



**FOUR IMMORTALS**  
POETS GARDEN AT ARROW PARK



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## FOUR IMMORTALS

### Foreword

This booklet is a collection of literary sketches of four world-known poets - Taras Shevchenko, Alexander Pushkin, Walt Whitman and Yanka Kupala. In introducing this booklet, we want to acquaint you with a short history of the monuments to the Four Immortals and Arrow Park where the monuments were erected.

The park itself is situated in the beautiful hills of Upper New York State. One of its powerful attractions is a large lake for fishing, boating and swimming. Its vast wooded areas make for a beautiful resting place for the park's members and their friends. This naturally provided resort complex is complemented by specially built cottages for guests who spend their summers basking in the sun and enjoying the clean fresh air.

Originally purchased by the progressive Russian American community, Arrow Park has presently become the center for other groups, including Ukrainian Americans, Polish Americans and many other nationality groups, in this manner adding an international touch to the whole project.

During the summer months, Arrow Park hosts Ukrainian, Russian and Polish Days, at which the respective cultural groups (choirs, dancers and orchestras) present their programs and popularize the rich cultures of their nations for the benefit of warmly responding diverse audiences.

Guided by the spirit of friendship and cultural relations with their brothers across the ocean, the shareholders of Arrow Park set up a special body, known as the Arrow Park Cultural Project Committee. Its purpose was defined as measures to promote exchanges with the associations for cultural relations which exist in the Ukrainian SSR, the Russian Federation and the Byelorussian SSR.

From the very start, the projected idea was to join efforts with the Ukrainian and Russian cultural societies to build monuments to Taras Shevchenko and Alexander Pushkin, these literary geniuses of the Ukrainian and Russian people who are also known throughout the world for their spirit of humanity and internationalism. The primary consideration of both projects was that they would enable the children of the emigrants and their grandchildren to acquaint themselves with the contributions these literary greats made toward the aspiration of their people for freedom and abundant democratic life.

The committee also planned, along with the erection of the monuments, to build a library-museum which would house works by the two outstanding authors, both in the language of the original and in English. Thus, visitors to the resort would all be able not only to view the monuments, but to get to know of these and other men of letters who continuously spoke out for brotherhood and friendship amongst peoples.

It was with great pride and joy that, on September 6, 1970, the monuments of Taras Shevchenko and Alexander Pushkin were unveiled before thousands of people, including American dignitaries, as well as honored guests and artists representing the Russian and Ukrainian people.

Since then, the Arrow Park Cultural Project Committee has erected the monuments of Walt Whitman, the beloved American poet, and Yanka Kupala, the revered bard of the Byelorussian people.

Currently, the committee is in the process of completing arrangements for the erection of the monument of Adam Mickiewicz, the well-known Polish poet.

Every year since the unveiling of the present monuments, thousands of people come to pay homage to the Four Immortals whose images stand side by side, as though the thread of their love of humanity and their inspired writings continue to weave a web of brotherhood, understanding and peace in our time.

This is how Four Immortals, the title of this booklet, has come about.

For the benefit of the reader, we are including a brief biographical sketch of each of the authors – recognized literary figures who have prepared this very valuable collection which, we hope, will encourage a desire to learn more about the life and work of the Four Immortals.

## TARAS SHEVCHENKO

Yevhen Shabliovskyy, a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences, Ukr. SSR. Author of a number of literary works among them some fundamental studies of the works of the Great Kobzar. One such highly acclaimed literary contribution is his Humanism of Shevchenko in Our Time, translated into English by Mary Skrypnyk, co-editor of The Ukrainian Canadian, a popular monthly magazine, published in Toronto, Canada.

## ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

Nina Krutikova, a leading literary critic. Her specialty is studies of the times and life of this Russian poetic genius. She is a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences, Ukr. SSR, and has written many educational essays, the most popular of which are Literary Relations of the Russian and Ukrainian People, Gogol and Ukrainian Literature, On the Creations of I. S. Nechui-Levytsky, Marko Vovchok: Life and Work.

## WALT WHITMAN

Vitafiy Korotych today heads the editorial staff of the magazine Vsesvit (The World). Before embarking upon a literary career, he graduated from Kiev's Medical Institute and spent some time working as a doctor. Later, he changed his professional interests and became a writer. His first book of verse, entitled Golden Hands, hit the shelves in 1961. It was followed by a rapid succession of collections of his poetry, publicistic writings and translations of foreign poets.

## YANKA KUPALA

Roman Lubkivsky was recently elected Chairman of Lviv's branch of the Writers' Union, Ukr. SSR. His name became known in Ukrainian literature in 1958. Since then, his works have systematically appeared in journals and magazines, as well as in separate publications. His original collection of poetry met an exceptionally warm response of the critics, let alone the readers, as did his many popular literary writings. He is also known for his translations from Bulgarian, Byelorussian, Slovak and Czech.



## TARAS SHEVCHENKO: UNDYING GLORY

The farther we are carried by time from the epoch in which Taras Shevchenko lived and created, the brighter and more understandable his genius and grandeur as a personality, a poet and fighter.

Few other people have suffered as much as he did or have been able, under similar circumstances, to remain as unwaveringly faithful to their ideals, as tender and pure of soul and kind of heart.

Shevchenko's was a tragic fate. Of the 47 years of his life, the poet spent 24 as a serf, 10 in exile and the rest under police supervision. As so many other advanced personalities of that period, he was tortured to death by czarism, by means of prison, exile and ruthless persecution.

Shevchenko's talent was multisided. He was a very sensitive lyricist, wrote immortal lyrical-epic and epic poems, plays and stories and was a gifted artist.

His literary heritage consists of a number of works in verse, several plays, nine stories and a diary.

His *Kobzar*, published for the first time in 1840, brought Shevchenko worldwide acclaim.

The poet's word played a decisive role in awakening his people's conscience and in the development of entire Ukrainian culture.

It was to poetry that Shevchenko gave his ever flaming ardor of a revolutionary and a fighter.

However, his first passion was the fine arts which lent some warmth to his orphan's childhood and sad youth. His heart remained drawn to the fine arts even in the years of poetic maturity and fame, which came his way so quickly. His love of the fine arts warmed and fortified his spirit in the gloomy years of exile. When already a very sick person, Shevchenko tirelessly worked in the graphic arts and, half a year before his death, was crowned with the laurels of an academician.

Shevchenko was an expert in the theater and an excellent musician. He was a herder when he was a small boy and found himself captivated by the sad tunes of the *sopilka* (fife). It was also at that period that he learned to recognize different birds from the way they whistled and sang somewhere in a wheat field or grove. These vivid memories of childhood, this memorized lively rhythm of the tongue of birds, beasts and the elements bestowed Shevchenko with his singularly charming verse, for true poetry is never artificial but sounds and affects one as Mother Nature herself.

April 22, 1838, was a very memorable date in his life. On that day, his landlord and feudalist, Baron Engelhardt, gave Shevchenko a certificate of freedom from serfdom, in exchange for

a large sum of money. This money had been raised by his friends in a very special way. Professor Bryullov of St. Petersburg Academy of Arts had made a portrait of the distinguished Russian poet Zhukovsky. The canvas had then been raffled off. The proceeds - 2,500 rubles - had been handed over to the baron. As a free man, Shevchenko didn't break contact with the toiling masses. Until his dying day he was a true son of the Ukrainian people and, at the same time, a sincere friend of the working people of all nations and nationalities.

On his travels in the Ukraine, Shevchenko more than once witnessed the horrible scenes of landlords' arbitrariness and hotly protested against this evil, both with his pen and word of mouth.

Wherever and whenever he could, Shevchenko had an audience of people around him - at the bazaar, in a tavern, near the church or, if the workday was over, at someone's home. Each time, his impassioned words cleared and stirred the befogged minds of the masses, directed them along the road of struggle for liberation. He took each such opportunity to read his revolutionary poems, tell salty antiserfdom anecdotes and parables, recollect the country's heroic past, the people's struggle against the Polish magnates.

"The forces of the people are uncountable," said the poet-revolutionary. "They must be consolidated and then used at once to fight czarist autocracy and serfdom. Only thus can we win freedom and build a new, happy life."

"Artist Shevchenko, for writing revolting and extremely insolent poems.... shall be sent as a private to the Detached Orenburg Corps (Middle Asia - Ed.) .... authorities shall be notified to exercise the strictest possible control over him, least he should find a way of sending forth his revolting and pasquil writings," read the draft resolution of the chief, of the Gendarmerie Corps, submitted for approval to the czar. Obviously not fully satisfied by the text, Nicholas I added in his own hand, "To be placed under strictest surveillance; forbidden to write and to paint."

And so Shevchenko was made a private of the Imperial Army. The term of service was not specified, which actually made it a life sentence. The place of service was a desert in a wild outlying province of the Russian Empire. But worst of all, a man born to create was forbidden to do so!

Being a soldier at that period was much worse than prison. Nowhere else was an individual oppressed and humiliated as hard as in the barracks; nowhere else human torture flourished as much as in that army.

The poet's spirit, however, proved insuperable. Despite the royal forbiddance, Shevchenko wrote inimitable verse in the harsh years of exile and army drilling. It was filled with great revolutionary strength and undying courage. He wrote under inquest, locked in a damp barracks, behind the fortified walls of Orsk, in the sun scorched Middle Asian steppe, on a deserted shore of the Caspian Sea, in the remote fortress of Novopetrovsk. The Kobzar wrote his moving verse in a small notebook which he had made himself and kept in the leg of his boot.



His friends spent a long time soliciting in high places, trying to save the poet. Eventually, the government allowed Shevchenko to return from exile.

Outwardly, the Ukrainian poet had changed quite conspicuously, looking much older than his age. But in his diary he wrote, "It seems to me that I'm exactly the same as I was ten years ago. Not a single feature in my inner countenance has changed."

On the very day of his arrival in St. Petersburg, Shevchenko paid a visit to the family of Feodor Tolstoy, Vice President of the Academy of Arts. He wanted to thank these people who had done so much to set him free. There, he met and made friends with the prominent British dramatic actor Ira Aldridge, a black American by birth, who had come to the Russian capital on a theatrical tour.

What made them close one to the other was their likeness in destiny and the deep-going interpretation of Shakespeare. Both loathed slavery and the whole system which divided people into the oppressors and the downtrodden. Both had suffered from the oppression that for centuries had been the lot of their people. Both had fearlessly embarked upon the thorny and winding road of life and had traveled long enough to reach their goals. Both were true masters of their vocations. Shevchenko understood Aldridge's stage personages better than anyone else and wouldn't miss any of his performances.

Aldridge frequented Shevchenko's home and the poet made his portrait. It turned out one of his most attractive canvases. The painted image looked exactly like the living prototype - clever, readily changeable, with an amused and even playful air, as though about to start dancing this very instant.

They sometimes met without the interpreter and found that they didn't need to speak, and when they spoke they understood each other. They read their favorite literary works in their mother tongues and sang their native songs. Then their souls met and embraced one another, their hearts beating in unison.

No, exile hadn't changed Shevchenko's spirit. His heart remained tenderly responsive to the grief of others, to the suffering of the oppressed and humiliated. Unfortunately, his health was not the same. Under mined by soldiering and hard climatic conditions, it gave way tragically early.

Still, the poet's physical death left untouched his literary life. Simple mortals are, in fact, remembered by two basic dates birth and death. Great personalities have only one date - birth. Shevchenko performed a Promethean feat, was meted out a Promethean punishment, and followed in the Titan's footsteps of immortality.

The genius of Shevchenko is the greatest accomplishment of Ukrainian culture. The poet laid the foundation of a new Ukrainian literature and the national literary language. His creations acquired worldwide importance.

His legacy is permeated with noble patriotism. His love for his Motherland showed, first of all, in his desire for a revolution to overthrow the feudal order, czarist autocracy, and to build a new life, based on the power of the people. Shevchenko's was the patriotism of a

revolutionary. To him the happiness and freedom of his Motherland were in the happiness and freedom of the working people.

He was alien to any national narrow-mindedness. He fought for all humanity to live in one free family and called on all the nations of czarist Russia to unite for struggle against their oppressors.

He sired a revolutionary democratic trend in Ukrainian literature and was the first truly national poet whose works reflected, in all entirety, the moods and ideas of the toiling masses, their age-old dream about liberation.

The Kobzar's forerunners in Ukrainian literature criticized separate contemporary social phenomena, such as the landlord's humiliation of his peasants, the corruptness of officials, etc. In contrast, Shevchenko came out as a severe judge of the whole autocratic-feudal system, as an irreconcilable enemy of landlords and czarism. In his works, he portrayed a new positive hero, a fighter against the autocratic-landlord order, for happiness for the people.

Bent under the weight of social and national oppression which hung like a heavy dark cloud over him and his nation, Shevchenko sometimes suffered a spell of deep gloom. At times, this mood was unbearable and he let out a cry of despair. Yet, the leitmotif of his creations - his belief in his people and their ultimate victory, his love for life and for the working man - survived and prevailed.

People, nature, life and work were for Shevchenko an inexhaustible source of beauty. He was amongst the first in world literature to deeply feel the poetry of man's work and its beneficial effect on human beings in general.

The poet regarded work as a criterion of human dignity and morality. By his work, an individual asserts himself in others' eyes.

However, under serfdom and feudal rule, the attitude of the common folk to work as a source of joy is constantly defiled. In an exploiter society, the creative inspiration and beauty of man's work become hopelessly contradictory to man's status in that society. Shevchenko was very conscious of this divarication between physical exertion and beauty.

"Its very people witless grew  
As dumbly to the fields they go  
To do forced labor for their lord,  
Babies at back, a hungry horde.....

The poet raised his wrathful voice in accusation of the whole system of exploitation of man by man, because this system deformed the very foundation of human existence - work - and made it senseless, turning it into inhuman servitude.

Shevchenko convinced his readers that their Motherland could not be free and happy so long as it was a common occurrence that "wicked lords have forced the folk / To an intolerable yoke."

He was convinced that the liberation of the toiling masses was to be social in the first place. In other words, a working man had to free himself from the feudal yoke. Then the Ukraine would flourish, there would be "big villages" and there would be "happy folk" in those "happy villages" - but only on one condition: there should be "no trace left of landlords in the Ukraine."

Shevchenko revealed the hereditary exploiter nature of the Cossack starshyna - the brass hats, hetmans and other chiefs - and their successors - Ukrainian landowners, then commonly known as the "Small Russian gentry." They were one gang of robbers. The poet reminded the Ukrainian landlord that his fortune had been looted by his grandfather. He called landlords "false patriots" who were "prompt, to flay/ The hide off lowly peasant brothers" and "forced the folk/ To an intolerable yoke."

He gave his readers examples from the historic past, recalled most spectacular events of the people's liberation struggle, instilling in them true patriotism and a selfless desire to serve their nation. The idea of the Motherland, the idea of its liberation was constantly in the focus of his creative endeavors. He was the first in Ukrainian literature to speak out loud about the grandeur and splendor of the people's love for their native land as a symbol of their love for freedom. The images of mother and Motherland were sacred notions and he saw them as a single most precious whole.

Ardently in love with his people as he was, Shevchenko never conducted his patriotic activities to the detriment of other nations. What was more, his patriotism included a feeling of deep respect for the fraternal Slavic peoples. He sincerely wished his nation to live in friendship and unity with them. The exploiter ruling classes are the only ones interested in kindling the flames of national animosity, stressed Shevchenko, since it is on this discord that they build their prosperity and supremacy.

Akakiy Tsereteli, a prominent Georgian poet, was a student when he met with Shevchenko in St. Petersburg in 1859. "That was my first and last meeting with him" he recollected later, "and it has remained one of my brightest memories. It was from him that I first understood how one was supposed to love his Motherland and his people."

The outstanding Russian literary critic and revolutionary democrat, N. Dobrolyubov, noted that one found "such thoughts and feelings "in Shevchenko's works "which, while belonging to the Ukrainian people, are understandable and close to each who hasn't completely maimed the worthiest human sentiments within himself.

Shevchenko was confident that the main thing in the aspirations of the working masses of different nations is that which unites them, and not that which disunites.

Everything progressive within a nation, Shevchenko thought, invariably constitutes a general human value. The national which does not go beyond the narrow Philistine outlooks loses its national character; it does not express the historical interests of the given nation.

The poet believed in the creative strength of nations, in their mutual sympathy. The range of humanism of the Ukrainian Kobzar enabled him to see positive features in other peoples, to understand their way of life and aspirations. The conclusion he arrived at was that peoples and nations can and must be friends. They are a single family, "children of the same mother."

In exile, the poet saw in his dreams the beloved Ukraine and her people in a fraternal union with the Russian nation and its advanced culture. Gogol, Pushkin, Lermontov and Saltykov Shchedrin were to Shevchenko "our" writers and poets, near and dear to the Ukrainian people.

All his life, the Kobzar remained true to the idea of the equality of nations and looked forward to their friendship and fraternity. In 1860, in his creative prime, remaining wholly and thoroughly national, he wrote on behalf of all tribes and peoples suffering in czarist Russia, that "prison of nations", these lines:

"And on our land, by faith retrieved,  
No foremen shall be brought to birth,  
Mothers and sons shall show their worth  
And love shall reign throughout the earth."

National liberation struggle was for Shevchenko not only the overthrow of the old exploiter system, but also a road toward asserting a new, happy life. He envisioned the future as a beautiful ripe wheat field, full of happy tillers. He foretold:

"Then land and lakes with life will teem,  
In place of narrow roads of old  
On every side there will unfold  
New highways, broad and sacred roads.".....

Shevchenko lived full of expectations of great social changes. He was deeply affected by the coming revolutionary events in Russia. He was convinced that true human happiness was unthinkable outside of social conditions which could help bring it about.

The poet dreamed of new social relationships when work to transform the land would bring people joy, well-being and happiness.

"To eager, toiling hands,  
To ardent, toiling brains-  
Send tilth of fallow fields,  
Thinking and speedy sowing  
And reaping of things sown  
Send to the toiling hands."

By his creations, the great folk bard bestowed Ukrainian literature with a wealth of new themes and genres never seen before and made it a worthy contribution to the treasury of world literature.

Shevchenko's path was subsequently followed by most advanced Ukrainian men of letters, such as Marko Vovchok, Panas Mymy, Ivan Franko, Pavlo Hrabovsky, Mikhailo Kotsyubynsky and Lesya Ukrainka. They continued and developed his great traditions of realism, folk character, democratic orientation and humanism.

Modern Ukrainian authors highly value and respect Shevchenko's heritage and learn from it.

The great Ukrainian poet developed and systematized the vocabulary and grammar of the Ukrainian language which have since remained a norm and standard for writers, the press, the theater and so on. He borrowed from the general vernacular all which he thought was most essential and eloquent and revealed in his works the richness, flexibility and charming melodiousness of the Ukrainian tongue.

His role in the history of the Ukrainian nation and all mankind was artfully defined by Ivan Franko, one of his celebrated successors.

"He was a muzhik's son and became a ruler in the realm of spirit.

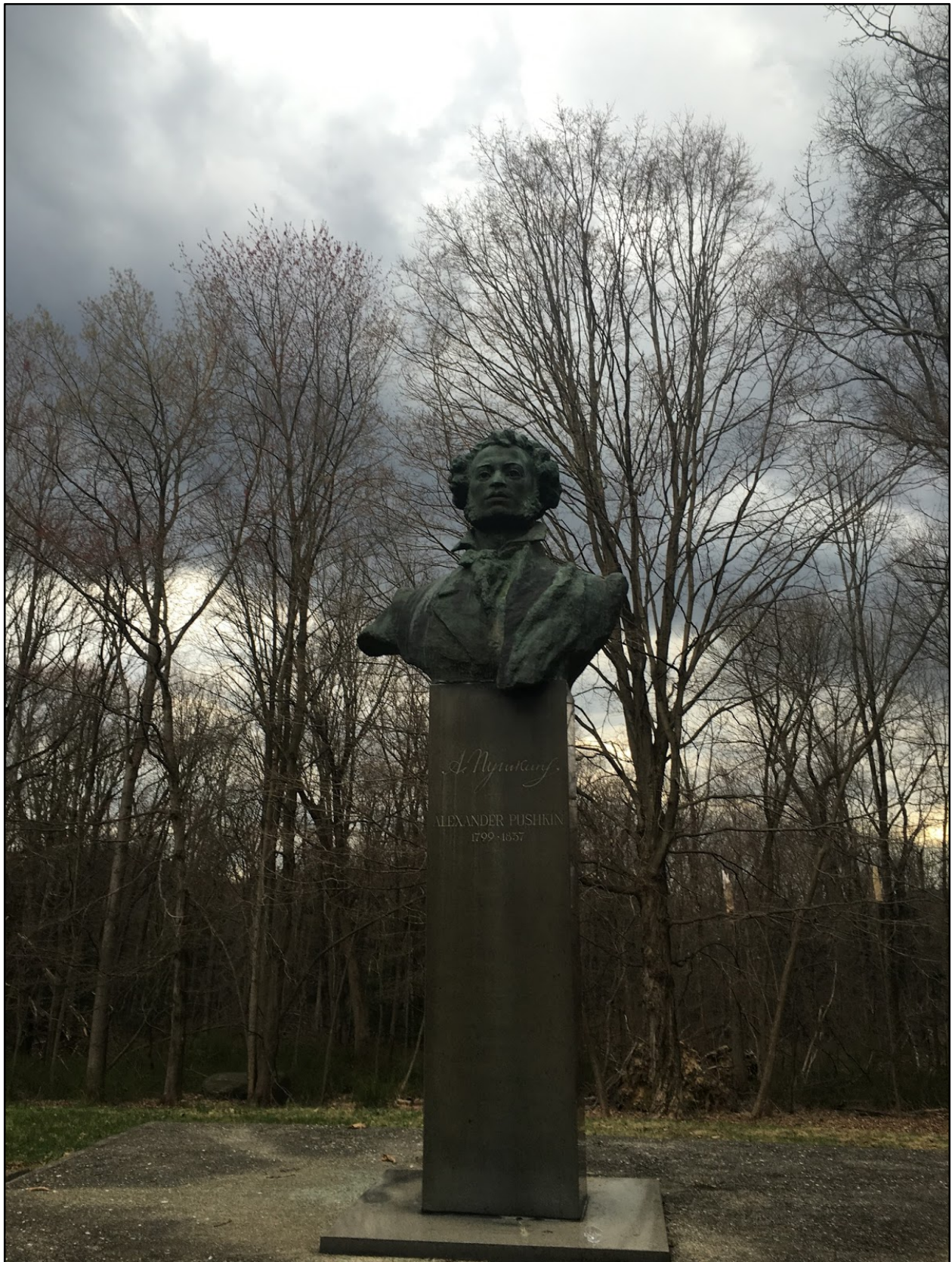
He was a serf and became a giant in the kingdom of human culture.

He was a self-taught man and showed professors and learned scholars new, bright and free roads....

"It was only after his death that Fate made him her best, most precious present-undying glory and everlasting joy which his creations shall again and again awaken in millions of human hearts."

---

YEVHEN SHABLIOVSKY, laureate of the Taras Shevchenko State Prize, corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences, Ukr. SSP



## ALEXANDER PUSHKIN: A SHINING GENIUS OF POETRY

The year 1799. An entry was made in the book of births, marriages and deaths of the Twelfth Day Church in Moscow. It read, "27th May, Sergiy Pushkin, a college registering clerk, tenant of Ivan Skvortsov.... hereby registers the birth of his son Alexander. Baptized on the eighth day in June..."

Without anybody knowing it, this entry proclaimed to the world the appearance under the sun of a person destined to become an outstanding man of letters, the founder of a new Russian literature, the creator of the Russian literary language.

Alexander Pushkin's father belonged to an old aristocratic dynasty, once prosperous but eventually reduced to a gradual decline. He was sufficiently educated for his time and wrote poems. His house was visited by well-known writers. There were often lively creative discussions to which little Sasha gave an interested ear. His uncle was a popular poet who helped his nephew develop an interest in literature.

His mother was the granddaughter of Hannibal, an Abyssinian whom Peter I had brought from Turkey. A son of an Ethiopian prince, Hannibal was a small boy when he had been captured, eventually to become a friend and follower of the Russian czar, and a reputed military engineer (Pushkin later portrayed him in his novel, *The Ethiopian of Peter the Great*).

The Pushkins entrusted the education of their children to French private tutors of both sexes. Alexander, however, was most influenced by his nurse Arina - an ordinary Russian village woman-who opened before the boy's eager eyes the wonderworld of Russian folk tales and awakened in him a love of folk poetry.

Beginning at age 7, Pushkin usually spent summers in Zakharovo, a village near Moscow where his grandmother had her estate. There, he took every opportunity -of which there were plenty -to have a closer look at the common folk, get acquainted with their daily life and learn to understand folk songs and the vernacular.

Pushkin's extremely abundant creative life was preceded by a period of "accumulation the stockpiling of impressions and knowledge. At 8, he could read and write and indulged in writing small comedies and epigrams about his teachers.

In 1811, a lycee was opened in Tsarskoe Selo, not far from St. Petersburg. It was a private college for young sons of the privileged nobility and specialized in cultivating literary tastes and inclinations.

On January 8, 1815, young Pushkin recited during examinations his poems under the general title *Reminiscences* in Tsarskoe Selo, dedicated to the occasion. He had written them under the fresh impressions of the Patriotic War against Napoleon (1812), when the victorious Russian troops had cleared the country of the invaders and

unfurled their banners on the streets and squares of conquered Paris, while Moscow had been still in smoking ruins.

Reminiscences were about ones love for ones Motherland, a keen interest in its past and the link between that past and the present. Some time after graduation from the lycee, Pushkin found himself lost in deep thoughts about the destiny of his country. He understood that the true life of its multimillion people was not in the noisy celebrations of the victory over Napoleon or in royal banquets. What was more, he could hear his people groan in shackles and saw their ardent desire to be free. It was then Liberty became the poet's Muse. He wrote the ode Freedom, calling on the "fallen slaves" to rise against the "tyrants of this world," and a number of other inciting freedom-loving poems.

His writings were copied and spread all he country, which caused the government serious concern, the more so that his verse stirred and inspired all those at variance with the autocratic regime.

Czar Alexander I decided to exile Pushkin to Siberia or the Monastery of Solovki. The poet's influential friends Karamzin and Zhukovsky pulled a lot of strings to have the Russian ruler change the place of exile for the Ukraine. The poet was sent to Yekaterinoslav (currently Dnipropetrovsk) under the pretext of being transferred to a different place of work.

That was Pushkin's first - but, alas, not the last - exile.

A man of humanistic thinking and profound patriotism, Pushkin was- unable to reconcile himself to slavery and arbitrary rule. Living in Russia was suffocating.

On December 14, 1825, the most advanced and educated part of Russian aristocracy publicly protested against autocratic despotism and serfdom. This event went down in history as the Decembrist uprising.

Pushkin belonged to the same aristocratic circles which gave Russia the Deceinbrists the first Russian revolutionaries. He wasn't merely a witness to those social developments. He was their participant, he glorified them in his verse, he was a powerful moral inspirer of the Decembrist exploit.

His political lyrics made a tremendous impact on the liberation movement in Russia. That was why the czarist government hated and persecuted the poet.

Pushkin went through a lot exile, severe censorship, slander, humiliation, blackmail, denunciation and the offending "appointment" as a gentleman of the emperor's bedchamber. Still, nothing was capable of crushing the poet's will. His was the voice of the people. As a poet and citizen, Pushkin all his life was true to the freedom-loving ideals of his youth.



One could compare the emergence of Pushkin amongst the literature of the past century to the appearance of the sun, dispersing heavy rain clouds and lending festive brightness to a gray day.

He was the author of the first realistic novel of manners in verse - Eugene Onegin - and the first historical folk novel, also in verse, Boris Godunov. His lyrics are strikingly poetic and their unmatched finesse reflects the entire splendor of the Russian tongue. His poems, his Small Tragedies present a whole gallery of images, created with the unmistakable touch of genius.

As generations change one another, people understand with increasing clarity the essence of Pushkin's creations - humanism, civic inspiration, all-embracing perception of life, singular aesthetic perfection in lyrics and other poems, his wonderful dramas and crystal-clear thoughtful prose.

Pushkin was the first to bring forth many far reaching problems of the Russian literature of the 19th century, such as people as the moving force in history and the relationships between an individual and society and between an individual and the State. In Small Tragedies and his lyrics, Pushkin applied the basic aspects of human existence love, creativeness and death.

More than anything else, the poet wanted to perpetuate in his works the history of the Russian nation, its movements and its attitude toward the general development of humanity. He was especially interested in following the destinies of peoples in Europe, the destinies of those fighting for the freedom of Spain and Greece, the Italian Carbonari and their French followers.

"Rise up, oh Greece, rise up!  
With reason did Vu strain your strength,  
With reason did the battles shake  
Olympus, the Pindus and Thermopylae."

It was clear to him that only struggle could bring people victory. There was another, specifically Russian sentiment added to his impassioned interest in the revolutionary events in Europe. Sympathy for all nations fighting against tyranny, violence and oppression of the human personality.

In publicistic articles, written in the last years of his life, Pushkin issued a death verdict to inhuman, exploitative British capitalism. The poet commented with as much indignation on the extermination of old Indian tribes and on slavery in America.

"Amazed, people saw democracy in all of its repulsive cynicism, cruel prejudices and unbearable tyranny. Everything noble and selfless, everything elevating human spirit is suppressed by irreconcilable egotism and thirst for comfort;.... black slavery amidst literacy and liberty.... greed and envy on the part of the constituency; humbleness and servility on the part of the land stewards; talent, forced to voluntary ostracism out of

respect to equality; a rich man dressed in rags, lest he should offend the haughty poor out in the street, whom he secretly despises - such is the picture of the American states."

A world of petty trading, selfishness, longing for personal power and continuous fortune-hunting - a world of new, bourgeois relationships which started to proclaim itself in the West with such cynicism already in Pushkin's time was opposed to, in the poet's writings, by a world of his own, a world of the greatest of humanists, a man so full of vitality who nourished his belief in a better future from his own profound patriotism, from his close ties with his people. At that period of reactionary darkness hanging over Europe, the poet sang glory to the ever bright sun of freedom, the immortal sun of human wisdom. Pushkin firmly believed in the triumph of the forces of this sun over darkness.

"Down with darkness, long live the sun!"

With his soul and talent, Pushkin found it hard to exist in the world around him. Yet, he retained a great degree of cheerfulness and mustered tremendous moral courage. He strove to find out about the sources and understand the reasons of the tragic condition of nations -in the first place, that of his own people. The poet was quite realistic when he wrote in *A Village how*

"gentry wild, bereft of heart, bereft of law,  
Used force and whips to make their own  
The tiller's fruits of work, his property,  
his time...  
Here, man is doomed to suffer in his yoke  
until his death..".

That was how the poet saw reality in his youth. Later, he understood, with even greater clarity, why the common folk "keeps silent" (*Boris Godunov*), while its leaders are being changed, why this folk never takes part in bloody coups d'etat which bring it nothing but another form of oppression. He understood how right people had been in rallying round Pugachev to wage an armed struggle against their oppressors (*The Captain's Daughter*).

His awareness of all this enabled Pushkin to write the following lines - something only a great poet, believing in the strength and genuineness of his relationships with his people, could write:

"I've built myself a monument  
That can't be built with hands.  
My kin won't let the path to it  
Get overgrown with weeds,"

Pushkin's literary genius harmoniously combined with the brilliance of his intellect and the beauty of his spirit. Inherent in him were that profound universality and that quick responsiveness to all things affecting humanity in different historical epochs which are found in only the most outstanding and exceptional personalities.

As a poet, he could, and did, reach such summits not only thanks to his inborn gift, but also because he turned out to be one of the most educated persons of his time. He was excellently versed in fiction literature of all countries, nations and periods. He was knowledgeable of different spheres in science and the scope of his intellectual interests was truly boundless. His private library boasted a variety of world authors, including works on history, linguistics, folklore, natural sciences, political economy and philosophy. He knew a number of foreign languages and took an interest in Hebrew, Arabic and Turkish. Specialists in philology were stunned by his expertise in linguistics and reputed historians spoke highly of Pushkin's studies in this science.

Pushkin's humanism, the realistic and folk character of his creations and the inherent wide range of his internationalist interpretation opened wide horizons before Russian literature and made it known the world over.

Here is a characteristic example. During his southern exile, the poet covered more than a hundred miles of Ukrainian soil. He breathed the fragrant Ukrainian air and lent an enchanted ear to the songs of Ukrainian minstrels-kobzars and lirnyks (lyre players).

Pushkin was quite familiar with Ukrainian folk songs and history. At the lycee he wrote the poem *Cossack*, an imitation of a Ukrainian folk song which he must have heard from his Ukrainian friends. His private library had several collections of Ukrainian folk songs.

He made notes (unfinished) on Ukrainian history. It is possible to presume that these notes were made in preparation for his projected *History of the People of Rus*.

Pushkin died at 38, in his prime, literally hunted down by the czar. He passed away without having realized so many of his creative plans, ready to enrich Russian and world culture with so many new accomplishments!

He saw and felt his tormentors close in on him but even when it came to the final showdown, he held himself in a remarkable noble and courageous manner. "I belong to my country and I want my name to stay spotless wherever it is known," he told his friends when they tried to talk him out of the fatal duel which involved his honor.

Czarism never succeeded in subjugating the dissenting and proud poet; neither could it deal with the continuously growing influence of his creations on the hearts and minds of millions. His literary heritage became another inexhaustible source of the development and endowment of the literatures of many nations, including, of course, Ukrainian. Pushkin was a favorite poet of Taras Shevchenko who knew all his works, many by heart. His prose, dramas and verse were in one or another way used by such

noted Ukrainian authors as Marko Vovchok, Panas Mymy, Mikhailo Staritsky, Pavlo Hrabovsky, Lesya Ukrainka, etc.

Early in his literary career, Ivan Franko translated into Ukrainian Pushkin's *A Crow Flies to a Crow* and the ballad *Mermaid*. In his declining years, the prominent Ukrainian poet bequeathed his readers with the translations of all Pushkin's dramatic works - from *Boris Godunov* and *Small Tragedies* to *Mermaid*. In addition to that, he wrote a critical-biographical survey on the brilliant Russian poet, in the text of which he included his versions of some Pushkin's lyrics.

After the October Revolution, Ukrainian translations of Pushkin were many times published and reprinted as separate collections and selected works. Translations by Maxym Rylsky came as a significant event in the cultural life of the Ukraine. Rylsky wrote in his autobiography that he had fallen deeply and eternally in love with Shevchenko, Pushkin and Mickieicz in his youth and that these poets were his most revere teachers. In his article *Russia's Eternal Love*, the well-known Ukrainian poet wrote that Pushkin, this great humanist, "is a man in the loftiest sense of this word," that he is alive even today and is near and dear to all nations, to all creative individuals. In Rylsky's, opinion, the humanness, life assertion and the belief in the strength of wisdom and in the people's happier future that are inherent in Pushkin are especially close to, and needed by, the present generation, as much as Pushkin's internationalism and his Muse who speaks to all peoples.

Another noted Ukrainian poet, Pavlo Tychyna, also regarded Pushkin's poetic writings as an example of supreme quality. To him Pushkin's thoughts "have grown and blossomed like an orchard" and his poetry was "a gigantic fountain with happiness," whose jets "ring with happiness," while feeding their life-giving water to the earth. Tychyna dedicated poems to Pushkin and translated his works - in the first place those which he thought to be especially rich in melodious variations and subtle phonetic techniques (i.e., *The Devils*, *Landslide*, *A Winter Evening*, etc.).

Pushkin was also translated by other prominent Ukrainian men of letters, including Mykola Bazhan, Volodymyr Sosyura, Andriy Nialyshko, Oles Honchar, Natalia Zabila and many others who felt influenced by the great Russian poet in their own original creations.

Pushkin borrowed everything that was the best from the treasury of his people's spirit and returned this debt to all mankind at a huge interest.

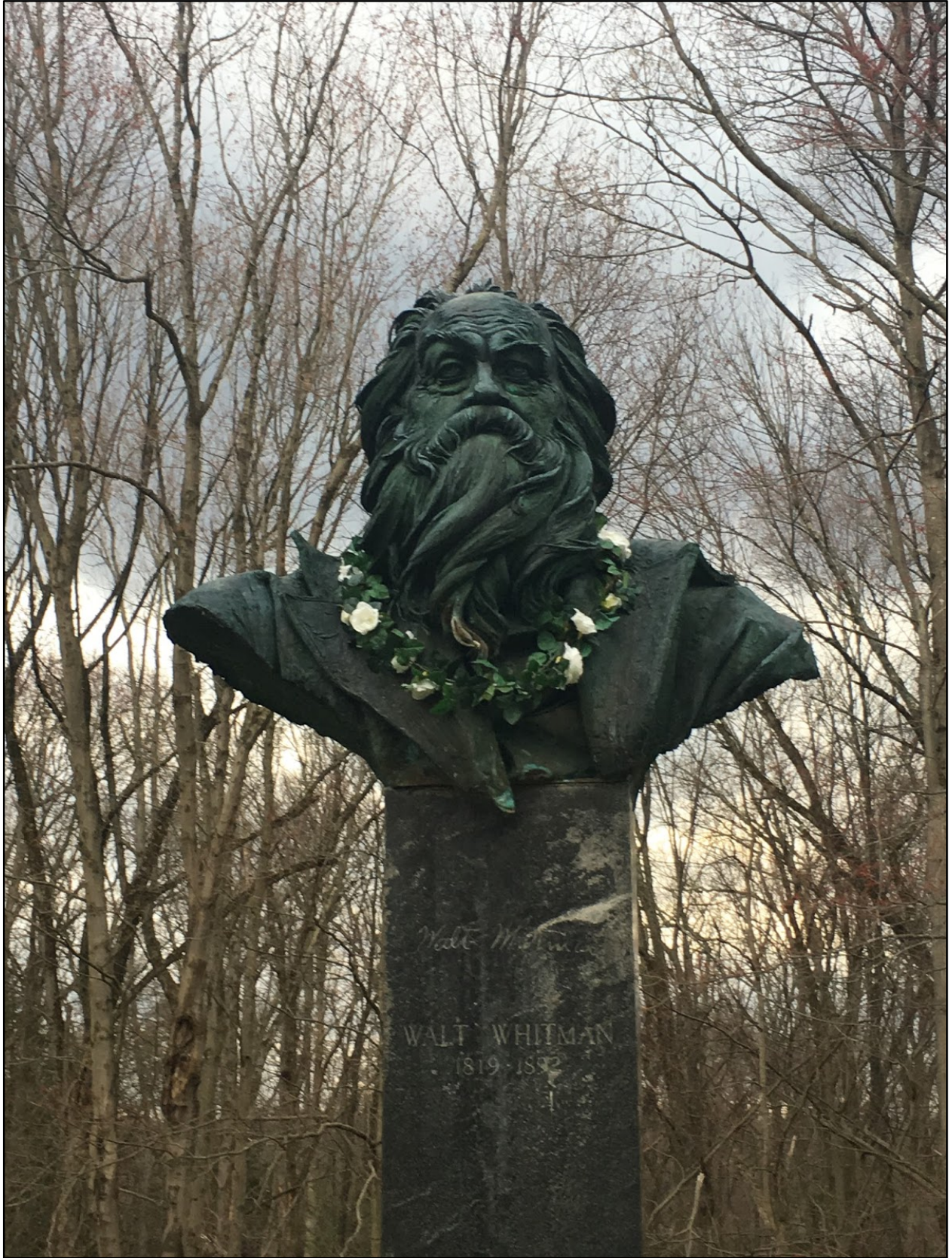
Nowadays, one of humanity's most cherished dreams - which in Pushkin's time was sheer fantasy, but in which the poet ardently believed - about the fraternity and unity of spirit of the entire human race is being translated into actual deeds.

"Then nations, their strife forgotten,  
Into one big family will merge."

Indeed, these lines are very close to all the nations struggling with growing resolution to set the planet Earth on the orbit of Peace, Labor and Brotherhood.

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*Walt Whitman*  
WALT WHITMAN  
1819-1892  
1

## WALT WHITMAN: THE IMMORTAL LEAVE OF GRASS

People emigrated to America to sell their labor and save some money. They wanted a happier life, which meant to them a home with a flower-bed, some well-fed and bred horses. Hardly any of them brought books along - except, maybe, the Bible.

The first of the Whitmans, a Dutch émigré, also brought the Bible. He was the sire of a dynasty in which it was a generally accepted fact that the life stories of saints exhausted the list of interesting information one could have acquired, had one even managed to read all the books in the world. The Bible was kept on the table close to the holy images. In the evenings, it was read out loud. Everybody in the family knew the Bible by heart. Decades later, Walt Whitman's researchers, having analyzed parallel repetitions in his verse and tropes, peculiar of Oriental poetry, would shrug and point out the Bible as the first, if not the only, literary school of the great American poet. They would also mention folk ballads and long émigré recitals to the accompaniment of the banjo (their rhythms could be easily traced in Leaves of Grass). As a matter of fact, even today Walt Whitman remains a puzzling phenomenon to most literary historians, as mysterious and even illogical as a rose bush that has grown overnight in a potato field.

The poet's childhood was typical of his time and country. As the custom dictated, the future author of Leaves of Grass was named after the breadwinner - Walter. Walter Whitman, Jr. was destined to build homes on Long Island, fix roofs and make doors for stables, fitting them with burglarproof locks. At least, that was what he was expected to do (there were nine children in the family and the destiny of each was determined from the very beginning). His parents didn't have the slightest notion that their eldest son would ignore the family plans, let alone change his first name to Walt, and that at age 36 he would publish a book of verse, entitled Leaves of Grass, which would immortalize the name of the Whitman's.

Europe was on the eve of horrible wars and stormy revolutions. Europe saw hundreds of thousands of her children off on their long émigré voyages to America. People were hastily leaving Europe for the New World, looking for peace and prosperity. However, nothing across the Atlantic heralded these benefits.

In America, close to four million black slaves were sweating and toiling, in a country of twenty-five million. They were like a tightly packed barrel of gunpowder, ready to explode any minute and tear the New World to shreds.

The Republican Party had just been formed. An Illinois lawyer by the name of Abraham Lincoln was delivering his first speeches and taking part in debates in front of whirling crowds. The whole country, it seemed, had become a disturbed anthill. One could very easily get lost in that multilingual hubbub. Walt Whitman's at that

period was quite unspectacular, and nobody blamed him for this. Nobody but his parents.

The country was getting to know itself. Revolutionary technological discoveries were changing its appearance. Steam boats were paddling and puffing up and down the Mississippi River. Thomas Alva Edison had already been born. Industrialists were learning to value not only muscles, but also the brain controlling them. And the slaves revolted. It was just like in ancient Egypt. Planters, armed with the newest of rifles, plunged into a manhunt. Rev. Beecher of Brooklyn declared that a Sharp gun held greater moral strength than the Bible. He was that same Beecher whom the admirers in Brooklyn revered almost as much as God Himself, that same Beecher whose church was a short distance from the Whitman's.

Walter Whitman, Jr. (his friends had already grown used to calling him Walt) was moving from the present-day America to an America of the future. The road he was to travel would be long and winding.

In 1848, Whitman visited seventeen states. By himself and on foot. He thought he needed such trips and so he consistently made them.

Dozens of his biographers would later comment on his anchoritic inclinations, seeking in them a source of mystical emotions, trying to understand why the poet felt just as comfortable in the thick of the forest as in human company (and, at times, even better). These biographers would unearth Whitman's first love in New Orleans. He was 29 and the woman flashed by and vanished, leaving the poet in one of his greatest emotional experiences of his entire life. As time went by, he remained single. Seclusiveness and reticence were Whitman's most conspicuous features. A man of few words when asked about his plans and persuasions, he liked to take his time in whatever he did, which before long won him the reputation of a lazy crank which he didn't seem to mind very much. Now and then, he lent his father a helping hand, building and selling cabins for new settlers and doing other chores. But whenever his role was that of an assistant, he became as clumsy and lacking in initiative as when he had worked as a reporter of Brooklyn Eagle - a provincial newspaper, in the print shop of which he had been later employed as a compositor.

Whitman found his goal when he was already halfway through his life. The second half of his life had very little in common with the first. Used to storing within himself every emotion, he was frantically afraid to betray to others what was in his heart. And yet, he opened his heart in his verse, as wide as very few men of the arts had ever done in the thousand-year history of civilization. His father, Brooklyn's reputed carpenter, slept on the dirt floor of his workshop. Walt also did not seek any comfort or conveniences. Till the end of his life, the poet didn't have a family and cared little for a permanent residence. That same soil which had served as a bed for his father suited Walt perfectly. This soil made the roads of his travels. He slept on it when tired and even spoke to it; he didn't seem to need any live interlocutors. This despite the fact that he had a great number of acquaintances. The poet abided by his inborn habit



in taking time making friends with people. He was deliberately unhurried in letting them into his inner circle. He dined out with them, took part in their discussions and, did what is generally regarded as maintaining social contacts. His choice of friends was quite versatile: actors, stevedores, literati, sailors, publishers, journalists and even vagabonds. As a child, he had been repeatedly told about human equality by his Quaker parents. Walt continued to believe in it with pathetic wholeheartedness. His poetry-this emotional outburst which many later considered quite unexpected-was ripening in his behavior and in his inclinations, just as it was in the manner in which he built his relationships with people. The poet was maturing toward his famous book the way a wild apple sapling, hardly noticeable in the thick of the brush, grows until it bears fruit. No matter what he did, Walt Whitman remained consistently strong in his life and world outlooks.

His journalistic work - attempts to do what may be described as quick touch of life - provided the forefront through which shimmered the first glimpse of what would become his world-famous poetic accomplishment. Strange as it may seem, the difference in literary quality between his newspaper and private literary endeavors remains stunning. In fact, his first steps toward authorship and recognition - his articles and the first story, Franklin Evans, even his early verse - turned out hopelessly naive. In these, one would be unable to spot even the slightest hint of the future blossom of Leaves of Grass. True, one should grant him, even at that stage, his inherent realism of description - probably, to be attributed to his journalistic experience - and the original manner of expression. Actually, this manner could be placed somewhere between poetry and prose.

His first work was published by The Democratic Review, alongside the poetry of Ralph W. Emerson, the then indisputable authority in English verse. Alas, this authority deigned to notice Whitman only when Leaves of Grass had come off the press. Everything written by Whitman before was simply shrugged off as something not worth discussing. The poet wrote in his foreword to Leaves of Grass:

"The land and sea, the animals, fishes and birds, the sky, of heaven and the orbs, the forests, mountains and rivers, are not small themes... but folks expect of the poet to indicate more than the beauty and dignity which always attach to dumb real objects... they expect him to indicate the path between reality and their souls."

Walt Whitman knew that what he sought and what he tried to create required a great deal of talent. Did he have it? Certainly.

In some way, a poet knows his worth. I mean a poet who is fully aware of his creative responsibility. Walt Whitman never tried to please his reader. He made him realize that the author must leave half of his job to him - understanding. The reader, Walt Whitman wrote, has constantly to take upon himself an appropriate share of the work. The poet did so himself, consistently and invariably. He did his poet's job which is honorable, although often enough uneasy and ungratifying. He not only thought up his images, but also forced his reader to consider them.

Walt Whitman, sporting a patriarchal beard, found himself at the head of a cultural youth movement in the New World. It happened when the media of the United States refused to recognize him, ridiculed and denounced him. It took America - or, rather, its most advanced strata - as many as fifty years to become aware of its own celebrated bard. A genius is always modern, so far as coming generations are concerned, and almost invariably he pays a bitter price to his contemporaries for his supremacy. Philistines coexist with the past - which is precisely the reason why anyone prophesying the future is feared and opposed by the Philistines. Almost all those whom Walt Whitman had sent or given his *Leaves of Grass* returned it to him. Ralph W. Emerson was the only one to sincerely congratulate the author (later, he was sorry he had done so). In his book, Walt Whitman exposed himself to thousands of eyes and none as much as gave him a sympathetic look. Instead, gossips about him were spread, his friends passed him by, looked away, and his parents felt scandalized by him. His own country, America, which would before long pride itself on his name as its glorious son, refused to accept him. One of the greatest humanists of the New World, the poet was destined to live through an inhuman period in the history of his native land.

*Leaves of Grass* must be read poem after poem, line after line. Quoted at random it says very little, because it is truly a book of verse in which poems are like stones put together to form a neat and everlasting structure. The form is dictated by the content, it is superimposed on the content and is inseparable from it. This book is extremely difficult to translate into other languages. It is simply unprecedented.

Whitman's followers would subsequently unite into a separate poetic school which would take decades to grow mature, reaching outside the United States. Only true talents would survive within its framework, those like Carl Sandburg (US) and Vladimir Mayakovsky, a prominent Soviet poet, born one year after Whitman's death, who would subsequently regard the brilliant American as one of his teachers.

Whitman professed his love for all of mankind. He sought to fill the entire planet with the kindness of his heart, because moral wretchedness was to him the gravest ailment of spirit. His poetic school taught not only the ability to write for all, but also the ability to love.

Once again, Whitman should not be quoted in order to be understood. Quoting simply doesn't suffice. However, what is said above concerning his emotional revelations and his moral criteria might well be used as an epigraph for each essay on humanism. Whitman thought in the categories of millions. Writing about a group of people, he singled out each individual. He himself was always a part of this group and constantly regarded himself from the side. Whitman fanatically believed in progress and was pained immensely by the realization that thousands and thousands of people followed those who didn't believe in humanity.

He searched every human soul for kindness and virtues and was pathetically Quixotic in striving to change the surrounding world.

Others did their best to ridicule him. His first poetic collection was considered not worth reading at all. Later, when Walt Whitman had added to it poems about Adam's children, a remarkably affectionate piece of lyrics, he was branded as an immoral character. But the poet remained tender and tranquil all through his ordeals, subsequently to become known as "the good gray poet." His kindness of heart was so unusual that it could survive even under the pressure of the surrounding unrestrained cruelty and hatred.

The Civil War was raging in America. The country was writhing, choking in its vain efforts to perform self-purification. The slaves and their holders, people who had come from all countries, had clashed on a battlefield where the only line dividing the hostile parties was one's attitude to the status of an individual and to the country's future. In a conversation with Horace L. Traubel, Walt Whitman formulated his credo when he said that he couldn't bring himself to love America and wish it prosperity at the expense of any other people. These thoughts were not only his own. When the poet voiced them, he found himself in the camp of Lincoln, the camp of that same Abraham Lincoln whose first steps in politics had coincided with the appearance, in print, of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and whose death inspired the poet to write his famous *O Captain My Captain!* - a requiem which is today known by every American student.

Whitman could not be placed on a par with prominent U.S. politicians, but each of his poetic lines seems to be prompted by the battles fought during his lifetime. As for his prophecies, he proved to possess a much greater foresight than many US. presidents.

In 1862, Whitman made a trip to Virginia in search of his brother George. He found him in, a hospital bed, suffering from a wound he had received from the Southerners. The hospital was in Washington, small verdant town on the Potomac-the river marking the boundary with the Southern states. The patients had been jammed into the available apartment buildings and the functioning of the personnel left much to be desired. Having considered the situation, Walt Whitman saw the only solution to the problem in getting himself employed, right on the spot, as an office clerk. He would thus make enough money to sustain his brother and other wounded soldiers of the North. He bought them bread, grapes, roasted meat and spent his leisure time by their beds. Ever sensitive to human tragedy, Whitman felt himself bend under the weight of the suffering of others. He wrote letters for the illiterate and read them messages from their relatives. He also read them the Bible -a book reminiscent of his childhood, a book to which the sick and those about to die often looked.

The great American poet reached the point when he felt he was merging into his country's very life. He no longer had his name, his former habits and sympathies. It was then he felt that what he did could well be called a sanitation job. And still, his new life had not begun from nowhere. It was a continuation of the daily existence of a young fellow from Long Island, a poet whose book of verse had made its debut in Brooklyn. Walt Whitman was going up the stairway of life, where each flight looked so very different. His experience as an employee at several hospitals in Washington

would let itself be remembered as the number of his admirers would continue to grow, the poet himself reaching acclaim (which, however, was very little, compared to his posthumous glory). But even then his recognition was rather appreciable.

After his 54th birthday, Walt Whitman remained the victim of his paralysis. Even when photographed with his friends, he wouldn't leave the safety of his armchair, his friends forming an amiable semicircle. Incidentally, the number of his friends had increased by that period.

His guests visited him in Camden, NJ, where he treated one and all with considerate cordiality. The number of his devotees in Europe increased very quickly. This was especially true of the British Isles where American poets were hailed even before domestic celebrities as is seen from the examples of Robert Frost, Thomas Stearns Eliot and many others.

Remarkably enough, America, then puritan in its literary tastes, did not accept Whitman in those of his works which, formally, were not his boldest. The unexpectedness of the Whitman literary phenomenon was altogether different. As at a feast of evil and cruelty, there suddenly appeared a bard who began to tell people about love and good and didn't try to play that hypocritical game which was pompously referred to as fine literature, cultivated for the farmer and family reading.

With Walt Whitman, everything was genuine. Even his rudeness was natural, so true to life that it simply couldn't make one feel ashamed, just as a worker is not ashamed of sweat running from his brow. He spoke to people as though speaking to himself, but people didn't understand him because they weren't used to such frankness. He addressed his verse to those, and on behalf of those, who had to work for a living. But even the laborers failed at first to see their poet in him. His words found no response in those for whom they were meant. Whitman was trying to instill in his reader his own love of life not the kind of life one sees printed on candy wrappers but real life, smelling of earth, milk, bricks and blood. Probably one of the most life-loving men in world poetry, he lived neglected and sick. But not once was he untrue to his sincere optimism. He was like a people which remains always vital and optimistic. He sought to merge with the people and become their spokesman. Pavlo Tychyna wrote in his poem *In a Cosmic Orchestra*:

"Mankind's voice is in the sound of three trumpets: Shevchenko, Whitman and Verhaeren. They are like bridges linking nations."

All in him - his rationalism and even a degree of monotony which suddenly unleashed themselves, becoming free and outpouring, like folk ballads - yielded to his genius which strove to speak to the whole world, being rooted in his native American soil. Some ten years before his death, Walt Whitman wrote that he would be happy if he were heard by the great peoples of Russia; if they entered into emotional contact with him. All peoples were great to him and although he expressed his respect for them in different words, he remained frank at all times.

The poet foresaw his contact with the world of tomorrow. Geniuses are entitled to such prophecies. Approaching his end and pondering over the transitoriness of all things in this world, he believed in the immortality of man's intellect and the deeds of man's hands. He found a stone block for his grave and specified the mound where he wished to find his last respite. The poet died on March 26, 1892. His friends read from the holy books of different nations over his grave and recited from the greatest poets, including Whitman. The brilliant American poet was already separated forever from his writings which started off on their lonely trips around the world. Newspapers carried large obituaries and hundreds attended the funeral. One of the speakers at the graveside said what then sounded as an appropriate exaggeration but was later corroborated a thousand times; "The brave words he spoke will continue to be heard long after all of us are gone..."

The greatest of the poets of the New World was born of the new nation on that continent- a sure sign of that nation's maturity. Poets glorify their people, write hymns and lullabies for them. Whitman was not only America's herald, but also its mirror, reflecting in his work and life all the intricate curves in the historical road of his country. He was a truly national poet who couldn't be born anywhere else but in America. Personalities such as his appear once in a lifetime and hundreds of years pass before their nations reach their level.

Walt Whitman was one of the most eloquent speakers of the worldwide assembly, assembly that has no intermissions and where debates about the future are endless.

Poetry is a very sensitive matter and more often than not is forbidding to free interpretation, especially in so far as giants like Whitman are concerned. In this sense, the fact that his works were translated in the Ukraine by Ivan Kulyk and Vasyl Mysyk -poets of exceptional caliber explains why his literary heritage has been found desirable and even necessary by several of our generations. Not so long ago, a collection of works of the great American hit the shelves and almost instantly disappeared, sotted by poetry hunters. New publications are in order. The literary life of Walt Whitman in the Ukraine continues. It is as perpetual as the immortal Leaves of Grass in our hearts.

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VITALIY KOROTYCH, writer



## YANKA KUPALA: A GREAT BARD OF BYELORUSSIA

Kupala is the pen name of the outstanding Byelorussian poet, Ivan Lutsevich. According to folk legends, the short July night of Ivan Kupala (St. John the Baptist) - a very popular Slavic holiday - is when fern begins to bloom in the thick of the forest. This herb is believed to possess some magic power. He who finds it and tears away its flower shall forever be happy...

The son of a landless Byelorussian peasant, Dominik Lutsevich, Ivan (or simply Yanka) sought the legendary flower of happiness not in the thick of the forest but in the depths of human life. Not for himself, but for his downtrodden people who for centuries had been destined to bear the unbearable yoke of national and social oppression.

For the first time, the name of Yanka Kupala appeared on May 15, 1905, in the newspaper Severo- Zapadny Krai (The North-Western Land), under his poem A Muzhik. Both the period and the circumstances surrounding his poetic debut seem unusual and significant, as tokens of the future ascend, above the horizon of Byelorussian and world culture, of not simply another literary star, but of a whole galaxy. Together with Kupala, or thanks to him, such extraordinarily endowed personalities as Tsiotka, Maxim Bogdanovich and Yakub Kolas emerged. However, Yanka Kupala was the first, the founder of a new Byelorussian literature, its architect and constructor. He was that trailblazer which is found in the culture of every nation, as Pushkin was in Russian culture, Shevchenko in Ukrainian, Mickiewicz in Polish, and so on.

The special place which Kupala occupies in Byelorussian literature may be determined from the words of Yakub Kolas, his distinguished contemporary; "Differences in genre notwithstanding, the creations of Yanka Kupala seem to me as a single book, even as one song glorifying the work of the people.

"Half of this song is angry and sad -these are the works of the pre-October period, when the poet used his inspired verse to place himself, courageously and selflessly, in the camp of those fighting for the social and national liberation of their people."

"The second half is cheerful, permeated with the enthusiasm of creativeness. It belongs to the period when the Byelorussian people achieved their statehood and, guided by experienced leaders, embarked upon the road leading to socialism and, further, to communism."

Kupala launched Byelorussian literature to high world-embracing orbits, freeing it from the triteness of unimaginativeness, stylishness and bookishness. His civic determination and ardent enthusiasm of an innovator gave birth to new ideas and,

more importantly, to new poetic forms, genres, rhythms and tones, all marked by finesse and stylistic flair.

However, Kupala's major contribution to literature in the period before 1917 was his voice of social protest. In his poem *The Song of a Free Man*, he openly calls on the people to wage a struggle. Czarist censors qualified it as "antiState," since, reading it, "one cannot but notice an open encouragement of obviously rebellious actions."

His humane verse, his "love of the sun" ("I bow to the Earth and the Sun, / I'm a son of the Earth, a free son of the Sun.") brought him close to his great contemporaries like Maxim Gorky, Ivan Franko and Lesya Ukrainka.

After the October Revolution, the poet envisioned his nation liberated, free from its social and national shackles. In place of zhaleika folk songs of grief, the poet, with trumpet in hand, urges his kin toward building a new life.

Living for twenty years under Soviet rule proved an important landmark on the poet's road toward creative accomplishment. This period dictated new poetic themes, ideas and images.

One by one, his collections of verse were published, having their effect on extensive reading circles. His works were translated into other languages -particularly into Russian which made Yanka Kupala known internationally.

In his verse after the Revolution, his lyrical hero seems to merge with the masses, reaching that supreme unity of which Pavlo Tychyna, a celebrated Soviet Ukrainian poet, once said, "I'm the people." At the same time, Yanka Kupala paid much attention to the individuality of his characters, thus asserting the impetuous progress of the personality and the richness of the soul of the people, as revealed in the new social epoch.

The bard of rejuvenated Byelorussia, Kupala was amongst the first to lay golden bridges between his and other nations. In 1921, he translated into Byelorussian *The Internationale* and *The Lay of the Host of Igor*. He was an internationalist poet. As an admirer of Pushkin, Shevchenko, Mickiewicz and Slowacki, as a keen interpreter of the Indian epic *Mahabharata* and the Armenian David Sasunski, the Byelorussian poet glorified brotherhood of nations and literatures in *The Ukraine*, *Georgia*, *To Djambul*, *To Shining Shota Rustaveli*, *On the Memory of Suleiman Stalski*.

When the Soviet country was invaded by the Nazi hordes, the poet raised his wrathful voice at the All-Slavic Assembly in Moscow. Together with outstanding Ukrainian cultural figures Maxym Rylsky and Olexander Dovzhenko, he signed *The Appeal to Brother Slavs*.



Yanka Kupala was bound to the Ukraine and her literature by ties of unbreakable, fraternal affection. Ukrainian themes, national coloration and Ukrainian folk images are found in such works as *Am I a Cossack?*, *I Saw It*, *Bondarivna*, etc.

Shevchenko's *Kobzar* was one of the books Kupala read in his youth. Later, the Byelorussian poet admitted that this book became that stimulus which stirred him to creative awakening, to becoming aware of himself as a son of an oppressed nation.

In 1909, Yanka Kupala wrote two poems *The Memory of Shevchenko* (February 25, 1909) and *Shevchenko's Memory* - which started the Byelorussian Shevchenkiana poetic series. In the first of these impassioned creative tributes, the Byelorussian bard acknowledges the truly boundless influence of the *Kobzar's* revolutionary Muse on vast social strata and expresses heartfelt admiration of this impact as a son of the Byelorussian people:

In the north, in the south, in the east,  
In the west, where the sun sets,  
The *Kobzar* plucks the strings of human souls.  
In a cabin, a palace, a prison cell, a tavern,  
He stirs hearts as a warden does with his bells.

His verse reaches us every time,  
We listen happily to our neighbor,  
We add our flowers to his garland.  
Brother, dear, Byelorussians salute you.

This motif is stressed even more in the second poem. Kupala refers to the *Kobzar* as the father of not only Ukrainians but also Byelorussians.

Shevchenko's image prompted Kupala to write the epic poem *The Fate of Taras*. It turned out as a kind of life story of the great Ukrainian bard, full of charming lyricism, a soft poetic narration.

The meter of *The Fate of Taras* is characteristic of Shevchenko's *kolomyjka* - a lively Western Ukrainian folk song or dance. Maxim Gorky, the great Russian author, noted at one time that he knew of no other poet, except Yanka Kupala, who had so completely and profoundly utilized the *Kobzar's* creative principles.

Early in his poetic career, Yanka Kupala translated *A Thought*, *To Gogol* and other works of Shevchenko. In the post-October period, Kupala edited his earlier translations of Shevchenko and began to work on others with great enthusiasm. His pen lent new splendor to such poems as *A Dream*, *My Testament*, *The Caucasus*, *Katerina*, *The Night of Taras* and *Ivan Pidkova*. In fact, most of Kupala's translations of Shevchenko served as the basis of the first complete Byelorussian version of *Kobzar* which he edited.

In 1939, Byelorussia celebrated Shevchenko's 125th birth anniversary, together with the rest of the country. Yanka Kupala appeared with a number of speeches and articles, dedicated to the occasion.

In the 1930's and 1940's, Kupala often visited the Ukraine. He readily admitted, "I love Ukrainian literature - perhaps, more than any other. Needless to say, Shevchenko remains my number one Ukrainian poet. Of modern poets, Pavlo Tychyna takes first place..." His personal contacts with Ukrainian literati contributed fruitfully to the enhancement of unity between Byelorussian and Ukrainian literature. One of the first Byelorussian academicians, Kupala was voted a member of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR. To this end, one is reminded of Maxym Rylsky who said, "I don't exaggerate when I say that, to Yanka Kupala, the Ukraine was like a second homeland."

Beginning in the 1900's, his name appeared in the, Ukrainian reading circles. A prominent Ukrainian Slavist, Ilarion Svetsitsky, included Kupala's *Why Do You Sleep?* and *There*, in the language of the original, into his book *The Renaissance of Byelorussian Literature* (1908). He kept in touch with the poet who supplied him with his books and manuscripts. Much was also done to popularize Yanka Kupala by Tsiotka (lit., Auntie, pen name of Aloiza Pashkevich, a prominent Byelorussian revolutionary poetess) who spent some time in Lviv.

Maxim Gorky sent Mikhailo Kotsyubynsky his translation of Kupala's *And Who Goes There* together with the notes, pointing out that "this Byelorussian hymn" had excited him tremendously. In 1916, this poem was recited, in Byelorussian, at a poetry evening in Poltava. According to those present, it made a great impression.

Many of Kupala's books were printed dozens of times in the Ukraine. A number of leading Ukrainian men of letters contributed their translations of the poet and dedicated to him their own verse. The unforgettable Maxym Rylsky perhaps most eloquently presented the image of his Byelorussian counterpart. He wrote a poetic triptych, entitled *To Yanka Kupala*, *For Yanka Kupata* and *Yanka Kupala*. The last of the three has the following lines:

Those in acquaintance with him  
Shall never forget  
The human warmth in his eyes;  
He was the knight of a lofty dream  
And fought what was false and sly.  
He cut a precious stone  
of the Byelorussian tongue,  
Working on it with so much loving care.

He was a wonder himself,  
Held in esteem by the nations of kin,  
Just like Shevchenko was held.

He taught us to respect  
A pair of able hands the best.

Down in history our Yanka went,  
As ever alive as the image, with wings,  
Of his Byelorussian land."

The first rays of the hot July sun illuminate a sizable spot of land not far from a log house in the village of Vyazintsi where a child, christened Yanka, was born almost one hundred years ago. It is here that the traditional Kupala festivals of poetry are held, attracting people from neighboring towns and villages and from the Byelorussian capital. Yanka Kupala created an imposing poetic image of his people, revealing for all to see the wealth of their soul in his verse, epic, publicistic and epistle writings and plays.

By tradition, the General Assemblies of the UN are attended by celebrated Byelorussian men of letters as members of delegations of the Byelorussian SSR. All of these have, at one time or another, been able to visit Arrow Park to place flowers at the foot of the monument to their famous countryman which proudly stands beside the monuments to Taras Shevchenko, Alexander Pushkin and Walt Whitman. The song of the Byelorussian lyre is heard amidst the swishing of the ocean surf, the rustling of copper-red maples. In the poet's staring eyes, one can discern the glimmering reflection of an ever-flaming torch. That torch gives the eerie light of the Kupala night, the light recaptured from the sinister darkness of the night. That torch is being raised high over the bearer's head, so it can be seen by all who are determined to be "called human."

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POMAN LUBKIVSKY, writer



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