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Russia's Bard: Aleksandra Pushkin as a Forerunner of Modern Russian Literature

Abstract

Aleksandre Pushkin has become the face of Russian literature with his original contribution in literature and his representation of national culture. The thrust area of the present paper would be on the 'Russian's Bard', Aleksandre Pushkin, the nation's poet whose literary undertaking becomes a prototype of the Russian literature as it looms large into the 20th century Russian literary culture. He becomes an archetype of the wide range of genres creating an 'encyclopedia of Russian life'. Therefore, the paper would look into the themes of love, life, death and boredom in his poem, Eugene Onegin. The present paper would also trace the poet's journey from Byron to Shakespeare culminating with an awareness of a mature perspective of his creative genius.

Keywords: Russian Literature, novel-in-verse, dehumanized society, ennui, passion, English influence.

Introduction

Literature manifests national culture. In the similar vein, Russian creative genius is reflected through the literary canon which embodies the original insight into the nations philosophy, conveys its aesthetics, moral and spiritual values and belief system. Russian writers and poets, through their literary outpouring, have painstakingly expressed the soul, people's conscience and the suffering they underwent. Russian Literature and the written form

of English language came in contact with the citizens of the nation only from outside once they were introduced to their religion, Christianity. The writers, specifically, experienced a lasting influence of the outside English literary figures and their contribution to their literary culture. Hence, the beginning of the written form of Russian literature saw the imitation of English techniques and strategies. Apart from this, Russia is replete with the richness of folk tradition, primordial knowledge from well-read men. Hence, the original language, folk songs and stories form a substantial part of Russian literature. However, the unusual shape that Russian literary history took during its formative years, has been the source of numerous controversies. Russian literature has been divided into four eras' depending on the sudden and unusual breaks that Russians encountered in their political scenario as well as in the philosophical aspects. The reforms of Peter I rapidly westernized the nation bringing it quite closer to the modernized western reformers, creating a rift between the past and the more westernized 19th century Russia, giving a fresh outlook of newly created nation and its literature. The 1917 Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik coup also generated a hard line between the past and the early 20th century Russia by evolving literature more for the political propaganda than for aesthetic purposes, hence, making it more "official". Mikhail Gorbachev's ascent to power in 1985 and the collapse of U.S.S.R. in 1991 marked another dramatic break. All these breaks informed to be the product of political forces external to literary history of Russia. Later half of the 17th century saw the invasion of European values resulting in cultural crisis throughout 18th century. Writers struggled between imitation of European values and original language and style. The whole period observed the aspiration for the national originality. There are many examples of leading Russian literary figures who established Russian literary culture in the form of poetry, drama, folk-styled songs, Russian prosody, language and style. The period of Alexander I is considered to be the most effective time in the creative efforts for the Russian writers because it was the time when most of these

Russian poets and dramatists experienced complete enjoyment given to their independent creative abilities and by catering to their original and authentic national spirit. Among these writers is Aleksandre Pushkin.

During the mid-19th century, Russian literature experienced the growth of Romanticism. Writers felt the need to express the incomplete man struggling in the humdrum of the westernized modern society where a common man felt uneasy with the living conditions, hence wanting to release himself into the obliviousness.

Later half of the 19th century saw the 'great reforms' drawing attention of literature towards social issues. Two mainstream parties started taking its roots in Russian literature. One group adhered to what was called the 'pure art' and stood against the utilitarian moral function of art and literature. On the other hand, Leo Tolstoy aimed at the 'destruction of aesthetics' for the sake of moral transformation by means of art. Fyodor M. Dostoevsky reflected religious implications upon the Russian experience, also showed with great artistic power, how isolated and proud human freedom results in slavery and self-destruction. Pre-revolutionary years saw the upliftment in literature, hence referred to as the 'silver age'. Late 19th century also saw the blossoming of new literary movement, symbolism. It was less a movement but more like a spiritual manifestation, thus, artists fought for something new that went beyond good and evil transcending arts and aesthetics.

20th century or post-revolutionary period, at the time of Russian Revolution, divided literature into domestic indigenous literature and emigrant literature. However, literature still retained its unity by longing for belongingness in classical and traditional Russian literary style. Many Russian writers belong to this category of Russian literature including Vladimir Nabokov who got universal acclaim in the 20th century. They did follow the tradition in the strictest terms but were not short of experimenting with new forms and styles either.

Biographical Note on Aleksandre Pushkin

Considered to be the founder of modern Russian literature, Aleksandre Pushkin's popularity rests on his mixing of Old Slavonic language with vernacular Russian taste in his poems, thus, bringing forth the blend of rich and melodic quality. From the very beginning, he was quite close to his housemaids and serfs than to his mother or father. It was this closeness that helped him to acquaint himself with the Russian language that he later on used in the development of his poetic career. He was admitted to the Lyceum in the year 1811, the school exclusively meant for the aristocratic kids. It provided him with the best possible education he could have ever acquired from any of the schools in St. Petersburg. He became the unofficial laureate of the place earning his teachers and peers acclaim for his poetic flair. His poem *Recollections about Tsarskoe Selo* was highly praised by the famous poet of the times Gavriil Derzhavin. After university education, he travelled on water to a number of places enjoying frivolous life. He took to writing creative pieces in the form of the revolutionary poems earning him the wrath of the emperor and finally expulsion from the capital in 1820 for writing revolutionary epigrams. He was permitted to return only in 1826. In the interim, he had served in southern Russia until his dismissal in 1824 for 'atheism' and subsequently lived on his mother's estate at Mikhailovskoe, near Pskov. During the period of his second term of three years exile, he came into the lasting contact with Lord Byron's works and under his romantic spell, he became the leading figure of the Russian Romantic Movement. In 1823, he began his poem, *Eugene Onegin*, considered to be a novel in verse. The poem is about a man who fails to reciprocate his love for a woman until she is hitched to a young bachelor. Pushkin was prolific in a wide variety of genres, poetry and prose, beginning with a narrative poem *Ruslan and Ludmilla* that brought him initial popularity. His Byronic poems *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*; *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*; *The Gypsies*; and his mature masterpiece *The Bronze Horseman*, set during the great flood of 1824, when the statue of Peter the Great chases the

distraught and fleetingly rebellious clerk Evgeny through the streets of Petersburg. Pushkin's finest work *Eugene Onegin*, a novel-in-verse is translated into twelve different languages known worldwide. Pushkin became widely known in English literature and was increasingly read by well-known English authors. He was influenced at different times by the works of William Shakespeare, Lord Byron, Samuel Richardson, Lawrence Sterne, Walter Scott, and William Wordsworth.

Pushkin's English Influence: Byron and Shakespeare

William Shakespeare and lord Byron had a huge influence on Pushkin's romantic art. The romantic version of Byron helped Pushkin define his emerging authorial 'I', an artistic creation called Byronic hero. He could not stop himself from being influenced by the lessons that readers associate with Byron's personality as well as his artistic controversies. However, at a very precise juncture, due to the historian articulation, he showed more interest in Shakespeare than Byron. In his *Reminiscences at Tsarskoe Selo*, Pushkin celebrates Russian victory over Napoleon. In this particular work, there is an obvious trace of Byronic influence seen which seems linked to the young poet's mind since the 1820s. Pushkin knew French and it became the source for his knowledge of Byron and Shakespeare. But his shift from Byron to Shakespeare can be noted in his letter to his friend, Prince Vyazemsky, referring to his Byronic poem *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*,

I hate to see our primitive language traces of European affectation and French refinement. Rudeness and simplicity are more becoming to it. I preach from internal conviction, but as is my custom I write otherwise. (Pushkin, *Letter to Prince Vyazemsky*)

Pushkin's views on Russian language favors the naturalness and simplicity of Russian language over artificiality of the European literary styles. His desire for authenticity in literature becomes a crucial step in enhancing modern Russian literature. Pushkin's

acquaintance with European romanticism came through Byron and this infatuation with the romantics is coincided with his exile to southern parts of the capital, where he modelled certain aspects of his views on politics as well as on his own amorous life as a sailor on various expeditions, which gave rise to his Byronic hero. Later, his characterization of his Byronic hero grew chaotic to an extent where his scholars concluded by stating that Pushkin had gone beyond Byron in his character development. During the years of his infatuation with Byron, the 'idol' figure of his era, Pushkin was forced for his exile (though Byron's was a voluntary one) due to his challenging views on social reformation and politically incendiary verse; his voluptuous liaisons with married women, on the one hand coincide with Byronic free-styled amorous life. However, his poems in Byronic version deviate a bit as far as the representation of its characters is concerned, hence is not a strict follower of romantic poet. Besides all this 'Don Juan list' of Pushkin's works, there is a marked difference in the physical appearance of the two writers. The small and ugly Pushkin was a deformed replica of his romantic and dashing Byronic lovers. In his 1835 biographical article, Pushkin speaks of the importance of biography in which it becomes difficult for a reader to do away with the parallels that the author tends to create between his life and the life of Byron, as at places he seems to speak about himself very often. Byron's grandfather whiled away his time by feeding and instructing crickets. These suggested Pushkin's creation of Ivan Petrovich Belkin, his alter ego. Lastly, in the same draft, Pushkin ends the drama with some kind of a poetic justice by referring to Byron's 'wounded pride', his passions, and his limp. Pushkin himself never did suffer such kind of physical deformity as did Byron. However, he was considered physically ugly. Byron's life was full of rebellious heroism that could impress upon and inspire the readers. Pushkin writes famous lines in one of his poems

I want to understand you,

I search for meaning in you. (Pushkin, Lines Written at Night During Insomnia)

Ultimately, he abandoned Byron and his literary product of creative heroes, be it Childe Herold or Manfred or Conrad, because they did not leave much impression on his further writing. What he would want from his English reading, be it of Byron or of Shakespeare, was the permanence of art. So, he became much interested in the artistic figure whose art and artistic creations would have left a deep and permanent shadow in the literary history. In spite of this magnificent sophistication in the development of his poetic career, Pushkin grew distant with Byronic heroism and associated Russian literature with that of Shakespearean literary expression. In one of his letters to Pyotr Vyazemsky, Pushkin writes,

I see that... you are sad about Byron, but I am glad to his death, as a sublime theme for poetry. Byron's genius paled with his youth. In his tragedies, not excluding even Cain, he is no longer that flaming demon who created *The Giaour* and *Childe Herald*. The first two cantos of *Don Juan* are superior to the following ones. His poetry noticeably changed. He was created completely topsy-turvy; there was no gradualness in him, he suddenly matured and attained manhood, sang his song, and fell silent; and his first sounds did not return to him again. (Pushkin, 1824)

After 1824, Byron was of no use to Pushkin but he definitely had his eyes on Byron's famous creation *Don Juan* when he started writing *Eugene Onegin*, a novel-in-verse. However, when we look at this masterpiece, his character *Eugene Onegin* looks more unlike *Don Juan*. Pushkin, later, found his genius in Shakespeare's exceptional intellectual ability. During 1820s, his reference to Shakespeare could be seen in his letter to N. N. Raevsky, July 1825,

...here is the real rule of tragedy...but what a man this Shakespeare is! I can't get over it. How paltry is Byron as a tragedian in comparison with him! (Pushkin 237)

In a draft, Pushkin states,

Read Shakespeare...he never fears compromising his hero/ character; he has him speak with all the naturalness of life because he is certain that at the appropriate time and

place, he can make that hero find a language consistent with his character. (Pushkin *Letters to Raevsky* 78)

His encounter with Shakespeare came through his reading of Francois Guizot. However, Pushkin did not admire Guizot's observation on Shakespeare as belonging to the category of 'brute' and 'uncivilized' group of poets with unpredictable genius. Pushkin uses Shakespeare to show not only his own original genius but how he could also be influenced by the European traditions which also includes French. Pushkin would take up Guizot's arguments as a challenge to turn these defects in Shakespearean dramaturgy into something productive principle of a new Russian theatre liberated from French Neoclassical principals. He used Shakespearean theatrical strategies, beginning with *Boris Godunov*, is in a real sense mesmerizing. His later works show true connections with Shakespearean immortal dramatic tragedies. the life of Shakespeare and his endeavors at personal level least interested Pushkin as opposed to Byron, whose amorous disposition had a great bearing on his life. Shakespeare, on the other hand was quite difficult to ascertain and therefore, turned to be the liberating force. In postmodern times, what we associate with Byron, is the theatrical metaphor, that is, the speaker's role-playing, but for Shakespeare, all the world is a stage. What interested Pushkin about Shakespeare was the lessons from his unpredictable characters of life, utterly non-Byronic notions of character. In a letter to a publisher of *Moskovskii Vestnik*, Pushkin claims,

Being completely certain that the outmoded forms of our theatre were in need of reshaping, I organized my tragedy according to the system of Our Father Shakespeare, and I sacrificed at his altar two of the classical unities (time and place), while barely preserving the third (action). (Pushkin, *Letter to publisher of Moskovskii Vestnik*, 66)

Thus, in *Boris Godunov*, one can easily trace the echoes of Shakespeare's *Julius*

Caesar and *Richard III*. But unfortunately, he could not be treated equal to Shakespeare because like many other dramatists, he also failed at that. Though, he left a huge impression on Russian literary culture, unfortunately, he could not receive critical acclamation for his works during his lifetime. Thus, critics failed to understand and appreciate his plight and human understanding in a naïve manner.

Critical examination of *Eugene Onegin*

Eugene Onegin is considered a classic piece of art in Classic Russian literature. In its initial days of expansion, the book was published serially between 1825 and 1832. Next year in 1833, its first complete edition was published and released in all over Russia. The book is unique in its style and rhyme scheme with 389 stanzas written in iambic tetrameter. It follows an unusual rhyme scheme, "AbAbCCddEffEgg" with the uppercase alphabets representing *feminine rhymes* while the lowercase represents *masculine rhymes*. This different, quite unique rhyme scheme has come to be recognized as "*Onegin Stanza*" or the "*Pushkin Sonnet*". The wonder of formal innovative rhyme scheme, the original tone and verbosity, all demonstrate the craftsmanship instrumental in announcing Aleksandr Pushkin as the undisputed master of Russian poetry of his times and times to come. Applauded for its verse narrative, the book explores ennui, love, life, death, convention and passion. It is a work of stunning social and psychological insight. *Eugene Onegin* holds the dual honor of being one of the most cherished Russian works in both, Russian opera and Russian literary culture. It's a timeless story of an unrequited love; about yearning and adventures; about the tragic death of a youthful pride, all contribute to the witticism of the verse style and complicated structure. The work has been translated adapted as an opera by the famous Russian, Tchaikovsky, who gives a fitting voice to the emotional as well as the physical turmoil acting at the heart of the novel in question.

Although, the libretto omits major chunk of the novel, but it does preserve some important scenes in an unaltered state, it remains true to the episodic nature of Pushkin's

narrative.

Canto the First

Pushkin opens his novel with a complaint from his protagonist, Eugene Onegin, against the growing ennui of caring for his dying uncle. But, before the protagonist takes his journey through the novel, Pushkin introduces the reader to some unnamed man with key traits of ‘vanity’ ‘indifference’ and ‘a sense of superiority, perhaps imaginary’ in his epigraph (written in 1823 at *Kishineff* and *Odessa*). Once Pushkin introduces his titular ‘hero’, Eugene, it becomes quite obvious that the protagonist very much fits into the description given about the unnamed man in its epigraph. Regardless of the nature of the epigraph, the novel-in-verse without a shadow of doubt establishes the connection between literature and life which will become a motif throughout the novel. The novel also represents the authors transition in many aspects—Pushkin’s intimately connected transitions from poetry to prose, from idealistic youth to a mature adult, from heart to the mind. The very first stanza of the novel explores the recurrent theme, that of ‘boredom’.

Onegin seems to speak to the readers complaining about his plight. At the same time, the reader also locates him enjoying in the humdrum on the streets of St. Petersburg, partying around at a maddening pace. This is also corroborated by the epigraph of the stanza which reads:

He hushes at life and exhausts the passions. (Pushkin *Canto 1*)

Onegin hurries from parties to restaurants to a ballet, back to the toilette at home to a ball. In his ceaseless pursuing of decadent life, we readers find that the protagonist doesn’t do this to impress upon the ladies of high society or because he seeks enjoyment from all those activities, but for the dizzying experience of constant acceleration that he seeks. The clever and a manipulative man that he displays, he is much capable of impressing upon the artificiality of the society that he himself belongs to. His egregious personality helps him to stand out from the crowd or sometimes above them all, but is also an alienated person. His alienation comes

to surface from the term ‘yawn’ that figures in the XVIII stanza.

Pushkin paints Onegin in the ‘springtime of his youth’, but yes, soon he lost all warmth of feeling/the social buzz became a bore’. This transformation is further emphasized when Pushkin says in his powerful lines

The Spleen is what the English call it,

we call it simply the Russian soul. (Pushkin Canto I)

What the readers can conceive from the above lines is the distinction that Pushkin stresses on, i.e., the two cultures, English and the Russian culture, and how the contemporary Russia deals with the westernization of Russian society. Peter the Great, the Russian emperor whose rule began with the Europeanization process in the early 18th century Russia, the Russian aristocrats since became increasingly European in their observation, especially French and German, and less inclined towards their old Russian tradition. The “social buzz” that Eugene refers to is the buzz imported from Europe and is antithetical to the “Russian soul.” Eugene, as a young man is dissatisfied with this culture and takes on the tormented personality, mostly associated with the literature and biographical sketch of the English poet, Lord Byron. As is seen in the following cantos, Tatyana finds Byron’s portrait in Eugene’s room and concludes that he is very much an empty person, a character derived not from reality but from English books he has read. Additionally, Pushkin compares Onegin to Byron’s world-weary and an archetypal character, Childe Herold from *Childe Herold’s Pilgrimage*.

At one point of time, when Onegin is seen bored of his present life and displeased of his past life, the protagonist encounters another character in the form of Pushkin, who moves beyond his duty of a writer and starts conversation with Eugene. Both drinks hard together but inevitably are separated, Onegin to his uncle’s place and Pushkin to his original place flowing above his narrative as a narrator. Pushkin appears number of times in the story till the end, where he once again collides with the main lead of the novel at a ball. This meeting, here, is

useful as it draws a parallel between the two journeys, they had promised to take together but end up taking their respective journeys all alone. These journeys they take to escape from the haunting past continuously chasing them, and to reach out for a new refreshing milieu. In the following canto, Onegin meets his only friend, Lensky. These two represent Pushkin's two halves of his personality. By sketching the difference between the two, Pushkin is sure to make a statement about different poetic sensibilities. Although, Onegin is much literate, but he never writes to his satisfaction, he even despises the bucolic countryside unlike Pushkin. In drawing a clear line between his protagonist and himself, Pushkin helps his own creativity to move away from the English Romantic influence or against the Romanticist tradition of Byron, whose characters are intensely autobiographical.

Canto the Second

The second canto begins with an epigraph, "O, Rus!", taken from the Roman poet Horace, referring to the countryside where the events are focused. Onegin has moved to a countryside after inheriting all wealth from his uncle. Unlike Pushkin, as is previously stated, he finds no life or pleasure in the bucolic countryside with natural beauty. He shows no interest in the simple-minded people either. He has no attachment for the native indigenous traditions. He even seems disinterested in the Larin feast that engages rural population. An intelligent, rich, with an urban upbringing, he instructs his peasants with characteristically European thinking, thus earning their wrath. He finds a new companion in Vladimir Lensky. Pushkin draws his sketch in such a way as suggesting his poetic flair, youthful ignorance and German influences, all of which sets him in opposition to the protagonist. The only common thing that the two young comrades share is the dislike for their neighbors.

'Wave', 'verse' and 'flame' refer to the young and energetic poet, Vladimir Lensky, while 'mountain', 'prose' and 'fountain' refer to Eugene Onegin. Out of these binary epithets, 'verse' and 'prose' protrude out the most. Second canto also introduce the reader to the two

Larin sisters, Olga and Tatyana, whose dissimilarities reflect Onegin-Lensky opposition. Like Lensky, Olga too is beautifully blossoming in her youthful days. Lensky has loved her since they were in their childhood phase and therefore, for a poet like Lensky, Olga becomes the Muse of his poems.

Pushkin engages his readers into believing the fact that the present work is just a meta-novel, a fiction that is aware of its 'fictionality'. At the same time, Pushkin blurs the demarcation between real and unreal through Olga Pushkin immediately pleads the cause of her elder sister, Tatyana.

Canto the Third

Third canto reflects the French poet Jacques Clinchamps de Malfilatre- 'She was a girl; she was in love'. The stanza opens with a dramatic dialogue between Onegin and Lensky, demonstrating the authors pure adaption to *Onegin stanza*, which he uses to loom large on the description of environments, and psychological reflections. Their conversation rests on the two Larin girls, Tatyana and Olga, after their visit to the Larin household. Onegin speaks with almost an honest disposition about the character of the two girls. Olga, he says, is plain and uninteresting, more to Lensky's disappointment, whereas, Tatyana is more of a good soul with a mysterious look. He describes the two sisters art work: Tatyana is more like "Svetlana", the melancholic heroin of a ballad written by Vasily Zhukovsky, and Olga, he says, is like a painting of a woman designed by the famous European painter Anthony Van Dyck. Throughout the rest of the poem, Pushkin will be seen praising Tatyana; shows his obvious sympathy and love for her. Interestingly, the reader can easily discern that Pushkin furthers his poem by comparing Russian culture with that of the European counterpart. In the following lines of the canto, Pushkin criticizes, rather harshly, Lensky's poetic views about love when he makes Onegin to speak in humiliating terms about Olga, comparing her to a "stupid moon" that the "stupid sky" and Lensky throughout his imaginative perception honors. This bitter

confrontation, as a result of Onegin's disrespectful statements about Olga, hence, offends Lensky. Onegin later seduces Olga, thus, infuriating Lensky's innocence the second time and the two are seen at odds with each other. Onegin's says,

Were I the poet, brother,

I'd choose the elder one instead (Pushkin Canto 3)

These lines further investigate into the unpoetic stance in Onegin's personality that contrasts with his later transformation into a poet at the time of his depression caused by Tatyana's refusal of reciprocating his love. Since Tatyana's simplicity and honesty is reflected in the very epigraph of the canto, her love seems to arise as soon as the rumors about their courtship start spreading throughout the country. She nurtures her love for French romantic novels imagining herself the heroine in the fiction and Onegin as hero pursuing his love. Her honest and artless love is further exposed in contrast to the bogus love shared by the ladies of high-class society in the following lines:

Heed the call of passion,

In such an honest artless fashion. (Pushkin Canto 3)

Before her confession to Onegin, "moon" appears four times in the stanza delineating the meaning of the first and the last as "shining" and the other two as "seductive rays". Her letter is emotional, overwhelmingly passionate and pleading. She expresses her hopes honestly and expects the same honest reply from Onegin. But she equally is not aware of the person Onegin displays himself to be. She is yet to conquer the knowledge of the person per se.

The answer to which she tries to grasp from the French romantic novels she starts reading once Onegin, dissatisfied, leaves for his long journey. Before Onegin's rejection of Tatyana's love, Pushkin mentions various beautiful details about Tatyana that transform her love for Onegin into something which defines her. Her love of nature, her escape to the meadows and woods, her singing of a maiden song, her scribbling of Onegin's initials on the

foggy windowpanes, all describe the transformation that she undergoes after falling for a person completely bereft of her unfeigned feelings. Onegin's sudden appearance in the garden where he could meet Tatyana and then Pushkin's abrupt closure of the canto.

Certainly, surprises and confuses the reader. In some sense, Pushkin tries to mock the readers empathetic attitude towards Tatyana's tender feelings for Onegin and wants to distance the reader from this emotionally charged grip of love. It's also clear that Pushkin makes his readers aware of the meta-effect of literature and its tricks to capture the reader emotionally.

Canto the Fourth

Fourth canto begins with an epigraph 'La Morale est dans la nature choses' which means morality is in the nature of things which refer to the moral dialectic speech delivered by Onegin as a reply to Tatyana's letter. Onegin, while brooding on his past, recollecting the memories gone, he seems to become Pushkin's mouthpiece criticizing the cunning and crafty schemes of the ladies of high society. Hence, Onegin gives reasons for his rejection of her feelings for him. He recognizes himself not worthy of her love because he is fragmented inside, he doesn't illuminate on his inner chaotic self, he is more an unsuccessful and unsatiated man replete with unhappy feelings. His lack of empathy leads him to disregard her feelings and question the young lady's trustworthy love.

Onegin's mention of "fate" in the canto, gains much importance at the end of the novel, when the reversal of roles take place, urging Tatyana to reject his advances by submitting to her fate.

Through Pushkin's authorial intervention, he does empathize with the character in the role of Tatyana, but can't help but ask for forgiveness, "Forgive me! Such the love I bear" (Pushkin Canto 4). He even says, "My heroine, Tattiana" (Pushkin Canto 4). The emphasis on "my" may speak of Pushkin's love for innocent Tatyana, but it may also indicate Pushkin's love for the character that he has created so interestingly, with a marked genuineness attached

to her. Pushkin deftly diverts the reader's attention away from this couple to another, Lensky and Olga. Once again, Pushkin criticizes the practices of the aristocratic society through the honest feelings imbibed by the loving couple. Lensky writes love poems for Olga's album, despite the ossified convention of the album. Lensky's honest poetic style, his honest love in his heart and his honest standards of living, draws a beautiful connection between literature and life. Olga, however, does not show as much ardor as Lensky possesses, be in poetry or in love. Indeed, Onegin's judgement of Olga in the previous canto was correct, and Lensky himself comes to realize the simplemindedness of his beloved when he comes to meet her the day before the duel. The last stanza, again, stresses on the contrast between Onegin and Lensky, striking a stark parallel between simple love and experienced disaffection. Pushkin praises the blitheness of the young and sympathizes with the torments of the age.

Canto the Fifth

It begins with an epigraph highlighting the inescapable dreadful dream that Tatyana grapples with, foreshadowing the pitiless death of Lensky at the hands of Onegin. The present canto starts with the beautiful description of the countryside covering the landscape with its white shining snow. As the morning breaks, Tatyana first sights the 'park', 'garden', 'palings', 'yard', and 'roofs' blanched over with wet snow. The description of such a landscape again brings in the parallel that Pushkin uses throughout the novel-in-verse, the over-emphasis shown towards the European topics of higher region to that of the rustic Russian peasant life. The Larin family engage themselves in Divination games during the night of the cold weather. Tatyana takes the game seriously, starts conjuring the spirits. Later, out of fear gives up the game and goes to bed. The game of spirits still haunts her in her dreams that brings Zhukovsky's quotation into mind: 'Oh, do not dream these fearful dreams, O my Svetlana' (Pushkin canto 5)

Pushkin himself shows concern for his character as Onegin once did and now the

epigraph does the same by comparing Tatyana with Zhukovsky's heroine, Svetlana. Tatyana does try her best to understand the meaning of her dream by simply going through the book but fails. However, certain points still become clear in the readers mind when it comes to the duel planned between Onegin and Lensky. The fearful dream forebodes the death of Lensky due to the stabbing that he receives from Eugene. Furthermore, Tatyana's encounter with Onegin surrounded by the demons in her dream, foreshadows her investigation into Onegin's room and discovery of monsters within his mind.

Apart from the dream episode that bears a tremendous importance as the story progresses into further cantos, another inevitable episode that comes to play when Lensky tricks Onegin into coming to a party arranged for Tatyana's name-day. Discovering the party to be just a parody of high social class parties of the cities, the bustling of the many guests, and the displeasure that Onegin figures out on the face of Tatyana, enrages him. Out of rage, Onegin decides to avenge his plight on Lensky by craftily monopolizing Olga, much to Lensky's dismay.

Off course, Lensky holds responsibility of deceiving world-weary Eugene into coming to such a frenzied party he harbors aversion for, but not for Tatyana's unhappiness. Tatyana, beyond any doubt, has stirred in Eugene an unusual love for her. He, however, allows his emotions to get the better of his vaunted rationality, which in turn spurs him to take revenge on Lensky's part. Onegin's control over Olga does nothing but infuriates Lensky. Onegin begins to flex the muscles of his cunning mind to corner Olga away from Lensky. His tricks devoid of true feelings, leads Olga to blush, driving Lensky into even greater rage. Here, Lensky realizes the love of Olga as false as that of the high society ladies whom he and Pushkin despise the most.

Canto the Sixth

The epigraph highlights the lack of fear among the contemporary youth which is not

only deceptive but is also a destructive social practice. Lensky and Onegin, being the representatives of the modern contemporary youth, make not even a single attempt to stop the senseless duel, neither for himself nor for each other. Once the party ends, Tatyana looks unsettled and confused and broods over her tight situation. In the meantime, Pushkin launches another character, vicious Zaretsky, one whose description is not that of a central character but a miniature one who plays a definitive role to bring about the tragic fall of the main protagonist at the end of the canto. Zaretsky's love for duel makes him a fitting character as Lensky's second. He also becomes a reason for not preventing the duel.

Zaretsky's visit to Onegin's place brings a challenge from Lensky. It also becomes quite clear from Pushkin's description of the trickster's biography when he, at no point of time tries to suggest a reconciliation between the two embittered friends, as he himself is so fond of dueling that he harbors not a shadow of compassion for either of the rivals. Also, the late arrival of Onegin at the meeting place, Zaretsky didn't raise a single voice of violating a rule, rather he and Onegin's servant, Guillot, seal their mouths to let the duel happen, highlighting the prevention of the loss. While Onegin grieves by the side of Lensky's dead body, Zaretsky is seen making a pitiless and stone-hearted statement about his death by shouting, "why! He's killed", which further disturbs the young guilty man, Onegin, later, haunting him in his depression. Zaretsky is seen devoid of any feelings and the one who is ready to see two friends kill each other.

Before the commencement of the dreadful event, Lensky decides to visit Olga brushing aside all the negativity and ill memories he has of the last night. Simple in his spirit, Lensky cannot resist to see Olga before his duel. The day before the duel, two lovers become one, are reconciled, but he still holds to his fatal plan. He does not open up in front of Olga about the plan, he reframes the intention of the duel as protecting Olga against Onegin rather than avenging himself.

Again, Lensky's choice of writing poetry against reading Schiller points to a contrast between Russia and her European counterpart. Russia as such, represents the creativity, whereas, Europe, an imitation. Further, the candle under the light of which Lensky first starts reading Schiller is overpowered by the bright incandescent light of Olga. The poem he undertakes deals with the themes of fate and memory. He, in a way, accepts the fate and hopes that his memories will be remembered through Olga's attempts. Ironically, she does contrary to what he observes in her compassion for him, as observed in the following canto. Even Pushkin is seen making a remark on the doomed fate that robs Lensky of his youthful blossom, and his poetic endeavors. Lensky's death anticipates the death of Pushkin's poetic and youthful recognition because he has gone beyond thirty years of age. The death also paints a contrast between poetry and prose, with prose work taking a new lead as a new genre for the Russian poet, Pushkin. The author also is seen displaying his worry, raising characteristically, a poetic question about he being remembered after his death.

The poet also seems to suggest his departure from his youthful poetic spirit. Lensky roused from his dreams by Zaretsky, then taking him to the dueling mill, foreshadows, in a sense, taking Lensky to his execution. This execution is the farewell that Pushkin bids to his poetic youth.

Canto the Seventh

The rich, beautiful, and lively portrayal of spring season kicks off the seventh canto blended with the major thematic concern of the novel-in-verse.

The description of nature that Pushkin paints, runs throughout the novel. But, the difference surfaces as Pushkin, instead of relying on the happiness that the season brings along with it, he reverts his happiness by turning back to the nostalgic mood of his youthful days and starts to mourn the spring. He seems to lack the ability to cope up with the changed physical as well as the emotional scenario of the landscape. Undoubtedly, the first stanza does present a

conventionally warm, colorful, and bright image of nature's reawakening, but Pushkin fails to grasp the positive energy implied through nature.

For Pushkin, this newly created life of spring brings unhappiness to his heart because he believes his heart has become dead long ago. In spite of that, it is stirring his heart heavily. What Pushkin tries to explain is his lost youth which cannot be rejuvenated after so long. Here, Pushkin closely resembles Onegin who expresses similar sentiments when his long-forgotten love is stirred by Tatyana's approach. In this agonizing situation, Onegin's snowy abrogation to Tatyana's love is the only solution that fits his harsh and frigid subjective self. In the renewal of greenery, Pushkin finds yet another reason to mourn the non-renewability of his youth when he turns to consider that it is poetry that helps in reassembling the thought process going on in one's mind. This strikes the difference between Pushkin and Onegin in the sense that Onegin never lets his conflicting ideas go loose, whereas, Pushkin does find solace in creativity, hence, European convention versus Russian creativity at odds with each other.

In the following stanzas, Pushkin shows that he has gained the energy that he invested in a characteristic way by setting out on a carriage ride, guided by the author's hand. He will set his journey from the city life through into the countryside, then to the shaded corner of Lensky's grave. Lensky's father-in-law's grave, where Lensky had once penned a funerary song and his own grave bring a close comparison with each other. His funerary verses for Olga's father metamorphose into the verses that he unintentionally writes for himself, hence, foreshadowing his own youthful and unfortunate death. Olga's short synoptic period of mourning for her fiancée and her subsequent marriage to a soldier is shown as an unfortunate move by her. Pushkin seems to pity the 'poor Vladimir'.

But this is not something that Pushkin or the readers are ignorant of. Because, Olga in the very beginning proved to be as light-hearted and shallow a character as against her elder sister, Tatyana. Olga's leaving the place and people behind not only assaults his late lover's

expectations of his love, but it also leaves Tatyana in a fit of melancholy and low pensive spirits, leading to her wandering into the empty estates of Onegin. Such a place filled with symbols of Onegin's absence, Tatyana finds an opportunity to enquire into Onegin's mysterious mental caliber. Throughout the work, Pushkin has maintained a particular poetic agreement between Onegin and Lord Byron. The portrait of Lord Byron and that of Napoleon that Tatyana encounters while frisking around the remains of Onegin's house, both conform to the description of Onegin that Pushkin details at full length. The books that Tatyana looks through, become a window into his soul, and consequently, into his world of existence which she concludes as hollow and empty. By providing special attention to his marginalia marked on his books of Byron, she starts to understand why she fell for Onegin, and what kind of a personality Onegin persistently entertains.

While investigating through the books that Onegin seems fond of reading, the echo of her letter flashes across her mind wondering if he is an "angel" or a "fiend" to her. She discovers that he is, indeed, the blend of both.

She even wonders if he impersonates either the imitation of Lord Byron's Childe Herold incarnated in a Russian body, or simply a parody of modern ways. In all respects, the design and structure of the subject matter revolve around two thematic solicitudes running parallel to each other- European westernized strain and the Russian creative thread, the latter weighing much heavier than the former, hence, gains excess of forethought. Tatyana's reference to Childe Herold and parody confirms her take on the sort of meta-narrative thinking that Pushkin often employs throughout the novel. By reading and investing closely in the works of the European writer, Tatyana becomes successful in solving the riddle of Onegin's life and actions.

At the close of the seventh canto, Tatyana with her mother visits her aunt in Moscow. While at the Grand Assembly in Moscow, Tatyana flaunts her natural, rustic beauty making

an eternal impression. Her matures self-further solidifies as the readers move ahead towards the last canto when she chooses to marry a socially acknowledged man. The unambiguous imagery Pushkin uses to elaborate on Tatyana's superior beauty accomplish the recurrent use of the "moon" as a symbol associated with her, as against that of the starry sky of the society ladies. The distinction that the novel tends to draw between the naturalness associated with Tatyana and the artificiality of the society ladies at the Assembly, is demonstrated in the canto.

She clearly stands out as the most dignified and classy of the ladies at the Assembly. She despises the "discordant ways" of the world by "looking upon all with absent gaze." Terms like "noise", "laughter", "bowing", "hurrying", "gallop", "mazurka" all display a rift between natural, rustic Russian landscape and the deceptively disingenuous and a hypocrite Europe.

Canto the Eighth

Pushkin's final canto is the most autobiographical of all the cantos. It is interspersed with many personal details in his life while living at the Lycee. It was the same place where his Muse had inspired him. It agitated the poet deep within the recesses of his imaginative self and helped reveal his poetic "delight" by singing the childhood of the past, "its joys" and the glory teamed up with "heart's agitated dreams." Pushkin remembers the Muse following him even after leaving Lycee behind. He recalls the time when the 'supportive Muse would follow him to many of his night feasts and fights, as the guardian of the night, and to 'wild festivities' triggering, in Pushkin, the imaginative delight of the inner world. Pushkin travels with this Muse to everywhere in the form of a damsel. The aforementioned details of the Muse clearly associate Pushkin's Muse to his beautiful creature in the novel, Tatyana. The charm that the Muse displays is the same charm that Tatyana shows, although Pushkin's Muse is like a rustic girl and not the matured Tatyana. As the narrative moves, Pushkin and his Muse spot Eugene Onegin, newly returned from his long journey, in a high society aristocratic ball. Pushkin describes Eugene as displaying "his brow" declaring "wretchedness" and his "suffering pride."

Pushkin along with his Muse wonders if he hoards the same personality he did before taking a long journey or has he become wise with age.

Pushkin seems to question the present state of his character, Eugene. He wonders whether Eugene is still that young spoiled misanthrope who once despised the humankind and its society, or has he changed the view of the world and people around him. He wonders if he has espoused his new character in the form of Melmoth. He even compares him to a philanthropist or a patriot, wondering if they have carved a place within his chaotic personality during his development into an adult humankind. In the above-mentioned stanza, it seems that Pushkin cannot believe that Eugene has changed a bit. He sounds cynical in the interrogation of his created character who has come back after a long break. The “advice” that Pushkin seems to suggest is questioning the very character of his own youthful poetic self. The novel-in-verse is clearly showcasing the movement that not only Eugene takes to reach to his original basic self in the end giving up his self-centered misanthropic views, but it also delineates the movement that Pushkin undertakes to reach some kind of a self-actualization, in a way, giving up immature love poems and taking up seriously arduous work of a mature kind, i.e., novel-in-verse, considered to be the most mature work of his oeuvre. Thus, Eugene’s physical journey becomes a metaphor for Pushkin’s inner creative journey, making his later creative output more sophisticated, linguistically stylistic and innovative.

Because of the unforgiving attitude of the crowd of ‘selfish nonentities’ towards the ‘ardent souls of flame’, Pushkin expresses his sympathy for Eugene, now an outcast. Pushkin goes on to say that the traditional loveless life is more attractive and highly blessed than the high ambitious life, which inevitably ends in disappointment. Through Eugene’s regrets, Pushkin seems to struggle with his own turbulent youth, but has arrived at a particular conclusion, unlike Eugene, through his poetry—as mentioned before, his mature novel-in-verse, and by doing away with his poems of reckless youth.

As the narrative moves towards its conclusion, Pushkin (as character), Eugene and especially, the readers meet the heroine of the story, Tatyana, in a completely new attire with the same natural effortless look, once a helpless girl but now a confident lady married to an old rich general. This maturation into a lady of reason, of course, stands in contrast with Eugene's lack of change. Though, she has changed a lot, but the natural and unaffected look still persists on her face. Pushkin does not cease his creative mind from comparing the moon with the essential Tatyana as he describes the "dazzling" society ladies with 'effulgence white/could not eclipse her neighbor's (Tatyana) light'. Eugene is dumbfounded as soon as he witnesses Tatyana after so long, displaying his interest in the lady, perhaps, the first time when his real feelings for her emerge. The dramatic scene occurs when the two confront each other, Tatyana keeping intact her unemotional mask of sort.

She comes across as victorious in the difficult test of emotions, keeping her reawakened anguish and confusion at bay. At this moment, the roles of Eugene and Tatyana are reversed. The once passionately burning Tatyana acts cool, and once cold Eugene burns at her emotionless sight.

The next stanza appears to make Eugene the speaker of the narrative when he questions in solitude, the changed appearance of Tatyana. He remarks, "Is this the same, Tattiana" once he "in a humble sphere despised". We, as readers, do realize his sort of love for Tatyana. As soon as "he quits the fashionable throng", meditates on his past actions resulting in pouring out of the mixed emotions or "visions, now sad, now graceful", "agitate" his state of existence. Nevertheless, just as he shows some love for Tatyana, he begins to show the symptoms that the story associated with Tatyana during her confession of love to him.

Furthermore, his health begins to decline, in the manner Tatyana's did, due to his unreciprocated love. As is clear from the reading between the lines, Eugene still holds Tatyana's letter: "The maid whose note he still possessed". Their reversed roles now make

Eugene to write letters to Tatyana, but to his unfortunate plight, he receives no response from Tatyana. However, it would be important to note that the two letters do have some similarities, possibly, due to the inspiration that Eugene unconsciously draws from Tatyana's letter or else deliberately uses it as a model to express his desires. The sobbing; the bending down on one's feet; the harsh, reproachful cry of the recipient; the dreadful bearing of love's parching agonies, all bear the testimony of love the writers of the letter show for each other in both the letters. Also, in particular is the freedom that Eugene once showed importance to, the liberty that surpasses everything, even the affection Tatyana has for Eugene. This freedom can be associated with the Byronic Hero, a characteristic of a particular taste, a reason for Eugene's repudiation of Tatyana feelings. In the letter, Eugene admits that his espoused ideal cannot lead him to his eternal happiness. Finally, confirming certain changes unlike his adamant stance he earlier embodied. Another important characteristic feature of Eugene's letter is his mentioning of two reasons that kept him away from people who were dear to him. First, he mentions his wretched youth that restricted him from the impulses of his passion that he imagined at the very first glance of her beauty. Secondly, he mentions the sad fate of his late friend, Lensky, who he believes to be the "unhappy victim", perished rather guiltless.

The fatalistic interpretation that Pushkin may share, seems not enough to compensate for the loss of Lensky's precious life, as Eugene pays no penance for what essentially is his crime. The other two letters from Eugene also go unanswered, leading him for winter hibernation into his den, the way he did when in the countryside, due to his boredom. But, this time, it's not against boredom from the outside weary world that he struggles throughout, it is because of his unrequited love from Tatyana, his guilt and torment from his past. He does enter his den literally, but, metaphorically, he enters a transcendental state in which he recalls Zaretsky's chilling words, 'why! He's killed' and visualizes Tatyana by the window, waiting for him. This is a memory when he has his first visit to the Larin's house. Strange enough, she

still waits for him; still is longing for his love that he realized only later.

The final climactic scene between Tatyana and Eugene shows the extent of Tatyana's maturation and Eugene suffering as an inferior to her. Although Eugene and Tatyana, both are exposed to their inner emotional turbulence, Tatyana manages to keep up the calm look on her face and masks herself behind the "role" that she would have played if not married. For the sake of her adaptation to the conventions of the society she lives in, she plays the role maturely because she realizes that she has entered into an inevitable conjugal life. In the final part, she does accept that her love for him still exists, but, now being a more mature lady, accepts her fate as a married woman destined to spend her life with a chosen man. She doesn't struggle against her fate, rather boldly keeps herself up realizing that its futile to fight blindly owing to its repercussions.

I love you--to what end deceive? —

But I am now another's bride—

Forever faithful will abide." (Pushkin Canto 8)

Nevertheless, the ending does not provide a complete closure or conclusion to the novel-in-verse, rather it chooses to remain open-ended with readers to decide what would have happened to the leading pair of the story. However, Pushkin's mention of a Persian poet, Saadi, at the end of the stanza, adds bulk to the ending.

Pushkin uses the aforementioned line to imply that even in the absence of certain people in one's life, nobody dies. Life still goes on. In particular to Eugene, his life without Tatyana is still complete. He is not in want of her to handle his unusual twists and turns that his life offers. In his depression, Eugene faces death-like situation, he turns into madness, and finally, to poetry which becomes the only method towards his salvation. Astonishingly, his metamorphosis remains incomplete because he sticks to his prosaic self. Thus, Pushkin in the

end gives up upon his character, Eugene, announcing his own departure from poetry to prose, the much of the mature kind of art.

But who abandon it--as

I Have my Oneguine--suddenly. (Pushkin Canto 8)

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