

**ASSESSING THE ROLES OF THE NARRATOR IN
THE VERSE NOVEL: A LOOK AT PUSHKIN'S
*EUGENE ONEGIN***

BY

**HAROLD WILSON HUBERT
(10031892)**

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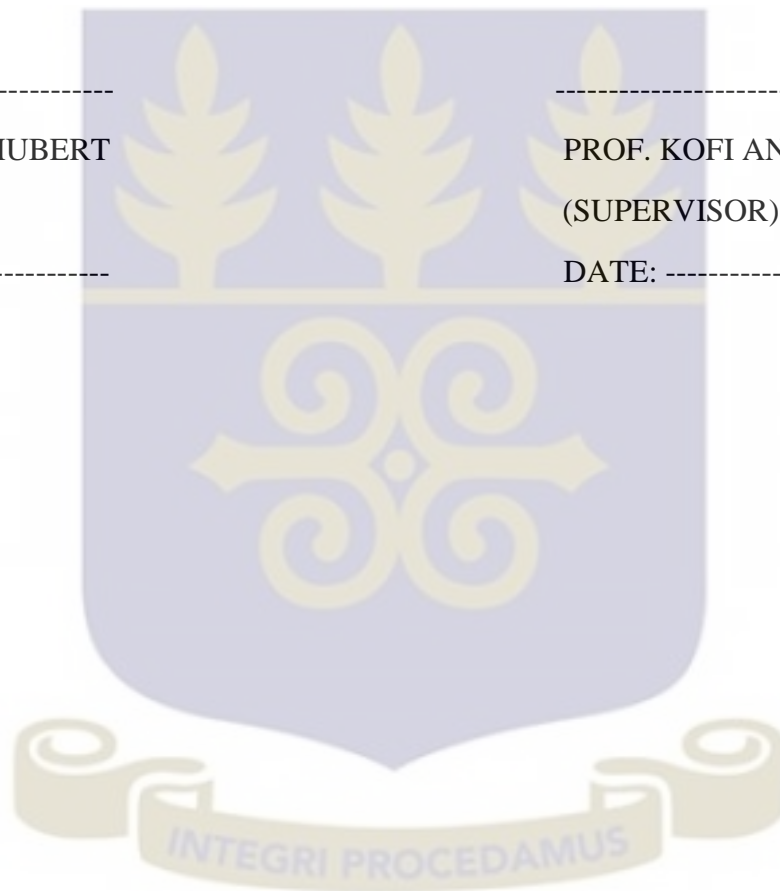
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the product of my own study, which I carried out under the supervision of Prof. Kofi Anyidoho.

All information included in this study was gathered from relevant primary and secondary literature, all of which have been duly acknowledged. Responsibility for all shortcomings remains mine.

HAROLD W. HUBERT
(STUDENT)
DATE: -----

PROF. KOFI ANYIDOHO
(SUPERVISOR)
DATE: -----



DEDICATION

TO KARI DARKO

Your dedication to the teaching and learning of the English Language in the University of Ghana and Ghana as a whole is acknowledged among your peers and students.

Through your personal commitment to the development of students, hope was restored to many and shattered dreams were pieced together from the shards of despair.

Posterity will sing your achievements in songs for generations.



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ABSTRACT

When mention of the narrator in fiction is made, the point that immediately comes to mind is the voice that speaks the story into the reader's ears. But the narrator does much more than just tell the story. Narratologist such as Gerard Genette and Monika Fludernik discuss other roles that the narrator plays even as it narrates the story. The narrator articulates its ideology, commenting or expounding on events in the story and in the process raising moral concerns.

The narrator may also engage narratees in discussions on the direction of the story. It may also offer testimonies to confirm the truth of the story, express his conviction concerning the events or state the degree of precision of the narrative. Finally, the narrator may say things purposely to maintain contact with narratees.

*This study finds out which of these roles the narrator in Alexander Pushkin's verse novel **Eugene Onegin** plays and the extent to which these functions support the plot. It is assumed that: the narrator in this novel plays roles other than just narrating the story: these other roles support the plot: and these roles are blurred by the narration of the story.*

*It is realised in the study that the narrator in **Eugene Onegin** actually plays roles other than just narrating the story. It is also realized that these other roles to a large extent support the development of the plot. The third assumption, that these other roles get blurred but the story falls flat in the face of evidence in the story, which shows that the other roles that the narrator plays are clearly marked out rather than blurred by the story.*



CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

The spotlight of this study is the roles that the narrator in Alexander Pushin`s verse novel *Eugene Onegin* plays. The novel is generally acknowledged as the `starting point of the classic Nineteenth Century Russian novel`¹ and it has remained a challenge to many readers and critics over the years. It was published in serial form between 1825 to 1832.

The first complete edition was published in 1833 and the currently accepted version is based on the 1837 publication. The novel has been hugely influential in the subsequent development of Russian literature, especially on the novels of Turgenev and Tolstoy.

The story`s principal characters, Onegin and Tatyana, have also served as archetypes ("superfluous man" and "ideal Russian woman" respectively) in the subsequent development of Russian literature. The moral superiority of Tatyana to her male counterpart Onegin has become a central aspect of Russian literature.

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- To identify the roles played by the narrator in the narrative.
- To examine the relevance of the narrator`s roles to the development of the novel.

¹ Levitt, 2006; 4. Apart from this reference, all other information in this Introduction were gathered from various online Encyclopedias.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical paradigm for this dissertation is a fusion of Gerard Genette's five functions of the narrator and Angstar Nunning's four-point framework of narrator functions. According to Gerrard Genette (1980; p. 255-6), the five functions of the narrator are the following:

- The narrative function.
- The directing function.
- The communication function.
- The testimonial function; and
- The ideological function.

On his part, Angstar Nunning (1989) proposes that a narrator has four functions in the narrative. They are:

- The narrative function.
- The commentary function.
- The moralist /philosopher function.
- The discursive function.

It is argued in this study that Nunning almost replicates Genette's framework. With the exception of Gerard's testimonial function and communication function, all the other variables in Genette's framework match the ones in Nunning's framework in meaning. Putting the two frameworks together therefore, the following narrator functions constitute the objects of identification and examination in this study:

- The narrative function.
- The directing/ discursive function.
- The communication function.
- The testimonial function.
- The commentary function.

- The philosophical function.

1.3 Hypotheses

Having synthesized various literatures related to the topic, the following hypotheses have been formulated to guide analysis of the primary text. They are:

- That in the process of narrating the story of the protagonist, the narrator plays other roles.
- That these other roles are relevant to the development of the story.
- That these other roles are blurred by the process of narrating the story.

1.4 Methodology

A general to specific approach is adopted in this study. In this regard, literature pertaining to the basic concepts of the study such as narrative and narrator, point of view, narrative discourse, *et cetera* is first to be studied. The aim in this regard is to formulate relevant operational definitions for the study.

Next, an effort is made to probe the historical foundations of Romanticism and the evolution of the narrator in the literature of the High Romantic Age (1785 – 1830). The aim is to understand issues concerning the narrator and his role(s) in the literature of the High Romantic Age. Finally, the study of secondary literature is narrowed down to critical works pertaining to the narrator's place and role in the primary text, *Eugene Onegin*. The aim is to appreciate what findings others have made on the topic of this study and use them as basis for a better understanding of the primary text.

Altogether, the review of the relevant second literatures provided the direction for the formulation of the hypotheses for the study.

Based on the theoretical framework and insight from the reviewed literatures, analysis of the primary text proceeds in order to test the various hypotheses devised. The analysis itself proceeds on a general to specific basis, from chapter to chapter and stanza to stanza. At any

point that a narrator's role is found significant, the first thing that is done, is to establish the plot. There is the need to know clearly what events are taking place in that particular instance and how they are related to the central idea (main theme) or a sub-theme in the story. The next one is to identify the form the narrator assumes. Is the narrator still the extradiegetic narrator or he/she has descended into the story as a character? Is he/she heterodiegetic or homodiegetic? If he/she is homodiegetic, to what extent is his/her involvement? Is he/she allodiegetic or autodiegetic? Maybe the narrator has handed over the narrative at a point to a character. Is it only one character who is involved or there are other characters? Is a hierarchy of narrators established?

Having established this, the next step is to determine what role it is that the narrator is playing in that specific instance. Is he/she still narrating or doing something else? Is he/she passing comments? Is he/she making a moral proposition or admonition? Is he/she giving extradiegetic directions to readers? Is he/she maintaining contact? Is he/she providing testimony to support something that he has said of the protagonist or other characters? Does he/she seem to be playing any of these roles while actually playing the other? Whether or not the role involved is blurred in the narrative, which is the third hypothesis, is also addressed.

Next, the most significant question: the extent to which the role involved advances the plot in those specific events is addressed. By proceeding this way the study points out the significant points, starting with the least important and zeroing in on the most important.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study has brought to the fore important technical information about the art of narrating in fiction, particularly the other roles that the narrator plays apart from just narrating the protagonist's story. It is also hoped that these findings will challenge students to dig deeper into the status and roles of the narrator in fiction.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, a historical background to the study is provided. The information provided includes the evolution of the High Romantic Age. The emphasis is on the imagination and subjectivity in the literary arts and the contribution of Alexander Pushkin to this literary revolution, with the writing of *Eugene Onegin* as the high point.

2.1 What is Romanticism?

Romanticism has defied definition (Bloom & Trilling, 1973; 3). It is considered an “ageless and recurrent phenomenon” which cannot be defined (*Ibid.*). Over the years, scholars could neither fix its characteristics nor its dates (*Ibid.*). But as a period in the history of literature, it is considered the literary form of the Revolution “which began in America and the West Indies, flowered in France and spread through space and time ...” (*Ibid.*). This literary period, the High Romantic Age, is said to have been manifest at different times in England, America, Germany and Italy (*Ibid.*).

In England, the High Romantic Age is reckoned to have spanned the American Rebellion through the first Reform Bill in 1832 (*Ibid.*). David B Pirie (2006: 1) refers to a “span between the year 1785 ... the midpoint of the decade in which Blake published his first poems and 1830”. In the British tradition, scholars in most parts of the Twentieth Century singled out William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Percy Shelley and Keats as the foremost of Romantic writers (*Ibid.*). What is this Revolution and why is this literary form called the High Romantic?

The Revolution was a whirlwind which blew across Europe and the Americas in the Eighteenth Century. In the process, it stirred the hearts and minds of many people, enkindling in them the strength to reject oppression and to lay the foundations of freedom. In its advance, this whirlwind resulted in the declaration of independence in the United States (the American Revolution, 1765-1783) and Haiti (the Haitian Revolution, 1791-1804). In France, a republic was established in place of the dethroned monarchy (The French Revolution, 1789-1799).

One of the causes of the French Revolution in particular was the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was an age of unparalleled confidence in the ability of knowledge and reason to comprehend and transform the world (“The Enlightenment” *Essential Humanities*, 2008). All fields of endeavour were exposed to relentless critical examination (*Ibid.*). Enlightenment scholars argued that methodical reasoning was the key to truth and advancement (*Ibid.*). In literary pursuit, “this fierce rationalism was compatible with the aesthetic ideals of classicism” (structure, unity, clarity, restraint, *et cetera*) (*Ibid.*).

This proved to be largely true, especially in the domain of science. Consequently, some Western scholars wondered whether reason alone was sufficient panacea for human development. In France in particular, it subverted the traditions of society and de-emphasized the authority of the monarch. This, among other reasons, culminated in the uprising. Globally, however, the stringently rational approach to the Enlightenment was matched by another worldview that underscored resort to *emotion* as key to great truth (*Ibid.*).

This worldview was known as romanticism and it flourished in both literature and art (*Ibid.*). Some authors, felt overly-inhibited by those “aesthetic ideals” of classicism. Thus, instead of adherence to these “aesthetic qualities”, the High Romantics craved to express “raw, unbridled passion” (*Ibid.*).

2.2 The Imagination and *the Spirit of the Age*

Thus, in the wake of the profound worldview that emphasised emotion over reason, High Romanticism, among other methods, “granted a crucial role to the creative imagination” (Pirie, *op.cit*). Situated in their belief in the Holy Bible, some writers gave a second thought to the belief that apocalyptic transformation depended on the “political actions of collective humanity” (*Ibid.*). Their new belief was that it depended on the imagination (*Ibid.*). Thus, the new heaven and earth promised in Biblical prophecies could be attained by the individual who achieves a “new spiritualized and visionary way of seeing” (*Ibid.*).

By extension, writers of the period held the view that “the imagination is our ultimate "shaping" or creative power, the approximate human equivalent of the creative powers of nature or even deity”. They believed that their literary arts must be the product of “emotion recollected in tranquillity” (Pirie, *op.cit*). It must also arise from “impulse and free from rules” (*Ibid.*).

The High Romantics did not consider themselves as “Romantic”. The term was applied to them only half a century later by English historians (Pirie, *Ibid.*, p. 6). Many critics of the time treated them as individual writers or grouped them. There was the Lake School of Wordsworth, Coleridge and others. There was also the Cockney School of William Hazlitt and there was the Satanic School of Percy Shelley and others (*Ibid.*).

Many writers, however, felt that there was something unique about this era, which some of them called *the spirit of the age*. There were both rational and religious interpretations of this spirit of the age.

In the former, David B. Pirie (*Ibid.*) writes that it was not a shared principle or set of literary values; it was a “pervasive intellectual imaginative climate which some of them called the spirit of the age”. Francis Jeffery associated “the revolution in our literature” with “the

agitation of the French Revolution, as well as the hopes and terrors to which it gave occasion” (*Ibid.*). On his part, Hazlitt devoted a series of essays titled *The Spirit of the Age* to the High Romantic Age.

In this essay, he upheld the view that the new poetry of the School of Wordsworth “had its origin in the French Revolution” (*Ibid.*). Indeed, there was the general belief that “the writings of those we now consider the major Romantic poets cannot be understood, historically, without an awareness of the extent to which their distinctive concepts, plots, forms and imagery were shaped first by the promise, then by the tragedy, of the great events in neighbouring France” (The Norton Anthology. . 2010). It was felt that the revolutionary spirit that swept in both directions across the Atlantic was the motivation for the Romantic writers` rejection of the literature of the Enlightenment.

In the light of their Christian worldview, many citizens of England, including prominent High romantic writers such as Blake, Coleridge, Barbauld and Wollstonecraft attributed the political changes set in motion in 1789 to the fulfilment of the prophetic writings of the Holy Bible. They saw the hand of God in the events in France: they understood those events as the actualisation of the Biblical prophesies of the coming millennium.

2.3 William Wordsworth: His Colossal Contribution

In keeping with the profound opinion that poetry articulates the poet`s inward feelings, the lyric poem written in the first person, which hitherto was described as a minor genre suddenly became a major Romantic form (*Ibid.*). Thus, in most Romantic lyrics, the “I” narrator is reckoned as one who “shares recognisable traits with the poet” (*Ibid.*). Indeed, the experiences and states of mind expressed by the lyrical “I” narrator “accords closely with the known facts about the poet`s life and the personal confessions in the poet`s letters and journals” (*Ibid.*).

William Wordsworth was very instrumental in these efforts to free creativity from classical aesthetic rules. Working in tandem, Wordsworth and Coleridge engaged in daily discussions of this *spirit of the age*, the product of which was the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798 (Pirie, *op.cit*, p. 8). Wordsworth embarked on an effort to justify the departure from the conventions and precepts of poetry in the Eighteenth Century in the *Lyrical Ballads* by means of a statement of principles which were published as a preface to the text:

“The majority of the following poems are to be considered as *experiments*. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure. Readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will perhaps frequently have to struggle with *feelings of strangeness and awkwardness*: they will look round for *poetry* and will be induced to enquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be *permitted* to assume that title.

It is desirable that such readers, for their own sakes, should not suffer the solitary word *Poetry*, a word of very disputed meaning, to stand in the way of their gratification; but that, while they are perusing this book, they should ask themselves if it contains a *natural delineation of human passions*, human characters and human incidents; and if the answer be favourable to the author’s wishes, that they should consent to be pleased in spite of that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own *pre-established codes of decision*.”
“Advertisement”. *The Lyrical Ballads and Other Stories* (1798).

By naming “the majority of these poems as experiments”, Wordsworth indicates that he wrote those poems in a manner that departs from the “gaudiness and inane phraseology” of the poetry of the Enlightenment. Thus, readers who are familiar with such conventional poetic language, while they look for “poetry” in the *Lyrical Ballads*, the kind that Voltaire or Pope would have written in that Age of Enlightenment, would instead contend with “feelings of strangeness and awkwardness”. And Wordsworth defends these experiments.

To him, the word “poetry” is of “very disputed meaning”. Thus, rather than allow themselves to be denied of their artistic pleasure by “our own pre-established codes of decision”, they should be pleased with the natural description of human desires, “human characters and

human incidents”. The pre-established codes of decision refer to the poetic rules and conventions of the Eighteenth Century. In reaction to these statements, Coleridge said that the preface was “half a child of my own brain” (Pirie, *op.cit*). Although he was skeptical about some of Wordsworth’s “unguarded statements” he did not question the appropriateness of Wordsworth’s attempt to defeat the ruling literary tradition (*Ibid.*). It was not only Wordsworth’s work that presented these new versions of the poet. Lord Byron wrote *Childe Harold* (1812 –1818), *Manfred* (1816-1817) and *Don Juan* (1819 –1824) in the first person (*Ibid.*). In so doing, he used the fictional protagonists’ experiences to disclose “the deep truths of his secret self” (*Ibid.*). Other Romantic poets also voiced their declarations of artistic independence from inherited precepts. In faraway Russia, Alexander Pushkin became one of them.

2.4 Alexander Pushkin

A couple of years after *Childe Harold* was written, in 1825, Pushkin started to write *Eugene Onegin*. Unlike *Childe Harold* however, the narrator in *Eugene Onegin* is not the protagonist. The “I” narrator in Stanza II of the book introduces himself as the one who creates the protagonist Eugene Onegin.

2.4.1 Biography

Alexander Pushkin was born to Sergei Lvovich Pushkin and Nadezha Ossipovna Gannibal in Moscow. His father Sergei was a descendant of a distinguished family of Russian nobility. His mother Ossip was the granddaughter of Abram Petrovich Gannibal, an African who was kidnapped and sent to Constantinople and presented to the Ottoman Sultan as a gift. He was later transferred to Russia and presented to Peter the Great as a gift.

Pushkin publishes his first poem at the age of fifteen. By the time he completes school, his flair for writing is widely acknowledged within Russian literary circles. After school, Pushkin joins the lively scholarly culture then prevalent among the youth of the capital, Saint Petersburg. In 1820, he publishes his first long poem, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. The subject and style of composition becomes the subject of debate.

Pushkin gradually becomes devoted to social transformation and becomes the mouthpiece of literary activists of the era. The Government of the day becomes concerned about his influence on the activists and therefore, banishes him from the capital in 1820. He sojourns in the Caucasus, the Crimea, Kamenka and finally settles in Chisinau, where he becomes a freemason and also joins the *Filiki Eteria*, a secret organisation that is bent on the overthrow of Ottoman rule in Greece and the establishment of an independent Greek state. Like Lord Byron², he is enthused by the Greek Revolution and keeps a diary of events that take place during the Greek war against the Ottoman forces.

Alexander stays in Chişinău until 1823 and writes two Romantic poems which earn tremendous praise; *The Captive of the Caucasus* and *The fountain of Bakhchisaray*. Thereafter, Pushkin relocates to Odessa, where he again clashes with the Government, which this time exiles him to his mother's countryside estate of Mikhailovskoe. He stays there from 1824 to 1826 and continues work on his verse-novel *Eugene Onegin*.

Pushkin is later allowed to visit Tsar Nicholas I to plead for his release, which the Tsar heeds. Unfortunately for him however, the insurgents of the Decembrist Movement³ in Saint

² Lord Byron was always a keen supporter of liberal causes and joined the Greek forces in their war of independence. He trained troops in the town of Missolonghi and died there on April 19th 1824, just after his 36th birthday.

³ The Decembrist Revolt took place in Imperial Russia on 26 December, 1825. On this occasion, about 3,000 Russian soldiers under the leadership of some of their officers proceeded to protest the assumption of the throne of Tsar Nicholas 1 after his elder brother Constantine removed had himself from the line of succession.

Petersburg are found with some of Pushkin's previous political poems. The authorities therefore, place Pushkin under strict censorship; barring him from travelling and publishing.

During that same year (1825), Pushkin also writes *Boris Godunov*, which becomes his most famous play. However, he is only granted the go-ahead to publish it five years later. The original play was first dramatised in 2007.

In 1828, Alexander meets Natalya Goncharova, a 16-year-old maiden whose beauty is the cynosure of admiration in Moscow. Subsequently, Natalya accepts Alexander's marriage proposal in April, 1830, but that is only after she has received assurances that the Tsarist Government is not intent on persecuting him over his poetry for its harshness on the ruling class. Alexander and Natalya are legitimately engaged on 6 May, 1830 and tie the nuptial knot on 18 February 1831. On that occasion, the couple, who have then become patrons of court activities, receive the regards of the Tsar.

In fact, the Tsar confers on Pushkin the lowest of the court titles. Pushkin becomes infuriated by this gesture; he thinks that the Tsar intends to debase him; he feels that he is being admitted to court not because he has anything to show for it but because the Tsar wants his admirable wife to properly attend activities at the court.

By 1837, Pushkin, like William Coleridge, is plunging deeper and deeper into debt. It is also rumoured that his wife Natalya is engaged in a love affair with her brother-in-law Georges d'Anthes. To redeem his pride, Alexander challenges Georges to a duel and both men are injured. Pushkin, who is shot in the lower right abdomen, dies two days later. His last residence is now a museum.

The insurgents in this civil unrest were referred to as Decembrists just because the events took place in December.

2.4.2 Of the Author and the Protagonist

Not only did Pushkin endorse this spirit of the age by writing *Eugene Onegin* in a unique style, he also shed his thoughts on this profound poetic licence that the High Romantics promoted. In the Introduction to the Penguin translation of *Eugene Onegin*, John Bayley (171; 14) observes that Pushkin himself did not know how he could craft a verse novel “to show all the qualities of which such a form was capable”. He brings up evidence from the text itself to support his point:

“Many many days have passed since that time when young Tatyana and Onegin with her, in a blurred vision first appeared to me – and the distance of a free novel I did not then clearly discern through the magic crystal”.
(Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, 8, 50, 8 -14)

By young Tatyana and Onegin appearing to him, the narrator refers to the fictional idea appearing as figments of his creative imagination. Pushkin by this declaration also associates with the prevailing idea among the High Romantics that poetry should be born out of the imagination.

In keeping with the spirit of the High Romantic age, Pushkin, according to Bayley, meant by the term “free novel” a literary text that did not conform to the “rules of a single genre” (*Ibid.*). Quoting again from the first stanza of the verse novel, Bayley states that such a novel to Pushkin, is “a collection of parti- coloured chapters, half – funny, half- sad, ideal and folk – simple`. To Pushkin, Byron`s poems and Shakespeare`s plays were examples of works that were` free” (*Ibid.*).

To buttress Pushkin`s position, Bayley makes reference to the views Pushkin expresses in his essay titled “Draft on Classical and Romantic Poetry” (*Ibid.*). Indeed, in that article, Pushkin blames “our confused understanding” of the difference between classical and romantic kinds of literature to the French journalists of the period (Pushkin, 1825, p.126).

Instead of the *form* in which a poem is crafted, these journalists tended to look at the spirit in which it was written as the basis for classifying it as either romantic or classical (*Ibid.*). For instance, the journalists ascribed to romantic literature “the stamp of visionary idealism or Germanic ideology, or which was based on popular superstitions and legends” (*Ibid.*). To Pushkin, this was “a most inaccurate definition” (*Ibid.*). For Pushkin then, romanticism was a literary technic and not a “movement of the soul” (Bayley, *op.cit*). Therefore, he believed that it could be applied in “any age to a work which obeyed no rules but its own” (*Ibid.*).

What then was Pushkin’s own conception of the difference between classical and romantic poetry? To classical literature Pushkin, in that article, assigns the following definition:

“... all those poems whose forms were known to the Greeks and the Romans, or of which they have left us models. . .”

He cites the following as genres included in this category: epics, didactic poems, tragedies, comedies, elegies, epigrams, satires epistles, heroides, eclogues and fables.

On the other hand, Pushkin assigns the following definition to romantic poetry:

“All those which were not known to the ancients, and all those whose earlier forms have suffered change or been replaced by others”.

It is obvious that Pushkin, in keeping with the High Romantic Age also sought to free writing from classical traditions and conventions; he quested for a free novel. If the word “romantic” meant anything to Pushkin then, it was “a work which obeyed no rules but its own” (*Ibid.*).

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, relevant background information to the study is provided. Against this background, review of literature pertaining to the topic is made in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction

Towards the review of literature pertaining to the topic, Booth *et al* (2011) make a point that is considered very appropriate. They liken a research undertaken without literature review to travelling to a strange and exotic country but never coming out of one's hotel room. The researcher, he suggests, may be able to complete the project and achieve the "occasional moments of insight" but will be starved of "so many vital moments of discovery". In order not to starve this study of "so many vital moments of discovery", efforts are made in this chapter to examine literatures that have been found to be relevant to this study.

The general-to-the-specific approach is used, starting from theories on the various core concepts in the domain of narrative discourse and concluding with critical works on the narrator in the primary text *Eugene Onegin*. The concept of narrative, which is the umbrella term for all the others, is first in line.

3.1 What is Narrative?

The word "narrative" is defined by Gerald Prince in his book titled *A Dictionary of Narratology* (1987) as the "recounting of one or more real or fictitious EVENTS communicated by one, two, or several ... NARRATORS to one, two or several . . . narratees".

To Prince therefore, the narrative is, strictly speaking, the telling of events that are either real or fictitious: the narrative is no more than a story, in his view.

On her part, Monika Fludernik (2006:1), suggests that the narrative is not just the literary type that we speak of today. Rather, the word “narrative” describes an activity that is all round us. In other words, the act of narrating is found whenever someone tells another something. The narrator, according to Fludernik, could be a newsreader on the radio, a teacher at school, a school friend in the playground, one`s partner over the evening meal or the narrator in the novel that we enjoy reading, among others (*Ibid.*).

All persons, in effect, can be narrators in their daily lives (*Ibid.*). Fludernik further explains that one might become a narrator on occasion, for instance, when one tells a bedtime story to children (*Ibid.*). Others could be professional narrators, say, when they are teachers, comedians or press officers (*Ibid.*).

Fludernik suggests therefore that “narrating is . . . a widespread and often unconscious spoken language activity which can be seen to include a number of different text-types” and she cites journalism and teaching as examples.

Fludernik`s explanation appears more realistic. However, for the category of professional narrators, it is proposed that her explanation may be accepted with a qualification: One may be saying something to others without narrating. For instance, a teacher could just be giving information, which may not entail narrating anything.

In addition to the simple definitions offered by Prince and Fludernik, the term “narrative” could also be considered within the context of psychology. According to Fludernik, research has revealed that the human brain is constructed in such a manner that it captures many complex events in one`s life in the form of narrative structures; either as metaphors or analogies (Polkinghorne; 1988). Therefore, in re-enacting one`s own life as a story, there is the propensity to highlight how particular events have given rise to and impacted succeeding events (Fludernik, *op.cit*). Thus, Fludernik proposes that:

“Life is described as a goal – directed chain of events which, despite numerous obstacles and thanks to certain opportunities, has led to the present state of affairs, and which may yet have further unpredictable turns and unexpected developments in store for us”. (Fludernik, 2006:1)

By this explanation therefore, Fludernik emphasises a point: that narratives are based on a “cause and effect relationships which are applied to a sequence of events” (*Ibid.*).

In view of this capacity of the brain, psycholo-analysis has incorporated the narration of a patient’s life story into the process of therapy (Linde 1993, Randall 1995). Thirdly, Fludernik points out that the narrative has also proved to be significant in human culture; written cultures trace their origins to myths that they eventually record for posterity (Fludernik, *op.cit.*).

From the foregoing, the term “narrative”, is invested with multiple meanings. It does not only refer to literary narrative as an art form, it describes a widespread activity (*Ibid.*). It is also an activity that is akin to a narrator (*Ibid.*). One could therefore, define a narrative as everything told by a narrator (*Ibid.*).

Turning to literary narratives, Fludernik notes that they are of various kinds (*Ibid*, p. 7). There are verbal (novels and conversational narratives) and visual (ballet) and verbal-visual narratives (drama, film *et cetera*) (*Ibid.*). These verbal narratives may be fictional (invented) or non-fictional narratives (*Ibid.*). Verbal narratives usually have a narrator who produces the narrative discourse or narrative text (*Ibid.*). Since the focus of this study is a verbal narrative (novel), it is necessary to examine the constituents of such narrative.

3.2 Narrative Structure

Scholars on narratology have over the years been in agreement that there are two levels in a narrative the WHAT and the HOW, the WHAT being something that happens and is narrated in a certain manner and the HOW is the manner in which the WHAT is narrated. Scholars of

structuralism such as Gerard Genette, Fludernik (*Ibid.*) and Chatman (1978:19) have generally referred to the WHAT as “story” and the HOW as discourse. Gerard Genette postulated on the argument for the WHAT and the HOW in the introduction to his seminal work titled *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1980) .

In that text, Genette observes that literary scholars have used the word “narrative”, “without paying attention to, even at times, without noticing its ambiguity “(p. 25). This to him is the cause of some of the difficulties of narratology. “If we want to see clearly in this area”, Genette told his colleagues”, we must plainly distinguish under this term three distinct notions” (*Ibid.*).

The first notion, which according to Genette, is the one that is most evident, is the narrative statement (*Ibid.*). This is the oral or written discourse by which the writer purports to tell of an event or a series of events. Genette obviously refers in this instance to the linguistic composition (language) or text that serves as the writer`s channel for telling the story. The study of the linguistic composition (language) of a narrative may therefore dwell on denotative and/or connotative elements. The denotative elements may include diction, word formation processes, grammatical structures, *et cetera* while connotative elements may include literary devices such as simile, metaphor, anagram, oxymoron *et cetera*.

The second meaning, which is less widespread, is a “succession of events, real or fictitious that are the *subject* of this narrative discourse”. In other words, this is the WHAT, the content of the story. Thus, to analyse narrative in this sense is to apply one`s self to the entirety of actions and existents without regard to the linguistic or other medium (*Ibid.*).

The third meaning, which to Genette is apparently the oldest, refers to “someone recounting something: the act of narrating taken in itself “(*Ibid.*). To Gennette, this third meaning is the foundation for the other two senses of narrative. As he puts it, “narrative discourse is

produced by the action of telling in the same way that any statement is the product of an act of enunciating” (*Ibid.*).

Otherwise known as the *sjuzet*, this third meaning encompasses artistic devices that establish the plot for the story and they include surprises, suspense, digression, disruption *et cetera*⁴. These artistic devices, together with the literary devices mentioned under the first meaning defamiliarise the narrative⁵. To Genette it is therefore, astonishing that until the time that he wrote, the theory of narrative had been so slightly concerned with the difficulties of the act of telling (*Ibid.*, p. 25).

Following these breakdowns, Genette proposes using the under-mentioned terms for the three different meanings of the word. For the first meaning (narrative statement/signifier), Genette proposes the word *narrative*. For the second meaning (the series of events/the signified) Genette proposes the word *story* (otherwise known as the *fabula* or *histoire*), and for the third meaning (the act of narrating/telling) he proposes the word *narrating*. Thus, the signified (story) is the WHAT while the signifier (narrative) is the HOW. But the HOW is not only the writer’s language but also the manner in which the language is used to signify the events. In other words, the HOW consists of two elements the author’s discourse and the structure (plot) that he constructs and employs in the process of signifying the events. This dichotomy can be illustrated as shown in the diagram below:

For the purposes of the critic, Genette makes a very important statement: that of these three strata, the level of narrative discourse is the only one that is directly available to textual analysis. Indeed, it is only through the discourse that we learn about the story. It is in the

⁴ Prof. A. A. Sackey made this explanation in his lecture notes on Language and Literature course for Level 600 students of the Department of English, University of Ghana, 2014/15 academic year.

⁵ Prof. A. A. Sackey, (*Ibid.*). He explained defamiliarisation as “a process of making the familiar appears strange”. This situation, as he said, “slows down the act of perceiving ordinary objects or words/ phrases long enough to force us into re-examinig or re-evaluating them as image patterns rather than thematic or speech patterns. “

signifiers (words) that we can find an existent (character) such as Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*.

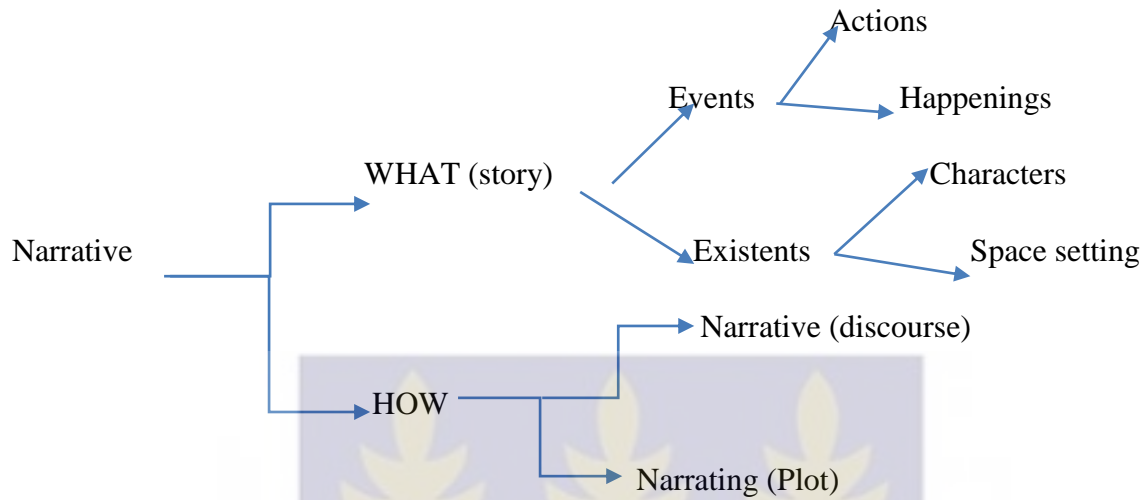


Figure 1: Constituents of narrative.

The words (signifiers) constitute the paint and particular colours that the writer uses to design the patterns of events and weave whole the existents in the story. Thus, in a narrative such as *Eugene Onegin*, one can discern the *histoire*, being the story of Onegin and the *recit*, being the discourse or language employed by the writer as well as the act of telling the story and the reference point for the writer's discourse is the narrator.

3.3 Who is a Narrator?

The term “narrator” denotes “the inter-textual speech position from which the . . . narrative discourse originates and from which references to the entities (characters and settings), actions and events that this discourse is about are being made” (Margolin, 2013, p.1). The narrator is not the author: it is a communicative position structured into the narrative discourse (Herman, 2011). Plato claims that the underlying difference between narrative and drama as two types of discourse lay in the difference between “directly showing and indirectly telling or reporting” (*Ibid.*, p. 3).

The difference, as Plato saw it, is deep-seated in the “absence or presence respectively of a “mediating instance” between the characters’ speech and the audience` (*Ibid*). And the narrator is exactly this ‘mediating instance’ (*Ibid*). In other words, the narrator operates as the intermediary in the “verbal medium of the representation” (Fludernik, *op.cit*, p. 6).

In the literal sense, the word “narrator” denotes the “speech position” from which the narrative discourse is initiated. It is the reference point for the mention of existents and events in the discourse (Margolin, *op.cit*). This reference point in the text is subsequently engaged through a twofold method of “metonymic transfer and anthropomorphisation” (giving it human characteristics) as a “textually-projected occupant of this position” (*Ibid*). Put another way, the narrator is the human agent who answers Genette’s question, *qui parle?*⁶ (Who speaks?) (*Ibid*). This narrator, a “strictly textual category”, should not be confused with the author who is a real person (*Ibid*).

3.4. Theoretical Approaches

The concept of the narrator has over the years been studied and defined in terms of three different theoretical frameworks (Margolin , *Ibid.*, p. 8). They are:

- The rhetorical framework (speech act, communication).
- The narratological framework.
- The cognitive framework.

Within the rhetorical framework, there are two perspectives from which the narrator may be viewed. They are the linguistic pragmatics or speech act theory perspective and the communication theory perspective. In terms of the former, any narrative, irrespective of its

⁶ Gerard Genette (1972: 203)

length, is considered a constative⁷ type of macro-speech and behind a claim by a constative utterance is an agent, say, a reporter. So is a tale also told by a teller (narrator) (Margolin, *op. cit.*). From the communication theory perspective, any communicative act is said to consist of a sender and a receiver (*Ibid.*). In much the same way, a narrative consists of someone telling someone (sending a message) that something happened and that someone doing the telling (sending the message) is the narrator (*Ibid.*).

In modern narratology, various scholars have upheld the importance of the narrator in literary narrative. On his part, Bal (1981: 45) distinguishes between three roles which are essential to give rise to any narrative: `doing, seeing and saying` (*Ibid.*). In other words, characters perform certain actions which are observed from a certain angle and what is witnessed is then recounted (*Ibid.*). These three functions correspond to three roles: narrative agent, focaliser and narrator (*Ibid.*).

Also relevant to this contemporary point of view is Baxtin`s influential theory of the novel (1934/35). This theory considers the novel to be the place of interaction between two categories of utterances: those originating from the characters and those originating from an “inner textual narrator”.

Margolin concludes that the complete spirit of narrative would be lost if one were to reject the textual presence of a narrator as a “stylistic and ideological position” (*Ibid.*).

In the domain of cognitive science, psychonarratologists such as Bortolussi & Dixon (2003) have shown that readers decode literary narratives in the same way as they do to everyday communication because they approve of a “textually encoded conversational partner” to be

⁷ In his book titled *How to do things with Words*, JL Austin, proposes a distinction between constative utterances and performative utterances. He describes a constative utterance as one that states that something is real or true. One can establish from the empirical facts whether the statement is true or false. Performative utterances on the other hand are those that do or are part of a deed or action. For example, an utterance that promises “I do” in a marital right is a performative utterance.

the one responsible for the messages in the narrative (*Ibid.*). In other words, the literary text has the capacity to form in the reader's mind the delusion of seeing a continuing narrative communication in which a more or less "personalised narrator" performs a role (Margolin, *op.cit.*). According to Margolin, this "mimetic-illusionist assumption" has in recent times attracted the attention of "cognitively – oriented narratologists" such as Nunning (2001) and Fludernik (2003).

In concluding his definition of the narrator, Margolin observes that, it is optional for the reader to identify and personalise the narrator in a literary text, and this process is built upon two kinds of input – "textual signals and storytelling scenarios" (*Ibid.*). The reader, he says, already possesses these two inputs from his real life experiences and once certain narrator indicators have been identified in the text, these inputs are activated (*Ibid.*). Margolin (*Ibid.*) also notes that in the narrative, some narrators are more noticeable and "individuated" than others (*Ibid.*). It is appropriate to know how then the narrator(s) could be noticed.

3.5 Conditions for Identification

However, Margolin believes that there are nominal textual circumstances under which one could classify a distinctive "narrating position or voice" (*Ibid.*). These circumstances are discussed next.

According to Margolin, these circumstances could form a hierarchy. At the top of the hierarchy, the text must contain a series of utterances or speech acts that can be seen to be originating from one or more agents (*Ibid.*). Secondly, it should be possible to delineate the utterances that make up the text and allot to each one of them a separate voice or originator (*Ibid.*).

It is only in uncommon cases that, according to him, all utterances recorded in a text stem from one speaker at a time (*Ibid.*). Thirdly, one should be able to define the “hierarchical relations” between the various utterances and their makers.

This, according to Margolin, is defined by such questions such as: who can quote whom? Who can refer to whom? Who can report about whom? (Margolin, 1991). One should also be able to determine the total number of originators and levels of speech in the text (*Ibid.*). Finally, and most essential of all, one should be able to recognise a single, peak “originator of all originators”: there should be one global voice from which proceeds a macro-speech act and all other utterances occurring within the text are rooted within this macro speech (*Ibid.*).

On a final note, Margolin observes that there is no procedure for determining whether any or all of the mentioned situations are met by a given text although readers reach conclusions “semi-intuitively” all the time (*Ibid.*). Where it is not possible to identify a single highest-level narrator, then the text, he suggests, may have multiple narrators. All things being equal however, the narrator, in his view, “designates the single, unified, stable, distinct human-like voice that produces the whole narrative discourse we are reading” (*Ibid.*).

It is important to note at this stage, though it is not relevant to this study, that there could be difficulty, as Richardson (2006) says, in identifying the narrator in postmodern texts. But even where it is possible to identify a narrator, it may be helpful to know what types there are and their characteristics.

3.6 Types of Narrators

In their book titled, *Handbook of Narrative Analysis*, Herman & Vervaeck (2001; 80), discuss two distinctions of narrators that are known to scholars of narrative discourse. The first is a hierarchy of narrators. At the highest place in this hierarchy is the extradiegetic narrator. This narrator is one who hovers above the fiction, who has no personal involvement

in the story. At the lower level of the hierarchy is the intradiegetic narrator (Herman & Vervaeck, *Ibid.*). The narrator at this level is also a character in the fictional world (*Ibid.*).

The second distinction is the extent of participation of the narrator in the story. Citing Gerard Genette (1980) Herman & Vervaeck discuss the heterodiegetic and homodiegetic extents. The heterodiegetic narrator is the one who has not experienced the events that she/he is narrating. The homodiegetic narrator is one who has experienced the events that he narrates. Readers therefore, get the opportunity to hear the story from the horse's own mouth. If the narrator is homodiegetic, the degree of involvement in the story may vary. The homodiegetic narrator's involvement may be only marginal, where she/he may only witness events from afar. She/he may, in such instance be, in Van de Voort's words, be an allodiegetic narrator. On the other hand, the narrator may have played the central role, being the protagonist of the story.

In that case, the narrator is an autodiegetic one. These two extents of involvement compare to Franz Stanzel (1984)'s distinction of first person and authorial narrators. It is worth noting at this point that the issue of person, in Fludernik's view, is very crucial in the study of the narrative: it is the term that describes the relationship between narrators and the figures around which their narratives revolve (Fludernik, p. 30).

The first person narrator is, like the intradiegetic/ autodiegetic narrator a character in the story. Indeed, one can only speak of the first person narrator when the narrator is also a character in the story (Fludernik *Ibid.*, p. 32). According to Fludernik, Stanzel (*op.cit.*), identifies a "particularly sophisticated form of the first person (singular) narrator, which he refers to as" the embodied 'I' (*Ibid.*, p. 4). In this case:

"The narrator is drawn in considerable detail, even down to providing a description of his/her physical appearance. Such a narrator takes an active part in the story, sits at his/her desk, contemplates the apple trees in blossom and has a spouse or child, a personal history and a gender which are clearly indicated". (Fludernik, *Ibid.*, p.4)

This is particularly relevant to this study as, in the first stanza of *Eugene Onegin*, the narrator refers to himself as “I”. It would be important to examine to what extent the narrator is embodied in this novel and how it impinges on his role as the narrator.

Concerning the issue of person and the narrator, Fludernik (*Ibid.*, p. 30) also observes that second-person narratives, which convey the story of a narratee are mostly interesting. Such you-narratives-he adds, are written from the viewpoint of the character referred to by the “you” (*Ibid.*). Citing Italo Calvino’s book titled *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveller*, Fludernik explains that second person (you–narratives) appear at the onset to be addressing the reader as “you” (*Ibid.*). Thus, the reader sees herself/ himself as being pressed to undertake the activities described in the story. It is only “when extensive use is made of the past tense and more and more personal details about the you- protagonist are revealed, does it become clear that the “you” must definitely be a fictional character (*Ibid.*).

Fludernik also notes that in postmodern writing, there have been various experiments with using personal pronouns to refer to the narrator (*Ibid.*). Thus, one comes across invented pronouns or impersonal pronouns such as “it” or “one”.

In *Eugene Onegin*, Molly C. Doran (2012; p. 10) also “hears” two voices in the narrative. The first of them appears as a character in Chapter One of the story and refers to the protagonist, Eugene, as “my good friend” (Pushkin, *Onegin*, 1, II, 9). The narrator is probably intradiegetic; a first person narrator. The second voice is the one who stands outside the text and refers to the protagonist, this time, as “hero of my novel” (*Ibid.*). It is the same voice that also refers to the protagonist’s foil, Tatyana, as “my Tatyana” (*Ibid.*).

The voice in this case is probably extradiegetic; an authorial narrator. In view of the “two ontological realities” that he perceives in the novel, Doran believes that it is “probably best ... to discuss the novel’s narration in terms of voices rather than one voice” (Doran, *op.cit.*).

3.7 Observations

In the view of Herman & Vervaeck (*Op.cit*, p. 84) challenges could arise when trying to draw a distinction between extradiegetic and intradiegetic narrators. First, they observe that it may be wrong to assume that the voices of all characters in a story are intradiegetic. To them, a character speaking at a particular moment in the narrative may not necessarily be telling a part of the story. Secondly, when various levels of stories are embedded in a frame narrative, it could lead to terminological problems, depending on whether the embedded story mirrors or summarises the story at the higher level or not (*Ibid.*). To deal with this problem, Genette according to Herman and Vaervaeck, combines the extradiegetic and intradiegetic levels with the level of involvement (framing) to evoke six types of narrators, three of them at the extradiegetic level and the other three at the intradiegetic level. The three narrators at the extradiegetic level are:

- Extradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator.
- Extradiegetic and autodiegetic narrator.
- Extradiegetic and allodiegetic narrator.

The extradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator lingers above the story; there is no narrative agent above him/her (*Ibid.*). She/he also narrates situations that she/he did not experience (*Ibid.*). This narrator can be inconspicuous if she/he narrates wholly in the third person and s/he may sometimes appear in the first person (*Ibid.*). At the next level is the “extradiegetic and autodiegetic narrator”. This narrator is likewise positioned above events that s/he has experienced (*Ibid.*). This narrator is in fact the central character in those events (*Ibid.*). It is when another character is the protagonist that this narrator becomes only a witness, an extradiegetic and allodiegetic narrator (*Ibid.*).

The narrators at the intradiegetic level are:

- Intradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator.
- Intradiegetic and allodiegetic narrator.
- Intradiegetic and autodiegetic narrator.

The intradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator relates things that she/he has not experienced while the allodiegetic narrator narrates things that she/he has witnessed (*Ibid.*). The intradiegetic autodiegetic narrator plays a central role in the events that she/he narrates (*Ibid.*). It is to be noted that these three intradiegetic narrators are character narrators and therefore narrate the story from a first person's point of view.

More engaging as their efforts are, it appears that it could be even more confusing trying to identify these types of narrators. For instance, it could be a herculean task trying to find out at what time a homodiegetic narrator is at the same time an extradiegetic narrator. Similarly, it appears problematic to perceive of an intradiegetic narrator who is at the same time a heterodiegetic narrator. It could be dicey trying to identify narrators this way.

There are other types and levels of narrators and there could be cross bonds among them (Herman & Vervaeck, *op.cit.*).

Other critics have also examined the narrator in *Eugene Onegin*. In his paper titled "Lyric and Narrative Consciousness in Eugene Onegin", Craig Cravens (2002, p. 683) describes the narrator in the novel as "an idiosyncratic figure". According to him, Pushkin at various times portrays the narrator as an image of the author by investing in him "autobiographical facts" (*Ibid.*). At other times, Pushkin portrays the narrator as a "vague and stylized image" of himself by attributing both fictional and real life elements to him (*Ibid.*).

In both presences, however, the narrator of *Eugene Onegin*, is, in his view, as omniscient as he is omnipresent (*Ibid.*, p. 684). In one breath, the narrator's "temporal point of narration" is certain years after the happenings that she/he narrates. In spite of that, the narrator is not

“spatially and psychologically” removed from the fictional world she/he creates. In other words, the narrator is not the “detached observer” that we find in latter realist novels.

As has already been indicated elsewhere in this chapter, the narrator is actually present in parts of the story as Onegin’s friend and he does not conceal his “psychological and emotional engagement” with the characters, especially Tatyana (*Ibid.*). This dichotomy, being the omniscient narrator who “spatially and temporally” is above the existents and events of the story and also being occasionally a participant in the events and its passionate attachment to the characters is, according to Cravens, a feature of first person narration (*Ibid.*).

By way of explanation, Cravens (*Ibid.*) observes that the first person narrator keeps the reader’s attention divided between these “spatio – temporal realms” - the narrator’s presence as a character in the story and the narrator seen as the one narrating the events of the story (*Ibid.*). Cravens refers to this fictional being within the fictional world as the narrator’s “experiencing self” (*Ibid.*). On the other hand, as the voice narrating the story, the fictional present tense that portrays the narrator’s experiencing self is replaced with the past tense to convey the narrator’s reflections on events from hindsight (*Ibid.*).

In spite of these traits, Cravens (*Ibid.*) believes that *Eugene Onegin* can only be described as a first person novel with some qualification. Firstly, the narrator in *Eugene Onegin*, in his view, participates directly as an existent only in the first chapter (*Ibid.*). As has already been pointed out in this chapter, the narrator often departs from the “fabulaic sequence”⁸ of the story to share material from the author’s biography. But after the first chapter, Cravens sees an omniscient third-person narrator who is positioned well outside the “fictional world”.

The mode of incorporating information from the author’s own life history in the fictional world differentiates, according to Cravens, *Eugene Onegin* from orthodox first person novels

⁸ The chronological order.

(*Ibid.*, p. 685). According to him, authors in the Realist period of the Nineteenth Century often shaped narrators which were clearly not identical with the author (*Ibid.*). In *Eugene Onegin*, however, Pushkin the author, openly reveals his life story, very much unlike the style of “later Realist fiction”.

Besides, the narrator of *Eugene Onegin* does not, as narrators of the Realist novel would usually do, assume the character traits of the fictional realm that he is narrating wherever he becomes a character in the story. Rather, the “fictional realm of the literary heroes” become, in Cravens’ view “biographised” by the author. In other words, readers see a real life image whenever the narrator assumes the role of a character, because the biographical materials that are ascribed to the narrator are very much the facts about the author’s life. As a result, readers begin to perceive the literary heroes as though they were real life participants in some particular events in Pushkin’s life.

At the other end of every communication process is a perceived recipient and in fiction, that recipient is the narratee.

3.8 The Narratee

The narratee is different from the reader. The narratee “is the intra-fictional addressee of the narrator’s discourse” (Fludernik, *Ibid.*, p. 23). She/he is inscribed in the text as the one to whom the story is narrated (Herman, 2003; 57). She/he is actually the person inside the story to whom the narrator speaks (Leveen, 2002). The *narratee* may be a fictional character like the narrator and may not be involved in the plot at all (*Ibid.*).

Levitt (2006; 41) identifies two bodies of narratees in *Eugene Onegin*. These groups of narratees are explicit and they are “friends” and “readers”. According to Levitt, the complexity of the narrative reflects the challenge facing these two groups of narratees. At

the higher level, Doran (*op.cit*) observes that the narrator “assumes a knowledgeable and educated audience” whom he addresses as friends (*Ibid.*).

The narrator has “high expectations” of these “friends” and believes that they will appreciate his “complex literary humours” such as the one on Krylov’s ass (*Ibid.*). Also, the narrator, in his estimation, frequently refers to famous contemporary authors such as Lord Byron and Tolstoy by their names and directly confronts their literary works, assuming for instance that they are aware of Lord Byron’s “authorial persona” (*Ibid.*).

To Levitt, “readers” on the other hand are considered “less adept narratees”. These *narratees* are assumed to be foolish and their “misreading is anticipated” (*Ibid.*).

As to the extent to which the narratee is important in the study of the role of the narrator in *Eugene Onegin*, Doran, (*op.cit*, p.12) has an answer. To him, they play a very important role in the construction of the novel, as they, like the narrator are overt and they are directly addressed by the narrator. In other words, as “explicitly characterised”⁹ addressees of the narrator, one cannot be discussing the narrator as communicator without engaging the narratees. It is assumed therefore, that the narratee is a key element of the narrator’s; he is at the receiving end of whatever functions that the narrator performs.

3.9 Functions of the Narrator

Having studied some literature pertaining to the narrative and identified and discussed some of the salient concepts that may inform this study, it is appropriate now to address the question of the narrator’s role(s), which is the object of this study. In this regard, Fludernik (*op.cit*, p. 22) suggests that Nunning (1989, 1997b) “provides the most exhaustive account of narratorial functions”. Based on Nunning’s framework, Fludernik discusses four functions of the narrator in fictional works.

⁹ Herman, C & Vervaeck, B. (2001), *Basic Elements of Narrative*, p. 82.

The foremost of them is the narrative function. It is the narrator who presents the fictional world to us and the narrator in this role may remain overt or covert (*Ibid.*). Secondly, the narrator comments or expounds on the events in the story. The narrator may explain why certain events occur or may attribute them to certain political or social situations. She/he may also indicate conditions or reasons that motivate the protagonist or other characters to act the way they do (*Ibid.*). Fludernik believes that the narrator needs to be overt in order to perform this function, “for the most part one who refers to himself by a first person pronoun” (*Ibid.*).

Further, Fludernik notes that it is important that the narrator’s comments refer to the fictional world of the narrative. The main purpose of such comments, according to Fludernik, is to arouse the reader’s sympathy or aversion for certain characters (*Ibid.*). Doran (2012, *op.cit*) observes that in *Eugene Onegin* the narrator makes copious comments. To him, the separation of the narrator from the protagonist allows the implied author to create a “conversation of sorts” between himself and his protagonist. In these conversations, however, the narrator’s comments go beyond the fictional world. These conversations, in his view, reveals Pushkin’s own commentary on a wide range of issues, “from politics to German romanticism” (*Ibid.*).

These comments on a plethora of ideas and issues are not necessarily “integral to the plot” (*Ibid.*). In this role, the narrator, in his view, represents reality while the protagonist represents fiction (*Ibid.*). The narrator in such conversations plays fiction and reality against each other and in so doing, demonstrates the “fundamental interdependence of art and life” (*Ibid.*).

Thirdly, the narrator often performs the role of a moralist or philosopher who expresses generally valid propositions (Fludernik, *op.cit*). The narrator does so especially by way of statements made in the gnomic present. Fludernik cites the following examples of such statements:

- “Man is an animal that has degenerated as a result of learning to speak”.

- “Boys will be boys”.

According to Fludernik, an overt narrator’s moral remarks should relate to the real world and not just to the fictional world of the characters, even if they are proposed to relate to them (*Ibid.*). The narrator’s gnomic statements are intended to point out the general rules which inform events in the story (*Ibid.*). They also create a pattern of guidelines that are proposed to make it easier for the reader to understand the text (*Ibid.*).

Fourthly, the narrator plays a discursive role in the narrative (*Ibid.*). In other words, the narrator addresses the *narratee* concerning the “communicative situation” of the narrative: the narrator makes “metanarrative comments” about the process of telling the story (*Ibid.*).

Fludernik concludes with one guiding statement for critics: that these functions discussed often become blurred in the telling of the story (*Ibid.*). For instance, while the narrator is describing a character it may use “evaluative adjectives” within the sentences. In other words, functions one and four may be combined in this case (*Ibid.*). Nunning’s four functions appear to replicate Genette’s version of the functions of the narrator, which are:

- The narrative function.
- The directing function.
- The communication function.
- The testimonial function; and
- The ideological function (Gerard Genette, 1980, p. 255-6).

The narrative function is obviously the same as in Nunning’s framework. The directing function is closely akin to Nunning’s discursive function. In both functions, the narrator makes metanarrative comments about the telling. The communicative function refers to things that the narrator says or writes to reinforce contact with the addressee¹⁰.

¹⁰ Prof A. A. Sackey gave this explanation to the contact constituent of Jakobson’s diagram of communication in his lecture notes: 2014/15 academic year. According to him, the contact element “has to do more with revealing or sharing a feeling or establishing an atmosphere of sociability than communicating ideas”.

This function seems to cut across Nunning`s commentary, philosophical and discursive roles. It may also be present in Genette`s own directing, testimonial or ideological roles. While commenting on issues in his narrative, the narrator may address the narratee, thereby maintaining contact between both.

The same may arise when the narrator is moralising or discursing/directing the narratee on the organisation of his narrative. In other words, contact may be established in the process of/part of performing other roles. Gerard`s ideological function appear to combine the commentary and the philosophical roles identified by Nunning. Same as these two roles, the narrator, according to Genette, interrupts the story to either present comments or stress certain moral issues in his narrative (*Ibid.*).

Genette`s testimonial function, however, does seem alien to Nunning`s framework. In this role, according to Genette, the narrator confirms the truth of his story (*Ibid.*). The narrator states the degree of precision in his narrative, his conviction regarding the events and his sources of evidence (*Ibid.*).

By way of comparison therefore, the narrator`s roles in Nunning`s and Genette`s frameworks may be illustrated as follows:

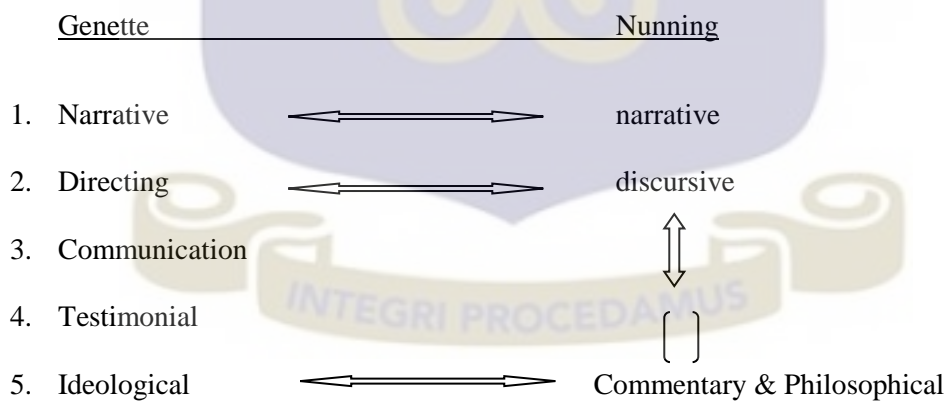


Table1: Comparative narrative functions.

From this illustration, the narrator functions identified by the two may be merged into the following framework:

- Narrative function.
- Directing/discursive function.

- Communication function.
- Testimonial function.
- Ideological/ Commentary/Philosophical function.

This fusion of Genette`s and Nunning`s framework will serve as the framework for the study. However, the Commentary and philosophical roles will be separated as Nunning did in view of the singular importance of each of the two functions. Thus, the probable narrator roles that will be searched for and examined in *Eugene Onegin* will be:

1. Narrative function.
2. Directing/discursive function.
3. Communication function.
4. Testimonial function.
5. Commentary function.
6. Philosophical function.

4.0 Conclusion

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to appraise some literatures that are considered relevant to the study. Areas that were touched on included the history and development of romanticism. The aim was to identify and examine the possible romantic background to Pushkin`s narrative voice(s) in *Eugene Onegin*. Also examined were some theories on the narrative with emphasis on the various types of narrator, how to identify them and their roles in fiction.

The insights gained from this review will inform the identification and examination of the narrator and his role in the context. Finally, Nunning`s four-phase functions of the narrator and Gerard Genette`s own five-tier roles of the narrator were discussed in conjunction with Molly. C. Doran`s observations on some of the narrator`s functions in *Eugene Onegin*.

In the synthesis of the two frameworks, six functions of the narrator have been identified and will, as already mentioned elsewhere in this study, form the intellectual paradigm for the analysis in this study.



CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the journey to find out the roles of the narrator in the verse novel *Eugene Onegin* reaches its most critical stage – exploration of the primary text for evidence. This analysis proceeds chapter by chapter and stanza by stanza. The first step is the establishment of the plot. The next stage is the identification of the type(s) of narrator(s) in the chapter and the final stage identifies and examines the various roles that the narrator(s) play(s) and their relevance to the plot.

4.1 Chapter One

The story begins in the first stanza with a soliloquy, apparently the voice of the protagonist Eugene Onegin. In this stanza, Onegin's uncle is ill and rather unusual of a close relation, he is sarcastic about it. Eugene describes his uncle as “a man of firm convictions”¹¹ in the first line of the verse. In the next line, however, he says that by falling “gravely ill” his uncle had won “due respect for his afflictions”¹².

This paradoxical statement is obviously to lampoon his uncle's condition, a suggestion that he feigned the gravity of his condition. Eugene probably detests his uncle and he can only treat his grave condition with such scorn. Perhaps, even more contemptuous is the statement

¹¹ Puskin, AS. (1979), *Eugene Onegin*.1, I, 11. The first number stands for the chapter, the roman numeral for the stanza and the number following stands for the verse(s). Same applies throughout this chapter.

¹² *Ibid*, 3.

in the next line that the way he conditioned himself is “the only clever thing his uncle had done.”¹³

Ironically, Onegin has not seen anything in his uncle`s life that smacks of cleverness. But for the fact that he is bedridden, his uncle would have been about something which is exactly the opposite of being clever – something foolish, stupid, senseless. The more scornful statement is in the next line:

“May his example profit others”¹⁴.

This again amplifies Onegin`s disdain for his uncle. Indirectly, he suggests that his uncle`s life does not benefit anyone else, no doubt he says in the last two lines:

“The devil take you, Uncle! Die!”¹⁵

Apart from the narrative function that he plays here, he also establishes some intimacy with a specific group of narratees, whom he addresses in the sixth line as “brothers”. More importantly, the narrator is also sending some moral lessons across. In this first stanza therefore, the narrator not only performs his narrative role, he also performs a communicative (contact) role as well as a moral role. This is the foremost of proof that the narrator`s other roles, as Fludernik observes, could be blurred in the narrative¹⁶.

In the next stanza, the narrator gives way to another first person narrator, who invites his “friends of my Ruslan and Lyudmila”¹⁷ to indulge him as he acquaints them with “this hero of my tale”¹⁸. As first person narrator, he refers to himself and other existents by various

¹³ *Ibid*, 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid*., 5.

¹⁵ *Ibid*., 14.

¹⁶ See Chapter Three, on Literature Review, p. 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid*., 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid*., II, 8.

pronouns. The possessive “my” shows the narrator’s possession of “*Ruslan and Lyudmila*”¹⁹, which is a poem written by the author Alexander Pushkin and published in 1820. The poem, which is a fairy tale consisting of six cantos and an epilogue, portrays the kidnapping of Ludmila, the daughter of Prince Vladimir of Kiev, which is in present day Ukraine, by an evil wizard and the attempt by the brave knight Ruslan to find and rescue her. From this early stage therefore, this narrator not only betrays himself as being Pushkin the author, but also seems to have earmarked one particular category of narratees – “friends of my *Ruslan and Lyudmila*”. These are obviously persons who have insight of his literary work. As Lewitt²⁰ suggests, they are assumed to be persons whose understanding of literary works are anticipated. Two lines down, the authorial narrator appeals to these narratees in the following words:

“ . . let *me* acquaint *you* on the nail with this hero of *my* tale . . .”²¹.

The objective case “me” is used here because there is an antecedent subject – “friends”. The use of the first person possessive *my* as in “my tale” again reinforces the point that the narrator is at the same time the author. In the next line, the narrator describes the hero of “my tale” as:

“Onegin, my good friend”²².

As has already been mentioned elsewhere in this study, this narrator at this stage also descends into the fictional world he is about to construct as a friend of the fictional hero Onegin. There is therefore, at this early stage portraying himself as an authorial narrator and at the same time a character-narrator.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁰ Levitt, Marcus (2006): *Eugene Onegin*, p. 43.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²² *Ibid.*, 9.

In the other half of the stanza, the narrator describes Onegin as one who was “littered and bred upon the Neva’s brink” where he believes “you were born as well ... reader”²³. Once again, the narrator provides material evidence that he bears the writer, Alexander Pushkin’s voice. The Neva is a river that flows through Saint Petersburg, where Pushkin once lived. In fact, he goes on to concretise this evidence, saying, that that place is “where I too strolled back and forth ...”²⁴. More importantly, however, the reference to “reader” probably confirms Levitt’s claim that the narrator envisages a second group of narratees – readers in general.

In the next stanza, the narrator assumes a third person status and the rest of the chapter is devoted to the exposition of the protagonist Eugene Onegin’s life. There are three phases of the protagonist’s life portrayed in this chapter. First, the narrator takes the tale back in time to the period when “fate saved Onegin from perdition”²⁵. His father is riddled with debts “after a fine career”²⁶. To his aid, a character identified as “Madame l’Abbe”²⁷ takes Eugene in and gives him tuition. Next, another character described only as “Monsieur”²⁸ takes over responsibility for the child.

The voice in this context is to a very great extent that of a heterodiegetic narrator, one who stands outside of the story and seems to know Onegin well. This narrator for the rest of the chapter dominates the tale about Onegin’s early life.

There is a turn in Onegin’s life when “the hour of youthful passion struck”²⁹. Onegin abandons his studies and is now “free” to pursue a life of pleasure. Among others, Onegin is portrayed as one who loved to take care of his appearance. His hair is “fashionably curled”

²³ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, IV, 1.

and “he donned new shapes and sizes”³⁰. He is also seen wearing “pantaloon, waistcoat and frock”³¹. These words, according to the narrator “are not of Russian stock”³², and they are evidence of Onegin’s taste for foreign fashion. Thus, the narrator in this instance is playing a testimonial role. At that early age, Onegin also learnt to “trouble the heart of the professional flirt”³³. He is also often attending soirees. He also has a taste for exotic foods and drinks – “wine of the comet”, “roast beef”, “the flower of *French* cuisine” and *Limburg*’s vivacious cheese”³⁴. Also, the cabinet of “the prize – boy of fashion’s college” is stuffed with “modishly luxurious” objects which “ingenious *London* has been sending across the Baltic in exchange for wood and tallow”³⁵. These are additional testimonies that the narrator provides to support his claim that Onegin loved exotic goods. He also loved to be identified with persons of influence. Thus, he knew Latin and could add *vale* when he signed a letter³⁶.

A significant point about the narrator’s role in this early stage is the inundation of the narrative with extradiegetic directions to readers. In Stanza XXIII, the narrator, having dwelt extensively on the protagonist’s indulgence with merrymaking, raises the question:

“Shall I depict with expert knowledge
The cabinet behind the door
Where the prize- boy of fashion’s college
Is dressed, undressed and dressed once more?”³⁷

The narrator goes on to describe the cabinet, from the second half of the stanza through the next two stanzas. Having done that, he teases readers with the following words:

³⁰ *Ibid.*, XI, 1.

³¹ 1, xxvi, 7.

³² *Ibid.*, XXVI, 8.

³³ *Ibid.*, XII, 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, XVI, 13.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1, xxiii, 6 – 8.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1, VI, 6.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, XXIII, 1 – 4.

“Your curiosity is burning
To hear what latest modes require,
And so, before the world of learning,
I could describe here his attire”.³⁸

The narrator uses the rest of the stanza to do the description of the protagonist’s attire.

Having done so, he addresses readers again:

“That isn’t our immediate worry:
We’d better hasten to the ball,
Where, in a cab and furious hurry,
Onegin has outrun us all”³⁹.

As has been pointed out in Chapter Three of this study, the narrator uses these discursive / directing elements to maintain contact with readers and also provide them with an appetite for the forthcoming events in the story. Throughout the story, it would be realized that the narrator is obsessed with this discursive/directing function.

In narrating this phase of the protagonist’s life, the narrator also comments extensively on various developments in the narrator’s life. In some instances, the comments are structured into the story and foreground the ensuing events. For instance, in his effort to present the protagonist’s level of education, the narrator makes the following comment –

“We all meandered through our schooling
Haphazard; so to God be thanks,
it’s easy, without too much fooling,
To pass for cultured in our ranks.
Onegin was assessed by many ...
as well read, though of pedant cast.”⁴⁰

³⁸ *Ibid.*, XXVI, 1-4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, XXVII, 1-4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, v, 4.

It would be realised that in the first four lines, the narrator is commenting on a situation rather than narrating a particular event. The narrator in this instance also departs from being a third person to using the first person plural form “we”, a reference to a group rather than to himself alone. This group does not only comprise of Onegin and the narrator, it is “all” more than two persons. The narrator is most probably referring to a general situation at a point in time before the events that he is narrating and which Onegin and the narrator were part of. This comment becomes the reference point for the subsequent revelation that Onegin “was assessed as well read”⁴¹. This is because “it’s easy to . . . pass for cultured in our ranks”, Onegin could be reckoned as being well read. But for this situation, Onegin, who is “of pedant cast” could not probably have been considered as “well read”⁴². The narrator is thereby subjecting Onegin’s standard of education to ridicule.

In other instances, the narrator’s comments dovetail a particular event; they are a reflection upon those events. For instance, in his reflections upon the protagonist’s indulgence in ballroom entertainment, the narrator makes the following confession:

In days of carefree aspirations,
The ballroom drove *me* off my head
The safest place for declarations,
And where notes are sped.⁴³

It would be realised once again that in this reflection, the narrative voice shifts to that of a first person singular narrator. This also confirms Fludernik’s view that the narrator ought to be overt in order to play the commentary role⁴⁴. Though the narrator in this instance is a fictional character, it is not directly involved in Onegin’s experience. it is a recap of the

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ 1, xxix, 1-2.

⁴⁴ Fludernik (2006;22)

narrator`s own isolated experience. The narrator could therefore, in this instance be considered an extradiegetic and homodiegetic narrator.

In the subsequent lines of the same stanza, the narrator makes some appeal.

*You husbands, deeply I respect you!
I'm at your service to protect you;
Now pay attention, I beseech you,
And take due warning from my speech.
You too, mamas, I pray attend it,
And watch your daughters closer yet,
Yes, focus on them your lorgnette,
Or else . . . or else may God forbend it!
I only write like this, you know,
since I stopped sinning years ago.⁴⁵*

The narrator is obviously playing a moral role here. In reflecting upon his own life, he considers it appropriate to drive home a lesson to readers. Contrary to Fludernik`s point that the other functions that the narrator plays may become blurred in the telling of the story these moral lessons are conspicuous⁴⁶. It is also important to realise that the issue the narrator raises also relate to life generally.

Parents are universally responsible for protecting their children from being influenced by corrupted morals before they become adults. These also confirm Fludernik`s position that the narrator ought to be overt to make moral pronouncement, and that the issues he raises should relate to the real world.

In the next chapter, the narrator reflects deeper:

Alas, on pleasure`s wild variety

⁴⁵ *Onegin*, 1, xxix, 14.

⁴⁶ Fludernik (2006;22)

I've wasted too much life away!
But, did they not corrupt society,
I'd still like dances to this day:
The atmosphere of youth and madness,
The crush, the glitter and the gladness,
The ladies` calculated dress;⁴⁷

Striking as it seems, Onegin “fell out of love at last with”⁴⁸ such life of pleasure. This “illness with which he`d been smitten . . . mastered him in slow gradation”⁴⁹ and Onegin, once the “child of luxury and delight”⁵⁰ grows colder to life “than the dead”⁵¹. As a result, “no glance so sweet, no sigh so teasing/no, nothing caused his heart to stir/and nothing pierced his senses “blur”⁵².

He tries to turn to writing but “a hard session of work made him feel sick” and he fails in that bid⁵³. He then turns to reading. He “read, and read” but gains no satisfaction in that either⁵⁴.

To confirm this remarkable turn in the protagonist`s life, the narrator discloses that he is “Onegin`s friend that season”⁵⁵. Indeed, as he says, they had “both drunk passion`s chalice”, and both “lives were (now) flat”⁵⁶. As additional evidence, the narrator says that Onegin`s tongue initially produces a haze in the narrator. As time goes on however, the narrator grows “used to his disputing and his cursing”⁵⁷. Also, both Eugene and narrator “drink in the

⁴⁷⁴⁷ *Onegin*, 1, xxx, 1-7.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, XXXVII, 13.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, XXXVIII, 1, 5.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, XXXV, 4.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 12 – 14.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1, xlii, 9.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1, xlv, 6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1, xlv, 3.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1, xlvi, 10 – 12.

midnight benediction, the silence” when they had talked enough⁵⁸. In other words, they reflect upon life after they have had enough conversation. The narrator by these revelations once again plays one of the roles cited by Genette, providing evidence to support this profound turn in the protagonist’s life.

It would also be observed that the narrator in this instance once again descends into the story as an intradiegetic character, a fictional character who is now a role player in Onegin’s circumstances. But though the narrator is in this instance an intradiegetic one, he is not the protagonist. He is still telling the story of the protagonist – Onegin. He is therefore, as Herman & Vervaeck (2001) will put it, an intradiegetic - allodiegetic narrator⁵⁹.

In the final phase of this chapter, narrator and protagonist part ways as a result of two occurrences:

“Eugene would willingly have started
With me to see an alien strand;
But soon the ways we trod were parted
For quite a while by fortune`s hand.
His father died . . .”⁶⁰

The narrator again provides evidence of being a character in the story (an intradiegetic allodiegetic narrator) and that status would have stayed but for the events that take Onegin away. When Eugene’s father dies, usurers take all that he has in settlement of the deceased’s debts⁶¹. Coincidentally, Eugene is shortly thereafter informed of his uncle’s ailment and travels to see him. In other words, the story turns full cycle to the opening stanza (I). Contradictory to the situation in the first stanza, however, Eugene’s uncle is dead by the time

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1, xlvii, 9 -10.

⁵⁹ Herman & Vervaeck. (2001).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1, LI, 1 – 5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*.

he arrives there⁶². Thereafter, “Eugene turned to countryman”⁶³. He inherits his uncle’s estate. He does not return to Saint Petersburg.

In stanza LVI, the narrator makes very important comments on poetry. The narrator takes “much pleasure in showing how to tell apart myself and Eugene”⁶⁴. This he does for a very significant literary purpose.

. . . lest a reader of mocking turn,
or else a breeder of calculated slander
should, spying my features, as he could,
put back the libel on the table
that, like proud Byron, I can draw
self-portraits only --- furthermore
the charge that poets are unable
to sing of others
the poet’s only theme is ‘I’⁶⁵.

The “I” is providing confirmation once again that he is an authorial narrator. If the narrator wants to avoid being seen to be repeating Byron’s weakness, then he must be the author (Pushkin) himself. In any case, this issue has already been highlighted elsewhere in this study⁶⁶. It is Levitt lauds Pushkin’s intention to take writing in this literary era in a new direction:

“Pushkin’s crucial move was to take what was a generally acknowledged weakness in Byron and turn it to his own productive advantage. In deciding to discontinue *Childe Harold*, Byron publicly admitted that he had failed to draw a clear distinction between himself and his fictional protagonist. In *Evgenii Onegin*, Pushkin directly confronts this key problem of Romantic poetics,

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1, lii.

⁶³ *Ibid.*,

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1, LVI, 3,4.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, LVI, 3- 14.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 3, p.

bringing these two aspects of authorial self into self-conscious dialogue. Pushkin's brilliance lies in playing them off one another, demonstrating the fundamental interdependence of art and life, 'literariness' and 'reality'. *Evgenii Onegin* thus marks a quantum leap in Russian literature, from the earlier century's mistrust of 'fiction' to a new conception of art."⁶⁷

Pushkin therefore, is not only prominent in upholding the High Romantics' emphasis on the imagination and subjectivity, he also blazes a trail: clearly separating the author from the protagonist. But it would appear that he is not able to draw a clear distinction between the narrator and the author, given his persistent intrusion in the story, often departing from the third person narrator to a first person singular or plural narrator and the references to material evidence of his own life.

In the next three stanzas, the narrator makes other comments that speak volumes for romanticism:

"Poets, I'll say in this connection,
Adore the love that comes in dream.
In times past, objects of affection
Peopled my sleep and to their theme.
My soul in secret gave survival:
Then from *the Muse* there came revival:
My *carefree* song would thus reveal
The mountain maiden, my ideal,
And captive girls, by Salgir lying.
And now my friends, I hear from you
A frequent question: 'tell me who
Inspires your lute to sounds of sighing'?
To whom do you, from all the train
Of jealous girls, devote its strain?"⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Levitt (2006). *Eugene Onegin*, p. 42

⁶⁸ Pushkin, *Onegin*, 1, lvii.

The narrator, again, by addressing a specific group of narratees, poets, tries to fulfill his function of establishing contact (communication) with them. In other words, this once again confirms the point made by Levitt⁶⁹ that poets are a specific group of narratees that the narrator has on his mind in crafting this novel.

The love that the narrator admonishes them to adore is the creative (story) ideas that come to them in their dreams. In other words, he expects them to cherish the fountains of ideas that the imagination suggests to them in the realms of unconsciousness. In the next seven lines, the narrator uses his own experiences to explain his point, referring to the “objects of affection” that “peopled my sleep” and how his own inner self-nursed them as themes. Next, the Muse⁷⁰ inspires him to shape these “carefree songs” into concrete creative objects in the form of “the mountain maiden”.

To illustrate, the narrator explains that contrary to suggestions from his colleague poets that it is some physical person who inspires him and that his poetry is devoted to some jealous girl, no one does. Having suffered “once from all the madness of love’s anxiety”, he rather embraces the Muse and “the weather of mind got clarity new – found...” Now free from the clutches of the anxiety of love, the narrator “once more weaves together emotion, thought, and magic sound”.

4.2 Chapter Two

The narrator continues the exposition of the protagonist in this chapter, starting with a description of his new abode in the first four stanzas. The place is described in the first stanza as “an enchanting country nook, such that any friend of his who is of harmless pleasure

⁶⁹ Levitt (Op.cit).

⁷⁰ According to the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*, it is an imaginary force or that gives – someone ideas and helps them to write, paint or make music. It is a source of inspiration to creative artists.

would bless the form his fortune took”⁷¹. The manor house is said to be “in deep seclusion”⁷². It is shielded by a hill and overlooks a river. Villages littered its surrounding landscape and cattle roamed the surrounding field. In stanza II, the chateau is described as having been built in a way that befitted “such a noble pile”⁷³. It had beautiful interior decorations that the narrator says are “now out of fashion”⁷⁴. According to the narrator, these interior decorations did not excite the protagonist a bit.

In spite of all his possessions, Onegin’s pre-occupation is “to pass the time”⁷⁵. Onegin also undertakes some reforms.

... he changed the *corvee* of tradition
into a small quit – rent and got
his serfs rejoicing at their lot”⁷⁶.

His neighbours react to this reform that he introduces. One of them, a thrifty fellow feels that he would suffer consequences. The other was indifferent. They call at his residence to confer with him but on realising, as time went on, that he leaves through the backdoor on a stallion, virtually avoiding them, they take offence, broke relations with him and never speak to him hence⁷⁷.

In the next stanza, the exposition shifts from Onegin to Vladimir Lensky. He is described as being “good looking, in the flower of age, a poet, and a Kantian sage”⁷⁸. The narrator also

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 2, 1.2, 3.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 5, 6.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 11, 1,2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 2, 11,9.

⁷⁵ 2, IV, 2.

⁷⁶ 2, IV, 6 – 8.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, V, 1 – 8.

⁷⁸ 2, VI, 7, 8.

cites him as one “whose creator was Gottingen”⁷⁹, believing that an informed narratee understands this piece of evidence.

The narrator devotes the next eight stanzas to describing Lensky in detail. Lensky is too young to have been dented by “the cold world’s corrupt finesse ...”⁸⁰ and in the affairs of the heart he is still a “sweet beginner”⁸¹. He trusts that friends are ready to defend him. He is compassionate, honest and devoted to doing good. Lensky roams the world with his lyre behind him and for evidence, the narrator notes that he draws inspiration from Schiller and Goethe⁸². He sings of love and grief and parting time.

In that community, it is to only Eugene that he shows his prowess. On the contrary, he dislikes the “entertainments of neighbouring owners of the earth”⁸³. Even though in their chatter they speak soundly on every matter, to him, they lack poetic heart.

As time went by, the wealthy and good looking Lensky was enticed by neighbours with a match between their girls and him but he is “quite untainted by any itch for marriage ties...”⁸⁴. Instead, he is desirous of the chance to get acquainted with Eugene and even though they initially are “tedious to each other”⁸⁵, they finally became closely knit like brothers.

After stanza XIII, the narrator breaks the story and reflects on friendship.

Friendship, as I must own to you,
*Blooms when there’s nothing else to do*⁸⁶.
But friendship, as between our heroes,
Can’t really be: for we have out grown
old prejudice: *all men are zeros*,

⁷⁹ 2, VI, 6.

⁸⁰ 2, VII, 2

⁸¹ 2, VII, 5.

⁸² *Ibid.*, IX, 6.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 2, XI, 2.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2, XIII, 1, 2.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 2, XIII, 9.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 2, XIII, 13, 14.

the units are ourselves alone.

Napoleon`s our sole inspiration . . .

The millions of two – legged creation

For us are instruments and tools:

Feeling is quaint, and fit for fools.⁸⁷

The narrator`s main point is that friendship is vain; he is emphatic about his belief that the friendship between Onegin and Lensky is a matter of convenience. To him, the two of them, like “all men are zeros”. In other words, they are not truly committed in their hearts to other persons. Each man is a unit, an independent entity holding unto their own interests, “ourselves alone”⁸⁸.

In furtherance of that, the narrator believes that to each one of us “the millions of two – legged creation for us are instruments and tools”⁸⁹, which we use to our convenience as and when we find it necessary. So Onegin and Lensky are using each other to kill their boredom. An exception to this human frailty, according to the writer, is Napoleon⁹⁰.

The narrator assumes that Napoleon`s life is credible evidence to support his assertion and his informed group of narratees are already apprised of this exceptional record of his.

In seeming contradiction to this assertion, the narrator believes that even though Onegin “knew and scorned his fellows through and through”⁹¹, there were people he “glorified, feelings he valued”⁹² outside his new neighbourhood.

Both characters discuss several topics but one that “preempted the thoughts of my two anchorites”⁹³ is passion. Onegin takes time to tell Lensky of his love escapades with sighs

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, XIV, 1-8.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 11.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, XVII, 1-2.

and regrets. Lensky in reaction narrates his “tale of youthful love”⁹⁴, not only to Eugene but “to us”⁹⁵. The exposition turns in stanza XXI to how Lensky has since his boyhood doted on Olga, in the next stanza, to how thoughts of her “were what inspired him to the first moaning of his flute”⁹⁶. In the next stanza, the narrator describes Olga, but is abrupt.

“Reader, the elder sister now
Must be my theme, if you “II allow”⁹⁷.

Thus, the elder sister (Tatyana) is next in the line of exposition, a journey of six stanzas (XXIV – XXIX). It begins this way:

Tayana was her name ... I own it,
Self willed it may be just the same;
but it's the first time you'll have known it,
a novel graced with such a name.
What of it? It's euphonious, pleasant,
And yet inseparably present,
I know it, in the thoughts of all
Are old times . . .⁹⁸

By saying “I own it”, the narrator is not saying that readers are getting to know the name “Tatyana” for the first time; rather it's the first time that they would have seen the name “Tatyana” being used to refer to the heroine of a novel. The narrator believes that “in the thoughts of all” the name Tatyana sounds “quaintly old-fashioned or lowly”, one that should be associated with persons of “old times and (heard within) the servants “hall” than among

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, XIX, 14.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, XXII, 3.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, XXIII, 13 -4.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 3 – 14.

principal characters. He believes that readers would have preferred a more modern name due to the influence of affectation.

“We must confess that taste deserts us
Even in our names (and how much worse
when we begin to talk of verse)

The narrator places the entire situation in one gnomic statement:

“Culture, so far from healing, hurts us . . .”⁹⁹.

The first person plural pronouns used in this context, “we” “us” and “our” most probably refer to a wider, universal, audience. The bordering contact with foreign cultures are universal; they are of concern in the real world and touch all manner of readers outside the narrator’s fictional world, this country not excepted. Among the younger generation, the taste for authentic Ghanaian identity is fading in the face of the whirlwind of westernization that has been blowing across the country and indeed, the world at large.

Many parents for instance would prefer giving their children foreign names, hardly bothering to find out their meanings. Yet various ethnic groups have names that are meaningful and reflect sound human values.

Thus the narrator, in this instance, is also referring to a global cultural challenge. It appears however, that this issue is not directly related to the events in this part of the story. It could therefore, be argued that contrary to Fludernik’s view narrator’s comments in this instance do not relate to the developments in the story.

The authorial narrator proceeds to describe Tatyana in the unkindest of terms. First, she lacks her sister Olga’s beauty. She is also described as a “savage, silent, tearful, wild as a forest

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*,12.

deer, and fearful”¹⁰⁰. She never kisses her parents; neither does she join the other children as they play. Instead, she remained in silence all day, “ensconced beside the window – pane”¹⁰¹, and `reflection was her friend and pleasure . . .”¹⁰².

From an early age Tatyana loved literature, romances being her “only food”¹⁰³, especially “all the fancies of Richardson¹⁰⁴ and of Rousseau”¹⁰⁵. Likewise, his father`s wife, who had been forced to marry him, loved romances and “had gone raving mad”¹⁰⁶ on Richardson. The narrator mentions these two romance writers to provide testimony to the Tatyana`s affection for romance. The narrator is again playing his usual testimonial role.

Tatyana`s family is described as being “so calm, so peaceful”¹⁰⁷ and they seemed to have a passion for hospitality and regularly receiving and serving guests at dinner.

Tatyana`s father dies and at his burial Lensky resurfaces and sadly mourns for his late neighbour. This is what he says:

“ Poor yorick`, said he, broken hearted:
 `he dandled me as a small boy.
 How many times I made a toy
 Of his Ochakov decoration!
 He destined Olga`s hand for me,
 Kept asking: `shall I live to see` . . .”¹⁰⁸

In this instance, Lensky takes over from the narrator and pours out his heart. Lensky is a character in the story and has experienced the events that he narrates and is therefore, in this

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, XXV, 2, 4, 6.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, XXVI, 1.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, XXIX, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Samuel Richardson was an 18th Century writer and printer who was best known for his three epistolary novels, *Pamela* (1740), *Clarissa* (1748) and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753). His name was on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, a list of books that Catholics were by Papal decree prohibited from reading.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 3, 4.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, XXXV, 1.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, XXXVII, 6 – 11.

instance an intradiegetic and autodiegetic narrator¹⁰⁹. It would be observed that the omniscient narrator interpolates his voice between the first and second utterances of Lensky, thereby describing Lensky`s mood and manner of speech.

The narrator therefore, maintains his presence as the agent who is at the top of the hierarchy of narrators an extradiegetic heterodiegetic narrator¹¹⁰. It would also be observed that in between Lensky`s rendition, the voice of Olga`s father is also heard asking “shall I live to see...”. He is equally an intradiegetic narrator but who is placed below Lensky in the hierarchy of narrators. Thus within this short monologue, there is a three tier-hierarchy of narrators – the extradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator at the top, that of Lensky just below it and that of Olga`s father at the lowest end. But the extradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator is not the most important here. It is rather the intradiegetic narrator, Lensky.

Being a commentator and philosopher on important issues about life, the authorial narrator sizes the opportunity of this burial event to reflect upon death, in the last three stanzas to reflect upon death. In a nutshell, the narrator makes one observation: that death will always befall mankind. Human beings, he says, will `rise and ripen and fall dead...`. His admonition therefore is:

“So glut yourselves until you`re sated
On this unstable life, my friends!”¹¹¹

The narrator in this regard echoes the “let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die” philosophy preached in the Holy Bible¹¹², which in itself re-echoes the popular vanity of vanities message in the book of Ecclesiastes¹¹³. In sharp contrast to this admonition, the narrator, probably conscious of his moral role, is quick to remind readers that:

¹⁰⁹ Herman & Vervaeck (op.cit). See chapter Three, p. 21.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, XXXIX, 1, 2.

¹¹² See ` First Letter to The Corinthians`, Chapter 15 verse 32.

¹¹³ See Ecclesiastes Chapter 1 verse 2.

“it will be painful to depart and leave no faint footprint of glory . . .”¹¹⁴.

Thus, the narrator maintains a careful balance while treading the sharp edge that straddles the material essence and the spiritual essence. To him, the motivation for this balance of opinion is “a distant admonition of hope (that) sometimes disturbs my heart”¹¹⁵.

4.3 Chapter Three

In this chapter, action in the story begins a steady rise as Lensky invites Eugene to the residence of the Larins` where Tatyana begins to fall in love with him. The prominent narrative technique in this chapter is dialogue: there is departure from the heterodiegetic narrator`s omnipresence to first person interaction among the principal characters. The protagonist Onegin and Lensky start the telling with the following conversation:

“You`re off? Why, there`s a poet for you!`
 `Goodbye, Onegin, time I went.`
 `Well, I won`t hold you up or bore you:
 But where are all your evenings spent?`
 `At the Larins`! But how mysterious.
 For goodness` sake, you can`t be serious
 Killing each evening off like that?`
 `You`re wrong. But what I wonder at
 Is this – one sees from here the party:
 In first place – listen, am I right?
 A simple Russian family night:
 The guests are feasted, good and hearty,
 on jam, and speeches in regard
 to rains, and fax, and the stockyard.”¹¹⁶

In this instance, the heterodiegetic narrator is not heard at all; he does not mediate the narrative by any means and plays no other role whatsoever. This dialogue continues in the second stanza where Onegin pleads with Lensky to present him to the Larins and both agree to visit them that evening. The heterodiegetic narrator takes back his place in the next stanza,

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9,10.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, XXXIV, 7.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3, l, 1-14.

telling readers of both friends' visit to the Larins, where they are treated to "the full rigours of old – time hospitality"¹¹⁷.

As they return home, "this was our heroes" conversation (according to the narrator) secretly overheard by "you"¹¹⁸. By the reference "you", the narrator thereby transfers narrative responsibility for the dialogue that ensues to readers. It is again, one of the numerous instances where the writer's tries to make readers part of the communication process.

This dialogue runs through the next two stanzas (IV and V) with Onegin, once again, describing their visit to the Larins' as another bore. In response to Onegin's inquiry, Lensky describes Tatyana as "one who looks as still and melancholy as Svetlana ..."¹¹⁹. Svetlana is the heroine of Vasily Zhukovsky's ballad whose title bears the heroine's name. It is again an instance of the numerous allusions to European and Russian writers in this novel, and this allusion is aimed at an accurate description of Tatyana as possible.

The heterodiegetic narrator takes over again, revealing how news about Eugene's visit to the Larins' set "a spout of gossip"¹²⁰, some saying Tatyana had found a suitor at last, and how Tatyana, despite listening "with vexation to all this tattle"¹²¹ begins to fall in love with Eugene. The narrator then focuses on Tatyana, who in sober reflection "roams the still forest (the pages of her romance novels) like a ranger"¹²², looking for direction, and finds "her dreams, her secret fire"¹²³. Her eyes are finally open and then she said:

"This is the one"¹²⁴.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3, 3.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, 3, 4.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, V, 2,3.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, VI, 2,3.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, VII, 2.

¹²² *Ibid.*, X, 5.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, VII,3.

In the next stanza, Tatyana “haunted by love’s anguish, has made the park her brooding place”¹²⁵. In the night, Tatyana is sleepless and confides in Tanya, her maid that she is in love. The narrator at this stage again surrenders the mediation directly to the two characters.

Tatyana started the dialogue in the following words:

“I can’t sleep, *Nanya*: it’s so stifling!”¹²⁶

After prolonged conversation, where *Nanya* tries to convince her that she is only ill, Tatyana repeats her plea:

“ I am in love ”¹²⁷

To this, *Nanya*’s response is:

“My dearest heart, you’re sick and ailing.”¹²⁸

Tatyana in desperation rebuffs this, saying:

“I am in love; leave me alone.”¹²⁹

Tatyana decides to write to Eugene expressing her love for him, but before she does, the narrator breaks the story again to reflect on the genuineness of Tatyana’s love for Eugene. He first alludes to the love of a beautiful woman who is haughty as compared to that of one “who stays quite self-absorbed and unaffected by sighs of passion or by praise”¹³⁰. The haughty woman is “cold, pure as ice”¹³¹.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, XVI, 1,2.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, XVII, 1.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, XX, 1.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, XXIII, 1-3.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, XXII, 2.

The latter one is one who “by her severe demeanour frightened to death a timid love...”¹³².

The narrator does not ascribe either description to Tatyana or any other character. The narrator, in furtherance of his reflections raises the question:

“Why is Tatyana guiltier seeming?”¹³³

For an answer, the narrator wonders whether it is because Tatyana’s “love obeys the laws of feeling...”¹³⁴. He asks another question:

“is this then what you cannot forgive?”¹³⁵

The narrator is pleading Tatyana’s case, not hiding his bias for her whatsoever. As far as he is concerned, Tatyana has decided to write to Eugene in obedience to “the laws of feeling.” Her love is a genuine one. Furthermore, the narrator contrasts the love of a flirt who has ulterior motives for expressing her love to that of Tatyana whose profound love for Eugene is “no by – play...”¹³⁶.

Tension begins to mount in the story when Tatyana writes to Eugene. She is very sincere! She indicates that she thought for a while that it was “out of season to speak”¹³⁷ and if she had the “slightest reason to hope” that she would see Eugene “even once a week”¹³⁸ and speak with him and exchange pleasantries with him and in so doing, have him on his mind till he comes visiting again, she would probably not have written.

Tatyana regrets, however, that Eugene is “not sociable, they say”¹³⁹ and he finds “the country godforsaken.”¹⁴⁰ The main point Tatyana makes is a note of surrender to Eugene’s love:

¹³² *Ibid.*, XXIII, 6, 7.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 1.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, XXV, 2.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.100.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

“ . . . for you I’m set apart;
 And my whole life has been directed
 And pledged to you, and firmly planned. . . ”¹⁴¹

Tatyana concludes that she trusts Eugene to conceal her plea in his honour. For a few days, Tatyana waits in pain, with “tears drowning her regard”¹⁴², for Eugene’s response. The tension in Tatyana suddenly rises when Onegin finally visits and both protagonist and foil meet face to face, Tatyana startled as though she has been “seared by fire”¹⁴³. On this momentous occasion, the third person narrator, just as he does in the two previous chapters, concludes the chapter with some reflection on his own work in progress:

“I lack the strength required to say
 What came from this *unlooked for meeting*;
 my friends, I need to pause a spell,
 And walk, and breathe, before I tell
 A story that still wants completion;
 I need to rest from all this rhyme:
 I’ll end my tale some other time.”¹⁴⁴

The narrator finds it appropriate to re-establish one-on-one contact with “my friend” again as one phase of his art ends. He has not forgotten to sustain their participation in the communication process. His decision to hold back the outcome of Tatyana’s meeting with Onegin seems to have two effects.

First, it appears to be part of the narrator’s overt bias towards Tatyana. Having given indication that Tatyana was startled, becoming “seared as by fire”¹⁴⁵, in her meeting with Onegin, the narrator is reluctant to subject her to further ridicule. Secondly, this expression of hesitation is to keep readers in suspense, whetting their appetite for the climax: the ultimate meeting of protagonist and foil.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, XLI, 8–14.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

4.4 Chapter Four

The narrator holds on to the suspense in the first two stanzas of this chapter, preferring to philosophise on the tools of love employed by “our forefathers”¹⁴⁶. These forefathers employed “cold-blooded debauchery”¹⁴⁷ as a technique for loving, and this was praised and studied. The premise for such wickedness, to the narrator, is that:

“With women, the less we love them,
The easier they become to charm,
The tighter we can stretch above them
enticing nets to do them harm.”¹⁴⁸

This allusion to such a historical account serves as foreboding to the impending reaction of the protagonist to Tatyana`s letter. The narrator believes that Eugene “thought in just this fashion.”¹⁴⁹ To support his claim, he recalls that as a youth, the wings of passion “had blown him (Eugene) far off.”¹⁵⁰ In spite of this disposition, the narrator believes that “Tatyana`s note made its impression on Eugene” and “. . . he was deeply stirred . . .”¹⁵¹. “Eugene (in fact) has no wish to betray a soul so innocent, so trusting”¹⁵².

Having done this, the narrator breaks the story again, inviting readers to “the garden, the scene where Tanya now confronts Eugene”¹⁵³. There at the scene, the narrator hands over the telling to Eugene, only introducing that scene with this preamble:

“Moments of silence, quite unbroken;
then, stepping nearer, Eugene said . . .”¹⁵⁴

Thus, even though the narrator hands over the narrative to Eugene at this stage, he again establishes a hierarchy: the narrator is at the top and he sets the stage for Eugene.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 4, 1, 10.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 5, 6.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1- 4.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, IX, 1.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, XI, 1,2.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 11 - 2.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 13 - 4.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, XII, 1,2.

In the ensuing dialogue, Eugene acknowledges receipt of the letter and confesses that Tanya's "sincerity of thought is dear to me"¹⁵⁵. He however, he says that he will not praise Tanya, rather will respond "with an avowal just as heartless"¹⁵⁶.

Eugene tells Tanya that if he had been saddled with being a father and husband in a "domestic plot" he "would have chosen none but Tanya to be the bride I'd call my own"¹⁵⁷.

He makes an emphatic and sympathetic statement to back his point:

"But I was simply not intended for happiness that alien role"¹⁵⁸.

Even more chilling, Eugene believes that he possesses "a soul that nothing can renew"¹⁵⁹. Eugene confesses that he nonetheless feels "a brotherly affection, or something tenderer still . . ."¹⁶⁰ for Tanya. In the light of this affection, Eugene prays, "you'll love again"¹⁶¹. In the same vein, he admonishes Tanya to teach her heart "some self-restraint" since "each and every man won't understand it as I have . . ."¹⁶². Eugene probably believes that other men would have taken Tatyana for a girl who is desperate and taken advantage of her.

At this point of the action, the narrator takes over the narrative role again, describing how having concluded "his sermon", Eugene "gave his arm" and how Tatyana leant on it and both "walked homeward"¹⁶³. The narrator's comment on Onegin's response is very refreshing:

"Agree, the way Eugene proceeded
with our poor girl was kind and good;
Not for the first time he succeeded
In manifesting, as he could,
a truly noble disposition"¹⁶⁴.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, XII, 7.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, XIII, 8.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, XIV, 1.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, XVI, 2.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, XVII4 – 9.

The narrator is being very objective, in effect suspending his bias for Tatyana. But Onegin's response causes the young Tatyana's "youthful soul" to writhe in anguish, as "sleep runs from her . . ."»¹⁶⁵.

4.5 Concluding Chapters

There is no significant change to the narrator's roles in the remaining chapters of this verse novel. In Chapter Five, Tatyana is still tense and is plagued by dreams and in one of her dreams she is pursued by a large bear amidst a snowstorm. As she is unable to escape, the bear takes her to a gathering in a hovel where she finds Onegin feasting with some weird creatures. Tatyana is consumed by fear and attempts to escape but the weird creatures pursue her. Onegin is outraged and claims her like a worthy hero, making Tatyana jump in ecstasy.

Tatyana, although she is so troubled by this dream, would not reveal it to her sister Olga. Rather, she plunges into one of her romance novels where she knows that she can find trustworthy heroes.

Tatyana's birthday is celebrated on January 25 with merrymaking and Onegin and Lensky are in attendance. Lensky urges Eugene to come along with him, assuring him that there will only be a small gathering, with Tatyana, her parents and her sister Olga around. When they arrive, however, Eugene is disappointed to see a vigorous countryside party.

Having become weary of the urban balls that he used to attend in Saint Petersburg, Eugene is really angry that Lensky has lured him into another large gathering. Eugene decides to even the score by taking Olga first to the dancing floor flirting with her. Anxiety sets in when Lensky who is obviously hurt leaves:

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, XVIII, 1 – 5.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

“He finds the shock beyond all bearing;
so, cursing women’s devious course,
he leaves the house, calls for his horse
and gallops.”¹⁶⁶.

In Chapter Six, Eugene becomes bored with his mischief after Lensky departs and also leaves. That night, while everyone is sleeping, Tatyana sits by her window and stares into the darkness, her heart heavy.

Later another day, a landowner delivers a letter from Lensky to Onegin, challenging him to a duel. Innocent of heart as he is Lensky believes that:

“Pistols made for pairing
and just a double charge of shot
will in a flash decide his lot.”¹⁶⁷

He accepts the challenge though he laments having to fight his friend:

“With reason, too: for when he’d vetted
in secret judgment what he’d done,
he found too much that he regretted:
last night he’d erred in making fun,
so heartless and so detrimental,
of love so timorous and gentle”¹⁶⁸.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 5, XLV, 8 -14.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, X, 1- 6.

In the ensuing duel, Onegin is first to hit target; he drives a bullet through Lensky's heart killing him. In view of this moral lesson, the narrator concludes this event on another reflection on the event.

Reader, whatever fate's direction,
We weep for the young lover's end,
The man of reverie and reflection,
The poet struck down by his friend!¹⁶⁹

The last expression "struck by his friend" is a sarcastic one. It is antithetic that Lensky friend and not his enemy who rather strikes him. This episode seems to confirm the narrator's comment earlier in the story that "friendship can't really be"¹⁷⁰. If men like Onegin were no zeros and feeling quaint as the narrator says, Eugene would not have broken Lensky's trust and his heart.

In Chapter Seven, Olga is wooed by another suitor and taken down the aisle. She leaves Tatyana in the countryside to begin a new life as a married lady. Tatyana is left lonely and grieving and visits the country home of Eugene Onegin. The local people are not happy with her state and advise her family to move her to Moscow. The family heeds the advice and Tatyana relocates to Moscow. There, Tanya meets her cousins and they in subtle stead prepare her for social activities. Tatyana co-operates with them but try as they did, she resists pouring out her heart's secrets to them.

In each of these chapters, the third person narrator is still omnipotent and omnipresent, but still hands over the narrative role to some characters at certain vital moments to portray

¹⁶⁹ Pushkin, *Onegin*, 6, XL, 1-4.

¹⁷⁰ See p. 15

events. He also continues to intrude the plot with copious commentaries and discussions on various matters during which he chips in various pieces of moral proclamations. The narrator also continues to break the story at various times to comment on his own art in progress or direct readers on the trend of the story.

The story concludes in Chapter Eight with Onegin meeting Tatyana again. To Eugene's astonishment, Tatyana is no longer the "plain, timorous, dejected and forlorn maiden whom he'd known, but the unbending goddess-daughter of Neva's proud imperial water, the imperturbable princess"¹⁷¹. Onegin is suddenly "deep in love, just like a boy"¹⁷².

In a reverse of fate, Onegin also writes (three times in his case) to Tatyana who is now married, asking that they consummate their love. In much the same way, there is a repeat of the meeting between Onegin and Tatyana in the garden. At this final meeting, an "emotion of wild repentance threw Eugene at her feet . . ."¹⁷³. Befuddled, Eugene does not speak. But Tatyana understands it all and her response to Eugene's plea is simply the anti-climax:

"I married, I beseech you, go!"¹⁷⁴

More elaborately, Tatyana says to Eugene:

"I love you . . . but I've become another's wife—and I'll be true to him, for life."¹⁷⁵

Tatyana leaves, and "Eugene, all emotion, stood thunder struck"¹⁷⁶.

This event draws the curtain of denouement on the tale of Eugene Onegin, "my good friend . . . my hero"¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, XXVII, 3-7.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, XXX, 2.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, XL, 7.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 8, XLVII, 8.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 11 – 14.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, XLVIII, 1, 2.

¹⁷⁷ Pushkin, *Onegin*, 1, II, 8.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 7, LV, 5.

In the last of his numerous and varied comments in this story, the narrator turns to “reader” and then to “my companion”, addressing each one of them in turns. To the reader, the narrator hopes that “whoever you may be, a friend, a foe ... you took at least a grain” from this story. To “my companion”, the narrator bids goodbye, describing him as “my true ideal”.

The “reader” and “my companion” are a flashback of the same group of narratees that the narrator addresses at the beginning of the story. Coming at the end of the narrative, these references confirm Levitt’s observation that the narrator had two groups of narratees in mind when composing the story¹⁷⁹.

Levitt’s observation that the first category are less adept readers is re-enforced in this concluding observation. This reader is not conversant with the intricacies of the literary arts, so it is enough to hope that “you took at least a grain” from the story. The companion is a fellow poet and so it makes sense to describe him as “my true ideal”.

He is a true ideal who understands the author’s effort to subvert Byron’s poetic weakness by creating a hero who is distinguishable from the authorial narrator. It also makes sense to reveal to him how Tatyana and Eugene first appeared to the authorial narrator “through the mist that dreams arise on” and how they were “still dim, through crystal’s magic glass, before my gaze began to pass”¹⁸⁰.

The exploitation of the dream state in this critical point of the narrative is also confirmation of the narrator’s commitment to the High Romantics’ quest to foreground the imagination and subjectivity in the literary arts¹⁸¹ and it lends credence to the speculation that the narrator is actually an authorial one, Pushkin’s own voice.

¹⁷⁹ Levitt. (2006). p.41.

¹⁸⁰ Pushkin, *Onegin*, 8, L.

¹⁸¹ See Chapter Three, on Literature Review.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, evidence found in the primary text *Eugene Onegin* and examined within the context of the theoretical framework, proves that the narrator plays various roles in addition to narrating the story. In fact, the analysis on the whole has laid bare the intricacies of a narrative; as far as the role(s) of the narrator is concerned these roles are discussed in the next chapter.



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Conclusion

It has been very challenging but worthwhile probing the novel for the roles of the narrator. The departure from the usual study of the political, social and cultural issues and themes in literature, to the application of narrative theory to a primary text has given this candidate a better appreciation of literature as an intellectual pursuit.

In the course of the analysis of the primary text *Eugene Onegin*, it is realised that apart from narrating the story of the protagonist Eugene Onegin, the narrator did play all the other roles cited in the theoretical framework – directing role; communication role; testimonial role; commentary role and the philosophical role.

This thus confirms the first hypothesis; that the narrator, while playing the narrative role also performs other roles. In fact, it is one novel in which the comments and moral statements the narrator makes as well as his incessant addresses and directions to narratees seem to outweigh the story in volume.

With regard to the second hypothesis, that these other functions that the narrator performs are relevant to the development of the story, evidence abounds in the text to support it. Even though on a few occasions the narrator's comments do not relate to the events in view, most of his comments and moral pronouncements expound the events in the story. To his comments in particular, it is argued that some are structured into the narrative, thereby serving as the theme around which those specific events revolve.

On the third hypothesis, that the other roles played by the narrator may be blurred by the telling, it is interesting to note that contrarily, the narrator in *Eugene Onegin*, makes his comments, moral/philosophical admonishing and propositions and directional statements as perceptible and as elegant as possible. In fact, the narrator switches to the first person whenever he makes any comment or drives home a moral point. That way, the narrator suspends the narrative and directly addresses a particular group of narratees.

In other instances, he uses the first person plural pronouns “we”, “us” or “our”, thereby drawing narratees into discussion of the comments that he makes. And in other instances, his audience is a defined “you” - poets, fathers, mothers or readers in general. He does the same with his extradiegetic directions to narratees or readers, addressing them directly. By this strategy therefore, the narrator more often than not, clearly marks out all other roles from the narration of the story. The third hypothesis therefore, falls in the face of evidence from the text.

Apart from these major findings, there are others that merit discussion. First is the changing status of the narrator. As has already been mentioned, the narrator is predominantly a third person/heterodiegetic narrator. He therefore, sits outside the story most of the time and presents the story from his own point of view. However, it is confirmed in the analysis, as Levitt observes, that there are instances when the narrator changes status into a first person narrator and becomes a character.

In one particular instance, the narrator metamorphoses into a character who is actively involved in happenings in Onegin`s life; he is a homodiegetic allodiegetic narrator.

Another finding of the study is the development of a hierarchy of narrators in certain instances in the story. In one instance, it is the narrator who is on top, followed by one character and then another. It is obvious that it is not the heterodiegetic narrator who is necessarily the most significant narrator in the hierarchy. Rather, it is the character who initiates the dialogue. The heterodiegetic narrator only percolates the dialogue at a point with some comment on one character's manner of narration. In other instances, it is two characters in dialogue, the first character initiating the narrative and the other responding.

The lessons learned will in future guide the study of the narrator's place and roles in literary texts. In view of the lessons learned in this study, certain questions have come up which future research could address. The recommendations in this regard are as follows:

5.1 Recommendations

On the first hypothesis, which is that the narrator performs various functions apart from narrating the story, it is proposed that each of the various roles of the narrator could constitute a topic for research by graduate students of English, given the enormity of evidence that is available on each role in this study.

As has already been mentioned, the narrator's comments in *Eugene Onegin* almost overshadow the story itself. Besides, there are various ramifications of the structure and functions of the comments that could not have been adequately delved into but for the limited time and scope of this study.

The narrator's comments could therefore, constitute a complete area of study. Likewise, the other functions. Even the narrative function itself could be the focus of a complete literary

study. For instance, one could examine the narrator`s tone, how he presents events over time and the narrator`s discourse.

In the same vein, students are encouraged to examine the various statuses that the narrator could assume on different occasions in one novel, preferably in our own African novels. They could find it challenging and interesting to distinguish the six narrator types which Genette proposes by combining narrative level and the degree of involvement of the narrator.



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