himself had published before his death and all the early poems that had been published posthumously in *Notes of the Fatherland* in 1841–42.

O. I. Senkovsky reviewed the 1842 edition in *The Library for Reading* (*Biblioteka dlia chteniia*), the middlebrow journal he had founded and built into a commercial success without precedent in Russia. He expressed righteous outrage over the edition, calling its publishers "Herostratoses," or blasphemers:

> I don't know what else to call those who, for the sake of speculation, violate *the last will* of a freshly deceased talent, his literary testament. . . . This testament is the collection of his poems published by him before his death. . . . In it he placed everything he considered worthy [*dostoinym*] of himself and the readers from among his first experiments [i.e., almost nothing]. The rest he prudently consigned to oblivion [*blagorazumno predal zabveniiu*]. By what right, when he has barely closed his eyes, does speculation [*sic*] immediately wrest from oblivion [*istorgaet iz zabveniia*] all of these unsuccessful, unacknowledged assays of the pen, mix them together with good and acknowledged compositions, assemble this into a tasteless porridge and publish it in three little notebooks or, as they say in high bookseller style, in three *parts*?[39]

Belinsky, Kraevsky's close associate, defended the 1842 edition on the pages of *Notes of the Fatherland*: "Everything written by [Lermontov] is of interest and should be made public [*obnarodovano*], as evidence of the character, spirit and talent of an uncommon man." He further speculated that the poet's own exclusion of the earlier works had been based on the expectation of a long, fruitful career, filled with far greater achievements. His early death had "imparted an entirely different turn to the matter" and made it the publisher's duty to make known to the public "everything written by Lermontov, everything that can be found."[40]

Although a handful of newly discovered poems appeared elsewhere, *Notes of the Fatherland* continued to be the major venue for such publications through 1843 and 1844. In the latter year, however, the fray was joined by none other than Senkovsky himself, who published seven poems written in 1830–31 in the fifth number of his *Library for Reading*, followed by six more in the sixth. Belinsky did not fail to note this reversal in his review of the belated part 4 of the 1842 edition, which appeared only in 1844 and included still more of Lermontov's previously unpublished works.[41] Senkovsky never enjoyed a reputation as the most scrupulous observer of authorial rights. (Had Belinsky known that some ten years earlier Senkovsky had committed an even more blatant violation by publishing one of Lermontov's works in his journal without permission, while the poet was still very much alive but completely unknown, he could have doubled his charge of hypocritical opportunism.)[42] Nevertheless, in the same 1844 article, Belinsky adjusted his previous opinion about the proper format in which to present Lermontov's works. In the two intervening years, so much more of Lermontov's juvenilia had come to light that they now outnumbered the mature works and threatened to swamp them. Even Belinsky was now forced to admit that a strictly chronological arrangement of all this material would not do justice to the "uncommon man" he so revered. In attempting to balance the reader's need to know against the purity of the great man's image, Belinsky suggested a new editorial principle designed to show the poet in the best light:

> We declare here the desire to see as quickly as possible the works of Lermontov in two books, of which one would include *Hero of Our Time*; and the other [would be] arranged in such order that the better pieces would be placed one after the other according to the time of their appearance; after these would follow excerpts from *The Demon*, *The Boyar Orsha*, *Hadji, the Blood Outcast*, *The Masquerade, The District Paymaster's Wife*, *Izmail-Bei*, and then finally all the smaller pieces of lesser merit [*nizshego dostoinstva*].[43]

While not a full retreat from Belinsky's earlier principle of publishing "everything written," this statement forecasts the selective halving of Lermontov's legacy that would come to characterize his otherwise unshakable place in the Russian canon.

The critics' main bone of contention was how best to present Lermontov's life-text to the public as that of a great man, the very question that concerned the poet himself throughout his life. What constitutes "Lermontov"? His best works or his life work as a whole, regardless of quality? To say that it is only the great works is to treat Lermontov as a national commodity, the very attitude that has impeded deeper understanding of the great works themselves. To read it all is to attempt to understand the man

himself as a way of understanding his finest artistic products. Lermontov's intensely personal approach to his art requires us to take the latter approach. The irony of the Belinsky-Senkovsky debate is that Lermontov's incendiary "The Poet's Death," which in my view was the pivotal text in his life as an individual and as an artist, could not be included anywhere in the 1842 edition, nor indeed could it be published in Russia prior to the liberalization of censorship that followed Nicholas I's death in 1855. A thousand scholars chained to a thousand desks for a thousand years could not have produced a more fitting metaphor for the ironic position of the Romantic individualist poet in Nicholas's Russia.

Chapter One

Representing the Romantic Hero: Death and the Dream of Death

> He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth belongs to the earth, and of the earth he speaks; he who comes from heaven is above all.
> —John 3:31 (Revised Standard Edition)

> Creations of the mind?—The mind can make
> Substance, and people planets of its own
> With beings brighter than have been, and give
> A breath to forms which can outlive all flesh.
> —Byron, "The Dream"

MIKHAIL LERMONTOV was born in Moscow on October 2, 1814. His mother, Maria Mikhailovna Lermontova, née Arsenyeva, came from a wealthy and distinguished noble family. The family of his father, Iury Petrovich, can be traced to a Scotsman, George Learmont, who entered the tsar's service after being captured by Russian troops in Poland in the early seventeenth century. Family legend asserted that Learmont descended from the legendary thirteenth-century Scottish bard Thomas the Rhymer. At the time of Iury's marriage to Maria Arsenyeva, however, the Lermontov family was neither famous nor particularly wealthy. Shortly after Mikhail's birth, the young family moved to Tarkhany, the Arsenyevs' estate near Penza. The poet's mother died in early 1817, when Mikhail was less than three years old. The boy's maternal grandmother, Elizaveta Alekseevna Arsenyeva, who had never approved of Iury Petrovich as a match for her daughter, subsequently banished him from Tarkhany, letting it be known that she alone would be responsible for the upbringing of her grandson. Perhaps aware that Arsenyeva could offer the boy much more than he in the way of money and social connections, Iury Petrovich put up little resistance. He would see his son only rarely before his own death from tuberculosis in 1831. Arsenyeva, who had lost both her husband (he poisoned himself in 1810 after a series of domestic troubles) and her only daughter, doted on her grandson. One anecdote tells

how Arsenyeva arranged to have peasant children dressed in military uniforms so that the seven- or eight-year-old future poet could command living toy soldiers in make-believe battles.[1] Arsenyeva foresaw a brilliant career for her grandson and spared no expense in providing him with the finest governesses and tutors available. Throughout his childhood in Tarkhany, young Mikhail Iuryevich wanted for nothing, and the single-minded attentions of his grandmother imbued him with a strong sense of self-worth. Memoirs of those close to the family paint a portrait of the boy as strong-willed, sensitive, and especially precocious in music and drawing.

At the same time, the early death of his mother, who remained a poignant, albeit distant, memory throughout the poet's life, marked him with a sense of loss that never entirely faded. His father's absence, too, left a deep, although more ambiguous, mark. As a child, Michel, as he was called, alternately longed for reconciliation with his father and condemned him for abandonment. Two family trips to the Caucasus, in 1820 and 1825 (at the ages of five and eleven), left lasting impressions. The region's lush and dramatic mountainscapes took hold of his imagination. During the early nineteenth century, the Russian empire was continuously engaged in the process of conquering territories and subduing native populations in the Caucasus. For Russian writers, the Caucasus served as a fertile incubator for an entire gamut of Romantic themes such as freedom; the original innocence and subsequent social corruption of the soul; national, social, and personal identity; and vengeance. Lermontov, however, also identified with the Caucasus in a very personal way. It figured as a "lost paradise," the object of his deepest spiritual longings. In one early poem, the Caucasian steppe speaks to him in his dead mother's voice.[2] In a journal notation, he recalls the mountain region as the site of his first experience of love, for a little girl whose name he could not remember. This association of love and loss with the Caucasus persisted into Lermontov's later work. The significance of the region in his consciousness would grow even stronger during his two exiles there. It was there that his mature poetic voice would be shaped and, ultimately, silenced.

In the fall of 1827, Arsenyeva brought her grandson to Moscow with the intention of securing an education for him. After a year of private tutoring, the thirteen-year-old Lermontov was enrolled in the elite Moscow University Pension for the Nobility, where he studied for two years. The pension, which shared faculty with the venerable university, had a tradition not only of academic excellence but also of political freethinking. Several of the officers who staged the Decembrist Revolt of 1825 had been products of the pension. Mindful of this tradition and ever wary of intellectual circles, Tsar Nicholas I effectively ended the pension's existence in the spring of 1830 by downgrading it to an ordinary gymnasium. Lermontov withdrew

and in the fall entered Moscow University, where he studied until 1832. Although a wide variety of subjects were taught at both the pension and the university, literature was the favorite among the students, who "published" several hand-copied literary journals and almanacs.

Lermontov wrote feverishly in the years 1829–32. He tried his hand at almost all the current literary genres, with the notable exception of those in prose. Of the approximately four hundred surviving lyrics Lermontov wrote, more than three-quarters date to this period. Almost two-thirds of the narrative poems he ever began were undertaken in these years. (A number of them remained unfinished.) In the years 1830–31, he wrote three of his four completed plays. All this activity produced almost none of the work for which Lermontov is known today. The early works are notable more for quantity than for quality. Nevertheless, they show us the poet in the process of assimilating a wide range of literary models and developing his own tastes. Imitating and borrowing from a variety of poets—foreign and domestic, traditional and contemporary—Lermontov sought the means to conceive and convey his particular vision of the individual human consciousness. These works reveal dimensions of Lermontov's Romantic individualism that shaped his early conceptions of poetry and the poet. The later, more famous works did not abandon these Romantic conceptions but rather perfected their artistic expression by means of greater artistic self-consciousness, subtlety, and irony. Later in life, the poet himself frequently returned to his early verses, mining them for nuggets, which he polished and transformed into superb lyric poems and narrative passages. For these reasons, and others, serious study of the juvenilia is crucial for deepening our understanding of the illustrious later works.

Above all, the early poems expressed the young poet's preoccupation with cultural fame or "glory" (*slava*). This concern manifested itself not only in the lyric theme of poetic immortality but extended to the more prosaic spheres of social reputation and interpersonal relations as well as to his narrative depictions of the Romantic hero. In each sphere, Lermontov revealed an awareness of a tension between the desire for fame—involving the necessity of others' opinions about the self—and the desire to portray the essence of self as original, unique, and unfinalizable. The resulting alienation of the "misunderstood" subject makes itself felt not only in the presentation of the lyric self in the first person but also in narrative treatments of third-person Romantic heroes.

The interprojection of these two perspectives—the person as both subject and object—provided Lermontov with the basic model that he would exploit throughout his life to explore Romantic individualist themes. Indeed, Lermontov counterpoised and intertwined lyric and narrative modes fre-

quently in lyric and narrative genres alike. In the lyrics, the voice of the speaking subject is countered by an awareness of a watching, framing other, who usually appears as an actual or potential antagonist, even in the love poems. In the narratives, the focalizing outside perspective—in the form of a pseudo-omniscient or semidetached frame narrator—comes up against the inscrutable, privileged perspective of the hero, whose lyric monologues interrupt the text, explaining the hero's state of mind but never doing so completely. These treatments of the subject in terms of a self-other phenomenology lend the texts in which they appear a distinctly metaliterary dimension, for the image of the hero is constantly refracted through the dual lenses of text and being. Text figures as the principle of structure in the representation of the hero's destiny—that which frames his image as a unified and intelligible whole in biographical and psychological terms. Being, on the other hand, remains fluid and unpredictable; the hero's being resides in his experience and consciousness and presents a surplus of meaning, always overflowing the boundaries of text and language. The outward manifestations of being—speech and action—offer, at best, fragmentary glimpses of the essential self.

The tension in the representation of the subject can be described in terms of competing sets of framing forces. What is at stake in all cases is the meaning of the individual as a unity. Yet the unifying frames imposed by the outside world always fail to correspond to the subject's own sense of the unity of his being. Indeed, they *must* fail, in order for the mysterious uniqueness of the Romantic hero to be maintained. From the subject's point of view, his own efforts to create and express the self constitute a set of centripetal forces, reinforcing autonomy and self-identity. On the other hand, the responses, representations, and interpretations produced by others act centrifugally. They effectively fragment the self (as perceived by the self), producing images in culture that are fundamentally alienated from the being's essential self. From the external perspective, these valences are switched. Readers—meaning all interpreters of the hero's personality—exert a centripetal force in striving to shape their fragmentary knowledge of the hero into a coherent text. Yet this is *their* text, not the individual's unfinalizable essential being as he himself (and Lermontov) conceive it. Lermontov's depictions of his lyric persona and narrative heroes deliberately thwart readers' desires for coherence by embedding contradictory signs in these figures' actions and words. Readers perceive these contradictions as centrifugal forces with respect to their own interpretive frameworks; but from the subject's perspective, they are meant, despite their seeming incongruities, to assert the autonomy and unity of the subject over and against external perspectives. This paradox is rendered intelligible by understanding that the contra-

dictions embedded in the heroes are not themselves essential to selfhood as such. Rather, they come into being on the level of representation, which is to say, they arise on the boundaries between being and text, meaning for the self and meaning for others. They point both to the conflict between self and culture and to the posited existence of the self in a pure form on a plane *beyond* the conflict, the plane of essential being.

Inasmuch as Lermontov's Romantic individualism stakes the entire value of meaningful individual existence on this ontological tension between being and representation, it comes as no surprise that death should play such a prominent role in his heroic depictions. It must be understood that for Lermontov the meaning of death is not moral but ontological and phenomenological. It serves not as punishment (or reward) for life's words and actions but, ideally, as the culminating correlation and transfiguration of these disparate elements as a complete and meaningful life-text. If the hero's existence is to acquire authentic public meaning, the hero's death must figure the moment at which internal and external perspectives converge. Upon his death, the hero's life-text becomes complete for readers—they will now proceed to interpret that life as a whole. If that whole is to satisfy Lermontov's requirements that the life-text be inscribed in public memory as meaningful and thus immortal, death must relate organically to the life that precedes it. Yet the life-text must simultaneously remain unique, beyond schematic or moralistic final interpretation. This last requirement is problematic, for death brings with it the end of the hero's speech and activity, and thus the end of his production of new outward, publicly interpretable phenomena. Death is the end of private being, and the beginning of the representation of that being in a realm in which the author no longer exerts any control. On this level, death ruptures the web of bidirectional connections between inner and outer worlds, since the subject can no longer influence or respond to the other. To compensate for this inevitable rupture in the future, the subject must keep death constantly in mind in the process of life-creation in the present, for only in this way can the subjective (inner) world of the living consciousness remain in contact with the frame that will ultimately establish its objective (outer) meaning. It is the hero's advance awareness of impending death—and often his prediction of it—that prepares him to transcend it by seeming to speak from beyond the frame, to speak of his life as a coherent whole, with beginning, middle, and end.

The Lermontovian hero's death—whether presented as accomplished narrative fact or as projected inevitability—always evinces a double logic, as the culmination both of the outward action and of the arc of inner consciousness. It is the completion of two texts, one personal and the other public. At the same time, it focuses on the potentials for correspondence

(immortalization in memory) and noncorrespondence (oblivion) between these texts in the perceptions of others. To maintain the status of the hero as an autonomous being rather than as the author's puppet, Lermontov must maintain a careful balance between these two potentials, especially in narratives that include the hero's death as a textual fact. Significantly, in Lermontov's narratives the death of the hero is usually followed by a depiction of its reception in the world of the text. Other characters interpret or appropriate the hero's story, without fully understanding it. Death, as life's ultimate objective frame, represents the moment when that life comes to be possessed and evaluated by culture, the moment of apotheosis or damnation. As such, it is the *temporal* equivalent of the *ontological* point of contact between self and other, with which Lermontov's Romantic individualism is obsessed.

BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH: THE ROMANTIC'S WORLD IN DOUBLE EXPOSURE

In his early poetry, Lermontov found his master metaphor for the tension between essential being and being in the world in the terms "heaven" and "earth," between which poles he frequently located his hero. Conventionally, this trope figured the spiritual longing and lamentation of a hero trapped in the corporeal world, and Lermontov often used it in this fashion.[3] However, he often realized the metaphor literally, in such a way that its terms became an explicit spatial allegory for the condition of the soul. In the spirit of Manichean dualism, earthly life represents the cosmic exile of the "pure" soul. "The Angel" (1831), one of only two poems written before 1837 that Lermontov chose to publish at the time of writing,[4] distilled the Gnostic allegory in concise, melodic verse:

> An angel flew across the midnight sky
> And a soft song did he sing;
> The moon and the stars and the clouds in a throng
> Hearkened to this sacred song.
>
> He sang of the bliss of sinless spirits
> Beneath the shrubs of the gardens of paradise;
> Of mighty God he sang, and his praise
> Was unfeigned.
>
> In his arms did he a young soul bear
> To the world of grief and tears.

And the sound of his song in that young soul
Did remain—without words, yet alive.

And long did this soul languish in the world,
Filled with marvelous yearning,
And the heavenly sounds could not be displaced
By the wearisome songs of earth.
(1831, I:230; see appendix, poem 1.1)

"The Angel" is widely considered to be one of Lermontov's very few artistically successful early lyrics. It succeeds on the strength of its rendering, in balanced and harmonious amphibrachs, of precisely the heavenly tone one might expect of the angel's song to which it alludes. Its own eloquence heightens the pathos of the exiled soul by suggesting that this soul is that of the poet himself, who echoes the angel's song in his own. It gains as well from its translation of the conventional stasis of elegiac lament into balladic narrative, thus avoiding the overwrought clichés of self-expression in the first-person elegy. By contrast, an even earlier poem, "Prayer,"[5] is weighed down by the poet's invocation of conventional elegiac language. Here the fifteen-year-old Lermontov prays with apparent sincerity to the "Almighty" that he be forgiven for "loving the funereal gloom of earth with its passions." He asks forgiveness for the "lava of inspiration" that "boils in my breast," for the "savage agitations" that "darken the glass of my eyes," and for the fact that "often with the sound of sinful songs I pray, God, not to you."

The contrast between these two poems suggests the paradox Lermontov felt between unique selfhood and universal spirituality. "Prayer" tries explicitly to express the spiritual contradiction as the poet himself experienced it. "The Angel," on the other hand, allegorizes this paradox in universal terms. The former devolves into elegiac platitudes, even as it labors to transcend them through baroque metaphoric elaboration, while the latter erases all personal individuality. "The Angel" is the more beautiful poem, but "Prayer" suggests the extent to which the poet was attached to the unique experience of earthly existence, despite his apparent contrition. This penitent tone, however, would soon disappear in Lermontov's lyrics as he embraced his "profane" earthly attachments as essential elements of unique selfhood.

Nevertheless, the acceptance of the soul's earthly desires never wholly displaced the longing for heaven. Many of the poet's early lyrics expressed the spiritual tension between heavenly and earthly affinities. "Heaven and Earth" ("Zemlia i nebo," 1830–31, I:311), for example, addressed the tension quite explicitly. Its first stanza seems to polemicize with Hamlet's famous third act soliloquy ("To be or not to be . . ."). Yet the "rub" for Lermontov

went further than the "dread of something after death." Earthly life offered its own inherent form of "happiness":[6]

> How can we not love earth more than heaven?
> Heavenly happiness is obscure to us.
> Though earthly happiness be a hundredfold lesser,
> At least we know what it is.
> (I:311)

Strikingly, the poet justifies earthly attachment in epistemological terms. The unknowability of what lies beyond death echoes Hamlet's theme, but mortal life, for Lermontov, comprised more than

> the whips and scorns of time,
> The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
> The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,
> The insolence of office, and the spurns
> That patient merit of the unworthy takes. . . .

Lermontov condemned these flaws in the world—and many more—and would do so throughout his life, but his ambivalence toward earthly life includes a distinctly positive valence, which allows it to become an organic part of the soul rather than something utterly alien and opposed to it, as we see in the final stanza of "Heaven and Earth":

> What we have in our power is more pleasant to us,
> Though we seek the other at times,
> But in the hour of parting we see more clearly,
> How it has become one with the soul.

If for Hamlet—as for the "soul" in "The Angel"—"this mortal coil" imprisons the self, in "Heaven and Earth" earthly experience penetrates the soul, becoming an inalienable aspect of selfhood. Hamlet rejects suicide because he fears that his punishment in the afterlife might be even worse than his present torments: "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all." Lermontov, on the other hand, weighs not present misery against eternal suffering, body against soul, but two desires against each other, and both have their place in the individual soul. The human soul exists in and through the paradox between its dual strivings. This whole yet conflicted soul represents Lermontov's first mimetic model of the Romantic individual. To be alive, to be "real," entailed the Lermontovian hero's full embodiment of the ontological paradox that makes a human being human. The hero's very ex-

istence had to express the tension between universal meaning and unique individual meaning.

Two years after writing "The Angel," in a letter of 1833 written upon his return from military camp to officer school in Petersburg, Lermontov expressly rejected his wistful idealism:

> We have returned to the city, and soon our studies will recommence; the only thing that sustains me is the thought that in one year I will be an officer. And then, then . . . good God! If only you knew the life I propose to lead! Oh, it will be delightful: first of all, strange antics [*des bizarreries*], all sorts of lunacy [*folies de toute espèce*], and poetry drowned in champagne: I know, you will protest; but alas, the time of my dreams has passed; the time to believe is no more; I require material pleasures, palpable happiness, the happiness one buys with gold, the happiness one carries in one's pocket like a snuff-box, a happiness that will deceive only my senses, while leaving my soul calm and inactive! This is what I need now, and so you see, my dear friend, that I have changed somewhat since we parted; when I saw my beautiful dreams vanish, I told myself that it was not worth the trouble to create new ones; it will be better, I thought, to do without them; I tried it; I resembled a drunkard trying little by little to break the habit of drinking wine; my efforts were not in vain, and soon I came to see nothing in the past but a series of trivial and exceedingly common [*fort communes*] exploits. But let us speak of other things. . . .[7]

Lermontov's abandonment of "trivial and exceedingly common exploits" in favor of "strange antics" and "all sorts of lunacy" suggests his recognition that his earlier heavenly longings, expressed in elegiac form, were incapable of representing the multiplicity and concrete individuality of his most earthly desires and experiences. Such language frames a crucial disjuncture between the universal meaning of heavenly striving and the personal meaning that one can possess as an individual and express in distinctive ways—meaning that one can "carry in one's pocket."

This change in worldview was profoundly connected with Lermontov's literary practice. At some point in late 1832, within a few months of his arrival in Petersburg from Moscow to enter the Junker School, he almost completely ceased to write lyrics. Over the four years from 1829 to 1832, he had written more than three hundred surviving lyrics, but in the subsequent four years he would write fewer than ten. Only after 1836, in the wake of the success of "The Poet's Death," would the lyric regain its central place in Lermontov's oeuvre. However, Lermontov did not completely cease to write in 1832, nor did he discontinue his search for a literary hero who might embody the paradox of existence that so concerned him. In the years 1833–34,

he wrote his notoriously explicit narratives of sexual adventure, known as the "Junker Poems," which express humanity's earthly valence in the most terrestrial of human activities. At the same time, he worked intensely on a new redaction of the narrative poem *The Demon*. Begun in 1829 and finished only in 1839, when it would take its place among Lermontov's masterworks, *The Demon* represents the core allegorical treatment of the heaven-earth theme in Lermontov's oeuvre. In the years 1832–36, Lermontov wrote one play (in multiple versions) and several narrative poems, and he began two novels, both to remain unfinished. Taken together, these works constituted a laboratory in which the poet experimented in various genres with various methods of depicting a hero who might satisfy Lermontov's mimetic requirement that he embody both earthly and heavenly desires, both unique and universal meanings. This imperative would continue to drive Lermontov's literary evolution, even after he returned to the lyric in 1837.

Heaven and earth serve everywhere as metaphors for two implicit valences of the hero's inner world, two targets for the soul's aim. However, in the allegorical mode of Lermontov's Romantic mimesis, they embody the metaphysical dilemma externally, as the setting for the hero's existence. In *The Demon*, this function is writ large, for the winged fallen angel's realm is literally the space between heaven, from which he has been exiled, and earth, where he vainly seeks redemption through the love of a mortal woman. The Demon's interstitial realm appears, in negative exposure, as the setting in which Lermontov's mortal heroes will continue to find themselves. As composite creatures, they can never attain heaven, nor can they completely reconcile themselves to earth, even at its most pleasurable. Lermontov's favorite geographical location, the Caucasus, provides an earthly microcosm of this cosmic topology. As the setting of *Hero of Our Time*, *The Demon*, and many of Lermontov's other narrative poems, the Caucasus, with its vertiginous peaks and yawning abysses, always offers the hero the opportunity to contemplate simultaneously what lies above and below, the alternative prospects of ascending and falling. The duel scene in *Hero of Our Time* makes the most of this inscription of fate into the landscape. Pechorin chooses the site, a sharp outcropping of rock that juts over a deep abyss. He dictates that the duelist not currently shooting stand at the very edge of the cliff, so that "even a light wound will be fatal" (VI:326). Pechorin shoots Grushnitsky, and the latter plunges into the abyss, where Pechorin will later glimpse the corpse while descending from the cliff. Although the Caucasian landscape promises the decisive alternatives of death and ascension, the surviving human hero (in this case, Pechorin) must always remain suspended between the two extremes.

The symbolic significance of the vertical axis is complicated by Lermontov's heroes' spiritual ambivalence toward both heaven and earth.

Most frequently, the hero's desire sanctifies an earthly pursuit. Some heroes, for example, expect to find divine comfort in the fleeting embrace of an earthly lover, while their earthly missions, usually in battle, promise them a kind of immortality. Conversely, the hero may conceive of heaven as a monotonous alternative to earthly variety and activity. In this way, the heaven-earth dichotomy and its instantiations in landscape become doubled by ever more paradoxes, mirroring the multilayered ambivalence of the minds of the heroes who inhabit them. What remains constant, however, is the hero's interstitial positioning *between* heaven and earth, in a space that acquires its own mythological status, echoing or resisting at every point both the inner duality of the soul and the objective paradox posed by the external world. This relationship between hero and setting runs deeper than the usual Romantic use of nature to reflect the state of the hero's soul. It unites under one metaphor—the dichotomy between heaven and earth—multiple potentials for Romantic individualist mimesis: the current state of the hero's soul, the metaphysical status of the soul in general, the concrete setting, the simultaneously internal and external sources of the hero's fate, and, most significantly, the representational tension between individual and universal meanings presented by Lermontov's radical individualism. This last pair of potentials is closely connected throughout Lermontov's oeuvre with his double exposure of his heroes from opposed perspectives, from within and without.

THE ICON AND THE ACT: BREAKING THE ELEGIAC FRAME

The heaven-earth dichotomy becomes increasingly complicated by the circumstance that earthly desire now shares space in the soul with heavenly desire. Given that Lermontov saw desire, in all its forms, as part of the inner—and thus sacred—world of the Romantic individual, the hero could now evince, paradoxically, a sacred desire for earthly things. This "secular spirituality" allowed Lermontov to portray the hero as transcendent even in his earthly individuality. What stands at the center of the hero's ambivalent consciousness is the confrontation of his will with fate, which itself acquires a composite nature. The hero is both doomed by the stars and persecuted by living men. In representing such a hero, Lermontov needed to strike a balance between two counterpoised representational forces. The first force involves the elevation of the hero along a vertical axis. He must be raised into the space between heaven and earth by the force of his own destiny. This destiny must produce a biography that sets the hero apart from other people and establishes his superior image as a fixed and immortal icon. The hero

must be everywhere recognizable as continuous and unified. This image of the hero is defined by his destiny and, especially, by its final outcome, which is his death. The hero's iconic image requires death, for only the end of his biography completes his life-text, establishes its meaning, and proves the immortality of his image. Inevitable death, the source of completion, casts its shadow backward over the hero's life, rendering all of its events meaningful.

The second force involves the freedom of the hero, the sense that his personality and will exert themselves in every moment of his active life. If the heavenly, iconic image of the hero represents his status as a recognizable object of contemplation, the earthly image is characterized by this activity. His essential being must remain dynamic, unpredictable, and unfathomable, lest the iconic force of destiny completely overwrite his individuality with its own universal meaning. The link between activity and earthly reality is encoded in the common root of the Russian words for "action" (*deistvie*), "actuality" or "reality" (*deistvitel'nost'*), and "to act" (*deistvovat'*). For Lermontov, action was as necessary to the immortality of the hero as his fate, a connection he expresses in the first person in the following lyric passage:

> Life is monotonous when there is no struggle.
> Penetrating the past, we discern
> Few deeds in it, in the flower of our years
> Such life cannot uplift the soul.
> I must act [*deistvovat'*], I wish to make every day
> Immortal, like the shade
> Of a great hero, and I cannot know
> What it means to rest.[8]

Lermontov considered each mode of heroic depiction to be equally necessary, but not in itself sufficient, for effective Romantic individualist mimesis. The death frame is required to give the hero's life meaning as a whole, but that death must frame a life that features free action and willful struggle. Thus, Lermontov's early verse, both lyric and narrative, exhibits a vacillation, often quite pronounced, between the two representational modes as he seeks a way to synthesize them.[9]

The particular mimetic difficulties Lermontov faced in a given work depended on both the genre and the provenance of the hero. Certain real-life heroic prototypes held an advantage in that they came with iconic frames already attached. The poet did not need to generate their universal significance himself. Among Lermontov's most revealing early experiments are the attempts to inscribe historical figures in lyric form. Several of these take the form of the "epitaph," that is, a final distillation of the

meaning of a life at its end. Lermontov almost certainly wrote his 1830 lyric "Epitaph" ("Epitafiia," I:122) with D. V. Venevitinov in mind.[10] Until his death at the age of twenty-one in 1827, Venevitinov had been the leading poet of the Moscow intellectual circle known as the Wisdom Lovers (*Liubomudry*). During his years at the Moscow University Pension for the Nobility (1828–30), Lermontov was exposed to the German idealist metaphysics and aesthetics then current among the Wisdom Lovers, especially through his teacher of philology, Semyon Egorovich Raich, who was close to the group. Although Venevitinov's metaphysical philosophy and poetry held little inherent interest for Lermontov, he could not help being struck by the Romantic cult of personality that grew up around Venevitinov, especially after his untimely death. In the introductory article to the 1829 edition of Venevitinov's poetry, the poet's friends and admirers "created a half-biographical, half-literary image of a beautiful and inspired youth who died in his twenty-second year of life; at the same time, this was also the image of a new Romantic poet."[11] Here is Lermontov's poem:

Simple-hearted son of freedom,
He spared not his life for feelings;
And the true lines of nature
Did he often love to sketch.

He believed in dark prophecies,
And talismans, and love,
And to unearthly desires
He gave his days in sacrifice.

And the soul in him retained a surplus
Of beatitude and torment, and of passions.
He died. Here is his grave.
He was not made for men.
(1830, I:122; see appendix, poem 1.2)

Lermontov seems to have approached this topic with a certain lack of enthusiasm, most unusual for his verse of this period, which tends rather to suffer from emotional excess. Despite his appreciation for the signifying power of this persona, the poem's tone is curiously unemotional and matter-of-fact. (One can imagine the poem as the fulfillment of an assignment from Raich, pursuant to a mandatory field trip to Venevitinov's grave.) The enumeration of the dead poet's characteristics remains a Romantic laundry list until the last line of the second stanza, where the theme of suicidal self-sacrifice raises the stakes. These characteristics are treated coolly, almost disdainfully, in

the second stanza. The epithet applied to "prophecies"—"dark," "vague," or "obscure" (*temnye*)—recalls the poet's misgivings about the heavenly realm in "Heaven and Earth": "Heavenly happiness is obscure (*temno*) to us." The adjective I have translated as "unearthly" (*neestestvennyi*) more literally means "unnatural," and can connote "affected"—an ambivalent lexical choice at best. The penultimate line of the last stanza perhaps aims at grandeur in its simplicity, but its two short, matter-of-fact sentences seem rather to convey Lermontov's hurry to get to the aphoristic last line.

This final line summarizes the significance of this particular subspecies of Romantic hero, the living "angel," the soul whose "feelings," "desires," and "torments" are so pure and strong that they cannot coexist with the baseness of earthly human life. The poem's ultimate failure stems, to some extent, from the one-sidedness of its mythologized heroic prototype. Venevitinov so devoted himself to metaphysical ideals that there was no earthly activity to represent in the poem. His "sacred" soul seems to contain no earthly desire whatsoever. For Venevitinov, poetry served metaphysics. For Lermontov, on the other hand, metaphysics was useful only when it could serve as a symbolic, phenomenological framework for emotional states and literary practice. He had no interest in evolving explicit answers to explicitly formulated metaphysical and aesthetic questions. He viewed even immortality in "practical" literary terms. He saw it exclusively in terms of the potential for meaning *beyond* the text to be acquired *by* the text, its author, and its hero. Indeed, this was what Lermontov (and others) found attractive in Venevitinov to begin with. The coincidence of the elegiac images of a meditative poet, often found contemplating graves, with the dead poet's own early grave, the object of the new, living poet's meditation, compounded the sublime significance of his death and grave site. A number of poets wrote eulogistic poems upon Venevitinov's death, employing elegiac language and setting,[12] and his grave on the Simonov Monastery grounds in Moscow was a site of frequent pilgrimage by idealistic youths.[13]

These very circumstances, however, served to limit Venevitinov's value as a Romantic hero for Lermontov. Given Venevitinov's metaphysical bent, his image was exceedingly vulnerable to the iconic representational force in two ways. First, Venevitinov's friends and admirers had already transfigured him as a secular saint. Second, elegiac language itself tended to iconize heroes, especially third-person heroes. The dominant elegiac tropes of the graveyard and recollection memorialized the genre's human object as already dead, or otherwise absent, and thus contained or fixed entirely in the mind of the elegiac speaker. (As we will see later, the elegy's treatment of the speaker as hero presents special problems all its own.) Upon entering elegiac discourse, the historical hero is inevitably sublimated as a symbolic hero, with fixed universal meaning. In the life and personality of Venevitinov,

as Lermontov understood it, there was nothing whatsoever to counter this elegiac sublimation, to tie his image to earth. While Lermontov wished to position his hero in the space he opened between heaven and earth, ethereal heroes such as this ascend from history into heaven inevitably, as if borne by their own mythic divinity. Venevitinov's ascension resembles the trajectory of a Christian saint: from human life to iconic representation and adoring contemplation. This is the inverse of the soul's descent into the living state of earthly paradox in "The Angel," which might be seen as the more compelling prehistory to "Epitaph." The sublimated, ascending hero acquired the requisite "heavenly" credentials but slipped out of the mimetic paradox in which Lermontov would have liked to capture him: the space between heaven and earth where the tragedy of the hero's confrontation with fate must be played out.

For Lermontov, as for Romantics all over Europe, the quintessential man of action and destiny was Napoleon. Arising out of nowhere not once but twice, Bonaparte's fate seemed to be an extension of the sheer personality and will of the man. The Corsican's dramatic life made him an attractive heroic model for Lermontov, who wrote ten lyrics devoted to him or to the events of 1812.[14] Through his invasion of Russia, occupation of Moscow, and subsequent defeat, Napoleon played a seminal role in the Russian national consciousness. Indeed, these events began the formation of this consciousness in its modern form. Russians evinced an understandable ambivalence toward Napoleon. When the Napoleonic wars began, some Russians saw Napoleon as an embodiment of the "cleansing" force of the Enlightenment.[15] After the French occupation of Moscow, most found it difficult not to see the great man as Russia's enemy. Some, including Tsar Alexander I, held the mystical view that Napoleon represented the Antichrist, and saw in Russia's eventual defeat of him a confirmation of Russia's sacred historical mission.[16]

Pushkin's three important lyrics about Bonaparte reflect this ambivalence.[17] Despite a certain detached elegiac sympathy for his isolation in exile[18] and sublime appreciation for the immortal status of the "mighty favorite of victories,"[19] Pushkin does not fail to paint Napoleon's negative side: "his limitless egoism, striving toward his own elevation, arrogance and haughtiness—everything that made Napoleon into a tyrant, the usurper of France's 'newborn freedom'[20] and oppressor of the liberation movements of other peoples."[21] Pushkin also gave voice to an idea that enabled his contemporaries to reconcile heroic treatment of Napoleon with their own Russian patriotism, without resorting to Alexander's mysticism. He came to view Bonaparte as part of providential history: "Praise! He showed the Russian people their great destiny."[22]

In contrast, Lermontov's Napoleon, now a posthumous citizen of the 1830s, a decade starved for heroes, was bound by no such duty to ex-

plain himself as a part of Russian national history, a concept that interested Lermontov very little, if at all.[23] This Bonaparte's significance lay solely in his identity as an individual of great will and destiny, unqualified by collective ideologies. The fact that he invaded Russia was almost irrelevant. It was the aesthetic and mythological possibilities for heroic depiction offered by Napoleon's activity and fate as an individual that attracted Lermontov.

Combining willful action with elegiac exile, Napoleon would seem the perfect historical prototype for a Lermontovian hero. However, the poet was aware that the elegiac representational mode in and of itself exerted an iconic force powerful enough to reduce even Bonaparte's greatness. The first of his Napoleon lyrics, the 1829 "Napoleon" (I:45–47), an elegy with a surprise ending, illustrates Lermontov's sense that the mournful, passive tone of the Russian elegy was inadequate to the task of portraying the active will of the individual. This poem begins with high elegiac conventions. The scene is St. Helena, dusk, Napoleon's grave. Waves crash against the shore. The obligatory elegiac "bard" (or "singer": *pevets*) arrives with his obligatory stringed instrument, in this case a harp. "Striving to awaken recollections," he strikes the strings and begins a typical elegiac song, which occupies lines 15–53 of the poem's total of sixty-five. "Why did he so pursue glory?" the bard sings. "Why did he disdain happiness for honor? / Join battle against innocent peoples? / And with steel scepter smash crowns?" The bard expresses conventional Russian Romantic ambivalence toward Bonaparte when he sings,

> audacious warrior . . . !
> The creator fogged your steadfast mind,
> You were defeated by the Moscow walls . . .
> You fled! . . . and hid beyond the distant seas
> The sad traces of your lofty thoughts.

The bard then begins the traditional elegiac coda, in which he imagines a passerby, in this case a fisherman, whom he expects to pause (again, at dusk) to note the grave . . . but the bard is not allowed to finish his elegy. Apparently, this "unknowing" fisherman's "silent treading . . . upon that ground where your forgotten ashes rot, without ceasing to sing his simple song" represents the last straw for the long-suffering hero. Accompanied by appropriate atmospheric effects, his shade appears and speaks, silencing the bard:

> Suddenly! . . . a breeze . . . the moon has fled behind the clouds . . .
> The bard falls silent. Cold flows in his veins;
> He is embraced by secret terror . . .
> And the strings snapped . . . and a shade [*ten'*] arose before him.

"Be silent, o bard!—hurry you from here—
Whether you praise me or plague me with reproach:
It is the same to me; in the grave there is eternal night.
No honors, no happiness, no fate there!
Let the history of my passions
And my deeds be kept by distant progeny:
I despise loud singing of songs;
I am above all praise and glory and men . . . !"

Napoleon's shade's assertion of its autonomy, its rejection of the passive role in the posthumous discourses of eulogy and condemnation, reprises a scene from book 11 of the *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus, recounting his visit to Hades, tells of his encounter with the shade of Achilles. Odysseus—who for Homer's Achilles represents the detested man who "hides one thing in the depths of his heart, and speaks forth another"[24]—praises Achilles' heroic fate, assuring him that

we ranked you with immortals in your lifetime,
we Argives did, and here your power is royal
among the dead men's shades. Think, then, Akhilleus:
you need not be so pained by death.

Achilles retorts,

Let me hear no smooth talk
of death from you, Odysseus, light of councils.
Better, I say, to break sod as a farm hand
for some poor country man, on iron rations,
than lord it over all the exhausted dead.[25]

Both Achilles and Lermontov's Napoleon reject death and assert their will against the conceptions of the living about their lives after death. Similarly, both heroes are depicted as inhabiting a limbo between earthly existence and nonexistence. Lermontov, however, reverses the meaning of Homer's spectral trope. Achilles echoes the same unwillingness to sacrifice the humblest earthly life for the sake of immortal glory, an unwillingness that he expresses while refusing to join the battle of Troy in the *Iliad*. This Napoleon, however, exerts precisely his glory, which transcends all human existence and discourse and death itself. For Achilles, death plunges one beneath the level of the lowest farm hand; Napoleon's death, however, is a transcendental leap beyond the scope of worldly affairs and the comprehension of men.

In dramatically seizing control of the discourse about himself, Napo-

leon makes his own superhuman status clear in no uncertain terms. He asserts his larger-than-life status both temporally (he exists beyond death) and spatially (he is "higher" than "praise, and glory, and men"). Moreover, in the world imagined by the poem, Napoleon's greatness cannot be contained by art—not, at least, by the traditional elegiac genre. The poem models the willful, transformative usurpation of poetic discourse by the transcendent, larger-than-life hero, a theme of linguistic transgression encountered repeatedly in Lermontov. It refutes the traditional elegiac lament of the vanity of earthly strivings, the erosion of greatness by time and death. The hero's greatness and the poet's subjective awe for the great man overflow the boundaries of the genre.

In a 1860 article that remained unknown to Lermontov scholarship until 1979, Alexander Herzen and M. Meizenburg shrewdly observed that Lermontov belonged among the "subjective" poets, whose works "generally blend in one the epic and the lyric element, action and reflection, narrative and satire. [Henri August] Barbier, and above all Lord Byron, are representatives of this class of poets."[26] In Lermontov's case, the literary intention behind this proclivity is to combine the opposed iconic and active representational modes in any given genre. The heroic immortality offered by the third-person lyric provided the former, but not the latter. Yet, for Lermontov, the tension between lyric-iconic and epic-active representations of the hero coincided with another conflict, that between inner and outer perspectives. Let us keep in mind that we are speaking here only about lyrics in which the hero appears in the third person. In such cases, the hero typically does not have the opportunity to speak for himself, being dead or absent. If he does speak, as the dead Napoleon unexpectedly does in Lermontov's lyric, he breaks the generic frame of the elegy quite dramatically. This poem was no longer an elegy but something else, a kind of hybrid of elegy and supernatural ballad. At the same time, such dramatic intrusions of the hero's voice demonstrate the connection in Lermontov's mind between the lyric-epic and inner-outer dichotomies. In its unfolding, Lermontov's 1829 "Napoleon" transgresses both boundaries simultaneously: from lyric into narrative, and from third-person characterization into first. At the same time, it dramatizes another violation of the great man's individuality, for in imposing the elegiac death frame the bard—like the Orleanists in 1840—misrepresents Napoleon's *life*, his activity before death.

In order to dramatize the confrontation between fate and the hero's will without such mimetic violations, the young Lermontov required a literary form that would allow him to represent his hero doubly: in both subjective and objective modes, from both inner and outer perspectives. He quickly discovered the genre of the Romantic verse narrative, or *poema*, to be the single most suitable vehicle for representing the hero's mythic

confrontation in double exposure. Pushkin had already adapted Byron's "Eastern" poems as "Southern" poems in the 1820s, and he had many imitators. The great attraction of the *poema* for Lermontov lay in its innate capacity to accommodate multiple modes of depiction. As practiced by Byron, Pushkin, and the Russian imitators, the *poema* provided fast-paced action, descriptions of exotic nature, and opportunities for lyrical or ethnographic authorial digressions. Many authors also introduced additional lyricism and exotic flavor in the form of interpolated "folk songs," often sung by secondary characters of exotic nationality. However, Lermontov's use of the genre reveals his own stringent mimetic requirements. He sharply reduced the role of authorial lyric digressions and allowed his hero to deliver more and longer lyric speeches of his own. He intensified the conflict between internal and external perceptions of the hero's personality and actions—and the outcomes were correspondingly bloodier. The Lermontovian hero's tragedy usually stems from others' inability to understand his enigmatic nature. Lermontov particularly loved to place his hero in an iconic pose, alone and motionless atop a cliff, or to describe his grave after death has brought his active life to a close. These ekphrastic moments, in establishing the transcendent superiority of the hero over other men, resemble the static images of tribute typical of the elegy (and certain types of ode). Here, however, the elegiac-iconic frame remains suffused with the poem's other, *active* depictions of the hero as he rages in battle, struggles with the world, and pursues his destiny. Conversely, against the background of such quiet moments, the hero's violent actions lash forth like thunderbolts from a clear blue sky. Even in death, the final elegiac frame, the hero remains inscrutable, for his unpredictable behavior and enigmatic speeches linger in the reader's mind, infinitely deferring final interpretation. Lermontov sought to superimpose iconic and active images of his heroes at all times, maintaining their images in double exposure. Death frames life and life frames death, but neither interpretive frame can entirely capture the hero's unique existence. He abides eternally in the paradox.

THE ANXIETY OF ORIGINALITY: AN AUTHOR IN SEARCH OF A HERO

From the very start, Lermontov took to the *poema* genre with tremendous enthusiasm. He began nineteen narrative poems in the years 1828–33. The *poema* remained a central genre for him throughout his life. He worked on *The Demon* until 1839. His stylized folk *poema*, *The Song of Tsar Ivan Vasilyevich* (1838), was his first major literary publication and met with resounding success. In that same year, he published *The Tambov Treasurer's*

Wife. He wrote one of his masterworks in the genre, *The Novitiate*, in 1839, and it was published in 1840. His earliest experiments began well within the bounds of contemporary Byronic-Pushkinian practice. The nine narratives he began in the years 1828–30 relied heavily on conventional heroes, situations, and plots. Even the titles of the first three, *The Circassians* (*Cherkesy*), *The Captive of the Caucasus* (*Kavkazskii plennik*), and *The Corsair* (*Korsar*), all written in 1828, echo the titles of two of Pushkin's Southern poems, *The Gypsies* (*Tsygany*) and *The Captive of the Caucasus* (*Kavkazskii plennik*), and one of Byron's Southern Tales, *The Corsair*. Moreover, in these earliest *poemy*, Lermontov imported large chunks of text verbatim from the works of his Russian predecessors.[27]

It was only natural that in his first experiments Lermontov should seek prototypes for his heroes in the (recent) literary tradition. The creation of an original fictional protagonist ab ovo may be the most difficult task faced by a beginning writer of narratives. Lermontov's borrowings stemmed also from his need to provide his fictional hero with Romantic iconic credentials of the kind that Napoleon and Venevitinov possessed from the outset. Established Romantic literary "types"—the outlaw, the pirate, the alienated wanderer—came equipped with such a frame. However, while Lermontov could hone his narrative techniques of double exposure using borrowed literary heroes, such conventional heroes, Romantic as they were, could not represent unique individuals. Strikingly, Lermontov avoided choosing actual historical heroes such as Napoleon for his narratives. Such heroes were indisputably unique, as well as larger than life, and thus would seem to have offered everything Lermontov required for narrative depiction in double exposure. However, the heroes of history presented Lermontov with another problem.

The connection between Romanticism, national identity, and history was especially strong in Russia, where intellectuals were highly conscious of their status as cultural and historical latecomers on the European stage. Russian Romantics sought the golden thread of immanent national identity in the fabric of the past and tried to express it on the pages of a new literature, which in turn would "prove" Russia's credentials as a unique and adequate, if not superior, member of the modern family of nations. It comes as no surprise, then, that many Russian writers of the period—Karamzin, Pushkin, and the Decembrists foremost among them—occupied themselves simultaneously with literature and history. Even Nikolai Gogol, a very unlikely historian, endured a brief and disastrous stint as adjunct professor of history at Petersburg University. Nevertheless, these authors were acutely conscious that history and literature represented distinct and contrasting spheres, each with its own standards of truth.

The challenge of Romantic national history lay in the task of singing

the "unsung" nation in a compelling manner for readers who lacked historical education, under increasingly commercialized conditions. Literary treatments required that the historical narrative be presented in a readily accessible format, without the complexities and ambivalence engendered by the evidentiary requirements of scholarly historiography. However, principled historiography was also part of the national historical project, for it authenticated national self-image at a higher level. In his *History of the Russian State* (1818–26), Karamzin resolved this dilemma by supplementing his lively, highly readable narrative with voluminous scholarly footnotes.[28] Pushkin approached this conundrum in several ways. In his fictional treatments of times past, he usually followed Walter Scott's practice of placing major figures in the background, as an affirmative sign of historicity, while shifting the focus of the plot to fictional, secondary, or legendary characters. At the same time, Pushkin engaged in serious and original historical research, but he either relegated his hard data to footnotes to literary texts (as in his 1828 *poema Poltava*) or wrote two texts, one literary, one historiographic. His extensive research on the peasant uprisings of the 1770s yielded both his *History of Pugachev* (1833) and his novella *The Captain's Daughter* (1833–36). The latter takes the form of the "found" memoir of a fictional character, a low-ranking young Russian officer, supplemented by a very brief epilogue by the "editor," which provides the final outcome of the officer's adventures. The officer's fate occupies the foreground of the novella but intersects fortuitously with the career of Emilyan Pugachev, the historical pretender to the throne who instigated the rebellions.

On the literary side of things, such measures expressed a concern best described by the metaphor Scott invoked to explain his naming of the eponymous hero of his *Waverley*. The name, he writes in the introduction, evokes no "preconceived associations"; it is "an uncontaminated name, bearing with its sound little of good or evil, excepting what the reader shall hereafter be pleased to affix to it."[29] The scholarly squabbles, political divisiveness, mythologies, and differences of popular opinion that inevitably enmesh major historical figures militated against the author's freedom of characterization and distracted the reader from the work's artistic goals. For Pushkin and Scott, the human and national sides of history were separate but complementary. They saw the proper role of literature as an illumination of the human side, a project that could be undermined only by allowing controversial major figures to dominate the text.[30]

Although Lermontov's goals were different, contamination posed just as great a problem. His interest lay precisely in titanic hero figures, and his interest in humanity was everywhere refracted through the lens of the great man's emblematic consciousness. His aim was mythopoetic. For him, figures like Napoleon, whom we last saw slipping free of the elegiac noose,