

sentiment but also involved deep worries about the future of diaspora Jewry, Brenner also powerfully demonstrates that beneath their polemical certainty, several of the most uncompromising Palestine Hebraists nurtured a complex literary relationship to the legacy of Jewish bilingualism. The pioneering Hebrew modernist Avraham Shlonsky's most famous poem-cycle recast the son-figure of Genesis as a socialist-Zionist manual laborer; in its bold leap across the temporal-cultural chasm between ancient Israel and modern Palestine, the poem has seemed to many a lapidary example of Zionist-Hebraist "negation of the diaspora." Brenner shows that the poem actually encodes a complex affective relationship to Yiddish in its loving embrace of the poet-figure's parents, who are simultaneously Biblical patriarchs and the poet's own Russian-Jewish parents. Brenner also notes, slyly and powerfully, that this incorporative rather than fully negating relationship to the parents' language was the norm of Hebrew literature in the 1930s.

Finally, Chapter 4 takes up the "terminal" relationship between Hebrew and Yiddish at the moment of a final double rupture within Jewish life: the birth of a fully Hebrew Jewish society in Palestine-then-Israel, and the destruction of east European Jewry. Focusing on series of translation projects from Yiddish into Hebrew in the US and (more significantly) in Palestine and then Israel, Brenner shows us the birth of our own age of Jewish culture: with the language war finished, European Jewry devastated, and a new Hebrew national culture in place, the question now became what could be salvaged from a devastated European Yiddish culture in an age of Jewish monolingualism.

Lingering Bilingualism is a must-read for scholars of Hebrew and Yiddish culture and of Jewish cultural history. The book also makes a substantial contribution to the field of translation theory by presenting a powerful counterexample to the presumption that all linguistic translation is necessarily cultural translation as well. Given that this review appears in *Slavic Review*, it must be acknowledged that there is nothing particularly "Slavic" about the work. Perhaps this itself is a contribution. Slavic studies has shown welcome attention to Hebrew and Yiddish culture in recent years, but also tends to read those transregional cultures as regional ones. Brenner shows us a case of a cultural field born in "Slavic" territory that emancipated itself completely from its regional origins, and reminds us that while there are important Russian and Polish stories to tell about modern Jewish culture, many—and perhaps most—of the most important stories about modern Jewish culture are neither.

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Hard Times: A Novel of Liberals and Radicals in 1860s Russia. By Vasily Sleptsov. Trans. Michael R. Katz. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016. xxii, 193 pp. Notes. Bibliography. \$19.95, paper.
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All teachers of Russian literature in translation owe a great debt to Michael R. Katz for his readable translation of one of the most important works of nineteenth-century Russian literature, Nikolai Chernyshevskii's *What Is To Be Done?* (Cornell University Press, 1989). Vasilii Sleptsov's *Hard Times* (1865) did not have the same lasting impact as Chernyshevskii's 1863 work, but it is an illuminating snapshot of gentry and peasant life in the immediate post-Emancipation period. Sleptsov, who is perhaps best known for founding a short-lived commune in St. Petersburg, seems



to have had a clear ideological agenda in writing his novel, which discredits the path of gradual reform in Russia. A cynical, disillusioned man named Riazanov comes to visit his university friend Shchetinin on his estate, and observes his attempts to cope with the new institutions created by the reform. Shchetinin's wife Mar'ia Nikolaevna, after listening to their debates, loses interest in the life of a dutiful housewife who treats the peasants' physical ailments; she toys with the idea of starting a school for the peasants, but gives it up when Riazanov makes its futility clear to her. She hopes to run off with Riazanov, but although he is drawn to her he declines to join her. At the end of the novel Riazanov leaves for parts unknown (it is hinted that he goes to Poland to join in the 1863 uprising), and Mar'ia Nikolaevna sets off, apparently for St. Petersburg, to find the "good people" (178), code for the radical intelligentsia.

Although Sleptsov shared Chernyshevskii's radical vision, his literary approach is quite different from Chernyshevskii's utopian narrative, providing instead a bleakly naturalistic, almost ethnographic description of life in the countryside (ethnography was among the numerous professions Sleptsov tried). Sleptsov seems either uninterested in or incapable of developing a compelling dramatic plot or psychologically detailed characters of the sort his great contemporaries Turgenev, Tolstoi, and Dostoevskii specialized in. But his very shortcomings lend his novel a certain appeal. Because there is no captivating story or truly sympathetic and believable characters, the sadness and boredom of gentry life in the countryside comes through more powerfully than in any other novel of the same period. The introduction by William C. Brumfield notes that Anton Chekhov praised Sleptsov to Maksim Gor'kii. Scenes in *Hard Times* of aimless, desultory conversation and time-wasting in a gentry parlor, and of squalor, child neglect, and cruelty in peasant huts have the ring of truth and anticipate both Chekhov's plays and his unsparing stories like "Muzhiki" (1897).

This novel presents enormous challenges to the translator. It makes constant use of peasant slang and locutions; even the narrator's voice has a folk-tale intonation. Many scenes revolve around the chaotic implementation of the reforms, and that chaos is reflected in the narrative and the dialogue. By 1865, with increased government surveillance and repression, a writer like Sleptsov had to be extremely careful (in fact, he was arrested the following year, after Dmitrii Karakozov's attempt on the life of Tsar Alexander II). So his radical hero, Riazanov, speaks in cryptic circumlocutions and complex metaphors. Katz does not make much of an effort to provide an equivalent for the slang, a decision that can be supported in view of the strangeness that a regional American or British dialect would lend the text. His translation comes down on the side of literalness, which causes more of a problem for the reader when it comes to scenes that involve the technical details of the peasant reform or Riazanov's coded hints. The translation would benefit from a more robust apparatus explaining the nature of the new institutions that are being satirized; without it, some of the scenes and conversations are difficult to follow. If the translation is, at it seems to be, aimed at a general audience, it might have been best to adopt a looser attitude to the original text and to incorporate more clarification into the translation itself, to avoid having to multiply footnotes or lengthen the introduction.

Minor works of literature can enrich and thicken our understanding of history and society. *Hard Times* would be a valuable text for any course dealing with the transformations of the 1860s in Russia.

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