

Thoughts on Mark Vovchik's Writings: Critical Sketch

Article VI

D. I. Pisarev (1840 - 1868), writer

*This article, from "Collected Writings of Pisarev", vol. 2, p. 103
(Moscow, 2000), was translated in 2006 by M. Ishutkina*

The difference between an artist and an ordinary human, who is not marked by a stamp of ingenuity, consists of greater imagination, ability to answer every question to his heart's content and his ability to fully accept and process in his soul all the images which will only glide over the soul of an ordinary, and perhaps even clever and educated, observer. An ordinary observer would have to study, examine and listen carefully, but even after many years of hard effort and observation, he would barely be able to recreate the detailed image of a place or people which comprised the subject of his study. Let us put in his place a talented artist. When such a person occasionally directs his attention to the matter, his agile face briefly assumes a thoughtful expression and his eyes light up. That is it. He does not stare, fidget or inquire. Should a sound of an unfamiliar song reach his sensitive ears, there will again be a minute of concentrated attention and thoughtfulness followed by the realization of the hidden meaning behind the unknown sounds and understanding as to which *human* feelings are expressed in them and which string of the *human* soul resonates with the melody. These impressions then are imprinted on his soul, like an image is imprinted through an obscure action of the sun on a metal plate or on chemical paper. They will eventually seem to be forgotten and can be thought to have disappeared because nothing in the appearance of a true artist or his attitude projects the volcanic work inside of him. This work takes over his soul independently of his will and is impossible to bear by persons in poor health because it exhausts and destroys their bodies, makes them age prematurely and puts them into an untimely grave. This period for an artist is akin to pregnancy, the time of dreary expectation. It finally gets resolved at a moment marked by solemnness, holiness and greatness. An artist awaits that moment both with fear and hope, like a woman, tenderly loving her husband, awaits the moment of parturition. An artist anticipates the approach of that moment, which feels heavy and stifling, he feels suffocated by the numerous and colorful images that fill his soul beyond its capacity and kick and move like a baby in the mother's womb wishing to break free, even though they are not quite ready yet to penetrate the integument and face the world in Minerva's fashion.

If an artist is a musician, then the feelings and the images which evolve in his soul try to escape before they are fully defined. At such a stage an artist does not quite fully understand which feelings possess him, but an uncontrollable desire attracts him to a musical instrument and sounds pour out of his soul like waves. These sounds astound the listener and, skipping the thought process, directly penetrate his soul. Like an artist, the listener does not fully understand what is happening and cannot explain his emotional state. He is simultaneously excited, troubled and overwhelmed. The goal has been achieved: an artist satisfied his need of expression and was appreciated directly through emotions. A mysterious connection has been formed between an artist and the listener, like the mysterious understanding which exists between the hearts of the lovers and which proves that they are both humans and they both have similar feelings, strengths, desires, needs, and interests.