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To Whom Did Pushkin Write? The Narrator-Reader Friendship in Eugene Onegin

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To Whom Did Pushkin Write?

The Narrator-Reader Friendship in *Eugene Onegin*

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Preface

Motley routine of ceaseless play:
Tomorrow will be like Today.
In youth's bloom, free of prohibition,
With brilliant conquests to his name,
Each day a feast, his life a game,
Was he content with his condition?
Or was he hearty and inane
Amid carousals—but in vain? (Eugene Onegin, I.36)

At the start of my senior year, faced with the rapidly approaching reality of graduation and the accompanying end to my college years, I felt anxious about my life's next chapter. Some concerns were easily attended to— developing my cooking skills for a life without Collins, for one.[1] Others proved more complicated. Try as I might, determining what it meant for me to live a meaningful life could not be accomplished with a cookbook. In my search for meaning, I turned to the usual suspects: motivational podcasts and a self-help book (or three), but I ultimately found comfort in Alexander Pushkin's, *Eugene Onegin*, a book I had read by chance in Professor Nicholas Warner's course on the 19th-Century Russian Novel. The first Russian novel I ever read turned out to be my favorite of all time. It was within its pages that I finally felt seen.

This surprised me. *Eugene Onegin* tells the story of a young wealthy man who moves from St. Petersburg to the Russian countryside, and then to urban Moscow, detailing the events of his life in each of these three stages. In the city we learn of his humdrum and disenchanted urban existence. In the country we hear of his rejection of Tatyana—an innocent country girl, and his slaying of his only real friend, Lensky, in a duel. Finally, back in the city, we feel his heartbreak, isolation, and regret upon seeing Tatyana faithfully married to a different man. In other words, nothing that bears any sort of resemblance to my modern 21st century life.

[1] Collins Dining Hall is the dining hall at Claremont McKenna College.

Yet, nearly 200 years since it was published in full, I had something to learn from *Eugene Onegin*. I saw my own days mirrored in the protagonist's "motley routine of ceaseless play." In his bitter loneliness and regret at the novel's end, I saw the very type of person I did not wish to become. In this sense, *Eugene Onegin* gave me the moral instruction I craved. It prompted me to realize that I did not want to continue on a path where "Tomorrow will be like Today" (I.36). In each of the many times I have read the novel since, I have closed its covers with a greater reverence for friendship, a heart more open to love, and a desire to treat others as I desire to be treated myself. Although I am neither male, nor Russian, nor living in the 19th century, Pushkin's advice felt directed towards me. I can think of few other literary works whose impact is as timeless.

At first, I had thought it was solely the thematic content of *Eugene Onegin* which resonated with me. However, as I have spent more time with *Onegin's* verse, I believe its magic stems from a greater force than its content alone. I no longer believe my connection to *Eugene Onegin* to be one of a coincidental interest in his themes, or a purely subjective individual experience. Rather, Pushkin's sensitivity to the narrator-reader relationship draws the reader into the work and elevates the reader's role to that of confidant and fellow observer. In the following chapters, I examine the narrative techniques employed by Pushkin in *Eugene Onegin* to demonstrate how Pushkin views his reader as a friend—and expects his reader to act as a friend in return. Ultimately, I seek to illuminate the powerful benefits to a reader that Pushkin's imagined narrator-reader friendship can provide.

It is worth noting that my emphasis on Pushkin's authorial relationship with his reader is not an effort to deny the many other features of the book that contribute to its greatness. *Eugene Onegin* was an experiment for the Russian writer: an attempt at writing a novel in verse. It

proved a success. *Eugene Onegin* is widely accepted as Pushkin's best and most complex work. Indeed, nearly two centuries since it was first published in full, its ubiquitous influence penetrates Russian culture, literary and otherwise. Its 14-line unit, now coined the "Onegin Stanza" is "a thing of intricate and varied beauty for which there is no precise precedent in metrics" (Arndt ix). Impressive, is exactly that *Eugene Onegin*'s achievement reflects not one particular area of accomplishment, but as Walter Arndt offers "astonishing and sustained perfection" (Arndt ix). But if *Eugene Onegin* has earned the label of perfection, its narrative structure is essential to it.

Introduction

An Overview: Narration in Eugene Onegin

The story of *Eugene Onegin* is told by a fictionalized Pushkin: a character which Craig Cravens describes as "a vague and stylized portrait of the author, comprising of elements from the worlds of both fiction and reality" (Cravens 684). Cravens notes that although Pushkin the narrator shares many of Pushkin the author's autobiographical facts, the two are not one and the same. Pushkin the narrator is not only aware of this distinction but emphasizes it to the reader stressing the "artificiality of his literary construct" (Cravens 684). *Eugene Onegin*'s narrator is then not only a "self-conscious narrator"— a narrator who is aware of themself as a writer, but a narrator conscious of his status as an "implied author" a term coined by Wayne Booth in the *Rhetoric of Fiction* to be a narrator, "always distinct from the "real man"—whatever we take him to be—who creates…a "second self," as he creates his work" (Booth 151-155).

Evidence of the narrator's self-awareness exists even in the first chapter. In his account of Onegin's room, the narrator prefaces his description by questioning his narrative abilities: "Oh, will it be within my powers \ To conjure up the private den" (I.23). In the chapter's final stanza, the narrator muses on the fictitious nature of his work directly:

> I've thought about the hero's label
> And on what lines the plot should run;
> Meanwhile, it seems, my present fable
> Has grown as far as Chapter One. (I.60)

By ending the chapter with a reflection on the process of writing his "fable," the narrator emphasizes his preceding lines fictionality. This is necessary because Pushkin often blurs the lines between fiction and life. For instance, in Stanza 51, Pushkin's narrator and his "friend" Onegin make travel plans: "My friend Onegin had decided \ With me on foreign sights to gaze" (I.51). While the fictional character of the narrator and the fictional Onegin may have had

"plans" to go on a trip, Pushkin's self-conscious narrator and the reader exist on a separate plane: they understand the events described as fictitious.

The merit of Pushkin's narrative style is two-fold. On the one hand, Pushkin works to blur the line between fiction and reality by immersing the reader into the world of the book. The narrator's first-person accounts of his interactions with Onegin combined with the narrator's identity as Pushkin, creates the illusion that the reader is consuming a work of nonfiction, and is learning about Pushkin's real life. On the other hand, Pushkin's narrator's explicit references to *Eugene Onegin's* status as a work of fiction, brings the narrator and the reader together by placing them outside the confines of the novel. Together the reader and the narrator share a bond of higher awareness and are separated from the other characters who remain unconscious of their fictive existence.

Pushkin's choice to "brazenly bare his biography" particularly draws the reader into the fictive world of the work (Cravens 685). "By packing his text with autobiographical references, Pushkin envelops his novel in the larger extra-textual, real world of author and reader, so that the worlds of fiction and reality are forced to intersect" (Cravens 686). Consider the novel's first page. The narrator offers that Onegin's birthplace was somewhere where "I myself once used to be: \ The North, though, disagrees with me" which, as Walter Arndt explains in his note, was "a saucy reference to Pushkin's penal transfer from the northern capital…for his mildly subversive poems and mordant epigrams" (I.2, Arndt 33). By blurring the lines between Pushkin's real life and the fictional, Pushkin builds a world for his reader to enter which feels real.

Yet, the narrator's awareness of the "borders of the fictional world" provides the reader with a different experience than that of reading an ordinary novel (Cravens 684). The narrator's self-consciousness allows him to engage with his reader in a higher dialog about the story he

relays, because he understands that he is writing to an audience of readers about a series of fictitious events. Pushkin's reader is treated not as a spectator to an unfolding novel, but as a participant in its very creation. Pushkin's narrator considers Onegin "a dear friend" and engages psychologically and emotionally with the characters whose lives he relates" (I.2, Cravens 684). But he also recognizes that these relationships are fictional; his true relation is his reader.

Pushkin's narrator's consciousness allows him to engage with the reader about his stylistic choices. Because Pushkin's narrator knows that his work will be read by an audience, he anticipates their opinions and responds to them preemptively. Dialogue of this sort joins the reader and narrator in intimate discussion. It pulls them away from the fictive world of the novel, into the realm of artistic thought. Consider the narrator's introduction of Tatyana in Chapter 2:

> Straight to her elder sister then,
> Dear reader, let me turn my pen.
>
> Tatyana was her name… I grovel
> That with such humble name I dare
> To consecrate a tender novel.
> And yet, I ask you, is it fair
> To sneer at it? It's full-toned, pleasant (II.23-24)

Pushkin's narrator begins with a direct address to the reader. They are "dear" to him, and so he asks their permission to proceed: to "let" him turn his pen to his next subject. Already, Pushkin invokes a connection between the narrator and his reader. In fact, the narrator imagines himself writing not to a reader but proceeding through the creation of the novel with them at his side—he asks for their continued attention and grace. He then introduces his central female character, Tatyana. Anticipating his reader's surprise at so common and rustic a name, he asks, "is it fair \ To sneer at it?" And justifies his choice: it is, he suggests, "full-toned" and "pleasant." In this sense, Pushkin's narrator engages with his imagined reader, not just informing them about the plot, but including them in the process of writing it into existence. To describe his question as

purely rhetorical would be to misread its intent. Pushkin genuinely engages with his reader, inviting them not only into the novel through address, but into the process of its construction.

The narrator's sensitivity to the reader also manifests in his transitions. In them, Pushkin's narrator often refers to himself and the reader using the first-person plural pronoun "us." Pushkin envisions his narrator and reader as a pair. One instance of this occurs in Chapter 3. Lensky and Onegin are traveling home from the Larin's via coach when cleverly, the narrator urges, "Let us keep silent, overhearing \ What our heroes have to say:" before relaying in the 3rd person a dialogue between Onegin and Lensky (III.4). Pushkin's genius is that although there is not a real conversation to overhear, the narrator poses it to the reader as such, creating the illusion of shared experience. Pushkin's narrator's self-consciousness allows him to break down the "fourth wall" between the reader and the novel's action. The narrator invites the reader to join him in the experience of the novel.

The thread between Tatyana's introduction and Onegin and Lensky's trip home is that in each scene the narrator treats the reader with intimacy. This is not a coincidence; Pushkin's attention to the reader pervades throughout the whole of *Eugene Onegin*. In every chapter, the reader is ascribed not the role of distant observer but treated as a close and trusted friend. From respecting their anticipation: writing at one point "Onward, my story, faster, faster!" to leaving them with best wishes "God bless!" *Eugene Onegin* exists as a model for a unique narrator-reader relationship, one that provides for greater and more meaningful reader involvement (VI.4-VIII.49).

With the central facets of Eugene Onegin's narrative structure outlined, the remaining chapters of my thesis seek to analyze the reader's role in *Eugene Onegin* by clarifying in greater depth the relationship between the narrator and the reader within the work. More specifically,

they will offer that the crux of Pushkin's narrative style is that he treats the reader he addresses as an intimate friend. With this argument in mind, Chapter 1 will survey the previous scholarly attention that has been paid to both Pushkin's voice as a narrator and his reader's role in the work. This will lay the groundwork for my own analysis of the narrator-reader relationship in Eugene Onegin—one which concerns not just the readers of Pushkin's own time, but readers of the present and future. Having considered this literature, Chapter 2 will evaluate the type of friend Pushkin writes to by examining the qualities needed for the reader's full participation in the work. Namely, it will assess the cultural background and familiarity with Pushkin's life needed to understand his narrator's references and humor. Finally, in Chapter 3, I hope to clarify the intimacy Pushkin imagined between his reader and himself by providing a sketch of the friend he is to the reader in return. In all, by considering the role that each plays in their friendship, I hope to better understand the uniquely reciprocal relationship that Pushkin forges with his reader in *Eugene Onegin*.

Chapter 1

Literature Review: Narration in Eugene Onegin

Previous scholars have analyzed Pushkin's style of narration in *Eugene Onegin.* However, their scholarship has concerned itself primarily with Pushkin's perspective as a narrator, and not his relationship with the reader—his main narratee. For instance, J. Thomas Shaw in "*The Author-Narrator's Stance in* Onegin," attempts to pinpoint Pushkin's narrator's overarching attitude accounting for the fact that "the characters and the author develop while the novel is being written and published" (Shaw xlviii). In his search for a "unity of stance behind the work which accommodates the author's development and reactions to the real world after he began writing and publishing," Shaw settles on one of "mature reenchantment" (Shaw xlviii-liv). Shaw reaches this conclusion by evaluating "'The Demon,' a lyric poem by Pushkin which [he deems] was obviously closely connected in his consciousness with his novel in verse" (Shaw li). Distinctively, Shaw's analysis of Pushkin's narration centers on Pushkin's state of mind. When Shaw does reference the reader, he does so only to briefly note Pushkin's assumptions about him. For example, he suggests that Pushkin's narrator assumes that his reader is familiar with Pushkin's previous poetry and knows of Pushkin's "relevant life experiences" (Shaw xlviii).

While Sona Stephan Hoisington places greater emphasis on the narratee than Shaw, she too focuses on what their treatment implies about Pushkin's narrator's stance.[2] Hoisington suggests that in *Eugene Onegin*, there are two readers: the implied reader and "the 'reader' addressed within the work, or what [she] should like to call the 'mock reader'" (Hoisington lxv). Hoisington assesses Pushkin's attitudes towards each type of reader and determines that "the implied reader is the narrator's real intimate, and a bond of intimacy is created by means of irony" (Hoisington lxv). Hoisington also discusses the dynamic between Pushkin's narrator and

[2] In her essay, "*The Hierarchy of Narratees in* Eugene Onegin."

the "'friends' (*druz'ya*)" (other than the reader) that he addresses in his novel. Hoisington provides that this "intimate circle" consists of "Pushkin's fellow poets, the well-known Pushkin Pleiad" (Hoisington lxvii-lzviii). She suggests that Pushkin "draw[s] a line between "'himself" and 'the group'" (Hoisington lxix). Hoisington concludes that Pushkin regards each of his three narratees in a distinct hierarchy. She finds that Pushkin's "implied author and implied reader stand firmly and securely together and from above look down on the misguided friends…[and] Below them yet, unaware that he is at the very bottom of the heap, struts the complacent "[mock] reader" (Hoisington lxxiii).

Hoisington's assessment—that a reader of *Eugene Onegin* can "look down on mock reader and poet-friends alike, aware that these friends too are 'fictive' and secure in the 'knowledge' that we as implied reader are the true friend"—adds to Shaw's essay by identifying a different aspect of Pushkin's narrative stance: his hierarchal understanding of his addressees (Hoisington lxix). However, while Hoisington offers a brief sketch of each of the three groups of narratees, she does not delve into the dynamics within each group, or the particulars of the relationship between the implied reader and the narrator.

This is precisely what V. A. Grekhnyov, in his essay, "The Dialogue with the Reader in Pushkin's Novel *Eugene Onegin*," begins to address. Despite sharing Hoisington's concern with Pushkin's implied reader, Grekhnyov differs from her claim that the implied reader is separate from the reader addressed directly by the narrator. Rather, Grekhnyov understands Pushkin's narrator to be engaging in a multi-voiced dialogue with a single imagined (and referenced) reader and even goes so far as to suggest that due to the narrator's different voices, Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic applies to Pushkin's relationship with the reader.

Significantly, Grekhnyov goes beyond Shaw and Hoisington's analyses by looking at not only Pushkin's narrator's stance but the role he gives to the reader. Grekhnyov asserts that a reader of *Eugene Onegin* has a dual existence as a reader of the work and a quasi-character within it. Grekhnyov believes that Pushkin's addresses are not to a "mock reader" but to the actual one, inviting them into the novel's fictional reality. While Grekhnyov concedes that the reader cannot reply to the narrator within the novel, he claims that Pushkin's narrator addresses and anticipates their reply. Due to this involvement, Pushkin elevates the reader's role within the work.

Out of all of the scholarship on the subject, my thesis then builds on Grekhnyov's analysis of the reader's role in *Eugene Onegin* the most. Shaw and Hoisington provide important insights into the novel's narrative stance, but their arguments stop when they are just beginning. Neither scholar considers the effect that Pushkin's narrative stance has on the reader's role within the work. Shaw's understanding of Pushkin's "mature reenchantment" is important because it informs the way that Pushkin writes to his reader. Similarly, Hoisington's understanding of Pushkin's "hierarchy of narratees" is important because it says something about how Pushkin views the audience he writes to. But neither scholar seems to appreciate that this is the true significance of their claims. Rather, it is only Grekhnyov who makes the essential connection between Pushkin's narrative stance and its effect on the reader's role. Grekhnyov's observation that the reader is particularly "elevated" in *Eugene Onegin* gets to the heart of its narrative genius. The next two chapters seek to substantiate Grekhnyov's claim of an elevated reader. But, they also seek to go beyond it, by suggesting that the reader's elevation is not to Hoisington's assumed status of "superior narratee" but to the level of intimate friend.

But before them, it is worth taking a moment to acknowledge what my thesis is not. With all of its mention of the "reader" and their "role" within the work, it might seem that my thesis is in the vein of scholarship known as reader response criticism. It is not. Reader response criticism is defined by Ross C. Murfin as a field of scholarship which "focuses on what texts do to, or in, the mind of the reader, rather than regarding a text as something with properties exclusively its own" (Murfin 126). It is an extraordinarily important lens through which to study any work of literature. But for the purposes of this thesis, it is not my focus. Rather, the reader's role I am concerned with is what Grekhnyov and Hoisington define as the "implied reader." This reader exists as a quasi-character within the novel itself and exists before an actual reader turns through its pages. This reader, the one imagined by Pushkin as he wrote, is the reader who becomes the narrator's friend.

Chapter 2

The Reader as Pushkin's Friend

No two friendships are alike. One's lived experience, personality, and level of commitment to a given relationship all inform the type of friend someone is and expects in return. Pushkin's imagined friendship with his reader is no different. This chapter focuses on the imagined reader in *Eugene Onegin*. Its central question is: What type of person did Pushkin imagine himself to be writing to?

Although the impact of *Eugene Onegin* reaches beyond its 19th-century Russian origins, Pushkin expected his reader to have at least a basic familiarity with the time and place of which he wrote—that is, of Russia from 1819 to the spring of 1825 (Shaw xlix). *Eugene Onegin* contains specific references to the political and cultural conditions of its time. For instance, when Pushkin describes one of Onegin's many glitzy nights, he refers to a specific type of champagne. He writes that as Onegin "enters: [a restaurant] corks begin to fly, \ The Comet's vintage gushes high" (I.17). To the modern reader, Arndt elucidates the reference: the "Comet's vintage" is a champagne of the year 1811, memorable also for a comet" (Arndt 32).

Pushkin trusts his reader will not only notice but make sense of his reference to this expensive bottle of champagne. Pushkin's "brand awareness" anticipates the contemporary fixation on name brands and material goods as status signifiers. Though Pushkin references a vintage particular to his historical moment, it is easy for a modern reader to understand Onegin's status-hungry company by simply filling in a brand of their own. (A glass of Dom Pérignon, anyone?) Pushkin's 21st-century relatability stems partly from his uncanny discernment of which cultural fixations were there to stay.

That said, not all of Pushkin's references are as easily accessible. Consider Chapter 4 when he speaks of "Tolstoy's wondrous brush" (IV.30). This Tolstoy is not to be confused by a

modern reader with the later Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, who shared the same last name. Rather, Pushkin refers to "F.P Tolstoy, [who was] an erudite contemporary painter and medal lionist whose prestige helped to make the non-literary arts respectable among the Russian aristocracy" (Arndt 111). Pushkin's reader, particularly a modern one, must possess a certain degree of Russian cultural understanding to make this distinction.

Pushkin also assumes that his reader is in tune with the controversies of his time. Although muted by intense censorship during his lifetime, Pushkin still comments (albeit mildly) on the political and historical circumstances of the early 19th century. In Chapter 6, Pushkin lambasts the sordid state of Russian infrastructure. He uses Tatyana's journey to Moscow to comment on the poor quality of the roads: "Now our roads are hard on coaches, \ Our bridges mold in disrepair" (VII.34). On that same journey, he references Russia's political past. As Tatyana approaches the city, Pushkin bids farewell to the "scene of grandeur humbled, \ Petrovsky Palace" and wishes to speedily continue past the embarrassment, "onward, fast!" (VII.38). The palace, which had become "Napoleon's headquarters when the great fire of 1812 drove him from the city," is assumed knowledge (Arndt 191). Pushkin's relationship with his reader is predicated on shared historical and cultural literacy. However, as his discussion of Onegin's dressing room in Chapter 1 reveals, it goes far beyond that; Pushkin considers his reader a friend.

The description of Onegin's dressing room is rife with cultural allusions. Pushkin's mention of fashion trends reflects the shared frame of reference he imagined having with his reader. In Chapter 1, stanza 23, Pushkin comments on the influx of British fashion amongst Russian's fashionable (and his distaste for it): "What London makes for cultured whimsy \ Of novelties polite and flimsy" (I.23). But Pushkin's imagined intimacy with his reader extends

beyond this shared cultural knowledge. In stanzas 23 to 25, Pushkin uses the plural pronoun of "us," to bring him and his reader together. He also describes Onegin as "our green \ Philosopher,"—thus elevating his reader's status in the story by making its main character "theirs" and not solely "his" (I.23). Finally, Pushkin speaks in a lighthearted and teasing tone. He does not adopt the role of a formal narrator telling a tale but rather a joking friend. This is not a one-time situation. Throughout all of *Eugene Onegin*, Pushkin views his reader as his friend. Because of that designation, Pushkin ascribes to his reader certain expectations. After all, friendship goes both ways.

To find concrete evidence that Pushkin sees his reader as a friend, one does not need to look very hard. Pushkin's narrator calls them one explicitly. One of the first instances occurs in Chapter 2 when the narrator speaks of Lensky's return to the countryside. There Pushkin offers a meditation on the cyclical nature of life:

> Our own bell, friends, is tolling, tolling,
> Our children's seed will come of age
> And swiftly crowd us off the stage.
>
> Meanwhile drink deeply of life's essence,
> Life's heady draught, enjoy it, friends! (II.38-39)

Twice in the span of five lines, the narrator refers to his reader as his friend. This choice is emphasized through the commas which separate each address from the rest of their respective stanzas. In the first instance, "friends" is separated by one comma on either side. In the second, it is sandwiched between one comma and an exclamation mark. Not only is the distinction of friendship made, but it is made deliberately.

Pushkin refers to his reader as a friend frequently. In Chapter 3, Pushkin again reaches for the label of "friend." Writing about Tatyana (and the Russian public)'s love of novels, the narrator comments to his reader that it "surely, friends, defies all reason!" (III.13). Pushkin is

clearly not a fan of what he calls the "novel curse," but he is of this intimate form of address (III.13). Again, as in Chapter 2, when Pushkin's narrator calls his reader a friend, he uses commas to separate this word from the rest of the stanza. Pushkin not only repeatedly uses the title "friend" but consistently emphasizes its importance.

Distinctly, in all three of the aforementioned cases of the reader being labeled a "friend," Pushkin uses the plural "friends" as opposed to the singular "friend." Pushkin's choice to use the plural reflects his narrator's self-awareness of his role within the work. Reading *Eugene Onegin* is an individual experience for the reader: they engage in a one-on-one relationship with the work and its narrator. Pushkin cultivates his reader's awareness of their individuality by addressing them singularly. For instance, he asks the individual reader in Chapter 4, "My reader, can you help bestowing \ Praise on Eugene for the fine part \ He played with stricken Tanya?" (IV.18). With the singular "reader" and the possessive "my," Pushkin leaves no room for the implication of community; there is a direct bond between the singularly addressed reader and the narrator. Pushkin writes in a way that encourages the reader to understand themselves as the whole of the narrator's audience.

In contrast, while Pushkin desires for his reader to feel singularly connected to him and his work, he remains aware that he is writing to a number of readers. Pushkin's use of the plural "friends" reflects that self-awareness. Pushkin's self-conscious narrator understands that as the author of a work he is writing to not just one friend—but appealing to a number of reader-friends. This recognition also comes across towards the end of the novel when Pushkin writes, "My reader—friend or not, whichever \ You were—now that the story's end \ Is here our mingled paths to sever" (VIII.49). Although Pushkin again addresses a singular reader, his aside "friend or not, whichever \ You were" provides a subtle reminder that he hopes to speak to many.

Pushkin speaks to a variety of readers, each of whom he understands will approach the text in their own way.

However, though Pushkin's addresses to his "friends" reveal that he imagined himself to be writing to an audience, they also provide insight into the individual relationship he imagined between his narrator and each person within that community of friends. Pushkin's addresses to his "friends" reveal two essential aspects of his understanding of the friendship he would have with them. First, Pushkin's use of the term "friend" reflects the intimacy he imagines with his reader. Pushkin's reader is not some ambiguous individual; they are someone whom he confides in and trusts. When Pushkin writes that "surely, friends, [this] defies all reason," his use of "friend" shapes his line's very meaning (III.13). Pushkin not only shares his opinion that "surely" the fascination with novels "defies all reason," but invites his "friend" the reader to join him in it. Pushkin imagines a greater intimacy between him and his reader than that between an ordinary narrator and narratee; They are friends able to assess popular culture hand in hand.

Second, Pushkin's use of direct address reveals that he views his reader as an actively involved friend, not a passive addressee. Pushkin imagines himself to be engaged in conversation with a "friend." Although Pushkin understands that his reader cannot actually respond to him, his addresses to them are not rhetorical. They reflect his effort to forge a genuine connection between them. Pushkin hopes that his reader (his friend) will genuinely engage with what he is saying.

And even when Pushkin does not call his reader "friend," it is clear he still views them as one. An important way that Pushkin reinforces his feelings of friendship towards his reader is through his use of plural pronouns. Pushkin uses the plural pronouns of "we," "us," and the possessive determiner of "our" to emphasize the closeness of the relationship between him and

his reader. This literary technique has two benefits. First, it strengthens the bond between the reader and the narrator. Second, it allows the narrator to assert his intimacy with his reader without diluting the meaning of the term "friend" through overuse.

Pushkin particularly uses pronouns to his advantage in Chapter 2 when introducing the relationship between Onegin and Lensky. The narrator offers that in response to Lensky's "youthful love's ingenuous tale \ Onegin was not long unsealing;" He acknowledges that though it was "a most affecting story, true, \ To us, however, [it was] far from new" (II.19). Pushkin's use of the pronoun "us" affirms the alliance between his reader and narrator. They are joined in their opinion: the poet Lensky's naivety is sweet, but it is an outlook that the author and reader have together outgrown.

The use of "us" reflects an intentional choice by Pushkin to view his reader and his narrator as one. Pushkin could have easily written the sentence without the plural pronoun. Replacing the plural "us" with the singular "me" to indicate his opinion would have still allowed the line to fit within the Onegin stanza's form. Pushkin's pronoun choice was not made out of stylistic necessity but informed by his view of a narrator-reader friendship. He views himself not as speaking to a stranger but as experiencing the novel with someone close to him.

Pushkin employs two other collective forms of speech: the phrase "you and me" and the possessive determiner "our," both of which he uses when writing of Tatyana's blossoming love for Onegin. The narrator explains to the reader:

> What causes you and me to nod—
> Our tender dreamer saw them blended
> Into a single essence warm,
> Embodied in Onegin's form (III.9)

Although they do not explicitly indicate friendship, phrases like "you and me" highlight Pushkin's closeness with his reader. By placing the "you" of the reader and the "me" of the

narrator together, Pushkin subverts the traditionally hierarchical narrator-reader relationship with one of mutuality. This intimacy is furthered by Pushkin's use of the positive determiner "our" to indicate the (narrator and reader's) dual ownership over the character of Tatyana. As was the case in his description of "our green \ Philosopher [Onegin]" in Chapter 1, by making characters "theirs" and not solely "his," Pushkin establishes a friendship between reader and narrator (I.23).

Just as the narrator's explicit and implicit references to the reader evidence Pushkin's view of a narrator-reader friendship, so do Pushkin's expectations of his reader. Pushkin expects his reader to possess more than just a shared cultural and educational background. He anticipates they are familiar with the details of his life, share his sense of humor, and will express tolerance towards him and his work. In other words, he expects them to be a good friend. The expectations Pushkin places on his readers prove that his references to them as "friends" are more than the product of stylistic choice. Rather, they are indicative of a genuine relationship.

Pushkin's assumption of his reader's familiarity with the details of his life speaks to the intimacy he imagines with them. Pushkin writes not to a distant reader but to a knowing friend. Moreover, if his reader forgets these details, Pushkin reminds him. When the narrator speaks of his travel plans and hopes to visit Africa in the first chapter, he reminds the reader of his lineage twice. It is "my [his] own, my [his] native Africa," which he wishes to see (I.50). By doing so, Pushkin breaks down the barriers between him and the reader by ensuring their familiarity with each other.

Although he likely wishes it was not so, Pushkin cannot ask the reader to reciprocate. There is no way for them to share the details of their life with him. Pushkin demonstrates his interest, nonetheless. For instance, he wonders about their heritage when he writes, "Born where Nevá flows, and where you, \ I daresay, gentle reader, too \ Were born, or once were wont to

shine" (I.2). Though Pushkin cannot create mutual intimacy, he provides for at least the sentiment of it.

Evidencing his view of friendship, other times Pushkin simply trusts in his reader's knowledge of him. Towards the end of the novel, Pushkin comments on the works of one of his family members. Assuming the reader's knowledge of his uncle, V.L. Pushkin's, poetry, Pushkin mentions the arrival of: "My own first cousin, too, Buyánov \ In a vizored cap, a little dim \ (As you no doubt remember him)" (V.26). Funnily enough, this reference to a cousin does not describe one of Pushkin's actual ones. Instead, it is "a playful allusion to one Buyánov who figures with these attributes in a poem by Pushkin's uncle V.L. Pushkin." Pushkin's cleverness is that "Buyánov being a child of his uncle's intellect, thus becomes Pushkin's "cousin" (Ardnt 136). It is a skillful play on words. But, even more importantly, it assumes the reader's knowledge of Pushkin and his family life. In order for the clever line to land, the reader must "no doubt remember" the character from their previous reading or be clued in by a helpful translator. Either way, the personal nature of the reference reflects an assumed degree of closeness between the narrator and the reader.

Pushkin also expects his reader to share his same sense of humor and love for wit. In *Eugene Onegin*, Pushkin adopts a playful and ironic attitude toward his reader. Through sarcasm, teasing, and self-deprecation, Pushkin suffuses his verse with humor—that is, as long as his jokes land. The content of *Eugene Onegin* is not always happy: it features a fateful duel and two instances of heartbreak. It also begins with the illness and subsequent death of Onegin's uncle. Moreover, although Pushkin adds levity to the work, his use of humor is not overt. Therefore, it takes a certain type of reader to appreciate Pushkin's humor. Pushkin expects his

reader to be a friend who finds things funny in the same ways as him. That is, they must be able to poke fun at themselves and relish in his successful use of wry and occasionally dark wit.

In the case of Onegin's inheritance, his wry sense of humor is on full display. Pushkin's narrator remarks that Onegin was "pleased to see his life's stale plot \ Exchanged for—well, no matter what" (I.53). The first half of the line takes the form of typical third-person narration. Pushkin relays Onegin's joy over his sudden influx of wealth. The second half, however, adds a touch of dark humor to the reality at hand. Onegin's joy stems from the death of his uncle. His riches were "exchanged for" a life. Pushkin sardonically jokes that this truth is better left unsaid, "—well no matter what" (I.53). Stylistically, Pushkin's humor is meant for the reader: the em dash between "for" and "well" creates an extended pause for them as they anticipate what he is going to say. But its content is meant for them as well. Pushkin envisions his reader to have a particular sense of humor. In order to enjoy the joke, Pushkin's reader must be able to look past Pushkin's obvious irreverence for Onegin's uncle. As his friend, he expects they will.

Whereas in the case of Onegin's fortune, a character was the subject of Pushkin's joke, in other instances, it is the reader themselves. This occurs in Chapter 4 when Pushkin addresses his reader's lack of patience. After inserting a two-stanza tangent about his tendency to "fool… about with verse," Pushkin returns to his story, chiding the reader: "Well, and Onegin? Brothers, patience! \ Don't hurry on this tale of mine" (IV.36-37). Here, the narrator jokes around with the reader as friends would do. Having the self-awareness to know that the reader has likely lost interest, Pushkin turns the spotlight to them, "Brothers, patience!" Although he uses an exclamation mark, Pushkin's tone is more playful than charged. Pushkin does urge the reader not to "hurry on this tale," but refers to him as an intimate, a "brother," insinuating that the comment

is made only in jest. Again, Pushkin expects that his reader will be able to take his teasing in stride. His intention is not to insult them but for them to laugh together.

Pushkin adopts a similarly playful tone toward the reader just a few stanzas later when he writes:

> At last a crackling frost enfolded
> Fields silvered o'er with early snows:
> (All right—who am I to withold it,
> The rhyme you know was coming—ROSE) (IV.42)

In this case, making an obvious rhyme with "snows" and "rose," Pushkin laughs at his readers for "know[ing] it was coming." The stress created by the all-capitalized "ROSE" functions as a "Ha!" directly in the reader's face. The casual "All right" in the line before it denotes that this mockery is being said only in good humor and softens the blow. Exchanges with the reader like these, reflect that Pushkin understands his reader to be not only a friend, but one he can joke with. Conversely, Pushkin's reader must be someone who can appreciate his sarcastic and teasing asides, or their friendship will be on the outs.

Similarly, Pushkin's reader must also be someone who gives him grace. Pushkin imagines his reader to be a friend willing to treat him and his novel with compassion. He expects his reader's tolerance towards his stylistic choices, characters, and own moral character. However, this tolerance is not to be conflated with submission. Pushkin's understanding of his reader as a friend requires him to justify his choices to them. Were Pushkin's narrator to speak to the reader authoritatively, their relationship would lack the mutual respect demanded by friendship. Pushkin, knowing this, then takes the time to explain his more controversial narrative choices. He asks, for instance, that his choice to praise Onegin generously for his "sermon" rejecting Tatyana be respected:

> My reader, can you help bestowing
> Praise on Eugene for the fine part

> He played with stricken Tanya? Showing
> Simple Nobility of heart (IV.18)

Pushkin's role as the novel's author means that his words will be published regardless of his reader's opinion of them, however, his desire for friendship with the reader requires that they remain in agreement. Pushkin must ask his reader if they can "help bestowing \ Praise on Eugene" because he wants their attention *and* support. Pushkin anticipates that his reader will be supportive as long as they feel considered. He deems his concern for their opinions enough to merit their support.

Pushkin's understanding of his reader as a tolerant friend also manifests in his hope that they will not judge his characters too harshly. *Eugene Onegin's* characters possess the nuance and mixed qualities of people in the real world. They are neither wholly good nor wholly bad. Because of this nuance, Pushkin depends on his reader not to be too critical in their assessments of them. The reader who fully appreciates *Eugene Onegin* must accept its characters for who they are. It is only then that they can take away its moral lessons.

Onegin is undoubtedly flawed. Nevertheless, Pushkin expects his reader to feel for him when Tatyana rejects him at the novel's end. In Chapter 8, Tatyana gives Onegin a taste of his own medicine. She offers only a reminder of their past in response to his declaration of love: "How to your oration \ I then submitted, meek and dumb? \ Today, I think, your turn has come" (VIII.42). The scene is a victory for Tatyana who has matured and made a good life for herself despite Onegin's earlier rejection. However, Pushkin hopes his reader will recognize that it is even more so the moment of Onegin's defeat. Onegin's indifference to the emotions of others finally catches up to him. Yet, the reader can only learn from Onegin's mistakes if they can feel for his self-induced heartbreak. Pushkin expects the reader to be a friend to him and his characters.

In the same way, Pushkin also asks his reader to avoid passing judgment on him. Pushkin hopes his reader, like a good friend, will not judge him too harshly. Writing of the friendship between Onegin and Lensky, Pushkin observes that "they soon are closer than two brothers. \ Thus friends are made (I'm guilty, too) \ For lack of anything to do" (II.13). In this case, Pushkin not only provides a detail about the relationship between two characters but asks for his reader's tolerance regarding his own moral character. Pushkin is honest with the reader, admitting that pursuing friendship out of boredom is something that he is "guilty, [of] too." Pushkin's candor reflects his understanding that he is writing to a friend who accepts him for himself. He feels no need to conceal his flaws. Pushkin anticipates that he can ask for leniency not just as an author but as a peer of the reader.

Pushkin's view of his reader as a friend is reflected in his use of the title and the expectations he ascribes to them. Pushkin expects his reader not only to know him, but to joke with him. He anticipates they will also provide him with a degree of mutual respect and tolerance found between two intimates. However, the reader is rewarded due to these high expectations. Pushkin's desire to maintain his friendship with the reader raises the stakes of what his narration must accomplish; Pushkin must also treat the reader as a friend.

Pushkin's desired relationship with the reader necessitates an acute awareness of his and his reader's collective engagement with the novel. This awareness is reflected subtly in Pushkin's use of collective pronouns such as "our." The reciprocal nature of friendship and Pushkin's imagined one with his reader defines *Eugene Onegin's* narrative form. By elevating the importance of the imagined reader in the work, Pushkin departs from the traditional narrator-reader hierarchy and meaningfully engages with the reader as an equal. Now that the nature of

Pushkin's imagined friend has been determined, the next chapter seeks to examine the specific type of friend that Pushkin is in return.

Chapter 3

Pushkin's narrator as a friend

My reader—friend or not, whichever
You were—now that the story's end
Is here our mingled paths to sever,
I want to leave you as a friend.
Farewell. Whate'er you sought to capture
In my loose rhymes—be it the rapture
Of reminiscence, pause from toil,
Lively tableaux, the piercing foil
Of wit, or bits of faulty grammar—
Please God you found here but a grain
To conjure dreams, to entertain
To move the heart, to raise a clamor
Of controversy in the press.
Upon this note we part—God bless! (VIII.49)

At the end of *Eugene Onegin*, the narrator addresses his reader one final time. The scholar Sona Stephan Hoisington interprets this final address as a form of extended verbal irony. Hoisington suggests that Pushkin is forging a "'between-the lines dialogue' between himself and his 'implied reader'" who is different from the mock reader addressed in the stanza. While the mock reader is "no friend of" Pushkin and a "pompous ass and a literary philistine," the "implied reader" is "the narrator's real intimate, and a bond of intimacy is created by means of irony" (Hoisington lxv).

Hoisington's broader claim is that as readers of *Eugene Onegin,* "we find ourselves actively engaged in a 'mutual performance'" with Pushkin. Pushkin's use of irony extends to readers the "'unequivocal invitation to reconstruct,' and we are required to make a series of precise judgments." She concludes that "this engagement draws the reader close to the author" (Hoisington lxv). Hoisington's reading of Pushkin draws on Wayne Booth's influential *Rhetoric of Irony,* in which Booth offers that the experience of reading between an author's lines yields a "strong sense of rejecting a whole structure of meanings, a kind of world that the author himself

obviously rejects' and of moving to a higher level where we share a kind of 'knowledge' with the author." Hoisington applies this reasoning to *Eugene Onegin*. She explains that:

> Because we play an active role in constructing this higher meaning, we find ourselves committed to it … In the stanza we have just examined, the bond that is forged is that much stronger because the mock reader is the object of the irony and the "knowledge" we attain so flattering to our sense of self-esteem. (Hoisington lxvi)

To Hoisington, Pushkin's friendship with the reader (and their elevated experience of the work) results from verbal irony. His addresses to a "mock reader" facilitate a bond of conspiracy between the real reader and Pushkin. This argument (though thoughtful and sophisticated) is unconvincing. Hoisington's overemphasis on the ironic ignores the sincere bond Pushkin imagines between himself and the addressed reader. This bond—albeit tinged at times with irony, is genuine and affectionate.

As evidence for her ironic reading, Hoisington argues that if Pushkin was writing literally then his form of "you" makes little sense. She questions why he uses the casual *ty* instead of the "more formal and more respectful *vy*" particularly "in light of the fact that on every other occasion the reader is addressed as *vy*" (Hoisington lxiv). This discrepancy illuminates to her that Pushkin appears only superficially "deferential and anxious to part with the reader on good terms" (Hoisington lxiv). Yet, a less cynical take on Pushkin's use of pronouns is not only equally possible, but even more plausible. This alternative reading of Pushkin's pronoun choice emphasizes Pushkin's close connection to a singular, explicitly addressed reader—an implied reader who is also Pushkin's implied friend.

This reading suggests that when Pushkin writes, "I want to leave you (*ty*) as a friend," he uses the informal *ty*, to express the intimacy he imagines having created between himself and the

reader. Pushkin intentionally switches his form of "you" at the novel's end to reflect the friendship established between him and his reader over its course. As expressed in the previous chapter, it is evident that Pushkin views his reader as a friend throughout the novel, but the reciprocal nature of friendship does not mean that his reader feels the same. Pushkin is acutely aware of this possible discrepancy. His stanza's opening line acknowledges that his reader begins his book with a certain attitude towards him and, therefore, his narrator. He concedes that it is possible they were a "friend," but it is equally as possible that they were "not." It is only after the reader and the narrator have come (to borrow the language of Pushkin's preceding stanza) "upon the landfall now" from their journey through the novel that Pushkin trusts in the strength of their mutual friendship enough to address them informally (VII.48).

For this same reason, when Pushkin writes, "I want to leave you as a friend (*priyatel*)," he uses the more casual *priyatel'* as opposed to "the more intimate form, *drug*" (Hoisington lxv). What Hoisington mistakes for "forced familiarity" is inclusiveness (Hoisington lxv). Though Pushkin includes all readers within the orbit of his friendship—he understands that for some, such as the cheekily referenced grammarian, the most he can hope for is some degree of friendliness. Hoisington is right then to detect a certain duality in Pushkin's narration, but that duality is not, as she suggests, between an explicitly addressed mock reader and a conspiratorial implied reader. Instead, there is a duality between Pushkin's treatment of those who enter the work as his friend and those who do not.

Pushkin strives for great intimacy with readers who enter the novel on his same wavelength. In contrast, he keeps those who are not at arm's length sometimes even teasing them. But he groups all of these readers under the rubric of friendship, nonetheless. Even for the "pompous ass and a literary philistine" who looks for only "bits of faulty grammar," Pushkin

hopes their time together was well spent (Hoisington lxv). Afterall, Pushkin pleads with God that no matter "Whate'er you [his readers] sought to capture," they found "but a grain" of meaning."

While Hoisington is right that there is irony in *Eugene Onegin*, irony is but one component of a multidimensional but genuine narrator-reader relationship. In fact, creating a sincere and direct relationship with the reader is the ultimate goal of Pushkin's narrative style. Pushkin's final address to the reader marks the cumulation of an artfully forged friendship between Pushkin's narrator and reader. The goal of this chapter is to examine how he goes about achieving it.

Pushkin's desire to forge a mutual friendship between his narrator and reader means that he must create some sense of common ground between them. To return to the language of Arndt's translation of his final stanza, the paths of reader and narrator must not merely intersect but "mingle." Though the word is not included in the original Russian and was instead likely an attempt by Arndt to echo the previous stanza's sentiment of joint travel, "We trailed his wake through smooth and rough. \ Let us congratulate each other \ Upon the landfall now. Hurray!" Mingle remains the perfect word to describe what Pushkin seeks to accomplish through his narrative style (VIII.48).[3] Defined as a verb in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, meaning "to mix (substances or ingredients together, or one thing with another) so that they become physically united or form a new combination; to combine in a mixture, to blend," mingle captures Pushkin's ultimate desire for a sense of overlapping experience with and closeness to his reader (OED).

In *Eugene Onegin,* Pushkin does not wish for his narrator to merely relay the plot to a passive reader. Instead, he aims to create an environment where his reader joins the narrator in

[3] The English transliteration of Pushkin's verse in Russian is "Ktob nee-byl ty, o moi chitatel', \ Drug, nedrug, ya khochu s toboi \ Rasstatsya nynche kak priyatel'" which reads literally as, ""Whoever you might be, oh my reader, \ A friend, or non-friend, I want from you \ To part now as from a pal." There is no inclusion of the word "mingled."

the novel. Aptly, another definition the *Oxford English Dictionary* provides for mingle is "to unite" (OED). Pushkin's narrator facilitates friendship with his reader by uniting their paths in three essential ways: Pushkin portrays himself as an observer, engages with the reader in dialogue, and confides in the reader by sharing his personal emotions.

I. Pushkin as a fellow observer:

Craig Cravens writes of *Eugene Onegin* that "dynamically and irregularly the author-narrator mixes the worlds of reader, author, and character. Fixed borders collapse, and life overflows into and animates art and vice versa" (Cravens 686). Cravens sees this mixing in Pushkin's interspersion of the lyric form throughout his verse. However, Pushkin "mixes the worlds of reader, author, and character" even more directly by positioning his narrator as a detached observer. By creating the illusion of the narrator's independence from *Eugene Onegin's* other characters, Pushkin advances his friendship with his reader by defying the traditionally hierarchical narrator-reader relationship. Pushkin insinuates that the narrator does not have control over the events he relays, spurring a more egalitarian friendship between the narrator and the reader.

Pushkin's narrator is aware that he has control over how he describes the events which unfold; for instance, in Chapter 4, he acknowledges his partiality towards Tatyana:

> I am constrained, I will confess
> My gentle readers, by compassion;
> So bear with me and let it be:
> My Tanya is so dear to me! (IV.24)

But this control extends only to his depiction of events, not their construction. Pushkin plays with temporality to create the illusion that his narrator remains powerless over the other characters' actions. Pushkin's narrator witnesses the events of Onegin's Russia in real time—a

world he does not create but merely observes. This narrative structure implies that the novel's characters have lives that possess far more than what can be expressed by the narrator. The narrator admits this directly when he offers that "Eugene's attainments were far vaster \ Than I can take the time to show" (I.8)). The narrator's role is then to provide a peek into the characters' lives, which are presumably ongoing and unaffected by his observation.

The temporal constraints faced by the narrator evidence themselves in the moments where the narrator suspends his narration for fear of missing the characters' actions. For instance, in Chapter 1, the narrator interrupts his digression on word choice due to Onegin's departure from home:

> Although I used to draw upon
> The Academic Lexicon.
>
> But never mind this—we must hurry,
> For while extraneous themes I broach,
> Onegin in a headlong flurry
> Drives to the ball by hired coach (I.26-27)

By placing his narrator up against the constraints of time, Pushkin nurtures the budding friendship between the narrator and the reader. The narrator's forced change of course signals to the reader that he does not have greater control over the story than them but rather that they are "in it" together. Together (as stressed by the pronoun choice of "we"), the reader and narrator face the novel's events as they come.

The narrator's role as an observer further establishes his friendship with the reader by lending the novel an experiential quality. The character's actions occur in the present tense, meaning that the narrator and reader encounter them together. In Chapter 1, the narrator urges the reader to "Listen: \ He's off with shouts of "way—away!" (I.16). The reader and narrator, as

a pair, turn their attention to Onegin's departure. Similarly, they witness a conversation between Onegin and Lensky in Chapter 4:

> In full career the coach is veering,
> Bound homeward by the shortest way,
> Let us keep silent, overhearing
> What our heroes have to say: (III.4)

As with the prior instance, the reader and narrator together "keep silent" and turn their ears towards the fictional sounds of the novel. The narrator does not relay a known scenario but instead invites the reader to "overhear" whatever is unfolding "live." Pushkin's author-narrator does not belong wholly to the novel's world but straddles the divide between its fictional reality and the reader's present-day one. Pushkin does not tell the plot to the reader but invites them into it alongside him. This shared and participatory experience engenders feelings of friendship within the reader.

II. Pushkin's use of dialogue:

Pushkin is no stranger to the rhetorical question. In Chapter 1, Pushkin "asks" his reader about Onegin's happiness. He questions if Onegin enjoys his glitzy urban lifestyle, "Or [if] was he hearty and inane \ Amid carousals—but in vain?" Immediately after the stanza break, Pushkin replies: "Yes—feeling early cooled within him; \ He came to loathe that worldly grind" (I.36). The question's function is superficial. Whether Pushkin intended to stress Eugene's unhappiness, or possibly just to keep his verse with the Onegin stanza's form— he certainly does not intend for genuine mediation on behalf of the reader. However, in other places throughout Eugene Onegin, Pushkin's narrator uses questions in powerful ways. Not all questions in Eugene Onegin are intended to be purely rhetorical. Instead, Pushkin asks his reader questions to demonstrate

that he anticipates their input. Opening up a dialogue between the reader and narrator strengthens their relationship because it puts their thoughts into conversation with each other.

In Chapter 3, Pushkin's narrator expresses his hesitancy towards issuing an outright rebuke of Tatyana's behavior towards Onegin. Through a series of three consecutive questions, Pushkin explores his conflicting feelings. The result is that as opposed to the earlier question from Chapter 1 whose function is merely transitional, the questions in Chapter 3, facilitate a sense of shared deliberation between the narrator and his reader. Pushkin first asks them:

> Should Tanya then be reprehended
> Because in her endearing faith
> She chose with candor unpretended
> What seemed her fate—and proved a wraith? (III.24)

Here, Pushkin places the task of moral judgment directly into the hands of the reader. The blunt beginning of "Should Tanya then be reprehended" invites the reader to make their own judgment regarding her actions. Pushkin then gives the reader information to consider in their evaluation: "Tatyana, "in her endearing faith…chose with candor unpretended \ What seemed her fate." Now to be clear, Pushkin surely does not offer an impartial assessment of Tatyana's actions. Phrases such as "endearing faith" and (from the second question) his description of her heart as "inflammable and tender" divulge his sympathies towards her (III.24). But the extent to which Pushkin explores those sympathies in the context of asking his reader to make their own judgment, reflects a sincere effort on his behalf to navigate the decision in tandem with them. Pushkin invites the reader into his own heart and mind. His third and final question to the reader, "Would you not hesitate to scourge \ The recklessness of passion's urge?" is not empty. Pushkin hopes to bring his view and the reader's into alignment through meaningfully exploring their feelings together.

Following the duel between Onegin and Lensky, Pushkin further engages in dialogue with his reader. Adding emphasis to his discussion of Onegin's reaction to killing his best friend, Pushkin asks his reader "What if your pistol-shot has shattered \The temple of a dear young boy" (VI.34). Although here Pushkin doesn't include a question mark, his remark has the same effect as his use of questions in Chapter 3 mentioned above. Even more obvious here, is the way that Pushkin's narrator speaks directly to the reader. Pushkin's language is concise, he asks the reader to put themselves in Onegin's shoes. What if it were them? How would they feel? The obvious effect is that the reader feels greater compassion for Onegin who did "shatter" the "temple of a dear young boy." But, beyond that, the reader understands that he remains at the top of the narrator's mind. The question reflects that Pushkin anticipates his emotions and reactions to the novel. Thus, the reader not only feels for Onegin, but feels closer in friendship to the narrator as well: their paths are mingled through dialogue.

III. *Pushkin as a confidant*

Finally, In *Eugene Onegin*, Pushkin also forges a friendship with his reader through confessional asides. By divulging his thoughts and opinions, Pushkin fosters intimacy between himself and his reader. The reader learns not just about the plot from Pushkin but about Pushkin himself. The reader finishes *Eugene Onegin* feeling as Pushkin is someone they know well.

In Chapter 1, one such confession occurs when Pushkin speaks of balls. In the midst of writing about one of Onegin's many party-filled nights, Pushkin offers his feelings toward them. Initially, Pushkin presents his view of them as a sign of maturity. He laments the time he "wasted" at them, writing that "I burnt so much life's brief candle \ In levity I now regret!" (I.30). However, in the very next line, he abruptly changes course. He admits to the reader that

he cannot shake their allure: “Still balls—but for the moral scandal \ They breed, I should adore them yet.” (I.31). Pushkin’s confession that balls remain one of his guilty pleasures is not particularly moving, but the way he relays it to the reader makes it so. By creating a contrast between the opinion he desires and the feelings he truly has, Pushkin suggests to the reader that they are someone whom he desires to be truly honest with. The reader, appreciating his candor, feels all the closer to him.

Pushkin’s confessional asides also evoke feelings of friendship in the reader because of their emotional vulnerability. Pushkin shares his emotions, and the reader feels inclined to open their heart to him in return. In Chapter 4, Pushkin reflects on how people he considered “friends” have let him down. He exclaims: “But friends—the Lord grant us protection! \ What friends they were to me, my friends! \ They cannot lightly make amends” (IV.18). Pushkin’s two successive exclamation marks highlight his exacerbation towards those who have hurt him and are even greater emphasized by his concluding statement that those friends “cannot lightly make amends.” Pushkin alludes to deep hurt, and the reader sympathizes with him. Pushkin opens his heart to the reader and inspires his reader to do the same.

The narrator’s confessions also highlight his self-awareness. As a result, Pushkin’s narrator particularly emerges not just as a fictional voice but as a person deserving of the reader’s friendship. Though the narrator does not reveal any personal details through statements such as “I notice here a certain penchant \ To let my stanzas overflow,” his honesty does result in him coming across as vividly human (V.36). This emphasized humanity makes the narrator someone who appeals to the reader not just as a seemingly “real” person, but as a person who possesses qualities which deserve their friendship in return. When the narrator admits to the reader in Chapter 6 that, “However dearly \ I prize the hero of my tale, \ And though I shall rejoin him,

clearly, \ Just now my love's a little stale," the reader—grateful to know how he is feeling—feels a sense of friendship with him (VI.43). Pushkin's asides then allow the reader to get to truly get to know him. They evidence to the reader his honesty, emotional vulnerability, and self-awareness—all qualities which convince them that he merits their friendship. Pushkin's friendship with his reader is not a mere convention. Rather, it is sincere, multidimensional, and one of the major aspects of his novel.

Conclusion

Pushkin Writes to Us

From ancient times to the present, proponents of the study of literature have pointed to the moral instruction it provides as evidence of its merit. When I wrote the preface to this thesis, I was no different. I credited *Eugene Onegin* (and my fear of facing Onegin's unhappy end) with encouraging me to live a more thoughtful life. Yet, what I failed to appreciate at this project's start is that the very act of reading *Eugene Onegin* is a lesson in self-improvement.

In this thesis, I have suggested that in *Eugene Onegin*, Pushkin transcends the traditional narrator-reader hierarchy to foster a sense of friendship between himself and his reader. Pushkin's desire for friendship with his reader necessitates a keen awareness of his and his reader's collective engagement within the novel. If Pushkin seeks a friendship with his readers, he must treat them as friends. Consequently, the reader's role in *Eugene Onegin* is elevated to that of Pushkin's intimate. Pushkin not only refers to his readers within the work but speaks to them directly and honestly.

But the reciprocal nature of friendship requires that we (as the reader) must act as Pushkin's friend in return. As discussed in my second chapter, Pushkin places several demands on his reader: practically, they must possess some cultural awareness of 19th-century Russia, but more importantly, they must approach his novel in verse with a strong sense of humor and an open mind and heart. As indicated in my final chapter, Pushkin includes all readers under the rubric of friendship, but what we get out of our friendship with him is up to us. *Eugene Onegin's* genius then, is that it not only provides us wisdom on how to become better versions of ourselves but prompts us, with its invitation of friendship, to act.

This is why nearly 200 years since its first publication, *Eugene Onegin* still captivates us. Without a doubt, Pushkin's novel, like other works of literature, remains rooted in its time.

Without notes from a translator, many of its references would slip past the notice of the 21st-century American reader. But its invitation of friendship endures throughout time and across cultures. Pushkin extends the invitation of friendship to all of us, and I wish nothing more than for you to accept it.

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