Pushkin’s Imagery of Dreams and Flying

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Abstract

This thesis analyses Pushkin's imagery of dreams and flying. Although the focus of my analysis is the work written in verse and the prose fiction, I also make reference to Pushkin's non-fictional prose. For convenience of reference I include in my definition of 'the imagery of flying' all references to birds, such as the swan or eagle. In the first four chapters I examine four key thematic areas in the poetic works in which Pushkin uses this imagery: the nature of the poet and poetic inspiration (Chapter One); acts of remembrance (Chapter Two); Pushkin's political views (Chapter Three); and relations between the sexes (Chapter Four). I establish that although Pushkin employs these areas of imagery in a wide variety of contexts there is a common objective in their use. He uses the imagery of dreams and flying in order to portray his characters – for the most part male – and political figures as weak, ineffectual or romantically inadequate. By contrast, when he applies these images to himself, this can be seen as an exercise of power and a declaration of his poetic independence. One of the greatest displays of this power is that he uses the same or similar language deliberately to undermine his own creations, the characters who are dependent on him for their very existence. In the final chapter I turn to an analysis of this imagery in the prose fiction. One of the consequences of Pushkin's approach to prose is that he rarely allows himself to use this imagery which is so closely associated with poetry. However, on a number of occasions when he does use these images in the prose fiction he finally appears to question the power and independence of the poet.
## Contents

A Note on Transliteration, Translation and References 4  
Introduction 5  

1 The Imagery of Dreams and Flying in Pushkin’s Description of the Poet and Inspiration 17  

2 The Role of Dreams and Flying in Pushkin’s Resolution of the Problem of Memory and Death 56  

3 Towards Pushkin’s Political Character Assassination 86  

4 The Downfall of Pushkin’s Bird Men 121  

5 Images of Dreams and Flying in Pushkin’s Prose Fiction 156  

Conclusion 177  

Appendices 180  

Bibliography 185
Note on Transliteration, Translation and References

All transliterations in this thesis are made according to the Library of Congress system without diacritic marks, except for names whose anglicized spelling is widespread and more familiar. These exceptions include the Russian rulers Peter (and not Petr), Catherine (Ekaterina), Paul (Pavel), Alexander (Aleksandr) and Nicholas (Nikolai); Mephistopheles (Mefistofil') and Gretchen (Gretkhen) in 'Stsena iz Fausta' [1825]; Mary (Mariia), Gabriel (Gavriil) and Joseph (Iosif) in Gavriiiada; Mozart (Motsart) and Salieri (Sal'eri) in Motsart i Sal'eri; Walsingham (Val'singam) in Pir vo vremia chuny; Claudio (Klavdio) in Andzhelo.

Quotation from Pushkin's work is generally in Russian; where words and phrases are translated, the translations are my own.

The system of abbreviations used in the references in this thesis is included in the bibliography.
Introduction

This thesis represents the first detailed study of the imagery of dreams and flying in Pushkin’s poetry (the lyric and narrative poems, dramatic works and *Evgenii Onegin*) and prose fiction. I aim to show that although this imagery varies extensively both in the way that it is employed and in its significance, one can detect a general trend in its use which gives this large and complex mass of images an element of cohesion. The greatest ‘beneficiary’ of this language is Pushkin himself. He consistently uses the images in order to assert his independence from other poets, political figures and even his own fictional creations. By contrast, the biggest ‘losers’ are those male characters to whom Pushkin applies this language: they are seen to be weak, ineffectual or romantically inadequate (women are, with few exceptions, peripheral characters in his work). They become victims of what Nabokov termed a ‘conspiracy of words’. However, this is very much a conspiracy carried out in the poetry. The imagery of dreams and flying scarcely occurs in the prose fiction. But on several significant occasions towards the end of his life when Pushkin does employ these motifs in the prose, the prose-writer appears to question the power of his *alter ego*, the poet.

In his examination of Pushkin’s lyric poetry, Bayley argues that the meaning of poems like ‘Prorok’ [1826] and ‘Poet’ [1827], both of which contain striking images of the eagle, is not dependent on a generalized symbolic structure: ‘Inherently dramatic, each poem is complete in itself. To read it in the light of others will not extend or

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1 All quotations from Pushkin’s work are taken from the recently revised ‘Jubilee’ edition: A.S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v deviatnadtsati tomakh*, ed. D.D. Blagot and others, 19 vols, M., 1994-97. The reference to poetic works comprises the number of the volume, page and line. If a volume contains two parts, the second book only will be indicated after the volume number following a full stop. References to variants of the final work and all prose works will include just the number of the volume and page. References to *Evgenii Onegin* comprise the number of the canto, stanza and line.

2 The phrase occurs in Aleksandr Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse*, translated from the Russian with a commentary by Vladimir Nabokov, Bollingen Series, 72, 2nd paperback edn, 2 vols, Princeton, 1990, III, p. 59; the second volume of this abridged edition of Nabokov’s commentary contains two parts which correspond to volumes two and three of the original hardback version. I will refer to part one as volume two, to part two as volume three.
modify its meaning'. Bayley is right: it is not possible to assign a fixed meaning to any of Pushkin’s images, especially in the lyric poetry, since the significance of each is dependent on the specific context of the work in which it occurs. However, there is an overall, albeit loose, consistency in the use of the imagery of dreams and flying which relates to its meaning. Pushkin’s general objective in using this language unites these vastly differing groups of images: he wants to assert his independence as a poet, at least from the secular powers. Moreover, Pushkin himself deliberately establishes relations between his individual lyric poems and ‘external’ works. These can either be lyric poems composed by other poets, which Pushkin playfully echoes in his poetry, or other areas of his own œuvre. For example, there are distinct resonances of the image of the eagle suddenly roused from its sleep in ‘Poet’ in a number of other works. These reminiscences do not alter the specific value of the image in the lyric poem, but they do say something about Pushkin’s general perception of the poet.

That Pushkin should choose to use the imagery of dreams and flying is not in itself surprising. He was embracing an archetypal nexus which can be found in classical, European and Russian literature. For example, it occurs in the first stanza of Zhukovskii’s ‘Mechty. Pesnia’ [1812], his translation of Schiller’s ‘Die Ideale’:

Зачем так рано изменила?  
С мечтами, радостью, тоской  
Куда полет свой устремила?  
Неумолимая, постой!

Pushkin himself described a winged dream in his earliest surviving poem, ‘K Natal’e’ [1813]:

Сон ленивый, томноокой  
Отлетает на крылах.  
(I, 6, 45-46)

The association persists throughout his work. For example, in the famous description of inspiration in ‘Osen’ (Otryvok)’ in 1833, he describes the ‘swarm’ of guests which is generated by his poetic ‘dream’:

Душа стесняется лирическим волненьем,  
Трепещет и звучит, и ищет, как во сне,  
Излишна наконец свободным проявленьем —  
И тут ко мне идет незримый рой гостей,  
Знакомцы давние, плоды мечты моей.  
(III, 321, 76-80)

In the early stages of his career, in the lyric poetry composed at the Lyceum, Pushkin employed this imagery predominantly to describe the poet and poetic inspiration. Even during this period the desire to distinguish himself – in this case from his fellow poets – is reflected in the use of the imagery of dreams and flying. Pushkin viewed these motifs as weapons which he could wield in his light-hearted, even affectionate attacks on his peers, notably Derzhavin. By the time of his departure from the Lyceum, he stood at the centre of a protective and increasingly complex figurative structure. It was only when he left the Lyceum and started to experiment with new genres, such as the narrative poem, that he expanded the number of themes in which he used, in isolation or combination, these two areas of imagery. His characters, fictional or historical, would sometimes replace Pushkin at the heart of this paradigm. At the same time, he continued to examine the nature of the poet and the ‘poetic experience’, the mysterious moments when the onset of inspiration transforms the ordinary man into the artist. These two branches of his work proceeded to develop in parallel and using the same types of imagery, but to vastly different effect. The very images which promoted Pushkin as a strong and independent figure were used to describe weak or compromised (male) characters. In Evgenii Onegin, of course, the two branches of work came together. At this point Pushkin’s very presence illuminates his disdainful treatment of his creations.

I will analyse the impact of this imagery in three specific areas which I will show to be thematically linked to the central theme of the poet and poetic inspiration: remembrance, political power, and ‘sexual power’ or relations between the sexes. The hypothesis which I will test is that the presence of the imagery of dreams or flying reflects Pushkin’s desire to perpetuate the discrimination between himself and his characters in these areas. One of the unlucky recipients of Pushkin’s discriminatory treatment is Lenskii, the mock ‘poet’ whose work will be forgotten, sometime political thinker and failed lover. He, more than any other, is a character against whom the vast negative potential of these images is unleashed.

Of these related areas, the theme of remembrance is linked most closely to the central issue of the poet. In his seminal essay published in 1926, Gershenzon drew attention to the relationship between remembrance and the imagery of dreams. The very title of Gershenzon’s essay, ‘Iav’ i son’, illustrates a fundamental problem encountered when describing dreams in Russian literature. Since son can mean ‘sleep’ as well as ‘dream’, it is not always possible to determine the precise meaning of the word. Gershenzon appears to elide the two meanings in the title, since in the essay he describes the process of going to sleep (zasnut’; son) and then the recollections of the dreamer. In this regard

5 M.O. Gershenzon, ‘Son i iav’, in his Stat’i o Pushkine, M., 1926, pp. 60-68.
he was guided by the material he was analysing. Pushkin himself does not always explicitly differentiate between the two states. For this reason, I do not rigidly limit the scope of my analysis to the imagery of dreams but will, when I feel that the inclusion elucidates the argument, extend my focus to include the imagery of sleep.

The definitional issue is made more complex by the presence of other words (or their verbal equivalents) which can mean ‘dream’ in Russian. Gershenzon makes no attempt to distinguish between these various words, which can be divided into three categories:

1. Son and snoviden’e (snovidenie), ‘dream’. When son means dream, it is virtually synonymous with snoviden’e.6
2. Mechta and mechtanie (mechanie). In her analysis of Pushkin’s use of mechta in Evgenii Onegin, Melchior de Wolff gives it the meanings ‘daydream’, ‘dream’, ‘fancy’, ‘reverie’, ‘chimera’.7 There appears to be little difference between mechta and mechtanie, although mechtanie tends to describe the process of dreaming, as opposed to the content. Nabokov describes mechta, with its derivatives, as ‘the main heroine of the Russian romantic vocabulary’, ‘the hardest-working member of the romantic team’.8
3. Grezy. Although this means ‘day-dreams’ in contemporary Russian, in Pushkin’s poetry (the word does not occur in the prose) it is clear that these can take place at night.9

Pushkin can use each of these words in a figurative sense:

Их жизнь — ряд горестей, гремящая слава — сои.
'K drugu stikhovortsu' [1814] (I, 22, 60)

И дни твои полётом сновиденья
Да полетят в счастливой тишине!
'Razluka' [1816] (II, 27, 12-13)

Тогда толпой с лазурной высоты
На ложе роз крылатые мечты,
Волшебники мой сон обворожили.
'Son. (Otryvok)' [1816] (I, 146, 190-92)

Летай с мечтанием надо мной,
Расправля летки крылы; <...>
'Mechtatel'' [1815] (I, 95, 67-68)

Но вновь в уме моем стеснились мрачны тревы,
Я слабою рукой искал тебя во мгле...
'Vyzdorovlenie' [1818] (II, 55, 11-12)

6 Nabokov, Eugene Onegin, III, p. 421.
8 Nabokov, Eugene Onegin, II, p. 211.
9 For examples, see ‘Kniaziu A. M. Gorchakovu’ [1817] (I, 196, 45-46) and ‘S portugalc skogo’ [1825] (II, 396, 9-12).
In this thesis I attach a number of appendices which contain statistical data and categories relating to the actual and figurative dreams in Pushkin's work. The table in Appendix A lists the actual dreams which Pushkin describes in some detail — for example, the dream of Ruslan or Tat'iana. Although son is used in the majority of occasions, the table shows that each of the synonyms can also describe 'real' dreams, in the sense that they occur during actual sleep (to avoid unnecessary repetition, I will hereafter use the expression 'real dream' in this sense). I do not intend to study these real dreams. My definition of 'imagery of dreams' includes all other uses of these dream words. I will also include in my definition those reveries which take place during wakefulness, even when the distinction between the state of sleep and wakefulness is not clear. For example, when Onegin recalls Lenskii's corpse and Tat'iana sitting by her window (Eight: XXXVII: 1-14), the reader does not know whether the dreams (mechty; sny) (Eight: XXXVI: 3; 11) which introduce this act of remembrance are 'real' or refer to Onegin's immersion in thought when awake. An analysis of these dreams is especially important when I come to examine the theme of remembrance. Pushkin distinguishes between his own figurative dreams in which he reminisces and the waking reveries of his characters. Although both are oriented to the past, only Pushkin's dreams result in a process of spiritual revival.

A related issue concerns the definition of 'flying'. This will also be given a wide meaning. In addition to those expressions which are obviously related to flying, such as 'soaring', all relevant metonymical references ('wing') and collective terms ('flock', 'swarm') are included within my definition. A significant area of this study is also devoted to the image of the bird, even if it is not depicted flying. For example, in the opening stanza of 'Vospominaniia v Tsarskom Sele' [1814] the young poet describes the moon 'swimming' in the silvery clouds 'like a majestic swan' (I, 60, 7-8). For the sake of convenient and brief reference, this image will be regarded as a 'motif of flying'.

A very important aspect of my methodological approach in this thesis is that I do not limit my analysis to an examination of those occasions on which the imagery of dreaming and flying coincide. My objective is to show that Pushkin uses both areas of imagery to reveal the flaws in his characters and to enhance his own standing. The two branches of imagery merge — for example in the description of the poet's 'winged dreams' of inspiration in the early lyric poetry — then move apart; but the occasional merging of the images recurs throughout Pushkin's work. This is not a tightly-knit figurative construct but, to borrow the expression of Henry James, a 'large, loose, baggy monster'. For example, the 'winged dreams' which inspire Pushkin at the Lyceum are related by the motif of flying to the image of the eagle. Pushkin uses this image in Ezerskii to describe the freedom of the poet. However, the eagle is an obvious and important symbol of Empire in Russia and therefore viewed by him as a potential...
threat to his poetic freedom. In another contrasting use, in Kapitanskaia dochka Pugachev tries to appropriate this image for himself by tattooing a double-headed eagle on his chest. The figurative edifice which I examine in this thesis is constructed from a series of contiguous, "rolling" images which are, at times, very distantly related: Pushkin's winged dreams appear to have little to do with the rebel's tattoo (however, in the final chapter I will show that a link of sorts exists between the two). The branch of imagery which conspicuously lends itself to this sprawling figurative edifice relates to the motif of flying. As we will see, flying comes to dominate the focus of my study.

Studies of Pushkin's imagery have tended to focus on individual works rather than on an overarching examination of the imagery throughout his work. Mednyi vsadnik has obviously generated a vast amount of critical analysis including examinations of its imagery. More specifically, David Bethea has described Peter's horse as a 'space-time' image which endows its rider with an apocalyptic significance. His study unites two themes which have been of particular interest to Pushkinists in recent years. Boris Gasparov has identified a number of eschatological themes and motifs in Pushkin. There has also been a number of studies devoted to the 'space-time' theme, especially in Evgenii Onegin. In more general terms, Vinogradov undertook a comprehensive

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analysis of aspects of Pushkin's poetic phraseology in the early 1940s; a further study of Pushkin's poetic phraseology was published in 1969. This area has been supplemented by a useful article by Gasparov and Paperno, as well as a number of articles on the subject of Pushkin's use of metaphor and simile. There is also an examination of Pushkin's symbols and allegories by the late M.F. Murl'ianov.

There is a substantial body of work devoted to the analysis of the characters' real dreams in Pushkin's work. As I mentioned earlier, these dreams are not the focus of this thesis, but I have made use of these critical works. A number of critics have discussed Tat'iana's dream in Canto Five of Evgenii Onegin. They tend to concentrate on a specific aspect: the possible literary sources; the folkloric elements; the significance of the dream according to a psychoanalytical or feminist interpretation; or the role of dream in the structure of the novel. However, the remaining dreams have attracted substantially less critical attention. An informative and useful study is Caryl Emerson's analysis of Grinev's dream in Kapitanskaia dochka.

14 V.V. Vinogradov, 'Puti i etapy razvitiia poeticheskoi frazeologii Pushkina', in his Stil' Pushkina, M., 1941, pp. 120-270.
18 M.F. Mur'ianov, Iz simvolov i allegori Pushkina, M., 1996.
drew attention to thematic elements common to five (out of at least twenty seven) of the dreams, a precedent followed in at least three subsequent examinations. Pushkin’s dreams have also been discussed in two studies of nineteenth-century literature by Michael Katz.

Pushknists, to whom I will make frequent reference, discuss aspects of Pushkin’s imagery of dreams and, to a lesser extent, the motif of flying; but this is either in the context of general, book-length studies, or as part of their analysis of a single work. For example, Katz discusses the use of *mechta* and *son* in *Evgenii Onegin*; Clayton analyses the various types of dream in the novel, as well as briefly noting the relationship between dreams and inspiration; Melchior de Wolff identifies Pushkin’s ironic use of the word *mechta* in *Evgenii Onegin* as a reflection of his turn against Russian Romanticism. Caryl Emerson has also argued that the final confrontation between Evgenii and Tat’iana is the product of Onegin’s fantasy or *mechta*. I will discuss this interpretation in some detail in Chapter Four. There is a recent examination of the imagery of sleep and dreams in Russian Romantic literature, but with a heavy emphasis on the poetry of Zhukovskii. Beyond the context of Pushkin’s work, a brief, but useful analysis of the differences between *son*, *mechta* and *greza* occurs in Shaw’s study of the dreams in Dostoevskii’s *Prestuplenie i nakazanie*. The motif of flying in Pushkin’s work has generated a much smaller body of secondary literature. However, several commentators have discussed the general significance of the image of the bird in Pushkin’s work; others have examined the specific image of the eagle.

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28 De Wolff, ‘Romanticism Unmasked: Lexical Irony in Aleksandr Puškin’s *Evgenij Onegin*’.


and the swan.\textsuperscript{34} In addition, Tsiavlovskaia has made some interesting observations about Pushkin’s drawings of birds in his manuscripts.\textsuperscript{35}

Pushkin uses this imagery in a wide variety of contexts. However, the four areas on which I focus relate to the nature of the poet and inspiration, remembrance, political and tyrannical power, and power between the sexes. I will not attempt to document all the critical work which has been carried out in these areas, each of which in itself represents a substantial topic. In particular, it is not possible to provide a synopsis of the voluminous secondary literature which examines the nature of the poet. Instead, in Chapter One I will make clear reference to those critical works which I have used. However, it is possible here to indicate those works which I have found useful in my examination of Pushkin’s imagery in the three remaining themes, with the obvious caveat that my selection of secondary literature relating to politics represents only a small proportion of the existing critical analysis on this subject.

In his study of Pushkin’s ‘lyric memory’, Michael Naydan gives a synopsis of what he calls the ‘paucity of critical materials on the subject of memory in Puškin’s work’;\textsuperscript{36} M.L. Gofman delivered a monograph on Pushkin’s creative memory in 1928;\textsuperscript{37} there have also been two studies of memory in Pushkin’s famous lyric, ‘K ***’ [1825].\textsuperscript{38} Naydan’s work is of particular interest because he concludes that words associated with dreaming or sleep belong to one of three basic layers of ‘memory code’ in Pushkin’s lyric poetry.\textsuperscript{39} In addition to these studies, Senderovich conducted a thorough analysis of the images used in ‘Vospominanie’ [1928].\textsuperscript{40} More recently Stephanie Sandler analysed Pushkin’s act of remembrance in ‘...Vnov’ ia posetil’ [1835].\textsuperscript{41} A related and productive area of study concerns the image of the shade. The seminal work on the topic was also carried out by Gershenzon.\textsuperscript{42} Both Gasparov and Senderovich have subsequently detected other paradigms or ‘myths’ in Pushkin based on this image.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{39} Naydan, ‘Puškin’s Lyric Memory’, pp. 1-2.
\textsuperscript{40} S. Senderovich, \textit{Aleteiia. Elegiiia Pushkina “Vospominanie” i problemy ego poetiki}, WSIA Special Series, 8, Vienna, 1982.
By contrast, Pushkin’s political views have produced a considerable amount of critical analysis. There have, for example, been studies of Pushkin’s concept of ‘freedom’, and ‘history’, his relationship with the imperial regime, his portrayal of Napoleon, as well as a huge amount of material on his portrayal of Peter in Mednyi vsadnik, Poltava and other works. A popular and, at times, sophisticated area of criticism consists in cracking the hidden ‘codes’ which Pushkin embedded in his work in order to give expression to his liberal sympathies. Lauren Leighton has been particularly active in this field. However, very few commentators have examined the relationship between his views and his imagery. The greatest contribution to this area has been Bethea’s analysis of the image of the horse which I referred to earlier. Stephanie Sandler has also written about the interaction of imagery and metrical form in ‘André Shen’è’ [1825].

While there have been no extensive studies of the role of the sexes and their relations across the whole of Pushkin’s work, a number of commentators have examined this question in single works or in a number of works which are closely related, such as the Southern poems, and the Malen’kie tragedii. Evgenii Onegin has generated a

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number of studies in this area, especially in the context of Tat'iana’s dream. Andrew has also discussed the mother-daughter relationship in the novel. In more general terms, Blagoi was instrumental in identifying two types of compromised male characters in Pushkin’s work. Together with Briusov, Khodasevich and Veresaev, he drew attention to a number of characters who display an unhealthy passion for ill or even dead women. Interest in this was revived by Murav’eva. Blagoi also described the leitmotif of the mocked old man. His findings were used in an illuminating study by Stroganov of the lyric poem, ‘Ot menia vechor Leila’ [1836]. In his study of the paradigm of the statue in Pushkin’s work, Roman Jakobson identified another leitmotif of a doomed and tired man in pursuit of a woman. This has been developed by a number of commentators who have located in Pushkin the so-called ‘Cnidus myth’, according to which the statue of Venus exerts an evil power over the people, separating the men from the women. Finally, several critics have examined the relationship between the structure of various works by Pushkin and their gender-related message.


53 See note 21.


It is not my intention to conduct an exhaustive examination of Pushkin’s imagery of dreams or flying, but to investigate its role in the four important thematic areas outlined above. These correspond to the first four chapters of this thesis. Motifs of dreams and flying are the most conspicuous components of the figurative language which Pushkin employs in his description of the poet and inspiration. In Chapter One I examine the ways in which Pushkin uses these motifs to distinguish himself as an artist both from his own ‘poetic’ characters such as Lenskii and, less obviously, from other poets. In particular, he conducts a witty polemic in his poetry, sustained over several years and at the expense of his peers, concerning the use of bird images in the description of poetry. Gershenzon showed that Pushkin uses the image of a dream in a very similar way to describe the onset of inspiration and also acts of remembrance. In Chapter Two I show that dreams and flying are key motifs in the descriptions of memory and are used to widen the divide between the poet and non-poet. In the third chapter the fundamental opposition which I examine is between the Pushkin the poet and what he perceives to be inimical political or authoritarian forces. I describe the ways in which Pushkin uses dreams and flying to articulate and camouflage his political views in his poetry. In Chapter Four I will describe Pushkin’s ‘Bird Men’, the various male characters who are likened to or figuratively endowed with the attributes of birds or other flying creatures. These men share the fate of being compromised by their romantic liaisons, often at the hands of a domineering woman. For the most part I confine my analysis of the imagery of dreams and flying in the first four chapters to Pushkin’s poetry. However, in Chapter Five I catalogue and examine in some detail the few occasions on which this imagery occurs in the prose fiction. In the work written towards the end of his life, Pushkin at last uses the imagery of dreams and flying in his prose to question the independence and power of the poet.
Chapter One

The Imagery of Dreams and Flying in Pushkin’s Description of the Poet and Inspiration

Gershenzon showed that a leitmotif in Pushkin’s work is the mental withdrawal from the real world. The term which Pushkin uses to describe this experience is ‘forgetfulness’ (забвение); this is often synonymous with sleep (сон). Once the ‘sleeping’ person starts to dream he frequently reminisces. While the withdrawal is marked by a sense of release from the constraints of the external world, the dreamer never becomes fully independent since he recalls events drawn from real life. A similar process describes the onset of inspiration. However, the fundamental difference in this case is that the mental images and emotions do not originate from the external world, but emanate directly from the poet’s imagination. As a result, the poet is seen to be completely liberated. According to Gershenzon, the clearest illustration of this release occurs in ‘Osen’. (Otryvok)’:

И забыла мир — и в сладкой тишине,
Я сладко усиплен моим воображеньем,
И пробуждается поэзия во мне;
Душа стесняется лирическим волненьем,
Трепещет и звучит, и ищет, как во сне,
Изъяться наконец свободным проявленьем —
И тут ко мне идет незримый рой гостей,
Знакомцы давние, плоды мечты моей.
(III, 321, 73-80)1

In the final couplet, the ‘invisible swarm of guests’, the fruits of Pushkin’s ‘dream’, are emblematic of his total liberation. One can add to Gershenzon’s analysis that Pushkin uses the motif of dreams and flying (represented by the swarm) to describe the poet’s unfettered freedom.2

1 Gershenzon, ‘lav’ i son’, pp. 60-68.
2 The manuscript of the poem is covered with pictures of flying birds – a representation, perhaps, of the ‘invisible swarm of guests’ (XVIII, 327). Pushkin was fond of including drawings of birds in his manuscripts: see XVIII, 309-13; 317; 321-23; 325-26; 329; 370; 380. On a number of occasions the
Throughout his career Pushkin uses both of these motifs in a wide variety of ways in his description of the poet and inspiration. However, there is a loose consistency in their use as well as an accompanying unifying objective: they assert Pushkin's independence and freedom as a poet. In the first part of this chapter I will trace the development of this area of imagery, on a broadly chronological basis, in the first 'half' of his poetry: from the early lyric poems written at the Lyceum to Tsygany, the last of the Southern poems, written between 1824 and 1825. In this body of work Pushkin gradually shifts the emphasis of his descriptions from the product of inspiration to its actual process. The imagery which he employs becomes correspondingly more prominent. In particular, the 'core' images of dreams and flying become emblematic not only of the poet's freedom, but of poetry itself.

This emphasis on the process of inspiration is reflected in the greater role given to the personification of Pushkin's inspiration, his Muse, the winged apparition who generates his poetic dreams. She is the only 'character' in his work who appears in a number of lyrics, narrative poems and Evgenii Onegin. Pushkin endows his Muse with two key characteristics which will be of importance in future chapters. Firstly, she is not a mere reproduction of the mythological archetype, but is a wayward and idiosyncratic creature. Secondly, she is portrayed as Pushkin's sensual lover. In Evgenii Onegin he describes her as rezvaia (Eight: III: 4), which Dalton-Brown translates as 'saucy'.^ Both of these aspects of her character reflect favourably on Pushkin: he, by association, is viewed as a virile, independent poet.

Although the motif of flying is an important component in the description of the poet in the early poetry, the dominant motif is that of dreaming. A significant shift occurs in Pushkin's relationship with his 'dream' in Evgenii Onegin. In the novel there are clear echoes of the early Lyceum poetry which deals with poetic inspiration. But Pushkin restates the language with an ironic gloss which is typical of the novel. The obvious target of this gentle act of self-deprecation is the generalized poet's 'dream'. In his brief analysis of this type of dream in Evgenii Onegin Clayton observes:

The intriguing thing about the semantics of 'dream' is the link between dreaming and poetic inspiration. From the lyrical point of view, Pushkin's stress on the dream as the source of inspiration suggests that he is very much in the romantic, 'orphic' stream, seeking his inspiration in the other world of the dream (a metaphorical equivalent of death), a world which contrasts with everyday reality.\(^4\)

However, Pushkin is prepared to refer to the poet's Romantic dream, especially in the specific portrait of Lenskii, with the same sense of irony as he does to so many other

\(^3\) Dalton-Brown, Evgenii Onegin, p. 107.
\(^4\) Clayton, Ice and Flame, p. 184.
elements in the novel. He never stops using the imagery of dreams when describing the poet or inspiration in his later works (for example, in ‘Osen’. (Otryvok’)), but he gives increasing emphasis to the motif of flying, and especially to bird imagery. In the second part of this chapter I will analyse the shift which occurs in Evgenii Onegin and then turn to the role of the image of the bird in Pushkin’s description of the poet and inspiration.

Clayton’s observation goes some way to explaining why the imagery of dreams is so conspicuous in the first ‘cycle’ of lyric poetry, written before Pushkin left the Lyceum mid-way through 1817: the nature of the poet and poetic inspiration represents an important and prominent theme in his work during this period. This cycle of poetry is saturated with words denoting a dream. An indication of this is that it accounts for approximately half of all the occurrences of mechta and mechtan’e in the lyric poetry.\(^5\)

A recurrent aspect of this poetry is that Pushkin undergoes a type of metamorphosis when he submits to his ‘poetic’ dreams, that is, those dreams which expose the young student to the power of inspiration. For example, in ‘Poslanie k Iudinu’ [1815] the transition of Pushkin into the ‘other world’ of dreams (mechty) corresponds to his transformation from a monk-like student in his ascetic ‘cell’ into an inspired poet:

Меж тем, как в келье молчаливой
Во плен отдался я мечтам,
Рукой беспечной и ленивой
Расбросив рифмы здесь и там, ...

(I, 130, 99-102)

As Pushkin starts to fantasize, the experience becomes truly liberating. At the point when the metamorphosis into a poet is complete, he applies the motif of flying to his dreams:

Ношуся на крыльях я мечты, ...

(I, 130, 110)

It is characteristic of Pushkin’s youthful poetry that, having briefly described the onset of inspiration, he moves impatiently to the description of the ‘dream’ itself – of those images which he imagines in his inspired state. He sees himself in battle, a favourite fantasy of his youth.\(^6\) In fact, the final part of his transformation into a poet, when his dreams become winged, actually occurs on the field of battle:

\(^5\) The words mechta or mechtan’e occur 72 times in this cycle and 148 times in the lyric poetry as a whole: see Appendix B.

\(^6\) See, for example, ‘Na vozvrashchenie gosudaria imperatora iz Parizha v 1815 godu’ [1815] (I, 110-11).
Pushkin quickly becomes fully absorbed in describing the events within his fantasy. Lying next to a grey-haired, moustached Cossack in the thick of action, he suddenly decides to attack the enemy:

Среди воинственной долины
Ищусь на крыльях я мечты,
Оти в стане дозорных; <...>
(1, 130, 109-11)

The motif of flying now conveys a sense of urgency and valour as Pushkin ‘flies’ towards his doomed adversary. In the following lines his steed is likened to an eagle, and Pushkin races ‘like an arrow’ through the field, a smouldering cigar clamped in his teeth (1, 130, 122-32). The reference to the cigar suggests that this self-aggrandisement is accompanied by an air of self-mockery, even in the poem of a boy. Pushkin knows that the ‘heroic’ language borders on the parodic. In *Ruslan i Liudmila*, as we shall see in the discussion of the narrative poem in Chapter Four, Pushkin uses similar motifs of flying to great effect in the characterization of Ruslan as a mock hero. The source of this language can be traced to the description of the adolescent Pushkin’s fantasies in poems like ‘Poslanie k Ludinu’.

Although the young Pushkin is more concerned with the substance of the inspired dream or fantasy rather than the actual process of inspiration, it is clear from poems such as ‘K Ludinu’ that flying can play a role, albeit smaller, in the description of the poet in the early lyric poetry. This is illustrated in his famous lyric, ‘Gorodok. (K ***’) [1815]:

Ах! счастлив, счастлив тот,
Кто лиру в дар от Феба
Во цвете дней возьмет!
Как смелый житель неба,
Он к солнцу воспарит,
Превыше смертных станет,
И слава громко гремит;
«Бессмертен в век пишит!»
(1, 78, 254-61)

The description of the poet soaring towards the sun with a lyre donated by Phoebus Apollo serves two purposes. Firstly, it shows that the motif of flying can elevate the poet into another ‘other world’. When Pushkin added the epilogue to *Ruslan i Liudmila*
in July 1820 he said that he wrote the poem when his mind had flown beyond the territory of the world (IV, 86, 10; my emphasis): in other words, poetry is not written on earth. There is a clear parallel between this image and the ‘other world’ of the poet’s dream described by Clayton. In both cases this other world is denied to the non-poet. This divide between the poet and ‘ordinary’ men will develop into an aggressive antipathy in poems such as ‘Poet i tolpa’ [1828] and ‘Poetu’ [1830]. Secondly, although the poet’s ascendance is temporary, ending when he is no longer inspired, the product of his inspiration – his poetry – will achieve a kind of immortality which is symbolized by him soaring above the mortal world. This extract from ‘Gorodok. (K ***’) is a powerful declaration of the special status of the poet and his freedom. However, as we shall see, the image of the poet soaring towards the sun probably derives from Derzhavin’s ‘Lebed’ [1804], which is itself based on one of Horace’s odes. Pushkin was keen to distinguish himself from his eminent forebears in his poem by refusing to transform himself, as they do, into a living swan. In ‘Bova. (Otryvok iz poemy)’ [1814] Pushkin had expressed his fear about soaring in the wake of poets like Milton ‘without wings’ (I, 49, 15-16). Barely a year later he boldly describes himself soaring towards the sun – but as ‘Pushkin’. On this occasion, he refuses to metamorphose. Derivative though the extract may be, Pushkin has declared in it his intention to establish a divide between himself and his peers, and he has done so before reaching his majority.

A less sophisticated description of Pushkin’s transformation into a poet occurs in ‘K sestre’, written in the previous year in 1814. Pushkin imagines leaving the confines of the Lyceum or ‘monastery’, ‘winged with dreams’ (‘мечтами ожиленный’): I, 32, 5). Having symbolically entered the other world of the poetic dream, he fantasizes about meeting his sister in the capital. As in ‘Poslanie k ludinu’, he is impatient to describe what he imagines, as opposed to the process of inspiration. Pushkin makes this mental journey with the aid of his pen or ‘feather’, which thereby conforms to the theme of ‘winged’ travel introduced in the first part of the poem:

Тайком взошёл в диванну,
Хоть помощью пера,
О, как тебя застуши,
Любезная сестра?
(I, 32, 23-26)

Pushkin wonders whether his sister will herself be ‘carried away’ in a dream (мечта), inspired by her reading:
This part of the poem is significant because Pushkin includes another dream or flight of fantasy which moves the reader of ‘K sestre’ a further stage away from ‘reality’ – from the setting of the Lyceum where the first dream began. Pushkin will subsequently use this technique of layering dream upon dream in his poetry in the context of remembrance. The difference in later poems is that the process of dreaming, and not the mental images generated by the dreams, will be all-important.

Having described several other scenarios – the sister is perhaps pampering her pug-dog, or gazing at the Neva like a ‘Svetlana’ (an early reference to Zhukovskii’s ballad), or playing Mozart on the piano – Pushkin himself joins her in the capital, his arrival appropriately accompanied by the music of another genius. At this point, the flow of fantasy comes to an abrupt halt:

Из с Греем и Тоссоном
Ты пренеслась мечтой
В поля, где от дубравы
В дол веет ветерок,
И шепчет лес курдючный,
И мчится ветреный
С вершины гор поток?
(I, 32-33, 33-39)

In an instant the transformation effected by the dream is reversed as he returns to the drab surroundings of the cell and to his monk’s world. The word ‘dream’ has undergone a transformation of meaning in the poem: instead of representing the poetic medium in which Pushkin makes his journey (mekhty), it signifies the illusory nature of the fantasy (mechtan’e).

Elsewhere in the Lyceum poetry, this sense of disillusion often relates to the evaporation of an erotic dream. As in ‘K sestre’, Pushkin describes himself as a student-monk who becomes transformed by his dreams. However, in contrast to the poem addressed to his sister, one of the consequences of his transformation into a poet in other poems is that he can abandon the monk’s abstemious lifestyle. The crude but significant equation which Pushkin often makes is that the poet’s dream world is the environment for passionate encounters. The imagery of dreams and flying which help describe the lucky student’s move into this other world therefore becomes associated with the poetic libido. This aspect of Pushkin’s portrayal of the poet is of great importance. A sexually or romantically successful man (I would like, for the moment, to leave to one side the question of the woman) is a powerful man. Irina Gutkin argues
that Pushkin’s expression of his libidinous nature in his poetry is an expression of his freedom. She notes that in ‘<Dur’euv’’ [1819], for example, he describes toasting freedom with his fellow members of the Green Lamp, but then significantly recounts a visit to a brothel (II, 87). As we shall see in Chapters Three and Four, in order to describe a weak or in some way ‘compromised’ character, Pushkin frequently emphasizes his romantic failings, or even his lack of sexual drive. This unlucky character is ‘unpoetic’ – lacking in power and with no access to the poet’s invigorating winged dreams.

The association between desire and the imagery of dreams and flying is made in Pushkin’s earliest surviving lyric, ‘K Natal’e’ [1813]. The young poet describes a dream (*mechtan’e*), in which he has a nocturnal encounter with a serf actress from the theatre in Tsarskoe Selo:

Ночь прідет — и лишь тебя 
Вижу я в пустом мечтаньи, 
Вижу, в лёгком одеяньи 
Будто миляя со мной; <...>
(I, 5, 29-32)

Although it appears that the fantasy takes place during actual sleep, when Pushkin wakes up the dream becomes a figurative image since it is personified:

И проснулся... вижу мрак 
Вкруг постели одинокой! 
Испуская вздох глубокой, 
Сон ленивый, томноокой 
Отлетает на крылах.
(I, 6, 42-46)

In this, his very first (extant) poem, Pushkin has established a relationship between the dream-flying nexus and desire. The focus of his lust shifts from Natal’ia’s snow-white contours within the dream (I, 5, 34-35) to languorous, dark-eyed, winged son. This alluring creature complements the personification of Pushkin’s lust in the opening lines as Cupid, the ‘bird’:

Так и мне узнать случилось, 
Что за птица Купидон; <...>
(I, 5, 1-2)

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8 In ‘Poslanie tserzoru’ [1822] the censor is therefore characterized as a tiresome eunuch wandering among the Muses (II, 238, 61). Similarly, in ‘Poet i tolp’ the people declare that they are at heart ‘cold eunuchs’ (III, 142, 32).
The poem ends with the exclamation to the addressee that he is a *monakh* (I, 7, 105), an open invitation to Natal’ia, perhaps, to carry out her own transformation of the student-monk and unfrock the frustrated youth. One can contrast this with Pushkin’s characterization of Pankratii in ‘Monakh’, another early poem which was written in 1813. Pankratii, who is a real monk, is plagued by a real dream (*son*). Molok, a devil, is a malevolent version of Cupid the bird. He inspires Pankratii with the dream, then turns into a fly and lands on the monk’s nose as he starts to snore (I, 13, 34-39). Unlike Pushkin, the monk is filled with a profound sense of shame when he wakes up and recalls the erotic content of the dream. Pushkin, on the other hand, sighs because his dream has flown away. In 1813 the young poet therefore communicates very different messages about himself and one of his characters using a strikingly similar scenario. Indeed, in order to distinguish himself further from Pankratii Pushkin invokes the aid of Barkov, the author of salacious material, in the opening lines of ‘Monakh’ (I, 9, 20). In the contemporaneous ‘Ten’ Barkova’ his ghost restores the virility of a poet in a Petersburg brothel on the condition that he agrees, in a type of Faustian pact, to sing Barkov’s praises – something which Pushkin subtly does (with, possibly, similarly beneficent consequences) by appealing to him in ‘Monakh’.9

Pushkin’s dream is also personified as a beguiling, winged creature in ‘Gorodok. (K ***)’. However, in contrast to ‘K Natal’e’, this dream occurs during the onset of inspiration. Pushkin sits beneath a window with a pen in his hand, and, becoming inspired, is joined by the dream:

Певца сопутник милый,
Мечтанье легкокрыло!
О будь же ты со мной,
Дай руку сладострастью
И с чашей круговой
Веди меня ко счастью
Забвения тропой; <...> 
(I, 78, 296-302)

The poetic dream results in the sort of withdrawal from the world (*zabvenie*) described by Gershenzon. However, having described the onset of inspiration, the object of Pushkin’s desire becomes the dream itself, now personified as winged *mechta*:

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9 The complete text of ‘Ten’ Barkova’ has never been fully published: see Anthony Cross, ‘Pushkin’s Bawdy; or Notes from the Literary Underground’, *RLT*, 10, 1974, pp. 203-36 (211-14).
This part of the poem clearly illustrates how Pushkin can use different words to describe the same dream: mechina, mechtan’e and finally, upon ‘waking up’, winged son.

Томаcевскii notes that Pushkin’s personification of the dream in an erotic context in this poem is highly derivative and influenced, in particular, by Batiushkov’s poetry. Much of Pushkin’s early poetry is derivative, especially in his use of words relating to dreams. As I noted in the Introduction, mechina (or one of its variants) is a favourite word in the poets’ lexicon in the early nineteenth century. In ‘Gorodok. (К ***)’ Pushkin expresses his familiarity with the dream by calling it his ‘fellow traveller’ (soputnik). Although he will direct his ironic gaze on the word in Evgenii Onegin, for the moment it fulfils its role: it further reinforces both the Romantic notion of withdrawing into the other world of the dream, and the association between the dream-flying nexus and the poet’s sensual nature.

Pushkin’s winged Muse gradually takes on this twin role. Not only does she inspire him by transporting him into the other world of the poetic dream, she also becomes his lover. However, when she makes her first appearance as a fully independent character in ‘Mechtatel’ [1815], she is more protective than erotic. In the first part of the poem Pushkin describes the winged dreams which inspire him:

С волшебной ночи темнотой,
Дри месячном сиянии,
Слетают резвою толпой
Крылатые мечтаны.
(1, 94, 21-24)

In the second part of the poem, Pushkin describes the moment when the Muse first appeared to him. Two key elements define her as his Muse in this first appearance: her
ability to fly and her association with the poetic dream (mechtan'e). These two motifs are united in her characterization:

Но слабом утре дней златых
Левца ты осенила,
Венком из миртов молодых
Чело его покрыла,
И, горным светом озарясь,
Влетала в скромну келью
И чуть дышала, преклонясь
Над детской колыбелью.

О будь мне спутницей младой
До самых врат могилы!
Летай с мечтанием надо мной,
Расправя легки крылья;  
Гоните мрачную печаль,
Пленяйте ум... обманом,
И милой жизни светлу даль
Кажите за туманом!
(I, 95, 57-72)

Like the winged dream in "Gorodok. (K ***)", the Muse is Pushkin's 'fellow traveller'. However, she does not yet exude the sensual energy which emanated from the personified dream in that poem. When recalling this initial encounter, Pushkin is content to emphasize her protective role, as she drives away gloom and sadness with her wings.

As so often in Pushkin's lyric poetry, there is a subtext in "MechtateL" which relates to another poet's work. He introduces the Muse into the poem in order to establish a symbolic distance between himself and Zhukovskii. This need to distinguish himself from his peers will become another recurrent feature of his work. Tomashevskii shows that the poem represents Pushkin's response to Zhukovskii's 'Pevets vo stane russikh voinov' [1812]. The first stanza clearly echoes the earlier work. However, whereas Zhukovskii calls on Russian poets to laud the patriotic feats of the Russian army, and indeed places his poet (pevets) on the battlefield, Pushkin conspicuously refuses to do this:

Пускай, ударя в звучный щит
И с видом дерзновенным,
Мне Слава издали грозит
Перстом окровавленным, <...>
(I, 95, 41-44)

In Zhukovskii's poem the shades of the dead soldiers hover over the poet:
In 'Mechtatel', by contrast, these martial shades are replaced by the winged dreams of inspiration. In the second half of the poem these give way to the figure of the Muse, the progenitor of the poetic dream, who protects the young poet with her benign wings. Pushkin subsequently changes his position with regard to the role of the 'war poet'. For example, in 'Orlovu' [1819] he expresses his willingness to take his 'military lyre' into battle (II, 80, 43-46). However, the relationship between the poet and the military is tangential to the main objective of 'Mechtatel'. Pushkin is showing that his Muse is not just the traditional personification of inspiration, but is symbolic of his own contrary and independent nature.

'Mechtatel' is Pushkin's declaration of his willingness to commit himself to the Muse - to be the 'dreamer' in the poem's title - until his death, until 'the very gates of the grave'. In the final stanza of the poem, he elaborates on the theme of death:

И тих мой будет поздний час;
И смерти добрый гений
Шепнет, у двери постучась;
«Пора в жилище теней!»
Так в золотый вечер сладкой сон
Приходит в мирный сени,
Венчанный маком, и склонен
На посох томной лени...
(1, 95, 73-80)

At this point another branch of related imagery is revealed in the poem. Pushkin contrasts the life of the poet, who is inspired by the Muse's dreams, with the prospect of death, which is likened to 'sweet sleep'. Pushkin appears to accept, with no apparent sense of alarm, the prospect of the inevitable end to his poetic career (or 'dreaming') as a result of death ('sleep'). Poetic dreams cannot survive in the sleep of death. In Chapter Two I refer to the problematic philosophical debate which Pushkin conducts in his poetry in the 1820s concerning the relationship between death and poetry. He finds a resolution to what amounts to a spiritual crisis through the agency of the image of the shade, which, like the Muse, is closely associated with the motifs of flying and dreams.

A less sombre, but no less important distinction which gradually evolves in Pushkin's poetry is between the poetic dream, the medium in which he composes poetry, and the sleep of poetic inactivity. In 'Poslanie k Galichu' [1815], Pushkin

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11 Zhukovskii, Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh, I, pp. 149-50.
12 Tomashevskii, Pushkin. Kniga pervaia (1813-1824), pp. 84-86.
describes to the addressee, a teacher at the Lyceum, how he can effortlessly compose
poetry as long as winged sleep (son) does not visit him:

Покамест сон прелестный,
Под сенью тихих крил,
В обители безвестной
Меня не усипил,
Морфей в ожиданье,
В постеле я лежу
И беглое посланье
Без строгого старания
Предателю пишу.
(I, 102-03, 38-46)

Pushkin is not antipathetic to sleep per se: it is ‘charming’; in ‘Son. (Otryvok)’ [1816]
he describes it as the ‘priceless gift of Morpheus’ (I, 143, 12). However, in this same
poem he implies that sleep is inconsistent with creativity:

Но сон мой тих! беспечный сын Парнаса
В ночной тиши я с рифмой не бьюсь,
Не вижу век ни Феба, ни Пегаса,
Ни старый двор каких-то старых муз.
(I, 147, 207-10)

Pushkin regards sleep which is devoid of dreams as ‘unpoetic’, meaning that it cannot
give rise to inspiring dreams and thus to the composition of poetry. Therefore, when he
berates Batiushkov in ‘Ten’ Fon-vizina’ [1815] for neglecting poetry, he describes him
as sound asleep in a cabin (I, 125, 317-20). This connotation of sleep persists
throughout Pushkin’s poetry. In ‘Zima. Chto delat’ nam v derevne? la vstrechaiu’
[1829], for example, he describes his inability to write because his Muse is dozing (III,
181, 18-20); and in ‘Osen’. (Otryvok)’ he says that autumn is a productive season for
him precisely because it is the season when his sleep ‘flies away’ (III, 320, 60).

A consequence of this connotation is that the motif of sleep becomes a useful tool in
Pushkin’s light-hearted attacks on friends, or on those poets whom he regards as
talentless rhymesters. In the final two lines of ‘Piruushchie studenty’ [1814], for
example, he asks his friend Kiukhel’beker to read out his verse in order to help him to

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13 Pushkin never makes reference to Pegasus’s ability to fly. In the lyric poetry written at the Lyceum,
which accounts for seven of the eleven references to the mythological horse in his work, Pegasus
(Pegasus) has the happy attribute of rhyming with Parnassus (Parnass), the mountain on which the
Castalian spring, a source of inspiration, was situated. The rhyme occurs here in ‘Son. (Otryvok); see
also ‘K drugu stikhotvortsu’ [1814] (I, 21, 1-2). In a later poem, ‘K Iazykovu’ [1826], the facile rhyme
has disappeared. Instead, Pushkin describes the episode when Pegasus beats the ground with his hoofs
on Mount Helicon, thereby opening up the Hippocrene, the Muses’ sacred fountain (III, 22, 6-9). There
is an interesting parallel between this and the description of the steed which Pushkin rides before
experiencing his celebrated withdrawal into poetic inspiration in ‘Osen’ (Otryvok). The catalyst for
the onset of inspiration is the horse-ride, during which the steed is described beating its hoof against the
frozen ground, possibly in imitation of Pegasus himself (III, 320-21, 65-73).
go to sleep (I, 48, 99-100); whilst in ‘Ten’ Fon-vizina’, Pushkin complains that Count Khvostov stays awake all night composing odes which will only put the city to sleep (I, 122, 155-56). On several occasions in the early poetry Pushkin also draws on the archetypal association between the poppy (mak) and sleep in his attacks on poets (personified sleep is crowned with poppies in the last stanza of ‘MechtateT’ cited earlier). For example, the opening quatrain of ‘K Galichu’ [1815] reads:

Пускай утрственный рифмовщик,
Повитый маком и крылатой,
Холодных од творец ретивый,
На скучный лад сплетая вздор, <...
(I, 92, 1-4)14

Similarly, the dramatist and director A.A. Shakhovskoi is said to wear a ‘crown of poppies’ in ‘K Zhukovskomu’ [1816] (I, 152, 84). One can distinguish this use of poppy from the ‘bed of poppies and lilies’ on which Pushkin lounges in ‘Moe zaveshchanie. Druz iam’ [1815] (I, 97, 64). In this case, the reference is suggestive of a general state of languor (len’); the image therefore contributes to Pushkin’s common depiction of himself during this period as an Epicurean poet, blessed with the facility for effortless creation (this was also observed in the extract from ‘Poslanie k Galichu’).

Nevertheless, in ‘K Del’vigu’, a landmark poem written in 1815 which was addressed to his fellow student at the Lyceum, Pushkin complained that his friend was not allowing him to languish in the ‘embrace of Morpheus’, but was coercing him to accept his predestined vocation as a poet:

О Дельвиг! начертали
Мне Музы мой удел;
Но ты ли мои печали
Умножить захотел?
В объятиях Морфея
Беспечный дух лелея,
Еще хоть год один
Позволь мне полениться
И негой наслаждаться,—
Я, право, нем сын!
(I, 108, 46-55)

With some misgivings, Pushkin acknowledges that he is not destined to sleep, or even to recline in the dilettante’s easy world defined by len’ and nega. Instead, in the first part of the poem he describes to Del’vig what Boris Gasparov considers to be a

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14 The juxtaposition of sleep and coldness (kholodnykh) frequently occurs in Pushkin’s poetry; by contrast, the dream can be a febrile state in which the dreamer is bombarded with an assortment (or, to use the expression in ‘Osen’. (Otryvok’), a ‘swarm’) of ideas and impressions. A good illustration of this occurs in ‘Vospominanie’ [1828] in which Pushkin’s dreams (mechty) are said to ‘boil’ (kipiat) (III, 102, 9).
defining moment in his life: when his uncle arranges his marriage to his Muse (I, 107, 8-10). At this moment, Pushkin ‘lowered his head in front of the dear dream [mechta]’. He uses the image of the marriage ceremony to describe both his admission into the world of the poet’s dream (which is later contrasted with sleep), and his union with the Muse:

Послушай, муз невинных  
Лукавый духовник:  
Жилец полей пустынных,  
Поэтов грешный лик  
Умножил я собою,  
И я главой помик  
Пред милой мечтою;  
Мой дядюшка-поэт  
На то мне дал совет  
И с музами сосватал.  
Сначала я шалил,  
Шутя стихи кроил,  
А там их напечатали,  
И вот теперь я брат  
Бестолковую пустому,  
Тому, сему, другому,  
Да я ж и виноват!  
(I, 107, 1-17)

In 1816 Pushkin asked Zhukovskii to bless the union in ‘K Zhukovskomu’, which begins with the appeal: ‘Give your blessing, poet!’ (I, 151, 1). Gasparov also observes that in Evgenii Onegin Pushkin refers to Derzhavin’s blessing of the couple (Eight: II: 3-4), a reference to the celebrated occasion on which the old poet heard Pushkin recite his poem ‘Vospominaniia v Tsarskom Sele’ at the public examination at the Lyceum in 1815.

Pushkin subsequently recalls his Muse’s patient tutelage during his youth in ‘Muza’ [1821]. She would listen to his clumsy first attempts to play ‘hymns’ on a pipe before herself taking over (II, 150). However, when describing the ‘present’, he increasingly uses his Muse’s ability to fly in order to convey a sense of her idiosyncratic and restless nature. For example, in 1824 she is compared to a ‘golden bee’ which flits ‘here and there’ (a similar bee, pchelka zlataia, occurs in Derzhavin’s ‘Pchelka’ [1794]); or, perhaps more significantly, to an evasive, flying kiss:

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15 Gasparov, ‘Encounter of Two Poets in the Desert’, p. 129. When Pushkin subsequently addresses Del’vig in ‘19 oktiabria’ [1825], he also recalls his friend’s Muse who flew into the Lyceum (II, 376, 91).
16 Gasparov, ‘Encounter of Two Poets in the Desert’, p. 129.
There is a note of ambivalence here. Is Pushkin exasperated by the Muse’s evasiveness, or is he bewitched by it? Another illustration of his companion’s wilfulness occurs in the epilogue of *Kavkazskii plennik*, in which Pushkin describes her flight to Asia and her subsequent eccentric behaviour:

Так Муза, лёгкой друг Мечты,
К пределам Азии летела
И для венка себя срывала
Кавказа дикие цветы.
Её пленял наряд суровый,
Племён, возросших на войне,
И часто в сей одежде новой
Волшебница являлась мне; <...>

She is presented as a fully independent person, prefiguring her appearance in Canto Eight of *Evgenii Onegin*. Pushkin is not severed from his Muse but is distanced from her. He is relegated to the position of a captivated onlooker. This characterization of the Muse is of interest for several reasons. His relationship with such a capricious, liberated spirit reinforces the association between the motif of the poet’s winged dream and his independence. Her characterization represents a political statement. I will discuss this in greater detail in Chapter Three. There are also parallels between her head-strong, flighty character and some of Pushkin’s female characters. His mock anxiety that he cannot keep pace with her sexual and emotional demands finds a real resonance in some of his weak male characters. The difference, of course, is that Pushkin is not really weak – his relationship with his Muse is an example of his exuberant capacity for self-deprecation – but his male creations are. I discuss the use of the imagery of dreams and flying in the portrayal of a number of these men in Chapter Four.

The lyric ‘Razgovor knigoprodavtsa s poetom’ [1824] marks a significant shift in the evolving description of inspiration in Pushkin’s work. It has more in common with the powerful representations of the poet in some of Pushkin’s subsequent lyric poems, such as ‘Prorok’ and ‘Poet’, than those preceding it. In this poem his recollection of his poetic activity during his period of exile in the South is layered with a sense of awe at
the power of inspiration. In order to reflect the apprehension of this power the twin strands of the dream-flying nexus are invested with a more dramatic energy than in the previous poetry. For example, Pushkin remembers the 'ineffable beauty' of the brilliant visions which flew above him. It is as though the winged dreams of his Lyceum poetry have now become visible and infused with dazzling light:

Там доле яркие виденья,
С неизъяснимою красою,
Вились, летали надо мной
В часы ночного вдохновенья!...
(II, 290, 24-27)

In keeping with the more dramatic representation of inspiration, the figure of a flying demon replaces the Muse as the source of Pushkin's poetic dreams. Pushkin has not abandoned his Muse - he even briefly mentions her in the poem (II, 290, 22) - but the poetic experience has become, in the old meaning of the word, 'awful'.

Кой-то дёмон обладал
Моими играми, досугом;
За мной повсюду он летал,
Мне звуки дивные шептал,
И тяжким, пламенным недугом
Была полна моя глава;
В ней грезы чудные рождались;
В размеры стройные стекались
Мои послушные слова
И звонкой рифмой замыкались.
(II, 290-91, 32-41)

Pushkin is inhabited by the wondrous dreams or grezy which, in his poetry, usually possess an equivocal, even disturbing connotation. In 'Stsena iz Fausta' [1825], for example, Mephistopheles inspires Gretchen with a passion for Faust and thereby stirs up her tender dreams (grezy) (II, 385, 81); in 'Ne dai mne bog soiti s uma' [1833] Pushkin will imagine losing his mind in 'wondrous dreams' (chudnye grezy) (III, 322, 12), the same expression which he uses here.

Pushkin included 'Razgovor knigoprodavtsa s poetom' after the preface in the 1825 and 1829 editions of Canto One of Evgenii Onegin. Nabokov is puzzled by the inclusion of a poem which, he says, has 'little to do' with the novel. But a possible link between the two works is that they both re-examine the nature of inspiration, but do so in different ways. The lyric poem's restatement of the poetic experience introduces a more 'serious' and dramatic dimension to the imagery of dreams and flying. By contrast, one of the various explorations of inspiration in the novel consists in re-using the sort of imagery which Pushkin had employed in his early lyric poetry,

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but, on occasions, to obvious ironic effect. Pushkin thereby establishes the distance of appraisal between himself and the figurative language associated with his youth. This notion of ‘looking back’ at his previous life occurs in an important digression at the end of Canto Six:

Дай, оглянусь. Простите ж, сени,  
Где дни мои текли в глуші,  
Исполнены страстей и лени  
И снов задумчивой души.
(Six: XLVI: 1-4)

This passage expresses Pushkin’s adieu to his past; but it is deliberately couched in the type of language which exemplifies the poetry of that past. It ends, therefore, with a reference to the ‘dreams’ of his pensive soul. In the next part of the stanza, however, he looks forward, and calls on ‘young inspiration’ to fly more often into his ‘corner’ in order to revive his slumbering heart:

А ты, младое вдохновенье,  
Волнуй мое воображенье,  
Дремоту сердца оживляй,  
В мой угол чаще прилетай, <...
(Six: XLVI: 5-8)

The use of the motif of flying here is fitting, since it will become an increasingly important part of his future descriptions of the poet.

One of the most conspicuous objects of Pushkin’s reappraisal in Evgenii Onegin is the poetic dream. The work is itself framed in the language of the dream: in the preparatory stanza, Pushkin expresses his wish that the novel is worthy of a soul filled with the sacred mechta (VI, 3); and in the penultimate stanza of the last canto, he recalls seeing Tat’iana and Onegin in a dim son (Eight: L: 10). The intervening stanzas are densely populated with dream words. Appendix C shows that Evgenii Onegin contains the highest occurrence of words denoting a dream in any single work by Pushkin: for example, son (including its meaning ‘sleep’) occurs forty six times, mechta and mechtan’e forty times. Nabokov complains that the recurrence of mechta forces the translator to use ‘dream’ ‘over and over’. When Pushkin uses ‘dream’ in the context of poetic inspiration, even when he is not being openly ironic, we sense that his appraising eye dwells on the conventional language — especially mechta and its derivatives. As a result these words become lightly, though significantly stressed. For example, in one of the final stanzas of Canto One, Pushkin observes:

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Nabokov, Eugene Onegin, I, p. 211.
It is appropriate that Pushkin uses the word 'dreamy', *mechtatel’noi*, in the reference to the stock poetic theme of love because it derives from a stock poetic word, *mechta*. It reinforces in a simple, economical way the ‘poetic’ context of the digression.

Onegin, we are told, used to be a dreamer. Pushkin was attracted to his ‘involuntary addiction to dreams’:

Мне нравились его черты,
Мечтам невольная преданность, <...

(One: XLV: 4-5)

One of the possible interpretations of this expression is that he used to be ‘poetic’.\(^{19}\) Pushkin will use a similar expression to describe poets in ‘Primety’ [1829]:

Мечтанье вечно му в тиши
Так предаемся мы, поэты; <...

(III, 152, 9-10)

Salieri mistakenly thinks that he can successfully make the transition from a scientific appreciation of music to creating it, by becoming party to the ‘creative dream’:

\(^{19}\) It is also possible that Onegin’s tendency to dreams relates to his fondness for reminiscing. Pushkin refers to this elsewhere in Canto One when he describes how he and Onegin used to recall former days in a ‘dream’ (*mechta*) when standing next to the Neva (One: XLVII: 13). In support of this interpretation, one can refer to a number of later lyric poems in which Pushkin describes acts of remembrance using the verbal equivalent of *predannost’* (*predavat’* or *predavatsia*) together with *mechta*: see ‘Brozhu li ia v dol’ ulits shumnykh’ [1829] (III, 194, 4) and ‘V nachale zhizni shkolu pomniu ia’ [1830] (III, 255, 23). However, a similar construction (using *mechtan’e*) is not used in the context of remembrance in Canto Seven of Evgenii Onegin when Pushkin describes the portrait of the contemporary man in literature (‘Мечтанье преданной безмерно’: Seven: XXII: 12). Nabokov declares that ‘we neither know nor care’ what Onegin’s dreams were, but notes that Russian commentators have also attached a ‘politico-economical’ meaning to them: Nabokov, *Eugene Onegin*, II, p. 169. Pushkin’s use of dreams in the contexts of remembrance and politics will be discussed in the next two chapters.
However, Onegin is no longer a 'dreamer', or a poet. We know this because Pushkin described his inability to produce any words from his pen, having locked himself in his rooms (One: XLIII: 6-14). By contrast, Pushkin’s pen ‘forgets itself’ (zabyvshis’) (One: LIX: 6) – the verb regularly employed in his descriptions of the withdrawal into a poetic dream.

Although Pushkin is a dreamer, he hovers delicately between sincerity and parody in this self-portrait. Lenskii, on the hand, is a dreamer who is, of course, openly mocked. Melchior de Wolff argues that Pushkin’s mockery of the predilections of the young poet is reflected in the pointed references to his dreams (mechtan’ia). This is well illustrated in Canto Four:

In the next stanza Pushkin deprecates himself when he reveals that the only audience for the fruits of his dreams (mechtan’ia) is his old nanny at Mikhailovskoe (Four: XXXV: 1-4). However, there is a key distinction in the use of irony in each stanza: only with Lenskii is the product of the dreams (mechty) ‘not worth reading’.

De Wolff concludes that one of the numerous subtexts in Evgenii Onegin consists in Pushkin’s turn against aspects of Romantic literature. This is reflected in his occasionally subversive treatment of the Romantic’s ‘friend’, mechta (one can extend this argument to Pushkin’s use of mechtan’e and other derivations, although De Wolff makes no reference to these words). Of course, Pushkin’s mockery of Lenskii’s poetic status exceeds this relatively narrow field of focus. He is prepared to deride all of

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20 De Wolff, ‘Romanticism Unmasked: Lexical Irony in Aleksandr Puškin’s Evgenij Onegin’.
Lenskii’s dreams and not just his *mechta*. Moreover, the Lenskii-Ol’ga relationship represents a comic echo of Pushkin’s relationship with his wayward Muse. Lenskii draws a dove on a lyre (Four: XXVII: 1-8) in Ol’ga’s album, a representation of Ol’ga as inspiration and himself as the poet. Nabokov observes that Pushkin uses the expression ‘ineffable beauty’, which he had applied to his dazzling visions in ‘Razgovor knigoprodavtsa s poetom’, to describe Lenskii’s view of Ol’ga:

C неизъяснимою красою
Он видит Ольгу пред собой.
(Six: XX: 7-8)

Ol’ga does inspire Lenskii to write, only not well. Moreover, she unfortunately displays aspects of the Muse’s ‘flighty’, wayward personality. For example, she flits ‘lighter than a swallow’ into Tat’iana’s bedroom after her sister’s disturbing dream and demands to know who (and not what) she saw in her dream (Five: XXI: 10-14); she, like the Muse, is ‘saucy’ (*rezvaia*) (Four: XLVIII: 2); in Canto Two, Pushkin says that she is responsible for Lenskii’s first ‘poetic dream’ and first inspired him to play his ‘pipe’:

Она поэту подарила
Младых восторгов первый сон,
О мысли об ней одушевила
Его цевицы первый сон.
(Two: XXII: 1-4)

There is a resonance in this extract of the Muse’s attempts to teach Pushkin to play on his poetic pipe in ‘Muza’. These lines also clearly reproduce a lyric fragment dating from 1822:

Она подарила
первый сон,
И мысль об ней одушевила
Безвестной лиры первый звон —
(II, 418, 1-4)

The rhyme here is the innocuous *son-zvon* (II, 418). However, Lenskii’s dream, *son*, is rhymed with ‘groan’, *ston*, a comment both on the quality of Lenskii’s ‘music’ and prospects for the relationship itself.

As we have already seen, an important corollary of the poetic dream is the poet’s sensual nature. The fact that Lenskii’s dreams are ‘maidenly’ or ‘virginal’ is indicative of their mediocre potential:

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Lenskii sings about love in his poetry, but his regard for it, unlike Pushkin’s, is not conditioned by experience or by the often scabrous community of poets – it is as uncorrupted and pure as the ‘dream’ (or possibly ‘sleep’) (son) of an infant:

In contrast to Lenskii’s sensually-disengaged view of ‘love’, Pushkin, and even Onegin, display a visceral appreciation of the pleasures of the flesh. This aspect of their personalities is reflected in the figurative use of the dream. For example, in Canto One Pushkin famously recalls easing a shapely foot into a stirrup in his dreams (mechty) (One: XXXIV: 1-4). It may be that the dreams to which Onegin was addicted relate to his romantic attachments, which, we are also told in Canto One, he has now abandoned (One: XXXVII: 1-4). Yet, as Briggs observes, he does not forgo the company of the occasional ‘white-skinned, dark-eyed girl’ on his estate (Four: XXXIX: 3-4).23 Moreover, upon his receipt of Tat’iana’s extraordinary propositional letter, the language of the maiden’s dreams (mechtan’ia) generates a swarm of disturbed thoughts in him and his soul becomes immersed in a delicious, ‘sinless’ dream (son) (Four: XI: 1-8). We can question the extent to which the dream is sinless, but the essential point is that Pushkin uses the word to describe Onegin’s arousal; and he does so again in Canto Eight (this time using mechta) following Onegin’s encounter with Tat’iana at the rout (Eight: XXI: 3-4). Elsewhere, Onegin dismisses Ol’ga, but he still expresses his admiration for her breasts (Four: XLVIII: 7); Lenskii, by contrast, may be ‘bewitched’ by her (Four: XXV: 1), but he is forced, flushing with embarrassment, to skip over salacious scenes in the novels which he reads out in her presence (Four: XXVI: 1-8). His fiery dreams are not just expressions of a Romantic formula, but are devoid of the sensual forces which lurk even in his icy companion.

23 A.D.P. Briggs, Eugene Onegin, Landmarks of World Literature, Cambridge, 1992, p. 64. Pushkin and Onegin appear to share the same taste in women. Onegin’s conquest recalls the personified dream, with her dark eyes and snow-white skin, described in ‘K Natal’ë’.
At this point I would like to turn to the significance of birds and bird imagery in Pushkin’s description of the poet in Evgenii Onegin and elsewhere in his poetry. My point of departure will be the first stanza in Canto Eight. Pushkin recalls the moment when his Muse first released him from his cell at the Lyceum and revealed to him the heart’s ‘trembling dreams’ (sny):

В те дни, в таинственных долинах,  
Весной, при цветках лебединых,  
Близ вод, сиявших в тишине,  
Являясь Муза стала мне.  
Моя студенческая келья  
Вдруг засияла; Муза в ней  
Открыла пир младых звезд,  
Воспела детские веселья,  
И славу нашей старины,  
И сердца трепетные сны.  
(Eight: I: 5-14)

In this stanza one can hear echoes of a number of disparate sources: it clearly reproduces a scenario which occurs in a number of poems written during the first part of Pushkin’s career; Tomashevskii detects a resonance of the 1821 lyric ‘Chedaevu’ (see II, 168, 29-32); the reference to the Muse entering Pushkin’s cell also recalls Pushkin’s hope, expressed at the end of Canto Six, that young inspiration will fly more often into his corner. Collectively, these reminiscences establish the stanza as one of the most significant focal points of Pushkin’s memory in the novel.

There is also an elegant parallel between the reference to the swans’ cries in the gardens at Tsarskoe Selo and the description in Canto One of the boat gliding across the Neva to the accompaniment of a daring song:

While gazing at the boat with Onegin, Pushkin perhaps regards it a replacement for the swans at Tsarskoe Selo. However, while the song ‘captivates’ him in St Petersburg, the cries of the birds appear to represent freedom because they emanate from the world outside the strictures of the Lyceum. In the fare copy of the stanza in Canto Eight Pushkin recalls jumping over the fence of the school into the gardens (VI, 619) (similarly, in ‘V nachale zhizni shkolu pomnui ia’ [1830] he remembers running

25 In ‘Chu, pushki graniuli! krylatykh korablei’ [1830] (III, 310, 4) and a single-line fragment written in 1835 (III.2, 1308) Pushkin explicitly compares the passage of a boat to the majestic movement of a swan.
furtively into the gardens when he was a student: III, 254, 19-21). One could argue that in the final version of this stanza his release is metaphorical. The Muse transports him, in Clayton’s phrase, into the ‘other world’ of the dream. The swans’ cries are an expression of the transformed poet’s new-found liberty within that world. The swan, according to this interpretation, symbolizes poetry and freedom. However, one of the unexpected findings in my study of Pushkin’s imagery of flying is that he is unwilling to associate himself with the image of the swan, an archetypal symbol of poetry. In the specific context of Evgenii Onegin, by the time he reaches Canto Eight Pushkin has already played several games regarding the interrelation of birds and poetry. The reference to the swans in this stanza is another example of what occasionally amounts to Pushkin’s ludic approach to the issue of poetry in the novel.

There have been a number of fascinating interpretations of the significance of the swans in this digression. According to Mur’ianov, for example, their cries signify the sound of the poet’s musical instrument – presumably the lyre. He believes that Pushkin was influenced by Slovo o polku Igoreve, a work in which he expressed much interest. Towards the end of his life it became the subject of detailed analysis in an unfinished article.26 The anonymous author of Slovo o polku Igoreve refers to the description of ten falcons which are set on a flock of swans in the work of ‘Boian’ in the eleventh century. The first swan to be caught then sings and its song becomes the content of the work. The poet interprets the falcons as an allegorical expression of the ten fingers which pluck the strings of a musical instrument, itself symbolized by the swan. In his article Pushkin declared both the explanation and the allegory to be equally ‘magnificent’ (XII, 150). The image of the fingers as flying birds is interesting, given that in several early lyrics the poet’s fingers or hand are described ‘flying’ over the strings of a lyre:

Настрой же лиру. По струнам
Летай исправными перстами,
Как веший Зефир по цветам, <...>
‘K Batiushkovu’ [1814] (I, 55, 23-25)

Исполнен тайною тоской,
Молчаньем вдохновенный,
Летает резвою рукой
На лире ожиленной.
‘MechtateP’ (I, 94, 29-32)

Lotman, on the other hand, argues more convincingly that Pushkin borrowed the reference to the cries of the swans from Derzhavin’s ‘Progulka v Sarskom Sele’ (sic)

26 ‘Pesn’ o polku Igoreve’ (XII, 147-52). Pushkin apparently had long discussions about Slavo o polku Igoreve with A.I. Turgenev during which he announced his intention to complete his study: see V. Sakharov, ‘Pushkin chitaet Igorevu pesn’, Nash sovremennik, 1985, 12, pp. 148-51 (148).
27 See Mur’ianov, Iz simvolov i allegori Pushkina, pp. 50-54.
[1791] (although Derzhavin uses the less raucous ‘voice’, glas). Pushkin certainly has the poet on his mind since he refers to Derzhavin’s blessing of his union with the Muse in the following stanza. The reference to the dead poet in this part of the novel is significant, since Derzhavin described himself as a swan in his own poetry:

Из необычайным я пареньем
От тленна мира отдельюсь,
С душой бессмертною и пеньем,
Как лебедь, в воздух поднимусь.

‘Lebed’ [1804]²⁹

In her study of the image of the swan in Akhmatova’s poem ‘I vot odna ostalas’ [c. 1917], Anna Lisa Crone observes that the personification of the bird as a poet or as the transmogrified soul of a recently deceased poet has its sources in classical times – for example, in the fable that the dead Orpheus’s soul becomes a swan at the end of Plato’s Republic.³⁰ Derzhavin’s ‘Lebed’ is a free translation of Horace’s ode ‘Non Usitata’ in which he describes his metamorphosis into a swan, a common symbol in classical culture for the poet’s transcendence of death. However, Hart notes that Derzhavin departs from the original:

[Horace’s] particular handling of the metaphor did not yield an unambiguously positive portrait of the artist, however. [...] Horace contrasts the humble condition of mortal life with the eternal power and beauty of the poet’s creation. But the image of the gawky cygnet in Horace produces an ironic effect which, in the estimates of some critics, cannot be overcome by the more positive tone elsewhere: ‘Now, now the skin on my legs is becoming wrinkled, and above I am metamorphosed to a white bird...’.³¹

Hart adds that Horace did little with the concept of soaring, which assumes major importance in ‘Lebed’.³² Derzhavin appropriated the image of a resplendent swan to express the special status of the poet and, more specifically, of himself. Furthermore, other poets would refer to Derzhavin periphrastically as ‘the swan’. Batiushkov does this in ‘Moi penaty’ [1810-12]:

³⁰ Crone, ‘Akhmatova and the Passing of the Swans’, p. 107. Many of my references to the use of the swan image in the work of other Russian poets were suggested by Crone’s article. Incidentally, the title of Akhmatova’s poem is possibly based on Pushkin’s ‘Odin, odin ostalsia ia’ [1822], a description of the isolated poet who is forced to live apart from his friends.
³² Hart, G.R. Derzhavin, p. 89.
Similarly, Zhukovskii refers to Derzhavin’s ‘swan voice’ in ‘Pevets vo stane russikh voinov’:\textsuperscript{34}

О старец! да услышим твой
День голос лебединий; \textsuperscript{35}\n
When Pushkin first encountered this old poet at the celebrated public examination in 1815, he himself used the image of the swan to identify the eminent guest in ‘Vospominaniia v Tsarskom Sele’:

Как древних лет певец, как лебедь стран Еллины, \textsuperscript{36}
(\textit{I}, 283)

However, as several commentators point out, having delivered his sop to the old man Pushkin subsequently removed this line from the poem when he copied it out for publication in the same year.\textsuperscript{36} In the final version, the swan only appears in the vehicle of a simile which describes the moon in the first stanza:

И тихая луна, как лебедь величавый,
Плывет в сребристых облаках.
(\textit{I}, 60, 7-8)

As Vinogradov observes, the image is similar to the extract cited from Batiushkov’s ‘Moi penaty’,\textsuperscript{37} but, significantly, it does not relate to a poet. Pushkin’s decision to remove the periphrastic reference to Derzhavin is symbolic. Throughout his career he will assert his special status by refusing to apply the image of the swan to the general figure of the poet and, indeed, by occasionally undermining the bird’s poetic aura. More specifically, with one notable exception which I will discuss in Chapter Three, Pushkin refuses to identify himself openly with the bird. It is possible that he based the passage quoted earlier from ‘Gorodok. (K ***’) in which the poet soars towards the sun, on Derzhavin’s ‘Lebed’ (according to Vatsuro, Pushkin was also influenced by

\textsuperscript{34} See Gumennaia, ‘Derzhavin v kontekste “Evgenia Onegina”’, pp. 60-61.
\textsuperscript{35} Zhukovskii, \textit{Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh}, 1, p. 163.
\textsuperscript{36} For example, see Tomashevskii, \textit{Pushkin. Kniga pervaia (1813-1824)}, p. 124; Crone, ‘Akhmatova and the Passing of the Swans’, p. 110. In ‘Ten’ Fon-vizina’, another poem which was also written in 1815, Pushkin is less respectful towards Derzhavin, implicitly expressing his surprise that the old poet is still alive (\textit{I}, 123, 200-10).
\textsuperscript{37} Vinogradov, \textit{Stil’ Pushkina}, p. 124.
Batiushkov’s ‘Moi penaty’). However, in that poem Pushkin decided to include no reference to the swan, a bird which lies at the heart of Derzhavin’s view of the poet.

In common with Derzhavin and Zhukovskii, Pushkin certainly associates Tsarskoe Selo with these birds. For example, the young poet describes a snow-white swan and his companion swimming across the lake at Tsarskoe Selo in ‘Gorodok (K ***’) (I, 79, 345-53); and ‘Tsarskoe Selo’ [1823], Pushkin’s recollection of the Lyceum, ends with a reference to the ‘proud flock of peaceful swans’ on the lake (II, 255, 22). Moreover, Pushkin was himself labelled a swan in 1815 by his close friend Del’vig in ‘Pushkinu’:

Кто, как лебедь цветущей Авзонии,
Осененный и миртом, и лаврами,
Майской ночью при хоре порхующих,
В сладких грезах отвился от матери, <...>39

Nabokov is unrestrained in his appreciation of this poem, detecting in it, he says, ‘a combination of intuitive genius and actual destiny to which I can find no parallel in the history of world poetry’. However, the lyric ‘K Del’vigu’, to which I referred earlier, records Pushkin’s modest and cool response to his friend’s epistle:

Спасибо за посланье —
Но что мне пользы в том?
(I, 107, 18-19)

The flourish of Del’vig’s imagery (in 1830 Pushkin refers to his friend’s ‘winged style’ in ‘Del’vigu’): III, 249, 21) is met with a question which is markedly lacking in overtly poetic flavour. Pushkin then strips the image of the poet of glamour by recording the public’s cliché-driven idea of what constitutes his life and work:

Поэта окружают
С улыбкой остряки.
«Ах, сударь! мне сказали,
Вы пишете стихи;
Увидеть их не льзя ли?
Вы в них изображали,
Конечно, ручейки,
Конечно, василечки,
Иль тихой ветерочк,
И рощи и цветки...»
(I, 108-09, 36-45)

40 Nabokov, Eugene Onegin, III, p. 23.
The portrayal of the poet as a swan conforms to this conventional view of poetry. A swan could easily have featured in the wits' list, perhaps languishing among the flowers on the brook.

_Evgenii Onegin_ thrives on subverting such poetic commonplaces. A good example (though perhaps excessive, which may have accounted for its removal from the final text) occurs in Canto Four when 'instead of roses' Pushkin describes the 'melted manure' in the fields in spring (VI, 360). This practice extends to other obvious 'poetic' elements such as the poet's dream (_mechta_) or, less obviously perhaps, the image of the swan. In _Evgenii Onegin_, the description of the swans on the lake at Tsarskoe Selo is prefigured in Canto Four in a way which undermines the subsequent recollection of this idyll. In the digression in which Pushkin describes reading the fruits of his dreams to his nanny at Mikhailovskoe, he goes on to describe the lake on the estate:

Или (но это кроме шуток),
Тоской и рифмами томим,
Вдоль над озером моим,
Путем стадо диких уток;
Всяя песнь сладкозвучных строф,
Они слетают с берегов.
(Four: XXXV: 9-14)

This passage describes a period in his life which, chronologically, follows the description of the swans at Tsarskoe Selo in Canto Eight. The setting of the lake in both cantos is similar, but, in a reversal of the 'ugly duckling' fable, the 'poetic' swans have been replaced by 'unpoetic' wild ducks. Moreover, the birds fly away — not as a metaphor for winged inspiration, but because they are literally repulsed by the sounds of Pushkin's poetry. They and the poet are not only clearly distinguished but stand in opposition to each other. The birds' respite may be short-lived: in a stanza which appeared in the separate edition of Cantos Four and Five, whilst Pushkin is still looking for the ducks in the sky, a hunter concealed in the wood 'curses poetry' (since it has frightened off the birds) and carefully releases the catch of his gun (VI, 648).

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41 Nabokov compares the final version of this scene with a passage from 'Moemu aristarkhu': Nabokov, _Eugene Onegin_, II, p. 455. This was written in 1815 when Pushkin was still a student at the Lyceum. In it he describes various settings where he composes poetry, including the grove next to the lake:

Брожу ль над тихими водами
В дубраве тению и глухой,
Задумался — взмахну руками,
На рифмах вдруг заговорю
И никого уж не морю
Моими резвыми стихами...
(I, 117, 55-60)
Pushkin therefore mocks the traditional relationship between the poet and birds in this scene. However, what he also does is introduce a flock of ducks, birds which are not traditionally associated with poetry, into poetry (even though they subsequently fly off). This balance between mockery of the poet-bird relationship and the wish to challenge the accepted wisdom of what constitutes a poetic subject occurs elsewhere in Canto Four. Pushkin appears to rework, with a certain degree of mischief, the dramatic simile of the cranes which head south for winter in Tsygany:

Так иногда перед зимою,
Туманной, утренней порою,
Когда подъёмляется с полей
Станица поздних журавлей
И с криком вдали на юг несется,
Пронзённый либеральным свинцом
Один печально остается,
Повиснув раненым крылом.  
(IV, 202, 528-35)

The description of one of the cranes being shot out of the sky relates to the gypsies' decision to ostracize Aleko for the double murder of Zemfira and her lover. There is an echo of this scene in Canto Four when Pushkin describes a flock of geese which also head south as winter approaches:

Уж небо осенью дышало,
Уж реже сольышко блистало,
Короче становился день,
Лесов таинственная сень
С печальным шумом обнажалась,
Ложился на поля туман,
Гусей крикливых караван
Тянулся к югу: приближалась
Довольно скучная пора;
Стоял ноябрь уж у двора.  
(Four: XL: 5-14)

If we compare the two passages, there is an obvious parallel in the basic description of the birds migrating in autumn, but there are also significant stylistic differences. The second passage is devoid of the sombre, serious tone of the first. When the simile occurs in Tsygany Pushkin has all but removed himself from the scene: his presence is barely felt. In Canto Four, by contrast, he appears actually to see the birds – the

When Pushkin suddenly throws up his arms, this is evocative of a startled bird, and may anticipate the actual reaction of the startled swans who would be floating on the lake's surface.

42 There is a possible reminiscence of the injured bird in this simile in the description of the 'injured' vehicle in Graf Nulin, composed in 1825:

Опасно раненый, печальный
Кой-как тащится экипаж.  
(IV, 6, 106-07).
comment about the 'rather boring period' is his (and, incidentally, contradicts his subsequent expressions of affection for autumn, his favourite season, in poems like 'Osen'. (Otryvok')). In keeping with the theme of metamorphosis which is an important aspect of Tsygany, the flock of elegant cranes there has become a 'caravan of honking geese'. In other words, an obviously 'poetic' image has become a gaggle of 'unpoetic' birds. The single cry of the cranes gives way to loud, raucous honking (which is reflected in the hard consonants of the Russian: 'Караван крикливых гусей'). Moreover, in another type of transformation, the geese do not occur within a simile but actually appear in the sky.

Several stanzas later, we encounter the abandoned 'Aleko' figure in the description of a lone red-footed goose which remains in wintry Russia:

На красных лапках гусь тяжелый,
Задумав плыть по лону вод,
Ступает бережек на лед,
Сколзнет и падает; веселый
Мелькает, выется первый снег,
Звездами падая на брег.
(Four: XLII: 9-14)

The unexpected caesura in line twelve conveys a sense of the confused goose's sudden fall onto the ice. This comic scene again appears to contrast with Tsygany in which the corresponding description of Aleko's abandonment in the steppe raises profound issues concerning freedom and Fate. Pushkin wrote the second half of Canto Four, including these stanzas, in 1825 (VI, 660), approximately one year after completing Tsygany (he wrote an extra scene in January 1825, but this was not included in the final text: see IV, 472). In stanza XL he refers to the Northern summer as the caricature of the Southern winter (Four: XL: 1-2). The Northern geese in Evgenii Onegin caricature their poetic Southern cousins in Tsygany. In another example of the complex network of references which Pushkin constructs in and between his works, the inclusion of the foolishly sliding goose appears deliberately to stand in opposition to the subsequent 'poetic' image of the swan in Canto Eight.43

In Canto Four Pushkin uses the goose, and indeed the duck, to challenge the established view of what is and is not 'poetic'. He also does this in other ways, and using different images, but the image of a bird has a particular resonance given that it is so closely identified with the poet. (It is ironic, therefore, that Zaretskii, the man who keeps alive the animosity between Onegin and Lenskii, and who ultimately plays a vital role in the death of the 'poet', rears both of these new symbols of poetry: Six: VII: 13.) An important related issue, which I discuss in Chapter Three, is that the bird is traditionally linked with the freedom of the poet. In this context, the description of the

single, abandoned goose can be interpreted as an analogy for Pushkin’s isolated existence in exile. The goose was, after all, the emblem of the Arzamas, the poets’ club of which Pushkin was a member in St Petersburg. Nabokov calls the Arzamas the ‘goose-dinner club’, and observes that ‘an echo of these dinners, the skeleton of the goose and the remains of its crimson coif, will be found in Tatiana’s dream’ (Five: XVII: 3). In fact, it is in the dream that Pushkin delivers the punch line to his witty and, possibly, serious joke by setting the goose next to his fellow reveller, and poetic alterego, the crane (Five: XVI: 14).

Approximately ten years before starting Canto Four, in one of his earliest lyric poems, ‘Kniaziu A.M. Gorchakovu’ [1814], Pushkin told one of his companions at the Lyceum that he would not change his ‘goose pen’ into a lyre:

Но, я, любимый Горчаков,
Не просыпайся с пером,
И написанными стихами,
Набором прозывчных слов,
Я петь пустого не умён
Высоко, тонко и хитро,
И в лиру превращать не смею
Мое — гусиное перо!
(I, 39, 5-12)

There is an apparent element of diffidence in the use of ‘dare’ – he does not dare change his goose pen into a lyre – but this contrasts with the exclamation in the final line which expresses a sense of defiance. The verb ‘dare’ is an early example of Pushkin’s deliberately ambiguous phrasing. It could mean that he cannot allow himself to follow the well-established norms of poetic expression. As in Evgenii Onegin, he uses the unpoetic goose (or a single feather from it) to delineate a distance between himself and other poets, especially Derzhavin. The link between the goose and the notion of transformation recalls the old poet’s famous description of himself in ‘Lebed’; or rather, responds to it, because Pushkin explicitly refuses to soar in Derzhavin’s wake:

Нет, нет, любимый князь, не оду
Тебе намерен посвятить;
Что прибыли соваться в воду,
Сначала не спросивши броду,
И в след Державину парить?
Пишу своим я складом ныне
Кой-как стихи на именины.
(I, 39, 13-19)

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46 In 1826 Pushkin and Iazykov composed ‘Nравовительные четверостишия’, a parody of Dmitriev’s ‘Apologi’. In one of the quatrains, ‘Lebed’ i gus’”, the goose tries to humiliate the swan by daubing on its back, at which the swan, with massive dignity, merely washes off the stain (III, 482). The parodic
The metaphors appear to be mixed: what is the point, he asks, of not looking before he leaps into the water, only to soar after Derzhavin? However, he could, of course, have the swan in mind: what is the point, he asks, of being a swan or another Derzhavin? In the same year Pushkin used similar language in an epistle to Batiushkov, whom he had just met for the first time. The older poet had advised Pushkin to introduce a stronger military theme in his poetry. This was his response:

И, с дерзостным Икаром
Страшась летать не даром,
Бреду своим путем;
Всюкий путь моем.
‘Batiushkovu’ (I, 87, 29-32)

These lines restate the basic manifesto for independence which was issued to Gorchakov. However, in a deliberately ironic twist which Pushkin highlights by the use of italics, the last line is not original to Pushkin, but lifted from Zhukovskii’s poem ‘K Batiushkovu’ [1812] (itself a reply to Batiushkov’s ‘Moi penaty’, addressed to both Zhukovskii and Viazemskii). The ‘joke’ is revealing, since it shows that although Pushkin was eager to establish his own credentials as an independent-minded poet, he also saw himself as part of a community of poets and, as such, felt able to filch their work.

The most powerful expression of Pushkin’s sense of membership of this circle of like-minded poets occurs in ‘K Zhukovskomu’ [1816], addressed to Zhukovskii in his capacity as the secretary of the Arzamas. What unites the members of this coterie is the general motif of flying (as opposed to the specific image of a bird). The young poet’s burgeoning career is described as a daring, dangerous flight. Although it is determined by Fate, Pushkin fears an ignominious ‘fall’:

Опасною тропой с надеждою полетел,
Мне жребий вынул Фев, и лира мой удел.
Страшусь, неопытный, бесславного паденья,
Ко пылкого смирить не в силах я влеченья, <...>
(I, 151, 3-6)

tone and the content of the poem are consistent with Pushkin’s fondness for stripping the swan of its poetic aura. Furthermore, given the close association between Derzhavin and the swan, the poem can be interpreted as a description of the sometimes disrespectful treatment which Derzhavin received in the poetry of Pushkin and other young poets.

47 If this interpretation is correct, Pushkin makes a rare, albeit obscure, reference to the swan in flight. The bird is almost always water-bound in Pushkin. A beautiful flying swan occurs in 1831 in ‘Skazka o tsare Saltane, o syne ego slavnom i moguchem bogatyre kniaze Gvidone Saltanoviche i o prekrasnoi tsarevne Lebedi’ [1831] (hereafter, ‘Skazka o tsare Saltane’) (III, 511, 191). The only other reference to its ability to fly occurs in the unfinished lyric ‘Chto beleetsia na gore zelenoi’ [1833], a translation of a traditional Serb ballad (III, 377, 4).

Pushkin therefore addresses those immortal poets, such as Zhukovskii, who inspire him. He openly asks for their guidance as he flies into the unknown in his courageous ‘dream’ (the strands of the dream/flying branches of imagery therefore once again merge). During this flight he senses that their ‘Genius’ hovers above him, accompanying him towards his goal:

Творцы бессмертные, питомцы вдохновенья!....
Вы цель мне кажете в туманах отдаленья,
Лечу к безвестной, отважной мечтою.
И, мчится, Гений ваш промчался надо мной!
(I, 151, 25-28)

In contrast to these soaring figures the members of the Arzamas’s rival literary society, Beseda liubitelei russkogo iazyka, are portrayed as sedentary figures, who use their poetry and prose as seats (I, 151, 39). Moreover, they become the targets of the Arzamas’s flying attacks. Pushkin urges his fellow poets, the ‘priests of Parnassus’, to ‘fly’ at their enemies, to cut them down with their blood-stained verses (I, 153, 107-08).

It is characteristic of Pushkin that the image of the poet’s flight subsequently recurs in his work but with a quite different meaning. His first narrative poem, Ruslan i Liudmila, is a testament to the influence of his peers but, as Bondi puts it, he ‘went further than them’. He describes Pushkin’s work as an answer to Zhukovskii’s Vadim [1817], the second part of a large narrative poem, Dvenadtsat’ spiashchikh dev [1811-1817]; however, in contrast to Zhukovskii’s high-brow, ‘incorporeal’ language and imagery, Ruslan i Liudmila contains elements of light-hearted, mischievous erotica. In the opening passage of Song Four, Pushkin acknowledges his debt to Zhukovskii, and also playfully apologizes for parodying his work:

Прости мне, северный Орфей,
Что в повести моей забавной
Теперь вослед тебе лечу,
И лию музы своенравной
Во лики прелестной обличу.
(IV, 50, 23-27)

Pushkin will find the motif of flying useful in a variety of ways in future poems in order to attack non-poets. In 'Sovet' [1825], for example, the critics are 'more stupid than even mosquitoes', and fly around the poet in a ‘journalistic swarm’; Pushkin’s advice is to swat them with a skilful epigram (II, 341, 8). A similar image occurs in the draft of Canto Four of Evgenii Onegin when Pushkin describes the habit some people have of swatting ‘journalistic flies’ (VI, 370). In ‘Prozaik i poet’ [1825] the epigram itself becomes winged: the poet claims to be able to take any thought, sharpen and feather it with a rhyme and fire it at his enemy (II, 391, 1-8).

Pushkin has separated (but not divorced) himself from the benign guardian genius which shadowed his flight in ‘K Zhukovskomu’. He refused to fly in an eminent peer’s wake in ‘Kniaziu A.M. Gorchakovu’, although there the reference was to Derzhavin. Now Pushkin does fly, but in order to signify the parodic treatment of another poet’s work. Following the completion of *Ruslan i Liudmila*, Zhukovskii famously gave Pushkin his portrait with the note: ‘To the conquering pupil from the defeated teacher’.\[^{51}\] Several years later, Pushkin referred to his ‘unforgivable’ treatment of the older man (XI, 145).

Although it is now possible to state that the motif of flying is a significant component of Pushkin’s presentation of himself, in none of the works studied so far has he explicitly applied the image of a bird to himself *qua* poet (as opposed, say, to a soldier, or lover). He may have identified himself with the sprawling goose in Canto Four of *Evgenii Onegin*, but this relationship, such as it exists, is concealed by the device of allegory. In fact, Pushkin applies the image of the bird to himself in three ways. On a number of occasions the bird represents the poet in a political context. In ‘Uznik’ [1822], for example, Pushkin draws a parallel between himself and a young eagle in chains. I will discuss this and other related poems in Chapter Three. In two lyric poems, the conventional image of a trapped bird also describes a sense of being captivated by love: in ‘K Natashe’ [1814], which is probably addressed to a maid amongst the royal retinue at Tsarskoe Selo, he likens himself to a caged siskin (*chizhik*) (I, 45, 22); and in ‘Kakov ia prezhde byl, takov i nynie ia’ [1828] he uses the image of a young hawk which has been caught in traps set by Venus (III, 143, 5-9).

However, Pushkin waited until 1825 to apply the image of a bird to himself in the context of inspiration in his poetry. In a light-hearted poem included in a letter to Viazemskii, written on 7 November 1825, Pushkin portrays himself as an eagle. His bird does not soar, nor is it used to describe the onset of inspiration. Pushkin sits ‘like an eagle’ – an unexpected simile – because he is uninspired:

\[^{51}\] The Commentary of Bondi, p. 434.
В глухии, измучась жизнью постной,
Изнемогая животом,
Я не парю — сижу орлом
И болен праздностью поносной.

Бумаги берегу запас,
Натуру вдохновенья чуждый,
Хожу я редко на Пирнас
И только за большою нуждою.

Но твой затейливый навоз
Приятно мне щекотит нос;
Хвость хвоста он напоминает,
Отца зубастых голубей,
И дух мой снова позывает
Ко испражненью прежних дней.
(XIII, 239)

In the final stanza Pushkin reproduces the scatological imagery used by Viazemskii in his own letter to Pushkin the previous month (XIII, 238). As in ‘Ten’ Fon-vizina’, Khvostov once again becomes the target of mockery. ‘The father of sharp-toothed doves’ is a reference to his work ‘Pritcha “dva golubia”’, in which a trapped dove bites through a net with its ‘teeth’. The fact that Pushkin’s poem was included in a letter obviously distinguishes it from poems which he intended to publish. However, in the same way that his uncensored letters sometimes display emotions or attitudes which he is forced to qualify in the censored material, this unguarded poem is indicative of his true regard for the image of the poet as a soaring eagle.

Pushkin therefore uses the ‘poetic’ image of the eagle to denote the absence of inspiration. As we have seen, he treats a number of conventional images in this subversive way. However, the eagle is of particular interest because in 1826, and again in 1827, Pushkin employs it in two of the most famous and powerful descriptions of inspiration in his work. In the first of these, ‘Prorok’, a seraph touches his pupils, whereupon he is filled with the inspiration of Isaiah’s prophet. At the point of contact with the seraph, Pushkin likens himself to a frightened young eagle:

Перстами легкими как сон
Моих зениц коснулся он.
Отверзлись вещие зеницы,
Как у испуганной орлицы.
Моих ушей коснулся он, —
И их наполнил шум и звон; <...>
(III, 30, 5-10)

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Bayley says that this poem pours out its apprehension of power ‘like a stream of molten lava’; but what image does Pushkin use to describe the poet being hit by the force of inspiration? The only sign that the poet is inspired is that his prophetic pupils dilate like those of a frightened eaglet. The seraph’s touch acts like a defibrillator on the poet, but the massive jolt of energy is almost fully absorbed within him. Apprehension of power, in its initial stage, practically immobilizes him, thereby allowing the seraph subsequently to assault his body. The image of the sedentary eagle in the verse enclosed in the letter to Viazemskii symbolized in an unserious, flippant way the poet’s sense of creative sterility. In ‘Prorok’, at least at the onset of inspiration, Pushkin makes this ‘unpoetic’, stationary bird dramatically poetic and places it at the very heart of the creative process.

In the Introduction I noted Bayley’s contention that Pushkin’s lyric poems require no further elucidation of meaning outside themselves. He makes this observation with specific reference to ‘Prorok’. It is not, he says, an allegorical poem, nor is its meaning dependent on a generalized symbolic structure. Whilst acknowledging the force of this argument, one can, however, draw attention to the obvious similarity between this extract from ‘Prorok’ and part of ‘Poet’ (which, curiously, Bayley does not mention in his study):

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Но лишь божественный глагол
До слуха чуткого коснется,
Душа поэта встрепенется,
Как пробуждшийся орел.
‘Poet’ (III, 65, 9-12)
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The basic notion of what happens to the poet when he becomes inspired is described using similar language in both poems. The delicate touch of non-mortal provenance rouses the poet from his indolence. In each poem the suddenly inspired poet is likened to an eagle, but one which does not explicitly ‘soar’. In ‘Prorok’ the poet as eagle is initially motionless, and will subsequently get up, while in ‘Poet’ the poet will run (III, 65, 17), but in neither case does he ‘fly’.

Echoes of a particular assortment of words or even whole phrases can be heard throughout Pushkin’s poetry, but they do not necessarily establish an intentional intertextual link. When the seraph touches the poet ‘like sleep’, the simile conveys the delicacy of touch, and thereby makes the subsequent violence which is perpetuated against the poet so unexpected. ‘Kakaia noch! Moroz trespuchii’ [1827] uses a

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54 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 145.
55 Bayley, Pushkin, pp. 144-45.
56 Gasparov observes that the description of the seraph touching the poet’s pupils in ‘Prorok’ is suggestive of the playing of a lyre: Gasparov, ‘Encounter of Two Poets in the Desert’, p. 136. He does
similar assortment of words but to quite different effect. Death is said to touch the condemned men at an execution 'like sleep': 

Ко смерть коснулась к ним, как сон,  
Свою добычу захватила.  
(III, 61, 27-28)

When *son* denotes death it becomes ponderous, semantically distanced from the seraph’s exquisite contact. By the same token, the terrified eagle in ‘Prorok’ is a very different creature from the poet-eagle in ‘Poet’ who is roused from ‘cold sleep’ (III, 65, 6). This later poet is not frightened but ‘proud’, far removed from the people and their idols (III, 65, 13-16).

This representation of the poet has more in common with what is known as *Ezerskii*, which Pushkin started in 1832. In this work the poet is likened to a flying eagle. The ‘fool’, the main representative of the mob, objects to the direction which the eagle has chosen; but the bird does not even hear since he is being drawn by his ‘gilded dreams’:

Глупец кричит: куда? куда?  
Дорога здесь. Но ты не слышши.  
идешь, куда тебя влечут  
Мечты златые; тайный труд  
Тебе напрока; и, ты дышишь,  
А плод его бросаешь ты  
Толпе, рабынь суеты.  
(V, 103, 190-96)

It is very likely that Pushkin intended to reproduce this part of the poem in the Italian’s inspired improvisation in ‘Egipetskie nochi’ [1835] (VIII, 269), a work which I will discuss in Chapter Five. Pushkin could have borrowed the image of the eagle from a number of sources ranging from the Old Testament to Russian folklore, and it also occurs in other poetry of the time.57

Gorodetskii traces the image of the soaring eagle in Pushkin’s work to Derzhavin, for whom, he says, it was another favourite symbol of poetic inspiration.58 However, the image of the eagle in Derzhavin usually represents Russia or the military (for example, in ‘Zazdravnyi orel’ [1791-1801]). Moreover, as Il’ichev observes, Pushkin’s eagle does not ‘soar’ but lands on a black stump.59

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57 The flight and subsequent fall of a young eagle convey the Romantic notion of spent idealism and youth in ‘Sila dukha’ [1825] by Shevyrev; and in 1833, when Pushkin was composing *Ezerskii*, Khomiakov also used the image of an eagle to describe the polarization between the poet and mob in ‘Zhavoronok, orel i poet’: Il’ichev, “’Zachem krutitsia vetr v ovrage...’”, pp. 146-50.
59 Il’ichev, “’Zachem krutitsia vetr v ovrage...’”, p. 149.
The adjective ‘heavy’ is incompatible with the image of an effortlessly soaring bird; it lays the emphasis on the eagle’s formidable appearance and symbolic gravitas, as opposed to its ability to soar. In a planned introduction to Cantos Eight and Nine of Evgenii Onegin, Pushkin responded to criticism of the banal subject-matter of Canto Seven by remarking that ‘the most insignificant subject can be chosen by the poet’ (VI, 540). The description of the startled ducks, as opposed to Derzhavin’s elegant swan, can be seen as an exercise of that choice. The juxtaposition of the eagle with the ‘unpoetic’ black stump also exemplifies Pushkin’s concept of poetic freedom.

In his famous lyric ‘Lebed’*, which was written between 1831 and 1839 (and published in 1839), Tiutchev refers to the debate between the relative virtues of associating the eagle or the swan with the poet:

Луский орел за облаками
Встречает молнии полет
И неподвижными очами
В себя вливает солнца свет...

Ко нет завиднее удела,
О лебедь чистый, твоего—
И чистой, как ты сам, одело
Тебя стихий божество.

Она, между двойною бездной,
Лелеет твоё всесящий сон—
И полной славой тверди звездной
Ты отовсюду окружен.60

Crone notes that Tiutchev chooses the role of the swan-poet, occupying the intermediate position of lake’s surface (between the ‘double abyss’), over the soaring eagle-poet.61 Tynianov observes that in the poem the swan ‘wins’ in the struggle between the two birds. He adds that the opposition between the eagle and swan in Tiutchev and the work of a number of other Russian poets can be traced to European poetry. For example, Rotchev’s ‘Garmoniia zhizni’ [1827], which describes a conversation between a swan and an eagle, is an imitation of Schlegel.62 Pushkin makes no mention of Rotchev in his work, but he may have read his poem which was printed in Severnaialira in 1827. The only reference to Tiutchev occurs in a review of

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62 Iu.N. Tynianov, Arkhaisty i novatory, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1985, pp. 363-64.
the almanac *Dennitsa* in 1830 (where he referred to him as a poet of the 'German school': XI, 105). This is surprising given that Pushkin knew and respected him well enough to print a series of his poems in *Sovremennik* in 1836.63

In Pushkin the eagle, and not the swan, appears to 'win'. It does so in a number of ways which establish links between this and future chapters. Firstly, the eagle and its double-headed (or, to adopt Nabokov's expression, 'bicephalous')64 version are, of course, well-established symbols of Empire. Peter the Great used to force subjects who had in some way displeased him to drink a heady brew from the 'great eagle cup' (*kubok bol'shogo orla*) and then watch in amusement as the transgressor, instantly intoxicated, staggered away. Korsakov has to drain this cup in 'Arap Petra Velikogo' (VIII, 17-18).65 This practice reinforced (one might add, in a very Russian fashion) the association between the image of the eagle and tsarist authority. The fact that Pushkin likens himself to an eagle in a number of poems suggests, at least prima facie, that there is a political dimension to these representations of the poet. In 'Prorok', for example, he compares the poet to an 'eaglet', *orlitsa*. The suffix signifies, perhaps, that he is a subject of the Tsar.66 However, the poem shows that the poet's inspiration and power ultimately derive from God Himself. In this context, the tsar's sanction of the legitimacy of the poet is simply irrelevant. Secondly, in 'Prorok', 'Poet' and Ezerskii, Pushkin chooses to describe the power and freedom of the poet by using the image of a bird which no longer flies. The idea of a non-flying bird is of particular significance in the portrayal of a number of important male characters, such as Aleko, Lenskii and Onegin. However, in contrast to Pushkin, the absence of flight symbolizes men who are neither free nor possessed of any power.

I would like to end this chapter by referring once again to Gershenzon's analysis of the role of the dream in Pushkin's poetry. He concluded his essay by citing part of 'Osen' (Otryvok)' as the clearest illustration of the poet's sense of liberation. However, by 1833, when this poem was composed, the famous stanza in which Pushkin withdraws from the world was no longer typical of his descriptions of the poet. Earlier I drew an approximate 'line' in Pushkin's poetry in 1824, dividing this

63 Another possible reference to Tiutchev occurs in the draft of 'Sobranie nasekomykh' [1829] where 'T—v' is called a 'black ant' (III, 801). For a detailed analysis of Pushkin's relationship with Tiutchev, see Tynianov, *Arkhaisty i novatory*, pp. 330-66.
65 Hughes discusses this cup in Lindsey Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, New Haven and London, 1998, pp. 254, 265, 267 and 520 (note 154). This cup features in a famous portrait of Peter by Valentin Serov.
body of work into two halves. In the second half of his poetry Pushkin rarely includes sustained descriptions of the poetic process: ‘Prorok’, ‘Poet’ and ‘Osen’. (Otryvok)’ are exceptional. There are, of course, other high-profile descriptions of the poet during this period, such as ‘Poet i tolpa’, ‘Poetu’ and ‘Ekho’ [1831]. But these lyrics predominantly describe the reception of the poet rather than inspiration itself. A consequence of this is that the poet’s dream occurs less frequently during this period. Of the six poems referred to in this paragraph, only ‘Osen’. (Otryvok)’ describes this sort of dream (mechta). Although Pushkin does not stop using words which denote a dream in a figurative sense in the second half of his career, they are increasingly employed in a number of different ways. Among these, the role of the dream, and indeed the motif of flying, become increasingly important in the context of memory, the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter Two

The Role of Dreams and Flying in Pushkin’s Resolution of the Problem of Memory and Death

In the epilogue of Kavkazskii plennik Pushkin’s Muse, the ‘friend of light Dream’, flies to Asia, where she often appears to the poet wearing the costume of the local tribes. Having established her idiosyncratic credentials, Pushkin then describes another aspect of her role in the following quatrain:

Вот вновь песен звучит,
Вспомни́нья полна,
Быть может, повторит она
Преданья грозного Кавказа; <...>
(IV, 113, 17-20)

The Muse is not just the source of Pushkin’s inspiration but is, at least on this occasion, the repository of memory. In this epilogue Pushkin therefore draws on the archetypal link between memory and poetic inspiration. In classical mythology this is symbolized by the relationship between the Muses and their mother Mnemosyne, the Goddess of memory. Pushkin refers to this relationship in ‘Rifma – zvuchnai podrúga’ [1828] and ‘Rifma’ [1830] when he recalls that winged Rhyme was Mnemosyne’s daughter. We saw at the start of Chapter One that, according to Gershenzon, the link between memory and inspiration in Pushkin’s work is reflected in the shared use of the imagery of dreams. Just as a dreamer recalls the past, the poet withdraws into an inspiring dream (with the significant distinction that only the poet becomes completely liberated). In this chapter I will show that the motif of flying plays as important a role in Pushkin’s treatment of memory as it does in inspiration.
The motif of flying can be observed in some of the extracts from Pushkin’s work which Gershenzon cites in his essay. For example, in *Domik v Kolomne* Pushkin says that he loves to ‘fly’ to Kolomna in his reverie:

Я живу
Теперь не там, но верною мечтою
Люблю летать, заснувши наяву,
В Коломну, к Покрову — и в воскресенье
Там слушать русское богослуженье.
(V, 88, 156-60)

In his analysis of the various methods used by Pushkin to describe acts of remembrance, Gofman focuses briefly on the role of the ‘winged’ or ‘flying’ dreams (*krylatye* or *letuchie mechty*). He observes that these expressions occur almost exclusively in the lyric poems composed at the Lyceum. However, the two individual strands of the dream/flying nexus often recur, either together or separately, in Pushkin’s subsequent descriptions of memory. Furthermore, one of the most significant occasions on which these two motifs come together is when Pushkin describes the image of the shade. It is a winged apparition of a deceased person who is said to appear to him in his waking dream. Pushkin only applies this figurative nexus to the description of the shade after a long and painful examination of the problem of death. His greatest fear is that memory and inspiration, symbolized by the motifs of dreaming and flying, will be extinguished by death. When he eventually uses this nexus to describe the appearance of the shade, he establishes a massive, unbridgeable gap between himself and his characters. For them the presence of a shade is a source of anxiety and despair; but for Pushkin it results in a sense of spiritual renewal and even immortality. The reproduction of the dream/flying nexus in the context of death symbolizes Pushkin’s belief that death will not strip him of inspiration and memory.

During his years at the Lyceum Pushkin learnt to write ‘heroic poems, anacreontics, witty sensual verses, epigrams and poems of friendship’. Although he had not yet fully embraced the elegiac lyric, he also managed to employ an elegiac ‘tone’ in some of his early poetry. This was achieved primarily by contemplating the irrecoverable past. In ‘К бар. М.А. Дельвиг’ [1815], for example, he informs Del’vig’s eight-year-old sister that ‘one cannot restore what has been’, and that he is ‘already old’ (I, 115, 5-6). However, the young poet was impeded in his attempts to adopt this stance by his brief and uneventful personal history. He had, in short, very little to recall. Thus in ‘Вospominanie. (K Pushchinu)’ [1815] he is forced to immortalize the unremarkable occasion on which he and his friend drank some wine (I, 101, 1-4). A natural reflection

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2 Gofman, ‘Tvorcheskaia pamiat’’, pp. 177-78.
of Pushkin’s limited experience was that his early lyric poetry contains few reminiscences. The imagery of dreams and flying relates primarily to inspiration during this period.

Pushkin could, however, describe the memories of fictional characters. When he does this in ‘Kol’na. (Podrazhanie Ossianu)’ [1814], he uses the imagery of dreams to describe the act of remembrance. Having built a monument to honour those who have fallen in battle, Toskar imagines a point in the future when a traveller will see the memorial and recall the dead ‘in a sweet reverie of light dreams’:

Пришлец, дорогой утомленный,  
Возлежши под надежный кров,  
Воспомнит веки отдаленны  
В мечтанье сладком летних снов!  
(I, 25, 49-52)

Following his departure from the Lyceum, Pushkin’s hedonistic experiences in the capital would become the focus of acts of remembrance in the poetry written in exile. However, during this period in the capital he found time in his poetry to contemplate a point in the future when he and his friend Shcherbinin would recall these exuberant times:

Тогда — без песен, без подруг,  
Без наслаждений, без желаний,  
Найдем отраду, мильный друг,  
В туманном сне воспоминаний?  
‘K Shcherbininu’ [1819] (II, 81, 25-28)

There is an unexpected similarity in the treatment of memory in these two poems. Firstly, both contemplate in the present future recollections of the past. This is a typical Pushkinian construction in the representation of memory. Secondly, these acts of remembrance do not conform to the process described by Gershenzon. Neither the future traveller nor Pushkin will withdraw from the world in an act of forgetfulness (zabvenie) in order to recall the past. The experience is much more simple: the ‘dream’ in both poems is the medium of memory.

Words denoting a dream not only allow the past to be remembered, but are, on occasions, emblematic of it. A reflection of this is that they are repeatedly employed in the vehicle of similes which describe the fleeting or ephemeral. For example, in

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4 Another typical feature is that the act of remembrance takes place in the present; but the memory focuses on a previous act of remembrance, with the result that only the process of memory is actually described: in other words, Pushkin recalls reminiscing. He does this in Canto One of Evgenii Onegin when he remembers the time when he and Onegin used to reminisce (in a mechta) by the banks of the Neva (One: XLVII: 11-14). According to Sandler, ‘...Vnov’ ia posetil’ [1835] is a prime example of Pushkin’s penchant for embedding multiple layers of remembrance within a single poem: Sandler, ‘Remembrance in Mikhailovskoe’, pp. 240-41.
'Vospominaniia v Tsarskom Sele’ Napoleon is said to have disappeared ‘like a dreadful dream’ (son) (I, 63, 152). In other early poems the dream can also represent the actual, unspecified event which is recalled. Thus in ‘Kniaziu A.M. Gorchakovu’ [1817] Pushkin tells his companion that he has not forgotten the ‘gloomy dreams’ (grezy) of his past (I, 196, 46); and in ‘Mesias’ [1816], the moonlight is said to ‘wake up’ his sad ‘dreams’ (mechtan’ia) (I, 162, 6).

An interesting feature of ‘Mesias’ is that, having stylized his memories as dreams, Pushkin instinctively endows them with the ability to fly, thereby reinforcing the increasingly robust relationship between dreams and flying. He had hitherto frequently used the motif of flying as a conventional metaphor for the passage of time, but this is the first occasion on which the motif relates to memory. More precisely, Pushkin actually wants to forget because he wants the dreams to ‘fly away’:

Летите прочь, воспоминанья!
(I, 162, 10)

In ‘Probuzhdenie’ [1816], by contrast, he wants to remember by ‘catching’ the memories of his dream (son) (I, 182, 18-19), an expression which implies that the memories are fluttering in the air. In the following year, in ‘K nei’ (‘V pechali noyi prazdnosti ia liru zabyval’), Pushkin again uses the motif of flying to denote forgetfulness:

В печальной праздности я лиру забыл,
Воображенье в мечтах не разгорялось,
С дарами юности мой теней отлетал,
И сердце медленно хладело, закрывалось.
(II, 42, 1-4)

Flying and forgetfulness are linked at one remove. The genius which, by implication, hovered over him (much as it does in ‘K Zhukovskomu’, written in the same year) has now ‘flown away’. This, in turn, means that Pushkin has ‘forgotten’ his lyre. Sleep is then equated with both creative sterility and forgetfulness as Pushkin sinks against his will into a ‘cold doze’ (II, 42, 14).

In fact, Pushkin only starts to use the motif of flying to describe acts of remembrance in Rustan i Liudmila. This occurs in Song Four when, from her confinement in Chernomor’s palace, Liudmila recalls her relations and friends in the capital by mentally ‘flying’ back to Kiev in her dreams:

5 For similar examples, see ‘Napoleon na El’be (1815)’ (I, 88, 39); ‘Favn i pastushka. Kartiny’ [1817] (I, 216, 185); ‘K Chedaevu’ [1818] (II, 68, 4); ‘Napersnitsa volshebnoi stariny’ [1822] (II, 241, 13); ‘Nedvizhnyi strazh dremal na tsarstvennom poroge’ [1824] (II, 279, 42).
Liudmila’s recollection is marked by the withdrawal from the world (zabven’è) noted by Gershenzon. It is both an act of remembrance and forgetfulness (of her capture and separation from her husband). Flight allows Liudmila to leave the real world of the present in order to visit the ‘other’ dream world of the past. Subsequently, Pushkin uses the dream-flying nexus to introduce Ruslan’s real dream (son) in Song Five:

Although Ruslan’s dream is described as ‘prophetic’ (IV, 72, 456), it is as much a recollection of the wedding as a prediction. Katz argues that it recapitulates in reverse order the main events of the first song. It only looks forward in its final stages when Farlaf takes Ruslan’s place as Liudmila’s partner.

One significant consequence of Pushkin’s exile to the South in May 1820 was that the years spent at Tsarskoe Selo and in the nearby capital became a clearly-defined period which he could recall in his poetry. This occurs in the well-known lyric ‘Pogaso dnevnoe svetilo’, which was written on a boat taking Pushkin and the Raevskii family from Kerch to Gurzuf in September 1820. The perceptible tension in the poem is generated by the contrast between the image of the boat speeding forward and Pushkin’s mental return to the past:

Pushkin emphasizes this tension by first describing the dream of remembrance which hovers over his head:

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6 Katz, Dreams and the Unconscious, p. 40.
7 See Turkevich, ‘Pushkin’s Dreams and their aesthetic function’, p. 43. In the preface to the second edition of Ruslan i Liudmila, published in 1828, Pushkin notes with obvious amusement a critic’s exasperated inability to detect a prophetic theme in the dream (IV, 282).
Мечта знакомая вокруг меня летает;
Я вспомнил прежних лет безумную любовь, <...>  
(II, 135, 11-12)8

Mentally, however, the poet is moving backwards. He contrasts this regressive motion with the relentless forward advance of the ship. Pushkin's anguish derives from the conflict between this memory, which he finds intoxicating, and his desire to escape from the past, symbolized by his injunction to the ship to 'fly' forward:

Дети, корабль, неси меня к пределамальным <...>  
(II, 135, 17)9

This is one of the first lyric poems in which Pushkin uses the opposition of stasis and movement. The impression created by the poem is that the dream, or memory, hovers over his head, no matter where he goes. Having trapped him, it torments the poet with its omnipresence. Pushkin's double declaration in the final lines that the girlfriends of his 'golden spring' are 'forgotten' (II, 135, 35; 37) implies just the opposite: they are at the forefront of his memory.

In this and a number of other poems written in the South which use similar imagery, the act of remembrance is a painful experience. It relates to his life in the capital from where he was exiled:

Я пил — и думою сердечной  
Во дни минувшие летал  
И горе жизни скоротечной,  
И оны любви воспоминал; <...>

'Druz 'iam' [1822] (II, 217, 17-20)

В изнаньи скучном, каждый час  
Горя завистливым желаньем,  
Я к вам лечу воспоминаньем,  
Воображаю, вижу вас; <...>

' Iz pis’ma k Ia. N. Tolstomu' [1822] (II, 234, 10-13)

By contrast, Pushkin's stay in the South itself becomes the object of positive recollections in a number of subsequent poems. In 'Redeet oblakov letuchaia griada' [1820], written approximately two months after 'Pogaslo dnevnoe svetilo', the catalyst for the act of remembrance appears to be the light of an evening star which he had first

8 Love is then described as 'light-winged joy' which betrayed him (II, 135, 26). The epithet conveys a sense of caprice but also implies that love was fleeting and now belongs to the past. Pushkin had used the adjective 'light-winged' with this meaning on a number of occasions in the poetry written after his departure from the Lyceum. See, for example, 'Stansy Tolstomu' [1819] (II, 99, 17-20).

9 The image of the 'flying' ship is suggested by its wing-like sails. Napoleon's vessel (kad'ia) was said to 'fly' in 'Napoleon na El be' (1815) (I, 89, 72); and in 'Korabliu' [1824] Pushkin refers to the ship on which his lover E.K. Vorontsova departs from Odessa as the winged beauty of the seas' (II, 282, 1); in the same year Pushkin refers to a 'flock' (staia) of boats in 'K moriu' (II, 295, 21).
seen in Gurzuf. Pushkin says that it ‘woke up’ thoughts which had gone to sleep in him (II, 144, 6). It is the landscape of Gurzuf to which Pushkin ‘flies’ in ‘Kto videl krai, gde roskosh’i prirody’ [1821]:

Златой предел! любимый край Эльвины,  
К тебе летят желания мои!  
(II, 170, 9-10)

Whereas St Petersburg represented a ‘negative’ memory in ‘Pogaslo dnevnoe svetilo’, here Gurzuf is recalled as a soporific idyll. It is a region symbolically associated with sleep. In ‘Redeet oblakov letuchaia griada’, for example, both the gulf and the tender myrtle are said to ‘doze’ (II, 144, 4; 10). Sleep signifies oblivion or, more appropriately, a sanctuary from the collection of painful memories of his life in the capital. Thus, in the closing couplet Pushkin speculates whether he will return to this region in order to ‘go to sleep’ (II, 170, 31-32).

However, sleep can also denote death in Pushkin’s poetry. Moreover, he routinely uses the motif of flying together with sleep in this sense. This is illustrated in one of the earliest lyric poems, ‘Osgar’ [1814]:

Он пал — еще рука меча кругом искала,  
И крепкий сон веков на сильного летел.  
(I, 30, 79-80)

But there is a continuum throughout Pushkin’s work whereby flying and death are linked, even when the element of sleep is absent.

И смерть потибельным крылом  
Шумела грозно над вселенной!  
‘Printsu Oranskomu’ [1816] (I, 142, 3-4)

So far in this chapter we have seen that Pushkin only starts to use the motif of flying to describe acts of remembrance after leaving the Lyceum; but it then features quite prominently in a number of what could be termed ‘memory poems’ – those which are devoted primarily to the description of the past. This brings us to the period 1821-1822. From this point one can detect a significant trend in the works in which the motif of flying relates to memory: these poems are united by a common theme of death. When his memory poems focus on his mortality, flying naturally becomes one of the staple motifs. The significant moment towards which I would now like to advance is when Pushkin adds the dream motif to his treatment of memory and death, thereby establishing once again the dream/flying nexus. In order to do this I will briefly illustrate the relationship between flying and death, with particular reference to the Southern poems.
This association is immediately made in the opening scene of *Kavkazskii plennik* when the ‘sleep of death’ is said to fly over the Russian prisoner’s body:

Над ним летает смертный сон
И холодом тлетворным дышит.  
(IV, 94, 27-28)

Elsewhere in the poem the flying-death association is expressed without the motif of sleep. For example, in a digression concerning the impressions of youth Pushkin declares:

Но вы, живые впечатления,  
Первоначальная любовь,  
Небесный пламень упоенья,  
Не прилетаете вы вновь.  
(IV, 98, 180-83)

The implication is that ‘live’ impressions fly away, never to return, and so ‘die’. This is how flying is used in the prisoner’s outburst to the Circassian girl. He has ‘died’ because hope has flown away:

Но поздно: умер я для счастья,  
Надежды призрак улетел; <...
(IV, 106, 64-65)

The flying/death association is clearly reinforced in the opening quatrain of *Brat’ia razboiniki*:

К стая воронов слеталась  
На груды тлеющих костей,  
За Волгой, ночью, вокруг оттений  
Удалых шайка собиралась.  
(IV, 145, 1-4)

The first line, which contains three words related to flying (‘flock’, ‘ravens’, ‘flew’) leads into the stark image of death – the piles of rotting bones – in the second. Pushkin had used the raven as a symbol of death in *Ruslan i Liudmila* when it flies over Ruslan’s butchered body in Song Six (IV, 76, 37). He associates other birds with a morbid theme: in the same work, for example, the huge, disembodied head in the steppe is inhabited by a flock of owls (IV, 44, 258); when Tat’iana enters Moscow in *Evgenii Onegin*, the sense of foreboding generated by her journey is confirmed by the sight of flocks of jackdaws on crosses (Seven: XXXVIII: 14). However, the raven is the most important of these birds in Pushkin’s work to symbolize death. We will see in
Chapter Five that it plays a small, but significant role in the characterization of Pugachev.

When some of the robbers in Brat'ia razboiniki go to sleep, Pushkin describes the dreams which fly over their heads:

Простертый на земле сырой
Иные чутко засыпают,
И сны зловещие летают
Над их преступной головой.
(IV, 146, 32-35)

The basic image is typical of Pushkin: his own inspirational dreams frequently hover over his head; dreams fly over his head as he reminisces in ‘Pogaslo dnevnoe svetilo’. However, elsewhere in the narrative poem the two strands of the dream/flying nexus possess a different significance. Dreaming makes the robbers vulnerable, exposing them to the agonies of an unclean conscience. One of the robbers recalls how his younger brother was tormented by hallucinations (described as grezy) during which his victims appeared to him and performed grotesque dances (IV, 148-49, 135-43). By contrast, the flying element, as suggested by the opening quatrain, represents an offensive force. It makes other people vulnerable by exposing them to the danger of death. For example, during his story the robber recalls:

Зимой бывало в ночь глухую
Заложим тройку удалую,
Поем и свищем, и стрелой
Летим над снежной глубиной.
Кто не боялся нашей встречи?
(IV, 147, 71-75)

As we will see, the image of the flying vehicle plays an important role in Onegin’s characterization. He flies in his post chaise through the dust in Canto One only to be met by the body of his uncle who is laid out on a table. Though the relationship is more loosely marked than here in Brat’ia razboiniki, Pushkin has again linked flying with death.

In these examples taken from the Southern poems Pushkin, in varying degrees, reinforces this link. However, the most interesting representation of death in this cycle occurs in Bakhchisaraiskii fontan. This narrative poem was written between 1821 and 1823, a period during which the image of the shade becomes a key component in Pushkin’s contemplation of death and memory in his poetry. Bakhchisaraiskii fontan is

10 These types of haunting dreams are fairly common in Pushkin. For example, in Poltava Mazepa experiences dreadful ‘strange dreams’ (mechty), which may or may not occur during sleep, on the eve of the execution of Kochubei, his former friend whom he has falsely implicated in a plot against Peter (V, 44, 291-313).
also indicative of this trend. In anticipation of the technique he uses in *Evgenii Onegin*, Pushkin himself enters the narrative in the final part of the poem. He then witnesses the shade of a girl, possibly Mariia or Zarema, flying through the ruins of the harem:

Дыханье роз, фонтанов шум
Влекли к невольному забвенью,
Невольно предавался ум
Невозможно волны воленье,
И по дворцу летучей тенью
Мелькала дева предо мной!

Чью тень, о други, видел я?
Скажите мне: чей образ нежный
Тогда преследовал меня
Неотразимый, неизбежный?
Мариинль чистая душа
Являлась мне, или Зарема
Носилась, равнодушно дыша,
Средь опустелого гарема?
(IV, 170, 533-46)

The archetypal shade of the dead fascinates Pushkin during this period because it unites the two fundamental issues of death and remembrance. The motif of flying becomes an important part of his philosophical treatment of these issues since it is associated with both (its role in remembrance is immediately underlined when, having seen the shade, all of Pushkin’s thoughts ‘fly’ to an unidentified woman: IV, 170-71, 547-50). This binary role is itself reflected in the shade’s ability to fly.11

The encounter between Pushkin and the shade in the ruined harem is described as though it were the product of a dream – it is ‘dreamlike’. One of the differences between this poem and *Kavkazskii plennik* is that the atmosphere established in the main body of the work – characterized in this case by a sensuous languor – is maintained in the final passage. In the earlier poem, the patriotic panegyrism of the epilogue contrasts very distinctly with the description of the lives of a people resistant to Russian rule in the main part of the work: as in eighteenth-century odes the private and personal gives way to the public. In *Bakhchisaraiskii fontan* Pushkin enters the ‘other world’ of the dilapidated harem; this ensures that the exotic tone of the poem is maintained and also allows him to commune with the past, as though in a dream. He therefore appears to hear the same continuous onomatopoeic noise (*shum*) of the fountain which used to sedate the harem’s eunuch (IV, 163, 280-86). Pushkin is drawn into oblivion or zabven’e (the word occurs twice during his visit), the state that precedes the reminiscing dream in Gershenzon’s model. It is while he is absorbed in

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11 A light-hearted but elegant example of the relationship between flying and the word ‘shade’ or *ten* occurs in the description of the giant head in *Ruslan i Liudmila* in which the feathers on his helmet are said to flutter ‘like shades’ when the head snores (IV, 43, 240-41).
this dreamlike mood that he witnesses the flying shade. This is an intriguing reworking of the scenario described in 'Liubliu vash sumrak neizvestnyi' [1822] where, as we shall see, the medium in which the shade appears to mortals is that of the dream. What is equally intriguing is the way in which Pushkin couches the description of the shades in the language of uncertainty. The initial exclamation that he has seen a shade gives way to three questions. As in the lyric poem, Pushkin questions the very existence of the shades. When Pushkin recalls the murdered girls in ‘Fontanu Bakhchisaraiskogo dvortsa’ in 1824, the element of uncertainty persists:

Светило бледное гарама!
И здесь ужель забвенно ты?
Или Мария и Зарема
Одни счастливые мечты?

Иль только сон воображенья
В пустынной миlé нарисовал
Свои минутные виденья,
Души неясный идеал?
(II, 305, 13-20)

The expression of uncertainty is symbolic: Pushkin is asking whether shades really do exist, whether the bewitching, fleeting forms of a dead woman can really fly into a poet’s dreams.

In another of his seminal essays Gershenzon showed that the shade of the dead is a stable, recurrent image in Pushkin’s œuvre. According to the critic, it constitutes a central component of the poet’s reflections on death and immortality, including the belief or lack of it in the afterlife; from a rational standpoint, Pushkin did not believe in the afterlife, even though this negative belief terrified him; nevertheless, the fact that he did not renounce the image of the shade was due to his ‘blind faith’ in their existence which ousted his rational beliefs; his faith, Gershenzon concludes, was generated by irrational ‘emotions’ and especially inspiration.12

Pushkin’s fear of death, as expressed in his poetry, relates predominantly to memory. A number of poems which illustrate this particularly clearly are all written between 1821 and 1823, a period during which Pushkin’s lyric poetry becomes increasingly pessimistic. In ‘Voina’ [1821], for example, he claims that ‘everything will die with me’, a direct contradiction of the Horatian belief in the immortal nature of the poet’s (swan) soul. He then specifies what he means by this conception of death: his recollection of his brother and friends, and ‘the futile agitation of creative thoughts’ will all die (II, 152, 21-24). ‘Voina’ shows that the problem of death relates to him as a man but also a poet. The poet will die twice: not only will his ‘normal’ memory be extinguished, but so will that part of his memory which stores his poetry, his creative

thoughts. This notion of the double death is made in the poem when he refers to the 'double crown' of death (II, 152, 19). Several years earlier he had made the same point in a free translation of a poem by Voltaire:

Нам должно дважды умереть;
Проститься с сладостным мечтанием —
Вот смерть ужасная страданьем!
Что значит после не дышать?
'Стансы. (Из Vol'tera)' [1817] (I, 191, 21-24)

The most striking demonstration of the poet’s double death occurs when Onegin’s bullet fells Lenskii. Lenskii makes his greatest contribution to the novel by dying. After the young poet’s corpse has been removed from the site of the duel, Pushkin asks a series of questions which, in effect, define Lenskii’s character. His tempestuous nature, the nobility of his aspirations, his thoughts which are lofty and tender and daring, his desire to be loved, his thirst for knowledge and work, his fear of vice and shame (Six: XXXVII: 5-11) - where, Pushkin asks, have all these now gone? But the most important question, and one which he poses last, relates to the fate of Lenskii’s poetic dreams:

И вы, заветные мечтанья,
Вы, призрак жизни неземной.
Вы, сны поэзии святой!
(Six: XXXVI: 12-14)

This lament for Lenskii may feed on the language which the dead man would himself have used, but there is a serious message underpinning Pushkin’s vaguely mocking tone. Chekhov once observed that Evgenii Onegin is a work in which no questions are answered, but they are all posed correctly.13 When Lenskii dies, Pushkin is able to ask what happens to the dream of a dead poet.

Pushkin establishes two robust associations with the word ‘dream’ in Evgenii Onegin: as we saw in Chapter One, one relates to inspiration; the other clearly relates to remembrance. The table below illustrates those occasions on which a character’s act of remembrance occurs during a dream. In some instances it is not clear whether the dreamer is asleep or not, but usually it is obvious that he or she is awake:

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13 In a letter to A.S. Surovin of 27 October 1888: A.P. Chekhov, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v tridtsati tomakh, ed. N.F. Bel’chikov and others, 30 vols, M., 1974-82, III (of the twelve volumes devoted to letters), 1976, p. 46.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Object of Recollection</th>
<th>Language Used</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pushkin</td>
<td>feet</td>
<td>son (One: XXX: 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushkin and Onegin</td>
<td>‘the start of young life’</td>
<td>mechty (One: XXXIV: 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Onegin</td>
<td>Tat’iana</td>
<td>mechta (One: XLVII: 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushkin</td>
<td>friends</td>
<td>son (Four: XI: 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>young woman</td>
<td>Lenskii</td>
<td>mechty (Four: XIX: 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushkin</td>
<td>a former spring</td>
<td>mechta (Six: XLII: 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tat’iana</td>
<td>a distant land</td>
<td>son (Seven: III: 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tat’iana</td>
<td>her life in the country</td>
<td>mechta (Seven: III: 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onegin</td>
<td>Lenskii, Tat’iana</td>
<td>mechta (Seven: XV: 7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting that Lenskii does not ‘dream’ about the past. In this regard there is a parallel with his poetic dreams which do not really amount to much. Lenskii is not a real ‘dreamer’: although as a dutiful son he remembers his parents by their graves in Canto Two, he does not engage in profound contemplations of the past in the way that Pushkin, Onegin and Tat’iana do. Nevertheless, Pushkin stresses the fact that he is a dreamer and poet after his demise. He is, for example, the ‘Poet, the pensive dreamer’ killed by the hand of his friend (Six: XL: 3-4). Onegin describes him as an ‘unlucky victim’ in his letter (Eight: Letter: 16). The expression is apt: he is the sacrificial victim, the token ‘poet’, whose death Pushkin engineers in order to ask where memory and inspiration, symbolized by the dream, go after death.

Having posed this question, Pushkin asks another: what happens to the memory of the non-poet – which is, after all, what Lenskii is. In Canto Seven, we are told that he is ‘blessed with insensibility’ (Seven: XI: 6) (a phrase, according to Cizevsky, subsequently used by Dostoevskii’s Svidrigailov). The expression may be an ironic response to Pushkin’s aphoristic announcement at the end of Canto Four that a man who cannot forget is wretched indeed (Four: LI: 9-14). Moreover, the oxymoron inherent in the description of Lenskii’s memorial which is ‘forgotten’ (Seven: VII: 9-10) represents an ironic comment on the poet’s verse which, in Canto Four, was described as the ‘silent memorial of the dream’ (mechtan’ė) (Four: XXVII: 12). Both of his memorials are forgotten: the one made of stone which lies neglected by the brook, and the legacy of his work which encapsulates for ever, and for a public which does not exist, the eminently forgettable product of his poetic dream.

In Pushkin’s lyric poetry, from about 1821, the issue of what happens to the poet’s inspiration and memory upon death becomes an increasingly serious focus of his

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metaphysical deliberations. In contrast to the novel in verse, the lyric poetry tries to answer this question. It does so by using the motif of flying in his treatment of memory. More precisely, Pushkin turns to the image of the flying shade. This approach again contrasts with Evgenii Onegin, in which not once does Pushkin employ the motif of flying in the descriptions of memory. He does in the draft of ‘Otryvki iz puteshestviia Onegina’, but this was removed from the final version (VI, 488). Lenskii’s shade is said to appear every day to Onegin, but it is not the winged apparition which appears to Pushkin in his poetry, but ‘bloodstained’ (Eight: XIII: 7). The epithet is as symbolic of Lenskii’s irreversible expiry as the image of the young man whom Onegin sees lying motionless on the melting snow in his dreams in St Petersburg (Eight: XXXVII: 5-7).16

In ‘Lebed’ Derzhavin confronts the problem of the poet’s double death by employing the imagery of flying. Having metamorphosed into a swan he soars above the world and becomes ‘doubly immortal’ (В двоем образе нетленный). His ability to fly enables him to cheat death as a man and a poet. In the bold final line he therefore commands:

Над лихим мертвцом не вой.17
(my emphasis)

Pushkin also turns to the motif of flying in order to assert the poet’s immortality, although in a much less forceful voice. This happens in ‘K Ovidiiu’ [1821], when he recalls the episode described by Ovid when he tried to step across the unfamiliar frozen surface of a lake:

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15 Arinshtein therefore overstates his case in his recent study when he claims that the theme of death only becomes pronounced in Pushkin’s work towards the end of his life, especially after the death of his mother in March 1836: Arinshtein, Pushkin. Neprichesannaia biografiia, p. 125.

16 There is a parallel between Onegin’s recollection of his victim and Boris Godunov’s troubled memory of the tsarevich. Boris has literally dreamt about him for thirteen years – but the specific image which haunts him is of the child after he had been murdered, ubitoe dita (VII, 49, 145). Elsewhere Boris complains that he constantly sees ‘bloodstained boys’ (VII, 27, 57). However, there is also an interesting difference in the respective representations of these victims. In Onegin’s dreams it is as though Lenskii is ‘sleeping’ (Eight: XXXVII: 6). This picks up on Lenskii’s own verse, composed on the eve of his duel, in which he said that either ‘wakefulness or sleep’ (life or death) awaits him (Six: XXI: 11). In Boris Godunov, on the other hand, Shuiskii informs Boris that three days after his murder Dimitrii’s face was still clear and fresh, ‘as though he had fallen asleep’ (VII, 49, 136). ‘Dimitrii sleeps in his grave,’ he tells the monarch (VII, 49, 139-40). Sandler observes that the Church believes the face of the corpse changes its appearance on the third day after death; the fact that the boy’s face has not changed implies, at least to Boris in his unstable psychological state, that the tsarevich may have been just sleeping and could, therefore, ‘wake up’: Sandler, Distant Pleasures, p. 114.

17 Derzhavin, Stikhotvorenia, p. 227.
There is a tight association here of memory, poetry and flying: Pushkin can recall this
day because it was recorded by Ovid’s ‘winged’ inspiration. Pushkin then appears to
encounter the shade of Ovid himself, who slips comically on the ice:

The presence of the shade adds the element of death to the scene; but there is also a
sense of rejuvenation since the ice on which he slips is now ‘new’. This is no longer a
recollection, but something which happens in the present. Having recalled Ovid,
Pushkin then imagines a time in the future when he too will be remembered by his
descendant (another contemplation in the present of a future act of remembrance):

Flight allows Pushkin to be remembered and, possibly, to remember. It restores all
memory relating to the shade by allowing him to leave oblivion (zabvenie), the state in
which the unfortunate Lenskii will reside.

According to Gasparov, this description of Ovid’s shade illustrates the paradigm or
myth of the ‘encounter of two poets in the desert’ in Pushkin’s work. A permanent
component of this myth is that one of the poets is a shade. Another is that in the
background of the ancient poet an idol (kumir) is present. In ‘K Ovidiiu’ this is
Augustus; but in ‘Baratynskomu. (Iz Bessarabii)’ [1822], it is Apollo:19

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18 There is a possible echo of this scene in the description of the goose which slips on the ice in
Canto Four of Evgenii Onegin. The two episodes are united by the theme of abandonment: Ovid, like
Pushkin, was an exile; and the lone goose appears to have been left behind by the flock of migrating
goose. This strengthens the argument for identifying the goose, the symbol of the foolish exiled poet,
with Pushkin himself.

A significant, albeit less sophisticated, point is that the presence of Apollo also advertises the 'poetic' nature of this experience. In 'K Ovidiu' the shade appears to Pushkin after the reference to winged inspiration; now he appears in response to the nurslings of the Muses and Apollo himself.

Having described 'poetic' encounters with a shade in these two poems, Pushkin subsequently draws away from the strictures of the paradigm described by Gasparov in order to appraise the whole concept. This technique of stepping back and re-examining 'the poetic' is, of course, used to great effect in Evgenii Onegin. The lyric 'Liubliu vash sumrak neizvestnyi' [1822] shows that Pushkin was experimenting with this approach before starting work on the novel. In the opening lines the poetic dreams, mechy, are the focus of Pushkin's equivocal expression of love:

Люблю ваш сумрак неизвестный
И ваши тайные цветы,
О вы, поэзии прелестной
Благословенные мечты!
(II, 227, 1-4)

Since this poem is so frequently cited in critical studies, the highly unusual imagery in these opening lines is, perhaps, easily overlooked. What does Pushkin mean by the 'unknown twilight' of 'blessed dreams'? In the lines which follow it becomes apparent that he is referring to the poets' concept of death and memory, or rather, to the resolution of the problem of death which is described in their 'dreams' or poetry:

Вы нас уверили, поэты,
Что тени легкою толпой
От берегов холодной Леты
Слетаются на брег земной
И невидимо навешают
Места, где было все милей,
И в сновиденьях утешают
Сердца покинутых друзей;
Они, бессмертие вкушая,
Их поджидает в Элисей,
Как ждет на пир семейка родная
Своих замедливших гостей...
(II, 227, 5-16)
For the first time Pushkin links the flying shade with the dream. Although the dreams could be 'real', the word *snoviden'ia* is probably being used in a figurative sense. (In an important future poem, which will be discussed, the dream in which the shades appear certainly does not take place during sleep.) The conjunction of the dream/flying strands of imagery results in an experience which is a source of solace to the dreamers because the shades fly into their dreams to comfort (*uteshaiut*) them. In 'Bezverie' [1817], Pushkin had said that the person who does not believe in the afterlife is the first to be deprived of comfort (*uteshen'e*) (I, 188, 10). The presence of the shades is proof that there is an afterlife, and therefore has a benign significance for the friends.

In the second half of the poem Pushkin dismisses this proposition as idle speculation. Perhaps, he says, these are 'empty dreams':

*Но, может быть, мечты пустые* <...

(II, 227, 17)

However, in rejecting this philosophy he *implies* that what he would have found comforting in the scenario of the shades is the thought that the soul of a dead person preserves its memory:

*Быть может, с ризой пророчей*
*Все чувства брошую я земные,*
*И чужд мне будет мир земной;*
*Быть может, там, где все блестает*
*Мокрой ноющей и красой,*
*Где чистый пламень пожирает*
*Несовершенство бытия,*
*Минутных жизні впечатлений*
*Не сохранит душа моя,*
*Не буду ведать сожалений,*
*Тоску любви забуду я?*...

(II, 227, 18-28)

Pushkin concludes the poem by reversing one of his favourite constructions: he contemplates in the present a moment in the future when he will forget. The very possibility of this terrifies him.

In 'Nadezhdoi sladostnoi mladenchek dysha' [1823] he calls this conception of death 'nothingness', and then expresses, in quite simple language, his fear of it:

*Нищетство меня за гробом ожидает...*
*Как, ничего! Ни мысль, ни первая любовь!*
*Мне страшно!...* <...

(II, 264, 12-14)

This poem reuses the bipartite structure of 'Liubliu vash sumrak neizvestnyi' by advancing the theory that memory survives death in the first half, only to dismiss this
as a ‘dream’ (*mechta*) in the second (II, 264, 10). If he knew that the dead man’s soul retained its memory, he would long ago have ‘flown’ to the ‘country of freedom’ — an extraordinary periphrastic expression of the desire to die, or even to commit suicide:

Надеждой сладостной младенчески дыша,
Когда бы верил я, что некогда душа,
От тления убежав, уносит мысли вечны,
И память, и любовь в пучине бесконечны, —
Клянусь! давно бы я оставил этот мир;
Я сокрушил бы жизнь, уродливый кумир,
И улетел в страну свободы, наслаждений,
Где смерти нет, где нет предрассудков, —
Где мысль одна плывает в небесной чистоте...
(II, 264, 1-9)

The motif of flying lies at the heart of the conditional structure of this passage. In the context of the poem it conveys the concept of death, but also of memory. Flying has become one of the media of memory.

In his notorious letter to Viazemskii, written between April and the first half of May 1824, Pushkin said that atheism is unfortunately not ‘comforting’ (*uteshitel’naia*) to him (XIII, 92). From the family seat of Mikhailovskoe, to where he was exiled as a direct result of this letter, Pushkin composed a poem in which he resumed his examination of the theme of death. The unfinished ‘Liubliu vash sumrak neizvestnyi’ and ‘Nadezhdoi sladostnoi mladencheski dysha’:

Лишь розы увидают,  
Амброзией дыша,  
[В Элладий] улетает  
Их [легкая] душа.

И там, где вольны сонны
Забвение несют,
Их тени благовонны
Над Летою цветут.
(II, 335, 1-8)

We know from *Evgenii Onegin* that Pushkin includes the rose in the premier division of conventional poetic images. In fact every line of this poem contains unremarkable language; but this language also occurs in the two earlier memory poems: Pushkin had referred to the Lethe and Elysium in ‘Liubliu vash sumrak neizvestnyi’; the rhyme *dyshaldusha* occurs in ‘Nadezhdoi sladostnoi mladencheski dysha’. This kinship of language supports the argument that these poems belong to the same thematic cycle. Pushkin uses a gentle, innocuous image in order to convey his nihilistic message. He states that the soul will not retain its memory: the flying shade hovers for ever in
oblivion (zabvenie). Pushkin may even have mentally linked the verb ‘to fly’ with the Lethe, Leta, the river of forgetfulness. ‘Lish rozy uviadianu’ is the nadir in Pushkin’s search for a resolution to the problem of death and memory in his poetry.  

In the same year as this poem was written Pushkin returned to the problem of the death of the poet in ‘Andre Shen’e’. In his analysis of the paradigm of the encounter of two poets, to which I referred earlier, Gasparov observes that the poets always have different, even contrasting personalities. When Byron died he could not appear as a shade because Pushkin identified himself too closely with him: ‘To approach the fact of Byron’s death from the poetic point of view, Pushkin needed another figure who would become Byron’s counterpart within the mythological pattern’. Chénier therefore became Byron’s ‘stand-in’: through his encounter with him, Pushkin could confront the Englishman’s death. However, Chénier’s soliloquy on the eve of his execution also allowed Pushkin to confront the prospect of his own death: the French poet is also Pushkin’s stand-in. In this regard, he prefigures Lenskii who will contemplate his possible imminent demise on the eve of the duel. The deaths of these two men essentially ask the same question: what happens to a dead poet’s cognitive functions?

In a note Pushkin records Chénier’s last action before being beheaded:

На месте казни он ударил себя в голову и сказал: pourtant j’avais quelque chose là.

(II, 356; note 7)

Stephanie Sandler dismisses the footnotes as ‘casual’, adding that they clash with the high style of the main body of the poem. In my view, Chénier’s bravura gesture has great significance for Pushkin. This is reflected in the fact that he places the note at the very end of the poem; and Pushkin again refers to Chénier hitting his head in a letter to Viazemskii, written in the second half of November 1825 (XIII, 243). The gesture symbolizes the problem of death for Pushkin: the poet’s head, the repository of his intellect, will fall and so, metaphorically, will his winged inspiration and memory. In his soliloquy Chénier refers to his ‘flying thoughts’ (II, 353, 82), thereby picking up

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20 The association between the rose and the shade can be traced, possibly, to Bakhchisaraiskii fontan in which, prior to the appearance of the shade, Pushkin detects the smell of roses (IV, 170, 533). When he mentally revisited Bakhchisarai in ‘Fontanu Bakhchisaraiskogo dvortsa’ in 1824 he announced in the first stanza that he bore the gift of two roses (II, 305, 2). These flowers seem to represent the two shades of Maria and Zarema whom he then recalls in the lyric.


23 There is a possible echo of this gesture in the description of Evgenii’s reaction when he discovers that Parasha is dead in Mednyi vsadnik:

Всё ходит, ходит он кругом, 
Толкует проклято сам с собою — 
И вдруг, ударя в лоб рукой, 
Захохочет.

(V, 145, 62-65).
on the relationship between inspiration and the motif of flying. He then says that his head will ‘prematurely fall’ at his execution (II, 354, 89-90). Death brings down the poet’s winged intellect, extinguishing his inspiration and his memory. We saw in Chapter One that the motif of falling occurs in a number of important early lyric poems. In ‘K Zhukovskomu’, for example, Pushkin openly concedes that he is frightened of falling. But in that poem, he fears an artistic fall: he may not be able to soar like his eminent peers. Here the fall betokens death – just as it does in Lenskii’s verse written on the eve of his duel:

Паду ли я, стрелой пронзенный, <...
(Six: XXI: 9)

One of the most important parallels between Lenskii and Chénier is that in both cases Pushkin is appraising both them and himself. Bayley observes that we can sense Pushkin’s feelings for Chénier’s ardent political idealism which he expresses in his soliloquy, ‘but they are not his, and they cannot be identified with him’. However, when Chénier invokes the device of the shade as a possible resolution to the problem of death, Pushkin clearly identifies himself with the poet, because he used the same device in ‘K Ovidiiu’. But the fact that another person is now articulating Pushkin’s words introduces, I believe, the equivocation of distance between Pushkin and his own ‘solution’. Pushkin tacitly places a question mark over Chénier’s speech:

Я скоро весь умру, но тень мою любя,
Храните рукопись, о друзья, для себя!
Когда гроза пройдет, толпой суеверной
Сборайте иногда читать мой свиток верный;
И, долго слушая, скажите; это он;
Вот речь его. А я, забыв мольбный сон,
Взойду невидимо и сяду между вами,
И сам заслушаюсь, и вашими слезами
Упьюсь... и может быть, утешен буду я
Любовью; <...
(II, 354, 92-101)

What is now apparent is that those people whose recollection of the poet cause his shade to leave the oblivion of ‘sleep’ or death must be poets. The word ‘friend’, or drug, frequently denotes a poet in Pushkin’s poetry. In ‘Gorodok. (K ***’), for example, he says: ‘My friends are dead men, the Parnassian priests’ (I, 74, 86-87), by which he means dead poets; when, in ‘Voina’, he says that death will strip him of his memory of his friends (II, 152, 23), he is probably referring to his fellow poets.

24 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 146.
Chénier uses the image of the shade to give expression to the Horatian notion of poetry as the poet’s ‘memorial’ which will never be forgotten by future poets. Towards the end of his life Pushkin himself paraphrased the origin of this principle, Horace’s ‘Exegi monumentum’. In ‘Ia pamiatnik sebe vozdvig nerukotvorny’ [1836] he states that the soul in his sacred lyre will outlive his dust, and that he will be famous as long as a single poet lives in the sublunary world (III, 424, 5-8). Bayley notes that Pushkin is equivocal but not openly ironic in his reworking of the Horatian poem. This same balance is struck in his appraisal of Chénier describing his shade during his soliloquy. The image of the shade does not offer a complete solution to death – it is not clear, for example, whether the dead poet’s memory will be preserved – but the thought that the poet’s work will never be forgotten provides a degree of comfort both to the condemned man and to Pushkin.

However, this ‘Horatian principle’ applies only to ‘friends’, to poets. When Pushkin described his work as his ‘monument’ in the draft of Canto Two of Evgenii Onegin in 1823, he was explicitly addressing his ‘friends’:

И этот юный стих небрежный
Переживш мой век мятежный
Могу ли воскликнуть в друзья —
Возводну памятник в я
(VI, 300)

In the final version of the canto, he retains the word ‘friend’ to describe a similar scenario:

Мне было бы грустно мир оставить.
Живу, пишу не для похвал;
Но я бы кжелал полный
Печальный небрежный свой прославить,
Чтоб обо мне, как верный друг,
Напомни хоть единый звук.
(Two: XXXIX: 9-14)

Pushkin then contrasts the poet’s remembrance, which he values, to the admiration of the ‘future ignoramus’, the non-poet (Two: XL: 1-14). ‘Andre Shen’e’ illustrates the mutual exclusivity of their respective worlds. The poet’s shade will only appear to poets. The overriding emotion between the poetic and non-poetic worlds is one of indifference (ravnodushie). Therefore Chénier predicts that his freshly severed head will be raised over an ‘indifferent crowd’ (nad ravnodushnoiu tolpou) (II, 353, 69);

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25 The fact Chénier describes the same credo is quite fitting, since, as Pushkin observes in his note ‘Ob Andre Shen’e’ [1825], his poetry only came to prominence after his death when Chateaubriand uttered ‘a few words’ about him in 1819 (XI, 35). See L.G. Frizman, ‘K zametke Pushkina “Ob Andre Shen’e”’, VPK, 14, 1976, pp. 144-46.
26 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 305.
and in ‘La pamiatnik sebe vozdvig nerukotvornyi’ Pushkin orders his Muse to accept praise and slander [of non-poets] with ‘indifference’ (ravnodushno) (III, 424, 19).

This unbridgeable gulf between the poet and non-poet explains Pushkin’s reaction to the death of his former lover Amalija Riznich in ‘Pod nebom golubym strany svoei rodnoi’ [1826]. Pushkin had referred to her dazzling beauty in ‘Otryvki iz puteshestviia Onegina’ where she is described at the Odessa opera, surrounded by her admiring ‘slaves’ while the cuckolded husband snores symbolically in the corner (VI, 205). Monika Greenleaf notes that Pushkin’s description of his relationship with Riznich was marked by the rhetoric of ‘domination and submission’. For example, in ‘Prostish’ li mne revnivye mechty’ [1823] Pushkin finds himself unable not only to express openly his affection for Riznich but also to talk to other women, so great is her hold over him. He probably includes himself among her ‘slaves’ at the opera. However, as Nabokov observes, when Pushkin wrote these lines he did not know that Riznich was dead. She had died of consumption in Genoa in May 1825. Yet when he gave his reaction to her death in 1826, the rhetoric of domination and submission had evaporated. He describes his complete indifference when he encounters his lover’s flying shade:

ПОД НЕБОМ ГОЛУБЫМ СТРАНЫ СВОЕЙ РОДНОЙ
Она томилась, уявала...
Увяла наконец, и верно надо мной
Младая тень уже летала;
Ко недоступная черта меж нами есть.
Напрасно чувство возбуждал я;
Из равнодушных уст я слышал смерть весть,
И равнодушно ей внимал я.
(III, 20, 1-8)

It may be that by removing all traces of grief Pushkin conceals and yet, paradoxically, betrays a paroxysm of emotion. But he appears to be as indifferent to her flying presence as he was to the news of her death. The two regard each other across an unbridgeable gap, an ‘impenetrable boundary’ which exists between them. This gap appears because the poem describes the encounter of two lovers, but not two poets. Riznich is not a ‘friend’. Pushkin cannot adapt the paradigm described by Gasparov to accommodate non-poets. The encounter does not result in any solace, either for Pushkin or for Riznich; nor does it lead to any resolution of the problem of death.

However, as Senderovich points out, the shade of the non-poet subsequently becomes a ‘desired guest’ in 1830. In ‘Zaklinanie’ [1830] the poet’s indifference

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consists in the fact that he does not care if the woman – possibly Riznich – appears still bearing the hideous marks of the illness which killed her (III, 246, 9-12):

Мне все равно, судя! судя!...
(III, 246, 16)

What has happened between 1826 and 1830 to cause such a dramatic volte-face in Pushkin’s attitude to the shade? The answer, according to Senderovich, lies in ‘Vospominanie’, which Pushkin composed in 1828. Senderovich agrees with Gershenzon that the shade is a stable, recurrent image in Pushkin’s work; but he challenges Gershenzon’s thesis that Pushkin displayed a blind faith in the existence of shades or the afterlife, only to turn away from this faith in moments of weakness (Gershenzon claims that there is not the ‘slightest doubt’ that Pushkin believed in the ‘objective existence of apparitions’). He argues that Pushkin’s treatment of the shade is indeed indicative of two contrasting states of mind, but that these correspond to Pushkin when he is inspired and when he is not. The inclusion of shades in his poetry did not, however, suggest a belief in them outside it: ‘One may experience in poetry that of which there is not the slightest hope in life outside poetry’. Pushkin oscillated between faith and the lack of it, but a mythological resolution of this contradiction arose only in poetry. When the poet is uninspired he is ‘pitiable and insignificant’, but after the onset of inspiration he can encounter ‘visions’ or shades:

The reality of these visions for Puskin consisted not at all in their illusory power, or their psychological clarity, but in the fact that the visions were mediating factors in the process of artistic creation. Their influence produced a result as real in the spiritual plane as in the material – their appearance led to the composition of verses.

Senderovich therefore identifies the shade as a catalyst in the creative process which results in poetry. He then invokes the Horatian notion of poetry as the pamiatnik, which enables the soul to outlive the mortal clay and escape decay. The appearance of the shade results in poetry, and thus the poet’s immortality. He concludes that this ‘shade-myth’ found its ultimate expression in ‘Vospominanie’ in which ‘two dear shades’ appear at a moment of spiritual crisis and facilitate a resolution into a creative act.

I find it difficult to accept, as Senderovich obviously does, that Pushkin believed without reservation in the ‘Exegi monumentum’ principle. Bayley notes that it was indeed restated, but with ‘the deadpan gravity of Pushkinian equivocation’. Derzhavin had produced his own version of Horace’s poem, ‘Pamiatnik’, in 1795. In

32 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 305.
this, the poet says that ‘swift-moving’ (bystrotechnyi) thunder will never shatter his monument:

Ni vikhry ego, ni grom ne slomit bystrotechnyi,
Ii vremeni polet ego ne sokrushit.33

A subtle indication of Pushkin’s difficulty with this concept (and another example of his irrepresible need to subvert Derzhavin’s work) is that the only occasion on which he uses the same adjective, bystrotechnyi, occurs in Claudio’s speech in Andzhelo [1833], the most powerful expression of the fear of death in his work:

А тут: войти в немую милю,
Стремглав низвернуться в кипящую смолу,
Или во льду застыть, или с ветром быстротечным
Носиться в пустоте, пространством бесконечным...
И все, что грезится отчаянной мечте...
(V, 123, 182-86; my emphasis)

Pushkin’s loose translation of Shakespeare’s Measure for Measure departs from the original, in which Claudio fears being ‘imprison’d in the viewless winds, And blown with restless violence round about The pendent world’ (Act Three, Scene One, 125-27).

I do, however, agree with Senderovich’s view that the presence of inspiration in ‘Vospominanie’ is crucial to Pushkin’s attempt to confront the problem of memory and death. I started this chapter by describing the archetypal link between memory and inspiration. The relationship between these two areas is reflected in Pushkin’s work by their common use of the dream/flying nexus. We have seen that once memory becomes specifically associated with death, this nexus practically disappears. Pushkin refers to the poets’ contention that shades fly into the dreams of mortals in ‘Liubliu vash sumrak neizvestnyi’, but then dismisses this as ‘empty dreams’. Pushkin’s refusal to use the dream/flying nexus in the context of death symbolizes his fear that inspiration and memory expire when the poet dies. Riznich’s shade which flew over Pushkin in ‘Pod nebom golubym strany svoei rodnoi’ was a dreadful caricature of the Muse, Pushkin’s poetic lover who hovers over his head. While the Muse generates for him the dreams of inspiration, his memory of the dead woman resulted in apathy. The poem expressed Pushkin’s emotional void by describing the inertia of the absence of inspiration. In ‘Vospominanie’ Pushkin once again encounters Riznich’s flying shade, but he does so during his reminiscing dreams (mechty). Symbolically the strands of the dream/flying nexus come together in the context of death. Pushkin shows that inspiration, memory and death can coexist. At this moment of synthesis he is filled with what Senderovich

33 Derzhavin, Stikhotvoreniiia, p. 166.
calls a ‘sacred horror’. He is gripped with the same feeling of awe which he experienced when he saw the effulgent dreams flying over his head in ‘Razgovor knigoprodavtsa s poetom’. The recollection of the dead woman strikes him with the extreme but inspirational emotions of terror and ecstasy.

In the first part of the poem, Pushkin’s dreams serve as the medium for an act of remembrance:

Мечты кипят; в уме, подавленном тоской,
Теснится тяжких дум избыток;
Воспоминание безмолвно предо мной
Свой длинный развивает свиток; <...

(III, 102, 9-12)

These dreams are not ‘real’, but take place during a period of insomnia (the poem was called, at various stages, ‘Bessonnitsa’ and ‘Bdenie’: III.2, 1158). His febrile mechty contrast with the sleep which has descended on the ‘mortal man’ (III, 102, 1). This reference to the real, mortal world reinforces the notion that Pushkin’s dreams locate him in the ‘other world’. However, Pushkin only reveals what he experiences in that world in the second part of the poem which he did not include in the published version in 1829. Akhmatova argues convincingly that this was because it describes two of Pushkin’s dead lovers, and that their presence in his poetry may have offended his future wife whom he was assiduously courting at the time.

As Lotman and Mints point out, the two women appear to the dreamer at a moment of spiritual crisis. Pushkin has read the ‘scroll’ of his life with ‘loathing’, and trembles and complains bitterly whilst shedding bitter tears (III, 102, 13-16). At this point, when he can find no comfort, two ‘dear shades’ appear:

И нет отрады мне — и тихо предо мной
Встают два призрака младые,
Две тени милье — два данные судьбой
Мне ангела во дни былие —
Ко оба с крыльями, и с пламенным мечом —
И стерегут — и мстят мне оба —
И оба говорят мне мертвым языком
По тайных счастья и гроба.

(III.2, 651)


34 A. Akhmatova, ‘‘Kamennyi gost’’ Pushkina’, PIM, 2, 1958, pp. 185-95 (193). Senderovich discusses the problems of studying the text in Senderovich, Aletheia, pp. 13-23. He concludes that there are two separate poems: version ‘A’, comprising the first sixteen lines (III, 102), and version ‘B’ which also includes the extra twenty lines of the second half (III.2, 651). It is curious that some studies of the poem make no reference to the second half: see, for example, Dennis Ward, “Pushkin’s “Vospominanie” — An Appreciation”, in The Wider Europe: Essays on Slavonic Languages and Cultures, ed. J.A. Dunn, Nottingham, 1992, pp. 177-84.

According to Sergei Shtein, the shades represent Riznich and another lover whom he could not identify. The presence of two shades conforms to the idea of ‘doubleness’ or pairing which is reflected throughout the poem. In this short passage Pushkin uses dva or oba six times in order to emphasize the fact that there are two of them. But whereas in the first part of the poem he describes a fundamental binary opposition – day versus night, or sleep versus dreams – the overriding impression in the second is one of synthesis. The two shades are united: they act and speak in unison. We can infer that their presence provokes profoundly contrasting reactions in Pushkin: they hold a flaming sword which may protect or inflict injury; they guard Pushkin but also seek vengeance; they talk about the secrets of happiness, but also of the grave. But these contrasting emotions are synthesized in one man, in Pushkin himself. He experiences the same extremes of emotion, an amalgam of violently opposing sensations, which fills him with inspiration in ‘Razgovor knigoprodavtsa s poetom’ or ‘Prorok’ or ‘Poet’. The idea of synthesis also defines the whole experience of the dream: inspiration and memory are fused with death; the dear shades inspire Pushkin to create, by revealing the secrets of happiness, but also inspire him with a belief in the afterlife with their secrets of the grave; and at this moment of catharsis for Pushkin the dead women are presented not just as shades but also as winged angels who protect him with their wings, just as his Muse did thirteen years earlier in ‘Mechtatel’ . An indication of the profound significance which Pushkin attached to ‘Vospominanie’ is that seven years after its composition he appeared to recall the comforting angel (the two angels have become one: the synthesis is complete) in the draft of ‘...Vnov’ ia posetil’ [1835]:

Погибла, как ангел-[у́читель],
Спасла меня; и я воскрес душой.
(III.2, 996)49

In the same year, on the manuscript of ‘Na Ispaniiu rodniyu’, which describes how a saint counsels a Spanish king during a beneficent dream (snoviden'e blagodatnoe) (III, 386, 97), Pushkin drew the picture of a single angel holding a burning sword.50

When Pushkin subsequently summons the shade in ‘Zaklinanie’ he says that he does not want to know ‘the secrets of the grave’ (III, 246, 20). This is because they had

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37 Sergei Shtein, Pushkin i Gofman, Derpt, 1927, p. 242.
38 There is no evidence here to suggest that Pushkin linked the word ‘sword’, mech, with the word for dream, mehta, but the similarity of the words is intriguing. According to Fasmer, however, there is no etymological relationship between them: Maks Fasmer, Etimologicheskii slovar ‘russkogo iazyka, ed. B.A. Larin, translated by O.N. Trubachev, 4 vols, M., 1964-73, II, 1967, p. 614.
40 Unfortunately, the Jubilee edition of Pushkin’s work does not include this drawing, but it is reproduced, with an interesting reference to ‘Vospominanie’, in Tsiavlovskaia, Risunki Pushkina, pp. 54-55. See also I.Z. Surat, Zhiza' i lira. O Pushkine, M., 1995, p. 49.
been revealed to him in ‘Vospominanie’, a poem which acknowledges the existence of the afterlife. As a result of this poem the shade becomes a ‘beneficent’ image for Pushkin. The expression is Senderovich’s. He also argues that the shade is a generally positive image from the perspective of Pushkin’s characters; the shade of Ivan the Terrible, for example, strengthens the spirit of the Pretender in Boris Godunov (VII, 64, 171-75); and in Skupoi rytar’ the Baron wishes to return as a shade in order to defend his treasures (VII, 113, 115-18). These, in my view, are not convincing illustrations of a shade which is beneficent. To take the example of Ivan’s shade, the Pretender’s recurrent dream predicts that he will ‘fall’ once he achieves power (VII, 19, 57-61). This calamitous denouement of his career may take place outside Pushkin’s work, but when the Pretender refers to Ivan we know, because of the portent of the dream, that the shade’s inspirational presence will turn out to be less than benign. The degree of consolation vouchsafed by the beneficent shade to the poet is not, as a rule, extended to Pushkin’s characters. In Onegin’s dreams, for example, Lenski’s shade cannot reveal the ‘secrets of the grave’ – one of the friends’ topics of conversation when they first got acquainted (Two: XVI: 6) – because it lies motionless in his mind in a pool of blood. In Pir vo vremia chumy Walsingham says that he will not be summoned from the feast by the ‘shade’ of his mother (VII, 182, 218), despite the priest’s reminder, designed to prey on his conscience, that she had only recently died. Indeed, remembrance is ‘dreadful’ for the son (VII, 182, 210). The great exception to this rule is the colossal figure of Mozart, Pushkin’s fellow artist. He (like Pushkin) can translate the ‘vision of the grave’ into a divine sound (VII, 127, 100). The man in black who follows Mozart ‘like a shade’ (VII, 131, 26-30) commissions a requiem, and thereby symbolically links the image of the shade with the theme of inspiration, memory and death. All that non-poets or non-artists like Salieri can do is observe the gap between Mozart’s talent and his own ‘wingless desire’ to compose, whilst devising the means to make his companion ‘fly away’ (VII, 128, 126-30).

Pushkin never fully accepted the ‘Exegi monumentum’ principle, nor did he ever fully resolve the problem of memory and death. The fact that the beneficent winged shades appear in that part of ‘Vospominanie’ which, for whatever reason, he withheld from publication, symbolizes his ‘agnosticism’, his inability to reach a definitive answer to the problem. Similarly, he removed the reference to the comforting angel of

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42 According to one critic, one of the clear consequences of Pushkin’s amendments to Wilson’s play, on which this tragedy is based, is that the encounter between the Walsingham and the priest – and therefore the unresolved fear of death – becomes the psychological centre of the work: Donald Loewen, ‘Disguised as Translation. Religion and Recreations in Pushkin’s “A Feast in Time of Plague”’, SEEJ, 40, 1996, pp. 45-62 (49). For a general comparison of the two works, see Henry Gifford, ‘Puškin’s Feast in Time of Plague and its Original’, American Slavic Review, 8, 1949, pp. 37-46. For Lotman’s fascinating interpretation of this scene, see Lu.M. Lotman, ‘Iz razmyslenii nad tvorcheskoi evoliutsiei Pushkina (1830 god)’, Pushkin, pp. 300-16.
poetry from ‘...Vnov’ ia posetil’; and he only allowed himself to draw, but not
describe, this figure in the manuscript of ‘Na Ispaniiu rodnuiu’. However, in
‘Vospominanie’ he came the closest he ever could to acknowledging that inspiration
and memory can coexist with death. He used the imagery of dreams and flying in order
to achieve an imperfect resolution to the problem of memory and death and, consonant
with that, a degree of solace.

Several years later, Pushkin again attempted to do this in the lyric ‘Kogda poroi
vospominan’e’’. The subtext of the poem suggests that Pushkin also employed this
figurative nexus in order to make a ‘political’ statement. At the start of the poem, in
accordance with Gershenzon’s hypothesis, Pushkin withdraws from the real world into
a state where he can fly to the past in a dream:

Когда порой воспоминанье
Гнездит мне сердце в тишине, <...>
Тогда забывшиесь? <я>? лечу <...>
Стрем<лас>ь привычною мечтою>
К студе<ньм> север<ньм> волк<ам>.
Меж белоглавой их тол<пою>
Открытый? о<стров> вижу там.
Печаль<ный> остров — берег дикой
Усеян зимнею? бру<ники>й,
Ув>ящей тундрою покрыт
И хладной пеною подмьт.
(III, 243, 1-26)

Both Tomashevskii and Tsiavlovksaia thought that this poem alluded to Solovki, where
Alexander I wanted to install Pushkin in 1820 (the reference to this place of exile, still
thriving in the Soviet Union, itself constituted a brave act).43 Akhmatova, on the other
hand, argued that Pushkin was describing Vasil’evskii Island in St Petersburg and that
his mental flight was triggered by the memory of the five hanged Decembrists whose
bodies were buried in unmarked graves in this area. In the final part of the poem,
Pushkin states that his ‘wretched boat’ (III, 244, 32) is carrying him to this barren
island where, according to Akhmatova, the dead Decembrists were located.44

The various, by necessity, obscure references to these hanged men in Pushkin’s
poetry indicate that he was preoccupied by their memory. He probably alludes to them
in the final stanza of Evgenii Onegin where he says that ‘Some are no more, others are
distant’ (Eight: LI: 3). Nabokov links this with the draft of ‘Na kholmakh Gruzii lezhit
nochnaia mgla’ [1829]:

264; the Commentary of Tsiavlovksaia, p. 626.
The destination of Pushkin’s mental flight in ‘Kogda poroi vospominan’e’ suggests that these memories relate not so much to the living men, but to the manner of their burial. As in the final passage of Mednyi vsadnik, with which the poem bears a close resemblance, the corpses on this forlorn island represent the ‘unclean dead’, whose souls, whilst they are bereft of the finality of a Church burial, can never rest. On several occasions in his manuscripts he therefore drew the bleak image of these hanged men, suspended for ever in the ‘pendent world’ (for example, see XVIII, 215-16). Pushkin’s act of reminiscence is not cathartic. The memory poem, which is itself unfinished, merely highlights the problem of their ‘incomplete’ death.

There is a fascinating parallel between this mental flight and the one which Pushkin describes in Domik v Kolomne, to which I referred at the start of this chapter:

Я живу
Теперь не там, но верною мечтою
Люблю летать, заснувши назву,
В Коломну, к Покрову — и в воскресенье
Там слушать русское богослуженье.
(V, 88, 156-60)

It seems quite possible that Pushkin is again recalling the hanged Decembrists. He wrote ‘Kogda poroi vospominan’e’ and Domik v Kolomne during the same celebrated Boldino autumn of 1830. The love which he expresses here is related to the ‘love of the fatherland’s graves’ (III, 242, 4) which he describes in ‘Dva chuvstva divno blizki nam’, which was written in October 1830. It relates to the memory of the executed men and to where they are buried. In this extract from Domik v Kolomne Pushkin deliberately contradicts his declaration, made earlier in the poem, that he will not allow himself to remember:

Я воды Леты пью,
Мне доктором запрещена унылость;
Оставим это,— сделайте мне милость!
(V, 86, 94-96)

He issues this ban on remembrance because he had just described the ‘strange dream’ which sometimes fills his heart:

45 Nabokov, Eugene Onegin, III, p. 246.
46 See Akhmatova, ‘Pushkin i Nevskoe vzmor’e’, p. 220.
Jakobson argues that Pushkin’s ‘dream’ is a general reference to his ‘political’ views – those views which he could not openly express because of the strictures of the imperial censorship.\(^{47}\) In my opinion, the dream is more specific. Pushkin is saying that he will not allow himself, as he does in ‘Kogda poroi vospominanie’, to recall the five men who are buried near Kolomna. Blessed is the man, he then declares, who can stifle the hiss of the snake (V, 86, 91-92): this is the same snake of remembrance which had gnawed his heart in ‘Vospominanie’ (III, 102, 8). This is why he must drink the water of forgetfulness from the Lethe. His subsequent refusal to suppress his memory of these men amounted, in 1830, to a political statement.

In the next chapter I will show how Pushkin uses the imagery of dreams and flying to make similar statements throughout his work. However, in concluding this chapter, I would like to suggest that the recollection of the Decembrists results in another resolution, of sorts, to the problem of memory and death for him. It is symbolic that Pushkin flies back in his dream to the place where they are buried on a Sunday. As at the end of Mednyi vsadnik (V, 149, 211), he uses the word ‘Sunday’, voskresen’e, to convey the idea of resurrection. The souls of the hanged men, who were buried in unmarked, non-consecrated graves, are finally and properly laid to rest so that they can be reborn: in this dignified act of remembrance Pushkin mentally gives the Decembrists’ remains a Christian burial, to the accompaniment of the Russian Orthodox liturgy, ‘for the sake of God’.

\(^{47}\) Roman Jakobson, ‘Puškin Unrestrained’, Puskin and His Sculptural Myth, pp. 68-75.
In 1934 Mirskii described the 'struggle' of interpreting the imagery in Mednyi vsadnik:

In Jakobson's opinion, this difficulty in assigning a definitive meaning to the imagery accounts for the endlessly contradictory judgements about the poem. In Lednicki's view, the oppressive presence of the censor was responsible, in great measure, for the 'complex and hazy' symbolism in Pushkin's poetry in general, and in Mednyi vsadnik in particular.

At each step, fear of the censor checked the impetus of inspiration and forced the poet to use his words as much to hide his thoughts as to express them. Thus Pushkin's poetry, acclaimed for being so crystal-clear, classically simple, and lucid, harmonious, and well balanced, became complex and hazy. The poet compelled himself to adopt, one might say, a double symbolic form of poetic expression. In other words, to the customary artistic law of representation by means of symbols was added the necessity of complicating the artistic symbolism and screening it with an opaque drapery of political loyalty in those passages in which the symbolism was not sufficiently obscure.

In this chapter I do not intend to 'crack' the code of Pushkin's imagery, a task that is fraught with difficulties, nor, indeed, to examine in much detail his great poem about the Bronze Horseman. However, I will show that in a significant number of other

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2 Jakobson, Pushkin and His Sculptural Myth, p. 49.
works, the imagery of dreams and flying – especially bird imagery – plays a significant role in the sort of disguised attacks described by Lednicki. The use of such imagery to portray characters in a negative light is not confined to a political context. Nevertheless, I will focus in the main on those political figures who become the target of Pushkin’s double-edged words. The chapter will culminate in the analysis of a work written in the 1830s in which Pushkin portrays himself as a bird and, in that guise, assassinates a monarch, who is himself described as a bird. Although it is not my intention to add another detailed analysis of Pushkin’s politics to the enormous number of critical studies which already exist on this subject, in order to trace the use of these images through his work, I will refer, in general terms, to the development of his political views.

In his study of *Mednyi vsadnik*, Lednicki identified the tyrannical charioteer in ‘K Litsiniu. (S latinskogo)’, written almost two decades earlier in 1815, as an early prototype of the Bronze Horseman. This lyric was one of Pushkin’s first poems to examine the themes of autocracy and freedom. Set during a period of despotic governance in ancient Rome, it is an allegorical description of the Russian regime. It is probably an imitation of Milonov’s satirical ‘K Rubelliu’, which was written in 1810 but published in 1814. Pushkin included the subtitle, ‘From the Latin’, in an attempt to divert attention from its real significance (it was later dropped when he revised the poem between 1817 and 1819: II, 11). In the opening lines, the narrator describes how a young man ‘flies’ through the streets in his chariot into a crowd of people:

Дициный, зришь ли ты? на быстрой колеснице,  
Увешан лаврами, в блестящей бахраме,  
Спешив разъярив, Ветулий молодой  
В толпу народную летит по мостовой.  
(1, 85, 1-4)

The reference to the young man’s purple clothes establishes him as a figure of authority in the political hierarchy. According to William Brown, the charioteer may represent Alexander I’s favourite, Count Arakcheev.6

Pushkin’s stress on the great velocity of the ‘flying’ vehicle reinforces the official status of the driver. In contemporary Russia, a vehicle travelling at great speed indicated that the passenger may be a government official. For example, the official courier (*fel’d’ejer*) was not obliged to observe the official speed limit (approximately twelve kilometres an hour in winter, ten in summer).7 Pushkin will ruefully contrast his

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4 Lednicki, *Pushkin’s Bronze Horseman*, pp. 28-30; see also Bethea, ‘The Role of the *Eques* in Pushkin’s *Bronze Horseman*’, pp. 103-04.
own slow vehicle to that of the courier in *Puteshestvie iz Moskvy v Peterburg* [1834] (XI, 243). The implication that the charioteer is a functionary, albeit an important one, distinguishes him from Peter in *Mednyi vsadnik*. In fact, Pushkin’s approach to their respective portrayals is quite different. A truism of his attitude to Peter is that it is shot through with equivocation. As Lednicki observes, in the poem Pushkin skilfully manages to establish a crack in the ‘smooth surface’ of the poem’s panegyrism. In ‘K Litsiniu. (S latinskogo)’, by contrast, Pushkin portrays the charioteer as an overtly negative character. The description of him careering into the crowd of people may draw on the folkloric belief that speed was something to be feared. However ‘K Litsiniu. (S latinskogo)’ also establishes a precedent which Pushkin will follow many times in his career: when applied to one of his characters, especially when they are male, the motif of flying can, and usually does, possess a distinctly negative connotation.

In the portrayal of this arrogant young Roman we see the prototype not of Peter, but of the brothers in *Brat’iarazboiniki* who fly in their troika at night; and of Onegin who flies in his post chaise to his dying uncle. In these later works Pushkin was able to draw on the various clusters of negative significance which had attached themselves to the motif of flying since 1815. As we saw in Chapter Two, flying in *Brat’iarazboiniki* is associated with death; as we shall see in the final part of this chapter and Chapter Four, it can also suggest sexual or romantic inadequacy – an important aspect of Onegin’s characterization. The flying vehicle is a small, but significant paradigm in Pushkin’s work. Each time it occurs, Pushkin reinforces or even expands its accompanying aura of negativity. For example, he describes personified Arrogance (Spes’) and Dissipation (Rasseian’e) ‘flying’ to a ball in some unidentified vehicle in ‘Son. (Otryvok)’ in 1816 (I, 144, 51-60).

The description of the young man’s arrival on his sleigh in ‘Zhenikh’ [1825] is particularly reminiscent of ‘K Litsiniu. (S latinskogo)’:

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8 Lednicki, *Pushkin’s Bronze Horseman*, p. 52.
The reproduction of the scene in the earlier poem is not complete: there the Romans scrutinized the driver’s face, searching for a smile or a movement of his eyes (I, 85, 9); now the young man immediately glances at the girl – a glance signifying keen appraisal, given that he soon proposes to her. At the wedding feast, Natasha recalls an unpleasant dream (son) in which her husband cut off the hand of a maiden and removed her ring. It transpires that the events of the ‘dream’ are real and that Natasha’s wedding ring belongs to this girl. The motif of flying is therefore not the only component in the groom’s portrayal, but the reference to his flying sleigh in the opening scene is immediately suggestive of a louche, dangerous character, a suggestion which is later confirmed by the bride’s story. As soon as the young man flew past, Natasha ‘went numb’, an expression which, in the Russian (pomertvela), conveys a sense of dying, of mortification. As in Brat’iarazboiniki and Evgenii Onegin, Pushkin juxtaposes the flying vehicle with the notion of death. There is no political or allegorical dimension to ‘Zhenikh’, but in his characterization of the groom, and indeed of the robbers and Onegin, Pushkin is able to make effective use of the powerful negative potential of flying, a potential which he discovered in ‘K Litsiniiu. (S latinskogo)’, one of his first attacks on a political figure.

A further distinction between the charioteer in this early lyric and Peter is that the Roman is not a horseman. The observation is obvious but highly significant. The unharnessed horse is, on the whole, a ‘positive’ image in Pushkin’s work, while the vehicle is usually ‘negative’. Pushkin would never have predicted Russia’s glittering future using Gogol’s image of a flying troika; but he could have used it, with a great degree of prescience, to suggest a troubled destiny. Bethea observes that Peter’s steed was the ideal symbol for eschatological transit from one ‘time-space’ to another,
thereby endowing the ruler with the attributes of an apocalyptic horseman. However, it was essential for Pushkin to match any oblique attack on Peter with a countervailing, open expression of admiration for him. Falconet’s statue proved such a productive image for the poet because the positive qualities of the horse (as opposed to Peter’s equivocal nature) allowed him to achieve this balance. An indication that Pushkin regarded the horse favourably is that, in contrast to the vehicle, the application to it of the motif of flying actually enhances its image. Pushkin approves of the animal’s ardour when it flies because it is an expression of its loyalty to its rider, even if he does not approve of the rider himself. Thus in ‘Kozak’ [1814], the steed which can move like an ‘arrow’ (I, 37, 23) and which ‘flies’ (I, 38, 57) is said to be ‘faithful’ (I, 37, 9), even though its rider uses it to attract and then abscond with a beautiful maiden.

However, in ‘Kakaia noch’! Moroz treskuchii’ [1827], Pushkin uses the steed’s refusal to ‘fly’, despite its master’s exhortations, to express his disapproval of the rider, and thereby of the regime which he represents. The poem describes one of the mass executions which took place in Moscow during the reign of Ivan the Terrible. On an incongruously peaceful night, an oprichnik is spotted ‘flying’ on his horse across a square, possibly Red Square, where the victims’ corpses are still displayed. He is flying to some assignation:


Although the sight of the corpses makes no impact on him, his steed suddenly stops when it reaches them, prompting the rider’s exclamation:


11 In an interesting drawing of the statue in the manuscript of Tazit in 1829, Pushkin removed the figure of Peter entirely, leaving the now uncorrupted image of the noble steed (XVIII, 220).
12 There may be a folkloric dimension to description of the flying steed, since the horse and bird are clearly understood as parallel images in Russian folk art: see Alison Hilton, Russian Folk Art, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1996, p. 171.
It is possible that Pushkin used the historical setting, as he did in ‘K Litsiniiu. (S latinskogo)’, to disguise another ‘political reference’, in this case to the specific memory of the executed Decembrists. Moreover, a very similar description of mutilated corpses occurs in 'Stambul giaury nynche slaviat' [1830] (III, 248, 40-45). Pushkin included the first part of this poem in the fifth chapter of Puteshestvie v Arzrum vo vremia pokhoda 1829 goda (hereafter, Puteshestvie v Arzrum) (VIII, 478-79), but again disguised the fact that this was his original composition by declaring that it was the start of a satirical work by a janissary called Aminom-Oglu (VIII, 478). Vickery contends that Pushkin deliberately uses similar descriptions in these poems in order to draw a parallel between the wholesale execution of the janissaries in Istanbul by the Turkish Sultan, and Ivan’s persecution of the boyars; Pushkin must also have had in mind Peter’s suppression of the strel’tsy. It is even possible that Pushkin was also expressing fears for his own fate, especially in light of the continuing controversy over ‘Andre Shen’é’ which was deemed, in some quarters, to represent an attack on the monarchy. During the same period in which 'Kakaia noch’! Moroz treskuchii' was written Pushkin refers to the possibility of being hanged in a poem to E.K. Ushakova (III, 56, 5-8). Although his tone there is light-hearted, it is significant that he is still making a similar ‘joke’ several years later in 1829, in a poem addressed to E.P. Poltoratskaia (III, 150, 1-4). There are, therefore, a number of possible political subtexts in 'Kakaia noch’! Moroz treskuchii'. Pushkin uses the horse’s reaction both to convey and to disguise his own sense of repulsion at the sight of the executed men. He identifies with the horse which, let us remember, is a positive beast. When the ‘tired steed’ is forced to gallop past the bodies (III, 61, 66-67), it becomes a victim, ‘its

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15 See Gorodetskii, Lirika Pushkina, p. 121.
nobility corrupted by its association with a rider who is himself corrupt'. Pushkin too is forced to compromise in this regime: the delicate self-censorship exercised in the poem is evidence of that. However, in the final line the steed gallops past the gallows, but still does not 'fly' as bidden. The capitulation to the regime of the horse – and therefore of the poet – is not total.

By 1827, when this poem was written, Pushkin's political statements largely consisted in attacking the negative, rather than advocating the positive ideals of social justice, enlightened governance, etc., which he had done in his earlier poetry. For example, he describes and disapproves of the desire which can seethe in the breast of the oprichnik even though he finds himself among the bodies of Ivan's victims; in 'K Litsiniu. (S latinskogo)', by contrast, the narrator had described freedom seething in his own breast:

Я сердцем римлянин, кипит в груди свобода, <...>
(I, 86, 49)

He then added:

Во мне не бредят дух великого народа.
(I, 86, 50)

The simple equation described by this imagery is that wakefulness is a 'positive' state associated with freedom; a state of sleep, by implication, symbolizes apathy and the absence of liberal idealism. In 'K Chedaevu' [1818] Pushkin predicted that Russia would, one day, 'rise from its sleep' (I, 68, 19). But in 'Kakaia noch'! Moroz treskuchii' the disillusioned poet notes that the 'whole of Moscow' sleeps, having already forgotten the excitement of the day's executions (III, 60, 11-12). Russia has, in effect, become one of the pitiable 'tribes' for whom (just) Law 'carelessly dozes' in 'Vol´nost'. Oda' [1817] (II, 44, 41-42).

Pushkin's general aversion to sleep was observed in the first two chapters. One can observe this same antipathy in the context of 'politics'. In 'Vol´nost'. Oda' he contrasts the general state of sleep with the vigilance of the poet who contemplates the palace in which Paul was assassinated:

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16 For a description of the similar use of the horse in the poetry of Maiakovskii, see Lawrence Leo Stahlberger, 'The Poet and the Animal', in his The Symbolic System of Majakovskij, The Hague, 1964, pp. 80-90 (84-86).

17 A similar scenario occurs in the late lyric 'Al'Tons saditsia na konia' [1836], based, it seems, on a work by the Polish poet Pototskii: see V.G. Chernobaev, 'K istorii nabroska “Al’Tons saditsia na konia”', PVPK, 4-5, 1939, pp. 405-16. Chernobaev observes that in the original and in Pushkin's draft it is the rider who is frightened by the sight of two hanged robbers, but in Pushkin's final version it is the horse (III, 437, 42-45) (p. 414). Pushkin may have been guided by the effective description of the horse's reaction in the earlier poem about Ivan's executions.

18 A similar expression occurs in 'Kinzhal' [1821] (II, 156, 5) and Andzhelo (V, 107, 8-9).
Vigilance is key to the portrayal of the liberal poet. In the second, unprintable section of 'Derevnia' [1819], for example, Pushkin addresses the 'oracles of the ages' who are able to drive away the 'sleep of sloth' (*leni son*) (*II*, 82, 31). When copies of the poem started to circulate, news of this reached Alexander I. Chaadaev persuaded Pushkin to appease the tsar by voluntarily showing him the full text. In 'Chedaevu', written in 1821, Pushkin thanked his friend for supporting him during this crisis with a 'hand which does not doze' (*II*, 169, 44-45) - the same hand which will pen Chaadaev's own incriminating works.

However, despite his vigilance, Chaadaev is, on occasions, also a 'dreamer':

Вижу кабинет,
Где ты всегда мудрее, а иногда мечтатель <...>
(*II*, 169, 74-75)

As Chaadaev was to find out to his great cost, a writer could not always espouse his liberal views; but he could always try to be wise when he did by cleverly disguising them. This extract refers to this essential balance and, at the same time, elegantly illustrates a way of striking it. A number of words in the lexicon of Pushkin and, indeed, the work of other poets, are charged with significance. They contain double, even a multiple, of potential meanings: for example, we saw in Chapter Two that 'friend' can also refer to a poet. The ubiquity and elasticity of meaning of the word 'dream' allowed it perfectly to accommodate a hidden, liberal agenda. Earlier in 'Chedaevu' Pushkin refers to his own 'dreams' in language which is reminiscent of his descriptions of inspiration at the Lyceum. Any possible allusion to his political ideals is therefore carefully concealed beneath the typical poetic veneer:

Вот вам, вновь явился Музы мне
И независимым досугам улыбнулись;
Цвеницы брошеньной уста мои коснулись;
Старинный звук меня обрадовал — и вновь
Пой мои мечты, природу и любовь, <...>
(*II*, 168, 22-26)
Pushkin may be declaring to his friend that he is a political dreamer, but he is also acting like a sage, a mudrets, by disguising the fact. Over a decade after completing this poem, Pushkin will describe himself as a sage, but on that occasion, which I will describe at the end of this chapter, he will no longer be a ‘dreamer’ but a bird: by then he will have resorted increasingly to the motif of flying, especially bird imagery, much as he does in his descriptions of inspiration.

As we saw in Chapter One, Tomashevskii detects an echo of this extract from ‘Chedaevu’ in the first stanza of Canto Eight of Evgenii Onegin, where Pushkin recalls the Muse’s first visit to the Lyceum. However, his dreams in this stanza (sny, but mechtan’ia in the draft: VI, 507) are ‘trembling’. The adjective implies timidity and indecision. Between 1821 and 1829, the year in which he began this canto, Pushkin had become disillusioned with the role of the poet as an advocate of the people’s (as opposed to his own) freedom. When he wanted to express his sense of disillusion, the symbolic word ‘dream’ became the focus of his bitterness. This reinforces the argument advanced in Chapter One that there is a shift in Pushkin’s attitude to the imagery of dreams, and particularly to the word mechta, in the early 1820s. In some poems during this period we can see Pushkin suddenly re-appraising this stock word which recurs so frequently in his early poetry.

Between April and October 1822, Pushkin addressed several poems to Vladimir Fedoseevich Raevskii (1795-1872) (not a member of the Raevskii family whom Pushkin accompanied to Gurzuf). Raevskii, a major in the regiment of chasseurs stationed in Kishinev and future Decembrist, was arrested on 6 February 1822 for disseminating his radical political views. From his confinement in the Tirapol’skaia fortress he addressed a number of epistles to Pushkin encouraging his friend to become a ‘poet of the people’, to expound in his verse the ideals of freedom. However, in his unfinished reply to Raevskii, Pushkin redefined his liberal poems as the ‘dreams of vain sleep’; the vigilance which had hitherto characterized his self-styled poetic role had given way to a dispiriting state of indolence:

![Image]

Several months later, Raevskii asked Pushkin in another poem, ‘Pevets v temnitse’:

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In his reply, Pushkin describes his former idealism as a ‘captivating idol’, an obvious reference to Raevskii’s question. He says that he has unmasked this kumir, thereby revealing an ‘ugly phantom’ (II, 235, 29-32). Pushkin’s liberal views had not changed, but his perception of the ‘mob’ had. He acknowledges the futility of addressing his poetry to the issue of freedom if the intended beneficiaries, the people themselves, are ‘cold’, or if they find his voice ‘funny’ (II, 236, 41-44). During 1823 he continued to convey his sense of despondency in poems such as ‘Kto, volny, vas ostanovil’, where he draws a parallel between the transformation of the waves [of freedom] into a ‘silent, dozing pond’, and his own soporific state (II, 258, 1-8); or ‘Telega zhizni’, where he contrasts the traveller’s initial energy and impatience in the morning with the description of his resigned, dozing figure in the evening (II, 273, 1-16).

When Onegin decides to replace the ‘yoke’ of unpaid labour due from his serfs with the fairer system of quitrent, a cynical neighbour smiles (Two: IV: 5-12) – and so, by implication, does Pushkin. The beneficiaries of this change will be as ‘cold’ and unresponsive as the mob in the poem addressed to Raevskii. Furthermore, we suspect that Onegin’s initial burst of altruism will inevitably give way to apathy in the same way that his enthusiasm for the country on days one and two of his stay turned to ‘sleep’ on day three (One: LIV: 1-7). Pushkin’s description of Onegin as a ‘sage’ (mudrets) (Two: IV: 5) for implementing his changes to the management of his estate implies that he is quite the opposite. When Pushkin’s amused appraisal of the mock sage shifts to Lenskii, the mock dreamer, Onegin himself joins in the detached observation. Onegin now wears the neighbour’s cynical smile when he listens to his companion (Two: XV: 1) (even though he himself, to a certain extent, has tried to act out an idealistic dream worthy of the young poet in the management of his estate). Lenskii’s dreams, imported from ‘misty Germany’, are ‘freedom-loving’:

Он из Германии туманной  
Призев учености плоды;  
Вольнолюбивые мечты,  
Дух пылкий и довольно странный, <...>  
(Two: VI: 9-12)

As Lotman observes, the political connotations of these dreams are even more explicit in the draft where they are said to originate from ‘free’ Germany (VI, 267). The

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20 Cited in the Commentary of Blagoi and Tsiavlovskaia, p. 720.
21 See M.A. Tsiavlovskaia, ‘Stikhotvorenia Pushkina, obrashchennye k V. Raevskomu’, PVPK, 6, 1941, pp. 41-50.
German derivation of these *mechty* evokes the figure of Schiller. As we saw in the Introduction, in 1812 Zhukovskii had translated the German’s ‘Die Ideale’ as ‘Mechty. Pesnia’. In the minds of future poets he thereby established a link between West European liberal idealism and the Russian word *mechta*.23 At first Pushkin respected this relationship: he therefore calls Chaadaev a sometime ‘dreamer’. But by the time he started work on *Evgenii Onegin*, his specific view of the poet as an advocate of the people’s freedom had become jaundiced. He therefore wryly smiles at Lenskii’s political dreams, just as he did at his inspirational reveries.

However, while he openly and repeatedly describes Lenskii as a poet, Pushkin can only hint at the young man’s liberal ambitions. William Brown believes that Pushkin decided to play down the political dimension of Lenskii’s portrait for artistic considerations, since ‘the dreamy romantic with his head in the clouds makes a far better foil for Onegin than would a young revolutionary’.24 Lenskii may be ‘dreamy’ but he is not an authentic ‘dreamer’, in the sense that he will never be a good poet or an effective political activist. As a non-poet he is Pushkin’s antithesis; but as a non-radical he and his creator are very close: the main difference between them is that Lenskii probably wants to be a political dreamer – the people’s poet – but cannot, whereas Pushkin voluntarily renounces this role in the 1820s. On the eve of his duel, Lenskii opens up one of Schiller’s works, but can think only of Ol’ga. As long as his thoughts are preoccupied with her, his sad heart does not ‘doze’ (Six: XX: 4-8). He only starts to sleep when he returns to his reading before dawn and reaches the fashionable word *ideal*. It appears that he has been trying to read ‘Die Ideale’:

И наконец перед зарею,  
Склонясь усталой головою,  
На модном слове ИДЕАЛ  
Тихонько Ленский задремал; <...>  
(Six: XXIII: 5-8)

Schiller’s German dream simply puts Lenskii to sleep. After his death, Pushkin speculates that, had he lived, he and his muses would have separated (Six: XXXIX: 6): Lenskii would have renounced his claim to be a poet. But he would also have reached old age wearing a ‘quilted dressing gown’ (Six: XXXIX: 8). This is a possible apolitical version of the metaphorical ‘democratic dressing gown’ which Pushkin had donned in ‘V.L. Davydovu’ [1821] (II, 161, 47-48). Lenskii’s garment would have

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24 Brown, *A History of Russian Literature of the Romantic Period*, III, p. 415 (note 36). Stephanie Sandler makes a similar, though more general observation, when she says that ‘politics never overwhelm poetry in Pushkin’s work, and it is his commitment to the priority of aesthetic considerations which separates Pushkin from the Decembrist poets’: Sandler, ‘The Poetics of Authority in Pushkin’s “André Chénier”’, p. 203.
been real but no less symbolic. By putting it on he would have renounced his claim to be a political dreamer: he would have been embraced by the comforting folds of sleepy apathy, a type of political len', a state suggested by his very name. When Lenskii at last falls into his involuntary doze as his eyes reach the word ideal, this is the closest that Pushkin will ever get to identifying with this character. During the 1820s Pushkin concluded that he could not represent the people or the mob. In his poetry this sort of dream', which seemed so potentially fertile in the immediate post-Lyceum period, ultimately gives way to the sterility of sleep.25

Although the equivocal nature of Pushkin's political statements can sometimes be attributed to the need to make them sufficiently, but not excessively, esoteric in view of the censor's scrutiny, his political views were sometimes genuinely ambivalent. This is reflected in his portrayal of Napoleon.26 Throughout his career, Pushkin was prepared to attack and even lampoon Napoleon's dictatorial ambitions, his 'dreams':

Где ты, любимый сын и счастья и Беллоны, Презревший правды глас и веру, и закон, В гарьне возмечта мечем низвернуть троны?27

Ужас, как утром страшный сон!

'Vospominaniiia v Tsarskom Sele' (1, 63, 149-52)

By the start of Pushkin's career, French hegemony in general and Napoleon's authority in particular were already massively compromised in Europe. It followed that one of the key elements in Pushkin's portrayal of Napoleon in his early lyric poetry was the fleeting nature of his reign. This dreamer was therefore said to have disappeared like a dream'. However, in 'Napoleon na El'be (1815)' this astringent criticism was counterbalanced by a guarded outflow of sympathy. The man who had dared to dream', and indeed still dreams of resuming his campaign, is surrounded on Elba by dispiriting 'dead sleep':

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25 In her analysis of the development of Russian 'anacreontic' poetry, Irina Gutkin established that the type of drink which poets 'drank' in their poetry became one of the primary coded tropes in the discussion of their liberal philosophy. Champagne, sometimes described as al, became the preferred drink because of its symbolic association with revolutionary France. It came to symbolize the defiant spirit of youth and its poetic revolutionary aspirations. However, in Evgenii Onegin, Gutkin observes, Pushkin declines to partake of al (Four: XLVI: 5), thereby signalling his wish, at least at this point in the novel, to remove his 'democratic dressing-gown': Gutkin, "The Ethics and Poetics of Drinking and Joy", pp. 102-10.


27 Here we observe Pushkin linking the words 'dream' and 'sword' by the common sound meek, a type of pun. The relationship between these words was briefly discussed in Chapter Two in the context of 'Vospominanie'.
This reference to 'dead sleep' is then repeated (I, 88, 33).

V.F. Raevskii was deeply critical of this poem which he considered to be excessively critical of a man who had dared to challenge Russian autocracy. But Pushkin’s portrayal of Napoleon is not completely negative (in contrast to the sort of attacks on Napoleon contained in Derzhavin’s poetry), nor is it lacking in sympathy. An indication of this is that Napoleon shares Pushkin’s aversion to sleep, the symbol of apathy and sterility. In his diary entry for 19 November 1824, written on the Mikhailovskoe estate, Pushkin will say: ‘I have loved, and love to this day, noise and a crowd’ (XII, 304). The tone of Napoleon’s soliloquy in his place of exile curiously anticipates Pushkin’s poignant remark. The Frenchman misses the noises to which he is accustomed, in his case the din of battle. In his soliloquy he therefore complains about the silence of the sleeping waters:

Напору, напенься под рулями,
Меня помчит покорная волна,
И спящих вод прервется тишина?

(I, 88, 18-20)

Napoleon would, of course, be antipathetic to the serene environment of Tsarskoe Selo which Pushkin describes in similar language in the first stanza of ‘Vospominaniia v Tsarskom Sele’, and which the young poet quickly abandons for the more interesting descriptions of the bloodstained steppe and Moscow in flames.

One consequence of Pushkin’s equivocal attitude towards Napoleon in these early poems is that it allowed him subtly to draw attention to his ambivalence to one of Napoleon’s enemies, Russia herself. In order to do this Pushkin found it productive to

29 In ‘Ten Fon-vizina’, which was also written in 1815, Pushkin openly mocks Derzhavin’s verse which portrayed Napoleon as ‘Lucifer’ emerging from an abyss in Paris, the new ‘Babylon’ (I, 123-24, 232-50). In this regard Pushkin was once again choosing not to follow poets like Derzhavin whose poetry vilified the Frenchman.
30 Надс покров утрёмный нищ
На своде дремлющих небес;
В безмолвной тишине пошли дол и рощи,
В седом тумане дальний лес;
Чуть слышится ручей бегущий в семь дубравы,
Чуть дышет ветерок, уснувший на листвах,
И тихая луна, как лебедь величавый,
Плывает в сребристых облаках.

(I, 60, 1-8).
draw on the flying part of the dream/flying nexus. For example, in ‘Napoleon na El’be (1815)’ Napoleon ruefully recalls the time when fame covered him with its ‘wings’ (I, 89, 50-51). He then anxiously waits for a vessel to ‘fly’ to Elba to deliver him from exile (I, 89, 72). There is an echo of both of these images in ‘Na vozvrashchenie gosudaria imperatora iz Pariza v 1815 godu’ [1815], in which Pushkin wishes that he had fallen under the wing of fame in the 1812 war (I, 111, 41-44), before referring to the ‘flying [trade] ships’ which will reach Russia (I, 111, 78). The similarity may be coincidental, but it may have amused Pushkin to use images in a poem addressed to Alexander I which he had only recently used in the context of his greatest adversary.

Of much greater significance is Pushkin’s use of bird imagery in his attacks on the Russian regime. This is a topic which I will examine for the rest of this chapter. In ‘Vospominanija v Tsarskom Selе’ Pushkin had, for the first time, personified Russia as the ‘mighty eagle’ which, having defeated the Swedish ‘lion’ in the Great Northern War (1700-21), returned to Tsarskoe Selo to rest:

He се ль Злициум мощный, 
Прекрасный Царско-селской сад, 
Где, льва сразив, постиг орел России мощный 
На лоне мира и отрад?
(I, 60, 25-28)

I would like, in passing, to draw attention to Pushkin’s identification of the eagle with Catherine and also with Tsarskoe Selo. The eagle returns to her gardens (I will return to this in the final chapter):

Увы! промчались те времена златые, 
Когда под скипетром великия жены 
Венчалась славою счастливая Россия, 
Цветя под кровом тишины!
(I, 60, 29-32)

Pushkin then describes, through the eyes of a Russian (Ross), a monument of the eagle in the gardens which commemorates victory over the Turks in 1770:

Он видит, окружен волнами, 
Над твердой, мшисто скалой 
Бознесс памятник. Ширяясь крылами, 
Над ним сидит орел младой. 
И щепи тяжкие, и стрелы громовые 
В круг прозрачного столпа трикраты обвились; 
Кругом подножия, шумя, вальы седые 
В блестящей пене улетались. 
(I, 61, 41-48)

31 For a discussion of the archetype of ‘winged fame’, see Vinogradov, Stil’ Pushkina, p. 10.
According to Vinogradov, the description of the Russian eagle spreading its wings is reminiscent of Derzhavin’s ‘Utro’ [1800]. Derzhavin’s influence can also be detected in the contiguous reference to the monument, *pamiatnik* (the title of his famous poem).

The eagle was, of course, the most important heraldic emblem of Russia. Yet in ‘Napoleon na El’be’ Pushkin allowed Napoleon to Gallicize this bird:

И вспыхнет брань за галльскими орлами,
С мечом в руках победа полетит,
Кровавый ток в долинах закипит,
И троны в прах низвернут я тромами
И скропну Европы дивный щит!

(I, 88, 28-32)

Pushkin himself will refer to Napoleon’s troops as his ‘eagles’ in ‘Napoleon’ [1821]:

Давно ль орлы твои летали
Над обесславленной землей?
Давно ли царства упадали
При громах силы роковой;
Послушны боле своенравной,
Бедой шумели знамена,
И налагал ярем державный
Ты на земные племена?

(II, 192, 17-24)

The dictionary of Pushkin’s work suggests that he used this periphrasis because the French flag staff bore the image of an eagle. This passage is a pointed reminder that the symbol of the eagle never was the inalienable property of Russia. Furthermore, Pushkin’s condemnation of the ‘yoke’ of oppressive power applies as much to the Russian eagle as to the French. Since he composed this poem in exile, he felt the weight of Russia’s yoke on his shoulders. He therefore tarnished the image of Russia by portraying the eagle as a generic symbol of potentially autocratic power.

Pushkin knew that even the double-headed eagle was not Russian in origin. In a letter to K.F. Ryleev written in the second half of May 1825, he criticized that part of ‘Oleg veshchii’ [1821-22] in which his friend described a shield bearing Russia’s coat of arms being hung on the gates of Byzantium:

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32 Vinogradov, *Stil’ Pushkina*, p. 128.
34 Towards the end of his life, in an essay on Voltaire in 1836, Pushkin also referred to the ‘Prussian eagle’ (XII, 80).
Pushkin observed that since Oleg was a pagan he would not have used the image of St George on the shield; and Russia had yet to adopt the double-headed eagle as its symbol – ironically, a symbol which was Byzantine in derivation anyway. Ryleev, he concludes, should have been guided by the historical manuscripts which refer simply to Oleg’s shield (XIII, 175-76). Moreover, in an earlier letter, written in the first ten days of January 1825 to his brother, Pushkin explained that the adoption of the Byzantine eagle made no sense in Russia, since the two heads were meant to symbolize the division of the Empire into East and West: ‘In Russia it means nothing at all,’ he complained (XIII, 54).

Nevertheless, the image of the Russian eagle became an obvious and irresistible figurative target which Pushkin could shoot at in his poetry. He does this, albeit, vicariously, in Kavkazskii plennik when the Circassian youths aim their arrows at the birds:

Чванло, в светлый Бахрам
Сберутся юноши толпою;
Игра сменяется игрою.
То, полный разобрав колчан,
Они крылатыми стрелами
Пронзают в облаках орлов.

(IV, 102, 325-29)

Pushkin goes on to describe their bellicose nature. Like Napoleon, they are born for war; peace only bores them:

Ко скучен мир однообразный
Сердцам, рожденным для войны, <...>

(IV, 102, 337-38)

The ‘game’ of firing arrows at the eagles is a light-hearted distraction, an inadequate substitute for battle; but it is also symbolic of their conflict with the Russians, of their bid for freedom to which Pushkin refers towards the end of the poem (IV, 112, 293). Pushkin is instinctively attracted to the Circassians who, like Napoleon, energetically assert themselves against the state. However, in contrast to Napoleon’s campaign, the conflict in the Caucasus was ongoing. Descriptions of challenges to Russia’s authority therefore had to be more circumspect, a requirement that was satisfied by the allegorical use of the eagle.

Monika Greenleaf describes the basic nuclear plot of *Kavkazskii plennik*, which is enacted in other Southern poems, as a love affair with a 'native girl', framed by 'distant rumbles' of Russian political domination. By the end of the poem, the girl has drowned and the rumble gives way to the distinct cries of the Cossacks who guard the Russian border:

Редел на небе мрак глубокой,  
Ложился день на темный дол,  
Взошла заря. Тропой далекой  
Освобожденный пленник шел;  
И перед ним уже в туманах  
Сверкали русские штыки,  
И окликались на куртанах  
Сторожевые казаки.  
(IV, 112, 294-301)

The cries of the guards recall an earlier description of the eagles crying to each other above Mount El’brus, thereby subtly reinforcing the association between Russia and the bird:

Орлы с утесов подымались  
И в небесах перекликались; <...>  
(IV, 99, 209-10)

The view that Pushkin identified the eagle as the ‘guardian’ of Russia’s interests is substantiated by his reference to the bird in some of his later works. In *Puteshestvie v Arzrum*, for example, whilst travelling on the ‘big road’ which links Europe and Asia, he describes being watched by ‘proud eagles’ which are perched next to him ‘like guards’ (VIII, 446). Greenleaf notes that Pushkin had deliberately undertaken the trip illicitly without the permission of Beckendorff, the head of the secret police, and without a travel pass:

Pushkin was also laying claim to one of the gentlemanly prerogatives of which he had been systematically stripped: that freedom to travel that in Russia was one of the marks of differentiation between the land-bound peasant, the legally restricted merchant, and the “unmarked” landowner. Like his famous predecessor in passportless, gentlemanly travel, Sterne’s Yorick, Pushkin bolted from Russia in order to experience at least the negative freedom of nationlessness.

The eagles, like the road itself, were omnipresent symbols of Russia which ensured that Pushkin could never fully experience the negative freedom of ‘nationlessness’.  

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38 The description of this intimidating avial presence is offset in other parts of his account by humorous descriptions of other birds which ridicule the Russian army. Upon reaching the dilapidated Georgian Military Road, for example, the only garrison consist of chickens and geese (VIII, 448); later,
It is significant, therefore, that Pushkin makes reference to the eagle which appears to monitor his movements in his lyrical recollections of the journey to Arzrum:

Кавказ подо мною. Один в вышине
Стою над снегами у края стремнины;
Орел, с отдаленной поднявшись вершины,
Парит неподвижно со мной наравне.
‘Kavkaz’ [1829] (III, 196, 1-4)

Дробясь о мрачные скалы,
Шумят и пенымся вальы,
И надо мной кричат орлы, <...
‘Obval’ [1829] (III, 197, 1-3)

In both poems the river Terek is an allegorical representation of the struggle for freedom. This is clear from the draft of ‘Kavkaz’ in which Pushkin likens its furious but futile attempt to leave the confines of its banks to those who try to resist the strictures of oppressive laws (III.2, 792). In Lotman’s view, Pushkin contrasts the sensation of being free in ‘Kavkaz’, symbolized by his position on a summit, with the feeling of being imprisoned on the valley floor in ‘Obval’. But the presence of the monitoring eagle ensures that in neither poem does he feel fully liberated.

Having allowed the Circassians to fire their arrows at the Russian eagle in Kavkazskii plennik, Pushkin safeguards his position in two ways. Firstly, in a note at the end of the poem he includes one of Zhukovskii’s epistles which contains a similar, but innocuous description of an eagle.

Изредка одни елени,
Орла послышав грозный крик,
Теснясь в толпщ, шумят ветвями, <...
(IV, 116)

Pushkin’s description of the terrain is similar but not identical. He has several eagles which rise from the mountain face and call out to each other, in anticipation of the guards at the Russian border. Later Onegin will see Zhukovskii’s eagle and deer during his journey to the Caucasus in ‘Otryvki iz puteshestviia Onegina’:

Он видит, Тerek своенравный
Крутые роет берега;
Пред ним парит орел державный,
Стоит олень, склонив рога; <...
(VI, 198)

Pushkin comes across a group of Russian Uhlans chasing a flock of chickens with drawn sabres (VIII, 473).

39 Lotman, ‘Iz razmyshlenii nad tvorcheskoi evoliutsiei Pushkina (1830 god)’, p. 304.
The eagle has become *derzhavnii*: it is 'sovereign', a representative of the omnipresent Russian *derzhava*. More significantly, in the epilogue of *Kavkazskii plennik* Pushkin describes, in the spirit of an eighteenth-century ode, the ultimate supremacy of 'our' eagle:

И вспомни тот славный час,
Когда, почуя бой кровавый,
На негодующий Кавказ
Подъялся наш орел двуглавый; <...
(IV, 113-14, 25-28)

He goes on to say that the Caucasus will eventually abandon its arrows of war (IV, 114, 58). The reference to the eagle and the arrows represents Pushkin’s overt patriotic response to the Circassians’ earlier attack.

However, even the panegyrisim of the epilogue is subtly questioned since Pushkin prefaces it with the description of his wayward Muse. In the dedication of the poem, she appears in the first sentence as Pushkin’s ‘free muse’ (IV, 91). Her behaviour in the epilogue illustrates this freedom. Her lack of concern and her unfettered existence, which were discussed in Chapter One, challenge the claim that follows her appearance that ‘everything is subject to the Russian sword’ (IV, 114, 48). The Muse certainly is not; nor, despite her apparent independence from him, is Pushkin. One will recall that Pushkin’s Muse flew to Asia, where she was captivated by the rough garb of the tribes raised on war:

Так Муза, лёгкой друг Мечты,
К пределам Азии летала
И для венка себе срывала
Кавказа дикие цветы.
Ее пленял наряд суровый
Племен, возросших на войне,
И часто в сей одежде новой
Волшебница являлась мне; <...
(IV, 113, 1-8)

Pushkin sends his Russian Muse to Asia not in order to sing the praises of Russia’s military presence there, but in order to express her sympathy for their bid for freedom by donning their clothes. Her flight is as skilfully aimed as the arrow of a Circassian youth. Furthermore, Greenleaf draws attention to the play on the theme of captivation (*plenial*) in the epilogue which serves to assert Pushkin’s poetic independence: ‘Turning the tables on the space of his imprisonment, the poet converted his central image of captivity into captivation – a punning emblem of his inventive freedom’.\(^{40}\)

The Muse’s eccentric behaviour can now be seen as a successful attempt by the poet to

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\(^{40}\) Greenleaf, *Pushkin and Romantic Fashion*, p. 140.
distance – but not sever – himself from this representative of poetry, of a world beyond the control of the double-headed eagle.

In the corresponding part of Tsygany, Pushkin dispenses with the distracting presence of his Muse. He again describes the presence of the eagle of Russia in a land which is still troubled by ethnic unrest. But in a bolder expression of his poetic freedom, he does not describe the ‘young eagle’, the bird represented by the statue in Tsarskoe Selo; this creature is old, forced to subsist on the glory of the past:

Где старый наш орел двухглавый
Еще шумит минувшей славой, <...>
(IV, 203, 548-49)

One of the methods available to Pushkin when he wants to undermine authority is to question its virility. This is what he does in 'Kakaia noch'! Moroz treskuchii' in which the oprichnik hurries to a romantic encounter. At the end of the poem his steed no longer ‘flies’, but is ‘tired’ (III, 61, 56). Pushkin implies that this reflects poorly on the rider and that the prospects for a successful denouement of his assignation are not good. He has therefore undermined the authority of this agent of oppression. In Kavkazskii plennik the undoubted power of the eagle was reinforced by the description of the shimmering phallic sabres at the Russian border (IV, 112, 294-301). However, the eagle in Tsygany is old and tired and, probably, can barely fly.

One of the first occasions on which Pushkin undermined a figure of authority by referring to his lack of virility occurred in ‘Bova. (Otryvok iz poemy)’ [1814]. Pushkin characterizes Tsar Dadon as a ‘negative’ figure by describing his decision to go straight to sleep rather than ‘playing’ with his wife.

Жаль меж тем уже глушилась,
Царь Дадон в постель царскую
Вместе с милой лет супругу,
С несравненной Милитрисою,
Но спиной оборотился к ней;
В эту ночь его величеству
Не играть, а спать хотелось.
(I, 52, 174-80)

By contrast, whilst he is falling to sleep, his wife’s maid, Zoia, is lying naked on her bed, waiting for Dadon’s page to appear at her open window (I, 52-53, 181-95).

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41 The noise generated by the eagle is an echo of the opening line of the poem:

Шапань шумеет толстой
По Бессарабии кому-то.
(IV, 179, 1-2)

This reinforces the moral of the poem, expressed in the final lines, that Fate is everywhere.

42 See Sandler, Distant Pleasures, p. 40.
Dadon’s lack of interest in his wife is underlined by the fact that she is so obviously attractive (nesravnennaia). It also contrasts with the description of his former virile nature. In the first part of the poem, Pushkin associates him with four motifs of potency – his weapons, his steed, his love of ‘flying’ into battle and his aversion to peace:

Вы слыхали, люди добрые,
О царе, что двадцать целых лет
Не снимал с себя оружия,
Не слезал с коня ретивого,
Всюду пролетал с победою,
Мир крещеный потопил в крови,
Не щадил и ненареченнего,
И в ничтожество низверженный
Александровым, прозным ангелом,
Жизнь проводит в унижении
И, забытый всеми, кляется
Ныне Эльбы императором; —
Вот таков-то был и царь Дадон.
(1, 50, 59-71)

The reference to Napoleon is not fortuitous: he, like Dadon, is ultimately viewed as an emasculated figure by Pushkin. In ‘Refutatsiia g-na Beranzhera’ [1827], for example, Pushkin refers to him standing before the conflagration of Moscow, ‘bare and bald like a tambourine’ (III, 82, 25), a description which suggests the loss of virility through the loss of hair. Alexander the ‘angel’ was obviously instrumental in bringing about Napoleon’s downfall (although Tolstoi would violently disagree). What is more interesting is that Pushkin identifies Alexander as the cause of Dadon’s loss of virility.

Lotman categorizes this poem as one of Pushkin’s early satirical works which establish his independence from peers such as Karamzin.43 More specifically, it has been interpreted as an attack on Alexander I.44 The nature of the attack consists in identifying Alexander, the ‘terrible angel’, as the cause and not the victim of impotence. This contrasts with Pushkin’s subsequent satire against Alexander, the ribald ‘Tsar’ Nikita i sorok ego docherei [1822], in which the pudenda of the tsar’s forty daughters are missing. Nikita views their inadequacy as a reflection of his own. His reaction is to reassert his authority by ordering his subjects not to reveal to the girls that they are in some way deficient. Using vulgar periphrastic language, he indicates that contravention of this order will result in castration (II, 223, 56-66). The pudenda are recovered and placed in a casket (itself a ‘female’ image),45 but when they escape they are described as birds which fly into the trees and perch on branches:

45 See Proffer, ‘Pushkin and Parricide: The Miserly Knight’, p. 349
Pushkin’s most sophisticated use of bird imagery to attack a figure of authority occurs in ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’ [1834]. Akhmatova was the first critic to discover that the tale was based on a short story by Washington Irving, ‘Legend of The Arabian Astrologer’, published in 1832. According to her reading Pushkin included a political subtext in the work. In particular she identified the tsar, Dadon, with both Alexander I and Nicholas I. In Irving’s story the guardian on top of the tower is a bronze figure of a Moorish horseman, fixed on a pivot, with a shield on one arm and his lance elevated perpendicularly. Like the cockerel in Pushkin’s version it would turn to face the foe at hand. Bayley thinks that the similarity with Mednyi vsadnik is striking but not significant, ‘but it may have prompted the substitution of the golden cockerel’. The substitution is in fact suggested by Irving’s own astrologer who tells the king that he once saw in an Egyptian valley the figure of a ram and above it a cockerel, both of molten brass and turning on a pivot. The ram would turn and the cockerel would crow when the country was threatened.

However, the cockerel is just one of a number of what I believe to be related bird images in the tale, the difference in the case of the cockerel being that it is ‘real’. Pushkin refers to each male character, including Dadon, as a type of bird. In neither the original nor the French translation does Irving refer to any of the male protagonists in this manner. By the end of the work, each man has died as a direct result of his contact

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46 For the use of the bird metaphor in erotic Russian literature, see Burkhart, ‘An Early Fairy-Tale in the Verse of Aleksandr S. Pu§kin’, p. 284. Burkhart cites Zhukovskii’s ‘Shuitochnoe zhelanie’ [1802-04], itself an adaptation from a poem by Barkov, as a possible source for Pushkin’s poem:

> Если б милье девицы
> Так могли летать, как птицы,
> И садились на сучки,
> Я желал бы быть сучаём.

Pushkin expresses a similar wish in ‘Krasavite, kotoraya niukhala tabak’ [1814], in which he says he would like to turn into tobacco in order to be imprisoned in the beauty’s snuff box (I, 35, 30-35).


49 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 53.
with the Shamakhanskaia tsaritsa. The central character, Dadon, becomes one of Pushkin’s ‘Bird Men’, those characters who are likened to or given the attributes of birds. They possess the common characteristic of being sexual or romantic failures. They are often dominated by their female counterpart, whom Pushkin can also liken to a bird or some other flying creature. The women are usually peripheral characters used by Pushkin to draw attention to the men’s failings and to the gulf between them and their omnipotent creator. In this respect, the women are his ‘agents’, beholden to no one but him. Although I will discuss these characters at length in Chapter Four, I would like to examine ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’ here because Dadon’s weakness of character and ultimately unsuccessful romantic adventure signify the moral and political failings of the imperial establishment.

In Pushkin’s tale an astrologer gives Dadon a golden cockerel which, from its vantage point on a spire, raises an alarm when the country is in danger of attack. The bird’s warning cry allows Dadon to dispatch his troops and to recline in idleness. The bird turns in the direction of the threat and cries:

«Кири-ку-ку.
Царствуй, лежа на боку!»
(III, 558, 59-60)

The cry of the cockerel was imitated by the nanny in the unfinished Rusalka, which Pushkin worked on between 1829 and 1832. However her tone (like that of the bird) is contemptuous since the prince, to whom she is referring, has abandoned his bride and, obsessed with the thought of the rusalka, leaves her at night to wander by the river bank:

Княгинушка, мужчина что петух;
Кири куку! мах мах крылом и прочь.
(VII, 201, 12-13)

A reference to lying on one’s side can be found in Pushkin’s first poem to appear in print (in Vestnik Evropy in 1814), addressed probably to Kiukhel’beke:

В железных сундуках червонцы хоронишь
И, лежа на боку, покойно ещё и спишь.
‘К другу стихотворцу’ [1814] (I, 22, 48-49)

However, whereas the young poet’s idleness conforms to his vocation, characterized by effortless creation and Epicurean pleasure, Dadon’s inactivity, like that of his namesake in ‘Bova. (Otryvok iz poemy)’, corresponds to his fading power. It is ironic therefore, that the masculine symbol of the cockerel facilitates this process. In fact, as
Pushkin notes in his diary, the cockerel’s reference to the tsar’s laziness was struck out by the censor (XII, 337).

In 1833, a year before writing ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’, Pushkin composed ‘Budrys i ego synov’ia’, a free translation of a poem by Mickiewicz. There is a similarity between this poem and Pushkin’s skazka, except in the denouement. Budrys sends his sons into battle against the Poles. When they do not return, the father thinks that they are dead; but eventually they each return with a Polish bride (III, 312-13). In Pushkin’s tale Dadon dispatches his two sons in order to ward off a threat advertised by the cockerel, but neither returns. (In Irving’s version the king sends his troops to deal with the threat; but all they find is a beautiful damsel who returns with the army to the king.) When Dadon goes after them, he finds that they have killed each other:

Все в безмолвии чудесном
Вкруг шатра; в ущельи тесном
Рать побитая лежит.
Царь Дадон к шатру спешит..........
Что за страшная картина!
Пред ним его два сына;
Без шлемов и без лат
Оба мертвые лежат,
Меч взяши друг во друга.
(III, 560, 115-23)

The implication that is subsequently made is that they were fighting over the enchanting Shamakhanskaia tsaritsa. Each brother has tried to assert a more powerful claim over the woman. This gruesome tableau prompts the father’s exclamation:

Горе мне! попались в сети
Оба наши соколи!
(III, 560, 128-29)

The falcon is, of course, a common folkloric image symbolizing courage and daring and therefore commonly applied to a heroic figure such as a prince or warrior. Pushkin draws on this association in Stseny iz rytarskikh vremen when Frants says that a knight is ‘as free as a falcon’ (VII, 221, 26), and thereby introduces an East European folkloric element into the West European setting. Dadon’s exclamation is deliberately ironic because these symbols of freedom have been trapped. The discovery

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51 See Boris Gasparov, Poetika “Slova o polku Igoreve”, WSIA Special Series, 12, Vienna, 1992, pp. 74-83. Vatsuro detects elements of the Russian ballad in this scene, such as the description of the sons’ steeds wandering in bewilderment around the bodies of their dead masters: V.E. Vatsuro, “‘Skazka o zolotom petushke”’. (Opyt analiza siuzhetnoi semantiki)’, PIM, 15, 1995, pp. 122-33 (130-31).
of their bodies, which have been symbolically stripped of their defensive armoury, ultimately indicates that they were each vulnerable to a more potent force in the form of the tsaritsa.

Despite the shock of finding his dead sons, moments later Dadon’s ‘falcons’ and the threat posed to his country are forgotten when he encounters this beauty. Having found his dead sons, Dadon had still displayed the dignity of his position by employing the royal plural. However, upon seeing the Shamakhanskaia tsaritsa, he is eclipsed by her dazzling appearance:

Как пред солнцем птица ночи,
Царь умолк, ей глядя в очи,
И забыл он перед ней
Смерть обоих сыновей.
(III, 560-61, 139-42)

There are a number of possible sources for the imagery in this passage. The ‘bird of the night’ occurs in one of the Pesni zapadnykh slavian. In ‘Videnie korolia’ the king hears the ‘night bird’ from his window. However, in contrast to Dadon, this is a ‘positive’ creature: sensing that the kingdom is about to be attacked, she frets about the fate of her fledgelings:

Часто он подходит к окошку;
Не услышит ли какого шума?
Слышен, веет ночной птица,
Она чувт будетеминучу,
Скоро ей искать новой кровли
Для своих птенцов горемычных.
(III, 337, 7-12)

Dadon, by contrast, immediately forgets about his fledgelings when he sees the tsaritsa. The fact that Pushkin composed this poem in 1834, the same year in which ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’ was written, suggests that Pushkin had the figure of the night bird in ‘Videnie korolia’ in mind when describing Dadon. Typically, Pushkin may have borrowed an image, in this case his own, but ‘inverted’ its significance.52

Another possible source not only of the image of the night bird but also of the sun is Slovo o polku Igoreve. We saw in Chapter One that Pushkin was thoroughly familiar with this work. In his essay ‘O nichtozhestve literatury russkoi’ which was also written in 1834, he described it as ‘the single monument in the desert of our ancient literature’ (XI, 268). In the first part of the work, when Igor’ decides to ride into battle, there is an eclipse of the sun which turns day into night; night ‘groans’ and fills the (day) birds with terror:

52 ‘Videnie korolia’ appears to have been written before ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’ according to the Jubilee edition of Pushkin’s work (see III.2, 1253 and 1307).
Pushkin’s version uses the key components of this scene — the sun, the bird, the night — but practically in reverse: the tsaritsa, who is likened to the sun, is not eclipsed but radiates light and, in effect, eclipses everything else; Dadon, who is likened to a night bird, is not filled with terror, but is entranced by her beauty. Dadon is a tsar in reverse. Igor’ is not put off by the eclipse and resumes his journey to battle. He says that it is better to be killed than be taken prisoner. Dadon, on the other hand, forgets about his dead ‘falcons’ (another common image in Slovo o polku Igoreve) and, in dereliction of his duty to his country, allows himself to be captivated by the tsaritsa.

Akhmatova points out that the scene in which the brothers kill each other does not occur in Irving’s work, but is original to Pushkin. Not only did this add to the authenticity of the tale, since the motif of fraternal opponents killing each other occurs in Slavic folklore, it is also understandable as part of the tale’s possible satire against the imperial regime. Their deaths serve to underline the depravity of the king’s subsequent romantic encounter with the tsaritsa. A possible deduction based on Akhmatova’s interpretation is that the brothers, whose foolish act of violence is seen as a reflection of their vulnerability, represent the Decembrists executed by Nicholas. The description of Nicholas as the bird of the night is as negative as any of the apocalyptic images used in the portrayal of Peter.

Paradoxically, Pushkin then undermines the figure of Dadon by allowing him to indulge himself with the tsaritsa. Irving’s Christian damsel never allows the king to satisfy his passion. When he became aroused, she would strike a silver lyre on a golden chain round her neck: ‘The king fell asleep and awoke cooled of his passion after agreeable dreams’. Smiling at him, and with mock deference (she bows to him), Pushkin’s beauty leads Dadon into the comfort of her tent, and its brocade bed. However, this represents her conquest over him: within a week he has submitted unconditionally to her will:

И потом, неделю ровно, —
Покорясь ей безусловно, —
Околдован, восхищен,
Пироовал у ней Дадон.
(III, 561, 151-54)

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53 Slovo o polku Igoreve, translated and commentary by A. Iugov, L., 1945, pp. 54-56.
54 Slovo o polku Igoreve, p. 56.
55 Akhmatova, “‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’”, pp. 23-25.
Dadon celebrates his abdication of responsibility and moral authority. Nepomniashchii observes: ‘Dadon utters clownish howls and is later cavorting with the maiden. The warning is forgotten, the Tsar is doomed’.57

When Dadon returns home with his beautiful booty, he is confronted by the eunuch. Reminding the tsar that he promised to grant him any wish out of gratitude for the gift of the cockerel, the eunuch asks for the tsaritsa. The astonished tsar refuses, but fails to persuade the eunuch to change his mind. Dadon eventually tires of this irritating presence and kills him with a blow of his staff. Nepomniashchii posits the theory that Pushkin identified himself with the eunuch and that the tale is not just parody and political satire, but self-parody and self-satire. He observes:

Pushkin found the model for his own fate in that of the astrologer with his grey hair and swan whiteness - the colour of purity, light and wisdom, with the secret and precious gift that he entrusted to the Tsar, for which he receives a blow on the forehead.58

Nepomniashchii refers to the swan because the eunuch is likened to this bird:

Всех приветствует Дадон.....
Вдруг в толпе увидел он,
В сарацинской шапке белой,
Весь как лебедь поседелый,
Старый друг его, скопец.
(III, 561, 165-69)59

The inclusion of the word ‘friend’ supports Nepomniashchii’s identification. In Chapter Two it was shown that this can refer periphrastically to the poet. However, Pushkin does not, as Nepomniashchii suggests, describe the swan as white, but grey (albeit a type of whiteness). The role of the white Sarachinskii hat is to draw attention to the swan’s greyness. The use of this colour seems to be crucial to understanding the significance of the image. Elsewhere in his work, Pushkin emphasizes the dazzling colour of the bird. For example, in ‘Gorodok. (K ***’) the swan which Pushkin sees floating on lake in Tsarskoe Selo is ‘snow-white’ (I, 79, 348). By changing the colour

59 Although the eunuch is the object of the verb, skopets is not put into the animate genitive, as it is in the draft (III.2, 1115). It also appears in the animate genitive earlier in the tale (III, 558, 47). The ‘imperfection’ may be deliberate, since it subtly draws attention to the troublesome figure of the eunuch. Pushkin uses these deliberate mistakes elsewhere in his work. For example, he does not include the sixth line of the octave in stanza XXXVI of Domik v Kolomne. He thereby draws attention to the punning relationship between the male-female rhyming scheme and the theme of cross-dressing in the poem: see Worthey, ‘Gender Poetics and the Structure of Pushkin’s “Little House in Kolomna”’, p. 285.
to a dull grey, Pushkin acknowledges that he has lost his ‘virility’. The corrupted image is a symbolic expression of his personal sense of impotence. Pushkin has, at long last, likened himself to a swan. But his swan bears no resemblance to the conventional image, either to the virile mythological swan which overwhelms the shepherdess in ‘Leda. Kantata’ [1814] (I, 66-67, 21-42), or to the soaring bird, the ultimate symbol of the transcendence of death, which occurs in the poetry of Horace and Derzhavin.

However, in his lyric poetry Pushkin had gone to great lengths to describe the virile nature of his poetic identity. The censor and the mob were eunuchs, not the poet. Now he is the eunuch (III, 558, 28; 558, 47; 561, 169); only once does Pushkin refer to himself as an astrologer in the tale (III, 558, 28). In Irving’s version, the astrologer (who is not described as a eunuch) sports a long grey beard which descends ‘to his girdle’. Pushkin removed the reference to a beard from the draft of the poem (III.2, 1117). Akhmatova suggests that was because eunuchs cannot wear them. This amendment is certainly consistent with the symbolic significance of the beard elsewhere in Pushkin. For example, in *Ruslan i Liudmila* the dwarf’s beard is a grotesque detachable symbol of his virility conveyed to Liudmila’s bed by a solemn retinue of ‘Negroes’ (IV, 34, 426-31).

Pushkin undoubtedly felt ‘impotent’ in his personal life as a result of living in a censorious and, at times, callous regime. In January 1834 he had been appointed a Kammerjunker, Gentleman of the Bedchamber, a role traditionally reserved, in his words, for ‘eighteen-year-old molokosy’ (XII, 333). In a diary entry in the same year, he wryly records the general amusement caused by the Metropolitan’s reading during Holy Week which inadvertently attached the label of ‘eunuch’ to those people like Pushkin who held this post:

Он выбрал для памяти главу из Книги Царств, где между прочим сказано, что царь собрал и тысячиников, и сотников, и евнухов своих. К.А. Нарышкин сказал, что это искусное примирение к камергерам. А в городе стали говорить, что во время службы будут молиться за евнухов. (XII, 327)

In 1830 the Metropolitan had addressed a poem to Pushkin, who described it as ‘the pure balm of his sweet-smelling speech’ (III, 212. 11-12). The Metropolitan’s reading was obviously less fragrant.

‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’ gave Pushkin the opportunity to wreak some sort of revenge for his emasculation. In Russian folklore it was considered a great sin to kill

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62 Akhmatova, “‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’”, p. 25.
the swan. As a result of his crime, Dadon, the ‘bird of the night’, is struck down by the cockerel, a ‘real bird’:

Вдруг — раздался лёгкой звон,
И в глазах у всей столицы
Петушок спорхнул со спицы;
К колеснице полетел
И царю на темя сел,
Встrepенулся, клюнул в темя
И вззвился... и в то же время
С колесницы пал Дадон!
Охнул раз, — и умер он.
(III, 562-63, 214-22)

Hoisington points out that the cockerel attacks Dadon in full view of the capital, making the act of revenge a public event. Moreover, the bird strikes the hubristic Dadon as he rides through the streets in his kolesnitsa (III, 561, 163): the image of the arrogant figure of authority travelling in his vehicle, established long before in ‘K Litsiniu. (S latinskogo)’, is finally dislodged. Ultimately, the cockerel did not guard Dadon against attack but simply kept him under surveillance, monitoring his behaviour; as soon as Dadon struck the eunuch-poet, the bird’s reaction was immediate and symbolic. One can now detect the deliberate ambiguity in the eunuch’s promise to the Dadon at the start of the tale:

Петушок мой золотой
Будет верный сторож твой; <...
(III, 558, 35-36)

As for the tsaritsa, she conspires with Pushkin to undermine the tsar. In the final lines of the poem she vanishes leaving Pushkin’s lone voice which hints at the real significance of the preceding events:

А царица вдруг пропала,
Будто вовсе не бывало.
Сказка ложь, да в ней намек!
Добрым молодцам урок.
(III, 563, 223-26)

The difference between the tsaritsa and the cockerel lies in the fact she is just his agent.
In Jakobson’s description of the myth of the statue in Pushkin’s work, one of the three stable components in this paradigm was that the woman, desired by the man, vanishes once the man has perished:

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1. A man is weary, he settles down, he longs for rest, and this motif is intertwined with desire for a woman. [...] 
2. The statue, more precisely the being which is inseparably connected with the statue, has a supernatural, unfathomable power over this desired woman. [...] 
3. After a vain resistance the man perishes through the intervention of the statue, which has miraculously set itself into motion, and the woman vanishes.\textsuperscript{65}

Jakobson believed that both this poem and \textit{Mednyi vsadnik} exhibit this myth, and that the cockerel and the Bronze Horseman play the same role as the statue: ‘The light ringing of [the cockerel’s] flight (\textit{legkij zvon}) echoes and simultaneously softens the Bronze Horseman’s heavily ringing gallop (\textit{tjazelo-zvonkoe skakanie}).\textsuperscript{66}

However, he also notes that a metonymic relationship exists between the eunuch and the cockerel.\textsuperscript{67} This is reflected in the eunuch’s use of the possessive pronoun in relation to the bird:

Петушок мой золотой <...>
(III, 558, 35)

Pushkin identifies himself with the eunuch, but also with this bird. There is a precedent for Pushkin attacking a tsar in the guise of a bird in his poetry. In ‘Prriateliam’ [1825] he had likened himself to a ‘hungry hawk’ circling above his ‘friends’ – the turkeys and geese – with a view to sinking his talons into them (II, 337, 5-8). Tsiavlovskaia observes that Pushkin referred to Alexander I as ‘our friend’ (\textit{priiatel'}) in his correspondence, and that the poem therefore represents an oblique attack on the establishment.\textsuperscript{68} After its attack in ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’, Pushkin’s cockerel does not simply vanish like the tsaritsa but soars into the sky. It is the virile poetic \textit{alter ego} of the swan.\textsuperscript{69} When viewed in isolation of the statue myth, the cockerel can be seen to stand in \textit{opposition} to the imperial image of Peter and his horse. The delicate sound of the bird’s flight is a poetic, but equally powerful response to the clatter of the steed’s hoofs.

According to Vinogradov, there is a long-standing literary tradition linking the poet with the image of a bird in a socio-political context.\textsuperscript{70} As we saw in Chapter One, Pushkin may have simultaneously drawn on both the political and poetic connotations of the eagle in poems such as ‘Prorok’ and ‘Poet’. In the earlier ‘Uznik’ [1822]

\textsuperscript{65} Jakobson, ‘The Statue in Pu§kin’s Poetic Mythology’, pp. 4-6.
\textsuperscript{67} Jakobson, ‘The Statue in Pu§kin’s Poetic Mythology’, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{68} The commentary of Tsiavlovskaia, pp. 554-55. Tsiavlovskaia refers to Pushkin’s letter to Ryleev, written at some point between the second half of June and August 1825 (XIII, 219).
\textsuperscript{69} Hoisington also views the cockerel as a symbol of Pushkin’s masculinity, but makes no reference to the other bird images in the tale: see Hoisington, ‘Pushkin’s “Golden Cockerel”: A Critical Re-examination’, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{70} Vinogradov, \textit{Stil’ Pushkina}, p. 115.
Pushkin, who was under house arrest in Kishinev for three weeks (from 8 to 28 March 1822) for assaulting a boyar, had identified himself with a tethered eagle which he could see from his window. He describes the bird's thoughts as it looks at the incarcerated poet:

«Мы вольные птицы; пора, брат, пора!
Туда, где за тучей белет гора,
Туда, где синеют морские края,
Туда, где гуляем лишь ветер... да я!..»
(II, 245, 9-12)

Pushkin was probably referring to the eagles which General Inzov, his superior in Kishinev, kept in iron chains outside his quarters. In 'Ptichka', written in the following year, Pushkin again appeared to identify himself with the birds which were traditionally released across Russia on Easter Sunday (Pushkin discusses this custom in a letter to N.I. Gnedich, dated 13 May 1823: XIII, 63). In a similar vein, he referred to the ptichka as the 'friend of freedom' in his translation of Ariosto, 'Iz Ariostova "Orlando furioso";' in 1826 (III, 15, 46).

However, Pushkin encountered two problems in following this tradition of portraying the oppressed poet as a bird. Firstly, he ran the risk that the authorities would infer the true meaning of the bird image, or even a meaning which did not exist – the censor’s office had, after all, erroneously found anti-establishment meanings for 'arrows' and 'poison' in 'Anchar' [1828] (III, 134, 33-36). Secondly, he may have objected to adopting a technique which was so well-established in the works of other poets. He certainly exhibits a degree of contrariness in his use of bird imagery in his descriptions of inspiration. By portraying himself as a ptichka, Pushkin was following the example of Derzhavin himself. In 'Na ptichku' [1792 or 1793] Derzhavin had expressed his discomfort at having to 'sing' like a bird for Catherine:

Поймали птичку голосисту
И ну сжимать ее рукой.
Пищит бедняжка вместо свисту;
А ей твердят: «Пой, птичка, пой!»

The resolution which Pushkin sought in response to these problems, and which eventually resulted in his self-portrayal as a cockerel in 'Skazka o zolotom petushke', was to choose a bird which traditionally was seldom associated with the poet. This is what he does in Canto Four of Evgenii Onegin. There he identifies himself as the lone

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71 The Commentary of Blagoi and Tsiavlovskaia, p. 671.
72 There is a reference to these birds in Tsiavlovskaia, Risunki Pushkina, p. 24.
73 See Bayley, Pushkin, pp. 144-45.
goose left behind in provincial Russia while the rest of the flock heads south. In Chapter One we saw that Pushkin appeared to be mimicking the simile in Tsygany in which Aleko is, figuratively speaking, shot from a flock of migrating cranes. This link between the two works substantiates the contention that Pushkin identifies himself with the goose. As many commentators have observed, he hints at his qualified identification with Aleko by giving him a similar Christian name. Pushkin therefore associates himself with the image of the crane, and thus with the corresponding image of the goose in Evgenii Onegin. Furthermore, as Brown notes, by choosing to portray himself as a crane in Tsygany, Pushkin was probably influenced by Radishchev's 'Zhuravli' [c. 1797-1800], a translation of Ewald von Kleist's 'Die Kraniche':

'Zhuravli' is an allegorical poem which describes Radishchev's four-year exile in Siberia. Brown observes that his crane overcomes its weakness and triumphantly rejoins the remaining birds oversees, a reference to Radishchev's eventual release from exile. By contrast, the crane's downfall in Tsygany is permanent. It is characteristic of Pushkin to have borrowed an image from another poet but, in the process, to have changed the fundamental message. He has successfully described his isolation in exile, but the cry of protest is motivated by despair and resignation.

78 There is a parallel in Puteshestvie iz Moskvy v Peterburg, Pushkin's polemical reply to Radishchev's Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu. Radishchev had succeeded in earning Catherine's displeasure by articulating a 'liberal' philosophy in the genre of a travelogue. In his version Pushkin conspicuously declines to follow Radishchev's example. He describes the same journey, but symbolically travels in the opposite direction. During the journey he mocks Radishchev's lachrymose reaction to the peasants' suffering, dismissing it as 'idle talk' (pustoslovie) (XI, 258). He also describes being handed a copy of Radishchev's work during the journey, but finds that it has lost its allure (XI, 245). Later, in his article 'Aleksandr Radishchev' [1836], he describes it as a 'highly mediocre book'; the first few pages are 'extraordinarily boring and tedious'; the style is 'barbaric' (XII, 30-36 (32; 33; 35)). Pushkin does, however, criticize the harshness of the sentence of death, commuted to exile in Siberia, issued against the author (XII, 33).
However, when in *Evgenii Onegin* Pushkin caricatures the image of the abandoned bird, now metamorphosed into a goose, he introduces a note of defiance in his protest. He gives the goose *red feet*:

На красных лапках гусь тяжелый,  
Задумываясь,  
Ступает бережно на лед,  
Скользит и падает; <...
(Four: XLII: 9-12)

Members of the Arzamas had to deliver an mock oath wearing a red cap. Pushkin refers to this light-hearted ritual in ‘Tovarishcham’ [1817] (I, 199, 28). The cap was seen as a symbol of freedom and independence amongst the riotous group of poets.79 In this depiction of the goose on the ice Pushkin deliberately picks out the redness of its feet (and does so again in his discussion of this stanza in ‘Oproverzhenie na kritiki’: XI, 146) in order to reinforce the link with the Arzamas. The reminiscence is even more evident in Tat’iana’s dream in which the hybrid goose (an echo of the bird in Canto Four) wears a red cap:

Вот череп на гусиной шее  
Вертится в красном колпаке, <...
(Five: XVII: 3-4)

In their commentary of ‘Tovarishcham’ Blagoi and Tsiavlovskaia refer to the red caps sported by the Jacobins during the Reign of Terror.80 But the members of the Arzamas were not advocating revolutionary action by wearing their caps. Nabokov notes: ‘These *bonnets rouges* are gloated upon by leftist commentators, who forget, however, that some of the heads that these caps covered belonged [...] to ardent champions of monarchy, religion, and genteel literature, and that the thread of travesty that ran through the proceedings of the club precluded the presence of any serious political (or artistic) purpose’.81 Blagoi and Tsiavlovskaia are certainly not ‘leftist’ commentators, but Nabokov’s general observation is justified. In Canto Four Pushkin wittily transforms himself into a goose, but the splash of red which he displays simply represents an oblique assertion of his independence and, perhaps, a poignant recollection of the time when he was part of a ‘flock’. By 1828, however, as the unhappy object of Nicholas’s continuing scrutiny and suspicion, Pushkin will note in ‘V.S. Filimonovu pri poluchenii poemy ego “Duratskii kolpak”’ that ‘the colour red is not now in fashion’ (III, 99, 12). Indeed, upon Nicholas’s ascendance to the throne, the new tsar had symbolically ordered the state emblem of the eagle to be portrayed in

80 The Commentary of Blagoi and Tsiavlovskaia, p. 707.  
black, for the first time in the history of Russia.\textsuperscript{82} Pushkin felt the full weight of the new sombre regime. In his diary in 1834, for example, he reveals that he was aware of the perniciousness to which his letters were routinely subject (XII, 328-29).

In another diary entry in this year, Pushkin described his visit to the village of Tarutino where Russian forces had warded off the French in 1812. To commemorate the victory, the owner, Count Rumiantsov, emancipated the serfs and presented them with the land. The victory was later commemorated by a monument which was unveiled in June 1834. Pushkin acknowledges that the victory should be remembered, but criticizes the monument, which showed an eagle perched on a column (in an ironic aside, he adds that he would have preferred to see a church with an adjoining school, since the peasants would be incapable of reading the inscriptions on the edifice) (XII, 332). In Jakobson’s opinion, the description of the cockerel on its spire in ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’ (also written in 1834) is an ironic allusion to this sort of generic memorial of an eagle on a column (although he does not refer to this diary entry).\textsuperscript{83} He also believes that Pushkin identifies the cockerel as the central character, the ‘carrier of the action’, by naming the skazka after it.\textsuperscript{84} This is the only title in Pushkin’s work which contains an image signifying Pushkin himself. Within the tale, and indeed in the drawing on the title page showing the cockerel on its spire (XVIII, 243), he places the poet at the very pinnacle of the kingdom.\textsuperscript{85} The poet-cockerel assassimates the bird of the night, whilst imitating the imperial eagle. In a further, exquisite layer of irony, when the poet-cockerel is roused from sleep, ostensibly to alert Dadon to impending danger, he becomes the unlikely, distant relation of the poet-eagle in ‘Poet’:

\begin{verbatim}

Ко лишь божественный глагол
До слуха чуткого коснется,
Душа поэта встревает,
Как пробудившийся орел.
‘Poet’ (III, 65, 9-12)

Петушок с высокой спицы
Стал стерветь его границы.
Чуть опасность где видна,
Верный сторож как со сна
Шевелится, встревает,
К той сторонке обернется
И кричит: «Кири-ку-ку.
Царствуй, лежа на боку!»
(III, 558, 53-60)
\end{verbatim}

Although Pushkin describes the astrologer as a ‘eunuch’, he is also, significantly, a ‘sage’ (mudrets):


\textsuperscript{83} Jakobson, ‘The Statue in PuSkin’s Poetic Mythology’, p. 28.

\textsuperscript{84} Jakobson, ‘The Statue in PuSkin’s Poetic Mythology’, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{85} In a recent study of Pushkin’s drawings Liubov’ Kraval’ notes that Dadon’s face looks feminine and may in fact represent Catherine II: Liubov’ Kraval’, \textit{Risunki Pushkina kak graficheskii dnevnik}, Pushkin v XX veke, 4, M., 1997, p. 38.
This part of his dual nature is assigned to the clever cockerel, Dadon’s faithful
guardian, which knows the value of concealing its hostile intentions and carefully
timing its attacks. One will recall that in a poem addressed to Chaadaev in 1821,
Pushkin said that his friend was ‘always a sage, and sometimes a dreamer’. ‘Skazka o
zolotom petushke’ illustrates the fact that Pushkin himself never forgot the wisdom of
camouflaging his political attacks. To do this he found the imagery of flying, especially
bird imagery, an indispensable asset.

In ‘la pamiatnik sebe vozdvig nerukotvorny’ Pushkin states that he glorified
Freedom in a cruel age (III, 424, 15). In the draft of the poem, he says that he did this
following Radishchev’s example (III.2, 1034). Although Pushkin could not
successfully use Radishchev’s specific image of the crane to attack the monarchy, the
older poet did possibly inspire him to use other bird imagery to express his hostility to
the imperial regime. In ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’ Pushkin transformed himself into
a cockerel and, unlike the great majority of his male characters who are endowed with
the attributes of a bird, and blazing with the golden red of defiance, he survived to soar
majestically into the air, leaving behind the corpse of his adversary. Several years later,
again in ‘la pamiatnik sebe vozdvig nerukotvorny’, he boasts that his monument will
rise above that of the tsar (III, 424, 3-4). From this vantage point the victorious poet
will look contemptuously down on Alexander’s Column – which is topped, of course,
by the monarch in the guise of an angel, another type of bird – for ever.

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86 See Alekseev’s monumental monograph on this poem: M.P. Alekseev, ‘Stikhotvorenie Pushkina
“la pamiatnik sebe vozdvig...”’, in his Pushkin i mirovaia literatura, L., 1987, pp. 5-265 (12-13).
Chapter Four

The Downfall of Pushkin’s Bird Men

Pushkin’s Bird Men are those characters who are likened to or figuratively endowed with the attributes of birds or other flying creatures. In this chapter I will trace the development of these men in three areas of Pushkin’s œuvre: *Ruslan i Liudmila*, the Southern poems (predominantly *Gavriiliada*, *Bakhchisaraiskii fontan* and *Tsytgany*) and *Evgenii Onegin*. The common factor in these works is that Pushkin applies this imagery to men whom he wants to compromise as conventional ‘heroes’ or sometimes, more specifically, as lovers. The role of the female protagonist, whom Pushkin can also liken to a bird or some other flying creature, is to humiliate or ruin these characters, and then to disappear or even die. There is, therefore, a parallel between her role in this paradigm and in Jakobson’s myth of the statue which was considered in Chapter Three.¹

The point of departure for my study of Pushkin’s Bird Men will be his first major narrative poem, *Ruslan i Liudmila*. Pushkin decided to use the happy denouement of a *skazka* in this work, something he patently does not do in ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’. At the end of Song Six Ruslan has successfully repulsed the two flying sorcerers, Naina and Chernomor. He emerges as a ‘wondrous warrior’ (IV, 83, 292) who proves his worth in the ‘bloody feast’ of battle (IV, 80, 206) – a stock expression which occurs in the works of Ryleev, Kiukhel’beker, Zhukovskii, Tumanskii, Glinka and Derzhavin.² Ruslan could have become Pushkin’s first romantically compromised male character outside the lyric poetry. He had, after all, allowed Chernomor to kidnap his new bride from the marital bed. His humiliation was compounded by his father-in-law’s decision to dispatch three other khans to rescue his daughter. Anxiety about his failings fuel his dream which, in part, looks back to the abduction of Liudmila and recreates the atmosphere of disapprobation which surrounded him at that time.

However, in the final scene Pushkin allows Ruslan to rehabilitate himself, a courtesy he will never again extend to any of his principal characters.

In this final scene, Pushkin uses the heroic language of the epic poem to describe Ruslan’s newly-acquired power. More specifically, as soon as his hero is revived by the Finn, Pushkin unleashes a volley of flying motifs: Ruslan ‘flies’ through the fields and groves (IV, 81, 229-30); the troops ‘fly’ to battle (IV, 82, 250); Pushkin focuses fleetingly on a light arrow which fells a man (IV, 82, 266); then Ruslan’s ‘flying’ figure joins the fray (IV, 83, 294), whereupon heads ‘fly everywhere’ from warriors’ shoulders (IV, 83, 301). He returns in triumph to the palace from the battle which he has single-handedly won for his father-in-law. Intent on reclaiming his wife, Ruslan holds his potent sword aloft as he ‘flies’ to the palace:

Дикует Киев... Но по граду  
Мотучий богатырь летит;  
В деснице держит меч победный;  
Копье сияет как звезда;  
Струится кровь с кольчуги медной;  
На шлеме вьется борода;  
Летит, надеждою окривленный,  
По стопам шумным в княжий дом.  
(IV, 84, 319-26)

Pushkin here employs the imagery of flying together with symbols of virility in order to describe Ruslan’s metamorphosis into a hero. His spear shines with what will become a Petrine luminescence, signifying power; his transition from feckless groom to bogatyr’ is symbolized by the blood which pours from his shirt of mail; the bizarre symbol of virility, the dwarf’s beard, is held aloft on his helmet; he is ‘winged with hope’. His rehabilitation is complete when he rouses Liudmila from her sleep with the magic ring. Ruslan is ‘reborn’ and finally earns his father-in-law’s acceptance:

Воскреснув пламенной душой,  
Руслан не видит, не внимает,  
И старец в радости немой,  
Рыдая, мильх обнимает.  
(IV, 85, 357-60)

We will see that in Tsygany and Evgenii Onegin Pushkin again uses the imagery of flying to describe the metamorphosis of Aleko and Onegin; but on those occasions he describes Bird Men who stop flying. Aleko is compared to a crane which falls from the sky and nurses its injured wing; and from the opening scene of Evgenii Onegin the hero ‘flies’ through the novel until he falls at Tat’iana’s feet at the end of Canto Eight. In both cases the transformation strips the character of all vestiges of hope and dignity.
Although Ruslan is eventually 'resurrected', the negative potential of the imagery of flying which Pushkin develops in the later works can be observed in his characterization prior to the final episode in Kiev. In Song Two, for example, Pushkin dwells on Ruslan’s calamitous failure to protect his new wife by comparing him to a cockerel, the 'haughty sultan of the hen-house', who embraces his female friend with his wings, only to let her be seized by a grey kite:

The rhyme *petukh*pukh neatly underlines the enormity of the cockerel’s loss. Instead of facing his beloved, he sees a piece of flying fluff, all that remains of his mate. Liudmila appears to become a victim of the dwarf, represented here as the kite. However, as we shall see, she is protected during her imprisonment in the palace by 'winged sleep', while the dwarf-kite becomes the frustrated victim of his own sexual impotence.

It would be productive to contrast this extract with the famous description of Istitomina’s performance in *Evgenii Onegin*, when the ballerina is compared to fluff (pukh) from ‘the lips of Aeolus’:

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The simile conveys the exquisite lightness of her flight through the air. But the delicacy of her movements is also an indication of her control. It is just possible that Pushkin may have intended to make a pun on the word pol, meaning both the floor and the (male) sex, both of which Istomina dances across. Later in the novel we find the combination pukh and pol, used now to mean the female sex:

И мильный пол, как пух, легок.
(Four: XXI: 8)

In this scene in Canto One Pushkin uses the imagery of flying to describe the bewitching allure of a notorious femme fatale. Nabokov notes that she was the cause of several duels including one between Griboedov and her ‘sponsor’, Count Sheremetov. Pushkin describes her with one of her conquests in ‘Orlov s Istominoi v postele’ [1817]. He also refers to the alluring appearance of a ‘winged’ ballerina, possibly Istomina, in a letter to P. B. Mansurov dated 27 October 1819. The tone of his reported reaction to the sight of the girl is marked by the jovial coarseness which characterizes much of the correspondence with his friends. In Evgenii Onegin, however, he simply records the vision. The very mention of her name invests the scene with an obvious sexual dimension. The power of the dancer’s guile is conveyed by the elegant control of her flight. In the two scenes in Ruslan i Liudmila and Evgenii Onegin, Pushkin therefore describes opposite sides of what becomes a simple equation in the works I analyse in this chapter: winged men are weak; winged women are strong.

One can also contrast Pushkin’s analogy of the cockerel in Ruslan i Liudmila with a scene in ‘Skazka o tsare Saltane’ [1831], in which Gvidon, having noticed a kite pursuing a swan, shoots it with an arrow (III, 510, 153-62). As in the narrative poem, the kite is a magician (III, 511, 186), while the swan is in fact a tsarevna. Blagoi thought that the swan represented Pushkin’s wife. Although Pushkin based the tale on oral sources (he probably heard it from his nanny Arina Rodionovna), this scene, according to Blagoi, was Pushkin’s original invention. If his interpretation is correct, the poet identifies himself with Gvidon and, in contrast to Ruslan, successfully kills off rival admirers of his beautiful wife. Pushkin hints at this identification in the final couplet of the tale where he announces that he was present at Gvidon’s celebratory feast:

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5 ‘Каждое утро крылатая дева летит на репетицию мимо окон нашего Хикиты [Всеволодского], по прежнему подымается на нее телескопы и <----- — но увы.’ (XIII, 11).
6 Blagoi, Dusha v zavetnoi lire, p. 422.
As in the later tale, ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’, Pushkin achieved a resolution to problems which arose in real life in the world of his own poetry, a world in which his control was complete.

Pushkin does not identify himself with any of the characters in Ruslan i Liudmila, but, as in Evgenii Onegin, he intrudes upon the narrative by offering his ironic appraisal of the hero’s progress. In his analysis of the poem Bayley observes: ‘Instead of a story told by a poet it is more like a series of tableaux vivants surveyed and commented on by a sophisticated spectator’. In the analogy of the cockerel Pushkin clearly announces himself as spectator. At other times his presence is less clearly delineated, but it can still be inferred by the ironic use of mock heroic language. This is illustrated in Song Three when Ruslan is himself likened to a ‘hawk’:

Как ястреб богатырь летит
С поднятой, грозною десницей
И в щеку тяжкой рукавицей
С размаха голову разит; <..>
(IV, 46, 332-35)

The object of this heroic attack is a giant head which has prevented Ruslan from riding past it by the simple expedient of blowing. Except for its mighty puff, the head is otherwise defenceless. Ruslan’s furious attack is hardly heroic. His response is also disproportionate to the head’s provocateur behaviour (he subsequently tries to cut off the head’s ears and nose: IV, 46, 348-49).

The view that Pushkin parodies the language of the heroic poem in Ruslan i Liudmila is expressed in most analyses of the work. Moreover, in Chapter One I referred to Pushkin’s apology to Zhukovskii in Song Four in which he implicitly acknowledges that he is parodying ‘Vadim’. However, Pushkin’s intrusion into his work goes beyond this exuberant reworking of the heroic poem and his Onegin-like asides. Pushkin himself fleetingly appears on the landscape through which Ruslan is travelling in order to deliver his verdict on the hero’s progress. He disguises his presence by imposing his voice onto the disembodied head on the steppe. Having repelled Ruslan

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8 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 46.
9 This aspect of Ruslan i Liudmila is investigated in Mark Altshuller, ‘Pushkin’s ‘Ruslan i Liudmila’ and the Traditions of the Mock-Epic Poem’, in The Golden Age of Russian Literature and Thought: Selected Papers from the Fourth World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies, Harrogate, 1990, ed. Derek Offord, Basingstoke, 1992, pp. 7-23.
with his breath, the head had mocked the young man's heroic status, just as Pushkin had openly done in Song Two:

А голова ему вослед,
Как сумасшедшая, хохочет,
Гремит: «ай, витязь! ай герой!
Куда ты? тише, тише стой!
Эй, витязь, шею сломишь даром;
Не тронь, воин, и меня
Порадуй хоть одним ударом,
Пока не заморил коня».
И между тем она георья
Дразнила страшным языком.
(IV, 45, 300-09)

Pushkin uses this titanic mouthpiece to laugh at Ruslan then withdraws from the scene. Ruslan sinks his sword into the head's offensive tongue (IV, 45, 313-14), but Pushkin has already resumed his role as the sophisticated narrator and is able to convey his sarcasm in the simile of the hawk. When the head speaks next, he bears no relation to the chaffing presence which first loomed out of the steppe:

„Ты вразумил меня, георй, —
Со вздохом голова сказала: —
Твоя десница доказала,
Что я виновен пред тобой;
Отныне я тебе послушен;
Но, витязь, будь великодушен!
Достоин плача жребий мой“.
(IV, 47, 359-65)

The head, which was severed from the body of a bogatyr' by the dwarf Chernomor, his younger brother, longs to die but is kept alive by the dwarf’s magic. When Ruslan returns with Chernomor, thereby breaking the spell, the head eventually dies (IV, 67-68, 270-95). Bayley believes that it is the only character in the poem to die 'like a hero'.\(^{10}\) However, when it first opened its mouth it spoke like Pushkin. There is a parallel between this episode and the final scene in Evgenii Onegin. As we will see, when Onegin sets off to confront Tat’iana in St Petersburg his defeat within the paradigm of the Bird Man is complete. At their last encounter Tat’iana suddenly starts to speak like a male aristocrat. Pushkin uses her as a mouthpiece to humiliate Onegin and does so with the defeated figure of his hero at his feet. Pushkin then withdraws and becomes the observer.

Although Pushkin is the ultimate éminence grise in Ruslan i Liudmila, there are two figures within the narrative who also control the other characters. They lead two rival

\(^{10}\) Bayley, Pushkin, p. 44.
conspiracies to recover the prize of Liudmila. The Finnish hermit, whom Ruslan encounters in Song Two, represents the ‘male’ camp; Naina, the sorceress, the ‘female’. Her determination to beat Ruslan derives from his alliance with the hermit. As a young man, the Finn was infatuated with Naina, but she twice spurned him. After a forty year apprenticeship in the art of black magic, he used an incantatory spell to force her to love him; but, having seen her now decrepit looks, he spurned her. Her newfound love for the Finn then turned to hate. Naina’s role is to obstruct the men’s bid to win by advancing Chernomor’s cause. This plot bears some relation to ‘Favn i pastushka. Kartiny’ [1814-16], a poem based on Parny’s *Les déguisements de Vénus*. In this work a faun tries unsuccessfully to catch a shepherdess. After a long period has elapsed, she propositions him, but he declares that he no longer finds her attractive now that she is old (I, 216, 184-232). As in *Ruslan i Liudmila* the man remains single, but he has ultimate control over the woman.

*Evgenii Onegin* describes a similar plot, but with the obvious difference that the role of the sexes is reversed. Tat’iana unsuccessfully pursues Onegin and then, by rejecting him, exercises the power which has shifted to her in the course of the novel. However, the very fact that she pursued Onegin in the first place reflects the fundamental shift which has taken place in Pushkin’s description of the woman’s romantic and sexual desires since ‘Favn i pastushka. Kartiny’ and *Ruslan i Liudmila*. Lila the shepherdess and Liudmila are both girls who go to extraordinary lengths to protect their honour. Both consider drowning themselves in raging torrents rather than allow themselves to be caught by their respective pursuers, the faun (I, 214, 88-113) and the unappealing Chernomor (IV, 32, 344-53). By contrast, in her dream Tat’iana comes across her own torrent but successfully negotiates it in order to meet the man she desires. A shaggy bear (Five: XIII: 3) then chases her in a scene remarkably similar to the episode in ‘Favn i pastushka. Kartiny’ in which a shaggy faun (II, 213, 53) pursues the shepherdess:

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‘Favn i pastushka. Kartiny’

Татьяна в лес; медведь за нею
И даже трепетной рукой
Одежду край поднять стыдится

Онегин, взорами сверкая
Пред ними лес

Татиана в лес; медведь за нею

(1, 214, 88-113)

In Canto Three Pushkin had declared that Parny’s ‘tender pen’ is out of fashion (Three: XXIX: 13-14). It would be characteristic of Pushkin’s contrary nature subsequently to include a scene which is inspired by Parny and which, as so many commentators point out, occupies the very centre of the novel.

Lila’s ‘flight’ from her lusty chaser is itself reminiscent of the maiden’s successful bid to avoid capture by the monk in the dream in ‘Monakh’. There Pankratii finds himself standing amid an Arcadian orgy. Exhausted lovers lie, still embracing, on a bed of roses. The dumbfounded figure of the monk stands in stark contrast to the exotic surroundings, replete with myrtle, satyrs and fauns. When he spots a group of maidens, he starts to chase after one of them like a ‘light steed’ (I, 13, 60-68). Her reaction is immediate:

Выстрей орла, быстрее звука лир
Предвестница летела, как зефир.

(I, 13, 69-70)

The maiden, who is never caught, is one of the first ‘Bird Women’, female characters to whom Pushkin applies the imagery of flying in order to humiliate or disempower male characters.
Despite the similarity between the chase in Tat’iana’s dream and ‘Favn i pastushka. Kartiny’, in her subconscious Tat’iana wants to be caught. In contrast to Lila, she does not ‘fly’ in order to evade capture by her shaggy pursuer. She may also choose not to copy the shepherdess and expose her breast rather than coyly refusing to raise even the borders of her dress since, in Slavic folklore, this exposure was said to prevent bears from touching a woman. In her letter to Onegin she revealed that he had appeared on several occasions in her dreams (snoviden’ia) (Three: Letter: 39). She then described him much as Pushkin described winged mechta in ‘Gorodok. (K ***): this dear apparition flitted through the transparent darkness and bent silently over her bed (Three: Letter: 52-55). In the dream in Canto Five there is no sign of the ‘golden-winged eros’es’ which flew from all sides to save Lila:

Эроты златокрылы
И нежный Купидон
На помощь юной Лилы
Летят со всех сторон; <...
(I, 214, 114-17)

The very absence of a winged saviour during her chase is indicative of Tat’iana’s carnal nature: she wants to be taken to Onegin’s hut to be placed on his bench. By subconsciously revealing her desire to be caught Tat’iana implicitly challenges the social code which proscribes the woman’s articulation of lust.

Liudmila’s assertion against male authority is more conventional. Like Lila, she evades capture by the dwarf; like the shepherdess, she is protected by a winged force when her honour is threatened. Having magically adopted Ruslan’s features, Chernomor succeeds in seizing the maiden. ‘She’s mine!’ (Ona moia) he says, in anticipation of Onegin’s exclamation in Tat’iana’s dream. However, at this critical moment she falls into the protective embrace of winged sleep which frustrates the dwarf’s attack:

Раздался девы жалкий стоны
Падет без чувств — и дивный сон
Объял несчастную крылами.
(IV, 59, 321-23)

14 Nesaule notices that Onegin says ‘Moe!’ (Five: XX: 1) instead of the feminine ‘moia’: Nesaule, Tat’iana’s Dream in Pushkin’s Evgenij Onegin’, p. 122. Does the neuter adjective signify that Tat’iana wants to be viewed as an impersonal body, or does it indicate that she subconsciously questions Onegin’s masculine demeanour because he does not view her as a woman? In my opinion, the purpose of the exclamation is simply to introduce another element of uncertainty into the dream. As in Pikovaia dama Pushkin manipulates the reader into asking questions which can never be definitively answered.
In a clear echo of this episode, when Ruslan is reunited with Liudmila’s still comatose body Pushkin assures the reader that he managed to resist a similar temptation (IV, 66, 218-229). Pushkin and indeed Ruslan have to fight hard to sustain even the mock heroic tone. In the 1820 edition of the poem, Liudmila’s alarming collapse does not discourage Chernomor from trying to pick this ‘tender, secret flower’, but all he reveals is his own impotence:

15 A similar scenario is described in the unfinished lyric ‘Nedavno tikhim vecherkom’ [1819], the ending of which describes a possible erotic outcome:

The dwarf’s incapacity is caused by his advanced years, by his greyness. This, it seems, is why the kite which seizes the hen in Pushkin’s description of the abduction is grey (although there the adjective is seryi not sedoi). The associations of this colour with age and loss of virility account for the greyness of the swan in ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’.

Chernomor’s failure to penetrate the winged sleep which embraces Liudmila contrasts with a woman’s successful seduction of Ratmir, one of Ruslan’s rival suitors, earlier in the same song. His encounter with the woman leads directly to his retirement from the contest and his metamorphosis into a passive fisherman. During his search for Liudmila, Ratmir sees a swan-like maiden moving along the wall of a castle:

15 A similar scenario is described in the unfinished lyric ‘Nedavno tikhim vecherkom’ [1819], the ending of which describes a possible erotic outcome:

Я дал и третий «поцелуй» <?>, 
[Она проснуться не желала <?>], 
Тогда я ей <дуз> 
И тут уже затерявала <?>.  
(II, 105, 10-13).
A similar scene occurs in ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’ when Dadon is dazzled by the sun-like tsaritsa. Like Dadon, Ratmir immediately cedes control to the maiden who, with the help of her equally bewitching friends, literally strips him of his symbols of virility: his steed, winged helmet, armour, sword and shield (IV, 53, 101-08). Like Dadon, Ratmir immediately forgets his mission:

Босторгом витязь упоенный
Уже забыл Людмилы пленной
Недавно милые красы;
Томится сладостным желаньем;
Бродящий взор его блистит,
И, полный страственный ожиданьем,
Он тает сердцем, он горит.
(IV, 54, 131-37)

When the maiden appears in Ratmir’s bedroom that night, she wakes up the sleeping khan in order to continue with her disarming seduction. In contrast to Chernomor, she is able effortlessly to penetrate her partner’s sleep. Upon her arrival, sleep disintegrates into winged dreams which flutter away, leaving the supine form of Ratmir beneath the girl’s gaze:

Дверь отворилась: пол ревнивый
Скрыт пти под ножкой торопливоей,
И при серебряной луне
Мелькнула дева. Сны крылаты
Сокройтесь, отлетите прочь!
Проснись — твоя настала ночь!
Проснись — дорог мим утраты!
(IV, 54-55, 162-68)

It is interesting that Pushkin uses the masculine noun lebed’ to describe a woman. The swan has a sexual ambivalence which Pushkin exploits in ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’. It is an archetypal symbol of male virility (such as in the Leda myth), but also a symbol of the ‘female’ qualities of grace and beauty. In ‘Nereida’ [1820], for example, Pushkin uses the image of a swan to describe the whiteness of the demi-goddess’s breast (II, 143, 5). The description of the girl on the castle walls draws on the classical and folkloric image of the siren; but there is also an element of sexual ambivalence in the description of a girl who ‘mans’ the walls like a guard. The use of the swan image in the simile conforms to this ambivalence in her portrayal. This air of uncertain sexual identity also extends to the description of the night scene. Making her

16 This episode resembles ‘Garal’ i Gal’vina’ [c. 1814], a poem belonging to Pushkin’s dubia.
way across the ‘jealous floor’ (the word pol vaguely reinforces the issue of sexuality)
the girl gazes at Ratmir’s face which is feminine in its demeanour:

Его чело, его ланиты
Множенным пламенем горят;
Его уста полуоткрыты
Лобзаньем тайное манят; <...
(IV, 54, 154-57)

In the Southern poems, the woman flushes when she becomes aroused. The Circassian
woman’s cheeks burn with sexual desire in *Kavkazskii plennik* (IV, 96, 130); in
*Bakhchisaraiski fontan*, Zarema observes the same flushing of Mariia’s cheeks (IV,
164, 321-22). In that scene, as in this, there is an ambiguity of sexual identity. As we
will see, Zarema appears to admire Mariia like a man. On this occasion, Ratmir is given
the attributes of a blushing maiden when he lies before the girl, who herself has been
earlier described in terms of the ambiguous figure of the swan.

The merging of sexual attributes and identity prefigures the metamorphosis of Ratmir
into a fisherman who has been absorbed into the world of this ‘bird’. When Ruslan
sees Ratmir in a boat, the former khan is spreading a net – a symbol, perhaps, of his
own captivity:

Раскинув невод по волнам,
Рыбак, на весла наклоненный,
Плывёт к лесистым берегам,
К порогу хижины смиренной.
(IV, 69, 327-30)

Ratmir floats like a swan across the surface of the water to his fellow bird with her
captivating (white) chest and bare shoulders (IV, 69, 337-38). It appears that the
former khan is leading a contented life in this peaceful setting. But following his
reunion with Ruslan, Ratmir is reminded of the exciting lifestyle he has forsaken. He
reflects with ‘involuntary sadness’ on the proud years of his youth (IV, 71, 425-26).
During the men’s conversation, Ratmir is appraised by the smiling shepherdess (IV,
71, 400) (Pushkin had described her smiling earlier: IV, 69, 336). Ol’ga will display
the same smile during her wedding ceremony (Seven: X: 13-14). It symbolizes the
complicity of these women in Pushkin’s plan to undermine his male characters. By

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18 Nabokov comments: ‘There is now something of a cunning young demon about Olga, strangely
changed ever since that nightmare ball. What does that slight smile imply? Why this glow in a virgin?
Should we not suppose—and I think we should—that the uhlan will have a difficult time with his
bride—a sly nymph, a dangerous flirt, as Pushkin’s own wife is to be a few years later (1831-37)?’
‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’, the smile has given way to the disturbing cackle of the tsaritsa:

хи-хи-хи! да ха-ха-ха!
(III, 562, 209)

In the second part of this analysis of Pushkin’s Bird Men, I would like to turn to the Southern poems. An important subtext developed by Pushkin in these works, and one which has attracted the attention of Stephanie Sandler and Joe Andrew, concerns the relationship between the sexes. Sandler prefaces her analysis with the observation: ‘Puškin’s narrative poems from the years of exile explore sexual themes, but always within a vocabulary of domination and defeat’. Andrew agrees with this view, but adds that the demise of the woman is a prerequisite for the man’s victory, for his ‘rebirth’. One will recall that in the epilogue of Kavkazskii plennik the Muse picked flowers for her crown:

Так Муза, леткой друг Мечты,
К пределам Азии летала
И для венка себе срывала
Кавказа дикие цветы.
(IV, 113, 1-4)

According to Andrew, the flowers represent not only innocence and Nature, but also women; the death of the flowers therefore echoes that of the Circassian girl. The epilogue refers to the event which allowed the prisoner to be reborn.

However, Andrew also notes the lack of definition and paucity of detail in the characterization of the female characters. For example, referring to the Circassian girl he observes:

She is Mother, child, virgin, whore, victim and so on. But, in the end, she is rarely herself, and remains at the level of a projection of male fantasy, a blank screen onto which anything may be projected.

The woman is only a token character in these works. According to my reading, she is peripheral and so is her defeat. But Pushkin approves of her passion because it challenges the established male order. It is symbolic, therefore, of independence and freedom, qualities which he appreciated in exile. Nevertheless, having seen her fulfil

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19 Sandler, *Distant Pleasures*, p. 141.
20 Andrew, “The Caresses of Black-Eyed Captive Women”, p. 120.
her role in captivating and then undermining the male protagonist, he discards her. The real vocabulary of domination and defeat (in Sandler's expression) pertains to the male character who grows progressively more vulnerable in each poem. There is a gradual haemorrhage of male power through this cycle of works. This process culminates in the figurative portrayal of Aleko as a crane which has been shot out of the sky. Ultimately, the gaze in these poems is male, as Andrew and Sandler suggest, but it is specifically Pushkin's. No doubt the flower does represent a woman in the epilogue of Kavkazskii plennik; but perhaps Pushkin, the 'almost touchingly inflammable womaniser', was periphrastically referring to the resumption of his own romantic career in the South.

Bayley describes both the prisoner in Kavkazskii plennik and Onegin as 'half-way men, divided between two worlds of sensibility'; both ultimately abandon their Byronic detachment for 'feeling and response'. Indeed, in a letter to Viazemskii on 6 February 1823, Pushkin reports Chaadaev's now celebrated observation that the prisoner was 'insufficiently blasé' (XIII, 58). Both the prisoner and Onegin respond to women whom they have rejected and who eventually reject them. In the similar scenarios of the shepherdess and the faun, and Naina and the Finn, the sexes were reversed. Now the woman has ultimate control in the relationship. Thus, when the prisoner suddenly asks her to escape with him, her refusal is as decisive and symbolic as Tat'iana's:

"O друг мой! — русский возопил,—
Я твой навек, я твой до гроба.
Ужасный край оставим оба,
Беги со мной..." — „Нет, русский, нет!"
(IV, 111, 250-53)

Debrecceny suggests that the girl, like Tat'iana, finds a sense of fulfilment in this self-abnegation: 'Happiness, according to the poetic code Pushkin was using, is its own tragic denial'. The same could be said of Mar'ia Kirilovna's refusal to abscond with Dubrovskii. A more significant corollary of this rejection is the humiliation of the man, scarcely perceptible in Kavkazskii plennik, but quite evident in Evgenii Onegin.

Of Pushkin's next long poem, Gavriiliada, Bayley says: 'Although it was written after his exile to the south it belongs in spirit to the poems of the Petersburg period'. An indication of this is that it contains distinct echoes of Ruslan i Liudmila, a poem composed in the capital. In both poems a virginal maiden is pursued by a number of male figures – Satan, Gabriel and God himself – the difference in this poem being that they all successfully seduce her. In the first of three couplings with Mary, Satan

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24 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 47.
25 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 76.
27 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 65.
transforms himself into a handsome young man, just as Chernomor turned into Ruslan; but Satan’s ruse, by contrast, results in his conquest of the girl. At this moment the imagery of flying appears to conform to Mary’s portrayal as a victim. The smile which denoted female complicity in Ruslan i Liudmila has flown away from Mary’s lips:

Но молодость утрачена твоя,  
От бледных уст улыбка отлетела,  
Твоя краса во цвете помертвела...  
Простишь ли мне, о милая моя!  
(IV, 131, 353-56)

It would be unproductive to compare Gavriiliada too closely with the other Southern poems. Its ebullience and obvious lack of seriousness marks it apart from these works. However, despite Mary’s winsome and submissive disposition, she fulfils essentially the same role as most of Pushkin’s female characters in this cycle. This role is described by Satan:

Ты рождена, о скромная Мария,  
Чтоб изумлять адамовых детей.  
Чтоб властовать над легкими сердцами,  
Улыбкою блаженство им дарить,  
Сводить с ума двумя-трёмя словами  
По прихоти — любить и не любить...  
(IV, 127, 224-29)

The seduction, an apparent symbol of the man’s control, signifies the loss of it. Ruslan just manages to preserve his self-control when he gazes at Liudmila’s beautiful slumbering form. Had he yielded to temptation he would have abandoned for ever the environment of the heroic poem. The sexually successful male characters in Gavriiliada never are heroes; instead they occupy the terrain of the ‘sex comedy’.28 The description of their passion for Mary is comic, but we laugh at their expense. For example, in a scene carefully choreographed by Pushkin, Satan and Gabriel, two rivals for Mary, move like comic figures around the field locked in each other’s arms in an attempt to pull the opponent down:

Бес ахнул, побледнел —  
И ворвались в объятия друг другу.  
И Гавриил, ни бес не одолел;  
Сплетенные кружащся идут по лугу,  
На вражьи трудь оперлись бородой,  
Соединив крест на крест ноти, руки,  
То силою, то хитростью науки  
Хотят увлечь друг друга за собой.  
(IV, 132, 395-402)

28 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 47.
Pushkin likens this fight (which reaches a conclusion when Gabriel bites Satan in 'that fateful place [...] by which Satan had sinned': IV, 133, 421-23) to the wrestling matches he and his fellow students used to engage in at the Lyceum (IV, 132, 403-06). The comparison is apt: Mary’s lovers are all child-like, the ‘children of Adam’ in Satan’s phrase. They can be easily controlled and duped.

The most prominent child in Gavriiliada is God, the last of Mary’s three lovers. When she worries that he will detect her now compromised status, Pushkin tells her not to worry: like a bride on her wedding night she simply has to play the ‘role’ of an innocent (IV, 134, 461). Unaware of the previous encounters, God, in the form of a dove, seduces Mary, then falls into an exhausted sleep:

И падает, объятый лёгким сном,
Приосеня цветок любви крылом.
(IV, 135, 507-08)

There is a possible echo in this passage of the dove which embraces the maiden with its wings in Zhukovskii’s ‘Svetlana’ [1812].29 It also appears to echo Parny’s La guerre des dieux in which Mary is impregnated by the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove.30 Moreover, Pushkin has also humorously reworked the description of winged sleep which protected Liudmila, ‘the flower’. A real wing now protects the flower which has just been ravaged. Pushkin has incorporated the figurative language from the earlier work into the actual narrative of the poem. The image has become, so to speak, ‘real’. The simile of the cranes undergoes a similar transformation when it becomes embedded in the story of Evgenii Onegin.

A comparable, albeit less specific, transformation has resulted in the portrayal of God as an actual Bird Man (Pushkin had, incidentally, referred to God as ‘the Bird’, Ptichka, in ‘V.L. Davydovu’ [1821]: II, 160, 21). The general image of the weak winged man has become personified as the figure of God. In Mary’s dream, the wing is a defining element of his subjects, the ‘winged legion of spirits’ (IV, 123, 72) and his emissary, winged Gabriel (IV, 123, 81). When he decides to consummate his passion for Mary, he too metamorphoses into a winged creature:

„Люблю, люблю Марию,
В унынии бессмертие влачу...
Где крылья? к Марии полечу
И на груди красавицы почну!..“
(IV, 124, 126-29)

29 Zhukovskii, Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh, II, p. 22.
His transformation into a dove reinforces the basic truth of the equation that winged men are weak men. Pushkin’s satisfaction at the orchestration of the preceding events is expressed in his declaration:

**Аминь, аминь!**

(IV, 136, 523)

In a parting shot at God, Pushkin dedicates the poem to ‘winged Gabriel’ who is, for the moment at least, Mary’s chosen favourite (IV, 136, 521).

In *Bakhchisaraiškii fontan*, Pushkin returns to the issue of gender. In his analysis of the poem, Joe Andrew says that Girei has supreme power over his captive world of women; that the solitary male is depicted as the controlling presence; even the eunuch, deprived of its sexuality, still controls the world of the enslaved women. Andrew adds:

The point of view of the poem is implicitly male. Within this context the female point of view is almost implicitly male. [...] Once this male gaze is removed [...], women cease to exist.^^

Stephanie Sandler gives a similar interpretation: ‘In its intricacies it underlines the omnipresence of male authority even in the cultural practice of female seclusion’.^^ In another article, Joe Andrew interprets the poem as an ‘over determined suppression of female desire, almost Gogolian in its intensity’; he argues that an illustration of this suppression is the fact that ‘even the girls’ dreams are not free’ due to the eunuch’s continuous surveillance.

However, it is clear from the text that Mariia is explicitly exempt from this scrutiny:

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[^Andrew, 'Alexander Pushkin and his True Ideal', pp. 28-29.](#)
[^Sandler, 'The Two Women of Bakhchisarai', p. 242.](#)
[^Andrew, “Not Daring to Desire”: Male/Female and Desire in Narrative in Puşkin’s “Bachcisarajskij fontan””, pp. 263-64. Andrew partly bases his premise on his interpretation of the opening passage of the poem in which Pushkin describes the formidable and threatening figure of Girei, surrounded by a cowering retinue. This is, Andrew argues, ‘an emphatic demonstration of female servitude and potential male violence and ultimate vengeance. [...] Even the inattentive reader must realise that such an opening allows for no happy endings’ (p. 264). However, this opening passage is the ending. The man in the opening passage is deflated, destroyed by the preceding events which Pushkin then recalls in a ‘flash-back’. Girei’s intimidating appearance is illusory. When he dismisses the crowd around him, he relaxes his pose and allows the reader to view his real disposition:](#)

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**Один в своих чертах он;**
**Свободной грудь его вздыхает,**
**Живее строгое чело**
**Волненье сердца выражает.**

(IV, 155, 12-15.)
The point of view of the poem is, I agree, implicitly male, but it does not belong to the male characters. As in Kavkazskii plennik it belongs to Pushkin. In contrast to Girei and the eunuch, he can enter Mariia’s bedchamber in order to describe the lamp which burns before the icon-like face of this ‘most sacred maiden’ (IV, 162, 231-36).

Zarema also enters her chamber to confront her rival. The illicit nocturnal confrontation between these two women reinforces the absence of the male character’s gaze: ‘He’s blinded by you,’ she tells Mariia, in reference to Girei (IV, 166, 411). However, even during this intimate encounter Pushkin continues to advertise his presence. When the Georgian princess approaches Mariia’s sleeping form, Pushkin records his own thoughts and passes them off as Zarema’s inner speech:

This episode has echoes of the night scene in Ruslan i Liudmila where the swan-maiden seduces the khan whose cheeks are also suffused with the heat of passion. Furthermore, with Gavriiliada fresh in his mind (he worked on both works in the
spring of 1821) Pushkin invokes the figure of an angel, perhaps Gabriel, who weeps over this ‘flower’ who is also called Mary. But here the real winged man has become an image, a component of an analogy in the poet’s mind.

On a much grander and more profound scale, this transformation of a man into an image is the fate which awaits Aleko in *Tsya*ny, the last of the Southern poems. In the first part of the poem, as we shall see, Pushkin likens Aleko to a bird (*ptichka*). He displays the qualities of previous Bird Men: he is weak and easily manipulated by a woman. But at least his flaws show him to be a human. Following his murder of Zemfira and her lover, Aleko the man is transformed into something which is less than human by Pushkin’s simile. The contrast between the movement of the departing gypsies and the stasis of Aleko’s immobile vehicle on the steppe is conveyed in the simile of the migrating cranes. As the birds fly south, one of them, Aleko, is shot out of the sky:

Так иногда перед зимою,  
Туманной, утренней порою,  
Когда подъемляется с полей  
Станица поздних журавлей  
И с криком вдаль на юг неется,  
Пронзенный птицейм свинцом  
Один печально остается,  
Повиснув раненным крылом.  
(IV, 202, 528-35)

Aleko is likened to a bird, but one which does not fly. He no longer fully functions as a human. Pushkin’s gaze is still present, but he does not inhabit his characters as he does in *Ruslan i Liudmila* and *Bakhchisaraiskiifontan* (in this regard he qualifies his identification with Aleko). Instead, he has withdrawn into the distance from where he impassively records the scene. Aleko’s portrayal ends with the simile: he is not seen again. Pushkin abandons him, suspended in this compromised state for ever. Andrew says: ‘Aleko is then banished from the gipsy society, but at least he remains alive’. But Aleko’s fate, from Pushkin’s point of view, does not constitute much of a life.

Bayley categorizes this simile as one of a series of the poem’s ‘metamorphoses’, a theme hinted at within the work by the references to Ovid:

Transformed by the irruption of a classic image, the Gipsies forsake their passive status as romantic exemplars of the happy life, and are transformed into a flock of cranes; the old man (who once knew the ‘difficult name’ of the poet Ovid but has now forgotten it) becomes the wise judge vested with an authority that sentences and rejects the murderer Aleko. And Aleko, himself an exile pursued by the vengeance of ‘an angry god’, becomes a solitary and inhuman object, invisible in a tattered cart abandoned on the steppe.35

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34 Andrew, ‘Alexander Pushkin and his True Ideal’, p. 35.
Bayley’s observation reminds us that the gypsies have also undergone a transformation into bird figures. However, the significance of their metamorphosis goes beyond the context of gender relations. In the epilogue of the poem Pushkin reminds the gypsies that they are subject to the forces of Fate. They too can be metaphorically shot down and so, by implication, can the poet himself.

In his description of the crane image, Bayley observes that in Ovid’s mythologies it is usually women who are turned into birds. He adds:

Returning to our idea of metamorphosis, we might say that Pushkin deliberately turns the Byronic poem inside out. In *The Gipsies* the Byronic male becomes the female. The freedom for which he yearns becomes the routine of poverty, domestic cares, the casual infidelity of the spouse. It is Zemfira and not Aleko who has the qualities of will, determination, ruthless style.36

In order to reinforce his point Bayley could have drawn attention to an earlier simile in which Aleko is likened to a bird. The man has undergone a type of figurative transformation which, in the context of Ovid, is usually reserved for women:

As a bird Aleko plays the woman’s role. This merging of female and male identities is typically ‘Ovidian’: in 1836 Pushkin will preface an article with the line from *Metamorphoses*: ‘Sometimes a man, sometimes a woman’ (XII, 64). Aleko is a passive, dominated character. He first appears walking in Zemfira’s wake: she has found him and tells her father that he is prepared to follow her everywhere (IV, 180, 39-50). Aleko is soon relegated to playing the tambourine with a chained-up bear (IV, 188, 222-50). Men in *Tsygany* are either submissive or, like Aleko, are forced to submit. This simple truism is reflected in the figures of Ovid himself and the Old Man. Ovid’s ‘crime’ of seducing the emperor’s daughter is hinted at (IV, 187, 206); exiled as a punishment he wandered ‘dried up and pale’ (IV, 187, 204) and died as an outsider, a ‘guest’ in an alien land (IV, 187, 21-16).37 The Old Man, who relates this in his narrative, describes his own humiliation at the hands of Mariula, who abandoned him after two days whilst he was sleeping, and left him with Zemfira, another man’s child.

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37 Pushkin refers to Ovid’s exile following his affair with Augustus’s daughter Julia in a lyric contained in a letter to Gnedich on 24 March 1821 (XIII, 27-28); ‘*diz pis’ma k Gnedichu*’ [1821] (II, 154, 1-3). The fact that he is also mentioned in *Evgenii Onegin* (One: VIII: 1-14) establishes another link between *Tsygany* and the novel.
As a result of this incident, the Old Man says he became celibate. He is the later incarnation of Joseph in *Gavriiliada*, a cuckold who looks after another man's son (IV, 136, 519-22).

The Old Man explains why he did not attempt to kill his unfaithful lover by saying: 'What for? youth is freer than a bird [ptitsa]' (IV, 195, 414). The irony of this statement is that although Zemfira is young and therefore free (she is a 'child': IV, 193, 343), Aleko the bird is not. In Zemfira's song the 'husband', Aleko, is described as old (IV, 189, 259) and grey-haired (IV, 189, 282). Andrew points out that two years earlier he had been a youth (IV, 180, 40). He believes that this solecism is required 'both to underscore the parallels with the Old Man and to emphasize the threat that female desire represents to the two fathers'. It also prepares the ground for the Old Man's aphorism about the bird. Old age in *Tsygany* signifies the absence of freedom. In this regard, it contrasts with the association with impotence which was observed in Chemomor's unsuccessful coupling with Liudmila; or in *Gavriiliada* in which Joseph, the 'grey-haired old man' (IV, 122, 27) does not water Mary, his 'flower', with his 'old watering can' (IV, 122, 36-39).

Aleko is not free to behave like a man. Zemfira's role is to provoke him into challenging his role as a passive male. His consequent protest results in his downfall as a bird, and the desolation of splendid isolation. In order to show this process, Pushkin uses another branch of imagery, associated with sleep and wakefulness. Zemfira will 'wake up' the passions, which lie dormant in him:

Но боже! как израли страсти
Его послушною душой!
С каким волнением кипели
В его измученной груди!
Давно ль, на долго ль усмирили?
Они проснутся: потори!
(IV, 184, 140-45)

In fact, a leitmotif in the poem, and one which reinforces the inevitable advance towards Aleko's metaphorical awakening, is the contrast between real sleep and wakefulness:

Как вольность, весел их ночлег
И мирный сон под небесами; <...>
(IV, 179, 5-6)

Но вот на табор кочевой
Исходит сонное молчанье <...>
(IV, 179, 18-19)

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38 Andrew, 'Pushkin's Southern Poems', p. 46.
However, half-way through the poem, the apparently innocuous transition between the two states becomes highly symbolic. In his real dreams Aleko is tormented by the knowledge that Zemfira has betrayed him. But upon waking he refuses to acknowledge that his passions have 'woken up'. He refuses to believe in his dreams:

Послушай: сквозь тяжелый сон
И стонет, и рыдает он.
(IV, 191, 303-04)

У спящего теснит дыханье
Домашний дух; <...>
(IV, 191, 308-09)

Я разбужу его...
(IV, 192, 320)

Он повернулся,
Привстал, зовет меня... проснулся —
Иду к нему <...>.
(IV, 192, 322-24)

Во сне душа твоя терпела
Мученья: ты меня страшил;
Ты, сонный, скрежетал зубами
И звал меня.
(IV, 192, 327-30)

Мне снилась ты.
Я видел, будто между нами.....
Я видел страшные мечты!
(IV, 192, 330-32)

Ах я не верю ни чему;
Ни сном, ни сладким увереньям,
Ни даже сердцу твоему.
(IV, 192, 334-36)

Aleko is forced to acknowledge that Zemfira has betrayed him because, like the Old Man (IV, 195, 400-01), he will wake up to find that his partner is missing (IV, 198, 440-46). But even when Aleko witnesses Zemfira with her lover, the doubts persist:
'Or is it a dream?' (IV, 198, 464). Finally, he is compelled to accept that he and his passions have woken up, whereupon he will be shot down:

Проснулся я.
(IV, 199, 473)

At the heart of this mass of imagery and symbolism is Pushkin himself. He is 'God's Bird' which, in anticipation of his transformation into an eagle in 'Poet' (a transformation which also occurs in a simile), is roused into song upon hearing God's voice:

Птичка божия не знает
Ни заботы, ни труда;
Хлопотливо не свивает
Долго вечного гнезда;
В долгу ночь на ветке дремлет;
Солнце красное взойдёт;
Птичка гласу бога внемлет,
Встрепенется и поет.
(IV, 183, 104-11)

This bird has produced a number of interesting interpretations. According to Novikova it represents the Christian soul. She substantiates this view by referring to Salieri's description of Mozart as a cherubim who brings his songs of heaven to earth. More convincingly, Tsvetaeva argues that the bird symbolizes poetic freedom. She also concludes that since it has no nest the 'bird' is 'clearly' a butterfly. The crucial point is that Pushkin contrasts the transformation of the man into a winged poet, endowed with the full power of his art, with Aleko's metamorphosis from a man into a passive ptichka. For Pushkin, the transition into the state of wakefulness symbolizes the onset of empowering inspiration. In this regard, Aleko is as antithetical to Pushkin as Lenskii, or Evgenii, who dreams like a poet in Mednyi vsadnik (V, 139, 48), or his namesake Onegin, who almost became a poet (Eight: XXXVIII: 3).

I will now turn to Evgenii Onegin in the third and final part of this examination of Pushkin's Bird Men. Before analysing its imagery of flying, it is worth briefly noting some of the similarities between Evgenii Onegin and Tsygany. Both works describe, in Bayley's phrase, 'half-way men'.

39 Novikova, 'Ptichka', pp. 258, 272-73. It is interesting that Salieri kills this cherubim using poison given to him by a woman, Izora, eighteen years before (VII, 128, 126-32). Even though she is dead, the woman continues to threaten the man. For the significance of Izora's role, see Robert Reid, Pushkin's Mozart and Salieri: Themes, Character, Sociology, Studies in Slavic Literature and Poetics, 24, Amsterdam, 1995, pp. 115, 126, 181; and Barbra Heldt Monter, 'Love and Death in Pushkin's Little Tragedies', RLT, 3, 1972, pp. 206-14 (209).
41 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 79.
them which is rooted in the Byronic model of the disillusioned and detached hero. By
the end of the novel Onegin literally falls at the feet of the woman who has come to
control his waking and sleeping thoughts, a denouement which, as we will see, has
echoes of the final scene of the Southern poem. Onegin is not explicitly compared to a
bird in the novel but, up to the point when he sets off for his final encounter with
Tat’iana, he is repeatedly associated with the motif of flying. At the end of the work, he
finds himself in a position analogous to that of the grounded crane: he is also a Bird
Man who no longer flies. He, like Aleko, has undergone a massive transformation.
Sleep, as I will show, is another key element in his characterization. By declaring his
love for Tat’iana he acknowledges that his passions have ‘woken up’ (Onegin’s
passions, like those of Aleko, are described as dormant in the draft and fair copy of
Canto Two: VI, 280; 562). Having seen Onegin prostrate himself literally and
metaphorically during this show of emotion, Pushkin, like the gypsies following
Aleko’s downfall, abandons his hero. The intimacy of sharing Onegin’s very thoughts
in the first stanza of the work gives way to a peremptory severance of relations between
the author and his ‘strange fellow traveller’ (Eight: L: 1).

One of the many leitmotifs in the novel is the fundamental opposition between
movement and stasis. In Canto One, this opposition is reflected in the relationship
between flying and sleep. At the start of the canto the vehicle in which Onegin is
travelling to his dying uncle is described as ‘flying’ in the dust:

Так думал молодой невест,
летя в пыли на почтовых, <...
(One: II: 1-2)

A recent article suggests that Pushkin based this description on ‘K Feone’ [1810] by
N.M. Murav’ev (to whom he later refers in a note: VI, 192):

Как вихрь летя на почтовых <...

Onegin subsequently ‘flies’ to the theatre (One: XVII: 9), rushes to the ball where he
‘flies’ past the doorman ‘like an arrow’ (One: XXVIII: 2); finally, upon his return
home he falls asleep just as the cabs have started work (One: XXXV: 6). The
tremendous burst of energy is replaced by the sudden immobility of sleep.

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42 Laura Rossi, ‘Pushkin i “Boginia Nevy”. (Mnimyi i podlinnyi Murav’ev u Pushkina)’, RusL,
1997, 4, pp. 3-15 (6-8). Some of the vehicles which were used in Pushkin’s day possessed wing-like
protuberances extending from the hood of the carriage above the wheels, endowing them with a bird-
like appearance which may have suggested the use of the verb ‘fly’: see A.K. Ganulich, “‘To v kibrike,
tov karete...’”, RRe, 1984, 4, pp. 44-50 (48).
Pushkin then rejoins Onegin's journey as he 'flies' to his uncle; upon his arrival, another stasis is now represented by the body of his uncle, laid out on a table in the final sleep of death:

Но, прилетев в деревню дядю,  
Его нашел уж на столе,  
Как день готовую землю.  
(One: LII: 11-14)

Onegin has arrived in order to replace his uncle in a manner reminiscent of an earlier couplet:

И устарела старина,  
И старым бредит новизна.  
(One: XLIV: 10-11)

The uncle's death represents a new beginning for Onegin – at least for a couple of days. He is very glad to have exchanged his former course for 'something'. However, for the second time in Canto One, he sinks into the inertia of sterile sleep:

Два дня ему казались новы  
Уединенные поля,  
Прохлада сумрачной дубравы,  
Журчанье тихого ручья;  
На третий рошо, холм и поле  
Его не занимали боле;  
Потом уж наводили сон;  
Потом увидел ясно он,  
Что в деревне скука та же,  
Хоть нет ни улиц, ни дворцов,  
Ни карт, ни балов, ни стихов.  
Хандра ждала его на страже,  
И бегала за ним она,  
Как тень, иль верная жена.  
(One: LV: 1-14)

The reference to the number of days during which Onegin stayed awake is indicative of Pushkin's ludic tone. In a parody of the story of the resurrection, on the third day Onegin goes back to sleep.

I will now move to the final canto in which Onegin appears to rise from this sleep. He had previously tried to shake off the despondency which characterized his life after the duel by a sustained and intense embrace of 'holy Russia'. However, his furious

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43 For an analysis of the significance of the journey in a series of cultural archetypes in old Russian literature, for example the literature relating to pilgrimage and the works of Afanasii Nikitin and Avvakum, see Sazonova, 'Ideia puti v drevnerusskoi literature', pp. 471-85; in the context of Evgenii Onegin, see Jackson, 'Space and the Journey. A Metaphor for All Times', pp. 427-38.
journey becomes a bewildering, disorientating experience, with no real purpose. He is 
momentarily shaken out of his narcoleptic state when he sees the river Terek in the 
Caucasus, prompting Pushkin’s dry comment: ‘Praise to you, Grey Caucasus, Onegin 
is moved for the first time’ (VI, 483). Tiring of this existence, Onegin returns to St 
Petersburg and re-enters the text before the final encounter with Tat’iana (Eight: XIII: 
1-14). He then ‘hibernates’ behind his double windows ‘like a marmot’ (Eight: 
XXXIX: 7). Emerging from his rooms into the blazing sun which is reflected in the 
blocks of ice, he is suddenly wide awake (Eight: XXXIX: 8-14). Like Aleko, he has 
eventually woken up.44

Clayton observes that when Onegin sets off to confront Tat’iana, he no longer ‘flies’ 
as he did in Canto One; or in Canto Three when he and Lenskii return home from the 
Larins:

Они дорогой самой краткой
Домой летят во весь опор.
(Three: IV: 1-2)

Onegin also ‘flies’ to a social engagement in the capital in the hope of encountering 
Tat’iana (Eight: XXII: 4). Now he merely ‘hurries’:

Примчался к ней, к своей Татьяне
Мой неисправный чудак.
(Eight: XL: 3-4)

Clayton notes that the speed is the same but not the vocabulary; he deduces from this 
that ‘it is no longer the same Onegin’.45

Pushkin’s declaration that Onegin is not ‘reformed’ implies that he in fact is: as in 
Tsygany, the hero has undergone a transformation in the final part of the work. The 
fact that he no longer flies or sleeps symbolically ends the cycle of movement and 
stasis. In a neat climax to the work Pushkin threatens to illustrate the value of the 
epigraph, taken from Viazemskii’s ‘Pervyi sneg’ [1822], which is used in Canto One:

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44 Briggs argues that the sun betokens reality in the novel: it is Onegin’s enemy. Its brilliance is 
therefore emphasized as he sets off to see Tat’iana: Briggs, ‘Morning into midnight’, Eugene Onegin, 
pp. 38-47. One could add that the sun is closely linked with Lenskii’s death. Whereas in Canto Two 
Lenskii loves the moon (Two: XXII: 8), before his duel he seems mesmerized by the sun (Six: XIII: 
4); it is high overhead when his killer eventually wakes up (Six: XXIV: 6); when Lenskii is killed, he 
falls like a lump of snow descending in its rays (Seven: XXXI: 1-6) and withers like a beautiful bloom 
at sunrise (Seven: XXXI: 12-13). In a final twist to this series of solar descriptions, Lenskii is buried 
in shade (Six: XI: 13). Smolenskii refers with admiration to Pushkin’s ‘virtuoso game with light’ in 
Evgenii Onegin: Ia.M. Smolenskii, ‘Tat’iana, Lenskii i luna’, in his V soiace zvukov, chuvstv i dum, 
M., 1976, pp. 159-71 (166).

Gustafson argues that Onegin is 'reborn' in the final scene because the encounter with Tat’iana symbolically takes place in spring. Just as I would argue that Onegin’s acknowledgement of his feelings for Tat’iana shows that he has changed, that he has metamorphosed into a man of sensibility; but, by the end of the novel, he is not ‘reborn’, a word which carries with it an impression of renewal. On the contrary, Onegin looks like a ‘corpse’ when he enters Tat’iana’s rooms (Eight: XL: 5). He has hurried to expose his emotions and, in this vulnerable state, he is rejected. He has hurried to live, but, as with Aleko, one wonders whether this life amounts to much. He is ‘consigned into the limbo of non-being’. Pushkin poked fun at those friends, especially Pletnev, the novel’s publisher, who expected him to kill Onegin off; Lotman observes that the novel conspicuously lacks a ‘conventional’ ending in which the hero dies. However, the fact that Onegin is alive in such a debilitated state (metaphorically nursing the ‘injured wing’, to pick up on the crane analogy in Tsygany) becomes the psychological climax of the novel. In this regard, Pushkin has finished with Onegin, just as he had finished with Aleko. As Tat’iana, Pushkin’s conspirator, says in her opening gambit, ‘That’s enough’ (Eight: XLII: 8).

It would be illuminating, at this stage, to refer in some detail to Caryl Emerson’s interpretation of this final scene. She argues that Onegin ‘fantasizes his final visit’ in order to bring about a permanent change in his life and to escape from the pattern of ‘transitory stimulation and restlessness followed by renewed anesthetization’. She draws a parallel between Tat’iana in her role as Pushkin’s poetic Muse, and her role as Onegin’s inner conscience. She is the inspiration for the imagined final encounter. Tat’iana’s lecture to him can be read as a ‘self-revelation of the hero’ and therefore results in a resolution analogous with the catharsis of confession.

Emerson’s interpretation is a useful point of reference for clarifying my own reading, even though it reaches a different conclusion. She believes that the ‘dreamlike’ atmosphere in this scene can be explained by the fact that the events in it occur in Onegin’s fantasy or mechta:

47 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 242.
The speed with which Evgeny moves through the city towards his beloved, the uncanny absence of any domestics at the door or in the halls of the Prince’s house, the extraordinary ease with which Evgeny gains access to Tatiana’s boudoir—all this has been interpreted variously as dreamlike activity, fairy-tale logic, or the narrator’s irony. [...] At an ominously rapid pace, the narrative begins to resemble erlebte Rede or inner speech: “He was hurrying to her, to his own Tatiana” (k svoei Tat’iane)—since when is she “his own”? Only in the reality of his own deep longing. Unseen by anyone, he slips into her private rooms; it is, after all, a mental journey he has now been rehearsing for months.\(^51\)

Emerson substantiates her interpretation but also problematizes it. Onegin, and indeed Tat’iana, behave like characters in a dream at various points in the novel and not just in this final scene. For example, Nabokov observes that Onegin’s behaviour throughout the morning of his duel has an ‘uncanny dreamlike quality’; he adds: ‘When Lenski falls, one almost expects Onegin to wake (as Tatiana does) and realize that it has all been a dream’.\(^52\) During the duel itself, Onegin and Lenskii prepare death for each other ‘as in a strange, unfathomable dream [son]’ (Six: XXVIII: 7), even though it would have been so easy for one of them to ‘burst out laughing’ and call a truce (Six: XXVII: 10-12).\(^53\) Another dreamlike episode occurs in Canto Seven when Tat’iana suddenly finds herself in front of Onegin’s parodic castle. Like Germann when he comes across the Countess’s residence in Pikovaia dama, she reaches the house in a kind of trance:

В свои мечты потруженна
Татьяна долго шла одна.
Шла, шла. И вдруг перед собою
С холма господский видит дом, <...>
(Seven: XV: 7-9)

Her bewilderment draws her to a halt: ‘Shall I go on, shall I go back?’ (Seven: XVI: 2); even when she is inside the house, Tat’iana behaves as if she is ‘sleep-walking, as if bewitched’.\(^54\) Later in the canto, having been moved to Moscow, she becomes an unwilling participant in society functions, listening to conversations ‘in a kind of dream [son]’ (Seven: XLVII: 8).

The encounter in Canto Eight must be viewed as the last in a series of dreamlike scenes in Evgenii Onegin. The characters occasionally behave like dreamers because they lack control over their actions. In this context, Pushkin uses the motifs of flying


\(^{52}\) Nabokov, Eugene Onegin, III, pp. 40-41.

\(^{53}\) Briggs rejects Nabokov’s description of the duel: ‘We have moved from an unreal world to a world of stark reality’: Briggs, Eugene Onegin, p. 91. However, Briggs implies that the ‘unreal world’ exists elsewhere in the novel.

and dreaming for a common purpose. Onegin is as lacking in freedom as Aleko, the *ptichka*, in *Tsygany*. He is driven by Pushkin through the novel towards his metamorphosis in Canto Eight. Ironically, he is driven towards a woman he had himself put to flight. In Canto Three, he frightens Tat’iana away from the porch of her house, whereupon she ‘flies, flies’ into the garden (Three: XXXVIII: 8), then ‘flies’ to the brook (Three: XXXVIII: 13) where her panting frame, described at the end of one stanza, is held in suspense before being matched with the conclusive verb ‘fell’ (*upala*) as she collapses onto the bench (Three: XXXIX: 1). Pushkin apes her ‘flight’ when he decides to ‘fly over’ to the garden to resume the description of the encounter (Four: XI: 13). The motif of the chase and eventual fall is matched in her dream in which Onegin’s agent, the bear, drives her into the snow (Five: XV: 1) (in the draft version of Canto Five, Tat’iana was also due to faint at her name-day party in Onegin’s presence: VI, 400-01). In another ironic echo, when Onegin stops flying in Canto Eight, he falls at her feet:

В тоске безумных сожалений
К ее ногам упал Евгений; <...
(Eight: XLI: 5-6)

At this moment it appears that Tat’iana has not changed at all in the novel, that she has been ‘reborn’ in this season of renewal as the simple maiden:

Простая дева,
С мечтами, сердцем прежних дней
Теперь опять воскресла в ней.
(Eight: XLI: 12-14)

But she has changed: she no longer cowers as she did in the garden in Canto Three in a typical Romantic trope. On that occasion Pushkin likened her to a moth which had been captured by a ‘naughty schoolboy’ (Three: XL: 9):

Так бедный мотылек и блеснет
И вьется радужным крылом,
Плененный школьным шалуном;
Так зайчик в озиме трепещет,
Увидя вдруг издалека
В кусты припадшего стрелка.
(Three: XL: 9-14)

In the variants of the novel there is evidence that Pushkin was going to develop the association between Tat’iana and the image of the moth. In the draft and fair copy of Canto Four he mocks those absurd men who rashly expect love from women (several

lines later described as 'winged love': VI, 339), 'as if it were possible to demand from moths or lilies deep sentiments and passions' (VI, 338; 593). This passage occurs in one of a number of stanzas which Pushkin removed from the final version of Canto Four. He published them separately in Moskovskii vestnik in 1827 under the heading 'Zhenschchiny. Otryvok iz "Evgeniia Onegina"' (VI, 643). Moreover, in his album, which Tat’iana (despite her apparent timidity) reads in the draft of Canto Seven, Onegin refers to his ‘game with a flying moth’ (VI, 436). In the final version, the roles suggested by the extract cited above are eventually reversed. By Canto Eight Tat’iana has now captured or, more appropriately, captivated Onegin. Tat’iana has also undergone a transformation because power has shifted completely from Onegin to her. She says:

,Довольно; встаньте. Я должна
Вам объясниться откровенно.
Онегин, помните в тот час,
Когда в саду, в аллее нас
Судьба свела, и так смиренно
Урок ваш выслушала я?
Сегодня очередь моя.
(Eight: XLII: 8-14)

Like the Circassian girl in Kavkazskii plennik, like Zarema in Bakhchisaraiskii fontan, like Zemfira in Tsygany, Tat’iana, the embodiment of the Russian woman in Dostoevskii’s famous speech, starts to speak like a man. Emerson attributes the masculine quality of Tat’iana’s words to the fact that they emanate from Onegin’s imagination:

Her tone with Evgeny is gratingly abrupt. I would go further: her tone is almost male, as if this painful but necessary denouement had to begin with Evgeny addressing a portion of his own self. In my scenario, of course, he is. (Tatiana refers to him throughout as “Onegin,” the way men do to one another, the way Evgeny did with Lensky). [...] No wonder Evgeny is impressed at her speech. It belongs to him, to his own better self, to his conscience.

The uncharacteristic brusqueness of Tat’iana’s speech can be explained by the role (Pushkin refers to her ‘role’ earlier in the stanza: Eight: XXVII: 2) which she shares with a number of other female characters in the Bird Man paradigm, and which makes her a profound, engaging but ultimately peripheral character. De Wolff believes that Tat’iana represents ‘a thoroughly constructed psychological unity, only to victimized by

56 Pushkin again uses motylek, as he did in Canto Three. On both occasions Nabokov translates this as ‘butterfly’: Nabokov, Eugene Onegin, I, p. 173; II, p. 417.
I would argue that precisely the reverse is true: only Onegin is real, and he ultimately becomes the victim, albeit a deserving one, of Tat'iana's wrath. Dostoevskii was mistaken when he stated that the novel could have borne her name. Onegin is the only genuine, central character. He is the Bird Man who is captivated and eventually humiliated by the woman, Pushkin's agent. At times during this scene her voice is replaced by that of her principal, Pushkin – thus the irony of Gregg detecting in her speech the accent of the 'self-styled rich and aristocratic favourite of the throne'. Onegin cannot win Tat'iana in the way that Ruslan won Liudmila because she is not his, but Pushkin's. She admits as much in the ambiguous moral (morals are always ambiguous in Pushkin) contained in her parting words:

No я другому отдана
Я буду век ему верна.
(Eight: XLVII: 13-14)

Is she referring to her husband or Pushkin? Having fulfilled her function, Tat'iana immediately disappears (Eight: XLVIII: 1), and Pushkin celebrates his victory over his rival:

За ним
Довольно мы путем одним
Бродили по свету. Поздравим
Друг друга с братом. Ура!
Давно б (не правда ли?) пора!
(Eight: XLVIII: 10-14)

In this context the moral differs from that of Tsygany. There Fate exerts its indifferent force over everyone – Aleko, the gypsies, even Pushkin. In Evgenii Onegin, Pushkin is Fate, at least vis-à-vis his characters. He is the fate (sud'ba) to which Tat'iana refers.

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61 Gasparov argues that the entrance of Tat'iana’s husband is related thematically to that of Natal'ia Pavlova's husband in Graf Nulin. They are both 'statuary reminiscences', and are accompanied by similar aural descriptions, especially zvon and grom. Gasparov adds that they are parodies of the apocalyptic horsemans. The same combination of sounds can be heard as the Bronze Horseman chases Evgenii (V, 148, 184-88): Gasparov, Poeticheskii iazyk Pushkina kak fakt russkogo literaturnogo iazyka, pp. 270-71. However, underlying the portrayal of the two husbands is a fundamental paradox which distinguishes them. The apparently virile hunting husband of Natal'ia is in fact a cuckold; the apparently old prince (although Nabokov claims he can be at most thirty seven in 1822: Nabokov, Eugene Onegin, III, p. 124), whom one would expect to be cuckolded, is sexually successful. This is suggested by the sound generated by his spurs which interrupts the final encounter between Tat'iana and Onegin (Eight: XLVIII: 5). Similarly, in a stanza preserved in a draft of Ol'ga's courtship with the Uhlan, Pushkin describes his fine frame, his wide shoulders, his black moustache and his proudly ringing spurs (VI, 420): see Michael R. Katz, 'Love and Marriage in Pushkin's Evgeny Onegin', Oxford Slavonic Papers, 17, 1984, pp. 77-89 (86). In a note in the manuscript of Canto One Pushkin says that there is 'something poetic' about spurs (VI, 528). In the novel they symbolize virility and serve to draw attention to Onegin and Lenskii as romantic failures.
in the opening part of her ‘lesson’ (urok) (a word, in Russian, itself suggestive of fate or rok). He brought her and Onegin together in the garden and brings them together in St Petersburg. As Fate, Pushkin shoots down Onegin and then vaingloriously proclaims his achievement in the final stanza of the novel:

О МНОГО, МНОГО РОК ОТЪЯЛ!
(Eight: LI: 8)

When Onegin is ‘shot down’ in this final scene, this recalls Tat’iana’s fall in Canto Three, but it is also resonant of Lenskii’s fatal fall in Canto Six. The memory of the young man lying motionless in the snow vitiates our sympathy for Onegin at his downfall. The crime is exacerbated by the fact that Lenskii, with his virgin dreams (Two: IX: 13) and his poetry, as clear as a ‘simple-souled maiden’ (Two: X: 3), is so obviously innocuous. Like Tat’iana, he is himself likened to a moth, but one which is drugged by the nectar of a calyx:

Он был любим... по крайней мере
Так думал он, и был счастлив.
Стократ блажен, кто пренебрел вере,
Кто хладный ум угомонив,
Покоится в сердечной неге,
Как пьяный путник на ночлег,
Или, нежней, как мотылек,
Ев венений впившийся цветок; <...>
(Four: LI: 1-8)

The flower is, of course, Ol’ga. There is an echo of the flower motif (a recurrent image in the works examined in this chapter) in the fair copy of Canto Eight, where Nina Voronskaia makes a dazzling entrance into the hall ‘like a winged lily’ (VI, 637), a possible allusion to the winged goddess Iris. In the final text Ol’ga is also compared to a lily, but one which moths like Lenskii have never known:

В глазах родителей, она
Цвела как ландыш потаенный,
Незаметный в траве глухой
И мотыльками, ни пчелой.
(Two: XXI: 11-14)

When Lenskii goes over in his mind the justification for issuing a challenge to Onegin, he himself refers to Ol’ga as his ‘lily’ (Six: XVII: 10). To whom is Onegin referring in his album when he talks about his ‘game with the moth’? Is it Tat’iana or Lenskii, whom he provokes into issuing the challenge and then ruthlessly shoots down?

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62 See V.V. Tsofïka, ““Krylataia boginia” i “Krylataia liliia” v poeziï”, RRe, 1981, 5, pp. 51-54.
However, the notion of a ‘game’ ultimately reveals more about Pushkin’s playful attitude to his characters than it does about their mutual relations. The ‘game’ in his portrayal of Onegin consists in propelling him towards his fateful encounter with Tat’iana, whereupon she disappears. Similarly, Lenskii flutters harmlessly towards his encounter with Onegin in Canto Six and is swatted, whereupon Ol’ga departs in a kareta with her new husband (Seven: XII: 13).

Another echo of the simile of the cranes in Tsygany occurs in Lenskii’s grandiloquent verse written on the eve of the duel:

Паду ли я, стрелой пронзенный,  
Къль мимо пролетит она,  
Все благо: бдения и сна  
Приходит час определенный, <...>  
(Six: XXI: 9-12)

Lenskii uses the imagery of flying and sleep, the two areas which feature so prominently in the characterization of Onegin. However, while Onegin breaks out of the cycle of flying and sleep to become a wide-awake Bird Man who does not fly, Lenskii the Bird Man disappears altogether in the finality of sleep or death. At first Pushkin appears to mock Lenskii, even as he draws closer to his demise, by playing with the images introduced in his verse; but after the young man’s death, the specific image of the arrow does not ‘fall’ with Lenskii but attaches itself to the horses which take away his corpse.

When compared with Lenskii’s verse, there is an obvious ironical dimension to Pushkin’s description three stanzas later of Onegin’s ‘dead sleep’ on the morning of the duel (‘Спал в это время мертвым сном’: Six: XXIV: 2). When the sun is high in the sky, Onegin’s sleep has started to fly (‘Еще над ним летает сон’: Six: XXIV: 10). When he eventually wakes up, the flying motif is maintained: Onegin ‘flies’ to the mill (Six: XXV: 10). This mill is mentioned on two other occasions during this scene (Six: XII: 11 and Six: XXVII: 11). Although it appears to be driven by water, Pushkin may mentally associate it with the wind-powered version. In Russian the sails of a mill are called ‘wings’. The mill in Canto Six echoes the personified mel’nitsa which appeared in Tat’iana’s dream, where it performed a grotesque jig and flapped its wings (Five: XVII: 5-6). Pushkin’s tendency to associate the water mill with the

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63 Onegin’s behaviour is offensive to his opponent, who left before seven to hurry to the mill. In practical terms it means that Lenskii has to wait for a couple of hours in Russian winter weather, ensuring that his shooting hand is cold: see Nabokov, Eugene Onegin, III, p. 40.
64 See Nabokov, Eugene Onegin, II, p. 203.
65 See Khodasevich, Poeticheskoe khoziaistvo Pushkina, pp. 152-53.
66 As Nabokov observes, a further echo occurred in the fair copy of Canto Eight when Tat’iana included the mill in the list of the things to which she would so like to return (VI, 635): Nabokov, Eugene Onegin, III, p. 240.
motif of flying can be observed in *Rusalka* where the deranged miller (of a water mill) claims to have metamorphosed into a raven when he tried to drown himself like his daughter:

Кой я мельник, говорят тебе,  
Я ворон, а не мельник. Чудный случай;  
Когда (ты помнишь?) бросилась она  
В реку, я побежал за нею следом  
И с той скалы прыгнуть хотел, да вдруг  
Почувствовал, два сильные крыла  
Мне выросли внезапно из-под мышек  
И в воздухе сдержали. С той поры  
То здесь, то там летаю, то клюю  
Корову мертву, то на мотылке  
Сижу, да каркаю.  
(VII, 206, 50-60)

As in *Evgenii Onegin*, Pushkin may have borrowed this image of the mill from Krasnopolskii’s opera *Dneprovskaia Rusalka* [1803]. This was an adaptation of *Das Donauweibchen* by Ferdinand Kauer with a libretto by Karl Friedrich Hensler. The miller who uses water in order to do his work was traditionally thought to have occult, ‘unclean’ powers. Thus the father in *Rusalka* claims to have sold the mill to the ‘devils’ (VII, 205, 36). This was reflected in the Sokolovskii’s comic opera *Mel’nik-koldun, obmanshchik i svat* [1779], with a libretto by Ablesimov. But here, as in Canto Six of *Evgenii Onegin*, the mill is hardly comic but a symbol of death. Similarly, in the variant of ‘...Vnov’ ia posetil’ the mill on the Mikhailovskoe estate is likened to a wounded ‘raven’, another symbol of death (III.2, 1001); and in *Poltava* the dead are buried near a ‘winged row of mills’ (V, 63, 435).

When Onegin fires (въстриял': Six: XXX: 12), Pushkin introduces the image of the striking clock (Six: XXX: 13), which evokes the attendant image of its hands, стрелки. This flow of flying images is briefly interrupted by the description of Lenskii’s fall. ‘Pushkin recreates the experience of falling described in the victim’s eve-of-duel verse, but the moving body now comes to an abrupt halt’ (Six: XXXI: 1-14). It is this immobile figure which haunts Onegin in Canto Eight when he sees a corpse lying motionless in the snow, ‘as though asleep’ (Eight: XXXVII: 6-7). This metaphorical


68 Pushkin made a reference to this work in his first extant poem, ‘K Natal’e’ (I, 6, 62). He also uses a quotation from it as the epigraph to Chapter Five of ‘Arap Petra Velikogo’ (VIII, 24).

69 Pushkin was probably quoting from Zhukovskii’s ‘Opustevshaia derevnia’ [1804], a free translation of Goldsmith’s ‘The Deserted Village’. However, in the English version, as Toporov points out, the mill is not winged, as it is in ‘Opustevshaia derevnia’, but ‘busy’. Pushkin was guided, therefore, by Zhukovskii: V.N. Toporov, *Pushkin i Goldsmit. V kontekste russkoi Goldsmithiana’y (K postanovke вопроса)*, WSIA Special Series, 29, 1992, p. 56.

use of sleep to denote death which was earlier mocked by Onegin’s sleeping frame now torments him in his dreams.

Following Lenskii’s fall, in a tart reminder of the brutal continuity of life, Pushkin reappllies the metaphor of the arrow to the flying horses which take away the ‘dreadful load’, already ice-cold, in the sleigh:

Дочуя мертвого, храпят
И бьются копы, пеной белой
Стальные мочат удила,
И полетели как стрела.
(Six: XXXV: 11-14)

Typically, a horse which is used to draw a vehicle is a loshad’ in Pushkin’s work. When the horses were tethered to two oaks during the duel, he referred to them as loshadi (Six: XXV: 13). The subsequent use of the more noble word ‘steed’ endows the animals with a sensitivity lacking in the normal beast of burden. The enhanced sensitivity, or even anthropomorphism, of the steeds which remove Lenskii’s corpse allows them to ‘smell’ the dead body and to convey at this dramatic moment a revulsion at Onegin’s behaviour. Moreover, given that his creator has consistently mocked Lenskii and ultimately allowed him to be shot down, it is the least that Pushkin can do to use the horses vicariously to express his own sympathy for this unfortunate, likeable Bird Man.
Chapter Five

Images of Dreams and Flying in Pushkin’s Prose Fiction

In 1822, in the unfinished piece ‘O proze’, Pushkin made the following observation:

During the early 1820s, as Debreczeny notes, prose appeared to Pushkin as an antithesis to poetry, ‘a mode of writing shorn of embellishments and deprived of histrionic gestures’. Prose demanded, in Pushkin’s now celebrated phrase, the virtues of ‘precision and brevity’ (XI, 19). Although ‘Arap Petra Velikogo’, his first serious attempt at prose fiction, was written some five years after this essay, it reflects the views of prose he held in the early 1820s. One of the features of Pushkin’s prose fiction which distinguishes it from the poetic works is the paucity of periphrastic and metaphorical language. In Evgenii Onegin he describes the contrasting personalities of Lenskii and Onegin as ‘verse and prose’ (Two: XIII: 6). He would only permit himself to employ such an ostentatious metaphor in a work, albeit a novel, written in verse. In a recent article, Richard Gregg describes Pushkin’s ‘hard prose’ as one which ‘shuns subordinate clauses, ornamental figures of speech, a plethora of modifiers and rhetorical flourishes’. One of the consequences of this approach is that the often elaborate imagery of dreams and flying, so prominent in the poetry, is relatively little employed in the prose fiction. In the 1830s Pushkin relaxed his self-imposed strictures

1 Derzhavin, Stikhotvorenia, p. 91.
3 Debreczeny, Complete Prose Fiction, p. 3.
by allowing himself to use increasingly complex sentence structures and figurative language in works such as *Pikovaiadama.* However, even during this later period, he rarely employs motifs of dreaming and flying in a figurative sense in the prose. Moreover, some of the occasions when he does—such as the correspondent’s observation that ‘time flies’ in ‘Roman v pis´makh’ (VIII, 52)—are of little significance.

In addition to these stylistic considerations, Pushkin was initially disinclined to use the motifs of dreams and flying in the prose fiction because they were so closely associated with poetry. We have seen that the winged dream appears at the very heart of those early lyrics which describe the poet and inspiration. From this seminal body of work the two areas of imagery consistently recur in the context of poetry throughout his career. As a result of the prominence which Pushkin gave to the relationship between dreams, flying and the poet, these images were often emblematic of poetry itself and therefore, at least in the first works in prose, to be avoided. Prior to ‘Egipetskie nochi’ and *Kapitanskaia dochka,* Pushkin successfully limits his use of this imagery, particularly the motif of dreams (as opposed to ‘real’ dreams). However, there are a number of occasions on which he uses this imagery, either directly or obliquely, as part of his increasingly playful mood in this genre. Then a turning-point occurs in ‘Egipetskie nochi’, in which the motifs of dreams and flying are boldly introduced into the text. In the case of the flying motif, this occurs in verse. Paradoxically, in this work Pushkin ‘depoeticizes’ this imagery: he shows that it forms part of a ‘prosaic’ world in which the poet is not autonomous, or a ‘tsar’ (as he is, for example, in ‘Poetu’: III, 223, 5). In *Kapitanskaia dochka,* this process of depoeticizing the poetic, specifically the motif of flying, is completed. The playful quality which marked Pushkin’s mood in his earlier prose works has dissipated. At the end of the novel he returns to Tsarskoe Selo, the *fons et origo* of his winged inspiration, and acknowledges that it is a ‘prosaic world’ in which the poet is not supreme and, perhaps, never was.

The mood of seriousness which had enveloped Pushkin by *Kapitanskaia dochka* can be illustrated by comparing several passages in the poetry and prose. In ‘Otryvki iz puteshestviia Onegina’, Pushkin provides an example of his new ‘prosaic’ vision:

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5 Victor Terras argues that it was Pushkin’s irrepressible need to describe ‘chatter’ (boltovnia) in his prose which made him moderate his treatment of the genre later in his career: see Victor Terras, ‘Puškin’s Prose Fiction in a Historical Context’, in *Puškin Today,* ed. David M. Bethea, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1993, pp. 214-20.
The ducks in this passage are viewed as birds which are 'unpoetic'. This is why in Canto Four they took to flight rather than listen to Pushkin reciting his poetry. Similarly, when he wanted to talk in the language of 'contemptible prose' in *Graf Nulin* (IV, 3, 22), written four years before this part of 'Otryvki iz puteshestviia Onegina' in 1825, he included ducks amongst the birds which inhabit the muddy yard outside Natal'ia Pavlovna’s window:

Ducks, it seems, are the perfect visual images to describe a 'prosaic' scene.

On several occasions in the prose fiction, Pushkin employs aspects of the scene which he envisioned in 'Otryvki iz puteshestviia Onegina'. As in *Graf Nulin*, he records this tableau from the point of view of a character. In the narrative the duck or other farmyard birds are symbolic of the drabness of the environment. For example, when the narrator describes the boring view from a post station in 'Zapiski molodogo cheloveka', he sees the rowans and fence described by Pushkin in *Evgenii Onegin*, then focuses on a duck pond:

There is a clear kinship between this scene and the passage cited earlier from ‘Otryvki iz puteshestviia Onegina’ (both were written in 1829). Ironically, Pushkin developed this scene, which implicitly advertises itself as being ‘prosaic’, in his poetry. However, if he wanted to describe a dismal scene devoid of any interest, as seems the case, he is not completely successful. His attempt is subverted by the ducks, the very symbols of the dreary environment. They are irredeemably comic, and distract the narrator (and Pushkin) as effectively as they did Natal’ia in Graf Nulin. Pushkin cannot help but insert a simile worthy of Evgenii Onegin, comparing them to spoilt children. There is a spark of the joie de vivre of the novel in verse in the description of the view. By Kapitanskaia dochka, however, the playful ducks have been banished from a similar scene viewed by Grinev when he looks for the first time through the little window of his izba in the fortress. The scene is now truly miserable:

Я стал глядеть в узенькое окошко. Передо мной простиралась печальная степь. Насколько стояло несколько избушек; по улице бродило несколько куриц. Старуха, стоя на крыльце с корытом, кликала свиней, которые отвечали ей дружелюбным хрюканьем. И вот в какой стороне осужден я был проводить мою молодость! (VIII, 296)

I will turn now to the moment when, like Belkin, Pushkin first ‘stooped’ to prose (VIII, 131) in ‘Arap Petra Velikogo’. Having read Pushkin’s effort, Viazemskii remarked that ‘the prose writer had locked himself in the walls of his prose so that the poet could not even take a peek at him’.7 This withdrawal from poetry is illustrated by Pushkin’s decision to cut from the text a passage in which Ibragim falls into a ‘poetic’ reverie. During his journey back to Russia he mentally continues to court the Countess whom he has left in Paris. Eventually his mental picture or ‘dream’ (mechtanie) becomes so vivid that he ‘completely forgets himself’:

Целый день он думал о гр.(афнев): Д., следовал сердцем за нею, казалось, был свидетелем каждого ее движения, каждой ее мысли; в часы, когда он обыкновенно с нею видался, он мысленно собирался к ней, входил в ее комната, садился подле нее, разговаривал с нею — и мечтание постепенно становилось так сильно, так ощутительно, что он совершенно забывался. (VIII.2, 506)

The description of Ibragim’s reminiscence clearly derives from the poetry. Compare, for example, ‘Vospominaniia v Tsarskom Sele’, which was also written in 1829, the same year in which Pushkin worked on the prose story:

As we saw in Chapter One, Gershenzon describes a recurrent process in the poetry, whereby Pushkin withdraws into a mental world (denoted by zabven'ė or its verbal equivalent) and recalls events in the medium of a dream. Pushkin subsequently removed Ibragim’s reminiscence during his journey from the text of ‘Arap Petra Velikogo’, realizing that he had used language which was excessively poetic in derivation. In the final version Ibragim recalls the Countess in a dream (snovidenie), but does so when he has reached the capital and gone to sleep (VIII, 12). The figurative dream has become ‘real’.8

This aversion to overtly poetic language is reflected in the striking contrast in the use of mechta and its derivatives in the poetry and prose fiction. In the works written in verse mechta and mechtan'ė are employed two hundred and twenty nine times (see Appendix C); they occur just five times in the prose (see Appendix D). Admittedly the poetry represents a much larger body of material than the prose fiction, but in Evgenii Onegin alone mechta and mechtan'ė occur forty times. Pushkin is aware of the semantic link between the poet and these words: when he dreams of the past in ‘Vospominaniia v Tsarskom Sele’ he does so like a ‘poet’, poetom, as if the word had been placed in apostrophes. The association is parodied, of course, in Lenskii’s portrayal; and then in the description of Evgenii’s poetic dreaming in Mednyi vsadnik:

So Evgenii ‘dreamed’ (mechtal) (IV, 140, 63). His dreams are an ironic ‘poetic’ reworking of Ibragim’s rational, ‘prosaic’ thoughts on marriage in ‘Arap Petra Velikogo’:

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8 Pushkin also removed Ibragim’s mental note during the journey that the past seemed like a ‘dream’ (son) to him (VIII.2, 506). The ‘dream’ is used in this conventional manner to express bewilderment on two later occasions in the prose. In Dubrovskii the Frenchman likens his encounter with an officer (Dubrovskii in disguise) who buys his identity papers to a ‘dream’ (snovidenie) (VIII, 202). The expression also occurs in Grinev’s narrative in Kapitanskaia dochka (VIII, 360).
Ibragim’s thoughts of marriage may originate from a short lyric poem written in 1824:

Каз женился задумал царский арап,  
Меж боярънъ арап похоживает,  
На боярышень арап поглядывает.  
Что выбрал арап себе сударушку,  
Черный ворон белую лебедушку,  
А как он арап черешенек,  
А она-то душа белешенька.  
(II, 300, 1-7)

In ‘Arap Petra Velikogo’ the question (in a slightly modified form) is retained but the simple bird imagery jettisoned. Instead of using the image of the raven to refer to Ibragim’s blackness, Korsakov refers in crude, realistic, ‘prosaic’ detail to his companion’s ‘splayed nose’, ‘prominent teeth’ and ‘curly hair’ (VIII, 30). When Pushkin abandoned the novel for Poltava in 1828, he enthusiastically returned to the poetic bird imagery: Mazepa, the old warrior who seduces Mariia, is described as an old kite which preys on a young dove (V, 26, 260-61); Mariia is also likened to a swan (Pushkin included an ink drawing of a swan in the manuscript of the text: XVIII, 370):

Ее движенъя  
То лебедя пустынных вод  
Напоминают плавный ход, <...>  
(V, 19, 21-23)

Debreczeny observes that this is just one of eight similes in which the poet indulges in the second paragraph of the poem. It is as though Pushkin celebrates his return to poetry with a surfeit of figurative language which he could not allow himself in the prose (V, 19-20, 16-40).  

The return to the bird imagery is as symbolic of the resumption of poetry as the run of similes.

One concession to the imagery of flying in ‘Arap Petra Velikogo’ occurs in the characterization of Korsakov, Ibragim’s foppish acquaintance from Paris. In a possible echo of Onegin’s portrayal in Canto One of the novel, all his movements are marked by great bursts of speed: upon hearing of Ibragim’s arrival he ‘runs’ to his residence (VIII, 14); at the end of their meeting he turns on one foot and runs out of the room (VIII,

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9 Debreczeny, The Other Pushkin, p. 40.
14); this mode of exit is then repeated in the house of Gavrila Afanas’evich (VIII, 31). However, when at the assembly he is drawn to Gavrila’s daughter, Natal’ia, he starts to ‘fly’:

Корсаков к ней разлетался и просил честь пойти с ним танцевать. (VIII, 17)

Gavrila subsequently complains that when Korsakov paid a visit to his house he did not get out of his carriage at the gates in order to approach on foot but simply ‘flew’ right up to the porch (VIII, 22). Onegin’s energetic movements would give way to periods of sterile sleep; in Korsakov’s case the analogous period of stasis occurs when he preens himself in front of the mirror, ‘the usual refuge from his boredom’ (VIII, 30). The application to Korsakov of the motif of flying reveals a tiny chink in Pushkin’s otherwise impassive narrative style in the story. His kinship with Onegin invests this character with a vivacious pomposity which elevates those scenes in which he is present.

One can detect Pushkin’s playful use of the metaphorical use of flying in a different context in Povesti Belkina. The device of multiple narrators in the tales allows Pushkin to mock, at one remove, the narrators’ literary tastes. As Bayley observes: ‘Pushkin gives the impression of honouring prose by remaining outside it and not slipping into it with familiar ease as he slips into the garment of poetry’. The target, such as it exists, of the faintly parodic tone which accompanies these metaphors is a literary style: the ballad or sentimental tale. In ‘MiateP’, for example, the concealed target is the contemporary vogue for tales of romantic elopements and demon bridegrooms. The story was supposed to have been narrated to Belkin by a Miss K.I.T. (VIII, 61). One of her literary influences appears to be Zhukovskii’s ballad ‘Svetlana’, from which the epigraph is taken. Both works describe a nightmarish wedding in a blizzard. At one point in the ballad it seems as if the horses pulling Svetlana’s sleigh are flying:

Мчат, как будто на крылах,
Сами кони ряжены; <...>13

In Miss K.I.T.’s narrative the horses are said to ‘fly’ when the sleigh takes Masha to the wedding service at Zhadrino:

[Кучер] помог барышне и ее девушке усесться и уложить узлы и шкатулку, взял вожжи, и лошади полетели. (VIII, 79)

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10 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 313.
11 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 311.
12 Debreczeny, The Other Pushkin, p. 83.
The reference to the flying horses reinforces the association of the story with ‘Svetlana’. In the extract from the ballad used as the epigraph, a black raven hovers over the sleigh flapping its wings and its prophetic ‘groan’ augurs sadness (VIII, 77). The motif of flying within the story picks up on the image of the wing and therefore magnifies the melodramatic presentiment of doom which was established in Masha’s nightmare. It may also echo the moment in her dream where she ‘flies’ headlong into an abyss (VIII, 78) (this itself is a possible echo of Ruslan’s dream in which the hero ‘flies’ headlong into a similar hole: IV, 72, 465).

While the most influential presence in Miss K.I.T.’s narrative, and the object of Pushkin’s distant but amused gaze, appears to be Zhukovskii, in her next story, ‘Baryshnia-krest’ianka’, Vinogradov detects the influence of Karamzin’s sentimentalism. At the end of a long, loose compound sentence, Liza, who is rushing to an assignation with Aleksei, starts to ‘fly’. The inspiration for her flight, it seems, is the sound of bird song:

Заря сияла на востоке, и золотые ряды облаков, казалось, ожидали солнца, как царедворцы ожидают государя; ясное небо, утренняя свежесть, роса, ветерок и пение птиц наполняли сердце Лизы младенческой веселости; боясь какой-нибудь знакомой встречи, она, казалось, не шла, а летела. (VIII, 113-14)

Of course, Pushkin frequently parodies a range of poetic genres in his poetry, but this normally takes place in the background of more specific ‘attacks’ on the characters, such as Onegin or Lenskii.

In the initial description of the eponymous hero in Dubrovskii, written between 1832 and 1833, it seemed that Pushkin, assuming once again the role of the omniscient narrator, was going to draw more freely on the language of poetry not so much to parody a literary style, but to subvert a literary type: the romantic hero, in the mould, perhaps, of one of Scott’s characters. In the first description of Dubrovskii he is a young man who spends his time gambling and running up debts whilst nurturing the dream (mechta) of finding himself a rich wife:

Будучи расточителен и честолюбив, он позволял себе роскошные прихоти; играл в карты и входил в долги, не забывая о будущем, и предвидя себе рано или поздно богатую невесту, мечту бедной молодости. (VIII, 172)

In Evgenii Onegin, Pushkin refers to the ‘cold dreams’ or mechty of prose (Six: XLII: 11), but in fact they are not so much ‘cold’ as practically extinct in the prose fiction.

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14 Vinogradov, Stil’ Pushkina, pp. 548-49.
15 Debreczeny, The Other Pushkin, p. 89.
This one of only two occasions on which Pushkin uses *mechta* in this genre. The other occurs in the chapter which was removed from *Kapitanskaia dochka* where Grinev (here called Bulanin) immerses himself in a reverie (VIII, 375). The reference to Dubrovskii’s cynical ‘dream’ in this extract marks him as an ironically observed character. Pushkin reinforces this impression when he goes on to describe Dubrovskii’s ‘romantic attachment’ to his father:

Он лишился матери с юности и, почти не зная отца своего, был принят в Петербург на восьмой год своего возраста — со всем тем он романтически был к нemu привязан, и тем более любил семейственную жизнь, чем менее успел наслаждаться ее тихими радостями. (VIII, 173)

Debreczeny notes that Pushkin soon removes all irony from his characterization: ‘What follows is the unhumorous stock in trade of romantic literature’. However, Dubrovskii becomes a romantic hero who fails to live up to the expectations attached to the label: he becomes a failure within the romantic genre. Towards the end of the novel Pushkin notes, with some wry humour, that Dubrovskii did not ‘fly’ to free Mar’ia before her wedding to the prince (VIII, 220): he has not turned out to be the valiant ‘falcon’ described earlier by his housekeeper (VIII, 173; 179).

Humour, in my view, is the key to understanding the significance of parts of Pushkin’s symbolic system in the prose fiction. For example, in ‘Arap Petra Velikogo’ he gave a rotund, old, female dwarf the misnomer Lastochka, or Swallow (VIII, 31). A more sophisticated illustration of his playful mood is the sign which hangs outside the undertaker’s premises in ‘Grobovshchik’:

Над воротами возвышается витрина, изображающая дорогого Амура с опрокинутым факелом в руке, с подписью: „здесь продаются и обивают гробы простые и крашеные, также отдаются на прокат и понижаются старые“. (VIII, 89)

Wolf Schmid argues that the sign pokes fun at the absurd Masonic rituals with which Pushkin was familiar from his membership of the Lodge in Kishinev; Débreczeny observes that the narrator simply made a mistake when recalling the sign: ‘He must have remembered a sign over a tailor’s or carpenter’s door, rather than over an

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16 Debreczeny, *The Other Pushkin*, p. 159.
17 In the final chapter he has withdrawn into the environment of the ‘deep’ or ‘slumbering’ forest (*dremuchii les*) (VIII, 221). Had Pushkin revised *Dubrovskii*, which exists in effect in draft form, he may have removed this epitaph which derives from the poetry: see Katz, *The Literary Ballad in Early Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*, p. 94. A ‘slumbering forest’ occurs in six lyric poems: ‘Kozak’ (I, 27, 16); ‘Os’gar’ (I, 30, 67); ‘Blazhenstvo’ (I, 42, 6; 15); ‘Vospominania v Tsarskom Sele’ (I, 61, 79); ‘Favn i Pastushka. Kartiny’ (I, 213, 75), *Zhenikh*’ (II, 363, 114).
undertaker’s’. However, the most plausible explanation for the sign is given by Vinogradov, who shows that it in fact parodies an archetypal motif of death, a winged spirit which carries an extinguished torch. This motif can be found in ‘K Zhukovskomu’ [1816]:

Смотрите: поражен враждебными стрелами,
С потухшим факелом, с недвижными крылами
К вам Озерова дух призывает; другим месте!
(1, 153, 103-05)

Under Pushkin’s mischievous gaze in ‘Grobovshchik’ the winged spirit has now metamorphosed into Cupid. One can trace the origin of this transformation back to Lenskii’s contribution to Ol’ga’s album in which he draws two hearts, a torch and flowers (Four: XXIX: 1); in the draft of this stanza Pushkin used ‘Cupids’ (amurys) instead of the torch (VI, 365). Ironically, Lenskii uses these motifs to express his ‘love until the gravestone’ for Ol’ga (Four: XXIX: 3-4).

Winged Cupids appear on ancient coffins as a symbol of the life after death promised to initiates of the so-called ‘mystery religions’. However, in both ‘Grobovshchik’ and Evgenii Onegin the Cupid symbolizes death after life. Petrunina observes that in Laokoon [1766] and How the Ancients Portrayed Death [1769] Lessing showed that in classical literature the emblem of death was not a skeleton, but sleep’s double, a young winged genie with a downturned light. This image was then adopted by Schiller (with whom, as we saw in Evgenii Onegin, Lenskii was familiar). Petrunina also refers to Karamzin’s objection to the use of the skeleton as a conventional emblem of death. The affectionate embrace of the skeleton in Adriian’s dream draws attention away from the ‘proper’ motif of death, the sign. This act of mischief is worthy of Cupid himself and represents another key parodic element in the story.

We saw in Chapter Three that Pushkin also uses motifs of flying and dreaming in his symbolic system in order to express and indeed hide political statements. In the prose fiction there is little scope for discovering a political agenda beneath these motifs.

19 Debreczeny, The Other Pushkin, p. 99.
20 Vinogradov, Stil’ Pushkina, p. 8. The variant has ‘an attractive little coffin’ instead of Cupid (VIII, 625).
because they are so seldom employed. The prose work which most lends itself to the scrutiny of commentators hoping to discover a politically motivated subtext in its symbolism is *Pikovaia dama*. Many critics have drawn attention to apparent Decembrist allusions in the text. For example, Esipov detects in Germann traces of the Decembrist leader Pavel Pestel', who was also of German origin. He also argues that the opening scene takes place in 1825, the year of the revolt. Cornwell notes that the epigraph to Chapter One is a parody of the agitational songs for which Ryleev and Bestuzhev were well-known before the Decembrist uprising; this, combined with the content of the story, would suggest to the reader of the day an element of political gambling.

Gambling, according to Lotman, represents a challenge to fate and therefore an attempt to determine the future. One could extend this argument by arguing that gambling is an attempt to fulfill idealistic 'dreams' which are also oriented to the future. In the context of *Pikovaia dama*, both gambling and dreams may have a political subtext. The description of Germann's real dream about winning at cards in Chapter Two (Pushkin uses the verb *prigrezilis*) (VIII, 236) is, perhaps, an allegorical reference to political idealism. There may even be an intentional pun on *son* in the phrase to 'to win at once' or 'to win *sonika*' which occurs twice in the story (VIII, 229; 230).

A second interpretation of the symbolism of *Pikovaia dama* is provided by Debreczeny. He views the setting of the action in the archetypal phases of winter and night as central to the story's symbolic structure: 'As the story unfolds, winter and night become metaphors for madness—the ultimate in the triumph of chaos'. He also describes in some detail a number of other structural elements which Pushkin uses in a symbolic fashion. The relationship between dreaming, sleep and wakefulness could also play a part in this complex system of symbols. The story opens with the gamblers playing until five o'clock in the morning, and only deciding to sleep forty five minutes later (VIII, 230); Paul tells his grandmother that he spent the previous night dancing until five o'clock (VIII, 231); during his nocturnal wanderings, Germann encounters a symbol of wakefulness, the sentry (VIII, 236); whilst the servant sleeps in the hall, and Liza's sleepy maid has gone to bed, the Countess suffers from insomnia (VIII, 240), Germann waits outside the house (VIII, 239), and Liza herself waits in her room (VIII, 244). There is, therefore, a general trend of sleep displacement amongst the characters.

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24 Of course this does not mean that the political subtext never exists. For example, Kodjak argues that there are encoded messages of support for the Decembrist movement in *Povesti Belkina*: Andrej Kodjak, *Pushkin's I.P. Belkin*, Columbus, Ohio, 1979, pp. 50-53.
28 Debreczeny, *The Other Pushkin*, p. 213.
However, Germann also behaves like a character in a dream. In Chapter Two he finds himself involuntarily drawn by ‘an unknown force’, like a dreamer, towards the Countess’s house (VIII, 236). He is an outsider, whose natural environment is beyond a limen, Liza’s window: he is located, perhaps, in the ‘other world’ of the dream (a possible source of Pikovaia dama is Marmontel’s ‘La fenêtre’, which had been translated by Karamzin). Furthermore, Tomskii teases Liza by saying that Germann may have appeared in her dream (son) (VIII, 244); and during their encounter in her bedroom, Lizaveta Ivanovna calls Germann a ‘monster’, chudovishche (VIII, 245): one critic detects a link in this word with Tat’iana’s dream, in which the grotesque monsters are also described as chudovishche (Five: XVI: 8). There is evidence, therefore, that Pushkin constructs the story around a character who is a dreamer and who represents, in allegorical fashion, the idealism of political dreams.

I concur with the view expressed by Caryl Emerson that Pushkin deliberately encourages the reader to search for this sort of unified meaning in the story, even though one does not exist:

He teases the reader with partial keys – because the reader, like Germann, does not really want to gamble. The reader wants to decipher, to study the past so that it will reveal the future, to predict patterns of behavior and events. [...] Puškin always promises system, but it is a trap.

Justin Doherty has made a similar point, arguing that it is very difficult to read any clear meanings into a text which is defined by Pushkin’s ‘ludic attitude’. According to Doherty, Dostoevskii admired Pikovaia dama precisely because the reader is not sure what really happens; he does not know, for example, whether the Countess really visits Germann on the night of her funeral or whether Germann imagines it. The inclusion by Pushkin of dreams or dreamlike events, which contrast with bouts of wakefulness, perpetrates this playful approach. The significance of the symbolism in Pikovaia dama lies in its lack of meaning, in its emptiness: Germann’s selfish, political, megalomaniacal or even sensual dreams are all ‘empty’, signifying nothing. The joke

30 D.M. Sharypkin, “Pikovaia dama” i povest’ Marmontelia “Okno”’, VPK, 12, 1974, pp. 139-42 (140-42).


32 Caryl Emerson, “The Queen of Spades” and the Open End’, in Puškin Today, ed. David M. Bethea, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1993, pp. 31-37 (36).


34 The most significant ‘symbol’ in Pikovaia dama is Germann’s phallic gun, which he fishes from his pocket and brandishes at the Countess (VIII, 242). It is symbolic, as it were, of the symbolism in the story. It is both funny and represents the illusory. The actual and symbolic threat of the gun does not exist: as Germann reveals to Lizaveta, it was not even loaded (VIII, 245). Pushkin apparently considered calling the story ‘The Blank Shot’ (Kholostoi vystrel). V.D. Komovskii reported this to A.M. Iazykov on 10 December 1833: see V. Veresaev, Puškin v zhizni, M., 1926, Part Two, p. 107.
is on him (and on the reader who tries to crack the code of the text). For this reason the Countess winks at him from her coffin (VIII, 247) and from the playing card when she metamorphoses into the Queen of Spades (VIII, 251).

Pushkin had earlier made oblique references to the theme of metamorphosis and, possibly, to the image of flying dreams, in the description of Germann’s departure from the Countess’s house. This part of the work contains distinct echoes of the lyric ‘Prozerpina’, which he composed in 1824. Pushkin used two models for the poem: Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and ‘Tableau XXVII’ in Parny’s *Les déguisements de Vénus*.\(^{35}\) In the poem, the goddess takes revenge on her philandering husband by finding herself a young mortal lover, whom she takes to Elysium. Subsequently, she herself decides to take him back to the mortal world along a ‘hidden path’ (‘пotaённая тропа’: II, 186, 39). When the lucky young man opens the door from Elysium, he releases a ‘false swarm of dreams’ which fly away:

И счастливец отпирает
Осторожной рукой
Дверь, откуда вылетает
Сновидений ложный рой.
(II, 286, 40-43)

Greenleaf argues that this swarm derives from Ovid, who populates the cave from the river Lethe with ‘voiceless quiet and empty dreams [...] indistinguishable from the real shapes they imitate’. However, Pushkin departs from both Ovid and Parny when his Persephone escorts the youth back home.\(^{36}\) Germann appears to draw on ‘Prozerpina’ in his mental narrative as he makes his departure. Sixty years before, he imagines, the young Countess’s fortunate lover (‘счастливец’: VIII, 245) would make his furtive exit along the hidden staircase (‘пotaённая лестница’: VIII, 245) which leads to the street. In contrast to Persephone, the Countess would symbolically observe the dignity of her imperious station by refusing to accompany the young man (the fop presumptuously dresses his hair ‘à l’oiseau royal’: VIII, 245). She is imperious because, in keeping with the theme of metamorphosis, this Persephone figure has been transformed into *la Vénus moscovite* (the expression used in Tomskii’s anecdote in Chapter One: VIII, 228). Her young men do not ascend to the real world after the encounter, but descend from her heavenly boudoir.

Although, in Germann’s narrative, the lover’s exit into the street signals the end of his royal audience, he has the not insignificant compensation of having been ‘lucky’ in

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love. When Germann himself uses this hidden exit he has not only failed to find out the secret of the cards, but he has also failed to make himself a lover, either with the Countess or Liza (he had earlier contemplated becoming the Countess’s lover in order to secure the secret of the cards: VIII, 235). Pushkin may have been aware that ‘Venus’ was the name given to the highest throw at dice in the classical era. Germann has failed to secure his Venus in every way. He is unlucky, neschastlivets; and when he opens the door into the street (Pushkin uses the same verb as in the lyric, otper: VIII, 245) a swarm of false, obscurantist dreams is symbolically released into the cold night air of the story in order to confuse its reader and amuse its author.

We have seen so far in this chapter that Pushkin is sparing in the open use of the imagery of dreams and flying in the prose fiction. By contrast, in ‘Egipetskie nochi’, which was written in the autumn of 1835, he boldly introduces into the prose text what essentially amounts to a paraphrase of the description of the poet’s ‘dream’ in poems like ‘Osen’. (Otryvok). In the first chapter he describes the onset of inspiration experienced by Charskii, a young aristocratic poet:

Однажды утром Чарский чувствовал то благодатное расположение духа, когда мечтания явственно рисуются перед вами, и вы обретаете живые, неожиданные слова для воплощения видений ваших, когда стихи легко ложатся под перо ваше, и звучные рифмы бегут на встречу стройной мысли. Чарский погрузжен был душой в сладостное забвение... и свет, и мгновения света, и его собственные примулы для него не существовали.— Он писал стихи. (VIII, 264)

Like Ibragim in the draft of ‘Arap Petra Velikogo’, Charskii withdraws into the ‘oblivion’ of his dream; but Charskii’s inspired dream results in poetry, whereas Ibragim recalls the Countess.

Although Pushkin clearly associates himself with Charskii, ‘at the same time he caricatures himself in him’. He does this by framing the poetic experience in passages which deflate the poetic aura which surrounds the poet. Just prior to Charskii’s drian’ – his term for inspiration (VIII, 264) Pushkin observes that this character is as unavoidable at social occasions in St Peterburg as ice cream from Rezanov’s (a confectioner in the capital) (VIII, 264). Pushkin was keen to avoid the use of the simile in his earlier prose fiction. An indication of this is that Povesti Belkina contains only one simile. It occurs in the extract of Baryshnia-krest’ianka cited above (VIII, 113). However, rather than representing a concession to the influence of poetry, the simile in ‘Egipetskie nochi’ mocks the poet.

37 See Debreczeny, The Other Pushkin, p. 238.
39 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 329.
40 The poet also refers to inspiration as drian’ in the prose fragment ‘Otryvok’ [1830] (VIII, 410).
41 See Debreczeny, The Other Pushkin, p. 94.
Moreover, during Charskii’s creative outburst, Pushkin rouses the poet from his
dream by arranging for the Italian *improvizzatore* to make an untimely entrance:

Вдруг дверь его кабинета скрынула и незнакомая голова показалась.
Чарский вздрогнул и нахмурился. (VIII, 264)

Leslie O’Bell argues that the entrance of the Italian, far from breaking the poetic
‘dream’, is a product of it. He is like one of the ‘swarm of guests’ which inhabits
Pushkin during the onset of inspiration in ‘Osen’ (Otryvok):

И тут ко мне идет незримый рой гостей,
Знакомцы давние, плоды мечты моей.
(III, 321, 79-80)

She concludes that the *improvizzatore* is Charskii’s poetic *alter ego*. 42 My reading
differs from this intriguing interpretation. The description of the creaking door and the
sudden appearance of a head not only disturbs Charskii, it disrupts the poetic mood.
Quite possibly, the Italian is a prosaic *parody* of the poetic guest in ‘Osen’. (Otryvok):

This framing of poetic language in prose in Chapter One anticipates the inclusion of
actual verse in the story in the next two chapters. In Chapter Three Pushkin includes a
modified version of the lyric poem ‘Kleopatra’ which he worked on between 1824 and
1828 (III, 130-32). Of more interest from the point of view of Pushkin’s imagery is the
inclusion of part of *Ezerskii* in the Italian’s improvisation in Chapter Two (it is not clear
from the manuscript that Pushkin intended to insert the verse fragment at this point but,
as Bayley points out, there is a very strong supposition of it). 43 In this extract the
Italian defends the independence of a poet by invoking the image of the eagle:

Зачем от гор и мимо башен
Летит орел, тяжел и страшен,
На чашлый пень? Спроси его. <...>

Таков поэт; как Аквилон
Что хочет, то и носит он —
Орлу подобно, он летает
И, не спросясь ни у кого,
Как Дездемона избирает
Кумир для сердца своего.
(VIII, 269)

The irony of the scene has been frequently noted. The Italian’s declaration of the
freedom of the poet is undermined by the fact that his performance was ordered by
Charskii, his patron. Moreover, Charskii’s suggested topic was that ‘a poet chooses the

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42 O’Bell, *Pushkin’s Egyptian Nights*, p. 106.
subjects of his songs himself: the crowd has no right to command his inspiration’ (VIII, 268). Charskii, on this occasion, is the representative of this commanding crowd. Another obvious irony is that the Italian’s dazzling improvised verse in both chapters is, in one sense, nothing of the kind: it is reworked from Pushkin’s earlier poetry which dates back as far as 1824.

In Ezerskii the image of the eagle expressed quite unequivocally the power and independence of the poet. The obvious ironic tone in ‘Egipetskie nochi’ questions this—not within the verse itself, but in the relationship between the Italian and his patron. Furthermore, the actual framing of the verse in prose is also a sophisticated metaphor signifying Pushkin’s acceptance that the poet—he as well as the impoverished Italian—is constrained by ‘prosaic’ considerations such as money. In 1824 Pushkin had symbolically reverted to prose at the end of ‘Razgovor knigoprodavtsa s poetom’ and thereby acknowledged the validity of the ‘prosaic’ bookseller’s statement that there is no freedom without money (II, 294, 170). Now the verse and the image of the eagle are encased by prose. At the end of his inspired improvisation the poet, the ‘eagle’ (he even looks like an eagle with his aquiline nose: VIII, 265),^5 politely accepts Charskii’s compliments and, much to the patron’s distaste, immediately turns to the business of the price of the tickets for his imminent public performance: the eagle is depoeticized. Although ‘Egipetskie nochi’ is hybrid in form, switching from prose to actual verse, Pushkin detaches himself from the poetry and the poets in it. In his poetic works he had appraised Lenskii, the mediocre poet, and Evgenii in Mednyi vsadnik, the arch non-poet, but always from the poet’s point of view. In ‘Egipetskie nochi’ he views Charskii, the Italian and the eagle from the standpoint of a writer of prose. In this regard he has successfully made the transition to this genre.

Marina Tsvetaeva believed that in Kapitanskaia dochka, the final work which I will examine in this thesis, Pushkin wrote as a poet, especially in his characterization of Pugachev. She argued that although the description of his behaviour in Pushkin’s historical account of the rebellion, Istoriia Pugacheva, inevitably alienates him from the reader, his characterization in the novel makes him a charming person. Pushkin clearly makes the rebel a likeable character and, to a certain extent, romanticizes his

44 Debreczeny, The Other Pushkin, p. 295.
45 O’Bell detects an echo of the lyric ‘Poet’, in which the poet-eagle is roused from sleep, in Charskii’s description of the performance:

Ко лишь божественный глагол
До слуха чуткого коснется,
Душа поэта встретится,
Как пробудившийся орел.
‘Poet’ (III, 65, 9-12)

—Удивительно,— отвечал поэт.— Как!
Чужая мысль чуть коснулась вашего
Слуха, и уже стала вашо собственностью,
Как будто вы с нею носились, делили,
Развивали ее беспрерстанно. (VIII, 270)

See O’Bell, Pushkin’s Egyptian Nights, p. 108.
exploits, at least from the point of view of the narrator, Grinev. However, a leitmotif throughout the novel is that the romantic and poetic become banal and prosaic. One of the interesting aspects of this process is that the 'prosaic', in this context, is feminine. Caryl Emerson has shown that the Belogorski fortress, an apparent bastion of masculine power, is in fact feminized: 'It is a citadel collapsed into a village, a parody on military order run by the captain’s wife'. For example, when Grinev visits Ivan Ignat’ich in order to ask him to be his second in his duel with Shvabrin, he finds the lieutenant stringing up mushrooms for this woman (VIII, 301). The motif of flying plays a small but significant role in the depiction of Pugachev’s unsuccessful challenge to the state’s power which, as we will see in the final part of this chapter, is prosaic and feminine.

When the rebel leader sets out to the fortress in Chapter Eleven with Grinev, the vehicle becomes an emblem of his captivating romantic nature and his masculine power. As Pugachev gives the go-ahead to his broad-shouldered driver standing in the kibitka, Grinev’s heart races and the vehicle starts to ‘fly’:

The driver of this flying vehicle is reminiscent of the charioteer in ‘K Litsiniiu. (S latinskogo)’. In this case, it is apparently the passenger who is the important, albeit fearsome, figure of authority. However, just as the vehicle starts its flight, we immediately hear the voice of Savel’ich, Grinev’s male ‘nanny’:

Upon this intervention the charged atmosphere evaporates. Pugachev is not really a figure of authority at all if he can be stopped by this inconsequential, asexual figure. Savel’ich symbolically stops the advance of the flying vehicle and brings it, so to speak, back to earth (in a parallel, jarring intervention, the sudden appearance of the Italian’s head roused Charskii from his poetic dream). This is a prosaic earth: Savel’ich has grounded the flying vehicle merely to tell Pugachev that he will never again ask for the return of the hare skin coat which Grinev donated to the rebel in Chapter Two.

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47 Debreczeny, *The Other Pushkin*, p. 263.
48 Emerson, ‘Grinev’s Dream’, p. 66.
When the passengers resume their journey, the vehicle again ‘flies’, but the image no longer suggests an exuberance or liveliness of spirit. During the journey itself Pugachev says to Grinev:

„Улица моя тесна; воли мне мало. Ребята мои умирают. Они воры. Мне должно держать ухо востро; при первой неудаче они свою шею выкупят моей головою“. (VIII, 352) 49

As in Evgenii Onegin, the motif of the flying journey does not exemplify the passenger’s freedom but signifies a lack of will, a fateful advance to an unpleasant denouement. As the kibitka draws closer to the fortress, it ‘flies’ across the smooth winter road:

Оба мы замолчали, потрузясь каждый в свои размышления. Татарин затянул унылую песню; Савельч, дремля, качался на облунке. Китника летела по гладкому зимнему пути... (VIII, 353)

There is a resonance here of ‘Telega zhizni’ [1823] in which the traveller’s enthusiasm in the morning gives way to an air of apprehension at noon and, by evening, a sense of sad resignation (II, 272). The description of Pugachev, who buries himself in his thoughts, also recalls the end of Pir vo vremia chumy, in which Walsingham is described sitting amongst the revellers, immersed in deep and melancholy thought (VII, 184, 239).

During his conversation with Grinev en route, Pugachev had become suddenly ‘inspired’. He is momentarily lifted from the prosaic surroundings by the recollection of a skazka which could serve as an analogy to justify his criminal conduct to Grinev:

„Слушай“— сказал Пугачев с каким-то диким вдохновением.— „Расскажу тебе сказку, которую в ребячестве мне рассказывала старая калмычка. Однажды орел снапишал у ворона; сжали, ворон-птица, отчего живешь ты на белом свете триста лет, а я всего-навсего только три года?— Оттого, батюшка, отвечал ему ворон, что ты пешь живую кровь, а я питание мертвечиной. Орёл подумал: давай попробуем и мы питаться тем же. Хорошо. Полетели орел да ворон. Вот завидали палую лошадь; спустились и сели. Ворон стал клевать, да похваливать. Орел кончил раз, кончил другой, махнул крылом и сказал ворону: нет брат ворон; чем триста лет питаться падалью, лучше раз напиться живой кровью, а там что бог дасть?— Какова калмыча сказка?“

— Затейлива, —отвечал я ему.— Но жить убийством и разбоем значит по мне клевать мертвечину.

Пугачев посмотрел на меня с удивлением и ничего не отвечал. (VIII, 353)

49 Pushkin records Pugachev’s expression, ‘My street is narrow’, in Istoriia Pugacheva (IX, 27).
In *Istoriia Pugacheva* Pugachev describes himself as a *voronenok*, ‘little raven’, a pun on the word *vor*, ‘thief’ (IX, 78). In the novel Pugachev tries to dissociate himself from this image of the pillaging thief-raven. In the *kibitka* he refers disparagingly to his men as thieves, *vory* (VIII, 352), the implication being that he is different. He therefore turns to the make-believe world of the *skazka* in order to legitimize his conduct, but identifies himself with the wrong bird in it. Grinev’s comment stops the inspired allegory as decisively as Savel’ich stopped the flying *kibitka*. Grinev strips the consequences of Pugachev’s crimes of any illusory, poetic gloss and returns him back to earth, where carrion is devoured.

In *Istoriia Pugacheva* Pushkin refers to some marks on Pugachev’s chest left by an illness known as *chernaia nemoch’* (IX, 41). The rebel passed them off as military scars (IX, 109). In *Kapitanskaia dochka* the mark has metamorphosed into a tattoo of a double-headed eagle. Grinev hears about the tattoo from a Cossack in Chapter Eight:

А в бане, слышно, показывал царские свои знаки на трудях; на одной двуглавый орел, величию с пятак, а на другой персона его. (VIII, 329)

There is a parallel here with Pugachev, the rebel leader in the novel, who distances himself from the historical figure by refusing to accept the label of a thief-raven in favour of the folkloric eagle. Now this character transforms an ugly scar on his historical counterpart into the symbol of imperial power. In the first case the prosaic murderer tries unsuccessfully to become a romantic vagabond; in the second, the rebel tries to pass himself off as the ‘legitimate’ heir to the throne. In both cases, Pugachev tries to poeticize his historical, factual image.

Pugachev’s tattoo symbolizes his preposterous, even amusing, attempt to abandon the label of *vor/voronenok* and represent himself as an eagle or a legitimate power. When he takes over the Belogorski fortress the inhabitants can avoid death only if they acknowledge his claim to the throne – in effect, that he is not a thief or raven, but an ‘eagle’. Both the Captain and Ivan Ignat’ich die because they call him a *vor*. The Captain says:

„Ты мне не государь, ты вор и самозванец, слышь ты!“ (VIII, 324)

Pugachev immediately orders his execution. Ivan Ignat’ich repeats his Captain’s words (VIII, 325) and receives the same punishment:
All traces of humour, which often motivate Pushkin’s direct and indirect use of the flying motif in the prose fiction, have disappeared here. Implicit in Pushkin’s description of this scene is the message that majestic eagles do not kill men in this way. Pugachev is a raven, a bird which, in Puteshestvie v Arzrum, Pushkin says is the symbol of death by execution (VIII, 463). He is a Bird Man who will himself be put to death for his pursuit not of Catherine, but of her symbol of power.

In his historical account of the rebellion Pushkin notes that Catherine considered travelling to the troubled region to take personal command of the army (IX, 69). As with Pugachev her portrayal is ‘poeticized’ in the novel; but – and this is a fundamental distinction – in contrast to the rebel she is not overtly stripped of her poetic aura. As so often in Pushkin’s work, this picture is achieved with elaborate irony. Debreczeny notes that Masha’s encounter with Catherine, who sits incognito in the gardens of Tsarskoe Selo, is a tongue-in-cheek denouement. It is often compared to Jeanie Dean’s meeting with Queen Caroline in Scott’s The Heart of Midlothian [1830].^50 Emerson argues that the idyllic nature of the setting conforms to the portrayal of Catherine as a fairy god-mother, the matushka-gosudarynya whom the Captain had invoked on the battlements of the fortress (VIII, 322).^51 Commentators have also noted the perfect reproduction of a famous portrait by Borovikovskii in 1791 of Catherine in her depiction in this chapter. It is as if she has stepped out of the painting for her encounter with Masha.^52

The irony in this episode is so obvious that Pushkin does not need to strip Catherine of her poetic aura: we know that it is not real. When Masha enters the garden she immediately sees some swans on the lake, but then her gaze moves to the Kagul monument, erected to honour a Russian victory.^53 The apparent idyll, represented by the poetic swan, is in fact a beautiful memorial to Russia’s might (itself represented, as we saw in Chapter Three, by the eagles which adorn some of the monuments):

^50 Debreczeny, The Other Pushkin, p. 258.
^51 Emerson, ‘Grinev’s Dream’, p. 74.
^52 See Emerson, ‘Grinev’s Dream’, p. 75.
But of course Catherine bites, as the subsequent description of Pugachev’s execution shows (his fate reinforcing the relationship between the raven and the notion of punitive death). When Masha contradicts her during their conversation, Catherine momentarily ‘blazes’ (VIII, 372), ‘and thereby reveals the power beneath the genteel shell’. The image of the swan is just part of the idyllic veneer. This elegant and conventional symbol of poetry in fact lives in a prosaic, feminine world.

In Chapter Three we saw that only in 1833, in ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’, did Pushkin allow himself to be identified with the swan. Three years later, in Kapitanskaia dochka, he hinted at the reason for his aversion. The swans are Catherine’s, in the same way that she, and not Pugachev, is the true proprietor of the symbol of the eagle. Her generals were therefore called her ‘eagles’ in poems such as ‘<Mordvinovu’ [1826] (III, 46, 2) and ‘Pered grobnitseiu svatoi’ [1831] (III, 267, 12). Tsarskoe Selo is also hers, a symbol of her glorious age. The eagle and the swan are permanent features within it, part of her domain. Derzhavin had reached this conclusion in ‘Razvaliny’ [1797] when he described Catherine, in the guise of Venus, watching her swans as they raised their wings. In Kapitanskaia dochka Pushkin had at last followed Derzhavin’s example. Viewed in this light, the obvious joke in the encounter between Catherine and Masha suddenly does not seem so funny. As Jakobson notes, the novel is dated October 19 1836, the anniversary of the founding of the Lyceum at Tsarskoe Selo (VIII, 374). In this work, in the final year of his life, a chastened Pushkin makes a curious return to the home of his poetry, and does so, symbolically, in prose. He shows that the beautiful creatures on the lake are trapped for ever in prosaic, imperial Russia. It seems, in the final analysis, that Pushkin may have identified himself with the swans all along.

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54 Bayley, Pushkin, p. 346.
Conclusion

There is, as I said in the Introduction, an overall, albeit loose, consistency in Pushkin’s use of the imagery of dreams and flying. The greatest beneficiary of his ‘conspiracy of words’, the complex figurative mass which comprises this imagery, is Pushkin – at least in the poetry. The greatest losers are those male characters to whom he applies this language. For them Pushkin’s poetry and even his prose fiction are, on the whole, unfortunate environments in which to dream or fly. With few exceptions, the imagery reveals the men’s inadequacies: their lack of talent, their mortality, their impotence, their romantic and sexual failings. In stark contrast stands the brilliantly-lit figure of the poet, usually Pushkin. He uses these motifs to promote himself and other artists, even though they and their work are often the object of his mocking, affectionate gaze.

Of all Pushkin’s male characters, the one to be most pitied is Lenskii, the harmless lad whom Pushkin sacrifices in order to illustrate the enormously negative potential of these images. Edmund Wilson said that Onegin hates and kills the poet in Lenskii. But Lenskii is not a real (that is, talented) poet and it is ultimately Pushkin who allows him to be killed. Shaw said that the moral of the novel is to suggest the importance of being poetic. However, Lenskii is conventionally ‘poetic’ but, unfortunately for him, he is not a good poet and is therefore not entitled to receive immunity from the debilitating imagery of dreams and flying. Only after his death, when his corpse is being carried away in the sleigh, does Pushkin fleetingly express a degree of pity for this character, before shifting the focus of his attack onto his killer.

Pushkin’s accomplices in this conspiracy are his engaging, peripheral women who mesmerize their male audience just as effectively as the flying figure of Istomina dazzles the Petersburg crowd in Canto One of Evgenii Onegin. Later in the novel Pushkin says that he has read with terror Hell’s inscription above women’s brows:

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The inscription could serve as a warning for Pushkin’s Bird Men, whose downfall is accomplished by the women’s willing participation. In this regard, and this is possibly an unexpected conclusion, Pushkin turns out to be a ‘feminist’ writer, in the sense that his women are strong – not in the pure, moralistic fashion described by Dostoevskii in his famous speech, but in the way that they subjugate their male counterparts. On the other hand, Pushkin’s work can be viewed as reinforcing the woman’s subservient role, because all the conspirators ultimately serve him. He uses the imagery of dreams and flying to construct an elaborate series of relationships between himself and his female characters in which he is nearly always the dominant party.

We saw in Chapter Three that Pushkin stands at the apex, the very summit of his poetic world in ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’, and does so as the virile golden cockerel. The strictures of the imperial censorship forced him to enlist words and images in his conspiracy to express his political views whilst hiding the real meaning behind the ‘opaque drapery of political loyalty’ (to recall Lednicki’s expression). The ever-present scrutiny of the censor was responsible, indirectly, for the series of contiguous images in Pushkin’s work which he uses to declare his independence. In order to trace this strange symbolic system we are forced to open up the ‘doors’, to which Mirskii referred and which link the compartments of imagery. Following this route, it is possible to establish a connection of sorts between the flying figure of the hateful charioteer in ‘K Litsiniiu. (S latinskogo)’ and the cockerel in ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’. Pushkin uses the motif of dreaming in his camouflaged political statements, but he finds it more productive to exploit the strand of imagery relating to flying, both to subvert figures of authority such as the charioteer and to restate his independence. This culminates in his metamorphosis into the guardian cockerel which delivers a fatal blow to the monarch’s temple. In ‘Vol’nost’. Oda’ Pushkin criticized the criminals who assassinated Paul. But in ‘Skazka o zolotom petushke’, seventeen years later, he carried out his own assassination of a monarch, albeit in the make-believe world of a skazka.

One of the sophisticated threads which runs through Pushkin’s work, both his poetry and prose fiction, and one which incorporates the figure of the cockerel, relates to the sort of bird images with which he is prepared to identify. In the poetry this polemic is frequently conducted in the vivacious language of a literary game. In Chapter One, I said that the eagle appears to ‘win’ in the contest with the swan. However, this
victory is confined to the poetry. In the prose fiction the game eventually loses its appeal and its accompanying vivacity of expression. In *Kapitanskaia dochka* Pushkin shows that both the swan and the eagle are, in a sense, ‘losers’, because these poetic symbols belong to a larger, more powerful, prosaic world. In *Evgenii Onegin* Pushkin was right, therefore, to describe prose as the ‘new devil’ which will inhabit him (Three: XIII: 4). His odyssey in prose leads him back to Tsarskoe Selo which is not, after all, the home of poetry, but a beautiful repository of imperial power. It is, moreover, a world which is feminine since it is Catherine’s. In this regard, Pushkin again reinforces the dominance of the woman. Bayley says that in ‘*la pamiatnik sebe vozdvig nerukotvornyi*’ Pushkin successfully dissociates his monument from the ‘stone and marble’ of Derzhavin’s corresponding edifice, which celebrated at the same time the poet’s fame and that of his imperial mistress, Catherine. But only as a poet is Pushkin able to assert his independence from her influence or that of any other Russian monarch.

In the same spirit of defiance, in this lyric Pushkin scorns the praise of the non-poetic crowd, represented by the ‘fool’ (III, 424, 20). This is essentially the same person who, in *Evgenii Onegin*, is described pointing at Pushkin’s famed portrait and saying: ‘Now that was a poet!’ (Two: XL: 5-8). This ‘ignoramus’ represents the inhabitants of the vast, non-poetic world, those mortals who are not blessed with the poet’s winged dreams and are therefore disqualified from passing judgement on his work, and who include amongst their number, alas, Pushkin’s humble student.

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# Appendix A

## Words Denoting an Actual Dream in Pushkin’s Poetry, Drama and Prose Fiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Dreamer</th>
<th>Language used</th>
<th>Alternative Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lyric Poetry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Monakh’ [1813]</td>
<td>Pankratii</td>
<td>son (I, 13, 39)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Podrazhania Koranu’ [1824]</td>
<td>‘I’</td>
<td>prisnili (II, 316, 1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Zhenikh’ [1825]</td>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>son (II, 362, 109)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Na Ispaniu rodniuju’ [1835]</td>
<td>Rodrik</td>
<td>snoviden’ (III, 386, 97)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Rodrig’ [1830-36]</td>
<td>‘I’</td>
<td>son (III, 445, 1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poem and Dramatic Works</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ruslan i Liudmila</em> [1817-20]</td>
<td>Ruslan</td>
<td>son (IV, 72, 76)</td>
<td>greza (IV, 73, 500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gavrilida</em> [1821]</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>son (IV, 122, 50)</td>
<td>grezy (IV, 142, 101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Vadim</em> [1821]</td>
<td>1. Vadim</td>
<td>son (IV, 141, 74)</td>
<td>mechtia (IV, 148, 119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Old man brother</td>
<td>son (IV, 142, 112)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prose Fiction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>‘Arap Petra Velikogo’</em> [1827]</td>
<td>Ibragim</td>
<td>snoviden’ (V, 32, 12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>‘Miatel’</em> [1830]</td>
<td>Mar’ia</td>
<td>mechtiia (VIII, 78)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>‘Grobovshchik’</em> [1830]</td>
<td>Adrian</td>
<td>no reference to a ‘dream’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>‘Baryshnia-krest’ianka’</em> [1830]</td>
<td>Aleksei</td>
<td>son (VIII, 116)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dubrovskii</em> [1832-33]</td>
<td>Mar’ia</td>
<td>videniiia (VIII, 214)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pikovaia dama</em> [1833]</td>
<td>1. Germann</td>
<td>prigrezilis’ (VIII, 236)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Germann</td>
<td>son (VIII, 249)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Kapitanskaia dochka</em> [1833-36]</td>
<td>Grinev</td>
<td>son (VIII, 288)</td>
<td>mechtiaia (VIII, 289)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes**

1. This list is not exhaustive. The table represents the most significant dreams which Pushkin describes in some detail. Therefore, Tat’iana’s recurrent and prophetic dreams (snoviden’ia) about Onegin, to which she briefly refers in her letter (Three: letter: 39-46), are not included in the table.
2. There are also ‘visions’ (videniia) in ‘Videnie korolia’ (III, 338, 26), one of the *Pesni zapadnykh slavian* [1834], and ‘Zhil na svete rytars’ bednyi’ [1829] (III, 161, 5), an adapted version of which appears in *Stseny iz rytarskich vremen* (VII, 238-39). Characters see supernatural visual phenomena, both characterized as lights, in ‘Ianko Marnavich’, another of the *Pesni zapadnykh slavian* (III, 341, 51), and ‘Strannik’ [1835] (III, 393, 60). In addition, there is, on occasions, an element of uncertainty in distinguishing between a dream and the supernatural in Pushkin’s work, such as in *Pikovaia dama*.

3. Natasha’s description of her dream in ‘Zhenikh’ turns out to be a recollection of her actual experiences. Nevertheless, the language which she uses in her narrative is similar to that employed in the ‘authentic’ dreams.¹

4. Pavel has a series of dreams about the Countess in ‘Uedinennyi domik na Vasil’evskom’. In a letter to A.V. Golovnin in 1879, V.P. Titov [1807-91] claimed to have heard the story from Pushkin in 1828. Having shown his transcript to Pushkin who suggested some alterations, Titov published it in the almanac *Severnye tsvety* in 1829 under the pseudonym Tit Kosmokratov.²

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² Tsiavlovskaja discusses this story in an article in the revised Jubilee edition of Pushkin’s work: T.G. Tsiavlovskaja, “‘Vliublennyi bes’ (Neosushchestvlenyi zamysel Pushkina)”, XVIII, pp. 601-635 (612-14); this first appeared in *PIM*, 3, 1960, pp. 101-30.
Appendix B

Occurrences of *son, mechta, mechtan’ë, snovidèn’ë* and *grezy* in Pushkin’s lyric poetry by period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Lyrics</th>
<th>Lyric I</th>
<th>Lyric II</th>
<th>Lyric III</th>
<th>Lyric IV</th>
<th>Lyric V</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>son</em></td>
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<td>78</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>mechta</em></td>
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<td>48</td>
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<td><em>mechtan’ë</em></td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>snovidèn’ë</em></td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>grezy</em></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Period I relates to the poetry written before Pushkin left the Lyceum (to mid 1817); period II to the Petersburg years (mid 1817 to May 1820); period III to the Southern exile (May 1820 to July 1824); period IV to the second exile (August 1824 to September 1826); period five to the post-exile years.
## Appendix C

**Occurrences of son, mechta, mechtan’e, snovid’en’e and grezy in Pushkin’s Poetic and Dramatic Works**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>son</th>
<th>mechta</th>
<th>mechtan’e</th>
<th>snovid’en’e</th>
<th>grezy</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Lyric poetry</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>Evgenii Onegin</td>
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<td>Vadim</td>
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<td>Kamennyi gost´</td>
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<td>Skupoi rytzar´</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>19</td>
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</table>

Source: Shaw, *Pushkin: A Concordance to the Poetry.*
Appendix D

Occurrences of *son, mechta, mechtan’e, snoviden’e* and *grezy* in Pushkin’s Prose Fiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>son</th>
<th>mechta</th>
<th>mechtan’e</th>
<th>snoviden’e</th>
<th>grezy</th>
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<td>Dubrovskii</td>
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<td>‘Arap Petra Velikogo’</td>
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<td>‘Baryshnia-krest’ianka’</td>
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<td>‘Mar’ia Shoning’</td>
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<td>‘Uchast’ moia reshena...’</td>
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<td>‘Egipetskie nochi’</td>
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</table>

Source: Vinogradov, ed., *Slovar’ iazyka Pushkina v chetyrekh tomakh*.
Bibliography

Bibliographical Abbreviations

CanSP  Canadian Slavonic Papers  
EPoet  Essays in Poetics  
L.  Leningrad  
M.  Moscow  
P.  Petersburg/St Petersburg  
PIM  Pushkin. Issledovaniia i materialy  
PVPK  Pushkin. Vremennik Pushkinskoi komissii [1936-1941]  
RL  Russian Literature  
RLJ  Russian Language Journal  
RLT  Russian Literature Triquarterly  
RRe  Russkaia rech'  
RS  Russkaia slovesnost'  
RusL  Russkaia literatura  
SEEJ  Slavic and East European Journal  
SEER  Slavonic and East European Review  
SEES  Slavic and East European Studies  
SRev  Slavic Review  
VL  Voprosy literatury  
VPK  Vremennik Pushkinskoi komissii [1965-]  
WSIA  Wiener Slawistischer Almanach

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