

Title: Pushkin's History in Portraits

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Since *Table-talk* was neither bound nor published during Pushkin's lifetime, critics and scholars have felt free to add or omit fragments from the collection as they see fit. And, as if playing with the pieces of a puzzle, scholars continue to regroup and reshuffle the fragments of *Table-talk* in the hope of stumbling upon something, aside from the given title, that may indicate the author's intention. More often than not, these scholars take *Table-talk* to be self-evident: a collection of anecdotes to be grouped with Pushkin's historical texts of the latter half of his career. Others have looked beyond the content and classify the text as autobiography. The following reading of *Table-talk* reconciles these two interpretations and realigns the historical and the personal by understanding the portrait as an organizing principle, a narrative technique. Even in the role of historian, Pushkin could not shake the impulses of a Romantic poet. This being so, his approach to historiography arises as a two-fold project: it simultaneously chronicles his private life and public events. The balance between private and public in his historical writing, however, grows unstable as the poet moves farther from the public eye into isolation. As his last contribution to his historiography, *Table-talk* is Pushkin's attempt at developing an isolationist history. This history is recorded as an intimate exchange between individual and literary portrait.