

Robert E. Tanner. *Ambivalent Souls: A True Translation of Alexander Pushkin's Eugene Onegin*. New York: Poets & Traitors Press, 2022. 197 pp., \$18.00.

In *Ambivalent Souls: A True Translation of Alexander Pushkin's Eugene Onegin*, Robert Tanner aims more for faithfulness to the spirit, rather than the letter. He translates the dedication and eight main chapters of the novel-in-verse into English, preserving the form of the original as in the verse translations best represented by James Falen and Stanley Mitchell. However, he takes more liberties than they do. Not only does he deliberately use anachronistic diction, but he also interpolates lines and even whole stanzas into places where Pushkin left stanzas out or unfinished. Tanner's work, therefore, is an unusual combination of both translation and an original work. In both categories it has merit and shortcomings.

As a translation, *Ambivalent Souls* usually gives a clear picture of the original, sometimes with charming verse. Occasionally there are forced rhymes, liberties taken with the meter and problems with clarity. However, many of the rhymes—especially the feminine rhymes—are delightfully unexpected. Tanner rhymes “Odessa/express a,” “First in / Immersed in,” “Apropos It / poet.” Not all such rhymes are successful. The slant rhyme “‘Heck...’ and / reckoned” distracts from the moment of Lensky's death. But many rhymes capture something of Pushkin's inventiveness.

Tanner's diction draws from virtually every period and register of modern English. Archaisms like “wight” and “joyance” coexist with a wealth of twenty-first-century vernacular. Pushkin's past romances were “sensitive but chill,” the beginning is “the novel's drop,” the champaign Aÿ is “a ditz,” and one page of Chapter 8 uses both “woke” and “to troll.” Such diction pulls the reader out of the nineteenth-century setting, but it also reproduces in a twenty-first-century context something of Pushkin's play with registers. In that regard I appreciated the description of Eugene as “a ping-pong of preconceptions.” Though anachronistic, it is concrete and evocative and feels like Pushkin could have written it. Many individual decisions of diction are debatable, but Tanner's general approach feels defensible as a method of translating Pushkin.

Tanner's interpolations are offset from the translated passages by a lighter font. Despite this differentiation, Tanner often includes lines like “Pushkin writes,” which I found redundant. His interpolations fall into three categories. The first, taking the place of footnotes, are in-text explanations about cultural references and nineteenth-century realia. I enjoyed the uninterrupted reading experience of having explanations embedded in the verse, but unfortunately, not all of Tanner's explanations are accurate. For example, he identifies Wilhelm Küchelbecker as Pushkin's “foe,” and states that Pushkin *planned* to participate in the Decembrist Uprising.

The second category of interpolations includes new stanzas and lines that expand on the aspect of the work that led Vissarion Belinsky to label it “an encyclopedia of Russian life.” Two stanzas in Chapter 1 reflect on Pushkin's death with a playful poignance that recalls Sergei Chudakov's “They Played Pushkin on a Grand Piano.” Three stanzas in Chapter 5 discuss Alexander Griboedov's duels with a discursiveness that feels Pushkinian. They provide fascinating cultural history and foreshadow the duel. While not by Pushkin, such passages harmonize with the spirit of his work.

The third category of interpolations comments on Tanner's own experience. There are lines about Tanner's Peace Corps service in Ukraine, his relationships, his distaste for (but reliance on) Vladimir Nabokov's commentary on *Eugene Onegin*, the struggles of translation and political events that happened during the process. The quality varies. I found the passages about the loneliness of the pandemic lockdowns moving, but I was appalled when Tanner compared the January 6th Uprising to that of the Decembrists and Donald Trump to Nabokov. Such comparisons are tone deaf to the different resonances the events and people have in their respective cultures.

There is an argument to be made in favor of Tanner's approach, particularly since Pushkin himself left a personal mark on translations, most famously in *Feast in Time of a Plague*. I found myself wondering who Tanner had in mind as an audience. His diction and lack of scholarly notes

seem to indicate a general readership. The forward by Peter Scotto is further evidence. Scotto only briefly introduces *Eugene Onegin* and Tanner's unusual treatment of it, devoting most of his word count to a discussion of the ethics of reading Pushkin during the Russo-Ukraine War. The discussion is highly general, touching on many *loci classici* of Pushkin's politics without engaging the scholarly conversation on the subject. Frankly, it would be more appropriate as an op-ed. Despite the targeted general readership, there are enough liberties taken that *Ambivalent Souls* would make a poor introduction to Pushkin. It does not belong, for instance, on the reading list of an introductory level Russian Literature course. It takes familiarity with *Eugene Onegin* and its author to appreciate what Tanner does in his book. I personally found it a fascinating experiment, though I remain ambivalent about whether or not it is successful.

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Martin Maiden, et al. *The Oxford History of Romanian Morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. xvi + 526 pp. \$165.00 (cloth).

This book was authored by a collective of five scholars including the coordinator Martin Maiden, of the University of Oxford, and four native speaker colleagues specializing in Romanian morphology. It provides a resource that, the Preface notes, had yet to exist: a book-length compendium devoted exclusively to the history of Romanian morphology. The emphasis is indeed morphology, i.e., form, but usage and grammatical meaning, dialectal as well as standard, are not ignored. The chapters in order of occurrence are: introduction, nouns and adjectives, pronominal and indefinite structures, determiners and the deictic system, possessives, the verb, word formation in diachrony, and conclusion. Since full consideration of a book so broad is impossible in a short review, I will limit myself first to several points of organization, and thereafter to several comments on substance.

The organization of a comprehensive and detailed grammatical reference such as this is challenging, and there will be differences of opinion relating to the organization which maximizes accessibility, mentioned as a concern in the Preface (xiii). To this end, the authors proceeded from the generally held view that the presentation must be sectioned rather than continuous. Nevertheless, if the expected emphasis in sectioning is an established and cohesive basis, this book may not accommodate all readers. The primary organization can be seen as *derivation* (Chapter 7) versus *inflection* (the preceding chapters), and, therefore, a division familiar to morphologists. However, within inflection, as reflected in chapter headings, we find not only the familiar organization in terms of part of speech (Chapter 2 treating nouns and adjectives), but further organization in terms of relevant morphosyntactic and grammatical properties (Chapter 4 treating determiners and deixis, with determiners, it should be noted, exhibiting agreement, and thus arguable as an independent part of speech because they behave like adjectives). Nor are the chapter contents organized as uniformly as they might have been; e.g., Sections 2 and 6, treating major parts of speech, could have benefitted from familiar diachronically and synchronically relevant headings such as overview, paradigmatic structure, allomorphic and generative relationships, morphosyntactic matters, analogical innovations, etc. This would have created a modicum of uniformity and resulting accessibility. Perhaps, alternatively, a layered four-way division would have been best for readers of this book, especially newcomers to the subject matter: a primary layer opposing inflection to derivation with each treating morphemic composition and relevant grammatical meaning, followed by a secondary layer within each treating morphophonemics and morphosyntax, i.e., realization. As an accompaniment to the survey of alternations provided by the authors (pp. 9–18), an introductory sketch of the morphology adopted for Old Romanian and the contemporary standard language would also have enhanced accessibility.

With regard to substance, we find a minimum of theoretical underpinning. There is no evi-

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