**BRIGGS**

EXTRACT FROM

*YEVGENY ONEGIN*

This brief extract comes from Chapter Four, about halfway

through the novel.

Tatyana Larina has fallen for the superficial charms of

Yevgeny Onegin, and written to him. He has now turned up

in person to give his response. Instead of taking advantage of

her, he has advised her to be more cautious, and admitted that

he would never make a proper husband. Pushkin now reflects

on his behaviour, praising him for not letting the young girl down

lightly, but imagining that his enemies (some of whom are also

his friends) will not be as charitable. This provokes negative

thoughts on families and friends, and a cynical conclusion that

the only person you can trust is yourself.

Anthony Briggs

17

This, like a preacher, spoke Yevgeny.

Eyes blinded, as the salt tears choked,

Tatyana, breathless, uncomplaining,

Was listening to him as he spoke.

He gave his arm. Far from ecstatic,

With movements now called “automatic”,

She lent on him (nothing was said),

And languidly inclined her head.

The came back round the kitchen garden,

Strolling together. No one would

Have thought this anything but good,

For rural laxity can pardon

Most things within its happy laws,

As also snooty Moscow does.

18

Reader, you must be in agreement:

Poor Tanya was gently let down.

Nothing but good was all that *he* meant.

Yevgeny once again has shown

That his poor soul could not be deeper,

And yet the ill will of bad people

Has spared him nothing, though his foes

Along with so-called friends, yes those

(Friends, foes―the difference may be worthless),

Pay him some desultory respect.

Foes flourish; but, to be correct,

From *friends*, not foes, may God preserve us.

Friends, friends of mine―they give me pause.

I recollect them with good cause.

19

Why so? Well, it is my intention

To put some blank, black dreams to sleep,

And *in parenthesis* to mention

That there’s no jibe too low or cheap,

Spawned by a gabbler in a garret

For high-born scum to hear and parrot,

No phrase too great for any man,

No vulgar gutter epigram

That won’t be smilingly repeated

In front of nice folk by your *friend*

“In error”, for no wicked end,

Though endlessly acclaimed and greeted.

But still he’s friends through thick or thin

Because he loves you―you’re akin.

20

Ho hum. I ask you, noble reader,

How are your people? Are they well?

Permit me to insist you need a

Pointer from me so you can tell

What is the point of *family members*.

Families have their own agendas;

We must indulge them, show them love,

Woo them in spirit like a dove,

And, following the common custom,

See them at Christmas, and, at most,

Send them a greeting through the post,

And then we can relax and trust ’em,

To disregard us through the year …

God grant them long life and good cheer.

21

But still, the love of gorgeous ladies

Outweighs the claims of friends and kin;

With this―whate’er the storms from Hades―

*You’re* in control, *you* rein things in.

Oh, yes, despite the whirl of fashion,

And nature with her wayward passion,

And world opinion… all that stuff…

But the sweet sex is light as fluff.

Besides, a husband’s fixed opinions

Must be observed throughout her life

By any truly virtuous wife.

Thus one of your female companions

Can suddenly be swept away.

Satan loves love. Watch him at play

22

Who shall be loved? Who can be trusted?

With whom do we risk no betrayal?

Who weighs our ways and deeds, adjusted

Obligingly, to our own scale?

Who never blackens us with slander?

Who’s there to coddle us and pander?

Who sees our sins as “not too bad”?

Who will not bore us, drive us mad?

Stop you vain self for lost illusions:

You’re wasting all your strength and health.

The one to love is *you yourself*.

You are, good reader, in conclusion,

A worthy subject, we insist,

For no-one kindlier exists…

**BIANCHI**

THE COMING OF WINTER

*Stanzas from “Onegin” [Chapter Four]*

[xl]

Our Northern Winter’s fickle Summer,

Than Southern Winter scarce more bland⎯

Is undeniably withdrawing

On fleeting footsteps from the land.

Soon will the Autumn dim the heavens,

The light of sunbeams rarer grown⎯

Already every day is shorter,

While with a smitten hollow tone,

The forest droops its shadow leafage;

Upon the fields the mists lie white,

In lusty caravans the wild geese

Now to the milder South take flight;

Seasons of tedium draw near,

Before the door November drear!

[xli]

From shivering mist ascends the morning,

The bustle of the fields declines,

The wolf walks now upon the highway.

In wolfish hunger howls and whines;

The traveller’s pony scents him, snorting⎯

The heedful wanderer breathless takes

His way in haste beyond the mountains!

And though no longer when day breaks

Forth from their stalls the herd begins

To drive his kine,⎯his noon-day horn recalls.

The peasant maiden sings and spins,

Before her crackling, flaming bright

The pine chips,⎯friend of Winter night.

[xlii]

And see! The hoar frost colder sparkles

And spreads its silver o’er the fields,

Alas! The golden days are vanished!

Reluctant Nature mournful yields.

The stream with ice all frozen over

Gleams as some fashionable parquét,

And thronging hordes of boyish skaters

Sweep forward on its crystal way.

On her red claws despondent swimming,

The plump goose parts the winter cold,

Then on the ice with caution stalking

She slips and tumbles,⎯ah behold!

Now the first snowflake idling down

Stars the depressing landscape brown.

[xliii]

At such a season in the country,

What can a man’s amusements be?

Walk? And but more of empty highway

And of deserted village see?

Or let him through the far Steppes gallop,

His horse can scarcely stand at all⎯

His stamping hoofs in vain seek foothold,

The rider dreading lest he fall!

So then remain within thy paling,

Read thou in Pradt or Walter Scott,

Compare thy varying editions,

Drink, and thy scoffing mood spare not!

As the long evenings drag away

So doth the Winter too delay.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Pushkin.

[*Pradt was a French political writer, Minister to the Grand Duchy of Warsaw in 1812. Nine editions of his History of the Embassy at Warsaw were demanded*.]

FROM “ONEGIN” [CHAPTER FOUR, XXVI]

Sometimes he read aloud with Olga

A latter day romance discreet,

Whose author truly painted nature,

With cunning plot, insight complete;

Of the passed over a few pages,

Too bald or tasteless in their art⎯

And colouring, began on further,

Not to disturb the maiden heart.

Again, they sat for hours together

With but a chess board to divide;

She wish her arms propped on the table,

Deep pondering, puzzled to decide⎯

Till Lenski from his inward storm

Captured her castle with his pawn!

Pushkin.

FROM “ONEGIN” [CHAPTER EIGHT, XXIX]

Love condescends to every altar,

Ah when in hearts of youth it springs,

Its coming brings such glad refreshment

As May rain o’er the pasture flings!

Lifted from passion’s melancholy

The life breaks forth in fairer flower,

The soul receives a new enrichment⎯

Fruition sweet and full of power.

But when on later altars arid

It downward sweeps, about us flows⎯

Love leaves behind such deathly traces

As Autumn tempests where it blows

To strip the woods with ruthless hand,

And turn to soggy waste the land!

Pushkin.

FROM “ONEGIN” [CHAPTER SEVEN, II AND III]

How sad to me is thine appearing,

O Springtime, hour of love’s unrest!

Within the soul what nameless languors!

What passions hid within the breast!

With what a heavy, heavy spirit

From the earth’s rustic lap I feel

Again the joy of Springtide odours⎯

That once could make my spirit reel!

No more for me such pleasures thrilling,

All that rejoices, that has life,

All that exults,⎯brings but despondence

To one past passion as past strife,

All is but prose to such as he,

Wearied into satiety.

Perchance we fain would pass unnoticed

That which in Autumn drooped and pined,

Now radiant in verdure springing,

Since it must of our loss remind;

As with a tortured soul we realize

In Nature’s glad awakening,

That we shall never find renewal,

Who evermore are withering.

Perchance there haunts us in remembrance,

Our own most dear and lyric dream,

Another long forgotten Springtime⎯

And trembling neath this pang supreme,

The heart faints for a distant country

And for a night beside the sea!

Pushkin.

From *Russian Lyrics: Songs of Cossack, Lovers, Patriot and Peasant* by Martha Dickinson Bianchi [Dickinson], New York: Duffield and Company 1910 (2nd edn 1916).

**CORNFORD**

*Note*

I know well that “’Tatiana’s Letter’ is peculiarly untranslatable, and also that *Eugen Onegin* is an organic whole which should not be served up in fragments. My reason for including the letter is that when I first read Russian literature my curiosity was roused by finding so many allusions to it, and I hope that some of my readers may have felt the same.

*Eugen Onegin* is a long narrative written in the stanza of Byron’s *Don Juan*. Tatiana has been described as the typical Russian woman of all times; certainly she and Onegin are the spiritual ancestors of many of the characters in the great Russian novels. After a brilliant description of Onegin’s upbringing and gay metropolitan youth, the story tells how he goes to stay with a friend in the depths of the country, and is introduced to Tatiana, the seventeen-year old daughter of neighbouring gentlefolk. Tatiana at once falls violently in love with him, and after many hesitations obeys an irresistible impulse to write and tell him what has happened to her. She writes in French, as Pushkin tells us, because ‘like all our girljs’ she could not express herself well in Russian; neither did she read much Russian, but mostly such books as *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, *The Sorrows of Werther*, and *Sir Charles Grandison*⎯already old-fashioned when Pushkin wrote⎯with whose heroines and heroes she identified herself and Onegin. Pushkin shows, with tenderly amused affection, how her integrity of spirit, her innocence and passion, shine through the borrowed conventional phrases and romantic attitudes. In line 34 she breaks, unconsciously it seems, into the familiar ‘thou’ and ‘thee’. Next morning Onegin comes to her in the garden and lectures he on the rashness of her letter. He admits that he is charmed by her sincerity; but it is not his destiny to be a husband; he would only be an unkind one. Soon he departs to travel abroad, and Tatiana pines. At last she is taken by her family to Moscow, and persuaded to marry an elderly grandee. She becomes a great and distinguished lady, mistress of a salon. Onegin returns to Moscow, and falls passionately in love with her. It is now his turn to write a letter. She does not reply, but one day he comes upon her reading it to herself, in tragic grief. ‘Seeing her thus, anyone would know that the old Tatiana was alive in her.’ She answers with a beautiful dignity. She will not pretend that she dose not love him, or that she has not always loved him; but now the time has come when he must be rebuked by her. Finally, she tells him that she will always be faithful to her husband, and leaves him alone, stunned by the realization of his loss.

*Tatiana’s Letter*

That I should write to you, will tell

Far more than I have words to say⎯

Will give you power, I know too well,

With scorn my boldness to repay.

But surely if your heart has got

Even one drop of pity, you will not

Leave me alone to my unhappy lot.

Silence seemed best when first you came;

You never would have known by shame,

If I had hoped I only might

Just see you sometimes⎯once a week,

And say one word and hear you speak;

Then, till next time, enjoy the right

To think about you day and night.

But you’re unsociable, they say;

What pleasure can this place afford?

With country mice like us you’re bored,

Though we rejoiced that you should stay.

Oh, could you not have kept away

From one forgotten village? Then

I never should have seen your face;

My heart had never felt this pain.

I might⎯who knows?⎯have found the grace

To teach my inexperienced soul

These restless longings to control,

And with some friend to have shared my life,

And have been a mother and a faithful wife. . . .

To someone else? That could not be!

Yours only is this heart of mine;

High councils ruled our destiny,

And I am yours by ordinance divine.

I see my whole life hitherto

An earnest of your coming, you

Were surely sent by God on high

To be my guardian angel till I die.

You came into my dreaming; so

I loved the face I did not know;

Your eyes, before I felt their fire,

Filled me with wonder and desire,

And my soul heard you speaking long ago.

But here was not a dream. You came⎯

You just came in. At once I knew,

All stupefied and all aflame,

Yes, this is he, and this is true!

Was it not you, whose voice I thought

I though in stillness as I brought

To some poor cottager relief,

Or when, with too much pain distraught,

I prayed for solace in my grief?

Beloved vision, is it you,

Seen the transparent darkness through,

This moment leaning down to me

Over my pillow, silently?

Oh, tell me, was it you I heard

Who spoke to me a whispered word

Of love and comfort? Who are you?

My guardian angel all life through,

Or my insidious tempter? Who?

I am bewildered. Tell me true.

Or is it all a dream? The whole

A figment of an inexperienced soul,

And are we both destined for another role?

But be that as it may; from now

I trust you with my fate. I bow

With tears before your feet. I sue

For your protection. Think of me

Alone with nobody at hand

To help, no soul to understand!

My reason fails. Oh, listen you,

Or I must perish utterly.

Oh, give me, friend for whom I wait,

Some hope before it grows too late,

Or help to make this nightmare pass

With a rebuke, deserved, alas!

I close, afraid to read this through,

Such fear, such shame it brings to me,

Yet trusting utterly to you,

Your honour my security.

Translated by Frances Cornford and E[sther] [S]Polianowsky Salaman. In their *Poems from the Russian*, pages 16-20. London: Faber and Faber, 1943

**DEACON**

**OPENING STANZA**

**of**

**“ Eugene Onaygin ”**

*By* Pushkin

My uncle, following well-tried custom,

When his last illness came to stay,

Sent for me, made himself respected

Nor could have found a better way.

But heavens ! Is there a worse boredom

Than nursing someone day and night

Who will not let you out of sight ?

Is there a cruelty more base

Than cheering someone half-alive,

Pouring his medicine with dejected face,

Shaking his pillow, with a groan,

Sighing; while inwardly you’re thinking:

“ When will the devil fetch his own ?”

**TATIANA’S LETTER**

**from**

**“ Eugene Onaygin ”**

*By* Pushkin

I’m writing to you . . .

What is there left to say ?

I know that now ’tis in your power

To punish, by despising me.

Yet you, for my unhappy fate

Some grain of pity feeling

Will not, I trust you, me forsake . . .

At first I wanted to keep silence,

Believe me, you would ne’er have known

A full confession of my shame⎯

If I had hoped that now and again

If only rarely, once a week,

You might, perhaps, our homestead seek.

Only to hear you speak

Exchange a word or two, and then⎯

Keep thinking of, repeating them,

Or day or night until we meet again.

But rumour has it you’re a hermit

That in our country walks you’re bored,

And we, perhaps we have no brilliant merit,

Yet simple hospitality accord.

Why did you visit us, I wonder ?

In this forgotten wilderness,

I never would have known of you,

Nor known this bitter pain . . .

My inexperienced soul’s emotion

I might have conquered, and in time

Have found a mate to suit my heart,

Become a true and faithful wife,

A virtuous mother . . .

Another ‘ no, to none on earth

Could I have given my heart.

’Twas in the Highest Council ordered,

The will of Heaven ‘ I’m yours alone

My whole life was the gage of meeting,

That I should meet you was decreed,

I know that it was God who sent you

And till my death you’ll never fail.

I often saw you in a dream⎯

Unseen, already I had loved you⎯

Your lovely glance had met with mine

And in my soul I’d heard your voice

So long ago . . . No, it was not a dream,

For when I met you, my heart stood still,

And in my thoughts I knew at once ’twas you.

For often I had heard your voice

When I was helping with the poor,

Or in the quietness, when with prayer

I would essay to calm my soul‘s despair.

Wasn’t it you a vision glorious

Through the translucent darkness, only sensed,

Whe bent above my head and to me whispered

Word of comfort, love and hope ?

Are you my guardian Angel, oft I wonder,

Or some foul tempter full of guile ?

My doubts I pray you to dispel⎯

Perhaps all this is only vain,

The phantom of a fevered brain,

And fate has otherwise decreed . . .

Be as it may, my life from now

Into your hands I must surrender,

’Tis before you I shed my tears,

Begging you to be my defender.

Only imagine, here I am alone,

No one has tried to understand me,

My intellect’s starving and I must go down,

Silently, even without a moan.

I wait for you⎯with one swift glance,

Give me some hope, or with a well-deserved

reproach

Break up my dream for ever.

I’ll write no more, I daren’t re-read my letter

From shame and fear I almost faint,

But firmly trusting in your honour,

I boldly place my faith in you.

**TATIANA’S MONOLOGUE**

**from**

**“ Eugene Onaygin ”**

**[Chapter Eight, 42.8 to 47]**

*By* Pushkin

Enough, arise.

I must speak openly to you:

Onaygin, do you remember that black day

When in the garden, on the avenue we met ?

And how submissively I listened to your tirade?

To-day it is my turn to speak:

43Onaygin, I was younger then,

And, I believe, more fair,

And how I loved you . . .

What response did I feel in your heart ?

A cold severity. For you a young girl’s love

Was no new thing,

To-day, my blood runs cold when I remember

That sermon, and that frozen glance . . .

No blame to you⎯in that dread hour

Your action was the soul of honour,

With my whole heart I thank you⎯

44In that fair wilderness, and at that time

I did not please you⎯

Why then am I the subject of such persecution ?

Why do you single me out ?

Is it because in Higher Circles

I now must occupy a place ?

That I am rich and have some honour

Because my husband wounded in the war

Is favoured by the court ?

Is it because my shame, if I stooped to you

Would give you in Society the fame

Base and ignoble, of tarnishing my name ?

45Forgive my tears. Believe me, if your Tania,

That little girl of long ago, is not forgotten quite,

She would prefer your sermons and cold glances

To misplaced passion and your tears and sighs.

To my earlier years you gave, at least,

The pity they deserved.

What brings you to my feet today ?

What paltriness ! How can you let

Your mind and heart be slaves

Of such a shallow feeling.

46To me this sumptuousness⎯

Of life which has no meaning,

The faded tinsel of success,

At Court, at balls, at routs⎯

For all these tatters of the masquerade

I’d gladly in exchange, have what I loved once

well;

Our modest house, the garden, now grown

wild,

A few loved books, and in the shade

Of branches, the cross and quiet grave

Of her who loved me best, my dear old nurse.

Those places where I knew you first⎯

47And happiness was once so near, so almost

in our grasp.

Perhaps I was unwise. My mother pleaded

With tears, and I consented. To me, just then

All fates seemed equal⎯and I married.

Onaygin, I beseech you, leave me,

I know that in your heart

Still live both pride and honour⎯

Why should I lie ? I love you still . . .

But I am his⎯and to the vows I made

I will be true.

From *Before the Iron Curtain: A Selection of Russian Verse*, translated by Olga Deacon. Original photos for illustrations by J. W. Johnson. Elms Court, Ilfracombe, Devon: Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd 1951.

**FENNELL**

YEVGENY ONEGIN

*Chapter One*

I

‘When my uncle, a man of the highest principles, fell seriously ill, he made himself respected and could have thought out no better way; his example is a lesson to others. But, my God, what a bore to sit with a sick man day and night without going so much as a pace away! What low cunning to amuse someone half-alive, to adjust his pillows, with gloomy countenance to bring him his medicine, to sigh and to think to oneself “When will the devil take you”’

II

So thought our young rake, flying in a post-chaise through the dust, the heir, by the highest will of Zeus, of all his relatives. Friends of Ruslan and Lyudmila [Pushkin’s epic poem printed in 1823], allow me to introduce you forthwith, without any foreword, to the hero of my novel. My good friend Onegin was born on the banks of the Neva, where perhaps you, my reader, were born or where you shone! Once I too lived a carefree life there: but the north is inimical me [Pushkin was exiled to the south in 1820].

III

Having served most impeccably, his father lived by debts, gave three balls a year, and finally squandered all his money. Fate preserved Yevgeny. First of all *Madame* looked after him, then *Monsieur* replaced her. The child was lively but lovable. *Monsieur l’Abbé*, a paltry Frenchman, taught him everything in a joking manner so that the child should not become exhausted, and did not bore him with stern moralizing, but scolded him gently for his pranks and took him walking in the Summer Gardens.

IV

But when the age of rebellious youth came to Yevgeny − the time of hopes and tender sorrow − *Monsieur* was given the sack. And now my Onegin is free; his hair is cut in the latest fashion; he is dressed like a London dandy − and at last he made his début in society. He could express himself in French, and write it too; with ease he danced the Mazurka and unconstrained he bowed. What more do you want? Society decided that he was intelligent and charming.

V

We have all learned − each of us a little − something or other. And so, thank God, it is not difficult with us to make a brilliant display of education. Onegin was, in the opinion of many (unhesitating and stern judges), a learned fellow, but a crank. He had the happy art of gently touching on everything in conversation without constraints, and, with the learned air of an expert, keeping silence in a weighty argument and arousing the ladies smiles’ by the fire of unexpected epigrams.

VI

Latin nowadays has gone out of fashion: to tell the truth, he knew enough Latin to decipher epigraphs, to talk about Juvenal, to put *vale* at the end of a letter, and he remembered − though not faultlessly − a couple of lines from the *Aeneid*. He had no inclination to rummage in the chronological dust of the history of our land: but he kept in his memory anecdotes of bygone days, from Romulus to out own time.

[*Stanzas VII-XLIV: Yevgeny’s life in St Petersburg is described − his visits to balls, to the theatre, to restaurants, his attempts to dispel boredom by writing and reading*.]

XLV

Having cast off, like him, the burden of society’s conventions and having set vanity aside, I made friends with him at that time. I liked his features, his instinctive addiction to dreaming, his inimitable oddity, and his sharp cool mind. I was embittered, he was sullen; we both knew the play of passions; life oppressed us both; in both of us the heart’s flame had burned out; the malice of blind Fortune and of men awaited us both in the very morn of our days.

XLVI

He who has lived and pondered cannot in his heart but despise people; he who has experienced emotion is disturbed by the phantom of irrevocable days, no longer feels fascination, is gnawed at by the serpent of memories and by repentance. All this often lends great charm to conversation. At first Onegin’s tongue embarrassed me; but I grew used to his caustic arguments and to his jokes mixed half and half with spleen, and to the spitefulness of his grim epigrams.

XLVII

How often in summer-time, when the night sky above the Neva is transparent and light and when the merry mirror of the waters does not reflect Diana’s face − how often, recalling romances of former years, recalling former love, sensitive once more, carefree once more, we silently relished the breath of kindly night! Just as the sleepy convict is transferred from his prison to a green forest, sow ere we carried away in our dreams to the beginning of our young life.

XLVIII

With his heart full of regrets and leaning on the granite parapet, Yevgeny stood pensively, just as the poet described himself. [A reference to N. M. Muravyev’s poem ‘To the Goddess of the Neva’.] All was quiet; only the night watchmen called to each other; and suddenly one could hear the distant clatter of a droshky from Milyonnaya Street; only a boat with waving oars floated along the slumbering river. And in the distance the horn band and spirited song entranced us . . . But sweeter, midst the joys of night, is the melody of Torquato’s *ottava rima*!

[*Chapter 1, Stanza XLIX, to Chapter 2, Stanza X: a short digression on Italy follows. Onegin and Pushkin part company. Onegin’s uncle dies and Onegin becomes a country squire. He is just as bored in the country as he was in the town. A young poet, Vladimir Lensky, arrives and settles in the neighbourhood*.]

*Chapter 2*

XI

In the wilderness, where only my Yevgeny could appreciate his gifts, he did not like the feasts of the lords of the neighbouring villages; he avoided their noisy chatter. Their sensible conversation about hay-making, wine, hounds, and their relatives did not of course shine with either emotion, or poetic fire, or humour, or intelligence, or the art of social intercourse. Yet the conversation of their dear wives was far less clever still.

XII

Rich and handsome, Lensky was everywhere received as an eligible bachelor; such is the country custom; everyone planned for their daughters to marry their *half-Russian neighbour*; as soon as he came into a room, straightway the conversation would begin to turn obliquely on the boredom of bachelor life; they would call their neighbour to the samovar and, while Dunya was pouring out tea, they would whisper to her: ‘Dunya, note him!’ Then they would bring the guitar and she would squeak (my God!): ‘*Come into my golden chamber!*’ [A very popular aria from a contemporary opera.]

XIII

But Lensky, having of course no wish to bear the bonds of wedlock, desired to make his relationship with Onegin more intimate. They became close friends. Wave and stone, verse and prose, ice and flame were not so different in themselves. At first they bored each other with their mutual disparity; then they took to one another; then they met each day on horseback, and soon they became inseparable. So people (and I am the first to admit it) become friends from having nothing to do.

XIV

But even that friendship does not exist between us; destroying all prejudices, we consider all people to be nonentities, but ourselves to be the entities. We all strive to be Napoleons. The millions of two-legged creatures are for us merely a weapon; for us emotion is strange and amusing. More tolerable than many was Onegin. Although of course he knew people and in general despised them − still (there are no rules without exceptions) some people he preferred, and in his detachment he respected emotion.

[*Chapter 2, Stanzas XV-XXVI: Lensky has fallen in love with Olga, the daughter of a neighbouring landowner*.]

XXII

She [Olga] gave the poet the first dream of youth’s raptures, and thoughts of her inspired the first lament from his pipes. Farewell, golden games! He began to find delight in dense thickets, in seclusion, in tranquillity, and in the night, the stars, the moon − the moon, that heavenly lamp, to which we used to dedicate our walks in the evening darkness and our tears, our consolation in secret sorrows . . . But now the moon we merely see a substitute for dim lanterns.

XXIII

Ever modest, ever obedient, ever merry as the morn, simple as a poet’s life, sweet as a kiss of love; her eyes − blue as the sky, her smile, her flaxen locks, her movements, her voice, her slender figure − all this is in Olga . . . But take any novel and for sure you will find her portrait. It is very sweet, and I myself once loved such portraits; but then I became completely bored by them. Allow me, dear reader, to occupy myself with her elder sister.

XXIV

Her sister was called Tatiana . . . For the first time we will deliberately hallow the tender pages of a novel with such a name. And why not? It is pleasant, it sounds well, but with it, I know are inseparably linked recollections of the olden days or of the servant-maids’ quarters! We must all admit that we have precious little taste in our names − to say nothing of our verse. Enlightenment does not suit us, and all we have got from it is affectation − and nothing else.

XXV

And so she was called Tatyana. She had not the beauty of her sister, nor her rosy freshness to attract the eye. Shy, sad, silent, timid as a forest deer, in her own family she seemed a stranger. She did not know how to be affectionate with her father or with her mother; herself a child, she had no wish to play or skip amongst the crowd of children, and often she would sit the whole day long in silence by the window.

[*Chapter 2, Stanza XXVI, to Chapter 3, Stanza XXXI: the character and habits of Tatyana and her family, the Larins, are described Onegin is introduced to the Larins by Lensky and Tatyana falls in love with him. She tells her nanny, and writes a letter to Onegin admitting her love for him*.]

*Chapter 3*

XXXII

Tatyana now sighs, now groans the letter trembles in her hand; the pink wafer dries on her feverish tongue. She lets her head fall on her shoulder. Her light chemise slips from her exquisite shoulder. But already the moonbeam’s radiance dies out. There in the distance the valley becomes clear through the mist; there the torrent sparkles like silver, and the shepherd’s horn wakes the villagers. Morning has come. Everyone has long been up − but to my Tatyana it is all one.

XXXIII

She does not notice the dawn; she sits with her head bowed and does not press her engraved signet upon the letter. But quietly opening the door grey-haired Filipyevna brings her tea upon a tray. ‘It’s time, my child − get up: but you are already dressed, my fair one! O my early bird! Oh, how frightened I was yesterday evening! But you are well, thank God! There is no sign of last night’s sorrow − your face is like the colour of a poppy.’

XXXIV

‘O nanny, do me a favour.’ ‘Of course, my darling, just tell me.’ ‘Don’t think . . . indeed . . . suspicion . . . But you see . . . Oh, don’t say no!’ ‘My dear, I swear to you by God!’ ‘Well then, send your grandson on the quiet with this note to O . . . to the one . . . to the neighbour . . . and tell him − not to say a word, not to mention my name . . . ’ ‘To whom, my dear? I have become slow-witted nowadays. There are so many neighbours round here; how on earth can I even count them all!’

XXXV

‘How slow you are at guessing, nanny!’ ‘My darling friend, I am old, indeed I am old: my mind grows dull, Tanya; yet once I was keen-witted, once one word only of the master’s wish . . . ’ ‘Oh, nanny, nanny! What has that to do with it? What need have I of your wits? You see, it’s a letter about Onegin.’ ‘Well then, all right, all right. Do not be angry, my darling, you know that I am hard of understanding . . . But why have you grown pale again?’ ‘It’s nothing, nanny, really nothing. Now send your grandson.’

[*Chapter 3, Stanzas XXXVI-XXXVII: There is no answer to the letter. Lensky visits the Larins and tells them that Onegin is coming in the evening. Tatyana waits for him*.]

XXXVIII

Meanwhile her heart ached and her languorous eyes were full of tears. Suddenly the clatter of horses’ hoofs! Her blood froze. Nearer and nearer! The horses are galloping . . . and Yevgeny drives into the courtyard. ‘Ah!’ she cries, and lighter than a shadow Tatyana jumps into the entrance hall, from the porch to the courtyard, and straight into the garden she flies, she flies; she does not dare to look back; in an instant she rand through borders, across small bridges, a little field, down the avenue leading to the lake, through a copse, breaking down lilac shrubs, flying over flower-beds towards the brook − and gasping for breath, upon the bench . . .

XXXIX

. . . she fell . . . ‘He’s here! Yevgeny’s here! O God! What did he think!’ Her heart, full of torment, harbours an obscure dream of hope; she trembles and burns with excitement, and waits: is he not coming? But she hears nothing. In the garden on the beds the servant girls were picking berries among the bushes and were singing in chorus by order (an order designed to stop their sly mouths from secretly eating their master’s berries, and to occupy them with singing: a true invention of provincial cunning!).

[*Chapter 3, Stanza XL, to Chapter 4, Stanza X: Onegin meets Tatyana in the garden. Pushkin describes his early amorous successes and his attitude to women*.]

Chapter 4

XI

But having received Tatyana’s epistle Onegin was deeply touched: the language of girlish reveries stirred up within him whole swarms of thoughts; and he remembered dear Tatyana’s pale complexion and her despondent air. And he plunged his soul into a deep sinless dream. Perhaps the old ardour of his feelings seized him for a moment; but he did not wish to deceive the trustfulness of an innocent soul. And now we will fly across into the garden where Tatyana met him.

XII

For about two minutes they were silent, but Onegin came up to her and said: ‘You have written to me, do not deny it. I read the admissions of your trustful soul, the confessions of your innocent love; your sincerity touches me; it has set astir feelings which have long been silent; but I do not wish to praise you; I will repay you for it with an avowal just as artless; accept my confession. I put myself on trial before you.

XIII

‘Had I wished to confine my life to the domestic round; had some pleasant fate ordered me to be a father and a husband; had I just for one second been captivated by the picture of family life − the, in truth, I would have sought no other bride than you alone. I will say this without any madrigalian flashes: finding in you the ideal of my youth, I would truly have chosen you alone to be the companion of my sad days, as a pledge of all that is beautiful, and I would have been happy . . . in so far as I could!

XIV

‘But I was not made for bliss; my soul is alien to it; your perfections are in vain: I am completely unworthy of them. Believe me (my conscience is a guarantee of this), marriage would be torment for us. However much I loved you, I would fall out of love with you as soon as I got used to you; you would begin to weep; your tears would not touch my heart but would only enrage it. Judge now yourself what roses Hymen would prepare for us − and perhaps for many a day!

XV

‘What can be worse on earth than a family in which the poor wife sorrows for her unworthy husband and is alone day and night; in which the bored husband, knowing her true value (yet cursing fate) is always gloomy, silent, angry, and coldly jealous! Such would I be. And was it such a man that you sought with your pure passionate soul when you wrote to me with such simplicity, such intelligence? Can it be that such a lot was prescribed for you by stern fate?

XVI

‘Daydreams have no return; I cannot renew my soul . . . I love you with a brother’s love, and perhaps even more tenderly. But listen to me without anger: a young girl will many a time replace one light reverie with another; thus a sapling changes its leaves each spring. Thus it is clearly ordained by heaven. You will fall in love anew: but . . . learn to have mastery over yourself; not everyone will understand you as I have done; inexperience leads to misfortune.

[*Chapter 4, Stanzas XVII-XXIII: Tatyana listens to Onegin in silence and goes back to the house with him. After a digression on love and friendship, Pushkin describes the effect of the meeting on Tatyana*.]

XXIV

Alas, Tatyana fades away, grows pale and dim and silent! Nothing occupies her or stirs her soul. Gravely shaking her heads, the neighbours whisper among themselves: ‘It’s time, high time she got married!’ But that’s enough. I must now quickly cheer the imagination with a picture of happy love. I cannot help but feel oppressed by pity, my dear ones; forgive me; I so love my dear Tatyana!

XXV

Hourly more captivated by the charms of young Olga, Vladimir abandoned himself with all his soul to sweet captivity. He is always with her. In her chamber the two sit in darkness; of a morning they stroll hand in hand in the garden; and what is the result? Enraptured by love, in the confusion of tender bashfulness, he only dares sometimes, emboldened by Olga’s smile, to play with an untwined ringlet of he hair or to kiss the hem of her dress.

XXVI

Sometimes he reads to Olga an edifying novel in which the author knows nature better than Chateaubriand does, while from time to time he blushingly skips two or three pages − empty rubbish, fairy tales, dangerous for the hearts of young girls. At times, retiring far from all the others, they sit over the chess board, leaning on the table, plunged deep in thought, and Lensky absent-mindedly takes his own castle with a pawn.

[*Chapter 4, Stanzas XXVII-XXIX: a digression on the poetry written by Lensky to Olga follows. Pushkin then returns to Onegin and describes his carefree life in the country*.]

XL

But our northern summer flashes by and is gone − a caricature of southern winters. This is well known, though we do not like to admit it. Already the sky breathed autumn, and ever rarer shone the sun; the days were growing shorter; the mysterious shade of the forests was baring itself with mournful sound; mist settled upon the fields, and the caravan of clamorous geese moved southwards: that rather boring time was drawing near − November was already at hand.

XLI

Dawn arises in a cold mist; the sound of work in the cornfields has grown silent; the wolf and his hungry she-wolf come out on to the road; the passing horse scents him and snorts, and the wary traveller rushes uphill at full speed; at dawn the herdsman no longer drives his cows from the shed, nor does his horn call them into a ring at midday; singing in her cottage the maiden spins, and the splinter − the friend of winter nights − crackles before her.

XLII

And now the brittle-hard frosts have set in, shining silver amidst the fields . . . (the reader is already expecting the rhyme ‘roses’ [rhymes with ‘frosts’ in Russian]; here you are then, take it quickly!). Neater than a fashionable parquet floor the river gleams, clad in ice. The joyful crowd of boys with hissing sound cur the ice with their skates; the heavy goose on its red web feet, having decided to swim upon the bosom of the waters, steps carefully on to the ice, slips, and falls; the merry first snow flickers and swirls, falling like stars upon the bank.

[*Chapter 4, Stanzas XLIII-LI: Lensky, who is to marry Olga in a fortnight, tells Onegin that he is invited to Tatyana’s name-day party. Onegin agrees to go*.]

*Chapter 5*

I

That year the autumn weather dragged on; nature waited and waited for winter. But the first snow fell only in January − on the night of the third. Waking early, through the window Tatyana saw the courtyard, which had grown white in the early morning, the flower-beds, the roofs, and the fence, and the delicate patterns on the windowpanes, the trees in their winter silver, the cheerful magpies in the courtyard, and the hills softly strewn with their shining carpet of winter. All around was bright, all was white.

II

Winter! The peasant with joyful heart renews his journeys on his sledge; his little horse, scenting the snow, jogs along at a trot; the dashing *kibitka* flies by, digging up the powdery furrows; the coachman sits on the box in his sheepskin coat and crimson belt. Here the house-boy runs to and fro, having put his dog Zhuchka on his toboggan and turned himself into a horse. The little rascal’s fingers are already frost-bitten: it’s painful, yet it makes him laugh, while his mother wags her finger through the window . . .

III

But perhaps such pictures do not attract you: all this [you will say] is bas nature; there is not much that is graceful here. Warmed by the god of inspiration, another poet has painted for us with luxurious style the year’s first snow and all the shades of winter’s joys [Vyazemsky, ‘First Snow’]; he captivates you, I am sure of it, by drawing secret sledge-rides in his fiery verses; but I do not intend to compete either with him yet awhile, or with you, singer of the young Finnish maid [E.A. Baratynsky, ‘Eda’]!

[*Chapter 5, Stanzas IV-X: On the evening before her name-day Tatyana goes to bed*.]

XI

And Tatyana dreams a wondrous dream. She dreams that she is walking through a snowy glade, surrounded by a gloomy mist; in the snow-drifts before her the seething, dark, grey torrent no longer fettered by winter, resounds with swirling billows; two small stakes, stuck together with ice − a trembling, perilous little bridge − are laid across the torrent: and in front of the roaring abyss she stopped, full of bewilderment.

XII

Tatyana chafes at the stream, as at a grievous parting; she sees no one who might give her a hand from the other side; but suddenly the snowdrift shifted − and who appeared from beneath it? A large, shaggy bear. ‘Ah!’ cried Tatyana; and he roared and stretched out to her a paw with sharp claws. Checking her fear, she leaned on it with trembling arm, and with timorous steps crossed over the stream; she started off, and what do you think? The bear followed her!

XIII

Not daring to look back, she hastens her hurried pace; but she simply cannot run away from her shaggy attendant; grunting, the horrid bear shambles on. Before them lies a forest; the pines are motionless in their sullen beauty. All their boughs are weighted down with clumps of snow. Through the tops of the naked aspens, beeches, and limes shine the rays of the stars of the night. There is no path; bushes and steeps have been covered by the snowstorm and are plunged deep in snow.

XIV

Tatyana enters the forest; the bear follows her; the crumbling snow is up to her knees; now a long branch catches her by the neck, now her golden ear-rings are violently torn from her ears; now her wet shoe gets stuck in the brittle snow and comes off her dear sweet foot; now she drops her handkerchief − she has no time to pick it up; she is afraid − she hears the bear behind her, and she does not even dare to lift the hem of her dress with trembling hand; she runs, and he keeps following her; and now she no longer has the strength to run.

XV

She fell into the snow; nimbly the bear seizes her and carries her; lifeless and submissive she dares not move or breathe; he rushes her along the forest path; suddenly between the trees a wretched hut appears; all around is thick forest; on all sides the hut is covered with desolate snow, and the little window shines brightly, and in the hut there is noise and shouting; the bear said: ‘Here my gossip lives: go and warm yourself for a little in his hut!’ He goes straight into the entrance passage and sets her on the threshold.

XVI

Tatyana comes to and looks around: the bear has gone; she is in the entrance passage; behind the door are shouts and the ring of glasses, as at a great funeral feast. Seeing no sense at all in this, she peeps stealthily through a crack − and what does she see? Monsters are sitting around a table: one has horns and a dog’s muzzle, another has cock’s head; here sits a witch with a goat’s beard, here an austere proud skeleton. There sits a dwarf with a little tail, and here a creature that is half-crane, half-cat.

XVII

Still more terrifying, still more wondrous: here is a crab riding a spider; a skull on a goose’s neck twists around in a red cap; a windmill dances squatting, rattles and waves its sails; barking, laughing, singing, whistling, banging, people talking and horses’ hoofs clattering! But what did Tatyana think when amidst the guests she recognized him whom she loved and feared, the hero of our novel! Onegin sits at the table and glances furtively at the door.

XVIII

He gives a sign: and they all bustle; he drinks: they all drink and shout; he laughs: they all roar with laughter; he knits his bows: they are all silent. He is the master there − that is clear. Tanya no longer felt so frightened, and in her curiosity she now opened the door a little . . . Suddenly a wind blew, quenching the flames of the night lamps; the band of goblins fell into confusion; Onegin with flashing eyes thunderously rises from the table; they all get up; he walks to the door.

XIX

But Tatyana is terrified, and she makes hasty efforts to run away: it is quite impossible; rushing impatiently hither and thither, she wants to cry out, but she cannot. Yevgeny pushed open the door and the girl appeared before the eyes of the hellish apparitions; a burst of wild and violent laughter rang out; the eyes of all, hoofs, crooked trunks, tufted tails, tusks, whiskers, bloody tongues, horns and bony fingers − all point at her and cry out: ‘Mine! Mine!’

XX

‘*Mine!*’said Yevgeny sternly, and suddenly all the band disappeared; the young man remained alone with him in the frosty darkness; Onegin gently entices her into a corner, lays her on a rickety bench, and leans his head on her shoulder. Suddenly Olga comes in with Lensky following. Light flashes. Onegin waves his arms; his eyes rove wildly and he curses the uninvited guests; Tatyana lies there barely alive.

XXI

The argument grows louder and louder; suddenly Yevgeny seizes a long knife and in an instant Lensky is felled; frighteningly the shadows thickened; an intolerable cry rang out . . . The hut rocked . . . And Tanya awoke in terror . . . She looks around: it is already light in the room; through the window’s frosted glass the purple ray of dawn flashes; the door opened. Olga flies in to her, rosier than the northern dawn and lighter than a swallow; ‘Well,’ she says, ‘tell me now. Who did you dream of?’

[*Chapter 5, Stanzas XXII-XXIX: Tatyana tries in vain to interpret her dream from a dream-book. By the evening the house is full of guests. They go in to dinner. Lensky and Onegin enter*.]

XXX

They are seated directly opposite Tanya. And, paler than the morning moon and timider than the hunted deer, she does not lift her darkling eyes: the heat of passion blazes violently within her; she suffocates, feels faint; she does not hear the two friends’ greetings; tears are just about to drop from the eyes; the poor girl is on the point of fainting; but her will and her power of reason won the day. Quietly she uttered two words through her teeth and remained seated at the table.

XXXI

Yevgeny had long been unable to tolerate tragic-neurotic displays, girls’ fainting fits and tears; he had put up with enough of them in his time. The odd fellow, arriving at the huge feast, was already angry. But noticing the languid maiden’s sudden fit of trepidation, he lowered his glance in irritation and began to sulk, vowing in his indignation to enrage Lensky and to take fitting vengeance on him; and now, exulting in advance, he began in his mind to sketch out caricatures of all the guests.

[*Chapter 5, Stanzas XXXII-XL: later in the evening dancing begins*.]

XLI

Monotonous and senseless, like a gust of young life, the noisy gust of the waltz whirls round; couple by couple the dancers flash by. Approaching the minute of revenge, Onegin, smiling secretly, goes up to Olga. Swiftly he spins with her around the guests, then seats her on a chair and starts talking of this and that. Then a minute of two later, he continues the waltz with her afresh; all are amazed. Lensky himself cannot believe his eyes.

[*Chapter 5, Stanza XLII, to Chapter 6, Stanza XVI: Lensky leaves the ball in anger. On the next day he challenges Onegin to a duel. Dissatisfied with his own conduct, Onegin nevertheless decides to fight. Lensky visits Olga*.]

*Chapter 6*

XVII

And once again pensive and despondent in the presence of his dear Olga, Vladimir has not the strength to remind her of the day before; he thinks: ‘I shall be her saviour. I shall not permit the libertine to tempt her young heart with the fire of sighs and flattery, nor the despicable poisonous worm to nibble at the lily’s slender stalk, nor shall I allow the flower on its second morn to fade away still half unfolded.’ All this, my friends, meant ‘I am going to fight a duel with my friend’.

XVIII

If only he had known what anguish burned my Tatyana’s heart! Had Tatyana known, had it been possible for her to know, that on the morrow Lensky and Yevgeny were to dispute about the shadow of the grave − ah, perhaps, her love would have united the two friends afresh! But as it happens no one had yet disclosed this passion. Onegin remained silent about it all; Tatyana pined away in secret; only her nanny might have known, but she was slow at guessing.

XIX

All evening Lensky was distraught − now silent, now cheerful again; but he who is nurtured by the muse is always like that: knitting his brow he would sit down at the piano and would strike only chords on it; now he would turn his gaze on Olga and whisper: ‘Is it not true? I am happy.’ But it grew late; it was time to go. His grief-laden heart was wrung; when he parted from the young maiden it seemed as though it was bursting. She looked him in the face. ‘What is the matter with you?’ ‘Oh, nothing.’ And he went on to the porch.

XX

Arriving home, he examined his pistols, then put them back again in their case, and, having undressed, he opened Schiller by the light of a candle; but one thought only absorbs his mind; his sorrowful heart does not slumber; in all her inexplicable beauty he sees Olga before him. Vladimir shuts his book and takes his pen; his verses, full of amorous rubbish, ring out and flow. He reads them aloud, in lyrical passion, like Delvig, drunken at a feast. [Baron Delvig, poet and school-friend of Pushkin.]

XXI

His verses have by chance survived; I have them; here they are: ‘Whither, O whither have you gone, golden days of my youth? What has the coming day in store for me? In vain my gaze seeks to grasp it; in the deep darkness it is concealed. There is no need; the law of Fate is right. Should I fall, pierced by an arrow, or should it fly past − it is all to the good; the appointed time for wakefulness and sleep comes; blessed is the day of cares − blessed, too, is the age of darkness!

XXII

‘The ray of dawn will sparkle on the morrow and the bright day will shine; but I − perhaps I shall descent into the mysterious shadow of the tomb, and slow Lethe will swallow up the memory of the young poet. The world will forget me; but will you come, maiden of beauty, to shed a tear over my early urn and think “He loved me, to me alone he dedicated the sad dawn of his stormy life”? Beloved friend, precious friend, come, Oh come! I am your spouse!’

XXIII

Thus he wrote *darkly* and *limply* (we call it Romanticism, though here I cannot see any Romanticism at all; but what has it to do with us?), and at last, just before dawn, inclining his weary head, Lensky quietly fell asleep on the fashionable word ‘*ideal*’; but no sooner has he sunk into oblivion of blissful sleep than his neighbour comes into his silent study and wakes Lensky up, calling: ‘Time to get up: it’s already past six. Onegin is sure to be waiting for us.’

[*Chapter 6, Stanzas XXIV-XXVII: Onegin and Lensky with their seconds, Guillot and Zaretsky, meet at the mill where the duel is to take place*.]

XXVIII

Enemies! Was it so long ago that his thirst for blood separated them from each other? Was it so long ago that they amicably shared their hours of leisure, their board, their thoughts and deeds? Now, filled with malice, just like hereditary enemies, as in a fearful, incomprehensible dream, they prepare destruction for each other calmly and in cold blood . . . Should they not burst out laughing before their hands are stained with blood, should they not part in friendship? But fashionable feuds are terribly afraid of false shame.

XXIX

But now their pistols have already flashed. The hammer knocks against the ramrod. The bullets go into the faceted barrel and for the first time the cock is snapped. Now the powder is poured in a thin greyish stream on to the pan. The jagged flint, firmly screwed on, is raised once more. Confused, Guillot stands behind a nearby stump. The two enemies throw down their cloaks. Zaretsky measured out thirty-two paces with extreme accuracy, took the friends apart, each to the end mark, and both took their pistols.

XXX

‘Now approach!’ In cold blood the two enemies, not yet aiming, covered the four paces − the four fatal steps − with firm gait, calmly and evenly. Then, without ceasing to advance, Yevgeny first began calmly to raise his pistol. Now they have stepped five more paces, and Lensky, screwing up his left eye, also began to aim − but at that very moment Onegin fired . . . The fateful hour struck: the poet, silently, drops his pistol . . .

XXXI

. . . quietly puts his hand on his breast, and falls. His misty glance portrays death, not agony. Thus a heap of snow falls slowly down a mountain slope with sparks flashing in the sun. Suffused with a sudden cold, Onegin hastens to the young man, he looks at him, he calls him . . . in vain: he is no more. The young singer has found an untimely end! The storm wind blew, and the fair blossom faded at the dawn of day, the flame on the altar went out!

[*Chapter 6, Stanzas XXXII-XXXV: Onegin is shaken by Lensky’s death. The body is taken away*.]

XXXVI

My friends, you are sorry for the poet: still in the bloom of joyful hopes, not yet having realised them for the world, barely out of the clothes of infancy, he faded away! Where is the passionate emotion, where is the noble flight of young, lofty, tender, dashing feelings and thoughts? Where are the stormy desires of love and the thirst for knowledge and toil, and the fear of vice and shame, and you, cherished reveries, you, phantom of unearthly life, you, dreams of sacred poetry!

XXXVII

Perhaps he was born for the good of the world or even for glory; his lyre, now silent, might have set a thunderous, uninterrupted sound ringing through the ages. Perhaps a high rung on the ladder of the world awaited the poet. Perhaps his martyr’s shade carried off with it the holy mystery, and for us a life-giving voice has become silent, and beyond the grave no hymn of ages, no blessing of the peoples will rush to greet that shade.

[*Stanza XXXVIII is defective*.]

XXXIX

And yet, perhaps, a normal fate might have awaited the poet. The years of youth would have passed: the ardour of the soul would have grown cold. He would have changed in many ways, he would have parted from the muses, married, and in the country, happy though cuckolded, would have worn a quilted dressing-gown. He would have come to know life as it really is, would have got gout at forty, would have drunk, eaten, become bored, fat, and ailing, and finally he would have died in his bed, surrounded by children, tearful women, and doctors.

[*Chapter 6, Stanza XL, to Chapter 7, Stanza VII: A description of Lensky’s grave follows. After a lyrical digression we return to Lensky’s grave. Stanzas VIII and IX of Chapter 7, which describe how Olga visited the grave, were omitted by Pushkin in the final version*.]

Chapter 7

X

My poor Lensky! Though pining, Olga did not weep for long. Alas! The betrothed matron was unfaithful to her sorrow. Another captured her attention, another succeeded in lulling her suffering with amorous flattery, an Uhlan knew how to captivate her − in her soul she loved an Uhlan . . . And now already she bashfully stands with him before the altar beneath the marriage-crown, with head inclined, her lowered eyes burning and with a slight smile upon her lips.

XI

My poor Lensky! In the confines of remote eternity beyond the grave, was he, the melancholy bard, discountenanced by tidings of her fateful betrayal? Or is the poet, lulled o’er Lethe and blessedly unfeeling, no longer disturbed by aught, and is the world for him now closed and silent? Yes, indeed, indifferent oblivion awaits us beyond the grave. The voice of enemies, of friends, of lovers suddenly grows silent. Only about the inheritance does the angry choir of heirs start its unseemly argument.

[*Chapter 7, Stanzas XII-XIV: Tatiana sees Olga and her husband off. She is sad and lonely*.]

XV

It was evening. The sky was growing dark. The waters streamed quietly by. A beetle buzzed. Already the dancers were dispersing; already, beyond the river, a fireman’s fire burned and smoked. In the open field by the silvery light of the moon Tatyana walked long alone, plunged in her dreams. She walked on and on. And suddenly from a hill she sees before her the manor house, the village, the grove at the foot of the hill, and the garden above the bright river. She gazes − and her heart within her began to beat more often and more strongly.

XVI

Doubts confuse her: ‘Shall I go on, shall I go back? He is not here. I am not known here . . . I will have a look at the house, at this garden.’ And now Tatyana comes down the hill, barely breathing; she casts around her a gaze full of bewilderment . . . and she enters the deserted courtyard. At the sound of her frightened cry a whole family of servants’ children gathered noisily around. Not without scuffling the boys chased the dogs away and took the young lady under their protection.

[*Chapter 7, Stanzas XVII-XX: Tatiana visits Onegin’s study. She asks permission to return*.]

XXI

Tatyana said farewell to the housekeeper beyond the gate. A day later she appeared early in the morning in the abandoned dwelling. And in the silent study, for a time forgetting everything in the world, she at last remained alone, and for a long time she wept. Then she set about the books. At first she had no time for them; but then the choice of books seemed strange to her. With eager heart Tatyana abandoned herself to reading; and a new world was opened up to her.

XXII

Although we know that Yevgeny had long ceased to love reading, still he excluded some works from banishment: the singer of the Giaour and Juan [Byron], and with him one or two more novels in which the age was reflected and modern man quite faithfully portrayed, with his amoral soul, self-loving and dry, utterly addicted to dreaming, with his embittered mind seething in vain activity.

XXIII

Many a page kept the sharp imprint of his nail; on them the eyes of the attentive girl were keenly fixed. With trepidation Tatyana saw what thoughts, what remarks Yevgeny had been struck by, what he had agreed in with in silence. On the margins of the pages she meets his pencil marks. Everywhere Yevgeny’s soul cannot help expressing itself, now with a short word, now with a cross, now with a question mark.

XXIV

And now little by little my Tatyana began to understand more clearly −thank God − the man for whom she was condemned to sigh by powerful fate: this gloomy, dangerous crank, this creation of hell or heaven, this angel, this haughty demon − what, then, is he? Can it be that he is an imitation, a worthless phantom, or yet again a Muscovite in Childe Harold’s cloak, a reproduction of the vagaries of others, a dictionary full of fashionable words? Can it be that he is a parody?

[*Chapter 7, Stanzas XXV-XXVII: Tatyana’s mother decides to take her to Moscow in the hopes of finding a fiancé. Tatyana is alarmed at the prospect*.]

XXVIII

Rising with the first rays, now she hurries to the fields, and gazing on them with tender eyes. She says: ‘Farewell, peaceful valleys, and you, the tops of familiar hills, and you, familiar forest! Farewell, heavenly beauty, farewell, joyous nature! I am exchanging the dear quiet world for the clamour of brilliant vanities. Farewell, too, my freedom. Whither am I hastening and why? What does my fate hold in store for me?’

XXIX

Her walks last longer. Tatyana cannot help stopping, captivated by the charm now of a hillock, now of a stream/ She hurries yet again to converse with her groves, her meadows, as with old friends. But swift summer flies by. Golden autumn has come. Nature, quivering and pale, is luxuriantly bedecked like a sacrifice . . . Now the north wind, driving the clouds together, blew and howled − and here comes the sorceress Winter herself.

[*Chapter 7, Stanza XXX, to Chapter 8, Stanza XVI: They travel to Moscow. Tatyana is unable to get used to the atmosphere and is bored by society. She marries a general. Onegin cannot settle down after the duel and takes to aimless travelling. He turns up at a ball in Moscow and recognizes Tatyana*.]

*Chapter 8*

XVII

‘Can it be,’ thinks Yevgeny. ‘Can it be she? But it’s just like . . . No . . . From the remote villages of the steppes!’ And each minute he trains his importunate lorgnette on the one whose aspect reminded him vaguely of forgotten features. ‘Tell me, Prince, do you not know who that is over there in a crimson toque talking to the Spanish ambassador?’ The Prince looks at Onegin. ‘Aha, you *have* been away from society for a long time! Wait, I’ll introduce you.’ ‘Yes, but who is she?’ ‘My wife.’

XVIII

‘So you’re married? I didn’t know before! Have you been married long?’ ‘About two years.’ ‘Who to?’ ‘A Larin.’ ‘Tatyana!’ ‘Does she know you?’ ‘I’m a neighbour of theirs.’ ‘Oh well, let’s go then.’ The Prince goes to his wife and brings his relative and friend to her. The princess looks at him . . . And whatever stirred her soul, however great her amazement and surprise, nothing betrayed her: she preserved exactly the same tone, her bow was just as serene.

XIX

In very truth, far from shuddering of suddenly becoming pale or crimson, she did not even move an eyebrow, nor did she even compress her lips. Although he gazed with all attention, Onegin could not find a single trace of the former Tatyana. He wanted to start a conversation with her and − and could not. She asked whether he had been here long, where he had come from, and whether he had come from their parts. Then she cast a weary glance at her husband; slipped out . . . and he remained immobile.

XX

Can it really be the same Tatyana to whom once, in the beginning of our novel, in those remote and distant parts, he recited admonishments *tête à tête* in the noble glow of moral exhortation? Can it be she, the writer of the letter he keeps, in which the heart speaks, in which everything is expressed, everything is freely spoken − that same girl . . . or is this a dream? That same girl, whom he had scorned in her humble lot − could it be that she was so indifferent, so unconstrained with him?

[*Chapter 8, Stanzas XXI-XLI: Onegin falls in love with Tatyana, but she pays no attention to him. He writes to her, but gets no answer. Winter passes, and in spring Onegin goes to Tatyana; he finds her reading a letter and crying; he falls at her feet*.]

XLII

She does not raise him from his knees, and without taking her eyes from him she does not remove her impassive hand from his greedy lips . . . What does she dream of now? The long silence draws on, and at last she says quietly: ‘Enough; get up. I must speak my mind to you with candour. Onegin, do you remember that hour when in the garden, in the alley, fate brought us together and I listened so humbly to your lecture? Today it is my turn.

XLIII

‘Onegin, I was younger then, more beautiful, it seems, and I loved you; and well, what did I find in your heart? What answer? Only severity. Is it not true? Was the love of a humble girl no novelty to you? And now − O God! − my blood grows cold as soon as I remember your chill glance and sermon . . . But I do not blame you: in that dreadful hour you acted nobly, you were right in your attitude to me: with all my soul I am grateful . . .

XLIV

‘Then − is it not true? − in the wilderness, far from empty Fame, you were not taken with me . . . Why then do you now pursue me? Why have you set your sights at me? Is it because I must now appear in high society, because I am rich and of high rank, because my husband was crippled in battles and because the court favours us for that? Is it not because my disgrace would now be noticed by everybody and might bring you tempting renown in society?

XLV

‘I weep . . . If you have not yet forgotten your Tanya, then know that if it were only within my power I would prefer the sting of your obloquy, your cold, severe discourse, to this offensive passion, to these letters and tears. Then at least you had pity on my childish reveries and at least you had respect for my years . . . But now! What has brought you to my feet? What a trifle! How, with you heart and intelligence, can you be the slave of petty emotion?

XLVI

‘But for me, Onegin, this splendour, the tinsel of this hateful life, my successes in the whirl of society, my fashionable house and my soirées − what is there in them for me? At this moment I would be glad to give all this shabby masquerade, all this glitter, noise and vapour for a shelf of books, for a wild garden, for our poor dwelling, for those places where I saw you for the first time, Onegin, and for the humble graveyard, where now my poor nanny lies beneath a cross and the shade of branches . . .

XLVII

‘Yet happiness was so possible, so close! But now my fate is already decided. I acted imprudently, perhaps: with tears and entreaties my mother implored me; for poor Tanya all lots were equal . . . I married. You must leave me, I beg you; I know that in your heart there is both pride and true honour. I love you (why dissemble?) but I am married to another; and I shall be true to him for ever.’

[*Chapter 8, Stanzas XLVIII-LI: Tatyana goes out of the room. Her husband enters. At this point Pushkin leaves Onegin and says farewell to his readers*.]

*Extracts from Onegin’s Journey*

[*Originally planned at Chapter 8, but later replaced by the present Chapter 8 and printed under the above title. Onegin travels from Moscow to Nizhny Novgorod and thence to the Caucasus and the Crimea. Pushkin recalls his own past*.]

And there, amidst the Tatars’ huts … what passion awoke in me! By what enchanting melancholy was my ardent breast constricted! But, O muse, forget the past!

Whatever feelings were concealed within me at that time − now they are no longer: they have passed or changed . . . Peace be unto you, emotions of bygone years! At that time I thought I needed wildernesses, the pearly crests of waves, and the sound of the sea, and rocks piled high, and the ‘ideal’ of a proud maiden, and nameless sufferings. Times change, dreams change: you have grown calm, high-flown reveries of my spring, and I have poured much water into my poetic goblet.

I need other pictures: I love a sandy hill-side, two rowan trees before a little cottage, a wicker gate, a broken fence, little grey clouds in the sky, heaps of straw in front of the threshing-floor − and a pond beneath the shade of thick willows where young ducks are free to swim at will; the balalaika and the drunken stamping of the *trepak* dance before the tavern’s threshold are what I now like. My ideal is now a housewife; my desires are peace and quiet, and *a bowl of soup and myself my own master*. [Russian saying.]

*Pushkin: Selected Verse*. With introduction and prose translations by John Fennell.

Harmondsworth: Penguin reprinted Bristol: Bristol Classical Press 1991. ISBN 1-85399-173-2. Pages 140-206.

**GARDNER**

**Eugene Onegin: Chapter One**

I

A person of unblemished morals

“My uncle was. When he fell ill, ⎯

Opposing needless talk and quarrels,

On all he would enforce his will ⎯

Indeed! A standard high to others!

But how, in faith it bores and bothers

To watch sick people night and day,

Not venturing to go away!

Oh ’t is a piece of wildly badness

To entertain a man half-dead,

To change the pillows of his bed

And give him medicine with sadness

And think in secret with a sigh

Oh! bodikins! When will you die?“

II

Bedusted, in a mail coack driving,

So thought a madcap, free of care,

At Yupiter’s command now thriving,

Of all his relatives the heir.

His character should now be painted.

Aside all forewords! Get acquainted

Frriends of Ludmila and Ruslan,

At once with this young charming man,

My mate Eugene, of wags a leader,

Was born hard by Neva’s key,

Where whilom you were born, may be,

Or where you flaunted once, my reader

There, there I rambled back and forth,

But harmful is to me the North.

III

With honour and distinction serving,

Each year three balls his father gave,

Indebted, high lile’s rules observing

His former wealth he could nor save

But luck to Eugene condescended:

At first Madame to him attended;

Monsieur then occupied her place.

The child was frisk though full of grace.

Monsieur l’Abbe, a poor French teacher,

Not wishinf to torment the child,

Was un instructor very mild;

Of morals strict he wasn’t a preacher,

But slightly the boy would chide

And to the Summer Garden guide.

IV

But youth came on with its temptations,

The time of hopes and fondness trist,

The time of love and expectations;

Monsieur l’Abbe was the dismissed.

Free is the fondling fair of passion;

His hair is cut, as orders fashion;

And like a dandy he is clad;

To see the world Onegin’s glad;

A mastery of French acquired

Onegin, which augments ones chance.

Mazurka he could nimbly dance;

His easy bows the world admired;

And thus resolved society

That sensible and nice was he.

V

We studied all, but just a little;

However, we pulled somehow through,

And therefore, knowing but a tittle,

Weel-bred we seemed in people’s view,

Some judges strict did thus acknowledge,

That serious was Eugene’s knowledge,

But that pedantic was the lad

Eugene the lucky talent had

Without constraint in conversation

To touch but slightly on each theme

And thus a learnt expert to seem,

Keep silence in great contestation,

The smiles of ladies to excite

By ardent epigrams that bite.

VI

Our hero’s Latin was defficient,

But latin lost its past command;

Howe’er his knowledge proved sufficient

The epigraphs to understand;

On Juvenal the ypouth debated,

With vale letters terminated,

And from Aeneis Eugene might,

Though blund’ ringly, two lines recite.

Onegin chroniques never cherished;

To pore he did not find it worth

O’er dusty annals of the earth;

Though anecdotes of days that perished

From Romulus up to out time

Remember could our youth sublime.

**From:** Вадим Гарднер, *Избранные стихотворения*, Санкт Петербург: Акрополь 1995. ISBN 5-86585-027-X. [Vadim Gardner, *Izbrannye stikhotvorenie*, St Petersburg: Akropol’ 1995], pp. 86-88 (text, inc. misprints, as above; written Feb. 1937).

**HAPGOOD**

**Extract from *Evgeny Onyegin***

**translated by Isabel F. Hapgood**

Taken from the extract in *A Library of the World’s Best Literature - Ancient and Modern* - Vol. XXX (ed. Charles Dudley Warner), New York, NY: Cosimo: 2008. ISBN 978-1-60520-225-9, pp. 11918−11924 (sic), part of which is available from Google Books. The section on Pushkin is introduced by Isabel F. Hapgood. Part at least was probably first published in *The Columbia University course in literature. Scandinavian and Slavonic literature: Slavonic Literature (*edited by Clarence A. Manning). New York: Columbia University Press 1928. LCCN (Library of Congress Control Number): 28022718. This extract consists of Chapter Three, Stanzas 26 and 28 and Tatyana’s Letter to Onyegin, Chapter Four, Stanzas 12 to 16 and Chapter Eight, Stanzas 41 to 47 (apart from part of Stanza 45).

[As it is not possible to reproduce both sense and rhyme, I have attempted only to give a correct translation, and to preserve the simple rhythm where I could, in my lack of poetic powers. I have indicated the scheme of rhyme by numbers attached to the first stanza.⎯I.F.H.]

**Chapter Three**

**26**

1. Another trouble I foresee:

2. To save the honor of my land

1. I shall be forced without a doubt,

2. To translate Tatyana’s letter.

3. She hardly knew her native Russian,

3. Our newpapers she never read,

4. And could express herself but badly

4. In her own mother tongue.

5. Accordingly she wrote in French.⎯

6. What’s to be done, again I say?

6. Down to this day a lady’s love

5. In Russian ne’er hath been expressed.

7. Down to this day our haughty tongue

7. To prose of letters is not used.

**28**

And God forbid that I should meet,

At full, or parting on the porch,

A yellow-shawled seminarist,

Or Academic in a cap!

Like rosy lips without a smile,

Without grammatical mistakes

I do not love the Russian tongue,

And yet it may be, to my grief,

Of beauties a new generation,

Heading entreaties of the journals,

To correct speech will make us used.

**31**

. . . . . .

Tatyana’s Letter to Onyegin

I write to you⎯What can I more?

What is there left for me to say?

And now, I know, upon your will

Depends my chastisement with scorn.

But if to my unhappy lot

You but one drop of pity spare,

You will not now abandon me.

At first I vowed I would not speak:

Trust me, you ne’er had heard my shame,

Might I at least have had the hope

To see you rarely,⎯once a week,⎯

To see you in our village here;

If I might listen to your speech,

Utter a word to you, and then

Think, ever think, of but one thing,

Both day and night until we met.

But you love solitude, they say:

All’s dull here in our rural wilds:

And we,⎯in no way do we shine,

Though truly glad to welcome you.

Why did you ever come to us?

In this remote, deserted spot

Forsaken then I ne’er had known you,

Nor known this bitterness of pain,⎯

The tumult of a soul untaught,

I might have tamed, in time, no doubt;

Have found another to my heart.

Perchance, and been a faithful wife,

A virtuous, loving mother,

Another! Nay to none on earth

Could I have given e’er my heart.

Heaven’s counsel then have thus decreed;

This is its will, and I am thine.

All, all my life hath been a pledge

Of faithful meeting thus with thee.

I know that God hath sent thee to me;

My guardian unto death art thou.

In dreams I long ago beheld thee,

And, still unseen, I found thee dear.

I languished ’neat thy wondrous glance,

Thy voice rang sweetly though my soul,

Long, long ago,⎯nay, ’twas no dream!⎯

Thou cam’st, and in a glance I knew thee;

I was benumbed, yet filled with flame.

My soul within me cried, “’Tis he!”

’Tis true, is’t not? I listened to thee:

Thou spak’st with me in silent watches

When I to aid the needy sought,

Or sweetened, by my fervent prayers.

The languors of my troubled sould.

And was’t not thou, beloved vision,

Who, at that instant as I prayed,

Didst flit in transparent darkness past me,

And to my pillow gently steal?

And didst thou not in love and gladness,  
Drop in my ear sweet words of hope?

Who art thou then? My guardian angel,

Or crafty tempter of my heart?

I pray thee now, disperse my doubts,

Perchance all this is but the empty

Deception of an untried soul,

And God hath willed quite otherwise:

So be it! From this hour my fate

I trustfully to thee commit;

Before thee burning tears I weep,

And for thy safeguard thee entreat.

Bethink thee, here I stand alone,

And no-one here doth comprehend.

My judgement weakens, reason reels,

And I must perish dumb, unheard.

I wait for thee; I pray thee quicken

With but a look of hope my heart,

Or break at least the numbing dream

With well-deserved reproof⎯alas!

I’m done! ’Tis terrible to read⎯

I faint with terror and with shame⎯

Your honour is my only pledge:

To be it I boldly thus confide.

. . . . . . . . . . . .

**Chapter Four**

**12**

For a brief space they stood in silence;

And then Onyegin, drawing near,

Spake thus:⎯

“A while agone you wrote me:

Deny it not, I pray. I read

That sweet outpour of innocent love,

Confession of confiding soul.

To me your frankness is most precious,

And it has raised within my heart

Feelings which long have sleeping lain:

But not for this will I extol you;

And yet for this I will requite

With a confession, artless too.

Accept , I pray, this confession,

And sit in judgement over me.

**13**

“Had I desired in life to limit

Within the bounds of hearth and home;

Had kindly Fate to me dictated

Husband and father e’er to be:

Had family bliss, as a fair vision,

One moment e’er my sense beguiled:  
Assuredly I should have chosen

No other bride than you, I vow.

Without a shade of flattery

I say, you’d be my only choice.

In you I’d find my sweet ideal

As partner of my gloomy life,

A pledge of all that is most fair;

And thus be happy⎯if I could!

**14**

“But I for bliss was not created;

To that my soul is foreign still:

In vain, in vain are your perfections;

Of them I count myself unworthy.

Believe (I pledge my word upon it),

Marriage for us would torture be.

However much at first I loved you,

At once, with custom, I should hate;

Straightway you’d weep⎯but could not touch,

With all your tears, my hardened heart,

Which would but more inflame my hate.

Judge for yourself what kind of roses

Hymen would thus for us prepare,⎯

And, it might chance, for many a day!

**15**

“What can be worse in all creation

Than household where the wretched wife

Her thankless spouse doth mourn and grieve.

Sitting alone by day and night;

While weary husband, her worth knowing

(Yet cursing his untoward fate),

Is always taciturn and gloomy,

Engaged, yet coldly jealous still!

And such am I. Is’t thus thou soughtest

In the love-flame of thy poor soul,

When with such simple innocence

Thou wrot’st so cleverly to me?

And can it be that such a lot

Hath been assigned to me by fate?

**16**

“Our dreams, our years we cannot call back;

My soul I never can renew;⎯

I love you with a love fraternal⎯

And tendered, perchance: who knows?

Then listen to me without anger:

Often, I think, in young maids’ minds,

Slight dreams succeed to dreams as slight.

As a young tree bears leaves in spring;

And thus, it seems, is heaven’s will.

Again you’ll give your love⎯and yet

You’ll learn of self-control the at,

Not every man will understand you:  
And innocence oft leads to woe.”

. . . . . . . . . . . .

**Chapter Eight**

**41**

Oh, who could not, in that swift flash,

Have read the tale of her dumb pain?

Who, in the princess, could not see

Our Tanya of those former days?

In frantic grief of his compassion,

Onyegin fell low at her feet.

She trembled, but was silent still,

And fixed her eyes upon Onyegin

Without surprise, yet without wrath.

To her his dim and tortured gaze,

Beseeching mean and dumb reproach,

Made all things clear. The simple girl,

With dreams and heart of former days,

Had waked once more within her breast.

**42**

She did not raise him to his feet,

But left with eyes still fixed on him,

She lets her senseless fingers lie

Beneath his thirsting, burning lips.

What is it that she dreams of now?

A long, long silence follows then;

And at the last she softly says:⎯

“Enough⎯arise; it is my part

To speak to you quite frankly now.

Onyegin⎯you recall the hour

When in our garden, in the walk,

Fate made to meet, how meekly I

Gave ear to all your lessons stern?

To-day it is my turn to speak.

**43**

“Onyegin, I was younger then;

I think that I was better too;

I loved you truly. What of that?

What was’t I found within your heart,

What answer? Sternness; naught but that.

’Tis true, is’t not? ’Twas nothing new

To you, this love of maiden’s heart?

How my blood curdles,⎯O my God!⎯

When I recall the chilling glance,

And that stern sermon which you gave.

But I blame not: in that dread hour

You acted nobly, for my good,

And honorably towards me then:

For that, receive my heartfelt thanks.

**44**

“In that far solitude, ’tis true,

Far from the noise of idle tongues,

I did not please you. Why then now

Do you thus persecute me hear?

Why do you deign to heed at all?

Is’t not because, at present, I

In loftiest circles must appear?

That I am rich and famous now;

That for the wounds my husband bore

In battle, we are loved at court?

Is’t not because this my disgrace

Would now by all be known and seen,

And might, in social circles here,

Lend flattering honor to your name?

**45**

“I weep. If you have not forgot

Your Tanya till this present hour,

Then know, the sharpness of your chiding,

The coldness of your step upbraiding,

Did but the choice lie in my power,

I would prefer to sullying passion,

And to your letters and your tears. . . .

**46**

“But list, Onyegin: all this splendor,

Illusion of a stupid life,

My triumphs in the social whirlpool,

My fashionable house and guests,⎯

What is there in them? I would gladly

Renounce this foolish masquerade,

This tumult all, incense and splendor,

For the wild park, a shelf of books,

And life in our poor, humble manse;⎯

For the old spots. In short, Onyegin,

When the first time I met with thee:

Yes, for the quiet, peaceful church-yard,

Where now a cross and shady bough

Bend o’er the grave of my poor nurse.

**47**

“And happiness was so near to us,

So possible! But my sad fate

Was shaped already. Indiscreet,

Mayhap, was my behavior then;

My mother, bathed in tears adjured me;

Poor Tanya felt all fates were one.

And so⎯I married. ’Tis your duty

To leave me now. I beg you will;

I know you⎯That your heart containeth

Firm pride and strenuous honor still.

I love you, (why should I conceal it?)

But I am now another’s bride

And I will ne’er betray his trust.”

**HEWITT**

EVGENY ONYEGIN

CANTO I

*From the Russian of Pushkin*

I

My uncle, rich and well respected,

When his old bones began to ache,

Determined not to be neglected,

(A proper line for him to take).

The moral’s hardly worth exploring,

But, Oh my God! How deadly boring

There at bedside night and day

And never walk a step away !

The meanness and degradation

To smile and keep his spirits up,

Then lay the pillows in their station

And sadly tilt a medicine cup,

To sigh and think at every cough

When will the Devil take him off?

II

Such was our young man’s mood and spirit,

Driving apace in dust and din.

’Twas Jove’s decree he should inherit

The garnered gold of all his kin.

Oh friends who heard my earlier story

That led Ludmila to her glory

Come, meet my hero, there’s no time

For introductions set to rhyme.

It was in Peter’s famous city

Onegin passed his infant days.

You too perhaps who read my ditty ?

At least you’ve trod its pearly ways.

Et ego ⎯⎯ but I came to see

The North does not agree with me.

III

Bravely evading war’s mischances

His noble father lived in debt,

Gave each year three splendid dances

And kept his name in the Gazett.

Eugene was not at all neglected ;

*Mamzelle* (most carefully selected)

Handed *Monsieur* a healthy child,

Lovable, but a trifle wild.

Monsieur l’Abbé avoided quarrels ⎯

A joke is better when you teach ⎯

Never insisted much on morals,

Or grew emphatic in his speech.

He could not bite and would not bark.

When ambling round the Summer Park.

IV

The years of boyhood duly ended,

Monsieur departed from the scene,

While hope and melancholy blended

Excited and dismayed Eugene.

Freedom at last, and money handy,

He dressed like a London dandy,

Hair a la mode, divinely curled,

And sallies forth to view the world.

He was equipped for good society.

Spoke French (and wrote it) with esprit,

Led a mazurka with propriety,

And bowed to just the right degree,⎯

Everything that in brief is meant

By charming and intelligent.

V

We all take up our spot of learning

Somehow or other, God knows how !

Enough to keep the brain from turning

And leave a polish on the brow.

Experienced critics, unromantic,

Labelled him clever but pedantic,

And yet he knew the art to please,

To listen and converse with ease.

Whate’er the theme, it never found him

In dull and unresponsive mood,

And if the topic grew beyond him

He smiled as if he understood,

And earned a tribute from Madame

By an unlooked-for epigram.

VI

The Classics now are out of fashion,

Let no-one therefore think the worse

Of Eugene that he had no passion

For Latin grammar, prose or verse.

He had been known occasionally

To round a letter off with *Vale*,

And greatly daring to translate

An epigraph with name and date.

He saw no point in archaeology,

Where dust and dirt have settled long,

And all he kept of this philology

Was tags of Virgil (quoted wrong)

And little stories, grave and gay,

From Tarquin to the present day.

VII

As to the tender melting lyric,

Its music never reached his heart,

What are Iambus, Trochee, Pyrric,

To one who know them not apart ?

In place of honouring the Muses

An economic work he chooses,

And with a grave judicious air

Deciphers in an easy chair

That complicated and ethereal

Legend that Adam Smith has told,

How if the State has raw material

A people may dispense with gold.

His father did not understand,

And mortgaged the remaining land.

VIII

I fear that it would try your patience

To tell you all the things he knew.

It was not always Wealth of Nations,

He had a nobler aim in view.

Had marked it down while still aboy,

His one complaint, his only joy,

With more than dictatorial might

Ruling his thought both day and night.

*Amour* ? Of course, I knew you’d say so,

The swelling theme, the gentle crime,

That ruined the melodious Naso

And snuffed him out before his time,

All by the barren Pontic foam,

Far distant from his hearth and home.

IX

X

He soon revealed a natural talent,

Adopting the Protean style,

Could turn from *ingenu* to gallant

Or turn the villain with a smile :

Be *sympathique* and confidential,

Not losing sight of the essential,

Keep silent for an hour, and then

Be the most eloquent of men.

His artless *billet-doux* included

As much of love as words will hold,

Never a hint of self intruded :

His eye was moist, his look was bold,

And more than once he drew quite near

To dropping an authentic tear.

XI

Despairing accents low and broken

Are certain of their destined aim,

A modest equivoke well spoken

Can set a virgin heart aflame.

Innocent is she ? Or retaining

Prejudice from an early training ?

Watch for the moment when she cares,

There is a tide in these affairs.

A challenge now. By way of trial

Secure a private rendezvous.

The hunt is up. Brook no denial.

The field of love is clear to view.

So to the culminating date,

When you instruct her *tête à tête*.

XII

Eugene could stir a tender feeling

In the coquette expert in arms,

And neatly deal a wound past healing

To any rival for her charms ;

Bonmots that raised an instant tetter,

His booby-traps were even better,

Yet happy husbands, all the same,

Asked him to dinner and he came.

Such Faublas’ friend and life-long student

(A knowing and accomplished spouse),

Timorous Greybeard (how imprudent !)

And Magnus of the antlered brows,

When no complaint about his life,

Himself, his dinner, or his wife.

(XIII, XIV)

XV

Awake at last, the sun is shining,

Three invitations on the tray.

A children’s party, dancing, dining,

Are all attractive in their way.

A problem, though, a bore, a worry,

Not to be settled in a hurry ;

Which to begin with ? I declare

One really can’t go everywhere !

Meanwhile, as fresh as any flower,

In a loose-fitting Bolivar,

Onegin spends a thoughtless hour

Sauntering down the boulevard.

The day glides on. It won’t be long

Before the punctual dinner-gong.

Translated by Reginald Mainwaring Hewitt

From *Reginald Mainwaring Hewitt (1887-1948): A Selection from His Remains*, edited by V. de S. Pinto, 120-25. Oxford: Printed for the Subscribers by Blackwell, 1955. Originally published in *The Gong*, the magazine of the students of Nottingham University College (British Library Shelfmark P.P.6122.aa).

**MITCOFF**

**Two Songs From**

**Pushkin’s Evgeni Onegin**

**Lenski’s Song [Chapter 6, XXII]**

*Translated by* Elena Y. Mitcoff

The dawn will come, and every cloud

The sun’s bright rays will swiftly banish,

But I perchance in a cold shroud

From life eternally shall vanish;

The mem’ry of the youthful singer

For one brief summer yet may linger,

The world I know will soon forget,

But will you weep in true regret

Beloved, for my untimely doom,

And whisper thus, “He loved me only,

He gave his life, pathetic, lonely

To earth and death’s eternal gloom?”

O tender friend, O friend so dear,

Come, come, and soothe thy lover’s fear.

**Tatiana to Onegin [Chapter Eight, XLVI]**

For me, Onegin, all this chill

Of wealth and pomp are only trifles.

The high position that I fill

To ore is empty, cold, it stifles.

What is it for? I. would with gladness

Throw all away, this dazzling madness,

This glamour, laughter, noise and heat,

For my old books, the rustic seat

Of our old garden’s leafy screen.

Those other spots, that fated place

Where first I met you face to face,

And for that churchyard’s shade serene

Where first I met you face to face

And for that churchyard’s shade serene

From: *The Russian Student* **6** (8) (1930), 19.

**MORFILL**

*From:* Alexander Poushkin by William R. Morfill, *Westminster Review* **119** (1883), 420−451.

… In 1812 was completed the poem of Eugène Oniéguin, in which the author attempted a completely new style, moulding his work upon the lighter sketches of Byron, in the Italian manner. Oniéguin is a man of the world, fashionable and *blasé.* The poet will remind us somewhat of Byron, in the account he gives of his education:⎯ [CHAPTER 1]

[VI] “Latin is now out of fashion;

So, to tell you the truth,

He knew it fairly—

He could decipher an inscription,

Talk about Juvenal,

And write ‘*vale*’ at the end of a letter.

Moreover he remembered, though not without a mistake,

Two verses of the neid.

He took no pleasure

To grope in the chronological dust

Of the earth’s existence;

But some anecdotes of olden time,

From Romulus to our days,

He preserved in his memory.

[VII] Not being inclined to waste

His life on sounds,

He could not distinguish

An iambic from a choreus.

He found fault with Homer and Theocritus,

But read Adam Smith;

And was a deep economist,

That is to say, he could form opinions how

The empire becomes rich,

And upon what it exists, and why

It has no need of gold

When it has natural products.

His father could not understand this,

And so had to mortgage his estates.

[VIII] But I have no leisure to tell

All that Oniéguin knew ;

But the thing in which he was a real genius,

Which he knew better than any other art,

Which to him from boyhood

Was labour and pain and delight,

Which occupied the whole day,

Was the study of the tender passion

Which Naso sang.

For which he suffered and ended

His brilliant and turbulent life,

In Moldavia, in the wilds of the steppe,

Afar from his native Italy.”

After having spent some party of his life idly in the capital, Oniéguin has a fortune left him by an uncle, and goes on to take possession of his estate in the country. The second canto opens with a description of the property, which the young hero has inherited:⎯ [CHAPTER 2]

[I] “The country seat, where Eugène felt dull,

Was a charming little nest;

There the lover of innocent enjoyments

Might bless Heaven.

The manor-house was solitary,

Defended by a hill from the wind.

It stood by a little river. Far away

In front of it rippled and bloomed

The meadows and the green cornfields.

Here and there peeped the villages;

Herds of cattle wandered through the fields,

And a large carelessly arranged garden

Spread its thick shrubs,

A refuge for the pensive dryads.”

In the midst of his solitude in the country Oniéguin makes the acquaintance of a young neighbour, with whom he soon becomes a fast friend:⎯

[VI] “A new proprietor had come

Just then to his country-house,

And gave occasion for a good deal of talk

In the neighbourhood,

By name Vladimir Lenski,

With a soul thoroughly steeped in Göttingen:

A handsome fellow, in the flower of his youth,

An adorer of Kant and a poet.

He brought from misty Germany

The fruits of study,

Dreams of love,

A fiery and strange spirit,

A style of talking always enthusiastic,

And curly hair falling over his shoulders.

Among their neighbours were two young ladies, Olga and Tatiana, at the house of whose parents the young men frequently visited. These are separate types which the poet has described very accurately. With Olga Lenski falls in love. Poushkin tells us:⎯

[XXII] “She gave to the poet

The first dream of youthful ecstasy;

The thought of her inspired

The first echo of his harp.

Farewell, ye golden amusements;

He loved the thick groves,

Solitude and silence,

And the nightly stars and the moon.

\* \* \* \*

[XXIII] “Always gentle, always docile,

Always gay as morning;

Simple as the love of the poet,

Dear as the kiss of love;

So is Olga. Eyes as blue as heaven,

A smile, flaxen hair,

Harmony of motion and voice and figure,

All these are in Olga. She was

A living love-story.

There you will find the portrait of the sweet

girl.

Well, I was some time in love with her

myself,

But it ended in nothing.

And now permit me, reader,

To occupy myself with her elder sister.

[XXIV] Her sister was named Tatiana.

\* \* \* \*

[XXV] “Neither by beauty,

Nor by rosy freshness,

Nor by her eyes did she attract.

Shy, melancholy, silent,

Like a timid wild deer,

She in the midst of her family

Appeared a strange maiden.

She did not know how to please

Either her father or her mother.

A child herself, amid the troops of children

She did not desire to sport and gambol;

And often for the whole day

Sat silent at the window.”

As Lenski falls in love with Olga, who reciprocates his passion,, so, on the other hand, the romantic Tatiana is *éprise* with Oniéguin. The struggles of the young girl with this passion are admirably described: they remind one of the similar case of Elspie in Clough’s “Bothie,” a fresh and charming picture.

After a restless night the poor girl makes a confession of her love to her nurse, and then sits down to compose a letter to Oniéguin. Poushkin apologizes to his readers for making his heroine take this step, and has some very jocose remarks upon the custom of his countrymen at that time writing in French. During the first thirty years of this century, and the latter part of the previous one, nearly all Russian correspondence (diplomatic and otherwise) was conducted in French. An end was put to this shameful state by the Emperor Nicholas, who, by making the national language the medium of conversation at Court, restored it to its proper dignity. And, indeed, that so vigorous a language as Russian should give place to French seems to involve an absurdity. The letter, a very pathetic one, is sent with much reluctance and many tears by the unfortunate Tatiana; but it only elicits a cold answer from Oniéguin, who frankly avows that he is incapable of love and constancy. In the meantime nothing can be deeper than the mutual affection of Lenski and Olga; but, between Lenski and Oniéguin, on account of the former being jealous because his friend has danced too often with his betrothed. The quarrel leads to a duel, and in the duel Lenski is killed. Poushkin has very graphically described the fate which awaited himself a few years afterwards. The poet moralizes cynically when he speaks of the cold-blooded murder of his friend by Oniéguin. [CHAPTER 6]

[XXXV] “Torn by remorse of heart,

Grasping in his hand the pistol,

Eugène gazes on Lenski.

He is dead! said the Second.

Dead! Oniéguin, overpowered

At that dreadful word,

Departs, and calls away his companion.

Zaretski carefully lays

The corpse, cold as ice, on a sledge,

And bears home the sad burden.

Scenting the dead man, the horses

Neighed and bounded, with white foam

The steel bit was moistened,

And they flew like arrows.

[XXXVI] “My friend, you grieve for the poet.

In the flower of his joyous hopes,

He has not fulfilled them for the world.

Hardly out of the garb of boyhood,

He has passed away. Where is the glowing

excitement,

Where is the noble struggle of the feelings,

And of tender, courageous young thoughts?

Where are the passionate longings of love,

And the thirst for knowledge and labour,

And the fear of vice and disgrace?

And ye, musings on the past,

Ye, visions of a celestial life,

Ye, dreams of holy poetry⎯

[XXXVII]

“Maybe he was born for the good of the world,

Or at least for glory.

His lyre, now silent,

Might have made his voice

Echo boldly through the ages.

Perhaps as the world rolled on,

A high dignity awaited the poet.

His suffering spirit,

Perhaps, carried away with itself

A holy secret, and for us

A life-giving voice is buried.

But in the grave

The hymn of time

And the blessings of his race cannot reach him.

[XXXIX] “Maybe, also, the usual

Fate awaited the poet.

The years of youth would have gone by,

The glow of the soul would have grown cold;

A great change would have come over him.

He would have given up the muses and got

married,

Happy at his country seat.

He would have worn a knitted dressing-gown;

He would have had practical experience of life;

At forty he would have had the gout,

Would have drunk, ate, been dull, grown fat,

And finally he would have died

In his bed, surrounded by his children,

Weeping old women, and surgeons.

The poet then in very tender verses describes the burial-place of the murdered enthusiast. In the next canto, the seventh, Poushkin shows us how soon the memory of Lenski is destined to be effaced:⎯ [CHAPTER 7]

[X] “My poor Lenski! Not long

Did Olga weep and languish.

Alas! the young betrothed

Was unfaithful to her grief.

Another attracted her regard,

Another succeeded in lulling

Her sufferings with the charm of love.

An Uhlan was able to captivate her,

An Uhlan was beloved by her,

And see, already with him before the altar,

She bashfully underneath the wreath

Stands with bended head,

With a sparkle in her downcast eyes,

With a soft smile on her lips.”

And now Tatiana is alone and melancholy. After some time has elapsed, she is taken to Moscow and married to a very aristocratic and rich general. Being a woman of great strength of character, she is easily able to shake off the traditions of country life, and to fulfil the duties of her more exalted station. Time goes on, and Oniéguin meets her at a ball, and is amazed to find in the stately princess the Tatiana who had once so naïvely confessed her attraction to him. He writes to her and receives a letter in reply, in which she tells him how much she once loved him, and would at one time have preferred a country life with him, but now all is over.

We consider this poem on the whole to be a very successful one⎯the metre consists of eight or nine-syllabled lines very skilfully varied in stanzas of fourteen lines, the last two of which always rhyme and close the verse with a couplet. The style is slight and sparkling, and well adapted for serio-comic verse; in fact, much more so than the Ottava Rima, which does not seem as suitable to the Russian as to the Polish language, for Slowacki has succeeded very well in his Beniowski. The characters of Lenski, Oniéguin, Tatiana, and Olga are drawn with a very fine pencil, and are each types. By the irony of fate the brilliant and sympathy-seeking Lenski loves the amiable but commonplace Olga, whereas the passionate and generous Tatiana wastes her love upon the artificial and narrow-hearted Oniéguin, a bad specimen of a bad class of man⎯the Russian dandy. But the end of the piece shows him the nemesis of his life; for the man who has repudiated the nobler impulses of existence, and who is satisfied by materialism and material pleasures, and leads a life “besotted in self,” there is nothing to prevent the consummation of a moral suicide. Such a person can only look (to borrow the forcible words of Tennyson [in ‘Love and Duty,’ 1842]) for

“The long mechanic pacings to and fro,

The eye glazed o’er with dull and sapless days,

The set grey life and apathetic end.”

No one can accuse Poushkin of want of nationalism in this poem; it is Russian in the backbone and in every fibre. He has made it the vehicle for the description of many customs and manners, such as the picturesque touches of the coachman round the huge fires in the streets while their masters and mistresses are at the ball, the various superstitious ceremonies which Tatiana, a true Russian girl, performs as auguries of her fate, reminding one of Zhukovski’s Svetlana⎯the sketch of the nurse, and the vigorous picture of Moscow. Here we have the *vera effigies* of Russia. And now a few words seems due to the metrical translation of the poem put forward by Colonel Spalding …

[This extract occurs on pages 438−443.]

**NABOKOV (1945)**

**From Pushkin’s “Eugene Onegin”**

Translated from the Russian

By Vladimir Nabokov

Chapter I

xxxii

Diana’s bosom, Flora’s dimple

are very charming, I agree⎯

but there’s a greater charm, less simple,

⎯the instep of Terpsichore.

By prophesying to the eye

a prize with which no prize can vie

’tis a fair token and a snare

for swarms of daydreams. Everywhere

its grace, sweet reader, I admire:

at long-hemmed tables, half-concealed,

in spring, upon a velvet field,

in winter, at a grated fire,

in ballrooms, on a glossy floor,

on the bleak boulders of a shore.

xxxiii

I see the surf, the storm-rack flying. . . . .

Oh, how I wanted to compete

with the tremulous breakers dying

in adoration at her feet!

Together with those waves⎯

I wished to kiss what they could touch!

No⎯even when my youth would burn

its fiercest⎯never did I yearn

with such a torturing sensation

to kiss the lips of nymphs, the rose

that on the cheek of beauty grows

or breasts in mellow palpitation⎯

no, never did a passion roll

such billows in my bursting soul.

xxxiv

Sometimes I dream of other minutes

by hidden memory retold⎯

and feel her little ankle in its

contented stirrup which I hold;

again to build mad builders start;

again within a withered heart

one touch engenders fire; again

⎯the same old love, the same old pain. . . .

But really, my loquacious lyre

has lauded haughty belles too long

⎯for they deserve neither the song,

nor the emotions they inspire:

eyes, words⎯all their enchantments cheat

as much as do their pretty feet.

From: *Russian Review* **4** (2) (1945), 38-39

**NEWMARCH**

TATIANA’S LETTER

FROM “EUGENE ONIEGIN” [CHAPTER THREE, AFTER 31]

I write to you . . . when that is said

What more is left for me to say ?

Now you are free (I know too well)

To heap contempt upon my head

Yet if some sparks of pity dwell

Within your breast you’ll surely not

Abandon me to my hard lot

When first I saw you I desired

To hold my peace : my shame (’tis true)

Would ne’er have been revealed to you

Had life's conditions but inspired

One gleam of hope that you would come

To see us in our country home

From time to time, so that I might

Hear but one word : catch but one tone.

And live by dreaming on alone

Till our next meeting, day and night.

But then it seemed there was no hope ;

Our rustic quiet bored you so,

Folk said you were a misanthrope ;

And we — we do not make a show —

You found us narrow in our scope.

Why did you come to visit us

In this forgotten quiet place ?

I need not have been tortured thus

If I had never seen your face.

My inexperienced heart maybe

Had grown resigned to this dull life,

And future years had brought to me

Some other love — my destiny

An honoured mother and true wife.

Another’s ! Nay, to none on earth

Could I have given this heart of mine.

By the decree of the Most High,

And by Heaven’s willing, I am thine.

Allotted unto you was I

E’en from the moment of my birth

And loyal to my future fate ;

And God, I know, sent you to be

My champion and my advocate

Till the grave closes over me. . . .

Oft in my dreams you did appear ;

I loved you then before the days

When palpably I saw you here ;

I languished in your wondrous gaze

And in my heart your voice rang clear

Long since . . . It was no dream to me I

You came — at once I understood

This swift confusion in my blood,

While my thoughts whispered : “Lo, ’tis he.”

Was it not true ? Am I not sure

You spoke with me in hours of peace

When I went visiting my poor,

Or when I strove by prayer to ease

The pain in which my spirit toss’d ?

Was not your image wont to rise

A vision sweet — too quickly lost —

To light my gloom ? Did not mine eyes

See you bend gently o’er my bed ?

Were not some words low whispered

Of love and hope ? Now in what guise

Come you ? As guardian angel good,

Or tempter in some wily mood ?

speak, and set my doubts at rest !

What if all this should prove at best

The empty dream, more light than froth,

Of a heart simple and untried ?

Well, be it so ! But from henceforth

1 must to you my fate confide.

Must weep my tears about your feet

And for your sheltering love entreat.

Picture me now. ... I sit alone

With none to heed or guess what ails . . .

And now my very reason fails !

I wait for you. One glance of yours

Fresh hope unto my heart restores ;

Or else the cruel dream comes back

Of merited contempt . . . Alack !

[She seals the letter. ]

Tis done ! I scarce dare read it through,

But overcome with shame and fright

I trust my honour now to you.

And dare to think I trust aright.

Translated by Rosa Newmarch.

THE DUEL

FROM “EUGENE ONIEGIN” [CHAPTER SIX]

28

Yes, foes ! — How many days, bethink you,

Since hatred stepped the two between,

And since in hours of thought and leisure,

At work, at table, they have been

As comrades ! Now, with purpose dread,

Like men in mutual loathing bred,

Each plans, as though in broadest day

A heavy nightmare on him lay,

The other’s downfall in his heart.

Oh, could they smile but once, while still

Their hands are pure from deed of ill,

And then their sev’ral ways depart !

But worldly hate, like worldly fame,

Shrinks at the breath of worldly shame.

29

. . . . . .

30

— Now, come together !

Calmly, coldly,

Not aiming yet, with haughty glance,

And tread assured and light, though measured.

The combatants four steps advance,

Four steps to death — whereon Eugene,

Still forward moving o'er the green,

(The other likewise) first began

To raise his weapon, fix his man. . . .

Nine steps now of the fateful quest

Were counted — Lensky, with a frown,

His left eye closed, took aim — when down

Oniegin’s thumb the trigger prest . . .

Reverse the sand-glass ! — Lensky sighed —

No more ! — and let his pistol glide.

31

He sought his breast with clutching fingers —

He fell, his glance grew dim, and still

It spoke of death alone, not torment,

As when upon some eastern hill

All sparkling in the morning light,

The snow-wreath vanishes from sight

Oniegin, suddenly a-cold

With horror, saw his shot had told.

He hastened— o'er the poet's form

He stooped, he called his name — too late !

He was no more — untimely fate !

The flower had perished in the storm —

The music on the broken lyre,

And on the altar-stone, the fire !

32

And there he lay ! How unfamiliar

Upon his brow the languid grace !

Beneath his breast the ball had pierced him,

The smoking blood ran down apace,

Thence, where, a few brief moments past,

The pulse of life was bounding fast,

Where hate and hope and love were strong.

And warm emotions wont to throng.

The heart is now a house bereft

Of former inmates — every floor

Is dark and still for evermore,

With dusty panes. The host has left ;

And whither went he ? Who shall say ?

His very trace is swept away.

33

To write an epigram, a sharp one.

Your stupid foe to irritate,

Is very nice. To see him lower

His sullen horns, still obstinate,

And, *nolens volens* in the glass

With shame behold himself and pass.

Twere nicer still (the fool !), should he

Stand there and gape — Tis meant for me ! '

And silently to dig your foe

An honoured grave, to aim with care —

Your mark, the pallid forehead there,

A generous distance off — we know.

Is nicest But to see him fall

And lie, is scarcely nice at all !

34

We’ll just suppose, my friend, your pistol

Has stretched a young acquaintance dead —

Because of forward look or answer,

Because some idle thing he said

Had stung you o’er the wine last night,

Or even called you out to fight

Himself in boyish anger — well,

What kind of feeling, pray you, tell,

Came o’er you with a whelming rush,

When laid before you on the ground.

Without a motion or a sound,

He stiffens in the sudden hush ?

When dumb, with blinded stare, he lies.

Stone-deaf to your despairing cries ?

Translated by H. C. F.

From: *Poetry and Progress in Russia* by Rosa Newmarch [Jeaffreson], London: John Lane, The Bodley Head 1907.

**OBOLENSKY**

*Tat’yana’s conversation with her Nurse from ‘Evgeny Onegin’*

XVI. Love’s anguish impels Tat’yana, and she goes into the garden to abandon herself to sadness; suddenly she lowers her gaze, and feels too languorous to walk on. . . Her bosom heaves, her chest suffused with a sudden flame, her breath grows faint, . . . There is a noise in her ears, and flashing in her eyes . . . It is night; the moon is patrolling the distant vault of heaven, and the nightingale in the darkness of the trees strikes up its sonorous melodies. Tat’yana, sleepless in the dark, talks softly to her nurse:

XVII ‘I can’t sleep, nanny: it’s so stifling here! Open the window, and come and sit by me.’ − ‘What is it, Tanya, what’s the matter with you?’ − ‘I feel depressed; let’s talk about old times.’ − ‘What about, Tanya? I used to remember not a few old tales and fables about evil spirits and maidens; but now all is dark in my mind, Tanya: I have forgotten what I knew. Yes, bad times have come! My memory’s gone . . .’ − ‘Tell me, nanny, about your own early years: were you ever in love in those days?’

XVIII − ‘Whatever next, Tanya! At that age we hadn’t even heard of love; if there had been any talk of it, my late mother-in-law would have been the death of me,’ − ‘But how did you get married, nanny?’ − ‘Such, it seems, was God’s will. My Vanya, my dear one, was younger than I, and I was thirteen. For about two weeks, the match-maker called on my family, and at last my father gave me his blessing. I wept bitterly for fear; they wept as they unplaited my hair, and sang as they led me into church.

XIX ‘And so they brought me into a strange family. . . But you aren’t listening . . .’ − ‘Oh, nanny, nanny dear, my heart aches, I am so miserable, I feel like crying, sobbing . . . ’ − ‘My child, you’re not well; the Lord have mercy and save you! What is it you want, tell me. Let me sprinkle you with holy water . . . . . . − you’re burning hot . . . ’ − ‘I’m not ill: I’m . . . oh, nanny . . . I’m in love.’ −’God preserve you, my child!’ And, as she prayed, the nurse made the sign of the cross over the girl with her frail old hand.

XX ‘I’m in love,’ she whispered sorrowfully to the old woman. ‘My dearest, you are not well.’ − ‘Leave me alone: I’m in love.’ Meanwhile, the moon was shining with a languorous light and lighting up Tat’yana’s pale beauty, her hair falling loose, her tears, and the old woman in her long warm jacket, with a kerchief on her grey head, sitting on a bench before our young heroine; and all things slumbered in silence beneath the inspiring moon.

*The Heritage of Russian Verse*. Introduced and edited by Dimitri Obolensky. With plain prose translations of each poem. Previously available as *The Penguin Book of Russian Verse*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1965. ISBN 0-253-32736-9. Pages 84-87.

**RAYFIELD**

*From Chapter One of* Evgenii Onegin

XXX. Alas, I have wasted much of my life on various amusements! But if morals did not suffer, I would still love balls. I love the furious youth, the crowded hall, the brilliance, the joy, and the ladies’ carefully planned dresses; I love their feet; only you’d be hard put to find three pairs of beautiful women’s feet in all Russia. Oh for a long time I could not forget two feet… Sad, chilled, I still remember them, and in my dreams they still disturb my heart.

XXXI. When and where, in what desert, madman, will you forget them? Oh, feet, feet! Where are you now? Where are you crushing the spring flowers? Nurtured in oriental bliss, you left no traces on sad northern snow: you loved soft carpets’ voluptuous touch. Was it so long ago that I forgot for you the thirst for fame and praises, and the land of my fathers, and incarceration? The happiness of youthful years has vanished like your light trace on the meadows.

XXXII. Diana’s chest, Flora’s cheeks are charming, dear friends! But Terpsichore’s foot is somehow more charming to me. Prophesying for the eyes a priceless reward, it brings with it, in its peculiar beauty, an idiosyncratic swarm of desires. My friend Elvina, I love it under the long tablecloth, in spring on the fresh meadow grass, in winter on the fireplace’s cast iron, on the ballroom’s polished parquet, by the sea on the granite rock.

XXXIII. I remember the sea before a thunderstorm: how I envied the waves which ran in stormy succession to lie down lovingly at her feet! How I desired then with the waves to touch the dear feet with my lips! No, never in my seething youth’s ardent days did I desire with such agony to kiss the lips of a young Armida or the roses of fiery cheeks, or breasts full of languor; no, never did the impulse of passions tear my soul apart like this.

*From Chapter Eight of* Evgenii Onegin

X. Blessed is he who was young from youth, blessed who matured in time, who gradually managed to endure life’s cold with the years; who did not indulge in strange dreams, who did not shun society’s rabble, who at twenty was a dandy or fop and at thirty profitably married; who at fifty was free of private and other debts, who calmly in due course won fame, money and rank, of whom all his life it was repeated: ‘N.N. is a fine person.’

XI. But it is sad to think that youth was given to us in vain, that we have constantly betrayed it, that it has let us down; that our best desires, that our fresh dreams have burnt out in rapid succession, like leaves in a rotten autumn. It is unbearable to see facing us a long series of just dinners, to look at life as a ritual, and to follow the solemn mob without sharing common opinions or passions with it.

*The Garnett Book of Russian Verse: A Treasury of Russian Poets from 1730 to 1996*. Edited by Donald Rayfield with Jeremy Hicks, Olga Makarova and Anna Pilkington. London: The Garnett Press 2000. ISBN 0 9535878 2 7. Pages 76-78 and 101-102.

***RUSSIAN REVIEW***

EXTRACTS FROM "EUGENE ONEGIN."

The poem *Eugene Onegin*, perhaps the best-known work of A. S. Pushkin, and one of the most notable of Russian classics, is a novel in verse. When. dismissed by Imperial order from St. Petersburg for verses winch he had written on Liberty and against the favourite Arakcheyev and later expelled from the State service, Pushkin lived in his country house in the province of Pskov, during which time he studied deeply the Bible, Shakespeare, and Byron; and this period did more to develop his genius than any other time in his life. The hero of the poem, Onegin makes friends with a family of simple country gentry, the Larins. Onegin, clever and *blasé*, regards his visits as a pleasant diversion; but the younger daughter of the family, Tatyana, who is perhaps one of the most distinctive and sympathetic of all Russian heroines, falls in love with him. Tatyana, in her simplicity, after many restless days and nights, writes to Onegin

*Tatyana’s Letter to Onegin.* [Chapter Three, after XXXI]

“I write to you. What else, what more can I say? Now I know it is in your power to punish me with contempt. But you, if you still have a drop of pity for my unhappy lot, you will not betray me. At first I wanted to keep silence; believe me, you would never know my shame if I had the hope of sometimes⎯only seldom⎯only once a week⎯seeing you in our house, of only listening to you talking; to say a word to you, and then to go on thinking, thinking of one thing flay and night till we met again. But they say you are unsociable. Here in the wilds, in the country everything bores you, and we . . . well, we are not brilliant people, though we have a hearty welcome for you.

“Why did you visit us ? In the wilds of an out-of-the-way village I might never have known you, not have known bitter torment. With time, calming the stirrings of an untrained nature⎯how do I know ?⎯I might have found a friend after my heart, have been a faithful wife and a virtuous mother:

“Another ? . . . To no one else in the world would I have given my heart. That was settled in the councils on high; that is the will of Heaven; I am yours. My whole life has been a pledge of my certain meeting with you; I know you were sent me by God; you are my guardian to the grave. . . . In my dreams I used to see you; before we had met, you were already dear to me. Your face went to my heart; your voice had found the echo in my soul long ago. . . . No, it was no dream! The moment that you came, I recognised you at once; I was struck down I flushed; and in my thoughts I said: It is he. I used to hear you, didn’t I? You used to speak with me alone when I was helping the poor, or when I was easing the unrest of my troubled soul in prayer; and at that very minute wasn’t it you, kind vision, that I caught a glimpse of in the transparent darkness⎯that came softy up to my pillow? Wasn’t it you, who with comfort and love whispered words of hope to me?

“Who are you ? My guardian angel or a cunning tempter? Settle my doubts. Perhaps this is all emptiness, the delusion of an inexperienced heart, and this is not for me. But there it is! From now on, I trust my fate to you. I weep before you; I beg your protection. Imagine: I am alone here; no one understands me. My thought grows feeble, and I must spoil in silence. I wait for you: with one glance revive the hopes of my heart or else break this heavy dream, alas with deserved reproach!

“I end! It is awful to read it through; I am dying with shame and fear. But my pledge is your honour, and I trust myself boldly to it.”

*Onegin meets Tatyana in the Garden.* [Chapter Four, XII−XVI]

XII “You wrote to me. Do not be afraid. I have read the Confessions of your trusting heart, the outpourings of an innocent love; I liked your openness; it stirred in me feelings long since silenced; but I do not want to praise you; I will repay your frankness by speaking⎯like you, without art. Hear my concession: I ask you to judge me.

XIII “If I wanted to bound my life by the circle of home, if a pleasing destiny bade me be father and husband, if I were for a single minute captivated with the domestic picture, then really I would not have looked for any other wife than only you. I will say without any flashes of madrigal, having found my old ideal I would really have chosen you alone for the friend of my melancholy days to give me all that is beautiful, and would have been happy . . . as far as I could.

XIV “But I am not made for felicity; my heart is foreign to it. In vain are your perfections; I am altogether unworthy of them. Believe me, on my conscience, married life will be for us a torment. I, however much I love you, when I had got used to you shall then cease to love you; you will begin to cry; your tears will not touch nay heart, and will only niche me angry. Judge yourself what roses Hymen prepares for us, and perhaps for many days.

XV “What in the world can be worse than a home where the poor wife grieves over an unworthy husband, and is alone from morning to evening; where the tiresome husband, though he knows her worth, all the same cursing his fate, is always frowning, silent, angry, and coldly jealous? That is what I am like. And is that what you were looking for, with your pure and ardent heart, when you wrote to me and showed me all your self, all your mind? Can a stern destiny have cast for you such a lot?

XVI “Dreams and years cannot return; I shall not renew my heart. . . . I love you with the love of a brother, and perhaps more tenderly still; listen to me without anger : a young girl will more than once change her light dreams for others; so the tree changes its leaves with each spring; so, it is clear, Heaven means it to do. You will love again, but learn to control yourself; not every one will understand you as I do; inexperience leads to misfortune.”

Eugene stays at home and becomes very irritable. His young poet friend Lensky is deeply in love with Tatyana’s shallow sister Olga. Eugene starts a cynical kind of flirtation with Olga which leads to a duel, in which he kills Lensky. He is horrified at this, and travels for months in the country to forget everything. Returning to Moscow, he finds that Tatyana has, at the urgent wish of her mother, married an old and honourable soldier, a prince, and is one of the foremost figures in Moscow society. He now feels for her a strong passion. He follows her aimlessly, writes to her, and at last, finding himself alone with her, throws himself at her feet and presses her hand to his lips. After a pause she speaks as follows :−

*Tatyana and Onegin in Moscow.* [Chapter Eight, XLII.8−XLVIII]

XLII.8 “Enough; stand up. I must explain myself to you frankly. Onegin, do you remember that hour when in the garden on the walk fate brought us together and I so humbly listened to your lesson? To-day it is my turn.

XLIII “Onegin, then I was younger; I think I was better, and I loved you. And what came of it? What did I find in your heart? What answer? Only sternness, wasn’t it? It was no novelty to you, the love of a meek little country girl, and now⎯heavens!⎯my blood runs cold when I remember your chilling look and that sermon. . . . But I do not blame you: in that awful hour you behaved. like a gentleman; you did rightly by me and I thank you with all my heart.

XLIV “In those days, you remember, out in the wilds there, far from the world. of gossip, you did not care for me. . . . Then why do you now pursue me? Why should you now single me out? Isn’t it because now I must be seen in society, that I have wealth and name, that my husband was crippled in the wars, that the court is therefore kind to us? Isn’t it because my disgrace would now be noticed by every one and might in society seem for you a flattering conquest?

XLV “You see I am crying. If you have not yet forgotten your Tanya, then know: I would rather have the prick of your rebuke, your cold, stern talk, if it were only in my power, than your insulting passion and these letters and tears; then you at least had pity for my childish dreams, at least respect for my girlhood . . . and now !⎯what has brought you to my feet? How petty! How, with your heart and mind, can you be the slave of some trivial mood?

XLVI “But for me, Onegin, all this show, the falseness of this sickening life, my successes in the whirl of society, my fashionable house and evening parties-what is there in them I would gladly give up this minute all this frippery of masquerade, all this glamour and fuss, for my bookshelf, for the tangled garden, for our tumbledown house, for the places where first, Onegin, I saw you; yes, for the humble churchyard where now the cross and the shadow of branches overhang the grave of my poor old nurse

XLVII “And happiness was so possible, so near! . . . but my fate is settled now; perhaps I behaved recklessly; my mother implored and adjured me with tears; for poor Tanya all lots were alike. . . . I married. You must, I beg you, leave me. I know: in your heart there is pride and honour too. I love you. Why hide it? But I am given to another ; I shall always be faithful to him.”

At this point the author breaks off the story.

XLVIII She is gone. Eugene stands as though thunderstruck. In what a storm of feelings his heart is now plunged! But as a sudden spur, a bell rang, and the husband of Tatyana came in; and here, reader, at this moment so cruel for him, we will now leave my hero, for long . . . for ever. Long enough have we been following him together over the world. Our journey is over; let us say good-bye. Hurrah! And we might have done that earlier, mightn’t we?

From *Russian Review* **2** (1) (1913 Spring), 56−60.

**SHAW**

… As the composition of “Evgénii Oniégin” extended over a considerable space of time, our readers may not be displeased at our reverting occasionally to the progress of this work and to the character of its merits. This productions must be considered as the fullest and most complete embodiment that exists in Russian literature of the nationality of the country. It will be found to be the expression of those discordant elements the union of which composes that hard riddle⎯the Russian character. A passage of Púshkin’s dedication will not incorrectly exhibit the variety of its tone:⎯

“ Accept this heap of motley traits

Half-gay, half sad, half false, half real,

Half every-day, yet half ideal,

The careless fruit of idle days,

Of sleepless nights, of wasted art⎯

The reason’s frigid observations,

And sad conclusions of the heart.”

“Sketch of Púshkin’s life and works” by Thomas B. Shaw, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* **57** (356) (1845 June), 657-678, at page 666.

**SIRIWARDENA**

TATYANA IN LOVE (FROM [CHAPTER THREE OF] *YEVGENY ONEGIN*)

[XVII]

‘I can’t sleep, nanny, it’s so stifling:

Open the window; then sit here.’

‘What’s wrong, my Tanya?’ ‘I’m depressed;

Let’s talk of old times, nanny dear.’

‘Talk about what? There was a time

I could have told you not a few

Tales of witches and maidens fair.

I have forgotten what I knew;

My mind is now in darkness, Tanya.

Yes, bad times have come, my dear:

My memory’s gone.’ ‘Come tell me, nanny,

About those days of yester-year:

Yes, nanny sweet, tell me the truth,

Were you in love in your own youth?’

[XVIII]

‘And what next, Tanya? In those days

We hadn’t even heard of love.

If I had dared to think of it,

They would have killed me, heavens above!’

‘How were you married, nanny, then?’

‘That was God’s will. You know, my Vanya

Was even younger than me, sweetheart;

And I had just turned thirteen, Tanya.

My father gave his blessing when

The matchmaker had come to sue

A whole fortnight. And bitterly

I cried for fear; and they wept too,

Loosing the tresses on my head,

And sang as me to church they led.

[XIX]

‘And so I went into a house

Of strangers. But are you asleep?

You aren’t listening!’ ‘Ah, nanny, nanny,

I’m so wretched, I could weep;

My heart aches so.’ ‘My child, you’re ill;

Don’t be afraid, the Lord have mercy.

Pray God will help and succour you.

What do you want? Tell your old nursey.

First let me sprinkle holy water.

You’re burning hot!’ ‘No, I’m not ill;

I’m really …nanny…I’m in love.’

‘God save you, child, in his kind will!‘

And with her right hand, frail and trembling,

She blessed the girl, a prayer mumbling.

[XX.1−4]

I’m in love, dear,’ Tatyana whispered

Sadly again to the old crone.

‘My dearest heart, you are not well.’

‘I’m in love, leave me alone.’

[XXXIII]

The dawn Tatyana doesn’t notice.

She sits dreaming, her head bowed low;

Her signet ring she doesn’t press

Upon the letter. But the door

Quietly opens, and tip-toeing

Into the room comes now the grey-

Haired nurse, Filipyevna; she brings

The morning tea upon a tray.

It’s time, my child, to get up now.

But you’re already dressed, darling!

How well you look today, thank God!

My lovely little early starling!

Although last night you were so sad,

You’re like a poppy now, I’m glad.’

[XXXIV]

‘Oh nanny, please will you help me?’

‘Of course, my darling, tell me how.’

‘Don’t think…I mean…and don’t suspect…

You see…please don’t refuse me now.’

‘My dear, I swear to you by God!’

‘Well then, please send this little letter

Through your grandsons (it’s hush-hush, mind

you)

To O…to him…the neighbour…better

To warn the boy he mustn’t say

A word about me, and still less

My name…’ ‘To whom, my dear? So dim

I’ve grown I just can’t guess

There are so many neighbours here,

I have lost count from year to year.’

[XXXV]

‘Oh nanny, nanny, you’re really slow!’

‘My dearest heart, I’ve grown so old,

My mind is dull. There was a time

I was quick-witted. If once told

One word of what the master wished…’

‘Oh nanny, nanny, how you chatter!

What have your wits to do with me?

You see, there is this little matter:

The note to Onegin.’ ‘Well, all right.

Don’t lose your temper, dearest, so:

You know how stupid I am now.

But why have your cheeks paled once more?’

‘It’s nothing, nanny, nothing really.

Now send your grandson, thank you dearly.’

[XXXVIII]

Meanwhile her heart ached ceaselessly;

Her languid eyes were full of tears.

A sudden clatter! Her blood froze.

Nearer! A galloping she hears:

He’s come ⎯ Yevgeny!’ ‘Ah!’ and leaping

Lighter than a shadow hares

Tatyana through the entrance hall,

From porch to yard; look back she dares

Not; straight into the garden now

She flies, she flies; across flower beds,

Over little bridges, down the path

Lakewards, scattering the lilac heads,

Towards the brook; till panting fast,

Upon a garden bench at last

[XXXIX.1−2]

She falls…

‘He’s here! Yevgeny’s here!

Oh God, what did he think of me?’

*From the Russian of Aleksandr Pushkin*

On the web at http://www.regisiriwardena.lk/node/54

Taken from Regi Siriwardena, *Poems and Selected Translations*, Colombo: privately published 1993, pp. 26−29. Presumably this is the same as the extract from *Many Voices: 50 Poems from the Spanish, Italian, French and Russian*, Colombo: Ena de Silva Fabrics, 1974, pp. 10−13, referred to in Leighton’s bibliography.

**TURNER**

**Evjenie Oneguin**

Chapter One

XLVI

Whoever has loved and thought

Must in his soul despise mankind ;

Whoever has felt, must be haunted

By the phantoms of days that can ne’er return ;

. . . . . .

Chapter Two

XV

He listened to Lensky and smiled :

The poet’s impassioned discourse,

And mind so childlike in its judgments,

And the rapt expression of his eye ;⎯

All this was something novel to Oneguin.

He therefore tried to keep in

The cold reply that was even on his lips,

And thought to himself : it was folly to mar

His momentary enjoyment of content :

The time will come without my stir.

So let him in the meanwhile live on

In the fond belief of this world’s perfectibility :

We will pardon the fire of youthful years,

The boyish zeal, and the dreams of early

manhood.

XXII

. . . . . .

He sang of night, the stars, and moon,

The moon, refulgent lamp of heaven,

Whom we too once believed to be the goddess

Of love’s sweet rambles in evening shades,

And tears that bring healing to the aching heart :

But now, alas, we see in it nothing more

Than a happy substitute for our dull street-

lamps.

Chapter Three

IV

. . . . . .

Good simple souls, The Larens,

And the young woman particularly charming :

But, you know, I much fear her bilberry wine

Will cause me no few pains.

V

. . . . . .

I should have chosen the other

Had I been, like yourself, a poet;

In Olga’s features there is no life,

She is like a Vandyck’s Madonna,

Round and ruddy in face ;

For all the world like a dull round moon

Shining up there in yon dull sky.

. . . . . .

XVII

. . . . . .

“Tell me, nurse,

Some stories of the days when you were young :

You were in love, then, I suppose ?”

XVIII

“Ah, enough, Tatiana. In those days

We never heard of love,

And my late mother-in-law

Would soon have whipped such nonsense out

of us.”

“But how, nurse, did you, then, get married !”

“How? why, God so willed it. My John

Was younger than I, darling,

And I was then thirteen years old.

For a whole fortnight

The svakha came and went

And then, at last, father blessed me.

Bitterly I wept with fear,

And the maidens wept as they plaited my hair,

And they led us to church with singing,

XIX

And then brought me to my new strange home.”

. . . . . .

XXXI

*Tatiana’s Letter to Oneguin*

I write to you :⎯what more remains?

What is there more that I can say ?

I know, that in your eyes

I have fallen and am despised.

But you, if my wretched lot excite

But one spark of sympathy in your soul,

You will not now abandon me.

To keep silent at first I wished ;

Believe me, never had you known

The shame that fills my heart,

Could I but some little hope have had,

Though seldom, though but once a week,

To see you in our village home,

So that I might hear your voice,

Breathe a word to you, and then

All day and night recall each tone,

And live on till we meet again.

They say you hate mankind,

And find our country-life all dull;

And we,⎯in nothing do we excel,

And nothing, save a simple welcome, could

we give.

But wherefore did you visit us ?

In the solitude of our world-lost village

I ne’er had known or heard your name,

Had never felt the torture of the heart,

Had learned in time to tame the unquiet

Of my young and inexperienced soul,

And⎯who knows ?⎯perchance have found

A friend to love and share his life,

Had proved to him a faithful wife,

And been a mother kind and true.

But the past it boots not to recall,

My fate to thee I now give o’er,

Before thee these tears I shed,

And thy protecting love implore.

Think only, I am here alone,

With none to understand my grief :

My strength of mind will slowly fail,

And I must die, as I have lived, alone.

. . . . . .

Chapter Six

XXXIX

The common lot of men awaited him ;

The years of youth would quickly pass,

The glow of fancy growing cold within him,

Till in all he would be changed,

Bid adieu to poetry, and take a wife,

Life a country life, contended and a cuckold,

Wear all day his loose striped dressing-gown,

And come to know the frets and woes of life :

From his fortieth year feel the twinging pangs

of gout,

Eat, drink, mope, grow fat and weak,

Till, last scene of all, he dies quietly in his bed,

Tended by his wife and children,

The village leech, and whining nurse.

Chapter Eight

XVIII

. . . . . .

The princess looks at him . . .

And whatever torture her soul may feel

Or howe’er she may be taken unawares,

XIX

No feature betrayed her heart’s emotion;

Not a tremble, or the sudden rush of white and

red,

Not a ruffle of the brow or a quiver of the lip ;

Nor could Oneguin in her looks or mien

Discover a trace of the Tatiana he had known.

He tried to enter into talk with her,

And . . . and could not. Then she asked him,

Had he been long here, whence had he come,

Had he lately been in their old country place ?

And, turning to her husband with a tired look,

Moved forward, and left him motionless alone.

XXVII

. . . . . .

O men and women, ye are all

The children of our first mother Eve :

What is given you is lightly valued,

And the cunning serpent is ever by

To show you the mysterious untested tree ;

And heaven itself is not heaven,

If the forbidden tree be but withheld.

XLIII

I was younger then Oneguin,

And it seems to me, I was better then,

And I loved you,⎯and what was my reward ?

What did I find in your heart,

What response ? Naught but coldness,.

Is it not true that for you

A simple maiden’s love was no novelty ?

And now⎯God!⎯my blood runs cold

Even at the bare remembrance of that icy look,

And the homily you read me. But do not think,

I blame you. In that awful hour,

You acted well and honourably,

You were right in all you said and did ;

And I thank you with all my heart.

XLVI

But to me, Oneguin, this worldly glare,

This tinsel blaze of an empty life,

My triumphs and successes in the world,

My fashionable home and gay evenings ;

What are those to me ? This minute I’d gladly

exchange

All this masquerading frippery,

All this noisy vapourish pomp,

For the old shelf of books, the wild garden,

The poor humble village home,

The spot where you first saw me, Oneguin,

Or for the quiet churchyard,

Where now a cross and the shade of cypress

tree

Mark the grave of poor old nurse

XLVII

For happiness was so conceivably possible,

So nearly within our grasp. But my fate

Is now decided. Inconsiderately,

It must be, I acted :

But with tears and conjuring prayers

My mother entreated me, and for poor Tatiana

All sacrifices were alike . . . .

I married. And now you must,

I implore you, you must now leave me.

I know that in your heart you own

The stern claims of pride and honour.

I owe you, ⎯why seek to play the hypocrite ?

But I am given to another,

And will for ever remain true to him.

LI

. . . . . .

Happy is the man who early quits

The feast of life, not caring to drain

The sparkling goblet filled with wine ;

Happy the man who does not wait

To read the final page of life’s romance ;

But suddenly bids the world adieu,

Even as now I say farewell to my Oneguin.

From *Studies in Russian Literatu*re by Charles Edward Turner, Chapter XIV: Evjenie Oneguin. London: Sampson Low. Marston, Searle & Rivington 1882. Reprinted Boston, MA: Elibron Classics 2005. ISBN 1-4212-1024-X.