2

The Broken Column: Genre, Structure, Form

> As for what I am doing, I am writing not a novel but a novel in verse - a devil of a difference. It's in the genre of Don Juan. There's no use even to think of publishing; I am writing the way I feel like writing. Our censorship is so arbitrary that it is impossible to determine the sphere of one's activity with it. It is better not to think of it - and if you're going to take something, take it, else why dirty your claws? *(Letters,* 141)

Pushkin's first reference to *Onegin,* in a letter to his friend and fellow poet Viazemskii written in Odessa on 4 November 1823, has become almost as famous as the work itself and is an indispensable starting point for any discussion of genre. The passage is an excellent example of Pushkin's epistolary style: chatty, witty, and colloquial to the point of untranslatability, in it we find encapsulated some of the tones which Pushkin the conversationalist must have had (although that air of negligence is deceptive: he frequently wrote drafts of his letters and worked upon them as if on a poem). These letters, sent mostly through travelling friends - and therefore not subject to perlustration or censorship - were frequently read, not only by the addressee, but by a broad circle of acquaintances, and copied for even wider circulation. They represented a free-content, and also free-form, underground literary genre.l As regards *Onegin,* Pushkin contrives in a few lines to define the problem of genre with extreme brevity, and to hint at a couple of other problems which were-he might have guessed with his writer's instinct - to exercise critics and scholars of *Onegin* from the moment of its appearance: the influence of Byron, and the role of censorship (or selfcensorship, which is at this point denied! in the shaping of the work.

Despite the gay, even flippant tone of the letter, the point that Push

kin is making to Viazemskii is a serious one: a first corrective to any false expectations that might be aroused by the news of his work on the new piece, and a first attempt to educate the reader and critic in how to relate to the unusual genre. Since the choice of genre brought with it a set of predetermined expectations or desiderata, it was important to disrupt those expectations by modifying the genre 'novel' with the unconventional qualification 'in verse.' Since, as we have said, Pushkin could expect his letter to be read not only by Viazemskii but by those of his acquaintances whom Viazemskii knew (and to be carried by word of mouth further into the literary clides of the capitals), we have to do here with a significant (and not the last) attempt by Pushkin to educate his readership.

The point is reinforced in the text itself:

Druz'ia moi, chto zh tolku v etom?
Byt' mozhet, voleiu nebes,
Ia perestanu byt' poetom,
V menia vselitsia novyi bes,
I, Febovy prezrev ugrozy,
Unizhus' do smirennoi Prozy;
Togda roman na staryi lad
Zaimet veselyi moi zakat.
Ne muki tainye zlodeistva
Ia grozno v nem izobrazhu,
No prosto yam pereskazhu
Predan'ia russkogo semeistva,
Liubvi plenitel'nye sny,
Da nravy nashei stariny.

Pereskazhu prostye rechi
Ottsa iI' diadi starika,
Detei uslovlennye vstrechi
U starykh lip, u rucheikai
Neschastnoi revnosti muchen'ia,
Razluku, slezy primiren'ia,
Possoriu vnov', i nakonets
Ia povedu ikh pod venets **…**
Ia vspomniu rechi negi strastnoi,
Slova toskuiushchei liubvi,
Kotorye v minuvshi dni
U nog liubovnitsy prekrasnoi

Mne prikhodili na iazyk,
Ot koikh ia teper' otvyk.

[My friends, what is the sense in this~ Perhaps, by the will of the heavens, I will cease to *be a poet, and a new fiend will possess me; and, despising the threats of Phoebus, I will descend* to *humble prose; then a novel in the old style will occupy* my *merry sunset. In it I will not describe in threatening* tones *the secret sufferings of the evil doer, but will simply relate* to *you the traditions of the Russian family, the captivating dreams of love, and the mores of our olden time. I will relate the simple speeches of a father or aged uncle, the secret trysts of the children by the old lime trees, by the brook; the sufferings of unhappy jealousy, separation, tears of reconciliation; I will have them quarrel again, then finally I will bring them* to *the altar ... I will recall the speeches of passionate delectation, the words of pining love, which in bygone days came* to my *lips at the feet of a beautiful mistress, and of which I have now lost the habit.* (Three: XIII-XIV)]

Although we may see some elements of this plan in *Onegin,* especially the 'traditions of the Russian family' and the 'mores of our olden time,' with this exception the plan of this humble novel in prose is in complete contrast with *Onegin,* especially the projected 'happy ending.' In this little capsule, Pushkin gives us a sketch of the features of the typical prose novel, amounting to a mini-parody, in order to define *Onegin* better, although again negatively: here is what the present work is not.

Such a method of negative definition (a method which he also uses with regard to Onegin - he is *not* a portrait of the author) was imposed upon Pushkin, who rightly foresaw that the genre of *Onegin* would create difficulties for his readership. The poem was different from anything he had undertaken, or was to undertake, and it was a far cry from the Decembrists' demand for a return to exalted forms and language. Pushkin likewise distanced himself from them in his mocking echo of Kiukhel'beker, chief theorist of this 'archaist' movement: 'Write odes, gentlemen!' In particular, the far from admirable character of the hero and the seemingly excessive attention given by the author to mundane detail stuck in the throats of Ryleevand Bestuzhev.

As we have already seen, Pushkin tried to forestall such criticisms in the Foreword to the initial edition of Chapter One. We find him, in

his correspondence to Ryleev and Bestuzhev and to his friend Raevskii, trying to ao the same. The Foreword caused as many difficulties as it solved, since in it Pushkin described *Onegin* as a satire and invited comparison with Byron. In the correspondence he had to backtrack:

> You compare the first chapter with *Don Juan.* Nobody esteems *Don Juan* more than I do ... but there is nothing in comJTIon with *Onegin* in it. You talk of the Englishman Byron's satire and compare it with mine, and demand of me the very same thing! No, my dear fellow, you want too much. Where do I have *satire?* There is not even a hint of it in *Eugene Onegin.* My embankment would crumble if I were to touch satire. The very word *satirical* ought not to appear in the preface. 24 March 1825. *(Letters,* 209-10)

The Decembrists' demand for satire was natural, since the bases of their art reflected the didacticism of eighteenth-century classicism which they had disinterred.2 Characters could be noble, and thus an object of emulation, or ignoble, and an object of satirical scorn. That Pushkin should portray an ignoble character yet not satirize him did not fit their canon.

The difficulties that Pushkin experienced in describing the genre of his new work were real because nothing like it had appeared in Russian (or foreign literature for that matter) with which it would bear exact comparison. The genre was unique and could but be summarized by the enigmatic formula contained in that initial reference – 'a novel in verse' - which became the subtitle of the work. In a sense Pushkin appear's to be barely in control of his new creation at this point. As John Bayley writes: 'Like all great novels it seems to have grown rather than been made, and yet at the same time it is constructed like a perfect curve or parabola, with a totally satisfying logic of its own.'3 Moreover, its development took place according to its own peculiar laws, which did not correspond to the taxonomy of contemporary literature. Pushkin appears at a loss for words. In this he was not alone; the genre of *Onegin* has exercised the thoughtful critic ever since. In this discussion, however, Pushkin's initial insight must be heeded: *Onegin* is *not* a novel. That is to say, the laws of its structure are not those which readers would expect from a novel. (True, the allembracing quality that we have come to expect in a novel, a genre which has been able to assume the most surprising forms and absorb the most disparate elements, permits us to see in *Onegin* a novel in the modem

sense, and a brilliant one at that.) Push kin himself offers us some hint as to the underlying principle of *Onegin.* It is, characteristically, when he is being himself and writing unguardedly to his friends that he puts his finger on it: 'I am writing the way I feel like writing' (in Russian, *spustia rukava* - literally, 'letting my sleeves down'). In a letter to Del'vig, written 12 November 1823, he remarks, 'I am now writing a new poem, in which I chatter *[zabaltyvaius']* to the limit' *(Letters,* 143). The same root occurs in a subsequent letter on the theme to Bestuzhev (May-June 1825): 'But a novel requires *chatter [boltovnia]:*say everything out plainly' *(Letters,* 224). It is precisely the *chatter* perhaps better rendered by the French word *badinage* (or by Tynianov's more precise and comprehensive term, 'verbal dynamics') - that defines *Onegin* and is, as Tynianov has suggested, the organizing principle.4 The tone of voice of the narrator expresses the author-reader relationship, which is fundamental to the novel. Indeed, the characters' author' and 'reader' are the two enduring ones that have an existence outside the confines of the 'novel.' In the last stanzas of Chapter Eight this relationship dominates as the characters are dismissed. The tone of 'chatter' or 'banter' which expresses this relationship is that 'verbal dynamics' which gives the work its structure. Interestingly, it has much in common with the tone of Pushkin's letters, a tone which, as we have seen, is highly colloquial and ironic.s

The author-reader relationship which is initiated by the dedication (to Pletnev, Pushkin's publisher, a piece of information which was suppressed in the *ultima editio)* and is foregrounded at various points in the text - principally the chapter endings - is, as several researcher~ have shown, a highly complex one. There is (as in all fiction) what Hoisington (following Booth) calls an 'implied reader. '6 This is the reader that we strive to be - a mirror image of the author, sharing his view of events and understanding every hidden allusion, every shade of irony. Then there is a paradigm of other narratees, individuals who are addressed or invoked at various points in the text, who are - as Hoisington shows - treated with greater or lesser irony: Pushkin's fellow poets (Baratynskii, Viazemskii, Kiukhel'beker, Tumanskii, Katenin), whose poetic tastes or talents differ from Pushkin's; the critics, whom Pushkin takes to task in the footnotes (and in 8: XLIX); fashionable young men of the Onegin type (curiously, given the bizarre narrative structure, Onegin himself could appear to be a reader, but is not, a fact which may be indicative); and the fair sex. The latter group were treated with the irony of a poet who was distancing himself from the notion of the innocent young girl reader characterized by a line

from Piron, 'la mere en prescrira la lecture a sa fille,' which was originally intended as a footnote to the rough draft variant of Two: XII. This doctrine, and the critics who demand its observance, are mocked in footnotes 7,20,23,32, and 36 ('Our critics, true admirers of the fair sex, severely criticized the indecency of this verse'). It is a representative of the 'fair sex' readership who enters the confines of the novel briefly (while remaining a reader) to pause at Lenskii's grave and wonder about the fate of the other protagonists (Six: XLI-XLII). Her sentiment contrasts with her preceding breakneck gallop through the fields in a way which is, the (initiated) reader suspects, not without its charm for Pushkin.

If a principal structural element is the banter that informs the tone of the novel and arises, as we have suggested, from the author-reader relationship, it should be noted that the ironic tone diminishes or is suspended at certain moments. It is at these moments (to be discussed in subsequent chapters) that we (i.e., authorlinitiated reader) come face to face with facts and events which cannot be ironized and which therefore constitute the nexus of the work, the kernel of meaning.

If we accept Pushkin's dictum that 'a novel requires banter' and agree that this is the formative element in *Onegin*, then we must accept the necessity of defining banter a little more closely. Implicit in the root is the notion of the spoken word: colloquial speech is the dominant. In *Onegin* reported speech is relatively rare, and limited to some halfdozen dialogues between different characters: Onegin and Lenskii, Tat'iana and her nurse, the Larins, mother and daughter, when they arrive in Moscow, and Onegin and Prince N (Tat'iana's husband). (The final scene is really a monologue by Tat'iana echoing Onegin's earlier 'sermon' to her of Chapter Four). This kind of reported speech is not what Pushkin means by 'banter,' howeverj on the contrary, they are opposites. Banter is the chatty, conversational mode in which the entire text is delivered, in which an 'I' addresses a 'you' who may be specific - Zizi Vul'f in 5: XXXII: 11 and Pletnev in the dedication - or, as we have s~en, a more generalized spectrum of narratees. The conversational mode in which *Onegin* is written is, at first sight at least, at odds with Lo Gatto's description of *Onegin* as a *diario lyrico*, since a diary is a reflective mode in which the author posits no audience but himself.7 In *Onegin*, by contrast, the audience is an omnipresent factor.

The conversational mode is expressed by the predominant speech level, in which the author (or 'speaker') apostrophizes his reader (sometimes using the familiar *ty*, sometimes the formal- or plural- *vy)*, in which he inserts asides ('hm, hm,' 'by the way,' etc.), and above all by

the ironic tone which predominates. A characteristic expression of the conventional mode is the abundance of digressions, which are tangential or utterly remote from the plot line of the 'nove1.' Equally typical are the frequent stylistic shifts, in which the author mimics the features of a specific style. The style mimicked may be a literary one, which gives the passage in question the force of a parody:

> *Poiu priiatelia mladogo*
> *I mnozhestvo ego prichud.*
> *Blagoslovi moi dolgii trud,*
> 0 *ty, epicheskaia muza!*
> *I vernyi posokh mne vruchiv,*
> *Ne dai bluzhdat' mne vkos' i vkriv'.*
> Dovol'no. S pIech doloi obuza!
>
> *['I sing a young friend and the multitude of his caprices. Bless my lengthy work,* 0 *thou, epic muse! And, placing the trusty staff in my hand, let me not wander from the straight and narrow.' Enough. There's a load off my shoulders!* (Seven: LV: 6-12)1

The passage reads as a 'Sternian' reference, since in *Tristram Shandy* a similar mock-epic introduction is introduced late in the course of the nove1. A similar 'Sternian' effect is achieved by Lenskii's 'Poor Yorick' outburst over Larin's grave (Two: XXXVII: 6). Here the parodistic effect is more complex, since Lenskii clearly *means* it to be Hamletian, although the comparison of the solemn Larin to the joker is ridiculously misapplied and reveals Lenskii's pose.

An equally crucial example of parody is the elegy which Lenskii composes on the eve of his duel with Onegin:

> Kuda, kuda vy udalilis',
> Vesny moei zlatye dni?
> Chto den' griadushchii mne gotovit?
> Ego moi vzor naprasno lovit,
> V glubokoi mgle taitsia on.
> Net nuzhdy; prav sud'by zakon.
> Padu li ia, streloi pronzennyi,
> 11' mimo proletit ona,
> Vse blago: bdeniia i sna
> Prikhodit chas opredelennyi;

Blagosloven i den' zabot,
Blagosloven i t'my prikhod!

[Whither, whither have you fled, golden days of my youth? What does the coming day prepare for me? My *eye seeks it in vain; it is hidden in the deep gloom. There is no need; the law of fate is just. Whether I fall, pierced by the arrow, or it flie$ past, all is well: the appointed hour of waking and sleep must come; blessed is the day of cares, blessed* too *is the coming of darkness!* (Six: XXI: 3-14)]

Here the parody blends into an ironical capturing of the character's 'voice.' Strangely, however, through the parody a 'real' content is visible, namely Pushkin's frequently expressed fatalism, the sentiments in Lenskii's elegy 'rhyming' with those in the last stanza of Chapter Eight: 11: 9-14. The question of where parody ends and narration begins is ultimately unresolvable. Is Tat'iana's letter, for instance, or the song of the peasant maidens in the garden a parody? The answer is in the ear of the reader, so delicately is the irony nuanced.

The panoply of styles which is a feature of *Onegin* - the parodies, letters, songs, dialogues, and even the passages of quoted text - all is subordinate to the intonation of a single narrative voice.8 That is to say, whether the narrator quotes what purports to be an autonomous text - for example, Onegin's letter to Tat'iana, which Akhmatova demonstrates to be a pastiche of Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe* - or a passage from another author, in the text or notes or as an epigraph, the choice of text, and its tangential position with respect to the narrative, inevitably read as more or less ironic, from the blatant *lasciate ogni speranza* to the subtly exaggerated air of excessive respect accorded Gnedich's pedestrian idyll (in note 8), which stands, despite Pushkin's description of it as 'charming,' in ironical contrast with the lightness and impressionism of Pushkin's stanzas.9

Another important aspect of the banter and an element in the irony is the presence of foreign words. As Bocharov has shown, they reflect the fundamental role of the concept of translation in the stylistic structure of the poem (1974, 77, 89). Words may be given in the foreign language *(comme il faut, vulgar)* or in Russian transliteration *(vasisdas, Ay),* or they may be translated into a Russian 'calque' ('temno i vialo' - *obscur et trainant;* see Nabokov, III, 31). The frequent attention that Pushkin gives to these words, and to the relationship of Russian vocables to foreign, ensures that this ironic situation is emphasized. For

Pushkin, who spoke and wrote French fluently and was steeped in French culture, French had an undeniable influence on the language, and he expressed his feelings on the subject (apropos Tat'iana's letter to Onegin):

> Nepravil'nyi, nebrezhnyi lepet,
> Netochnyi vygovor rechei
> Po prezhnemu serdechnyi trepet
> Proizvedut v grudi moei;
> Raskaiat'sia vo mne net sily,
> Mne gallitsizmy budut mily,
> Kak proshloi iunosti grekhi
>
> *[Incorrect, careless twitter, the imprecise pronunciation of speeches* >0.11, *as before, produce a flutter of the heart in my breast; I do not have the strength* to *repent that gallicisms will be as dear* to *me as the sins of my spent youth* (Three: XXIX: 1-7)]

Pushkin elevates imperfection (of language, in this case) to the level of an idiosyncratic aesthetic ideal. In any case, the admixture of Gallicisms and insertion of foreign elements are essential to Pushkin's 'banter.' .

Equally essential to the tone of the text are the literary allusions. In *Onegin* we do not simply have a narrator recounting some novelistic events to a reader. The author and the 'aware' reader are assumed to be highly literate. Again, as with foreign words and stylistic levels, there is a paradigm of literary allusions. There are, first, the quotations which are tangential to the text and the author of which is identified. Such are the mottoes and quotations from texts given in the footnotes. In *Onegin* Pushkin refrained from Scott's practice of inventing quotations for the occasion, with the sole exception of the epigraph to the entire novel ('Petri de vanite ...t which was, it seems clear, composed by the author.lO Next to the identified and distinct quotations stand the quotations, sometimes slightly altered, which are embedded in the verse. These might be anonymous - 'Qu'ecrirez-vous sur ces tablettes ...' (Four: XXVIII: 10) - or identified as to author - e.g., the quotation from Griboedov (note 38) - without any apparent irony (beyond a shade of pedantry). Next in line come the parodies and pastiches. Here again, we must distinguish those where the author is identified (note 34) from those where the allusion is hidden

Poroi belianki chernookoi
Mladoi i svezhii potsalui

[At times the young, fresh kiss of a dark-eyed white-skinned girl
(Four: XXXVIII: 3-4)]

which, as Nabokov discovered, is a 'hidden quotation' from Chenier:

Le baiser jeune et frais d'une blanche aux yeux noirs. 11

The number of such reminiscences is very large. From a specific quotation, such as that cited, to the general stock of images and phrases of the French pastoral tradition in poetry, the sentimental and romantic novel, classical literature (e.g., Horace: Zaretskii planting cabbagesL the text of *Onegin* is a vast amalgam of literary allusion and reminiscence, all subsumed into the ironic *badinage* of the worldly and widely read narrator. Numerous scholars have delighted in excavating this burial ground of allusions and classifying every bone. Of these, the scholiast-in-chief is Nabokov, whose formidable erudition and passion for detail provide a fascinating commentary on Pushkin's reading (although even Nabokov misses certain echoes) and fix *Onegin* as a type of literary text to be unsurpassed in this respect, at least until the modernists.

Although Pushkin's emphasis on the necessity of banter is important in defending the nature of *Onegin*, it does not stand alone in the organization of the poem. A novel that was composed of sheer banter would tend to lose all limits and structure. It is therefore placed in a creative tension with another unique element: the verse, or more precisely, the stanza. The question of the origin and form of the *Onegin* stanza has been examined by several critics. 12 The fourteen-line sonnetlike stanza with its unique rhyme-scheme (ababeeccddiff), whatever its inspiration, imposes a severe discipline on the iambic tetrameter line (which was already becoming trite under the weight of repetition - a consideration which later induced Pushkin to move to the pentameter in 'The Little House in Kolomna'). The intricacy of the rhyme pattern reflects the importance that Russian verse accords to rhyme (blank verse having had only intermittent success in that language). As Vinokur has pointed out, the stanza imposes regular divisions upon the narrative (thus distancing the reader somewhat from the events narrated), both inter-strophic divisions, and intra-strophic ones, especially after the eighth line (1941). These divisions have the advantage

for the author of providing 'natural breaks' for him to switch from story to digression, or from one stylistic level to another, so that the stylistic complexity of *Onegjn* goes hand in hand with the *Onegjn* stanza. The banter, the colloquial rhythms, the passages of dialogue, the lines of foreign-language text, the outrageous rhymes, all are subordinate to the precise discipline of this demanding form, which rarely tolerates even enjambment. The poet thus creates a challenge for himself – as Bayley has aptly pointed out - to fulfil again and again the demanding requirements of his self-imposed stanzaic structure, and yet maintain the facility and tone of colloquial banter.I3 That he manages to do so with apparent ease suggests the level of his art. The effect of the imposition of this complex form is to create another level of irony, the requirements of the rhyme scheme being fulfilled, occasionally, in bizarre or even outrageous ways; for example, with a foreign phrase or initials:

> Podumala chto skazhut liudi?
> I podpisala T.L.
>
> *[She wondered what people would say and*
> *sjgned: T.L. (PSS,* VI, 320)]

- lines from a draft in which T.L. (Tat'iana Larina) is pronounced according to the names formerly given the letters in the Russian alphabet: 'Tverdo, Liudi.' Another example is the macaronic rhyme:

> *Qu'ecrjrez-vous sur ces tablettes,* I
> podpis': t. *a v. Annette*
>
> *['Qu'ecrirez-vous sur ces tablettes'; And the sjgnature: 't[oute]* à *v[ous]. Annette'* (Four: XXVIII: 10-11)]

It is important to note, however, that, as with language, Pushkin recoils from a rigorous perfection of form. The stanzaic text here is broken three times: by the intrusion of the two letters (in iambic tetrameter but not in stanzas) and by the song of the maidens. It stands, moreover, in contrast to the prose elements - mottoes, notes, and the introduction and comments in the Journey. Prose lurks like an everpresent threat, beyond the manicured gardens of the stanza, like the forests through which Tania roams after passing through the luneshaped beds and alleys of the manorial park. The reader tends to forget

that the letter, the epitaphs on the graves of Larin and Lenskii, and the dialogues and monologues are prose that has conformed, for the occasion, to the magic of the stanza. Pushkin's references to 'humble' or severe prose to which the years are driving him serve to emphasize the tension and elevate (as Tynianov andLotman have suggested) 'prose versus verse' to a theme of the work (and one, again, which is adumbrated by the laconic subtitle' a novel [= prose genre] in verse').14

The avoidance by Pushkin of formal perfection goes beyond the places where the text slips out of the *Onegin* stanza. In his discussion of the structure of *Onegin,* Nabokov remarks that 'its eight chapters form an elegant colonnade' (Nabokov, I, 16). This remark forms a curious lapsus on Nabokov's part. The latter defended the inviolability of the *editio optima* of 1837 as the text of the novel: 'It is ... the structure of the end product, and of the end product only, that has meaning for the student - or at least for this student - confronted by a master artist's word' (ibid.). Yet in the final text one of the 'columns' - Chapter Eight - had fallen down, to be hastily dragged to one side where it would remain as Onegin's Journey, while Chapter Nine was blatantly renumbered 'Eight.' There is a gap in that colonnade, which Pushkin himself had carefully constructed in all its symmetry and which was represented by the plan that he had prepared at Boldino in the fall of 1830 (giving titles to the chapters - cantos - and the place written):

ONEGIN		
Part First	Foreword	
I canto	*Hypochondria*	Kishinev, Odessa
II canto	*The Poet*	Odessa 1824
III canto	*The Damsel*	Odessa, Mikh[ailovskoe]
Part Second		
IV canto	*The Countryside*	Mikh[ailovskoe] 1825
V canto	*The Name Day*	Mikh[ailovskoe] 1825-6
VI canto	*The Duel*	Mikh[ailovskoe] 1826
Part Third		
VII can to	*Moscow*	Mikh[ailovskoe]
		P[eters].B[urg]
		Malinn[iki]. 1827. [182]8
VIII can to	*The Wandering*	Mosc[ow]
IX canto	*The Grand Monde*	Bold[ino]

The reasons that motivated Pushkin to disrupt this classical symmetry

may be guessed at. is The introduction that he places in front of the fragments of the *Tourney* is characteristically - and playfully - evasive. The reasons, the poet claims, are important for him, but not for the public. It may be surmised that some (destroyed) portions of it contained material that was subversive. Katenin, in a letter to Annenkov, was of this opinion. Pushkin had confided to him that Onegin visited, in the original text, the Arakcheev military settlements, 'and here occurred remarks, judgements, expressions that were too violent for publication' (Nabokov, III, 257).

The remaining stanzas (extant in rough draft) could, however, conceivably have been placed in the position of the eighth chapter, with an indication of the missing stanzas. Such an arrangement would have preserved the 'elegant colonnade' (at least in a diminished form) and made, as Katenin suggested, a smoother transition to the Petersburg scenes of Chapter Eight (Nine!. The 'pressure of censorship theory' does not, therefore, appear in itself to be of sufficient weight. More cogent would be the aesthetic argument - having suggested this image of perfect symmetry, Pushkin deliberately disrupts it. His breaking of the colonnade is another aspect of his eschewal of formal perfection: it is the defects, the slight disproportions, which make a fair face beautiful, and give it life, just as the solecisms and gallicisms give charm to Tat'iana's speech. By breaking the story line (placing the fragment of the Journey after the events of Chapter Eight, which it precedes in time), Pushkin signals that it is not formal perfection that is his goal, nor the chronology of the novelistic story-line that is paramount. The Journey forms a coda which has, in fact, an important poetic function. It returns us to the themes and the poetic world of Chapter One: Odessa, the romance of Italy, and a day in the life, not of Onegin, but another young rake - Pushkin. The symmetry becomes of a different type: instead of the 3:3:3 structure (or an early variant, 6:6, suggested by treating the end of Chapter Six as the end of the 'First Part'), the structure becomes rather 1: 7: 1.16

The principle of 'avoidance of formal perfection' or 'avoidance of symmetry' that is operative here is one that many scholars have failed to understand. The most egregious example, the emigre V.L. Burtsev, urged that the drafts be used to fill in all the missing stanzas and that the Journey be restored to its position as Chapter Eight. Burtsev (1934), asserting that the Boldino plan cited above was Pushkin's 'will,' demanded that the headings be added to the chapters, that the motto to Chapter One be moved to Eight (the Journey) and that the motto 'Petri de vanite' be placed at the beginning of One. His entire essay is sat

urated with a strident dogmaticism and is a curious example of the intentional fallacy, but it is illustrative of the temptations *to* 'restore' that *Onegin* offers. The *Onegin* that we have, though its chapters do resemble Nabokov's elegant colonnade, is, like those infrequently visited manor-houses where Pushkin achieved much of his creative work, slightly ramshackle, with a fallen column, some shutters missing, and humble outbuildings appended. The less dogmatic reader should be prepared *to* see in this a rustic charm rather than a perfection lost.

Discussi~n in this chapter has centred upon questions that may appear peripheral in the light of the historically acc~pted view of *Onegin* as a novel. In fact the reverse is closer *to* the truth: the work is *not* defined *by* the term 'novel/and that term forms only one part of Pushkin's definition. Pushkin's own perception of the piece is blurred: in speaking of it he uses the terms novel *(roman)* and poem *(poema),* chapter *(glava)* and canto *(pesn')* interchangeably. Certainly, this ambiguity (Tynianov wrote of the 'principle of paradox' in *Onegin)* is a reflection of the tension between the prose genre (novel) and the verse which is a (perhaps even *the)* central theme of the work.

The question then arises of the extent *to* which we may speak of *Onegin* as a novel - how does the term 'novel' fit into the structure of the final world Opinions on this subject are diverse. In the nineteenth century the most common approach was simply *to* ignore the limiting factors of the verse and treat *Onegin* as a realistic novel. Although this approach still has adherents (especially among a broader reading public) it has been severely discredited. For Shldovskii, the novel was a parody, the theme of the novel consisting in the manipulation of the action. For Lo Gatto, the work was a 'lyrical diary' in which the novelistic elements formed, presumably, a convenient frame on which the poet might hang his lyrical transports. The notion has been revived *by* L. Stilman, who, after his refutation of the 'realist' interpretation, goes on *to* discuss similarities between *Onegin* and Byron's *Don Juan.* He writes:

> This fairly obvious similarity lies in the 'form and manner' about which Belinskii spoke, in the poetic and stylistic structures, which rest on completely different skeletons. If in *Don Juan* the skeleton is the ancient adventure novel and the burlesque epic, in *Onegin* an analogous role. is played *by* the sentimental novel with motifs from the early romantic novel and the psychological novel of the beginning of the nineteenth century. (1958,343)

Such references to the novel of *Onegin* as a 'framework' or a 'skeleton' or even as 'parody' are useful as a corrective to the traditional 'realistic novel' approach. But do they provide a satisfying description of the actual role of the novel? In the way they tend to reduce the importance of the novelistic events narrated, which do, after all, occupy the greater part of the reader's attention, it would seem that they are deficient.

It is certain that the author is describing, in *Onegin*, what appears to be a novel. There is a cast of characters - Onegin, Lenshi, Tat'iana, Ol'ga, Prince N, Zaretskii, the Larins, Tat'iana's nurse, Onegin's uncle, the housekeeper, M. Guillot, and many more - a surprisingly large list, especially for such a small work. There is, likewise, a list of novelistic events. A young man inherits an estate; a young girl falls in love with him. He rejects her. He has a fatal duel with her sister's intended. She goes to Moscow to be married off to a fat general. Some two years later she, now married, meets Onegin again. He falls in love with her. She rejects him.

Clearly there is, as part of the 'banter,' the stream of inspired commentary which forms the text of *Onegin*, the idea of a novel. It is, however, impossible to generalize about the narrator's attitude to (and hence the stylistic presentation of) both characters and events. It has been shown that the narrator is blatantly negligent (contemptuous even) of at least some of his characters. This is true of Ol'ga:

> Vsegda skromna, vsegda poslushna,
> Vsegda kak utro vesela,
> Kak zhizn' poeta prostodushna,
> Kak potsalui liubvi mila,
> Glaza kak nebo golubye,
> Ulybka, lokony l'nianye,
> Dvizhen'ia, golos, legkoi stan,
> Vse v Ol'ge ... no liuboi roman
> Voz'mite i naidete verno
> Ee portret ...
>
> *[Always modest, always obedient, always as merry as the morning, as simple-minded as the life of a poet, as darling as the kiss of love, with eyes as blue as the sky; her smile, her flaxen locks, her movements, voice, slender form, everything in Ol'ga ... but take any novel and you'll surely find her portrait.* (Two: XXIII: 1-10)]

Here the character 'Ol'ga' has, not the believable existence of a realistic portrayal (the 'illusion of reality'), but a purely conventional *(uslovnyi)* function, a theoretical existence as the parody of the muse of an elegiac poet.

The same is true of Onegin himself, at least the Onegin of the Onegin- Tat'iana romance. Chizhevskii quotes Jakobson's discussion of metonymy as a realistic device in *On egin* , in particular the interior of Onegin's study, noting 'these surroundings, created by the hero himself, allo~ his essence to be discerned' (Chizhevskii 1968, 153-4). It is curious to note, however, that Tat'iana's conclusion, after acquainting herself with Onegin's intimate surroundings, is to ask herself: 'Might he not be, in fact, a parody?' (Seven: XXIV: 14). We receive no image of Onegin from the work (significantly, his externals are not describedL and the intellectual bric-a-brac with which he is surrounded is typical of a young man of the period (as generations of critics have pointed out) rather than expressive of Onegin's individuality. Like Ol'ga, Onegin is a cipher, a question mark.

The characters in *Onegin* thus are scattered in a limbo which varies from parody through stylization to an approximation of psychological reality. The character whose psychological reality is most clearly sketched and whose thoughts and emotions we know in most detail is Tat'iana (so much so that the notion that the work should really be called *Tat'iana Larin* has become a critical commonplace). There is therefore a distinct note of iconoclasm in Shklovskii's question: 'Baldly stated, did "Pushkin" weep over Tat'iana, or was he joking?' (1923, 214). The critic's own opinion is given later: he believes the tone of the narrator's declarations of his love for Tat'iana is Sternian. Strictly, we may discern here a further complication - a paradigm of narrators, as suggested by Shklovskii's quotation marks: 'Pushkin' (character in novel) wept over Tat'iana, but Pushkin (writer) was joking. In my discussion of Tat'iana in chapter four I will analyse further the realization of her character. Whether she appears as realistic or not, it is certain that she had, as a poetic image, a certain charm for PusW<in that Shklovskii fails to take into account.

The discussion of the novel element in *Onegin* has to involve also the question of the completeness of the plot. The beginning, although it is abrupt - in medias res - as we encounter Onegin on the road to his uncle's estate, conforms to novelistic convention by offering a sketchy biography of the hero in the retrospective stanzas which constitute the larger part of Chapter OneY The ending is, however, of an unprecedented abruptness, which the author, far from mitigating, draws attention to:

Kto ne dochel Ee romana
I vdrug umel rasstat'sia s nim,
Kak ia s Oneginym moim.

[[Blessed is he] who has not read its [life's] novel through to *the end, and was able* to *part with it suddenly, as I do with* my *Onegin.* (Eight: LI: 12-14)]

The effect of this abrupt ending is to destroy any trace of the illusion of Onegin as a reality that has developed in the reader's mind, and to show us, as Stilman has it, the artificiality of the decorations.18

The fact remains that, despite the tone of artificiality and conventionality, bordering upon and frequently becoming parody, with which the narrator frequently treats the novel, the novel is an essential element in the composition, not merely as a 'skeleton' or 'framework,' but as a poetic construct through which issues are examined that are meaningful for poet and audience. The 'novel' which we have in *Onegin* is in ironical counterpoint to the expectations of the reader. As both Lotman (1976,90) and Bayley (1971,265) have suggested, these expectations arise out of the reader's knowledge of the vast antecedent literature that Pushkin invokes in *Onegin.*

Indeed those expectations can be viewed as an autonomous construct (given life by the 'sensitive reader' who comes to muse at Lenskii's grave). The novel can be imagined as having a complete existence in the mind of the reader, whereas the author expresses an ambivalent, sometimes involved but more often negligent and cavalier, attitude towards it.

Although the narrator tends to undermine the illusory reality of the novel by his irony, and by the frequently conventional, parodistic descriptions of character and event, in another way he paradoxically attempts to heighten the sense of immediacy. This is achieved by intertwining the novel with elements of the reality of his own life. Pushkin the narrator is a friend of Onegin, and an admirer of Tat'iana. Other real personages, such as Viazemskii and Kaverin, pass through the invisible walls and participate in the novel in a minor way. Thus, though the author in one way stresses the artificiality and conventionality of his novel, in another way he endows it with a great deal of specificity and actuality. The events of the novel blend into a stylized (and shadowy) version of his own biography, a fact which has fascinated many readers.19 (Studies have been made, for example, of the chronology of events in the novel, placing perhaps a little too much credence

in Pushkin's tongue-in-cheek remark that 'in our novel the time is calculated according to the calendar.')20

Tantalizingly, the novel *of Onegin* exists and does not exist within the wide confines *of* the total work. It is, as the author is at pains to make us aware, a figment *of* his imagination, an imagined extension *of* his own world in which reality (or a stylized version *of* it) and fiction are interwoven in an elaborate conceit which has the plot features *of* a novel, but whose illusion is frequently disrupted and eventually destroyed 'by the author. Questions about, for example, the fate *of* the protagonists are simply not relevant, since the protagonists cease to exist as soon as they disappear from the text. Pushkin was aware *of* the impact *of* his ex *abrupto* finish. Although in terms *of* the sentimental novel, whose features he had borrowed, this was 'ungrammatical' - the required ending being death or marriage - in terms *of Onegin* the 'doh' to which the work returns at the end is not that dictated by the novelistic convention, but that *of* the narrator's life. Hence the great importance *of* the (apparently casual) last line *of* the Journey: 'And so, I lived then in Odessa .",' echoing note 10 from Chapter One and evoking, through the prism *of* time (and with a tinge *of* nostalgia), the themes *of* Odessan exile *of* Pushkin.21

Earlier in the discussion on *badinage,* it was suggested that one *of* the most distinctive elements in the form *of Onegin* is the dominant position occupied by the narrator-audience mode. It was further suggested that the' audience' was composed *of* a number *of* elements (Hoisington's 'hierarchy *of* narratees') - intimate friends and poets, critics, sensitive young ladies, etc. Equally important is the problem *of* the author in the narrative structure. Several critics (e.g., Hoisington 1976, Hielscher 1966) have emphasized that the author is analysable into several distinct figures. For the purposes *of* the present argument, three can be distinguished, although they overlap and at times merge. They are:

Pushkint Actual historical Figure	Pushkin2 Narrator and lyric poet	Pushkin3 Participant in the novel (friend *of* Onegin, admirer *of* Tat'iana)

Term: implied author - author/narrator - 'Pushkin'

These distinctions are not, it should be emphasized, pursued rigorously throughout the novel. On the contrary, the ambiguity *of* the 'I' is part *of* the overall ambiguity *of* the work. There is, so to speak, a 'paradigm'

of Pushkins, and at anyone time it may be one or another which dominates. For example, all three Pushkins listed relate to a female (although in each case this relationship is - or appears to be - chaste).

True, the author includes some coy references to his affairs of the heart:

> A ta, s kotoroi obrazovan
> Tat'iany milyi Ideal...
>
> *[And she, from whom I shaped* my *dear ideal Tat'iana* ... (Eight: LI: 6-7)]

In a parallel way, the poet-narrator who comments on the technical aspects of the text has a muse (described in Eight: I-VI) who is comically replaced at one point by his old nurse (in a disquisition on muses provoked by the Lenskii-Ol'ga relationship), and a paradigm of other equally comic listener-victims (Four: XXXV: 1-14).

'Pushkin,' the participant in the action, presents himself as a secret and sympathetic admirer of Tat'iana:

> No zdes' s pobedoiu pozdravim
> Tat'ianu miluiu moiu
>
> *[But here let us congratulate* my *dear Tat'iana on her victory* (Seven: LV: 1-2)]

or:

> Tat'iana, milaia Tat'iana! S
> toboi teper' ia slezy bu.
>
> [*Tat'iana, dear Tat'iana, I now pour out* my *tears with you.* (Three: XV: 1-2)]

It is possible to extrapolate, from such hints, a Pushkin-Tat'iana relationship.22 But such a relationship is present in the text only as a potential. There is, indeed, a considerable amount of 'play' in it: 'Pushkin' the character sympathizes with Tat'iana, while Push kin her creator manipulates her fate. It is the blurring of the different 'Pushkins,' as well as the overlay of Tat'iana on the various hypostases of 'muse' and shadowy existential referents, which makes *Onegin* such an extraordinarily complex text.

The facts of the real Pushkin's biography serve as the basis for a shadowy, stylized biography of the 'Pushkin' of the text. This biography, as I shall argue in chapter six, is in fact a 'second plot,' which runs in counterpoint to the novel plot and is ultimately more important. The hints and allusions to the Pushkin biography are scattered throughout the text, including the footnotes. They are mostly cryptic in character and therefore presuppose an initiated reader (as do Pushkin's letters). Nevertheless, the events that they recreate form an important narrative. We can trace in them Pushkin's life in St Petersburg to 1820, his visits to the country (Mikhailovskoerduring that time, his exile to the South - the Caucasus, Yalta, Bessarabia, Odessa - his subsequent sojourn in Mikhailovskoe, the Decembrist uprising, and his return to the Capitals.

The *badinage* that *Onegin* contains is therefore directed at a specific problem: to create an image of 'Pushkin,' complex in structure and composed of at least the three components that we have sketched, and to hint at a biography of that 'Pushkin,' which forms the second plot. The problem of 'Pushkin' is inseparable from another question that must be mentioned since it has an important bearing on the form and structure of *Onegin:* the so-called 'digressions.123 These are passages that are inserted into the novelistic narrative and deal with problems and themes outside the mainstream of the novelistic plot. Some are by way of introduction or conclusion to a chapter, while others are inserted directly into the midst of the story-line and have the effect of retarding the novelistic unfolding of events and distancing the reader from them. Although Pushkin uses it himself at one point, the term 'digressions' *(otstupleniia)* is not totally satisfactory, since there is a great variety of such features in the text: the generalization offered as a commentary on the novelistic plot; the authorial aside or parenthetical quip (be it on a personal matter - 'but harmful is the North to me' - or on a professional one - 'now the reader expects the rhyme "frosts-roses" '); the apostrophizing of a real person - e.g., the poets Baratynskii and Iazykov - or, of course, of the 'reader'; the discussion on, say, Russian weather - 'But our Northern summer / is a caricature of Southern writers' - which manages at the same time to be a generalization, a description of the fall Onegin spends on his estate, and, beyond all that, of Pushkin's sojourn at Mikhailovskoe; the lyrical flight - most notably, the interpolation on the charms of 'little feet,' which is simply inserted without apology or motivation into Chapter One and is the purest form of digression; and the introductions and conclusions to certain chapters which likewise have the function of distracting the reader from the novelistic plot-line. To these must be

added the mottoes and footnotes, which add yet another discursive layer whose function is closely related to that of the digressions. In these, the voice may belong to anyone of the three 'Pushkins.'

Of the three, the fictional 'Pushkin,' who is Onegin's friend and shares a similar outlook on life, is the least satisfactory. As Nabokov has pointed out, the content of the digressions in Chapters One to Three is a reflection of conventional Gallic cynicism (Nabokov, I, 1920). One of the 'sources' of this is the aphorisms of Chateaubriand, one of which is quoted in note 15: 'Si j'avais la folie de croire encore au bonheur, je Ie chercherais dans l'habitude.' The effect of these digressions is to diminish the distinction between Pushkin and his hero. Where Pushkin is content to permit such 'blurring' in the case of the female characters, he is careful to stress the distinction between himself and Onegin:

> Vsegda ia rad zametit' raznost'
> Mezhdu Oneginym i mnoi,
> Chtoby nasmeshlivyi chitatel'
> IIi kakoi-nibud' izdatel'
> Zamyslovatoi klevety,
> Ne povtorial potom bezbozhno,
> Chto namaral ia svoi portret,
> Kak Bairon, gordosti poet.
>
> *[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.* (One: LVI: 8-11)]

There has been a tendency, especially among Soviet scholars, to read these lines too literally. Pushkin and Onegi.p. have, indeed, much more in common than Pushkin would have us believe. These lines are to be read as a conventional disclaimer, derived in part, seemingly, from the preface to the second edition of Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe:* 'J'ai deja proteste contre les allusions qu'une malignite qui aspire au merite de la penetration, par d'absurdes conjectures, a su y trouver.' (We should compare this with Sismondi: 'Je reconnais l'auteur a chaque page.') The fact that Constant's protest is not without a certain irony should not prevent us from seeing behind it the marking of a real problem: the distinction of author and hero. Lermontov was to refer once again to

this 'old and sad joke' in his foreword to *A Hero of Our Time.* In fact, Onegin and 'Pushkin' are practically indistinguishable as far as their social opinions, attested in the digressions, are concerned. What divides them - crucially - is Onegin's inability to distinguish an iambus from a trochee.

If the digressions on social matters - friendship, relatives, women are a little disquieting to read and tend to confuse the images of Onegin and 'Pushkin,' the digressions and footnotes on professional matterschoice of genre, foreign words, etc. - have the important, and useful, role of distancing the reader from the novel by drawing attention to its artifice. They create the image of an author involved in a running battle with critics and fellow poets on such questions as genre, foreign words in Russian, and style. It is here that the difference between creator and creation is felt most strongly (Pushkin even mocks Onegin who, falling in love with Tat'iana, 'almost became a poet' - 'Pinocchio becoming human'). Together with the mass of literary allusions, quotes, borrowings, pastiches, parodies, and echoes that saturate the text, this set of asides and digressions serves to create a work that is hyperconscious of the literary process and could validly be read as a meditation on literary form and convention.

An additional measure of disruption of the novelistic pattern is provided by the 'omissions/ i.e. the places where omitted material is marked by stanza numbers in the final version. The omission of stanzas, far from being unique, is a commonplace of romantic poetry. Pushkin's use of the device may be seen to be prompted firstly and simply by the necessity to remove material that was too personal, too likely to cause offence, or simply unsatisfactory as poetry. For the omitted stanzas there exist fair-copy or draft variants with the exception of four. Over these there is a question mark: were they 'artificial' breaches in the narrative that were intended to have a specific poetic weight (Nabokov seems inclined to think so, at least with regard to Seven: XXXIX), or is it simply that the variants have been lost, and they have the same status as the other omissions? Whatever the case, the fact that variants exist is 'illicit' information and should not colour our view of the function (rather than the cause) of the omissions. In general we may say that they heighten the air of negligence and insouciance which permeates the poem, and add a layer of mystery as the reader is invited to conjecture about the 'reasons' for the omission - is it because of some gossipy detail of the poet's private life (evidently the case in Eight: II: 5-14), or because the poet deemed certain satirical descriptions of individuals too risque (Eight: XXV: 9-14), or is there a

political reference to be guessed at in certain omissions (prompted by the exigencies of censorship)? Such are the conjecturings which the omissions had the effect of provoking. They are, as Tynianov has it, fill able with 'any content' the reader may add, and increase the 'opening' of the novel, the confines of which are, thanks to the deformations which Pushkin imposes, far from clearly definedY

In trying to define the nature of the genre of *Onegin* (and the form which gives it shape), one becomes aware of the similarities with Tat'iana's search for the 'word' to describe her demonic hero. The 'word' that fits Onegin most closely is 'parody.' In discussing the nature of parody Tynianov proposes a theory of 'two planes' - the plane of the text and a deeper plane, that of the remembered work which is the object of the parody (1929b, 416). In a similar way, the text of *Onegin* is the deformed parody of an underlying concept in the mind of the reader. Lotman and Bayley have each asked in different ways how it is that readers have perceived and continue to perceive *Onegin* realistically. Is it naivete on the part of the reader, perversity, or a reflection of that underlying concept, the novel that the text parodies? The first half of Pushkin's original definition can be reduced thus: *ne roman* (not a novel) = *neroman* (a non-novel) = *antiroman* (the anti-novel) (Siniavskii's definition).25 This anti-novel is the bright moon-like sliver that contains the dark shape of the novel in its arms, the circle which the reduced silvery shape we see only hints at. The examination of that novel, of its plot, its characters, its possible importance, is the substance of the chapter that follows.