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Russian Opera in the Age of Psychological Prose

By

Emily Anne Frey

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

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Abstract

Russian Opera in the Age of Psychological Prose

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Music

University of California, Berkeley

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Russian Opera in the Age of Psychological Prose examines the relationship between opera and literature in Russia between 1866 and 1881, considering the ways in which both art forms reflected and contributed to contemporaneous understandings of human subjectivity. The status and psychology of the individual was a vital issue for Russian writers of the time, owing to both the new social circumstances that arose from Alexander II's Great Reforms and the still-reverberating salvos from the radical critics of the 1860s, who believed that the political destiny of Russia depended on the psychological constitution of Russians. I argue that opera, a genre that has always traded in the externalization of inner emotional states, played an important and little-understood role in these conversations. Interdisciplinary in orientation, my project draws liberally from the fields of musicology, Slavic studies, psychology, comparative literature, and the history of ideas.

After an extended historical and theoretical introduction in "Opera, Literature, and Psychological Realism in 1870s Russia," three chapters focus on the works of Modest Musorgsky and Pyotr Chaikovsky, Russian opera's most celebrated psychologists. "Boris Godunov and the Terrorist" discusses Musorgsky's treatment of Tsar Boris' upstart antagonist, the historical figure of Dmitri the Pretender, in light of the contemporary controversy surrounding Dmitri Karakozov's 1866 assassination attempt on Tsar Alexander II. Considering texts by Dostoevsky, Turgenev, and Chernyshevsky,

this chapter contextualizes the Pretender's ambiguous operatic fate within a broad debate about the morality and psychology of political violence. In "Nowhere Man: *Evgeny Onegin* and the Politics of Reflection in Nineteenth-Century Russia," I put Chaikovsky's opera in dialogue with the reception history of Pushkin's novel, investigating the ways in which the opera responds to, and transforms, key questions about the status and politics of introspection in contemporary Russian culture. Taking its title and central questions from Tolstoy's 1869 *War and Peace*, "*Khovanshchina*, *The Maid of Orleans*, and the Force that Moves the Nations" interrogates Russian ideas about the role of the individual in history. I juxtapose Chaikovsky's *The Maid of Orleans* with Musorgsky's *Khovanshchina*, examining the divergent takes these operas present on history and human agency.

Together, these studies propose that opera, far from a mere nationalist vehicle or cultural *divertissement*, served as public staging ground for the exploration, reflection, and enactment of many of the most important social and intellectual issues of late imperial Russia.

*to my family
old and new*

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I am immensely indebted to the members of my dissertation committee: Richard Taruskin, who challenged and supported with equal ferocity; James Davies, the keenest of listeners and subtlest of readers; and Luba Golburt, who proved a shrewd yet sympathetic interlocutor during my qualifying exam and continued to embody those adjectives thereafter. Mary Ann Smart, Marina Frolova-Walker, and Jenny Kallick have also provided caring and canny guidance at various points of my academic career.

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Note on Transliteration and Dates

Russian words and names have been transliterated according to a simplified Library of Congress System (–skiĭ endings, for example, are here rendered as –sky). I've retained the Russian, rather than the traditional English, spellings of such names as Chaikovsky and Musorgsky to correspond with modern scholarly practice.

All dates before February 1, 1918 are given according to the Julian calendar (Old Style), which during the period under study ran thirteen days behind the West's Gregorian calendar. Russia adopted the Gregorian calendar after the revolution, declaring that, in 1918, the day following January 31 would be called February 14.

INTRODUCTION
Or, “What Is to Be Done?”

Western scholarship on nineteenth-century Russian opera has ever been dominated by two preoccupations: nationalism and literature.

In musicology, focus on the former has been largely compelled by the assumed position of Russian music at the fringes of the European canon. The notion of Russia as exotic other to a preexisting musical mainstream was a major factor in both the composition and the reception of this music, and left a great many myths to be debunked. Debunked they were, with a vigor and cogency that shook the field; all musicology did indeed get a little more Russian,¹ as Richard Taruskin prophesied in the preface to 1997’s *Defining Russia Musically*. For musicologists of my generation, however, these battles have always already been won, and so decisively that it is hard to fathom there could have been a time in which the term “Russianness” traveled unbedecked with quotation marks. A few years ago I was asked, in my phone interview at Cambridge, whether in fact I thought there was anything left to say about nationalism in Russian music. (A bit of an ambush, this, as my interlocutor was at the time compiling her own take on the subject: *Russian Music and Nationalism from Glinka to Stalin*.² I replied then as I would today: “Of course! – but not by me.”) In November 2010, too, an international conference in Leeds devoted itself to “Non-Nationalist Russian Opera”; its call for papers asserted that

The rise of nationalism in nineteenth-century Russian opera completely eclipsed the works of composers who did not actively engage in nationalist discourse, or whose operas did not display particular Russian musical style...This one-day symposium will address the “other” side of Russian opera as represented by

¹ The quotation reads: “Where academic musicology, as befit its Germanic origins, used to be tetchily (and yes, nationalistically) ‘center-centered,’ now it is much more the fashion (and much more fun) to use the discourse of ‘alterity’ as a tool for deconstructing (particularizing and situating) the universal. All of musicology, we Rusists like to think, is getting Russian.” Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton University Press, 1997), xviii.

² Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism from Glinka to Stalin* (Yale University Press, 2007).

stage works that cannot so readily be subsumed under the theme of national identity.³

I'd dispute such categorical phrasings as "completely eclipsed"; the operas of the Silver Age, in particular, have invited diverse perspectives from scholars in the last fifteen years,⁴ and few of these works are commonly considered "nationalistic." Still, the notion that all topics other than nationalism could be said to constitute a singular, marginalized group seems hardly salubrious for the state of scholarship on this repertoire. Without diminishing the historical significance that nationalist ideas have had in Russia, one nevertheless wonders how much of the stage has been left unilluminated by so bright and sharp a spotlight on this one area.

In Slavic Studies, the prevailing winds when it came to Russian opera long blew from an attitudinal and methodological direction. While the literarily inclined have always been apt to view opera as a mindless and derivative art form, in Russia this problem is endemic, owing largely (and ironically) to the high-mindedness composers there often displayed in choosing operatic subject matter. Russian composers were unusually disposed to operaticize literary works of exceptional artistic merit in their own right – works, in other words, that had never seemed to be lacking a cabaletta. They also had a penchant for culling operatic plots and even wholesale librettos from the modern literature of their own nation, thereby guaranteeing audiences' familiarity with the source material. And so operas in Russia, far more so than anywhere else, have always worn the scarlet A of the adaptation; the charge of blasphemy against a national masterpiece has been a tough one for even (or especially) the most successful Russian operas to shake. Beyond all this, the timeworn scholarly exercise of comparing Russian operas to their decades-old, paper-and-ink "originals" – taking diligent and usually disapproving note of the deviations – has more often than not served to obscure the ways in which those operas participated in the social and intellectual issues of their own time. Divorced from history and overshadowed by literature, Russian opera has too often appeared a sort of cultural *divertissement*, an image that does justice to neither opera nor history.

³ See the conference's website, "International Symposium: 'Non-Nationalist' Russian Opera," School of Music, University of Leeds, <http://music.leeds.ac.uk/events/non-nationalist-russian-opera/>

⁴ See, for example, Simon Morrison's *Russian Opera and the Symbolist Movement* (University of California Press, 2002), Anna Nisnevich's dissertation "The Silver Age and Its Echo: St. Petersburg Classicism at Home and Abroad, 1897-1921" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2007), and most recently, Olga Haldey's *Mamontov's Private Opera: The Search for Modernism in Russian Theater* (Indiana University Press, 2010).

Happily, this image has been largely supplanted in recent years. Caryl Emerson's introduction of Bakhtinian theories to the study of generic "transpositions" in Russian art has done much to delegitimize the automatic privileging of literary "originals" over their later manifestations in other artistic media.⁵ Julie Buckler further complicated the picture in her 2000 *The Literary Lorgnette*,⁶ which all but eschewed discussions of individual works in order to consider the ways in which Russian literary culture shaped, and was shaped by, practices of operagoing in the nineteenth century. In 2005, Boris Gasparov's tour de force *Five Operas and a Symphony* attempted to yank Russian opera out of its time warp, resituating six works within the literary and cultural histories of their own eras. For Gasparov, the chronological gap between literary works and their operatic adaptations serves as "a useful heuristic tool...[for] familiar situations and characters, firmly entrenched in the national memory, receive a new meaning in the new context."⁷ Most recently, studies by Olga Haldey and Anna Fishzon⁸ have further enriched our understanding of Russian opera's audiences and institutions. These contextual approaches to the relationship between Russian opera and literature have proved both stimulating and productive, but they do not begin to exhaust a rich area of inquiry to which musicologists have yet to contribute.

Thus despite my Chernyshevskian subheading, my aim is not violent overthrow; I will issue no dissertator's call to take arms against a sea of unsatisfactory scholarship. Much of the literature on nineteenth-century Russian opera, at least that written within my own lifetime, has been more than satisfactory; the problem is rather that there is no "sea." While twentieth and twenty-first century Russian music has witnessed a flowering of academic interest in recent years, work on the nineteenth century remains comparatively sparse⁹ – and in musicology, what scholarship does exist has been too highly concentrated around the theme of nationalism. I seek not to replace, then, but to supplement and complicate. As a point of departure, I wonder whether our overwhelming focus on constructions of nationhood in nineteenth-century Russian music has risked reinforcing yet another myth: "the strongly held belief," as Slavist Lynne Attwood writes, "that Russia's interest in the collective meant that individuality

⁵ See especially Emerson, *Boris Godunov: Transpositions of a Russian Theme* (Indiana University Press, 1986).

⁶ Julie A. Buckler, *The Literary Lorgnette: Attending Opera in Imperial Russia* (Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁷ Boris Gasparov, *Five Operas and a Symphony: Word and Music in Russian Culture* (Yale University Press, 2005), xxi–xxii.

⁸ Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera*. and Anna Fishzon, *Fandom, Authenticity, and Opera: Mad Acts and Letter Scenes in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁹ As a point of comparison, the Doctoral Dissertations in Musicology database lists precisely six English-language dissertations on any topic relating to Russian opera before the Silver Age. Scriabin alone has inspired more than three times that number.

was neglected even before the revolution and was virtually wiped out afterward.”¹⁰ It is precisely this under-considered, and fraught, category of “the individual” in nineteenth-century Russia that I hope to address here, through a consideration of opera’s relationship to psychological literature in the period 1866-1881.

Texts, contexts, intertexts

Interloping at another discipline’s national conference can produce a certain frisson of the forbidden. Such was my experience at the 2012 meeting of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages, when I heard a presenter ask in earnest: “Why study context? Can it tell us anything about the work that cannot be discovered through close reading?” Having come of scholarly age in the ascendancy of the new musicology, I was more than a little diverted to witness someone so brazenly stick out her tongue at the Crystal Palace, in Dostoevsky’s colorful expression. This panelist’s position was not a representative one, to be sure. But as a measure of the distance between her discipline and my own, I couldn’t help but think of an observation – terrifying to me at the time – that Roger Parker had made in the first meeting of our MPhil proseminar several years earlier: “Some of the best theses in recent years haven’t mentioned a specific piece of music at all.”

Perhaps the greatest point of difference between the fields of opera studies and Slavic literature lies in the methodological status of close reading – which for Slavists remains among the truest arrows in a scholar’s quiver. Some, like Eric Naiman in 2010’s *Nabokov, Peversely*, have defended the practice on disciplinary grounds. Close reading may not give much insight into the way works have been viewed historically¹¹ (though what critical activity, asks Naiman in response to charges of ahistoricity, is *not* colored by the interpreter’s own historical position?). It is, however, what a literary scholar has uniquely to offer; to give it up is to become a quirkily-trained historian working in a literary ghetto. “Why,” Naiman writes, “should a literary scholar – when confronted by the notion of literary history – lay down the tools of her trade and so readily accept the time-bound approach of another? ...Can’t we read and write history from our own,

¹⁰ Lynne Attwood, “Review of *Self and Story in Russian History* by Laura Engelstein and Stephanie Sandler,” *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 5 (December 1, 2001): 1902.

¹¹ In conversation, my colleague Anna Berman of McGill University has defended close reading on precisely historical grounds, arguing that nineteenth-century Russians were (as we will see) a nation of incorrigible close readers. To read closely a work of nineteenth-century Russian literature, then, is to engage with the ways in which contemporary Russians experienced that work – or, to put it musicologically, to get “drastic” with Russian literature, one has to get “gnostic.”

disciplinary position of strength?"¹² Donna Tussing Orwin likewise assigned close reading a central role in *Consequences of Consciousness*, her 2007 study of Russian psychological prose:

I am obviously interested in ideas, but in deference to my topic and also to the dynamics of any artistic text I develop the particularities of my ideas through close readings. ...I hope that readers...will participate actively in the many close readings in the book; the readings are intended as checks of the validity and usefulness of the ideas.¹³

Orwin's aims, one notes, diverge sharply from those of the AATSEEL panelist; the former does not see the explication of an individual work as the focus of her scholarship. But a close reading of a literary text can *validate* one's broader ideas, and the yields of this practice may constitute legitimate evidence on which arguments can be based. There is something comfortingly, perhaps antiseptically, scientific about close reading in Orwin's formulation. For her, close reading produces not "a solipsistic reflection of the Self,"¹⁴ as one writer has summed up the prevailing musicological view of the practice, but rather the potential for contact between authors and audiences, in the form of empirical "checks" that readers may verify independently.

The story of musicology's engagement with, and protracted disentanglement from, close reading has been recounted by Mary Ann Smart and James Currie, among others.¹⁵ Opera scholars in particular are now long accustomed to calls that we should abandon our insular focus on "the music itself" and investigate instead the ways in which opera has mattered to people historically; in Carolyn Abbate's terms, we should pay more attention to music's "drastic," experiential aspects and less to its "gnostic" and intellectual ones.¹⁶ (At this late date, the only thing that is shocking about such calls is

¹² Eric Naiman, *Nabokov, Perversely* (Cornell University Press, 2010), 271. Naiman is here writing specifically of a literary scholar's prerogative to practice comparative close reading on works written in different historical periods, and to speak of a later work's "influence" on an earlier one. The chapter is called "What If Nabokov Had Written 'The Double': Reading Dostoevsky After Nabokov."

¹³ Donna Tussing Orwin, *Consequences of Consciousness: Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy* (Stanford University Press, 2007), 4.

¹⁴ Mary Ann Smart, "The Queen and the Flirt," *Representations* 104, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 130.

¹⁵ See Mary Ann Smart, "The Queen and the Flirt," *Representations* 104, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 126–136, and also James Currie, "Music After All," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 62, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 145–203.

¹⁶ Carolyn Abbate, "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (Spring 2004): 505–36.

that those who make them still often feign to write from an iconoclast's perspective.¹⁷) This goal has left musicologists in a bit of a quandary regarding how, if at all, to deal with musical scores. For scores present a problem that literature does not: namely, reading them requires fluency in a specialized notational language, and musicologists writing for a general scholarly audience cannot necessarily expect readers to be able to "check" the validity of their textual interpretations. Beyond that, unlike with literary works, the printed text is not the only, or even the most important, form in which audiences encounter a piece of music. How, then, do we conceive of a score's historical status? Are all attempts to interpret these documents ineluctably tainted with the "ideological charge of modernism"¹⁸? Is there a way to speak about the contents of a musical text without presuming that the work's entire meaning lies bound there within?

Some solutions to this problem have been more – forgive the pun – drastic than others. In their recent, hungrily awaited *A History of Opera*, Abbate and Parker, two of the most eminent scholars of the genre, dispensed with scores altogether:

At a very early stage...we decided that this history would contain no musical examples. We did so because, at the same stage, it became obvious to us that – as far as possible – we wanted to write the book without reference to musical scores. ...Mostly [this] was because scores encourage elaborate attention to particular aspects of a strictly musical argument, above all those involving harmonic and melodic detail on the small and the large scale, aspects that have tended to figure too prominently in musicological writings about opera. In other words, scores encourage the idea of opera as a text rather than as an event.¹⁹

This approach, at least in the case of *A History of Opera*, has yielded an eminently readable history of the genre with lively and original musical descriptions. (It helps that Parker and Abbate possess sensitive ears – ears, I think, that are probably not much more like the average nineteenth-century operagoer's than their twenty-first century, musicologically-trained eyes. One must interpret what one hears as well as what one

¹⁷ Abbate and Parker may be the worst offenders here. In the preface to 2012's *A History of Opera*, they write: "Various stalwarts of the musicological lexicon are almost entirely absent [from our discussions of operas]. Readers will look in vain for abstract structural analyses of music, or extended descriptions of notes interacting with each other." [Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, *A History of Opera* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012), xv.] But these "stalwarts" have been "almost entirely absent" from musicological writing about opera for the past fifteen years, thanks in no small part to the influence of those two excellent scholars.

¹⁸ Gary Tomlinson, "Musical Pasts and Postmodern Musicologies: Response to Lawrence Kramer," *Current Musicology* 53 (1993): 18–24.

¹⁹ Abbate and Parker, *A History of Opera*, xv.

reads, after all; can close listening really give us so much more insight into people's "drastic" historical experience than close reading can?²⁰) It's hard to summon much enthusiasm for the prospect of seeing their methodology be more widely adopted, however. As a corrective measure, Parker and Abbate's embargo on musical scores has its merits (though, I submit, the need for such correction is no longer entirely pressing in 2014), but as a prescription it seems wrongheaded. Why should we deliberately circumscribe our inquiry into this most heterogeneous of art forms; why, as scholars, should we be ascetic with a genre that is all about excess? If we reject the premise that texts tell us everything, must we then accept the idea that they can offer us nothing? And further, why should the choice to consider an opera's score necessarily signify that one will ignore all of that opera's other facets? Can opera be only *either* text or event, and not both (and more)? Why can't opera, like everything else on earth, exhibit the qualities of both wave and particle, so to speak? Isn't it more interesting to engage with opera in all its chaotic indeterminacy?

I have no grand theory to offer, just an observation that the vast and messy middle is often the most challenging place to be (for it allows no prefab solutions), and that textual criticism need not be seen only as either holy grail or *bête noire*. Perhaps, instead, it might be regarded as one item among many in a music historian's eclectic toolkit, to be wielded or to collect dust as the argument requires. And in any case, to characterize nineteenth-century Russian opera – which bids fair to be the "textiest" opera ever written – only as an audio-visual event is to present a willfully distorted historical picture. Spectacular effects and astounding voices, the latter of which *A History of Opera* locates "at the centre of operatic experience,"²¹ were never the key ingredients of operas created and performed by Russians. (In fact, when reading reviews of nineteenth-century Russian operas, one sometimes wonders whether anyone in the theatre was singing at all.) If you wanted to encounter those in St. Petersburg, you went to the Italian opera; the Russian troupe, which unlike the Italians did not benefit from the imperial purse, simply couldn't afford them. And so, for reasons both economic and cultural, Russians had to define their own opera differently: in terms of its closeness to a literary tradition of which the nation was understandably proud; in terms of its treatment of contemporary themes and issues even in historical guise ("the past in the present," as Musorgsky put it); in terms of a performance style that emphasized self-effacement – a singing actor's ability to "disappear" into the role – over

²⁰ Beyond this, scholarly writing – with its sinuous syntax and extravagant footnotes – seems a medium quite hilariously ill-suited to capturing immediate experience. This is not to say that we shouldn't expand the purview of our study to those elements that have traditionally been left out of musicological research, but rather that we should be more realistic about what we can hope to accomplish, given the historical and generic constraints under which we work.

²¹ Abbate and Parker, *A History of Opera*, 8.

divadom. Reviews from the period indicate that opera's textuality (or more precisely, its *intertextuality* – its status as a text that adapts, modifies, or otherwise refers to other texts) was a crucial part of its reception in Russia, right from the beginning. We gain little by denying that fact. It's more productive, I think, to explore the connections between Russian opera's "intertextual" status and the broader social conditions of its creation and dissemination.

To that end, this dissertation asks: How did opera participate in the cultural life of 1870s Russia, a society that was highly invested in the production and consumption of psychological literature? Chapter One, "Russian Opera in the Age of Psychological Prose," lays out the general historical and theoretical concerns underpinning this inquiry, discussing several points of connection between opera and literature in nineteenth-century Russia. Each of my succeeding chapters attempts to shed light on the question above from a different angle, drawing on an eclectic array of sources: fiction, journalism, reviews and criticism, memoirs and autobiographies, diaries, personal correspondence, and musical scores. In dealing with the last of these, I'll attempt not to dazzle with hermeneutic derring-do, but rather to keep my observations on the level of what someone with intermediate score reading ability can easily spot, or what an educated musician can hear. Some degree of musical literacy will be useful, but not essential, in understanding the details.

Chapter Two, "*Boris Godunov* and the Terrorist," considers Musorgsky's opera as a response to the outbreak of ideologically-motivated violence in 1870s Russia. In the years surrounding Dmitri Karakozov's assassination attempt on Alexander II, Russian artists from Repin to Dostoevsky explored the psychology of this new breed of political criminal in their works. Musorgsky's decision to adapt *Boris Godunov* for the opera stage was thus timely, for Pushkin's play featured a character who, as a young, low-born revolutionary dedicated to toppling the tsar, had much in common with contemporary urban radicals – an association that did not go unnoticed by Russian commentators of the time. But Musorgsky's handling of Dmitri the Pretender diverges sharply in his two versions of *Boris Godunov*, suggesting shifting ideas about the role of this figure both in the opera and in history. Musorgsky's first attempt at the character produced a Dmitri every inch the undeterrable "new man" of Russian literature; evincing little subjectivity beyond his obsession with his cause, 1869's Dmitri escapes out a tavern window in Act II and exists thereafter only as a musico-dramatic idea. In Musorgsky's 1874 revision of the opera, however, Dmitri next pops up in Poland, where both his self-determination and his dogged recitative style are easily bowled over by Marina Mnishek's triple-metered tunefulness. Like Ratmir in *Ruslan and Lyudmila's* enchanted garden, this Dmitri forgets his cause – but participates in the opera's most ravishing music. Drawing on writings by Dostoevsky, Turgenev, and Chernyshevsky, this chapter contextualizes Dmitri's ambiguous operatic fate within a broad debate surrounding the dominant

socioliterary type of the era – the “nihilist,” the “new man,” and ultimately the “terrorist.”

“Nowhere Man: *Evgeny Onegin* and the Politics of Reflection in Nineteenth-Century Russia” centers on the eponymous hero of Chaikovsky’s 1879 opera. Critics from Hermann Laroche to Catherine Clément have lamented not only the triviality of Evgeny’s character, but the flavorlessness of his music – a deficiency cast into relief by the compelling and pervasive musical presence of Tatiana, the too-eventual object of Evgeny’s affections. This imbalance, a departure from Pushkin (whose Tatiana is ever sketchily drawn, and indeed almost mute), has often been attributed to Chaikovsky’s well-publicized emotional identification with his heroine. In such accounts, Evgeny’s seeming blankness often appears the result of a composerly flaw, Chaikovsky’s inability to portray convincingly in music a character dissimilar to his own. The *Evgeny Onegin* Chaikovsky inherited was not only Pushkin’s, however: it had been written on and written over by virtually every major intellectual figure in nineteenth-century Russia. The novel had met its share of controversy in the decades after its publication, and, in keeping with the contemporary Russian penchant for dissecting literary personages to diagnose real-life social malaise, fierce contention had hinged precisely on the natures of Tatiana and Evgeny’s characters. By the time Chaikovsky got his hands on them, Pushkin’s heroes were entangled in some of the century’s most urgent debates: about the ethics of action versus reflection, the slippage between public and private identities. This chapter traces the constructions of Evgeny and Tatiana in a series of nineteenth-century readings of *Evgeny Onegin*, examining the ways in which the opera responds to and transforms key questions from the reception history of the novel.

Taking its title and central questions from Tolstoy’s 1869 *War and Peace*, “*Khovanshchina*, *The Maid of Orleans*, and *The Force that Moves the Nations*” interrogates Russian ideas about the role of the individual in history. Tolstoy imagines a model of personality that runs counter to the “typological” view: for him, selves are moving targets, lacking both finitude and internal coherence. Any notion of human agency is illusory, Tolstoy argues, for the individual is not “figure” but “ground” on which the whims of history play themselves out. History, not human effort, is the force that moves the nations. Chapter Three discusses two works in which this most classic of operatic conflicts – individual will vs. the impersonal heft of history – is thematized: Chaikovsky’s Gallic barnburner *The Maid of Orleans* and Musorgsky’s *Khovanshchina*, a loose baggy monster to rival any of Tolstoy’s. Dramatic stakes are high here, as the heroines of both operas maintain dual identities as prophets and mortal lovers, conduits between human and supra-human forces. Despite their similar positions, Chaikovsky’s Joan and Musorgsky’s Marfa embody opposing ideas toward inevitable historical processes: the former sets herself against history and faces an agonizing internal struggle, while the latter simply rides the historical tide. In this chapter, I contextualize

Chaikovsky and Musorgsky's divergent takes on these issues within a discussion of the historically contingent personality in Russian literature.

Together, these studies propose that opera, far from a mere nationalist vehicle or cultural *divertissement*, served as public staging ground for the exploration, reflection, and enactment of many of the most important social and intellectual issues of late imperial Russia.

CHAPTER ONE

Opera, Literature, and Psychological Realism in 1870s Russia

В 70-х годах...широкое развитие получает лирико-психологическая опера. ...Почти все оперы этого жанра созданы на основе произведений русской литературы, для которого характерен пристальный интерес к душевному миру героев и воссозданию реальной среды.

In the 1870s...lyrical-psychological opera underwent a sweeping development. ...Nearly all the operas of this genre are based on works of Russian literature, which is characterized by a steadfast interest in the spiritual life of its heroes and the representation of realistic circumstances.

Abram Gozenpud¹

In 1896, on a lecture circuit around the eastern United States, Prince Sergei Volkonsky remarked on the extraordinary abruptness with which the West had been gripped by a vogue for Russian novels – the latest products of a literary tradition that, Volkonsky gently chided his audience, had languished for a long time in international obscurity. “The sudden interest in Russian writers which has broken out in these last twenty years,” opined the prince, “is too recent to compensate for so many years of indifference.”² The novels that first captivated the West – *Crime and Punishment*, *Anna Karenina*, *War and Peace*, *The Brothers Karamazov* – had all been written between the late 1860s and the early 1880s, a period that (not coincidentally) also produced the first Russian operas to enter the standard Western repertory. The relationship between opera and the novel in 1870s Russia was one of sympathy and symbiosis; both were cultivated

¹ Abram Gozenpud, *Russkii opernyi teatr XIX veka (1873-1889)* (Leningrad: Muzyka, 1973), 125.

² Serge Volkonsky, *Pictures of Russian History and Russian Literature* (Boston, New York, and London: Lamson, Wolfe, and Co., 1897), 5.

and consumed in the same fertile environment, and both shared a number of common concerns. Perhaps the most notable of these was a marked preoccupation with the artistic representation of individual subjective experience, and in particular, the relationship between that experience and the conditions of Russian social life.

On psychological prose

The term “psychological prose,” familiar in Slavic studies, requires a bit of unpacking. It was popularized by the literary critic and memoirist Lydia Ginzburg (1902-1990),³ whose 1971 *On Psychological Prose* explores the ways in which the literature of various times and places has represented contemporary ideas about subjectivity. For Ginzburg, the relationship between “real life” conception and artistic representation is ever a two-way street, for literature both reflects and shapes prevailing ideas about human psychology. (This view, as we will see, was shared by many nineteenth-century Russian writers.)⁴ Catholic in its treatment of genres and periods, *On Psychological Prose* considers documents ranging from Tolstoy’s novels to Rousseau’s *Confessions* to the private correspondence of the Stankevich circle. In common usage, however, the term usually applies to Russian writing from the later nineteenth century, with Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883), Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881), and Lev Tolstoy (1828-1910) its most prominent practitioners. Theirs was a time in which a peculiar, and ardently voiced, aesthetic of realism held sway over the Russian arts.

Russian realism was distinguished by an outsize interest in the mundane; in an era dominated by organicist conceptions of biological and social organization, the seemingly trivial factlets of daily life were held to be the empirically observable traces of larger and more important truths. The specifics of a person’s dress, grooming, and manner of speaking became legible⁵ markers of personal and social identity. Dirty

³ Though Russian scholars consider her comparable in stature to Bakhtin, Ginzburg remains little known in the west. Of her critical writings, the only works currently in English translation are *On Psychological Prose*, trans. Judson Rosengrant (Princeton University Press, 1991) and a collection of essays published in Emily Van Buskirk and Andrei Zorin, eds., *Lydia Ginzburg’s Alternative Literary Identities*, Russian Transformations 2 (Oxford and New York: Peter Lang, 2012).

⁴ See her introduction to *On Psychological Prose*, 3–24.

⁵ For Ginzburg, everyday life itself may be considered a kind of text (a “human document”) whose elements can be subjected to literary analysis. While Ginzburg rarely performed such analyses herself – her concerns tended to be broader and more theoretical – Boris Gasparov has credited *On Psychological Prose* as “an important stimulant to the development of the semiotics of behavior” of Yury Lotman’s Moscow-Tartu school. (See Gasparov’s introduction to Alexander D. Nakhimovsky and Alice S. Nakhimovsky, eds., *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural*

fingernails, for example, were an essential accessory of any self-respecting nihilist.⁶ Of special fascination was the relationship between such quotidian details and the events of one's internal, emotional life – these subjective “facts” being just as observable (by the subject, at least), and therefore just as “real,” as their objective, external counterparts. “The interaction between [inner and outer experience],” writes Donna Tussing Orwin, “rather than the romantic preference of the former over the latter was a central theme for the realist school in Russia, the more so because its greatest representatives did not treat subjectivity as simply a delusion. They considered it ‘real’: the reality of subjectivity is a cardinal principle of all great works of Russian psychological realism.”⁷ Hoping to better understand the correspondence between internal and external “realities,” Tolstoy, Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1828-1889),⁸ Nikolai Dobroliubov (1836-1881), and many other writers of the time were also painstaking diarists, analyzing the material and emotional details of their daily lives with scrupulous precision. Famously in Tolstoy's case, these diaries served a “laboratory” function; the idea that a writer's own experience should provide the empirical basis for his or her works was a vital condition of realist authorship in Russia. The analytical autobiography likewise became a favored genre, with writers such as Alexander

History: Essays by Iurii M. Lotman, Lidiia Ia. Ginsburg, Boris A. Uspenskii (Cornell University Press, 1985), 16–19, and also William Mills Todd III, “Discoveries and Advances in Literary Theory, 1960s-1980s: Neoformalism, the Linguistic Model, and Beyond,” in Evgeny Aleksandrovich Dobrenko and Galin Tihanov, eds., *A History of Russian Literary Theory and Criticism: The Soviet Age and Beyond* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 230–249.

⁶ In 1864, the right-wing newspaper *Vest'* printed the following characterization of women nihilists (*nigilistki*): “They dress with no taste, and in impossibly filthy fashion, rarely wash their hands, never clean their nails, often wear glasses, always cut their hair, and sometimes even shave it off.... They read Feuerbach and Büchner almost exclusively, despise art, use *ty* [informal address] with several young men, light their cigarettes not from a candle, but from men who smoke, are uninhibited in their choice of expressions, live either alone or in phalansteries, and talk most of all about the exploitation of labor, about the silliness of marriage and the family, and about anatomy.” Quoted in Irina Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford University Press, 1988), 17–18. See Paperno's introduction (“The Individual and Literature”) for an insightful exploration of the relationship between everyday behavior and realist literature in mid-nineteenth-century Russia.

⁷ Orwin, *Consequences of Consciousness*, 5.

⁸ Irina Paperno discusses Chernyshevsky's diaries in detail in *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*, 39-88. Particularly notable is the way in which Chernyshevsky would sometimes attempt to quantify his emotional experience in terms of its physical manifestations: “‘Three to four tears trickled out’ is how Chernyshevsky related his reaction to the death of a childhood friend.” (*Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*, 47.

Herzen (1812-1870) and Apollon Grigor'ev (1822-1864) documenting and examining themselves for public consumption.

Also characteristic of Russian realism was a certain blurring of boundaries – between artistic genres (Ginzburg posits an “unbroken chain connecting artistic prose to the history, the memoir, the biography, and ultimately the ‘human document’ of everyday life”⁹), and most crucially, between art and life itself. The critic Vissarion Belinsky (1811-1848), who provided Russian realism its intellectual spark, declared in 1847 that Romantic ideas about art’s transcendent autonomy were specious: “They [Romantics] wish to see in art a kind of intellectual China, sharply delineated by precise boundaries from everything that is not art in the strict sense of the word. But in fact those borderlines are more hypothetical than real.”¹⁰ While mid-century Russian realists did not posit the complete congruence of art and life – indeed, they were adamant that the products of nature outranked those of human ingenuity – they held that the boundaries between the two spheres were porous, and that movement across them occurred in both directions. (“Reality is transfigured, passing through art,”¹¹ Dostoevsky pithily put it.) Though in itself inferior to “reality,” then, art had an enormous potential to influence reality, and especially to transfigure social life.

Just what this transfiguration ought to look like was, of course, a subject of endless debate: did Russia’s salvation lie in the Orthodox peasant commune, the European democracy, or the socialist cooperative? But Russians of differing political stripes did tend to agree that social progress depended on individual transformation. “The life of society is the sum of individual lives,”¹² wrote the socialist Nikolai Chernyshevsky; the conservative Dostoevsky too argued that Russia’s future development hinged on individuals’ “microscopic efforts”¹³ at self-improvement. Mediating between individual psychology and collective identity, and likewise between life and literature, was the concept of the social type: a “representative” character drawn ostensibly “from life,” but stripped of a real person’s contradictions and extraneousities – a personality boiled down

⁹ Ginzburg, *On Psychological Prose*, 4. The flimsy borders between literary genres were even reflected in the medium in which nineteenth-century Russians usually consumed their prose: the aptly named “thick journal,” which printed scholarship and journalism alongside the latest installment of *Anna Karenina* or *Crime and Punishment*.

¹⁰ Vissarion Grigor'evich Belinskiĭ, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniĭ* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1953), 10:318.

¹¹ Dostoevskii, “Otvēt Russkomu Vestniku,” in *Stat'i, Polnoe sobranie khudozhestvennykh sochineniĭ*, ed. B.V. Tomashevskii and K.I. Khalabaev, vol. 13 (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1926), 213.

¹² Nikolaĭ Gavrilovich Chernyshevskii, *Izbrannye filosofskie sochineniia*, ed. M.M. Grigorian (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1950), 2:484.

¹³ Fyodor Mikhaĭlovich Dostoevskii, *A Writer's Diary*, ed. Gary Saul Morson, trans. Kenneth Lantz (Northwestern University Press, 2009), 107.

to its most basic and characteristic elements.¹⁴ Literature's power to shape society, Russians believed, derived in large part from its ability to illuminate social types, for people landscape their internal worlds in accordance with fictional models. In 1868, Alexander Herzen commented on the "strange...interaction of people with books and books with people":

A book takes its whole shape from the society in which it originates, generalizes the material, makes it clearer and sharper, and is then surpassed by reality. The originals turn their own sharply drawn portraits into caricatures, and real people take on the character of their own literary shadows.¹⁵

The importance of fictional characters as models for real-life behavior can be judged from the distinctive bent of Russian literary criticism at the time, which often treated literary personages as if they were real people, discussing at great length the social implications of those characters' personalities and actions. (Sometimes, as in Mikhail Katkov's review of Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, critics went so far as to invent situations that did *not* appear in the book and imagine how characters *would have* responded.¹⁶) The literary critic thus played a crucial mediating function: it was the critic's job to homilize, to distill works of literature into practical lessons that could be assimilated by readers. During this period literature was frequently, and unironically, described as a "guide to life."

¹⁴ In *The Idiot*, Dostoevsky suggested that a major purpose of contemporary writing was to present such "types," which had the capacity to transcend the bounds of art: "Writers in their novels and stories for the most part try to take social types and present them graphically and artistically – types which in their full state are met with extremely rarely in reality and which are nonetheless almost more real than reality itself." [Fyodor Mikhaïlovich Dostoevskiï, *The Idiot*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage, 2003), 461.] Nineteenth-century Russian literature witnessed a long series of such types, who often went by epithetical titles: the "superfluous man," the "underground man," the "new man," the "ridiculous man." These titles could often serve as shorthand for distinctive worldviews; the generational conflict Turgenev dramatizes in *Fathers and Sons* was widely depicted as a clash of social types, the "men of the forties" against the "men of the sixties."

¹⁵ Aleksandr Gertsen, "Eshche raz Bazarov," in I. N. Sukhikh, ed., *Roman I.S. Turgeneva "Otsy i deti" v russkoï kritike* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1986).

¹⁶ Katkov argues that Turgenev's character Evgeny Bazarov is immoral, and if only the novel's plot had given him the occasion, he would surely have shown it. ["O nashem nihilizme po povodu romana Turgeneva," *Russkii Vestnik* 40, no. 7 (1862): 402–26.] This extreme importance that nineteenth-century Russians placed on literary characters provides some context for the most frequent charges hurled at operatic adaptations of Russian literary works: that the characters had been misrepresented.

Russian psychological prose in the age of realism sought both to represent Russians' social and emotional reality precisely and to shape that reality, largely by influencing the inner lives of individual readers. Whatever their political orientation, all the major Russian writers during this period saw the investigation and interpretation of human interiority as a central artistic aim. For the modern subject was not a native growth in Russia; raised in a country that privileged the communal over the individual, and whose relationship to the concepts of personal rights and private property had always been uneasy, Russians received western ideas of the autonomous individual with skepticism. This encounter with foreign models of the self, the theory went, caused Russians to become self-conscious, viewing themselves at a remove, constantly interrogating their spontaneous feelings. In 1840, Belinsky mused on his era and his countrymen: "Our age is primarily the age of reflection...a man falls apart into two men, one of whom lives, while the other observes him and judges him." Five years later, Turgenev would promote omphaloskepsis to the status of national pastime: "Reflection is our strength and our weakness, our destruction and our salvation...in Russian 'to reflect' means 'to ponder one's own feelings.'"¹⁷ By mid-century, Russians had come to see themselves as a people defined by introspection, and literature would provide a crucial medium for these inward explorations.

Back from the brink

The accession of Alexander II in 1855 brought a thaw in relations between the intelligentsia and the state, which had been at their frostiest under Alexander's father, Nikolai I. Nikolai had come to power amid the Decembrist Revolt of 1825, in which a group of liberal-minded military officers had attempted to overthrow the autocracy, and the new tsar had been quick to institute crushing restrictions on all forms of public speech. He also established the doctrine of Official Nationality, whose troika of ingredients included Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality – a bracing antidote to the cocktail of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* that was the Decembrists' preferred quaff. Alexander, given a broad western education¹⁸ and shamed by military defeat in Crimea at the beginning of his reign, would reverse much of his father's rhetoric and many of his policies. In a series of so-called Great Reforms between 1861 and 1865, Alexander revamped Russia's judicial system, established a system of elective local governments (*zemstva*), and, most importantly, emancipated the serfs, in the hopes of nurturing a

¹⁷ Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniĭ i pisem v dvadtsati vos'mi tomakh* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1960), 1:244.

¹⁸ Alexander II's tutor was Vasily Zhukovsky, the most influential writer in Russia before Pushkin.

modern European economy. He also granted self-governance to the universities and relaxed his predecessor's strict censorship of the press, thus allowing freer discussion of social and political issues than had existed ever before, and scarcely since, in Russian history.¹⁹

The universities, meanwhile, had begun admitting students from outside the nobility in the 1830s and 1840s, breeding a motley and vocal class of urban intellectuals by the start of Alexander's reign. Known as *raznochintsy* – people of mixed ranks – the members of this group began their careers in the comparatively temperate climate of early Alexandrine Russia, which witnessed a proliferation of scholarly and journalistic activity. Many of these *raznochintsy* came to staff Russia's left-leaning journals; Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov, the leading critics of the era, shared common origins as the sons of priests. In 1862's *Fathers and Sons*, which depicts the struggle between the liberal "men of the forties" and radical "men of the sixties," Turgenev popularized the term "nihilism" to describe the movement these priests' sons led. Placing their faith in the natural sciences rather than in Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality, the young socialists and anarchists of the nihilist movement sought the destruction of all traditional forms of authority, religious and temporal alike.

These new and uncompromising politics demanded new and uncompromising personalities. The nihilists turned a censorious eye to widespread Russian reflection, finding the national penchant for "pondering one's own feelings" an epidemic in need of tough medicine.²⁰ A solipsistic immersion in one's inner world, the nihilists argued, precluded the kind of committed civic deeds a nation required of its citizens; the times called for action, not navel gazing. Betting on the power of literature to shape individuals, Nikolai Chernyshevsky attempted to provide Russia's radical youth with fictional models on which to base their own lives. His 1863 novel *What Is to Be Done?* depicts the active, blunt, and outwardly-oriented personalities of a handful of prototypical Russian revolutionaries, whom Chernyshevsky called "new people," as a "positive" alternative to "nihilists." Despite its notorious infelicities of literary expression, *What Is to Be Done?* was a wild success, and as a prescription for Russian behavior it proved remarkably efficacious. Commenting further on the "strange... interaction of people with books and books with people," Herzen noted – with his trademark sense of irony intact – that "after 1862, all the young Russians who came to

¹⁹ Of course, even these relaxed policies had their limits. Open denunciations of the tsar and the government could not be printed, though some amount of social and political critique could be smuggled in under the guise of literary criticism. This is one reason for the importance of the genre in late imperial Russia: it provided an outlet, and a cover, for intellectuals to consider issues that could not otherwise be discussed openly.

²⁰ See Chapter 2 of this book for a discussion of changing Russian attitudes toward reflection in the nineteenth century.

see me were straight out of *What Is to Be Done?*”²¹ The anarchist Piotr Kropotkin (1842-1921) also recalled that “for the Russian youth of the times, [*What Is to Be Done?*] was a revelation and it became a programme... no novel of Turgueneff and no writings of Tolstoy...ever had such a wide and deep influence upon Russian Society as this novel had.”²² As received by Lenin and Gorky, Chernyshevsky’s “new person” of the 1860s would be a direct ancestor to the New Soviet Man.

The eleven-year period historians call the “sixties” came to a shattering close on April 4, 1866, when Dmitri Karakozov, a morose university student turned revolutionary, attempted to assassinate Alexander II outside the Summer Garden. Following the attack, the “Tsar-Liberator” put an abrupt end to the relative free speech that had prevailed during the first half of his reign. The radical journals *Sovremennik* and *Russkoe slovo* were shuttered, the leaders of the nihilist movement imprisoned and exiled. Meanwhile, Russians found themselves surveying a vastly altered social landscape, owing to the reforms Alexander had instituted just a few years earlier. In freeing the serfs and democratizing the judicial system, Alexander had hoped to bring the nation in line with contemporary European standards. But such monumental renovation came with monumental side effects: an impoverished and resentful gentry, a flood of emancipated workers in Russia’s heretofore elite capitals, and an autocrat whose claim to absolute power seemed increasingly dubious. The revolutionary fringe continued to grow ever more ruthless and ever more organized; after several failed attempts, the terrorists of *Narodnaia Volia* successfully assassinated Alexander in March of 1881. For the majority of the intelligentsia, however, reassessment was the order of the day. The 1870s, as Boris Gasparov writes, were “a time of introspection, inner crises, the disturbing elusiveness of right answers, of deep dissatisfaction and worry.”²³ If the sixties had been characterized by sweeping change and shock-and-awe rhetoric, the seventies ushered in a period of serious national soul-searching.

They also gave rise to the high water mark of psychological prose in nineteenth-century Russia, the heyday of the psychological novel in Russia. The Russian individual – at least from the perspective of the educated classes – had always occupied a fragile, negotiated space, somewhere between the ultimate communality of the serfs and the ultimate autonomy of the tsar. But the emancipation edict and an ordinary citizen’s attack on the emperor had disrupted those long-standing poles in the realm of personal identity, further destabilizing a construct of the self that had always been fraught and conditional. At the same time, the influence of foreign and home-grown socialist ideas, as well as the consciousness that, despite Alexander’s liberality and physical

²¹ Gertsen, “Esche raz Bazarov,” in Sukhikh, *Roman I.S. Turgeneva “Otsy i deti” v russkoj kritike*.

²² *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1905), 280–281. For more on the reception of *What Is to Be Done?*, see Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*, 27–28.

²³ Gasparov, *Five Operas and a Symphony*, 131.

vulnerability, Russians were living in the last autocracy in Europe, placed the Russian individual under a kind of pressure that existed nowhere else at the time. For these reasons, questions relating to the nature of individual experience, and of what sort of inner life a Russian subject did and should have, became more urgent than ever – and art, under the influence of that specifically Russian brand of realism, became a favored means of working them out. The second half of Alexander’s reign would be time of astonishing literary achievement; nearly the entire novelistic output of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky dates from the fifteen years following Karakozov’s fateful shot. Inspired, perhaps, by the reflective mood of the times, these writers probed their characters’ inner lives in uncommon depth and detail, cultivating new techniques for representing human subjectivity in prose.

Their efforts were directly coincident with the careers of Piotr Il’ich Chaikovsky (1840-1893) and the composers of the *kuchka*.²⁴ The social and intellectual currents that propelled Russian writers toward the psychological novel also pushed Russian composers in an introspective direction, and the 1870s saw composers too step back from the artistic and political brink of the previous decade. The sixties had been dominated by the *kuchka*’s calculatedly progressive rhetoric of musical reform; “*K novym beregam!*” (Toward new shores!) was the nascent group’s rallying cry. In the sphere of opera, the contemporary debate about private reflection versus public action – so central to Russian literature of the 1860s – found parallel in the *kuchka*’s bold experiments with musical form. “Emotion and form are opposites,”²⁵ Chernyshevsky had declared in *The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality*, the bible of 1860s aesthetics and certainly the most influential master’s thesis ever penned. The emotions Chernyshevsky had in mind were the new person’s spontaneous, “natural” feelings – in other words, precisely those that Belinsky and Turgenev’s “reflective” Russians had been too self-conscious to experience. Embarking on his tour de force *The Stone Guest* in 1868, proto-*kuchkist* Alexander Dargomyzhsky hit on a musical *modus operandi* perfectly suited to conveying such immediate passions: he would forgo formal arias and set his text (an 1830 verse drama by Pushkin) verbatim in continuous recitative. This was an obvious break from traditional operatic practice, which Caryl Emerson has defined thus:

²⁴ The name of this group, *moguchaia kuchka* (“mighty little heap”) or simply *kuchka* for short, is often rendered in English as the Mighty Five or the Mighty Handful. I’ll use *kuchka* hereafter, for the term yields a handy adjective (“*kuchkist*”) to describe the ideology and practices of this group. The *kuchka*’s membership included five composers – Mily Balakirev (1837-1910), Alexander Borodin (1833-1887), Cesar Cui (1835-1918), Modest Musorgsky (1839-1881), and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908) – and one honorary, non-composing participant, the critic, librarian, propagandist, and general “functionary in art,” Vladimir Stasov (1824-1906).

²⁵ Nikolai Chernyshevsky, “The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality,” in *Selected Philosophical Essays* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), 347.

Traditionally, recitative is the dynamic ‘spoken’ message, taking place in real time and moving action forward. Aria, in contrast, is a song, and tends to function as a static element in the drama. Each of these opera times has its appropriate space. Recitative is social: it usually occurs in dialogue, and people onstage are supposed to hear and respond to it. Aria, however, can stop action. Often it is sung not to others in the opera but to oneself or to the audience, as a sort of private confession. People onstage may not be expected to listen in, and therefore the aria’s act of expression need not serve to motivate the actions of the other participants in the opera.²⁶

In banning the aria, then, Dargomyzhsky also jettisoned the traditional means by which operatic characters could relate their feelings in private. Emotional expressivity left the realm of intimate confession and entered the public sphere, as dialogue, rendered through music that continuously and spontaneously adapted itself to convey the nuances of the text, took the place of static, inward-looking soliloquys. It was a fitting musical treatment for the story of Don Juan, who at one point in the opera explicitly announces his preference for improvisation over reflection:

С чего начну?	How shall I start?
«Осмелюсь»... Или нет. «Сеньора»...	“May I be so bold...” No, not that. “Señora”...
Ба! Что в голову придет,	Bah! Whatever comes to my mind,
То и начну, без предуготовлений,	That’s how I’ll start, without rehearsal,
Импровизатором любовной песни!	I’ll improvise a song of love!

Eschewing any need for harmonic closure or musical repetition (except where repetitions occurred explicitly in Pushkin’s text), *The Stone Guest* resembled, in Richard Taruskin’s words, “a gargantuan, kaleidoscopically varied, through-composed ‘romance.’”²⁷ The *kuchka* was thrilled with the project. *The Stone Guest*, Cui wrote in 1868, “is the first conscious attempt to create a contemporary opera-drama²⁸ without the

²⁶ Emerson, *Boris Godunov: Transpositions*, 165.

²⁷ Richard Taruskin, *Opera and Drama in Russia as Preached and Practiced in the 1860s* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981), 269.

²⁸ While this phrase can hardly help but bring Wagner to mind, and while kuchkist and Wagnerian reform did have certain elements in common (most notably, the elimination of arias), the two operatic programs were based on vastly different artistic and intellectual principles. The dissemination of Wagner’s music and ideas was tortuous in Russia, and complicated in the 1860s by personal factors: namely, the fact that Wagner’s greatest champion in Russia at the time was the composer Alexander Serov (1820-1871), the sworn enemy of

slightest compromise; this will be the codex to which Russian composers will direct questions concerning...the truthful setting of the text.”²⁹ It was, perhaps, the most eagerly anticipated opera in Russian musical history, and at the time of Dargomyzhsky’s death in January 1869, when he left *The Stone Guest* to be completed by Cui³⁰ and orchestrated by Rimsky-Korsakov, there was every indication that it would indeed become a model – even *the* model – for future kuchkist composition.

But *The Stone Guest* was dead on arrival when it premiered, three years after its composer’s own demise, in 1872. Inspired by Dargomyzhsky, Modest Musorgsky had taken kuchkist practice to its conceivable limit in his uncompleted 1868 opera *Marriage*, a setting not of elegant Pushkinian poetry but of bathetic Gogolian prose. A painstaking experiment in capturing the rhythms and intonations of Russian speech, *Marriage* was regarded unanimously by the *kuchka* as a step too far in the pursuit of dramatic “truth” at the expense of musical beauty. Musorgsky himself would beat a retreat in his next project, *Boris Godunov* – an opera famous less for its treatment of “public” dialogue (brilliant though it is) than for its psychologically invasive, but dramatically static, monologues. In “perpetrat[ing] a certain arioso”³¹ for the title character, and thus granting audiences a close-up view of a mind contemplating its own disintegration, Musorgsky made the guilty tsar into a compelling tragic figure; Gerald Abraham could hardly complain of *Boris*, as he did of *The Stone Guest* in 1935, that the opera “fail[s] to achieve *characterisation*.”³² Ultimately *The Stone Guest*, that “keystone of the New Russian Operatic School,” would inspire few imitations in the twenty-five years following its premiere,³³ and in 1878, even Cui had to admit that the opera’s methods were basically

Vladimir Stasov and the *kuchka*. All of the members of that group, as well as Chaikovsky, expressed antipathy to Wagner during the 1860s, though the degree to which they were acquainted with the German composer varied. Dargomyzhsky, for one, only ever knew (and disapproved of) Wagner as the composer of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*. For a discussion of the *kuchka*’s attitude to Wagner and his reforms, see *Ibid.*, 281–293. For a history of Wagner’s reception in nineteenth-century Russia, see Rosamund Bartlett, *Wagner and Russia* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9–56.

²⁹ Tsesar Kiui, “*Kamennyi gost’ Pushkina i Dargomizhskogo*,” in *Izbrannye stat’i*, ed. I.L. Gusin (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe Muzykal’noe Izdatel’stvo, 1952), 147.

³⁰ Cui’s contributions are minimal, amounting to some sixty-two bars at the end of the first scene of Act I.

³¹ Letter from Modest Musorgsky to Vladimir Stasov, August 10, 1871. In Jay Leyda and Sergei Bertensson, eds., *The Musorgsky Reader: A Life of Modeste Petrovich Musorgsky in Letters and Documents*, trans. Jay Leyda and Sergei Bertensson (New York: W.W. Norton, 1947), 167.

³² Gerald Abraham, *Studies in Russian Music* (London: W. Reeves, 1935), 76.

³³ The quoted phrase is Cui’s, from *La musique en Russie* (Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der DDR, 1974), 98. Interestingly, the Pushkinian *opera dialogué* underwent a revival of sorts at the turn of the twentieth century. Pushkin’s “*The Stone Guest*” comes from a cycle of four short dramas

unviable – that dramatic effectiveness should not be the sole criterion of relevance to an opera composer.³⁴ By that point, of course, the *kuchka* had long since parted ways: Balakirev gave up composing almost completely in 1871, and in the next year, Rimsky-Korsakov joined the faculty of the *kuchka*-despised St. Petersburg Conservatory. In retrospect, the group itself turned out to have been the heady product of the heady sixties, and by the early 1870s, the musical tide in Russia had turned definitively away from the *kuchka*'s "new shores."

Novel operas

The close relationship between opera and literature in 1870s Russia owes itself to both the subject matter opera composers chose and the ways in which they dealt with that subject matter, which strongly resonated with the interests and methods of the contemporary psychological novel. Table 1 below describes the sources of Russian-language operas written between 1866 and 1881.³⁵ Of the twenty-four works listed, fully two-thirds are based on literature and drama from nineteenth-century Russia. (These titles are bolded.) Four come from works of European Romanticism, usually in free and idiosyncratic Russian translation by Vasily Zhukovsky, Russia's *other* famous poet of the early nineteenth century. Three are drawn from Russian historical sources, and the

known as the *Little Tragedies*, and the remaining three plays would become the bases of operas by Rimsky-Korsakov (*Mozart and Salieri*, 1897), Cui (*A Feast in the Time of Plague*, 1900), and Rakhmaninov (*The Miserly Knight*, 1905). All of these set Pushkin's text virtually verbatim. For more on these operas, see Caryl Emerson, "Little Tragedies, Little Operas," in Svetlana Evdokimova, ed., *Alexander Pushkin's Little Tragedies: The Poetics of Brevity* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 265–289. See also Richard Taruskin, "Realism as Preached and Practiced: The Russian Opera Dialogue," *The Musical Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (July 1970): 431–54.

³⁴ "In general," Cui advised in a history of Russian music meant for foreign consumption, "it is better to avoid such texts by great poets [as *The Stone Guest* by Pushkin], for though their intrinsic beauty may render them seductive in the eyes of musicians, they are not made for music. A truly lyrical text, which lends itself favorably to the development of vocal melody, is, on the whole, that which should be principally sought in a libretto." Cui, *La musique en Russie*, 108. The fact that Cui felt the need to make this statement at all betrays the remarkable literary bent of Russian opera during this period. He does not speak of having a new text created specifically to serve as an opera libretto, with designated arias and recitatives, but rather of composers *seeking* an appropriate text that would allow for moments of lyrical expansion.

³⁵ This table is not comprehensive, but includes those operas for which I could verify all the relevant details. Information was drawn from Paul Fryer, *A Chronology of Opera Performances at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, 1860-1917*, 2 vols. (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009) and V.V. Fedorov, *Repertuar Bol'shogo teatra SSSR, 1776-1955*, 2 vols. (New York: Norman Ross, 2001), as well as the *New Grove* works lists for the various composers.

outlier – *Mlada*, an unrealized collaboration cooked up by Stepan Gedeonov, the director of the Imperial Theatres – was loosely adapted from an Italian ballet that had premiered in St. Petersburg in 1839.

TABLE 1. Russian-language operas composed between 1866 and 1881

Date	Composer	Opera	Libretto/Scenario Sources
1861-8	Cui	<i>William Ratcliff</i>	1822 play by Heinrich Heine, in Vasily Zhukovsky's translation (libretto by the composer and Viktor Krylov)
1866-7	Kashperov	<i>The Storm</i>	1859 play by Alexander Ostrovsky (libretto by the playwright)
1867-8	Nápravník	<i>The People of Nizhny-Novgorod</i>	Historical sources (libretto by Piotr Kalashnikov)
1867-71	Serov	<i>The Power of the Fiend</i>	1854 play by Alexander Ostrovsky (libretto by Piotr Kalashnikov and Alexander Zhokhov)
1868-9	Dargomyzhsky	<i>The Stone Guest</i>	1830 play by Alexander Pushkin (set verbatim by the composer)
1868-9	Chaikovsky	<i>The Voevoda</i>	1865 play by Alexander Ostrovsky (libretto by the playwright)
1868, unfinished	Musorgsky	<i>Marriage</i>	1842 play by Nikolai Gogol' (libretto by the composer)
1868-72	Rimsky-Korsakov	<i>The Maid of Pskov</i>	1859 play by Lev Mei (libretto by the composer)
1868-74	Musorgsky	<i>Boris Godunov</i>	1825 play by Alexander Pushkin (libretto by the composer)
1869, destroyed by composer	Chaikovsky	<i>Undina</i>	1811 novella by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, in Vasily Zhukovsky's translation (libretto by Vladimir Sollogub)
1869-87, unfinished	Borodin	<i>Prince Igor</i>	12 th century Russian epic poem (libretto by the composer)
1870	Afanas'ev	<i>Ammalat-Bek</i>	1832 story by Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinsky (libretto by A.F. Weltmann)

1870-72	Chaikovsky	<i>The Oprichnik</i>	1859 play by Ivan Lazhechnikov (libretto by the composer)
1871	Rubinstein	<i>The Demon</i>	1842 narrative poem by Mikhail Lermontov (libretto by Pavel Viskovatov)
1871-5	Cui	<i>Angelo</i>	1835 play by Victor Hugo (libretto by Viktor Burenin)
1872, unfinished	Borodin, Cui, Minkus, Musorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov	<i>Mlada</i>	1839 ballet by Filippo Taglioni (libretto by Viktor Krylov)
1872-80, unfinished	Musorgsky	<i>Khovanshchina</i>	Sergei Solov'iov's <i>History of Russia from the Earliest Times</i> (relevant volumes pub. 1861-4); Russian historical chronicles (libretto by the composer)
1874	Chaikovsky	<i>Vakula the Smith</i>	1832 story by Nikolai Gogol' (libretto by Yakov Polonsky)
1874-80, unfinished	Musorgsky	<i>Sorochintsi Fair</i>	1832 story by Nikolai Gogol' (libretto by the composer)
1877-8	Chaikovsky	<i>Evgeny Onegin</i>	1832 verse novel by Alexander Pushkin (libretto by the composer and Konstantin Shilovsky)
1877-9	Rubinstein	<i>The Merchant Kalashnikov</i>	1838 narrative poem by Mikhail Lermontov (libretto by Nikolai Kulikov)
1878-9	Rimsky-Korsakov	<i>May Night</i>	1832 story by Nikolai Gogol' (libretto by the composer)
1878-9	Chaikovsky	<i>The Maid of Orleans</i>	1801 play by Friedrich Schiller, in Vasily Zhukovsky's translation, and other dramatic and historical sources (libretto by the composer)
1880-1	Rimsky-Korsakov	<i>The Snow Maiden</i>	1873 play by Alexander Ostrovsky (libretto by the composer)

While most nineteenth-century operas draw on pre-existing literary and dramatic works, Russian operas of the 1870s are thus unusually homogeneous in their source material. The proximity, temporal and linguistic, of those source texts, as well as their

generally high artistic cachet, influenced both the expectations of Russian audiences and the approaches composers took to the process of adaptation. These expectations regarding the ways in which revered and familiar works of literature should be treated helps account for one of the quirks reflected in the table above: that Russian composers were just as likely to work without a librettist as they were to work with one, and in the latter case, the librettist might be the original author of the play being adapted. This relatively librettist-free landscape was demonstrative not of a Wagnerian desire to create an organic, perfectly integrated *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but rather of a notion that a libretto's interventions in a pre-existing text should be modest – that a libretto should be derived directly from the language of the original work.³⁶ While *The Stone Guest* and *Marriage* had taken this principle to an extreme, the idea of textual fidelity as a virtue in Russian operas did not evaporate overnight. (Ex. 1, below, shows the title page to the full score of Chaikovsky's *The Maid of Orleans*, published by Piotr Jurgenson in 1899. "Text after Schiller and Zhukovsky," the cover advertises, "preserving many of the latter's verses.") In condensing a longer text, omission was usually preferable to paraphrase; the audience, having read the source work, could be depended on to fill in the blanks. Russian composers had reason to be so radically conservative, for they knew their operas would be compared to intimately familiar plays and stories, and not infrequently accused of blasphemy vis-à-vis the earlier works. Turgenev's famous comment to Tolstoy about the libretto of *Evgeny Onegin* illustrates the bind in which composers often found themselves. "The music is undoubtedly remarkable," Turgenev wrote, "but what a libretto! Can you imagine, Pushkin's verses describing the characters are put into the mouths of the characters themselves."³⁷ *Onegin's* libretto so apportions those verses precisely to retain as much "Pushkin" as possible; but even in preserving the poet, Turgenev suggests, Chaikovsky had violated him.

³⁶ While this approach obviously anticipates the *Literaturopern* of the twentieth century, it was unique to Russia in the nineteenth, as far as I know. Many nineteenth-century composers – Verdi, Gounod, Berlioz, and Massenet among them – based operas on revered works of literature, but while attempting to capture the spirit of the original texts, they tended to play fast and loose with the letter. To some extent this was inevitable: Verdi and his librettists, for example, had only ever read Shakespeare in translation.

³⁷ Turgenev, *PSSP*, 1960, 12:383–4.

Ex. 1. Title page to Jurgenson's 1899 edition of Chaikovsky's *The Maid of Orleans*.

№ 3950.

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ДѢЙСТВІЕ I.

[*The Maid of Orleans*. Opera in 4 acts (6 scenes). Text after Schiller and Zhukovsky, preserving many of the latter's verses. Music by P. Chaikovsky.]

One final idiosyncrasy of the foregoing table is the near-complete absence of novels among the sources of Russian operas of the 1870s. This seems both out of keeping with the fashion in contemporary Western European opera, which frequently pilfered novels for operatic plots, and also a curious missed opportunity, given the fact that the 1870s were precisely the period in which both Russian novels and Russian operas started to become international repertory items. But Russian novels are accused of nothing so infrequently as overwhelming concision, and in light of the criterion of textual fidelity discussed above, to compress one down to a libretto's proportions would have required a more radical transformation of the source text than most composers of the era would have found acceptable. Adaptation necessarily involves some transformation, however, and in the case of Russian opera this often signified a change of focus. When transposing plays and short stories to the opera stage, Russian composers of the 1870s typically scaled back on the external action of the plot in order to focus more acutely on the psychological progress of the heroes. In a word, then, they effectively novelized the original texts.³⁸ In its operatic incarnation, Pushkin's kaleidoscopic political drama *Boris Godunov* became the story of a dizzying psychological fall; had Dostoevsky not claimed the title a few years earlier, Musorgsky might easily have called his opera *Crime and Punishment*. While Schiller's *The Maid of Orleans* had staged the physical and political consequences of defying fate, Chaikovsky's narrates instead the psychological consequences of submitting to it. Even *Evgeny Onegin*, the lone novel represented in the table above (at a breezy 24,000 words, scarcely one-twentieth the length of Tolstoy's behemoth *War and Peace*), was never so novelistic as when Chaikovsky rendered Pushkin's "encyclopedia of Russian life"³⁹ an intimate personal drama à la Turgenev. If Dargomyzhskian opera had aspired to the status of drama, Russian operas of the next decade would much more closely parallel the psychological novel.

A few of the formal curiosities common among Russian operas might be understood in terms of these novelistic inclinations. Carl Dahlhaus' concept of the "musical novel," which unfolds in a "loose-knit series of 'tableaux'" rather than a "close-knit structure of 'actions' which interlock in such a way as to bring about the tragic outcome,"⁴⁰ reflects the structure of not only fin-de-siècle French operas, but many Russian operas from twenty years earlier – most famously *Evgeny Onegin*, whose genre Chaikovsky

³⁸ Following Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Peter Conrad has contrasted the principles of drama, which emphasize external action, "endeavor and achievement," with those of opera and the novel, which deal instead in "psychological change and shifts of consciousness." Peter Conrad, *Romantic Opera and Literary Form* (University of California Press, 1977), 122.

³⁹ The phrase is Belinsky's, from an 1844 article on *Evgeny Onegin*. See "Eugene Onegin: An Encyclopedia of Russian Life, in Sona Stephan Hoisington, ed., *Russian Views of Pushkin's Eugene Onegin*, trans. Sona Stephan Hoisington and Walter Arndt (Indiana University Press, 1988).

⁴⁰ Carl Dahlhaus, *Realism in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 93.

described as “lyric scenes,” but also *Boris Godunov*, *Prince Igor*, and *The Maid of Orleans*, among others. Outwardly static, each of the tableaux centers on an emotional crux; the audience, once again, can fill in the plot gaps from memory. Thus Musorgsky the composer, unlike Pushkin the dramatist, chose to show not how Grigory Otrepiev contrives to insinuate himself into the ranks of the Polish nobility, but rather the way in which Grigory’s naïve love for Marina Mnishek allows him to be co-opted by the very people he hopes to exploit. Meanwhile, as Boris Gasparov notes, the onstage concerts, ballets, and other embedded performances that proliferate in Russian opera – “to the chagrin of those who would like to see them be more dramatically effective”⁴¹ – likewise serve a novelistic function: to direct the audience’s attention to the “psychological drama” experienced by the operatic protagonists who observe the spectacle.

One can often notice an intricate connection between the melody of a song performed at such a concert and the hero’s leitmotif or between the plot of the pantomime played onstage and the situation in which the heroes, who are present as spectators, find themselves...It is up to the listeners to take notice of the thematic threads that connect the embedded performance with the hero’s inner world and to draw conclusions about the impact those invisible connections might have on the hero’s subsequent behavior.⁴²

The conservative critic Hermann Laroche (1845-1904) once snidely remarked that the challenge of operatic dramaturgy in the age of realism would be to find new ways for characters to ask one another to perform, as beautiful music in realist opera could only be motivated by such an “invitation to sing.” For an audience, Gasparov suggests, these performances-within-performances function instead as invitations to read: between the lines of the overt action (such as it is) to the adumbral realm of thematic connections and psychological potentialities.⁴³

⁴¹ Gasparov, *Five Operas and a Symphony*, 17.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 93.

⁴³ The late nineteenth-century Russian novel, too, was not without its operatic elements. Russian literature of the period makes frequent excursions into what Caryl Emerson has called “aria time,” a spatial-temporal mode that is “vertical,” introspective, and private, in contrast to the “horizontally progressive and dialogic” mode of recitative. [Emerson, *Boris Godunov: Transpositions*, 152.] Having forsaken the public sphere, Dostoevsky’s *Underground Man* is permanently suspended in “aria time”; while he reflects at length on himself and human nature, he speaks to no one except in reminiscence. The conflict between Oblomov and Stoltz in Goncharov’s novel might also be understood as a clash of operatic chronotopes: Oblomov, who argues that constant activity leaves no space for feelings, longs for the sublime stasis of aria mode (is it any wonder that his favorite piece of music is “Casta Diva,” *Norma*’s preternaturally gorgeous plea for tranquility?), while the industrious Stoltz can sing only recitative. Even the

Of the major Russian composers of the era, the two who spoke most consistently about psychological representation in their own works were Piotr Chaikovsky and Modest Musorgsky – two authors who, despite their mutual antipathy, both saw “realistic” psychical depiction as both their task and their talent. Like their literary colleagues, both composers explored the connections between external environment and internal experience, though they differed in the ways in which they conceptualized that environment as well as the means by which they narrated that experience. Both, too, aimed to compose “from life,” citing experience and observation as the foundations of their practice.

Chaikovsky, society, and reflection

“Verdi’s...style of musical drama,” writes Dieter Schnebel, “makes possible a musical realism which shows the real person in his real, i.e. social, situation, but also directs a light on to the inner reality of the person, his false and his true feelings – even when they are purely instinctive or otherwise unconscious.”⁴⁴ This makes for a seaworthy enough description of Chaikovskian realism as well, for like the Italian composer, Chaikovsky always imagined the individual’s “inner reality” in productive dialogue with his or her “social situation.” Both composers make audible this interplay between inner and outer realities; in *La traviata*, Violetta’s arias “Addio del passato” and “Ah! Fors’è lui!” refer to the rhythms of the Parisian ballrooms she frequents,⁴⁵ while Chaikovsky’s Tatiana sings in the idiom of the early nineteenth-century Russian domestic romance⁴⁶ – one example of which the heroine is heard performing with her

narrative structure of *Oblomov*, alternating as it does between lyrical digressions (e.g. Oblomov’s dream) and forward-driving narration, approximates the characteristic “stop-and-go” shape of traditional operatic dramaturgy.

⁴⁴ Dieter Schnebel, ‘Die schwierige Wahrheit des Lebens: Zu Verdis musikalischem Realismus,’ *Musik-Konzepte 10: Giuseppe Verdi* (Munich, 1979), 66. Quoted in Dahlhaus, *Realism in Nineteenth-Century Music*, 63–64.

⁴⁵ James Hepokoski investigated these resonances in “Genre and Content in Mid-Century Verdi: ‘Addio, Del Passato’ (La Traviata, Act III),” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1, no. 3 (November 1989): 249–76.

⁴⁶ See Boris Asaf’ev, “Evgeniï Onegin, liricheskie stseny P.I. Chaïkovskogo: opyt intonatsionnogo analiza stilia i muzykal’noï dramaturgii,” in *O muzyke Chaïkovskogo* (Leningrad: Muzyka, 1972). See also Taruskin, “Chaikovsky and the Human: A Centennial Essay,” in Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 239–307. Taruskin links both Chaikovsky and Verdi with Mozart, for whom “humans are at their most human not *au naturel*, and not as individuals, but as members of groups – all right, *classes* – whose feelings and actions are mediated through social convention.” *Ibid.* 293.

sister as the curtain opens in Act I. “Reality is transfigured, passing through art,” Dostoevsky wrote; in these operas it is transfigured, passing through individuals. The self, in Verdi and Chaikovsky, is never hermetic, never autonomous, but conditioned by the social environment in which it operates.

As in Verdi, too, Chaikovsky’s protagonists generally manage to channel their emotions through conventional forms. But while Verdi’s characters sing arias in order to elaborate on their feelings, they rarely wonder *why* they feel the way they do; Verdian emotions are complex and conflicting, but spontaneous. Chaikovsky’s operas, on the other hand, are strewn with doubters, second-guessers, and other self-conscious sorts prone to “pondering their own feelings,” in Turgenev’s words. The Chaikovskian self is forged through reflection, whether implied (*zadumchivo* and *zadumyvaetsia* – “deep in thought” and “sinks into thought” – are common stage directions) or voiced. “Where have these tears come from? What are they for?” demands Liza; “What’s with me? I’m all aflame!” frets Tatiana; “Why has terror crept into my soul?” wonders Joan; “Why have I never before known pain, grief, and tears?” inquires Iolanta. (Nor is anguished introspection purely a feminine affliction: the downtrodden smith Vakula asks, “why do you gnaw away at me, torment and grief; why, you snake in the grass, do you drain my heart and poison my soul?”) Textually, these self-conscious outbursts tend to be Chaikovsky’s own interpolations: as Chapters Three and Four will show, neither Pushkin’s Tatiana nor Schiller’s Joan of Arc ever displayed any such inclinations toward self-analysis. Even *Vakula the Smith*’s Oksana, whose interest in reflection would seem to go no further than her mirror, succumbs to this Russian disease at the end of Act I. Having chased a lovelorn Vakula away with cruel jeers, she begins to mull over her own feelings and behavior:

(Оксана задумывается.)

Порядком я помучила его,
И так, что даже жалко стало.
А ну, как если озлится,
Да покинет?
Что со мною?
И плакать хочется,
и разбирает смех,
а больше плакать бы хотелось!
...Ах! Как скучно мне,
ах, как скучно мне, тяжело, скучно,
Ах! Сама не знаю, что со мною!

(Oksana sinks into thought.)

I tormented him a little,
And even started to feel sorry for him.
And now, as if enraged,
He scurries off?
What’s with me?
I want to cry,
and dissolve in laughter,
and cry some more!
...Ah! How bored I am,
ah, how bored, how sad, how bored,
Ah! Even I don’t know what’s wrong with me!

Oksana’s introspective arioso motivates an emotional shift: while she disdains Vakula at the beginning of the scene, she will realize she loves him at the end. In and of

itself, this shift is hardly noteworthy – the tried-and-true Italian double aria form, in which brilliant cabaletta succeeds lyrical cantabile, had been invented specifically to showcase such emotional contrasts. What the Act I finale of *Vakula* depicts, however, is not the simple juxtaposition of two divergent moods, but rather the process of getting from one to the other; for Chaikovsky, the endpoints are less interesting than the struggle. Oksana's change of heart is accomplished through soul-searching, occurring as it were in "real time," not instantaneous intervention of the "Hey, Manrico, your mom's on fire!" variety. This Ukrainian flirt is in good company among Chaikovsky protagonists. All the characters mentioned above use their moments alone onstage to actively work through their feelings, to attempt to understand themselves and their situations, not just to express their current emotional states. Their arias, then, do not unfold in "aria time": if the traditional aria occupies a sort of suspended, lyric present tense, Chaikovsky in these cases shifts it into the progressive.

"In the works of great poets," wrote Chernyshevsky in an 1856 review,

we notice...the dramatic transitions of one feeling to another, one thought to another. But usually we are presented with only the two outermost links of this chain, only the beginning and the end of the psychological process... [This author's] special talent consists in the fact that he does not limit himself to depicting the results of the psychological process: he is interested in the process itself – and he masterfully depicts the subtle developments of this inner life, changing from one to the next with extraordinary rapidity and inexhaustible variety.⁴⁷

The author in question was Tolstoy, whose first novel *Childhood* had recently appeared in print. Chernyshevsky's review of that book is famous in its own right, for its coinage of the term "interior monologue" (*vnutrennii monolog*) to describe Tolstoy's pioneering method of representing psychology in motion. (In *Lectures on Russian Literature*, Nabokov declared bluntly: "The Stream of Consciousness or Interior Monologue is a method of expression which was invented by Tolstoy, a Russian, long before James Joyce."⁴⁸) Chaikovsky's struggling subjects have something in common with these monologuing Tolstoyan selves: if Dostoevsky's heroes are "idea-people,"⁴⁹ and

⁴⁷ Chernyshevskii, "Detstvo i otrochestvo," in S.P. Bychkov, ed., *L.N. Tolstoï v russkoï kritike: sbornik stateï* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennoï Literatury, 1952), 97.

⁴⁸ Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Russian Literature*, ed. Fredson Bowers (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 183.

⁴⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin introduced the term "idea-person" (*ideia-chelovek*) in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (University of Minnesota Press, 1984). "It is not the idea itself that is 'the hero of Dostoevsky's works,'" he writes, "but the person born of that idea." *Ibid.*, 85.

Turgenev's are historical types, Tolstoy and Chaikovsky's are moving targets, continuously absorbing influences from their environments, contemplating themselves, evolving in time. Not for nothing did Tatiana's sprawling letter scene, which constantly falls into songlike eddies only to be interrupted by self-conscious recitative, follow hard on the heels of *Anna Karenina* – perhaps Chaikovsky had learned a thing or two from the novel's penultimate book, which contains Tolstoy's most celebrated interior monologue. Or perhaps Anna, whom Julie Buckler and others have likened to "the diva in a grand opera,"⁵⁰ gets an appropriate ending: a Chaikovskian aria in prose.

Chaikovsky also followed Tolstoy in declaring, frankly and frequently, that his personal emotions and experiences were the subjects of his work. Lydia Ginzburg wrote of Tolstoy:

With enormous freedom he created whole worlds, simultaneously introducing into them his own personality and his own experience, both spiritual and domestic. And he did so frankly, in a way that was apparent to the reader, thereby transforming that private experience into one of the structural principles of his fiction.⁵¹

This same autobiographical impulse has featured large, and negatively, in the western reception of Chaikovsky's music.⁵² For anyone fond of imagining music as an autonomous, transcendent art, Chaikovsky's "subjective" aesthetic is bound to seem the epitome of the vulgar, the bourgeois, the pandering. In *Literature as Opera*, Gary Schmidgall described the composer of *Evgeny Onegin*: "The composer was a man of sentiment rather than intellect...The need to deflate, ridicule, and debunk that is present

⁵⁰ Buckler, *The Literary Lorgnette*, 170.

⁵¹ Ginzburg, *On Psychological Prose*, 245. To cite only the most famous example of autobiography in Tolstoy's fiction, the history of Konstantin Levin (who shares a leonine appellation with his creator) folds in many details from Tolstoy's own life, including his propensity to keep, and share with his fiancée, an all-too-comprehensive diary. Sofia Tolstaia, the author's wife, once reportedly observed, "Levochka, you are Levin, but with more talent."

⁵² Part of this negative reception is surely due to twentieth-century squeamishness regarding one particular element of Chaikovsky's biography – namely, his homosexuality, which has never been a secret. If Chaikovsky's music is autobiographical, some writers imply, it is an "aberrant," even a "pathological" subjectivity that speaks through those tones. David Brown is a trustworthy source of such interpretations; see also Henry Zajackowski's astoundingly-titled article, "On Čajkovskij's Psychopathology and Its Relationship with His Creativity," in *Internationales Čajkovskij Symposium, Tübingen 1993: Bericht*, ed. Thomas Kohlhase, Čajkovskij Studien 1 (Mainz and New York: Schott, 1995), 307–28. For a history of homophobia in Chaikovsky scholarship, see Richard Taruskin, "Pathetic Symphonist: Chaikovsky, Russia, Sexuality and the Study of Music," *The New Republic* 212, no. 6 (February 6, 1995): 26–40.

in Pushkin's verse is replaced by Tchaikovsky's need to sympathize with, draw near to, and grasp the innermost passions he is setting to music." Condescension fairly drips from the page. But such characterizations are made in ignorance of the intellectual context in which Chaikovsky worked. Subjectivity, Ginzburg and Donna Tussing Orwin remind us, was "real" to late nineteenth-century Russian writers, and the acuity of an author's subjective observations of self and society were directly relevant to the value of his or her works. The inclusion of autobiographical, and even "confessional," elements in one's artworks did not spell "sentimentalism" to a nineteenth-century Russian. It spelled "realism," and Chaikovsky said as much himself. "It seems to me," he wrote to an official of the Imperial Theatres, "that I am truly gifted with the ability to express *truthfully, sincerely, and simply* the feelings, moods, and images suggested by a text. In this sense I am a *realist* and fundamentally a Russian." In what did this truthfulness and sincerity consist? Chaikovsky elaborated in a letter to Sergei Taneyev: "Truth and sincerity are not the result of a process of reasoning, but the inevitable outcome of our inmost feelings...I always choose operatic subjects in which I have to deal with real men and women, who share the same emotions as myself."⁵³ Tolstoy could hardly have put it better.

Musorgsky's realisms

It is tricky to speak generally about Musorgsky, whose operatic legacy includes only one masterpiece and a few fascinating stumps, and whose correspondence and other literary leavings are likewise sparse. His reputation as the nineteenth century's musical realist *par excellence* is usually staked on his precise, empirical notation of the rhythms and pitch contours of speech, a practice Leoš Janáček (1854-1928) would greatly expand and codify a couple of decades later. But Musorgsky's collection and composition of these speech melodies was a passing phase, confined mainly to the period of "high kuchkist" ferment in 1868-9. Already in *Boris Godunov* the vestiges of speech melody are attenuated, and in *Khovanshchina* they would evaporate; the "intelligently justified melodies" (as Musorgsky put it) of that opera were based on other principles. Further, Musorgsky's interest in these speech melodies during the late 1860s – particularly in *Marriage*, his most fascinating stump of all – was not simply in their "realism," if we understand that term narrowly, and un-Russianly, in the sense of "naturalism." In a much-quoted 1868 letter to Glinka's sister, Liudmila Shestakova, Musorgsky wrote:

⁵³ Letter to Sergei Taneyev, January 14, 1891. In Modeste Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky*, ed. Rosa Newmarch (London: J. Lane, 1906), 621.

This is what I would like. For my characters to speak on the stage, as living people speak, but besides this, for the character and power of intonation of the characters, supported by the orchestra, which forms a musical pattern of their speech, to achieve their aim directly, that is, my music must be an artistic reproduction of human speech in all its finest shades, that is, *the sounds of human speech*, as the external manifestations of thought and feeling must, without exaggeration or violence, become true, accurate *music*, *but* [read: which means] artistic, highly artistic. That is the ideal toward which I strive.⁵⁴

Musorgsky, then, saw speech as the meeting point between a person's inner and outer worlds, as psychology's external trace. The more closely you captured the sound of a person's speech, he thought in 1868, the more closely you captured the movements of the soul. *Psychological "realism"* was what Musorgsky was after, and for him it would not consist solely in a technique; while Musorgsky's musical methods and aesthetic outlook changed much over the short course of his career, his interest in (and incomparable skill at) creating nuanced psychological portraits did not. For Musorgsky, as for Chaikovsky, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and the rest of literate Russia, psychological "truth" lay in the interstices between outer environment and subjective experience, between the individual and the collective.

It is a commonplace to say that Musorgsky's "collectives" are bigger than Chaikovsky's; while the latter groups individuals by class and social circle, the former groups them by nation. In its vastness, the Musorgskian collective also poses a greater threat to individual freedoms, and his operatic subjects tend to feel this pressure acutely. Boris Godunov, Grigory Otrepiev, Prince Golitsyn, Andrei and Ivan Khovansky: all of these characters act desperately, and futilely, to assert their own autonomy in the face of forces that are far beyond their control. All attempt, like Raskolnikov, to become Napoleons, and all, like Raskolnikov, fail horrendously. (Unlike in Dostoevsky, of course, Musorgsky's characters get no uplifting epilogues, for no hope of Christian salvation is available to them.) If self-reflection is the quintessential Chaikovskian state, in Musorgsky it is existential panic, and the only characters who find anything like success are those who give up flailing.

Musorgsky's characters also prove highly susceptible to the phenomenal world; external sounds and objects make deep and unsettling impressions on many of them. In 1897, still in the midst of the post-kuchkist hangover that would last for the rest of his

⁵⁴ To Liudmila Shestakova, July 30, 1868. In Leyda and Bertensson, *The Musorgsky Reader: A Life of Modeste Petrovich Musorgsky in Letters and Documents*, 111–112. Taruskin discusses the philosophical background to these ideas in the chapter "Handel, Shakespeare, and Musorgsky: The Sources and Limits of Russian Musical Realism," in *Musorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 71–95.

life, Rimsky-Korsakov had a trenchant word to say about Musorgsky’s musical representation of objects in *Marriage*: “Just imagine, in this work there are musical illustrations of such things as gray hair, which, for some reason, is depicted by a minor second.”⁵⁵ But this is not quite right: the scene in question shows the bachelor “hero” of the opera haggling with a matchmaker, who tells him that he cannot afford to be picky regarding his future wife because “you know, there’s already a gray hair on your head.” The grating minor second, reproduced every time the phrase “*sedoi volos*” (gray hair) is uttered (Ex. 2), drives Podkoliosin into a fury; his voice swinging wildly from pianissimo to *sforzando*, he yells for his servant to bring a mirror, in which he espies the offending strand. “There’s another!” he cries, *s uzhimkoï* (with a grimace); “God save me, this is worse than the smallpox!” As the scene ends, Podkoliosin dashes from the room, clutching his head, to the jeering accompaniment of minor seconds in octaves (Ex. 3). That harping, irritating, provoking interval, then, is not an “objective” depiction of Podkoliosin’s gray hairs (this, as Rimsky rightly hints, would be absurd if it were not impossible), but a subjective one – the impression those hairs make on their unaccountably vain owner. We hear the hairs as Podkoliosin “feels” them.

Ex. 2. Mentions of gray hair in *Marriage*, Scene 2:

The image displays a musical score for two scenes from Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *Marriage*. The first scene, labeled 'ОТКЛА.', features a vocal line with the lyrics: 'бъ же ху-же! Вѣдь въ го-ло - вѣ сѣ-дой во-лосъ ужь гла - дить!...' and a piano accompaniment. The second scene, labeled 'ПОДКОЛ.', features a vocal line with the lyrics: 'го вдругу ме-ня сѣ-дой во-лосъ!' and a piano accompaniment. Both scenes include musical notations such as 'среще.' and 'среще.'.

⁵⁵ V. V. Yastrebtsev, *Reminiscences of Rimsky-Korsakov*, ed. and trans. Florence Jonas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 175.

Ex. 3. *Marriage, Scene 2, ending:*

(съ ужимкой.)
Вотъ е - ще! Бо - же со - хра - ни! Э - то ху - же чѣмъ ос - па!

ускоряя.
string.

mf

Въ рукописи:
mf

cresc.

f

(Подкол идетъ къ двери (останавливается на право.) (продолжаетъ идти, хватается за голову и уходитъ.)

Въ рукописи:
въ темнѣ. in tempo.

f

mf

ff

Юля 2. 1868.
Изба въ Шилевѣ.
М. Мусоргскій.

PODKOLIOSIN (*with a grimace*): There's another! God save me! This is worse than the smallpox! (*Podkoliiosin goes to the door on the right. He stops and paws at his hair. He continues on, clutching his head, and goes out.*)

The effect, here, is appropriately Gogolian, a mixture of the pathetic and the ridiculous. Elsewhere, Musorgsky's "subjective" representation of external phenomena would be chilling. In the Coronation Scene of *Boris Godunov*, Musorgsky takes a sound familiar from the everyday lives of his audience – Orthodox church bells – and makes it strange; the "triumphant sound of bells," as the stage directions describe it, becomes dissonant and threatening. This astonishing passage is based on two dominant seventh chords whose roots, A-flat and D, lie a tritone apart. Instead of being treated as functional harmonies, however, and resolving to their implied tonics on D-flat and G, these dominant sevenths simply oscillate from one to the other, producing a harmonic impasse. (Ex. 4).

Ex. 4. *Boris Godunov*, Prologue, Scene 2 (“Coronation Scene”)

The musical score for Ex. 4 consists of two systems. The first system is for piano and bassoon. The piano part is in the right hand, and the bassoon part is in the left hand. The tempo is marked "Andantino alla marcia. [Умеренно]" and the dynamics range from "pp" to "sf". The second system is for piano and bassoon. The piano part is in the right hand, and the bassoon part is in the left hand. The tempo is marked "Andantino alla marcia. [Умеренно]" and the dynamics range from "pp" to "sf". The score includes markings such as "martellato" and "cresc.".

There is no way out of this stalemate, no chord that can tie up all these harmonic loose ends, just an endless loop of unresolved, and unresolvable, dissonance. This is not how Russian Orthodox bells “actually” sound, of course; such a church would have a hard time of retaining its congregation. Rather, it is the way those bells sound when refracted through the disintegrating mind of Tsar Boris, who likewise finds himself amid a dramatic situation from which there can be no escape. All external sounds, moreover, become oscillating tritones in Boris’ ears: when a clock is brought out at the end of Act II, it beats the same hellish interval. (Ex. 5) While most operatic mad scenes invite the audience to gaze at the raving protagonist, Musorgsky in these moments forces us to *hear with Boris*, to experience from “within,” as it were, the way his mind distorts the external world.

Ex. 5. *Boris Godunov*, Act II (“Terem Scene”)

98 Глухо.
Dumf.
Е - же - ли в те - бе пят -
Нет *in dir*; *führ wahr*, *ein*

фл. и гоб.
Fl. & Ob.
На сцене темнеет, часы с курантами приходят в движение.
Es dunkelt, das Glockenspiel in der Uhr beginnt.

скрипки
Violini
pp 12 12 12 12

98 *p* *dimin.* *pp*

Stage directions: The scene darkens, and a clock begins to chime.

One further example, from Musorgsky’s song cycle *Sunless* (1874). The penultimate song, “Elegy,” contains a fairly straightforward instance of word painting: when the protagonist sings of a star flickering through the clouds, the accompaniment calls for a pianissimo tremolo in the right hand. To the sound of this tremolo, the protagonist compares his own fate to that of the star, singing “The portent star, as if full of shame, hides its radiant face in the desolate mist – like my future, mute and impenetrable” (Ex. 6). As “Elegy” ends and the last song, “On the River,” begins, the tremolo migrates down into the left hand of the piano and relaxes into oscillating eighth-note triplets; it has transformed from flickering star into lapping river. The tremolo thus ties together two disparate natural phenomena, the star and the river, for indeed they have become united in the protagonist’s mind. In “Elegy,” he sings that the star in the clouds is like his future, and in “On the River” we discover that – like many a song cycle protagonist before and since – his future will be spent at the bottom of the river.

Ex. 6. *Sunless, No. 5, "Elegia."*

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system includes a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked *Andantino mosso*. The piano part begins with a *pp* dynamic. The second system continues the vocal and piano parts. The third system concludes the piece with a *moreno* marking. The lyrics are provided in both Russian and German.

Andantino mosso.

pp

не - вест - ни - на звез - да, Как буд - то пол - на - я стыда, Скры - ва - ет свет - лый лик в ту - ма - не без - от -
lich - le Mor - gen - stern Erblasst so traurig in der Fern' Und hüllt sich schamhaft ein in grau - en, dich - ten

рад - ном, Как бу - душность мо - я, — Не - мом и
le - bel, Der stumm ist, wie mein Loos, — und düs - ler,

не - про - гляд - ном.
wie mein Le - ben. *moreno*

The portent star, as if full of shame, hides its radiant face in the desolate mist – like my future, mute and impenetrable.

Ex. 7. *Sunless*, No. 6, "Nad Rekoï"

Andante molto. *cantabile, con meditazione* *pp*

Me - сяц за - дум - чи - вый,
Mond blickt so träu - te - risch,

звезд - ды да - ле - ки - е С - си - не - го
leuch - ten - de - Ster - ne - lein Schau - en - got

Pensive moon, distant stars

Musorgsky shared with Dostoevsky an interest in the squalid, the grotesque, the pathetic. In the works of both authors, wry humor and wrenching pathos coexist in the bleakest of circumstances; never was there a more Dostoevskian figure than *Boris Godunov's* holy fool,⁵⁶ nor a more Musorgskian one than *Crime and Punishment's* Katerina Ivanovna. Both tended to personify the conflicts among different political factions and ideologies; each of the struggling groups in *Khovanshchina* finds an individual spokesperson to represent it, as does each strain of progressive thought depicted in *Demons*. Both authors, too, construed their psychological explorations in

⁵⁶ For more on Dostoevsky's manipulation of the "holy fool" archetype in his novels, see Harriet Murav, *Holy Foolishness: Dostoevsky's Novels and the Poetics of Cultural Critique* (Stanford University Press, 1992).

realistic terms. “They call me a psychologist,” Dostoevsky wrote, “– not true, I am only a realist in a higher sense, that is, I depict all the depths of the human soul.”⁵⁷

Defining Russians musically

The connections between opera and literature that I have sketched here are not meant to suggest that composers and writers always saw their aims as congruent, nor that the two art forms were equally regarded in late nineteenth-century Russian culture. More than one initially starstruck Russian composer would come away nonplussed from a meeting with Tolstoy.⁵⁸ For his part, the author of *The Kreutzer Sonata* was ever suspicious of what he considered music’s peculiar power, its ability to bypass a person’s rational faculties and act directly on what we might, only a little anachronistically, call the subconscious. This capacity to influence the subject without her conscious participation, and even against her will, was the root of Tolstoy’s misgivings about the art form: music’s affective potential was sublime and therefore dangerous (Tolstoy sometimes wrote of the “terror,” *strakh*, of music), and could lead the individual to immoral thoughts and destructive actions.⁵⁹ Chernyshevsky, like most other Russians of the era, did not hesitate to rank literature the most eminent of the arts, but he too granted music a singular potential. When motivated by “sincere feeling,” vocal music was the lone art capable of transcending artifice and becoming a product of nature; singing, unlike “rational” literature, could communicate emotional truth in an unmediated form. Moreover, while Russian composers were highly engaged in representing the subjective experience of their characters, they evinced little of the didactic inclination that characterized so many of their literary colleagues – little desire to actually shape the subjective experience, and thus the lives, of their audiences.

⁵⁷ In Nikolaï Strakhov, *Biografiia, pis'ma i zametki iz zapisnoi knizhki F.M. Dostoevskogo* (Sankt-Peterburg: A.S. Suvorin, 1883), 373.

⁵⁸ Chaikovsky described his ambivalent impressions of Tolstoy in letters from early 1879; see Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky*, 336ff. Rimsky-Korsakov’s meeting with the author in January 1898 was drearier; the author, by then fully in his philosophical stage, rejected all of Rimsky-Korsakov’s ideas about art on ethical grounds. Rimsky’s biographer Yastrebtsev reported Tolstoy’s remarks on parting: “It’s been very interesting today to come face to face with gloom.” Yastrebtsev, *Reminiscences*, 199.

⁵⁹ Tolstoy thematized this link between music and immorality in several of his works. In *War and Peace*, Natasha Rostova is able to be seduced only after she goes to the opera; this is to say nothing of the evil deeds and states of mind that music seems to compel in *The Kreutzer Sonata*. For more on Tolstoy’s complex and mercurial views on music, see Caryl Emerson, “Tolstoy and Music,” in Donna Tussing Orwin, ed., *Anniversary Essays on Tolstoy* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 8–32.

But Russian operas did sometimes have a didactic effect, with operatic characters coming to serve, like literary “types,” as models to be imitated in real life. The role performers played in defining and spectacularizing these “types” cannot be overstated. Throughout Osip Petrov’s career, for example, critics hailed the prolific bass as a creator of “incomparable types” (*bespodobnye tipy*), from Ivan Susanin in *A Life for the Tsar* to the Miller in Dargomyzhsky’s *Rusalka* to Varlaam in *Boris Godunov*. By the end of the century, Anna Fishzon writes, daily life itself had become operatic in Russia: “highly theatrical, operatic confessions... were required of properly authentic individuals, and the opera star was well suited to exemplify such a mode of behavior.”⁶⁰ Anton Chekhov’s 1892 short story “After the Theatre” lightly satirizes this real-life modeling of operatic behavior. Returning from a performance of *Evgeny Onegin*, Chekhov’s teenage heroine is inspired to imitate the opera’s leading lady:

Nadya Zelenina had just returned with her mother from the theatre, where *Evgeny Onegin* had played. Entering her room, she quickly threw off her dress, loosened her braid, and in only her petticoat and a white camisole, sat down at once to write a letter, just as Tatiana had done.

“I love you,” she wrote, “But you don’t love me, you don’t love me!”

As soon as she had written it, she laughed.

She was only sixteen years old, and she hadn’t been in love with anyone yet. She knew that the officer Gorny and the student Gruzdev loved her, but now, after the opera, she wanted to doubt their love. To be unloved and unhappy – how interesting that was! When one loves so much, and the other is indifferent, there is something beautiful, touching, and poetic in it.⁶¹

Without a trace of Chekhovian irony, the writer Marina Tsvetaeva (1892-1941) assigned Tatiana a similarly formative role in her own emotional development. In *My Pushkin*, written in 1937 for the hundredth anniversary of the poet’s death, Tsvetaeva recalled her six-year-old self observing a scene from Chaikovsky’s 1878 opera at the local music school:

A bench. On the bench is Tatiana. Then Onegin enters, but he doesn’t sit, and *she* stands. They both stand. And only he speaks, all the while, for a long time, and

⁶⁰ Fishzon, *Fandom, Authenticity, and Opera: Mad Acts and Letter Scenes in Fin-de-Siècle Russia*, 2.

⁶¹ Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, “Posle teatra,” in *Polnoe sobranie sochineni i pisem*, vol. 8 (Moskva: Nauka, 1977), 32.

she doesn't say a word. And here I understood, that my red cat, Avgusta Ivanovna, my dolls – they were *not* love, that *this* was love: when there is a bench, and she is on the bench, and then he enters, and speaks the whole time, and she doesn't say a word.

...And yet another thing – not one, but many things – did *Evgeny Onegin* preordain in me. If later, all my life, until my last day, I was always the first to write, the first to extend my hand – and hands, not fearing fate – then it was only because, at the dawn of my days, in front of my eyes, Tatiana – inclining over a book, before a candle, with a tousled braid thrown over her chest – had done so. And if later, when they left (always – they left), I not only did not extend my hand back, and did not turn my head, then it was only because then, in the garden, Tatiana had stiffened like a statue.⁶²

In Russia, music's ambitions have always been modest compared to literature's, and "literocentric"⁶³ historians have often neglected music in their considerations of late nineteenth-century Russian culture. But as the sympathies between opera and the psychological novel of the 1870s suggest, music was deeply enmeshed in that culture. Perhaps, as Boris Gasparov implies, music's life-sized aspirations allowed it to permeate more thoroughly into the daily experience of individuals⁶⁴: "In a nation accustomed to looking at its writers with expectations of messianic proportions, music turns out to be the phenomenon that was truly inextricable from everyday life."⁶⁵ In poetics, performance, and reception, opera in the late nineteenth century was ever in the business of defining Russians, musically.

⁶² Marina Tsvetaeva, *Moï Pushkin* (Sankt-Peterburg: Azbuka, 2001).

⁶³ Lynn Sargeant has used this term to describe the traditional scholarly orientation toward Russian cultural history; she argues that historians' literary bias has blinded them to the ways in which the visual and aural arts have participated in Russian culture. See Lynn M. Sargeant, *Harmony and Discord: Music and the Transformation of Russian Cultural Life* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁶⁴ Sargeant concurs with Gasparov that music and not literature was the art that Russians encountered most often in their daily lives; "Music," she writes, "...was the art that you could not escape." *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁵ Gasparov, *Five Operas and a Symphony*, xx.

CHAPTER TWO
Boris Godunov and the Terrorist

«Ну-с, и начнется смута! Раскачка такая пойдет, какой еще мир не видал... Ну-с, тут-то мы и пустим... Кого?

— Кого?

— Ивана-Царевича.

— Кого-о?

— Ивана-Царевича; вас, вас!

Ставрогин подумал с минуту.

— Самозванца? — вдруг спросил он, в глубоком удивлении смотря на испуганного. — Э! Так вот наконец ваш план!»

“Well, and there will be a time of troubles! Such chaos will follow as the world has never seen... Well, and then we’ll put forward... Whom?

— Whom?

— Ivan-Tsarevich.

— Who-om?

— Ivan-Tsarevich; you, you!

Stavrogin thought for a minute.

— A pretender? — he suddenly asked, looking with deep surprise at his frantic companion, — Ah! So that’s your plan at last!”

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Demons*, 1872

The Shot

On April 4, 1866, Tsar Alexander II narrowly avoided an assassin's bullet outside the Summer Garden in St. Petersburg. The inexperienced marksman was one Dmitri Karakozov, a recent university expellee who moved in revolutionary circles. Karakozov, who had

donned both a peasant disguise and a pseudonym for the occasion, was quickly apprehended by guards. His pockets were found to contain a number of items – strychnine, cyanide, morphine; a letter, an anti-tsarist manifesto, a scribbled name – from which the courts would later attempt to sketch a motive for the attack. Convincing accounts, however, proved elusive. Karakozov was evidently disturbed, attempting suicide no fewer than three times while he awaited trial, and the documents he carried pointed toward contradictory explanations: the letter, to the notion that Karakozov acted on behalf of a vast conspiracy of young urban radicals; the manifesto (entitled “Druz’iam-rabochim,” “To My Worker-Friends”), to the possibility that he was a lone gunman bent on martyrdom. According to a witness, the tsar himself leapt to a third conclusion – one also reached, and considerably amplified, by the conservative press. Mindful of the January 1863 uprisings in Poland, Belarus, and Lithuania, Alexander immediately queried his would-be assassin: “*Ty, verno, poliak?*” (You’re Polish, right?)¹

Reactions to Karakozov’s shot were swift, and vehement. Dostoevsky’s was especially dramatic: his friends recalled that the epileptic writer tore into the room, shouted “They’ve shot at the tsar!” and, shaking uncontrollably, ran out again into the street.² Alexander himself, until that point the most liberal tsar in Russian history, hurried to establish the watchdog Special Council, which he charged with ferreting out potentially subversive elements within Russian society. This involved a press crackdown of Putinian magnitude: under the “white terror” of the Council’s scrutiny, any publication evincing a whiff of leftist sentiment faced drastic censorship, suspension, and even permanent closure, as in the cases of *Sovremennik* and *Russkoe slovo*. The Bolshoi and the Mariyinsky, meanwhile, responded with nightly stagings of Glinka’s *A Life for the Tsar*; the 1836 opera, in which the life of the incipient sovereign (Mikhail Romanov, Alexander’s six-times-great-grandfather) is delivered from Polish aggressors by a self-sacrificing peasant, had suddenly acquired a new relevance. Three days after the attack, the 25-year-old Pyotr Chaikovsky wrote dryly of the nationalistic frenzy in which Glinka’s opera, and particularly its Polish scenes, participated:

The news of the attempt upon the Emperor’s life reached us at the station... The rejoicings here [in Moscow] were beyond belief; yesterday at the Opera, where I went to hear *A Life for the Tsar*, when the Poles appeared on the stage the entire public began to shout, “Down with the Poles!” In the last scene of the fourth act, in which the Poles put Sousanin to death, the singer who was taking this part resisted with such realistic violence that he knocked down several of the “Polish” chorus-singers. When the rest of the “Poles” saw that this outrage to art and to the truth delighted the public, they promptly fell down of their own accord, and

¹ This anecdote was first printed in *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, no. 72 (April 7, 1866).

² See Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: A Writer in His Time* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 464.

the triumphant Sousanin walked away, shaking his fists at them, amid the vociferous applause of the Muscovites. At the end of the opera the Emperor's portrait was brought on the stage, and an indescribable tumult followed."³

On the opera stages of Moscow and Petersburg, the events of April 4 received a grandiose, and state-affirming, artistic apotheosis.

For many in Russia, however, the significance of those events was not immediately clear. "April 4, 1866 was unthinkable," writes historian Claudia Verhoeven in her recent monograph on the Karakozov affair. "No one expected it, and no one understood it."⁴ Thus launched a nationwide epidemic of hermeneutomania, with interpretations shaking out predictably along ideological lines. Conservatives and xenophobes, spurred by the activities of the Special Council, jumped at the chance to pin Karakozov's crime on a wide assortment of despised leftist influences. The literary-minded among them were apt to find in the tsaricide a flesh-and-blood facsimile of Rakhmetov, the leader of an underground radical cell in *What Is to Be Done?*, Nikolai Chernyshevsky's popular novel of three years before. So pervasive was the connection to Chernyshevsky that the Supreme Criminal Court cited *What Is to Be Done?* in its verdict on the Karakozov case: "The novel of that criminal⁵ [Chernyshevsky] had the most destructive influence on many of the defendants,⁶ inspired absurd antisocial ideas, and, finally, invited them to take as a maxim, *the end justifies the means.*"⁷ Others attributed Karakozov's apparent disregard for means to a favorite conservative whipping boy: the doctrines of Polish Jesuitism, which appeared more threatening than ever after the 1863 Polish uprising. Despite its unlikeliness, this association between Russian nihilism – a homegrown and by definition atheistic phenomenon – and Jesuitism had in fact predated the rebellion. In 1862, the critic Mikhail Katkov characterized both as "religions of denial," writing that a nihilist's "only needs are for total self-control and the prudent use of his means toward the goal of denial...In this regard he is in complete agreement with the Jesuit fathers, and fully accepts their famous rule, the end justifies any means."⁸ From here, it was no great leap for the daily newspaper *Peterburgskii Listok* to declare on August 20,

³ Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky*.

⁴ Claudia Verhoeven, *The Odd Man Karakozov: Imperial Russia, Modernity, and the Birth of Terrorism* (Cornell University Press, 2009), 5.

⁵ In 1866, the author of *What Is to Be Done?* was two years into a quarter-century political exile in Siberia.

⁶ Karakozov was tried along with thirty-five alleged abettors.

⁷ See Verhoeven's chapter "The Real Rakhmetov," *ibid.* 39-65, for a thorough exploration into, and debunking of, these accusations.

⁸ Katkov, "O Nashem Nigilizme po Povodu Romana Turgeneva," *Russkii Vestnik* 40, no. 7 (1862): 409.

1866: "Karakozov is...one of the members of a circle...whose basic teaching is fixed by the Jesuit dogma, 'the end justifies the means.'" Others still found it unsatisfying for Karakozov to be merely ideologically "Polish," and when the undeniable Russianness of the tsaricide's background became known, covert links to Western political cabals had to be invented. As the editor of several of Russia's most widely circulating publications, Katkov (whose erstwhile liberalism, like Alexander's, underwent a retrenchment in this decade) did his best to fan the flames of these rumors.

The official report of the Investigative Commission⁹ knitted all these yarns together, offering a virtual matryoshka doll of conspiracy within conspiracy. Karakozov, the Commission declared, was the leader of a secret faction ("Hell") of a radical socialist group ("The Organization") that, in turn, took orders from a number of shady and powerful foreign movements. The version of the report produced for public consumption appended a string of Polish names for good measure, and singled out "that criminal" Chernyshevsky for particular blame. In the face of all this, liberals and socialists could only groan about the damage Karakozov's actions had done to their movement, and attempt to distance themselves from the situation in the most forceful terms they could muster.¹⁰ Despite their best efforts, however, notions of vast collusion between Karakozov, the Russian left, and the nation's foreign enemies proliferated. And this, for Verhoeven, demonstrated "the limits of the era's imagination: it could not think [of] unauthorized politico-historical agency in terms other than as something being manipulated by a big conspiracy."¹¹

Yet if, for critics on the right, Karakozov could be reassuringly stripped of individual agency – reduced to the "blind weapon," in the language of the time, of socialist fiction or scheming foreigners – for others it was precisely his individuality that compelled. For Karakozov seemed to represent a new kind of political criminal in a country that had seen no shortage of the breed.¹² His motives were bafflingly abstract; he held no personal grudge against Alexander (again, the tsar most sympathetic to left-wing ideas), nor did he appear to seek political gain for himself. His manifesto read:

⁹ This report was prepared by Mikhail Murav'iov, a staunch Polonophobe who had helped to quash Polish rebellions in both 1830 and 1863.

¹⁰ The exile Alexander Herzen, for one, roared over and over that all talk of conspiracy was both baseless and noxious. See Herzen's article "Novosti iz Rossii," in *Kolokol* 220 (May 15, 1866): 1797, reprinted in Herzen, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1954), 19:69–70.

¹¹ Verhoeven, *The Odd Man Karakozov*, 47.

¹² In *The Russian Syndrome: One Thousand Years of Political Murder* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1992), H el ene d'Encausse locates political violence at the very heart of Russian historical consciousness.

It became sad and painful to me to watch my beloved people perish, and so I decided to annihilate the tsar-villain and to die for my beloved people. A plan came to me – I will die for my people, so that my death may be of use to my dear friend – the Russian muzhik. And I fully believe that this plan will not succeed unless it finds people who will follow in my path. I will not succeed – they will succeed. For them my death will be an example and an inspiration. Let the Russian people recognize their greatest enemy – be he Alexander the second or Alexander the third and so on, it’s all the same. The people will reckon with their great enemy, and the remaining few – landowners, grandees, officials, and other rich folks will quail, because their numbers are insignificant. Then there will be real freedom.¹³

The victory Karakozov hoped to achieve in his attempt on Alexander was thus primarily symbolic. He aimed, through the use of spectacular violence, to instill fear in his enemies and win converts to his cause; for him, violence became a moral imperative. From our own century, it is easy to see in Karakozov a prototype of the modern terrorist, but Russians in 1866 struggled to conceptualize his outlook. Was this cold-blooded reason or madness? Did the proclamations in “To My Worker-Friends” represent the terrible endpoint of rational utilitarianism, the nihilists’ favored doctrine, or simply ravings? Karakozov’s legal team – among whom numbered Dmitri Stasov,¹⁴ brother of the music critic Vladimir – argued in favor of the latter interpretation, calling in a number of medical professionals to give evidence of the accused’s “nervous, disturbed condition.” Newspapers, too, debated just what sort of psychology could have inspired Karakozov’s perspective, and whether his apparent neurosis was enough to exonerate him for his “unheard-of act.”

In one of the eternal ironies of the Russian censor’s office, the year of Karakozov’s fateful shot was also the year in which that most famous dramatization of political violence in Russia, Pushkin’s 1825 *Boris Godunov*, was finally approved for public performance. Based on historical events from the turn of the seventeenth century, Pushkin’s drama of tsar and tsaricide sees the titular sovereign pursued, nemesis-like, by an upstart pretender amid social unrest and Polish threats. Externally, the historical figure of Dmitri the Pretender had much in common with the real-life Dmitri whose attempt on the tsar occupied so many column inches in 1866 newspapers. Both were young, educated, violently inclined, and not of especially high birth; both traveled in

¹³ The original, handwritten document can be found in the Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (Moscow), f. 95, op. 1, d. 163 T. 1; this excerpt published in O. V Budnitskiĭ, *Istoriia terrorizma v Rossii v dokumentakh, biografiakh, issledovaniakh* (Rostov-na-Donu:, 1996), 32.

¹⁴ Stasov published his recollections of the trial in “Karakozovskii protsess (nekotoriia svedeniia i vospominaniia),” *Byloe* 4 (1906): 276–90.

disguise and both were connected, whether by rumor or by fact, with Polish anti-tsarist conspiracies. Each, moreover, tilted against a tsar of questionable legitimacy: Boris Godunov's presumable illegitimacy lay in his common origins, Alexander's in the European anachronism his autocracy represented, particularly after the liberalizing Great Reforms of which he had been champion. As the epigraph to this chapter suggests, these affinities between the modern revolutionary and the historical pretender, and more broadly between the 1860s and the Time of Troubles (1598-1613), were not lost on contemporary writers.

Such was the climate in which Modest Musorgsky began his operatic adaptation of Pushkin's play, only two years after the Karakozov affair. This work was then the timely product of an age in which the ethics of political violence, and the psychology such acts demanded, weighed on many Russian minds. In the pages that follow, I'll trace a brief history of a cluster of socioliterary "types" – the revolutionary, the terrorist, and the pretender – and press a bit further into Russian ideas about, and depictions of, the Time of Troubles during the 1860s and 1870s. For contemporary Russians, these topics touched on a series of philosophical knots: Can an ordinary individual, not born to power, have historical agency? Does this agency preclude interiority – that is, must one renounce emotions, personal conscience, relationships, and the private sphere in order to act in a historically significant way? Are violent means justified in the service of the greater good? Is "everything permitted" (as Dostoevsky would have Ivan Karamazov argue in 1880) when absolute authority – temporal or divine – is recognized as illegitimate? In adapting *Boris Godunov* to the opera stage in 1868, Musorgsky entered the conversation, and his ambiguous treatment of Dmitri the Pretender in the two versions of the opera suggests shifting ideas about many of these questions.

Writing the Russian Radical

A short history of the revolutionary as a Russian literary type must begin with Turgenev, in whose fiction, at the turn of the 1860s, fiery ideologues began to replace the jaded, impassive aristocrats whose portraits had hitherto dominated the writer's prose. Two characters, *On The Eve's* Insarov and *Fathers and Sons'* Bazarov, came to serve prototypes for future depictions of Russian radicals in literature. Their diverging novelistic fates and critical receptions contained the kernel of what would be a long-lived debate: could one be simultaneously a revolutionary and a subject?

1859's *On the Eve* features an upper-class Russian heroine, Elena Stakhova, who falls in love with Dmitri Insarov, a Bulgarian freedom fighter. When Insarov dies shortly after the couple's wedding, Elena decides never to return to her homeland, but rather to devote her life to her husband's cause. In letters of the time, Turgenev wrote that historical progress depended on the efforts of individuals like Insarov: self-determined,

tireless men of action whose likeness Russia had not yet seen. "At the foundation of [*On the Eve*]," he wrote to the journalist Ivan Aksakov, "is the idea that *consciously* heroic natures are indispensable if we are to move forward."¹⁵ ("*Conscious* heroism" here signified not impulsive bravery, but reasoned ideological commitment put into action.) Insarov's reception, however, was largely negative; even those who sympathized with the Bulgarian's antiestablishment politics questioned Turgenev's handling of the character. In his impatiently titled review "When Will the Real Day Come?" the radical critic Nikolai Dobroliubov agreed with Turgenev that Insarov types were essential to the nation's future, and lamented the fact that they were in such short supply in Russia. As a personality, however, Dobroliubov found Insarov flat and featureless, inseparable from his animating ideology:

In Insarov, strictly speaking, there is nothing exceptional. Bersenev and Shubin, and Elena herself, and finally, even the author of the work all characterize him with negative features. He doesn't lie, he doesn't go back on his word, he doesn't borrow money... In a word, he has none of those qualities for which any decent person should rebuke himself.

...He would never think of putting his personal welfare in conflict with his life's aim...he cannot conceive of himself at all except in connection with his homeland.¹⁶

Three decades later, Edward Garnett put a finer point on it:

Insarov is a figure of wood. He is so cleverly constructed, and the central idea behind him is so strong, that his wooden joints move naturally, and the spectator has only the instinct, not the certainty, of being cheated. The idea he incarnates, that of a man whose soul is aflame with patriotism, is finely suggested, but an idea, even a great one, does not make an individuality. And in fact Insarov is not

¹⁵ Letter to I.S. Aksakov, 13 (25) November 1859, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v tridtsati tomakh* (Moskva: Nauka, 1978), 4:110. The emphasis is Turgenev's. While Turgenev sympathized with the radical cause to some extent, he belonged to an older generation – the liberal "men of the forties," represented as the "fathers" of *Fathers and Sons* – and neither condoned the radicals' methods nor fully shared their aims. The "forward progress" he sought was incremental, not instantaneous, and its endpoint was not a socialist utopia but an educated, democratic, humane Russia whose values accorded with European norms. Turgenev's beliefs were routinely attacked from both the left and the right. For more on Turgenev's politics, see Isaiah Berlin's essay "*Fathers and Children: Turgenev and the Liberal Predicament*" in *Russian Thinkers*, ed. Henry Hardy and Aileen Kelly (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 261-303.

¹⁶ Dobroliubov, "Kogda zhe Pridet Nastoiashchii Den'?" in *Izbrannoe* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Detskoï Literatury, 1954), 218–219.

a man, he is an automaton...He is a patriotic clock wound up to go for the occasion, and in truth he is very useful. Only on his deathbed, when the unexpected happens, and the machinery runs down, do we feel moved.¹⁷

The same could hardly be said of Turgenev's next young man of ideals, for in Evgeny Bazarov of 1862's *Fathers and Sons*, the conflicting forces of personal emotion and public duty play out with operatic intensity. On first meeting the elder members of the Kirsanov family, Bazarov professes to reject all traditional institutions, authorities, and philosophies, and claims public utility as the sole inspiration for his actions. "We act on the basis of what we recognize as useful," he explains to Pavel Kirsanov. "Nowadays, the most useful thing of all is rejection...the ground must be cleared." (A terrified Pavel immediately realizes the destructive potential of Bazarov's nihilist philosophy: "You reject everything, or, to put it more precisely, you destroy everything."¹⁸) This mission statement leaves no room for what Arkady Kirsanov, Pavel's nephew and Bazarov's acolyte, terms "personal egotism." Halfway through the novel, however, Bazarov's iron will begins to rust. Reason yields to passion in a physically legible display: Bazarov, who elsewhere boasts of his flinty, uncompromising nature,¹⁹ is rendered a gasping, quivering ruin before the brilliant widow Anna Odintsova. Pale and sullen, Bazarov forgoes food and sleep after Odintsova spurns his affections, and confesses to Arkady that "the machine has broken down" [*raskleilas' mashina*].²⁰ The embittered Bazarov never fully recovers, and succumbs uncomplainingly to typhus in the novel's final pages. For Turgenev, ambivalent as ever, "conscious heroism" may be indispensable to history, but it comes at a price to the individual, for unwavering political commitment is incompatible with a rich emotional life. It is contingent on one's capacity to keep the "machinery" running – to subjugate the self to the idea.

Fathers and Sons' reception was famously tumultuous. In the progressive journal *Sovremennik*, Maksim Antonovich first panned the novel, finding in its hero a lampoon of the radical movement by an out-of-touch "man of the forties."²¹ A few weeks later,

¹⁷ Edward Garnett, introduction to Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev, *On the Eve*, trans. Constance Garnett (London: Heinemann, 1973), vii.

¹⁸ Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons*, trans. Michael R. Katz (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 38.

¹⁹ "When I meet a man who can hold his own next to me," he asserts at one point, "I'll change my opinion of myself." *Ibid.* 99.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 84.

²¹ See M.A. Antonovich, "Asmodei' nashego vremeni," in *Izbrannye stat'i: filosofii, kritika, polemika* (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1938), 141–202. Joseph Frank writes entertainingly that Antonovich's vituperative review has since become "a synonym for critical malpractice." (*Dostoevsky*, 348.)

however, Dmitri Pisarev of *Russkoe Slovo*²² would embrace Bazarov as an exceptional representative of his generation. In Pisarev's reading, Bazarov is not an Insarov-like automaton, but a heroic individual par excellence, isolated from the petty crowd by his intellect and conviction. Such supermen have no need for abstract moral principles to guide their behavior, for they act according to careful calculation and "personal taste." The absence of moral absolutes, Pisarev writes, can lead Bazarov types into both genius and crime: "Nothing but personal taste prevents [people like Bazarov] from killing or stealing and nothing but personal taste motivates such people to make discoveries in the realms of science and social life."²³ While thus acknowledging Bazarov's potential for violence – and providing the philosophical basis for Raskolnikov's essay "On Crime" in *Crime and Punishment* – Pisarev nevertheless holds up Turgenev's *enfant terrible* as an ideal to whose model real-life nihilists ought to aspire.

The idea that the nascent revolutionary movement could be shaped by fictional models quickly caught on, and Nikolai Chernyshevsky's 1863 *What Is to Be Done?* aimed to do just that. The novel recast Turgenev's nihilists as "new people" (*novye liudi*), whose "positive"²⁴ features and actions could be imitated by readers. The leader of Chernyshevsky's "new people" is Rakhmetov, an ascetic²⁵ who sleeps on a bed of nails and restricts his diet to a minimum. Hoping to divest himself of irrational ties to the physical world, Rakhmetov likewise shuns close relationships, romantic and otherwise. The existence for which he strives is thoroughly public, a life pledged wholly to a cause. But even Rakhmetov's ideological piety is not perfect, or at least not yet ("Yes, pity me," he exhorts the novel's heroine, Vera Pavlovna, "for even I am also not an abstract idea, but a person wants to live. Well, but this is nothing; it will pass") and furthermore, Rakhmetov is not the personage Chernyshevsky would have his readers embody in their own lives.²⁶ Strict "rigorism," to use Chernyshevsky's term, is neither the only nor

²² *Sovremennik* and *Russkoe Slovo* were both disbanded under the White Terror in 1866, after which Antonovich all but ceased his literary activities. Pisarev, meanwhile, had been arrested in 1862 for circulating an anti-tsarist pamphlet, and at the time of Karakozov's attack was occupying a cell of the Petropavlovsk Fortress.

²³ Dmitri I. Pisarev, "Bazarov," trans. Lydia Hooke, in Ivan Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons*, ed. and trans. Michael R. Katz (New York and London: Norton, 1994), 187.

²⁴ For Chernyshevsky, as for the Soviets, the term "positive" in relation to literary characters denoted both agency and virtue, and a "positive hero" was one whose characteristics should be adopted in real life. See Rufus W. Mathewson, *The Positive Hero in Russian Literature* (Stanford University Press, 1975). Chernyshevsky disliked the title "nihilism" for his movement, as he found it too negative.

²⁵ For a history of the ascetic as a Russian literary type, see Marcia A. Morris, *Saints and Revolutionaries: The Ascetic Hero in Russian Literature* (State University of New York Press, 1993).

²⁶ Andrew Drozd makes this argument forcefully in *Chernyshevskii's What Is to Be Done?: A Reevaluation* (Northwestern University Press, 2001), 140: "Rakhmetov's ascetic philosophy, as

necessarily the most desirable path to new personhood. The bulk of *What Is to Be Done?*, in fact, concentrates on the personal lives of Vera Pavlovna and her succession of husbands, with the idea that Russian domestic life should model in miniature a rationally organized socialist society. In contrast to Bazarov, in whom the forces of private emotion and ideological commitment prove devastatingly incompatible, Chernyshevsky's revolutionaries can have both their sewing communes and their passionate romances, even if it takes a faked suicide in order for them to manage it. Moreover, Chernyshevsky takes pains to insist on several occasions that transformation into a "new person" does not compel a loss of individuality:

Just as Europeans among Chinese are all of one face and one manner of acting as far as the Chinese are concerned, while in reality among Europeans there are incomparably greater differences than among Chinese, so it is with this apparently uniform type [new people]: their individual differences are more numerous and more distinguished from each other than the differences among all the other types diverge from each other. Here there are all sorts of people: sybarites and ascetics; the stern and the tender; and so on and so forth.²⁷

If readers cannot perceive the differences among his characters, Chernyshevsky suggests in a bit of "Emperor's New Clothes"-like logic, it implies a failure of perspective on their own part, for new people are more internally varied than any other human type.

What Is to Be Done? proved wildly popular. In a footnote to his 1868 article "Bazarov Yet Again," Alexander Herzen mused on the remarkable influence of *What Is to Be Done?* among his young countrymen:

It's a strange thing, this interaction of people with books and books with people. A book takes its whole shape from the society in which it originates, generalizes the material, makes it clearer and sharper, and is then surpassed by reality. The originals turn their own sharply drawn portraits into caricatures, and real people take on the character of their own literary shadows. ...After 1862, all the young

striking as it may be, is clearly at odds with the views of the author himself and with the attitude expressed throughout the remainder of the novel...As such, Rakhmetov is not Chernyshevskii's contribution to Russian literature's search for a positive hero. Rather, his chosen path, with all its self-imposed deprivations, is precisely what is not to be done." This is further than I would go, considering the number of times Chernyshevsky describes Rakhmetov as being of a "higher nature" than the other characters.

²⁷ Nikolaï Gavrilovich Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'?: Iz rasskazov o novykh liudiakh*, ed. T. I. Ornatskaia and S. A. Reïser (Leningrad: Nauka, 1975).

Russians who came to see me were almost straight out of *What Is to Be Done*, with a few of Bazarov's traits mixed in.²⁸

As we have seen, in 1866 the Supreme Criminal Court averred that Karakozov had taken on just such a literary shadow, having been inspired by Rakhmetov "to take as a maxim, *the end justifies the means*." Judicial opinion aside, however, Karakozov's "means" were hardly Chernyshevsky's. The revolution the novelist hoped to catalyze with *What Is to Be Done?* was a bottom-up enterprise, and psychological overhaul, not bloodshed, was his method of choice. Individual Russians, Chernyshevsky imagined, would read his novel, pattern their lives on those of his characters, and inspire imitators through their example. Once a critical mass of "new people" had been reached, the nation would be transformed into a socialist utopia; thus the possibility of revolutionary violence lay almost entirely outside the fictional realm of *What Is to Be Done?* The distance between Rakhmetov and Karakozov, and the ease with which it was traversed in the Russian imagination after April 4,²⁹ nicely illustrates Herzen's point. Literature had been surpassed by reality – but such would not be the case for long.

If the hallmark of Chernyshevskian new people was their ability to balance the claims of personal feeling and public duty, for the titular figure in Sergei Nechaev's "Catechism of a Revolutionary," no such compromise was acceptable. Nechaev, who led a real-life revolutionary circle and embraced the title "terrorist," wrote the pamphlet in 1869; it was published in Russia two years later, along with the trial proceedings of several of Nechaev's underlings.³⁰ Unlike Rakhmetov, Nechaev's revolutionary *was* an "abstract idea," and he had no regrets about the fact. "The revolutionary is a doomed man," read the infamous opening lines of what remains one of the most radical documents ever penned:

He has no personal interests, no business affairs, no emotions, no attachments, no property, not even a name. Everything in him is engulfed in one exclusionary interest, one passion – revolution.

²⁸ Aleksandr Gertsen, "Eshche raz Bazarov," in Sukhikh, *Roman I.S. Turgeneva "Otsy i deti" v russkoï kritike*. Kropotkin too recalled: "For Russian youth of the time, [*What Is to Be Done?*] was a kind of revelation, and it turned into a program – it became some kind of banner." Piotr Alekseevich Kropotkin, *Idealy i deïstvitel'nost' v russkoï literature* (Sankt-Peterburg: Znanie, 1907), 306.

²⁹ Claudia Verhoeven writes: "What has always looked like the source for all of Russia's ruthless revolutionaries up to and including Lenin, Rakhmetov the 'rigorist,' only looks that way because he is seen through a filter based on the reactionary reception of Karakozov's political action." *The Odd Man Karakozov*, 41.

³⁰ The ringleader himself had conveniently decamped to Zurich at the time, and would not stand trial for his role in the so-called "Nechaev affair" until the following year.

...The nature of the true revolutionary excludes all sentimentality, romanticism, infatuation, and exaltation. All private hatred and revenge must also be excluded. Revolutionary passion, practiced at every moment of the day until it becomes a habit, is to be employed with cold calculation. At all times, and in all places, the revolutionary must obey not his personal impulses, but only those that serve the cause of revolution.³¹

This was just the sort of instrumentalized personality that conservative commentators had in mind when they described Karakozov as the “blind weapon” of foreign Jacobins: an angel of vengeance who saw human lives as expendable, and who believed that a person’s worth consisted solely in his or her usefulness to the cause, which Nechaev defined as the total annihilation of all existing social and political structures. (Nechaev, unlike Chernyshevsky, would leave the question of what to do with the rubble up to future generations.) Among Nechaev’s revolutionaries, individuality was to be neither sought nor tolerated. All group decisions were to be taken unanimously, with the ultimate goal of “welding the people into one invincible and all-destructive force.” Here, however, lay a paradox already implicit in Rakhmetov: it took a heroic act of individual will to transform oneself into a revolutionary, but once this transformation was accomplished, one’s will could be freely abdicated, subsumed into the group and the idea.³² In Nechaev’s “Catechism,” the agency to remake worlds demands the erasure of the subject.

³¹ Sergeĭ Nechaev, “Katekhizis Revoliutsionera,” in Evgeniia L'vovna Rudnitskaia, ed., *Revoliutsionnyi radikalizm v rossii: vek deviatnadtsatyĭ: dokumental'naia publikatsiia* (Moskva: Arkheograficheskiĭ Tsent, 1997).

³² In this, the far left and the far right begin to converge, for the sort of undifferentiated groupthink Nechaev imagined would prevail his revolutionary cells was also prized by conservative Slavophiles in their image of the Russian peasant commune. As the Slavophile critic Konstantin Aksakov wrote: “The commune is a union of people who have renounced their egoism, their own personality...each person is heard, not as a solitary voice, but in harmony with others, and this represents the noble phenomenon of a harmonious existence of rational beings (consciousness); there arises a brotherhood, a commune – a triumph of the human spirit.” K.S. Aksakov, “Kratkiĭ istoricheskiĭ ocherk Zemskikh Soborov,” in *Polnoe sobranie sochineniĭ* (Moskva: Universitetskaia Tipografiia, 1889), 1:279–80. One might also see in this shades of the ideal society proposed by Ivan Karamazov’s Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1881). For more information, see Frances M. Watters, “The Peasant and the Village Commune,” in Wayne S. Vucinich, ed., *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Stanford University Press, 1988), 133–57, and Sergei Horujy, “Slavophiles, Westernizers, and the Birth of Russian Philosophical Humanism,” trans. Patrick Lally Michelson, in Gary M. Hamburg and

From the right, Dostoevsky had long been crying foul. 1864's *Notes From Underground* hurls a scathing polemic against Chernyshevsky, and in particular the notion that either society or the psychology of individuals could be organized according to rational principles. Living "underground," and interacting with no one for the first half of the novella, Dostoevsky's narrator gleefully shuns the public and civic commitments of the new people. Man cannot live by reason alone, the underground man argues, for people are fundamentally irrational beings; reason cannot contain humanity's irrepressible demonic whims. Nor can people bear, Rakhmetov-like, to deny the expression of their free will in the service of a cause, for they would rather act foolishly and arbitrarily simply to prove their individual agency. For these reasons, the underground man asserts that he fears the Crystal Palace,³³ which for Chernyshevsky symbolized the triumph of rational achievement, a utopia of reason. "I am standing for...my caprice," he writes,

"...You believe in a palace of crystal that can never be destroyed – a palace at which one will not be able to put out one's tongue or make a long nose on the sly. And perhaps that is just why I am afraid of this edifice, that it is of crystal and can never be destroyed and that one cannot put one's tongue out at it even on the sly."³⁴

Two years later, *Crime and Punishment* again took up the issues of reason and free will, and foregrounded the problem of means vs. ends that likewise dominated the contemporary Karakozov trial.³⁵ At the outset, the protagonist Rodion Raskolnikov

Randall Allen Poole, eds., *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830-1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

³³ The crystal palace Chernyshevsky and Dostoevsky had in mind was built to accommodate the Great Exhibition in London, 1851; it showcased the latest technological innovations of the Industrial Revolution. In *What Is to Be Done*, Vera Pavlovna encounters it in her fourth dream, which presents a utopian vision for a socialist future.

³⁴ Fyodor Mikhaïlovich Dostoevskii, *Notes from Underground*, trans. Michael R. Katz (New York: Norton, 2001).

³⁵ Karakozov's shot interrupted the serial publication of *Crime and Punishment* in Katkov's *Russkii Vestnik*, and several scholars have argued that the novel and its reception absorbed the bullet's impact. Joseph Frank writes that "the shattering event [of April 4] increased the impact made by Dostoevsky's portrayal of the crime committed by his ex-student, and certainly affected the mood in which the final sections of the book were composed" [*Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 1865-1871* (Princeton University Press, 1995), 42]. Claudia Verhoeven, too, asserts that the Karakozov trial, which concentrated so intensely on the defendant's aberrant mental state, "rendered intelligible the possible connection between illness, ideologically inspired crime, and revolutionary politics" that likewise distinguishes the mindset of

resolves to murder his miserly landlady out of rational utilitarianism: he will make better use of her money than she will, for he will use it for the betterment of society, however hazily he might conceive of that notion. Though confident that he has settled the morality of his actions on rational grounds, Raskolnikov nevertheless finds his grip on reason slip as he prepares to murder the crone. Like so many of Dostoevsky's characters, he begins to feel as if his conscious mind is no longer sovereign over his actions, "as if a piece of his clothing had been caught in the cogs of a machine and he were being dragged into it."³⁶ Late in the novel, he confesses to the saintly prostitute Sonya Marmeladova that his actions were in fact not "reasonable" at all, but proceeded from something akin to the underground man's demonic impulse to prove himself a free agent. "I wanted to become a Napoleon,"³⁷ he admits,

I did not kill so that, having obtained means and power, I could become a benefactor of mankind. Nonsense! I simply killed – killed for myself, for myself alone – and whether I would later become anyone's benefactor, or would spend my life like a spider, catching everyone in my web and sucking the life-sap out of everyone, should have made no difference to me!³⁸

In the end, Raskolnikov discovers – to his torment, his downfall, and his eventual salvation – that means matter, that individual conscience cannot be suppressed in favor of some general idea of the greater good. For Dostoevsky, a belief that one can ever be rationally justified is at best a delusion, and at worst the most terrible kind of egoism.

Times of Trouble

Demons, published serially in 1871 and 1872, deals most directly of all Dostoevsky's novels with the issue of revolutionary violence. In part a fictionalization of the so-called "Nechaev affair" of 1869,³⁹ in which the members of Nechaev's circle brutally murdered one of their own, *Demons* once again shows moral justifications for violent acts to be

Dostoevsky's own murderer-with-a-cause. (*The Odd Man Karakozov*, 100.) At the very least, these "psychological means of defense," as Porfiry Petrovich calls them in *Crime and Punishment*, prove equally ineffective in Raskolnikov's case as they did in Karakozov's.

³⁶ Fyodor Mikhaïlovich Dostoevskiï, *Crime and Punishment*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 70.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 415.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 419.

³⁹ In 1869, several members of Nechaev's revolutionary circle murdered one of their own in order to prove fidelity to their hardboiled leader. For a history of this event and a biography of Nechaev, see Philip Pomper, *Sergei Nechaev* (Rutgers University Press, 1979).

nothing more than smokescreens for monstrous egos. *Demons'* young agitators, Nikolai Stavrogin and Piotr Verkhovensky, are not self-abnegating freedom fighters, but rebels with a decidedly vainglorious cause. All of the characters in *Demons* act in thrall to the personal magnetism of Stavrogin, who along with the "ideas man" Verkhovensky serves as the novel's stand-in for Nechaev. (The names of Karakozov and other real-life revolutionaries likewise appear scattered throughout the notebooks for *Demons*.⁴⁰) This monstrous charisma is what motivates Dostoevsky's frequent references to Stavrogin as fraud (*moshennik*), seducer (*obol'stitel'*), and – especially – pretender (*samozvanets*). In two places, Maria Lebiadkina specifically invokes the name of Russian history's most famous pretender when addressing Stavrogin. "Listen," she demands, "have you read about Grishka Otrepiev, who was cursed in seven cathedrals?" Later in the conversation she taunts Stavrogin with a quotation from Pushkin: "Grish-ka Ot-rep-iev a-na-the-ma!"

In thus linking his own era to that of Grishka Otrepiev, Dostoevsky was tapping into a contemporary trend. The writer was certainly not alone in perceiving a connection between the later years of Alexander II's reign (1866-1881) and the "Time of Troubles" at the turn of the seventeenth century, when Ivan the Terrible, having murdered his heir, left Russia without a viable monarch.⁴¹ (Nor was Dostoevsky the only conservative writer to find a kinship between modern revolutionaries and historical pretenders. The critic Apollon Grigor'ev, for one, made frequent reference to his radical colleagues at *Sovremennik* as "Tushino thieves"⁴² – the nickname of the second False Dmitri to challenge the Russian throne during the Time of Troubles.) In 1874, the popular writer Vsevolod Krestovsky explicitly linked contemporary Russia to its restive past in a pair of anti-nihilist novels, which together he called *A Bloody Nonsense: A Chronicle of the New Time of Troubles in the Russian State*. Meanwhile, Russia's theatres of the 1860s and 1870s brimmed with plays set during the Time of Troubles, such that in 1866, an anonymous reviewer in *Sovremennik* grumbled – in response to the premiere of Nikolai Chaev's play *Dmitri Samozvanets* – that "Dmitri the Pretender and the era of pretenders in general is the most beloved and most worn-out subject of all our playwrights."⁴³ The next year,

⁴⁰ See Fyodor Mikhaïlovich Dostoevskii, *The Notebooks for "The Possessed,"* ed. Edward Wasiolek, trans. Victor Terras (University of Chicago Press, 1968), 94, 137, 142, and 349. In these examples Karakozov appears as both a real-life historical figure and a character in the novel.

⁴¹ Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar*, which served as a balm for a shaken society after the first attempt on Alexander, appropriately dramatizes the end of this period of upheaval.

⁴² See Grigor'ev's letter 242 to M.P. Pogodin (September 17-28, 1860): "At least they [the editors of *Russkii Vestnik*] are honest people, not Tushino thieves...I cannot write in *Sovremennik*, for that is the center of the Tushinites." These terms are scattered liberally throughout Grigor'ev's correspondence; see *Pis'ma*, ed. Robert T. Whittaker, Boris Fedorovich Egorov, and I. G. Ptushkina (Moskva: Nauka, 1999).

⁴³ *Sovremennik* 2 (1866): 241.

A.K. Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan the Terrible*⁴⁴ and Alexander Ostrovsky's *Dmitri the Pretender and Vasili Shuisky*⁴⁵ would premiere almost simultaneously, accompanied by incidental music from Serov and Chaikovsky, respectively.⁴⁶ In attempting to explain this general interest in the Time of Troubles during the reign of Alexander II, Olga Maiorova has proposed that while, for conservatives and progressives alike, the Great Reforms of the early 1860s represented a clearing of the slate – a way out of a national quagmire – their sweeping scope was so destabilizing that many Russians sought historical antecedents to help them parse the chaos.⁴⁷ This, she writes, along with the shared circumstances of Polish threats and peasant rebellions, accounts for the appeal of the Time of Troubles in the post-reform era: this period of violent upheaval, during which at least nine different heads filled the Russian crown within fifteen years, could serve as a prism through which contemporary Russians might make sense of their own turbulent era.⁴⁸

Central to these discussions was the shadowy figure of Dmitri the Pretender, who, with powerful Polish backing, held the throne for some ten months in 1605-6. A polemical war regarding the true identity of the Pretender erupted in the 1860s; Table 1 below summarizes the major contributions.

⁴⁴ *The Death of Ivan the Terrible* the first in a trilogy of plays about the Time of Troubles (the others being 1868's *Tsar Feodor Ioannovich* and 1870's *Tsar Boris*), on which A.K. Tolstoy's reputation as one of Russia's greatest historical dramatists rests.

⁴⁵ Serov briefly contemplated an opera on this subject in 1866 (the year in which the drama was published), but wrote to O. Novikova that, while brilliant, Ostrovsky's play was not made for music. See Abram Gozenpud, *Russkii opernyi teatr XIX veka (1857-1872)* (Leningrad: Muzyka, 1971), 248.

⁴⁶ Chaikovsky's library holds a heavily notated copy of Ustrialov's *Contemporary Tales of Dmitri the Pretender*, which the composer apparently consulted while working on the incidental music to Ostrovsky's play.

⁴⁷ See Olga Maiorova, "Tsarevich-samozvanets v sotsial'noi mifologii poreformennoi epokhi," *Rossiiia-Russia: kul'turnye praktiki v ideologicheskoi perspektive* 11, no. 3 (1999): 204–32.

⁴⁸ Boris Gasparov has argued that the Time of Troubles served a similar function for Russian writers during the "apocalyptic" War of 1812. See *Poeticheskii iazyk Pushkina kak fakt istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka*, 27 (Wien: Gesellschaft zur Förderung slawistischer Studien, 1992), 82–4.

TABLE 1. Historians' conclusions about the False Dmitri

Writer	Works	Conclusions
Ustrialov	Preface to the 3 rd ed. of <i>Contemporaries' Tales of Dmitri the Pretender</i> (1859)	The pretender's identity is still a mystery; previous accounts have been incomplete. "There's no doubt that he was a deceiver, but who exactly? Otrepiev, the son of Batoriev, the weapon of Jesuits?"
Kostomarov	"Who Was the First False Dmitri?" (1864)	The pretender is neither Grigory Otrepiev nor Dmitri, but someone else who sincerely believes he is Ivan's son. His success is the result of a boyars' plot.
Bitsyn (Pavlov)	"The Truth about the False Dmitri" (1864)	In Moscow, Grigory Otrepiev was groomed (by whom?) for the pretendership, but he switched places with someone else (identity unknown) while in Lithuania.
Ikonnikov	"Who Was the First Pretender?" (1865)	The pretender is the legitimate Dmitri Ivanovich, who survived the assassins' attack.
Dobrotvorsky	"Who Was the First False Dmitri?" (1866)	The pretender is Grigory Otrepiev.
Soloviov	"Notes on Pretenders in Russia" (1868)	The pretender is Grigory Otrepiev, who sincerely believes he is Ivan's son. Cossacks exploit his credulity.

Debates about the False Dmitri during this time period tended to hinge on the issue of who had pulled the strings – was the pretender a Russian Napoleon or a cog in a Polish (or Cossack, or boyar) machine? – thus paralleling, in striking ways, the concerns voiced about Karakozov and his associates. As Maiorova notes, Karakozov's attempt on the tsar only increased the urgency with which references to the Time of Troubles, and particularly the bloody career of the False Dmitri, circulated.⁴⁹ And Ilya Vinitzky writes: "Ivan Kireevsky once described Dimitry as the shade who reigns in Pushkin's tragedy,

⁴⁹ "Выстрел Каракозова довел аналогии со Смутным временем до апогея и вывел их из области политической риторики в сферу публичного действия." [Karakozov's shot took analogies to the Time of Troubles to their apogee and brought them out of the realm of political rhetoric and into the sphere of public action.] Maiorova, "Tsarevich-samozvanets," 227.

Boris Godunov, from beginning to end. In the 1860s he became the shade haunting all of Russian society, connecting the present to the past.”⁵⁰

Musorgsky, of course, was a composer who traded in just these sorts of historical analogies: “The past in the present,” he wrote to Stasov while composing *Khovanshchina*, “that’s my task.” His own False Dmitri, half ascetic revolutionary and half ardent romancer, cuts a provocative figure in the context of the times.

The rebel sings?

The False Dmitri of Pushkin’s *Boris Godunov* is a male type, frequently encountered in the poet’s works, who has tended to have some difficulty leaving the page. An expert operator, he is a chameleon and an opportunist whose “true self,” if he can be said to have such a thing, is as inaccessible to the readers as it is to the characters he charms. Caryl Emerson has attributed the success of Pushkin’s pretender to his plasticity, his capacity to make himself up as he goes along. “[Pushkin’s] Pretender has no need of psychological continuity,” writes Emerson; “in fact, he celebrates his multiple identities. ...His ‘cause’ comes and goes; at any given moment he merely wishes to maximize his passion and his freedom.... The Pretender can always find a voice, and a vision, proper to his many roles.”⁵¹ This kaleidoscopic, centrifugal personality stands in contrast to that of the utterly centripetal Boris, whose fatal flaw is his inability to adapt. For, dominated as it is by allusion and innuendo, the world of Pushkin’s *Boris Godunov* resists fixed meanings; words, in Pushkin, are always fabrications, open to distortion and appropriation by interested parties. Such a perspective would seem a peculiar fit for Musorgsky’s aesthetic, which located dramatic truth precisely in human speech. Emerson’s point about Grigory’s voice (rather, his ability to channel multiple voices) is also germane here. It is a commonplace of Pushkin scholarship that the poet’s plays were never intended to be performed, and as long as he is silent, Grigory has access to an infinite number of potential voices. But to give that character one voice – in this case a tenor, with all the dramatic connotations that voice carried by the late nineteenth century – is to necessarily contain him. A Pretender who sings is one whose options are finite.

In Musorgsky’s hands, then, Grigory bears few of the chameleon characteristics he had in Pushkin. Some of this had to do with the exigencies of transposition: in adapting Pushkin’s sprawling drama to manageable operatic proportions, Musorgsky had to be selective. The first version of *Boris Godunov*, completed in 1869, includes only two scenes

⁵⁰ Ilya Vinitsky, *Ghostly Paradoxes: Modern Spiritualism and Russian Culture in the Age of Realism* (University of Toronto Press, 2009), 50.

⁵¹ Emerson, *Boris Godunov: Transpositions*, 101–2.

for Grigory, and in neither of those is he given the chance to manipulate identities for his own gain. But musically, too, Grigory is anything but a shape shifter. In place of a propensity to change masks at will, Musorgsky grants his False Dmitri perfect single-mindedness – an *idée fixe* in the form of a leitmotif to which he clings obsessively throughout the opera. In one of its first appearances,⁵² the theme acts as a sort of musical light bulb above Grigory’s head, appearing just as Pimen muses that the tsarevich murdered at Uglich would now be Grigory’s age – and reigning. (See Ex. 1.)

Ex. 1. *Boris Godunov*, Cell Scene.

Григорий при этих словах величественно выпрямляется
до весь рост, потом снова с притворным смирением опускает-
ся на скамью.

так: двѣнадцать лет. Он был бы твоим ровесник и царствовал..
ist's: zwölff jah - re sind's. Er wär so alt wie du jetzt, und Herr, sches-wirt..

PIMEN: It has been twelve years since. He would have been your age, and tsar!
(At these words, Grigory regally sits up to his full height, then with false modesty sinks again onto the bench.)

This theme, appearing in both major and minor mode variants, is deployed to sublime dramatic effect throughout the opera, particularly in the disintegrating mind of Tsar Boris.⁵³ When Grigory sings it, the motive refers to his big idea: to impersonate the murdered tsarevich and challenge Boris for the throne. The “tsarevich” theme recurs constantly in Grigory’s part; “everything in him” to paraphrase Nechaev’s image of the ideal revolutionary, seems absorbed in this one musical and dramatic idea. This is hardly a pretender whose cause “comes and goes,” as Emerson says of Pushkin’s.

⁵² In the 1869 version of the opera, this is in fact the motive’s third appearance – though its first in the major mode. A minor-mode variant had twice accompanied Pimen’s narration of the tsarevich’s death at Uglich. When Musorgsky revised the opera in 1872, he cut Pimen’s narrative, and with it the first two instances of the “tsarevich” theme in the minor mode.

⁵³ For a thorough analysis of the dramatic significance of this motive throughout the opera, see Richard Taruskin, “Musorgsky vs. Musorgsky: The Versions of *Boris Godunov*,” in *Musorgsky*, 201–90.

Nor is he much of a charmer. In the first act of the opera – the only one in which he appears, in Musorgsky’s 1869 version – Grigory is painfully aloof, occupied utterly with his plan. When his traveling companions, Varlaam and Missail, imbibe at an inn, Grigory fastidiously abstains, prompting jeers from the vagabond monks (“It’s one thing to be drunk, and quite another to be a prig”). After a rousing recital of Ivan the Terrible’s terrible deeds in Kazan, Varlaam sinks drunkenly to the floor, singing a Russian folk song with a leaden tongue. Grigory takes no notice, but instead approaches the innkeeper to ask for directions to Lithuania, from whence Grigory hopes to escape to Poland:

Ex. 2. *Boris Godunov*, Inn Scene

34 Григорий. Подходя к хозяйке.
Grigori]. *An die Wirtin tretend.*

Хозяйка! куда ведет э-та до-ро-га?
Frau Wirtin! wohin, sag mir, führt die .se S'rasse?

Шапка на ём *Top-*
und in sein G'nick *den*

35 Хозяйка. Wirtin.
А в Лит-ву, кормилец.
Grad nach Li-tau-en hin.

А да-ле-че до Лит-вы?
Und ist Li-tau'n weit von hier?

35 чат как ро-зон!
Hut er ge-rückt;

Весь, ах, весь то
Ganz, ach, ganz so

esec.

VARLAAM: With his hat on, he sticks out like a pole...

GRIGORY: Innkeeper! Where does that road lead?

INNKEEPER: To Lithuania, sir.

GRIGORY: And is it far to Lithuania?

Layering clipped recitative over the vagrant's slurred *protiazhnaia*, Grigory appears here a musical ascetic as well as a teetotaler. A few bars later, this notorious *moshennik* (fraud) proves the character in the opera *least* capable of using false words to deceive. His attempt to pull one over on the guards at the end of the scene, by purposely misreading a description of the criminal they seek, goes woefully, and hilariously, awry.

There is quite a bit of Rakhmetov to this depiction: the ascetic restraint, the dogged focus on the big idea, the literal-mindedness, the faint aroma of the ridiculous. Dobroliubov and Garnett might easily find the same faults in the 1869 Grigory as they did in Insarov: he is indeed a figure of wood who seems unable to conceive of himself at all except in connection with his cause. As for a private life, Grigory hardly has one to speak of. Strangely for an operatic character, all of his utterances are public; left alone onstage at the end of the Cell Scene, Grigory wastes no time in private reflection, but rather issues an outwardly directed apostrophe to the title character (Ex. 3). In this respect he is the mirror image of the guilty tsar, who cannot help slipping into "private" speech even in a crowd.

Ex. 3. *Boris Godunov*, Cell Scene

80 Григорий. У самой двери.
Grigoriĭ. An der Thür.

Бо-рис, Бо-рис! все пред то-бой тре-пет, Ни-кто не сме-ет и на-
Bo-ri-s, Bo-ri-s! Al-les vor dir er-sit-tert, und nie-mand wagt's dich zu er-

Подходя к столу.
An den Tisch tretend.

[Più lento] Еще медленнее.
Doch noch
Fast sehr
A между
Doch in-ter-

48 49

помнить о жре-би-и несчастно-го мла-ден-ца...
-т-п-т-т-т aus litt'ere Los des unglück-s'i-gen Kin-des...

А между
Doch in-ter-

ворком.

GRIGORY: Boris, Boris! Everything trembles before you. No one dares to remember the fate of that unfortunate boy...

In the first version of the opera, the Inn Scene is the last we ever see of Grigory. He slips out the window of the inn and appears again only as an abstract idea – a musical leitmotif – thus accomplishing the transition Rakhmetov sought but never quite managed. Russian literature never produced so perfect a revolutionary.

As Richard Taruskin has shown, Musorgsky's revisions to *Boris Godunov* went far beyond supplying the missing "feminine element" for which the Imperial Theatres directorate had rejected the first version of the opera.⁵⁴ His changes amounted to a full musical and conceptual overhaul, and no character was more affected by this shift in approach than Grigory. As before, Musorgsky is selective with Pushkin, for he includes no scenes that show the False Dmitri charming powerful Poles. At his entrance in the Fountain Scene, Grigory again finds himself alone, and again he apostrophizes. His thoughts, however, turn in an entirely different direction.

⁵⁴ See Taruskin, "Musorgsky vs. Musorgsky."

Ex. 4. Boris Godunov, Fountain Scene

3

p

При - дешь ли ты, - же -
Oh, kommst du nicht zu sich, Ge-

pp

- лан - на - я, При - дешь ли, го - луб - ка мо - я, легко - кры - ла - я. А ль не ве - по -
- lieb - te mein? Oh, kommst du, mein Täubchen, so selig, so leicht - beschwingt? O, der ver -

cresc.

- мянешь ты буй - но - го со - ко - ла, что по те - бе грустит, над - ры -
- ges - sen ist dein wil - der Fal - ke schon der mir in Seh - nucht heiss sich an

cresc.

Ex. 4. cont.

- ва - ет - ся. При - ве - том лас - ко - вым, ре - чью неж - ло - ю Ты у - го -
dich wecket. Mit holden Lie - begruss, san - ten Ko - se - wort tu mir

- ли му - ку серд - ца без' не - ход - ну - ю. Ма
di mit ne Her - versreit, die dro - che Pott. Ma

- ри - на!.. Ма
ri - na!.. ia

- ри - на!..
ri - na!..

GRIGORY: Will you come, my beloved, my light-winged dove? Or do you forget your impetuous falcon who yearns for you, who slaves away for you? With gentle greetings, with tender speech heal my tormented heart! Marina!... Marina!...

Onstage and alone, but this time singing quite naively about his tortured heart, this is surely no Dmitri we have ever encountered before. Nor is this lovesick fellow to be found in Pushkin: in the poet's conception of the scene, Grigory struggles self-consciously to keep his feelings for the Polish princess in check. Musorgsky conspicuously omits Grigory's final speech in Pushkin's Fountain Scene:

No – easier far to strive with Godunov.
Or play false with the Jesuits of the Court,
Than with a woman. Deuce take them; they're beyond
My power. She twists, and coils, and crawls, slips out
Of hand, she hisses, threatens, bites. Ah, serpent!
Serpent! 'Twas not for nothing that I trembled.
She well-nigh ruined me; but I'm resolved;
At daybreak I will put my troops in motion.⁵⁵

Unlike Pushkin's pretender, who falters around Marina but ultimately keeps his head, Musorgsky's False Dmitri appears to forget not just his cause, but even his own identity. "For reasons totally incomprehensible to us," sniffed Nikolai Soloviev in *Birzhevoye Vedomosti*, "the composer considered it necessary...to depict the Pretender as believing that he was the true son of Ivan... The false Dmitri's self-delusion is very strange." Not all of Grigory's former traits are reversed in the Polish Act, however. He retains his singularity of purpose – Grigory can be wholly absorbed in either his ambitions or his love for Marina, but cannot balance the two. Musically as well as dramatically, the two forces are polarized. In the Polish Act, Grigory tends to sing the "tsarevich" motive when he also sings about renouncing love (see Ex. 6a below). This is not a romance that aids Grigory's cause, as it is in Pushkin, but one that threatens it. Like Bazarov, Grigory finds romantic love incompatible with commitment to his goals.

Not that he seems to mind. With hardly a complaint, Musorgsky's pretender relinquishes his agency in favor of a rapturous, emotional oblivion. The "love" duet (such as it is) is a masterpiece of subterfuge, constructed as a duel between "Russian" duple and "Polish" triple meters. At first, Grigory's duple-meted pleas for Marina to love him are met with jeers delivered *alla polacca capricioso*:

⁵⁵ Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, *Boris Godunov: A Drama in Verse*, trans. Alfred Hayes (New York: Dutton, 1918), 78.

Ex. 5. *Boris Godunov*, Fountain Scene.

Не от-вер-гай люб-ви мо-ей бе-зум-ной!
O, wei-se nicht von dir mein Lie-bes-wer-ben!

Марина. Отталкивает Самозванца ногою.
Marina. Stößt Dimitrij mit ihrem Fusse weg.
64 Più mosso poco a poco, alla polacca capriccioso. Скоро.
 Встань, лю-бов-ник неж-ный. Не то-ли се-бя моль-
Auf, mein zar-ter Frei-se! Quäl dich nicht un-sonst mit

GRIGORY: Don't reject my delirious love!

MARINA (*pushing him away with her foot*): Get up, tender lover. Don't torture yourself with these vain entreaties.

After a few rounds of this, Grigory spurns Marina, singing the "tsarevich" leitmotif in a triumphant march. "My brave troops will march on Moscow tomorrow," he boasts, "and when I am tsar, everyone will laugh at you." Grigory's last stand, however, is sadly undercut by triplet figures in the accompaniment; the pretender's great ambitions have been hijacked by Polish rhythms. Knowing she has won, Marina makes peace in 9/8 – the tripliest triple meter of them all.

Ex. 6A. *Boris Godunov*, Fountain Scene. Grigory rejects Marina:

Co всех гон - цов Пу - сч вож - ди сток -
 Zu mir her - bei schon - Russ lauds Füh - ver -

GRIGORY: From every corner of Russia, we will fly to battle...

Ex. 6B. Marina reconciles with Dmitri:

72 **Andante. Медленно.**
 M. O, ца - ре - вич, у - мо - ля - ю не - кля - ни те - ня за ре - чи злы - е мо - и. Не у -
 O, Za - re - vitsch, ich be - schwö - raich, O, ver - gib mir mei - ne bö - s' - e, ε - f - ti - ge Red: Nichtals

MARINA: O, tsarevich, I beg you, don't curse me for my wicked words.

Grigory is completely taken in; as Rangoni (a scheming Jesuit priest of Musorgsky's very timely invention) looks on, the "lovers" sing a ravishing 9/8 duet. This reconciliation, and by extension Grigory's entire campaign against Boris, now occurs on Polish terms. Here, Musorgsky's False Dmitri becomes no smooth operator, and indeed no revolutionary, but rather: a tenor. In retrospect his defining characteristic throughout the opera becomes an unreflective passion that constantly seeks an object – "real" feeling, of course, being the one trait that Pushkin's Pretender wholly lacked.

Reverberations

As revolutionary violence surged in the 1870s and 1880s, the psychology of political criminals retained its fascination for Russian artists. During this time the painter Ilya Repin, who as a 22- year-old art student attended both Karakozov's trial and his

execution,⁵⁶ embarked on a series of canvases featuring young revolutionaries. Common to these works is a strong central focus (so different from Repin's depictions of Cossacks and barge haulers!), with particular attention devoted to the details of the subjects' heads – the conspicuous eyes, the defiant expressions, and especially the unruly red hair, a characteristic long identified with the False Dmitri. (See Figs. 1-4.) Repin's historical paintings of the period also took a violent, psychologically inflected turn. Among the painter's most renowned canvases is *Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan on November 16, 1581*, a portrait of the guilt-stricken tsar clutching the bleeding body of the son he has just murdered (Fig. 5).

FIG. 1. Ilya Repin, *D.V. Karakozov*, 1866.



⁵⁶ In his memoirs, Repin described Karakozov's execution in terms worthy of many a Russian novelist: "Karakozov was already rising smoothly, shaking on the rope; his head, cinched about the neck, looked not quite like a doll's, and not quite like a Circassian's in a hood. Soon his legs started to buckle convulsively – they were in grey trousers. I turned into the crowd and was very surprised that all the people appeared in a green fog... My head swimming, I grabbed for [my friend] Murashko, and almost jumped back at the sight of his face – it was uncannily frightening in its expression of suffering; at once he seemed to me like another Karakozov. Oh God! The same eyes, only his nose was shorter." Il'ia E. Repin, *Daliokoe-blizkoe* (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1953), 204.

FIG. 2. Repin, *Student-Nihilist*, 1883.



FIG. 3. Repin, *Arrest of a Propagandist*, 1880-92.



FIG. 4. Repin, *A Revolutionary Meeting*, 1883.



FIG. 5. Repin, *Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan on November 16, 1581*, 1885.



By including the date in his awkwardly titled portrait of Ivan IV, Repin implicitly linked this act of violence with a contemporary trauma: the successful assassination of Alexander II by terrorists, and the public execution of those terrorists, three hundred years after the event pictured. Repin elaborated on this link in a 1913 interview: “The idea of painting the picture, a tragic episode in the life of Ivan IV, first came to me when I was in Moscow in 1882. A kind of bloody streak ran through that year; my feelings were overloaded with the horrors of contemporary life... It was natural to look for a way out of these horrors in history.”⁵⁷ Twenty years after Karakozov’s shot, the impulse to find Russia’s bloody past within its bloody present remained as compelling as ever.

Dostoevsky, who died four weeks before Alexander’s assassination – and six before Musorgsky’s death from alcoholism – would undergo an evolution in his views on political criminals toward the end of his life. While he had portrayed the revolutionary ringleaders of *Demons* as cynical and opportunistic egomaniacs, in 1880 he wrote, a propos a terrorist bombing of the Winter Palace: “The young Russian energies, alas, so sincerely deluding themselves, have at last fallen under the power of dark, underground forces, under the power of enemies of the Russian land and consequently all of Christendom.”⁵⁸ For those familiar with the two most common English renderings of *Besy*, the title of Dostoevsky’s novel of 1872, this shift might appear especially appropriate: the Stavrogins of the world had gone from *Demons* to *The Possessed*. And in the last month of his life, Dostoevsky wrote to a friend that in the planned sequel to *The Brothers Karamazov*, “my pure Aliosha will kill the tsar.”⁵⁹ Had Dostoevsky lived to complete this work, the youngest Karamazov brother would have gone from monk to tsar-killer – thus tracing precisely the path trod by the False Dmitri.

As for Musorgsky’s *Boris Godunov*, it may present the most pessimistic take of all when it comes to the power of a revolutionary to influence history. Or, for that matter, on the power of an individual to influence anything: while Marina masterfully manipulates Grigory, she does so as a puppet of the Jesuit Rangoni, who in turn acts on behalf of forces much broader and more diffuse. One might find in this earlier work

⁵⁷ “Beseda s Il’ei Repinoi,” *Russkoe Slovo* (17 January 1913). Reprinted in P. Iu. Klimov and Elena Vvedenskaia, eds., *Geroi i zlodei russkoï istorii v iskusstve XVIII-XX Vekov* (Sankt-Peterburg: Palace Editions, 2010), 95.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet, 1871-1881* (Princeton University Press, 2002), 481.

⁵⁹ Dostoevsky to Aleksei Suvorin, February 1881. Quoted in *ibid.* Suvorin also recalled that in Dostoevsky’s plans, Aliosha Karamazov would “pass through the monastery and become a revolutionary. He would commit a political crime. He would be executed. He would have searched for truth, and in these searches, naturally, he would have become a revolutionary.” *Ibid.* 484.

shades of the historical philosophy that animates *Khovanshchina* – in which, as Richard Taruskin writes, “personal volition is everywhere set at nought; in which everyone plots and strives and everyone loses.”⁶⁰ In *Boris Godunov*, political violence is ever ineffectual and misguided, little more than the “Wahn, Wahn, überall Wahn!” that Hans Sachs bemoans in Act III of *Meistersinger*. *Boris Godunov* thus vitiates Karakozov’s central conjecture: that “new steps”⁶¹ would be required in order to usher in a new world. The “steps” are irrelevant, Musorgsky seems to say, for the world can never be made new. Means and ends both rendered meaningless, all that remains is the existential lament of the holy fool: “Weep, weep, Russian people, hungry people.” Like Ratmir in *Ruslan and Liudmila*’s enchanted garden, and like *Prince Igor*’s Vladimir on the Polovtsian steppe, Grigory goes to Poland and forgets his quest; his agency is negated by music. His one consolation, like theirs, is that the music is glorious.

⁶⁰ Taruskin, *Musorgsky*, 324.

⁶¹ This term is Dostoevsky’s (from *Crime and Punishment*); Karakozov tended to refer to acts of political violence as “decisive facts” or “factual propaganda.”

CHAPTER THREE
Evgeny Onegin and the Politics of Reflection
in Nineteenth-Century Russia

Но бедный, бедный мой Евгений...
But my poor, poor Evgeny...

Alexander Pushkin, *The Bronze Horseman*, 1833

In the opera that bears his name, Evgeny Onegin often seems remarkably inconsequential, a “superfluous man” among Russian society and nearly such in his own story. 135 years after the opera’s premiere, it has become something of a truism that *Evgeny Onegin* is not really about its titular hero at all.¹ Caryl Emerson was hardly the first to observe, as she did in 1995, that Chaikovsky’s lyric scenes “probably should have been titled *Tatiana*.”²

Given the fame of the opera’s literary source, Chaikovsky of course had little freedom regarding the title. As a work, though, the operatic *Onegin* does appear somehow lopsided, its symmetry of plot at odds with its imbalance of characterization. These asynchronous lovers make a wobbly match: the immoderately sympathetic heroine, whose arching sixths and aching chromaticism soak the score, surely outclasses the rather flavorless hero. Is it so regrettable that these two don’t end up together? “Onegin is rather less significant [than Tatiana],” wrote Hermann Laroche after the conservatory premiere; he went on to call the hero “essentially antimusical.”³ A century later, David Brown’s account of Evgeny’s deficiencies hinted at a more anatomical

¹ See, for example, Richard Taruskin’s entry in the *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, which declares Tatiana the opera’s principal character; Gerald Abraham too avers that the heroine “takes the centre of the stage.” [Gerald Abraham, *Slavonic and Romantic Music: Essays and Studies* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1968), 147.]

² Caryl Emerson, “Tatiana,” in Sona Stephan Hoisington, ed., *A Plot of Her Own: The Female Protagonist in Russian Literature* (Northwestern University Press, 1995), 7.

³ G.A. Laroche, “Tchaikovsky’s Eugene Onegin in the Conservatoire’s Production,” in James Stuart Campbell, ed., *Russians on Russian Music, 1830-1880: An Anthology* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 247. See also Catherine Clément: “Onegin is a very small young man, rather obnoxious, insignificant.” [*Opera, Or, The Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 80.]

dimension: "...At the end, where [Evgeny] should surely have revealed a stronger, more virile passion than is embodied in his desperate babblings to [Tatiana]...he seems diminished."⁴ Even Boris Asafiev, a lonely proponent of Evgeny's claim to the status of protagonist, justified this position only by noting that the grim fates of Lensky and Tatiana are both precipitated by Evgeny's chronic irony toward human pathos.⁵ Evgeny is here reduced to a catalyst, a gravitational force without matter. Or indeed an inversion of Lacan's famous formula: the man as lack.

Admittedly, the hero of the novel has met his share of detractors as well. Boris Gasparov recently argued that as the social codes that underpinned Evgeny's conduct fell out of real-life currency, his actions began to look incomprehensible – and unjustifiable. Evgeny's reputation could not survive the transition to a straight-talking age.⁶ But whatever his flaws, Evgeny frames the novel. Pushkin's *Onegin* begins, in fact, in the title character's head – with the "young rake's" dry musings on the inconveniences posed by dying relatives – and the whole of Book One traces the rake's progress from bright child to disaffected Petersburg youth. The narrator's final gesture, moreover, is to bid farewell to "my Onegin." Meanwhile, in the novel Tatiana is the personage most readily associated with insubstantiality. Not only is Pushkin's physical description of his heroine outrageously scant, and given primarily in terms of characteristics she does not possess (namely, the flaxen-haired, azure-eyed, cookie-cutter prettiness of her sister, Olga), but in the end Tatiana merges with the narrator's ethereal muse. All but silent apart from her final speech and, of course, her letter, Pushkin's Tatiana is often described as lightning in a bottle, embodied inspiration – indeed, as a catalyst.⁷

Here, then, lies an important discrepancy between novel and opera. If Pushkin's Tatiana is ever elusive, Chaikovsky's is a commanding presence, her musical language audible throughout the opera even when she does not appear onstage. Evgeny, on the other hand, passes through the opera leaving scarcely a trace of himself in the score – and this, in a work that provides (as Asafiev exhaustively demonstrated) a distinctive "intonational pattern" for virtually every other character. At some moments the musical Evgeny seems downright truant: the duel music is all Lensky's, and in the third act, when stormy baritone passion would seem to be the order of the day, the memorable

⁴ David Brown, *Tchaikovsky: A Biographical and Critical Study*, 1st ed., vol. 2, *The Crisis Years, 1874–78* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 216.

⁵ Boris Asaf'ev, "Evgeniĭ Onegin, Liricheskie Stseny P.I. Chaikovskogo: Opyt Intonatsionnogo Analiza Stilia i Muzykal'noĭ Dramaturgii," in Asaf'ev, *O muzyke Chaikovskogo*, 122.

⁶ See Gasparov, *Five Operas and a Symphony*, chapter 3.

⁷ See, for example, Caryl Emerson: "Tatiana is a paradigm of energy under constraint, of inspiration itself. She is the perfect neoclassical Muse." "Tchaikovsky's Tatiana," in Leslie Kearney, ed., *Tchaikovsky and His World* (Princeton University Press, 1998), 219.

tunes go to Prince Gremin, a character who did not even merit a name in Pushkin. Explanations for this phenomenon have relied, predictably enough, on the details of Chaikovsky's private life. Those who would read a personal program into all of Chaikovsky's compositional choices find uncharacteristically abundant support for such interpretations in his correspondence regarding *Onegin*, which richly documents Chaikovsky's emotional identification with the heroine.⁸ Evgeny's musical impotence then becomes a product of Chaikovsky's inability to portray convincingly in music a character dissimilar to his own.⁹ David Brown conflates Chaikovsky and his underwhelming Evgeny still further, finding in the character a suspect masculinity that must naturally arise from Chaikovsky's own. "What seems much more likely," writes Brown, "is that Tchaikovsky's own nature stultified his capacity for creating music of a truly masculine sexual declaration."¹⁰

We need not, I think, take these as the final words on the matter. After all, Evgeny and Tatiana had not been pickling undisturbed in Pushkinian vinegar until Chaikovsky came along. In the fifty years that separated novel and opera, Pushkin's heroes – and Evgeny in particular – had become entangled in some of the century's most urgent debates: about the ethics of action versus reflection, the slippage between internal and external identities. Given opera's celebrated (and maligned) capacity to broadcast the inner workings of the personalities represented onstage, the adaptation Chaikovsky undertook was fraught indeed. This chapter puts Chaikovsky's *Evgeny Onegin* in dialogue with the reception of Pushkin's novel across the nineteenth century, examining the ways in which the opera responds to, and transforms, key questions about the status and politics of reflection in contemporary Russian culture.

⁸ For a sampling, see the composer's letters to Nikolai Kashkin in Nikolai Kashkin, *Vospominaniia o P. I. Chaikovskom* (Moskva: Iurgenson, 1896), 120.

⁹ Boris Asafiev states it outright: "Where Tchaikovsky dealt with states of soul alien to him... (for example, in... the role of Onegin), he... did appreciable violence to himself and was not in a state to achieve a powerful exertion of his creative will in such cases." "Pathways Into the Future," in James Stuart Campbell, ed., *Russians on Russian Music, 1880-1917: An Anthology* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 243.

¹⁰ Brown, *Tchaikovsky*, 2, The Crisis Years, 1874–78:216. Perhaps needless to say, the notion that either the character or the composer lacked an essential masculinity was utterly foreign to the time and place in which *Evgeny Onegin* was written, and in which its action takes place. For a thorough consideration of heterosexism in Chaikovsky scholarship, see Taruskin, "Pathetic Symphonist: Chaikovsky, Russia, Sexuality and the Study of Music."

Sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought

If Chaikovsky's opera has been faulted in the twentieth century for its failure to engage with Pushkin's literateness – with the deadpan telling of *Onegin's* slight tale¹¹ – there was ample precedent for this sort of reading. Russian *intelligenti*, after all, have often evinced a marked ideological allergy to matters of aesthetics. For Russian realists of the nineteenth century, literary criticism largely meant discussing fictional personages as real-life social types, whose personalities and behaviors could not only reflect society but also influence it in surprisingly direct ways.¹² The realist critic, then, had the all-important task of parsing those personalities for a malleable reading public. But *Evgeny Onegin* presented a hurdle for those inclined to use it as a means of social critique: Pushkin's masterpiece had gone prematurely gray. By the end of Pushkin's short life, the common wisdom was that Russia's national poet was past it, a pre-Decembrist relic out of touch with contemporary reality.

Vissarion Belinsky, the first major professional critic in Russia, highlighted this cultural shift in a monumental series of Pushkin articles. For Belinsky, the outstanding feature of *Evgeny Onegin* was its historicity: its realistic, "encyclopedic" depiction of Russian society of the 1820s.¹³ "A lot of water has flowed over the dam since then," the critic acknowledged in 1844 – a scant dozen years after the eighth and final book of *Evgeny Onegin* appeared in print. The main casualty of these rapids, it seems, was the reputation of the novel's title character, whom Belinsky swaddles tightly in defensive rhetoric. "Most of the public," wrote Belinsky, "flatly denied that Onegin possessed a heart and soul and viewed him as a cold, unfeeling person and an egoist by nature."¹⁴ The process Gasparov outlines in his 2005 "Eugene Onegin in the Age of Realism" had begun: in 1844, the hero's behavior already seemed problematic and even opaque, lacking discernible motivation.

¹¹ See Hugh McLean's memorable complaint: "one of the functions of the author-narrator in the novel...is to force us to keep our distance from the characters and to judge them intellectually and rationally...Irony is a kind of spiritual air conditioner. ...Čaikovskij's opera, incidentally, shows what happens to the story of Onegin and Tat'jana, Ol'ga and Lenskij, if you turn off this machine. The atmosphere becomes sticky, the underpinnings of the wonderfully delicate, intricate, balanced structure rot, and it collapses." Hugh McLean, "The Tone(s) of Evgenij Onegin," *California Slavic Studies* 6 (1971): 15.

¹² For more on (in Alexander Herzen's terms) "the mutual interaction of people and books" in nineteenth-century Russia, see Irina Paperno, "Introduction: The Individual and Literature," in *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*, and Lydia Ginzburg's introduction to *On Psychological Prose*.

¹³ See Vissarion Belinsky, "Eugene Onegin: An Encyclopedia of Russian Life," in Hoisington, *Russian Views of Pushkin's Eugene Onegin*, 26.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

Belinsky attempted to fill in a perceived gap between the character's inner world and his outer comportment by emphasizing Evgeny's disillusionment with both the world and himself. To Belinsky, this disillusionment was a sure sign of an elevated nature, for it indicated a talent for what the critic elsewhere termed "reflection" (*refleksiya*). Reflection, Belinsky argued in several articles from the 1840s, was an inevitable outgrowth of Peter the Great's Westernizing reforms, which had forever altered Russians' relationship to authority. Cut off from folk traditions of old, Russians faced an epistemic crisis: they could no longer accept knowledge passively from above, but had to actively question all received suppositions. Though fundamentally healthy for society, this heightened consciousness came at a high cost to the individual. "Reflection," Belinsky writes,

[is] a disease of many individuals in our society. It takes the form of an apathetic cooling toward the good things in life as a result of the inability to submit oneself fully to them. The result is a dreary passivity in actions, an aversion to every deed, a lack of all interests in the soul, a vagueness of desires and aspirations, an unaccountable gloominess, a sickly dreaminess commensurate with an excess of inner life.¹⁵

Like Hamlet – whose image Turgenev considered "closer and more understandable to us [Russians] than to the French...[or even] the English"¹⁶ – Belinsky's Evgeny is stricken with a serious case of this ailment. He questions everything, including himself, and the restlessness of his inner life causes near-paralysis in his outer one. Dissatisfied with superficial appearances and hazy "general truths," Evgeny (unlike the "completely abstract" Lensky) is a dyed-in-the-wool skeptic and realist. The main fault Belinsky allows him, self-absorption, is tempered by this unwavering objectivity, for Evgeny recognizes his own failings and suffers greatly on their account. Belinsky holds up Evgeny's conduct toward Tatiana as proof of his keen perception: Evgeny simply "understood human nature so well" that, although "profoundly moved" by Tatiana's infatuation, he could not be carried away by a naïve romance that offered no real prospect of future happiness.¹⁷ Evgeny's response to Tatiana's letter then results from not an absence of feeling, but a surfeit of consciousness. This Evgeny's great fault, and virtue, is that he sees too clearly.

¹⁵ See V.G. Belinskiĭ, "Geroĭ nashego vremeni: Sochinenie M. Lermontova," in Belinskiĭ, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniĭ*, 4:254.

¹⁶ Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev, *Sochineniia v piatnadtsati tomakh*, vol. 15 (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1968), 50.

¹⁷ See Belinsky, "Evgeny Onegin," in Hoisington, *Russian Views of Pushkin's Eugene Onegin*.

As a provincial teenager who falls in love at no more than third sight, Tatiana could hardly hope to meet a Belinskian standard of critical subjectivity. In his Ninth Article on Pushkin, Belinsky famously (and provocatively, as we shall see) dubbed Tatiana a “moral embryo” [*nравственный эмбрион*].¹⁸ Though possessed of an uncommon depth of soul and an admirable unity of character, Tatiana never awakens to genuine consciousness; to the end, her capacity for *refleksiya* remains undeveloped. This failure, writes Belinsky in a blistering attack on Russian gender norms, is largely society’s fault. In any case, if Evgeny’s internal activity defines and delimits his ability to engage with the outside world, Tatiana’s rich interior remains utterly divorced from her actions. Her letter to Evgeny is executed on impulse; she acts only reflexively, never reflectively. Even the sophisticated princess of Book VIII exists in a state of arrested development. Noting the passive voice in Tatiana’s final renunciation (“But I was given to another”), Belinsky deems Tatiana’s decision to stay with her husband “profoundly immoral,” in that it is an automatic response, a thoughtless capitulation to petty opinion. While Belinsky’s Evgeny is a (suffering) egotist, his Tatiana is ego-less: all id as provincial maiden and all superego as Petersburg grande dame, her potential for consciousness is never accessed, never actualized.

Belinsky’s writings were widely influential, but his measured esteem for Pushkin would not hold for long. Certain critics, from liberals like Annenkov¹⁹ and Druzhinin to Slavophiles like Katkov, fetishized the poet in order to promote the principle of artistic autonomy that he represented for them. Pushkin – eto nashe vsio” [“Pushkin – this is our everything”] was Apollon Grigoriev’s²⁰ eminently quotable catchphrase. These attitudes played no small role in the early reception of Chaikovsky’s *Onegin*; Nikolai Kashkin recalls that at the opera’s premiere, “Pushkin devotees like M.N. Katkov were not totally satisfied, because they could not appreciate the worth of the music, but noticed only the deviations from Pushkin.”²¹ To the radical left, meanwhile, Pushkin began to look less and less wholesome. As an aristocrat, an aesthete, and a sellout – a

¹⁸ See Belinsky’s ninth article on Pushkin, in Vissarion Grigor’evich Belinskiĭ, *Stat’i o klassikakh* (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1970), 124.

¹⁹ In 1855 Pavel Annenkov published both the first scholarly edition of Pushkin’s works and the first major biography of the poet, *Materialy dlia biografii A.S. Pushkina* (Sankt-Peterburg: Annenkov, 1855). His later works on Pushkin include *Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin v Aleksandrovskuiu epokhu* (Sankt-Peterburg: Tipografiia M. Statiulevicha, 1874).

²⁰ In a discussion of *Evgeny Onegin*, Grigoriev presents a slight but telling modification on Belinsky’s statement of both heroes’ representative Russianness: Tatiana is “pure-Russian and to this day the only full realization of Russian womanhood,” while Evgeny, “though not entirely a ‘Muscovite in Harold’s cloak,’ is all the same a Russian by many traits of his nature.” “Razvitie Idei Narodnosti v Nasheĭ Literature,” in Apollon Aleksandrovich Grigor’ev, *Sochineniia*, vol. 1 (Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatel’stvo N.N. Strakhova, 1876), 513.

²¹ Kashkin, *Vospominaniia o P. I. Chaikovskom*, 124.

man who, it was popularly thought, had abandoned his Decembrist principles for a spot at the imperial court – Pushkin became a favorite target for dethronement by the young utilitarian critics of the 1860s, and Evgeny Onegin partook of his creator’s devaluation.

Also up for reevaluation was the concept of *refleksiya*. For Belinsky, the epidemic of introspection afflicting Russia was destined to be a temporary, progressive condition – a sort of historical adolescence, the pimply but inevitable antithesis to the “natural immediacy” that had prevailed before Peter’s reforms. Eventually, these two historical states would be reconciled, leaving a considered and committed national consciousness in place of instinctive emotion and cold thought.²² (This last, highest state Belinsky termed “rational reality.”) Russian writers of the 1850s, however, began to figure introspection less as a precursor to committed action than as an obstacle to it. Across this decade, Russian reflection went from a step in the right direction to a societal scourge. In 1850, Ivan Turgenev popularized the term “superfluous man” to describe those rendered impotent by aristocratic Weltschmerz; this soubriquet was applied retroactively to such personages as Lermontov’s Pechorin, Griboedov’s Chatsky, and Evgeny Onegin himself. “Onegin is an idler,” complained Alexander Herzen in 1851, “...he is *superfluous* in the sphere in which he finds himself and lacks the character to escape from it.”²³ Turgenev’s fiction of the period, including “A Hamlet of the Shchigrov District” (1849), “Diary of a Superfluous Man” (1850), *Rudin* (1856), and “Asya” (1858), abounds in types whose feelings and thoughts are stillborn, held beneath the level of expression by the millstone of self-awareness.²⁴ Ivan Goncharov, meanwhile,

²² For a full elaboration of this idea, see Belinsky’s articles on Peter the Great from 1841: “Deianiia Petra Velikogo,” in Belinskiĭ, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniĭ*, 5: 91–152.

²³ Alexander Herzen, “The Development of Revolutionary Ideals in Russia,” in D.J. Richards and C.R.S. Cockrell, eds., *Russian Views of Pushkin*, trans. D.J. Richards and C.R.S. Cockrell (Oxford: W.A. Meeuws, 1976), 21. Italics mine.

²⁴ Turgenev’s eponymous “superfluous man” – whose pathology of spirit has metamorphosed into terminal illness – takes Belinskian “suffering egoism” to a new extreme, lamenting: “Between my thoughts and feelings – and the expression of those thoughts and feelings – there has always been some senseless, incomprehensible, and insurmountable obstacle; this has probably been the result of pointless egoism or of an unsuccessful arrangement of my personality. And whenever I made up my mind to overcome this obstacle by force, to break down this barrier, my movements, the expression on my face, my whole being, assumed a look of agonizing exertion: not only did I appear to be phony and artificial, but I actually became so. I sensed this myself and hastened to withdraw into myself. Precisely then a frightening turmoil would rise up within me. I examined and unraveled myself down to the last thread; I compared myself to others and recalled the slightest glances, the words people had spoken, people whom I wanted to impress. I viewed everything in the worst light and laughed spitefully at my pretension to ‘be like everyone else’ – and suddenly, in the middle of my laughter, I would give

took indolent introspection to its conceivable limit in his 1859 *Oblomov*, a novel whose hero spends an astounding 150 pages debating whether to get out of bed. In the mind of Ilya Oblomov, action and feeling all but preclude one another:

‘My dear fellow, you’re up to your neck in it,’ thought Oblomov, as he watched [Sudbinsky] go. ‘Blind, deaf, and dumb to everything else in the world. But he’ll be a big man one day, be put in charge of all sorts of important things, and reach a high rank in the service. This is what they call making a career, I suppose! But how little of the real man is wanted for such a career – intelligence, will, feelings are not wanted. What for? They’re a luxury!’

...He felt a quiet satisfaction at the thought that he could stay in bed from nine till three and from eight till nine, and was proud that he had no reports to make nor papers to write and that there was ample scope both for his feelings and his imagination.²⁵

Goncharov’s novel spawned a still-familiar term, *Oblomovshchina*, or “Oblomovitis,”²⁶ to describe pathological lassitude. The next year, Turgenev – ever a devotee of the comparison/contrast – polarized the states of action and reflection in a public speech known as “Hamlet and Don Quixote.”²⁷ The essay presents portraits of two opposing socioliterary types, to one of which, Turgenev contends, every human personality conforms. The two exist in dynamic equilibrium: Hamlet impassive, centripetal, “nugatory” to the external world; Don Quixote selfless, in *moto perpetuo* toward some absolute ideal. Hamlet the negative, Don Quixote the positive; Hamlet the particle, Don

up completely, fall into an absurd despair, and go back to what I was doing before. In a word, I was running around and getting nowhere, like a squirrel in a wheel. Entire days were spent in this agonizing and pointless endeavor.” Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev, *Diary of a Superfluous Man*, trans. David Patterson (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), 20–21.

²⁵ Ivan Aleksandrovich Goncharov, *Oblomov*, trans. David Magarshack (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin, 1954), 33.

²⁶ In Russian, the suffix *-shchina* imparts a negative connotation.

²⁷ Worth noting here are a few peculiarities of the Russian translation of *Hamlet* available at the time. Completed in 1837, Nikolai Polevoi’s translation was denounced by Belinsky as crude melodrama. It features a hero whom many have found exceptionally weak; Polevoi’s Hamlet makes multiple (un-Shakespearean) exclamations of self-abasement and refers to himself as an “insignificant creature.” This Danish prince and the nascent Russian “superfluous man” were, it seems, created in each other’s image. For more on this topic, see Eleanor Rowe, *Hamlet: A Window on Russia*, New York University Studies in Comparative Literature 7 (New York University Press, 1976)., particularly the chapter “Turgenev, Hamlet and Hamletism.”

Quixote the wave. And while the world cannot function without both types, writes Turgenev, “in our era the Hamlets are far more common.”²⁸

If the novelists Turgenev and Goncharov could approach their suffering layabouts with some measure of sympathy,²⁹ their critical counterparts were much less kind. Nikolai Chernyshevsky, in his essay “The Russian at the Rendezvous” of 1858, argued that (*pace* Belinsky) the solution to the Russian plague of introspection was not reconciliation, but rupture. As for “superfluous” types like the nameless hero of Turgenev’s “Asya,” they had nothing to offer Russian society and were best discarded – only “at the moment we have not yet come to terms sufficiently with that idea.”³⁰ Chernyshevsky quickly tired of waiting; his 1862 novel *What Is to Be Done?* was intended to serve as a sort of practical manual for yanking a nation of Oblomovs off the couch. Discussing Rakhmetov, the most virtuous representative of the novel’s legion of “new people,” Chernyshevsky depicts private reflection as a sort of indulgence – a luxury for which the best of the “new people,” steadfast as they are to their revolutionary ideals, have no need. Nikolai Dobroliubov, Chernyshevsky’s younger colleague, explicitly drew *Evgeny Onegin* into the conversation. The critic’s 1860 essay “Chto takoye Oblomovshchina?” (“What is Oblomovitis?”) casts Pushkin’s hero as spiritual ancestor to Goncharov’s slugabed, and suggests that what the Oblomov type needs most is a swift kick. For, writes Dobroliubov,

all these Oblomovs have never converted into flesh and blood the principles with which they were imbued; they...have never reached the borderline...where principle merges with the inherent requirements of the soul, disappears in it and becomes the sole spring of a man’s conduct.³¹

²⁸ Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev, “Hamlet and Don Quixote,” trans. Moshe Spiegel, *Chicago Review* 17, no. 4 (January 1, 1965): 93.

²⁹ As Pyotr Kropotkin wrote of Turgenev: “He loved Hamlet, yet he admired Don Quixote – the man of action. He felt his superiority; but, while describing the second type of man, he never could surround it with that tender poetical love for a sick friend which makes the irresistible attraction of those of his novels which deal with one or the other of the Hamlet type.” Piotr Alekseevich Kropotkin, *Russian Literature* (New York: B. Blom, 1967), 106–107.

³⁰ The full quotation reads: “It constantly seemed to us (a vain dream, but nevertheless an irresistible one for us) that [the superfluous man] might render our society some service...But the feeling that this is a vain dream about him constantly increases in us; we feel that we shall not stay under its influence very much longer; that there are better people than he, to wit, those he offends; that it would be better for us to live without him – but at the moment we have not yet come to terms sufficiently with that idea.” N.G. Chernyshevsky, “The Russian at the Rendez-vous,” in Ralph E. Matlaw, ed., *Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolyubov: Selected Criticism*, trans. Ralph E. Matlaw, 1st ed. (New York: Dutton, 1962), 126.

³¹ Nikolai Dobrolyubov, “What is Oblomovitis?” in *Ibid.*, 166–167.

Like Belinsky's Tatiana, the superfluous man may possess a wealth of human potential, but all this goes to waste. An active inner life means nothing if it does not translate into civic action. Contrasting the native greatness of Evgeny's mind with the insignificance of his actions, Dobroliubov thus reopens the gap between Evgeny's thoughts and deeds, between his private and public selves.

The coup de grace was delivered by Dimitri Pisarev, a twenty-five year old firebrand writing from a cell in the Petropavlovsk Fortress. Pisarev's 1865 essay "Pushkin and Belinsky: *Evgeny Onegin*" bubbles with vitriol toward the novel, the poet, and, most expansively of all, the hero. Pilfering Belinsky's language, Pisarev deems not Tatiana but Evgeny an "embryo,"³² a moral and intellectual infant whose disdain for the crowd is unjustified on account of his own baseness. Pisarev likewise applies Belinsky's verdict on the mature Tatiana – that she is an unreflective conformist – to Evgeny:

Onegin has forever lost the strength and ability to feel, think, and act without seeking the approval of that crowd he so greatly despises. Onegin's own ideas, feelings, and wishes are so weak and shapeless that they cannot possibly have any appreciable effect on his conduct. In any case he acts just the way the crowd demands that he act.³³

In a stroke, Pisarev collapses the tension Dobroliubov had set up between Evgeny's nature and his conduct. This Evgeny has no "potential," no principles – and if he ever did, they have been irrevocably lost. The Pisarevian Evgeny Onegin is all of a piece, an inert blob through and through. He occupies space but does nothing, internally or externally; even his boredom is a purely "physiological reaction."³⁴ And for this, Pushkin should have condemned him. The poet's failure to do so renders the novel morally pernicious – all the more so for its seductive verbal patina. To be sure, Pisarev has no great admiration for Tatiana; he strips her too of the profound nature Belinsky had allowed her. But it is hero and poet who shoulder the blame. No more do they exemplify societal progress from blind acceptance of authority to critical consciousness. "*Evgeny Onegin* is nothing other than a bright and glittering apotheosis of a joyless and meaningless status quo," writes Pisarev in one of his most-quoted lines, "[and] we hope

³² Dmitriĭ Ivanovich Pisarev, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniĭ i pisem v dvenadsati tomakh*, ed. Feliks Feodos'evich Kuznetsov, vol. 7 (Moskva: Nauka, 2000), 213.

³³ *Ibid.*, 7:229.

³⁴ "[Onegin's] boredom is nothing other than a simple physiological reaction to a very disordered life. This boredom is a variant of that feeling the Germans call *Katzenjammer*, which habitually attends every drunkard the day after a good bender." *Ibid.*, 7:211.

to prove to the public that old literary idols crumble away with age as soon as a serious literary critic touches them."³⁵

The conservative position never quite recovered from Pisarev's blast. For over a decade Pisarev's remained the loudest, if not quite the last, words on Pushkin and *Evgeny Onegin*. Pockets of support for Pushkin did still exist among the intelligentsia, but these were isolated and decidedly on the defense. The attitudes of Chaikovsky's benefactor, Nadezhda von Meck, were far more fashionable. "I will not allow myself to criticize the libretto you have chosen," she wrote of *Onegin*, "but I am positive that *the music will be superior to the subject-matter*. By the way, I must tell you that I am an admirer of Pisarev and Chernyshevsky; this will tell you my attitude to Pushkin."³⁶ (Chaikovsky wrote back to say that he was "a little disappointed."³⁷) Public interest in Pushkin, moreover, had long been on the wane. In 1860 a subscription was started for a monument to Pushkin, but within a decade less than a fifth of the required funds had been collected. Fifty years after the poet's death, it was estimated that only twenty to thirty thousand copies of Pushkin's works were owned privately.³⁸

Such was the context surrounding Chaikovsky's project. It seems not so curious, then, that Chaikovsky first found the idea of operaticizing *Onegin* "wild," nor that he evidently had some difficulty tracking down a copy of the novel. It also adds another dimension to the general peevishness of Katkov and other "Pushkin devotees" at the opera's premiere: their position was an embattled one, and the inviolability of Pushkin was a point of pride. It should be remembered, though, that Russian literary politics did not always map perfectly on to Russian musical politics. Pushkin was a perennially popular subject for composers, even those who imagined themselves more progressive than did Chaikovsky. Nor should Chaikovsky's selection of *Onegin* be construed as a political statement, despite the composer's self-professed odium of Pisarev. The opera certainly was not received that way, and as Gasparov and others have argued, Chaikovsky's treatment of *Onegin* cast it largely in line with the expectations of the realist novel. (This is to say nothing of the "realistic" terms with which Chaikovsky defended his choice of subject.)³⁹ The point is, however, that the *Evgeny Onegin*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7:255–256.

³⁶ Letter to Chaikovsky on 26 June 1877, in Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky and Nadezhda Filaretovna von Meck, *To My Best Friend: Correspondence Between Tchaikovsky and Nadezhda von Meck, 1876–1878*, ed. Edward Garden and Nigel Gotteri, trans. Galina von Meck (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 22. Italics original.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁸ See Marcus C. Levitt, *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880*, Studies of the Harriman Institute (Cornell University Press, 1989), particularly chapter 2.

³⁹ Smarting from the failures of his first three operas, Chaikovsky invested his choice of *Evgeny Onegin* with a polemic of operatic reform. "You have no notion how crazy I am upon this subject, he wrote to his brother Modest, "How delightful to avoid the commonplace Pharaohs,

Chaikovsky undertook to adapt was not only Pushkin's. It was a cultural palimpsest, a text written on and written over by multiple critics from multiple angles. As we have seen, the images of Evgeny and Tatiana had altered much. In just over twenty years, Evgeny had transformed from an over-insightful but humane individual to an utter waste of organic material. Tatiana had not so far to fall, but she too had become a spiritual Sahara. In 1877, both protagonists of *Evgeny Onegin* were vacant. Chaikovsky's task, at least insofar as Tatiana was concerned, would be to fill in the gaps.

Tatiana agonistes

Much paper and ink has been devoted to the figure of Tatiana in the opera, as Chaikovsky's take on the character found expression in a highly distinctive musical profile. ("Like Mozart's heroines," Gerald Abraham wrote, "[Tatiana] exists *as* music."⁴⁰) Among the chief features of this musical being are chromatic harmonies, phrases built upon the interval of a sixth (a characteristic known as *seksstovost'* – "sixthiness" – in Russian), and arched melodic contours. This idiom saturates the role, and much of the opera; Chaikovsky's *Onegin* indeed begins not amid the "young rake's meditations" but in Tatiana's musical space. The short overture is based entirely on Tatiana's primary leitmotif (ex. 1a), an "embryo" of her sonic self.

Ethiopian princesses, poisoned cups, and all the rest of these dolls' tales!" Sergei Taneev received a similar missive: "It has long been an established fact that I have no dramatic vein...I thought very little of the treatment, the effectiveness, and all the rest. I spit upon 'effects'! Besides, what are effects? If *Aida* is effective, I can assure you I would not compose an opera on a similar subject for all the wealth of the world, for I want to handle human beings, not puppets. I would gladly compose an opera which was completely lacking in startling effects, but which offered characters resembling my own, whose feelings and experiences I shared and understood." See Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky*, 203, 255.

⁴⁰ Abraham, *Slavonic and Romantic Music*, 147.

Ex. 1. Chaikovsky, *Evgeny Onegin*

a. Overture.



b. Act I, sc. 1. Tatiana.

TATIANA

Kak ia liub - liu pod zvu - ki pe - sen' e - tikh

Andante (♩ - 66)

p *espress.* *cresc.*

How I love to dream when I hear these songs . . .



The melody describes the interval of a sixth, following a downward, “sighing” contour. Harmonically, it is underpinned by a chromatic turning figure, moving from G minor to A major and F sharp diminished before returning to G minor. When, after a peasant chorus, Tatiana first speaks her own words (“How I love to dream when I hear these songs,” ex. 1b), she does it to the strains of this motif in the orchestra, thus identifying herself both textually and musically. In a reversal of the novel, it is now up to Olga to define herself against her sister’s portrait. “Ia ne sposobna k grusti tomnoï; ia ne liubliu mechtat’ v tishi” [I’m not made for melancholy; I don’t like to dream in silence], she sings, aping Tatiana’s sixty sighs.

As Cesar Cui pointed out in an early review of the opera,⁴¹ Tatiana’s idiom has much in common with that of the Russian salon romance of the 1820s, the decade in which the action of *Evgeny Onegin* takes place. Richard Taruskin has interpreted the “generic resonances” between Tatiana’s idiom and the salon romance as evidence of the shaping of Tatiana’s interior space by her environment.⁴² Chaikovsky’s handling of the sisters’ curtain-raising duet shows this mental landscaping in action; it involves not simply imitation of 1820s salon style, but rather quotation, assimilation, and reinterpretation. The artifact in question is a real salon romance from the period – a setting of the same

⁴¹ See Tsesar’ Kiui, “Muzykal’nye zametki: ‘Evgeniï Onegin,’ liricheskie stseny G. Chaïkovskogo,” *Nedelia* 45 (November 4, 1884).

⁴² See Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 53–55.

Pushkin verse Tatiana and Olga sing in the opera – by the composer Alexander Aliabiev (1787-1851). The first lines of Aliabiev’s “Pevets” [The Singer] appear in ex. 2; Chaikovsky’s setting follows in ex. 3.

Ex. 2. Aliabiev, “Pevets”

p
Sly-kha - li' I' vy za ro - shchei glas noch-noi pev - tsa liub -

4
vi, pev - tsa svo-ei pe - cha - li?

Have you heard, behind the grove, the nocturnal voice of the singer of love, who sings of his sorrow?

Ex. 3. *Evgeny Onegin*, Act I, Scene 1

TATIANA
 Sly - kah - li' vy, za ro - shchei glas noch - noi pev - tsa liub -

OLGA
 Sly - kha - li' vy, za ro - shchei glas noch -

T.
 vi, pev - tsa svo - ei pe - cha - li! Kog - da po - lia v chas u - tren - nyi mol -

O.
 noi pev - tsa liub - vi, pev - tra pe - cha - li! Kog - da po - lia e - shche mol -

T.
 cha - li, svi - re - li zvuk u - ny - lyi i pros - toi, sly - kha - li'!

O.
 cha - li, svi - re - li zvuk u - ny - lyi i pro - stoi, sly - kha - li' vy?!

p

Ex. 3 cont.

10

T. *cresc.* *f*
 vy? Sly - kha - li' vy? Sly kha - li' vy? Sly - kha - li'

O. *cresc.*
 Sly - kha - li' vy? Sly - kha - li' vy? Sly - kha - li' vy?

poco cresc.

13

T. *f* *p*
 vy, tog - da svi - re - li zvuk u - ny - lyi i pros - toi, sly - kha - li' vy,

O. *f* *p*
 Sly - kha - li' vy, tog - da svi - re - li zvuk u - ny - lyi i pros - toi Sly - kha - li'

f *p*

*Have you heard, behind the grove, the nocturnal voice of the singer of love, who sings of his sorrow!
 And the simple, doleful sound of the pipe at dawn, when the fields were hushed!*

The “resonances” between the two settings are numerous and varied, from Chaikovsky’s near-quotation of Aliabiev’s opening melody and rhythm to more abstract, stylistic correspondences – the arpeggiated keyboard figuration (taken up by a harp in the opera) and the two-against-three pull between voice and accompaniment. As the duet departs from Aliabiev’s melodic and rhythmic model, however, it begins to incorporate and develop Tatiana’s leitmotif, already familiar from the overture and soon to be identified positively with that character. In its construction, then, the duet mirrors just the sort of creative reading that the bookish Tatiana will perform throughout the opera. Much like Pushkin’s heroine consumes foreign novels and reimagines herself as “Julie, Clarissa, or Delphine,” Chaikovsky’s Tatiana constantly

takes in impressions from her sonic surroundings, reflects upon them, and synthesizes them into a musical language of her own.

Unlike in Pushkin, of course, this Tatiana's language is audible – an operatic heroine, at least one outside the city limits of Portici, can hardly be mute. And in this, writes Caryl Emerson, lies Chaikovsky's real heresy.

The blasphemy of the opera is one of psychology. It violates a personality beloved...for its single act of compulsive exposure--which is then followed by silence, a commitment to privacy, a closed world that is rich but reluctant to express and define itself. For Pushkin's Tatiana is better than the rest of us: she does not even dream of playing out her fantasies. Paradoxically, by presenting the story from Tatiana's point of view and allowing her to struggle openly, sing back, be embraced, Tchaikovsky breaks the vessel he would most honor.⁴³

Even this "single act of compulsive exposure" is still and all shielded in Pushkin: the book's narrator claims to present only a "pale and incomplete" rendering of Tatiana's letter, translated poorly from French. (Just how the voluble and by no means disinterested narrator managed to come by the original document remains more than a little dubious.) Thus, while Pushkin's readers encounter the letter as a closed text, separated from its creator by both time and language, Chaikovsky's audience must watch, and hear, the originary act.

But Chaikovsky goes beyond putting his heroine's epistolary exposure into the present tense. He depicts Tatiana not only writing the letter, but struggling to write it; the resulting text thus becomes undeniably the product of calculation as well as inspiration. At one point in the letter scene – one of very few moments in which Chaikovsky interpolates original text⁴⁴ – Tatiana reads over what she has written, thinks the better of it, and begins afresh. It is a supremely self-conscious act, of which Belinsky's impulsive Tatiana would have been utterly incapable. (The interpolated text appears in italics.)

⁴³ Emerson, "Tchaikovsky's Tatiana," in Kearney, *Tchaikovsky and His World*, 219.

⁴⁴ The ten lines of text that begin the letter scene do come from Pushkin, but not from the letter itself. Chaikovsky adapts the narrator's remarks in III.xv.

Я пью волшебный яд желаний,
 Меня преследуют мечты:
 Везде, везде передо мной
 Мой искушитель роковой,
 Везде, везде он передо мною!
Нет, все не то! Начну сначала!..
Ах, что со мной! Я вся горю!
Не знаю, как начать...
 Я к вам пишу — чего же боле?

I drink the magic potion of desire;
 Dreams pursue me:
 Everywhere, everywhere before me
 Appears my fatal tempter,
 Everywhere, everywhere he is before me!
No, that's all wrong! I'll start again!...
Ah, what's wrong with me! I'm all on fire!
I don't know how to start...
 I am writing to you – what more is there to say?

Musically, too, Chaikovsky fills the gap between Tatiana's interior and her actions. The letter scene is constructed from four romances, all stamped, as Taruskin observes, with Tatiana's trademark sixthness and arching phrases.⁴⁵ But this is not a static portrait: each of the romances breaks off in the middle of things, transitioning seamlessly into recitative as if illustrating a developing train of thought. In its sprawling, idiosyncratic form, the letter scene seems to depict a dynamic internal process; this is a heroine whose reflection generates her actions.

When the plot shuttles her off to Petersburg, Tatiana's music likewise evolves. The graceful clarinet theme that introduces the Princess Gremina sounds perfectly in place in the grand ballroom – Tatiana is, now as ever, influenced by her surroundings. Yet her arrival is heralded by the abrupt appearance of D flat major, the home key of the letter scene, and the clarinet melody drips with sighing sixths. Compare Tatiana's entrance into the ballroom (ex. 4) to the fourth romance of the letter scene (ex. 5).

Ex. 4. Act III, Scene 1



⁴⁵ See Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 55.

Ex. 5. Act I, Scene 2

TATIANA

Ni - kto me - nia ne po - ni - ma - et!

No one understands me!

Evgeny may not believe that this is *ta samaia Tat'iana*, that same Tatiana, but Chaikovsky's musical x-ray can leave the audience in little doubt. (Pushkin, incidentally, leaves the question open; it is not until Evgeny comes upon Tatiana crying in her boudoir that the narrator asks, "Who would not have recognized the poor, former Tanya in the princess?") Tatiana's musical portrait may contain something of the sentimental, something of the derivative, but it contains still – *something*. Hers is a constant yet evolving musical presence; she always speaks in the first person.

Chaikovsky's treatment of *Onegin's* "immoral" ending was perhaps his largest, and certainly his most controversial, departure from Pushkin. Rather than having Tatiana deliver her rebuff in an uninterrupted, obviously premeditated speech (as Evgeny does in the first act), Chaikovsky stages this final encounter as a dialogue. The result, and the source of much critical outrage,⁴⁶ is that Tatiana's resignation appears not so perfect

⁴⁶ Cui was predictably acidic on the subject: "Why...was the last scene necessary, where Onegin lays siege to Tatyana so energetically and her husband finds them almost *en flagrant delit*, a scene tasteless in itself and disgraceful in relation to Pushkin's work?" ["Notes on Music – *Eugene Onegin*," in Campbell, *Russians on Russian Music, 1830-1880*, 249.] But even the otherwise sympathetic Laroche found this amendment hard to swallow, complaining that "Tatyana's character as created by the poet and reverently preserved by the composer until this scene is destroyed and replaced by another one." ["Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* in the Conservatoire's Production," in *Ibid.*, 246.] The composer, for his part, fretted particularly over where to find singers who could credibly embody Pushkin's characters; it was partially this concern that led him to stage the opera first at the Moscow Conservatory, with young and malleable singers, rather than on a professional stage with hidebound veterans.

Charges of character assassination are still frequently hurled at new interpretations of *Evgeny Onegin*. Compare Laroche's comments above to those of the soprano Galina Vishnevskaja regarding a revisionist staging of the opera at the Bolshoi: "Was it was necessary to show the Russian public such cretins as appear at the Larin ball? Such people are everywhere, but Chaikovsky didn't write an opera about them." [Natal'ia Zimianina, "Ia

after all – the outcome appears less a *fait accompli* than a decision in the making. As in the Letter Scene, Chaikovsky forces Tatiana to struggle: she agonizes over her choice, at one point nearly giving in before pushing Evgeny away. Once again, Chaikovsky’s textual interpolations emphasize Tatiana’s real-time mental processing – and her sympathy for her interlocutor. Immediately before she reveals that she still loves Evgeny, she begins to refer to him by his first name, her resolve clearly attenuating. Even as she finally sends Evgeny on his way, Chaikovsky’s Tatiana admits inner turmoil:

(*Про себя.*)

Глубоко в сердце проникает
Его отчаянный призыв,
Но, пыл преступный подавив,
Долг чести суровый, священный
Чувство побеждает!

(*To herself.*)

His desperate appeal pierces
the depths of my heart,
but, stifling this sinful flame,
honor’s severe and sacred duty
will overcome passion!

In Chaikovsky’s original conception of the scene, the final decision was in fact not Tatiana’s at all. Her husband was to step in at the last moment and reassert the patriarchal order, while Tatiana cried “I’m dying” and Evgeny moaned that “only death remains.” (These lines were later changed to “farewell forever” and “o bitter fate,” respectively.) Hero and heroine torn apart by the conflict between love and duty, the grave their only viable option – this sounds like the ending of a lot of operas, not least *Aida*, from whose model Chaikovsky was so determined to break. But conventional as it may be, this melodramatic ending does provide a solution to the problems posed by Belinsky. Tatiana’s struggle is proof of her morality, and removing the decision from her hands displaces the sin. The beefed-up presence of “Gremin” (a blank and nameless fat general in Pushkin) also heightens Tatiana’s moral dilemma: can she willingly destroy someone who sings her praises so ravishingly? Even when Gremin does not physically appear in the final scene, he clearly weighs on Tatiana’s mind. Her opening melody in the duet is a minor-mode inflection of her husband’s big tune, though she sings her ultimate renunciations in her own arching sixths.

voobshche ne poïdu v operu!’ - Zaiavila Galina Vishnevskaiia posle nedavneï prem’ery ‘Evgeniia Onegina’ v Bol’shom Teatre,” *Vecherniiaia Moskva*, September 8, 2006, <http://www.vmdaily.ru/article/27006.html>.](Now, one notes with amusement, Chaikovsky’s opera, in which Laroche detected an “act of violence against the poetic work,” has become a sacred object quite on par with Pushkin’s novel.) If nothing else, the doggedness with which this particular allegation clings to *Evgeny Onegin* demonstrates the continued purchase, and relevance, that these characters maintain in Russian culture.

Nowhere man

Evgeny, on the other hand, offers strikingly little in the way of musical consistency. In Boris Asafiev's analysis the baritone cuts a protean figure, ever adapting his exterior to satisfy both social demands and his own whims:

In the first scene, in the quartet, Onegin masquerades in curiosity and irony toward Olga and Lensky's feelings for her. In his stroll with Tatiana he disguises himself [прячет свое я, literally "he hides his I"] in polite conversation, lightly ironizing "old-fashioned manners"... Here, in the scene of his "liquidation of [Tatiana's] letter," it is necessary for him to be himself, and above all sincere, which he does.⁴⁷

Leaving aside this "liquidation" scene for a moment, it is worth noting just what sorts of musical guises this putative Proteus typically favors. For if Tatiana takes in her sonic environment and synthesizes it, Evgeny often seems to merely echo what he hears (and even, in one significant case, what he *doesn't* hear), thus appearing less chameleon than parrot. He begins the above-mentioned stroll with Tatiana by filching a characteristic rhythmic and melodic gesture from Lensky (see ex. 6 and 7). But Evgeny does not keep this up. Halfway through the conversation, he drops these Lenskyisms and immediately picks up Tatianese, singing "What do you dream about?" to the strains of her leitmotif in the orchestra (ex. 8). Is this a conscious switch; might Evgeny be briefly sympathizing with Tatiana, or even mocking her, as Stanislavsky suggests?⁴⁸ Or does Tatiana's vocabulary leach passively into Evgeny's?

Ex. 6. Act I, Scene 1



LENSKY

Ia liub - liu vas, ia liub - liu vas, Ol'-ga,
I love you, I love you, Olga.

⁴⁷ Boris Asaf'ev, "Evgeniï Onegin," in Asaf'ev, *O muzyke Chaïkovskogo*, 121.

⁴⁸ Pavel Ivanovich Rumiantsev and Konstantin Sergeevich Stanislavski, *Stanislavski on Opera*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1975), 71.

Ex. 7. Act I, Scene 1

ONEGIN

la du - ma - iu by - va - et vam pre - skuch - no zdes' v glu - shi

I think it must be boring for you here in the country.

Ex. 8. Act I, Scene 1

ONEGIN

bez - nu pi - shchi dlia u - ma i serd - tsa, no ne vseg - da si - det' nam mozh - no

5 s kni - goi. Mech - ta - iu i - nog - da, bro - dia po sa - du.

9 ONEGIN

T. O chem zhe vy mech - ta - e - te?

ONEGIN: *[Reading provides] food for the mind and heart, but one can't always sit with a book!*

TATIANA: *I daydream sometimes, wandering around the garden.*

ONEGIN: *What do you dream about!*

Evgeny's mimicry continues in the second act. Immediately before their duel, fop and poetaster sing a canon at the third – and here as before, it is Lensky who seems to invent the melodic material, for the canon's phrases recall Lensky's great aria of several bars before.⁴⁹ But the most egregious instance of this musical ventriloquism occurs at the end of the ball scene in Act III, when Evgeny realizes his love for Tatiana to the tune of her letter aria. In this case there can be no question of intentional borrowing, as Evgeny did not "hear" this music the first time around. Even here, at his supposed moment of utter emotional revelation, Evgeny can only ape; stripped of all intentionality, all subjectivity, he is reduced to an echo chamber.

Asafiev's contention that Evgeny's rebuff is a model of musical sincerity also seems open to debate. Chaikovsky appears rather to telegraph the aria's contrivance, artfully flanking Evgeny's "confession" with a painfully inapt women's chorus ("Maidens, pretty maidens, let's lure a young man to our games, then pelt him with cherries"). And if this is the "real" Evgeny, musically speaking, it is a Evgeny we have not heard from before and will never encounter again. He sings a highly conventional, well-behaved little romance: two sections in B flat major, constructed in parallel periods, surround an 8-bar foray into the relative minor, ending neatly with a coda, a perfect cadence, and a long rest. There is no sign of creative struggle here, as there was with Tatiana's letter. Indeed, as repayment for the lovesick girl's herculean, self-conscious sprawl, Evgeny's "rejection" aria can hardly help but sound inadequate, inappropriate – even thoughtless. The aria's concision, its formal and harmonic neatness, mark it as an auto-reply.

If not here, then, where can the "real" Evgeny be located? Perhaps at the beginning of Act III, where the operatic libretto imparts to the hero a level of sustained introspection that Pushkin's Evgeny never achieves. The text is largely Pushkin's, but here as elsewhere Chaikovsky displaces the narrator's commentary about a character into the mouth of that character himself.⁵⁰ The result is a confessional soliloquy (see ex. 9).

⁴⁹ The resemblances between Lensky and Tatiana's characteristic musical idioms have often been noted – see, for example, Truman Bullard's "Eugene Onegin: Tatiana and Lensky, the Third Couple," in Alexandar Mihailovic, ed., *Tchaikovsky and His Contemporaries: A Centennial Symposium*, Contributions to the Study of Music and Dance 49 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999), 157–166. Both favor "sixthy," descending melodic phrases, a testament to their joint affinity for, and immersion in, the social world of the salon romance (see Asaf'ev, "Evgeniï Onegin," in *O muzyke Chaikovskogo*). Tatiana's music is far more chromatic than Lensky's, however, and she prefers flat keys to his sharps.

⁵⁰ The habit Chaikovsky's characters display for declaring themselves openly (as, perhaps needless to say, they do *not* do in Pushkin) has often been the subject of ridicule. Gasparov interprets this propensity for direct speech as further evidence of Chaikovsky's shaping of *Onegin* according to the conventions of the realist novel.

Ex. 9. Act III, Scene 1.

L'istesso tempo
ONEGIN

I zdes' mne skuch - noi! Blesk i su - e - ta bol' - sho - go sve - ta

L'istesso tempo

5 *Poco meno* *Andante* (♩ = 72)
O. ne ras - se - iat vech - noi, to - mi - tel' - noi tos - ki! U - biv na po - e - din - ke dru - ga,

Poco meno *Andante* (♩ = 72)

10 *Adagio* (♩ = 112)
O. do - zhiv bez tse - li, bez tru - dov do dvad - tsa - ti shes - ti go - dov, tom - ias' bez - deist - vi - em do - su - ga, bez

Adagio (♩ = 112)

13 *Più Adagio* (♩ = 104)
sluzh - by bez zhe - ny, bez del, se - bia za - niat' ia ne su - mel!

Più Adagio (♩ = 104)

Ex. 9 cont.

15

0. Mnoi o - via - de - lo bez - po - koist - vo, o - kho - ta k pe - re - me - ne mest, ves' - ma mu -

poco crescendo

17

0. chi - tel' - no - e svoist - vo, ne - mno - gikh do - bro - vol' - nyi krest! O -

19

0. sta - vil ia svo - i se - len' - ia, le - sov i niv u - e - di - ne - n'e, gde o - kro - vav - len - na - ia ten' ko mne ia - vi - las' kazh - dyi den'!

22

0. la na - chal stranst - vi - ia bez tse - li, dos - tup - nyi chuvst - vu od - no - mu ... i chto zh! K ne - schast' - iu mo - e - mu, i

Ex. 9 cont.

25
 O. *stranst-vi-ia mne na-do-e-lil' la voz-vra-til-sia, i po-pal, kak Chat-skii, s ko-rab-lia na bal!*

*I'm bored even here!
 The glitter and hubbub of society cannot dispel my eternal world-weariness.
 After killing my best friend in a duel, existing aimlessly, pointlessly, until the age of twenty-six,
 oppressed by the idleness of leisure, without employment, wife, or concerns, I was unable to keep myself occupied.
 Wanderlust overcame me, the desire for constant change of scene,
 [a thoroughly irritating trait, a cross few would choose to bear].
 I left my rural estate, the solitude of woods and fields, where a bloody shadow appeared before me every day.
 I began to travel aimlessly, heading whim alone . . .
 And what then! I found, to my disgust, that I was fed up with even traveling.
 I returned—and fell, like Chatsky, straight from ship to hell!*

This should by rights be Evgeny's Belinskian moment, when he turns his vision inward and comes away disillusioned with himself. The music, however, undermines this very purpose. Under the conventions of operatic dramaturgy, this text deserves an aria – a temporary stopping of the plot machine in order to allow a character to elaborate his inner world. But Evgeny does not get an aria. His third-act soliloquy bears all the markers of interstitial music, of *action* music: the cropped note lengths, the absence of a key signature, the lack of repetition, the kaleidoscopic accompaniment, the quick succession of tonal centers. Stylistically, Evgeny's soliloquy approaches Dargomizhskian melodic recitative, an idiom designed to continuously and immediately adapt itself to reflect passing emotions – with little regard for the deeper personalities that underlie those emotions⁵¹ Chaikovsky's Evgeny cannot direct his vision inward as for him there is no "inward"; he has no internally consistent self to be conscious of. (Even the arioso he sings at the end of this scene is, as noted above, poached almost entirely from Tatiana.) Like that of Mozart's Don Giovanni,⁵² Evgeny's

⁵¹ Among the most common criticisms of Dargomyzhsky's *The Stone Guest* is that, owing to its constantly fluctuating musical style, the opera "fail[s] to achieve *characterisation*" – the music reflects only the words, not the speaker. See Abraham, *Studies in Russian Music*, 76.

⁵² Mozart scholars have long made similar complaints of Don Giovanni to those I level here at Evgeny Onegin. In *Opera as Drama*, Joseph Kerman grumbles about the Spanish rake's lack of introspection and lyric voice: "What is one to say of the mysterious Don himself? He is an unaware person for a Mozartian figure...The singular fact is that until the end almost all of the action and musical expression goes to illuminate the people with whom he is involved, not Don Giovanni himself. This seems to me a dramatic mistake." [Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, new and revised (University of California Press, 1988), 102. Wendy Allanbrook memorably

musical psychology is all impulse, action divorced from reflection, with no guiding principle other than the whim of the moment. And as if to underscore the point, Evgeny's non-aria must precede the greatest showstopper in the entire opera. Shortly after Evgeny's wilted patch of recitative, Prince Gremin (a blank and nameless "fat general" in Pushkin) steps out to deliver an august da capo aria written expressly to showcase a glorious bass voice.⁵³ Evgeny is a musical flyweight by comparison: faced with Gremin's noble sentiments and sustained low G flats, Evgeny is, quite literally, out of his depth.

Echoes

The vocal score of *Evgeny Onegin* was published in the fall of 1878. A year and a half later, Muscovites erected a monument to Pushkin, and this event was feted in June 1880 with three days' worth of speeches by Russia's leading men of letters. One speech was to eclipse the rest⁵⁴: after an extraordinarily moderate appraisal of Pushkin's significance by Turgenev, Dostoevsky stood up and delivered, in Nabokov's piquant words, a "famous but essentially claptrap politico-patriotic speech...before a hysterically enthusiastic audience."⁵⁵ The Pushkin Speech features Dostoevsky in full messianic mode, offering salvation to Europe in the all-embracing Russian soul – and salvation to Pushkin in the upending of Belinsky and Pisarev's critiques. For Dostoevsky, Evgeny

characterizes the Don as "No-Man," a "vibrant nonentity" who apes the music of others [Wye Jamison Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart* (University of Chicago Press, 1983), 207–208, 224.] And to Bernard Williams, "[Don Giovanni] seems to have no depth adequate to the work in which he plays a central role...we are not given any insight into what he really is, or what drives him on. We could not have been: it is not that there is something hidden in his soul. It is notable that he has no self-reflective aria... He is presented always in action." [Bernard Williams, *On Opera* (Yale University Press, 2006), 32.]

⁵³ Kashkin recalls: "As Chaikovsky told me, Prince Gremin's aria was written only because in 1878, the roster of students at the conservatory [where *Onegin* premiered] included the bass M.M. Karyakin, now an artist at the Petersburg opera, whom the author of the opera wanted to give a conspicuous number – not because there was any special need for this aria in the course of action. But when the production of *Onegin* was put on in 1879, M.M. Karyakin had already finished his course and left Moscow, where he did not sing the aria written especially for him." Kashkin, *Vospominaniia o P. I. Chaikovskom*, 123.

⁵⁴ For an account of the immediate impact of Dostoevsky's "Pushkin speech," see Levitt, *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880*, particularly the chapter "Dostoevsky 'Hijacks' the Celebration," 122-146.

⁵⁵ In Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse*, trans. Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov, revised, vol. 3, Bollingen Series 72 (Princeton University Press, 1975), 191.

Onegin exemplifies the negative image⁵⁶ of the Russian soul: an archetypal denizen of Peter's city, alienated from the Russian land and condemned to wander restlessly, ever in flux. Inverting Belinsky's language, Dostoevsky judges Evgeny a wholly abstract entity, a figure with "no root at all...a blade of grass, borne on the wind."⁵⁷ Tatiana, meanwhile, loses any hint of dreamy ethereality, becoming a grounded, quintessentially Russian woman firmly connected to her people. Even when she finds her life in ruins at the end of the novel, her memories of her own bucolic past "save her soul from final despair...for there is here a whole foundation, unshakable and indestructible."⁵⁸ Of course, this corporeal Tatiana's ultimate decision still had to be defended against charges of immorality. Dostoevsky does it, once again, by explicitly inverting Belinsky: it is now Tatiana who possesses the searing moral insight, who sees the truth beyond surface appearances. She realizes that Evgeny does not really love her – as a "moral embryo," he is incapable of apprehending her "completeness and perfection."⁵⁹ His love is a fantasy, a contrived solution to his problems, certain to be discarded as easily as any of his other passing whims, and Tatiana's understanding of *this* is what motivates her rebuff. Petty societal mores play no part; indeed, Dostoevsky ventures that Tatiana would have rejected Evgeny even had she been free. And for good measure, Dostoevsky adds one further justification for Tatiana's decision: her compassion for her husband.

...That general, her husband, [is] an honest man who loves her, respects her, and is proud of her. ...Should she run away merely because her happiness lay therein? What kind of happiness would that be, based on the unhappiness of another? Imagine that you yourself are building a palace of human destiny for the final end of making all men happy, and of giving them peace and rest at last.

⁵⁶ For a discussion of the history and significance of "negative" vs. "positive" literary types in Russia, see Mathewson, *The Positive Hero in Russian Literature*.

⁵⁷ Fyodor Mikhaïlovich Dostoevskii, *The Dream of a Queer Fellow, and the Pushkin Speech*, trans. J. Koteliansky and J. Middleton Murry (London: Unwin Books, 1960), 52.

⁵⁸ Ibid. For more on the intellectual context of these ideas, including Dostoevsky's involvement with the *pochvennik* (roughly, "man of the soil") movement, see Wayne Dowler, *Dostoevsky, Grigor'ev, and Native Soil Conservatism* (University of Toronto Press, 1982), Sarah Hudspith, *Dostoevsky and the Idea of Russianness: A New Perspective on Unity and Brotherhood*, BASEES/RoutledgeCurzon Series on Russian and East European Studies 6 (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), and Robert T. Whittaker, *Russia's Last Romantic, Apollon Grigor'ev (1822-1864)*, Studies in Slavic Languages and Literature 15 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), particularly 406-8. See also A. S. Dolinin, "Dostoevskii i Gertsen," Fyodor Mikhaïlovich Dostoevskii, *F.M. Dostoevskii: stat'i i materialy*, ed. Arkadiï Semionovich Dolinin (Peterburg: Mysl', 1922), 275-324.

⁵⁹ Dostoevskii, *The Dream of a Queer Fellow, and the Pushkin Speech*, 48.

And imagine also that for that purpose it is necessary and inevitable to torture to death one single human being...not a Shakespeare, but simply an honest old man, the husband of a young wife in whom he believes blindly, and whom, although he does not know her heart at all, he respects, of whom he is proud, with whom he is happy and at rest. ...Could Tatiana's great soul, which had so deeply suffered, have chosen otherwise?⁶⁰

For Nabokov, this elevation of Pushkin's blank (and quite possibly young!) general to an honest and respectable old man goes to show that Dostoevsky, a "much overrated, sentimental, and Gothic novelist of the time...had not really read [*Onegin*]." ⁶¹

Had Dostoevsky "read" Chaikovsky? It's possible: the score was in print, and it had been selling astoundingly well given that the opera had never been performed on a major stage. In certain fundamentals, of course, Chaikovsky and Dostoevsky's *Onegins* are vastly different. Chaikovsky's decidedly – polemically – earthbound opera makes no claims to the sort of cosmic heft Dostoevsky places on the novel.⁶² Chaikovsky's Tatiana is no clairvoyant who instantly intuits the truth; her decisions result from a difficult internal process, from an eminently human struggle. It is likewise dubious whether a connection to the Russian soil can really be said to constitute the indestructible core of an operatic heroine who remarks (in interpolated text) that folk songs make her dream of someplace undefined – and distant. However, in light of the moral and ideological questions that had dominated nineteenth-century criticism of the novel, these contemporaneous *Onegins* largely confirm one another. Both place at the center of the story a positive, supremely conscious Tatiana, whose external actions flow from an organic and integrated private self. Evgeny for both Chaikovsky and Dostoevsky is neither a villain nor an inert lump, but simply a negative – a man without a center, an eternal wanderer. Each interpretation of the ending, too, buttresses the other: Chaikovsky's scene-stealing bass surely merits the compassion of Dostoevsky's all-seeing Tatiana, while Dostoevsky's spin on the morality of Tatiana's final decision renders unnecessary Chaikovsky's original, melodramatic ending.

Like any adaptation, Chaikovsky's *Onegin* exists in complex relation to Pushkin's original. In operaticizing the novel, Chaikovsky entered into a conversation not only with Pushkin, but with many others who had thought and written about *Evgeny Onegin* in the half-century that separated the two works. While the opera was certainly shaped by the reception history of the novel, it also left marks of its own on that history. Caryl

⁶⁰ Ibid., 51.

⁶¹ Nabokov, *Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse*, 3:191.

⁶² Caryl Emerson writes drolly that Dostoevsky "invest[s] [Tatiana's] marital fidelity with the cosmic dimensions of Ivan Karamazov's challenge to an unjust universe." "Tatiana," in Hoisington, *A Plot of Her Own: The Female Protagonist in Russian Literature*, 6.

Emerson cites the opera, with its positive and creative Tatiana, as a “crucial stage in the maturation of the cult” surrounding that character that began to develop at the end of the nineteenth century.⁶³ More immediately, the success of the operatic *Onegin* was likely one of the factors that drove the renewed public interest in Pushkin in the 1880s. When the poet’s complete works were released from copyright in 1887, there was an unprecedented run on the booksellers in Petersburg and Moscow; Pushkin’s popular canonization had begun. Rather than viewing Chaikovsky’s opera as the sentimental desecration of a national epic, then, we would be better served to see it as an important milestone in the *construction* of *Evgeny Onegin* as a national epic. Like Pushkin’s novel, too, Chaikovsky’s *Onegin* left questions and issues to be worked out by future generations – most dynamically, perhaps, in the arena of performance. Evgeny’s musical indeterminacy, after all, allows tremendous interpretive scope. Perhaps his unwillingness to sing in the 1820s-inflected language of the opera might render him a more immediate, relatable character to twenty-first century audiences; like *Pikovaia Dama*’s Hermann, Evgeny is another Chaikovsky hero “out of time” with his overtly historical surroundings.

The fluctuating images of Evgeny and Tatiana in nineteenth-century Russia fit into a broader historical discourse about the relationship between public and private identities, between reflection and reaction. In the polite society of pre-Decembrist Russia, a protean exterior was a sign of a properly calibrated psyche; “an *idée fixe*,” writes William Mills Todd III, “was a serious conversational flaw.”⁶⁴ For Dostoevsky, with his ideal of the organic, integrated self, such chameleon behavior indicated psychic dysfunction – a theme he explored in several of his novels. In the world of Chaikovsky’s *Evgeny Onegin*, Tatiana perhaps represents an ideal subject: her interior space, as limned in a developing system of musical characteristics, both shapes and is shaped by her environment. Her subjectivity is borne of her struggles and her efforts, which she must make openly, before our eyes and ears; Tatiana was never a conscious being until she was a soprano. Chaikovsky’s Evgeny, on the other hand, is one in a long line of attempts to come to terms with a character whose behavior, outside of its original social context, looked capricious, unmotivated, and indefensible. Chaikovsky’s interpretation sliced the Gordian Knot: denying the character internal consistency absolved Chaikovsky of any need to “explain” Evgeny, as so many critics had spent so many pages doing. But if a kaleidoscopic, constantly adapting exterior made one a sure fit in polite society, it also made one a cipher in nineteenth-century opera.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ William Mills Todd III, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative* (Harvard University Press, 1986), 33.

CHAPTER FOUR

Khovanshchina, The Maid of Orleans, and the Force that Moves the Nations

В игре ее конный не словит,
В беде – не сробеет, – спасет:
Коня на скаку остановит,
В горящую избу войдет!

In sport the finest horseman's equal,
In trouble – fearless – she quails not
To stop a bolting horse by dashing
Straight into a burning hut!

Nikolai Nekrasov, "Red-Nosed Frost," 1863

Kto vinovat?

The funeral of Modest Petrovich Musorgsky, it seems, bore witness to a coffinside row. Instigating the affair was that likeliest of culprits, the indefatigable Vladimir Stasov; the target of his ire was the young composer and music critic Mikhail Ivanov. On this particular occasion, the insect disturbing Stasov's bonnet was an obituary Ivanov had published in the popular journal *Novoye Vremya*. As the self-appointed curator of Musorgsky's legacy – and the author of a rival obituary of the composer – Stasov took it upon himself to regale his younger colleague with a public dressing-down at the funeral.

Let us hear from these dueling elegists. Stasov's version, printed in *Golos*, read as follows:

Once again Russia has lost a great man! Today, Monday, March 16...Modest Petrovich Musorgsky passed away from paralysis of the heart and of the spinal cord. The disease which had been developing over the years in the greatly ruined and now shattered physique climaxed on February 12, with three nervous shocks succeeding each other in a matter of only a few hours. The following day... Musorgsky was placed in the military hospital... During the next two weeks,

Musorgsky suddenly improved so much that he frequently repeated to the numerous friends who visited him: 'Never in my life did I feel so well as I do now.' The people close to him could not stop marveling at this happy change; they found in his appearance an unexpected change for the better; they noticed that his strength, good spirits, and healthy complexion were returning. And hope began to revive among Musorgsky's sincere admirers. But he was suddenly overcome by an unexpected relapse: new and frightening symptoms began to appear, his arms and legs were paralyzed, and in a very few days he was no more. Total consciousness and memory did not leave him until his last minutes. He died without pain or suffering; the agony lasted only a couple of seconds....

Musorgsky died...in the very prime of life and talent. ...How distant the years of old age should have been, and how much one could have expected of him, in view of his powerful talent and dynamic nature! But he was stricken by the cast-iron, implacable hand of that very bitter fate which hangs, practically without exception, over the greatest talents in our fatherland: almost none of them lives long, lives as long as he could and should live; almost none of them accomplishes everything he was obviously called to and for which he was born. Almost everyone is mown down halfway.¹

Ivanov, meanwhile, offered this account:

Everyone was as unprepared for Musorgsky's death as they had been for N[ikolai] Rubinstein's. His constitution was so strong that no one ever thought that he was in any serious danger. [But] Musorgsky's foe was that unfortunate propensity which has destroyed so many talented Russians. He was driven to his grave by that fatal passion, which held him in a vice, as well as by the irregular life of an artist, which affects the nervous system. It was only about a month ago, in mid-February, that Musorgsky became ill. His illness was quite complex. He had a liver disorder, an adipose heart, and an inflammation of the spinal cord. He was in need of intensive care, and we could never have let him stay at home. The distressing situation of the composer at the beginning of his illness is difficult to imagine. He had always had a Bohemian life-style, but in the last two or three years he forsook almost everyone and was leading the life of a vagabond. ...[H]e totally ceased to control his fateful weakness. Alcohol, sleepless nights, erysipelas on one leg, and strenuous mental activity...quickly exhausted his strength. Nevertheless, by nature, his constitution was so strong that, provided with reasonable conditions and with sensible treatment, he

¹ "Nekrolog M.P. Musorgskogo," *Golos* (March 17, 1881), repr. in Vladimir Stasov, *Izbrannye sochineniia* (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1952), 2:117–118.

promptly began to improve. The hopes of his friends, however, were not to be fulfilled. On account of his own gross imprudence, a sudden change for the worse occurred. It was clear that recovery was no longer a possibility. His arms and legs were paralyzed...[and] taken into account with all his other ailments, these symptoms foretold the end... Paralysis was gradually taking hold of his respiratory organs: he was able to breathe only with difficulty and constantly complained about the lack of breath...

I thought about the strange fate of our Russians. To have such talent as Musorgsky had...to have all the qualities, to be superior, to live – and then to die in a hospital, among strangers, without a friendly or a loving hand to, at least, close his eyes. What is this fate that hounds our gifted ones... Yes, we have lost a great talent, and we have so few of them.²

Funereal feud notwithstanding, Stasov and Ivanov's obituaries share a few conspicuous features. At center stage in both is that *body*: extravagant, entropic, splayed out in Dostoevskian detail. (Perhaps Stasov and Ivanov, along with most of educated Russia in September 1879, had read the episode involving Father Zosima's decaying body in *The Brothers Karamazov*.) In their minute accounts of Musorgsky's jagged breaths, paralyzed limbs, and nervous attacks, Stasov and Ivanov render in a thousand words the story telegraphed by Ilya Repin's famous portrait, painted from life during the composer's gruesome final days.

FIG. 1. Ilya Repin, *Portrait of the Composer Modest Musorgsky*, 1881.



² Mikhail Ivanov, *Musorgsky's Obituary*, in *Musorgsky Remembered*, 136-9.

The elaborate carnal horror functions, in both obituaries as well as in Repin's portrait, as the terrible antipode to Musorgsky's spiritual greatness; Stasov and Ivanov each make much of the contrast,³ as indeed Dostoevsky had done before them. Equally notable is the easy leap both authors make between the private experience of one individual and the fate of Russia. "The life of the nation" here appears not quite "the sum of individual lives," as Chernyshevsky would have it, but rather the multiplication of *one* such life. For both Stasov and Ivanov, who occupied opposite ends of the artistic and political spectrum, Musorgsky's particular, grimly detailed end was somehow representative of a universalized Russian experience. His body not yet interred, Musorgsky was already the stuff of legend – or more accurately, the stuff of literature. He had instantly become a type.

The difference, of course, lay in precisely what sort of type Musorgsky represented, and what general lessons could be drawn from his example. Stasov's primary beef with Ivanov was that the latter had publicly alluded to Musorgsky's alcoholism, but I'd like to consider another point of contention here: the opposing views these excerpts present on the issue of history and human agency. Both position Musorgsky in the jaws of an inexorable, mechanistic destiny; as Musorgsky's was only the most recent in a spate of high-profile Russian deaths,⁴ perhaps the doomsday tone was to be expected. They differ, however, on the question of "*kto vinovat?*" (who is to blame?), to borrow the title of Alexander Herzen's 1847 novel. Stasov's Musorgsky is an essentially robust figure, cut down "in the prime of life and talent" by external, impersonal forces. This characterization is much in line with the by-then familiar image of Russian artist as martyr, which had originated in leftist publications and often carried with it a shade of anti-government critique. In a controversial and widely read pamphlet from 1850, Herzen – then in exile in Geneva, and thus immune to Nikolai I's crushing censorship – had asked outright:

What, in the end, is this monster that calls itself Russia, which needs so many victims and which permits its children only the sad alternative of either losing

³ This clash, so arrestingly captured in newsprint and oils, has since 1881 defined the shape of Musorgsky's biography in the popular imagination – a fact that has caused no little consternation among recent scholars. "Projecting back in time from [Repin's] portrait, it is all too easy to imagine an entire life lived in its desperate spirit," warns Caryl Emerson. [*The Life of Musorgsky* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 159.] Within the last twenty years, Emerson, Richard Taruskin, and other Musorgsky scholars have aimed to dismantle the teleology implied by that ravaged body in the portrait, emphasizing instead the composer's meticulous craftsmanship and elegant social persona.

⁴ The others included Dostoevsky (February 9), Tsar Alexander II (March 1), and Nikolai Rubinstein (March 11).

themselves morally in a setting hostile to all that is human, or of dying at the dawn of their life? It is a bottomless abyss, where the best oarsmen will perish, where the greatest efforts, the greatest talents, the greatest minds will be swallowed up before having succeeded at anything.⁵

Musorgsky, in Stasov's eyes, had chosen Herzen's second alternative, to retain his moral integrity at the cost of his life. The disease that ravaged Musorgsky's body never corrupted his inner being; the Musorgsky Stasov describes anticipates the literary heroes of Socialist Realism, whose maimed bodies are so often the price of their inner virtue. (Pavel Korchagin of Nikolai Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered* is one such fellow.) The party to blame here is not the individual, but rather a corrupt and unjust society that allows its best representatives to be so brutally victimized. In Stasov's reckoning, Musorgsky had no agency in his own destruction; he was Russian history's hapless victim.

Ivanov's view is more complex. "Our Russians" are indeed beset by a "strange fate," he observes melancholically at the end; the nation's lot is ever sad. But the nature of this strange fate is not so blunt as it is in Stasov's version of events, for Ivanov gives us a Musorgsky whose faults lie as much in himself as in his stars. This Musorgsky is a tragic hero in the Aristotelian-Shakespearean mold, a "superior" sort with "all the qualities," including a fatal flaw. This internal defect – his "fatal passion," and "gross imprudence" when it came to controlling it – is what made Musorgsky's specific end inevitable. If he was "driven to the grave" by "the fate that hounds our gifted ones," he still bore some responsibility for the specific way in which that fate was dispatched; destiny can reside in internal passions as well as in national history. The universality, the representative "Russianness," of Musorgsky's story did not in itself absolve the individual of blame.

Between these two interpretations lay the crux of a debate that resonated far beyond the obituary section of Russian periodicals. What is the nature of history? Is its course borne by human actions or abstract, external forces? What are the implications of these questions on the personality? Might internal experience be likewise governed by forces outside humans' conscious control? How should an individual regard historical inevitability – should one simply ride along the historical tide or fight to preserve one's agency? Tolstoy and Dostoevsky would take up these questions in their novels, as would contemporary historians in their essays and treatises. In Chaikovsky's *The Maid of Orleans* and Musorgsky's own *Khovanshchina*, this debate would play out on the opera stage.

⁵ Alexander Herzen, "On the Development of Revolutionary Ideals in Russia," in *A Herzen Reader*, ed. and trans. Kathleen Parthé (Northwestern University Press, 2012), 17.

What is the force that moves the nations?

In the infamous Second Epilogue to 1866's *War and Peace*, Tolstoy threw a salvo. "What is the force that moves the nations?" the Epilogue asks over and over again; in whom, or what, can historical agency be located? The question, Tolstoy notes, is inextricable from the concept of free will, and in considering this problem Tolstoy discusses two distinct modes of human cognition. The first, consciousness or *soznanie*, is subjective and immediate – we might also call this the mode of intuition – and capable of apprehending the particular, the personal, and the finite. The second, reason or *razum*, is objective and depersonalized, allowing us to contemplate the universal, the eternal, the abstract. For Tolstoy, free will is a construct that belongs entirely to the mode of consciousness; each individual feels instinctively that he is a free agent, that her own will is the source of her actions. This belief is an essential part of the way humans conceptualize their place in the world, and consciousness is the only source of self-knowledge. "As soon as there is no freedom there is also no man,"⁶ no individual, writes Tolstoy. Nonetheless, he argues in an appeal to the natural sciences, this belief is illusory, and best discarded as such:

As with astronomy the difficulty of recognizing the motion of the earth lay in abandoning the immediate sensation of the earth's fixity and of the motion of the planets, so in history the difficulty of recognizing the subjection of personality to the laws of space, time, and cause lies in renouncing the direct feeling of the independence of one's own personality...In the first case it was necessary to renounce the consciousness of an unreal mobility in space and to recognize a motion we did not feel; in the present case it is similarly necessary to renounce a freedom that does not exist, and to recognize a dependence of which we are not conscious.⁷

The idea of a finite self, a discrete and stable chunk of psychology, is thus also chimerical, Tolstoy suggests. The individual is rather something like a historical eddy, in which broader forces mingle and collect.

For Russian historians, Peter the Great had often served as the quintessential image of the autonomous individual, a seven-foot-tall demiurge who wrenched Russia out of ancient barbarism and into Western modernity. In 1837's *Apology of a Madman*, Pyotr Chaadaev wrote that Peter the Great had in essence given Russia access to history. Before Peter, Chaadaev contended, Russia had existed in an isolated, perpetual stasis:

⁶ Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoï, *War and Peace*, ed. George Gibrian, trans. Louise Shanks Maude and Aylmer Maude, 2nd ed. (New York and London: Norton, 1999), 1070.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1074.

history advanced, Russia stayed put.⁸ By connecting Russia to the West, Peter gave the nation a trajectory, and therefore a sense of time. Peter, for Chaadaev, was quite literally a force that moved nations: “In his hand Peter the Great found only a blank sheet of paper, and he wrote on it, Europe and the West; since then we have belonged to Europe and the West.”⁹ Vissarion Belinsky reached related conclusions in his 1841 essay “The Deeds of Peter the Great”¹⁰: in negating the ancient beliefs and traditions of Muscovite Russia, Peter severed Russia from the past and gave to Russians a new historical consciousness. For both Chaadaev and Belinsky, Peter was an actor not just in, but *on* history.

This steely giant must have seemed the very antithesis of his descendant who occupied the Russian throne in 1872: his life routinely threatened by terrorists among his own subjects, Alexander II was a conspicuously vulnerable autocrat, and the reforms he initiated had served to diffuse, not consolidate, his agency. Yet in that year, state historians endeavored assiduously to link the two reform-minded Romanovs. 1872 marked the two hundredth anniversary of Peter’s birth, and in commemorating the influence of one tsar, statist historians sought also to honor the accomplishments of the other. For Sergei Solov’iov, the most eminent Russian historian of the nineteenth century, this comparison necessitated a reevaluation of Peter’s role in Russian history. Solov’iov’s public lectures on Peter the Great, widely publicized in 1872, proposed the following:

A great man is a son of his time, of his people; he loses his supernatural significance, his activity loses the attribute of chance, of arbitrariness, he rises high as a representative of his people at a given time, as the carrier and expresser of popular thought; his activity acquires a great significance, because it satisfied a

⁸ “For us,” wrote Chaadaev in his first “Philosophical Letter,” published – surely due to a censor’s oversight – in 1836, “historical experience does not exist; ages and generations have flowed by fruitlessly for us. It would seem that in our case the general law of humanity has been revoked. Alone in the world, we have given nothing to the world, taken nothing from the world, bestowed not even a single idea upon the fund of human ideas, contributed nothing to the progress of the human spirit, and we have distorted all progressivity which has come to us. Nothing from the first moment of our social existence has emanated from us for man’s common good; not one useful idea has germinated in the sterile soil of our fatherland; we have launched no great truth; we have never bothered to conjecture anything ourselves, and we have only adopted deceiving appearances and useless luxury from all the things that others have thought out.” Piotr Iakovlevich Chaadaev, *The Major Works of Peter Chaadaev*, trans. Raymond T. McNally (University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 27.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 205.

¹⁰ See “Deianiia Petra Velikogo,” in Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniï*, 5: 91–152.

powerful popular need, because it leads the people onto a new road, one necessary for the continuation of its historical life.¹¹

While Solov'iov, unlike Tolstoy six years earlier, allows for the historical influence of "great men," he limits Peter's independence considerably. This "great man" is not autonomous but conditioned, a son of his time and his people, and his actions are influential precisely because they are representative of a *universal* will. The nation's "historical life" existed before and exists after Peter; his role was to provide essential maintenance, to act, in a manner of speaking, as history's custodian. By Solov'iov's reckoning, history did not come about because of Peter – but rather Peter, at least in part, because of history.

Other historians of the 1870s too sought balance, a framework that acknowledged the force of history without crushing individual freedom and particularity. In his massive 1879 treatise *Science and Religion (Nauka i religiiia)*, the liberal historian and philosopher Boris Chicherin shuddered at "scientific" accounts of history that depict the individual as "the plaything of blind forces, a tiny speck lost in an endless expanse, an arbitrary combination of particles that can just as easily decombine." Yet, for Chicherin, historical laws do exist, and individuals are subject to them. Chicherin attempted to resolve this tension by cleaving means from ends: if history ultimately determines all outcomes, individuals do have some power over the way in which those outcomes are realized. "Freedom does not consist in making the laws," Chicherin writes, "but in carrying them out."¹² Or in other words: people are free to obey history in whatever manner they choose.

For Dostoevsky's characters, Tolstoy's prescription – that people should reject a false belief in their own historical and spiritual autonomy – is a psychological impossibility. Dostoevsky's heroes rarely go quietly into the abyss of historical determinism: the Underground Man makes a passionate stand for his caprice, while Raskolnikov kills in order to prove himself a Napoleon, unbound by the laws that govern the unexceptional. But freedom of choice can burden as well as liberate. In Ivan Karamazov's famous parable, the Grand Inquisitor admonishes Christ that by granting humans free will, and therefore moral responsibility, he has condemned them to endless suffering:

Did you forget that peace and even death are dearer to man than free choice in the knowledge of good and evil? There is nothing more seductive for man than the freedom of his conscience, but there is nothing more tormenting either. And so, instead of a firm foundation for appeasing human conscience once and for all,

¹¹ Sergeĭ Mikhaĭlovich Solov'iov, *Publichnye chteniia o Petre Velikom*, ed. L.N. Pushkareva and V.I. Buganov, *Pamiatniki istoricheskoi mysli* (Moskva: Nauka, 1984), 2.

¹² Boris Nikolaevich Chicherin, *Nauka i religiiia* (Moskva: Tipografiia Martynova, 1879), 518.

you chose everything that was unusual, enigmatic, and indefinite, you chose everything that was beyond men's strength, and thereby acted as if you did not love them at all – and who did this? He who came to give his life for them! Instead of taking over men's freedom, you increased it and forever burdened the kingdom of the human soul with its torments.¹³

This is certainly the case with Ivan Karamazov, whose moral ruminations lead him to madness. For Dostoevsky, free will exists – but its exercise can be deadly. One way out of this moral agony, as Father Zosima suggests in *The Brothers Karamazov*, is paradoxically to take on *more* responsibility. Since the spiritual world is an organic whole, Zosima argues, by subsuming his own guilt into the guilt of all humanity, the individual can in effect attune his will to the will of God. The capacity to love universally, and thus to do good, depends on one assuming responsibility for everything. Like Tolstoy, Zosima too suggests that individuals should renounce their autonomy – not because it doesn't exist (unfortunately for everyone, it does), but rather because its implications are too much to bear.

Nineteenth-century Russia never lacked for utopian solutions: communes both Orthodox and socialist, the idea of a historical necessity that enfolded all humanity in its inexorable crush. In such context, it seems only understandable that the question of an individual's capacity to determine herself and her fate should be hotly debated, never resolved.

La forza del destino

Human pathos versus the heft of fate is perhaps the trustiest of operatic tropes. To dramatize a clash between the astounding and the affecting, the sublime and the sympathetic, has often seemed opera's very *raison d'être* – the art form being exceptionally capable of both amassing huge, imposing forces onstage and representing poignant emotion in the solo aria. The various nineteenth-century operatic traditions had represented the relationship between the individual and fate (whether in the sense of personal fortune or historical inevitability) in varying ways. Italian opera typically presents the most “personal” take – a fate that responds intimately to the actions and intentions of individuals. French grand opera, on the other hand, stacks the deck in favor of impersonal history; individual actions have little impact on the course of events. Russian opera, meanwhile, is often the most deterministic of all.

¹³ Fyodor Mikhaïlovich Dostoevskiï, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1990), 254–255.

Verdi explicitly thematized fate and human action in the opera he wrote for St. Petersburg in 1862. The title of that opera – *La forza del destino* – resonated *avant la lettre* with Tolstoy’s “force that moves the nations,” but Verdi’s idea of destiny is very unlike Tolstoy’s. In *La forza del destino*, as in Verdi generally, fate is specific, personal, and precipitated by injurious action. Originating as it did in Catholic Italy, this notion of fate has a twinge of divine justice to it: a person commits an offense, either by design or by accident, and is in turn made to pay for it. (This repayment is often made with interest, in the form of collateral damage; innocent children, for example, will suffer for their parents’ crimes.) Frequently there is some element of personal vengeance involved, and one individual may seek to impose a destiny on another through a curse. In *La forza del destino*, the “original sin” is a disruption of parental authority and social order by Donna Leonora, the daughter of a status-conscious Spanish Marquis, and Don Alvaro, a foreign nobleman of uncertain origins. Alvaro and Leonora conspire to elope against the wishes of the Marquis, who is accidentally wounded in a confrontation with the lovers and curses his daughter with his last breaths. Don Carlo, Leonora’s brother, resolves to pursue the pair in order to avenge his father, and as the final curtain falls, Leonora is dead and Alvaro has lost everything. A similar, karmic notion of fate – invoked, again, by malediction – suffuses *Rigoletto*. The title character of that opera mocks the father of a young woman who has been seduced by a royal leech; the father curses Rigoletto, who in the end becomes the unwitting mastermind of his own daughter’s murder. In *Il trovatore* and *I vespri siciliani*, the punishable offenses occur in the operas’ lengthy prehistories, and the need for retribution largely drives the unfolding of the plot. When Verdi’s characters bemoan *cruda sorte* (as, frequently, they do), they are lamenting the inevitable consequences brought about by destructive human action.

In Wagner, destiny’s arc is longer, its sphere of influence broader, and its psychological toll more crushing. Free will is more restricted in Wagner than in Verdi, and more innocents get caught in fate’s machinery. But Wagnerian destiny is still responsive to human behavior: it is still in the business of righting wrongs and punishing transgressions, and it is still susceptible to human intervention in the form of curses. The Dutchman engenders his fate by invoking Satan, and as punishment, he and his blameless crew are condemned to set foot on land only once every seven years. In the *Ring* cycle, two destructive power grabs – Wotan’s destruction of the World Ash Tree and Alberich’s theft of the Rhine gold – set up debts that must be repaid over the succeeding 18 hours’ worth of stage time. Wotan and Alberich’s attempts to extricate themselves from fate’s grasp (in the former’s case, by creating a “free” being who may exercise his will unencumbered by the treaties and commitments that bind Wotan) only serve to ensnare them farther, and the sense of inexorability that overhangs the two characters is certainly not helped by the curse Alberich places on the Ring, which both strive to control. Ennui is the typical Wagnerian response to crushing fate, and both

Wotan and the Dutchman vainly seek *das Ende*. But if action – harmful, self-serving, and usually male – sets these mechanistic processes in motion, action – self-sacrificing and female – provides the means of stopping them, and both *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Der Ring des Nibelungen* end with their respective heroines' redemptive leaps.

In French grand opera, a genre whose shelf life in Russia extended well into the 1860s, fate has little of the karmic element it possesses in Verdi and even Wagner. Fate, in French grand opera, is best understood not as *sort*, an individual's private lot, but as *fatalité* – general, abstract, and depersonalized. It is historical, not individual, and it has a momentum all its own; destiny's processes do not require independent human action to set them in motion. History often seems to work *through* individuals, who as Anselm Gerhard notes are likely to be passive and irresolute.¹⁴ For the kind of history grand opera represents tends to have a flattening effect on the personality; psychology, that life-blood of opera, is profoundly de-emphasized, and protagonists are rarely given a moment of private repose to consider their feelings. But while history's threat to human agency is formidable in grand opera, it is not entirely insurmountable. In his landmark *Introduction à l'Histoire Universelle* of 1831, Jules Michelet characterized history as the struggle of "*la liberté contre la fatalité*." *Fatalité* had put up a stiff battle; it was only in the nineteenth century, Michelet wrote, that humans stood a chance of breaking free from its all-determining grasp. But eventually, *la liberté* would prevail. As Sarah Hibberd writes, the creators and consumers of French grand opéra largely shared this image of history as both progressive and tending toward freedom, despite the formidable resistance posed by *la fatalité*.¹⁵ World-shaping, liberating action *is* possible in grand opera, writes Mark Pottinger – especially when such heroism "does not fulfill a personal or selfish want but results in a collective liberty or redemption."¹⁶ Some of the emotional potency of French grand opera, too, derives from the ease with which counterfactual histories can be imagined; had not some freak accident or chance occurrence come to pass, everything would have turned out differently. (If only Raoul

¹⁴ "Robert and Raoul are alike, then," writes Gerhard of Meyerbeer's tenors, "in being determined by external influences, in roles apparently dependent on the function assigned to them in a plot controlled by others, if not by an inscrutable fate. ... There are, it is true, a number of operas by other composers which have descriptive, functional terms in their titles, but in none of them does the fact express profound doubt about the autonomy of the individual in the way it does in Meyerbeer." Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (University of Chicago Press, 1998), 174.

¹⁵ See Sarah Hibberd, *French Grand Opera and Historical Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), particularly Chapter One ("Politics, History, and Opera," 1-19), and Chapter Five ("Charles VI: Creating the Future," 114-152).

¹⁶ Mark A. Pottinger, *The Staging of History in France: The Characterization of Historical Figures in French Grand Opéra during the Reign of Louis-Philippe* (Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag Müller, 2009), 46.

hadn't seen Valentine at Nevers' chateau, he would never have refused the marriage, and the rift between Protestants and Catholics would have been healed!) Destiny, then, while indifferent to the desires and deserts of individual human actors, is not a wholly hermetic, predetermined system – and, with exceptional effort, or exceptional luck, it may be swayed.

Both *Khovanshchina* and *The Maid of Orleans* have been compared to French grand opera,¹⁷ and for good reason: like Stasov and Ivanov's obituaries, both operas set the individual against a seemingly implacable and indifferent fate. If anything, Musorgsky and Chaikovsky evince even less faith than their French predecessors in an individual's capacity to shape his or her destiny. Easy counterfactuals, too, are impossible to draw: if every character in *Khovanshchina* did the exact opposite of what the libretto calls for, one imagines, the outcome of the opera would remain precisely the same. But even if historical inevitability were a given, the psychological implications of this condition, as we have seen, were not. As it happens, *Khovanshchina* and *The Maid of Orleans* have a character type in common: a woman who acts as both prophet and lover, as a conduit between human and supra-human forces. Though both Musorgsky's Marfa and Chaikovsky's Ioanna meet similarly fiery fates in the final act, these vatic lovers take opposite attitudes toward their predetermined roles.

Singing stasis

Set in the chaos immediately preceding Peter the Great's rise to unchallenged autocracy, *Khovanshchina* dramatizes a universe that greatly resembles Chaadaev's image of pre-Petrine Russia, a world in which time is arrested and progress impossible. In her monograph on the opera, Emiliia Frid argues that the lyric mode, typically a vehicle for private, introspective emoting, here serves to embody not personal states but the universal condition.¹⁸ In *Khovanshchina*, Russia as a whole seems suspended in "aria time." Caryl Emerson has linked this depiction of history with the views of the Old Believers, the religious sect with whose self-immolation the opera ends. The Old Believers were so named because they rejected the church reforms instituted by Patriarch Nikon in 1666; as Emerson writes, "they interpreted the reforms as an indication that the past was no longer sacred, the End of the World was nigh, and the Antichrist, posing as Peter the First, was already abroad in the land. [Old Believer time]

¹⁷ See especially Marina Frolova-Walker, "Grand Opera in Russia: Fragments of an Unwritten History," in David Charlton, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 344–365.

¹⁸ See Emiliia Lazarevna Frid, *Proshedshee, nastoiashchee, i budushchee v "Khovanshchine"* *Musorgskogo* (Leningrad: Muzyka, 1974), 279–291.

is an end to *all* presents; in fact, it is an end to time itself, and thus inherently incompatible with other attitudes toward history.”¹⁹ In the opera, even Peter himself is absorbed into the morass of history. Due to a censor’s ban on Romanov tsars figuring as characters in theatrical spectacles, Peter had to remain offstage, an abstract if ominous threat rather than an immanent force.

The opera begins with a now-famous orchestral prelude titled “Dawn Over the Moscow River.” The main theme of the prelude is in the style of a *protiazhnaia*, a “drawn out” folk song with a highly ornamented melody. Each orchestral statement of the tune is ornamented in a slightly different manner, just as a singer would perform a *protiazhnaia*. (Ex. 1, excerpted from the flute part, shows one version of the theme.) The effect of this treatment is less like a theme with variations than, in Boris Gasparov’s words, a “community of versions,” with no individual iteration of the theme coming to serve as definitive. The orchestration, too, is kaleidoscopic, with various accompanimental styles following one after the other – a method known, prosaically enough, as the “changing backgrounds technique.”²⁰ Associated most strongly with Glinka’s symphonic fantasy *Kamarinskaia* – the acorn, according to Chaikovsky, from which the oak of Russian music sprang – the changing backgrounds technique is a mode of orchestral variation calculated specifically to avoid development. There is no working out of themes, no harmonic “progress,” no structural trajectory of any kind. One “background” simply succeeds another; it is an epic, not a narrative, form. In the prelude to *Khovanshchina*, each statement of the theme is harmonically open-ended, finishing on the dominant (sometimes with an extension to V/V). Any sense of tension, however, is undercut by the ostinato-like nature of the theme, which brings an inevitable and immediate return with the next iteration. The effect, once again, is one of circularity, of a sort of fluctuating stasis, rather than a linear progression.

¹⁹ Caryl Emerson, “Musorgsky’s Libretti on Historical Themes: From the Two *Borises* to *Khovanshchina*,” in Arthur Groos and Roger Parker, eds., *Reading Opera* (Princeton University Press, 1998), 249.

²⁰ For a history of the changing backgrounds technique in Russian music, see Richard Taruskin, “How the Acorn Took Root: A Tale of Russia,” *19th-Century Music* 6, no. 3 (Spring 1983): 189–212.

Ex. 1. *Khovanshchina*, Prelude.

The *protiazhnaia* idiom crops up at every corner of *Khovanshchina*. One of the most striking and unexpected appearances of this style is in the aria of Shaklovitya, a scheming Boyar who, until the first scene of Act III, evinces nary a thought for anything but his own self-interest. At this moment, however, Shaklovitya summons up a *protiazhnaia* to lament Russia's eternal suffering: "Ah, mother Rus', unhappy in fate! Who can save you from your sad lot?" (Ex. 2.) Like Natasha's dance in *War and Peace*, this folk idiom proves accessible to all Russians within *Khovanshchina's* fictional realm, irrespective of class and character. It is, moreover, a singularly appropriate musical style for this sort of text, for, as Soviet musicologist Boris Asaf'iev wrote in his study on Russian song, Russians have often imagined the *protiazhnaia* as a point of contact between the "I" and the "we," where individual emotional expression is subsumed, and apotheosized, into a statement of universal experience, of Russians' shared suffering. "In *protiazhnye*," Asaf'iev writes, "all the people's past and experience, all their thoughts and feelings, all their humanism, is expressed without loud and flashy pathos, with deep seriousness and stately modesty of a restrained soul. It is the entire country that is singing, the country for which life has always been a harsh experience and whose lot has always been one of indescribable suffering."²¹ Eternal, "indescribable suffering" might well serve as a nutshell description of *Khovanshchina's* overarching historical vision.

²¹ Boris Asaf'ev, "O russoi pesennosti," *Sovetskaia Muzyka* 3 (1948): 24.

Ex. 2. *Khovanshchina*, Act III. Shaklovity's aria:

Ах, ты, в судь - би - не зло - счаст - на - я, род - на - я Русь, —
 Ach, du vom Schick - sal so schmerz - lich ge - trof - fe - nes Land, —

кто - ж, — кто те - бя — печаль - ну - ю от бе - ды лихой спа - сет? — Аль
 wer, — wer wird dich, — be - küm - mer - tes Va - ter - land vom Leid be - frei? — Sind

SHAKLOVITY: Ah, mother Rus', unhappy in fate! Who can save you from your sad lot?

While the *protiazhnaia*'s melodic style intermittently infects the vocal parts of several characters, one personage demonstrates a particular inclination toward it. Marfa, a clairvoyant Old Believer, has a misfortune of her own to bewail – namely, abandonment by her lover, Prince Andrei Khovansky. She does so, however, not in the idiosyncratic language of Romantic opera, but in the *protiazhnaia*'s “universal” idiom. Resolutely tuneful, her vocal line rarely strays from the forms and conventions of Russian folk music; unlike Boris Godunov, and indeed unlike her erstwhile lover, Andrei Khovansky, Marfa narrates her inner unrest in rounded and regular phrases. Her number in Act III, “Once a Maiden Went Wandering,” (See Appendix A, Ex. 1) is based on an authentic folk song that would have been familiar to Musorgsky’s audience, owing to its publication in Vil’boa’s 1860 anthology of popular songs. (Chaikovsky also used the tune in his 1864 overture to Alexander Ostrovsky’s play *The Storm*.) It was also one of few pieces in the opera that Musorgsky lived to orchestrate himself.

MARFA:

Once a maiden went wandering
Through the meadows and marshes.
Through the meadows and marshes.
She was searching for her lost lover.

Though her courage began to fail,
Sore and blistered her tiny feet,
Onward she wandered through the night,
But she could not find her lost lover.

To his own cottage she came at last.
Swift and silent she ran to the door,
Sharply tapped on the window pane,
Hoping he would hear.

Do you remember, beloved one?
Ah, how you swore to be true to me!
Long I've languished in nights so dark,
And your vows were my consolation.

Like the eternal flame of God
We shall burn together.
We shall share in the brotherhood
Of souls released by cleansing fire.

You have broken the vows you made,
Mocked my love and devotion.
But, in death, you shall join with me,
With your abandoned, despised Old
Believer.²²

Marfa enters the scene singing a familiar tune – presumably, within the context of the opera, a pre-existing peasant song she has heard many times before. Only gradually do we realize that the maiden who went wandering is, in fact, Marfa herself, and that she is folding her own history into this “universalized” narrative. (Moreover, the English translation mostly obscures the way in which, from the second verse onward, Marfa alternates between first- and third-person pronouns, between “I” and “she.”) While her text moves from past, to present, to future – Marfa and Andrei will both indeed “burn together” at the end of the opera – the music admits no such forward motion. As in “Dawn Over the Moscow River,” Marfa’s aria comprises an ostinato theme (a theme that ends, again like the prelude to the opera, on the dominant, and thus with no ending at all), accompanied by a kaleidoscopic sequence of accompaniments. While the changing backgrounds respond to the momentary images suggested by the text – a staccato jab, for example, on the word “knock” (*stuk*) – the overall impression is one of supreme stasis. The “I” and the “we,” the past, the present, and the future all collapse into Marfa’s song.

Stasov found the character curiously impassive, and sent Musorgsky a long list of suggested improvements: make Marfa Golitsyn’s mistress, for one, and beyond that a “furiously amorous and jealous woman.”²³ (Musorgsky put him off, replying that he

²² Translation adapted from Jennifer Batchelor and Nicholas John, eds., *Khovanshchina: The Khovansky Affair* (Paris and London: Calder in association with the English National Opera, 1994).

²³ “In its present form,” wrote Stasov in a letter of May 18, 1876, “your opera has too many choruses and too little activity of individual personalities, characters.” His suggestions for

had “fallen into thought.”²⁴) Later critics, too, have found Musorgsky’s vocal writing for Marfa “impersonal,” observing that she seems not to speak, but rather to be spoken through.²⁵ Having given up her musical subjectivity along with her control over historical events, this spurned seer appears to have read *War and Peace*, and taken Tolstoy’s advice very much to heart.

Johanna contra fatum

Joan of Arc has often served as a bellwether for cultural attitudes toward fate and human agency, for her own slipperiness – instrument of God or glory-seeking manipulator? – lends itself to virtually every interpretation.²⁶ For political leaders, historians, and artists alike, this figure held a special fascination in the “revolutionary” nineteenth century, and her image fluctuated much according to the tenor of the times. Chaikovsky’s sources for his opera *The Maid of Orleans*, written in 1878-1879, comprised a *borscht* of nineteenth-century literature, drama, and historiography. The most notable of these was Friedrich Schiller’s 1801 play *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, along with two contemporary French works: Jules Barbier and Charles Gounod’s 1873 melodrama *Jeanne d’Arc* and Auguste Mermet’s 1876 opera of the same name. All of these sources

Marfa’s renovation run to several pages and amount to a complete psychological overhaul. In Stasov’s plan, Marfa’s aria in Act III would be contextualized thus: “Marfa, who has heard and discovered all, rushes to [Andrei]; her resolution to retreat from all worldly things is broken, she is suffocating with jealousy, with fury and lust for this young, handsome hussar of the seventeenth century – she flings and tosses herself about like a real Potiphar’s wife, the voice of the dissenter and of ‘the true faith’ has left her and is silenced, leaving only a furiously amorous and jealous woman. But Andrei manages to free himself from her and declares that he doesn’t love her and never will love another man’s slave, Golitzin’s mistress! ... She is left alone, crushed and beaten, she looks about her in dismay at her solitude, and just then, from the background of the street (or from a window) Susanna, who has silently witnessed the whole scene, sneaks up to her....” Leyda and Bertensson, *The Musorgsky Reader: A Life of Modeste Petrovich Musorgsky in Letters and Documents*, 335–336.

²⁴ See Musorgsky’s letter of June 15, in *Ibid.*, 338.

²⁵ “[*Khovanshchina*’s] sinuous melodies,” writes Taruskin, “unlike the idiosyncratic recitatives of [Musorgsky’s] earlier manner, are curiously impersonal. The characters who sing them (Marfa throughout, Shaklovitiy in act 3, Dosifei in acts 3 and 5) do not speak, it seems; rather, something is speaking through them.” Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 324.

²⁶ For a survey of historical interpretations of the Joan story, see Dominique Goy-Blanquet, ed., *Joan of Arc, a Saint for All Reasons: Studies in Myth and Politics* (Aldershot, Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2003). For a discussion of twentieth-century views on Joan of Arc, see Françoise Meltzer, *For Fear of the Fire: Joan of Arc and the Limits of Subjectivity* (University of Chicago Press, 2010).

(unlike the historian Michelet's writings about Joan in the 1840s,²⁷ which Chaikovsky also consulted), present Joan as more instrument than agent, but the German and French works take differing, and even opposing, stances on her character and motivations. By importing "French" traits into Schiller's basic scenario, Chaikovsky created a Joan quite distinct from her European prototypes.

The heroine of *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* undergoes an Edenic fall, from unthinking obedience to guilty self-consciousness. Schiller's Johanna is at first much like Brünnhilde in Act II of *Die Walküre*: confident, secure in her God-ordained mission, and utterly unreflective. That mission, as Schiller portrays it, is to forswear love in order to liberate her country – to seek universal, rather than personal, satisfaction. But on seeing the face of Lionel, an enemy knight (English in Schiller's version, Burgundian, and therefore redeemable, in Chaikovsky's), Johanna instantly learns love – and doubt. She begins to question her own motives, and then to admonish herself for questioning: "A sightless instrument thy God demands/Blindly thou must accomplish his behest!"²⁸ Her "transgression," however, is limited to thought-crime; she keeps the man she loves ever at a distance, disavowing any friendship between herself and the English. In the end, she reaffirms her commitment to her heavenly cause, and Schiller's Johanna dies on the battlefield, not at the stake.

The Jeannes d'Arc of Barbier/Gounod and Mermet are a far and feeble cry from Schiller's proto-Valkyrie.²⁹ These pale saints express grave doubts about their own fitness for the mission they have been assigned, aspiring to nothing greater than an obscure life in the French countryside. "All-powerful God," pleads Barbier's Jeanne at the end of Act I, "I implore your goodness: leave, leave my life in its obscurity!"³⁰ In the parallel scene of Mermet's opera, Jeanne embarks on her campaign with dread:

²⁷ Michelet presents perhaps the most positive take of all: his Joan is both creative and ingenuous, an uncalculating agent. "[Joan] was a living legend," wrote the liberal historian, "But the vital force in her, exalted and concentrated, became all the more creative. Unawares, the young girl *created*, so to speak, her own ideas, turned them into realities, made them entities, powers, imparted to them, from the treasure of her virginal life, an existence so splendid, so compelling that the paltry realities of this world grew faint in comparison." Jules Michelet, *Joan of Arc*, trans. Albert Guerard (University of Michigan Press, 1957), 9.

²⁸ Friedrich Schiller, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Schiller*, vol. 5 (New York: P.F. Collier, 1902), 208.

²⁹ For a detailed discussion of these two works, see Thérèse Hurley, "Jeanne d'Arc on the 1870s Musical Stage: Jules Barbier and Charles Gounod's Melodrama and Auguste Mermet's Opera" (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2013).

³⁰ "Seigneur Dieu tout puissant, j'implore ta bonté: Laisse, laisse ma vie en son obscurité!"

L'engagement est pris...
je ne puis me dédire.
Au moment solennel,
je sens faiblir mon cœur.
Ce rêve audacieux,
au quel mon âme aspire,
se dresse menaçant!
Prête à partir...j'ai peur!

The time has come...
I cannot go back.
At this solemn moment,
I feel my heart falter.
This audacious dream,
to which my soul aspires,
looms threateningly!
Ready to leave...I'm frightened!

Unlike Schiller's Johanna, these demure French heroines are racked with fears and insecurities from the beginning – but they would never think of *acting* on those doubts. Outwardly, they fulfill their missions admirably; neither succumbs to romantic love (though forswearing love was not a condition either French God demanded), and neither dares to let her own personal feelings cause her to disobey God or king. Mermet's Jeanne accepts the king's direction to remain at his side after France has been liberated – even though she has premonitions of the conflagrant future that awaits her. Barbier and Gounod's heroine, meanwhile, dies a blameless martyr's death at the stake, the lamblike victim of impassive fate.

Chaikovsky's opera would retain the outline of Schiller's plot, as well as much of his language. But operatic self-reflection being a peculiar Chaikovskian delicacy, the Russian composer – acting, with difficulty, as his own librettist³¹ – grafted French doubts onto Schiller's empty gong of a heroine.³² The distance between Schiller and Chaikovsky's maids can be judged from their "farewell" monologues in Act I of both play and opera, as the two shepherdesses prepare to leave their homes and join the French campaign against the English.

³¹ "I am very well pleased with my musical work [on *The Maid of Orleans*]. As regards the literary side of it, I believe it will cost me some days of my life. I cannot describe how it exhausts me. How many penholders I gnaw to pieces before a few lines grow perfect! How often I jump up in sheer despair because I cannot find a rhyme, or the metre goes wrong, or because I have absolutely no notion of what this or that character would say at a particular moment!"
Chaikovsky to Nadezhda von Meck, January 1879, in, *The Life & Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky*, 331.

³² "Beneath this vest of steel," boasts Schiller's Johanna to a captured enemy, "there beats no heart."

Ex. 1 A. Schiller, *The Maid of Orleans*, Act I, Scene 4³³

Farewell ye mountains, ye beloved glades,
Ye lone and peaceful valleys, fare ye well!
Through you Johanna never more may stray!
For, ay, Johanna bids you now farewell.
Ye meads which I have watered, and ye trees
Which I have planted, still in beauty bloom!
Farewell ye grottos, and ye crystal springs!
Sweet echo, vocal spirit of the vale.
Who sang'st responsive to my simple strain,
Johanna goes, and ne'er returns again.

Ye scenes where all my tranquil joys
I knew, Forever now I leave you far behind!
Poor foldless lambs, no shepherd now have you!
O'er the wide heath stray henceforth unconfined!
For I to danger's field, of crimson hue,
Am summoned hence another flock to find.
Such is to me the spirit's high behest;
No earthly, vain ambition fires my breast.

For who in glory did on Horeb's height
Descend to Moses in the bush of flame,
And bade him go and stand in Pharaoh's sight—
Who once to Israel's pious shepherd came,
And sent him forth, his champion in the fight,—
Who aye hath loved the lowly shepherd train,—
He, from these leafy boughs, thus spake to me,
"Go forth! Thou shalt on earth my witness be.

"Thou in rude armor must thy limbs invest,
A plate of steel upon thy bosom wear;
Vain earthly love may never stir thy breast,
Nor passion's sinful glow be kindled there.
Ne'er with the bride-wreath shall thy locks be dressed,
Nor on thy bosom bloom an infant fair;
But war's triumphant glory shall be thine;

Ex. 1 B. Chaikovsky, *The Maid of Orleans*, Act I

Yes, the hour has come.
Joan must submit to the will of heaven.
But why has terror crept into my soul?
My heart aches so painfully!

Farewell, you hills, you native fields,
You peaceful, clear valleys, farewell!
Joan will no more be seen with you.
Forever she says to you: adieu!
Meadows and trees, my friends, my pets,
Ah, you will bloom and fade without me!
Cool grotto, my swift-flowing stream,
I leave you now, and will never return again.

Those places that were once so dear,
From now on you'll forever be parted from me.
My flock, I'll no longer be your fence;
You're fated to wander without a shepherd.
It has fallen to me to lead another flock,
On the bloody pastures of war.
So has heaven decreed it;
No earthly desire attracts me.

O God! I open my heart to you:
It grieves, it suffers!

³³ Schiller, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Schiller*, 5:142–143.

Thy martial fame all women's shall outshine.

"For when in fight the stoutest hearts despair,
When direful ruin threatens France, forlorn,
Then thou aloft my oriflamme shalt bear,
And swiftly as the reaper mows the corn,
Thou shalt lay low the haughty conqueror;
His fortune's wheel thou rapidly shalt turn,
To Gaul's heroic sons deliverance bring,
Relieve beleaguered Rheims, and crown thy king!"
The heavenly spirit promised me a sign;

He sends the helmet, it hath come from him.
Its iron filleth me with strength divine,
I feel the courage of the cherubim;
As with the rushing of a mighty wind
It drives me forth to join the battles din;
The clanging trumpets sound, the chargers rear,
And the loud war-cry thunders in mine ear.

Chaikovsky leaves Schiller's first two stanzas more or less intact; the minor differences in the English renderings here owe themselves to the fact that Chaikovsky was working from Vasily Zhukovsky's Russian translation of *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*. But in omitting the last four verses, and in flanking Schiller's text with introspective exclamations, Chaikovsky shifts the focus of Ioanna's monologue from her future victories to her present emotional state. Note, in particular, the ending: the aria finishes not with a yelp of bravado and visions of martial glory, but with a lament for a grieving, suffering heart. As in Barbier/Gounod and Mermet, this Ioanna knows her mission, but seems decidedly apprehensive to accept it. How will this new, psychologically complex heroine fit into Schiller's plot, which – unlike the French versions – requires an Eve-like fall from grace? This Ioanna, after all, is self-conscious to begin with; love can have nothing of the sort to teach her. What kind of "blind instrument" can this doubting subject be?

Ioanna's internal struggle at the end of Act I is conveyed in a battle royale of timbres and harmonies. During her aria, "Farewell, you hills, you native fields," she holds the stage alone for upwards of seven minutes – a circumstance all but unheard of in grand opera, but common enough in Chaikovsky – mulling over her doubts and fears in D minor. The melody describes a descending chromatic line, the accompaniment heavy with Dionysian winds and brass. (Ex. 3.)

Ex. 3. Chaikovsky, *The Maid of Orleans*, Act I, Ioanna's aria, second verse

Tempo I.

Ob. *p*

Corni. *p* *pp*

I. *p*

Мѣс-та, гдѣ все бы-ва-ло мнѣ ус-ла-дой, от-ны-нѣ вы сомной раз-
Ihr Plät-zte all' von mei-nen stül-len Freu-den, euch lass' ich hin-ter mir auf

pp *p*

Tempo I.

Ob. *p* *cresc.*

Fag. *p* *cresc.*

I. *p* *cresc.* *scen.* *do*

-лу че-ны; мо-и ста-да, не бу-дувамъ ог-ра-дой, безъ па-сты-ря бро-
im mer-dar! Ihr Lämmer all' zer-streuteuch auf den Hai-den, denn hir-ten-los ver-

pp *cresc.* *scen.*

pp *cresc.* *scen.*

pp *cresc.* *scen.*

pp *cresc.* *scen.*

pp *pizz.* *cresc.* *scen.*

IOANNA: Those places that were once so dear, from now on will forever be parted from me. My flock, I'll no longer be your fence; you're fated to wander without a shepherd.

Ioanna's chromatic, wind-accompanied aria yields to chromatic, wind-accompanied recitative: "But have I the strength; am I fit to accept such a crushing duty?" Eventually, Ioanna's doubts and dusky harmonies are interrupted by the sound of bells – an angel chorus has come to visit her, bearing triadic vocal writing and the Apollonian sonorities of the harp. Their message is unyielding: "You must put on your battle armor; in iron will your young breast be enclosed." After a quick orchestral interlude to collect her thoughts, Joan addresses the angels in their own musical language – diatonic, harp-accompanied, with a militantly regular rhythm. But her former doubts have not yet subsided. "You heavenly hosts of angels and cherubim," she cries, "look down on me: I suffer, tremble, I weep..." After two rounds of this pleading, she breaks down to the sound of diminished triads: "Is it time? Can there really be no return?" "Take courage, Joan," the angels urge, and after another orchestral interlude and a long rest, she does. Joan now sings the same melody as before, replacing the words "I suffer, I tremble, I weep," with "now I am strong, I am ready." The scene ends in a blaze of E-flat major triads, punctuated only by the intrusion of a C-flat major chord near the end – a remnant, perhaps, of her chromatic near-past. (See Appendix A, Ex. 2-5.)

In contrast to Marfa's aria, which collapses, past, present, future, and subject into the fluctuating stasis of the changing backgrounds technique, Ioanna's scene at the end of the first act – encompassing nearly fifteen minutes in total – narrates a dynamic psychological process unfolding in time. Ioanna moves from introspective longing to resigned conviction, and from chromatic woodwinds to diatonic harps. Also, while Marfa sings her feelings in the style of the "universal" *protiazhnaia*, tuning her own subjectivity, as it were, to the frequency of the infinite, Ioanna's "subjective" music sounds vastly different (and, frankly, much more interesting) than the square, diatonic melodies the angels inspire her to sing. Fate, blunt and unsubtle, is the empty gong here. Of course, Ioanna's fate is no less sealed than Marfa's – and it is not a "karmic" fate, at this point, but an "indifferent" one; the gods of history are attempting to work through her. The angels, however, have quite a job of convincing her to fulfill that destiny willingly. And if the penultimate blast of the flat submediant is any indication, Ioanna's conversion may not be as secure as the angels hope.

Any concerns the angels might have had on Ioanna's account would have been well founded, as the musical battle for the heroine's soul does not end with the Act I finale. At the court of Rheims in Act II, a victorious Ioanna narrates her heavenly visions to the sound of the harp (and often to the tune of the angel chorus) – but finds considerably reedier backing when she recalls her former life as a shepherdess. (In Ex. 4, below, Ioanna describes one such visitation; the harp cedes to the oboe and clarinet when she notes that the saint who came calling was dressed "like me, as a shepherdess.") In Act III, the winds return with a vengeance when Ioanna meets Lionel and shows the enemy knight an uncharacteristic bit of mercy. The lamenting arioso she sings as she lets Lionel go (Ex. 5) – romance-like in style, with heavy chromatic decoration and woodwind

accompaniment – clearly recalls her Act I aria, “Farewell, you hills, you native glades.” (When sung, as it usually is, by a mezzo soprano,³⁴ the arioso is even in the same key as the aria.) By tying Ioanna’s actions in the forest to her “subjective” music from Act I, Chaikovsky removes the element of shock that was present in Schiller. This is no sudden or fleeting lapse, no spontaneous sprouting of sentiment in a heroine who had never before demonstrated any capacity for it. Musically, her “betrayal” was prepared long ago; this act is consistent with the Ioanna we know, not wildly out of character.

And, unlike her Schillerian prototype, this Joan of Arc will eventually transgress against heaven’s command in deed as well as thought. Hiding out in a forest at the beginning of Act IV, Joan again struggles with a moral decision: should she, once and for all, give in to her feelings for Lionel? This time, Ioanna’s emotional, subjective, chromatic side wins the day. Lionel suddenly enters the scene, and the two break into a love duet. With its reedy timbres from the oboe and clarinet, and with its constant alternation between the flat and natural sixth scale degree, the duet bears all the sonic markers of what Taruskin has called *nega*,³⁵ Russian composers’ shorthand for representing blissed-out, satisfied desire in operas from *Ruslan and Liudmila* to *Prince Igor*. The middle section, meanwhile – with its arching stepwise melody and harmonic motion by semitones – seems suspiciously redolent of the *Tristan* prelude (see Ex. 6). Like that other impossible pair, Ioanna and Lionel can never be united in this time and place. But here, where she sings of her desire to stretch moments into eternity, time itself seems to be transformed. Joan, who has until now always been shown in battle, internal or external, suddenly gives up fighting. Linear, progressive time becomes vertical and suspended, as if what Joan willed – “Ah, if only this hour could last forever and ever, without end!” – has indeed come to pass. And unlike Tristan and Isolde’s duet, this one is allowed to finish; only as the duet fades into its D-flat major afterglow do the angels dare to intervene. Fate – no longer indifferent, but punishing – does get her in the end, but as Chicherin might have hoped, Ioanna meets her destiny on her own terms.

³⁴ In 1882, about eighteen months after the opera’s premiere, the Imperial Theatres Directorate asked Chaikovsky to transpose Ioanna’s role for mezzo soprano. He complied, and both authorial versions were printed in Jurgenson’s edition of the full score (1899). In its performance history, the role has mostly become a mezzo vehicle (notably for Irina Arkhipova), notwithstanding the soprano Nina Rautio’s turn in the recent Bol’shoi production of *The Maid of Orleans*, released on DVD in 2005.

³⁵ See “Entoiling the Falconet,” in Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 152–185.

Ex. 4. *The Maid of Orleans*, Act II. Harps and winds in Ioanna's narration:

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system features a vocal line for Ioanna (marked 'I.'), a harp part (marked 'Agra.'), and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "И разъ, вьночь съ усердно ю молитвой, забывъ о спѣ, сидѣла я подь дровомъ, Пре-чи-ста я предста ла миѣ; Docheinst, als ei - ne Nacht hindurch in Andacht ich unterm Baum gesessen, nimmerschlafend, da trat die Hei - li - ge zu mir;". The harp part is marked 'p' and the piano accompaniment is marked 'mp'. The second system features a vocal line for Ioanna (marked 'I.'), an oboe (Ob.) and clarinet (Cl.) part, and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "въ рукахъ е - я былъ мечъ и знамя, но о - дѣ - та о - на была, какъ я, пастушкой, и ска - зала: „уз - in ih - rer Hand war Schwert und Banner, aber sonst, mir gleich in die Schiffertracht gekleidet, und sie sagte: „Er -". The oboe and clarinet parts are marked 'p'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'p'.

IOANNA: And once, as I sat beneath the tree all night in fervent prayer, forgetting sleep, the holy one appeared to me. She held a sword and a banner in her hands, but she was dressed, like me, as a shepherdess.

Ex. 5. *The Maid of Orleans*, Act III. Ioanna's arioso:

Fl. I. Allegro moderato.

ведчайшей горести и отчаянья)
größter Betrübniß und Verzweiflung)

1. мой, за-чѣмъ, ахъ, за-чѣмъ за мечъ бо-инственный я свой посохъ от-да-ла,
Gott, mein Gott! Frommer Stab, o häßt' ich nim-mer mit dem Schwerte dich ver-tauscht!

Allegro moderato.

Fl. I.

Cor. III.

и то-бо-ю, и то-бо-ю, дубъ та-инственный, о-ча-ро-ва-на бы-ла?
Hätt' es nie, o häßt' es nie in dei-nen Zwei-gen, heil'ge Ei-che, mir ge-rauscht!

IOANNA: [O my God], why did I forsake my shepherdess' crook for a battle sword?
 And why, you mystical oak,³⁶ was I taken in by you?

³⁶ The site of Ioanna's visions, according to legend.

Ex. 6. *The Maid of Orleans*, Act IV duet, middle section:

564

Cl. *a 2*

Cor. III. IV.

I. *leidenschaftlich.*

J.

..ви! Часъ не забвенный, свѣтлый, блаженный, о, ес-либъ вѣчно длиться мого ты,
Zeit! Stun-de des Glu-cks, see!-gen Ge-schi-ckes, o, dass du währtest mir in E-wig.

Cl. *a 2*

Fag.

Corni.

I.

J.

..вѣчно, вѣчно, безъ конца!
..keit, in al-le E-wig-keit! (Вдохновенно, страстно; сильно.)
ЛИОНЕЛЬ LIONEL. *ff* (Begeistert, leidenschaftlich, mit Kraft.)

Чудный даръ любви! Часъ не забвенный
Won-nig-li-che Zeit! Stun-de des

pizz.

3950

IOANNA: Wondrous gift of love! Unforgettable hour, serene and blessed. O blessed hour, if only you could last forever and ever, without end!

Opera off the clock

The black earth's power will manifest itself, when you plow it to the very bottom. It is possible to plow the black earth with tools wrought of alien materials. And at the end of the seventeenth century they did plow Mother Russia with *such* tools, that she could not immediately discern with what they plowed, and how the black earth *opened up* and began to *breathe*. And there the beloved Mother gave herself to sundry actual and privy state councilors and they gave her, the long-suffering, no time to collect herself and think: "*where are you pushing me?*" The ignorant and the confused were executed: *force!* and officialdom goes on and the search is aver as of oft: only the times have changed: the actual and privy state councilors disturb the *breathing* of the black earth. The past within the present – that is my task.

'*We've gone ahead*' – you lie. *We're still here!* Paper, books, they've gone ahead – *we're still here*. ...Public benefactors are quite apt to glorify themselves, and to fix their glory in documents, but the people groan, and drink to stifle their groans, and groan all the louder: *still here!*³⁷

So wrote the composer of *Khovanshchina*, an opera in which all actions are futile and the only characters who get what they want are those who give up believing their own efforts can bring it about.³⁸ Chaikovsky's views on the individual in history, at least as regards his own creative work, were more in line with Solov'yov's image of Peter the Great: "If I am sure of anything, it is that in my writing I am as God created me, as well as a product of my upbringing, circumstances, the characteristics of the age and the country in which I live and work. I have never betrayed myself."³⁹ The self Chaikovsky describes is one conditioned, but not wholly determined, by history.

As for Marfa and Joan, the two clairvoyant lovers exemplify opposing attitudes toward the destinies they foresee. Marfa, subsuming her own grief into Russia's eternal suffering, heeds her mentor Dosifei's aphorism: "In God's will lies our non-will." (And also our non-self, apparently, for in *Khovanshchina*, individuals are just as predetermined as history; "without Man being aware of it," Musorgsky wrote to Stasov while composing the opera, "he is *gripped in a vise*."⁴⁰) Ioanna, on the other hand, has a

³⁷ Letter to Vladimir Stasov, June 16-22, 1872, in Leyda and Bertensson, *The Musorgsky Reader: A Life of Modeste Petrovich Musorgsky in Letters and Documents*, 185–186.

³⁸ See Taruskin, "The Power of the Black Earth: Notes on *Khovanshchina*," in *Musorgsky*, 313–327.

³⁹ Letter to Sergei Taneyev, January 14, 1891, in Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky*, 621.

⁴⁰ Letter to Vladimir Stasov, October 18, 1872, in Leyda and Bertensson, *The Musorgsky Reader: A Life of Modeste Petrovich Musorgsky in Letters and Documents*, 198.

much harder time of relinquishing her subjectivity. Historical inevitability still reigns in *The Maid of Orleans*: despite her hemming and hawing, Joanna fulfills her historical mission to a “T,” flawlessly delivering France from English occupation. Her only scope for “free” action is in the realm of the personal, and for even this small rebellion, she is punished. But for Joanna, as for Dostoevsky’s desperate characters, “freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and evil” is a thing worth preserving, even at the cost of her life.

One feat both Marfa and Joan accomplish, however, is to step *out* of history, at least momentarily: Marfa by collapsing time, Joan by suspending it. In *War and Peace*, Tolstoy proposed that free will is only conceivable in a temporal vacuum: “To imagine [an action] is free, it is necessary to imagine it in the present, on the boundary between the past and the future – that is, outside time.”⁴¹ These conditions are impossible, Tolstoy writes, for no one can escape the bounds of history. Except, perhaps, in opera.

⁴¹ Tolstoï, *War and Peace*, 1069.

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APPENDIX A
Extended Musical Examples to Chapter Four

Ex. 1. *Khovanshchina*, Act III. Marfa's song, "Iskhodila Mladioshen'ka"

2) *Listesso tempo*

7) Марфа Сидя на заваленке у дома, занятого Хованским.

1) Marfa Auf dem Wall vor dem von Chovansky besetzten Hause sitzend.

8) *p*

Ис_хо_ди_ла мла_дѣ_шень_ка все лу_га и бо_ло_та,
Ue_ber Nacht ging die jun_ge Maid durch die Wie_sen und Fel_der,

poco ritard.

все лу_га и бо_ло_та, а и все сен_ны_е по_ко_сы.
durch die Wie_sen und Fel_der, durch die Hei_de und dunk_le Wäl_der.

Ex. 1. cont.

9 *a tempo*

Ис-топ-та-ла, мла-дѣ-шенька, не-ко-ло-ла я но-женьки,
Wie sie lief ü-ber Strauch und Stein, stach der Dorn in die Soh-len ein,

все за ми-лым рыс-ка-ю-чи, да и лих-е-го не и-ма-ю-чи.
sie a-ber sucht' den Lieb-sten fein, der ihr, ach, ge-stoh-len das Her-ze-lein.

10

Уж-как под-кра-лась, мла-дѣ-шенька, ко-то-му ли я к те-ре-му,
Und als sie kam an das stol-ze Haus, war der Tag längst ver-klun-gen schon,

уж я стук под о-кон-це, уж я бряк во зве-ня-ше ко-леч-ко:
und ich pocht' an sein Fen-ster und ich klopft' mit dem klir-ren-den Ring'-lein:

Ex. 1. cont.

11

Вспом - ни, припом - ни, ми - лой — мой, ох, не забудь как бо - жил - ся,
 Denkst du da - ran, o mein Lieb - stev, dass du mir Treu hast ge - schwö - ren?

pp legatissimo

мно - го - ж я но - чек про - ма - я - лась все тво - ей ли бож - бой у - слаж - да - ю - чись.
 Vie - le der Näch - te hab ich durch - wacht, dei - nen Schwü - ren ge - lauscht in herz - inn' - ger Lust.

12 Poco meno mosso - mistico.

Слав - но све - чи бо - жи - е, мы с то - бо - ю за -
 In dem Got - tes Flam - men - schein strahl - ten bei - de wir

- теб - лим - ся; о - крест бра - тья во пла - ме - ни, я в ды -
 fei - - er - lich; Got - tes Flam - men er - grei - fen jetzt uns - re

Марфа.
Marfa.

13 Tempo I^o; con forza.

- му ог - бе ду - ши но - сят - ся. Раз - лю - бил ты мла -
Her - zen und See - len lich - er - lohl Treu - los warst du der

Входит Сусанна.
Susanne tritt ein.

- де - шень - ку, ва - гу - бил ты на во - люш - ке, так по - чу - ешь в не -
jun - gen Maid, hast ge - bro - chen den Lie - bes - schwur, da - für rächt sich durch

Сусанна.
Susanne.

Злобно.
Zornig.

f

Грех! —
Oh! —

Марфа.
Marfa.

- во - ле злой о - по - сты - лу - ю, злу - ю рас - коль - ни - цу!
ew' - ges Leid die ver - sto - sse - ne, ar - ge Ge - lieb - te dein!

Ex. 2. *The Maid of Orleans, Act I Finale. Angels' entrance:*

135

Moderato.

-дѣтъ должна ты ла - ты бо - е - вы - я, въ же лѣ - зо грудь мла ду - ю за - ко -
rau - hes Erz sollst du die Glieder schnü - ren, mit Stahl be - de - cken dei - ne zar - te
 -мни, часъ на - стать, будь го - то - ва! мечъ твой по - ра пре - по -
Zeit ist schon da, sei ge - wär - tig! Gür - te das Schwert um zum

Арга.

Moderato.

- вать; стра - шись надеждъ, незнай любви зем - ны - я, вѣн - чальныхъ свѣтъ те - бѣ не за - жи -
Brust! Nicht Männer - lie - be darf dein Herz be - rüh - ren, mit sünd'gen Flammen eit - ler Er - den -
 - я - сать, и въбит - вахъ Богъ те - бя про - сла - витъ;
Kam - pfe, durch Sieg will Gott jetzt dich ver - klä - ren!

Арга.

Poco più mosso.

- гать, но въбит - вахъ Богъ гла - ву тво - ю про - сла - витъ, всѣхъ вы - ше дѣвъ земныхъ те - бя по -
- lust, Doch wird dich Gott mit kriege - rischen Eh - ren, vor al - len Er - den - frau - en jetzt ver -
 да, и въбит - вахъ Богъ гла - ву тво - ю про - сла - витъ, всѣхъ вы - ше дѣвъ земныхъ те - бя по -
Ja, es wird dich Gott mit kriege - rischen Eh - ren, vor al - len Er - den - frau - en jetzt ver -

Арга.

Poco più mosso.

3950

ANGELS: You must put on your battle armor; in iron will your young breast be enclosed. Dread all hope, and know not earthly love; no wedding candles will be lit for you. But in battle, God will glorify you above all earthly women.

Ex. 3. *The Maid of Orleans*, Act I Finale. Ioanna pleads:

Allegro moderato e maestoso

80 Иоанна (с силой и страстью)

Вы, сон - мы ан - ге - лов не - бес - ных

и хе - ру - ви - мов бес - те - лес - ных,

воз - зри - те с не - ба на ме - ня: тер -

- за - юсь, страж - ду, пла - чу я!

IOANNA (*with strength and passion*): You heavenly hosts of angels and ethereal cherubim, look down on me: I suffer, I tremble, I weep!

Ex. 4. *The Maid of Orleans*, Act I Finale. Ioanna is convinced:

Allegro giusto
 Иоанна *f*
 У - жель по - ра,

и
 у - же - ли нет воз - вра - та, и

и
 час про - бил?..

Сопрано (Сопрано соло с 1-ми сопрано) *ff*
 Альты Му - жай - ся, И - о -

ХОР АНГЕЛОВ (за сценой) *f cresc.*

Ex. 4. cont.

120

- ан - на, и - ди!

Allegro moderato e maestoso
(с вдохновением и силой, как бы в экстазе)

Иоанна

Вы, сон - мы ан - ге - лов не - бес - ных
о, спе - ши ско - рей,

Allegro moderato e maestoso

mf *p*

и хе - ру - ви - мов бес - те - лес ных,
час про - бил, по - ра, ты

Ех. 4. cont.

И. 
 воз - зри - те с не - ба на ме - ня: те -
 мощь вра - гов сра - зишь,

И. 
 - перь силь - на, го - то - ва я!
 в плач по - бед - ный глас об - ра - тишь!

И. 
 В ки - пя - щий бой ду - ша стре - мит - ся,
 130

IOANNA: Is it time? Is there really no return? And the hour has struck?

ANGELS: Take courage, Ioanna, go!

IOANNA: *(with inspiration and strength, as if in ecstasy)* You heavenly hosts of angels and ethereal cherubim, look down on me: now I am strong, I am ready. In seething battle, my soul will strive...

Ex. 5. *The Maid of Orleans*, Act I Finale. Ending:

160

Го - сподь с то - бо - ю!

ЗАНАВЕС

170

*) При исполнении первоначального варианта арии Иоанны с хором ангелов - здесь конец первого действия.

ANGELS: Go, go! God is with you!