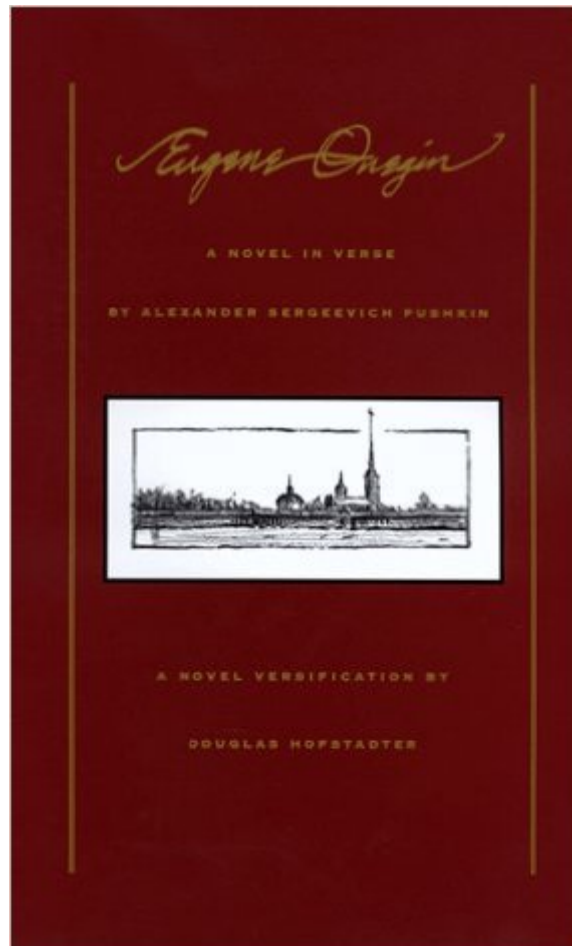


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Eugene Onegin: Translation By Douglas R. Hofstadter



Synopsis

Sparked by reading Jim Falen's beautiful English version of Eugene Onegin (published in 1992), Douglas Hofstadter presents a more liberal, distinctly American, colloquial version of the Alexander Pushkin classic. Hofstadter's version is entirely in so-called "Onegin stanzas" a unique sonnet form devised by Pushkin with a very intricate rhythmic and rhyming pattern. There is also a preface in Onegin stanzas, in which Hofstadter talks about Pushkin, his novel in verse, its form and content, the challenges of translating it into English and his deep admiration for Falen's version. This work will correspond with Pushkin's 200th anniversary; thus, it should be a timely and well accepted literary gem.

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Customer Reviews

I am currently reading Hofstadter's new translation of Pushkin's Eugene Onegin and I must say it's one of the finest translations I've read. While I have yet to read the Falen translation, I've read others, including Nabokov's, and Hofstadter's seems the freshest, the most vigorous, and certainly the most enjoyable. What a splendid job he's done. The introduction on how he worked with the original is a "must read" for anyone interested in the joys and pitfalls of translation work.

There are many similarities between Pushkin and Tchaikovsky in real life as well as in art. The Russian poet and the Russian composer together weave a story that is unforgettable adapted for the operatic stage to create Russia's most famous operatic work. The Letter Aria, in which a young girl pours out her heart to a man she has barely met and suffers from his rejection took place in real

life when a young woman wrote to Tchaikovsky and he could not bear to see her hurt by his rejection, so he married her...with disastrous results. A duel takes place in the lives of the characters in Eugene Onegin and took place in Pushkin's real life. To follow the lives of Russia's top poet and top composer is to know Eugene Onegin. For this reason, I ordered and read the poem, followed by a biography of Tchaikovsky, and will be speaking on the opera in the fall when it is performed at Los Angeles Opera. Studying these two artists is truly a joy and a learning process on the subject of Russian culture. Students of poetry, literature, Russian history/culture, and opera/music will love reading Eugene Onegin. I certainly did. Thank you, , for providing the materials to enable my upcoming talks on the opera based upon Pushkin's poem, with the music by Peter Tchaikovsky.

Hofstadter is a brilliant man, with no ear for poetry. One aspect of human intelligence that computers have some hope of matching is pattern recognition. This, perhaps, has led computer scientist Hofstadter to value pattern (rhyme, meter) in poetry at the expense of sense and, above all, tone. Both in this translation and in his fascinating and infuriating "Le Ton Beau de Marot" he shows a near-complete obliviousness to the nuances of tone that words bring with them. Try the Falen translation instead.

I read this book after watching a movie on the story. One thing for sure is that James Falen did a perfect job on the translation of EUGENE ONEGIN. Much of the Russian nature of glows in this English translation, bringing out the humor, wittiness, emotions, grief, sadness and vitality of the original story, which mirrored the Russian society at the time Pushkin lived. The lessons from the story are strong. Never fight against somebody who is not out to hurt you even if you feel he hurt your pride. That was the case between Eugene and his friend and neighbor Vladimir Lensky, which ends tragically over a nonexistent rivalry over Olga Larin: Another lesson is to appreciate the genuine and selfless love of others for, especially when we are lost in life. That was the case of Olga's sister Tatiana, whom Eugene initially rejects, only to fall in love with her later at a time when she had lost faith in him and had committed herself to a man she did not love but respected. Pushkin himself could be seen in the writing. The loss of what we did not know we loved is the overriding theme in this book. In this direction, there are many lessons to learn from Russia. We can see that in UNION MOUJIK, WAR AND PEACE. I enjoyed reading this book, so if you are undecided about reading it, pick it up and do yourself a favor by knowing about this great work of art.

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