5

Onegin:
The Fallen Angel

In a recent article on the author-narrator in *Onegin* and his relationship to the other principal male characters, Onegin and Lenskii, J. Thomas Shaw formulates the basic postulates which must guide any discussion of their role in the work. These can be resumed as the paradigmatic nature of these three figures, their differing roles symbolizing different stages in the search of man, or at least of Pushkin the individual, for maturity, and the function of poetry as a definition of maturity and human excellence:

> Actually, the entire novel suggests the importance of being poetic. Perhaps the basic underlying question of the novel is not simply the stages of development, but how a poet (or the poetic in man) can develop to maturity and remain, or once more become, poetic. From this point of view, both chief male characters of the fictional story fail to measure up, in that each insufficiently manifests the genuinely poetic. (1981,35)

By 'poetic,' of course, Shaw means a particular attitude to the world and to experience which is manifested in the poet and his poetry and enables him to survive and achieve serenity where others fail. In this chapter I propose to examine the principal male characters, especially Onegin, in the light of these insights and challenge some of the traditional notions about them, notions which have persisted down to our time.

As we have seen in the first chapter, traditional nineteenth-century criticism insisted on Onegin's 'typicality,' a position which was reflected in orthodox Soviet writings. This position is the maaifestation of the 'realist' or, as I would like to call it in this chapter, the 'mimetic'

interpretation of *On egin* , and was the result of a reading of the work through the prism of later, realist writings. Initially, perhaps, the interpretation of Onegin as a 'typical' representative of his age was established through the readers' expectations, evoked through the presentation and form of Chapter One: since a 'typical' day of Onegin is described, and since the genre adopted is that of the sociological portrait with its details of everyday existence, then surely Onegin must be the 'typical' young man of his time, who is seen to be a young 'dandy' with affected manners. This defective logic was reinforced by the apparent fitting of *Onegin* into a series or set of titles: Karamzin's *Rytsar' nashego vremeni (A Knight of Our Times!,* Lermontov's *Geroi nashego vremeni (A Hero of Our Time),* and so on, through a 'creative misreading' of *Onegin,* to the Rudins and Lavretskiis, the Oblomovs and the Bazarovs of nineteenth-century Russian realism, each of which tried in some way to realize this goal of 'typicality.'

The notion of 'type' very quickly begins to break down when subjected to closer scrutiny - is it, to put it simply, the lowest common denominator or the highest common factor of the generation? Is a typical character ordinary, the statistical average, or is he exaggerated, a caricature possessing the 'typical' qualities of the age to an extreme degree? Even if we have accepted the latter proposition, we have simply moved the question a step back, for now it must be asked what the 'typical' qualities are, and how they are determined. Even a cursory glance at such figures as Oblomov and Bazarov suggests that, whatever their authors and audience thought they were, they are interesting not because they resemble their contemporaries but because they are different. It is some extreme facet of their make-up - Oblomov's laziness, Bazarov's nihilism - which makes them command the reader's attention, not their 'typicality.'

It is perhaps not news that the sterile debate about the realistic 'type' was, and is, a chasing after shadows. What I intend to dispute in the following pages is the notion that Onegin was a normal young man who was somehow representative of his age (which is what I take the word 'type' to mean). Even the foreword that was placed before Chapter One when it was first printed, if read carefully, does not bear out such an assumption: 'The first chapter is in a way a whole. It contains the description of the life of a young man in Petersburg society at the end of 1819' *(PSS,* VI, 638). Pushkin's statement is laconic, yet specific: we are to read the description of the life of a certain young man at a certain place at a certain time. The conclusions are left for the reader to draw for himself. No notion of typicality is imposed.

This is not surprising, since if we examine Onegin closely we find that, far from being the representative of his age, he is a very unusual individual, and that he is defined, not in terms of what he is, but rather in terms of what he is not, or more precisely, in terms of the activities that he avoids. Onegin has to be seen, that is to say, against the background of his age, an age that ascribed very clear roles to individuals. Lotman, in his article on theatricality and theatre in early nineteenthcentury Russia, notes the pervasiveness of these roles:

> Gentry life at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries was built not only on the basis of a hierarchy of conduct, created in turn by the hierarchical nature of post-Petrine governmental structure, organized by the table of ranks, but also as a set of possible alternatives ('service/ retirement,' 'life in the capital/life on one's estate,' 'Petersburg/Moscow,' 'military service/civil service,' 'the Guards/the army,' etc.) each of which presupposed a particular type of behaviour. (1973, 45-6)

A number of the alternatives that Lotman lists are incidentally operative in *Onegin* (e.g., 'Petersburg/Moscow'), but it is my intention to focus on one or two which are particularly significant in the work.

In the notional world of *On egin* , a particularly important choice is that between service and non-service. All three principals, Onegin, Lenskii, and Pushkin, have essentially chosen the path of non-service. In the case of Pushkin, true, the poet was 'officially' a functionary in the Ministry (Collegium) of Foreign Affairs. In fact this was purely a matter of form and does not play any role in the work. As Lotman points out, however, the fact that Onegin had never served (in particular, had never served *in the army)* was highly significant: 'The military field was such a natural one for a nobleman, that the absence of this feature in a biography had to have a special explanation. ... Onegin, as has been said, never wore the military uniform, which distinguished him among his coevals who had been 16-17 in 1812. But the fact that he had never served anywhere at all and had none, not even the lowest rank, made Onegin decidedly a white crow among his contemporaries' (1980, 48-9). Lotman's point is that, although service (either military or civil) to the state was no longer absolutely obligatory, as it had been under Peter the Great, it was the normal path for the vast majority of Onegin's contemporaries. The reference to 1812 is very important, for, if we are to believe the chronology of *Onegin* as it has been sketched

by numerous Pushkinists, Onegin entered the *grand monde,* and with it embarked on his life of seduction and high living, precisely at the point when those born around 1795, like Tolstoi's Petia Rostov, rushed out to enlist in the military in response to the motherland's dire need.l Onegin's non-service is thus not simply a chance feature of his biography but a highly significant trait which underlines Onegin's egoism and indifference to Russia, and it is made even more heinous by his cult of Napoleon, manifested by the presence of the French emperor's statuette in his study (discovered by Tat'iana in Ghapter Seven). (In this context it should be noted that both Pushkin and Lenskii were too young to serve in the Napoleonic wars, and that their non-service is caused by their decision to undertake the life of a poet.)

The second kind of choice that Onegin appears to have made is in the category 'Decembrist/non-Decembrist.' The Decembrist movement (as it became known after its tragic denouement on the Senate Square in Petersburg on 14 December 1825) was an underground movement of young officers who became inflamed with revolutionary ideas while serving in Europe during the Napoleonic wars and formed secret societies dedicated to the overthrow of the Tsarist regime and the abolition of serfdom in Russia. Pushkin himself was on the fringes of the movement, but was saved, paradoxically enough, from the dire consequences of involvement in the events of December by the fact that he was in exile on his family's estate of Mikhailovskoe for earlier misdeeds.

Pushkin could not, of course, write openly about the movement in *Onegin* for reasons of censorship (and to avoid implicating himself and others - he was already in enough trouble). The debate therefore about Decembrism in *Onegin* turns on various cryptographic references and evidence in drafts (including the famous 'Chapter Ten') and elsewhere. We have, for example, the reminiscences of Mikhail luzefovich discussed in chapter three: 'he [PushkinJ explained to us in considerable detail everything that had been in his first scheme, according to which, by the way, Onegin was either to die in the Caucasus, or to end up among the Decembrists.'2.As I have already pointed out, such 'evidence' is, at best, highly tenuous, especially since *Onegin* was conceived, and a good portion of it was written, before the Decembrist uprising took place. In any case, the ending of *Onegin* gives no especial credence to such speculations about the continuation of the novel. On the contrary, the ex abrupto ending makes them 'illegal.'

The other important piece of evidence that might argue in favour of Onegin's being a Decembrist is the fact that, when he inherits his

uncle's estate, he replaces the work obligations (corvee) of the serfs by a 'lenient quitrent' (Two: IV). This action is, however, far from unequivocal. It is of a piece with his ostentatious indifference to money in Chapter One (in which he abandons the remnants of his father's estate to the deceased's creditors [One: 11]. It also reflects his mouthing, in society, of fashionable theories of Western political economy:

> Za to chi tal Adama Smita,
> I byl glubokoi ekonom,
> To est', umel sudit' o tom,
> Kak gosudarstvo bogateet,
> I chern zhivet, i pochemu
> Ne nuzhno zoloto emu,
> Kogda *prostoi produkt* imeet.
> Otets poniat' ego ne mog
> I zemli otdaval v zalog.
>
> *[But he did read Adam Smith and was a profound economist, that is he could discuss how the state gets rich, and on what it lives, and why it does not need gold when it has the 'simple product.' His father could not understand him, and mortgaged his lands.* (One: VII: 6-14)]

Onegin's understanding of economics implies not a profound critique of Russian society but a justification for his life-style: like the state, Onegin does not need gold, but simply lives on credit (the state by printing money, Onegin through the indulgence of the good tradesmen of Petersburg). Onegin's father needs no high-falutin' foreign theories in order to justify his squandering of his inheritance by mortgaging it. Like father, like son. The irony of the 'economics' aspect of Chapter One is that Onegin is right: he is saved from any unpleasant shortage of liquidity by the providential death of his uncle, who receives as thanks only the thoughts expressed by Onegin in the very first stanza of the novel.

There is, needless to say, very little in the way of Decembrism to be wrung out of Onegin's thoughts on political economy. Far from being an idealistic revolutionary concerned with the fate of his country, Onegin is, like his father, a thoughtless spendthrift who squanders his patrimony and whose 'new order' on the estate he has inherited from his uncle reflects not a humanitarian concern for the serf but a lack of regard for his own financial interests, which he is willing to sacrifice to a whim, or at best to the desire to be in fashion. The reaction of the

serfs is characteristic: 'the slave blessed his fate' – implying that the actions of the young lord are as incomprehensible to him as the turns of destiny, and that no thanks are required for such an act of folly. Pushkin, it seems to me, is ironical about rather than approving of Onegin's gesture, which is made, he suggests, out of boredom and is another manifestation of his insouciant nature.

Perhaps the most convincing argument about Onegin's 'un-Decembrist' nature is the reaction of the Decembrist writers themselves (principally Ryleev and Bestuzhev), who were dismayed at the Onegin whom they saw in Chapter One.3 In the writings of the Decembrists themselves there had been a return to classical genres (ode, tragedy, etc.) and an adoption of folkloristic ones (e.g., the Ukrainian *dumy).* The purpose of Decembrist literature was a didactic one: to inculcate civic virtue and heroism by the example of great heroes of the pastof the antique world and Russia. In *Onegin* Pushkin pours scorn on the exhortation of Vil'gel'm Kiukhel'beker, a Lyceum schoolmate and now representative of the neo-classicist branch of Decembrist writing, to write odes, advice which Pushkin was happy to ignore (see Four: XXXII-XXXIII). Instead of finding in *Onegin* a virtuous, idealistic, and self-sacrificing hero to be emulated, the Decembrists were shocked by the frivolity, selfishness, and cynicism of Onegin's life-style. Lotman, writing about the tendency of young Russians of the time to be drawn to the 'norms of antique heroism,' notes 'this "Roman" poetry of poverty, which lent a theatrical grandeur to material need, was subsequently characteristic of many Decembrists' (1973, 39). It is therefore straining credulity to see in Onegin an attempt, either overt or covert, to portray a Decembrist. Neither his life-style of indolence, debauchery, and self-indulgence, nor his cynical and egoistic opinions nor his bo redorp and spleen correspond to the codes of behaviour and the literary norms which 'read' as Decembrist. His act of munificence - freeing his serfs from their corvee – is the arbitrary act of an 'eccentric' *(chudak* – which is what his neighbours call him) who is uncaring of his own fate and fortune and who feels no urge to preserve his patrimony for posterity.

Onegin, then, far from being a 'type,' is outside all the accepted career/behaviour codes - a non-military, non-functionary nonDecembrist. For the purposes of the novel, however, there is a fourth 'negative' which we have to add, and one which, in the context of *Onegin,* is of paramount importance. He is not a poet:

> Vysokoi strasti ne imeia
> Dlia zvukov zhizni ne shchadit',

Ne mog on iamba ot khoreia,
Kak my ni bilis', otlichit'.

[Not having that exalted passion to not spare his life for the sake of sounds, he could not distinguish an iambus from a choree, however hard we tried. (One: VII: 1-4)]

The detail is important since the other two principal characters - Lenskii and Pushkin - are poets, and because, as Shaw asserts in the passage cited above, the notion of 'being a poet' has important existential connotations in the work. What we are talking about here, however, is less these than the simple question of a function, a career, a role that gives one a place in society and gives meaning to one's existence.

Poetry was not, of course, the kind of career that brought fortune. If one adopted the role of 'gentleman poet' of the Karamzinian kind which Lenskii, for example, favours, then it hardly even promised fame (see the two 'future lives' that Push kin sketches out for Lenskii - had he not been shot by Onegin-in Six: XXXVI-XXXIX). Much of the meaning of Pushkin's own life can be seen in the conscious (and unprecedented) choice that he made to adopt poetry as an acceptable career *and source of income* for a gentleman; in short, to drop the cloak of amateurism. In a sense Pushkin in doing so 'transgressed the codes' of acceptable behaviour for a nobleman-poet established by Vasilii L'vovich Pushkin his uncle, 1.1. Dmitriev, and other poets of the Karamzinian group. Lenskii, it appears, would, unlike Pushkin, have adhered to the traditional mould.

Onegin as 'non-poet' has, however, another dimension that should be mentioned, namely the fact that he cannot tell an iambus (- /) from a choree (/ -). The reason is apparently that Onegin is largely a Frenchspeaker who has read only French poetry and for whom the notion of stress as a significant feature in metre is foreign and incomprehensible. It is made clear to the reader that the correspondence between Tat'iana and Onegin is likewise in French (Three: XXVI), as, given the norms of social behaviour of the time, would be the conversations as well, especially since Tat'iana 'knew Russian badly, did not read our journals, and expressed herself with difficulty in her native language' (Three: XXVI: 5-8).4 It was, indeed, quite practical even for a young nobleman of the time to function knowing hardly any Russian (as did A.N. Raevskii, a friend of Pushkin's whom some chose to see as the 'prototype' on whom Pushkin modelled his hero). We are told that Onegin communicates to his neighbours without putting the polite enclitic -s when

replying *da* and *net.* One suspects that these monosyllables constitute the largest part of his conversation, so that if Lenskii, despite his Russian elegies, is described by his neighbours as 'half-Russian' (Two: XII: 5), then it would be legitimate to call Onegin 'non-Russian.'

Onegin, then, is a catalogue of negatives, a 'dangerous eccentric' who appears as the personification of the 'spirit of denial' *(Geist der Verneinung)* that inspired Pushkin's poem 'Demon' ('The Demon'). The relationship between this poem and the image of Onegin in *Onegin* is explored by Shaw in his article, and I do not intend to go over the same ground again. One should, however, mention the extent to which Pushkin seeks to reinforce this impression through the use of such terms as 'my demon,' which are summed up in the author's comment in Chapter Eight:

> Sozdan'e ada il' nebes,
> Sei angel, sei nadmennyi bes,
> Chto zh on?
>
> *[Creation of hell or heaven, this angel, this arrogant demon, what is he?* (Seven: XXIV: 7-9)]

Although the Soviet critic I. Medvedeva has asserted that Pushkin gradually removes the 'demonic' features from Onegin so that he becomes more ~nd more realistic in the course of the novel, one can find little to support such an interpretation in the text.S Indeed, as late as Chapter Eight, we find the following speculation:

> Chern nyne iavitsia? Mel'motom,
> Kosmopolitom, patriotom,
> Garol'dom, kvakerom, khanzhoi,
> II' maskoi shchegol'net inoi,
> II' prosto budet dobryi maloi,
> Kak vy da ia, kak tselyi svet?
>
> *[What will he now appear as~ Melmoth, a cosmopolite, a patriot, a Harold, a Quaker, a hypocrite, or will he sport some other mask, or will he simply be a nice chap, like* you *and me, like the whole world?* (Eight: VIII: 5-10)]

The appearance of an individual in a thousand guises was, of course, the sign of the devil. Interestingly, both this passage and the one quoted

before it are preceded by the description of Onegin as a *chudak* ('crank'). The suggestion is that this is one of Pushkin's code-words for the devil. (His neighbours in the country, we recall, had likewise described him as a 'most dangerous crank.') The word, though derived from *chudnyi* ('odd'), is related to *chudo* ('marvel'!, which in turn has connotations of the supernatural. It is therefore not unjust to conclude that Pushkin wishes us to see some slight overtones of at least a mock-devilry in his hero.

If we accept Shaw's interpretation, the fundamental meaning of *Onegin* is thus not a realistic one - a portrayal of a social type - but a *symbolic* one, a transposition into the codes of the social-portrait genre of a philosophical principle which had troubled Pushkin, and to which he had returned obsessively again and again, trying to give it concrete form in various ways.

It has frequently been pointed out that Pushkin, unlike Byron, differentiates between his hero, Onegin, and himself.6 That is to say, unlike Byron's heroes, Onegin is not a projection of the author into the text. This view is acceptable only with certain modifications. The principal method which is used to achieve distance is, of course, the figure of the author-narrator who acts in the text as a differentiated character. Pushkin goes out of his way to stress the point by his own intervention in a digression:

Vsegda ia rad zametit' raznost'
Mezhdu Oneginym i mnoi,
Chtoby nasmeshlivyi chitatel'
IIi kakoi-nibud' izdatel'
Zamyslovatoi klevety,
Slichaia zdes' moi cherty,
Ne povtorial potom bezbozhno,
Chto namaral ia svoi portret,
Kak Bairon, gordosti poet,
Kak budto nam uzh nevozmozhno
Pisat' poemy 0 drugom,
Kak tol'ko 0 sebe samom.

[I am always glad to note the difference between Onegin and me, so *that a mocking reader* or *some publisher of a malicious calumny, discerning* my *features here, should not then blasphemously say that I have scrawled* my *own portrait like Byron, the poet of pride, as if it were impossible for us to*

> *write poems about anything else but ourselves.* (One: LVI: 3-14)]

These are, however, the words of the stylized Pushkin-narrator, and should be viewed circumspectly because of their importance in the 'battle with the critics' function which I have mentioned elsewhere. Onegin's biography, though it is different from Pushkin's, has a number of points of contact with it (his life in the country, for example, is clearly modelled after Pushkin's in Mikhailovskoe).7 As has been recently been noted by **1.1.** Vol'pert, in Pushkin we observe a principle by which literary 'play' mingles with life, or biography, so that the presence of Pushkin as a character (together with Katenin and Viazemskii) alongside the 'fictional' Onegin, Tat'iana, and Lenskii was by no means paradoxical, but rather another manifestation of this rich interpenetration of real life and literature which is characteristic of Pushkin (1980, 8). This tendency gives rise to the speculation that has bedevilled Pushkin studies to find the 'prototypes' of Onegin, Tat'iana, etc. If there is a basis to such research, then it surely lies in the fact that Pushkin attributed to real-life individuals at different points in time the 'role' of these characters *who already existed in his imagination:* literature, in other words, imposed itself on real life for Pushkin, not vice versa, as many have supposed.s This interpenetration of literature and real life is the most remarkable feature of *Onegin.* It permits us to see Onegin not as the poet, nor as his projection into literature, but as the parody or dramatization of a philosophical and aesthetic principle. The fact that Onegin had deep roots in the matrix of ideological relationships means that Pushkin can make the concrete manifestation of this principle - the description of Onegin's actions, dress, day, reading, etc. - a composite of whatever traits he likes, taken from literature *(Childe Harold, Don Tuan, Beppo, Adolphe,* etc.) or from life (Napoleon, Byron, A.N. Raevskii, Push kin himself).

The creation of Onegin as the personification of negation, the realization of his own 'spirit of denial' with its obvious parallels to Goethe's Mephisto, is supported by a vast amount of detail and especially by literary allusions which serve as a 'source-book' of foreign literary models.9 Pushkin uses these as a shorthand to define the demonic nature of Onegin (and identify him with the anti-hero of the post sentimental novel). Since Jakobson and Chizhevskii it has been assumed that the use of detail in *Onegin* (e.g., the description of his cabinet in Seven) is metonymic, that it serves as a *pars pro toto* to describe Onegin as a character (Chizhevskii 1971, 153-4). This would

be true if the description of Onegin (or Tat'iana for that matter) were mimetic or reflexionist, reflecting a particular 'reality' (type). However, in *Onegin,* I would contend, the reverse is true: Onegin is not a depiction of a type, but a parody of one, a mocking projection into life of an idea of which Napoleon, Melmoth, and such characters, are other manifestations. Onegin, in other words, is placed in a paradigmatic (and ironic) relationship with other figures, both historical and literary, who all constitute, as it were, hypostases of this 'spirit of deniaL' (The use of detail in *Onegin* should be compared with, say, the use of the lip of the 'little Princess' in *War and Peace,* which is truly metonymic.)

As Shaw shows, the most important of the roles which Onegin eschews is that of poet - or rather, his being a non-poet is his most important feature. Onegin is the incarnation of that negative, cynical force which destroys those positive values that are poetry's theme. In the context of *Onegin,* there are two values that are central. They are expressed specifically in the poetry of Lenskii, and are the object of Onegin's scorn: namely the values of 'love' and 'friendship.' Lenskii is the personification of the sentimental, elegiac poetry which was the continuation of the Karamzinian tradition and which Pushkin himself wrote in his early period.1O This poetry was characterized by a restricted, 'purified' vocabulary, periphrastic phraseology, and a restricted number of 'conventional' themes: those mentioned above (love and friendship) and the passage of time (together with impending death). It was a poetry of the salon, which aimed at good taste and avoided any depth of emotion or unusual expression that might give offence. Already in *Ruslan and Liudmila* Pushkin had broken out of the confines of this poetic, which had too much of the emptiness of a formalized routine and was too remote from the realities of life and language. [11]

In *Onegin* we find the author-narrator conducting a running battle against one of the most important aspects of the Karamzinian (sentimental) poetry, namely the notion of a chaste, innocent heroine who must be protected from anything indecent or risque - a notion summed up in the quotation from Piron: 'La mere en prescrira la lecture a sa fille.' The weapons that Pushkin uses against this 'ideal reader' are manifold. He uses the footnotes as an ironical commentary on the remarks of critics who have criticized *Onegin* from this point of view - for example, footnote 36: 'Our critics, true admirers of the fair sex, severely criticized the indecency of this verse' *(PSS,* VI, 194). The verse in question - 'The girls skip in anticipation' (Five: XXVHI: 9) - was offensive only in its use of vocabulary, which transgressed the boundaries of Karamzinian good taste. This footnote is, as it were, a false

scent, part of the game that Pushkin plays with his critics in the footnotes, mostly by the use of bawdy quibbles to which the footnotes draw laconic attention (e.g., footnotes 12,20, and 21).12

Despite, then, Pushkin's disclaimer quoted above, it seems fair to say that up to Chapter Four there is little or no distinction between the voice of the author-narrator in the digressions on love and friendship and that of Onegin. This is nowhere clearer than in the stanzas VII and VIII with which Chapter Four begins (I to VI are omitted) and which express disgust with the falseness and dissimulation of the 'game of love.' These stanzas 'read' as authorial digression mitil the beginning of stanza IX, when we read: 'Precisely thus thought my Evgenii' (a lame echo of One: II: 1: 'Thus thought a young rake'). A similar, 'cynical' commentary is provided on the subject of friendship:

> No druzhby net i toi mezh nami.
> Vse predrassudki istrebia,
> My pochitaem vsekh nuliami,
> A edinitsami - sebia.
> My vse gliadim v Napoleony;
> Dvunogikh tvarei milliony
> Dlia nas orudie odno,
> Nam chuvstvo diko i smeshno.
>
> *[But there is not even that friendship among us. Destroying all prejudices, we consider everyone zeroes, and ourselves ones. We all aspire to be Napoleons; the millions of twolegged creatures are for* us *a mere tool; sentiment is strange and laughable* to *us.* (Two: XIV: 1-8)]

The inclusiveness of the 'we' in this passage points to the identification of Pushkin and Onegin in these sentiments, which are, as it were, 'common property' of them both. (The stanza quoted echoes in turn the stanza One: XLVI: 1-14, which provides the initial basis for the communality of interest between the author-narrator and the hero.) The fact that Pushkin and his hero are seen to hold identical opinions in these digressions on the nature of love and friendship, and that they both express their contempt for the poetry of Lenskii, which is the vehicle for these sentiments, permits us to see Onegin not as the reflection of the author in the text but as the expression of a part of the author, of his opinions. He is, as it were, one side in the dialectical opposition in Pushkin's own philosophical make-up.

What is important to recognize in Onegin is his dual nature. He has

his roots in the concept of the 'spirit of denial' expressed in Pushkin's lyrical poetry, but he is projected into a novelistic situation, with the demands for realistic human detail which that genre demands. (In this, it should be noted, he reflects the hybrid form - poem/novel - of *Onegin* itself.) This is shown in the lines following the passage quoted above, in which the poet contradicts the view of a totally cynical Evgenii:

> Khot' on liudei konechno znal,
> I voobshche ikh preziral,
> No (pravil net bez iskliuchenii)
> Inykh on ochen' otlichal,
> I vchuzhe chuvstvo uvazhal.
>
> *[Although he of course knew people and in general despised them, yet (there are no rules without exceptions) some people he very much sought out and he respected sentiment in others.* (Two: XIV: 10-14)]

The figure of Onegin, then, is delicately poised between the symbolic cynical demon and the human being, friend of Pushkin and Lenskii, and oscillates between these two modes.

How are we to account for this opposition? Lotman, in his commentaryon *Onegin,* discusses duelling as a strict code which deprived the participants of their free will and reduced them to automatons: 'This ability of the duel to enmesh people, deprive them of their own will and turn them into playthings and automatons is very important' (1980, 102-3). He concludes this observation by referring the reader to the article by Roman Jakobson on Pushkin's 'sculptural myth.' The comment by Lotman is a brilliant extension of Jakobson's argumenton Pushkin's fascination with the static image of the sculpture, and the 'forced immobility' which it suggests - into the discussion of *Onegin* (Jakobson 1937a, 39). We may extrapolate Lotman's observation (which is not amplified) as follows. Put in 'realist' terms, Onegin is an individual who is 'locked into' codes of behaviour which make him behave like an automaton and which deprive him of the ability to express his free will and be a human being. Such 'codes' or roles are numerous: lover, seducer, cynic, landowner, duellist. Thus, although Onegin is a friend of Lenskii's, he cannot resist the impulse to flirt with Ol'ga, nor can he step outside the codes of behaviour which lead him *automatically* to the duel, the impossibility of compromise, and Lenskii's death.13

Most interestingly, the human-being/sculpture alternation which Jakobson pointed *to* and which is so important in such works as 'The Bronze Horseman' ('Mednyi vsadnik') and 'The Stone Guest' ('Kamennyi gost" - Pushkin's version of the Don Juan theme) is present in *Onegin* in the figure of Napoleon, who lurks as a presence in the work (e.g., in the lines on egoism quoted above, and in the description of Moscow in Chapter Seven), and who is, as I have suggested above, another 'hypostasis' of the 'spirit of denial' which Onegin represents. Napoleon appears, in Onegin's study, metamorphosed into a little statuette:

> I stolbik s kukloiu chugunnoi
> Pod shliapoi s pasmurnym chelom,
> S rukami szhatymi krestom.
>
> *[and a little column with an iron doll, with cloudy brow beneath a hat, its arms folded.* (Seven: XIX: 12-14)]

Napoleon has received his punishment, and has been turned from human being into immobile figure. Most important, it is as a figure transfixed, immobile 'as if struck by lightning,' that we leave Onegin at the end of the novel (Eight: XLVIII: 2). Like Napoleon, he has been reduced *to* a state of 'enforced immobility.'

The presentation of Onegin is thus a dialectical one: as valuedestroyer versus the value-bearers, versus poets. The dialectic, I would argue, is inherent in Pushkin's aesthetics. Onegin's physical destruction of Lenskii, on this symbolic plane, is the destruction of the value 'friendship.' It also implies the destruction or rejection of inadequate poetry: of poetry which has not penetrated *to* the root of life, which has not freed itself from the automatism that is in turn a denial of the will of the individual and hence of humanity. (For Lenskii the elegiac poet is as much a mask, a role-player, as is Onegin.) In the sense that only the best and most real can stand up *to* his negation, Onegin's cynicism, it can be argued, is useful, and even a necessary evil, like a corrosive acid that will eat away all but the most noble metals. In the sense that Onegin is an aspect of Pushkin's aesthetic thought, he is the force that leads Pushkin from Kara)TIzinian versification *to* Pushkinian poetry.

Onegin is the most extensive of a series of portraits which have a common root in the formula 'demon falls in love with angel./!4 Perhaps the most perfect expression of this formula is *to* be found in the lyric 'Angel' (The Angel'):

V dveriakh edema angel nezhnyi
Glavoi poniksheiu siial,
A demon mrachnyi i miatezhnyi
Nad adskoi bezdnoiu letal.

Dukh otritsan'ia, dukh somnen'ia
Na dukha chistogo vziral
I zhar nevol'nyi umilen'ia
Vpervye smutno poznaval.

'Prosti, on rek, tebia ia videl,
I ty nedarom mne siial:
Ne vse ia v nebe nenavidel,
Ne vse ia v mire preziral'.

[At the gates of Eden an angel shone with bowed head, while a demon, gloomy and rebelJjous, flew above the abyss of hell. The spirit of denial, the spirit of doubt beheld the pure spirit and he experienced vaguely for the first time an involuntary flush of tenderness. 'Forgive me, spake he, I saw you, and you did not shine towards me for nothing. I have not hated everything in heaven, I have not despised everything on earth.' (PSS, III, 59)]

As we have seen, the transposition of this formula to the novelistic genre entailed the addition of humanizing traits (e.g., the friendship with Lenskii discussed above) and produced the oscillation between the human and the symbolic/mask/parody. It is important to note that, whether expressed in symbolic/lyrical or novelistic terms, the formula shows that the nemesis of the demon is to be found in love for a pure and innocent creature. It is a case of irresistible force versus immovable object. Love, Pushkin tells us in Chapter Eight, is synonymous with poetry, for it is precisely at the moment when Onegin feels his love for Tat'iana most deeply that he comes closest to poetry:

I postepenno v usyplen'e
I chuvstv i dum vpadaet on,
A pered nim Voobrazhen'e
Svoi pestryi mechet faraon.
To vidit on: na talom snege
Kak-budto spiashchii na nochlege
Nedvizhim iunosha lezhit,

I slyshit galas: chto zh? ubit.
To vidit on vragov zabvennykh,
Klevetnikov, i trusov zlykh,
I roi izmennits molodykh,
I hug tovarishchei prezrennykh,
To sel'skii dam - i u alma
Sidit *ona* ... i vse ana! ...

On tak privyk teriat'sia v etom,
Chto chut' s uma ne svorotil,
IIi ne sdelalsia poetom.
Priznat'sia: to-to b odolzhil!
A tochno: siloi magnetizma
Stikhov rossiiskikh mekhanizma
Edva v to vremia ne postig
Moi bestolkovyi uchenik.
Kak pokhodil on na poeta,
Kogda v uglu sidel odin,
A pered nim pylal kamin,
I on murlykal: *Benedetta*
11' *Idol mio* i ronial
Vogan' to tufliu, to zhurnal.

[And gradually he falls into a trance of feelings and thoughts, and imagination deals its multicoloured faro before his eyes. Now he sees: a youth lies motionless on the melting snow as if sleeping at a bivouac, and he hears a voice: 'WeW - he's dead.' Now he sees forgotten enemies, slanderers and malicious cowards, and a swarm of young traitresses, and a circle of despised comrades; now - a country house, and by the window she *is sitting - always she! ... He became* so *used* to *losing himself in this, that he almost went off his head or almost became a poet. Let's admit - that would have done* us *a favour! and truly, by hypnosis* my *unruly pupil almost understood at that time the mechanism of Russian verse. How he resembled a poet when he sat alone in the corner, and the fireplace glowed in front of him, and he purred: 'Benedetta' or 'Idol mio' and dropped either a slipper or a newspaper in the fire.* (Eight: XXXVII: **1-** XXXVIII: 14)]

These two stanzas are, arguably, the most remarkable in *Onegin.* They contain the crux of the argument: it is by poetry (which is seen and

evoked in all its manifestations: muse - Taeiana - friendship, lovef guilt, remorse, but also the incantatory power of the verse itself) that the demon can be exorcised, and Onegin be turned from petty devil into human being. Far from Push kin resembling his hero, it is the hero who must try to learn the role of the poet. But most important in the passage, surely, is the 'almost.' The jocular tone of the second verse reduces Onegin to his proper dimensions: he will never be a poet, will never have happiness, never be united with the object of his love. The life and the success of the poet are, as it were, defined by contrast. The spirit of denial which Onegin represents is thus stymied by the confrontation with love lost and friendship destroyed. The intensity of feeling is equal to poetry or madness (a fine note of irony from Pushkin) and represents the (at least temporary) triumph of the human side of Onegin over the demonic. Onegin, interestingly, even includes Russian poets on his reading list: 'He read some of ours, *not rejecting anything'* (my italics; Eight: XXXV: 7). The suggestion is that that Gallomane has for the first time come to appreciate what it is to be Russian.

Ultimately, however, for Pushkin the 'enamoured demon' syndrome was unresolvable: the operative word in the passage quoted above is 'almost': despite it all, the demon remains demon, angel angel, eternally fated to remain apart. The final scene of the novel, which follows these lines, has the air of inevitability about it. The reproaches which Tat'iana scatters on Onegin are left unanswered, and Onegin stands petrified with confusion as her husband approaches in a pastiche of the ending of the Don Juan myth: the suitor - Onegin - is turned to stone, while the threatening figure of the husband comes to life. It is in the ultimate unresolvability of the syndrome that we must seek the reason for the abrupt ending in Eight: there is simply no more to be said. Onegin has received his punishment for his deficient humanity, his scorning of love, his desecration of friendship, his inability to be poetic. The rest is silence.

An intriguing aspect of Shaw's argument concerns the notion of chances missed: 'Along with the theme of maturing in *Onegin* runs a central theme of a time for doing and a time for being. The stages of the author-narrator's development are suggested as the "natural" ones of the novel - youthful enchantment to 20 or so, then a period of disenchantment to 23 or 24, but a mature reenchantment by that time' (1980, 34). Shaw's formula seeks to define precise existential correlatives for what is worked out by Pushkin in symbolic terms. His argument - that the position of Pushkin in the poem is one of 'mature reenchantment' with life - rests perhaps a little too much on the use

of the past tense in the poem 'Demon,' which suggests, according to Shaw, that the battle with the demons of denial was over for good as far as Pushkin was concerned. Rather, I would suggest, the 'demon versus goodness' situation continues to occur in Pushkin's work after this point, suggesting that each 'exorcism,' as I have chosen to call it, was only temporary, to be fought out anew in each succeeding work. One can see in Shaw's argument interesting parallels to the Soviet view that Pushkin 'overcame' romanticism in the period of exile, specifically in *Onegin,* which is contrasted with the so-called 'southern poems' as Pushkin's 'path to realism.' In fact, Pushkin returned to romantic themes in different forms throughout his creative life, so that such an argument is flawed (and depends on an overly narrow definition of romanticism).

Despite these criticisms, it seems undeniable that Shaw has a point in stressing the question of timeliness as a central aspect of *Onegin.* As I argued above, Onegin is a non-person as far as his function in Russian society is concerned: he has no career, no recognizable role, only a series of masks. On this 'career' plane he is contrasted with both the principal male protagonists: Lenskii and Pushkin. Lenskii, we recall, had chosen the path of amateur poet, Pushkin that of the professional. That the question of career was an important concern for Pushkin is suggested by the fact that Chapter One was originally published with the 'Conversation of a Poet and a Bookseller' - a poem that sets out, in dialogue form, the problems and frustrations of writing for inspiration work which is then to be sold for money. Pushkin felt only too keenly the contradictions between the mercantile pursuit of publishing for profit and the notion of the dignity of the nobleman. *Onegin* is thus concerned, on one level, with the question of how one is to live one's life. Pushkin, it is clear, was very conscious of the exigencies of time, the necessity of making a successful career at something, and the pitfalls that lurked for the unwary.

As we have seen, the three principal male characters in the novel all have 'eccentric,' exceptional lives. Pushkin is a professional poet, Onegin a non-person, and Lenskii an amateur poet who has eschewed any kind of service. In the case of Onegin, there is another character who scarcely figures in the text of the poem at all, and yet is in direct contrast with him. This is the husband of Tat'iana, whom we know only as Prince N. The mentions of him are exceedingly scant, yet incredibly important. We first encounter him in Chapter Seven in Tat'iana's remark: 'Who? That fat genera!?' (Seven: LIV: 14). He then recurs in Chapter Eight, when we learn that the general is an old-time

> *matured at the right time, who gradually learned with the years to suffer the coldness of life; who did* not *give himself up to strange dreams, who did* not *shun the rabble of society, who at twenty was a fop or a blade, and at thirty is advantageously married; who by fifty has freed himself from private and other debts, who has calmly attained in turn fame, fortune and rank, about whom they have said for a whole epoch:* N.N. *is a fine man.* (Eight: X: 1-14)]

To be sure, the identification of this idealized figure with Tat'iana's husband is not made absolutely explicit; the use of the letter 'N' seems a possible pointer, although it was a common enough device in Pushkin. The stanza picks up on other moments in the poem when the 'beatus qui *I* heureux qui' formula is used, always with irony, if not sarcasm. It is evident that here is a picture of what the author-narrator will never be. The notion of 'timeliness' that Shaw has invoked is thus a complex one: N.N. is precisely a person who has been able to fit his career to the necessities of the different ages of man. He has followed the ideal career that Pushkin seems to have in mind for his brother in the letter. The image is evidently not without its attractiveness for Pushkin, who had enough self-esteem to wish he *too* could share in the spoils of a successful career: wealth, a position in the court and society, and the hand of a beautiful woman (even if she did not love him).

The image of a successful careerist which is sketched in the lines quoted and in the character of Prince N stands in equally stark contrast, I would suggest, with the figures of Lenskii and Onegin. As noted above, Pushkin, after the death of Lenskii, describes, in *two* stanzas, the *two* possible fates that one might imagine for him (Six: XXXVII-XXXIX). They represent a study in contrasts: the one, which is by the ironic tone of the narrative marked as less likely, is the path of fame achieved through poetry; the second, which is again marked by the tone as the likely one, is an 'ordinary fate': Lenskii abandons poetry, marries, and settles down to a humdrum existence as a 'happily married man.' Indispensable concomitants of this existence, as far as Pushkin is concerned, are the dressing-gown, an excessive appetite, cuckoldry, and a death in bed surrounded by 'snivelling wenches and medicoes.' Lenskii's 'future' echoes those of *two* other individuals: Tat'iana's father, Dmitrii Larin, whose 'life and times' are described in *Two:* XXXIV and XXXVI. Only the question of cuckoldry is described differently in the case of Larin, unless we are to believe that the stress on 'faithful'

(vernoiu) in Two: XXXVI: 7 is ironic and that the very different appearances and natures of Tat'iana and Ol'ga are not a genetic quirk
although one is tempted to think that Pushkin inserted the mention of 'Grandison *liS* son (Seven: XLI: 14) as a tantalizing glimpse of Tat'iana's half-brother (in Nabokov this would certainly be the case). The other individual whose fate resembles that of Larin and Lenshi is the husband of Pelageia Nikolavna:

> U Pelagei N ikolavny
> Vse tot zhe drug mos'e Finmush,
> I tot zhe shpits, i tot zhe muzh;
> A on, vse kluba chIen ispravnyi,
> Vse tak zhe smiren, tak zhe glukh,
> I tak zhe est i p'et za dvukh.
>
> *[Pelageia Nikolavna still has the same friend Monsieur Finemouche, the same spitz dog, and the same husband; he, still a stalwart member of his club, is still as docile, still as deaf, and still eats and drinks [enough) for two.* (Seven: XLV: 9-14)]

The sequence - Finemouche, dog, husband - indicates the esteem in which Pushkin believes the husband is generally held. We see, too, that the healthy appetite of a husband is, for Pushkin, a sign of cuckoldry - he is eating for himself *and* Finemouche. The portrayals of the decaying, complacent husband which we find in *Onegin* serve, among other things, to heighten the exceptional quality of Tat'iana: she is that rarity, a constant wife who does not take a lover and is loyal to her husband (even, apparently, obedient to him, and an asset in his social life). When the wife is faithful, it is the husband who can be assumed to be the philanderer. Such is the fate which Onegin foresees for any union between himself and Tat'iana when they first meet in the country (Four: XIV-XVI). The only exception to the general rule is the marriage of Tat'iana and Prince N, which is presented as the essence of propriety and mutual respect. Significantly, it is a marriage which was not motivated by love.

Of all the contrasts between the male figures in *Onegin,* perhaps the most significant is that between Onegin and Prince N: where Tat'iana's husband has made a good career, served his country well, and integrated himself into society, thus earning the hand of Tat'iana, the paragon of Russian beauty (and, in a sense, symbolic of mother Russia herself), Onegin has remained alienated from all that is Russian. He has ne

glected his life, his fortune, and his career, and now is punished for his neglect and lack of caring. Of the range of lives and careers presented, the only one that holds out the promise of greater satisfaction than that of Prince N is that of the poet, the narrator of *Onegin,* friend of Onegin (and, presumably, of Prince N too). It is on this figure that we shall concentrate in the next chapter.

Onegin and Pushkin on the Neva embankment. Drawing by Pushkin to illustrate One: XLVII. 1824