

ALEKSANDR PUSHKIN



EUGENE
ONEGIN

A Novel in Verse



Translated by
VLADIMIR NABOKOV

VOLUME II
Commentary and Index

BOLLINGEN SERIES LXXII



Eugene Onegin

A NOVEL IN VERSE BY Aleksandr Pushkin
TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN, WITH
A COMMENTARY, BY Vladimir Nabokov

IN FOUR VOLUMES

2

Commentary on Preliminaries
and Chapters One to Five



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Method of Transliteration

Except when otherwise stated, I have followed in all my transcriptions of Russian texts the new spelling adopted in Russia after the Revolution. The reform did not affect, or at least was not supposed to affect, anything in the pronunciation. Its main object was to get rid of certain superfluous ornamental letters. Thus (to mention a few of the changes), it retained only one of the vowels, identically pronounced but differently spelled, corresponding to the English *e* in "yes"; abolished the so-called "hard sign" that used to follow all nonpalatalized consonants at the end of words; and substituted for the nonaccented *a* in the *ago* of genitive endings (pronounced like the *a* in the *ava* of *Cavalleria*) an *o*, which, being unaccented, is pronounced, or should be pronounced, exactly like the *a* it replaces. Below is a table of the transliterations used in the present work.

<i>Russian</i>			
<i>Character</i>	<i>Transliterated</i>		PRONOUNCED
А а	a		Like the Italian <i>a</i> . Resembles the <i>a</i> of "art" (never pronounced as in "man" or "male").
Б б	b		As in "Byron." Exceptions: medial <i>b</i> before a voiceless consonant and final <i>b</i> tending to <i>p</i> . Thus <i>próbka</i> , "cork," rhymes with <i>knópka</i> , "tack,"

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Russian Character	Transliterated	PRONOUNCED
		and <i>lob</i> , "forehead," rhymes with <i>pop</i> , "priest" (but <i>volshébnno</i> , "magically," and <i>velikolépno</i> , "splendidly," do not rhyme).
В в	v	As in "Victoria." Exceptions: medial <i>v</i> before a voiceless consonant and final <i>v</i> tending to <i>f</i> . Thus <i>bulávka</i> , "pin," rhymes with "Kafka," and <i>nрав</i> , "temper," rhymes with <i>telegráf</i> (but <i>svoenrávnïy</i> , "capricious," and <i>telegráfnïy</i> , "telegraphic," do not rhyme).
Г г	g	As the hard <i>g</i> of "go" (never as in "gentle" and never mute before <i>n</i>). Exceptions: medial <i>g</i> before a voiceless consonant and, in a few words, final <i>g</i> tending to aspirated <i>h</i> as in <i>myágkiy</i> , "soft," and <i>bog</i> , "god." Otherwise, final <i>g</i> tends to <i>k</i> . Thus <i>rog</i> , "horn," rhymes with <i>urók</i> , "lesson." In terminations of adjectives and pronouns in the genitive singular, <i>g</i> is pronounced <i>v</i> . Thus <i>nemógo</i> , "of the mute," rhymes with <i>slóvo</i> , "word."
Д д	d	As in "Dante." Exceptions: medial <i>d</i> before a voiceless consonant and final <i>d</i> tending to <i>t</i> . Thus <i>vódka</i> rhymes with <i>glótka</i> , "throat," and <i>sled</i> , "trace," with <i>let</i> , "of years" (but <i>ládno</i> , "all right," does not rhyme with <i>besplátno</i> , "gratis").
Е е	e	As <i>ye</i> in "yellow."
Ë ë	yo	As <i>yo</i> in "yonder" (never as in "yoke").
Ж ж	zh	As <i>s</i> in "measure" or <i>z</i> in "azure" (never as in "zeal") and as the French <i>j</i> in "Jacques" or the second <i>g</i> in

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Russian Character	Transliterated	PRONOUNCED
		“garage.” Exceptions: medial <i>zh</i> before a voiceless consonant and final <i>zh</i> tending to <i>sh</i> . Thus <i>lózshka</i> , “spoon,” rhymes with <i>kóshka</i> , “cat,” and <i>krazh</i> , “of thefts,” rhymes with <i>karandásh</i> , “pencil” (but <i>lózshnĭy</i> , “false,” does not rhyme with <i>ros-kóshnĭy</i> , “luxurious”).
З з	z	As in “zebra” (never as in “mezzo-soprano” or “azure”). Exceptions: medial <i>z</i> before a voiceless consonant and final <i>z</i> tending to <i>s</i> . Thus <i>skázka</i> , “fairy tale,” rhymes with <i>láska</i> , “caress,” and <i>glaz</i> , “eye,” with <i>nas</i> , “us” (but <i>ráznĭy</i> , “different,” does not rhyme with <i>prekrásnĭy</i> , “beautiful”).
И и		As the first <i>e</i> in “scene” (never as <i>i</i> in “mine”), but as <i>i</i> (see p. xxi) after the three letters <i>zh</i> , <i>ts</i> , and <i>sh</i> .*
Й й	-y	A semivowel existing only in diphthongs: thus <i>táyna</i> , “mystery,” in which <i>ay</i> is like an English long <i>i</i> or, more exactly, the French <i>aille</i> ; <i>ey</i> , “to her,” which sounds like the end of a long-drawn English “away!” in the mist and the distance; very close to the French <i>eille</i> ; <i>kiy</i> , “billiard cue,” in which <i>iy</i> is like the French <i>ille</i> in <i>quille</i> ;

*In Pushkin’s time, and generally before the new orthography was introduced (in 1918), И, when preceding a vowel, was replaced by the identically pronounced і. There were also other differences: thus *e* was written as ѣ in a number of words (this letter, although pronounced exactly as *e*, I have transliterated by *ye* whenever the necessity to mention it arose, for the sake of differentiation), and words terminating in consonants had the useless “hard sign,” Ъ, affixed at the end. When medial, it acts as a medial Ъ (see further) and is marked thus, ’.

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Russian Character	Transliterated	PRONOUNCED
		<p><i>boy</i>, "battle," in which <i>oy</i> sounds like the <i>oy</i> in the English "boy" (in which, however, the <i>o</i> has greater duration and the <i>y</i> is not so strident);</p> <p><i>duy</i>, "blow" (imperative), in which <i>uy</i> sounds like the French <i>ouille</i> as in <i>andouille</i>; and</p> <p>-<i>iy</i>, the ending of adjectives (masc. sing.), which sounds like the French <i>œil</i>.</p>
К к	k	As in English, but never mute before <i>n</i> .
Л л	l	} As in English.
М м	m	
Н н	n	
О о	o	Like the Italian <i>o</i> ; close to the first <i>o</i> in "cosmos" when accented and close to the second <i>o</i> when not (never as in "go"). In Moscow speech the unaccented <i>o</i> (as, for example, in <i>Moskva</i>) is pronounced in a manner about as "ah"-like as the accented <i>o</i> in New York English ("jahb," "stahp"). In ordinary good Russian the unaccented <i>o</i> (as, for example, in <i>koróva</i> , "cow") is pronounced like the final <i>a</i> , which sounds like the ultima of "Eva."
П п	p	As in English, but never mute before <i>n</i> or <i>s</i> .
Р р	r	A clean, clear vibration that is closer to the Italian than to the English (never amplifying the preceding vowel as it does sometimes in English). When burred (by old-fashioned Peterburgians), it is undistinguishable from a French <i>r</i> and then very annoying to the Moscow ear.

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<i>Russian</i> Character	<i>Transliterated</i>	PRONOUNCED
С с	s	Like the first <i>c</i> in "cicada" (never like the second).
Т т	t	As in "Tom" (but never as in "ritual" or "nation").
У у	u	As <i>oo</i> in "boom." Similar to the French <i>ou</i> (never as the <i>u</i> of "buff" or of "flute").
Ф ф	f	As in English.
Х х	h or kh	Close to <i>ch</i> in the German <i>ach</i> or the Scottish "loch." There is no <i>k</i> sound about it, as the usual <i>kh</i> transliteration unfortunately suggests to the English eye. I have used <i>kh</i> only in one or two cases when <i>s</i> precedes it (for example, <i>skhodll</i> , "descended"), to avoid confusion with <i>sh</i> .
Ц ц	ts	As <i>ts</i> in "tsetse" or the German <i>z</i> in <i>Zermatt</i> . It should be observed, however, that in many words such as <i>otsyúda</i> , "from here," in which <i>ot</i> is a prefix, <i>kázhetsya</i> , "it seems," in which <i>sya</i> is the suffix, and <i>détskiy</i> , "childish," in which <i>skiy</i> is the suffix, the transcription <i>ts</i> corresponds to these two separate letters in Russian.
Ч ч	ch	As in English.
Ш ш	sh	As in English.
Щ щ	shch	A fusion of sibilants that can be imitated in English by such combinations as "fish chowder," "cash check," "hush child," "plush chair," and so forth.
Ы ы	ï	A medial or final nonpalatal vowel pronounced as a very blunt, short <i>i</i> by trying to say <i>ee</i> while keeping the tensed tongue back so as not to touch

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<i>Russian</i>	<i>Character Transliterated</i>	PRONOUNCED
		the inner side of the lower teeth, as it would do in a palatal vowel. The result is a kind of cross between a dull short <i>i</i> and a grunt. (The character chosen to represent this difficult letter should not be mistaken for the sharp French <i>ï</i> bearing the same diacritical sign, as in <i>naïf</i> .)
Э э	e	As in "Edinburgh." Apart from foreign words and geographical names, it is found only in <i>étot</i> , "this," and its derivations and in a few interjections such as <i>e</i> , <i>ey</i> , <i>eh</i> , and so forth.
Ю ю	yu	As <i>u</i> in "use" but of less duration.
Я я	ya	As in the German <i>ya</i> .
Ь ь	'	A palatal sign modifying (softening) the preceding consonant, so that <i>t</i> ' sounds somewhat like <i>ts</i> , <i>d</i> ' like <i>tz</i> , and so on. A usual termination of infinitives (<i>govort'</i> , "to speak"; <i>pet'</i> , "to sing"; <i>pisát'</i> , "to write"). When placed after a medial letter it indicates not only palatization but also a very slight pause. Thus the <i>n'e</i> of <i>pen'e</i> is like the <i>nié</i> of the French <i>dernièrement</i> . Consequently <i>Il'ya</i> , "Elijah," sounds very like the French <i>il y a</i> pronounced rapidly.

Although rigid consistency would require that in transliteration all Russian names ending in *нѣ* should end in *iy* (such as surnames—e.g., Vyazemskiy—and first names—e.g., Grigoriy—as well as the names of avenues, lanes, and boulevards, all of which are masculine in Russian), I have had to make certain concessions to accepted spellings as given in works of reference.

All surnames lose the *y* after the *i* in transliteration (e.g., Vyazemski). All first names retain the *y* (e.g.,

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Grigoriy), except in the case of one or two Russian names that have lost it in English usage (e.g., Dmitri instead of Dmitriy). The same goes for the names of boulevards, avenues, and lanes, except in the case of the Nevski, or Nevski Avenue (instead of Nevskiy). The word "street," *ulitsa*, is feminine in Russian, and the feminine ending of the adjective to it is completely transliterated in English (e.g., Morskaya Street). All names ending in оѣ (Shahovskoy, Bolshoy) retain the *y* in transliteration.

Except for the surnames of female performers, such as dancers, singers, actresses, and so on, which traditionally retain these feminine endings (Istomina, Pavlova), all feminine surnames, although ending in *a* in Russian, take a masculine ending in transliteration (Anna Sidorov, Anna Karenin, Princess Vyazemski).

I omit the soft sign in Russian names (Bolshoy instead of Bol'shoy, Olga instead of Ol'ga, Gogol instead of Gogol'), unless such names appear in lines of Russian or in other phrases that require exact transliteration in my Commentary.

Not a few Russians have German surnames, and there occur borderline cases in which a transliteration is preferred to the German original. But, generally speaking, I use the simple German spelling of such names whenever this does not clash with tradition (thus, Kùchelbecker instead of Kyuhel'beker).

No accents are used in Russian, but I use them to indicate the correct stress whenever it might help the reader in scanning a verse.

In capitalizing the first word of each line when quoting verse, given that it is capitalized in the original, I have adhered to the following principles: it is capitalized in translations when the lines render exactly the form of the original, including rhymes and rhyme pattern; it is also capitalized in lines that are metrically faithful translations of blank verse or rhymeless dactylic hexameters.

Calendar

The Julian calendar (Old Style), introduced by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. and adopted by the First Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, was used in Russia up to the Revolution of 1917. The Gregorian calendar (New Style), now in general use, was introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. The date October 5, 1582, was called October 15, 1582; thus ten days were dropped. In Great Britain, however, the Old Style lasted till 1752, when, in September, eleven days were dropped.

The years 1700 and 1800 were not leap years by the Gregorian rules (whereas 1600, being divisible by 400, was); therefore, the difference between the two calendars was increased in each of those years by one day, bringing it to eleven days from 1700 to 1800, twelve from 1800 to 1900, and thirteen from 1900 to 1917. Thus the middle of July in Russia would be the end of July elsewhere, while January 12, 1799, and January 13, 1800, in the world at large would both be New Year's Day in Russia.

In the present work all dates pertaining to events in Russia are Old Style unless stated otherwise. Dates pertaining to events in the rest of the world are New Style. When there exists a possibility of confusion, both styles are given thus: 1/13 January.

Abbreviations and Symbols

- Acad 1937 A. S. Pushkin. *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* (Complete Collected Works), vol. VI, ed. B. Tomashevski. Akademiya nauk SSSR (U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences), Leningrad, 1937. (The so-called "akademicheskoe izdanie," or academic edition.)
- Acad 1938 A. S. Pushkin. *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* (Complete Collected Works), vol. XIII, ed. M. A. Tsyavlovski. Akademiya nauk SSSR (U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences), Leningrad, 1938. (The so-called "akademicheskoe izdanie," or academic edition.)
- Acad 1948 A. S. Pushkin. *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* (Complete Collected Works), vol. V, ed. S. M. Bondi. Akademiya nauk SSSR (U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences), Moscow and Leningrad, 1948. (The so-called "akademicheskoe izdanie," or academic edition.)
- EO *Eugene Onegin.*
- Lit. nasl. *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* (Literary Heritage), nos. 16–18. Moscow, 1934.
- MA Moscow Central Archives.
- MB Lenin Public Library, Moscow.
- PB St. Petersburg, later Leningrad, Public Library.
- PD Pushkinskiy Dom (Pushkin House), Leningrad.

Abbreviations and Symbols

- P. i ego sovr.* *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki* (Pushkin and His Contemporaries), nos. 1-39. St. Petersburg, 1903-30.
- Vremennik* *Vremennik Pushkinskoy komissii* (Annals of the Pushkin Commission), vols. I-VI. Moscow, 1936-41.
- Works 1936* A. S. Pushkin. *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* (Complete Collected Works), ed. Yu. G. Oksman, M. A. Tsyavlovski, and G. O. Vinokur. Akademiya nauk SSSR (U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences), Moscow and Leningrad, 1936. 6 vols.
- Works 1949* A. S. Pushkin. *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* (Complete Collected Works), vol. V, ed. B. Tomashevski. Akademiya nauk SSSR (U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences), Moscow and Leningrad, 1949.
- Works 1957* A. S. Pushkin. *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* (Complete Collected Works), vol. V, ed. B. Tomashevski. Akademiya nauk SSSR (U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences), Moscow, 1957.
- [] Translator's interpolations.
- < > Canceled readings.

COMMENTARY TO *EUGENE ONEGIN*

Foreword

The following commentary consists of a series of notes to the whole of *EO*, including rejected stanzas and variants preserved in Pushkin's cahiers as well as projected continuations. Among these comments, the reader will find remarks on various textual, lexical, biographical, and local matters. Numerous instances of Pushkin's creative indebtedness are pointed out, and an attempt has been made, by a discussion of the actual melody of this or that line, to explain the enchantment of his poetry. Most of my notes are the result of original research, or amplify and continue research done by others, but in some cases they reflect a background of anonymous knowledge shared by all Russian lovers of Pushkin.

The four "English," "metrical" "translations" mentioned in my notes and unfortunately available to students are *Eugene Onéguine*, tr. Lt.-Col. Henry Spalding (London, 1881); *Eugene Oegin*, tr. Babette Deutsch, in *The Works of Alexander Pushkin*, ed. A. Yarmolinsky (New York, 1936 and 1943); *Evgeny Onegin*, tr. Oliver Elton (London 1937; also published serially in *The Slavonic Review*, Jan., 1936–Jan., 1938); and *Eugene Onegin*, tr. Dorothea Prall Radin and George Z. Patrick (Berkeley, Cal., 1937).