



ANDREW KAHN

**PUSHKIN'S LYRIC
INTELLIGENCE**

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A.K.

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Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	ix
<i>Note to the Reader</i>	x
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xi
Introduction	1
Critical Approaches	2
Methods	5
1. Tradition and Originality	13
The Literary Context: 'An Old Parnassian Dynasty'	13
The Anonymity of Coterie Writing: The Classicism of Arzamas	15
Dialogues with the Dead and the Anxiety of Influence	19
Tradition and Originality ('To Zhukovsky', 1816)	26
2. Invention and Genius	34
The Romantic Debate	35
Poetic Theory and the Aesthetic of Invention and Inspiration	38
Inspiration	48
3. The Meaning of Beauty	62
The Idea of Beauty	63
The Sublime and the Reinvention of Boileau	66
Romantic Hellenism	74
The Plastic Arts and the Platonic Ideal	80
From Classical to Romantic	85
4. A Reticent Imagination	88
The Power of the Imagination: Galich, Coleridge, Hazlitt	90
Radicalism and the Imagination	107
5. Nature and Romantic Subjectivity	117
Nature in Pushkin's Early Verse	119
Romantic Intimations: 'The Orb of Day has Set' (1820) and 'To the Sea' (1824)	124
'Autumn' (1833) and the Mind of the Poet	134
The General Law: 'I visit once again . . .' (1835) and Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey'	144
6. Genius and the Commerce of Poetry	158
Profit Motive: Poetic Labour and the Book Market	159
The Rights of Authorial Identity	170

The Economics of Inspiration: 'Conversation between a Bookseller and a Poet' (1824)	175
The Prophecy of 'André Chénier' (1825)	186
Art for Art's Sake and Poetic Egotism	197
The Purpose of the Poet	201
Protean Pushkin	214
7. The Hero	217
The Philosopher Hero and Classical Emulation	218
The Action Hero: Napoleon	230
Heroic Typology and Enlightenment Historiography	238
'The Hero' (1830)	246
Painting the Heroic Ideal: 'The Commander' (1835)	259
Alienation and Independence	273
8. Body and Soul	278
The Science of Feeling	279
Epicurean Masters: Lucretius, Voltaire, and Diderot	282
The Meaning of the Passions	292
The Libertine	304
Poetic Mortality and Negative Capability	316
Stoic Fate and Friendship	326
<i>Appendix</i>	339
<i>Bibliography</i>	343
<i>Index</i>	379

List of Illustrations

Antoine-Jean Gros, *Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa*, 1804. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

1. Jacques-Louis David, *Napoleon at the Great St Bernard Pass*, 1800. Musée du Louvre, Paris.
2. Antoine-Jean Gros, *Napoleon at Arcola*, 1796–7. The Hermitage, St Petersburg, Russia.
3. Théodore Géricault, *Wounded Cuirassier*, 1812. Musée du Louvre, Paris.
4. Antoine-Jean Gros, *Napoleon Bonaparte on the Battlefield of Eylau*, 1807. Musée du Louvre, Paris.
5. Detail of Antoine-Jean Gros, *Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa*, 1804. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Note to the Reader

Unless otherwise indicated, all citations of Pushkin's works are from A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, ed. M. A. Tsiavlovskii, B. Tomashevskii, et al., 17 vols. (Leningrad: Akademiia nauk, 1937–54), henceforth *PSS*. References to volumes in the series *Pushkin. Issledovaniia i materialy* use the abbreviation *PIM*. References to volumes in the series *Vremennik Pushkinskoi komissii* use the abbreviation *VPK*. Part I of the Bibliography lists the editions quoted in this study. Wherever possible reference has been made to the editions in Pushkin's library, as recorded by Modzalevskii, and this information is recorded in square brackets. A simple reference to the Modz. number indicates that the edition corresponds exactly. In some cases, identification of the precise edition is difficult because of shortcomings in Modzalevskii's descriptions. In cases where he fails to mention the name of the publisher, other bibliographic data (year, place of publication, number of volumes) usually make identification of the edition unproblematic. In a small number of cases, however, where Modzalevskii gives date and place of publication but not publisher there are several editions which could correspond to the one described; in practice, these different editions are often similar and have similar pagination: in these cases the Modz. number is preceded by the abbreviation *cf.* Where no reference to Modz. appears, it may be assumed that this work was not present in Pushkin's library as recorded by Modzalevskii.

Russian is transliterated according to the Library of Congress conventions except in the case of well-known figures whose surnames are given in familiar form, e.g. Dostoevsky, rather than -skii, but Viazemskii rather than Viazemsky. The first names of Russian figures are given in the original spelling, e.g. Petr rather than Peter and Ivan rather than John. For the sake of familiarity, however, the name of a well-known figure like Pushkin appears as Alexander rather than Aleksandr. Following standard practice, rulers' names are given in their more familiar form (Nicholas I rather than Nikolai).

Until February 1918 Russia used the Julian (Old Style) calendar, which ran thirteen days behind the Gregorian (New Style) calendar used in Western Europe. To avoid complication, dates are in the Old Style.

Abbreviations

<i>CAIEF</i>	<i>Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des Études Françaises</i>
gos.	gosudarstvennyi
Izd-vo	Izdatel'stvo
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
Modz.	entries in the annotated catalogue of Pushkin's library as printed in B. L. Modzalevskii, <i>Biblioteka A. S. Pushkina. Bibliograficheskoe opisanie</i> (St Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia nauk, 1910; repr. Moscow, 1988, with supplement)
<i>PIM</i>	<i>Pushkin. Issledovaniia i materialy</i>
<i>PSS</i>	A. S. Pushkin, <i>Polnoe sobranie sochinenii</i> , ed. M. A. Tsiavlovskii, B. Tomashevskii, et al., 17 vols. (Leningrad: Akademiia nauk, 1937–54)
<i>RHLF</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France</i>
<i>SEEJ</i>	<i>Slavic and East European Journal</i>
Tip. Imp.	Tipografiia Imperatorskogo
<i>VPK</i>	<i>Vremennik Pushkinskoi komissii</i>
<i>ZhMNP</i>	<i>Zhurnal ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia</i>

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Introduction

The subject of this book is Alexander Pushkin's thinking through lyric. It seeks to show how Pushkin wrote poems about fundamental aspects of his creative and intellectual identity in response to the ideas and aesthetic questions of his age. Like the great poets from whom he learned, including André Chénier, Byron, and Wordsworth, Pushkin was able to create argumentative poems that are dramatically and lyrically viable. The Pushkinian lyric in Russian is memorable for its intimate tone and its employment of a spontaneous speaker to express a process of thought as it unfolds in the course of a poem. Many poems present themselves as the working out of moments of delight, reveries of pleasure, confessions in a relationship, flashes of insight, and their intention seems to require no clarification of meaning unless it is of a biographical kind. With important exceptions, few of his lyrics pay obvious attention to the poetic act itself. Together with clarity of diction, a conversational quality in tone, and unobtrusive form, there is a lack of self-conscious reflection that lends simplicity. This transparency, which is often called classical, is deceptive.

Clearly, Pushkin's poems, on which he lavished minute care, did not occur all by themselves; they emerged out of the complex combination of mind and feeling that formed his poetic personality. Yet the influence of abstract thought on his practice of self-representation has been underestimated—and possibly for good reason. As a literary critic, Pushkin was highly empirical and rarely abstract. His reviews can support a sense of how the meanings of his aesthetic vocabulary shift without positively corroborating them or making them final. At times, his practical goals in a review make him seem blithe—or troublingly evasive. His work as a practical critic, often strictly determined by the journalistic function and his sense of the combative responsibility of the critic as taste-maker, imperfectly applies the lessons of his reading, and arguably far less so than can be sensed in the implications of key words in his poetry.

The impression of seamless development in Pushkin's lyric comes partly from the consistency of his vocabulary about his poetic art, which is so beautifully harmonized with the intonation and pathos of his poetic style that an emotional satisfaction deters curiosity about the potential of his vocabulary to work as a type of philosophical shorthand. Pushkin's conceptual vocabulary has largely been taken for granted, and there has been little attempt to understand what he means when he writes about the self, about the imagination, about knowledge,

about memory. In gaining a more precise understanding of the meaning of common terms of Pushkin's poetic creativity, like 'imagination', 'fancy', 'will', 'strength', and even 'fame', we acquire a sharper picture of his relationship to the poetic self and subjectivity. We understand this conceptual vocabulary by reading the poems not as ideological statements but as lyric opportunities for the indirect dramatization of ideas, for creating a lyric speaker who thinks aloud, and, through an allusive set of terms, alerts the reader to the larger conceptual framework behind the lyric expression. In so doing, it is possible to arrive at a far richer understanding of Pushkin's aesthetics, and in particular his attitudes to Romanticism and the Romantic self. Ideas in Pushkin, often reduced in Structuralist analysis to synchronic invariant motifs, can helpfully be redescribed as problems on which Pushkin suspends judgement, continually revising his views and testing the comprehension of contemporary readers and critics. There is a need for a more holistic approach that sees the particular in light of the general, a synthesis that understands local reference in the light of Pushkin's larger interests. This book addresses a Pushkinian sense of the creative mind that informs his understanding of mimesis. We see how his understanding of the poetic mind is refracted through a status-based definition of the place of the poet; how it shapes his relationship with his commercial circumstances and readership, and is projected in poems about the purpose of poetry, and poems that consider where the imagination reaches the limit of its powers. The connection between Pushkin's aesthetics and his intellectual concerns is indelible and close to his whole sense of creative endeavour.

If the significance of Pushkin's aesthetic vocabulary is in danger of being ignored or simplified, it is because his terminology cannot be correlated confidently to any theory; and because his use of certain words, despite changing meaning, sometimes at the level of nuance and often at a more profound level, reflects the overlapping vocabularies of different aesthetic schools. Yet the actions of the poems and the positions they take should be understood to indicate significant shifts in sense, particularly when seen in the changing light of Pushkin's artistic and professional contexts.

CRITICAL APPROACHES

Pushkin's lyric poems were central to the author's creative development and are at the heart of Russian literature; yet until now there has been no single book in English devoted exclusively to their analysis. Much of the best Russian-language scholarship in the Soviet period, and now once again, has been in the area of editions, material bibliography, and textual criticism, and has immeasurably increased understanding of Pushkin's sources and the textual history of his works. But much of the source-criticism, while still informative, is lopsided and dated

in its intellectual and interpretative results, and has often gone hand in hand with the application of an outmoded and mechanical type of genre-criticism. Although it produced many positive results, this approach has had the effect of emphasizing formal issues over the possible debt of the lyric to the history of ideas.¹ Literary history and criticism long ago moved away from seeing genre as the engine of originality. Indeed, Formalist critics who staged a confrontation between classicism as exclusively a doctrine of rule-based art versus Romanticism as the embodiment of innovation did a disservice to how Pushkin understood these aesthetics.

There are two ways of thinking about intellectual sources (as distinct from intertextual references, where a different critical vocabulary is used). One approach targets the specific and precise identification of a phrase or sentence in Pushkin, and correlates it to its equivalent in another writer. Such positivist annotations are, of course, valuable when done accurately. Even so, the benefit of this method is not self-evident, and runs the risk of creating an atomized intellectual picture. To fully penetrate Pushkin's thinking it is more helpful to look at references in terms of content and structures of thinking as is customary with the history of ideas. By way of example, we might say that the job of the source-critic is to identify the edition that Pushkin might have used when he quoted Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' at the beginning of 'I visit once again . . .' ('Vnov' ia posetil . . .', 1835). But the job of the reader using that information is to take the source, and the formal parallel, and ask questions about the idea of nature that the poem represents and how that idea stands in relation to his reading and thinking about the interaction of poetic speakers and landscape.² What is required is a dynamic understanding of intellectual context, where ideas often stand against each other in sometimes fruitful and productive tension. These clashes may exist in terms of styles, as Iurii Lotman has demonstrated, but they just as often exist as signs of the development of ideas and, in particular, aesthetic thinking. We should aim to see that Pushkin's experimentalism in this poem is not driven by his wish to imitate Wordsworth's blank verse and intonation; those formal structures are only the vehicle for a greater affinity that is suggested and thwarted. The textual borrowing itself may not necessarily prove that an idea has been transferred, which is why a pattern of reading and writing, rather than a mosaic of quotations, must create the right framework.

¹ The practice of genre-criticism in itself was not unified, of course. N. L. Stepanov, *Lirika Pushkina* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1959), esp. 131–74 ('O zhanrakh'), takes every opportunity to identify Pushkin's move toward realism, in keeping with the governing ideology of Soviet aesthetics, vitiating some otherwise fine formal points. At the other end of the spectrum, Vsevolod Grekhnev, *Lirika Pushkina. O poetike zhanrov* (Gor'kii: Volgo-Viatskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1985), suffers from no such distortions but tends to see experimentation with genre as the source of Pushkin's originality.

² Boris Tomashevskii identified such aims long ago in some thoughtful words on the problem of measuring influence. See B. V. Tomashevskii, *Pushkin i Frantsiia* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1960), 80–1.

As British Romantic studies never cease to show, the 1820s and 1830s were a dynamic and turbulent time in European thought. Both Romanticism and classicism as labels apply to a whole range of issues in the history of ideas, aesthetics, philosophy of history, and theories of the body with which Pushkin engaged. Locked away in portmanteau words, like classicism and Romanticism, are unrelenting cross-currents between empiricism and transcendentalism, subjectivity and empiricism, determinism and fatalism. In his poetry, the clashes that matter are not about stylistic innovation or indecision, but a range of positions on originality, the imagination, the status of the poet, the role of commercial success, the meaning of genius, the meaning of nature, the definition of the hero, and the immortality of the soul. These become more available to us when seen in terms of the interaction between Pushkin's thinking and a larger context of ideas, than when they are seen simply as the replaying of sources.

Over the past twenty years, there has been much important work on Pushkin, largely driven by the timely application of new critical theories. Bakhtinian readings of *Evgenii Onegin* and his dramas have significantly increased our understanding of Pushkin's dialogism and use of inner voicing. This innovative method has been less applicable to the lyric. Iurii Lotman's contributions remain highly significant in the areas of textual criticism, biography, and cultural history. Arguably, his greatest impact has been in the application of semiotic analysis, showing the inter-penetration in the Romantic period of the mimetic practices of art and social codes of behaviour. Through the lessons of New Historicism, more recent work by scholars like A. A. Faustov, Igor Nemirovsky, and Irina Reyfman has modified semiotic analysis, and continued to investigate the connection between behavioural codes in Pushkin's representation of Russian life and historical circumstance.

Like the New Criticism, Structuralism concentrated on the text purely as a linguistic event. Among the most effective Structuralist analyses is the monograph of Boris Gasparov, *Pushkin's Poetic Language as a Fact of the History of the Russian Language (Poeticheskii iazyk Pushkina kak fakt istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka, 1992)*, which explains aspects of Pushkin's Romanticism largely in terms of a series of oppositions between Pushkinian usage and non-Pushkinian usage, mythic and non-mythic discourse, Western and Russian images. While one may have sympathy with Structuralist-oriented criticism for creating a critical model aloof from the highly personal and public opinions that Pushkin (and Pushkin scholarship) provokes, it champions code and system at the expense of understanding Pushkin's poetry as something Pushkin writes for, and with, specific readers, and tends to treat surplus meanings as extra-semantic. Many recent works, such as Oleg Proskurin's *Pushkin's Poetry, or the Mobile Palimpsest (Poeziia Pushkina, ili podvizhnyi palimpsest, 1999)*, extend the formal approach and make the identification of subtextual sources, often at the micro-level of prosody, the key focus. While his readings generally treat the text as a closed system of meaning, Proskurin's microscopic analysis of patterns of echo and intertextuality

enables other propositions about Pushkin's aesthetics and his working attitude to questions like invention and originality.

In the West, and most particularly in America, the past twenty years have seen a significant number of critical advances. Stephanie Sandler's book on the Southern period (*Distant Pleasures: Alexander Pushkin and the Writing of Exile*, 1989) represented a new departure in its combined application of literary history, feminist criticism, and close Formalist analysis to exploring a network of issues, including power, gender, and the meaning of exile, that pervades Pushkin's creative output in the Southern period. Monika Greenleaf's *Pushkin and Romantic Fashion: Fragment, Elegy, Orient, Irony* (1994) successfully revamped the semiotic model by examining the ways in which Pushkin used the example of Byron to project his own identity in the 1820s. Greenleaf's book approaches Pushkin's Romanticism in its literary performance across a range of genres, exploring its diverse components largely in terms of Formalist concepts through close readings of *Evgenii Onegin* and *Boris Godunov*. Her work has reinvented the whole issue of Pushkin's Romanticism, and invites a complementary discussion from different perspectives in literary history and the history of ideas. In *Realizing Metaphors: Alexander Pushkin and the Life of the Poet* (1998), David Bethea has innovated by assessing (and demonstrating) the application of critical discourses like Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence on Pushkin. His conclusions can be given a different emphasis when Pushkin's attitude to his predecessors is explored in terms of the contemporary appraisal of imitation and originality in a literary system that to some degree rewarded anonymity. None of these books concentrates on the lyric poetry, but all accord significant attention to a number of key poems and provide valuable interpretations and pointers for a more comprehensive study of his lyric.

The moment is timely therefore for attending to Pushkin's lyric poems in their own right rather than following the historical practice of using them to support readings of more accessible works, like *Evgenii Onegin* or the narrative poems, and to corroborate unexamined generalities about the poet. Building on earlier achievements, this book aims to add a further critical dimension by importing methods more usually applied in the area of French and British Romanticism and Romantic theory; these have much to offer conceptually, not least because they illuminate areas of cognate Romantic traditions that were a direct influence on Pushkin.

METHODS

In the early twentieth century, Mikhail Gershenzon's essay *The Wisdom of Pushkin* (*Mudrost' Pushkina*, 1919) extolled Pushkin largely for his perceived relevance to readers as a source of wisdom and emotional truth. Subsequent generations of

readers have validated his observation, which is more a statement about what Pushkin means in Russian culture than an explanation of what Pushkin means. There has been strong resistance to reading Pushkin as a poet of ideas. The contention of this book is that it is insufficient to attempt to understand his meanings entirely within his oeuvre, or even within the larger period framework, as a closed system. The lyric poems draw on a wide range of intellectual and literary sources from both the Russian and European traditions, and moving beyond semiotic, Structuralist, and Formalist readings we need to assimilate the insights that the history of ideas and a historicizing hermeneutic approach can provide.

A great reader and bibliophile, Pushkin was the proud owner of a large library of several thousand volumes.³ Legend relates that on his deathbed he bade farewell to his books. The annotated catalogue of Pushkin's library is an invaluable work of reconstruction that identifies more than 90 per cent of the titles from his library, the precise editions he read, the pages that were cut, and the marginalia and annotations that belong to him. Over 80 per cent of the collection represents English and French works in the original and in translation. The catalogue has been mined for decades to identify sources. But the meaning of a source as a conduit to ideas has brought a different emphasis to my enterprise, which is less focused on specific verbal repetitions than the impact of conceptual content on his poetic practice. In reading systematically many hundreds of titles from Pushkin's library in the exact editions he used, I have focused on the patterns of the collection and its emphases as guidelines to the pattern of his thinking. Unlike Coleridge, for example, Pushkin did not leave an elaborate record documenting his reading for the benefit of future scholars. The vast evidence of his letters, diary fragments, autobiography, notebooks, and literary criticism provides a good picture of his unflinching curiosity and magpie intelligence elusively but purposefully elaborating patterns of thought that become illuminated in poems.⁴ Such a practice has been successfully demonstrated, for example, by H. J. Jackson's work, including her most recent book *Romantic Readers*.⁵ It is difficult to replicate the same understanding of the psychology of the Russian Romantic reader since the history of the book for that period in Russia has lagged over the past two decades and our understanding of the reading environment has stagnated. Undoubtedly, Pushkin will yet again come to look different as a reader once the overall picture changes significantly. Scholarly

³ For the history of the library through its compilation, sale, and reconstitution, see B. G. Modzalevskii, *Biblioteka A. S. Pushkina* (Moscow: Kniga, 1988), pp. ii–xv, together with the essay by L. S. Sidiakov in this edition's 'Supplement', 56–99.

⁴ But there is a fascinating example of his use of marginalia and markings in his comments on Viazemskii's book on Denis Fonvizin in manuscript. See *Novonaidennyi avtograf Pushkina. Zametki na rukopisi knigi P. A. Viazemskogo 'Biograficheskie i literaturnye zapiski o Denise Ivanoviche Fonvizine'*, ed. V. E. Vatsuro and M. I. Gillel'son (Moscow: Nauka, 1968).

⁵ H. J. Jackson, *Romantic Readers: The Evidence of Marginalia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

reconstructions of Pushkin's library have provided invaluable information, but his annotations were few and he left mainly non-verbal traces through underscoring and vertical lines. There is little self-exposure through marginalia, and he rarely mentions his reading in his letters. Nonetheless, clear-cut areas of concentration and strength in the library reveal an intellectual sense of purpose. Uncertainty about Pushkin's purchasing history makes it hard to pinpoint his motives in acquiring books, but the publication dates of volumes establish a chronology that suggests the incremental growth of his interest in the psychology of the creative mind.

The profile that emerges is of a writer who is a man of his age, immersed in the European literature of his time, from journalism and political theory to fiction and poetry, with a pronounced interest in the writers of the French and German Enlightenment and a strong interest in classical antiquity, most particularly Epicurean and Stoic philosophy. Above all, the presence of numerous rare eighteenth-century works that he must have made efforts to acquire points to a serious interest in the radical Enlightenment and materialist thought. These works underpin how Pushkin regards sensation, and, arguably some of his greatest poems about love and death emerge from this understanding. Erudite but reticent about his reading, Pushkin makes no avowals of systems. In this, he is like Voltaire whom he greatly admired. What can be described instead are tendencies out of which a reasonably coherent set of positions appear on the nature of the creative imagination, the meaning of style, and the purpose of poetry.

Although the primary aim of this study is to shed light on the connection between ideas and expression in Pushkin and, through close reading, to uncover more of Pushkin's intellectual labour, its method of combining history of ideas and literary criticism undeniably takes aim at an assumption that has operated, sometimes silently, sometimes explicitly, in Pushkin studies. This is the belief that intellectual content in Pushkin is somehow incompatible with the perfection of his formal accomplishment. In part, the explanation for a tendency to underestimate the content of the lyrics lies with Pushkin himself. This is not because Pushkin as a reader of poetry and literary critic in any way defended a Formalist approach to verbal art as the exclusive task of the critic. While his articles provide a picture of an active practical critic keen to promote excellence and show disapproval, he left few expository reflections formulating at an abstract level his ideas about topics that are manifest in his literary works. He wrote sparingly about aspects of philosophy, often touching in his letters tartly on abstract topics like metaphysics and epistemology that he claimed to find unpalatable. His creative energies were invested almost entirely in producing imaginative literature. In their philosophical and critical *œuvre*, writers like Voltaire or Coleridge or Hazlitt, all read by Pushkin, created intellectual systems that stand in direct relevance to their works. However much they may clarify or complicate the meaning of their other writings, works of theory like

the *Biographia Literaria* (1817) or Hazlitt's *Essay on the Principles of Human Action* (1805) are also essential paratexts for the readers primarily interested in their literary performance, inseparable if exogenous creative acts to the poetry and prose. By contrast, Pushkin's reticence can be a stumbling block. Where Coleridge's *Table-Talk* brims with ideas, Pushkin's own *Table-Talk* (1830–7) is entirely concrete, anecdotal, and historical. Where Voltaire fills the margins of his books with a running commentary that is evidence of his imaginative engagement with his reading, Pushkin, who read Voltaire's marginalia with great interest, merely leaves lines as his trace.

But it would be a bad mistake to conclude that Pushkin, however taciturn in his marginalia and his notes about his reading, did not interiorize ideas. Boris Unbegaun was right to note that Pushkin's reading and erudition were immense.⁶ Boris Meilakh claimed that 'Pushkin apparently was not interested in abstract conceptual categories of aesthetics; in any case, we cannot find the traces of such an interest in his work.'⁷ This book will argue the opposite. The question, then, is how to find those 'traces'. The answer is that they are everywhere in the vocabulary he uses, and in the meaning that we can see invested in his abstract vocabulary if we understand that Pushkin renews the meaning of words implicitly, proceeding from his systematic reading in certain areas of aesthetics and historiography where the words he employed in poems are subjected to discussion. His words are his concepts, and his poems are the literary worlds in which their full meaning derives from the connotation of these words. While Pushkin may point the way only intermittently, the traces of his reading and thinking are everywhere in his poems and visible through the shape of his ideas. Unlike a Voltaire, he can be philosophical without being a philosopher. But like Coleridge, he can only be a poet because his reading matters to him.

The method of this study is not, however, to work from the library to the poems, but to let questions that arise in the poetry, and about the poetry, guide interpretation back to his sources. Making connections is less direct than might be the case for other writers who are more explicit in reacting to their reading. The approach seeks to minimize intuition as a tool of insight into Pushkin's creative mind by creating highly specific contexts based on Pushkin's documented knowledge and then proceeding to his poetic expression. This book does not aim to divine Pushkin's creative process and attempt to recreate what went through his mind as he drafted his poems. If the procedure involves a level of conjecture, it is never far removed from the control of the material evidence of his reading. My assumption is that the poems and other writings are finished products in the sense that the words Pushkin uses represent, intentionally or unconsciously,

⁶ Boris Unbegaun (ed.), *Povesti pokoinogo Ivana Petrovicha Belkina* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1991), 1.

⁷ Boris Meilakh, *Khudozhestvennoe myshlenie Pushkina kak tvorcheskii protsess* (Leningrad: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1962), 46.

meanings that must be understood as statements about the ideas to which he gave importance.

Although this book is not a history of Pushkin's poetry, it pursues thematic continuities of his work across the span of his career, and chapters tend to move forward chronologically. Careful attention to the verbal texture through close reading remains the key tool in assessing Pushkin's ambiguities and hidden depths. Only a variety of approaches can explain the rich background of ideas and history behind Pushkin's ceaseless creative life and engagement as a professional writer over more than twenty years. I have applied a variety of critical approaches in these chapters, dictated by the specific type of analysis required to bring together poems and their context. Readers can expect the application of intertextual criticism where questions of imitation and originality are at issue, history of ideas where the precise meaning of words like 'imagination', 'inspiration', and 'passion' are a concern, and sociology of literature where defining Pushkin's anxiety of reception as a literary strategy rather than a biographical reflex holds the key to famous poems. The lessons of art history come to the rescue in stripping away historical overlay from the meaning of an image that holds the key to Pushkin's representation of heroism and virtue.

I will emphatically not argue that Pushkin's aesthetic evolves from the classical to the Romantic. From his early poems to his late masterpieces, Pushkin exhibits a perpetual questioning about the mental powers of invention and imagination that define poetic talent and individuality. Neither invention, as a cornerstone of classicism, nor imagination as a fundamental poetic power of Romanticism, is a static concept. The notion that Pushkin is a classical writer was a commonplace in his own day, and the tag remains current. We expect Romanticism to be inherently dynamic and unstable, while the perception remains that classicism is unchangingly synonymous with timeless values and craft. In fact, over the course of his career classicism as a doctrine about art developed in new directions from the rule-based pedagogical theory of his youth. The first three chapters of *Pushkin's Lyric Intelligence* will look at Pushkin's changing classicisms in the light of contemporary theories of art and mind. As a theory of expressivity and invention, classicism in the 1830s took a new view of poetic form that complemented but stood apart from the Romantic imagination. Kantian Idealism contributed to classicism a new belief in the meaning of form that the art of invention could achieve. Kantian epistemology had unleashed the power of the imagination and with it a belief in the individual genius of subjectivity. Contemporary theorists of classicism and Romanticism were particularly concerned with the nature of inspiration. We will see Pushkin reflect these concerns in poems about inspiration, where the portrait of the mind in poetic action constitutes his thinking about lyric. Chapters 2 and 5 examine the role of sense-based association in Pushkin's representation of inspiration. Poems that capture indolent versifying, exalted prophesying, defiant statements of poetic autonomy are statements that refract a theory of art. It is here that Pushkin wonders whether the sources

of genius lie within the poet's cognitive control; or whether, as Associationists and theorists of sensibility suggested, the imagination, as it processes perception, reflects the connection between body and mind in which the poet's volition only plays an uncertain part.

The poet's view of his own powers of mind has a direct bearing on what he thinks he can represent. Different views of the creative mind occupy the Pushkinian lyric, and this explains the different quality of representation we see in his poems about art and historical figures, on the one hand, and poems about the body and soul, on the other. The story of the unfolding of the imagination as a vital poetic power and concept for Pushkin is a consistent theme of the entire book. His movement towards a fuller apprehension of the imagination as the key poetic faculty and power will be the subject of Chapter 4, which analyses the multiple sources that moved Pushkin further along the spectrum from invention to imagination. Chapter 5 will look at how invention and imagination mark his lyric thinking about nature. Throughout his works, early and late, Pushkin is most comfortable holding up a mirror to nature. But two of his greatest poems, 'Autumn' ('Osen', 1833) and 'I visit once again . . .', can be seen to represent rare departures where he holds up the lamp of imagination and subjectivity. Close reading of these lyrics reveals how differently the two poems explore the activity of the mind of the poet in the process of creation.

The energy of Romantic subjectivity endows the poet with the means to assert his greater stature. Throughout the 1820s, Pushkin's poems grew less concerned with any specific political set of values and more intrigued by the question of the social status of poetry and the extent to which the poet could meaningfully claim a public role for himself. Poems that are central to Pushkin's definition of the poet and poetic art proceed from a positive impulse as Pushkin tested the liberating power of Romantic subjectivity, and as he turned commercial challenge into an opportunity to extend his popularity, authority, and vision of art. In the Russia of the 1820s, no less than in France and England, genius could claim no economic or social privileges unless a readership believed in the uniqueness of the writer's talent. In this context, Chapter 6 examines strategies of self-presentation in the literary marketplace, drawing connections between poems about censorship, commercial pressures, and art for art's sake, and the prophetic power that Pushkin arrogates to the poet. The chapter further argues that the most famous poems of the 1820s should be understood in the context of the contemporary aesthetic discussions about the purposes of art. As Pushkin followed aesthetic discussion in France, where classicists and Romantics debated whether art should be appreciated for its own sake or advocate a social function for literature, he posed both sides of the question in poems that strike extreme positions. But it is equally important to consider Pushkin's poetic persona and the commercial pressures of a changing book market. The growth of a commercial audience, anonymous and remote by comparison with his early readers, and the rise of the

literary critic, created new challenges for a writer with professional aspirations. In the 1820s, while the discourse of genius privileged the emancipation of the poet from the public as a commercial entity, it also expressed anxiety about the total independence of the inspired poet. Even as he struck postures openly disdainful of the 'crowd', Pushkin kept a close eye on book sales, royalties, and the impact of censorship on his popularity. We can build on William Todd's seminal work on the institutions of nineteenth-century Russian literature by applying the more recent studies of such scholars of Romanticism as Lee Erickson, Lucy Newlyn, and William St Clair, who have shown the close connection in Romantic literature between creative psychology, the projection of poetic persona, and the publishing world. From this contextualized perspective, the confidence of the poems that have come to determine Pushkin's image and status in Russian culture, such as 'The Prophet' ('Prorok', 1826), 'The Poet' ('Poet', 1827), and 'The Poet and the Crowd' ('Poet i tolpa', 1828), looks different, expressing claims for authority rather than its possession.

Chapter 7 examines poems that treat the definition of heroic greatness based on ethical criteria such as clemency, wisdom, and bravery pursued at the expense of humane values. Pushkin's lyrics about greatness explore whether action or philosophical awareness produce the heroic character worthy of emulation by posterity. The vocabulary and assumptions of classical rationalism mark Pushkin's descriptions of poetic power, drawing a direct link between theory of invention and the poems about historical figures and statuary discussed in both Chapters 3 and 7. The greatest challenge to the exemplary figure of the independent philosopher is the era's greatest hero, Napoleon. The poems ask which of the historian, the artist, and the poet have the imaginative capacity and judgement to teach the truth about celebrity. The discourse of heroism and virtue also impinges on Pushkin's thinking about the status of the poet. From 1835, poetic self-characterization moves away from visionary projection to uncertainty about public success and the reassertion of an ideal of independence worthy of the virtue discerned in the model of philosophical heroism.

Finally, the reassertion of art as an eternal ideal stands in contrast to Pushkin's thinking about mortality. In Chapter 8 we once again see a larger philosophical dimension to Pushkin's aesthetic thinking. The Associationism that surfaces in his reading and representations about inspiration comes out of a complex of ideas about sensibility in which the philosophy of materialism is important. In focusing on the legacy of eighteenth-century philosophical materialism and science on his understanding of the body, we have a common ground for his works of erotic pleasure, and his Stoic meditations on mortality and death. It is from these theories of the body that his Epicurean and libertine speakers come. And it is from the same materialism that springs a sense of religious disbelief or scepticism that causes Pushkin in his late poems to doubt whether the imagination can envisage an afterlife or ideal realm, and to dispense with the consolation of philosophical poetry.

Pushkin's Lyric Intelligence examines a key set of interlocking topics by approaching Pushkin not as the great icon of a national literary history. In this book, he is seen as a writer who worked out his lyric and intellectual identity over the course of a career during which he negotiated complex cross-currents in the history of his nation, the history of ideas, and the history of aesthetics and sensibility. Much of his intellectual experimentation takes place in the world of his lyric, where the artistic priorities of expressiveness and psychological immediacy restrain a philosophical turn of mind that remains perceptible but not immediately transparent despite the ease of his surface meaning. Chronologically and temperamentally, he stands between the attractions of classicism and Romanticism, Europe and Russia, antiquity and modernity, a philosophy of history and an existential sense of fate. These large dichotomies present challenges to which Pushkin, nowhere more than in his lyric poems, offered tentative solutions, responses to the ideas and literary issues that defined his literary environment. Over the course of his career, the Pushkinian idea of poetry, and indeed of art more generally, frequently set notions of craft and notions of original genius in relation to one another, creating a spectrum of responses to questions about art. Poems about the purpose of poetry reflected European debates about art for art's sake and the social obligations of the poet. In negotiating the shifts between classical and Romantic aesthetics—and the predicament could almost be said to define what it meant to be a Romantic—Pushkin had an acute sense of the message his style would send to different parts of the reading public. He had a similarly astute awareness of how polemical poems about the purposes of poetry might create for Russia a culture of critical debate on a par with European discussions.

1

Tradition and Originality

In the first decade of his career Pushkin often represented poetic composition as a matter of craft and imitation rather than visionary inspiration. For poets of the period mastery of the art of allusion was what Christopher Ricks has called a form of secondary imagination.¹ In the verse he wrote before his Southern exile in 1820, Pushkin gave it primary importance. By addressing other writers, including prominent figures with whom he discussed the meaning of a poetic career, and by means of imaginary conversations with dead poets in which he debunked predecessors while imitating them, Pushkin subsumed numerous voices in his work. The result is that at times Pushkin cultivated an anonymous lyric, and intermittently wrote his poetic persona out of the centre of his creative text. In this connection, the chapter treats questions about Pushkin's view of originality and poetic identity, and argues that he read his predecessors with a sense of superiority free from anxiety about literary influence and informed by aspiration.

THE LITERARY CONTEXT: 'AN OLD PARNASSIAN DYNASTY'

The literary world of Pushkin's youth was progressive because the long-term consequences of Westernization that began in the Enlightenment were now secure. From the 1780s, Russian literary culture gradually became a consumer and producer of homegrown achievements.² Poetry written in all modes from the song to the epic flourished.³ A sociological snapshot of literary institutions spanning the period from Catherine II to Nicholas I paints a similar picture. While a manuscript culture continued to exist in Moscow and St Petersburg, the publishing industry had expanded hugely from the 1780s, as had the distribution system that fed a growing network of bookshops.⁴ Literary journals, formerly the

¹ Christopher Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 119.

² On the European foundations of Russian neoclassicism, see Joachim Klein, *Puti kul'turnogo importa. Trudy po russkoi literature XVIII-ogo veka* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 2005), chs. 5 and 7, with bibliography.

³ See Andrew Kahn, 'Russian Rewritings in the Eighteenth Century of La Fontaine', in D. L. Rubin (ed.) *Strategic Rewriting* (Charlottesville, Va.: Rookwood Press, 2002), 207–26.

⁴ On the growing market for books in this period, see Arkadii Reitblatt, *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii* (Moscow: NLO, 2001), 191–233.

ephemeral private publications of men of letters, slowly became commercially viable and helped to establish literary critics. Literacy was on the rise, and by 1826, when Pushkin returned from his period of official disgrace, increasing commercial demand created opportunities for writers to aspire to a professional status.

In Pushkin's youth, the age of Catherine the Great must have seemed very close. In 1799, the year of Pushkin's birth, Mikhailo Lomonosov (1711–65) was still remembered for a staggering series of accomplishments: as a pedagogue and scientist he modernized the Russian education system and founded Moscow University; as a theoretician and poet he reformed syntax and rules of prosody; his studies of rhetoric had made available a whole set of tropes and literary norms to Russian writers; his cultural outlook completely revolutionized national self-awareness. In the 1830s, Pushkin would ponder his own handling of the pressures facing the professional writer by drawing a comparison with the independence Lomonosov had demanded from his patrons. The greatest lyric talent of the previous epoch belonged to Gavriil Derzhavin (1743–1816), statesman and poet, who famously blessed the young poet during the graduation ceremony at the Lycée in Tsarskoe Selo in 1815. On that day, Pushkin recited a poem that showed his precocious mastery of techniques of imitation, combining pastiche and parody of Derzhavin himself and the younger poet Konstantin Batiushkov (1787–1855). Above all there was Nikolai Karamzin (1766–1826), whose affection and respect Pushkin craved (and, occasionally, earned). In the 1790s, Karamzin, famed as poet and travel writer, hit his stride as a publisher of journals. As a critic, publisher, and journalist, Karamzin in the 1810s embodied the potential for the man of letters as a professional.

The heritage of Russian neoclassicism shaped Pushkin's sense of opportunity and change. He made his way in a world of letters that was newly in transition from its origins in court culture and the private circles of amateur men of letters to a literary marketplace eroded by popular demand and commercial values.⁵ However attuned Pushkin was to his contemporary European context, his poems grew out of a sophisticated Russian literature that itself was already in part Europeanized. The contest for authority that had incited famous literary feuds of the 1770s begot a similar taste for polemic among the next generations. Even in the mid-1820s, when Pushkin was already celebrated, debates in literary societies about neoclassical rules and the correct use of genre related to arguments that were decades old. This was not a complete surprise because some of the same individuals survived into old age as standard-bearers for competing programmes for a national literature.⁶ The stability of poetic doctrine and style represented an achievement that gave confidence in the potential of Russian literature. But

⁵ See Irina Reyfman, *Vasilii Trediakovskii: The 'Fool' of the New Russian Literature* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), 49–70.

⁶ See Oleg Proskurin, *Literaturnye skandaly pushkinskoi epokhi* (Moscow: OGI, 2000); and N. A. Baxter, 'The Early (1817–1825) Literary Criticism of Wilhelm Kükhel'beker' (dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1970), ch. 1.

there was an odd mismatch between, on the one hand, the successful elaboration of a classical poetics rooted in timeless values, and, on the other hand, the largely ephemeral quality of writing produced. By the 1810s, few writers had survived in print; even fewer would show any staying power at all. This contested legacy was proof of the volatility and instability of a tradition that appeared to be self-erasing. The situation was problematic, since a creative engagement with the past and a sense of building on it plays an important role in the classical aesthetic.

For Pushkin when he was a young poet, two issues of importance emerged out of this context. The first concerned the incentives and disincentives of originality. Far from seeing himself as the creator of a new Russian literature, Pushkin came of age as a student of the literature and precepts of the previous century, both Russian and European, and as a dutiful observer of literary success, which was defined more as a function of group loyalty than original greatness. The second concerned the incentives and disincentives of a writer's career. The Enlightenment legacy to Pushkin's generation included not just a disputed canon of writers, but an attitude to the status of the poet as a gifted man of letters appreciated by a small circle of friends, or court poet available for ceremonial occasions and capable of inspiration on demand. In the latter part of Catherine's reign, despite the efforts of certain writers, innovations such as copyright and royalties that might have given financial stability to authors and translators remained impossible.⁷ By the mid-1810s, the notion of having a career as a writer was still scarcely plausible. Pushkin entered the literary world at a time when these changing cultural and economic trends coincided, and their joint impact on him is visible virtually from his first extant poem in 1813 in which aesthetic and financial motifs intertwine. An aesthetic of imitation remained feasible because there was still no social or economic need for a readership outside the main poetic circles, which rewarded brilliance and poetic loyalty with friendship rather than money.

THE ANONYMITY OF COTERIE WRITING: THE CLASSICISM OF ARZAMAS

We must all join forces in order to help develop this future giant, who will surpass all of us. There is no question that he needs to study, but not as we studied!⁸

(V. A. Zhukovsky)

In St Petersburg of the 1810s, literary alliances centred around two main parties. The traditionalist group known as the Symposium of the Amateurs of

⁷ See Marcus Levitt, 'The Illegal Staging of Sumarokov's *Sinav i Truvor* in 1770 and the Problem of Authorial Status in Eighteenth-Century Russia', *SEEJ* 43: 2 (1999), 299–323.

⁸ Quoted in V. E. Vatsuro and A. L. Ospovat (eds.), *Arzamas. Sbornik*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1994), i. 334 (Letter to P. A. Viazemskii, 19 September 1815).

the Russian Word ('Beseda liubitelei rossiskoi slovesnosti') was headed by the politically and culturally conservative minister Admiral Shishkov.⁹ The literary polemic that began in 1803 with Admiral Shishkov's attack on the 'new style', pioneered by Karamzin and his followers, only truly ended in the 1820s. They and their allies crossed swords over stylistic differences relating to diction, syntax, and genre. For Shishkov, an authentic Russian literature was obliged to employ an old-fashioned archaic Slavonic diction, and revive largely defunct genres such as the ode and classical verse tragedy. At the heart of their programme was a search for native authenticity. Followers of Beseda advocated a literary programme explicitly designed to purge the literary language of Karamzin's innovations.¹⁰ Vertical ties of age and class, more than compatible visions of craft, account for the presence of genuinely important poets, Vasily Kapnist and Derzhavin, for example, in the membership.

In 1816, Beseda's opponents came together in the second group known as Arzamas.¹¹ The membership of Arzamas was politically and socially more heterogeneous than Beseda, running the gamut from Republicanism to Jacobinism; their unity resided in their common literary values.¹² The Archaists' interest in style and versification was fundamentally nationalist, and not aesthetic. The poetic orientation of Arzamas was fundamentally international and aesthetic.¹³ The best of the Arzamas authors were highly diverse, with distinctive voices and poetic affiliations. Batiushkov was supreme at imitating the love elegy from Tibullus to Parny, Zhukovsky opened elegiac writing to the influence of German lyric, and Petr Viazemskii (1792–1878) shone as a brilliant verse satirist. But within that diversity and across its larger membership, there was a group identity forged by a shared sense of poetic community. In 1811, Pushkin first visited the Lycée at Tsarskoe Selo in the company of his uncle Vasily, an author of light verse and a celebrated wit.¹⁴ By the time he completed his education there in 1817, he was already a member of Arzamas, to which Vasily had introduced him.¹⁵ The function of groups like Beseda and Arzamas was not only to create literary alliances. In their speeches, competitions, light verse, and epistles, the members articulated their canons of taste in practical terms. Implicit views on

⁹ See Mark Al'tshuller, *Predtechi slavianofil'stva v russkoi literature (Obshchestvo 'Beseda liubitelei russkogo slova')* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984).

¹⁰ As discussed in B. A. Uspensky, *Iz istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka XVIII-nachala XIX veka: iazykovaia programma Karamzina i ee istoricheskie korni* (Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1985).

¹¹ See M. S. Borovkova-Maikova (ed.), *Arzamas i arzamasskie protokoly* (Leningrad: Izd-vo Pisatelei, 1933), 82–4.

¹² See V. E. Vatsuro, 'V predverii pushkinskoi epokhi', in *Arzamas. Sbornik*, i, 5–27.

¹³ See Fedor Fedorov, 'Zhukovskii v poeticheskom soznanii Pushkina: god 1818', in *Pushkinskie chteniia v Tartu* (Tartu: Tartuskii universitet, 2000), 25–32.

¹⁴ See T. J. Binyon, *Pushkin: A Biography* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), 17–19.

¹⁵ At the Lycée, Pushkin took an eager interest in metropolitan literary debates, ranging himself on the side of his uncle's friends against Shishkov and allies even before leaving school. By the time of his formal induction to Arzamas in 1816, the society had begun to decline, partly because Beseda was reduced after Derzhavin's death.

aesthetics, which in the 1810s were still inadequately theorized, informed their idea of literature. Their attacks on deliberately old-fashioned precepts of Beseda had a prescriptive dimension, for Arzamas positively championed a notion of literary decorum based on the idea of a correct poetics descending from the eighteenth century and reinforced by the continued pedagogical dominance of French neoclassicism. In the poems, speeches, and treatises of the Arzamas members, references to ancient and modern authorities, from Pindar and Horace to Racine and Voltaire, abound as examples of writers who both followed and developed norms of style and decorum common to any definition of the neoclassical.

Much in the manner of their eighteenth-century predecessors, the poets of the 1810s directed at each other a continual crossfire of articles and reviews full of satirical barbs.¹⁶ Parody, sometimes learned and pedantic, sometimes bawdy and personal, was the staple of the Arzamas group.¹⁷ At the time of Pushkin's early success, an ease with tradition and a sparkling wit in its subversion defined critical perceptions of literary talent. Among the still relatively small elite coterie of St Petersburg and Moscow, a writer's acclaim depended on fulfilling expectations of erudition, fluency, and self-assertion made through witty mockery of others. In 'To Zhukovsky' ('K Zhukovskomu', 1816), Pushkin, a self-proclaimed Arzamasite, mustered literary allies against the precepts of Beseda by summoning 'poets raised by nature and by labour | In the happy heresy of taste and learning' to smite the enemies of Enlightenment.¹⁸

It is helpful to think of a long eighteenth century as the basis of Pushkin's development and the literary culture and poetics to which he reacted. The first period of Pushkin's career, from his juvenile creativity at the Lycée till his exile in 1820, unfolded at a time when neoclassicism meant a command of the arts of imitation and parody largely in the service of loyalty to the poetic norm of the group. When Pushkin assimilated the rules of the poetic system, he also acquired preconceived ideas about invention and the imagination that were fundamental to his poetic identity. From that starting point, it is clear that the significance of Arzamas for Pushkin was twofold. As a collective united by poetic values, Arzamas gave Pushkin an image of a special group of readers, who, like his friends at the Lycée but now more cosmopolitan, comprised a model readership where friendship and literary values were mutually reinforcing. More immediately, Arzamas bore on Pushkin's development because the group collectively impressed on him the value of judging literary performance by criteria of correctness and wit. Scholarship has depicted the clash of Arzamas and

¹⁶ See Andrei Shishkin, 'Poeticheskoe sostiazanie Trediakovskogo, Lomonosova Sumarokova', *XVIII vek*, 14 (1983), 232–47.

¹⁷ On parodic technique in Arzamas, see B. M. Gasparov, *Poeticheskii iazyk Pushkina kak fakt istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka* (Vienna: Gesellschaft zur Förderung slawistischer Studien, 1992), 33–6. See also the protocols of the meetings as printed in Arzamas. *Sbornik*, i.

¹⁸ See the commentary in A. S. Pushkin, *Stikhotvoreniia litseiskikh let, 1813–1817*, ed. V. E. Vatsuro (St Petersburg: Nauka, 1994), 616–18.

Beseda, and the echoes that reverberated in successor groups and polemics of the 1820s, as a battle between Archaists and Innovators.¹⁹ That characterization of Arzamas's programme in terms of its opposition to a retrograde poetics is not invalid. But Arzamas was equally regressive in advocating a highly normative prescriptive poetics based on the inherited doctrines of French neoclassicism.²⁰ In the poem 'To the Areopagus' ('Areopagu', 1814), Zhukovsky claimed that 'To write irreproachably, my dear friend | You need a highly flexible talent for that!'²¹ Members of Arzamas had a deceptively light-hearted style of poetic combat. The humorous 'Speech of Cassandra', transcribed in the notebook of one member, translated this literary policy into a fantasy of the group's genesis when 'all the bookcases flew open, and Homer and Racine and Fénelon and Virgil came to life on the shelves'.²²

Despite their individual poetic voices, the writers of Arzamas collectively endorsed a view of literary art as a type of skill and discourse crafted according to rules that were broadly compatible with the major tenets of French classical doctrine and practice. The impact of such an orientation on Pushkin is felt most in his approach to questions concerning the nature of poetic memory, invention, and the limits of the imagination. The precepts of neoclassicism operated not only explicitly at the level of form and diction; implicitly they shaped Pushkin's idea of poetry and his idea of what it meant to develop as a poet. His grasp of his own individual talent and his appetite for innovation depended at least partly on the expectations of the period. The discovery of the concept of original genius as the measure of superior professional literary ability arrived in Russia at a relatively late date and not until after Pushkin's initial formative period. In the still amateur world of Arzamas poetic culture, imagination was understood as a faculty of invention, meaning a talent for imitation (of nature in the first instance) that 'conceives the design and order of its production' by following a rational procedure.²³ In the 1810s, the precepts of eighteenth-century French poetic theory echoed in the writings of Arzamas. The Arzamasite D. V. Dashkov, author of a commentary on La Harpe, concluded that 'our harmony ('harmonie') is not the gift of language, but the labour of talent ('l'ouvrage du talent')'.²⁴ Dashkov declared that the art of poetry required expertise in the conventions governing word choice, prosody, and metaphor that lead to correct expression for one's own language. Rules existed for the sake of helping writers acquire optimal power of expression, and not just for their own sake. Instead of striving for a

¹⁹ See Iurii Tynianov, 'Arkhaisty i Pushkin', first published in *Pushkin v mirovoi literature. Sbornik statei* (Leningrad: GIZ, 1926), 215–86; and Gasparov, *Poeticheskii iazyk Pushkina*, ch. 2.

²⁰ The fundamental issues were set out by Grigorii Gukovskii in two articles: 'K voprosu o russkom klassitsizme (sostiazaniia i perevody)', *Poetika*, 4 (1928), 126–48; and 'O russkom klassitsizme', *Poetika*, 5 (1929), 21–65.

²¹ V. A. Zhukovsky, 'Areopagu', in *Arzamas. Sbornik*, ii. 271.

²² 'Rech' Kassandry', in *Arzamas. Sbornik*, i. 301.

²³ Walter Jackson Bate, *From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 36.

²⁴ D. V. Dashkov, 'Perevod dvukh statei iz Lagarpa, s primechaniiami perevodchika', in *Arzamas. Sbornik*, i. 11–43.

singleness of voice, poetic invention made the mastery of other poetic voices the aim. Aleksei Illichevskii, one of his classmates at the Lycée, laid down the terms for excellence when as early as 1812 he praised Pushkin's progress, saying that 'he had acquired much learning and taste in the art of poetry'.²⁵ The arts of imitation and parody were to be exercised in addressing a community of dead writers (or writers who, on the critical consensus, were almost as good as dead). By parodying writers discarded from the canon, acolytes of Arzamas aimed to create literary pleasure and strengthen their chosen tradition. Their project remained true to eighteenth-century culture in its belief in literary combat as a necessary process of canon creation, and, chiefly, in its belief that the truly successful poets assert their pre-eminence by speaking through other voices. Invention in this context was the rhetorical art of matching tropes and literary expression to ideas. Originality was maximal inventiveness in this sense.

DIALOGUES WITH THE DEAD AND THE ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE

A lack of respect for ancestors is the first sign of a lack of civilization ('dikost'') and immorality.²⁶

(Pushkin, 1828)

Despite the formidable body of source-studies on Pushkin, there is no comprehensive study of Pushkin's allusive practice that attempts to describe how his mode of echoing evolves both in quantity and quality. From an early point intertextuality played an essential role in his notion of poetic craft, circumscribing the value of originality in order to vouchsafe the impression of stylistic mastery. In poems written after 1826, the imitation will be more overt and purposeful. In earlier works, and especially the poems before 1821, Pushkin's allusive devices were pervasive and automatic. Commentaries provide a picture of a poet gifted with an excellent memory whose every line either quoted, echoed, or rewrote other poets. Such display was neither an assertion of poetic prowess nor merely adolescent mimicry. Pushkin's ongoing engagement with other poets and reproduction of their voices changed character, but never ceased to play a part in the creation of his own voice. Chapter 6 will discuss a sequence of works, starting with his great tribute to André Chénier of 1825 and culminating in the 'Poet' cycle, in which Pushkin moved from imitation to an assertion of his own originality. In earlier treatments, however, parodying predecessors created an

²⁵ *Russkii arkhiv*, 10 (1864), 1052; also see K. Ia. Grot, *Pushkinskii litsei (1811–1817). Bumagi 1-ogo kursa, sobrannye akad. Ia. K. Grotom* (St Petersburg: Ministerstvo putei soobshcheniia, 1911), 35.

²⁶ Pushkin, *PSS*, viii. 42 ('The Blackamoor of Peter the Great').

opportunity to jockey for artistic authority according to the custom of the poetic group.²⁷

Pushkin acquired the skill of imitation at the Lycée, where students cultivated pastiche and parody for the sake of displaying verbal wit.²⁸ In its meaning as an act of imitation, parody is inseparable from Pushkin's literary sensibility and capacity for asserting his talent. Parody as a comic technique of caricature based on ironic pastiche was a natural product of Pushkin's prowess as an imitator. In such a literary culture, the meaning of originality related to the simultaneous presence of different voices harmonized into a single, seamless voice. The prevalence of allusion to other poets in the early poems led later critics, who applied post-Romantic expectations, to wonder whether Pushkin was guilty of plagiarism. The charge is anachronistic, and interesting only because it underscores the fact that at certain moments the predominance of other voices over a distinctive individual voice was acceptable and even desirable.²⁹ The degree to which Pushkin carefully recreated the sound patterns of Batiushkov's verse, even while writing his own text, gives an excellent example, as Oleg Proskurin has shown, of musicality and echoing as a type of parody that is both revisionary and complimentary.³⁰ Early on, the allusive propensity of numerous poems accorded little room for the personal voice.

In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the world of Russian poetry was full of metaphorical ghosts—older poets, dead and alive, who were not only prominent in literary politics, but present as the subject of poems.³¹ David Bethea has examined the presence of Derzhavin's shade in Pushkin's poetry, arguing that the evocation of the great older poet is a response to an invented father-figure whom Pushkin needed to subdue in order to assert his own

²⁷ On erudite citation and literary authority, see Antoine Compagnon, *La Seconde Main, ou Le Travail de la citation* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1979), 98–108.

²⁸ On the school journal, see Grot, *Pushkinskii litsei*, 123–215 and 240–319. Examples of both types of parody abound in extant work of Pushkin's contemporaries, including spectacularly irreverent spoofs by Del'vig of Nikolai Koshanskii, the authority on rhetoric. Pushkin's own 'Carousing Students' ('Piruiushchie studenty', 1814) and the even more audacious 'The Hamlet' ('Gorodok', 1815) famously parodied Zhukovsky's 'A Bard in the Troop of Russian Soldiers' ('Pevets vo stane russkikh voinov', 1812). The whole panoply of intertextual techniques marks Pushkin's poetic relationship with Zhukovsky, and reflects their common approach to poetic taste. For example, Pushkin spoofed the opening lines of Zhukovsky's verse epistle to Bludov in a letter to Zhukovsky (Pushkin, *PSS*, xiii, no.165 (20 April 1825)).

²⁹ See Mikhail Gershenzon, 'Ten' Pushkina', in his *Stat'i o Pushkine* (Moscow: Academia, 1926), 69–96. He catalogues poetic ghosts largely as clues to Pushkin's sentiments about the afterlife (on which see Chapter 8).

³⁰ Recent studies have shown the closeness with which Pushkin read Batiushkov, particularly in his early elegies and epistles. See Oleg Proskurin, *Poeziia Pushkina, ili podvizhnyi palimpsest* (Moscow: NLO, 1999), ch. 2; more generally on acoustic borrowing as a form of intertextuality, see John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (London: University of California Press, 1981), ch. 1.

³¹ Poems by Batiushkov that put a younger poet in contact with a poetic ghost included 'My Penates' ('Moi Penaty', 1811–12), 'The Shade of a Friend' ('Ten' druga', 1816), 'The Dying Tasso' ('Umiraiushchii Tass', 1817).

pre-eminence.³² In a post-Bloomian age, the analysis of poetic relations based on highly specific intertextual allusions can certainly reveal meanings beyond the writer's intentionality, including feelings of competition and anxiety with a strong poet. It is clear that Derzhavin interested Pushkin from early in his career, eliciting a mixture of tribute and abuse for the roughness of his style. Bethea's analysis uncovers subtle links, revealing the surprising extent to which Pushkin returned to the image of this poet both explicitly and implicitly and was 'shadowed' by him.

One advantage of a psychological hermeneutic such as the 'anxiety of influence' is that it aims to explain a varied pattern of attitudes according to a single key: both positive responses to a great predecessor and critical misreading are seen to emanate from an unconscious complex of creative desires and, in the Freudian terms of the underlying model, filial ties.³³ But the Bloomian model suffers the weaknesses of any globalizing theory. Above all, its circularity is problematic because any application of Bloom's model to poetic influence necessarily seeks to interpret both acknowledged influence and tacit, suppressed influence in terms of discomfort and evasion. In the context of the present discussion, a Bloomian approach to inter-generational anxiety invites revision because other conclusions are possible if the premisses are adjusted to reflect the history of the 1810s. How 'strong' a poet was Derzhavin? The history of his reputation suggests that at least in the 1810s and 1820s, Derzhavin attracted veneration mixed with scorn as a relic of the age of Catherine, a court poet whose best work dated to the 1780s.³⁴ He does not bestride the poetic culture as Shakespeare and Milton do for Keats and Wordsworth. Bethea's discussion may be most interesting because it uncovers in Pushkin's attitude to Derzhavin a need for a poetic father less than an example of Bloom's troubled ratio of influence. In this respect, Pushkin shared the general anxiety of many of his contemporaries who periodically wondered why Russian literature, despite its obvious achievements, had yet to produce its own incontestable genius. The fact that poets and critics were quick to anoint the adolescent Pushkin as the great hope of Russian literature, presciently seeing in him a future genius, suggests the depth of their own anxiety about a nation that remained without a native genius of European magnitude.

In a literary culture that laid emphasis on invention as the fundamental value of poetic originality, poets with a future never wished to be seen escaping the past. The closed quality of the Bloomian model is problematic because the mapping of anxiety between later and earlier poet is not tested against the established patterns of imitation and emulation that exist in the larger literary culture

³² David Bethea, *Realizing Metaphors: Alexander Pushkin and the Life of the Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), ch. 2.

³³ For an analysis, see Graham Allen, *Harold Bloom: A Poetics of Conflict* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), 49–54.

³⁴ See A. L. Zorin, 'Glagol vremen', in A. Zorin, A. Nemzer, and N. Zubkov (eds.), *Svoi podvig svershiv* (Moscow: Kniga, 1987), 6–25.

and influence individual performance. In the case of lyric, because the poetic culture placed a premium on strategies of allusion and quotation, emulation was pervasive.³⁵ Parody, as a means of respectful and sometimes disrespectful debunking, was necessarily a favourite mode in which Arzamas poets confronted the 'shades' of eighteenth-century writers.³⁶ Dialogues with the dead, perhaps based on the Lucianic genre that was popular in the eighteenth century, enjoyed a vogue in Russia in the 1810s.³⁷ Poets were not content to befriend and mock one another. They also felt a need to descend to a poets' hell (or ascend to poetic heaven) and trouble their forebears. Pushkin developed at a moment when living poets typically haunted the dead. At an age when he ought to have been seeking strong models or, in Bloomian terms, poetic fathers, Pushkin fell into the Arzamas practice of mingling with the shades of the dead and mocking them. It is arguable, therefore, that even if Derzhavin disappoints as a poetic father, Bethea rightly detects in Pushkin the unfulfilled need to enter into a poetic contest with a great predecessor. In part this may be a function of Pushkin's own psychology. In flaunting their superiority, later poets of Pushkin's generation betrayed no anxiety of influence; nor, as members of a coterie bound by common literary values, did they come across as advocates of original genius based on anything other than a total command of creative choices inscribed in the poetic system.

In the absence of a truly great national poet, numerous minor if accomplished poets were free of anxiety caused by a dominant voice, and played a different sort of game based on the rules of a literary system that permitted them to revel in learned and affectionate belittling. Shaped by the values of Arzamas and its culture of parody, Pushkin produced precocious satirical poems that had a double function.³⁸ As works of literary history, they used satire to clear the ground for a new poetic talent unconstrained by poetic fathers. As displays of erudition and wit, the satires revealed the extent to which the poet had assimilated one aspect of the Arzamas aesthetic. Literature in this culture satisfies Gianbiagio Conte's description, made with reference to Roman poetry, of 'the text as a profoundly

³⁵ For an overview see V. B. Mikushevich, 'K voprosu o romanticheskom perevode', in *Aktual'nye problemy teorii khudozhestvennogo perevoda. Materialy vsesoiuznogo simpoziuma* (Moscow: Soiuz pisatelei SSSR, 1967), i. 69–79; V. E. Vatsuro, 'Sharl' Milvua v russkikh perevodakh i podrazhaniakh pervoi treti XIX-ogo veka', in M. P. Alekseev (ed.), *Vzaimosviazi russkoi i zarubezhnykh literatur* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1983), 100–28.

³⁶ The locus classicus in the period is A. F. Voiekov, 'House of the Mad' ('Dom sumashedshikh'), which appeared in continually updated editions from 1814 well into the 1830s.

³⁷ On Lucianic dialogues in the Enlightenment, see Christopher Robinson, *Lucian and his Influence in Europe* (London: Duckworth, 1979), 144–64.

³⁸ The subject has proven too diffuse for a single treatment. Most discussions of parody focus on Pushkin's rewriting of specific genres. On the intertexts to 'Ten' Barkova' and its parodic strategies, see M. I. Shapir, 'Barkov i Derzhavin: iz istorii russkogo burleska', in A. S. Pushkin, *Ten' Barkova. Teksty. Kommentarii. Ekskursy*, ed. I. A. Pil'shchikov and M. I. Shapir (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 2002), 397–458, with bibliography.

contextualized network of associations, echoes, imitations, allusions'.³⁹ Based on assimilated poetic voices, literature creates an artistic language that is reused, familiar within the literary tradition, and when mastered by younger poets a demonstration of their command of the literary system in which experimentation is a matter of learning, allusion, refinement, and invention within the rules for style and language preserved in the poetic memory. Conte sums up a situation that is close to Pushkin's own: 'Not all periods let their poets speak with a direct voice or are able to produce or synthesize a style that is uncomplicated and unmistakably their own—their distinctive and exclusive property.'⁴⁰

Respect for poetic forebears was expressed through imitation and translation. In dialogues with the dead, however, the same awareness of an earlier age provoked riotous disrespect and gave the younger poet opportunity for subversion of the hierarchy between older and younger writers.⁴¹ Pushkin depicted the afterlife of poetic shades in a series of Stygian visitations.⁴² Most sensational was his 'The Shade of Barkov' ('Ten' Barkova', 1815), an erotic burlesque, part parody of Zhukovsky's military narrative 'Gromoboi' (1811), part imitation and tribute of Ivan Barkov and a host of French priapic odists. In 'The Shade of Barkov', the notorious eighteenth-century pornographic poet and Horatian satirist appears to the young Pushkin, instructing him with wonderful wit in the art of poetic disrespect. But we see Pushkin's response to this aspect of classicism best in his 'The Shade of Fonvizin' ('Ten' Fonvizina', 1815), a work full of the irreverence and erudition prized by Arzamas that delights in freedom from anxiety.⁴³ Built on an extensive knowledge of Russian literature from the 1770s, the poem displays Pushkin's dazzling command of pastiche. A non-strophic work of 320 lines, 'The Shade of Fonvizin' is organized as a series of vignettes and literary commentaries spun out as the narrator encounters poets on his trip down to Hades and back up again. In the Lucianic mode, the whole poem inverts the epic topos of the descent to hell as a moment of tribute to distinguished predecessors or one's poetic father. In the main narrative, stretching from lines 65 to 241, the comic playwright Denis Fonvizin (1744–92), Virgil to Pushkin's Dante, guides the narrator into interviews with four writers, Andrei Kropotov, Count Dmitrii Ivanovich Khvostov (1757–1835), Count S. A. Shikhmatov (1783–1837), and Derzhavin. The sequence progresses from the most obscure figure to the most eminent.

³⁹ *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 41. See also Eleanor Cook, *Against Coercion: Games Poets Play* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), ch. 6.

⁴⁰ Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation*, 63.

⁴¹ In Pushkin's poetry from the mid-1820s ghostly friends appear as images of continuity with a beloved community and as the psychological manifestation of a longing for an earlier self.

⁴² For further examples in early Pushkin see the poems 'Bova' (1814), 'Gorodok' ('The Hamlet', 1815), 'Osgar' (1814).

⁴³ For the text, see Pushkin, PSS, i. 156–64. The work was not published in Pushkin's lifetime. Vadim Vatsuro has suggested that Pushkin's poem imitates Fonvizin's *Epistle to his Servants*, which was republished in 1815.

On their descent, Fonvizin and the speaker make short shrift of the forgotten and drunken Kropotov, passing quickly on to the premature ghost of Khvostov, who is ridiculed here, as elsewhere in Pushkin, for a level of effort in inverse proportion to his talent and for a stubborn relentlessness despite his true standing. As a scourge of inflated reputation, Pushkin has learned to lampoon in the best manner of Fonvizin. A vaudeville scene ensues between poet and ghost, who is utterly mundane and grumpy as he pours out his heart in a monologue about his critical reputation, despised by all except a hack critic and relation who places a metaphorical wreath on Khvostov's bust. Loaded with references to ephemeral journals and obscure publications, the exchanges weave into the narrative a virtual history of the life of an aristocratic amateur, reminding the reader that literary reputations were the work of small cohorts of the elite who published their own work and the journals in which those works were reviewed. In the next vignette, Pushkin creates a composite target out of several figures associated with Beseda. The humour is pitiless as he casts his eye over a parade of poets who thrived within living memory, beginning with the forgotten Shirinskii-Shakhmatov, a sentimental versifier moved to tears by his own poetry; progressing to Admiral Shikhmatov, the self-appointed arbiter of linguistic and literary norms, as archaizer-in-chief, who now takes a drubbing in language clotted with his grotesque archaisms and stylistic excesses; concluding with cameo portraits of minor supporters of the archaizing programme, who are picked off for their youth and inexpertise and then clipped round the ears with mock fury.

By chance, Fonvizin asks after Derzhavin. To Pushkin's surprise, he learns that the great man is still alive and writing, but not to good effect in the view of the narrator who casts his criticism (ll. 205–10) as a pastiche of Derzhavin. All the trademarks of Derzhavin's style are used in a stunning show of Pushkin's mastery of other voices and comic disrespect for a would-be master poet. It is a measure of Fonvizin's respect (and Pushkin's impiety) that Derzhavin, alone of all the interlocutors, is allowed to recite one of his own stanzas. Lines 241–50 are a single ten-line stanza, the standard form of his odes, but the style is a gross caricature of Derzhavin's usual tone. It is a manifestation of poetic decline, exaggerating the archaic civic style displayed in his endless 'Lyro-Epic Hymn on the Expulsion of the French from the Fatherland' ('Gimn liro-epicheski na prognanie frantsuzov iz otechestva', 1813). In addition to weaving quotations from the hymn into his parody, Pushkin picks up on Derzhavin's penchant for the occasional two- or three-word line; mocks his love of neologism and old-fashioned composite adjectives, disrupts the usual syntactic patterns of the odic stanza, and pokes fun at pleonasm and illogic, and at the bogus piety and tone of reverence. Fonvizin adds insult to injury by mocking Derzhavin's claim to fame and garbling the most famous line of his great ode 'God' ('Bog', 1784).⁴⁴ Fonvizin

⁴⁴ In l. 247, Derzhavin's famous declaration 'I am a slave, I am a Tsar | I am a worm, I am God' becomes 'You are a God, You are a worm | You are light—you are darkness'.

compounds the criticism by having Lomonosov speak in the Pindaric style that jarred with Derzhavin's philosophical language of reason.

The final section dismisses all these poets as no more than 'rhymesters' ('рифмачи'). The tone changes from ridicule to affectionate greeting on the visitor's voyage back to Hades when he welcomes figures from the generation of his own mentors. The appeal to the 'Singer of the Penates' identifies Batiushkov as the subject, referring to his best-known poem 'My Penates' ('Moi Penaty', 1811–12), which pays tribute to his own personal pantheon of poets, including Horace and Anacreon, prized for their irony and their personal voice. But even here Fonvizin expresses disgust for an over-indulgent hedonist. Batiushkov, with all his genius, is as lazy as the untalented Khvostov is diligent, further failings that leave Fonvizin in a state of ironical dismay over the future of Russian poetry.

'The Shade of Fonvizin' is significant because it shows that Pushkin worked precociously to integrate himself in the larger poetic environment; that he accomplished this through a use of wit and satire that not only gave evidence of a formal grasp of a genre but allowed him simultaneously to show respect for literary authority and to debunk it; and that he had already developed a notion of 'instant' or 'ephemeral' literature as opposed to writing for posterity. However much satisfaction he took in satirical literary history, he understood the serious implication of the conclusions, namely that none of these poets was sufficiently great to escape such censure, a fate that would await him unless genius and professional luck spared him.

As expressed with a light touch, loyalty to Arzamas secured admiration if not outright patronage. At the same time, loyalty brought its own hazards to creative development. Long after Arzamas ceased to exist, Pushkin continued to feel for poets of the group an allegiance akin to his attachment to the Lycée. In the 1820s and 1830s memories of both groups nurtured Pushkin's image of an ideal readership distinct from the anonymous public or partisan literary critics (to be discussed in Chapter 6). But even as his poetic practice reinforced his identity as a member of this group, he posed questions about the limits on poetic individuality that faithfulness might impose if a rigid sense of classicism defined the individual talent. Despite the tendency to see Arzamas as a 'modernizing' circle, we must remember that their notion of innovation is determined by neoclassical theory and values. In the first decade of his career, that tendency encouraged Pushkin to see poetry as a matter of craft and imitation rather than visionary inspiration. While Pushkin might have been in search of a strong predecessor, his use of anterior texts constituted less a map of misreading than a *tour de force* of ease with poetic influence. As an imitator-poet he was in an excellent position to consolidate and surpass tradition. The balance between tradition and individuality was a question that at an early stage Pushkin pondered in poems full of self-reflection on the nature of poetic talent and his own career prospects. In a letter to Pushkin, Vasily Zhukovsky, the most distinguished authority in Arzamas, voiced his optimism in an anxiety-free endorsement by offering Pushkin the

‘pre-eminent spot on Parnassus’, provided he devoted his ‘sublime genius’ to a suitable goal. Genius here does not mean the wilful expression of individuality, but the complete mastery of a prescribed literary system that determines whether Pushkin, in Zhukovsky’s words, is ‘deserving’.⁴⁵

TRADITION AND ORIGINALITY (‘TO ZHUKOVSKY’, 1816)

A miraculous talent, a rare sense of taste! wit, invention (‘izobretenie’), jollity (‘veselost’).⁴⁶

(Batiushkov)

The terms of Batiushkov’s encomium define precisely the period values associated with poetic genius. Viazemskii went further in admitting that the versifier who correctly implements rules is not the equal of the poet who both observes the ‘convenances’ and possesses the ‘secret of poetry’, which he can only define as an indefinable ‘je ne sais quoi’.⁴⁷ In the years 1813–17, Pushkin made his poetic development a topic in a number of works. Two poems describing poetic talent consider the meaning of self-determination within a framework of loyalty to a literary community and its stylistic norms. In these works the group provides a network of readers and writers within which the poet can find a place albeit at some cost to individuality.

Pushkin’s first published poem, ‘To a Versifier Friend’ (‘K drugu stikhotvortsu’), appeared in 1814 in the *Herald of Europe* (*Vestnik Evropy*), the journal founded by Karamzin. While Pushkin possibly had his close friend Anton Del’vig in mind as his addressee, he is also speaking to himself on the hazards of a poet’s life. The dialogue between poet and interlocutor stages the poet’s own internal debate. The poem of eighty-nine lines is written in alexandrines, with a traditional caesura after the sixth syllable, the metre of choice in satirical polemics of the 1750s.⁴⁸ The form and topic suggest that in his first extensive statement on poetic craft, Pushkin has in mind the epistolary debate that broke out in the early 1750s between Sumarokov, Ivan Elagin, Semon Bobrov, and an anonymous writer over the issue of whether originality or imitation defined poetry. Other stylistic touches, such as references to mythological topoi and

⁴⁵ See his letter in *PSS*, xiii, no. 110, p. 116 (31 October 1824).

⁴⁶ From a letter of Batiushkov to Viazemskii as quoted in *Arzamas. Sbornik*, ii. 371.

⁴⁷ He spells out these views in letters to A. I. Turgenev written in 1819 and on 18 December 1820 for these sentiments. See *Arzamas. Sbornik*, ii. 379–93.

⁴⁸ On Pushkin’s use of hexameter and the alexandrine, see Sergei Bondi, *O Pushkine. Stat’i i issledovaniia* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1978), 307–70. On Pushkin’s Karamzinian syntactic orientation, see V. V. Vinogradov, *Stil’ Pushkina* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1941), 120–270, esp. 132. On Pushkin’s use of the iamb in this period, see V. E. Kholshchevnikov, ‘Stikhoslozhenie Pushkina-litseista’, in Pushkin, *Stikhotvoreniia litseiskikh let, 1813–1817*, 405–509.

classical metaphors, are conventional trappings of the genre, indications of stylistic competence and good taste; the list of poets, which encompasses a wide chronological and geographic range, from Juvenal to Jean-Baptiste Rousseau and a host of Russians, reflects a neoclassical doctrine that order and pleasurable instruction unify ancient and modern poets, provided they share compatible artistic principles based on belief in clarity.

The question the poem asks is why one would become a poet, and it lays down a set of themes that Pushkin will return to at various points. The initial argument proceeds by negative definition. First, the autobiographical speaker avers that history is the true arbiter of creative success (ll. 17–18), consigning many to oblivion (l. 36); and that poets should not put too much stock in their own self-belief (l. 29) as the measure of poetic merit; he recognizes that the true poet is not merely a versifier who can weave rhymes (ll. 29–40). He cites Derzhavin and Lomonosov among Russia's genuine poets and awards comic pseudonyms to her failures. Writing large quantities of verse is meaningless as a skill unless meaning, too, is memorable. Poetry is great, therefore, when it has didactic value ('immortal bards . . . feed a healthy mind'). Financial hardship is almost a certainty, making the reward of fame particularly important.⁴⁹ Satisfactions and dangers seem evenly weighed in the balance. The addressee responds to his friend's meditations with the cautionary tale of a priest who is blind to the unhappiness that his own teaching causes him. In his view, it is essential to know what a definition of happiness entails. If happiness means a 'quiet life' ('tikhii vek'), then it would be better not to become a writer condemned to a life of 'burdening journals with odes' and 'spending weeks on impromptu compositions', 'wandering about the heights of Parnassus in search of the pure Muses'.

Арист! и ты в толпе служителей Парнасса!
 Ты хочешь оседлать упрямого Пегаса;
 За лаврами спешишь опасною стезей,
 И с строгой критикой вступаешь смело в бой!
 Арист, поверь ты мне, оставь перо, чернилы,
 Забудь ручьи, леса, унылые могилы,
 В холодных песенках любовью не пылай;
 Чтоб не слететь с горы, скорее вниз ступай!
 Довольно без тебя поэтов есть и будет;
 Их напечатают—и целый свет забудет.⁵⁰ (ll. 1–10)

⁴⁹ The writer's fate as a hard financial lot surfaces frequently in journalistic and satirical publications even in the earlier period. In 'To my Lyre' ('K moi lire', 1793) Nikolev, author of the haunting 'The Poet's Changes of Mind', goes so far as to retire his talent. In 'To the Lyre' ('K lire', 1793) the minor poet A. I. Klushin is one of the first to articulate this view about the immunity of the artist to such travails. See G. P. Makogonenko and I. Z. Serman (eds.), *Poety XVIII veka*, 2 vols. (Leningrad: Biblioteka poeta, 1972), ii. 80–4, 105–8, 352–6.

⁵⁰ Pushkin, *PSS*, i. 25.

Aristus! you too among the servants of Parnassus! | You want to saddle headstrong Pegasus; | You rush after laurels on a dangerous path, | And bravely join the severe critic in combat!

Aristus, trust me, leave your pen, ink. | Forget the brooks, woods, sad graves, | Don't burn with ardour in cold songs; | Hasten off the mountain before you fly off! | There are and will be hordes of poets without you, | They are published—to be forgotten by all.

The speaker defines poetic enterprise in terms of success and reputation. His interlocutor counters with a vision of a career as a combination of aspiration, commitment, and willingness to risk much for a craft. Although the first speaker intimates that becoming a poet is a matter of choice, the second speaker asserts that by definition the true poet regards his occupation as inevitable.

The dialogue captures both a context in transition and a young poet's hesitation and ambition. Within the next four years, Pushkin had started publishing his poems regularly and determined to have a career as a writer.⁵¹ By the age of 17 he appears to have planned a first collection in which his epistle to Vasily Zhukovsky would have been the opening work.⁵² The two poets became acquainted and friendly from the summer of 1815.⁵³ Like 'To a Versifier Friend', contemporary debates and other poetic exchanges supply 'To Zhukovsky' with much of its content.⁵⁴ It revisits the theme of the hazards of the poetic career broached in the epistolary poem published in 1814. Once again, Pushkin writes himself into the history of the group by writing about it.⁵⁵

After a precocious success, Pushkin now possessed the poise and credibility to address an esteemed mentor with an argumentative work in which a fledgling poet clarifies the common ground of their literary friendship by submitting his ideas to the older authority.⁵⁶ Verse epistles exchanged by poets have an important place in the literary world of Arzamas.⁵⁷ They hold an obvious interest to

⁵¹ On Pushkin's early publishing in literary journals, see P. V. Annenkov, *Materialy dlia biografii A. S. Pushkina* (St Petersburg: Voennaia tipografiia, 1855; new edn., Moscow: Kniga, 1985), i. 29–30.

⁵² On the structure of Pushkin's first poetic collection, see N. V. Izmailov, *Ocherki tvorchestva Pushkina* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1975), 213–17, and N. N. Petrunina, 'Iz istorii pervogo sobraniia stikhotvorenii Pushkina', in *Voprosy siuzheta i kompozitsii* (Gor'kii: GGU, 1984), 141.

⁵³ For Zhukovsky's initial appraisal, see *Arzamas. Sbornik*, ii. 344.

⁵⁴ It was written between April and August 1816, probably just before Pushkin was formally elected a member of Arzamas (he signs the epistle 'Arzamasite').

⁵⁵ The standard critical response to this poem, and other early works like it, has been a too narrow attempt to attribute to Pushkin a well-defined position on the literary politics of the period. It is doubtful whether Pushkin was aiming to further his career by allying himself to the right people. He never faced a real choice between the poetics of Karamzin and Arzamas, on the one hand, and the Archaisists, on the other. His entire education and literary sensibility disposed him, as it did most literary people of his generation, in the direction of Karamzin.

⁵⁶ In November 1815, in a gesture of friendship Zhukovsky gave Pushkin one of the first copies of his newly published collection of poems. This early support was commemorated by Pushkin in *Evgenii Oegin*, viii. 2.

⁵⁷ See William Mills Todd, III, *The Familiar Letter as a Literary Genre in the Age of Pushkin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 112–44.

biographers and literary historians as statements used to mark out allegiances and to express personal sympathy in a bid for friendship. 'To Zhukovsky' manages the usual arts of ingratiation. It is this as much as his youth that explains why in a poem of rhetorical energy and vibrant image the speaker of 'To Zhukovsky' remains imperfectly individuated. He pursues self-definition only as far as literary politics or friendship permit, a style that is in keeping with the friendly letter as a genre as well as consonant with an attitude to poetic statement. But respect combines with interrogation because Pushkin's goal is genuinely to pose questions about poetic craft and authorial identity—and to be seen posing them. From the late eighteenth century, Russian poets raised the problem of differentiating the rhymester from the genuine talent. Ivan Elagin favoured the view of the poet as craftsman rather than inspired prophet in the manner of Lomonosov. His 'Epistle to Sumarokov' ('Epistola g. Elagina k g. Sumarokovu', 1753) stressed mastery of form as the primary qualification, calling the poet 'one who tames the language and resounds in rhyme'.⁵⁸ While Pushkin adheres to this belief in dexterity, he is also inclined to ascribe importance to inherent talent. 'To a Versifier Friend' suggested that poetic talent, consistent with the eighteenth-century tradition, was a matter of personal choice. 'To Zhukovsky' indicates that Pushkin reaffirmed his conviction in creative autonomy as sanctioned by authorities he respects. Belief in individual talent brings with it a willing submission of one's worth to external evaluation. Genius is awarded by others and not to be claimed autonomously.

While the poet, like Icarus, feels anxiety at the possibility of failure, he turns to elders and betters, like Derzhavin and Ivan Dmitriev, for approval, securing the sanction of Karamzin. Pushkin and Karamzin met on 23 March 1816 in Tsarskoe Selo, when the ever-ironic Karamzin apparently told the poet, 'Fly, like an eagle, but don't stop in mid-flight' (alluded to in l. 11). The primary function of these references is not to boast, but to assure Zhukovsky that his positive judgement of the young poet has been corroborated by others. Hence the modesty topos is also a type of flattery, and flattery becomes a step to familiarity, a *sine qua non* of the epistolary genre, as Pushkin dares to praise Zhukovsky as a poet in his own mould. As proof of his qualifications for making judgement, lines 13–18 incorporate into the poem the celebrated episode when at the Lycée graduation ceremony Derzhavin praised the poem that Pushkin recited, and blessed him. The language of fate and blessing are one part of the self-mythologizing tone of the first part of the poem. At the end of the section, the poet recalls his first meeting with Zhukovsky:

Могу ль забыть я час, когда перед тобой
 Безмолвный я стоял, и молнийной струей,—
 Душа к возвышенной душе твоей летела
 И, тайно съединясь, в восторгах пламенела,—
 Нет, нет! решился я—без страха в трудный путь,

⁵⁸ See Makogonenko and Serman (eds.), *Poety XVIII veka*, 372–7.

Отважной верою исполнилася грудь.
 Творцы бессмертные, питомцы вдохновенья! . . .
 Вы цель мне кажете в туманах отдаленья,
 Лечу к *безвестному* отважною мечтой,
 И, мнится, Гений ваш промчался надо мной!⁵⁹ (ll. 19–28)

Can I forget the hour when in front of you | I stood silent and, like a bolt of lightning, |
 My soul flew to your elevated soul | And, silently united with it, flared in ecstasy,—
 No, no! I have decided, fearless, to take the hard path, | My breast is filled with certain
 faith. | Immortal creators, children of inspiration! . . . | You show me the goal in the distant
 clouds, | Through brave fancy I fly to the unknown, | And, it seems, your Genius has
 flown above me!

‘Genius’ in the final line signifies individual poetic capacity and voice but not yet the transcendent visionary insight of the High Romantic lyric. Generosity, friendship, and poetic alliance attest the presence of ‘genius’, as Pushkin asserted at the end of ‘The Shade of Fonvizin’. Individual genius requires poetic tribute and mutual recognition. Here the discourse of genius is spread democratically around all poets who have forged a path, artistically and professionally, that a younger colleague can also take. Poetic egotism of a kind that becomes essential to Pushkin’s pre-eminence after 1825 would sit uneasily with this earlier posture of subordination. The genius or talent of an exemplary individual rather than Apollo’s grace provides inspiration. Throughout Pushkin’s poetry the former usage is dominant until 1826.

Having asserted the role of poets in teaching and inspiring one another, Pushkin turns in the next section (ll. 28–67) to notorious controversies from eighteenth-century Russian literature. The poem becomes a showcase for literary history as a narrative of disputation, envy, and in-fighting.⁶⁰ He wonders how young poets, dependent on the right instruction in their craft, can negotiate treacherous factionalism. Bitterly divided against one another, Trediakovsky and Sumarokov were both impotent against the fire and passion of their common enemy, Lomonosov, the ‘northern miracle’ whose lone star shone bright. Pushkin draws two interesting conclusions from the episode. First, he accepts that the poet who wins a literary battle is the ‘right’ poet, citing the example of Boileau as a poetic victor who has the stature to set the standard of taste owing to his victory over the now forgotten Chapelain. Secondly, and by corollary, he acknowledges that literary history is written by winners because their antagonists suffer, lose credibility and influence, and eventually disappear. The confident conclusion is that we can trust to posterity to sift the good from the bad and award distinction to the most genuinely talented: the first-rate may face envy and interference (catalogued in ll. 85–93), but it is not fatal to their ultimate status. When bookish

⁵⁹ Pushkin, *PSS*, i. 194.

⁶⁰ See Reyfman, *Vasilii Trediakovskii*, 132–74; on dogmatic claims by various competitors for the authority of their poetics as the ‘correct’ style, see Viktor Zhivov, *Iazyk i kul'tura v Rossii XVIII-ogo veka* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 1996), 171–84.

battles are caused by discord on points of principle rather than personal dislike, they have a place because they lead to a rational outcome. In the final two sections of the poem Pushkin delights in the realignment of poetic talent to canons of craft that are explicitly classical. The penultimate section stages a mock-battle between the proponents of taste and their detractors in terms of neoclassical tragedy, implicitly mocking all advocates of the old-fashioned:

И вы восстаньте же, Парнасские жрецы,
 Природой и трудом воспитанны певцы
 В счастливой ереси и Вкуса и Ученья,
 Разите дерзостных друзей Непросвещенья.
 Отмститель Гения, друг истины, поэт!
 Лиющая с небес и жизнь и вечный свет,
 Стрелою гибели десница Аполлона
 Сражает наконец ужасного Пифона.
 Смотрите: поражен враждебными стрелами,
 С потухшим факелом, с недвижными крылами
 К вам Озерова дух взывает: други! мечь! . . .
 Вам оскорбленный вкус, вам Знанья дали весть—
 Летите на врагов: и Феб и Музы с вами!
 Разите варваров кровавыми стихами;
 Невежество, смирясь, потупит хладный взор,
 Спесивых риториков безграмотный собор . . . (ll. 95–110)

Rise up now you, priests of Parnassus, | Poets formed by nature and by work | In the happy heresy of Taste and Learning, | Smite the bold friends of Unenlightenment. | The poet is the avenger of Genius, the friend of truth! | The right hand of Apollo, which from the heavens | Gives life and eternal life | With a ruinous arrow will finally | Destroy the terrible Python. | Look: he is struck by the enemy arrows, | His torch goes out, his wings are still, | He summons Ozerov to you: friends! Revenge! | Affronted taste, Learning have spread the news— | Fly at your enemies with Apollo and the Muses! | Smite the barbarians with bloody verse; | Ignorance will give way and lower its cold gaze, | An illiterate gathering of arrogant rhetoricians . . .

While the speaker refuses to don the mantle of the poetic legislator, his arguments work on a contrast between two discourses of inspiration. The first type, associated with Beseda, views art as the product of models sanctioned by reference to divine inspiration. The second position draws inspiration from figures whose aesthetic positions have stood the test of time as imitated and perfected by later generations. Such inspiration invokes rational rules of taste that must also be consistent with emotional truths. The modern is implicitly conservative, but it takes taste to discern what is true and beautiful in the traditional. Given his conclusions, it is no wonder that Pushkin at the very beginning of the poem sidelines the image of the poet as a child of Apollo.

'To Zhukovsky' is an informal pledge of allegiance to a set of writers and their literary style.⁶¹ It is an impressive declaration for a new member of Arzamas. The poem demonstrates an imitativeness that is self-aware: the poet understands that speaking in these voices constitutes a critical display of poetic credentials in a period where much poetry is made up of other people's poetry, where satire is written about other writers' satires, where originality lies in clever restatement and undercutting rather than in original observation or original feeling. It restates a commitment to poetry as craft. This poem, like 'To a Versifier Friend', makes authorial status dependent on a process of writing poetry that subordinates personal identity to an impersonal notion of aesthetic personality. For the young Pushkin, poetic existence entails openness to the literary process construed within the framework of classical invention as defined by the group.

Like European poets of the early nineteenth century, who emphatically assert their distinctiveness from ordinary hack writers, these poems put a distance between doggerel and quality poetry.⁶² But Pushkin's lines sensibly stop short of championing genius as revolutionary in both its artistic and political aims. Despite a nod in the direction of poetry as a vocation, Pushkin's 1816 epistle advances a conservative definition of poetic brilliance as a mastery of historical practice. Arguably, his fidelity to those values remained constant for the next few years in his lyric writing even while he became more adventurous and experimental as an author of narrative. The premiss at the heart of these and numerous other early works is the ascription of a central place to reason as a power of invention controlled by taste, style, and erudition.⁶³ Originality is not the primary characteristic of authorial identity, which is seen rather as a process of education and imitation. Genius is characterized by correct taste, and, while impersonal, it is always recognizable to the fellow literary connoisseur or craftsman. In 1823, the writer A. A. Bestuzhev remarked in a letter to Viazemskii that 'Pushkin was always Pushkin'. The remark was not intended entirely as praise.⁶⁴ While the consistency of talent pleased his early admirers, others would become more critical about a lack of obvious development into a more distinctive voice.

Some contemporary readers interpreted Pushkin's early poems to be statements of his attachment to a classical ideal as understood in this sense. In 1821, the little-known French grammarian Pierre Hennequin published in Moscow a mammoth manual on rhetoric and literary history. As an example of verse that was classic because of its fidelity to the classical ideal, Hennequin singled out Pushkin's 'To Zhukovsky' (indeed, the poem had long enjoyed success among

⁶¹ See V. E. Vatsuro, 'Litseiskoe tvorchestvo Pushkina', in Pushkin, *Stikhotvoreniia litseiskikh let, 1813–1817*, 396.

⁶² Andrew Bennett, *Romantic Poets and the Culture of Posterity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3.

⁶³ For instance, 'The Dreamer' ('Mechtatel', 1815), 'To an Artist' ('K zhivopistsu', 1815), 'Sleep' ('Son', 1815), 'To Sleep' ('K snu', 1816—the later 'To Morpheus', 'Morfeiu').

⁶⁴ Quoted in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii nauk, 1956), lx. 204.

readers even when circulated in manuscript copies). He praises it as exemplary because it shows how the modern poet 'studies the great masters of the art, Horace and Boileau, and puts their models to use'.⁶⁵ By the time 'To Zhukovsky' became a model in its own right, Pushkin's attitude to originality as the measure of poetic genius had become much more complex and ambitious in the context of Romanticism.

⁶⁵ Pierre Hennequin, *Cours de littérature ancienne et moderne, contenant un traité complet de poétique*, 4 vols. (Moscow: A. Semen, 1821–2), i. 327. On the popularity of the poems, see Pushkin, *Stikhotvoreniia litseiskikh let, 1813–1817*, 613.

2

Invention and Genius

Inspiration ('vdokhnovenie') is the disposition of the soul to the most vivid reception of impressions and understanding of ideas that leads to their clarification. Inspiration is necessary in poetry as in geometry.¹

(Pushkin)

The Southern exile that began in 1820 has rightly been understood as a turning point in Pushkin's creative biography. The parallels that he saw between himself and Ovid led him to meditate on poetic fates and posterity; the compatibility that he saw between himself and Byron even more productively stimulated his desire for literary innovation and experimentation, especially in the narrative poems of these years. Yet his lyric poetry, for all its diversity of topic, feeds off familiar sources while branching out into Romantic theories of the imagination.²

Over the course of the 1820s, two related understandings of invention characterize Pushkin's idea of expression. Invention will diverge from its earlier manifestation as a type of wit and capacity to imitate. Chapter 3 will look at the role of invention as a capacity to intuit a higher realm of beauty. The present chapter will focus on invention as the creative principle that regulates poetic enthusiasm consistent with the canons of taste. Like imitation, it is a key element in Pushkin's self-description of poetic talent and underpins his classical elegance. At a time when his contemporaries hailed him as a Romantic, Pushkin was drawn to the theory of creativity and poetic invention advocated by the eighteenth-century theorists Jean-François La Harpe (1739–1803) and, above all, Jean-François Marmontel (1723–99). While both La Harpe and Marmontel figured prominently on the syllabus of Pushkin's school, it is important to appreciate that their thinking on the psychology of art continued to shape his attitude to the creative faculty. It has long been a mistaken assumption that La Harpe and Marmontel can be grouped with Boileau as theorists who advocated the genre-system as the core of a classical ideal.³ Both La Harpe and Marmontel were significant for Pushkin because their theory of the classical ideal focused

¹ Pushkin, *PSS*, xi, 54 ('Otryvki iz pisem, mysli i zamechaniia', 1827).

² Annekov identifies 1823 as the year when Pushkin started to spend most of his available cash on book purchases for his library.

³ When describing the French seventeenth-century imitation of the classical inheritance (to which Russian writers of the eighteenth century looked), for the sake of consistency I shall use the term neoclassicism. Otherwise I shall refer to imitations of ancient writers or a formulation of an

on literary art as a powerful expression of sensibility, rather than on linguistic or stylistic rules. We shall see these ideas at work in Pushkin's representation of poetic enthusiasm, where the vocabularies of craft and invention serve as touchstones of poetic taste.⁴

THE ROMANTIC DEBATE

By the 1820s, classicism and Romanticism had become potent notions in the literary world as a culture of book reviewing became better established.⁵ Echoes of the French debates about Romantic aesthetic and political subversion generated discussion in Russia. Among Russian critics, Pushkin's older contemporary Petr Viazemskii, eventually one of Russia's most important literary critics, was incisive in identifying literary fashions. As Pushkin's publisher, Viazemskii had a clear polemical purpose in his 1822 review of *The Caucasian Captive* (*Kavkazskii plennik*, 1822). Viazemskii believed that individual talents demarcated turning points in literary history. Eager to put Pushkin, still in exile, back in the limelight, he used his review to inaugurate a new Romantic period led by Pushkin. In the few years that had elapsed since Zhukovsky praised his potential, Viazemskii had privately lauded Pushkin for Romantic virtues such as a sharp pictorial sense and 'power' even while admiring his classical 'accuracy'.⁶ On the strength of Pushkin's Byronic experimentation, Viazemskii argued that commercially minded responsiveness to popular taste was a further mark of Romanticism:

The appearance of the above-mentioned works [*The Prisoner of Chillon* and *The Caucasian Captive*] that we owe to the best poets of our time has one further significance: it means the success among us of Romantic poetry. At the risk of insulting the faithful followers of an old Parnassian dynasty, we have decided to use the term, which for many of us is rude and considered to be uncouth and illegal. We agree: reject the term, but recognize its existence. It is impossible not to recognize an unassailable truth that literature, like everything human, is subject to changes. Many of us will not take them to heart, but it is impossible or irrational to deny them. And now, it seems, an epoch of such transformation has begun.⁷

aesthetic based on the ancients as classicism. With reference to Academic painting (see Chapter 7) and statuary the term neoclassical is solidly entrenched.

⁴ For a review of this vocabulary, see Dmitrii Blagoi, *Masterstvo Pushkina* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1955), ch. 2, whose conclusions about Pushkin's aesthetic are very different from my own.

⁵ See William Mills Todd III, 'Periodicals in Literary Life of the Early Nineteenth Century', in Deborah A. Martinsen (ed.), *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 37–63.

⁶ The letter to Batiushkov is cited in N. V. Izmailov, 'Pushkin v perepiske i dnevnikakh sovremennikov', *VPK*, 1962 (1963), 30.

⁷ 'O "Kavkazkom plennike"', in P. A. Viazemskii, *Estetika i literaturnaia kritika* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1984), 43.

He hails Pushkin's imitations of Byron as works of original genius because his larger aim is to persuade readers that a cultural shift is under way in Russia—or possibly because his aim is to bring about that shift. Viazemskii claims to sense a transition from classicism, by which he means works of interest to the literary elite, to Romanticism, by which he means literature that can be read by the educated masses for the pleasure of its plot, descriptive detail, and naturalness. In 1824, when Viazemskii published for Pushkin a new edition of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, he replaced his preface with an invented dialogue of his own composition between a publisher and a classical-minded reviewer. Their debate sharpened the opposition between the two sides: classicism is presented in caricature as a pedantic obsession with rules that would prohibit the development of original genius, while Romanticism is feared as 'wilful anarchy destructive to the rules hallowed by antiquity and superstition'.⁸ But once they venture beyond polemical assertion, the two speakers focus on the question of how poetry moves the reader, choosing Pushkin's narrative as a case study. Both identify emotion as the goal of the work of art, but differ on the relative value each assigns to aspects of the reader's reception of the work. The Romantic advocate says that brilliant description and economy of plot grip the reader. He calls such total immersion in the motion and energy of the text a form of participation by the reader. Viazemskii's crucial move is a theoretical one because the cardinal assumption of Romantic lyric is that 'the true voice of feeling' cannot be contrived by rhetorical means since it comes from a profound unity of life and art.⁹ The classical advocate casts the dynamic of reader response as a rational application of rules by which feeling comes across through connotation and the tasteful use of figurative language. It is the application of these rules, with elegant concision, that controls the reader's response and satisfies expectation. It follows from this that the writer's skill in conceiving his topic and its expression, all synonymous with the art of invention, must within reason fulfil the expectations of the literary system.¹⁰ In effect, Viazemskii's 'Classicist' faithfully reflects the values inherent in Zhukovsky's call to Pushkin to learn his craft. For this speaker, the Romantic writer errs in allowing too much liberty to the reader's unclear imagination. On a secondary note, both sides also turn to the issue of imitation and originality seen in terms of fidelity to native tradition. The 'Classicist' argues that writers ought to maintain the tested rules of poetic systems because history sanctions their suitability and attests their compatibility with the national properties of language. The 'Romantic' counters by

⁸ P. A. Viazemskii, 'V mesto predisloviia k *Bakhchisaraiskomu fontanu*. Razgovor mezhdu izdatelem i klassikom s Vyborgskoi storony ili s Vasil'evskogo ostrova', in Viazemskii, *Estetika*, 50.

⁹ See Geoffrey Hartman, 'Romanticism and Anti-Selfconsciousness', in *Beyond Formalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 302–3.

¹⁰ See briefly P. W. K. Stone, *The Art of Poetry, 1750–1820: Theories of Poetic Composition and Style in the Late Neo-classic and Early Romantic Periods* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1967), 64–77.

pointing out that Lomonosov, the great legislator of Russian neoclassicism, was an innovator who based his rules of prosody and style on German models. This speaker goes so far as to call Karamzin's more recent reforms to literary style manifestations of Romanticism.

Viazemskii's tendentious argument makes clear how alive the classical trend remained in attempts to define Romanticism. For this reason, the article also demonstrates the degree to which both sides actually spoke a common aesthetic language. For while the 'Romantic' and 'Classicist' remain unreconciled on questions of aesthetic psychology, they are equally concerned with originality as the goal. The 'Classicist' holds that the source of originality in art is invention. The 'Romantic' sees literary history as a record of ceaseless adaptation, but nonetheless accepts that writers must employ the 'correct language' of Lomonosov and Sumarokov even as they appeal more forcefully to the imagination of their readership. True to Viazemskii's polemical purpose, both of his articles vigorously turn the Pushkin of 1824 into a Romantic revolutionary.

From the mid-1820s, depending on the literary and political orientation of reviewers, the label stuck.¹¹ The critic Ivan Kireevskii followed Viazemskii in periodizing Pushkin's career and marking the Southern narrative poems as transitions to Romanticism and artistic maturity.¹² It is no wonder that Pushkin was circumspect in approaching the issue. When invited to pin his colours to the mast and define Romanticism, in a note 'About Classical and Romantic Poetry' Pushkin resorted to the opposition between the classical and the Romantic loosely understood as the replacement of tradition by a search for the new.¹³ His conclusions were as open-ended as Viazemskii's sounded definitive. Two explanations of this can be given. First, Pushkin viewed literary history as a process of ongoing experimentation, and was uncertain about marking a watershed without the advantage of historical perspective. And, secondly, the classic/Romantic binary opposition bore little real correlation to his own lyric identity because his practice reflected the blurring of boundaries that was occurring.¹⁴ This is nowhere more the case than in poems about poetry or beauty which negotiate a

¹¹ For a contemporary chronicle of the debate between classicists and Romantics, see V. K. Kiukhel'becker, 'Obzrenie rossiiskoi slovesnosti 1824 g.', in *Literaturnye portfel'i. Vremia Pushkina* (Petrograd: Atenei, 1923; often reprinted), 72–9.

¹² See his 'Obzrenie russkoi slovesnosti za 1829 g.', in I. V. Kireevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii I. V. Kireevskogo*, ed. M. Gershenzon, 2 vols. (Moscow: Tip. Imp. Moskovskogo universiteta, 1910–11), i. 15.

¹³ Pushkin, *PSS*, xi. 36–8 ('O poezii klassicheskoi i romanticheskoi', 1825). For a helpful discussion of this essay and Pushkin's use of the term Romantic, see John Mersereau, Jr., 'Pushkin's Concept of Romanticism', *Studies in Romanticism*, 3: 1 (1963), 23–41, which, however, neglects the persistence of classicism (not to be confused with the archaism supported by opposing literary groups). For an overview of the scholarship on this question, with particular attention to the issue of genre, see Boris Gasparov, 'Pushkin and Romanticism', in David M. Bethea (ed.), *The Wisconsin Handbook to Pushkin* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 537–67.

¹⁴ Pushkin considered the problem of terminology in a letter to Viazemskii. See Pushkin, *PSS*, xiii, nos. 63 and 63 (a), pp. 73–4, 380–1.

tension between poetic inspiration as a product of craft and labour, and instinct and genius.

POETIC THEORY AND THE AESTHETIC OF INVENTION AND INSPIRATION

Pushkin is a writer who has strayed from the eighteenth century into our era.¹⁵

(A. A. Bestuzhev)

Writing about Pushkin's classical style tends to focus on a set of stylistic choices, described linguistically and syntactically. Less attention has been paid to aesthetic factors that support Pushkin's election of a poetic manner in which invention thrives and the power of the imagination is held in check. In the 1820s, when Pushkin stocked his library with more recent editions of Boileau and La Harpe, the element of creative psychology in French aesthetics must have struck him as a contrast to the Anglo-German readings about the creative imagination that were opening a new dimension to him. In French writers he also recovered the aesthetic sources that were most influential in the development of Russian classicism. He returned to La Harpe not to refresh his memory of the rules of style, and not even as a source of poetic examples, but with an interest in the connection between literary systems and the psychology of creativity.¹⁶ For Pushkin the basis of taste was originally in the interrelation of good usage and the rules of expressiveness that gave the writer power over the reader's emotions. As Pushkin's reading kept pace with the times, the language of aesthetics converged with the language of epistemology. A large number of the works, whatever their main purpose as literary history or journalistic criticism, pressed arguments by examining the affect of the literary work not as a product of style, but rather as the result of mental operations of a certain type, where imagination is the most discussed term.

Pushkin's entry points to theories of the classical style were multiple via imitation, literary debate, critical writing, and pedagogical literature. The commentaries published in the first volume of the new Academy Edition of Pushkin reveal the extent of his borrowing from a host of French writers from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, from Clément Marot and Jean Racine, Jean-Baptiste Gresset, Louis Racine, and Marmontel. These affiliations are more than textbook exercises and represent an active engagement with the classical style through the mastery of imitation. Poetics, as taught in Russian academies in the early

¹⁵ Quoted in B. S. Meilakh, *Pushkin i ego epokha* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1958), 212.

¹⁶ Modzalevskii, *Biblioteka A. S. Pushkina*, 266–7.

nineteenth century, meant rhetoric and scholastic logic.¹⁷ But at the Lycée in Tsarskoe Selo, the curriculum was designed on French models and the textbook compiled in Russian by Pushkin's teacher perpetuated the approach.¹⁸

In general, classicism as a subject of study attracts less interest now than when René Bray wrote his *Formation de la doctrine classique* (1927), which was influential from the 1950s. The best recent discussions of the subject, however, tend to suggest a plurality of classicisms rather than looking at 'Classicism' as a monolithic concept.¹⁹ It is also true to say that when scholars have discussed French neoclassicism in effect they have in mind the decade of the 1670s. Boileau casts a long shadow over the French eighteenth century, but classical theory evolved considerably in that period, especially in the wake of the abbé Dubos's influential *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (1719), which reflected the rise of empiricism, bringing feeling and sentiment into literary discourse. Although typically grouped with neoclassical rule-givers, Marmontel and La Harpe had new lessons to teach. Throughout the 1820s, French literature exhibited a steady resistance to Romantic poetic theory. Classicism as a doctrine was not at all static because its aesthetic philosophy absorbed new thinking about the workings of sensibility and the imagination.

As founder and director of the Lycée in Paris, La Harpe created an ideal venue in which to promote his belief in the classical style, which he enshrined in his influential manual and literary history, the *Lycée, ou Cours de la littérature*.²⁰ He believed that the rules do not curb genius because they guide it, whereas inspiration on its own is untutored emotion and, therefore, unreliable. This set his views somewhat in tension with those of Marmontel who believed that literary originality was possible outside the strict application of rules of genre and prosody, provided the writer succeeded in convincingly capturing universal emotion. An ally of Diderot, Buffon, and Grimm, Marmontel collected his articles on literary theory and aesthetics in two important books, the *Poétique française* (1763) and *Éléments de la littérature* (1818–19).²¹ La Harpe's textbooks and Marmontel's collected writings put theories of the imagination and questions of expressivity at the heart of their critical views on the canon and in their writing manuals.²² In 1819 or thereabouts, at a time usually marked

¹⁷ See V. P. Vomperskii, *Ritoriki v Rossii XVII–XVIII* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988).

¹⁸ N. F. Koshanskii, *Ruchnaia kniga drevnei klassicheskoi slovesnosti*, 2 vols. (St Petersburg: Tip. V. Pavil'shchikova, 1816–17).

¹⁹ See Jean-Charles Darmon and Michel Delon, *Classicismes XVII^e–XVIII^e siècle*, ii: *Histoire de la France littéraire* (Paris: PUF, 2006), 1–38.

²⁰ On his career and doctrine, see Christopher Todd, *Voltaire's Disciple: Jean-François de La Harpe* (London: MHRA, 1972).

²¹ See Michael Cardy, *The Literary Doctrines of Marmontel* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1982).

²² The editions recorded in Pushkin's library were Jean-François La Harpe, *Lycée, ou Cours de littérature ancienne et moderne* (Paris: Didier, 1834) [Modz. 1063]; *Ceuvres diverses de La Harpe*, 16 vols. (Paris: P. Dupont, 1820–6) [Modz. 1064]; *Ceuvres de La Harpe* (Paris: Verdier, 1820) [Modz. 1065]; Jean-François Marmontel, *Ceuvres complètes de Marmontel*, 18 vols. (Paris: Verdier, 1818–19) [Modz. 1136]; *Ceuvres posthumes de Marmontel* (Paris, 1820) [Modz. 1137].

as the beginning of the Byronic phase of his Romanticism, Pushkin acquired a set of Marmontel's writings containing his *Essai sur le goût*, and the literary manual *Éléments de la littérature*.²³ Alongside these volumes could also be found a substantial collection of La Harpe's writings, including an abridged version of the *Lycée, ou Cours de la littérature*, a staple of late Enlightenment and early Romantic poetics already familiar to Pushkin from school. Even as he turned to Byron, his continuing interest in French classical theory existed in a dialectical relation to other sources.²⁴ It is not the case that other more explicitly 'modern' schools were inaccessible. We shall see in Chapter 4 that Pushkin's knowledge of the poets and poetics of the Lake School, supplemented by his reading of Sainte-Beuve, William Hazlitt, and criticism printed in English literary journals, coalesced with Anglo-German theories of the imagination that guided his attitude to the creative imagination. But the classical aesthetic, as redefined by La Harpe and Marmontel, remained Pushkin's primary touchstone. For Pushkin, the ongoing relevance of both La Harpe and Marmontel as theorists is attested in the editions of their works that he acquired for his library and read in the 1820s. Their influence on Pushkin can be measured not only in terms of his assimilation of the explicit rules of the classical style, but in the much larger, if harder to describe area of literary sensibility, where invention and originality, feeling and imagination, remain fundamental points of reference and discussion.²⁵

Defining the influence of Marmontel and La Harpe narrowly in prescriptive terms is inappropriate for literature in an age of sensibility.²⁶ For their own period, both La Harpe and Marmontel represented modernizing restatements of the classical ideal. The importance of expressivity rather than the correct application of rules gave this conservative poetics continued relevance. Such attention as has been paid to this area of Pushkin's thought invariably centres on La Harpe, rightly identifying his famous *Cours* as the source of Pushkin's knowledge of classical rules and the notion of a correct poetics based on the strict observance of genre. Observing the rules of good taste allowed for

²³ On Marmontel's authority among Russian writers of the previous generation, see Jean Breuillard, 'La Russie', in Jacques Wagner (ed.), *Marmontel: un intellectuel exemplaire au siècle des lumières* (Paris: Mille Sources, 2003), 124–39. The impact of La Harpe and especially Marmontel on one of the leading poets of the older generation and a mentor is carefully studied in the first chapter ('V. A. Zhukovskii—chitateľ "elementov literaturnykh Marmontelia") of the catalogue of V. A. Zhukovsky's library. Zhukovsky found both treatises valuable guides to his work as a practising translator of European poetry, but also summations of eighteenth-century poetics.

²⁴ See André Monnier, 'Puškin, "Fils prodigue transfiguré" ou "Orgue vivant des dieux"', *Revue des études slaves*, 68 (1996), 414.

²⁵ For an example of this critical tendency, see P. R. Zaborov, *Russkaia literatura i Vol'ter. XVIII-pervaia tret' XIX-ogo veka* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1978), 174–81. For an inventory of poetic phrases in Pushkin that derive from examples cited in La Harpe, see V. N. Toporov, 'Eshche raz o sviazakh Pushkina s frantsuzskoi literaturoi (Lagarp-Bualo-Ronsar)', *Russian Literature*, 22 (1987), 379–446.

²⁶ See Todd, *Voltaire's Disciple*, esp. ch. 8; and Andrew Hunwick, *La Critique littéraire de Jean-François de La Harpe (1739–1803)* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1977), 51–2.

historical change and flexibility rather than a narrow application of any system. La Harpe's teachings retained interest because his prescriptions on genre encompassed notions of taste and the workings of affect. Both theorists formulated their theory of classicism less in terms of genre than as a poetics of expressiveness; and the aim of their writings was to advocate a view of psychology first and then to guide writers on properly fulfilling the emotional demands of literature.

La Harpe's *Lycée* advocated a theory of invention and imagination that permeated the verse treatises of acolytes that also earned their place in Pushkin's reading such as Delille's *L'Imagination* (1806), which reinforced this sense of the imagination as a recreative and mimetic faculty to be kept 'on a leash'.²⁷ The imagination that Diderot exceptionally glorified as the chief faculty of the poet was subordinated in most eighteenth-century French lyric to the more precisely defined invention, a faculty celebrated famously by André Chénier in his poem 'L'Invention' (1787).²⁸ The abbé Morellet, a French academician whose historical work was of interest to Pushkin, praised La Harpe for assembling 'all the riches of the human spirit ('esprit')', and especially for popularizing Aristotle's *Poetics* and Longinus' *Treatise on the Sublime*.²⁹ Instruction in 'esprit', therefore, was not just a matter of teaching rules, but embodying in rules an approach to creativity. In the *Tableau de la littérature française au dix-huitième siècle*, a tendentious literary history that Pushkin read, Prosper Barante paid particular tribute to Marmontel's contribution to aesthetic discourse.³⁰ Barante praises Marmontel for exploring methodically the connection between form and feeling, and for judging literary texts not on their adherence to rules but for the vivid impressions and emotions that they evoke as circumscribed by good taste. Imagination, in Barante's analysis of Marmontel, is essentially the power to create vivid impressions by knowing how to manipulate the emotions of the reader.³¹ Imagination can only be effective in producing pleasure and fear where a command of good style coordinates effective prosody and selection of images. In his writings, Marmontel regularly states his conviction that this definition of literature in its pathetic function is timeless and irreplaceable. What the writer commands is 'the art of astonishing the imagination, elevating the spirits, moving souls, exciting and soothing passions', and this is possible, now as earlier in the history of art, because 'the human heart is practically the same now as it was in the time of Sophocles and Demosthenes'.³² In his theory, imagination is not

²⁷ See Michel Delon (ed.), *Anthologie de la poésie française du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 19.

²⁸ See Margaret Gilman, *The Idea of Poetry in France from Houdar de La Motte to Baudelaire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), 126, 137.

²⁹ Abbé Morellet, *Mélanges de littérature et de philosophie du XVIII^e siècle*, 4 vols. (Paris: Vve Lepetit 1818), i, 99 [Modz. 1192].

³⁰ Prosper Barante, *Tableau de la littérature française au dix-huitième siècle* (Paris, 1832), 277–9 [Modz. 575]. Pushkin refers positively to Barante in his critical articles.

³¹ *Ibid.* 279.

³² Jean-François Marmontel, *Œuvres complètes*, xii, 25.

the capacity to move the reader directly. It is closer to the rhetorical concept of invention as the ability to choose the right form of expression that, as it happens, will go straight to the mind and the heart of the reader by detecting and then directing feelings that are present. By using simple expression and language, invention sets into motion 'a great thought, a great character, a pathetic situation, a sublime and true sentiment, a movement of passion that engages because of its vehemence and devastates because of its energy'.³³ Here the power of the imagination belongs almost entirely to the mind of the reader even to the point where the reader is endowed with a certain creative genius if pushed to see new things. As Marmontel writes:

This is what we call the faculty of the soul that renders things present to the thought; it presupposes vivid and strong apprehension in the understanding, and the quickest facility in reproducing what it has received. When the imagination only retraces the things that have struck its senses it differs from memory only by the liveliness of its tints. When from the collected features that have been gathered by memory, the imagination creates its pictures, the collection of which has no model in nature, then it becomes creative, and that is when it belongs to genius.³⁴

At the end of this passage, Marmontel startlingly refers to the 'creative imagination' as the production of new combinations. The phrase evokes a mechanistic definition of human psychology that had such a pervasive impact on French aesthetic theory from the second half of the Enlightenment. In his psychology, sensibility is a machine-like property capable of only a certain limited number of combinations that can be predictably triggered. Genius as a creative power does not, he states, need to feel passions in order to represent them. If anything, it means a mastery of the heart against the stimulus of the passions. In an extraordinary passage in the *Éléments de la littérature*, he asserts that

a poem is a structure of which all the facets ought to contribute to its solidity, to the beauty of the entirety; or indeed it is a machine in which everything must be combined for the sake of producing a common movement. The best-worked component only has value insofar as it is an essential piece of the machine, and in that it fulfils precisely its place and its end.³⁵

Looked at in the broader perspective of modern critical theory, Marmontel's theory of imagination formulates a theory of reader response based on assumptions about the predictability of feeling. The value of the formally perfect work lies in the absolute clarity with which it activates a response.³⁶ In his concept, the poet can assume that certain expressions, far more than genres, will automatically

³³ Marmontel, *Poétique française*, 285.

³⁴ Marmontel, *Ceuvres complètes*, xiv. 125–6 (*Éléments de la littérature*, vol. iii). (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 1.)

³⁵ Ibid. 176. (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 2.)

³⁶ La Harpe, *Lycée*, i, pp. xv–xxi; on the neoclassical view that great art has universal affect, see Alain Génétiot, *Le Classicisme* (Paris: PUF, 2005), 353–7. According to Stone, *The Art of Poetry*, in

trigger emotions and a pattern of response because they bring the reader face to face with recognizable truths. Art, however, is not a mirror to inner reality, for that mirror is the imagination of the reader.³⁷ Similarly, La Harpe wrote that genius was nothing other than 'a natural aptitude, what one might call talent, in the most restrained sense. It signifies no idea of pre-eminence.'³⁸ Invention, which combines psychological perception and calculated wording, is the definitive poetic talent. Imagination, like memory, is relegated to being reactive and secondary.

What new light does a description of this aesthetic shed on texts that are in other terms well understood? One recurrent claim of Pushkin scholarship is that genre is the main source of innovation in his œuvre.³⁹ The basis of this view lies partly in the strict equation, common in Pushkin studies, of classicism with a code of rules. For contemporary theorists, and for Pushkin's own critics, the violation of the genre-system was clearly not an acceptable path to originality. Throughout his lyric poetry, Pushkin's approach to genre is flexible but essentially correct and formally conservative. Contemporary readers understood and felt originality to be a function of expressivity, defined as the achievement of a personal voice through the moving application of a correct style to new emotional situations.⁴⁰ For the classical theorists whom Pushkin continued to read and value, originality remained a matter of expressivity and the elegant attainment of feeling through lightly applied craftsmanship. Insofar as genius and talent impress through competence, and imagination impresses through the agreeable representation of ideas that compel the reader's emotions, classical theory of expression ascribed importance to literary competence or craft. Style defines voice but voice does not define style. Individuality is thought to accrue through the brilliance of execution or, as Marmontel explained it when praising Boileau, through colour, harmony, and elegance.⁴¹ The critic who wrote that 'a poem is a machine in which everything must be combined in order to produce a single movement' saw mechanical excellence as the attainment of a formal perfection that, while full of pleasing effect in itself, was most successful virtually when least

the late eighteenth century 'vivacity has to do with the representation of clear, life-like images, and it would seem to be a principle of invention rather than of style' (p. 55).

³⁷ See David Bleich, 'Epistemological Assumptions in the Study of Response', in Jane P. Tompkins (ed.), *Reader-Response Criticism from Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 134–63.

³⁸ La Harpe, *Lycée*, i, p. xxv.

³⁹ For example V. A. Grekhnev, *Mir Pushkinskoi liriki* (Nizhni Novgorod: Izd-vo Nizhni Novgorod, 1994). But even Grekhnev in his chapter on the 'Anthology Epigrams' insists too hard that Pushkin's miniatures are to be understood primarily as displays of his skill in refreshing an ancient genre, when in fact they raise much more complex issues about the choices which poets and artists face between being imitators and innovators, objectifying mirrors to an ideal or subjective creators.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Marmontel, *Poétique française* (Paris: Chez Lesclapart, 1767), 251.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

noticed because least intrusive. Marmontel proposes that passion and correctness produce originality:

The true legislators of the arts are those who go back to the principles of things after studying in man and in nature and in the arts themselves the connection of objects and the soul, and the sense and impression of pleasure and pain that result from these connections; who after drawing from the experience from all the ages, above all the enlightened ages, the conclusions that determine the most certain procedures and the most powerful means, and the effects that are the most consistent, give these conclusions as rules without pretending that genius should submit to them slavishly without the right to withdraw at any point should it feel that they are too cumbersome or hinder it. These are the means to do well that one recommends, while at the same time allowing one to do better; he alone is mistaken who does worse when ignoring the rules; and as there is nothing more common than a work that is regular and bad it is possible, albeit entirely unusual, to produce one that is universally pleasing while being against and in spite of the rules . . . It has been said that a few lines sketched by a man of genius are more useful to talent than the methods outlined by cold theorists. Nothing could be truer when it comes to exciting and elevating the soul. But the most striking models only throw their light on one point; those of the rules are more general, and illuminate the entire path: one should have neither a presumptuous contempt nor servile and superstitious respect for the rules that have been elaborated. Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian for the orators; Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, and Boileau for the poets are the guides that even genius itself should not disdain to follow; but in order to walk with a more certain step he should not cease to walk with a free step.⁴²

Similarly, La Harpe's definition of genius is a vintage statement of the classical aesthetic. The genius combines perceptiveness about nature and the capacity to imitate nature. The business of the genius is to observe the human heart, analyse it, and then through art to move the viewer or reader by accessing those emotions. The psychology of the creative mind is both intuitive and imitative. The imitative propensity of the artist is the gift and limit of the imagination: 'Every imagination in effect captivates our imagination, which is nothing more than the faculty of representing to ourselves things as though they were present, and it is always a pleasure for one to compare the images that art presents to us with those that

⁴² Marmontel, *Ceuvres complètes*, xv. 204–5 (*Éléments de la littérature*, vol. iv). This passage comes from a page which is not cut in Pushkin's set. It is quoted here, however, as a convenient summation of a set of ideas recurrent in the *Éléments*. Much of the extract parallels points made in the essay on 'Harmonie du style' (xiv. 9–38), specifically on page 27 where Marmontel states 'il faut avouer qu'il est difficile de donner des règles au sentiment. Toutefois les principes de l'harmonie du style doivent être dans la nature; chaque pensée a son étendue, chaque image son caractère, chaque mouvement de l'âme son degré de force et de rapidité.' He then goes on to give a practical demonstration by analysing the impact of syntactic choices on the feelings of the reader. For further passages that have a bearing on Pushkin's knowledge of classical reader-response theory, see in Marmontel the discussion of historiography, xiv. 61–72; 'Illusion', pp. 95–8, on how narrative poetry and drama make thoughts visible; and 'Interêt', pp. 145–54, which treat the 'mouvements du style' and the appropriate means of animating reader-response. (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 3.)

we already have in the mind.’⁴³ What is divine about the poet, and what makes him the child of Apollo and the Muses worthy of being called a prophet, is, according to La Harpe, nothing more than this heightened receptivity to human emotion and correspondingly an inspired sense of how to evoke and express that emotion. For that reason La Harpe judges severely the *furor poeticus* of poet-prophets whose claim to genius he mocks as ‘coarse drivellers in rhymed quips’.⁴⁴ In his view, the mark of the lyric genius is not ‘the most foolish explosions of the most stupid *amour-propre*’, but rather, as with Marmontel, a gift for the clear exposition, where proportion is perfectly observed, where figures of speech are appropriately used, where the enthusiasm of passion remains within the bounds of taste, where emotions that are already in the soul and mind of the addressee now become ‘as if present’.⁴⁵ In a way that may contradict the tendency to equate imagination with liberty, La Harpe nonetheless puts the imagination at the centre of his theory of style and expressivity, but such imagination is permissible only if it does not exceed certain limits. Genius therefore is the power of invention, understood as cleverness at staying within the rules and bounds while contriving formal variation in expressing those eternal classical verities. For La Harpe, a certain style is important because it vouchsafes the correct imitation of reality that should be the goal of a rational system, thereby ensuring universal intelligibility.⁴⁶ The imagination is only dangerous if, unconstrained by these rational guidelines, it leads to subjectivity that impedes mimesis and results in obscure visions.⁴⁷ Yet adherence alone to rules of prosody and genre guarantees only workmanship but not art, which is the result of the inspired application of the rules. Rules concerning diction and genre were in themselves only of relative value.

These precepts, which the young Pushkin had mastered, did not strike him as retrograde on reading them a decade later in the 1820s even as other writings clearly opened his mind to the possibility of tapping the power of the imagination. If we read the pages that Pushkin is known to have cut in these volumes, it is clear that he was selective and interested above all in the relation between a style defined, on the one hand, by traditional conservative formal properties, and, on the other hand, a style that at the same time possessed genius and originality. What was it for Marmontel (even more than La Harpe) that defined the poet as opposed to the versifier? We have seen that Marmontel is a

⁴³ La Harpe, *Lycée*, i. 11.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, xii. 337 (‘de grossières barbouilles dans les boutades rimées’).

⁴⁵ For an interesting parallel in English literature of the eighteenth century, see Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 54–7. In the Russian case, however, fears of enthusiasm as disruptive do not reproduce British fears of Dissent.

⁴⁶ La Harpe, *Lycée*, i. 15–20.

⁴⁷ The English Fancy, construed by Romantic theorists as a potentially subversive, unregulated process of association, would simply be viewed by French theorists as a form of madness. Imagination is a heightened application of invention, and invention has none of the randomness associated with Fancy. See Marmontel, *Éléments de littérature*, xii. 1–77 (‘Essai sur le goût’).

universalist in his belief that human psychology and physiology are a constant through space and history, a fact that in his mind guarantees certain fixed truths and values in human nature.

For the moment let us suppose that at long intervals, either in time or in space, for example, at distances of two thousand years or two thousand miles, an inclination for action is communicated and spread and that, despite differences in the usages of manners, customs; even despite the diversity of climates and their influence on the character of peoples, this taste is almost universally accepted as being good taste. Nothing will be more decisive and indubitable than this unanimous testimony. . . . There is then only one supreme judge, one judge who decides on taste, without appeal. That is nature. Fortunately almost everything is submitted to this arbiter.⁴⁸

At the same time, he is a relativist in admitting that taste is the result of a historical process contingent on the values of a given society, subjected to the pressures of climate and political economy; and yet in his view all societies ultimately, whatever the surface variations that distinguish their views of taste, will within their own conventions give priority to art that is able to engage the emotions. For Marmontel, genius is the ability to make out of the literary text a record of lived feeling so powerful that through an extraordinary bond the writer shapes the feelings and soul of the reader into his own. The chapter on the 'Mouvement du style' is one of the most interesting in Marmontel's manual (acquired by Pushkin in the 1819 edition) and an important statement of the classical theory of expressivity:

Montaigne says of the soul, 'Agitation is its life and grace'. The same is true of his style: his style could hardly be in motion if this motion were not the analogue to that of the soul. The turns of expression that render the action of the soul are those that the rhetoricians have called figures of thought. Indeed the action of the soul can be imagined in the image of the directions that follow the movement of the body. . . . Either the soul rises or it declines; either it leaps forward or it turns in on itself; or ignorant about which movements to follow it heads in all directions, flailing and irresolute; or in its most violent agitation and blocked by obstacles to any action, it turns on itself like a top, like a fiery globe spinning on its axis. To the movement of the soul that rises correspond all the transports of admiration, of joy, of enthusiasm, of exclamation, of imprecation, of ardent and impassioned wishes, of rebellion against heaven, indignation that excites pride, insolence, wickedness, the abuse of power. To the movement of the soul that declines correspond all laments, all humble prayers, discouragement, repentance, everything that begs for grace or pity. To the movement of the soul that leaps forward and outside itself correspond impatient desire, a lively and emphatic reaction, a reproach, a threat, an insult, anger and indignation, decisiveness and audacity, all the actions of a firm and decided will that is impetuous and violent, whether it is in a battle against obstacles, or whether it creates obstacles to antagonistic activities. To the soul that is turned in on itself correspond surprise mingled with terror, disgust and shame, fear and remorse, everything

⁴⁸ Marmontel, *Œuvres complètes*, xii. 3–4 (*Éléments de la littérature*, vol. i). (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 4.)

that suppresses or reverses certainty, the inclination, the compulsion of the will. To the situation of the soul that wavers correspond doubt, indecision, disquiet and perplexity, the balancing of ideas and the battle of the sentiments.⁴⁹

Given this aesthetic, we might consider how shifting the emphasis from rules to affect alters our description of the emotional dynamic of works that have been cited as the high points of Pushkin's Romantic creation. The narrative poems of Pushkin's Southern period, from the *The Caucasian Captive* to the *Gypsies* (*Tsygany*, 1824), imitate Byron's Eastern poems only up to a point. In these rewritings of the master Byronic texts, from *The Corsair* to *Childe Harold*, Pushkin's poems are formally and thematically highly condensed by comparison with Byron's luxurious description and more consecutive plotting. While their stories are often similar in outline, Pushkin increases theatrical dialogue, reduces the role of the narrator, increasingly pares down local colour and exotic detail, and, particularly in the *Gypsies*, reduces the actual drama to a single moment because tension mounts through psychological portraiture of the characters. In discussing the Southern poems, scholars have fruitfully applied the Formalist language of defamiliarization. In this analysis Pushkin manages to fragment his Byronic models and yet succeeds because his readers possess a literary competence that makes, in Barthes's term, these texts 'lisible'.⁵⁰ Such assumptions allow Pushkin to be economical with descriptions, characterization, and plotting because the mind of the reader supplies them independently, leaving one free to focus on the play of emotions. In this Formalist description, departures from the standard practice of a genre convey shifts in meaning and also convey originality. This is undoubtedly right, yet when seen in terms of contemporary aesthetics, also contains a contradiction. According to the Formalist theory of defamiliarization, such rewriting ought to enhance appreciation of the work as art by stripping away used devices and creating the impression that the new work of art is mimetically closer to the truth, more realistic because the writer is imitating reality and not art. But if those passions are hardly sketched in any greater depth in these poems and are simply depicted more starkly here, why are they so gripping? When seen from Pushkin's own contemporary viewpoint, the answer may be that Pushkin assumed that the simple representation of emotions, pared down to the stark drama of love, jealousy, hate, and murder,

⁴⁹ Marmontel, *Œuvres complètes*, xiv. 303–4. As was the case with the text on p. 44, this passage, from an uncut page, usefully distils ideas found in many other articles read by Pushkin. For concrete examples see the latter part of the essay on 'Epic' (xiii. 377–9), which treats the impact of description on the emotions of the reader and spectator, observing that 'les poètes doivent supposer tous les détails qui n'ont rien d'intéressant et auxquels la réflexion du lecteur peut suppléer sans peine'. Of additional relevance are the entries on 'Esquisse' (pp. 380–3), 'Déclamation oratoire' (pp. 2–9), which analyses the impact of voice on the emotions of listeners; and the discussion of prosody and sound (xiv. 9–39), where Marmontel uses mechanistic language to identify how sound alters 'les mouvements combinés' of the body's organs. (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 5.)

⁵⁰ See M. Frenkel, 'Pushkin's Byronic Apprenticeship: A Problem in Cultural Syncretism', *Russian Review*, 53: 3 (1994), 382–98.

was effective because they are the ‘universal movements of the soul’ of which Marmontel speaks, realigning the affect of his most Romantic poems with an earlier understanding of expressiveness. As an imitator of Byron, Pushkin’s work lay entirely in augmenting expressivity rather than in the recombination of sub-genres in order to make a statement about his originality. The power of his Byronic narratives may lie in their closeness to classical drama rather than to a Byronic model, and the impetus for this achievement comes from the model of reader response that Pushkin found in these theorists.

INSPIRATION

Poetry is simply my craft, a branch of honest industry that guarantees my livelihood and domestic independence.⁵¹

(Pushkin)

From 1826, Pushkin began to position himself as a poet of imagination elevated by a divine afflatus. But he continued to see a dynamic element in classicism and to explore the relation between the two theories of inspiration. We shall see that certain poems, such as ‘To the Sea’ (‘K moriu’, 1824), ‘Conversation between a Bookseller and a Poet’ (‘Razgovor knigoprodavtsa s poetom’, 1824), and ‘The Prophet’ (‘Prorok’, 1826), demonstrate the attraction Pushkin felt to an alternative view of creative talent, what Leslie Brisman calls the ‘romantic or idealized origin [that] frees the writer from “following” anyone and impels him to leap over the grounds of individuality’.⁵² We see the uncertainty of Pushkin’s aesthetic sense played out in poems that represent inspiration either as a creative process commensurate with the poet’s sense of style and in equilibrium with his psyche; or troubling and disruptive because fundamentally inexplicable. It is a measure of Pushkin’s inquisitiveness and self-awareness that poems composed to describe the first type identify how illusory the model of control is in practice, and what price the poet pays for seeming to remain classical rather than visionary.

Invention is not synonymous merely with labour or craft. Within its own terms it puts the imagination to work. In a number of poems Pushkin broaches such fundamental issues as the distinction between the associative model of inspiration, by which he means to illustrate the inner movement of the mind trained in poetic craft to guide ideas, and inspiration associated with the visionary imagination in which expressive resources come from outside the poet. Over the 1820s Pushkin will be increasingly in sympathy with the notion of poetic

⁵¹ Pushkin, *PSS*, xiii, no. 83, p. 93 (22 May 1824).

⁵² Leslie Brisman, *Romantic Origins* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 1978), 14.

mystery and genius as highly individual, the ‘mystery of poetry’ as Viazemskii called it. Yet we see Pushkin stop short of surrendering invention (understood as reason with an associative power akin to a limited type of fancy) as the primary creative mechanism to imagination and subjectivity. Raised on the literary system of Boileau, La Harpe, and Marmontel, Pushkin accepted the terms on which invention regulated poetic enthusiasm. Through inspiration, the poet acquired superhuman (rather than supernatural or divine) powers of expression, consonant with his skill, but only more prodigious in their application to representing his vision. Inspiration of this type, reflecting a rationally conceived model of creativity, eliminates the personal and individual in favour of universal emotions. The theorists whom Pushkin continued to follow in the 1820s agreed that literary control kicked in exactly at the moment when the poet felt least in control, giving perfect expression to new ideas and implementing poetic skill. Even Victor Hugo, who in the public perception of the 1830s epitomized the idea of poet as divine genius, asserted that the poet ‘could not forsake his duties, could not fail to take account of the inventor, of the artist, of the administration of his ideas. However free the imagination is, and no matter the legitimacy of its independence, it could not do without the control of reason.’⁵³ Until the mid-1820s, the meaning of originality and inspiration remained within the bounds set for Pushkin by his education, but was open to the questioning characteristic of French Romanticism. Timothy Clark has noted that ‘Romantic conceptions of inspiration often wrestle with the most intractable feature of the archaic notion—that writers have most authority when they least know what they are doing.’⁵⁴ The result was a curiosity about the sources of inspiration, which became an almost inescapable topic in publications of the period, cropping up sometimes in unexpected places like editions of classic works that Pushkin owned. The relation between inspiration and literary decorum became a key criterion of taste for French theorists. In his introduction to an edition of Pascal’s *Provincial Letters* published in 1818, the Catholic writer and literary historian Abel Villemain expressed the view that when ‘the great interests of the nation and of liberty disappear from public existence’, it is the inner emotions of the soul that resurface as a focal point.⁵⁵ At the same time, good taste (‘le bon goût’), a disdain for inflated rhetoric, and a false style, are prized once again.⁵⁶ But while convincing expressions of inspiration were acknowledged as a necessary bona fide in a lyric poem, there was also disunity and inconsistency among poets who preserved

⁵³ Gustav Planche, *Portraits littéraires* (Paris: Werdet, 1836), 247 [Modz. 1266]. See Hugo’s *Préface* to the 1824 edition of his collection *Les Orientales* (1829) where he declared the imaginative autonomy of the artist [Modz. 1011, the 1829 edition]. By 1830, Hugo, like the other members of his circle, had advocated a more social role for the artist.

⁵⁴ Timothy Clark, *The Theory of Inspiration* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 3.

⁵⁵ Blaise Pascal, *Lettres écrites à un Provincial . . . précédées d’une notice sur Pascal considéré comme écrivain et comme moraliste* (Paris, 1818), p. vi [Modz. 1247].

⁵⁶ See Albert Cassange, *La Théorie de l’art pour l’art en France chez les derniers romantiques et les premiers réalistes* (Paris: L. Dorbon, 1959), 406–13.

a classically pure style while celebrating poetic genius as an irrational, divine madness unbound by rules.⁵⁷ Among Pushkin's preferred contemporary poets, Victor Hugo argued that the manifestation of spontaneous genius was part of the essence of art, independent of all rules determined by an external authority. In his view, the mere observance of rules was insufficient to guarantee artistic genius. He denigrated 'writers without inspiration and energy who make use of their pen much as the tailor uses his needle, and regularly produce verses midday till two o'clock, and turn to prose for a little while from two o'clock' as Hugo put in the *Le Globe* of 1825.⁵⁸ Exaltation rather than worldliness, inspiration rather than work, mystery rather than reason mark out the true genius. Alfred de Vigny's *Stello*, the eponymous hero of a novel admired by Pushkin, declared that the mission of the poet was to produce works only at the moment when he hears 'a secret power, invisible and indefinable, comparable to a prediction of the future and a revelation'.⁵⁹ Hugo's collection *Les Contemplations* provided a startling demonstration of the religious power that the poetic word has over the poet, a divine phantom born from the imagination: 'For the word, as one must know, is a living creature' ('un être vivant').⁶⁰ Such spontaneous eruptions of genius must not be confused with improvisation, an acquired skill born from the expert application of the rules of a literary system. A. F. Théry, for Pushkin a French source on German aesthetics, wrote of inspiration as the inalienable, and innate, sign of genius: 'When inspired, man is everything that one can be on earth; but such fleeting power comes from his nature, it is his own, and inspiration, which appears to get lost in a divine nature, plunges its roots in the human spirit.'⁶¹ In the 1820s and 1830s, the rhetoric of genius was used to differentiate the true poet from the versifier on the basis of oracular transformation. By the 1840s, when scientific understanding made room for empirical observation in literary discussion, writers such as Baudelaire would, at least in the privacy of their diary, speak of inspiration as a daily labour.⁶² In 1828, Pushkin chose to celebrate labour as a poetic virtue by placing an apophthegm by Aleksei Merzliakov, Professor of Classics in Moscow, as epigraph to his narrative poem *Poltava*: 'Undertake a labour greater than your powers.' In 1830 he marked the completion of *Evgenii Onegin* with the poem 'Labour' ('Trud', 1830) which casts inspiration as unglamorous labour. In certain works,

⁵⁷ On genius and frenzy, see Frederick Burwick, *Poetic Madness and the Romantic Imagination* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), ch. 1.

⁵⁸ As quoted in Cassange, *La Théorie de l'art pour l'art*, 37.

⁵⁹ Alfred de Vigny, *Stello* (Paris, 1832), ch. 7: 'Je crois en moi, parce que je sens au fond de mon cœur une puissance secrète, invisible et indéfinissable, toute pareille à un pressentiment de l'avenir et à une révélation des causes mystérieuses du temps présent.'

⁶⁰ See Victor Hugo, 'Du génie', in *Littérature et philosophie mêlées* (Paris, 1841), 171, similar to Pushkin's 1834 edition published in Brussels [Modz. 1005].

⁶¹ A. F. Théry, *De l'esprit et de la critique littéraires chez les peuples anciens et modernes*, 2 vols. (Paris: L. Hachette, 1832), ii. 200 [Modz. 1430]. (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 6.)

⁶² Cassange, *La Théorie de l'art pour l'art*, 413.

like the story entitled the *Egyptian Nights* (*Egipteskie noch*, 1835) and his play *Mozart and Salieri* (*Mozart i Salieri*, 1830), the issue of inspiration drives the plot, reflecting a question about the creative faculties that nags away at Pushkin. The most famous of the *Little Tragedies* pits the blithe and feckless Mozart as the embodiment of effortless genius against the masterly and worthy Salieri, whose inability to convert the brass of effort into the gold of genius leads to murderous frustration. Clearly Pushkin wanted to be seen as Mozart-like in the 1830s, but the hard work of revision preserved in his notebooks reveals the labour of a Salieri.

It is no wonder that at all the stages of Pushkin's life and career, the ambivalence about inspiration as craft based and visionary persisted. Lyrics about poetic inspiration refract Pushkin's thinking about the idea of poetry, extending from his early considerations of talent as a form of good schooling to the aggressive assertions of the visionary imagination, and finally to poems written in the last year of his life that combine the powerful language of philosophical subjectivity and Romantic independence (as discussed in Chapter 5). His idea of poetry changed to reflect his alertness to the fluid context of literary and intellectual fashion. Having early declared himself a poet of invention, Pushkin faced a backlash from critics. An 1829 article faulted him as an imitator of Byron and argued that he lacked the utter uniqueness required of genius.⁶³ (The criticism probably stung since Pushkin took pains even as late as the 1830s to repudiate the comparison while privately worrying about it.)

Words meaning 'inspiration' (*'vdokhnovenie'*, *'vdokhnovliat'sia'*) occur relatively infrequently in Pushkin's poetry. Their usage reflects Pushkin's sensitivity to the changing potency of inspiration as both a necessary proof of genius required by a public readership, rather than by one's like-minded coterie of fellow poets and allies; and a potential challenge to his view of inspiration as a higher power of reason required as much in 'geometry as in poetry'. Questions that his poems raise about inspiration, invention, and imagination implicate Pushkin in his own attempts to work out his relationship to innovation and tradition. In turning the tension between two modes of inspiration into a topic of his own poetry, Pushkin transposed the intellectual content of the debate outlined by *Viazemskii*, and also created an opportunity to reflect on and challenge his own poetic practice. First-person poems about art have generally elicited biographical readings from critics keen to correlate statements on his art to his circumstances. Inevitably, when seen from this angle, his meditations on his creative powers—and this will be most evident from 1833—come to seem more trenchant and defiant as his professional and personal circumstances grew more precarious.⁶⁴

⁶³ See the review by N. I. Nadezhdin, 'Poltava, poema Pushkina', *Vestnik Evropy*, 8 (1829), 287–302.

⁶⁴ See Irina Surat, *Pushkin. Biografiia i lirika: problemy, razbory, zametki, otkliki* (Moscow: Nasledie, 1999), ch. 2.

Pushkin's most famous poems about inspiration, including 'The Prophet' or 'The Poet' ('Poet', 1827), are unusually forceful. Less conspicuous but perhaps as telling are lyrics where the rhetorical emphasis on effortless craft makes it easy to miss the fact that these poems, too, interrogate the sources of Pushkin's inspiration, and in the process enact an idea of poetic creativity. These works often balance alternative impulses. Their playfulness should not hide the fact that they are no less searching than dramatically visionary works such as 'The Prophet'. Among lyrics that are essentially self-reflexive, some reveal uncertainty and even tension about the moment when genius strikes. In 'The Muse' ('Muza', 1821), 'To my Inkwell' ('K moei chernil'nitse,' 1821), and 'In hours of amusement or idle boredom . . .' ('V chasy zabav . . .', 1830), the speaker objectifies the moment of inspiration, and observes a conflict between different impulses that broadly corresponds to the distinction between classical and Romantic expectations. Insofar as these poems capture the writer suspended between the easy habit of the craftsman and possible transfiguration through inspiration, they reveal Pushkin's thinking about artistic choice and creative psychology.

In 1815, Pushkin was comfortable talking about inspiration as only a secondary factor in poetic composition, subordinate to the rules of language and versification. In 'To Del'vig' ('K Del'vigu', 1815), the character of the song is determined entirely by the pastoral pipe on which the singer plays. Six years later, the sonnet 'The Muse' recapitulates this image:

В младенчестве моем она меня любила
 И семиствольную цевницу мне вручила.
 Она внимала мне с улыбкой—и слегка,
 По звонким скважинам пустого тростника,
 Уже наигрывал я слабыми перстами
 И гимны важные, внушенные богами,
 И песни мирные фригийских пастухов.
 С утра до вечера в немой тени дубов
 Прилежно я внимал урокам девы тайной,
 И, радуя меня наградою случайной,
 Откинув локоны от милого чела,
 Сама из рук моих свирель она брала.
 Тростник был оживлен божественным дыханьем
 И сердце наполнял святым очарованьем.⁶⁵

In my youthful years she favoured me | And handed me a reed with seven pipes. | She listened to me with a smile, willingly, | Along the vibrating tubes of the hollow reed | I had already played with weak fingers | Both stately hymns, inspired by the gods, | And the peaceful songs of Phrygian shepherds. | From dawn till dusk in the silent shadow of the oak-trees, | I diligently heeded the lessons of a secret maid, | Who, as she delighted me with this random reward, | Brushed back the curls from her sweet brow, | And took the flute from my own hands. | The reed was enlivened by her divine breath | And filled the heart with sacred charm.

⁶⁵ Pushkin, *PSS*, ii/1. 164.

Despite the presence of 'divine inspiration' and 'sacred charm', the poem essentially describes a music lesson, where the poet polishes the arts of invention. Under the patient tutelage of the loving Muse the poet perfects his command of the flute that is her gift. A crucial part of the experience is learning to play not the music that he hears but the songs and hymns inspired by the gods that celebrate them: the poet learns his craft as a part of ceremonial obedience. The inspiration that the Muse embodies is the spirit of poetic authority based on knowledge. It is a sign of innate talent that the youth has done nothing to earn the gift of the flute and receives it because the Muse chooses him. As a poem, 'The Muse' charms because it lacks portentousness. But poems about muses are programmatic, and the conclusions here place Pushkin, if attitudes to inspiration are the spectrum, closer to his classical sources.

Later poems will employ hieratic images to illustrate the proposition that poetry is a holy calling. In 'The Muse', the ability to perform religious poetry is a matter of hard practise from morning until night. Through its lovely sound play and artful syntax, the poem demonstrates its argument about rooting the sources of art in the mastery of technique and craftsmanship. Balanced alliteration and assonance mark each line, and there is a fine modulation in the distribution of the vowels from the name 'Muzá' with '-u' dominating until the Muse actually approves the artist in line 10, whereupon 'a' dominates the pattern. In line 4 the poet offers a clever chiasmus and shows mastery of the placement of caesura in this model use of the alexandrine line. The poem is delightful proof of the poet's own claim to competence. But the artist can do nothing to exceed that craft and remains the humble pupil of the Muse until she gives licence and reward in the final four lines. The model education offered here to the poet notably omits certain acts and powers that regularly identify poetic creation. His tutorials do not address the role of the imagination; he does not aspire to imitate nature but instead imitates the songs he has been taught, putting him at a double remove from nature as a primary inspiration of all song; finally, he exercises no powers of invention but instead delights in the mechanical acquisition of the ability to imitate. It is only after proof of such competence that the Muse rewards him by replacing his pipe with an enchanted reed 'enlivened by divine breath' and capable of captivating the heart with its 'sacred charm'.

This early poem on the education of the poet suggests that the capacity of the poet to appeal to sensibility only follows technical mastery. In the same year that Viazemskii proclaimed him to be a Romantic, Pushkin's 'The Muse' crystallized the views separately articulated by the 'Classicist' of Viazemskii's introduction to *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*.⁶⁶ It is not accidental that Pushkin celebrated the Muse through an image of craft and technique. For the scholar Iurii Lotman,

⁶⁶ See Iu. Lotman, *Pushkin. Biografiia pisatel'ia. Stat'i i zametki. 1960–1990. 'Evgenii Onegin' Kommentarii* (St Petersburg: Iskusstvo, 1995), 704–5. See O. Iu. Shokina, 'Obraz muzy v poetike Pushkina', in *Sibirskaiia pushkinistika segodnia* (Novosibirsk: SO RAN, 2000), 155–71.

the Muse denotes poetic evolution and is synonymous with poetry itself. Earlier scholars including Evgenii Maimin, Sergei Bondi, and Boris Meilakh see the Muse simply as a personal principle of inspiration. It is clear that the Muse is always a figure of inspiration, but my approach argues that the aesthetic language of the individual poems discloses a theory of inspiration connoted as invention.

In 1821, at the beginning of the exile that saw the first great period of experimentation in numerous genres, Pushkin wrote a poem that discerns a greater complexity between poetic craft and creative psychology. 'To my Inkwell' treats poetic technology as the source of inspiration. The poet does not labour here, but work is unnecessary once the poet has followed Zhukovsky's advice and studied hard. Like Coleridge's aeolian harp, the inkwell is Pushkin's non-conscious tool for unlocking the associations that the poet's mind produces out of the material world:

Подруга думы праздной,
 Чернильница моя;
 Мой век разнообразный
 Тобой украсил я.
 Как часто друг веселья
 С тобою забывал
 Условный час похмелья
 И праздничный бокал;
 Под сенью хаты скромной,
 В часы печали томной,
 Была ты предо мной
 С лампадой и Мечтой.—[...]
 Заветный твой кристалл
 Хранит огонь небесный;
 И под вечер, когда
 Перо по книжке бродит,
 Без вялого труда
 Оно в тебе находит
 Концы моих стихов
 И верность выраженья;
 То звуков или слов
 Нежданное стеченье,
 То едкой шутки соль,
 То Правды слог суровый,
 То странность рифмы новой,
 Неслыханной дотоль.
 С глупцов сорвав одежду,
 Я весело клеймил
 Зоила и невежду
 Пятном твоих чернил . . .
 Но их не разводил
 Ни тайной злости пеной,

Ни ядом клеветы.
 И сердца простоты
 Ни лестью, ни изменой
 Не замарала ты.⁶⁷ (ll. 1–12, 29–52)

Sweetheart of idle thought, | My inkwell; | I've adorned with you | My varied life. | How often, friend to mirth, | Have you and I forgotten | An agreed hour of sobering up | And the holiday beaker; | Under the shade of a modest cottage, | In hours of listless sadness, | You were there for me | With a lamp and Fancy.— | Your hallowed crystal | Guards a heavenly flame; | And by night, when | My quill wanders about my notebook, | Without the fatigue of labour | It finds in you | The ends of my verses | And accuracy of expression; | Or an unexpected coupling | Of sounds or words, | Or the salt of a biting joke, | Or the stern style of Truth, | Or the oddness of a new rhyme, | Unheard of till now. | I've stripped the clothes of fools, | Merrily damned | The Zoilus and the idiot | With a blot of your ink... | But you didn't get them heated up | With either a frothy secret malice | Or the poison of slander. | And you didn't stain the | Simplicity of the heart with flattery or dishonesty.

The centrepiece of the first section is a tribute to creativity, an automatic process close to Fancy ('Mechta') that is entirely free of anxiety about loss of control. Inspiration pours through him, minimizing the necessity of will and the anticipation of reception. Even at the level of performance, the reader finds irresistible the ready association between form and content, since the poem revels in its free-flowing prosody, replete with a mammoth chain of rhymes that defy the limitations of a rhyme-poor language such as Russian, and suggest the effortless, liquid sound of inspiration pouring out of the magical inkwell. Here self-determination is represented merely as a right to doodle, because the right to unserious play is itself the serious claim. Creativity flows magically and effortlessly, because the poet's quill guarantees a polish and accuracy to his expression. The lack of effort is not synonymous with the lack of skill, but rather points to the aesthetic value of correct effect achieved almost automatically. Such a position resembles the teaching of La Harpe and Marmontel on inspiration, where the pleasure of craft defined as invention is its own inspiration. And yet that facility also raises a question for the poet who wonders about the nature of his control over his gift and his ability to direct his inspiration. While poetry must respond to a variety of situations, alleviating the hangover ('uslovnyi chas pokhmel'ia | i prazdnichnyi bokal', l. 7), sharpening the poet's wit in satirical battle by verbal originality ('to zvukov ili slov | nezhdannoe stechen'ie', l. 38), the inkwell remains unchanged despite the poet's protean mutations. The crystal vessel remains clear and intact, undisturbed by the fiery inspiration contained in the liquid, a single entity of perfect consistency and consistent perfection against the variety of life that the poet cites at the opening ('moi vek raznoobraznyi', l. 3). Or, to express it differently, poetic craft stands as an objective capacity that

⁶⁷ Pushkin, PSS, ii/1. 182.

can be applied to subjective circumstances. Or, differently once again, the mental processes involved in inspiration remain controlled by its own rules that rise to the expressive challenges of a topic or situation but, on the other hand, show no psychological or emotional reciprocity.

'To my Inkwell' delights in a type of inspiration for which the speaker professes not to take credit although the poem is in fact a tribute to his invention. The flow of the couplets corroborates the view of creative power as a form of poetic ease, making the poem a good example of the classical trope of the 'harmonie imitative' or iconic versification in which form and message coalesce perfectly.⁶⁸ Under any circumstances, the poet can always rely on the inkwell for the capacity to react. The poet sees his own life as various ('raznoobraznyi') and disordered, and his poetic talent is equally varied and protean. Yet even without effort the poet can still create harmonious verbal adornment (ll. 1–4). Should the poet suffer during the 'agreed hour of hangover' ('uslovnyi chas pokhmel'ia', l. 7), the inkwell will dispel his tedium. Should sleeplessness affect him (ll. 10–12), then next to the lamp burning on his desk he sees the pot of ink and the figure of Fancy ('Mechta').

The poet identifies two sources of pleasure. The first is the effortless mastery of the craft, the second is the moral authority that his formal gift confers. But he puzzles over the coming and going of this seemingly automatic technical virtuosity in order to raise the problem of Associationism that haunts other poets, most famously Coleridge in his 'The Aeolian Harp' (1795). Poets dedicated to craft do not fear the imagination because its visions are irrational; and the representation of inspiration as an external afflatus also causes no anxiety since that trope is rhetorical, deliberately advertising extraordinary powers to a public captivated by manifestations of genius. It is a key assumption of the Romantic lyric that the true voice of feeling is spontaneous. But poetry that comes automatically, while it may have formal virtues as the embodiment of craft, troubles the speaker because it springs from impulses in the body operating according to biologically driven associations over which the poet has no rational control. In 'To my Inkwell' the poet enjoys these sensations as the snapshots cross his consciousness. But he equivocates on the crucial issue of whether he owns them, since he feels uncertain about the sources of talent. It is facile to read the poem merely as a light-hearted way of addressing guilt over the urge to write light verse when the true genius commits an act of moral purpose. In his self-congratulation the poet strikes an ironic tone, and wishes to make us consider the argument about the nature of the creative imagination without clarifying it and obviously addressing it. But the Associationist view of inspiration clearly affects the poet's sense of the status of his art as a matter, first, of individual psychology, and, secondly, as a question of status because he is well aware of the connection being made between authenticity and the social value of art. Here the effortless

⁶⁸ See Charles Batteux, *Principes de la littérature* (Lyon, 1802), 138.

creation of unconscious association produces a witty and lovely work that in the eyes of the poet represents his talent working at top speed and form. Such devices as the rapid succession of views sustain the impression of Associationist organization.

Alongside these images is a parallel rhetoric of deliberate isolation. The poem oscillates between images of private and public performance. Indolence, seen as a private right, represents not inertia but the remoteness of the individual talent ('the unknown anchorite', 'otshel'nik neizvestnyi', l. 28) content to be distant from a public. The final section provocatively reverses the passivity of the poet's mind. In the second half, the speaker imagines how the philosopher Petr Chaadaev will collect the inkwell that stands orphaned and cold in an empty house after the poet's death. He asks for one final greeting and then implores the inkwell to stand as a mute decoration and keepsake in Chaadaev's house. There is a hint that imagination no longer refers only to the treatment of the topic, but moves beyond to the greater capacity of relating distant ideas:

Беспечный сын природы,
Пока златые годы
В забвенье трачу я,
Со мною неразлучно,
Наперсница моя.
Когда же берег ада
На век меня возьмет,
Когда навек уснет
Перо, моя отрада,
И ты, в углу пустом
Осиротев, остынешь
И на всегда покинешь
Поэта тихий дом . . .
Чедаев, друг мой милый,
Тебя возьмет унылый;
Последний будь привет
Любимцу прежних лет.—
Иссохшая, пустая,
Меж двух его картин
Останься век немая,
Украшь его камин.—
Взыскательного света
Очей не привлекай,
Но верного поэта
Друзьям напоминай. (ll. 73–98)

Carefree son of nature, | These golden years | That I waste in oblivion | Be inseparable from me, | My mistress.

When the shore of Hades | Shall claim me for good, | When my pen, my joy, | Will fall asleep for good | Oh, you, orphaned in | An empty corner | Will grow cold and will |

Leave forever the poet's quiet house . . . | Chaadaev, my sweet, sad friend, | Will collect
 you; | Let this be the final greeting | To the beloved of years past. | Dried out, emptied, |
 Remain mute between two pictures, | Decorate his fireplace. | Do not attract the eyes |
 Of the curious world, | But remind friends | Of the faithful poet.

The lines introduce a counter-argument haunting the poet's thoughts. Until this point, all creative agency resides with the poetic medium, which animates and guides. In the posthumous scene, however, once the poet is dead, the inkwell does not enjoy its autonomy; it has become dry and empty. Muteness will safeguard his voice from appropriation, and that is an advantage. Anxiety about posterity is a familiar topos in Romantic poetry. Poets seeking recompense for contemporary neglect show confidence that posterity will see true merit.⁶⁹ This is the logic behind the poet's almost spiteful wish on the inkwell. At the end, this desire betrays fear about the inalienability of poetic creation. The final vignette alters the balance of the poem's argument by suggesting that the poet's deeper belief is that inspiration emanates from him. Art created by invention has no purpose apart from the pleasure of free-play. But when the poet conceives an unknown future, the act of imagining involves a self-conscious awareness of how his poetry will be read, by whom and for what purpose, and that incites him to contemplate ownership of his voice. What will become of his inkwell? The question also introduces a concern for reputation that imparts to poetry a function and connection with self-interest. This conclusion complicates the earlier sense that poetry is craft rather than unique voice, more the arts of expression assimilated at the deepest level of the poet's consciousness rather than a visionary moment of inspiration, and for that reason a gift that is not unique to the individual. The poem Pushkin makes out of demonstrating the process of unconscious association is his way of putting forward a question about an aesthetic problem that cannot easily be solved. Once the poet sees inspiration as, at least partly, a function of cognitive processes driven by the body and incompletely conscious, both classical and Romantic views of intentionality come under pressure. The intention to make a moral statement, while perhaps a necessary condition, is not a sufficient criterion since Romantic genius must be recognizably present and exceptional for determining any artistic merit. The intention to produce a polished work, according to rules of style long internalized, seems less at risk except when inspiration causes movements that take one unaware, disrupting both the capacity of the mind to aim at invention and the power of synthesis granted to the imagination. But the power of the body to preempt through association the power of the imagination to organize images and associations will be the drama and message of the later 'Autumn', as we shall see in Chapter 5.

⁶⁹ Bennett, *Romantic Poets and the Culture*, 16 identifies contemporary neglect as a *sine qua non* for poets who dream of posthumous fame.

'To my Inkwell' is not written to criticize poetic facility. But Pushkin deliberately sets up an opposition between two models of inspiration and correspondingly with the larger aesthetic values that they represent. Inspiration of a Romantic type treats the idea of talent as the inalienable property of unique genius. Invention has the advantage of not troubling the poet's psyche because the rules of art work on their own and afford the disinterested pleasure of creating a work of art untroubled by subjectivity. However, at a moment when ownership of inspiration has become an acute question in poetic culture, the anonymity of this model of inspiration and its link to sensationalist theories of creative perturbation is striking.

Starting with poems written in 1826, the force of inspiration threatens the poetic speaker's sense of identity and control because poetry comes to him as a type of vatic magic.⁷⁰ Even then, other poems will maintain a more conservative position and disavow the visionary model. Consider, for example, a poem written in 1830. 'In hours of amusement . . .' is famed mostly for the history of its composition and portentous final line.⁷¹ It brings together the notion of poetry as a type of play associated with invention and control, on the one hand; and poetry as unregulated mental association mixed by the imagination with strong emotions. The psychological tension of the poem leading to the catharsis of tears arises from the poet's loss of control as he involuntarily falls under the power of his imagination:

В часы забав или праздной скуки,
 Бывало, лире я моей
 Вверял изнеженные звуки
 Безумства, лени и страстей.
 Но и тогда струны лукавой
 Невольно звон я прерывал,
 Когда твой голос величавый
 Меня внезапно поражал.
 Я лил потоки слез неожиданных,
 И ранам совести моей
 Твоих речей благоуханных
 Отраден чистый был елей.
 И ныне с высоты духовной
 Мне руку простираешь ты,
 И силой кроткой и любовной
 Смиряешь буйные мечты.

⁷⁰ On the purpose of genius as portrayed in 'The Prophet' and the 'Poet' cycle see Chapter 6.

⁷¹ In 1828, Metropolitan Filaret read Pushkin's poem 'Vain gift, random gift' ('Dar naprasnyi, dar sluchainyi') as an atheistic confession. He replied in verse, and Pushkin answered in turn with this poem, which he published in 1830. For a reading of 'Vain gift, random gift', see Chapter 8.

Твоим огнем душа палима
 Отвергла мрак земных сует,
 И внемлет арфе серафима
 В священном ужасе поэт.⁷²

In hours of amusement or idle boredom, | Once upon a time, I used to confide | To my
 lyre the cosseted sounds | Of madness, indolence and passion.

But even then I would arrest | The vibration of the treacherous string | When your
 majestic voice | Suddenly struck me.

I poured forth streams of sudden tears, | And to the wounds of my conscience | The
 balsam of your fragrant words | Was a pure delight.

And now from a spiritual height | You extend a hand to me | And with meek and
 loving strength | Becalm restless dreams.

Set afire by your flame my soul | Has thrown off the darkness of earthly cares, | And in
 a state of holy awe | The poet listens to the harp of the seraphim.

The retrospective profile of the first two quatrains affectionately disparages a view of creativity already recognizable from 'To my Inkwell'. Once again, the poet draws attention to a tool of artistic technology, the lyre, onto which poetic volition appears to have been transferred. At the end of the initial stanza the poet remains well contented with the comfort afforded by his craft. The poet can access the therapeutic and self-healing function of creative play by transferring emotions to his 'lyre' and channelling feeling in the language of art.

But the jolt that renovates his poetic identity comes not as an act of will but external compulsion through a sudden visionary flash that shocks ('porazhat'). Whereas poetry as amusement and comfort was also a matter of trust ('vveriat') in one's talent, unpredictability and emotional turbulence characterize this transformation. Whereas the speaker in 'To my Inkwell' can bridge the worlds of private and public provided his judgement remains independent, in this poem inspiration seems to obliterate a sense of private or public space. By surrendering his own lyre to the harp of the seraphim, the poet becomes the instrument of an external agent. The transition is involuntary and loaded with language of moral disapproval. In line 3, the adjective 'cosseted' ('iznezhennyi') evokes the effete vocabulary of the love elegy that must cede to poetic grandeur ('velichayvi') of a supernal type. By the end, the poet needs to surrender his own voice, by hearing this other voice in order to achieve the status of 'poet': the occurrence of the word and its placement at the conclusion suggests that the entire lyric itself formulates a definition of what it means to be a poet. In earlier poems, musical instruments like the lyre or flute are tools of his craft. Here the metaphor for inspiration is not one of light and enlightenment, but of fire, a primordial and terrifying image of mythic power.

Contradiction between extremes of mastery and submission, moments of hearing, moments of speaking, elevation and debasement, control and

⁷² Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 212.

abandonment, marks the poet's creative psychology. Unlike the other lyrics in this chapter, this poem sees poetic creation as two irreconcilable processes (that are, of course, harmonized in a single work of art). Pushkin forces the clash in order to make the meaning of inspiration an object of critique. Everything about the poet's reaction, from his hieratic language to his furious weeping, is consistent with other visionary poems written in 1826 and 1827. In 'The Prophet', poetic epiphany is a type of resurrection. In 'The Poet', the creative moment turns a trivial child into an exalted artist, and while scaling the visionary heights exalts the poet's moral stature, he also regrets his other creative existence where poetry is a gentler art guided by an instructive muse or the precepts of a friendly group. Unlike 'The Prophet', this poem does not enact the moment of epiphany. Written in the past tense, 'In hours of boredom or idle amusement . . .' captures the end of a process that creates formal beauty. Despite the illusion of irrational inspiration, the result is a highly crafted piece composed in strict stanzas with a conspicuous use of sound-orchestration emphasizing its artistic perfection.

From the mid-1820s, the perceived authenticity of the poet's genius became a key commercial concern in marketing talent. Critics made novelty and ostentatious genius the measure of creative vitality, and Pushkin's responsiveness to critical opinion remained acute. In 1830, a year often regarded as a turning point in his career when critical opinion, motivated by personal reasons, turned against him, the conservative *Moscow Telegraph* dared to ask how distinct Pushkin was from his imitators. Their answer was that the novelty of *Evgenii Onegin* had worn off five years into its publication history and that the once innovative Pushkin appeared to be stuck (or, in the words of the critic, 'sitting in the same place').⁷³ One response was to make a conspicuous display of the imagination as a creative power, satisfying the demands of readership. There was a risk of compromising independence, and increasing one's exposure to criticism. The imagination, as expressed in visionary statements, could bring reward as a new power of subjectivity and an increase in fame. Yet even as we see Pushkin taking these risks in the second half of the decade, his sense of the classical developed in parallel with European innovations. During this time, classicism fashions out of invention an intellectual ability to perceive the sublime and the beautiful, endowing the poet with the capacity to judge art by an unchanging objective standard, and to create it.

⁷³ See the article 'Novyi zhivopisets obshchestva i literatury', in *Moskovskii telegraf*, 5 (March 1830), 67–75.

3

The Meaning of Beauty

It is understandable why young poets imitate the ancients, and less obvious why established poets might continue the practice. Towards the end of his life, Pushkin returned to classically inspired forms, including a cycle of Anacreontic imitations, poems about statuary, imitations of Horace, and an impassioned defence of Boileau.¹ The resurgence of classicism in Pushkin in the 1830s has caused bafflement. In fact, his poetic practice reflects a context in which aesthetic theories actively discussed the relation between form and creative power. In coming to terms with Pushkin's ostensible conservatism, and even archaism, it will be helpful to see his manner against the backdrop of European and Russian thinking about art in which the meaning of the classical is no less dynamic and innovative than the Romantic. Poetic theorists reinvented neoclassicism as Romantic Hellenism for the generation of the 1830s, prizing the fragment and rediscovering in Boileau a theorist of the classical sublime.² The notion of a 'correct' poetics moved on from being a system of rules. Invention as a poetic power underwent yet one further stage of refinement through association with the Platonic ideal.³

Informed by this fusion of an older doctrine with the abstract theory of the 1830s, Pushkin shared a belief in invention as a type of intellectual perception—and a poetic power whose expression is rarefied, exquisite, and undemocratic. Despite formal conservatism, this Romantic Hellenism embodied innovative ideas about the beautiful. In defending art for art's sake, classicism also created

¹ Pushkin actively augmented his collection of ancient authors in these years. In 1835, for instance, Alexander Turgenev sent him editions of Catullus, Propertius, and Tibullus [see Modz. 714]. His interest in Voltaire's manifold activities as a writer was complemented by his ongoing interest in his poetic style. See, for example, V. S. Liublinskii, 'Neizvestnyi avtograf Vol'tera v bumagakh Pushkina', *Vremennik*, 2 (1936), 257–65.

² Pushkin's sharp criticism of some French writers as 'anti-poetic' in his 1832 article on Hugo has been misunderstood as a rejection of the French classical heritage. See, for example, A. Sevast'ianov, 'Vol'ter glazami Pushkina', *Voprosy literatury*, 2 (1987), 146–66. This view can also be found in Zaborov, *Russkaia literatura i Vol'ter*, 174–81. I think that Pushkin is in fact arguing with a static approach to classicism that looks outmoded as he tries to reconcile its aesthetic with Romanticism. He singles out Voltaire's attitude to the French seventeenth century because it was prominent. Vadim Vatsuro describes the early 1830s for Pushkin as a period of 'fierce opposition to fixed aesthetic programmes' in V. E. Vatsuro, 'Pushkin i Beaumarchais', *PIM* 7 (1974), 213.

³ See Monika Greenleaf, *Pushkin and Romantic Fashion: Fragment, Elegy, Orient, Irony* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), ch. 1, for a subtle discussion of the tension between the Romantic and neoclassical, with different conclusions and arguments from my own.

an alternative definition to Romantic genius as a turbulent power of feeling and personality. Here genius has the power of intellectual clarity and timeless impersonality reserved for the poetic elite. Before we trace the connection between invention and the beautiful in later poems that are largely concerned with art, it will be helpful to consider Pushkin's Russian and European context.

THE IDEA OF BEAUTY

Among Russian writers on aesthetics active in the 1820s, Alexander Galich was philosophically the most coherent. As first the German and then Latin master at the Lycée, he was also the best known to Pushkin, and may have laid the groundwork for Pushkin's interest in the psychology of art before moving on to St Petersburg University where he became Professor of Aesthetics.⁴ Pushkin made no more than several enthusiastic references to Galich, and none cites any specific doctrines. The humorous sympotic poem 'Carousing Students' ('Piruiushchie studenty', 1814) shows Pushkin and his comrades setting aside their reading of Kant, Tacitus, and Seneca in order to follow the example of their Epicurean teacher and live it up. For 'Epicurean' we should read a coded reference to Galich's materialism and atheism (views that eventually brought him into conflict with the authorities and cost him his university job).⁵ In a diary entry of 17 March 1833 Pushkin recorded meeting the 'good Galich' again after many years, an occasion that caused him great pleasure because, as his professor, Galich 'approved of the path that Pushkin chose in life'.

An expert on aesthetics and epistemology, Galich made notable contributions to the study of these areas in Russia, and his work channelled continental thinking with considerable sophistication. His standing was high with Pushkin's contemporaries. In a letter of 1826 the poet Evgenii Baratynsky drew Pushkin's attention to Galich's recent work on Kant's aesthetics, urging him to read his work:

I have to tell you that Muscovite youth are mad about transcendental philosophy, but I don't know whether this is good, or bad, I haven't read Kant and confess that I don't understand the latest theories in aesthetics all that well. Galich has published a poetics in the German manner. In it he's refreshed Platonic discoveries and with some additions turned them into a system. As I am without German, I was very glad of the chance to become acquainted with German aesthetics. What I like in it is its own poetry...⁶

⁴ Ia. K. Grot, *Pushkin, ego litseiskie tovarishchi i nastavniki* (St Petersburg, 1899), 269.

⁵ The association between Epicureanism and radical free-thinking was not lost on the public. A hostile review of the Russian translation of Thomas Moore's novel *The Epicurean* (*Severnaia pchela*, 87, 21 April 1833) hoped that the novel would foster public suspicion of writers who under the 'mask of genius' corrupted morals, and singled out Pushkin as the foremost example.

⁶ Pushkin, *PSS*, xiii, no. 236, p. 254 (5–20 January 1826).

It is entirely likely that Pushkin took his advice in 1826 and read the newly published *Essay on the Science of the Beautiful* (1825), the second of three philosophical works. Unlike the other treatises, which focus on conceptual issues, this manual combines explanatory passages with practical criticism.⁷ It is easy to see Galich the teacher at work in the *Essay*; presumably it was based on his lectures.⁸ Although he has come to be seen as an advocate of Romantic subjectivity, his work in 1825 laid down an innovative approach to the classical style. Much like Marmontel, he is not a classicist in a schoolmasterly sense. The sections on genre pay little attention to formal issues and rules, being concerned with the overall aesthetic effect or 'colour' of the writer's voice. In effect, the *Essay on the Science of the Beautiful* continues where La Harpe and Marmontel leave off. Like them, he follows the teaching of Shaftesbury by accepting as a premiss that there is a moral order and harmony in nature that art replicates; for this reason the aim of art must be to express truth, beauty, and goodness. Of particular relevance is the importance he ascribes to the Kantian view that the only purpose of art is to achieve beauty. The *Essay on the Science of the Beautiful* explains theories of mind and cognition, and its Kantian outlook also corresponds to the understanding of German metaphysics and transcendentalism in France at the time. The influence of Victor Cousin, whose writing on the 'beau idéal' caught the attention of Ivan Kireevskii, one of the 'Muscovite youth' who was philosophically impassioned and wished to translate Cousin's writings, is certainly visible in the Platonic element that Baratynsky detects.⁹ While Galich argues that art has no purpose in itself, thereby affiliating himself with the Kantian ethos of the autonomy of art,¹⁰ he holds that it should strive to express the absolute, the perfect and limitless beauty of an ideal or an organic whole. True to the classical ideal of the universal, in his view, art that produces a synthesis of versions, rather than being the depiction of a single instance, can embody this idea. Through the intellectual faculty, freed from the minute observation of ephemeral detail, the artist captures the 'mental nature' ('umstvennaia priroda') of the object and produces a work of beauty, of universal appeal because it taps into the capacity of all to perceive the ideal ('obshchiia chuvstvovaniia ideal'nogo').¹¹ Another way to put this would be to say that Galich's mimetic theory advocates presenting the imitated

⁷ Alexander Galich, *Opyt nauki iziashchnogo* (St Petersburg: Tipografia Departamenta Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia, 1825).

⁸ Over the span of his writing Galich's positions parallel the emphases in Pushkin's reading and shifting attitudes almost certainly because both men independently kept abreast of the most important trends. Pushkin acquired his most complex work, *A Picture of Man: An Attempt at an Instructive Course on the Subjects of Self-Knowledge*, in 1834, and its connection to theories of sensibility and the body will be taken up in Chapter 8. Whether or not all of his writing had direct bearing on Pushkin's thinking about art—and it is likely that his influence was in fact direct from an early date—is a question of interest. Even then an affirmative answer is not essential to our discussion, since Galich's writings synthesized a great deal of thought from the period that was also available to Pushkin through other sources.

⁹ Kireevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, i. 12.

¹⁰ *Opyt*, ¶20, p. 20.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, ¶13, p. 13.

object according to natural rather than arbitrary linguistic signs. Poetry, taken in its broader meaning as creativity, can transform the incidental into symbolic language that is accessible to perception and intuition. He calls it the 'pure ideal art of mental observation' and identifies sculpture, by way of example, as the best medium for portraying heroic figures who will serve as symbols of eternal ideas.¹² In his view, perceiving such beauty is the work of the mind ('smysl') rather than feeling.¹³ Everything that is beautiful is 'ideal and exemplary'¹⁴ since the activity of the imagination is synthetic, activated by inspiration (Galich also uses the word 'fantasy') to produce new combinations in acts of original genius. The description of imagination in its synthetic function is recognizably that of Coleridge and other Kantians, while the capacity to achieve a vision of the ideal affiliates Galich with the French aestheticians, such as Victor Cousin, who from the 1820s breathed life into the aesthetic theories of Winckelmann, Schlegel, and Lessing on the ideal of Greek beauty.¹⁵

Galich's essay avoids an opposition between classical and Romantic aesthetics. He sees both invention and the imagination as conducive to an aesthetic ideal. Genius is highly individual and vouchsafed only to the very few, and perhaps because it is hard to define and the work of the imagination harder to describe Galich makes only passing reference to it. Yet he allows that all artists who strive to represent the beautiful and the good will possess the technique and mental power necessary to achieve a vision of the ideal. As guided by invention and craft, artists are less likely to produce nonsense than would be the case if they followed the stirrings of their imagination. Galich does not fear the imagination as impossible to regulate. Rather, he holds that only the genius can balance powers of imagination and invention, and because this is a rare and inexplicable conjunction, he refrains from seeing the imagination as the definitive element in poetry. In 1825, Galich favoured intellectualism, and was directed against sensibility. He also thought that imagination and invention work harmoniously in poets of genius who can produce new combinations without losing sight of the ideal. In the 1830s, writing at much greater length in his substantial philosophical discourse on cognition, Galich will concede that the imagination and the body are hardly separable and explore that connection. He affirms his view that the expression of individual perception is the proper activity of the poet. Both his attachment to invention, as an intellectual process, and his espousal of the imagination as a synthetic activity, encapsulate schools of thought that informed Pushkin's poems. It was less than a decade before other writers and

¹² Galich seems close here to Schlegel's concept of symbolism, on which see L. Dieckmann, 'Friedrich Schlegel and the Romantic Concept of the Symbol', *Germanic Review*, 34 (1959), 276–83.

¹³ *Opyt*, §22, p. 22.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, §24, p. 25.

¹⁵ This is also very much the message of M. D. Nisard, *Études de mœurs et de critique sur les poètes latins de la Décadence* (Brussels: Louis Hauman et Compe, 1834) [Modz. 1216], esp. 216–29, which sees equivalence between beauty of style and the moral order essentially in terms defined by La Harpe (to whom he refers).

sculptures inspired in Pushkin a ‘late classicism’ that expressed the search for an ideal that had been usefully summarized by Galich. Surprisingly, one key figure in this final stage of Pushkin’s classicism was Boileau—not in his capacity as the supreme giver of rules, but as a theorist of the classical sublime.

THE SUBLIME AND THE REINVENTION OF BOILEAU

Writing in the *Bulletin du Nord* in 1828, an anonymous critic offered a noteworthy judgement. Determined to draw distinctions between creative movements, he identified the struggle to master difficult artistic material as a key element in the myth of Romantic genius. In this context, he characterized Pushkin as a great classical poet owing to his mastery of craft. But in defining what he means by the classical he speaks of Boileau’s *Art poétique*—the ‘French Koran’ as Pushkin called it—as the source of the concept of beauty at the origins of Romanticism.¹⁶ On the surface, the conjunction of Boileau and the Romantic seems paradoxical, but this summary most particularly anticipates the position that Pushkin himself will advocate in a poem written five years later, ‘Strict judge of French rhymesters’ (‘Frantsuzskikh rifmachei surovyi sud’ia’, 1833). An unfinished tribute to Boileau and diatribe against his enemies, Pushkin’s poem defends Boileau not as an archaic authority, but as a poet and critic of contemporary significance. To some extent, the appreciation has a retrospective relevance because it upholds values that have been active in his own writing. The fragment addresses a number of questions about poetic careers, treating the tension between commercial servility and artistic independence, and the value of posterity’s judgement (the latter in terms that we shall discuss in Chapter 6). On the surface, the poem restates the familiar model of invention as a mixture of craft and reason:

Французских рифмачей суровый судия,
 О классик Депрео, к тебе взываю я:
 Хотя постигнутый неумолимым роком
 В своем отечестве престал ты быть пророком,
 Хоть дерзких умников простерлася рука
 На лавры твоего густого парика;
 Хотя, растрепанный новейшей вольной школой,
 К ней в гневе обратил ты свой затылок голый,—
 Но я молю тебя, поклонник верный твой—
 Будь мне вожатаем. Дерзаю за тобой
 Занять кафедру ту, с которой в прежни лета
 Ты слишком превознес достоинства сонета,

¹⁶ *Bulletin du Nord: journal scientifique et littéraire*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1828), i. 50 [Modz. 1507]. There is a need for a fresh study of Boileau’s reception in Russia from the eighteenth century; but see A. M. Peskov, *Bualo v russkoi literature XVIII-pervoi treti XIX-ogo veka* (Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1989), 92–7.

Но где торжествовал твой здравый приговор
 Глушам минувших лет, вранью тогдашних пор.
 [Новейшие вдали вралей старинных стоят—
 И слишком уж меня их бредни беспокоят.
 Ужели всё молчать, да слушать? О беда! . . .
 Нет, всё им выскажу однажды навсегда.] (ll. 1–18)

The strict judge of French rhymesters, | O classic Despréaux, I appeal to you: |
 Though you have been struck by invincible fate | And no longer are a prophet in your
 homeland, | Although the hand of daring wits has reached out | To grab the laurels on
 your thick wig, | Although, amused by the latest free school, | You have turned your
 balding pate to it in anger, | Yet, your true admirer, I beseech you | To be my guide. Do I
 dare assume your podium, | From which in years gone past | You too much extolled the
 qualities of the sonnet, | But where your healthy judgement triumphed | Over the fools
 of bygone years, and the nonsense of those times. | The latest ravings rank with the old
 lunacies | And disturb my brain too much. | Shall I stay silent and listen? O, woe! . . . |
 No, I shall tell them all for once and all.

While the defence of Boileau is conservative in tone, it has a cutting edge belief that Romanticism has come full circle in rediscovering the classical idea. Pushkin begins by hailing Boileau as a classic ('klassik') in the double sense of canonical author as well as theorist of neoclassicism, and denounces Boileau's Romantic detractors. His speaker announces his fidelity to the classical ideal, praising the sanity ('zdravyi prigovor') of Boileau's prescriptions against the excesses of the 'latest free school' ('noveishei vol'noi shkolo'), a stereotypical equation of Romanticism with novelty. In defending classicism, Pushkin protects his own working model of Romanticism as a compatible style, provided certain limits are agreed. Central to the idea of art put forward in the poem is the quality of inspiration evoked by the writer. True poetic enthusiasm distinguished between the real poet and the overenthusiastic impostor:

О вы, которые, восчувствовав отвагу,
 Хватаете перо, мараете бумагу,
 Тисенью предавать труды свои спеша,
 Постойте—наперед узнайте, чем душа
 У вас исполнена—прямым ли вдохновеньем
 Иль необдуманным одним поползновеньем,
 И чешется у вас рука по пустякам,
 Иль вам не верят в долг, а деньги нужны вам.¹⁷

(ll. 19–26)

O you, who feel bold and | Grab the quill, cover the page in scribble, | Hastening to give
 over your labour for printing, | Stop for a bit and discover what | Fills your soul—whether

¹⁷ Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 305–6.

honest inspiration | Or some careless lucubration, | And whether your hand itches to jot trivialities, | Or whether your debts are called, and you need money.

A Modern in his own day set against the Ancients of the seventeenth-century Querelle, Boileau personifies a standard invoked against a vanguard that places a premium on change. In talking about a poetic master Pushkin is also to a degree talking about himself. By appealing to this particular authority, Pushkin suggests that his own status is in transition from innovator to classic, from being a practitioner of the modern to a partisan of an ancient ideal. Poetic tradition here is marked by competition, rivalry, and overthrow in which the latest aspirants to immediate rewards, however trite their positions, however specious their talents (they are called ‘liars’), displace old masters. All the conditions that Pushkin articulated almost twenty years earlier in ‘To Zhukovsky’ reappear. Far from the Bloomian model of anxiety, the psychological model of creativity involves respect and disrespect, tribute and destruction, but no underlying sense of anxiety regarding a master poet taints the appreciation of healthy rivalry. Audacity (‘derzost’) is the quality of mind that both proponents of the new (the ‘umniki’) and the speaker share. What matters in authenticating good poetry is not the critic’s capacity to discern conformity with rules as such, but the power of invention.

The affirmation of this ideal is not a restatement of a static position on invention. The crux of the issue is a separation between the Romantic sublime and the classical sublime, which originates with Boileau and is rediscovered by French theorists in the 1820s in its seminal form. In the 1830s, Boileau’s name became closely associated with a reconceptualization of invention and the equation of poetic genius with inspiration as a type of the sublime. In distinguishing between Pushkin’s early and late classicism, it is helpful to maintain a contextualized sense of how Romantic writers and philosophers realigned Boileau and the post-Burkean sublime with its origins in Neoplatonic theory.

From Thomas Weiskel working in English to Harsha Ram’s treatment of the Russian context, discussions have described the post-Burkean Romantic sublime as a type of mental and aesthetic reaction to landscape that is marked by a paradoxical pleasure in terror and obscurity.¹⁸ In origin, the classical sublime is a term of literary discourse and rhetoric, whereas the Romantic sublime is a more all-embracing (and vaguer) aesthetic concept developed by a series of thinkers including Burke and Kant. Recent work that examines the concept of the sublime (‘le sublime’) from its earlier starting point in Boileau’s 1674 translation of Longinus argues that the origins and impact of the classical sublime and Romantic sublime can be traced separately. Each accords a different role to the power of reason and emotion. Both the Romantic and the classical sublime inform Pushkin’s idea of the beautiful, but they do so separately. He had already

¹⁸ See Harsha Ram, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 2003); ch. 2 pursues a Burkean reading.

in the 1820s imported the Romantic sublime into the landscapes of his Southern narrative poems to great effect. Readings that examine Pushkin's Southern poems in terms of the Romantic sublime have been productive because the Byronic basis of Pushkin's landscape description had already absorbed the Burkean aesthetic. However, this approach is less helpful with respect to Pushkin's later lyrics, where we should look to the classical sublime to give us the theory embodied in Pushkin's ancient imitations. The 1833 defence of Boileau, the key theorist of the classical sublime, serves as a signal of this adjustment. Both Romantic and classical theories champion powerful expression. In both doctrines, the artist and poet may attempt to represent the ineffable, but the notions of inspiration are fundamentally distinct.¹⁹ But whereas the Romantic sublime aims to explain moments where the ineffable can be the only viable aesthetic response, for Boileau totally powerful expression means a complete matching of the word and idea aimed at a Platonic clarity. The classical sublime is about the power of language through ultimately precise expression.²⁰ Boileau's original understanding of the classical sublime offers 'an ideal of clarity' that can be attained through rational means and the skill of invention.²¹ This notion has nothing in common with the enthusiasm of the *furor poeticus* associated with the Romantic sublime in which the genius of the poet reaches new heights of meaning and expression through unprecedented feeling.²²

In writing of Boileau as a founder of Romanticism, the critic from the *Bulletin du Nord* drew on the contemporary re-evaluation of Boileau's understanding of Longinus. In the early nineteenth century, it formed one aspect of classical theory that shaped the views of the next generation of French writers on the nature of beauty. In the period 1800–20, aestheticians like Quatremère de Quincy and Cousin moved Boileau's reading of Longinus away from the Burkean model and closer to their Platonic theories of imitation in which the 'beau idéal' or 'vrai idéal' is the representation of beauty that surpasses nature.²³ For them, the process of apprehending such beauty repeats the dynamic of Boileau's classical sublime in which invention leads the mind to higher perception. In the Romantic reading of Boileau advanced by these theorists, the defining features of beauty, such as universality and transparency, are cognate with Romantic yearning for the immaterial and the infinite, and for a harmony of form that reflects a Platonic ideal of eternal and possibly ineffable perfection.²⁴ In the 1823 edition of Boileau

¹⁹ On this distinction, see Nicholas Cronk, *The Classical Sublime: French Neoclassicism and the Language of Literature* (Charlottesville, Va.: Rookwood Press, 2002), 172–5.

²⁰ See Génétiot, *Le Classicisme*, 429–35.

²¹ Pushkin's treatment of invention in this poem echoes Boileau's *L'Art poétique*, I, ll. 150–2: 'Selon que notre idée est plus ou moins obscure, | L'expression la suit, ou moins nette, ou plus pure. | Ce que l'on conçoit bien s'énonce clairement.'

²² See Michel Delon, 'Le Sublime et l'idée d'énergie: de la théologie au matérialisme', *RHLF* 86 (1986), 62–70.

²³ See M. Iknayan, *The Concave Mirror* (Saratoga, Calif.: Anma Libri, 1983), 81.

²⁴ On the changing perception of Boileau, see I. A. Henning, *L'Allemagne de Mme de Staël et la polémique de l'ouvrage en France et en Allemagne (1814–30)* (Paris: H. Champion, 1929), 26; on the

that Pushkin read, the editor vigorously argued that Boileau had been misread as exclusively a poet of reason. He charged critics with failing to understand the degree to which Boileau championed the imagination as ‘the faculty of awakening in us the impressions caused by perceived objects’.²⁵ This view identifies intellectual apprehension and the higher clarity of ideal beauty as the meaning of inspiration. Pushkin shared this understanding, and it provides a key to Pushkin’s late enigmatic classicism. In late Pushkin, the model of invention has shifted away from the witty emulation of earlier writers, the definitive classical quality of his earlier works, to a higher form of imitation in which reason discovers through invention changeless beauty, granting the poet a capacity to animate the inanimate and objectify the living. We see this in ‘The Beauty’ (‘Krasavitsa’, 1832), a poem in which the image of feminine beauty serves as an emblem of aesthetic design.

Всё в ней гармония, всё диво,
 Всё выше мира и страстей;
 Она покоится стыдливо
 В красе торжественной своей;
 Она кругом себя взирает:
 Ей нет соперниц, нет подруг;
 Красавиц наших бледный круг
 В ее сияньи исчезает.

Куда бы ты ни поспешал,
 Хоть на любовное свиданье,
 Какое б в сердце ни питал
 Ты сокровенное мечтанье,—
 Но встретишься с ней, смущенный, ты
 Вдруг остановишься невольно,
 Благоговей богомольно
 Перед святыней красоты.²⁶

Everything about her is harmony, everything wondrous, | Everything higher than the world and passions; | She rests chastely in her majestic beauty, | In her triumphant beauty; | She gazes around her: | She has no rivals and no friends; | The pale circle of our beauties | Vanishes amidst her radiance.

Wherever you should be hastening, | If only for an amorous intrigue, | Whatever treasured fantasy | That your heart should nourish— | Once you have met her,

Romantic ideal of absolute completion, see Richard Eldridge, *The Persistence of Romanticism: Essays in Philosophy and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), ch. 1.

²⁵ *Œuvres de Boileau Despréaux avec les commentaires revus, corrigés et augmentés* (Paris: Desoer, Libraire, 1823), 9 [Modz. 661]. The biographical essay lays emphasis on Boileau’s struggle against hostile critical opinion, emphasizing his qualities as an innovator. The portrait makes out of him a figure of Romantic classicism.

²⁶ Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 287. Pushkin originally inscribed the poem in the album of Countess Elena Zavadovskaia.

disturbed, | You come to a sudden, involuntary halt, | As you worshipfully feel awe |
Before the sanctum of beauty.

The beauty of this portrait is virtually faceless. All the attributes that capture her arresting radiance are predicated as abstractions according to aesthetic, emotional, and moral terms of reference. Despite his famed love of concrete detail, Pushkin does not strive for a mimetic representation, but offers instead a theoretical statement of beauty as an ideal of which every instance of the beautiful participates to a lesser or greater extent. The two eight-line stanzas divide the tribute thematically, with the first describing the effect of beauty and the second describing its extent and ubiquity. The portrait is human only insofar as its rhetoric of tribute suggests admiration for a concrete subject.²⁷ But the portrait is emblematic because the description associates her with an abstract vision of the beautiful. Line 2 concedes the unearthliness of this embodiment by admitting that she is 'higher than the world'. Defining physical and inner beauty as a reflection of an unworldly harmony is more than hyperbolic praise. It is the working of that harmony that the poem describes instead of the subject's actual appearance, and underneath the transparent surface of the words the argument of the poem has a doctrinal force.

'Harmony' ('garmoniiā') is a suggestive word for any poet to use in the period. What Pushkin means precisely presents a typical problem in reading his lyric where there is no barrier to understanding the line for surface sense, but no indication as to the exact resonance of the conceptual vocabulary.²⁸ In French and Russian poetic manuals, harmony means the expressive correspondence of sound-orchestration and content. The term in Pushkin's later texts no longer simply refers to works that are musically well made. Clearly a different sense is at the heart of this poem's description of beauty. If we look to Pushkin's library and his reading for sources on its meaning, we can see that it encompasses moral and psychological elements as well as aesthetic significance.

²⁷ A. A. Smirnov, 'Romanticheskaia kharakternost' v lirike Pushkina', in V. Baevskii (ed.), *Pushkin. Problemy tvorchestva, tekstologii, vospriiatiia* (Kalinin: Kalininskii gos. universitet, 1989), 10, notes that the female image in Pushkin is rarely more than the vehicle for an 'unreal ideal of spiritual beauty'.

²⁸ Pushkin uses 'garmoniiā' 34 times, less frequently than 'vdokhnovenie' (inspiration) at 100 times, 'voobrazhenie' (imagination) 143 times, and 'genii' (genius) 122 times. Shifts in the understanding of the meaning of harmony give a good idea of how terms common to both the classical and Romantic contained changes in nuance. For La Harpe and Marmontel harmony means exclusively the musical coordination of sound and meaning as regulated by notions of taste and expressivity. Similarly, the abbé Dubos refers to it as 'peindre à l'oreille ce que les mots peignent à l'esprit'. But in the Romantic period, harmony is no longer just a function of form. It refers to a transcendent and metaphysical level of meaning. Pushkin as a reader of French poets may have sensed this shift, particularly as he admired the verse of Sainte-Beuve's poetic alter ego Joseph Delorme who, in the words of one contemporary critic, 'vise une autre harmonie, celle des rapports finement saisis entre les éléments de la langue, les idées, les sentiments et la connaissance intuitive'. Pushkin would also have been able to follow relevant discussions in *Le Globe*. See Brian Juden, 'L'Esthétique: "l'harmonie immense qui dit tout"', *Romantisme*, 5 (1973), 4–17.

In turning oppositions between hope and despair or materiality and plasticity into new entities, harmony also creates beauty of a classical kind by distancing the personal viewpoint and striving to reveal a glimpse of the infinite. Harmony preserves contradiction and sublimates it through the forms of beauty. In Marmontel, taste and beauty appear to be interchangeable terms denoting the capacity of genius to turn the incoherence of passion and the destructive energy of vehemence into sentiments that are ‘sublime and true’, above all in accordance with the properties of beauty in nature, where energy and the passions possess simplicity and elegance. Other writers reinforced this sense of the term. In his copy of the French translation of Fichte’s *Destination de l’homme*, Pushkin cut the pages that characterized harmony as a connection between the physical and mental state:

Between my organs, my voluntary movements and my thought, there exists a harmonic agreement. Insofar as this accord continues, I exist. I exist all the more so as a being of a single type, since the essential attributes that characterize this type subsist in my mind amidst the fluctuation and turmoil of ephemeral changes.²⁹

There is further corroboration of this same idea in an 1829 publication by Frédéric Ancillon that was in Pushkin’s library, *Pensées sur l’homme, ses rapports et ses intérêts*. The two volumes gather short essays on a large range of topics in which the author addresses the place of psychological motivation in human activity. The second volume concentrates on man as a creature of sensibility. Ancillon pays considerable attention to aesthetic issues. His attempts to define beauty repeatedly circle around the notion of harmony, which he describes as ‘calm and sweet, or rapid and passionate, simple or learned, harmony imposes a dominant tone in the soul, and it elevates [the soul] of the reader in the same tone’.³⁰ The meaning of ‘beauty’ here matches its use in ‘The Beauty’ to connote freedom from disturbance—in other words, a type of harmony.

In a certain mood, Pushkin regarded harmony as a matter of life and death. Harmony denotes the poet’s ability creatively to transform the emotional extremes that he makes central to a definition of life. At the turning point of his great elegy ‘The extinguished mirth of my mad years . . .’ (‘Bezumnoykh let ugasshee vesel’e . . .’, 1830) the speaker repudiates his fatal melancholy, and blurts out his desire to ‘become drunk on harmony’.³¹ And the feelings he predicates of harmony are extremes of pleasure and pain, emotional contradictions that contradict the obvious expectation of harmony. Ancillon argues that harmony

²⁹ J.-G. Fichte, *Destination de l’homme* (Paris, 1832), 42–3 [Modz. 917]. (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 7.)

³⁰ Frédéric Ancillon, *Pensées sur l’homme, ses rapports et ses intérêts* (Berlin, 1829) [Modz. 540], 68. (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 8.)

³¹ The intermittently hostile Vissarion Belinsky singled out this elegy as a ‘precious pearl, a reminder of the poet of old’ because it was a perfect example of a highly meditative type of personal poetry. See V. Belinsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 13 vols. (Moscow: Akademiia nauk, 1953), ii, 82–4.

belongs to a larger category called the beautiful, and Pushkin seems to follow him in his poem by relating harmony to the essence of beauty:

Pure beauty does not only consist in the beauty of forms. Expression is something different that can exist without the beauty of forms, just as the beauty of forms can exist without expression. The perfection of the arts consists in the unification or in the harmony of expression and beauty; in such a manner that beauty is expressive and the expression is beautiful. The arts differ from one another according to this aspect. There are those arts where beauty is subordinated to expression, as in poetry; there are others, where expression is subordinated to beauty, as in sculpture. But neither one of them has the capacity to be converted completely from one into the other.³²

The striking tenet in this statement is the separation of beauty from expression as two similar but ultimately distinct properties. Beauty means a formal perfection that exists independent of the effect on the viewer; it exists entirely within itself, primarily for itself, by its own rules or, as Pushkin puts it, 'she rests chastely in her majestic beauty' ('ona pokoitsia stydliivo v krase torzhestvennoi svoei'). Pushkin's late poems move one step further towards the intellectual apprehension of beauty. Like the song that emanates from the unseen poet in the early lyric 'The Singer' ('Pevets', 1816); like nature which abides by its own workings independent of the viewer in 'Signs' ('Primety', 1821), like sound which requires no human response in order to reverberate in 'Echo' ('Ekho', 1831)—beauty is self-reflexive yet admirable, detached yet not inaccessible ('she gazes around her'). It is also absolute because its perfection eclipses lesser examples, 'filling up the whole intermediate space with continuous grace and beauty', as Hazlitt expressed it, in a phrase underlined in Pushkin's copy of *Table Talk*.³³

Against this ideal portrait of absolute beauty, the second stanza of 'The Beauty' sketches the effect of beauty on the emotions of a human admirer. Perfect beauty disrupts and subjugates the viewer's imagination. Unlike the majestic radiance of beauty, the viewer is in haste; unlike her, his emotions feed his imagination, but the ideal inspires a religious awe that shames the very modesty of his conceptions. For all her indifference, beauty is not indifferent. The witty conclusion proves the contention of the first stanza that beauty has no rivals, since she has now become Beauty. Ideal beauty becomes the subject of adoration. Harmony is the state of rapture in which the viewer achieves this ideal by conflating real and ideal, animate and supra-sensory. The poem can be read as a parable for the creative act where the artist follows his own fancy until somehow the vision of inspiration irresistibly strikes. Harmony, the source of beauty's power, is another word for the artistic system that imposes psychological and formal order. The search for harmony also inspires the artist to strive to give material expression to an immaterial ideal. Such striving after the absolute aims at the sublime in

³² Ancillon, *Pensées*, 68. (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 9.)

³³ William Hazlitt, 'On the Application to Study', in *Table-Talk: or, Original Essays* (Paris, 1825), 25 [Modz. 974].

its classical sense, and leads Pushkin to see the power of invention as a new power of discovery. At the same time, the power of harmony as an ethical tool of reconciling opposite passions existed in a cognate discourse on which Pushkin draws in texts where he wishes to connect art and the meaning of life.

ROMANTIC HELLENISM

'How often I tear out my hair', he used to say, 'because I've not got a classical education—I have ideas, but nothing to base them on.'³⁴

(Pushkin)

The poet, like the painter, has models that never change. In order to redraw them faithfully for oneself, it is necessary to have imagination, and nothing more.³⁵

(Marmontel)

The Romantic reinvention of Boileau's idea of the classical offers us a new perspective on Pushkin's late interest in classical statuary and his imitations of the Greek Anthology.³⁶ Inspired by Batiushkov's cycle, Pushkin collected his early imitations of the ancients (as 'Podrazhaniia drevnim', 1826). His decision to revisit a Hellenic ideal and its small poetic forms in the 1830s was unexpected.³⁷ For most critics, these Grecian imitations reflect Pushkin's continued expertise in small forms and adherence to the genre-system.³⁸ Monika Greenleaf's insightful discussion associates them with Schlegel's aesthetic of the fragment.³⁹ The repositioning of Boileau by a new generation as a theorist of metaphysical beauty rather than a legislator of rules revived his relevance to Pushkin in the 1830s. In the

³⁴ Cited in *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva Aleksandra Pushkina* (Moscow: Slovo, 1999), iii. 427. The remark is dated 1830, coinciding with the resurgence of his creative interest in classical literature and thought.

³⁵ Marmontel, *Œuvres complètes*, xv. 178.

³⁶ The 'Anthology Epigrammes' were first published in the literary almanac *Severnye tsvety* of 1832.

³⁷ See Izmailov, *Ocherki tvorchestva Pushkina*, 224. In 1833, under the title 'Imitation of the Ancients', Pushkin wrote two brief epigrams that are settings of poems preserved in Athenaeus. My discussion focuses on other imitations written in the same year. On the early cycle, see V. B. Sandomirskaiia, 'Iz istorii pushkinskogo tsikla "Podrazhaniia drevnim" (Pushkin i Batiushkov)', *VPK*, 1975 (1979), 15–30. On Pushkin's technique as a translator from the Greek Anthology, see M. L. Gasparov, 'Perevod Pushkina "Iz Ksenofana Kolofonskogo"', *VPK* 20 (1986), 24–35; on the growth in fragmentary forms in the poetry of the 1830s, see B. P. Gorodetskii, *Lirika Pushkina* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk, 1962), 440–6.

³⁸ See Vs. A. Grekhnev, 'Anfologicheskie epigrammy', in *Boldinskie chteniia* (Nizhnii Novgorod: Izd-vo Nizhnegorodskogo gosuniversiteta im. N. I. Lobachevskogo, 1976), 31–49; and T. G. Mal'chukova, 'O zhanrovyykh traditsiakh v anfologicheskikh epigrammakh', in *Zhanr i kompozitsiia literaturnogo proizvedeniia* (Petrozavodsk: Petrozavodskii, gos. universitet, 1986), 64–82.

³⁹ Greenleaf, *Pushkin and Romantic Fashion*, 39–49.

French classical idea as it was understood in the 1830s the views of Schlegel on poetic fragmentation and Boileau on beauty stood shoulder to shoulder. Despite surface similarities, Pushkin's later classical imitations bear little relation to his youthful experiments. His archaism taps into new trends, rather than following nostalgia for the old. Like fragments in their brevity yet formally complete, these miniatures fall into the Platonic 'beau idéal' through their attachment to an unspoken whole completed in the mind of the spectator.⁴⁰

In the section on 'Harmony of style' in the *Éléments de la littérature*, Marmontel discussed the issue of expressiveness and mimesis with reference to eighteenth-century practice. He argues that certain syntactic and prosodic choices by convention and by nature correspond to certain feelings. While he accepts that versification as a formal system has rules that must be maintained for their own sake, correct expression, although still restrained by those 'convenances', functions by means of subtle variation, exaggeration, and emphasis. While there is no plausible way to determine the precise effect of certain phonetic and syntactic combinations on the implied reader, the belief in the animating power of style was strong. Together with such formal mastery comes a psychological control of the reader or viewer, in the case of painting and sculpture, whose response will be attuned to the exact message without the further aid of the imagination or the liberty to consider the response for themselves: 'The secret of the genius therefore is not to serve, but to animate his imitation: for the more lively and strong the imitation, the more it acts on the soul, and, consequently, the less liberty it leaves for reflection and attachment to the truth. What impression can light departures from the truth make on spirits that are moved, troubled by astonishment and terror?'⁴¹

Pushkin's early studies in Anthology-style verse were exquisite exercises crafted according to the precepts taught at the Lycée. In composing his later Grecian imitations, Pushkin stepped back from the extrovert claims for visionary power that he made in the 1820s when conspicuous flashes of genius accompanied one idea of poetry. The later Greek imitations strive for the absolute, moving towards the 'beau idéal', where imitated form conveys a relation to a Platonic ideal. Marmontel, who generally placed greater emphasis on feeling than intellectual apprehension, here anticipates French aesthetic theory of the 1830s:

In order to contemplate the object of poetry in all its meaning one must dare to regard nature as present in the mind of the Supreme Intelligence. Therefore, everything that, in the play of the elements, in the organisation of living, animated, sensitive entities, could either physically or morally contribute to varying the mobile and successive spectacle of

⁴⁰ See Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (London: HarperCollins, 1996), 48–58, and Marjorie Levinson, *The Romantic Fragment Poem: A Critique of a Form* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1986), ch. 1. On Schlegel and the Romantic fragment, see Kevin Newmark, 'L'Absolu littéraire: Friedrich Schlegel and the Myth of Irony', *MLN* 107 (1992), 911–17.

⁴¹ Marmontel, *Éléments de la littérature*, 83. (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 10.)

the universe is united in the same picture. That is not all: the present order and past changes are joined by an infinite chain of possibilities under a single essence of beings, and not only that which is, but that which will be in the enormity of time and space.⁴²

Many writers in the period argued that the Greeks were permanently valuable because they taught that an exact imitation was double in essence. Truth in imitation lay in the harmony achieved by the artist between the outer expression and the inner character of the subject. Phidias set the standard for imitation in statuary and painting because he combined anatomical truth with an ideal. Based on scientific study of a live model from which the artist drew initial inspiration, the imitation aimed to give expression to an inner model. Or, as Madame de Staël put it, 'Everything is symbolic in the arts—nature under a thousand diverse appearances in its statues, in its paintings, in its poetry, where immortality must indicate movement, where the exterior must reveal the depth of soul, where the existence of a momentary instant must be made eternal.'⁴³

There was no need for Pushkin to read a theorist like Quatremère de Quincy when the illustrations and long introduction to the deluxe edition of Winckelmann's *Histoire de l'art chez les anciens* distilled for him the essential point that the discerning eye, fortified by an imagination capable of inspiration but 'strengthened by reason', would see in Greek art an analogy between part and whole that reflected the 'true and beautiful' ('le vrai et le beau') in nature.⁴⁴ Among the most representative of thinkers of this school whose theory was compatible with Kant, Schiller, and Schelling was Victor Cousin. As a Platonist, he held that the 'ideal was the object of the passionate contemplation of the artist', and that the basis of the beautiful is the idea.⁴⁵ In the same vein, Ancillon usefully summarized key ideas in French debates around post-Kantian aesthetics in his two manuals. His *Mélanges* and *Pensées philosophiques* communicated the view that the plastic arts incarnate in specific form an ideal vision that 'awakens the feeling for the infinite in the spectator'.⁴⁶ While Ancillon acknowledged that the poet possessed the greatest freedom to soar above reality, he believed that

⁴² Marmontel, *Œuvres complètes*, xiv. 167 ['Invention']. (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 11.)

⁴³ Germaine de Staël, *De l'Allemagne* (Paris: Hachette, 1958–60), 72 (part II): 'Tout est symbolique dans les arts, et la nature sous mille apparences diverses dans ces statues, dans ces tableaux, dans ces poésies, où l'immortalité doit indiquer le mouvement, où l'extérieur doit révéler le fond de l'âme, où l'existence d'un instant doit être éternisée.'

⁴⁴ Johann Winckelmann, *Histoire de l'art chez les anciens... avec des notes historiques et critiques de différents auteurs*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1793–1803), i, p. lxxxiv [Modz. 1502]. On an ideal versus material beauty, see Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), ch. 3.

⁴⁵ On Cousin's Platonic aesthetics, see Frederic Will, *Flumen Historicum: Victor Cousin's Aesthetic and its Sources* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 17–34.

⁴⁶ On the Platonic ideal and sculpture, see Iknayan, *The Concave Mirror*, ch. 2 (p. 34). Ancillon writes about the infinite and the sublime, and argues in Platonic terms that in great poetry an infinite world of ideas is hidden under precise forms: 'Cette idée, dont les formes ne sont jamais que le signe et l'enveloppe, constitue l'idéal de l'art, ou, en d'autres termes, le sublime et l'énergie d'un ouvrage

good poetry, like sculpture, needed specific features and details in order to imitate nature.

To some extent, elements of this theory of mimesis filtered down to Pushkin through fictional treatments and literary histories.⁴⁷ In addition to de Staël, he also read Étienne de Sénancour, who championed the idea of imitation as a synthesis of a remembered but lost original and an ideal intuited by the artist. It is obvious that the hero of Sénancour's highly successful novel *Oberman* (1804) had an impact on Pushkin's ideas about fictional protagonists. Sénancour was significant not only for his take on the disaffected Romantic hero. In the novel and in the *Rêveries*, which Pushkin read, he encountered a theory of ideal beauty that was 'by definition unattainable but we may sense it by perception of relationships. In the work of art these relationships are brought into order.'⁴⁸ Pushkin read other theorists, including Gustave Planche and Pierre Ballanche, who held that the object of imitation was 'la belle nature'. This realm of ideal and improved beauty was close to the meaning of nature defined by classical theorists. Once it acquired greater philosophical substance through the influence of German philosophy, the classical ideal became a vital part of the Romanticism espoused by the Cénacle from Lamartine to Hugo to Sainte-Beuve, whose poetic practice and criticism contributed to Pushkin's thinking about the poetic imagination in the 1830s.⁴⁹ In this light, Pushkin's renewed interest in the form and style of the Greek Anthology in the 1830s is not inexplicable archaism, for his approach to classicism corresponds to Romantic Hellenism in France and Britain.⁵⁰

In formal and thematic terms, Pushkin's early and late Grecian imitations are bound to be similar because they emanate from the common source of the Greek epigram.⁵¹ The resemblances, however, are limited. The earlier 'Imitations of the Ancients' convey a naive perspective, striving artlessly for simplicity and a lack of self-consciousness, embodying the classical idealization of antiquity

poétique.' Frédéric Ancillon, *Mélanges de politique et de philosophie morales* (Paris: Fuchs, 1801) i. 165.

⁴⁷ In Russia, Viazemskii knew Cousin's writings well. See P. A. Viazemskii, *Zapisnye knizhki (1813–48)* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk, 1963), 267. The influential philosopher and cultural theorist Ivan Kireevskii admired Cousin's doctrine and hoped to translate his writings. See Kireevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, i. 12.

⁴⁸ See Étienne Sénancour, *Rêveries* (Paris, 1833), 14–15, which speak of 'une idée du bien absolu' [Modz. 1386].

⁴⁹ See Canat, *L'Hellénisme des romantiques*, ch. 9; and A. G. Lehmann, *Sainte-Beuve: A Portrait of the Critic, 1804–1842* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

⁵⁰ See Timothy Webb, 'Romantic Hellenism', in Stuart Curran (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 148–76.

⁵¹ See S. A. Kibal'nik, 'Vozniknovenie v russkoi lirike antologicheskogo roda poezii', *Russkaia literatura*, 2 (1984), 148–60; and by the same author 'Antologicheskie epigrammy Pushkina', *PIM* 12 (1986), 152–74. Kibal'nik's understanding of the relation of these poems to Pushkin's aesthetics is very different from mine. Pushkin's source in 1832 was the French prose translation by Lefevre [Modz. 550]. See Ia. Levkovich, 'K tvorcheskoi istorii perevoda Pushkina iz Ksenofana Kolofonskogo', *VPK* (1972), 91–100.

as the state of perfect harmony. These poems downplay pastness, aiming to recover fleetingly an ancient ideal by turning it into an eternal present. The speakers express the passion and feeling of a moment without being thoughtful about the forms they inhabit. Unlike Keats, who sees in Greece an ideal 'whose imaginative rehabilitation might guarantee the authority of modern poetry',⁵² Pushkin constructs classical moments that continually swerve away from the demands of subjectivity and self-scrutiny of the modern poem, where the value of poetic statement depends on the poet's strength of imagination.

Pushkin's first Grecian imitations featured speakers. The later four poems represent objects, taking as their subject Greek statuary situated in the gardens at Tsarskoe Selo. These poems are therefore imitations of imitations. By interposing a work of art and creating a double-remove from nature, the poet intimates the view that such an ideal is irrecoverable. The shift from imitating nature to imitating art is consonant with the impact of the 'beau idéal' on theories of mimesis. Their purpose is not to express nostalgia for classical art as such. Through the verbal imitation of the plastic arts, they achieve an equivalent of the ideal harmony of meaning and form. Like Canova's Ovidian figures, which miraculously seem alive as though petrified into marble, these epigrams seem to fix a moment. The poems teach an ideal responsiveness to the sculpture because they read the inanimate object as though it were still alive. Unspoiled by particularizing detail, they match gesture and feeling in simple correspondence as perfect expressions of a mental state or physical ideal. The shape of all four poems about sculpture is the classical distich, underscoring their formal, crafted status as artworks or verbal statuary.⁵³ In the 'Statue at Tsarskoe Selo' ('Tsarskosel'skaia statuia', 1830), the poet's subjective viewpoint has been submerged in the sadness of the subject.

Урну с водой уронив, об утес ее дева разбила.
 Дева печально сидит, праздный держа черепок.
 Чудо! не сякнет вода, изливаясь из урны разбитой;
 Дева, над вечной струей, вечно печальна сидит.⁵⁴

Dropping the urn of water, the maiden broke it on the rock. | The maiden sits sadly, holding the empty shard. | Miracle! the water is unstinting, flowing from the shattered urn; | The maiden, over the eternal stream, sits eternally sad.

For the girl, the broken jug means nothing more than an accident. The girl is frozen in sadness because she cannot see, as the spectator does, that the sculptor has transformed a single event into a timeless and unbroken circle of continuity. For the poet, her pathos is perhaps a more general reminder of the gap between

⁵² Martin Aske, *Keats and Hellenism: An Essay* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 38.

⁵³ For a different reading, see Roman Jakobson, 'The Statue in Pushkin's Poetic Mythology', in Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings, v: On Verse, its Masters and Explorers* (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 237–81.

⁵⁴ Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 231.

the timelessness attributed to the work of art and the limited perspective of the subject. The miracle enjoyed by spectator and reader is both the reversal of time and the fact that the illusion of the scene seems to rise out of nature. Only the title acknowledges the vision as a work of craft. The fountain stands as an elegant allegory of art's ability to turn a single event into an eternity, to recuperate the destroyed into an endless continuity and flow. From the outside perspective of the poet who describes the statue, his poem offers the further dimension of Romantic irony, a reminder that the imitation is always self-conscious and aware of its status as a work of art despite the illusion of immediacy.

A pair of poems written in 1836 reverses the art of the sculptor by reanimating monumental athletes. 'On the Statue of the Thrower of the Horseshoe' ('*Na statuiu igraushchego v svaiku*', 1836) describes beauty as unforced strength fusing power and lightness:

Юноша, полный красы, напряженья, усилия чуждый,
 Строен, легок и могуч,—тешится быстрой игрой!
 Вот и товарищ тебе, дискобол! Он достоин, клянуся,
 Дружно обнявшись с тобой, после игры отдыхать.⁵⁵

Youth, full of beauty, tensile strength that is unforced. | Harmonious, light and mighty, he revels in the fast game! | Here is a comrade for you, the discus-thrower! He is truly worthy, I vow, | To give you a friendly embrace and rest after the game.

Modern and ancient are not entirely alike because the former's imitation of an ancient model is one step further removed from the synthetic Greek ideal of the male form. In his use of apostrophe, the poet plays with the illusion of verisimilitude. The opening is an address not to a statue but to a human, and yet the second distich begins with an apostrophe to the famous statue of the Discus-Thrower, who will now find a companion worthy of him, a companion who seems to be simultaneously inanimate and animate. The first distich lays emphasis on the plasticity of form that gives human qualities and energy to the stone: the lightness, power, effortlessness combine with the impression of tension to give the appearance of coiled energy. By the last line the poet's imagination takes the illusion of animation to be a reality and imagines the two statues embracing on finishing their sporting activities.

In the poem 'On the Statue of the Youth Playing Knuckle-bones' ('*Na statuiu igraushchego v babki*', 1836) the figure appears to be frozen in the follow-through from his shot:

Юноша трижды шагнул, наклонился, рукой о колено
 Бодро оперся, другой поднял меткую кость.
 Вот уж прицелился . . . прочь! раздайся, народ любопытный,
 Врозь расступись; не мешай русской удалой игре.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ibid. 434.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 435.

The youth stepped thrice, bowed, with one hand on knee | He balanced boldly, the other [held] the well-aimed bone. | Look he has already fired . . . away! give way, curious people, | Step to one side; do not hinder a wild Russian game.

Everything unfolds from the athlete's viewpoint as the speaker follows the trajectory of the shot. It has become impossible to separate the thrower from the throw. On the surface level, these short lyrics are about a moment reduced to pure action and sign. But as reflections of Pushkin's idea about poetry, they renew the importance of invention over imagination. Imagination is limited to the perfect application of style in the imitation of an imitation that aims to capture an ideal merger of form and idea.

The idea of art in these poems is nothing less than the position of form as an image of the ideal. These poems create a set of mimetic ratios. Language stands to the poet as stone stands to the sculptor, conveying a view shared by Lessing and French writers such as Cousin and Quatremère that language in the poetic imitation of art can depict the 'corporeal power' of parts with a success equal to the plasticity of sculpture.⁵⁷ But such imitation relies not on the naturalistic description of physical detail. Contemporary theorists of mimesis, working after Lessing, held that the task of the poet is to convey in language a translation of sensation that will achieve an effect equivalent to the feelings the original viewer would have on seeing the object. This interpretation of feeling takes the viewer back to the Greek sculptor's original object, itself a synthetic ideal of what the athlete should look like as a type.⁵⁸ Almost inevitably, given Pushkin's dialectical habit of mind on aesthetic issues, the 'beau idéal' prompts him to consider an alternative view, expressed in another group of important if little studied lyrics concerned with statuary and the commemoration of real individuals rather than invented antique figures.

THE PLASTIC ARTS AND THE PLATONIC IDEAL

The ideal human face serves only as the vessel of heavenly phenomena since the primary significance of the plastic is symbolic; indeed, symbols in the arts are the individual, independent manifestations of eternal ideas.⁵⁹

(Galich)

In 1836, Pushkin wrote two more poems about the plastic arts. After expressing the Hellenic ideal in his miniatures, he stopped to reflect on the relation between

⁵⁷ Pushkin may have known Lessing through the discussion of his theory of mimesis that Karamzin included in his *Letters of a Russian Traveller* (1792), and indirectly by reading Winckelmann. On the impersonality of art in Lessing's theory, see David Wellbery, *Lessing's Laocoon: Semiotics and Aesthetics in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 105–8.

⁵⁸ See Iknayan, *The Concave Mirror*, ch. 3, and Frederick Burwick, *Mimesis and its Romantic Reflections* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), ch. 3.

⁵⁹ Galich, *Opyt*, ¶89, p. 89.

an ideal of imitation and the artist's own aspiration to originality. Self-conscious meditation on the nature of art, posterity, and eternity characterizes these works. It is one thing to cast a mythic figure in sculpture or writing. But should the artist wish to commemorate individuals, the priority of the universal type threatens the individual subject (in an aspect of neoclassical portraiture that we shall discuss in Chapter 7). The conundrum leads Pushkin to consider whether poetry or statuary best expresses the human ideal in moral terms. While the poems reassert the role of poetic craft in capturing originality that makes individuals great, they retreat from the philosophical association of form with 'le beau idéal'.

'To an Artist' ('Khudozhniku', 1836) invokes three types of response to art: first, art based on its historical function; secondly, on Kantian criteria of independent aesthetic value untainted by subjective appreciation; and, finally, on a personal biographical connection:

Грустен и весел вхожу, ваятель, в твою мастерскую:
 Гипсу ты мысли даешь, мрамор послушен тебе:
 Сколько богов, и богинь, и героев! . . . Вот Зевс Громовержец,
 Вот из подлобья глядит, дуя в цевницу, сатир.
 Здесь зачинатель Барклай, а здесь совершитель Кутузов.
 Тут Аполлон—идеал, там Ниобея—печаль. . . .
 Весело мне. Но меж тем в толпе молчаливых кумиров—
 Грустен гуляю: со мной доброго Дельвига нет;
 В темной могиле почил художников друг и советник.
 Как бы он обнял тебя! как бы гордился тобой!⁶⁰

Sad and cheerful I enter, sculptor, your studio: | You confer thought to plaster, marble is obedient to you: | So many gods, and goddesses, and heroes! . . . Here is Zeus the Bolt-Thrower, | There, peering askance, blowing his pipe, is a satyr. | Here is Barclay the initiator, and over here the completer Kutuzov. | Right here is Apollo—an ideal, there Niobe—sadness . . . | I find it cheerful. But all the same amidst the throng of silent statues— | I am sad as I walk about: good Del'vig is not with me; | The friend and adviser of artists rests in his dark grave. | How he would have embraced you! What pride he'd have taken in you!

In the Greek imitations, the poet cannot permit himself self-conscious concern for the artwork since awareness of its artificiality would spoil the effect. By contrast, this poem offers its own reader paradigms of responsiveness by showing how the poem, as a work of art about art, reflects on the nature of a viewer's (and reader's) responses. By concentrating on the sculptor rather than the sculptures, it replaces an anonymous ideal with the subjectivity of the artist, the plastic strength of his material, and the idea of process. The artist is able to infuse inanimate

⁶⁰ Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 416. On the sculptor Samuil Gal'berg, whose style was strictly classical, see G. Kok, 'Stikhotvorenie Pushkina "Khudozhniku"', *VPK*, 1972 (1970), 100–3. He sculpted Pushkin's bust in 1837.

material with the ideas that will in turn affect the viewer ('Gipsu ty mysli daesh', l. 2) because he is sensitive to the inner expressiveness of material ('mramor poslushen tebe', l. 2) awaiting release by him. Pushkin suggests the opposition between creativity as both an active and passive force by chiasmatically arranging the attributes ('ty mysli daesh': masterskaia || vaiatel': mramor poslushen tebe'). Moreover, the poem evaluates the artistic work according to its success as national monument or as memorial to an individual.

Oxymoron is the key trope of the poet's survey of the artist's studio:⁶¹ he yokes together the sublime Zeus and the winsome satyr; the failed heroism of Barclay and the triumph of Kutuzov, the Olympian remove of Apollo seen in the foreground ('tut') and Niobe's sadness in the background ('tam'). The poem then turns again on the contrast between sadness ('pechal'') and the viewer's avowed feeling of happiness in response to seeing these creations. Yet that mood is unstable, as the subject's mind turns to the death of a friend: the effect of naming his late classmate Del'vig at line 8 is not only to make the subject autobiographical but more generally to shift attention away from one mode of artistic response characterized by disinterested admiration to one based on personal association and rooted in individual experience. The sad-joy oxymoron (note the chiasmic placement of the adjectives 'grustnyi' and 'veselyi' in ll. 1 and 7) is to the viewer what the inherent patterns of the marble are to the artist: both are capacities of feeling and expressiveness that are released by viewing and by crafting. But ultimately the poet must add the name and image of Del'vig in order to confer true meaning on the art form and life on the statues.⁶² On its own, the 'beau idéal' is insufficient as an emotional experience.

In 'I have erected to myself a monument not made by hand' ('Ia pamiatnik sebe vozdvig nerukotvornyi', 1836), an imitation of Horace's 'Exegi Monumentum', the poet becomes the verbal sculptor of his own monument. Inevitably, discussions of this poem have centred on the tragic sense of an ending that haunts lines written in the last full year of Pushkin's life.⁶³ But if we leave to one side the biographical undertones linking the poem to Pushkin's state of mind, it is possible to concentrate on the connection between the opening stanzas and two questions that are central to the aesthetics of imitation, where once again statuary serves as the emblem of lasting beauty. Horace's ode had enjoyed a long history in Russian poetry, beginning with imitations by major

⁶¹ The addressee, B. I. Orlovskii, had sculpted the statues to Barclay and Kutuzov that still stand outside the Kazan Cathedral in St Petersburg.

⁶² The function of the name is similar to Derrida's concept of supplementation (as discussed in *Of Grammatology*), where an outside signifier stabilizes meaning and changes the 'horizon of signification'. Without the poet's memory of Del'vig, statuary represents the limitless interchangeability of commemorated figures, such as Kutuzov and Barclay, in Romantic typology. With the poet's supplementation, the heroism of the individual is disclosed (on which see Chapter 7).

⁶³ See Izmailov, *Ocherki tvorchestva Pushkina*, 235. Izmailov regards the poem as a final reckoning of Pushkin's life and of his generation at the Lycée, whose Jubilee was celebrated that year.

eighteenth-century writers from Lomonosov to Derzhavin.⁶⁴ For a generation of poetic innovators, each of whom considered himself to be the founder of a new secular Russian literature, Horace's lyric struck home because it cast innovation and originality purely in terms of imitation. Horace vaunts his skill in domesticating the diction and rhythms of Greek through which he enriched the language and literature of Rome as a successor culture to Greece.⁶⁵ He makes no claims for his visionary powers or imagination, celebrating instead the skills and values of the craftsman. In the eighteenth century, when Horace's authority stood high as an arbiter of taste and poetic rules, and when Russian writers conceived the position of their culture *vis-à-vis* France by analogy with the Roman attitude to the legacy of Greece, there could have been no more appropriate statement about the poet's originality.⁶⁶ The fact that Russians in the eighteenth century imitated the poem indicates the importance of literary competition as the mark of original contribution amongst rival linguistic and literary models.

Pushkin turned to Horace in the knowledge of the poem's general importance in European literary culture and its status in Russia. No poet gains immediate authority as a Horatian merely by virtue of being the most recent imitator. By rewriting a poem and the tradition invested in it, Pushkin chose to cast his own originality in terms of a theory of imitation. In fact, Pushkin made his most blatant assertion of originality by choosing one of the most intertextual tributes to imitation. Speaking in his own voice required him, as he had done throughout his career, to master and speak in other voices. As a youthful poet, he visited the shades of other poets and mockingly spoke in their voices. Now, in anticipation of his own eventual ghost, he speaks with the authority and voice of Horace.⁶⁷

Ехегі monumentum

Я памятник себе воздвиг нерукотворный,
К нему не заростет народная тропа,
Вознесся выше он главою непокорной
Александрийского столпа.

Нет, весь я не умру—душа в заветной лире
Мой прах переживет и тленья убежит—

⁶⁴ On Pushkin's imitation, see M. P. Alekseev, *Stikhotvorenie Pushkina 'Ja pamiatnik sebe vozdvig...'* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1967).

⁶⁵ See Gordon Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), ch. 5.

⁶⁶ On Horace's stature as a teacher and poetic model, see J. Marmier, *Horace en France, au dix-septième siècle* (Paris: PUF, 1962), and Frank Stack, *Pope and Horace: Studies in Imitation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), ch. 1.

⁶⁷ In a similar vein the ageing Voltaire paid tribute to Horace as a poetic model. His 'Epître à Horace' (1772) was known to Pushkin, whose interest in Voltaire was particularly strong in the 1830s.

И славен буду я, доколь в подлунном мире
Жив будет хоть один пиит.⁶⁸ (ll. 1–8)

I have erected to myself a monument not made by hand, | The nation's path to it will not become overgrown, | With unbowed head it soars higher | Than the column of Alexandria. | No, I shall not entirely die—my soul in the hallowed lyre | Shall outlast my remains and escape disintegration— | And I shall be famed in the sublunary world | If only one poet remains alive.

The nature of the monument itself attracts interest when seen in the light of the theory of beauty that we have discussed. It is taken for granted that Horace's poem was an obvious choice for Pushkin on which to base his own appeal to posterity, and its history in Russian lyric validates this assumption. But at a time when he gravitated to sculpture in his poems about art, it must have been the image of the monument that was most compelling. In Russian the word 'pamiatnik' means either monument or statue. In this context the two meanings are interchangeable since public monuments of individuals are statues. The meaning of the epithet describing the statue ('not made by hand', 'nerukotvornyi') is literally 'unmanufactured'.⁶⁹ The drift of the entire first stanza is toward emphasizing the unphysical essence of the monument. This is paradoxical because an immaterial monument cannot be the goal of the popular tribute that the poet predicts. Similarly, the poet envisages the ethereal height of the monument as it rises above some mythic wonder of the world.⁷⁰ This is clearly only possible if the statue is a conceptual entity representing the totality of his creation.

We have already seen that in the later Greek imitations viewer and reader progress from contemplating statuary as material object, regarded as a synthesis of the real and the mental, to a contemplation of the 'beau idéal' as a timeless category. In his Horatian adaptation, Pushkin suggests that contemplation of the statue marks the beginning point of an admiration that will transcend the material. Implicitly, the poem makes a claim for the written word, and for poetry in particular, as a superior medium to statuary because the true meaning of language requires correspondence with the essential and imperishable. Throughout the poem Pushkin's emphasis falls not on written, but on spoken language. What are remembered are the sounds that come from the lyre (l. 5), and at the beginning

⁶⁸ Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 424.

⁶⁹ On the possible glosses of the epithet, see Rolf-Dietrich Keil, 'Zur Deutung von Puškins "Pamjatnik"', *Die Welt der Slaven*, 2 (1961), 174–220.

⁷⁰ On the identity of the specific monument, see Alekseev, *Stikhotvorenie Pushkina*, 12–15; R. D. Timenchik and A. L. Ospovat, 'Pechal'nu povest' sokhranit'. *Ob avtore i chitateliakh Mednogo vsadnika* (Moscow: Kniga, 1985), 42–3. For a reading with a different philosophical emphasis on the creative independence of the Romantic, see G. Mickelson, "'Pamiatnik" Pushkina v svete ego filosofskoi liriki 1836 goda', in *Tvorchestvo A. S. Pushkina. Materialy sovetsko-amerikanskogo simpoziuma v Moskve* (Moscow: Nauka, 1985), 68–80.

of the third stanza he boasts that '[r]umour about me will traverse the length of great Russia'. From that point of view, the second stanza makes use of the Platonic language of classicism by invoking the soul as the infinite part of the creative self that survives. But the poet envisages none of the steps toward attaining a sense of that higher realm associated with viewing the statue. What is remarkable in the poem is not the standard claim of immortality (l. 10), but the proof of that claim on posterity. Like the beauty who becomes the Beautiful in 'The Beauty', the monument is the emblem of Pushkin's achievement as an ideal of poetry.⁷¹ By eliminating the physical permanence of the monumental and making the material immaterial, Pushkin surpasses the key Horatian topos with the language of invention. He has also made his idea of beauty and the idea of Pushkin dependent on no craftsman other than himself. In both these respects, Pushkin's greatest classical imitation speaks the language of the Romantic absolute.⁷²

FROM CLASSICAL TO ROMANTIC

While there is a consensus that Romanticism has an underlying philosophical unity, few dispute the view that fluidity, change, contradiction are its hallmarks. Of all terms, classicism suffers from being seen as too unified to be productive, suggesting constraint and obedience where Romanticism, even where confusingly varied, breathes freedom and innovation, where Romanticism cultivates the natural and the progressive. In part, the incompleteness of efforts to understand the interaction of these two aesthetic movements as an ongoing problem in Pushkin's aesthetics reflects a larger tendency towards polarization. Marilyn Butler astutely observed that the reification of both Romanticism and eighteenth-century classicism into stable movements is the work of the late nineteenth century, which 'probably reflects a prejudiced, outdated and inaccurate stereotype of the late eighteenth century as an era of stasis rather than of rapid expansion and change'.⁷³ These chapters have sought to redress that imbalance. A fundamental asymmetry obtains in the use of these terms with respect to Pushkin, whose Romanticism is defined in terms of innovative content and experimentation, while his classicism is understood as little more than an adherence to a precise and polished style, rather than an aesthetic current in its own right. Within Pushkin criticism, classicism has been narrowly perceived as a set of rule-bound moralizing

⁷¹ The limitations of material art, as opposed to the imaginative scope of poetry, are treated by Lessing and other writers. See Wellbery, *Lessing's Laocoon*, 121–2.

⁷² On statuary and the idea of beauty, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'Absolu littéraire: théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978), 180–91.

⁷³ Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 18.

principles, emphasizing correctness and an artificial approach to nature improved by art. More recent studies of the classical legacy have in fact shown how complex and creative it is as an aesthetic system. Classical theories of imitation and inspiration do not preclude originality. Imitation itself poses complex questions as to choice of models.⁷⁴ Even as Romanticism refashioned the main genres, numerous lyric poets, including Hugo himself, and critics like Sainte-Beuve defended classicism well into the 1830s, largely by recasting it as a theory of an ideal type of beauty rather than a rule-bound system.

When pressed to draw a distinction between the classical and the Romantic, Pushkin, as we have seen, ducked the question by calling the Romantic anything innovative. Romanticism enhanced the place of the artist over the imperatives of tradition. Poems about inspiration of a different type resist the trend. In the end, the Pushkinian lyre is not entirely like Coleridge's aeolian harp because the poet must know how to make music or transform Apollo's lessons.⁷⁵ In the poems discussed in this chapter we see Pushkin advocating an idea of invention that goes against a current running in favour of individual visionary plenitude. The conjunction of taste and invention for which Batiushkov had praised Pushkin remained fundamental to his artistic philosophy. It enabled Pushkin to produce poems that are statements about absolute beauty. But such distance from the ordinary, and from the subjective, was satisfactory only in part. Just as the poetry of imitation that Pushkin wrote in his early years subordinated originality to competence, the classical standard favoured a tone of remove that was anonymous. Such an approach came under pressure from the demands of a Romantic print culture for conspicuous individuality (the subject of Chapter 6).

'All systems are false', wrote Hugo, 'only genius ('le genie') is true.' On the surface, this declaration gives primary importance to the expressive power of the individual imagination over the mimetic impulse of classicism. At least in rhetorical terms, the Romantic poet generally will look to nature or to his own inimitable genius for those new directions in feeling. Pushkin's importance for Romanticism in Russia lies in his determination to force a confrontation with the question of poetic egotism. To do so he often removes himself from the centre of his work and makes other writers the central subject of his writing.

⁷⁴ See R. Wellek, 'The Term and Concept of "Classicism" in Literary History', in E. R. Wasserman (ed.), *Aspects of the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965), 207–43; and the excellent E. B. O. Borgerhoff, *The Freedom of French Classicism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), esp. ch. 6 ('The Complex of Classicism').

⁷⁵ Invocations to Apollo are not uncommon in Russian poetry of the period, normally as tongue-in-cheek classical affectation. Apollo will serve Pushkin as a byword for genuine poetic quality as in the poem 'To Prince A. M. Gorchakov' ('Kniaziu A. M. Gorchakovu', 1814). In poems of the 1820s, Pushkin will invoke the image of Apollo with a new purpose in poems marked by extreme psychological dislocation, a tutelary deity present when the poet is possessed by a visionary spirit yet also an emblem of classicism. The coupling here of the lyre and extreme emotion is unusual. For a poetic meditation on inspiration contemporary with Pushkin's poem that uses the conjunction of ancient emblem and effusive inspiration, see the poem 'B. V. Kapnistu' in Pavel Mezhakova, *Stikhotvoreniia Pavla Mezhakova* (St Petersburg, 1828) [Modz. 234].

From the 1820s, Pushkin's lyric poetry, much more than his narrative and novel-in-verse, resisted one idea of Romanticism. The poet remained in his last decade inescapably drawn to the classical poetics he continued to refine with a more recent ideal of beauty based on his reading. In these poems, and even when contemplating material representation of the self, Pushkin emerges as a poet who tries to escape the subjectivity of the self and self-preoccupation through classical form. In 'I have erected to myself a monument' Pushkin is true to his first beginnings, for his understanding of innovation develops in tandem with his practice as an imitator. Such convictions about tradition and originality only tell half the story. Chapters 4 to 6 will chart the changing status of the imagination as a faculty and aesthetic power in Pushkin's thinking and poetry. The growth of the imagination brings with it a more assertive rhetoric of originality and repudiation of imitation, no matter how consistently intertextual Pushkin's lyric continues to be. I shall argue that from 1826 the influence of English Romanticism and German Idealism will make available to Pushkin a new model of the imagination that compels him to depart from one understanding of the ideal of beauty and experiment with a more active application of the poetic imagination, leading to poems of greater subjectivity.

4

A Reticent Imagination

Imagination is . . . a complex power: it includes conception, or simple apprehension, which enables us to form a notion of those former objects of perception, or of knowledge, out of which we are to make a selection; abstraction, which separates the selected materials from the qualities and circumstances which are connected with them in nature; and judgment and taste, which direct their combination.¹

This chapter steps back from close reading in order to focus on the meaning of such concepts as subjectivity, imagination, and mimesis that from the late 1820s provided a counter-current to the classical ideal. It will provide the context for the close study of Pushkin's representation of nature in the chapter which follows.

Although Pushkin was inherently conservative as a lyricist, he understood how the classical could become the Romantic. Revisionism was a vital part of the Romantic concept of creativity. It is commonplace to recognize how much value Romantic writing invests in the notion of absolute originality. But it is also true that for many European writers, '[t]he true originality of Romanticism . . . lies in a claim not only to destroy the classical tradition and replace it with something better, but eventually—in the near, or far, or infinitely distant future—to arrive at a higher form of classicism'.² His approach to innovation as a type of creative recycling met the Romantic revolutionary ideal halfway. But from 1826 the path to Romantic subjectivity through imagination also lay open to Pushkin. Issues once given little urgency in his poetry became more critical from 1826. We shall see that the transition to a greater Romantic lyric was tentative, and that Pushkin only intermittently transposed his reading about the imagination and subjectivity into poems that are statements about the creative mind. Yet even as fidelity to the classical dominated his lyrical poetics, the serial publication of *Evgenii Onegin* in the 1820s brought him renown and, in equal measure, harsh criticism. The novel's hints of radicalism and its excessive display of imagination courted controversy. By contrast, the structure and content of his first collection

¹ Review of Stockdale's *Lectures on Eminent English Poets*, in *Selection from the Edinburgh Review*, ii, 3 [Modz. 584].

² See Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner, *Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth-Century Art* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984), 24.

of poems in 1826 communicated the basically conservative stance of his lyric aspirations, while also hinting at new departures.

We have already seen that Pushkin in 'About Classical and Romantic Poetry' fell back on a standard opposition between the classical and the Romantic loosely understood as the replacement of tradition by a search for the new.³ The very fact that Pushkin lazily repeated a familiar and unproductive opposition is perhaps a helpful clue to his thinking. By yoking the classical and Romantic together, he refused either to prescribe new rules or to discard the classical elements of his style. What is most telling about Pushkin's article is its indecision. The essay ignores available definitions of the Romantic in political, artistic, and ideological terms at a moment when Pushkin could have chosen to define the Romantic in Russia by summarizing contemporary trends and promoting a more ideological role for poets. The Decembrists defined the Romantic in terms of a political programme undertaken against the post-Napoleonic repression. For others, including Zhukovsky and Baratynsky, elegiac posturing was the quintessence of the Romantic, while for others alienation in the muted manner of Oberman and Werther, or in the desperate misanthropy of the Corsair, defined the essence of the 'Romantic'. If the article fails to ask the question how a classical poet can become a Romantic it is because the problem will remain theoretical until he experiences the impact of a new subjectivity in 'Autumn' and 'I visit once again . . .', where imagination overwhelms reason and memory, with both negative and positive results. Even as Pushkin delved into more recent writing, his interest in the writers who originally formed his taste remained active. Yet the irresistible reversion to mimesis and invention increasingly rubs against the power of the imagination to do new things, and makes out of poems a chance to test the ground, possibly in the hope of building a bridge between the two sides.

Eighteenth-century Russian writers were in practice far more experimental than in their aesthetic theory. Lomonosov's landmark treatise on the three styles (1743) and subsequent works of rhetoric were more writer's manual than investigations of the connection between style and the psychology of affect. During Pushkin's youth, the European bias of the book market and an enterprising translation industry provided a growing influx into Russia of European works on aesthetics, read in the original or in Russian translation. In the early nineteenth century, native works on literary terminology and rhetoric by Nikolai Koshanskii and Nikolai Ostolopov, often cited as evidence of growing sophistication, in fact largely perpetuated neoclassical rules without encompassing issues of aesthetics. Ostolopov's dictionary was perhaps the first manual to draw the copious illustrations for its entries from contemporary Russian literature, thereby demonstrating the compatibility of practice with a theory of literature. But on more abstract subjects, like the imagination, Ostolopov aligned himself

³ Pushkin, *PSS*, xi, 36–8 ('O poezii klassicheskoi i romanticheskoi', 1825).

with classicism by translating an article by Marmontel.⁴ Such cross-currents, where critical practice continued to mandate eighteenth-century precepts even as writers fully engaged with European models, affected Pushkin's attitude to style and limited the risks he took in embracing Romantic subjectivity. The opposition between theories of the imagination was a central issue in the 1820s and 1830s, particularly in France. The critics and aestheticians who laid the groundwork for the Romantics by exploring the creative imagination finally had an impact in Russia, both underpinning the rise of Romanticism and complicating, in particular, Pushkin's attitude to the relation of craft and inspiration in balancing classical and Romantic.⁵ Abstract discussions of taste and aesthetic theory practice were present in the form of European imports by writers such as La Harpe, Alexander Gerard, Immanuel Kant, and also included works about them. This enriching context also stimulated the first attempts by Russian philosophers to write about the philosophy of art. Treatises that put issues of aesthetics at the centre of their anthropology or psychology included Dmitrii Vellanskii's *Physiology or the Science of the Nature of Man* (1820),⁶ and A. Pisarev's *A Theory of the Arts, or the Rules of Painting, Sculpture, Engraving and Architecture* (1808).⁷

THE POWER OF THE IMAGINATION: GALICH, COLERIDGE, HAZLITT

It may be helpful to avoid terminology that gives a false impression of philosophical allegiance. Pushkin seems to have a practical approach to learning about abstract things, taking short cuts in order to get a purchase on complex systems. Correlating Pushkin's vocabulary to ideas is not simple, since there is an asymmetricality between Pushkin's application of his aesthetic vocabulary and the changing conceptualization assimilated silently and almost invisibly in those words.⁸ The cumulative evidence may align him with various positions but he arrives there indirectly, being possibly Kantian without much knowledge of Kant,

⁴ Nikolai Ostolopov, *Slovar' drevnei i novoi poezii*, 3 vols. (St Petersburg, 1821), i. 140.

⁵ Ostolopov illustrated his article on 'Invention' with examples from Pushkin, whom he regarded as a classicist rather than Romantic. See his article 'O vymysle' in the *Novoe sobranie obrazitsovykh russkikh sochinenii i perevodov v proze* (St Petersburg, 1822), 15–27.

⁶ Dmitrii Vellanskii, *Fiziologiia ili Nauka o estestve chelovecheskom* (St Petersburg: Tipografiia Imperatorskogo Vospitatel'nogo Doma, 1820).

⁷ A. Pisarev, *Nachertanie khudozhestva, ili Pravila v zhivopisi, skul'pture, gravirovanii i arkhitektury* (St Petersburg, 1810).

⁸ It is a measure of the inattention to Pushkin's aesthetic vocabulary and its connection to his intellectual history that the entry on the imagination in a standard reference work on Pushkin simply sees imagination as any type of creative agency. See the article 'Vooobrazhenie', in N. I. Mikhailova (ed.), *Pushkinskaia entsiklopediia* (Moscow: Gos. muzei A. S. Pushkina, 1999), 206–7.

a Coleridgean through assimilation of intermediary sources without knowing Coleridge's most philosophical writings.⁹ Yet he also read a great deal, and the cumulative picture adds up to an awareness of the major trends in German, French, and to some extent English aesthetics. Pushkin looked into aesthetic theory and learned about expression in which poetry can have emotional content without yielding much space to the imagination. Until the late 1820s, Pushkin was reticent about the example of English Romantics apart from Byron. But he read Coleridge, Wordsworth, Hazlitt, and Galich, with increasing attention, and while he may have stopped short finally of emulating their confidence about the poetic imagination as a way to recover a sense of identity and self, the impact of their example can be felt at decisive moments, particularly with respect to the representation of nature.¹⁰ From about 1833 such writings may be responsible for stimulating a shift in Pushkin's aesthetic thinking, in which a preference for invention as the primary act of literary creativity yields to an understanding of the creative imagination consonant in many respects with trends in continental and English philosophy and literature.

In February of 1834, Pushkin acquired Galich's most individual and important work, *A Picture of Man: An Attempt at an Instructive Course on the Subjects of Self-Knowledge*.¹¹ His third work, *A Picture of Man*, represents Galich's own system, based on an impressive and eclectic range of sources. An example of anthropological philosophy, it is committed to the holistic exploration of the psychology of creativity by integrating the aesthetic into a comprehensive description of man's mental properties as physiological operations.¹² From his model of sensibility he deduces how the mind works in its artistic function. Once again influenced by Kant and the problem of reconciling the phenomenal and noumenal worlds, Galich reached new conclusions about the force of the creative imagination.¹³ His selective survey of aesthetic schools, from Shaftesbury to Fichte, grounds his theory of the imagination in the sensational and physicalist description of the creative psychology.

⁹ Pushkin discovered Coleridge's poetry in the mid-1820s and later acquired *The Poetical Works of Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats, Complete in One Volume* (Paris, 1829) [Modz. 762], which contained virtually all Coleridge's poetry in English.

¹⁰ For example, see L. S. Sidiakova, 'Izmeneniia v sisteme liriki Pushkina 1820–1830-kh godov', *PIM* 10 (1982), 48–69; Proskurin, *Poeziia Pushkina*, 67–82.

¹¹ Pushkin spent the considerable sum of 15 roubles. See *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva*, iv. 152.

¹² The 'critical philosophy' attracted positive attention in Russia in the 1790s. But from that time well into the 1820s Kantian doctrine earned suspicion in Russia because of its perceived atheism. Acolytes like Galich faced censure. On Kant's influence on these figures and on aesthetics in this period see the preliminary but useful summary in F. Z. Kichatov, '“Filosof revnyi i piit...” (k voprosu vlianiia kantianstva na formirovanie filosofskikh vzgliadov A. S. Pushkina)', in *Vnimaia zvuku strun tvoikh...: sbornik statei* (Kaliningrad: Kaliningradskoe otdelenie Rossiiskogo fonda kul'tury, 1996), 26–34. Pushkin alludes to Galich in a number of lyrics from 1814, including 'Carousing Students', 'To Batiushkov', 'To Prince A. M. Gorchakov'.

¹³ Alexander Galich, *Kartina cheloveka. Opyt nastavitel'nogo chteniia o predmetakh samopoznaniia dlia vsekh obrazovannykh soslovii* (St Petersburg: Tipografiia Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk, 1834).

Galich was unusual among native Russians for his impressive command of Enlightenment and early Romantic philosophy. His work has been described as Schellingian, but this label is reductive and reflects only one relatively minor aspect of his writing (which remains, together with the history of ideas in the period, largely neglected). At 600 pages in length, *A Picture of Man* is his most ambitious work. Unlike his two first books, it has a wider philosophical scope, drawing extensively on English empiricist thought, French materialism, while also modestly restating his prior animist (and to that extent Schellingian) views of nature. His main concern is to set out theories of the body and the mind, and to that end he devotes two of the three sections to a description of the physiological basis on which perception rests. It is easy to see why the authorities suspected him of blasphemy. But his philosophical system is mainstream, and draws on a prominent intellectual tradition including all the major writers of eighteenth-century materialism, such as Condillac, Helvétius, La Mettrie, Bonnet, and d'Holbach who apply the physical sciences to the elucidation of creative psychology. Many of Galich's sources and his frames of reference coincide with Pushkin's own reading in the early 1830s.¹⁴ Galich's writing about the mind and representation in 1825 and 1834 made an impression where it mattered most—on the thinking about the poetic mind that we discern in a number of Pushkin's poems. Pushkin's receptiveness to the imagination was apparent in *Evgenii Onegin*. Arguably, in his lyric poetry the cumulative effects will only burst out in the subjectivity of poems written from 1833.

Even if they fell short of their ambition to establish Russia as a centre of Schellingian thought, aestheticians like Galich had an impact on individual writers. Ideas did not come labelled as either Romantic or classical, and in any case the history of ideas as a discipline does not usually describe trends simply in terms of straightforward acceptance, since the pattern of reception looks more like cross-currents, eliciting resistance that is meaningful in itself. Ideas need to be traced at the level of individual creativity rather than wholesale affiliation with a group, and in the reverberations of these ideas in the vocabulary and postures that make up a poet's lyric thinking. Readers of Pushkin have too quickly discounted the possibility that Pushkin took an interest in the poetic implications of philosophy. In part this is because the dominance of genre-criticism, structuralism, and semiotic approaches in Pushkin studies has been so prevalent that we are in danger of forgetting the considerable insights that the history of ideas can yield when applied to his Romanticism.¹⁵ It is, furthermore, understandable because the dearth of outstanding philosophers in Russia in this period has concentrated minds on the stronger connections between the history of thought in the 1840s

¹⁴ Chapter 8 will treat in greater depth his writing about sensibility in relation to Pushkin's thinking about the body and soul.

¹⁵ N. V. Izmailov argues that Pushkin's change of direction in the 1820s, especially after the Southern period, is largely an attempt to free himself from old genres: Izmailov, *Ocherki tvorchestva Pushkina*, 216.

and key figures such as Belinsky, Bakunin, and Herzen.¹⁶ Accounts therefore tend to downplay any intellectual activity before the 1830s. The single episode that merits attention relates to the work of the neo-Kantian group called the Lovers of Wisdom (*Obschestvo Liubomodriia*) in Moscow from 1828 to the 1830s. Their history has generally been understood as laying the foundation for thinkers of the 1840s.¹⁷ Hence, in her excellent account of the connection between metaphysics and Russian Romantic poetry of the 1840s, Sarah Pratt treats this first generation of Russian aestheticians as marginal figures.¹⁸ Pratt regards the Lovers of Wisdom in the 1820s as failed forerunners of the Schellingians of the 1840s. As a result, she may be underestimating the immediate impact of thinkers like Vellanskii and Galich simply because they are remote from the later generation that was the first to be truly inspired by Schelling. While that argument may be right for the thinkers of the 1840s, it neglects the impact of a writer such as Galich at the earlier stage, and perhaps gives too much weight to Schelling to the exclusion of a more diverse range of sources, both native and foreign.

At the same time, Pushkin himself discouraged certain lines of enquiry. His short-lived journalistic collaboration with the Lovers of Wisdom has been understood largely as a matter of personal rather than intellectual sympathy. Yet it is arguable that critics puzzled by his rapprochement with this group have overstated the conclusiveness of his ill-tempered statements about German philosophy. On 2 March 1827 he wrote to Del'vig, his publisher and editor of a literary journal, concerning the Moscow group. Given his loyalty to Del'vig, the unusually acerbic tone might be his attempt to draw the sting that his friend felt over Pushkin's collaboration with rivals:

My dear, I've been cross with you for days and because of your silence, I wrote Venevitinov a stern letter—Apologies: it's spring, the thaw—and I've not heard a word from you for about two months—you get cross without provocation. At present there's a frost, we've seen off horrid spring once more, I've had a letter from you—everything, thank God, is fine. I'm waiting for *The Gypsies*, and will go to print immediately. You complain to me about the Moscow News—and about German Metaphysics. God be my witness, how I hate and detest it; but what to do? These lovely youngsters have got organised, they are stubborn; to each priest his own devil. I say: Gentlemen, you're determined to make mountains out of molehills—which is fine for Germans who are already saturated with the appropriate cognitions, but we . . .¹⁹

¹⁶ A. Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), ch. 1.

¹⁷ See E. Maimin, *Russkaia filosofskaia poeziia. Poety-liubomodry, A. S. Pushkin, F. I. Tiutchev* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976).

¹⁸ Sarah Pratt, *Romantic Metaphysical Romanticism: The Poetry of Tiutchev and Boratynskii* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1984), 23–4.

¹⁹ See Alexander Pushkin, *Pisma* (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izd-vo, 1928), ii. 27, with commentary.

The overt hostility toward metaphysics is rhetorical. Pushkin took more than a superficial interest in the Muscovites' attitude toward art.²⁰ From 1826, once his first lyric collection had consolidated his standing among poets, Pushkin had to uphold his reputation as a genius. The group's image of the poet as visionary force attracted him (without exactly inspiring his interest) precisely at a time when he had begun to speak of the poet as a vatic and moral authority in the 'Poet' cycle completed in 1828. But the more strident his criticisms, the more striking the direction his reading took even after he parted company from this group. It is not just that the language of German philosophy was unavoidable (and contemporary critics bundled Pushkin together with other more obviously Germanophile authors).²¹ Despite his pronouncements, Pushkin's reading suggests an ambition to clarify certain ideas for himself. If the basis of his view of the imagination does not rest entirely on German Idealism, his awareness of these ideas complemented theories with which he was more comfortable.²² It is true that Pushkin did not share their profound attraction to Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, but the history of Pushkin's understanding of the imagination does not merely shadow the ideas of the Lovers of Wisdom.²³ In Galich, where the influence of Kant is far more prominent than Schelling or Fichte, he would have found a theory of art that was richly psychologized, adventurous because it confronted the potentially disruptive activity of the imagination, yet familiar because in following the theory of the aesthetic imagination set out in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, Galich straddled the division between the classical acceptance of abstract rules and the Romantic belief that Genius makes the rules. Galich summed up various streams of German aesthetics, French scientific writing, and English psychological criticism, which described the imaginative process as one of coalescence and transformation in which sensations and intuitions, once felt separately, were now available to the imagination and memory.

Starting from his publications in 1818 through to his last major work, *A Picture of Man*, Galich's essays reflected a serious engagement with aspects of Kant's phenomenology and aesthetics as discussed in the *First Critique* and the *Transcendental Analytic*. In his theory, Galich argues that the mind, while open to experience, contains structures that operate on sense data and that can be known through reflection. In the first of his two treatises, *An Essay in Aesthetic Science*, Galich argued that force ('sila') in art and poetry is the compliance of

²⁰ In fact, Annenkov credits Pushkin with a strong and active interest, *Materialy dlia biografii Aleksandra Sergeevicha Pushkina* (St Petersburg: Voennaia tipografiia, 1855; repr. Moscow: Kniga, 1855), i. 176–7.

²¹ See, for instance, the review in *Severnaia pchela*, 38 (March 1829). Cited in *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva*, ii. 254.

²² On Coleridge's reading of Kant's *First Critique*, see Rosemary Ashton, *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought, 1800–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 27–48.

²³ See 'Deviatnadstatyi vek', Kireevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, i. 90.

the activity of the imagination with the laws of taste and the history of form.²⁴ He proposes a highly conservative view of the operation of the imagination. To support his definition of the beautiful as the ‘pleasant naturalness of phenomena’ (‘priatnaia natural’nost’ iavlenii’) he adduces a string of quotations from Aristotle and Horace to Batteux and Pope. In his view, man tries to subject his inner being to a hierarchy of certain forces (‘sily’) that balances, on the one hand, the unlimited and potentially unreasonable power of fantasy (called here a ‘necessary manifestation’, ‘bezuslovnoe videnie’), an ethical norm consistent with reason in nature, probably as defined by Shaftesbury and his followers. In his *History of Philosophy* (1818), written while he was Pushkin’s teacher at the Lycée, he espoused the Platonic connection between beauty in art and goodness in nature. By 1825 Galich’s views had moved hesitantly in the direction of a new type of subjectivity. Both the earlier treatise and the history of philosophy acknowledge the teachings of Kant and Fichte on the mind, and anticipate conclusions that he would explore and endorse in the 1834 *A Picture of Man*, which Pushkin acquired in the year of its publication and read only a year before he wrote his greatest statement of Romantic subjectivity in ‘I visit once again . . .’. In the later *A Picture of Man*, he confirmed his attraction to one conclusion of the English Moral School, for whom the result of imaginative activity is meant to be a state of harmony yielding delight and order as well as a sense of untroubled play. Such harmony flows from genius in which the power of imagination achieves the mimetic reproduction of reality in its best form as seen or felt in nature, according to the conventions of taste. Now in the 1830s Galich’s attitude essentially reinforced the views articulated in Marmontel and La Harpe, suggesting that this is the line he pursued in his lectures at the Lycée.

A Picture of Man seeks to produce a scientific discussion of human knowledge as the consequence of the interrelation between mental and spiritual faculties and physical experience.²⁵ The engagement with Kantian philosophy is evident in the work’s epistemological, ethical, and aesthetic preoccupations. Book I, which sets out the work’s scientific principles, sees man’s freedom as the logical outcome of the structure of nature. Book II is divided into three sections. Section i draws on medical rather than philosophical discourse to provide a sensationist description of the body. Section ii appears to represent Galich’s attempt to synthesize key features of Kant’s first two *Critiques*. He rapidly surveys aspects of transcendentalism, treating the function of reason and its unifying powers.²⁶ He turns to connections between moral and aesthetic judgements, seeing in the

²⁴ Galich, *Opyt*, 74. See, for a parallel discussion, Voltaire’s discussion of ‘force’ as evidence of the poetic imagination. See Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire: nouvelle édition* (Paris: Chez Lefevre/Deterville, 1818), xix. 472–3 (‘Force’) [Modz. 1491].

²⁵ Galich was increasingly influenced by scientific theories of the mind. His last treatise, *A Picture of Man* (1834), appears to accept a materialist and atomistic definition of the self. His later theory of the mind gives far more emphasis than Kant did to psychology, and uses language similar to that of Fichte in describing self-consciousness.

²⁶ Galich, *Kartina cheloveka*, § 129–§ 239.

harmony of the faculties the joint work of mental pictures, reason, and the imagination. In what Galich calls the ‘practical side of the spirit’, by which he means the phenomenal rather than the ideal world, he returns to the structure of the body and, in effect, to the issue of animal intelligence to expand on its role in cognition but also to separate out certain pathologies, which he calls passions (in the etymological sense of forces that act on a passive subject). Book III purports to provide a synthesis of the two approaches in what he calls a ‘spiritual phenomenology’, but largely discusses supra-sensory types of knowledge and the world of the unconscious—or what he calls its ‘spiritual semiotics’.

In his earlier work, Galich began by acknowledging epistemological categories that, for the follower of Kant, guarantee the independence of the inner world as created within man by the mind of man. At the end of his *History of Philosophy*, Galich had invoked Schelling as he took small steps toward attributing a more plastic function to the imagination. Departing from the earlier reservations about the role of subjectivity in art, his ‘Attempt at a Philosophical Dictionary’ offers a definition of fantasy as ‘the ability of the soul to assemble images that change ad infinitum’. Here the brief discussion of ‘association’ allows for the power of the imagination to combine mental images of objects in new ways, and classifies the imagination as either synthetic or analytical. There is no doubt that an unresolved tension exists between Romantic subjectivity and Kantian Idealism. The *History of Philosophy* denies the artist or poet a type of visionary power to create anything outside the laws of representation determined by reason in nature. The *Essay on the Science of the Beautiful*, published in 1825, acknowledges the faculty if only to neglect it. *A Picture of Man* concedes the power, but is chary about the result. The progression of the status of this faculty in his system is clear.

Part II of *A Picture of Man* discusses the workings of the imagination more extensively. On the basis of lasting sensory impressions or recollections of those impressions, he allows that the mind follows two types of operation—memory and imagination. His discussion of memory in essence reproduces Kant’s early view on the imagination as a reproductive power. The second operation is closer to the view in Kant’s *Third Critique* of the imagination as a faculty that expresses freedom by representing new ideas to itself: ‘their ideal impression replaces their material, real, sensible existence; now the object is conceived in the soul, now it is created through the soul’s intellectual capacity’.²⁷ Modifying his earlier adherence to the empiricism of Locke and Berkeley, Galich now takes the view that, for objects to exist, the mind must recognize a correspondence between them and some interior image that already exists in it; and that certain objects will only exist as images in the mind because the new mental combinations outstrip reality. But the question that Galich confronts, and can only answer by way of compromise scenarios, concerns the degree to which mind and senses

²⁷ See *Ibid.*, ¶157 (p. 167). (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 12.)

might be independent or, put differently, to what degree imagination is similar to consciousness. Consciousness is a matter of will in which man directs his mind at some level to adhere to the established correspondence between things and ideas in a process that is automatic or semi-automatic. But what happens when that sense of order is broken?

Here, where freedom battles with necessity, we distinguish a double motion in the direction towards a connection of sensory perceptions: 1. those in which their coupling is defined externally by the laws of the very objects and 2. others, as a result of which representations join one another in a link not adhering to an external order, but proceeding according to the blind but correct instinct of poetic strength, which is able to create both separate images and entire pictures without, however, being able to give an account of its playful movements.²⁸

In characterizing this level of unconscious mental activity, paragraph 170 discriminates between types of poetic thought in a way that is cognate with Coleridge's division between primary and secondary imagination. Galich describes the synthetic imagination, which the poet possesses as a special power of association. He demystifies genius as a type of structured thought somewhere beyond the cognitive control of the poet and yet not completely random or undetermined, because the poet remains aware of the pattern of his own thoughts as a self-referential system. While the recognition of this special status of imagination ('voobrazhenie') confers distinctiveness on it as a poetic power, Galich is troubled by the notion that the independence of the imagination from reason may undermine the moral authority of the poet if he is not in charge of the power of his images:

Penetrate the working of understanding. Whether you wish it or not, these vivid images by themselves—even without your knowledge and intentionality—are sketched on the dim canvas of consciousness. An internal feeling tells us that it is not you who created them, that you are only the witnesses here of scenes which, apparently, are represented for the first time and which, above all, are the products of the Poet hidden in you; they are the play of the forces of life becoming perfected in the sphere of sensory representations, consequently in the sphere of the spirit where the spirit releases its control, permitting a capricious movement to phantasmagoric power, if we attribute to it the same powers of attraction by which the atoms form links. So it is in this intermediate state, between blind necessity and freedom, that new combinations of sensuous images are formed which, though uncorroborated by anything either external or from within, combine in the new, amazing, horrible creations of the idle but flighty imagination.²⁹

It is clear that he would prefer to argue that the imagination is creative not merely by virtue of accidental or random associations, but because it may have a logic and language of its own anchored in the will or intentionality. Like Coleridge, he

²⁸ *Ibid.*, ¶169 (p. 181).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, ¶170 (pp. 182–3). (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 13.)

sees in the imagination evidence of volition and the power to regulate oneself.³⁰ He attributes to the poet a greater power than is usual to make unusual synthetic connections, amplifying a view he already held in the mid-1820s:

Diverse sensations and passions become aesthetic material only when the Genius confers the value of *fine works of Poetry*. This occurs when (a) he represents truthfully a series of sensations through the one dominant idea that constitutes their character or tone; and when (b) through his *majestic and free activity* he expresses them more as the *general sensations of an ideal and complete person* than the limited experiences of his own separate person [...] insofar as the aroused movements of the soul can be expressed either spontaneously in the heat of reaction or consciously, that is, on reflection about experience at hand.³¹

He concludes cautiously by allowing that the imagination can be a positive force only if it reinforces the rules of taste and a love of truth. He advises the poet to avoid states of mind (presumably such as dreaming or reverie) where imagination will gravitate to images ('perekhodit k liubimym svoim kartinam') unexpectedly and seemingly at random. He echoes Kant in endorsing a classical rather than Romantic description of Genius:³²

Whatever in free art is created with the participation of insight, talent and technical ability is fine ('iziashchnoe') in the narrow sense that it is beautiful in an ideal sense. Its inner unity of meaning animates external forms, which are in themselves lifeless. In [the work] an interesting idea receives a harmonious, lovely exterior. From whatever perspective you gaze at Apollo or the Madonna—they radiate life at you, life in its most original ('pervozdannaiia') rather than merely in a state of harmony or unity with itself. Such perfection is the general condition of the beautiful: for the meaning of the beautiful is not limited only to the creations of art, but extends as well to creations of nature, in a word, to everything that in and of itself, entirely without relation to enjoyment, to use, and to instruction, pleases the eye of the spiritual subject not only with the correctness of its form, but through life, from which it borrows law and measure in correlating representations of its essence.³³

In articulating for Russians of Pushkin's generation a theory of organic form, Galich emphasizes the side of Kant closer to Winckelmann and Platonic theory.³⁴ In this respect, his analysis reinforces the views of taste that at a practical level of style and expression Pushkin absorbed from La Harpe and Marmontel. At

³⁰ See Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm and Regulation*, 75.

³¹ Galich, *Opyt*, ¶184 (p. 174).

³² By 'genius', Kant is understood to mean outstanding talent that gives rules to art and is best able to imitate nature. See Kai Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 35; on the connection between imagination and genius in Kant, see Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste: A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 248–88.

³³ Galich, *Kartina cheloveka*, ¶434 (p. 487).

³⁴ On the positioning of Kant's aesthetics *vis-à-vis* classicism and Romanticism, see, briefly, G. N. G. Orsini, *Coleridge and German Idealism* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), 163–7.

the same time, for all his reservations, he also makes out of the imagination a power that is attractive because it leads to unpredictable creativity. In so doing, Galich may have encouraged Pushkin to challenge the limits of his attitude to expression.

It is right to be wary of a facile analogy between Pushkin's transition from being a poet of invention to a poet of imagination and Galich's own progress to a philosophical position on mind that accepts the cognitive value of the imagination. While important and perceptible, Pushkin's movement is halting and continually reticent; and Galich's own metamorphosis shows a thinker who manages to keep pace with the times and reflect the way philosophy has been enriching European Romanticism. All the same, the parallel is there and it is significant as a matter of specific influence and a function of the larger intellectual milieu. The degree to which Galich's writings directly stimulated Pushkin is easier to assert in 1834, but remains highly probable at a much earlier stage when he worked at Tsarskoe Selo. It is not essential to demonstrate direct influence since Galich's thinking at the time reflects other works on aesthetics that Pushkin read. But in 1834 when he bought a copy of his teacher's latest treatise, Pushkin may have been inclined to read him because other thinkers had already primed the pump on the subject of subjectivity and the imagination. Three types of indirect sources inform Pushkin on aesthetics, sometimes with a Kantian bias. There are critical discussions and digests of other writers on aesthetics contained in Pushkin's library and bearing evidence of use; French and English Romantic theory, filtered through journals including the *Edinburgh Review* where Hazlitt and Coleridge published, and separate works of synthesis, including the writings of Madame de Staël; and Russian expositions published in the period 1808–34 that, as we have seen, have often been broadly categorized as Schellingian, but where philosophical sources are diverse and include a strong Kantian element.

Typical of the first category is A. F. Théry's *De l'esprit et de la critique littéraires chez les peuples anciens et modernes*.³⁵ Théry's discussion of German literature up to the period of Kant analyses the contribution of the new philosophy to aesthetic theory. His focus is on the writings of the German Bodmer and Swiss Breitinger, thinkers who in Russian had already exercised a direct influence on Karamzin and his attitude to the working of the imagination and in particular the workings of the sublime.³⁶ His method is comparative, and in evaluating new views of the imagination he refers to Marmontel as a starting point. Théry, Bodmer, and Breitinger represent one school on mental power, offering Pushkin a more decisive affirmation of the independent status of the imagination from acts of

³⁵ Théry, *De l'esprit*, esp. vol. ii, which contrasts visions of the creative spirit before and after Kant.

³⁶ Karamzin's 1798 lyric 'Poets' is clearly inspired by Kantian exaltation of the imagination as a force of independence and disinterested creative work.

representation.³⁷ Departing from the earlier positions of La Harpe and Marmontel, Bodmer and Breitinger discriminate between the imagination and mimesis, regarding it as a faculty separate from the intelligence or reason. Pictures stand to the imagination as ideas stand to the intelligence; and just as ideas must follow a logic accessible to the intelligence that can be expressed as propositions, images must be accessible to the creative mind and understood as allegories for the reality that has been observed. According to Breitinger, imitation is not the mechanical transference of those observations where verisimilitude governs expectations. The process operates according to what he calls its 'mysteries and artifices', a medium therefore for discovering the new and the marvellous beneath the manifest texture of life.³⁸ It is in poetry—and Milton is his favourite example—rather than in painting that Théry finds the optimal medium for representing this theory. He regards painting as limited because it is wed to figurative representation, whereas the connotations of words act on the imagination, even more than on the intelligence. For this reason, poetry is a type of painting where the imagination works actively to interpret the words and complete the mental picture. We have already seen Pushkin following through on the same view in his poems about statuary.

How does the mind make the imagination work? Different writers employ similar language in putting forward various conjectures about intellection. Memory will play a decisive role in the poetry of Wordsworth, where it is the essential impetus to the recreative emotional ability. Breitinger lays greater emphasis on enthusiasm or inspiration than on memory. Unlike imagination, which is a separate faculty of the mind, inspiration is an emotional state characterized by a sudden transition from calm to extreme emotion. Enthusiasm opens the eyes of the poet to the supernatural or wonderful. This state of emotional elevation gives the poet access to the power of the imagination. Théry calls this an 'short-lived power' ('puissance momentanée') that comes from nature. He lightly mocks the Ancients for depicting it as a gift of divine epiphany, when it should be regarded as an expression of the unusually sensitive quality of poetic sensibility. For Breitinger, whose authority on this is Kant, the natural progression works from enthusiasm to imagination, whereas Marmontel, as he points out, saw enthusiasm and inspiration as the effect of imagination.

No single systematic treatise inculcated a doctrine on the creative potential of the imagination. While Pushkin most certainly did not study the *Critique of Judgement*,³⁹ other sources such as Madame de Staël's *De l'Allemagne* and Tenne-
mann's *Manual of the History of Philosophy*, as translated by Cousin, disseminated

³⁷ See James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), ch. 8.

³⁸ Théry, *De l'esprit*, 22.

³⁹ In an essay on popular drama ('O narodnoi drame i drame "Marfa Posadnitsa"', *PSS*, xi, 177–83), Pushkin spoke positively, in passing, of the aesthetic philosophies of Kant and Lessing.

Kantian theory in the mid-1820s to a readership that, like Pushkin, had little patience for abstruse metaphysics and technical philosophical discussion, but, also like Pushkin, subscribed to the moral elevation of art. This was one aspect of the Kantian legacy in France by the mid-1820s.⁴⁰ For Mme de Staël, the beautiful is precisely ‘pas l’imitation de ce qu’il y a de mieux dans la nature, mais l’image réalisée de ce que notre âme se représente’.⁴¹ The real impact of this key premiss led French Kantians, beginning with Mme de Staël, to ponder the independence of art from any utilitarian function, a point to which we shall return in Chapter 6. Apart from the common vocabulary that draws Bodmer, Breitinger, and de Staël together, they share the attempt to define art in terms of the mental disposition of the artist, and in so doing to distinguish between different creative states, and to establish a hierarchy between the recreative and the creative, the mimetic and the original, the sensuous and the mental. In the period, this is one of the great and most pervasive preoccupations of European aesthetics and, as conveyed through Hazlitt and Coleridge, it reverberates in Pushkin’s practical development of his poetic theory.

To judge from the evidence of his library, Pushkin’s awareness of various interrelated theories of the creative imagination appears to have started in the mid-1820s, and grew sporadically until the last years of his life, when his reading hints strongly at an increasing interest in a scientific curiosity about organic psychopathology of human cognition. Pushkin may owe Galich the more intense approach to subjectivity that he adopts from the second half of the 1820s. It is likely that this reading of Coleridge’s lyrics as well as Hazlitt anticipated the conclusions about Kant’s first and third Critiques that were available to him through the other Kantian sources that had an impact, as Chapter 5 discusses, on his understanding of the ability of the imagination to enter the natural cycle.⁴²

⁴⁰ On her reading of Kant’s *First Critique*, see André Monchoux, ‘Madame de Staël interprète Kant’, *Revue d’histoire littéraire de la France*, 66 (1966), 71–4; Henning, *L’Allemagne de Mme de Staël*, ch. 4. Pushkin fleetingly mentions *De l’Allemagne* in his correspondence, but gives the impression of knowing key arguments well, especially ch. 11 (‘De la poésie classique et de la poésie romantique’) and ch. 15 (‘De l’art dramatique’). Boris Tomashevskii takes for granted that Pushkin read the book, but there is, so far as I know, no certain evidence to the effect. For his claim, see Tomashevskii, *Pushkin i Frantsiia*, 19–20. J.-C. Lann, ‘Pouchkine et l’esthétique du classicisme français’, in R. Timenchik and S. Shvartsband (eds.), *After Jubilee* (Jerusalem: Center for the Study of Slavic Languages and Literature, 2000), 113–22 argues that his view of Aristotle’s theory of tragedy derives largely from *De l’Allemagne*.

⁴¹ Staël, *De l’Allemagne*, iv. 136.

⁴² There is a consensus that from 1828 Pushkin read in English with some ease. It is therefore not surprising to find an increase in references to English literature and especially the poets of the Lake School. For the most precise restatement of the problem, see V. D. Rak, *Pushkin, Dostoevskii i drugie (Voprosy tekstologii, materialy k kommentariiam)* (St Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2003), 64–99, with bibliography. Pushkin admitted, with typical irony, that he read it like a dead language (Latin), but his translations were accurate (see *Pushkin v vospominaniakh sovremennikov* V. É. Vatsuro, M. I. Gillel’son, and Ia. L. Levkovich (eds.) (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1974), ii. 121. Contemporaries were aware of his active interest. In a letter of August 1828 to Pogodin, P. A. Mukhanov remarked that Pushkin was studying English (cited in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 16–18 (1934), ii. 699). On Pushkin’s use of English, see N. M. Zhutovskaia, ‘Angliiskii

The shared attraction of the Lovers of Wisdom to Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* may also have strengthened in Pushkin's mind the idea of nature as a 'creative' force that he encountered in Coleridge's 'The Aeolian Harp'.⁴³

The seminal work on the distinction between Fancy and Imagination was Chapter 4 of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. Although Pushkin seems not to have known the *Biographia*, Coleridge's role as a popularizer of German thought had other outlets such as the essays that Pushkin read in the *Selections from the Edinburgh Review*, which contain a synthesis of the prevalent attitudes to the imagination among English writers.⁴⁴ This reading, combined with the other sources mentioned, opened up to Pushkin the discourse of the imagination. He also knew of Coleridge's views on Kant from a long profile of Coleridge that paid tribute to his intellectual 'universalism', and his 'independence of spirit'.⁴⁵ The article provides an outline of Coleridge's learning and sketches the philosophical orientation of his poetry in which 'he attempted to introduce the transcendental theories of Kant'.⁴⁶ The observation may have been for Pushkin a lead into Coleridge, whom he read in English, as well as a stimulus to test the waters of German metaphysics. Of some interest is a volume published by the *Edinburgh Review*, which brought together a series of essays on the theory of poetry illustrated with samples of poetry that were intended to show how the theory of the imagination worked in practice. One of the essays subjected various theories to sustained criticism, but in praising the pictorial qualities of poems by Milton and Keats it reinforced the positive vision of the imagination's associative work. The terms in which the English critic praised Keats as a specimen of the pure poet were similar to the positive analysis of the imagination's associative work that Pushkin read in other sources, including Thérý's essay. According to this writer,

iazyk Pushkina', *VPK* (2005), 55–65, which argues that his reading comprehension was good, and fluent, from 1828.

⁴³ Jerome McGann reads the poem as a response to sensationist philosophy, which dramatizes the tension between poetic volition and automatic effusion. See Jerome McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 19–24.

⁴⁴ In an unfinished piece of literary criticism written in 1828 ('V zreloi slovesnosti...') Pushkin talked about the democratic language of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Translations of Wordsworth first appeared on the pages of the *Literary Gazette*, edited by Pushkin's great friend and literary ally Baron Del'vig. At the same time he had an unflagging interest in the critical work of Sainte-Beuve, whose poetry under the pseudonym Joseph Delorme he reviewed. As numerous scholars have seen, including Tomashevskii, *Pushkin i Frantsiia*, 97, Sainte-Beuve put him in touch with an important source for the European reception of English Romantic writing. On the last, see Maxwell Austin Smith, *L'Influence des Lakistes sur les romantiques français* (Paris: Jouve, 1920), 67–82; the specific question of Pushkin's knowledge of the Lake Poets is treated in survey fashion in V. A. Saitanov, 'Pushkin i angliiskie poety ozernoï shkoly' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Moscow University, 1979).

⁴⁵ On Coleridge and Kant, see briefly R. Brett, *Fancy and Imagination* (London: Methuen, 1969), 46–54; more extensively, see 'Introduction', Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton: Bollingen Press 1983), pp. lxxxii–civ.

⁴⁶ See the article 'Beaux Esprits contemporains: Coleridge et Southey', in *Revue britannique*, 3 (1833), 30–7 [Modz. 1516]. In an autobiographical note, penned sometime around 1826–7, Pushkin notes that he is rereading Coleridge. See Pushkin, *PSS*, xii. 310.

‘in pure poetry, where, without much incident or many characters . . . a number of bright pictures are presented in the imagination, and a fine feeling expressed of these mysterious relations by which visible external things are assimilated with inward thoughts and emotions and become the images and exponents of all passions.’⁴⁷

A series of pieces published in the same issue explained the mechanics of the imagination in terms of a sensationist model. Such a mixed approach was compatible with the views of Hazlitt and Galich, who saw creative psychology in the light of medico-chemical and neurological theories about the connection between nerve fibres and the mind’s capacity for generating images. In his review of *Stockdale’s Lectures on the Eminent English Poets*, an anonymous critic articulated in a more scientific manner this theory of the imagination, which is:

a complex power; it includes conception, or such appreciation, which enables us to form a notion of those former objects of perception, or of knowledge, out of which we are to make a selection; abstraction, which separates the selected materials from the qualities and circumstances which are connected with them in nature; and judgement and taste, which direct their conclusion. To these powers we may add that particular habit of association to which we give the name of fancy, as it is this which presents to our choice all the different materials which are subservient to the efforts of imagination; which may therefore be considered as forming the grandeur of poetic genius.⁴⁸

The passage moves from a mechanical explanation of the mind to an ethical statement on the superiority of the poet, founded on the majesty of genius as the totally individual creative power of a single mind. The idea that the mind, as a force endowed with constitutive power, defines the nature of poetic genius was a radical break with the school of thinking Pushkin had known best.⁴⁹ The aesthetic and moral and metaphysical definition of the operation of the mind was particularly significant in the Romantic world because it ascribed such powers not to the mind of God or to nature, but to the human agent, and thereby made an indelible connection between imaginative genius and the status of the poet.⁵⁰ Such a theory of poetry emphatically makes use of the vocabulary of power, by which ‘power’ denotes both a faculty and the force with which the act of the imagination strikes and reveals. Following the Coleridgean definition, the ‘Essay on the Nature and Object of Poetry’ set out a distinction between fancy and imagination that is one of the most explicit statements Pushkin could have read on the separate roles of invention and imagination. Unlike fancy or the invention, the imagination fashions new conceptions and original truths ‘not

⁴⁷ *Selections from the Edinburgh Review* in *Baudry’s Collection of Ancient and Modern British Authors*, ci. 247 [Modz. 585].

⁴⁸ *Collection of Ancient and Modern British Authors*, c. 102.

⁴⁹ See Uttara Natarajan, *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense: Criticism, Morals, and the Metaphysics of Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 28–33.

⁵⁰ See Brett, *Fancy and Imagination*, 24–5.

absolutely justifiable by the ordinary rules of logic, but quite intelligible to the mind when duly elevated'; it is a type of combinatory power—what he describes as the 'harmony of the mind which embraces and reconciles its seeming discords' that gives the poet access, in the words of this writer, 'not so much to what is impossible, as what is at present unknown'. In this analysis, poets have a claim to the title of the *vates* because their unusual powers of insight combine with the imagination in the

higher moods of the mind. It is the fiercer and more potent spirit (than Fancy) . . . and it is a complex power, including those faculties which are called by metaphysicians Conception, Abstraction and Judgement. It is the genius of personification. It concentrates the many into one, colouring and investing its own complex creation with the attributes of all. It multiplies and divides and remodels, always changing in one respect or other the literal fact, and always enriching it, when properly exerted.⁵¹

While Pushkin's knowledge of William Hazlitt was probably limited to the essays in *Table Talk* and the *Spirit of the Age*,⁵² marginal markings make clear that Hazlitt's more abstract pages on the imagination and the nature of talent caught Pushkin's eye, from which we might surmise that he turned to Hazlitt with the specific purpose of learning more about the mind and subjectivity, the independence of the imagination and the autonomy of art. For Pushkin, who read without the demands of the rigorous philosopher, Hazlitt's ideas complemented other aesthetic writings, including the neo-Kantians Schön and Bretinger.⁵³ The common denominator was their belief in the imagination as a disruptive or creative power. Once again, a key word is power or force (meaning Pushkin's 'sila') which, in this theory of the mind, is coupled with the imagination.⁵⁴ In Hazlitt's 'On Application to Study' and 'On the Ignorance of the Learned', two of the essays that Pushkin appears to have read with care to judge from his page-markings, 'power' denotes a high degree of intellectual penetration that enables the imagination to move beyond the 'trammels of strict scholastic discipline', by which Hazlitt means ordinary appearance and obvious logic. Hazlitt reflects the tendency to associate exceptional powers of imagination with genius, here understood differently from late eighteenth-century usage to mean the distinct spiritual quality of the individual or a type of enthusiasm. In Hazlitt's theory of genius, the imagination of the poet is a faculty of self-affirmation because the imagination is marvellous 'in the sheer speed of its operation as it flashes beyond the instant into the future'.⁵⁵ It is an innate power

⁵¹ See *Collection of Ancient and Modern British Authors*, c. 103.

⁵² William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age; or, Contemporary Portraits* (Paris: A. and W. Galignani, 1825) [Modz. 973].

⁵³ Chaadaev recalled lending Pushkin a volume of Hazlitt sometime between 1818 and 1820 (as noted in *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva*, i. 486).

⁵⁴ See W. P. Albrecht, *Hazlitt and the Creative Imagination* (Lawrence, Kan.: University of Kansas Press, 1965), ch. 1.

⁵⁵ Natarajan, *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense*, 8.

because, in striving to create, the mind necessarily makes the object of its volition an entity that does not yet exist and is therefore imaginary. All action taken to produce it happens in the mind through the volition of the poet, and is entirely independent of sense impressions. The mind, according to Hazlitt's psychology, 'releases its potential to constitute its own objects' and this is power. Genius now denotes a unique quality of talent, sublime and awesome, demonstrated by the imagination as a special power. In the essay 'On Application to Study', Hazlitt compiles a small gallery of men of genius who were wayward students, deemed to be stupid for want of interest in their immediate subjects when they were simply incapable of submitting their imaginations to such mundanities. Such wisdom on the mischievous and disobedient quality of genius also appeared in the *Pensées* of Jean-Paul, including the passage that Pushkin underlined in the volume published in 1836: 'Poetic geniuses are renegades and persecutors of good taste in their youth, but later they become the most ardent proselytes and apostles.'⁵⁶

In the second essay, Hazlitt reformulates and amplifies the distinction between the two states of genius, first at rest in a type of wanton laxness and then, secondly, roused to work. The distinction captures a similar division in Pushkin, who correlates inspiration and idleness and art and labour as a paradoxical element of poetic talent in works such as 'To my Inkwell' and 'The Poet'. For Hazlitt the prodigality of genius, best exemplified by Sir Walter Scott and Shakespeare, naturally flows into a pattern of work, with the mind constantly in use and working on ideas because 'genius rusts for want of use' but increases in power with increasing creativity. Ultimately the habit of exercising genius, by trusting to impulses, drafting and redrafting, leads to a creative moment, Hazlitt's Herculean effort, where genius achieves insight by applying the power of the imagination to synthesize. In a wonderful passage from the *Lectures on the English Poets*, underscored by Pushkin, Hazlitt describes this combinatory power:

Poetry . . . is an imitation of nature, but the imagination and the passions are a part of man's nature. We shape things according to our wishes and fancies, without poetry; but poetry is the most emphatical language that can be found for those creations of the mind 'which ecstasy is very cunning in'. Neither a mere description of natural objects, nor a mere delineation of natural feelings, however distinct or forcible, constitutes the ultimate end and aim of poetry, without the heightenings of the imagination. The light of poetry is not only a direct but also a reflected light, that while it shews us the object, throws a sparkling radiance on all around it . . . Poetry represents forms chiefly as they suggest other forms; feelings, as they suggest forms or other feelings. Poetry puts a spirit of life and motion into the universe. It describes the flowing, not the fixed . . . the poetical impression of any object is that uneasy, exquisite sense of beauty or power that cannot be contained

⁵⁶ *Pensées de Jean-Paul, extraites de tous ses ouvrages* (Paris: Didot, 1829) [Modz. 1031], 75. (For the original, see the Appendix no. 14.) The association of poetic power with juvenile iconoclasm formed part of Pushkin's image of his own poetic development.

within itself; that is impatient of all limit; that (as flame bends to flame) strives to link itself to some other image of kindred beauty or grandeur . . . It is strictly the language of the imagination; and the imagination is that faculty which represents objects, not as they are in themselves, but as they are moulded by other thoughts and feelings, into an infinite variety of shapes and combinations of power.⁵⁷

Although set out extensively in *Essay on the Principles of Human Action*, the tenets of Hazlitt's complex Associationist theory of creativity left traces on his other writings, including the essays from *Table Talk* and the *Spirit of the Age* that Pushkin knew. Hazlitt's exaltation of the empowered mind, a mind that is at liberty to exercise its power of perception and freely constitute its own objects, offered a compelling alternative to the classical ideal of invention. It was a short step from the passage above, which presents in poetic language the kernel of his theory, to the related essays that Pushkin read in the *Edinburgh Review* where an anonymous essayist wrote in Hazlittian terms about the creative mind, that connected an entire critical system into a series of compelling propositions about psychology and aesthetics. The article in the *Edinburgh Review* argued that poetry is a creation not copied from nature, but shaped in the mind and transcribed from the mind; that poetry is created by the power of the imagination, and that imagination in this creative sense is not a common facility, but belongs particularly to the poet; that, unlike prose, poetry does not reiterate foregone conclusions but produces new images and visions; and, finally, because the poetic imagination is a special power, it should be cherished and used for purposes beneficial to mankind on whose habits of thinking it may have 'a prodigious effect'. That same conviction of the regenerative property of the poetic imagination is forcefully stated by William Godwin in an essay Pushkin read in the *Revue étrangère de la littérature*. Godwin assigns poetry a heroic function, arguing that the serious reader ought to submit to the authority of the poet like a priest, and suffer in order to benefit: 'It is heroism, believe me, to concentrate the otherwise scattered forces of one's imagination and reason on matter that is of such use to humanity. One does not dedicate oneself to such a priest without undergoing numerous privations, without strongly tempering one's soul.'⁵⁸ An article in praise of Keats argued that the real power of the imagination is to make known unknown feelings; in other words, this adds a new capacity to the recreative power assigned by La Harpe and Marmontel. The 'pure poet' is expressive because gifted with 'bright pictures of the imagination', and the 'fine feeling expressed of those mysterious relations by which visible external things

⁵⁷ *Collection of Ancient and Modern British Authors*, c: *Selections from the Edinburgh Review*, 100 [Modz. 585]. The passage is from 'On Poetry in General', *Lectures on the English Poets*, in William Hazlitt, *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, vol. v (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1902), 3.

⁵⁸ William Godwin, 'Godwin, du talent, de son emploi et de la durée de ses œuvres', in *Revue étrangère de la littérature, des sciences et des arts* (St Petersburg: Bellizard, 1832), i. 99 [Modz. 1517]. (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 15.)

are assimilated with inward thoughts and emotions, and become the images and exponents of all passion and affection'.⁵⁹

If we sum up the combined message of these disparate sources, the result is a coherent picture of the theories of poetry and mind that consistently attracted Pushkin's interest at a moment when his poetry negotiated between homage to the classical style and a new intensity of feeling unlocked by the possibility of subjectivity. He understood how much there was to gain by investing the poetic ego with these new powers. As it comes to Pushkin in the late 1820s, the beautiful imagination is defined as a marvellous capacity to project inner feeling outward symbolically in images. In an essay of 1830 Pushkin echoes these conclusions directly, taking the view that 'aesthetics from the time of Kant and Lessing had developed with such clarity and comprehensiveness that we continue to repeat that . . . the beautiful ('prekrasnoe') is an imitation of lovely ('iziashchnoe') nature'.⁶⁰ It is in this context that the sum of Pushkin's unconsecutive reading of English Romantic writers like Coleridge and Hazlitt may be greater than the individual parts. Such imagination, empowered to create from an inner reality, to produce new visions for the world, and to act in the world, is the same force that made Napoleon a hero and poet for both Hazlitt and Pushkin. Napoleon incarnated the possibility open to the Genius of projecting the power of the imagination onto nature. How could a poet like Pushkin, newly empowered by these theories of the imagination and genius, emulate Napoleonic audacity in his lyric poetry? For the time being, the lyric poet could only flirt with the power of the imagination, while the novelist was allowed greater leeway to experiment with subjectivity.

RADICALISM AND THE IMAGINATION

The challenge that Pushkin faced in bridging the division between a classical style based on the values of invention, universality, and imitation with the Romantic emphasis on self-consciousness, identity, and breaking of boundaries came not only from books. He recognized the expectations of a readership fixed in traditional genre conventions that was more tolerant of experimentation in Byronic narrative than it was ready to condone new approaches to writing lyric.⁶¹ In the 1820s, Pushkin enjoyed greatest critical and commercial success as the author of the mock-epic *Ruslan and Liudmila* (1820). Even after he disappeared from

⁵⁹ *Collection of Ancient and Modern British Authors*, ci: *Selections from the Edinburgh Review* (Paris, 1835–6) [Modz. 585], 245.

⁶⁰ Pushkin, *PSS*, xi. 177.

⁶¹ See N. Smirnov-Sokol'skii, *Rasskazy o prizhiznennykh izdaniiaakh Pushkina* (Moscow: Izd-vo vsesoiuznoi knizhnoi palaty, 1962), ch. 4. However, the poet N. M. Iazykov anticipated later attacks on Pushkin by finding fault with the insufficient craft of Pushkin's narratives. See *Iazykovskii arkhiv* (St Petersburg: Tipografiia Akademii nauk, 1913), i. 26.

metropolitan Russia into his Southern exile, his early readers held fast to an image of a poet who revelled in verbal wit and the skills of invention such as pastiche, allusion, and irony. From 1823, the narrative poems *The Caucasian Captive* and *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* sold well and garnered plaudits for their handling of local colour and management of plot. Pushkin's skill in adapting the Byronic model of the narrative genre added to his reputation as a craftsman in command of the codes of Romanticism, able to pare down descriptive extremes and lurid plotting without forfeiting the pleasures of exotic tales of intrigue. At the same time, the first chapter of *Evgenii Onegin*, although a smaller commercial success than Pushkin had hoped, also confirmed his burgeoning reputation as a brilliant stylist. Cumulatively, these works convinced his distant audience that Pushkin was more than a supremely talented *enfant terrible*, since he gave evidence of continuing to satisfy a taste for elegant and clear versification and successful plots.

It is hard to dissociate literary conservatism and experimentation from the immediate public context, where Pushkin's troubled relations with the government affected popular perception of the poet. With one eye on the public and another on a repressive government that associated his every caprice and eccentricity with radicalism, Pushkin briefly channelled his natural talent for multiplicity into Byronic poetic narrative, masking a more profound process of re-evaluation and questioning. Different readerships were inclined to confuse his artistic development with Pushkin's reputed political views. The conservative readership and critics who admired the poet of *Ruslan and Liudmila*—and also found his Byronic narrative poems at the acceptable limit of their taste—expected no real change in a post-exilic Pushkin. The celebration of Russian's imperial policies in the Caucasus that ended *The Caucasian Captive* provoked criticism. One purpose of the passage may have been to give the authorities and his readership necessary reassurance of his Russianness and patriotism. It became safe to assume that the political radicalism that led to his exile was the passing folly of youth. Chastised into political subservience after 1826, he could be expected artistically to revert to previous form and continue to dazzle with stylistic polish and unchallenging formal perfection, a poet whose greatest gift was for packaging the familiar more expertly than any of his contemporaries.⁶² When Pushkin was recalled from exile in 1826 his interview with Nicholas I was read as a sign of favour from the emperor and acquiescence on the part of the poet. Pushkin was stung by suggestions that his rapprochement with Nicholas I was an act of disloyalty to his Decembrist friends.⁶³ In 1827 and 1828 he aimed to dispel this

⁶² See, for instance, N. V. Izmailov, 'Obozrenie na 1826 god', in V. E. Vatsuro and B. A. Fomichev (eds.), *Pushkin v prizhiznennoi kritike, 1820–1827* (St Petersburg: Gos. pushkinskii teatral'nyi tsentr, 1996), 314.

⁶³ For a summary, see George J. Gutsche, 'Pushkin and Nicholas: The Problem of "Stanzas"', in David M. Bethea (ed.), *Pushkin Today* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1993), 185–200.

impression by writing poems that averred his loyalty to them and also suggested that peace with the government made it possible for him to speak to the tsar and attempt to mitigate a harsh justice.

A contemporary critic summed up the general attitude by noting that ‘Pushkin was the great literary lion of the 1820s, but as time went on, with the growth of his increasingly mature talent, he stopped enchanting the readership of his youth.’⁶⁴ In large part the problem lay with *Evgenii Onegin*, which quickly ceased to satisfy critics and readers. By the publication of the third and fourth chapters in the mid-1820s, sales had tapered off badly, and critics openly took issue with fundamental aspects of the work’s style and structure. Evgenii failed to satisfy most readers’ expectations of a novelistic hero, the stop-start plot was seen as tedious, and, above all, the narrator’s propensity to digression provoked consternation because it undermined the sense of perfect control that was prized in the poet. Writing in the *St Petersburg Spectator*, Boris Fedorov, an admirer of Pushkin’s ‘wit’, ‘humour’, and ‘poetic variety’, faulted the poet for not making an effort to ‘make his imagination work’ (‘ne zatrudniaet svoe voobrazhenie’) and allowing wit (‘mysl’) to run away with him. Fedorov appreciated the poet’s brilliant capacity to use allusion, quotation, and parody to engage the reader’s imagination in filling in barely sketched scenes or descriptions. But he also complained about the degree to which fragmentation made the reader work, expressing nervousness at the role of reader as co-author because it subverted the expectations of the novel reader for a consecutive realistic style of narration.

The politically conservative critic Mikhail Pogodin, reviewing chapters 4 and 5 in the *Moscow Herald* of 1828, produced an article that purported to be a mosaic of critical reactions overheard in Petersburg salons. This critical cento of comments captured the exasperation of a readership disenchanted with the progress of the novel, dismayed in particular by the sense of declining craftsmanship. Readers, Pogodin said, disliked a fuzziness caused by an imbalance between detail and plot line; he faulted the openness of the text as well as a style of fragmentation that gave the uncomfortable impression of carrying on ‘à l’infini’ in a disrupting digressiveness that lacked all proportion, commitment to plot, and the moral life of the characters. While Pogodin acknowledged that a few readers enjoyed the narrator’s chatty digressions that contained much of the philosophical, satirical, and literary content of the novel, most readers took them as proof that Pushkin had ‘matured’, meaning he had stopped ‘crafting his forms’ and was showing disregard for the public (‘neuchtivost’ k publike’), that the poet had got above his station in not respecting his readers (‘zaznalsia’), attitudes that

⁶⁴ One favourable critic writing in the journal the *Northern Bee* anticipated the hostile response to Pushkin’s new Byronic style from readers accustomed to the smooth transitions and plotting of *Ruslan and Liudmila*. See *Pushkin v prizhiznennoi kritike, 1820–1827*, 317. See also Walter Vickery, ‘Parallelizm v literaturnom razvitiu Bairona i Pushkina’, in *American Contributions to the Fifth International Congress of Slavists* (The Hague: Mouton, 1963), 371–401.

had finally ruined his sense of taste ('o porche vkusa'). M. A. Dmitriev, critic and nephew of the much admired older lyric poet Ivan Dmitriev, noted that while some readers appreciated the Sternean wit of Pushkin's digressiveness, others thought Pushkin had got lost in his own imagination ('zatei vobrazheniia'). Irritated by the seeming pointlessness of the poem, Nikolai Nadezhdin in his review of Pushkin's burlesque *Count Nul* ('Graf Nulin', 1828) pointed out that the correct use of the imagination was in realistically conveying the grandeur of natural scenes, like the Alps, and that verisimilitude and mimesis were its natural function. By treating subjects that were not beautiful, Pushkin's imagination, he felt, had failed to elevate the reader's sensibility and to speak to his or her imagination, claims that amounted, in his view, to a sure sign that, however witty, Pushkin was no longer writing poetry that mattered.⁶⁵

The common criticism, which was to be repeated in coming years, equated digression not only with poor management of narrative and plot, but more importantly with defects of the imagination and a breakdown in taste. Critical discourse, both positive and negative, identified the good and bad uses of the imagination as the underlying and definitive criteria of artistic value and individual talent. On the conservative side, most writers viewed the imagination as an aptitude for skilful derivativeness or possibly moral elevation that adhered to conventional expectations of genre, language, and achieved realism undistorted by subjectivity and personal projection. Pushkin let loose on his novel a narrator imbued with all his own skills, capable of simultaneously and distractingly deploying such a panoply of rhetorical gifts. Even more destabilizing than this dazzling display of stylistic variety was the shift of focus away from the main characters towards the growth of the narrator's sensibility, which was always in flux, growing, changing, brooding philosophically, and yet indulging hedonistically. This sudden, increasing demonstration of multiplicity and playful irony made this novel too radical for contemporary taste to bear, provoking the suspicion of artistic and political conservatives. There was a latent fear about the connection between original genius, radicalism, and immorality.⁶⁶ Mikhail Dmitriev, a persistent and prudish detractor, responded to chapter 1 of *Evgenii Onegin* by publishing a poetic conversation about a fop and ladies' man consumed with his own vanity that was replete with phrases from Pushkin's novel.⁶⁷

Society was quick to associate Pushkin's transgressions with his tendency to digression. In his diary for 1827, the censor A. V. Nikitenko noted the rumour

⁶⁵ See M. P. Pogodin, "Evgenii Onegin", roman v stikhakh, sochinenie Alexandra Pushkina, pesn' 4 I 5', and N. I. Nadezhdin, 'Dve povesti v stikhakh: "Bal" i "Graf Nulin"', in E. Larionova (ed.), *Pushkin v prizhiznennoi kritike, 1828–1830* (St Petersburg: Gos. pushkinskii teatral'nyi tsentr, 2001), 42–5, 116–17.

⁶⁶ There is an interesting parallel in the association of radicalism and digression among Byron's readers. See Jane Stabler, *Byron, Poetics and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), ch. 1.

⁶⁷ See *Atenei*, 3 (1829), 391–7.

that Pushkin, having sustained colossal losses at cards, had retreated to the countryside. He commented that such 'lamentable behaviour clashes with the sublime gift he received from nature'.⁶⁸ One unusually appreciative journalist argued that most poets were well content to imitate themselves and that at least Pushkin when on form continued to imitate others. In his view, if innovations disrupted readers' expectations this had to be sanctioned as the natural development of gifts of genius. Modifying an image from 'The Prophet', he writes of Pushkin as a once charming poet who has become a literary Prometheus able to breathe life into 'literary corpses who would otherwise remain corpses'.⁶⁹ Part of the problem with Pushkin's narrator is that his digressiveness promoted a new version of the poetic self that struck readers as expressive in a way that was too individual and too centred on the narrator's individual genius to sit comfortably with expectations of a speaker whose feelings and reactions, whose passions, above all, should never exceed reason and universality. By shifting attention away from conventional novelistic protagonists onto a speaker whose idiosyncratic behaviour developed unpredictably from chapter to chapter Pushkin confronted his readers not only with a narrator who violated literary taste, but confronted them with a new type of subjectivity and individual genius that few readers had the sophistication to appreciate. In an unsigned article, N. A. Polevoi expressed the fear that Pushkin, whose poetry was circulating in large numbers of unauthorized copies, would inspire masses of untalented young imitators.⁷⁰

To Pushkin's more insidious conservative critics the issue was one of national pride as much as a single writer's individual competence. Writing in the *Northern Bee* of 1830, Faddei Bulgarin articulated an undercurrent that ran through much of the criticism—namely, a suspicion that while Pushkin may have learned to toe the line politically, his subversive style and language were radical in their refusal to serve the official doctrine of the state (codified in 1834 by Uvarov in his infamous slogan of 'Orthodoxy, Absolutism, Populism').⁷¹ It was, in his view, shocking that the 'genius of our poets' was not roused to celebrate the foreign policy achievements that should have brought Russia the 'respect of all enlightened peoples'. Pushkin's reputation for free-thinking extended beyond metropolitan Russia. In a provincial collection, one amateur poet denounced Pushkin's misguided attitude to freedom.⁷² In 1826, another detractor hinted at the dangerous connection between the Romantic style and radical politics by saying that Pushkin had joined other writers marked by a great liberty of

⁶⁸ A. V. Nikitenko, *Dnevnik*, 3 vols. (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1955), i. 176.

⁶⁹ P. I. Shalikov in Larionova, *Pushkin v prizhiznennoi kritike, 1828–1830*, 248.

⁷⁰ See N. A. Polevoi, 'Obozrenie russkoi literatury v 1824 g.', *Moskovskii Telegraf*, 3 (16 February 1825), 242–62.

⁷¹ On Bulgarin's hostile review of chapter 7 of *Evgenii Onegin* and Pushkin's sparring with the editor of the *Northern Bee*, see the convenient summary in Binyon, *Pushkin*, 312–19.

⁷² See N. Tsubul'skii, 'Myсли protiv lozhnoi svobody', in *Kaluzhskie vechera, ili otryuki sochinenii i perevodov v stikakh i v proze voennykh literatorov* (Moscow: Universitetskaiia tipografiia, 1825), as cited in *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva*, ii. 88.

style: the term he uses for such freedom is 'vol'nost', the title word of the radical ode with which Pushkin incurred the wrath of the government in 1819. The critic was only articulating the latent suspicion that Pushkin's Romanticism was more than Byronic attitudinizing, because a radical change in style raised suspicions of a dangerous revolutionary inclination. In a letter written early in 1826, in the aftermath of the Decembrist revolt, P. A. Bolotov denounced Pushkin as the 'fashionable oracle' whose poetry had infected the others with his 'godless philosophy'.⁷³ Sensitive to the gossip, Zhukovsky anticipated such negative associations when he warned Pushkin about the danger his radical politics posed to his reputation and literary popularity.⁷⁴ 'Obscurity' ('temnost''), inconsequentiality ('net perekhodov'), and indefiniteness ('neopredelonnost''), all the opposite of the qualities of clarity, smoothness, and accuracy that readers automatically expected from Pushkin, were named as the hallmark of the new Romantic poetics displayed in *Evgenii Onegin*. Pushkin felt uncertain about the limits of his innovation, confiding to Bestuzhev that 'our timid taste will not tolerate genuine Romanticism'.⁷⁵

But the reaction to *Evgenii Onegin* only tells half the story about the image that the poet projected to his readership. Even as his narrator's idiosyncratic self-presentation challenged conventional taste, Pushkin published a first collection of lyric verse in 1826. Although lyric poetry had flourished from the last third of the eighteenth century, single-author collections were uncommon, few and far between because the metropolitan elite either found piecemeal publication in journals to be adequate or relied on the circulation of manuscripts.⁷⁶ Buoyed by the relative commercial success of his narrative poems and encouraged by a changing attitude to print-culture, Pushkin produced a collection that was both a personal landmark and a milestone in the literary history of the period. In assembling his selection of texts Pushkin aimed to fix the record of his early career as a poet by collating versions of early poems that had circulated freely without manuscript authority.⁷⁷ Notoriously, he had sold off a notebook full of original authorial copies in order to settle a gambling debt and borrowed the collection in order to establish proper versions of his own works. Of the eighty

⁷³ See N. A. Shimanov, 'Iz perepiski Bolotovykh o dekabristakh i A. S. Pushkine', *Literaturnyi arkhiv. Materialy po istorii literatury i obshchestvennosti*, 1 (1938), 279.

⁷⁴ See PSS, xiii, no. 257, p. 271 (12 April 1826). On Pushkin's self-conscious projection of his image as a renegade from the South, see T. G. Tsiavlovskaiia, 'Neiasnye mesta biografii Pushkina', *PIM* 4 (1962), 37–8.

⁷⁵ PSS, xiii, no. 228, p. 228 (30 November 1825).

⁷⁶ See L. S. Sidiakov, "Stikhotvoreniia Aleksandra Pushkina" i russkii stikhotvornyi sbornik pervoi treti XIX-ogo veka', in E. A. Maimin and E. V. Slinina (eds.), *Problemy sovremennogo pushkinovedeniia. Sbornik statei* (Pskov: Pskovskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii institut im. S. M. Kirova, 1994), 44–57.

⁷⁷ In a letter to his brother Pushkin claimed, disingenuously of course, that much of the collection was 'rubbish' ('drian'), but that it presented a convenient opportunity once and for all to squelch pirated versions by printing an authorized text. See the comments in Annenkov, *Materialy*, 191.

poems published under generic headings as elegies, epigrams, imitation of the ancients, and epistles, no fewer than fifty-five dated to 1821 or earlier. It is clear that Pushkin did not regard his early verse as makeweights, but rather saw the pieces as worthy to stand next to his more recent output as comparable examples of his art. Revisions to his early poems largely involved changes to punctuation and minor modifications in diction. By arranging the poems according to genre rather than chronology, Pushkin signalled a fidelity to the genre-system and a stable poetics, thereby alerting his reader to the general emotional tone to be expected in each of the sections. While the most recent poems in the collection could strongly suggest new approaches and a refashioning of genre, the entire collection succeeded critically because it showed a consistent mastery of technique and tone perfectly calibrated to the tastes of readership and an expected literary decorum. The verse epistle was distinctly old-fashioned by 1826, and several of the longer poems in this section dated to Pushkin's years at the Lycée. Similarly, the sections entitled 'Imitations of the Ancients' and 'Epigrammes', which include a pastiche of Clément Marot and an idyll written after Moschus, counterbalance the more obvious Romantic gestures of a poem like 'The Orb of Day has Set' ('Pogaslo dnevnnoe svetilo', 1820) and 'To the Sea', an imitation of 'Childe Harold's Farewell'.

Even as the serialization of *Evgenii Oegin* kept some readers impatient for more plot and upset others with the narrator's unpredictability, *The Poems of Alexander Pushkin* (1826) turned back the clock to a poet untainted by political scandal and celebrated for giving new energy and polish to a form of lyric that had been stable since the turn of the century. As a lyric poet he remained the master of invention even as the author of *Evgenii Oegin* acquired a reputation for too radical and disruptive an imagination. The inclusion of so many early poems, dating from Pushkin's teens, was intended less to prove his precociousness than to emphasize a consistency of voice and manner that marked out his genius as seamless, possibly unchanging, and certainly in command of the rules of his art. Apart from the elegy to Chénier, where radical themes intrude by virtue of the subject's life, Pushkin included no poems of a political content, like his setting of the parable of the sower ('Freedom's Sower in the Wilderness', 'Svobody seiatel' pustyynnyi', 1823).⁷⁸ In terms of verse form and theme, most of these poems fit comfortably with the models established by earlier generations of

⁷⁸ Pushkin had promised Zhukovsky to keep his more controversial ideas to himself and not to 'contradict accepted convention' (Pushkin, *PSS*, xiii, no. 250, p. 265 (7 March 1826)). In his first major lyric collection, published only a year after the Decembrist rebellion, Pushkin had no intention of testing the tolerance of the censor and the authorities, particularly after establishing a rapprochement with Nicholas I. Such circumspectness raised suspicions among friends sympathetic to the Decembrists who cherished the image of Pushkin the radical. When he published his tribute to Andrei Chénier in the collection it was without the most controversial forty-four lines, a sign that he wished to stay on the right side of the authorities. But because the lines had already circulated clandestinely the poem, nonetheless, carried a political charge. On Pushkin and Chénier, see Chapter 6.

poets, reinforcing Pushkin's lyric identity as an Arzamasite follower of Karamzin, Batiushkov, and Zhukovsky, who is able to enhance their virtues and eliminate their defects. Craft more than individuality is the watchword of the achievement that he wishes to present to the public, counterbalancing the other message that was simultaneously hitting readers of *Evgenii Onegin* about his potential for a different type of lyric energy and identity.

It is insufficient to admire these skills without asking about the intentionality behind such a conservative attitude to presenting innovation. Most of the poems in the collection that invest such ingenuity and powers of memory in the seamless integration of allusion do not aim to complicate the poet's relation to an anterior model or poet. That much should be clear. Less clear, however, is precisely what these poems choose not to do and why. Behind the screen of Pushkin's poetics there operates a striking resistance to two fundamental areas of Romantic aesthetics: the first is an absence of subjectivity and overt interest in the workings of his imagination; the second, and related, phenomenon is the minimal place that his lyrics accord to description of the countryside. Whatever indications of innovation in genre and tonality, the basis of the collection was indisputably the well-schooled production characteristic of the younger Pushkin, notable for ease and elegance and a certain impersonality. Underneath the surface impression of a poetics firmly anchored in the tastes of the late eighteenth century we sense a complex and shifting negotiation between the values of classical poetics and Romantic possibilities that Pushkin had already expressed in his narratives and kept at a distance in his lyric. The arrangement of cycles within the collection structurally demarcates these frames of reference. By concluding the entire book with the cycle exotically entitled 'Imitations of the Koran' ('Podrazhaniia Koranu', 1824) he offset the exquisitely old-fashioned 'Imitation of the Ancients', hinting at experimentation with a new subjectivity. Similarly, the disposition of elegies in the collection has a lopsided balance. From the earliest 'Awakening' ('Probuzhdenie', 1816) to the lamentations of the prematurely old speaker in 'Soon I shall fall silent' ('Umolknu skoro ia!', 1821), the poems feature a standard type of speaker familiar from both Russian and French elegy since the 1780s. Placed prominently at the end of the book's first section of elegies, the gigantic 'André Chénier' ('Andrei Shen'e', 1825) comes as a revelation. The poem breaks new ground because the choice of Chénier as a model reveals a self-consciousness that sheds light on the practice of the entire section. Regarded in the period as a neoclassicist in form and an early Romantic in sensibility, Chénier embodied the tension between two types of poetic subjectivity, and by filtering his own voice through ventriloquism of Chénier the poem enacts Pushkin's reluctance to embrace a subjective lyric identity unless he can control his own voice through that of another poet. By giving him the final word at the end of the elegies, Pushkin suggests attraction to a model of indirection and his own indecisiveness about his suitability for writing poems in which the speaker must contemplate, as

the Romantic does, not just the state of his feelings, but the very representation and act of feeling.⁷⁹

The dense allusiveness that scholars, including Vadim Vatsuro and Oleg Proskurin, have uncovered in the early elegies suggests that the purpose of intertextuality, where poems fold in multiple sources that are remarkably similar between themselves, is to increase the competence of the literary performance. But at the same time one result of such saturation is to increase artificiality, making Pushkin's own individual, subjective voice describable only in terms of the indistinct voices of others. If Pushkin gravitates toward dialogue with predecessors, both dead and alive, he is also capable of allowing the voices of other poets to help him define the scope of his attraction to the Romantic, learning through the emulation of Chénier (discussed in Chapter 6) how to balance a voice of classical restraint and theatrical projection of the poet as a heroic figure.

The more his readership wanted him to remain a narrative poet of brilliant light verse, and a lyric poet of impeccable eighteenth-century cast, the more determined he became to espouse the status, if not the complex voicings and self-consciousness, of the Romantic poet.⁸⁰ Identity is at the heart of the distinction between Pushkin's lyric self-presentation, where biographical reticence dominates, and the self-projection of the narrator of *Evgenii Onegin*, whose sensibility and moral growth increasingly crowd out the actions of the protagonists. In the lyric collection, where any reader would have sensed an autobiographical substratum, Pushkin carefully deflects attention from himself by writing as an admirer of Chénier and Byron. In *Evgenii Onegin*, the narrator's interest in his own emotions runs riot in the famous foot digression of chapter 1, a passage that explores, in the narrator's reaction to his own erotic fetish, the impact of memory and sensation on his identity. In the lyric collection such subjectivity remains channelled through the formulas of elegy, where the emotional self exists at a generic level in compliance with the classical insistence on the universality of feeling. Even in the section of the book devoted to 'Epistles', where the rules of the genre allow the writer to include more personal information, Pushkin continually pushes the focus onto others.

We have seen that the dynamic view of the imagination as a creative force is common across Pushkin's eclectic reading. If Pushkin did not adhere to one single theory of creativity, the shared elements coalesce in a coherent if reticent approach to the imagination as a poetic power. Tentatively in the late 1820s and more powerfully in the poetry of the early 1830s, Pushkin positions the

⁷⁹ In the perpetual tension between modes, Pushkin's classical Romanticism is comparable to Beethoven's wavering. See Maynard Solomon, 'Beyond Classicism', in *Studies in Late Beethoven: Music, Thought, Imagination* (London: University of California Press, 2003), 27–41.

⁸⁰ Contemporary critics started dubbing Pushkin a 'Romantic' from the mid-1820s. For a typical example see the review of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* in Vatsuro and Fomichev, *Pushkin v przhiznennoi kritike, 1820–1827*, 303.

imagination in a complex set of associative activities of the intellect: words that we may take somewhat for granted in Pushkin like memory ('pamiat', 'vospom-inanie'), will ('volia'), dream ('son', 'mechta') fall increasingly into the semantic field of the imagination. For the imagination to become akin to Coleridge's Imagination, we would expect to see changes in Pushkin's approach to mimesis, shifting from the representation of an external reality to a mental conception conceived in a moment of self-awareness by the poet. Imitation is a reflection of the conception in the author's mind. But this was acceptable to him since, to quote a passage from Coleridge that he marked, '[t]he idea of the mind forming images of itself, is as absurd as the belief of Descartes with respect to the eternal world. There is nothing in the mind which was not previously in the senses, except the mind itself.'⁸¹ Ultimately, through its intellectual grasp of structures—what Ancillon, echoing Kant, calls judgement—and through language, the imagination uses mimesis to preserve a real-life screen on which to project new scenarios and pictures as conceived entirely in the mind.

⁸¹ S. T. Coleridge, *Letters, Conversations and Recollections of S. T. Coleridge*, 2 vols. (London, 1836), 138 [Modz. 761].

5

Nature and Romantic Subjectivity

In a note penned in 1827 Pushkin equated ‘elevated boldness’ in literature with ‘boldness of invention’ (‘smelost’ ‘izobreteniiia’) but not the imagination.¹ How does a poet committed to an aesthetic of invention come to possess the faculty of inspiration and imagination that distinguishes the Romantic poet? One answer lies in Pushkin’s openness to the combined English and Germanic approach to the imagination that we discussed in the previous chapter. Another answer lies in his responsiveness to great poems about nature written by authors for whom he felt an affinity. Nature in Pushkin’s lyric corpus has attracted little critical attention. Such silence may eloquently convey how problematic or elusive the subject is. But it does not do enough to explain why Pushkin’s engagement with a central topic of lyric exploration from the mid-eighteenth century through to Romanticism is so strangely muted. This chapter argues that it is not until the 1830s that Pushkin’s lyric treatment of nature finally aligns him with Romantic subjectivity. I begin with a discussion of the role of nature in his first collection of poems, a patently important moment when Pushkin, the famed author of narrative, achieved comparable status as a lyric poet. Despite the seeming consistency across the collection, certain poems signal how Pushkin began to conceptualize new directions in representing the interaction of the poet and landscape.

The seminal work of M. H. Abrams, followed by Paul de Man and Geoffrey Hartman, established the fundamental connection between Romantic self-consciousness and nature. Romantic writers understood that perception is the product of the interaction of the imagination and the world; that the mind is not a mirror of a stable outer world, but a shaper of that perception and a faculty that is aware of its powers of representation that reflects the dynamism of its own operation. In the late 1820s, Pushkin began to accept this interaction between the imagination and nature, and to share in the pervasive conviction in the capacity of the imagination to create ideal realms. This Romantic trend, present in the sublime landscapes of his narrative poems, parodied in the poetic discourse he gives the poet Lensky in *Evgenii Onegin*, is more unusual in his

¹ See Pushkin, *PSS*, xi. 59–61; interestingly, however, the range of authors he commends for such boldness includes Shakespeare, Molière, and Goethe, suggesting again an inseparable appreciation of both invention and imagination.

lyric oeuvre. Despite fragmentary attempts, it is not until the 1830s that Pushkin produced a Greater Romantic lyric, famously defined by M. H. Abrams as poems that

present a determinate speaker in a particularized, and usually a localized, outdoor setting, who we overhear as he carries on, in a fluent vernacular which rises easily to a more formal speech, a sustained colloquy, sometimes with himself or with the outer scene, but more frequently with a silent human auditor, present or absent. The speaker begins with a description of the landscape; an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape evokes a varied but integral process of memory, thought, anticipation, and feeling which remains closely interwoven with the outer scene. In the course of this meditation the lyric speaker achieves an insight, faces up to a tragic loss, comes to a moral decision, or resolves an emotional problem. Often the poem rounds upon itself to end where it began, at the outer scene, but with an altered mood and deepened understanding which is the result of the intervening meditation.²

The chapter will conclude with two examples of the Pushkinian Greater Romantic Lyric, which are among his greatest poems, 'Autumn' and 'I visit once again . . .', the latter a revision of Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' (1798). It is because nature is more prominent for its absence than presence in Pushkin's lyric that these poems mark an exceptional trial of a Romantic mode for Pushkin. They suggest a revolution in his attitude to the natural landscape, where the imagination and the poet's awareness of the power of the imagination augment Pushkin's Romantic voice. Close reading of these lyrics reveals how differently the two poems explore the activity of the mind of the poet in the process of creation. 'Autumn' captures the connection between the mind and body, exposing a materialist side of Pushkin's thinking that correlates the energy of the imagination to physiological change. 'Autumn' owes its rich and innovative body imagery to the 'bio-medical' understanding of the mind current from the Enlightenment well into the Romantic period (explored at greater length in Chapter 8). Association, touched on in 'To my Inkwell' as a threat to invention's imposition of order, leads the imagination into pictorial disarray.

According to Geoffrey Hartman, in Romantic lyric the problem of the isolation of the individual caught in his own subjectivity is particularly acute. He writes that 'subjectivity—even solipsism—becomes the subject of poems which *qua* poetry seek to transmute it'.³ For Hartman this is nowhere more the case than in 'Tintern Abbey'. It is a measure of Pushkin's intuitive grasp of Wordsworth that he turned to 'Tintern Abbey' in experimenting with forms of subjectivity expressed in a meditation on the self and the natural world. 'I visit

² M. H. Abrams, 'Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric' in Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom (eds.), *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 527–8.

³ Hartman, *Beyond Formalism*, 308.

once again . . .', however, uses the language of the transcendental and time-space categories, conferring on the imagination a metaphysical power.⁴

NATURE IN PUSHKIN'S EARLY VERSE

In Pushkin's early verse, the countryside appears as a reflex of classical attitudes. Representation is so stylized that few poems employ even the distanced and unpoetic language of the mind and the eye.⁵ The tendency to create a natural picture from a tissue of intertexts and familiar tropes appears early, beginning with the celebrated 'Recollection in Tsarskoe Selo' ('Vospominaniia v Tsarskom Sele', 1814). The debut poem that brought him to public attention places the poet in the park at the Summer Palace and reflects the artificiality of the landscape by producing a verbal mirror of equal artifice. But even in less constructed locations, the mind of the poet rarely sees itself in nature, and rarely even sees the landscape itself. In 'The Village' ('Derevnia', 1819) a political interpretation of the pastoral makes landscape a showcase for political satire. Nature is no more than an allegorical *mise-en-scène* for an attack on serfdom as an inhumane socio-economic system.⁶

By 1826 when Pushkin published his first collection one might have expected to see change. Even the most ardent Romantics felt admiration for the rediscovered legacy of André Chénier, a key figure in Pushkin's personal pantheon, whose poetry, particularly in describing nature, seemed perfectly poised between the ancient and modern and an attractive model.⁷ Yet there are still no great landscape poems in the book. On point of surface detail it would be easy to conclude that Pushkin's attitude has remained static. The organization of the book according to genre muffled genuine if inherent differences among the poems where nature was the primary subject.⁸ Consequently, even where

⁴ Izmailov, *Ocherki tvorchestva*, 260, notes that Pushkin planned to publish 'Osen' and 'Vnov' ia posetil . . .' adjacent to one another in his 1836 collection as the expression of a common theme in which each poem develops different aspects.

⁵ For another view, see A. A. Smirnov, 'Romanticheskaia mediatsiia v lirike A. S. Pushkina', in M. L. Remneva (ed.), *Pushkin. Sbornik statei* (Moscow: MGU, 1999), 42–9. Smirnov argues that Pushkin is a Romantic poet because of the emotion that he injects into landscape, but he can only point to a handful of poems, not including 'Osen' and 'Vnov' ia posetil', that hardly bear out his definition.

⁶ See Stephanie Sandler, *Distant Pleasures* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1989) ch. 1.

⁷ Pushkin was introduced to Chénier's poetry by N. N. Raevskii, who coached him in English by reading him Byron's *Corsair*. See M. A. Tsiavlovskii, *Stat'i o Pushkine* (Moscow: Akademiiia nauk, 1962), 15–27. At some time between the autumn of 1820 and spring of 1821, Pushkin copied out lines from Chénier's *Jeune Captive* as an epigraph to a manuscript anthology of poems.

⁸ For the tables of contents of the 1826 and 1829 collections (the first by genre, the second organized chronologically), see A. S. Pushkin, *Stikhotvoreniia. Kniga pervaiia* (Peterburg. 1817–1820) = vol. ii. of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v dvadtsati tomakh* (St Petersburg: Nauka, 2004), 356–62.

poems started to speak a new language of subjectivity, as in 'To the Sea', the immediate context of the collection masked that distinctiveness. In the first four sections of his first book of poems, nature is conspicuous for its scarcity and deliberate sense of limitation. The Russian word for nature ('priroda') does not occur at all in the collection, scarcely any descriptive scenes dedicated to a vista mark the sections, and only a handful of the eighty-four titles indicate an interest in the natural world. For the most part, especially in the first section of seventeen elegies, nature plays the familiar part of the neoclassical pastoral backdrop in which shepherds pipe plaintive tunes. The presiding genius of this section, as made clear in the tribute of the final elegy, is André Chénier, and the Pushkinian landscape stays close to Chénier's approach to the idyll, where all the shepherds and shepherdesses are alike, lovely and sensitive, conforming to Marmontel's observation that 'delicacy of sentiment is essential to pastoral poetry'.⁹ While French pastoral verse had an overriding homogeneity, theorists nonetheless established fine distinctions between sub-genres depending on the degree to which rustic detail could be tolerated, and emotional artificiality or frankness (as embodied by the Swiss poet Gessner) cultivated. Most early Pushkinian eclogues steer clear of Gessner's profusions, and display a correct command of the rules of the erotic idyll or eclogue as practised by poets, including the eighteenth-century French pastoralists François Bernis, Nicolas Léonard, and Jean Roucher, where rusticity is kept at bay, nature is sketched in with one or two unrealistic and colourless details, and the focus is on sentiment.

While Pushkin's attachment to a patently old-fashioned view was not unique, it was unusually emphatic and prolonged in its resistance to the kind of pre-Romantic synthesis that Zhukovsky had perfected in landscapes imbued with a combination of Schiller's feeling for nature and Ossianic mood. Pushkin's avoidance of pathetic fallacy is conspicuous. In the elegy 'I've outlived my desires...' ('Ja perezhil svoi zhelaniia...' 1821), the speaker invokes a storm not as a projection of his turbulent feelings but emblematically as a Stoic symbol of fate. The source of feeling in the poem lies in its declarative rhetoric rather than in its images, since the speaker sees nature as an entirely separate realm that is indifferent to his state. Similarly, in the two quatrains of 'The Little Bird' ('Ptichka', 1823), the poet makes an emblem out of a natural image. In the first stanza, the poet frees the bird from the cage: freedom here is 'volia', meaning the ability to exercise will, which in this case is the natural homing instinct that sends the bird away and that the poet would follow if he were at liberty. In the second quatrain the language is allegorical because he bestows freedom of a different kind, namely, 'svoboda' or a metaphysical type of liberty, on a 'creation' ('tvorenie') as a gift ('darovat'). In its emblematic function,

⁹ See his article 'Éclogue' in the *Encyclopédie*; for a helpful discussion of the consistency of representation and theorizing in France, see Daniel Mornet, *Le Sentiment de la nature en France de J.-J. Rousseau à Bernardin de Saint-Pierre* (Paris: Hachette et Cie, 1907; repr. New York), ch. 1.

the bird has moved from the natural world to that of culture and creativity.¹⁰ In other poems, no regret or reflection inflect the sense of separation between man and nature. In an elegy like ‘The Grave of a Youth’ (‘Grob iunoshi’, 1821), the poet explores his nascent atheism. Detail reinforces the premiss that the landscape will not share in the expression of the speaker’s loss: the more poignant the reflection on young death and mortality, the more resolute stands the boundary between mankind and nature, where ‘the old lime rustles | Having forgotten the woes of the heart . . .’. Most landscape descriptions in the collection resemble the ‘eclogues galantes’ of the best eighteenth-century practitioners such as Léonard, Nicolas Gilbert, and Charles Millevoye, as well as the numerous imitators of eighteenth-century French poetry of a lighter kind who persisted well into the 1820s.

This emphasis is not merely automatic. Pushkin held a critical view of Rousseau’s myth of nature, which underpins the theme of flight from civilization in *The Gypsies*, begun in 1824 and completed in 1827. He embodied his rejection of Rousseau’s vision of nature in the failure of the hero to merge peaceably with the tribe of savages who shelter him.¹¹ Earlier lyric poems showed little sympathy for Rousseau’s anthropology or his type of natural religion, projecting instead a consistent ease with the conventions of the pastoral genre, where nature serves as a stage-set for the love plot. But as a reader of the *philosophes*, including Buffon and Diderot, Pushkin was well aware of an alternative to Rousseau’s mythic state in the Enlightenment approach to nature as a scientific system. The landscape of this nature asks to be known through observations and measurement.¹² His ease with this approach is visible in the deceptively simple poem ‘Signs’ (‘Primety’, 1821).¹³ Tucked away in the ‘Imitation of the Ancients’ section this sonnet is a miniature version of a georgic (Pushkin disliked the descriptive abundance of Thomson’s *The Seasons*):

Старайся наблюдать различные приметы:
 Пастух и земледел в младенческие леты,
 Взглянув на небеса, на западную тень,
 Умеют уж предречь и ветер, и ясный день,
 И майские дожди, младых полей отраду,
 И мразов ранний хлад, опасный винограду.
 Так, если лебеди, на лоне тихих вод
 Плескаясь вечером, окличут твой приход,

¹⁰ Other emblem poems that use metaphors of ripeness for mortality and creation are ‘The Rose’ (‘Roza’, 1815) and ‘The Vineyard’ (‘Vinograd’, 1824).

¹¹ Before Pushkin’s deconstruction of the Rousseauian myth, Karamzin had already attacked the notion of a Golden Age anterior to the social contract. At the same time, however, Karamzin defended the close connection that Rousseau demonstrated, above all in *Les Réveries d’un promeneur solitaire* (1782), between sensibility, religious sentiment, and awe toward the natural world.

¹² See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1989), ch. 1.

¹³ The poem dates from late December 1821. See R. V. Iezuitova, ‘Rabochaia tetrad’ Pushkina PD. No. 833 (Istoriia zapolneniia)’, *PIM* 15 (1995), 247.

Иль солнце яркое зайдет в печальны тучи,
 Знай: завтра сонных дев разбудит дождь ревучий,
 Иль бьющий в окна град—а ранний селянин,
 Готовясь уж косить высокой злак долин,
 Услыша бури шум, не выдит на работу
 И погрузится вновь в ленивую дремоту.¹⁴

Try to observe the various signs: | In their young years, shepherd and landowner, | With a glance at the skies, the shadow in the west, | Are already able to predict the wind and clear day, | And the May showers, joy of the young fields, | And the early nip of frosts, a threat to the vine. | So, if in the evening swans splash in the basin of quiet waters, and trumpet your arrival, | Or if the sun should rise fierce through sad cloud, | Know: tomorrow a fierce rain will waken sleepy maidens, | Or hail will smash the windows—and the early | Farmer, already preparing to mow the valleys' tall grass, | Once he hears the noise of the storm, will not go out to toil, | And once again will plunge himself into lazy slumber.

The poem is an exercise in the self-instruction of the observer, who attempts to understand nature empirically. The method of the shepherd and farmer is purely inductive. He surveys summer (l. 5), winter (l. 6), spring (l. 7), autumn (l. 12) in order to master the secrets of nature by establishing patterns. The rhetorical structure of the poem emphasizes the underlying posture of philosophical enquiry. The opening is a syllogism from which the proposition contained in the next thirteen lines flows: the poem argues that if one tries to observe different signs it is necessary to proceed in the following manner and draw certain conclusions. Line 10 picks up the first part of the proposition with the imperative 'then know' ('znai'). The knowledge that derives from reading signs will direct the viewer's eye and lead to entirely practical decisions about whether to work or not on any given day. In positioning the subject in nature, the poem sees the interrelation of man and the world as a question of knowledge and theory and eliminates subjectivity. Uncertainty, caused by the limits of knowledge about nature, creates a dilemma for the farmer, who examines the weather for signs and certain knowledge of the agricultural year and the patterns of the natural world.

'Signs' implies an opposition between two epistemologies. It shies away from any sense of immanence or subjectivity in the natural world associated with German Romantic philosophy and landmarks in English poetry like the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). The poem supports the viewer who attempts to read nature for its own patterns rather than to impose his imagination, and does not seek to transcend the scientific limits of knowledge by way of feeling. The figure applies a method, rather than intuiting natural laws, or merging his consciousness with the landscape, or projecting subjectivity via the pathetic fallacy. Despite his skill in reading the signs and the intensity of his effort, the farmer admits that nature's fluidity limits his knowledge, thereby putting a barrier between his application of reason and the larger world. In the manner of the georgic where

¹⁴ Pushkin, *PSS*, ii/1. 222.

the catalogue of data encourages scientific conclusion, and signs are not symbols but parts of a larger pattern, the observer resists the Romantic impulse to regard nature in a phenomenological way. Nature means the mechanisms of life, and the poem admits no attempt to see immanence outside the objective points of consciousness that are established by these 'signs', which embody the practical wisdom that works for the cultivator. The poem does not actively exclude the imagination as a principle in observing nature, but resists the vocabulary of subjectivity by giving priority to fact, detail, reality, and empirical rules over insight, personality, the symbolic, and the abstract. In the manner of empirical philosophy, knowledge is limited to sense data and ideas are forecasts that derive from them. There is, however, no suggestion of belief in a priori knowledge since the speaker's horizon ends with experience: once reality disproves the forecast, the farmer does not trouble his mind about it and withdraws to sleep or, symbolically, ignorance. For the speaker, the conclusion is the moment where inaccurate divination establishes the limits of knowledge. For all man's powers of observation in reading the signs, nature slips past his ken. At the level of narrative, the role of the speaker is to instruct on the correct method of forecasting; but the poem also stands as an allegory on the correct way to write and read landscape poems that reflect the empiricism of this outlook. The impulse to regard nature as a system will recur even when the subjectivity of the self infuses the landscape in 'I visit once again . . .'. Other poems in the collection marshal cultural and poetic authorities in support of variations on the neoclassical mood. Such is the case, for example, with Pushkin's free version of Wilhelm Meister's song. Landscape here resists utopian imagining and metaphysical longing. The search for the ideal land becomes the search for the ideal artist and the model poet. In 'Who has seen the land . . .' ('Kto videl kraj', 1821), the myth of a golden age reunion with classical perfection transports the poet to a realm where the subject exists in a detached if compatible harmony and calm within an ideal pastoral realm. In paying tribute to the Italy of Tasso, Raphael, Canova, and Byron, Pushkin focused on a realm where universal values of taste made available through imitation confer artistic parity among nations; and where classical taste represents the imagination at its peak.

Elsewhere, memory rather than a synthetic, creative imagination intensifies the meaning of the landscape, infusing the poet's vision and feeling. This is apparent even in 'Tsarkoe Selo', an 1819 place-naming poem, where his early uncertainty about subjectivity and nature description subordinates the aesthetic imagination to the reproductive imagination of memory:

Хранитель милых чувств и прошлых наслаждений,
О ты, певцу дубрав давно знакомый Гений,
Воспоминание, рисуй передо мой
Волшебные места, где я живу душой,
Леса, где я любил, где чувство развивалось,
Где с первой юностью младенчество сливалось

И где, взлелеянный природой и мечтой,
Я знал поэзию, веселость и покой.¹⁵ (ll. 1–8)

Guardian of sweet feelings and past pleasures, | O you, Genius of the groves [who are] long known to the poet, | Memory, conjure before me | The magical places where I live in my soul, | The woods, where I lived, where feeling evolved, | Where childhood blended with early youth | And where, caressed by nature and fancy, | I knew poetry, humour and peace.

Incapable of trusting the powers of his own imagination, the speaker surrenders to the countryside. Both agency ('the genius of the oaks', 'Genii dubrav'; 'memory', 'vospominanie'; 'nature', 'priroda'; 'fancy', 'mechta') and art ('poetry', 'poeziia') belong to nature. This represents a shift, because the poem reverses the usual relationship by making nature the agent and the poet the object; this reversal is expressed in the linguistic mirroring between seeing ('vizhu'), the poet's characteristic act, and, through the adjective 'alive' ('zhiv'), denoting the creative vitality associated with the landscape. An experimental element surfaces in the first section, where the abundance of stock Romantic phrases corroborates the impression that the poem articulates his new view of landscape. But unlike the poet of more decided Romantic sensibility who would project the power and energy of the imagination onto nature and through reading the landscape and attaining self-discovery also recognize larger truths, landscape remains only a repository for remembered feelings ('milye chuvstva', 'proshlie naslazhdeniia', 'chuvstvo', 'mladenchestvo', 'veselost', 'pokoi').

ROMANTIC INTIMATIONS: 'THE ORB OF DAY HAS SET' (1820) AND 'TO THE SEA' (1824)

Pushkin's representations of nature only intermittently depart from a tested style, where wit and ornament vary the description of a timeless world that is truthful, according to neoclassical expectation, because it aspires to the perfection and universality of the ancient landscape. These stirrings in new directions are therefore noteworthy. Within the 1826 collection two key lyrics depart from the prevailing approach and exhibit a complex ambivalence to their codes of representation. Written at the beginning and end of his first period of exile from 1820 to 1824, 'The Orb of Day has Set. An Imitation of Byron' ('Pogaslo dnevnoe svetilo', 1820) and 'To the Sea' ('K moriu', 1824) were immediately read as autobiographical statements in the manner of Byron and therefore taken as Romantic declarations. If anything, Pushkin encouraged this tendency in letters written at the time. On closer reading, and through a discussion of their intertextual

¹⁵ Pushkin, *PSS*, ii/1. 285.

connection to an Enlightenment paradigm of nature, we see that the same poems put forward two contrasting positions about nature and fail to resolve a split in Pushkin between two outlooks on the connection of the poet to the natural world. By comparison with other elegies and epigrams that he had published, both poems appeared to suggest a shift in his lyric style because they projected an expansive sense of poetic ego and genius commensurate with the vastness of nature. Within the frame of the collection, the juxtaposition of this vision and the more conventional pastoral compositions is provocative, raising the question of whether the poems were included in order to suggest new directions for the future or to test the limits of experimentation.

In 'The Orb of Day has Set', apparently composed as Pushkin took the ferry across the Black Sea, the poet observes his own feelings as his ship takes him further from the mainland, from his stormy youth, and from unhappy love affairs.¹⁶

Погасло дневное светило;
 На море синее вечерний пал туман.
 Шуми, шуми послушное ветрило,
 Волнуйся подо мной, угрюмый океан.
 Я вижу берег отдаленный,
 Земли полуденной волшебные края;
 С волнением и тоской туда стремлюся я,
 Воспоминая упоенный . . .
 И чувствую: в очах родились слезы вновь;
 Душа кипит и замирает;
 Мечта знакомая вокруг меня летает;
 Я вспомнил прежних лет безумную любовь;
 И всё, чем я страдал, и все, что сердцу мило,
 Желаний и надежд томительный обман . . .
 Шуми, шуми, послушное ветрило,
 Волнуйся подо мной, угрюмый океан.
 Лети, корабль, неси меня к пределам дальным
 По грозной прихоти обманчивых морей,
 Но только не к берегам печальным
 Туманной родины моей,
 Страны, где пламенем страстей
 Впервые чувства разгорались,
 Где музы нежные мне тайно улыбались,
 Где рано в бурях отцвела
 Моя потерянная младость,
 Где легкокрылая мне изменила радость

¹⁶ Pushkin gave the date of composition as the night of 17/18 August 1820. The poem was first published in 1820 in the journal *Son of the Fatherland*, and in his 1826 collection where Pushkin added the subtitle 'Imitation of Byron'. See Boris Tomashevskii, *Pushkin*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990), ii. 104.

И сердце хладное страданью предала.
 Искатель новых впечатлений,
 Я вас бежал, отеческия края;
 Я вас бежал, питомцы наслаждений,
 Минутной младости минутные друзья;
 И вы, наперсницы порочных заблуждений,
 Которым без любви я жертвовал собой,
 Покоем, славою, свободой и душой,
 И вы забыты мной, изменницы младые,
 Подруги тайные моей весны златяя,
 И вы забыты мной . . . Но прежних сердца ран,
 Глубоких ран любви, ничто не излечило . . .
 Шуми, шуми, послушное ветрило,
 Волнуйся подо мной, угрюмый океан . . .¹⁷

The orb of day has set; | On the azure sea an evening cloud has set. | Sound, sound, obedient sail, | Stir beneath me, sullen ocean. | I see the distant shore, | The magical realms of Southern land; | I head there with feeling and anguish, | Thrilled by recollection . . . | And I feel how tears come to my eyes again; | My soul churns and thrills; | Around me a familiar fancy flies; | I've remembered the mad love of previous years; | All that I suffered, and all that was dear to my heart, | The wearying illusion of desires and hopes . . . | Sound, sound, obedient sail, | Stir beneath me, sullen ocean. | Fly, ship, bear me toward distant limits | By the menacing whim of deceitful seas, | But only not to the sad shores | Of my cloudy homeland, | The land, where my feelings first burst | In a flame of passion, | Where the tender muses secretly smiled at me, | Where early amidst the storms | My lost youth ripened, | Where a fleet-winged joy betrayed me | And surrendered my cold heart to suffering. | A seeker after new impressions, | I fled you, paternal lands; | I fled you, children of pleasures, | Ephemeral friends of ephemeral pleasure; | And you, recipients of sinful delusions, | To whom lovelessly I sacrificed myself, | My peace, fame, freedom, and soul, | And you faithless young ladies, forgotten by me, | Secret friends of my golden spring, | You too are forgotten by me. . . . But nothing cured | The old wounds of my heart, the deep wounds of love. | Sound, sound, obedient sail, | Stir beneath me, fearsome ocean . . .

Pushkin wished to inject enough personal detail to satisfy the demand for autobiographical disclosure that travels with the Romantic persona. Within the familiar topoi of premature ageing ('my lost youth', 'moia poteriannaia mladost') and miserable ennui ('cold heart', 'serdtse khladnoe') references to early poetic success, unhappy love affairs, and political radicalism played up the sensational quality of his life. The fluidity of the viewpoint contrasts with the emphasis on nature as a static background, since here sky and sea are constantly changing in tandem with the poet's own emotions. Physical distance also becomes a type of longing and metaphysical distance: the world the poet leaves behind on the 'distant shore' ('otdalennyi', often used metaphorically by Romantic poets) is a magical realm as

¹⁷ Pushkin, *PSS*, ii/1. 146.

well as a 'murky' motherland. Possessed with Byronic wanderlust, this seeker of new experiences ('iskatel' novykh vpechatlenii') cast himself not as an exile, but an active figure in flight from his homeland. But 'The Orb of Day has Set' takes Pushkin to the limit of his Romantic experimentation, projecting subjectivity and creation of the self according to Byronic codes of revelation, theatrically projecting confession and remorse while avoiding genuine introspection. As a scenic prop, the vastness of the sea suggests the poet's isolation, but the engagement with nature falls short of the egotistical sublime, Keats's phrase for the grandness and intensity of Wordsworth's vision. Nature, reverberating in the background as an inhuman noise ('gul') to the music of the poem, does not engage the imagination of the poet or reveal a feeling of immanence (best exemplified in Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey'). Nature and the poetic ego remain separate without the capacity to disturb one another.

'The Orb of Day has Set' marked the beginning of Pushkin's exile. Written four years later and just before his transfer to the family estate at Mikhailovskoe, 'To the Sea' was his farewell to the Southern period.¹⁸ Both poems focus on the image of the shore as a metaphysical as well as geographic boundary. While the earlier poem discerned in exile the promise of a type of freedom, the second poem casts repatriation as surrender of freedom. But this reversal is not only an instance of symmetry, for the language of 'To the Sea' rewrites the first poem, exceeding its original terms by asserting a much greater connection between creativity, individual identity, and nature. The speaker begins by indicating how intertwined poetic capacity and nature have become, paradoxically suggesting that the restoration of personal liberty comes at a cost to poetic freedom. Through personification of nature, already treated in the earlier lyric as a friend with whom he communes, the speaker abrogates the original distance between the landscape as a backdrop and his own sense of identity:

Прощай, свободная стихия!
 В последний раз передо мной
 Ты катишь волны голубые
 И блещешь гордою красой.
 Как друга ропот заунывный,
 Как зов его в прощальный час,
 Твой грустный шум, твой шум призывный
 Услышал я в последний раз.
 Моей души предел желанный!
 Как часто по берегам твоим
 Бродил я тихий и туманный,
 Заветным умыслом томим!

¹⁸ For a compelling reading, see Sandler, *Distant Pleasures*, 57–76, which detects unresolved attitudes towards the land, the sea, and the journey between the two, arguing that the transition from wanting to escape to wanting to remain is a farewell to Romantic ideology.

Как я любил твои отзвуки,
 Глухие звуки, бездны глас,
 И тишину в вечерний час,
 И своенравные порывы!¹⁹ (ll. 1–16)

Farewell, free element! | For the last time before me | You roll your blue waves | And gleam in your proud beauty

Like a friend's sorrowful mutter, | Like his call at the hour of leave-taking, | Your doleful sound, your sound of summons | I have heard for the last time.

My soul's longed-for realm! | How often along your shores | Have I roved, silent and dazed, | Troubled by a cherished design!

How I loved your call-notes, | Your muffled sounds, the chasm's voice, | And [your] silence at the evening hour, | And [your] wilful surges.²⁰

In further stanzas, as the poet contemplates his future path, he remembers Napoleon in his final exile and death, possibly because he may wonder whether his own return from exile will replay Napoleon's flight and final failure (see Chapter 7). More significantly, the moment of departure affords Pushkin the chance to identify a new power that comes from the interpenetration of human genius and the spirit of nature. The poem eulogizes a chapter in his poetic biography where he claims to have been 'bewitched by the mighty passion' of the sea. In the final stanzas, the poet attests how nature has changed him by claiming that, no matter his eventual destination he carries the sound of the sea within him. The merger of self and nature that he achieves ostensibly replicates the examples of Byron and Napoleon, whom he commemorates and twins in the preceding stanzas as manifestations of an identical type of genius that is inseparable from the music of the sea:

Там он почил среди мучений.
 И вслед за ним, как бури шум,
 Другой от нас умчался гений,
 Другой властитель наших дум.
 Исчез, оплаканный свободой,
 Оставя миру свой венец.
 Шумы, взволнуйся непогодой:
 Он был, о море, твой певец.
 Твой образ был на нем означен,
 Он духом создан был твоим:
 Как ты, могущ, глубок и мрачен.
 Как ты, ничем неукротим. (ll. 39–50)

There he found rest amid agonies. | And in his wake like noise of tempest | Another genius sped from us, | Another potentate of our thoughts.

¹⁹ Pushkin, *PSS*, ii/1. 331.

²⁰ Translated by Walter Arndt, *Pushkin Threefold* (New York: Dutton, 1972), 185.

He vanished, bemoaned by Freedom, | Leaving his wreath to the world: | Roar out,
well up with stormy weather: | He was, oh Sea, your singer.

Your image had left its mark on him | He was crafted by your spirit: | Like you, mighty,
deep, and darkling, | Like you, undaunted by anything.

The poet contemplates his dead heroes and sees in them nature's forms of power and invincibility. For the first time Pushkin approaches a vision of nature imbued with immanence that genius can tap, attributing to it 'spirit' ('dukh') and 'creative' power ('sozdan'). Yet the poet can still only read the signs of such power through its human agency and manifestations as imprinted on heroic figures whom he can emulate.

Often seen as the culmination of Pushkin's Romantic period, 'To the Sea' may be more ambivalent about nature as a source of inspiration than seems to be the case. The poem shows the assimilation of nature and genius as two inseparable forces while subtly refusing, at the same time, to situate the poet's own subjectivity in a nature seen truly as a creative spirit. In the concluding stanzas, the poet's valediction to the sea refers to its 'hum' ('gul'), a word that is a synonym for the undifferentiated noise ('shum') used to characterize the sea in 'The Orb of Day has Set'. As the poet travels back to Russia away from the South he hails the 'desired limit of his soul'. The repeated image of nature as a type of noise may also signify, at a self-referential level, a boundary that the poet's mind crosses as he closes and opens new chapters in his life. That boundary may be the poet's own sense of a division in his own artistic development. To one side there are the narrative poems together with poems such as 'The Demon' ('Demon', 1823), where Pushkin gestured toward a Romantic poetics. To a striking degree, these works make out of the poetic self a figure of the egotistical sublime, suggest numinousness within nature, and intimate that subjectivity and genius are coterminous with that nature. On the other side stands an aesthetic defined by Pushkin's adherence to the example of Chénier whose neoclassicism curbed the urge to view the subjective self and landscape in a new way. Even as he carries this new noise inside his head, he feels obliged to bid the sea farewell because the poem is, in effect, a retreat from innovation antithetical to the objective principles of neoclassical restraint. The 1826 collection largely shifts Pushkin's poetics further from the Romantic end of the spectrum.

A deistic sense of the natural world inhabits the poem's vocabulary. Beyond the verbal echoes suggesting internal continuity, the poems are linked through an external connection to two poems by the eighteenth-century scientist and poet Mikhailo Lomonosov. His famous pair of meditations on the universe, regarded as a canonical work before the Pushkin era, grounded the religious faith of the scientist in the rational appreciation of the objective laws, independent of man, by which nature works. In the spirit of deism, imbued with a pietist ethic, Lomonosov's poems expressed in the religious sphere the same conviction about the underlying universality of reason that Lomonosov codified in his

seminal treatises on rhetoric and poetic practice. The language of Lomonosov's first 'Morning Meditation on the Grandeur of God' ('Utrennee razmyshlenie o bozhiem velichestve', 1743) reverberates in the opening stanzas of 'The Orb of Day has Set':

Уже прекрасное светило
 Простерло блеск свой по земли
 И божие дела открыло:
 Мой дух, с веселием внемли:
 Чудяся ясным толь лучам,
 Представь, каков виждитель сам!

The beautiful orb | Has shed its shine across the earth | And revealed the works of God: |
 My spirit rejoice and understand: | Marvelling in such brilliant rays | Imagine how great
 the creator is!

In using the uncommon words 'svetilo' and 'okean' (both more familiar in scientific discourse) and Lomonosov's imperative stance, Pushkin establishes obvious verbal links to the earlier lyric. For Lomonosov, the spectacle of sunset inspires a sense of admiration and oneness with the universe, as the scientist-poet's mind extrapolates from his solar gazing the existence of God and likely existence of other universes in which his mind roams.²¹ Like Lomonosov, the Pushkinian speaker also leaves a world behind. But the 'seeker of new impressions' experiences only separation from the realms that he calls 'magical'; and whereas the obedience of the solar system to physical laws makes Lomonosov feel at home in the universe, the Pushkinian speaker laments the 'menacing caprice of the treacherous seas' that make his fate uncertain. Pushkin's appropriation of the earlier poem uses an intertext in order to effect a transition away from an earlier world view in sympathy with Lomonosov's deism. No atheistic conclusions spring from 'The Orb of Day has Set' to reverse Lomonosov's deism, but the poem still intrudes a painful gap between man and nature. Pushkin's poem defines boundaries between the speaker and his earlier life, the physical and metaphysical shore, whereas Lomonosov's poem shows the mind and imagination in the act of appreciating a 'boundless universe' ('ne nakhodiat beregov'). What matters is the reversal that adds to the Byronic imitation a sense of cosmic and poetic exile. A fallen angel, the Pushkinian speaker has lost the divine spark that animates Lomonosov's astronomer; the remnants of Lomonosov's deistic diction serve to underscore his separation from a poetic model and a religious rationalism. These points of separation, particularly in the context of the collection of 1826 where nature remains an inert neoclassical prop, suggest that the convergence with Romantic trends is ongoing if tentative.

²¹ Pushkin's thoughts will return to Lomonosov and his status in Russian literature during the 1830s. See Andrew Kahn, 'Talking Back to Radishchev: Dialogism and Reversal in Pushkin's *Puteshestvie iz Moskvy v Peterburg*', *Stanford Slavic Studies*, 29 (2005), 234–40. It has been conjectured that the title figure in Pushkin's 'The Youth' ('Otrok', 1830) is Lomonosov.

The affiliation with Lomonosov is even more central to the meaning of 'To the Sea'. The speaker twice hints at a connection with Lomonosov's second meditation by noting that it is evening, the moment at which Lomonosov set his meditation on the interaction of the rational mind and the wonder of nature. In the 'Evening Meditation on the Grandeur of God', the sublime spectacle of the Northern Lights unsettles the poet who, in sensations akin to the mathematical sublime, feels dwarfed by the vast number of stars and frightened by the scale of the universe. Lomonosov's speaker feels as lost as a speck of sand in the sea and loses himself, immersed in the abyss of the night ('v sei bezdne uglublen, | Teriaius', mysliami utomlen'). By contrast, the Pushkinian speaker listens to the sea and hears in the 'muffled sounds' ('glukhi zvuki') and the 'voice of the abyss' ('bezdny glas') the power of an elemental freedom. The sound of the sea, which the poet internalizes in the 'The Orb of Day has Set', inspires the sense that the poet carries within him the same natural energy that moves the sea. Overwhelmed by nature, Lomonosov's speaker is no longer able to discern its 'law' ('zakon'). And since he reads the book of nature as an allegory for human life, he feels profound uncertainty about the forces that guide man, ending up, in the concluding stanza, 'full of doubt' ('sommenii polon'). By contrast, the Pushkinian speaker bids farewell to the sea with no anxiety because he carries the power of nature within him ('toboïu poln') as a type of music and sees the same force embodied in Napoleon and Byron who make destiny through genius.

Despite appearances, it is doubtful whether 1824 marks a breakthrough toward Romantic subjectivity. Despite his knowledge of the status of landscape and nature among the English and German Romantics,²² poems like 'Signs', and 'Winter' ('Zima. Chto delat' nam v derevne?', 1829) turn away from investing nature with the subjectivity of the poetic mind or from seeing the imagination as a harmonizing agency when the natural world is presented as intact and independent of the mind of the viewer. Poems where invention more than imagination mediates between the viewer and landscape are Pushkin's normal practice. Against the Christian vision of nature represented by some contemporary English poets like Coleridge, the nature poetry that Pushkin absorbed in his youth, and

²² In March of 1831 Pushkin wrote to Pletnev to thank him for purchasing books on his behalf and sent a further wish-list for Crabbe, Wordsworth, Southey, and Shakespeare (see Pushkin, *PSS*, xiv, no. 585, p. 158 (26 March 1831)). His continuing creative interaction with Shakespeare led to important works like *Andzhelo*, his adaptation of *Measure for Measure*, and has been much discussed. But Pushkin remained avid to read as much in English as possible, buying up many titles in the series of English writers published cheaply by Galignani in Paris (on which see M. P. Alekseev, *Pushkin. Sravnitel'no-istoricheskie issledovaniia* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972), 265. The Lake Poets, and most especially Wordsworth who provided the epigraph for a sonnet and whose portrait was sketched in a notebook, had clearly caught his imagination, possibly as filtered through their reception in France by Sainte-Beuve whom he read as both critic and poet (under his pen-name Joseph Delorme). On this connection, see Smith, *L'Influence des Lakistes*, esp. part 2. Also see Pushkin, *PSS*, xiv, no. 590, p. 161 (11 April 1831). On Pushkin's attitude to Sainte-Beuve, see G. Akhinger, 'Pushkin i Sent-Bev. Lirika Sent-Beva v otsenke Pushkina', in *Pushkin. Sbornik statei* (Moscow: Moskovskii universitet, 1999), 212–28.

which remained present in his library, offered a sometimes deistic but largely mechanistic view of nature. The closeness to Lomonosov derives from compatible outlooks rather than poetic influences. Whatever the degree of religion infusing their separate visions, for James Thomson in Saint-Lambert's version, Delille, and Millevoye, nature operated according to its own regular scientific laws.²³ In the late 1820s, one work that verified this view of nature, and extended the views of Marmontel and La Harpe to the relation of imagination and landscape, was Chenedollé's epic didactic poem *Le Génie de l'homme*. Pushkin acquired this little-known but fascinating work in the 1820s, and it has left evident traces on his views of nature. It is relevant because in four cantos treating astronomy, man, society, and nature, Chenedollé restated an essentially deistic view of nature as a stable system structured according to principles of reason, a view that Pushkin knew well from his reading of Lomonosov and French deists and materialists including Voltaire, Diderot, and Helvétius. Chenedollé celebrates imagination as the capacity to recreate entire worlds in the mind pictorially, sometimes deliberately but more often involuntarily, as in sleep; and suspects imagination as unreliable and deceptive, calling her a neighbour to madness at odds with reason:

Déesse au front changeant, mobile enchanteresse,
 Qui sans cesse nous flatte, et nous trompe sans cesse,
 Mère des passions, des arts et des talents,
 Qui, peuplant l'univers de fantômes brillants,
 Et d'espoir, tour à tour, et de crainte suivie,
 Ou dore ou rembrunit le tableau de la vie.
 De la Fille des sens tels sont les mille traits.²⁴

While Chenedollé allows that imagination and memory can advance man along the path of scientific discovery, Romantic subjectivity has no place in his system. Imagination must be responsive rather than creative, mimetic rather than expressive, realistic rather than invented. Man is an essential part of his world because the natural world operates according to discoverable objective laws of science, one principle of which is the Great Chain of Being. Man stands

²³ There is good reason to suppose that Pushkin read Diderot from the mid-1820s. He acquired the great posthumous editions of his works that started to appear in the early 1820s. In an 1832 letter to his wife he mentioned reading memoirs of Diderot, which must be Naigeon's *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques sur la vie et les ouvrages de D. Diderot* (Paris: J. L. J. Brière, 1821) [Modz. 1208]. This systematic thematic discussion of the history of Diderot's ideas devotes much attention to his view of nature as a blind material force that exists for the sake of propagating species. Diderot praises classical descriptions of nature in Homer and Cicero because they contain a 'harmony that astonishes us', making them 'great painters of nature' because they reveal 'forces in nature that we do not believe we can always feel' (p. 99). The attention to feeling and the poet's powers of penetration into nature as a physical entity seems close to the presentation of nature in 'Autumn'.

²⁴ Charles de Chenedollé, *Le Génie de l'homme: poëme*, 3rd edn. (Paris: C. Gosselin, 1822), 89: 'Goddess of changing visage, changeable enchantress | Who ceaselessly charms us, and deceives us ceaselessly, | Mother of the passions, of the arts and talents, | Who in populating the universe with brilliant phantoms, | And with hope followed in due course by fear, | Who either gilds or darkens the picture of life. | So are the thousand features of the Daughter of the senses.' The fourth edition that Pushkin owned [Modz. 735] is identical to the third edition quoted here.

at the apex of the natural world because he alone possesses the imagination, memory, and judgement that permit him to penetrate the workings of the universe.

Pushkin continues to shy away from reading the mind of the poet in the landscape; the aesthetic imperatives of invention and imitation restrain the interaction of imagination and nature. Yet the impulse to write a different type of poem of place is present after the Southern period, and the evidence is more of frustrated fragmentation than full-blown Romanticism. Until the 1830s, Pushkin will not present nature in such complex relation with subjectivity. Memory and autobiographical feeling in 'Recollection in Tsarskoe Selo' ('Vospominanie v Tsarkom Sele', 1829) gesture towards a new turn:

Воспомианьями смущенный,
 Исполнен сладкою тоской,
 Сады прекрасные, под сумрак ваш священный
 Вхожу с поникшею главой.
 Так отрок библии, [безумный] расточитель,
 До капли истощив раскаянья фиал,
 Увидев наконец родимую обитель,
 Главой поник и зарыдал.
 В пылу восторгов скоротечных,
 В бесплодном вихре суеты,
 О, много расточил сокровищ я сердечных
 За недоступные мечты,
 И долго я блуждал, и часто, утомленный,
 Раскаяньем горя, предчувствуя беды,
 Я думал о тебе, предел благословенный,
 Воображал сии сады.
 Воображаю день счастливый,
 Когда средь вас возник лицей,
 И слышу наших игр я снова шум игривый
 И вижу вновь семью друзей.
 Вновь нежным отроком, то пылким, то ленивым,
 Мечтанья смутные в груди моей тая,
 Скитаясь по лугам, по рощам молчаливым,
 Поэтом забываюсь я.²⁵ (ll. 1–24)

Overcome by memory, | Filled with sweet longing, | Beautiful gardens, into your sacred evening, | I enter with bowed head. | Like the Biblical youth, the mad prodigal, | Who drained the cup of remorse to the last drop, | When he finally saw his native home, | Dropped his head and wept.

In the heat of momentary passions, | In the fruitless whirlwind of distraction. | O, I squandered so many emotional treasures | For unavailable dreams, | And long did I wander, and often, weary, | Burning with remorse, foreseeing woe, | I thought about you, blessed precinct, | I imagined your gardens.

²⁵ Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 189.

I imagine the happy day, | When in your midst the Lycée opened, | And I hear anew
 the playful noise of our games, | And see anew the family of friends. | Once again a
 tender youth, now fiery, now lazy, | Unclear fancies melting in my breast, | I roam about
 the meadows, the silent groves, | And forget myself in being a poet.

Revisiting the gardens—and the adjective ‘beautiful’ pointedly underscores their neoclassical design—is not only an act of memory, but makes memory subordinate to creative power: he envisages his younger self in the same landscape, but the poem breaks off because the act of imagination is blocked by the memory of the poetry that he wrote there. As the poem invokes a cherished place by imagining an earlier poetic experience (his original poem of place of 1815), textual memory occludes his creative effort to ‘forget himself through poetry’ and to merge with the landscape, blocking the imagination and leading to fragmentation. His present powers of imagination cannot replace the original act of invention. While the poem itself is not a success, it has a significance as a type of worksheet that Pushkin assembles in evolving a new language of landscape which he will use in the poems that most clearly establish his affinity to the High Romantic lyric, and most particularly reveal echoes of Wordsworth’s approach to nature.

In poems where Pushkin follows the subjective mind, formal closure becomes problematic. Fragmentation occurs when Pushkin abandons the premiss of nature as a rational and mechanical order impervious to human feeling. Psychology, aesthetics, and materialism come together in single poems from 1833 and 1835 although not in any systematic manner. Within the poems that explore what the imagination can do, a tension between the two vocabularies of controlled association and subjectivity captures Pushkin’s continued reticence and ambivalence.

‘AUTUMN’ (1833) AND THE MIND OF THE POET

Uncertainty in Pushkin’s treatment of nature emanates partly from his attentiveness to developments in French poetry, where neoclassical imitation lives alongside the iconoclasm of Hugo, and the newly discovered Chénier confounds received wisdom by being ancient and modern at the same time.²⁶ Pushkin inherited these fractures, but English poetic example and his philosophical reading allowed him to produce his own response. The stimulus toward experimentation in his poetry comes from an uncertainty about provisional solutions, and in a number of instances, the pursuit of a new poetics of expressivity contradicts his previous practice. The best examples are two of his most famous lyrics, ‘Autumn’

²⁶ See Pierre Moreau, *Le Classicisme des romantiques* (Paris: Plon, 1932), 16; see also Gilman, *The Idea of Poetry*, 163.

and ‘I visit once again . . .’. The remainder of this chapter will interpret these poems in terms of the discourse of imagination as texts that reflect the thinking and reading that drew Pushkin, with visible traces of anxiety and effort, beyond the limits prescribed by La Harpe and Marmontel.

For Pushkin, the year 1833 brought a final period of calm before the intrigues that ended with his death in a duel in January 1837. Family life was full of financial uncertainty but also happy; Pushkin’s relations with his censor and the head of police were less strained and there had been no major confrontations with the government since 1832. His creative life was heading in new directions, with research well under way on *The Captain’s Daughter* and the *History of Pugachev*. He spent the autumn of 1833 at his modest estate in Boldino. For intensity, variety, and sheer quality of creation, it is every bit the equal of the famous first autumn at Boldino of 1830.²⁷ He wrote his narrative masterpiece, *The Bronze Horseman*, in a mere six weeks. However, as the world of Petersburg and high society became increasingly distasteful for Pushkin, the countryside became not only a symbol of retreat, but of creation. In a now famous letter, he recorded the special place autumn had in his own self-mythology and sense of creativity as his ‘favourite time of year’ when his health improved and his ‘season for literary labour’ arrived. The connection he makes out here between his own bodily sense of vitality and writing is borne out in the physical language of the poem.

This sense of innovation and creative renewal through poetic work and the release of the energy of the imagination dominate ‘Autumn’. The poem is built on images that join the mental and the corporeal, as it follows the power of the imagination and models how the sensual beauty of the landscape impels the life of the mind through impassioned observation of the natural world. It is one of a handful of lyrics in Pushkin to take nature as its subject, and equally unusual in treating the mind of the poet as it observes nature as the subject of meditation. Taken from Derzhavin’s greatest celebration of the Russian countryside, the epigraph immediately focuses attention on the poem as a meditation on the relation of mind to landscape and the workings of mimesis: ‘What then does not enter my mind as it slumbers?’ Drafts of the poem show that Pushkin added the quotation from Derzhavin at a late stage. It signals the connection between the form of expression in the poem and the importance of mind or reason as the source of creativity.

The poem opens with a quick description of autumn in the countryside as seen by the poet living at Boldino in 1833 (stanza 1); it moves on to a comparison of autumn with the other seasons and summer and their relative merits (stanzas 2 to 4). It then returns to images of autumn, this time not on the level of objective

²⁷ For a chronology of the poem’s composition, see N. V. Izmailov, ‘“Osen”’, in *Stikhotvoreniia Pushkina 1820–1830-kh godov. Istoriia sozdaniia i ideino-khudozhestvennaia problematika* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1974), 222–54; recent work on Pushkin’s notebooks suggests that the poem originally ended with the fifth stanza. See Ia. L. Levkovich, ‘Raboचाia tetrad’ Pushkina PD 839 (Istoriia zapolneniia)’, *PIM* 16–17 (2003), 72.

description, but rather in terms of the effect it has on the poet and on his attitude to it. The poem explores how the beauty of the season affects the viewer's body as well as mind, linking the subjective work of the imagination to his physical state in stanzas 5 to 9:

Осень
(Отрывок)

Чего в мой дремлющий тогда не входит ум?
Державин

I.

Октябрь уж наступил—уж роща отряхает
Последние листы с нагих своих ветвей;
Дохнул осенний хлад—дорога промерзает.
Журча еще бежит за мельницу ручей,
Но пруд уже застыл; сосед мой поспешает
В отъезжие поля с охотою своей,
И страждут озими от бешеной забавы,
И будит лай собак уснувшие дубравы.

II.

Теперь моя пора: я не люблю весны;
Скучна мне оттепель; вонь, грязь—весной
я болен;
Кровь бродит; чувства, ум тоскою стеснены.
Суровою зимой я более доволен,
Люблю ее снега; в присутствии луны
Как легкий бег саней с подругой быстр и волен.
Когда под соболем, согрета и свежа,
Она вам руку жмет, пылая и дрожа!

Autumn | (Fragment) | What then does not enter my mind as it slumbers? | *Derzhavin*

October has already arrived—already the grove | Sheds the final leaves from its naked branches; | An autumn chill has breathed—the road freezes, | While the still gurgling brook runs behind the mill, | But the pond has already frozen; my neighbour hastens | With his hunting pack to the distant fields | And the winter crops suffer from their mad play | And the dogs' barking wakes the sleeping oak-groves.

II | Now is my time of year: I don't like spring; | The thaw is tedious; stench, dirt—in the spring I'm ill; | The blood wanders, feelings, the mind are oppressed by boredom. | I'm more satisfied by harsh winter, | I love its snow; in the presence of the moon | How the light flight of the sled is quick and easy with a girl. | How under a sable-wrap, warmed and fresh, | She clasps your hand, burning and shaking.

The plan of 'Autumn' is uncomplicated; its form and language make it a masterpiece. Pushkin had already used the octave in poems of a meditative character as early as 1821 in 'Who has seen the land...'. He employs the octave here in an unusual conjunction with iambic hexameter. The majestic flow of the metre, punctuated by a constant caesura at the third foot, in a strict stanzaic arrangement with triple rhymes and a concluding couplet was a highly

capacious vehicle. While this stanza form carried no single semantic connotation on its own, it would have recalled the lush descriptions of Ariosto, Tasso, and Byron, bearing out Susan Wolfson's observation that 'Romanticism's poetic forms take shape within complicated literary and cultural contexts'. For Pushkin's poem, the cultural context explicitly includes the representation of landscape by the English Romantics.²⁸ 'Autumn' conspicuously rejects the plain speech and conversational form advocated in the 'Preface' to the *Lyrical Ballads* in favour of an ostentatious formality where description strives to bring the observer closer to nature through a transcript that is 'a sort of poetry that is not poetry'.²⁹ From the viewpoint of the Wordsworthian model, for instance, the elaborate form and diction is disruptive. From a historical perspective, the poem looks like a reassertion of the influence of Chénier's neo-classical manner of presenting nature as more natural when artifice reveals its essence.

Form can also be a type of psychological statement about the mind of the poet. The bravura use of a complex stanza makes formal intricacy a perceptible part of the poem. For this reason, the fragmentation at the end of 'Autumn' is all the more powerful. At a second level, the dissolution of form is dramatic, since the stanza signifies a mimetic stability that the imagination undermines. Paul Sheats has noted that Wordsworth's choice of metre reflected profound psychological issues, and that his lyric forms are often a bulwark against the spontaneous overflow of emotion.³⁰ Blank verse was the form Wordsworth used when confronting subjects that did not trouble him. Wordsworth's practice offers an analogy. We can see this formal contest between the highly wrought and the fragmented as an allegory for the larger governing opposition between poetry as invention and poetry as imagining. Pushkin's choice of elaborate form arguably conveys an insecurity caused by fear of the final fragmentation. Despite the ability of the mind to construct an artful structure that gives mimetic stability, the poet anticipates the power of the imagination to subvert a naive approach to imitating and painting nature. Despite the harmonious impression of its majestic surface, the logic of contradiction permeates its descriptive, psychological, and creative strategies. Russian has two words to indicate textual fragment. The Russian subtitle of 'Autumn' is the word 'otryvok', which indicates that the poem is an excerpt from a completed whole rather than an unfinished piece.³¹ In this case, the larger entity of the completed poem is only theoretical, since the verbal content of 'Autumn' disintegrates in mid-stanza, with rows of ellipses making

²⁸ Susan Wolfson, *Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 21.

²⁹ The phrase belongs to J. Douglas Kneale, *Romantic Aversions: Aftermaths of Classicism in Wordsworth and Coleridge* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 34.

³⁰ Paul Sheats, *The Making of Wordsworth's Poetry, 1785–1798* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 185–7.

³¹ For a history of composition and study of the drafts, Izmailov, *Stikhotvorennia Pushkina 1820–1830-kh godov*, 222–55.

up the remaining lines and filling up the lines of the twelfth, nearly wordless stanza.³² The key trope of the poem is abundance and amplification, a motif that grows prominent from the fifth stanza:

V.

Дни поздней осени бранят обыкновенно,
 Но мне она мила, читатель дорогой,
 Красною тихою, блистающей смиренно.
 Так нелюбимое дитя в семье родной
 К себе меня влечет. Сказать вам откровенно,
 Из годовых времен я рад лишь ей одной,
 В ней много доброго; любовник не тщеславный,
 Я нечто в ней нашел мечтою своенравной.

VI.

Как это объяснить? Мне нравится она,
 Как, вероятно, вам чахоточная дева
 Порою нравится. На смерть осуждена,
 Бедняжка клонится без ропота, без гнева.
 Улыбка на устах увянувших видна;
 Могильной пропасти она не слышит зева;
 Играет на лице еще багровый цвет.
 Она жива еще сегодня, завтра нет.

VII.

Унылая пора! очей очарованье!
 Приятна мне твоя прощальная краса—
 Люблю я пышное природы увяданье,
 В багрец и в золото одетые леса,
 В их сенях ветра шум и свежее дыханье,
 И мглой волнистою покрыты небеса,
 И редкий солнца луч, и первые морозы,
 И отдаленные седой зимы угрозы.

VIII.

И с каждой осенью я расцветаю вновь;
 Здоровью моему полезен русской холод;
 К привычкам бытия вновь чувствую любовь:
 Чредой слетает сон, чредой находит голод;
 Легко и радостно играет в сердце кровь,
 Желания кипят—я снова счастлив, молод,
 Я снова жизни полн—таков мой организм
 (Извольте мне простить ненужный прозаизм).

IX.

Ведут ко мне коня; в раздолии открытом,
 Махая гривую, он всадника несет,

³² On this distinction there are helpful comments in Balachandra Rajan, *The Form of the Unfinished* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 15–21.

И звонко под его блистающим копытом
 Звенит промерзлый дол, и трескается лед.
 Но гаснет краткий день, и в камельке забытом
 Огонь опять горит—то яркий свет лиет,
 То тлеет медленно—а я пред ним читаю,
 Иль думы долгие в душе моей питаю.

V. | The days of late autumn are usually grumbled about, | But the season is tender to me, dear reader, | For its quiet beauty which shines tranquilly. | Like an unloved child in one's own family | Who attracts me. To speak frankly to you, | Of all the seasons I am happy to see her alone, | She contains much good; a modest lover, | By reason of my own idiosyncratic fancy I have found something in her.

VI. | How to explain this? I like her, | The way you, too, probably, | Like from time to time a consumptive girl. | Doomed to death, the poor thing | Declines without a fuss, without anger. | A smile is visible on her fading lips; | She does not hear the roar of the tomb's abyss; | A crimson colour still plays on her face. | Today she is still alive, no longer so tomorrow.

VII. | A forlorn time! Delight to the eyes! | Your farewell beauty is a pleasure for me— | I love the sumptuous fading of nature, | The forests clad in crimson and gold, | The noise of the wind and fresh respiration are in their shadows, | And the skies are covered by waves of mist, | And the rare ray of sun, and the first frosts, | And the distant thunderings of hoary winter.

VIII. | And with every autumn I flourish anew; | Desires boil—I am once again happy, young, | And once again full of life—such is my organism | The Russian chill is of use to my health; | I once again feel affection for the customs of daily life: | In turn sleep is shed, in turn hunger appears; | The blood lightly and happily plays in the heart, | (If you permit and forgive an unnecessary prosaicism).

IX. | A horse is brought out to me; in the open pasture, | Waving its tail, it carries the rider, | And noisily from underneath its brilliant horseshoe | The frozen sod rings and the ice cracks. | But the short day goes out, and in the neglected hearth | A fire burns once again—now it pours out a bright light, | Now it fades slowly—and I read in front of it | Or nurture in my soul long-meditated thoughts.

The calendar frames a colourful survey of vignettes of the natural world, the cultural anthropology of rural Russia, and customs of courtship. The subjects inspire a range of discourses from the painterly observation of nature (stanza 7) to the scientific self-examination of the poet's own response (stanza 8), and, finally, to the conceptual vocabulary of aesthetics. Abundance of detail attests the active degree of the poet's participation in the mimetic act. He does not read the landscape for the impression of his own subjectivity. We might say that, if anything, the elaborate painterly scenes create a barrier against subjective self-reflection. Feeling and subjectivity arise from the lovingly shaped materiality of everything observed that is outside the poet's mind. To this plenitude of sensation, there corresponds a counterweight of depreciation and decline. Nature is seen at its most colourful just at the vanishing point of autumnal foliage, the eloquently named 'valedictory beauty' ('proshchal'naia krasa'), and Pushkin uses

personification and pathetic fallacy for the sake of suggesting that nature itself seems imbued with paradox, since brooks burble even as lakes freeze, trees fall asleep while dogs bark. He feels at his most robust in a season where others feel unwell, reassigning autumn to the semantic field of regeneration while he maligns spring as an infertile, diseased moment. Erotic happiness is most intense and charged when it is most fleeting. In speaking of vital juices (which is what blood signifies for Associationist theorists of the mind such as Galich), Pushkin refuses to separate the languages of poetry and the body. This approach grows out of an organic understanding of the imagination, one given direct expression by the fragmentation of consciousness. The ninth stanza takes an introspective turn. Belatedly this leads to the main theme of the poem in the tenth stanza, that of poetic inspiration and the moment when the 'fruits of fancy' ('plody mechty') invade the poet's mind, poured out in the freely flowing verses before the poem breaks off in a jumble of metaphors. As fecundity of the poet's descriptive powers reaches its height, his imagination appears to cause a loss of verbal control, precipitating a lapse into silence. His pictorial powers have already made the poem a masterpiece of empirical apprehension, but imagination supervenes at the beginning of the tenth stanza:

X.

И забываю мир—и в сладкой тишине
 Я сладко усыплен моим воображеньем,
 И пробуждается поэзия во мне:
 Душа стесняется лирическим волненьем,
 Трепещет и звучит, и ищет, как во сне,
 Излиться наконец свободным проявленьем—
 И тут ко мне идет незримый рой гостей,
 Знакомцы давние, плоды мечты моей.

XI.

И мысли в голове волнуются в отваге,
 И рифмы легкие навстречу им бегут,
 И пальцы просят к перу, перо к бумаге,
 Минута—и стихи свободно потекут.
 Так дремлет недвижим корабль в недвижной влаге,
 Но чу!—матросы вдруг кидаются, ползут
 Вверх, вниз—и паруса надулись, ветра полны;
 Громада двинулась и рассекает волны.

XII.

Плывет. Куда ж нам плыть?.....

.....
³³

X. | And I forget the world—and in sweet silence | I am sweetly put to sleep by my imagination, | And poetry awakens in me: | The soul feels inhibited by the lyric wave, |

it shudders and sounds, and seeks, as though in sleep, | To pour forth finally in one free manifestation— | And suddenly an invisible swarm of guests approaches me, | Distant acquaintances, the fruits of my fancy.

XI. | And ideas stir in my head in a tumult, | And light rhymes rush to meet them, | And my fingers reach for a quill, the quill for paper. | One minute—and verses will flow freely. | Thus does a stationary ship, in the still mist, slumber, | When whoosh!—sailors suddenly run about, crawl | Pell-mell—and the sails are taut, full of wind; | The fleet moves and cuts through the waves.

XII. | It sails. Whither shall we sail? . . .

When in the final stanzas the poet loses the power of language his aphasia manifests a sublime moment of self-dissolving. While recognizing in principle a distinction between inner and outer nature, Pushkin can no longer maintain his attention on the outer world. His intelligence, relaxed by a sleep that releases a power of association stronger than the willed pictures of imagination, cedes control of the poem to a random series of images. Sensory apprehension leads to sensory collapse and perception gives way to a language over which the poet has no conscious control. This is not the power of the imagination at work on its own, but sensation based on the workings of the body and its obscure connections between perception and physiology. The imagination becomes tantamount to a natural force in its own right, making way for subjectivity to replace the usual rational distance that Pushkin maintains from the natural world. The poet's attentiveness to his own biological organism matches the degree of pictorial precision, but even then an awareness of the impact of physiology on the workings of the mind and inspiration does not enable him to control the imagination. In 'Autumn' the design of the natural world, which man can enjoy but never control, potentially has a sublime power to awe and frighten. But at the end it is only the mind of the poet rather than nature itself that brings on such feeling.

In 'Autumn' the tensions between the poetry of craft and the unwilling power of the imagination, together with hesitation between the projection of the mind onto nature and the impact of nature on the imagination, hang in the balance. The poem begins by taking the naturalness of nature for granted, extolling it and delighting in pictorial power until self-consciousness about the mediating power of the imagination intrudes. Despite evident differences in their descriptive technique and attitudes to the countryside, Derzhavin captured best for Pushkin both the tranquillity of country life and, more importantly, its conduciveness to work. In his 'To Evgenii. Life at Zvanka', Derzhavin described the countryside in terms of its rural economy, enjoying its cottage industries as much as the natural beauty. In this poem, labour belongs to the farmer more than the poet. By contrast, Pushkin's pastoral work is the creation of 'Autumn'. However close to nature the description in 'Autumn' seems, the epigraph immediately interposes a literary text between the speaker and the naturalness of nature: the illusion of perfect mimesis is a fiction since the poet's powers of observation draw inspiration from the literary world. Furthermore, the epigraph also draws attention to the

diminishing role of the mind in the creative act, associating sleep with activity that bypasses reason. If the poem in its first phase strives to impart the immediacy of the naive vision, the epigraph has already alerted the reader to the tension between two modes of imagination indicated by the reference to the poetic mind when fully alert, and the poetic mind in a figurative state of sleep, where involuntary imagination acts. In 'Autumn', the creative imagination succeeds in mirroring nature, but it cannot make permanent the changing forms of nature that exceed the bounds of neoclassical art and liberate subjectivity. Throughout the exposition, images of personal growth, hopefulness, and inspiration are, like the natural world, proven ephemeral and subject to a cycle beyond the volition of the poet. But such sensual decay only stirs the imagination to guide the poet's subjectivity. Given the sense of harmonious fusion between the objective and subjective, the disintegration must be perceived as a shock and in its own right a statement on the mind of the poet—and the question of the mind of the poet has been present from the very first words of the epigraph. Within the framework that I have argued, where the tension between imagination, association, and invention guides Pushkin's language, fragmentation represents a loss of control and sudden indirection when the poet no longer accepts the notion of transparency between the objective and the subjective, and cannot achieve a compatible vision.

At the end, the mind of the poet looks on as he experiences the power of the imagination released to its own logic. When the language of the imagination finally overwhelms the poet, silence results from a clash between objective mimesis and a new type of subjectivity in Pushkin where the Romantic sublime, marked by anxiety and disintegration, displaces the aesthetics of the beautiful with its emphasis on integrity of form. The concluding stanzas enact this way of regarding the world; their mode of vision is very different from the composed survey of the opening where a solid grasp of the landscape seems unassailable because the poet writes as he perceives and is untroubled by awareness of the act of perceiving. On an immediate level, the final response to the landscape must be seen as sudden yet natural, brought on by sleep, in order for the poem to be coherent within the terms of its own vocabulary. Against the overpowering sublimity of the imagination, the poem captures the mind of the poet attempting to impose the fixity of the empirical on nature through a profusion of objective detail. The vision remains within the bounds of the beautiful as long as the threat of the imagination to order can be contained. Even the power of paradox to unsettle by uncertainty becomes a principle of logical regulation of contradiction as the harmonious fusion of opposites. For Coleridge, the definition of beauty, made very much in contradistinction with sublimity, is precisely the harmonious fusion of many elements into an untroubled whole that stands apart from a personal response. The poem brings together both operations, but reverses a Wordsworthian standard whereby the mind reveals its growth by regarding as beautiful scenes that it once regarded as sublime. The beauty of the poem imitates

the beautiful in nature by reproducing the concrete images 'where the actual process of the connecting and unifying power can be traced'.³⁴ This is one example of harmony.

Fragmentation means that disruption rather than harmony marks the reader's experience of 'Autumn'. We can suppose that this most pictorial of Pushkin's poems is meant to be retained in the eye of the reader as an image as much as a textual mass; and therefore to suppose that the images of stanzas 1, 2, 5, 7, and 8 coalesce into a landscape held in the reader's memory as a specimen of the picturesque. In fact, the poem represents an oscillation between external observation and an inwardly turned gaze on the changing nature of poetic sensibility. In the stanzas that treat the poet's inner apprehension, Pushkin conveys the impact of nature's beauty not in aesthetic terms, but in a biological and materialist vocabulary that appears to distance the sensibility of the poet from the reader. Unusually, the mind of the poet converts that picturesque into a pattern of biological determinism that makes him as much a spectator of the workings of his own mind as he is of the natural scene. The impact that the recreated landscape of 'Autumn' will have on the reader is not comparable to the impact of nature on the mind of the poet. At one level, the project of the poem is to answer the question posed by Derzhavin in the epigraph. What does enter the mind—and the question is precisely about the mind—of the poet? Is it a ready-made picture? Is it the disparate optical ('*zerkalo*'), tactile ('*khlad*'), auditory ('*zhurcha*', '*lai sobak*') sensory perceptions that are made into a single synthesis by the creative imagination? Or is it sensibility that first translates these images into feelings that are then reconceived as images, fashioned under the pressure not only of the poet's sensibility but of his literary talent—an important factor as well, because there is no denying that, however close the poem seems to nature, it draws heavily on a substantial number of intertexts.³⁵ It is a question that Pushkin does not want his reader to forget, which is why exactly at the mid-point of the entire poem he opens the sixth stanza by reformulating the query: 'How shall I explain this?' ('*Kak eto ob'iasnit'?*'). When the poet speaks to himself about the mystery of genius, and holds up nature as a mirror to his mind, his narrative uses a precise set of terms attuned to the inexplicable but felt connection between body and poetic perception.

³⁴ Engell, *The Creative Imagination*, 358.

³⁵ See P. O. Morozov's commentary in A. S. Pushkin, *Biblioteka velikikh pisatelei*, ed. S. A. Vengerov (St Petersburg, 1911), v. 156; more recently, allusions to Byron, the poetry of Sir Walter Scott, and Mickiewicz have also been detected. See E. M. Zhiliakova, 'Pushkin i Val'ter Scott', in *Boldinskie chteniia* (Nizhnii Novgorod: Vektor, TIS, 2003), 60–76; D. P. Ivinskii, *Pushkin. Sbornik statei* (Moscow: MGU, 1999), 189–95. Ivinskii notes helpfully the subtextual observation of Vinogradov who hears echoes of Lomonosov's 1742 ode in these lines as a source for the ship. As observed in Chapter 4, Pushkin's thinking about nature as an entity returns to the deist concept espoused by the Russian scientist. Another possible source is Lucretius, on which see Chapter 8 of this study.

THE GENERAL LAW: 'I VISIT ONCE AGAIN ...' (1835) AND
WORDSWORTH'S 'TINTERN ABBEY'

'I visit once again ...' is Pushkin's greatest poem of place. Composed in the speech patterns of blank verse after 'Tintern Abbey', it opens up nature through biographical self-consciousness and self-consciousness through the image of nature.³⁶ Through its echoes of 'Tintern Abbey', the form as much as the text enters into a dialogue with Wordsworth and the whole poetic ethos of the *Lyrical Ballads*, including the literary style of the Lake Poets. After the elaborate design of 'Autumn', the literary plainness of Pushkin's diction and phrasing cannot be ignored. For 'I visit once again ...' records a new stage in Pushkin's departure from invention and comes as close as he ever will to writing the Greater Romantic lyric as described by Abrams.

... Вновь я посетил
Тот уголок земли, где я провел
Изгнанником два года незаметных.
Уж десять лет ушло с тех пор—и много
Переменилось в жизни для меня,
И сам, покорный общему закону,
Переменился я—но здесь опять
Минувшее меня объемлет живо,
И, кажется, вечер еще бродил
Я в этих рощах.

Вот опальный домик,
Где жил я с бедной нянею моей.
Уже старушки нет—уж за стеною
Не слышу я шагов ее тяжелых,
Ни кропотливого ее дозора.
Вот холм лесистый, над которым часто
Я сживал недвижим—и глядел
На озеро, вспоминая с грустью
Иные берега, иные волны ...
Меж нив золотых и пажитей зеленых
Оно синее стелется широко;
Через его неведомые воды
Плывет рыбак и тянет за собой
Убогой невод. По берегам отлогим
Рассеяны деревни—там за ними
Скривилась мельница, насилиу крылья

³⁶ On the draft versions of the poem and the autobiographical material that Pushkin omitted from the final copy, see Annenkov, *Materialy*, who asserts categorically that in general 'Pushkin constantly omitted from his narratives and lyrics everything that directly, without the veil of culture and artistic illusion, referred to his own personality' (p. 115).

Ворочая при ветре. . .

На границе
 Владений дедовских, на месте том,
 Где в гору подымается дорога,
 Изрытая дождями, три сосны
 Стоят—одна поодаль, две другие
 Друг к дружке близко,—здесь, когда их мимо
 Я проезжал верхом при свете лунном,
 Знакомым шумом шорох их вершин
 Меня приветствовал. По той дороге
 Теперь поехал я, и пред собою
 Увидел их опять. Они всё те же,
 Всё тот же их, знакомый уху шорох—
 Но около корней их устарелых
 (Где некогда всё было пусто, голо)
 Теперь младая роща разрослась,
 Зеленая семья; кусты теснятся
 Под сенью их как дети. А вдали
 Стоит один угрюмый их товарищ
 Как старый холостяк, и вокруг него
 По-прежнему все пусто.

Здравствуй, племя
 Младое, незнакомое! не я
 Увижу твой могучий поздний возраст,
 Когда перерастешь моих знакомцев
 И старую главу их заслонишь
 От глаз прохожего. Но пусть мой внук
 Услышит ваш приветный шум, когда,
 С приятельской беседы возвращаясь,
 Веселых и приятных мыслей полон,
 Пройдет он мимо вас во мраке ночи
 И обо мне вспомнит.³⁷

. . . I visit once again | That nook of land where I had passed | In exile two unnoticed years. | Ten years have gone since then—and much | In life is not the same for me, | And I myself, a subject to the common law, | Am not at all the same—but here again | The past, as though alive, embraces me, | So that it seems as yesterday I roamed | Amongst these groves.

O'er there the exile's cabin, | My poor nurse and I lived there. | The old lady's gone—no longer do I hear | Her heavy steps behind the wall. | Nor sense her watchful, careful gaze.

O'er there the wooded hill on which | I used to sit and motionless would view | The lake, remembering in sorrow | Now distant shores, now distant waves . . . | Between the golden corn and emerald pastures | The lake looks blue and widely spreads; | Across its hard-to-fathom waters | An angler sails and trawls behind his boat | A tattered net. Along

³⁷ Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 399–400.

the distant, outer shores | Stand scattered hamlets—and over there, beyond, | A windmill
hides from view, by force of wind | Its sails revolving . . .

. . . At the limit | Of patriarchal holdings, on the very spot | Where rising gently up
the hill, the road | Is worn away by rainstorms, three pine trees | Still stand—one further,
two more | Close by to one another—here, when past them | I rode on horseback in
the moonlight, | Their tops with friendly noise and rustling rush | Would greet me.
Along that road | I travel even now, and straight ahead | I see them once again. They
are the very same, | And just the same their rustle strikes my ear— | But right around
their roots, now wracked with age, | (Where everything was once deserted, bare) | A
budding grove has grown, now overgrown, | A green family; their branches intertwine |
Like children, underneath their shade; while not too far | All to himself there stands their
gloomy chum, | Like an old bachelor, and all about him | The place is empty, as it used
to be.

Hail to you, a tribe | Unknown, and young! Not I | Shall see you in your mighty
later growth, | By then you will outstrip my dear familiars, | And screen their old
head | From the walker's eyes. But may | My grandson hear your noisy salutation |
As he returns toward home from friendly conversation, | When, full of thoughts both
pleasant and amused, | He passes right before you in the gloom of night | Then may he
recall me.

'I visit once again . . .' is organized visually and rhetorically as a series of tableaux, marked by deictic adverbs ('*voť*', '*zdes'*') as the poet moves through the landscape and converts each significant place into a landmark. As in Wordsworth, pauses and end-stopping control the pace of the meditation. In 'I visit once again . . .' blank verse shaped according to the intonation of speech patterns and simple language de-poeticizes the text. Pushkin opens his poem by echoing Wordsworth's opening evocation of time past. This kind of quotation, which we now read as hermeneutical, is part of the rewriting of the relationship between poet and nature represented in the final section. Remembering, for Pushkin, is an active process of establishing the limits of Romantic subjectivity. The work of revision is to juxtapose a Pushkinian process of growth, which moves aesthetically in the direction of Wordsworth, taking his assumptions seriously, but psychologically withdraws from the same merger of self and nature. Unable to achieve Wordsworthian recuperation, Pushkin is surely conscious of nullifying the power of the imagination and with it the visionary status of the poet as an interpreter of the universe.

Wordsworth's feeling and his concern with the self lie behind Pushkin's ability to create great personal poetry out of his meditation on nature as a process. Despite the echoes of 'Tintern Abbey', this poem resists making the fusion of subjectivity and nature the goal of the poet's moral and imaginative growth. We should see that resistance, however, is complex since Pushkin finds his own equivalent for Wordsworth's view of poetic consciousness that converts subjective feeling about the self, nature, and time into conceptual images that fit into his rational sense of cosmic order. Where Wordsworth observes change, and finds consolation and evidence of the growth of his poetic imagination by recording

the merger of imagination and the natural world, Pushkin excludes change and finds renewal in perfect recall that excludes his creative power and accepts the barrier between the mind of the poet and the activity of nature. At each stage, it is sameness and identity that he cites rather than the alteration noted in the first section. At the end, when he contemplates heirs who will visit the same landscape, that vista is seen as unchanged for descendants who travel the same paths and are greeted by the same rustling of the trees. Insofar as they will at a future time look back to the poet and utter the lines of this poem, Pushkin's text imposes his own identity on them by guiding their experience of the place and also guaranteeing his own survival at least textually to the length of his family's generations.

Like Wordsworth, Pushkin ponders the disconnection between the present and a former self. Two types of time register in the poem, human chronology and the time of the natural cycle. Ten years have passed, a period that is significant only in human terms, as he acknowledges when he mentions his own alteration and the death of a beloved figure. In turning to Wordsworth Pushkin knowingly created a ratio of difference between his approach to the self, imagination, and nature and Wordsworth's mode of recapturing identity.³⁸ For Wordsworth, the proof of his identity with his past self must come, as Charles Rzepka argues, 'in the form of presence, not essence of being as he was before'.³⁹ The problem that Wordsworth experiences is that he 'cannot recapture the self that incorporated the landscape',⁴⁰ the moment when he had the poetic power of mind to achieve communion with nature. When he views the landscape, the poet of the *Lyrical Ballads* bears the burden of remembering a self that had the power to replace the outer world with an interiorized vision and to make the landscape the picture of his own mind. What appears more vividly to him is the self that was last represented in the landscape and not the self that represented the landscape.

The Pushkinian turn to Wordsworth is striking because only a fragile analogy actually obtains between the great poet of the imagination and nature, and a successor whose reticence about the imagination abets his usual distance from nature. In rewriting his intertext, Pushkin also revises the key terms of Wordsworth's meditation on his own poetic powers. While Pushkin preserves the retrospective cast of 'Tintern Abbey', he cannot look back in order to recover a visionary plenitude and an earlier sense of being in nature that he never

³⁸ The extent of Pushkin's knowledge of Wordsworth remains hard to pinpoint. In an essay on poetic style written in 1821, Pushkin, who elsewhere mentions reading Coleridge, wrote: '[By contrast with the French], the works of the English poets are filled with deep feeling and poetic ideas, expressed in the language of decent, common people.' His reading of Sainte-Beuve and a number of literary journals leaves no doubt that he knew the *Lyrical Ballads*, but no copy of Wordsworth survives in his library. For a summary, see N. L. Pertsov, 'Sonetniy triptikh Pushkina', *Moskovskii Pushkinist*, 5 (1998), 218–29.

³⁹ Charles J. Rzepka, *The Self as Mind: Vision and Identity in Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 85.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 88.

possessed. In Pushkin's poem, memory is satisfying because it tightly controls the dominance of description over any false recollection of the history of his own imagination. By aligning the description of the present visit as a mimetic act to the fixed picture or transcription that the poet has lodged in his memory, the poet focuses on details that exclude self-consciousness. Instead, his poem is based on a disjunction between an earlier self, presented in terms of emotional biography rather than intellectual potency, and a present self who, imbued with a new sense for nature, comes close to the younger Wordsworthian self in apprehending a special connection between poet and landscape. The poem turns on the juxtaposition between the plainness of the remembered self and the grandeur of a future vision achieved through imagination rather than through memory. The picture of regeneration, attained through nature, is a moment where Pushkin empowers the imagination in, for him, a new way. But at the same time, while that trust has an energy and an optimism characteristic of the younger Wordsworth, Pushkin's poet does not need to come to terms with the loss of poetic power and does not seek to experience a communion with nature that he never shared. 'I visit once again . . . ' is an act of both restatement and revision. It presumes a vision of nature that, while at odds with Wordsworth's sense of the immanent, is consistent with Pushkin's tendency to empty nature of any feeling. At the same time, it is an act of revision, where Wordsworth's brave example of imagining and his 'great hope in unviolent regeneration'⁴¹ open up to the individual mind of the poet a new prophetic purpose. While imagination proved disruptive in 'Autumn', this poem allies imagination with an understanding of the rational design of nature. The imagination enables the poet to overcome fear of death not because he sees his mind or spirit perpetually haunting the scene, but because it creates the mental pictures that accord with his philosophy. For the first time, through joining Wordsworth, he may, like Wordsworth, 'expand infinitely and then contract to the scope of a thought of himself'.⁴²

Inspired by Wordsworth's moment of spiritual journey and self-reflection, Pushkin is now more expansive in exploring the interaction of subjectivity and landscape, present and future, nature and art. 'I visit once again . . . ' shows the poet asserting his identity not only through the biographical act of revisiting a place but through an act of mind. In the concluding great apostrophe, where the poet hails the trees, he imagines the growth of a forest that only his descendants will live to see, accepting his own extinction and discontinuity while simultaneously projecting continuity through the renewal of generations. Like a time-lapse photograph, the final image is of a change so gradual that it would normally go unnoticed. Here the difference between first and final frames becomes clear

⁴¹ The phrase belongs to Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787–1814* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 30.

⁴² David Bromwich, *Disowned by Memory: Wordsworth's Poetry of the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 60.

to the viewer. This law of change, however, scarcely affects the depiction of the natural world in most of the poem.

What is philosophical about the poem is its distillation of definitions into the action of memory and feeling, abetted by a vocabulary of thinking, perceiving, and judging. The coherence between the remembered earlier self, the present self in the act of recollection, and, at the end, the self that will be remembered according to the text of the poem, defines the identity of the speaker and confirms the existence of the world and the identity of the self through the poetic act of mind. To throw into context the intellectual process enacted in Pushkin's text, we must turn to a complementary set of ideas. Although the intertextual relation to 'Tintern Abbey' is important because it is through Wordsworth that Pushkin finds the rhetoric that accommodates the autobiographical persona and hallowed sense of landscape, the authority for the confident projection of continuity in the future lies closer to Pushkin's grasp of the underlying philosophy of the English Romantic lyric.

'Tintern Abbey', perhaps more than any other poem, reflects the impact of Schelling's philosophy of identity and nature on Wordsworth. In overcoming the separation between the world of man and the world of nature, the poem embraces Schelling's ideal of a reciprocity or 'interfusion' between the mind and the external world in which both the mind and nature actively participate by acting on consciousness and being acted upon. In the words of a contemporary explicator of Schelling, 'the laws of Nature must exist within us as the laws of Consciousness; and *vice versa* the laws of Consciousness are found to exist in objective Nature as the laws of Nature'.⁴³ The nature on which the mind acts is for Wordsworth full of a vital, religious life that is autonomous but also reciprocal because nature and man pulse with the same seemingly divine essence. As E. D. Hirsch put it, for Wordsworth in this mood, 'God is in things and, therefore, each thing is autonomous, holy, and self-active. But God is also through things, binding their self-activities in harmonious, reciprocal relationships.'⁴⁴ We shall treat the impact of materialism on other aspects of Pushkin's thought in Chapter 8, but a brief mention is necessary here. Materialism, as one of the philosophies to emerge from the scientific advances of the early Enlightenment, accepts the universe as a mechanistic creation run by the physical laws of nature and subject to the properties of matter. Although the universe is active and perpetually changing, materialism does not see the larger process of life in terms of the dynamic reciprocity advocated by Schelling. In its most radical variant, as adopted by Diderot and other writers read and admired by Pushkin, it rejects the notion of living matter that can think. For the materialist, matter is blind, and identification of mankind with the unconscious processes

⁴³ Johann Tenneman, *Manuel de l'histoire de la philosophie*, trans. V. Cousin (Paris: A. Sautetet, 1829), i. 440.

⁴⁴ E. D. Hirsch, *Wordsworth and Schelling: A Typological Study of Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 43.

of nature is impossible. Bridging the gap between subject and object, or the non-conscious thing and the thinking man, is inconceivable. In approaching nature through Wordsworth's poem, Pushkin is not merely inserting a literary screen between himself and nature because he believes, as a classicist might, that the best imitation of nature is through art. Through the conscious imitation of Wordsworth, he addresses a vision of nature that is problematic. There is no question but that 'I visit once again . . .', along with other poems like 'When lost in thought . . .' ('Kogda za gorodom zadumchiv ia brozhu . . .', 1836), expresses an emotional affinity for a theory of landscape and nature that merges human identity with a nature that is so vast and unending as to be God. Schelling offered a great deal with his claim that 'the One Absolute Nature reveals Itself in the eternal generation of existing things, which on their part constitutes the forms of the first'. Arguably, we can see that Pushkin aspires to this relationship between the real objects he sees, namely, the three trees within his field of vision (ll. 33–5), and the future trees that represent the 'forms' of Nature. The juxtaposition of the particular with the vision of infinitude expresses a wish for unity, aiming for the permanent replication of the self in this infinite totality. But one great impediment blocked Pushkin from going any further than wrestling with this vision of harmony achieved by intuiting the divine life of nature. I do not think Pushkin fears the imagination as an uncontrollable power. He had learned from his reading of Marmontel and Galich about the increase of poetic power that imagination brings. To Galich, and to the Lovers of Wisdom, Pushkin may owe a grasp of the general approach to nature, with which he seems better acquainted after 1828. Fashionable as the poetic power of genius, the imagination was, as we shall see in Chapter 6, a gift that Pushkin was keen to display. By temperament, Pushkin was a sceptic and empiricist, and his formative philosophical reading inclined him intellectually towards materialism, with its associated atheism, rather than toward Naturphilosophie with its pantheistic message. His greatest imitation of Wordsworth takes him close to a shared vision of the subjectivity and the imagination. But in the end he could not follow Wordsworth's example fully in 'Tintern Abbey' because he did not share his view of nature.

Subtle revisions at the beginning and the end of the poem suggest how his rewriting engages with the philosophical assumptions of the original poem. 'Tintern Abbey' opens by drawing attention to the cyclical pattern of the seasons and immediately making time a function of the external world. The poet's own experience will also be measured by such recurrence. In Pushkin, by contrast, the experience of the first-person speaker comes first, and it is from that concrete sense of ego and identity rooted in the awareness of change that a sense of time forms. On the surface, this pattern may seem very similar to Wordsworth's cyclicity of time. However, Pushkin's sense of repetition unfolds in accordance with what he calls the 'general law'. The 'general law' takes us away from Schelling and toward the opposing idealism of Kant, where the moral law and

the laws of the natural universe rise above human involvement. Apprehending them intellectually does not permit this poet, unlike Wordsworth, to overcome estrangement. Pushkin's poetry here is both subjective and impersonal, and these features are the same because they come from a rejection of a spiritualized relation between man and nature.

'Tintern Abbey' showed Pushkin how to turn nature poetry into a poetry of introspection, but even here Pushkin withdrew slightly from Wordsworth's example of self-revelation by turning meditative reflections into an abstract vision of time and nature. Around 1831, Pushkin's tentative philosophical interests led him to read L. F. Schön's *Philosophie transcendente ou Système d'Emmanuel Kant*, a methodical exposition of Kant's thought. It is not necessary to exaggerate the depth of Pushkin's interest in Kant's work as a philosophical system. Numerous critics, particularly among the French Romantics but also among the English writers we have cited, showed that the terminology of Kantian aesthetics was transferable outside particular philosophical schemes. In that context, a working familiarity with certain terms in their broad use formed part of the suggestiveness of Romantic poetry in general. In his book, Schön provided a coherent summary of Kant's three main philosophical works. His discussion may have appealed to Pushkin because it made accessible the contents of the arguments without dwelling on complexities or problematic areas. The introduction surveyed Kant's career, giving due weight to his importance as a 'powerful genius' whose work represented the acme of Enlightenment thought. Schön's aim is to give an exposition of the individual treatises, but not fundamentally to analyse Kant's approach to problems or to identify the problems that philosophy had subsequently identified in Kant's system and in gaps or tensions among the three *Critiques*.⁴⁵ For Pushkin, the least compelling topics would certainly have been in the area of epistemology, where the distinctions between subjectivity, understanding, and intuition were the stuff that made him explosively impatient with German philosophers. Yet it would be hasty to relegate all aspects of Kantian thought to the abstractions that Pushkin dismissed in the letter of 1827 to Del'vig.⁴⁶ The evidence of his reading makes clear that questions of aesthetics and the moral definition of man kept his attention. In his earlier works, Galich anticipated for Pushkin the approach and conclusions of Schön's précis, so that Pushkin is likely to have understood these conclusions when he came to read Schön and explore a new attitude to nature and his awareness of the growth of his own mind as an appropriate subject for lyric. The conceptual density of 'I visit once again . . .' appears to grow out of his own understanding, however impressionistic and compressed, of the most influential consideration of the three categories of self, art, and nature brought together in this poem.

⁴⁵ L. F. Schön, *Philosophie transcendente, ou Système d'Emmanuel Kant* (Paris, 1831), 17–32 [Modz. 1361].

⁴⁶ Quoted in Chapter 4, p. 93.

Identity is a critical feature of the Kantian system because Kant treats the problem of the existence of man as an autonomous being in a natural world that science was showing to be deterministic. Andrew Bowie puts it well when he says that Kant ‘writes a complex philosophy of aesthetic judgements which aims to establish links between nature in itself and the freedom of rational beings’.⁴⁷ Kant had paved the way for examining the relationship of the thinker to his own thoughts, and for seeking the source of the coherence of self-consciousness and the identity of the self in the properties that bind identity without an external source. Schön treated this part of the first *Critique* at some length. Kant held that we know the world as it appears to us through the a priori categories of subjectivity that synthesize intuition into cognizable forms. The structures of consciousness that we possess constitute the world as an object; or in Schön’s words, ‘sensibility is the vehicle that brings the exterior world, that presents it to consciousness’.⁴⁸

By 1835, and most especially in this poem, Pushkin had begun to write a poetry that suggests a complex philosophy of aesthetic judgement based on assumed links between nature and notions of creative freedom, and the full richness of these associations becomes visible with the help of this conceptual framework. ‘I visit once again . . .’ contains a new approach to the question of self and landscape, art and posterity, memory and imagination that must come from engagement with a body of thought that Pushkin could instinctively distil into poetic statement. In a poem like ‘I visit once again . . .’ philosophical sources are absorbed into the fabric of language and subjective sensibility transposed. In explaining the poem as a description of sensibility and subjectivity engaged with landscape, it is helpful to draw terms of reference from the influences shaping Pushkin’s mind. By echoing ‘Tintern Abbey’, Pushkin establishes a ratio between himself and Wordsworth, where the connection is their equivalent positions regarding the power of the imagination. Scholars regard ‘Tintern Abbey’ as the poem where Wordsworth began the turn from memory to the imagination as would be celebrated in the *Prelude*.⁴⁹ Pushkin’s poem echoes the younger Wordsworth’s tentative belief in the faculty of the imagination, and does so in a way suited to Pushkin’s continuing reticence about projecting the mind onto nature. Imaginative attempts to forge a unity through past and present by remembering a past poetic space, like Tsarskoe Selo, tended toward fragmentation. The attractions of imagination over memory could not be denied untested or accepted without the sanction of poetic example. In ‘I visit once again . . .’, Pushkin is theorizing, and he is doing so on lines laid down by his Kantian sources; but his poetry allows for a Wordsworthian depth of feeling without in

⁴⁷ Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity from Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 43.

⁴⁸ Schön, *Philosophie transcendente*, 50.

⁴⁹ See Mary Jacobus, *Tradition and Experiment in Wordsworth’s Lyrical Ballads* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 38–58.

the end also accepting the Wordsworthian belief in the transforming power of the mind. The poem is the scene of both closeness and distance with a nature that follows external, irreligious reason.

The 'I' of 'I visit once again...' is a set of linked cognitive selves whose identity is made through a unity of experience in the past and present. At the end, the poet predicts not that his poem will be read or that his lines will be quoted, but, interestingly, that he will be remembered. His assertion that descendants will commemorate the self as a subject makes the poem an extension of that unity beyond the physical life of the poet. Why does the Pushkinian 'I' have this intuition of itself? Pushkin appears to have taken seriously two related Kantian propositions about the connectedness of the mind and nature, and man and nature. Towards the end of Schön's analysis of the meaning of freedom, Pushkin underscored the following passage: 'The force of the will is the manner of willing and acting rationally. The force is the only element that never belongs to phenomena; it is purely intellectual; consequently when the will is decided solely by force alone it is entirely independent of the causality of nature; it is entirely free, it is autonomous.'⁵⁰

Imagination, which destabilized the operation of mind in 'Autumn' and severed the poet's connection to nature, is not the faculty behind the poet's claim. We have already seen that the connection between the will and imagination threads numerous treatises from Marmontel to Diderot to Hazlitt and Coleridge. In this quotation, the power of the will to act reasonably is elevated to the principle of distinction that makes man absolutely independent and free both in relation to other men and to nature. Kant's philosophy, as presented in the digest that Pushkin read, argues that the source of liberty of a metaphysical kind lies in reason, and that such liberty is absolute because it exists independently of the mutability of nature. The connection between remembering and the moral sentiments is inherent when the poet remarks that his experience of his visit defies the 'general law' to which he is subjected. Once an exile, he returns to this place politically liberated but aware now that the deprivation of liberty can take another form. Michael McKeon discerns in English poetry of retreat a mode in which 'writers consolidated the idea of pastoral retreat as an active agency, not the passive "privation" of merely private existence, but the negative liberty of a chosen solitude'.⁵¹ Anne Janowitz expresses the consensus that Wordsworth's self in the Romantic landscape offers a perfected version of the impulse nowhere more strikingly than in 'Tintern Abbey'.⁵² Pushkin's poem reproduces the Wordsworthian scene of the solitary speaker contemplating posterity, and the poems are compatible in that the Wordsworthian speaker inserts the poet into a larger social unity just as Pushkin insists on kinship and readership. But in Wordsworth, the

⁵⁰ Schön, *Philosophie transcendente*, 297.

⁵¹ Unpublished remark cited in Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 20.

⁵² *Ibid.* 15.

solitary speaker is moved by a sense of alienation from both the natural world and the social world that can be bridged through imagining a new relation to the landscape. In Pushkin, however, unity with the landscape, as reinforced through memory, dominates. For Wordsworth, the solitary speaker is a figure of guilt because poetic labour needs to compensate for an unfair agrarian system and redeem the poet as a labourer. The Pushkinian speaker, by contrast, has already paid a price as a political exile and now finds in the landscape the promise of the attention of posterity as reward for poetic labour.

An interesting indication of the effect of Pushkin's philosophical readings on Pushkin's mind can be single words and phrases that spill into his verse. The reference to 'the general law' (*obshchii zakon*) is among the most distinctive, and it may derive from Schön's summary of Kant. Poetically the phrase works because it also refashions Wordsworth's description ('Tintern Abbey', ll. 94–103) of the diurnal cycle into a highly condensed definition. What is this general law? Why is it a law rather than anything else? Why does Pushkin use the vocabulary of judgement, a language that is absolute and incompatible with Wordsworthian subjectivity? On the surface, the proposition merely restates the obvious fact that the speaker acknowledges his mortality and subjection to time. Such a gloss, however, falls short in not giving a more specific meaning to the language of law. The poem wants us to consider the more general proposition that there is a law of nature to which the poet must conform; and that this law is also inscribed in the poet's act of representation since it governs the landscape. The point of the poem is to establish a relation between individual identity and that general law, but two contradictory outcomes arise. On the one hand, the speaker projects a vision of descendants, who are also future readers. However, it is not possible to extrapolate a general law from a vision of posterity guaranteed through kinship, because families become extinct in a way that nature should not. On the other hand, if the general law, as exemplified at the end, is about the continuity of nature, then a formulation about human biological decay does not actually explain that relation of the individual to universal law because it suggests that nature is self-replenishing whereas the individual as individual is not. The contrast between natural replenishment and individual mortality is strong. Is it pure faith on the speaker's part to claim that for as long as the forest grows a relation-cum-reader will recall him (*'obo mne vspomianet'*)? The question remains as to what extent the individual category represents the whole, and the answer lies in a more precise understanding of the meaning of nature in the poem and the permanent structures of perception that Kant identified as intrinsic to human consciousness and corresponding to nature. This brings us back to the 'general law'. How does the poet know that the continuity of nature and family are coextensive?

The language of 'general law' is consistent with the sense of nature espoused by Enlightenment writers, and with the limited role of subjectivity permitted to imagination and memory. While learning from Kantians like Galich and Schön, Pushkin continued to read poets like Chenedollé, who offered to reason a

vision of nature as a system and presented the imagination as a beautiful picture only worth transcribing. While Chenedollé builds a deist argument out of his empirical observation, this rationalism in treating nature (no threat to Pushkin's atheism) appealed to Pushkin until the early 1830s. What changed to compel Pushkin to attempt to put a subjective speaker into a landscape where mind and memory could be projected?

Despite its Wordsworthian echoes and the patently emotional engagement of subject with landscape, 'I visit once again . . .' does not break with an earlier understanding of nature in Pushkin. While the absence of a Schellingian sympathy is obvious, the conclusion should not be that Pushkin's vision has remained static. Memory, the power that animates the recreative landscape of 'I visit once again . . .', is seen as a force of psychological consolation and, because memory aids reason, it is an essential tool in the rational exploration of the world. Through the Kantian notion of law, the poem solves the problem that the poet experienced in 'Autumn'. The speaker does not see reflected back to him the subjectivity of his imagination turned into an objective impression of the workings of nature. Insofar as 'I visit once again . . .' envisages human spiritual continuity—as opposed to individual continuity—as a fact of nature, it takes us back again to the contention that Pushkin's thought draws on a Kantian definition of liberty summarized on pages of Schön's essay that Pushkin marked. In Schön's summary, Kant argues that the various goals of the universe must lead back to a final cause, and that the final goal of these causalities must be man because man is the sole creature capable of understanding these goals, without which the universe would be unintelligible. If, therefore, man is the final goal of the universe it is because nature is teleologically subordinated to his strivings towards his goal. Man is the goal of nature and man is, therefore, the supreme creation of nature not only because man alone is able to understand the goals of the universe, but because he is able to conceive the law according to which he achieves goals independent of nature that are consistent with the moral law. In order to be free to express his moral liberty man must shake off external constraints or despotism of any kind, and exist in a culture where his will is liberated from external constraint inconsistent with the faculty of moral liberty that makes man a part of the world of ideas. According to Schön, Kant is a deist not only because a final intelligence that establishes the moral law must exist, but because that supreme intelligence will make it possible for the final goal of nature, which is man, to be achieved as a good in itself, consistent with the moral law and reason yet independent of any conditions.

The existence of a god has no relevance to the moral and physical world of 'I visit once again . . .' because chance and accident play no part in its vision. The omission of reference to causality apart from the 'common law' is striking, given how often Pushkin ponders elsewhere the meaning of chance, and asks whether randomness makes life meaningless. Instead, the poem focuses on nature in its guise as a mechanical force guided according to its own laws in a way

that appears entirely compatible with the aspirations of man. In the poem, it is man who makes sense of nature—a position that is Kantian, and a proof of nature's existence for the sake of man—and man who aspires to a goal, again man understood in a Kantian sense. It is not the imagination that liberates the poet to fantasize about posterity, but the reason of the poet, which is informed by an understanding of the 'general law' as the moral law that reconciles the goals of nature and the goals of man. This is the sense of the argument that leads up to the passage marked by Pushkin. The vision of subjectivity, nature, and creativity brought together in this particular poem can be read as a transposition of Schön in which a Pushkinian subject encounters a Wordsworthian landscape where this rational and Kantian understanding of the common law operates.

In 'I visit once again . . .' Pushkin anticipates time future as precisely a repetition of time past. The posterity of the poet is a property of the minds of future visitors (perhaps including virtual visitors) who, in reading precisely the words that the present reader has before him, will remember the poet exactly in his own words and re-enter precisely that anterior time-frame in which Pushkin lived. The time represented in the poem is therefore seen to be unified and consistent, unchanging and unaffected by subjectivity and therefore as an objective fact. The chronotope of the poem appears to stand as something like an absolute category that Kant says humans know intuitively as an external truth. For the poet, and for his readers, memory and imagination as employed in the poem do not make the interior picture of time deviate from objective experience, but make the poem, as a slice of poetic experience and poetic time, an infinitely repeatable and ideal or absolute fact, itself like a Kantian category, that is unassailable. Just as the poet returns to this place and through memory achieves perfect recollection of his earlier self, sloughing off change, so does the reader, through the words of the poem, enter that moment as an unchanging category of time and space. At this time, Pushkin was also reading, in French translation, Fichte's *Destination de l'homme*, where the following paragraph offered a powerful complement to the discussion of nature and freedom in Schön:

Ceaseless nature accomplishes in this way an eternal revolution, and the changes that it creates one by one, far from being the result of change, are in fact subjected to rigorous and consequential laws. Each of them is what it is by necessity and could not be different. The visible appearances underneath which the world appears as a succession forms a closed chain, in which each ring, determined by the preceding one, determines the one that follows, and all hang together so closely that, from the external state of the world at any given moment, one should be able to retrace through thought all the previous states through which it had to pass before this moment, or to divine all of those through which it must pass after this moment.⁵³

Similarly, in pages that were known to both Coleridge and Pushkin, Leibniz wrote that harmony was already pre-established in the relationship between

⁵³ Fichte, *Destination de l'homme*, 22 [Modz. 917].

all things to one another and to nature. It may be such a Leibnizian sense of confidence about the cycle of creation, destruction, and recreation that speaks at the end of 'I visit once again . . .'.⁵⁴ If Pushkin is confident that, just as trees will grow in the forest, so will people be moved to do this, it is not in this case because he is thinking—as would be more the case in the poems of the Easter cycle of 1836—about his individual talent, or about the book market and a readership for poetry. The conclusion of this poem makes the prospect of personal continuity and therefore happiness contingent on poetic teleology: 'I visit once again . . .' exists in order to allow the reader to enter that category of time and space to which those Pushkinian feelings have been elevated. If his hopes are fulfilled, however, the future visitor will not experience the landscape simply through perception, but through a broader category of understanding bringing together perception and a knowledge of the poem, or the images that Pushkin has already created. Pushkin splits himself into subject as speaker and object as the focus of memory. For the poet, as a subject, memory is the apprehension of the sensuous place; for the reader memory will be the knowledge of the text, since the poem itself as the art object will guide the perception of nature and the response to it. Nature will not appear to be a blind biological system but, on the contrary, will adhere to the Kantian view that natural products contain an 'idea' which makes them take the form they do, which makes them intelligible and fundamental to our comprehension of our own existence. In this case, the purposive force that makes nature more than mechanical is the poem itself that has become part of the mind of the reader, who will see in nature a purposeful manner. The workings of his mind, including the powers of memory and imagination, must be subject to that law rather than able to disrupt it.

Why did Pushkin believe that the imagination could accomplish all these acts? It was not simply by watching other poets do these things and imitating their rhetoric. Pushkin's philosophical and poetic thinking underpins his discovery of the powers of the imagination. Coupled with anxiety about his professional status and his economic success, this separate but parallel unlocking of new poetic power emboldened Pushkin to make certain claims for poetry and, above all, for himself from 1826 to 1830. It has been typical to read the poems of the 'Poet' cycle as statements of the wish of the Romantic artist to choose his own subject free from concerns of utility. But poems in which Pushkin asserts the visionary power of the imagination also articulate claims for the new status of the imagination as a poetic faculty. In this chapter, we have examined what happens when poems that bring subjectivity and nature together test such a poetic faculty. From a different perspective, Chapter 6 will address the strategies of authority that Pushkin uses in poems where the elevation of the poet to prophetic heights over the abject reader disguises a growing dependence and vulnerability rather than mastery.

⁵⁴ *Pensées de Leibniz sur la religion et la morale* (Paris: Nyon, 1803), i. 502 [Modz. 1087].

6

Genius and the Commerce of Poetry

The poet is a prophet. In the minute of inspiration he attains the signature of the period of time in which he lives, and he reveals the goal to which mankind must strive in order that it be on the natural (as opposed to unnatural) path. All other people only fulfil his instructions.¹

(V. F. Odoevskii)

The prominence of genius as a defining characteristic of poets in European and Russian Romanticism spurred Pushkin in the 1820s to use the first person more assertively, and to publish verse about the purposes of poetry. The growth of a commercial audience, anonymous and remote by comparison with his early readers, created new challenges to a writer with professional aspirations. This chapter aims to explain how and why Pushkin experimented with different and sometimes contradictory projections of poetic authority. In seeking commercial success, Pushkin encountered the irreconcilable demands of a readership avid for genius as something unique and inimitable, but which paradoxically most valued Pushkin at his most imitative. This creative stimulus elicited poems that took different positions on the connection between money and art. This is especially striking in two key texts about creative autonomy and the problem of selling genius, ‘The Epistle to the Censor’ (‘Poslanie tsenzoru’, 1822), and the ‘Conversation between a Bookseller and Poet’ (‘Razgovor knigoprodavtsa s poetom’, 1824).

This chapter argues that Pushkin’s path to the confidence manifested in ‘The Prophet’ lies through his imitation of the French poet André Chénier whose life and poetry demonstrated the perils and rewards of poetic authority. In earlier dialogues with the dead, who, as we saw in Chapter 1, were largely figures from the eighteenth century, the Pushkinian speaker brilliantly emulated their idiom, establishing a gift for pastiche and complete stylistic control. ‘André Chénier’ (‘Andrei Shen’è’, 1825) has been read primarily as a coded political statement because the tribute culminates with Chénier’s last hours before he is guillotined. But it can be read for more than its political sentiment. By impersonating Chénier’s ghost, Pushkin delivers a supreme act of imitation and

¹ V. F. Odoevskii, ‘Iz zapisnoi knizhki’, in *Russkie estetieskie traktaty pervoi treti XIX-ogo veka* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1974), 178.

creative self-dissolution. As an act of tribute the elegy is double-edged: he revives Chénier in order to relive and mourn a great poet and to assert the continuity and sense of authority that poets can give to other poets. At the same time, the poem stages the death of the Pushkinian imitator as the moment when Pushkin is poised to become most himself by completely inhabiting another voice. It is this act which allows him to loosen the hold of neoclassical emulation and to imagine another identity. The authority of the later writer stems from an inspired act of poetic empathy.

From this confident position of projecting a prophetic self, Pushkin confronts related positions on the place of poetic art. Between 1826 and 1831, when his commercial prospects were at their peak, Pushkin wrote a series of poems that made the case for poetic art as an exclusive and superior medium. Some poems advocated poetry's social mission while others written in close proximity proclaimed the sanctity of art for art's sake. Although a canonical work such as 'The Prophet' now seems inevitable, the image of the poet that it projects emerged from a complex set of economic and literary circumstances marked by struggle and uncertainty. 'The Prophet' comes at the beginning of this series of remarkable texts that pose the questions of what it means to be a poet; what poetic labour is; and what the mission of art should be. It is too easy to take at face value the rhetoric of exclusivity used in these poems. Other poems, including 'Arion' ('Nas bylo mnogo na chelne', 1827) and 'The Poet and the Crowd' ('Poet i Tolpa', 1828), retreat into an art for art's sake position, and send out a very different message that continued to serve Pushkin's commercial aims precisely because they abjured any responsibility to a readership.

PROFIT MOTIVE: POETIC LABOUR AND THE BOOK MARKET

Once he finished his secondary education at the Lycée, Pushkin understood how limited career opportunities were for a member of the educated gentry reluctant to enter the civil service. Although it was unclear how certain prospects were for financial success in the world of literature, the shift to a commercial readership from coterie writing and a patronage culture was definitive. Realistically or not, from 1824 Pushkin pinned his financial prospects on the success of his writings. The strenuous efforts Pushkin made to recover the authorial copy of his early poems, sold off to settle a gambling debt, speak to his commercial hopes for his first collection of lyric poetry in 1826.² Although literary endeavours could generate valuable royalties, he understood that a reliable income stream was only a distant possibility and set himself a deliberate task to improve

² See Pushkin, *PSS*, xiii, nos. 108, 108a, pp. 115, 399–400 (late October 1824).

that position—and, if possible, to defend his ownership of his texts and the proceeds of their sale. In letters he wrote to publishers and collaborators in St Petersburg from his exile, Pushkin assessed his commercial prospects.³ He was well aware of Byron's success ten years earlier when *The Corsair* sold 10,000 copies on the first day of publication in 1814 and 20,000 in the first fortnight.⁴ In promoting his narratives à la Byron with an eye to the profit per line, he was in search of a wider readership. Perhaps no more than 1 per cent of the Russian population bought books by comparison with the 10 per cent of book buyers that has been estimated for Great Britain. In 1824 educated readers, while exceeding the group who read him in 1815, remained few and were concentrated in metropolitan centres. Pushkin had an acute understanding of the critical success of *Evgenii Onegin* in 1823 as an opportunity to win a readership, and participated in the business negotiations leading to the publication of its first chapter. Despite critical acclaim, Chapter 1 achieved only respectable sales of fewer than a thousand copies. When the chapter was reprinted over a third of the copies were remaindered. And while subsequent chapters sold even less well, Pushkin refused to relent in his commitment to charging prices that symbolically conveyed his own prestige and the degree of innovation of his book. Readers and critics baulked at these sums, regardless of their esteem for his talent.⁵ Critical reaction to chapters 6 and 7 faulted a lack of plot, the narrator's garrulousness and digressiveness, complaints that drowned out continued praise for the finesse of language and verse. He was highly conscious of the power of critical reviews in literary journals to influence public opinion, even among his more sophisticated readers.⁶ In a letter of early April 1824 to Viazemskii, terms of reference move from literary criteria to financial issues as he boasts of a lucrative offer from a publisher for the first instalment of *Evgenii Onegin*. Mikhail Pogodin noted in a review that female readers, a crucial segment of the readership, were making known their disenchantment with Onegin as a hero. Yet when he published chapters 4 and 5 as a single volume, Pushkin was adamant about charging for two separate books, asking ten roubles rather than the discounted price of nine roubles that Pletnev hoped would increase sales.⁷

Pushkin's thinking about a literary career never stopped in his lyric poems. If lyric expression gave him the means for trying out an idea about how the poet

³ See, for instance, the letter to N. I. Gnedich of 13 May 1823 from Kishinev, where Pushkin examines the prospects for a second print-run of *Ruslan and Liudmila*.

⁴ See André Meynieux, *Pouchkine: homme de lettres et la littérature professionnelle en Russie* (Paris: Librairie des Cinq Continents, 1966), 241.

⁵ This elicited the following comment from the *Moscow Telegraph*: 'Until now *Onegin* has been selling for sums unheard of in the annals of the book-trade: forty roubles for eight little notebooks! It is easy to judge whether there was an excess supply, since *Onegin* with supplements and notes is selling for twelve roubles. Hail to the poet who took pity on the threadbare pockets of the reading public!'

⁶ Pushkin, *Pis'ma*, i, no. 79.

⁷ Smirnov-Sokol'skii, *Rasskazy*, 181.

should sound, it also gave him the chance to impart to readers a message about the connection between art and inspiration; and inspiration and money. From 1824, the point when his acclaim made significant sales and income at least conceivable, he began to confront the challenge of publishing as a business and to represent the unknowable quantity represented by an anonymous readership. Launching his name, selling his books, and gaining professional and critical standing were real tests for a writer whose development overlapped with all sorts of unpredictable shifts—political, social, artistic—in the Romantic period. A review article in the journal *Atenei* for January 1828 contended that Romantic poetry was close to the mass reader, and cites Pushkin as saying that ‘Few will understand Racine’s *Phedre*, but everybody reads *Ruslan*.’⁸ The boast was true as far as it went, but Pushkin had stopped producing crowd-pleasers like *Ruslan and Liudmila* and found it increasingly difficult to match public taste with his own writing.

The reward of inspiration is the material foundation for a professional independence that does not compromise the writer as long as the reader, like the initiate, willingly accepts the product. It is unquestionable that Pushkin invested a lot of himself in the poems that set out a theory of poetic worth which would also prove the theory by selling books. In this context, it becomes clear why a specific incident that took place in 1824 caused Pushkin such anxiety. The Oldekop affair illustrates the connection between ownership, genius, and money, and the writer’s vulnerability to a type of identity theft. From the time of his first publishing success in the early 1820s Pushkin was keen to remain permanently in print, and to give the public what it wanted as he prepared to see new works into print. A double strategy is at work. Poems like ‘The Prophet’ might shock and even alienate some readers, but the narrative poems retained loyalty and sold well on reprinting. In 1824, buoyed by public demand, Pushkin planned to republish them. He soon learned to his dismay that Oldekop, a German publisher in St Petersburg, had rushed into print an edition that contained a German-language translation and the original Russian text on facing pages.⁹ The ruse stymied Pushkin, whose physical distance from the publishing world hampered his negotiating powers, especially as copyright offered translators a loophole against which authors had no protection. Readers eager to buy the text scooped up this edition, depriving Pushkin of royalties. Financial frustration was one thing. But the symbolic alienation from his product was just as important since the legal status of the writer and his intellectual ownership were critical in this new environment.¹⁰ One guide on the subject of authorial rights was

⁸ Cited in *Letopis’ zhizni i tvorchestva*, ii, 336.

⁹ Pushkin showed his irritation about Vsevolozhskii and Oldekop in a letter of 29 November 1824 to Viazemskii. See Pushkin, *PSS*, xiii, no. 119, pp. 124–5.

¹⁰ The publisher’s ungentlemanly opportunism provoked indignation from numerous allies, including Zhukovsky who called him a ‘vulture’. See *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 58 (1952), 47. In a letter to Andrei Turgenev, Viazemskii quotes Pushkin saying that Oldekop’s action was ‘theft’, and sympathizes with Pushkin who has been left ‘no more than a little hut on Parnassus’ (*Ostaf’evskii*

Charles Nodier, whose novels and critical writing Pushkin owned. Pushkin may well have consulted Nodier's essay on the connection between the protection of copyright and authorial identity. Nodier's taxonomy of literary theft moves from allusion and imitation to outright plagiarism. He argues that in the mind of the writer ownership and commercial reward have equivalence, and that plagiarism constituted both creative and commercial theft.¹¹ Depriving the author of control over a new edition in effect sundered the intimate link between the writer, the author's genius, and his words. Behind the mystique of the 'first edition' lay the belief in closeness not only to the ideal text but to inspiration and genius. At a psychological and symbolic level, the loss of ownership implied a loss of identity because the very text that proved the original genius of the writer now had only an attenuated and vanishing connection with it.¹²

The Pushkinian theme of inspiration and publication fits into the larger European tendency of the first third of the nineteenth century to commercialize genius and assign a price to its labour. Scholarship on the history of the book has begun to play a major part in reassessing authorial self-presentation and the discourse of commerce in the Romantic period. Important work by Richard Swartz and Lee Erickson on the way in which legal and commercial issues like copyright and royalty affected how writers conceptualize notions of originality and genius is producing new readings of the creative psychology behind the rhetorical structures of poetic texts. The emphasis shifts away from understanding the role of the implied reader to assessing the writer's attitude to the historical reader, who is a purchaser of the book as a commercial object, as well as a 'buyer' of the poet's talent. As Swartz argued in a case study concerning Wordsworth and the problem of copyright, the Romantic writer confronts the problem of reconciling economic measures of success with the notion that genius is beyond price.¹³ Similarly problematic is the question of popularity and accessibility. By definition, genius denotes rarity and exclusiveness.¹⁴ Yet, because it is such an unusual commodity, the same genius ought to confer a greater worth on a writer's work, a worth that translates into higher prices that readers in larger numbers will pay. On a superficial level it easy to see what Pushkin meant when he wrote in a letter

arkhiv kniazei Viazemskikh (St Petersburg, 1899–1913), iii. 86–7). Despite their protests the bookshop ran advertisements from the autumn well into 1825.

¹¹ Charles Nodier, *Questions de littérature légale: du plagiat, de la supposition d'auteurs, des supercheries qui ont rapport aux livres* (Paris: Crapelet, 1828) [Modz. 1221].

¹² See Robert Macfarlane, *Original Copy: Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 18–35.

¹³ Richard G. Swartz, 'Wordsworth, Copyright, and the Commodities of Genius', *Modern Philology*, 89 (1992), 484.

¹⁴ An anonymous reviewer of the *Gypsies* warned young readers that Pushkin was the genius of the day and should not be imitated. He feared the possibility that successful imitators would undermine Pushkin's originality while also worrying that they might catch the suspect morals of his literary characters. See *Karmannaia knizbka dlia liubitelei russkoi stariny i slovesnosti*, 27 July (1829), 257–69.

that 'inspiration cannot be bought but manuscripts can be sold'.¹⁵ Once the poet's visionary moment wins a readership, talent becomes a material good that can be priced according to perceptions of genius as a literary commodity. While exclusivity and distance characterize the status of the poet, writers increasingly use the rhetoric of genius to draw attention to the value of their literary product. Since genius is unique, its presence in a literary work ensures the reader an uncommon experience for which the writer deserves to charge a premium. This was particularly true for the lyric poet, because as Pushkin came to realize bitterly by 1835, the growing popularity of prose had not led to a proportionate increase in readers of poetry.¹⁶

A certain peril, however, accompanied these tactics. Questions of price made writers vulnerable to charges of greed from purchasers not persuaded of the value of the product. It is not entirely surprising that in 1828, which arguably was the apex of Pushkin's professional success, some detractors sniped about the cost of his poems. More than one review of chapter 7 of *Evgenii Onegin* drew attention to its expensiveness. Only several years had passed since Viazemskii, Pletnev, and Pushkin regarded a high price per line as an attraction. A favourable article in the *Revue de Paris*, later reprinted in the *Russian Journal for Ladies*, referred to Pushkin snidely as the Russian Byron who had received a colossal sum for his Southern narrative poems.¹⁷ Despite such resistance, their marketing psychology had some impact. Rumours about Pushkin's sold-out print-runs sharpened the anticipation of readers anxious to secure their own copies. Having heard the rumour that Pushkin's new collection of poems had sold out in St Petersburg, A. Ia. Bulgakov asked his brother to send a copy from Moscow as soon as possible.¹⁸ Nevertheless, commercial success led to charges of greed, which was seen as a mark of commensurate artistic decline.¹⁹ In the early 1830s, Zhukovsky was pleased that Pushkin had not succeeded in setting up a journal, fearing that his commercial enthusiasm would compromise him by association with a hack like Bulgarin.²⁰

¹⁵ 'Razgovor knigoprodavtsa s poetom': 'Ne prodatsia vdokhnovenie, | No možno rukopis' prodat', in Pushkin, *PSS*, ii/1. 330, l. 184.

¹⁶ Larionova, *Pushkin v prizhiznnoi kritike, 1828–1830*, 299.

¹⁷ *Damskii zhurnal*, 43 (1832), 63.

¹⁸ *Russkii arkhiv*, 7 (1901), 343–4. Also see the 1825 letter from one friend to another as quoted in *Letopis' zhizni i tvorcestva*, ii. 79. Andrei Turgenev followed Pushkin's commercial negotiations with avid interest. See A. N. Shebunin, 'Pushkin po neopublikovannym materialam arkhiva brat'ev Turgenevy', *Pushkin. Vremennik*, 1 (1936), 200.

¹⁹ On the allegation of greed, see the *Northern Bee*, 40 (1830). The reception of *Evgenii Onegin*, chapter 7, was mixed. At the other end of the spectrum, the review by N. D. Ivanchin-Pisarev proclaimed Pushkin's status as a 'Prometheus' whose all-encompassing domain is poetry and whose talent is popular ('narodnyi'). See *Atenei*, 21 (1828), 229–32.

²⁰ Quoted in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 58 (1952), 110. By contrast, Viazemskii at an earlier date welcomed the deal Pushkin struck with the *Moscow Herald* to supply them with copy for an annual fee of 10,000 roubles. See *Arkhiv brat'ev Turgenevykh* (St Petersburg: Akademiia nauk, 1911–21), i. 46, 48.

Success does not guarantee genius. But all writers of genius who do not sell miss the necessary public confirmation of their talent. Once writers put works up for sale they confront the question of what price will reflect their value; and whether the price does justice to their own perception of their originality. Out of this tension arose a constellation of concerns that, as Lucy Newlyn has shown for the English context, exposed the subjective sense of identity to the valuations and demands of anonymous readers.²¹ This was a factor that Pushkin confronted directly at the opening of his 'A Refutation of Criticisms', the remarkable unpublished survey that he wrote in 1830 covering the history of his treatment by literary journals:

As a Russian writer, I always considered it my duty to follow contemporary literature and have always read with particular attention the criticism to which I had given rise. I confess frankly that expressions of praise touched me as evident and, probably, sincere signs of favour and positive disposition. Even when I read the most odious analyses, I have to say that I always try to enter into the thought process of my critic and to follow his judgements, without subjecting them to egotistical intolerance, and trying, insofar as an author's self-denial will permit, to agree. Unfortunately, I have observed that for the most part we simply did not understand one another.²²

The discourses of money, inspiration, and poetry are closely linked in the period for both writers and their readers. Writers of the Romantic age understood and reflected on the need to expand their reputation among a potentially hostile or indifferent set of readers. Selling genius was a threatening business, destabilizing to the writer's confidence in his own talent or artistic principles. In these circumstances it is not surprising that both admiring and intensely hostile expressions about the 'crowd' are a fact of literary culture in England, France, and Russia. While professing to remain aloof from commercial interests, successful writers such as Wordsworth saw in legal protections like copyright not only a way of guaranteeing financial success for themselves and their posterity, but a seal of ownership that reaffirmed the inalienability of their individual genius in works that had become common property while securing their elevated economic and cultural status.

The connoisseurs who hailed Pushkin as a prodigious talent on his debut in 1815 spoke for the metropolitan literary world, where social circles and readerships overlapped almost completely, where small print-runs were the norm and works continued to circulate in manuscript. From the 1820s, the commodification of print-culture in Russia led to a growing middle-class readership with a taste for fictional entertainment, a proliferation of literary journals, some notoriously sponsored by writers who acted as agents of the autocratic government in attacking 'liberal' writers, and a massive influx of translated foreign fiction.

²¹ Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp. ch. 1.

²² Pushkin, *PSS*, xi. 143.

The growth of printing technology and commercial opportunity generated larger print-runs, expanded distribution networks to provincial cities, and initiated changes in royalty structures and copyright. Although these changes occurred more slowly in Russia than in Europe, the psychological perception of a change in the status of the writer was acute.

The lamentations of the contemporary writer about the state of Russian literature form a permanent cliché in Russian critical discourse going back to the last third of the eighteenth century. The static rhetoric of dismissal and denigration reflects growing ambitions for a national literature rather than facts about a literary environment that was increasingly dynamic and productive. In 1822, only two years before the initial success of *Evgenii Onegin* confirmed Pushkin's reputation, Viazemskii wrote that 'we are rich in the names of poets, but poor in creations', and he later returned to the topic repeatedly. In 1828, Pushkin referred to 'our infantile literature, which offers no models in any genre'. In 1834 he jotted down notes for an article entitled 'On the Paltriness of Russian Literature' ('O nichtozhestve literatury russkoi'), a subject on which Belinsky began his career as a critic. Commenting on these perceptions, Donald Fanger noted that 'the absence of Russian literature was the absence of an institution', which is to say official cultural institutions and official economic status for the writer.²³ The complaints that Russian critics expressed about the state of Russian literature cannot be taken at face value as factual statements because they do not match the reality of a vibrant literary scene. If the remarks of Viazemskii and Bestuzhev are at all apposite, what do they express? In part, the answer relates to the perennial issue of the canon and the search for great figures around whom the corporate identity of writers as a social group could crystallize. But, at the same time, Romantic critics also understood that the shift from the 'gentleman of letters' model to the professional status of the writer presupposed a change in readership. The standard of the reading public, and the failure of Russian literary history to produce quality literature of popular appeal, were two further concerns.

No one more than Pushkin perceived the status of the Russian writer in terms akin to the attitudes of British and European writers regarding analogous trends in their own spheres of activity. Through literary journals, anthologies, and newspaper articles, Pushkin and his friends monitored the European book trade. While allowing for the significant differences in scale, they noted the way in which European writers perceived and discussed their circumstances. From the period of Catherine II the publishing industry had mushroomed, and it is no exaggeration to say that the number of titles grew exponentially, in part to meet the demands of a growing bourgeois readership. In fact, the situation was changing rapidly at a commercial level owing to the competition for a growing readership that was waged by newspapers: prose in journals, and in

²³ Donald Fanger, *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), ch. 2.

the novel, was by the late 1820s becoming a hot commodity. William Todd's work charts the rise of a sense of profession among writers in the first third of the century who ultimately hoped to create in literature an alternative public sphere to that of the state.²⁴ As Todd shows, these ambitions, which only began to take concrete form in the Pushkin period, finally bore fruit later in the century. The comparisons were of course imprecise. At this stage any fight for 'market share' still concerned small numbers that fell short of the thriving class of intellectuals and the bourgeoisie of the 1850s, and shorter still of the massive explosion of commercial presses and a popular audience that would not come until the 1870s. Relative numbers had a greater symbolic weight rather than a make-or-break significance for writers. Sociologists of literature have rightly identified the importance of Pushkin's vision for the man of letters in Russia, and have also noted how unrealistic those aspirations were. Strangely, however, the underlying tone in Pushkin studies is a regret for Pushkin as a victim, doomed beforehand to fail commercially given the quality of the public and the collusion of the government against him. In failing to acknowledge fully the degree of his idealism, ambition, and conviction, we blunt awareness of just how bold his poems are as tactical approaches to commercial aspiration. Pushkin's ambitions for a larger and more sophisticated readership involved a contradiction that could only frustrate him because they created a moral hazard. In theory, the growth of a more demotic readership and expansion of culture increased opportunity. Whatever his personal opinion of their literary quality, Pushkin might have been expected to see the success of potboilers as proof that literature could pay. However, although other writers, such as Faddei Bulgarin and Nikolai Grech, prospered, the pool of readers for quality literature stagnated relative to the market as a whole. This was the crux of the challenge that he faced. Relative popularity could increasingly be measured in terms of commercial success and used for hostile critical purposes. In Pushkin's 'Conversation between a Bookseller and a Poet', the riches that the bookseller/publisher (in Pushkin's time these two functions were often associated in one person) dangles before the poet have force mainly as an imaginative premiss. As much as anything, the poem envisages a time when the commercial growth and prosperity of publishing will create dilemmas between economic and artistic valuation.

From the 1820s, Pushkin witnessed the transition from a manuscript culture, where poetry circulated among the favoured few, known poetic adepts and skilled readers, and poetry in the larger public sphere, where the claims of poetry might not so easily be taken for granted. Before the 1830s most poets found their audience among social equals who frequented the same literary salons. Pushkin was the most important exception to this rule, since necessity forced economic realities on him from early in his career. He astonished the literary world in 1825

²⁴ William Mills Todd III, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), ch. 1.

by selling *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* for 3,000 roubles (*The Caucasian Captive* had brought him only 500 roubles two years earlier).²⁵ The accepted pattern at the time was for a poet to print a work at his own expense, distributing copies to booksellers for sale on a commission basis and receiving money only for copies actually sold. But poetry for Pushkin was more than a gift or calling: in a letter of 1824 he writes that it is 'my trade, a branch of honest industry, which provides me with food and domestic independence',²⁶ the last word being the most important for a poet proud of his noble status and of his elite aesthetics. The only answer for aristocrats unable to live on revenues from their estates, reluctant to serve in the bureaucracy, prizing literature as a vocation, was to make it a respectable and paying profession.

Pushkin was by no means alone in facing the challenges and anxieties built into an expanding readership. But by the mid-1820s two factors certainly increased the pressures on him. The first was that his early successes had raised expectations among critics as well as readers. Faddei Bulgarin, who was yet to become a permanent enemy and schemer, trailed the publication of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* by heralding a 'genius' who promised much for Russia.²⁷ The proliferation of journals across the political and literary spectrum meant that reviews had consequences of a material and moral kind only partially under his control. All writers needed to adapt, but since Pushkin was expected to be in the vanguard the chances of 'anxiety of reception' increased. The critical drubbing he took in the 1830s has often been singled out, especially by biographers, as one of the factors that caused the confusion and demoralization responsible for the tragic misjudgements that ended in the fatal duel. Whatever the truth of this supposition, the fact is that Pushkin faced hostile reviewers throughout the 1820s, and while some of his critics were hacks who were also in the pay of the hostile security services, much criticism was not politically motivated. Once he had been hailed as a genius—and the accolade is central to the Romantic love of the poet's autogenesis and uniqueness—reviewers and readers were, by some law of human nature or literary spite, keen to spot decline. Behind the class tension that fuelled animosity between the literary elite and commercial writers such as Grech and Bulgarin could be felt the poet's resentment and insecurity about the enfeebled status of the gentry and aristocracy resulting from the social and political changes that transformed Russia in the eighteenth century and undermined the old elite. It is true that journals hostile to the 'literary aristocrats' outsold them with the help of government backing. But it is also a striking fact that readers from the cultural elite were more critical of Pushkin's literary experimentation than he anticipated. He found disapproval of *Evgenii Onegin* hard to accept because it came largely from people of his own class rather than

²⁵ See Meynieux, *Pouchkine*, 238–9.

²⁶ See the draft versions of the letter to A. I. Kaznacheev of 25 May 1824 in Pushkin, *Pisma*, i, no. 81.

²⁷ See his remarks in *Literaturnye listiki* (January 1824), 25.

the rank-and-file of his opponents.²⁸ His anxiety of reception spilled over into tributes to the friends of his youth from Tsarskoe Selo who comprised an ideal community of readers of steadfast loyalty.²⁹ The poems that assert the authority of the poet reflect Pushkin's determination to capture the public's imagination. Even mixed success emboldened him to confront his insecurity with poems that treat directly the issues posed by a literary culture where success lies with the larger reading population rather than with a smaller identifiable group of like-minded peers.

Bound up in the concrete questions of profit and loss are issues of identity and questions about self-worth. In his 'Journey from Moscow to St Petersburg' ('Puteshestvie iz Moskvy v Peterburg', 1834), a complex rewriting of a classic Enlightenment work by the Russian *philosophe* Alexander Radishchev, Pushkin filtered his own concerns about the impact of economic forces on the writer's self-esteem. He compared the contemporary situation to that of the writer in the eighteenth century, where identity and success depended on one's standing in the Academy of Sciences and with a patron, and did not fluctuate in response to popularity. His seeming regret for the world of the gentry, which calcified into a bitter resentment over the weakening of their corporate rights under Catherine II, did not overshadow his determination to follow Byron as a high-quality author celebrated and consumed by the public. On the one hand, Byron's example was important because he proved that genius could achieve material success. On the other, as perhaps the first Russian poet in a similar position with an opportunity to elevate the culture and a hope to enrich himself, Pushkin took the discourse of his French counterparts seriously, believing that the writer would gain an audience for his genius by asserting that authority. Like Wordsworth and Hugo, Pushkin had reason to expect that readers of poetry would be willing to spend more for the priceless product of inspiration.³⁰ As Lee Erickson has shown in the British context, when the cost of books is high readers will pay for superior literature because it sustains rereading and therefore represents a renewable pleasure.³¹

²⁸ In the 1820s, the growing cult of Pushkin as genius grew out of his notoriety for independence as well as his creative brilliance. See Reitblatt, *Kak Pushkin*, 51–69.

²⁹ Pushkin's interest in Byron as a historical and biographical subject revived in the 1830s. In 1835 the journal *Son of the Fatherland* published a highly critical biography which branded Byron the head of the 'egotistical writers' and also denounced his debauchery. Pushkin appears never to have shifted from the position he took in a letter of 1825 to Viazemskii, where he defended Byron's reputation against scandal-mongers and acknowledged that if Byron was 'bad and nasty' the mob, that is, the reading public, was far worse. On Pushkin's interest in Byron's biography, see N. E. Miasoedova, 'Ob istochnikakh stat'i Pushkina o Bairone', *VPK*, 1981 (1985), 184–93. Also, see Pushkin's article with the provisional title 'O Bairone i o predmetakh vazhnykh', in Pushkin, *PSS*, xi. 275, 519, which suggests the influence of Moore's *Mémoires de Lord Byron publiés par T. Moore, traduits de l'anglais* (Paris, 1830) [Modz. 696].

³⁰ Larionova, *Pushkin v prizhiznennoi kritike, 1828–1830*, 299.

³¹ See Lee Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 9.

The connection between the discourses of inspiration and commercial value takes us to the heart of some key issues of his lyric. ‘The Prophet’ is a poem where inspiration happens before the reader’s eyes without being brought into second-order reflection. We think of the poem as a timeless tribute to genius, but its composition was thoroughly timely in the context of the late 1820s when Russia passed its first copyright law in 1828, and questions of market share and professional status preoccupied Pushkin. What effect was the cycle of poems that defined the image of the poet as inaccessible meant to have? Was Pushkin capitalizing on the charisma inherent in the art for art’s sake argument?³² Once his poems started projecting an image of genius, not only was Pushkin read—he was even ogled for signs of extraordinary ability. While most were disappointed by his ordinary appearance, some, like General Ermolov, felt the ‘power of his sublime talent’.³³ Although it sounds counter-intuitive to claim otherwise, the history of the Russian book in the Romantic period tells us that writers who flaunted their aloofness were not necessarily any less commercial in their aspirations and strategies than overtly popular writers. The next sections of this chapter will argue that some of his most important poems reveal different stages in Pushkin’s thinking about these challenges, building up to the commanding assertions of ‘The Prophet’.³⁴ Pushkin pondered his situation either by writing poems that were polemical statements about the value of art, enhancing its intrinsic worth and therefore its commercial value; or by converting the problem into a question of Wordsworthian dimensions about the separation of artistic and economic values; or, in some moods, repudiating poetry as public statement at all, because it compromised a philosophical notion of freedom. All the poems that I shall discuss address the question of whether art must exist for the public good or for its own sake, whether commercial gain automatically dilutes the artistic product and also, because it puts the Romantic artist at the mercy of the consumer, actually undermines the market value of the artist. It would be simplistic to reduce the entire spirit of Pushkin’s enquiry to questions of money. Ultimately, all the poems emerge from an awareness of commercial opportunity in tension with a certain model of the poetic career based on an ideal notion of creative liberty. Romantic poets are caught between trading on genius and defending its rebellious and independent character. Through poems that directly address his publishing environment, like ‘The Epistle to the Censor’ and the ‘Conversation between a Bookseller and a Poet’, Pushkin confronts anxiety

³² Stephanie Sandler, ‘Poetics of Authority’, *Slavic Review*, 2 (1983), 199.

³³ A. S. Pushkin, *Pisma*, ed. B. L. Modzalevskii and L. B. Modzalevskii (Moscow: Kniga, 1989), ii, 342–3; and the description in his diary by the censor Nikitenko who apparently in vain scrutinized the poet’s face, from chin to forehead, for signs of genius. See Nikitenko, *Dnevnik*, i, 48.

³⁴ By contrast, post-Soviet Pushkin studies continue to read these poems as statements of the poet’s moral posture outside the context I describe. See, for example, Irina Rodnianskaia, ‘Stikhotvorenie “Blazhen v zlatom krugu vel’mozh . . .” Propushchennoe zveno v razgovore o naznachanii poeta’, *Moskovskii Pushkinist*, 7 (2000), 28–37; and Irina Surat, ‘Bibleiskoe i lichnoe v tekstakh Pushkina’, *ibid.* 85–94 (esp. 92–3).

about his position. Other poems, like 'André Chénier', where the first-person speaker makes the act of poetic creation a palpable demonstration of genius for the reader, marked steps on the way to the declarations of 'The Prophet'. We can turn first to a poem that demonstrates the price in creative freedom that Pushkin pays because of censorship; and then to a text where the dialogue between poet and bookseller ponders the impact of commercial pressure on artistic psychology.

THE RIGHTS OF AUTHORIAL IDENTITY

Pushkin's standing with the government, and the censor in particular, was uniquely difficult.³⁵ From the time of his return from exile in 1826—also the year incidentally when comprehensive censorship was mandated in the so-called Cast-Iron Statute—he was virtually under constant surveillance by agents of the Third Division, the security arm of the state.³⁶ Nicholas I personally acted as censor of Pushkin's work. Ostensibly the tsar volunteered as an act of noble and generous patronage, but his intentions were hardly benign. While he rarely read any works in draft, the assignment of Pushkin's works to a political figure meant that the usual inspection structure was bypassed. The result was that the censors to whom he had to answer were agents from the Third Division, including its chief, Count Benckendorff. This turned out to be a real disadvantage for Pushkin, because the professional censors were considerably more flexible and lenient. Censorship imposed a double anxiety on the author vetted by officialdom before readers had their say.³⁷ The threat of punishment did not stop him from some spectacular transgressions in circulating—or permitting to circulate—subversive or blasphemous texts, notably the proscribed stanzas from 'André Chénier', and the blasphemous *Gabrielriad* (*Gavriiliada*, 1821?) and the obscene fragment 'A poor knight lived . . .' ('Zhil na svete rytsar' bednyi', 1831).

³⁵ For a series of documentary examples, see S. A. Pereselenkov, 'Materialy dlia istorii otnoshenii tsenzury k A. S. Pushkinu', *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki*, 6 (1908), 1–45; with respect to difficulties surrounding Del'vig's *Literaturnaia gazeta* in 1830, see N. K. Zamkov, 'K tsenzurnoi istorii proizvedenii Pushkina', *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki*, 8: 29 (1927), 49–62; and A. I. Egorkin and I. A. Shliapkin, 'Literaturnye dela arkhiva Tsenzurnogo komiteta', *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki*, 29–30 (1918), 98–130.

³⁶ In the period between the Decembrist revolt and Pushkin's repatriation by Nicholas I in July 1826 the illicit circulation of a number of manuscripts, including *The Gypsies* and stanzas from 'André Chénier' prohibited by the censor, only undermined the poet's position further with the government. For a helpful documentary account, see P. E. Shchegolev, 'Pushkin v politicheskomo protsesse, 1826–1828', in P. E. Shchegolev, *Iz zhizni i tvorchestva Pushkina* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1931 = *PIM* 3 (1931)), ii, 95–126.

³⁷ See Iu. Oksman, 'Narushenie avtorskikh prav ssynogo Pushkina v 1824, po neizdannym materialam', in M. P. Alekseev (ed.), *Pushkin. Stat'i i materialy* (Odessa: Odesskii dom uchenyikh, 1923), 10–19; and S. A. Pereselenkov, 'Pushkin v istorii zakonopolozhenii ob avtorskom prave v Rossii', *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki*, 3: 11 (1909), 52–62.

And while the repercussions undoubtedly tried his patience and cost him money (most grievously in 1833), the extent to which they revived his reputation as a free-thinker and confirmed an attractive notoriety in some circles was not lost on Pushkin. Contemporary readers increasingly expected the Romantic poet to evince unfettered emotion and self-exposure, declarative expansiveness and love of freedom. However reluctant Pushkin was to think of himself as a Romantic writer in aesthetic terms, there is no question that the persona he projected was a Romantic one, both personally and professionally. Notoriety, the aura of struggle and failure, the fact of rejection by the many, set the seal in the period for authenticity and individuality.

In the 'Epistle to the Censor', a poem in alexandrines of sixty-three couplets, Pushkin took advantage of his high standing with the public to make out of the topic of censorship a chance to set out a theory of authorial rights and artistic liberty.³⁸ The epistle projects both a sense of authority and insecurity in instructing the censor on his duties while also explaining to him the nature of the book market in which the author wishes to act as a free agent. The poem asks whether the successful writer, shielded from state intervention by public acclaim, can afford to challenge curbs on his expression.³⁹ By making a literary text out of these questions, Pushkin put the issue in the public domain as a matter of concern to his readers; and by playing an ironical game of cat-and-mouse with the censor, the poet insinuated a belief in the laws of art over the prerogatives of the state:

Угрюмый сторож Муз, гонитель давний мой,
Сегодня рассуждать задумал я с тобой.
Не бойся: не хочу, прельщенный мыслью ложной,
Цензуру поносить хулой неосторожной;
Что нужно Лондону, то рано для Москвы.
У нас писатели, я знаю, каковы;
Их мыслей не теснит цензурная расправа,
И чистая душа перед тобою права.

Во-первых, искренно я признаюсь тебе,
Не редко о твоей жалею я судьбе:
Людской бессмыслицы присяжный толкователь,
Хвостова, Буниной единственный читатель,

³⁸ Pushkin was elsewhere less polite, calling Biriukov's performance the 'tyrannical revenge of a pusillanimous idior'. Biriukov had prohibited the publication of poems including 'Epistle to Alekssev' ('Poslanie k Alekseevu'), 'To a friend' ('Priiateliu'), 'To a Foreign Lady' ('Inostranke'), 'To Krivtsov' ('Krivtsovu'), and 'To my Friends' ('Druz'iam'). 'The Epistle to the Censor' was not published in Pushkin's lifetime.

³⁹ Pushkin complained in a letter of September 1821 to N. I. Grech that any whiff, however unfounded, of political subversion provoked the censor. This was the case with the poem 'To Chaadaev' (1821) from which he was forced to excise the word 'freedom-loving' ('vol'noliubivyi'). *PSS*, xiii, no. 26, p. 32 (21 September 1821). From 1826 the history of Pushkin's relations with his official censor Nicholas I and his actual censor, General Benckendorff, is one of continual harassment.

Ты вечно разбирать обязан за грехи
 То прозу глупую, то глухие стихи.⁴⁰

Grumpy guardian of the Muses, long-time persecutor, | Today I'm of a mind to go over things with you. | Have no fear: I have no wish, carried away | By some false conception | To belittle the censor with imprudent abuse. | What's needed in London is early for Moscow. | I know what sort of writers we have. | A censor's reprisals does not crimp their thoughts, | And the pure soul is just in your eyes.

To start with, I'm genuinely grateful to you. | I quite often regret your harsh fate: | A hired interpreter of people's nonsense, | The sole reader of Khvostov and Bunina, | For your sins you are eternally obliged | To get through stupid prose and stupid verse.

After this opening display of hypocritical flattery, the poet uses irony to demean the censor. In the first twenty lines, the speaker assumes the high ground by proving to the censor how thankless his job actually is—so thankless that he refuses to blame the censor and gives him the intellectual benefit of the doubt. Such decorous detachment attests his self-possession. Normally it is for the censor to grant permission and to forgive, while here the writer positions himself as a true authority even as he condones the censor's task. Irony begins with the first couplet, where the poet both lays claim to being a victim ('my long-time persecutor', 'gonitel' *davnii moi*) and lays aside his complaint with magnanimity as he promises the censor not in effect to censure him. In fact, the true martyr is not the writer, but the censor himself (l. 21) who is to be pitied first because he is condemned to read all the inferior publications that the public shuns (ll. 10–20), a terrible chore; and secondly because such fruitless occupation deprives him of the chance to read high literature of serious interest.

This line of exposition recurs from line 31, shifting from a position of intellectual compassion to an argument based on rights and obligation. These lines in effect comprise a job description for the ideal censor, setting up the paradigm against which the censor will be found wanting. The poet writes in the manner of a loyal citizen inclined to accept the moral stature of the censor as a guardian of public welfare. His literary stewardship must necessarily emanate from respect for the law and regard for truth that should in theory be manifested in tolerance of opinion and reason. 'He doesn't hinder opinions and tolerates reason': the line gives a working definition of the censor, who can permit diversity of opinion and argument provided they are in accordance with the law and strike a balance between his obligation to maintain order, on the one hand, and his equally powerful obligation to refrain from impeding what Pushkin calls 'lively poetry' (*zhivaia poezii*). In a final counter-intuitive twist, although initially described as a long-time adversary, Pushkin makes of the censor a figure of reason and courage, a champion appointed not to suppress, but rather to display moral mettle in defending the right of the author to expression.

⁴⁰ Pushkin, *PSS*, ii/1. 267.

Such assessments, however, are no more than a prescription for how the censor should behave; for without any more transition than the adversative 'but' ('a') the second section launches a withering satire on the current censor's performance. A host of complaints is aimed at the censor whose cardinal sin is a paranoia ('You cast your skewed, inaccurate regard at everything', 'Na vse kidaesh' ty kosoi, nevernyi vzgliad', l. 65) that has inhibited literary production. The speaker reverses his initial pity for a censor obliged to read sub-standard literature, castigating him for a failure to comprehend contemporary authorship, and laying the blame for the deficiencies of contemporary literature at his feet. The first charge is made on aesthetic grounds, levelling accusations of dullness and literary incompetence. The poet has acknowledged the right of the state to impose control provided the censor is a person of literary taste and ability. But the poet finds that in reality his adversary does not live up to the job description because he is as untalented as vicious. However important in theory, it may not in fact be of consequence in practice. It is inherent in the logic of the discussion that the subjection of the author to the legal authority of the censor will provoke a counter-statement of authorial privilege. This comes when the poet avers that the censor is powerless to stop a manuscript culture in which texts circulate beyond his control in response to a readership's demand. Pushkin corroborates his claim about the current vitality of manuscript culture in Russian by citing subversives from Radishchev to himself. Underlying this position is the view that, at least from the time of Catherine the Great, there has been a marketplace and readership independent of the state and beyond the reach of the censor: the quill is mightier than the censor's 'fatal axe'. The argument is in part disingenuous, since the commercial disadvantage of pirated editions or uncontrolled copies could be grievous in cases where publication was allowed.⁴¹

Even more important than citing tradition is a second argument about the history of the writer's privileges in Russia, as attested in lines 84–97. According to Pushkin, both by law, as promulgated by the Great Instruction of 1767, and in practice, rulers and censors since the eighteenth century had achieved a *modus vivendi* with their satirists.⁴² Historically, the censor was in a position to offer encouragement as well as tolerance, since Catherine at her most enlightened regarded the satirist as an ally devoted to the same cause of moral and intellectual improvement: 'In the eyes of the Empress the brilliant satirist | Punished ignorance in his popular comedy' ('V glazakh monarkhini satirik prevoskhodnyi | Nevezhestvo kaznil v komedii narodnoi'). Both political satire and erotic verse were tolerated, and the speaker cites precedent as evidence

⁴¹ For an example of this in action, see the 1824 letter from S. M. Saltykov to A. N. Semenova in which Saltykov refrains from copying out autograph fragments at the request of Pushkin's publisher Pletnev. As quoted in B. L. Modzalevskii, *Pushkin* (Leningrad: Priboi, 1929), 133–4.

⁴² See W. G. Jones, *Nikolay Novikov: Enlightener of Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), chs. 2 and 3.

of irreversible progress. Pushkin was well aware that freedom of the press and freedom to dissent, as articulated in Catherine's legislation, was an ideal rather than a reality, because in an autocracy all such liberties were controlled by the ruler rather than enshrined in the law. He also knew that the list he adduces is highly selective and incomplete, omitting a much longer list of victims of the censor and the ruler's displeasure, including such figures as the philosopher Alexander Radishchev, the playwright Iakov Kniazhnin, and publisher Nikolai Novikov, who fell into Catherine's disfavour and were punished. Such omission allows the writer to make his case by emphasizing privileges exercised by earlier satirists, which he would like to hold up as the norm. While he shows tact in this respect, elsewhere he still vilifies the censor. The very freedom of expression exhibited here makes the poem itself evidence, if not a test-case, of the established tolerance for critical expression.⁴³ In self-defence, the censor can only advance his own economic argument, claiming poverty and the need to support a family as a weak justification for his cowardice. Despite his enlightened tastes—Pushkin imagines that at leisure the censor reads Rousseau, Buffon, Bentham, and Karamzin, among others—his confession makes him a hired gun, rather than a principled enemy, a bureaucratic slave to his wage who censors at random and can no longer keep track of fashion. With witty aplomb the poet demolishes the censor and establishes his own intellectual integrity.

The poem remains a daring piece of advocacy because, for the first time since Radishchev caused a scandal in 1792 with his subversive *Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow*, a Russian writer formulated a theoretical, practical, and historical challenge to an institutional impediment to his professional (as well as intellectual) advancement. In this respect the poet is as much a defender of authorial rights as satirist. The case rests on practice, as Pushkin lists writers who have challenged governments, but also on a loose interpretation of principle which expands the rights promised to nobles in the Great Instruction without guarantee. By implication, but without direct insult, the poem challenges Alexander I to live up to the liberal attitude of his famous early days and to follow in his grandmother's example. At the same time, it paints a positive picture of Russian intellectual advancement against which the pathetic figure of the censor can only represent a sclerotic and useless bureaucracy.⁴⁴ And perhaps even more importantly in terms of Pushkin's ambitions and sense of opportunity, the poem creates a relation between intellectual freedom and commercial values. If the government allowed the free circulation of ideas, like the free circulation of money, both the censor and writer would be rewarded for doing their job well. We now turn to 'Conversation between a Bookseller and a Poet', a poem in which Pushkin brilliantly makes the case for pricing genius in ostensibly anti-commercial terms.

⁴³ For an account of changes in the censorship regime, see the notes by B. M. Modzalevskii in Pushkin, *Pisma*, ii, 185.

⁴⁴ In 1824 Pushkin revisited the issue by writing a second epistle to the censor. Much more circumspect, the poem tempers high-mindedness with apology.

Alive to the lucrative potential of his enterprise, Pushkin weighs the temptations and dangers by splitting himself into two speakers, the poet and the bookseller.

THE ECONOMICS OF INSPIRATION: 'CONVERSATION BETWEEN A BOOKSELLER AND A POET' (1824)

In their correspondence about the publication of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, Viazemskii wrote, '[i]t is necessary to push the price up to a Byronic one. It will be dearer and as a result more will buy it.'⁴⁵ From his exile in the Crimea, Pushkin replied with the order to 'publish it as soon as possible; I'm asking you this not for the sake of glory but for the sake of Mammon'. While *Ruslan and Liudmila* had left the author virtually out of pocket, Pushkin's publisher sold the entire print-run of 1,200 copies of the new book for 3,500 roubles. Booksellers charged the substantial sum of five roubles a copy. After the cost of printing, which did not exceed 500 roubles, the net profit for Pushkin was a mere 1,500 roubles because of his terms of contract. But the return was unprecedented for the publishers, and Viazemskii was in fact keen to bruit this about as evidence of Pushkin's commercial viability. Critics and the commercial press pounced on the exorbitant price of five roubles for about 600 lines of poetry. The upshot was that, as both author and publisher predicted, the print-run sold out and the stimulus to Pushkin's ambition was considerable: 'I am beginning to respect our publishers and to think that our craft is indeed not worse than any other. . . . What a joy not to belong to our eighteenth-century writers: I write for myself, but publish for money and not at all for a smile from the fair sex.'⁴⁶ In England, Viazemskii's point of reference, genius sold when popular perception valued it as a rare and therefore expensive commodity.⁴⁷

From the mid-1820s to as late as 1830, as Pushkin pondered issues of Romantic subjectivity and aesthetics more closely, poems of economic discourse interrogated creative decisions. The distinction that we have explored between invention and imagination as modes of inspiration finds equivalents in an economic discourse. Poems attach value to literature either in terms of a perception of the market value assigned to labour; or in terms of demand for a work of permanence that is like a commodity and vendible; or as a property of such rarity, as the product of a unique imagination, that the writer cannot find an equivalent value in money for his labour.⁴⁸ The separate demands of

⁴⁵ Quoted in Smirnov-Sokol'skii, *Rasskazy*, 79.

⁴⁶ Pushkin, *PSS*, xiii, no. 78, pp. 88–9 (8 March 1824).

⁴⁷ For examples of Pushkin's entrepreneurial zeal in coordinating republication with his perception of popular interest, see his letter of 1827 to Pletnev, *PSS*, xiii, nos. 140 and 348, pp. 147–8, 344–5 (3 March 1825/22 September 1827).

⁴⁸ For a contemporary statement by a Russian critic of the poet's metaphysical transcendence, see A. Pisarev, *O нравственныkh kachestvakh poeta (On the Moral Traits of the Poet)* (Moscow, 1821),

accessibility and exclusivity, of popularity and genius, and the tension between them, together with the practical challenges of selling books, created an anxiety that Pushkin objectified in poems. Even if the writer refrains from advertising the degree of work that poetry requires, cultivating a myth of effortless creation—in this case the tag of Mozartian ease stuck to Pushkin—using the vocabulary of work in private reinforces the sense of ownership of the product of imagination. In introducing *Evgenii Onegin* to the public, Pushkin put before them precisely the question of privately assigned value against commercial price.

This is nowhere more apparent than in the ‘Conversation of a Bookseller with a Poet’. First published as a preface to chapter 1 of *Evgenii Onegin*, the poem is Pushkin’s longest lyric in dialogue form.⁴⁹ It is a mini-drama of commercial temptation and artistic idealism, a strikingly ambivalent way to launch one’s new novel. While sometimes attuned to its relation to the commercial context, interpretations tend to disregard its poetic form and theatrical style of argument, falling into the biographical fallacy by automatically equating author and poetic speaker.⁵⁰ Critical consensus on the poem takes it to be defensively setting out the right of the author to publish for gain. The final concessions of the Poet to the Bookseller represent ‘a declaration of Pushkin’s rejection of the Romantic view of existence and the goals of poetic creation’.⁵¹ The question the Poet asks himself—and the question he makes part of his poetry so that his readers will also ask themselves—is whether commercial success necessarily lowers artistic standards because pleasing the majority can only mean pandering to debased tastes. Clearly there is space for other readings that acknowledge the nuance and irony of the dialogue, that bear in mind Pushkin’s penchant for dialogue and dialogical forms to express ambivalence, and that scrutinize the language of publisher and poet with a view to a fluid commercial context where Pushkin hopes to compete—in sum, that take account of the poetic form. The fact that Pushkin shares his own quandary with the reader already indicates a challenging attitude to the demands of the public—and if we read the poem correctly, a demand that he retain the right to challenge the public.

While the Bookseller talks a straight commercial game, the characterization of the Poet is far more complex. Not all poet-figures in Pushkin’s imaginative works are autobiographical alter egos. *Evgenii Onegin* plays teasingly with the

which identifies the poet as one who ‘feels it more strongly than anyone else, when his gaze attains the sacrosanct beauties of nature’, and is able to convey this perception with the same ‘force’ (‘sila’) that overcomes his ‘burning soul’. It is this figure, as the ‘gifted son of nature’ who deserves to be called a poet because he stands at the centre of an existence that, while invisible to all others, creates an eternal harmony among all the parts of the universe.

⁴⁹ Composed in 1824 it was passed by the censor for publication as the preface to ch. 1 of *Evgenii Onegin*.

⁵⁰ On the forms of dialogue poems in Pushkin, see Iu. M. Lotman, ‘K strukture dialogicheskogo v poemakh Pushkina’, in his *Pushkin* (St Petersburg: Iskusstvo-SPb, 1995), 228–36.

⁵¹ A. S. Iankushevich, ‘Razgovor knigoprodavtsa s poetom’, in *Primery tselostnogo analiza khudozhestvennogo proizvedeniia* (Tomsk: Tomskii gos. universitet im. V. V. Kuibysheva 1988), 28.

boundaries between author and character, suggesting and deflating comparisons between himself and his narrator, and himself and the poet Lensky. Here, too, it would have been hard to resist the natural conclusion that the poetic speaker of 'The Conversation', placed at the opening of a new work, voices the author's own concerns. The temptation to make the Poet Pushkin's proxy should be resisted not just on principle but because in this case Pushkin's correspondence repeatedly shows the great interest he took in the commercial success of his publications in contrast to the Poet's indifference.

Dialogue poems are not common in Pushkin, and there is little of a parallel tradition in France and England, where the standard forum for comment was the preface or dedication in which the author addressed readers or patrons or publishers. This conversation over almost 200 lines reminds the reader of Faust's bargain, with the publisher playing the devil: where Mephistopheles offers life the publisher offers money; where Faust commands the secrets of alchemy, the poet commands an enigmatic talent; where Faust seeks through science to divine the essence of nature, the poet through his talent already feels in harmony with nature. In fact, Pushkin went on to produce a calque of that scene from Goethe's epic in his 'Scene from Faust' ('Stsena iz Fausta', 1825), and the germ of the idea of a tainted exchange of ideals for material benefit, whether life or money and fame, seems to be anticipated here. In the opening speech of 'The Conversation' the Publisher (or Bookseller) wishes to strike a bargain with a poet famed for facility in composition. The language of the huckster ('name your price') has Faustian overtones, with the use of alchemy as a metaphor for the exchange of goods: in the blink of an eye, lines of verse can be literally transformed into bank notes, provided the Poet agrees. But the Bookseller's further speech reveals that he is also capable of speaking the language of classical economics as fluently as that of alchemy, construing talent as a commodity measurable in terms of demand and scarcity beyond the control of the producer.

Emphasis in the Publisher's speech falls on commercial immediacy, on the here and now, whereas an attachment to the past and a spiritual remoteness marks the Poet's opening self-description. This is nowhere more blatant than in the Publisher's opening salvo where, for purposes of emphasis, Pushkin gives him a crassness worthy of caricature:

Стишки для вас одна забава,
Немножко стоит вам присесть,
Уж разгласить успела слава
Везде приятнейшую весть:
Поэма, говорят, готова,
Плод новый умственных затей.
Итак, решите; жду я слова:
Назначьте сами цену ей.
Стишки любимца муз и граций
Мы вмиг рублями заменим

И в пук наличных ассигнаций
 Листочки ваши обратим.
 О чем вздохнули так глубоко?
 Не лъзя ль узнать?⁵² (ll. 1–14)

Your versicles are pure fun for you, | It hardly costs you to take a seat | And already fame has bruited | To every corner the nicest news: | The poem, they say, is ready, | The new fruit of mental efforts. | So, make up your mind; I await your word: | Designate the price for it | In a second we will swap for roubles | The versicles of the favourite of the Muses and Graces | And we'll turn your leaves into | A sheaf of printed bills. | Why are you groaning so deeply? | Can we not know?

In offering the Poet money, the Publisher draws the Poet's attention to the concept of price. On his argument, price means the transvaluation of an abstract, intangible product into a currency that is tangible because pegged to the reader's appraisal yet also symbolic because an expression of the Poet's own self-value.

The Bookseller is alert to the connection between price, aesthetics, and public demand. In making the tension between artistic and commercial scales a burden to the Poet, the Publisher attempts to manipulate him. When he speaks of poetry as a type of instant creation, he presses on the writer his own marketing strategy. His ability to sell poetry depends entirely on the potency of this image of poetry as ephemeral, unwilled inspiration, something that is a rare commodity even to the Poet. This argument, made for public consumption, conveys the value of mystique in public consumption. But in private conversation with the Poet, he trivializes the nature of poetic talent. While the charisma of genius as a God-given gift, the bounty of the 'Muses and Graces', has its uses in public relations, in fact he regards inspiration as a mechanical facility that generates a verbal object. The Bookseller makes no allowances for the role of craft and labour because he does not see poetry as a type of work to which he can assign a price. He therefore leaves it to the Poet to name a likely value. By definition, this is to treat him no longer as a poet. Nonetheless, the Poet seems immune, caught up in a reverie of his own childhood discovery of verse that protects him from the Bookseller's injunction to name his price.

The Bookseller retorts by noting that, whether he likes it or not, the Poet has been a commercial success. The more his works sell, the greater the demand they create. In opening the second exchange, the Bookseller, unnerved by the Poet's first response, alters the terms of the argument. If money will not tempt the Poet, he is convinced that the promise of fame will surely affect the Poet's intentions. At a time when Pushkin revelled in his celebrity and fleeting commercial success, the Poet advances a bitter argument in favour of obscurity and neglect. Lines 65–76, cast in the biblical cadence of 'Beatus ille . . .', identify a new cost in the relationship between artist and public:

⁵² For the entire text, see Pushkin, *PSS*, ii/1. 324–8.

Блажен, кто про себя таил
 Души высокие созданья
 И от людей, как от могил,
 Не ждал за чувство воздаянья!
 Блажен, кто молча был поэт
 И, терном славы не увитый,
 Презренной чернию забытый,
 Без имени покинул свет!
 Обманчивей и снов надежды
 Что слава? шепот ли чтеца?
 Гоненье ль низкого невежды?
 Иль восхищение глупца? (ll. 64–75)

Blessed the one who keeps to himself | The lofty creations of the soul | And from people,
 as from the grave, | Expects no reward for his feeling! | Blessed the one who is a poet
 in silence | And, unadorned by the wreath of glory, | Forgotten by the scornful mob, |
 Departs the world anonymous. | More deceptive than the dreams of hope, | What is
 fame? The whisper of a reader? | Persecution by the low moron? | Or the admiration of
 the fool?

Ironic strategies underpin this declaration of self-denial, and put Pushkin's reader on guard against taking as sincere the Poet's oxymoronic avowal of silence ('Blessed is the poet who keeps silent . . .', 'Blazhen, kto molcha byl poet . . .'). The renunciation of fame is a cliché of Byronic posturing, and the display of spleen and contempt that advertises the superiority of the poet vouchsafes precisely the level of alienation and deep feeling that readers craved in their 'mad, bad, dangerous' poets.⁵³ Contempt for money is identified in the text itself as a topos of poetry, with Byron and Zhukovsky singled out as examples of writers whose disregard of financial advantage only, ironically, enhanced their revenue. Yet the Bookseller also admits that Byron and Zhukovsky, models of commercial success, also feared public exposure as an inescapable necessity. Their solution, he says, was to write a different type of poetry by employing a civic discourse dedicated to moral and historical judgements. Through his creations, argues the Bookseller, the Poet can become omnipotent, and serve as an arbiter of justice, a consoler of historical figures ('geroev uteshaet'), and a champion of beauty, and therefore, by virtue of all three capacities, an indispensable figure. Pushkin's poetic speaker abjures any such role. But the fact is that in the lyric poetry written between 1825 and 1830 Pushkin hoped to galvanize his readership through figures of authority rather than through figures of intimacy, and to do precisely what the Bookseller wants.

It is important to recall the poem's original purpose as a preface to Pushkin's new novel. Rejection of commercial motives is decorous because it suggests that

⁵³ Sentiments that were known to Pushkin from numerous sources, including his reading of Leigh Hunt, *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries* (London, 1828), esp. 186 [Modz. 1013].

the relationship between writer (who is not the vendor-publisher) and reader is one of spiritual affinity rather than commercial exchange, a matter of aesthetic discrimination rather than commercial judgement. Pushkin gave a small demonstration of this perception when he copied into the album of a society hostess four lines from 'The Conversation' about the emotional bond between the poet and reader who possess understanding and true affection for him.⁵⁴ Confidence in such a bond is all important in a text like *Evgenii Oegin*, where the narrator, through direct appeals and autobiography, makes an affinity between reader and narrator an active part of the experience of appreciating the text, where the reader is felt to be a part of the creation of the work and a personal confidant. In part, the purpose of the drama of temptation and repudiation is to vouchsafe the inherent aesthetic integrity of a writer reluctant to sell his inspiration. The prefatory display of reluctance is meant to assure the reader of the inherent aesthetic value of the text.

Any reader of Pushkin's letters, where he sets out his commercial ambitions vividly, will know that the speaker's high-mindedness represents a rhetorical position, rather than autobiographical fact. An avowal of the ideal is essential to the image of the poet because it is the unknowable source of his talent that keeps the interest of his public—and drives his commercial power with the bookseller and for the bookseller. It is not for nothing that the Poet points to strategies of concealment that poets must use in order to protect their imaginative independence. The charged language of his Romantic defence does not necessarily provide a true account of what the author standing behind him actually thinks. The hackneyed amplitude of the performance bears little resemblance to Pushkin's style in his first-person elegies. The exaggerated pastiche suggests the rhetorical and theatrical nature of the speaker. His role is to play up to readers who require of the poet sincerity and identity, and who as purchasers of *Evgenii Oegin* would prefer not to think about profit as Pushkin's motivation. Whether the speaker's views reflect a theory of poetic creativity that Pushkin claims for himself is less salient than the fact that the 'Conversation' was an opportunity to put forward an image of the poet coordinated with public expectations of genius (as confirmed by the Bookseller) and therefore contextualized to economic circumstance. The assertion of this vision afforded a means to shape the attitude of his readership, which will consider purchasing and reading a new work as a choice between two models of genius expressed in terms of artistic disinterest or good value. In buying Pushkin's book, have readers been duped by the Bookseller into paying for nothing more than verbal work? Or should they trust the profession of the Poet and regard their purchase as an entertainment enhanced by genius?

Pushkin's Poet has generally been understood to be making a case for the exclusivity of verse and the absolute freedom of the poet from fashion and

⁵⁴ See A. M. Glasse, 'Pushkin ii Gogenloe (po materialiam Shtuttgartskogo arkhiva)', *PIM* 10 (1982), 360–1.

popular sanction. The problem is not the issue of topical relevance, however. More troubling on principle is the demand that art be expected to take into account the demands of the audience. This intrusion into the poetic process creates a clash. The belief in aesthetic transcendence takes a battering from the Publisher who redefines freedom entirely in economic terms as a property defined by the Poet's market value. When he speaks of money it is no longer in the same terms as the Poet. His terminology is industrial and material: money is gold ('We need gold, gold, gold', 'Nam nuzhno zlata, zlata, zlata') and the free-floating product of labour. He also adduces a prudential argument, conjuring the spectre of impoverishment for the poet who refuses to sell. What money represents here is a different system of signification, where arbitrary value that is fixed has been assigned to a symbol of worth. It is a system that is purely rational, transparent, and artificial. It clashes strongly with the Poet's self-description, where value is expressed in chains of images, metaphors, and glorious noises that are impossible to fix: the poem abounds in terms for noise ('zvuki', 'gul', 'shum') yet the greater the degree of connotation, the more impressionistic the picture becomes. Money is not just an image for unequal exchange of the Poet's priceless product for an arbitrarily assigned sum. It is more strikingly a metaphor for frozen and fixed signification, where the fluidity and open-endedness of meaning and the power of words to evoke is limited.⁵⁵

The Bookseller rather than the public represents the greatest threat to poetic values. The Poet rebuts the commercial valuation of art not by claiming that it is beyond price, but by demonstrating the psychological complexity of the creative act. His economics of the imagination prizes genius as a rare and priceless talent that is devalued when exposed to readers who do not understand its worth. The Poet's main soliloquy (ll. 94–122, 132–63) draws on standard features of the Romantic poetic biography, condensing elegiac motifs and phrases familiar in Russian poetry from the first decade of the nineteenth century. His portrait contrasts the unremarkable external impression made by the Poet and his inner divinity: the Poet characterizes his talent as spontaneous and naive, his inspiration as uncontrolled, his mentality independent, his status virtually anonymous. Only those already inclined to appreciate it will see its worth, since his job is not to sell it. The Poet repudiates the Bookseller's simplistic view of the development of talent, making the growth of the poet's imagination inseparable from a unique biographical experience. His talent represents a plenitude of feeling and imagery marked by an ease of responsiveness, a promptness of emotion, and brilliant vividness. Importantly, the Poet does not immediately equate this creative disposition with poetry, speaking instead in terms of noise ('zvuchat', 'buri shum', 'zvuki') and ineffable beauty ('neiziasnimaia krasa'). The Poet sees the agency of poetry in paradoxical terms: it is not the writer himself who

⁵⁵ See R. T. Gray, 'Hypersign, Hypermoney, Hypermarket: Adam Müller's Theory of Money and Romantic Semiotics', *New Literary History*, 31: 2 (2000), 299–300.

generates this noise but some demon, by which Pushkin is certain to mean something like the Socratic definition of inspiration as an interior voice and sense of judgement. Creativity is seen as a Romantic agony, the artist half-crazed with sounds and divine images at the imaginative climax, until a countervailing principle of harmony subdues passion and translates the noise of the imagination into poetry. The heavy fever of an illness becomes rhythm, syntax, and rhyme. By way of analogy with the noise of the creative process, the Poet had already drawn an analogy between his inspiration and natural phenomena. Each set is predicated as part of the constitution and definition of a larger organism: we define nature in terms of such sounds, just as we define the poet according to the conversion of the noise of language into magical sounds. There is a link here to Pushkin's interest in the figure of the poetic improviser, famously embodied in the Italian of the *Egyptian Nights* (*Egipetskie nochi*, 1835). What the improviser has is a scientific certainty in his own ability to perform; despite that awesome facility for versifying at a level of great technical accomplishment, the authority figures in the tale do not acclaim his output as poetry: he remains an improviser but not a poet. The improviser thrives in displaying his talent to the crowd because he does not require inspiration to strike, functioning as he does like a well-tooled machine. Yet he satisfies the crowd's definition of what it means to be a poet only because he produces poetry in which a mechanical facility gives proof of, at least, his status, if not of genius. By contrast, the Poet here emphasizes the biographical sources of his work, and the role of nature as inspiration, both of which vouchsafe poetry as a product of genuine emotion and not mere technique.

When the 'Conversation' is read independently of *Evgenii Onegin*, it is natural to suppose that the Poet is naive in opposing his ideals about creativity to the marketing strategies of the manipulative Publisher. But when we understand the poem's original context and purpose as a preface to the book that Pushkin launched with high commercial hopes, the 'Conversation' makes the Poet only sound naive. Faced with a choice between the Bookseller's devaluation of talent and the Poet's more elevated claim, it is a matter of common sense that any reasonable purchaser would prefer to side with the Poet, since this implicitly flatters the reader's judgement and taste. The dialogue allows Pushkin to have it both ways, projecting through the Poet in the 'Conversation' aloofness from the marketplace that enhances his reputation while also, in effect, acting with the acumen of a publisher. For readers who treat texts as feelings rather than commodities, as personality rather than persona, there must be no distance between the Poet and his words: the poetic 'I' and the autobiographical 'I' are one and the same. This is a premiss about readers that *Evgenii Onegin* will contest as Pushkin tries to educate his readership in a more sophisticated literary gamesmanship. But it is the message that readers desire in buying poetry because they seek an experience that can only be indelible and valuable if it is also authentic. Ironically, the more the Poet stands his ground by refusing to acknowledge commercial

values, the greater his value in the eyes of the Bookseller and, presumably, the readers of the novel to which it stands as preface.

The Bookseller expects poets to speak in language of this kind.⁵⁶ Pushkin, a poet inclined to deceptive self-containment, creates a speaker to play the Romantic poet whose commercial worth increases with his every abjuration of economic incentive. The lesson he delivers is a philosophical one about the disinterested nature of art. Insofar as poetic expression communicates the personality of an individual, shaped by circumstance and experience, art will have value because it is not alienable but belongs to a single creative mind. Not even the true poet, however, can identify the source of genius since, unlike a technical facility at verse, it lies imperceptibly deep in the mind. If an audience demands proof of one's poetic talent in the form of instant composition, the Poet rightly fears such a test because it is not in his control to manage his gift in response to these impulses. Real poetry has its own chemistry by following patterns of invention and combination that operate independently of the Poet: when he refers to the 'silence of his efforts' ('v bezmolvii trudov') the proper interpretation of this phrase, I think, is not that the Poet as agent works silently at his craft, but that the labour of poetic creation, with all its imagined noises of nature, happens not as performance available to auditors, but in a part of the Poet's imagination in which he has no voice and simply listens to what comes to him. At the same time the literal fear that the crowd will somehow wrest it from him is meaningless. The Poet covets his gift and refuses to share it because his grip on it is insecure: the divine noises and ravishing fever come to him in a private rhapsody, and to open the process to anyone else is to risk disrupting it.

Nothing in the description rebuts the claim that genius is a gift of which the poets are at times unaware. But the embedded poetical biography produces a philosophical argument: namely, that art cannot be great if it is conceived as a utilitarian product, since such application destroys the disinterested work of the imagination. In the Kantian sense, the role of the imagination should aim only to satisfy the demands of beauty. Like nature, art may have laws that vouchsafe harmony but mean that the Poet's involvement in his own talent appears largely passive. He is the vessel filled by inspiration, but linguistic performance and poetical laws seem to regulate themselves. As a result, his talent remains for him a fragile and uncertain mystery, and it is in the first instance because of this that the Poet wishes to hide his creativity ('their thrifty curator', 'khranitel' ikh skupoi'). The anxiety of the Poet, comparable to feelings identified in Wordsworth's reflections on genius and the book trade, is that once he accepts the Publisher's challenge to estimate his work and assigns a price, he will spoil the

⁵⁶ Consider the reaction of Annenkov, *Materialy*, 179, who cites this poem's characterization of the poet as the perfect image of Pushkin himself who 'became a creator independent of the taste and approval of the public and its judgements'. In my reading, the poem shows how fine a line Pushkin negotiates by hoping to achieve commercial success while raising the public's taste to his level.

admirable indifference to anything apart from the artistic imperative that is expected of a poet. The reply is a clever ploy because it is admirably naive, as the Poet wishes to seem, but also commercially shrewd, because he has shown with conviction that if he complies with the Bookseller's request he will damage the product and therefore his reputation, precisely the opposite of what the Bookseller wants.

As the Poet confides his anxious fears of alienation ('I am alien to all', 'Ia vsem chuzhoi'), forlornness ('I have known the bliss of love', 'Liubvi blazhenstvo znal li ia'), unintelligibility ('The heart will understand it | The wild murmuring of madness', 'Bezumstva dikim lepetan'iem | Tam serdtse poimet ono'), early senility ('If only youth could revive', 'Mogla by iunost' ozhivit'), the Bookseller's responses become more aggressive and bold. His replies crowd out the Poet from the remainder of the poem, and in the ultimate symbolic show of victory deprive the Poet of the language of poetry. His final concessions to the Publisher's commercial demands now come in prose: 'You are completely right. Here is my manuscript. Let us strike a deal.' But it is not clear who has got the better of whom, leaving the reader in real doubt. Has the Poet really compromised and been persuaded? Has he learned the art of disingenuously deflecting certain demands? Or is he convinced that if he must address the public he can still do it in his own way? The dialogue of 'Conversation with a Bookseller' stages a contractual negotiation. It also treats the nature of the bond between poet and reader, and whether it should be determined by exclusive criteria of emotional affinity and taste or as impersonal transaction regulated by money. The conclusion of 'Conversation between a Bookseller' suggests that the Pushkinian speaker will toe the line, give the public what it wants, and make money. At the end, when the Poet's resistance collapses with unanticipated haste, despite everything he said earlier in making an essentialist argument about the bond between feeling and the lyric, the Bookseller appears to have persuaded him that his talent and his labour can be dissociated; and that the text that circulates, accruing financial value, bears no relation to the productive imagination.

There is a severe economy operating in the text, one that should not support the two contrasting visions of genius. The Poet's genius is presented as naive and whole, but that presentation is articulated deceptively since the Poet understands that he and the Publisher share a mutual dependence. The Poet needs to think of himself as self-sufficient, self-possessed, and aloof from the demands of his audience. But the context in which Pushkin has his Poet make the argument for absolute genius shows how keenly he seeks to promote the power of genius as an aesthetic absolute but also as a commodity. Transferred to *Evgenii Onegin*, this poem defends and promotes both ideals simultaneously, endorsing the view that poets knowingly cultivate their independence as a source of appeal because in the fullness of time success will make the poet and poetry more secure. Such high stakes deserve attention because of the risk Pushkin took in tying his name to externally priced value.

When Pushkin completed *Evgenii Onegin* in 1830, he wrote an epigram—‘Labour’. In this coda to his years of composition, he deliberately revived the language of economics:

Миг вожделенный настал: окончен мой труд многолетний.
 Что ж непонятная грусть тайно тревожит меня?
 Или, свой подвиг свершив, я стою, как поденщик Ненужный,
 Плату приявший свою, чуждый работе другой?
 Или жаль мне труда, молчаливого спутника ночи,
 Друга Авроры златой, друга пенатов святых?⁵⁷

The desired moment is here: the labour of many years is completed. | Why does an unfathomable sadness secretly give me anxiety? | Is it that, my triumph over, I stand like a redundant labourer, | Unneeded, | Who has taken his wage and is now alien to other work? | Or do I miss my labour, silent companion of the night, | The friend of gold Aurora, friend of the sacred Penates?

The epigram distinguishes between value that depends on the quantity of labour necessary to produce an artwork, and the appreciation of its independent value. The Bookseller argued that it was possible to compute the relationship between production and consumption, arriving at the price as a function of, in the words of Kurt Heinzelman, ‘labour bestowed and labour commanded’.⁵⁸ Here the wage as an economic reward looks unsatisfactory.

The ‘Conversation’ is remarkable because it makes questions of creative psychology and commercial evaluation part of the public’s experience of *Evgenii Onegin*, teaching the reader about the business of poetry as an economic and spiritual exchange. Every reader of this poem, and every purchaser of the novel, is made to wonder where they stand on the issue of economic value versus intrinsic worth. The poet establishes a type of reciprocity with his public by requiring his purchaser to understand the value of the object given as a price. This is not far from Wordsworth’s attitude to his literary work as ‘a form of labour to be exchanged for the reader’s’.⁵⁹ But while the ‘Conversation’ is a fascinating performance because it functions at different levels of sincerity and commercial awareness, it was not a poem to command public opinion and make Pushkin’s poems a ‘must have’. Several other important poems marked the stages in Pushkin’s thinking about representing poetic authority. The bid to conquer hearts and minds is inevitably paradoxical, for the more Pushkin wanted to command his readers, the less inclusive and inviting his rhetoric was about the bond between writer and reader. In ‘André Chénier’, his poem about a great predecessor, and poems about art for its own sake, Pushkin considered alternative

⁵⁷ Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 230.

⁵⁸ Kurt Heinzelman, *The Economics of the Imagination* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 205.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 200.

modes of self-presentation. These works reflect an ambivalent attitude towards the mutual need of reader and writer for inclusion and exclusiveness, commercial support and artistic independence.

THE PROPHECY OF 'ANDRÉ CHÉNIER' (1825)

My soul! I am a prophet, dear God, a prophet! I enjoin André Chénier to be published in Holy Letters in the Name of the Father and Son, etc.⁶⁰

(Pushkin)

In Pushkin's dialogue with dead (and living) poets, he accommodated the urge of youthful self-assertion with compliance to the conventional values of poetic craft. The same urge to speak to other poets, and through the language of other poets, drove the range of allusions, quotations, and auto-quotations that comprised the rich intertextual panoply of Pushkin's verse from the mid-1820s. Other pressures and the natural impulses of a developing talent stimulated Pushkin to take his lyric in a new direction. The Byronic liberty of the first person exploited in *Evgenii Onegin* had taught the poet to speak as novelist and autobiographical memoirist. Increasingly aware of the marketplace, Pushkin grappled with the premium put on genius. As a reader of poetic treatises and aesthetic discussions, Pushkin had one eye firmly on the tried-and-true classical style, and the other eye more and more fixed on theories of the imagination that increased the place of subjectivity. In tandem, the burden to acquire a distinctive voice also grew. For the young Pushkin, the point of lyric had been to sound like all admired poets unified into a single voice. Now, as a mature poet admired by the literary establishment and the public, the aim of lyric was to sound individual. What does Pushkin gain by learning to speak in André Chénier's voice?

His tribute of late 1825 to André Chénier is an important guide to the cross-currents in his thinking and poetry. The rediscovery of Chénier in 1819 had caused a sensation in France. Admired for his supreme stylistic polish, Chénier's vibrant persona and distinctive voice exceeded the classical nature of his subjects. The violent indignation to be found in his newly published final poems and

⁶⁰ Pushkin, *Pisma*, xiii: Letter to P. A. Pletnev, early December 1825 and 7 March 1826. The editors of this edition give early December as the date, while the Academia Edition dates it no later than 5 December. The consensus is that it was written before the Decembrist Revolt on 14 December. While Pushkin may have had a vague knowledge of the conspiracy, there is no evidence to suggest he was aware of any details, a conclusion that deprives the political reading of a factual basis. It is possible that he boasts of becoming a prophet because he wishes to promote Chénier's poetry by predicting its eventual acclaim, despite the fact that Chénier predicts that posterity will ignore him. Eidel'man argues that Pushkin's remarks in the letter, suggesting that a time will come when the whole poem can be published, does not reflect his expectation that the Decembrists will be successful, but in fact shows his hope for leniency from Nicholas I. See N. Ia. Eidel'man, *Stat'i o Pushkine* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2000), 142–61.

his tragic destiny made him seem a close contemporary rather than precursor to the French Romantics. Master of all classical sub-genres from epigram to erotic elegy to satirical iambs, Chénier's eloquence and passion for his country gave him a Byronic stature. Francis Scarfe speaks of him as 'constantly stretched on the rack of opposing desires', and the very uncertainty of his artistic affiliations and dramatic oppositions gave him instant appeal.⁶¹ In the first instance, this was because his poetics and personality came together in an innovative way; and secondly because the interplay of his classical style and highly personal voice opened a new chapter in French lyric. Chénier's classical restraint and formal polish frame an uncommon emotional immediacy and visionary imagination. As an avid imitator and translator of Chénier, Pushkin learned in the process how to balance his allegiances to poetry of objective expression and to poetry of subjective identity. 'Hearken o Helios' ('Vnemli, o Gelios', 1823) and 'André Chénier' grow out of Pushkin's continuing engagement with him as a poetic rather than political inspiration. The second poem represents the culmination of Pushkin's ongoing fascination with a poet of similar sensibility torn between classical purity and correctness and experimental violation and Romantic self-expression. Whether they are pastoral singers or visionary utopians, or in his revolutionary *Iambes* the satirical scourges of unjust regimes, poets are central figures in Chénier's work. According to Jean Starobinski, the source of Chénier's appeal and authority among the younger generation of poets was his 'boldness to envision truth as the privilege of genius'. Throughout his verse he reveals the power that 'can establish the authority of the poet above his fellow citizens, especially if they recognize in him [a] hero'.⁶²

Pushkin's 'Hearken, o Helios' adapts in a finished fragment the first twenty-five lines of 'L'Aveugle'.⁶³ One of the longest and most celebrated poems of his *Bucoliques*, Chénier's 'L'Aveugle' turns to the mythic biography of Homer for an allegory of the uncertainty of the fate and reputation of poets.⁶⁴ Starobinski sees 'L'Aveugle' as an absolutely central poem because it is a fully developed myth of the poet as disinterested oracle to his fellow citizens.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Francis Scarfe, *André Chénier: His Life and Work, 1762–1794* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 55.

⁶² Jean Starobinski, 'André Chénier and the Allegory of Poetry', in K. Kroeber and W. Walling (eds.), *Images of Romanticism: Verbal and Visual Affinities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 47.

⁶³ On Pushkin's translations of Chénier and this setting of the hymn to Apollo, see the perspective comments of V. B. Sandomirskaia, 'Pervyi perevod Pushkina iz Andrei Shen'e', *PMI*, 7 (1974), 167–83. Sandomirskaia explains Pushkin's attraction to Chénier on the basis of the prominence of the theme of poetry and the image of the poet (p. 172). On his technique of adaptation, see E. Grechanaia, 'Pushkin i A. Shen'e (dve zametki k teme)', *VPK* 22 (1988), 98–108.

⁶⁴ On the poem's significance in Chénier's oeuvre, see Jean Fabre, *André Chénier* (Paris: Hatier, 1965), 211; and with respect to Homer and Chénier's collection *L'Invention*, see Édouard Guitton, *Physionomie(s) d'André Chénier* (Orléans: Éditions Paradigme, 2005), 109–24.

⁶⁵ Starobinski, 'André Chénier and the Allegory of Poetry', 45.

«Внемли, о Гелиос, серебряным луком звенящий,
 Внемли, боже кларосской, молению старца, погибнет
 Ныне, ежели ты не предыдишь слепому вожатым.»
 Рек и сел на камне слепец утомленный.—Но следом
 Три пастуха за ним, дети страны той пустынной,
 Скоро сбежались на лай собак, их стада стерегущих.
 Ярость уняв их, они защитили бессилие старца;
 Издали внемля ему, приближались и думали: «Кто же
 Сей белоглавый старик, одинокой, слепой—уж не бог ли?
 Горд и высок; висит на поясе бедном простая
 Лира, и голос его возмущает волны и небо.»⁶⁶ (ll. 1–11)

'Hearken, o Helios, who resounds with silver quiver, | Hearken, God of Claros, to the prayer of the elder, | Who will die now unless you precede and guide a blind man.' | Thus the exhausted blind man spoke and sat on a stone | —But three shepherds followed him, children of this desert land, | They quickly encircled him when the dogs guarding | Their flocks barked; | They calmed them, defended the weak elder; | Hearing him from afar, they approached and thought: | 'Who is this hoary, lonely, blind elder—is he a god? | He is proud and tall. A simple lyre | Hangs from his poor belt, and his voice stirs the | Waves and the sky.'

Invocations to the Muse are rare in Pushkin's verse, and are most often confined to imitations.⁶⁷ Such poems present opportunities to adopt a persona where the mediation of the model offsets the potentially stilted tone of a vatic declaration made as part of an original work.⁶⁸ If the technical distancing of imitation does not automatically diminish the power of the persona, the very fact of quotation and rewriting raises the possibility of irony. Pushkin's use of titles to indicate imitation or translation is generally inconsistent.⁶⁹ 'L'Aveugle' consists of four thematic blocks. If imitation for the sake of technical experimentation had been Pushkin's primary purpose then he could have chosen any of these self-contained sections. But formal variation provides the key to Pushkin's content. In his adaptation, Pushkin truncates the first tableau of the original 'L'Aveugle' for the sake of thematic and narrative unity. The purpose of decontextualization was to enhance the independence of the fragment by providing a closed frame; the

⁶⁶ Pushkin, *PSS*, ii/1. 283.

⁶⁷ They include his version of Southey's 'Hymn to the Penates', on the dating of which see D. D. Blagoi, *Tvorcheskii put' Pushkina, 1818–1826* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk, 1950), 693, who assigns it to 1830 rather than 1829. Pushkin probably first read Southey in the translations produced by Zhukovsky before 1820. See A. N. Girivenko, 'Poeziia Roberta Sauti v interpretatsii Pushkina. Spornye voprosy retseptsii', in *Universitetskii Pushkinskii sbornik* (Moscow: MGU, 1999), 454.

⁶⁸ In the early 1830s Pushkin produced a number of translations from Southey, including 'Medok' and a portion of 'Roderic the Last of the Goths'. On the latter, see S. Veksler, 'Sauti, sobesednik Pushkina', *Pushkinskii iubileinyi* (Jerusalem: Praedicta Ltd., 1999), 129–33, who rightly observes that Pushkin was attracted by the challenge of metrical imitation of Southey.

⁶⁹ For an overview of Pushkin's translations from Chénier and comments on them as literary performance, see V. B. Sandomirskaiia, 'Perevody i perelozheniia Pushkina iz A. Shen'e', *PIM* 8 (1978), 90–106; and G. D. Vladimirkii, 'Pushkin. Perevodchik', *VPK* 4–5 (1939), 300–29.

action of the excerpt forms a self-contained vignette, moving from the refugee poet's despair to his salvation and initial acclaim. Structural separateness gives 'Hearken, o Helios' an independent status as a translation, ringing variations on a number of important concepts regarding the function of poetry.

Chénier situates Homer in a conventional pastoral setting, where the persecuted and scorned poet encounters three young sympathetic shepherds. As Homer recounts his misadventures, his harmony of style and language enchant his rustic auditors, provoking remorse at his plight. The most poignant tale of rejection concerns Homer's rough treatment onboard a ship, where the sailors ordered him to sing for their entertainment: 'J'ai fait taire mon cœur qui voulait les confondre; | Ma bouche ne s'est point ouverte à leur répondre. | Ils n'ont pas entendu ma voix, et sous ma main | J'ai retenu le Dieu courroucé dans mon sein.' The centrepiece of 'L'Aveugle' is what Scarfe called 'a toccata, in which Homer displays his marvellous art in a rapid improvisation in which all the kinds of poetry are honoured in short, evocative pictures', moving across a range of poetic modes from the didactic to the epic.⁷⁰ The effect mesmerizes not only his immediate audience, for Orpheus-like Homer charms the entire city, who then beseech the poet to make their city his home ('Viens dans nos murs, viens habiter notre île, | Viens, prophète eloquent, aveugle harmonieux . . .'), offering a resolution of Homer's plight and vindicating through their worship of the poet the civilization of the Greeks.

One central theme relates to the unexpectedness of genius, which can come in any guise. In works like 'The Poet', and *Mozart and Salieri*, feckless youth masks exceptional talent. In 'Hearken, o Helios', Pushkin views the unnamed Homer through the eyes of the innocent shepherds, whose description dwells on the decrepitude of the stranger, who is marked by 'fatigue, weakness, blindness, loneliness'. Yet at the same time through the magic of his voice and majesty of his bearing ('gord i vysok'), they suspect in him a latent divinity and sense, despite his 'crumbling body', a 'magnificent magic'. The drama of the poem lies in the conversational ease of Pushkin's apprehension of a pagan world where all are on guard for manifestations of the divine. It is constructed entirely of quick reversals between distance and closeness (l. 8), aggression and defence (l. 6), impotence and power (l. 9), decay and beauty (l. 15), mortality and immortality (l. 14). The ultimate reversal and main conceit of the poem lies in the paradox that while Homer is in fact mortal because not a god, he is at the same time a poetic immortal.

As will occur three years later in 'The Prophet', Pushkin creates a parable of poetic inspiration in which visionary insight requiring an act of will from the poet is seconded by a divine grace. We need to ask how appropriate such a model of creativity is with respect to the poem itself. Can an imitation genuinely be regarded in such terms or does its derivative nature undermine its 'sacred'

⁷⁰ Scarfe, *André Chénier*, 170.

pretensions? If the latter is the case, does Pushkin choose to cast the parable as an imitation precisely because it implicitly calls into question the model of poetic creativity as divine accident rather than a matter of craft? In fact, all imputation of the divine belongs to the audience in this poem, for it is the onlooking boys who speculate on the power of the old man's lyre: Pushkin's verb 'vozmushchat' for Chénier's 'émouvoir' is more subjective and infused with their viewpoint, conveying their miraculous expectations. Perspective therefore is the key to the parable, which is as much about the manner in which an audience—or readership—regards the status of the poet as it is about a Homeric neoclassical ideal. Irony marks the discrepancy between the literal seeing of the shepherds who cannot differentiate mortal from immortal, and the blindness of Homer who enjoys metaphorical sight.⁷¹ In the original, the basis for Pushkin's key episode is a transitional passage leading to Homer's monologue on the continuity between classical and neoclassical poetics, offering a lesson in literary history. Pushkin moves past this in order to concentrate on the divine transformation of the poet, who transcends his detractors and amazes his true public through the nature of his inspiration. As a parable of poetic creativity, the vignette, like 'The Prophet', endorses inspiration as an external force. It also subscribes to the contemporary view that prophecy is proof of the essential quality needed to sell poetry—genius. But Homer's attitude of indifference and aloofness to his audience stands in contrast to the social responsibility of the prophet-figure. We see that even in a minor work of translation Pushkin reflects on the tension between models of poetic craft and poetic responsibility. 'Hearken, o Helios' throws out links to one vision of the poet's identity while subtly moving toward the opposite pole. The tension remains permanent in Pushkin's writing about the liberty and duty of the poet.

Once he had spoken Chénier's own words through translation, Pushkin progressed to a more profound type of imitation by imagining himself into Chénier's final moments before execution. He took the part of the poet because he was also trying out the mantle of Chénier's authority.⁷² Pushkin was rereading Batiushkov's collection *Essays in Verse* as he put together his own first collection, where he published a truncated version of 'André Chénier'. He faulted his Chénier imitation of 1823 for its lack of psychological plausibility and inability to capture the genuine voice of the subject.⁷³ Pushkin saw in Chénier's plight a chance to write an authoritative elegy on the incarcerated poet as a literary

⁷¹ On visionary moments and the tradition of poetry as a wild natural music, see Hartman, 'The Poetics of Prophecy', in *Beyond Formalism*, 160–8.

⁷² Pushkin viewed it as a challenge to write a poem about the Romantic image of the fallen poet that would join a long line of Russian poems on the subject. The original title of the poem, 'André Chénier in Prison' ('Andrei Shen'e v temnitse'), is significant since it suggests a generic link with poems like Pletnev's 'Tasso in Prison' ('Tass v temnitse', 1822), P. A. Gabbe's 'Byron in Prison' ('Bairon v temnitse', 1822), and V. F. Raevskii's 'The Poet in Prison' ('Poet v temnitse', 1822) which ultimately descend from Batiushkov's 'The Dying Tasso' ('Umiraiushchii Tass', 1817).

⁷³ Pushkin, *PSS*, xii. 283.

subject. Pushkin's portrait of Chénier turns him into hero and martyr of the French Revolution for the sake of elevating the cultural status of the poet-figure. His purpose is not to disseminate a political message, but to use a political event to create the heroic corroboration of the poet's importance. At the same time, because of political and biographical circumstances, the poem also became a turning point in Pushkin's psychology of imitation, tentatively revealing the possibility of writing visionary poetry in which the poet's prophetic claim derives from his own genius or the power of subjectivity.

At an extent of 185 lines, 'André Chénier' is almost a quarter the length of *The Bronze Horseman*; it is one of Pushkin's longest lyrics and remained his most explicit and extensive tribute to another poet. The poem has a highly complex structure: a poetic invocation (ll. 1–20), followed by Chénier's monologue, which is made up of several parts: a hymn to freedom praising the early success of the revolution (ll. 21–44); an account of the decline into despotism; the prophecy of the future birth of freedom after the poet is already gone (ll. 50–64).⁷⁴ The second section contains two linked elegies: the first is the address of the poet to his friends (ll. 65–102), heavily saturated with the spirit and tone of Chénier; the second draws a contrast between two periods in the poet's life, his youthful enthusiasm and then his political passions, the section marked by questions (ll. 110–40), a section that links the lyric and the civic, and takes the poet to the brink of despair over his early death but ends with a reawakening of self-belief. This leads into the final section of the monologue which is suffused with echoes of Chénier's later poetry, in particular his iambs on Charlotte Corday.

Partly because of its inherently revolutionary subject matter and partly through association with its date of composition close to the time of the Decembrist rebellion interpretations of 'André Chénier' have accentuated the poem's political implications, insisting on links to the Decembrist revolt that occurred on 14 December 1825.⁷⁵ This scholarly line has looked for support to a famous letter written early in 1826 in which Pushkin, with reference to the poem, congratulates himself on being a prophet either by anticipating the Decembrist rebellion or the amnesty that Nicholas offered.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ For an explication of the historical allusion, see N. K. Teletova, 'Andrei Shen'e i Aleksandr Pushkin', *Russkaia literatura*, 1 (1996), 6–19.

⁷⁵ For an example of the instant association made between the poem and 14 December 1825 see the remarks of a contemporary student as quoted in P. E. Shchegolev, 'Pushkin v politicheskoi protsesse 1826–1828 gg', *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki* (1909), 23.

⁷⁶ Lines 21–64 and 150 were removed by the censor, but they circulated clandestinely in manuscript under the title 'On 14 December'. As a result, Pushkin was interrogated and put under surveillance (see above n. 35), on which see B. L. Modzalevskii, *Pushkin pod tainym nadzorom* (Leningrad: Atenei, 1925). Contemporary critics like Belinsky seem to have known only the censored version and Pushkin's first important biographer, Annenkov, does not mention the poem at all. The political line has been advanced in Sandomirskaiia, 'Andrei Shen'e', 8–34, which carefully reviews the chronology of composition and circumstantial events about which Pushkin may or may not have known. On the sequel to the Southern exile, spent in Mikahilovskoe 1824–6, see Binyon, *Pushkin*, 214–40, which contains a sound summary of Pushkin's knowledge of the Decembrist plot. For a summary of the scholarship on Pushkin's association with Decembrist groups in Kishinev,

Pushkin's jubilation at being a prophet is more likely to be a type of retrospective rereading of his own poem rather than a disclosure of his original intentions. Chénier's posture in the poem is not particularly radical and he is clearly a victim of the unrest rather than its instigator. But contemporaries well disposed to Pushkin immediately associated the revolutionary setting of Chénier's incarceration with the exiled Pushkin and read it as a political statement.⁷⁷ This must have suited Pushkin, whose position was unenviable, only up to a point. The post-Decembrist settlement with Nicholas, which initially struck the poet as progressive and flattering, created vexation at every turn. The fact that Pushkin had achieved a rapprochement with the tsar provoked mystification among his old loyal cohort who wondered about his attachment to erstwhile political ideals and, personally, to the Decembrists themselves.⁷⁸ In poems such as 'To my Friends' ('Druz'iam', 1828) and '19 October 1827', Pushkin attempted to allay doubts, courting controversy in the first poem with friends by stating his perhaps naive belief that loyalty to them did not preclude loyalty to a ruler whose policies he wished to influence for the good. In the second poem, a touching message secretly disseminated to the Decembrists exiled in Siberia, he courted punishment from the authorities who were still investigating aggressively the inflammatory stanzas that had floated free from 'André Chénier' and had recently launched an investigation concerning Pushkin's authorship of the blasphemous *Gabrieliad*. The radical reading of the poem that arose by circumstance rather than design was convenient, satisfying his urge to behave like a free agent and also soothing his conscience.⁷⁹

The phrase from the letter also offers insight into the meaning of his literary affinity with Chénier. What does Pushkin mean (in the sentences quoted in the epigraph) when he says that he has become André Chénier? Biographical readings ignore the wide divergences in the poets' lives. Boris Tomashevskii rightly identifies the obvious congruence in Pushkin's plight as exile in the countryside and André Chénier's victimization by a hostile regime. It is their eventual fates, however, that differ. At the end of Pushkin's elegy, André Chénier foresees his day of liberation when his chains will fade away. A biographical reading will insist that Pushkin articulated through Chénier his hopes for himself. But in factual terms the analogy is hard to sustain: Chénier opposed the Terror, while Pushkin

see I. V. Nemirovskii, *Tvorchestvo Pushkina i problema publichnogo povedeniia poeta* (St Petersburg: Giperion, 2003), 135–51.

⁷⁷ For examples, see N. Ia. Eidel'man, *Pushkin i dekabristy: Iz istorii vzaimotnoshenii* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1979), 328–31; and P. E. Shchegolev, *Iz zhizni i tvorchestva Pushkina* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1931), ii. 114–15.

⁷⁸ For an overview of conjectures on the meeting between Nicholas I and Pushkin in the autumn of 1826, see Eidel'man, *Stat'i*, 166–207.

⁷⁹ The illicit circulation of the poem and the variant of its most radical lines caused Pushkin great difficulty, directly when he was interviewed by the police in January of 1827, and indirectly when provincial authorities took legal action to investigate the sources of copies.

is alleged to have been a Decembrist; Chénier was guillotined, while Pushkin was liberated. To read Chénier's liberation as Pushkin's autobiographical projection is to miss the poem's accomplishment and to circumscribe the fuller connection between poet and predecessor. In what way does Pushkin free Chénier?

In his deposition to the official Commission of Inquiry on the Decembrist Uprising, Pushkin insisted that his poem was about the French Revolution and Chénier's sacrifice. Pushkin pointed out that all this had been composed before the rebellion. He was, of course, capable of being disingenuous for the sake of self-protection, but the possibility that he is actually forthright about his motives should also be taken seriously. Decoupling the poem from the Decembrists does not diminish Pushkin's admiration for Chénier as a champion of the poet's right to speak of freedom. By impersonating an admired poet Pushkin liberates him by giving his predecessor's voice, and his own, new life.

Although Pushkin seems to have conceived a greater interest in the poet's biography during the second phase of his exile to his estate in Mikhailovskoe, the basis of his admiration was aesthetic.⁸⁰ Chénier successfully navigated the demands of classicism and early Romanticism. His command of an ancient idiom and his capacity to renovate and transmit the old and the new brought proof of continuity to other poets and other traditions. The reconciliation of innovation with tradition appealed to Pushkin's artistic conservatism. It also suited his sense of Romanticism as a style of dynamic reinvention.

What critics have regarded as a political dimension to this stirring evocation of Chénier's final moments, where eloquence and poetry banish fear of the Terror and its abuses, could also be seen differently as a moment of literary martyrdom that the successor poet can redeem. Let us therefore pursue the possibility that writing about Chénier confers another sort of authority on his Russian admirer. Only in the most general sense is politics the basis for Pushkin's identification with the French poet. The moral authority of the poet stems from the poet's bravery in speaking freely even at his own peril. Stephanie Sandler has given a powerfully contextualized reading of the poem that is faithful to its reception as a historical elegy, but astutely identifies its importance as an assertion that Pushkin makes about the right of the poet to speak about history, and about the lives of other poets as victims and martyrs of history. What elevates the poet

⁸⁰ Pushkin knew Chénier's works from the 1819 edition of Latouche, with its biographical introduction. Two details may be drawn from that source: the line 'But friendship bewitches the mortal path of the poet' ('No družba smertnyi put' poeta ocharuet') refers to Chénier's meeting on the way to the guillotine with his friend and fellow poet Roucher; and Chénier's role in the trial of the king, on whose behalf he wrote a letter arguing for his right to address the Convention, a position that may have endangered his life—Pushkin refers to this in n. 4. Altogether he seems to use Latouche only a few times (nn. 4 and 6), and at ll. 155–9 and l. 183. The description of Chénier's death, however, is more likely to be based on Chateaubriand's account (see Pushkin, *PSS*, xi. 25). Pushkin's periodization of the poet's career also differs from that of the biography. He speaks of the poet's love of freedom as a constant of his career rather than as a final expression of his plight, confirming Starobinski's conclusion about Chénier's status among Romantic writers.

is not a political programme, but the ability to speak the truth that inspiration endows. It is also possible, I believe, to build on this reading and see another motivation in Pushkin's tribute. If becoming Chénier gives him access to a new source of authority, this is important because the act of imitation and emulation allows Pushkin himself to become the new sort of poet who has the confidence to speak as 'The Prophet'.

Imitation in 'André Chénier' differs from the verbal mimicry of Pushkin's earlier poetry. Imaginative affinity and total sympathy underpin the act of transforming oneself into the dead poet. In other dialogues of the dead, Pushkin has worked out identity by acknowledging debts of stylistic affiliation and independence of imagination and ambition. 'André Chénier' marks a logical culmination and end-point because it turns dialogue into a monologue in which the later poet assumes complete control of his predecessor through self-transformation. At impressive length and with a magnificent mastery of Chénier's own generic and tonal range, Pushkin's poem makes imitation an act of completely inhabiting the mind of the other poet. The poem uses imitation in order to produce one of Pushkin's most daring and radical translations in the sense of a poetic and psychological re-creation: the entire emotional effort of the poem is to relive Chénier's last moments. Through pastiche and subtle blending of voices, Pushkin moves between the identities of the Pushkinian lyric speaker and his submergence in the recovered voice of Chénier. Through craft, empathy, and intuition, Pushkin is able to write as Chénier would have written posthumously if he could return and recall the moments leading to his death:

Ainsi, triste et captif, ma lyre toutefois
S'éveillait . . .

Меж тем, как изумленный мир
На урну Байрона взирает,
И хору европейских лир
Близ Данте тень его внимает,
Зовет меня другая тень,
Давно без песен, без рыданий
С кровавой плахи в дни страданий
Сошедшая в могильну сень.

Певцу любви, дубрав и мира
Несу надгробные цветы.
Звучит незнаемая лира,
Пою. Мне внемлет он и ты.⁸¹ (ll. 1–12)

Ainsi, triste et captif, ma lyre toutefois | S'éveillait . . .

And while the astonished world | Gazes on Byron's urn, | And nearby Dante's shade |
Listens to a chorus of European lyres,

⁸¹ Pushkin, *PSS*, ii/1. 397.

Another shade summons me, | One long without songs, without lamentations, | That departed for the shelter of the grave | From a bloody scaffold during days of suffering.

To the singer of love, trees and peace, | I bear flowers for his grave. | An unknown lyre sounds, | I sing. It hears me, as do you.

The first twenty lines establish a relation between poet and predecessor, framed in terms of a shift of allegiance from Byron to Chénier. The epigraph of the poem is taken from the last of Chénier's *Iambes*, his harsh political invectives and diatribes against the Jacobin massacre. The first word of the quotation 'ainsi' is echoed in line 1 of his poem ('mezhtem...') thereby at the very start blending voices of imitated poet and imitator. Pushkin raises the question of poetic voice at the opening, where poetic inspiration is assigned not to a god or a muse but to the choice of a favoured poet. The word 'lyre' occurs five times in as many stanzas. In the first stanza it figures merely as a classical detail alongside Byron's urn. In stanza 3 the lyre, described as unrecognized, must belong to Pushkin's speaker, who establishes his own biographical connection with the uncelebrated Frenchman. In the fourth and fifth stanzas the lyre belongs to Chénier and in both is credited with poetic activity: the lyre rather than the poet sings as an objectification of genius. I do not agree, as some have argued, that this signifies Pushkin's rejection of Byronic Romanticism in favour of another more classical-oriented variant. For the rejection of Byron also comes with a tribute: the world gazes with amazement ('izumlennyi mir') at his urn, a sign of reverence both for his poetic achievement and his status as the subject of poetic tributes. His urn is a metaphor for poetic worship. If the speaker does not reject Byron as a great figure or Romantic, he prefers Chénier for two reasons. His death had not yet become a subject for painters and poets, whereas Byron's demise had already become an indelible part of his image. The vividness of Chénier's sacrifice, the harrowing quality of his death and prophecy, the torment of his devotion to freedom, give him a stature and poignancy even more compelling than Byron's own fate. The abrogation of Chénier's burial place (mentioned in l. 71) undermines veneration of his memory, and therefore requires a different strategy of mourning.

The project of reviving Chénier redresses the injustice of his posthumous neglect.⁸² A sense of mutuality inhabits 'André Chénier' that goes beyond biography because the bond of sympathy, based on creative admiration, generates a new type of relation between poet successor and predecessor.⁸³ In commemorating Chénier's death, Pushkin is actually reviving him and bearing out his final prophecy that the words and ideas of a poet can live on: poets empower other poets, and thereby guarantee their posterity. As a political victim, Chénier confers authority on the figure of the dissenting poet, and Pushkin confers authority on Chénier by proving his prophecy to be right. This sense of common destiny

⁸² Sandler, 'Poetics of Authority', 200.

⁸³ See L. P. Grossman, 'Pushkin i Andrei Shen'e', in *Pushkin. Etiudy o Pushkine* (Moscow, 1928), 194–6.

and conflation of biographies—a conflation that is mutually confirming—is a literal truth of the poem since in line 12 the poet claims to speak to Chénier's shade ('Mne vnemlet on i ty'). But the source of Chénier's charisma lies not only in his tragic fate and heroic posture, and not only in oblique biographical parallelism with Pushkin, important though these points are. Pushkin chooses to portray him in his last hours, caught in a poetic reverie even as he faces the guillotine. He is an exemplary poet because his art compelled him to express his beliefs in poetry even as he awaited execution. The choice of subject matter does not emphasize political defiance, but the inevitability of poetry. For the true poet, verse creation is like breathing. However, in order to learn the lesson of how to speak with prophetic strength, the poet must first annihilate himself through complete subordination to an exemplary predecessor. In Pushkin's earlier dialogues with the dead, predecessors are foils to the successor poet, revived with far less autonomy than Pushkin accords Chénier here, beginning with Chénier's self-elegy at line 72.

In the monologue, extending from line 20 to line 171, the reincarnated poet speaks entirely on his own, independent of an authorial relation with his creator. The act of resurrection, where the voice of the successor poet ceases to exist, is an expression of total confidence and independence because the poet feels no psychological contest or anxiety about the merger of their voices. In the final section of the elegy, he embraces the redemptive power of his political verse by writing a final declaration, full of defiant belief, amidst the ghoulish evocation of the guillotine, in the power of the poet to dominate the crowd, even after death.⁸⁴ It is Pushkin who now guarantees the validity of this description, and who projects onto Chénier his own need to express a desire for public authority. From Ovid, Pushkin learned the language of the exile. From Chénier, Pushkin learns the language of authority. What is special about that language is that it does not require official sanction, provided poets subordinate themselves to one another, and then in due course claim their own rightful authority. The closing stanza brings the poem back into the present and to the involvement of the narrator who is once again the speaker, replacing the poet, expressing hope against hope that Chénier will be spared and freedom restored. The final line of Chénier's ninth iamb and last poem ('Comme un dernier rayon, comme un dernier zéphyr') invoked the spirit of Virtue to weep for the poet. In Pushkin, by contrast, the Muse is invoked in lamentation, reminding the reader that comparable artistic visions form the basis of the bond between predecessor and successor. The annihilation of the self in the other poet comes close to the 'sympathetic genius' that Keats identified in Shakespeare as a gift for total psychological harmony with

⁸⁴ The motif of the uncomprehending crowd and the poet as voice of truth first surfaces in the 1822 poem to V. F. Raevskii ('Ty prav, moi drug') and continued to haunt Pushkin as a lyric situation in fragments (see draft versions of 'Poet i tolpa' in Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 707–8) although it no longer figures as the subject of completed individual poems. See L. M. Arinshtein, 'Dve tekstologicheskie zametki: o datirovke nabroska "Tolpa glukhaia . . ."', *VPK* 25 (1993), 120–4.

another, where the 'I' of the creator disappears. The creative psychology stands at the opposite end of the Wordsworthian 'egotistical sublime' that Pushkin will achieve once he impersonates a prophet and speaks under the direction of his own visionary inspiration. As a statement about the authority of the poet, 'André Chénier' falls between the overt derivativeness of earlier poetry of self-assertion and poems like 'The Prophet' where the authority of the poet rests in assertions of total originality.

In Chapter 1, I expressed resistance to applying Bloomian theory of the anxiety of influence to the young Pushkin, whose use of wit and parody can hardly be seen as defensive since they strengthened his stature. But Bloom's theory is not only about resistance to powerful voices, for in its sixth and final phase, which seems almost detachable from the rest of the theory, he eloquently sketches the moment of 'apophrades' when a later poet not only imitates a precursor but submerges his own identity in the revived voice of the dead poet. For Bloom this moment marks a turning point because the acceptance rather than evasion of the predecessor is the mark of a strong poet able to withstand his 'revisionary relationship to the dead'. 'André Chénier' represents the moment when that relationship changed. By turning Chénier's death into a moment of transcendence, the young poet becomes the strong poet 'who has persisted in his strength' and the elegy becomes 'not so much a return of the dead as a celebration of the return of the early self-exaltation that first made poetry possible'.⁸⁵ In Pushkin's case, a new type of poetry, drawing on the imagination and a heroic example of self-assertion, has been made possible through Chénier.

ART FOR ART'S SAKE AND POETIC EGOTISM

Inspiration is not for sale, but you can sell a manuscript.

(*'Conversation between a Bookseller and a Poet'*)

Over the course of the decade following his early success, Pushkin's readership extended to a number of sub-sets, from his Arzamas brothers and Lycée cohort, to an anonymous public, to government agents, and the tsar himself. In assessing and securing his position *vis-à-vis* these groups, Pushkin's instinct is to test his positions dialectically, sometimes even within a single poem like 'The Conversation'; this is more usually the case across poems that share common concerns and reach different conclusions. The other side to works that assert the poet's moral authority are poems that draw authority from their purely artistic conviction. Such contradiction should only seem surprising. When poems stand as counter-examples to one another, they are clearly not refutations and do not automatically

⁸⁵ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 62.

ironize related statements. If a poem articulates parallel views, the real question concerns how the poem projects Pushkin's own anxiety of reception to his own audience; or his fear of the poet he might become if he were to take this attitude categorically. Both postures of extreme assertiveness and extreme withdrawal were intended to capture the imagination of the reading public. Having learned to speak through a dead poet like Chénier, Pushkin wished to speak with an authority of his own. Particularly after his reconciliation with Nicholas I and the shocking execution of five of the Decembrists, it was impossible to follow the example of André Chénier and bring about his own martyrdom. Pushkin had paid the price for his early political subversion, and enjoyed the benefits of his notoriety. In the post-Decembrist era, any overt challenge to Nicholas was unthinkable and undesirable. In Restoration France, writers of his generation could navigate literary politics, taking sides on factions and challenging the government at relatively unthreatening cost. At the same time, advocates of art for art's sake such as Sainte-Beuve, who from 1824 resented the populist and bourgeois atmosphere, enjoyed the luxury of a journalistic income that was inconceivable for Pushkin. Selling genius placed Pushkin in a dilemma. Raising the banner of art for art's sake appealed to the values of a staunch yet static group of readers. The logic of poetic charisma suggested that repudiating public taste actually encouraged new readers. But that in the end only worked if the public got what it wanted, and the strategy of aloofness could possibly backfire.

The mid-1820s represented a transitional moment in Pushkin's popularity.⁸⁶ The poor sales figures for chapters 3 and 4 of *Evgenii Onegin* anticipated the turn of critical opinion against him by several years. It was only by republishing the popular Southern narratives that Pushkin once again increased his royalties and standing with the public.⁸⁷ In these propitious conditions he directed his efforts to his first collection of lyric poems in order to capitalize on the initial wave of success. This is the moment when Pushkin's commercial viability and popularity approached their zenith. All 1,200 copies of Pushkin's first lyric collection sold quickly. His friend and sometime publisher Petr Pletnev devised a complex system of discounts and premiums among booksellers that guaranteed certain levels of sales.⁸⁸ Even then, popularity was not something to be taken for granted: the first book of *Evgenii Onegin* published in 1825 had a print-run of 2,400 copies; 700 were snapped up in the first two weeks; in the next half year only another 400 were sold. In August of 1825 Pletnev wrote to Pushkin: "They think that this book is already finished, but forget how they will snap it up once you

⁸⁶ For a citation-index that attempts to quantify Pushkin's prominence, see Paul Debreczeny, *Social Functions of Literature: Alexander Pushkin and Russian Culture* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 180–4.

⁸⁷ See Pletnev's complaints to Pushkin about the difficulty of agreeing satisfactory terms in Pushkin, *PSS*, xiii, no. 197, p. 202 (5 August 1825).

⁸⁸ Smirnov-Sokol'skii, *Rassказы*, 113–27. For the source of the figures, see *PSS*, xiii, no. 209, p. 217 (29 August 1825); *Literaturnyi arkhiv*, xi. 32.

publish another chapter or two. Won't we laugh at the idiots then. I'll confess that I'm happy about this.'⁸⁹ This proved to be optimistic.

In a series of poems written between 1826 and 1831, Pushkin produced contradictory statements on poetic authority, sometimes measuring genius in terms of social commitment and sometimes setting the utility of art against art created for its own sake. We can understand this as ambivalence; or tactical publishing depending on the artistic orientation of journals where poems appeared; or his way of testing European discussions about the place of art in a Russian context. Pushkin and his contemporaries kept an unflinching eye on the European literary scene. Not only did they follow the connection between *belles-lettres* and politics on the pages of newspapers, literary journals, and essays—their gaze was on poetic celebrity and sales figures. More than any other country, France was the obvious magnet for their attention. From his repatriation to metropolitan Russia in 1826 until his death, his critical articles and notes continually invoked the state of literature and academic life in France as a reference point for Russian culture.⁹⁰ For him the ideals that French and English writers championed, and their strategies for negotiating the anxieties caused by critical debates and commercial pressure, provided a virtual reality of the Russian culture that he was in the process of creating. Of course, the correspondence between nations was imperfect, since Russia's autocratic stagnation prohibited the engagement in politics that marked Romantic identity. Yet although Pushkin could not follow the example of Hazlitt or Hugo in freely advocating political authority to the writer, his discourse of art assimilated in broader outline contemporary European attitudes to creativity and social responsibility. Adjusted for different circumstances, the analogies between Pushkin and his counterparts provide a key to the meaning of poems about the value of art running the gamut from assertions of the writer's responsibility to violent repudiation of popular interest.

In France of the 1820s and 1830s, an extensive journalistic and polemical literature energetically assessed the professional identity and self-worth of the writer. In post-Napoleonic Europe, where the end of the age of heroes spurred the rise of the talented common man, the growth of mass-produced literature and newspapers had an immediate impact on serious writers. No matter what their political allegiances, however demotic or royalist, writers defended their value and identity against the inferior production of anonymous and ephemeral hacks, and against the increased number of periodicals that undercut demand for books of poetry.⁹¹ Underlying the multifarious arguments of all the major spokesmen and literary groups in France was the common belief in

⁸⁹ Pushkin, *PSS*, xiii, no. 209, p. 217 (29 August 1825).

⁹⁰ For some examples, see Antonia Glasse, "Soblaznitet'nye otkroveniiia". Pushkin i frantsuzskaia memuarnaia literatura', *Voprosy literatury*, 4 (1993), 54–68.

⁹¹ See Erickson, *Economy of Literary Form*, 26.

the spiritual value of art and the exceptional moral position of the poet and artist.⁹²

The fault-line between groups lay along the social application of art. Should art exist for its own sake and therefore exalt man through inspiration? Or should art actively combat the spiritual dullness and complacency of bourgeois values with their concomitant social injustices? From the 1820s, most writers had opinions on this issue although some, like Hugo, found it difficult to be consistent over the longer term. Among them Sainte-Beuve, whose poetry attracted Pushkin, also wavered. He had begun as a fervent supporter of social art who argued that 'the forms of the art of literature are tied to political and social revolutions'. By 1834, after the failure of his novel *Volupté*, he abandoned these ideals and withdrew to 'an egotistical Romanticism'. In his 1818 publication about 'le Vrai, le Beau et le Bien' Cousin proclaimed the doctrine of art for art's sake, replicating a doctrine of art's objective value as originally expounded by Kant, Schiller, and Schelling. Like Quatremère de Quincy in his *Essais sur l'idéal*, Cousin held that 'the beautiful is not an imitation of nature. It is the ideal that is the object of the artist's passionate contemplation; the idea is the basis for the beautiful.'⁹³ In his 1824 *Préface to Les Orientales*, Hugo decreed in the loftiest terms the moral independence of the poet who follows, in his view, only his own fantasy and fancy unencumbered by the duty to serve other causes outside his own imagination.

But both Cousin and Hugo allied a social mission even to pure art, urging writers to pursue their own credo and to lead the public. In France, controversy about the social utility of art and the Saint-Simonian belief in the artist as spiritual and political liberator would come to a head in the 1840s.⁹⁴ Nonetheless, by the 1820s key writers had begun to defend positions on the value of art and creativity as independent activities that are good in their own right, whatever their social application. From the 1830s, newspapers and journals published literature as a way to enhance their market share, serializing writers like Dumas, Sue, and Balzac. The urge to condescend to the crowd was sometimes hard to resist. Other writers whom Pushkin read avidly, including the critics Planche and Sainte-Beuve, complained about the utilitarian spirit, industrialization, and the mercantilism of the bourgeoisie. They had genuine cause for concern. In his magisterial study of the writer in French Romanticism, Paul Bénichou identified the considerable hostility that writers faced among conservatives and royalists, who associated them with the subversion of eighteenth-century free thinking and the French Revolution. This fear of the writer is a topic that must have seized Pushkin's attention when he read Prosper Barante's history of French literature. Barante argued that, after the disorder of the French Revolution and collapse of Napoleon, a proliferation of men of letters filled the cultural void. Where philosophers and clergy once guided public opinion, larger numbers of

⁹² Paul Bénichou, *Les Mages romantiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 102–7.

⁹³ See Cassange, *La Théorie de l'art pour l'art*, 37. ⁹⁴ See *ibid.* 199.

uncontrollable writers had come to form something like a sect and a single uniform bloc of opinion that was too detached from society and therefore counter-productive.⁹⁵ Barante's views were appropriate for the Restoration, but, as Bénichou shows, the conflict that surrounded fiction and journalistic writing left the authority of poets untouched.⁹⁶ Even as the intellectual and man of letters provoked hostility from royalists, Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme*, first published in 1802, had successfully propagated in the early 1820s the seminal idea of the poet as an exalted bard and teller of truth. Such a conception of the poet as an Apollonian visionary inhabits the works of cultural theorists like Ballanche and Villemain. Whatever his attitude to their religious devotion, Pushkin appears to have taken their descriptions of the French context seriously. His enthusiasm for their view of the poet shaped the image of the poet in certain of his poems.

Russia was to have its key debates about the social function of art only after the end of the Pushkin period. In literary criticism, the early writings of Vissarion Belinsky around 1833 began to explore the same issues that eventually exploded into the debates of the 1860s and 1870s where Belinsky's mature writings were most influential; and where Pushkin's creation polarized supporters and detractors of pure art.⁹⁷ The poems examined in the remaining parts of this chapter balance the discourse of pure art and social exclusivity against the language of social mission in tones and images that owe a manifest debt to the European context. But the main issues are less about aesthetics in the abstract and return us to the issue of poetic identity and the economic and personal significance of genius.

THE PURPOSE OF THE POET

More than any other single work, 'The Prophet' has shaped the view that poetry occupies a uniquely important place in Russian literature.⁹⁸ The exaltation of the poet as a visionary genius has become inseparable from Pushkin's own image. From 1880 when Dostoevsky in his famous speech exalted Pushkin as a pan-Slavic genius, this vision of the poet as a seer capable of self-renovation and the moral renovation of others has become a cultural archetype in Russia. The significance that subsequently accrued to the poem represents a chapter in Russia's cultural history separate from the story of Pushkin's ambitions as a professional writer in the 1820s. When read from the vantage point of Pushkin's

⁹⁵ Barante, *Tableau de la littérature française*, 8.

⁹⁶ Paul Bénichou, *Le Sacre de l'écrivain, 1750–1830* (Paris: José Corti, 1973), ch. 4.

⁹⁷ See Charles Moser, *Aesthetics as Nightmare: Russian Literary Theory, 1855–1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 14–18, 54–6.

⁹⁸ See Sergei Bocharov, 'Iz istorii ponimaniia Pushkina', in his *Siuzhety russkoi literatury* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kultury, 1999), 230–45; Stephanie Sandler, *Commemorating Pushkin: Russia's Myth of a National Poet* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 5–13.

historical status as a great national poet, 'The Prophet' lives up to its title as a prescient statement about the cultural power a poet can acquire under certain circumstances.⁹⁹ But removing that cultural filter makes it more possible to appreciate the impact of a poem that is strikingly violent and even ugly, and that could only have shocked contemporaries by its association of poetry with violence. Most critical attention to the poem has focused on its obvious biblical allusions, using source-criticism to downplay the visceral shock of the sequence of exhaustion, dismemberment, and rebirth. Echoes of the Book of Isaiah occur, not to serve a Christian message, but promulgating instead an awesome ancient statement about poetry as a new religion.¹⁰⁰

Духовной жаждою томим,
 В пустыне мрачной я влачился,—
 И шестикрылый серафим
 На перепутьи мне явился.
 Перстами легкими как сон
 Моих зениц коснулся он.
 Отверзлись вещи зеницы,
 Как у испуганной орлицы.
 Моих ушей коснулся он,—
 И их наполнил шум и звон:
 И внял я неба содроганье,
 И горний ангелов полет,
 И гад морских подводный ход,
 И дольней лозы прозябанье.
 И он к устам моим приник,
 И вырвал грешный мой язык,
 И празднословный, и лукавый,
 И жало мудрыя змеи
 В уста замершие мои
 Вложил десницею кровавой.
 И он мне грудь рассек мечом,
 И сердце трепетное вынул
 И уголь, пылающий огнем,
 Во грудь отверстую водвинул.
 Как труп в пустыне я лежал,
 И бога глас ко мне воззвал:
 «Восстань, пророк, и виждь, и внемли,
 Исполнись волею моею,
 И, обходя моря и земли,
 Глаголом жги сердца людей.»¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ See Sandler, *Commemorating Pushkin*, 17–21.

¹⁰⁰ On the biblical images in 'Prorok', see Vatsuro, *Zapiski kommentatora*, 7–17.

¹⁰¹ Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 30.

Exhausted by spiritual thirst, | I dragged myself in the gloomy desert— | And a Seraphim with six wings | Appeared to me at the crossroads. | With feathers as light as a dream | He grazed my pupils. | The prophetic orbs opened wide | Like those of a startled eaglet. | He touched my ears— | And filled them with noise and din: | And I sensed the shuddering of the sky, | And the elevated flight of the angels, | And the underwater motion of sea creatures, | And the growing vine that creeping grows. | And he leaned close to my mouth, | And tore out my sinful tongue, | So idle and deceitful, | And he placed the sting of the wise serpent | In my lips as they went numb, | With his bloody right hand. | And he split my chest open with a sword, | And removed the trembling heart | And in the open cavity he installed | A piece of coal burning with flame. | I lay like a corpse in the desert, | And the voice of God called out to me: | ‘Rise up, prophet, and see and understand, | Become filled with my will, | And as you traverse seas and lands, | Scorch the hearts of people with your speech.’

Seen in its historical context, the poem reflects Pushkin’s aspirations at a moment of uncertainty and promise in his career. To what extent is the poem a manifesto of the artistic and moral ambitions he holds for poetry? Is its confident projection of genius a vehicle for Pushkin’s commercial ambition as professional writer? That is, to what extent is the speaker of ‘The Prophet’ the creation of the ethos of the publisher in the ‘Conversation’?

When Pushkin gave programmatic importance to the poem by including it in his collection of 1829, it was clearly not with the expectation that his readers and all of mankind would fall into line and, as Odoevskii says, ‘fulfil his instructions’. Pushkin used the poem to signal a radical departure in two ways. First, the voice that emanates from poems such as ‘The Prophet’, ‘Arion’, and ‘The Poet and the Crowd’ does not belong to the conversational and stylish poet admired by Pushkin’s early readers.¹⁰² The exoticism and compressed plotting of his early Byronic imitations, like *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, contributed greatly to Pushkin’s success with his readership, and to the allure of his poetic personality. Assertions of originality and visionary independence disrupted the expectations of readers comfortable with the wit and polish so brilliantly on display in *Ruslan and Liudmila*. Among Pushkin’s critics only a small minority expressed the view that the poet ‘ought to be in every work a creator and not an imitator’, acknowledging the right of the author to challenge readers with a new approach to themes and style.¹⁰³ V. Izmailov was one of the few to salute the departure:

¹⁰² See V. E. Vatsuro, ‘Pushkin v soznanii sovremennikov’, in *A. S. Pushkin v vospominaniakh sovremennikov* (Moscow: Gosudarstvenno izd-vo Khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1974), i. 5–40. The title of ‘The Poet and the Crowd’ was ‘The Mob’ (‘Chern’) when the poem was published in 1829. Pushkin altered it to the better-known version only in 1836 when he was preparing his collection of poems.

¹⁰³ For contemporary reaction to this message, see N. Stolpianskii, ‘Pushkin i Severnaia Pchela (1825–1837)’, *Pushkin i ego sovremennik. Materialy i issledovaniia*, 19–20 (1914), 132–3.

Another poet who reaps new laurels with each new song, flitting from success to success, in his young years is prepared, it seems, to climb the heights of Parnassus. Pushkin has aroused novel surprise with his 'Poems' as published in a single book. In them he breathes with the freedom of genius.¹⁰⁴

At a time when Pushkin thrived on his notoriety for political mischief and sexual shenanigans, the facelessness and repulsion of the persona created in 'The Prophet' took up that liberty, and created a powerful contrast with the image of the poet Pushkin had cultivated just a few years earlier as feckless, stylish, Byronic, and hedonistic.¹⁰⁵

Secondly, 'The Prophet', 'The Poet and the Crowd', and 'To the Poet' ('Poet', 1830) marked a departure by depicting poetic genius as the inimitable and inalienable gift of a unique speaker. The images of the 'The Prophet' violate the rules of good taste and expression that had been the legacy of La Harpe and Marmontel to Pushkin's poetics. The poem offers nothing like Wordsworth's 'gentle shock of mild surprise'.¹⁰⁶ Instead, it uses brutal and violent images to express the spiritual cost of the poet's wished-for epiphany. Pushkin's prophet is a poet of the revelatory and illuminating moment. Genius in the prophet—and the genius of a poem like 'The Prophet'—is to shatter with violent images the notion of poetry as a type of classical craft, precisely the hallmarks of Pushkin's lyric artistry that his audience had been admiring since 1815. One enthusiastic reader saw it as marking an 'epoch in his life', which is undoubtedly just what the author wanted.¹⁰⁷ By 1830, however, this same reader would sour of Pushkin's new seriousness.

In the mid-1830s, Pushkin underscored the following sentence in Coleridge's *Table Talk*: 'Talent, lying in the understanding, is often inherited; genius, being the action of reason and imagination, rarely or never.'¹⁰⁸ Genius, as exemplified in the poems Pushkin wrote between 1826 and 1830, is a capacity for spectacular transcendence, rousing the poet from his own earthbound torpor, and instilling a sense of moral watchfulness in his readers. A decade since 'To Zhukovsky' made poetry a type of work, inspiration comes at scarcely any cost in 'The Poet' ('Poet', 1827), where Apollo magically raises the poet from mundane banality to an elevated state of play. On these terms, any reader might covet the favour of the god of poetry. In 'The Prophet', by contrast, the power to see afresh involves a process of physical annihilation and rebirth that is deliberately repellent. Having ripped out the speaker's organs, the biblical angel replaces his heart with a burning coal

¹⁰⁴ V. V. Izmailov, 'Kratkoe obozrenie 1826 goda', in Vatsuro and Fomichev, *Pushkin v prizhiznennoi kritike. 1820–1827*, 314.

¹⁰⁵ See S. Shvartsband, 'O poeticheskikh "dinamicheskikh sistemakh"', *Pushkinskii sbornik* (Jerusalem, n.p., 1997), 97; he also argues that 'there is not sufficient evidence to support the view that "The Prophet" was conceived as an "antigovernment" poem'.

¹⁰⁶ William Wordsworth, 'There was a boy' (1799), l. 19.

¹⁰⁷ The reaction of A. A. Mukhanov is quoted in *Shukinskii sbornik*, 3 (1904), 194.

¹⁰⁸ S. T. Coleridge, *Specimens of the Table Talk of the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1835) [Modz. 760], 144.

and his tongue with the stinger of the wise serpent. No one would argue that the poem is Pushkin's manifesto for a new aesthetic. The bleakness and self-laceration of this work recur too infrequently in his lyric for that to be the case. In dramatizing for the reader a credo on the independence of genius, the poem has great weight because 'The Prophet' initiates a series of questions about the responsibility of the artist. In the early 'To Zhukovsky', Pushkin asked whether it was possible to have a career as a poet. Ten years later his poems pose questions about the purposes of the poetic career.

Pushkin's prophet was not a unique figure. The visionary poet enjoyed a vogue, especially in England and France, that inspired Pushkin to respond with 'Arion' and the 'Poet and the Crowd', among other titles. Poems that make statements about the timelessness of art may wish to seem timeless themselves, and the recycling of Greek Orphic and Horatian postures in these two cases may strive for that effect. More importantly, Pushkin uses his stylization with a view to the Romantic archetype. One source of the contradiction between poems of social commitment and assertions of art for art's sake lies in the myth itself. As elaborated by Vico and then taken up by historians and textual critics like Fabre d'Olivet, the myth ascribed two identities and functions to the poet. In the distant past, the poet's divine knowledge gave him the natural authority to rule over other members of a primitive society as a benevolent lawgiver, one of the people and *primus inter pares* because of his superior wisdom. But in the course of time, as both the institutions of religion and society became more complex, displacing the seer from his selfless task, he evolved into the figure of the poet, dedicated to his own craft and enjoying only diminished responsibility for fellow citizens. The mystic bard's purposes were not exclusively artistic. Popular origin and the leadership of the poet as legislator were an important component. Both sides of the poet's character as *vates* and as aloof craftsman entered the Romantic myth of the poet, as Pushkin knew from the discussions he found in Michelet's introduction to Vico that was published in 1827,¹⁰⁹ a set of utopian socialist sermons,¹¹⁰ and Fabre d'Olivet's edition of Pythagoras' verse.¹¹¹ In the long treatise

¹⁰⁹ See the introduction by Michelet, read by Pushkin, in Giambattista Vico, *Principes de la philosophie de l'histoire* (Paris, 1827), pp. i–xxvi [Modz. 1479].

¹¹⁰ *Religion Saint-Simonienne. Aux artistes. Du passé et de l'avenir des Beaux-Arts. Aux élèves de l'École Polytechnique. Cinq discours. La religion. Dieu. L'humanité. L'héritage. Lettres sur la religion et la politique. Deuxième édition* (Brussels: Hauman et Cie, 1831) [Modz. 1309]. The first part by Émile Barrault surveys the history of the arts. Barrault, like other writers on cultural theory influenced by Vico, juxtaposes an 'époque organique' in which poets like Homer led society and the 'époque critique', by which he means the Enlightenment. His programme for humanitarian and social renewal advocates a revival of classical art and ideals in a secular Christian spirit compatible with pagan antiquity, the influence of which has become 'more profound and more widespread' on the arts (pp. 33–4).

¹¹¹ Fabre d'Olivet, *Les Vers dorés de Pythagore expliqués, et traduits pour la première fois en vers eumolpiques français; précédés d'un discours sur l'essence et la forme de la poésie* (Paris, 1813) [Modz. 912]. It was not only in poetry that the occult view of inspiration took root. Interestingly, Pushkin shows a marked preference for Balzac's philosophical fictions, works like *Louis Lambert* that explore the mystical nature of genius where the power of the seer often threatens the ability

on poetics printed as a preface, Fabre examined the mythic basis for the poet's spiritual authority by investigating the remains of poetic cults at ancient shrines. He sees the same properties of primordial genius operating from Pythagoras and Orpheus to Lucretius and Epicurus, which can be discerned by the knowing:

It is not sufficient, as even Plato said, to have poetic talent; it is not sufficient to make verse, even good verse, to deserve the title of poet. One must also possess a divine enthusiasm, an inspiration that elevates the soul, that makes it shine, that takes it away, so to speak, to intellectual regions and makes it drink from this spring the very essence of this science.¹¹²

Sacerdotal inspiration vouchsafed the authentic nature of genius. The logic of the analogy dictated that the seer-poet would also keep the reader, cast as an initiate, at a distance in order to maintain the inviolate quality of his art and the charisma of his inspiration. Once French poets borrowed the priestly rhetoric and lofty vision, there was nothing to stop a Russian from following. Once Pushkin had learned in 1825 to impersonate one great poet by letting his spirit conquer his own voice, the next step was to reach for the anonymous divinity of the poetic seer.

At the same time, Pushkin was alive to the second, communitarian description of the poet. At the end of 'The Prophet', in a moment of visionary exaltation the poet hears an instruction to devote his new-found moral strength to the education of mind.¹¹³ Vatic authority has a public function within the cult of worshippers. Seers do not preach to the unconverted; and by the same analogy poets only speak to those who already believe in their genius. The Romantic myth stimulated Pushkin to assume both guises as concerned legislator and aloof aesthete.

Lyric collections captivate a readership with poems of awesome charisma and personal interest. The degree to which poems that come after 'The Prophet'

of the artist to communicate and work. On the significance of Fabre to writers like Ballanche and Chateaubriand whose spiritualized view of the poet influenced Pushkin, see G. Bays, *The Orphic Vision: Seer Poets from Novalis to Rimbaud* (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 74.

¹¹² Fabre, *Les Vers dorés*, 5.

¹¹³ Understanding of this poem, no less than the tribute to Chénier, has been hard to separate from rumours concerning its history of composition: political readings originate with suppositions about the original ending and cryptic references to the fate of the Decembrists. Pushkin is alleged apocryphally to have dropped an incendiary original ending while on his way to the interview with Nicholas I that ended his period of exile; see *Rasskazy o Pushkine, spisanny so slov ego družei P. I., Bartenevym v 1851–1860 godakh*, ed. M. A. Tsiavlovskii (Leningrad: Izdanie M. i S. Sabashnikovych, 1925), 91–4; M. A. Tsiavlovskii, *Kniga vospominanii o Pushkine* (Moscow: Mir, 1931), 283–4; and N. Lerner, "'Vosstan', vosstan', prorok Rossii' . . .", *Pushkin i ego sovremennik. Materialy i issledovaniia*, 13 (1910), 18–29. On the dating of the poem and its ending, there are further helpful remarks in V. E. Vatsuro, 'Pushkin i obshchestvenno-literaturnoe dvizhenie v period posledekabristskoi reaktsii', in B. P. Gorodestkii, N. V. Izmailov, and B. S. Meilakh (eds.), *Pushkin. Itogi i problemy izucheniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), 214–15.

abrogated the commitment to 'kindle the hearts of mankind' varies. In a number of works, Pushkin addresses the connection between poet and public in terms of a middle ground between independence and dependence. In the poems 'To Gnedich' ('Gnedichu', 1832) and an imitation of Southey's 'Hymn to the Penates' ('Eshche odnoi vysokoi, vazhnoi pesni', 1829), Pushkin suggests that, at least originally in a mythic age, people and poet were at one. In 'To Gnedich' the poet is like Moses, a stern but loving father to his people, In the 'Hymn to the Penates', he abandons mankind in order to return to the gods of poetry, blaming his creative and spiritual depletion on his sojourn in society. All powers of renewal and imagination depend on the poet's retreating to an isolated space, where he can repair himself and his relation to the sources of inspiration. Unlike the speaker of 'The Poet and the Crowd' whose superiority presupposes total isolation, this poet sees renewal in terms of service that, while not at all philanthropic, is nevertheless still not solipsistic and repugnant. 'The Prophet' even more emphatically links social mission to poetic legitimacy. This is in the spirit of the utopian aspiration of the Saint-Simonian religion in which the poet, understood in his primordial role, 'has the secret of the skies' and 'unites the earth and the sky' and 'shows by working towards a common goal the will of heaven and human activity'.¹¹⁴ In earlier poems like 'Arion' and 'Near the place where golden Venice reigns' the poet withdraws from the world without openly attacking or rejecting a community. In contrast, 'The Poet and the Crowd', 'The Poet', and 'To the Poet' affirm the status and self-definition of the poetry by abjuring a social function to poetry.¹¹⁵ These works establish a pronounced antagonism between the poet and public, employing hieratic language in order to underscore the poet's unnatural exceptionalness. Pure art poems defend the non-utility of art with as much vehemence as 'The Prophet' proclaimed it. Given Pushkin's engagement with the reading public, we cannot take the last group to signal a genuine retreat from selling lyric charisma to a larger readership. Pushkin grasped the changing literary marketplace and the requirement to captivate a public by projecting irreproducible literary talent. The genius of his salesmanship, when it appealed to his reader's tastes, was the sale of his genius. Pushkin saw his poor trading figures as a real impediment to professional ambitions. His response was once again to make his own uncertainty about negotiating an audience the subject of his art. In 1827 three related concerns put pressure on Pushkin: that he should not alienate Tsar Nicholas I and also not offend the Decembrist friends punished by the tsar; that he should enjoy a professional career and financial success through his published work; that he should achieve the latter by leading his readership and

¹¹⁴ *Religion Saint-Simonienne*, 16.

¹¹⁵ On the publication of poems in *Moskovskii vestnik*, see Annenkov, *Materialy*, 176–7, who emphasizes the journal's orientation toward German aesthetics and Pushkin's highly active participation. See also V. E. Vatsuro and E. A. Maimin, 'Eshche o Pushkine i "Moskovskom vestnike"', in *Pushkinskii sbornik* (Pskov: Velikolukskaia gorodskaiia tip. Pskovskogo obl. upr. po pechatu, 1968), 165–92.

acquiring a more distinctive voice even at the risk of displeasing his readership and disrupting his image. Poems about the figure of the poet are instances of reflection on the poet's own status and strategies of self-presentation. They ask a common question about the definition of poetry as a social or aesthetic act, but the emphasis varies greatly because the poems differ in their approach to the question of poetic solitude. In 'Arion' solitude can be seen as solipsism, but self-removal from the community does not lead the poet to denounce others:

Арион

Нас было много на челне;
 Иные парус напрягали,
 Другие дружно упирали
 В глубь мощны веслы. В тишине
 На руль склоняясь, наш кормщик умный
 В молчаньи правил грузный чолн;
 А я—беспечной веры полн,—
 Пловцам я пел . . . Вдруг лоно волн
 Измял с налету вихорь шумный . . .
 Погиб и кормщик и пловец!—
 Лишь я, таинственный певец,
 На берег выброшен грозою,
 Я гимны прежние пою
 И ризу влажную мою
 Сушу на солнце под скалою.¹¹⁶

Arion

There were many of us on the skiff; | Some tautened the sail, | Others harmoniously
 plunged | Their powerful oars into the depths. In the silence, | Leaning on the helm, our
 wise helmsman | Steered the heavy skiff silently; | Whereas I—full of careless faith— |
 Sang to the sailors . . . Suddenly a noisy | Whirlwind swept across the lap of the waves, |
 Captain and sailors perished!— | Only I, the mysterious singer | Thrown onto the shore
 by the storm, | I sing my previous hymns | And my drenched mantle | I dry under the
 cliff in the sun.

I do not subscribe to the reading of 'Arion' chiefly as allegory of Pushkin's feelings about the Decembrist revolt and his guilt over survival. The implications seem broader and are more likely to spring from an analogy with European models. The social, economic, and political upheaval that ensued in post-Napoleonic France compelled French writers to consider the relation of art to society. No such debate about the Decembrist rebellion was possible in Russia, but it was hard for a writer of Pushkin's political interests to ignore the responsiveness of European writers to their new political order and to ask comparable questions

¹¹⁶ Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 58. The poem first appeared in Del'vig's *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 2: 43 (1830), 43.

about the uses of poetry. 'Arion' tells a story of survival and affirms the vocation of the poet and the durability of song even in dire circumstances. Initially, the subject of the poem is a collective 'we' of fellow passengers in the shipwreck. From line 7 the first person becomes the primary subject, a point made emphatically by the repetition of the pronoun four times in nine lines which also contain two verbs in the first-person singular, four verbs in the masculine singular past tense, and the possessive first-person singular pronoun twice. When the speaker says '[o]nly I' ('Lish' ia...') he formalizes the solipsism already implicit through this grammatical foregrounding of the first-person singular. The separateness of the poet from the group is not only a matter of his sole survival. From the beginning the poet does not share in the labour of the group; his world is entirely private and inwardly focused. Line 6 notes the 'silence' into which the captain steers the ship. An opposition obtains between the sphere of the ship, the collective, and a world that is silent, and, on the other hand, the world of the poet, which is that of the distant shore, the solitary self, and song. In 'Arion', the poet's unconcern for others may be damaging but it is a passive obliviousness. Unlike the other sailors who work desperately to survive, he concentrates exclusively on his art. His stance implicitly divorces poetry from humanitarian interest.¹¹⁷ His indifference to the calamity may imply questions about the social relevance of poetry, but explicitly delights in art as, in the Kantian sense, independent of the creator's subjective purpose.¹¹⁸

Traditional Kantians had made the case for art by defining beauty in formal and intrinsic terms. The art for art's sake advocates of the 1820s in France skewed the argument by shifting the definition of pure art away from the product onto the status and intention of the artist. While the solipsism of the poet in 'Arion' may offend, the case for the value of art in this poem is closer to its philosophical description. The defence of art in other poems involves explicit contempt for the audience that the poet also wishes to win over. In 'The Poet and the Crowd' the value of art is predicated on the social exclusivity of the writer. This poem does not make a positive case, and if anything illustrates the danger of alienation that the poet courts by overdoing the posture of aloofness associated with genius.

As Pushkin knew, French writers, starting with Voltaire, had used the rhetoric of condescension by advertising the exclusive nature of their genius, convinced that such assertions of authority actually attracted an audience. Fear of the mob, more generally, is a widespread topos in Romantic literature.¹¹⁹ The class insecurities fuelling hostility to the masses in English and French culture do not

¹¹⁷ Irina Surat, "'Stoit, beleias', Vetiluiia...'", *Moskovskii Pushkinist*, 3 (1996), 139.

¹¹⁸ Like 'Prorok', 'Arion' has persistently been seen as an allegory about Pushkin's guilt over the Decembrist plot and his absence from the conspiracy. For a survey of this approach, see V. V. Pugachev, 'Iz evoliutsii mirovozzreniia Pushkina kontsa 1820-nachala 1830-kh godov ("Arion")', in *Problema istorii, vzaimosviazei russkoi i mirovoi kul'tury* (Saratov: Izd-vo Saratovskogo universiteta, 1983), 38–59.

¹¹⁹ Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries*, 126.

translate precisely to Pushkin's context. While Pushkin lashed out at a relatively small cabal of hostile critics, and also wished to create distance between himself as a proponent of quality literature and the hack work that had begun to sell, the 'mob' of the Russian context was in scale and commercial value nothing like that of English Grub-Street or the French newspaper readers. The defiance of these poems surpasses their immediate critical and economic context.¹²⁰ The imperfect analogies with France and Britain energized Pushkin to write poems that are propositions about the circumstances in which art happens. Just as Pushkin's lyric thinking considers modes of inspiration, his poetry reflects on the social mission that art might need to accept if circumstances ever allowed. While defiant, they are optimistic in the sense that they envisage a time when such discussions might need to occur.

The aloofness of 'Arion' is very different from the aggressive disdain of 'The Poet and the Crowd' in which three speakers put under scrutiny the relationship between writer and reader-consumer. Their engagement is dramatic and the characterization has psychological nuance. The poem is not programmatic in an obvious way. In lines 1–15 a narrator or the 'author' sketches the tension between the crowd irritated by the artist's aloofness. The poem then turns to the poet who vilifies them by excoriating and repudiating their utilitarian approach to art and proletarian sensibility (ll. 16–26). In turn, this draws a rebuttal (ll. 27–37) from the crowd, who criticize a devotion to art marked by indifference to humanity. In the final eighteen lines, the poet becomes more relentless in excoriating their 'depravity', 'servility', and determination to spoil the art of the poet because they do not recognize that 'poets are born for inspiration, for sweet sounds and prayers'.

Given the positive status of most poet-figures in Pushkin's writing, it is easy to see why interpretations of 'The Poet and the Crowd' take it for granted that Pushkin's sympathy must lie with the offended poet. Closer attention to the opening might cast doubt on that assumption:

Procul este, profani
 Поэт по лире вдохновенной
 Рукой рассеянной бряцал.
 Он пел—а холодный и надменный
 Кругом народ непосвященный
 Ему бессмысленно внимал.

И толковала чернь тупая:
 «Зачем так звучно он поэт?
 Напрасно ухо поражая,
 К какой он цели час ведет?
 О чем бренчит? Чему нас учит?»

¹²⁰ S. A. Sobolevskii appreciated the sentiments of 'To the Poet' but thought that Pushkin was likely to have caused more harm than good by teaching the 'crowd' how to upbraid elite writers. As quoted in *Russkii arkhiv*, 2 (1909), 497.

Зачем сердца волнует, мучит,
 Как своеправный чародей?
 Как ветер песнь его свободна,
 Зато как ветер и бесподна:
 Какая польза нам от ней?»¹²¹ (ll. 1–15)

On his inspired lyre | With a careless hand the poet strummed. | He sang—but cold and insistent, | The uninitiated crowd around him | Listened to him listlessly.

And the dim crowd commented: | ‘Why does he sing so resonantly? | He stuns our hearing in vain, | For what goal does he lead us to? | About what does he strum? Teach us? | Why does he upset our hearts, torment us, | Like a capricious magician? | His song is free as the wind | But like the wind it is fruitless: | What use is it to us?’

The characterization of the poet is not obviously flattering by comparison with the charm of ‘To an Inkwell’ and the naive genius of ‘Arion’. Inspiration is the product of an effortless gift (‘rasseiannaia ruka’) although the narrator’s first verb ‘to strum’ (‘briatsat’) is more pejorative than the neutral ‘to sing’ (‘pet’), l. 3). Moreover, the level of diatribe and abuse suggests that the poet is overreacting to the crowd, which is at best admiring and at worst too ignorant to understand his meaning. While admitting the power of his song to move them, they are suspicious of the motives of the poet who has the capacity to upset them with his images. It is possible that ‘The Poet and the Crowd’ complicates rather than condones the assumption that Pushkin agrees with the poet in opposing the social purpose of art. The Horatian epigraph ‘Procul este, profani’¹²² was intended to cause injury to his interlocutors. Unwittingly, it may also undermine the poet. Unlike the visionary genius of ‘The Prophet’, this speaker dons the Horatian mantle in staking his claim for the poet’s separateness. Yet appropriating Horace’s oracular pose makes the poet derivative rather than an original genius.¹²³

The poet sings for himself without heeding an audience and without care for their response. In fact, the auditors are not deaf to his message: the poetry moves and disturbs them, but they are unable to turn that emotion into knowledge or spiritual gain or practical benefit. In rebuffing them, the poet rejects a moral content in art and repudiates the appeal made by the crowd in the brotherly language of the Gospels:

Нет, если ты небес избранник,
 Свой дар, божественный посланник,
 Во благо нам употребляй:
 Сердца собратьев исправляй.
 Мы малодушны, мы коварны,
 Бесстыдны, злы, неблагоприятны;

¹²¹ Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 141.

¹²² This is the opening line of Horace, *Odes*, III.1.

¹²³ On Horace’s rhetoric of moral superiority, see R. O. A. M. Lyne, *Horace: Behind the Public Poetry* (New Haven: Yale, 1995), 161–84. One source in Pushkin’s library that stresses Horace’s exceptional status in Roman ceremonial life, conflating priest and poet in a sacred figure, was F. Schoell, *Histoire abrégée de la littérature romaine* (Paris, 1815), i. 320–4 [Modz. 1360].

Мы сердцем хладные скопцы,
 Клеветники, рабы, глушцы;
 Гнездятся клубом в нас пороки.
 Ты можешь, ближнего любя,
 Давать нам смелые уроки,
 А мы послушаем тебя (ll. 26–37)

No, if you are heaven's chosen, | Divine ambassador, your gift | Use for our welfare: | Reform the hearts of your brothers. | We are cowards, we are crafty, | Shameless, mean, ingrates; | We are eunuchs cold at heart, | Slanderers, slaves, idiots; | Sins lie rooted like a ball within us. | You are able, despite loving your neighbour, | To give us bold lessons, | And we will obey you.

The perspective of the crowd reveals self-knowledge as well as reverence. On the one hand, they are reasonable to wonder why the poet lashes out. On the other hand, they also show a sympathetic understanding of the uncontrollable character of inspiration, which is free like the wind ('kak veter pesn' ego svobodna'). By contrast, the narrator only understands the rules of his art rather than its power to create affect. In fact, their response to the song seems well judged and moderate, throwing into relief the scorn of narrator and poet as unusually disdainful. While the poet regards popular service as the cause of artistic decline, he asserts the right of the artist to exploit a subordinate class of people who facilitate the work of the 'priests'. In this respect, the poet is blind to the moral implications of his own argument. In the end, his priority is not genuinely the elimination of a utilitarian approach to art, provided it benefits the status of the artist.

Stung by the poet's abuse, the crowd retaliates with a crude direct question about the use of art ('Kakaia pol'zia nam ot nei?'). The poet lashes out and defensively restricts the aims of art to exclude human feeling and psychological complexity ('ne dlia zhiteiskogo volnen'ia'), polemical function ('ne dlia bitv'), and material desire ('ne dlia korysti'). On this definition, art is directed entirely to its own moments of inspiration and self-satisfaction. Any suggestion of utility compromises the poet's aesthetic convictions. Those convictions are represented in the images of marble and the Apollo Belvedere:

Молчи, бессмысленный народ,
 Поденщик, раб нужды, забот!
 Несносен мне твой ропот дерзкой,
 Ты червь земли, не сын небес;
 Тебе бы пользы все—на вес
 Кумир ты ценишь Бельведерской.
 Ты пользы, пользы в нем не зришь.
 Но мрамор сей ведь бог! . . . так что же?
 Печной горшок тебе дороже:
 Ты пищу в нем себе варишь. (ll. 16–25)

Silence, thoughtless people, | Labourer, slave to need and chores! | Your bold rumbling I find intolerable, | You are a worm of the earth, not a son of the heavens, | To you utility is all—you appraise | The statue of Apollo Belvedere by weight. | You see no use, no use in it. | But this marble is a god! Well, so what? | A clay vessel is dearer to you | In which you can make yourself food.

Service to the rules of a god is the measure of freedom here, rather than the absolute independence already seen in 'Arion', where the poet enjoys the music of his verse entirely free in the solitary confinement of a deserted island. Both the vehemence of the poet's response, and his negative gloss which conceivably refers to the crowd's search for moral guidance, suggest an inhumanity that exceeds devotion to art.

Although the mob abases itself, it nonetheless demands moral renewal. This surely laudable appeal is couched in the mythic language of primitive socialism ('serdtsa sobrat'ev') and the Christian language of brotherly love, which gives them the moral high ground by comparison with the poet's disdainful rhetoric.¹²⁴ They readily avow that he is a 'divine messenger', and that they are treacherous cowards, shameless, evil, ungrateful; in a word, their status is reciprocal to the poet's, matching distorted abjection against hyperbolic egotism. Read ironically, the crowd can be seen to taunt the poet with his own sacral rhetoric, challenging him to live up to his claims of existential superiority. Does their categorical self-assessment not ring true as Pushkin's own view?

In the poems discussed in this chapter the spectrum of reaction to the public moves from intimacy to exclusivity. Such shifts show Pushkin testing extreme postures of inspiration. At a time when he had real concerns about selling his books, we can expect to see him asserting his genius.¹²⁵ But the strategy of overstatement risked backfiring. From 1830, when feuds and partisanship meant that journals were less disinterested, a reciprocal coldness surfaces even among less partisan readers. The reviewer for the *Moscow Telegraph* of part III of Pushkin's poems saw his negative reaction as more than a private concern, and interpreted the disfavour of the public as a type of revenge over disappointment that the formerly 'thoughtful and awesome, strong and fiery speaker of ideas and dreams' has gone cold.¹²⁶ It is beside the point whether Pushkin's new poems and statements of independence had offended the public: the critic felt they ought

¹²⁴ In 'To Gnedich' ('Gnedichu'), where the translator of Homer is Moses-like in his relation to the rebellious, pagan crowd, Pushkin again takes the viewpoint of the crowd. Vadim Vatsuro rightly identifies the moral complication that such a double perspective creates. See V. E. Vatsuro, 'Poeticheskii manifest Pushkina', *PIM* 14 (1991), 65–72.

¹²⁵ His polemical verve is on display in the remarks that he drafted in the autumn of 1830, now collected as 'A Refutation of Criticisms' ('Oproverzhenie na kritiki'). See the edition in Larionova, *Pushkin v prizhiznennoi kritike, 1828–1830*, 283–99 (with commentary, 486–502).

¹²⁶ *Moskovskii telegraf*, 43: 4 (1832), 570.

to have done.¹²⁷ Shortly afterwards, the same journal nagged Pushkin again by publishing a parody of ‘The Poet and the Crowd’ over the signature ‘Senseless One’, which accuses Pushkin of condescension to his readership.¹²⁸

PROTEAN PUSHKIN

As assertions of uniqueness, these poems coincided with the moment when critics began to question Pushkin’s identity and direction. From the mid-1820s, the engine of Pushkin’s commercial success was his reputation as a genius. Viazemskii and Bestuzhev had at last found the figure to fill the gap they had lamented in Russian literature. Repeated questions about Pushkin’s identity, however, made something negative out of his reputation as a Proteus.¹²⁹ In 1832, Gnedich, the translator of Homer, captured that side of Pushkin’s fame pithily:

Пушкин, Протей
 Гибким твоим языком и волшебством твоих песнопений!
 Уши закрой от похвал и сравнений
 Добрых друзей;
 Пой, как поешь ты, родной соловей!

Pushkin, a Proteus | By dint of your flexible language and the magic of your songs! | Stop your ears to the eulogies and comparisons | of your dear friends; | Sing, as you sing, a native nightingale!

While acknowledging a marvellous diversity of style, the label also suggested that Pushkin was hard to pin down, and that his mercurial talent somehow masked a lack of identity. This mobility offended the notion of genius that readers wished to have guaranteed. As Lidiia Ginzburg noted, critics and readers in the 1820s and 1830s put a premium on poetic identity as a unified entity.¹³⁰ Nothing could have been worse than Pushkin’s diverse aesthetic when the individual identity of Genius was the key to professional success. The Protean was more than just a mastery of different genres. Contemporaries found the Shakespearian ease with which Pushkin donned the dramatic masks and lyric guises puzzling. Belinsky for one became increasingly sceptical of Pushkin precisely because of his ‘incredible

¹²⁷ For a summary of reactions to ‘The Poet and the Crowd’, with an emphasis on the later nineteenth century, see O. S. Murav’ev, ‘Poet, tolpa i literaturnaia kritika’, *Russkaia literatura*, 2 (1992), 3–10.

¹²⁸ *Mokovskii telegraf*, 44: 8 (1832), 154.

¹²⁹ On ‘Protean’ in the first sense as a cliché of Pushkin criticism, see A. V. Kulagin, ‘Pushkinskii proteizm kak istoriko-literaturnaia problema’, in *Boldinskie chteniia* (Nizhnii Novgorod: Izd-vo Nizhegorodskogo gosuniversiteta im. N. I. Lobachevskogo 2000), 5–11; On the image of the poet as chameleon, see Mario L. d’Avanzo, *Keats’s Metaphors for the Poetic Imagination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1967), 17.

¹³⁰ Lidiia Ginzburg, *O lirike* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1974), 90.

ability freely and easily to shift into contradictory modes of life'.¹³¹ Moreover, Pushkin's ongoing commitment to both classicism and Romantic statement was confusing. One sympathetic journal advertised its reprinting of an early work with the comment that 'in this classic work Proteus-Pushkin reveals to us Chénier and Voltaire' as well as the Russians Batiushkov and Murav'ev-Apostol.¹³² In the wrong hands, praise for versatility and a harmonious style turned into an accusation of identity-theft.

It was clearly a position that Pushkin rebelled against as he slowly probed the extent to which he was willing to push his overt Romanticism. All the poems examined in this chapter consolidate the creative power of the poet. Whether the poet speaks only on behalf of poets, or for the sake of art, or in the service of the people, taken together all these postures are only different sides of a single conviction that it is only the poet who has the authority to make such claims—not the critic, not the publisher, not even the reader. As the poems themselves argue, the basis of this authority lies in the attainment and demonstration of unique inspiration. Protean if only by virtue of the multiplicity of genres in which he wrote, Pushkin through the art of the lyric gave himself an identity and certain genius that made him essential to the very crowd he wished to keep at bay and to attract.¹³³ Whatever his ambivalence, Pushkin had no choice but to risk the judgement of his contemporaries in a way that would have been almost unthinkable just a decade earlier. Other journals cited Pushkin's diminished status as an example of the precariousness of fame.¹³⁴ The clear counterpoint to the aloof posture of the 'Poet' cycle was a psychological dependence on the existence of devoted readers, such as the friends celebrated in the 19 October cycle, and a belief in the lasting virtue of the hero. The next chapter will look at poems where Pushkin defined heroism, both military and ethical, in terms that transcend contemporary opinion and conflict. The focus on the hero is the product of a twofold process in his thought. Chapter 3 explored the connection between poems about statuary and an aesthetic of the ideal. Those poems were about the form of the beautiful. Chapter 7 looks at works that pose questions about the beautiful in its moral sense. Increasingly, even as his own position deteriorated, he elevates the poet to the position of the Great Man and bears out the example of genius vouchsafed him by Chénier.

¹³¹ V. V. Belinsky, *Sobranie sochinenii v 9-i tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1976–82), vi. 294.

¹³² *Slavianin*, 10 (March 1830), 780–5.

¹³³ Consider from a fairly typical reader the remarks of A. A. Mukhanov, who admires Pushkin's new-found depth but misses the bold, carefree, cheerful younger poet, as quoted in *Russkii arkhiv*, 10 (1899), 297. The embittered Bulgarin would write openly of Pushkin's 'abandoned genius' in *Syn otechestva*, 33: 6 (1833), 309–26.

¹³⁴ Starting with a lambasting of *Poltava* as 'vile prose', the journal *Galateia* printed a series of harsh reviews into the 1830s.

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7

The Hero

From 1828, and more emphatically from 1830 when Pushkin undertook serious historical research, his idea of the heroic treated the fate of an individual in a national context. The heroes of many of Pushkin's narratives are conspicuously unheroic. It is only in *Poltava*, the narrative of Peter the Great's victory over Charles XII, where narrative form meets history for the first time in Pushkin, that characters are animated by passions on a grand scale and by epic visions for their countries and themselves. Even here feats of heroism are few, since Peter the Great never actually appears. In his prose fiction and in *The Bronze Horseman* (*Mednyi vsadnik*, 1833) Pushkin's attention to historical causality was split between a fascination with powerful men and women and an allegiance to the famous 'small man', normally the victim of social change brought about heroic acts.

In the lyric poetry, however, he remained consistently curious about defining the nature of individual greatness. From early considerations of the contemporary Russian thinker Petr Chaadaev as a philosophical master to a portrait in 1835 of a Russian general, Barclay de Tolly, Pushkin's poems about admirable individuals raise profound questions about the relationship between historical knowledge, reputation, and morality. This chapter opens by considering the meaning of the heroic as it emerges from a group of highly significant if little-discussed early poems, 'The Epistle to Licinius' ('K Litsiniu', 1815), 'Towards a Portrait of Chaadaev' ('K portretu Chaadaeva, 1818), and 'To Chaadaev' ('K Chaadaevu', 1821). Attitudes to the teaching of history strongly shaped the heroic element in Pushkin. Admiration for exemplary figures who demonstrate a moral independence worthy of emulation formed the pedagogical goal of history in the period. Nothing from 1815 to the late 1820s seemed to damage Pushkin's belief in heroism, defined as a position of moral and philosophical independence and brave activism. The lesson of this pedagogical ideal will set a standard that Pushkin returns to in 1830.

The 1820s also saw his admiration gravitate toward action and public greatness in preference to ethics and private virtue. It is not surprising that in the age of Napoleon Pushkin's heroic ideal should move away from a contemplative paradigm to a more obvious military and historical ideal. The chapter examines a Pushkinian fascination with Russia's nemesis expressed in poems on Napoleon's escape from Elba and his death. His approach to defining and embodying the

heroic was to change again. By 1830 admiration became a question of judgement and who is entitled to make it. Two of Pushkin's greatest poems ponder the question of how such valuation can be made. The final parts of the chapter will focus on 'The Hero' ('Geroi', 1830) and 'The Commander' ('Polkovodets', 1835), paying close attention to the role of portrait painting and historical canvases by David, Gros and Dawe that Pushkin invokes in articulating an ambivalent message about the heroic ideal. His experience as a historian revealed to him that his earlier ethical discourse no longer worked for the Napoleonic heroic ideal. The problem was not that Pushkin rejected the two ideals of virtue and prowess as incompatible. The earlier poems about Napoleon made an aesthetic phenomenon out of admiration: the poet is no less captivated than contemporaries by the charisma of Napoleon and the narrative of his rise and fall. In my interpretation, 'The Hero', often read as an allegory for the reign of Nicholas I, is seen afresh as a statement on the radical uncertainty of historical judgement faced by writer and painter alike. The abiding question Pushkin asks is whether a single individual can satisfy the demands for humanity established, on the one hand, according to ethical values and, on the other hand, expectations of military and practical greatness from the active hero. 'The Commander', the subject of the final part of this chapter, is Pushkin's most searching meditation on the meaning of the heroic. The uncertainty of fame, when meted out by biased opinion, troubles him. Out of Barclay de Tolly, an example of a failed warrior, Pushkin created a case study in the difficulty of defining and illustrating a contemporary life as exemplary. Yet Pushkin did not think that greatness could only be decided by distant future generations. This conclusion placed a deeper responsibility on the creative artist to make historical judgements that would determine the judgement of future generations. These poems formulate the problem, and make it the responsibility of individual readers of history and literature and viewers of painting to identify and judge greatness. Insofar as poems about historic individuals are necessarily public statements, they pose moral opportunities and burdens for the writer.

THE PHILOSOPHER HERO AND CLASSICAL EMULATION

Despite his youth when he composed 'To Licinius', Pushkin had already earned recognition from the literary world of St Petersburg. His outlook was poised between the private community of the Lycée and an outside world where history was happening. He experimented with the lyric identities that conveyed loyalty to an ideal community, but he also wrote poems that focused his ambitions and thoughts on what it meant to act in the world. In the Romantic period it was the essence of the hero, as a figure of exemplary bravery or virtue, to inspire. But there was no single heroic type, and, at least initially, Pushkin populated a small

pantheon with representative figures whose various images were shaped by myth as much as history. Admiration for the ancients instilled a desire to emulate a modern counterpart as the embodiment of their lessons. Such a hero would be the soldier and philosopher Petr Chaadaev (1794–1856).

Roman historians entered Russia on the coat tails of modern European writers. From the 1770s, Russian pedagogy belatedly followed the Renaissance and Humanist tradition of elevating ancient figures for their model lives. Each biography served as a peg on which to hang a standard set of ideals comprising love of nation, love of God, and love of the monarch. A trademark of the moral literature of the neoclassical period was that ancient precept was regarded as fully modern, and ancient figures were treated as wholly accessible interlocutors.¹ New texts, in the main translations, reinforced and enriched this attitude. A small roster of republican heroes whose virtues transcended points of ideology provided models of behaviour uncontaminated by political ideology: Cato always spoke for self-sacrifice and noble faithfulness to duty; Pericles for eloquence and civic pride; Aristides for fairness; Scipio for bravery, to name just a few.² Cornelius Nepos, available in Russian from the reign of Peter the Great, went on teaching about the ways of good and brave men into the 1830s.³ Perhaps even more striking is the collection, part translation, part original work, compiled by Fedor Glinka entitled *Plutarch for Young Women, or Short Lives of Famous Women with Explanatory Lessons Regarding their Deeds and Creations*.⁴ Cheek by jowl with the familiar heroes of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* is a series of notable women whose aspirations, achievements, manners, posture, and speech Russian women are encouraged to emulate, from Cleopatra and Agrippina to Catherine the Great and Mary Stuart. That emulation has a practical aim is evident in the short exercises following each sketch, in which the reader is required to answer a series of questions demonstrating that she has understood which aspects of the heroine's life are to be imitated, usually the more genteel and benign, though independence of character also emerges as admirable. On a lighter note, such

¹ See G. A. Kosmalinskaia, 'Oral'no didakticheskoe chtenie russkogo iunoshestva vtoroi poloviny XVIII v.', in *Kniga v Rossii do serediny XIX-ogo veka* (Moscow: MGU, 1985), 92–3.

² Consider in that regard an unsigned manuscript presented to the poet by Alexander Voeikov, a man of conservative views, who, according to the classicist and poet Aleksei Merzliakov, called a room in his house 'The Aeneid'. The manuscript comprises a series of lives of the ancients. Brief potted biographies of no more than several pages recount the exploits and promote the outstanding virtues of a score of figures, including both the elder and younger Cato. No political sentiment intrudes anywhere, and the exercise resembles the sort of static approach surviving from an earlier period.

³ Among versions of Nepos were the following: *Korneliia Nepota Zhitiiia slavykh generalov v pol'zu iunoshestva s latinskogo iazyka perevedeny Vasil'em Lebedevym Akademii nauk perevodchikom* (St Petersburg, 1748, reprinted numerous times); *Nepot Kornelii. Latinskii podlinnik s primechaniiami Semena Ivashkovskogo* (Moscow, 1808); *Nepot Kornelii. O zhizni slavnishikh polkovoditsev s zamechaniiami, khronologicheskoi tablitsiei i dvumia slovariami*, ed. N. Koshanskii (Moscow, 1816).

⁴ *Plutarkh dlia molodykh devits, ili kratkie zhizneopisaniia slavykh zhen, s ob'iasnitel'nymi urokami o ikh deianiiakh i tvoreniakh* (Moscow, 1813).

didacticism also entered the pages of historical potboilers set in Rome where classical precept protects noble youth from prevalent decadence.⁵

The spotlight was also on other figures as the embodiment of virtue and heroic ideals. In the literary culture of Pushkin's youth, Tacitus on tyranny gained a more prominent hearing, and Plutarch taught about a variety of politicians, from Lycurgus to the Gracchi, who espoused popular causes.⁶ The historian Richard Wortman noted that the idealized behaviour of an ancient could equip the modern monarch with notions of military conduct.⁷ Roman history also contained a stock of noble examples, culled chiefly from Livy and Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, embodying an aristocratic moral code.⁸ Cato, Scipio, even the Gracchi could denote ideals without the taint of political activism.

The approach to the ancient world as a source of ethical instruction was constant in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Its application expanded when radical groups like the Decembrists made the heroic figures of the past guides to political action. Scholarly interest in the political self-fashioning among the Decembrists has underestimated the broader application of the ethical ideal.⁹ While some Russian thinkers like Alexander Radishchev in the 1790s, and the Decembrists in the 1820s, politicized the ancients by veiling their own agendas in classical costume, their attitude represents only a special application of an admiration based on the love of virtue. Moral writings formed a part of a curriculum with a much broader reach in the 1820s than the Decembrists alone, emanating from a tradition in Russia that dated to the 1770s. Roman writers in Latin, in French and Russian translation, gave educated Russians direct access to moral as well as political values. The legacy of Stoic thinkers was also filtered through Enlightenment writers, including Diderot's essays on Seneca and Rousseau's fiction. Based on Plutarchan and Roman writings, the powerful discourse of the exemplary figure was mediated through Voltaire and Melchior Grimm and guided Pushkin's approach to heroic action.¹⁰ Following the Enlightenment example, his moral vocabulary cast character in terms of seriousness of purpose, marked by a restraint and self-denial that hark back

⁵ See, for example, *Héliogabale, ou esquisse morale de la dissolution romaine sous les empereurs* (Paris, 1802) [Modz. 978]. Most of the pages of Pushkin's copy of this epistolary pedagogical novel were cut. See the letters of Sylvinus to Alexis for examples.

⁶ A staple of seminary education, Plutarch was read for his essays on ethics, the *Moralia*; in the early part of the nineteenth century, with the politicization of the ancients, interest shifts to his *Parallel Lives*. Numerous translations into Russian were produced in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Pushkin read Plutarch in French translation in his father's library. See Annenkov, *Materialy*, i. 13.

⁷ Richard Wortman, *The Development of a Russian Legal Consciousness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 97.

⁸ On Plutarch, see D. Babut, *Plutarque et le stoïcisme* (Paris: PUF, 1969), esp. 116–80, 318–66.

⁹ This is the case, for example, with S. Volk, *Istoricheskie vzgliady dekabristov* (Leningrad: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1958), esp. ch. 3.

¹⁰ Noting that Pushkin was writing a biography of Peter the Great, Alexander Turgenev remarked in 1831 that 'this would be not the only resemblance with Voltaire'. See *ZhMNP* 3 (1913), 21.

to a Roman Stoic respect for frugality and simplicity. This tradition defined one side of the heroic ideal. These works considered the question of whether action or thoughtfulness creates the heroic character. Fiction reinforced the message indirectly. However repugnant Rousseau was to the authorities, Russian readers lapped up *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, where Stoic values shape the depictions of emotional reserve and fortitude.¹¹ Inspired by European theories of political economy, the Decembrists did not take their political agenda from Plutarch or Cato or Tacitus. While heroic emulation did of course reinforce class values that the Decembrists reached independently, in the case of Pushkin, for example, it awakened ideals that never translated into a clear political vision.¹² At the very least, these notions provided a certain philosophical vocabulary and sense of precedence, bolstering modern ideals of behaviour in the Romantic period through reference to the past.

For eighteenth-century satirists and tragedians, the world of the ancients became a convenient allegorical frame in which to discuss contemporary values. That is the tradition Pushkin evokes in 'To Licinius'. Written in March 1815 and originally published in May of that year, this eighteenth-century pastiche is one of the poems Pushkin republished in his 1826 collection and then again in 1829.¹³ The poem was to remain for him a seminal statement on the relation between private and public images of the heroic. We can surmise from these reprintings that Pushkin saw the poem as a marker of continuity and change in his thinking about the nature of heroism.¹⁴ 'To Licinius' applies moral judgement to action in political life as a test of the heroic. It is the politician rather than the philosopher or poet who commands respect.

'To Licinius' is a striking statement about suspect types of heroism which may be dictated by political elites for their own expediency, and ratified by the crowd out of fear, but ultimately are unconfirmed by history. The subject of the poem is the question of individual liberty in a state where the political culture fosters servitude through adulation and where the abdication of the corporate right of the nobility, in this case the Roman senate, to voice an independent opinion and even form an opposition is under threat or already forfeit. The specific issue

¹¹ See G. Bretonneau, *Stoïcisme et valeurs chez J.-J. Rousseau* (Paris: SEDES, 1957), 81–7.

¹² For salutary scepticism about Pushkin's involvement in Decembrist activity see Eidel'man, *Pushkin i dekabristy: iz istorii vzaimotnoshenii*.

¹³ Pushkin simplified the title 'To Licinius'. Both the text originally published in *Ruskii muzei*, 5 (1815), 129–32, and the slightly altered 1826 version can be found in Pushkin, *Stikhotvoreniia litseiskikh let*, 88–9, 89–92; my references are to the earlier version. The table of contents in Pushkin's 1826 collection lists the title as 'from the Latin', but that tag is not printed with the text probably because of a printer's oversight.

¹⁴ On Pushkin's early interest in antiquity and the Juvenalian tone of this poem, see S. Liubomudrov, *Antichnye motivy v poezii Pushkina* (St Petersburg: Tipografiia N. N. Klobukova, 1901), 18. An established eighteenth-century Russian tradition of Juvenalian satire was revived in the 1810s, but the New Academy Edition commentators are correct in noting that 'To Licinius' has no specific source.

of the relation of the monarch to the nobles and the loss of political authority had already surfaced through imitation of Rome and in more purely Russian guise in the 1780s. Following the stern tradition of the Roman moralists, Prince Shcherbatov, in his discourse on *The Corruption of Morals*, proved to be a Cato for his times in denouncing the corruption that Western-style luxury had brought about in Russia.¹⁵ The poem falls into the Juvenalian tradition of satire (closest to Juvenal III and VIII) that enjoyed a revival in Augustan England and found a small number of imitators among earlier Russian writers, including eighteenth-century poets such as Antiokh Kantemir, Ivan Elagin, and Derzhavin, who were read by Pushkin.¹⁶ Other early Pushkin texts, such as 'Liberty' ('Vol'nost', 1817) and 'The Village' (1819), also imitated eighteenth-century Russian political satire. The satirist diagnoses contemporary corruption, often expressed in terms of decline from ancestral virtue and ancient mores, on which to base a larger moral problem and diagnosis. Interpretations have asked whether the poem is a genuine satire, or only a stylistic exercise in the Juvenalian mode.¹⁷ There is a legitimate basis to readings of this poem that cast it as an allegory for post-Napoleonic expectations of a Russian gentry still buoyed by aspirations for parliamentary reform under Alexander I.¹⁸ But Pushkin uses Roman discourse because his education and reading, typically for the period, turned to ancient writers to show how individuals make history.

The political subject of the poem is polarized around two key words 'obedience' ('pokornost') and 'freedom' ('svoboda'). The argument of the poem is about the ancestral rights and powers of the Roman nobility in the Republic. Its exposition proceeds through a series of tableaux, just as it will later in 'The Hero' and 'The Commander'. In a brilliant and highly theatrical vignette the opening block of lines illustrates the nature of popular subservience under the spell of a demagogue. The most celebrated representation in all of Pushkin's

¹⁵ On the treatise as a reaction to Enlightenment 'corruption' in Catherine's Russia, see the remarks of Antony Lentin in his edition of M. M. Shcherbatov, *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 51–3.

¹⁶ Pierre Hennequin cited Pushkin's poem as an example of the unbroken tradition in his *Cours de littérature ancienne et moderne*, iv, 80, 130.

¹⁷ The archaic tone rests on the selective stylistic devices, all sparingly used. Pushkin can rely on the title, the translation tag, and the Roman names automatically to confer an air of antiquity. He concentrates outmoded diction primarily in the first block of lines as an indication of the frame device, and, symmetrically, in the final block: 'zrish' for 'vidish'; 'kolesnitsa' for 'chariot', 'oko' and 'zlodeian'ia', 'otchizna' for 'rodina'; 'bagrianitsa' a standard eighteenth-century instance of metonymy; there is also evidence of pleonasm: 'diti malye' and 'startsy s sedinoi', which is an old-fashioned effect. Word order also departs from standard syntax, particularly evident in the placement of adjectives and adverbial phrases before their verbal object (e.g. 'Lstetsov... dlinni riad' or 'divnogo bogov blagoslaven'ia'); at the same time the use of epideictic formulas like 'zrish' li ty' and 'smotri', coupled with expostulation ('O Romulov narod... O Rim') approximate the rhetoric of forensic oratory.

¹⁸ See N. N. Stepanov, *Istoricheskie vozzreniia A. S. Pushkina* (Leningrad: Izd-vo gazeta 'Pravda', 1949), 7–8, who typically associates Pushkin's practice with the example of Alexander Radishchev, the Enlightenment writer persecuted by Catherine the Great, whose writings provoked contradictory reactions from Pushkin for the rest of his career.

work of the reaction of the crowd to an acclaimed leader is found in the first scenes of *Boris Godunov* (1825), where the populace is coerced into simulating obeisance even as they murmur slanderous gossip under their breath.¹⁹ The opening of 'To Licinius' auspiciously anticipates this effect: the phrase 'popular mob' ('tolpa narodna') precisely differentiates the popular masses, understood as the disenfranchised urban population, from the free orders of Rome. The reader is simultaneously impressed with the view that Vetulius will have of his own greatness as crowds tremble before the lictors and soldiers in his retinue, and the true disdain that they feel as they fall before this 'idol'. From demagoguery and false heroism follows the rise of despotism and the domination of the senate by the corrupt dictatorship of Vetulius described in the second segment. Inevitably, and deliberately, the phrase 'the Roman caesar' ('Rimlian tsar') sounds especially daring in the Russian context where the censor scrutinized works for subversive references to the Russian monarch.

With line 24, the poem asks where opposition might be found and looks clearly to the philosophers of the porch, the Stoics, identifying an embittered figure called Dametes, who chooses to retreat from Rome and contemplate life 'in the desert' ('v pustyne') in accordance with one branch of Stoic thought.²⁰ The speaker then assesses the merit of adopting Stoic values and bowing to the blind wheel of fortune which cannot be determined or altered but only tolerated. The ardour of the speaker, with an instinctive and hereditary belief in freedom and political self-determination, compels him to dismiss the Stoic option (l. 59) of retreat into rustic removal and self-containment or frivolous poetry, but affirms a belief in poetic satire as social corrective and a duty to subject his age to the same treatment that Petronius and Juvenal gave their own time: 'In thundering satire I will depict sin | And reveal the morals of the ages to posterity' ('v gremiashchei satire porok izobrazhu | I nray sikh vekov potomstvu obnazhu'). The future of the moral and cultural safety of a people is seen to reside with the ability of the writer to reverse decline. Yet in the final paragraph of invective the writer prophesies ineluctable decay. The prognosis shares the tendency of the philosophical historians of the eighteenth century to see history follow an inevitable cycle despite the efforts of great men.

'To Licinius' does not advocate a political agenda. The hero worship of the poem confirms the longevity of an Enlightenment pedagogical model. Appreciation for model military lives, largely encouraged through reading Quintus Curtius Rufus, whose biographies of Roman generals were standard fare in classrooms across Europe, continued against a growing emphasis in historiography and the teaching of history on the rise and decline of nations as a cyclical process determined by its own laws. No less a figure than Napoleon himself referred

¹⁹ See Sandler, *Distant Pleasures*, 85–7.

²⁰ See Malcolm Schofield, 'Stoic Ethics', in Brad Inwood (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 255.

to Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* as the seminal reading that shaped his early attitude to destiny, history, and the capacities of leadership and character that defined a heroic ideal.²¹ Their lesson about progress, the dynamic of which varied from country to country depending on the individual genius of nations, had been absorbed into Russian historical thinking by Karamzin, who was the first Russian historian to write about cycles in European history in his *Letters of a Russian Traveller*, and subsequently applied it in the magisterial *History of the Russian State* published from 1811.²²

In his first years of exile (1821–4), Pushkin devoted a number of poems to exemplary figures, paying tribute to individuals who triumphed over fate through genius and resolve.²³ Chaadaev's reputation for bravery, integrity, and intelligence dazzled the schoolboy Pushkin who had made his acquaintance when the older man was stationed at Tsarskoe Selo.²⁴ In 'Towards a Portrait of Chaadaev', an epigram dating to the same period, Pushkin wrote that Chaadaev would have been a Brutus in Rome and a Pericles in Athens, both defenders of republican principles and also, befitting the Plutarchan tradition, eloquent in their steadfastness and bravery. In 'To Chaadaev', the second of four poems to him, Pushkin nominates an ethical master, demonstrating the impact of admiration and emulation on the poet's sense of self.²⁵ Against the Napoleonic backdrop, where the great hero of the day never ceases to act, Pushkin turns to Chaadaev who is unusual because he withdrew from military life to pursue the life of the thinker.

The 1821 epistle to Chaadaev represents an interesting transition because it mediates between the worlds of the private and the public, and between the subjective and objective evaluation of greatness. The poem asserts the authority of a figure both remote in the manner of the Great Man and yet also known as a friend. The aim of the tribute is not to exaggerate his importance on a national or

²¹ See Luigi Mascilli Migliorini, *Napoléon* (Paris: Perrin, 2004), 34.

²² Briefly, see F. A. Kogan-Bernshtein, 'Vliianie idei Montes'ke v Rossii v XVIII veke', *Voprosy istorii*, 5 (1955), 99–110; and Andrew Kahn, 'Karamzin's Discourses of Enlightenment', in Nikolai Karamzin, *Letters of a Russian Traveller* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2003), 537–50.

²³ Pushkin made Chaadaev's acquaintance at the house of Nikolai Karamzin in the summer of 1816. From 1818 until May 1820 they met frequently and discussed philosophical, ethical, and historical topics as both and Pushkin and Chaadaev recalled in letters (see Pushkin, *PSS*, xiv, no. 626, pp. 187–8 (6 July 1831); P. I. Chaadaev, *Sochineniia i pisma P. Ia. Chaadaeva*, ed. M. Gershenzon (Moscow, 1913–14), i. 306–7.

²⁴ See M. N. Longinov, 'Vospominaniia o P. Ia. Chaadaeve', *Russkii vestnik*, 42: 11 (1862), 119–60; on Stoic sources in Chaadaev's thinking, see Charles Quénet, *Tchaadaev et les lettres philosophiques* (Paris: Champion, 1931), 120, 163–5.

²⁵ On ethics and moral improvement as a feature of Epicurean and Stoic conceptions of friendship, see James Warren, *Facing Death: Epicurus and his Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 184–8; and John M. Cooper, *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 498–510. Mme de Staël makes a similar point in her *De l'influence des passions sur le bonheur des individus et des nations* (Paris, 1820), iii. 199, where she defines friendship as 'le besoin de communiquer ses sentiments et ses pensées, l'espoir d'intéresser la douce assurance que ses plaisirs et ses peines répondent à un autre cœur'.

historical scale, but rather to demonstrate why he made a difference to Pushkin's own sense of the world. Although Chaadaev's gifts as a thinker and moral force are largely felt in the private sphere by a small community of people, Pushkin still magnifies his friend's stature into that of larger exemplary figure, by his art and moral discernment elevating him to his personal pantheon. In the earlier 'Towards a Portrait of Chaadev' Pushkin had praised his friend as a republican and democrat wise enough to be a philosopher king were the right political order possible:

Он вышней волею небес
 Рожден в оковах службы царской;
 Он в Риме был бы Брут, в Афинах Периклес,
 А здесь—он офицер гусарской.²⁶

By the divine decree of heaven | He was born enchained by Imperial service; | In Rome he would have been Brutus, in Athens—Pericles, | But here he is an officer of the Hussars.

At much greater length, the later poem shifts the emphasis from political principle to personal ideals as the basis of virtue. As a model of self-control, wisdom, and disinterested integrity, Chaadaev is most like the Stoic image of the sage, a later Roman reincarnation of Socrates who appeared on the pages of the ancient writers known to Pushkin, including Diogenes Laertius, Cicero, and Plutarch. The sage is 'one who does everything that he undertakes well, one who is never impeded in what he does, one who is infallible; he is more powerful than all others, richer, stronger, freer, happier'.²⁷ Although shared political values can be important (as Pushkin will stress when he writes to Chaadaev again in 1824), it is the ideal of friendship, where philosophical values are of primary importance, that he assimilates.²⁸ Pushkin places two types of friendship under consideration. In works like 'The Epistle to Iudin' ('Poslanie k Iudinu', 1815) and 'To my Aristarchus' ('Moemu Aristarkhu', 1815) Pushkin celebrates associations based on Epicurean pleasures.²⁹ By contrast, admiration based on the Stoic model was exemplified by Chaadaev. As one historian of friendship in Graeco-Roman culture notes, friendship with the virtuous and wise man 'does not grow out of need, neither does it rest on the pursuit of pleasure . . . Rather than contribute to a carefree life, friendship, as all virtuous activity, requires a life of care to keep its

²⁶ Pushkin, *PSS*, ii/1. 134. While the poem has not been firmly dated, circumstantial evidence and stylistic detail suggest 1817–18 as the likeliest years of composition.

²⁷ This composite definition, drawn from a variety of sources, comes from John Sellars, *The Art of Living* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 59.

²⁸ See Luigi Pizzolato, *L'idea di amicizia nel mondo antico classico e cristiano* (Turin: Einaudi, 1993), 109.

²⁹ The 'Aristarchus' of the poem is N. F. Koshanskii, Professor of Russian and Latin Letters at the Lycée, highly respected (if also mocked by Pushkin) for his learning and political ideals.

opposite away.³⁰ This is the underlying ethos of the attraction Pushkin feels for Chaadaev.

In poems of Stoic orientation, personal admiration is a condition of the public ideal. In the 1830s, in cases where the humanity of the heroic leader is in doubt, Pushkin will question the extent to which the relationship between public deeds and private morality matters in understanding individual greatness. In 'To Chaadaev' he avoids this problem. What began as an expression of infatuation in the 1817 poem had by 1821 matured into a tribute conferring on Chaadaev a combination of attributes. He is a figure sufficiently close to stand as a personal model, on the one hand, and at the same time sufficiently remote to look like a hero, on the other; the poem makes out of the speaker a worthy recipient of that friendship by proof of emulation:

В стране, где я забыл тревоги прежних лет,
 Где прах Овидиев пустынный мой сосед,
 Где слава для меня предмет заботы малой,
 Тебя недостает душе моей усталой.
 Врагу стеснительных условий и оков,
 Не трудно было мне отвыкнуть от пиров,
 Где праздный ум блестит, тогда как сердце дремлет,
 И правду пылкую приличий хлад объемлет.
 Оставя шумный круг безумцев молодых,
 В изгнании моем я не жалел об них;
 Вздохнув, оставил я другие заблужденья,
 Врагов моих предал проклятию забвенья,
 И, сети разорвав, где бился я в плену,
 Для сердца новую вкушаю тишину.
 В уединении мой своенравный гений
 Познал и тихой труд, и жажду размышлений.³¹ (ll. 1–16)

In the land, where I forgot the upsets of the past, | Where Ovid's ashes were my desolate neighbour, | Where fame was scarcely a care for me, | My tired soul missed you. | An enemy of constraints and bonds, | I easily lost the habit of feasts | Where an empty mind shines as the heart sleeps, | And the cold of good manners smothers heated truth. | Once I had left the noisy crowd of young rakes, | In my exile I did not miss them; | With a deep breath I left behind other errors, | Consigned my enemies to the curse of oblivion, | And, breaking the net that held me captive | I lap up a peace that is new to my heart. | In isolation my individual genius | Accepts quiet work and a hunger for thought.

At the beginning, the speaker needs to establish his credentials as a moral character worthy of Chaadaev's friendship. He reviews his recent history, turning the shameful fact of exile into a story of new-found maturity. He loves freedom, and

³⁰ Benjamin Fiore, 'The Theory and Practice of Friendship in Cicero', in John T. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Greco-Roman Perspectives on Friendship* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1997), 63.

³¹ Pushkin, *PSS*, ii/1. 187.

he now speaks of himself as an enemy of forms of constraint ('vragu stesnitel'nykh uslovii i okov'), dismissing his erstwhile hedonism and intellectual idleness, repenting of his youthful errors, and proclaiming a new seriousness marked by a 'thirst for thought' ('zhazhda razmyshlenii') and self-application through work ('trud'). Following the decorum of the friendly letter, the speaker establishes immediate affinities.³² The basis for their rapport is the speaker's cultivation of a 'new quiet', the word 'tishina' meaning precisely the state of equanimity and lack of perturbation prized by the Stoics, of whom Chaadaev was a reader and admirer.³³ In this poem, personal attachment means a commitment to philosophical emulation: lines 17 to 32 describe the process of self-education and moral renovation that will teach the speaker, through a new intellectual stamina and coherence, and through a mastery of his youthful rebelliousness, to be in 'Enlightenment' the equal of his age, in other words, to achieve maturity of character. The poem sets in parallel two types of mind, balancing poetic thinking through feeling and images suited to one type of friendship, and, on the other hand, more abstract conceptual discourse that makes out of the second part of the poem a conduct manual for the philosophical friend. Fame, cares, and systems, the latter presumably meaning philosophical ideas, have not harmed the poet's natural spontaneity because he has acquired the philosophical habits that he admires in Chaadaev as living proof:

Владею днем моим; с порядком дружен ум;
 Учусь удерживать внимание долгих дум;
 Ищу вознаградить в объятиях свободы
 Мязежной младостью утраченные годы
 И в просвещении стать с веком наравне.
 Богини мира, вновь явились Музы мне
 И независимым досугам улыбнулись;
 Цевницы брошенной уста мои коснулись;
 Старинный звук меня обрадовал—и вновь
 Пою мои мечты, природу и любовь,
 И дружбу верную, и милые предметы,
 Пленявшие меня в младенческие леты,
 В те дни, когда, еще незнаемый никем,
 Не зная ни забот, ни цели, ни систем,
 Я пеньем оглашал приют забав и лени
 И царскосельские хранительные сени. (ll. 17–32)

My days are my own; my mind likes the order; | I train my attention to retain deep thinking; | I hope to compensate, in the embrace of freedom, | Years wasted in youthful

³² On the rules of the genre and its practice in Russia, see Todd, *The Familiar Letter*.

³³ The New Academy Edition of Pushkin repeats the traditional emphasis on politics as the basis of Chaadaev and Pushkin's friendship, to the exclusion of virtually all other themes. In my reading, the poem subordinates political concerns to larger issues of ethics and character. On Pushkin's admiration of Chaadaev's character, see Mikhail Gershenson, 'Chaadaev i Pushkin', in his *Stat'i o Pushkine* (Moscow: Akademiia, 1926), 20–2.

rebellion | And in enlightenment to be the equal of the age. | Goddesses of peace, the Muses appeared again | And smiled on my independent free hours; | My lips touched the flute I discarded; | The old sound heartened me, and once again | I sing of my dreams, nature and love, | And of true friendship, and tender subjects, | That so enchanted me in my youthful years, | In those days when, still unknown to all, | Having no cares, no aims, no system | In song I hailed the refuge of pleasure and fun, | The protective precincts of Tsarskoe Selo

In the second block of lines, Pushkin turns to the admired philosopher, saying that the lessons of friendship are the intellectual and moral resources that Chaadaev originally taught him. He draws a distinction between other friends and Chaadaev, whose remarkable courage and confidence provided the values and example of ‘resilience’ (‘terpenie’) which made the poet’s exile bearable.³⁴ Now, in articulating the virtues that he misses in exile—an ardour for exalted love, strictness of character, brave fortitude, disdain for enemies—the poet rehearses the whole of his moral education. The poem is a tribute to friendship as an active force for self-renewal based on emulation of a private type of hero.³⁵ If initially the speaker laments the absence of a friend to shore him up against his sadness and isolation, the process of thinking about Chaadaev revives the inculcated values, enabling him at the end of the section to claim that despite the attacks of enemies, despite the vicious gossip, he is now an exemplary pupil of an exemplary friend:

Благодарю богов: прешел я мрачный путь;
 Печали ранние мою теснили грудь;
 К печалям я привык, расчелся я с Судьбою
 И жизнь перенесу стоической душою. (ll. 65–8).

I give thanks to the gods: I travelled a dark path, | Early woes oppressed my breast; | I got used to woes, I settled my score with Fate, | And I bear fate with a stoic soul.

The final section contains a contradiction. In his valediction, the poet regrets his absence as a pain, yet enjoins his friend to abide with him (‘ostan’sia ty so

³⁴ Integrity and resilience rather than military activity define the nature of Chaadaev’s courage. This is because for the true Stoic all circumstances are similar and courage can be mustered on the battlefield or in private circumstances with equal facility. The association of courage and Stoic thought has a long history in the Western Renaissance. See the essays in Pierre-François Moreau, *Le Stoïcisme au XVIe et au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999); and Anthony Levi, *French Moralists: The Theory of the Passions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), esp. ch. 5. Stoicism comes to Russia indirectly through Roman literature and French drama although Montaigne was read from the eighteenth century. Chaadaev, however, was exceptionally well educated in philosophy and the history of ideas. The erudition behind his ethical views gave him a legendary status in the 1820s. Pushkin’s discourse respects the precise terms of Chaadaev’s ethical orientation, the Stoic values that render him an exemplary figure.

³⁵ Chaadaev kept a ring that Pushkin gave him, while the poet kept a portrait of Chaadaev that he drew (reproduced in R. G. Zhuikova, *Portretnye risunki Pushkina. Katalog attributsii* (St Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1996), no. 837.

mnoi!') and imagine their reunion and further conversations. The contradiction pays tribute to Chaadaev's moral presence. The speaker projects strength as the legacy of a significant friendship and fragility as a pupil whose Stoic resolve is not absolutely certain, who imagines this closeness to a master as a process of continual education and revision. The future of their attachment lies in a process of repeated self-examination that takes the measure of their moral growth, and in so doing helps the young speaker cultivate the gift of behavioural adaptation and maturity that, in this instance, is the key to happiness. The sphere of friendship is the private world of the philosopher's study where poet and philosopher will be reunited. The poem demonstrates that wisdom and Stoic fortitude provide a defence against unfriendly behaviour in public. Moreover, threats to the private world and to the sense of individual identity come not only from hostile groups (such as Pushkin faced when critical opinion turned against him). The individual, who must monitor his worldly identity and stay self-consciously alert to the temptation and dangers presented to core ethical values, must guard against vulnerability. In some poems of friendship the speaker will replace the threatening group with the image of the ideal poetic community (as discussed in Chapter 8); elsewhere, as in 'To Chaadaev' and 'From Pindemonte' ('Iz Pindemonti', 1836), the individual must become his own hero by emulating the internalized ideal of the morally and philosophically independent outsider.

Such self-mastery, a military virtue traditionally associated with the hero on the battlefield, informs Pushkin's views of the Great Man as an ethical entity. Ultimately the lesson that Chaadaev imparts to the speaker was also supplemented by his reading of Helvétius' *De l'esprit* (1758). The second discourse (*De l'esprit par rapport avec la société*) addresses the consequences when the mores of an individual contradict the will of the majority or the rules of a government, and why the demonstration of such virtue and 'esprit' often belongs to the man of quality ('honnête homme').³⁶ 'To Chaadaev' dissociates both master and pupil from the youthful frivolity recorded in other poems. Chaadaev's greatness as a model is a matter for private admiration by a chosen few. Heroic in his independence and self-mastery, Chaadaev is a representative man only for a fellow exile whereas he remains marginal for the majority. Pushkin will again consider the issue of the victimization of the virtuous and morally elevated in 'The Commander'. But first he repeatedly pondered the figure of Napoleon, trying to determine whether he embodied the truly heroic ideal, in whom the moral and active must

³⁶ Chaadaev was extensively read in ancient and modern philosophy. Pushkin borrowed his heavily annotated copy of Ancillon's *Pensées*. Among works listed in the *Katalog biblioteki P. Ia. Chaadaeva*, 2nd edn. (Moscow: Izd-vo 'Pashkov dom', 2000) are treatments of moral philosophy by Alexander Adam (no. 89), Édouard Alletz (90), Ancillon (90), Apuleius (101), Cousin (214), Creuzer (216a), Damiron (218), Droz (244), Duboc (246), Lamennais (418).

coalesces.³⁷ Three stages mark the sequence of Napoleon's transformation from compelling fallen angel to magnetic tyrant to heroic ideal.

THE ACTION HERO: NAPOLEON

Even while fascinated by Chaadaev as a model moral hero, Pushkin began to contemplate an antithetical type. From 1815, Napoleon's life and works profoundly influenced Pushkin's notion of the psychology of the Great Man. Napoleon represented historical agency, the philosophical attitude to fate and destiny, and the overall meaning of the epoch. It is Napoleon rather than any contemporary Russian ruler who in Pushkin's mind stands closest to Peter the Great as an example of the power of a titanic ego to direct history, even at great cost to nations. Pushkin's most important lyric on the nature of greatness and leadership, 'The Hero' will pose abstract questions about the moral and human toll of heroism, the problem of contemporary and historical evaluation, and the differences between historical and poetic representation and their relation to the truth with reference to Napoleon. Two earlier poems treated the fallen emperor, first capturing the poet's reaction to his final defeat at Waterloo at the end of the Hundred Days, and then on the news of his death in 1821. The poems charted a reassessment of Napoleon from destroyer to reformer, from adventurer to statesman and defender of revolutionary ideals.³⁸ In itself this movement was not untypical of the period, and is a factor that needs to be taken into account when assessing how 'The Hero' treats Napoleon. It is, however, remarkable in the Russian context where the negative image of the invader of 1812 dominated at all levels of expression from popular woodcuts to portraiture and poetry.³⁹ The change in Pushkin's attitude to a more favourable portrait of Napoleon closes the gap with contemporary European trends.

'Napoleon on Elba' ('Napoleon na El'be', 1815) is Pushkin's earliest attempt at a portrait. Written at the beginning of the Hundred Days, after Napoleon's escape from Elba on 25 February 1815, the poem looks back to the beginning of the saga and attempts to enter the mind of the hero at the moment when he planned his escape. The dating of the poem increased its dramatic effect.⁴⁰ By anticipating Napoleon's escape, the poet takes the reader to the inception of a drama being played out in real time with an unknown outcome. An extended

³⁷ Natan Eidel'man sees evidence for Chaadaev's influence on Pushkin's late ideas about individual greatness in the history of early modern Russia. See Eidel'man, *Stat'i o Pushkine*, 354–67.

³⁸ For a descriptive overview of the Napoleonic theme in Pushkin's writings, see O. Murav'eva, 'Pushkin i Napoleon (Pushkinskii variant napoleonovskoi legendy),' *PIM* 14 (1991), 5–33.

³⁹ For popular images, see *Azbuka 1812 g. Faksimil'noe vosproizvedenie izdaniia 1815 g.* (St Petersburg: Iskusstvo Rossii, 1993).

⁴⁰ The news of Napoleon's flight on 13 March 1815 was reported in the newspaper *Russkii invalid* in April. On the poem's dating, see Pushkin, *Stikhotvoreniia litseiskikh let*, 567–70.

monologue framed by two landscape tableaux, the poem is written in a stylized Ossianic idiom full of obvious Romantic sweep that contrasts the vastness of nature and the diminished tyrant, the power of nature moved by invisible forces and the power of history as created by men. The interior speech takes us into the heart and mind of the conquered emperor who, confident of eventual escape, plans future triumphs and reviews earlier fateful reversals.

In his monologue, the centrepiece of the poem, Napoleon appeals to his own personal fate, whether a guiding star or principle of happiness, or, because of the personal language used in phrases like ‘my secret guardian’ (‘tainyi moi khranitel’), something akin to his own ‘daimon’, a personal genius and inner voice that guides him unflinchingly in his historic pursuit of ‘brilliance’ and ‘glory’ (‘blesk’ and ‘slava’). Line 49 puts the exiled Napoleon at the heart of the action, strengthening the sense that he is at the centre of everything, from the battles that unfold around him to the ocean lapping round Elba—the universe emanates from him. The poem continues in a rhapsody of militaristic tribute as the emperor yearns for the sound of battle. Visual density and emphatic sound orchestration create a dynamic canvas: the world of Napoleon is ‘mighty’ (‘moguchii’), ‘noisy’ (‘zvonkii’), ‘brilliant’ (‘blistaiushchii’), ‘bloody’ (‘krovavaia’). Napoleon’s language becomes increasingly metaphorical: the images of shield and sword have emblematic force. While exile has taken the shine off his military prowess, his mastery of his destiny is expressed in the image of light (‘gleaming with the look of destruction | Revolt grows pale seated on the helm’). Byron led the way in acting out his identification with the upstart, revolutionary, wilful egotist.⁴¹ At the height of his admiration for Byron, Pushkin found it difficult to resist the spell of Napoleon. Within several years he would come to see Napoleon as the invader of Russia before evaluating him once again.

Until his death, and even beyond, Europe was swept by rumours of Napoleonic sightings and landings that on several occasions led to riots.⁴² Whether through common-sense intuition or awareness of newspaper accounts, Pushkin captured the unsettled combination of relief and disbelief that surrounded Napoleon’s downfall. Despite the image of stasis and meditation, practically every sentence in ‘Napoleon on Elba’ contains a verb, an effect suggesting pent-up energy. Ominous forebodings mark the symbolic description of light in the first frame passage: where Napoleon sits it is already black, which suggests that he is facing west towards France, where his thoughts go, while the horizon is already light. The second frame passage, at the end of the poem, recapitulates the motif of darkness and illumination. Napoleon’s meditation on revenge occurs against the backdrop of moonlight, shedding faint light on the distant object of his plans, like some sort of ray of energy from the mind of the diabolical or

⁴¹ See Christina M. Root, ‘History as Character: Byron and the Myth of Napoleon’, in Stephen Behrendt (ed.), *History and Myth: Essays on English Romantic Literature* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 149–65.

⁴² Sudhir Hazareesingh, *The Legend of Napoleon* (London: Granta Books, 2004), ch. 2.

infernal genius ('I Gallia tebia, o khishchnik, osenila'). Similarly the new image of the star also carries a symbolic association with fate and divine determination, a pervasive association in the period. In his 1814 *Ode*, an ambivalent tribute, Byron compared Napoleon to Prometheus, the illegitimate thief who steals fire from the gods for the sake of mankind.⁴³ Byron spoke of Napoleon's imprisonment as a 'starless night'. Here, too, light shines darkly as we move to the interior of Napoleon's visionary mind and his fantasy of military revival and renewed power. Napoleon's thoughts are sufficient to undermine the tranquillity of the public realm, and make the calm of the frame uneasy because the world remains vulnerable to the machinations that emanate from the 'mind of the destroyer':

Умолк. На небесах лежали мрачны тени,
И месяц, дальних туч покинув темны сени,
Дрожащий, слабый свет на запад изливал—
Восточная звезда играла в океане,
И зрелася ладья, бегущая в тумане
 Под сводом Эльбских грозных скал.
И Галлия тебя, о хищник, осенила;
Побегли с трепетом законные цари.
Но зришь ли? Гаснет день, мгновенно тьма сокрыла
 Лицо пылающей зари,
Простерлась тишина над бездною седою,
Мрачится неба свод, гроза во мгле висит,
Все смолкло . . . трепещи! погибель над тобою,
 И жребий твой еще сокрыт!⁴⁴ (ll. 80–93)

He falls silent. Dark clouds layer the sky, | The moon, out from the dark shades of far cloud, | Pours a flickering, weak light on the west— | The Eastern star plays on the ocean, | And a barque is seen, running in a mist | Under the arc of Elba's menacing cliffs. | For France, o creature of prey, shields you; | Lawful kings flee in terror. | Do you not see? The day goes out, instantly | A darkness covers the face of the burning sun. | Silence extends across the hoary abyss, | The vault of heaven grows dark, a storm hangs | In the air. All goes quiet . . . Tremble! Disaster is | Upon you, and your fate is already cast!

In the final passage of Pushkin's poem the light becomes purely symbolic: from the perspective of mainland France, Napoleon's star can only cast darkness on the waters. The poet is emphatic in the declamatory last two lines that the earlier 'silence' ('tishina') has become menacing. While Napoleon was initially seated on a cliff, he now perches over an 'abyss', a touch that melodramatically reinforces the infernal association.

The next text to treat the emperor is 'Napoleon' (1821), composed shortly after 18 July 1821 when Pushkin learned of his death. A new approach to the subject reflects the changing image of Napoleon in European poetry

⁴³ Lord Byron, 'Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte', stanza xvi.

⁴⁴ Pushkin, *PSS*, i. 118.

rather than any new thinking about history on Pushkin's part.⁴⁵ Like Byron, Lamartine, and Hugo, Pushkin signals his awe by employing a monolithic stanza form.⁴⁶ 'Napoleon' moves from an opening elegiac frame (stanzas 1–3), to the period from the French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon and the Napoleonic Wars (stanzas 4–7). Full of tyrannical scorn for democracy, the Napoleon of this portrait is guilty primarily of crushing the principles of the French Revolution. Napoleon's military apotheosis and downfall are in the Russian campaign (stanzas 8–11), and the poem comes full circle to Napoleon's decline and exile (stanzas 12–14) before ending in the fifteenth stanza with a prayer of praise and warning to his detractors, restating the poem's message of mourning. It would not be difficult to arrange a sequence of tableaux to correspond to the sections of this highly pictorial poem, each conveying a different dimension of the Napoleonic myth.

The anonymous memoirs of 1817 that were attributed to Napoleon had already aroused immense curiosity so that, at his death in 1821, a number of related works readily captivated the popular imagination. The contribution of historians to popular and literary representation was crucial in the elaboration of the Napoleonic legend. Of particular influence were portraits of the deposed Napoleon on St Helena.⁴⁷ Pushkin purchased virtually all the key works that propagated the positive legend of Napoleon. Among the most important were the Comte de Ségur's chronicle of the Russian campaign, the memoirs of Napoleon's physician Barry O'Meara and Christophe-François Antommarchi, the physician present at his death, and finally the great *Mémorial* by Emmanuel Las Cases which appeared in 1823 and was seminal in winning the interest of a younger generation.⁴⁸ These books were bestsellers in the period—3,000 copies of de Ségur were snapped up in days. The *Memorial*, Las Cases's eyewitness account of Napoleon's psychological and physical torment when in the care of his English jailers, provoked both sympathy for Napoleon and the indignation of French national pride. Even more importantly, as Michael Marrinan rightly notes, 'the work provided an international rostrum for Napoleon, speaking beyond the grave, to evaluate his achievements and place in history'.⁴⁹ The Napoleon who

⁴⁵ Napoleon's death gave immediate impetus to poets to commemorate or excoriate him. See Natalie Petiteau, *Napoléon de la mythologie à l'histoire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999), ch. 2. Pushkin learned of Napoleon's death on 18 July 1821 and composed the poem, originally with the title 'On the death of Napoleon'. It was published in his 1826 collection with significant cuts (stanzas 4–6 were omitted in their entirety).

⁴⁶ The form may have reminded Pushkin of Byron's nine-line stanza. Zhukovsky employs this stanza in poems that he calls 'songs' (rather than odes), where the subject is freedom in a metaphysical sense (see, for example, 'Uznik k motylku, vletevshemu v ego temnitsu' and 'Zhelanie'); dashed hopes ('Mechty'); fate and salvation ('spasitel'-providen'ie') ('Plovets').

⁴⁷ Maurice Descotes, *La Légende de Napoléon et les écrivains français du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Minard, 1967), 92.

⁴⁸ The markings in his copy of O'Meara cannot be dated precisely [Modz. 1228].

⁴⁹ Michael Marrinan, *Painting Politics for Louis-Philippe: Art and Ideology in Orleanist France, 1830–1848* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 143–4.

speaks from these pages, and whose popularity by 1830 was stunning, is a defender of the liberal programme of the Hundred Days, the figure embraced by Benjamin Constant as a paternalistic lawgiver—all lawgiver and nothing of the tyrant. The profound impact of these writings on the legend of Napoleon can be seen in this renewed image of him as social transformer rather than general, humanist rather than tyrant, Enlightenment rationalist rather than self-glorifying hero. In 1821, Pushkin celebrates the military hero, and buries the tyrant, ending one phase of Pushkin's hero worship and making room for a figure of greater historical weight commensurate with the ongoing and widespread re-evaluation of Napoleon in the 1820s.

Drawing on images from Napoleon's iconography, Pushkin created a narrative by distributing historical episodes stanza by stanza with a formal regularity that suggests historical inevitability. The poem, relentlessly focused on Napoleon's motivation and drive, is singularly devoid of philosophical questioning. Rather than adopting a distant viewpoint, the narrative unfolds the separate tableaux of the panorama across the viewer's consciousness. This disposition generates the forward momentum of a contemporary perspective as well as a near-cinematic sense of being in the middle of chaos. Two turning points, however, introduce a distanced perspective where the issue of historical judgement arises. The first is the frame-device of the opening two stanzas where the vision of posterity as the 'memory of the world', the new home of the hero exiled from the universe, appears.

Чудесный жребий совершился;
 Угас великой человек.
 В неволе мрачной закатился
 Наполеона грозный век.
 Исчез властитель осужденный,
 Могучий баловень побед,
 И для изгнанника вселенной
 Уже потомство настает.
 О ты, чьей памятью кровавой
 Мир долго, долго будет полн,
 Приосенен твоею славой,
 Почий среди пустынных волн . . .
 Великолешная могила!
 Над урной, где твой прах лежит,
 Народов ненависть почила,
 И луч бессмертия горит.⁵⁰ (ll. 1–16)

The miraculous destiny is accomplished: | The great man is extinguished. | In a gloomy captivity the terrible age | Of Napoleon was eclipsed. | The condemned master has

⁵⁰ Pushkin, *PSS*, ii. 213.

disappeared, | The mighty favourite of victories. | But for the exile from the universe |
Now posterity arises.

Oh you, with whose bloody memory | The world will long, long be full, | Lighted by
your glory, | Amidst the resting places of vacant waves! | Great grave . . . ! | Above the urn
where your ashes lie | The hatred of nations rests | And the flame of immortality burns.

The argument of the poem is that a true evaluation of Napoleon requires two perspectives, both the contemporary and the historical, and Pushkin maintains these two viewpoints in describing the era. Artistic worth and moral judgement stand next to one another in the portrait without causing any contradiction: aesthetic admiration is accorded to the imagination that Napoleon displays in calming a nation made deliriously uncontrollable by its revolution and new-found freedom. But contradiction governs the first two lines which juxtapose the miraculous and the mortal—his death is a miracle because it disproves his immortality; yet at the same time, as the final line states, he lives on for posterity. The semantic fields of domination ('groznyi', 'velikii', 'moguchii') and captivity ('osuzhdennyi', 'nevoliii') create a tension that is, of course, resolved only by death. At this point such contradiction is only a form of rhetorical paradox enlisted to underscore the speaker's emotion. The issue of posterity ('potomstvo') coincides with a rhetorical division at the second stanza. The poet addresses Napoleon directly and evaluates his reputation. The tension between aesthetic admiration and moral outrage is resolved into sympathy for a vanquished enemy, privileging aesthetic appreciation and moral (albeit conditional) admiration. At a moment when Pushkin is most inclined generally to indulge in Byronic self-identification with his own heroes, it is not surprising that he engineers an end to the poem where positive feeling overcomes ambivalence about his reign. If the poet praises Napoleon's mind as 'miraculous', it is with admiration for the energy and daring that mobilized the French nation against Russia. The terms are close to those of Goethe who looked back with surprising admiration for Napoleon as a figure

always luminous, always light, decided, possessing at any moment the energy to execute immediately whatever he has decided is beneficial or necessary. His life was that of a demigod. One might say with respect to him that the light of his spirit was not dimmed, even for an instant. And that his life shone with a splendour the world never saw before him and will never see again.⁵¹

The second turning point comes in stanza 11, where the poet repudiates Napoleon's detractors. While history has yet to pronounce conclusively on Napoleon, the poet has already reached a verdict:

Оцепенелыми руками
Схватив железный свой венец,
Он бездну видит пред очами,

⁵¹ Cited in 'Chronique napoleonienne', *Revue de l'Institut Napoléon* (January 1923), 83.

Он гибнет, гибнет наконец.
 Бежат Европы ополченья!
 Окровавленные снега
 Провозгласили их паденье,
 И тает с ними след врага.
 И все, как буря, закипело;
 Европа свой расторгла плен;
 Во след тирану полетело,
 Как гром, проклятие племен.
 И длань народной Немезиды
 Подъяту видит великан:
 И до последней все обиды
 Отплачены тебе, тиран!
 Искушены его стяжанья
 И зло воинственных чудес
 Тоскою душного изгнанья
 Под сенью чуждою небес.
 И знойный остров заточенья
 Полнощный парус посетит,
 И путник слово примиренья
 На оном камне начертит. (ll. 81–104)

His hands pinned in irons, | He grabs his crown of iron, | And sees the abyss before
 his eyes, | He perishes, finally perishes. | Europe's recruits flee; | The bloodied snows |
 Proclaim their fall | And the trace of the enemy melts with them.

Like a storm everything seethes; | Europe has broken its captivity; | In pursuit of the
 tyrant there flies, | Like lightning, the scourge of tribes. | And the giant sees raised | The
 hand of popular Nemesis: | So to the very last one all injuries | Are at your expense, tyrant!

Atoned for are his strivings | And the evil of his martial miracles | Through the
 languishing of suffocating exile | Under the shadow of foreign skies. | And then the
 midnight sail visits | The burning island of incarceration, | And the traveller inscribes
 on | A rock a word of submission.

The injunction of the fifteenth and final stanza not to reproach Napoleon is an
 injunction to historians to forestall rash judgements:

Да будет омрачен позором
 Тот малодушный, кто в сей день
 Безумным возмутит укором
 Его развенчанную тень!
 Хвала! Он русскому народу
 Высокий жребий указал,
 И миру вечную свободу
 Из мрака ссылки завещал. (ll. 113–20)

May the very coward be stricken | With shame on the very day | He, a madman, disturbs
 with reproach | His overthrown shadow! | Glory! To the Russian people | He displayed

supreme sacrifice | And to the world eternal freedom | Did he bequeath from the gloom
of exile.

That conclusion does not implicate the poet in a political statement; he speaks instead as advocate for the Romantic genius who makes his fate, tempts fate, challenges the universe, and only then fails because other forces establish a hostile order. The image of Napoleon as fallen angel, widespread in European representations, reflects Pushkin's determination not to reduce to merely human dimensions a character whose superior force matches the aesthetic power of the imagination. The rise of the military genius follows a tragic trajectory until hubris leads him to immoral action. When he destroys himself in Russia, his tragic destiny is fulfilled and his guilt absolved. This is why the poet refuses to license denigration of Napoleon. The sublime narrative of his conquests compensates for—or at least offsets—the need for historical judgement. This is the last poem in which Pushkin is still interested in representing the 'human' Napoleon, author of a contradictory legacy of freedom and oppression. After 1821 Napoleon is on the way from being hero to becoming Hero.⁵²

The departure point of the 1815 poem was the thrill of the escapist plot and the intimation that history was in the making. In 1821, death has released Napoleon into history, making his career a record to be contemplated from the outside: interior monologue is no longer an appropriate vehicle. The 1821 poem clearly belongs to the family of Napoleonic images that avoid pity through visionary Romantic appreciation. While Pushkin does not use the language of Hegel, he reflects the spirit of the age at the precise moment when Napoleon inspired a need among thinkers to understand the principles of history all over again. At the level of narrative, the 1821 poem treats history as a finite record of events coterminous with the life of the historical agent. Yet on the level of self-aware historical discourse, the poem indicates that there is another life to the hero that is only just being written. The burden of posterity belongs to the historians and poets, but at this juncture the poet does not actually assume the responsibility for making such an evaluation. The poem subordinates moral conclusions to the excitement of its narrative digest because, implicitly, the poet deems it impossible as yet to take stock of the true meaning of the era.

'Napoleon' works effectively as a poem because of its dynamism and drama and compressed imagery, but it is a screen onto which Pushkin projects an evolving attitude that in 1830 came into greater focus in 'The Hero'. The poet's moral attraction to Napoleon is guided entirely by an aesthetic appreciation of his activity and narrative richness as a subject. The meditation of 1821 is close to Romantic drama, celebrating in Napoleon an example of the egotistical sublime. The power of Napoleon's mind and visionary genius is what counts, even the excess of destruction as a manifestation of volition. At the end, Napoleon's fate

⁵² See Pierre Barbeis, 'Napoléon: structure et signification d'un mythe littéraire', *RHLF*, 70 (1970), 1031–58.

is both human and personal, and mythic and supernatural. He pines for his native France, but the watery tomb that he contemplates hints at his status as an incomprehensible natural phenomenon who in death will once again be dissolved into the universe—nothing less than the oceans can be his ‘magnificent grave’ (‘velikolepnaia mogila’). The great and the awful are not easily dissociated; nor is the response of posterity to a colossal historical figure easily understood. In Pushkin’s contemporary world, newly liberated peoples determined Napoleon’s reputation, but ultimately the guarantors and arbiters of his fame were the poets and historians who wrestled with the contradictions of his achievement.

HEROIC TYPOLOGY AND ENLIGHTENMENT HISTORIOGRAPHY

I want a Hero.

(Byron, *Don Juan*)⁵³

There is no doubt that he [Byron] felt great envy of the brilliant part of Napoleon’s character.⁵⁴

(Moore)

A fascination with the precise moral and practical chemistry of the hero intrigued Pushkin from the 1820s. His interest was commensurate with that of the French historians whom he read avidly. Revisionist attitudes to the man and his era made Napoleon a relevant test-case for any attempt to formulate greatness as a type. From the mid-1820s, as the legend of Napoleon progressively reworked the story of the Empire, casting the satanic tyrant as a fallen liberal angel, Pushkin’s poems on greatness treat the problem of correlating moral judgements, inspired by the creative intuition of the writer or painter, with the ruling of history. Should the poet or artist aim to provoke sceptical attitudes to official art and historiography? Should the Romantic poet or artist, attracted to the moral discourse and style of classicism, also adopt its didactic function? Or should the Romantic poet make part of his art the mission to instruct morally by exposing the political suppositions of official art? These questions are central to interpretations of ‘The Hero’ and ‘The Commander’, marking progress from Pushkin’s earlier poems on Napoleon’s heroism in which he reproduced the standard representation of Napoleon as an emblem of Romantic genius and fate.

⁵³ Byron, *Don Juan*, Canto 1.1.

⁵⁴ Reportedly of Lord Byron. See Thomas Medwin, *Conversations of Lord Byron noted during a residence with his Lordship at Pisa in the Years 1821 and 1822* (London, 1825) [Modz. 1149]. Contemporaries saw in Napoleon’s death a pendant to Byron’s magnificent self-sacrifice, a view that Pushkin read in *Revue étrangère de la littérature, des sciences et des arts: choix d’articles extraits des meilleurs ouvrages et recueils périodiques publiés en Europe*, iv. 22.

In French historical thought of the post-Napoleonic period, the concept of the hero featured in ideas about national self-revaluation and individual self-esteem.⁵⁵ The providential historical school of François Guizot and Jules Michelet endowed heroes with the power to direct history and take nations down the path of a God-given destiny.⁵⁶ However much their ambivalence about Napoleon combined nostalgia for the hero of the years prior to 1804, it was clear to the same historians that military authority was no longer a viable basis for heroic figures: weary, beleaguered, and actually much more prosperous, the masses that followed Napoleon required a different type of leader. Napoleon, who in respect of popular appeal was never greater than the power of his image, was reborn to suit the times. Prince P. A. Viazemskii summed up the paradoxical longing for Napoleon:

Our times are not epic . . . Our age is narrow, investigative, extremely petty, self-righteous and if it lies then it lies to itself, and then that only comes out of an unquestionable, fanatical love for the truth. What epic, that is, what kind of epic superstition, could continue to exist in Europe after Voltaire's *Essai sur les Moeurs*, the *Mémoires* of the Duc de Saint-Simon, the political epigrams of Talleyrand in the form of his hundred-eyed, hundred-handed journalistic writing? . . . If, however, there is a figure in the most recent times, who could pose for the epic pen of the poet, that is indeed Napoleon, for his life is an epic.⁵⁷

Contemporary historians saw in France's loss to Russia the end of an opportunity granted by Providence to realize the exceptional enterprises that gave individuals the chance to exhibit personal valour and express their own heroism. That lost victory, paradoxically, helped to create the positive face of the Napoleonic myth after his death. In his preface to the 1833 collection of songs that Pushkin owned and read, the popular writer Pierre Béranger provided insight into the relation of the hero and the masses of the Napoleonic period:

The greatest poet of modern times, and perhaps of all time, Napoleon, when he freed himself from the imitation of ancient monarchical forms, judged the people in just the way our poets and artists should judge them. He wanted, for example, free public performances to be made up of the masterpieces of the French stage. Corneille and Molière often fitted the bill, and it was noted that their plays were never applauded with greater discernment. The great man learned early, in camps and in the middle of revolutionary turmoil, the degree of elevation to which the instinct of the masses could rise when skilfully moved. It would be tempting to say that it was to satisfy this instinct

⁵⁵ See Ceri Crossley, *French Historians and Romanticism: Thierry, Guizot, the Saint-Simoniens, Quinet, Michelet* (London: Routledge, 1993), 38 (on the Great Man as the instrument of God), 71–6 (on Guizot).

⁵⁶ On the influence of the 'Providential School' on Pushkin, see Svetlana Evdokimova, *Pushkin's Historical Imagination* (New Haven: Yale, 1999), 33–5.

⁵⁷ P. A. Viazemskii, *Ostaf'evskii arkhiv* (St Petersburg: n.p., 1899–1913), ii. 267–9.

that he so exhausted the world. The love borne him by the younger generation who did not know him is sufficient proof of what power poetic emotion exercises on the people.⁵⁸

Testimonials of this type encapsulate the change in Napoleon's status from pariah to standard-bearer for a new type of heroic leadership. The fall of Napoleon and the Bourbon restoration also impinged on representations of the people or mob. The relationship of the hero and the people was seen as reciprocal. In the presence of heroic leaders, the people submitted. In the period of revolutionary and heroic action, the people, in the form of *la Grande Armée* and in the stunning patriotism of Russia in 1812, followed dutifully. Even in the absence of great leaders, the people worshipped Everyman and demonstrated heroic transformation, individually and collectively. In historical and journalistic writing of the 1820s and 1830s, the people and mob have become equivalent. Once heroic, the people are now bourgeois; once spiritual, they are now materialistic; once an inspiration to the hero-cum-poet, they are now scorned by him.⁵⁹ Such nostalgia combined with frustration compelled thinkers including Guizot (much read by Pushkin) as well as Kościuszko and Adam Mickiewicz to recast the Napoleonic experience as the great example of heroic exceptionalism, formed on the ancient model of ethical rigour rather than military prowess. In his memoir of Napoleon on St Helena, Napoleon's secretary came close to dictating the script for a new generation gripped by nostalgia for greatness and ready to take stock:

The poet, the philosopher said that it was a spectacle worthy of the Gods to see the man in the grip of misfortune. Dreaming and constancy also have their glory—so noble and so great a character could not descend to the level of more vulgar souls; he who governed us with so much glory, who had created the admiration and destiny of the world, could not end up like a desperate gambler or deceived lover.⁶⁰

In the post-Napoleonic period, nostalgia for the exhilarations of France's period of empire building gnawed at the hearts of the veterans of the campaigns who regretted political apathy, and tormented Romantics like Musset with a sense of the emptiness of an age dominated by the bourgeois values of the Restoration. All

⁵⁸ *Chansons nouvelles et dernières de P.-J. Béranger* (Paris: Perrotin, 1833) [Modz. 599], 41.

⁵⁹ The theme runs through French literature of the 1830s. A good example contained in Pushkin's library would be Barthélemy et Méry, *L'Insurrection: poème dédié aux Parisiens*, 2nd edn. (Paris, 1830) [Modz. 582]. See Luigi Mascilli Migliorini, *Le Mythe de héros: France et Italie après la chute de Napoléon* (Paris: La Bibliothèque Napoléon, 2002), 58–64; and on fear of the sovereignty of the mob Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries*, 55. The attitude is also felt in the visual language of paintings. See Beth Segal Wright, 'Scott's Historical Novels and French Historical Painting 1815–1855', *Art Bulletin*, 63 (1981), 268–9.

⁶⁰ E. Las Cases, *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* (Brussels, 1823–4), i. 91 [Modz. 1074]. This work played an important part in the formation of the legend: Las Cases refuted charges of tyranny and wanton cruelty, addressing the rumours about various incidents including Jaffa, and generally noting in sections that Pushkin will have read the part of rumour and gossip in assailing the reputations of great figures, e.g., see i. 245.

accepted the impossibility of a hero on the Napoleonic scale.⁶¹ In the aftermath of Waterloo, when military service lost its glamour, but the rot of ennui had not quite yet set in, the status of the hero was redefined in moral terms. The historian and biographer Luigi Migliorini has written that memoirists of the period, across Europe and across the political spectrum, identified a divergence between 'gloire' and 'bonheur', between heroism and individual perfection. Consistent with the ancient virtues, the hero became a man of impeccable integrity, of valiant and honest character endowed with a sense of national duty.⁶² In a world where military action no longer defined the heroic, the new emphasis was on the beauty of moral perfection as the measure of an individual worth. In this context, moral character was the measure of heroism. Guizot and Benjamin Constant voiced the consensus of their generation in arguing that the elevation of individual perfection and virtue was part of the extension of democracy and bourgeois values in society, thereby subordinating the Great Man to the interests of the body politic.⁶³ Heroic exceptionality moved away from military prowess because it was no longer compatible with a model of uniqueness accessible to the masses. After the 1824 Restoration, writing in France embraced Plutarchian exceptionalism as the measure of greatness, defining the modern hero according to the antique virtues of bravery and valour, sternness and imagination. The ideals out of which Chaadaev fashioned his behavioural codes and ideals looked timely once again. Events in Russia and France in the summer of 1830 would give Pushkin another opportunity to revise his view of the Napoleonic ideal.

From 1827 there are numerous texts, from lyric poems to narratives like *Poltava* and *The Captain's Daughter*, in which Pushkin pondered historical causality as a random or providential force.⁶⁴ Other propositions concerning the capacity of rulers to act justly or not (a theme at the heart of *Andzhelo*, Pushkin's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*) followed from conclusions about the power of the individual to adapt to circumstances and dominate them or acquiesce. The way in which Napoleon's biography and legacy continued to reverberate through contemporary events gave Pushkin a perfect opportunity to consider the feasibility of the Great Man as a model of historical agency. Clues to his thinking can be found in his reading. Among the most fascinating sources in his library was the copy of Grimm's *Correspondance littéraire*. In the 1820s, Pushkin acquired a rare edition of this diverse and rich collection of essays, reviews, and articles on aesthetic theory, history, art criticism, originally assembled by Grimm with Diderot's help and circulated to a small list of European monarchs from the 1750s until the 1770s. The volumes of Pushkin's set are

⁶¹ See Frank Lestrignat, 'Préface', in Musset, *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 2003), 14.

⁶² See Migliorini, *Le Mythe de héros*, 23–51.

⁶³ Tzvetan Todorov, *Benjamin Constant: la passion démocratique* (Paris: Hachette, 1997), 11.

⁶⁴ See Alexander Dolinin, 'Historicism or Providentialism? Pushkin's History of Pugachev in the Context of French Romantic Historiography', *Slavic Review*, 58: 2 (Summer 1999), 291–309.

cut extensively and consecutively, marks of purposeful study rather than random dipping. In the entry for 15 May 1754 Grimm provided a lengthy comparative analysis of historical methodology in which he attacked the growing tendency of historians to collect facts at the expense of moral instruction. While he allows that historians have a duty to collate facts and to try to extract an accurate record from conflicting accounts, Grimm thinks the effort is worthwhile only if it concerns heroic deeds and imitates the best ancient writers, especially Plutarch and Tacitus. For them, the purpose of history is to commemorate 'the actions, the morals that they judged worthy of their pen. A fact is only interesting insofar as it makes character emerge; a king does not deserve the attention of the historian unless he is a hero and a human being ('héros et homme').'⁶⁵ If philosophers were left to write history, then history would be a narrative of the deeds of great men and women. He concludes that it is only in adopting the principles of Plutarch, who distilled the moral greatness of his heroes, that historians will be useful, and he identifies in Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII* (published first in 1730 and much reprinted) an example among the moderns of such an approach.

Pushkin, who worked in Voltaire's Library in St Petersburg in 1832, must have read this essay by the time he wrote 'The Commander' and perhaps even before he wrote 'The Hero'.⁶⁶ Voltaire's historical work made relevant reading in the context of the post-Napoleonic world when writers and historians approached the task of assessing the era of a great man. The role that Voltaire gives in his histories to the great individual as the shaper of a nation, and especially those named for rulers, had a lasting impact on Pushkin's attitude to the writing of history, whether in the form of his own chronicle account of the Pugachev rebellion or in his representation of the mythic labours of the Great Man in *The Bronze Horseman*. Newly aware of Voltaire's precepts as historian, and stimulated by the turmoil of the July Revolution to ponder the Napoleonic legacy, Pushkin condensed in 'The Hero' a meditation on the question of historical truth and moral evaluation of great men and deeds.⁶⁷ The poem is complex because it mediates historical judgement through visual and poetic discourse. 'The Hero' raises these issues in a spirit of scepticism and uncertainty and without overtly endorsing any heroic model.

The spectacular reversal in Napoleon's fate was the focal point of the legend of Napoleon, all the more so as the last chapter was being played out for

⁶⁵ *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique de Grimm et de Diderot*, 15 vols. (Paris, 1829–31), i. 153 [Modz. 831].

⁶⁶ He mentions reading Grimm in a letter of 17 April 1833 to his wife (Pushkin, *PSS*, xv, no. 917, p. 128). An earlier letter to Viazemskii discusses French and English historians, including Voltaire, Hume, and Robertson (Pushkin, *PSS*, xiii, no. 91, p. 102 (5 July 1824)).

⁶⁷ See M. I. Gille'son, *Ot arzamasskogo bratstva k pushkinskomu krugu pisatelei* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1977), 37.

contemporaries during the July Revolution of 1830. Virtually forgotten since his final incarceration, Napoleon, within months of his death, had once again captivated the imagination of artists and writers, who began to take stock of the man and his time. His death provoked a counter-reaction against the stolidity of the Bourbon restoration, and his political influence became palpable among unlikely political allies such as surviving Jacobins and Bonapartists. The Hundred Days had inspired fear in the newly propertied classes and royalists, who dreaded that the return of the emperor might lead to confiscation, but Napoleon had also laid the groundwork for his reputation as a statesman when he introduced the 'Additional Act' guaranteeing a wide range of political liberties.⁶⁸ Although many thinkers, including Benjamin Constant, were reluctant to accept his transformation from military power-house and fallen warrior into republican champion, Napoleon's belated liberal actions led to the remarkable change in his status in the 1820s.⁶⁹ By 1830 Napoleon had come to be regarded as a popular champion and liberator, an icon of individualism, and an emblem of French nationalism. French reactions were closely followed in Russia.

The July Revolution had taken the lid off suppressed popular longing for Napoleon, and made depictions of the imperial period part of official iconography at the Salon and Versailles, and middle-class culture.⁷⁰ From the 1830s, Napoleon became appropriated by various factions, some in competition, some in uncomfortable alliance, because after fifteen years of ostracism, the Orléans dynasty found it politically expedient to ally itself with the popular enthusiasm of the Napoleonic era. Napoleon appeared on trinkets, on porcelain, on large canvases, on easel canvases, in literature, and on the stage. The work of Jean Tulard, Migliorini, and, most recently, Sudhir Hazareesingh explains the history of the 'legend' and the process by which a revitalized portrait of the emperor as republican champion rather than tyrant, as lawgiver rather than lawbreaker, was created.⁷¹

The immediate catalyst for Pushkin's meditation on heroism was the fall of the Bourbons in the July Revolution of 1830. The date (29 September 1830) printed at the bottom of 'The Hero' is significant for two reasons. The outcome of the July Revolution hung in the balance between the end of July and Louis-Philippe's coronation on 9 August, during which time Bonapartists remained hopeful that Napoleon's nephew would beat Louis-Philippe, the duc d'Orléans, to the throne. Similarly, readers intent on seeing the poem as a veiled message to Nicholas I note that the date refers to Nicholas I's triumphant return to

⁶⁸ Pushkin read the positive account of François Antommarchi, *Derniers Moments de Napoléon* (Paris, 1825), 493 ff. [Modz. 549].

⁶⁹ Pushkin admired Constant's political writings and owned more of his work than survives in the catalogue of the library.

⁷⁰ See Marrinan, *Painting Politics for Louis-Philippe*, 148.

⁷¹ See Hazareesingh, *The Legend of Napoleon*, ch. 1.

Moscow after he pacified a mob during the cholera epidemic of 1830. When he published the poem anonymously, Pushkin included the date in order to create a contemporary reference point.⁷² It inserts the poem into the historical events of the July Revolution in which the Napoleonic era in its long duration continued to be played out; and inscribes the poem's values and images in the period discourse in which Napoleon was represented. By taking the date as proof of connection with contemporary politics, readings often ignore the extent to which a meditation on Napoleon and heroism is a response to contemporary European events that does not have to be unlocked with an allegorical key. Commentators tend to pursue one of two basic strategies with this information. Some disregard the larger question of Pushkin's meaning and discuss it as another instance of veiled allusion to contemporary politics. Others cite, as corroboration, a letter Pushkin wrote in which he speaks of the poem as an apocalyptic piece, and they extend their topical interpretation by reading the poem with reference to sermons preached at the time in thanksgiving for Nicholas's survival during the cholera epidemic that led to rural unrest. Both of these views have informational value, but both are incomplete and ignore most of the text apart from the epigraph and date. If the date establishes a connection between Nicholas and Napoleon, it is between one figure and a model ruler, and between Nicholas's heroism and Napoleon's continued capacity to influence European affairs.

While the search for implicit political meaning in Pushkin's poetry has its own validity, not all Pushkin's poems speak to the Russian context in the same way. There is no question that Pushkin, particularly from the time of his interview with Nicholas in 1826, had hopes that the tsar would enhance the role of the nobility and govern more closely with the nobility, proving closer to Pushkin's model of the enlightened ruler. In poems such as 'Stanzas' ('Stansy', 1826), and later 'The Feast of Peter the Great' ('Pir Petra Velikogo', 1835), Pushkin addressed the question of his own ruler's performance through historical example, and in earlier poems, like 'To Licinius', he may have written an allegorical critique of the reign of Alexander I.⁷³ But it is also the case that in these poems he not only refers to a specific monarch, but formulates an ideal of kingship. Of them all, 'The Hero' is the least allegorical. Out of events that suggest a parallel between Napoleon and Nicholas, Pushkin develops a typology of leadership that he considers in the abstract in 'The Hero'. One underlying question therefore is

⁷² Pushkin sent the poem to Pogodin in *Teleskop* and asked him to omit his name. This cover letter (Pushkin, *PSS*, xiv, no. 533, pp. 121–2 (early November 1830)) contains the reference to the poem as his 'apocalyptic song from Paphmos', a phrase that some used as the key to interpretation. See V. S. Listov, 'Iz tvorcheskoi istorii stikhotvoreniia "Geroi"', *VPK* (1981), 131–46.

⁷³ On Pushkin's politics in the 1830s, see Oleg Proskurin, 'Pushkin's Politics', in Andrew Kahn (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Pushkin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 112–18.

about the relation between Napoleon as a Romantic prototype and how appropriate it is to hold any ruler, including Nicholas I, to such a measure. But the poem offers no critique of Nicholas, obliquely or directly, because the dialogue between the Historian and Friend, the two speakers in 'The Hero', shows how problematic any attempt at defining the heroic has become. Measuring greatness and assigning historical worth is fraught with more and not less uncertainty in the period following the achievements and disgraces of a Great Man like Napoleon.

In this connection, the date has a second significance in anchoring the composition of the poem and Pushkin's thought in the July Revolution. The Bourbon Restoration in 1830, more than Napoleon's death nine years earlier, had brought closure to the historical period launched by the French Revolution. The events of July 1830 in France prompted leading French writers to ponder the Napoleonic period and its aftermath, and the impact on poetic and historical thinking and representation of historical genius was immediately felt. One product of the Restoration was the unlikely reinvention of Napoleon for an age of bourgeois stability. The superior man is not the Byronic hero exuding gloom and tormented alienation. Instead, the sign of the true poet is a serene yet inspired detachment full of spiritual energy, 'le génie au front calme, aux yeux pleins de rayons'.⁷⁴ The new Romantic genius may be radical in politics yet classical in aesthetics. Victor Hugo expressed the sense of re-evaluation when he wrote that 'le plus fort est celui qui tient sa force en bride', citing the heroes of Athens and Sparta, noteworthy for their disciplined passions, as exemplary figures. Hugo speaks for his contemporaries in praising discipline over tumult, reason over ruthless energy, and grace over force as characteristics of a genius common to historical actors and poets alike. Whereas the earlier poems discussed in this chapter showed that Pushkin's exhilaration over Napoleon's works and days was undiminished by an ethical reckoning, the fundamental concern of 'The Hero' is to ask whether the standards of the classical ideal of the hero, embodied in a figure like Chaadaev, apply to the greatest hero and, in some eyes, greatest villain of the Romantic age.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ R. Canat, *L'Hellénisme des romantiques: le romantisme des Grecs 1826–1840* (Paris: M. Didier, 1953), 241. In a fascinating survey, Canat identifies this as the post-Napoleonic ideal in sculpture and painting as well as poetry. Royal statuary was badly disfigured after the revolution in acts of *damnatio memoriae*. But in the Napoleonic period marble once again becomes a favoured medium for the new 'hero'. On the reinvention of the tradition see Christopher M. S. Johns, 'Portrait Mythology: Antonio Canova's Portraits of the Bonapartes', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28: 1 (1994), 121–3.

⁷⁵ Dates of composition have led scholars to anchor the meaning of the poem in the immediate political context of 1830, reading it as an allegory for the behaviour of Nicholas I whose brave comportment during the plague of that year Pushkin admired. G. V. Krasnov, *Pushkin. Boldinskii stranitsy* (Gor'kii: Volgo-Viatskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1984), 44 sees it specifically as a defence of the tsar. Recent work argues that the biblical language in Pushkin's poem consciously echoes a pair of sermons preached in Moscow by the Metropolitan Filaret (see V. E. Vatsuro, 'Apokalipticheskaia

'THE HERO' (1830)

In his study of Napoleon and British Romanticism, Simon Bainbridge put the issue well in saying that 'Napoleon was the supreme embodiment of the hero in an age in which the artist was increasingly seen as heroic, but his career raised numerous questions about the nature of heroism itself.'⁷⁶ Two interrelated questions of this kind occupy Pushkin's poem. A dialogue between friends, it asks whether we can arrive at a precise definition of the Hero when the truth of an individual test-case is hard to discern.

Герой

Что есть истина?

Друг

Да, слава в прихотях вольна.
 Как огненный язык, она
 По избранным главам летает,
 С одной сегодня исчезает
 И на другой уже видна.
 За новизной бежать смиренно
 Народ бессмысленный привык;
 Но нам уж то чело священо,
 Над коим вспыхнул сей язык.
 На троне, на кровавом поле,
 Меж граждан на чреде иной
 Из сих избранных кто всех боле
 Твоею властвует душой?

Поэт

Все он, все он—пришлец сей бранный.
 Пред кем смирились цари,
 Сей ратник, вольностью венчанный,
 Исчезнувший, как тень зари.

Друг

Когда ж твой ум он поражает
 Своею чудною звездой?
 Тогда ль, как с Альпов он взирает
 На дно Италии святой;
 Тогда ли, как хватает знамя
 Иль жезл диктаторский; тогда ль,

pesn'” Pushkina (opyt istolkovaniia stikhotvoreniia “Geroi”, 92–122)); these conclusions are repeated and amplified by V. G. Morozov, “Apokalipticheskaia pesn'” Pushkina (opyt istolkovaniia stikhotvoreniia “Geroi”, in *Dukhovnyi truzhenik. A. S. Pushkin v kontekste russkoi kul'tury* (St Petersburg: Nauka, 1999), 90–117.

⁷⁶ Simon Bainbridge, *Napoleon and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2.

Как водит и кругом и вдаль
Войны стремительное пламя,
И пролетает ряд побед
Над ним одна другой вослед;
Тогда ль, как рать героя плещет
Перед громадой пирамид,
Иль как Москва пустынно блещет,
Его приемля,—и молчит?

Поэт

Нет, не у Счастья на лоне
Его я вижу, не в бою,
Не зятем кесаря на троне;
Не там, где на скалу свою
Сев, мучим казнию покоя,
Осмеян прозвищем героя,
Он угасает недвижим,
Плащом закрывшись боевым.
Не та картина предо мною!
Одров я вижу длинный строй,
Лежит на каждом труп живой,
Клейменный мощною чумою,
Царицею болезней . . . он,
Не бранной смертью окружен,
Нахмурясь ходит меж одрами
И хладно руку жмет чуме,
И в погибающем уме
Рождает бодрость . . . Небесами
Клянусь: кто жизнь свою
Играл пред сумрачным недугом,
Чтоб ободрить угасший взор,
Клянусь, тот будет небу другом,
Каков бы ни был приговор
Земли слепой . . .

Друг

Мечты поэта—

Историк строгий гонит вас!
Увы! его раздался глас,—*
И где ж очарованье света!

Поэт

Да будет проклят правды свет,
Когда посредственности хладной,
Завистливой, к соблазну жадной,
Он угождает праздно!—Нет!
Тьмы низких истин мне дороже
Нас возвышающий обман . . .

Оставь герою сердце! Что же
Он будет без него? Тиран . . .

Друг

Утешься

29 сентября 1830

Москва

*Mémoires de Bourrienne⁷⁷

The Hero

What is truth?

Friend

Yes, glory is free and fickle. | Like a tongue of flame, it | Flies about the heads of the
chosen, | Today disappears from that of one | And tomorrow lights on another. | The
people have become accustomed to | Meekly chasing after new phenomena; | But for us,
however, the profile is holy | Of the one about whose head this tongue flared. | On the
throne, on the bloody field of battle, | Among citizens of a different rank | Who is it from
among these chosen ones | That most commands your soul?

Poet

It is he, it is he—the martial newcomer. | Before whom rulers surrendered, | This soldier
crowned by liberty, | Who disappeared like the shade of dawn.

Friend

When does he first stun your mind | With his miraculous star? | Is it when he gazes from
the Alps | Over the plain of holy Italy; | Or is it when he grabs the flag | Or the sceptre
of the dictator; or when | He leads, nearby and at a distance, | The swift flame of war, |
And a series of victories fly | Over him one after another; | Or is it when battle washed
over the hero | Under the mass of the pyramids, | Or when deserted Moscow shines | As
it receives him—and says nothing?

Poet

No, in the cradle of Happiness | I don't see him, nor in battle, | Nor as Caesar's son-in-law
on the throne, | Nor seated on a high cliff, | Tormented by a punishment of inaction, |
Mocked with the nickname of a hero, | Unmoving as his flame goes out, | Wrapped in
his military cloak; | That is not the picture I have before me! | A long row of beds I see
before me, | On each of which before a living corpse lies, | Stamped by the powerful
plague, | The queen of illnesses . . . , | Surrounded by death of an unmilitary kind, | He
walks among the rows, his brow furrowed, | And coldly clasps the hand of the plague, |
And in the mind of the dying | Spawns valour . . . By the heavens | I swear: one who risked
his own life | Before this grim illness, | In order to embolden a dying gaze, | I swear that
he will be a friend to the heavens, | Whatever conspiracy there is | On the blind earth.

Friend

Fancies of a poet, | The strict historian pursues you! | Alas! his voice has sounded—* |
And where then is the world's enchantment!

Poet

May the light of truth be damned, | If it indulges in vain | A cold, envious and
greedy mediocrity!—No! | An illusion that elevates us | Is dearer to me than a mass

⁷⁷ Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 251.

of low truths... | Leave the hero with a heart... for what | Will he be without it? A tyrant...

Friend

Calm yourself...

29 September 1830 | Moscow

*Mémoires de Bourrienne

Their first exchanges address a fundamental problem as to whether the definition of greatness should be contingent on fame. While the Pentecostal, sacred image of the flame superficially suggests that inherent greatness may be a matter of divine favour, the Friend by contrast links fame to popular appeal rather than to an older ethical evaluation based on notions of virtue.⁷⁸ Who makes up a crowd? 'Narod' has always proved a highly vexed word in Pushkin scholarship; arguably a sense of his meaning is best determined with reference to immediate context rather than understood more generally. In this case, the speaker's scorn of popular favour reflects a noticeable antagonism in European and Russian literature of the period. In the post-Napoleonic age, politicians, military leaders, and writers vied for the attention and approval of a growing bourgeoisie and increasingly powerful press. As in the 'Poet' cycle, Pushkin has in mind the commercial press when he denigrates the crowd. In lines 6 to 8, the Friend takes a negative view of the judgement of the crowd because such popularity raises suspicion about demagogic capacity to anticipate and satisfy the wishes of the 'mindless people', who arbitrarily worship change and the excitement of upheaval. Behind the masses stand the opinion-makers of the popular press, who in France and England invoked the authority of the people when pressing their own agenda. Wordsworth's championing of the common man, as Pushkin knew, had incited debate that began in the late 1790s and continued to resonate onto the pages of the literary journals that he read in the 1820s. The obvious question for the reader, therefore, is whether the painter, historian, or poet can be relied on to evaluate the claim for fame with greater disinterest than government-sanctioned or commercial institutions, which perforce lack historical and moral perspective.⁷⁹

To ask what the truth is to ask whether we can trust the Poet as an independent judge. In an essay that Pushkin would later read and note, perhaps in confirmation of his own conclusions, Sainte-Beuve considered the connection between the legend of Napoleon and his disappearance, observing that historical greatness

⁷⁸ On the motif of the flame, see Petiteau, *Napoléon*, 29.

⁷⁹ Note the fascinating remark by Planché (translated into Russian) in his 15 July 1834 review of Sainte-Beuve's novel. Published in the *Revue des deux mondes* his survey of contemporary writers compares the 'crowd' to the chorus of a tragedy: 'Typically, the abuse ('khula') or praise of contemporaries is nothing more than a pact concluded with vanity. By elevating onto a pedestal those who were dragged through the dust, the majority of people think only of themselves and vow to attain for themselves the same celebrity ('pochesti'). There are very few who sing hosannas without betting on their own apotheosis.' This is a useful comment because it sets the question of fame in a larger Romantic context outside the immediate political environment insisted on by so many commentators.

can only be assessed by posterity and is not in the end about victory: ‘The forms under which the past appears to men of our own times, that is for the poet true reality (la vraie réalité).’⁸⁰ The poet can discriminate between ephemeral and genuine heroes because the true hero takes possession of the poet’s soul. Such subjectivity, based on visionary power and insight, invites scrutiny.

In the central passage of dialogue, each speaker supplies a set of images representing an alternative and contrasting view of the heroic. What moment defines a hero best? Is it the sublime but horrid adventurer, a general of genius and military miracle born under a lucky star whose titanic achievement attains the heights of the Alps and the Pyramids? Is it the Napoleon of the doomed Russian campaign who epitomizes glory? What sort of figure commands the soul of the Poet? To put that question is also to consider whether inspiration has a moral element or is purely aesthetic. Despite his downfall and death, Napoleon incarnates greatness by virtue of the three features that were fixtures in the myth: his status as an outsider (‘prishlets’, l. 14), his greatness as a warrior (‘sei ratnik | pred kem smirilisia tsari’, ll. 15–16), and, perhaps, above all his embodiment of a principle of freedom (‘venchannyi vol’nost’iu’, l. 17).

‘The Hero’ makes its arguments by assembling famous turning points of Napoleon’s reign. The Napoleonic era (1795–1815) inspired a visual legacy in the history paintings and portraits that collectively, in a vast panorama, recorded political and military change, social upheaval, and imperialism as well as legalism and state-sponsored institutionalism. There is nothing surprising in the fact that Pushkin’s imagination should respond to the vividness of Napoleon in a painterly way. For numerous Romantic poets, including Wordsworth, Napoleon himself was a metaphor for the power of the imagination to harness visionary genius and will. Pushkin does not see the image of his own mind in action in figuring Napoleon. What he does see, however, is a phenomenon that challenges the moral dimension of his aesthetic thinking and tests his Plutarchan ideal of the hero.

Boldness of imagination characterizes the Friend’s Napoleonic episodes. The events are all turning points in Napoleon’s fortunes, beginning with the second Italian campaign of 1800 that inspired David’s great equestrian portrait *Napoleon at St Bernard* (Plate 1). From its unveiling in 1800, the canvas, which included an inscription that likened Napoleon to Hannibal and Charlemagne, made a seminal contribution to Napoleon’s legend. Knowingly or unknowingly, the Friend puts forward views that reflected Napoleon’s careful manipulation of his legend, and demonstrate the impact of those images on his admiration for Napoleon. God-like in his military prowess, depicted on the grandest natural scale against the backdrop of the Alps and on the grandest man-made scale against the pyramids, his vast *imperium* from north to south, and east to west, the Napoleon of this portrait warrants the vocabulary of the Romantic sublime.

⁸⁰ Sainte-Beuve, *Critiques et portraits littéraires* (Paris, 1836), iii. 482 [Modz. 1346].

Like the greatest landscapes, Napoleon defies belief, instilling a sense of awe, silence, and the miraculous. The Friend uses the rhetoric of apotheosis to forge an association between heroism in its boldest form on a scale that fills the human mind with dread of the inhuman. Even the moment of defeat, when the abandoned Moscow shines as it burns, ranks as heroic because the silent reaction of this master of the universe was taken by contemporaries to signify the defeat of a revolutionary ideal, tantamount to nothing less than the silencing of a god or a force of nature. As David Blaney Brown has commented, '[Napoleon] personified the Revolution's ideal of individual empowerment, and he maintained his hold as long as he kept his mystique as its saviour.'⁸¹ Power and boundlessness were the defining feature of the heroic, beginning with (contested) legends of his daring on the Arcola Bridge in November 1796, captured in painting, where no physical or conventional limits can easily stop his headlong energy ('stremitel'noe plamia') (Plate 2). This first paragraph poses no questions about the moral or physical costs that such unbridled heroism carries. Unlike numerous paintings of the immediate post-Waterloo period, where the violence and savagery of war filled large canvases, or the monumental figure of Géricault's wounded cuirassier (Plate 3) produced an emblem of French exhaustion, the speaker represents only one point of view and uses the language of Romantic apotheosis that attached to Napoleon in the 1830s. The appreciation of the heroic is aesthetic, for it depicts Napoleon's greatness not according to his institutional or political legacy, but in terms of the lasting images by which he defines his period. No more than the Friend can the Poet escape the facts of the legend and the legend as a fact.

The Poet contrasts a different set of images to this kaleidoscope of heroic scenes. His picture of kingship is based on ethical ideals. He opens with a systematic contradiction of the Friend's characterization, rejecting Napoleon as fortune's upstart, as commander, as self-proclaimed emperor, and finally as the brooding fallen angel on Elba, the last great image in the Napoleonic iconography. The Poet refers to his reference points as a 'picture' ('kartina'), clearly meaning both a mental picture and any one in the series of iconic images. The word 'picture' serves here as a meta-textual marker. Despite the seamless integration of the snapshots into the speakers' discourse, it must be remembered that the translation of an image into a verbal portrait brings an imitation of an imitation into the poem. Paintings are not neutral pieces of evidence but acts of representation, containing viewpoints and ideological meaning cast according to separate conventions and epistemological structures that condition our response differently from other media. When Pushkin adduces a series of paintings in 'The Hero' to counterpoint the verbal portrait, he relies on the reader's memory and mental image of those celebrated canvases where narrative time disappears and the moral force of the historical exemplum depends on the unambiguous clarity of the picture. Painting represents a different form of knowledge from historical discourse as denoted

⁸¹ David Blaney Brown, *Romanticism* (London: Phaidon, 2001), 84.

in the footnote to General Bourrienne's *Memoirs*. The meaning of 'The Hero' does not only lie in a manifest opposition between history and painting. By embedding other acts of representation with their own complex message in his text, Pushkin makes interpreting those images part of the work of understanding the poem. The reader of 'The Hero', therefore, assesses the abstract question of historical greatness with reference not to a simple juxtaposition of visual and verbal Napoleons. Each depiction in itself already forces the reader as viewer of a famous painting to ask Pushkin's question 'What is truth?' because the discourse of the paintings chosen by the Poet contain challenging ambivalences.

The Poet and Friend debate the choice of the quintessential portrait. The Friend produces small-scale snapshots of scenes that had become large-scale historical compositions. All of the moments touched on here represent turning points that put Napoleon on the crossroads of destiny. Will he succeed where Hannibal struggled and make it over the Italian Alps? Will he be First Consul of a Republic or dictator and emperor? Will he be remembered as great military strategist or overstretched adventurer laid to waste with his army in Russia? The Friend calls on pictures that show Napoleon only in the role of warrior dominating circumstance through daring and through action. Pushkin chose the specific iconography of his poem with care, encompassing incidents that lay at the fault-line of division on Napoleon's reputation, from the controversy over the Italian campaign to the quintessential portrait of the humanitarian Napoleon. In 1807, Antoine Gros's huge canvas of the battle of Eylau depicted the emperor as a demi-god dispensing aid and mercy to a defeated army (over 25,000 died). The clement king became a more prominent figure in the iconography of Napoleon, further legitimizing his rule (Plate 4). Early critics found the spatial arrangement of the painting hard to accept with the anti-classical heap of far too individualized corpses in the foreground surrounding the beatified emperor. The central image of 'The Hero' occurs in the Poet's monologue at lines 32–55, where he describes a leader filled with the spirit of sacrifice and mercy based on Gros's most famous painting, *Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa* (1804) (see plate opposite ch. 7). Gros's canvas depicts an event that occurred during the Egyptian expedition of 1798 and 1799, when a severe outbreak of plague struck the French army. Napoleon, who had recently suffered a bruising defeat in Syria, was unable to evacuate the remaining victims from the hospital at Jaffa. According to one version of the incident, he ordered the army medical chief, Desgenettes, who appears just behind him in the painting, to poison them. When Desgenettes refused, a subaltern complied instead. Some contemporaries viewed the order as a humane gesture, given the widespread belief that soldiers were otherwise doomed to be butchered by the natives. The Jaffa episode was debated in biographies and histories. Some advocates maintained that Napoleon's heroic visit occurred more or less as depicted in the painting, while detractors decried the painting along with other Bonapartist accounts as a whitewash and cover-up for the inhuman massacre that Napoleon brought on the inhabitants of Jaffa and his own soldiers. Among the many narratives that claimed to rely on the

evidence of survivors, the 1803 memoir of Sir Robert Thomas Wilson, published in English as the *History of the British Expedition to Egypt* and translated into French in 1804, helped to spread the allegations of atrocities, which circulated through anti-Bonapartist royalist networks and insidiously sapped the confidence of soldiers in the French army.

The critical consensus on 'The Hero' takes the dialogue of the poem in its literal sense, reading it as a work that simply says there are always two points of view, particularly on controversial figures.⁸² Having established that Pushkin knew about the lack of unanimity in period accounts, they argue that the poem in effect stages an exercise in a problem of historical method. In their view, Pushkin focuses on the problem that insufficient evidence poses when historians must make a judgement between two alternative accounts. This description is helpful but insufficient. For the poem offers an alternative to this binary division by pressing the reader to understand that uncertainty can itself be the only certain conclusion. In the absence of decisive proof, other criteria can be invoked. The basis of historical judgement on evidence reassures the Friend who, speaking for historians, mocks the Poet as gullible because his views, no less than the Friend's, derive from impressions. But any critical reader will find the 'strict historian' ('strogii istorik') fallible in his argument against poetic authority, since the one authority he invokes was notoriously unreliable. Pushkin cites Bourrienne's memoirs because they were widely read (even if his library appears not to have contained a copy). On this basis, the reader is entitled to judge the historian negatively for failing to collate and analyse disparate evidence. By the end of his second segment the Friend, as history's apologist, looks less persuasive. The reference to a source that was originally meant to corroborate his argument is more likely to undermine him on closer consideration.

In a famous maxim, the Poet condones the value of a lie if it is morally ameliorative and psychologically comforting: 'An illusion that elevates us | Is dearer to me than a mass of low truths.' The issue is whether Pushkin genuinely believes we can follow the Poet in putting poetic truth ahead of historical truth, based on moral preference, in cases when historical truth cannot be ascertained. This is hard to credit for several reasons. First, the argument that the absolute and patent lie is better than the somewhat inaccurate historical truth defies its own logic as a proposition about how to write history. Second, such a conclusion proceeds from a failure to discriminate between the different values espoused by history and art (by which we mean poetry and painting). Third, it also assumes that historian and poet individually have no doubt about their viewpoints. On my reading, the poem undermines each of these premisses.

'The Hero' subjects the poet's intuitive certainty to equal scrutiny, provided readers use their visual imaginations and knowledge of the Napoleonic iconography to understand the connection between the poem's propositions and its use

⁸² See, for example, Krasnov, *Pushkin*, 44–60.

of images. The Poet ought to have an advantage because he does not work by the same rules as the historian. The Poet's dictum merely sums up the standard view that art should have didactic and ameliorative aims and be plausible and unified in appearance. That is appropriate since neoclassical conventions dominated French historical painting in the Napoleonic era. The image of the truth is what counts, and the aesthetic unity of painting is sufficient, even if the contents purvey myth rather than fact—especially if there is uncertainty about the facts. Yet by the end the Poet's position is no more confident and no more secure than that of the historian.

To ask what is truth is to ask about the truthfulness of poetry and history as specific discourses. By casting the question in terms of this specific dichotomy, Pushkin alludes to the distinction that originates with Aristotle's *Poetics* and operates powerfully through drama and painting in the period. By reading the poem in this light, we gain a helpful new departure in the history of its interpretation. 'The Hero' is difficult to understand because it defines 'the elevating truth' through representations in a period where there is general uncertainty about the status of mimesis and realism in literature. The Poet's use of painting reflects a parallel debate within the art world about portraiture and history painting as the most faithful rendering of reality.⁸³ It is the status of painting as the source of the Poet's conviction that we must explore.

The standard line of interpretation worked out and repeated by the majority of Pushkin scholars sees the reference to Gros's painting as shorthand for the factual content of the Jaffa episode. In their view, the purpose of the painting is to introduce a piece of evidence about Napoleon. Their concern is not to decipher the message of the painting itself because their assumption is that the message of the painting meets the eye: Gros's canvas is treated as a type of documentary realism, where mimesis and historical content correlate perfectly. I would like to argue that the truer message of the painting relates to its status as a represented object, the content of which calls into question the poet's own act of representation. These assertions need to be contested, beginning with the assumption that anybody could ever separate the facts from the legend when the legend itself was the fact. In representing the question about historical truth in terms of two types of discourse, Pushkin confronts the reader with a historical fact. As we have already seen, Napoleon is inseparable from the massive pictorial legacy of the period. From a historical point of view, the work of the myth in disseminating the image of the hero cannot be given less value and attention than writing about him; and the impact of the visual legend on the historical record must also not be discounted.⁸⁴ Here Gros's image occupies an unusually important position.

⁸³ On the theory of mimesis at this time, see Ann Jefferson, *Reading Realism in Stendhal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), ch. 1.

⁸⁴ Migliorini, *Le Mythe de héros*, 14.

Napoleon exerted an unrelenting influence on his own iconography, vetting portraits and even engraved copies of the portraits exported to the provinces, overseeing word and image on the huge visual paraphernalia that accompanied his rise, especially after becoming the First Consul in 1799.⁸⁵ His understanding of the power of the image to consolidate his message and the legitimacy of his reign, to impose authority by co-opting the traditional images and language of kingship and republicanism, is nowhere more on display than in David's great *Sacre de Napoléon*, not a record but a carefully crafted revision of the ceremony at which Napoleon, in imitation of Charlemagne, is seen crowning himself emperor while Pope Pius VII is relegated to watching.

Art historians agree that Gros's *Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa* was a watershed in establishing the form of history painting for which the empire is remembered. The painting diverges from the military iconography because it makes a statement about heroism as the act of the good king. The image of mercy blends a number of themes, including Enlightenment admiration for the clement king, together with an older image of the monarch as miracle-worker and healer (Plate 5). At the same time, the painting is the most Christianized of Gros's Napoleonic images: Napoleon extends a raised hand in a Christ-like gesture of benediction.⁸⁶ The 'humanitarian' stress in the reception of Napoleon, becoming a part of the definition of heroism generally, dates broadly from a period of realignment of the civic-heroic with bourgeois values in the late eighteenth century. During the Napoleonic period this became a regular theme of painting and commentary. In thousands of engravings that reproduced famous scenes of the era, the clemency of the 'fatherly' Napoleon tempers the harsher images of martial virtue. On this basis, it is evident why the Poet is inclined to read Gros's painting in the first place as a positive image of the humane king. What leads him to consider the possibility that the legend is not true? The motivation for his doubt can only lie in his unspoken thoughts about the painting behind his lines.

What does the image at the heart of the poem mean to the Poet? Superficially, Gros's painting, a great success when first displayed, was an obvious choice of visual source to stand as an antidote to the image of Napoleon as general and megalomaniac. However, Pushkin's decision to base the Poet's defence on this canvas is not straightforward. Of all the images of Napoleon, that of Jaffa was as controversial as it was famous. Perceptions of the painting became inseparable from its initial reception. An officially sanctioned image of Napoleon's triumph in the East, the canvas polarized opinion. Discussions about its true intent continued unabated for decades. The opinions of contemporary viewers record uncertainty about the ideology of the painting because its images were

⁸⁵ On the portraiture and its iconography, see Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting: Antoine-Jean Gros's La Bataille d'Eylau* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 61–72.

⁸⁶ Robert Rosenblum, *Transformations in Late Eighteenth-Century Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967) writes about Napoleon as a 'new Christ' who comes 'to bestow mercy, tolerance and wisdom upon enemy troops', 97.

highly unstable.⁸⁷ Contemporary attitudes to a highly influential and notoriously ambiguous painting clearly informed Pushkin's selection. In preferring to choose this image above all others, therefore, Pushkin's Poet is not making a simple choice. If anything he is making a choice that can only place the reader—or at least the reader informed about the history of the painting—in a dilemma about Napoleon's moral worth. How does this work?

Numerous commentators have argued that Gros's canvas was an invention designed to remove the stigma of the massacre that purportedly occurred in the Palestinian city. In her important discussion of the painting, Darcy Grigsby quotes a number of contemporary anti-Bonapartists who described the painting as a lie and attempted to reverse the positive impression it makes of Napoleon's bravery in visiting the hospital.⁸⁸ Pushkin's library contained the main accounts of Napoleonic hagiography and scarcely any of the critical works. There were only two exceptions. One is Mme de Staël, whose hostility to the emperor was too personal to form the basis of a serious critique. The second was Chateaubriand, who waged his own campaign against a man he reviled as a low-born villain, a murderer on a par with Caligula and Nero, a modern Attila who left his soldiers to rot in the wastes of Russia during the retreat from Moscow.⁸⁹ As an unbridled Romantic, ardent about the power of individual genius, even this implacable legitimist confessed admiration for Napoleon's magnificent will and visionary energy, a 'poet in action, an immense genius in war, an indefatigable spirit'. For Chateaubriand, Napoleon incarnated Romantic genius:

He is especially great for being born of only himself: for knowing how, without any authority other than that of his genius, to make himself obeyed by thirty-six million subjects at a time when absolutely no illusions surrounded thrones. He is great for . . . having taught his name to savage as well as to civilized peoples; for having surpassed all the conquerors who had preceded him.⁹⁰

Nonetheless, once Napoleon was gone, François-René de Chateaubriand spoke for many in the 1814 pamphlet in which he denounced the servile propaganda machine that Napoleon had made of the arts. Among detractors of the painting made into the focal point of the 'The Hero' was Chateaubriand: 'Bonaparte poisons the plague victims of Jaffa; a painting is made that presents him touching, by an excess of courage and humanity, these same plague-stricken men. It was

⁸⁷ See Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, *Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 83–8, 99–101.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 99.

⁸⁹ See Descotes, *La Légende*, 59–112; the best evidence for Chateaubriand's attitude is, of course, his *Vie de Napoléon*. For further remarks on Chateaubriand's political stance, see Ghislain de Diesbach, *Chateaubriand* (Paris: Perrin, 1998), 246–50.

⁹⁰ Cited in Marrinan, *Painting Politics for Louis-Philippe*, 178.

not like this that Saint Louis healed the ill presented to his royal hands with a touching and religious confidence.⁹¹

As the most vigorous unrelenting anti-Bonapartist and adherent of the Restoration, Chateaubriand seized on Wilson and Bourrienne's accounts as proof against Gros and left no doubt as to where he thought the truth lay. He ends his diatribe with the words: 'I cannot say that I saw him give the potion, that would be a lie; but I know definitely for a fact that the decision was taken and had to have been taken after deliberation, that the order to that effect was given, and that the plague-stricken are dead.'⁹² The ongoing publication of Chateaubriand's collected works from the late 1820s gave new life to the accusations, or perhaps more appropriately to the remarkably compressed history of the revisionism that Napoleon's reputation had undergone. Pushkin, a long-time admirer of Chateaubriand's fiction and prose translation of Milton, acquired at some expense the Brussels edition of his collected works.⁹³ Chateaubriand's anti-revisionist account attacked the legend of Napoleon and prompted Pushkin to cast the question of artistic truth as a matter of doubt and questioning rather than certainty. Chateaubriand's reaction to the painting did not discredit Gros entirely because it was so blatant and ideological. The painting's notoriety thus made it a highly controversial and equivocal image to invoke in any defence of Napoleon. Does this mean that Pushkin has set the Poet up?

The painting has two different layers of ambiguity that need to be taken into account. We have already discussed the first, which is the contemporary eyewitness literature that informed reactions to the painting and automatically put it in a dialogic relation with historiography. The second relates to instability in the pictorial language that creates uncertainty about its moral message. Recent scholarship suggests that the contemporary reception of *Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims at Jaffa* identified ambivalent meanings that put the viewer of the painting in the position of making uncomfortable decisions. Beginning in the first decade of the 1800s, paintings move away from Jacques-Louis David's photo-realist vision. Stephen Bann argues in his book on Gros's young contemporary Delaroche that the role of the viewer in post-Davidian history painting changed radically.⁹⁴ The conventions of Academic painting required the reader to understand a painting by decoding a symbolic style, where the pictorial rhetoric is largely stable and fixed by iconography. The visual vocabulary of honour, virtue, the heroic, the good was not hard to decipher. Increasingly,

⁹¹ François-René de Chateaubriand, *De Buonaparte, des Bourbons et de la nécessité de se rallier à nos princes légitimes pour le bonheur de la France et celui de l'Europe* (Paris, 1814), 7. Chateaubriand repeated his criticisms of Gros in his account of the Syrian expedition in his *Vie de Napoléon*, part I.

⁹² As cited in Descotes, *La Légende*, 102.

⁹³ *Œuvres complètes de M. le victime de Chateaubriand*, 27 vols. (Brussels: De Mat, 1826–31); virtually all the volumes in the set have been cut.

⁹⁴ Stephen Bann, *Paul Delaroche: History Painted* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 102–97.

canvases combined the Academic manner with narrative fantasies that accorded a greater role to the imagination of the viewer. This was especially the case in paintings where the key to the painter's interpretation of an historical event was less than explicit and had to be deciphered in the connotations of formal devices and compositional choices.

In her comprehensive analysis of Gros's painting Grigsby has shown how it skews expected historical conventions on many levels, and is better read as a deconstruction rather than affirmation of neoclassical codes. For instance, in feminizing and orientaling the French soldiers, the painting presents an image of the French army as the ravaged masculine body politic that Napoleon has damaged. Contrary to prevailing interpretations, she argues persuasively that Napoleon does not embody the 'roi thaumaturge'. He stands instead as a secular figure of reason, heroic because he remains calm in his rational belief that the plague is not spread by touch. This quality is not to be confused with the bravery of a soldier. As a counterweight to Napoleon, the benevolent ruler, stands the antithetical image of the blindfolded figure, the victim of the force that cannot be controlled or even confronted, the soldier who cannot see the light brought by the king as saviour. In Grigsby's analysis of the patterning of light and dark, the painting takes on meaning as a statement about the fear of invisible forces that destroy the heroic body, the self, the army, and the state, forces which cannot be fought. She concluded that 'the horror evoked by Gros's painting must be understood to arise from its effective destabilization of the classical figures purported to be the most stable (and eloquent) pictorial forms representative of Western civilization'.⁹⁵ In the painting, Napoleon does nothing to restore that order and relieve the horror, and contemporary viewers, as Grigsby demonstrates, picked up on the unsettling power of the painting.

Anti-Bonapartist propagandists seized on the painting as a deception. Other viewers, however, drew the opposite message from its pictorial vocabulary. For them the painting was powerful because it did not obviously perform a propagandistic function of dispelling rumours and glorifying the regime. Instead of eliminating the subject of Napoleon's conduct at Jaffa from the public arena, Gros's painting was 'instrumental to the government precisely because it introduced a controversial subject to an officially sanctioned public inquiry: the biannual Salon exhibition'.⁹⁶ If anything, the brilliance of the painting lies in its unwillingness to delimit readings and, therefore, in the licence it gives to the public to think about alternative versions. The painting does not attempt to convince the viewer one way or the other on the question of whether the poisoning occurred. Instead, as Grigsby argues, it accommodates 'difference, ambiguity, rumour, terror and dissent within its very frame'.

This conclusion about the painting was repeated in the published reactions of critics and viewers. Whether or not Pushkin knew them is hard to say as a

⁹⁵ Grigsby, *Extremities*, 88.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 100–1.

matter of fact. But at the very least his awareness of Chateaubriand's response to the painting and the episode leaves no doubt that he knew how controversial the painting had been as a representation. In 'The Hero', Pushkin compels his reader to view a canvas that is a lesson in uncertainty, and that lesson must also delimit the reader's understanding of Pushkin's view of the heroic, which remains a matter of preferred choices, speculation, and, ultimately, guesswork. My argument has been that the tension 'The Hero' establishes between historical truth and poetic or artistic truth needs to be applied to the use of visual evidence in the poem. Pushkin does not write as a polemicist against Bourrienne, Chateaubriand, or Wilson. His aim is not to uphold one version of the Jaffa plague episode against another. The ambiguity and ambivalence that he asks the reader to confront is concentrated in the image of the painting, an image that is not incontrovertible proof of Napoleon's humanity. Art is no more conclusive than history. In fact, art is if anything more complex because a seamless conventional work of art, a formal masterpiece, can contain two clashing viewpoints without producing the truth. The position that the poet adopts, and the position of the implied reader here, anticipates the ambivalent and dialogical structure of *The Bronze Horseman*, where again the poet represents the achievements of the Great Man, but the historical narrative also encompasses 'a mass of low truths' ('r'my nizkikh istin'), and therefore undermines the 'illusion that elevates' ('nas vozvyshaiushii obman'). When Pushkin points to an image like this, he means 'illusion' to signify not just a tendentious image opposed to other outside meanings, but a moral choice that the viewer makes, which may be a deliberate act of both blindness and insight.

It should be noted that the historical-minded Friend and Poet are dissimilar in an important respect. Conflicting evidence from memoirs does nothing to dent the Friend's confidence in history. But the Poet, if he is like the implied reader who understands the complex nature of Gros's painting, comes to feel doubt about the validity of poetic judgement. At the end, the only truth is that every great representation will contain multiple and contradictory views. The Friend cannot reach this truth and continues to go on the attack, but the Poet in lapsing into silence has the more honest reaction to his doubts about the painting which he sees again in his mind's eye as he represents Gros's famous representation to the reader. What is truth? In the Aristotelian contest Pushkin's Poet would be the winner because he, unlike the historian, understands that he cannot separate history and myth. In the 1830s, the myth of Napoleon was still making history.

PAINTING THE HEROIC IDEAL: 'THE COMMANDER' (1835)

'The Commander' is the second major poem to juxtapose popular judgement as the measure of historical reputation with the philosophical truth captured in

painting by the artist. One of Pushkin's most searching considerations of the nature of historical reputation, it focuses, like 'The Hero', on the role of personal subjectivity and intuition in forming conclusions about individuals, events, and nations.

The double topic of the poem is the portrait of Barclay de Tolly by George Dawe in the Hermitage's War Gallery, a place of commemoration for the heroes of 1812, and the effect of portrait painting on the mind of the poet. Like 'The Hero', the poem poses questions about the scope available to different modes of discourse (historical, poetic) and representation (painting, statuary) in capturing and conveying the greatness of an individual. But whereas 'The Hero' assumes that references to celebrated images of the Napoleonic iconography will jog the reader's memory of these paintings or, failing that, stimulate the reader's imagination of famous episodes from the Napoleonic campaigns, in 'The Commander' the poet faces Dawe's painting, and makes out of his own reaction to the portrait the subject of the poem.

Barclay de Tolly (1761–1818) was a Baltic nobleman descended from a Scots family. He earned a reputation for bravery in the Russian-Swedish War of 1808–9 and the campaigns against Napoleon that ended in the peace of Tilsit in 1807. After being promoted first to the rank of general and then Minister of War in 1812, he was designated Commander-in-Chief of the First Western Army. The retreat from Smolensk, for which he took responsibility, did nothing to enhance his reputation among the Russian public and troops, who already regarded him with suspicion owing to his foreign-sounding name and haughty manner. At Borodino he served, typically, with valour and was awarded the order of St George before being dismissed from his post, ostensibly on grounds of ill health, ceding the command to Mikhail Kutuzov. After Kutuzov's death in April 1813 he returned to active service, taking charge of the occupying Russian forces in Paris in 1814.⁹⁷

By the 1830s, Kutuzov's status as the victor against Napoleon had long been enshrined in official historiography and popular memorabilia. Pushkin's poem provoked a storm of controversy on publication because it was perceived as an attempt to reassign kudos to the eclipsed Barclay for the strategy that routed Napoleon. This sounded like *lèse-majesté* against Kutuzov.⁹⁸ Contemporary readers, led by members of Kutuzov's family, reacted angrily to the superficial sense in which the tribute to Barclay could have been construed as a rehabilitation

⁹⁷ For a positive contemporary evaluation of his character that explains the lack of support for him in the army, see V. I. Semevskii, V. Boguchanskii, and P. E. Shchegolev (eds.), *Obshchestvennye dvizheniia v Rossii v pervuiu polovinu XIX-ogo veka*, i: *Dekabristy M. A. Fonvizin, Kn. E. P. Obolensky* (St Petersburg: Gerol'd, 1905), 159–63.

⁹⁸ See V. V. Pugachev and V. A. Dines, 'Iu. M. Lotman o Pushkinskom ponimanii Barklaia i Kutuzova', in *Lotmanovskie chteniia* (Saratov: Izdatel'skii tsentr Saratovskoi gos. ekon. akademii 1998), 13–24, who read the poem as an attack on Alexander I rather than a denigration of Kutuzov. On its composition, see N. N. Petrunina, 'Polkovodets', *Stikhotvoreniia Pushkina 1820–1830-kh godov*, 278–305.

of him, and a slur against his rival. From its publication, attitudes to Pushkin's intentions in writing 'The Commander' have been strongly guided by the original journalistic attacks on the poem and the rebuttal Pushkin made in his explanatory notes published in 1836.⁹⁹ On this consensus, 'The Commander' is best read specifically as a defence of Barclay and an attempt by Pushkin to redress a historical injustice that ultimately originates in Alexander I's resentment of any rivals for popular approval.¹⁰⁰ By way of corroborating this interpretation, there has been a tendency to claim that sources in Pushkin's library prompted him to mount this revisionist view of Barclay's role.¹⁰¹ In short, this reading concludes that Pushkin's aim was to write a polemical work in favour of Barclay with the explicit purpose of correcting the historical record.

Contemporary responses can be valuable pieces of evidence, and as such deserve scrutiny. But they are not automatically illuminating about artistic principles, and critics have been notably blinkered in examining information that they think inspired Pushkin to rehabilitate Barclay. Most proponents of the standard interpretation adduce the same set of sources. As in 'The Hero', here, too, Bourrienne is the commonly cited authority for Pushkin's views on the Napoleonic Wars. However, it is more accurate to say that the historical and memoir literature in Pushkin's library on the War of 1812 largely neglects Barclay.¹⁰² The memoirs of the poet-Hussars Iakov Tolstoy and Denis Davydov, for instance, omit to mention him, while paying fulsome tribute to Kutuzov.¹⁰³ One exception to tacit denigration is the *Histoire de Napoléon* by the Comte de Ségur, who consistently and sharply criticizes Barclay throughout. In book VIII, chapter 6, he blames Barclay for a poorly conceived strategy and portrays him as a blundering coward prone to panic ('la crainte échauffait l'imagination'). He reserves the final invective about Barclay for Napoleon, to whom he allots an invented speech on Barclay's foolishness in abandoning Smolensk. A rhetorical *coup de grâce*, the passage is unsparing:

What a disgrace for Barclay—to have delivered, without a struggle, the key to ancient Russia! And yet what a field of honour he had offered him! What an advantage he had given him! A fortress to strengthen and share his forces! A city and a river to receive and shelter the remnants in case he was beaten!

And what was it that he had to combat? An army, a large army, it is true, but one hindered by a terrain that was too narrow, that afforded only cliffs as a retreat. It was as

⁹⁹ See L. A. Chereiskii, 'K stikhotvoreniuu Pushkina "Polkovodets"', *VPK*, 1963 (1966), 56–8.

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, N.N. Petrunina, 'Novyi avtograf "Polkovodtsa"', *VPK* (1970) 14–23, who sees the variant manuscript readings in this light.

¹⁰¹ The best account of the history of composition and revision of the poem remains V. A. Manuilov and L. B. Modzalevskii, "'Polkovodets" Pushkina', *VPK*, 4–5 (1939), 125–64. Barclay's portrait was completed in 1829, more than a decade after his death.

¹⁰² For example, see Vatsuro, "'Apokalipticheskaia pesn'" Pushkina', 93; L. S. Sidiakov, 'Zametki o stikhotvoreniiu Pushkina "Geroi"', *Russkaia literatura*, 4 (1990), 210.

¹⁰³ Ia. Tolstoy, *Essai biographique et historique sur le Feld-Maréchal Prince de Varsovie comte Paskevitch d'Ecrivau* (Paris, 1835) [Modz. 1442].

though the army was liberated from his blows. All Barclay lacked was resolve... For in the end could Barclay have enjoyed a more favourable position on which to stop? Which position would he have decided to contest, he who had abandoned the very Smolensk that is called Smolensk the Holy, Smolensk the strong. That was the key to Moscow! This highway to Russia that was called the tomb of the French! One would see the effects of this loss on the Russians.¹⁰⁴

Nothing corroborates the view that dispassionate foreign sources prompted Pushkin to attack the official historiography. If anything, Russian writers were more polite or circumspect by silently skipping Barclay's disgrace, while French historians damned him outright. If Pushkin aimed to rehabilitate Barclay by advocating his dignity and moral worth, it is not because alternative accounts prompted a reconsideration.¹⁰⁵ What lies behind the new portrait of the subject is the power that Pushkin gives to the poet, even more than the painter, to discern true heroism.

In concentrating his analysis of the past through the single portrait of Barclay de Tolly, Pushkin follows his own impulses as a historian to focus on individuals who stand out as agents of historical change from a larger mass of peoples and blind forces. He subordinates the War Gallery and its 332 generals to the background, and privileges the portrait rather than history painting as the key to identity. This is in keeping with a larger trend, helpfully defined by Stephen Bann who observes for the period that 'the test of truth in historical discourse comes to seem more a matter of "pictures" than of "judgement"'.¹⁰⁶ Pushkin chooses to follow the Romantic fashion of fixing identity in the portrait image. The English Romantic portrait—and in this Dawe's British school is relevant—eschewed the vocabulary of academic classicism, introducing into the formal portrait hints of emotion, literally shedding light on the subject in the foreground while staging history at a distance.¹⁰⁷ Closeness between subject and viewer was the key to affect in the theory of the portrait, a bond that is subsequently attested in the emotional language of the poem. Every portrait asks the viewer to meet the gaze of the subject and think through a response to basic questions: 'What do I look like? What am I like? Who am I?'¹⁰⁸ All viewers know that those answers are

¹⁰⁴ Comte de Ségur, *Histoire de Napoléon et de la grande-armée* (Brussels, 1825), 281 [Modz. 1380].

¹⁰⁵ Multiple sentiments may have provoked Pushkin into putting the opposing case for Barclay. His dislike and disrespect for Alexander I were apparent in the characterization of the emperor in *The Bronze Horseman* and in lyrics like '19 October 1836'. Pushkin's work as a historian had made him more sceptical of sources, especially the corruption of written sources by rumour and oral testimony, and that theoretical spirit of doubt would be a prompt to restoring some balance. See his 'Ob"iasnenie' in Pushkin, *PSS*, xii, 133–4.

¹⁰⁶ Stephen Bann, *Romanticism and the Rise of History* (Oxford: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1995), 3–10.

¹⁰⁷ See Kenneth Garlick, 'The Beginnings of the English Romantic Portrait', *Studies in Romanticism*, 2: 2 (1963), 65–88.

¹⁰⁸ As observed by Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (London: Reaktion Books, 1991), 13–15.

inseparable from a sense of how the medium shapes that gaze, and from the value ascribed to the portrait genre.

Полководец

У русского царя в чертогах есть палата:
 Она не золотом, не бархатом богата;
 Не в ней алмаз венца хранится за стеклом;
 Но сверху донизу, во всю длину кругом,
 Своею кистию свободной и широкой
 Ее разрисовал художник быстро-окой.
 Тут нет ни сельских нимф, ни девственных мадонн
 Ни фавнов с чашами, ни полногрудых жен.
 Ни плясок, ни охот,—а все плащи, да шпаги,
 Да лица, полные воинственной отваги.
 Толпою тесною художник поместил
 Сюда начальников народных наших сил,
 Покрытых славою чудесного похода
 И вечной памятью двенадцатого года.
 Нередко медленно меж ими я брожу
 И на знакомые их образы гляжу,
 И, мнится, слышу их воинственные клики,
 Из них уж многих нет; другие, коих лики
 Еще так молоды на ярком полотне,
 Уже состарелись и никнут в тишине
 Главою лавровой . . . ¹⁰⁹ (ll. 1–21)

The Commander | In the palace of the Russian tsar there is a chamber: | It is not richly adorned in gold or in velvet; | It is not here that the diamond of the crown is kept behind glass; | But from ceiling to floor, the entire length and all around, | With a brush free and broad | A quick-eyed artist painted it. | Here you will find no pastoral nymphs, no virginal madonnas. | No fauns with vessels, no full-breasted women. | No dances, no hunting scenes—rather nothing but coats and swords, | And faces full of military pride. | Packed in a crowd, the artist placed | Here the leaders of our national forces, | Covered in the glory of the miraculous campaign | And in the eternal memory of the year 1812. | Often slowly among them I wander | And look about their familiar images, | And, it seems, I hear their bellicose cries. | Of their number many are no longer; others, whose visages | Are still young on the canvas, | Have already grown old and silently | Bend their laurelled head . . .

The first segment of twenty-one lines turns to the main subject only from line 10. Until that point, the speaker engages in an elaborate counterfactual description, sketching what the reader will not see in the War Gallery. This anti-description comes as a series of litotes that evokes a neoclassical aesthetic, made up of pastoral scenes, libertine *mises-en-scène*, stylized portraiture, where order, proportion, and definition are the rule. The elaborate, crafted description,

¹⁰⁹ Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 378.

where metonymy is the key figurative trope pointing to a notional, undescribed décor, creates a world removed from the confusion of history.¹¹⁰ The transition from the seamless *ekphrasis* of the imaginary setting to the domain of the War Gallery, where the commemorative portraits hang, is abrupt. Synecdoche marks the shift to a new visual space: only parts comprise the superficial listing, giving glimpses of a single mass of portraits. To begin with, the speaker calls them a crowd because they strike the eye as a jumble of swords, coats, and faces, they have no individual identity, and are an interchangeable set of identical portraits. When the speaker calls the artist's technique 'free' and 'broad', he suggests that the cumulative impact of the collective portraiture is of a single mass standing for the larger strength of the nation. Out of this anonymous crowd the hero finally emerges as a distinct figure at line 22.

While subjectively entering the historical spirit of 1812, the speaker retains his historical awareness, citing the eventual fates of the figures in the paintings and noting the passage of time that puts him at a remove from the world of the paintings. At the end of the section he will, in this vein, reflect on the meaning of the earlier phrase 'eternal memory'. The phrase is tautological, since by definition monuments exist to perpetuate and foster the eternal memory of their subjects. But the poem suggests that eternal memory is also a matter of the sensibility of individual viewers affected by the sight of the gallery. Not having served in the war, the speaker has no personal memory of events and individuals. The period exists at a historical distance. The fact that the War Gallery engages his imagination movingly is therefore all the more proof of the power of art as a type of historical representation. Painting enables him to commune with the historical spirit of the age as embodied in the symbolic space of the War Gallery.

Does Barclay stand out because of the quality of the painting or because the viewer discerns special qualities in the subject? From line 15, viewpoint is firmly attached to the speaker, who admits to finding the painting irresistible and moving. Nothing dims his appreciation over the course of repeated viewings. The sentiments here stem from the same Romantic reflexes that led viewers to the worship of ruins and the reading of epitaphs. To view a figure or a site is to turn history into biography as the viewer reads an image and in the process intuits the mind of the individual subject. If the images are familiar ('znakomye'), it is because the poet's psychological interest is renewed with each viewing. Pushkin, who left no doubt about his love of Italian portraiture and especially that of Raphael, is unlikely to have esteemed Dawe highly as a craftsman. Patriotic sentiment swelled appreciation of the Gallery as an impressive monument, but the painter did not enjoy a great critical reputation even in Russia. The *Bulletin*

¹¹⁰ On the history of the construction and design of the War Gallery, see V. M. Glinka, *Voennaia Gallereia Zimnego Dvortsa* (Leningrad: Aurora, 1974), 7–23, with a history of Dawe's troubled participation in the project (10–14). At the beginning of the 'Puteshestvie v Arzrum' (1829/1835) Pushkin mentions Dawe's 'poetic' portrait of Ermolov.

du Nord for 1828 published a frank and thoughtful evaluation of his work, which was evidently read by Pushkin. Arguably, the critic's comments inform Pushkin's approach to the speaker's visual activism in the poem. Dawe's reviewer defines 'belles productions de l'esprit et de l'âme' as works that are not only remarkable for their skilful *vraisemblance* (such as Dawe's portraits). Great works are memorable because they compel the viewer to see through the eyes of the painter, co-opting the viewer as a co-creator and thereby elevating the viewer to that idea of the purely beautiful. If the viewer penetrates to the heart of the subjects of the painting as co-creator it is because portraiture, above all, has the ability to convey the force of the subject's character. Whatever Dawe's strengths, which include a good handling of lighting effects and an attractive palette, the reviewer faults his technique for a lack of purity and simplicity. Despite the admirable vitality and lightness of his draughtsmanship, his technique strikes the reviewer as excessively theatrical and mannered, especially in the portraits of Mordvinov, Speransky, and Tolstoy, for example,—bold but, in the final analysis, not beautiful.¹¹¹ Pushkin's verbal portrait of the painting aims to surpass Dawe's limited success and reveal the beauty of this virtuous hero.

In 'The Hero', the myth represented in painting underwrites poetic judgement. In 'The Commander', the poet recreates the painting according to new principles and aims, moving inductively from a point of personal identification to a typological portrait. The verbal portrait of the poem far exceeds in virtue, gloriousness, and character that of the canvas. Despite the polite tribute to Dawe, competition from the poet spurs him to create an even more powerful poetic image.

Но в сей толпе суровой
 Один меня влечет всех больше. С думой новой
 Всегда остановлюсь пред ним—и не свожу
 С него моих очей. Чем долее гляжу,
 Тем более томим я грустию тяжелой.
 Он писан во весь рост. Чело, как череп голый,
 Высоко лоснится, и мнится, залегла
 Там грусть великая. Кругом—густая мгла;
 За ним—военный стан. Спокойный и угрюмый,
 Он, кажется, глядит с презрительною думой.
 Свою ли точно мысль художник обнажил,
 Когда он таковым его изобразил,
 Или невольное то было вдохновенье,—
 Но Доу дал ему такое выраженье. (ll. 22–34)

But in this solemn crowd | One more than any other draws me. I always stop before him |
 With a new thought—and cannot take my eyes | Away from him. The longer I gaze, |
 The more overwhelmed by heavy sadness I become. | He is depicted in his full height.

¹¹¹ See the *Bulletin du Nord: journal scientifique et littéraire*, 4 (Moscow, 1828), 380 [Modz. 1507].

His brow, like a bare skull, | Shows nobly, and, it seems, a great sorrow | Has settled there.
 Around him—thick mist; | Behind him—the military camp. Calm and determined | He
 seems to gaze with a scornful thought. | Precisely whether the artist revealed his design, |
 When he painted him like this, | Or whether it was involuntary inspiration— | But this
 is the expression that Dawe gave him.

In the description of Barclay's portrait, the process of understanding history through painting is about an emotional bond between viewer and object. What attracts the poet to his portrait is a moral ('duma nova') rather than aesthetic quality. The more the poet looks at the painting, the sadder he feels. For that reason we might expect him to shun it, whereas in fact the feeling appears to intensify the attraction. What results is a correspondence between viewer and portrait based on the portrait's affect and the viewer's capacity to feel a 'great sadness' ('grust' velikaia'). Both the self-portrait of the speaker that is built up in the mind of the reader, and the historical portrait radiate thoughtfulness ('duma nova | дума презritel'na'); there is no emotional distance between them, a state that should also lead through both verbal and pictorial art to complete empathy. This empathy is remarkable since it overcomes the remoteness and impenetrability to others for which Barclay was reputed. Whereas neither painter nor poet can successfully fathom Napoleon's motives in 'The Hero', now both penetrate to the inner truth of the subject. The writer's introspectiveness attunes him to the inner power of the subject's own thoughtfulness.¹¹² This perfectly pitched note of empathy is also a form of self-identification. At the end of this section the poet raises the question of realism versus projection (lines 31–4), without clarifying the degree to which he is aware of his own subjectivity in reading the painting. The concentration of emotional attachment will lead to the expostulation that marks the beginning of that section:

О вождь несчастливый! . . . Суров был жребий твой:
 Все в жертву ты принес земле тебе чужой.
 Непроницаемый для взгляда черни дикой,
 В молчаньи шел один ты с мыслию великой,
 И, в имени твоём звук чуждый не взлюбя,
 Своими криками преследуя тебя,
 Народ, таинственно спасаемый тобою,
 Ругался над твоей священной сединою.
 И тот, чей острый ум тебя и постигал,
 В угоду им тебя лукаво порицал . . .
 И долго, укреплен могущим убежденьем,
 Ты был непоколебим пред общим заблужденьем;
 И на полупути был должен наконец
 Безмолвно уступить и лавровый венец,
 И власть, и замысел, обдуманый глубоко,—
 И в полковых рядах сокрыться одиноко.

¹¹² On this pattern in Romantic writing, see Clark, *The Theory of Inspiration*, 95.

Там, устарелый вождь, как ратник молодой,
 Свинца веселый свист слышавший впервой,
 Бросался ты в огонь, ища желанной смерти,—
 Вотще!—

.....
 (ll. 35–56)

Oh unfortunate leader! Your lot was a stern one: | You sacrificed everything for the sake of an alien land. | Impenetrable to the gaze of the rude mob, | Alone you made your way with your great idea, | And, because they did not like the alien sound of your name, | Pursuing you with their shrieks, | The people who secretly had been saved by you, | Upbraided your saintly grey head. | And he who discerned in you a sharp mind | To please them craftily criticized you . . . | Fortified by your mighty conviction, | Long were you unwavering before the common delusion; | And at the halfway point were you finally obliged | To surrender quietly the laurel wreath, | And power, and the conception that had been so thoroughly thought out— | And lonely you withdrew among the ranks of soldiers. | There, an aged leader, like a young soldier | Who has heard for the first time the cheerful whistle of lead, | You threw yourself into the fire of battle, seeking a desired death— | In vain!— | . . .

What Dawe has captured and made available to the viewer-poet is a prototype of the visionary who remains isolated and scorned in his lifetime only to be appreciated by posterity and history. A diatribe on the unjustness of Barclay's fate, this dramatic monologue on the nature of fortune and heroism is staged against the backdrop of the painted scenery of the 1812 wars, and matches rhetorical force with the emotional power of a theatrical scene. The characterization of Barclay as misunderstood, misrepresented, undone by a rival, and mocked by the people, bears some resemblance to the characterization of Tsar Boris in Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*, but the speaker's rehabilitation is not an objective one. Based on his superior insight into Barclay's character and only secondarily corroborated by his awareness of the historical record, Pushkin's portrait of Barclay defies popular scorn. This posture is central in defining the true Great Man as a figure whose unrecognized private heroism, in withstanding unjustified abuse, surpasses the conspicuously heroic. Barclay stands closer to the contemplative version of the heroic represented by Chaadaev than to Napoleon. The final section of the poem, with its concluding denunciation, implies a distinction between history as a long-term evaluation and the immediate context:

О люди! жалкий род, достойный слез и смеха!
 Жрецы минутного, поклонники успеха!
 Как часто мимо вас проходит человек,
 Над кем ругается слепой и буйный век,
 Но чей высокий лик в грядущем поколенье
 Поэта приведет в восторг и в умиленье! (ll. 57–60)

Oh people! pitiful species worthy of tears and laughter! | Priests of the ephemeral,
 commanders of success! | How often past you there goes by a man | Whom a blind
 and uncontrolled age curses, | But whose noble visage in a future generation | Will put
 the poet in a state of ecstasy and awe!

The vocabulary of ecstasy and admiration ('vostorg i umilenie') affirms the strong emotional connection between viewer and portrait, the bond that prompts the speaker to evaluate a heroic figure without applying historical criteria. How can the speaker produce such a tribute in the face of the hard evidence of Barclay's war record?

Like 'The Hero', the conception of 'The Commander' emerges from Pushkin's development as historian. What exercises his judgement here is the role of imagination as a faculty that converts history into art. 'The Hero', which shows the problem of turning art into history, runs a competition between historian and poet. While the visions of painter and poet in this poem are compatible, different values will be assigned to each. 'The Commander' is about painting as a type of historiography, and therefore about the connection between representation and truth. In that respect, 'The Commander' once again, if now implicitly, poses the questions raised in 'The Hero' about historical evidence in cases where sources are unreliable and when facts contradict an emotional truth. In 'The Commander', the power of historical revisionism is assigned specifically to the painter and, by extension, the poet who represents the painting and reveals a new meaning in it. The poet-speaker subordinates Dawe's canvas to the picture he superimposes in the reader's mind. Artists are empowered with special access to the truth denied to historians. But the poem goes on to differentiate between the painter and the poet. Thus far, in 'The Commander' it is the artist who is epistemologically privileged, reversing the hierarchy of 'The Hero'.

It would be convenient to explain this ability as a manifestation of the Romantic belief in genius, and to claim that on this basis Pushkin confers on the artist a gift for exposing falsities and disclosing new truths. But Pushkin is too empirical as historian to endorse confidence in the intuition of the painter in the abstract. If anything, the poem turns away from the Romantic appreciation of genius, and reverts to the common assumptions behind history painting and historiography that derive from their neoclassical respect for the Great Man paradigm. Grimm's belief in moral verisimilitude, rather than fidelity to historical detail, was the shared aim of academic painting and history. On these terms, painting as a didactic genre was judged by the moral power of its expression. If the viewer is uplifted on seeing historical painting, it is because the painter has penetrated the essence of the figure's virtue, as revealed in his heroic activity. The paintings of the War Gallery, both the portraits and historical canvases, belong to this tradition. In creating out of his own poem a counter-picture to the portrait, Pushkin restores to the portrait its neoclassical rather than Romantic assumptions.¹¹³

¹¹³ K. A. Malafeev, '“Ja dumal stikhami . . .”', in *Istoriko-dokumental'nye ocherki o liricheskikh stikhakh A. S. Pushkina* (Moscow: Nauka, 2000), 169.

The image of Barclay combines the moral virtues of the Plutarchan ideal, which Pushkin first expressed in the Roman-style epistles, with the valour of the Napoleonic hero. For the 1830s, Barclay stands as a representative figure of a lost age where the heroic ideal was not defined by the bourgeois masses or public opinion, but by the philosopher-historian whose special powers of discernment allowed him to recognize 'men who, by their genius, by their virtues, or at least by their individuality, merit the attention and homage of humanity'.¹¹⁴ The second part of 'The Commander' begins with such an act of discernment. It is in discriminating between the portrait of Barclay and the scores of other similar portraits that the speaker demonstrates his own status as a different class of viewer, with separate criteria for greatness. Just as Barclay stands out of the crowd, so does the poet emerge from the mass of viewers, and the double and linked distinctiveness of both men is part of the moral authority and rhetorical strategy of the poem. Where does this leave the reader in his capacity as viewer?

The characterization of the disgraced general comes in two sections, a description of the portrait in lines 26 to 34, followed by the moral portrait of lines 35 to 54. The imbalance between the two gives a clear indication of the relative importance of the moral to the physical, and the subordination of the painter's viewpoint to that of the spectator. Intellectual rather than physical detail dominates the verbal description of the portrait, identifying Barclay's intelligence as the key to his character. We have already noted the qualities of thoughtful scorn ('prezritel'naia duma'), calm ('spokoinyi'), and seriousness ('ugriumi') that are characteristic of the classical hero. The intellectual profile suits the physical depiction of Barclay as a modern ancient. Drawn at full height, his bald pate and severe expression giving the only point of light against the murky background, the portrait resembles a statue.

The act of verbal description immediately provokes the spectator to interrogate his own reaction and assumptions about the painter's intentions. The viewer takes the look of high seriousness as an objective fact of the painting, and not as his own subjective impression. But he wonders whether the mind of the painter consciously revealed this aspect of Barclay's character and transferred it to the canvas knowingly; or whether his understanding of Barclay's temperament was a stroke of unplanned artistic wit and inspiration. The implications of the question reverberate through the next section of the poem where the poet's unequivocal defence of Barclay contrasts with the uncertainty about Dawe's intentions. Whether Dawe has captured the look either uncomprehendingly, as part of the mechanical process of mimesis, or because of his empathy for the subject, the poet attempts to rewrite the portrait on his own terms.

The apostrophe ('O vozhd' neschastlivyi!...', l. 35) compels the reader to imagine the poet as he addresses the portrait as virtually a living human. The subject of the painting becomes the silent auditor of the poet's expostulation. The physical lifelike quality of the canvas inspires the poet to evoke a moral portrait.

¹¹⁴ See the *Correspondance littéraire*, i. 155 (15 May 1754).

The incisiveness and violent indignation of this verbal icon displace the painting. This alternative portrait removes Barclay from the pantheon of 1812 heroes, and sets him as an individual against the malign forces of rumour and a nation in search of a scapegoat for the surrender of Moscow. Commentators remind us that the date of composition, marked on the manuscript (7 April 1835), coincided with Easter, and take it as further evidence that the story of Barclay falls into a Christological typology of self-sacrifice and martyrdom for the sake of a benighted people, and that the date of the poem gives a clue to Pushkin's purpose in resurrecting Barclay.¹¹⁵ Here, as in 'The Hero', Pushkin invokes the Christianized topos of the opposition of the heroic individual and the ungrateful crowd. There is no denying that the language of sacrifice, sacralization, and salvation lend a religious pathos. Yet such language overlaps with the discourse of the Great Man in Romantic literature, implying utopianism (such as the period sees in the socialism of Saint-Simon, for instance) about his mission as an agent of salvation without being evangelical. From Byron to Coleridge, from Chateaubriand to Hugo, and from Pushkin to Lermontov, the heroicizing of the individual who rises above the crowd draws on Christian metaphor as the most powerful language of fall and redemption. Even images of Napoleon in the Hundred Days invert the binary opposition by turning the erstwhile Satan and scourge of humanity into a Christ-like figure.¹¹⁶ The Barclay of this poem is more Shakespearian than biblical, a Coriolanus figure in his pathos as a betrayed champion of the people.

What captures the imagination of the poet, who in a mere twenty lines sketches the outline of the vivid drama of a hero, is the display of staunch principles, impeccable loyalty, and bravery. Ultimately, this hero is outmanoeuvred by the machinations of more skilful politicians ('I tot, chei ostryi um tebia i postigal, | V ugodu im tebia lukaov poritsal') who take the credit and leave the blame for Barclay. The painter was barely able to hint at Barclay's distinctiveness because the design of the War Gallery imposed a uniform look to collective bravery. The poet identifies the moral qualities of the Great Man by discerning the true feeling behind the expression of the portrait. While the description skilfully packages the precise combination of rumour and allegation that dogged Barclay's war record, there is no need to know the facts in order to read the account on a more general level as a parable of fallen greatness. In providing such insight, and such a defence, the poet feels free to dissent from the judgement of the crowd, thereby expressing his own heroic instinct. Unlike the painter,

¹¹⁵ Most recently this argument has been restated in Proskurin, *Poeziia Pushkina*, 249–55.

¹¹⁶ See Valentin Boss, *Milton and the Rise of Russian Satanism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 163; Pushkin knew Chateaubriand's translation of *Paradise Lost* and read parts of his *Essai sur la littérature anglaise*. For his critical remarks on both, see Pushkin, *PSS*, xii. 145–6, where he faults Chateaubriand for a translation produced for commercial gain. The appearance of religious language—'zhrebii', 'zhertva', 'sedina sviashchennaia', 'tainstvenno spasaemyi', 'lavrovyi venets'—has been the basis of a number of Christological readings, reinforced by emphasis on the Easter date.

who, under the obligation of his commission, restrains the moral language of the portrait, the poet is free to advocate a militantly historical reappraisal and to exercise judgement through the verbal imagination. In 'The Hero', while the poet guides the response of the viewer to Gros's canvas, he refuses to dispel all its ambiguities and offer a definitive statement that will convince the reader of the poet's right to make certain historical judgements. In 'The Commander', the poet-speaker makes a more certain judgement based on his superior powers of aesthetic insight unaided by historical evidence.

The consensus that Pushkin's aim in writing 'The Commander' was to topple Kutuzov from his pedestal and rehabilitate Barclay is questionable. In any case, it is too narrow a basis for interpreting Pushkin's work.¹¹⁷ The poem considers the hero as a type rather than a specific individual. It should be noted that Barclay is not named, and while the identity of the subject of Dawe's portrait was obvious to everyone, the verbal portrait lacks highly individual detail. If lines 35 to 54 were read on their own as a separate portrait, it is doubtful whether Barclay's name would come to mind. As in 'The Hero', the poem has moved from the specific historical case to the distillation of a type, giving greatest weight to questions of definition because Pushkin at this point is considering the role of the individual in history; and because he considers the question whether great men make history or men are made great by history. At the same time, 'The Commander' provides an alternative angle on the nature of historical evaluation by applying the criteria of moral greatness—central to one school of historiography from Plutarch to Voltaire—rather than the criteria of achievement. The final paragraph is written outside the historical frame of the War Gallery and outside the purview of the poetic speaker. Its viewpoint is that of eternal truths about mankind and also about art. It is a didactic conclusion to a poem about paintings closer in style to the expectations of the eighteenth century. 'The Commander' addresses the problem of the hero as a Romantic type from a neoclassical perspective. The final paragraph of the poem speaks not in the tones of the contemporary historian: the ferocious indignation of the moral expostulation belongs more to the satirist or the philosopher, for whom the purpose of history is the illustration of his ethical conclusions. Judged on these terms, 'The Commander' is not about an individual but about a category of individuals. In 'The Commander' there are two exemplary figures, the subject of the canvas whose uneven reputation becomes a case study in the nature of fame and fortune; and then the poet who, as an exemplary viewer-figure, demonstrates the power of the charisma of the represented object, and the power of the artist to embody certain intentions in an image.

It is not necessary to argue that Pushkin's choice of Barclay imposes on him a requirement to be sincere or insincere as a champion of Barclay's individual

¹¹⁷ For an example of this interpretation, see Manuilov and Modzalevskii, '“Polkovodets” Pushkina', 138–40; for a review of the arguments on this issue, see V. V. Pugachev, 'Pushkin i 1812 goda: k istolkovaniiu “Polkovodtsa”', in *Problemy istorii kul'tury, literatury, sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi mysli* (Saratov: Izd-stvo Saratovskogo universiteta, 1984), 174–8.

biography. His virtues, and the tragedy of his immediate reputation, confer the grandeur of an exemplary man, a latter-day Belisarius. At the end of 'The Hero', the speaker presents the reader with a philosophical choice between an ameliorative vision of history and the debased truth. At the end of 'The Commander', the poem effectively puts the reader in the position of having to apply that choice of alternatives. Do we read the poem and the vision of the artist against the record of history because the artistic vision improves us morally? Do we read against the grain of history because we know that a pitfall of contemporary evaluation is the tendency to overlook greatness? Do we accept the artist's vision despite the truth because it is the more noble view? If so, then by corollary we place on the artist and poet the responsibility for identifying greatness rather than telling the truth. In the copy of Ancillon that Chaadaev sent Pushkin, numerous passages in the section 'On Glory' were marked, including words that sum up the moral implication inherent in the conclusion of 'The Commander':

The number of those who do not even know the names of the great men and beautiful geniuses who have honoured the human race is immense; the number of those who know and admire them is small. But these last are the elite of humanity, the representatives of the truth, the judges of the beautiful, who century on century acquit humanity of its debt. It is with them that one should wish to identify when one wishes to live in the memory of mankind. The idea of leaving in one's actions and works the impression of one's soul, and sharing one's thoughts and sentiments with people whom one would have admired if one had been in a position to know them is a marvellous idea.¹¹⁸

The theme of the unidentified hero occurs prominently in the historical articles printed in the *Correspondance littéraire*. We have seen that the preoccupation with the meaning of greatness articulated in the 1750s came full circle and coincided with the post-Napoleonic preoccupation that gripped poets and novelists in the late 1820s. Grimm had observed that it was the role of the man of genius to begin by studying deeply the character of his heroes and to imagine for each of them a manner and a discourse that suited their character, their 'esprit', their century.¹¹⁹ The worlds of eighteenth-century Plutarchan values and Romantic alienation meet in 'The Commander' in which the historian's understanding of greatness, measured by the moral examples of a Cassius, a Brutus, a Cato, is transformed into indignation and sympathy for Shakespearian fallen angels; where a figure of an older nobility marked by a Stoic acceptance of fate meets the rebellious revisionism of the Romantic poet; and where the old-fashioned didacticism of historical painting meets the new powers of insight accorded the poet, the viewer, and the reader. This takes us to the meditations on his own standing that Pushkin

¹¹⁸ Ancillon, *Pensées*, ii. 92. On the gift and Chaadaev's hopes that Pushkin will acquire a spiritual mission for Russia, see Pushkin, *PSS*, xiv, no. 411, p. 44 (March–April 1829).

¹¹⁹ *Correspondance littéraire*, i. 13. Grimm expresses his view in an attack on La Harpe that would have been of interest to Pushkin.

wrote shortly afterwards. In writing an appreciation of the general, the poet also characterizes himself.

ALIENATION AND INDEPENDENCE

By 1835 a massive amount had changed not only in his personal life but in his professional standing in the public eye. From this time, the Pushkinian lyric speaker was beset by uncertainties about professional status and his readership.¹²⁰ Caught between harassment from the censor and anxiety over the inconstant taste of the anonymous readership of the public, Pushkin wrote a number of poems in which the poet speaks as a hero worthy of the independence and defiance exemplified by a Chaadaev or Barclay.

It is in the nature of Romantic identity and literature to make art out of one's travails, and for that reason the temptation to read many of Pushkin's most intense lyric statements as confessional moments has been hard to resist. In the spring of 1836, the year after he wrote 'The Commander', Pushkin was at one of the lowest points of his career. Most of the poetry he composed in this period remained in his notebooks unpublished, including a cycle of poems that expressed feelings of anxiety about his social and professional status. Among his last poems, and unknown to his readership, the five poems now grouped together as an Easter cycle are among Pushkin's most defiant works. In terms of penance and spiritual revival, they defend the ethos of the writer with the same sense of principle marshalled for his philosophical heroes. Each of these lyrics expresses a need for escape and security whether through flight as in the four-line 'In vain I flee to the heights of Athos . . .' ('Naprasno ia begu k sionskim vysotam', 1836), through prayer for self-understanding and renewal in 'Hermit fathers and virtuous women' ('Ottsy pustynniki i zheny neporochny', 1836); through death and merger with nature (discussed below); or through the verbal monument that wins one the admiration of posterity. The poems make no reference to specific feuds, commercial pressures, and private financial woes. In distancing themselves from personal circumstances, these poems reassert the posture and self-belief of the autonomous artist. Of the five, 'From Pindemonte' ('Iz Pindemonti', 1836) most directly concerns the status of the artist and the psychology of independence necessary if inspiration is to lead to the creation of true art.¹²¹

Не дорого ценю я громкие права,
От коих не одна кружится голова.
Я не рошщу о том, что отказали боги

¹²⁰ A useful overview of his escalating feud with Faddei Bulgarin can be found in V. Gippius, 'Pushkin v bor'be s Bulgarinym v 1830–1831 gg.', *PVK* 6 (1941), 235–55.

¹²¹ On sources of the poem, with special reference to Southey, see Alexander Dolinin, *Pushkin i Angliia* (Moscow: NLO, 2006), 226–36.

Мне в сладкой участи оспоривать налоги,
 Или мешать царям друг с другом воевать;
 И мало горя мне, свободно ли печать
 Морочит олухов, иль чуткая цензура
 В журнальных замыслах стесняет балагура.
 Все то, видите ль, *слова, слова, слова*.
 Иные, лучшие мне дороги права;
 Иная, лучшая потребна мне свобода:
 Заивисить от властей, зависить от народа—
 Не все ли нам равно? Бог с ними.

Никому: *слова, слова, слова*.

Отчета не давать, себе лишь самому
 Служить и угождать; для власти, для ливреи
 Не гнуть ни совести, ни помыслов, ни шеи;
 По прихоти своей скитаться здесь и там,
 Дивясь божественным природы красотам,
 И пред созданьями искусств и вдохновенья
 Трепеща радостно в восторгах умилиенья.
 —Вот счастье! вот права...¹²²

I do not value highly the loud privileges | From which more than one head has been turned. | I do not complain that the gods have refused me | The sweet fate of disputing taxes | Or hindering kings from warring; | And I'm not bothered if the press pulls the wool | Over the eyes of fools, or touchy censorship | Inhibits a fool in his journalistic projects. | You see, all of this is just *words, words, words*. | Other, better rights matter to me; | Another, better freedom is essential to me: | To be subject to rulers, to be subject of the people— | Is it not one and the same? May God be with them. | To be accountable | To no one, to serve and please for power and for livery | To bend neither conscience, nor plans, nor one's neck; | To caper here and there according to one's whim, | Marvelling in the divine beauties of nature, | And before the creations of culture and inspiration | Trembling joyously in raptures of tender feeling. | This is happiness! This is one's right...

In the first block of lines the poet abjures all the ostentatious (and clearly desired) markers of success, including official approval, power, critical acclaim, and financial reward. Even the freedom to publish can be dispensed with provided the writer assigns a higher value to his own independence of thought and freedom to answer to his own moral values and to his own artistic impulses. A contextualizing reading could easily see the poem as a moment of stocktaking and correlate each of the privileges renounced by the speaker to one of Pushkin's thwarted goals in these years: resigning dreams of power expresses the belated understanding that Nicholas will not take seriously Pushkin's wish to see the gentry play its part in ruling; accepting on the basis of recent experience that the censor, far from being the enlightened bureaucrat to whom Pushkin wrote

¹²² Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 420.

in his 1822 epistle, will continue to hinder; that circumstances, most especially critical trends and the fluctuations in one's reputation, impinge on opportunities to publish and earn royalties; that the humiliation of his social standing at court has eroded his self-esteem.

Such connections, framed by the larger context of Pushkin's domestic upheavals and precarious finances, blatantly suggest that Pushkin speaks for himself and only himself here. But the poem employs the techniques of theatrical soliloquy—and to that end quotes *Hamlet*—in order to create an intermediate space between private meditation and public statement. The poet takes the stage, and rather than interiorizing his troubles, addresses the audience or reader. The great credo of independence of the second half elicits an unexpected exclamation of confirmation: 'This is happiness! This is one's right . . .' The punctuation and separate placement of the line suggest that the voice here belongs not to the soliloquist but to a sympathetic interlocutor or implied reader who shares the speaker's beliefs. The poem dramatizes a turning point when long frustration and meditation becomes self-assertion, but the resolution achieved at the end is not only a type of consolation. We do not need to read 'From Pindemonte' as a soliloquy about his immediate travails to see it as more than a restatement of Romantic privilege and artistic freedom. While that meaning is part of the resolution, the first part of the poem is necessary because the poet must not merely renounce the trappings of success and approval, but must purge himself of the exterior motivations that have made him vulnerable. Out of despair and resignation, the speaker creates a situation in which the artist reclaims freedom, and the meaning of that freedom is the right to enjoy a position of disinterestedness. The reward for that state of detachment is the relief of producing art that is pure art because it is free from any ascribed purpose (and the connection with Kantian aesthetics as explored in Chapter 4 should be borne in mind). In this respect, we recognize an essential unity between the credo of one of Pushkin's last poems and the implicit convictions of 'The Singer'—one of his earliest. Once art aims to please, however, it automatically acquires a purpose and betrays that ideal.

There are readings of the more overtly religious poems in the cycle that lay emphasis on the dates and order of composition over the Easter period, and see in its vocabulary of resignation, love of man, chastity, and self-castigation a deeply religious and specifically Christian meaning in which Pushkin is seen to enact his own Passion. If Pushkin fought off the tendency to the transcendent, his later poems effect a gradual passage from an aesthetic of the personal to an aesthetic of the spiritual, and do have visionary glimpses. The question of Pushkin's religious convictions tends to polarize writers on the subject who are keen to fix the poet as atheist or latent Christian when it is possible to discern in the poems a more complex set of deliberations and feelings. If Irina Surat is right in arguing, as a polemical corrective, that 'Pushkinian poetic religiosity is based not on the duality of the earthly and the heavenly, as in the romantics and symbolists, but on

a love for this world',¹²³ insistence on Pushkin's down-to-earthness can obscure moments of spiritual division as powerful as Pushkin's few trenchant statements of atheistic repudiation.¹²⁴ When in the later poems rejection of a transcendent Christian vision occurs, as in 'The Wanderer' ('Strannik' 1835), it stands in a dialectical relationship with the powerful attraction of belief that we see in the poem 'Hermit fathers and virtuous women' where he associates the process of moral renewal with the period of Easter.

But there is a large gap between recognizing that Pushkin caught the solemn mood of Easter and arguing that the poems are an acceptance of Christian belief, a conclusion that is unnecessary to a meaningful interpretation of them and also false to the materialist and avowedly atheist strain in his writing. From the late 1820s the Christ-like image of the poet had begun to enjoy a vogue in French poetry; and increasingly from the 1830s the writings of French utopian socialists conflated the profile of an ideal secular leader with Jesus. One source for views about the social function of art comes from an 1829 volume about Saint-Simon's socialism that was in Pushkin's library.¹²⁵ Indeed, Chaadaev wrote to Pushkin in 1831 about the 'political religion' of Saint-Simon which, like other movements, promised that 'soon a man will come bringing us the truth of our times'.¹²⁶ Romantic movements readily added Christ to their typology of the Great Man, creating a potent symbol that even godless poets could employ.¹²⁷ Pushkin fashioned such a figure out of Barclay, and could apply the same ethos to his own poetic portrait. Why could the poet not be such a man? In *Du prince et des lettres*, Vittorio Alfieri, a friend of Chénier and fellow republican, produced an impressive statement on the moral of leadership of the writer whose greatness, in his view, grows out of a freedom from service to a master, whether prince or the public. Chapter 4 of the treatise predicts that writers, once freed from service to the prince, will bring the public enlightenment, but also warns writers that princes inevitably prefer and promote the mediocre writers over those of genius.¹²⁸ Voltaire, who was not beyond comparing himself to Christ, had made the hazards of a professional career a refrain throughout his work. Complaints about the fickleness of rulers and the crowd were taken up by his pupil La Harpe in the long introduction to his edition of Suetonius, in which he ranted against

¹²³ See the provocative article by Irina Surat, 'Pushkin kak religioznaia problema', *Novyi mir*, 1 (1994), 207–22 (with bibliography).

¹²⁴ Several years earlier in the *Gabrieliad* Pushkin adapted Voltaire's *La Pucelle*, and produced a blasphemous rewriting of the Immaculate Conception in which he made Satan the father of Christ. On Pushkin's youthful atheism see Vladislav Khodasevich, 'Gavriliada', in A. S. Pushkin, *Gevriilada*, ed. B. Tomashevskii (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1991 (repr. 1922 edn.)), 117–24; and idem, 'Koshchunstvo', in *O Pushkine* (Berlin: Petropolis, 1937), 103–15.

¹²⁵ *Doctrine de Saint-Simon: exposition* (Paris, 1829) [cf. Modz. 885]; there are numerous references to Christ as a model for the leader of a secular religion, and Saint-Simon says that it will be the poet who shall lead humanity to a brighter future. The 1831 Brussels edition in Pushkin's library is a now scarce cheap reprint in duodecimo of the widely available Paris text.

¹²⁶ Pushkin, *PSS*, xiii, no. 681, p. 227.

¹²⁷ Bénichou, *Le Sacre*, 39–47, and ch. 4.

¹²⁸ Vittorio Alfieri, *Du prince et des lettres* (Paris, 1818) [Modz. 592].

the explosion of popular journals that was leading to a decline in quality and taste.¹²⁹ In his lengthy preface to an edition owned by Pushkin of Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, the politician and thinker Abel Villemain observed over the course of history a pattern between the wish of arbitrary authority to subjugate the 'independence of thought' ('l'indépendance de la pensée'), and cited the examples of Socrates, Stoic philosophers, Henri IV, and even Robespierre as such figures, among whom Christ was pre-eminent.¹³⁰ The most interesting passages identify Christ as a prototype for the secular modern artist, who will be an emblem of his doctrine, which is to say a 'type of perfectibility'. This doctrine accepts fully the widespread Romantic view that the poet has always been a legislator of mankind, even in primitive societies, because of his powers of imagination. But the Saint-Simonian doctrine goes further in using Christological imagery as a metaphor for poetic genius that must remain independent and operate on its own terms. In setting these works that Pushkin read alongside his situation in 1836, we might revise the pessimistic conclusions of interpretations of the Easter cycle. There is no question that Pushkin was beleaguered: his finances had deteriorated, resulting in greater dependence on Nicholas I; his commercial standing was challenged, and his reputation among certain critics was in tatters. But the defiance of the Easter cycle is as much about rebirth and the assertion of ideals as it is about martyrdom. The imagery of the Easter cycle, which champions independence, the eternal value of the poet to the nation, captures a poet striving to be a secular hero rather than emulating the Passion of Christ (as many readings have contended). Poetry that assimilates Christological features and aspects of a Christian message wished to communicate a moral commitment and interest in humanity without espousing a faith.¹³¹ When Pushkin's poems about intellectual independence evoke Christian associations they must be seen within this broader discourse. The religion of the poet described in 'The Prophet', who is enjoined to travel the globe and inflame the hearts of men, is art. The power of art allows the poet to discern and create true heroism.

¹²⁹ Suetonius, *Les Douze Césars, traduits du Latin de Suétone, avec des notes et des réflexions par M. de La Harpe* (Paris, An XIII [1805]) [Modz. 1415], 20–3.

¹³⁰ Pascal, *Lettres écrites à un provincial*, p. ix; also see Cassange, *La Théorie de l'art*, 232.

¹³¹ On the figure of Christ as a Romantic type, and the application of the Passion story to poetic lives, see M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971), 394–5.

8

Body and Soul

The great object of life is sensation—to feel that we exist, even though in pain.¹

(Byron)

I still love the language of the passions. ('Ia vse liubliu iazyk strastei'.)²

(Pushkin)

This chapter returns to the intersection of poetry and ideas. Chapter 3 argued that Pushkin's concept of art in the 1830s moved closer to idealism. His renewed attention to classicism inspired confidence in the capacity of art to embody eternal truths. At the same time, he also harboured the sense that inspiration was not only a matter of intellect since sensation and association guided the play of ideas. Materialism, one of the most influential ideas to coalesce in the Enlightenment, underlies a number of Pushkin's poems about eroticism, death, and fate. Scholarship on Pushkin and the eighteenth century tends to concentrate on literary continuities (as touched on in Chapter 1). Let us refocus instead on a theory of sensibility that is an important part of the pre-Romantic legacy of Pushkin's view of individual identity.

In exploring the impact of materialist thought, this chapter considers works that are not usually read together because they fall into separate thematic groupings. When seen as structural or stylistic invariants, Pushkin's motifs often seem static and suggest an apparent lack of development over the course of his career. This impression is illusory. We can better appreciate how his thinking evolves by seeing motifs in terms of ideas that are dynamic links between poems. It is not the theme but the idea that should serve as the connecting thread. In this case, materialism is the fundamental concept which links poems which adopt recognizably Epicurean and Stoic positions on the subjects of love and death, and the body and soul. If the terms Epicurean and Stoic have been applied to Pushkin, it has largely been in the limited popular sense of a lover of pleasure or a fatalist.³ In

¹ *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, 13 vols., vol. iii (John Murray: London, 1974), 109 (Letter to Annabella Milbank, 6 September 1813).

² Pushkin, *PSS*, ii. 138 ('Denisu Davydovu', 1821).

³ For an important exception, however, see Natalia Mazur, '“Brozhu li ia vdol' ulits shumnykh...” i stoicheskaja filosofija smerti', in *Stikh, iazyk, poezii. Pamiati Mikhaila Leonovicha*

fact, Pushkin heeds Epicurean and Stoic lessons about the passions and about life, about the nature of both the body and the soul, because he shares their assumptions about what it means to be alive and to feel in a basic physical sense. Pushkin establishes both parallel and contrastive meanings by drawing upon elements of a shared vocabulary.

THE SCIENCE OF FEELING

What does Pushkin mean by the passions and their language? The idea of sensation at work in many of Pushkin's poems has a complex development. Although this is not the place to give a detailed historical account, it is worth observing the close connection between sensibility—and the sets of emotions prized by sentimentalism and explored by lyric poetry—and empirical psychology. As scholarship in the history of ideas has shown, a whole raft of innovations about the connection between body and mind, increasing in complexity from Locke's Associationism to the medical theories of academic science, came to inform aesthetic and poetic theory from the mid-eighteenth century. By the time of Karamzin's heyday in the 1790s, the underlying intuition of eighteenth-century writers is that 'thought' and 'feeling' are not separable.

The physiological sciences changed Enlightenment descriptions of the human self as a psychological, social, and emotional entity.⁴ Materialism, associated in the seventeenth century with libertine and neo-Stoic thinkers, kept pace with developments in the physical sciences from the early Enlightenment. The views of the most important writers, including Julien Offray de La Mettrie, Baron d'Holbach, Étienne Condillac, and Denis Diderot, on questions concerning the body, the soul, free will, and God, paid serious consideration to Epicurean and

Gasparova (Moscow: RGGU, 2006), 343–72. Mazur discusses late poems (other than those treated here) in which she finds evidence of Pushkin's moral dependence on the Stoic attitude to facing death. That Pushkin took Stoic teaching seriously in the 1830s is incontrovertible. Based on a different set and combination of sources, all known to be in his library, I see the impetus for Pushkin's ethical language in the reading and thinking about eighteenth-century theories of the body and belief. Mazur suggests Pushkin was a thoroughgoing Stoic from an early age, but to my mind the early borrowings display a pseudo-Stoicism which bears witness to literary ambition, and which stands apart from the more comprehensive and considered views that go with his later readings of Helvétius, Diderot, and many others. I have, then, reservations about the extensive pattern of quotation that Mazur deploys, since the younger poet probably absorbed key Stoic motifs as clichés of eighteenth-century verse, rather than directly from the large inventory of ancient writers adduced, many of whom Pushkin may well not have known.

⁴ The classic work on the subject is François Duchesneau, *La Physiologie des Lumières: empirisme, modèles et théories* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982); a useful overview can be found in Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), ch. 1.

Stoic concepts.⁵ The theories of Epictetus and Epicurus on the atoms and their properties were invoked as part of the physical aspect of the Stoic moral calculus.⁶ A long article in the *Encyclopédie* enshrined the importance of Epicurus as a medical and physiological theorist. For *philosophes* such as Diderot and d'Holbach, steeped in new theories of the body, ancient precursors had raised all sorts of questions about determinism and the self-control of the individual.⁷

Like France and England, Russia at the end of the eighteenth century was a 'culture of sensibility'. A growing body of scholarship has begun to show that the meaning of the feelings rested on scientific and sometimes materialist premisses about sensibility. Further study will undoubtedly provide more precise descriptions of how medical and physiological theories shaped concepts such as feeling, affect, emotion, passion, and tranquillity in a movement like Sentimentalism. While the culture of sensibility invested sensation with moral value, there was an increasing awareness of the human being as a complex of physical operations. Until the 1760s, Epicureanism and Stoicism were the legacy of Horatian imitation, being adopted in literature independent of the larger scientific and philosophical context behind sensibility.⁸ From the 1770s, Russian writers began to examine in moral and scientific terms the hedonistic calculus of pleasure and pain as was already the case in Europe. As a chemist Lomonosov was instrumental in creating a context in which Epicurean physics, as found in Lucretius, attracted native exponents in the Russian Academy. In turn, their research informed Alexander Radishchev's materialist theory of the emotions.⁹ Physio-psychological descriptions of the self as advanced by writers like Radishchev and Nikolai Karamzin and the mathematician Dmitrii Anichkov emanated from the empirical, biological, and epistemological theories of the period. Both Radishchev and Karamzin show cognizance of arguments that sensibility ('chustvitel'nost') is a pathological property, and that the proper management of sensation will lead to equanimity and happiness.¹⁰ Karamzin's views on sensibility came largely in the form of poems and stories that pioneered a

⁵ Denis Diderot's views on Seneca are most fully expressed in his *Essai sur la vie de Sénèque le philosophe, sur ses écrits et sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron* (Paris, 1779); on Russian interest in the *Encyclopédie*, see P. N. Berkov, 'Histoire de l'*Encyclopédie* dans la Russie du XVIII^e siècle', *Revue des études slaves*, 44 (1965), 47–58. Pushkin had a summary of these theories in Charles Coquerel, *Essai sur l'histoire générale du christianisme* (Paris: Sautet, 1828), ch. 1 [Modz. 824].

⁶ See, with bibliography, Gerhard Stenger, 'L'Atomisme dans les *Pensées philosophiques*: Diderot entre Gassendi et Buffon', *Dix-Huitième Siècle*, 35 (2003), 75–100.

⁷ See Jonathan Israel, *The Radical Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), part IV.

⁸ For a discussion of the Russian convergence with Europe, see Andrew Kahn, "Blazhenstvo ne v luchakh porfira": histoire et fonction de la tranquillité (spokojstvie) dans la pensée et la poésie russe du XVIII^e siècle, de Kantemir au sentimentalisme', *Revue des études slaves*, 74: 4 (2003), 669–88.

⁹ See Andrew Kahn, 'Epicureanism in the Russian Enlightenment: Dmitrii Anichkov and Atomic Theory', in A. Lifschitz and N. Leddy (eds.), *Epicureanism and the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, forthcoming, 2009).

¹⁰ On the impact of the biological sciences on literary representations of sensibility, see G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago:

language and style of feeling. These representations were easily detached from scientific or philosophical views, suffusing the emotional vocabulary which was becoming common coin for lyric poetry of the period. Outside their poetry, Radishchev and Karamzin were more explicit about the biological basis of sensibility theory, which, for example, informed literary characterization in the *Letters of a Russian Traveller* (1792), and drew attention to the epistemological theories of Locke, Condillac, and Bonnet among others.¹¹ The letters about Haller, Bonnet, and Lavater provided non-technical descriptions of the organic workings of sensibility, popularizing a philosophical point of view about the relation of mind, body, and soul to one another.

A scientific definition of the body dictated conclusions about the connection between sensation and emotion and, more abstractly, about metaphysical concepts involving determinism and belief. Ideas about love and death developed in relation to the heritage of materialism. The materialist premiss on which sensibility rested was quickly absorbed within sentimental conventions.¹² While these sensations had a rational basis, they were only partly controllable because knowledge about them was incomplete. A culture of sensibility gave pride of place to the refinement of inner feeling and the sublimation of the passions into a non-eroticized friendship. Equally, this culture felt anxiety about desire that threatened individual stability and social convention. Accordingly, the representation of feeling emphasized the emotions independent of bodily perceptions. Apart from Galich, few Russian writers after Karamzin demonstrated such curiosity about the tension between the materialistic and Vitalist explanation of the passions. Poetry of the period 1800–16, so often hailed in Russian scholarship for inventing the self, scarcely reflected this modern vision of individual identity. Lyric voices vibrated in response to mood and landscape settings, and retreated into a nebulous, ill-defined spirituality that reflects more an ease in manipulating Gothic effects than a comparable apprehension of the meaning of identity. Karamzin's successors amplified the language of emotion and lost sight of what generates feeling. Pushkin was an exception in bringing together poetry and a philosophical knowledge of the emotions.

University of Chicago Press, 1992), ch. 1. The British scientific discussion of sensibility is close to the French context that Pushkin knew better.

¹¹ The writings of the Associationist philosophers, the theories of Haller on muscular irritability and Bonnet on the location of the soul—all certain influences on Karamzin—represented sensibility as a quasi-physical entity. From sensationalist philosophers like Condillac, Bonnet, and Buffon (the latter two were in Pushkin's library), to aestheticians like Dubos and Diderot, to moralists like Duclos and J.-J. Rousseau, to the Vitalist theorists of the Montpellier medical school, French Enlightenment thinkers subscribed to the idea that sensibility was the essential link between the human body and the psychological, intellectual, and ethical faculties of humankind. On the development of the biological sciences and philosophy, see Lester Crocker, *An Age of Crisis: Man and the World in Eighteenth Century French Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959), 79–123.

¹² See the entries 'Amour' and 'Sensibilité' in d'Alembert, *Esprit, maximes et principes de d'Alembert* (Geneva: Briand, 1789), 16–17, 415–16 [Modz. 908].

EPICUREAN MASTERS: LUCRETIUS, VOLTAIRE,
AND DIDEROT

All elevated minds follow Voltaire.¹³

(Pushkin)

In physiological terms death (natural) is the gradual weakening of the body that follows as a consequence from the elimination of those *fiery atoms* to which imaginative Poets—the philosophers of ancient times—attributed organic life and motion, to which they ascribed sensibility and thought.¹⁴

(Alexander Galich)

A short profile that Pushkin wrote of Radishchev puts materialist thinkers at the centre of Russia's generation of *philosophes*:

Helvétius fell into their hands [Radishchev and his classmates]. They greedily studied the principles of his trite and sterile metaphysics. Grimm, the itinerant agent of French philosophy, was in Leipzig and came across these Russian students with the book *On Reason* and conveyed to Helvétius a piece of news that was joyous and flattering for him and his entire group. Nowadays it is incomprehensible to us in what manner the cold and dry Helvétius could become the favourite of young people who were emotional and sensitive if we ourselves did not know, unfortunately, just how seductive to developing minds these ideas and new rules were despite having been rejected by the law and tradition. Our knowledge of French philosophy of the eighteenth century is already well established; it has been examined and evaluated from every point of view. What used to be the secret knowledge of hierophants has subsequently been published, preached in public, and has forever lost the charm of its clandestineness and novelty. Other ideas, just as juvenile, other dreams, just as unreal, have replaced the ideas and dreams of the pupils of Diderot and Rousseau, and the superficially thoughtful admirer of Rumour once again sees in them the goal of mankind and the solution to an eternal enigma, not imagining that they are in turn replaced by others.¹⁵

Diderot regarded Helvétius critically as a crude mechanist, unable to explain creative genius except in the most primitive mechanical way. It is possible that Pushkin's negative comments reflect Diderot's reservations. Criticism of Helvétius, however, is a secondary concern here. Pushkin's emphasis is on reminding the reader of a forgotten chapter in Russian intellectual history when the materialists were read and emulated. At the same time, his own interest in

¹³ Pushkin, *PSS*, xi. 272.

¹⁴ Alexander Galich, *Kartina cheloveka*, § 116, 129: 'В физиологическом же смысле смерть (естественная) есть постепенная окрепость тела, последующая за удалением тех *огненных атомов*, которым замысловатые Поэты—философы древних времен приписывали органическую жизнь и движение, приписывали чувствование и мысль.'

¹⁵ Pushkin, *PSS*, xii. 31.

Helvétius (whom he read) is meant to indicate a revival in interest and some continuity with an earlier generation of Russian thinkers. Pushkin's defensive rhetoric is tactical and probably ironic, since an explicit avowal of materialism would have been problematic after his clash with the Church authorities in 1828. The story of Radishchev's education screens his own intellectual profile, thereby dodging the censor and charges of impiety, while showing just how dangerous these names were in the Russian context.¹⁶

Pushkin's reading encompassed the European philosophical and literary sources of Russian sentimentalism. Certain sections of Pushkin's library have a comprehensiveness that suggests systematic purchasing. This is particularly the case with titles in classical literature and the history of ideas, titles that were unusual and expensive.¹⁷ Taken together, they provide incontrovertible evidence of one stimulus to his creativity. Of the French thinkers, the most important to him were Voltaire and Diderot, and both wrote extensively, if from different positions, on materialism and the existence of God.¹⁸ Voltaire's prominence in his library is no surprise, since under the Restoration his reputation as a poet and dramatist remained high. The presence of works by four of the most important radical thinkers of the Enlightenment, La Mettrie, d'Holbach (as a translator of Hobbes), Helvétius, and Diderot, should not be taken for granted. Pushkin owned and read editions of the last three (there is little evidence that La Mettrie's work was known directly in Russia). Each of the four employed different styles of argumentation according to their different aims, but they shared assumptions about the definition of matter, the connection between sensation and psychology, and the corporeal nature of the soul. Specialists in the history of ideas discriminate between different strands of this largely clandestine movement. It would be stretching a point to try to affiliate Pushkin precisely with the softer materialism

¹⁶ In the 1830s Pushkin's interest in the history of ideas and the history of academies resulted in a series of comparative essays on the development of intellectual life in Russia and Europe. Pieces on the Académie Française and the Russian Academy reveal the depth of his reading about the major philosophical and literary figures of the Grand Siècle and his sympathy for Lomonosov and Radishchev as bold innovators. This is particularly apparent in the 1834 essay 'On the Paltriness of Russian Literature' ('O nichtozhestve literaturny russkoi'), *PSS*, xi, 269–72.

¹⁷ Among titles containing philosophical discussions of eighteenth-century theories of sensibility one of the most systematic is E.-J.-L.-E. Lermnier, *Études d'histoire et de philosophie* (Paris, 1836) [Modz. 1093], esp. 65–93, which treats the history of idealism as well as the neurological theories of sensibility from Condillac onward; also of interest is a discussion Pushkin knew of Kant's views of the Cyrenaic philosophers, sceptics who advocated bodily pleasures over intellectual pleasures. Particular attention is paid to the meaning of sensation and whether it occurs in the body or the mind. See Jean-Gottlieb Buhle, *Histoire de la philosophie moderne depuis la Renaissance des lettres jusqu'à Kant; précédée d'un abrégé de la philosophie ancienne* (Paris: F. I. Fournier, 1816), i, 67–87 [Modz. 683].

¹⁸ Pushkin read Voltaire during his Southern exile in an edition he came across in Gurzuf. See P. B. Bartenev, *Pushkin v iuzhnoi Rossii. Materialy dlia ego biografii, sobiraemye Petrom Bartenevym, Russkaia rech' i Moskovskii Vestnik*, 88 (1861), 32–3. Pushkin, like most readers of the period, took Voltaire seriously as a poet. It was in his early and late verse that Voltaire was his most Epicurean and Horatian. See Nicholas Cronk, 'Arouet, poète épicurien: les voix de l'épicurisme dans la poésie de jeunesse de Voltaire', *Dix-Huitième Siècle*, 35 (2003), 157–70.

expounded by Helvétius in *De l'esprit*, or with more radical statements of an author like Diderot about the atomic nature of matter, the mortality of the soul, and the corporal rather than spiritual basis of the passions. As a man and writer alive to the responses of the body, he was interested in the organic description of feeling and the soul provided by these texts. Philosophical niceties would have been of less interest to Pushkin than their style of thought and overall conclusions.

Not all materialists of the Enlightenment were free-thinkers, but the materialists who most attracted Pushkin's attention, whose works he owned and read and even (too infrequently) wrote about, including Diderot, d'Holbach, and Helvétius, were declared atheists. Voltaire, an evident influence on Pushkin's historical work, breathed life into his thinking about sense perception and belief. As a brilliant polemicist and philosophical popularizer, the deist Voltaire frequently attacks materialism in his writings on religion and philosophy. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the religious positions of key writers were understood tendentiously. As a commonplace, 'Voltairean' became a byword in good society for heretical thought, despite the fact that Voltaire's natural religion accepts the existence of a deity.¹⁹ Voltaire's ideas about religion were inseparable from his attitude to Church and State, theory of society, anthropological views, and scientific knowledge. As the great enemy of bogus religion, fable, intolerance, and a champion of the secular, Voltaire was easily mistaken for an atheist. The chance to form a more accurate picture of his complex attitude to religion was available to readers, like Pushkin, of Voltaire's complete works. Pushkin's set included the volumes collected in the Kehl edition under the title *Dictionnaire philosophique* as well as other volumes of scientific and philosophical works. On the evidence of the pages cut, it seems clear that Pushkin knew precisely which aspects of Voltaire's thought most intrigued him. All the articles of the *Dictionnaire philosophique* were cut, whereas he was more selective elsewhere, omitting, for instance, all of Voltaire's biblical criticism but opening the essays on atheism contained in the same book.

Materialism in itself is not a single school. Broadly speaking, it is a theory of matter based on Epicurean physics which argues that everything consists of atoms and space. In his *De rerum natura*, Lucretius set out precepts on how materialism operated in nature and in man. His physical theory described how the mind and soul functioned as atomic entities, and also explored the anthropological consequences of materialism by narrating the physical causes of belief and fantasy that led men to create the stories about origins and causes that form the basis of religion. Its modern scientific version took strength from its legacy in the thinking of Epicurus, his disciple Lucretius, Cicero, and Seneca, among others. In his article on 'Atoms' Voltaire charts a straight line joining atomic thinkers

¹⁹ A number of Decembrists, including Pestel', admired Voltaire for his iconoclasm and putative atheism. See Zaborov, *Russkaia literatura i Vol'ter*, 172–3.

from Epicurus to the French seventeenth-century thinker Gassendi and then Isaac Newton and the English chemist Robert Boyle. He argues that the moderns surpass their ancient predecessors only because they can now scientifically demonstrate the existence of space and matter which remained an article of faith for the ancients who believed, in Voltaire's striking phrase, that 'the universe was taken from nothingness'. Rehearsing the definition of matter is only Voltaire's pretext in the essay for talking about chance and the problem of explaining how according to atomic theory causality arises if matter operates according to a strictly determinist biological logic: 'Comment donc se peut-il faire qu'on accuse encore les philosophes de penser que l'arrangement prodigieux et ineffable de cet univers soit une production du concours fortuit des atomes, un effet du hasard?'²⁰ Pushkin knew Voltaire's two *Dialogues between Lucretius and Posidonius* (1756), in which an Epicurean and a Stoic poet debate whether the existence of a deity follows from their Epicurean premisses on the creation of the world and the operation of nature. While both speakers subscribe to Epicurus' physics, Lucretius is staunch in arguing two positions: first that matter has thought and therefore requires no outside architect; and, secondly, that the soul is made up of matter and cannot be described as immaterial in any way. Voltaire does not inject his own viewpoint.²¹ The deadlock of two poet philosophers serves his purpose in exposing the philosophical core of materialism and in identifying the theological problem it continued to cause throughout the eighteenth century. Whether or not Voltaire himself believes that all emotions have a physical cause is unclear. The language in which he describes sensibility and the origins of feeling has a materialist bias. But his protagonists often argue that point and put forward a strictly Epicurean and Lucretian line that the 'soul is always matter that has been infinitely distributed, like an elementary fire that animates the entire machine'.²² By machine he means man himself whose body is governed by a 'material that is extremely small and rapid' and whose feelings are entirely a matter of bodily function because a 'body can only be agitated by another body; and because the interior of my body can only be penetrated by the tiny and distributed corpuscles that make up my soul'.

Voltaire was virtually a one-man encyclopedia on key ideas and works of Enlightenment thought, and Lucretian materialism is a recurrent theme. If anything, his arguments for the existence of God stem from his social conservatism rather than fundamental belief. Across these pieces Voltaire consistently takes the view that the material basis of being has been established conclusively, but that the existence of God is unknowable as a matter of scientific proof and is only

²⁰ Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes*, xxiii. 477 ('Atomes').

²¹ See David Furley, *Two Studies in the Greek Atomists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).

²² Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes*, xxii. 64. See Ann Thomson, *Materialism and Society in the Mid-Eighteenth Century: La Mettrie's Discours préliminaire* (Geneva: Droz, 1981), 33–49.

tenable as a matter of belief.²³ Such a view recurs in the essay on the ‘Soul’, which acknowledges that the ‘dogma of the immortality of the soul is one of the most consoling of ideas and also the most repressive that the human spirit could conceive’.²⁴ He does not deprive anyone of the right to believe as they wish, but observes that materialists wishing to be self-consistent ought to argue that the soul becomes extinct. For Voltaire, it would seem, accepting the soul as matter does not entail atheism. The arguments are for him separate and he reacts with hostility to other thinkers, above all d’Holbach, who makes the positions contingent on one another and takes a more dogmatic line.

The differences between various schools of materialism held no interest for Pushkin insofar as we can tell. But he grasped tenets of the system with interest as we see from a note in his diary for 9 April 1820 recording that he ‘spent the morning with Pestel’, an intelligent man in every sense of the word. “Mon cœur est matérialiste”, he says, “mais ma raison s’y refuse.” He and I had a metaphysical, political, moral conversation. He has one of the most original minds that I know.’²⁵ The association of political radicalism with materialism echoed a widespread view in French philosophical writing of the 1820s and 1830s. In 1824 he wrote to Viazemskii:

You want to know what I am doing—I am writing various stanzas of a Romantic narrative—and I am taking lessons in pure atheism. There is here an Englishman, a deaf philosopher who is the only intelligent atheist that I have yet met. He has written 1000 pages with the aim of proving qu’il ne peut exister d’être intelligent Créateur et régulateur, and in the process destroys the feeble proofs of the immortality of the soul. This system is not as comforting as is usually thought, but unfortunately it is the most likely.²⁶

Diderot and Lucretius are Pushkin’s most important guides on Epicureanism outside the inherited influence of French poetry.²⁷ Treating them separately is difficult because the Roman poet so permeated Diderot’s thought that he referred to Lucretius as his ‘pagan Bible’.²⁸ Pushkin first read Lucretius at school:

²³ Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes*, xxiii. 465–6 (‘Athéisme’). ²⁴ *Ibid.* 130–69 (‘Ame’).

²⁵ A. S. Pushkin, *Dnevnik, zapiski*, ed. Ia. L. Levkovich (St Petersburg: Nauka, 1995), 14–15 (9 April 1821).

²⁶ Pushkin, *PSS*, xiii, no. 82, p. 92 (May 1824).

²⁷ Pushkin’s early exposure to Epicureanism was through French poets such as the libertine Piron and Parny. Clearly he read and reread these writers as a way of polishing his own style, but the pleasure he took in their texts also grew out of an understanding of pleasure that he shared with them. His knowledge of Roman writers, including Lucretius, Catullus, Horace, and Seneca, formed during his primary education depended on modern translations. For an overview of Pushkin’s references to Horace, see L. A. Stepanov, ‘Pushkin, Goratsii, Iuvenal’, *PIM* 8 (1978), 75–82. He apparently spared no expense on these and bought two substantial sets published as *Bibliothèque latine-française* and Panckoucke’s magnificent eighteen-volume collection. These editions are intellectually significant because their scholarly apparatus is extensive and expert. Each volume offered a potted history of the writer’s ideas. A separate volume on Catullus demonstrated the closeness of antiquity and modernity by printing numerous versions by other poets for each poem of Catullus that is translated, thereby writing the history of French lyric from the Renaissance to the end of the eighteenth century as a story of imitation in a way that Pushkin would have found rewarding.

²⁸ See Aram Vartanian, ‘Érotisme et philosophie chez Diderot’, *CAIEF* 13 (1961), 369.

references to the Epicurean poet occur early in the poet's juvenile works. To judge from the evidence of Pushkin's library, his reacquaintance with Lucretius coincided with his burgeoning interest in Diderot, dating probably to after his return from Southern exile in 1824, if not earlier. The most important source on Epicurus, one which will contribute to both the theory of inspiration and pathology of love and death in the Pushkinian lyric, is the learned treatise in the edition of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* that he bought at the end of the 1820s.²⁹ This commentary systematically explained the sensitive foundation of cognition, its effects on psychology, and processes like ageing and death.³⁰ Together with other texts, the philosophical context elaborated here would have alerted Pushkin to the depth behind representations, permeated with Epicureanism, in the Roman and French poetry that he read.

In the editor's introduction ('Notice historique, bibliographique et littéraire sur Lucrèce'), Ajasson de Grandsagne identified Epicureanism as a form of empiricism or materialism which gives priority to the senses over ideas in human perception. He argued that this empiricism informed the thinking of Locke, Hume, and Condillac, all of whom influenced Diderot.³¹ On the basis of a detailed history of ancient atomic physics, Ajasson summarized Epicurus' conclusion that in a world where matter behaves according to these laws there can be no place for the existence of a God as a supreme moral being; and, further, that the soul:

is a part of the body, just like the foot, the hand, the head; it is essential to life, like the body, and man cannot exist without one or the other: but one and the other, however, continue to exist separately even after the separation known as death; though man himself is no more. Hence, like the body the soul is made up of atomic particles, but these molecules are yet finer, smaller and round in form.³²

Pushkin satisfied his curiosity about the mind—body connection, and the tension between the conviction of the heart and the mind, by reading more widely about Epicureanism and Stoicism. The edition of Lucretius treats desire as an appetite stimulated by the senses, which send pictures to the imagination. Sexual arousal creates torment because it creates moments in which biological

²⁹ For a description of Epicurus' doctrine and its Lucretian interpretation, see Warren, *Facing Death*, chs. 1 and 2. On the connection between medical theory and literary description in Diderot, see Jean Starobinski, 'Diderot et les chimistes' and 'Pathologies réactionnelles', in his *Action et réaction* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999).

³⁰ For a useful compilation of references to *De rerum natura* in Pushkin, see T. G. Mal'chukova, 'O traditsii Lukretsiia v poezii Pushkina', in *Materialy k 'Slovariu siuzhbetov i motivov russkoi literatury': ot siuzheta k motivu*, ed. V. I. Tiupy (Novosibirsk: Institut filologii SO RAN, 1996), 116–36.

³¹ Lucretius, *De la nature des choses: poème; traduit en prose par de Pongerville avec une notice littéraire et bibliographique par Ajasson de Grandsagne* (Paris, 1829–32) [Modz. 619]. Other relevant sources in Pushkin's library include F. Schoell, *Histoire abrégée de la littérature romaine*, vol. i., section 3, which contains an extensive discussion of Epicurean and Stoic philosophy as well as illuminating remarks about Lucretius.

³² Lucretius, *De la nature des choses*, p. li.

determinism contradicts the illusory impression of control and will-power that the mind may wish to assert. If Pushkin had not already seen the connections between Lucretian materialism and modern philosophy, Ajasson's essay clarified the relevance of Lucretius for Enlightenment philosophy. What is the difference between the pure sexual pleasure of the voluptuary and sexual passion inspired by love?

In checking love ('l'amour'), does one forfeit the sweet fruits of bliss ('volupté')? Ah! It is more likely that one harvests its charms in avoiding its pains: bliss is the reward of a spirit that is free and formed, and avoids those madmen whose passions float uncertainly; who, in the ardour of love, do not know which attractions they ought to give to the avidness of their hands and their looks; who under the constraint of their lubricious fury seem angry and exhaust the object of their desire, and with a ferocious tooth imprint on their lip painful kisses . . . Love is the only desire that is aggravated by its satisfaction. Hunger and thirst are easily appeased because the liquids and nutrition of food disperse in our limbs and become of them; but a charming face, a complexion of brilliant freshness only implant in us light simulations, a vain hope that is suddenly carried off by the breeze. Thus, in sleep, a man consumed by thirst vainly searches for the wave that can extinguish the ardour in his breast; he extends his parched lips to the simulacrum of the limpid stream, he exhausts himself in vain effort and succumbs, overcome by thirst amidst this false wave.³³

What is pleasure for the Epicurean atomist? The closeness of pain and pleasure is a function of the impact of external sensations on the internal configuration of the atoms in the body as a system. When the object has a positive impact that is in harmony with the body or with an image formed by the atoms as a type of a memory in the mind, then the result is pleasure. Desire is the energy that such a memory of a previous pleasure creates toward the reception and discovery of other similar pleasures. While at some level the physical response to pleasure is involuntary and purely material, it can also be willed because we continue to have knowledge of these sensations through dreams and images that can alter the physical shape of the atoms.³⁴ These simulacra, while smaller than the real atoms that they represent, have an effect on the mind and heart because they reproduce the image of the real thing and have a physical existence, however reduced. Evoked by stimuli of one kind or another, memories and feelings work physically on the mind in this material theory of sensibility. For ancient thinkers and modern Epicureans alike, the direct impact of sensation on psychology and behaviour is a fact, but its consequences are not entirely predictable. This is because Epicurus and Lucretius allow the will to exercise a power of its own in directing desire. In fact, physical pleasure can only truly occur when there is harmony with intentionality.

³³ Lucretius, *De la nature des choses*, 79. (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 16.)

³⁴ See Wilda Anderson, *Diderot's Dream* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

The writings of Diderot were another conduit for these ideas. Little published in his lifetime, Diderot was known up to the mid-nineteenth century essentially as a director of the *Encyclopédie*.³⁵ It shows a deliberate and precocious interest on Pushkin's part that he acquired the substantial Naigeon edition of Diderot's complete works. Within the overall complexion of the library, however, this is not a maverick purchase. Pushkin undoubtedly took delight in Diderot's major novels, and the full impact of Diderot's self-referential *Jacques le fataliste* on Pushkin's equally playful *Evgenii Onegin* has yet to be investigated. But it is more likely that he purchased Diderot for his philosophical interest. The works of this pioneering theoretician of materialism sum up a whole field of eighteenth-century thought, where Lucretian atomic theory, Epicureanism and Stoicism, the aesthetics of Shaftesbury, and theory of mind all crowd together. These writings, which in the 1820s were only just becoming of influence, fall logically into place in Pushkin's library alongside other works of similar scope such as d'Holbach's translation of Hobbes's theory of man,³⁶ and writings of Cicero and Seneca.

In 1829, Abel Transon, the author of a series of utopian sermons collected into a pamphlet, proclaimed that the 'universe is alive', his phrase tinged with the radical Enlightenment idea of thinking matter, and defined love in terms that exhibit continuity with earlier thinkers like d'Holbach and Diderot:

Love is apparent in thought and in action. The two orders of phenomena that one has arranged under the general categories of *spirit* and *matter* no longer, for us, correspond to two distinct entities. The duality *spirit* and *matter* in the unity LOVE only represent a sub-division that we are forced to make in order to study BEING; just as in a selection of matter one extracts the physical properties, from another part the chemical properties, although one and the other subsist together as properties of the same subject.³⁷

In *A Picture of Man*, which Pushkin bought in 1834, Galich stated his debt to the European tradition of materialism. Accordingly, he concentrates on the mechanical operation of sensation, starting with basic physical activities (or what he calls the 'semiotics of feeling') and finally treating the connection between body and mind. It is difficult to affiliate Galich with one particular school. In fact, he draws extensively on various distinct if compatible theories in producing a map of how feelings are processed. His image of the body is essentially a bio-mechanical one, derived from nerve theorists like Haller who underpin Karamzin's characterization of sensibility. In describing the soul, however, he falls within the medical Vitalist discourse of the Montpellier school, arguing that the soul is a type of fluid that circulates throughout the body and communicates

³⁵ See *Dictionnaire de Diderot*, ed. R. Mortier and R. Trousson (Paris: Champion, 1999), 433–4.

³⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *De la nature humaine, ou Exposition des facultés, des actions et des passions de l'âme, et de leurs causes* (London, 1772) [Modz. 995]. The Encyclopedists read Hobbes for his views on causality and determinism rather than as a political theorist.

³⁷ *Religion Saint-Simonienne*, 89. (For the original, see the Appendix, no. 17.)

the message of sensation.³⁸ He is, in this respect, a necessitarian who subscribes to the view that all knowledge springs from sense experience as registered by the mind. At the same time, he is also attracted to Lucretian doctrine, praising (as in the epigraph) the poet philosopher capable of describing a phenomenon still beyond clinical description. This last point is not insignificant. Materialists had trouble explaining how the routine mechanical function of the body could generate inspiration and genius. Diderot, above all, felt that the materialist systems of d'Holbach and Helvétius were in this respect inadequate and crude, and in his writing continued to explore poetically the extra something that is the mark of genius. With respect to the soul, Galich accepts a dualism, allowing it a twofold nature as a physical entity and, in terms that are far less defined, exceptional vitality in the case of poets. His religious beliefs are those of an atheistic empiricist.

Diderot communicated much of his philosophical thought in fictions, where scepticism and dialogism displace didacticism. While his preoccupations are clear, his conclusions are hard to pin down. Now a possible deist (in the *Pensées philosophiques*), now a radical materialist, Diderot sometimes seems to believe in an architect and sometimes feels that life is made from blind, unthinking matter.³⁹ In Diderot, the acceptance of the material theory of the soul as purely atomic matter virtually removes any spiritual component from sexuality, which operates in accordance with the laws of nature—a Lucretian Nature moved by the laws of attraction and procreation.⁴⁰ Pushkin's knowledge of Diderot dates to roughly the second half of the 1820s when he composed *The Gypsies*. Arguably, Diderotian and Lucretian language already permeated his attitude to nature even earlier. Consider from this new angle the description of nature in 'The Orb of Day has Set', already discussed with different emphasis in Chapter 5. The poem approximates the Diderotian sense, refracted through echoes of Lomonosov, that man as a machine and nature as a universal organism work analogously.⁴¹

³⁸ In Pushkin's library, Julia de Fontenelle, *Recherches médico-légales sur l'incertitude des signes de la mort, les dangers des inhumations précipitées, les moyens de constater les décès et de rappeler à la vie ceux qui sont en état de mort apparente* (Paris: Rouvier, 1834) [Modz. 924] gives a thorough, modern overview of physiological theories of the definition of life as mechanical/chemical or generative process, and reviews debates on Vitalist theories and their connection to materialism. Taking issue with Bichat's views (see p. 317), which were also known to Pushkin, she argues that the views of the Montpellier school have been misunderstood as materialist. In short, while she sees death as a chemical dissolution of the body in which organs cease to function and heat disappears, she does not believe in the loss of a 'puissance vitale'. The pages cut in Pushkin's copy include these parts of her discussion. On these issues, see the accessible analysis in Anne C. Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), ch. 4.

³⁹ For an excellent history of the stages in his thought, and the relation between philosophy and fiction, see Jean-Claude Bourdin, *Diderot: Le Matérialisme* (Paris: PUF, 1998).

⁴⁰ Vartanian, 'Érotisme et philosophie', 372; Bourdin, *Diderot*, 56–79 ('Le Matérialisme et le tout').

⁴¹ See Jean Ehrard, *L'Idée de la nature en France à l'aube des Lumières* (Paris: Flammarion, 1970). Stoic thought permeates lyric descriptions of nature description and is visible, for example, in one of the adaptations contained in the French translations of Catullus that Pushkin owned. A version

Pushkin correlates passion as a type of energy with the workings of nature on the grandest scale. Passion as a life force in the individual reflects its existence as a dynamic procreative force in nature.⁴² We see this again in the poem ‘Vain gift, random gift’ (‘Dar naprasnyi, dar sluchainyi’), which Pushkin composed on his birthday on 26 May 1828:

Дар напрасный, дар случайный,
Жизнь, зачем ты мне дана?
Иль зачем судьбою тайной
Ты на казнь осуждена?

Кто меня враждебный властью
Из ничтожества воззвал,
Душу мне наполнил страстью,
Ум сомнением взволновал? . . .

Цели нет передо мною:
Сердце пусто, празден ум,
И томит меня тоскою
Однозвучный жизни шум.⁴³

Vain gift, random gift, | Life, why have you been given to me? | Or for what reason have you been | Condemned to death by a secret fate?

Who with inimical power | Summoned me from nothingness, | Who filled my soul with passion, | Who disturbed my mind with doubt? . . .

No goal stands before me: | My heart is empty, my mind idle, | And the monotonous noise of life | Wearies me with yearning.

The poem antagonized both the Church, which took the materialist language to be a declaration of atheism, and the censor, who objected to its publication in the journal *Northern Flowers*. Whether or not line 6 (and specifically the word ‘nichtozhestvo’) is deliberately meant to echo Voltaire’s deist discussion of the creation of matter from nothing (‘le néant’) or atheistic usage, the effect is the same. The departure point for Pushkin’s speaker is the need to ask a fundamental question about the workings of the universe. The position suggests scepticism if not outright atheism. But instead of finding evidence for a deity, his interrogation leaves him uncertain about causes, which he refers to as a ‘passion’ (‘strast’), that turns brute matter into life: ‘Who with inimical power | Summoned me from nothingness | Filled my soul with passion, | Disturbed my mind with doubt?’ All the elements of soul, matter (‘nichtozhestvo’), passion, and mind (‘um’) as agency (‘vlast’) correspond to materialist physical theory. The equation

of Catullus, xxxi (‘Ad Sirmionem Peninsulam’) by Roger meditates on happiness in nature, which the speaker sees as ‘indépendant, sobre et tranquille | Sans préjugés, sans passions’. See Catullus, *Traduction complète des poésies de Catulle* (Paris: Crapelet, 1806), ii. 175 [Modz. 713].

⁴² See Angelica Goodden, *Diderot and the Body* (Oxford: Legenda, 2001), 59–61.

⁴³ Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 104.

of passion with energy is typical of Diderot's materialism rather than his deism.⁴⁴ He also continues to wonder why passion remains alive, troubling dreams and memories with traces of experience.⁴⁵ In associating erotic energy with nature as a generative (female) principle, Pushkin follows both Lucretius and Diderot. But he is, in the end, more interested in passion in the individual rather than on a cosmic scale. Following Diderot, Pushkin sees the passions as an inalienable and defining human ingredient, one which causes happiness but also tragedy because ultimately the passions are beyond the total control of reason. Diderot, and Pushkin probably as well, reserves a place for the blind element that materialism allows, since the body will not always respond to mental regulation.

THE MEANING OF THE PASSIONS

Ce serait donc un bonheur, me dira-t-on, d'avoir les passions fortes. Oui, sans doute, si toutes sont à l'unisson. Établissez entre elles une juste harmonie, et n'en appréhendez point de désordres.⁴⁶

(Diderot)

Young writers in general are unable to portray the physical movements of the passions.⁴⁷

(Pushkin)

All Epicureans seek pleasure; some also discuss ethics. The narrator of *Eugénie Onéguine* is a prime example. In the novel's closing stanzas he enjoins the reader to enjoy life to the full, by which hedonism he means a consolation for the brevity of youth and life itself.⁴⁸ In the first chapter, the same narrator, younger and less wise, cannot resist the impulse to recall erotic pleasure in all its sensations. Involuntary memory sets off the famous foot-digression, cast in the manner of an eighteenth-century erotic burlesque. Love is pleasure, pleasure is sensation,

⁴⁴ The classic study on the vocabulary of energy in Enlightenment literature is Michel Delon, *L'Idée d'énergie au tournant des lumières (1770–1820)* (Paris: PUF, 1988).

⁴⁵ While it would be rash to conjecture that Pushkin's use of terms such as 'trace', 'image', and 'dream-image', for instance, owes anything specific to atomic theory, it is nonetheless worth observing that when memory takes over in his poems it is always highly empirical and in response to a new visual stimulus that evokes the interiorized vision, a dynamic that corresponds to the materialist theory of memory.

⁴⁶ Denis Diderot, *Ceuvres de Denis Diderot* (Paris: 1821), i. 197 (*Pensées philosophiques*, no. 4) [Modz. 881]. His collection of Diderot also contained an analysis of Diderot's views on the body and soul, and on other materialist thinkers, in the first volume of the above set, which is separately titled J. A. Naigeon, *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques sur la vie et les ouvrages de D. Diderot* (Paris: Brière, 1821), see esp. 216–24.

⁴⁷ Pushkin, *PSS*, xiii. 145.

⁴⁸ The Horatian motif is, of course, pervasive in French poetry of the eighteenth century. On its philosophical content, see Warren, *Facing Death*, ch. 5 ('Living an Epicurean Life').

sensation is the basis of memory, and by the end of the work, when the moral is much more sombre, memory is the basis of judgement about experience that is only partly ours to determine mentally.

Pushkin is more inclined to sexualize sensibility in poems written before 1830. Surrender rather than resistance to desire typifies this mode. Poems seem to ask why it is that erotic play can sometimes affect the body more than the mind and create high-spirited pleasure; and at other times why love is an affliction. The answer, it will be argued, lies in the fundamentally materialist orientation of Pushkin's Epicureanism. By virtue of their power to alter the impact of sensations and even alter the sensibility of the individual, the passions are different from other constituent pleasures of Epicurean pleasure, like friendship and drinking.

The degree to which quasi-philosophical language can shape a literary text varies according to interest and genre. Unscientific lyric poetry must translate scientific language into a symptomology of love that uses an acceptable idiom. Both fiction and poetry afforded Pushkin impressive examples and instruction on literary Epicureanism. It is a surprising (if neglected) fact that Pushkin's extant library contains virtually no clandestine or pornographic erotic literature of any kind. This is almost certainly because the collection was purged of compromising material after his death. We do not know whether Pushkin read Baculard d'Arnaud's infamous poem *L'Art de foutre*. But the major part of his library that now survives remains rich in meditations on love, including Baculard's *Épreuves du sentiment*, and sensational anthologies of anecdotal histories alongside medical works on masturbation.⁴⁹ As a reader of the fictions of Diderot, Laclos, and Crébillon *fils*, Pushkin knew that the erotic writer revels in psychological games perhaps even more than pornographic detail.⁵⁰ Anecdotal evidence records that Pushkin read Sade's *Justine*, although his copy did not survive.⁵¹ Pushkin is not prim. The comic poem 'Count Nul' delights in the plotting of a bed trick. The fairy tale 'Tsar Nikita and his Forty Daughters' is not far removed from the Diderotian sexual brio of *Les Bijoux indiscrets*, and the bawdiness of his correspondence attracted the attention of imperial and Soviet censors. In 1826, the Secret Police interrogated Pushkin about the *Gabrieliad*, an anonymous

⁴⁹ These collections include *Amours mythologiques traduits des Métamorphoses d'Ovide par de Pongerville* (Paris, 1827) [Modz. 1231]; numerous stories of historical lovers are contained in the volumes of the *Bibliothèque universelle des romans* set in Pushkin's library [Modz. 640–54] and the *Dictionnaire historique des anecdotes de l'amour* (Paris, 1832) [Modz. 880].

⁵⁰ Nothing is known about specific visual sources, but prints in large numbers offered frank illustrations of sexual poetry, and were plentiful in St Petersburg. See Dimitri Ozerkov, 'French Prints of the Gallant Age in Paris and St Petersburg', in *The Triumph of Eros: Art and Seduction in 18th-Century France* (London: Fontana, 2006), 45–54, with illustrations following.

⁵¹ Calling *Justine, ou les liaisons dangereuses* one of the best works of 'depraved' French fantasy, Pushkin admitted that he had become aroused while reading it ('chto sam nachinaiu vlekats'ia') and had to put it down. *A. S. Pushkin v vospominaniakh sovremennikov*, ii. 115. Others have rightly speculated on the loss of erotic works from his library. See, for instance, Anthony Cross, 'Pushkin's Bawdy; or, Notes from the Literary Underground', *Russian Literature Triquarterly*, 10 (1974), 210–11.

poem in circulation that was attributed to Pushkin. An adaptation of Parny's *La Guerre des dieux*, the *Gabrieliad* blasphemously shows the Virgin Mary in sexual relations with the Archangel Michael. The attribution was almost certainly correct, although the poet never acknowledged it and protested unconvincingly to Governor General P. V. Golenishchev-Kutuzov in 1828 that he had never published anything with a 'trace of atheism or blasphemy toward religion'.⁵² (Voltaire frequently made similar claims, as Pushkin knew.)

Among his books, the *Errotika biblion* provides a relevant illustration of the connection between the mind and body. Published anonymously under a false Vatican imprint, Mirabeau's work contains a series of chapters on topics such as homosexuality, female sexuality, auto-eroticism, the figure of Sappho. Pseudo-scientific and sometimes utopian, erotic without being pornographic, this treatise on sexual pleasure embraces biological determinism about the machine-like responsiveness of the body. Using standard terms of nerve-fibre theory, Mirabeau asserts that the individual imagination inevitably augments physical impulses because 'the fibres of the brain extend independent of any immediate affection in nature. Everything that heats the imagination, irritates the senses or more probably the will to which very often our senses are insufficient; similarly, the imagination is only at its liveliest, most ardent temperament when the senses are at their best according to age and circumstance.'⁵³ Wherever the writer turns there are signs of the erotic that need to be deciphered, and the true Epicurean will feel no shame in understanding them correctly since they are in nature:

Shamelessness, wantonness, lasciviousness, libertinism, erotic melancholy are very different qualities yet only produce nuances that are stronger or weaker in the same sensations. Wantonness, lasciviousness, for example, are purely natural aptitudes for pleasure since several species of animal are lascivious and lubricious; but there are none that are shameless. Shamelessness is a quality inherent in nature, like lewdness. Shamelessness is in the eyes, in the face, in gestures, in speech: it announces a temperament that is very violent without giving a very clear example of it; but it promises a great deal of pleasure in sexual climax ('jouissance'), and keeps its promise because the imagination is the true antechamber of sexual satisfaction which man varies, prolongs, extends by study and the refinement of the pleasures.⁵⁴

It is the attention to such bodily signs of sexual arousal that differentiates Pushkin's Epicurean verse from other verse about love. Much Russian poetry about love before Pushkin avoids symptoms of ardour and sexual intensity. The language of the love elegy was stylized and charming, the sense of pleasure indirect or allegorical, and more in the manner of Watteau or Boucher than Laclos or Sade. Pushkin's language of emotion often conforms to standard poetic decorum. But there are poems where sexuality means more than restrained

⁵² *Rukoiu Pushkina* (1997), 621.

⁵³ *Errotika biblion* (Rome: Vatican, 1783), 174 [Modz. 905].

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 169.

prurience. In these cases the workings of the erotic imagination test the close connection between mind and body in defining the self that was lost on most poets in the 1820s who worked with the hackneyed reflexes of elegy. Sensation brings about instances of love and pleasure, often beyond individual volition. In the 1810s Pushkin found the indomitable nature of arousal an irresistible topic. In the precocious 'The Monk' ('Monakh', 1813), Pushkin for the first time explicitly writes about the passions as a physical process that culminates for the male in ejaculation. Elsewhere the characteristic product of the passions is orgasm, both male and female.⁵⁵ The 1817 imitation of Voltaire's 'Stances' spices up the dictum of the original that with orgasm reason abandons us and we die a second time. The rapid climax of the female in an 1819 poem provokes reciprocal passion, anticipating a much later poem, 'The Confidant' ('Napersnik', 1828), where the poet with some embarrassment again speaks of passion as a type of power to achieve multiple orgasm communicable from a lover to the beloved. The fragment 'Laisa, I love your daring, free gaze' ('Laisa, ia liubliu tvoï smelyi, vol'nyi vzor', 1819) candidly treats female sexuality from the male viewpoint, expressed in physical rather than emotional terms.⁵⁶ The female is the seducer, a tireless ('neutolimyi', 'neprevynyi') erotic free agent. The poem suggests the sense of the passionate haste of a tumultuous encounter by giving only the partial confused glimpses of her face that the speaker sees as passion overwhelms him. The poem uses wordless signs to communicate the act of seduction: the seducer commands a superabundance of feeling and meaning, his glance is 'bold, free' ('smelyi', 'vol'nyi vzor'), his conversation 'rich' ('polnyi razgovor'); the seduced fully understands those meanings even when communication is unvoiced until the sensation of physical climax in 'swift spasms' ('bystrye vostorgi') blots out words. With neat wit and graphic delight such poems associate the passions with orgasmic screams, flushing and blushing, mad abandon and infectious desire. Through the emphasis on reaction and sensation, they turn the subjects into emblematic tableaux of how the passions act on bodies.

Pushkin departs somewhat from expectations of bodily description in French Epicurean verse by observing the bodily symptoms of pleasure more minutely.⁵⁷ Such scrutiny is the subject of the epigrammatic 'Dioneia' (1821). Similarly, in 'Platonism' ('Platonizm', 1819) the speaker treats the repressed sexual energy of a virgin. The female subject cannot resist the 'involuntary force' ('nevol'naia sila') of fantasies that invade her dreams. Although the description of auto-eroticism

⁵⁵ But see Proskurin, *Podvizhnyi palimpsest*, 324–8 on tears as sexualized release.

⁵⁶ The epigram, a translation of Voltaire's version of a poem by Ausonius, appeared in his friend Pushchin's translation of an article by Voltaire published in the *Herald of Europe* in 1814.

⁵⁷ Apart from the example of Parny, most of the poems in anthologies such as *Les Plaisirs de l'amour* [Modz. 1265] minimize attention to the physical. See J.-C. Abramovici, 'Libertinage et construction de la pudeur à l'âge classique', in *Femmes et libertinage au XVIIIe siècle* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003), 89–97; and Alain Génétot, 'L'Amour', in Darmon and Delon, *Classicismes*, 609–17.

is oblique, the poem makes out of the delirium of *jouissance* a provocative demonstration of bodily desire.⁵⁸ Russian commentators, misled by the title into reading this as an exalted profession of sexless love, cannot bring themselves to acknowledge the true subject matter.⁵⁹ There is nothing Platonic about the poem, suggesting that Pushkin has ironically substituted a philosophical ‘-ism’ about metaphysical worship for the worship and practice of onanism.⁶⁰ To judge from the poem, Pushkin shares the widespread scientific view of the day that female orgasm involves ejaculation. It was certainly repeated in Tissot’s famous treatise on masturbation, its causes and moral hazards, which Pushkin had in his library.⁶¹ In ‘Doris’ (‘Dorida’, 1819), the connection between sentiment and sex remains true to the spirit of the libertine age that is evoked, where sensation governs thought. Exciting the reader is only an indirect aim, since Pushkin is primarily interested in the mood of the post-coital state, where state of mind follows physiology and desire multiplies uncontrollably.⁶² In ‘A fiery desire burns in my blood’ (‘V krovi gorit ogon’ zhelan’ia’, 1825) where the passions are once again a physical matter, the language of love is Lucretian (such as Voltaire writes about in his article on ‘Fever’). The notion of burning desire contaminating the blood, the adjective ‘unrebellious’ (‘bezmiatezhnyi’), a word that occurs in Russian scientific and philosophical writing, puts an Epicurean stamp on the description of love:

В крови горит огонь желанья,
 Душа тобой уязвлена,
 Лобзай меня: твои лобзанья
 Мне слаще мирра и вина.
 Склонись ко мне главою нежной,

⁵⁸ For Diderot’s definition of ‘jouissance’, see Diderot, *Choix d’articles de l’Encyclopédie*, ed. Marie Leca-Tsiomis (Paris: Éditions du CTHS, 2001), 566.

⁵⁹ Pushkin changed his mind about publishing the poem at the last minute in 1820 and again in 1825, when he scribbled on the fair copy ‘There’s no need—since I want to be a moral chap.’ The recent commentary included in the new Academy Edition of Pushkin’s works points to Parny’s ‘Coup d’œil sur Cythère’ as a model, but tastefully reads the poem as an exalted tribute to a list of putative addressees. See A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v dvadtsati tomakh* (St Petersburg: Nauka, 2004), ii. 607. The poem circulated among friends early in 1820.

⁶⁰ On attitudes historically towards onanism, see Philippe Brenot, *Éloge de la masturbation* (Cadeilhan: Zulma, 2002). For a brief discussion of the literature in Russian, see K. A. Bogdanov, *Vrachi, patsienty, chitateli. Patograficheskie teksty russkoi kul’tury XVIII–XIX vekov* (Moscow: OGI, 2005), 141–9. Thomas W. Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone Books, 2003), 83–91 observes that eighteenth-century discussions of masturbation, which focus on the origins of desire and the composition of semen, do not reflect a Christian taxonomy of guilt and sin. That emphasis may hold for Pushkin, too. But he also read the treatise by Deslandes, *De l’onanisme et d’autres abus vénériens considérés dans leurs rapports avec la santé* (Paris, 1835) [Modz. 871], which sees a threat to society and individual health in self-pleasure.

⁶¹ See Theodore Tarczylo, “‘Prêtons la main à la nature . . .’: l’onanisme de Tissot”, *Dix-Huitième Siècle*, 24 (1992), 79–94.

⁶² For rare examples in the Pushkinian period, see Laura Wilhelm, ‘Pornography and the Politics of Oppression in the Russian Aesopian Tradition’, in M. Levitt and A. Toporkov (eds.), *Eros and Pornography in Russian Culture* (Moscow: Lodomir, 1999), 262–74.

И да почию безмятежный,
Пока дохнет веселый день
И двинется ночная тень.⁶³

A fire of desire burns in my blood, | My soul is wounded by you, | Kiss me: to me your kisses | Are sweeter than myrrh and wine. | Lean your tender head close by me, | So that I might sleep undisturbed | Until cheerful day should breathe | And the shadow of night moves away.

This youthful burst of Epicurean sexuality subsided quickly. The lasting legacy to Pushkin of this graphic phase, however, was a deeper understanding of the psychological problem of resistance to desire. He will continue to recognize the power of the mind over libido and the reciprocal power of libido to stimulate fantasy, and in so doing ponder how passion infringes judgement. In his reading of fiction, such as Constant's *Adolphe*, and philosophy, especially Diderot, Pushkin had opportunities to see scientific discourse of the passions as a psychophysiological category compatible with his poetic style and discourse.⁶⁴ His copy of the Nageon edition reveals a specific, precise pattern of reading rather than random cutting of pages. One of the works that caught his attention was the *Pensées philosophiques*, or at least the early paragraphs in which Diderot discusses the passions using conspicuously Lucretian and atheistic language.⁶⁵ They represent for him a type of energy of potentially positive or negative power. In their defence Diderot regrets that 'one rails ceaselessly against the passions; one imputes to them all the pain of man, and one forgets that they are also the source of all his pleasures'.⁶⁶ One message of both Russian and European intellectual context from the beginning of the 1760s to the 1780s concerned the danger of the passions. At the end of *The Gypsies*, in one of the most famous lines in all of his poetry, Pushkin's narrator comments that 'the fateful passions are ubiquitous | And there is no defence to be found in judgement'. The statement reflects Diderot's view that 'it is within one's constitution an element of which it is impossible to speak too well or too ill'. The essay 'On Love', printed in Pushkin's edition of a volume of the Grimm–Diderot correspondence, captured the sense of scientific certainty and philosophical mystery about love as a dynamic between mind and body:

These sudden impressions, this invincible attraction, these involuntary tendencies and all the mysterious charms of sympathy are in morality what hidden qualities are in the physical world. One speaks of them often with scorn yet nature leads us on to this point at every moment despite ourselves. Pleasure and pain ('le plaisir et la douleur'), desire

⁶³ Pushkin, *PSS*, ii/1. 442.

⁶⁴ See Goodden, *Diderot and the Body*, ch. 1. On the connection between Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe* and the figure of the Don, see the perceptive remarks of Boris Gasparov, 'Don Juan in Nicholas's Russia (Pushkin's *The Stone Guest*)', in Lydia Goehr and Daniel Herwitz (eds.), *The Don Giovanni Moment: Essays on the Legacy of an Opera* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 50–1.

⁶⁵ Diderot, *Œuvres*, i. 194–200 [Modz. 881].

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 197 (the first of the *Pensées philosophiques*).

and aversion penetrate our soul through a thousand channels that are unknown to it. Our sense and our instinct have a wisdom that the most rapid thought processes ('la réflexion') cannot attain, and of which even the most sustained study will only give us a highly imperfect idea.⁶⁷

As an outline of thinking on the subject, the paragraph combines scientific and moral discourses in ways that leave plenty of room for the responses of the poet by acknowledging the imperfect understanding of the impact of desire on the soul. When Pushkin writes about the 'fateful passions' ('strasti rokovye'), he is not merely affecting Racinian grandeur: the combination of epithet and noun distil the complex physical model of the passions that pervaded his reading.

Pushkin's thought is often dialectical. The symptoms and causes of uncontrollable desire provoke him to consider the uses of reason. If Epicureanism encompasses the span from pleasure to excess and annihilation, Stoicism gives Pushkin the ethos and language of restraint with respect to love and death, which we can address in that order. The psychological fascination of the love lyrics lies in their close observation of moments where sensations blur the boundaries, where speakers unexpectedly find pleasure in pain and pain in pleasure, where they find themselves unwillingly at a tipping point from one category to another. Like other Romantics, Pushkin is drawn to what Jerome McGann calls in Byron 'the reciprocals of pleasure'.⁶⁸ In *Evgenii Onegin*, his Petrarchan metaphor for passion as a combination of satisfaction and despair is 'fire and ice'. Pain as a function of erotic attraction enhances the pleasure of satisfied longing, as an almost physical reminder of the effort of conquest; whereas in cases where wooing fails, pain paradoxically soothes by reminding the speaker of his emotional sincerity, even as renunciation must be borne. Numerous poems written from the mid-1820s confront love as both a sexual and psychological state of body and mind where being a voluptuary and yielding pleasure carries dangers to the subject himself and to others. They show the Pushkinian speaker in the act of restoring self-control through reason.⁶⁹ The paradox of love as pleasurable torment surfaces as an early constant in Pushkin's poetry. It is undoubtedly a requirement of elegy as a genre that the pleasure of love should be tinged with the sadness of remembered feeling and the drama of renunciation or repudiation. Passion ('strast'), with its tormented, cruel, deadly, burning wasting, delineates the pathology of love.

⁶⁷ Diderot, *Correspondance inédite de Grimm et Diderot* (Paris, 1829), 404 [Modz. 883]: 'Ces impressions subites, cet attrait invincible, ces penchants involontaires et tous ces charmes mystérieux de la sympathie, sont en morale ce que les qualités occultes sont en physique. On en parle souvent avec mépris, et la nature nous y ramène à tout moment malgré nous. Le plaisir et la douleur, le désir et l'aversion pénètrent dans notre âme par mille canaux qui lui sont inconnus. Nos sens et notre instinct ont une sagacité que la réflexion la plus rapide ne saurait atteindre, et dont l'attention la plus soutenue ne se fera jamais qu'une idée très imparfaite.'

⁶⁸ Jerome McGann, *The Romantic Ideology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 172.

⁶⁹ Diderot investigates the problem of controlling emotions as an organic response and a mood. See Goodden, *Diderot and the Body*, ch. 3.

Signs of deep feeling, such as the trademark weeping of sentimentalism, were mostly exhausted for Pushkin by 1818.⁷⁰ His usage often makes the passions a property of physical matter. The full recognition of the interrelation of pain and pleasure places a particular and unusual emphasis on restraint and anticipation.⁷¹ Pushkin quickly learned to ration his tears. He turned to oxymoron, the definitive paradoxical trope, to align the bitter-sweet conjunction of pain and pleasure with his philosophical context.⁷²

Passion is uncontrollable when the force of external stimulus on the senses subordinates the will. Despite the capacity for unleashing great creative energy and happiness, the passions, as Diderot noted in the *Pensées philosophiques*, potentially 'dégradent les hommes extraordinaires'.⁷³ Ancillon, a philosophical popularizer, weighed up the merits and dangers of the passions in a passage that drew Pushkin's attention, probably because it equates desire and 'énergie':

There are two sorts of energy, that of the passions and that of character. The first is born from the fever of desires, the second from the dominion of principles and eternal ideas on willpower ('la volonté'). One often provides the courage to destroy everything before achieving the object that inflames the passions; only the other gives the means to create and preserve that which deserves to be.⁷⁴

Like characters from the fictions of Laclos or Crébillon *filis*, Pushkin's Epicurean speakers subordinate feeling to sexual satisfaction. For the Stoics, the origins of the passions posed a key question, since it concerned the role of individual agency and control. If, as thinkers like Cicero believed, the passions

⁷⁰ See Anne Vincent-Buffault, *The History of Tears: Sensibility and Sentimentality in France* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991).

⁷¹ Poems in this category would include 'Elegy' ('Elegiia', 1816), 'The Wish' ('Zhelanie', 1816), 'Pleasure' ('Naslazhden'e', 1816), 'Her' ('Ona', 1817), 'To***' ('K***', 1817), 'To Her' ('K nei', 1817), 'Do Not Threaten a Young Indolent' ('Ne ugrozhai lenivtsu molodomu', 1817), 'How delightful! . . . but, Lord, how dangerous' ('Kak sladostno! . . . no, bogi kak opasno', 1818), 'In vain, dear friend, I thought to hide' ('Naprasno, milyi drug, ia myslil utait', 1819), 'Alas, for what does she shine so' ('Uvy! zached ona blistaet', 1820), 'Soon I shall fall silent' ('Umolknu skoro ia', 1821), 'If with a tender beauty', ('Esl s nezhnoi krasotoi', 1821), 'Into your room, my dear friend' ('V tvoiu svetlitsu, drug moi nezhnyi', 1821), 'To the Foreign Girl' ('Inostranke', 1822), 'To Princess M. A. Golitsyn' ('Kn. M. A. Golitsynoi', 1823), 'All is over: we have no tie' ('Vse koncheno: mezh nami svyazi net', 1824), 'May one crowned by a beauty's love' ('Puskai uvenchannyi liubov'iu krasoty', 1824), 'The Burned Letter' ('Sozhzhennoe pis'mo', 1825), 'Under the blue sky of her native land . . .' ('Pod nebom golubym strany svoei rodnoi . . .', 1826), 'To C. N. Ushakova' ('Ek. N. Ushakovoi', 1829), 'On the hills of Georgia there lies a night-time mist' ('Na kholmakh Gruzii lezhit nochnaia mgl'a', 1829), 'I loved you' ('Ia vas liubil', 1829), 'Farewell' ('Proshchanie', 1830), 'You grow weak and silent' ('Ty vianesh' i molchish', 1824), 'All in tribute to your memory' ('Vse v zhertvu pamiati tvoei', 1825), 'The Confidant' ('Napersnik', 1828), 'Reply to A. I. Gotovtseva' ('Otvet A. I. Gotovtsevoi', 1828).

⁷² The physical quality of 'strasti' is neglected in the too broad, ahistorical definitions given in the entry to the *Slovar' iazyka Pushkina*, iii. 395–6.

⁷³ Diderot, *Œuvres*, i. 197 (the third of the *Pensées philosophiques*).

⁷⁴ F. Ancillon, *Pensées sur l'homme, ses rapports et ses intérêts* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1829), 43 [Modz. 540].

derive from opinion or judgement then they are not merely animal reactions, but capable of mastery and of being mastered.⁷⁵ From the mid-1820s Pushkin moves closer to the Stoic view that the passions are combined entities where emotional matter takes both sensual and intellectual form on which memory and the imagination can act. Other speakers, who can roughly be grouped as Stoic, on the basis of a common degree of self-mastery and sacrifice, use the Romantic vernacular of deep feeling. Like the archetypal Romantic hero of Sénancour's *Obermann* (1804) or the speaker in Byron's *Hebrew Melodies* (1813), these protagonists plumb the meaning of love most successfully after it is lost. Pushkin is poised in an intermediate position between erotic gamesmanship and sincere sentiment. He has no wish to go quite so far as Stendhal in *De l'amour* (1822) and distil a new science of love that displaces the heritage of the eighteenth century with its emphasis on love as a type of game, preferring sincerity rather than play, permanence rather than pleasure, love rather than passion. For Pushkin, however, erotic discourse and the values of Romantic love fascinate because the border between them is permeable: speakers who begin with one set of expectations are surprised where their passions lead.

Does Pushkin think it possible to become wise about love if pain is the inevitable consequence of pleasure? In the 'Epistle to Iudin' ('Poslanie k Iudinu', 1815), Pushkin employs the precise lexicon of Stoic restraint and equanimity in describing the passions: 'With the quiet breathing of the breeze | And in incomprehensible disturbance | I burn, melt, my blood burns | And everything in a language that the heart understands | Speaks about tender passion.'⁷⁶ Elsewhere the definition of the man who is wise about love coincides with that of the Stoic: 'Long life to him, dear friend | Who is not ill with foolish passion.' In the poem 'And I have heard that God's world | By friendship alone . . . ' ('I ia slykhal, chto bozhii svet | Edinoi druzhboiu', 1818) the speaker uses contradiction to underscore the point that passion does not differ from other feelings by degree but in its very essence. The poem compares the pleasures of friendship with the tormented symptoms of passion:

Оно и нежит и томит,
 В трудах, заботах и в покое
 Всегда не дремлет и горит;
 Оно мучительно, жестоко,
 Оно всю душу в нас мертвит,
 Коль язвы тяжкой и глубокой
 Елей надежды не живит . . .⁷⁷ (ll. 7–13)

⁷⁵ On this issue in Stoic thought in antiquity and its modern versions, see Yvan Éliassalde, *La Passion: premières réflexions* (Rosny-sous-Bois: Éditions Bréal, 2004), ch. 1.

⁷⁶ Pushkin, *PSS*, i/1. 171.

⁷⁷ Pushkin, *PSS*, ii/1. 67.

This [feeling] caresses and tires, | At work, cares and at rest | It never sleeps and always burns; | It is tormenting, cruel, | It deadens the entire soul in us, | Like a heavy and deep wound | The balm of hope does not heal it.

Despite the wise resolution taken elsewhere to make tranquillity the ultimate good over other pleasures, the Pushkinian speaker cannot quite devote himself to a life led in 'unfeeling nature'. In a number of poems, the Lucretian disengagement from the passions directly informs Pushkin's expression. In distinguishing between the effects of Stoic self-mastery and the torment of passion, Lucretius compared the Stoic to the viewer situated on the shore who watches the hectic and desperate activity of sailors on a sinking ship: 'One who has not suffered an unsuccessful love | Does not know sad captivity. | Fortunate one! But I am even more fortunate. | I broke the chain of torment | Once again I favour friendship... I am free.'⁷⁸ His Stoic equanimity barely suppresses the energy with which he returns compulsively to the 'torments of love' ('mucheniia liubvi'). The early 'I thought that love had gone forever' ('Ja dumat, chto liubov' pogasla navsegda', 1816) alludes to the Lucretian figure of the wanderer on the shore who observes a shipwreck from a distance with the dispassion that he also seeks to achieve in his own feelings. 'Elegy' ('Elegiia', 1816) places the Lucretian metaphor in the foreground by celebrating the benefits of emotional reserve and aloofness from passion.⁷⁹ The metaphor recurs in a lyric of 1823, where the vocabulary of quiescence provides the key to the poem as a parable of the passions:

Завидую тебе, питомец моря смелый,
 Под сенью парусов и в бурях поседелый!
 Спокойной пристани давно ли ты достиг—
 Давно ли тишины вкусил отрадный миг—
 И вновь тебя зовут заманчивые волны.
 Дай руку—в нас сердца единой страстью полны.
 Для неба дального, для отдаленных стран
 Оставим берега Европы обветшалой;
 Ищу стихии других, земли жилец усталый;
 Приветствую тебя, свободный Океан.—⁸⁰

I envy you, brave son of the sea, | Grown old under the shelter of sails and in storms! | You reached the harbour of tranquillity long ago— | You long ago tasted the joyous moment of calm— | And once again the treacherous waves call you. | Give your hand—our hearts are full of a single passion. | Let us leave the banks of crumbling Europe | For a distant sky, for distant lands. | A weary liver on land, I seek different elements; | I greet you, free Ocean.

⁷⁸ Ibid., i/1. 200.

⁷⁹ Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), esp. 10–15.

⁸⁰ Pushkin, PSS, ii/1. 290.

Alongside the seducers and sufferers who embody the Epicurean and Stoic sides of his hedonistic philosophy, Pushkin makes room for a detached lyric subject, who, like the character in a Marivaux comedy, minutely analyses feelings and memories, or surprises himself with the unexpected documentation of sensual arousal.⁸¹ Death as the final limit of love inspires another type of self-possession in the elegiac couplets of ‘Under the blue sky of her native land . . .’ (‘Pod nebom golubym strany svoei rodnoi . . .’, 1826):

Под небом голубым страны своей родной
 Она томилась, увядала . . .
 Увяла наконец, и верно надо мной
 Младая тень уже летала;
 Но недоступная черта меж нами есть.
 Напрасно чувство возбуждал я:
 Из равнодушных уст я слышал смерти весть,
 И равнодушно ей внимал я.
 Так вот кого любил я пламенной душой
 С таким тяжелым напряженьем,
 С такою нежною, томительной тоской,
 С таким безумством и мученьем!
 Где муки, где любовь? Увы! в душе моей
 Для бедной, легковерной тени,
 Для сладкой памяти невозвратимых дней
 Не нахожу ни слез, ни пени.⁸²

Under the blue sky of her native land | She grew weak, faded away . . . | In the end she vanished, and overhead | Her young shade flew past; | But an uncrossable divide exists between us. | In vain have I aroused my feeling: | I heard the news of her death from indifferent lips, | And I received it with indifference. | So much for the one I loved with an ardent soul, | With such intense concentration, | With such tender, exhausting yearning, | With such madness and torment! | Where are the pains, where is the love? Alas, in my soul | For the poor, frivolous shade, | For the sweet memory of irretrievable days | I find neither tears nor song.

⁸¹ I would also include in this category ‘Experience’, (‘Opytnost’ , 1814), ‘Stanzas’ (‘Stansy’, 1814), ‘Dream’ (‘Son’, 1816), ‘Stanzas: (from Voltaire)’ (‘Stansy. (Iz Vol’tera)’, 1817), ‘In the Album’ (‘V al’bom’, 1817), ‘I have heard that the world is only beautiful from friendship’ (‘I ia slykhal, chto bozhii svet | Edinoi druzhboiu prekrasen’, 1818), ‘I remember the miraculous moment’ (‘Ia pomniu chudnoe mgnoven’e’, 1825), ‘Alas, the garrulous language of love’ (‘Uvy! Iazyk liubvi boltlivyi’, 1829), ‘Before a Spanish noblewoman’ (‘Pred ispankoi blagorodnoi’, 1830), ‘No, no I must not, I dare not, I cannot’ (‘Net, net, ne dolzhen ia, ne smeiu, ne mogu’, 1832), ‘I thought the heart had forgotten’ (‘Ia dumal, serdtshe pozabylo’, 1835). Marivaux’s comedies enjoyed a revival in Russia in the 1820s. In 1827 Pushkin attended a performance of *Les Fausses Suivantes* as translated by Katenin.

⁸² Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 20.

Written in memory of Amalia Riznich, the poem captures the power of inexpressivity.⁸³ It falls into three parts: lines 1 to 6 concisely report the news of her long wasting and death; lines 7 to 13 capture the speaker's response; and the final four lines capture his ironic distance on his own feelings which are not as he might have expected. Completeness of separation is the key fact in the first section: the poet cites a boundary that now lies between him and the beloved, whom he images as a young shade in flight above him. Is the boundary the separation of life from death? Or is it the limit of the poet's own power to envisage an afterlife? Given Pushkin's beliefs at this time, it would be possible to ascribe a meaning of atheistic annihilation. Whatever her status, the beloved is now no longer retrievable except through recollection. Paradoxically, the poem now monitors the speaker's failure to experience a reverie of commemoration. On hearing the news, the speaker makes a vain attempt to rouse his feelings ('vobuzhdai'). He not only fails to stimulate grief, but regrets the fact that it requires a conscious decision. The weightiest word in the second section is the twice-repeated 'indifferent' ('ravnodushnyi'). It is a key term of Stoic moral philosophy—the Russian word is a calque for 'equanimous'—and looks back to the Lucretian posture of imperturbable tranquillity from which the subject experiences even the most extreme emotions. The very use of the term, resorted to in the most extreme situation, seems to point to the unspoken perturbation that must be kept in check.

'Indifference' should not be confused with lack of feeling, despite the overt symptoms of apathy. Why is the speaker taken aback by his own indifference? The manner in which he calmly accepts death rewards with calm acceptance. But while such Stoic reserve blunts pain, the speaker senses that it deprives him of the positive power of grief to commemorate more fully through feeling and memory. Suffering arises not from her loss—after all she is transfigured as an eternally young spirit—but from an inability to recreate emotionally the moments of love that shocks the speaker into wondering whether that love was in fact ever real. What the speaker remembers of that love is the conjunction ('napriazhenie') of different affective capacities that made it so powerful, and his first expectation is that the death of a loved one will provoke responses associated with that love. As a response to death, the poem shows how a philosophical position pre-empts the 'sweet memory of irretrievable days'. By contrast, 'On the

⁸³ The poems 'The Spell' ('Zaklinanie', 1830) 'To the shores of my distant land' ('Dlia beregov otchizny dal'noi', 1830) 'Farewell' ('Proshchanie', 1830) and the verse dedication to *Poltava* may all be inspired by the single figure of Amalia Riznich, possibly the mysterious love of Pushkin's Southern period. This is the theory of P. E. Shchegolev to which numerous commentators have returned with further hypotheses. The frustration of literal attribution is built into many of Pushkin's love lyrics because the self-portrait of the elegiac speaker overshadows the more circumstantial description of the beloved. See P. E. Shchegolev, 'Amalia Riznich v poezii A. S. Pushkina', in *Iz zhizni i tvorchestva*, 255–75. On the theme of the dead beloved, see O. S. Murav'eva, 'Obraz "mertvvoi vozliublennoi" v tvorchestve Pushkina', *VPK* 24 (1991), 17–28.

hills of Georgia there lies . . . ’ (‘Na kholmakh Gruzii lezhit . . . ’, 1829) expresses the oxymoronic connection between pain and the pleasure of love: ‘I am sad and at ease: my sadness is joyous’ (‘mne grustno i legko: pechal’ moia svetla’). Employing the Stoic vocabulary of perturbation, the poet turns the doctrine of tranquillity on its head by declaring that nothing can ‘disturb or torment’ his sense of despondency. It is this sense of despondency that affirms the reality of his feeling and the inevitability of the love that he feels. By implication, the argument of poems in this vein is that if love were pure pleasure, it would not be love but merely pleasure, whereas love as a type of feeling must combine contradiction. Libertinism, another philosophy of pleasure, cuts through the tension by shattering the need for restraint and the pain of compunction.

THE LIBERTINE

L’homme est libre, mais il cesse de l’être, s’il ne croit pas à sa liberté; et plus il suppose de force au destin, plus il se prive de celle que Dieu lui a donnée en lui donnant de la raison.

(Casanova, from the ‘Preface’ to *Histoire de ma vie*)

Pushkin’s own version of the libertine lover takes over where the adolescent Epicurean left off, and explores the inevitable clash between social convention and individual desire, the taboo of religion and the amorality of the non-believer seducer. Libertinism turns sexual desire into sexual self-determination. In so doing, it turns biological determinism on its head by giving the libertine the will of a protagonist who has nothing to fear from the sanction of official religion or the afterlife. The prurient hedonism of the young poet grew into the transgressive libertinism of the mature poet. In a verse epistle of 1819 Pushkin asked Prince Ia. Tolstoi whether his friends and fellow members of the Petersburg literary societies still tended the flame of their Epicurean youth. The poem is more than a routine rehashing of clichés from hedonistic juvenilia. It juxtaposes the standard props of Epicurean verse (wine, a table, bottles, conversation) with concerns about freedom and love.⁸⁴ The lines that immediately follow the tribute to their ‘hospitable shelter | a shelter to love and the free muses’ describes a place where the group ‘with a mutual oath | inscribed our eternal bond’ in an atmosphere of equality.⁸⁵ On the basis of these images of a secret society and masonic language

⁸⁴ Pushkin, *PSS*, ii. 109 (‘Stansy Tolstomu’). Commentators have understandably glossed this as nostalgia for the riotous rituals of Arzamas and Green Lamp societies or deciphered the meaning in political terms linked to the plans of the Decembrists.

⁸⁵ On the generic connection between the elegy and the use in the epistle of distancing devices to define a special place distinct from the public sphere, see D. M. Magomedova, ‘Idillicheskii mir v zhanrakh poslaniia i elegii’, in *Boldinskie chteniia* (Nizhnii Novgorod: Izd-vo Nizhegorodskogo Universiteta, 1999), 5–12.

it is obvious why the poem has been read politically. But the words love, equality, and freedom put in place the personality traits of the libertine that Pushkin was keen at times to project.

Readings of Pushkin's love poems have been hard to separate from Pushkin's biography. For readers inclined to follow the poet's life as a text in its own right, literal interpretation is hard to resist.⁸⁶ The result is a common assumption that Pushkin was no less prone to falling in love than his invented speakers.⁸⁷ In 1830, when the publication of Thomas Moore's *Memoirs of Byron* appears to have renewed his interest in the poet's life, Pushkin faulted Byron for sacrificing variety of characterization in order to project his own features onto his characters and then sensationally exploit the public's avidity for scandal and gossip. But far from shrinking from the Byronic model, Pushkin had played at acting the worthy successor: the teasing 'To the Greek Girl' ('Grechanke', 1822), for example, exploited such an opportunity. The addressee was Calypso Polychroni, Byron's former lover, whom Pushkin met during his exile in Odessa.⁸⁸

Pushkin himself enjoyed tantalizing the public and friends with the connection. The game exacerbated his reputation as a dangerous poet and attracted some readers more viscerally than the exalted posture of the 'Prophet'.⁸⁹ No poet in the period was unaware of the power of Byronic sex appeal and autobiographical sensationalism to sell books.⁹⁰ In his twenties and thirties, Pushkin created male speakers who flaunt their robustness and sexual ambition, whose allure undoubtedly contributed to his own appeal. 'To a Temptress' ('Napersnitse',

⁸⁶ See David Bethea, 'Where to Begin: Pushkin, Derzhavin, and the Poetic Use of Filiation', in Stephanie Sandler (eds.), *Rereading Russian Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 58–70.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Clive James's review of T. J. Binyon, *Pushkin: A Life*, 'The Priapic Pushkin', *TLS*, 27 September 2002, 2–4. Literary scholars have also invested importance in such attributions because similar sentiments and expressions can provide links that make it possible to group poems on the basis of the object of inspiration. See, for example, Boris Tomashevskii, "'Tavrida" Pushkina', in *Utaennaiia liubov' Pushkina* (St Petersburg: Gumanitarnoe agentstvo 'Akademeskii Proekt', 1997), 219.

⁸⁸ See Fiona MacCarthy, *Byron: Life and Legend* (London: John Murray, 2002), 549. See Greenleaf, *Pushkin and Romantic Fashioning*, ch. 1. In its first issue of January 1825, the *Moscow Telegraph* noted that few poets had paid such tribute to Byron as Pushkin did in his 'To the Sea' (p. 39); readers and critics will repeatedly from the mid-1820s compare Pushkin to Byron as a writer and man. Pushkin himself felt increasingly uncomfortable with the comparison, noting to Viazemskii that 'when he reads Byron his heart tightens from the resemblance' (cited in *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva*, ii. 213). By 1827 the comparison was no longer a compliment, and was used to corroborate the charge that he was an imitator. See, for example, the article by N. I. Nadezhdin in *Vestnik Evropy*, 8 (May 1829), 287–302.

⁸⁹ In her diary entry for 28 July 1828, A. A. Olenina recorded meeting Pushkin at a ball and noted that 'all—both men and women—made an effort to pay him the attention that is always accorded to a genius'. *Dnevnik A. A. Oleninoi* (1828–9) (Paris: n.p. 1936), 11–12. See also Ch. 3, n. 5 on Pushkin's reputation as an Epicurean. On the use of blasphemy to invert the poet's prophetic status, see V. M. Zhivov, 'Koshchunstvennaia poeziiia v sisteme russkoi kul'tury kontsa XVIII-nachala XIX veka', *Trudy po znakovym sistemam*, 13 (1981), 76–83.

⁹⁰ On the phenomenon, see Ghislaine McDayter, 'Conjuring Byron: Byromania, Literary Commodification and the Birth of Celebrity', in Frances Wilson (ed.), *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 43–62.

1818), written just when Pushkin was beginning to cut a figure in society, aggressively displays sexual self-possession as a metaphor for creative independence. The poem rebukes the wanton sexuality of the whore and priggishly advertises the virtue of the ‘child of the Muses’, who relishes making conquests. The moral is that the poet will not be a slave to bought love (‘I zlatom kuplennyi vostorg’), and in poetry he will not prostitute himself to a muse for commercial gain. The poem advertises personal and professional incorruptibility and virility as features the Romantic poet wants associated with his image. In the epistolary poem ‘To Iur’ev’ (‘Iur’evu’, 1820), Pushkin contrasts two types of eligibility and attractiveness, and two types of sexual satisfaction and passion. He strikes the opposition between love, as a charmed moment (‘delightful’, ‘prelestnyi’) under the patronage of the civilized Aphrodite, and the world of ‘wild simplicity’ in which different imperatives drive desire. On the one hand, the poem represents Iur’ev as the favoured child of love, equipped with overt dashing attractiveness and sexual zest, capable of passion and emotional attachment; and, on the other hand, Pushkin himself, cast in the role of the satyr in search of his nymph, who represents, as the eternal rake, animal passion untroubled by the knowledge of love and sufferings, purely physical in desires. In the world of the satyr, the key word in this bravura and slightly ridiculous declaration is ‘shamelessness’ (‘besстыdstvo’), linking the art of the seducer to a willingness to break conventional rules and boundaries when driven by the madness of his desires. Although he worries for his friend, the speaker advises him to enjoy pleasure for its own sake ‘in the fog of city pleasures’ (‘v chadu veselii gorodskikh’). It takes no more than a moment to show how pleasure liberates.

Poets can create their own mythology by projecting their personalities so vividly into the cultural landscape that their lives become inscribed in readers’ awareness of poems. In that connection, the search for immortal beloveds—for the most part the beloved in Pushkin’s poetry remains anonymous—has obscured what should be a basic question: why do we actually know so little about Pushkin’s erotic life? Memoirists of the period are not especially prudish or reticent.⁹¹ The less Pushkin gave away about his erotic subjects, the more commentators have speculated on their existence. Through the anonymity of his love poetry, he seemed to revel in creating false leads that encourage open-ended and unending speculation. This holds true not only for his biographers: the question of Pushkin’s erotic history, his escapades, his decision to marry, mesmerized his contemporaries. Keeping readers guessing as a strategy fanned the flames of gossip, and, because it captivated the public with his image as a master seducer, enabled Pushkin to continue to articulate his philosophy of love through lyric speakers.⁹²

⁹¹ For examples relating directly to Pushkin, see P. E. Shchegolev and N. M. Iazykov (eds.), *Dnevnik i liubovnyi byt Pushkinskoi epokhi* (Moscow: Federatsiia, 1929).

⁹² For a sample of Pushkin’s reputation among female readers, see the letter from S. M. Saltykov to A. N. Semenova who writes, ‘how I love ecstatically this enchanting poet and love not only his

The boundary between public and private was porous. In a letter of 1824, he reproached his fellow writer Aleksandr Bestuzhev for disobeying his instructions and publishing the complete text of the elegy 'The swift bank of clouds thins out...' ('Redeet oblakov letuchaia griada...', 1820), including the last three lines which Pushkin had wanted to suppress, anxious not to compromise his beloved by revealing her identity. Literary and personal confidences were in effect open secrets in the manuscript culture of the time, where albums and letters circulated freely. Pushkin was right to predict that knowledge of the letter would fire speculation as to the identity of the 'Southern love' mentioned in lyric poems and the dedication to the narrative poem *Poltava* (1828). Speculation has scarcely let up since, and much scholarly effort has been devoted to establishing her identity; while the arguments have narrowed the list down to four possibilities, there is no absolute proof.

Even more notorious was Pushkin's so-called 'Don Juan List'. In 1828 Pushkin became close to the Muscovite sisters Elizaveta and Ekaterina Ushakov. He found their sense of mischief as beguiling as their musicality and intelligence. Even as marital proposals to other women were made and then rejected, rumours circulated about a liaison between Pushkin and Ekaterina Ushakova. In a letter of April 1829 a mutual friend conveyed Ekaterina's gratitude to Pushkin for the 'enchanting sign of sympathy' that Pushkin had inscribed in the young woman's album.⁹³ In one part of the page, he sketched a cameo of Elizaveta Ushakova with a cat in her lap underneath which he wrote the word 'puss': the cat is an emblem of the nickname that her fiancé gave her. He then sketched her again as an older woman with children, and returned to the image of the cat which this time must be an emblem of her future husband. On a different part of the page, he drew another female head in several versions with an inscription that identified it as the portrait of the young beauty Natalia Goncharova, his own future wife. Underneath these whimsical fantasies of domestic bliss, Pushkin wrote 'Elizaveta Nikolaevna on the name day of the Angel Don Juan'. The joking inscription prompted a further gesture of intimacy that left a famous trace. On the reverse side, Pushkin then pencilled his own self-portrait in the guise of a monk taunting a devil, and affixed the caption 'Do not tempt me unnecessarily', the first line of a famous love poem by the contemporary Evgenii Baratynsky.⁹⁴ Nearby, under the Roman numeral I, he wrote out a list of women's names, some of which are followed by a Roman numeral indicating multiplicity

poems, but his personality, and passionately defend him whenever anyone speaks ill of him. She [a friend] named to me all the women with whom he'd been in love, and that he began to fall in love from the age of eleven' (cited in B. L. Modzalevskii and I. E. Velikopol'skii, *Pamiati L. N. Maikova*, ed. N. Chechulin (St Petersburg: ODP, 1902), 150–2).

⁹³ For the album as a type of literary cento and social document, see the facsimile reproduction of the Ushakov notebook, *Al'bom Elizavety Nikolaevny Ushakovoi*, ed. T. Krasnoborod'ko (St Petersburg: Logos, 1999).

⁹⁴ For the images and chronology of the drawings, which were probably made on two separate occasions, see Zhuikova, *Portretnye risunki Pushkina*, nos. 242, 256, 548, 703, 720, 809.

(there are four 'Ekaterinas'). Under the Roman heading 'II', a second, much longer list appears. In the manner of Mozart's Don Giovanni and his manservant Leporello, the Don Juan of the recto appears on the verso to be acting as his own chronicler by cataloguing his conquests. Undoubtedly, in the immediate context the lists were a flattering gesture of intimacy and flirtation on Pushkin's part, suggesting just how much he trusted the sisters, and just how much he wanted them, when married, to remember him as a seductive figure. But Pushkin also knew that other friends, poets, visitors would also read the album and that his lists would quickly become part of the public domain, fuelling gossip and often intense speculation about him and his life.⁹⁵ Since 1880, when the album was first published, the 'Don Juan List' has been irresistible to scholars who have attempted to decipher the identities of female addressees of lyric poems, of the unknown woman whom Pushkin credits for telling him the story behind the poem *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, and the dedicatee of *Poltava* (who may or may not be the same as the woman designated 'N.N.' in the 'Don Juan List').⁹⁶

When Pushkin complained in 1827 that Byron's egotism limited his poetry because all his characters were 'a ghost of himself', he was, to a degree, being disingenuous.⁹⁷ No less than other writers, Pushkin delighted in breaking the assumed divide between author and speaker. But he is also insincere here because he recognized that Byron both led and followed the more general spirit of the age to portray individual genius in the boldest colours for the largest potential readership. In his analysis of Thomas Moore's *Memoirs of Lord Byron*, Marlon Ross argues that Moore downplays the role of domesticity in Byron's life.⁹⁸ Writing at a time when female writers had begun to make claims on the book market and earn critical regard, Moore worked to reassert the image of poetry as the manly pursuit of the Romantic as a liberated seeker who cannot be tamed and emasculated by domesticity. For all his criticism of Byron, Pushkin understood that Byron knew how to propagandize a poetic personality by accommodating his poetry to the persona he assumed.⁹⁹ And when the largest growth area of

⁹⁵ For a history of Pushkin's erotic life that deciphers the 'Don Juan List', see P. Guber, *Don-Zhuanskii spisok A. S. Pushkina* (Paris: Izd-vo Lev, 1979). Pushkin turned the question of whom to marry into a poetic joke in 'The Wedding' ('Zhenit'ba', 1830). For a reconstruction and commentary, see S. Bondi, *Chernoviki Pushkina* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1975), 193–203.

⁹⁶ For a summary of views on the list and a deciphering of the initials, see Ia. L. Levkovich, '“Donzhuanskii spisok” Pushkina', in *Utaennaia liubov' Pushkina*, 34–50.

⁹⁷ Pushkin, *PSS*, xi. 51 ('O dramakh Bairona').

⁹⁸ Pushkin owned and read the French edition, published as *Mémoires de Lord Byron, publiés par Thomas Moore* (Paris, 1830) [Modz. 696]. It may have been the appearance of this work that prompted Pushkin to sketch an essay on Byron in which he argues that Byron exploits his autobiographical persona to the detriment of literary characterizations.

⁹⁹ Jerome McGann, *Fiery Dust* (Chicago, Press: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 6–8, 287–90. Pushkin was increasingly sensitive (and even distressed) about superficial comparisons between the two poets, pointing out that he had no need to imitate the aristocratic Byron as he was himself of an ancient family. He expressed his feelings in the highly combative 'A Refutation of Criticisms' (1830). See Larionova, *Pushkin v prizhiznennoi kritike, 1828–1830*, 291–2.

that readership was female there was further incentive to intensify the poet's reputation for virility and the association of talent with sexual prowess. Given the strong autobiographical associations that readers made between author and first person, such poems also enhanced Pushkin's own reputation as a libertine—and made up for appearances.¹⁰⁰ A relation commenting on the beauty of Natalia Goncharova, then Pushkin's fiancée, said that Pushkin was in seventh heaven: 'Physically they are two complete opposites: Vulcan and Venus.'

The metaphorical association of creative success and virility was also part of the evaluative discourse of Pushkin's contemporaries. The Romantic poet best succeeds in asserting his genius if he persuades others of the masculinity of his creative project.¹⁰¹ When rumours about his marriage plans circulated, they provoked predictions of creative decline. His old teacher Egor Engel'gardt wrote to Pushkin's classmate Fedor Matiushkin that Pushkin's engagement had fallen through, which was good news for the bride, and that 'he was still versifying, sometimes successfully but only rarely and often very badly'.¹⁰² When his marriage finally took place, it prompted letters about how unlikely domesticity was for a poet who, in the words of one contemporary, 'lived from one inn to the next'.¹⁰³ An epigram, published anonymously in a journal, detected a reduction in the number of poems since his marriage, implying a causal connection between creative impotence and domesticity.¹⁰⁴ His friend Dolly Ficquelmont, in one of those letters that was intended to circulate among members of a social circle, regretted that 'Pushkin stopped being a poet in the presence of his wife'. Pushkin himself used explicitly Byronic language in writing to a friend about his decision finally to settle down, and makes it clear that he fathoms the alteration to his image and self-image that will occur:

You have not got a leg to stand on, and I am married.—Married—or almost. Everything that you could say to me in favour of the single life and against marriage, everything I've already thought of myself. Cold-bloodedly I weighed the advantages and disadvantages of the state that I have chosen. My youth passed noisily and fruitlessly. Until now I have lived differently from how most people live. I wasn't happy. Il n'est de bonheur que dans les voies communes. I am now more than thirty years of age. At thirty people normally get married—I am acting as people do, and probably will not regret it. Moreover, I am marrying not out of ecstasy, without infantile enchantment. I don't see the future as a bed

¹⁰⁰ In 1830, Viazemskii quipped that Pushkin, 'such an aristocrat in love', ceased his pursuit of both Ficquelmont mother and daughter, fearing 'incest'. *Zven'ia. Sborniki materialov i dokumentov po istorii literatury, iskusstva i obshchestvennoi mysli XIX–XX vv.* (Moscow: Academia, 1956), vii, 242–4.

¹⁰¹ Marlon B. Ross, *The Contours of Masculine Desire: Romanticism and the Rise of Women's Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 24.

¹⁰² V. S. Nepomniashchii (ed.), *Khronika zhizni i tvorchestva A. S. Pushkina* (Moscow: IMLI RAN 'Nasledie', 2001), ii, 17.

¹⁰³ Comments can be found interspersed in the entries in *Khronika zhizni i tvorchestva A. S. Pushkina* iv, 17, 28, 42, 46, 52, 53, 56, 60, 68–9, 77, 80, 223.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 56.

of roses, it appears to me in all its bareness. Woes will not astonish me; they enter into my household accounts. Every joy will be for me unexpected. I am suffering from spleen today, I shall break off my letter . . .¹⁰⁵

An awareness of parallel creative situations and, potentially, parallel opportunities to attract, beguile, and increase his readership, motivated Pushkin to write poems that advertised the prowess and irresistibility of the poet in that role. This is one reason why the seducer remains a charismatic poetic protagonist in Pushkin's lyric. But the libertine seducer, intent on sex, destructive in love, represents a special case. Late poems that pursue the tension in desire between the physical and voluntary operation of the passions, between desire that overwhelms and the pleasures of restraint and renunciation, come out of a version of hedonism that pushes desire to extremes.¹⁰⁶

Pushkin's attitude toward the passions stands somewhere between the social worlds of Enlightenment fiction, in which love operates according to class rules and a hedonistic calculus, and the post-Napoleonic world, where love often provides escapist relief from bourgeois sexual mores and marriage.¹⁰⁷ In France of the early nineteenth century, the Civil Code of 1804 defined man legally as a husband and owner of property. This is the world of Balzac's novels that Pushkin read so avidly (he found their depiction of marriage 'disgusting'). In Russia, the state under Nicholas I enforced obedience and conformity, and legislatively reinforced the ideal of submission to patriarchal authority in the family. One has only to think of the emotional life of Pushkin's heroine Tatiana, who at the end of the novel embodies bourgeois respectability. In her marriage, love means obedience, duty, and dignity, but nothing like the passion that she felt only several years earlier for Onegin.¹⁰⁸

One challenge to the passionless love life of the bourgeoisie came in the form of idealism. In the 1830s, the language of passion belonged mainly to the first generation of Russian radicals, notably Nikolai Stankevich and Mikhail Bakunin, for whom passion represents a sublime joint commitment to self-knowledge through one another and a shared commitment to philosophical ideals and a higher sense of truth. Their love was to be directed toward lofty and unearthly attachments, reviving the sentimental ideal of friendship. The Bakunins' private correspondence becomes a history of the soul and the mind, giving each the opportunity to transform the inner self through the acceptance

¹⁰⁵ Pushkin, *PSS*, xiv, no. 574, pp. 150–1 (10 February 1831).

¹⁰⁶ For a brief discussion, see Roy Porter, 'Libertinism and Promiscuity', in Jonathan Miller (ed.), *The Don Giovanni Book: Myths of Seduction and Betrayal* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), 1–20.

¹⁰⁷ Pierre Laforgue, *L'Eros romantique: représentations de l'amour en 1830* (Paris: PUF, 1998), 30–3.

¹⁰⁸ On gentry attitudes toward love and courtship and the family rituals that defined female identity, see Iu. Lotman, *Besedy o russkoi kul'ture. Byt i traditsii russkogo dvorianstva (XVIII–nachalo XIX veka)* (St Petersburg: Iskusstvo, 1994), 103–22.

of the other.¹⁰⁹ Harmony through ideal union was one aspiration together with wisdom achieved through suffering. In writing to his sister Bakunin captured the flavour of Romantic love brilliantly, arguing that '[a]nybody who has not suffered cannot love genuinely, since suffering is an act of emancipation of the person from all external expectations, from attachments to his instinctive unconscious pleasures. Therefore one who has not loved is not free, and without freedom there is no love, and without love there is no bliss . . .'¹¹⁰ For a younger generation of Pushkin's readers, eloquence was about the command of philosophical discourse, and the ability to excite passion for exalted ideals. Pushkin's libertine seducer and Epicurean lover can be seen as a retort to these metaphysical constructions of the passions, providing a powerful figuring of love as an anti-bourgeois ethos.

The libertine flouts convention with an irresistible and subversive eloquence. Poems of seduction must be acts of persuasion where, through sincerity of profession or a winning ardour, the speaker convinces the addressee to yield. In *De l'amour*, Stendhal makes sincerity a crucial factor in wooing the beloved, whereas Ovid advises on how to feign sincerity and act the part. The Roman manual offered lessons in the illusion of love.¹¹¹ Among his readings, Pushkin would have found it most convenient to go to the Roman master on the connection between eloquence and erotic success. His editions of Ovid contained a well-thumbed edition of the *Ars amatoria*, where the following instruction occurs:

Not all women resemble one another. You will find there a thousand different natures, so employ a thousand means in order to win them. The same earth does not produce all sorts of fruits; one type is good for the vine, the other for olive trees; this one bears abundant moss. There are just as many differences in characters as in their appearances. A clever man will adapt to all types. Like Proteus, he will take a thousand forms, now a gazelle, now a lion, now a treat, now a terrifying bore . . . Make sure you appear erudite to an inexperienced girl, but if you look enterprising to a prudish one you will put her on guard. She who fears to surrender to an 'honnête homme', will shamefully throw herself into the embraces of a low scoundrel.¹¹²

All libertines are seducers even if not all seducers are libertines. Libertines are rhetorically promiscuous, blending all the arguments they need, from Epicurean promises of pleasure to Stoic statements of fortitude, to make their case. In some of Pushkin's 'libertine' poems, the assurance of mutual pleasure is the most powerful argument.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ For an example, see A. A. Kornilov, *Molodye gody Mikhaila Bakunina* (Moscow: M. and I. Sabashnikovych, 1915), esp. 225–8. Numerous letters in this documentary biography characterize love in the terms described.

¹¹⁰ Cited in Kornilov, *Molodye gody*, 228.

¹¹¹ Stendhal, *De l'amour*, ch. 22 ('De l'engouement').

¹¹² Ovid, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris, 1799), i. 221 [Modz. 1232].

¹¹³ Julia Kristeva separates 'meaning and seduction' in relation to Don Juan (*Histoires d'amour* (Paris: Denoël, 1983), 192), but other studies suggest that the Don means what he says in that the meaning of Don Juan is seduction. James Mandrell argues that for men, the message is one of rhetorical virtuosity, of persuasion; for women, Don Juan's story represents indoctrination and

Many a Pushkinian poem of seduction therefore begins with the appearance of sincerity. In the poetic fragment 'Allow me to bare my soul before you' ('Pozvol' dushe moei otkryt'sia pred toboiu', 1819), the act of seduction comes with a bitter-sweet message marked more by emotional exhaustion than by desire. Ostensibly, the lover languishes at the mercy of the love object who alone can resolve his desire, but the rhetorical mastery of the poems suggests control and determination. 'When in my embraces' ('Kogda v ob"iatiiia moi', 1830) is one of Pushkin's most sensual poems, cast as one sentence, unfolding in a series of sub-clauses, wrapping the reader in a rhetorical embrace just as the speaker begins by wrapping the woman in his arms. Written during the autumn of 1833, when the myth of Don Juan captivated Pushkin's imagination in *The Stone Guest*, the poem treats the tension between physical desire and conscience in both seducer and seduced:

Когда в объятия мои
 Твой стройный стан я заключаю,
 И речи нежные любви
 Тебе с восторгом расточаю,
 Безмолвна, от стесненных рук
 Освобождая стан свой гибкой,
 Ты отвечаешь, милый друг,
 Мне недоверчивой улыбкой;
 Прилежно в памяти храня
 Измен печальные преданья,
 Ты без участия и вниманья
 Уныло слушаешь меня . . .
 Клянц коварные старанья
 Преступной юности моей
 И встреч условных ожиданья
 В садах, в безмолвии ночей.
 Клянц речей любовный шопот,
 Стихов таинственный напев,
 И ласки легковерных дев,
 И слезы их, и поздний ропот.¹¹⁴

When in my embraces | I enfold your slender figure | And squander ecstatically for you |
 Tender talk of love, | Silent, you free your lithe figure | From the grip of my hands, |
 You answer me, tender friend, | With a disbelieving smile; | As you guard closely in your
 memory | Sad tales of betrayals, | You hear me sullenly, | Uninterested and inattentive . . . |
 I abjure the treacherous strivings | Of my criminal youth | And the expectations of
 meetings arranged | In gardens in the silence of the night. | I abjure the amorous murmur

belief, or, at the very least, acquiescence, however reluctant. See his *Don Juan and the Point of Honor: Seduction, Patriarchal Society and Literary Tradition* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), ch. 3.

¹¹⁴ Pushkin, PSS, iii/1. 222.

of spoken words, | The mysterious refrain of poems, | And the caresses of credulous maidens, | And their tears, and their delayed protestation.

Other poems also use physical gestures to evoke desire. By embedding a picture of seduction in the poem, Pushkin collapses the distance between the act of narrating and the narrated event. The use of the present dissolves the boundary between narrative time and space, and the interior frame. It is not clear whether the opening temporal clause should be read to indicate future occurrence of an event or suggest a conditional mood. The ambiguity reinforces the impression that both speaker and addressee have moved into the virtual space of the poem where seduction already takes place in the present tense. Even if she refuses to allow him physical consummation, the act of speaking and hearing the poem has been its own erotic experience.

The poem is physically explicit but elliptical about the couple's spoken exchanges, making it impossible to judge whether seduction is a consensual act based on trust. At the moment of seduction, the speaker's mind is an eternal present, morally isolated from previous experience and unrelated to the future. This is consistent with his profession of penance. The language of Pushkin's speaker, from his emphasis on the present moment to his physicality, from the ardour of his images, his confession of criminality, to his quick reasoning, displays an affinity with the libertinism of Don Juan, who lives in isolated moments without any interiority, capable of avowing his constancy because desire is his mode of continuity while only others see the catalogue of overthrown lovers as proof of discontinuity and inconstancy. In fact, the 'sad tales of names' referred to in line 10 seems an explicit reference to the famous catalogue aria of the Mozart opera meant to point to the prototype. Just as time seems endless, so his eloquence is inexhaustible. The image of the prodigal spending of tender expression ('I squander my ecstasy on you', 'Tebe s vostorgom rastrochau') reinforces the association with Don Juan, for whom the only function of money is ludic. The admission of guilt in the two final main clauses is prompted by the speaker's observation that his beloved listens to him listlessly. The confessions are meant as speech-acts to satisfy a demand and, depending on the willingness of the beloved to be persuaded, they will succeed. By abjuring his previous behaviour in language of the greatest pleasure rather than remorse, the seducer can recant with an eye to the next conquest, but never feels truly guilty as he lives by his own code and narcissistic needs. While the reader recognizes in the speaker a practised seducer and sees through the artlessness of this ruse, the poem retains its drama because we know that the same techniques have worked before and that charm and beauty overcome scruples; and because the poem is entirely his speech and does not allow her to answer except in signs of uncertainty.

Excess is the *modus vivendi* of the libertine, who pursues pleasure beyond limits established by religion or the law, and even beyond the limits of nature. True to

type, the Pushkinian libertine respects no limits. Like Don Giovanni as described in Leporello's catalogue aria, the Pushkinian libertine loves the virgin and the crone, and challenges the social order by despoiling innocence and duping the mature.¹¹⁵ A poem like 'To a Coquette' ('Koketke', 1821) injects the humorous weariness of the practised seducer into the pose of disaffection and premature ageing.¹¹⁶ A pornographic Epicurean narrator will indulge in pleasures for their own sake—and for the sake of creating a voyeur out of the reader. Libertine literature elevates erotic energy to a special philosophical status. Michel Foucault gives a helpful description of the significance and special capacity of this erotic energy:

Underneath the great violator of the rules of marriage—stealer of wives, seducers of virgins, the shame of families, and an insult to husbands and father—another personage can be glimpsed: the individual driven, in spite of himself, by the sombre madness of sex. Underneath the libertine, the pervert. He deliberately breaks the law, but at the same time, something like a nature gone awry transports him far from all nature; his death is the moment when the supernatural return of the crime and its retribution thwarts the flight into counter-nature. There were two great systems conceived by the West for governing sex: the law of marriage and the order of desires—and the life of Don Juan overturned them both.¹¹⁷

Libertinism is scarcely to be dissociated from materialism and atheism. The materialist atheist in Pushkin continues to wonder about the nature of life. 'To a Young Widow' ('K molodoi vdove', 1817) is the appeal of a seducer to a sorrowful widow. Remorseful over her liaison; she fears that her husband will avenge his posthumous betrayal. The speaker's argument addresses mainly the possibility of revenge from the grave. He expounds a philosophy of love and life based on a frank, and probably atheistic, acceptance of the finality of death. The argument turns on a reversal of perspective. Incredulously, he debunks a belief in a vengeful afterlife, which to him is no more than a fantasy. He urges her to trust her senses and, above all, the pleasure he affords her. The poem collects the main points in Pushkin's concept of the libertine: materialism, atheism, unbounded eroticism. The reality of death lies in its finality as a state of cold disintegration, just as the reality of love lies in the pleasure of intimacy. The evidence of their physical

¹¹⁵ On the figure of the aged seducer, see Michel Delon, *Le Savoir-vivre libertin* (Paris: Hachette littératures, 2000), 301–16. On Don Giovanni as an exemplar of excess as a flaunting of taboos, see Jean Starobinski, 'Quali eccessi', in *Nouvelle Revue de psychanalyse*, 43 (1991), 265–75. For a discussion of Mozart's hero in his eighteenth-century context, see Leo Weinstein, *Metamorphoses of Don Juan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1959), ch. 5; and Thomas Grey, 'The Gothic Libertine: The Shadow of Don Giovanni in Romantic Music and Culture', in *The Don Giovanni Moment*, 75–106.

¹¹⁶ Written in November 1820 when Pushkin carried on a flirtation with Aglaia Davydova and her daughter Adele. For other examples, see 'When your young years . . .' ('Kogda tvoie mladye leta', 1829), and for violation of virginity 'Maiden' ('Deva', 1821). On the seductress as a type of female libertine, see Olivier Blanc, *Les Libertines: plaisir et liberté au temps des Lumières* (Paris: Perrin, 1997), 8, and Delon, *Le Savoir-vivre*, 281–300.

¹¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon, 1978–86), i. 39–40.

intimacy, comprising moans of pleasure, tears of ecstatic bonding ('otkrovennoi družby slezy | I liubovnits robkii zov'), and union, should corroborate the sincerity of his professions. The sheer physicality of the poem counters death, which the speaker can only visualize as darkness. It is a void into which the subject projects fantasies and fears that are unreal, for the speaker bluntly negates a host of standard fantasies of the afterlife: death is a cold fastness from which there is no awakening (l. 22) and not an Elysium (ll. 25–6). The nihilistic argument for pleasure anticipates the attitudes of the seducer, reminiscent of both Casanova and Don Juan.¹¹⁸

Pushkin's route to materialism through French literature and thought extends even to the afterlife. Death is in the first instance the absence of sensation, but it is also the definitive extinction of body and spirit for the materialist who sees spiritual functions in organic terms. Love and death meet at this boundary which is defined by a double longing—to see the beloved and to know whether life exists after death. 'The Spell' ('Zaklinanie', 1830) moves closer to this boundary. The speaker evokes the ghost of the beloved, conjuring her to leave her grave to be reunited with him:

Явись, возлюбленная тень,
 Как ты была перед разлукой,
 Бледна, хладна, как зимний день,
 Искажена последней мукой.
 Приди как дальняя звезда,
 Как легкой звук иль дуновенье.
 Иль как ужасное виденье,
 Мне все равно, сюда! сюда! . . .
 Зову тебя не для того,
 Чтоб укорять людей, чья злоба
 Убила друга моего,
 Иль чтоб изведать тайны гроба,
 Не для того, что иногда
 Сомненьем мучусь . . . но, тоскуя,
 Хочу сказать, что всё люблю я,
 Что всё я твой: сюда, сюда!¹¹⁹ (ll. 9–24)

Appear, most beloved shade, | Just as you were before parting, | Pale, cold as the winter's day, | Disfigured by your final torment. | Come like a distant star, | As a light noise or breeze. | Or as a terrible apparition, | It matters not: hither, hither! . . .

I call upon you with no intent | To punish you whose malice | Murdered my friend, | Or to penetrate the secrets of the grave, | Not even because from time to time | I am

¹¹⁸ Rumours circulating in the summer of 1825 that Pushkin had taken his own life were greeted with scepticism. In the words of one letter-writer, 'I didn't believe from the start in Pushkin's suicide. He might destroy his own soul, but his body—never' (*Russkii arkhiv*, 5 (1903), 65–6).

¹¹⁹ Pushkin, PSS, iii/1. 246.

tormented by doubt . . . for I yearn | And want to say that I still love, | That I am yours:
hither, hither!

The intensification of desire generates more lurid and more vivid fantasies as language fills the void. Despite his denials—denials that allow him politely to underscore his yearning—the speaker is driven as much by a Faustian desire to know ultimate secrets as by the fantasy of reunion. All this is clear in the poet's wish to 'discern the secrets of the grave' ('izvedat' tainy groba'), possibly to assuage his own existential and spiritual doubts, but possibly because these secrets will give him the power to reproach others with his superior knowledge. The speaker stands at the threshold of life and death, greeting his beloved as an oracle of the afterlife. Love is only the pretext or pious offering to lure the ghost. Here the images reflect the different senses of sight, sound, and touch by which the speaker hopes to identify the intangible manifestation. The purpose of the fantasy is less one of erotic renewal than of connection with the mysterious and occult as a means of moral redress.

POETIC MORTALITY AND NEGATIVE CAPABILITY

Nous ne vivons jamais, nous attendons la vie.¹²⁰

(Seneca)

On the question of happiness, I am an atheist, I don't believe in it and it is only in the company of old friends that I become a bit of a sceptic.¹²¹

(Pushkin)

In a poet of Epicurean cast, dedicated to the pleasures of friendship and love, it is unsurprising that death is treated obliquely.¹²² Yet alongside the brilliantly extrovert Pushkin, there is a more sombre speaker who interrogates life and fate and denies the power of the imagination to go any further than our senses.

¹²⁰ Seneca, *Ceuvres complètes de Sénèque le philosophe* (Paris, 1832–4), iii. 274 [Modz. 631].

¹²¹ Pushkin, *PSS*, xiv, no. 535, p. 123 (5 (?) November 1830).

¹²² The Pushkinian anthology of poems on mortality includes: 'I do not regret you, years of my spring' ('Mne vas ne zhal', goda vesny moei', 1820); 'I have outlived my desires' ('Ia perezhil svoi zhelaniia', 1820); 'Soon I shall fall silent' ('Umolknu skoro ia', 1821); 'Grave of a Youth' ('Grob iunoshi', 1821); 'Tauride' ('Tavrida', 1822); 'The Cart of Life' ('Telega zhizni', 1823); 'The awful hour will come' ('Pridet uzhasnyi chas . . .', 1823); 'Epitaph for a Youngster' ('Epitafiia mladentsu', 1828); 'Whether I walk along the noisy streets' ('Brozhu li ia vdol' ulits shumnykh', 1829); 'What is in my name for you' ('Chto v imeni tebe moem', 1830); 'Before the sacred tomb' ('Pered grobnitseiu sviatoi', 1831); 'The more often the Lyceum celebrates' ('Chem chashche prazdnuet litsei', 1831); 'I visit once again . . .' ('Vnov' ia posetil . . .', 1835); 'When lost in thought . . .' ('Kogda za gorodom zadumchiv ia brozhu', 1836); 'I have erected a monument to myself' ('Ia pamiatnik sebe vozdvig', 1836); 'It was time: our young celebration . . .' ('Byla pora: nash prazdnik molodoi . . .', 1836).

His copy of Lucretius exposed him to the corporeal description of the soul.¹²³ Pushkin's attitude to death emerges from the same philosophy of materialism that formed his sense of the passions. Pushkin also had some knowledge of contemporary medical literature that accepted the conclusions of eighteenth-century materialism. In his *Recherches physiologiques sur la vie et la mort* (1800), the celebrated French surgeon Xavier Bichat describes death as the cessation of the biological function that makes all bodily matter inert, and does not take seriously other Vitalist theories which argue that spiritual matter is of a separate and indestructible composition.¹²⁴ Pushkin also owned the French translation of Lord Brougham's *A Discourse of Natural Theology showing the Natures of the Evidence and the Advantages of the Study*. His own copy was uncut, but he may well have had knowledge of the contents from a review or read another copy. The essay is a thoroughgoing history of materialist doctrine and contains nothing that Pushkin would not have known from other works. Brougham writes as a scientist and atheist convinced by materialism, especially as expounded in d'Holbach's *Système de la nature*, and on guard against Christian refutations. He systematically explains most of the axioms of materialist thought from its views on creation to its theory of mind as 'a modification of Matter, or the result of a collocation of material particles'. On the subject of the survival of the soul, he writes as follows:

The Immateriality of the Soul is the foundation of all the doctrines relating to its Future state. If it consists of material parts, or if it consists of any modification of matter, or if it is inseparably connected with any combination of material elements, we have no reason whatever for believing that it can survive the existence of the physical part of our frame; on the contrary, its destruction seems to follow as a necessary consequence of the dissolution of the body. It is true that the body is not destroyed in the sense of being annihilated; but it is equally true that the particular conformation, the particular arrangement of material particles with which the soul is supposed to have been inseparably connected, or in which it is supposed to consist, is gone and destroyed even in the sense of annihilation; for that arrangement or conformation has no longer an existence.¹²⁵

He concludes that while the body decays because 'matter is perpetually changing and never destroyed', the body will be resolved into its elements and become the 'material of new combinations, animate and inanimate, but not a single particle is annihilated'. We cannot tell whether Pushkin acquired the book for its expert

¹²³ See Martha Nussbaum, 'Mortal Immortals: Lucretius on Death and the Voice of Nature', in her *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 192–239.

¹²⁴ Xavier Bichat, *Recherches physiologiques sur la vie et la mort* (Paris, 1800), 50–60 [cf. Modz. 655]. For information on Pushkin's interest in physiology and medical theory, see S. M. Grombakh, *Pushkin i meditsina ego vremeni* (Moscow: Meditsina, 1989), which says regrettably little on Bichat.

¹²⁵ Quoted from Lord Henry Brougham, *A Discourse of Natural Theology showing the Natures of the Evidence and the Advantages of the Study* (London: Charles Knight, 1835), 100; the French edition is *Discours sur la théologie naturelle* (Paris: H. Dumont, 1835) [Modz. 675]. I am grateful to Lawrence Goldman for explaining to me Brougham's religious position, on which the entry in the *DNB* is notably silent.

summary of materialist theory or for the Christian counter-arguments. The truth is that they are one and the same because he would have wanted to see both sides to an issue where no certainty was possible.

In the paragraph quoted earlier in the chapter about Helvétius, Pushkin observed that no philosophy can solve the great mystery of religion, namely, the nature of death and the immortality of the soul, which were two of Helvétius' key concerns. While he is uncritical of materialism, he observes that it is no more conclusive than any other scientific theory or philosophy or religion about the meaning of death. This Voltairean resignation to uncertainty expresses a sense of dissatisfaction and yearning for greater clarity. In the end, Epicurean hedonism cannot dispel doubt and a craving for greater knowledge; and libertine revolt is unsustainable. His own description of Pestel' as a materialist at heart whose reason resists atheism seems right for Pushkin, too, and echoes a line from his poem 'Atheism' ('Bezverie', 1817). This mood leads him in the direction of Stoic teaching on the subject of time, death, and the soul.

There has been ample discussion of whether Pushkin was an atheist, and the subject has become considerably charged in Russia's post-Soviet intellectual life where many readers find it hard to imagine their national poet separately from the resurgence in Orthodox Christianity. In the perspective of this study, the question of Pushkin's belief has a different complexion because it is more about describing the context of ideas with which his poetry engaged. Religion as an institution elicited no sympathy from Pushkin, and certainly provoked blasphemous Voltairean resistance. Yet his private positions on spiritual issues seem to be in flux and marked by doubt. Religion did not mean just one thing for him. Behind religion were questions that gripped him about the nature of the soul, the order of the universe, and the possibility of free will.

From Cicero to Leibniz, from Lucretius to Diderot, from Seneca to Voltaire, the great moralists read by Pushkin all addressed physical theories of the universe and built their thinking about divinity and causality around theories of matter. Pushkin's understanding of their materialism impinged on his ideas about love, death, and friendship, and therefore in the end about his very notions of poetry. Natural philosophy and religion in the Enlightenment were preoccupied with definitions of the body and the soul, and questions about their union. From such issues it was only a small step to central theological questions. Thinkers who rejected revealed religion pondered alternative explanations for the structure of the world. Put simply, the issue was whether the world had a design and designer; or whether matter was itself intelligent and through its own powers of organization created biological and social structures without the external supervision of a designer or deity. Throughout the 'long Enlightenment' scientists, philosophers, and writers outside the Church articulated elaborate and nuanced systems in defining positions between the classic deist position summarized in the design argument, and the latter position which is or comes close to atheism.

Pushkin's intimations of mortality have a manifold complexion. In relatively early poems the subject of death elicits an intellectual response shaped by philosophical language.¹²⁶ Other works interrogate the darkness of the night, posing ultimate questions of life and death;¹²⁷ and in the 1830s graveyard poems ponder the interrelation of the life-cycle and natural growth and destruction, and where a special type of silence greets the poet's doubts.¹²⁸ Stoicism of a common-sense type can mark Pushkin's everyday posture.¹²⁹ For Pushkin, the ultimate proof of being alive is what he called, in a letter about Del'vig's death, 'the complete encompassing of feeling' ('vseob'emlemost' chustva'). Other inspirations, such as beauty and harmony, elicit a similar alertness to the flux of emotion.¹³⁰ All of these situations represent a speaker caught between the desire to exist in the world, where living is, as Pushkin wrote, a matter of 'thinking and suffering', and the alternative desire to inhabit a magical realm free of these anxieties; between the desire to exercise critical faculties in self-conscious assessment that affirms their sense of existence and rational self-determination, and, on the other hand, the yearning for a realm of freedom where all contradiction is erased and the flux of circumstance vanishes. A number of poems conjure a transcendent refuge of creative plenitude and untroubled satisfaction distinct from the Horatian model of rustic solitude.¹³¹ These works fantasize on states of being either beyond the end of life or conceived in some impossible alternative existence. In both situations the poet removes himself from the concreteness of

¹²⁶ There has been a tendency to ignore the early concern with death as adolescent melancholy and see the preoccupation as concentrated in Pushkin's final years. See I. E. Fiks, 'Motiv smerti v pozdnei lirike A. S. Pushkina', *Russkaia literatura i provintsiiia* (Simferopol': KT&GI, 1997), 47–8. Grombach, *Pushkin i meditsina ego vremeni*, notes that Pushkin's conversations with the English philosopher W. Hutchinson, author of *A Dissertation on Infanticide in its Relation to Physiology and Jurisprudence*, must be responsible for further reinforcing his tendency to atheism, and sees a strong connection with the poem 'While youthfully breathing sweet hope' ('Nadezhdoi sladostnoi mladencheski dysha', 1823).

¹²⁷ See Vl. Grekhnev, 'Drugoe "ia" v elegiiakh Pushkina', *Boldinskie chteniia* (Gor'kii: Volgo-Viatskoe knizhnoe izd-vo, 1983), 141; V. B. Sandomirskaiia, "'Otryvok" v poezii Pushkina dvadtsatykh godov', *PIM* 9 (1979), 69–83.

¹²⁸ From the early lyric consider 'My Testament' ('Moe zaveshchanie', 1815). 'My epitaph' ('Moia epitafiia', 1815) turns the subject into a parodic epigram. Between 1820 and 1823 a number of poems reprise the theme of premature death as a spur for fantasies about future pleasures, or offer variations on the theme of the extinction of inspiration, an obvious ironical conceit since the proof of inspiration's vitality is, of course, the poem itself. Hence, the theme of *memento mori* surfaces in 'Grave of a Youth' which is written in the style of a typical elegy, where death scarcely disrupts the beauty, and in 'Tauride' ('Tavrida', 1820), a fragmentary and stylistically awkward attempt at a metaphysical lyric, a Pushkinian speaker for the first time gives prolonged consideration to the possibility of death as irretrievable and complete obliteration of all sensation, pleasure, memory, and love, but rejects this painful and unimaginable vision in favour of a mythical place 'where an eternal light burns' ('gde vechnyi svet gorit') and some sort of Elysian repose and imperishable pleasure are on offer. He embarks more clearly on his own independent considerations with the openly irreligious 'Atheism', published together with 'The Cart of Life', 1827.

¹²⁹ See letter on Pushkin, *PSS*, xiv. 112 (letter of 9 September 1830).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* 337 (letter of 9 February 1831 to E. M. Khitrovo).

¹³¹ Eldridge, *The Persistence of Romanticism*, 25.

life and invents a new realm that removes from death its frightening mystery. The Pushkinian speaker escapes from a troubled state of introspection into a state of delight in an Elysian landscape, 'where an eternal light burns' ('gde vechnyi svet gorit').

Such poems offer a positive fantasy, whereas poems about death end with the blankness of non-imagining. Thrown back on speculation when the only psychological comfort would be certain knowledge, this speaker once again tests the capacity of the imagination to penetrate existential mystery. Romantic subjectivity with its potential for dissolving the ego into the non-ego of the natural world made it possible to contemplate deathless afterlife. Chapters 4 and 5 showed how Pushkin experimented with Romantic subjectivity. In 'I visit once again...' he came close to creating his own Wordsworthian spot of time. Other poems retreat more dramatically from a Schlegel-inspired vision of Nature, and intimate a materialist view of death as bodily extinction. This is apparent with reference to his great elegy of 1836, 'When lost in thought...' the draft of which bore the title 'the Graveyard':

Когда за городом, задумчив, я брожу
 И на публичное кладбище захожу,
 Решетки, столбики, нарядные гробницы,
 Под коими гниют все мертвецы столицы,
 В болоте кое-как стесненные рядком,
 Как гости жадные за нищенским столом,
 Купцов, чиновников усопших мавзолеи,
 Дешевого резца нелепые затеи,
 Над ними надписи и в прозе и в стихах
 О добродетелях, о службе и чинах;
 По старом рогаче вдовицы плач амурный,
 Ворами со столбов отвинченные урны,
 Могилы склизкие, которы также тут
 Зеваючи жильцов к себе на утро ждуют,—
 Такие смутные мне мысли все наводит,
 Что злое на меня уныние находит.
 Хоть плюнуть да бежать...

Но как же любо мне

Осеннею порой, в вечерней тишине,
 В деревне посещать кладбище родовое,
 Где дремлют мертвые в торжественном покое.
 Тем неукрашенным могилам есть простор;
 К ним ночью темною не лезет бледный вор;
 Близ камней вековых, покрытых желтым мохом,
 Проходит селянин с молитвой и со вздохом;
 На место праздных урн и мелких пирамид,
 Безносных гениев, растрепанных харит

Стоит широко дуб над важными гробами,
Колелясь и шумя . . .¹³²

When lost in thought I wander beyond the town | And walk into a public cemetery, | [There are] the railings, little pillars, neat tombs, | Under which all the dead of the capitol rot, | Packed side by side in the swampy earth, | Like greedy guests at a pauper's table, | Mausoleums of deceased clerks, of merchants, | The ugly efforts of a cheap mason, | Above them inscriptions in prose and in verse | About their virtues, their service and ranks; | The widow's amorous lament for an old cuckold, | Urns pulled off their pedestals by thieves, | Slippery graves, which in the same way | Yawningly await the morning's occupants—| All this brings upon me such confused ideas | That an evil despondency finds me out, | I want to spit and run . . .

Yet how I love | At the autumn season, in the quiet of the evening, | To visit an ancestral cemetery in the country, | Where the dead slumber in solemn peace. | There is space there for the unadorned graves; | By the dark of night no pale vandal creeps in; | Near the ancient stones, covered in a yellow moss, | A villager passes by, with a prayer and a sigh; | In place of the empty urns and meagre pyramids, | Of noseless Geniuses, and the flustered angels | An oak spreads over the venerable graves, | And bends fluttering . . .

'When lost in thought . . .' is a fragment that condenses *topoi* of the graveyard elegy.¹³³ Two juxtaposed landscapes form its visual, thematic, and emotional structure. Pushkin is alive to a larger distinction between rural nature and urban artificiality, but prefers to overlook it and focus instead on the opposition between urban commemoration and rural burial. 'Stanzas' ('Brozhu li ia vdol' ulits shumnykh . . .', 1829), another poem about death, enacts what Thomas McFarland has identified in Wordsworth as the 'recognition of structures of loss', where meditation in a cherished place compensates for loss. 'When lost in thought . . .' begins on a contrastive note. The urban graveyard, owing to its ugliness, cannot offer the speaker the images that foster contemplation, memories, and comfort. The language of class tempts one to suggest that Pushkin's own social views colour his repudiation, but the emotions seem even more complex. Ostensibly, the speaker's antagonism to those buried in the public cemetery stems from his scorn for their shoddy monuments.¹³⁴ Editions of Pushkin's poetry almost always print this poem next to his imitation of Horace's 'Exegi monumentum'; the juxtaposition, though an editorial choice, is instructive. For Pushkin the only monument that has enduring value is one created by the artist. Chapter 3 has argued that the poem conveys Pushkin's wish for an art that is ultimately

¹³² Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 422–3.

¹³³ For a survey of interpretations, largely biographical or descriptive in character, see A. V. Il'ichev, "Kogda za gorodom, zadumchiv ia brozhu . . .", *VPK* 21 (1987), 98–104.

¹³⁴ O. G. Postnov, *Pushkin i smert'* (Novosibirsk: Izd-vo SO RAN, 2000), calls death in Pushkin 'Apollonian' because the poet looks to his art and the favourable reception of posterity to counter biological extinction (p. 21). But what is striking about the poems under discussion in this section is that the speaker takes no comfort in art but ponders the indeterminacy of death as a separate fact.

beautiful and immaterial, permanently beyond decay because it is a concept in the mind. This graveyard would be repugnant even if the monuments were better crafted. Nothing apart from the cycle of nature seems to be acceptable.¹³⁵

Unlike Wordsworth's *The Excursion*, which, in the words of Paul de Man, 'constructs a sequence of mediations between incompatibles: city and nature, pagan and Christian, body and grave',¹³⁶ 'When lost in thought . . .' draws a firm line of opposition between these pairs. Like Wordsworth, Pushkin focuses on the connection between man and nature. The ploughman is the equivalent of the Wordsworthian human figure who is always a part of the landscape. But unlike Wordsworth, the poem does not establish either a fellowship between man and man or between man and nature. The antithetical second half introduces the positive image of growth and labour through the figure of the ploughman, and the image of the natural monument of the oak supplanting the despised statuary and presiding over graves that are called, according to the very specific period meaning of the word, 'significant' ('vazhnyi').¹³⁷ In the second tableau, Pushkin recovers this treasured landscape. Within all of twelve lines the blurring of boundaries that de Man finds usual in poems of this type occurs. For insofar as the dead merely slumber their presence remains animate, and insofar as the speaker appears with a prayer and a sigh, presumably expressed out of feeling for the dead (the clinical 'mertvy'e' is a gesture of deference from the pejorative 'mertvetsy' of the first part), the picture is one of community, an internal illustration of the meaning of 'ancestral'. If the country graveyard is preferable, it is because it comes closer to the Wordsworthian ideal of community and continuity, but this human connection is overshadowed by the endlessness of nature and death.

In 'I visit once again . . .' the promise of human continuity and the succession of generations are projected onto nature. The conclusion of this poem carries a different suggestion. The poet does not suspend doubt, but imagines himself in a landscape that takes no notice. It is hard to read this as a Keatsian Negative Capability, allowing the poet to confront the unknowable without disquiet.¹³⁸ The dead do not slumber because Pushkin wishes to suggest that their souls are intact. The triumphant calm comes from a conviction in the senseless, unfeared physical dissolution that will occur. By contrast with the poet's violent reaction to the urban cemetery, slumber is peaceful for those who know they will be buried in the right place and laid in the ground. The poet finds comfort and consolation in imagining the right sort of graveyard where no false signs of life beyond death are

¹³⁵ On the Wordsworthian opposition between nature and culture, see Anne Janowitz, *England's Ruins* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 79 ff.

¹³⁶ Paul de Man, 'Autobiography as De-Facement', in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 74.

¹³⁷ For a very different reading in terms of Christian and pagan symbols, see E. M. Taborisksaia, 'Ontologicheskaiia lirika 1826–1836 godov', *PIM* 15 (1995), 93–5.

¹³⁸ On the term and Keats's thought, see W. Jackson Bate, *Keats* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), 238–63.

given and where nothing hinders dissolution into the cycle of nature and selfless absorption into the movement of the universe, as both Lucretius and Diderot expect. This is not the language of pantheism since no divine presence inhabits the place. This poem shows no awareness of subjective consciousness. Schlegel's vision of nature and the self as interrelated through the ego and non-ego posed a challenge to Pushkin's imagination in 'I visit once again . . .' that he does not face a second time. 'When lost in thought . . .' closes down that picture.

Like love and poetry, the phenomenon of death causes Pushkin to ponder the tension between reason and feeling, intuition and intelligence, subjectivity and fact. It is understandable why intelligent readings have compared Pushkin's posture to Keatsian Negative Capability. But I think this position is open to doubt. This is not simply because Pushkin did not read Keats's letters. Negative Capability, as an openness to the unknowable and inexpressible, is a type of silence. Differentiating between poetic silences and comparing them is difficult, and the temptation is to see responses as cognate. The larger context of a poet's belief-system and intellectual profile can alert us to a more plausible argument from silence. If atheistic materialism is the departure point for Pushkin's contemplation of death, then certain poems must be read as statements of blankness rather than as a benign suspension. While superficially similar, different types of silence can produce distinct readings.

In trying to fathom the meaning of silence at the end of this poem, it might be helpful to position Pushkin with respect to the types of response that others offered. Chapter 5 argued that Pushkin did not subscribe to the Schellingian divine life of the whole, and interprets 'I visit once again . . .' in that light. 'When lost in thought . . .', like many poems about death, is a statement about consciousness, and it is torn by wanting to say more than it possibly can about death and belief. If there was an alternative to the disbelief inherent in his understanding of the body it was in philosophy rather than religion. Of the sources available to Pushkin, two books from this period in his life address the relevant issues. Apart from Schön's work on Kant (discussed in Chapter 5), there was also Fichte's philosophy of consciousness as set out briefly in the essay *Vocation of Man* (1800). Two aspects of Fichte's system are germane in the present discussion if we are looking for a philosophy that makes it possible for the self to survive physical dissolution and yet survive as something like a soul.

The first is the question of what 'I' means. For Fichte there is an absolute 'I' of consciousness that is separated from mechanical accidents and the flux of the world. It is doubtful whether Pushkin would have been at all gripped by the inconsistencies and problems that are apparent in Fichte's thought. But in pondering what the self is in existential terms he would have been intrigued by the question that is so generally important to Romanticism about why the absolute 'I' should objectify itself in an intelligible world. Fichte offers different responses, and there is one in the *Vocation of Man* that builds a bridge between his theory of the Ego and Nature:

I, for example, am a product of the organizing force of nature, just as the plant is. I am a product of its motor-force... In me organism, movement, and thought are not interdependent and do not derive one from the other. It is not because organism and movement exist that I conceive of them. In the same way, it is not because I conceive of them that they exist. Rather, organism, movement, and thought constitute the parallel and harmonious developments of that force whose product is necessarily a being of my type; whose ineluctable destiny is to continue creating men. Within me a thought is born in and of itself: a faculty corresponds to it in and of itself; then a movement follows, also in and of itself. What I am is not because I think I am what I am. Nor is it that I am it because I think I am it or want to be it. But I am and I think: the two things in and of themselves. Both, existence and thought, derive from a source that is greater than either.¹³⁹

While other kinds of knowledge are secondary, this absolute 'I'—if it exists since Fichte may intend to posit it as an ideal—possesses intellectual intuition, which is also described in terms of spontaneity because it gives immediate access to consciousness. This absolute Ego represents a type of 'intellectual intuition' that objectifies itself in the intelligible world. The construct of the absolute 'I', which has no limit, would give the poet the authority to see the self transcending the finite, becoming part of nature, and overcoming death since, as this paragraph states, the 'I' exists absolutely, whether or not it thinks of itself thinking. Whatever he made of his transcendentalism and the convolutions of his epistemology, Pushkin would have found passages in Fichte that struck a chord, since Fichte attempts to align a view of nature with an understanding of psychology. But however much Pushkin wishes to know whether the self is part of a greater universal force, and whether his thinking is part of nature, it is hard to conceive that such an argument would persuade a man of Voltairean and empirical inclination.

There is a second feature of his system that opened up an avenue on the possibility of contemplating the posthumous self. It concerns the way in which Fichte enables one to split consciousness and make it possible for the 'I' to contemplate itself.¹⁴⁰ Because the action of the 'I' thinking about itself is an action upon itself, Fichte has to explain how the reflecting 'I' and the reflected 'I' remain distinct. In explaining this self-consciousness, Fichte postulates an absolute Ego that is itself divisible into separate entities. The Ego is the capacity for reflection and judgement that recognizes its own existence absolutely. The Ego establishes independently its own existence, as agent and result of the thought process. Fichte argues that the self as Ego is defined by Non-Ego, that is, by what it is not since without an object there could be no subject. While Non-Ego limits the self it cannot destroy it since both of them have their existence in absolute Ego. Its negation is the Non-Ego, which limits the Ego but does not

¹³⁹ Fichte, *Destination de l'homme* 39. (For the original see the Appendix, no. 18.)

¹⁴⁰ A version of this part of his theory comes in *Destination de l'homme* in part II, *La Science*, in the form of a dialogue between 'L'esprit et moi', 86 ff.

destroy it. Our conception of external objects, as external, is the operation of Ego whereby it transfers to Non-Ego a real existence abstracted from itself. Fichte's concept of this interrelation makes it possible to contemplate the existence of the self and everything outside the self as having existence independent of one's own consciousness. The relationship makes it possible in theory to imagine contemplating the self as a non-self or object, whereby the Non-Ego continues to exist even if it ceases to act on the Ego. 'When lost in thought . . .' may or may not be read as a direct attempt to translate Fichte into the language of the poetic speaker. Of the philosophical systems that Pushkin knew and may have seen as an antidote to his materialism, it is the one that by analogy rises to the challenge of conceiving oneself in death.

Fichte and sensationist psychology cannot be reconciled. For the materialist, and any other believer in the bio-mechanical nature of the self, consciousness does not exceed physical existence after which the mind ceases to function. Pushkin gives no evidence of relaxing into a loss of identity, as would the Keatsian. Nor does he affiliate his speaker with a Non-Ego that objectively survives death. What may be truly striking at the end of the poem is not the indifference of nature (which is how Pushkin wants us to see it at the end of 'Stanzas'), but the fact that the power to signify presence has been given to nature through the sound of the leaves and taken away from man. Nothing in the poem reverses the impression that when the body dies the self also ceases to exist as a subject, which implies the end of the Non-Ego as an external object—that is the possible self, whether a spirit or sense of consciousness or soul that might survive. At the end of this poem the 'I' has ceased to contemplate, and the poem fades into a state of omniscient remove. The conclusion we can draw is that Pushkin's contemplation of death irretrievably draws the line not between the Ego and Non-Ego, but between the living and non-living.

Although this position follows from atheism, it is not necessary to argue that Pushkin is an atheist in order to come to this conclusion. Most theories of sensibility, materialist or not, hold that consciousness stems from sensation and only from sensation. This was the message of Galich's *A Picture of Man* concerning the conceptual capacity of the imagination. In his analysis of the link between mental and physical operations, all images must have a basis in sensation and physical experience. Memory and ideas are formed in the mind through empirical experience until new experiences dislodge those memories. But nothing that has not been experienced in some form can be conceived by the imagination, and in writing of death Galich himself is reduced to saying that the soul, when it departs the body, leaves 'for a region'. Such a euphemism is the best he can manage for an obscurity that escapes rational description. Pushkin writes in the same spirit, but in this poem stops short of providing even a euphemism. Jean-Paul in his *Pensées* wrote of the power of the poet to give death, which is unknowable, a soul and face. Pushkin has come as close as he can to achieving

this effect.¹⁴¹ But how to contemplate that unknown, and how to surrender the love of friends, was another question that troubled Pushkin increasingly in the 1830s.¹⁴²

STOIC FATE AND FRIENDSHIP

A life of action and danger moderates the dread of death. It not only gives us fortitude to bear pain, but teaches us at every step the precarious tenure on which we hold our present being. Sedentary and studious men are the most apprehensive on this score.¹⁴³

(William Hazlitt)

At a time when Pushkin wrote about independence (as discussed in Chapter 7) he also reached out to his friends as a special community. Friendship in Epicureanism and Stoicism plays different roles. Epicureanism considers friendship as a source of pleasure and enjoyment that banishes cares. Stoic theory regards friendship as a means of regulating the fear of death and overcoming isolation. For the Stoic, friendship has an important communitarian role by offering the prospect of social continuity despite the threat of individual extinction. Pushkin's late and greatest poems of friendship, the 19 October celebrations of 1831 and 1836, apply Stoic reasoning to the problem of personal and collective annihilation faced by the group.

Pushkin understood that a group's sense of destiny changes with time and demands new psychological resources. The libertines celebrated in Pushkin's youthful poems showed no genuine commitment to Epicureanism as a moral system because it seeks to minimize pain as a type of unsatisfied desire, and maximize pleasure as the removal of pain. They easily injected Epicurean language into their casual hedonism as a matter of rhetorical polish, but because they were insulated from menacing destiny by their youth and by their disbelief in providence this should be read for what it is, as Horatian pseudo-wisdom. Hints of 'carpe diem' occurred in their juvenile verse when mortality threatened least. Their youthful songs prepared them for pleasure, not for death. However much those songs echoed in Pushkin's earlier poems of friendship, from the late 1820s

¹⁴¹ *Pensées de Jean-Paul*, 15 [Modz.1031].

¹⁴² Irina Surat, "‘Stoit, Vetulia, . . .’", *Moskovskii Pushkinist*, 2 (1996), 146, correctly notes that forebodings of death become pronounced in the poetry of 1835, including 'The locks grew thin and grey' ('Oda LVI. Iz Anakreona', 1835), 'The Wanderer', ('Strannik', 1835), as well as 'It's time, my friend, it's time' ('Pora, moi drug, pora!', 1834), 'Rodrig' ('Chudnyi son mne Bog poslal', 1834); in the 1830s the renewed anxiety that has been discerned may not only be a biographical reflex but a reaction to Pushkin's reading about the self and subjectivity in Schön, Fichte, and Heine on Fichte.

¹⁴³ A marginal notation marks this phrase in Pushkin's copy of Hazlitt's *Table Talk*, a book first recommended to him as early as 1818 by Chaadaev.

he felt a duty to articulate the vulnerability of the group. He remained loyal to the rituals of Epicureanism, but in the 1830s began to speak in an idiom of causality and ethics through which a genuine appreciation of classical moral theory shows, reflecting the wealth of sources on ancient theories of fate at his disposal.

The final chapter of *Evgenii Onegin* begins autobiographically with the narrator of 1830 recalling how he read Cicero and Apuleius at the Lycée.¹⁴⁴ He wears his learning lightly. Cicero and Apuleius impressed the narrator as writers who considered time and fate, the role of providence, and the possibility of free will. In the 1830s, Pushkin appears to have begun buying systematically for his library the works of philosophers who address issues of determinism and causality. In numerous cases these works reinforce the teachings of Stoic philosophy that Pushkin had begun absorbing through French literature.¹⁴⁵ Pushkin collected Cicero's writings in thirty-five volumes when they were published from 1829 as part of Panckoucke's *Bibliothèque latine*. Of the complete set that he had collected before 1835, he cut the pages of the 1830 volume containing the *De natura deorum*. Along with *De finibus* and the *Academica*, this long work remains Cicero's most important writing on Epicurean and Stoic religion.¹⁴⁶ It takes the form of a series of dialogues about the nature of the gods and their involvement in the affairs of men. The discussion encompasses a range of views including the radical teaching of thinkers like Diagoras of Melos who contest the existence of the gods; other Epicureans who accept the existence of the gods and believe that they exercise no control in human affairs; and finally philosophers who represent the Stoic school, including Cicero himself, who say that the whole world is ruled by divine intelligence and reason.¹⁴⁷ The last of these equate Jupiter, as the chief god of the Roman pantheon, with a Law that is everlasting and eternal, through whom Necessity or Fate operate.

Other works in Pushkin's library supplemented Cicero's discussion with highly scholarly analyses of the theories and their key protagonists. A French translation of Conyers Middleton's life of Cicero, a mainstream biography of the eighteenth century mentioned by Voltaire, also supplied Pushkin with a detailed political life, ending with a lengthy exposition of Cicero's moral philosophy. Middleton drew attention to Cicero's investigation of the opinions of the ancient sects

¹⁴⁴ The evidence is that he continued reading Apuleius in the early 1820s (see *Iz dnevnikov i vospominanii I. P. Liprandi*, *Russki arkhiv*, 8–9 (1866), 1245) at a time when he was discussing materialism with Pestel' and most likely starting to read Diderot.

¹⁴⁵ For further material in this vein, see [n.a.] *Doctrines de Saint-Simon: exposition*, 176–7; Schön, *Philosophie transcendente*, 8, 45. Guizot's commentary on Hamlet uses exactly the language of destiny, fatalism, and will-power. See William Shakespeare, *Ceuvres complètes de Shakespeare, traduites de l'anglais par Le Tourneur: nouvelle édition, revue et corrigée, par F. Guizot et A. P., traducteur de Lord Byron*, 13 vols. (Paris, 1821), i. 169–70 [Modz. 1389].

¹⁴⁶ For analysis of the arguments, see M. Tullius Cicero, *De natura deorum*, ed. Arthur Stanley Pease (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), esp. 1–61.

¹⁴⁷ See J.-B. Gourinat, 'Prédiction du futur et action humaine dans le traité de Chrysippe *Sur le destin*', in G. R. Dherbey and J.-B. Gourinat (eds.), *Les Stoïciens* (Paris: Vrin, 2005), 247–73.

on the question of the chief end of life, which is happiness. He conveniently summarizes the famous *Tusculan Disputations* in which Cicero ‘first teaches us, how to contemn the terrors of death, and to look upon it as a blessing, rather than an evil; the second, to support pain and affliction with a manly fortitude; the third, to appease all our complaints and uneasiness under the accidents of life; the fourth, to moderate all our other passions: the fifth, to evince the sufficiency of virtue to make man happy’.¹⁴⁸ He explains the very high place that Cicero, like all the Stoics, gives to friendship as one of the great benefits to human life; and he distils Cicero’s view on the existence of a God, who is the same as Providence presiding over the whole system. Pushkin also had access to thinking of this kind in the form of a highly detailed handbook, which interspersed the literary history, discussed by genre, with extensive discussions of ancient philosophy and philosophers, including excursions on the Epicureans and Stoics, and separate essays on Seneca and Cicero as Stoics.¹⁴⁹

The poems in the 19 October cycle commemorate the anniversary celebrations of 1825, 1827, 1828, 1831, and 1836. They are disparate in theme and style.¹⁵⁰ But the final two written in 1831 and 1836 stand together in conveying a new attitude to time or fate and man’s posture of individual self-control. It would be easy to read them exclusively as restatements of familiar sentiments of friendly devotion. Traces of Pushkin’s own biographical circumstances are conspicuous, of course. But the focus is outward on the meaning of the significant group and its behaviour under the pressure of destiny. They share an outlook on the future and the vocabulary of time. Both have a dual emphasis, first on the impact of time on the life of the individual, and then on the connection between single lives and the larger historical frame—and both find it difficult to integrate the sense of individual fate with the direction of history since history has so betrayed the group’s liberal expectations. The degree of introspection they exhibit aligns them with another shift in Pushkin’s lyric writing to a surface bleakness combined with philosophical depth. More than occasional statements, they show how the poet manages his position in relation to the group by assuming the role of a teacher of simple but difficult truths. Both poems ring the death-knell for absent friends and confront death as a fact.

The longest of the anniversary poems, written when Pushkin was still in exile, is ‘19 October 1825’. It created a panorama of friends who had found themselves scattered across distant places, each pursuing individual aspirations; it created a communal effect by assimilating the familiar voices of individual members, and roused them to raise their glasses. By the end, the poet has collapsed the

¹⁴⁸ The work is *Histoire de Cicéron, tirée de ses écrits et des monuments de son siècle: avec les preuves & des éclaircissements* (Amsterdam, 1784–5) [Modz. 986]; for the translation, see Conyers Middleton, *The History of the Life of M. Tullius Cicero* (London, 1755), ii. 395.

¹⁴⁹ Schoell, *Histoire abrégée* [Modz. 1360].

¹⁵⁰ For a history of their composition and links, see Ia. L. Levkovich, ‘Litseiskie “godovshchiny”’, in *Stikhotvoreniia Pushkina 1820–1830-kh godov*, 71–106.

distance between himself and his readers, and also merged the time-frames into a single moment. Although absent from the celebration, the poet in 1825 speaks of 'us' as a single group. In the 1831 anniversary poem, the drinking songs of youth make room for a strophic eulogy that distills the language of family and friendship into a stark statement of grief. The first stanza confronts this bravely by flaunting the tormenting oxymorons of sad rejoicing, diminished reunion, muffled songs, and clinking of glasses.

Чем чаще празднует Лицей
 Свою святую годовщину,
 Тем робче старый круг друзей
 В семью стесняется едину,
 Тем реже он; тем праздник наш
 В своем веселии мрачнее;
 Тем глуше звон заздравных чаш
 И наши песни тем грустнее.¹⁵¹ (ll. 1–8)

Each time the Lycée celebrates | Its holy anniversary, | More timidly the old circle of friends | Closes rank into a single family, | More infrequently; our holiday | Is more gloomy in its joy; | More muffled is the sound of raised glasses | And more sad our songs.

The fear of death has made the group more timid in its celebrations, and unified them into a singular family. Solidarity emboldens the surviving members to understand the unvarnished truth, however comfortless. The poem of 1831 undoes those effects. Although Pushkin attended the celebration that year, he speaks in the third person rather than the first, thereby accentuating his dispassionate, objective regard. The second stanza ponders fear, caused by the random occurrence of death as a more corrosive force of moral erosion than death itself. In hammering home this point the poet is no longer the Epicurean *arbitrator bibendi* of Horatian pleasures. His voice combines the tones of a friend with the precepts of the wise man.¹⁵² A principle of moral growth lies in the acceptance of Fate. The solidarity of the group, and the values that were instantly conjured through a poem or a song by one of their number, had instilled a sense of immortality. Recognizing the degree to which their own collective myth blinded them to

¹⁵¹ Pushkin, *PSS*, iii/1. 277–8, 431–3.

¹⁵² The French edition of Horace published in 1831, and presumably acquired by Pushkin in that year, had a large number of cut pages. Although Pushkin already knew Horace well enough from his youthful studies, reacquaintance in prose translation with *Odes* I.9, the famous poem to Mt. Soracte, may have unlocked the combination of feelings evinced in his 1831 poems, also offering the interplay between an image of nature's instability and the unpredictable lot of man, in particular the final lines: 'Ce qui doit arriver demain, garde-toi de le chercher, et chaque jour que le destin t'accorde, mets le bien à profit: ne méprise pas les tendres amours ni les danses, tandis que tu es jeune et que la vieillesse morose n'a pas abattu ta vigueur.' In 'Who among the gods returned me . . . ' ('Kto iz bogov mne vozvratil . . . ', 1835), Pushkin once again raises the theme of fate and survival by imitating Horace's poem 'O saepe mecum' (*Odes* II.7). On the circumstances and religious language, see R. G. M. Nisbet and Margaret Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes. Book II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 106–21.

their frailty is the truth that the poet now feels obliged to disclose, and it is particularly sad since the emotional sustenance and source of consolation of each lies precisely in membership of that community. The second stanza numbly list what lies ahead:

Так дуновенья бурь земных
И нас печально касались,
И мы средь пиршеств молодых
Душою часто омрачались;
Мы возмужали; рок судил
И нам житейски испытанья,
И смерти дух средь нас ходил
И назначал свои закланья. (II. 9–16)

Thus have the winds of earthly storms | Touched even us unexpectedly, | And even we amidst our young festivities | Have grown cast down at heart; | We have matured; fate decreed | For us, too, life's trials, | And the spirit of death amidst us stalks | And has marked its victims.

In the 1831 poem time is registered institutionally as a school anniversary; biographically as felt through loss; and historically against a canvas of past events. In speaking of destiny, Pushkin employs the elevated word 'rok', which is an abstract type of fate. The word is drawn from Stoic vocabulary, and frequently occurred in eighteenth-century Russian tragedy and in Russian translations of Roman writing.¹⁵³ More than the usual Russian word 'sud'ba', it signifies what Cicero calls the 'disposition and series of causes', manifested through the different deaths enumerated in the third stanza. It is the implacable destiny that providence keeps in store for each against which man has no recourse apart from the chance to express resignation and exercise his own will within the limits of that destiny. The choice that Pushkin and his fellow celebrants faced was between denial and silence, or mourning and affirmation through hope.

Stanza 3 eulogizes six comrades, elegantly and elliptically recording their deaths: no names are disclosed because the contemporary reader, as a member of the circle, already knows all the names and histories, while the implied reader need only register the cumulative impact:

Шесть мест упраздненных стоят,
Шести друзей не узрим боле,
Они разбросанные смят—
Кто здесь, кто там на ратном поле,
Кто дома, кто в земле чужой,
Кого недуг, кого печали

¹⁵³ For a convenient example, see the Russian anthology that Pushkin had in his library: *Zlatye ostatki drevnosti, soderzhashchie drevnikh Grecheskikh filosofov dragotsennia nravoucheniia* (Moscow, 1783) [Modz. 152].

Свели во мрак земли сырой,
 И надо всеми мы рыдали.
 И мнится, очередь за мной,
 Зовет меня мой Дельви́г милый,
 Товарищ юности живой,
 Товарищ юности унылой,
 Товарищ песен молодых,
 Пиров и чистых помышлений,
 Туда, в толпу теней родных
 Навек от нас утекший гений. (ll. 17–32)

Six places stand empty, | Six friends we shall see no longer, | Scattered afar they sleep— |
 One here, another on the battlefield, | One at home, another in a foreign land, | One by
 illness, another by grief | Have been swept into the gloom of the dank earth, | And over
 all of them we sobbed.

And it seems that the next turn is mine, | My sweet Del'vig calls me, | Companion of
 my lively youth, | Companion of my gloomy youth, | Companion of my young songs, |
 Feasts and pure reflections, | Calls me there, to the crowd of kindred shades | Where
 departed genius has left us forever.

The very act of such a roll-call underscores the moral gravity of the poem and its quiet heroism in confronting death. The anniversaries require the speaker to exemplify for the group the lesson of self-mastery and poise that Pushkin associated with the example of Chaadaev. The purpose of '19 October 1831' as a moral statement is to provide a new text for their celebrations, replacing carefree commemoration with the lesson of heroic resolve that the group requires in order to mourn and to carry on at the same time. It is because they have often 'been forlorn in their souls' that they have matured.

Stoic acknowledgement of death does not gainsay sensitivity to personal tragedy. The fourth stanza laments the death of Del'vig who is the only one of the six missing friends to be named. Naming becomes the ultimate acknowledgement of grief, and also proof of the degree of self-control required to dominate one's emotions in order to speak for others. The stanza also establishes a ratio between dead and living mediated through the poet, for just as Del'vig calls to Pushkin from Elysium (a favoured topos of the idylls he composed as a school-boy) thus does Pushkin speak to the group. In the final stanza Del'vig beckons him to an afterlife, but the poet defies the temptation and renews the morale of the group to face the challenge of living fully and preparing for death. He closes his eulogy with an affirmation to the living, repeating twice in consecutive lines the word 'hope' as a mantra by which to anticipate further meetings. Despite the impediment of destiny, hope represents free will. Self-determination continues to be seen as conceivable even within the limits imposed by the notion of fate. It is also, within the limits of their sphere, a heroic act not because it expresses defiance, but because it demonstrates Stoic acceptance as a reasoned wish for better things should fate permit. That is the message of the very last line and the

very last word, which confirm the resolution of the poet and of the group not to fear: it is the inability of their destiny, now understood as impermanent, to cause them fear that represents a Stoic triumph of self-mastery and dignity.

Тесней, о милые друзья,
 Тесней наш верный круг составим,
 Почившим песнь окончил я,
 Живых надеждою поздравим,
 Надеждой некогда опять
 В пиру лицейском очутиться,
 Всех остальных еще обнять
 И новых жертв уж не страшиться. (ll. 33–40)

Dear friends, closer | And yet closer let's join our faithful circle, | I've finished my song to the dead, | Let's hail the living with a hope, | That some time once again | We shall find ourselves at a Lycée feast, | And once again embrace all the others | And have no fear of new losses.

The anniversary poem of 1836 would be Pushkin's final tribute to the group. Composed in the last full year of his life before his premature death, it develops the emotional truths of the 1831 anniversary poem in similar ethical terms. This work is about the meaning of time. Its poignancy lies in the evocation of the spirit of past celebrations, its bleakness arises from the explicit absence of the sense of futurity that existed in 1831 and hardly appears now in 1836. When the calendar year comes round again to 19 October, repetition of the same stanza form suggests continuity. Yet the poet cannot sing the same old song. The first two stanzas juxtapose erstwhile mirth with festivity that now rings hollow. Time has brought about the contrast, and the main concern of the later poem will be with its meaning:

Была пора: наш праздник молодой
 Сиял, шумел и розами венчался,
 И с песнями бокалов звон мешался,
 И тесною сидели мы толпой.
 Тогда, душой беспечные невежды,
 Мы жили все и легче и смелей,
 Мы пили все за здравие надежды
 И юности и всех ее затей. (ll. 1–8)

The moment was timely: our young celebration | Sparkled, roared and was crowned with roses, | And the sound of glasses mixed with our songs, | And we sat round in a tight crowd. | That was the time when, carefree idiots at heart, | We lived all the more lightly and boldly, | We all drank to the success of our hope | And our youth and all its undertakings.

The third stanza is conceptually the richest in the poem, echoing the great teachings of Ecclesiastes. It clarifies this point by enunciating the biological and spiritual imperative under which man lives:

Всему пора: уж двадцать пятый раз
 Мы празднуем Лицея день заветный.
 Прошли года чредою незаметной,
 И как они переменяли нас!
 Недаром—нет!—промчалась четверть века!
 Не сетуйте: таков судьбы закон;
 Вращается весь мир вокруг человека,—
 Ужель один недвижим будет он? (ll. 17–24)

Everything has its time: for the twenty-fifth time | We celebrate the sacred day of the Lycée. | The years have gone by as an unnoticed sequence, | And how they have changed us! | Not in vain—oh no!—has the quarter of a century flown by! | Do not fret: such is the law of fate; | The entire world revolves around man— | Can it be that he alone remains unmoved?

The speaker nervously repeats the figure of twenty-five years, quantifying the indescribable process of personal alteration. Until now the ritual of celebration has served as a constant even as the celebrants become unrecognizable to one another and to themselves. Pushkin's vocabulary points to three aspects of Stoic philosophy: man's posture regarding fate, the nature of time, and the consolation and value of friendship. It was not necessary to be an expert in Stoic logic, physics, and metaphysics to follow the interconnections between the different parts of the system articulated in the primary and secondary literature that he knew. The 1831 poem carried the message of wisdom acquired at the price of suffering. The mention of hope ('nadezhda') in 1836 echoes the sentiments of 1831. Time has taught the surviving members new lessons. As recollected in this stanza, hope is a blessing of youth and function of ignorance, untainted by knowledge of death, bold in energy. In 1836, the vocabulary of time is simple but portentous. When the speaker and friends look back to a distant time, the word 'pora' for 'time' is close to the Greek notion of 'kairos', which describes those opportune and, indeed, propitious moments when fate does not thwart the will of the individual. They had no understanding, then, that the calendar cycle of their friendship was inscribed in an independent sphere, which, like nature, surrounds man. Hope bears no link to the morally heroic until individuals understand the need to act and withstand various trials, such as those portrayed in the anniversary poems of 1825, 1827, and 1831.

Stanza 3 is the centre of the poem's philosophical meaning because it questions the interrelation of fate, necessity, and determinism: 'The entire world revolves around man— | Can it be that he alone remains unmoved?' (ll. 22–4). This stanza emphatically demarcates between spheres independent of man (the law of fate, the physical reality of the world, time) and spheres open to activity and self-determination. Man exercises self-determination by not lamenting in vain, since that is an admission of helplessness, and instead by ritually making out of time the cause of celebration. The only meaningful act of human agency is to record

time. For the Stoic there is a logic, and a providence, in the working of the world, and it incorporates both acceptance of fate and the exercise of human free will unchecked by a rigidly determinist system.¹⁵⁴ By the time of later moralists, such as Cicero and Marcus Aurelius, the distinction between fate and necessity, an area of contention for the Old Stoa, was no longer a topic for discussion. They considered Fate to be an inexorable fact that must be accepted, such as the awareness of death. This must be the sense of the line 'such is the law of fate'. As two of his greatest nature poems show, Pushkin wished to believe in a harmoniously interrelated order of things and that sense comes through here. But the next two lines qualify this by drawing a parallel between the physical operation of this universe and the moral nature of man, and by questioning the relation between macrocosm and microcosm. The tone of the question is ambivalent, deliberately allowing two possible answers: 'The entire world revolves around man— | Can it be that he alone remains unmoved?' If line 24 is a rhetorical question, the obvious answer will be that man indeed has no choice because he is subordinate to the external laws of the universe as we see them operating around us. If the entire universe orbits around the earth and mankind upon it, so must man's nature, too, be fixed ('nedvizhim').

The second possible reply is more consistent with the image of hope through self-determination that the poem holds out. Even if we admit the proposition that the universe operates according to laws, it does not follow from this that the destiny of man must of necessity be fixed. While it is granted that physical norms operate in the universe, it is not clear a priori that man must be subordinated to them in every aspect of his life. With that qualification, the question makes it possible to allow a degree of self-determination according to which man in his own sphere lives according to his laws. The poet has put this as a question, not as an assertion that he takes for granted, thereby allowing his auditors and readers to exercise their own judgement. Some may be inclined to fatalism, but others are permitted to take the view that destiny outside the laws of nature and within the moral realm remains within man's compass.

Despite repeated references in his writing to fate, and his manifest interest in probability theory, there is no evidence that Pushkin has worked out a full theory of causality. The books in his library made available technical discussions of the history of the Stoic schools. We do not need to correlate his vocabulary to specific trends in Stoic thought, and decide whether Pushkin felt closer to the views of Carneades or Chrysippus. The poems express an intuitive grasp of the doctrines in their larger shape, and they match emotional experience with an increasingly nuanced attempt to probe abstract concepts like time and destiny. Still, Pushkin's choice of terms is never careless and carries the thinking behind his

¹⁵⁴ For an overview, see Dorothea Frede, 'Stoic Determinism', in Inwood (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, 179–205.

message.¹⁵⁵ Understanding the sense in which free will and determinism figure here depends on the meaning of the adjective ‘fixed’ (‘nedvizhim’). The spatial connotation of the word is striking because the reference to movement touches on a key element in the definition of the atom from antiquity to Enlightenment chemistry. Epicurean physics maintains that the physical laws of the universe are rigid and determined by the nature of the constituent particles or atoms. Epicureanism, later modified by Roman Epicureans, held that free will was the result of an accidental, random swerve in atoms that set off new reactions. The unpredictability and frequency of the swerves meant that reactions, while broadly regular, were not completely predetermined.

It is a mark of the brilliance of Pushkin’s lyric thinking that he can crystallize two related thought-systems with one word. Cicero distinguishes between chains of causes that are so remote from us as to be meaningless, and proximate causes over which the individual has some control. The poem gestures at free will within a framework of determinism. Stoic theory reconciles the positions. Chrysippus argued that while the actions of an individual are caused by Fate, they are also a matter of individual agency. This is known as Stoic compatibilism and Pushkin’s formulation captures its essence.¹⁵⁶ In the edition of Seneca that he acquired in 1834, Pushkin cut the full extent of the notes to Seneca’s essay on ‘The Brevity of Life’ (*De brevitae vitae*). The apparatus illuminates Stoic ethics by adducing parallels from such French authors as Montaigne and Pascal, who on questions of time, mortality, and the enjoyment of life read like students of the Roman thinkers.¹⁵⁷ Many of the conclusions about how human psychology reacts to the mysteries of life and fate resemble the teachings Pushkin encountered in his copy of Leibniz’s *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l’homme, et l’origine du mal*. Leibniz’s view as expressed here illustrates how compatibilism works:

Everything therefore is certain and determined in advance in man, just as it is elsewhere, and the human soul is a type of spiritual machine. Although its contingent actions in general, and free actions in particular are not necessary in order to have absolute necessity of a kind that would be truly incompatible with chance. Thus neither the future in itself, however certain it is, nor the infallible anticipation of God, nor the predetermination of causes, nor that of the laws of God, ever destroy this contingency and this liberty.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Time in the poem is restricted to the past and present tenses and the future tense is entirely absent. This may reflect the Stoic concern about making propositions about the future that were not determinist. Pascal’s *Pensées* may have been his source on this doctrine either as quoted in the edition of Seneca (see n. 29) or in the *Pensées*, which Pushkin owned. See J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), ch. 7. See also Victor Goldschmidt, *Le Système stoïcien et l’idée de temps* (Paris: Vrin, 1969), esp. part II. iii.

¹⁵⁶ See Tadd Brennan, *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties and Fate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 257–69.

¹⁵⁷ Seneca, *Cœuvres complètes*, iii. 265–88. Pascal is quoted at length in n. 35, p. 275.

¹⁵⁸ G.-W. Leibniz, *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l’homme, et l’origine du mal* (Lausanne, 1760), 539 [no. 52] [Modz. 1086]. (For the original see the Appendix, no. 19.)

For the Epicurean, free will is a matter of accident that occurs when matter is unfixed. For the Stoic, free will meant exercising choice through our moral capacity, subject to the limitations of fate, which is fixed ('nedvizhim', in Pushkin's word).¹⁵⁹ There is no reason to suppose that Pushkin wished to draw a distinction between the Stoic and Epicurean approaches. His reading had illuminated a large zone of possibilities. The shared language of the schools suited his purpose of evoking timeless truth through ancient philosophy as read in its larger, more general extent. By writing lines that contain contradictory views on determinism and free will, Pushkin rests elegantly and ingeniously on the horns of the dilemma. He comprehended the limits of knowledge about the future on which no system has a greater purchase than any other. In the passage we quoted earlier, Pushkin concluded that materialism, as taught by Helvétius, offered only an illusory clarity. In a poem like 'When lost in thought...' the only clarity Pushkin can impart about death is of looking through a glass darkly. Where science and philosophy fail to be precise, precision may not be possible and only poetry can plausibly communicate what is in the end no more than a feeling beyond rational proof about the end of life. Yet 'When lost in thought...' conveys a scepticism that counters and blocks his poetic intuition. In '19 October 1836', when drawing on the physical and metaphysical language of causality related both to the Stoic notion of providence and the materialist doctrine of blind chance, he makes the question one of reasoned choice. Given the common ground of both philosophies, we can easily see how Pushkin ends up poised between them. While not a confusion, the intermediate position is credible and meaningful. It relates to the nature of religious faith that stands behind the use of providential language in the poem. '19 October 1836' does not reject atheism.¹⁶⁰ True to his disbelief, he remains either an Epicurean of the old school who believes that the gods exist and do not intervene in the world, or an atomist in the manner of Diderot and d'Holbach who believes in matter without a divinity. But the language of fate in its Stoic usage reveals a yearning for some sort of divine mechanism; for, as Cicero's Stoic says, 'the law of nature is divine'.¹⁶¹

The poet's role in voicing the morbid disquiet of the group is to translate into moral terms reactions to fear that are compatible with their values. The poem shares with readers its awareness of the truth it recognizes and the illusion it barely sustains. The message that Pushkin drew from philosophers and transferred to

¹⁵⁹ See John M. Cooper, 'Eudaimonism, the Appeal to Nature, and "Moral Duty" in Stoicism', in his *Reason and Emotion*, 427–48.

¹⁶⁰ The exiled Decembrist and school friend Kiukhel'beker in 1833 continued to see the early poem 'Bezverie' as a statement of Pushkin's true position on religion, glossing the line 'that the mind seeks God, but his heart doesn't find it' with the comment that 'such disbelief is terrible, but it is more of an illness and unhappiness than a crime'. See V. K. Kiukhel'beker, *Puteshestvie, dnevnik, stat'i*, ed. N. V. Koroleva and V. D. Rak (Leningrad: Izd-vo 'Nauka', 1979), 261.

¹⁶¹ Cicero, *De natura deorum* with an English translation by Harris Rackham (London: William Heinemann 1933), ch. 14.

this poem is that the indifference of the universe is to be met by the Stoic indifference worthy of the sage ('Ne setuite'), a fortitude toward circumstance that Cicero praises in the man 'who knows how to make himself the master of his inclinations and passions and who acts only in conformity with nature without allowing himself to be perturbed by good and evils which are nothing more than an appearance'.¹⁶² Tranquillity in the face of trouble is a cardinal, and also familiar, aspect of Stoic psychology; it also represents a way in which the individual remains able to exercise free choice while accepting what must be necessarily the case. In other words, the capacity to prepare oneself for one's fate represents a process of self-determination, however circumscribed the compass of action, that preserves free will despite external conditions. As we have already seen in Chapter 7, Pushkin regarded Chaadaev the philosopher as a model of how to live. In this case he asks of himself how to die.¹⁶³ One of the most informative sources in Pushkin's library on Roman philosophy contains a representative Stoic lesson by Seneca that demonstrates what such wisdom means:

Destiny desired that he [Seneca] experience all the vicissitudes to which unhappy mortals are exposed in elevating him from the condition of an exile to a state of greatness in order to precipitate him subsequently in an abyss of misery. It is in this way that his books have become a manual for all men who love practical philosophy and above all those who live in the larger world. Perhaps there exists no other work that contains such a store of observations that help to correct and ennoble the character and to underpin the power of reason over the passions, to teach one how to be moderate in the possession of happiness and to tolerate with patience misfortune. There are few other writers in whom we find such a picture of different situations in which man can find himself, sketched with such a steady and ingenious pen.¹⁶⁴

In this portrait we also recognize ethical qualities similar to the fortitude displayed by Barclay de Tolly in 'The Commander'. The resemblance is to be expected since the neoclassical theory of the Great Man descends from Plutarch whose theory of agency and morality are based on Stoic thought. The way the heroes discussed in Chapter 7 contended with their destiny looks like an object lesson in two contrasting philosophies. From Corsica to Paris and from Elba to St Helena, from apogee to nadir, Napoleon had an unshakeable conviction that he embodied destiny. Remembering in his last days the Egyptian campaign (a military fiasco, as it happens) he exclaimed: 'Y aurait-il un homme assez aveugle pour ne pas voir que le destin lui-même dirige toutes mes opérations? Y aurait-il quelqu'un d'assez incrédule pour révoquer en doute que tout, dans ce vaste

¹⁶² Schoell, *Histoire abrégée*, 160.

¹⁶³ On the life of the ancient philosopher as a form of secular hagiography in the Enlightenment, see Dinah Ribard, *Raconter, vivre, penser: histoires de philosophes, 1650–1766* (Paris: Vrin, 2003), 45–88.

¹⁶⁴ Schoell, *Histoire abrégée*, 437.

univers, est soumis à l'empire du destin!¹⁶⁵ More like Voltaire or Diderot, or even Barclay, than Napoleon, the Stoic hero is one who recognizes the impossibility of surmounting destiny and, to paraphrase Seneca, follows rather than struggles.¹⁶⁶

In admonishing his comrades to bear their destiny with fortitude, and in reviewing their history from youth, Pushkin does the work of the Stoic sage who 'creates out of time a chain in his memory and by this means sees once again times that are past'.¹⁶⁷ For the Romantic poet, friends represented the significant group of privileged readers. For the Romantic poet also imbued with Stoic faith, friends also represented a state within a state where virtue can be cultivated, and Pushkin's political metaphor for their union drew strength from that tradition in reckoning with the precarious consolation of friendship.

¹⁶⁵ As quoted in the memoir of his physician, François Antommarchi, *Mémoires du Docteur F. Antommarchi: derniers moments de Napoléon* (Paris, 1825), 176 [Modz. 549].

¹⁶⁶ On the model deaths that Voltaire and Diderot described, see Robert Favre, *La Mort dans la littérature et la pensée françaises au siècle des Lumières* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1978), ch. 5 ('La philosophie dissipant les ténèbres').

¹⁶⁷ As quoted in *Sénèque, Œuvres complètes*, 276. On the figure of the wise man, see A. A. Long, 'Dialectic and the Stoic Sage', in his *Stoic Studies* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 85–106.

Appendix

CHAPTER 2

1. Note 34: 'On appelle ainsi cette faculté de l'âme qui rend les objets présents à la pensée; elle suppose dans l'entendement une appréhension vive et forte, et la facilité la plus prompte à reproduire ce qu'il a reçu. Quand l'imagination ne fait que retracer les objets qui ont frappé les sens, elle ne diffère de la mémoire que par la vivacité des couleurs. Quand de l'assemblage des traits que la mémoire a recueillis, l'imagination compose elle-même des tableaux dont l'ensemble n'a point de modèle dans la nature, elle devient créatrice; et c'est alors qu'elle appartient au génie'.

2. Note 35: 'Un poème est un édifice dont toutes les parties doivent concourir à la solidité, à la beauté du tout; ou plutôt, c'est une machine dans laquelle tout doit être combiné pour produire un mouvement commun'.

3. Note 42: 'Les vrais législateurs des arts sont ceux qui, remontant au principe des choses, après avoir étudié, et dans les hommes, et dans la nature, et dans les arts mêmes, les rapports des objets avec l'âme et les sens et les impressions de plaisir et de peine qui résultent de ces rapports après avoir tiré de l'expérience de tous les siècles, surtout des siècles éclairés, des inductions qui déterminent et les procédés les plus sûrs, et les moyens les plus puissants, et les effets les plus constamment infaillibles, donnent ces résultats pour règles, sans prétendre que le génie s'y soumette servilement, et n'ait pas le droit de s'en dégager toutes les fois qu'il sent qu'elles l'appesantissent ou le mettent trop à la gêne. Ce sont des moyens de bien faire qu'on lui propose, en lui laissant la liberté de faire mieux; celui-là seul a tort, qui fait plus mal en s'écartant des règles; et, comme il n'y a rien de plus commun qu'un ouvrage régulier et mauvais, il est possible, quoique plus rare, en produire un qui plaise universellement, contre les règles et en dépit des règles... On a dit que quelques lignes tracées par un homme de génie sont plus utiles au talent que des méthodes péniblement écrites par de froids spéculateurs. Rien n'est plus vrai, quand il s'agit d'échauffer l'âme et de l'élever. Mais les modèles les plus frappants ne jettent leur lumière que sur un point; celle des règles est plus étendue, elle éclaire toute la route: il ne faut donc avoir, pour les règles tracées, ni un présomptueux mépris, ni un respect superstitieux et servile. Arioste, Cicéron et Quintilien, pour les orateurs; Aristote, Horace, Longin, Boileau, pour les poètes, sont des guides que le génie lui-même ne doit pas dédaigner de suivre: mais pour marcher d'un pas plus sûr, on ne doit pas cesser de marcher d'un pas libre'.

4. Note 48: 'A présent supposons qu'à de longs intervalles, soit dans le temps, soit dans l'espace, que, par exemple, à deux mille ans et à deux mille lieues de distance, le goût d'une action se communique et se répande, et que, malgré les différences d'usages de mœurs, de coutumes, malgré la diversité même des climats et leur influence sur le caractère des peuples, ce goût soit presque universellement reconnu pour être le bon goût: rien de plus décisif sans doute que ce témoignage unanime... Il n'y a donc qu'un juge suprême, un

seul juge qui en fait de goût, soit sans appel; c'est la nature. Heureusement presque tout est soumis à cet arbitre'.

5. Note 49: 'Montaigne a dit de l'âme, "L'agitation est sa vie et sa grâce". Il en est de même du style: encore est-ce peu qu'il soit en mouvement, si ce mouvement n'est pas analogue à celui de l'âme... Les tours d'expression qui rendent l'action de l'âme, sont ce que les rhéteurs ont appelé figures de pensée. Or l'action de l'âme peut se concevoir sous l'image des directions que suit le mouvement des corps... Ou l'âme s'élève, ou elle s'abaisse; ou elle s'élançe en avant, ou elle recule sur elle-même; ou ne sachant auquel de ses mouvements obéir, elle penche de tous les côtés, chancelante et irrésolue; ou dans une agitation plus violente encore, et de tous sens retenue par les obstacles, elle se roule en tourbillon, comme un globe de feu sur son axe. Au mouvement de l'âme qui s'élève, répondent tous les transports d'admiration, de ravissement, d'enthousiasme, l'exclamation, l'imprécation, les vœux ardents et passionnés, la révolte contre le ciel, l'indignation qu'excitent l'orgueil, l'insolence, l'iniquité, l'abus de la force, etc. Au mouvement de l'âme qui s'abaisse, répondent les plaintes, les humbles prières, le découragement, le repentir, tout ce qui implore grâce ou pitié. Au mouvement de l'âme qui s'élançe en avant et hors d'elle-même, répondent le désir impatient, l'instance vive et redoublée, le reproche, la menace, l'insulte, la colère et l'indignation, la résolution et l'audace, tous les actes d'une volonté ferme et décidée, impétueuse et violente, soit qu'elle lutte contre les obstacles, soit qu'elle fasse obstacle elle-même à des mouvements opposés. Au retour de l'âme sur elle-même, répondent la surprise mêlée d'effroi, la répugnance et la honte, l'épouvante et le remords, tout ce qui réprime ou renverse la résolution, le penchant, l'impulsion de la volonté. A la situation de l'âme qui chancelle, répondent le doute, l'irrésolution, l'inquiétude et la perplexité, le balancement des idées, et le combat des sentiments'.

6. Note 61: 'L'homme inspiré est tout ce que peut être l'homme sur la terre; mais cette puissance momentanée vient de sa nature, elle est la sienne, et l'inspiration, qui semble se perdre dans la nature divine, enfonce ses racines dans l'esprit humain'.

CHAPTER 3

7. Note 29: 'Entre mes organes, mes mouvements volontaires et ma pensée, il existe un accord harmonique. Tant que cet accord continue, j'existe. J'existe de plus, comme un être de la même espèce, car les attributs essentiels que caractérisent cette espèce subsistent en moi au milieu d'un flux et reflux de modifications passagères'.

8. Note 30: 'Calme et douce, ou rapide et passionnée, simple ou savante elle suppose un ton dominant dans l'âme, et elle monte celle du lecteur sur le même ton'.

9. Note 32: 'La beauté pure ne consiste que dans la beauté des formes. L'expression est quelque chose de différent, qui peut exister sans la beauté des formes, comme la beauté des formes peut exister sans l'expression. La perfection des arts consiste dans la réunion ou dans l'harmonie de l'expression et de la beauté, de manière que la beauté soit expressive et que l'expression soit belle. Les arts se distinguent les uns des autres sous ce rapport. Il

y en a où la beauté est subordonnée à l'expression, comme dans la poésie; d'autres, où l'expression est subordonnée à la beauté, comme dans la sculpture; mais aucun d'eux ne peut se passer entièrement ni de l'une ni de l'autre'.

10. Note 41: 'Le secret du génie n'est donc pas d'asservir, mais d'animer son imitation: car plus l'illusion est vive et forte, plus elle agit sur l'âme, et par conséquent moins elle laisse de liberté à la réflexion et de prise à la vérité. Quelle impression peuvent faire de légères invraisemblances sur des esprits émus, troublés d'étonnement et de terreur'.

11. Note 42: 'Pour concevoir l'objet de la poésie dans toute son étendue, il faut oser considérer la nature comme présente à l'Intelligence suprême. Alors tout ce que, dans le jeu des éléments, dans l'organisation des êtres vivants, animés, sensibles, a pu concourir, soit au physique, soit au moral, à varier le spectacle mobile et successif de l'univers, est réuni dans le même tableau. Ce n'est pas tout: à l'ordre présent, au vicissitudes passées, se joint la chaîne infinie des possibles, d'après l'essence même des êtres; et non seulement ce qui est, mais ce qui serait dans l'immensité du temps et de l'espace'.

CHAPTER 4

12. Note 27: 'Идеальный их отпечаток заступает место их бытия вещественного, настоящего, чувственного; тут предмет воображен в душу, тут он создан умственным ее достоянием'.

13. Note 29: 'Вникните . . . в механизм глумливых соображений. Хотите ли вы, или не хотите—яркие образы сами собою без вашего ведома и умысла, рисуются на темной канве сознания. Внутренне чувство говорит нам, что вы их не создали, что вы бываете тут свидетелями сцен, кои, по видимому, представляются в первый раз, и кои, за всем тем, суть произведения скрытого в вас Поэта, суть игра жизненных сил, совершающаяся в области чувственных представлений, следственно в области духа там, где последний ослабляет бразды правления, позволяя фантазмагории движение своевластное, предоставляя ее тем же самым физическим силам тяготения, по коим сцепляются атомы. Так-то в состоянии, среднем между слепую необходимостью и свободой, завязываются небывалые соотношения чувственных образов, которые не поддерживаемые ничем, ни снаружи, ни изнутри сцепляются часто в новых, дивных, уродливых созданиях досужного, но легкомысленного воображения'.

14. Note 56: 'Les génies poétiques sont dans leur jeunesse les rénégats et les persécuteurs du bon goût, mais plus tard ils s'en font les prosélytes et les apôtres les plus zélés'.

15. Note 58: 'C'est de l'héroïsme, croyez-moi, de concentrer sur telle matière utile à l'humanité les forces éparses de son imagination et de son raisonnement. On ne se consacre pas à ce sacerdoce sans se soumettre à des privations nombreuses, sans tremper fortement son âme'.

CHAPTER 8

16. Note 33: 'En réprimant l'amour, se prive-t-on des doux fruits de la volupté? Ah! plutôt on recueille ses charmes en évitant ses peines: la volupté est le partage de l'esprit libre et formé, et fuit ces forcenés dont les ardeurs flottent incertaines; qui, dans l'ivresse de l'amour, ne savent quels attraits ils doivent livrer à l'avidité de leurs mains et de leurs regards; qui, dans l'étreinte de leur fureur lubrique, semblent courroucés, fatiguent l'objet de leur désir, et, d'une dent frémissante, impriment sur sa lèvre des baisers douloureux... L'amour est l'unique désir qui s'irrite par la jouissance. La faim et la soif s'apaisent aisément, parce que les breuvages et les sucs des aliments se distribuent dans nos membres et font partie d'eux-mêmes; mais un visage charmant, un teint brillant de fraîcheur n'introduisent en nous que de légers simulacres, qu'un stérile espoir soudain emporté par le vent. Tel, dans le sommeil, un homme consumé par la soif, cherche vainement l'onde qui peut éteindre l'ardeur de son sein; il tend ses lèvres avides au simulacre d'un limpide ruisseau, il s'épuise en vains efforts, et succombe, dévoré par la soif au milieu de cette onde trompeuse'.

17. Note 37: 'L'amour se manifeste par la pensée et l'action. Les deux ordres de phénomènes qu'on a rangés sous les dénominations générales *esprit* et *matière*, ne correspondent plus, pour nous, à deux entités, à deux substances distinctes. La dualité *esprit* et *matière* dans l'unité AMOUR, ne représente qu'une subdivision, que nous sommes forcés de faire pour étudier l'ETRE; comme dans une portion de matière on abstrait d'une part les propriétés physiques, de l'autre les propriétés chimiques, bien que les unes et les autres subsistent ensemble, qualités d'un même sujet'.

18. Note 138: 'Moi, par exemple, je suis une manifestation de la force d'organisation de la nature, de même que la plante; je suis une manifestation de sa force motrice... En moi, l'organisme, le mouvement et la pensée ne dépendent pas l'un de l'autre, ne dérivent pas l'un de l'autre. Ce n'est pas parce que l'organisme et le mouvement existent que je les pense: réciproquement, ce n'est pas parce que je les pense qu'ils existent. Mais l'organisme, le mouvement et la pensée constituent les développements parallèles et harmoniques de cette force dont la manifestation est nécessairement un être de mon espèce, dont la destination est inévitablement de créer des hommes. Il naît au-dedans de moi une pensée absolument: un organe lui correspond absolument; puis un mouvement s'ensuit absolument aussi. Ce que je suis, ce n'est pas parce que je pense l'être que je le suis. Ce n'est pas non plus parce que je le suis que je pense l'être ou que je veux l'être; mais je suis et je pense: les deux choses absolument. Tout deux, l'existence et la pensée, découlent d'une source plus élevée que l'une ou l'autre'.

19. Note 156: 'Tout est donc certain & déterminé par avance dans l'homme, comme partout ailleurs, & l'âme humaine est une espèce d'automate spirituel, quoique les actions contingentes en général, & les actions libres en particulier, ne soient point nécessaires pour cela d'une nécessité absolue, laquelle serait véritablement incompatible avec la contingence. Ainsi ni la futurition en elle-même, tout certaine qu'elle est, ni la prévision infallible de Dieu, ni la prédétermination des causes, ni celle des décrets de Dieu, ne détruisent point cette contingence & cette liberté'.

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Index

- Abrams, M. H. 117, 118, 144
Adam, Alexander 229 n.
aesthetics 4, 8, 10, 12, 17, 37–9, 41, 42, 43,
47, 50, 62–5, 69, 71–6, 90, 91, 94, 99,
101, 106, 107, 134, 151–2, 175, 180,
186, 207 n., 209, 254, 275, 279,
289
 goodness 64, 65, 257
 of the fragment 74
 Russian theory 63, 89, 93
 Soviet 3 n.
affect 41, 42 n., 47, 48, 89, 107, 136, 212,
262, 266, 280
afterlife 11, 20 n., 23, 196, 303, 304, 314,
315, 316, 331
Agrippina 219
Alexander I 174, 222, 244, 260 n., 261, 262 n.
Alfieri, Vittorio 276
Alletz, Edouard 229 n.
allusion (art of) 13, 19, 20, 22, 23, 109, 114,
115, 143 n., 162, 186, 244
 biblical 202, 245 n., 249, 332
Anacreon 25, 62
Ancillon, Frédéric 72–3, 76, 116, 229 n., 272,
299
Anichkov, Dmitrii 280
animal intelligence 96
Annenkov, P. V. 183 n., 191 n., 207 n.
anonymity 5, 13, 59, 86, 158, 181, 244, 293,
294, 306, 307
Antommarchi, Christophe-François 233, 243,
338 n.
anxiety 170, 185, 319
 of influence 5, 13, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 68,
196, 197
 concerning:
 desire 281
 identity theft 161, 215
 posterity 58, 66, 81, 84, 147, 153, 154,
156, 186 n., 321 n., 322–3, 326, 336
 alienation 184, 209
 control 55, 56, 59, 60, 135
 fragmentation 137, 142
 reception 9, 11, 29, 55, 167–8, 176, 183,
198, 199, 273
Aphrodite/Venus 306, 309
Apollo 30, 31, 45, 81, 82, 86, 98, 187 n., 201,
204, 321 n.
Apollo Belvedere 212–13
Apuleius 229 n., 327
Archangel Michael 294
Ariosto, Ludovico 137
Aristides 219
Aristotle 41, 44, 101 n., 254, 259
art and commercial value 169, 170, 174, 176,
178, 180–6, 201, 210
art history 9, 255
Arzamas 16–19, 22, 23, 25, 28, 32, 114, 197,
304 n.
association 45 n., 48–9, 54, 55, 59, 96, 97,
103, 116, 118, 141–2, 152, 225, 232,
251, 303
 controlled 10, 65, 134
 personal 82
 sense-based 9, 56, 58, 278
 unconscious 57, 58
Associanism/Associationists 10–11, 56–7,
106, 140, 279, 281 n.
Atenei 161
atheism 63, 91 n., 121, 130, 150, 155, 275–6,
284, 286, 290, 291, 294, 297, 303,
314, 317, 318, 323, 325,
336
audacity 68
authority (artistic/moral) 11, 20, 49, 53, 56,
68, 78, 83, 97, 106, 149, 159, 171,
172, 187, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197,
198, 199, 200, 201, 205–6, 209, 215,
224, 253, 269, 324
 strategies of 157, 158–61, 166, 168, 179,
185, 190, 207, 310
authenticity 16, 56, 61, 182
Ausonius 295 n.
Baculard d'Arnaud, François-Marie-Thomas
de 293
Bainbridge, Simon 246
Bakunin, Mikhail 93, 310–11
Ballanche, Pierre-Simon 77, 201, 206 n.
Balzac, Honoré de 200, 205 n., 310
Bann, Stephen 257, 262
Barante, Amable-Guillaume-Prosper, baron
de 41, 200–1
Baratynsky, Evgenii Abramovich 63, 64, 89,
307
Barkov, Ivan 23
Barrault, Emile 205 n.
Barthélemy, Auguste et Joseph Méry 240 n.
Barthes, Roland 47
Bate, Walter Jackson 18 n., 322 n.

- Batiushkov, Konstantin Nikolaevich 14, 16,
20, 25, 26, 35 n., 74, 86, 114, 190, 215
- Bartheux, Charles, abbé 95
- Baudelaire, Charles 50
- beauty 31, 34, 37, 42, 61–2, 64–6, 68–73,
75–7, 79, 84, 86, 87, 95, 98, 101, 106,
107, 136, 142, 179, 181, 183, 189,
200, 209, 215, 265, 313, 319, 321
Greek ideal of 65, 74, 79, 80, 82
in a moral sense 215, 241, 272
valedictory 139
- Beethoven, Ludwig van 115 n.
- behavioural codes 4, 12, 241, 313
- belief 281, 284, 285, 286, 290, 318, 323, 336
- Belinsky, Vissarion Grigorevich 93, 165,
191 n., 201, 214
- Belisarius 272
- Benckendorff, Alexander Khristoforovich 170,
171 n.
- Bénichou, Paul 200–1
- Bentham, Jeremy 174
- Béranger, Pierre 239
- Berkeley, George 96
- Bernis, François 120
- Beseda (Archaists) 16–18, 24, 28 n., 31
- Betha, David 5, 20, 21, 22, 305 n.
- Bichat, Xavier 290 n., 317
- Biriukov, Alexander Stepanovich (censor)
171 n.
- The Blackamoor of Peter the Great (Arap Petra
Velikogo, 1828)* 19
- Blagoi, Dmitrii 188 n.
- Bloom, Harold 5, 21, 22, 68, 197
- Bludov, Dmitrii Nikolaevich, count 20 n.
- Blumenberg, Hans 301 n.
- Bobrov, S. S. 26
- Bodmer, Johann 99–100, 101
- body
theories of the 4, 11, 58, 64 n., 65, 92, 96,
140–1, 143, 280, 281, 289, 290, 292,
293, 323
and mind/soul 10, 72, 91, 92, 95, 96, 103,
118, 135–6, 141, 278, 279, 281, 283,
284, 285, 287, 288, 289, 290, 292 n.,
294–8, 317, 318, 325, 332,
335
- Boileau-Despréaux, Nicolas 30, 33, 34, 38,
39, 43, 44, 49, 62, 66–70, 74, 75
- Bolotov, P. A. 112
- Bondi, Sergei 54
- Bonnet, Charles 92, 281
- book reviewing 35, 37
- Boris Godunov* (1825) 223, 267
Greenleaf's reading of 5
- Boucher, François 294
- Bourbon Restoration (1830) 240, 241, 243,
245, 257
- Bourrienne, Louis-Antoine Fauvelet de 249,
252, 253, 257, 259, 261
- Bowie, Andrew 152
- Boyle, Robert 285
- bravery 11, 193, 217, 218, 224, 228, 241,
256, 258, 260, 270, 329
- Bray, René 39
- Breitinger, Johann Jakob 99–100, 101, 104
- Brisman, Leslie 48
- Bromwich, David 148 n.
- The Bronze Horseman (Mednyi vsadnik, 1833)*
135, 191, 217, 242, 259, 262 n.
- Brown, David Blaney 251
- Brougham, Lord Henry 317
- Brutus 224, 225, 272
- Buffon, Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de 39,
121, 174, 281 n.
- Bulgakov, A. Ia. 163
- Bulgarin, Faddei Venediktovich 111, 163,
166, 167, 215 n., 273 n.
- Bulletin du Nord* 66, 69, 264
- Bunina, Anna 172
- Burke, Edmund 68–70
- Butler, Marilyn 85
- Byron, George Gordon, Lord 1, 5, 34, 36, 40,
47, 48, 51, 91, 110 n., 115, 123, 124,
128, 131, 137, 143 n., 160, 163, 168,
175, 179, 187, 194, 195, 204, 231,
232, 233, 235, 238, 245, 270, 278,
298, 300, 305, 308, 309
- Caligula 256
- Canat, P. 245 n.
- canon, creation of 19, 39, 165
- Canova, Antonio 78, 123
- Carneades 334
- Casanova de Scingalt, Giovanni Giacomo
304
- Cassius 272
- Catherine II 13, 14, 15, 21, 165, 168, 173,
174, 219, 222 n.
- Cato 219, 220, 221, 222, 272
- Catullus 62 n., 286 n., 291 n.
- ensorship 10, 11, 110, 135, 170–4, 223, 273,
274, 283, 291, 293
- censure 25, 91 n., 92, 191 n.
- Chaadaev, Petr Iakovlevich 57, 58, 104 n.,
217, 219, 224–30, 241, 245, 267, 272,
273, 276, 326 n., 331, 337
- chance 155, 334, 335, 336
- Chapelain, Jean 30
- Charlemagne 250, 255
- Charles XII 217
- Chateaubriand, François-René, vicomte
de 193 n., 201, 206 n., 256–7, 259,
270
- Chenedollé, Charles de 132, 154

- Chénier, André-Marie de 1, 19, 41, 113,
114, 115, 119, 120, 129, 134, 137,
158, 186, 189–97, 198, 206 n., 215,
276
- Christ 255, 270, 276, 277
- Chryssippus 334, 335
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius 44, 132 n., 225, 284,
289, 299, 318, 327, 328, 330, 334,
335, 336, 337
- clarity 27, 34, 42, 45, 55, 63, 69, 70, 112,
251, 318, 336
- Clark, Timothy 49
- classical antiquity 7, 12, 36, 75–6
- classicism 9, 23, 25, 31, 32, 34, 35, 35 n., 37,
39, 40, 41, 58, 61, 62, 64, 66, 69,
71 n., 74 n., 77, 78, 85, 88, 89, 98 n.,
123, 150, 187, 238, 245, 278
- academic 262
- aesthetic 15, 40, 44
- as doctrine of rule-based art 3, 43, 67, 94
- classical drama 48
- French 10, 18, 34, 39, 62 n., 75, 86
- ideal of the universal 64, 107, 115
- idealization of antiquity 77
- moral theory 327
- Platonic language of 85
- classical rationalism 11
- Russian 38
- clemency 11, 255
- Cleopatra 219
- cognition 10, 58, 64, 65, 93, 96, 97, 99, 101,
153, 287
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor 6, 7, 8, 54, 56, 65,
86, 91, 94 n., 97, 99, 101, 102, 103,
107, 116, 131, 142, 147 n., 153, 156,
204, 270
- commemoration 81, 303, 331
- commercialization of the publishing world
10, 11, 13, 14, 61, 89, 112, 157, 158,
159, 162, 164–6, 168, 199, 249,
277
- Condillac, Etienne Bonnot de 92, 279, 281,
283 n., 287
- Constant, Benjamin 234, 241, 243, 297
- Conte, Gianbiagio 22, 23
- contemporary readership 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 15,
17, 25, 32, 33, 34, 43, 51, 61, 107,
108, 109–10, 111, 112, 113, 160, 163,
164, 165, 167, 169, 171, 173, 192,
197, 202, 203, 215, 243, 260, 261,
309, 330
- copyright and royalties 15, 159, 161–2, 164,
165, 169, 198, 274
- Coquerel, Charles 280 n.
- Corday, Charlotte 191
- Coriolanus 270
- Corneille, Pierre 239
- Cornelius Nepos 219
- correctness 17, 44, 45, 62, 86, 98, 123, 187
- Cousin, Victor 64–5, 69, 76, 77 n., 80, 100,
200, 229 n.
- Crabbe, George 131 n.
- craft (poetic) 12, 13, 16, 18, 19, 25, 26, 29,
30, 31, 32, 35, 36, 38, 43, 48, 51, 52,
53, 54, 55, 56, 58, 60, 65, 66, 79, 81,
82, 83, 90, 107 n., 108, 109, 114, 141,
178, 183, 186, 190, 194, 204, 263
- defined as invention 55
- creative psychology 11, 38, 52, 54, 61, 68,
91–2, 103, 197
- Crébillon, Claude-Prosper Jolyot de 293,
299
- Creuzer, Georg Friederich 229 n.
- Damiron, Jean-Philibert 229 n.
- Dante Alighieri 23, 194
- Dashkov, D. V. 18
- David, Jacques-Louis 218, 250, 255, 257
- Davydov, Denis 261
- Davydova, Adele Alexandrovna 314 n.
- Davydova, Aglaia Antonovna 314 n.
- Dawe, George 260, 262, 264–8, 271
- death 7, 11, 57, 82, 121, 147, 148, 154, 273,
278, 279 n., 281, 282, 287, 290 n.,
298, 302, 303, 314, 315, 316, 317,
318, 319, 320, 322, 323, 325, 326,
328, 329, 330, 331, 333, 334, 335,
336, 337, 338 n.
- of Chénier 191, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197
- of Del'vig 331
- of Napoleon 128, 217, 230, 231, 232, 233,
235, 238 n., 239, 243, 245, 250
- Decembrists 89, 108–9, 112, 113 n., 170 n.,
186 n., 191, 192–3, 198, 206 n., 207,
208, 220, 221, 284 n., 304 n., 336 n.
- defamiliarization 47
- deism 129–30, 132, 143 n., 155, 284, 290,
291, 292, 318
- Delaroché, Paul 257
- Del'vig, Anton Antonovich 26, 81, 82, 93,
102 n., 151, 170 n., 208 n., 319, 331
- Delille, Jacques 41, 132
- Demosthenes 41
- Derzhavin, Gavriil Romanovich 14, 16, 20,
21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 83, 135,
141, 143, 222
- Derrida, Jacques 82 n.
- Descartes, René 116
- Desgenettes, Nicolas-René-Dufriche 252
- Deslandes, Léopold 296 n.
- determinism 4, 152, 280, 281, 285, 288,
289 n., 294, 304, 327, 333–6
- and free will 318, 327, 334–6, 337
- Diagoras of Melos 327

- Diderot, Denis 39, 41, 121, 132, 149, 153, 220, 241, 279, 280, 281 n., 282, 283, 284, 286, 287, 288, 290, 292, 293, 296 n., 297, 298 n., 299, 318, 323, 327 n., 336, 338
- digression 109–10, 111, 115, 160, 292
- Diogenes Laertius 225
- Dmitriev, Ivan Ivanovich 9, 110
- Dmitriev, Mikhail Alexandrovich 110
- Dostoevsky, Fedor 201
- dreams 116, 288, 292, 295
- Droz, Joseph-François-Xavier 229 n.
- Duboc, Édouard, 229 n.
- Dubos, Jean-Baptiste 39, 71 n., 281 n.
- Duclos, Charles Pinot 281 n.
- Dumas, Alexandre 200
- Edinburgh Review* 99, 102, 106
- Eidel'man, N. Ia. 186 n., 192 n., 221 n., 230 n.
- Elagin, Ivan Perfilievich 26, 29, 222
- Elysium 315, 320, 331
- emotion 1, 36, 38, 39, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 56, 59, 60, 68, 71, 72, 73, 82, 86, 91, 100, 103, 107, 113, 115, 118, 119, 120, 126, 133, 137, 148, 150, 155, 171, 180, 181, 182, 184, 187, 194, 211, 221, 235, 240, 262, 266, 267, 268, 279, 280, 281, 282, 285, 294, 295, 298, 300, 301, 303, 306, 310, 312, 319, 321, 330, 331, 334
- empiricism 1, 4, 39, 50, 92, 96, 123, 280, 287, 290, 324
 empirical psychology 279, 287, 325
- emulation 11, 21–2, 70, 91, 107, 115, 129, 159, 194, 217, 219, 221, 224, 226, 227, 228, 229, 277, 282
- energy 42, 50, 72, 76 n., 79, 113, 114, 131, 135, 231, 235, 245, 256, 291–2, 297, 299, 301, 314, 333
- Engel'gardt, Egor Antonovich 309
- The Enlightenment 7, 13, 15, 17, 22 n., 42, 118, 121, 149, 151, 154, 168, 205 n., 220, 222 n., 223, 234, 255, 278, 279, 281 n., 283, 284, 285, 288, 289, 292 n., 310, 318, 335, 337 n.
- ephemeral literature 14, 15, 24, 25
- Epictetus 280
- Epicurus 206, 280, 284, 285, 287, 288, 335
- Epicureanism 7, 63, 224 n., 225, 278, 279, 280, 283 n., 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 292, 293, 294, 297, 298, 302, 304, 305 n., 311, 316, 318, 326, 327, 328, 329, 335, 336
- epistemology 7, 38, 63, 95, 96, 122, 280, 281
 Fichtean 324
 Kantian 9, 151
- Erickson, Lee 11, 162, 168
- Ermolov, Aleksei Petrovich, general 169, 264 n.
- erotic pleasure 11, 278, 292, 293, 313, 315
- erudition 17, 20 n., 32
- Evgenii Onegin* (1823–1830) 5, 28 n., 50, 61, 92, 108, 113, 114, 115, 117, 176, 179, 180, 182, 184, 185, 186, 198, 289, 292, 298, 310, 327
 Bakhtinian readings of 4
 Greenleaf's reading of 5
 reception of 88, 109–10, 111 n., 112, 160, 163, 165, 167
- exile (meaning/language of) 5, 196, 226, 228, 229, 231, 233, 235, 337
- expressivity 2, 7, 8, 9, 12, 18, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 46, 48, 56, 58, 69, 71 n., 73, 75, 82, 86, 99, 134, 204, 301
- Fabre d'Olivet, Antoine 205–6
- fame 2, 11, 24, 27, 61, 85, 178, 179, 198, 204, 215, 218, 227, 238, 249
 historical reputation 259–60, 271, 272
 literary success/reputation 15, 24, 27, 28, 58, 94, 112, 126, 159, 161, 163, 165, 167, 168, 171, 182, 184, 187, 197, 203, 214, 273, 275, 277, 305, 309
- fancy 2, 45 n., 49, 55, 56, 73, 102, 103, 104, 124, 140, 200
- Fanger, Donald 165
- fantasy 95, 96, 98, 200, 284, 293 n., 297, 314, 316, 319 n., 320
- fate 4, 12, 25, 29, 34, 120, 130, 187, 195, 196, 217, 224, 228, 230, 231, 232, 234, 237, 238, 239, 242, 251, 252, 264, 267, 272, 278, 291, 304, 316, 326–34, 335, 336, 337, 338
- Faustov, A. A. 4
- Fedorov, Boris 109
- feeling and sentiment 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44 n., 46, 47, 56, 60, 63, 69, 72, 75, 76, 78, 80, 82, 86, 105, 106, 115, 118, 120, 122, 123, 124, 125, 127, 132 n., 134, 141, 143, 148, 149, 152, 153, 157, 175 n., 179, 181, 182, 183, 184, 212, 235, 262, 264, 266, 270, 272, 274, 275, 280, 281, 285, 289, 295, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 319, 322, 323, 328, 329 n., 333, 336
 and thought 279, 296, 298
- Fénelon, François de Salignac de La Mothe 18
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb 72, 91, 94, 95, 156, 323–5, 326
- Ficquelmont, Dolly 309
- financial hardship 27, 166, 175, 275, 277
- Fontenelle, Julia de 290 n.
- Fonvizin, Denis 6 n., 23, 24, 25

- force ('sila') 94–5, 104, 157, 176 n., 251, 265, 267, 295
- form 18, 29, 41, 42, 43, 45, 64, 69, 71 n., 74, 75, 79, 80, 81, 82, 95, 98, 105, 113, 136, 142, 215
 and content 55, 56, 78, 188, 313
 and creative power 62, 135, 137
 blank verse 137, 144, 146
 dialogue 176–7, 182, 184
 narrative 217
 prose fiction 217
 stanza 24, 137–8, 233, 234, 332
 theatrical soliloquy 275
- formalist analysis 3, 5, 6, 7, 47
- Foucault, Michel 121 n., 314
- fragmentation (poetic) 75, 109, 118, 133, 134, 137, 142–3, 152
- French poetic theory 18, 40, 45 n., 49, 68, 71
- Freud, Sigmund 21
- friendship 15, 17, 28, 29, 30, 224 n., 225–9, 281, 293, 300, 301, 310, 316, 318, 326, 328, 329, 331, 333, 338
- Gabbe, Petr 190 n.
- Galateia* 215 n.
- Galich, Alexander Ivanovich 63–6, 80, 91–9, 101, 103, 140, 150, 151, 154, 281, 282, 289, 290, 325
- Gasparov, Boris 4, 8, 17 n., 37 n.
- Gassendi, Pierre 285
- genius 10, 12, 18, 21, 22, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 38, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 56, 58, 59, 61, 63, 65, 71 n., 72, 95, 97, 98, 103, 104, 105, 107, 110, 111, 113, 120, 125, 127, 129, 131, 143, 150, 151, 168, 170, 183, 184, 189, 191, 196, 204–7, 209, 211, 224, 245, 250, 282, 290, 305 n.
 and nature 129
 and rules 39, 44, 50
 and social commitment 199
 as an aesthetic absolute 184
 as power of invention 45
 discourse/rhetoric of 11, 30, 36, 50, 163
 equation with inspiration 68, 158, 162–3, 168, 169, 206, 215
 meaning of 4, 75, 201, 277
 military/historical 237, 245, 250
 personal 231–2, 237
 Romantic 58, 63, 66, 69, 86, 94, 158, 162, 167, 169, 237, 238, 256, 268, 309
 selling genius/as a literary commodity 158, 160, 161–4, 168, 174, 175–6, 178, 180–1, 184, 186, 190, 198, 203, 214, 308
 sources of 10, 183
- genre 5, 14, 16, 22 n., 25, 27, 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 47, 48, 54, 64, 86, 107, 110, 113, 120, 165, 187, 194, 214, 293, 328
 as source of innovation 43, 114
- eclogues 120
- 'éclogues galantes' 121
- elegy 16, 60, 114, 115, 120, 121, 125, 159, 191, 192, 193, 196, 197, 233, 294, 295, 298, 302, 304 n., 319 n., 320, 321
- epic 13, 189
- epistles 115, 269
- epistolary/epigrams 29, 125, 185, 224, 295, 319 n.
 friendly letter 29, 227
- erotic poetry 23, 173, 292, 293, 295
- fairy tale 293
- the georgic 122
- the idyll 120, 331
- landscape poems 119, 123
- Lucianic satire 22, 23
- mock-epic 107
- narrative 108
- ode 16, 24, 27, 112
- pastoral 120, 121, 125, 141, 153
- the picturesque 143
- political satire 173, 187, 222
- portrait 263
- song 13
- verse epistle 28, 113, 304
- verse satire 16
- verse tragedy 16
- genre-criticism 3, 37 n., 92
- genre-system 34, 74, 113, 119
- Gerard, Alexander 90
- Géricault, Théodore 251
- Gershenson, Mikhail 5, 37 n., 224 n., 227 n.
- Gessner, Salomon 120
- Gilbert, Nicolas 121
- Ginzburg, Lidiia 214
- Glinka, Fedor 219
- Le Globe* 71 n.
- Gnedich, N. I. 160 n., 214
- Godwin, William 106
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von 117 n., 177, 235
- Golenishchev-Kutuzov, P. V. 294
- Goncharova, Natalia Nikolaevna 242 n., 307, 309
- the Gracchi 220
- Grandsagne, Ajasson de 287, 288
- Great Man, concept of 215, 224, 241, 242, 245, 259, 267–70, 276, 337
- Grech, Nikolai 166, 167, 171 n.
- Green Lamp (*Zelenaia lampka*) 304 n.
- Greenleaf, Monika 5, 47 n., 62 n., 74, 305 n.
- Grekhnev, Vsevolod 3 n., 43 n., 74 n.

- Gresset, Jean-Baptiste 38
 Grimm, Friedrich Melchior 39, 220, 268, 272, 282, 297
 Correspondance littéraire 241–2, 272
 Grigsby, Darcy Grimaldo 256, 258
 Gros, Antoine-Jean 218, 255
 Bonaparte Visiting the Plague victims of Jaffa 252, 254, 255–9, 271
 Guizot, François 239, 240, 241
 Gukovskii, Grigorii 18 n.
 Gypsies (*Tsygany*, 1824, pub. 1827) 47, 93, 121, 162 n., 170 n., 290, 297
- Hades 23, 25, 57
 Haller, Albrecht von 281, 289
 Hannibal 250, 252
 happiness 27, 82, 140, 157, 225, 229, 231, 241, 274, 275, 280, 291 n., 292, 299, 328, 337
 harmony 18, 43, 44 n., 64, 69, 71, 72, 73, 74, 78, 95, 96, 98, 104, 132 n., 142, 150, 156, 176 n., 182, 183, 189, 311, 319
 imitative 56, 143
 psychological 196
 Hartman, Geoffrey 36 n., 117, 118, 148, 190 n.
 Hazareesingh, Sudhir 243
 Hazlitt, William 7, 40, 73, 91, 99, 101, 103–6, 107, 153, 199, 326
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 237
 Heine, Heinrich 326 n.
 Helvétius, Claude-Adrien 92, 132, 229, 279 n., 282, 283, 284, 290, 318, 336
 Heinzelman, Kurt 185
Herald of Europe (Vestnik Evropy) 26, 295 n., 305 n.
 Hennequin, Pierre 32, 33 n., 222 n.
 Henri IV 277
 heroism 4, 9, 11, 65, 82 n., 160, 191, 196, 197, 215, 217, 220, 221, 223, 228, 230, 237, 241, 243, 246, 250, 251, 255, 257, 258, 265, 271, 312, 313, 314, 315, 331, 337
 classical ethos of 245, 269
 heroic greatness 11, 107, 129, 199, 226, 230, 238, 239, 240, 249, 260, 262, 272
 military and historical ideal of 217, 234, 238, 239, 241, 242, 254, 269
 moral/philosophical 11, 227, 229, 230, 241, 270, 271, 272, 273
 Plutarchan ideal of 219, 220, 224, 241, 242, 250, 269, 337
 poetic 106, 115, 187, 191
 private versus conspicuous 267, 272
 Romantic hero 77, 89, 218, 235, 245, 270, 271, 276, 300
- Herzen, Alexander 93
 Hirsch, E. D. 149
 historical judgement
 plurality of viewpoints 253, 259
 responsibility of the artist 218, 268, 271, 272
 uncertainty of 218, 242, 252, 253, 259
 historiography 8, 44 n., 223, 257, 260, 262
 painting as 268
 history of the book 6, 160 n., 162, 169
 history of ideas 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 92, 205, 228 n., 239, 279, 283
 Hobbes, Thomas 283, 289
 Holbach, Paul-Henri Thiry, baron d' 92, 279, 280, 283, 284, 286, 289, 290, 317, 336
 Homer 18, 132 n., 187, 189–90, 205 n., 214
 Horace 17, 23, 25, 33, 44, 62, 82, 83–4, 95, 205, 211, 280, 283 n., 286 n., 292 n., 321, 326, 329
 Hugo, Victor 49, 50, 62, 77, 86, 134, 168, 199, 233, 245, 270
 Hume, David 242 n., 287
 humour 18, 24, 26, 63, 109, 314
 Hunt, Leigh 179 n.
 Hutchinson, W. 319 n.
- Icarus 29
 Idealism 310
 (German/Kant) 9, 87, 150
 Pushkin's concept of art 278
 tension with Romantic subjectivity 96
 idleness 105
 Illichevskii, Aleksei Dem'ianovich 19
 imagination 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 11, 17, 18, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 45, 49, 50, 51, 53, 56, 57, 58, 59, 65, 70, 71 n., 74, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 83, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 109, 110, 117, 123, 130, 133, 134, 136, 137, 140–2, 147–8, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 176, 181, 183, 184, 187, 194, 200, 204, 207, 235, 237, 241, 250, 282, 294, 300, 320, 323
 and reason 89, 97, 106, 122
 and sleep 141–2
 Anglo-German theories of 40, 117
 as a faculty of invention 18, 45 n., 175
 as creative power 7, 48, 56, 61, 88, 90, 91, 97, 99, 100, 104–6, 115, 118, 129, 134, 135, 137, 142–3, 150, 152, 157
 as fundamental poetic power of Romanticism 9, 86, 277
 as reproductive power 96, 123
 as uncontrollable power 150

- changing status in Pushkin 87, 102, 107,
 114, 116, 118, 131, 146–8, 152, 157
 converting history into art 268
 discourse of 135
 disruptive 104, 109, 113, 148, 153, 157
 erotic 295
 equation with liberty 45, 200
 independence from representation 99
 interaction with nature 117, 123–4, 132,
 133, 147–8, 155
 primary and secondary 13, 97
 responsive 132
 Romantic theories of 34, 117, 186
 sensationist model 103, 287, 316, 325
 unconscious mental activity 96–7
 imitation 5, 9, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21,
 23, 25, 31, 32, 38, 43 n., 44, 64, 76,
 77, 79, 83, 100, 111, 116, 123, 162,
 189–90, 203, 251, 286 n.
 ability to imitate 53, 70, 75, 80
 classical theories of 86, 107
 neoclassical 134, 159
 of the Ancients 62, 69, 74, 82, 205, 242,
 280
 of art 78, 80, 107
 of nature 44, 53, 77, 78, 98 n., 101, 105,
 137, 142–3, 150, 200
 of reality 45, 47
 Platonic theories of 69
 Pushkin's repudiation of 87
 immortality 19, 110
 immortality 4, 76, 85, 147, 152–4, 189, 190,
 195, 209, 234, 235, 237, 273, 286,
 317–18, 322, 323, 324, 325, 329
 improvisation 50
 independence (artistic/moral/intellectual) 11,
 14, 29, 49 n., 64, 104, 161, 168 n.,
 169, 170, 171, 180, 184, 186, 194,
 196, 200, 203, 205, 213, 217, 270,
 273, 274–7, 306, 326
 influence (poetic) 3 n., 20, 21, 22, 25, 30, 99,
 132, 137, 168 n., 239 n.
 inner voicing 4, 231
 innovation 4, 18, 25, 34, 43 n., 51, 61, 62,
 83, 85, 88, 111, 114, 129
 inspiration 9, 11, 13, 25, 29, 30, 34, 38, 39,
 45, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56,
 58, 61, 65, 67, 71 n., 73, 76, 86, 90,
 100, 105, 140, 141, 160, 161, 175,
 187, 189, 190, 194, 197, 200, 204,
 206, 215, 269, 273, 274, 305 n.,
 319 n.
 as higher power of reason 49, 51
 classical theories of 86
 discourse of 31, 164, 169
furor poeticus 45, 69
 ownership of 59, 161, 164, 176, 197
 sources of 49, 54, 61, 129, 141, 195, 207,
 278, 290
 theories/modes of 48, 49, 51, 54, 56, 59,
 69, 70, 182, 205 n., 210, 213, 250,
 287
 uncontrolled 61, 178, 181, 183, 212
 intentionality 21, 58, 209, 255, 261, 269, 271
 intertextuality 3, 4, 9, 19, 20 n., 21, 22 n., 83,
 87, 115, 119, 124, 130, 143, 147, 149,
 186
 intuition 8, 44, 65, 77, 94, 151, 153, 194,
 238, 253, 260, 268, 323, 324, 334, 336
 invention (poetic) 5, 10, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23,
 26, 35, 38, 40, 42, 43, 45 n., 48, 49,
 51, 53, 56, 58, 59, 70, 80, 85, 86, 103,
 118, 142, 183
 and the beautiful 63, 65, 69
 as capacity to imitate 18, 34
 as cornerstone of classicism 9, 36, 37
 as poetic power 62, 68, 74, 91, 117, 134,
 137
 classical 32, 61, 69, 106, 107
 reason as power of invention 32, 66
 theory of 11, 34, 41
 irony 25, 56, 79, 108, 110, 171, 172, 176,
 179, 188, 190, 198, 283, 296, 303,
 319 n.
 Izmailov, V. 203

 Jackson, H. J. 6
 Jakobson, Roman 78 n.
 Janowitz, Anne 153
 Jean-Paul, Johann Paul Friedrich von Richter,
known as 105, 325
 July Revolution (1830) 242–5
 Juvenal 27, 221, 223

 Kant, Immanuel 63–4, 65, 68, 76, 81, 90, 91,
 94, 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 107,
 116, 151–7, 183, 200, 209, 283 n.,
 323
 Kantemir, Antiokh 222
 Kapnist, Vasily Vasil'evich 16
 Karamzin, Nikolai Mikhailovich 14, 16, 26,
 28 n., 29, 37, 80 n., 99, 114, 121 n.,
 174, 224, 279, 280, 281, 289
 Katenin, Pavel Aleksandrovich 302 n.
 Kaznacheev, A. I. 167 n.
 Keats, John 21, 78, 102, 106, 127, 196, 322,
 323, 325
 Khodasevich, Vladislav 276 n.
 Khvostov, Dmitrii Ivanovich 23, 24, 25, 172
 Kireevskii, Ivan Vasil'evich 37, 64, 77 n.
 Kiukhel'beker, Wilhelm Karlovich 336 n.
 Klushin, A. I. 27 n.
 Kneale, Douglas 137
 Kniazhnin, Iakov Borisovich 174

- knowledge 1, 53, 88, 95, 103, 122–3, 211,
 281, 282, 290, 316, 320, 324, 336
 opposition between painting and
 history 251–2, 254, 258, 262, 264
 supra-sensory 96
 Kościusko, Tadeusz 240
 Koshanskii, N. F. 89, 225 n.
 Kristeva, Julia 311 n.
 Kropotov, Andrei 23, 24
 Kutuzov, Mikhail, Ilarionovich 81, 82, 260,
 261, 271
- Laclous, Pierre-Ambroise-François Choderlos
 de 293, 294, 299
 La Harpe, Jean-François de 18, 34, 38, 39, 40,
 41, 43, 44, 45, 49, 55, 64, 65 n., 71 n.,
 90, 95, 98, 100, 106, 132, 135, 204,
 272 n., 276
 Lake School/poets 40, 101 n., 102 n., 131 n.,
 144
 Lamartine, Alphonse de 77, 233
 Lamennais, Félicité Robert de 229 n.
 La Mettrie, Julien Offroy de 92, 279, 283
 Las Cases, Emmanuel 233, 240
 Lavater, Johann Kaspar 281
 leadership (typology of) 244
 Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm 156–7, 318, 335
 Léonard, Nicolas 120, 121
 Lermnier, E.-J.-L.-E. 283 n.
 Lermontov, Mikhail Iur'evich 270
 Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim 65, 80, 85 n.,
 100 n., 107
 libertinism 304, 305, 309, 310, 311, 312,
 313, 314, 318
 literary alliances 16, 17, 30
 literary control 32, 48, 49, 55, 59, 75, 109,
 114, 140–2, 158, 194
Literary Gazette (Literaturnaia gazeta) 102 n.
 literary history and criticism 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 14,
 22, 25, 30, 32, 35, 37, 38, 39, 112,
 137, 164, 173, 190, 198, 201, 222,
 240 n., 254, 286 n., 292 n., 295,
 305 n., 328
 Livy 220
 Locke, John 96, 279, 281, 287
 Lomonosov, Mikhailo Vasil'evich 14, 25, 27,
 29, 30, 37, 83, 89, 129–32, 143, 280,
 283 n., 290
 Longinus 41, 44, 68, 69
 Lotman, Iu. M. 3, 4, 53, 176 n., 260 n.,
 310 n.
 Louis-Philippe, duc d'Orléans 243
 love 7, 126, 228, 276, 278, 281, 287, 288,
 289, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298,
 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306,
 310, 311, 314, 315, 316, 318, 319 n.,
 323, 326
- Lovers of Wisdom (*Obshchestvo
 Liubomodriia*) 93–4, 102, 150
 Lucretius 143 n., 206, 280, 284, 285, 286–8,
 289, 290, 292, 296, 297, 301, 303,
 317, 318, 323
 Lycurgus 220
- the Madonna 98, 294
 Maimin, Evgenii 54
 Man, Paul de 117, 322
 manuscript culture 13, 166, 173, 307
 Marcus Aurelius 334
 Marivaux, Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de 302
 Marlinsky, Bestuzhev, Alexander
 Aleksandrovich, *known as* 32, 38, 165,
 214, 307
 Marmontel, Jean-François 34, 38, 39, 40, 41,
 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 55, 64,
 71 n., 72, 74, 75, 90, 95, 98, 99, 100,
 106, 120, 132, 135, 150, 153, 204
 Marot, Clément 38, 113
 Marrinan, Michael 233
 materialist philosophy 7, 11, 63, 92, 118,
 134, 149–50, 276, 278, 279, 280,
 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287,
 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 314,
 315, 317, 318, 320, 323, 325, 327 n.,
 336
 Matiushkin, Fedor Fedorovich 309
 McFarland, Thomas 321
 McGann, Jerome 102 n., 298, 308 n.
 McKeon, Michael 153
 Meilakh, Boris 8, 54
 melancholy 72
 memory 2, 18, 23, 42, 43, 89, 94, 96, 100,
 115, 116, 118, 123–4, 132, 133, 134,
 148, 149, 152, 154, 155, 156, 157,
 288, 292, 293, 300, 302, 319 n., 325
 Merzliakov, Aleksei Fedorovich 50, 219 n.
 metaphor 18, 24, 27, 60, 121, 126, 140, 177,
 181, 190, 195, 231, 250, 270, 298,
 301, 306, 309, 311, 338
 metaphysics 7, 71 n., 104, 282, 333
 German 64, 93–4, 101, 102, 153
 metonymy 222 n., 264
 Meynieux, André 160 n., 167 n.
 Michelet, Jules 205, 239
 Mickiewicz, Adam 143 n., 240
 Middleton, Conyers 327, 328
 Migliorini, Luigi 241, 243
 Milbank, Annabella 278
 Millevoye, Charles 121, 132
 Milton, John 21, 100, 102, 257, 270 n.
 mimesis 2, 4, 41, 45, 47, 64, 71, 75, 77, 78,
 80, 86, 88, 89, 95, 100, 101, 110, 116,
 132, 135, 137, 139, 141–2, 148, 254,
 269

- the mind 64, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100,
103–7, 116, 117, 130, 140, 155, 206,
227, 231, 235, 251, 288, 289, 290,
291, 317, 322, 325
and feelings 1, 65, 227, 284, 288, 310
creative 10, 65, 100, 106, 153, 183, 260
Mirabeau, Honoré-Gabriel Riqueti, comte
de 294
Modzalevskii, Boris x
Molière, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, *known*
as 117 n., 239
money 15, 68, 158, 161, 164, 167, 169, 175,
177–9, 181, 184, 313
Montaigne, Michel de 46, 228 n., 335
Moore, Thomas 63 n., 168 n., 238, 305, 308
Mordvinov, N. S., admiral 265
Morellet, André, abbé 41
Moschus 113
Moses 207, 213 n.
Moscow Herald (Moskovskii vestnik) 109,
163 n., 207 n.
Moscow Telegraph (Moskovskii Telegraf) 61,
160 n., 213, 305 n.
Moscow University 14
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus 51, 176, 308, 313
Mukhannov, A. A. 215 n.
Murav'ev-Apostol, Ivan Matveevich 215
the Muse, versions of 27, 31, 45, 53, 54, 61,
172, 178, 188, 195, 196, 228, 304,
306
Musset, Alfred de 240
mythic and non-mythic discourse 4
mythological topoi 26
- Nadezhdin, Nikolai Ivanovich 110
Naigeon, Jacques-André 289, 292 n., 297
Napoléon 11, 107, 128, 131, 200, 217, 218,
223, 224, 229–46, 249, 250–2, 254–9,
260, 261, 266, 267, 269, 270, 337, 338
Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, nephew 243
Jaffa (plague victims of) 240 n., 252–4,
255, 256, 258–9
nature 18, 42, 44, 46, 64, 69, 72, 75, 76, 79,
86, 95, 98, 100, 103, 110, 128, 131,
132, 134, 139–42, 146, 157, 176 n.,
251, 274, 297, 314, 324, 329, 333,
334, 336, 337
animist views of 92
as a type of noise 129, 183
connectedness of the mind and nature/of
man and nature 128, 150, 153, 156,
157, 177, 273, 322, 323
the countryside 114, 119, 124, 135, 141
empirical/scientific understanding
of 122–3, 142, 149, 152, 154, 155,
284, 285, 290
Enlightenment paradigm of 125
idea of 3
landscape 68, 69, 120–2, 124, 129, 131,
134, 137, 147, 156, 231, 251, 281,
321, 322
interaction with the poet 3, 117, 118,
119, 123–4, 126, 133, 135–6, 139,
142–3, 146, 148, 152, 154
lyric thinking about 10, 107, 117, 143 n.,
146–7, 153, 177, 182, 231, 290 n.,
291
meaning/essence of 4, 77, 137, 154, 177
and subjectivity 146–8, 150, 155, 157
separation between man and
nature/boundary with mankind 120,
130, 149–50
Nemirovsky, Igor 4
Neoclassicism 17, 18, 25, 27, 34 n., 42 n.,
62 n., 89, 123, 124, 129, 134, 141,
268, 271
as Romantic Hellenism 62, 190
French 17, 18, 39, 67, 114, 137
neoclassical tragedy 31
pastoral backdrop 120, 130, 189, 263
Russian 13 n., 14, 37, 219
Neoplatonic theory 68
neo-Stoicism 279
Nero 256
Newlyn, Lucy 11, 164
Newton, Sir Isaac 285
Nicholas I 13, 108–9, 113, 170, 171 n.,
186 n., 191, 192, 197, 198, 206 n.,
207, 218, 243, 244–5, 274, 277, 310
Nikitenko, Alexander Vasil'evich (critic and
censor) 169 n.
Nikolev, N. P. 27 n.
Niobe 81, 82
Nodier, Charles 162
The Northern Bee (Severnaia pchela) 109 n.,
111, 163 n.
Northern Flowers (Severnye tsvety) 291
Novikov, Nikolai 174
- Odoevskii, V. F. 158, 203
Oldekop affair 161
Olenina, A. A. 305 n.
O'Meara, Barry 233
originality 3, 4, 5, 9, 15, 19, 20, 21, 32, 37,
39, 40, 43, 45, 47, 49, 55, 86, 87, 164,
197, 203
and imitation 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 25,
26, 36, 81, 83
as measure of poetic genius 33, 162
rhetoric of 87
Romantic 88
subordinated to competence 86
Orpheus 189, 205–6
Ossianic idiom 120, 231

- Ostolopov, Nikolai Fedorovich 89
 Ovid 34, 196, 226, 311
 Ozerov, Vladislav Aleksandrovich 31
- pain 278, 280, 297, 298–9, 300, 302, 304, 311, 319, 326, 328, 333
 Panckoucke, Charles-Joseph 286 n., 327
 Parnassus 26, 27, 28, 31, 35, 161 n., 204
 Parny, Evariste-Désiré de Forges 16, 286 n., 294, 295 n., 296 n.
 parody/pastiche 14, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 108, 109, 113, 117, 180, 194, 197, 214, 221, 319 n.
 and mockery 22, 24, 31, 83, 225 n.
 Pascal, Blaise 49, 277, 335
 passions 9, 30, 41, 42, 45, 72, 103, 105, 107, 128, 132, 133, 182, 187, 191, 217, 245, 278, 279, 280, 281, 284, 288, 291–2, 293, 295–301, 306, 310, 311, 317, 328, 337
 pathetic fallacy 120, 122, 140
 patronage 25, 168
 perception 10, 43, 44, 62, 65, 69, 70, 77, 88, 92, 97–8, 103, 106, 117, 141–3, 154, 157, 176 n., 180, 255, 284, 287
 Pericles 219, 224, 225
 Pestel', Pavel Ivanovich 284 n., 286, 318, 327 n.
 Peter the Great 217, 219, 220 n., 230
 Petrarch 298
 Petronius 223
 Phidias 76
 philosophy 7, 92, 95, 99, 288, 318, 323, 325, 328, 336, 337
 and European Romanticism 99
 French 282, 286
 English 149
 German 77, 93–4, 122, 151
 philosophy of art 90
 philosophy of history 4, 12, 223
 Pindar 17, 25
 Piron, Alexis 286 n.
 Pisarev, A. 90
 Pius VII 255
 plagiarism 20, 162
 Planche, Gustave 77, 200, 249 n.
 Plato 206
 Platonic discoveries/ideal 62, 63, 64, 69, 75, 76, 78, 80, 81, 82, 84, 95, 98
 pleasure (love of) 278, 280, 283 n., 286 n., 292, 293, 294, 295, 297, 298–9, 300, 301, 304, 306, 311, 313, 314, 315, 316, 319 n., 326
 Pletnev, Petr Alexandrovich 131 n., 160, 163, 173 n., 186 n., 190 n., 198
 Plutarch 221, 225, 271, 272
 poetic disrespect 23, 24
 poetic egotism 30, 86, 168 n., 213
 poetic enthusiasm 34, 35, 49, 67, 69, 100, 104, 191, 206
 poetic solitude 208, 319
 poetic mystery 49, 50
 poetic power 9, 10, 11, 62, 97, 105, 115, 147, 148, 150, 157
 Pogodin, Mikhail Petrovich 109, 160, 244 n.
 Polevoi, Nikolai Alekseevich A. 111
 Polychroni, Calypso 305
 Pope, Alexander 95
 'Popular Drama' 100 n.
 portraiture 217, 218, 230, 250, 251, 254–5, 260, 262, 264, 265, 269
 neoclassical 81, 254, 258, 268
 Pratt, Sarah 93
 professional status of the writer 14, 15, 157, 158, 165, 166–7, 168, 199, 201, 203, 273
 Prometheus 111, 163 n., 232
 Propertius 62 n.
 Proskurin, Oleg 4, 14 n., 20, 20 n., 91 n., 115, 244 n., 295 n.
 prosody 4, 14, 18, 37, 39, 41, 45, 47 n., 55, 75
 alexandrines 26, 53, 171
 alliteration 53
 apostrophe 79, 269
 assonance 53
 deictic adverbs 146
 epideictic formulas 222 n.
 expostulation 222 n., 266
 iamb 26 n., 136, 191, 196
 octave 136
 oxymoron 82, 179, 299, 304, 329
 phrasing 144
 quotation 22, 24, 109, 146, 153, 186, 188, 275
 sound patterns 20, 47 n., 53, 55, 61, 71, 182, 231
 tone 1, 3, 24, 113, 114, 146, 191, 194, 222 n.
- Pugachev rebellion 242
 Pushchin, Ivan Ivanovich 295 n.
 Pushkin, Alexander Sergeevich
 19 October cycle 215, 328
 aesthetics 2, 3, 5, 9, 11, 35 n., 48, 58, 59, 62 n., 64 n., 70, 71, 77 n., 80, 81, 85, 91, 101, 117, 129, 133, 142, 146, 152, 167, 173, 181, 193, 205, 212, 214, 215, 218, 235, 237, 250, 251, 271, 275
 attitude to nature 117, 118, 120, 124, 126–9, 131, 133, 134, 135, 144, 147–53, 155, 182, 290, 320, 322, 325
 attitude to religion 11, 284, 286, 291, 294, 303, 314, 318, 323, 325, 336

- attitude to Romanticism 2, 67, 114, 146, 171, 176, 180, 183, 195, 215, 262
- autobiographical/biographical
circumstances 6, 82, 102 n., 115, 124, 126, 133, 144 n., 149, 176, 180, 182, 186, 193, 195–6, 273, 305, 309, 327, 328
- Boldino 135
- bridge between classicism and
Romanticism 9, 12, 36, 37, 52, 62 n., 67–8, 85, 88–90, 107, 114, 115, 186, 193, 195, 215
- career prospects 25, 28, 160, 180, 203, 205, 207
- classical
elegance/accuracy/style 34, 35, 38, 66, 78, 85, 87, 89, 107, 108, 113, 114
enigmatic archaism 70, 75, 77
sense of the 61, 62, 70, 119, 123
- commercial circumstances/success 2, 4, 10, 28, 51, 94, 107, 108, 112, 157, 158, 160, 161, 163, 166, 175, 177, 178, 183 n., 198, 207, 213, 214, 273, 277
- concrete detail (love of) 71, 139, 142, 148
- conservatism 31, 32, 43, 45, 59, 62, 88–9, 114, 120, 193
- creative development 2, 18, 19, 25, 26, 32, 34, 40, 105 n., 108, 129, 135, 186, 278
- and critical opinion 61, 88, 107, 108, 112, 160, 164, 167, 198, 229, 261, 308 n.
- diary entries/fragments 6, 63, 169 n., 286
- drafts 135, 137 n., 144 n., 167 n., 196 n.
- dramatic works
Angelo (Andzhelo), 1834) 131 n., 241
Mozart and Salieri ('Motsart i Salieri', 1830) 51, 189
The Stone Guest ('Kamennyi gost', 1830) 312
- duel 135, 167
- engagement as a professional writer 9
- Easter cycle (poems of the) 157, 273, 275, 277
- erotic life 303 n., 305, 306, 307, 309, 314 n.
'Don Juan List' 307–8
- erudition 7, 8, 22, 23
- essays
'A Refutation of Criticisms' ('Oproverzhenie na kritiki', 1830) 164, 213 n., 308 n.
'About Classical and Romantic Poetry' ('O poezii klassicheskoi i romanticheskoi', 1825) 37, 89
- 'On Byron and important subjects' ('O Bairone i o predmetakh vazhnykh'=[Bairon], 1835) 168 n.
'On the Paltriness of Russian Literature' ('O nichtozhestve literaturny russkoi', 1834) 165, 283 n.
'On the popular drama 'Marfa, the Posadnik's daughter' ('O narodnoi drame "Marfa Posadnitsa"') 107
- exile 17, 35, 54, 108, 124, 127–8, 153, 154, 160, 170, 175, 192, 206 n., 224, 283 n., 287, 305, 328
- experimentalism 3, 32, 34, 54, 75, 85, 87, 114, 124–5, 134, 167, 188
Byronic 35, 36, 40, 47, 48, 69, 107, 108, 109 n., 127, 130, 186, 203
- female image in 71 n.
- fragments 170, 187, 188, 196 n., 295, 312, 319 n., 321
- gambling 111, 159
- and history/as a historian 193, 217, 218, 230, 233, 237–8, 242, 253, 259, 262, 264, 266, 267, 268, 271, 284
- Greater Romantic lyric 30, 118, 134, 144
- identity
creative and intellectual (authorial) 1, 12, 29, 32, 127, 147, 148, 162, 168, 170, 186, 194, 214–15
individual 229, 278, 308, 325
lyric 12, 114, 159, 218
poetic 13, 17, 37, 60, 91, 190
projection (self-presentation) 5, 10, 11, 112, 115, 125, 159, 162, 169, 171, 180, 186, 203, 204, 207–8, 305, 306
- as imitator-poet 25, 48, 51, 74, 75, 77, 78, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 111, 113, 114, 130, 150, 158, 159, 187, 188, 190, 191, 194, 195, 203, 222, 295, 305 n., 321, 329 n.
- intellectual concerns/experimentation 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 18, 48, 49, 51, 99, 107, 118, 150, 151–4
with Anthology-style verse 75
with historical causality 217, 241
with the history of ideas 283
with lyric exploration 117
with the meaning of the heroic 217–18, 221, 238, 244–5, 250, 259, 267, 273, 277
with the psychology of the creative mind 7, 38, 44, 63, 82, 88, 101, 106, 118, 134, 137, 142–3, 181
with social conventions and desire 304
with theories of the body and belief 279
- as journalist 1, 93
- letters 6, 7, 124, 135, 160, 180, 224 n., 293

Pushkin (*cont.*)

- library x, 6, 7, 8, 34 n., 38, 40, 46, 49,
62 n., 64 n., 71, 72, 91, 95, 99, 101,
131 n., 132, 147 n., 162, 211, 220,
233, 239, 241, 243 n., 253, 256, 257,
261, 276, 277, 279 n., 281 n., 283,
284, 286 n., 287, 289, 290 n., 291 n.,
293, 296, 308 n., 317, 327, 329 n.,
330 n., 334, 335, 337
marginalia 6, 7, 8, 104, 105, 153, 155–6,
204, 233 n., 249, 326 n.
- as literary critic 1, 6, 7, 62 n., 102 n.,
131 n., 147 n., 164–5, 199, 213 n.,
270 n., 308 n.
- literary/publishing environment 12, 13, 14,
15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 25, 32, 51, 61,
63, 90, 99, 137, 159, 164, 165–7, 169,
176, 214, 220, 281
- Lyric poems
'19 October 1831' 326, 329–33
'19 October 1825' 328–9
'19 October 1827' 192
'19 October 1836' 262 n., 326, 332–3,
336–7
'A fiery desire burns in my blood' ('V krov
gorit ogon' zhelan'ia', 1825) 296–7
'A poor knight lived... ' ('Zhil na svete
rytsar' bednyi', 1831) 170
'Alas, for what does she shine so'
('Uvy! zachem ona blistaet', 1820)
299 n.
'Alas, the garrulous language of love'
('Uvy! lazky liubvi boltlivyi,
1829) 302 n.
'All in tribute to your memory' ('Vse v
zhertvu pamiati tvoei', 1825) 299 n.
'All is over: we have no tie' ('Vse
koncheno: mezh nami sviazi net',
1824) 299 n.
'Allow me to bare my soul before you'
('Pozvol' dushe moei otkryt'sia pred
toboiu', 1819) 312
'And I have heard that God's world/By
friendship alone... ' ('I ia slykhal, chto
bozhii svet/Edinoi družhboiu', 1818)
300–1
'Andrei Chénier' ('Andrei Shen'e',
1825) 114, 158–9, 170, 185, 186–7,
191, 192, 194–7
'Arion' ('Nas bylo mnogo na chelne',
1827) 159, 203, 205, 207, 208–9,
210, 211
'Atheism' ('Bezverie', 1817) 318, 319 n.,
336 n.
'Autumn' ('Osen', 1833) 10, 58, 89,
118, 119 n., 132 n., 134, 135–43, 144,
148, 153, 155

- 'Awakening' ('Probuzhdenie', 1816) 114
'Before a Spanish noblewoman' ('Pred
ispankoi blagorodnoi', 1830) 302 n.
'Before the sacred tomb' ('Pered
grobnitsei sviatoi', 1831) 316 n.
'Bova' (1814) 23 n.
'Carousing Students' ('Piruiushchie
studenty', 1814) 20 n., 63, 91 n.
'Conversation between a Bookseller and a
Poet' ('Razgovor knigoprodavtsa s
poetom', 1824) 48, 158, 166,
169–70, 174, 176–84, 185, 197,
203
'Dioncia' (1821) 295
'Do not Threaten a Young Indolent'
('Ne ugrozhai lenivtsu molodomu',
1817) 299 n.
'Doris' ('Dorida', 1819) 296
'Dream' ('Son', 1816) 302 n.
'Echo' ('Ekho', 1831) 73
'Elegy' ('Elegiia', 1816) 299 n., 301
'Epistle to Iudin' ('Poslanie k Iudinu',
1815) 225, 300
'Epitaph for a Youngster' ('Epitafia
mladentsu' 1828) 316 n.
'Experience,' ('Opytnost', 1814) 302 n.
'Farewell' ('Proshchanie', 1830) 299 n.,
303 n.
'Freedom's Sower in the Wilderness',
('Svobody seiatel' pustynnyi',
1823) 113
'From Pindemonte' ('Iz Pindemonte',
1836) 229, 273–5
'Grave of a Youth' ('Grob iunoshi',
1820) 121
'Guardian of sweet feelings and past
pleasures' ('Khranitel' milykh chuvstv',
1819)
'Hearken o Helios' ('Vnemli, o Gelios',
1823) 187–9
'Her' ('Ona', 1817) 299 n.
'Hermit fathers and virtuous women'
('Ottsy pustynniki i zheny
neporochny', 1836) 273, 276
'How delightful!... but, Lord, how
dangerous' ('Kak sladostno!... no, bogi
kak opasno', 1818) 299 n.
'Hymn to the Penates' ('Eshche odnoi,
vysokoi vazhnoi pesni', 1829) 188 n.,
207
'I do not regret you, years of my spring'
('Mne vas ne zhal', goda vesny moei',
1820) 316 n.
'I have erected to myself a monument not
made by hand' ('Ia pamiatnik sebe
vzdvig nerukotvornyi', 1836) 82–4,
87, 316 n.

- 'I have heard that the world is only beautiful from friendship' ('I ia slykhal, chto bozhii svet/Edinoi družboiu prekrasen,' 1818) 302 n.
- 'I have outlived my desires' ('Ia perezhil svoi zhelaniia,' 1820) 120, 316 n.
- 'I loved you' ('Ia vas liubil', 1829) 299 n.
- 'If with a tender beauty' ('Esl' s nezhnoi krasotoi', 1821) 299 n.
- 'Imitations of the Ancients' ('Podrazhaniia drevnim', 1821) 74, 77, 114; poems in the cycle: 'The Muse' ('Muza', 1821); 'To Doris' ('Dorida', 1820); 'The swift bank of clouds thins out...' ('Redeet oblakov letuchaia griada...', 1820); 'The Youth. Sappho' ('Iunosha. Safo', 1825); 'Nereida' (1820); 'Dioneia' (1821); 'Doris' ('Dorida', 1819); 'Maiden' ('Deva', 1821); 'Night' ('Noch', 1823); 'Signs' ('Primety', 1821); 'Earth and sea. An idyll by Moschus' ('Zemlia i more. Idillia Moskha', 1821); 'The beauty in front of the mirror' ('Krasavitsa pered zerkalom', 1821).
- 'Imitations of the Koran' ('Podrazhaniia Koranu', 1824) 114
- 'In hours of amusement or idle boredom' ('V chasy zabav...', 1830) 52, 59–61
- 'In the Album' ('V al'bom, 1817) 302 n.
- 'In vain, dear friend, I thought to hide' ('Naprasno, milyi drug, ia myslil utait', 1819) 299 n.
- 'In vain I flee to the heights of Athos...' ('Naprasno ia begu k sionskim vysotam', 1836) 273
- 'I remember the miraculous moment' ('Ia pomniu chudnoe mgnoven'e', 1825) 302 n.
- 'I thought that love had gone forever' ('Ia dumal, chto liubov' pogasla navsegda', 1816) 301
- 'I thought the heart had forgotten' ('Ia dumal, serdtse pozabylo', 1835) 302 n.
- 'Into your room, my dear friend' ('V tvoiu svetlitsu, drug moi nezhnyi', 1821) 299 n.
- 'It was time: our young celebration...' ('Byla pora: nash prazdnik molodoi...', 1836=19 October 1836) 316 n.
- 'It's time, my friend, it's time', ('Pora, moi drug, pora!' 1834) 326 n.
- 'I visit once again...' ('Vnov' ia posetil...', 1835) 3, 10, 89, 95, 118, 119 n., 123, 135, 144–50, 151, 152–7, 316 n., 320, 322, 323
- 'Laisa, I love your daring, free gaze' ('Laisa, ia liubliu tvoi smelyi, vol'nyi vzor', 1819) 295
- 'Labour' ('Trud', 1830) 50, 185
- 'Liberty' ('Vol'nosr', 1817) 222
- 'Maiden' ('Deva', 1821) 314 n.
- 'May God protect you, my friends' ('Bog pomoch' vam, druž'ia moi', 1827=19 October 1827) 192
- 'May one crowned by a beauty's love' ('Puskai uvenchannyi liubov'iu krasoty', 1824) 299 n.
- 'My epitaph' ('Moia epitafiia', 1815) 319 n.
- 'My Testament' ('Moe zaveshchanie', 1815) 319 n.
- 'Napoleon' (1821) 232–7
- 'Napoleon on Elba' ('Napoleon na El'be', 1815) 230–2, 237, 245
- 'Near the place where golden Venice reigns' ('Bliz mest, gde tsarstvuet Venetsiia zlataia', 1827) 207
- 'No, no I must not, I dare not, I cannot' ('Net, net, ne dolzhen ia, ne smeiiu, ne mogu', 1832) 302 n.
- 'On the hills of Georgia there lies a night-time mist' ('Na kholmakh Gruzii lezhit nochnaia mgl'a', 1829) 299 n., 304
- 'On the Statue of the Thrower of the Horseshoe' ('Na statuiu igraiushego v svaiku', 1836) 79
- 'On the Statue of the Youth Playing Knuckle-bones' ('Na statuiu igraiushego v bakki', 1836) 79
- 'Osgar' (1814) 23 n.
- 'Platonism' ('Platonizm', 1819) 295–6
- 'Pleasure' ('Naslazhden'e', 1816) 299 n.
- 'Recollections in Tsarskoe Selo' ('Vospominaniia v Tsarskom Sele', 1814) 119, 134
- 'Recollection in Tsarskoe Selo' ('Vospominanie v Tsarkom Sele', 1829) 133–4
- 'Reply to A. I. Gotovtseva' ('Orvet A. I. Gotovtsevoi', 1818) 299 n.
- 'Rodrig' ('Chudnyi son mne Bog poslal', 1834) 326 n.
- 'Scene from Faust' ('Stsena iz Fausta', 1825) 177
- 'Signs' ('Primety', 1821) 73, 121–3, 131
- 'Sleep' ('Son', 1815) 32 n.

Pushkin (*cont.*)Lyric poems (*cont.*)

- 'Soon I shall fall silent' ('Umol'knu skoro ia', 1821) 114, 299 n., 316 n.
- 'Stanzas' ('Stansy', 1826) 244
- 'Stanzas' ('Brozhu li ia vdol' ulits shumnykh... ', 1829) 321, 325
- 'Stanzas. (From Voltaire)' ('Stansy. (Iz Vol'tera)', 1817) 302 n.
- 'Stanzas to Tolstoy' ('Stansy Tolstomu', 1819) 304
- 'Statue at Tsarskoe Selo' ('Tsarskosel'skaia statuia', 1830) 78–9
- 'Strict judge of French rhymesters' ('Frantsuzskikh rymfichei surovyi sud'ia', 1833) 66–7
- 'Tauride' ('Tavrida', 1822) 316 n., 319 n.
- 'The awful hour will come' ('Pridet uzhasnyi chas... ', 1823) 316 n.
- 'The Beauty' ('Krasavitsa', 1832) 70–2, 73, 85
- 'The Burned Letter' ('Sozhzhennoe pis'mo', 1825) 299 n.
- 'The Cart of Life' ('Telega zhizni', 1823) 316 n., 319 n.
- 'The Commander' ('Polkovodets', 1835) 218, 222, 229, 238, 242, 259–61, 263–9, 271, 272, 273, 337
- 'The Confidant' ('Napersnik', 1828) 295, 299 n.
- 'The Demon' ('Demon', 1823) 129
- 'The Dreamer' ('Mechtatel', 1815) 32 n.
- 'The Epistle to the Censor' ('Poslanie tsenzoru', 1822) 158, 169, 171–3, 275
- 'The Epistle to Licinius' ('K Litsiniu', 1815) 217, 218, 221–3, 244
- 'The extinguished mirth of my mad years... ' ('Bezumnyi kh let ugasshee vesel'e... ', 1830) 72
- 'The Feast of Peter the Great' ('Pir Petra Velikogo', 1835) 244
- 'The forest sheds its crimson dress' ('Roniaet les bagrianyi svoi ubor', 1825=19 October 1825) 328–9
- 'The Grave of a Youth' ('Grob iunoshi', 1821) 121, 316 n., 319 n.
- 'The Hamlet' ('Gorodok', 1815) 20 n., 23 n.
- 'The Hero' ('Geroi', 1830) 218, 222, 230, 237, 238, 242, 243, 244–50, 251–4, 256, 259, 260, 261, 265, 266, 268, 270, 271, 272
- 'The Little Bird' ('Ptichka', 1823) 120
- 'The locks grew thin and grey' ('Oda LVI. Iz Anakreona', 1835) 326 n.
- 'The Monk' ('Monakh', 1813) 295
- 'The more often the Lyceum celebrates' ('Chem chashche prazdnuet litsei', 1831=19 October 1831) 316 n.
- 'The Muse' ('Muza', 1821) 52–3
- 'The Orb of Day has Set' ('Pogaslno dneвноe svetilo', 1820) 113, 124–7, 129, 130–1, 290
- 'The Poet' ('Poet', 1827) 52, 59 n., 61, 105, 189, 204, 207
- 'The Poet and the Crowd' ('Poet i tolpa', 1828) 11, 159, 196 n., 203, 204, 205, 207, 209, 210–13, 214
- 'The Prophet' ('Prorok', 1826) 11, 48, 52, 59 n., 61, 111, 158, 159, 161, 169, 170, 189, 190, 194, 197, 201, 202–4, 205, 206, 207, 209 n., 211, 277, 305
- 'The Rose' ('Roza', 1815) 121 n.
- 'The Shade of Barkov' ('Ten' Barkova', 1815) 22 n., 23
- 'The Shade of Fonvizin' ('Ten' Fonvizina', 1815) 23, 25, 30
- 'The Singer' ('Pevets', 1816) 73, 275
- 'The Spell' ('Zaklinanie', 1830) 303 n., 315–16
- 'The swift bank of clouds thins out... ' ('Redeet oblakov letuchaia griada... ', 1820) 307
- 'The Village' ('Derevnia', 1819) 119, 222
- 'The Vineyard' ('Vinograd', 1824) 121 n.
- 'The Youth' ('Otrok', 1830) 130 n.
- 'The Wanderer' ('Strannik', 1835) 276, 326 n.
- 'The Wedding' ('Zhenit'ba', 1830) 308 n.
- 'The Wish' ('Zhelanie', 1816) 299 n.
- 'To ***' ('K***', 1817) 299 n.
- 'To a Coquette' ('Koketke', 1821) 314
- 'To a Foreign Lady' ('Inostranke', 1822) 171 n.
- 'To a Friend' ('Priiateliu', 1821) 171 n.
- 'To a Temptress' ('Napersnitse', 1818) 305
- 'To a Young Widow' ('K molodoi vdove', 1817) 314–15
- 'To an Artist' ('Khudozhniku', 1836) 32 n., 81
- 'To Batiushkov' ('K Batiushkovu', 1814) 91 n.
- 'To Chaadaev' ('K Chaadaevu', 1821) 171 n., 217, 224, 226–9
- 'To C. N. Ushakova' ('Ek. N. Ushakovoi', 1829) 299 n.
- 'To Del'vig' ('K Del'vigu', 1815) 52
- 'To Denis Davydov' ('Denisu Davydovu', 1821) 278

- 'To Gnedich' ('Gnedichu', 1832) 207, 213 n.
- 'To Her' ('K nei', 1817) 299 n.
- 'To Iur'ev' ('Iur'evu', 1820) 306
- 'To Krivtsov' ('Krivtsovu', 1817) 171 n.
- 'To Morpheus' ('Morfeiu', 1816) 32 n.
- 'To My Aristarchus' ('Moemu Aristarkhu', 1815) 225
- 'To my Friends' ('Druz'iam', 1828) 171 n., 192
- 'To my Inkwell' ('K moei chernil'nitse', 1821) 52, 54, 56, 58, 60–1, 105, 118, 211
- 'To Prince A. M. Gorchakov', ('Kniaziiu A.M. Gorchakovu', 1814) 86 n., 5 n.
- 'To Princess M. A. Golitsyn' ('Kn. M. A. Golitsynoi', 1823) 299 n.
- 'To the Foreign Girl' ('Inostranke', 1822) 299 n.
- 'To the Greek Girl' ('Grechanke', 1822) 305
- 'To the Poet' ('Poetu', 1830) 204, 207, 210 n.
- 'To the Sea' ('K moriu', 1824) 48, 113, 120, 124, 127–9, 131
- 'To the shores of my distant land' ('Dlia beregov otchizny dal'noi', 1830) 303 n.
- 'To a Versifier Friend' ('K drugu stikhovortsu', 1814) 26, 28, 29, 32
- 'To Zhukovsky' ('K Zhukovskomu', 1816) 17, 28, 29–3, 68, 205
- 'Towards a Portrait of Chaadaev' ('K portretu Chaadaeva', 1818) 217, 224, 225
- 'Tsarkoe Selo' (= 'Khranitel' milykh chuvstv i proshlykh naslazhdenii', 1819) 123–4
- 'Under the blue sky of her native land...'
(Pod nebom golubym strany svoei rodnoi...', 1826) 299 n., 302–3
- 'Vain gift, random gift' ('Dar naprasnyi, dar sluchainyi', 1828) 59 n., 291
- 'What is in my name for you' ('Chto v imeni tebe moem', 1830) 316 n.
- 'When in my embraces' ('Kogda v ob'iatia moi', 1830) 312
- 'When lost in thought...'
(Kogda za gorodom zadumchiv ia brozhu', 1836) 150, 316 n., 320–3, 325, 336
- 'When your young years...'
(Kogda tvoie mladye leta', 1829) 314 n.
- 'Whether I walk along the noisy streets' ('Brozhu li ia vdol' ulits shumnykh', 1829) 316 n.
- 'While youthfully breathing sweet hope'
(Nadezhdoi sladostnoi mladencheski dysha', 1823) 319 n.
- 'Who among the gods returned me...'
(Kto iz bogov mne vozvratil...', 1835) 329 n.
- 'Who has seen the land...'
(Kto videl kraj', 1821) 123, 136
- 'Winter' ('Zima. Chto delat' nam v derevne?', 1829) 131
- 'You grow weak and silent'
(Ty vianesh' i molchish', 1824) 299 n.
- lyric persona 2, 3, 28, 60, 78, 80, 111, 114, 121, 127, 130–1, 141, 149, 157, 158, 159, 176, 177, 179, 183, 194, 195, 196, 203, 204, 207, 211, 214, 226–9, 235, 245, 249, 250, 251, 264, 266, 268, 269, 273, 274, 275, 302, 303 n., 305, 308, 316, 319, 320, 321, 322, 325, 328, 329
- Epicurean and libertine 11, 295, 296, 298, 299, 306, 313–14, 315, 316, 326; libertine as Proteus figure 311
- first-person 150, 153, 154, 158, 170, 180, 182, 186, 209, 309
- role of the 123, 263–5, 272, 291, 331, 333, 336
- spontaneous 1, 56, 227
- Stoic 300, 301, 303
- memory (powers of) 19, 114, 133
- Mikhailovskoe 127, 191 n., 193
- the mind in poetic action 9, 149, 250
- narrative poems
- Count Nul* (*Graf Nulin*, 1828) 110, 293
- Poltava* (1829) 215 n., 217, 241, 303 n., 307, 308
- Ruslan and Liudmila* (*Ruslan i Liudmila*, 1820) 107, 108, 109 n., 160 n., 161, 175, 203
- The Caucasian Captive* (*Kavkazkii plennik*, 1822) 35, 47, 108, 167
- The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* (*Bakhchisaraiskii fontan*, 1824) 36, 53, 108, 115, 167, 175, 203, 308
- Gabrieliad* (*Gavriliada*, 1821?) 170, 192, 276 n., 293
- Tsar Nikita and his Forty Daughters* (*Tsar Nikita i sorok ego docherei*, 1822) 293
- narrative poetry 5, 34, 37, 47, 112, 117, 129, 161, 163, 198
- nature (representation of) 3, 88, 91, 124–5, 134, 137, 143, 146, 149, 151, 154, 157, 182, 290
- notebooks 6, 51, 112, 131 n., 135 n., 273
- originality (statement about his) 48
- packaging the familiar 108, 119

- Pushkin (*cont.*)
- poems of place 123–4, 144
 - the 'Poet' cycle ('The Poet', 'The Poet and the Crowd', 'The Prophet') 19, 94, 157, 169, 215, 249
 - as poet of ideas 6
 - as poet of imagination 48, 87, 99, 176, 197, 270
 - as poet of invention 51, 89, 99, 108, 113, 131, 144
 - poetic self 1, 2, 10, 13, 25, 107, 111, 125, 127, 129, 149, 188, 203, 276
 - professional contexts 2, 11, 13, 14, 66
 - prose writing
 - Egyptian Nights* ('Egipetskie nochi', 1835) 51, 182
 - History of Pugachev* (*Istoriia Pugacheva*, 1834) 135
 - 'Journey from Moscow to St Petersburg' ('Puteshestvie iz Moskvy v Peterburg', 1834) 168
 - 'Journey to Erzerum during the Campaign of 1829' ('Puteshestvie v Arzurum vo vremia pokhoda 1829 goda',) 264
 - Table-Talk* (1830–7) 8
 - The Captain's Daughter* (*Kapitanskaia dochka*, 1836) 135, 241
 - Protean talent 55, 56, 108, 214, 215
 - public context 108–12, 135, 166, 167, 170, 171, 174, 191 n., 192 n., 193, 198, 210, 244, 261, 274, 283, 291, 293
 - as a reader 1, 6, 7, 8, 11, 38, 41, 43, 44 n., 45, 47 n., 63, 64 n., 70, 71, 76, 77, 80 n., 83 n., 87, 88, 91, 92, 94, 99, 100–1, 102, 103, 121, 132, 134, 147 n., 149, 150, 151, 152, 154, 156, 164, 186, 190, 193 n., 200, 205, 220 n., 222, 233, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 249, 257 n., 265, 270 n., 279 n., 280 n., 283, 286, 287, 290, 293, 297, 298, 299, 308 n., 310, 311, 317, 318, 323, 326 n., 327, 329, 335
 - of English 101 n., 102, 104, 106, 107, 116, 131 n., 147 n., 149, 179 n., 188 n.
 - remembering 146–9, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157, 303
 - role of the narrator 23, 47, 109, 110, 111, 113, 115, 180, 210, 292, 327
 - Romanticism 4, 5, 34, 35, 37, 40, 47, 48, 51, 53, 85, 87, 92, 112, 113, 115, 117, 118, 124, 127, 129, 131, 133, 171, 193, 205, 237, 286, 338
 - self-mythology 135, 176, 306
 - self-reflexive lyrics 52, 139, 140, 144, 151, 320
 - self-representation 1, 29
 - sense of opportunity 14, 174
 - sensibility (literary) 20, 28 n., 51, 143, 152, 187
 - Southern period 5, 13, 34, 47, 69, 92 n., 127, 133, 303 n.
 - status of the poet 2, 4, 10, 11, 15, 30, 32, 56, 60, 61, 68, 94, 103, 115, 117, 146, 167, 181, 182, 190, 191, 195, 197, 208, 210, 212, 213, 215, 272, 305 n.
 - subjectivity 1, 2, 23 n., 49, 51, 59, 61, 78, 81, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 95, 101, 104, 107, 111, 114, 115, 118, 120, 123, 127, 129, 131, 133, 134, 139, 141–2, 146, 147, 151, 152, 153, 156, 224, 320
 - as translator 74 n., 187, 188–90, 194, 222 n., 295 n.
 - Tsarskoe Selo (Lycée) 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 25, 29, 39, 63, 75, 78, 82 n., 95, 99, 113, 152, 159, 168, 197, 218, 224, 225 n., 228, 286, 327, 329, 332–3
 - group loyalty 15, 17, 25, 26, 92
 - vocabulary
 - aesthetic 2, 8, 35, 51, 54, 90, 139, 190
 - conceptual 1, 2, 8, 71, 90, 129, 134, 142–3, 149, 152, 154, 181, 222, 227, 235, 249, 264, 279, 292 n., 296, 319, 330, 332–5
 - moral 220, 268, 275
 - Pushkin, Lev Sergeevich (brother) 112 n.
 - Pushkin, Vasily Lvovich (uncle) 16
 - Pythagoras 205–6
- Quatremère de Quincy 69, 76, 80, 200
- Querelle des Anciens et Modernes 68
- Quintilian 44
- Quintus Curtius Rufus 223
- Raevskii, Nikolai Nikolaevich 119 n., 190 n., 196 n.
- Racine, Jean 17, 18, 38, 161, 298
- Racine, Louis 38
- radicalism 108, 110, 111, 112, 113, 126, 192, 220, 245, 286, 310
- Radishchev, Alexander Nikolaevich 168, 173, 174, 220, 222 n., 280, 281, 282, 283
- Ram, Harsha 68
- Raphael 123, 264
- reader response and implied reader 3, 6, 36, 41, 42, 43, 44 n., 45, 46, 47, 48, 58, 75, 81, 109, 113, 143, 147, 153, 156–7, 162, 176, 178, 179, 180, 182, 184, 185, 251–3, 256, 259, 260, 266, 268, 269, 272, 275, 292, 296, 306, 313, 314, 330, 334, 336
- realism 254

- Reitblatt, Arkadii 13 n., 168 n.
 religious poetry 53, 129, 132, 275–7, 329 n.
Revue de Paris 163
Revue des deux mondes 249 n.
Revue étrangère de la littérature 106, 238 n.
 Reyfman, Irina 4, 14 n.
 Rhetoric 14, 19, 20 n., 32, 36, 39, 46, 49, 57,
 68, 89, 120, 122, 130, 146, 157, 159,
 162, 180, 213, 235, 251, 267, 269,
 283, 312, 326
 pedagogical norm 39
 pictorial 257
 Ricks, Christopher 13
 Riznich, Amalia 303
 Robertson, William 242 n.
 Robespierre 277
 Romanticism 4, 9, 11, 12, 33, 35, 37, 48, 58,
 62, 66, 67, 69, 71 n., 84 n., 85, 86, 89,
 90, 98 n., 99, 103, 114, 117, 118, 119,
 123, 127, 130, 157, 164, 193 n., 205,
 206, 249, 250, 264, 268, 272, 273,
 275, 277, 298, 311, 323
 alienation 89, 245, 272
 as embodiment of innovation 3, 193
 British 5, 246
 codes of 108
 conspicuous individuality/identity 86, 107,
 171, 181, 190 n., 199, 306
 egotistical 200, 231, 308
 elegiac posturing 89
 fear of the mob 209
 English 87, 91, 99, 102 n., 131, 137
 French 5, 10, 49, 77, 99, 151, 187, 200,
 240
 German 131
 poetic forms 137, 161
 revisionism 88
 Romantic classicism 70 n., 74, 88, 238
 Romantic Hellenism 77, 82
 Romantic lyric 30, 56, 111, 118
 English 149
 subjectivity/self-consciousness 10, 64, 107,
 115, 117, 118, 126, 132, 146, 153,
 175, 187, 323
 theory 5, 39, 45 n.
 traditions 5
 Rosen, Charles 75 n., 88 n.
 Rosenblum, Robert 255 n.
 Ross, Marlon B. 308
 Roucher, Jean 120, 193 n.
 Rousseau, Jean-Baptiste 27
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 121, 174, 220, 221,
 281 n., 282
Russkii invalid 230 n.
 Russia
 autocratic stagnation 199
 ‘culture of sensibility’ 280
 Enlightenment ‘corruption’ 222 n.
 national self-awareness 14, 111
 pedagogy in 219–20, 223
 post-Napoleonic repression 89, 222
 role of the nobility 244, 274
 writer’s privileges 173–4
Russian Journal for Ladies 163
 Russian literature 2, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20,
 21, 23, 25, 30, 45 n., 82, 83, 88, 89,
 130 n., 165, 201, 294, 296 n., 330
 Juvenalian satire 221 n., 222
 nineteenth-century institutions 11, 13,
 38
 poetic manuals 71
 (quest for) national poet 22, 167, 202,
 214
 Romantic poetry 93, 181, 190 n.
 scorn of popular favour 249
 Russian philosophers 90, 92, 282
 Rzepka, Charles 147
- Sade, Donatien-Alphonse-François, marquis
 de 293, 294
 sadness 81, 82, 185, 265, 266, 298, 304,
 329
 Sainte-Beuve, Charles-Augustin [Delorme,
 Joseph] 40, 71 n., 77, 86, 102 n.,
 131 n., 147 n., 198, 200, 249–50
 Saint-Lambert, Jean-François de 132
 Saint Louis 257
 Saint-Simon, Henri de 200, 207, 239, 270,
 276, 277
 Salieri, Antonio 51
 Saltykov, S. M. 173 n.
 Sandler, Stephanie 5, 119 n., 127 n., 169 n.,
 193, 195 n., 223 n.
 satire, 17, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 n., 32, 55,
 109, 119, 173, 174, 221, 223, 271
 Scarfe, Francis 187, 189
 scepticism 11, 150, 238, 242, 257, 290, 291,
 318, 336
 Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von 76,
 92, 93, 94, 96, 99, 102, 149–50, 155,
 200, 323
 Schiller, Johann Christoph Friedrich von 76,
 120, 200
 Schlegel, Friedrich 65, 149, 320, 323
 Schoell, Friedrich (Maximilian
 Samson) 211 n., 287 n.
 Schön, L. F. 104, 151–6, 323, 326 n.
 Scipio 219
 Scott, Sir Walter 105, 143 n.
 Ségur, Louis-Philippe, comte de 233, 261
 self-esteem 168, 239, 275
 self-mastery 42, 60, 225, 229, 231, 280,
 299, 300, 301, 312, 328, 331, 332,
 337

- semiotic analysis 4, 5, 6, 92
- Sénancour, Etienne de 77, 300
- Seneca 63, 220, 280 n., 284, 286 n., 289, 316, 318, 328, 335, 337, 338
- sensation 7, 115, 141, 278, 279, 280, 283, 288, 289, 290, 292, 293, 294, 315, 316, 319 n., 325
and emotion 281, 295, 298, 299, 301, 314
and ideas 278, 287
- sensationalist theories of creative perturbation 59
- sensibility (theory of) 10, 11, 12, 35, 39, 40, 42, 53, 64 n., 65, 72, 91, 100, 152, 264, 278, 280, 281, 282, 283 n., 285, 288, 289, 293, 325
- sentimentalism 279, 280, 283, 299
- serfdom 119
- sexuality 288, 290, 292, 293, 294, 295–9, 304, 306, 309, 314
- Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of 64, 91, 95, 289
- Shakespeare, William 21, 105, 117 n., 131 n., 196, 214, 241, 270, 272, 275
- Shakhmatov, count 23, 24
- Shcherbatov, Prince Fedor Fedorovich 222
- Sheats, Paul 137
- Shishkov, Alexander Semenovich, Admiral 16
- Shirinskii-Shakhmatov, Sergei Alexandrovich 24
- Sobolevskii, Sergei Aleksandrovich 210 n.
- social function of art 154, 169, 173, 179, 199–200, 205–12, 215, 223, 276, 277
art for art's sake 10, 12, 62, 159, 169, 185, 198, 199–201, 207, 209, 210, 212, 215, 275
prophetic purpose/social mission of poetry 148, 158, 159, 187, 190, 191, 192, 195–6, 201–2, 204, 207, 238, 272 n.
- Socrates 182, 225, 277
- Son of the Fatherland* (*Syn otechestva*) 125 n., 168 n.
- Sophocles 41
- sources (intellectual and literary) 3, 6, 8, 10, 34, 40, 52, 53, 65, 71, 77, 89, 91, 93, 99, 102, 143 n., 151–7, 211 n., 221 n., 229, 230 n., 241, 253, 261, 262, 283, 284, 287, 289–92, 296 n., 319 n., 323, 325, 327, 333, 335, 336, 337
Greek epigram 77
visual 255–6, 259, 293 n.
- source-criticism/sources studies 2, 3, 4, 19, 202, 273 n.
- Southey, Robert 131 n., 188 n., 207, 273 n.
- Speransky, Mikhail Mikhailovich, count 265
- St Clair, William 11
- St Petersburg 13, 15, 17, 82 n., 109, 135, 160, 161, 163, 218, 293 n., 304
Voltaire's Library 242
St Petersburg Spectator 109
- Staël, Germaine Necker, baronne de 76, 77, 99, 100, 101, 224 n., 256
- Stankevich, Nikolai Vladimirovich 310
- Starobinski, Jean 187, 193 n., 287 n., 314 n.
- statuary 11, 35 n., 62, 74, 76, 78–80, 81, 82, 84, 100, 215, 245 n., 260, 322
- Stendhal, Henri Beyle, *known as* 300, 311
- Stern, Laurence 110
- Stoicism 7, 11, 120, 220, 221, 223, 224 n., 225–9, 272, 277, 278, 279, 280, 285, 287, 289, 290 n., 298, 299, 300, 302, 303, 304, 311, 318, 319, 326–8, 330–4, 335, 336, 337, 338
- Structuralist approach 2, 4, 6, 92, 278
- Stuart, Mary 219
- style 1, 3, 6, 7, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 32, 35, 37, 38, 41, 43, 44 n., 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 58, 62, 75, 80, 87, 89, 90, 98, 109, 110, 112, 124, 131, 134, 144, 158, 176, 186, 189, 194, 203, 205, 214, 215, 222, 225, 286 n., 297, 328
colour 43, 47, 64
decorum (literary) 17, 49, 113, 294
diction 1, 16, 18, 45, 113, 137, 144, 222 n.
in painting 257
transparency 1, 12, 69, 142
- subjectivity 4, 9, 10, 88, 95, 96, 99, 110, 114, 122–3, 134, 152, 154, 186, 190, 191, 209, 250, 260, 281, 295, 323–5, 326 n.
- sublimation 72, 281
- the sublime 61, 62, 66, 68–9, 72, 73, 76 n., 99, 142, 237, 250
egotistical 127, 129, 197, 237
mathematical 131
- Sue, Eugène 200
- Suetonius 276
- Sumarokov, Alexander Petrovich 26, 30, 37
- the supernatural 100, 238, 314
- Surat, Irina 275
- Swartz, Richard 162
- symbolism 65 n., 76, 80, 107, 120, 123, 181, 184, 231, 322, 257, 264, 322 n.

- synecdoche 264
 syntax 16, 24, 26 n., 38, 44 n., 53, 75, 182, 222 n.
- Tacitus 63, 220, 221, 242
- talent 17, 18, 20, 22, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 43, 44, 56, 57, 59, 60, 68, 98 n., 104, 105, 110, 157, 164, 169, 182, 183, 184, 189, 206, 309
 of the common man 199
 creative 48, 143, 186
 inherent 29, 53, 204
 irreproducible 158, 207
- Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles-Maurice, duc de 239
- Tasso, Torquato 123, 137
- taste (poetic) 1, 16, 19, 20 n., 27, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 38, 40, 41, 45, 46, 49, 71 n., 72, 83, 86, 88, 95, 98, 103, 105, 110, 111, 112, 123, 173, 174, 204
- Teleskop* 244 n.
- Tennemann, Wilhelm Gottlieb 100
- textual criticism 2, 4, 205
- Théry, Augustin F. 50, 99–100, 102, 103
- Thomson, James 121
- Tibullus 16, 62 n.
- time/time past 146–7, 150, 151, 154, 156, 264, 318, 327, 328, 330, 332–4, 338
- Tissot, André-Simon 296
- Todd, William Mills, III 11, 28 n., 35 n., 166, 227 n.
- Tolly, Barclay de, Mikhail Bogdanovich, Field-Marshal Prince 81, 82, 217, 218, 260–2, 264–6, 269–71, 273, 276, 337, 338
- Tolstoy, Iakov 261, 265, 304
- Tomashevskii, Boris 3 n., 101 n., 125 n., 192
- tranquillity 139, 141, 227, 232, 245, 280, 291 n., 301, 303, 304, 337
- transcendental philosophy 4, 63, 64, 71 n., 95, 102, 119, 324
- translation 6, 15, 23, 40 n., 63 n., 64, 68, 72, 77 n., 89, 90, 100, 101 n., 102, 143, 156, 161, 164, 188 n., 213 n., 219, 220, 249 n., 253, 257, 270 n., 283, 286 n., 289, 291 n., 302 n., 327, 328 n., 329 n., 330
 of image into verbal portrait 251, 265, 271
- Transon, Abel 289
- Trediakovsky, Vasily 30
- truth 11, 43, 47, 64, 72, 76, 82, 98, 103, 124, 172, 194, 196, 201, 248, 249, 254, 266, 270, 271, 272, 276, 278, 310, 328, 329, 330, 336, 336
- anatomical 76
- artistic 257, 259, 268
- as privilege of genius 187
- emotional 5, 31, 268, 332
- external/historical 156, 230, 235, 239, 242, 250, 252, 253–4, 257, 259, 261, 262, 268
- in imitation 76
- Tulard, Jean 243
- Turgenev, Alexander Ivanovich 26 n., 62 n., 220 n.
- Turgenev, Andrei Ivanovich 161 n., 163 n.
- Tynianov, Iurii 18 n.
- Unbegaun, Boris 8
- Ushakova, Ekaterina Nikolaevna 307
- Ushakov, Elizaveta Nikolaeva 307
- Uvarov, Sergei Semenovich 111
- Vatsuro, Vadim 16 n., 23 n., 32 n., 62 n., 115, 206 n., 213 n.
- Vellanskii, Dmitrii 90, 93
- Venevitinov, Dmitrii Vladimirovich 93
- verisimilitude 79, 100, 110
 moral 268, 272
- versification 16, 52, 75, 160, 182
 iconic 56
- Viazemskii, Petr Andreevich 6 n., 16, 26, 32, 35, 36, 37, 49, 51, 53, 77 n., 160, 161 n., 163, 165, 168 n., 175, 214, 239, 242 n., 286, 305 n., 309
- Vetulius 223
- Vico, Giambattista 205
- victimization (of the virtuous) 229
- viewer (role/response of the) 257–8, 265, 266, 268, 269, 271, 272
- Vigny, Alfred de 50
- Villemain, Abel-François 49, 201, 277
- Virgil 18, 23
- virtue 9, 11, 196, 215, 218, 219, 220, 222, 225, 228, 229, 241, 249, 257, 265, 268, 269, 272, 306, 328, 338
 private 217
- Vitalist discourse 281, 289, 290 n., 317
- Voelikov, Alexander Fedorovich 219 n.
- Voltaire 7, 8, 17, 62 n., 83 n., 95 n., 132, 209, 215, 220, 239, 242, 271, 276, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 291, 294, 295, 296, 318, 324, 327, 338
- Vsevolozhskii, Nikita Vsevolodovich 161 n.
- Vulcan 309
- War Gallery, Hermitage, St Petersburg, Russia, 260, 262, 263, 264, 268, 270, 271
- Watteau, Antoine 294
- Weiskel, Thomas 68

- Westernization 13, 14
- will/volition 2, 10, 47, 55, 60, 97–8, 105,
116, 120, 142, 153, 155, 189, 237,
250, 256, 288, 295, 299, 304, 333
- Wilson, Sir Robert Thomas 253, 257,
259
- Winckelmann, Johann 65, 76, 80 n., 98
- wisdom 5, 11, 123, 134, 225, 229, 255 n.,
298, 300, 301, 311, 329, 333, 337,
338
- wit 17, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 34, 55, 57, 70, 73,
108, 109, 110, 124, 174, 197, 203,
269, 295
- Wolfson, Susan 137
- Wordsworth, William 1, 3, 21, 91, 100, 118,
127, 131 n., 134, 137, 142, 144,
146–56, 162, 164, 168, 169, 183, 185,
197, 204, 249, 250, 320, 321, 322
Lyrical Ballads (1798) 122, 137, 144, 147
- Wortman, Richard 220
- Zavadovskaia, Elena Mikhailovna, countess
70 n.
- Zeus 81, 82
- Zhukovsky, Vasily Andreevich A. 15, 16, 18,
20 n., 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 35, 36, 54,
89, 112, 113 n., 114, 120, 161 n., 163,
179, 188 n., 233 n.