

## PUSHKIN, *EUGENE ONEGIN* -- STUDY IDEAS

The situation in Russia, 1825: the tsarist autocracy (Nicholas II) and repression of liberal, western ideas after 1825; Russian society (agrarian, serfdom); the gentry, westernization (characters speak French).

The impact of Romanticism and especially of Byron, *Don Juan*, on Pushkin.

Narrative: a romantic story; "twice lost love;" story begins in the country and ends in the city (St. Petersburg and Moscow).

written in intricately rhymed "Onegin" verse; is the effect entirely Romantic? Or are there important elements of realism in the style and narrative? Do you get a vivid impression of upper-class Russian society through the novel?

the narrator impinges on the story throughout; many digressions about art, associates in Russia, affairs of the heart, etc. What are the narrator's opinions; how does his personality come through; is he the same person as Pushkin?

rote played by *fate*: Is the failure of Eugene's and Tatyana's love inevitable?

The characters (aside from the narrator)

Eugene: the main character. Does he feel superior to his environment; is he condescending; does he treat the world with irony? Why in the world does he reject Tatyana's appeal? What drove him to "try to seduce" Olga, and to fight the duel with his friend Lensky?

Lensky: the poet, the romantic (in matters of love).

The women:

Olga: the pretty one; innocent; dutiful; superficial? (it doesn't take her a long time to forget Lensky!).

Tatyana: deeply romantic and sincere; pours her heart out to Eugene and exposes her soul to being wounded? Is her subsequent behavior admirable? Is this deeply popular character in Russian literature a truly noble soul?

The author's focus:

Does he comment on the "Romantic" individual with his "extreme vulnerability to life's trials" and *Weltschmerz* and *mal de siècle*?

Is he focusing on an analysis on the Russian soul, deeply Romantic, brooding, alienated, even despairing because of the tsarist autocracy and an unjust social system?

Does he focus on the role of *fate* in the story: everyone seeks *happiness* and satisfaction in this world, but we seem fated not to achieve it; "there are no second chances;" the failure of Tatyana's and Olga's love seems inevitable?