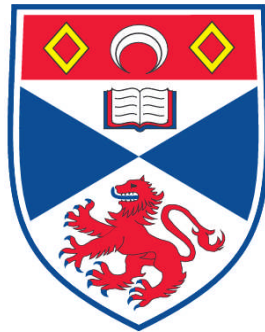


**THE GENERIC ORIGINALITY OF
IURII TYNIANOV'S REPRESENTATION OF PUSHKIN
IN THE NOVELS *PUSHKIN* AND *THE GANNIBALS***

Anna Rush

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
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The Generic Originality of
Iurii Tynianov's Representation of Pushkin
in the Novels *Pushkin* and *The Gannibals*

This dissertation is submitted
in partial fulfilment for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Russian Department,
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University of St Andrews

by Anna Rush

20 January, 2011

Abstract.

This thesis is the first extensive study devoted to the generic originality of Iurii Tynianov's representation of Pushkin in his two historical novels, *Pushkin* (1935-1943) and the abandoned *The Gannibals* (1932). Chapter 1 contextualises Tynianov's contribution to the current debates on the novel's demise, 'large' form and the worthy protagonist. The conditions giving rise to contemporary interest in the genres of biography and the historical novel are delineated and the critical issues surrounding these are examined; Tynianov's concern to secularise the rigid monolith of an all but sanctified 'state-sponsored Pushkin' and the difficulties of the task are also reviewed. Chapter 2 shifts the examination of *Pushkin* as a historical novel to its study within the generic framework of the *Bildungs*, *Erziehungs* and *Künstlerromane* with their particular problematics which allowed Tynianov to grapple with a cluster of moral, philosophical and educational issues, and to explore the formative influences on the protagonist's identity as a poet. Chapter 3 explores the concept of history underlying Tynianov's interpretation of the characters and events and the historiographical practices he employed in his analyses of the factors that shaped Pushkin's own historical thinking. Chapter 4 investigates Tynianov's scepticism about Abram Gannibal's and A. Pushkin's mythopoeia which reveals itself in Tynianov's subversively ironical and playful use of myth in both novels. The Conclusion assesses Tynianov's contribution to the 20th century fictional Pushkiniana and reflects on his innovative transgeneric historical novel which broke the normative restrictions of the genre, elevated it to the level of 'serious' literature and made it conducive to stylistic experimentation.

Declaration:

I, Anna Rush, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 88,500 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in September, 2004 and as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2004 and 2009.

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Ph.D. in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

Date 20 January 2011

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The system of transliteration employed in this work is that of the Library of Congress (without diacritics). The only exceptions are names well known to English readers, such as Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Mayakovsky, Shklovsky, Merezhkovsky, and others, which have been given in their traditional British Museum transliteration. I have also preserved the German spelling of the names Küchelbecker and Eisenstein.

The first two parts of Tynianov's novel *Pushkin* were first published in serial form in the Leningrad journal *Literaturnyi sovremennik*, Part One ('Detstvo'): nos 1-4, in 1936, and Part Two ('Litsei') 10-12 (1936) and 1-2 (1937). Part Three ('Iunost') appeared in *Znamia*, nos 7-8, Moscow, 1943. The text of the first two parts is the last published during the author's lifetime (the first part within a collected edition of Tynianov's works from Goslitizdat in Leningrad, 1941, the second in a separate edition from GIKhL, Leningrad in 1938). The third part was written and published when Tynianov was gravely ill, so he could neither revise and prepare his manuscript for publication, nor correct proofs. The first complete book edition of *Pushkin*, edited and annotated by B. Kostel'ianets, saw the light of day only in 1956. Having conducted archival work and studied Tynianov's original manuscripts, V. Kaverin and Ie. Toddes arrived at a new reading and drastic re-editing of Part Three of the novel, publishing their version in 1976 in a separate edition of *Pushkin* (*Khudozhestvennaia literatura*: Leningrad), which differs considerably from both the first journal publication and the first complete volume editions of 1956 and 1959.

When citing from Tynianov's *Pushkin* I refer to the widely available 'canonical' 1981 edition of the novel *Pushkin* (Moscow: Pravda). All longer quotations from Tynianov's novel *Pushkin* are provided in the original Russian and the shorter ones in my own English translation. Page numbers of the quotations from the text are provided in brackets within the body of the thesis, e.g. (568).

The text of *The Gannibals* is cited as from its first publication: 'Vstuplenie' was published in Pomerantseva (ed.) *Iurii Tynianov. Pisatel' i uchenyi* (Molodaia gvardiia: Moscow, 1966), pp. 204-211, and the opening chapters from the novel were published in *Nauka i zhizn'* (1968:10), pp. 120-126. Although occasionally referred to in publications and unpublished research on Tynianov, until 2006 *The Gannibals* had not been translated into English or properly analysed. The first translation by L. Trigos of the 'Introduction' was published as Appendix B in Nepomnyashchy C. Theimer et al. (eds) *Under the Sky of My Africa: Alexander Pushkin and Blackness* (Evanston, 2006), 377-383.

All citations from Pushkin's works are also in Russian, supplied parenthetically (volume and page number), e.g. (V, 37) and refer to the 1977 edition of A. S. Pushkin *Sobranie sochinenii v 10 tomakh* (Moscow, Khudozhestvennaia literatura), unless otherwise specified.

All citations from *Tynianovskie sborniki* are abbreviated as *TC*, e.g. *1 TC*, *7 TC*, etc.

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Introduction

The present study is primarily concerned with Tynianov's novelistic treatment of Pushkin, the man, the poet and the (self)mythologized construct. It is necessitated by the fact that, in spite of the wealth of critical attention to Tynianov's oeuvre (including *Pushkin*) in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, research into the novel carried out in English-speaking countries has been limited to articles and chapters in longer books devoted to the author, while *The Gannibals* has been so far almost entirely overlooked. Even in Russia the scope and depth of published critical studies of *Pushkin* have been cursory and generalised. My thesis, therefore, is the first full-scale monograph dealing with Tynianov's work on his novelistic Pushkin project, in which I will explore Tynianov's representation and treatment of Pushkin in the eponymous novel and in the abandoned project, and *Pushkin's* precursor, *The Gannibals*. A particular effort has been made to illuminate Tynianov's concept of history, which informed his interpretation of characters and events and his treatment of the Pushkin myth. The thesis will also assess Tynianov's contribution to Soviet fictional Pushkiniana and will attempt to demonstrate the percipience and originality of Tynianov's concept of Pushkin's personality, creative mechanisms, and of the various influences on the poet in his formative years. This will be achieved by re-orienting the angle of investigation from that of the study of *Pushkin* and *The Gannibals* as historical biographical novels to their study within the generic framework of the *Bildungs*, *Erziehungs* and *Künstlerroman*.

Chapter I will provide a brief outline of Tynianov's involvement in OPOIAZ and the Formalist method which informed his theoretical views and practices as a novelist. I will also offer a concise overview of the critical background and the state of research into Tynianov in Russia and in English-speaking countries, focussing on the studies relevant to the issues of representation of artistic personality and genre discussed in the present thesis. I will further consider the complex relations between Tynianov's scholarship and his imaginative prose, before turning to his role in the debates on the 'end of the novel' and the future of the genre that were taking place in Russia in the 1920's in response to the cataclysmic social upheaval of 1914-1921. The generic impasse which was acutely felt in the Soviet novel by the late 1920's-early 1930's sharpened a sense of urgency about searching for a new type of a novelistic hero, and I will argue that Tynianov's contribution proved valuable not only in indicating a direction for the developing novel but also in establishing the artist as a type of a protagonist who embodied the historical sense of the continuity of life and its cultural wealth and would extend the genre's imaginative range. I will consider, therefore, the ethical concerns Tynianov faced when writing Pushkin's 'life' and the fictional stereotypes he inevitably came to grips with and overran.

I will proceed by examining theoretical issues concerning generic tensions within the genres of the historical novel and literary biography and in particular, the relations within them between historical and artistic truth, the role of invention and imaginative empathy and the problem of the objectivity of such accounts. These theoretical considerations will inform my further discussion of the complex generic choices Tynianov faced when writing his Pushkin novels. My strong contention is that the generic scope of both *Pushkin* and *The Gannibals* is wider than their customary attribution to the genre of the historical novel. Nor are they just biographical novels as such or, in the case of *The Gannibals*, ethnobiographical, in spite of Tynianov's pronounced emphasis on the detailed authenticity of the *couleur locale*, customs and rituals of the community he describes. I contend that *Pushkin* is an innovative discursive hybrid, incorporating features from a number of genres which define the novel's protagonist type, its system of personages, its peculiarities of plot and indeed, its entire novelistic structure.

Throughout the thesis the analysis will build on the theoretical conclusions of this sub-chapter, and close textual readings will provide insights into Tynianov's artistic methods of interpreting the formative influences on Pushkin, focussing on the Formalist techniques of 'defacilitated' form and 'estrangement' which Tynianov employs in order to bend the biographical data to his artistic ends. Employing the theoretical inferences of Tynianov's writings on cinema and verse language and his numerous historico-biographical essays on Pushkin, I shall also analyse his filmic techniques of multiperspectival montage as means for pluralistic characterisation, and explore the inherent ambiguities of his novelistic narrative structure: its textual (un)reliability, and ironical subversion and withholding of authorial judgment. I shall examine the deliberately crafted bathetic effects (comic switches in level), detectable in the extensive use of contrast, oxymoron and paradox. I shall demonstrate the ways whereby Tynianov shows his commitment to objectivity and impersonality, illustrating the most diverse points of view through dramatizing ideas often incongruent with current ideological dogmas and avoiding any blunt statement of ideological commitment.

In Chapter 2, therefore, I will contend that, in order to penetrate the depths of Pushkin's creative consciousness, Tynianov resorted to the tradition of the German *Bildungsroman*, which in the 19th century had also taken root in Russian soil, and focused primarily on the protagonist's interiority on his path to maturation. When discussing Tynianov's portrayal of Pushkin's emotional and intellectual growth, particularly in the description of his Lycée years, I will analyse *Pushkin* as a further transmutation of the genre of *Bildungsroman* into that of *Erziehungsroman*.

Pushkin featured in Tynianov's first two novels, which may be considered as initial tentative approaches to his main undertaking. Tynianov's choice of literary protagonists in all three of his published novels reveals his fascination with man's creative inner potential. I will contend that the genre of the *Bildungsroman*, which is habitually concerned with the protagonist's self-realisation, acquires in the novel *Pushkin* the distinctive features of the *Bildungsroman*'s particular variety, the *Künstlerroman*. I will therefore proceed to explore Tynianov's portrayal of Pushkin's struggle not only with an inhospitable environment, but also for an understanding of his vocation and creative mission, as well as seeking recognition and encouragement from his peers and established writers.

I will further contend that although any identification between Pushkin's characters and their author might appear to be preposterous and unfeasible, in Tynianov's interpretation Pushkin creates his heroes not only according to the literary models fashionable at the time, but also to a certain extent, invests them with his own experiences and closely correlates them with his personal ideals. I propose, therefore, that Tynianov's reading of young Pushkin, particularly in the later chapters of *Pushkin*, is that of a prototypical 'superfluous man' who questions the notions of success prevalent in contemporary society and experiences a profoundly ambivalent desire for both acceptance and non-conformity – the theme which becomes paradoxically pervasive in the novel. Since 'superfluity' presents the case when there occurs a failure in the process of 'the reconciliation of the problematic individual driven by deeply felt ideals with concrete social realities'¹, I will consider Tynianov's interpretation of Pushkin's reluctance or inability to conform to societal norms and civic values within the framework of the *Bildungsroman*, which is strongly preoccupied with the clash of reality and ideals, and of *Künstlerroman*, focused on portraying an artist's irreconcilable differences from his milieu.

In Chapter 3 I will argue that Tynianov widens the scope of the *Bildungsroman*, which is normally relatively unconcerned with history, to incorporate a wide historical background in all its tangible reality. I will investigate the philosophy of history that informed Tynianov's views, his historical understanding and representation of Pushkin and his epoch, attempting to demonstrate that Tynianov's concept of history derives from the German idealistic philosophy of history of Humboldt, Ranke and Dilthey. From his search for the meaning of history in the Diltheyan and Weberian terms of *verstehen* and *nacherleben*, Tynianov proceeds to incorporate into his thinking the theory of *Einfühlung* which was propounded in the latter part of the 19th century by the German scholars Vischer and Lipps and popularised in Russia as *вчувствование*

¹ Lukács, G. *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (Merlin Press: London, 1978 [1916], 132.

and *переживание* by Grigorii Vinokur.² The concern of this chapter will be to indicate the way in which these concepts function in Tynianov's interpretation of key historical figures and events in early 19th-century Russia with particular attention to Tynianov's notion of historicity, its differences from Marxist historicism, and Tynianov's keen interest in 'counterfactual' history.

Chapter 4 will dwell on Tynianov's treatment of Pushkin's conception of his forebears, both maternal and paternal. Throughout his life Pushkin 'favoured' one set of his ancestors over the other. In his youth he was proud to be a scion of the time-honoured Pushkins; later he became more drawn to his maternal forefathers, the Gannibals, and proudly called himself '*потомок негров безобразный*' (II, 42). Ambivalent as it was, Pushkin's curiosity about his ancestry, which at times acquired an almost obsessive quality, was his way of searching his ancestors' past for truths about himself. I shall propose that he challenged his contemporary detractors by constructing an 'acceptable' ancestral past, which was an unavoidably mythologized construct. I will compare the modes of exploiting the same set of facts in the auto/biographical accounts by Abram Gannibal, his great-grandson, Aleksandr Pushkin, and their novelistic biographer Tynianov, on the assumption that stories, like the lives they recount, are always open-ended, inconclusive and ambiguous, subject to multiple interpretations. I will show how Tynianov explodes some of the myths of self-representation in which Pushkin's great-grandfather – and his offspring after him – indulged throughout their lives, and demonstrate how these myths paralleled Pushkin's own anxieties concerning race and class. The investigation will also attempt a partial explanation of Pushkin's strong mythopoeic consciousness, which, as Tynianov convinces us, Pushkin inherited from ancestors on both sides. I shall explore Tynianov's antimythical intentions and the demythifying techniques that he deploys in his deconstruction of the personal myths of Pushkin's ancestry. Tynianov's exposure of Pushkin's black great-grandfather's and indeed the poet's own mythologized self-portraiture as '*потомок негров*' will also be explored in the analysis of Tynianov's *The Gannibals*.

Finally, in the Conclusion I will assess Tynianov's contribution to alerting contemporary criticism to the problematics of the genre of the historical novel and his offering of innovative practical solutions through cross-fertilisation of the historical novel with auto/biographical discourse and various novelistic (sub)genres. The results of the investigation will be summarised, focusing on the ways in which Tynianov subverted the generic expectations of the historical novel, simultaneously breaking away from established tradition, while yet in his own way ensuring its continuity.

² Vinokur, G. O. (1896-1947), a prominent Formalist scholar with an interest in poetics, stylistics, lexicography and Pushkin studies. In 1922-1924 he was a member and the chair of the Moscow Linguistic Circle founded by R. Jakobson.

Chapter One. Contexts.

1. Biographical framework

Iurii Tynianov belonged to the *Pléiade* of Russian post-Revolutionary ‘Renaissance men’ who evinced an amazing breadth of cultural interests. He was a leading Russian Formalist scholar of the 1920’s, an original historian of literature, an inspiring lecturer, an elegant critic, energetic polemicist and persuasive essayist, as well as an innovative screen-writer, a theoretician of the cinema, a literary editor and translator. For the general reading public, however, he remains the revered historical novelist who chose Pushkin and his contemporaries, their age, literature and culture, as the subject of his fiction.

Born in 1894 on the outskirts of the Russian Empire in what is now Latvian Rezikne, the son of a Jewish doctor, Tynianov had personally experienced the pre-revolutionary policy of anti-Semitic alienation, and there is a sense in which his Jewish origins seem to have been a facilitating factor in his assimilation into the majority culture through his studies of its literature.³ Instead of religion which used to give their ancestors their sense of identity, Russian Jewish intellectuals strove for personal affirmation by means of appropriating the core figures of Russian culture thus moving from the cultural periphery to its centre. Thus Shklovsky, the founder of the OPOIAZ group, the progenitor of what would be called Russian Formalism, culturally ‘appropriated’ the modern-day hero Mayakovsky; Eikhenbaum – Lermontov and Tolstoy and Tynianov focused on the national icon of Pushkin. In his *Autobiography*⁴ Tynianov never made direct mention either of his ethnicity or of his religious affiliation writing only that he was born ‘some six hours’ journey from the birthplaces of Mikhoels and Chagall,⁵ and eight hours from the birthplace of Catherine I’.⁶ His mention of such geographical proximity (within the Jewish Pale of Settlement) is significant inasmuch as it is indicative of cultural figures, with whom he felt an affinity and demonstrates his fascination with the fluidity and relativity of the

³ See J. Curtis *Boris Eikhenbaum: Ego sem’ia, strana i russkaia literature* (St Petersburg, 2004) 34, 29.

⁴ ‘Avtobiografiia’ [1939] in *Iurii Tynianov, pisatel’, uchenyi* (Moscow, 1966). In his 1967 diary entry K. Chukovsky wrote: ‘Автобиография Тынянова – чудо. Вся из конкретных образов, из художественных деталей. Как будто пишет не ученый, а великий беллетрист. В книге нигде не говорится, что он был еврей. Между тем, та тончайшая интеллигентность, которая царит в его *Вазир-Мухтаре*, чаще всего свойственна еврейскому уму’. (*Dnevnik (1930-1969)* (Moscow, 1991, 390)).

⁵ Dvinsk (then Latgalia, part of the Empire, now Daugavpils, Latvia) and Vitebsk respectively.

⁶ Catherine I, née Martha Skavronskaia, a daughter of a Lithuanian peasant, was born near Dorpat (now Tartu) and later became Peter the Great’s second wife. This allusion is pregnant with implication if we recall another outsider and also a Catherine (II, the Great, née Princess of Anhalt-Zerbst) who, too, was born on the Baltic coast (in Stettin), and in her later life moved to the centre-stage of Russian politics and culture to become a more enlightened embodiment of the Russian state. These implications are indicative of the theme of non-Russians in Russia, of national minorities, ‘aliens by birth’ [*иностранство*], that fascinated Tynianov throughout his life.

notion of Russianness and the variegated cultural forces (particularly extraneous ones) that shaped it.⁷

Having lived most of his life on the edges of the Empire Tynianov was in a position to appraise it afresh and, like J. Brodsky at a later period, could claim that he ‘found [himself] looking at this empire as if at a tangent. That is, it’s precisely this element of estrangement which is necessary for the writer’.⁸ Perhaps, the love for the Russian culture that nurtured Tynianov and his fresher and more sober view of it,⁹ provided him with the perspectival distance which, in Bakhtinian terms, is vital for enhanced understanding:

In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding – in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one’s own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others.¹⁰

One feels something of this sense of distance, even alienation from Russian culture, in reading the Formalists: ‘Their combativeness is perhaps more than a consciously assumed critical position, more even than a reflection of the general mood of the immediate post-revolutionary years. It may well answer to something more personal...’¹¹ ‘Distance’ remains a persistent theme in Tynianov’s creative writing: his sense of being ‘marked out and set apart’, his self-awareness as an Other in Russian society, his need to penetrate the core of Russian spiritual life from outside and afar.

Tynianov’s acute interest in Pushkin was boosted by his attendance, while a student of history and literature at Petersburg University (1912-18), of Vengerov’s celebrated Pushkin seminar, the forum for free expression of literary hypotheses and ideas. Tynianov was, arguably, the most gifted of Vengerov’s talented students (the seminar was attended by a number of future renowned Pushkinists: Iu. Oksman, G. Maslov, V. Zhirmunskii, S. Balukhatyi and S. Bondi). There Tynianov also struck up a life-long friendship with B. Eikhenbaum and V. Shklovsky and became actively engaged in the literary group OPOIAZ (1916-1919) (Society for the Study of Poetic Language) which viewed the development of literature as an immanent process independent of sociological influence. During the most productive years OPOIAZ had ‘an appearance of organization in the form of a kind of committee of which Viktor Shklovsky was

⁷ As revealed by the archival materials, in his unrealised projects Tynianov intended to explore these themes (‘Neosushchestvlyennye zamysly Iu. Tynianova’ in 1 *TC*, 24-45).

⁸ Interview by A. Epelboin, 38, quoted in Polukhina, V. ‘Pushkin and Brodsky: The Art of Self-deprecation’ in *Two Hundred Years of Pushkin*, Andrew, J. and Reid, R. (eds) (Amsterdam, 2003), I, 163.

⁹ Cf, for example L. Grossman’s auto-referential characterisation of M. Gerzhenson as ‘еврей влюбленный в славянскую душу’. (Grossman, L. ‘Gershenzon-pisatel’ in Gershenzon, M. *Izbrannoe* in 4 vols. (Moscow, Jerusalem, 2000), I, 12.)

¹⁰ Morson, G. S. and Emerson, C. *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (California, 1990), 55.

¹¹ Maguire, R. ‘The Formalists on Gogol’ in Jackson and Rudy (eds) *Russian Formalism: A Retrospective Glance* (New Haven, 1985), 225-226.

president, Boris Eikhenbaum his aide-de-camp, and Iurii Tynianov the secretary'.¹² They saw themselves and acted more like a creative movement than proponents of a purely critical doctrine, and were closely associated with a poetic group (the Futurists) and a group of novelists (the Serapion brothers).

As an academic (1921-1929) and literary historian at the Institute of the History of Arts, Tynianov concurrently published scholarly research on the problems of parody and stylisation, verse language, literary evolution and studies of particular authors (Gogol', Dostoevsky, Küchelbecker, Griboedov, Nekrasov, Tiutchev and, above all, Pushkin). By the mid-1920's he had become one of the central figures of Russian Formalism, an heretically un-Marxist literary group¹³. Formalism strove to create a dynamic scholarly discipline [*наука*] ¹⁴ which came to signify the study of common laws and generalities in disparate works of literature, as well as the regularities of their evolutionary transformation. The Formalists strove to combat the academic routine of preceding generations of 'beardies' [*бородачи*], which was a metonymical allusion to the emblematic attribute of their teachers, as well as a figural representation of the latter's academic conservatism and respectability. It also implied the revisionist and reformist impulse of Formalist literary studies, which, like the Petrine reforms, were keen to eliminate 'the beard' as the symbol of the backward and the obsolete.

Tynianov's novelistic endeavour began in his early 30-s when the State Institute of the History of Arts where he was lecturing at the time was 'reformed' by the authorities¹⁵ after A. Lunacharsky officially denounced it as isolationist and reactionary, and a full-scale campaign was launched against the Formalists by the more materially-oriented Institute of Comparative History and Literature of East and West.¹⁶ Tynianov took his colleagues by surprise by publishing his first novel *Kiukhlia* (1925), a historical-biographical work dealing with Pushkin's little-known and long-forgotten Lycée friend, Wilhelm Küchelbecker. The choice of the Pushkinian theme and of a protagonist close to the great Russian poet was emblematic of the Formalists' spiritual affinity with Pushkin's circle. Like Silver Age artists before them they were keen to re-mythologize the experience of 20th-century Russia in terms of an apparent cyclical

¹² Tomashevskii, B. 'La nouvelle école d'histoire littéraire en Russie' in *Révue des études slaves* (1928: VIII), 227, n.1.

¹³ Curtis notes that 'the Formalists were apolitical inasmuch as they could afford to be in their dangerous times'. Op. cit., 110. Tynianov famously quipped: 'Назвать писателя, которого интересует форма «формалистом» -- это то же самое, что назвать женщину, которая интересуется содержанием «содержанкой»'. The allusion made here is to the original meaning of *formalism* in Russian, with its implications of pedantry, standing on ceremony, insistence on observing strict procedures and superficiality.

¹⁴ 'The study of a concrete material in its specificity' according to Eikhenbaum. (In *O literature. Raboty raznykh let* (Moscow, 1987), 375) [1941, No. 1, 130-143].

¹⁵ Eikhenbaum's reaction to the closure of the philological department at Leningrad University was unequivocal: 'Это погром!' (Curtis, Op. cit., 162).

¹⁶ Slobin, G. N. 'Masters of Contemporary Literature' in Jackson and Rudy, 54, 56 (34fn).

return of the early 19th century with its European war and social upheavals, flourishing of romanticism and utopian idealism.

Although separated by a hundred years, the members of OPOIAZ and Arzamas¹⁷ were united by a sense of continuity in the perception of their cultural mission, their anti-academism, non-dogmaticism and conceptual approach to literature. The innovative science-building ‘triumvirate’ of the new age – Tynianov-Shklovsky-Eikhenbaum – bore a striking similarity to the Pushkin-Viazemsky-Zhukovsky trio as psychological and cultural types, among whom Tynianov can be viewed as the Pushkin figure, flighty, witty, temperamental and fun-loving.¹⁸ Shklovsky, like Viazemsky, was the live wire, ‘a fighting cock’, an expert in the art of literary fisticuffs, and general guiding spirit.¹⁹ Eikhenbaum, who clearly identified with Zhukovsky, possessed the latter’s integrity and respectability which increased the group’s credibility and prestige, gained it prominence and enabled it to exert influence on young writers.²⁰

Tynianov’s acute identification with Pushkin began in his youth with his self-conscious emphasis on their similarity in appearance, sartorial dandyism and theatricality of manners.²¹ As time went by Tynianov seemed to have grown into Pushkin, not just in appearance, but also in character, mind, interests and inclinations.²² Like the poet whom he worshipped, Tynianov possessed an absolute literary taste; he was a virtuoso reader; he made fine drawings in the margins of his notebooks and indulged in the composition of impromptu epigrams and impersonations, mirroring Pushkin’s very habits and practices.

The writing of a novel about Pushkin’s Lycée friend was Tynianov’s attempt to inscribe himself upon the cherished era, although superficially it appeared to have owed its conception to adverse exterior circumstance.²³ Tynianov’s experience of verse translations and essay-writing made the transition to a different genre not just possible, but seemingly effortless. *Kiukhlia* did not only signify Tynianov’s successful rite of passage into the realm of authorship, but his first foray into writing about Pushkin in imaginative prose. Ironically, the novel won him the sobriquet of the founding father of the Soviet historical novel.

Later, when the atmosphere around Tynianov became more sinister and the political ambience more dogmatic, his fiction seemed to provide a private escape route from grim reality

¹⁷ Russian literary circle that flourished in 1815–18. It advocated Westernized language reforms and was formed for the semiserious purpose of ridiculing the conservative Lovers of the Russian Word, a group dominated by the philologist Aleksandr Shishkov, who wished to keep the modern Russian language firmly tied to Old Church Slavonic.

¹⁸ N. Chukovsky in Pomerantseva, Op. cit., 143.

¹⁹ Kurganov, E. *OPOIAZ i Arzamas* (St Petersburg, 1998), 1-15; Any, C. Op. cit., 41-42.

²⁰ Eikhenbaum in Tynianov, Iu. *Poetika: Istoriia literatury: Kino* (Moscow, 1977), 571.

²¹ See for example, reminiscences of Andronnikov, Kaverin, Stepanov, Shklovsky in *Vospominaniia o Iurii Tynianove*, (ed.) V. Kaverin (Moscow, 1983).

²² Pomerantseva, G. (ed.) *Iu. Tynianov, pisatel', uchenyi* (Moscow, 1966), 143.

²³ Kaverin, V., Novikov, V. *Novoe zrenie* (Moscow, 1988), 141-144.

into the world of imagination, creativity and the historical past.²⁴ From 1928 on, feeling the academic ground slip from beneath his feet, he reverted to traditional academic history of literature while becoming increasingly preoccupied with writing prose fiction.²⁵ Tynianov was forced to abandon theory; what replaced this, Tynianov's novels, reflected his personal intellectual odyssey as well as the disillusionment of the wider intelligentsia at the very moment when the trap of historical circumstance was being sprung.²⁶

The turn of the 1920's and 30's, like that in the previous century, became a watershed between a time of hope and revolution and that of stultifying reaction and the new regime grew increasingly restrictive of freedom of expression and conscience. Tynianov's second novel (1927) capitalised on this feeling and focused on the post-1825 period and the themes of disappointment, betrayal, unrealised potential, wasted talent and, eventually, the premature death of a poet by savage murder. *The Death of Vazir-Mukhtar* described the tragic events of the last year in the life of Pushkin's fellow writer, Aleksandr Griboedov, the author of the tellingly named comedy *Woe from Wit*.

While the reviewers of *Kiukhlia* praised Tynianov for his fortuitous choice of protagonist, idealistic and enthusiastic, and thus well suited to reflect most strikingly the illusions of the Decembrist ideology,²⁷ his second novel was condemned for its dark mood – the author was accused of historical determinism and pessimism, 'strange and inappropriate in our literature',²⁸ and his technique of *vchuvstvovanie* was pronounced erroneous, resulting in distortions of historical perspective. The application of the requirements of conventional historical fiction to Tynianov's prose led to its being severely condemned, even by his own pupils. Hailing Tynianov as 'almost a genius as literary scholar', L. Ginzburg, for example, denounced his novel as a failure.²⁹ In his 1935 book on Tynianov, Leonid Tsyrlin chided the author, among other things, for his 'distorted' notion of historicism:

Историзм держится на пафосе дистанции. Чувства расстояния у Тынянова нет, - это очевидно... Тынянов неизбежно оказывается замкнутым в пределах изображенной эпохи; он погружен в нее, он не может взглянуть на нее издали, и он вынужден забыть весь последующий исторический опыт... И главный упрек здесь в том, что он не различает, не видит тенденций исторического развития, не понимает сущности дела декабристов. 'Штурманы будущей бури' - эта ленинская характеристика декабрьского движения никак не подходит к людям двадцатых годов, которые, пережив друзей, пытаются приспособиться к победителям.³⁰

²⁴ Kurganov, Op. cit., 35.

²⁵ Kurganov writes: 'Самый красивый и неожиданный путь ухода оказался у Тынянова – через славу, которые принесли романы и, кстати, романы о том, как эпоха ломает личности, а если они не поддаются, то расплющивает их.' (Ibid., 35).

²⁶ For the discussion of this see, for example, Clark, K. *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Harvard, London, 1995) and Rosenthal, B. *Dmitrii Sergeevich Merezhkovsky and the Silver Age: The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality* (The Hague, 1975).

²⁷ Tsyrlin, L. *Tynianov-belletrist* (1935), 68-79.

²⁸ Ibid., 49.

²⁹ Ginzburg, L. 'Zapisi 20-30kh godov' in *Novyi mir* (1992: 6), 156, 175.

³⁰ Tsyrlin, Op. cit., 47-49.

Undeterred by such criticism Tynianov addressed himself to his much relished project of writing a novel about Pushkin, the theme that had been magisterial in his entire creative life. It was the only work that took him more than a decade to write (1932-1943), and even then remained unfinished. As a literary historian Tynianov had already written prolifically about Pushkin, but it was in his novel, whose genre Eikhenbaum defined as an ‘*artistic dissertation*’,³¹ that he aimed to penetrate the enigma of Pushkin’s personality and bring him close to the reader. By exploring the private introverted world of a great poet, Tynianov exposed for investigation the universal question of genius: what makes it appear at a particular moment in history and what makes it peculiarly national and, in this case, Russian? To answer this question it was necessary for him to probe further than Pushkin’s immediate family, relationships and education; indeed in July 1932 Tynianov had already begun a novel called *The Gannibals* which was to form the first stage of a novelistic biography of Pushkin, treating Pushkin’s maternal African ancestry. A year later he abandoned the project, possibly because he became aware of the problems involved in beginning the Pushkin story so far back in time (in 1698 to be precise, a century before Aleksandr Pushkin was actually born); with advancing illness shortening his life, he would need to hurry if he wanted to concentrate on the biography of the poet himself.³² Belinkov, however, has argued that the novel about the Gannibals was the direct and natural development of the historical and stylistic conceptions of the Griboedov novel, and the novellas *Lieutenant Kijé* and *The Wax Effigy*, and that in the reigning literary and political atmosphere a work of that kind was already doomed to remain unpublished. Tynianov’s novella *Young Vitushishnikov*, neither politically heretical nor excessively experimental linguistically, was published that very year and was met with gloom and hostile incredulity, a reaction which must have sent him a stark warning of how this kind of modernist writing would be received in the current climate.³³ In Chapter 4 of the present thesis I will suggest another reason for Tynianov’s abandonment of the project, but for the time being it will suffice to say that he never returned to the Gannibals project, and the manuscript was believed to be lost, until in the 1960’s it was discovered in the extant part of Tynianov’s archive and was subsequently published.

The first two parts of Tynianov’s *Pushkin* (serialised 1935-37), were viewed as an unquestionable success, representing Tynianov’s ‘return’ to the realism of *Kiukhlia*, in the same way as *The Wax Effigy* was regarded as a step ‘away’ from it. Apparently, Tynianov was hailed as having achieved new heights as an artist and having ‘rediscovered’ his acute artistic vision.³⁴

³¹ Eikhenbaum, B. ‘*Tvorchestvo Iu. Tynianova*’ in *O literature*, 380-420.

³² Stepanov, N. ‘Zamysly i plany’ in *Vospominaniia o Iurii Tynianove* (ed.) Kaverin, V. (Moscow, 1986), 243-244.

³³ Belinkov, Op. cit., 518.

³⁴ Tsyrlin, Op. cit., 112.

On the contrary, for Tynianov's more demanding later critics, *Pushkin* appeared to be a 'step back' stylistically to more simplistic and less experimental writing, an obvious concession to the ruling literary doctrine's demand for a realistic portrayal of history, executed on the order of and, therefore, accessible to, the people. My intention is to contest the views that *Pushkin* is so radically different from anything Tynianov had written before and that, unlike any other of Tynianov's works, his last novel contained no artistic breakthrough.³⁵ I will argue that to overlook the degree of generic experimentation and claim that the novel was an 'artless' narrative about Pushkin's life led some critics to a stinging indictment of Tynianov, who appeared to return to the critical realist mode of writing, to the classical canon created by greater writers whom he would never emulate.³⁶ Whatever *Pushkin* was – stylistic compromise in response to the social *zakaz*, revision of and nostalgic farewell to the past, or token of Tynianov's creative maturity as a writer – the conception and stylistics of the novel seemed to them to be ridden with inherent contradictions. To submit this charge to critical examination is a further task of this dissertation.

2. Critical foundations.

Tynianov's valuable contribution to the Formalist school had been habitually considered within the context of the school's theoretical and critical output, starting with the first studies of the method in Russia by N. Efimov (1925), B. Engel'gardt (1927), P. Medvedev/M. Bakhtin (1928) and Medvedev's own, highly tendentious *Formalizm i formalisty* (1934).³⁷ The publication of Tynianov's debut novel, however, made it clear that he was an extraordinary and significant phenomenon, not only in Russian criticism, but in Russian literature too. Study of Tynianov's novelistic method began in the author's lifetime, even before his major novel *Pushkin* began to be serialised. In the late 1920's-early 1930's, however, alarm bells began to ring with increasing stridency concerning the supposed 'difficulty' of interpreting Tynianov's fiction and his stylistic manner, highlighting his apparent 'ambiguities'. In his 1935 monograph on Tynianov, for example, Tsyrlin felt compelled to state that:

легче всего может быть понят, раскрыт в своем подлинном значении такой исторический роман, автор которого не замыкается в пределах исторического жанра. И у Алексея Толстого, и у Ольги Форш, и у Артема Веселого легко осязаемы те творческие нити, которые соединяют их исторические вещи с другими произведениями. В таком историческом романе историческая ткань прозрачна, и сквозь нее явственно проступает уже знакомое лицо автора.

Но что сказать о таком писателе, как Тынянов, который на протяжении всего своего творчества не выходит из рамок истории, как разглядеть в нем нашего современника, как угадать, какие тревоги и вопросы, подсказанные ему сегодняшним днем, пытается он разрешить в своих исторических построениях?³⁸

³⁵ Belinkov, for example, maintained: 'Он писал *Пушкина* так, как будто бы все написанное им раньше было неверно'. (Ibid., 610).

³⁶ Op. cit., 606-610.

³⁷ They were concurrent with articles of the Formalists and para-Formalistic circle explicating the method. See Bibliography.

³⁸ Tsyrlin, Op. cit., 19.

The critics were concerned by the elusiveness of the narrator and the impossibility of drawing any clear ideological conclusions about the worldview of the author. Tynianov's treatment of his characters' dramas as universal drew harsh criticism. His portrayal of Griboedov's tragedy in his second novel, for instance, was criticised for being anachronistic, and the thematics of the novel were seen as so abstract and non-specific for their time that they could be easily transferred to any other era.³⁹

Tynianov was later to be chastised for his misuse of the genre of historical fiction: instead of an attempt at comprehending historical facts, his novella, *Voskovaia persona*, for example, appeared to represent no clear social or historical conception, and was based instead on 'verbal connoisseurship' [*гурманство*], the aesthetics of absurdity and 'empty meaningfulness'. The befuddled critics' almost invariably negative responses were predicated upon the dichotomy of 'ideology' (or historiosophical 'idea'), and 'devices' in which the former were embodied. The story's 'fullness of content' was contrasted adversely with the 'form' or devices which in turn were regarded as empty packaging material and as an instrumental, auxiliary characteristic in relation to history/content. Literature and history were thus placed in the relationship of signifier and signified, i.e. one of direct correspondence between historical concepts and their linguistic representation. In the case of *The Wax Effigy* these elements appeared fatally dissociated. From Tynianov's point of view, the literary sense was immanent in the process of signification accomplished *inside* the literary text.⁴⁰ Iampol'skii's studies of the problem of representation in Tynianov's works and the influences of Heine's aesthetics on Tynianov's poetics are pertinent for the present study inasmuch as they indicate that in Tynianov's works meaning is engendered not by the straightforward translation of ideas into words, but by deliberate manipulation of the linguistic material for its intrinsic effect,⁴¹ a contention which partially explains why the objectives of Tynianov's imaginative prose were at odds with those of Socialist Realism.

Eikhenbaum's programmatic 1941 essay on Tynianov, together with Tsyrlin's monograph, arguably laid the foundations for Tynianov studies 'proper', including discussion of his innovations in the use of the novelistic genre. Tynianov strenuously objected to generic inertia and to blind reverence for the western novel (such as the *biographie romancée*) so characteristic of post-revolutionary Russian prose:

новые жанры складываются в результате тенденций и стремлений национальной литературы и привнесение готовых западных жанров не всегда целиком разрешает эволюционную задачу внутри национальных жанров. (Так, по-видимому,

³⁹ Ibid., 27-28.

⁴⁰ Bliumbaum, Op. cit., 43-44.

⁴¹ Iampol'skii, M 'Razlichie, ili Po tu storonu predmetnosti (Estetika Geine v teorii Tynianova)', in *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* (2006:80), 49.

теперь обстоит дело с западным романом. Привнесение готовых жанровых образований с Запада, готовых жанровых сгустков не совпадает с намечающимися в эволюции современной русской литературы жанрами).⁴²

Eikhenbaum attributed the success of French *biographie romancée*, which had as its plot an adventure story centred round a hopelessly modernized hero, to the state of methodological impasse [*обморочное состояние*] in literary studies and literary history at the time. Tynianov's novels, on the contrary, were an attempt at 'transcending' the genre, unhistorical and anti-scholarly by its very nature. My study will take as axiomatic Eichenbaum's claim that Tynianov's 'new' prose was a particular method and style of interpreting the past and, instead of being geared towards modernizing events of the past and seeing them in a heroicised light, it was based on the prosaic or 'intimate history', which previously remained outside the scope of historical writing. Such an 'atomistic' or 'microscopic' analysis, as Eikhenbaum argued, proved remarkably productive at drawing far-reaching conclusions from the minutiae of the most diverse facts, and enabled Tynianov to understand the past in a sort of 'double vision', where the facts of the past acquired significance according to their relevance to present-day problems, and were employed as a specific method of studying the present.⁴³ My intention, however, is to extend this claim and demonstrate Tynianov's engagement in developing a new constructive principle of historical prose-writing concerning the choice of a hero, overall composition and type of narration.

Previous studies have largely centred on a few general features of Tynianov's method of fictional writing: his approach to the problem of historical truth in art (A. Kalinkina, 1972), his artistic interpretation of fact (Z. Poliak, 1985), the cinematic nature of his style (I. Razmashkin, 2001), comparative evaluations of his historical biographical novels with those of other authors, as well as his influence on the genre of the historical novel in the 1920's (K. Urazaeva, 1999). This thesis will fill the existing gap in detailed investigation of Tynianov's novel *Pushkin* from different generic angles.

Pushkin as such was the specific focus of studies by G. Melekhina (1958) and M. Nesterov (1969), who examined the novel, in the first case through a Marxist critique, and in the second linguistically, through the analysis of Tynianov's use of language. I will repudiate Melekhina's excessively ideologized sociological interpretation, informed by Socialist Realist requirements, which led her to dismiss Tynianov's 'Formalist follies' which he had supposedly indulged in his earlier *Wax Effigy* and *Historical Sketches*, and from which he had now supposedly departed in his mature novel, *Pushkin*. I will specifically challenge her claim that, for

⁴² Tynianov, Iu. 'Arkhaisty i Pushkin' in Tynianov, Iu. *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki* (Moscow, 1968), 111-112.

⁴³ Eikhenbaum, 'Tvorchestvo Iu. Tynianova' in *O proze* (Leningrad, 1969), 380-420.

all its undeniable merits as a novel, *Pushkin* was a failure of epic proportions. I find equally objectionable some of the conclusions in Belinkov's analysis of *Pushkin* in the aforementioned *Iurii Tynianov*⁴⁴ where the critic deliberately chose to focus his attention on the allegorical or political interpretation of Tynianov's novel by scrutinising the work mainly for subversive tendencies and political allusions to contemporary circumstances and overstressing their potentially anti-Soviet ideological message. Although this school of thought spawned many followers, I have been careful not to fall into this trap since Tynianov himself warned critics to be wary of analysis of this kind.

As to investigation of the generic originality of Tynianov's fiction, the way was paved by A. Petanova's thesis of 1990 which cast a spotlight on the question of the genre of *Pushkin* itself: if it clearly was not a historico-biographical novel *per se*, what then was it? Disappointingly, she misinterprets the changes in Tynianov's narrative techniques as an 'abandonment' of the experimentation with expressive subjectivity to be found in his previous novels, and sees Tynianov's move in *Pushkin* towards authorial neutrality as characteristic of a chronological, realistic and rather traditional novelist. Therefore, she viewed his last novel as nothing more than a well-executed *zhizneopisanie*⁴⁵ which, in her opinion, determined its failure. Refuting Belinkov's pronouncements on Tynianov, Petanova claims that Tynianov chose deliberately not to withstand the 'pressure of the time' and not to accentuate issues relevant to his contemporaries. On the contrary, she argued, Tynianov was trying his utmost to make opaque any possible parallels with contemporary life.⁴⁶ In the course of the present thesis I intend to disprove her suggestion that *Pushkin* was an unquestionable artistic and political retreat from Tynianov's earlier positions, and that this very retreat put him out of step with modern literature and the cultural needs of his readers. My intention is to prove, on the contrary, that Tynianov succeeded in confronting and dissecting issues which the Soviet intelligentsia was sensitive to at the time.

My own position is closer to, although not identical with that adopted by N. Proskurnia in her 1999 investigation of Tynianov's innovative treatment of genre.⁴⁷ She disagreed with Petanova's condemnation of *Pushkin* as a token of Tynianov's 'cowardice': on the contrary, Proskurnia argues, by resorting to fictional writing Tynianov actually put at risk his hard-earned reputation as a serious literary scholar and did not shy away from controversy. Proskurnia's thesis marked a critical breakthrough in studies of genre in Tynianov, particularly with regard to

⁴⁴ Ch. Six, 471-610.

⁴⁵ *Romanistika Iu. Tynianova i ee zhanrovoe svoeobrazie* (Moscow), 203.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 140-1.

⁴⁷ *Iu. N. Tynianov kak pisatel'-literaturoved (Zhanrovo-stilevoi eksperiment v istoricheskobiographicheskom romane)* (Moscow).

his unconventional development of narrative line: she argued that the latter is not chronological but associative, and Tynianov's handling of focalisation and obliteration of authorial interference is not a retreat, but a remarkable narratological experiment.⁴⁸

Scholarship in English-speaking countries began to discover Tynianov's ideas in the mid-1950's when Russian Formalism became an object of fascinated scrutiny and resulted in a number of groundbreaking monographs. An array of investigations into various aspects of Tynianov's life and *oeuvre* have been carried out, none of them, however, solely devoted either to the matter of the historical novel in Tynianov, or to his representation of Pushkin.

Angela Britlinger has touched upon the Pushkinian theme in Tynianov in a chapter of her book, *Writing a Usable Past* (2000), using as her title a phrase coined in 1918 by Van W. Brooks for viewing the past as a tool of interpretation and understanding of the present.⁴⁹ Neither Tynianov's treatment of the genre, however, nor his rhetorical devices were actually examined by her, which rendered some of her conclusions somewhat abstract. Tynianov's first two novels are undervalued as mere 'trial runs or practice sessions before the author turned to Pushkin', and even then he fails in his task: she claims that the author 'got bogged down, essentially never reaching Pushkin's life as a poet and adult', and that his last novel proved the least experimental of all his works.⁵⁰ I shall discuss the problems of dealing with Pushkin imaginatively, dwelling in particular on Britlinger's claim that the reasons for Tynianov's (and other writers') failure to come up with a comprehensive novelistic biography of Pushkin were rooted in what she defines as 'the issue of literary ownership',⁵¹ i.e. the numerous previous attempts of critics and writers which had rendered the material sterile. In her opinion, Tynianov succeeded in his first two novels and failed in the third because Pushkin was 'common property' in a way that Griboedov or Küchelbecker were not, and this very anxiety prevented Tynianov from constructing a usable past from Pushkin's life. I will contest her charge that Tynianov missed the opportunity to answer the historical call for a biography of Pushkin; not only did Tynianov himself fail, in the specific instance, she argues, but the 'scientific novel' that he pioneered was itself to prove infertile. Ultimately, her negative assessment of Tynianov's achievement in *Pushkin* stems from the same tired old approach to the novel, which involves the complete dismissal of narrative

⁴⁸ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁹ Brooks, V. W. 'On Creating a Usable Past' in Hutner, G. *American Literature, American Culture* (New York, Oxford, 1999), 213-216 [*Dial*, 64 (1918), 337-41]. The idea of selectivity, of what we borrow from the past, goes at least as far back as Nietzsche, who argued that 'a natural relationship of an age, a culture, a nation with its history is... regulated by the extent of its need'. Nietzsche, F. 'On the uses and abuses of history for life' in *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge, 1983), 59-123, 59, 77. See also Bouwsma, W. J. (ed.) *A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History* (Berkeley, Oxford), 1990, 1-16.

⁵⁰ Britlinger, Op. cit., 159.

⁵¹ Ibid., 42, 183.

innovation, and a disregard of those formal techniques which ensured the novel's stark emotive quality.

Andrew Wachtel appears to be on much safer analytical ground in *An Obsession with History: Russian Writers Confront the Past*, when he postulates a peculiarly Russian way of capturing historical truth(s) – through what he terms an ‘intergeneric imaginative dialogue’, whereby a chosen historical period is illuminated through multiple competing narrative perspectives.⁵² Starting from the initial broad premise that major Russian authors produce their own transpositions of historical themes from fiction into non-fiction, or vice versa, he traces such a trend from Karamzin and Pushkin, through Dostoevsky and Tolstoy to Tynianov who, he argues, provides conclusive proof of the trend's vitality in 20th-century Russian letters. Challenging the thesis that Tynianov's novels were mere ‘illustrations’ for his critical works, Wachtel places Tynianov in the context of a dialogue, both with previous treatments of Pushkin by other authors, and with the presentation of Pushkin in his own critical works and imaginative prose. I intend to go still further and shall contend that, even within the novelistic genre itself, Tynianov found the notion of generic ‘purity’ unproductive and preferred to go against the grain of the rigid normative poetics of Socialist Realism, which disapproved of destabilising generic uncertainty. I shall concern myself in particular with Tynianov's narrative techniques and novelistic structures, while supporting Wachtel's contention that Tynianov instinctively subverted any singular vision and boldly affirmed an author's right, not only to an opinion of his own, but also to a change of opinion depending on the genre in which he wrote, i.e. his right to a variety of diverse approaches to the same historical material even within the genre of the historical novel itself. I shall start by examining two such approaches, scholarly and fictional, and will offer some correctives and additions to Wachtel's conclusions insofar as these concern Tynianov.

3. The relation between Tynianov's scholarship and his imaginative prose

In the emergence of a literary artist of Tynianov's type, Eikhenbaum recognized the attribute of their ‘synthetic’ epoch which, in order to enhance understanding of the complexities of modern life, required a combination of multi-lateral modes of cognisance. Tynianov had demonstrably shaken popular belief in the incompatibility of theoretical thought and artistic creativity, so that even his immediate circle appeared undecided on the issue. Shklovsky, for one, contended that ‘a

⁵² See in particular Ch. 8. ‘Literary History, Criticism, and Fiction: The Case of Tynianov’, 177-197 (Stanford, 1994), 7.

literary critic must be able to write a novel, albeit a mediocre one.’⁵³ However, in a letter to Tynianov in 1927, he characteristically contradicted himself by famously joking that to become an ichthyologist one doesn’t have to be a fish.⁵⁴ He adds, however: ‘about myself I can state that I am a fish: a writer who analyses literature as art.’ Eikhenbaum also pointed to the uniqueness of Tynianov’s novelistic innovation deriving from a symbiotic interaction between his scholarship and art, resulting in a peculiar species of ‘scientific’ novel [*научный роман*].⁵⁵

Tynianov’s perceived ‘descent’ into artistic prose seemed unexpected (Eikhenbaum wrote that when reading his 1921-24 articles one could least of all have expected Tynianov to turn to imaginative prose).⁵⁶ L. Ginzburg, on the other hand, recalled that the entire atmosphere of the GИИ (*Государственный институт истории искусств*) was imbued with literary activity, and not only studies of literature, but actual literature-making: ‘Everybody, the students and the staff, wrote poetry; switching from creative writing to literary studies and back seemed entirely natural.’⁵⁷ Their self-perception as *littérateurs* displayed an ‘artisanal’ attitude to authorship and familiarity with ‘the taste of the craft’.⁵⁸

Such testimony clearly suggests that the very term ‘transition’ is not factually true in Tynianov’s case since he never ceased literary work, and the development was absolutely in character. Theoretical knowledge, however, does not automatically guarantee success as a writer, as K. Mochul’skii was quick to point out on the release of Tynianov’s first novel:

Ему ведомы все тайны художественного построения: он знает наизусть ‘приемы’ и ‘пружины’. У него профессиональная привычка критического научения, расследования и анализа. Все им заранее взвешено... При чтении литературного произведения он разлагает свое впечатление на элементы и объясняет себе, как достигнут тот или иной эффект. И вот ему кажется: умею разобрать весь механизм по винтикам, значит сумею и собрать его. Стоит только все поставить на свое место, применить кстати самые действенные приемы – и получится хороший роман. Теория должна оправдаться на практике и за анализом последовать синтез.⁵⁹

But this was where arguably the difficulty arose, according to Mochul’skii: even when a novel was written with impressive knowledge of the facts, impeccable taste and great

⁵³ Shklovsky wrote a few semi-autobiographical books balancing on the cusp of artistic prose: *Sentimental’noe puteshestvie* (1919-1923), *Zoo. Pis’ma ne o Liubvi, ili Tret’ia Eloiza* (1923), *Tret’ia Fabrika* (1926), the semi-historical *Matvei Komarov, zhitel’ goroda Moskva* (1929) and *Zhitie arkhiereiskogo sluzhki* (1931); Eikhenbaum’s venture into belles-lettres was *Marshrut v bessmertie* (1933). This practice stretched beyond the Formalist circle to a few other literary critics, such as, for example, L. Grossman (*Zapiski D’Arshiaka* (1930) and *Ruletenburg* (1932)).

⁵⁴ Shklovsky, *Tetiva*, 239.

⁵⁵ Eikhenbaum, ‘Tvorchestvo Iu. Tynianova’ in *Op. cit.*, 380-420.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 391.

⁵⁷ Ginzburg, L. ‘Vspominaia Institut istorii iskusstv’, *4 TC* (1990), 20.

⁵⁸ Ginzburg, *Chelovek za pis’mennym stolom*, 22. Her entry reflects the wide-spread ‘production’ metaphor in literary studies of the time. Cf, for example Eikhenbaum’s and Shklovsky’s titles employing ‘craftsmanship’ metaphors (*Kak sdelana Shinel’ Gogolia*, *Tekhnika pisatel’skogo remesla*, *Tret’ia fabrika*, etc.)

⁵⁹ Mochul’skii, K. ‘Iu. Tynianov. ‘Kiukhlia’ in *Krizis voobrazheniia: Stat’i. Esse. Portrety* (Tomsk, 1999), 275 [*Zveno*, No. 203, 19 December (1926)].

sensitivity, it could still fail to work, supposedly owing to the author's lack of creative temperament: 'the scholar has failed to become a writer'.⁶⁰

Even if Tynianov's hypostasis as a novelist did not come as a surprise, his venture into the field of the novelistic *biography* seemed an incongruous step in the light of the Formalists' ostensibly anti-biographical stance on scholarship. As early as 1916, Osip Brik and OPOIAZ had called for the disregard of authorial subjectivity: 'The social role of the poet cannot be understood by an analysis of his individual qualities and habits. It is essential to study on a mass scale the devices of poetic craft, what distinguishes them from adjacent domains of human labour, and to study the laws of their historical development.'⁶¹ Thus, the author was to be removed or sidelined in order to concentrate exclusively on literary concerns. The relevance of authorial intention to the interpretation of the literary text was dismissed. In this light Tynianov's interest in biography would appear to have been a betrayal of his scholarly credo, but the Russian Formalists' anti-authorialism had appeared as a reaction against biographical positivism and was a *temporary* strategy, not a primary position in itself. It was a means towards eliminating any dependence on extra-literary contexts.⁶²

The Russian Formalists [...] forbade recourse to the author in the interests of founding a science of literature which rejected the mimeticist view of language. By this exclusion they hoped to disburden the text and criticism of the text of any answerability to 'contents', of any obligations to the aesthetics of representation. However, the further they progressed in the direction of a non-representational theory and criticism, the more they came to find that their researches put the validity, and even the efficacy of authorial exclusion under question. The removal of the author opens a provisional space wherein the methodology can be developed, but once [it] has been established, it must either return to take stock of that which it has excluded... or continue to neglect the question of the author at the cost of remaining regional, selective, inadequate to the literary object.⁶³

Tynianov's novelistic biographies can be seen as a mode of such reinscription predicated on the realisation that, after all, the life of the literary subject cannot be jettisoned into a separate sphere.⁶⁴ In a certain sense, he did remain true to Formalism in the techniques that he adopted to achieve such reinscription. He resisted authorial subjectivity by almost completely obliterating the implied author of his own books and thus, in a manifestation of modernist attitudes, opened his narratives to antithetical interpretations, i.e. multiple connotations, at times differing from or in outright opposition to one another. In this way, Tynianov deflected attention from his own status as author and adopted techniques similar to those used in scholarly argument, where impersonality and anonymity produce an effect of neutrality, of unbiased truth: 'the narrator is simply that anonymous, disinterested spectator who observes, and ventures

⁶⁰ Some of Tynianov's colleagues and pupils were of the same opinion. G. Gukovskii and B. Bukhshtab, for instance, held that Tynianov was indisputably a genius as a scholar, but the same claim could not be upheld about him as a novelist. (Baevskii, V. S. 'Ia ne byl lishnim' (Iz vospominanii o B. Ia. Bukhshtabe) in *4 TC*, 170, quoted in Bliumbaum, Op. cit., 44).

⁶¹ Brik, O. 'The So-Called Formal Method' in *Russian Poetics in Translation 4* (Colchester, 1977), 90.

⁶² Burke, S. *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* (Edinburgh, 1992), 14, 15, 42.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 50

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

hypotheses' (172), in a display of detached curiosity reminiscent of Joyce's artist.⁶⁵ This technique reverberates with the 'exit author' theory described by J. W. Beach in English literature as 'the disappearance of the author [narrator]' – 'the one thing which will impress you more than any other... in a bird's eye view of the novel from Fielding to Ford'.⁶⁶ Paradoxically, this did not have a simplifying effect on the text: on the contrary, in such a narrative the author operates as a principle of uncertainty in the text, and inevitably 'the death of the author' leads to 'the birth of the reader', demanding his or her active involvement in the reception of the text, for, to borrow Barthes' words: 'the reader is the space in which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination'.⁶⁷

A striking peculiarity of Tynianov's literary work is that, in almost twenty years of novel writing, he did not publish a single piece set in his own times. It is also abundantly clear that, in spite of his interest in biographical issues, he was not interested in biographical *chronicle* or *life-description* as such. His historical fiction also went beyond the bounds of the regular historical novel or novella.⁶⁸ In spite of earlier attempts by Merezhkovsky and Briusov to intellectualise the genre of the historical novel, to make it more cerebral, in the 1920-30's it was still regarded as low-brow reading-matter owing to its perceived accessibility and popular appeal. After Karamzin and Pushkin the genre had never been part of the prime axis of literary movements and did not appear to resolve any important tasks of poetics, style or psychological representation. The historical novel had always occupied an intermediate place between fiction (sometimes good, like Mark Aldanov's) and politically engaged pot-boilers (ideological engagement prevented the later novels of Merezhkovsky and A. Tolstoy from making their way into 'high' literature).⁶⁹ Thus, Shklovsky could argue that even for readers in the early 1920's

⁶⁵ 'The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his finger-nails.' *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Penguin, 1964) [1916], 215.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Stanzel, F. K. *A Theory of Narrative* (Cambridge, 1986), 18.

⁶⁷ Burke, S. (ed.) 'The Death of the Author' in *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern Reader* (Edinburgh, 1995), 129.

⁶⁸ See, for example, V. Khodasevich's review of Tynianov's *Wax Effigy*: 'Автор исторической повести, вскрывая и объясняя соотношения данных сил, течений, характеров, тем самым изображает причины и следствия исторического явления или момента. В этом и заключается его основная, хоть не единственная, задача. Исторические повести пишутся не ради отрывочного воскрешения бытовых или языковых частных, с которыми можно полнее ознакомиться по первоисточникам. Что хотел объяснить или открыть своей повестью Тынянов?

Кое-какие следы исторических размышлений у Тынянова как будто можно найти. Но они вовсе не любопытны и, главное, чуть намечены, да и то произошло не по воле автора, а скорее вопреки ей. Литературное произведение для формалиста есть совокупность формальных приемов – и только, а вовсе не вместилище исторических или иных размышлений. Тынянов, сделавшись беллетристом, старался быть верным себе как критику. У него мы вправе искать приемов, и только приемов.' (Khodasevich, V. *Sobranie sochinenii* in 4 vols. (Moscow, 1996), II, 206-207).

⁶⁹ Chudakov, A. in 'Anketa k 100-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia Iu. N. Tynianova', 7 *TC*, 62.

этому учит Хлебников.⁷⁶ Apparently, Tynianov yearned to reach out beyond what he regarded as the regimented, and purely conventional bounds of generic forms and to move on to writing fragmented narratives, something like autobiographical notes in the style of Rozanov's *Opavshie list'ia*.

And yet, as Aristotle argues in his *Poetics*, although both scholarship and art spring from the same desire to explore and to understand, the creative writer (dramatic poetry was what Aristotle had in mind) as opposed to the scholar does not merely portray particular people, scenes, situations and events which he happens either to have observed or to have invented, but writes about them in such a way as to bring out their characteristic elements, thus illuminating their essential nature. The writer thus works 'according to the law of probability or necessity', as Aristotle puts it, not according to some chance observation or random invention.⁷⁷ Putting the Aristotelian thesis another way, D. Daiches contends that the writer is more fundamentally scientific and serious than the historian, because he is not restricted by actuality and is free to construct his story and manipulate the facts in order to present 'what, in terms of human psychology and the nature of things, is more inherently probable'. The miracle of literature resides in the fact that it creates a self-sufficient world of its own, with its own compelling kind of probability, its own inevitability, and what happens in the (writer's) story is both probable in terms of that world and, because that world is itself a formal construction based on elements in the real world, an illumination of an aspect of the world as it really is.⁷⁸

Such an Aristotelian approach became deeply rooted in Russian soil through the 'aesthetic cognition' theory of the early Belinsky, through Apollon Grigor'iev and, with particular Orthodox overtones, through Dostoevsky. These writers 'emphasized the artist's aesthetic intuition – rather than the philosopher's fully conscious logic – as the primary, and indeed the only integral way to truth. Only in the works of an inspired poet-artist, who combines an intuitive vision of the world with his conscious reason, can one fully penetrate the essence of reality'.⁷⁹ In such a scheme of things the philosopher's (scholar's) role becomes that of the literary critic who can only explicate the meaning of a work of art – and of reality – 'by trying to replicate within himself the intuitive logic of the artist'.⁸⁰ With reference to Tynianov this implies that only by using 'novel as technique' could he achieve the synthetic all-embracing and un-fragmented mode of 'explication through replication'.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Tynianov, 'Khlebnikov', 592.

⁷⁷ Aristotle *The Poetics* (Oxford, 1920), 43.

⁷⁸ Daiches, D. *Critical Approaches to Literature* (London, 1956), 37.

⁷⁹ Levitt, M. C. *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880* (Ithaca, London, 1989), 132-133.

⁸⁰ Daiches, Op. cit., 37-38.

⁸¹ Ibid.

The consensus appears to be that, without Tynianov the theorist, there would have been no Tynianov the fictionist, whereas there might have been (and indeed there was) Tynianov the theorist without Tynianov the fictionist.⁸² The drawback of many studies of Tynianov, particularly those exploring the fact-into-fiction aspect of his creative process, is that, despite painstaking research, the scholars are so completely absorbed in the factual side of his writing that they fail to look at Tynianov's metatext in terms of its poetics. Referring once again to Eikhenbaum's article on Tynianov, I should like to repeat the argument which I see as crucial for this study: that Tynianov's concern was 'the search for a *new prose*, a trial of a *new style* and search for *new genres*'⁸³ (my emphases). It goes without saying that the artistic emplotment of factual material could take place only after the stage of scholarly research had been successfully negotiated. Chukovsky's and Ginzburg's memoirs provide unique glimpses into this, figuratively speaking, 'patch-work' or 'quilt-making' stage in Tynianov's writing. If we accept Levinton and Greenleaf's observation that Tynianov's fictional plots act as 'strange-making' or 'deautomatising' [*остраняющие*] devices in relation to truth, then Tynianov's entire biographical project suddenly assumes a Formalist dimension which would preclude us from seeing his novels as 'betrayal' or 'descent', but rather as a logical stage in his development as scholar-cum-artist.

His fiction appeared complementary or auxiliary to his primary field – scholarship. It might have helped him to solve problems otherwise insoluble by scholarly research, or served as a practical laboratory for his theoretical conclusions and granted him the artistic freedom to use even unsubstantiated guesses and hypotheses, in order to recreate the spirit of an era, and the inner worlds and experiences of his characters.⁸⁴

In a certain sense Tynianov pre-dated the post-modernist trend where philosophers and literary critics such as Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes, in a manner not unlike that of Tynianov, made the passage from scholarly to creative writing and successfully challenged the boundaries between the two.⁸⁵ Tynianov's personal impulse to write sprang from his approaching literature through criticism, and might have been necessary as a stage in the search for his own voice, 'for a form of expressiveness no longer tied to the programmatics of reading,

⁸² Dushechkina, V. B. 'Anketa' in 7 *TC*, 16.

⁸³ Eikhenbaum, 'Tvorchestvo Iuriiia Tynianova' in *O proze* (Leningrad, 1969), 397.

⁸⁴ This process took place not only between Tynianov's studies of literary history and creative writing, but also between his verse translations from Heine and his studies of prosody and verse language. Tynianov was first of all a 'virtuoso versifier', who skilfully reproduced German meters in Russian, and only then a scholar. (See Il'ushin, A. in 'Anketa', 27, Gasparov, M. *Ibid.*, 10; Runchin, A., Ronen, O. *Ibid.*, 46-49).

⁸⁵ Wachtel, A. 'Zamechaniia o vzaimootnoshenii khudozhestvennykh i nauchnykh proizvedenii Tynianova', 7 *TC*, 220. A similar switch from criticism to artistic prose took place in A. Siniavsky's and U. Eco's careers.

and those of reading ‘over the author’s shoulder’.⁸⁶ There might have been psychological reasons for Tynianov’s recourse to fiction which had a beneficial, almost ‘therapeutic’ effect on the author by creating an outlet for those elements of his psyche which he had previously found it necessary to suppress. Writing could have been a recreation from rigorous scholarship and provided him with a private intellectual space. No doubt Tynianov’s success as a fictionist eased his feeling of disorientation and historical fiction clearly became the main area of application for his outstanding abilities.⁸⁷ Tynianov’s almost exclusive devotion to fictional writing in his later years may also be attributed to his ‘yielding to the temptation of the power of persuasion which he felt he had over his readers’, and which led him away from his ‘duty to discover scientific evidence.’ (10-11) It would appear, at any rate, that literary writing satisfied Tynianov’s craving for artistic expression and recognition.

There was clearly a bifurcation in his personality, capable of combining two diametrically opposed spheres, the ‘Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde’ theory first articulated by K. Chukovsky.⁸⁸ Without refuting this theory, it is feasible to argue that perhaps the contrast between the two sides of his endeavour seemed more striking at a time when, in scholarship, Tynianov, the visionary theoretician, was revolutionising the studies of poetry and literary history, whereas in literature he was experimenting in what was seen as an inferior genre. I would argue that what Tynianov was doing in fiction was no less ‘serious’ and innovative than his activity in scholarship. Of course, the relationship between the two was ‘complexly indivisible’, and enabled him to compartmentalise: what was allowed to the one (the *littérateur*) was strictly forbidden to the other (the theorist). One was a purist scholar who would not tolerate the fictionalising of ideas and conceptions, while the other was an inventive artist free from the restraints of cold logic.⁸⁹

Undoubtedly, the retreat into creative internal exile, or ‘literary emigration’, must also have had certain practical advantages. It provided Tynianov with opportunities to ‘fill in the grey areas of history’, to reach beyond the theoretical framework of Formalism. He had begun to feel constricted and even bored by the expressive possibilities of the theoretical article. As well as operating with well-established facts in his novels, Tynianov was able to explore something he

⁸⁶ Burke, *The Death of the Author*, 152-153.

⁸⁷ See Eikhenbaum’s letter to V. Shklovsky, May 1928, where he describes his state of complete isolation, utter gloom and weariness: ‘Все это невесело. Я остаюсь совсем один, очень мрачный и усталый. Ничего не клеится. Пишу с трудом. Денег нет. В ГИЗе [State Publishing House] работа останавливается. Из ИИИ [State Institute of Arts] нас выгоняют. Я хожу иностранцем, не знающим радости... Здесь ничего веселого – утешить мы тебя не сможем, хотя Юра [Tynianov] бодрится. Ему немного легче, чем нам.’ (Curtis, *Op. cit.*, 310).

⁸⁸ ‘По какой-то странной причине Тынянов-ученый не любил Тынянова-художника, держал его в черном теле, исключительно для домашних услуг и давал ему волю лишь в веселой компании, по праздникам, когда хотел отдохнуть от серьезных занятий.’ (Chukovsky, K. ‘Iurii Tynianov’ in *Sovremenniki* (Moscow, 2008), 487).

⁸⁹ Novikov, V. ‘Anketa’ in *Op. cit.*, 40.

could not approach in Formalism, namely, the psychology of characters, their motivations, emotions and mentalities. Fiction offered him the opportunity to compensate for what was lacking in the other sphere, 'to allow Tynianov the luxury of technicolour, sound-tracked storytelling which the rigorously stylised, black and white scientific conventions of Formalism had denied him.'⁹⁰ Psychologism was not proscribed, but appropriate and even necessary in imaginative literature.⁹¹

By the late 1920's the development of Russian literature and its genres was taking place not only according to the logic of aesthetic laws, but was undergoing considerable pressure from political and ideological factors, and was synchronous with processes in the socio-political life of Soviet society. What was taking place was nothing less than the forceful appropriation of literature by the state, when the Party began to formulate ideological concepts designed to exert control over the entire activity of writing.⁹² Tynianov, like certain other writers, had to develop techniques of literary self-preservation which would ensure the continuation of his creative development and even his physical survival. Far from being cynical opportunism, this was a sad necessity, particularly in the post-1929 period, which marked the 'great turning point' [*великий перелом*] in Russian economic and social development (with all that phrase's ironic connotations of fracture, breakage or dislocation on a grand scale).⁹³ The hounding of Pil'niak and Zamiatin introduced a new era of writers' unquestioning obedience to the state. Tynianov's position became ever more serious after the launching of two campaigns, that against so-called *вычурный язык* (1934) and the discussion of Formalism and naturalism in literature (1936). Understandably, in order to adapt to the new life, one had to shut one's eyes to one's real situation and to relinquish some of one's habits, reference points and values, in other words, continue to function by means of consistent conformism. But, as Knabe explains,

было в таком поведении и понимание того, что жизнь, наука, искусство никогда не исчерпываются действиями власти, что за пределами ее действий остается довольно широкое поле, где в повседневном труде, честном и добросовестном, подспудно и вопреки всему живет нечто сохраняющее и передающее будущему представление о порядочности, честности и добросовестности.⁹⁴

The genre of the historical novel, which appeared to deal exclusively with events of the past, could have provided a safe haven for some writers, removing them from the field of

⁹⁰ Greenleaf-Frenkel, M. 'Tynianov, Pushkin and the Fragment: Through the Lens of Montage' in Gasparov, Op. cit., 287.

⁹¹ Wachtel, 'Zamechaniia', 7 TC, 224.

⁹² Skorospelova, E. B. 'Russkaia proza 1917-1950kh godov' in Avramenko A. (ed.) *Istoriia russkoi literatury 20 veka. 1920-50-e gody. Literaturnyi protsess* (Moscow, 2006), 68.

⁹³ By the mid-1930's for almost two decades Soviet writers had worked under a regime which, since its Decree on the Press of Oct. 27, 1917 had effectively banned freedom of speech and had never sought to restore it, a fact that made criticism of Soviet reality not only unpalatable to the authorities, but also illegal. (Golubkov, M. M., Skorospelova E. B. 'Sotsiokul'turnaia situatsiia 1920-50kh godov' in *Istoriia russkoi literatury 20 veka*, 45-52).

⁹⁴ Knabe, G. S. 'Arbatskaia tsivilizatsiia i arbatskii miif' in Knabe, G. S. (ed.) *Moskva i 'moskovskii tekst' russkoi kul'tury* (Moscow, 1998), 159.

engagement with the ‘dangerous’ issues of contemporary life. But, as history has shown, even this did not prove to be an absolute panacea against repression for everyone.⁹⁵ Like his contemporaries E. Shvarts and K. Chukovsky (who took refuge in children’s literature), Tynianov found himself in a role he might not otherwise have voluntarily assumed. Through the aesthetic shelter provided by the genre of the historical novel, he was able to withstand the pressure of official criticism, to participate actively in the literary process and, to a certain extent, to shape it, being canonised at the same time as a classic of Soviet literature.⁹⁶ Tynianov and his circle were keen to find the ‘point of compatibility with their epoch’ and adjust themselves to whatever they had to endure.⁹⁷ This ‘ostensible surrender’ (to borrow R. Sheldon’s coinage) was their response to the vicious attacks made on the Formalists by Marxist critics and to the latter’s concerted assault on ‘fellow-travellers’ in 1929, during Stalin’s cultural (counter)revolution. This led Tynianov to create a particular kind of Aesopic language, allegedly conciliatory, but palpably ‘perfunctory and forced’, resulting in the impression of defiance which writing of this kind produced on an attentive reader.⁹⁸ The need to convey one’s message to the reader led to the creation of a subtle ‘text in disguise’ [*текст-маска*] which, while contriving to present an official point of view that would allow a writer’s work to enter the Soviet ideological field, actually opposed the premises of official ideology. This practice resulted in the creation of double-layered texts which worked simultaneously for the consumption both of an ‘inner circle’ of initiated readers, and of outsiders, philistine readers. Such writing used scholarly authority and an educational ethos to convey a message which would meet official requirements thematically, while at the same time overcoming the ideological limitations of the established canon. The process involved a great deal of self-censorship and lip-service to the dominant realistic mode of writing, but this was regarded as a necessary and justifiable compromise. As I intend to demonstrate, these two novels exemplify the apparent accessibility of such works to wide reading audiences, sometimes viewed as capitulation to the dictates of Socialist Realist doctrine, while enabling members of the ‘aesthetic resistance’ to voice their opposition to these very demands.

⁹⁵The historical novelist A. Chaianov was executed in 1937, K. Bol’shakov was arrested and died in confinement in 1938, A. Radlova perished after a long period of incarceration in concentration camps in 1951. Bol’shakov’s novel on Lermontov (*Begstvo plennykh ili Istoriia stradanii i gibeli poruchika Tenginskogo pekhotnogo polka Mikhaila Lermontova* (1928)) might have resonated too deeply or been too close for comfort with its ethos of the tragically curtailed lives of poets in Russia.

⁹⁶Rudenko, M. ‘Poslevoennyi etap v razvitii literatury sotsialisticheskogo vybora’ in *Istoriia*, 260-288.

⁹⁷Ginzburg, L. ‘Eshche raz o starom i novom. (Pokolenie na povorote)’ in *2 TC*, 138-139.

⁹⁸*Ezopovskii iazyk* designated writing in Soviet Russia in which political dissent was expressed ambiguously or allegorically, to avoid official censorship. See, for example Sheldon, R. ‘Shklovsky and the Device of Ostensible Surrender’ in Shklovsky, V. *Third Factory* (Ann Arbor, 1977), vii-xxx. For the brief overview of Tynianov’s adjustment strategies, see A. Smith, ‘Conformist by Circumstance v. Formalist at Heart: Some Observations on Tynianov’s Novel *Pushkin*’ in *Neo-Formalist papers: Contributions to the Silver Jubilee Conference to Mark 25 Years of the Neo-Formalist Circle*, Andrew J. and Reid, R. (eds) (Amsterdam, 1998), 296-315.

In the course of my investigation I will demonstrate how, even in his later novels, Tynianov continued to break the generic barriers between history, theory, criticism and verbal art proper, and positioned himself not outside or above, but at the heart of the literary process, as simultaneously participant and observer, as literary Jack-of-all-trades, polemical, undoctinaire, witty and playfully anti-academic. He might have been writing from ‘hiding’, but he remained true to the ideals of his OPOIAZ youth, treating literature, history and criticism as an organic whole.

Tynianov’s avant-gardist intellectual dual horizons are impressive, but the relation of the scholarly communities in Russia and abroad to the legacy of this scholar/writer remains ambivalent. In Russia it appears that interest in his theoretical postulates has faded somewhat, and there is a feeling nowadays that it is his imaginative writing that remains alive: the hour of his literary works has finally arrived. Now that his historical novels are no longer regarded as a mere adornment to his great name in philology, they can assume the importance and status of revolutionary works that they enjoyed at the time of writing.⁹⁹

4. The ‘end of the novel’ debate and the search for a hero: Tynianov’s contribution.

‘History teaches us that whole movements become captives of a particular theme’, wrote Tynianov in his 1923 critical analysis of contemporary literature. This is what happened to the Russian Sentimentalists and to the Symbolists, he said, when theme became an engine ensuring the vitality of a school. Such themes arose as a constructive principle, as a justification for a particular style, and were usually opposed to the themes immediately preceding them.¹⁰⁰ By the late 1920’s one of the Formalists’ dominant themes was that of biography versus man’s fate. This reflected the Formalists’ conviction that, in times of historical upheaval, people often find themselves at the mercy of ‘fate’, which could mangle, disrupt or even suddenly end their ‘biographies’. The Formalists came to regard destiny/fate as an external necessity, therefore, while biography was seen as the internal result of the growth of the personality.¹⁰¹ They were particularly sensitive to the topical questions of how to keep in step with one’s time, to maintain personal freedom while conforming to the new regime with sets of values vastly different from their own. When they reflected on their own personal destinies, their literary *byt* and the fate of art in the aftermath of the Revolution, they naturally interpreted these within the framework of the theme ‘writer and Revolution’. The tragic loss of Blok and Gumilev in 1921, followed by

⁹⁹ Bliumbaum, Op. cit., 20.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Promezhutok’ in Iu. Tynianov *Istoriia literatury. Kritika* (St Petersburg, 2001), 406-407.

¹⁰¹ Tsyrlin, *Tynianov-belletrist*, 29.

that of Khlebnikov a year later, the mass voluntary exodus or forced banishment of so many eminent Russian intellectuals,¹⁰² the hardships which Tynianov's circle had to endure alongside their fellow-citizens in the post-revolutionary era, coincided with the marking of the anniversaries of Pushkin's and Dostoevsky's deaths, which acquired particular cultural significance in that critical year of the Civil War.¹⁰³ As the first post-revolutionary decade drew to its end, Russian literature continued to lose its poets, which allowed Jakobson speak of 'the law of large numbers at work': 'in the space of a few years the whole flower of Russian poetry has been swept away?'¹⁰⁴ The theme of writer and revolution soon metamorphosed into the theme of the state machine and the destruction of the poet.¹⁰⁵

As a result of powerful social movements and historical events, individuals, as Osip Mandelstam pertinently observed, found themselves 'plucked out of their biographies, like balls out of the pockets of billiard tables'.¹⁰⁶ A sense of powerlessness and despair is tangible in Mandelstam's reference to 'the forces of reality... whose reprisals against psychological motivation become more cruel by the hour'. Appreciation of the supreme humanistic value of the individual, which had been the propelling force that ensured the development of the novel, was no longer in evidence. Both the stock value of the individual in history and the power and influence of the novel were thus devalued. Writing on the fate of the novel after ten years filled with world war, revolution, civil war and military intervention, Mandelstam forecast the end of the novel as it had been hitherto known. He connected its future with the problem of the individual 'acting in accord with his sense of time'.¹⁰⁷ The void left by the end of the novel (as 'a social mode, a school and a religion') was enormous: it had the power to reflect society, to provide its readers with the tools of self-knowledge and serve as an example for 'the widespread imitation of the typical' (198). The greatest loss, however, was the end of the novel as an artistic event, as an autonomous art form, as a central, vital necessity of European art.

1920-1932 were years of the most intense aesthetic search for a genre which would most adequately reflect the burning topics dictated by the complex realities of post-Revolutionary life: morality and politics, the crisis of the traditions of humanity, national

¹⁰² See L. Chamberlain's illuminating study *The Philosophy Steamer: Lenin and the Exile of the Intelligentsia*, London, 2006. On the Moscow and Petrograd lists of those to be exiled were priests, literary critics, publicists, political activists, academics, journalists, economists, artists, historians, writers and poets. (309-312).

¹⁰³ 1921 marked the 84th and 40th anniversaries of Pushkin and Dostoevsky, respectively. Pushkin's celebration was not even a jubilee.

¹⁰⁴ Jakobson, R. 'On the Generation that Squandered its Poets' in *My Futurist Years* (trans.) Rudy, S. (New York, 1992), 239.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 218.

¹⁰⁶ 'The End of the Novel' in *On Poetry*, 1928 (Harris, J. G. in Mandelstam, O. *The Collected Critical Prose and Letters* (London, 1991), 640).

¹⁰⁷ Mandelstam, *Op. cit.*, 201. The following citations to the source are given in parentheses.

character, personality and the masses, the fate of the individual.¹⁰⁸ Heated discussions about the future of the novel and its thematics took place across the board, and the Petrograd-Leningrad Formalists, the Serapion Brothers and Zamiatin took the lead in this discussion.¹⁰⁹

Writing in 1924 Tynianov identified ‘the literary present’ as dominated by the prose genres suffering from tremendous inertia.¹¹⁰ The sensation of an impasse was palpable, the search for new vision essential, the search for new generic forms crucial. Such a dead-end, Tynianov argued, was temporary and necessary: ‘У истории тупиков не бывает. Есть только промежутки.’ (401). In his own imaginative prose he set about to search for a new and adequate ‘large form’.

Rebellion against the novel and attempts to reshape the genre system as a whole were certainly as old as Tolstoy’s ‘renunciation’ of literature.¹¹¹ However, the development of genre-preferences in the post-1917 period resulted from a general distortion of aesthetic values resulting from profound artistic changes taking place in society: the old artistic intelligentsia had lost its leading role, while second-rate authors were thrust centre-stage and artificially advanced by the new system.¹¹² Those to whom education and culture had previously been inaccessible were now eager to gain access to literature and art and were making utilitarian demands on literature. The large generic forms were least suitable to meet the requirements of the newly-literate masses which had no time to read long invented stories and demanded shorter documentary narratives – sketches, outlines, notes and daily/weekly columns. By the end of the 1920’s the *Lef* theorists, Shklovsky and Brik, argued that imaginative fiction had outlived its usefulness and that the future belonged to the ‘literature of fact’, to ‘factographic’, ‘surrogate proto-literary’ genres such as reportage, travelogue, diary, and popular science.¹¹³ Even though narrative fiction, after a temporary eclipse, had begun to show signs of recovery, the time for large epic panoramas was still in the future.¹¹⁴ The huge number of novels appearing in print was

¹⁰⁸ Skorospelova, E. B. ‘Russkaia proza 1917-1950kh godov’ in *Istoriia*, 69-71.

¹⁰⁹ Harris, Op. cit., 640.

¹¹⁰ ‘Написать рассказ не хуже Льва Толстого, по соображениям критики, теперь нетрудно.’ Tynianov, ‘Promezhutok’, 400. The following citations to this source are given in parentheses.

¹¹¹ The novel’s expiry had been prophesied in Russian and European discourse for decades. See, for example, Eikhenbaum, B. ‘Novel or Biography?’ in *O literature*, 288-9 [*Russkaia molva* (1913:69), 18 Feb.]. The publication of A. Belyi’s anti-novel *Peterburg* (1913-14) exploded the genre from within. By departing radically from the great tradition of the Russian novel and by ridiculing the preceding novelistic tradition, its author had virtually destroyed the form. (Maguire, R. *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920’s* (Princeton, 1968), 99). Maguire, Op. cit., 100.

¹¹² Skorospelova, Op. cit., 15-17.

¹¹³ Terras, *Handbook of Russian Literature* (New Haven, 1985), 512. Osip Brik went so far as to suggest that literature be replaced by newspapers – the ultimate literature of fact – which were capable of fulfilling the new society’s needs and surpassed European and pre-Revolutionary Russian literature. (Any, Op. cit., 114-115). For details of their position see Chuzhak, N. F. (ed.) *Literatura fakta*, (Moscow, 1929) 78-83, 225-26). Shklovsky argued: ‘большие романы, эпические полотна сейчас никому не нужны. Это какие-то алюминиевые телеги, издаваемые в то время, когда нужно строить стальной и алюминиевый автомобиль’. (*Gamburgskii schet* (Berlin, 1928), 109).

¹¹⁴ Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History, Doctrine* (New Haven, Yale, 1965), 120. The emergence of such lateral genres reflected the shift from ‘central’ (normative, authoritative, canonical,) to the ‘peripheral or non-canonical’ that was taking place in almost

not a sign of stability and the flourishing of the genre, but rather its opposite – indeterminacy and confusion. Some literary groups (such as the radical Proletarian Octobrists) linked the genre of the novel to its ideological content and the ‘class’ origins of its authors. The end of the previous era for them signified the logical end of the traditional bourgeois novel.

It was expected that the novel would be automatically succeeded by new revolutionary forms corresponding to, and infused with, proletarian ideas. The Formalists argued that this was not the case, however, that the new world with its new class ideology was not a prerequisite for the emergence of new forms of art, that the new grew according to established laws, that art (and literature in particular) could not be regulated, and that it was inadmissible that its organic development should be disrupted. Shklovsky and his circle declared art’s freedom from life and from the imposition on it of functions which are intrinsically alien to it.¹¹⁵ Clearly, to them the use of literature as a means of propaganda was both detrimental to society and destructive of literature itself.¹¹⁶ Perhaps the proletariat was not yet ready to appreciate the avant-gardist forms of art, in the same way as the bourgeoisie had been unable to understand the artists of its time and even the most ideologically advanced class could be artistically retarded.¹¹⁷

When the old forms of literature become a ‘custom, like a necktie’,¹¹⁸ they grow ‘insensitised like gums numbed by cocaine’.¹¹⁹ The Formalists’ objective was, therefore, the search for new generic forms and expressive means. They sought to overcome [*preodolet*] the form by achieving its *retardation* or *defacilitation* [*затруднение*], which meant any device, whether semantic, syntactic or phonological, that forces the reader or listener to follow the text with intense conscious effort and sharpened perception.¹²⁰ This process, which they also termed *estrangement* [*остранение*],¹²¹ embodied, they believed, the major quality and function of art: a sense of wonderment at the world. The function of art was precisely to preserve and prolong the act of wonderment.¹²²

every area of Russian cultural life. The result was a string of tales with the emphasis on the quotidian, on factuality, on showing ‘little men’. Everyday life de-emphasised the plot and led to dull, eventless and fragmented narratives. (Clark, *Petersburg. A Crucible*, 265-66).

¹¹⁵ Shklovsky, *Op. cit.*, 74, 39. ‘Искусство всегда было вольно от жизни, и на цвет его никогда не отражался цвет флага над крепостью города.’

¹¹⁶ Shklovsky compared the use of art for agitation to drilling doors with a spoon, shaving with an awl, or hammering in nails with a samovar; even if such a use were possible, this was not the primary function of these things. *Ibid.*, 43.

¹¹⁷ ‘Как не привыкли мещане, что искусство всегда впереди их, что интересны для истории искусства только те, которые хотят сделать нечто иное, чем их предшественники – есть и другие: это те, что хотят сделать то же самое, что было сделано, но они-то не интересны.’ (Shklovsky, *Op. cit.*, 154).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 109-110.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹²⁰ Terras, *Op. cit.*, 518.

¹²¹ This neologism is translated variously into English as ‘estrangement’, ‘making it strange’, ‘deautomatisation’ or ‘defamiliarisation’. The root of the word conveys the simultaneously double meaning of ‘strange’ [*странный*] and ‘to estrange’ (to remove, to push aside) [*отстранить*].

¹²² Shklovsky, *Tetiva*, 230-231.

In the early years of the Revolution and Civil War, when life was in unimaginable flux, it was virtually impossible to create an artistically significant novel from the confrontation of characters and events. Understandably, young writers rebelled against such aspects of the novel as its excessive length, its precise and skilled craftsmanship (life was too eventful and unpredictable to be cut to measure), and its emphasis on the individual (it was class/the masses that now mattered). Hence, the novel form became ‘eroded’ through the appearance of novels modest in size in comparison with the 19th-century mammoths; psychological motivation was jettisoned, and the narratives were focused on a ‘pure’ story line normally set in the present and propelled not by means of character analysis, but through a series of adventures. This manner of writing challenged critical Realism’s traditional pretence of imitating ‘real’ life by claiming to be more ‘authentic’ and ‘honest’. The overall confusion in generic criteria threw the novel into a downward spiral, turning it into ‘baggy assemblages of shorter materials’,¹²³ devoid of the novel’s traditional sensitivity to ethical questions. Psychological analysis, critical to the Russian novel of the 19th century, seemed to be hopelessly out of step with the times. Whilst death was a major theme of pre-revolutionary psychological prose, the World War, the Russian Revolution, and the Civil War considerably depreciated it. From a significant event of special meaning it became reduced to a triviality, the humdrum, an ordinary occurrence.¹²⁴

Instead of psychological analysis, novels came to be centred on something other than man: a mood (chaos, terror), a passion (greed, envy), an idea (Asiaticism, Bolshevism) and, as Maguire contends, ‘personality was now a function of the thing, of the idea, of the event, which existed quite apart from any person’; ‘the mind has been utterly extinguished, reason abandoned, thought banished, conflict erased, conscience extirpated’.¹²⁵

‘Social command’[социальный заказ]¹²⁶ became the watchword of Marxist critics for accessibility and simplicity, a tool used to bludgeon ‘suspect’ writers on ideological grounds. Such critics felt the need ‘to question writers on the readers’ behalf, acting as a kind of

¹²³ Maguire, Op. cit., 97.

¹²⁴ Nikolaev, D. *Russkaia proza 1920-1930kh godov*, 674. This change was best expressed by the narrator of Arkadii Averchenko’s darkly humorous short story ‘Razryv s druž’iami’ (1920): ‘Простите вы меня, но не могу я читать на пятидесяти страницах о «Смерти Ивана Ильича». Я теперь привык так: матрос Ковальчук нажал курок; раздался сухой звук выстрела... Иван Ильич взмахнул руками и брякнулся оземь. «Следующий!» привычным тоном воскликнул Ковальчук. Вот и все, что можно сказать об Иване Ильиче’». (Averchenko, A. *Sochineniia* in 2 vols., *Kipiashchii kotel* (Moscow, 1999), I, 160).

¹²⁵ Maguire, Op. cit., 96-97.

¹²⁶ To the *Lef* spokesmen this ‘connoted a spontaneous response of the poet to the social needs of his epoch or of his class’ (Erlich, *Russian Formalism*, 112, n. 58.) The term which was later appropriated by critical hacks was actually coined by a Formalist Osip Brik, one of the main intellectual sources of Russian Formalism, ‘a prompter of the ideas destined to find a scholarly future in the works of other scholars’. (Svetlikova, Op. cit., 127, 68). The term *ostranenie* was also his coinage, later appropriated by Shklovsky (72). Brik played a key role in the formation of Eikhenbaum’s Formalist thought in 1917-1918 (Any, *Boris Eikhenbaum*, 33-35.) He stimulated the ideas for at least two and possibly all four of Eikhenbaum’s Formalist monographs and planted the seeds for his later work.

ideological middleman'.¹²⁷ For Tynianov and Eikhenbaum, however, the term meant rather the transformation of non-literary material (newspaper jargon, correspondence) into literature. They insisted on the separation of politics from literature, renouncing ideological attacks as irrelevant to literary analysis: 'Как социальный заказ не всегда совпадает с литературным, так и классовая борьба не всегда совпадает с литературной борьбой и литературными группировками'.¹²⁸ Tynianov, for his part, found such heavy-handed bureaucratic attempts of thematic coercion utterly ludicrous. As he wrote:

Литература идет многими путями одновременно — и одновременно завязываются многие узлы. Она не поезд, который приходит на место назначения. Критик же — не начальник станции. Много заказов было сделано русской литературе. Но заказывать ей бесполезно: ей закажут Индию, а она откроет Америку.¹²⁹

The search for new thematic material and different ways of constructing plot in fiction [*сюжетостроение*] encouraged writers to turn their attention to foreign material in the form of the so-called 'exotic' novel, something that led Tynianov to remark that 'the most difficult thing for Russian literature has always been the 'large form' based on national material'.¹³⁰ Shklovsky emphasised the necessity for concentrating 'not on the theme but on the methodology',¹³¹ calling on his literary confrères to '*estrangle* the topic by means of narrative techniques', to use what he called a 'feuilleton principle', i.e. presenting an object in an unexpected context and creating an effect of 'startled perception' [*неожиданное восприятие*],¹³² their watchword – 'inventiveness' [*izobretatel'stvo*].¹³³ The task set for literature to reflect 'topicality' [*злободневность*] did it no favours. To go along that route would be to find oneself in another impasse, because no amount of 'reflecting reality' could substitute for its meaningful perception. The Formalists proclaimed that for reality to be transformed into an artistically viable form, it had to be expressed and arranged in 'palpable words' and in a 'palpable form'. They linked the solution of the problem of genre with the solution of the problem of literary language and narrative forms.

Русской литературе нужен новый путь. Во всей остроте заново стоит проблема литературного языка и повествовательных форм. Происходит перестановка традиций. Старый русский роман с психологией, с бытом, с философией и 'чувством природы' - все стало мертвым. Ожило чувство языка, и ожило чувство сюжета. Явилась заново потребность в игре с формой.¹³⁴

While the present was still 'raw' and therefore artistically barren, Tynianov chose to write what he dubbed 'belles-lettres on history'. As life returned to relative stability, the personal

¹²⁷ Slobin, G. 'The Formalist Series 'Masters of Contemporary Literature and the Literary Polemic of the 1920's,' in Jackson and Rudy, 53.

¹²⁸ Eikhenbaum, B. 'Literaturnyi byt' in *O literature*, 428-436.

¹²⁹ Tynianov, Iu. 'Russkii sovremennik', (1924: I), 306.

¹³⁰ Tynianov, Iu. '200 metrov I. Erenburga' in *Zhizn' iskusstva* (1924:4).

¹³¹ Shklovsky, V. *Gamburgskii schet* (1928), 86.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 64-69.

¹³³ Erlich, Op. cit., 149.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 366-367.

fate of a man was again thrust to the forefront of literary works. In an attempt to grasp the purport of the process of social historical development in its inner manifestations, interest in human psychology once again assumed a prominent place in Soviet literature. The private man became bearer of an idea against the backdrop of the general laws of history.¹³⁵ The Soviet historical novel was also required to demonstrate its position vis-à-vis autocracy, orthodoxy and the cultural heritage at large through the reinterpretation of the lives of the great people of the past, including writers and poets. Although this very culture was inevitably associated with the Tsarist regime, ‘progressive’ men of letters (and Pushkin was no exception) were nonetheless portrayed as being in tune with the Communist ideals of harmony and justice,¹³⁶ an oversimplification which, as I shall hope to show, Tynianov was careful to avoid.

The search for a hero brought to life an entire series of ‘remarkable people’, who were singled out as ‘official harbingers of a revolution in human anthropology soon to affect every Soviet man.’¹³⁷ The political bias of biographers in any society necessarily colours their work, especially with portraits of ‘great men’.¹³⁸ The genre of biography in Soviet Russia was used to lay claim to the human superiority of particular great men of the past and, by association, of the present-day Soviet people, descendants of a sort of those same great people. This ‘father-and-sons paradigm’¹³⁹ was designed to help the present regime achieve political legitimisation by culturally appropriating prominent figures of the past. The greatest Russian poet of all time, Pushkin, could not possibly escape the fate of becoming such a cornerstone of the Russian poetic paradigm. However, both his life story and his texts came into conflict with his appropriation and use by the state.¹⁴⁰ As we shall see, politically sensitive points in Pushkin’s biography and writings made him a controversial subject for a historical novel and a problematic role-model for its working class readership.

5. Writing Pushkin’s ‘life’: Tynianov’s role in the contemporary controversy.

Commenting on the selectiveness of the nation’s historical memory, Tynianov wrote:

Каждая эпоха выдвигает те или иные прошлые явления, ей родственные, и забывает другие. Но это, конечно, вторичные явления, новая работа на готовом материале. Пушкин исторический отличается от Пушкина символистом, но Пушкин символист несравним с эволюционным значением Пушкина в русской литературе; всегда эпоха подбирает нужные ей материалы, но использование этих материалов характеризует только ее самое.¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ Ershov, L. *Russkii sovetskii roman* in 2 vols. (Moscow, Leningrad, 1967), I, 108-109.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 607-616.

¹³⁷ Clark, K. *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Bloomington, Indianapolis, 2000), 119.

¹³⁸ Briggs, J. ‘Virginia Woolf and the proper writing of lives’ in Batchelor, J. (ed.), 279.

¹³⁹ Clark, *Op. cit.*, 122.

¹⁴⁰ Levitt, M. ‘Pushkin in 1899’ in Gasparov, *Op. cit.*, 187-9.

¹⁴¹ Tynianov, *Arkhaisty i novatory*, 12.

For Tynianov personally and for the Formalist circle which, in the wake of Mayakovsky's suicide, reflected uneasily on itself as the generation that 'squandered its poets', the present possessed many echoes of the situation after Pushkin's death, reverberations 'repeated by the same philistines of Moscow stock who immediately try at all costs to replace the live image of the poet by a canonical saint-like mask'; 'When singers have been killed and their song has been dragged into a museum and pinned to the wall of the past, the generation they represent is even more desolate, orphaned, and lost – impoverished in the most real sense of the word.'¹⁴² To remove the mask from poets who had recently died, to go even further back in time and restore the cherished image of Pushkin himself to its real dimensions, to save the poet from becoming 'a pathetic little alabaster statuette, adorning a boudoir' (Eikhenbaum) – this was a task which at the time seemed to assume a tone of even greater urgency.¹⁴³

In spite of numerous attempts at resurrecting the image of Pushkin in such a spirit, the task appeared to be insurmountable. Writing in 1937 Nabokov remarked on the number of tasteless biographies of Pushkin produced in Russia by 'unceremonious hacks' and 'scribblers of fashionable biographies'.¹⁴⁴ As later became clear, in the first fifty years of the Soviet regime alone, Pushkin became the hero of seven novels, twenty plays, five novellas¹⁴⁵ and a huge number of short stories, the overwhelming majority of which enjoyed little popularity and displayed dubious artistic taste. Undertaken by second-rate writers, often written in haste, commissioned to coincide with an anniversary of Pushkin's birth or death, most of this output was soundly and deservedly forgotten. In a way these efforts were doomed to failure from the outset in their attempt to conform to the Socialist Realist requirement of the search for a positive hero, which could not possibly tally with Pushkin's controversial and idiosyncratic character.

Pushkin, so familiar to his readers from school primers, had hitherto proved resistant to categorisation, to be pinpointed in a work of enduring artistic significance. Nabokov's essay voiced the objective aesthetic and, indeed, ethical concerns facing biographical novelists, irrespective of their political or aesthetic creeds. He contended that it *was* possible to create a Pushkin 'truthfully enough, though it won't be the truth'; it would be art which in his definition aimed essentially to find artistically convincing truth [*животисная правда жизни*]. But there also exists 'the well-meaning, selfless labour of a few select minds, who, sifting through the past

¹⁴² Jakobson, 'On a Generation', 241, 245.

¹⁴³ Eikhenbaum, B. 'Problemy poetiki Pushkina' in *Pushkin. Dostoevsky* (Pbg, 1921), 77.

¹⁴⁴ Nabokov, Op. cit., 528.

¹⁴⁵ Levkovich, Ia. 'Pushkin v sovetskoj khudozhestvennoi proze i dramaturgii' in *Pushkin: Issledovaniia i materialy*, V: *Pushkin i russkaia kul'tura* (Leningrad, 1967), 140-178.

¹⁴⁵ Nabokov, Op. cit., 530.

and collecting the minute detail, are not worried in the least about the production of trumpery for the consumption of vulgar taste'.¹⁴⁶

Tynianov was one of those 'conscientious polymaths',¹⁴⁷ whose novel on Pushkin was, after all, his life-long and most ambitious project, even if its actual writing kept being postponed for more pressing concerns. *Pushkin* eventually emerged as Tynianov's last and, regrettably, unfinished work. The author's anxiety about his long-planned novel is revealed by the fact that whatever personality or historical event Tynianov had dealt with prior to *Pushkin* was, in his mind, inextricably linked with that pre-eminent Russian 'cultural hero', who features directly or indirectly in everything Tynianov ever wrote. In a sense, the entire body of Tynianov's writings forms a meta-narrative, or a hypertext in which a complex of common themes, ideas, problems and motifs find their realization in the author's treatment of a particular era, of the national life and of the character central to his imagination. The continuity of this free-flowing succession of novels, each independent and complete in itself and complementing each other in a consistent way, is also achieved through the reinterpretation of entire episodes from different angles in separate works written in various genres. All of them, are linked intertextually as in a *roman fleuve* through a web of autoreferences, indicating the deep-lying foundations of Tynianov's literary output. The river metaphor is particularly pertinent owing to the implication, both of the breadth and the panoramic quality of Tynianov's historical vision, and of the depth of insight that such an overarching historical 'saga' enabled him to achieve. In conceiving such a wide-ranging undertaking he might have taken his cue from renowned European novelists like Proust, Rolland, Galsworthy, or Duhamel whose *Civilisation* Tynianov had translated into Russian. Tynianov's overarching project can also be seen as a substitute for the all-embracing scholarly literary history that his group intended to embark upon, but never did, as well as embodying the desire to resist the epic reinvention of the Soviet pantheon of heroes, which was taking place in Stalinist Russia at the time.¹⁴⁸ *Pushkin* was a conscious attempt to wrench control of the poet's image from vulgarly over-politicised, ignorant and simplistic interpreters.

Writing Pushkin's life presented a wide range of fundamental difficulties. As already explained, the poet's protean aesthetics do not lend themselves easily to unequivocal interpretations; wherein 'every single image is contested, not a single one can be interpreted

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 528.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Platt, M. and Brandenberger, D. (eds) *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda* (Madison, 2006). The heirs of the Russian avant-garde, gathered at the time around the *New LEF* journal, also refused to participate in the various jubilees honouring 'canonized' writers. Mayakovsky's poem 'Jubilee', 1924, written for *LEF* on the occasion of Pushkin's jubilee, typifies this tendency. Flaker, A. 'Shklovsky and the History of Literature' in Jackson and Rudy (eds) *Russian Formalism* (Yale, 1985), 59.

conclusively from one standpoint; each interpretation opens a door to another, and not a single one can be accepted as definitive'.¹⁴⁹ This ambiguity or multiplicity of meanings, as Jakobson pointed out, made a single 'correct' interpretation as futile as 'look[ing] for a unified ideology in an echo'. For this reason, therefore, judgments about the writer's political, philosophical or religious views gathered from his poetic works were endlessly contradictory.¹⁵⁰ A further problem was that Pushkin's Romantic self-fashioning and strong orientation towards autobiography compelled him to make extensive literary use of his own biography. He 'poetically fostered' certain facts of his life and became both the actual hero *and* the theme of his lyrical poems. This prompted readers to confuse his life and works and to reach beyond the works to their creator, 'demanding the complete illusion of life'.¹⁵¹

It was becoming increasingly apparent that without a scientific approach to the problem, the 'real' Pushkin would remain unfathomable, and the numerous attempts to reveal his essence would lead to the creation of what Shklovsky called a 'stuffed doll' [*чучело*], encompassing only the outward and the scratching at the surface of the inner man.¹⁵²

The formulation and experimental application of such a scholarly approach became one of the Formalists' main objectives, and their contribution to the debate on literary biography in general and Pushkin's biography in particular has remained deep and lasting. The self-identification of Tynianov's immediate literary milieu with the 'Literary Aristocrats' of Pushkin's circle of writers compelled them to ponder the writer's role in society in critical periods of radically changing cultural values. The Futurists' polemically sharpened call for throwing Pushkin, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy out of the steamer of modern times was 'obviously aimed at the hated 'philistines'', and 'need not be taken too seriously'.¹⁵³ Closely associated with OPOIAZ, the Futurists' objection was certainly not to Pushkin per se, but to the loss of the 'live feeling for Pushkin'. In Shklovsky's formulation, it happened 'not because we are far removed from him in our daily life or in our language, but because the time had come to change the yardstick by which we measure Pushkin.'¹⁵⁴ The notion of 'distance' in general had become a

¹⁴⁹ Mirsky, D. 'Problema Pushkina' in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 16-18 (1934), 102.

¹⁵⁰ Jakobson, R. *Puškin and his Sculptural Myth* (The Hague, 1975), 49

¹⁵¹ Tomashevskii, B. 'Literature and Biography' in *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern*, Burke, S. (ed.) (Edinburgh, 1995), 85. Eikhenbaum, too, repeatedly pointed out that not a single phrase in an artistic work could in itself be a simple 'reflection' of the author's personal feelings, but was always a construct and a play: 'Мы не можем и не имеем никакого права видеть в подобном отрывке что-нибудь другое, кроме определенного художественного приема. Обычная манера отождествлять какое-нибудь отдельное суждение с психологическим содержанием авторской души есть ложный для науки путь... Художественное произведение есть всегда нечто сделанное, оформленное, придуманное – не только искусное но и искусственное в хорошем смысле этого слова; и поэтому в нем нет и не может быть места отражению душевной эмпирики'. Eikhenbaum, B. *Literatura teorii, kritika, polemika* (1927) [(Chicago, 1969), 161].

¹⁵² Shklovsky, V. *Gamburgskii schet*, 1928, 52.

¹⁵³ Erlich, Op. cit., 48.

¹⁵⁴ Shklovsky, V. 'Evgenii Onegin (*Pushkin i Stern*)' in *Ocherki po poetike Pushkina* (Berlin, 1923), 199-220.

major theme of Formalist aesthetics at the time: ‘The remoteness from Pushkin that we sense today... is precisely the distance that is needed for true perception... his stature demands that we view him from a distance’ (Eikhenbaum).¹⁵⁵ The Formalists’ ‘new’ Pushkin envisaged not only fresh insights into his personality, but also conscious experimentation with the stylistics of such a representation. In the context of an urgent discussion about the future of the novel the biographical genre came to be regarded as a potentially revitalising factor in the further development of the ‘large form’.

The urgency of ‘re-imagining’ Pushkin for a new readership in new socio-economic circumstances was a crucial issue for the evolution of Formalist poetics that thrust into the foreground the question of scientific biography. Tynianov, for one, insisted:

Необходимо осознать биографию, чтобы она впряглась в историю литературы, а не бежала, как жеребенок, рядом. ‘Люди’ в литературе — это циклизация вокруг имени — героя; и применение приемов на других отраслях, проба их, прежде чем пустить в литературу; и нет ‘единства’ и ‘цельности’, а есть система отношений к разным деятельности, причем изменение одного типа отношений, напр. в области полит[ической] деятельности, может быть комбинаторно связано с другим типом, скажем, отношением к языку или литературе.¹⁵⁶

And even though he had not come up with a systematic theoretical approach, his practical solution to biography-writing proved to be a remarkable breakthrough.

The ambiguity of the early Formalist approach to creativity and authorial biography, as discussed above, resulted in criticism which blatantly excluded biography or the psychology of creativity. In this way, the Formalists divorced an author’s literary development from the story of his life: it was not writers who produced literature, but literature that produced writers.¹⁵⁷

And yet the papers read in the mid-1920’s by Grigorii Vinokur and Pavel Bogatyrev at the Formalist-minded Moscow Linguistic Circle reveal their great preoccupation with literary biography and, in particular, the critical issue of separating an artist’s inner and everyday life. Rather than viewing biography as ‘life-writing’ they, like Tynianov, viewed it as a problem of literary history and historical poetics. Proposing to approach biography as a scholarly subject, Vinokur defined the biographer’s task as the scientific description of a historical personality in its various manifestations (anthropological, intellectual, psycho-physiological, ethical, sociological, religious, etc.) set in an extensive cultural and historical context.¹⁵⁸ Intrinsically interdependent with biography, literature is more than a mere ‘reflection’ or ‘interpretation’ of life, and a historical phenomenon in its own right. As the product of concrete artistic activity, it is

¹⁵⁵ Eikhenbaum, B. ‘Problemy poetiki Pushkina’ in *Pushkin. Dostoevsky* (Petrograd, 1921), 95.

¹⁵⁶ Tynianov, Iu. *Poetika*, 513.

¹⁵⁷ Morson, G. S. ‘Return to Genesis: Russian Formalist Theories of Creativity’ in Jackson, Rudy, 177. It is enough to recall Brik’s famously provocative statement: ‘Had Pushkin not existed *Eugene Onegin* would all the same have been written. America would have been discovered even without Columbus.’ (*LEF*, 1923:1).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

in itself a fact of biography. On the other hand, the work of art could not be legitimised as a biographical source, since literature is not so much a historical document, as a fictitious aesthetic object. It cannot serve as the material of an historical investigation.¹⁵⁹ In his study *Biography and Culture* (1927), Vinokur went on to argue that a good biography should transform an object of reality into an object of aesthetics (20). An accumulation of facts without their aesthetic distillation and qualitative transformation, so he contended, was not worth the paper it is written on.

The Vinokurian emphasis on ‘the unity of the human ‘I’ (87) is palpable in Tynianov’s novels: it is the dynamic interaction of art with its creator and his environment, the tension between the needs of a human being and the artistic self, that makes his characters so fascinating. In an artist, as critics have pointed out, almost always the two selves are at odds, and it is an artist of rare fortune who achieves happiness and success both as man and as creator.¹⁶⁰ This may partly explain Tynianov’s complex dramatic vision of his protagonists as individuals pulled simultaneously in two directions, failing at least in one, and often in both.

Tynianov, in his turn, called upon his fellow-scholars to drop their naive concept of regarding a literary character taken ontologically as a real being. The hero, like the other devices of the whole construction, he argued, depends upon the general artistic aim at a given moment¹⁶¹ It is, therefore, a dynamic element.¹⁶² His method sharply contrasted with Veresaev’s documentary biography, which amounted to an exhaustive chronicle of contemporaries’ opinions of Pushkin. Veresaev’s concept of ‘the two planes’ [*двух планов*] which made it possible to distinguish and separate the elevated and the debased in the personality of a great person, saw its subject as a split entity, and his life was treated as a fount of anecdotes, or as material for a racy plot.¹⁶³ The chronicle method failed to show how the facts of lives and history relate to creativity. Ignoring them as something unnecessary led to inner contradictions at the core of literary aesthetics and made the latter dogmatic.¹⁶⁴

Throughout the 1920’s, under the influence of external criticism and following the logic of its immanent development, the Formalists revised their fundamental OPOIAZ tenet of the

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Beebe, M. *Ivory Towers and Sacred Fountains. The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce* (New York, 1964), 308.

¹⁶¹ Pomorska, Op. cit., 34.

¹⁶² Tynianov, Iu. *Problema stikhotvornogo iazyka* (Leningrad, 1924), 9 [The Hague, 1963].

¹⁶³ Solntseva, ‘Khudozhestvenno-istoricheskaia proza 20-50kh gg’ in Avramenko, Op. cit., 319. Khodasevich, consequently, accused the author of *Pushkin v zhizni* of ‘love of materials for the sake of materials’, of producing a ‘Pushkin without poetic creation, i.e. a living corpse’. See ‘Pushkin v zhizni (Po povodu knigi V. V. Veresaeva)’ in *Poslednie novosti*, Jan. 13 (1927: 2122), quoted in Malmstad, J. E. ‘Khodasevich and Formalism’, Jackson and Rudy, 76.

¹⁶⁴ Review of Iu. Eikhenval’d’s *Pushkin* in Eikhenbaum, *O literature*, 311-312.

autonomy of the aesthetic function in imaginative writing. In *The Problem of Verse Language*

Tynianov now wrote:

Я, разумеется, не возражаю против 'связи литературы с жизнью'. Я сомневаюсь только в правильности постановки вопроса. Можно ли говорить 'жизнь и искусство', когда искусство есть тоже 'жизнь'. Нужно ли искать еще особой утилитарности 'искусства', если мы не ищем утилитарности 'жизни'?¹⁶⁵

By the late 1920's Tynianov and his Formalist colleagues had reached beyond 'pure Formalism' and admitted that social pressures and ideologies might be beneficial to the artist by spurring him on to change his form and to give it artistic expression in his subsequent work.¹⁶⁶ Instead of this initial methodological anti-biographism,¹⁶⁷ Formalists developed sociology based on a conception of the writer as a nexus of literary, social and historical forces that begin to develop before the writer is born and continue to take shape after his death.¹⁶⁸ In such a scheme the writer fulfilled different functions at different moments and 'shared the role of producing the text with other agents in this process (editors, posterity, censors, etc)'.¹⁶⁹ The Formalists went on to demonstrate the interdependence of literary form, economics and social structure, and, in Todd's appraisal, in this respect they 'remain stimulating and valuable for their awareness of dynamics, conflict, and systemic change'.¹⁷⁰ This augured a new direction in their aesthetics: to abandon the provocatively simplistic definition of the work of literature as 'a sum of literary devices' in favour of a functional definition and to acknowledge the importance of the influences of the extra-literary *byt* on literature.¹⁷¹

In their acceptance of such factors, the Formalists, nonetheless, differed from their Marxist critics as to what constituted the originality of a writer, arguing that in order to create new forms an artist required neither inspiration nor imagination, but craftsmanship or technique. The creation of new genres occurred through unintentional or conscious parodying of earlier works, or through assimilating material from the non-literary realm.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁵ Tynianov, *Problema*, 123.

¹⁶⁶ Shklovsky's *Theory of Prose* (Dalkey Archive Press, 1991), 180. See also Erlich, *Russian Formalism*, 120, 206. An attempt to reach out can be seen in Shklovsky's *Third Factory* (1926), Eikhbaum's 'ethical biographies' and Tynianov's biographical novels.

¹⁶⁷ This tendency was the point of harsh criticism of the method given by many perceptive contemporaries. Thus, Khodasevich, rejecting the Formalist declared negligence of the individual in history, called Formalism 'Pisarevism turned inside out – aestheticism raised to the point of nihilism.' (Malmstad, J. 'Khodasevich and Formalism' in *Russian Formalism*, 74-76.)

¹⁶⁸ Particularly revealing in this respect are the entries in Eikhbaum's *Moi vremennik* [1929] and his critical essays dealing with the notions of a 'literary path', 'writer's image' or sense of vocation. Tynianov's essay 'Blok' in *Arkhaisty i novatory* [1929], also focused on studying the literary environment [*быт*], various literary groups and the role of the reader in the literary process.

¹⁶⁹ W. M. Todd, 'Literature as an Institution: Fragments of a Formalist Theory' in *Russian Formalism*, 22. For further development of the argument see the book-length discussion of 'collective authorship' in Stillinger, J. *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (New York, Oxford, 1991).

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁷¹ Davydov, S. 'From 'Dominant' to 'Semantic Gesture': A Link Between Russian Formalism and Czech Structuralism in Russian Formalism' in Jackson, Rudy, 101-102.

¹⁷² Rosenberg, J. 'The Concept of Originality in Formalist Theory in Jackson, Rudy, 163-165.

In his diary Eikhenbaum described his obsessive dream of writing a particular kind of biography. He thought of this as biography of distinctive *generations* solving problems that they faced in their times and of building a culture. It would be ‘a book, not on one writer, but on many – not from a psychological or historical point of view..., but from the standpoint of the historical milieu. The book would interweave the question of how to build one’s life (art as an act) with the epoch, with history.’¹⁷³ Tynianov’s aim proved to be more difficult and ambitious than Eikhenbaum’s; his *Pushkin* novel was not only to be the biography of the poet, his generation and the portrayal of his milieu, but to be fitted into the framework of the historical novel with its own inherent complexities and specific challenges. I will now delineate these while concentrating in particular on the points which will inform my subsequent analysis of Tynianov’s fiction.

6. Biography and the historical novel: theoretical problems and critical issues relating to Tynianov’s treatment of the genre.

The nature of the genre of the historical novel seems to be so self-evident that no one has ever attempted to provide a clear-cut definition of it. Since the moment of its birth the status of the historical novel had been dubious. ‘An illegitimate child without kith or kin, the fruit of the adulterous seduction of history by imagination’,¹⁷⁴ ‘a bastard genre, which might even be dangerous in disguising truth’¹⁷⁵ – the implications are of history (feminine *история*) – nonsense, pure, virtuous – being assaulted and taken advantage of by imagination [masculine *вымысел*] – flighty, frivolous and spontaneous. The union itself is seen as something dangerous, improper, but thrilling and enticing and its fruit is a parvenu which energetically forces its way upwards into ‘big’ literature, striving to be recognized on its own merits.

Some critics went so far as to maintain that the difference between ordinary fiction and the historical novel was actually non-existent.¹⁷⁶ Pushkin himself wrote: ‘В наше время под словом роман мы разумеем историческую эпоху, развитую в вымышленном повествовании’ (VI, 36) implying that in any novel history is accorded a place as part of the *background*, enabling the author to recapture the atmosphere of the time and place his characters firmly in a particular socio-historical milieu. Such a position allowed some purists to argue that

¹⁷³ Diary, Dec.15 (1925), quoted in Any, Op. cit., 102-103.

¹⁷⁴ Senkovsky, O. quoted in M. Al’tshuller *Epokha Val’tera Skotta v Rossii: Istoricheskii roman 1830-kh godov* (SPg, 1996), 44.

¹⁷⁵ Simmons, C. *Reversing the Conquest: History and Myth in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (New Brunswick, London, 1990), 8.

¹⁷⁶ Döblin maintained that *Der historische Roman ist erstens Roman and zweitens keine Historie*, quoted in Humphrey, R. *The Historical Novel as Philosophy of History: Three German Contributions: Alexis, Fontane, Döblin* ((London, 1986), 6), while Lukács claimed that the historical novel is neither a particular genre nor even a particular sub-genre (Op. cit., 290).

the historical novel can be called *historical* only in the thematic sense, as dealing with a distinct circle of concerns (the same might be said of ‘village prose’ or the ‘war novel’).

Throughout his creative life Tynianov repeatedly asserted that preoccupation with the past is synchronous with interest in the future’,¹⁷⁷ rejecting the arguments of vulgar sociologists, who in the course of the 1934 debate concerning the place of the historical novel in Soviet literature, claimed that history had little to do with contemporaneity, that the cultural achievements of the past had nothing to offer to the present classless society, and that the historical novel dealt only with therefore, ‘dead facts’ and with subjective interpretations.¹⁷⁸ Even critics who had no doubt as to the legitimacy of the genre voiced deep concern over the place and importance of the historical novel in the contemporary literary process. Tsyrlin, for example, argued that the historical novel could not and would not find its place in ‘**serious**’ literature, that it would continue its decline into reading matter for children, and even there would only ever play a minor role.¹⁷⁹ Tynianov, however, remained in sharp disagreement with such pronouncements, as his new project, *Pushkin*, was about to demonstrate.

Although the novel was eventually published without an introduction, while working on it during the 1930’s Tynianov drafted the outline of one. In it he wrote:

This book will not be a biography. The reader will not find in it exact facts, precise chronology, or a retelling of the findings of scholarly studies. That is not the task of a novelist but the duty of a Pushkin scholar... What I want to do is to find the *truth of art* about the past, which is always the goal of the historical novelist.¹⁸⁰

Despite his clearly stated goal, Tynianov’s draft introduction shed no light on his methods for achieving it and, although his work has been traditionally assigned to the genre of the historical novel, I would argue that, by reason of its obvious ‘contamination’ by other genres and the thematic range uncharacteristic of the historical novel, *Pushkin* neither belongs to the genre of the historical novel, nor lends itself easily to categorisation in the conventional sense of the term.

First of all *Pushkin* blatantly fails to display an inalienable feature of the historical novel whereby history and its agents occupy centre-stage. Rather, we see life presented *in the context* of history, something which to all intents and purposes has always been viewed as a characteristic of the ‘regular’ novel. In Tynianov’s novels, also, historical characters are not the focal point of the novelist’s scrutiny but, through the author’s deliberate choice, are situated on its periphery. Although it has been suggested that ‘when the novel’s characters live in the same

¹⁷⁷ *Kak my pishem*, 158

¹⁷⁸ Lukács, G. *The Historical Novel* (London, 1969), 284.

¹⁷⁹ Tsyrlin, Op. cit., 12.

¹⁸⁰ Quoted in M. Ginsburg’s Introduction to her translations of Tynianov’s *Lieutenant Kijé* and *Young Vitushishnikov* (Baltimore, 1990), 14.

world as historical persons we have a historical novel',¹⁸¹ the worlds inhabited by Tynianov's protagonists and those of the historical figures proper are concurrent, but distanced from each other, and the spiritual divide between the conventional makers of history – monarchs or statesmen – and the country's thinking elite is deliberately underlined. The fact that in Tynianov's novel a number of historical figures are cast in vivid but brief cameos, stresses their background status, exposing Tynianov to the perhaps justified criticism that in *Pushkin*, for example, 'the Lycée is more important than the Cabinet of Ministers' or that the 'Emperor Alexander, Speransky, Golitsyn and Arakcheev appear to be primarily preoccupied with the problem of educating the young and with the question of who would be the winner in a poetical argument'.¹⁸²

By nature of the subject matter that formed the basis for his novel, Tynianov inevitably made himself vulnerable to the criticism that his novel was 'like a communal flat, overcrowded with personages and cluttered with furniture, books, babies' cots and gossip',¹⁸³ in other words, material which was 'too prosaic for words'.¹⁸⁴ The biographical genre is believed to possess the capacity for 'sublime triviality' and is grounded 'in the tradition of gossip, aristocratic scandal, of piquant anecdote'.¹⁸⁵ These attacks reflected historians' customary case against biography: that 'life is not novel-shaped. It is not generally poetic. It is regrettably *unartistic*'.¹⁸⁶ As far as Tynianov was concerned, however, the biographical genre's perceived impurities, dualities and weaknesses were precisely why it remained so alive, adaptable and capable of reinvigorating the 'tired' genre of the novel.

By recasting the poet's biography as the historical novel Tynianov dispelled the doubts of some critics who regarded it an insuitable medium for dealing with prominent *literary* figures. Lukács, for one, was ardent sceptical about the validity of a historical *biographical novel* as a genre. He viewed the main goal of the historical novelist as a portrayal of the inner life of the *nation*, 'the passions and undercurrents seething inside it', not the portrait of an individual. He justifiably believed that the requirements of biography place severe restrictions on the artistic imagination: the author of a biographical novel focuses on identifying only singular and accidental occasions when the man's greatness manifested itself. The facts of a great man's life, Lukács maintained, could at best acquaint the reader with the occasions on which the work of genius appeared; but they could never form the chain of actual reasons, which entailed the

¹⁸¹ Fleishman, A. *The English Historical Novel*, 1971, 4-3.

¹⁸² Belinkov, Op. cit., 474.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Lloyd, J. Review of *Young Pushkin* in *Glasgow Herald*, 30.06 (2007), 14.

¹⁸⁵ Holmes, R. 'Biography: Inventing the Truth' in Batchelor (ed.), *The Art of Literary Biography* (Oxford, 1995), 15-16.

¹⁸⁶ Holroyd, M. *Works on Paper: The Craft of Biography and Autobiography* (Washington [D.C.] 2002), 8.

emergence of great thoughts, or inventions of historical consequence. Meanwhile, the objectives of the historical novelist had to go beyond the task of creating a character; he ought to embrace the historical reality, identify and reproduce the main tendencies of the era, comprehend and portray the features which brought the great man close to the *masses*. The goal of the historical novel was, therefore, much wider than the creation of a portrait, no matter how remarkable its prototype.¹⁸⁷

Although not embracing Lukács's categorical views of the potentiality of the historical novel, Tynianov shares his belief that great people realize in themselves the tensions and direction of history at a particular time¹⁸⁸ and are exceptional by definition. But the protagonist of a historical novel could be typical even without being canonically 'great'. By introducing a large number of little known personalities, Tynianov revised the assumptions of what lives have been significant and why. The ethical concern that he posed was: what life is worthy of narration? In fact, his novels rescued from oblivion a number of characters, including those of Vasilii L'vovich Pushkin, Küchelbecker and Osip Abramovich Gannibal, and demonstrated that the apparently 'less deserving' ones could also become the subject of fascinating historical novels. Recovering the forgotten lives of individuals previously marginalized by literature and history is an achievement of Tynianov which manifests his distinctly humanistic impulse, his assertion of 'the sense of the worth and importance of the individual in a world that for all its egalitarian principles still stands to hold life cheap'.¹⁸⁹

Writing a *biographical novel* of a great literary artist involved not just the merger of history and fiction but, even more problematically, the blending together of history, fiction and literary biography. Even if a biographer decides to omit the works altogether and concentrate on the 'life', he has to possess the skills of the intellectual and cultural historian, literary critic, novelist and psychoanalyst; 'where the record is fragmentary he should add to that list the abilities of an archivist, an archaeologist, and a sleuth.'¹⁹⁰ Tynianov possessed the required versatility in abundance, but in this novel he also demonstrated his qualities as an innovative novelist, something to a large extent due to his experimentation with generic form.

As for the dilemma of how to demonstrate the mechanics of the creative process of his chosen author and analyse his literary work, Tynianov realised that, of course, the historical novel was not really the place to do so, since the biographical novel of a writer might easily degenerate into the recounting of superficial plots taken from his life and works. Strictly

¹⁸⁷ Lukács, G. *Literaturnyi kritik* (1938), No. 12, 46-57.

¹⁸⁸ Fleishman, Op. cit., 11.

¹⁸⁹ Edel, Op. cit., 153.

¹⁹⁰ Batchelor, J. 'Introduction' to Batchelor (ed.), 5.

speaking, it is not the business of a novelist to impinge on the sphere of literary studies, to penetrate the psychology of a man's writing and to analyse his fiction.¹⁹¹ Tynianov suggests that the only angle from which the literary biography becomes possible is the investigation of the inner spiritual life of the artist: something that is arguably more important than the most detailed account of his creative life. Literary biography's entire *raison d'être* is to grasp this elusive inner world of its subject, to understand the meaning behind the artist's work and to extend our knowledge of the creative process.¹⁹² This is another concern of the present thesis and I shall attempt to demonstrate how Tynianov uses his scholarly knowledge of Pushkin's works, in conjunction with the imagination of a writer, to relate these to the consciousness that gave them birth and to the world in which that consciousness functioned,¹⁹³ in other words, to show what produced Pushkin's unique vision of reality.

The relationships between lives and texts cannot be explained in terms of simple cause and effect. In *Pushkin* Tynianov chose not to separate the creator from the creation and treated Pushkin's text as an integral part of his biography: 'when the writer sits down to write, all his past sits behind his pen'.¹⁹⁴ I will therefore explore Tynianov's techniques for avoiding falling prey to the biographical fallacy and making direct parallels between characters in an artist's fiction and his real-life acquaintances, or ascribing the emotions of protagonists to the author, or assuming that situations in authors' works necessarily have taken place in their own lives, in other words 'reading a writer's work as if it were his internal monologue or stream of consciousness, or using letters as if they expressed the truest feelings of their author.'¹⁹⁵

As a trained historian, he frequently quoted Ranke's famous dictum that a historian must describe the past '*wie es eigentlich gewesen*', as it 'really was'. Tynianov the fictionist, however, was impelled to get to the bottom of *how it really was* by fulfilling Karamazin's demand that the writer of historical fiction describe what *might have been*.¹⁹⁶ But there are areas of human experience which are notoriously impervious even to the multiple gazes of those close to an artist: even to his family and friends, his contemporaries, let alone to subsequent generations.

Tynianov came to understand that in history 'the most homely and intimate and personal things slipped through the hands of the historian'.¹⁹⁷ This very *appeal to imagination*

¹⁹¹ Oskotskii, V. *Istoriia i roman: Traditsii i novatorstvo sovetskogo istoricheskogo romana* (Moscow, 1980), 338, 353, 355, 345.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 1, 3.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 49, 52, 53.

¹⁹⁴ Edel, *Op. cit.*, 54.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁹⁶ Emerson, C. *Boris Godunov: Transpositions of a Russian Theme* (Bloomington, 1986), 40.

¹⁹⁷ Butterfield, *Op. cit.*, 15.

enables the novelist to enliven the dry history of text-books, which, is after all, ‘little more than a chart to the past’.

Embarking on a biographical *novel*, Tynianov questioned the historians’ authority and fought for the genre’s right to tell its own truth, in the Aristoteleian sense. He set out to prove that the biographical novel, in the guise of the historical novel, could be true to history in its own way, even without always being true to fact. To assume that by grounding narrative in the facts one would automatically ensure the ultimate truthfulness of a biographico-historical account, was unforgivably naïve. As Tynianov pointed out, the notion of the *documented* biographical fact is doubtful:

Есть документы парадные, и они врут как люди. У меня нет никакого пиетета к ‘документу вообще’... Не верьте, дойдите до границы документа, продырявьте его. И не полагайтесь на историков, обрабатывающих материал, пересказывающих его.¹⁹⁸

He also questioned the idea that *every* moment of a protagonist’s life could be documented:

бывают годы без документов. Кроме того есть такие документы: регистрируется состояние здоровья жены и детей, а сам человек отсутствует.¹⁹⁹

And even when the events of life were documented, the sources were almost always inherently unreliable. A later biographer would argue that, ‘memory itself is fallible; memoirs are inevitably biased; letters are always slanted towards their recipients; even private diaries and intimate journals have to be recognized as literary forms of self-invention rather than an ‘ultimate’ truth of private fact or feeling.’²⁰⁰ The facts of life can, therefore, be overwhelming, and may even impair the achievement of a successful story.²⁰¹

Tynianov argues in the draft Introduction to his novel already referred to, that while history’s aim is the quest for knowledge, fiction is self-contained, autotelic, an expression of the notion of ‘elevating illusion’ [*возвышающий обман*], which consistently points to the idealizing function of art. The chaotic mass of documents – all those ‘letters filled with rationalizations and subterfuges, exaggerations, wishful thinking, deliberate falsehoods, elaborate politenesses’²⁰² – are varied viewpoints which are not to be taken at face value until they are sifted through, reduced to a particular order, evaluated and recreated. Besides the inevitable loss of major parts of the evidence, there are always things that we shall never know about. Extant sources may also be accidental; the easy-flowing narrative is constructed from a ‘random survival of facts and

¹⁹⁸ *Kak my pishem* (Izdatel’stvo pisatelei v Leningrade, 1930), 161.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 163.

²⁰⁰ Holmes, R. ‘Biography: Inventing the Truth’ in Batchelor (ed.), 17.

²⁰¹ In L. Strachey’s famous dictum ‘a basket of eggs is not an omelette’ (quoted in Longaker, M. *Contemporary Biography* (2007), 111 [*English Biography in the 18th century* (Philadelphia, 1931)]).

²⁰² Edel, *Op. cit.*, 12.

letters, and memoirs, and a random survival of relationships that can be known about'.²⁰³ This makes any account, even a factual one, something arbitrary and limited. With a different set of surviving sources a different story might be created.

As we shall see, in the case of literary subjects – and in that of Pushkin, in particular – the documents may also conceal much more than they reveal, since 'letters are a part of the novelist's work, of his literary self, a part of his capacity for playing out personal relations as a great game of life'.²⁰⁴ The man, Tynianov has pointed out, may conceal a great deal:

сам человек – сколько он скрывает, как иногда похожи его письма на отписки! Человек не говорит главного, а за тем, что он сам считает главным, есть еще более главное. Ну, и приходится заняться его делами и договаривать за него, приходится обходиться самыми малыми документами. Важные вещи проявляются иногда в мимолетных и не очень внушительных формах. Даже большие движения – чем они сначала проявлялись на поверхности? Там, на глубине, меняются отношения, а на поверхности – рябь или даже – все как было.²⁰⁵

In the recreation of history, which Manzoni defined as 'a chronological narration of selected human events',²⁰⁶ the very principle of such selection suddenly appears problematic. Unintentionally or not, selection may become a means of manipulation, exclusion and/or misinformation, 'as narratives that tell one story rather than all stories ... will always seem partial and inaccurate from the vantage point of other narratives, themselves no less.... exclusionary'.²⁰⁷ Indeed, a selection can be a simplification resulting in a falsification, though art itself, of course, is by definition a selection from reality, and not a complete or exact copy of it. Throughout this thesis I shall therefore focus on the selectivity of Tynianov's account and on his deliberate technique of portraying reality through the eyes of his characters. The opportunity to employ such a technique is an unquestionable advantage of fictional writing:

Whether he fairly admits default of evidence or pretends to information beyond the historian's resources, the novelist still differs from the traditional essayist in this: it is through the consciousness of his characters that he conveys his sense of what 'really happened', so far as he chooses to make this part of his tale; whereas, for the essayist, the reverberations die at the circumference of his own consciousness.²⁰⁸

I shall also investigate what one might regard as Tynianov's balancing act on the brink of objectivity and subjectivity, that dichotomy which lies at the heart of the distinction between history and fiction, where history is seen as a distanced, objective, inclusive version of events, and fiction as warm, subjective and personalizing.²⁰⁹ In a certain sense subjectivity is not necessarily a disadvantage in life-writing: it enables the biographer to render 'the felt dimension

²⁰³ Worthen, J. 'Necessary Ignorance of a Biographer' in Batchelor (ed.), 232.

²⁰⁴ Edel, Op. cit., 36.

²⁰⁵ *Kak my pishem*, 163.

²⁰⁶ Manzoni, 76.

²⁰⁷ Fish, S. 'The Young and the Restless' in Thomas, B. (ed.) *The New Historicism and Other Old-Fashioned Topics*, (New Jersey, 1991), n. 1, 316.

²⁰⁸ Lascelles, M. *The Story-teller Retrieves the Past* (New York, 1980), 13.

²⁰⁹ Wachtel, A. *An Obsession with History: Russian Writers Confront the Past* (Stanford, 1994).

to the material'.²¹⁰ The analysis of the subject's and the biographer's selves can lead to deep identification with the protagonist which, as we have already observed in Tynianov's case, enabled him as both biographer and historian 'to understand feelingly another person's... spiritual life across the ages', for 'without sympathy and understanding the study of many figures in history would be meaningless'.²¹¹

Invention in Tynianov's fictional writing thus became not only unavoidable but even desirable. He had inevitably to resort to imagination for details that memory could no longer supply. In his novels surmise often took the place of a chronicle of events:²¹²

Если вы вошли в жизнь вашего героя, вашего человека, вы можете иногда о многом догадаться сами.²¹³

Together with the impressions and imaginary sensations of palpable objects, 'the inert materials' that used to surround the subject have to be 'reprojected into words', creating the set scenes of an unfolding narrative which has to create the impression of continuity and progression of human life.²¹⁴ The novelist has to possess a special metaphorical capacity, a 'plastic or tactile imagination that can detect shapes and configurations where others less gifted see only jumble and confusion'.²¹⁵ He has to fill in these blanks and to provide, not 'life's literal interpretation, but rather a symbolic one; yet the symbols [are] the facts of [the subject's] life'.²¹⁶ This argument can be traced back at least as far as the Romantics, with Keats maintaining that only 'very shallow people... take everything as literal... A Man's life of any worth is a continual allegory – and very few eyes can see the Mystery of his life ... a life like the scriptures, figurative.'²¹⁷ To see life as such an allegory, to grasp life's essence was Tynianov's particular gift.

In his novel, Tynianov declared, conjecture would play an important place in discovering the inner truth about his subjects and their past ('Там, где кончается документ, там я начинаю', he stated emphatically).²¹⁸ In this he adhered to the Aristotelian notion of the writer's duty which was

to describe, not the thing that has happened but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e. what is possible as being probable or necessary. The distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse – you might put the work of Herodotus into verse and it would still be a species of history: it consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars.²¹⁹

²¹⁰ Storr, A. 'Psychiatry and Literary Biography' in Batchelor (ed.), 101.

²¹¹ Gittings, R. *The Nature of Biography* (London, 1978), 62.

²¹² Ginzburg, 14.

²¹³ *Kak my pishem*, 163.

²¹⁴ Edel, Op. cit., 12-20.

²¹⁵ Scarpio, S. *Elusive Subjects: Biography as Gendered Metafiction* (Leicester, 2005).

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

²¹⁷ J. Keats, quoted in Gittings, Op. cit., 13.

²¹⁸ *Kak my pishem*, 163.

²¹⁹ Aristotle *The Poetics* (Oxford, 1920), 43.

By merging biography and the historical novel Tynianov arguably extended their generic range and increased the flexibility of both genres. But combining the two in a single novel caused a certain creative tension: although fictional techniques enabled Tynianov to create a cogent illusion of life, unlike the realist novelist he could not give entirely free reign to his imagination when describing his hero. After all, the biographer, like the historian, is a slave to his documents;²²⁰ he has no freedom to invent a world and its characters, but is expected to report and arrange. He has to convince his readers that the account he provides is true, whereas the novel leaves the reader free to believe or disbelieve at will.

The underlying tensions at the core of the historical novel's and biography's generic duality, placed as they are between fiction and non-fiction and merging invention with truth, provided the grounds for Tynianov's rejection of the notion of factual truth as an absolute value in a biographical account, and permitted him to state in his usual paradoxical manner that a 'writer could never invent anything more beautiful than the truth'.²²¹ After all, our notions of truth are fairly relative, and no amount of imagination can think up what sometimes happens in reality, for 'truth is stranger than fiction'. But even when Tynianov ascribed to his protagonists deeds unknown to history, he did so according to the 'probabilities of character types and the necessities of the human condition',²²² and this had nothing to do with fictionalising history. His historical fiction is not the same as manifestly unhistorical fictitious history, which describes what *could never have* happened.²²³

Fact and fiction, as Tynianov appears to argue, can interact in a variety of ways, but 'pure' invention (like absolute truth) in a historical narrative is as impossible as a *perpetuum mobile*. He confessed that he felt pangs of conscience if he had not penetrated sufficiently 'beyond the document', or if he chose not to use it because at the time he had not appreciated its significance. He even spoke of the necessity of 'creating' a document if it was missing, regretting the fact that he had sometimes waited to find a document supporting some hypothesis, instead of proceeding with his work.²²⁴ But one could 'create' a document, i.e. achieve intuitive penetration of the essence of the event, only when one was equipped with factual knowledge of

²²⁰ Edel, L. *Literary Biography* (Bloomington, London, 1957), 5.

²²¹ Pomerantseva, Op. cit., 20.

²²² Fleishman, Op. cit., 8

²²³ 'It spins and weaves its own fabric, defying the known facts, playing with chronology and the order of events, violating time-scheme, or changing psychological motivations. Fictitious history liberates the imagination in order to explore a particular theme, whereas history must place some constraint upon the imagination. The author of fictionalised history demands from his readership an unconditional suspension of disbelief.' (Simmons, Op. cit., 114; Lascelles, Op. cit., 116).

²²⁴ *Kak my pishem*, 164-5.

the era, which ignited the author's imagination:²²⁵ 'Я должен быть уверенным, что я знаю людей.'²²⁶

He viewed the historical novel as the interpenetration, the dovetailing of history and fiction in a coherent plot, where they could enrich and amplify one another²²⁷ and it appears that Tynianov could develop 'to full stature' only when he broke free from the hampering conventions of history, and that the more decisively he could do so, the more effective and original his novelistic writing would become. In his biographical novel of *Pushkin* materials are melted down, obvious quotations are rare, strict chronology is broken up by flashbacks, prolepsis, and other manipulations of time. Trivial incidents are discarded, though much attention is paid to incident and detail in order to light up a whole scene and to bring a personality into relief. Tynianov quite simply saturated himself in his documents so that he could 'cut himself free from their bondage without cutting himself free from their truth'.²²⁸

The novelist attempts to recapture the moment, rather than to estimate its historical significance, and apart from the historical characters and events themselves, he can also find in the past, and reflect in his novel, all those 'subtle things, unconscious prejudices and unformulated sentiments that we take unawares', 'the human things which are irrecoverable.'²²⁹ His goal is to create a convincing world, a picture of the past in its *wholeness*²³⁰ even though this *wholeness* is an illusion: the genre of the historical novel not only leaves the author free to choose his subject matter, but also does not bind him 'to tell us all'.

Tynianov is sensitive to the biographer's enhanced responsibility in practising his craft which can be used as a double-edged sword used either for worship or destruction, idolisation or vilification, and the best examples of the genre, as we shall see in Tynianov's novels, have elements of both. He had to confront the deeply rooted popular hagiography and powerful pre-existing fictional stereotypes of Pushkin, which had long grown indistinguishable from the facts. Both the biographers and the readers had developed certain preconceptions about what *should* be in the biography, the way it *should* be told, and the conclusions that *should* be drawn.²³¹ To find his own way (a crucial thing in the literary process, according to Tynianov, who insisted on the sovereignty and independence of an artist),²³² to rid his subject of these incrustations and penetrate deep into the essence of his character, to bring him back to life in a vivid, unexpected,

²²⁵ Oskotskii, Op. cit., 270.

²²⁶ *Kak my pishem*, 166.

²²⁷ Butterfield, H. *The Historical Novel* (Cambridge University Press, 1924), 7.

²²⁸ Edel, Op. cit., 124-133.

²²⁹ Butterfield, Op. cit., 79, 2, 18.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

²³¹ White, N. 'Pieties and Literary Biography' in Batchelor (ed.), 214.

²³² Belinkov, 587, 590.

memorable way – this was the task confronting him as Pushkin’s novelistic biographer. Tynianov the fictionist retained Tynianov the scholar’s scepticism towards unchecked data, and loathed statements which appeared to be correct only because they were repeated sufficiently often. His dislike of the blind following of erroneous tradition in portraying Pushkin, and his striving to overturn it, led to his deliberately lowering and polemically sharpening his protagonist’s image.²³³ These were essential for Tynianov’s method since he saw his biographical novel as a powerful tool for counteracting the superficial idolisation of Pushkin by depicting him as human and therefore as fallible.

The shaping forces and formative influences at work on the writer have always been of particular interest to the biographer (his native talents, childhood and family influences, intellectual and social environment, teachers and guides, practical experience). Recasting literary biography into the historical novel would add an extra dimension to this pursuit by describing how individual lives were shaped at *specific moments of history*. The formation of the private self would thus reveal symbolic truths about the nature of those historical periods.²³⁴ Instead of factually biographical studies of a particular life, it would turn under the historical novelist’s pen into a study both of a distinctive individual and of human nature.²³⁵ The biographical historical novel would aim to create a narrative of identity centred around a character, who is a ‘fusion of the extraordinary and the typical that ‘stands out’ not because he is different from his contexts but because he embodies them.’²³⁶ Rejecting the ‘history of generals’, Tynianov asserted that it was no other person than a poet, and Pushkin in particular, who best embodied the epoch which both engendered and killed him. In writing the biographical novel of the poet, he realised that he would have to probe deeper than a biographer and use a much greater degree of symbolisation as a novelist. In the following chapter I shall contend that, in order to resolve the predicament of creating a novelistic portrait of Pushkin’s interiority, Tynianov used the schema of the traditional German *Bildungsroman* updated for the 20th century, and that its framework provided a consistent and effective structure for his exploration of Pushkin’s personality and creativity and in this way illuminated the main tendencies and ethos of his time.

²³³ Ibid., 502, 505, 512.

²³⁴ Ibid., 10-11

²³⁵ Ibid., 15, 73.

²³⁶ Clifford, J. ‘Hanging up Looking Glasses at Odd corners: Ethnobiographical Prospects’ in Aaron, D. (ed.) *Studies in Biography* (Cambridge, Mass., London, 1978), 51.

Chapter Two. In Search of Self and Vocation: *Pushkin* as *Bildungsroman*

All three of Tynianov's published novels are concerned with the psychology of his heroes' self-discovery and their efforts to find and establish themselves in their creative vocation. I propose that in two of them, *Kiukhlia* and *Pushkin* (the Griboedov novel by contrast covers only the final year of the writer's life) Tynianov emplotted his protagonists' lives in the well-established genre of the *Bildungsroman* transplanted in Russian soil as the novel of *stanovlenie*. The genre regards youth as the most important and, certainly, most meaningful stage in life.²³⁷ Adopting its structural and narrative features allowed Tynianov to follow his heroes' paths from childhood to maturity and to conceptualise these lives as journeys on which his protagonists make false starts, meet various guides and counsellors, undergo the usual processes of self-reflection and understanding and eventually adjust themselves to the demands of their time and environment by finding a sphere of action in which they may work most effectively.²³⁸ The *Bildungsroman* focuses on the conflicting features of an individual personality; explores its mobility, interiority and restlessness while all the emphasis is laid on the everyday, the routinised, the un-heroic and prosaic.

When compared to other genres the very term *Bildungsroman* appears to be an 'extreme of imprecision' which some critics suggest should be recognized for what it is: a placeholder at best.²³⁹ The elasticity of the *Bildungsroman* inspires 'a tendency toward taxonomic proliferation'²⁴⁰ it lends itself easily to compromises and mutations, and its generic hybrids may contain disparate elements of the picaresque novel, the travelogue, the Gothic novel, the romance, and so on. It appears to allow its practitioner an unparalleled freedom to draw together materials belonging to different generic categories and for the novel itself to unfold at a stately pace showing in great detail the character developing in 'organic' time, growing inwardly according to his own laws, maturing slowly at his own speed.²⁴¹ Even more important for a historical novelist is the *Bildungsroman*'s placing of a protagonist in the flow of time. Bakhtin, the first theoretician of the genre in Russia, emphasised the importance of a *changing* protagonist who acquired significance for the *Bildungsroman*'s plot:

Время вносится вовнутрь человека, входит в самый образ его, существенно изменяя значение всех моментов его судьбы и жизни.²⁴²

²³⁷ Moretti, F. *The Way of The World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (London, New York, 2000) [1987], 3-4.

²³⁸ Beebe, Op. cit., 79.

²³⁹ Amrine, F. 'Rethinking the Bildungsroman', *Michigan Germanic Studies* 13:2 (1987), 119-39.

²⁴⁰ Kontje, T. *The German Bildungsroman: History of a National Genre* (Columbia, 1993), 101.

²⁴¹ Pascal, R. *The German Novel: Studies* (Manchester, 1956), 23-25.

²⁴² Bakhtin, M. 'Roman vospitaniia i ego znachenie v istorii realizma' in *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva* (Moscow, 1986), 212.

And this is where the difference between the biographical novel and the *Bildungsroman* essentially lies:

Несмотря на изображение жизненного пути героя, образ его в чисто биографическом романе лишен подлинного становления, развития; меняется, строится, становится жизнь героя, его судьба, но сам герой остается, по существу, неизменным.²⁴³

By focusing on a man in the making through concentrating the plot on the process of the character's *Bildung* [становление] while placing him firmly in historical time, Tynianov succeeded in merging the two successfully in a single whole. His Pushkin becomes inextricably linked with the historical development performed in 'real historical time, with its necessities, its fullness, its future and its deep chronotope' (Bakhtin).

Starting with the characters' childhood allowed him to depict his protagonists' surroundings through the eyes of a child, seen by modernist literary artists of the first quarter of the 20th century as an archetypal artist – a shy, introspective, imaginative, perceptive human being who prefers solitary pleasures and bears within himself creative potential. A child was perceived as a human being *sui generis*, exceeding an adult in his creative potential.²⁴⁴ The child's intuitive perception of universal truths was a theme explored by the Romantic poets, both in Europe and in Russia. Wordsworth, for instance, wrote that 'the child is father of the man', and that 'shades of the prison-house begin to close/Upon the growing boy' as the child progresses, or regresses, from the intuitive state to that of the rational adult.²⁴⁵ In this respect the Futurists' keen interest in 'infantile' aesthetics, stimulated by Freud's studies of the child's psyche, speech, thinking and reception seem of particular significance.²⁴⁶

Tynianov suggests that genius has the ability to preserve the freshness of the child's vision in the adult artist. Seeing the world through the eyes of someone who belongs more to nature than to culture, who has a more developed imagination and impressionability, created the desired effect, imitating the impeded perception of an 'innocent' recipient in the early stages of acquainting himself with the world around him. 'Difficult form', estrangement, impeded perception, according to the Formalists, enabled art to accomplish its most important task. Modernist art showed a higher degree of resemblance to the original than so-called 'realist' art, since all attention had shifted from the superficial outward resemblance to an internal likeness

²⁴³ Ibid., 207.

²⁴⁴ Benčić, Ž. 'Infantil'noe kak estetičeskaia i etičeskaia kategorija' in *Russian Literature: Croatian and Serbian, Czech and Slovak, Polish*, XL-I, Amsterdam (1996), 1-18.

²⁴⁵ *Poetical works of Wordsworth* (London, New York, 1961), 'Poems referring to the period of childhood' (1807), 62, 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' (1807), 460.

²⁴⁶ Freud's profound effect on the Formalists' theory of evolution and their choice of metaphors to describe it have already been explored by scholars. Kalinin, I. 'Istoriia literatury kak *Familienroman* (Russkii formalizm mezhdru Edipom i Gamletom)', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, (2006:80).

rendering the inner similarity more essential than the external.²⁴⁷ Portraying the characters and their surroundings from such a point of view revealed the reality behind the appearances.

While describing the process of formation, education and initiation of the protagonist in Tynianov's *Bildungsroman* two ideals collide: the ideal of self-determination and the equally imperious demands of socialisation.²⁴⁸ Tynianov's primary concern was to find answers to the questions: what was it like to be Pushkin? What were the first, the earliest impressions of the boy born to be a poet? These questions are perfectly valid in a novel, while no biographer can answer them, except by referring to his subject's works, letters, memoirs, or remarks recorded by others. Pushkin remains silent on the matter of his early infancy and, respecting this, Tynianov refrains from putting pictures or words into the boy's head. This determines the focalisation of the narrative about Pushkin's early years when we as readers never penetrate his mind. When we first see him, the omniscient narrator informs us that 'he was staring calmly with the unthinking eyes of an infant – eyes of that indeterminate, ultramarine colour' (45). The notion of ultimate indeterminacy is crucially implanted in the reader's mind, as at this stage the author does not make any attempt to penetrate that blank unconscious infantile state.

When we next see Pushkin he is about a year old and in Petersburg with Arina. Again we are invited to imagine something of the child's viewpoint through the running commentary on events delivered by the loquacious Arina. It creates the picture of a potential poet's first encounter with a striking combination of physical sensations making him more sensorily alert than other men, his sensibilities sharper and his responses more intense.

In Pushkin's own autobiographical sketch there was little of what might have opened a window onto his earliest infancy. He did, however, in 1830, jot down a synopsis of the first six chapters of a proposed autobiography, in bullet-point form. The synopsis of the second chapter covers the first eleven years of the poet's life and is a register of a number of experiences, many of them negative:

Первые неприятности – Гувернантки – Ранняя любовь – Рождение Льва – Мои неприятные воспоминания – Смерть Николая – Монфор – Русло – Нестерпимое состояние - Охота к чтению - Меня везут в П. Б. (VII, 249-251).

Since Tynianov would have considered that he had failed in his task if he did not take creativity beyond the document, he follows each detail with his novelist's intuition, accounting for everything in the above in an attempt to reconstruct imaginatively Pushkin's biography as Pushkin himself might have done. This patient attention to the tangible and concrete, to the

²⁴⁷ See Lotman, Iu. *Lektsii po struktural'noi poetike: Vvedenie, teoriia stikha* (Providence, 1968) [1964], 19-20; Hansen Löve, K. *The Evolution of Space in Russian Literature: A Spatial Reading of 19th and 20th Century Narrative Literature* (Amsterdam, 1994), 32.

²⁴⁸ Moretti, Op. cit., 15.

minutiae of the objective world, as Pascal indicates, assigns the *Bildungsroman* a particularly humane colouring, turning it into ‘fiction of humanity’.²⁴⁹ The author appears to insist that small everyday things are of importance in drawing a picture of the life and spiritual constitution of the character.²⁵⁰ In this way the novel transcends the limitations of everyday practicality, treating banal and everyday material with poetry and lyricism in an effort to mediate between the poetic and the prosaic.²⁵¹

To answer the question of what constitutes a genius one would have to go deep into a person’s past when the child’s psyche is in the process of being shaped. To understand Pushkin, Tynianov compels us to go back to the time when the boy might have been barely aware of his surroundings, or was just about to start to imitate or reject the behaviour of his parents and siblings and of others around him. It is no surprise then that Tynianov begins his novel with a sequence of scenes featuring Aleksandr’s parents (starting with his father), seen individually and as a couple, and also the immediate circle into which the baby boy was born.

1. *Otets semeistva*

Tynianov had promised that his work on Pushkin would not be written like a researcher’s biography, and this is exactly what he avoids doing, by taking his reader straight into the heart of the matter, starting the novel *in medias res*. No ancestral tree, historical analysis or poetic preamble, just a picture of Sergei L’vovich, the poet’s father, sneaking out of the house a short while before the christening party in honour of his first-born son. Tynianov, adhering to his literary commitment, does not trouble us with factual details, urging the reader instead to interpret the contextual clues and determine the identity of the Guards Major, the time of the action (July, 1799) and the age of the newly-born baby. From the very beginning he creates what Moretti calls ‘the fairy-tale-like closed world of the classical *Bildungsroman*’,²⁵² while saturating his narrative with prosaic details and collating the two views of Pushkin’s life – Sergei L’vovich’s and the reader’s.

By devoting considerable attention to the figure of Sergei L’vovich, Tynianov explores the question of how his father’s example could help young Aleksandr construct his masculine identity, which is one of the *Bildungsroman*’s central questions. Sergei L’vovich is by natural right the first in a series of father-figures whom Pushkin encounters in his life and in the pages of Tynianov’s novel. In attempting to solve the mystery of Pushkin’s admittedly problematic

²⁴⁹ Beddow, M. *Fiction of Humanity. Studies in the Bildungsroman from Wieland to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge, 1982).

²⁵⁰ Pascal, Op. cit., 66-67.

²⁵¹ Swales, *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton, 1978), 29, 147, 23.

²⁵² Moretti, Op. cit., 28.

character, Tynianov is naturally eager to explore what the young Pushkin inherits materially and spiritually both from his father and from the other male role-models in his life: to what extent he repeats his own father or, in Minden's words, 'outgrows the sphere of his father's world to accede to another, a far broader and greater one, [while] his father's world in several aspects anticipates the one to which he finally arrives'.²⁵³

It has to be said that Sergei L'vovich has suffered considerably (and not entirely deservedly) at the hands of Pushkin's biographers. He has been summed up by Troyat, for example, as someone for whom

everything was a pretext for attitudinising, epigrams, grimaces and exclamations. He wept and laughed at the drop of a hat. He was an overgrown, selfish, spoiled, sentimental, sensual baby, who spent his life flitting from drawing-room to drawing-room and theatre to theatre, scorched by the lights, dizzied by the laughter, buzzing with anecdotes and *bons mots*.²⁵⁴

Binyon is not quite so harsh, but still shows little mercy:

His main preoccupation was his social life. He was at his best in some salon, elaborately polite and delicately witty, throwing off a stream of French puns or inscribing elegant sentiments in French verse or prose in ladies' albums.²⁵⁵

Simmons typifies him as a Dickensian character:

There was a touch of the Micawber about Sergei L'vovich. He had a genius for getting into debt and an illusion of grandeur that was well supported by a hypocritical trust in God and a measure of self-pity altogether offensive... he belonged... to that class of people called 'loafers'.²⁵⁶

But in spite of the allusion to Dickens there is no sign of humour here, and the biographer remains contemptuously dismissive, describing him as

a colossal lump of egotism... The cheerful appearance and kind nature he presented to the world would degenerate into irascibility or maudlin sentimentality the moment he was faced with the cold realities of life... With such a nature it is easy to see why Sergei L'vovich was utterly incapable of understanding his talented son.²⁵⁷

By contrast, Tynianov takes pains to demonstrate that the talented son understood the incapable father and, as we shall see, was later to defend him against the attacks of the contemptuous Piletskii at the Lycée. This clearly conveys the point that Sergei L'vovich gave his son rather more than some biographers are ready to admit. An enlightened and cultured companion, he was a Francophile, wit and raconteur, an excellent 'after-dinner speaker' and a great declaimer of Molière, his own imitations of whom he actually staged, even earning himself a local reputation as a dramatist. Tynianov implements a principle significant for the Formalists' theory of literary analysis: his painstaking analysis resolutely avoids value judgment. It is not the critic/scholar's nor, in Tynianov's case, the novelist's business to pronounce such judgment. Instead he weaves the fabric of his imaginary world and imbues it with irony, which suggests

²⁵³ Minden, M. *The German Bildungsroman: Incest and Inheritance* (Cambridge, 1997), 29.

²⁵⁴ Troyat, H. *Pushkin* (London, 1974), 19.

²⁵⁵ Binyon, T. J. *Pushkin: A Biography* (New York, 2003), 11.

²⁵⁶ Simmons, E. *Pushkin* (Harvard, 1937), 18.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

more than it is overtly saying, making the ‘realities’ it represents transparent to wider meanings.²⁵⁸

Even in satirical depictions Tynianov succeeds in avoiding equivocal characterisation and two-dimensionality. Instead he points out and explores the paradoxes, dualities and incongruities of his characters, and Sergei L’vovich is no exception: avaricious, self-obsessed, vain, in fear of his wife. Following the sources, Tynianov demonstrates the co-existence of two Sergei L’voviches in the same person: the hen-pecked skinflint of a husband and the swaggering poseur who will spare no cost for his own pleasure. With striking economy of means and impressive authorial unobtrusiveness Tynianov manages to include most of the known characteristics of Sergei L’vovich Pushkin, not omitting the most notorious: his stinginess, vanity and philandering. Tynianov punctures Sergei L’vovich’s vanity by his description of the district the Pushkins live in as provincial if not village-like, in curious contrast to the impression created by many modern biographers that the German street was in a fairly fashionable section of the city:²⁵⁹

Немецкая улица, где он жил, была скучна: длинный, серебристый от многолетних дождей забор, слепой образок на воротах и - грязь. Дождя давно не было, а грязь все лежала - комьями, обломками, колеями. Шли какие-то немцы-мастеровые, баба несла гуся. Он не взглянул на них. Переулками он вышел к Разгуляю - местности, получившей свое название от славного кабака (15-16).

This is the first indication of the Pushkins’ perpetual financial difficulties and of their inability to afford the surroundings to which their pretensions aspire. Tynianov makes no formal statement about this, nor any effort to labour the point, but the image of the Pushkins’ servant boy’s ‘pockets full of holes’ aptly illustrates the chaotic state of the household.

Tynianov’s narrative is steeped in the themes and motifs of Pushkin’s works, woven into the scenes in order to evoke situations that might have been the genesis of the poet’s future masterpieces. A mosaic of such fleeting memories might have been activated deliberately or at random in the consciousness of the poet whose memory was by all accounts impressively tenacious and osmotic.²⁶⁰ So, proleptically, the opening section of the novel contains unmistakable allusions to *The Miserly Knight* (1830): Sergei L’vovich locked in his room, sighing, and surreptitiously re-counting his money – an archetypal image of miserliness. At least one reason for the future troubled relationship between the father and the son is foreshadowed. Pushkin himself did not want his father to be seen as the prototype for the avaricious Baron of

²⁵⁸ Beddow, Op. cit., 297.

²⁵⁹ E.g. E. Feinstein, *Pushkin* (London, 1998), 13, Binyon, Op. cit., 3. Of European biographers Troyat comes closest to Tynianov in offering an insight into the social reality of the Pushkins’ surroundings: ‘It was not so much a city as a cluster of villages... The streets were rivers of dust. The squares resembled vacant lots’. (Op. cit., 3).

²⁶⁰ Vatsuro, V. (ed.) ‘Vospominaniia Komovskogo’ in *Pushkin v vospominaniakh sovremennikov* in 2 vols., (Moscow, 1974), I, 59.

the play, understanding that, while the Baron was obsessed with money for money's sake, Sergei L'vovich was preoccupied with it because he had never enough and was often in debt. And yet the reason why Tynianov draws this transparent parallel is that the young Pushkin may have witnessed scenes similar to this, or the one in which his father hides from his creditors in the nursery, all of which made him feel sympathy for his father. Such scenes are also indicative of a wider social picture, that of the hereditary nobility's impoverishment and the devastating effect that pauperisation had on their self-esteem and intergenerational relationships.²⁶¹

In spite of the catalogue of unpalatable truths about Sergei L'vovich, his motives and motivations are portrayed as varied and complex, not single or simple. For example, he is completely divorced from reality: soon after the accession of Tsar Paul he resigned his commission, but not because he was a victim of ill-wishers' intrigues, as he liked to think, but because of his own unsuitability to the discipline of army life as well as his financial incapability of affording the life-style of the Guards. He was also unsuited to be a landlord and rarely set foot on his estate, leaving the management to corrupt and incapable stewards, which was part of the reason why the property was unprofitable. In this respect Sergei L'vovich was not much different from many other absentee landlords in Russia at the time and, if he had felt inclined, Tynianov could have condemned him for it. Instead of which, while the reader is invited to share in the humour, there is evidence of a sneaking authorial sympathy, intermingled with Sergei L'vovich's own childish and almost fairy-tale notions of the estate:

В вотчине Сергей Львович никогда не бывал [for emphasis' sake Tynianov ignores the two visits he had actually paid there in his lifetime] и болезненно морщился, когда матушка намекала - не без яду, - что не мешало бы, дескать, заглянуть. Знал, что числится тысяча душ [there are the other two thousand he is not clear about!], никак не меньше, что есть там в селе мельница на речке, от казны поставлен питейный дом, а кругом густой лес. А что там в лесу, неясно себе представлял - ягоды, волки. Получая доходы, всегда им радовался, как кладу или находке, и мгновенно чувствовал себя богачом. Когда же деньги задерживались, начинал смутно беспокоиться и тосковать (17).

The character is shrouded in the ironic ambiguity of judgment which, by Empson's definition, 'must be indefinitely postponed',²⁶² as if pointing to the historian's necessarily limited knowledge of the real man and the possibility of other interpretations. Not only such suspension of judgment, but also Tynianov's obvious sympathy for a character as flawed as Sergei L'vovich appear remarkable at a time when Soviet writers were expected to take sides and pronounce a verdict. Tynianov (and his readers) increasingly warm to his character, using ambiguity as a device of semantic compression and multi-dimensional portrayal: a failure as a military man and

²⁶¹ Pushkin might have been writing from personal experience through Albert, the Baron's son, when he wrote 'О бедность, бедность! Как унижает сердце нам она!' (V, 287)

²⁶² Empson, W. *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (London, 1947), xv, 16.

a bureaucrat, Pushkin's father is a great success with the ladies, a lover of the society of men of letters and of literature in French.

Watching his father provides an object lesson to the boy in the assumption of interchangeable identities, which Pushkin *films* will perfect in the course of his life. Such varied and frequently mutually exclusive roles embodied Pushkin's desire to 're-live' everything for himself, to experience every situation, to go through every role.'²⁶³ He sees his father posing in front of the mirror in the mornings, already rehearsing his greeting of his guests in the evenings. The motif of mirrors and male vanity will become pervasive in Pushkin's writings: his menfolk spend a great deal of time in front of mirrors ('Onegin, that Venus in fastidious drag, preens for hours before going out').²⁶⁴

Александр любил час перед выездом. Он присутствовал при вечернем туалете отца. Сергей Львович одевался в кабинете. Старый, славный франт просыпался в нем. Быстро чистил он ногти пилкой и щеточкой, наблюдал, как Никита горячими щипцами завивал ему волосы а-ля Дюрок, управлял его движениями и делал весьма дельные и тонкие замечания. Потом, плотно обдернув новый фрак, он прохаживался по комнате, принимая разные выражения и цедя отдельные отрывистые слова. Мимоходом он взбивал волосы перед зеркалом (133).

The boy enjoys the theatricality, as he was later to relish the professional theatre himself and play a part, not on stage but as one of the Petersburg audiences, outdoing through his outrageous behaviour anything ventured by his father.²⁶⁵

And yet, unsurprisingly, even seeing his father for what he is, Aleksandr Pushkin took part of his character from this superficial man whose interior life was so incomplete that his own home lost its lustre whenever some important guest left. Some of those features will reveal themselves in the course of the poet's future life. Something, for example, of Sergei L'vovich's restlessness – *охота к перемене мест*, was to characterise the life of the poet himself.

Tynianov uses humour as an essential and effective characterisation device. Benjamin once famously said that 'there is no better start for thinking than laughter'.²⁶⁶ Throughout the novel humour is instrumental in the process of 'resurrecting history through laughter', which fuses authorial sympathy and criticism. Bakhtin expands on this theme of laughter and objectivity, when he observes:

Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into that zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and below its external shell, look into its centre, doubt it, take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare and expose it, examine it freely and experiment with it... thus clearing the way for an absolutely free investigation.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ Vol'pert, L. *Pushkinskaia Frantsiia* (St Petersburg, 2007), 18.

²⁶⁴ C. Emerson in 'Foreword' to O. Peters Hasty's *Pushkin's Tatiana* (Madison, 1999), xiii.

²⁶⁵ See Grossman, L. *Pushkin v teatral'nykh kreslakh. Kartiny russkoi stseny 1817-1820 godov* (St Petersburg, 2005), or Zhikharev, S. *Zapiski sovremennika and Vospominaniia starogo teatrala* (Moscow, Leningrad, 1955).

²⁶⁶ Benjamin, W. 'The author as producer' in *Understanding Brecht* (London, New York, 1983), 231.

²⁶⁷ Bakhtin, M. *The Dialogic Imagination*, (trans.) Emerson, C. and Holquist, M. (Austin, 1981), 23.

Tynianov's concern as a novelist is to make us see a situation from within, even if the character happens to be Pushkin's weak and wayward father, and his focalisation is predictably distorted. This absence of authorial intrusion is characteristic of Tynianov's method throughout the novel. The actual purport of any authorial comment, even deceptively straightforward, is often opaque or concealed. Dialogue containing unreconciled tension between opposite viewpoints produces what Schlegel called a 'hovering' quality of signification and allows non-subjective presentation of the characters.

The omniscient narrator's terse sentences imply so much but appear to state so little 'objective' truth, except to leave us with Rankean 'sympathetic understanding'. Tynianov utilizes the interior monologue of the character to allow us access to Sergei L'vovich's mind and constructs the kind of sentence in which the voices of the narrator and the character merge, as the usually non-verbalized or subconscious life of the character is revealed. The character seems to be protesting his innocence through the ostensibly sympathetic narrator, revealing Sergei L'vovich's indignation: 'Он даже не смел ущипнуть за щеку дворовую девку - вполне невинная шалость.' (55)

The narrator effectively embodies the authorial position in the novel when he goes even further than mere understanding and employs what Ginzburg defined as *отпускающий вину анализ*.²⁶⁸ Tynianov implies that, in spite of the anger and resentment that young Pushkin was entitled to feel towards his father, his ability to look at him objectively allowed him to withhold and control resentment of his father. Compassion, not anger, liberated and empowered the son. And it is achieved by seeing his father as a human being, beset by fears, vanities, doubts, delusions and insecurities (narcissism often being a cover for these). Tynianov suggests that by coming to understand this at a very early age, the son took the best of what his father had to offer, and attempted to eschew the negative emotional legacy and set himself free. Although the relationship between the two continued to be strained, the fact that Pushkin was able to achieve such an understanding testifies to the future poet's emotional sensitivity and intellectual perspicacity.

Sergei L'vovich may have indulged himself in fantasy and invention and Aleksandr might have inherited the gene for invention from his father, but the former lacked the art to harness it to something tangible, unlike his gifted son. Contrary to some biographical claims, Tynianov's Sergei L'vovich was perfectly capable of appreciating his son's poetic talent, and indeed in this sphere treated him almost as an equal even when he was a child – that is when he

²⁶⁸ Ginzburg, L. *O psikhologicheskoi proze* (Leningrad, 1971), 424.

was not ignoring him altogether, which was admittedly the general rule. It was Sergei L'vovich and his brother who were the first educators of Pushkin's immaculate literary taste and his sense of style; and perhaps the father, bewildered at first by his son's gifts, grudgingly revered him in the end for what he himself never managed to achieve in the literary world to which he aspired. Ineffectual Sergei L'vovich certainly was in several ways, as husband, father, citizen, but he remains convincingly effective as a character in Tynianov's novel, and he makes his mark, not only on the reader, but on Russia's greatest poet – of that we are left in no doubt.

2. 'Uroki mamen'ki svoei'

Scholars have pointed out the paradoxical nature of *Bildungsromane* – despite their protagonists' linear development from birth to adulthood, these novels are, as a matter of fact, circular: the answer to the question where the journey of maturation and discovery is leading is Novalis's '*immer nach Hause*'; the destination is *always home*. It is home where the subject's feeling of self and his feeling of others is formed in the process of primary socialisation. Relation with the self takes place through a series of relations with existing models and determinants.²⁶⁹ Of all such relationships, the one with the mother is often the most complex and difficult because the protagonist is literally a part of her, she is the first emotional bond he will ever make. Her legacy is forever imprinted on his soul, and freeing himself from that intractable connection causes more problems than in almost any other area in his life. Even in her death she casts her long shadow.²⁷⁰ Not all mothers are a problem for all men, of course, but Pushkin's, in spite of her often shadowy presence, clearly was.

The oedipal antagonism to paternal authority is traditionally perceived as the major component of the son's interaction with his mother, whose love, by contrast, is believed to be an archetypal source of the artist's inspiration. Omnipotent, benign, protective, nurturing and life-affirming, she is thought to empower and inspire art and all creation. Even in Freud's considerably complicated interpretation an artist succeeds through the cathartic sublimation of his ambivalent feelings for his mother into the spiritual sublime.²⁷¹ In the *Bildungsroman* female figures, in particular, often have a structural function, as well as a thematic one: the youthful character always displays a fundamental orientation towards the mother and is constituted through his interaction with her. Failure of such interaction makes secondary socialisation

²⁶⁹ Minden, Op. cit., 1, 71.

²⁷⁰ Poulter, S. *The Mother Factor* (Prometheus, 2009).

²⁷¹ See for instance Kuttner, A. B. 'A Freudian Appreciation' in which the mechanism is described at work in D. H. Lawrence's creative writing (*Sons and Lovers: A Selection of Critical Essays*, Salgado, G. (ed.) (Macmillan:London, 1969), 69-94).

problematic.²⁷² In Pushkin's writings the agent is seen to be woman,²⁷³ but his keen interest in masculine pride, which, as has been noted, resulted in his investigation of the issue in *Eugene Onegin* and *The Queen of Spades* (centred around the infertility and isolation engendered by Hermann and Onegin in their conflict with woman and family and their 'refusal to adopt a filial piety or humility before the force of life')²⁷⁴ might have had something to do with his uneasy relationship with his own mother and his struggle with her, the arbitrary and uncontrollable authority.

We learn little from Pushkin's biographers about Pushkin's maternally inspired experiences during his early years. Tynianov structures the beginning of his novel in such a way as to imply that, in order to understand Aleksandr Pushkin fully, you have first to understand his mother.

One of Tynianov's techniques is wide use of bathetic effects, i.e. comic switches in level achieved through a clash of styles and deliberately emphasised contrasts. They are normally sustained through the application of the poetic and elevated together with the low and prosaic.²⁷⁵ Thus, using his narratorial voice, he reflects the flattering, if somewhat guarded, society opinion of Nadezhda by introducing her as 'an extraordinary creature' [*существо необыкновенное*], an opening statement which encourages admiration and hints at her exotic ancestry and her often impulsive actions. But Tynianov swiftly punctures this aestheticised romantic construct by showing that *la belle Créole*, as the Petersburg Guards called her, possessed another aspect that was distinctly less appealing: sick of her changing moods, people called her 'negress' [*аранкою*] behind her back.

Tynianov is already explaining, if not excusing, the mother's behavioural problems, and perhaps he is going as far as to suggest that Pushkin's Muse was an alien, African one, which, in popular belief, may partially account for the extraordinarily passionate power of his poetic inspiration. But this is also the first indication that the swarthy 'African' complexion might be a blessing and a curse both for the mother and for her young son. In his case, from an early age his dark features provoked taunts and marginalisation both from his parents and from other children. The boy's early realisation of his 'freakishness', his 'abnormality' and his resulting self-division and introversion introduce the theme of the outsider.²⁷⁶ Enhanced introversion quite often goes hand in hand with acute and honest observation, with seeing 'too

²⁷² Minden, Op. cit., 2, 55.

²⁷³ Hubbs, J. *Mother Russia: The Feminine Myth in Russian Culture* (Bloomington, 1988), 216, 210.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 226-227.

²⁷⁵ Hopkins, C. *Thinking About Texts: An Introduction to English Studies* (Palgrave:London, 2001), 184-185.

²⁷⁶ Wilson, C. *The Outsider* (London, 1967) [1956], 11-13.

deep and too much'.²⁷⁷ Tynianov suggests that this was the stage where the seed of an inferiority complex may have been sown; and this is the first link in a chain of reasons, which might explain Pushkin's extreme sensitivity to questions of integrity, dignity and honour, now and later in his life. He was mockingly referred to as 'арапчонок' by other boys in the street, and his reaction, according to Tynianov, would be violent and unpredictable. Tynianov leaves us in no doubt that the primitive fury of which he was capable could be attributed to 'the beautiful African', his mother:

Он каждый раз вдруг закипал таким гневом, что Арина пугалась. Зубы оскаливались, глаза блуждали. К удивлению Арины, гнев проходил быстро, как начинался, без всякого следа. Дома он никому ничего не рассказывал (89).

The clash of races and temperaments, as Tynianov suggests, had been present from the start of Sergei L'vovich and Nadezhda Osipovna's marriage, a clash that was far from dispassionate or sterile. In the scene where the boy is watching his parents, still attracted to each other, Tynianov produces a picture which is not usually offered by the biographers:

Мать выходила с блестящими глазами, быстро и легко. Отец, тоже нарядный, обращался с ней почтительно и небрежно, как с какой-то другой женщиной. Раз в полуоткрытую дверь Александр увидел, как отец, уже нарядный, завитой и напрысканный, дожидаясь матери, напевая тоненьким голоском какой-то мотив и не зная, что за ним наблюдают, вдруг стал, что-то лепеча и улыбаясь, плавно приседать. Он танцевал. Вышла мать - как всегда перед вечером, с быстрым дыханием и блестящим взглядом. Отец, все так же плавно приседая, подхватил ее, и она тоже готовно и покорно поплыла рядом с ним на своих быстрых коротких ногах, сильно дыша тяжелой грудью. Потом мать остановилась, и они уехали (133).

The passion excited by constant jealousy and suspicion emanates mainly from Nadezhda Osipovna. Her jealousy, the narrator tells us, employing Sergei L'vovich's viewpoint, was 'frightening' and, in an ironical reversal of domestic roles, led to physical violence *on her side*: 'She had a heavy hand.' (117) Typically for Tynianov, he offers two possible explanations of her deep jealousy: either her passionate love for her husband, or a deep desire to protect and hold on to what was rightfully hers. Even if the tenderness between them in public can be viewed as social role-playing, a matter of good manners, by presenting the intimate scene between them as observed by their voyeuristic son, Tynianov gives this explanation no credence. Even if, after all, it were a game, the boy Pushkin must have made a mental note of it early in his life: the fact that they still want to play the game of love, in a sense makes the love itself real.

A creature of the *monde*, she is at the same time strangely alien to it. The very sound of her voice is unconventional and her appeal is darkly passionate and unorthodox, almost inappropriate to civilised society. Both Sergei and Vasilii L'vovich's reactions to her singing are seriously suggestive of Nadezhda's primitive power to attract, madden and seduce:

²⁷⁷ Barbusse, H. *L'Enfer* (Paris, 1917) [1932, 72].

Она пела низким голосом. Голос был гортанный, влажный, рокошующий на 'р'. Сергей Львович слушал, скосив глаза, слегка ошалев от грусти и воображения... Василью Львовичу пение Надежды Осиповны напомнило хрипчатое пение цыганок, смуглых фараонит, а не песни милых женщин, но, впрочем, очень понравилось (31).

The stock Romantic epithets 'husky' [*хриповатый*] and 'swarthy' [*смуглый*] emphasise the gap between Nadezhda and the society to which she now belongs.

Apart from the obvious allusion to Egypt which borders on the Gannibals' native land, Abyssinia, the references to gypsies and pharaohesses may recall yet another dark charmer, Cleopatra, who will feature prominently in the adult Pushkin's consciousness, as well as gypsy Zarema and the Circassian maiden from his Southern poems. But although Pushkin would be drawn to wilful and passionate women like Nadezhda, as Tynianov will demonstrate later in the novel, by contrast he seemed to fall more deeply and seriously in love with women like Katerina Karamzina, and ultimately Natalie Goncharova who were placid and almost phlegmatic by comparison.

Tynianov also contends that in order to understand Nadezhda Osipovna it is essential to consider her own traumatic childhood experiences and acknowledge that emotionally she herself may still be a child. The tangible reminder of her father is her black uncle Petr Abramovich who interrupts the christening party and brings bad memories flooding back. She stares at her uncle, remaining 'unusually calm' – the powerful emotions in her are being contained – the implication is that part of her difficult psychology was to do with the suppression of deep feeling.

Along with her mother she had been made to suffer through her father's neglect, and Tynianov contends that inevitably her first son's negroid features were a painful reminder of her years of unhappiness. This might be the reason why she found it impossible to relate to him, to establish the normal emotional bond between mother and son. For the same reason she found it difficult to manage her marriage. Her emotional insecurity, Tynianov stresses, expressed itself through unstable behaviour, such as her passion for changing houses and rooms. It is also possible – and some of Tynianov's scenes seem to go as far as to suggest this – that her behaviour was distinctly bi-polar: there are the high points of ecstasy during the soirées, or of feverishly violent activity prior to going out for the evening, interspersed with the periods of brooding restlessness and inactivity when she spent days on end in her bedroom, sitting there 'unkempt and unwashed while there were no visitors, and bit her nails' (76). Such huge physical and psychological swings appear to correspond to the two different names by which she was known in the house, *Nadine* and Nadezhda, two different faces, one public, one private, two different personalities, two types of behaviour – civilised and savage, and two different languages, French and Russian, for her contrasting occasions and moods.

Tynianov does not merely present Nadezhda as a bad mother and a difficult wife, but offers reasons for her behaviour and generates sympathy for her situation, which increases as the novel develops. Paradoxically, he points out, the woman who is ‘an absolute tyrant at home’ is also ‘a person of unusual stupidity outside it’ (98). We see that she is superstitious, troubled by dreams, and terrified by the death-card when Arina is telling fortunes – which is an effective introduction to the themes of fate and predestination that preyed on Pushkin’s creative mind throughout his writing career. The exploration of the interplay of will or fate is pervasive in a *Bildungsroman* as a genre whereby freedom is viewed as the first and essential prerequisite for personal *Bildung* which can only develop to its full potential through will – active engagement with the world around, as opposed to ‘passive ripening’.²⁷⁸

As Siniavsky points out, ‘Pushkin relates in dozens of variations how opponents of fate are brought to their knees, how despite all ruses and intrigues fate triumphs over man, mixing up his cards or surreptitiously throwing in a surprise’.²⁷⁹ We learn for example, that Nadezhda ‘was scared out of her wits by all the signs and superstitions and had absolute faith in them’ (62). She believed in the cards and was also afraid of the ‘evil eye’ (Ibid.), as Tynianov tells us, and took decisions in accordance with her dreams, which was a part of the Russian folk tradition, and which in spite of her education was written into her cultural consciousness. It comes as no surprise to discover that Pushkin himself was very superstitious, as commented on by his contemporaries and by numerous later researchers. He was greatly attracted to dream interpretations and folk divinations,²⁸⁰ and indulged in cartomancy, something which figures in *Eugene Onegin* and *The Captain’s Daughter*.²⁸¹ He famously attributed his decision to turn back prior to the Decembrist revolt to encounters with bad omens. His library contained numerical probability tables which he, inveterate gambler that he was, found fascinating.²⁸² Even his future participation in the Kishinev Lodge can be partially attributed to his interest in the symbolic. As an apprentice Mason he was required to learn the symbolism of the Grand Architect of the Universe – ‘the signs, the signals, and the words’. One critic goes as far as to draw a link between Pushkin’s keen appreciation of numbers, numerical and numerological practices and patterns, and his sense of metrical rhythm.²⁸³

²⁷⁸ Pascal, 3, Beddow, 297, Kontie, 4, Swales, 33.

²⁷⁹ Terz, A. (Sinyavsky, A.) *Strolls with Pushkin* (Yale, 1993), 65.

²⁸⁰ Shtein, S. *Pushkin-mistik* (Riga, 1931); Kandinsky-Rybnikov, A. *Uchenie o schast’e i avtobiografichnost’ v ‘Povestiakh pokoinogo Ivana Petrovicha Belkina, izdannyykh A. P.’* (Moscow, 1993). On the ways Pushkin’s own interest in fortune-telling rituals were translated into artistic images and his most famous heroine’s divination practices see Hasty, Op. cit., Ch. 5, 137-175.

²⁸¹ Rakov, Iu. *Troika, semerka, dama: Pushkin i karty* (St Petersburg, 1994).

²⁸² Modzalevsky, B. *Biblioteka Aleksandra Sergeevicha Pushkina* (St Petersburg, 1910) [Moscow, 1988], nos. 1059, 1070, 1429.

²⁸³ Leighton, L. G. *The Esoteric Tradition in Russian Romantic Literature. Decembrism and Freemasonry* (Pennsylvania, 1994), 133. Commenting on Pushkin’s interest in symbols and predestination, Leighton remains fairly sceptical about the depth and

In the novel, through his association with the serf menials the child Pushkin became exposed to folk divination which, as Tynianov indicates, was the probable source of his peculiar type of religious faith defined by some as folk Orthodoxy – alien to official orthodoxy, which was too stiflingly ritualised and associated with the priggish and double-faced practices of high society.²⁸⁴ As Tynianov demonstrates, neither of Pushkin's parents was interested in or suitably equipped to provide adequate spiritual guidance for their son who, in the words of their priest, at ten years of age, had 'not a trace of knowledge of the Scriptures and was a stranger to the catechism' (127).

Pushkin's mother's western education and her break with the natural father gave her a keen feeling of rootlessness and isolation. She has no recollection of Suida where she had been born and, in fact, instead of taking solace in family history, she is determined to erase her unhappy past. When, after her father's death, she has his wardrobe dragged out of the room, 'the marks of its heavy feet imprinted on the floor, which disturbed her like the tracks of bygone times.' (106) The image of the past appears quite literally scored into the floorboards. Authorial sympathy is mingled here with subdued humour – even in the depth of despair she is unable to resist the temptation to change the order of the rooms. Tynianov is implying that her obsession with room- and house-changing in general represents a lifelong flight from the past, as from reality. Her inability to satisfy her desire of fulfilment through escape might have unwittingly encouraged her son to formulate his own, contrasting prerequisite of happiness – 'peace of mind and freedom' [*покой и воля*].²⁸⁵

The troublesome relationship with her own father reaches its conclusion in the Holy Hills scene when Nadezhda visits her father's grave. We learn of 'the wooden cross, down which a huge resin tear had ploughed' (109) and are introduced to the spot where some thirty years later Pushkin will find his final resting place (of his own choice) beside his grandfather and mother. The wooden cross is resonant of Christ's original, and the present one, purely conventional, ought to be an image of Christian goodness, sacrifice and love, whereas in fact it reflects parsimony, neglect and absence of affection or hope. The tears of Christ are a powerful part of the iconography of the religion he inspired, but the resin tear that has ploughed down Osip's

extent of Pushkin's involvement in esoteric practices as such and contends that his interest in such practices was essentially a healing procedure, 'a psychological exorcism of painful memories and the troubling matters of conscience' (185-194).

²⁸⁴ Refuting Nemirovskii's argument Papernyi contends that Pushkin's 'blasphemy' in later life was not a sign of his theomachy but a literary embodiment of his personal myth at the time – Pushkin, the radical, the opponent of the State and the Church – which he was busy constructing in the early 1820's (Buks, N. and Kont, F. (eds) *Semiotika strakha* (Sorbonne, Moscow, 2005), 122.

²⁸⁵ For the discussion of the topic see Papernyi, 'Svoboda i strakh v poeticheskom mire Pushkina' in the aforementioned edition (Buks and Kont), 102-123. The only other systematic study dedicated to the theme of freedom in Pushkin is by Bocharov, S., 'Svoboda' i 'schast'e' v poezii Pushkina' in *Poetika Pushkina* (Moscow, 1974), 3-25.

cross, left by an ordinary carpenter, or the involuntary tear of impersonal nature, is the only tear he gets. None of his family weeps for him. The resin tear on the cross is therefore a mockery and a lie and an extremely effective metaphor for the deception that was his relationship with his daughter and her mother.

In spite of the name, this is no holy hill in the biblical sense, as designation of the high points of awareness and aspiration: Sinai or Golgotha. She leaves the place no less emotionally hostile to her father than she had been before. The cross still emanates an odour of the pine from which it was made, which is unconsciously calling to mind Pushkin's 1835 poem '*Vnov' ia posetil'* (II, 368) in which he describes the three pine-trees establishing a kind of natural monument to his grandfather's estate, which they overlook. They provide the background for generations living out their lives and succeeding each other – the author's assertion of the power over humans of the 'current of time' and his emphasis on the unexpected similarities in the succeeding generations, the themes which are dominant in the *Bildungsroman*.²⁸⁶ The three pine-trees may also be an ironic evocation of the three crosses on Calvary, or Golgotha. Abram's cross is not a symbol of spiritual perfection, but a deliberately shoddy epitome of his failure to achieve or adhere to such a status, and indeed one which rather allies him to the two crosses on either side of the 'true' cross, i.e. those of common villains, which in a sense he was.

In Tynianov's continuing search for similarities between the mother and her son, the likenesses become particularly prominent in the scene of her father's 'harem' of serf-girls dancing for her. The effect of their performance on her is remarkable. To begin with she acts the part of the bored Francophile but as the dance gets under way, her half-African body comes alive, taking control of the Frenchified lady she has been taught to become:

Они плясали вполпляса - плыли - как при старике, когда он бывал трезв и скучен. Дворня, как в старые дни, собралась в кружок и издали глядела; все молчали, потому что при старике не были приучены к разговорам. Надежда Осиповна все смотрела в лорнет. Постепенно она оживилась, ноздри ее стали вздрагивать, а лицо покраснело. Девки, приученные к барским лицам, пошли быстрее... Надежда Осиповна, смотря в лорнет, неподвижно сидя на одном месте, плясала каждым членом - глазами, губами, плечами, ноздри ее вздрагивали. Она выслала девкам пирога. Скука прошла (110).

Inevitably this calls to mind the famous scene from *War and Peace*, where Natasha dances for her uncle and the 'Russian soul' (presumably) breaks through the whole French façade. Tynianov travesties the scene, but elects not to over-articulate it, paying tribute to Tolstoy though unwilling to push the literary parallel too far, or perhaps even questioning the whole idea of the mystical *âme russe*. Nadezhda's reaction might well be a manifestation of the deeply-rooted Russianness or Africanness lying dormant, but ready to be awakened at any moment, or might simply be an instinctive response to the rhythm of tambourine beating, to the

²⁸⁶ Krasnoshchekova, *Roman vospitaniia Bildungsroman na russkoi pochve* (Moscow, 2009), 168.

sound of music and the passion of dancing – something that her son would not fail to appreciate in gypsy performances.²⁸⁷

Having discovered her husband's sexual indiscretions in her absence, Nadezhda is described during one of her domestic rages:

в гневе она была страшна, лицо ее становилось неподвижно, не белое, а белесое, тусклое; глаза гасли, губы грубели и раскрывались. Она бросала наземь тарелку за тарелкой' (113).

Tynianov draws a picture of her as the plaything of elemental forces that are beyond her power to harness. Displaying a total lack of self-control, she dashes off to the maids' room 'as if blown by the wind' (113). Finding her son among the servant girls, she beats him until she is exhausted. Paradoxically enough, although Aleksandr is on the receiving end of her fury, the scene itself clarifies an important point, as Tynianov saw it: that Pushkin was closer to his mother than we are given to imagine, and he himself was capable of the kind of deep fury that emanated from her, an emotion partly inherited, partly imitated, perhaps, that expresses itself more than once in the course of the novel, and which famously led to his tragic death.

Tynianov portrays the Pushkins' world as split down the middle, one in which reality is Russian and romance is French – a bald and simplistic generalisation perhaps, but possessing a core of truth. Her impressionable son imbibes the European glitter of their household, albeit appreciating its artificiality. The metaphor of theatrical performance is a habitual one in the *Bildungsroman*: it emphasises the staged quality of the process and its dramaticity.²⁸⁸ Pushkin observes how his parents transform themselves into habitants of the entirely alien world of the salons and the soirées, adjusting their behaviour, thinking and even emotions to the conversation of another, more civilised and alluring country. It is both thrilling and frightening for him because the roles his parents play appear to be unfamiliar and insincere:

у матери становился певучий голос. Смех ее был гортанный, как воркотня голубей весной, у голубятни. Отец сидел в креслах уверенно, не на краешке, как всегда. Он казался главою семьи, владел разговором; мать безропотно его слушала и ни в чем не возражала. Это была другая семья, другие люди, моложе и лучше, незнакомые (76).²⁸⁹

The intelligent and sensitive boy instinctively sees through such adult deception and disguise. It is not hard to understand the tension felt by a clever child, trapped between two opposing cultures that present, as Tynianov implies, a bewildering assault upon the sense of personal identity, so vital to a young person. The young Pushkin enjoyed conversation in French, but

²⁸⁷ Lemon, A. *Between Two Fires: Gypsy Performance and Romani Memory from Pushkin to Post-Socialism* (Durham, NC, 2000).

²⁸⁸ Barney, R. *Plots of Enlightenment: Education and the Novel in 18th Century England* (Stanford, 1999), 81-88.

²⁸⁹ 'The cooing of pigeons' that Nadezhda Osipovna's laughter is compared to is a memorable and unconventional image, from a source quoted by V. Vinogradov in 1930 and referred to by Nabokov: 'all the daughters of Isaak Hannibal, Pushkin's grand-uncle, son of Abram, spoke with a peculiar singsong intonation – 'an African accent', they 'cooed like Egyptian pigeons'. (Nabokov, V. *Eugene Onegin* in 4 vols (London, 1964), III, 437).

notice that the conversation suddenly switched to Russian the moment any genuine emotion was felt, if somebody was surprised, for example, in which case they immediately reverted to

речь нянек и старух; и болтающие рты разевались шире и простонароднее, а не щелочкой как тогда, когда говорили по-французски'.²⁹⁰

Moments like these might have impelled him to wish that the Russian language could express elegantly, not only the prosaic and the mundane, but more witty and refined matters as well as 'metaphysical thoughts'. On the other hand, these scenes might have made him tolerant and even endeared him to colloquial Russian's linguistic idiosyncrasies.²⁹¹

Tynianov's prevailing concern is to estimate the effects on genius of circumstances which may have influenced and fostered it. His comparison of Pushkin to a wolf cub who 'stole through his parents' house, sidling among the secretly hostile objects' (74), was later echoed by Magarshack (like 'a hunted wolf cub'),²⁹² and underlines Pushkin's sense of being excluded from the closed circle of protection and belonging. Tynianov endorses the idea that the artist will always feel alien and unwanted and credits the boy with a self-control and determination to uncover the source of his suffering that few children of his age possess:

Мальчик не плакал, толстые губы его дрожали, он наблюдал за матерью.' (73)

The irony is that Nadezhda Osipovna has been mainly remembered for ill-treating her son. Every biographer cites her cruel tactics and some of these can be found in Tynianov. But sister Olga was ill treated too, though not to the same extent, and such bad parenting would not have been considered outrageously abusive at the time, since these were regarded as measures for reforming an awkward child.²⁹³ Where Tynianov goes further than the usual sources is in his suggestion that what Nadezhda Osipovna felt towards her son was a deep antipathy that amounted to hatred and even fear. And it is Tynianov who first suggests that the loathing and fear are the consequences of her own traumatic childhood, the deep cause of which was her own

²⁹⁰ Later we shall see how hearing Katerina Karamzina's speaking Russian makes his heart beat faster. Tynianov reports Pushkin's innermost thought: history for him was not the eight volumes of her husband's official *History*, but she and her affectionate and slightly ungrammatical Russian speech. (539)

²⁹¹ 'Как уст румяных без улыбки,/ Без грамматической ошибки,/ Я русской речи не люблю.' *Evgenii Onegin*, Ch. 3, XXVIII. (IV, 58-59)

Later he would write: 'разговорный язык простого народа (не читающего иностранных книг и, слава богу, не выражающего, как мы, своих мыслей на французском языке) достоин также глубочайших исследований. Альфиери изучал итальянский язык на флорентийском базаре: не худо нам иногда прислушиваться к московским просвириям. Они говорят удивительно чистым и правильным языком.' (VII, 122).

²⁹² Magarshack, D. *Pushkin: A Biography* (New York, 1969), 24.

²⁹³ See Raeff, M. *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth Century Nobility* (New York, 1966), 11-147 and Dunn, P. 'That Enemy is the Baby: Childhood in Imperial Russia' in L. deMause (ed.) *The History of Childhood* (New York, 1975), 385-405.

father, to whom her son Aleksandr, alone among her fair-haired children, bore an uncanny resemblance.²⁹⁴

As with her husband, Nadezhda Osipovna emerges from Tynianov's novel with the reader's sympathy, genuine and poignant, which not a biographer in the world appears to grant her. Each detail in Tynianov's psychological analysis conveys the essence of the character but the author is not so much interested in listing a feature, as to explain it and indicate its causality. Thus, good and evil cease to be the distinct polarities in the authorial, appraisal but are shown to coexist in the same person, rendering Tynianov's characters irreducible to simplistic formulae.

3. 'Akh! umolchu l' o mamushke moi...'

A major theme of the *Bildungsroman*, the genre dealing with the spiritual development of the protagonist, is the attainment of ideal love. The hero may experience love in its different forms – sensual, ideal, imaginary, intellectual, etc. These experiences can be highly differentiated, each encounter opening up a new facet of the emotion and revealing new depths to the hero.²⁹⁵ For Tynianov's hero such encounters will come later, but in the meantime the author enables us to see that in his early years – as in later – Pushkin craved a love that came from neither parent. The boy might have been irrevocably damaged psychologically, of course, had he known no family affection at all. Such, Tynianov convinces us, was not the case. In later life Pushkin found love in a succession of women,²⁹⁶ but in boyhood he adored two in particular, his grandmother, Mar'ia Alekseevna, and also his nurse, Arina, one of the latter's serfs to whom she had granted freedom, but who elected instead to stay with the Pushkins and become nurse to their children. Tynianov presents both women as profoundly influential surrogate mother figures for the boy. Mar'ia Alekseevna virtually runs the house of her incompetent daughter, caring for the children and giving them their initial education, while Arina acts as young Sasha's companion and protector, always there to offer comfort, in contrast to the anger and disgust that Pushkin feels emanating from his mother.

The *Bildungsroman* is preoccupied with the formation of identity from a variety of perspectives, including that of gender; it has traditionally been sensitive to the process of the shaping identity (be it masculine or feminine); and Pushkin's close relationship with these two women may have been decisive in the formation of his own. Association with them, in

²⁹⁴ Magarshack is the only biographer who goes as far as Tynianov in describing Nadezhda's behaviour as stemming from real hatred as opposed to routine strictness or harsh discipline. (Op. cit., 24).

²⁹⁵ Krasnoshchekova, E. 'I. A. Goncharov: *Bildungsroman* na russkoi pochve' in *Goncharov: Materialy Mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii, posviashchennoi 190-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia Goncharova* (2003, 7-19), 11; Ginzburg, Op. cit., 235-236.

²⁹⁶ See Guber, P. *Don Zhuanskii spisok Pushkina* in *Liubovnyi byt pushkinskoi epokhi* in 2 vols (Moscow, 1994), I, 11-183 [1923].

Tynianov's interpretation, undoubtedly enhanced his sensitivities. Although the hero of a *Bildungsroman* need not be an artist, quite often the protagonist at the centre of the novel of education, from Goethe to Joyce, displays a latent artistry. That the artist in this kind of a novel is androgynous by nature of his artistic individuality has been indicated by one of the most prominent 20th-century German practitioners of the genre, Thomas Mann, who wrote: 'There is always something feminine in the essence of the beautiful. Look at the example of the artist, who has never been simply or brutally masculine'.²⁹⁷ It has also been suggested that in a number of Pushkin's romantic narrative poems the masculine narrator's voice is linked to the feminine ideal and that Pushkin's portrayal of Tatiana is in fact an exercise in autoportraiture.²⁹⁸ Küchelbecker was the first to point this out, writing down in his diary:

In his eighth chapter the poet himself resembles Tatiana. For one of his Lycée comrades, for a person who has grown up with him and who knows him inside out as I do, the feeling with which Pushkin is filled is noticeable everywhere, although he, like Tatiana, does not want the whole world to know about this feeling'.²⁹⁹

It appeared that Pushkin gave his heroines the strength their masculine counterparts lacked.³⁰⁰

Tynianov's interpretation of the events of Pushkin's early life explains the profoundly feminine influences that stirred Pushkin's imagination and which might have prompted him to 're-think' himself playfully in a female image in some instances in his later writing. As Tynianov demonstrates, the two women were, in their own way, Pushkin's early Russian teachers, representing the informal cultural strain in Pushkin's poetic education.³⁰¹ These particular female influences to a certain extent account for his knowledge and awareness of the nuances of colloquial folk Russian. Tynianov indicates that the Russian that Mar'ia Alekseevna taught her grandson, expressed in simple but powerful language the tales of Russia's past and of Pushkin's own ancestors, which so fascinated the boy.³⁰² Arina's verbal influence on Pushkin, as Tynianov shows, introduced a more primitive poetic element into his consciousness. The knowledge they imparted enabled him in later life to bridge the gap between the intellectual life of the upper classes and that of the people by infusing a derivative literature based on Western models with

²⁹⁷ Quoted in Minden, Op. cit., 3.

²⁹⁸ Cf. Hasty, Op. cit., where she maintains that Pushkin's heroine proved 'a highly effective disguise' for her author (216) and L. Beaudoin's study *Resetting the Margins: Russian Romantic Verse Tales and the Idealized Woman* (New York, 1997) in particular Ch. 11 (181-212) 'Undressing *Eugene Onegin's* Heroine: Narrative Transvestism and the Right to Choose', where he argues that Pushkin parodies Tatiana's role as female ideal (perhaps because she is in fact a reflection of his own ego)' (210, 183)

²⁹⁹ Cited in Lotman, Iu. 'K evoliutsii postroeniia kharakterov v romane *Evgenii Onegin*' in *Pushkin: Issledovaniia i materialy*, III (Moscow, Leningrad, 1960), 161 and in Hasty, Op. cit., 263.

³⁰⁰ Hubbs, Op. cit., 210.

³⁰¹ Folk poetry emanating from his childhood substitute mothers is believed to have had the power to unblock Pushkin's creative energies. His amazing productivity during his Boldino autumn, in Greenleaf's view, was triggered by his nurse's 'simple faithfulness and the belated motherly gift of her native Russian storytelling. An interlude of normally loving and loyal attachment released his blocked energies in the precise direction her genres suggested: fairy-tale, historical legend, the multivocal detritus of history.' (*Pushkin and Romantic Fashion: Fragment, Elegy, Orient, Irony* (Stanford, 1995), 297).

³⁰² Pushkin himself may be recording something of his own debt to her and to Arina in his poem 'Dream' [*Сон*] (1816, I, 414), though neither woman is specifically identified in the poem by name.

the vitality of folk elements, popular language, ritual and the mythological paradigms contained in Russian folk culture, as well by refashioning the literary language with its foreign terms and stilted expressions of court life, infusing it instead with the sounds of native speech.³⁰³

In acknowledging Mar'ia Alekseevna's role and her formative influence on Pushkin, Tynianov transforms her into one of the most sharply realized characters in the novel, the author's observations based as always on a sensitive and intelligent interpretation of the sources. She is introduced as a kindly, caring and steadying influence on a household in a permanent state of chaos or crisis. Stressing her grassroots native Russianness, her traditional strengths and folk psychology that she passed on to her grandson, the narrator also reveals that 'deep in her heart she believed the best and most important place in her life to be a town called Lipetsk' (20) which is described in terms of an archetypal *locus amoenus* (*pleasant place*, Lat.),³⁰⁴ an idyll nostalgically longed for, with its unassuming Russian landscape, unhurried ways of life, safety, wholesomeness, comfort and moral goodness, the landscape so desirable for Pushkin in his later life.

Having been jeered at behind her back for marrying a black man gave her first-hand knowledge of what it was like to be different. Like her grandson, Tynianov notes, 'she hated to be judged' (20). With her military background, notorious for its rootlessness, alienation and repetitive routine, she was an expert on loneliness, uncertainty, vulnerability – the legacy for ever imprinted not only on her, but also transmitted to her daughter who will later replay the pattern she had learnt as a child.

Pushkin's granny most certainly told Pushkin folk tales, but was more a factual recounter of chronicle and family history. In Tynianov's version her voice coloured the boy's concept of his ancestry and provided him with the first striking examples of the private lives of individuals intersecting with history. Arina's ability to dramatize family history and associate it with the folk tales, legends and family stories that represented an older Russia explains why the Gannibals may have come to be admired by Pushkin beyond their actual merits.³⁰⁵

Arina is shown to be protective of Aleksandr throughout his childhood: weeping when Aleksandr is beaten, and taking to her 'secret phial' [*лужи́рыек*] – a little humanising vice

³⁰³ Hubbs, Op. cit., 210.

³⁰⁴ The term was introduced by E. Curtius in *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern, 1948) [trans. Trask, W. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (London, 1953)]. It came to mean an Edenic-like locality which includes greenery and water, is described in terms of an ultimate place of safety and comfort and provides refuge from aging and death.

³⁰⁵ Nabokov's short story, 'Nezhit' (*The Wood-sprite*, 1921), springs immediately to mind in its use of Russian folkloric personages as an emblem of the Old Russia. The flight of the woodsprite from the new regime represents the destruction of the old Russia, the theme encapsulated in the sprite's pining lament: 'It was we, Rus', who were your inspiration, your unfathomable beauty, your age-long enchantments! And we are all gone, gone, driven into exile by a crazed surveyor!' Nabokov, V. *Collected Stories* (Penguin, 1997), 5.

attributed by Tynianov, perhaps also as a suggestion that the cup of wine that the grown-up poet would invite his nurse to share with him in his exile [*вытьем с горя, где же кружка? сердцу будет веселей*] was a literal memory. Upon his departure for the Lycée she is the only one who laments the fact, trying her best to smooth his transition into the adult world by providing him with something precious by which to remember his home. Ironically though, the best thing the illiterate serf can think of are the tiny volumes of French anecdotes from Sergei L'vovich's library, which she knows Sasha has chuckled over.

More than anyone else in the Pushkins' household, Arina fulfils the responsibility and the role abnegated by his 'true' parents and does so with a love of which neither of them was capable. After Pushkin has graduated and lost the only 'true' family he had ever known – the circle of his friends, the fellow-Lycéens – Tynianov puts the matter baldly enough: 'Семья? Семьи не было. Была Арина.' (552).

Pushkin's deep emotional attachment to his nurse became metaphorically associated with bountiful and ever-nurturing nature (Mother Earth) and *Matushka Rus'* (the land and people), which determined the identity and the direction of his creative impulse. Pushkin's granny and his nurse came to embody further the warmth of family life, the folk traditions and a simple existence in communion with the cycles of nature which he would attempt to rediscover in his adult years when he sought to find refuge in country life.³⁰⁶

4. 'Prilezhno ia vnimal urokam...': The problem of Erziehung

The *Bildungsroman* is closely linked to the strongly didactic subgenre of the *Erziehungsroman* [*роман образования*], which is centred on the discussion of pedagogical problems.³⁰⁷ Such discussions, as we shall see, feature prominently in the novel *Pushkin* – what kind of education is preferable – secular or religious, civilian or military, strict or lenient, and more important: how can the education of the intellect be reconciled with that of the senses and of virtue? By paying homage both to the *Bildungsroman* and to the Russian tradition of the portrayal of an adolescent's *stanovlenie*, Tynianov was able to explore the burning educational issues of Pushkin's age and link them directly to Pushkin's emerging sense of personal identity under the influence not only of a social milieu but also of an educational system. Tynianov's discursively hybrid text (in particular Part II and most of Part III) is imbued with the problematics of the novel of education which enriches our understanding of Pushkin's worldview and intellectual horizons.

³⁰⁶ See Ch. 7 and the Conclusions of Hubbs's study, 207–237.

³⁰⁷ Hardin, J. (ed.) *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman* (South Carolina, 1991), xiv.

The *Bildungsroman* [роман воспитания] was historically predicated upon the Rousseauesque antithesis between the natural, biological, inherently virtuous man and ‘unnatural’ society torn apart by vice. It was also one of the major themes of early 19th-century Russian literature and journalism, which thrust to the fore the problems of upbringing and education. The place of the schools and institutions in the education of virtue and of the mind, as Tynianov demonstrates, acquired both social and even political significance at the time. Speransky articulates the changing current in the thinking about educating youngsters in Russia when he states that

Привычки воспитывают домашние. Но разума воспитать они не могут. У дворянства дома - разврат, у духовных - невежество. (210).

The issue of the importance of developing the individual capacities of the pupil and of preparing him for a useful role in society has traditionally been the key one in the *Bildungsroman*.³⁰⁸

Tynianov explores these problematics in order to penetrate further Pushkin’s artistic imagination and to discover how, in the artist’s mind, the sensory correlated with the cerebral, i.e. how intuition and imagination interconnected with formal knowledge as purveyed by society’s institutions. Even before Pushkin’s formal education begins, Tynianov’s concern is to explore the impact of various influences, including home tutors, siblings and even menials on the mind of the young Pushkin. Following the sources, he portrays a boy who, even prior to boarding school had independently developed the skills of self-education, which broadened his intellectual horizons, trained his memory, dissolved his loneliness and altogether transformed his existence. He achieved this through books, an obvious source of information, ideas and images to which, as Tynianov shows us, Pushkin reacted with remarkable imaginative responsiveness.

Pushkin’s own synoptic note, quoted earlier, says simply: ‘Passion for reading.’ Pushkin’s sister Olga, two years older than he, wrote:

Учился Пушкин небрежно и лениво; но зато рано пристрастился к чтению, любил читать Плутарховы биографии, Илиаду и Одиссею, в переводе Битобе, и забирался в библиотеку отца, которая состояла преимущественно из французских классиков, так что впоследствии он был настоящим знатоком французской словесности и истории и усвоил себе тот прекрасный французский слог, которому в письмах его не могли удивиться природные французы.³⁰⁹

We know from biographical sources that the young Pushkin read books of multiple genres, either in the original French or in French translations from the English, German and

³⁰⁸ Bruford, W. *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: ‘Bildung’ from Humboldt to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge, 1975), 264.

³⁰⁹ In Veresaev, Op. cit., 53. His brother, Lev, comments as follows: ‘Воспитание его мало заключало в себе русского. Он слышал один французский язык; ... библиотека его отца состояла из одних французских сочинений. Ребенок проводил бессонные ночи и тайком в кабинете отца пожирал книги одну за другую. Пушкин был одарен памятью неимоверной и на одиннадцатом году уже знал наизусть всю французскую литературу.’ (Ibid., 51)

Italian.³¹⁰ He read classical drama, verse fables, the Encyclopaedists, Voltaire, the light verses of Parny and Gresset, as well as Homer, Ossian and Wieland, all in French translation. In other words, his reading was unrestricted (thanks to his parents' indifference to educational matters) and omnivorous. He also expressed his enthusiasm for those native Russian authors who imitated the lighter style of his French favourites: Krylov, Barkov, Batiushkov, and his own uncle Vasili. Frivolity, irony, cynicism, and, of course, eroticism – these were the attitudes and approaches most admired at the time.

Tynianov first shows Pushkin entering his father's study at the age of six when he started to become 'exceptional' (in Olga's words). Tynianov shows the young boy responding to the experience of the study in a purely sensory manner. The portraits of Karamzin and Dmitriev are seen through an 'innocent' eye and the estrangement effect lends the vision a cartoonish quality:

косоглазый и розовый Иван Иванович Дмитриев, с хрящеватым носом, которого он почему-то не любил, и в воздушных лиловатых одеждах черноглазая девушка с широкими боками. (87)

At this point in his life books for him are nothing more than concrete objects, producers of sensations; the precocious child is not yet reading. The novelty of the experience is carefully emphasised: they are layered with dust and make him sneeze; the pages are porous, the letters spacious, the illustrations embossed. 'Он ощупал их пальцем' (Ibid), Tynianov says, rather than embraced them intellectually. Pushkin's education begins in the study, which is often vacant for a whole day or two at a time. Its territory becomes the child's; he is reading to learn what his father knows and to go beyond that. The military metaphor ('В кабинете он научился распоряжаться, как в захваченном вражеском лагере.' (100)), aptly generates the sense of Freudian fascination, struggle and desire to emulate, that the son feels towards his father, as well as the boy's intuitive achievement of authority through learning.

Очень ему понравился также рассказ в стихах о том, как две благочестивые старушки, вернувшись домой и улегшись на постель, нашли там дюжего молодца и подрались друг с другом. Благочестивые старушки, ханжи, девотки, напоминали тетушку Анну Львовну, а мать с гостями жеманничала, как мадам Дезульер (101).

He is not only reading with understanding: he is relating what he reads to real life and is reflecting on life with enhanced awareness and perception. In Pushkin's case this gives him a sort of intellectual power over his hypocritical mother and aunt, the power of knowing them for what they are.

³¹⁰ Following his father and uncle's example, Pushkin learned excellent Italian in early childhood and spoke it as well as French. (König, H. *Ocherki russkoi literatury* (St Petersburg, 1862), 101). In *Materialy k biografii Annenkov* confirms that in spite of the presence in the house of an English and a German tutor, Pushkin learned only very basic English and had no German at all (Moscow, 1984), 12

Tynianov does not subscribe to the biographical notion (held, for example, by E. Simmons) that Olga was Pushkin's constant companion in reading.³¹¹ All the author's descriptions of the library scenes make it clear that this was an individual discovery, a personal process of exploration and a solitary joy. Now 'all of a sudden his life was full', Pushkin enjoyed the freedom of the library, where reading is equated to an escape from the pain or boredom of mundane life. The preference for the 'elevating illusion' [*возвышающий обман*] over 'mundane truths' [*низкие истины*] is apparent even at this early stage

Он быстро сползал с постели и бесшумно шел, минуя полуоткрытые двери, в отцовский кабинет. Босой, в одной сорочке, он бросался на кожаный стул и, подогнув под себя ногу и не чувствуя холода, читал. Давно были перелистаны и прочтены маленькие книжки в голубых обертках. Он узнал Пирона. В маленькой истрепанной книжке была гравюра: толстый старик с тяжелым подбородком, плутовскими глазами и сведенными губами лакомки. Он сам написал свою эпитафию: 'Здесь лежит Пирон. Он не был при жизни ничем, даже академиком'. Отчаянная беспечность этого старика, писавшего веселые сказки, смысл которых он уже понимал, понравилась ему даже более, чем шаловливый и хитрый Вольтер.

Любимым героем его был дьявол, при одном упоминании о котором тетушка Анна Львовна тихонько отплеывалась. Однако дьявол у Пирона был превеселый молодец и ловко дурачил монахинь и святых. С огорчением он подумал, что в Москве нет человека, похожего на этого мясистого поэта (122-3).

The theme of forbidden knowledge calls up associations with the Genesis myth. *Crawled, sneaked, noiselessly, barefoot* – the word choices emphasise cumulatively the sense of secret and illicit pleasure, the thrill of guilt. And as the boy eats the fruit of the tree of knowledge, Tynianov evokes the Edenic scene complete with devil. The French dramatist and poet Piron (1689-1773), famous for his farces and comic-operas, is described as an Epicurean satyr, a picture of pagan sinfulness, accompanied by repeated diabolical references. Thus, the notion of reading as a subversive activity, godless and pagan, is established in the boy's mind. And the theme receives even greater emphasis when Tynianov moves on to the area of 'the forbidden bookcase', the specifically taboo works of erotica.

The author meanwhile notes that the period of this intellectual leap coincides with the physical change in his appearance recorded by Olga:

Исчезла медленная походка увальня; медленный и как бы всегда вопрошающий взгляд стал быстрым и живым.' (101)

In describing the boy's bibliophilic adventures in his father's study, Tynianov refers to an 'abandoned volume of Derzhavin, borrowed from somebody and never returned' (123). It does not attract the boy's interest at this stage. As far as the national literature is concerned, Tynianov describes Pushkin's childhood reading quite categorically: 'He found no Russian books in his father's study' (123), even though there was no shortage of Russian writers visiting the house.

³¹¹ Simmons takes as his cue Pushkin's early poem 'To my sister' (1814, I, 290) 'in which he pleasantly recalls their hours in the library'. (Op. cit., 29.)

Pushkin's early learning through literature, like his learning of Russian folk culture, was an aural one. The boy was a keen audience of his father's declamations of Molière. He actually asked him to recite and these sessions gave Pushkin a vivid demonstration of how art can transform life, render it meaningful and turn the mundane into the marvellous:

Слова и пространство перед камином и даже самый сертук [отца] приобретали необыкновенное достоинство. Когда в дверь входили, [Сергей Львович] смолкал, оскорбленный.³¹²

When Sergei L'vovich happens to pass the nursery and overhear Arina telling a fairy-tale to his son, who looked at her spellbound, Sergei L'vovich was alarmed by the inappropriateness of the situation (native culture was obviously associated in his mind with the low classes, vulgar and debased). By contrast, Sergei L'vovich's own recitations of Molière, though arousing Aleksandr's attentive curiosity, had never drawn forth such an emotional response, and this stung the father's pride. The author emphasises a certain dichotomy here: while Russian literature is shown to appeal to Pushkin's heart, French appears to stimulate his sense of form. Tynianov emphasizes the emotive as opposed to the intellectual influence wielded by his serf nanny, an influence whose strength and power dismays his father, unable to understand how folk tales could captivate his son's soul to this extent.³¹²

The choice and use of language at the time was strongly linked with class, position in society, manners and what was perceived as 'progressiveness'. To Sergei L'vovich it was a matter of pride, Tynianov tells us, and ironically for the father of the greatest Russian poet of all times, he scarcely uttered a word of Russian in the course of an entire week except to the servants. Sergei L'vovich is determined to eradicate the inimical influence on his son of their menials. Tynianov's satire is perfectly clear: Pushkin's formal education was required not for the sake of the boy's intellectual development, but as a point of social honour and pride and a matter of snobbery for his father. In making the reader reach this conclusion Tynianov is not pointing an individual finger at Sergei L'vovich: he is simply representative of the times which dictate that a French governess must replace a Russian-speaking nurse, to prevent the son of a gentleman from turning into a peasant and a boor.

Comically, Sergei L'vovich's worry was that a real *Madame*, though an absolute imperative, would be too expensive. So, the third source of Pushkin's education in his pre-Lycée years became private tutoring. Pushkin stated his opinion of it in a report on public education,

³¹² At the time folk-tales were seen as quasi-literary phenomenon and were just beginning to appear in print in a highly stylised and refined form (as pseudo-Russian chivalrous tales) in the works of the sentimentalist writers. Hammarberg, G. *From the Idyll to the Novel: Karamzin's Sentimental Prose* (Cambridge, New York, 1991), 110.

which he wrote in 1826 at the suggestion of Tsar Nicholas I, and which does not read like the view of someone who had himself enjoyed a pleasant and profitable private education:

В России домашнее воспитание есть самое недостаточное, самое безнравственное; ребенок окружен одними холопами, видит одни гнусные примеры, своевольничает или рабствует, не получает никаких понятий о справедливости, о взаимных отношениях людей, об истинной чести. Воспитание его ограничивается изучением двух или трех иностранных языков и начальным основанием всех наук, преподаваемых каким-нибудь нанятым учителем. Воспитание в частных пансионах не многим лучше; здесь и там оно кончается на 16-летнем возрасте воспитанника. Нечего колебаться: во что бы то ни стало должно подавить воспитание частное. ('O narodnom vospitanii' (VII, 32)).

Pushkin also began a novel, which he never completed, *A Russian Pelham*,³¹³ in which the hero's remarks on his tutors bear an unmistakably autobiographical character:

Отец конечно меня любил, но вовсе обо мне не беспокоился и оставил меня на попечение французов, которых беспрестанно принимали и отпускали. Первый мой гувернер оказался пьяницей; второй, человек неглупый и не без сведений, имел такой бешеный нрав, что однажды чуть не убил меня поленом за то, что пролил я чернила на его жилет; третий, проживший у нас целый год, был сумасшедший... Впрочем, и то правда, что не было из них ни одного, которого бы в две недели по его вступлению в должность не обратил я в домашнего шута (*Russkii Pelam* (VI, 545-548)).

In the Pushkin household there was, in fact, a long succession of foreign tutors who in turn had unfortunate effects on their charge. The French migration following the Revolution had altered elementary education in Russia to an astonishing degree. Not only aristocrats flooded into Russia, but soldiers, servants, tradesmen, cooks, in their thousands. Any foreigner could land a position with a family, without any teaching qualification or talent. Inevitably the system was ripe for and rife with abuse, much satirised by writers and journalists at the time.³¹⁴

Tynianov does not take us through the entire known list of teachers. A succession of more than six or seven would have made the narrative tedious. After a couple of false starts, the Comte de Montfort appears on the scene, at first as an 'important' guest at Pushkin's christening, having just arrived in Moscow in the retinue of the Duke of Bordeaux. Tynianov has woven Montfort into the story as an example of the socio-political reality of an age when 'even princes of pedigree could be lured to dinner' and, seven years after the Revolution, had become such a familiar sight in Moscow in their strained circumstances and their search for refuge that they 'were treated without ceremony' (27). Charting Montfort's gradual degradation, ten years after the christening he is hired by the Pushkins to teach their son French.³¹⁵

³¹³ Pushkin admired the English writer E. Bulwer-Lytton, whose best novel, *Pelham: or the Adventures of a Gentleman*, was published in 1824. An analysis of Pushkin's 'Russian Pelham' as a *Bildungsroman* can be found in Krasnoshchekova's *Roman vospitaniia* (2008), Ch. 2, 71-125.

³¹⁴ See, for example Ignat'eff, L. 'French Émigrés in Russia after the French Revolution. French Tutors', *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 8 (1966), 125-131.

³¹⁵ The echoes of Pushkin's experiences with his home tutors can be found in some of his works, most notably in the character of Petrusha Grinev's tutor Monsieur Beaupré (*The Captain's Daughter*) who, the narrator tells us, had been a barber in his fatherland, a soldier in Prussia and then came to Russia 'pour être a uchitel' – 'although his understanding of what this entailed was somewhat vague.' Good-natured but flighty and wayward, he was, like Montfort, 'no enemy of the bottle' and had 'a passion for the fair sex'. Left to his own devices Petrusha 'wished for no other mentor'. Petrusha and his teacher 'pursued [their] separate interests and lived in perfect harmony' as do Tynianov's Pushkin and Montfort.

Driven by similar considerations of propriety and prestige the Pushkins sent their children to the dancing lessons of the renowned Iogel, where Pushkin proved exceptionally inept.³¹⁶ Tynianov elects to transfer the notorious scene to the celebrated but less expensive Monsieur Pengeau, making Sergei L'vovich argue that Pengeau is the better teacher, the truth being that the Pushkins cannot afford his exorbitant fees. We are made to see the scene from two points of view: Aleksandr's and his mother's. Pushkin is filled with the anger and boredom that partly cause his clumsiness and absent-minded confusion. Here Tynianov clearly locates the source of his hatred of activities that turn people into performing dummies. For Nadezhda Osipovna this is the moment of a shocking revelation:

Она всегда была или казалась самой себе красавицей, ее звали франты *la belle créole*. Этот мальчик с обезьяньими глазками и матовой кожей, с угловатыми движениями, почти урод - был ее сын. Худенькая длинноносая девочка с сутулой спиной, с бегающими глазками, с плоскими бесцветными волосами была ее дочь. И чувствуя непонятное отвращение, гнев, горькую жалость к себе, она поднялась, крепко схватила за ухо сына, за шиворот дочь и швырнула их за дверь, как швыряют котят.

- Урод, - сказала она, сама не слыша (153-4).

At this epiphanical moment she understood that one has absolutely no control over one's offspring and that the forces of heredity can be a cruel reminder of a bitter past at which she is venting her fury: all of life seems to her a disappointment and deception. For the boy as well as his mother, this is a lesson in much more than dancing. As the young Pushkin lies in bed that night and comes to terms with the fact that his mother detests him,

он [...] все вдруг понял. Он был урод, дурен собою. Это глубоко его тронуло. Он вспомнил, как шел под музыку с сестрой Ольгой, и заплакал от унижения. Никто в этот час не подошел к его постели: Арина была где-то далеко. Француз сидел у стола и с внимательным, угрюмым видом, отрешась от всего, чистил ногти маленьким ножичком и щеточкой (154).

Whether this episode really took place in the way Tynianov described it, is open to speculation, but he leaves us in no doubt of the profoundly brutalizing effect that Pushkin's mother had on her son's shaping identity.

This is an example of how the novel of education is engaged with the self-discovery which is usually achieved through a succession of seemingly random experiences as a result of which human identity emerges as a coherent and unbroken unity.³¹⁷ At its most fundamental level it deals with the problem of the elusiveness of the self and casts light on the ways in which external forces constantly affect an individual's 'genetic material' throughout his childhood and adolescent years and there comes a point when the protagonist can no longer be sheltered by parental care and has to pass on into a totally new environment.³¹⁸ Sensitive to this stage in the

³¹⁶ Iogel was sufficiently celebrated to have one of his dances described by Tolstoy more than fifty years after Pushkin disgraced himself at his fashionable establishment (Tolstoy, L. *War and Peace*, Book 2, P. 1, Ch. 12).

³¹⁷ Swales, Op. cit., 15, 165, 147.

³¹⁸ Kontje, Op. cit., p. 2.

life of its protagonists, such a novel reveals the point from which the continual conflict between the public and private self intensifies.³¹⁹ This accounts for the learned or intellectual flavour of the novel of education which is a literary offshoot – ‘even a discursive aberration’ – of educational theory as propounded by Locke, Kant and Rousseau.³²⁰ Tynianov’s novel addresses the prevalent theories and educational practices influenced by the European philosophers, while closely engaging with the process of Pushkin’s learning and individual growth. Educational debate in the novel takes place through the articulation of the views of the reforming educationalist Speransky, the obscurantist Jesuit de Maistre, upholders of the status quo Razumovskii and Martynov, the enlightened ‘middle-ground man’ Karamzin, and the Lycée professors, Kunitsyn, De Boudri and Inspector Piletskii. Rich in ideological content, *Pushkin*, grapples with the cluster of moral, ethical and philosophical issues that arise as we follow the protagonist’s years of learning.

By the time Part I reaches its conclusion it becomes clear that the Pushkins are hardly an exemplary family, and what affection, respect and consideration they spare their son is negligible. Foreign tutors had failed to educate their difficult son to the satisfaction of his parents, compounding their conviction that boarding school was now the answer. The Pushkins believe formal schooling to be the means of asserting their parental authority, reforming their wayward son and instilling in him the desirable piety and necessary social values which would enable him to conform to the societal requirements. As a failed careerist Sergei L’vovich sees his son’s advancement by means of St Petersburg education as his own, as a boost to his ego and as a chance to improve the family’s social standing and revolutionize its entire life. Pushkin reaches the stage when he has to and, as a matter of fact, is ready to leave the unloving embrace of his parents, and he does so with a sense of eager anticipation of the opportunities opening before him:

глаза юнца горели, рот был полуоткрыт со странным выражением, которого Василий Львович не мог понять; ему показалось, что юнец смеется (194).

Pushkin’s ‘years of apprenticeship’ thus begin with his leaving home, an event which is presented as metaphorical embarkation on a pilgrimage, one which would last for the next six years of his life and beyond.

In fact, the educational options have proved rather limited, and the Pushkins’ characteristic spontaneity and levity come to the fore again: their son is indeed leaving home, but

³¹⁹ Pascal, *Op. cit.*, pp. 45, 91.

³²⁰ Minden, *Op. cit.*, 159, 149, Barney, *Op. cit.*, 26, Pashigorev, V. *Roman vospitaniia v nemetskoj literature XVIII-XX vekov* (Saratov, 1993), 50, Krasnoshchekova, *Roman vospitaniia*, 128.

without any clear notion of which institution he is about to enter. Tynianov appears to relish the idea of how different Pushkin's schooling and, indeed, his very personality might have been. The complex dialectic of chance and predestination and the theme of the correlation between the protagonist's life and the universal laws of being, traditional characteristics of the *Bildungsroman*,³²¹ constitute a pervasive theme in Tynianov's novel. He shows how destiny emerges out of a flux of events and is the result of accident, chance, the opposing interplay of individuals, circumstances and ideas. An experienced gambler and a firm believer in luck as a part of destiny, Sergei L'vovich leaves it up to his brother to make the final decision. When Aleksandr's fate is decided in a flash, Vasilii L'vovich himself seems to be 'staggered by the easiness and suddenness of this Petersburg play of fortune' (244).

At first Pushkin seems destined for the highly restrictive, French and Latin based Petersburg Jesuits school of the Abbé Nicholes. Instead he finds himself being enrolled at the Imperial Lycée in Tsarskoe Selo, which at the time was expected to become the most innovative and academically advanced institution of education in the entire country, where all teaching was to be conducted in Russian. Its egalitarian agenda, absence of corporal punishment, lenient and respectful treatment of the boys, highly knowledgeable professorial staff, some of whom became Pushkin's substitute 'fathers', as Tynianov will proceed to demonstrate, made an appreciable difference to Pushkin's worldview and sense of identity, perhaps shaping his passion for intellectual distinction and his hatred of mediocrity. Significantly, the Tsarskoe Selo Lycée offered free entry to any nobleman, even to destitute small-fry, and placed on an equal footing representatives of the aristocracy, old and new, and the offspring of the families on the fringes of nobility, such as the Pushkins.

The ethos of the school, its challenging curricula, goals and procedures appear to reflect a shift in perception of the educational process along Lockean lines, one antithetical to the reactionary educational views expounded by the reactionary Count de Maistre: education, in his view, though a necessary evil, is a sure path to freethinking, which in his parlance meant anarchy, bloodshed and destruction similar to those caused by the French Revolution. He is the mouthpiece for the Jesuits' belief that one should not so much educate the mind, as instil unquestionable conformity (143) .

Speransky's ideas on education, as Tynianov demonstrates, were based on rationalist philosophy; when deliberating what should be educated, 'sense' [*разум*] or 'sensitivity' [*чувствования*], he was inclined to favour the former: in his opinion

sensitive people - это машина, не понимающая своего хода, идущая по слепой привычке, заведенная воспитанием (210).

³²¹ Krasnoshchekova, *Roman vospitaniia*, 141.

His Rousseauist faith in the power of education seems unshakable, not only in respect of the acquisition of knowledge, but also as a tool for society's moral improvement. At his suggestion the sciences were eliminated at the Lycée in favour of the humanities and of physical education; these aimed at producing civically-minded members of society. According to Speransky, having graduated, the students would be appointed to government posts according to their achievements, and to be promoted to high office in the military and civil services. Speransky's views could arouse nothing but contempt in the old French aristocrat who despised the utilitarian goal of such indiscriminate and easily accessible education.

Slipping into the genre of the epistolary novel for the following few pages, Tynianov hands over the narrative of the official opening of the Imperial Lycée to Aleksandr Kunitsyn, the young professor of philosophy, ethics and political economy, whose journal occupies over 20 pages of Part Two. The very form of the epistolary novel, or of first-person narration in the form of a diary, confers on the narrative an aura of authenticity and is meant to preclude overt authorial interference. Kunitsyn's written account is naturally subjective, as that of a participant of the events might be expected to be and it provides the insider's view of the inner workings of the school. It makes apparent, for example, that from the outset the autonomy of the Lycée was undermined by the high-ranking officials hostile to its innovative liberal spirit and they kept it under instant supervision and controlled it strictly and down to the pettiest detail.

This technique tallies well with the *Erziehungsroman's* concentration on a certain set of values to be acquired and lessons to be learned by the 'apprentice' and portrays an objective process, observed from the standpoint of the educator.³²² The common device of narrating the events of the opening ceremony and beyond through the private impressions of one of the Lycée's distinguished teachers, is extremely effective in this respect and avoids the literary pitfall whereby the author may appear to be mechanically recounting events that are already part of public knowledge in the domain of history. Familiar events are lent a fresh perspective and a new immediacy: the headmaster Malinovskii, 'pale, stuttering and almost inaudible', petrified by the sight of the Emperor; the Sovereign himself, looking rather vague and deaf; the seemingly attentive Empress, actually unable to understand a word because she has no knowledge of Russian and soon succumbing to sleep; the eerie figure of Inspector Piletskii; a number of characters – fat, short-sighted, frowning, self-satisfied or sleepy – introduced and depicted in a vivid Hogarthian tableau, sharply detailed, precise and yet imbued with ambiguity.

³²² Swales, *Op. cit.*, 14; Moretti, *Op. cit.*, 17.

Of course, a world created in words can never be neutrally represented, and it has been noted that subjectivity is the medium through which the novel of education communicates its aesthetics.³²³ In addition to Kunitsyn's diary entries, Tynianov employs the Joycean technique of stream of consciousness, where, paradoxically, objectivity is increasingly achieved through 'subjectivity'.³²⁴ Like any other writer Tynianov is simultaneously subjective, relating his personal vision, and objective, or 'aesthetically distanced', expelling himself from what he is writing about although in control of his material. This customary creative 'balancing act' is complicated in Tynianov's novel by the increasingly apparent interplay of the subjective perspectives of his characters. The reader is allowed to see things from varying viewpoints with their character's distinct monological voice. Such an accumulation of angles, some of which are inevitably opposed to one another produces a sense, both of verisimilitude and of paradoxical objectivity. Instead of expressing in any obvious way his own, intensely personal beliefs and convictions, the narrator's commentary turns out to reflect a character's position or pass the perspective over to his characters, the 'seers' of the object, from Kunitsyn to Pushkin, from the Lycée's most distinguished teacher to the boy who will become its most distinguished pupil.

The post-Journal pages provide us with an insight into how the young professor's rhetoric might have struck a twelve-year-old boy and how it could have sown the first seeds of Pushkin's civic values. He is both detached from and intrigued by Kunitsyn's passionate speech in which the professor articulates the goals that the boys' education would pursue: inculcating in his pupils patriotism, a sense of dignity and duty as well as educating them to become autonomous, and yet worthy and useful, future citizens.³²⁵

Bakhtin defined the mega-plot of the novel of education as

Типически повторяющийся путь становления человека от юношеского идеализма и мечтательности к зрелой трезвости и практицизму. Этот путь может осложняться в конце разными степенями скепсиса и резиньяции.³²⁶

Sobriety and resignation are, thus, the results of maturation. Tynianov juxtaposes reality with the young protagonist's expectations and indicates that they inevitably do not coincide – a key theme of the novel of education. So, for example, Sergei L'vovich had talked to his son anxiously and in awe about 'the court'. But what the twelve-year-old Pushkin sees in front of him is simply 'the stooped fat back of the Emperor, a few old ladies, several young women with monograms on their shoulders and men in uniforms and frock-coats, all sitting in a small hall' '(291); in other

³²³ Minden, Op. cit., 3.

³²⁴ Bell, M. *Literature, Modernism and Myth: Belief and Responsibility in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1997), 67, 69.

³²⁵ Tynianov includes an extract from the draft of the speech, as submitted by Kunitsyn to Speransky, who 'underlined in pencil what he thought was the best and coincided with his own ideas' (267). The full text of the speech can be found in Kunin, V. V. *Zhizn' Pushkina, rasskazannaia im samim i ego sovremennikami* in 2 vols (Moscow, 1987), I, 143-147.

³²⁶ Bakhtin, M. *Estetika*, 213.

words, a deliberately and unimpressively anonymous bunch of people, looking almost absurdly out of place. The boy is not intimidated by the spectacle, and the older Pushkin will be in even lesser awe of them and will accord them even less respect as he holds them in his writer's scrutiny.

He is intrigued by the reaction of his fellow-students, Korff and Küchelbecker, who burst into tears at the news of regulations prohibiting the students from leaving the Lycée during their entire period of study. He can scarcely understand such an emotional response, when he recalls 'the bare walls of his nursery-room, the coals in the stove, his father' (299). His response to the news of the boys' 'exile' is to seek consolation in the forbidden pleasure – books, familiar to him from the library at home:

Вечером, ложась спать, он взял томик Вольтера, который сунула ему Арина, прочел краткое стихотворение о Фрероне, которого укусил змей, от чего издох змей, а не Фрерон, улыбнулся от удовольствия и прижал книгу к щеке. Она была в ветхом кожаном переплете; кожа была теплая, как старушечья щека. Он еще улыбнулся и заснул (300).

Pushkin's reading provides him with armour against the emotional blows and personal loneliness. Unlike the other boys, he has the ability to put his home emotionally behind him and to look forward to his future. The above allusion is also partly prophetic: for Pushkin the Lycée will become a microcosm, a utopian, almost Edenic space, inhabited by his spiritual confrères. Moral Supervisor Piletskii, with his belief that pupils should be 'cleansed' of outside influences, ready for covert supervision and moral instruction, will act as an alien intrusion, a snake, whose bite, however, will fail to defeat Pushkin and who will bite back in due course, and bring about Piletskii's expulsion – the exit of the cursed serpent.

Monocentric by its very nature, the novel of education focuses its attention on the protagonist alongside others who act as supporting agents. Such characters are structured according to the principles either of dissimilarity or doubling [*двойничество*].³²⁷ Since part of both the *Bildung* and *Erziehung* involves the acquisition of a pre-existent cultural legacy, an obligatory figure in such a novel is that of the mentor who guides and assists the character on his journey as he inherits and assimilates the classical heritage.³²⁸ This feature may lend the *Erziehungsroman* a didactic air. Characteristically, the role of mentor who leads the student to a predetermined goal is performed by individuals whom the 'apprentice' comes across in the course of his early life. So, we see Pushkin surrounded by a chorus of teachers, all of whom have been shaped by their own personal temperaments and life experiences. Interestingly, their opinions are not absolute, and they often oppose, contradict and counteract one another. But by adopting or

³²⁷ Krasnoshchekova, 'I. A. Goncharov: Bildungsroman na russkoi pochve', 9.

³²⁸ Kontje, Op. cit., 52, 54.

discarding their wisdom, the protagonist achieves maturation through his own crises and suffering – only then can he be considered to have passed through a ‘proper’ apprenticeship.

Tynianov deals fairly factually with the Lycée routines, observations flitting between his own authorial voice and that of Pushkin, sometimes merging into one, until, that is, he arrives at the episode which introduces the opposition between the boys and the Lycée Inspector, Jesuit Piletskii, who believes that moral instruction and instilling Christian piety in his charges is the main objective of good education. One night Pushkin peeps out into the dark corridor to see Piletskii on his knees, praying. Here the perspective passes largely to the intrigued boy.

Он взгляделся и увидел человека в черном, длинную тень; человек стоял на коленях у стены, прижавшись лбом к каменным плитам, и медленно, беззвучно бил поклоны. Он вспомнил, что сегодня вызвался дежурить сам инспектор, и постоял не шевелясь. Мартин Пилецкий, подставив носовой платок, стоял на коленях на каменном полу, прижимая руки к сердцу, изгибаясь и всем своим положением показывая полное уничижение. Одни только огромные ступни в черных туфлях сохраняли человеческий вид: были похожи на ступни мертвеца. В коридоре было холодно; самая молитва иезуита, казалось, была, несмотря на усердие, холодна; лоб стучал о каменный пол, как маятник (295).

In three images he is deprived of his humanity: he is a shadow, a corpse, a pendulum; and he is strongly associated with the stone (i.e. cold and heartless). To Pushkin Piletskii appears as the death-force, the stifling of life and the killing of the imagination; he is the opponent of poetry, humanity and creativity. Characteristically he later sees the incident in comic perspective, recalling one of his uncle’s favourite French books. Suddenly Piletskii is made to seem not so much repulsive as absurd. Apart from its function as a ‘false guide’, Piletskii is also a remarkably effective portrait of a German ecclesiastical fanatic not far removed in spirit from those under whose influence the Tsar himself was later to fall, and as a result lose a window of opportunity for change and progress.³²⁹

The embodiment of the monitorial concept of education, Piletskii attempts to impose his patriarchal authority on the boys. He expects and demands their unquestioning submission, but his authority is undermined by the narrator through the emphasised incongruity between his articulated concerns for the boys’ moral purity and virtue, and the repressed sexuality emanating from this repulsive ‘protector’ of the boys, whom he had decided ‘to tame’ (309). The metaphor of imperial conquest, not uncommon in 18th-century novels of education,³³⁰ emphasises Piletskii’s power of domination, subjugation and manipulation. He negates the child’s personality, seeing it in terms of blank space, human palimpsest, and viewing the process of education as that of ‘social writing’.³³¹ In practice, however, he finds it difficult to leave his mark on the boys, particularly Pushkin. The Inspector’s ‘system of invisible moral presence’ is

³²⁹ He was one of the breed of sanctimonious mystics who, as Magarshack observes, ‘personified the new reactionary trend in Russian internal and external policies after Aleksandr I’s conversion to mysticism’. (Ibid., 31).

³³⁰ On the other tropes habitually deployed in the novel of the kind see Barney’s splendid study. Op. cit., 9, 61, 62, 302.

³³¹ Ibid., 38-9, 43.

employed by the author for a particular purpose: it is invaluable for presenting Piletskii to the reader as the hostile 'eye' of an alien consciousness, bewildered and dismayed by the contradictions in Pushkin's character.

Pushkin finds Piletskii's self-appointment as the boys' 'spiritual father' presumptuous and intrusive, and he rebels against Piletskii's authority, preferring moral freedom to ready conformity. As in the case with his own father and his previous male tutors, Pushkin again fails to reconcile himself with and to submit to a substitute for the patriarchal father. He finds more acceptable the thought expressed in Kunitsyn's speech that 'человек мыслящий сам волен себе выбирать предков' (266), i.e. examples for emulation.

Tynianov's narrative, like that of any novel of education, is structured as a series of episodes in which the main character – and the readers – encounter unfamiliar experiences, form responses to them, and learn their effectiveness, while under the watchful eye of the tutor. As the narrative unfolds, the protagonist undergoes a series of transformations and reformations.³³² One of the most powerful of these, according to Tynianov, was the opposition between the boys and the Inspector in terms of Pushkin's struggle (and that of a few others, including Küchelbecker) with a powerful and oppressive authority which could potentially destroy them: under the pretext that Pushkin was a godless and corrupting influence Piletskii argues for his expulsion from the Lycée. The conflict's resolution and Piletskii's departure from the academic Elysium are portrayed by Tynianov as another seed of social responsibility sown in Pushkin's soul and his first real moral triumph. But although the snake leaves the paradisiacal space of the Lycée, the damage has already been done, and not only by Piletskii. The Principal falls victim to politics and personalities, his superiors' hatred and his colleagues' ambitions. As to the high ideals of the Lycée itself and its brilliant beginning, much of this has also crumbled; the reality no longer matches the dream, and the high purpose of the school has become obscured.

Malinovskii's death soon afterwards shifts the focus to the orphaned grieving schoolboys he has left behind. For many of them he was a benevolent and sympathetic patriarch and his school was their home. With his departure the very ethos of the institution was to change:

Это не был более монастырь, по которому крался иезуит, не была игрушечная 'академия', которую хотел бы видеть министр Разумовский, - это был дом, хозяин которого умер (416).

Tynianov is touching here on the theme of Pushkin's search for alternative parents and home – Arina, the Lycée, the Karamzins, the Hussars, the Raevskys, the Vulfs. The death of Malinovskii represents the fruitless end of that particular pathway in his quest and a significant point in the

³³² Ibid., 109.

paradigm of the 'apprenticeship years', the protagonist's emotional education and the stripping away of illusions.

Pushkin's striving for self-expression and self-assertion through poetry encounters stubborn resistance from Malinovskii's successor, the new principal Anton Engel'gardt, who attempts to channel Pushkin's gift into safer and more 'appropriate' directions. Basing his depiction of Engel'gardt on extant documents in which the latter describes Pushkin as arrogant, heartless and lacking in good nature, Tynianov offers the underlying motivation for Engel'gardt's dislike of Pushkin through tracing the core of the conflict to the fact that Engel'gardt preferred to cultivate in his pupils 'ежедневное, скромное честолюбие', approving of poetry as an educative means, as entertainment, 'приятное меланхолическое занятие'. But he disapproved of it as a passion (490).³³³ For Engel'gardt Pushkin's verse was not pretty or cosy enough, while for Pushkin, nothing mattered so much as poetry, and to be confronted by a man totally incapable of understanding his art was to find himself facing an intellectual enemy. Tynianov uses the clashes between Pushkin and his opponents to reveal the depths of his character, when in the heat of emotional excitement he shows what he really is or what his potentialities may be. In this sense, 'even [the protagonist's] obsessions and perversions reveal the truth'.³³⁴

Debates with an opponent who is presented as psychologically antithetical to the protagonist, constituted an essential part of such a novel. The Lycée Professor of Russian literature, Koshanskii, acts as another such opponent of Pushkin, but for reasons different from those of Engel'gardt's. Koshanskii is a failed poet but a thoroughly derivative and pretentious one.³³⁵ His dislike of Pushkin, as Tynianov implies, was stirred by his embittered envy of his talented pupil. Towards him and a few other boy versifiers Koshanskii adopts a position of authority and privilege, which he exercises through criticism of the efforts of 'юнцов без знаний', a criticism which he refers to as 'спасительная лоза' (320). But even negative influence, Tynianov insists, can be beneficial: Pushkin imbibes what he requires from Koshanskii's theory, rejects the rest of it, and gradually the pupil becomes the equal and critic of the master.

Apart from Kunitsyn there were actually few teachers for whom Pushkin had any admiration or respect, although Tynianov stresses that these men were able enough as teachers; it

³³³ See 'Engel'gardt's private papers' in Gaevskii, V. *Pushkin v Litsee: Ego litseiskie stikhotvoreniia, Sovremennik* (1863), XCVII, 376.

³³⁴ Pascal, *Op. cit.*, 302.

³³⁵ Fascinated by the theme of poetic failure Tynianov planned to write its history in Russian literature under the title 'Rejected by Thebes' [*Отвергнутые Фебам*].

is as teachers of Pushkin that they fell short. And yet Tynianov manages to convince us that they, too, in their own way left their mark on their pupils by providing external stimuli essential to the development of young individuals, including Pushkin.

The exposure to and interaction with a variety of contrasting figures, observing their dramatic destinies, strengths and weaknesses were crucial to the growing boys' understanding of humanity and their spiritual preparation for social life. Such exposure reflects the major concern of the novel of education as 'an arduous journey out of inwardness into social activity, out of subjectivity into objectivity.'³³⁶ Tynianov chooses to articulate it from Pushkin's point of focalisation by stating that at the Lycée he had seen it all: 'friendship, madness, honesty, pride, destitution' (332).

The friendships Pushkin developed in his Lycée years formed a particularly powerful component of Tynianov's portrayal of Pushkin's learning process. Deploying the metaphorical garden plot habitual for this type of the novel, the enchanted grounds of Tsarskoe Selo³³⁷ are described as providing a refuge for such egalitarian male friendship which created a strong sense of community with Pushkin at its core. The spiritual brotherhood that emerged between the Lycéens is portrayed as the nourishing and testing ground for Pushkin's creative ideas.

External influences on the protagonist of the *Bildungsroman* are crucial, which partially explains the bewildering variety of characters in *Pushkin*. This is the only process by which transmission of wisdom, the acquisition of values and unfolding of character can take place.³³⁸ Tynianov manages to include in the sweep of his narrative many of Pushkin's Lycée friends without making it seem forced or mechanical: each has his place, however minor. From each Pushkin learns one thing or another, and similar to his teachers they, as Pascal has noted, 'consciously and unconsciously cancel out much of the others and the protagonist has to find the way between them'.³³⁹ Many of them are characterised by means of brief adjectival tags. What is noteworthy, however, is the astonishing panoply of qualities and the emphasis on the incongruities in most of the summaries, which point to the complexities of the young individuals who surrounded Pushkin. Their subjective assessment by Pushkin himself and the Lycée staff naturally varies and Tynianov appears to be saying that even the most intelligent of observers does not occupy an exclusive or complete corner in truth. There is, in fact, no clear truth, only a mosaic of impressions – which is another of Tynianov's relentless themes. Human history is a

³³⁶ Pascal, *Op. cit.*, 299.

³³⁷ On the inspirational influence of Pushkin's physical environment at the Lycée on his poetics see Loseff, L. and Scherr, B. (eds) *A Sense of Place: Tsarskoe Selo and its Poets* (Columbus, 1993).

³³⁸ Pascal, *Op. cit.*, 8, 25, 55, 56.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

drama in which each character has something to say, or *should* have something to say and Tynianov's gift consists in putting together a mass of 'contributions' from all sorts of sources and making us see and hear a familiar scene in all its wholeness, richness and complexity, while he brings multiple and often contradictory viewpoints together.

The initial disappointment with some of his fellow-students' attitudes, their 'aloofness, indifference and flightiness' at first had taken Pushkin aback. But it is compensated for by the feeling of being immediately drawn to others, such as the awkward Küchelbecker, 'thin, skittish and uneasy', or Pushchin, with whom he would develop a close friendship.³⁴⁰ Pushkin gradually warmed to some of his new friends and won the respect of others, or at least earned the right to be left alone. He integrates himself into the group and engages in the role-playing that takes place in this miniature world: the boys imitate their fathers, living out their idea of what a genuine nobleman's behaviour should be like:

Они завтракали у Леонтия так, как их отцы в пале-рояльском кабачке. Горчаков однажды выпил у него маленькую рюмку ликера и два дня ходил, когда никого из надзирателей вблизи не было, покачиваясь: он воображал себя пьяным. Они важно рылись в кармашках и благосклонно давали Леонтию на чай (301).

Ginzburg has also pointed to the moralistic and possibly Masonic undercurrent in the perception of friendship at the time – as a responsible act of spiritual life and self-perfection in which friendship was viewed as both the condition and the outcome of a productive life and virtue itself.³⁴¹ For Pushkin and his group, friendship becomes the means of learning about self and others. He begins to attract disciples and acquires a few close friends who enjoy his confidence. Having known no parental love for all the years of his childhood and youth, Pushkin has finally found a surrogate family among strangers.

Marking the end of Pushkin's schooldays, Tynianov focuses on the huge emotional element that the Lycée has become in Pushkin's life. October 19th comes to possess particular significance in Pushkin's consciousness, to mark a kind of a second birthday, the birth of the spiritual brotherhood. The years of apprenticeship are over and the graduates are inevitably and forcefully propelled into the adult world. Continuing to develop the lapsarian paradigm, Tynianov indicates that the partaking of the fruit from the tree of knowledge inevitably leads to the Fall, the loss of paradise, the boys' expulsion into the real world of responsibility, toil and suffering. But, for Pushkin, the Lycée proved much more than mere bricks and mortar; as the narrator comments in an obvious reflection of his character's inner thought:

³⁴⁰ On Küchelbecker see Tynianov's 'Predislovie' in Kiukhelbeker, V. *Dnevnik* (Leningrad, 1929); 'Archaists and Pushkin' (Ch-s 15-18, 85-99), 'Pushhkin i Kiukhelbeker' and 'Frantsuzskie otnosheniia Kiukhel'bekera' in *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki* (Moscow, 1968), 233-347; and Kiukhel'beker, V. Koroleva, N. (ed.) *Puteshestvie. Dnevnik. Stat'i* (Leningrad, 1979).

³⁴¹ Ginzburg, *Op. cit.*, 38, 42, 43.

Нет, они не кончили лица. Кончались лекции, кончалось царское село - время, пробуждения на заре, блуждания с неотвязчивым стихом весь день, кончалось это все, а лицей не кончался. Не мог кончаться (552).

Tynianov poses the question:

но откуда же это братство, почему Царское Село - отечество? Потому что они каждый день в один час вставали, ели одно и то же, по одному месту гуляли, у одних профессоров учились? Отсюда эта сумасшедшая близость на всю жизнь? (553)

And he hints at the answer that it is the artists such as Pushkin that unify a society by crystallizing and expressing its quintessence, by articulating its spiritual meaning.³⁴² Stepping out of the novel here in an unprecedented digression, Tynianov assumes the rhetorical stance of the essayist. For a brief moment he sounds like Tolstoy, tutoring the reader. He knows very well that his novel has only a short way to go, because his own time is running out, so perhaps he is taking a stylistic short-cut, either thinking out loud, or suddenly addressing the reader as the Pushkin scholar. For some readers this may sound too pompous or formal – too ‘authorial’. For others it may heighten the significance of his story. But if the question itself (could it be Pushkin who created this Lycée unity?) is not quite answered to our satisfaction, it is because Tynianov’s question here is not a biographer’s question, but that of the novelist appealing both to our intellect and to our imagination.

5. The Artist-as-Hero: *Pushkin as a Künstlerroman.*

The Romantic notion of the artist as the ‘unacknowledged legislator’,³⁴³ the proper leader of mankind owes much, of course, to Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*, the protagonist of one of the earliest exemplars of the *Bildungsroman*. After *Wilhelm Meister* the theme of talent and the realisation of one’s vocation through artistic creativity gained prominence in the genre of the *Bildungsroman*.³⁴⁴ Parents, domestic environment, extended family, home tutors, Lycée teachers, friends, the opposite sex, history and politics all played their part in Pushkin’s maturation. But in the final analysis Tynianov’s most significant objective was to come to grips with Pushkin’s outstanding genius and its formation, a task which compelled him to venture into the field of the poet’s creative psychology. The portrayal of Pushkin as a creative artist lends Tynianov’s *Bildungsroman* the peculiar features of an artist novel or the *Künstlerroman*.

³⁴² The circle of Pushkin’s classmates is depicted as instrumental in initiating Pushkin’s search for his public identity, for his ‘historical character’ [эпохальная личность] which would reveal the essence of the age. (Ginzbrug, op. cit., 48). Pushkin’s personal development seen in the wider picture of his circle of friends provides insights into the spiritual maturation of the Russian intellectual elite of the time.

³⁴³ Beebe, Op. cit., 37 is obviously quoting from Shelley’s ‘A Defence of Poetry’. See also Iu. Mann, Op. cit., 94.

³⁴⁴ Krasnoshchekova, ‘I. A. Goncharov: Bildungsroman na russkoi pochve’, 10, 12.

With rare exceptions the Russian tendency had been to avoid the intrusiveness of psychology, at least as a tool of literary analysis.³⁴⁵ For the Formalists, in particular, as I have pointed out earlier, such an extra-literary approach was not merely unproductive and inconclusive, but also speculative and unscientific. Nonetheless, the fictionalisation of the life of Pushkin who, however we look at him, was in essence a poet, inevitably led Tynianov to explore the inextricable link between biography and creativity.

The archetypal image of the poet is that of a divided being, of a man and an artist in one, of a human being and a free detached spirit, of someone who consumes life and simultaneously transcends it through his creative effort, and of a mortal who slips the bonds of time.³⁴⁶ And since Tynianov's *Pushkin* dealt with the psychology of an artist, by definition a detached and introverted person engaged in introspection, it was bound to emerge in some measure as a psychological novel. If the complexities of a poet were to be investigated and the novelistic emphasis shifted from outside the self to an analysis of the hero's inner world, which the novelistic narrative made possible, the psychological approach thus became inescapable. Tynianov rose to the necessary challenge, but achieved it with the methodological corrections introduced into the psychological method by research carried out by the OPOIAZ and the Formalist group. Their original rejection of the psychological method was an anti-traditionalist rebellion against Potebnia's notion of poetic creativity as 'thinking in images', the concept Tynianov had been eager to overturn in his seminal *Problema stikhotvornogo iazyka* (1924). The Formalists did not reject psychologism altogether but counterbalanced the obsolete traditional theories with more modern ones based on the current achievements in contemporary psychology (Oswald Külpe, Lev Vygotskii) and OPOIAZ's own intimations. Tynianov introduced into the analysis of the mechanism of poetic thinking a number of new notions predicated upon the idea that the essence of the creative mechanism lay not in thinking in images, but in the deformation of the habitual flow of associations.³⁴⁷

Shaping *Pushkin* as a psychological portrait-of-the-artist novel enabled Tynianov to foreground the idea of *literary быт* which was of such significance for later Formalism.³⁴⁸ He

³⁴⁵ Bethea, D. *Realizing Metaphors, Alexander Pushkin and the Life of the Poet* (Wisconsin, 1998), 38. This is not to say that the psychological method was never used before. Its main proponents and practitioners in the 1910's and 20's were Veselovsky, Ovsianiko-Kulikovskiy and Ermakov.

³⁴⁶ Beebe (Op. cit., 6) employs the Jamesian definition of the Sacred Fount tradition (going back to Wordsworth) which in James' words, 'tends to equate art with experience and assumes that the true artist is one who lives not less, but more fully and intensely than others'. Its opposite is the Ivory Tower tradition, which equates art with religion rather than experience and sees artist as a god-like, priestly, aloof being, who in order to create, needs to retreat from the world into his private universe. These traditions embody the socially engaged/alienated artist dichotomy prominent in any artist, including Pushkin. (13-22).

³⁴⁷ Svetlikova, I. *Istoki russkogo formalizma: Traditsiia psikhologizma i formal'naiia shkola* (Moscow, 2005), 62, 65, 72, 81-83, 123.

³⁴⁸ The productivity of this direction in the later post-Formalist Pushkin studies is evident by the numerous splendid works in this vein by M. Gilell'son, *Molodoi Pushkin i Arzamasskoie bratstvo* (Leningrad, 1974) and *Ot arzamasskogo bratstva k*

throws emphasis not so much on history *per se*, but on the narrower scope of the literary milieu, crucial for the formation of the poet; its leading personalities, warring factions and literary scandals of the time. Tynianov transforms the historical novel into a *литературно-бытовой роман* which, although dealing with particular artists, succeed in saying a great deal about the nature of the artist in general, his interaction with society and the creative process as such. In addition, this genre allows him to express his own ideas on the artistic process and literary mores closer to home. Embarking on an artist novel, which is, unquestionably, a widely recognized genre of fiction, Tynianov had the chance to modify the trend dominant among the most influential European writers from Conrad and Henry James to Joyce and Proust, writers who, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, produced what were arguably the most innovative novels of the time.³⁴⁹ Tynianov sensed the potential of this type of fiction, and with impressive receptivity adopted and adapted the mode, adjusting it significantly to his own scholarly interests and turning it into a scholarly philological novel.³⁵⁰ On the one hand, a work of art about art was an exercise in criticism and aesthetic theory as well as a product of the creative imagination;³⁵¹ on the other, the point of view of the artist-novel paradigm opened up like no other wide scope for formal experimentation and for the manipulation of familiar materials in a new way.

Tynianov's Pushkin is a poet who felt that he was marked out in some special way, not necessarily attractively so, and who managed to turn a weakness into a strength. Tynianov stresses that Pushkin's ancestry – or rather his intense awareness of it – responsible both for his negroid features and an ambivalent pride, may well have been a shaping influence on his literary career (to be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four). That Pushkin himself might have made a mental link between his 'random gift' [*дар случайный*] and the facts of his biography is demonstrated by the fact that to the end of his life he kept on his desk the treasured gift of an inkstand in the form of a bronze statuette of a black boy leaning on an anchor before two bales of cotton. This was a sign of the importance Pushkin attached to his exotic heritage, while the marine associations might have reminded him of the sea that washed the scene of his first creatively fruitful exile. The archetypal symbolism of the sea as the place of transfiguration and

pushkinskomu krugu pisatelei (Leningrad, 1977), Lotman, Iu. *Sotvorenie Karamzina* (Moscow, 1987), Vatsuro, V. S. D. P.: *Iz istorii literaturnogo byta pushkinskoi pory* (Moscow, 1989), Al'tshuller, M. *Predtechi slavianofil'stva v russkoi literature* (Ann Arbor, 1984), and most recently Proskurin, O., *Poeziia Pushkina, ili podvizhny palimpsest* (Moscow, 1999) and *Literaturnye skandaly pushkinskoi epokhi* (Moscow, 2000), and in the West by P. Debreczeny (*Social Functions in Literature: Alexander Pushkin and Russian Culture* (California, 1997) and Mills Todd, W. *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions and Narrative* (Harvard, 1986), to name but a few.

³⁴⁹ Beebe, Op. cit., v.

³⁵⁰ On Tynianov's method of *filologicheskii roman* see Novikov, V. *Roman s iazykom* (Moscow, 2007).

³⁵¹ Beebe, *Ibid.*, 299.

rebirth, moreover, might have borne associations with the ‘baptismal’ of his genius, the mystery of which Tynianov makes it his business to uncover.

Tynianov also turns his novel into a study of the duality which Pushkin’s precocious talent produced in the soul of the adolescent boy. He begins by demonstrating the pull of the disparate influences that formed the future poet: on the one hand, the folk-tales and oral poetry of his *mamushkas* and on the other, his father’s recitations and Pushkin’s own unguided but voracious reading of the more recent French classicist and neo-classicist writers, as well as some clandestine explorations of French and Russian pornography.

T. S. Eliot, in his various essays on poetry, alludes to the primitive aspect of poetry, which he contends is a more primitive and visceral response to life than is permitted by or contained in prose. He traces the beginnings of a poem’s composition not to a set of words or ideas, but to instinctive physiological rhythms, a poetic pulse that is followed by words, though they do not arise rationally or logically. ‘Genuine poetry,’ he argues, ‘can communicate before it is understood’,³⁵² and this sub-rational process may apply not only to the reader (who can frequently appreciate without full understanding) but also to the poet himself.

In the Usupov garden scene the child is presented as the Rousseauesque ‘noble savage’ more sensorily alert to the world than the adult, especially the civilized adult, between whom and the world much second-hand experience has intervened. Pushkin’s response to the statues is typically child-like in its fascination and the desire to touch and see how they work, and comprehend their meaning and purpose. At the same time Tynianov is stressing the primitive and irrational qualities of the process and, through his word-choice, pointing to the origins of poetic composition in the infant Pushkin:

Сомнительные, безотчетные, как во сне, слова приходили ему на ум. Сам того не зная, он долго бессмысленно улыбался и прикасался к белым грязным коленям. Они были безобразно холодные (61).

Even earlier, in the ‘hat’ episode, we see how Arina interpreted everything for him, the sights, sounds, shapes and tactile sensations of the soldiers riding by in the frost, and ‘singing to the baby as only nurses and savages do’ (50). The reference to savages is again hardly accidental. Tynianov is reminding us of poetry’s ancient and primitive past, and in this scene it is possible to see Arina not only as interpreter, but also as camera obscura, focusing and transmitting Pushkin’s own poetic sensations, telling the reader what he sees, hears, feels, and ‘says’. When his senses are thus alerted to multiple receptions, the three-year-old receives one of his early lessons in keen observation and synaesthetic perception of the world. The emphasis on sensual images brings to mind the basic artistic conflict between feeling and knowing.

³⁵² Eliot, T. S. quoted in Potter, S. *Our Language* (London, 1964) [1950], 91.

Pushkin's responsiveness is highlighted by Tynianov in the description of the first journey to Zakharovo, which again involves a battery of sensations: visual ('полосатые версты, редкие курные избы и кругом холмы; помещичьи дома белели на пригорках, как кружево'(116)); auditory ('песня колес и ямщика'); olfactory ('новые запахи: дегтя, дыма, ветра'); tactile (поля и рощицы, еще голые и мытые последними дождями'); and kinetic ('столбовая дорога – холмистая, грязная; всех трясло и подбрасывало на ухабах'). The combination of sensory appeals enables the reader to hear, see, sense and feel everything as the boy might have done. This symphony of sensation will re-surface again and again in the mature Pushkin's poetry and the inimitably Russian, realistic country landscape, particularly autumnal, will become his artistic 'discovery'. Tynianov excels at tracing its origins back to experiences that are unarticulated or scarcely articulated at the time, but which will later be expressed and immortalized in Pushkin's verse.

The maids' fortune-telling is similarly described in terms of a combination of sense experiences:

Мороз, босые девичьи ноги, хрустящие по снегу, звук колокольчика, собачий лай... мешались в голове. В окно смотрел московский месяц, плешивый, как дядюшка Сонцев. В печке догорали и томились угли. (139)

The physical realities of the Russian winter make young Pushkin's head spin while raw experience is transmuted into something approaching a poem. The physical experience is invested with another quality – the boy's awareness of people's happiness and sorrow stemming from his observation of the serf maids' tears and laughter as they confronted what they believed to be their destinies. And the entire experience is stamped as uniquely Russian, ending in the image of the falling snow, the blasting wind: 'все снег, да снег, да ветер, да домовый возился в углу' (Ibid.).

By contrast the scenes in the library where Pushkin is discovering poetry on a more formal, educational level are different from the scenes of direct sensory experience. He is now responding to printed or hand-written poems, to verbal signs. Tynianov points out that this new verbal experience is not purely intellectual, but has an emotional quality that is partly to do with the excitement of forbidden pleasures:

Русская поэзия была тайной, ее хранили под спудом, в стихах писали о царях, о любви, то, чего не говорили, не договаривали в журналах. Она была тайной, которую он открыл. Смутные запреты, опасности, неожиданности были в ней' (126).

Tynianov makes clear that poems begin in the creative imagination long before the poet actually picks up a pen and begins to write. The poems that eventually emerge may have their origins in the incidental impressions from infancy and childhood and could possess a certain mnemonic quality – be a form of evidence, a record of a past:

Стихи нравились ему более, чем все другое, в них рифма была как бы доказательством истинности происшествия (101).

By this early age Tynianov's Pushkin has already instinctively understood a vital thing about poetry: that it is the form, the technique that creates its own authority and its own autonomous world, distinct from the external world.

Pushkin's younger brother, Leo, claimed that Pushkin had started composing in 1806, at seven years old, and had an early sense of vocation.³⁵³ The following year he wrote a mock-heroic parody of Voltaire's epic, *Henriade*, entitled *La Toliade*, which has not survived. Without mentioning the poem by its title, Tynianov describes the scene in which the poem is ridiculed by Pushkin's current tutor, Roussleau,³⁵⁴ and burnt by the offended child in the stove in a display of rage incomprehensible to his stunned parents, but quite clear to Tynianov's sympathetic readers. Tynianov describes it as the boy's instinctive response, which is as uncontrollable as that of a wild animal:

...он встал и посмотрел на них, не видя их и как бы ничего не понимая. Лицо его было белесое, тусклое, рот подергивало, глаза налились кровью. Мягким внезапным движением он бросился к Руссло, как бросаются тигрята, плавно, и вдруг - вырвал у него из рук стихи и со стоном бросился вон из комнаты. Все остолбенели (179).

Everything in the description points to the primitive fury that the Frenchman's insult has unleashed, the imagery of the jungle accentuates the ancestral aspect of the passion, in order to depict and predict a Pushkin who in later life will react with similar violence when his pride is hurt or his honour attacked.³⁵⁵ At present he merely threatens his tutor with a log, but the time will come when he will level a pistol at his opponent and, although Tynianov does not actually deal with Pushkin's notorious duels, in the proleptic situation he shows the propensity and articulates it: 'Будь он старше, он вызвал бы его' (180). The scene also demonstrates that poetry with Pushkin was often tied up not only with the intensely private and forbidden but with questions of honour, conviction and commitment.

Pushkin's literary education also came from *soirée* gossip about poetry and poets, as well as from influential literary figures. Tucked silently in a corner, Aleskandr was allowed to listen to the luminaries, whom any salon in Europe would have been honoured to welcome. In this respect Sergei L'vovich was a permissive and progressive parent. Some of them knew him from birth (Karamzin, Dmitriev), others arrived on the scene a little later in his life (Zhukovsky, Batiushkov, Viazemsky). Minor ones such as Vasilii L'vovich, was a frequently seen relative.

³⁵³ Veresaev, V. *Pushkin v zhizni: Sistematicheskii svod podlimnykh svidetel'stv sovremennikov* (Chicago, 1970), 51.

³⁵⁴ Binyon claims it was M. Chédel 'of whom little is known other than that he was sacked for playing cards with the servants'. (Op. cit., 13.).

³⁵⁵ For an illuminating exploration of the psychology of the *bretteur* behaviour in Russia see I. Reyfman's study *Ritualized Violence Russian Style: The Duel in Russian Culture and Literature* (Stanford, 1999). Very valuable are L. Ginzburg's observations on the topic in *Mysl', opisavshaiia krug*, 457-8, 475-6 (In *Chelovek za pis'mennym stolom*).

He acts as Aleksandr's companion to and in Petersburg at the time of his *Lycée* enrolment, and Pushkin's affinity with his genial and relaxed uncle is used by Tynianov as a playfully literal illustration for the Formalists' thesis of literary succession taking place in a 'knight's move', not in a straight line, but in tortuous and unpredictable leaps, from 'uncle to nephew', rather than from father to son, as well as of Tynianov's conviction that we can learn more about an age from its minor writers, 'rough and incomplete' [*шершавые, недоделанные*] than from its major figures.³⁵⁶ Vasilii L'vovich Pushkin was one such 'foot soldier', and the irony is that this inconsequential figure, possessing what Batiushkov called a 'sluggish Muse',³⁵⁷ but representative of his time and culture, should have effected a disproportionately powerful creative impact on the boy, as Tynianov aptly demonstrates.³⁵⁸

Vasilii L'vovich was the author of a few mostly derivative verses in the style of Karamzin and Dmitriev, an average of three or four poems a year, mainly accidental knick-knacks [*стихи 'на случай'*] – madrigals, epigrams, apostrophes, impromptus, all belonging to the 'small form' of a salon trifle so tremendously influential in the pre-Romantic time.³⁵⁹ His first and only collection of poetry saw the light of day only in 1822, eight years before he died. Although from Pushkin's more adult perspective he saw his uncle as the minor poet that he was, Pushkin the boy is shown to be fascinated by his uncle and his work: its wit, inventive playfulness, energy, lightness of touch, dynamism of description, flightiness and parodistic and aphoristic quality. In a poetic self-styling mode and in an obvious appreciation of Vasilii L'vovich's friendly support and his uncle's obvious pride and joy in Aleksandr's success, Pushkin would later foreground his uncle as his 'Parnassian father' in the same way as he 'selected' Arina as his mother.³⁶⁰ The boy Pushkin's instant appreciation of Batiushkov's poems

³⁵⁶ He declared his famous preference for this kind of history to 'the history of generals' [*история генералов*] in *Kak my pishem*, 166.

³⁵⁷ Batiushkov, K. 'Вот стихи! Какая быстрота, какое движение! И это написала вялая муза Василия Львовича' in Batiushkov, K. N. *Nechto o poete i poezii* (Moscow, 1985), 241.

³⁵⁸ Vasilii L'vovich managed to earn his nephew's admiration even in the way he died. In a letter to Pletnev, Pushkin described his uncle's death like this: 'Бедный дядя Василий! Знаешь ли его последние слова? Приезжаю к нему, нахожу его в забытьи, очнувшись, он узнал меня, погоревал, потом, помолчал: как скучны статьи Катенина! И более ни слова. Каково? Вот что значит умереть честным воином на щите, *le cri de guerre à la bouche*.' (Quoted in Mikhailova, *Poema V. L. Pushkina*, 69). Pushkin's own farewell to his library on his deathbed showed the family proximity between the two at least in this respect.

³⁵⁹ See Hammarberg's study, particularly her analysis of the role of salons in shaping new literary forms and the tendency at the time towards miniaturization, reduction or trivialization in literature. Other features of these quasi- or extra-literary speech genres were the trivialisation of the plot, personalization of the narrator, un-moralizing attitude, the pleasure principle aimed at entertaining the readers and keeping their attention, the emphasis on the casual and reportedly effortless way of composition. (93-95).

³⁶⁰ Pushkin's ambivalence as regards his uncle is expressed in his epigrams, where even when paying tribute to him, Pushkin establishes a distance between them appreciating the difference of their respective poetic gifts. (*To the Uncle who Called the Poet Brother*' (1817), (I, 242): 'Я не совсем ещё рассудок потерял/От рифм бахических, шатаясь на Пегасе./Я не забыл себя, хоть рад, хотя не рад./Нет, нет — Вы мне совсем не брат:/Вы дядя мне и на Парнасе.

read to them by A. Turgenev reveals his uncle's slower perception. Clearly Tynianov is showing that the nephew has already become the 'uncle' in terms of literary insight.

Tynianov's approach to Vasilii L'vovich, as to any other minor literary figure of Pushkin's time (Katenin, Küchelbecker, Gnedich, Ozerov, etc.) appears as demonstrably anti-hierarchical and displaying keen interest in those who remained, so to speak, 'in Pushkin's shade'.³⁶¹ Obviously believing that the view of literature as a mechanical sum total of the recognized *chefs-d'oeuvre* is profoundly a-historical, Tynianov insisted on considering their artistic value not in stasis, but in the historical dynamic. A history of any period of Russian literature presented as a series of portraits and tableaux would inevitably, to his mind, be incomplete. As one critic has justly pointed out, experience shows that, 'in spite of its seemingly scholarly approach, such a history of poetic schools or individual poets would unavoidably be subjective in the selection of names and facts and their evaluation.'³⁶² Tynianov treated the Pushkin phenomenon as the product of the long and complex work of different cultures, both Russian and foreign.³⁶³ Moreover, Tynianov believed in the power of others to fan the spark of genius into life. Biographers tend to accord Pushkin's uncle a few brief mentions in passing, while Tynianov, on the contrary, writes Vasilii L'vovich large as a humorously bathetic, Dickensian sort of figure, suggesting the point that sometimes men of genius may owe part of their success to men almost totally devoid of it.

Tynianov favours Vasilii L'vovich's character as ideally suited to his own artistic vision, always eager to grasp and make use of the startling inconsistencies and paradoxes of human nature and behaviour in order to shatter the established portraits of traditional biographies. He adopts Batiushkov's summary of Vasilii L'vovich as 'silly *and* witty, wicked *and* good-natured, fun-loving *and* crabby, in a nutshell, a living contradiction'(my italics).³⁶⁴ But in his portrayal Tynianov focuses in particular on the two aspects, that Vasilii L'vovich considered vital to his own character: his love of poetry and of literary scandal.³⁶⁵

³⁶¹ Commenting on the authors who have been treated by literary historians as nothing more than 'pedestal material', Iu. Mann quotes Viazemsky's commentary on Baratynsky's predicament, who 'in his lifetime and when he was literarily active did not fully enjoy the empathy and respect he deserved. He was 'overshadowed' and in a manner of speaking 'oppressed' by Pushkin... Everywhere, and with us in particular, the general opinion makes the path of success so narrow that no more than three people can walk along it. We clear the road for our idol, carry him on our shoulders and wish to know no one else. Both in literature and in statesmanship we accept extraordinariness as a rule, as an unconditional supreme singularity.' (*Russkaia literatura XIX veka. Epokha romantizma* (Moscow, 2007), 222; Viazemsky, P. *Estetika i literaturnaia kritika* (M. 1984, 271).

³⁶² Sakharov, V. *Romantizm v Rossii: epokha, shkoly, stili* (Moscow, 2004), 113.

³⁶³ The productivity of this approach is amply demonstrated by the vast scholarship emanating from it: Tomashevskii, B. *Pushkin i Frantsiia* (Leningrad, 1960), Murianov, M. *Pushkin i Germaniia* (Moscow, 1999); the most recent ones *Pushkinskaia Afrika* (2006) and *Pushkinskaia Italiia* (2004) by A. Bukalov and *Pushkinskaia Frantsiia* (2007) by L. Vol'pert; A. Dolinin's *Pushkin i Angliia* (Moscow, 2007); Alekseev, M. *Pushkin i mirovaia literatura* (Leningrad, 1987); Nebol'sin, S. *Pushkin i evropeiskaia traditsiia* (Moscow, 1999), etc.

³⁶⁴ Quoted in Mikhailova, 'Parnasskii moi otets', 46

³⁶⁵ In 1816 he wrote his own epitaph: *Здесь Пушкин наш лежит: о нем скажу два слова:/Он пел Буянова и не любил Шишкова.*

An ephemeral creature, a philanderer and poser, Vasilii L'vovich is presented as a paradigmatic epigone artist who professes the cult of oneself, and who, in spite of the outward attributes of a poet is temperamentally incapable of artistic detachment. His love of fashion serves the utilitarian purpose of improving his unimpressive physique and enhancing his appeal to the 'dear ladies'. There is, however, another significant and telling side to the narrator's remark. Under Paul I foppishness could have been regarded as a sign of free-thinking and even of political opposition. As an extreme manifestation of Europeanism, it was also associated with the corruption of morals, the spirit of Revolution and lack of Christian faith, none of which, with the exception of Francophilia, was applicable to Vasilii L'vovich. He is devoted to fashion as an attribute of the more advanced European civilisation, a symbol of progress and education and associates foppishness with the cult of sensitivity, the new style in language and elegance of verbal expression. It was also a means of separating himself from the crude and obsolete archaists who extolled the virtues of the Russian national dress, which for the Karamzinists was an emblem of barbarism, stagnation, isolationism and servility, antagonistic to freedom and education.³⁶⁶ Vasilii L'vovich is a prototypical Russian dandy in another sense too: a worshipper of aestheticism, who re-invents himself after celebrated literary characters (such as Chateaubriand, Byron or Sheridan,) and replaces life with art, turning art into a playful ritual: he is an artist of life who makes an artistic creation of *himself*, prides himself on doing nothing useful and 'aspires to indifference'.³⁶⁷

Tynianov emphasizes the benefits for the budding poet of having as his model someone who displayed a selfless love of poetry, which Vasilii L'vovich served chivalrously, enjoying literary fun and games and becoming completely engrossed in literary polemics, fighting his opponents fearlessly. Such figures are culturally indispensable for their gift of attracting and cementing together a group of like-minded people, and Pushkin could have seen that the literary mask of fop, socialite and slave of fashion concealed a much larger and more nuanced personality 'unique in its own inimitable way': 'an enlightened traveller, a passionate theatre-goer, a keen bibliophile, who by the will of fortune found himself at the crossroads of many historical and literary destinies'.³⁶⁸ Vasilii L'vovich was also a Freemason, one of the founding fathers and a member of the Free Society of Philology and Arts, an amateur actor and declaimer, a translator of La Fontaine, Byron, Ossian, Thompson, Catullus and Tibullus (he spoke five

³⁶⁶ See O. Proskurin's essay 'Chto skryvalos' pod pantalonami (Korrelatsia 'moda-iazyk' v *Evgenii Onegine* i ee kul'turnye konnotatsii' in *Poeziia Pushkina*, 301-342.

³⁶⁷ Beebe, Op. cit., 133. See also Huttunen, T. 'Understanding Explosion: The Case of the Russian Dandy' in *Slavica Helsingiensia* 35, Helsinki (2008), 68-76.

³⁶⁸ For details see N. Mikhailova's '*Parnasskii moi otets*' (Moscow, 1983), updated and reworked in 2005 as *Poema V. L. Pushkina 'Opasnyi sosed': Ocherki o diade i plemiannike, Buianove i Onegine, 'Arzamase' i 'Besede', et cetera*, p. 4.

languages, including a perfectly idiomatic French). More importantly, he had sown the seeds which would germinate in Pushkin's creative mind and in 1823, over a decade after Vasilii L'vovich took his nephew to St Petersburg, give fruit when Pushkin would start *Eugene Onegin* with the famous mention of *moi diadia*. Apparently two of the characters in the novel in verse, Zaretskii and Buianov, as well as the concept and execution of Pushkin's *Gavriliada*, bear relation to Vasilii L'vovich's scabrous verse poem 'The Dangerous Neighbour' written in March 1811 (Tynianov devotes an entire scene to Pushkin's witnessing the process of its writing). In the novel young Pushkin acquainted himself with the poem, which the proud uncle had 'accidentally' left on his desk. What effect it had on the boy we do not know, but what might have impressed him in it very deeply was the particular Hogarthian quality of the depicted scenes built up as picturesque and precisely detailed tableaux, the virtuoso stylistic craftsmanship, which betrayed Vasilii L'vovich's keen eye of the vivid portraitist and satirist.

The easy-going uncle who is married to a classically beautiful woman (so noticeably different in complexion from the negroid Nadezhda Osipovna) and who shines in society, also appeals to the young Pushkin as a figure to emulate, a man who seemed to float free from twisted, tortured domestic circumstances, presenting poetry itself as an art of entertainment and escape.

Vasilii L'vovich's affair with his wife's chambermaid Annushka provided an example for the boy Pushkin of affairs of this kind being a habitual occurrence in fashionable society at the time. In actual fact, Annushka was a merchant's daughter, but even if Tynianov was aware of the fact it would be feasible to assume that he deliberately ascribed her to a lower estate in order to increase the social abyss between Vasilii L'vovich and his lover and, by making her his wife's maid, to re-emphasise its scandalous nature. Tynianov deliberately overturns the possibility of application of the Sentimentalist stereotypes and refuses to present Annushka as a Karamzinian 'poor Liza'-type heroine, callously seduced and abandoned by the nobleman. Instead he shows us, as Pushkin would later do in *The Station Master*, that the supposed 'victim' did not only end her life in disgrace but was actually much loved and well looked after.³⁶⁹

The importance of the episode describing the break-up of Vasilii L'vovich's marriage which brought him scandalous fame lies in the way it formed young Pushkin's own notions of a poet's acceptable behaviour in the *monde* and the nature of celebrity. Pushkin's role model

³⁶⁹ In point of fact, Vasilii L'vovich spent with Annushka the rest of his days (her real name was Agrafena) and was aggrieved by the church's prohibition of his marrying her and giving her and their children his name and fortune (Mikhailova, 'Parnasskii', 50-51).

provides his nephew with the formula of success: a dandy, poet, womaniser, *flâneur* and Epicurean, flouter of authority and talk of the town.

Vasilii L'vovich's sojourn in Paris which made him again the talk of the town and even inspired an envious poem from the pen of Dmitriev ('*Puteshestvie NN v Parizh i London pisannoe za tri dnia do puteshestviia*'), made young Pushkin see how the details of everyday life became transformed into literature, became 'literary facts', and how a living person could become a literary hero. At this point in the novel, Pushkin is not even ten years old and imbibing and assimilating his uncle's risqué stories of his time abroad and the ideas about the necessary disreputability that accompanies the vocation of the poet.

Even more exciting for him, however, is seeing his poet uncle in action in the literary war against literary archaists, which was in full swing and which transformed Vasilii L'vovich from the witty but polite figure he knew from his parents' soirées into a kind of berserk poetic warrior, violent, vibrant and inspired. Tynianov is eager to show Vasilii through his nephew's bewildered eyes. His uncle's rooms became unrecognisable:

на окнах, на полу - везде были брошены книги. Книги врагов дядя не разрезал ножом, а взрезал вилкою, как бы вспарывая им животы, и Александр их тотчас узнавал: это они валялись на полу в небрежении. Дядя Василий Львович и жил и дышал литературной войной. Недаром Шишков со своими варяго-россами его задел: дядя рвался в бой (232).

Vasilii expresses his contempt for the Shishkovites in language that the boy is surprised to hear issuing from the mouth of his cultured uncle:

Сам того не замечая, в защите тонкого вкуса, дядя употреблял весьма крепкие выражения (195).

Naturally Aleksandr was relishing it all – 'the night outside, his uncle's rage... and the literary war in which Vasilii L'vovich was a warrior' (234) and it is hardly surprising that Pushkin became notorious even while he was at school for the risqué language which he used in his more audacious poems. He also learned from his role-model that poetry could be an almost military art, a means of waging war against literary and political opponents. Tynianov deals with the literary war primarily from Pushkin's point of view, and is emphatic about its influence on the young Pushkin. In the process, however, the boy learns to listen carefully and borrow the best from *both* sides.

Tynianov's *Künstlerroman* deliberates as one of its themes the nature of poetic inspiration. Through the description of Vasilii L'vovich in the full flow of poetic inspiration Tynianov offers, in fact, nothing less than a complete caricature of the conventional picture of the inspired poet: unkempt, unrestrained, unaware of his surroundings. The quill screeches, the ink splatters, the sheets of paper are covered, his belly heaves, he roars with laughter. Tynianov's parody may be intended gently to ridicule Vasilii L'vovich, whose poem, *The Dangerous*

Neighbour, is hardly the work of genius he imagines it to be, notwithstanding its social success. His hair, for example, is not exactly ‘floating’ as there is so little of it: ‘His sparse hair stood on end’ (247). Presenting such out-of-character behaviour, the narrator shows Annushka making the sign of the cross over him as a protection against the satanic force with which he is obviously possessed. What prevents us taking the picture of a genius at work too seriously are the ironically incongruous physical details. There is the picture of physical ageing and imperfection (lop-sided belly, scarcely covered by the negligently draped dressing-gown) and the animalistic ‘mooring’ sound that he makes as he composes. In a double ironic vision sacred and profane merge into a single image as Tynianov maintains the image of supernatural enchantment alongside the comedy. The portrayal of Vasiliï’s inspiration is completely literal: The verses ‘had just poured out of him. Open-mouthed, he’d written them down’ (248). A potential poet has the chance to see ‘literature in action’, and Tynianov follows up the process with an account of the results which convinced the boy of the power of the word to propel the writer to the centre stage of society:

Успех был неопиcуемый. Все крапивное семя, писцы в канцеляриях, были заняты тем, что переписывали поэму Василья Львовича. Это была настоящая слава, наконец-то пришедшая. Когда он проезжал, все взгляды обращались к нему. Одно его огорчало: о печати нечего было и думать (248).

Young Pushkin, who ‘accidentally’ read it, is struck by the wit and formal brilliance of the piece. The point made here is that, before Pushkin became a great writer, he had learned to be a perceptive reader, capable of appreciating the formally new and the original, irrespective of its moral content. It would enable him to claim years later that

поэзия выше нравственности – или по крайней мере совсем иное дело. Господи Суси! какое дело поэту до добродетели и порока? разве их одна поэтическая сторона (VIII, 380-1).

From now on he ‘couldn’t conceal his respect for his uncle and gazed at him with admiration’ (248). Much later in the novel, when composing his own ‘infernal poem about a monk’, he has that role-model in his mind:

Пример Василья Львовича его околдовал: он вспоминал дядин хохот, шипенье и свист, истинно бесовские. Да, и он был рожден для тайной славы, подспудного чтения, и его поэмы будут хранить потайные шкапы. Опасная, двусмысленная слава прельщала его (425).

Interestingly, Pushkin does not copy his uncle’s behaviour when he is himself engaged in the creative process; it is distinctive enough, but much more introverted, reflecting the deeper level at which Pushkin composed, even as a schoolboy, and he soon realizes that his poems are much superior to his uncle’s and the hero worship comes to an end, which does not invalidate the important influence it was at the time.

Pushkin himself establishes his first real poetic engagement, his ‘meetings with the Muse’, as belonging to the Lycée. In his poem *To My Sister* (1814), Room 14, which was like any other student’s bedroom in the Lycée, appears as startlingly real, personal and immediate as Van Gogh’s famous painting of his room in Arles:

Стул ветхий, необитый,
И шаткая постель,
Сосуд, водой налитый,
Соломенна свирель. (I, 46)

Such detailed lists of concrete and prosaic objects corresponded to the ethos of the friendly epistle, a minor form, but the whole essence of which, as Tynianov pointed out in one of his scholarly articles, ‘и заключалась в вводе в поэзию прозаических тем и деталей’.³⁷⁰

Although obviously bearing the trademarks of Sentimentalist *poésie fugitive* with its pastoral allusions to rustic simplicity and the shepherd’s life in the bosom of nature, the conditions both of his Lycée dormitory cell and the surrounding academic regime also led Pushkin to re-conceptualise the school as a monastery and himself as a monk, engaged in solitary scholastic pursuits. Tynianov suggests that this was a form of compensation by Pushkin’s creative imagination for the fact that the original plan for his schooling with the Jesuit Abbé Nicole had fallen through. Though it was not to be, in Pushkin’s mind it was a prospect both frightening and attractive. This adopted metaphor pervades many of his early poems as a central image and expresses the motif of the poet’s withdrawal from the joys of life into the ivory tower of seclusion in order to acquire a more objective and focused vision. Paradoxically, he first experienced the liberating light of poetic inspiration in this tiny monastic cubicle, a situation which he later recalled in one of the cancelled opening stanzas of Canto Eight of *Eugene Onegin*.³⁷¹ Love and poetry completely transform his existence and he rethinks inspiration in obviously erotic terms, where it is ascribed to his romantic trysts with the Muse. The poet sees himself in typically romantic fashion as a passive object, an instrument, similar to the Aeolian harp upon which the unfathomable force exerts its wondrous sounds. His personal metamorphosis, Pushkin tells us, seems to have occurred almost without any effort on his part, as if by an independent power and process. He emphasises the spontaneous unforced nature of his gift, for which he is a mere receptacle. The love-affair with the Muse is an important stage in his maturation and signifies the end of ‘childish games’.³⁷²

³⁷⁰ Tynianov, *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki*, 93.

³⁷¹ ‘В те дни - во мгле дубравных сводов/Близ вод текущих в тишине/В углах Лицейских переходов/Являться Муза стала мне/Моя студенческая келья/Доселе чуждая веселья/Вдруг озарилась - Муза в ней/Открыла пир своих затей.’ *Evgenii Onegin* (IV:416).

³⁷² ‘Простите хладные Науки!/Простите игры первых лет!/Я изменился, я поэт/В душе моей едины звуки/Переливаются, живут/В размеры сладкие бегут.’ (Ibid).

By portraying Pushkin's real encounters in the corridors of the Lycée, not with the Muse, but with Countess Volkonskaia's chambermaid, Natasha, and the poems she inspires, Tynianov indicates that at this stage in Pushkin's life erotic love and artistic creation are not in conflict. Frustration of the erotic desire (during one of the trysts the nimble Natasha escaped from the boy's embrace) leads Pushkin by sublimation to artistic productivity. The fulfilment with another Natal'ia, Count Tolstoy's actress, also spurs him creatively to produce albeit more trivial and formulaic pieces. The incongruity of the image of a 'monk' who is supposed to withstand all worldly temptations and the erotically charged metaphoricity seems to indicate the clash between the classicist heritage Pushkin had absorbed and the new romantic mood.

In a novel describing the intense development of a sensitive artist in his youth the Lycée is presented as providing numerous other stimuli and influences. One of the most powerful among these and the one that played an important and lasting part, as Tynianov demonstrates, was the geographical environment surrounding the budding poet. During the organized walks, for example, he peers through the narrow window of the Turkish pavilion, and Pushkin sees in the semi-darkness 'an interior [which] was such as if the host, a pompous Turk, had just left for a moment and would be back soon to smoke his hookah that stood in the corner' (293). The window image underscores the importance of observation for the young poet, and it also acts as the barrier that separates him from what he sees. The task of the artist is to break through that barrier in order to embrace reality and, by transcending it, to create a world of his own. In an artist observation and inspiration are obviously closely related: 'observation leads to an imaginative insight, the ability to go beyond mere observation to interpretation'.³⁷³ The ability to observe sparks Pushkin's imagination and makes him see even mundane objects as extraordinary and fresh.

The phrase also points in two further directions: to the past – a reminiscence of something he has seen (Usupov's garden with its Asiatic splendour) or read about (Classicist odes) – and proleptically to the future. It makes Pushkin recall Derzhavin's conventionally ethnographic Orientalist poems, and at the same time ignites an early spark which would bring forth the themes of Pushkin's southern poems, and in a few years' time would revolutionise Russian literature.

His poetic, bookish imagination, which had also fed on Gothic horror and tales of the supernatural,³⁷⁴ makes him identify a real character with a literary one. His imagination is now

³⁷³ Beebe, *Op. cit.*, 205.

³⁷⁴ Pushkin might have associatively linked his Ivory Tower to the type of the mad scientist from Gothic fiction in that 'both invoke magic and ritual as a means of penetrating to a secret that will result in their mastery over the universe.' (*Ibid.*, 117)

free to feed on the disparate materials that lie about him and to use any and all experience in his understanding and analysis of life.

He is hardly in control of his Muse yet. The withdrawal from the Sacred Fount of the everyday life is indicated again:

надув губы, наморщив брови, с быстрым, бессмысленным взглядом, он украдкой свирепо грыз ногти во всех углах (311).

This behaviour had already manifested itself at home:

Часто Александр бродил по комнатам, ничего не слыша и не замечая, кусая ногти и смотря на всех и на все, на мусье Руссло, на Арину, на родителей, на окружающие предметы отсутствующим, посторонним взглядом. Какие-то звуки, чьи-то ложные, сомнительные стихи мучили его; не отдавая себе отчета, он записывал их, почти ничего не меняя. Это были французские стихи, правильные и бедные; рифмы приходили на ум ранее, чем самые строки. Он повторял их про себя, иногда забывая одно-два слова и заменяя их другими; вечерами, засыпая, он со сладострастием вспоминал ползабытые рифмы. Это были стихи не совсем его и не совсем чужие (176).

Even at this stage, his artistic process is not totally rational. To some extent he is only a semi-aware medium through which flow sounds rather than ideas. He is looking right through the visible, external surfaces of the world to the essence of reality, hence the obliviousness to everything that is going on around him.

Later, while other boys at the Lycée were free to enjoy themselves, Pushkin felt that he was one of the chosen few. The creative torment intensifies to the extent that Tynianov describes it as 'a kind of disease' (314). Armies of words attack the young poet, and he has no choice but to fight his way through the frustration. As Bethea observes,

the birth of a real idea (or a real poem) is not as simple, straightforward, and psychically 'hygienic' as one might think. It is labour, and there are times when one senses a kind of painful dilation at work: it is bigger than you are, it is trying to get out, it hurts, it takes over everything (including the body), and it *will have its way*.³⁷⁵

The process includes dreams and delirium. Pushkin dreams, for example, of Natasha, Volkonskaia's maid, and words come to him in his dream. Tynianov confronts the essential question: 'что ему снилось в ту ночь – Наташа или стихи?' (314), the question that takes us to the heart of the paradoxical overlap where love, desire and creative impulse fed on and inspired each other. Women were a large subject to him but perhaps remained essentially no more than just that: a subject, a topic for composition, to most of whom he denied even the ability to appreciate his writings.³⁷⁶ What mattered for him, above all was the creative process and,

³⁷⁵ Bethea, *Op. cit.*, 27. This idea harks back to Eliot: '[The poet] does not know what he has to say until he has said it; and in the effort to say it he is not concerned with making other people understand anything. He is not concerned, at this stage, with other people at all: only with finding the right words or, anyhow, the least wrong words. He is not concerned whether anybody else will ever listen to them or not, or whether anybody else will ever understand them if he does. He is oppressed by a burden which he must bring to birth in order to obtain relief.' *On Poetry and Poets* (London, 1957), 98.

³⁷⁶ Echoing the testimonies of some of Pushkin's acquaintances, Guber contends: «Он был гениален в любви, быть может, не меньше, чем в поэзии. Его чувственность, его пристрастие к внешней женской красоте всем бросалось в глаза. Он «любил любовь» гораздо раньше, чем в его душе зародилось подлинное чувство к какой-нибудь определенной женщине». Being in love for him had little to do with the real nature of his feelings but was 'литературная гримаса'. (Guber, *Op. cit.*, 26, 37).

although even his schoolboy verses reveal his obvious fluency, spontaneity and speed, the features of natural talent, on many occasions the process of their birth was much more lengthy, painful and complex than he was willing to admit. Tynianov even goes so far as to suggest that the illness, which brought him to the sickbay, was induced by neither chill nor virus, but by the stress of creativity:

Стихи привязались к нему, две первые строки мучили его. Слава Жуковского, громкая и чистая, ... вдруг стала как бы слишком громка, немного смешна. Какое-то беспокойство не давало ему спать по ночам; кровь стучала в виски, преувеличенные, дерзкие, буйные стихи снились ему... Он заболел. Горячка мешалась у него с горячкою поэтической (426).

Pushkin's readiness to compose was stimulated even further by the small, but eager audience which he found in the circle of his classmates, to several of whom he dedicated poems expressing his delight in their friendship and companionship and their mutual love of punch and poetry.³⁷⁷ These poems are not only his tribute to the Sentimentalists' reigning cult of friendship, but are also indicative of Pushkin's intent to locate himself within a circle of equals for which he would serve as a mouthpiece. This position helped him to relieve his anxiety about his readership and addressees' reception of his poetry.

Anxiety about his public identity and relationship with posterity demanded that he should seek and secure the approval of literary authority figures and forge a rapport with a wider readership outside the Lycée walls. As Tynianov shows, a serious outlet for Pushkin's creative impulse was the public domain, as represented by the literary journals. When *To A Poet Friend* appeared in issue 13 of the *European Herald* Pushkin's public career as a poet began, albeit anonymously.

Pushkin's continuing search for an individual style is further affected by the Lycée Professor Koshanskii who criticises Pushkin for the family resemblance of his style and that of his uncle,

подобно тому как дядя его наводнил Парнас непристойными и пустяжными стишками, так заражает все вокруг себя и племянник. А стишки дяди вот уж подлинно легкая поэзия: дунешь, и нет - одуванчик (322).

When Koshanskii lectures the boys on the style of true poetry³⁷⁸ as opposed to the popular trash composed by certain contemporaries – 'mockingly caustic, capricious, too easily lightweight and colloquial' – he is describing the features of Pushkin's Lycée trifles accurately enough, even if he is not according them any poetic merit. Ironically, it was Koshanskii himself, in ways he

³⁷⁷ See for example 'K drugu stikhotvortsu', 'K N. K. Lomonosovu', 'Piruiushchie studenty', 'K Pushchinu (4 Maia)', 'Poslanie k Iudinu', 'K Del'vigu', 'Kniaziu Gorchakovu', 'Moe zaveshchanie druz'iam', 'Vospominanie (K Pushchinu)', 'Druz'iam', 'Kaverinu', 'V al'bom Il'ichevskomu' 'Tovarishcham'.

³⁷⁸ A. Gorchakov's notes of Koshanskii's lectures at the Lycee were published in *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 1937, No.1. His definition of poetry was formulated as 'imitation of the elegant nature, expressed in measured style' [слогом] (138). 'The main task of poetry is to combine the pleasant and the useful, to appeal to the reader and to excite his noble passions'. (141), quoted in Tomashevskii, *Pushkin i Frantsiia*, 446.

could not have foreseen, who not only contributed, but as a matter of fact started what would become Pushkin's poetic revolution. Pushchin recalled how, at the end of one of his lectures, Koshanskii asked the class, on the spot, to write some verses on a rose, and how the results were predictably unimpressive, except for those by Pushkin. This marked the beginning – or at least an early stage – of a Lycée cycle that amounted to some 130 poems by the time Pushkin had finished school.

He has already learned from his uncle's literary experience that not all poetic works can be published in their authors' lifetime. He also comes to realize the mastery of self-censorship and the art of writing 'for the desk drawer' [*в чмола*]. Only about 30 poems were published in that time, Pushkin proving himself to be unusually judicious and selective for such a young and eager writer. Some of the poems were not even discovered until long after the poet's death, as late even as 1935. Pushkin himself remarked in 1830 that he began to write in Russian and publish almost simultaneously from the age of thirteen, though there were 'a great many things I should like to destroy as unworthy even of my talent, whatever that may be. Some of it lies heavy on my conscience like a reproach. At any rate I can hardly be held responsible for the re-publication of the sins of my adolescence'.³⁷⁹

Tynianov describes how, while dangerously risqué pieces such as *In Barkov's Shade* and *The Monk* cannot be published even under a pseudonym and are in fact hidden away by Gorchakov as Pushkin lies ill, Professor Galich (for whom Pushkin had the greatest fondness, so Tynianov suggests, following Pushkin's own poetic admission,³⁸⁰) has already suggested to him the subject for a serious poem which represented the next important stage in his career. Galich was a temporary replacement for Koshanskii and his complete opposite, as calm and undramatic as Koshanskii was pompous and theatrical. Kindly, relaxed and self-pleasing, he is seen by Pushkin as an inspirational and liberating fraternal figure, rather than as a prohibiting and restrictive paternal influence. Galich taught him that 'the main subject of poetry was truth' (443)³⁸¹ and was also responsible for one of Pushkin's earliest poetic triumphs, the elegy

³⁷⁹ Quoted by Magarshack, *Op. cit.*, 50. After his death, juvenilia which he had held back was included in an edition of the Complete Works, drawing fire from critics who saw this as a violation of the poet's wishes. Tynianov's view of the matter appears to be close to Belinsky's who wrote: 'Pushkin's schoolboy verse is important not only because it shows us by comparison with his later work how swiftly his poetic genius grew and matured, but also... because it established the historical link between Pushkin and the poets who preceded him. (Quoted in Troyat, *Op. cit.*, 85).

³⁸⁰ In '*Galichu*' (1815, I, 355) Pushkin called him 'a lazy sage' and 'a loyal companion of the cup' and addressed him as the 'apostle of all sloth' and 'lover of pleasures'. Galich received praise for his truthfulness, his noble incorruptible spirit, philosophical attitude to life and his amiable and encouraging treatment of his young friends. The theme of the poem, that the true poet lives for his art and for pleasure, not for money, self-advancement and fame, reveals the youthful respect of the pupil for the master, whom he admired and revered as the ideal artist and epicure in one.

³⁸¹ Galich composed his own treatise on literary styles, '*Opyt nauki iziashchnogo*' (see *Russkie esteticheskie traktaty pervoi treti XIX veka* (Moscow, 1974), II, 205-274).

‘*Vospominaniia v Tsarskom Sele*’ which marked Pushkin’s poetic rite of passage and brought him the recognition by Derzhavin that he had craved.

The problems of creative process around which the *Künstlerroman* is centred are further reflected upon by Galich who provides some excellent practical advice concerning achieving verisimilitude in verse: multiperspectivity of observation and description – a double, triple, etc. vision of objects and individuals at varying angles:

если хотите обнять весь этот парк, а потом и произвести отбор самого великого, нужно наблюдать его с разных точек зрения, при разных условиях, чтобы один памятник не походил на другой. Лучшее время для этого - темнота. Гуляйте в вечернюю пору, и вы увидите, как все крупные черты прояснятся. Только б вас не стали искать как беглеца. Вечер - время льготного хода для мыслей, утро - время проверки.

Глаза философа сияли, словно он наблюдал любопытный опыт.

- Такова дисциплина поэзии (445).

The famous exam is normally covered by biographers from the Pushkin point of view, naturally enough, with Derzhavin a faint figure in the shadows. Tynianov foregrounds Derzhavin, writing up the entire scene, and the events leading up to it, from the previously neglected viewpoint of the fading poet. It is sharply visualised and combines merciless photographic realism and empathic psychological penetration. Reading Tynianov, it becomes possible to comprehend the essence of that facial expression (somewhere between ecstasy and incredulity) on the features of Repin’s Derzhavin.

Derzhavin becomes the embodiment of the theme of the transience of literary fame and of literary mortality. He is pictured by Tynianov as a shrunken figure, dwarfed by the enormous sofa, which acts as a kind of throne of a once powerful monarch who is now just strong enough to lie on it. The imagery of old age signifies a spent creative force and past glory, with associations redolent with cold melancholic pastel colours, emblems of approaching oblivion:

Зимний утренний блеск солнца, желтый, розовый и синий, был на коврах; в окне пылинки инея; далее везде, на всем дворе был снег (458).

Tynianov is also saying that his kind of poetry is approaching extinction, filling Derzhavin with the fear of creative impotence familiar to any artist, the anxiety about the loss of the gift and inspiration. The blank slate he is still trying to write upon is the symbol of his infertility emphasised even further by Tynianov’s cinematographic lingering on the head from which the night-cap has slipped employing the the images of infancy (or second childhood) and cadaverous old age.

Tynianov stresses Derzhavin’s isolation, ironically accentuated by the picture of the little dog, Taika, curled up fast asleep on his chest. He is at once the relic of the Catherine’s era, its embodiment and survivor. He is also the personification of a literary past whose values are

already antiquated in the eyes of the younger generation, and which farther increases his sense of isolation.

Besides, Derzhavin is childless and Tynianov turns this factual material into a symbolic statement where the continuation of a family line is equated with a search for a literary heir. He is crushed by the thought of complete extinction: personal and poetic, which created in him a desperate vision of oblivion:

Диван развалится, по листкам рассыплется из боковых шкапиков рукописи и копии. Пока живы наследники, хоть что-нибудь да уцелеет, а коли их не станет? Нужно было хоть кому-нибудь передать и стихи, свой гений, не только что копии (480).³⁸²

Derzhavin's reported speech reveals the sentiments which found reflection in his poetry written towards the end of his life. In sharp contrast to his 1794 imitation of Horace's 'Monument',³⁸³ in which he proudly declared that his creative output was 'harder than metals and taller than pyramids', that 'neither storm, nor thunder will destroy it' and that 'the flight of time will not eradicate it', his last recorded poem, written days before his death, is permeated with the sense of futility of art, which like everything else on earth passes into oblivion:

Река времен в своем стремленьи
Уносит все дела людей
И топит в пропасти забвенья
Народы, царства и царей.
А если что и остается
Чрез звуки лиры и трубы,
То вечности жерлом пожрется
И общей не уйдет судьбы.³⁸⁴

The impression is deliberately intensified in the scene where he is taken from his sofa and dressed for the journey like a dummy, a corpse, being prepared his funeral procession. The forthcoming encounter with Pushkin signifies his brief resurrection. But first Tynianov is careful to strip away the glamour from the event while maintaining the delicate balance between pathos and irony. Pushkin was inspired by Derzhavin's glory: his elevation from obscurity to a councillor of the Tsarina and his hard-earned right 'with a smile to tell the tsars the truth' [*истину царям с улыбкой говорить*]. But Derzhavin appears to be simply a bitter old man who does not match the heroic image that lingers in his youthful hero worshippers, who imagine that fame induces happiness. Derzhavin stands looking at the colonnade, where the bronze busts of his idols, Greek and Roman thinkers, stood 'looking all alike' – Tynianov's ironic comment on the shortcomings of fame as an ideal to pursue:

³⁸² This is based on Derzhavin's lines from 'Moi istukan', although, as one can see, Tynianov has changed the tenor of the poem, turning Derzhavin's wish explicit in his verse into an object of fear: 'А ты, любезная супруга/Меж тем возьми сей истукан;/Спрячь для себя, родни и друга/Его в серпный свой диван...' Derzhavin, *Stikhotvoreniia* (Moscow, 1983), 103.

³⁸³ Written 17 years before Derzhavin's death. Op. cit., 123.

³⁸⁴ Derzhavin, Op. cit., 204.

его мучило желание, чтобы и его кумир был рядом. В надежде, что дело дойдет до этого, заказал он ваятелю Рашету себя и Пленуру. Тот изваял, взяв большие деньги. Но на колоннаду он не попал, и нынче его истукан стоял у серпантного дивана Дарьи Алексеевны, бюст же Пленуры вторая супруга уже спрятала в диван. То же предстояло и его истукану, когда он умрет (464).

But his envious regret gives way to an acceptance of fate reflected in the old poet's own sentiments.³⁸⁵ Even if he had made it onto the colonnade, the next generation might have treated his bust in the same way as he suspects they have treated some of his idols – 'kicked it down the stairs and he would have counted the steps with his head' (464), the image illustrating the pathetic indignities of oblivion, of which Derzhavin has always been afraid.

When he enters the Lycée his frailty is obvious but Tynianov alters Pushkin's account – in which Derzhavin became galvanized by his own poems in the programme of events. In Tynianov's version the pathos is sustained – the tragic image of an old poet barely aware that it is his own work that is being read and discussed, that it is his own poems that still have the power to move him.

But it is Pushkin's voice and poem that the author wishes to electrify the old poet into attentiveness:

Потом звонкий голос раздался. [Державин] взгляделся. Голос был звонкий, прерывчатый, гибкий, словно какую-то птицу занесло сюда ветром. Он стал шарить, беспокойно ища лорнет. Не было лорнета. И этот голос вдруг сказал ему, и никому другому:

- Воспоминания в Царском Селе (465).

The scene, with its central image of a torch of inspiration being handed down from one generation to another, appealed so powerfully to the Russian imagination that it has been captured both in art (the famous oil painting by Repin (1844-1930) whose iconography Tynianov closely follows, preserving the spatial arrangement, the poses and gestures, as well as the facial expressions and the entire ambiance of the tableau) and by the Russian cinema (a silent film made in the first decade of the 20th century).³⁸⁶ Pushkin himself admits to being so overcome by the experience of reading before the great man that he fled as soon as the recitation was over. Tynianov focuses on the celebrated moment in the Repin painting:

Старик, костлявый, согнутый в три погибели, все выпрямлялся и теперь, откинув голову, стоял; лицо его было в бессмысленном старом восторге, который из сидящих здесь помнил только старик Салтыков. Слезы текли по его морщинистому грубому лицу. Вдруг он с неожиданною легкостью отодвинул кресла и выбежал, чтоб обнять чтеца (466).

³⁸⁵ Foreseeing old age and frailty, in his poem 'Мой истукан' written long before his death, Derzhavin envisaged himself as 'an ugly, bald monkey', unworthy of being sculpted for posterity. 'Достойны вы! – Но мне ли права/Желать – быть с вами на ряду?.../Увы! Почто ж сему болвану/На свете место занимать?!/Дурную, лысу обезьяну/На смех ли детям представлять,/Чтоб видели меня потомки/Под паутиною в пыли,/Рабы ступали на обломки/Мои, лежащи на земли?!/Нет! Лучше быть от всех забвенным,/Чем брошенным и ввек презренным.' (Op. cit., 100).

³⁸⁶ Goncharov, V. *Zhizn' i smert' Pushkina* (1910).

Tynianov does not give Derzhavin the famous words, *I am not dead* and *He is the one who will replace Derzhavin* (as recalled by V. Gaevskii and F. Glinka respectively).³⁸⁷ He confines himself simply to the retort *Let him be a poet*, in response to Razumovskii's suggestion that Pushkin should try writing prose. It may be that Tynianov did not wish to end on a note of triumph, but to maintain to the very end the image of a saddened old Derzhavin, just as Pushkin described him, on the virtual brink of the grave, and not one who has been rejuvenated by a new hope. The ironic contrast is complete, between the youthful new poet going for the glory of fame, and the disillusioned elder who could have told Pushkin that fame forsakes and forgets the famous. Simultaneously it is an indication of Pushkin's ability to express what Derzhavin had no creative power to express; he brought the 18th century to completion or, as Guber has pointed out: 'В его лице русское столетье впервые обрело дар слова'.³⁸⁸ The vital link between Derzhavin and Pushkin is thus forcefully emphasized.

Tynianov follows Pushkin to the brink of his first public renown as a deputation arriving at the Lycée in the form of V. L. Pushkin, accompanied by Karamzin and Viazemsky, who come to admit Aleksandr to the society of Arzamas. It is a sign of recognition of the boy's talent, and a rite of initiation into the world of serious literature and Pushkin thrills to the excitement of the honour. Vasilii L'vovich revels in his nephew's success, assuring everyone that Pushkin is simply following family tradition, that he 'had grown up as his uncle's disciple and follower' and that 'this boy was the fruit of his upbringing' (478).³⁸⁹

On the question of why Tynianov accords so little space to Pushkin's poems in this third part of the novel, we must continue to remember, of course, the unfinished condition in which Part Three went to press. And it should also be borne in mind that Pushkin's juvenile output is vastly overshadowed by the works of his maturity, that his major poetic career was only just about to begin at the point where the novel ends, and that Tynianov would undoubtedly have envisaged treating the familiar and famous Pushkin poems at some length in succeeding volumes.

We encounter no more than a few epigrams and stray quotations from or allusions to longer poems. *Ruslan and Liudmila* is referred to briefly; a couple of lines from 'Desire' feature in the text; and the 'deep wounds of love' image from '*Pogaslo dnevnoe svetilo*' appears several times towards the end, although the imagery and emotion of this powerful elegy mingle

³⁸⁷ Veresaev, Op. cit., 77.

³⁸⁸ Guber, Op. cit., 19-20.

³⁸⁹ As Viazemsky testified, Vasilii L'vovich was unaware of the reversal that had taken place, 'that in verse, compared to [Aleksandr], it is now he who is the nephew.' (Tsiavlovskii M. and Tarkhova, N. (eds) *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva A. Pushkina* in 4 vols (Moscow, Leningrad, 1991), I, 67- 68).

movingly in the concluding section with the acute desire for freedom and escape as he sails into exile.

Throughout his novel Tynianov deals with the artist-novel's typical concerns with the maturation of the protagonist's art and techniques. He shows us that Pushkin tackled all the verse forms, imitated widely, used various influences and shed them later, as they served their purpose. At first he could not cut through to reality because of all the reading that stood in his path; was unable to see with his own eyes because he was looking through Parny's or Voltaire's, or through those of his contemporaries, who praised him partly because, as Troyat says, 'they saw themselves in him, they heard an amplified echo of their own voices, and what they liked in his ideas was the magnified reflection of their own'.³⁹⁰ Yet, even at an early stage, we can hear in Pushkin's poetry what Wordsworth had referred to as 'a selection of the language really used by men', as opposed to what he termed 'the gaudiness and inane phraseology' of eighteenth century writers.³⁹¹ Pushkin was learning to write about the everyday world in a language that approximated to real speech, so that the poet might emerge not as a neo-classical visionary uttering mystic truths, but as 'a man speaking to men'. Tynianov demonstrates how Pushkin had set about this particular task through instinct and through learning, as he developed his own voice. In describing a mug of beer set down on a table, a palisade overgrown with nettles, a moustache soaked in rum, and an old woman chattering to him about a broken balalaika and how well the cabbages are doing, while all the time knitting away at her skirt, Pushkin is beginning to revolutionize Russian poetry. Troyat is not entirely correct in stating that Pushkin 'could not be a pure Romantic' because of his great love of clarity and restraint of style and his scorn of Zhukovsky's 'messianic mists'.³⁹² Romanticism is admittedly a wide term, containing many conflicting ideas, and is one of those notoriously useless labels that cause trouble the moment they are applied. An interim during which Romanticism and Realism were overlapping in curious ways must have been an even more troublesome and paradoxical stage, but it offers a more reasonable idea of where precisely Pushkin was standing as a poet at the point where Tynianov's novel ends.

6. Lessons in Alienation: The problem of 'superfluous man' in *Pushkin*

There is a sense in which the *Bildungsroman* is an unfulfilled genre: it can never achieve inner closure since it describes the development of a young man towards integration into society, leads

³⁹⁰ Troyat, Op. cit., 87.

³⁹¹ Wordsworth, *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (London, 1968) [1800], 20.

³⁹² Troyat, Op. cit., 89.

him up to the decision to take part in social life, but halts at the threshold. In that, of course, it imitates the very open-endedness and the indeterminateness of life.³⁹³ It is also open-ended because it presents to the reader only a single one of the protagonist's fates, while his entire life still lies ahead of him.³⁹⁴ The rich potentiality of the character's fulfilment is eagerly anticipated, but its full realisation remains in question. The novel of the genre demonstrates that the desired reconciliation between the individual and society can never convincingly take place. Tynianov's Pushkin's experience forcefully reasserts the message.³⁹⁵ At the end of the novel we see Pushkin at a crossroads: a graduate of the Lycée, during his Petersburg 'years of dissipation' he drifts seemingly aimlessly towards a purpose of which he himself is unaware. The given society's ideal of *Bildung* appears incongruous to Pushkin and his interrelation with his milieu is complicated by his failure to conform to the values of society or to show any inclination to do so. As a matter of fact, Pushkin is one of a number of Tynianov's protagonists on whose behalf he stands up for an individual's right to 'non-harmonious' or 'non-integral' [нецельный] character:

Я не могу отказаться от лишних черт, мне не нужно черных и белых, мне нужно объяснить самому себе, почему это случилось так, а не иначе.³⁹⁶

Tynianov is drawn to the characters which were were believed to have failed, well-meaning though they may be even in their errors (such as Küchelbecker),³⁹⁷ or considered themselves to be failing despite success and recognition (Griboedov). At this stage in his life Pushkin, too, is portrayed as 'failing' in more than one respect. From a general point of view, he has missed the opportunity to translate his brilliant education into a 'decent' career and to establish himself either as a landowner or a high-ranking bureaucrat. Moreover, he is distinctly reluctant to pursue that route of self-advancement. Instead, not uncommonly for young people of his class, he throws himself into carousing, gambling, duelling, womanising and flirting with political ideas. Retreat to Bohemia, of course, has always been seen as a mild form of revolt on the part of an artist: 'The potential artist goes to the Latin Quarter not only to develop his art but also to find convivial companions, to join coteries, and to establish an environment congenial to his temperament'.³⁹⁸ The reconciliation with society, which usually takes place at the end of the *Bildungsroman*, has not taken place by the end of Tynianov's novel. His hero's idea of useful activity contradicts his family's expectations and he defies them by seeking refuge in creativity, but his devotion to art, to his imagination, as often happens in the *Bildungsroman*, detaches him

³⁹³ Pascal, Op. cit., 55, 28, 13.

³⁹⁴ Krasnoshchekova, 'I. A. Goncharov', 15.

³⁹⁵ Kontje, Op. cit., 60, 65.

³⁹⁶ *Kak my pishem*, 167.

³⁹⁷ Pascal, Op. cit., 60.

³⁹⁸ Beebe, Op. cit., 78.

even further from the conventional round of life, from vulgar concepts of success and failure, from the thoughtless egoism of the Philistine.³⁹⁹

A series of crises shakes him up profoundly: his unrequited love for Karamzina and the outrageous rumour of his having been flogged at the secret police headquarters bring him to the brink of despair and the thought of suicide; and his reckless epigrams and association with the free-thinking element of society bring about the threat of banishment either to the White Sea Solovki Islands or to Siberia.

Pushkin's intuitive masterstroke, of course, is to re-think his imposed banishment as a matter of personal choice.⁴⁰⁰ Tynianov shows him fearlessly accepting what life has to offer and taking leave of the city he loves so much: after his last fling with the hussars, Pushkin takes off his hat, alone in the street, in the white night, and bows 'to Petersburg, as if to a person' – an important farewell which follows his saying good-bye to the woman he loved:

Здесь Нева катилась ровно, царственно. Как всегда. Как катилась при Петре, как будет катиться при внуках. (574).

The great rolling river represents the stream of history, and here Tynianov shows the poet at this symbolic moment with momentary cinematic sharpness and boldness, as he prepares to embrace his destiny. It is the moment of that very resignation without which the *Bildungsroman* is impossible: 'the unrealistic expectations lead to an unavoidable disillusionment; the reconciliation between individual and reality can only be achieved in the modern world through resignation.'⁴⁰¹ On the other hand, this quietly dramatic scene is indicative of the young man's inner strength and the power of his imagination to inscribe himself not only onto the space of the city, where he has 'tired of the noise of balls and of turning morning into midnight', but also in time. His bow is simultaneously to history, to the past – his ancestors and to the future – to posterity.

The novel ends in the midst of Pushkin's travels along the outskirts of the empire, which fits well with the *Bildungsroman*'s aesthetics being grounded on the Rousseauist idea of travelling as a necessary constituent of personal development. Pushkin embarks on a journey (the road of course being the usual metaphor of choice-making) and travelling becomes an experience conducive to the acquisition of wisdom, and the protagonist is bound to return considerably wiser than he was before his departure. As is well known, Pushkin's travels were instrumental in

³⁹⁹ Pascal, Op. cit., 32.

⁴⁰⁰ This reformulation from a 'poet banished by the powers to be' into a 'willing traveller' is noticeable when comparing 'Iur'evu' (1820), 'Ovidiiu' (1821), 'Moei chernil'nitse' (1821), 'Chaadaevu' (1821), 'Kto videl krai...' (1821), 'V. F. Raevskomu' (1822), 'F. N. Glinke' (1822) with 'V izgnan'e skuchnom, kazhdyi chas' (Iz pis'ma Ia. N. Tolstomu, XIII, 47), 'I strastiu voli i gonen'em' (V. F. Raevskomu, II, 260).

⁴⁰¹ Kontje, Op. cit., 24, Bakhtin, Estetika, 213.

accelerating his spiritual evolution. In the space of a few years he would manage to overcome the infantilism of the noble youngster, by acquiring self-knowledge, tolerance and inner freedom, by discovering nature and by understanding the national mentality as well as those of other peoples.⁴⁰²

Quite suddenly Pushkin is thrust into the next paradoxical phase of his life – exile in his own country:

Подлинно, он узнавал родину во всю ширь и мощь на больших дорогах. Да полно, не так и не там ли нужно ее узнавать? (577).

Pushkin arrived in Ekaterinoslav, in May 1820 but Tynianov deliberately ignores facts and figures at this point, and there is a growing sense of symbolic timelessness in the remaining pages of the novel.

While in a feverish delirium, he is cared for by a pronouncedly fatherly General Raevsky, who arrives in time with his son Nikolai and his two daughters, all of whom will become Pushkin's surrogate family for the next few weeks of his life. But it is not the fever that interests Tynianov so much as an event that Pushkin witnessed on the Dnieper River: the sight of two escaped convicts, swimming desperately for freedom, while pursued by their guards and still shackled together. This incident was actually witnessed on a separate occasion, but Tynianov resorts to a creative compression of events, so that Pushkin's symbolic plunge into the Dnieper, the fever, and the prisoners' bid for freedom all coalesce in a highly significant passage, the theme of which is, of course, craving for freedom and the inability to obtain it. Pushkin still feels imprisoned when he arrives at Ekaterinoslav. The imagery of restriction and constriction intensifies in the description of the tavern: 'low ceilings that made it look like a coffin' and 'his body... fettered by the long journey' (578). The river, archetypal image of the passage of life, in this scene represents freedom of spirit rather than of body, the state he longs for:

Только плавая, только быстро плывя, оно опять становилось его телом, а он – собой.

Witnessing the incident with the prisoners reverberates with Pushkin powerfully on the symbolic level and reactivates his creativity:

это было уже не воображение, не игра. Это не были еще стихи, это был он сам, это были чьи-то тела, чьи-то руки, бьющие воду, чьи-то плывущие в оковах ноги. Так началась его высылка. (578).

The compression and brevity of the writing create a distinctly cinematic juxtaposition of events, in which Pushkin is identified with the convicts, victims of the law, and their bodies and shackles

⁴⁰² Krasnoshchekova, *Roman vospitaniia*, 52-62, 68.

become his, and his theirs. This deliberate confusion provides a convincing transition to the borderline state of delirium:

новая поэма мучила его. Он и бредил ею. Два разбойника, скованные вместе, вместе бежавшие, вместе плывшие за свободой, не покинули его (579).

In his delirium Pushkin's identification with the prisoners deepens and is completed as he, too, flees his pursuers:

Он стал в бреду спасаться от погони, стал задыхаться, требуя в пустыне ледяной воды, ничего не видя, ничего не слыша, не понимая. Наконец рука его поймала кружку, холодную как лед (578).

The narrative poem in question is the unfinished *Brat'ia razboiniki*. Craving for ice-cold water in the desert also refers the reader unequivocally to Pushkin's 'Prorok' with its strong indication of craving for spirituality [духовной жаждою томим]. Plunging into the water and the ensuing delirium as portrayed by Tynianov, is the first stage of the initiation rite that the poet has to undergo in order to be elevated to the status of the prophet who, in contrast with his current state, will gain an acute and practically superhuman sense of vision and hearing.

Pushkin craves freedom – 'the only thing it was possible to swim for in shackles, chained to another human being' (Ibid). The intermittent metaphor that saturates these final pages, refers to that other human being, the poet's fellow-prisoner, whom Tynianov believes to be Pushkin's 'nameless love', Karamzina, and to whom Pushkin is shackled for life by love.⁴⁰³ But, paradoxically, exile proves to be Pushkin's creative liberation. With the Raevskys (the first happy family he has known) he becomes immersed in the Crimea, and in spite of emotional shackles, is at least free to write without the censorship that had banished him from the capital. He submitted himself only to 'the censorship of his heart and of dear friends.' (582) The note of resignation is sounded when the narrator reports Pushkin's conviction that, no matter how unfortunate the circumstances of his life might have been, 'his life was taking its inevitable course' (Ibid).

⁴⁰³ The debate about the identity of Pushkin's nameless love had been long-standing and involved P. Bartenev, A. Nezelenov, M. Gershenzon and P. Shchegolev who suggested that the woman in question was N. Kochubey or Ekaterina, Elena or Sof'ia Raevskys and others. Tynianov's hypothesis was first published in *Literaturnyi sovremennik*, (1939), L. Nos. 5-6, 243-262 [*Pushkin i ego sovremenniki*, 109-232]. Admittedly, it was this bold idea that made S. Eisenstein 'madly excited' about the project of producing a technicolour screen version of the novel. In his letter to Tynianov of 1943, he confessed to having been 'immediately psychologically convinced' by the writer and saw it as the structural core of his future film. This was the missing link that could shed the light on 'the enigma of Pushkin's utterly incomprehensible infatuation with Natalie Goncharova', 'the frenzy of this completely illogical and inexplicable impulse and attraction', which in essence was 'seeking a substitute [*Ersatz*] for an inaccessible beloved', which Tynianov argues was Karamzina. (Eisentein, S. 'Neposlannoe pis'mo Tynianovu', Kaverin, V. (ed.) *Vospominaniia o Tynianove*, 272-277). Even Tynianov's opponents granted that 'it would be hard to consider Tynianov's hypothesis confirmed, even if no one has refuted it with equal conviction. However, one cannot but appreciate the brilliance of his analysis, his thorough familiarity with the material and his ability to reconstruct events' (*Pushkin i ego sovremenniki*, 403). On the history of the argument see Iezuitova, R. et al (eds) *Utaennaiia liubov' Pushkina* (St Petersburg, 1997).

The sense of enforced alienation that Tynianov's character encounters at this juncture in his life is of palpable significance. As Krasnoshchekova has perceptively observed, at a specific point in his inner development the protagonist of the Russian *Bildungsroman* acquired the characteristics of the leading type of the 19th-century Russian literature – the so-called 'superfluous man', as was only natural since the Russian novel of the time was preoccupied with testing an individual's value and social suitability (the theme of the 'superfluous man' can be seen as a distant branch of the novel of education, one that goes on to test the results of education).⁴⁰⁴

The *Bildungsroman*'s sharp focus on interiority, and the superfluous man's inwardness [замкнутость на себя] and reflection on moral values overlapped and converged. Although Gertsen maintained that the social type was ubiquitous at the time⁴⁰⁵ and could not possibly be identified with the real author, yet it undoubtedly served as Pushkin's personal poetic model: this type of identity is perhaps the most complex construct of all created by Pushkin. Lesskis has argued that with Pushkin 'the dominant of the image was light, warm and creative. But we also know that at some moments Pushkin's creative hedonism turned into the realisation of a malaise [недуз], scepticism, loss of faith, disappointment in love and friendship, utter despair, profound remorse, even premonitions of insanity'.⁴⁰⁶ The sense of superfluity found its reflection in Pushkin's work in a gallery of heroes: the Captive, Aleko, Faust, Onegin and even the lyrical hero of most of his early poems.⁴⁰⁷ Pushkin went on record to separate himself adamantly from his protagonists ('мой Пленник – не я'); he wrote:

Характер Пленника неудачен; доказывает это, что я не гоюсь в герои романтического стихотворения.⁴⁰⁸

It would be naïve to think that Pushkin was the romantic hero of *The Captive of the Caucasus*, that Chatskii was Griboedov or Izhorskii was Küchelbecker. However, what is true without doubt is that they managed to discern and portray the characteristic features of the romantic youth of their time. Iu. Mann goes so far as to say that there was a certain amount of 'authorial

⁴⁰⁴ Krasnoshchekova, *Roman vospitaniia*, 158; Bakhtin, *Estetika*, 195.

⁴⁰⁵ Gertsen, A. I. *Sobranie sochinenii v 30-ti tomakh* (Moscow, 1955), VII, 204. In an essay 'O razvitii revoliutsionnykh liudei Rossii' he contended: 'Образ Онегина настолько национален, что встречается во всех романах и поэмах, которые получают какое-либо признание в России, и не потому, что хотели копировать его, а потому, что его постоянно находишь возле себя или в себе самом'.

⁴⁰⁶ Lesskis, Op. cit., 127.

⁴⁰⁷ The problem of superfluity in Pushkin's contemporary hero has been investigated in G. Lesskis's *Religiia i npravstvennost' v tvorchestve pozdnego Pushkina* (Moscow, 1992) in particular Ch. XII, 122-131. He writes: 'Romantic god-warring was absolutely alien to Pushkin, but the motifs that entered his creative work at the time were those of disappointment with life, fleeing friends and lovers, the fear of a creative burning-out, and consequently the theme of 'the hero of our time', who had lost his faith in the old system of values and fled civilisation, away from the 'captivity of the stifling cities', seeking either freedom or oblivion.' (35.)

⁴⁰⁸ To V. P. Gorchakov, October-November (1822) (X, 41-42).

biographical parallelism' between the creators of romantic verse poems and their protagonists.⁴⁰⁹

In order to create their superfluous characters, their authors would have to base them at least to some extent on their own experience of non-conformity. The validity and truthfulness of the type was never in question and, as Belinsky has pointed out:

Но не Пушкин родил или выдумал их: он только первый указал на них, потому что они уже начали показываться еще до него, а при нем их было уже много. Они – не случайное, но необходимое явление. Почва этих жалких пустоцветов не поэзия Пушкина или чья бы то ни было, но общество.⁴¹⁰

They can be considered, therefore, as a genuine reflection of a significant part of the young generation at the time and Pushkin himself.

Tynianov has already taken his reader through those episodes from Pushkin's loveless childhood that had bred his insecurities; the European culture/Russian nature schism resulting from his upbringing; the satiation with a string of unsatisfying love-affairs, and a conflict with the authorities. Now he demonstrates the end-result of all these in a portrayal of Pushkin as a prototypical superfluous man who, being an artist, possesses the capability of 'double vision': to see himself objectively and to feel himself into the thoughts and emotions of others.

Tynianov opens a window into the young Pushkin's mind filled with turmoil and confusion as he is composing his famous elegy on board the *Mermaid*. The themes of forbidden love, of freedom and imprisonment, banishment and return, past and future, childhood and maturity, love and death, are thrown into sharp relief in a complex web of allusion. Paradoxically, Tynianov's Pushkin sees exile as an escape, banishment as freedom. He pledges to keep his love secret, yet also shouts his secret out to the sea. The final image of Pushkin that we see at the conclusion of the novel is that of the mythical universal exile, an outcast with similarities to Byron, Odysseus, or to Cain, which makes the poet a 'marked', cursed figure, an eternal wanderer and eventually a prophet summoned to endure suffering in order 'to burn the hearts of people with the word' [*глаголом жечь сердца людей*]; an ability he can achieve only by overcoming his present alienation and superfluity.

⁴⁰⁹ Mann, Iu. *Russkaia literatura XIX veka: epokha romantizma* (Moscow, 2007), 282. Sakharov too points to the 'authorial autobiographism in the spirit of Byron' in Pushkin's *Gypsies*. (*Romantizm v Rossii: epokha, shkoly, stili. Ocherki* (Moscow, 2004, 214-5).

⁴¹⁰ Belinsky, V. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1955), VII, 375.

Chapter Three. History in *Pushkin*: Tynianov's Concept of History and his Historiographical Practices.

At the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers Konstantin Fedin was compelled to admit that 'in an unequal fight with the novella and in view of the decline of the psychological novel and science fiction, the dictatorship of the historical novel is about to take hold of us'.⁴¹¹ By the mid-1930's the historical novel had emerged as the leading genre of Soviet literature. As an acknowledged *maître* of the Soviet historical novel, Tynianov was expected to adhere to the ruling regime's notion of historicity and concepts of history. As it turned out, by this point in time these concepts had undergone remarkable changes, to a large extent in response to the new directions in Party policy on teaching history.

As a general aesthetic principle in realist literature, historicism shapes the writer's notion of national consciousness and character, as well as the writer's concept of the individual and the ways of interaction between this individual and society and nature. As an aesthetic technique historicism governs the artistic realisation of these concepts in literary works.

Marxist historicism was a creative principle that determined the new artistic consciousness of Socialist Realism. As literature was increasingly seen as a means of social control and its function as that of influencing the attitudes and behaviour of people to desirable effect, Socialist Realist historicism, instead of being an artistic category, came to be reduced to a primarily ideological one with particular emphasis on the educational value of works recounting the past. An artist was expected to orientate himself civically and consider events of the past in their historical (that is, Marxist) perspective. Marxists conceptualised history as the creative product of the working masses engaged in the struggle with their oppressors. The foremost responsibility of a writer was to provide a 'truthful' account [*правдивое изображение*] of a historical event, as well as a realistic representation of history and its prominent figures.⁴¹²

The problem of the hero in essence turned into the problem of the *positive* hero, a harmonious human being triumphing over chaos. However, the Socialist Realist demand to depict a typical character as forming part of the heroic Russian people, 'an exemplary man of labour' [*человек труда*], went against the historical novel's natural inclination to portray prominent individuals. The positive ideal was presented as a stark contrast to the 'imperfect' characters from past epochs:

⁴¹¹ *Pervyi vsesoiuznyi s"ezd sovetskikh pisatelei, 1934, Stenograficheskiĭ otchet* (Moscow, 1990), 225.

⁴¹² Borev, Iu. *Estetika. Teoriia literatury*, p. 175.

У нового героя чувство и разум, долг и страсть, общее и частное существуют в гармонии. Именно в этом он отличается от человека прошлого, у которого в основе характера лежит 'разлад', отсутствие гармонии, который является либо 'носителем' конфликта, либо его источником.⁴¹³

This explained the circumspection with which the man of the past was treated by contemporaries: he threatened to overturn the harmony supposedly achieved in the present with such difficulty, to introduce into it a chaotic element.

The task set by the Party was the political education of the wider reading masses, in which the historical novel was regarded as an obvious tool in the intensifying class struggle. The notion of 'tragic optimism' gained currency, something which postulated the intrinsic and deep-rooted optimism of the genre of historical fiction. Only then would the historical novel perform its task well, when the tragic conflicts of the past were resolved, not in a pessimistic, but in a life-affirming key, revealing clear prospects ahead for the future.⁴¹⁴

Historical novelists, particularly those who worked in the biographical genre, found themselves in a precarious situation, especially when they had to deal artistically with personalities whose treatment might be ideologically sensitive. Every biographical historical novel became a socially orientated novel; characters were to be clearly marked as good or evil (according to their class origin), and presented in such a way that the readers could identify with them and use them as an example for emulation. The structure of the plot, characterisation, and language had to be accessible to the target readership. Needless to say, such requirements bred uniform and monotonous descriptive techniques, clichéd imagery and trite language – to facilitate perception of the ideas the novel contained. Such novels needed to have an authoritative narrator, and the reader would be left with no choice regarding the interpretation of characters and events. The author would be further expected to disambiguate his characters and their motivations through continual commentary on action and through dialogue. Not surprisingly, such a novelistic paradigm resulted in an simplified and strongly ideologised picture of the world and schematic characterisation of its protagonists.⁴¹⁵

Tynianov's techniques, as we shall see, went against the grain of such expectations. The historiosophical concept which informed his portrayals of historical personalities appeared strikingly individual and often at odds with the accepted views, even when he was treating officially promoted topics such as the lives of 'progressive' writers or the Decembrist

⁴¹³ Ibid., 677.

⁴¹⁴ Nikolaev, Op. cit., 677.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 645-675.

movement.⁴¹⁶ Tynianov opposes this civic-minded and invariably strident materialist mandate, defending his art against, what Emerson calls, ‘ragged, ill-formed obligations to ‘real life’’.⁴¹⁷

He was strongly influenced by L. Ranke’s thinking about history and fiction and his critical historiography, with its commitment to truth and distinctive lack of induction.⁴¹⁸ Historicism, understood as a definite conception of historical development and a certain philosophy of history, in Rankean terms meant that ‘every society must be seen as a complex of values, but that these values must be understood in their own terms rather than by reference to standards external to the society.’⁴¹⁹ Censure of the people and events of the past by the yardstick of present-day dogma was plainly unacceptable.

Clearly the biographical novel of a great man not grounded in the notion of historicism would remain a mere montage of documentary materials. But for Tynianov the historical novelist was first and foremost a literary craftsman, not a politically engaged exposeur of social ills, assigning blame to whole classes and individuals. By artistically resisting the artificially super-imposed methodology of Socialist realist historicism, Tynianov demonstrated its literary ineffectiveness and impoverished possibilities in terms of stylistic experimentation. The compulsory requirement of literature to ‘reflect’ life disregarded the importance of the artist’s uniquely expressed original vision and was opposed to the Formalist tenet of the relationship between art and everyday life:

Для того чтобы литература зацепляла быт, она не должна его отражать, для этого литература — слишком ненадежное и кривое зеркало, она должна сталкиваться в чем-то с бытом.⁴²⁰

Defying vulgarised concepts of history as incessant class struggle and of preceding revolutionary movements as mere ‘preparation’ for the Bolshevik revolution, Tynianov appeared to advocate the idea of the seamless and continuity of Russian culture whose magisterial matter had traditionally been a preoccupation with the philosophy of history:

Russian thought is thoroughly historiosophical, it is always oriented towards the questions of the meaning of history, the end of history, etc. This exceptional, if you will, extraordinary concern with the philosophy of history, is undoubtedly not accidental and is certainly rooted in the moral problematics of the Russian past.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁶ See L. Trigos’ Ph.D. thesis ‘Ardent Dreamers in the Land of Eternal Frost: Centennial Representations of the Decembrists, 1825-1925’ (Columbia University, 1998), summarised in her article ‘An Exploration of the Dynamics of Mythmaking: Tynianov’s *Kiukhliia*’, *SEIJ*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (2002), 283-300. She argues that Tynianov portrayed the Decembrists as knights of honour, horrified by the thought of violence and unnecessary bloodshed and mistrustful of the participation of the people in the political struggle.

⁴¹⁷ Emerson, C. *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian literature*, p. 15.

⁴¹⁸ Ranke was determined ‘to hold strictly to the facts of history, to preach no sermon, to point no moral, to adorn no tale, but to tell the simple historical truth’. (H. B. Adams, ‘Leopold von Ranke’, *American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, XXXII, Part 2).

⁴¹⁹ Ranke, L. *The Theory and Practice of History*, (eds and trs.) Iggers, W. A. and Moltke, K. (New York, 1983), xx.

⁴²⁰ Tynianov, Iu. *Poetika. Istoriiia literatury. Kino*, 158.

⁴²¹ Artem’eva, S. T. and Mekeshin, M. I. ‘Istoriosofskie arkhetypy v russkoi kul’ture’, *Filosofskii vek*, no. 5 (1998), 11. Zen’kovskii, V. V. *Istoriiia russkoi filosofii* (Leningrad, 1991), I, 16-17.

The historiosophical approach envisages reflection on the nature of historical understanding and the methods of the historian. Historiosophical thinking is critical – as opposed to the mere collection and repetition of stories about the past – and shaping them into a coherent whole. It is the detection of a grand system, ‘the unfolding of the evolution of human nature as witnessed in successive stages’⁴²² and the view of history as having a plot which can be traced through the history of ideas and moral development of man. In order to grasp this evolution one has to possess the ability to re-live past thought and past lives.

Approached in this way, the biographies of remarkable people in the critical thinking prevalent in the Formalist circle became histories of their times, in which the dates of their personal stories coincided with significant milestones in history. In the subject of the biographer’s enquiry – private life *in history* – the historical was understood, not as a thing of the past, but as a dynamic system and evolutionary process (Vinokur). Personality in its development [*Sichbilden*] was therefore regarded ‘not as constant and defined, but as necessarily dynamic’ and an inner form of such a development is ‘emotional experience’ [*переживание*], the spiritual experience in personal life that formed the basis of creativity. Consequently a historical fact acquired biographical meaning only when it became the subject of such a *perezhivanie*. A successful biographer would need to adopt a historical and philosophical point of view in order to study a historical event as a sign, whose meaning for the subject’s life biography was striving to uncover. His aim, therefore, was to see the meaning of life in each event of his subject’s life, to discern his fate, defined as ‘the unity of life which is grasped and mastered according to its immanent laws.’⁴²³

Vinokur’s method of understanding the past followed the early thinking of Dilthey on the understanding of human expression in history, biography and culture. His view of how knowledge and understanding of the individual is possible and the search for meaning in history influenced the theories of historiography and auto/biography in the late 19th and early 20th century. Biography, according to Dilthey, is no mere superficial account of a man’s life, but ‘an interpretation of him in the light of his own moments of clearest insight, when he saw himself, and we too can see him, *sub specie aeternitatis*’.⁴²⁴

Both a work of art and a contribution to knowledge, biography was to investigate the depth of human nature and the historical interactions from which that influence sprang up: ‘The individual is only the point of intersection for cultural systems, organisations, in which his

⁴²² Blackburn, Op. cit., 174-175.

⁴²³ Vinokur, G. *Biografiia i kul'tura* (Moscow, 1997) [Moscow, 1927] 29-30, 39, 44, 64-66.

⁴²⁴ Hodges, H. *The Philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey* (London, 1952), 172, 281-282.

existence is embedded: how could *they* be understood in terms of *him?*'(my italics)⁴²⁵ Dilthey, preoccupied with the question of meaning in history, sees society through the historically prominent individual who derives his meaning from his place in the historical and social process in which he is caught up.⁴²⁶ The author should find a single thread which holds together the various facets of a prominent man's personality and activity, this fundamental element or 'inner unity', or else the biography would disintegrate into fragments. The task of the biographer was to make visible the meaning of the life which he records and to present it from two standpoints: from within – through the portrayal of the individual's inner consciousness (a task similar to that of autobiography), and from without – through his social and historical inter-relations (the historian's task).⁴²⁷

Tynianov attempted to fulfil this task in a particular genre, the *Bildungsroman*, ideally suited to uncover the intrinsic ties between the historical and the private. Never existing in its 'pure' form such a novel thrusts to the fore the image of a shaping hero.

Он становится вместе с миром, отражает в себе историческое становление самого мира. Он уже не внутри эпохи, а на рубеже двух эпох, в точке перехода от одной к другой. Этот переход совершается в нем и через него. Он принужден становиться новым, небывалым еще типом человека. Меняются как раз устои мира, и человеку приходится меняться вместе с ними.⁴²⁸

Biography and historical time are merged and the world is not just the static background for an unchanging hero: the character's inwardness, his *Bildung* ('a man in the making') is enacted within 'the finite realm of social practicality'.

The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to explore the ways in which Tynianov employs history as an organizing framework for Pushkin's development, being aware of the fact that 'it is at the intersection of story (history) and mind (idea) that the *Bildungsroman* will generate its characteristic import, one which evolves out of an artistically controlled, and frequently unresolved tension.'⁴²⁹

By Tynianov's own admission his fiction arose 'from a dissatisfaction with the history of literature, which merely scratched the surface, remained commonplace and trivialised and did not clearly represent people, movements, the development of Russian literature'.⁴³⁰ This discontent inspired in Tynianov the aim to probe deeper into and to understand more about those same people, places, movements and events; as he said himself, 'the necessity to become more closely and more deeply acquainted with them – that is what fiction was for me.'⁴³¹ In that closer

⁴²⁵ Dilthey, W. *Gesammelte Schriften*, VI, 251.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, VII, 246-251.

⁴²⁷ Hodges, *Op. cit.*, 283.

⁴²⁸ Bakhtin, *Estetika*, 214.

⁴²⁹ Swales, *Op. cit.*, 15, 17.

⁴³⁰ Pomerantseva, *Op. cit.*, 20.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*

relationship, he believed, his fiction would attain that ‘greater, more intimate understanding of people and events’ that distinguishes literature from history, and indeed generate ‘a greater excitement’ and a deeper concern about them.

He bases his novels firmly on historical facts: the first quarter of the 19th century was particularly rich in historical events of epic, not to say cataclysmic proportions whereof Pushkin’s generation became witnesses and participants.⁴³² It is not surprising, therefore, that the theme of the individual human being fatefully drawn into and ruthlessly swept away by history should become one of Pushkin’s most incessant themes. And yet, since he felt deeply rooted in the history of his country, he cherished these experiences, and stated with dignity:

Я далек от восхищения всем, что я вижу вокруг себя; как писатель, я огорчен, как человек с предрассудками, я оскорблен; но клянусь вам честью, что ни за что на свете я не хотел бы переменить отечество, ни иметь другой истории, чем история наших предков, как ее послал нам Бог (X, 689).

Tynianov goes to the root of the keen historical inclination in Pushkin’s creative thinking, pointed out by Kireevsky, for example, who wrote: ‘history in our time is the centre of all knowledge, the scholarship of the scholarships, the single condition of any development; historical thinking embraces everything... Age could not but have its influence on Pushkin, too.’ I shall therefore also explore Tynianov’s artistic analysis of the historical factors, prominent personalities, historical events and contemporary historical thinking which shaped Pushkin’s self-awareness and historiosophical views, enhanced his understanding of history and the ability to re-live and recreate it in his works from a distinctly ethical angle.⁴³³

1. Emperor Paul’s ‘*zheleznyi vek*’.

‘Царствование Павла доказывает одно,’ wrote Pushkin in August 1822, ‘что и в просвещенные времена могут родиться Калигулы’ (VIII, 93). Besides Mme de Staël’s famous description of the Russian state as *un despotisme mitigé par la strangulation* he goes on to mention a number of facts which, as Tomashevskii has pointed out, he must have learned in Kishinev from his political conversations with future Decembrists.

⁴³² Looking back at his life the poet wrote in ‘*Byla pora: nash prazdnik molodoi...*’ (1836): ‘Чему, чему свидетели мы были!!/Игралища таинственной судьбы./Метались смущенные народы;/И высились и падали цари;/И кровь людей то славы, то свободы/То гордости багрила алтари.’ (II, 392).

⁴³³ Pushkin expounded his own views of history most fully in his articles ‘O Mil’tone i shatobrianovom perevode ‘Poterianogo raia’’, ‘Iurii Miloslavskii ili russkie v 1612 godu’, ‘Dzhon Tenner’ and ‘O romantikakh i Val’tere Skotte’. For a thorough analysis of the realisation of Pushkin’s views of history in his artistic works see Tomashevskii, B. V. ‘Istorizm Pushkina’ in *Pushkin* (Moscow, Leningrad, 1961), Book 2, 154-199; Toibin, I. M. *Pushkin. Tvorchestvo 1830-kh godov i voprosy istorizma* (Voronezh, 1976); *Pushkin i filosofsko-istoricheskaia mysl’ v Rossii na rubeze 1820 and 1830 godov* (Voronezh, 1980); Eidel’man, N. *Pushkin. Istorii i sovremennost’ v khudozhestvennom soznanii poeta* (Moscow, 1984) and a more recent study by S. Evdokimova, *Pushkin’s Historical Imagination* (Yale, 1999) and S. Kibal’nik, *Khudozhestvennaia filosofii Pushkina*, Ch-s. 4-5 (St Petersburg, 1998).

Tynianov traces the origins of Pushkin's unflattering opinion of Tsar Paul to an episode which took place long before Pushkin's southern exile, to the poet's only meeting with the tsar, the family's legend of their experiences during the latter's reign and some literary sources. He describes Paul's reign from the point of view of the Pushkins and their circle for whom those were 'difficult times', a 'Lenten fast'. Like a wrathful god, Paul was only alluded to euphemistically, and his reforms – with a meteorological metaphor (Derzhavin's, in fact):⁴³⁴ 'Время стояло 'хладное', и 'дул борей' или 'норд' для хороших фамилий' (17). Like the majority of the gentry who were hostile to Paul, Sergei L'vovich was afraid of the regime 'down to the core of his soul', but the rage of the Moscow *fronde* who, like Sergei L'vovich, imagined themselves in conflict with the powers that be, was quite impotent. Tynianov makes it clear that the euphemisms employed by them to avoid direct mention of the Emperor were due to widespread fear and misunderstanding of, as well as disrespect for, the Emperor's pedantry and volatility. From various perspectives Tynianov depicts what disappointed and offended the tsar's subjects most. In Karamzin's opinion:

император Павел не оправдал ожиданий, возлагавшихся на него всеми друзьями добра. Он был своеволен, гневлив и окружил себя не философами, но гатчинскими капралами, нимало не разумевшими изящного (28).

Karamzin was also saddened, disturbed and annoyed by the 'barbarous' and petty censorship introduced by the Emperor; Vasilii L'vovich, on a more mundane level, lamented the forced changes in fashion (the prohibition of 'Jacobin' French round hats and breeches); while Sergei L'vovich presented the reasons for his resignation from the army 'which would actually be only temporary' (17), as a 'noble-minded' protest against Paul's policies of the state's encroachment on the rights of the gentry. Unsurprisingly, when the news of the Emperor's assassination reached Moscow it caused 'much excitement', was viewed as a sign of liberation and celebrated by an endless succession of balls.

By far the most effective and vivid scene which encapsulates the essence of Paul's brief but harsh reign, is the famous 'hat' episode of 1800 in Petersburg, when the Tsar, who happened to be passing by with his military entourage, reprimanded Pushkin's nurse Arina for failing to take off the child's cap in the presence of royalty, and rectified the insult to his person by removing the cap himself.⁴³⁵ That at least was the family story. Tynianov opts for a different version, preferring to imply that the incident had been deliberately dramatized over the course of

⁴³⁴ 'Умолк рев норда сиповатый./ Закрылся грозный, страшный взгляд', quoted in M. Murav'ev *Pushkin i Germaniia* (Moscow, 1999).

⁴³⁵ Pushkin wrote in later days: 'Видел я трех царей: первый велел снять с меня картуз и пожурил за меня мою няньку, второй меня не жаловал, третий хоть и упек меня в камер-пажи под старость лет, но променять его на четвертого не желаю, от добра добра не ищут'. (In a letter to his wife, 20 April 1834 (X,160)).

time by Sergei L'vovich, to exaggerate the imagined danger to the family and bring them closer to royalty, even in such an absurdly ridiculous and unflattering context. The panic-stricken Sergei L'vovich blew the story out of all proportion. That very evening, recounting it to one of his friends, he has the mounted Emperor not only threatening Arina, but deliberately ыфцїng at the reins, so that the horse's hooves tread the air right above the infant's head.

Curiously, the incident, though not traumatic for the child, could be viewed in the Vinokurian sense as a *perezhivanie* which might have inspired the adult poet to write about the menacing and ruthless horse-rider (in actual fact, Tsar Paul's great-grandfather) who was capable of instilling fear in his subjects and if not actually driving them to insanity, at least making them feel insignificant and insecure.

Tynianov treats the entire episode comically, while managing to make an entirely serious point about Tsar Paul and his mad military mentality. His diminutive stature is emphasised; he is like a toy soldier (a midget in contrast to the giant figure of his great-grandfather), his self-importance in grossly ironic disproportion to his actual size. The horse is real enough, with its rearing and snorting accentuating the almost dreamy unreality of its rider. The tsar's capricious and unreasonable demand is suggestive of his psychotic nature. With his usual habit of supplying in passing the tiniest but telling details, the author does not miss the Tsar's 'mad grey eyes' which may remind the reader of the Bronze Horseman's 'лик его ужасен' while reflecting the prevalent belief that the tsar was mentally unstable if not clinically mad.

The people of Petersburg, not to mention the country's 55 million subjects, were ruled arbitrarily by an omnipotent and apparently uncontrollable man, and went in fear of repression. Paul took his fear of revolution almost to the point of lunacy:⁴³⁶ when describing the movements of the heavenly bodies scientists and academics, succumbing to Paul's strict linguistic policing, dared not use the word 'revolution'. In such a context Sergei L'vovich had good grounds for his own fears, based on fact and hearsay. As always, the historical background to the novel is sketched in with Tynianov's characteristic lightness of narrative and descriptive touches which hint at the kind of audience he had in mind: an informed reader well-versed in Russian history who would pick up the most subtle clues.

The major point about this scene is that many people live out their lives relatively untouched by history, but for Pushkin history was one of the pressures which moulds the individual life. In accordance with this view Tynianov turned the famous 'hat' episode into an

⁴³⁶ Martin, A. *Romantics, Reformers, Reactionaries. Russian Conservative Thought and Politics in the Reign of Alexander I* (Northern Illinois, 1992), 5.

illustration, firstly, of how close history came to crushing Pushkin for the first, but not last, time in his life, and secondly, illuminated by the reader's own knowledge of Pushkin's works, an example of the inexhaustible source of literary inspiration which it would prove to be.

In a few brief but telling scenes Tynianov shows the concerns of Russian society at the time: the nobility enraged by the state's encroachments on its privileges; its political support for the monarch, crucial to any Russian tsar, lukewarm; Paul obviously failing to secure such a support and risking overthrow, which in the Russian context invariably meant assassination – continuing the 18th-century history of 'government by coup d'état'.⁴³⁷ The Russian intelligentsia is still in an embryonic state but, despite strict censorship and the suppression of personal freedoms, civil society is gradually emerging; 'emancipation from compulsory state service in 1762 had left many nobles without a satisfying purpose in life, and some now focused their moral energies on notions of individual honour, corporate liberty, and service to the nation rather than on unquestioning loyalty to the crown'.⁴³⁸ Pushkin's own life, as we know, will be marked by the distinct impulse to free himself from court duties, striving instead for independence through the power of his pen, thereby securing himself the income of a professional writer.

2. Alexander I: 'pravitel' prazdnyi i lukavyi'.

Tynianov's incisive analysis of the second Tsar whom Pushkin would encounter in his lifetime reveals a historian's understanding, but also a writer's ability to manage his material, having already addressed the world of Russian monarchy in his *Wax Effigy* (Peter the Great, Catherine I) (1931), *Lieutenant Kijé* (Paul I) (1927) and *Minor Vitushishnikov* (Nicholas I) (1933). In *Pushkin* Tynianov extends the gallery and confronts the reader with a novelistic representation of the figure of the tsar as seen not by the author, but rather as refracted through Pushkin's creative imagination. Each detail of the Emperor's portrayal is meant to explain Pushkin's perception of Alexander as a two-faced Janus and the poet's distinctly varying appraisals of the tsar. When, in 1814, Pushkin's class was given a creative writing assignment, 'The Surrender of Paris', Pushkin never produced a piece. Or, if he did, it has not survived. What has survived, however is a cartoon which he drew of the corpulent tsar, showing him as unable to get through a triumphal gate, which was too small for him. Later he was to call the tsar a harlequin,⁴³⁹ as others as

⁴³⁷ Pushkin would later quip in a conversation with the Grand Duke Michael: '*Vous êtes bien de votre famille, tous les Romanoff sont révolutionnaires et niveleurs.*' (Diary, 22 Dec (1834), VII, 294).

⁴³⁸ Martin, Op. cit., 8, 9, 12, 39, 43, 64, 10.

⁴³⁹ Pushkin's comment in verse on Thorvaldsen's famous sculptural bust of the Emperor, 'К биусту завоевателиа' read: Напрасно видишь тут ошибку./Рука искусства навела/На мрамор этих уст улыбку/А гнев на холодный лоск чела./Недаром лик сей двуязычен/Таков и был сей властелин./К противочувствиям привычен,/В лице и в жизни арлекин (II, 204).

famous as Napoleon and Chateaubriand had called him ‘a Veritable Byzantine’, ‘the Talma of the North’ and ‘the Sphinx’. Pushkin’s 1815 poem ‘Aleksandru’, in stark contrast to the caricature just mentioned, was suitably eulogistic towards its subject calling him ‘good’ and ‘glorious’, ‘brave’ and ‘liberating’, ‘a Russian deity’ who ‘crushed the foe with mighty hand’.⁴⁴⁰

The duality of the tsar’s personality is mirrored in Tynianov’s curiously androgynous portrayal which brings Alexander startlingly alive: the husky voice, the pale-blue eyes, pale skin and white skull shining through the receding hair; the wrinkles and the unsteady legs; the sagging belly beneath the corset; the fat feminine face and ‘fat-lipped silent smile’ (202) which he had cultivated since childhood.⁴⁴¹ Having assembled the evidence, Tynianov sums up the essence of the man in a single statement: ‘Подлинная любовь была у него к самому себе’ (Ibid).

Tynianov does not limit himself to exterior portraiture, and takes us inside the Emperor’s mind to reveal his fears and anxieties: Alexander is consumed by feelings of the guilt of parricide and betrayal – guilt before his mother because of the way he had insinuated himself with his father; guilt before the ghost of his dead father because he had been a passive accomplice to his murder; guilt before his wife to whom he is unfaithful. She is described with typical concision by the narrator, reflecting the distinctly subjective point of view of the Emperor, as ‘a frigid and melancholy Baden princess’. This descriptive shortcut throws light on the Tsar’s past and present and enables the reader to understand why he is attracted to religion with its key idea of atonement and mysticism and its disregard for the practicalities of the tangible world.

Throughout such descriptions Tynianov remains objectively analytical, revealing or suggesting the inner psychology, hidden from history and unrecorded or unassessed by the textbooks. The emphasis on the Tsar’s marital unfaithfulness makes it easier to appreciate Alexander’s general reputation as a treacherous and untrustworthy person.⁴⁴² But Tynianov partially extenuates and explains Alexander’s attitudes as inconsistency:

Это случилось по уклончивости ума: он говорил, обещал, возражал машинально, а думал только спустя некоторое время (202).

Modern historians are inclined to share Pushkin’s assessment, underlining the contradictory influences on the Emperor, such as rationalism and mysticism, which remained in permanent conflict within him. (Martin, Op. cit., 184) Even his displays of religious faith are believed to be ‘either manipulative political tactic or proof of an unbalanced personality.’ (Ibid., 169)

⁴⁴⁰ Subtitled ‘Na vozvrashchenie gosudaria imperatora iz Parizha v 1815 godu’, in which he imagines how one of the veterans of the 1812 campaign ‘словами истины, свободными, простыми... славу прошлых лет в рассказах оживит/И доброго царя в слезах благословит.’ (I, 377)

⁴⁴¹ Martin, Op. cit., 128, 153.

⁴⁴² Vol’pert has pointed out that *lukavyi* in Pushkin’s vocabulary often means not only ‘wry’, but also ‘unfaithful’ (e.g. *Evgenii Onegin*, IV, 12): ‘Его ласкал супруг лукавый’. (*Pushkinskaia Frantsiia*, Ch. 4).

This places the tsar in an entirely different category from that of a Machiavellian back-stabber: Tynianov observes that Alexander ‘had little understanding of politics’ (203), and that is why he had more or less handed the reins of government to Speransky. Inevitably, therefore, he dug pits for himself, from which he could only later escape by resorting to what looked like treachery.

Certainly, Tynianov could not have known for certain what the ‘true’ reasons for the Emperor’s treachery were. He places the reader in an area between history, therefore, and biography, the essay and the novel. And in spite of the uneasy and complex position in which the reader is thus placed, any decision on how successful Tynianov’s strategy was, has of necessity to be a literary one, based on the aesthetic truth of the writing itself. But the literary decision affects to some extent the historical one; it involves an act of faith which the writing confirms in the reader’s mind: yes, this is the historical Aleksandr, accurately portrayed.

Again, to take another example, the reader learns from a fusion of the narrator’s speech and free indirect discourse that:

в России, кроме дворцов, в которых жил или останавливался и из которых некоторые были удобны, кроме городов – по большей части малых и неправильных, он более всего помнил дороги, варварские, ухабистые, грязные, с отвратительным запахом навоза... Он ценил внушительность пространств в цифрах верст на карте, которая висела у него в кабинете, да количество жителей: пятьдесят миллионов. Это количество и пространство пугали его, когда он был в России; в Европе же он любил говорить о них, и сам, случалось, пугал (202-3).

This is intuitive identification, convincing while it lasts, even when we realise that Tynianov’s evocation of the tsar’s inner thoughts and feelings might not have accurately reflected the reality. Tolstoy and Pushkin himself possessed this capacity for identification. Tynianov, while working on a smaller scale than Tolstoy, shares something of his ingenious ability to identify with a person of the past. He had learned from Tolstoy the business of entering into the mind of a historical personality, but appreciated that it was not the fiction writer’s responsibility to teach his readers a history lesson.

So, Tynianov’s Alexander is subtle, treacherous, lecherous, evasive, effete, opportunistic, selfish, cowardly, conceited and easily upset. And yet, above all he is, in his own way, well-meaning and vulnerable. Rostopchin characterised him as ‘a Croesus in his good intentions but a Lazarus in their execution’.⁴⁴³ In Tynianov’s interpretation, apart from his feelings of guilt and that abstract fear of the sheer size of the country he rules, he lives in a state of fear about the approaching military conflict with Napoleon.

Unable to come to terms with the distressing realities of warfare, Tynianov’s Alexander shares Speransky’s fears that war will lead to the collapse of his power. But Tynianov brushes away the thought of the Emperor’s genuine appreciation of Speransky, choosing instead to show

⁴⁴³ Quoted in Martin, *Op. cit.*, 62.

that he is apprehensive of Speransky's exceptional capabilities and articulacy, which make him feel inferior, 'suspicious, envious and upset' (204). He prefers the 'humble slave' attitude of Arakcheev, who took pride in his own rudeness, pitiless brutality and lack of sophistication. Tynianov thus emphasizes that the tsar's treachery is not inevitable and innate; it is induced by fear, and the need for self-preservation. Speransky is dispensable, he is a pawn in the tsar's political game, and can be easily removed or restored to pacify the crowds.⁴⁴⁴

The absence of heirs intensifies his feelings of vulnerability. He is also apprehensive of his brothers who are waiting to replace him, such is the Moscow gossip. His mother guarded them jealously, 'as a tigress guards her cubs' (Ibid) and had moved them 'into the forsaken Gatchina', where he was no longer able to keep his eye on them. Applying his customary technique, Tynianov resorts to a zoological metaphor to shorten and sharpen his descriptions so as to strengthen their hard-hitting potential. The Emperor is anxious to have his brothers moved into his palace, on the pretext of furthering their education and the Lycée is just an excuse to bring them under his control. Ironically, his plans come to nothing, while those of Speransky, in spite of the Emperor's betrayal, bear fruit. Having promised Speransky not to allow the Lycée to come under the control of the Ministry of Education, nor even to allow Razumovskii, the Minister, to see the memorandum, Alexander does the opposite. Whatever the actual motivations and historical circumstances. Tynianov emphasizes that the Lycée might never have come into being, or might have been a completely different institution – less democratic and more restricted – if the Grand Dukes had been among its pupils.

At no point does Tynianov mention the Emperor's liberal ideas like the emancipation of the peasantry, whose servitude he apparently considered 'contrary to his conscience' and 'something [with which] he was not in the least in agreement'. At the salon of Mme de Staël he had reportedly said: 'Every day I receive good news about the state of my empire, and with God's help serfdom will yet be abolished in my reign'.⁴⁴⁵ Tynianov focuses his attention instead on the inner man, enmeshed in an uneasy struggle with his family, for whom, with the exception of his sister – described by Tynianov as 'unbridled and unstoppable' (201) – he felt not the

⁴⁴⁴ A. Zorin's analysis of the ideological mechanism that caused Speransky's fall is particularly valuable in this context: 'Speransky's resignation was a symbolic gesture of the kind for which Alexander had always had an exceptional flair'. Speransky was a victim of the mythology of conspiracy and betrayal that had taken hold of Russian society. He was the embodiment of an outsider, who by the will of fate had turned out to be the tsar's adviser and for his own selfish reasons was preparing to enter into a secret agreement with the enemies of the state and to ruin his country. Following this logic his fall and banishment were inevitable and caused a tremendous upsurge of patriotic feelings. So Speransky came to be seen as an emblem of reformist plans symbolically sacrificed by the Emperor 'on the altar of the Fatherland' and turned to as a symbolic token of national unity. *Kormia dvuglavogo orla. Literatura i gosudarstvennaia ideologiia v Rossii v poslednei treti XVIII – pervoi treti XIX vekov* (Moscow, 2001), 177, 197, 230.

⁴⁴⁵ Quoted in Alt'shuller, M. *Predtechi slavianofil'stva v russkoi literature. (Obshchestvo 'Beseda liubitelei russkogo slova')* (Ann Arbor, 1984), 236.

slightest bond or affection: having no brotherly feelings towards his ‘wild and intolerable’ brothers and fearful of his mother. Even the sincerity of his fatherly feelings towards his two infant daughters who had died in infancy are undercut by De Maistre’s comment that ‘the Emperor did not want children because he did not want premature heirs, he himself having been one’ (205).

In Tynianov’s interpretation, for the self-absorbed and absent-minded Emperor his subjects always remained nothing more than ‘bestial-looking villagers’ (203), menacing, unpredictable, volatile. Liberal phraseology is attributed to mere ‘love of talk’ and the enjoyment of the frightening effect that the sheer size of Russia and its population had on foreigners:

Он любил только иностранные города и иностранцев, потому что там чувствовал себя вполне государем (202).

Tynianov continues to emphasise in Alexander’s portrayal the motifs of acting, pretence and dissimulation of truth and leaves no doubt in the reader’s mind that the tsar’s programme of reforms was doomed from the outset and was never to be implemented, even had it not met with resistance. When listening to Speransky, who was brimful of concrete ideas, the Emperor never interrupted him and by the end of every conversation ‘seemed persuaded and agreeable’. But, Tynianov adds, as soon as the Minister left the imperial presence, ‘the Tsar grew bored and forgetful’ (209). Instead of the portrait of a ‘cultured Westerniser’, ‘a frustrated reformer’ with ‘moral antipathy towards the old regime’⁴⁴⁶ we see the portrayal of a ruler as he must have struck Pushkin, as someone who does not possess the vision, will or energy to see such reforms implemented. His closest adviser falls victim to the Emperor’s vagueness (the key word in Tynianov’s description), passivity, and his loose and muddled grasp of reality. There was a lack of public knowledge about Speransky’s reforms and the gentry’s grievances were deposited firmly on his doorstep, although in some cases, as historians maintain and Tynianov convincingly proves, only because of his critics’ reluctance to blame the Emperor directly.⁴⁴⁷

3. *‘Groza dvenadtsatogo goda’.*

The 1812 war was the first huge historical event which the young poet lived through, and it was crucial in shaping the outlook of Pushkin’s generation, who constituted the core of the Russian Romantic movement. The wartime experiences came to be reflected not only in Pushkin’s Lycée lyrics, but also in his later works (‘K teni polkovodtsa’ (1831) and ‘Polkovodets’ (1835)). In Tynianov’s novel the war that loomed so large in Tolstoy’s historical fiction is essentially an off-

⁴⁴⁶ Martin, Op. cit., 122-141.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 120.

stage action. There are no military scenes as such, except as authorially reported action. In its own way this indirect method of dealing with a huge conflict is peculiarly effective and rather moving, since it is an established literary truth that sometimes the unseen (but reported and visualised) can be more powerful than the seen, and can produce a greater emotional effect.

It is not violent action as such that interests the novelist, but the effect of that action on the mind of Pushkin and his friends who occupy centre-stage. The reader views the war, through their eyes and assesses it insofar as it affects them, their parents and their teachers. A titanic struggle and the destinies of nations become the background to life in a Russian school and the behaviour of twelve-year olds.

Rumours of war are scattered throughout the opening chapters of the novel, and the author keeps on reminding the reader that it is impending. When it finally breaks out, it happens during a French lesson appropriately enough: for the Professor of French, de Boudri, the brother of Marat who had perished in the Revolution, and who has also lost his country and even his own name, the invasion of Russia by his compatriots indicates that the ideals of the Revolution have been violated and betrayed by Napoleon, and the human sacrifice had been in vain, with the monarchy restored and now engaged in imperialist expansion.⁴⁴⁸ His prophetic words 'Итак, все кончено' may suggest that the retribution will involve the whole of France, whose defeat will be catastrophic. De Boudri is employed by Tynianov in order to introduce into the novel the grand matter of Napoleon and the French Revolution. Tynianov's striking ability to combine public and private history and the everyday flow of ordinary life in a single dramatic moment comes to the fore again when he embarks on his favourite themes of strange coincidences, concatenations of circumstances and chance meetings, as when Kunitsyn cannot help letting his imagination wander as he glances at a vacant chair at de Boudri's dinner table and pictures Marat, not lying in a bath of blood, but 'sitting here, in Petersburg, at his brother's house'.⁴⁴⁹ Both for Kunitsyn and Pushkin, De Boudri epitomises the story of an epoch, and Pushkin's association with him moves the young poet and his fellow-Lycéens into the context of contemporary European history. The teacher's words cause the spark that ignites Pushkin's intense brooding upon the figure of Napoleon.

Tynianov shows how in February and March 1812 Pushkin and his classmates, still in their first year, watched the Russian troops as they rode past the school to the theatre of war.

⁴⁴⁸ This perception of Napoleon as a tyrant and 'the murderer of freedom' will find its realisation in 'The Reminiscences in Tsarskoe Selo': 'Вострепещи тиран! Уж близок час паденья' (I, 12) and later, in 'Napoleon', 1821 (I, 162) 'Во след тирану полетело./Как гром проклятие племен'.

⁴⁴⁹ Tynianov's acute interest in the topic of chance meetings was to form the foundation of his unrealised project centred on a chance meeting between E. A. Poe and Pushkin.

Many of them were not much older than the schoolboys themselves, and the Lycéeists' encouragement and admiration were mingled with envy. Pushkin is struck by the contrast between them and the soldiers he had been used to seeing on parade in Petersburg:

Лошади осклизались. Не было блестящих киверов - все солдаты в фуражках, шинелях, теплых наушниках. Медные котелки позвякивали у седел. Холод был жестокий, дул ветер... Офицеры ехали в теплых оберроках, делавших их немножко похожими на кучеров. Музыка впереди заиграла, и эскадрон прошел (358-9).

Tynianov shows that the boys realise that this is a different war, one whose scale and nature are unprecedented in history. Pushkin witnesses the reality of men going to war, possibly to die, in all their ordinariness and banality; men having to feed themselves, having to keep warm, nervous, perhaps, beneath their bravado. The boys realise that all of these men have families, mothers, some of whom are now saying farewell to them, possibly never to see them again. The horrific anonymity and impersonality of war are evoked by this image of potential cannon fodder, a mass of people whose individuality has already been erased.

The boys also get a glimpse of the truth which underlies the pride, indifference and theatrical defiance of the Cossacks as they pass by. Acting on a powerful impulse, Pushkin is momentarily tempted to find a horse and catch up with the young horse-militia officer who had befriended them earlier that day and urged them to join up. The scene is a pointer to the future: Pushkin will, in fact, meet Captain Kaverin again, and he will be one of the hussars whose company Pushkin will frequent during his final year at school and of whom he will remain a friend during his years of dissipation in Petersburg (1817-1820).

Switching to a contrasting mode Tynianov reports the Napoleonic invasion of Russia in an effectively brief factual chapter consisting of a single half-page long paragraph, which in epic tone catalogues the various troops which crossed the Russian border under Napoleon's command. The simple devices of parallel syntax and anaphoric repetition create the mounting tension. There are no grand events, however, to match the style, since civilians and soldiers alike are in retreat before the French invaders, and Napoleon's expectations – of 'big sweeping famous battles with the enemy, a final decisive conflict, occupation of the capital, and a quick peace on his terms' (364) – are denied him.

Tynianov does more than merely follow the extant letters and memoirs: he gives an accurate and convincing picture of the identification process typical of teenagers. Küchelbecker hero-worships his distant relative and now Commander-in-Chief, Barclai de Tolly, nailing his portrait to his bureau. Young Malinovskii, whose village was in the Ukraine, identifies himself with the Cossacks, imitating their walk, talk and posture. Gorchakov imitates the Tsar, while Val'khovskii, aspiring to live like his hero Suvorov, 'ate stale rusks and slept on the bare boards, every night taking the mattress off his bed' (370).

But, curiously, Pushkin reacts differently to the other boys and does not adopt a military hero at this point in his life, though he was later to write eulogistically of Kutuzov in the poem ‘Pered grobnitsei sviatoi’, 1831 (II, 267-268), and approvingly of Barclai de Tolly in ‘*Polkovodets*’, 1835 (II, 355), defending someone who, as W. Arndt writes, ‘had been abruptly relieved of his command as a concession to mob chauvinism, which took umbrage at his French name and hinted at treason’.⁴⁵⁰ Tynianov says of Pushkin that he ‘kept silent and listened. He had revealed caution, a characteristic nobody had suspected in him’ (374). Apparently, as the poet’s mind develops, he comes to recognize that literature is not about unequivocal answers, but the raising of questions and the suspension of judgment. This might be the point, Tynianov indicates, at which Pushkin learned not to be content with adopting a simple-isolated viewpoint or personality, however heroic, but to ponder a multiplicity of views and truths, and experience a compassionate empathy with all sides.⁴⁵¹

Nearly a decade later Pushkin wrote a fairly balanced portrait of Napoleon in which he acknowledged his faults, but elevated him above the scorn of petty-minded people, calling him ‘a majestic man’.⁴⁵² At this earlier stage in his development, Tynianov prefers to picture the young boy associating the French Emperor with death:

Александр помнил портрет Наполеона, висевший в кабинете у дяди Василия Львовича: пустые, как у кумиров, стоявших в саду, глаза, отсутствие улыбки, необычайная правильность черт, простота мундира. Тогда черты эти казались просты и прекрасны. Лицо, припоминавшееся ему теперь, было равнодушно и холодно – лицо мертвеца (371).

The boy’s imagination is at work, and Tynianov presents Pushkin picturing the Moscow to Petersburg highway, along which he and his uncle had journeyed the previous year, and which is now being travelled by invaders. The concrete mind of the poet, alive to images and objective detail, recalls the various sensations, visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, almost kinetic:

⁴⁵⁰ Arndt, W. (ed. and trans.) *Collected Narrative and Lyrical Poetry of Aleksandr Pushkin* (Woodstock, 2002), 466.

⁴⁵¹ In his ‘Pushkin i Kiukhelbeker’ essay (1934) Tynianov quotes Küchelbecker’s mother’s letter to her son (original in German). Considering Küchelbecker’s close friendship with Pushkin, it is feasible that Pushkin might have read the letter and that it affected him deeply. There are curious similarities between its pathos and Pushkin’s thoughts expressed in his 1830 poem ‘The Hero’ (II, 249). ‘Учись не быть никогда поспешным в суждениях и не сразу соглашаться с теми, которые порицают людей, занимающих в государстве важные посты. Как часто случаются времена и обстоятельства, когда они не в состоянии действовать иначе, а отдаление и очень часто вымышленные сообщения враждебно настроенных и легкомысленных умов (Körfe) вредят чести великого мужа ... Урок моему милому Вильгельму – не так слепо верить всему, что он слышит. В твоём положении не следует противоречить, но не нужно выносить свой приговор...’ (Tynianov, *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki*, 237-8). Cf. ‘Да, слава в прихотях вольна./Как огненный язык, она/По избранным главам летает./С одной сегодня исчезает./И на другой уже видна./За новизной бежать смиренно/Народ бессмысленный привык./ Но нам уж то чело священо./Над коим вспыхнул сей язык.’ (II, 355)

The ethical problematics of the poem are suggested by its very epigraph: ‘Что есть истина?’

⁴⁵² Pushkin, A. ‘Napoleon’ (Chudesnyi zhebrii), 1821, (I, 162-165). For the analysis of the evolution of Pushkin’s perception of Napoleon see, for example, Grunskii, A. ‘Napoleon v russkoi khudozhestvennoi literature’ in *Russkii Filologicheskii Vestnik* (1898), Vol. 40, 100-120, Reizov, B. *Iz istorii evropeiskikh literatur* (Leningrad, 1970), 37-66, Murav’eva, O. ‘Pushkin i Napoleon: (Pushkinskii variant ‘napoleonovskoi legendy’)’ in *Pushkin. Issledovaniia i materialy* (Leningrad, 1991), XII, 5-32, Nemirovskii, I. ‘Genezis stikhotvoreniia Pushkina ‘Napoleon’ (1821)’ in *Tvorchestvo Pushkina i problema publichnogo povedeniia poeta* (St Petersburg, 2003), 103-117 and Vol’pert, L. ‘Napoleonovskii mif Pushkina i Stendalia’ in *Pushkinskaia Frantsiia*, 347-364.

низкие станционные домики, посеревшие от дождей, с надтреснутыми и облупившимися деревянными колоннами, воробьи, нахохлившиеся под застрехой; старик смотритель, избегавший смотреть прямо в глаза, а дорогой - ящик, который тянул бесконечную песню, мерно позвякивавшие колокольцы; встречные обозы со скрипом колес и запахом дегтя. Теперь по этим дорогам скакала чужая конница, станционные домики были заняты неприятелем, несущимся беспрепятственно во весь опор. Мысль, что по этой дороге, которая, вероятно, ничем не отличалась от той, по которой он ехал с дядей Васильем Львовичем, скакали чужие лошади, чужие всадники, тяготила его (368-9).

Pushkin is thinking about the roads because he and his class are in the middle of a geography lesson and, his thoughts arise naturally out of the narrative context:

На карте, которая была приколочена гвоздиками в зале, Калинин красным карандашом медленно и верно обозначил рукою каллиграфа движение войск – и толстая красная черта поползла со скоростью вверх; он долго стоял перед картою. Грузный, неподвижный, без всякого выражения на лице, он каждый день отмечал на ней движение войск и на этот раз был поражен ее видом... Он шепотом читал названия городов и, очнувшись, произнес:
- Как ножом (368).

The poignant irony of the situation is that the boys learn these placenames at the point when the places themselves are being obliterated by the enemy from the face of the earth.

Pushkin's response to the news of the Borodino battle which was accepted as a great Russian victory is again unusual. Wishing to redeem himself, in the course of the battle Barclai threw himself into the thick of the action. Yet again Pushkin stays interestingly silent amid the other boys' excitement:

Пушкин молчал; оклеветанный и несчастливый полководец искал под Бородином смерти. Вдруг он закусил губу, вспыхнул, что-то проворчал и в замешательстве убежал. Он так поступал всегда, когда бывал сильно тронут (385).

Tynianov points out that one's initial response might be powerful, but the ability to articulate it will come only when it is distilled in the creative imagination during a process which might take years. As it happens, it took Pushkin twenty-three years to express himself in his poem, the *Polkovodets* (1835), but what Tynianov appears to suggest is that the idea was 'written' in the mind and in the soul long before then. Rightly or wrongly, he even ties Pushkin's insight down to an actual day – to the very hour and minute.⁴⁵³

Pushkin stayed similarly silent in Tsarskoe Selo during the days of the Moscow fire which followed the Russian army's retreat to the south-east of Moscow and Napoleon's entry to the city. Even though his synoptical notes make no reference to the appalling event of the destruction of his home, Tynianov seeks to reconstruct Pushkin's inner drama at the time. The occupation of Moscow by the enemy meant for Pushkin the end of the only home he had ever

⁴⁵³ 'Всё в жертву ты принес земле тебе чужой./Непроницаемый для взгляда черни дикой,/В молчаньи шел один ты с мыслию великой,/И в имени твоём звук чуждый не взлюбя,/Своими криками преследуя тебя,/Народ, таинственно спасаемый тобою,/Ругался над твоей священной сединою.../Там, устарелый вождь! как ратник молодой,/Свинца веселый свист слышавший впервой,/Бросался ты в огонь, ища желанной смерти, - Вотще!' (II, 356) See also Pushkin's sketch 'Ob"iasnenie' published in 'Sovremennik' April 1835, where among other things he says this: 'Барклай, не внушающий доверенности войску, ему подвластному, окруженный враждою, язвимый злоречием, но убежденный в самого себя, молча идущий к сокровенной цели и уступающий власть, не успеет оправдать себя перед глазами России, останется навсегда в истории высокопоэтическим лицом.' Quoted by B. Tomashevskii in Commentary to *Sochineniia A. S. Pushkina v odnoi knige, Zolotoi tom, Polnoe sobranie* (1993), 909.

known, ‘гнездо у Харитония’ (386). But it is not the destruction of his home as such that moves the boy, though it seems beautiful to him now, with all its chaos and genteel poverty. What Tynianov suggests is that it was the city itself, the whole of Moscow and what it stood for in his memory and imagination, that moved him. This loss is the cause of almost physical pain:

Он не думал ни о родителях, бежавших на Волгу, ни даже об Арине - он думал о Москве, о пепелище, где родился, где рос, куда должен был некогда вернуться; теперь некуда стало возвращаться. Он был один как перст и с широко раскрытыми глазами лежал и смотрел в темноту, со всех сторон его обступившую. Он вспоминал знакомые дома, один за другим, и сомневался в их существовании. Даже спросить было не у кого. Царское Село было в этот час пустынно. Он тихо постучал в стенку и тотчас ему ответили слабым стуком: Пушин не спал. Он поуспокоился. Москва не могла быть уничтоженной, и он решил еще раз повидать ее, чего бы это ему ни стоило... (386-7).

Pushkin’s shock is magnified by the realisation that all this wanton destruction – the savage looting, the gratuitous violence, the mistreatment of the remaining residents, the acts of vandalism which so vividly illustrate the French soldiers’ moral degeneracy – was displayed by a nation whose language and culture the Russians (and Pushkin among them) were brought up on and whom they were accustomed to idolise as the epitome of refinement and civilisation.⁴⁵⁴ Although France would continue to be the bridge of ideas and cultural values between Europe and Russia, defining its tastes and fashions in the post-war years, nonetheless, as Tynianov demonstrates, the titanic war effort of 1812-14 contributed to a deeper understanding of the basis of *Russian* life and the subsequent flowering of national self-identification.⁴⁵⁵

Tynianov depicts Pushkin’s mood of melancholy contemplation: the world he had known is disintegrating before his eyes: life will never be the same. As if following those historic events the weather turns autumnal and, employing the pathetic fallacy, the author heightens his prose to hint at the apocalyptic forebodings which fill the atmosphere in Tsarskoe Selo:

Осень ударила вдруг: ветер завывал, мокрый снег лепился по веткам и бил плетью по лицу, когда они выходили на прогулку. Пустынные сады стояли кругом, небо было мутно; Большой Каприз, как надгробный холм, темнел вдали; торчали носы кораблей на седом дедовском граните. Луна всходила багровая, кровавая. Он нашел книжку Парни, где все это было названо. Сады назывались лесами Морвена, пещера - пещерою Фингала. Обо всем этом некогда пел бард Оссиан (398).

The prophetic cruelties of nature, the grave-mound image of death, the column commemorating the Russian naval glory of Catherine’s golden age, the enemies’ ship symbolically sunk, and in the godless skies a moon turned apocalyptically to blood – Tynianov is painting a picture of certain destruction for the enemies of Russia, using language and Ossianic imagery to embody the mood of Pushkin and his friends, as they prepare to be evacuated to Finland and say goodbye to their second home, having already lost the first.

⁴⁵⁴ Martin, Op. cit., 138.

⁴⁵⁵ De Maistre, who had attempted to educate Russian society according to the harsh Jesuit code, was struck by this unexpected, and unfavourable development: ‘A Russian man, of all the people in the world sees his shortcomings, but is more than unforgiving of anyone who points them out to him’ in *Russkii arkhiv* (1912), No. 1, 51, quoted in Sakharov, Op. cit., 15.

But this was not, after all, to be. Just as he has earlier used a French teacher to introduce the war, and a geography teacher to chart its progress, Tynianov now employs the unpopular ancient history teacher, Kaidanov, to announce its end. Roman history serves as the parallel for modern events and indicates the inevitability of Russian victory. The elevated classicist odic rhetoric and frequent allusions to antiquity seem completely natural to the boys:

Ныне греческие и римские имена стали воинской славой: Багратион был Эпаминонд; Кульнев - Деций; Раевский и Коновницын - совместники древней Спарты. В обращении к войскам было сказано, что Неман станет для французов другим Стиксом - подземною адскою рекою, которую переходят только раз (363).

From start to finish the war has been depicted within the framework of school life. Once again, and very briefly, Tynianov adopts the omniscient authorial voice to describe that terrible retreat, and does so with a power due partly to the fact that he has avoided for so long any hint of description as to what is actually happening on the ground. Now the disintegrating Grande Armée is depicted convulsed in the last throes of its agony, reaching the final degree of physical and emotional suffering in its almost animalistic degeneration.

The narrator immediately returns to the portrayal of the hardships of the civilians and the epic tone is deliberately counterpointed and undermined by the almost playfully ironic description of how life goes on for those close to Pushkin: his parents and his uncle, small but resilient figures in the global landscape which dwarfs but cannot extinguish their spirits. Sergei L'vovich and Nadezhda Osipovna leave Moscow for Nizhnii Novgorod in a peasant's cart.

С собой [Надежда Осиповна] взяла свой портрет, рисованный известной Виже-Лебренью в тот год, когда гвардеец Бодэ сказал ей, что две самые прекрасные женщины *sont les deux belles créoles* - она и Жозефина, супруга Бонапарта. Теперь Бонапарт жег Москву, а она тряслась в мужицкой телеге (393).

She is clutching in vain at the intangible and transient: her past, her youth, her legendary beauty and worldly success. Pushkin's parents will never be tragic figures, but they are at least pathetic, in the proper sense of the word. Tynianov enhances the sympathy felt by the reader for Pushkin's unfortunate parents by ending the section with the scene in which Sergei comes back one evening to his peasant's *izba* to find Nadezhda Osipovna all dressed up in a low-cut evening dress, a beauty spot on her cheek, and clutching the Vigée-Lebrun miniature of herself, tears rolling down her wrinkled cheeks. Amidst the universal upheaval that uprooted and displaced many millions of people, the Pushkins remain their usual selves. It is not the loss of their Moscow home that has made her distraught, but the fact that 'they had not received a single invitation for that evening' (398).

Vasilii L'vovich, leaving Moscow in the clothes he happened to have on, with no money in his pockets, and also in a peasant's cart, is not exactly the most moving spectacle of the human tragedy of war. Tynianov treats his situation with humour as Vasilii L'vovich recalls one

by one his favourite items – an admired book, his pipe, his dressing-gown, his fur-coat, all of which to his distressed imagination become sacred icons of his past. At the same time Tynianov does not ridicule him – the irony is gentle – and we are reminded that the upper and middle classes have their tragedy too, one that it is no less real to them, and that this does not just concern the loss of property. It would have been easy to pour scorn on this creature of the salons, comparing his misfortunes directly with the miseries of the poor or the soldiers. Instead Tynianov displays a broad-mindedness, humanity and sympathy for Pushkin's uncle, who continues to strike new poses: wooing the provincial ladies, squabbling with other refugees about the extent of their material losses (paradoxically even these become a matter of pride and boasting!) and quarrelling with his cousin Aleksei, whose recent gambling success he envies. His poem about the burning of Moscow is set to music and becomes a great hit. Once again he is in vogue. The tolerant author embraces him here, as he does throughout the novel, as a character without whom human life would be the poorer. Vasilii L'vovich actually grows into an embodiment of the Russian men of letters' cheerful stoicism in the face of loss and adversity; the major survival tactic that sees them through their physical hardship and emotional turmoil are their intellectual pursuits. The author also makes another important point: Vasilii L'vovich's playful strategy of everyday behaviour works through the artistic re-evoking of literary models as he and his circle adjust their *byt* according to literary paradigms and switching between them depending on the situation. So, in a reversal of opinion which would seem otherwise strange, Vasilii L'vovich now imagines himself a figure à la Piron: he accepts peasant cuisine as a superior substitute for his Parisian dishes, and proclaims the virtues of the simple life of a poet in an *izba*, his possessions reduced to a bed, a couple of chairs, a quill and paper, and a 'kind-hearted maid' to solace him. Tynianov's description of this theatrical strategy, inherited and assimilated by the uncle's famous nephew, can help us to understand Pushkin's own behaviour in later life: his love of 'transformations', his ability to become 'the other', his role-playing and adoption of a variety of biographical 'masks', sometimes even moral principles – those varied and frequently mutually exclusive roles which so puzzled his contemporaries through their inconsistency.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁶ For the importance of French literature as a source of such role-play models see Vol'pert, L. Op. cit., 2, 18. This idea had long been in circulation in OPOIAZ circles, see, for instance L. Ginzburg: 'literature is a form [*унотмась*] of life. It is well known that in human life literary models have had a frightening, and even deadly palpability. They have the power to form ideals, to deform and even destruct.' (*Chelovek za pis'mennym stolom*, 332.)

4. Speransky

Tynianov's scholarly convictions are embodied in his actual imaginative writing and, although there are many places in *Pushkin* where history is brought alive, there can be few more striking examples of literary art probing the shadowy corners of history than the chapter in which he explores the emergence of the concept of the Imperial Lycée in the minds of the Emperor Alexander, and of his Secretary of State, Mikhail Speransky, who has been described by historians as 'probably the most brilliant Russian statesman of the nineteenth century',⁴⁵⁷ and as 'perhaps the most brilliant bureaucrat that ever served a Tsar'.⁴⁵⁸ Tynianov draws us more intimately into the lives of both characters – his novel 'taking over where history ends' – and succeeds in generating both a greater excitement and deeper understanding. Speransky, whose first biographer was Pushkin's Lycée fellow-student Modest Korff,⁴⁵⁹ and whose best biographer in the conventional sense of the word has been Marc Raeff,⁴⁶⁰ has in fact found his greatest 'human' interpreter in Iurii Tynianov.⁴⁶¹

Speransky is nearly forty years of age when Tynianov introduces him into the novel. The son of a village priest, he himself graduated from a seminary, entered the civil service and quickly rose to power, soon becoming the Tsar's advisor and Secretary of State. The first view the reader gains of him in the novel features his 'huge stooped back', an angle achieved by allowing us to look at him through the eyes of his German secretary, who is peeping through the door of the study at the figure of the Minister, absorbed in writing his report. There is the faint suggestion here of the profile of a person who is not quite human, the massive anonymity of the back conveying an image of the apparent inscrutability of officialdom – or of this particular mysterious official at least. Such ideas are strengthened by the associated image of the 'automaton' – which is how he writes, 'without halt or hesitation... cover[ing] page after page with his rounded regular handwriting' (197), and by the almost unnatural quietness in which he works.

This inscrutability is an illusion, however, since, by studying his back the secretary can tell whom he is writing to. His body language reveals the addressee to be the Tsar. By adopting the secretary's viewpoint, the reader is thus put into the privileged position of a lawful spy, and for a moment the reader becomes himself the omniscient narrator. Tynianov makes a splendid

⁴⁵⁷ Chubarov, A. *The Fragile Empire: A History of Imperial Russia* (NY, 1999), 50.

⁴⁵⁸ Seton-Watson, H. *The Russian Empire 1801-1917* (Oxford, 1967), 102.

⁴⁵⁹ Korff, M. *Zhizn' gr. Speranskogo* (St Petersburg, 1861).

⁴⁶⁰ See his *Michael Speransky: Statesman of Imperial Russia 1772-1839* (The Hague, 1969).

⁴⁶¹ Tynianov was by no means the first or the only novelist to apply himself to the task, following in the famous footsteps of Tolstoy, L. (*War and Peace*), D. Merezhkovsky, *Aleksandr Pervyi*, 2 vols. (1911-1913) and Tynianov's contemporary, the émigré author I. Nazhivin, *Vo dni Pushkina* (1930).

attempt to soften the remote figure of Speransky and give bureaucracy a human face. The allusion to the large English clock and the old English housekeeper, Mistress Stephens (in actual fact, Speransky's mother-in-law), who 'moved angrily about the house in her soft shoes'(197), has the sudden effect of personalising the situation, bringing it into the sphere of human relationships and opening a window into Speransky's tragic past:

Десять лет назад, когда он был экспедитором, незначительным чиновником, умерла после родов его жена-англичанка. Не взглянув на ребенка, он ушел из дому и пропал две недели. Он не был на погребении жены, и все считали его погибшим. Вернулся он домой в виде истерзанном, мокрый и грязный. Глаза его блуждали. Из всех живых существ он замечал только свою дочь. Он молчал с месяц, а потом стал ходить в должность. Он никогда не заходил в комнату покойной. Сердце его было разбито, и жизнь, казалось, кончена. В действительности она только начиналась (197-8).

This is the man who now, Tynianov reminds us, shoulders the responsibility for the entire state, the Tsar having virtually 'leased the state to him' (203). Consequently, 'his power was enormous and its boundaries blurred'(198), with the inevitable result that he had many enemies: he is damned by the nobility, cursed by the clerks, despised by the courtiers. Tynianov builds up the picture of a man capable of powerful feelings who has been forced by circumstances to retreat into himself, leading a life of austerity and unlikely to be bribed. The avoidance of society, the refusal to entertain guests, the simple but cosy house, the smallness of the study, in spite of such vast power, and the life of a Spartan – all this, is suggested by the detail.

The entire profile is that of a man who has substituted work for life, his inner self having been damaged. Paradoxically, however, the outer world of political power is presented as a joyless façade, a view which Tynianov once again enforces by making the reader look out from the study window, this time through Speransky's eyes, at the architectural symbols of power, 'the desolate frozen Tauride Gardens' and behind the trees 'Prince Potemkin's squat palace... its windows barred... snowed up, like an empty theatre after the performance is over and the travelling actors have left'(198).

Possibly with Viazemsky's apt remark in mind ('Petersburg is the stage, and the spectators are in Moscow; the former performs, the latter judges'),⁴⁶² Tynianov implies here that politics are performance, power an empty act, the state a theatre. Tynianov hints proleptically at the motif of mighty favourites falling out of favour, Speransky's own future fate.⁴⁶³ Was Tynianov thinking here in terms of 'subjunctive history' of what *might* have happened if Speransky's reforms had succeeded? The Decembrists (a theme that fascinated and obsessed

⁴⁶² Quoted in Martin, Op. cit., 58.

⁴⁶³ The similarities between the two statesmen are striking as regards their organizational and administrative genius, their visionary and utopian qualities, their exalted piety and admiration for Hellenistic culture, all inspired by the challenging projects which lay before them. (See Zorin, Op. cit., 38, 130.) Speransky however differs from Potemkin in his indifference to luxury and dislike of 'hyperbolically lavish ceremonies'.

Tynianov throughout his creative life) might then never have been. One could follow this line of thought as far as the 1917 Revolution – which again might never have taken place, had Speransky's programme of gradual liberal reforms been allowed to proceed along the route of the Napoleonic *Rechtsstaat* governed by a meritocratic bureaucracy under the rule of an enlightened monarch.⁴⁶⁴ There is no telling how Russian history *might* have developed had his policies succeeded, but the sense of Aleksandr I missing an opportunity which presented itself so urgently is palpable in the novel at this point.

Pursuing his cinematic handling of the scene, Tynianov allows us proper sight of the Minister only when he stops writing and rises from the desk, which he does 'at once', emphasising once again the idea of his machine-like efficiency:

Он был высок ростом, с длинными руками, ширококостый. Лицо его было белое, лоб покатый, а глаза полузакрытые, китайские (198).

Apart from the 'damp smile' that he gives his secretary, 'baring the gums with the firm yellow teeth' (199), this is all we ever learn of Speransky's physical exterior. True to his method, the author is far more interested in the inner man. We learn, for example, how 'he hated the chaos of war' because 'it was like some vast accident with unforeseen consequences' (200), disturbing his carefully conceived designs and taking absolute control out of his hands. Tynianov employs a visual metaphor to illuminate this notion. Speransky has just thrown into the fire a letter naming Karamzin as the author of the latest petition to the Emperor about the oppression of the nobles. He takes the tongs and pokes the fire with his usual efficiency, 'neatly ... arranging the coals and watching them slowly turn to ashes'. His fear of losing power is then expressed in a stream of consciousness metaphor, which has been transformed from the fireplace to his mind:

Война путала все планы и нарушала размеры. Он был человек статский: произойди война, и система его - уголь и прах. Война предстояла решительная, и он не сомневался в поражении и гибели всего (200).

This is typically Tynianovian, a simple and telling stroke: external and internal are held together, the disintegrating coals and Speransky's thoughts about disintegrating power portrayed in parallel, perfectly logically: looking into the fire, this is what the man naturally thinks, his thoughts influenced by what he actually sees.

The scene ends with an unexpected touch when Speransky takes *Don Quixote* from the shelf, opens it entirely at random, the action revealing how often he has read it. This uncharacteristic choice of favourite reading matter reflects a deeper truth: Cervantes' famous novel is about an idealist and his futile desire to change reality. Speransky's own most recent

⁴⁶⁴ Martin, Op. cit., 43.

quixotic scheme is 'a special Lycée for all classes'. Speransky who attaches huge importance to his 'special' relationship with the Tsar also finds a certain parallel between himself and the hero of the novel:

Дружба толстого Панса с сухопарым дворянином была самой высокой поэзией, какую он знал (200).

Employing montage, Tynianov intercuts the scene with a companion portrait of the Tsar, before flashing back to the Minister's study, where he is shown receiving guests, not socially but on business: Illichevskii, his former fellow-seminarian whom he has just appointed Governor of Tomsk; old Samborskii, the Tsar's former confessor, and his son-in-law Malinovskii. Illichevskii's son will be a pupil at the new Lycée; Malinovskii will be its headmaster. The characters, major and minor, from tsar to schoolboy, are introduced and assembled in their natural settings, creating the illusion of complete plausibility, as Tynianov shows here his continuing fondness for combining the roles of dramatist and camera-man, along with his more conventional novelistic role as narrator.⁴⁶⁵

Withdrawn from society and remaining 'a lonely wolf in the jungle of the court and government',⁴⁶⁶ Speransky is portrayed by Tynianov as someone who actually *liked* to associate with old friends even though this may have been because of his constant need to be reassured, admired and respected by his social inferiors, his need to feel superior and in control.

Ironically, Illichevskii, characterised as a grasper, is about to take up his post in Tomsk where, as if to emphasise the impossible nature of the task, part of his mandate will be to eradicate bribery and corruption. Tynianov had clearly brought Illichevskii into the scene as a representation of the old Russian vice of which the next generation will be purged through a proper education.

The Tsar's brothers, in Speransky's idealistic opinion, should provide an example to the nobility by entering a special college where they would not be allowed access to the court, with its corrupting sycophancy. Their classmates, selected from all classes, would become a new breed of civil servants who would work selflessly for the good of their country. A new 'race' of people will thus be created, free of 'bribery and corruption, laziness and opportunism' (Ibid).

⁴⁶⁵ Tynianov might with ample justification have applied to himself the line *I am a Camera*, which was the title given to John Von Druten's dramatization of Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939). Isherwood, whose early literary influences like stream of consciousness overlapped with Tynianov's, lived in Berlin from 1929 to 1933. Tynianov was in Berlin in 1928 to consult the doctors at the same time as Nabokov, who was also in Berlin around this time. (His novella *Sogliadatai*, meaning 'the watcher' or 'spy' is set in Berlin in late 1920's, employs a number of 'voyeuristic techniques' or 'mirror reflections' and explores the notion of arriving at a picture of a conclusive identity). The 'camera' analogy between Isherwood and Tynianov is, however, only partially valid. In the opening of his book Isherwood writes: 'I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking.' *Goodbye to Berlin*, (Penguin, 1973), 7. By contrast, Tynianov's use of his photographic technique is always thought-through and executed with *active* precision.

⁴⁶⁶ Raeff, Op. cit., 27.

Illichevskii, senior and junior, are a concrete example of both problem and solution, the rationale and justification for the entire project. The new breed would be separated from their families, treated equally themselves and treating each other as equals, just as they did at the original Lycée in ancient Greece.

С разумом ясным и открытым, лишённые косных привычек их отцов, выходили из этой школы для служения государству и отечеству молодые люди, умные и прямые, угадывающие *его* мысли (my italics); они окружали его, стареющего. Главные места заполнялись ими (Ibid).

The grand irony behind Speransky's idealism is that he is aiming for purity and freedom from nepotism, and yet the winners of the high posts will all be *his* children, the Lycée *his* brainchild.

We shall never know whether Tynianov's window into the workings of Speransky's mind is a 'true' view of that particular mentality but what is certain is that Tynianov's portrait carries the authenticity and conviction of *literary* truth: the entire scene, characters and surroundings, are almost tangible in their immediacy and detailed credibility: the Minister's clothes ('a smoke-coloured tailcoat and white stockings in the English fashion'(206)); the locked bureau containing the plan for a didactic novel; Illichevskii's greedy fingers unconsciously stroking the base of one of the silver candlesticks and the Minister's knowing smile of observance; Speransky pacing the study alone, the only one awake, 'in his great soundless steps'(214); the frozen darkness outside where some shadow lurks, darts briefly and disappears – drunkard, thief or spy; and the symbolically dead palace of Potemkin, whom Speransky addresses enigmatically at the end of the scene. All this is accompanied by an impressive appeal to the senses – textures and colours, shapes and styles, odours and sounds (the muffled clock, Speransky cracking his knuckles) giving the reader a vivid sense of actually *being* there.

A warning note of Speransky's fall is already sounded in this section. No matter how much the Emperor seems to be persuaded by Speransky's eloquence, 'no sooner had the Minister left than his logic crumbled into ashes' (209), -- the imagery of ashes being a verbal echo of the fire-poking episode in the earlier scene. We next hear of him in Kunitsyn's Journal, looking 'paler, thinner, icier' (265), and shortly afterwards 'arrested as a criminal [and] taken to an unknown destination' (287). His political views and his personal aspirations were little understood and considered suspect. According to Razumovskii's inconsistent assertions referred to in the novel, he was a *Jacobin* who aspired *to ascend the throne*. The logic of this claim appears particularly warped since the incessant search for enemies and conspiracies was precisely a Jacobin practice.⁴⁶⁷ And although he was generally referred to as a republican, the

⁴⁶⁷ Zorin, Op. cit., 177.

truth was that Speransky's reforms threatened many of the vested interests of his conservative opponents.

Tynianov sustains the fire imagery:

Мать нашего лицейского, госпожа Бакунина, говорила при свидании сыну, что близ [Сперанского] всегда ей казалось, что она слышит серный запах, а в его глазах видела синеву адского пламени (288).⁴⁶⁸

The imagery takes a diabolical twist with the allusion to Lucifer or Mephistopheles – after all, it was widely believed that Speransky was favoured by the arch-devil himself, Bonaparte. On the day of Speransky's fall the staff at the Lycée were thunderstruck, and behaved abnormally, pale, taciturn, distressed, each according to his personality:

Только дядьки по-прежнему растапливали печи, отдирая с треском бересту и ворча: печи дымили (312).

This kind of comic parody of a visual metaphor that has been consistently attached to one character in particular is easy to miss in a novel. The sophisticated reader of Tynianov, alert to his filmic mentality, learns to be aware of such touches: Speransky has figuratively gone up in smoke.⁴⁶⁹

Much of what is known historically of Speransky has been unobtrusively mediated to us in this portrait. Tynianov never makes the reader feel that he is being historically 'informed', however; he makes general information an integral part of each individual story. So, for example, Vigel' records that Speransky had the expression *d'un veau expirant*,⁴⁷⁰ and this unflattering and indeed repulsive metaphor is matched by what Tynianov says about his pale face with its half-shut oriental eyes (198), the wet grin, the yellow teeth, the bared gums (199).

Many found Speransky's reforming measures equally unattractive but, as a modern historian has pointed out, this was due to a 'generalized opposition to him as an agent of social change, rather than specific criticism of individual policies'.⁴⁷¹ Speransky was summarily sacked and banished from the capital after an audience with the Emperor on 17th March 1812. This did not spell the end of his career, but it put an end to his period of power and to his reforms. After the March meeting the Tsar reportedly said, in his characteristically melodramatic fashion: 'Last

⁴⁶⁸ These words actually belong to F. Vigel' who hated Speransky. He saw him as a 'secret enemy of Orthodoxy, autocracy and Russia, and within it, one class especially – the nobles': 'I always thought that I could smell a sulphuric odour and that in his blue eyes I could see the greenish flame of the underworld.' Wiegel, F. *Zapiski* (Moscow, 1928), 154-7. For Bakunina's memoir see 'Dvenadtsatyi god v zapiskakh V. Iv. Bakuninoi' in *Russkaia starina* (1885), No. 9).

⁴⁶⁹ The parodistic technique seen at work here is similar to that used by Ch. Marlowe in *Dr Faustus*, a work in which power is also associated with 'the reek of sulphur'. At the conclusion of the drama *Faustus*, the power-seeker, quite literally disappears in smoke and sulphur. Even if Tynianov had not been aware of the parallel to Marlowe, he could have known it from Goethe's *Faust*. The major point of difference would be that Speransky's power was directed to liberal rather than to selfish ends. Nonetheless, Tynianov's portrait is that of a man who clearly relishes his power because, like Faust, his life has become empty, and it is power which fills the vacuum, or so he likes to imagine.

⁴⁷⁰ Vigel', a sharp commentator mirroring the general mood of the times, accused Speransky of indifference, insincerity and hypocrisy.

⁴⁷¹ Martin, Op. cit., 55

night they took Speransky away from me, and he has been my right hand.⁴⁷² The comment reveals an autocrat who was not really in control and much at the mercy of other forces and is in exact correspondence with the picture of the Tsar offered by Tynianov.

Speransky's removal from power was a victory for the conservative reformers who feature in the novel, Karamzin, Shishkov, Rostopchin and Razumovskii. The latter, recently appointed Minister of Education, was himself the son of a herdsman who had risen to become one of the major grandees: his Moscow house resembled a boyar's palace, surrounded by a garden that stretched for three miles, with rare fish swimming in its ponds. This 'enlightened' sadist and misanthrope, as Tynianov portrays him, did not regard his servants and clerks, or even ordinary noblemen, as human beings. He had rid himself of his wife and son by confining them in the Schlüsselburg Fortress, leaving himself free to live 'in a proud solitude that frightened the bustling city', as Tynianov puts it so picturesquely, adding that 'the count's cruelty was the gossip of Moscow' (219).

This rather chilling portrait of the inner man is complemented by the exact physical detail describing this repellent relic of the past,⁴⁷³ which brings him startlingly to life:

французский говор старика – выговор старого маркиза, его усмешка, почти плотоядная, худые руки, игравшие лорнионом, его сутулый зыбкий стан, который казался станом маркиза (219).

Although his only confidant, De Maistre, is aware of the Minister's dubious pedigree, he has to admit – and here Tynianov allows his satire to become unusually scathing – 'that the Minister behaved like a real aristocrat – childishly cruel, learned and frivolous' (221). De Maistre meets him to discuss the Lycée scheme and falls victim to one of his friend's acts of childish cruelty. This man, who so hates his fellow creatures, nourishes an ironical tenderness for plants. Even his conversation is coloured by horticulture:

В наружности всех этих семинаристов, - сказал он [referring to Speransky], - есть нечто древовидное, но они, не правда ли, лишены достоинства деревьев – молчаливости (221).

But even in nature Razumovskii enjoys mostly the cruel aspect. His favourite is a new species of prickly juniper called *Razoumovskia*:

Родительское чувство граф питал именно к этому растению, носившему его имя, а не к дочери (219).

This sounds almost hopeful, as if the old man had discovered in the natural world a beauty and innocence that he was unable to find in people, an outlet for the paternal instincts,

⁴⁷² Cited by Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovich, quoted in Raeff, *Op. cit.*, 191.

⁴⁷³ His uncle had been so-called the Night Emperor of Russia – the favourite and secret husband of Empress Elizabeth.

which his own son had not managed to release. Tynianov presents it as ironical that a man of such sadistic qualities should have been placed in charge of the Russian education system.

Tynianov uses De Maistre to portray Razumovskii further as an opponent of progress and of Speransky's reforms. When they retreat to the conservatory or lock themselves up in the Minister's library, the *ancien régime* is reborn in their minds, as if there had never been any Revolution or any Bonaparte. At the very mention of Speransky's name his face fills with hatred. This is the man to whom Alexander has now passed Speransky's memorandum about the Lycée and who, in spite of the Emperor's promise, will eventually take it under his control.

The re-worked proposal offered by this reactionary pair was astonishingly politically backward, though they were scarcely lone voices in the Europe and Russia of 1810. The Tsar did not follow the proffered advice, though he approved of some of the minor detail.

Созданы ли русские для знания? Они еще ничем этого не доказали... Знание и разум делают человека вообще неспособным к великим предприятиям, презирающим мнения других, критиком властей, нововводителем. Знание для России не нужно, государство разорвется на школы, а они пустуют. Школы - это прекрасные гостиницы в стране, по которой никто не путешествует. Там набивают головы юношам хламом лишних предметов, из которых самое вредное для ума молодого - изложение систем, история отвлеченных понятий.

Для России, как страны воинственной, вообще науки не только бесполезны, но и вредны. Они лишают мужества. Лучшие воспитатели - священство, разумеется не русское, полуграмотное. Новые воспитательные учреждения должны быть устроены по образцу иезуитских новициатов; у юношества не должно быть никаких сношений с внешним миром. Они должны жить как бы на острове. Юноши должны быть гибки и послушны. Надзиратели должны следить за ними непрерывно (222).

Tynianov has demonstrated something that does not always emerge from Pushkin's biographies: an indication of the kind of education that he *might* have had, if things had taken a different turn. He also provides insight into the complex and contradictory political forces and personalities that were at work behind the setting-up of the Lycée. Through his analysis of opposing historical forces, Tynianov explores problems of human probability and reality, so-called counterfactual history, '*несостоявшаяся история*' (Vatsuro), which throws into sharp relief the problematics of the accidental.⁴⁷⁴ Eidel'man gives credence to such an approach in his claim that

what has not taken place, without doubt is of a considerable historical interest as one of the possibilities, as a tendency, as a sign of some existing force or an opinion, albeit not a triumphant [*победоносный*] one.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁴ Vatsuro, V. E. 'Iz razyskaniï o Pushkine' in *Vremennik Pushkinskoi komissii*, 1972 (Leningrad, 1974), 100-104.

⁴⁷⁵ Eidel'man, N. *Pushkin. Istoriia i sovremennost' v khudozhestvennom soznanii poeta* (Moscow, 1984), 215. The topic of alternative history has recently gained considerable prominence. The major part of 2004 March issue of the US Historical Society's journal was devoted to counterfactual modelling. See Cowley, R. 'When do counterfactuals work?' in *Historically Speaking*, V, 4, Evans, R. 'Telling it like it wasn't' in *Historically Speaking* (2003), V, 4, Lebow, R. 'Good history needs counterfactuals' in *Historically Speaking*, V, 4. In Russia the ideas have been in circulation for some time, see, for instance, Toinbi, A. 'Esli by Aleksandr ne umer togda...' in *Znanie – sila* (1979), 2 and more recently, Modestov, S. *Bytie svershivshegosia* (Moscow, 2000); Nazaretian, A. 'Znaet li istoriia soslagatel'noe naklonenie? (Megaistoricheskiï vzgliad na al'ternativnye modeli)' in *Filosofskie nauki* (2005), 2.

Tynianov's view of history is sensitive to the accidentalities and potentialities of individual actions and the overall historical process, as well as to a creative resolution of an erroneous action, i.e. the hidden potential of a mistake. With this concept of history in mind Tynianov makes his characters go through unique individual stages inextricably linked with the historical context of human lives:

Становление человека дается в неразрывной связи с историческим становлением. Становление человека совершается в реальном историческом времени с его необходимостью, с его полнотой, с его будущим, с его глубокой хромотопичностью.⁴⁷⁶

The tension between probabilities and necessities and the questions of free will and forming destinies are thus thrust to the fore.

Tynianov's novel, sensitive to the subtlest cultural developments resulting from historical changes, devotes particular attention to the interweaving of individual lives and the national destiny, the sometimes strange and eccentric interlocking of the private with public life at large. Grounding as he did his practice on theoretical foundations, Tynianov adheres to the postulates of Ranke and Humboldt, that, by contemplating the particular [*Betrachtung des Einzelnen*], the way opens for the historian (and, in Tynianov's case, for the historical novelist) to recognise the 'course which ... the world in general has taken' (Humboldt). In this way, the uniqueness and spontaneity of the agents of history embody the total unpredictability of historical events.⁴⁷⁷

Unlike a writer such as Tolstoy, who guides the reader through the story, explicating, lecturing and hectoring as he goes, Tynianov makes few concessions to his reader. The entire architectonics of the novel, the complexities of its structure, the system of leitmotifs and associations, are deliberately arranged by the author to challenge the reader. Even when he begins with an introductory piece of narrative on conventional lines, he soon departs from this and confronts the reader with a number of alternative narrative modes, thus challenging his expectations by a deliberate angularity of approach which forces the reader to find out where the many paths are leading. While there were other writers who wrote in that mode in the 1920's (Vaginov, Olesha), by the mid-30's when most of these voices were silent, Tynianov's ambiguities, even at his stage of cautious and necessary self-censorship, appeared to teeter on the brink of the permissible. Owing to his training as an historian, who is used to a distanced approach to characters and events he appears to be much more sensitive than other writers of his

⁴⁷⁶ Bakhtin, Op. cit., 213.

⁴⁷⁷ See W. Humboldt's 'The idealistic theory of historiography' in von Ranke, L. *The Theory and Practice of History* (eds and trans.) Iggers, W. A. and von Moltke, K. (New York, 1983) [Indianapolis, 1973], 3-24. The quotations are from p. 31 and *lv* in the same volume.

time to the many-sidedness of truth and its relativity in the perspective of time. Rather than proclaiming a message or a law, his concern was to illuminate the truth, as he saw it, that human life is a complex business and cannot be simplified, whether by politics, propaganda, sociology, literary trends – or even by writing itself which *had* to be difficult, to reflect the complexities of life.

Such an almost existentialist approach by Tynianov brought its own difficulties, preventing the reader from settling down into a comfortable reading mode. As the novel progresses the reader is kept on constant alert, constantly having to shift perspective, to re-think and revalue, as he is led ever deeper into the Tynianovian awareness that life can only be lived, interpreted, assessed and valued by the individual, and that it alters according to whether that individual is a poetic genius, a serf-woman, an emperor, a feckless father or the lonely wife of an isolated intellectual.

Adhering categorically to a particular perspective sets up a train of apparent illogicality in relation to the many other perspectives. Such an apparent disjointedness makes Tynianov's reader especially aware of the absence of 'correct' interpretations and ultimate absolutes; there are no absolute truths; instead there are (contradictory and conflicting) accounts of individual consciousnesses. This suspension of judgement and freedom from didacticism and tendentiousness (e.g. in I. Nazhivin's or L. Zilov's novels about Pushkin) or the 'catch-all' approach of I. Novikov is what makes Tynianov's novel so unique in the historical fiction of its time.

Chapter Four. Personal Myths and ‘Acceptable’ Ancestry in *Pushkin* and *The Gannibals*.

In an extract written in 1830 Pushkin expressed his personal sentiment when he wrote:

Дикость, подлость и невежество не уважает прошедшего, пресмыкаясь пред одним настоящим. И у нас иной потомок Рюрика более дорожит звездою двоюродного дядюшки, чем историей своего дома, т. е. историей отечества (VIII, 410).

Indeed, Pushkin himself was proud of the fact that his family name was mentioned in Karamzin’s *History of the Russian State* even though he was aware of the murder, madness and domestic abuse that marred his ancestry on both his mother’s and father’s side. Each lineage was precious to him, especially the maternal, though it was from his father’s line that he took the nobility of which he was so proud. In his lifetime he was often misunderstood and ridiculed by some of his contemporaries on account of what they believed to be inappropriate ‘aristocratic haughtiness’. The poet’s fascination with his 600-year old nobility and his insistence on presenting in his fiction a private view of history revealed first of all Pushkin’s strong claim to his right to history, as a man, an artist and an intellectual.⁴⁷⁸ Secondly, as was pointed out by Shklovsky:

Родовитость аристократа Пушкина условна и литературна. О ней без уважения говорит Вяземский, настоящий аристократ. Ганнибал – негр, большое место для аристократизма, с трудом исправляемое экзотикой. Аристократизм Пушкина связан с биографией Байрона и является частью его литературного облика.⁴⁷⁹

Pushkin’s pride in his ancestry coupled with a reference to his maternal progenitor as ‘*аранская роза*’⁴⁸⁰ betrayed his elusive, not to say ambivalent feelings towards his pedigree. His pride was mixed with loathing for those new-fangled nobles (‘*У нас нова рожденьем знатность/И чем новее, тем знатней*’),⁴⁸¹ who rose to power through its more dubious corridors. On his father’s side he traced his roots back to the ancient boyars who served with Alexander Nevsky and fought for their country,⁴⁸² though he admitted the features of his forebears that ‘got us all into trouble’ (*Упрямства дух нам всем подгадил*): intransigence, indomitability and arrogance of which the poet himself felt fully capable (‘*в родню свою неукротим*’). In spite of his ancestral pride, he personally was prepared to reconcile himself to

⁴⁷⁸ See Eidel’man, N. *Pushkin. Istoriia i sovremennost’ v khudozhestvennom soznanii poeta* (Moscow, 1984), 309, 322.

⁴⁷⁹ Shklovsky, V. *Gamburgskii schet* (1928), 12.

⁴⁸⁰ In a letter to L. S. Pushkin, 1825. Quoted in Gessen, A. *Vse volnovalo nezhenyi um... Pushkin sredi knig i druzei* (Moscow, 1965), 476. Pushkin thematized his ancestry consistently from 1823 (epigram on D. P. Severin) to 1836 (‘*Rodoslovnaia moego geroia*’, ‘*Kladbishche*’, ‘*Kapitanskaia dochka*’ and others).

⁴⁸¹ ‘*Moia rodoslovnaia*’ (1830).

⁴⁸² In his autobiographical sketch of 1834 he wrote ‘We are descended from the Prussian Radshi or Rachi, a highborn gentleman (‘an honest man’, the Chronicle described him), who settled in Russia during the reign of Aleksandr Nevsky...’ (VII, 246) ‘Though Pushkin claimed to be able to trace his ancestry on the paternal side back to the second half of the thirteenth century, the first to bear the family name was Konstantin Pushkin, born in the early fifteenth century, the younger son of a Grigorii Pushka.’ (Binyon, Op. cit., 8) Simmons points out that ‘the Pushkins had a right to the hereditary title of ‘boyar’ which belonged only to the highest officials of the state’, but further notes that ‘in the eighteenth century ... new stock coming from obscure provincial gentry pushed the descendants of the old boyars into the background. The Pushkins were among those families that lost their lustre and importance.’ (Simmons, *Pushkin*, 8-9).

the role of Russian intellectual rather than courtier, valued his autonomous status as writer and poet, and preferred independence to submission to the Tsar.

Pushkin's fearless delving into the darkest and most unseemly episodes of his ancestry is indicative of his keen interest in the historical role of his kin, his consciousness of family tradition and of the importance of finding one's own place as a link in this never-ending chain. As Pushkin saw it, ignorance of one's historical origins was just as deplorable as ashamedness of them:

Я без прискорбия никогда не мог видеть унижения наших исторических родов; никто у нас ими не дорожит, начиная с тех, которые им принадлежат... Прошедшее для нас не существует... Семейственные воспоминания дворянства должны быть историческими воспоминаниями народа. Говоря в пользу аристократии, я не корчу английского лорда, как дипломат Северин, внук портного и повара; мое происхождение, хоть я им и не стыжусь, не дает мне на то никакого права. Но я согласен с Лабрюером: *Affecter le mépris de la naissance est un ridicule dans le parvenu et une lâcheté dans le gentilhomme* (V, 413).⁴⁸³

Although biographers have traditionally been concerned with genealogy and family history, it remains unclear how much the early lives of a subject's parents and grandparents, these 'peripheral lives', really add to our understanding of the central figure.⁴⁸⁴ Early 20th-century biography was sensitised to investigating such questions by the development of Freudian and Jungian psychoanalytical techniques (which in themselves were a form of self-narrated analyses) together with theories of evolution (Darwin), psychology (Pavlov) and genetics (Mendel), which changed the way scientists examined questions of heredity and psychological motivation, and both biography and the novel came to reflect these profound changes.

Tracing the subject's ancestors is the biographer's habit, 'a well trodden route', which is 'instinctive and ingrained' since lineage was always a vitally important element of European culture. One's ancestry has always been of crucial interest 'due to its association not only with inheritance of titles and property but with notions of character'.⁴⁸⁵ Pushkin's maternal great-grandfather most certainly passed on to his Russian descendants the physical characteristics that can be seen in the famously negroid features of the poet. What non-physical traits Pushkin inherited, if any, from his ancestors on both sides is also an interesting question, and it is my intention to trace Tynianov's inferences in this regard in his novels *The Gannibals* and *Pushkin*. My other aim is to demonstrate the originality of Tynianov's interpretation of Pushkin's black ancestry and to determine the points of similarity and difference from Pushkin's own interpretation, as well as from his great-grandfather's, Abram Gannibal's. I will discuss the way Tynianov treats the sparse facts of Abram's early life in his fiction and how he recreates them in

⁴⁸³ 'Roman v pis'makh' (1829). See also Pushkin's own poetic admission: 'Два чувства дивно близки нам- /В них обретает сердце пищу -/Любовь к родному пепелищу,/Любовь к отеческим гробам.' (II, 481).

⁴⁸⁴ Peters, C. 'Secondary Lives: Biography in Context' in Batchelor, 47-49.

⁴⁸⁵ Ellis, D. *Literary Lives: Biography and the Search for Understanding* (Edinburgh, 2000), 40, 55.

what on the surface appears to be an ethnobiography. As it turns out, Abram's version of events is consistently subjected to ironical interrogation. Tynianov lays bare the archetypal structures that the Tsar's blackamoor employed in his so-called 'German biography' in order to cast his own life in an heroically enhanced and glamorised light.

As Northrop Frye argued in his essay 'The Koine of Myth: Myth as a Universally Intelligible Language'⁴⁸⁶ there is no such thing as pure historical truth, at least not when it is written down, since it is the chronicler, or historian who selects facts and arranges his material; the very process of telling the story invariably implies some degree of judgment on the historian's part. So, Frye argues that there will always be a sense in which history, written history, is 'untrue', that it is a fictional account with concomitant inevitable distortions of historical facts. He further suggests, and this is important for my argument, that the narrative that the historian finally presents – what Frye calls the 'sequential narrative which is not present in the non-verbal events themselves' – is the historian's *mythos*, i.e. his story, his plot. Frye's example is Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, whose very title, so Frye contends, 'indicates the mythical principle that controls the selection of material and various other factors, such as the tone used in presenting it'. Gibbon's 'mythos' contains an element of something imposed subjectively by himself, the historian, on the objective reality of the events and people he describes.

The Aristotelian notion of *mythos* is considerably wider than that and encompasses a plot in general – 'the soul of any literary work that was an imitation of an action,' the outline of events, the articulation of the skeleton of narrative. 'A myth, then, is a traditional plot which can be transmitted'.⁴⁸⁷ The idea of a repetitive imitation of a pattern is crucial to Aristotle's understanding of *mythos*. Depending on the pattern, historical facts can be construed as bearing various possible meanings. For, as H. White contends, one could tell any number of possible stories about the same event in the past with equal plausibility and without doing any violence to the factual records.⁴⁸⁸ The problem that the historical novelist/novelistic biographer encounters is the problem of the emplotment of his narrative and the interpretative meaning he is prepared to attach to it. 'Every history is first and foremost a verbal artefact, a product of a special kind of language use' and any historical interpretation is narrativization – events *happen* whereas facts are *constituted* by linguistic descriptions⁴⁸⁹ (my italics): history supplies us with *fabula*; while the

⁴⁸⁶ In his *Myth and Metaphor: Selected Essays 1924-98* (Virginia, 1990), 198.

⁴⁸⁷ Scholes, R. and Kellogg, R. *The Nature of Narrative* (New York, 1966), 12.

⁴⁸⁸ White, Op. cit., 71-73.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2, 18.

novel is a conversion of the *fabula* into a *siuzhet*.⁴⁹⁰ The events of the past therefore have to be narrativised (or fabulated) into a particular sequence whose meaning resides in its resemblance to timeless archetypal stories.⁴⁹¹ In this chapter I would argue that both the conscious and unconscious choice of such an archetypal structure can be revealing of the narrator's attitude to the characters and the meaning of the described events.

1. Maternal lineage in *Pushkin*

Writing 'My Genealogy' as he did in 1830 on the eve of his wedding, Pushkin's reflections on his ancestors' tempestuous private affairs appeared to occupy the poet's mind and seem starkly prophetic (II, 259-262). He knew that both his paternal great-grandfather and his grandfather had caused the deaths of their wives, and that the grandfather's second wife had almost undergone the same fate.⁴⁹² We meet her in Tynianov's novel as the mother of Pushkin's uncle Vasilii (b. 1767) and his father Sergei (b. 1770), both of whom carry on the tempestuous marriage-tradition of the Pushkins: Vasilii by taking up with the serf-girl Annushka on whom he begets an illegitimate child after scandalously divorcing his wife, and Sergei by visiting prostitutes and enjoying their pimp Pankrat'evna's cabbage soups, rather than fulfilling his responsibilities at home and enduring his wife's jealous rages.⁴⁹³

The biographer typically records or recounts ancestral details in footnotes and in the preliminary paragraphs of chapters; Tynianov's method, with regard to his hero's paternal ancestry, is to provide telling glimpses into the essence of his characters' intergenerational relations, in order to underline the features of similarity and difference between them. Sergei L'vovich's monthly visit to Ogorodnaia Sloboda to see his mother Olga Vasil'evna, who apparently gave birth to him in a coach outside Moscow,⁴⁹⁴ is employed by the author to

⁴⁹⁰ Oskotskii, Op. cit., 280.

⁴⁹¹ White, Op. cit., 73.

⁴⁹² 'Прадед мой Александр Петрович был женат на меньшей дочери графа Головина, первого андреевского кавалера. Он умер весьма молод, в припадке сумасшествия зарезав свою жену, находившуюся в родах. Он был посажен в крепость и выпущен через два года. С тех пор он уже в службу не вступал и жил в Москве и в своих деревнях. Дед мой был человек пылкий и жестокий. Первая жена его, урожденная Воейкова, умерла на соломе, заключенная им в домашнюю тюрьму за мнимую или настоящую ее связь с французом, бывшим учителем его сыновей, и которого он весьма феодально повесил на черном дворе.' (VII, 246)

⁴⁹² Pushkin's anxiety and his feeling of doom regarding his marital happiness are revealed in a letter he wrote on the eve of his unsuccessful bid for the hand of Sof'ia Pushkina: '...я содрогаюсь при мысли о судьбе, которая, быть может, ее ожидает - содрогаюсь при мысли, что не смогу сделать ее столь счастливой, как мне хотелось бы. Жизнь моя, доселе такая кочующая, такая бурная, характер мой - неровный, ревнивый, подозрительный, резкий и слабый одновременно - вот что иногда наводит на меня тягостные раздумья. - Следует ли мне связать с судьбой столь печальной, с таким несчастным характером - судьбу существа, такого нежного, такого прекрасного?' (quoted in Volovich, N. *Pushkinskie mesta Moskvy i Podmoskov'ia* (Moscow, 1979, 47.)

⁴⁹³ For the factual account see Rozanov, I. I. 'Semeinye bezobrazii bylogo vremeni (rasstorzhenie braka V. L. Pushkina) in *Russkii arkhiv* (1894), No. 12, 554-5.

⁴⁹⁴ Pushkin wrote: 'Вторая жена его, урожденная Чичерина, довольно от него натерпелась. Однажды велел он ей одеться и ехать с ним куда-то в гости. Бабушка была на сносях и чувствовала себя нездоровой, но не смела отказаться. Дорогой

introduce a fair amount of background genealogical data in the innocuous guise of a domestic scene.

Tynianov introduces Olga Vasil'evna with characteristic concision, the short sentences creating the impression of a tough old lady and a petty domestic tyrant compensating for the powerless subjugation she had to endure while her husband had been alive. Tynianov then brings the past into the present through that simple but effective Romantic device: of a locked door and forbidden room indicating a mystery or a well kept secret. This is the room where Lev Aleksandrovich had spent his last years after sinking into madness. Like the tracks made by her father's wardrobe on Nadezhda's bedroom floor, the locked door in Olga Vasil'evna's house is the concrete symbol of Sergei L'vovich's fear of the past. As if by tacit agreement, neither son ever brought up with their stern old mother the subject of their mad father.

Только подслеповатые лакеи иногда под вечер или ночью, когда не спалось, говорили о нем. Человек он был пылкий и жестокий и первую жену уморил из ревности к итальянцу-учителю, взятому в дом. Она умерла в его домашней тюрьме, в подвале, на соломе, в цепях. Итальянцу же он учинил такие непорядочные побои, что тот тут же на месте и умер (56).

Paradoxically, the father whom the sons were afraid to recall even in daylight is thus elevated almost to the realm of legend.

Soon after his son's death Sergei L'vovich himself would strenuously deny the story, which was so damaging to his father's memory.⁴⁹⁵ Alexander Pushkin's keen interest in the lives of his ancestors and his search for predecessors among his great-grand- and grandfathers stood in sharp contrast to his own father's attitude, who was obviously reluctant to discuss 18th-century events, considering life then savage and uncouth, and disapproving of that age's ignorance and crude patriarchal ways.⁴⁹⁶

So, he reduces the hanging to a beating and changes the nationality of the unfortunate tutor from French to Italian so as to emphasise the spontaneous nature and method of the murder which would better reflect his grandfather's fiery nature. Manipulating the available sources, Tynianov as always interprets the incident in the light which would most tellingly characterise the person and the epoch in question. In a novelistic account he obviously preferred a more obvious crime of passion to a cold-blooded execution, despite Pushkin's own testimony in the autobiographical sketch. Significantly the incident itself is indicative of a hereditary readiness to act on mere suspicion of marital disloyalty, as Pushkin himself would do.

она почувствовала муки. Дед мой велел кучеру остановиться, и она в карете разрешилась - чуть ли не моим отцом. Родильницу привезли домой полумертвую и положили на постелю всю разряженную и в бриллиантах.' (VII, 247)

⁴⁹⁵ For the full text of his letter to the *Son of the Fatherland*, published in 1840, and its discussion see Eidel'man's brilliant study, *Op. cit.*, 12-15.

⁴⁹⁶ Levkovich, Ia. 'Pushkin v rabote nad 'Zapiskamki'' in *Russkaia literatura* (1982), No. 2, pp. 141-148. Eidel'man has pointed out that this search had been complicated by the habitual at the time dearth of fundamental historical studies, the embryonic state of the memoir genre, harsh censorship and lack of access to state archives. *Op. cit.*, 21-44.

Pushkin's paternal grandfather is presented by Sergei L'vovich as a fearless man who resigned from the artillery after the assassination of Peter III, refused to recognise Catherine the Great and was incarcerated for two years, after which, the narrator tells us, he 'squandered his fortune in bouts of rage and rancour, directed either at himself or others' (56). But in Tynianov's version, fearlessness and obduracy are not just Pushkin character traits: they obviously have direct social and historical reasons, manifesting the wish to be independent and to make personal choices, as well as readiness to suffer for one's convictions and beliefs.

The narrator's mention of Aleksandr L'vovich's other passions (such as expensive horses) is another proleptic image, a point of similarity with his grandson. As we shall see, during his Lycée years the poet Pushkin impressed the military-minded Lycée inspector Frolov with his horse riding, the instinctive confidence of the true horseman, and the unhesitating obedience which he commanded of the horses (419). This inherited equestrian skill seems to have come from his paternal ancestors as did other, less appealing traits. For example, we are confronted by the notion that the poet Pushkin's notorious black furies, though not visibly inherited from his foppish father, may nonetheless have passed to him from the genes of more distant ancestors. Tynianov thus subverts the racial explanation of Pushkin's 'African' temperament: the older Pushkins could just as well have passed it down to their grandchild.

One irony brought out by Tynianov is that the grandfather's widow, Olga Vasil'evna, now misses her strong-willed husband. By comparison her sons prove to be a disappointment ('сыновья не в него, мелки; сыновья - прыгуны' (57)): in a strange sort of way she might have been glad had they also indulged in colossal drinking bouts, riotous rages or other extremes. (The implication is that she retained a semblance of respect for the larger-than-life husband about whom at least there was nothing petty.) These genetic and family implications, included by Tynianov in the description of Sergei L'vovich's routine courtesy call to Ogorodnaia Sloboda, are made to appear a natural part of the story and provide a clear instance of the author's talent for transmuting raw information into the narrative sweep of the tale. He humanizes the episode and treats it comically, employing laughter as an emotionally charged aesthetic critique which underlines the incongruousness of the ideals and the reality.

In light of the facts concerning Pushkin's paternal ancestry, Sergei L'vovich's snobbish pride is ironically misplaced, and Tynianov satirises his verbiage. Thus, Sergei L'vovich loftily explains to Petr Abramovich the choice of his son's name 'after his great-grandfather, Aleksandr Petrovich, the founder of the family's prosperity' (not Aleksandr the Great or Gannibal, the finest military leaders in history). By that time the reader already knows that this noble founder of the family's fortunes (which exists only in Sergei L'vovich's imagination) was a murderer. As

for Pushkin's grandfather, Lev Aleksandrovich, Sergei L'vovich later describes him to his son as 'a person of rare spirit... the darling of society' and proudly shows him the roll of documents testifying to his pedigree. It is important for Sergei L'vovich to present the story in the most respectful and appropriate light, so he underlines the importance of these family papers:

Твой дед эту грамотой вовсе уволен от службы, в абшид за болезнями. Это было, впрочем, более дело государственное (91).

In reality Pushkin's grandfather was imprisoned by the new monarch, Catherine the Great, who had secured the Russian throne after a *coup d'état* and assassination of her husband. The society darling – of no consequence whatsoever to the nation except in Sergei L'vovich's mind – had died, unwanted and forgotten, imprisoned in his own house.

2. Black Ancestry in *The Gannibals*

Having decided to begin with Pushkin's ancestors, Tynianov realised that he had very few facts to deal with, and that even these would require an enormous stretch of the imagination to qualify as 'factual'. They were mostly family legends and anecdotes, which often sacrificed truth for colourful detail. Some of them were almost entirely falsifications (incorrect dates, wrong names, unclear geography etc).⁴⁹⁷ To analyse the existing accounts of Pushkin's great-grandfather's life, to purify them of the elements of fantasy and wishful thinking and to reconstruct these scanty facts into a narrative paradigm which would be both verisimilar and persuasive – these were just a few of the problems Tynianov had to face.

Although Pushkin's maternal line cannot be traced as far back as his father's, it is more thickly clustered with detail. Simmons heaped ridicule on the amusing abandon with which writers allowed their imaginations to run riot on the subject of the negro blood passed on to Pushkin by his mother, a strain supposed to explain now his wild imagery and sense of rhythm as a poet, now his passionate nature and insane jealousies as a man.⁴⁹⁸

Modern biographers praise Abram highly indeed:

That a blackamoor, without relations, wealth or property, should have risen to this position, is in the highest degree extraordinary: so remarkable, indeed, as to argue a character far beyond the common, one that was more than justified in appropriating the name and reputation of the great Carthaginian.⁴⁹⁹

This is a view not shared by Nabokov who, not unlike Tynianov, sums up Pushkin's progenitor as

⁴⁹⁷ Teletova, N. 'A. P. Gannibal: On the Occasion of the 300-th Anniversary of the Birth of A. Pushkin's Great-Grandfather' in *Under the Sky*, 48.

⁴⁹⁸ Simmons, Op. cit., 8.

⁴⁹⁹ Binyon, Op. cit., 6.

a sour, grovelling, crotchety, timid, ambitious and cruel person; a good military engineer perhaps, but humanistically a nonentity; differing in nothing from a typical career-minded, superficially educated, coarse, wife-flogging Russian of his day, in a brutal and dull world of political intrigue, favouritism, Germanic regimentation, old-fashioned Russian misery, and fat-breasted empresses on despicable thrones.⁵⁰⁰

And yet Hannibal's proved to be a story which would inspire both the poet and numerous scholars.⁵⁰¹

In his lifetime, Pushkin's great-grandfather Abram Petrovich Gannibal (Ibrahim originally) made a few astonishing claims about his own persona: that he belonged to an African aristocracy; that his genealogy penetrated deep into world and even Old Testament history (he claimed to be related to Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and through them to King David himself!), and that he was a direct descendent of the famous Hannibal of Carthage. His main claim, though, was that he had enjoyed the close guardianship and companionship of Tsar Peter the Great who was also his godfather (hence, according to Abram, his patronymic – Petrovich). Most often and persistently he claimed to be the son of an Abyssinian prince whose sovereign power had been curtailed by the Turks, to whom he was in the position of a kind of vassal, and who constantly invaded his country. Around 1703 the father attacked his Turkish overlords, lost the battle, and Abram, along with other young noblemen, was sent as hostage to Constantinople, where he spent a year in the sultan's seraglio. In later life he recalled poignantly how his sister, Lagan or Lahann, (they were the only two siblings from the same mother) had thrown herself into the sea in the wake of the ship that was carrying him off, and drowned in her despair.

Abram's petition of February 1742 stated unequivocally that he was 'from Africa, of the high nobility there, was born in the town of Lagon in the domain of my father'.⁵⁰² Although Lagon has traditionally been placed in Ethiopia, recent conjecture tends to locate it in the north-east corner of the present state of Cameroon.⁵⁰³ Tynianov's novel *The Gannibals* of which he wrote an introduction and one chapter, provides a striking portrait of Abram's father, Bakharnegash Isaak, draws the picture of life in the principality of Lagon and describes the circumstances of the seven-year old boy's abduction from his native land. By placing Lagon on the shores of the Red Sea Tynianov appears to indicate his support for the Gannibals' biographical legend. It is unclear whether Tynianov believed the veracity of this claim or adhered to this version because it added more plausibility to Abram's story: undoubtedly the boy

⁵⁰⁰ Nabokov, *Eugene Onegin*, III, 438.

⁵⁰¹ The last fifteen years have seen a surge of interest in Pushkin's black ancestry, which coincided with the celebration in 1996 of the tercentenary of A. Gannibal's birth and the bicentenary of that of his famous great-grandson. Nabokov devoted sixty pages of notes in his edition of *Eugene Onegin* to the subject, but until or unless future research proves further information, no true or final picture is likely to emerge concerning the early years of A. P. Gannibal.

⁵⁰² The petition is extant, and is quoted by Nabokov with his own comment. (See Nabokov, *Op. cit.*, III, 398).

⁵⁰³ Modern research locates Abram's birthplace just south of Lake Chad. See Gnamankou, D. 'New Research on Pushkin's Africa: Hannibal's Homeland', *Research in African Literatures* 28, no. 4 (1997), 220-223, Teletova, 'A. P. Gannibal: On the Occasion...', 46, Barnes, *Op. cit.*, 43, 48-49, 51.

would have had a better chance of surviving the sea journey to Constantinople across the Red Sea than a months-long caravan voyage through the Sahara desert, under constant threat of being assaulted, robbed and either taken hostage or murdered by pirates. I shall suggest that, irrespective of the truth of the matter, sending the protagonist off on a sea voyage was the more conducive to Tynianov's artistic task in his novel.

For some reason, Tynianov never mentions the other two boys who, according to the most recent of Pushkin's biographers, were bought by a Serbian trader in the employ of the Russian Foreign Office, Savva Raguzinsky, at the same time as Abram was captured.⁵⁰⁴ The elder brother,⁵⁰⁵ historians tell us, was christened Aleksei and was also given the tsar's name as patronymic; he was trained as a musician, played the hautboy in the Preobrazhenskii regimental band, and promptly disappeared from history, unlike the younger, Abram, who rose from penniless black slave to a position of power and respect, a rise which some biographers appear content to view as the stuff of an extraordinary story, more akin to Othello's than to real life. I would argue that Tynianov's omission of any mention of those other boys is not accidental, and it is significant for the pattern or *mythos* he used in reconstructing Abram's life-story that Abram was apparently the only blackamoor boy taken into Turkish captivity on that occasion.

At first glance Tynianov seems to shape the story of the Tsar's blackamoor as an ethnobiographical portrait of a man closely connected with his cultural and social surroundings. The author recreates Abram's genesis by imaginatively inhabiting the entire African milieu out of which Gannibal sprang. To convey the exotic flavour of that distant place and era, Tynianov had studied the 18th-century French and German sources on 17th-century Abyssinia which helped him to re-evoke in meticulous realistic detail the social, political, economic and religious backgrounds of his hero. Anthropological detail, artistically transformed by Tynianov, brings Abram's world accurately, persuasively and intimately alive: from food and drink, to clothing and domestic conditions, from topography and rituals, to people and political intrigue. With a few emotive lines Tynianov provides a memorable description of the idyllic locality – hills with medicinal springs trickling into their hollows – a sort of an Edenic *Lustort*.⁵⁰⁶ The natural beauty and fertility of the location is conveyed through the vivid colours and balmy fragrances of a

⁵⁰⁴ A letter from an official at the Foreign Office in Moscow, dated 15th November 1704 to the minister, General-Admiral Golovin described Savva's purchases in the following terms: 'Before leaving Constantinople on 21 June, Master Savva Raguzinsky informed me that according to the order of your excellency he had acquired with great fear and danger to his life from the Turks *two* little blackmoors and *a third* for Ambassador Petr Andreevich (Tolstoy), and that he had sent these blackmoors with a man of his for safety by way of land through the Walachian territories'. Another important reference in the letter is that minister Golovin had obtained the blackamoor *brothers* as a gift for the tsar, and they were presented to him when he came to Moscow that December. (Binyon, Op. cit., 4, my italics.)

⁵⁰⁵ Abram claimed he had nineteen of them and is silent on sisters, other than the one sibling who drowned.

⁵⁰⁶ *Lustort* is another term for *Locus amoenus*, usually a locality around a tree, a meadow and a spring or a brook, with singing and blooming flowers, the breathing of the wind, an image of an ideal landscape or a pleasant corner. (Mann, Iu. Op. cit., 166.)

variety of African crops, trees and plants growing in the breathtakingly beautiful locality at the foot of the mountains: grapes, fig-trees, barley, peas, lentils, cotton. The life of bees, cattle, hyenas, fish, the quality of alcohol, even of dung – Tynianov really gets down to what we might call the grass roots of the time and setting, recreating it almost literally from the soil upwards. He weaves into his narrative African, Turkish words and distorted ‘Europeanisms’, aiming to create both visual and auditory effects. Some words signifying the details of the African setting are left untranslated, their meaning to be deduced from the context and they act as a sort of phonetic *zaum*’,⁵⁰⁷ their semantics being of little importance as their function is to create an emotive effect and render the wildness, exoticism and mystique of the distant continent.

In spite of this apparently attractive milieu, however, the description of the locale, innocuous at first glance, gives first indications of the demythologising impulse that guides the author. Through a series of images, which perforate the seemingly paradisiacal picture, Tynianov unhinges the myth of the alleged power and wealth of the Abyssinian kingdom perpetuated by the Gannibals and paints instead a picture of the dire poverty that disfigured Abram’s father’s reign. By beginning his novel inside Isaak’s head, Tynianov straight away signals the gap between the reality and Bakharneqash’s vision of his principality, a disparity which betrays his loose grip on reality and his failure to draw connections between his inadequate rule and the diminished welfare of his people.

Tynianov’s interpretation of the circumstances of Abram’s abduction differs from the one Pushkin offered in the initial paragraph of the note for *Eugene Onegin* (N.11, One: L).⁵⁰⁸ Although Tynianov bases his account on the same source material (the so-called German biography allegedly recorded from Abram’s own words, but put together properly only after his death),⁵⁰⁹ he proposes a strikingly different explication of the way the events unfolded.

Writing his novel almost thirty years prior to the publication of Nabokov’s essay, Tynianov appears to arrive at a similar conclusion that the German biography is a fictionalised account, containing fragments of historical fact and indeed based on Gannibal’s autobiographical account (which explains the details which only Abram could have known and remembered). In spite of this (or *because* of this) it is factually unreliable (‘contradicted either by historical

⁵⁰⁷ Tynianov was keenly interested in *zaum*’ and V. Khlebnikov who had introduced the term. He lectured on Khlebnikov, in February 1923 in the State Institute of Arts and wrote about him in his later essays ‘O Khlebnikove’ (1928) and ‘Promezhutok’ (1934).

⁵⁰⁸ Nabokov’s commentary (III, 389).

⁵⁰⁹ Nabokov adds, that ‘whoever spun this grotesque fabric had before his or her eyes some autobiographic notes left by Gannibal himself. The German seems to me to be that of a Rigan or Revalan. It may be the work of some Livonian or Scandinavian relative of Mme Gannibal (née Schöberg). The bad grammar seems to preclude its being a professional genealogist’s job.’ (III, 393).

documents (such as Gannibal's own petition) or by plain logic').⁵¹⁰ Aestheticised like every memory, Abram's account is predictably subjective and conspicuously self-eulogising.

Traditionally, autobiography has higher prestige as primary documental evidence than biography, which is a third-person account based on witnesses' statements (hence secondary by definition). This places autobiography and biography in a complex and antagonistic relationship. Tynianov's scepticism regarding Abram's (auto)biography stems from an obvious realisation that the self is not necessarily the most reliable source for truth to life and that an autobiographical narrative can be trusted only to a certain extent. Autobiographical discourse in general is torn between its creator's contradictory desires – to reveal and to conceal. It is preoccupied with the image of 'self' as presented to posterity, and in this sense it is both 'a discourse of anxiety' and 'a discourse of usurpation' of truth.⁵¹¹ It takes the thoroughness of a historian and the penetration of a psychologist to construct a plausible account of or perspective on a subject's life and these are the talents of the later biographer, not of the autobiographer. As we have seen, the recorder of Abram's account was not an expert and his account was strongly dominated by the subject's own vision of his life. Tynianov is acutely aware of the problematic aspect of autobiography which apparently creates a clearly fictional reality.

In the opening chapter Tynianov chooses as the focal point of his story the absolute ruler of the kingdom of Logon, Baharnegash (Lord of the Sea) Isaak, Abram's father. The reader is plunged into the stream of his consciousness and is made privy to his thoughts on old age, reminiscences about his past glories, and his anxieties about power slipping from his hands. On the archetypal level it is tempting to succumb to a reading of the opening chapter of *The Gannibals* as a lightly veiled political allegory, a study in autocracy, reflecting the burning issues of contemporary Soviet life. This mode of reading can certainly open up a different dimension of the story, one which a reader familiar with Russian history of the 1920-30's would find difficult to dismiss. Indeed, the autocratic and wilful 'lord of the sea' Bakharnegash can be viewed as an archetypal absolute ruler, an image repeating itself throughout history and exhibiting features immediately associated with the Soviet ruler of the time.⁵¹²

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., 392.

⁵¹¹ Schlager, J. 'Biography: Cult as Culture' in Batchelor, 58-59, 61.

⁵¹² Tynianov's portrayal of the African ruler brings to mind Stalin's brutality and fits of irrational temper, his brooding, mercurial temperament and 'rough, self-assured humour', 'roguish, impish, never far from the gallows', his 'elaborate hospitality in that Asiatic way'. The pervasive theme of the power struggle and paranoid rooting out of 'conspiracies' in Tynianov's novel might have been an unconscious reflection of 1930-1932 events when Stalin turned viciously against the Old Bolshevik guard and, as the result of rural impoverishment and the ensuing famine, found himself governing a country on the edge of rebellion. See, for example, Sebago Montefiore, S. *The Court of the Red Tsar* (London, 2004), 49, 53.

Parallels with the political realities of the early 1930's appear to proliferate as the novel progresses, and it is feasible that at the time of writing (the aftermath of the XVI Party Congress in summer 1930 had virtually 'crowned' Stalin as paramount leader), some or all of the points of relevance might have reflected the anxieties of the Soviet collective unconscious, as well as vividly expressing the fear of Tynianov's generation that they would be ousted from history, if not ruthlessly destroyed by it. Moreover, rethinking the ruler of Lagon as an archetypal tyrant and writing about the mechanisms of totalitarianism was hardly out of character for Tynianov who returned to the topic obsessively and had already explored it in one of the greatest tragicomic parables of all times, *Lieutenant Kijé* (1927), and the dark and poignant *Death of Vazir-Mukhtar* (1928). *The Gannibals*, too, can be regarded as Tynianov's thematization of the moral implications of despotism and the dangers that it posed particularly where the matter of succession arose; hostility, suspicion and the constant threat of conspiracies created situations in which even the innocent were entrapped.

Going 'beyond the document', Tynianov questions Abram's account of the events of his childhood, opting instead to provide insights and conclusions of his own. The instantly recognizable bare bones of Abram's story are still there: the African setting, the privileged position over his other brothers of the youngest son, the kidnapping, the death of his sister. But the psychological twist that Tynianov assigns to these events is markedly different. Gone is any reference to the luxury of the paternal principality; Bakharnegash's subsidiary position to the Turks is emphatically foregrounded; Abram's entrapment and abduction, as well as his sister's drowning, are presented not as the consequences of Turkish revenge, but of the ruler's own short-sided policies. He is arrogant towards his masters, the Turks, and grossly miscalculates in his dealings with them, but, even more to his detriment, he is hurtful and offensive towards his older sons.

Driven by the counter-biographical impulse, Tynianov explodes the myth that Abram bequeathed to posterity in his later years, but he does not take him to task for doing so; he understands that history and biography, like life, are open-ended and can be endlessly re-written. The resulting account would inevitably contain an element of what Frye terms *mythos*. Biographies by necessity have a symbolic structure: the life is presented as a linear procession and represents a process of gradual maturation while embodying a myth of 'personal coherence'. It is also the literary expression of the individual's reflection on life, the subject's search for identity, his chance to express himself publicly and to build a life story instilled with purpose and

a sense of worth.⁵¹³ So, it is reasonable to assume that, even in its factually distorted form, the German biography written on the basis of Abram's personal memoir might give us an idea, if not of what his life was actually like, then of what he *believed* to be true about it in his old age and of how he wanted to be remembered.

Since, by virtue of their linguistic representation, history and biography may be viewed as 'texts', it requires only one further step for us to admit with Schlager that 'selves are texts, and texts are not about reality but about other texts, that they are 'intertextually constructed.''⁵¹⁴ What this means in practical terms is that, when looking back at his life, the individual unconsciously uses the archetypal structures familiar to him from lore and literature as convenient shapes into which he can cast himself, identifying with a particular hero and using a paradigm to explain the meaning of his life.

Tynianov's structuring of Gannibal's story suggests a narrative for which Abram might have used as matrix a number of mythological proto-heroes. Born and raised in Abyssinia, the oldest Christian country in Africa, Abram will at the time of his abduction undoubtedly have been familiar with certain biblical stories. Numerous elements in his account point to Genesis, for example, to the story of Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob, or to Exodus and the story of Moses. Parallels with the Joseph story are particularly striking: his jealous brothers also plotted to sell him as a slave to foreign merchants; he was bought by Pharaoh's Captain of the Guard and after various misfortunes succeeded in impressing the ruler, becoming his favourite and acquiring the status of the second most important man in the kingdom. In Abram's story, as in that of Joseph or Moses, the one-time slave has effectively become governor of the strongest nation in the region. African analogues are particularly prominent in the story of Moses, who was saved by his mother when Rameses II ordered all male Hebrew babies to be drowned. Using water as a means of escape and salvation, (a detail noteworthy for its connotations in Abram's story), she placed him in a basket of rushes and set him on the river where he was found and eventually adopted by the Pharaoh's daughter. She called him Moses 'because I drew him out of the water' (*Moshe* (Hebr.) 'to draw out of') and he went on to become a great leader of his people. The stories Abram used and the protagonists with whom he strongly identified reveal his deep preoccupation with his foreignness. By appropriating the victimisation/rise to power paradigm, Abram sought to draw attention to his remarkable physical and moral strength and

⁵¹³ Quoted in Hutch, R. *The Meaning of Lives: Biography, Autobiography, and the Spiritual Quest* (London, Washington [D.C], 1997), 51, Denzin, Op. cit., 60.

⁵¹⁴ Schlager, J. 'Biography: Cult as Culture' in Batchelor, 62.

ability to overcome adversity. In his striving for social inclusion such characteristics were meant to emphasise his worthiness of it.

The imagery of *The Gannibals* as well as the structure of the plot suggests the interpretation of Abram as a mythical hero performing a rite of passage into adulthood. The boy is shown enduring a number of physical and emotional ordeals: he is forcibly removed from his idyllic pastoral environment (the sacred mountain and the royal residence) and endures the ritual transition (sailing across the Red Sea, the Dardanelle and the Sea of Marmara); on the way he suffers symbolic temporary death in the bowels of the ship and is subsequently reborn in the multicultural seething metropolis of Constantinople which offers him hope and a plethora of opportunities. The sea voyage invokes the symbolic image of a shifting and broadening horizon and of Abram as the mythological Odysseus who, 'having experienced all four winds and having known both rise and fall, was made wise by experience'.⁵¹⁵ The suffering which he endures at this transitional stage in his life is seen by him as necessary for his achievement of a higher status, and foreshadows his forthcoming transformation. The journey is necessarily hard: as befits a myth, 'the road is arduous, fraught with perils, because it is, in fact, a rite of the passage from the profane to the sacred, from the ephemeral and illusory to reality and eternity, from death to life, from man to the divinity.'⁵¹⁶ But the cyclical repetitiveness of the action undergone by many before him may have had a comforting, therapeutic effect on Abram, who must have found solace in the fact that he was merely enacting a role within an established story. And when the time came for him to create his own account, he was aware of a model on which to fashion his existing situation,⁵¹⁷ and he did so with the feeling that it was not merely his own story.

The racial and topographical parallels between Abram's story and those of the two biblical heroes are also designed to assert the veracity of his own account, assigning it the value of historical truth.⁵¹⁸ The similarities must have seemed irresistible to Abram when explaining his origins for posterity, and to Tynianov when re-writing the story of the rise of Gannibal as a latter-day myth. The emotionally powerful overtones of forcible removal from one's original birthplace and long banishment in a foreign country were bound to prove just as irresistible to Pushkin.

Such archetypal situations and imagery indicate another possible source for Abram's re-figuring of his life along lines familiar to him, not only from the Bible (the universal pattern

⁵¹⁵ Teletova, N. 'On the Occasion...', 47.

⁵¹⁶ Eliade, M. *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (Princeton, 1974), 18.

⁵¹⁷ Bell, Op. cit., 169.

⁵¹⁸ Both Moses and Joseph are part of Hebrew mythology that may be rooted in historical truth. For a discussion of this see Garbini, G. *Myth and History in the Bible* (Sheffield, 2003).

into which all other experience is fitted),⁵¹⁹ but also from legend and folktale. The biblical plots drew further power from their associations with other world myths: of an outcast Perseus, of Isis searching for the lost Osiris, of Persephone kidnapped by Hades. All in all, such ancient Hebrew, Egyptian and Greek myths served to confer upon Gannibal's story a cultural resonance, which added to its power and attractiveness as modern myth, not only elevating him in estimation but practically sanctifying him.

The structures that informed Abram's accounts might also have had literary provenance: Johnson's *Rasselas*,⁵²⁰ Voltaire's *Candide*, Rousseau's noble savage, Shakespeare's jealous Moor.⁵²¹ The mythical (or literary) model enabled him to transform his frightening and unpredictable reality into a meaningful and structured concept, as well as overcome the 'tragedy of inevitability': 'myth teaches us the ineluctability of the effects, most particularly the fateful inescapability of the entanglement, expressing a condition that applies to all men'.⁵²² As I have argued above, Tynianov has not condemned Abram for being a liar or a fantasist, since in search of personal identity 'we are all engaged in turning our own lives into texts': 'Short of proving an auto/biographer to be guilty of wholesale fraud or pathological lying, the errors, lies, forgetfulness, or distortions that readers detect with regard to the biographical record are properly interpreted as characteristically involved in the elaboration of personal myth that is part of every auto/biography.'⁵²³ In Abram's case, as Tynianov makes us understand, the invention of genealogical myth has a clearly demarcated social purpose, as well as the didactic task of presenting a life as exemplary for future generations.⁵²⁴

In his retrospective endeavour Gannibal imbued his account with archetypal images which acted as 'exemplary model' or 'paradigm'. This is what gives such constructs an air of significance and authority, granting an aura of sanctity to a person's existence: 'any human fact whatever acquires effectiveness to the extent to which it exactly repeats an act performed at the beginning of time.'⁵²⁵ The character seeks personal legitimisation through identification or similarity with a mythical hero, by means of 'consecration through analogy'. Aware of such an impulse, Tynianov needed to deal with his mythologized subject and reintroduce historical

⁵¹⁹ Zimmermann, E. *The Boundaries of Fiction: History and the Eighteenth-Century British Novel* (Ithaca, 1996), 29.

⁵²⁰ Nabokov, *Op. cit.*, III, 403, 440-1.

⁵²¹ Bukalov, *Pushkinskaia Afrika*, 107-109, Barnes, *Op. cit.*, 239.

⁵²² Dözrie, H. 'Myth in German and Russian Literature' in Strelka, 123.

⁵²³ Lejeune, P. 'The Autobiographical Pact' in *Auto/biography* Eakin, P. (ed.) (Minneapolis, 1989), 3-30, 25-26 quoted in P. Eakin 'Writing Biography: A Perspective from Auto/biography' in Donaldson, I. et al (eds) *Shaping Lives: Reflections on Biography* (Canberra, 1992), 199-200.

⁵²⁴ Dözrie, H. 'Myth in German and Russian Literature' in Strelka, 23.

⁵²⁵ Eliade, *Op. cit.*, ix, 4, 18, 22, 29.

authenticity into his narrative. This was achieved by questioning Abram's legendary tale, in particular its mythical features indicative of a timeless universal system.

'Mythological' imagination blossomed in the first third of the 20th century as an artistic means of expressing the author's conception of the world. It manifested itself through the discovery of 'eternal principles' preserved intact throughout historical changes and hidden beneath the mundane surface. Writers drew mythological parallels to emphasize the repetition of similar unresolved personal and social collisions.⁵²⁶ The wide use of myth in the historical novel at the time implied a critical attitude to the traditional model of historical novelistic form. Developing the mythic method was the central modernist means of assimilating and yet transcending realist form, which was increasingly seen as narrow and restrictive.⁵²⁷ There is, however a huge distance separating the genuine creators of myth in ancient times and 20th-century novelists, and this distance is marked by modern writers' elusively ironic and irreverent attitudes to myth. So, for example, Tynianov portrays a rather unseemly picture of the 'great Principality' in which the Gannibals took such pride and reduces it to ridicule, indicating that there is nothing grand or dignified about Isaak or his realm. On the contrary, Tynianov shows how primitive Isaak's life really was, how unprincely was the great Prince. Even the days of his glory are made to seem dubious, if not illusory: in spite of his golden headdress he is hardly a rampant lion, but a drunk, a glutton and voluptuary, a despot and an egotist. All these characteristics foreshadow features of the later Gannibals whom we come across in Tynianov's subsequent novel *Pushkin*: their pride, vanity, pleasure-seeking and self-deception.

Tynianov's treatment of Abram's myth is thus overtly ironic, undermining the established account through parody and pastiche.⁵²⁸ By referring to a particular mythical paradigm, Tynianov establishes in his readers a certain horizon of expectation in order immediately to subvert their inferential activities.⁵²⁹ Through realistic description and convincing motivation of characters' actions, he reinterprets the story within the realm of the everyday, particular, profane and individual, instead of relating it to some generalised archetype. Furthermore, by recasting the story as 'anti-myth', Tynianov adds an extra dimension to the narrative and heightens the emotional response of his readership, while simultaneously questioning the veracity of the version created by Abram Gannibal and his descendents. This he

⁵²⁶ Meletinskii, E. *Ot mifa k literature* (Moscow, 2001), 129-130.

⁵²⁷ Bell, Op. cit., 191, 165.

⁵²⁸ Illuminating in this respect is J. Labanyi's discussion of the historical uses of myth in her *Myth and History in the Contemporary Spanish Novel* (Cambridge, 1989), Ch. 1, 5-34.

⁵²⁹ White, J. J. 'Mythological Function and the Reading Process' in Strelka, Op. cit., 77.

does by laying his intentions bare in his Introduction to the *Gannibals*:⁵³⁰ after all, Abram and, to a lesser extent, his offspring had faced the challenge of having to assimilate to a racially, culturally and linguistically foreign environment and compensated for their perceived racial inferiority by claiming elevated status and emphasising their closeness to absolute imperial power and the court. Even when Tynianov says he follows Rotkirch's version,⁵³¹ as for example that Abraham was not abducted by slave traders, but rather assisted by the enraged wives of Abram's imprisoned brothers, jealous of him, and was taken hostage by the Turks, he provides a more complex underpinning of the familiar event, enriching mythological paradigm with the psychological detailing of fictional prose.

In the *Gannibals* Tynianov fully incorporated myth into the structure and fabric of his story. Mythological plots enabled him to write about contemporary life in a manner that transcended local political meaning and achieved a universal one. I would also contend that the reason why he decided to abandon his novel at the point where he did was that the possibility of politically sensitive readings was becoming increasingly threatening. Pushkin himself insisted, when defending Karamzin from his critics, that one must not seek allusions in Karamzin's apothegms (his morally didactic reflections), i.e. their direct application to contemporary life. He made a similar point about his own *Boris Godunov* when he wrote:

Хотите ли знать, что еще удерживает меня от напечатания моей трагедии? Те места, кои в ней могут подать повод применениям, намекам, *allusions* (VI, 250-251).

Pushkin's novelistic biographer, Tynianov, must have found such sentiment particularly pertinent: he always objected to utilitarian and single-directed interpretations of historical narratives, including and, indeed, in particular, his own.

3. Tynianov's Treatment of the Gannibals in *Pushkin*

The question of identity, important for any individual, acquires particular significance for the self-awareness of a creative writer, and Tynianov makes it clear in his novel that this was a question fundamental in the life of A. Pushkin. As we have already seen, the exotic Gannibals had loomed large in Pushkin's consciousness ever since he first heard stories about them as a child from his grandmother. He even hoped to publish the full biography of Abram, his maternal great-grandfather.⁵³² Peter the Great's fledgling, an African who had served five monarchs and ended up in disfavour, could not help but ignite Pushkin's creative imagination. Tsar Peter was a

⁵³⁰ Trigos, L. (trans., commentary) 'Creativity and Blackness – a Note on Y. Tynianov's 'The Gannibals'' in *Under the Skies...*, 369-376.

⁵³¹ The person who put on paper Gannibal's story.

⁵³² Feinberg, I. *Chitaia tetradi Pushkina* (Moscow, 1981), 68.

subject which fascinated Pushkin and to which he kept returning throughout his life. The African's extraordinary life was a striking example of what Eidel'man called 'the conjunction of fates' when family history becomes deeply embedded and entwined with the history of Russia.⁵³³

It might be tempting to read Tynianov's first references to Abram Petrovich in the novel *Pushkin* as positive, almost approving, if this seemingly narratorial statement were not impregnated with Sergei L'vovich's thoughts, reflecting his calculations as he considers marrying Abram's granddaughter. Among the advantages there was the renown attached to her famous grandfather, a 'friend, rather than a mere valet of the Emperor Peter' (18). Far from encouraging us to approve of the illustrious African, Tynianov is actually inviting us to view his reputation with some scepticism by keeping the reader constantly balanced on the edge of irresolution and continually on guard against hasty conclusions.

The first impression of Abram's son, Petr Abramovich, whom we see in the opening chapters of the novel, is unprepossessing, and Tynianov stresses the startling effect on the guests of his 'uncompromisingly negroid' features:

В отдалении от них никто не мог вообразить, как желты и черны арапские лица. ... Личико его было морщинистое, жеваное, глазки живые, коричневые, кофейные, с темными желтыми белками, как у больных желтухой, а ноздри широки (35).

Added to the connotations of disease are the simian associations, which curiously foreshadow Aleksandr Pushkin's own nickname at the Lycée, 'a mixture of tiger and a monkey'. There are also the constant references to the unattractively reified features, revealing the signs of aging, to the gurgling, guttural sounds that emanated from his throat, to the abruptness of his conversation and manners and an obvious addiction to alcohol. The combination of images is certainly not distinguished or heroic. As a reflection of Abram Gannibal in the person of his son, it is in fact a quite merciless mirror. The implication of hereditary resemblance is strengthened even further when Petr Abramovich declares the baby Pushkin to be 'the spitting image of his grandfather' (46), the words that make Sergei L'vovich shudder and wince. Tynianov's old negro [*старый арап*] reminds the guests of a chapter in the Pushkin family history which their hosts would have preferred to forget: when Sergei L'vovich remarks that Aleksandr has been named after his great-grandfather on the Pushkin side, he bluntly responds – 'wasn't his wife stabbed to death?' (37). Here we have the ironic spectacle of *both* ancestral lines of the poet Pushkin, mother's and father's, appearing to disadvantage at exactly the same moment.

Scepticism concerning Abram Gannibal's supposed nobility and the African principality which Petr Abramovich intends to discover and claim as his own, belongs to Mar'ia

⁵³³ Eidel'man, *Op. cit.*, 333, 335.

Alekseevna Gannibal, with her pointed questions and remarks, and to a man of letters Karamzin with his historian's inquiry as to proof of the story, any existing evidence in the form of letters or papers. Tellingly, the mention of papers makes the old negro bristle and become 'instantly suspicious': he had spent half his life under investigation for the embezzlement of artillery shells. He manages to sound both boastful and evasive when he claims that his grandfather was an African prince in the Arabian Kingdom of Ethiopia or Abyssinia. But by making him talk of it as if trying to convince himself, Tynianov appears to treat the entire tale of the illustrious ancestor's nobility with amused cynicism.

The notoriously unreliable German biography (*'верный документ'* in Petr Abramovich's words!(40)) surfaces in the conversation, together with the story, dismissed by Nabokov, as ridiculous, that Peter the Great brought Abram to Russia as an example to his reluctant nobles of the power and influence of education.⁵³⁴ The fact that Abram had a black face would supposedly make the nobles remember him all the better, 'remember what a great man he developed into'(40). Tynianov punctures this interpretation by making us look at Peter's 'impetuous reign' through the enlightened eyes of Karamzin. In fact, the black child was bought without any particular aim in sight, as one of those curios for which the Emperor had shown a particular liking: giants, dwarfs and negroes, putting Abram in the same category as freaks of nature. It further transpires that the 'trustworthy German' in Reval who had compiled Abram's biography was a pharmacist of the Gannibals' acquaintance. The narrator informs the reader matter-of-factly, as an obvious reflection of Petr Abramovich's point of view, that, after the record had been compiled (from the old negro's own words), the old man summoned his sons, and with the help of the very same pharmacist they had read it and learned it off by heart. The aims and circumstances of the pedigree fabrication are thus laid bare. The whole genealogical exercise was apparently geared towards the practical goal of acquiring noble rank retrospectively:

Петровское время было хлопотливое, и о дворянстве старый арап вспомнил только ко времени Елизаветы, когда все наперерыв стали доказывать благородство своего происхождения (41).

The notion that Abram's noble origin had simply slipped his mind is as unfeasible as it is ludicrous. It is little wonder that Petr Abramovich is perspiring. The image is further developed of 'the noise, commotion and irritation that had always arisen around the Gannibals like a skein of hot steam around someone in a bath-house' (44). By further association the imagery is continued into the nursery scene with the flickering candlelight, the firelight of the

⁵³⁴ Nabokov, *Eugene Onegin*, III, 424.

furnace and the steaming tub. Things are literally ‘hotting up’, the alcoholic black man’s eyes turn ‘smoky’, he loses control and creates a drunk and disorderly scene. A general he might be, but his behaviour does not match his supposed high nobility, and even the serfs speak of him with contempt.

Tynianov gives Petr Abramovich a thoroughly seamy background, only marginally better than his brother, Osip’s. He proved useless as Nadezhda Osipovna’s guardian and provided no economic assistance to her, being himself in financial trouble. He was also an adulterer like his brother and, hilariously, intending to lecture him on his immoral behaviour, he ‘found instead a certain affinity between them’ (34). The result was brotherly drinking bouts that went on for weeks. When with artful innocence the narrator says that Petr Abramovich was ‘an artilleryman like all the Gannibals’ (ibid), he does so in the context of adultery, thereby insinuating that all the Gannibals were artillerymen and adulterers. The idea that Tynianov leaves us with is that, in spite of their high military rank, the Gannibals were indeed a tribe of lecherous, mischievous, wasteful and vengeful monkeys. Petr Abramovich keeps up his grudges and in the course of the novel inflicts a spiteful and unnecessary revenge on the unsuspecting Pushkins ‘for all the insults that had ever been inflicted on the Gannibals’ (171). Thus, the two sides of the family become warring parties, when Petr Abramovich decides to recover their debts through auctioning ancestral estates, though the trouble had been caused, not by the Pushkins, but by brother Osip’s adulterous passion. As Tynianov puts it, reflecting the Pushkins’ viewpoint, ‘the source of all the trouble, as always, was the Gannibals’ (171). The point of focalisation here is the understandably subjective Sergei L’vovch’s, his voice merged with the impartial omniscient narrator’s.

Aleksandr Pushkin met his great-uncle in 1817, when Petr Abramovich, owner of the estate of Petrovskoe, lived just a few miles from brother Osip at Mikhailovskoe. Petr Abramovich, like his brother, kept a harem of serf girls and was notorious for his debaucheries. When Pushkin visited him again in November 1824, in the hope of obtaining family documents, including probably the German biography, Petr had just over a year left to live. Pushkin records the meeting in his diary:

Подали водку. Налив рюмку себе, велел он и мне поднести; я не поморщился - и тем, казалось, чрезвычайно одолжил старого арапа. Через четверть часа он опять попросил водки и повторил это раз 5 или 6 до обеда (VII, 238).

Tynianov uses both of these features – debauchery and alcoholism – as key characteristics in his portrayal of Nadezhda’s father, Osip Gannibal, described from the start as ‘thoroughly irresponsible’ (18), if not a complete villain. It is Tynianov’s achievement, however, actually to arouse our sympathies for this egotistical rogue. His illegal second marriage had

landed him in trouble and his mistress, Ustin'ia Tolstaia had ruined not only him and his brother, but the entire family. Whatever his sins, Tynianov argues, avarice was not amongst them:

Мотовство его было удивительное, он был враг денег и точно все время летел вниз по откосу, не имея времени остановиться (Ibid).

Tynianov, as usual, enjoys the paradoxical nature of Osip's predicament: although perceived to be a scoundrel by his estranged wife, he had actually been the victim of his own trust in a woman to whose charms he had succumbed. Tynianov portrays not Osip, but Ustin'ia as the real villain:

Старая прелестница то съезжалась с Осипом Абрамовичем, то уезжала от него и в обоих случаях требовала денег (19).

Even before the reader encounters Osip, Tynianov manages to humanize him, wastrel, lecher and absentee father that he is. Nadezhda, staring at her uncle, is reminded of her father, whom the narrator informs us she has seen only twice in her childhood: glass buttons on the waistcoat, a moist kiss and his 'astonishingly light way of walking'(43). The child's-eye-view adopted here by the author – the tiny physical details that a child would typically remember – is a remarkable example of Tynianov's cinematic method of thinking and presentation, aimed at engaging his reader's attention and sympathy – he knows exactly where and on what level to 'place the camera' in order to achieve the desired effect.

Sergei L'vovich, picturing a conventionalised scene as if borrowed from a sentimentalist novel, imagines that, when he meets old Osip, he will forgive him on behalf of his wife and will be greeted with remorse, hugs and tears, a scene of family reconciliation in which he, Sergei L'vovich, will be the leading actor. Instead of this, the old negro remains firmly in control, emanating a profound indifference towards his son-in-law. By this stage of his life he has become a shadow of his former self: an indifferent handshake, a mechanical inquiry about Sergei L'vovich's health, and 'a long pale smile'(48) – three simple but telling details create the portrait with the perfect economy representative of Tynianov's technique.

Characteristically for Tynianov's method, the external details of his character's world represent the inner landscape of the man who inhabits it. The bench is rotten and 'blackened by rains'(48), the paths littered with yellow leaves, the arbour crooked, the ploughed fields 'overgrown with charlock', a scene of melancholy and autumnal desolation, reflecting the interior unhappiness of a man who is fast approaching extinction:

Он походил более на почерневшее от пожара, оставленное людьми строение, чем на человека' (Ibid).

The use of landscape to embody human situations, characteristics and emotions is a universal literary technique, but Tynianov's handling of it is peculiarly evocative. The various

details of neglect and decay combine to symbolize a life of listlessness, weariness and hopelessness. Topography itself is permeated with symbolic images of despair. Even the young pine-trees on the hillock, pointing to the estate, seem to point to a youthful vigour that has vanished and is unrecoverable. The very ripples on the lake are used to provide a metaphor of the youth-and-age polarity. They appeared 'like the furrows on an old woman's face... were washed away, and the water grew younger again'(49), making us see Osip's private situation in a universal light: humans are just links in the eternal cycle of nature. When he points to the surrounding landscape telling Sergei L'vovich, 'All this I leave to you'(ibid), it sounds nobly elegiac, a grand gesture – except that it is an ironically empty one. All that he is leaving the Pushkins is a legal mess and derelict estate.

Increasingly, the pathetic and grotesque elements in this little tragi-comedy take greater hold: the old negro, 'monstrously fat' (91), is abandoned by everyone and confined to an armchair by the window, where he slept, and where 'for hours he would follow the flight of a fly or listen even more listlessly to the creaking of a cart behind the woods'. In synchrony with these details of despair are images of the autumnal beauty – the rains, the leaves falling and changing colour [*пыльное природы увяданье*]. These details act as an extension and embodiment of his plight: the leaves are yellow and red, the colours of disease, the death of nature; the maples are 'on fire' with decay, the birches 'waxen', connoting corpses and invalids; the trees are 'shedding their leaves in front of the window' (ibid) (as Osip's soul is about to shed its body) pre-enacting his death in front of his eyes; while even the life-giving rains, instruments and symbols of fertility, had stopped, leaving an almost unnatural sterility in the air. This seasonal symbolism is conveyed by Tynianov in a few lines of prose, demonstrating once again his haunting economy of expression.

Having learnt that he had two days left to live, Osip lies staring at his father's portrait, into the past, into history and his line of descent. Deliberately and persistently, Tynianov continues to de-mythologize the figure of the great ancestor, saying simply that he had 'an ill-natured face, the colour of clay'(92) (Abram was by no means distinguished, but an ignoble Everyman, made of the same stuff as the first man, Adam), and that he was wearing his full-dress General-in-Chief's uniform 'with the ribbon of the Order of St Anne across his shoulder'(ibid), the decoration which Nabokov notes that Abram never even received.⁵³⁵ Symbolically Osip orders that the portrait be removed to the attic. The past is being dismantled: history, heroism, family pride suddenly irrelevant in the face of death.

⁵³⁵ For further discussion see Barns, *Op. cit.*, 22 and Teletova 'O mnimom i podlinnom izobrazhenii A. P. Gannibala' in *Legendy i mify o Pushkine* (St Petersburg, 1995), 86-103.

Like a swollen corpse he is carried for a last visit to the bath-house, where he is sweated out (like a corpse being washed) and a Bacchanalian scene ensues with all the classic ingredients – light (the master’s last command is that every candlestick in the house should be lit in the living-room), leaves from the grove strewn around the chamber, wine brought up from the cellar, naked dancing and music (the guitar acting as a Greek lyre). The mythical element is increased by the description of the superstitious belief of the neighbouring peasants that all the Gannibals are actually devils. Osip is being likened to a satyr (which, metaphorically, he was) and from a distance the brightly lit manor house becomes in the local folk-imagination a palace of pagan pleasure. The dying man is bidding farewell to a lifetime of illicit pleasure and Tynianov elevates the scene into something eccentrically rich with an unforgettably intense climax, which is one of the great triumphs of the novel. In a symbolic gesture Osip orders that the horses be fed with oats soaked in wine and set free:

Ветер ходил по комнате. Он сидел у раскрытого окна и ловил ртом ночной холод. На дворе было темно. Со звонким ржаньем, мотая головами, выбивая копытами комья земли, пронеслись мимо окон пьяные кони (94).

The combination of cinematographically synecdochal images, each one being an outer extension of an emotion are observed as if by a human eye: the fistful of air, the clutched fingers symbolically empty, the limp hand, the dangling head, the tears rolling down the face and onto the thick lower lip to the point where he swallows each one *slowly*. The technique achieves a peculiarly effective blend of merciless observation and intense sympathy, objective as a camera.

This is followed by the symbolic giving away of goods in preparation for death – the wine given to the serfs, etc. – and the opening of the windows to remove the last barriers between himself and the nature which is shortly to claim his body and to which he will then belong. There is inverted biblical symbolism in the image of the wind blowing into the living-room and straight into his open mouth. At the creation of Man, God breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life (the original inspiration) and ‘man became a living soul’ (Genesis 2:7). Now the breath of Osip Abramovich is coming with difficulty and preparing to leave his body, which will return to the earth. The drunken stallions represent the wild untamed maleness that was the essence of the Gannibals in their prime; the ‘fiery stallion’ in particular is Osip’s soul set free, while he himself will shortly be a clod of earth under those ‘stamping hooves’, and all his former lusts and glories will be gone.

Osip’s ‘silent laughter’ may be variously interpreted: joyful, jeering, empathetic, defying his fate, even self-mocking. It is a desperate kind of glee, the cynical assessment of an entire era, and of all achievement, all power:

Все наше, все Аннибалово! Отцовское, Петрово – прощай! (94).

This last sentence makes reference to the legendary tsar inextricably linked in the reader's mind with the statue of an equestrian reining in a horse, the symbol of Russia, Peter the Great's fame lying in the fact that he *Россию поднял на дыбы*. The scene therefore reverberates with a meaning and emotion well beyond its literal attributes. Osip realises that the epoch of giants like Tsar Peter and Abram Gannibal is over, and so is his own life. His time is up: larger than life personalities like him are out of step with the tameness of the present. Through the portrayal of Pushkin's grandfather and emphasis on the points of similarity between him and Abram Gannibal, Tynianov establishes the link between Peter, the groundbreaker and progenitor of modern Russia, and Aleksandr Pushkin as his spiritual successor.⁵³⁶

Osip's last scene is described in a different vein – rather dry and ironic. This is because it is as much a satirical portrait of his former mistress as a final farewell to Osip himself. She commits one of humanity's worst crimes when she pulls a yellow-stone ring off Osip's finger and places it on her own. The dying Osip, by contrast, appears almost likeable, though the narrator records his expiry with deliberate neutrality more suitable for an official document:

а в ночь Осип Абрамыч Аннибал, флота артиллерии капитан в отставке, скончался' (97).

But the irony returns in the following sentence when we are informed that the priest gave the peasants a sermon about 'Moisei Murin who had also been an Ethiopian and a robber in his youth' (Ibid). The character alluded to is St Moses the Moor (IV AD) or Black Moses, who was indeed a man of extraordinary charisma and physical strength. At first glance, the comparison seems appropriate enough, almost laudatory in its implication of an ignoble past redeemed through faith and good deeds. But, as one delves deeper into Abram's life story, it becomes apparent that, in spite of striking similarities with Black Moses (a slave achieving wealth and being banished from his homeland) the reference to this apocrypha instead of elevating Abram, emphasises our perception of the blackamoor and his offspring as shady and sinister creatures. Unlike St Moses Osip has spectacularly failed to atone for his sins. Like his father, he died unrepentant, having never attained the virtuous life. Comparison with the canonised saint therefore underlines the decisive difference between them and perforates with irony Osip's claim to elevated status.

⁵³⁶ The idea was extremely popular in post-revolutionary Russia. See for example O. Forsh's *Sumasshedshii korabl'*, where she describes Peter the Great in terms of a 'superman' or 'pure will', the progenitor of revolutionary being: 'Два гения у колыбели исторического существа, которое звалось еще недавно Россия. Петр – родитель, Пушкин – духовный восприемник.' (L 1988, 1972), 115-116.

The conclusion Tynianov comes to is a telling one: the Gannibals had been little better in their time than adulterers, criminals and abusers of women, and never changed. Tynianov glances at the Gannibal legend with typical authorial unobtrusiveness through Ustin'ia's consciousness, as she looks at Osip, 'dying in dreadful squalor, in much the same way as his grandfather had probably expired, somewhere in Africa' (96). The grandfather referred to is Abram's father and the supposed African Prince. The almost contemptuously dismissive phrase, 'somewhere in Africa', tells us what Pushkin's contemporaries thought of the story that Pushkin cherished so much as part of his proud family legend.

Tynianov has presented the Gannibals for what they obviously were: serious flawed and unhappy human beings, belonging to an age in which corruption, criminality, indecency and abuse could thrive. And, although his entire treatment of the Gannibal source material has been coloured, as we have seen, with scholarly dubiety and indeed with considerable scepticism, in Tynianov's novels the Gannibals, like the Pushkins, nevertheless emerge as triumphant artistic creations.

Conclusions

In his 1930 assessment of contemporary literature Maxim Gorky had to concede that Soviet letters had so far failed to produce major masters of verbal art.⁵³⁷ Soviet literature had been unable to produce its own *War and Peace*, he explained, because 'it has been living in a state of war with the old world and febrile construction of the new one. Aestheticism is out of place in war. In war only a callous cynic can remain an aesthete.'⁵³⁸ The modest achievements of proletarian art, however, according to Gorky, had been eclipsed by one particular genre: 'Imperceptibly, among other things, a genuine, highly artistic historical novel has sprung up'.⁵³⁹ And he went on to name Tynianov, Shishkov and Count A. Tolstoy as its most noted practitioners. What Gorky chose not to dwell on was the fact that a genre of such remarkable excellence could not have miraculously 'sprung up' from nowhere in so short a time.

In this thesis I have attempted to challenge such a view by placing Tynianov's work in the context of the problems facing the novelistic genre in general in Tynianov's times and of the history and theory of the genre of the historical novel in particular, while also illuminating his innovative techniques within the notoriously problematic genre of the novelistic biography. Tynianov's task was complicated by the overfamiliarity of his subject, by Pushkin's apparent accessibility and yet enigmatic aura, that of a poet, who was, by critical admission, 'many-faced' and 'impossible to find a single formula for...without betraying one's extreme narrow-mindedness and pedantry'.⁵⁴⁰ My primary concern has been to find out how Tynianov, the canonised *maître* of the Soviet historical novel, transmuted and transcended the generic prescriptions and practices of his literary predecessors and succeeded by involving factographic or borderline [*пограничные, промежуточные*] genres, and by employing defamiliarising aesthetic strategies, thereby producing generic hybrids that reached far beyond the normative restrictions usually applied to the historical novel. He thus created a historical novel of a new kind, with enhanced literary qualities and increased potential for formal experimentation in what had been regarded as a 'tired' genre, discredited by a number of admittedly tedious, historically and artistically feeble novels about 'progressive' writers, and Pushkin in particular, written mostly in heroico-eulogising and highly didactic mode.⁵⁴¹

In my study I have been guided by a premise formulated by Heather Dubrow which, as it happens, stems from the Formalists' own theoretical conclusions, namely that 'when an author

⁵³⁷ Gorky, M. 'O literature' in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* in 30 vols. (Moscow, 1968), XXV, 248.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁵⁴⁰ Sakulin, P. *Russkaia literatura: Sotsiologo-sinteticheskii obzor literaturnykh stilei*, II, 586, 1929.

⁵⁴¹ Levkovich, Ia. 'Pushkin v sovetskoi khudozhestvennoi proze i dramaturgii' in *Pushkin: Issledovaniia i materialy*, V: *Pushkin i russkaia kul'tura* (Leningrad, 1967), 140-178.

chooses to write in a given genre, he is not merely responding to the achievements and the pronouncements of others; he himself is issuing certain statements about his art and often about art in general. The very act of adopting a literary form, especially a well-established one, implies a respect for the past, or at least for one particular period, or school within it.⁵⁴² Tynianov's own understanding of the non-linear literary character of literary evolution where succession is never peaceful and occurs 'not from father to son but from uncle to nephew', as well as Eikhenbaum's dictum that art cannot live by canon alone and creates a canon in order to overcome it,⁵⁴³ have also been borne in mind.

Existing research into Tynianov's *Pushkin* in this country and the USA seems to lack a study of this kind, while *The Gannibals* has never received the close attention it deserves. In this work I have therefore striven to rectify this situation while attending to the research on these two novels that has been carried out in Russia during the last fifty years. In dealing with the problem of genre in Tynianov's novels I quickly realised the impossibility of illuminating Tynianov's creative method without examining numerous areas and concerns that radiate outward from *Pushkin*. Tynianov's achievement seems to me to have been to establish the extent to which literary genius is dependent upon other forces: family, friends, education, national and international history, literary history, language, living writers, the cultural milieu. In order to reveal the effectiveness of his method I had to adopt a structure which would allow me to examine Tynianov's treatment of Pushkin's early life both chronologically and thematically.

It has become common in Tynianov studies to emphasise the specifically scholarly background of Tynianov's historical novels. It stands to reason, however, that even the most extensive and perfect knowledge of historical material is not by itself sufficient to create a work of art. By the very nature of the genre, novels have to stand on much surer, specifically *aesthetic* foundations. Thus, if the question *what* to write, or what to write *about* was suggested by Tynianov's scholarly interests and by life itself, the question that interested him most of all was *how* to write, what generic *form* the novel should take, the better to achieve its artistic goal. Tynianov remained faithful to Formalism in his dissatisfaction with the simply mimetic representation of reality, evolving instead a form of imaginative writing in which factuality was enhanced by complex and nuanced strategies of 'literariness'. For instance, I have argued that the most important skill that Tynianov brought with him from scholarship was the quality of 'emotional impersonality', rather than any claim to objective knowledge. I have analysed, therefore, his attempts to increase authorial emotional distance by adopting the 'exit author'

⁵⁴² Dubrow, H. *Genre* (London, New York, 1982), 10.

⁵⁴³ Eikhenbaum, B. 'Problemy poetiki Pushkina' in *Pushkin. Dostoevsky* (Petersburg, 1921), 78.

strategy, and to achieve objectivity by emphasising the subjective and often opposing perspectives of his characters. In this way, he relied on the active participation of a reader sensitive to his literary technique of multi-faceted, deautomatized representation of characters and events. Tynianov thus rejected the notion of factual truth as an absolute value and affirmed, paradoxically perhaps for a scholar of his stature, that scholarship should not necessarily be taken too seriously as a form of knowledge, for imaginative writing has the powerful potential to reach its own, subtle and, at times, profounder truths. As Pomorska observed in her study of Formalist doctrine, two types of cognition, the scientific and the intuitive, could be clearly distinguished, and the intuitive mode was declared to be the better able to be implemented through art.⁵⁴⁴ Tynianov's espousal of novelistic prose, as I have argued, hinged on the deeply held belief that such a mode, which is less restrictive than that of scholarly writing, would enable him to write the cultural history of Pushkin's age more intimately, 'from within', as it were, while supported from without by the sheer range and depth of his own scholarship. Lack of firmly verifiable facts about Pushkin's early years, the incrustation of the established facts with subjective assumptions, and the potential multiplicity of possible interpretations made the novelistic genre more suitable and appealing to his needs than a scholarly essay.

I have also suggested that it is ultimately Tynianov's innovations in the artistic sphere that justify his switch from criticism to imaginative writing. At stake here is clearly not a simple case of what Slonim described as 'imaginary flights to safe shores', and 'escape from the pressures of the moment'.⁵⁴⁵ I have argued that, instead of being an attempt to avoid the burning issues of the day, or to provide a mechanical response to the social demand for popular patriotic and nationalistic jubilee literature, Tynianov's turn to historical fiction was natural and logical, and that in it he pursued complex and far-reaching literary endeavours. It was first and foremost an attempt to arrive at a new understanding of the historical genre and reorientate it towards literary thematics, shattering in the process the lightweight and unscientific but, at the time, so popular *biographie romancée*. In Tynianov's novels, literature performs the role of a character in its own right, and a major character at that, deciding the hero's destiny no less importantly than a statesman or a Tsar. His novels embody the view of a historian who regarded literature as an essential part of the cultural history of Russia, if not all of it. As a Formalist effectively silenced by Stalinism in the field of theoretical academic writing, he fashioned his fiction into an arena for continuing his scholarship through consistent elaboration, in a different medium, of the main issues of literary process and evolution. Effectively the first writer to make the history of Russian

⁵⁴⁴ Pomorska, K. *Russian Formalist Theory Theory and its Poetic Ambiance* (The Hague, Paris, 1968), 56.

⁵⁴⁵ Slonim, M. *Soviet Russian Literature: Writers and Problems* (New York, Oxford, 1977), 245.

literature and the literary process the propulsive force of the plot, Tynianov shaped his works as conceptual or ideological constructs in the sense that they explore complex concepts and ideas, as opposed to mere illustration or adhering to certain ready-made doctrines imposed on the writer by the political establishment.

Tynianov found himself at the point of intersection of conflicting trends: influenced on the one hand by the general movement of Soviet literature, from the mid-1920's, towards factographic genres with the emphasis on aestheticising and fictionalising facts, and on the other, by the Formalists' methodological rejection of biographism which had been so characteristic of their earlier programme. As we know, of course, they soon moved beyond such perceived antibiographical and antipsychological attitudes. Investigating the relationship between the factuality of personal lives and its representation in the work of differing authors made them look more closely at the benefits that the biographical method could provide, particularly in matter of relating creativity to private life in the sphere of literary *byt*.

Although Tynianov was unapologetic about embracing the biographical method, he did not abandon Formalist positions as regards his dissatisfaction with simplistic cause and effect explications of the creative process. He realised with Zhirmunskii that not every life experience can be used in art: to become a poetic theme, experience has to be 'apperceived by the poet, and the most important factor of this apperception is not biographical, but artistic demand'.⁵⁴⁶ So, pointing out biographical sources is in itself insufficient: a poet never reproduces passively the material of his experiences in their entirety; he subjects them to selection, which is primarily defined by the artistic tastes of his era. This is precisely what Tynianov concentrates on: the depiction of Pushkin as a receptacle who refracted, selected and assimilated the ideas, tastes, intellectual atmosphere and literary trends of his times. Tynianov thus anticipated by over half a century what modern-day proponents of the biographical method in literary studies designate as 'contextual instruction'. The significance of establishing biographical contexts for the analysis of Pushkin's main *topoi* has recently been re-emphasised in Kibal'nik's and Nemirovsky's studies, both of whom argue that without consideration of such contexts later generations might be tempted to actualise the semantic potential of works in ways unrelated to the poet's intentions, a retrograde development, no matter how elusive or fragile the concept of intentionality can be.⁵⁴⁷ By exploring the discrepancies between the plain facts of the poet's life and various representations provided by the poet himself, Tynianov also used the biographical method as an

⁵⁴⁶ Zhirmunskii, V. M. *Bairon i Pushkin. Iz istorii romanticheskoi poemy*, [Leningrad, 1924]; (The Hague, Paris, 1970), 197-8, 147.

⁵⁴⁷ Kibal'nik, S. A. *Khudozhestvennaia filosofiia Pushkina* (St Petersburg, 1998); Nemirovskii, Op. cit.

epistemological tool to explore the techniques of Pushkin's fluid, playful and somewhat 'narcissistic' self-representation in a variety of social personalities.⁵⁴⁸

In the end, Tynianov accomplished a task deemed by some to be almost impossible: he wrote a novel about a time in Pushkin's life dismissed by even the most renowned Pushkinians as insignificant. Lotman, for one, stated as 'glaringly obvious' that 'when Pushkin wanted to cast a glance at his early life, he never went earlier than the Lycée – he had struck the memory of his childhood out of his life'.⁵⁴⁹ On this count Tynianov is in adamant disagreement, artistically dissecting precisely those early years for their significance and potential; not only as a period of trauma and neurosis (anticipating Harold Bloom's famous pronouncement that 'health is stasis'),⁵⁵⁰ but as the years that provided the ground for future creativity in the form of that enhanced universal responsiveness [*универсальная восприимчивость, всеотзывчивость*] praised so highly by Dostoevsky.⁵⁵¹ He felt that only by addressing Pushkin's early biography could he achieve an understanding of Pushkin's creativity, something so deeply rooted in the soil, in its milieu, that if ever uprooted, would lose its potency and significance. By artistically portraying Pushkin's parents in his novel and analysing their influence on the son, Tynianov insisted that, deficient though the parents were as providers of a secure and loving environment, it was nonetheless they and that very environment that laid the foundation for the poet's future cult of 'home', or what Semen Frank later formulated as the 'at home ideal' – the safe haven of the traveller on a journey full of mortal danger; the idea of 'penates', the cult of the hearth, family and domestic seclusion as the foundation of the spiritual life'.⁵⁵²

While telling Pushkin's story Tynianov is concerned with the problem of the sources of Pushkin's ideas and images and the mechanisms whereby the poet related to the otherness surrounding him, including also his techniques of literary assimilation, of creative borrowing, of drawing on other works that preceded him. This, in Tynianov's thinking, is the only way to answer the question of the origins and originality of Pushkin's genius. Recovering (or re-imagining) wherever possible the circumstances of literary production, investigating the literary milieu thus becomes of paramount importance to the author and reader, eager to grasp the influences exerted on the poet by his time and place: both as shaping forces or as pressures he was striving to resist. By addressing the features of the *Bildungs-* and *Künstlerroman* in *Pushkin*

⁵⁴⁸ See L. Ginzburg's *O psikhologicheskoi proze* (Leningrad, 1977), 5-33, Vol'pert, L. *Pushkin v roli Pushkina. Tvorcheskaia igra po modeliam frantsuzskoi literatury. Pushkin i Stendal'* (Moscow, 1998); and Nemirovskii, I. *Tvorchestvo Pushkina i problema publichnogo povedeniia poeta* (St Petersburg, 2003).

⁵⁴⁹ Lotman, Iu. *Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin in Lotman, Pushkin* (St Petersburg, 1995), 29.

⁵⁵⁰ Bloom, H. *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York, London, 1973), 95.

⁵⁵¹ Dostoevsky, F. 'Pushkin (Ocherk)' [1880] in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* in 30 vols (Leningrad, 1972-1990), XXVI, 1984, 136-149.

⁵⁵² Frank, S. 'O zadachakh poznaniia Pushkina' in *Pushkin v russkoi filosofskoi kritike* (Moscow, 1990), 435.

I have also shown how childhood impressions define the major themes and image clusters which the adult Pushkin would develop throughout his creative life. In this I have been guided by Jakobson's ideas of the multiform interpenetration of the word and situation, their mutual tension and mutual influence:

We do not wish mechanically to derive a work from a situation, but at the same time, in analysing a poetic work we should not overlook significant repeated correspondences between a situation and the work...The situation is a component of speech; the poetic function transforms it like every other component of speech, sometimes emphasizing it as an efficient formal device, sometimes, on the contrary, subduing it, but whether a work includes the situation positively or negatively, the work is never indifferent to it.⁵⁵³

Furthermore, I have argued that Tynianov's novel demonstrated its author's appreciation of the medium of the *Bildungsroman* as one well suited to psychological analysis, enabling him access to the mysteries of Pushkin's temperament and behaviour and the subconscious and irrational factors which might have served as secret regulators of his actions. By subtly presenting Pushkin's psyche as the arena of various opposing impulses, Tynianov achieved convincing interpretations of the processes and mechanisms of motivations and impulses that might have governed Pushkin in his childhood and youth. This 'inner' portrait helped Tynianov to create an illusion of authenticity unprecedented in Pushkin novels before or since.

Since historical events occur according to the spontaneous laws of history and may seem accidental, the task of the writer is to see significance beyond the accidental facts, to determine their meaning [*смысловой знак*],⁵⁵⁴ to 'decipher the will of history'.⁵⁵⁵ I have examined the meanings which Tynianov assigns to his historical characters and argued that the originality of such representations resides in the form in which they are delivered: i.e. as if through the prism of Pushkin's own creative imagination, as they might have struck Pushkin. Such representations not only demonstrate the impact of historical events on Pushkin's life and work, but often tell us as much about Pushkin as they do about Emperors or Ministers. Analysing Tynianov's concept of history as revealed in the novel, I have attempted to establish what Tynianov believed to be true about the nature of historical understanding, and secondly, how the historical events and personalities which he portrayed might have affected Pushkin's own historical thinking.

Finally, in my discussion of the poet's personal myth I have dwelt on the use of myth in Tynianov's two novels, applying the word 'myth' loosely as connoting several meanings: as timeless universal paradigms re-enacted by subsequent generations, as fictionalised or otherwise

⁵⁵³ Jakobson, R. *Pushkin's Sculptural Myth* (The Hague, Paris, 1975), 3.

⁵⁵⁴ Eikhenbaum, *Moi vremennik*, 42, 49.

⁵⁵⁵ Eikhanbaum, B. 'Nuzhna kritika', *Zhizn' iskusstva*, VI (1924), quoted in Erlich, *Russian Formalism*, 149.

distorted historical accounts, or even as blatant lies, and as officially accepted versions of events. I have discussed the mythopoeic techniques that Pushkin's forebears, his immediate family and the poet himself employed as means not only of reconstructing their origins, but also of satisfying their craving for identity and advancing themselves in Russian society. I have investigated the ways in which Tynianov handled the task of bringing into the novel dubious research materials available at the time in order to expose the myth-making intentions visible in both the Gannibals' and the Pushkins' accounts of themselves. Although sceptical about the validity of such artificial creations, Tynianov nevertheless demonstrates that such a mythopoeic impulse was crucial in Pushkin's developing his own self-awareness, and indeed his creativity.

In Tynianov's analysis Pushkin's view (apparently Schellingian) is that not only may a writer create a personal myth, he must do so if his art is to transcend the limits of his own experience. In the hands of a great synthesizing artist, the personal becomes the universal. Without personal mythology there can be no great art; the supreme modern poets are always myth-makers.⁵⁵⁶ I have argued that awareness of the need to act in keeping with a model was a vital aspect of the psychology of both his forebears and the poet himself which allowed them to negotiate the crises of their lives by reflecting on similar episodes told of their ancestors or by identifying with certain legendary, biblical or mythological heroes. The intentional re-enactment of archetypal models allowed them to adjust such models according to the necessities of an unpredictable historical present.

Myth for Tynianov himself was a reservoir of material, a human resource which allowed him to emplot his stories in order to express their universal significance and to explore the innermost essence of the age he described. However, elements of relativity and scepticism in his mythopoeia reveal themselves in a subversively ironical and playful stance, indicating his expository and thoroughly anti-mythologizing intentions. In dealing in both novels with the national myth of Pushkin, Tynianov's main achievement was to strip it of its absolute status. He continued to strive against 'monumentalising' the great poet, having already attacked Apollon Grigor'ev's maxim – 'Pushkin is our everything' – in his literary criticism. Tynianov argued that although Pushkin's significance is enormous, it is 'not at all extraordinary or exclusive' and that from the historico-literary point of view Pushkin was 'only one of many' in his era.⁵⁵⁷ But even Tynianov's impulse towards scientific secularisation of Pushkin's image has nuanced underpinnings. In his unfinished novel *The Gannibals*, for example, he shatters the myth of the very possibility of 'pure blood' in any given nation and demonstrates how a convergence of

⁵⁵⁶ Quoted in Haskell M. Block 'The Myth of the Artist' in Strelka, 6.

⁵⁵⁷ See Tynianov, Iu. *Poetika*, 78 and *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki*, 167.

extraordinary or mundane and not necessarily favourable circumstances can produce a remarkable and truly unpredictable result: the first *national Russian* poet.

Lukács once aptly pointed out that great novels become possible when they ‘define the historico-philosophical moment’, when they ‘grow into a symbol of the essential thing that needs to be said’.⁵⁵⁸ One such topical issue for Tynianov was the theme of conformity with or alienation from the political regime, of finding ways to fight or conform to the epoch. I have argued that as the novel progresses, Tynianov’s Pushkin, as representative of his epoch, acquires the features of the prototypical Russian ‘superfluous’ man – a theme, which could not have escaped reverberating with Tynianov on the personal level, as it will have done with many other 1930’s’ *intelligenty* undergoing crises of identity and contemplating their place in literature and society. Such a theme was in tune with the Formalists’ particular slant on history, one which compelled them to focus on the successes and failures of the independently thinking element in society as it resisted the gradual encroachment of the state on its intellectual and creative freedom.

Rejecting, debunking and purifying the myth of Pushkin enabled Tynianov to develop a myth that was of personal significance to him: of Pushkin as role model for the creative artist. Such a fact categorically refutes the ‘escapism’ charges levelled at Tynianov by critics at the time. The two Tynianov novels considered closely in this thesis, if not actually political allegories as some of his novellas arguably are, nonetheless present an intense deliberation on the topical questions of the day. They are topical issues important for *Tynianov the writer*, and include that of a concealed polemic with the Socialist Realist doctrine. Through a series of themes and images, Tynianov ponders the issues pertinent to writers of his time: the function of the writer in Russian society, the place of literature in cultural life, the writer’s ethical responsibility to his readers and himself, the role of censorship, and numerous others. Tynianov for one supports Pushkin’s dictum that ‘the aim of poetry is poetry’ and that an artist should be free from any kind of pre-conceived ‘ideological objectives’ or ‘utilitarian’ attitudes. Ignoring the demands for art to be accessible, easily digestible and useful that were imposed on the Soviet historical novel, Tynianov refused to allow his art to be utilised as a political weapon of any party or class. This is not to say, of course, that he was not reflecting the views and aspirations of any group at all. Tynianov’s hypostases as an academic, scholar and novelist enabled him to present the view of Jewish Russian intellectuals of his generation on the contemporary reality and communist ideology, and tackle issues that reach far beyond the character of Pushkin and yet

⁵⁵⁸ Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (London, 1978) [1916], p. 88.

are linked to it, such as the freedom of the intellectual in a totalitarian state, whether past and present, race and Russian nationhood.

The overarching idea of my thesis has been that, by seeking to decanonize the one-dimensional rigid monolith of the ‘state-sponsored Pushkin’, Tynianov was engaged in an effort to create an image which would respond to what he perceived to be the spiritual needs of the Soviet intelligentsia. As I have argued, Tynianov’s Pushkin emerged as a construct, re-mythologized in such a way that certain features came to achieve special prominence. However, contrary to Zagidullina’s observation about the intelligentsia’s emphasis on Pushkin’s suffering [*трагичность*],⁵⁵⁹ I would argue that in Tynianov’s personal circumstances and in those of his milieu, what proved most productive were the *survival* and *life-affirming* techniques that Pushkin developed in his lifetime, the skills of surmounting adversity without self-pity or complaint and remaining creatively active in spite of hostile circumstances. As in all myths, the process of ‘joyful recognition’, whose processes have been aptly described by G. Knabe, enabled Tynianov and his group to sublimate their own life experiences, to view them in a clearer and purified light, to elevate themselves above the pressures of the time and create a more optimistic self-image which clearly defined their place in history. More importantly, Pushkin’s tragic life allowed them to resolve the issue of personal values and the meaning of their own situation and proudly to reaffirm their affiliation to the traditions of the humanistic values of the pre-revolutionary democratic Russian intelligentsia. Like any other social-historical myth, the Pushkin myth performed a harmonizing role in alleviating socio-cultural tensions and contradictions and reconfirmed the solidarity of the Soviet Russian intelligentsia as ‘a union of like-minded confederates’ resisting the negative realities of the political order.⁵⁶⁰

Tynianov the writer and Tynianov the Pushkinist managed to resolve the mutually cancelling vectors and potentially destructive contradictions in their respective areas in this sense: the *episteme* (the objective or the cerebral) in Tynianov’s fiction came to be felicitously combined with the *doxa* (the intuitive and the imaginative). Intellectual understanding and artistic perception came to work as two facets of the same creative process in which, as with Pushkin, artistic instinct was the measure of objective truth. Responding to the zeitgeist of his times, that very ‘yearning for holistic, organicist understanding’ which in the mid-1920’s was beginning to be felt in many spheres of research into spiritual activity, Tynianov indicated a new way of seeking from the past answers to the burning issues of the present. His intimate

⁵⁵⁹ She argues that Pushkin’s function of a national hero was to a large degree to act as a sacral ‘atoner for the nation’s sins’ and as its ‘saviour’. Zagidullina, M. *Pushkinskii mif v kontse XX veka* (Cheliabinsk, 2001), 199.

⁵⁶⁰ Knabe, G. S. ‘Arbatskaia tsivilizatsiia i arbatskii mif’ in Knabe, G.S. (ed.) *Moskva i ‘moskovskii tekst’ russkoi kul’tury* (Moscow, 1998), 185-190.

exploration of Pushkin transcended the boundaries of mere biography, or the formulaic conventions of an adventure plot in a historical novel. Instead, he turned his *Pushkin* into a startling manifesto of the *bytie* of a single person, of ‘an intellectual in particular circumstances’⁵⁶¹ which was also a universal statement about the relation of art to life.

⁵⁶¹ Ginzburg, L. ‘Zapiski blokadnogo cheloveka’ in *Chelovek za pis'mennym stolom* (Leningrad, 1989).

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