Alexander Pushkin stands in a unique position as the founding father of modern Russian literature. In this Companion, leading scholars discuss Pushkin’s work in its political, literary, social and intellectual contexts. In the first part of the book, individual chapters analyse his poetry, his theatrical works, his narrative poetry and historical writings. The second section explains and samples Pushkin’s impact on broader Russian culture by looking at his enduring legacy in music and film from his own day to the present. Special attention is given to the reinvention of Pushkin as a cultural icon during the Soviet period.

No other volume available brings together such a range of material and such comprehensive coverage of all Pushkin’s major and minor writings. The contributions represent state-of-the-art scholarship that is innovative and accessible, and are complemented by a chronology and a guide to further reading.

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
PUSHKIN

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ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Mass meeting, 1937, near the Pushkin Monument on Tverskoi Boulevard, Moscow. The verse at the bottom of the billboard of Pushkin is from his ‘Epistle to Siberia’. Reproduced from Iu. Molok, *Pushkin v 1937 godu: materialy i issledovaniia po ikonografii*, Moscow, NLO, 2000, p. 27

2. Boris Knoblok, poster, 1936. The verses are the same as those quoted on the billboard (figure 1) and describe the day when freedom will come ‘and on the ruins of autocracy / will our names be written’. Here, the names of Stalin, Pushkin, Molotov, Gorky, Kaganovich and Mayakovsky are written on the red volumes carried by the masses. Reproduced from Molok, *Pushkin v 1937 godu*, p. 55

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NOTE ON THE TEXT


Russian is transliterated according to the Library of Congress conventions except in the case of well-known surnames given in familiar form, e.g. Dostoevsky, rather than -skii. Russian first names are given in the original spelling, e.g. Petr rather than Peter and Ivan. For the sake of familiarity, however, the English spelling of names like Maria and Natalia is preferred, as it is with the name of a well-known figure like Pushkin, which appears as Alexander rather than Aleksandr. Following standard practice, rulers’ names are given in their more familiar form (Nicholas I rather than Nikolai).

Until February 1918, Russia used the Julian (Old Style) calendar, which ran thirteen days behind the Gregorian (New Style) calendar used in Western Europe. To avoid complication, dates given in this volume are in the Old Style.

1811  Matriculates at the newly founded Imperial Lycée at Tsarskoe Selo as a member of its first class; makes lifelong friends with Baron Anton Del’vig.

20 June 1814  Makes his debut in print with the publication of two poems in the literary journal the *Herald of Europe*.

1815  Beginning of a lifelong friendship with the older poet and influential figure Vasilii Zhukovskii, who predicts his future greatness.

1816  Joins Arzamas, the most progressive and western of literary groups in St Petersburg.

June 1817  Graduates from the Lycée. Secures an appointment in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

April 1820  At the order of Alexander I, Pushkin is investigated for subversive behaviour linked to the inflammatory ode ‘Liberty’.

1820  July publication of long poem *Ruslan and Ludmila* to popular and critical acclaim.

1820–24  Period of exile in southern Russia. From the autumn of 1820 based in Kishinev until June 1823, followed by time in Odessa from July 1823 until July 1824.

December 1824  *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* is published. In August, Pushkin transfers from the south to confinement on the family estate at Mikhailovskoe until 1826.

1825  *Boris Godunov* completed, Pushkin has affair with the peasant girl Olga Kalashnikova.
11 January 1825  Pushkin visited by his Lycée classmate Ivan Pushchin, who hints at secret political activity.

18 February 1825  Publication of chapter 1 of *Evgenii Onegin*, with sales of 700 copies in February, decreasing steeply in the next months.

1 March 1825  Death of Alexander I.

14 December 1825  Coronation of Nicholas I disrupted by the Decembrists.

1826  *Poems of Alexander Pushkin*, Part I. In September, Nicholas I pardons him and becomes the poet’s personal censor. Possibly advised by the critic and government agent Faddei Bulgarin, Nicholas blocks *Boris Godunov* for publication.

1827  Publication in July of the narrative poems *Brothers-Brigands* and *The Gypsies*, written in 1824. Publication in November of the burlesque poem *Count Null* to much indignation in prudish court circles.

1828  Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of *Evgenii Onegin* published to tepid reviews and modest sales. Second edition of *Ruslan and Liudmila* sells well. Investigated for the illicit circulation of stanzas from the poem ‘Andrè Chénier’ under the title of ‘14 December’.

18–19 August 1828  Real threat of a second period of exile owing to the blasphemous *The Gabrieliad*. Made to sign a declaration stating that his verses will not henceforth be circulated in public without the censor’s approval under a threat of severe punishment. Also placed under surveillance, which is to continue until his death.

1829  March publication of *Poltava; Poems of Alexander Pushkin*, Parts I and II.

May 1829  First proposal to Natalia Goncharova. Pushkin travels to Georgia and the Caucasus, recorded in *A Journey to Erzerum*.

January 1830  First number of the *Literary Gazette*, edited by Del’vig, to which Pushkin contributes.

Spring 1830  Del’vig publishes critical review of Faddei Bulgarin’s play *Dmitrii the Pretender*, hinting at plagiarism of Pushkin and Bulgarin’s status as a spy. Open hostilities prompt malicious epigrams from Pushkin;
Bulgariin and his allies plague Pushkin henceforth. Engagement to Natalia Nikolaevna Goncharova, a beauty and favourite at court. Follows the July Revolution in France avidly.

September–December 1830
‘First Boldino autumn’. Among other works, Tales of Belkin, The Little House in Kolomna, Onegin’s Journey (original chapter 10 of the novel), the Little Tragedies, and over thirty lyric poems are composed.

January 1831
Boris Godunov published, 400 copies sell on the day of publication; receives 10,000 roubles from the publisher Smirdin, much of which goes to pay off debt.

18 February 1831
Marries Goncharova (having loaned her impoverished parents 11,000 roubles for the bride’s dowry).

June 1831
The couple live in Tsarskoe Selo. The Tales of Belkin published.

August 1831
Russia retakes Warsaw, ending the Polish insurrection. Pushkin publishes the patriotic ‘To the Slanderers of Russia’, highly regarded at court but deemed craven by others.

November 1831
Nicholas I grants Pushkin permission to undertake historical research in the state archive, has him readmitted to a nominal position in the Foreign Office with an annual stipend of 5,000 roubles paid from July 1832.

Winter 1832
Chapter 8 of Evgenii Onegin published. Beginning of acute financial problems.

March 1832

7 January 1833
Election to membership in the Russian Academy.

February–March 1833
Archival research on the Pugachev rebellion. First sketches of The Captain’s Daughter penned. Travels to the Orenburg and Kazan districts to research the history of the Pugachev Rebellion.

March 1833

6–31 October 1833
‘Second Boldino autumn’: ‘The Queen of Spades’, Angelo, several fairytales, the great lyric ‘Autumn’, and The Bronze Horseman composed. Financial woes mount and the family estate is almost forfeited to creditors.

1 January 1834
Appointment as Junior Gentleman of the Chamber.
**CHRONOLOGY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 1834</td>
<td>‘The Queen of Spades’ published. Researches the history of the reign of Peter the Great, works in Voltaire’s Library in St Petersburg.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>As editor publishes first volume of the journal <em>The Contemporary</em>. Three more volumes appear during the course of the year, including his only novel <em>The Captain’s Daughter</em>, completed on 19 October, and published in December in volume iv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 March 1836</td>
<td>Death of Pushkin’s mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26–29 January 1837</td>
<td>Wounded in duel and death.</td>
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Pushkin's Russia