



# Realizing Metaphors: Alexander Pushkin and the Life of the Poet (Wisconsin Center for Pushkin Studies)

*David M. Bethea*

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Readers often have regarded with curiosity the creative life of the poet. In this passionate and authoritative new study, David Bethea illustrates the relation between the art and life of nineteenth-century poet Alexander Pushkin, the central figure in Russian thought and culture. Bethea shows how Pushkin, on the eve of his two-hundredth birthday, still speaks to our time. He indicates how we as modern readers might "realize"—that is, not only grasp cognitively, but feel, experience—the promethean metaphors central to the poet's intensely "sculpted" life. The Pushkin who emerges from Bethea's portrait is one who, long unknown to English-language readers, closely resembles the original both psychologically and artistically.

Bethea begins by addressing the influential thinkers Freud, Bloom, Jakobson, and Lotman to show that their premises do not, by themselves, adequately account for Pushkin's psychology of creation or his version of the "life of the poet." He then proposes his own versatile model of reading, and goes on to sketches the tangled connections between Pushkin and his great compatriot, the eighteenth-century poet Gavriila Derzhavin. Pushkin simultaneously advanced toward and retreated from the shadow of his predecessor as he created notions of poet-in-history and inspiration new for his time and absolutely determinative for the tradition thereafter.

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