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Onegin's Path from Page to Stage: A Study of Tchaikovsky's Transposition of Pushkin's Novel in Verse into Novel in Music

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ONEGIN'S PATH FROM PAGE TO STAGE:
A Study of Tchaikovsky's Transposition
of Pushkin's Novel in Verse into Novel in Music

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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APPROVAL BY THESIS DIRECTOR

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26 April 2002

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Introductory Thoughts

For all the popularity it enjoys today, Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* did not meet with universal acceptance when it premiered in its entirety in March of 1879. Tchaikovsky himself wrote: "...there was heavy applause only after Gremin's aria and Triquet's couplets."¹ "In place of the accustomed bravado ensemble, the first scene ended with nanny's recitative...The audience stared uncomprehendingly at the dropping curtain, thinking that it was a mistake."² In an 1881 article in the journal *Artiste*, the critic Kruglikov protested "...but to take plots from the modern life of the cultured class, to put a modern society parlor in an opera is, to me, risky beyond compare. Ordinary waistcoats and tails on the operatic stage?! A general in dress uniform invited to the footlights to sing a tender bass aria? – I cannot reconcile myself with all this!"³ The writer Turgenev, in a letter to Tolstoy about the opera, complained that he "did not care for the libretto, in which Pushkin's verses describing the actors are put into the mouths of the actors themselves."⁴ Indeed, even the detractors acknowledged the exquisiteness of the music, but musical beauty was not Tchaikovsky's only goal in creating this work. An examination of the many factors that influenced the creation and further development of this work reveals that what Tchaikovsky intended to create was his own distinct interpretation of Pushkin's masterpiece. In it, he intended to convey the powerful influence of Pushkin's verse over his own creative spirit, while simultaneously revealing deeply felt personal opinions about the nature and potential of its enduring heroes.

Interestingly, the three specific problems with the opera cited above, namely, a sense that certain parts of the music seem to stand apart from others, the lack of conventional scenic effects, and the permutations of Pushkin's text undertaken by Tchaikovsky in the creation of the libretto, were all attributes that Tchaikovsky himself recognized might be potential stumbling blocks in

the success of the work. These attributes, however, were not accidental; Tchaikovsky was intentionally trying to do something new with this work.

Of his regard for the musicality of Pushkin's verse, Tchaikovsky wrote that

“by dint of his [Pushkin's] genius talent, [he] very often bursts from the tight spheres of versification into the limitless realm of music...Independent of the essence that he is putting into the form of a poem, in the poem itself, in its sonic sequence there is *something*, penetrating to the very depth of the soul. That *something* is music.”⁵ (italics Pribegina's)

To Modest, his brother, he wrote,

“At first I was annoyed by your criticism of *Onegin*^{*}, but it did not last long. Let it lack scenic effect, let it be wanting in action! I am in love with the image of Tatiana, I am under the spell of Poushkin's verse, and I am drawn to compose the music as it were by some irresistible attraction. I am lost in the composition of the opera.”⁶

In appreciating the result of the composer's efforts, one of Tchaikovsky's biographers wrote,

“Similar to the *novel in verse* of Pushkin, Tchaikovsky has created a *novel in music*.”⁷ This comment has been a guiding motive in my study and suggested the subtitle for the thesis.

The specific problem of dealing with two major works of art with the same title can produce some very awkward writing as one attempts to refer to both works in one sentence or paragraph. Complicating this matter is the fact that the two works in question, Tchaikovsky's opera and Pushkin's novel, have distinct organizational systems. I have decided upon a method that I hope will simplify the representation of references to each work in the text, while simultaneously precluding the possibility of any confusion about which work is being mentioned.

Pushkin's novel is divided into chapters, the numbering of which is generally spelled out in all editions (“Chapter One”, “Chapter Two”). Each chapter further subdivides into stanzas designated by roman numerals. Each stanza is fourteen lines long. The only exceptions to this

* “*Onegin*” is a transliteration variant; the modified Library of Congress (mod LC) transliteration is “*Onegin*;” similarly, mod LC of “*Poushkin*” is “*Pushkin*.”

organization are two letters, one by Tatiana and one by Onegin, and a song of eighteen lines. In the Academy edition of Pushkin's *Евгений Онегин* (to which I will occasionally refer by the abbreviation *PSS*), the letters have numerical designations every ten lines; the song does not have such a designation.

Tchaikovsky's opera⁸ is divided into three acts. The first act has three scenes, and the second and third acts have two scenes each. Within the score and libretto, the character singing a given line will be shown either by the first or last name (e.g., Tatiana or Larina).

The abbreviated reference system I will use will work in the following way. For Pushkin's *Евгений Онегин*, I will designate the novel itself by the abbreviation EOP, followed if necessary by the chapter number in Arabic numbers, followed by the stanza number in roman numerals. I will designate the line numbers within the stanza in parentheses. Thus, the famous first lines of the poem will be designated as follows:

EOP.1.I (1-4) *‘Мой дядя самых честных правил,
Когда не в шутку занемог,
Он уважать себя заставил
И лучше выдумать не мог’.*

Tchaikovsky uses these same lines in his *Евгений Онегин* in the first scene of the first act. For this paper, I will designate the opera by the abbreviation EOT, followed if necessary by the act number in roman numerals, followed by the scene number in Arabic numbers. The person who sings the line will be shown, followed by a semi-colon. Thus, the same quote in the opera will be as follows:

EOT.I.1 Onegin: *Мой дядя самых честных правил,
Когда не в шутку занемог,
Он уважать себя заставил
И лучше выдумать не мог.*

Admittedly, the system for reference to the opera is not quite as precise and will occasionally require additional explanation (especially in cases where a line is repeated). Furthermore, I will find it necessary from time to time to refer to the representation of a musical idea in the score. If the example is fairly limited, I will present a reduced notation of the theme or melody within the paper itself. If it is a complicated or long example, I will refer the reader to the page number, system and measure number of the edition of the piano reduction* I used in my research.

With regard to transliteration of names, I will use three systems. For the names most familiar to Western readers, such as Tchaikovsky and Tolstoy, I will follow popular convention, not technically transliterating, but using the spelling normally associated with the respective well-known name in English-language publications. For less familiar names and plain text, I will transliterate using a modification of the Library of Congress system (the modifications being “j” for *й* and “ju” and “ja” for *ю* and *я*). For the heroine of both the novel and the opera, I will employ the transliteration used by both the novelist and the composer. Although technically this name should be “Tat’jana,” I am deferring to the romanized spelling Pushkin himself uses in Chapter Five, stanza XXVII: Tatiana. Tchaikovsky also uses this spelling in Act II, Scene One. It seems appropriate to follow their example. Occasionally, a spelling will appear that does not fit into any of these systems because it comes from a quote by an author using yet another transliteration system. On these occasions, I will observe the author’s variation and add the modified Library of Congress version in brackets or a footnote.

* This term refers to a musical score that has been “reduced” from a full orchestral notation to one containing only the voices and piano accompaniment.

I. Why Onegin?

I have stated that beautiful music alone was not Tchaikovsky's goal in composing this opera. What then might have been the goal? To answer this question, it is necessary to get some sense of who Tchaikovsky was and what experiences might have influenced him in his creativity at the time of the opera's composition. I have concluded that the experience most pivotal to the creation of EOT was Tchaikovsky's decision to marry, despite the fact that he was homosexual. In Tatiana, Tchaikovsky found a heroine whom he would have liked to reproduce in his own life and marriage. In Onegin, he saw the essence of worldly cynicism that would forestall any possibility of such happiness. Tchaikovsky manipulates Pushkin's text in the creation of his libretto to point out and emphasize the homoerotic tension between Onegin and Lensky that partly explains Onegin's initial rejection of Tatiana. He elevates Tatiana's commitment to her marriage to underscore his own faith in the simultaneously powerful and terrible bonds of matrimony.

I have relied on a number of sources in gaining the knowledge I have about Tchaikovsky's life. In his excellent biography *Tchaikovsky: The Quest for the Inner Man*, Alexander Poznansky dwells primarily on the personal side of Tchaikovsky's rich and fascinating life. Poznansky refers to a number of other excellent sources, chiefly, the *Life and Letters of Tchaikovsky*, compiled after the composer's death by his younger brother, Modest. It is available in English in a two-volume set translated into what now seems antiquated prose by Rosa Newmarch and published in 1906. When quoted within the text it appears as *LLT*. The original Russian version, *Жизнь Петра Ильича Чайковского* is in three volumes and was published in 1903. I referred to a 1997 edition of it occasionally when a particular document had

been abridged in the translation. Another invaluable source on Tchaikovsky, particularly his creative life, is David Brown's three-volume *Tchaikovsky: A Biographical and Critical Study*, published in 1982.

For a fuller account of Tchaikovsky's life, I defer to these works. The focus of my study is Tchaikovsky's transposition of Pushkin's novel into an operatic libretto, with some limited observations on the resulting musical-theatrical work. I have borrowed the term "transposition" from Caryl Emerson's exhaustive study of the evolution of *Boris Godunov* from Karamzin's historical figure to Pushkin and, subsequently, Musorgsky's theatrical creations. Her work dwells on a number of intriguing issues, such as the inherent literary quality of libretti and the artistic influences that led to Musorgsky's rather iconoclastic vocal lines. I am deeply indebted to her approach in formulating my own. I will occasionally touch upon related matters, but my primary interest is in the analysis of the changes Tchaikovsky made in Pushkin's text and in the possible significance of these changes.

In examining the text, I discovered that there were many new juxtapositions created by Tchaikovsky's changes, resulting in intensification of drama and alteration of the role of certain characters from what they had been in Pushkin. There is a prioritization to the cuts and modifications he made. Sometimes, this prioritization is based simply upon the need to make a line easier to sing or more coherent within the context of the dramatic moment. At other times, the prioritization results from sensitivity to the "feelings" of a character that is different from what we find in Pushkin. For example, Tatiana appears far more often, proportionately speaking, in the opera than in the novel, and she, rather than Onegin, moves the plot. The result is that the opera is really *about* Tatiana, rather than Onegin. Lensky is treated with a great deal more sympathy, as opposed to the scorn with which Pushkin frequently regards him. Tchaikovsky

removed the narrative voice of Pushkin and with it the irony that accompanies Pushkin's reader throughout the novel; yet he retained the words of Pushkin's narrator, putting them in the mouths of his operatic characters and thereby emphasizing fatal and tragic elements that Pushkin in fact parodies⁹.

I will take up the consideration of Tchaikovsky's life in the year in which he began to compose *Евгений Онегин*, 1877. Brown describes the period 1874-1878 as Tchaikovsky's "Crisis Years" and assigns the pinnacle of that crisis to 1877, the year in which Tchaikovsky married disastrously. Tchaikovsky was a 36-year-old professor at the Moscow Conservatory and already famous in Russia as the composer of such works as: the fantasy overtures *Romeo & Juliet* – 1869; *The Tempest* – 1873; and *Francesca da Rimini* – 1876; as well as the ballet *Swan Lake* – 1875-76. *Swan Lake* and *Francesca da Rimini* both premiered in February 1877, with the overture overwhelmingly more successful than the ballet. The fact that all three of these overtures were based on literary works demonstrates Tchaikovsky's sincere enthusiasm for literature and his desire to express his impressions of it in music.

It was a performance of *The Tempest* some years earlier that so struck Nadezhda von Meck, who would become Tchaikovsky's patroness. It was the first work by the composer that she had ever heard. In March of 1877, she sent a letter to him that was to change the nature of their correspondence. It relates, among other things, the effect of this overture on her. Of it she wrote,

I cannot describe the impression that it made on me; for several days I was as one delirious, and I could do nothing to free myself from this state. I must tell you that I cannot separate the musician from the man.... Only the other day from a casual conversation I learned of one of your opinions which so delighted me, with which I felt such sympathy that, as it were, you immediately became close to me – or, at any rate, dear to me (Brown 134-35).

Von Meck was not the only woman to express interest in Tchaikovsky.

Previously, Tchaikovsky had experienced romantic entanglements with a singer named Désirée Artôt. In January of 1869, he wrote his father to ask his advice on the prospect of marrying this woman, who was quite a famous singer:

...My friends, especially N. Rubinstein [director of the Conservatory], are trying might and main to prevent my marriage. They declare that, married to a famous singer, I should play the part of ‘husband of my wife’; that I should live at her expense and accompany her all over Europe; finally that I should lose all opportunities of working, and that when my first love had cooled, I should know nothing but disenchantment and depression (*LLT* 98).

His father replied that, while his friends were probably correct, he wanted to know more of Artôt’s character and the nature of Tchaikovsky’s feelings, details upon which the composer had not elaborated. The matter was moot within days, as Modest writes, “During this month (January) Désirée Artôt, without a word of explanation to her first lover [Tchaikovsky], was married to the baritone singer Padilla at Warsaw” (*LLT* 101). Tchaikovsky seems not to have suffered much in consequence, for when they met a year later, their relations appear to have been simple and cordial.

Seven years later, according to Brown, Tchaikovsky is once again declaring his intent to be married, but with only one prospect: his sister-in-law, Vera Davydova, whose “yearnings for him were presenting an open challenge to his sexual nature” (Brown 132). Here we come face to face with the central issue to trouble Tchaikovsky in this crisis year and throughout his life: his desire for matrimonial bliss is at odds with his homosexuality.

In the fall of 1876, Tchaikovsky had written a letter to his brother, Modest, who was also homosexual, in which he declared his intentions to enter “into a lawful marriage alliance, regardless of the identity of the other party” (Orlova 57). He also recommended that Modest do the same: “I think that for both of us our *dispositions* are the greatest and most insuperable obstacle to happiness and we must fight our natures to the best of our ability” (57, italics

Tchaikovsky's). He saw this action as the surest means of avoiding a possible scandal and to prevent any injury to any of their loved ones, especially their sister Alexandra, of whom in the same letter to Modest he wrote:

I know that she has guessed *everything* and that she *forgives everything*. Many people whom I love and respect regard me in the same way. Surely you know how painful it is for me to know that people *pity and forgive* me when, in truth, I am not guilty of anything. How appalling it is to think that those who love me are sometimes *ashamed* of me! But this has happened dozens of times already and, of course, it will happen dozens of times again. In short, I seek marriage or some sort of public involvement with a woman so as to shut the mouths of assorted contemptible creatures whose opinion means nothing to me but who are in a position to cause distress to those who are near me (Orlova 58, italics Tchaikovsky's).

In much of the material available to us written about Tchaikovsky and his music, the issue of his sexuality is treated with every attitude ranging from pity for his “personal anguish” (Brown 132) to hostility toward the work of a man who could not admit his “pathological”¹⁰ nature. Poznansky's biography seeks to put this interpretation of Tchaikovsky's sexuality into a more constructive, and most importantly, historically accurate, context.

There are two forms to the view the public has traditionally had toward the significance of Tchaikovsky's homosexuality with regard to his works. One form is essentially blind to his sexuality and seems to regard his personal life as irrelevant to his creative impulse. This thesis seeks to explain how blindness to Tchaikovsky's sexuality fails to allow for the discovery of the many fascinating interpretive possibilities explored here. The other form of the traditional view sees his sexuality as a pejorative quality that casts suspicion on the quality of all his work.

Poznansky informs us that part of the explanation for the “frustrated, guilt-ridden homosexual”¹¹ theory is that the biographical material made available to the public has been intentionally misleading. The good intentions of Tchaikovsky's survivors, along with the accidental conspiracy of Soviet censorship with conservative, Western prudery on matters of

sexual candor, paved the way to a confused body of literature on an already complicated man. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, archives that previously had been off-limits were suddenly available to a new wave of scholars. Letters and diaries written by Tchaikovsky were finally available in unabridged form. Over the decades, beginning with the composer's own biographer brother, portions of text that might be subject to unfavorable scrutiny were "effaced, blotted out, scribbled over, and even in a few instances physically cut out with scissors."¹² What emerges from the new information is a picture of the composer rather different from the traditional, pejorative view.

Poznansky treats the information in vivid detail, but it will suffice here to describe just a few key points to establish the composer's own awareness of his sexual orientation and the impact it had on his life and work. Tchaikovsky's diaries and letters indicate that he did not delude himself about his homosexuality and was only "tormented" by it to the degree that others could not accept it. In his correspondence, we see that he was completely open with much of his family, including his beloved younger twin brothers, Modest and Anatolij. Poznansky has translated and published the full text of seventeen of these letters, all of which are written at exactly the time during which the "crisis" occurs, and, simultaneously, Tchaikovsky is composing EOT. I include below excerpts from three of these that firmly establish his sexual self-awareness and the ramifications his sexuality had on his life.

After the terrific blow of having his *Piano Concerto No. 1* (today regarded as a masterpiece) reviled by his supervisor at the Moscow Conservatory and former professor, Nicholaj Rubinstein*, he wrote to Anatolij in January 1875,

* mod LC transliteration of this name should be "Rubinshtejn," but since the name is itself a Russian transliteration from German, it seems appropriate to use "Rubinstein." I will follow this logic with other names of non-Russian origin, as well.

I am very, very lonely here, and if it were not for working constantly I should simply give myself over to melancholy. It is also true that my damned homosexuality creates an unbridgeable chasm between me and most people. It imparts to my character an estrangement, a fear of people, immoderate timidity, mistrustfulness, in short a thousand qualities whereby I am growing more and more unsociable. Just imagine, frequently now and at length I dwell on the idea of a monastery or something of the sort. (Poznansky, *Tchaikovsky and His World* 60-61)

In January of 1877, six months before his marriage, Tchaikovsky writes to Modest about his infatuation with a twenty-one-year-old student, named Iosif Kotek, whom Tchaikovsky has known for six years and through whom he has established contact with Nadezhda von Meck. He begins by telling Modest,

“I am *in love*, as I haven’t been in love for a long time. Can you guess with whom? He is of middle height, fair, with wonderful brown eyes” (66, italics Tchaikovsky’s). He goes on to describe Kotek’s features in detail. Interestingly, despite the fact that Tchaikovsky recounts sexual acts in other letters and diaries with complete candor, here he writes,

However, I am far from desiring physical consummation. I feel that, if *that occurred*, I would cool toward him. I would feel disgusted if this *wonderful youth* stooped to sex with an aged and fat-bellied man. How horrible this would be, and how disgusting I would become to myself! It is not called for (66-67, italics Tchaikovsky’s).

Although, the letter goes on to describe some affectionate teasing and very modest petting, it seems that Tchaikovsky is expressing reasonable restraint in consideration of the difference between his and Kotek’s ages, while simultaneously feeling free to express himself openly to his brother about his genuine feelings.

Six months after the writing of the letter above, Kotek will stand next to Tchaikovsky in the church of St. George on the Malaya Nikitskaja Street in Moscow as witness at his wedding, but before we examine the nuptial episode, let us look at the last of these three examples from Poznansky’s seventeen translations. This letter is also to Modest, but is written, according to Poznansky, “after a long stay abroad caused by the matrimonial fiasco” (85) nine months after

the wedding. A friend of Tchaikovsky's arranges a meeting with a young man from the peasant class.

Our *rendez-vous* was set for Nikitskij boulevard. My heart moaned sweetly all day, since I am at present quite disposed to falling madly in love with someone. We arrived at the boulevard, introduced ourselves, and I fell in love immediately, just as Tatiana fell in love with Onegin. His face and figure were *un rêve*, the embodiment of a sweet dream (85-86).

This encounter also comes to nothing, primarily because Tchaikovsky does not like the look of the lackey's small hands with nails "slightly bitten all around, and with a gleam on his fingers next to his nails like Nicholaj Rubinstein's!" (86) It is little wonder that someone who reminds Tchaikovsky of the imposing Nicholaj Rubinstein would fail to be a good match. Poznansky has found examples of Tchaikovsky fully enjoying himself that clearly show he was not always frustrated in his amorous pursuits. I feel that their inclusion here, however, would only serve a prurient interest. They are available in the books cited here. The comparison Tchaikovsky draws between himself and Tatiana in the third example is very telling because this tendency to identify with Tatiana, or at least with her feelings, also played a role in his decision to marry.

Brown summarizes the details of Tchaikovsky's marriage quite succinctly:

His bride was a certain Antonina Ivanovna Miljukova. Her existence was unknown to him until May 1877. Some two months later, on 18 July, he married her; after only two and a half months of nominal conjugality, he fled to St. Petersburg, and the 'marriage' was over (137).

This, of course, leaves out a great deal, but it does convey the astonishing rapidity with which Tchaikovsky makes the decision and then regrets it. Like Tatiana, Miljukova declares her love for Tchaikovsky to him in a series of letters, at the end of one of which she states that she is ready to kill herself if he does not reply. In attempting later to justify his rash action to his benefactress, von Meck, he writes, "there was something fateful in my encounter with this girl."

(Brown 141). To his friend Nicholaj Kashkin, with whom he collaborates on the libretto of EOT, he writes:

When I received a second letter I was ashamed and even came to hate myself for my attitude towards Mlle Miljukova. In this second letter she bitterly complained that she had not received a reply, adding that if her second letter met with the same fate as her first the only course open to her was to take her own life. In my mind this all got associated with my conception of Tatyana* and it seemed to me that I had myself behaved infinitely worse than Onegin; I was genuinely angry with myself for my heartless treatment of a girl who had fallen in love with me.

...I was constantly under the influence of my genuine anger with Onegin for his casual and flippant treatment of Tatyana. It seemed to me that to behave like Onegin would be heartless and quite impermissible on my part (Orlova 67).

It would be easy to surmise from these few excerpts taken from a very large number of long and detailed letters that Tchaikovsky was confusing fiction with reality, but this girl was very much in love with him. Even after he did reply and tried to make plain to her in the clearest terms possible that he would never be able to love her (at least he writes to others that he told her so), she maintained her conviction that she was madly in love with him, and at the beginning of June 1877, he made a proposal of marriage.

The wedding took place, as noted earlier, on 18 July 1877. His brother, Anatolij, was the only family member present; Modest was furious with his brother about the decision. It is clear from letters that conjugal relations were never commenced. The composer met Antonina's "weird" (Brown 149) family, and "the most shattering discovery made by [Tchaikovsky] was that she did not know a single note of his music" (148).

As his anguish over the consequences of this fictitious marriage increased, Tchaikovsky actually contemplated suicide, but made only a half-hearted attempt by trying to catch cold wading in the Moscow River in late September. The attempt had no consequence. His family

* These are the transliterations of "Miljukova" and "Tatiana" preferred by Davison, Orlova's translator.

and friends stepped in to rescue him, a psychiatrist made the pronouncement that must no longer live with his wife, and their only contact after that time was through third parties.

It is astonishing to consider that during this same period of time, Tchaikovsky begins the sketches for not only EOT, but for his Fourth Symphony, as well. He completes the sketches for the symphony in May and the scoring the following January, dedicating the symphony to his “Best Friend,” Nadezhda von Meck. His singer friend, Lavrovskaja proposes the idea for composing an opera on the subject of EOP on May 25, 1877, a few days before he proposes marriage to Miljukova. He spends most of June at Glebovo Estate, where he collaborates on the libretto with Vladimir Shilovskij.*

So now it is June of 1877, Tchaikovsky has a libretto in his hands, and we know something about the state of his emotional life. I explore in detail the construction of the libretto in Section II, but the question of Tchaikovsky’s creative interests still remains.

According to Modest, from Tchaikovsky’s youth, three operas – Weber’s *Der Freishütz*, Glinka’s *A Life for The Tsar*, and Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* – “occupied the highest niches in the temples of his gods” (*LLT* 23). Even years later (September 1886) he would write in his diary “I love everything in Mozart, for we love everything in the man to whom we are truly devoted. Above all, *Don Juan* [he means *Don Giovanni*], for through that work I have learned to know what music is” (518). While he was still working on the orchestration of *Onegin*, von Meck sent him a volume of verses, including the text of Aleksej Tolstoy’s *Don Juan*, from which he composed a serenade (one of *Six Romances*, Op. 38, 1878). The gift touched off an exchange on the overall worth of Mozart, of whom Tchaikovsky’s benefactress was not fond. In March of

* Vladimir Shilovskij owned Usovo Estate – site of the composition of *The Tempest*. His brother, Konstantin owned Glebovo Estate—site of the composition of EOT and 4th Symphony; coincidentally both brothers died the same year as Tchaikovsky, 1893.

1878, the composer wrote von Meck: “I do not merely like Mozart – I worship him. For me the best opera ever written is *Don Giovanni*” (Orlova 117).

This gives us some sense that Tchaikovsky was intrigued by the type of social lion known in Russian literature as the “Superfluous Man,” of which Onegin is unquestionably a classic example. Pushkin himself invites us to see a connection between the figure of Onegin and the personality of Byron’s anti-hero in Chapter Seven, stanza XXII:

*Хотя мы знаем, что Евгений
Издавна чтенье разлюбил,
Однако ж несколько творений
Он из опалы исключил:
Певца Гяура и Жуана
Да с ним еще два-три романа,
В которых отразился век
И современный человек
Изображен довольно верно
С его безнравственной душой,
Себялюбивой и сухой,
Мечтанью преданной безмерно,
С его озлобленным умом,
Кипящим в действии пустом.*

Interestingly, although Onegin is ostensibly the center of both the novel and the opera, both Tchaikovsky and Pushkin are at pains to distance themselves from any identification with him. In Chapter One, stanza LVI of EOP, Pushkin states that he enjoys pointing out the differences between himself and Onegin and finds “shameless” (Nabokov 1964, I: 123) the suggestion that poets, in the manner of Byron, are only capable of describing themselves in their works. Tchaikovsky, for his part, saw Onegin as a “cold, heartless fop” (Brown 143) whose alluring personality as described by Pushkin nonetheless “[cried] out for expression” (LLT 255), no matter how monstrous it might be toward Tatiana.

We have seen what Tchaikovsky's real-life experience with women was, but what were the contemporary literary females occupying his imagination at that time? The Russian biographer Pribegina answers this question quite clearly:

В романе «Евгений Онегин» композитор видел реальные и правдивые образы, глубокую жизненную драму, которая происходила в условиях реальных, правдивых («энциклопедией русской жизни» называл «Евгения Онегина» В. Г. Белинский). Он глубоко проникся пушкинскими образами, чистотой любви героев, верностью и пониманием их чувства долга и чести, их возвышенной мечтой и стремлением к идеалу. Здесь была та же сложная, психологическая драма, что волновала Чайковского в «Анне Каренине», которую он читал «с восторгом, доходящим до фантазма,» в «Обрыве» Гончарова, повестях и романах Тургенева, Достоевского. Поэтому и в героях своей оперы композитор не мог не воплотить также правдивого выражения искренности чувств, душевных переживаний. (Pribegina 88)

Shaw concurs that the atmosphere of EOT is much more “like a Russian novel written in the 1860s or 1870s than like Pushkin’s novel written in 1823-31” (84). Of *Anna Karenina*, the composer’s brother, Modest, writes that after initially criticizing the earlier installments of the novel, Tchaikovsky in 1877 “acknowledged it to be one of Tolstoy’s finest creations” (LLT 198). This shows that while one of Tchaikovsky’s basic impressions of the Onegin type seems to have been the Mozartean Don Juan, the psychology of the drama he was looking may have been informed by the mood of Tolstoy’s *Анна Каренина*. He did not look at the conflicts confronting Tatiana with the sophistication of Pushkin’s witty narrator; indeed, as already pointed out, he removed that narrator from the story. He contemplated unrequited love, jealousy, and adultery within a Tolstoyan, Realist moral atmosphere. This mindset has very significant consequences on the approach he takes to both the libretto and the score.

This leaves open only the question of what Tchaikovsky was ready to accomplish and might have been trying to accomplish musically. We have seen that by this time, Tchaikovsky was already an accomplished and established composer. He had his detractors (notably the group of Petersburg composers, Musorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Balakirev, and Cui,

known as the *Мозычуй Куч*), but he himself had no doubt about his abilities. In a letter to von Meck from March 19, 1878, in which he deals at length with his reputation among famous composers abroad, he states unequivocally, “Among all living musicians there is not one before whom I would willingly lower my crest” (*LLT* 290).

He had already composed a number of relatively successful operas: *The Voevoda* (libretto by Ostrovskij) of 1868; *The Oprichnik* (libretto by Lazhechnikov and M. Tchaikovsky) of 1872; and *Vakula the Smith* (libretto from Gogol by Polonskij) of 1874. He had some fairly strong opinions about the efforts of other operatic composers of the day. He was not at all fond of Wagner (“The Nibelungen may be actually a magnificent work, but it is certain that there never was anything so endlessly and wearisomely spun out” *LLT* 184) but thought Gounod was “a first-class master craftsman, if not a first-class creative genius” (Brown 137). It was his respect for Gounod that led him to reject a libretto that his friend Stasov (who had suggested the program for *The Tempest*) had sent him based on a subject very close to one that Gounod had just had produced.* Around the same time, Modest also sent his brother a libretto based on Nodier’s novel *Ines de Las-Sierras* that the composer rejected. (*LLT* 202) Tchaikovsky had seen a performance of Bizet’s *Carmen* in Paris in January 1875, upon the recommendation of Valdimir Shilovskij. Modest wrote of Tchaikovsky’s response: “Rarely have I seen my brother so deeply moved by a performance in the theater.” (Brown 58). Tchaikovsky himself wrote of the opera and its composer:

Bizet is an artist who pays tribute to our present age, but he is fired with true inspiration. And what a wonderful subject for an opera! I cannot play the scene without weeping; on the one hand, the people enjoying themselves, and the coarse gaiety of the crowd watching the bullfight, on the other, the dreadful tragedy and death of two of the leading characters whom an evil destiny, *fatum*, has brought together and driven, through a whole series of agonies, to their inescapable end (Brown 59).

**Cinq-Mars*, based on a historical romance by Alfred de Vigny. Brown 136.

Later, when he had finished writing *Onegin*, Tchaikovsky wrote a long letter to a former student of his (who would later become the director of the Moscow Conservatory), Sergej Taneev, in which he described his concerns about how the public would react to the opera and how performers would realize his artistic intentions. He stated that he had been “looking for an intimate yet thrilling drama, based upon such a conflict of circumstance as I myself have experienced or witnessed, which is capable of touching me to the quick” (*LLT* 256).

At this moment, Tchaikovsky, a homosexual about to marry a woman he does not and cannot love, is ready to write an intimate opera about leading characters propelled by a fate that he himself has experienced or witnessed. He holds in his hands Pushkin’s *Евгений Онегин*. It is now time to examine what kind of libretto results from his collaboration.

II. Development of the Libretto

A. Genesis

It is well known that a society acquaintance of Tchaikovsky's, Madame Elizaveta Lavrovsky, who was a singer, made the specific proposal of the idea for setting EOP as an opera in May 1877. Tchaikovsky himself writes about it:

“Recently I was at Madame Lavrovsky's. The conversation fell upon opera libretti. X. talked a lot of rubbish and made the most appalling suggestions. Madame Lavrovsky said nothing and only laughed. Suddenly, however, she remarked: ‘What about *Eugene Oniegin*?’ The idea struck me as curious, and I made no reply. Afterwards, while dining alone at a restaurant, her words came back to me, and, on consideration, the idea did not seem at all ridiculous. I soon made up my mind, and set off in search of Poushkin's [sic] works. I had some trouble in finding them. I was enchanted when I read the work. I spent a sleepless night; the result—a sketch of a delicious opera based upon Poushkin's text. The next day I went to Shilovsky, who is now working post-haste at my sketch”¹³ (*LLT* 202-03).

Unfortunately, from this point, things get a bit murky. Shilovskij is involved, but how much?

He himself made a very specific declaration to have his name removed from association with the opera in 1885. After the Society of Russian Dramaturgical Writers approached Shilovskij to query him as to whether he considered himself the author of the libretto of *Евгений Онегин*, they told Tchaikovsky that he answered, “*хотя первоначально либретто было составлено им, но вследствие сделанных в нем (Чайковским) изменений, он признавать либретто за свой труд не желает*¹⁴.” By 1885, the opera had already premiered at the Bolshoi and the Mariinsky Theaters. It is difficult to imagine why anyone would want to dissociate himself from such a resounding artistic success. Based upon all the data and the expressed opinions of experts and those close to the process, it appears probable that Shilovskij contributed little more material than the French version of the couplets sung by Triquet.

In a footnote, Brown relates the potentially dubious collaboration of Tchaikovsky's friend Nicholaj Kashkin. Despite the inconclusiveness Brown admits regarding the authenticity of this information, it seems appropriate to include it in an examination of possible contributions:

Tchaikovsky's own account of how the scenario of *Onegin* came to be compiled is difficult to reconcile with Kashkin's. According to the latter, Tchaikovsky had got hold of some stage adaptation of Pushkin's *Onegin*, and then taken Kashkin to a restaurant. After they had dined, he had told Kashkin of the circumstances in which Lavrovskaya* had suggested *Onegin* to him; he was now, he said, soliciting Kashkin's help in devising the scenario. There and then they set about it but, despite repeated attempts, had been quite unable to devise anything satisfactory. At midnight they had parted, and the next evening they had returned to the restaurant to try again. At the end of this equally unsuccessful exercise, Tchaikovsky had exclaimed to Kashkin: 'Now I see it is impossible to make a real opera out of *Eugene Onegin*, but at the same time I have to tell you I cannot *not* compose it; much is already prepared in my head.' In the face of this evidence from Kashkin, who seems to have been an honest, if far from infallible biographer, it must be accepted that he did play some part in the early planning of the *Onegin* scenario. Kashkin did confirm that Shilovsky had some hand in the libretto, and certainly wrote Triquet's couplets in French. (142)

Although we may not currently know much about the specific input of Tchaikovsky *vis à vis* Shilovskij or Kashkin, we have already examined the circumstances and state of mind in which Tchaikovsky found himself during the period in which he put together the libretto.

"You have no notion how crazy I am upon this subject. How delightful to avoid the commonplace Pharaohs, Ethiopian princesses, poisoned cups, and all the rest of these dolls' tales! *Eugene Oniegin* is full of poetry. I am not blind to its defects. I know well enough the work gives little scope for treatment, and will be deficient in stage effects; but the wealth of poetry, the human quality and simplicity of the subject, joined to Poushkin's inspired verses, will compensate for what it lacks in other respects." (May 20th, 1877 to I.A. Klimenko LLT 203, transliterations by Rosemarch)

We have seen that Shilovskij was reluctant to have his name associated with the libretto and that Kashkin's contributions are subject to some doubt. There are even some who have ascribed to the composer's brother some role, which was true with *The Queen of Spades* but not with *Onegin*. The only name conclusively associated with the libretto on which total agreement

* The transliterations here are those preferred by Brown.

exists is that of the composer himself, whose intimacy with the characters is abundantly clear from his letters. For this reason in this paper, I will refer to Tchaikovsky alone as the librettist.

The history of research in Russian on the topic of Pushkin's *Евгений Онегин* practically predates the publication of the work in its entirety, with Pushkin's own notes of explanation providing fodder for some of its earliest interpreters. Research has continued up to the present day. In this country (and in England), there is a similarly long and uninterrupted tradition, dating back at least to the early years of the 20th century. Study of the Tchaikovsky opera in its own right has been rather thorough in Russia, perhaps less so here, but what is so surprising is that a work based on an unquestionable monument of Russian literature has inspired such scanty investigative comparison between the two works (other than the dismissive comments noted previously) that I was unable to find anything in book-form in Russian on the topic. Non-Russian research has begun to gather momentum, but only in the last fifteen or so years. If this fairly sudden interest may be attributed to anything, I would suggest perhaps it is the revelatory work done by Poznansky that has provided some impetus, by dispelling the myth of "tortured homosexual," having clouded appreciation of Tchaikovsky's work for so long. The sense that the composer, or at least his family biographers, was complicit in his duplicity brought further harm to his esteem. The reevaluation of Tchaikovsky, the man, in Russian society has been even slower.

Because opera is such a dramatic and highly subjective form, serious inquiry into its nature demands that the researcher know something of the intentions of the composer and librettist. When *tout le monde* was under the impression that the creator of the opera *Евгений Онегин* was a barely sane, probably suicidal, and certainly desperate societal misfit, there was little inclination to take this very emotional work seriously, and even less willingness to compare

it to its solidly admirable literary forebear. The disparity seemed almost to discredit Pushkin. Now that we have a better understanding of Tchaikovsky as a human being, we can better appreciate the context in which he made some of his creative choices with respect to Tatiana, Lensky, Onegin, and all of Pushkin's memorable images.

B. Organization and structure of the libretto

The libretto of EOT is neither a mere adapted text, nor a literal setting of the novel. In some scenes, Tchaikovsky has selected, arranged, and reorganized texts from separate parts of the novel, creating remarkable juxtapositions, such as Olga's first aria and many of the lines from the ensembles. In other places, he provides completely original text, much of it retaining the rhythm, some of it even approximating the Onegin stanza form. The quality of some of this material, most notably Gremin's aria, has even caused it to be assumed to *be* from EOP, hence written *by* Pushkin. Still other parts are purely conventional opera fare (recitative and chorus) yet bear the mark of sensitivity to their Pushkinian forebear.

Of the one thousand lines in the libretto of EOT, 57 percent were written by Pushkin. Some of these have been altered slightly to make sense according to person, number or tense. These alterations themselves speak very intriguingly of both the amazing plasticity of Russian to endure such transformation and of Tchaikovsky's extraordinary sensitivity to the poetic (metrical, rhythmic, and rhyme) demands. This percentage figure is, however, somewhat meaningless taken by itself, for in some scenes the ratio exceeds 85%, while in others it is only 26%. Looking at the figures scene by scene, especially in consideration of the action that takes place in each particular scene, is considerably more useful.

Before doing so, it would probably also be helpful to remind the reader of the particular aspects that distinguish the libretto from the novel in verse. In EOP, there are, of course eight chapters. In EOT, there are only seven scenes. These seven scenes follow primarily the action of Chapters Two through Eight of EOP, with the notable exception of action from Chapter Seven, in which Tatiana looks through Onegin's library and then accompanies her mother to the "marriage market" of Moscow. There is nothing in EOT of Chapter Seven; there is also very little of Chapter One. Nonetheless, the longer one looks at the libretto, the more one is impressed with Tchaikovsky's sensitivity to the dramatic possibilities in EOP, as well as their limitations.

Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that conformity to the linear passage of time in EOP is not of primary importance to Tchaikovsky. He, in fact, modifies the Onegin chronotope¹⁵ quite intentionally. Frequently, passages from one stanza will be followed by passages from a *previous* stanza, or sometimes by lines from a previous chapter. But this does not produce an effect of confusion. Rather, Tchaikovsky is always careful to make adjustments to person, number, and tense to cause the line to seem quite natural within the action, while simultaneously retaining the obviously desired effect of ironic juxtaposition. I will refer to this effect in each instance as a *neochronotope* to demarcate the creation by Tchaikovsky in the libretto of a juncture of previously disparate spaces and times.

Additionally, there is a device that is repeated frequently and for various effects throughout the libretto. This device is the placement of words originally spoken by the narrator (i.e., arguably Pushkin himself) *about* a character into the mouth of the character himself or another. The frequency of this phenomenon does not admit of its being a mere accident, and in fact, examination of when and how Tchaikovsky makes such transpositions suggests that he had

an intention in mind. Nearly all commentators have noticed this device (Žekulin, Emerson, Wiley), but no term of referral has been offered. Because I will be referring to it so often and feel that Tchaikovsky used this device for a specific purpose, I find it appropriate to give it a name. I will be referring to this device throughout this paper as *transvocalism*¹⁶. We use the word *transvestite* to describe a person of one sex putting on the clothes of the opposite sex in order to perform the role traditionally associated with the other sex. Likewise, the term transvocalism is appropriate because of the meaning it conveys that the voice of one person is being taken on by another (or imposed on another) for the purpose of making a comment on one or both characters.

Let us look at how some of these textual choices were made act by act, scene by scene. To ease the reader's orientation between EOP and EOT, I will provide a very brief synopsis of the action of the respective works before beginning the discussion of each scene. Where the action is the same in both works, it will be shown under the EOT column with the respective Chapter indicated in the EOP column

Act One, Scene One

<u>EOT</u>	<u>EOP</u>
Tatiana and Olga meet Onegin, neighbor of Olga's childhood sweetheart, Lensky	Chapter One: Onegin in Petersburg and his move to the country estate Chapter Two and beginning of Three

Total lines 306; 32 % from EOP

After the fairly short orchestral introduction, the opera begins with the singing of a duet by Tatiana and Olga¹⁷. The text is from a poem entitled *Певец* written by Pushkin in 1816. I

will discuss the very far-reaching implications of the use of this poem in Section III, but in addition to its relation to Tchaikovsky's interpretation of the story, it relates to a number of incidents in EOP in chapters Two, Three, and Six. That is to say, the text of the duet, which ostensibly takes place in the chronotope of EOP's Chapters Two and Three, also contains material (words, ideas, and even action) from Chapter Six. Simultaneously, the text is from a poem written several years before the action begins in the novel. Nabokov fixed the beginning of the action in May 1820 (Nabokov 1964 II: 31). Thus, from the very outset, Tchaikovsky has us, especially close readers of the libretto, contemplating Pushkin's characters in a sort of timeless, transcendental existentiality. He has created his first EOT neochronotope. Throughout the opera, he frequently reminds us musically of statements made by one character, or their feelings at a certain moment, by providing us with this music at another. The combination of the musical citations and the quotes from Pushkin creates provocative neochronotopes that invite the informed listener to think of Pushkin's characters as continuing to develop within the opera. Finally, since Pushkin is the narrator of the original poem, the duet serves as an example of transvocalism, inviting Pushkin's adolescent persona to comment on the opera, as well.

During the second verse of the duet (actually the third stanza of *Певец*), the first scene begins with the girls' mother, Madame Larina, and the nanny¹⁸, singing lines from EOP 2.XXX-XXXI. In these lines, we encounter for the first time transvocalism of words from EOP itself. The very first words that come out of Larina's mouth are strongly reminiscent of Tatiana's thoughts after the "Berry-Picking Song" (parallel indicated in boldface) that ends Chapter 3 of EOP, which themselves call to mind some of the words of *Певец* (parallel indicated by underscore):

EOT.I.1	Larina:	<i>Они поют, и я, бывало,</i> <i>В давно прошедшие года –</i>
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Ты помнишь ли – и я певала.

EOP.3.XL

***Они поют, и с небреженьем**
Внимая звонкий голос их,
Ждала Татьяна с нетерпением*

Певец(third stanza)

*Вздохнули ль вы, внимая тихий глас
Певца любви, певца своей печали?¹⁹*

This conversation between Larina and Nanny over the duet stanza from *Певец* continues as a quartet. Despite the fact that so much is going on textually, there is nonetheless a stillness to this scene that connotes the serenity of the country life lived by the Larin family.

As an example of the grammatical adjustments Tchaikovsky makes to original EOP text, let us look at four lines sung by Larina in this quartet (parallel underscored):

EOT.I.1

Larina:

*Ах, как я плакала сначала!
С супругом чуть не развелась!
Потом хозяйством занялась,
Привыкла – и довольна стала.*

EOP.2.XXXI (9-12)

*В свою деревню, где она,
Бог знает кем окружена,
Рвалась и плакала сначала,
С супругом чуть не развелась;
Потом хозяйством занялась,
Привыкла, и довольна стала.
Привычка свыше нам дана:
Замена счастью она.*

Here we see that it was only necessary for Tchaikovsky to change from third person to first in his line, and then the tendency in Russian not to repeat pronouns²⁰ would clearly convey that Larina is singing about herself. He removed the verb *рвалась* and replaced it with «Ах, как», and he was done with the need to edit those lines. We will see additional examples later where the need to edit was more involved but could still be done with little damage. The last two lines of the stanza, which Pushkin designates as a paraphrase of Chateaubriand²¹, Tchaikovsky takes up as a refrain for Larina and Nanny. Interpolating this refrain with the melancholy message of *Певец*,

Tchaikovsky firmly establishes that, despite the bucolic atmosphere of this opening scene, we are not watching a comedy: “Habit is given from above:/ it is a substitute for happiness” (Nabokov 1964, I: 144).

This ensemble is followed by the appearance of peasants who have been working in the fields. They sing a folk-song and a type of dance tune that Asaf’ev calls a *пляска*. The text of these two choruses does not have any immediate source in EOP, and their significance to Tchaikovsky’s overall interpretive idea will be discussed in Section III, “The Arcadian Anathema.”

Following the dance, Tatiana makes a remark that comes close to the description that Pushkin gives of her in EOP.2.XXVII-XXIX, but which is essentially a libretto creation.

EOT.I.1 Tatiana: *Как я люблю под звуки песен этих
Мечтами уноситься иногда куда-то, куда-то далеко*

Olga responds in a manner consistent with her character and then proceeds to start singing in an arioso style, suddenly singing a bar from the peasant *пляска*, then launching into a full aria in which she distinguishes herself from Tatiana as being incapable of dreaming and sighing in the dark of night on a balcony. What is interesting is that Tchaikovsky retains the iambic tetrameter rhythm that pulses through the whole of EOP.

EOT.I.1 Olga: *Я не способна к грусти томной, a
Я не люблю мечтать в тиши, b
Иль на балконе ночью тёмной a
Вздохать из глубины души. b
Зачем вздохать, когда счастливо c
Мои дни юные текут? d
Я беззаботна и шаловлива, c
Меня ребёнком все зовут! d*

The rhyme scheme attempts to mimic that of the first four lines of the Onegin stanza. The only place the words *глубины души* appear in EOP is in the Chapter 6, where they are written as the

description of *Tatiana*'s thoughts after the incident of her Name-day party when Lensky becomes offended by Onegin's behavior with Olga:

EOP.6.III (1-14) *Его неожиданным появленьем,
Мгновенной нежностью очей
И странным с Ольгой поведеньем
До глубины души своей
Она проникнута; не может
Никак понять его; тревожит
Ее ревнивая тоска,
Как будто хладная рука
Ей сердце жмет, как будто бездна
Под ней чернеет и шумит...
"Погибну, - Таня говорит, -
Но гибель от него любезна.
Я не ропщу: зачем роптать?
Не может он мне счастья дать."* -

Even *Tatiana*'s interjection "зачем роптать?" in line 13 of this stanza seems to be ironically reflected in *Olga*'s "зачем вздыхать?" from EOT. This might seem to be stretching the transvocalist concept at first, but then Tchaikovsky makes it clear that *Olga* is not singing her own words. Her next lines in this aria are:

EOT.I.1 Olga: *Мне будет жизнь всегда мила
И я останусь, как и прежде,
Подобно ветреной надежде,
Резва, беспечна, весела!*

Compare this to:

EOP.6.XIII (7-14) *Он думал Оленьку смутить
Своим приездом поразить;
Не тут-то было: как и прежде,
На встречу бедного певца
Прыгнула Оленька с крыльца,
Подобно ветреной надежде,
Резва, беспечна, весела,
Ну точно так же, как была.*

These EOP lines come from a few stanzas after the quote from *Tatiana*'s thoughts shown above.

In this case, Tchaikovsky, in the first aria of the opera, has caused *Olga* to transvocalize lines describing the thoughts of *Tatiana* and Lensky from Chapter 6 of EOP, regarding the

imminent duel between Onegin and Lensky. In the case of Lensky's lines, they are literally the very words he thinks just before he speaks to Olga after the party and after having already dispatched the letter challenging Onegin to the duel. In addition to this clear foreshadowing of the action to come later, we see that Tchaikovsky's Olga scarcely exists as an independent character with her own thoughts, even when she is singing about herself.

Following Olga's aria, there are several minutes of recitative, with lines entirely invented by Tchaikovsky. The composer introduces some important musical ideas that merit further investigation and discussion in a future paper devoted to the musical ideas. In the course of the recitative, amid much musical consternation, Lensky arrives and wants to introduce the Larins to his friend and neighbor, Onegin. There are a few more moments of polite recitative banter, and then we reach the next major stretch of libretto drawn from original EOP material. Tchaikovsky constructs a luminous quartet for Onegin, Lensky, Tatiana, and Olga from a number of interesting places.

Onegin and Lensky's portion of the quartet begins with the directly quoted exchange from EOP that in Pushkin's work had taken place *after* they left the Larins.

EOP.3.V (1-12) *Скажи: которая Татьяна?"*
- *Да та, которая грустна*
И молчалива, как Светлана,
Вошла и села у окна.-
"Неужто ты влюблен в меньшую?"
- *А что? - "Я выбрал бы другую,*
Когда б я был, как ты, поэт.
В чертах у Ольги жизни нет.
Точь-в-точь в Вандиковой Мадонне:
Кругла, красна лицом она,
Как эта глупая луна
На этом глупом небосклоне.

Tchaikovsky only deletes the anachronistic "*вошла и села у окна*" from line 4. Otherwise, the rest works fine as a side conversation between the two while still in the presence of the two girls.

The placement of this text in the construct of a quartet diminishes the potentially offensive effect of Onegin's words, but to the longer portion of the conversation, Tchaikovsky cleverly adds, as a rejoinder on the part of Lensky, a famous line from Chapter Two (change from third person plural to first person plural underscored):

EOP.2.XIII (5-8) *Они сошлись. Волна и камень,
Стихи и проза, лед и пламень
Не столь различны меж собой.
Сперва взаимной разнотой*

EOT.I.1 Lensky: *Ах милый друг, волна и камень,
Стихи и проза, лед и пламень
Не столь различны меж собой.
Как мы взаимной разнотой*

By interposing Pushkin's comment on the extraordinary difference between Lensky and Onegin, Tchaikovsky causes Lensky to underscore from nearly their first moments on the stage, the sense that Lensky has of this great difference. By specifically choosing Lensky to transvocalize this observation, Tchaikovsky attributes to the character of Lensky some of the personality of Pushkin and, by extension as co-author of the personality, of himself. Throughout the opera, Tchaikovsky demonstrates such sympathy with Lensky's feelings – poetically romantic as they are – and generally develops his character as central to the idea of the work. This contrasts fairly significantly from the marginal and rather parodic light that Pushkin generally casts upon Lensky.

For Olga's part in the quartet, Tchaikovsky chooses a narrative section in Chapter Three that seems consistent with Olga's society-oriented mindset:

EOP.3.VI (1-8) *Меж тем Онегина явленье
У Лариных произвело
На всех большое впечатленье
И всех соседей развлекло.
Пошла догадка за догадкой.
Все стали толковать украдкой,
Шутить, судить не без греха,*

Татьяне прочить жениха:

EOT.1.1 Olga: *Ах, знала я, что появление
Онегина произведёт
На всех большое впечатленье
И всех соседей развлечёт.
Пойдёт догадка за догадкой.
Все станут толковать украдкой,
Шутить, судить не без греха,
И Тане прочить жениха:*

In comparing the EOT with the EOP in Olga's text, we see a transition from an omniscient narrative past tense to a first person narrative with present tense observations and predictions.

Pushkin was relating the sensational effect of Onegin's appearance at the Larins' on the surrounding gentry. In Olga's transvocalization of Pushkin, we find the superficial preoccupation with societal opinion transferred directly to her person, which does not seem inconsistent from Pushkin's portrait of her. Additionally, it is impressive that all the tense and number changes can be accomplished without marring Pushkin's original meter.

Following the quartet, Onegin and Tatiana retreat into the background, and Tatiana sings the first two lines from EOP.2.VI: *Задумчивость её [EOT:моя] подруга/От самых колыбельных дней.* Meanwhile, Lensky begins to fawn on Olga. This recitative, like much of the recitative material, is also original to EOT. It highlights the considerable difference in attitude between Lensky and Olga regarding the importance of their relationship. It leads to Lensky's first aria, which is drawn from Pushkin's description of Lensky in Chapter Two

EOP.2.XX (1-7) *Ах, он любил, как в наши лета
Уже не любят; как одна
Безумная душа поэта
Еще любить осуждена:
Всегда, везде одно мечтанье,
Одно привычное желанье,
Одна привычная печаль.*

EOT.I.1 Lensky: *Я люблю Вас, я люблю Вас, Ольга как одна*

*Безумная душа поэта
Еще любить осуждена:
Всегда, везде одно мечтанье,
Одно привычное желанье,
Одна привычная печаль.*

Tchaikovsky then skips to the subsequent stanza (EOP.2.XXI.1-6), making the necessary person and number changes. He then adds a verse comprised essentially of variations on the verse above:

EOT.I.1 Lensky: *Ты одна в моих мечтаньях,
Ты одна моё желанье
ты мне радость и страданье.*

And then he returns to where he left off in Stanza XX, with some license:

EOT.I.1 Lensky: *Ни охлаждающая даль,
Ни час разлуки, ни весёлая шум –
Не отрезвят души
Согретой девственным огнём любви.*

He concludes the text of the aria with lines that resemble the sentiments expressed in Stanza XXI, concerning their tender courtship and their betrothal by their parents, and has Olga and Lensky exchange these lines as a duet. The effect is quite charming; however, whereas Pushkin goes on to invite his reader, "...but take any novel,/ and you will surely find/ [Olga's] portrait...,²²" Tchaikovsky prefers to leave his audience basking in this amorous tableau. This aria also contains, in the material original to EOT, a transition from the use of the formal *Вы* to *ты*, or more specifically the accusative *тебя*, a transition that Tchaikovsky will repeat in the final scene between Tatiana and Onegin²³.

Madame Larina returns at this point and invites the young people in to dinner, but Tatiana and Onegin have drifted off. As they return to the house, Onegin sings to Tatiana the quotation with which Pushkin opens his masterpiece, but omits the last six lines of the stanza:

EOP.1.I (1-14) *"Мой дядя самых честных правил,
Когда не в шутку занемог,
Он уважать себя заставил
И лучше выдумать не мог.*

*Его пример другим наука;
 Но, боже мой, какая скука
 С больным сидеть и день и ночь,
 Не отходя ни шагу прочь!
 Какое низкое коварство
 Полуживого забавлять,
 Ему подушки поправлять,
 Печально подносить лекарство,
 Вздыхать и думать про себя:
 Когда же чорт возьмет тебя!"*

The last six lines are rather searing in their honest depiction of Onegin’s complete disinterest in his uncle’s welfare, a disinterest he seems to have for all of humanity. We have already seen Tchaikovsky’s sensitivity to Lensky. His sensitivity for Tatiana was immeasurably greater. He wrote to his friend Kashkin, previously noted as one of his collaborators on the libretto, “Being completely immersed in the composition. I so thoroughly identified myself with the image of Tatyana that she became for me like a living person, together with everything that surrounded her” (Brown 143). In a letter to his benefactress, Nadezhda von Meck, he wrote, “I’m in love with the image of Tatyana” (Brown 177). When we are in love, we tend to omit our innermost thoughts, particularly if they reveal unpleasant aspects of our nature. We will often not even allow others to speak harshly before the object of our affection. It is possible that this reasoning causes Tchaikovsky to excise the brutally honest last six lines of this stanza.

The scene closes with the simple, wondering observation by Nanny (EOT-original) that Onegin seems to have had some sort of effect on Tatiana.

Act One, Scene Two

EOT

EOP

Tatiana speaks with Nanny about love and writes a letter in the night declaring her love to Onegin

Chapter Three (middle)

Total lines 189; 87% from EOP

In the preceding scene, 98 of the scene's total of 306 lines came directly from Pushkin, for a ratio of 32%. In Scene Two, this number jumps dramatically to 165 of the total of 189 lines, for a total of 87%, exceeded throughout the opera only by the ratio in Scene Three.

All of the material from this scene comes from Chapter Three, the bulk of it comprising the famous letter of Tatiana to Onegin. After a few short lines to set the situation in Tatiana's bedroom as she and Nanny prepare for bed, Tchaikovsky goes straight to the first lines of direct dialogue in the chapter after the exchange between Lensky and Onegin (mentioned previously). These appear in Stanza XVII, which is quoted verbatim, with the exception of the line, "*А нынче всё мне тёмно, Таня,*" which Tchaikovsky changes to: "*А ныне всё темно мне стало.*" From this point through stanzas XVIII and XIX, every word is quoted with only the smallest changes: "*эти лета*" becomes "*наши лета,*" "*я страдаю*" is added to "*я тоскую.*"

In the transition from stanza XIX, after Tatiana's declaration that she is in love, and her order to be left alone in XX, some narrative lines are removed, as well as some lines that would seem to indicate Nanny's strong sympathy with Tatiana's feelings:

EOP.3.XIX (12-14) - *Дитя мое, господь с тобою! -*
 И няня девушку с мольбой
 Крестила дряхлою рукой.

Following Tatiana's next direct quote in Stanza XXI and a "Good-night" from Nanny added in EOT, Tchaikovsky takes us on another short time-trip backward four stanzas through Pushkin's text to a dramatic moment before the conversation between Tatiana and Nanny. Here Pushkin addresses Tatiana directly in the second person familiar *ты*.

EOP.3.XV (1-14) *Татьяна, милая Татьяна!*
 С тобой теперь я слезы лью;
 Ты в руки модного тирана
 Уж отдала судьбу свою.
 Погибнешь, милая; но прежде
 Ты в ослепительной надежде
 Блаженство темное зовешь,

*Ты негу жизни узнаешь,
Ты пьешь волшебный яд желаний,
Тебя преследуют мечты:
Везде воображаешь ты
Приюты счастливых свиданий;
Везде, везде перед тобой
Твой искуситель роковой.*

There are at least a dozen places in the novel where Tatiana weeps at her own fate or that of others, and there are some spots where Lensky weeps. Still others speak of the *absence* of tears on the part of Onegin; but this is the only stanza in which Pushkin himself weeps for Tatiana. Tchaikovsky transvocalizes lines 5-14 of this stanza into Tatiana's own mouth as follows:

EOT.I.2 Tatiana: Пускай погибну я; но прежде
Я в ослепительной надежде
Блаженство темное зову,
Я негу жизни узнаю,
Я пью волшебный яд желаний,
Меня преследуют мечты:
Везде, везде передо мной
Мой искуситель роковой.

The necessity to omit the first four lines is almost self-explanatory; girls in love may think of their beau as a tempter, but no one wants “to surrender her fate” to a “*модный тиран.*” In addition to the obviously necessary change from second to first person, Tchaikovsky prevents Tatiana from expressing the imagination of happiness as indicated in lines 11 and 12 of EOP.3.XV. Tchaikovsky, of course, knows that this introductory *arioso* will be succeeded by the text of the letter with all its tender expressions of Tatiana's sincere love, which will be answered in the subsequent scene by Onegin's rejection. The words of these two lines convey Pushkin's ironic, worldly sympathy and reveal his knowledge of human nature. They demand recitation with something like a knowing sigh. Perhaps Tchaikovsky felt that it was the better part of valor to remove Pushkin's words about Tatiana's naive hope from this poignant sequence. This again emphasizes the sensitivity that Tchaikovsky felt toward the image of Tatiana.

Further evidence of the significance Tchaikovsky found in this passage can be found in the reprise of the musical idea to which he set these words in Act III (EOP.8). When Onegin sings the words of his own letter to Tatiana as represented in that scene, it is to the melody of Tatiana's "*Пускай погибну я.*" Moreover, Tchaikovsky transvocalizes the lines underscored above into Onegin's mouth at that same moment.

Following this weighty transvocalized neochronotope and a few recitative phrases, Tchaikovsky launches directly into the text of the letter itself. He sets all but eleven of the 79 lines of the letter to music that soars and dives with the nuances of young love, making only four minuscule changes in the remaining text. These are the words Tchaikovsky does *not* set:

EOP.3.Tatiana's Letter (11-21)	<i>Когда б надежду я имела Хоть редко, хоть в неделю раз В деревне нашей видеть вас, Чтоб только слышать ваши речи, Вам слово молвить, и потом Все думать, думать об одном И день и ночь до новой встречи. Но говорят, вы нелюдим; В глуши, в деревне всё вам скучно, А мы... ничем мы не блещим, Хоть вам и рады простодушно.</i>
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It is not entirely clear why Tchaikovsky chose not to set these specific words. He attests in his letters that this scene was the first that he set to music. This indicates that many of the musical ideas expressed in this scene should be considered as forebears of other, related themes. We have already seen that he has lofty ideas about Tatiana's personality. He did not have the same opinion about his own wife – in fact, quite the contrary. There is a line of reasoning in these verses that strongly resembles some of the appeals that Miljukova made in her letters to Tchaikovsky. On May 16, 1877, she wrote: "Although I cannot now see you, I console myself

with the thought that you are in the same city as I am...and God knows whether I shall chance to see you.” Later the same day, she wrote Tchaikovsky again:

...your shortcomings mean absolutely nothing to me. Perhaps if you were a perfect being I would have remained completely cool towards you. I am dying of longing, and I burn with a desire to see you, to sit with you and talk with you...I sit at home all day, pace the room from corner to corner like a crazy thing, thinking only of the moment when I shall see you. I shall be ready to throw myself on your neck, to smother you with kisses... (Brown 138-39).

The desperate longing to see and speak with Tchaikovsky is like Tatiana’s desire to see Onegin, thinking day and night only about their next meeting. Yet the reality of Miljukova is not the ideal of Tatiana; she goes the additional step of promising kisses and embraces. When the reality came to pass after the marriage, Tchaikovsky would describe the effect of her overtures as “totally repugnant” in a letter to his brother (Brown 148). Perhaps Miljukova’s stated desire to demonstrate her affection physically compromises the words and sentiments in this passage to such an extent that Tchaikovsky could not place anything of the kind into the mouth of his beloved Tania.

The other changes in the letter are: a break for a few lines of dramatic recitative following the omission above; the move of the conditional particle *б* in line 24; the deletion of the word *волнуемой* from line 51; and the reverse of the order of the words “*ваша честь*” to “*честь его*.” This last change is problematic because it upsets the rhyme scheme:

EOP.3.Tatiana’s Letter (78-79)	<i>Кончаю! Страшно перечесть...</i> <i>Стыдом и страхом замираю...</i> <i>Но мне порукой ваша честь,</i> <i>И смело ей себя вверяю...</i>	a b a b
EOT.I.2	Tatiana: <i>Кончаю! Страшно перечесть...</i> <i>Стыдом и страхом замираю...</i> <i>Но мне порукой <u>честь его</u>,</i> <i>И смело ей себя вверяю...</i>	a b c b

There is only one possible explanation for this change, one of the few not necessitated by the need to conform third person narrative to spoken first or second person. Tchaikovsky must have felt strongly that at this point Tatiana needed to have sealed the letter already, making second person no longer an option. This stage direction is, in fact, written in the copy of the score I have: (*вставая и запечатывая письмо*)²⁴. Although stage directions are notoriously inaccurate and unreliable²⁵, in this case, nothing else really makes sense.

From this point to the end of the scene, Tchaikovsky uses exclusively direct quotes (with some unremarkable repetitions) from the remainder of stanzas XXXIII-XXXV, the last line of which is the last line of the scene.

Act One, Scene Three

EOT

Song of the Maidens. Scene in the garden between Tatiana and Onegin. He rejects her and delivers a “sermon” about his disinterest in marriage.

EOP

Chapter Three (end), Chapter Four (beginning)

Total lines 85; 88% from EOP

After beginning with some very important musical interludes, Tchaikovsky commences the Garden Scene from Chapter Four of EOP with the very ingenious use of Chapter Three’s *Песня девушек*, known to English-speaking opera audiences as “The Berry-Picking Song.” Tchaikovsky uses all eighteen of the song’s lines and sets it to decidedly *un*-folkish music. Shaw complains that, “the song is taken from Pushkin but without the explicit motivation²⁶.” He is dismayed by the absence of reference to the ironic note that Pushkin adds following the song in EOP, that the girls sing “...by decree in chorus/(a decree based on that/sly mouths would not in secret/eat the seignioral berry/and would be occupied by singing; a device/of rural wit!)²⁷”

While this observation has merit, it does not take into account the style of the setting as a possible commentary on the song's purpose within the scene.

Sometimes this song is performed on-stage as an actual chorus of girls picking berries, but the words themselves suggest something much more sophisticated and motivated by something other than agricultural necessity. Rancour-Laferriere says that references to “berries, cherries, and red currants” in folk songs, and specifically in this song, “...are all common images from peasant lyric songs and wedding songs, and are all vaguely suggestive of female sexuality” (238). Later, he says, “For the young maidens, then, to pelt the young man with berries in Puškin’s folkloric song is to ‘throw themselves’ at this man, sexually” (239). Yet this sort of disingenuous playfulness is at odds with Tatiana’s sincere hopes of capturing Onegin’s attention. I feel that, with his elegant setting and instrumentation of this song, coupled with the fact that he uses it to frame the entire scene, Tchaikovsky, fully aware of the double meaning of the words, assumed that intelligent performers would communicate very well the “explicit motivation” of this chorus. It serves to highlight that, at least in Onegin’s view, the ordinary occupation of girls, both noble and peasant, is to “throw themselves” at a man and play with his feelings. Sadly, he does not see that Tatiana is far from ordinary.

After the chorus, Tchaikovsky uses a short direct quote from Chapter Three that actually precedes the Berry-Picking Song from EOP.3.XXXIX.(1-2): *Здесь он! здесь Евгений!//О боже! что подумал он!* (PSS 77), and then continues with recitative. Tchaikovsky then returns to material from Chapter Four, as Onegin begins to sing the words given him by Pushkin that will be so painful to Tatiana:

EOP.4.XII (3-6)

*И молвил: "Вы ко мне писали,
Не отпирайтесь. Я прочел
Души доверчивой признанья,
Любви невинной излиянья;"*

Tchaikovsky starts with the direct quote and removes the preposition *ко*, but otherwise includes all the lines from the remainder of this stanza, as well as the first eight lines of stanza XIII.

Parenthetically, this becomes one of the very few moments in the opera when Tchaikovsky gives his baritone a genuinely singing melody of his own. In almost all the rest of the opera when Onegin is not singing recitative, he is either singing in ensemble or repeating a melody used by someone else first (see Act Three, Scene One). This quality of Onegin's music attests to the possibility that Tchaikovsky was not as fond of the Petersburg dandy as his literary creator. Elsewhere in the letter to Kashkin already quoted above (29), he wrote: "I...was furiously indignant with Onegin, who seemed to me a cold, heartless fop" (Brown 143).

In stanza XIV, he changes the word order in line four from "*Их вовсе недостойн я*" to "*Их недостойн вовсе я.*" This does not disrupt the meter or the rhyme scheme. It seems to be an example of a phenomenon Krasinskaja describes in her treatment of Tchaikovsky's operatic melodies. Tchaikovsky seemed to feel that the approach a composer should take to setting words in recitative was different from the approach needed when setting aria passages. While the lines from stanza XII are sung in recitative, by the time we reach stanza XIV, Onegin's "sermon" aria is in full swing. The melody line of the aria has been fully established, and Tchaikovsky has even begun to make variations on the tune:

[Insert measure 70 – 74 pp139-140 from score]

If we look at the moment when Onegin sings “*их не достоин вовсе я*” and try replacing it with the EOP word order, we see that the influence of the melody line causes the words to have an unnatural intonation. In spoken language, just as in recited poetry, there is a rise and fall to the relative pitch, or intonation, of the speaker that can be notated musically with some degree of technical accuracy. If a musical line follows this rise and fall, it is described as having “natural intonation,” otherwise the intonation is “unnatural.”

Unnatural intonation or declamation was a subject about which Tchaikovsky vacillated considerably. Krasinskaja quotes Tchaikovsky in his correspondence with the Grand Duke Konstantin Romanov*, “Your criticisms of my sins as regards declamation are too lenient. In this respect I am past redemption. I do not think I have perpetrated many blunders of this kind in recitative and dialogue, but in the lyrical parts, where my mood has carried me away from all just equivalents, I am simply unconscious of my mistakes” (LLT 610, Krasinskaja, 8). Later in the same letter he writes, “*безусловная непогрешимость в отношении музыкальной декламации есть качество отрицательное и ...преувеличать значение этого качества не следует*” (Krasinskaja 8). Krasinskaya invites us to compare this comment to another he makes in a letter from March of 1873 on the undesirability “of slavish mimicry of conversational intonation.”

In the case of the line in question, Tchaikovsky was faced with a quandary: how to remain faithful to Pushkin’s original? Force the words to fit the melody or vice versa? Had the words been in recitative, as his comments to the Grand Duke suggest, we can imagine that he might have altered the musical line. They are, however, in the middle of a lyrical aria line. Serendipitously, the simple reverse in the order of the words alleviates the quandary and does not

* On the subject of the opera *The Queen of Spades*, written some thirteen years later, but the topic is nonetheless germane to this discussion.

harm the poetics of Pushkin's verse. Undoubtedly, Tchaikovsky faced many such moments during the composition of the opera. I will not address all of them in the detail that I have here, but it gives one pause to consider the complexity of the composer's task.

There are three other excisions from Pushkin's verse as Tchaikovsky continues through stanzas XIV, XV, XVI, each of which again seems to be inspired by the composer's delicacy of feeling for Tatiana. From XIV, he removes the lines, "you would begin to weep; your tears/would fail to touch my heart – /they merely would exasperate it" (Nabokov I: 188). From XVI he takes out, "a sapling thus its leaves/changes with every spring./By heaven thus 'tis evidently destined./Again you will love; but..." (Nabokov I: 189) Both of these deletions disrupt the rhyme scheme, but perhaps Tchaikovsky's great admiration for Pushkin's rhyme scheme is exceeded by his love for Tatiana. This would also explain the exclusion of all of stanza XV, where Onegin mercilessly paints a picture of what married life with him would be.

EOP.4.XV (1-14) *"Что может быть на свете хуже
Семьи, где бедная жена
Грустит о недостойном муже
И днем и вечером одна;
Где скучный муж, ей цену зная
(Судьбу, однако ж, проклиная),
Всегда нахмурен, молчалив,
Сердит и холодно-ревнив!
Таков я. И того ль искали
Вы чистой, пламенной душой,
Когда с такою простотой,
С таким умом ко мне писали?
Ужели жребий вам такой
Назначен строгою судьбой?"*

The extraordinary tawdriness of the image reflected in this stanza adds a vividness to Pushkin's portrait of Onegin that was apparently of less interest to Tchaikovsky.

The scene and act conclude, as already stated, with a reprise of the "Berry-Picking Song." This time, however, the neochronotope created by placing the carefree, lighthearted song after

Onegin’s cold “sermon” causes us to consider the possibility that these berries may not be very sweet.

Act Two, Scene One

<u>EOT</u>	<u>EOP</u>
<p>Tatiana’s name-day ball. Onegin and Olga flirt, and Lensky is offended.</p> <p>Lensky challenges Onegin to a duel <u>Total lines 76; 26% from EOP</u></p>	<p>Chapter Four: Rural and literary matters Chapter Five (beginning): Tatiana’s Dream</p> <p>Chapter Five (middle)</p> <p>Chapter Six (beginning)</p>

This scene has the least material taken directly from Pushkin. It concerns Tatiana’s name-day ball and the efforts by Onegin to incite Lensky’s jealousy as related in Chapter Five of EOP. In the novel, Lensky departs from the party bewildered and profoundly injured emotionally. He sends Onegin a challenge to a duel by letter. In constructing the libretto, Tchaikovsky obviously must have felt that the drama of the challenge to the duel belonged on-stage. Many in his circle had warned Tchaikovsky that Pushkin’s novel lacked many of the moments of high drama typical of most operas. While working on the opera in June 1877, he addressed these concerns in a letter to his brother, Modest, declaring boldly, “Let it lack scenic effect, let it be wanting in action!” (*LLT* 203).

The action of the scene opens with a now famous waltz and chorus, the words of which are entirely original to EOT. They are in no wise to be understood as trying to mimic Pushkin; neither rhyme nor meter in any way correspond to the Onegin stanza. The lines themselves are especially vapid. They convey, similar to the “Berry-Picking Song” (Chorus of Girls) in Act One, a sense of the vanity of the social whirl:

EOT.2.1 Guests *Вот так сюрприз!
Никак не ожидали
Военной музыки!
Веселье хоть куда!
Давно уж нас
Так не угощали!
На славу пир,
Не правда ль, господа?
Браво, браво, браво etc.*

Tchaikovsky follows the order of the dances from the name-day ball description in chapter Five by succeeding the waltz with a mazurka. Pushkin mentions this as a rustic convention preserved primarily in the country:

EOP.5.XLII (8-14) *Но в городах, по деревням
Еще мазурка сохранила
Первоначальные красы:
Припрыжки, каблуки, усы
Всё те же: их не изменила
Лихая мода, наш тиран,
Недуг новейших россиян.*

It is during the mazurka that the tension begins to build up in recitative exchanges among Olga, Onegin, and Lensky. Olga chooses to dance with Onegin over the protestations of Lensky.

When the mazurka ends, discussion begins among the guests about a “Frenchman who lives with the Kharlikovs.” The guests encourage this man to sing some charming verses in dedication of Tatiana’s name-day. Although his verses are an invention of EOT, the character is not. In the novel, we find:

EOP.5.XXXIII (1-14) *Освобождаясь от пробки влажной,
Бутылка хлопнула; вино
Шипит; и вот с осанкой важной,
Куплетом мучимый давно,
Трике встает; пред ним собранье
Хранит глубокое молчанье.
Татьяна чуть жива; Трике,
К ней обратясь с листком в руке,
Запел, фальшивя. Плески, клики
Его приветствуют. Она
Певцу присесть принуждена;
Поэт же скромный, хоть великий,*

*Ее здоровье первый пьет
И ей куплет передает.*

The name of the family with which he lives is derived from a passage a few stanzas later,

EOP.5.XXXIX (5-9) *Обрадован музыки громом,
Оставляя чашку чаю с ромом,
Парис окружных городков,
Подходит к Ольге Петушков,
К Татьяне Ленский; Харликову,
Невесту переспелых лет,
Берет тамбовский мой поэт,*

In Pushkin there is no direct connection between Kharlikov and Triquet. The character of Triquet, although not at all central to the development of the plot, is one of the most memorable creations of the opera.

As mentioned at the beginning of the paper, in the premiere at the Moscow Maly Theater in 1879, this aria was one of only two numbers to draw enthusiastic applause. Also noted earlier, this seems to be the one spot in EOT in which Vladimir Shilovskij played an uncontested role. The aria has the unique distinction of having two sets of text – one in French and one in Russian. According to Brown, Shilovskij appears to have written the French version. Many observers have expressed the opinion that the French text is charming. This is the text sung by all Triquets in performances outside of Russia, and it gives the character a personality similar to that of Cherubino in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* – an excessively refined, slightly effeminate, sincere, but ultimately trivial fop.

Within Russia, however, the text is always sung in the broken Russian apparently created by Tchaikovsky himself. The effect is pure buffoonery, and in three of the four performances of the opera I saw in fall 2001 the audience laughed out loud at the singer's delivery*. Triquet is usually clad in some sort of outlandish costume. Here are both versions:

*A description of this performance will appear in a later paper devoted to specific musical issues in the section, "Notes on Performance Practice."

Triquet: (Recitative)

*Куплет имеет я с собой
но где, скажите, Mademoiselle?
Он должен быть передо мной,
Car le couplet est fait pour elle!*

Girls:

Вот она! Вот она!

Triquet:

*Aha! Voilà царица этот день
Mesdames! Я буду начинать
Прошу теперь мне не мешайт!*

(Aria)

*Какой прекрасный этот день
Когда в сей деревенский сень
просыпался belle Tatiana!
И ми преиекали сюда
Девуц и дам и господа,
Посмотреть, как расцветайт она!*

*A cette fête conviée
De celle dont le jour est fêté
Contemplons le charme et la beauté
Son aspect doux et enchanteur
Répand sur nous tous sa leur
De la voir quel plaisir, quel bonheur!*

*Ви роза, ви роза,
Ви роза belle Tatiana!*

Brillez, brillez toujours, belle Tatiana!

*Желаем много быть счастлив,
Быть вечно фея de ces rives,
Никогда не быть скучна, больна!
И пусть среди своих bonheurs,
Не забывайт свой serviteur,
И все свои подруг она*

*Que le sort comble ses désirs,
Que la joie, les jeux les plaisirs
Fixent sur ses lèvres le sourire!
Que sur le ciel de ce pays,
Etoile qui toujours brille at luit,
Elle éclaire nos jours et nos nuits!*

*Ви роза, ви роза,
Ви роза belle Tatiana!*

Brillez, brillez toujours, belle Tatiana!

There are many grammatical problems with the Russian version: the verb *имеет* is improperly conjugated; *мешать*, *начинать*, *забыть*, and *расцветать* are all modified in order to be horribly mispronounced. *Просыпался* is almost nonsensical in this context, and even if it made sense, the gender is wrong*. The main idea is well conveyed: Triquet has not mastered Russian.

* Some of these mistakes are noted on p. 77 of the libretto from the *English National Opera*, edited and translated by David Lloyd-Jones.

The refrain “*belle Tatiana*” is actually from EOP.5.XXVII.14, in which stanza Pushkin tells us that Triquet set the couplets to the tune of “*Réveillez vous, belle endormie.*” Tchaikovsky, according to Roland J. Wiley, sets his text to the tune “*Dormez, dormez, chères amours.*” It is interesting that the tune in Pushkin is about waking up, while the tune Tchaikovsky chooses is about going to sleep, because in stanza XXXIII, Pushkin himself describes Tatiana as “scarce alive” (Nabokov I: 225) from embarrassment when Triquet sings. Wiley goes on to assert that this is not “a static ornamental scene like the one with which the opera began...he [Tchaikovsky] is declaring her [Tatiana] to be a muse.”²⁸ The assessment that Tchaikovsky equates Tatiana with the Muse seems quite reasonable. The opening scene’s “static, ornamentality” will be challenged in the discussion in Section III.

Following the singing of the couplets, the dancing resumes, with much of the conversation mimicking the gist of stanzas XL through XLV, on which Chapter Five ends. However, the drama on stage is just warming up. Here the text is entirely original because, as noted earlier, Tchaikovsky decides to put Lensky’s challenge of Onegin to a duel in the action of the name-day party. The music is primarily recitative, and the text is essentially conversational prose without rhyme or meter. When Onegin dances with Olga, Lensky becomes bitterly jealous and begins to make accusations against him, arousing the attention of the guests, the hostess, and her daughters. When Larina expresses her horror that such an ugly scene is taking place: “*О боже! В нашем доме, пощадите, пощадите!*” Lensky turns this phrase around and begins singing the music that eventually becomes a quintet with the guests as chorus:

EOT.II.1	Lensky:	<i>В вашем доме, как сны золотые Мои детские годы текли; В вашем доме вкусил я впервые Радость чистой и светлой любви. Но сегодня узнал я другое: Я изведal, что жизнь не роман.</i>
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*Честь – лишь звук, дружба – слово пустое,
Оскорбительный, жалкий обман!*

It is interesting that he sings these lines to Larina, especially lines six through eight, with the observation that “life is no novel.” They take to a bitter level the advice she herself gave to Tatiana in EOT.I.1 “*Бывало, я, как ты, читая книги эти, волновалась. Всё это вымысел! Прошли года и я увидела, что в жизни нет героев.*” Although these lines do not appear in this form, they are certainly consistent with Pushkin’s narrative in stanzas XXX and XXXI of Chapter Two, where he describes the young Madame Larina’s passion for reading French and English novels. This is a trait Tatiana very evidently inherits. Pushkin suggests the idea that Tatiana confuses the heroes she encounters in novels with Onegin in many ways throughout the novel. In one passage in Chapter Three he describes how Onegin might compare to the men Tatiana dreams about in the novels *she* devours: “*Но наш герой, кто б ни был он,/Уж верно был не Грандисон.*” There is irony upon irony, then, in Lensky’s observation.

As the quintet develops, Tchaikovsky must invent words for Lensky, Olga, Larina, and the guests, but he draws Onegin and Tatiana’s from Chapter Six. As a result, just as with the quartet in Act One, in this quintet we get the sense again of the suspension of real-time – a neochronotope – because the action is progressing at the name-day ball of Chapter Five, while Tatiana and Onegin sing words from different parts of Chapter Six.

For Onegin, Tchaikovsky knits together lines from two different stanzas in Chapter Six that concern the presentation by Zaretsky of Lensky’s written challenge and Onegin’s reaction:

EOP.6.IX (9-14) *Зарецкий встал без объяснений;
Остаться доле не хотел,
Имея дома много дел,
И тотчас вышел; но Евгений
Наедине с своей душой
Был недоволен сам с собой.*

EOP.6.X (1-14) *И поделом: в разборе строгом,
На тайный суд себя призвав,
Он обвинял себя во многом:
Во-первых, он уж был неправ,
Что над любовью робкой, нежной
Так подшутил вечер небрежно.
А во-вторых: пускай поэт
Дурачится; в восемнадцать лет
Оно простительно. Евгений,
Всем сердцем юношу любя,
Был должен оказать себя
Не мячиком предрассуждений,
Не пылким мальчиком, бойцом,
Но мужем с честью и умом.*

Compare this to:

EOT.II.1 Onegin: *Наедине с своей душой
Я недоволен сам с собой.
Над этой страстью, робкой, нежной
Я слишком пошутил небрежно!
всем сердцем юношу любя
Я б должен показать себя
Не мячиком предрассуждений
Но мужем с честью и умом.*

The usual irony of transvocalism from Pushkin to Onegin is deepened for the reader familiar with EOP by the fact that Onegin is speaking lines of response to the duel *before* the challenge has actually been issued. This may mean that he has actually willed the duel to happen because he knew on some level of consciousness where the consequences of his behavior would lead.

For Tatiana, Tchaikovsky draws from a similar neochronotopic well with the same effect. She is singing about her reaction to Onegin's unusual behavior with Olga *while* it is taking place. Adding to the fatal and fateful character of this commentary, her own spoken words, which Tchaikovsky paraphrases, go on to express the thought that she will perish, but that to perish at Onegin's hands is sweet:

EOP.6.III (1-14) *Его неожиданным появлением,
Мгновенной нежностью очей*

*И странным с Ольгой поведением
До глубины души своей
Она проникнута; не может
Никак понять его; тревожит
Ее ревнивая тоска,
Как будто хладная рука
Ей сердце жмет, как будто бездна
Под ней чернеет и шумит...
"Погибну, - Таня говорит, -
Но гибель от него любезна.
Я не ропщу: зачем роптать?
Не может он мне счастья дать." –*

By the time Tatiana finishes singing the paraphrase of the above lines, it has become clear to all that a crisis is coming.

It is interesting that at this moment, when a duel is imminent, Tchaikovsky puts the following words in Olga's mouth: "*Но я ни в чём не виновата, ни в чём.*" The words are suggestive of a comment attributed to Pushkin on his deathbed, while the poet lay dying from a duel fought to defend the honor of his wife. To Natalya he said: "Do not worry. You are not guilty in this matter" (Feinstein 273). The irony is, of course, that she *was* guilty, at least of allowing people to think she was carrying on an affair with a young, French count*.

Tchaikovsky found Olga perhaps less guilty than Natalya. Unfortunately, my research has not revealed to me how much Tchaikovsky himself knew of the particulars of this deathbed absolution – certainly all Russians of his class and educational background were familiar with the circumstances of Pushkin's tragic end.

Following the quintet, Lensky issues the challenge *per se*, the most theatrical neochronotope of the entire opera. The rivals confront one another physically, Lensky rushes out bidding an eternal farewell to Olga, and the guests sing of their morbid excitement at the scandal that has unfolded right before their eyes.

* For more on this highly controversial point, see Feinstein 261-264

Act Two, Scene Two

EOT

Onegin and Lensky duel. Lensky is killed.

Total lines 76; 80% from EOP

EOP

Chapter Six (middle)

Chapter Seven:
Onegin goes abroad. Olga marries someone else. Tatiana peruses Onegin's library, then goes to Moscow and meets her future husband.

This scene, after scenes two and three of Act One, has the highest percentage of pure EOP text. There is some rearrangement of Chapter Six text resulting from the placement of the challenge on stage and the reorganization of events precipitated by that decision. EOT begins with Zaretsky and Lensky awaiting Onegin at the appointed place. They exchange a few lines of invented recitative. Zaretsky then sings a couplet derived from the words that he wakes Lensky with in EOP:

EOP.6.XXXIII (10-14)

*...уж сосед
В безмолвный входит кабинет
И будит Ленского воззванием:
"Пора вставать: седьмой уж час.
Онегин, верно, ждет уж нас".*

EOT.II.2 Zaretsky:

*Что нет его: седьмой вед час.
Я думал, что он ждет уж нас.*

Tchaikovsky maintains both EOP rhyme and meter in this fairly substantially altered variant and succeeds quite succinctly in making it a believable comment at the field of contest, rather than at the bed of Lensky.

We then travel back a bit in EOP time (one stanza, to EOP.6.XXI) to the lines that Lensky spends the night writing to bid his poetic farewell to life: “*Куда, куда вы удалились,/Весны моей златые дни?*” Pushkin himself denigrates this poetry as *nonsense*: “*...его стихи/Полны любовной цепухи/звучат и льются*” (EOP.6.XX). Therefore, any

changes should arouse a bit less indignation. Nonetheless, Tchaikovsky makes a fine aria of this text.

Because Pushkin quotes this poem verbatim, Tchaikovsky can treat it without the grammatical changes required for transvocalization. He changes the word “*мгле*” to “*тьме*,” without harming the meter or rhyme, and dramatically improving the singability of the line by replacing the glide resonant-glottal blend of the former with the crisper sibilant-resonant complex of the latter. He adds a dramatic, rhetorical “*Скажи*” to Lensky’s question, “*Придешь ли, дева красоты*” and twice the even more dramatic, “*Ах, Ольга, я тебя любил!...*” In Tchaikovsky’s setting and reorganization of the lines that follow, there are a number of interesting repercussions:

EOP.6.XXII	(13-14)	<p><i>Слезу пролить над ранней урной</i> <i>И думать: он меня любил,</i> <i>Он мне единой посвятил</i> <i>Рассвет печальный жизни бурной!..</i> <i>Сердечный друг, желанный друг,</i> <i>Приди, приди: я твой супруг!.."</i></p>
EOT.II.2	Lensky:	<p><i>Слезу пролить над ранней урной</i> <i>И думать: он меня любил,</i> <i>Он мне единой посвятил</i> <i>Рассвет печальный жизни бурной!..</i> <i>Ах, Ольга, я тебя любил!...</i> <i>Рассвет печальный жизни бурной!..</i> <i>Ах, Ольга, я тебя любил!...</i> <i>Тебе единой посвятил</i> <i>Рассвет печальный жизни бурной!..</i> <i>Сердечный друг, желанный друг,</i> <i>Приди, приди: желанный друг</i> <i>Приди, я твой супруг! Приди!</i> <i>Я жду тебя, желанный друг,</i> <i>Приди, приди! Я твой супруг!</i> <i>Куда, куда вы удалились,</i> <i>Златые дни моей весны?</i></p>

In EOP, Lensky wonders whether Olga will visit his grave and what her thoughts will be.

Pushkin does this without the use of quotation marks for the thoughts presumed to be Olga’s.

The referent of who is supposed to be the “*Сердечный друг, желанный друг*” is unclear, ambiguous; is Olga thinking of Lensky, or has the perspective shifted back to Lensky, and he is thinking of her? This question is partially answered by the final line “*Приди, приди: я твой супруг!..*,” which is joined to the phrase in question by a comma.

In Tchaikovsky’s version, the ambiguity becomes even greater because he changes the “*Мне единой посвятил*” to “*Тебе единой посвятил.*” We can at least eliminate Olga from the list of possible *subjects* of the phrase, i.e., we are not to understand that she might have the thought, “*Сердечный друг, желанный друг.*” Despite the presence of all the “*Ах!*” declarations of love in the preceding lines clearly directed to Olga, the last six lines in the EOT text above are sung to music of a very different nature. There is a harmonic modulation and a marked change in rhythmic texture, which cause these lines to seem to be connected to some new idea. Of this passage, Natalia Challis writes, “his anguished call may not be to Olga, his Muse, but to an unnamed ‘desired friend’” (*ENO 38 42*). Complicating the situation, after Lensky sings these lines, Onegin, as if in answer, appears on stage.

Taken by itself, this suggestion that Lensky is declaring himself to be Onegin’s “spouse” and that Onegin is “friend of his heart, desired friend” may seem abrupt. Nonetheless, in creating this neochronotope, Tchaikovsky has shifted attention from the emotional link between Lensky and Olga to that between Lensky and Onegin. I develop this idea further in Section III, but the question will arise again before we have finished discussing this scene.

The next exchange of dialogue takes place between Zaretsky and Onegin and reveals Zaretsky’s impatience with Onegin’s cavalier attitude toward the conventions of dueling. Tchaikovsky takes this exchange from Pushkin’s description of Zaretsky at the duel in Chapter Six and transvocalizes some of Pushkin’s narrative voice to Zaretsky and Onegin. Retaining all

of the direct quotes, he transvocalizes the narrator Pushkin's comment on the irony of the two friends, Onegin and Lensky, taking arms against one another.

- EOP.6.XXVI (4-14) *Зарецкий жорнов осуждал.
Идет Онегин с извиненьем.
"Но где же, - молвил с изумленьем
Зарецкий, - где ваш секундант?"
В дуэлях классик и педант,
Любил методу он из чувства,
И человека растянуть
Он позволял - не как-нибудь,
Но в строгих правилах искусства,
По всем преданьям старины
(Что похвалить мы в нем должны).*
- EOP.6.XXVII (1-14) *"Мой секундант? - сказал Евгений, -
Вот он: мой друг, monsieur Guillot.
Я не предвижу возражений
На представление мое:
Хоть человек он неизвестный,
Но уж конечно малый честный".
Зарецкий губу закусил.
Онегин Ленского спросил:
"Что ж, начинать?" - Начнем, пожалуй, -
Сказал Владимир. И пошли
За мельницу. Пока вдали
Зарецкий наш и честный малый
Вступил в важный договор,
Враги стоят, потупя взор.*
- EOP.6.XXVIII (1-12) *Враги! Давно ли друг от друга
Их жажда крови отвела?
Давно ль они часы досуга,
Трапезу, мысли и дела
Делили дружно? Ныне злобно,
Врагам наследственным подобно,
Как в страшном, непонятном сне,
Они друг другу в тишине
Готовят гибель хладнокровно...
Не засмеяться ли им, пока
Не обагрилась их рука,
Не разойтись ль полюбовно?..*

First, let us examine the EOT version of the Zaretsky-Onegin-Lensky exchange:

EOT.II.2 Zaretsky: *Позвольте! Где же ваш секундант?
В дуэлях классик я педант,
Люблю методу я из чувства,
И человека растянуть
Позволю я - не как-нибудь,
Но в строгих правилах искусства,
По всем преданьям старины!*

Onegin: *Что похвалить мы в вас должны.
Мой секундант? Вот он: monsieur Guillot.
Я не предвижу возражений
На представление мое:
Хоть человек он неизвестный,
Но уж конечно малый честный.
Что ж, начинать?*

Lensky: *Начнем, пожалуй.*

Once again, looking at the four lines underscored in both versions, it is striking how the shift from third to first person can be accomplished with such seeming ease without harm to the poetics. It is clear that Tchaikovsky tries as far as possible always to maintain the iambic rhythm of the lines, even when he feels he cannot retain the lines necessary to maintain the rhyme scheme. Emerson, while recognizing the value of Tchaikovsky's interpretation and finding it "remarkable how much has been left in," cannot resist preceding this comment with, what seems to me, an inaccurate comment: "Libretti leave out a great deal, and it should not surprise us that much of Pushkin's novel is lost – most importantly the rhythmic pace of that severely uniform 'Onegin stanza' which sheathed a garrulous narrator and a world of warring intonations" (*ENO* 38 12). It is true that the Onegin stanza is, here as elsewhere, disturbed, but this is less an issue of rhythm than of rhyme. Tchaikovsky is in fact quite faithful to rhythm, a point borne out in the music; but he perhaps failed to recognize that rhyme scheme creates a prosodic architecture that is of equal importance to rhythm.

After Onegin and Lensky have spoken their own words, Pushkin describes the two going behind the windmill, noted in the stage directions of the libretto, where they regard one another

as enemies. Pushkin seizes upon his own comparison of the two former friends as enemies to write a poignant rhetorical commentary. Tchaikovsky takes the text of this touchingly momentous turning point, and transvocalizes it into the mouths of *both* men as a duet. The music he chooses for the duet is not the lyrical sort of melody that carried Lensky's declaration of love or his farewell to life, nor even Onegin's sermon to Tatiana, but a rhythmic, almost baroque canon with a decidedly Russian tonality. This musical idiom is by definition imitative and causes the men to repeat these words after one another. The style of the music combined with the effect of transvocalism lends the words a chilling wistfulness.

EOT.II.2

Lensky & Onegin:

*Враги! Давно ли друг от друга
Нас жажда крови отвела?
 Давно ли мы часы досуга,
 Трапезу, и мысли и дела
 Делили дружно? Ныне злобно,
 Врагам наследственным подобно,
 Как в страшном, непонятном сне,
Мы друг для друга в тишине
 Готовим гибель хладнокровно..
 Ах!
 Не засмеяться ль нам, пока
 Не обагрилася рука,
 Не разойтись ли любовно?..
 Нет! Нет! Нет! Нет!*

In addition to the changes made to alter the EOP text from third person plural to first person plural, I have underscored two points that demand some further mention. The addition of the conjunction *и* in line four of the EOT text is necessary for the musical line. The motive of the canon at that point has become a quarter note on the upbeat, followed by a moving eighth-note or quarter-note figure for two beats. The first peak of the canon is reached on the word *мысли* and the word *и* (or, at any rate, some syllable, and this one makes sense) is needed to provide the upbeat quarter note:

MUSIC EXAMPLE. Duet, Lensky and Onegin. Act II, Scene 2, “Враги.”

(Ленский и Онегин сидят в ожидании, не смотря друг на друга)

Л. Вра . ги! Да . но ли друг от дру . га нас жа . жда кро . ви от ве . ла?

Он. Вра . ги! Да . но ли друг от дру . га нас жа . жда кро . ви от . ве .

Л. *cresc.* Да . но . ли мы ча . сы до . су . га, тра . пе . зу и мы . сли, и де . ла . де .

Он. . ла? Да . но . ли мы ча . сы до . су . га, тра . пе . зу и мы . сли, и де .

The other change noted above is the phrase *Не обазрилася рука*. The necessity to avoid the third person, EOP *Не обазрилася их рука* is self-evident, but *обазрилася* strikes me as ungrammatical, being that the change to the feminine singular past tense *should* generate *обазриласяь*. The form Tchaikovsky chooses is not grammatical in contemporary Russian, but has always been acceptable in poetry. In this instance, Tchaikovsky has preferred preservation of the rhythmic pace to conventional grammaticality, a preference Pushkin would likely have shared with him.

A duet in which both men sing the same words together expressing the regret that they cannot resolve their disagreement “*полюбовно*” is followed by the two men advancing toward one another with pistols. While they do so, the theme that the winds play in the orchestra is a minor key variation on Lensky’s first aria to Olga, specifically the notes on which he sang the words “*Я люблю вас.*”

MUSICAL EXAMPLE. Act II, Scene 2. Woodwinds leading up to duel.

F1 *p espress*

Cl *p espress*

MUSICAL EXAMPLE. Lensky's Arioso. Act I, Scene 1, "Я люблю Вас."



It is possible that Tchaikovsky wants to show that the consequence of this love for Olga has led Lensky to this fatal moment. Another possibility that this duel is a substitute for acting on the unnamed feeling between Onegin and Lensky expressed in the melody that carries the unspoken phrase, "Я люблю вас." The neochronotope created by the "сердечный, желаний друг" ambiguity succeeded by the singing of the duet certainly seems to call out for a reconsideration of the emotional bonds among Onegin, Lensky, and Olga. While Tchaikovsky never draws this connection explicitly in his writings or correspondence, the knowledge we have of his homosexuality certainly allows for permitting this conclusion as a possibility.

Tchaikovsky draws one final direct quote from Zaretsky in EOP.6.XXX: "Теперь сходитесь!" The two men advance to the accompaniment of the music just described. Onegin, just as in EOP, fires first, and Lensky falls. Onegin asks "Убит?" and Zaretsky replies "Убит!" Pushkin uses a number of euphemisms in stanza XXXI to communicate that Lensky has died as ironic references to Lensky's poetry: "Туманный взор изображает смерть," "Младой певец/Нашел безбрежный конец," "Потух огонь на алтаре." Tchaikovsky, as usual, removes the irony.

Act Three, Scene One

EOT

Onegin appears at a ball in St. Petersburg where he meets the now-married Tatiana. He falls in love with her.

EOP

Chapter Eight (beginning)

Onegin writes a letter to Tatiana, declaring his love

Total lines 136; 57% from EOP

Shaw admits that Tchaikovsky's libretto "is best considered as a separate work with its own particular qualities, judgeable in terms of itself, and with an independent life from the original on which it is based" (84) but goes on to state inaccurately, "Whole chapters of the novel are *omitted* in the operatic adaptation" (85, Shaw's italics). There is only *one* chapter that is omitted entirely, Chapter Seven. This inaccurate enumeration of the omissions suggests that he perceives the libretto as irremediably inferior.

A great deal happens in Chapter Seven: we learn that Olga "did not weep for long" (Nabokov I: 266) over Lensky and marries; Tatiana begins perusing Onegin's library, learning much about him in the process; and she goes with her mother on a journey to Moscow, where she marries a "fat general." It is not difficult to imagine why Tchaikovsky avoids treating all of this material. The plot elements are, as Emerson says, "banal – if not outright repulsive" (*ENO* 38 9). Their interest in Pushkin arises from the caustic wit he applies in poking fun at some of the Moscow characters and the warm tenderness of his descriptions of the countryside and of his heroine who embodies the grace of that countryside. Tchaikovsky recognizes that these elements, even if they could be expressed in music, do not conform to the "intimate drama" he told Taneev (Cf. 21) he was seeking.

He begins the scene at a ball in St. Petersburg, with Onegin returning from his journeys.

Tchaikovsky knits together several stanzas from Chapter Eight for Onegin to sing while he wanders through the dancing throng; Onegin transvocalizes Pushkin's commentary.

- EOP.8.XII (9-14) *Онегин (вновь займуся им),
Убив на поединке друга,
Дожив без цели, без трудов
До двадцати шести годов,
Томясь в бездействии досуга
Без службы, без жены, без дел,
Ничем заняться не умел.*
- EOP.8.XIII (1-14) *Им овладело беспокойство,
Охота к перемене мест
(Весьма мучительное свойство,
Немногих добровольный крест).
Оставил он свое селенье,
Лесов и нив уединенье,
Где окровавленная тень
Ему являлась каждый день,
И начал странствия без цели,
Доступный чувству одному;
И путешествия ему,
Как всё на свете надоели;
Он возвратился и попал,
Как Чацкий, с корабля на бал.*
- EOT.III.1 Onegin: *Убив на поединке друга,
Дожив без цели, без трудов
До двадцати шести годов,
Томясь в бездействии досуга
Без службы, без жены, без дел,
Себя занять я не сумел.
Мной овладело беспокойство,
Охота к перемене мест
(Весьма мучительное свойство,
Немногих добровольный крест).
Оставил я свои селенья,
Лесов и нив уединенье,
Где окровавленная тень
Ко мне являлась каждый день,
Я начал странствия без цели,
Доступный чувству одному;
И что же? К несчастью моему,*

*И странствия мне надоели;
Я возвратился и попал,
Как Чацкий, с корабля на бал.*

Apart from the always-surprising ease with which they are made, the changes in person are not remarkable. It is unclear why he pluralizes *свое селенье*, except perhaps that it personalizes the object more than the singular form. Whereas Pushkin makes a reference to “*И путешествия ему, / Как всё на свете надоели,*” Tchaikovsky has Onegin considering his “*несчастье,*” which can take the vernacular meaning of “displeasure” or the more poetic meaning of “misfortune.” The latter possibility squares with the fatal themes that recur throughout the opera even more insistently than in the novel.

Meanwhile, the guests are singing lines from EOP that precede Onegin’s contemplations, suspending or expanding our sense of the passage of time.

EOP.8.VII	(6-7)	<i>Но это кто в толпе Стоит безмолвный и туманный?</i>
	(12-13)	<i>Кто он таков? Ужель Евгений? Ужели он?.. Так, точно он.</i>
EOP.8.VIII	(1-9)	<i>Всё тот же он иль усмирился? Иль корчит так же чудака? Скажите, чем он возвратился? Что нам представит он пока? Чем ныне явится? Мельмотом, Космополитом, патриотом, Гарольдом, квакером, ханжой, Иль маской щегольнет иной, Иль просто будет добрый малой,</i>

This is so close to the text in EOT that further comment on its construction is not justified. The mention in this text of *Гарольд* (i.e. Byron’s *Childe Harold*) is noteworthy, however, in that it is the only one of several possible literary allusions that Tchaikovsky retains. Nonetheless, he must have felt strongly about the Byronic influence because in the name-day ball scene, he invents a

line for Onegin to call Lensky a “Childe Harold.” In EOP all the comparisons to Byron’s hero refer to Onegin.

Direct quotes of dialogue between the prince (who is named Gremin by Tchaikovsky) and Onegin from EOP stanzas XVII through XVIII are set verbatim, with one odd exception. In EOP, Onegin puts to the prince the question regarding the prince’s marriage: “*На ком?*” The prince answers, “– *на Лариной*” to which Onegin exclaims “*Татьяне!*” When Tchaikovsky sets the words, he gives Gremin both: “– *на Лариной, Татьяна!*” This possible oversight is usually corrected by performance convention with the baritone Onegin easily taking the bass Gremin’s part.*

At this point we come to the second moment that gained applause, as with Triquet’s aria noted above, at the Moscow premiere. This is the aria sung by Tatiana’s husband, called alternately in EOP the “fat general” or the “prince”. I am presenting below the text of the aria itself in a format slightly different from that of the rest of the examples. The full text is on the left. On the right is shown whether the text is from EOP or EOT.

<i>Любви все возрасты покорны;</i>	EOP.8.XXIX.1
<i>Ее порывы благотворны,</i>	EOP.8.XXIX.3
<i><u>И юноше в расцвете лет,</u></i>	EOT.III.1
<i><u>Едва увидевшему свет,</u></i>	
<i><u>И закаленному судьбой</u></i>	
<i><u>Бойцу с седою головой!</u></i>	
<i><u>Онегин, я скрывать не стану,</u></i>	
<i><u>Безумно я люблю Татьяну!</u></i>	
<i><u>Тоскливо жизнь моя текла,</u></i>	
<i><u>Она явилась и зажгла,</u></i>	
<i><u>Как солнца луч среди ненастья,</u></i>	
<i><u>Мне жизнь и молодость и счастье,</u></i>	{after <i>молодость</i> “да, <i>молодость</i> ”
<i>Среди лукавых, малодушных,</i>	EOP.6.XLVII [deleted]
<i>Шальных, балованных детей,</i>	
<i>Злодеев и смешных и скучных,</i>	
<i>Тупых, привязчивых судей,</i>	
<i>Среди кокеток богомольных,</i>	

* At the four performances of the opera I saw in fall 2001 in Moscow, this was the case each time.

*Среди холопов добровольных,
Среди вседневных, модных сцен,
Учтивых, ласковых измен,
Среди холодных приговоров
Жестокосердой суеты,
Среди досадной пустоты
Расчетов, дум и разговоров,
Она блистает, как звезда
Во мраке ночи, в небе чистом,
И мне является всегда
В сиянье ангела лучистом!*

EOT.III.1

As can be seen, the first two lines come from EOP, but are not sequential. The next ten lines and the last four lines of the aria are all original. The EOP iambic tetrameter is maintained throughout all the EOT text. The rhyme scheme, however, does not follow the Onegin stanza. By using the first two lines out of sequence, Tchaikovsky essentially makes a rhyming couplet. He follows a couplet pattern throughout the first ten EOT lines. We then come to EOP material, but interestingly, it is not EOP material to be found in the novel itself; rather it comes from the notes that Pushkin himself included in the full, published work of 1833. Incidentally, this would have made the text a bit more difficult to find. Specifically, it comes from note 40. He states in this note that this stanza was originally the final stanza of Chapter Six. He does not, however, state why the stanza was not included in the final version. Nabokov, in his commentary on Pushkin's notes, states: "They have no compositional value. Their choice is haphazard, their matter rather inept. But they are Pushkin's and belong to the work as published by him" (III: 252).

In his commentary on the chapter, however, Nabokov goes into more detail on the "expunged" (Nabokov's word) stanza. He states that the text appeared, bound with the previous chapters, in the 1828 edition, but that Pushkin had altered the word *дум* in line 12 to *думи*, an

alteration that Nabokov says “hardly affects the meaning of the whole rather colorless passage”

(III: 66). Of these two lines, according to Nabokov:

Brodski (EO commentary, pp. 250-51), in his sociological fervor, abolishes the comma between *raschyotov* and *dush*, gives “souls” the sense of “souls of peasants” (serfs being reckoned by “souls,” as cattle are by “heads”), and makes the two lines read:

amidst the vexing emptiness
of estimates of serfs and conversations...

implying that Pushkin here is satirizing barons who in high society engaged in shop talk, in calculating the number of slaves each possesses and haggling about their prices! This is sheer nonsense, of course: no such talk was typical of the beau-monde prattle. Besides the construction *raschyotov dush* is impossibly clumsy and thematically throws out of balance both the “vexing emptiness” and the unspecified “conversations.” (III: 66-67, Nabokov’s transliterations)

Unfortunately, these comments do not state specifically why the passage was deleted from the 1833 and 1837 editions, in which the *dyu* controversy is relegated to a teapot tempest by Pushkin’s final decision to use *dyu*. It might appear that Nabokov (and Brodski, for that matter) had other than academic aims in mind in this debate, although he does seem to suggest that Pushkin chose wisely in not using this text.

Tchaikovsky retains the text as reflected in the final editions, but does not use the last two first-person narrative lines of the stanza. It is interesting to ponder what drew Tchaikovsky to text located in a footnote. He could not have been using the edition that included the stanza at the conclusion of the chapter because, as we learned above, the word *dyu* would have been printed there. Unfortunately, the only information I have discovered in my research on which edition Tchaikovsky used is from a letter to his associate Klimenko, where of his search for Pushkin’s works, he says, “I had some trouble in finding them” (*LLT* 202). When one considers the almost god-like stature of Pushkin in Russia today, it is difficult to imagine having trouble finding his works, but in the late nineteenth century this was apparently not the case.

It would not be excessive to state that Tchaikovsky's operas (and others') on Pushkin's works have played a large role in endearing the poet to the Russian people. Many of them think they know Pushkin, when in fact, they know the operas better. The Gremin aria is an excellent case in point. If you were to ask a Russian to sing a line from this, the most beloved of the operas based upon Pushkin's works, chances are he or she would sing a line from this aria, but the line would be "*Онегин, я скрывать не стану, / Безумно я люблю Татьяну,*" words written not by Pushkin, but by Tchaikovsky.

After the aria, Gremin then takes Onegin over to meet his wife, Tatiana. The few, courteous words exchanged here echo phrases from EOP.8 stanzas XVIII and XIX, except that Tchaikovsky invents Tatiana's polite, but firm, announcement that she wishes to leave the ball. Onegin then becomes inflamed with feelings for Tatiana that he did not have when she was a young girl in the country. This sequence is fairly close to the plot development in Chapter Eight, as shown below:

EOP.8.XX	(1-14)	<i>Ужель та самая Татьяна, Которой он наедине В начале нашего романа В глухой, далекой стороне, Благом пылу нравоученья Читал когда-то наставленья, Та, от которой он хранит Письмо, где сердце говорит, Где всё наруже, всё на воле, Та девочка... иль это сон?.. Та девочка, которой он Пренебрегал в смиренной доле, Ужели с ним сейчас была Так равнодушна, так смела?</i>
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Tchaikovsky takes out lines 3, 7-10 and makes the necessary changes in person, while the tense does not need to be changed. He adds one original line,

EOT.III.1	Onegin:	<i>Но что со мной? Я как во сне!</i>
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then continues with four lines from the next stanza.

EOP.8.XXI (11-14) *Что шевельнулось в глубине
Души холодной и ленивой?
Досада? суетность? иль вновь
Забота юности - любовь?*

Next, he invents some lines that approximate Onegin's thoughts in stanza XXX, after which he does something quite interesting. As noted earlier (31), Onegin transvocalizes lines from Tatiana's letter scene that had themselves been transvocalized from Pushkin, speaking to Tatiana in the second person. This transvocalization reinforces the sense that the shoe is now on the other foot in this relationship. Further reinforcing this sense is the fact that Tchaikovsky gives Onegin Tatiana's melodic line, although the syllabization* is different, implying that Onegin is no longer the driving force in the plot development (if he ever was). When Onegin reprises Tatiana's line "*Пуускай погибну я,*" he does so on notes in the melody that come later than those on which Tatiana sings the same words.

Tchaikovsky invents one more original line (underscored below) for Onegin to sing before he rushes offstage to end to the scene. It develops out of the material from Tatiana's letter:

EOT.III.1 Onegin: *Везде, везде он предо мной
Образ желанный, дорогой,
Везде, везде он предо мною!*

The *он* to which Onegin refers in the first line is the *образ* in the second line. When he repeats the words "*Везде, везде он предо мной*" in the third line, this is at least grammatically clear. It requires little imagination, however, upon seeing the invented line, to call to mind Lensky's "*Сердечный друг, желанный друг*" and the ambiguity that attended the analysis of the antecedent of that phrase. Tchaikovsky is certainly inviting us to reconsider Onegin's

* the correspondence of a syllable to a note of music.

relationship with Tatiana at this moment. Might he not also be reminding us of the role played by the relationship between Lensky and Onegin in determining the course of Tatiana's fate?

Act Three, Scene Two

EOT

EOP

Onegin comes to Tatiana's house and tries to convince her of his love. Tatiana admits that she still loves Onegin but is resolved to be faithful to her husband forever. She now rejects him.

Chapter Eight (end)

Total lines 132; 57% from EOP

The bulk of the EOP material used in this scene is taken from direct first person quotes and from Onegin's letter to Tatiana in Chapter Eight. Nicholas Žekulin believes that "Nowhere are divergences between Chaikovskii's opera and Pushkin's novel greater or more fundamental than in Scene 7" (284)*. I feel that the only explanation for this statement is that, in devoting his entire paper exclusively to this one scene, he has overlooked the much larger divergences in Act II, Scene One, the name-day ball scene. His point seems to be that the development of Tatiana's character is significantly marked in this scene. While this is true, I would argue that Tatiana's character development only culminates in this, the final scene of the opera. Tchaikovsky has made changes to Tatiana's representation with such devices as transvocalism and neochronotopes throughout the opera. Žekulin's commentary is otherwise extremely convincing and even revelatory, but to state that this scene diverges more from Pushkin than any other disregards several other significant convergence points.

In this scene, 57% of the material is derived from EOP. Onegin comes to see Tatiana; Tchaikovsky sets to music practically every word spoken by them in Chapter Eight. Finally,

* By "Scene 7," he refers to this scene, the seventh in the opera.

after admitting her unabated love for him, Tatiana rejects Onegin and leaves him alone. The only material difference is that the prince (or, as is the case in EOP, the sound of his spurs approaching) does not appear in this scene. We can contrast this scene to the name-day ball scene, in which only 26% of the material is from Pushkin, and in which Lensky delivers an invented speech on his nostalgia for the Larins' home; moreover, the challenge to Onegin is moved from a letter delivered the following day to a scandalous quarrel in the middle of Tatiana's name-day ball.

Žekulin correctly states that the final version of Act III, Scene Two is materially better than the original EOT version as it premiered in 1879. To substantiate this opinion, he quotes Tchaikovsky's friend, Hermann Laroche, on the incongruity of the dramatic conception of this scene as it then appeared: "Chaikovskii 'has [Tatiana] in practice subvert her famous "I am given to another and will be ever faithful to him" by five minutes of kisses and embraces"' (284). Tchaikovsky understood this shortcoming immediately, according to Nest'ev and Jarustovskij's account of the stage history of the opera, and made the changes in the finale before the Bolshoi Theater premiere in 11 January 1881 (46).

Tchaikovsky takes us directly to a reception room in Prince Gremin's house, where as Žekulin tells us, Tatiana is lamenting the reappearance of Onegin in her life (286). Pushkin places this scene in Tatiana's boudoir, but presumably for reasons of theatrical propriety, Tchaikovsky decides otherwise. It was acceptable for Tatiana to be in her nightgown with the nanny in the letter-writing scene of Act I, but to place Onegin onstage with Tatiana in such an intimate setting would have been unusual.

As in the Gremin aria, we are again dealing with a long stretch of material, mostly EOP original, disparate parts of the chapter:

Tatiana:	<p><i>Довольно, встаньте. Я должна Вам объяснить откровенно. Онегин, помните ль тот час, Когда в саду, в аллее нас Судьба свела, и так смиренно Урок ваш выслушала я? <u>Сегодня очередь моя.</u></i></p>	<p>EOP.8.XLII.8-14</p> <p>EOT: underscored portion omitted</p>
Onegin:	<p><i><u>О, сжалитесь! Сжалитесь надо мною!</u> Как я ошибся, как наказан</i></p>	<p>EOT EOP.8.Onegin's Letter.22 [in EOT: <i>Я так ошибся, я так наказан!</i>]</p>
Tatiana:	<p><i>Онегин, я тогда моложе, Я лучше, кажется, была, И я любила вас; и что же? Что в <u>сердце вашем</u> я нашла? Какой ответ? одну суровость. Не правда ль? Вам была не новость Смиренной девочки любовь? И нынче - боже - стынет кровь, Как только вспомню взгляд холодный И эту <u>проповедь</u>... Но вас Я не виню: в тот страшный час Вы поступили благородно. Вы были правы предо мной: <u>Я благодарна всей душой</u>... Тогда - не правда ли? - в пустыне, Вдали от суетной молвы, Я вам не нравилась... Что ж ныне Меня преследуете вы? Зачем у вас я на примете? Не потому ль, что в высшем свете Теперь являться я должна; Что я богата и знатна, Что муж в сраженьях изувечен, Что нас за то ласкает двор? Не потому ль, что мой позор Теперь бы всеми был замечен И мог бы в обществе принести Вам соблазнительную честь?</i></p>	<p>no in EOT вашем сердце in EOT</p> <p>исповедь in EOT</p> <p>EOT: omitted EOP.8.XLIII.1-14</p>
Onegin:	<p><i><u>Ах! О боже! Ужель!</u> <u>Боюсь</u>: в мольбе моей смиренной</i></p> <p><i>Увидит ваш <u>суровый</u> взор Затеи хитрости презренной - <u>И слышу гневный</u> ваш укор.</i></p>	<p>EOT EOP.Onegin's Letter.41-52. This word is replaced by <i>Ужель</i> in EOT <i>холодный</i> in EOT</p> <p><i>Меня терзает</i> in EOT</p>

	<i>Когда б вы знали, как ужасно Томиться жаждою любви, Пылать - и разумом всечасно Смирять волнение в крови; Желать обнять у вас колени, И, зарыдав, у ваших ног Излить мольбы, признанья, пени, Всё, всё, что выразить бы мог.</i>	<i>Терпеть</i> in EOT
Tatiana:	<i>Я плачу!</i>	EOP.8.XLV.
Onegin:	<i>Плачьте! Эти слёзы дороже Всех соковиц мира!</i>	EOT
Tatiana: & Onegin:	<i>Ах! Счастье было так возможно, <u>Так близко!</u></i>	EOP.8.XLVII.1-2 Repeated in EOT
Tatiana:	<i>...но судьба моя, Уж решена. <u>Неосторожно</u> Я вышла за муж. Вы должны Я Вас прошу, меня оставить!</i>	EOP.8.XLVII.2-3 <i>И безвозвратно!</i> in EOT EOP.8.XLVII.8-9
Onegin:	<i><u>Оставить? Оставить? Как, Вас оставить?</u> Нет, поминутно видеть вас, Повсюду следовать за вами, Улыбку уст, движенье <u>глаз</u> Ловить влюбленными глазами, Внимать вам долго, понимать Душой всё ваше совершенство, Пред вами в * муках замирать, Бледнеть и гаснуть... вот блаженство!</i>	EOT EOP.Onegin's Letter.23-30 <i>взгляд</i> in EOT <i>*страстных</i> added in EOT
Tatiana:	<i><u>Я знаю:</u> в Вашем сердце есть И гордость и прямая честь.</i>	EOP.8.XLVII.10-11; <i>Онегин</i> in EOT
Onegin:	<i><u>Я не могу оставить Вас!</u></i>	EOT
Tatiana:	<i><u>Евгений.</u> Вы должны Я Вас прошу, меня оставить!</i>	Underscore EOT; repeat EOP.8.XLVII.8-9
Onegin:	<i><u>О сжальтесь!</u></i>	EOT

Tchaikovsky adds a large number of exclamations and repetitions here, an indulgence we have already seen him confess to Grand Duke Konstantin. There are two small changes of note in

Tatiana's lines. From EOP.8.XLII he deletes the line “*Сегодня очередь моя,*” possibly because it imparts a vengeful quality to Tatiana's speech that he wanted to avoid. In EOP.8.XLVII line 3 he changes “*Неосторожно*” to “*И безвозвратно!*” This alters the characterization of Tatiana's decision from one of recklessness to that of fatal immutability, a characterization more indicative of Tchaikovsky's more idealized conceptualization.

At this point, the conversation begins to wander more significantly from Pushkin's text, so we revert to the other representation system:

EOP.8.XLVII	(12-14)	<i>Я вас люблю (к чему лукавить?), Но я другому отдана; Я буду век ему верна</i>
EOT.III.2	Tatiana:	<i>Зачем скрывать, зачем лукавить! Ах! Я Вас люблю!...</i>
	Onegin:	<i>Что слышу я? Какое слово ты сказала? <u>О радость! Жизнь моя!</u></i>
[EOP.8.XLI.3 has <i>прежней Тани</i>]	Tatiana:	<i>Ты <u>прежнюю Татьяной</u> стала Нет, нет! Прошлого не воротить! Я отдана теперь другому Моя судьба уж решена, А буду век ему верна!</i>

In the lines below, we encounter a phrase unique to EOT: “*О не гони.*” When one compares this negative imperative to the name with which so many of Tatiana's exclamations begin in this scene, *Онегин*, it would appear that Tchaikovsky may be having some fun with the similarity between the sounds of these two utterances. There is clever irony in having Onegin beg not to be sent away in a phrase that resembles his own name. In actuality of course, the name is a typical Russian surname based on an old form of the feminine adjectival of the geographical name “Onega” (like “Larin” from “Lara”). Nabokov tells us, “The name is derived

from that of a Russian river, the Onega, flowing from Lacha Lake to the Onega Bay, White Sea; and there is an Onega Lake in the province of Olonets” (II: 37).

EOT.III.2	Onegin:	<i>О не гони! Меня ты любишь,</i>	a
		<i>И не оставлю я тебя</i>	b
		<i>Ты жизнь свою напрасно сгубишь</i>	a
		<i>То воля неба: ты моя!</i>	b
		<i>Вся жизнь твоя была залогом</i>	c
		<i>Соединения со мной!</i>	d
		<i>И знай: тебе я послан богом,</i>	c
		<i>До гроба я хранитель твой.</i>	d
		<i>Не можешь ты меня отринуть,</i>	e
		<i>Ты для меня должна покинуть</i>	e
		<i>Постылый дом и шумный свет,</i>	f
		<i>Тебе другой дороги нет!</i>	f
Tatiana:		<i>Онегин, я тверда останусь:</i>	a
		<i>Судьбой другому я дана,</i>	b
		<i>С ним буду жить и не расстанусь.</i>	a
		<i>Нет, клятвы помнить я должна!</i>	b
		<i>Глубоко в сердце проникает</i>	c
		<i>Его отчаянный призыв,</i>	d
		<i>Но пыл преступный подавив,</i>	d
<i>Долг чести <u>суровый, священный</u></i>			
	<i>Чувство побеждает!</i>	c	

Having maintained throughout this section of the paper the conviction that Tchaikovsky appears to have been the sole librettist, I have to confess that these lines give me cause to wonder. This is not because of any improvement in poetic quality, or because of any new rhythmic fidelity (that has been fairly consistent throughout). It is because here, for the first time in EOT material, we see an almost Pushkinian rhyme scheme. At the very least, we can say that the rhyme finally ventures beyond successive couplets into the realm of actual quatrains. The first and second quatrains of Onegin’s lines repeat the pattern of the first four lines (first quatrain) of the Onegin stanza -*abab*. The third quatrain of Onegin’s lines resembles the scheme of lines 5-8 (the second quatrain) of the Onegin stanza – *eeff*, while the second quatrain of Tatiana’s lines resembles lines 9-12 (the third quatrain) of the Onegin stanza – *cddc*. There is the

problem of the metrical deviation in the last line caused by the obvious addition of the underscored words – obvious only because without them the meter would be restored. It is not difficult to imagine the creator of the stanza feeling thoroughly frustrated by someone’s attempt to upset the poetics of the verse, especially if that someone is the composer insisting that these words were called for in realizing his musical score. We have seen previously that Tchaikovsky is usually more faithful to meter than to rhyme scheme, but here both are destroyed. Such a deviation might arouse an understandable desire to have one’s name removed from association with the effort.

Following the exchange above, the emotion of the music almost overwhelms the text, which is little more than repeated snatches of the foregoing lines. In a moment of iron will, Tatiana summons up the strength to do what she must and leaves the room with the words: “*Прощай навеки!*” Tchaikovsky gives almost these exact words to Lensky as he departs from Olga (see p. 45 this paper) at Tatiana’s name-day ball, a correspondence that reinforces the connection between the Olga-Lensky-Tatiana triangle and that of Tatiana, Lensky, and Onegin.*

In addition to the displays of affection deemed excessive by the critics in the original version of this scene and *willingly* expunged from the stage directions by Tchaikovsky (Nest’ev and Jarustovskij 46), the composer also faced a problem with the last lines of the libretto. Pushkin offers no assistance here at the end of his novel as he unceremoniously tears the reader away from the scene at the very climax of the interview. Yet Tchaikovsky the dramaturge was left with his ostensible hero on the stage. In the first version of the opera, he had Onegin sing the

* Were one to define these triangles further, it would be appropriate to describe them as isosceles, with Lensky and Tatiana on the two equal, wide angles, and Onegin on the unique, narrow one of the latter triangle. Conversely, with the Lensky-Olga-Tatiana triangle, Lensky becomes the narrow side.

lines: “O death. O death! I go to seek thee out!” Tchaikovsky was obviously not satisfied with this ending. Lloyd-Jones informs us,

“In the first piano score (March 3, 1878), beneath the notes of Onegin’s last phrase there are no words. It is fully possible that this blank was left until a decision had been taken, for Tchaikovsky had written a letter [to this end] to K.K. Albrecht on February 15, 1878: Ask [Ivan Vasil’evich] Samarin to read through the libretto carefully... I ask him also to pay particular attention to the last line” (93).

Tchaikovsky goes on to describe the theatrical necessities that had brought him to this moment, not reflected in EOP, continuing to quote the unsatisfactory last line, followed by the typically merciless self-deprecation:

“It seems to me that this is all stupid, that he must say something else, and what I cannot conceive. So then I am asking Ivan Vasil’evich that he render me an invaluable service and solve this difficulty” (93).

It is important to understand that this man, Samarin, had been given the unenviable task of supplying words to an existing opera that had been set to a beloved novel in verse.

Furthermore, he was asked, owing to the music already composed and already known, to supply exactly ten syllables of iambic pentameter. How he went about deciding these words is not yet known. It seems to me that the evidence is in the result, and Tchaikovsky was wise to interpolate it:

EOT.III.2 Onegin: *Позор! Тоска! О жалкий жребий мой!*

Recognizing the central role played by Tatiana, Lensky, and Onegin, I believe that Samarin must have conducted a thorough search of the particular verbal utterances of these principal characters in the opera in EOP and *within the libretto*. I believe that he has chosen one word for each of these pivotal characters: for Tatiana – *Позор*; for Lensky – *Жалкий*; for Onegin – *Жребий*.

The word *Позор* appears only once in EOP: significantly in Tatiana's last scene with Onegin:

EOP.8.XLIV (11-14) *Не потому ль, что мой позор
Теперь бы всеми был замечен
И мог бы в обществе принести
Вам соблазнительную честь?*

Жалкий is an invention of EOT, rather like the predominance of *Lensky* in the entire opera. It does not appear anywhere in EOP. Where it does appear is in Act II, Scene Two of EOT. Before *Lensky* is joined by the others in the quintet, he sings: “*Честь – лишь звук, дружба – слово пустое, Оскорбительный, жалкий обман!*”

Similarly *жребий* only appears in one significant place in both EOP and EOT, which is the scene in the garden when Onegin rejects Tatiana (EOP.4.XIII3-4/EOT.I.3-Onegin): “*Когда б мне быть отцом, супругом/Приятный жребий повелел...*” It is repeated in EOP in the stanza that Tchaikovsky seems to have found particularly insulting to Tatiana (see 45) and removed from EOT: “*Ужели жребий вам такой/Назначен строгою судьбой?*” (EOP.4.XV.13-14) Thenceforth this word *жребий* becomes inextricably associated (justly or unjustly) with Onegin's indifference to a domestic situation. In this interpretation of Onegin's last line, the Tatiana-Lensky-Onegin triad is preserved through the last utterances of the opera's libretto.

We have examined the entirety of the text of the libretto. The next question for investigation concerns the meaning of his choices.

III. “The Arcadian Anathema”

Having extensively examined the text that Tchaikovsky created for his opera, we have identified that he made informed selections about what to include and what to omit, based on: sensitivity to the beloved image of Tatiana; the desire to promote her significance over that of Onegin; the heightening of dramatic tension; the establishment of a tighter emotional link between Onegin and Lensky. There remains the question of why Tchaikovsky responded to these particular concerns. What might have been the comprehensive idea that Tchaikovsky felt needed to be communicated in this work? I believe the answer to this question lies in a significant omission from EOP – the dream – and a number of significant addenda. Some have observed that Tchaikovsky saw the story of EOP as one pitting the bitterness of “what might have been” against the inexorable hand of fate.²⁹ My view is that Tchaikovsky viewed the work as a kind of paradise lost, a story of characters who unwittingly act in ways that defy the classical conventions of their setting, with profoundly disastrous results.

He presents a pastoral story in which some of the key, classical elements for happy resolution get thrown off. The traditional fabric becomes warped, leading to the tragic consequences of the duel and the impossibility of a relationship between Tatiana and Onegin. In addition, Tchaikovsky may have recognized that a homoerotic tension existed between Onegin and Lensky, and he allowed Tatiana to recognize this. There is much in the libretto and the music to support this idea, which I will examine below.

The first clue that Tchaikovsky wanted to stamp his own idea of a program upon the work comes with the opening duet, “*Слыхали ль вы?*” As noted earlier, this text is not part of EOP; it is one of the significant addenda. It is also not an EOT invention, but an earlier poem by Pushkin, “*Певец*”. The use of this poem as text for the libretto plays an overarching role when

examined within the context of recurring themes in the novel. After discussing Tchaikovsky's response to the pastoral beauty of Pushkin's verse (especially in the poem, *The Muse*), Challis observes that, "The Singer' may be the key to understanding Tchaikovsky's concept of *Onegin*" (ENO 38 39). It allows for several important ideas to be introduced at the very beginning, so that they do not have to be developed by plot on-stage later. These ideas are nearly all tied to the amorous ethos and erotic code of the pastoral: youth, the muse, idealized love. The accumulation of elements of this type in EOP made a strong impression on Tchaikovsky. Here are some of the passages in EOP that might have caused Tchaikovsky to sense a connection.

In these lines Lensky is referred to by *юный* or *юноша* – "the youth."

EOP.2.XV (13-14) *Простим горячке юных лет
И юный жар и юный бред.*

EOP.2.XVI (12-14) *И снисходительный Евгений,
Хоть их не много понимал,
Прилежно юноше внимал.*

Still elsewhere, there are some conventionally poetic descriptions of Lensky, undoubtedly used ironically by Pushkin:

EOP.2.XV (2-4) *Поэта пылкий разговор,
И ум, еще в сужденьях зыбкой,
И вечно вдохновенный взор, -*

EEOP.6.XV (1-4) *И вновь задумчивый, унылый
Пред милой Ольгою своей,
Владимир не имеет силы
Вчерашний день напомнить ей;*

But perhaps the most telling moment is in the description of Lensky's death, when Pushkin applies the word *певец* directly to Lensky:

EOP.6.XXXI (10-11) *Его уж нет. Младой певец
Нашел безвременный конец!*

And even after Lensky's death, Pushkin describes him with that epithet:

ЕОР.7.XI (1-4) *Мой бедный Ленский! за могилой
В пределах вечности глухой
Смутился ли, певец унылый,
Измены вестью роковой,*

Having looked at these examples, let us turn now to the poem “*Певец.*”

*Слышали ль вы за роцей глас ночной
Певца любви, певца своей печали?
Когда поля в час утренний молчали,
Свирели звук унылый и простой
Слышали ль вы?*

*[Встречали ль вы в пустынной тьме лесной
Певца любви, певца своей печали?
Следы ли слез, улыбку ль замечали,
Иль тихий взор, исполненный тоской,
Встречали вы?]*

} Second verse not used by Tchaikovsky

*Вздохнули ль вы, внимая тихой глас
Певца любви, певца своей печали?
Когда в лесах вы юношу видали:
Встречая взор его потухших глаз,
Вздохнули ль вы?*

Even the hour of Lensky’s untimely demise is consistent with the time frame of “*Певец,*” as is the metaphor of the extinguished fire on the altar:

ЕОР.6.XXXI (12-14) *Дохнула буря, цвет прекрасный
Увял на утренней заре,
Потух огонь на алтаре!..*

Faced with all these corresponding images, it is not hard to see why this poem might have come to mind. It is also clear that Tchaikovsky is linking Olga and Tatiana with Lensky by having them sing these words from the outset. But what is the context and purpose of this link?

Wiley points out that the effect of this song is to create a mood of “Hellenic classicism” (ENO 38 20). As Act One, Scene One unfolds, as previously noted (51), Larina explains her impatience with Tatiana’s susceptibility to the fates of the heroes of novels along this vein, “*Полно, Таня! Бывало, я, как ты/Читая книги эти, волновалась*” (ЕОР.1.1). This makes

plain the notion that Tatiana’s worldview is influenced by the pastoral ethos of the sentimental novels she reads. Wiley states that this pastoral mood is established again after the Letter Scene in Act One, Scene Two, “The oboe and bassoon play bucolic solos as Tatyana sings, ‘There goes the shepherd.../The world’s at peace.’ Are these not the panpipes, are these not the shepherd and the brightness of a morning in that Arcadian landscape suggested in the sisters’ opening duet?” (23).

Yet, beyond the cleverness of a connection of moods, this link has other ramifications. The word for “panpipe” to which Wiley refers is *свирель*, which appears in line four of “*Певец*.” This word itself, or a form of it, appears only once in EOP, just before Tatiana’s dream in Chapter Five.

EOP.5. IX (11-14) *И голосок ее звучит
Нежней свирельного напева:
Как ваше имя? * Смотрит он
И отвечает: Агафон.*

We may even surmise that the unseen passing shepherd of the opera is a reflection of this passerby, Agafon.

Even if the use of “*Певец*” and the panpipes are not sufficient to convince us of the powerful influence on Tatiana of romantic, idealized notions of love, we have Tchaikovsky’s own words to offer support. In the letter of January 1878 to Taneev already quoted a number of times here, he explains his own perspective on the nature of Tatiana’s love for Onegin:

With regard to your remark that Tatiana does not fall in love with Onegin[†] at first sight, allow me to say – you are mistaken. She falls in love at once. She does not learn to know him first, and then to care for him. Love comes suddenly to her. Even before Onegin comes on the scene she is in love with the hero of her vague romance. The instant she sets eyes on Onegin she invests him with all the qualities of her ideal, and the love she has hitherto bestowed upon the creation of her fancy is now transferred to a human being (*LLT* 257).

* Pushkin himself adds a note here: *Таким образом узнают имя будущего жениха.*

† Rosemarch’s transliteration

Having discussed the addenda to the text, we come now to the significant omission of the dream. For reasons already discussed, Tchaikovsky chose not to include the dream in literal representation on the stage. This does not mean that he disregarded the implications of the dream or neglected to transmit those implications to the drama.

Rancour-Laferriere has written an extremely provocative and compelling paper “Puškin’s Still Unravished Bride: A Psychoanalytic Study of Tat’jana’s Dream,” on the significance of the dream. The conclusion he draws is “that Onegin has rejected Tat’jana for homosexual reasons.” (215). He bases this conclusion on a number of images that occur in the dream related to loss of virginity, phallic symbols, and the metaphorically charged murder of Lensky by Onegin at the end of the dream. Although Rancour-Laferriere discusses a great many other elements, a few merit attention now.

In the dream, Tatiana crosses “a shaky perilous footbridge” made of “Two thin poles, glued together by a piece of ice.” (Rancour-Laferriere 218). Rancour-Laferriere asserts that the psychoanalytical interpretations of such dreams include a woman’s fear of losing her virginity and sexual intercourse in general (220). One of the most striking interpretations he cites of the bridge itself is: “The double bridge adumbrates her guess that Onegin must be homosexual to have rejected her: double shaking penises glued together by congealed semen” (250). The “double bridge” implicates Lensky into Tatiana’s conceptualization of Onegin’s desires.

Related to the bridge imagery are a number of folk songs singing about young girls crossing bridges that Rancour-Laferriere cites. It is striking how much the text of these songs resembles the text of the peasant chorus *пляска* (a dancing song) in Act One, Scene One.

EOT.I.1 *Уж как по мосту-мосточку*
Peasants: *По калиновым досочкам*
Refrain: *Вайну, вайну, вайну*

Across the little bridge,
Across its snowball-wood planks
Refrain: Vainu, Vainu, Vainu

<p>Тут и шел, прошел детина – Словно <u>ягода-малина</u>. Refrain. На плече несет <u>дубинку</u> Под полой несет <u>волинку</u>. Refrain. Под другой несет <u>гудочек</u>, Догадайся, мил-дружочек! Refrain. Солнце село. Ты не спишь ли? Либо выйди, либо вышли – Refrain. Либо Сашу, либо Машу, Либо душечку Парашу. Refrain. Парашенка выходила, С милым речи говорила. Refrain. Не бессудька мой дружочек, В чем ходила, в том и вышла, В худенькой <u>во рубошонке</u>, Во короткой <u>понижонке</u>. Refrain.</p>	<p>Passed a youth – Ruddy as a <u>berry</u>. Refrain. A <u>stout stick</u> on his shoulder, A <u>bag-pipe</u> beneath his coat. Refrain. A <u>whistle</u> on the other side, Guess, my little darling! Refrain. The sun has set. Are you still awake? Come out or send someone else. Ref. Send Sasha, or send Masha, Or little Parasha. Refrain. Parashenka came out, Talked to her sweetheart. Refrain. Don't scold me, little friend, I came out as I was, <u>In a thin nightshirt</u>, A <u>very short</u> nightshirt. Refrain.³⁰</p>
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The song begins with the bridge-crossing. There are then references to berries and raspberries (*ягода-малина*) – staples of youthful ripeness, as well as snowball-wood (*калиновый*).

Nabokov, in his commentary on the stanza X of the dream, notes that in “Russian songs the *kàlina* and *màlina* are common rhyme words almost devoid of meaning” (1964 II: 502, Nabokov’s transliterations and accent marks). Of *Kalina*, he says gardeners know it as “snowball tree,” while *Malina* is “the common European raspberry.” That the bridge itself in the peasant song should be made of branches of a “snowball” bush, presumably named for its snowy blossoms, yields yet another reference to the very beginning of the dream. The bridge spans a river that “In front of her, between the snowdrifts/dins, swirls its wave/a churning, dark, and hoary torrent” (Nabokov 1964 I: 214). Coincidentally, Nabokov identifies a further pastoral image in the preceding stanza (“Lel hovers over [Tatiana]”): Lel is “a pagan god (of love and grove)” (II: 500). Pushkin draws Tatiana into her dreamscape under the influence of a Slavic Eros. Tchaikovsky translates this transport into a peasant dance.

The ruddy, young suitor in the *пляска* has a number of conspicuous items in tow: a “stout stick,” a “bagpipe,” and a “whistle.” The stout stick, within Rancour-Lafferriere’s psychoanalytic

interpretation, seems to be a powerful phallic emblem, long enough to rest upon the lucky fellow's shoulder. The bagpipe and the whistle, as typical Russian peasant instruments, seem to be a Slavic variation on the Arcadian panpipe/*свирель*.

Finally, the young maid who at last crosses the bridge in the song is significantly clad in a "thin nightshirt," indeed a "very short" one. This suggests that the ruddy youth's stout stick will meet little resistance. If we check EOP to learn Tatiana's dream couture, we find in stanza IX a "low-cut frock." In stanza XI, "Tatiana has removed/her silken sash, undressed/and gone to bed" (I: 214). Tatiana, at least in her dreams, is ready to cross the bridge.

Rancour-Laferriere does not observe the parallel with this EOT chorus because he is concerned with the EOP text only, but he does see relevance in the Song of the Maidens that precedes the rejection scene in the garden, used in both EOP and EOT. With respect to the ambivalence Tatiana shows toward Onegin in the dream by running away from him, he sees a parallel in her flight from his approach in the garden scene. The Song of the Maidens ("Berry-Picking Song") "seems to delay the meeting with Onegin in the garden [and] expresses this ambivalence" (238). In this song, the girls scatter and flirtatiously pelt their young suitor with berries, cherries, and raspberries, which are "all common images from peasant lyric songs and wedding songs, and are all vaguely suggestive of female sexuality" (238).

The final image from the dream with which we will concern ourselves is the knifing of Lensky by Onegin at the end of the dream. As we have seen in the construction of the libretto in Section II, Tchaikovsky is at pains in Act Two to transplant the issuance of Lensky's challenge from the third-party delivery narrated in EOP to face-to-face confrontation at the name-day party before the very eyes of Tatiana and Olga. He makes an ensemble number of it! Moreover, in the next scene, he has Lensky and Onegin transvocalize Pushkin's narrator's lament on the vanity of

this confrontation as a canonic duet just before the fatal duel. Rancour-Lafierriere explains the impetus of this confrontation in the knife Onegin wields in Tatiana's dream. Another commentator on the dream, Douglas Clayton, maintains that the dream is "Tatiana's fantasy about Onegin *as she masturbates*" and that "Onegin...could only offer homoerotic or autoerotic activity" (Clayton 264-65).

But why does all this ruddy, youthful, homoerotic sexuality end in tragedy? Renato Poggioli in his book *The Oaten Flute* examines both the ancient and modern sources of the pastoral motif, including a number of Russian examples (but, regrettably, not *Onegin*). He explains that within the stricture of the code there are fixed actions and consequences in the modes of love:

According to the erotic code of the pastoral, when the woman is older than the man, her love remains unrequited: which ... renders it ridiculous, or even grotesque. But when the senior partner is a man, the liaison is possible, probable, nay unavoidable: love this time will be returned, although the man, besides being no longer young, is not even handsome. This is how it should be, since the prime mover of pastoral love is youthful feminine beauty, which is endowed with such innocent power and unconscious charm as to entice at all ages the spirit and senses of man (272).

Onegin is both handsome and young, although older than Tatiana. Tatiana has youth and beauty. Yet, instead of allowing her charms to "entice" Onegin, she instead pursues him with her letter. This is a violation of code and, like the peregrinations of a capricious architect, leads to catastrophe. "Her active search for an affair with Onegin" places her somewhere outside the metaphorical monochrome of virgin or harlot (Clayton 258). Because she dreams of a pastoral idyll as a creature beyond its pale, she is doomed, nonetheless, to heed its verdict – unrequited love.

In a related theme, Poggioli instructs us that in the pastoral poetry of the Italian Renaissance, the poet Gaurini was the first to use the phrase "to die" as "experiencing sexual

orgasm” and that this phrase was then adopted by the Elizabethan poets (54), of whom as one of the earliest devotees of Shakespeare in Russia, Pushkin ranks as a Slavic bard. This lends a sexual energy to the duel between Lensky and Onegin*.

We have seen that Tchaikovsky had every reason to be sensitive to potential homosexual themes in the story. We have also seen that he intentionally added pastoral elements to the libretto and the score that communicate some of the folkloric imagery of the EOP dream. Thus, by the use of all these elements, Tchaikovsky communicates the following: Tatiana and Olga, harmonizing in their idyllic Arcadia, conjure up the “singer,” represented by Lensky, who signifies very different things to these very different sisters. For Olga, he is a potential spouse and a means of entering the world outside. For Tatiana, he is an ideal, a muse, and unattainable because of his involvement with her sister.

Onegin enters the picture and raises the possibility of relieving the tension of this triangle somehow. He breaks up the triangle, but with results unlike what any of the participants would have expected. He is drawn homoerotically to Lensky and flirts with Olga primarily to arouse Lensky’s interest. Tatiana, meanwhile, has violated the pastoral code by writing him and proposing love, and he rejects her because he is more interested in Lensky. The duel becomes the perverted consummation of all their desires: for Onegin and Lensky, a metaphorical coitus; for Olga, a release from a tiresomely ill-suited match; and for Tatiana, an explanation for rejection.

Let me assume optimistically that the reader has granted possible validity to these observations. The question could still remain: why must we be willing to delve so deeply into

** According to most accounts of the circumstances of Pushkin’s fatal duel, this interpretation could undoubtedly be extended to his fascination with d’Anthes.

the libretto? Why should we consider such interpretations? Tchaikovsky provides the answer to this question himself:

“Успех этой оперы должен начаться снизу, а не сверху, то есть не театр сделает ее известной публике, а напротив, публика, мало-помалу познакомившись с нею, может полюбить ее...” (Pribegina 91).

Tchaikovsky *expected* the opera to become well-known to people in home performances and felt that without this deep knowledge, the opera would never gain the success it now enjoys today.

Unquestionably, the full discussion of Tchaikovsky’s *musical* treatment of the ideas manifested in the libretto is conspicuous by its absence here. I have begun such an investigation of the score, with the intention of synthesizing and contributing to the previous work of Asaf’ev, Brown, Krasinskaja, Wiley and others on motivic development and modulations, as well as the state of performance practice. The work of musicologist Timothy Jackson on the significance of the structure of Tchaikovsky’s symphonies (particularly the Fourth, composed simultaneously with *Onegin*) also offers many interesting possibilities. I hope to combine that investigation with this thesis at a later date.

It is also interesting to imagine what the application of a similar analysis to other text-based operas might yield. Even more alluring is a treatment along this line of the enormous body of vocal romances by Russian composers based on great poetry. These songs form a repertoire that is all but unknown outside Russian culture.

Undoubtedly, some would argue that the theories put forth here go beyond what either Pushkin or Tchaikovsky themselves intended in the creation of these masterpieces. I hope that both men would understand that I undertook this effort with the intent, to borrow a phrase from the last stanza of Pushkin’s novel, of continuing “the sweet discourse of friends.”*

** *беседу сладкую друзей*

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End Notes

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- ¹ I. Nest'ev and B. Jarustovskij, "The Stage History of *Eugene Onegin*," *Tchaikovsky and Theater*. (Moscow: Iskusstvo State Publishers, 1940) 43. Translations mine.
- ² Nest'ev and Jarustovskij 44.
- ³ Nest'ev and Jarustovskij 44.
- ⁴ Garden, Edward "Tchaikovsky and Tolstoy." *Music & Letters*. LV/3 (1974): 308. Also, Krasinskaja 71.
- ⁵ Pribegina, *Tchaikovsky* 88.
- ⁶ *Life and Letters*, June 18th, 1877, 203.
- ⁷ Pribegina 89.
- ⁸ This term is itself problematic. Tchaikovsky was so anxious to distinguish this work from the conventions of ordinary opera, such as Verdi's Ethiopian princess Aïda and the storming Teutonic gods and goddesses of Wagner, that he requested that the work be known as "lyric scenes" in a famous letter (quoted several times in this thesis) to his student, Sergej Taneev from January 1878. Many publishers and record labels have honored this request over the years, and among opera-lovers it is a familiar sobriquet. Nonetheless, for ease of usage I will follow academic convention and refer to Tchaikovsky's work as an opera in this thesis.
- ⁹ Emerson, "Pushkin into Tchaikovsky: Caustic Novel, Sentimental Opera" (*ENO* 38 7-16)
- ¹⁰ Poznansky, Alexander, *Tchaikovsky and His World* (Princeton: 1998): 56. He quotes here a late nineteenth century critic, James Huneker, from that man's work *Mezzotints in Modern Music: Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Chopin, Richard Strauss, Liszt and Wagner* (New York, 1899): 90. According to Poznansky, this work was influential in establishing the prevailing opinion of Tchaikovsky's music as tainted negatively by his homosexual nature.
- ¹¹ Garden, Edward, "Tchaikovsky and Tolstoy," *Music and Letters* LV/3 (London, 1974): 307.
- ¹² Poznansky, *Tchaikovsky and His World*, 57.
- ¹³ *Life and Letters*, May 20th, 1877. To I.A. Klimenko 202. The transliterations are those preferred by Rosemarch.
- ¹⁴ Krasinskaja, 70.
- ¹⁵ This word, used in dramatic and literary theory to refer to the definite space and time of concern to an author, but not necessarily the space and time of the work itself, is also borrowed from Emerson's treatment of the Godunov transpositions, primarily Part IV of her *Boris Godunov: Transpositions of a Russian Theme* (165-168).
- ¹⁶ I would be remiss not to give some credit for the inspiration of this term to Rancour-Laferriere's "transvestite goddess" idea (R-L "Still Unravished Bride" 246), as well as the habit Tchaikovsky had of singing opera in falsetto and acting out the female parts of ballets (Poznansky, *Tchaikovsky: Quest for the Inner Man* 56).
- ¹⁷ The correct modified LC transliteration of Olga is *Ol'ga*, but virtually all English-language sources spell her name as shown here. Similarly, I will employ conventional spellings of Lensky, Zaretsky and other characters, rather than their technically correct Mod LC transliterations.
- ¹⁸ Pushkin refers to her only once by name, *Филиппьевна* (EOP.3.XXXIII.6), otherwise as *няня*. In EOT, she is only called *Няня*, so in this paper she will be known as "Nanny," "the nanny," or "the nurse."
- ¹⁹ Pushkin *Песни русских поэтов, том первый*. 249.
- ²⁰ This phenomenon is known as pro-drop or anaphoric zero. For a full treatment of this topic, see Joanna Nichols's "Grammatical Marking of Theme in Russian."
- ²¹ Pushkin *PSS-VI*, 192.
- ²² Nabokov, I: 140.
- ²³ Žekulin 286.
- ²⁴ Tchaikovsky, *Evgenii Onegin*, piano score, (Moscow: Muzyka, 1999): 109.
- ²⁵ "Stanislavski was always quite skeptical about such stage directions in plays or opera libretti. He considered that they were put in by people with little knowledge of the stage. This was usually done during the first production and then printed that way." From *Stanislavski on Opera* 49.
- ²⁶ Shaw, J. Thomas, "Novel in Verse into Opera: Pushkin's and Tchaikovsky's 'Eugene Onegin,'" *Pushkin Poems and Other Studies*, V2 Charles Schlacks, Jr., Publisher, 1996: 88.
- ²⁷ Nabokov I: 175.
- ²⁸ Wiley 26.
- ²⁹ Žekulin 286.
- ³⁰ Translation adapted by me from David-Lloyd Jones, *ENO* 38: 59