

Title: Арбенин без маски, или Жизнь поэта: Lermontov's Unknown Tribute to Pushkin

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An older husband, driven to madness by jealousy, despite all his brilliance. A younger wife, beautiful, trustful, and innocent, despite all the incriminating evidence. A carefree socialite, recklessly pursuing his passions. A ruthless intrigant on a vengeful mission. A heartless crowd, amused by the cruel game. A senseless murder in the endgame.

One significant difference between *Masquerade's* Arbenin and his Shakespearean prototype is in the fact that this Nikolaevan Othello did not have any exotic blood running through his veins that could be used as a justification of his violent temper. Or did he?

Using intertextual references, as well as biographical and epistolary data, I argue that the character of Evgenii Aleksandrovich Arbenin, apart from exemplifying the emerging literary genius of its creator, was also Lermontov's attempt at a psychological portrait of his famous older contemporary, whom he glorified posthumously just a short while later.

Admitting that every Russian poet, beginning with Lermontov, could not escape objectifying at some point his or her phantomic reality of "my Pushkin," I propose to take into consideration that before *Death of a Poet* (1837) there was *Masquerade* (1834-1836), in which Lermontov presented his very own, inherently dark, covertly demonic, and still living "slave of honor."