

Two Centuries of Russian Verse

Translation and Notes

NOTES

by Colin J. Holcombe II

ocaso press 2023

Two Centuries
of Russian Poetry:
A Short Selection

Notes on Translations by
Colin John Holcombe
Ocaso Press 2023

Two Centuries of Russian Verse:

Notes on translations by Colin John Holcombe

© Ocaso Press 2023

Last Revised: May 2023

Published by Ocaso Press Ltda.

Santiago, Chile. All rights reserved.

Copyright applies to this work, but you are most welcome to download, read and distribute the material as a pdf ebook. You are not permitted to modify the ebook, claim it as your own, sell it on, or to financially profit in any way from its distribution.

CONTENTS

RUSSIAN VERSIFICATION	1
EXAMPLES AND INDIVIDUAL TRAITS	14
TRANSLATION MATTERS	23
COVERAGE	24
HISTORICAL CONTEXT	26
NOTES ON INDIVIDUAL TRANSLATIONS	33
Prokopovich: Faith	35
Kantemir: Satire One	36
Trediakovsky: Verses in Praise of Russia	39
Sumarokov: Fly, My Sighs	43
Lomonosov: Selections from Job	46
Lomonosov: Evening Meditation	
Lomonosov: On the Road to Peterhof	
Derzhavin: On the Death of Prince Meshchersky	59
Derzhavin: To Rulers and Judges	
Derzhavin: Felitsa (excerpt)	
Derzhavin: Waterfall (excerpt)	
Derzhavin: Life at Zvanka (excerpt)	
Karamsin: Autumn	70
Karamsin: Merry Hour	
Krylov: Quartet	73
Zhukovsky: Lalla Ruk	76

Zhukovsky: Singer	
Zhukovsky: Boatman	
Zhukovsky: Night	
Batyushkov: Farewell	84
Batyushkov: My Guardian Spirit	
Batyushkov: Shadow of a Friend	
Batyushkov: Madagascar Song	
Batyushkov: Youthful Days	
Pushkin: To Anna Kern	95
Pushkin: Distant Shores	
Pushkin: I Loved You	
Pushkin: Winter Morning	
Pushkin: Confession	
Pushkin: Caucasus	
Pushkin: Prophet	
Pushkin: Natalya's Letter	
Pushkin: Remembrance	
Pushkin: Gypsies (opening excerpt)	
Pushkin: Gypsies (concluding excerpt)	
Pushkin: Bronze Horseman	
Pushkin: Monument	
Baratynsky: Death	143
Baratynsky: Autumn	
Baratynsky: Spring has Come	
Baratynsky: Dissuasion	
Yazykov: Evening	151
Yazykov: The Rhine	
Koltsov: Song	154
Tyutchev: Spring Storm	156
Tyutchev: Autumn Evening	

Tyutchev: Winter's Put the Snow	
Tyutchev: Winter is the True Magician	
Tyutchev: I Love those Feral Eyes	
Tyutchev: A Golden Time I Have in Mind	
Tyutchev: As One That's Lost in Sleep	
Tyutchev: Last Love	
Tyutchev: On the Eve of the Anniversary	
Tyutchev: How Readily the Seas at Night Contrive	
Tyutchev: Why Do You Howl, O Night Wind Here?	
Tyutchev: Silentium	
Lermontov: Cossack Lullaby	181
Lermontov: Dream	
Lermontov: My Country	
Lermontov: New Year's Night	
Lermontov: Alone, I Look Out	
Lermontov: The Cliff	
Lermontov: The Sail	
Fet: Greetings	198
Fet: Steppe at Evening	
Fet: Storm in the Skies	
Fet: Clear and Golden	
Maikov: Haymaking	210
Polonsky: Blind Preacher	212
Tolstoy: Mary	215
Tolstoy: Troparion	
Tolstoy: Convicts	
Nekrasov: At the Entrance	222
Nekrasov: Pedlars	
Nekrasov: Home	
Nekrasov: Red-Nosed Frost (excerpt)	

Nekrasov: Who Can Be Happy in Russia

Balmont: Reeds

Balmont: Devil's Voice 241

Balmont: I Came

Bryusov: Huns 244

Bryusov: To the Poet

Sologub: Moistened Clay 249

Sologub: High Moon

Sologub: Lullaby

Hippius: Freedom 256

Bunin: Leaf Fall 259

Bunin: And Flowers and Bumblebees

Bunin: Sirius

Bunin: Morpheus

Esenin: My Native Land 269

Vasiliev: Natalya 272

Bely: To My Friends 275

Blok: Black Raven

Blok: Stormy Weather

Blok: Steps of the Commander

Blok: Unknown Woman

Blok: I Foresee You

Ivanov: Beauty's Nomads 295

Ivanov: Taormina

Ivanov: Transcende te ipsum

Annensky: Among the Worlds 302

Gumilev: Like the Wind 305

Gumilev: Gates of Paradise

Gumilev: Trees	
Kuzmin: Abandoned	314
Khodasevich: Monument	315
Akhmatova: Last Meeting	318
Akhmatova: All Is Traded	
Akhmatova: I Don't Ask	
Mandelstam: Silentium	325
Mandelstam: St. Sophia	
Mandelstam: Tristia	
Tsvetaeva: Jealousy	314
Tsvetaeva: Newspaper Readers	
Tsvetaeva: Poets	
Pasternak: February	345
Khlebnikov: Hunger	348
Mayakovsky: Our March	351

RUSSIAN VERSIFICATION

It is difficult to convey the flavour of Russian verse, but it is worth quoting Maurice Bowra's assessment:

'For poetry Russian is superbly fitted. Its rich and expressive syntax enables it to dispense with many artifices required by English. Its strong stress-accent allows it to fall easily into almost any kind of metre. Its varied and uncorrupted vowels, its abundance of liquid consonants, its combination of long and short words, its large vocabulary, its affectionate diminutives, all fit it for verse. It is rich in rhymes not merely single but double and even triple. It can have the monumental conciseness of Latin, the magnificence of English, the subtlety of French. The only language with which it may be compared in Greek, and to that it is inferior. For Greek has all the ease and fluency of Russian, all its adaptability and variety and expressiveness, but it is more muscular, more masculine. It rises without effort to sterner altitudes for which Russian is less fitted. But with this exception, Russian is perhaps of all European languages the most gifted by nature for poetry.'

He also remarked:

'When we come to Russian poetry from English or French or Italian, we feel at first that its tones are quieter, its colours more subdued, its subjects less adventurous, its range more limited. It is not merely that Russia has had no Renaissance, no Reformation, no Grand Siècle, nor that the centuries in which it was severed from Europe

deprived it of the historical development which created our own civilisation; it is that even in the nineteenth century the world revealed in Russian poetry is much quieter, much closer to common life, than we should expect in the age of Shelley and Hugo. . . Exaggeration, rhetoric, unfettered fancy, histrionic gestures, are not in the Russian tradition.'

Rhyme retains a key role, even in Modernist works. The position of the caesura (a pause in the syntax or logic of the sentence) can be a defining feature. Feminine lines (ending - u) are common, and the verse is more fluid and delicately patterned than strict English measures allow. There are indeed several systems of versification, reflecting the nature of the Russian language itself and the influence of foreign traditions (notably the German and Polish).

DETAILS

Lay of Igor's Conquest

Не лепо ли ны бяшет, братие, начяти старыми словесы
трудных повестий о полку Игореве, Игоря
Святославлича! Начати же ся той песни по былинамь
сего времени, а не по замышлению Бояню! {3}

(Is it not foolish for us, brethren, to begin in the manner of ancient lays the difficult stories about Igor's campaign, Igor the son of Svyatoslavich! rather let us begin this song in accordance with events of our own time, and not on the plan of Boyan!)

Byliny

Не бумажные листочки расстилаются,
Расстилается сын перед батюшкой,
Он и просит себе благословеньица:
«Ох ты, гой еси, родимый, милый батюшка! {4}

(Not a damp oak on the ground, / Not paper leaves
spread out, / The son is stretched out before the father, /
He asks for a blessing: / "Oh, you, dear father, dear
father of mine!)

Syllabic Verse

Syllable verse is based on the number of syllables in a line, no more than that. Unlike syllable verse in English, a twentieth century variety of free verse, syllabic verse was a brief eighteenth century phase that was superseded by the syllabo-tonic system that is still largely in use today.

Syllabo-Tonic

The syllabo-tonic system is superficially similar to our own sense of meter with its regular pattern of stressed (-) and unstressed (u) syllables. There are seven constituent 'feet' making up metre in Russian poetry:

Iambic: u -

Trochaic: - u

Dactylic: - u u

Amphibrachic: u - u (ternary metre)

Anapaestic: u u -

Pyrrhic: u u

Spondee: - -

All are used much more widely than is the case with us, where the iambic is the great workhorse of English poetry, generally in pentameters or tetrameters. Russian verse is more varied in line length and metre.

How a Russian word is stressed has to be learnt or looked up in the dictionary, however: it is not disclosed by simply inspecting the word. Russian words may or may not have a stressed syllable, but never have a secondary stress. One word, of whatever number of syllables, can therefore have no more than one syllable stressed. Our English word 'secondary', for example, carries a secondary stress on the third syllable: **se** con **da** ry. In Russian that would have to be **se** con da ry. In English we could write an acceptable tetrameter as: It **has** / a **sec** / on **da** / ry **stress**. But in Russian, at best, we could only write: It **has** / a **sec** / on da / ry **stress**. In fact many Russian words carry no inherent stress at all, so the same line in Russian might run as: It has / a sec / on da / ry **stress**. Just one syllable is stressed in the whole line.

It was to avoid such metrically shapeless lines that the convention arose of giving an unvoiced stress (accent in Nabokov's terminology) to syllables: It has / a **sec** / on **da** / ry stress, where only **sec** is heard on reading aloud. The others are 'sensed' or 'heard' only in the mind. But, however artificial the convention, there had to be rules. Only verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs could carry an

unvoiced stress, and then generally on the second syllable of the word. Prepositions and conjunctions couldn't carry an unvoiced stress, but personal pronouns could. To add to the complications, it was possible for lines to end with an unstressed syllable, the so-called feminine lines (- u). Such lines are very common in Russian verse, which has borrowed a convention from the Polish language, where most words end with an unstressed syllable. It was even possible for lines to end with two unstressed syllables (- u u), though they would generally have to rhyme. Those extra unstressed syllables do not change the terminology, however, and a tetrameter plus pyrrhic ending (u u), for example, is still counted as a tetrameter. Acceptable tetrameters can have 8, 9 or 10 syllables, therefore, and anything from 0 to 4 voiced stresses. That being the case, it is sometimes difficult to discern the metre immediately, but some lines in a poem will usually have their full complement of voiced stresses, and their metres will give the metre of the whole poem.

The tetrameter in this passage from Pushkin's *The Prophet* has a regular meter of 4 stresses to the alternate masculine and feminine lines, but the rhythm, — i.e. the stresses actually realized or voiced — is much more variable. Lines 1 and 2 have three stresses realized, and lines 3 and 4 have 2 stresses realised.

Духóвной жа́ждою томи́м,
В пусты́не мра́чной я влачи́лся,
И шестикры́лый серафи́м
На перепу́тье мне яви́лся.

(Languishing with spiritual thirst, / I dragged myself
through a gloomy desert, / And a six-winged seraph / I
came to at the crossroads.)

This trochaic tetrameter comes from Pasternak's *Hamlet*.

Гул затіх. Я вѣшел на подмѳстки.
Прислонясь к двернѳму косякѳ,
Я ловлю в далѳком отголѳске отголѳске
Что случітся на моѳм векѳ

(The rumble ceased. I went out on the stage. / Leaning
against the door jamb, / I catch in a distant echo / What
will happen in my time.)

Dactylic is the commonest of the ternary meters: Fet

Бѳря на нѳбе вечѳрнем
Мѳря сердітого шум —
Бѳря на мѳре и дѳмы,
Мнѳго мучітельных дум —

(The storm in the evening sky / Sea angry noise — /
Storm on the sea and thoughts, / Many painful thoughts
—)

This amphibrachic comes from Lermontov's *The Angel*

По нѳбу полунѳчи а́нгел летѳл,
И тѳхую пѳсню он пел;
И мѳсяц, и звѳзды, и тѳчи толпѳй
Внимали той пѳсне святѳй.

(In the middle of the night the angel flew, / And he sang a quiet song; / And the moon, and the stars, and the clouds by the crowd / We listened to that holy song.)

Blok's *To the Muse* provides this anapaestic:

Есть в напевах твоих сокровенных
Роковая о гибели весть.
Есть проклятье заветов священных,
Поругание счастья есть.

(There are in your tunes the secret / Fateful death of the message. / There is a curse of the covenants of the sacred, / The blasphemy is of happiness.)

Some further variation was allowed. Iambic lines could start with a spondee (- -). Some lines have stresses on the first and fourth syllables, an arrangement that Nabokov termed a 'tilt'. Most importantly, words that do have an inherently stressed syllable, however, must retain that stress when put together as verse: that inherent stress cannot be masked or lost by arranging words astutely.

Russian verse is therefore less regimented by metre than English. Conversely, rhyme is more important, strictly observed until recently, even by Revolutionary and Modernist poems. Rhyme needs a stressed vowel and adjacent consonant (but can be followed by one or two unstressed syllables that do not have to rhyme). Rhyme is based on sound, not letters, moreover, vowels

notwithstanding. The rules governing rhyme were also stricter at first, matching by parts of speech: a noun had to rhyme with another noun, for example. Such rules were relaxed in the nineteenth century, and consonant pairs (e.g. d/t) could also serve in rhymes if devoiced, but rhyme still had to make meaningful connections.

Clearly, the syllabo-tonic system is a convention, highly artificial, but one that has served well for two centuries of Russian poetry.

Accentual Verse

Accentual verse is defined on the number of realized stresses, i.e. regardless of the overall number of syllables. Most poets from the 18th century to the present used the syllabo-tonic system, but accentual verse also occurs, particularly in the 20th century. Dol'nik verse is a transitional form where accentual verse scans as syllabo-tonic. Blok's dol'nik can be very regular:

Крыльцо́ Её́ сло́вно па́перть.
Вхожу́ — и стиха́ет гроза́.
На столе́ — узо́рная скáтерть.
Прита́ились в углу́ образа́.

На лице́ Её́ — не́жный румя́нец,
Тишина́ озарённых те́ней.
В душе́ — кружа́щийся та́нец
Мо́их улетёвших дней.

(Her porch is like a church's porch. / I enter and the storm subsides. / On the table is a patterned tablecloth. / The icons lurk in the corner. // On Her face there is a gentle blush, / The silence of illuminated shadows. / In soul — a whirling dance / My days gone by.)

Though this may seem to have syllabo-tonic lines, there are difficulties in so reading it. Line 2 could be amphibrachic trimer (stresses on syllables 2,5 and 8) and lines 4 and 6 as anapaestic trimeter (stresses on syllables 3, 6 and 9). But none of the other lines fit this pattern, and it's best to simply count the stresses: it's accentual verse with some similarities to a syllabo-tonic form.

Rhymeless Verse

Rhyme is crucial to Russian verse: the so-called free verse, lines without rhyme, is a largely a late development. Nonetheless, there was also blank verse, used in the late 18th to early 19th century, where the lines do not rhyme, but where the caesura plays a leading role. Whatever its place in one line must be reproduced in all lines. In this example from Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* the caesura comes after the second foot:

Ещё одно, / последнее сказанье –
И летопись / окончена моя,
Исполнен долг, / завещанный от бога
Мне грешному. / Недаром многих лет
Свидетелем / господь меня поставил

И книжному / искусству вразумил;

(One more, last narration – / And the Chronicle is over, /
Duty fulfilled, bequeathed from God / I am a sinner. Not
for many years / Did he place me as a witness / And
enlightened me in the art of books;)

Other Aspects

Enjambment is more common in later Russian verse, and even stanzas may not wholly enclose the meaning.

Russian verse also uses a poetic diction, rather grand in 18th century verse when poets were court officials, and employed church Slavonicisms. French and polite society came to influence word choice in the nineteenth century, but diction could be close to the vernacular by the close of the century. Much depends on the poet and topic.

Nekrasov incorporated common words and expressions in his civic verse of social conscience, but Tyutchev employed a more elevated diction. Assonance and rhetoric is as common in Russian verse as English, but poets like Batyushkov could employ hiatus (similar conjoining vowels) to obtain melodious effects. The elaborate Russian case system allows a freer word order than is possible in English.

Russian words are generally pronounced as written, but, ignoring some complications, is also subject to these rules:

Stress is heavier than in English, and harder to predict. As

noted above, the stress pattern for a word has to be learnt or looked up in the dictionary. Different forms of the same word may have different stress patterns. Рука for 'hand' is stressed on the last syllable (ruka) , but the plural, Руки, is stressed on the first (ruki).

Hard and soft consonants sound quite different to the Russian ear, and the ъ and ь indications are usually transcribed, often as " and '. The letters е ё и ю я and ь make the preceding consonants soft, except when these preceding consonants are ж ц and ш, which are always kept hard (i.e. with no 'y' sound). The voiced consonants б в г д ж з turn into unvoiced equivalents consonants when appearing at the ends of words, and if they come immediately before an unvoiced consonant, i.e. к п с т ф х ц ч ш щ. The voiced consonants then sound as a p, f k t sh and s respectively. Similarly, the unvoiced consonants become voiced when appearing immediately before б г д ж or з.

Pronouns are read as though joined to the following word.

Pronunciation of the vowels о е and я changes according to whether are stressed or not. An unstressed о sounds like а. An unstressed е sounds like an unstressed и. The vowel я in the syllable before the stressed syllable also sounds rather like и.

Pronunciation varies a little with dialect, and several common words have simplified pronunciations. In the Moscow dialect, Что (what) is pronounced 'shto'. его (his) is pronounced yevo. Пожалуйста (please) is often

pronounced pa-zhal-sta. Здравствуйте (hello) is pronounced zdra-stvooy-tye. Сегодня (today) is pronounced sve-vod-nya. Радио is pronounced ra-dee-o because of foreign origin. And so on: this is only an introduction.

Poetry in the nineteenth century, particularly from the 1830s, was based on the Moscow pronunciation and so allowed a to rhyme with unstressed o, e to rhyme with и and unstressed я, and o to rhyme with ё. The identity of a o and ы after a stress in a close syllable was also accepted, but these are generally case endings. Hard and soft consonants could not rhyme. Nor could the rhyme be truncated (i.e. a word ending in a consonant could not rhyme with one ending in a vowel: взором does not rhyme with скопо).

Rhyming in the mid nineteenth century was generally more flexible, and the phonetic identity of vowels was only strictly observed when those vowels were stressed.

Modern poets, especially those writing after 1920, have been much more flexible, indeed versatile. Rhymes have been truncated, so that встречей will rhyme with вечер, for example. Feminine rhymes can end with different consonants: собан and добым. Rhymes have become closer to assonance, therefore, the more so with consonants than vowels. A few poets (but only a few, like Mayakovsky) have also rhymed words where the stress does not fall on the same syllable counted from the line end. In practice, this has produced two rhyme

combinations: dactylic + feminine and hyperdactylic + dactylic. Very occasionally, even the virtuoso, Mayakovsky altogether disregarded the final syllable. The result of this flexibility has been richness rather than disorder, however, especially in the possibilities for consonants before the stressed vowel. Many matches introduce a touch of humour, of course, and in that category is also the broken rhyme: интересней rhyming with сентябре с ней.

Unrhymed verse belongs to four categories:

1. Translations from German and English classics, especially plays.
2. Imitation of classical metres like the hexameter and elegiac couplets: never very popular.
3. Imitations of folk poetry, i.e. byliny and popular songs.
4. Occasional work by individual poets, e.g. Zhukovsky and Nekrasov (in *Who is Happy in Russia*).

Modern poets (Blok, Akhmatova and Kuzmin in particular) will also write lines where the stresses are more variably distributed, which turns verse into a rhythmic prose.

EXAMPLES AND INDIVIDUAL TRAITS: OVERVIEW

Russian verse is far too various to illustrate all its forms, but here are a few examples:

Vasily Trediakovsky spent his extravagant student days in Paris, but could still compose stirring patriotic pieces:

{15}

Россія мати! свет мой безмёрный!
Позвóль то, чáдо прошú твой вёрный,
Ах, как сиди́шь ты на трóне красно́!
Не́бо российску ты со́лнце я́сно!

(Mother Russia! my immeasurable light! / Allow me to ask, who am your faithful child / Oh, how you sit so well on the throne! For Russians you are the sun in the clear sky!)

Lomonosov's ode to the battle of Khotin is in the grand style: fairly regular and solemn:

Востóрг внеза́пный ум плени́л,
Ведёт на верх горы́ вы́сокой,
Где ветр в леса́х шумéть забы́л;
В доли́не тишина́ глубо́кой.

(The sudden delight captivated my mind / Conducts me to the peak of high mountains, / Where the wind has forgotten to make a noise / In the valley the silence is deep.)

Pushkin could write memorably in any style, here in the opening to his love poem 'Awakening': iambic dimeters, all faultlessly rhymed:

Мечты́, мечты́,
Где ва́ша сла́дость?
Где́ ты, где́ ты,
Ночна́я ра́дость?
Исчезнул он,
Весёлый сон,
И одино́кий
Во тьме глубо́кой

(Dreams dreams, / Where is your sweetness? / Where are you, where are you, / Night's joy? / It's gone / a happy dream / I am alone / In the darkness of the deep)

Batyushkov makes much use of hiatus, consecutive vowel sounds where (contra Nabokov above) syllables tend to be elided, yet with harmonious results:

От волн Улеи_и Байка́ла,
От Во́лги, До́на_и Днепра́,
От гра́да на́шего Петра́,
С верши́н Кавка́за и_Ура́ла!

(From the waves of Uleyi and Baikal, / From the Volga, the Don, and the Dnieper, / From the city of our Peter, / From the peaks of the Caucasus and the Urals!)

Lermontov's *Cossak Lullaby* is a stylised folk song:

Спи, младенец мой прекрасный,
Баюшки-баю.
Тихо смотрит месяц ясный
В колыбель твою.

(Sleep, my beautiful child, / Lullaby. / The bright moon
looks quietly / Into your cradle.)

Nikolay Nekrasov was very different: an easy fluency, and colloquialisms, prosaisms and vulgarisms of popular speech and folklore that were better used than by other poet in the 19th century. But rhymes can be somewhat approximate. He was also fond of ternary rhythms, which have great variety. Here the metre is fairly regular, though line 1 has a final pyrrhic, and first syllable in line 3 is accented, i.e. the line carries four accents.

Вот парадный подъезд. По торжественным дням,
Одержимый холопским недугом,
Целый город с каким-то испугом
Подъезжает к заветным дверям;

(Here is the main entrance. On solemn days, / Obsessed
with the slave's illness, /A whole city with some kind of
fright / He drives up to the cherished doors;)

Afanasy Fet's nature poems can be deceptively simple: plain description without verbs, pronouns, adverbs, elaborate syntax and grammatical complexities. The poetry works by repetition: rhythm, sounds and images. The rhymes are often over-emphatic:

Бúря на нéбе вечéрнем,
Мóря сердíтого шум —
Бúря на мóре и дúмы,
Мнóго мучíтельных дум

(A storm on the evening sky, / The noise of the angry sea
— / A storm on the sea and thoughts, / Many painful
thoughts)

Rather similar is Tyutchev's *These Poor Settlements*,
which are tetrameters employing nouns in nominative and
genitive cases and a complicated word order:

Эти бéдные селéнья,
Эта скúдная прирóда —
Край роднóй долготерпéнья,
Край ты рúсского нарóда!

(These poor villages, / This sparse nature — / The land of
native patience, / You realm of the Russian people!)

Vyacheslav Ivanov is often seen as the forefather of
Russian Symbolism:

Как óсенью ненáстной тлéет
Святáя óзимь — тáйно дух
Над чёрною могíлой рéет,
И тóлько душ легчáйших слух

(Just autumn rains smoulder / The holy winter — the
spirit secretly / Over the black grave, / And only the souls
of the lightest hearing)

Alexander Blok took many liberties with the standard iambic. {24} Lines 4 and 5 have all the stresses realized. In line 6 the first potential stress is unrealised; in line 2 the second potential stress is unrealised; in line 8 the third potential stress is unrealised. Line 1 begins with a spondee (- -), and 7 has a stress on syllables 1 and 4 (Nabokov's 'tilt'). begin with a stressed syllable

Ночь, у́лица, фона́рь, апте́ка,
Бессмы́сленный и ту́склый свет.
Живы́ ещё хоть че́тверть ве́ка —
Всё бу́дет так. Исхо́да нет.

Умрёшь — начнёшь опять́ снача́ла
И повторится́ всё, как встарь:
Ночь, ледяна́я рябь кана́ла,
Апте́ка, у́лица, фона́рь.

(Night, a street, a lantern, a pharmacy, / A senseless and dim light. / Live for another quarter century — / Everything will be this way. There is no way out. // If you die, you'll begin again from the start, / And everything will repeat as it did long ago: / The night, the icy ripple of a canal, / A pharmacy, a street, a lantern.)

The stress in line 1 of Mandelstam's first poem in his collection entitled Stone falls on the first syllable:

Звук осторо́жный и глухо́й
Плода́, сорва́вшегося с дре́ва,
Среди́ немóлчного напе́ва

Глубо́кой тишины́ лесно́й. . .

because important (Sound cautious and deaf) — it was in fact a personification of the poet himself. The full translations runs: A sound cautious and deaf / The fruit that fell from the tree / Among the unceasing melody / deep silence in the forest. . .

Mayakovsky could use a stressed verse where the unvoiced syllables could vary widely, leaving the reader somewhat bewildered by the patterning. In fact there are four accents to the line, if lines 1 and 2 are counted as a single line:

Вашу мысль,
мечтающую на размягченном мозгу,
как выжиревший лакей на засаленной кушетке,
буду дразнить об окровавленный сердца лоскут:
досыта изъиздеваюсь, нахальный и едкий.

(Your thought / dreaming of a softened brain, / like a servant run to fat on a greasy couch, / I will tease against the bloodied rag of my heart, / I, brash and caustic, am getting rid of satiety.)

Diction also varies considerably, from Tyutchev's *Day and Night*:

На мир таинственный духов,
Над этой бездной безымянной,
Покров наброшен златотканый
Высокой волею богов.

(On the world of mysterious spirits, / Above this
anonymous abyss, / A veil woven of gold is thrown / By
the high will of the gods.)

Pasternak's *Without a Name*:

Пошло слово любовь, ты права.
Я придумаю кличку иную.
Для тебя я весь мир, все слова,
Если хочешь, переименую.

(The word 'love' is banal, you are right. / I'll come with
another name. / For you I am the whole whole world, all
the worlds, / If you like, I'll rename it.)

Mandelstam often used an iambic hexameter in poems
about antiquity:

И мóре, и Гомéр - всё двíжется любóвью.
Когó же слúшать мне? И вот Гомéр молчít,
И мóре чёрное, витíйствуя, шумít
И с тяжким грóхотом подхóдит к изголóвью.

(And the sea and Homer — everything is moved by love. /
But whom shall I to listen to? And Homer is silent / And
the Black Sea, in motion, makes noise / And with a heavy
crash approaches the head.)

Anna Akhmatova's *I Don't Ask For Love* carried on a long
tradition of lost love in this apparently artless piece, so
naturally that it seems autobiographical:

Я не любви́ твоёй прошу́.
Она́ тепе́рь в надёжном ме́сте.
Пове́рь, что я твоёй неvéсте
Ревни́вых пи́сем не пишу́.

(I don't ask for your love. / It's now in a safe place. /
Imagine me as your fiancée / I don't write jealous letters.)

Marina Tsvetaeva's *An Attempt at Jealousy* is much less
accepting, and the verse less regular:

Как живётся вам с друго́ю, —
Проще ведь? — Уда́р весла́ ! —
Ли́нией береговóю
Скóро ль па́мять отошла́

(How's life with another woman, — / Easier, after all? —
Beat the oars! — / Along the shore-line / Soon the
memory's gone)

In Paris, as poster-boy for the new Soviet regime,
Vladimir Mayakovsky wrote of his homesickness for
mother Russia:

В автó,
последний франк разменя́в.
— В котóром часу́ на Марсэль? —
Пари́ж
 бежи́т,
 провожа́я меня́,
во всей

невозможной красе́.

(In the car, / the last franc is exchanged. / 'What time is the last train to Marseilles?' / Paris runs / seeing me off, / in all / its impossible beauty.)

TRANSLATION MATTERS

The anthology had three aims. First was to create faithful translations of Russian poems that read as acceptable poems in their own right, i.e. were not too obviously a translation from something better. Second was to respect the form of the originals, duplicating the rhyme schemes and stanza shapes of the Russian. Third was to render the individual poet's voices, which differ quite markedly, particularly after the Golden Age.

Russian verse of the period covered by the anthology, i.e. up to 1935, was rather formal. Even the revolutionaries ensured their poems rhymed, and though they experimented with syntax and other matters — were indeed enabled to do so by the close-structured and formal nature of Russian poetry — the results were never like our contemporary free verse. To do so, to follow the dictates of Modernist translation, is to strip Russian poetry of its essential character.

Two other expectations should be mentioned. First is the feminine rhyme, which I translate when appropriate, when it adds something positive to the translation, and not as a matter of unyielding principal. The feminine rhyme is difficult to reproduce convincingly in English, without the rendering appearing inept, comic or contrived.

Second are the varied Russian metres, which I have generally converted to the English iambic. What is natural in one language isn't necessarily so in another, and metre

duplication, when it can be achieved at all, commonly produces quite different connotations.

COVERAGE

I have not covered Russian poetry after 1935 because it's not generally poetry in the fully accepted meaning of the word, i.e. something carrying a strong emotive meaning, a clear aesthetic shaping and transcendental values. The last is hardly to be expected in Communist regimes, and is largely missing from Modernism anyway. But the real difficulty is the lack of a fully stand-alone meaning that can be extracted from the Russian and then recreated in English. In the earlier poetry we respond to the content, which we expect to be further shaped and enhanced by its expression. In the later poetry the content is more prosaic, arbitrary and elusive, often being simply part of its expression. The retreat into a complexity was no doubt wise given the political horrors of the times, but that matrix, on which later Russian poetry depends, is not easily reproduced in the very different language and mindset of English verse. Thus, whereas the poems of Pushkin will always make good translations, the work of later poets often will not. Even the selected renderings in this short anthology gradually become less successful as poems as we turn to the nineteen tens and twenties.

Readers may wish to consult anthologies like *Modern Russian Poetry* (Markov and Sparks: Bobbs Merrill, 1976) and *The Penguin Book of Russian Poetry* (Chandler et al., Penguin Books, 2015) to see the matter in detail. One problem is the usual difficulty of all poetry translation,

that of bringing the poetry across. Many of the translations in both volumes are into verse, and good verse at that, but the verse commonly lacks that extra magic needed to go one step further and turn verse into poetry. As in Modernism generally, Russian poets succeeded in expanding the themes and styles of poetry, but the result could be a rather indigestible hodgepodge of novelties. The skills and intelligence exhibited in both anthologies are not in doubt, therefore, but they operate against such difficulties that I do not myself find much compelling poetry to enjoy. Readers may think differently, of course, and both books were winners of the coveted PEN award.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A nation's literature cannot be understood without knowing something of its history — its cultural traditions, the make-up of its classes, institutions and social aspirations. Russia began in the city states of the Ukraine — Kiev, Novgorod and Vladimir, with their complex religious and cultural inheritance from Byzantium — but these were overrun in the 13th century by the Mongols, who plunged the country into centuries of backwardness. The Grand Duchy of Moscow began its pre-eminence by acting as tax collectors for the Golden Horde, but a succession of strong-willed, indeed tyrannical, tsars gradually expanded the state and gained increasing independence from their Muslim rulers. Russia's turn towards the west began with Peter I, who imported ideas, technologies and experts from Europe. Autocratic and centralising tsars — Anna and particularly Catherine the Great — continued those westernising trends, and pushed Russian control eastwards over the fraying medieval Muslim states of central Asia. By the mid-19th century, Russian rule stretched unbroken to the Pacific, but control was still tenuous and sometimes contested.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: PRIOR TO 19th CENTURY

Russia was a patrimonial empire, which the Romanovs ruled through families they ennobled, and from whom they expected wise counsel and loyal service — a system that depended much on the tsar's character and competence. In essence, the empire was the tsars' to govern without laws or parliaments, guided only by their

conscience before God. In practice, much in Russia went its own local ways, with officialdom barely reaching into the countryside. Church and local communes retained their inveterate and sometimes barbaric customs, and were worlds apart from the court, city life, the fledgling professions and industry.

Much had been reformed by Peter I (ruled 1682–1725), who was rightly called the Great. By sheer force of will, this giant of a man had turned a vast but poor and backward country into a world power. He created a strong navy, reorganized its army on Western lines, secularised schools, administered greater control over the reactionary Orthodox Church, and introduced new administrative and territorial divisions. He acquired territory in Estonia, Latvia and Finland, and through several wars with Turkey secured access to the Black Sea. Most importantly, he established the city of St. Petersburg on the Neva River in 1712, and moved the capital there from its former location in Moscow. The city became Russia's 'window on Europe'.

Peter's rule could nonetheless be brutal and oppressive: his heavy taxes led to revolts, which were savagely put down. He married twice and had 11 children, many of whom died in infancy. The eldest son from his first marriage, Alexis, was convicted of high treason by his father and secretly executed. No heir was nominated, and short reigns followed Peter's death. The throne passed to Catherine I (1725–27), to Peter II, (1727–30), to Anna Ioannovna (1730–40) and to the infant Ivan IV (1740–41). With army support, Peter's second daughter,

Elizabeth (1741-62), then seized the throne and declared her own nephew as heir, the future Peter III (1762).

Elizabeth was a popular ruler. She was vivacious, outgoing and pretty, not only capable but cultivated, speaking French, German and Italian. With Peter's modernisation and building schemes she was intimately familiar, saw the country through the War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Year's War, encouraged the arts, and created the most splendid court in Europe. {4}

Catherine, who ousted her detested husband, Peter III, in the 1762 coup, did even better. Of all periods in Russia's history, the happiest was probably under this well-informed, hard-working and long-headed German princess. Catherine ruled through favourites and sometimes lovers, but these were patriots and highly talented: the generals Orlov, Potemkin, Suvorov and Rumyantsev, the admirals Greig and Ushakov, and many others who either performed suitably or were promptly replaced. Russia colonised Alaska, and through war obtained Crimea and territories along the Black and Azov Seas. {5}

Catherine, who diligently learned Russian and Russian customs, re-established the governorates, founded new towns and cities, and continued the reforms of Peter and Elizabeth. The economy and army still depended on serf labour, however, and their over-exploitation led to many uprisings, most seriously in the Pugachev Rebellion. Nonetheless and throughout, Catherine saw herself as patron of the arts, literature and education, expanding the

royal collections, re-landscaping palace grounds in European styles and bringing noted intellectuals and scientists to court. She corresponded with Voltaire and Diderot, and was indeed regarded as Europe's enlightened monarch. {5}

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: 19th CENTURY

Alexander intended social reform when he came to the throne in 1801, but these hopes were frustrated by the Napoleonic Wars and the nature of Russia: its vastness, backwardness and the sheer inertia of officialdom. Alexander governed through ministries, but their officials were often divided between those who wanted a more centralised, stronger tsarist government and those who sought to have power more devolved in the European manner. Alexander's victory over Napoleon won him immense prestige, but Russia had to fight Persia in 1826, Turkey in 1828–29, Poland in 1830–31, and the peoples of the Caucasus in the 1830s and 40s. Russia was unaffected by the widespread 1848 Revolutions but the 1853-56 Crimean War exposed fundamental weaknesses.

The bureaucracy increased steadily throughout the period, but officials were often badly trained and badly paid. Even minor decisions tended to be referred upwards to the tsar himself. Taxes were inadequate and not properly enforced; the nobility often escaped taxation altogether.

Trade and industry made slow progress, though mines in the Urals produced pig-iron and other areas were successfully devoted to cotton textiles and sugar refining.

The first railway appeared in 1851, though roads remained as bad as ever. The urban population grew substantially, and a few areas had the beginnings of a working class. Much of trade was in the hands of prosperous merchants, well protected by the government, and town inhabitants were otherwise small tradesmen and artisans, often with serfs living in town with their owners' permission as household servants or casual labourers.

The serfs were emancipated in 1861, but in a manner that pleased no one. Landowners in the rich agricultural south benefited from paid labour, but in northern areas emancipation left serfs worse off, and destroyed the livelihoods of the minor gentry. A four-tier system of schools from the primary to the university level was introduced in 1804, in theory open to all classes, but in practice it was the children of minor officials, small tradesmen, and priests who benefited, in time forming an intellectual elite. More democratic European ideals were curbed by censorship, which was applied to books and periodicals right through to the Revolution and beyond. Society was split between radicals and conservatives, the latter idealising the past, particularly the Church, which tended to uphold autocracy. Priests were not always well regarded, but most Russians, from aristocrats to the poorest serfs, were devoted to the Orthodox faith.

.

REVOLUTION

Bloody Sunday repression in 1905, the defeat in the Russo-Japanese of the same year, war weariness by 1917, the incompetence of the tsar and his ministries to even

supply the basic necessities of life made revolution inevitable. Large parts of the country had already become ungovernable, and the first 1917 Revolution, headed by Kerensky, was a largely popular movement. It urged the dissolution of the monarchy, but was otherwise only moderately socialist. As both vice chairman of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the Minister for Justice in the Provisional Government, formed by the Duma, Kerensky instituted basic civil liberties: freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and religion, universal suffrage; and equal rights for women. He subsequently became Minister for War, but his June offensive could not overcome basic weaknesses in the army and proved an unmitigated failure. Kerensky lost the support of both army and the socialists, and the Provisional Government was overthrown by the Bolsheviks in the October 1917 coup d'état.

The Bolsheviks had support in the industrialised areas of Moscow and St. Petersburg, but not the country at large. Though the 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk ceded large areas to Germany, it did end Russia's part in the war. Other measures were less popular: rule through revolutionary councils and the execution of the royal family. The succeeding Civil War (1918-23) brought hardship and deaths to millions, but, though the Red Army was intensely disliked, the opposing White Armies were no less brutal and offered only a continuation of non-democratic government. The New Economic Policies (1923-28), essentially a return to private enterprise, had to be conceded to an impoverished country, but the path

was then to further collectivisation, renationalisation and centralised planning.

All artists and intellectuals were subject to strict censorship in tsarist Russia, and difficulties increased under Communism. Poets fled abroad (Bunin, Tsvetaeva, Khodasevich), came to terms with the Revolution (Bely, Mayakovsky) or remained in opposition (Akhmatova, Pasternak). Poets were not generally persecuted: they were simply irrelevant to socialist plans. Many were nonetheless murdered (Gumilev, Vasiliev, Mandelstam) particularly in Stalin's Great Purges of 1935-6, when no one was safe from arbitrary arrest and execution.

NOTES ON INDIVIDUAL TRANSLATIONS

The full Russian text can be found online by searching either with the first line of the poem given below, or with the name of poet plus title of poem. Adding аудиозапись to the search terms will often yield audio recordings. Adding литературная критика or анализ will locate short critical articles, which non-Russian speakers can run through online translation services (e.g. Google translate, Yandex translate, DeepL.com, etc.) for an adequate rendering of the sense.

Good sources for Russian poems in Russian include:

1. Рейтинг стихотворений. <https://поэтика.рф/>
2. Стихи русских поэтов. <https://rupoem.ru/>
3. Русская поэзия. <http://russian-poetry.ru/>
4. СОВРЕМЕННАЯ РУССКАЯ ПОЭЗИЯ.
<http://modernpoetry.ru/>
5. With multiple renderings into English and other languages: reverses.com

There are many guides to Russian poetry: I have mostly used:

Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Poetry. (Alfred A: Knopf, 1926) 107-9/Vintage 1958). Very readable and still sound.

Bristol, E. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) Dry, but detailed, with a good bibliography.

Watchel, M. The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry (C.U.P., 2004) The 'nuts and bolts' of Russian verse.

Readers will also find these sites useful

1. Existing Web Resources - Russian and English.

<http://readrussia.org/resources/existing-web-resources-russian-and-english>

2. Maintaining Russian On Your Own: Reading.

<http://international.ucla.edu/russianflagship/article/131833>

3. Russian Language: Useful links.

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/mlac/russian/usefullinks/>

4. Russian stress marking tool: [russiagram](#).

5. Guide to Russian Pronunciation.

<http://masterrussian.com/blpron.shtml>

6. 5 Minute Russian Pronunciation Guide – Quick Intro.

<https://www.linguajunkie.com/russian/russian-pronunciation-guide>

7. Ultimate Russian Pronunciation Guide.

<https://www.russianpod101.com/lesson-library/ultimate-russian-pronunciation-guide/>

8. Силлабо-тоническое стихосложение.

<https://ru.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

Prokopovich: He who Puts his Trust in God

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Прокопович Феофан: Кто крепок, на бога уповая

Кто крепок, на бога уповая

Date: c.1730

The poem is written in syllabic verse, 10 syllables to the line, and rhymed AA BB CC, etc.

Кто кре́пок, на бо́га упова́я, 10А
той недви́жим смóтрит на вся зла́я; 10А
Ему́ ни в наро́де мяте́ж бе́дный, 10В
ни страше́н мучи́тель зверови́дный, 10В
Не страше́н из облак гром па́рящий, 10С
ни́же ветр, от ю́жных стран шумя́щий 10С

References

1. Прокопович Феофан Стихотворения (Prokopovich Feofan Poems). Russian [text](#).
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 23-41.
3. Bristol, 1991. 40.

Kantemir: Satire One

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Антиох Кантемир

Уме недозрелый, плод недолгой науки!

Date: 1729-39

The poem is written in syllabic verse, 13 syllable to the line and rhymed AA BB, etc.

Уме́ недозре́лый, плод не/до́лгой нау́ки! (13) A
Покóйся, не понужда́й / к пéру́ мой ру́ки: (13) A
Не писав летящи дни / века́ проводи́ти (13) B
Мо́жно, и сла́ву доста́ть, / хоть творцо́м не слы́ти. (13)
B
Веду́т к ней нетру́дные в наш / век пу́ти мно́ги, (13) C
На кото́рых сме́лые не / запну́тся но́ги; (13) C

Antioch Kantemir (1708-1744)

Prince Antioch Kantemir in his time — 1708-44 — was probably the most cultured man in Russia. He was born to wealthy nobility, soon became active in court circles and in 1730 was appointed Minister-Resident in London, transferring in 1738 to Paris, where he remained till his death in 1744. He kept up a lively correspondence with French men of letters, and composed, from 1729 to 1739 and for his private satisfaction, a series of well-known satires. Manuscripts

circulated among friends, but weren't formerly published until 1762 (though a French edition appeared earlier).

Written in the syllabic verse that was soon superseded, they are nonetheless Russia's first literature of the classical age: consciously realistic and literary. The satires were directed against the enemies of the Enlightenment, against those who supported the old prejudices of Moscow, or displayed the foppishness of the semi-educated Europeanised young nobles.

Though the language is racy and colloquial, considerably less bookish than Lomonosov's, the style was nonetheless antiquated when the satires were published. Even the opening Уме is in the old vocative case, and the писа́в of line three is the imperfective gerund.

The nine sisters referred to are the nine muses, goddesses and inventors of science, Jupiter and the Memory of their daughter, i.e. Clio, Urania, Euterpe, Eraton, Falia, Melpomene, Terpsichore, Calliope and Polymnia. Crito, used throughout the Satires, is a fictitious character, a man feigning reverence, ignorant and superstitious, who prefers the appearance of the law to the essence of it for his own self-interest.

References

1. Wachtel, M. The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry (CUP 2004) 17-8.
2. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 41-2.
3. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 46-8.
4. Prince Antiokh Kantemir. Satire I. On His Mind: On the

Scorners of Learning. Translated By Jeannette Eyre.
Slavonic [Review](#))

5. Satires A.D. Cantemir. Issues, style (in [English](#)).

6. Antioch Cantemir of satire. Letters (in [English](#))

7. Russian text and accompanying notes (in [Russian](#))

Trediakovsky: Verses in Praise of Russia

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Василий Тредиаковский: СТИХИ ПОХВАЛЬНЫЕ РОССИИ

Начну на флейте стихи печальны

Date: 1728

The poem is in syllabic verse, ten syllables to the line and nominally rhymed AABBC, etc. Such verse in Russian usually employs a feminine rhyme but, as will be noted, Trediakovsky doesn't distinguish between masculine and feminine rhymes. Nor do the natural stresses of words create any regular pattern. This is early Russian verse, simply governed by rhyme and syllable count:

1. Начnú на флэйте стихí печáльны, A (10)

Зря на Росси́ю чрез стра́ны да́льны: A (10)

Ибо всё днесь мне её доброты́ b (10)

Мы́слить умáм есть мно́го охóты. B (10)

2. Росси́я мати! свет мой безме́рный! C (10)

Позво́ль то, ча́до прошу́ твой ве́рный, C (10)

Ах, как сиди́шь ты на трóне красно́! d (10)

Не́бо российску ты со́лнце я́сно! D (10)

Vasily Trediakovsky (1703-69)

Vasily Trediakovsky was the son of a priest but wangled his way into the Slaviano-Greco-Latin Academy in Moscow, then to The Hague and finally to Paris, where he studied philosophy at the Sorbonne. Returning to Russia in 1730, Trediakovsky made his reputation with a translation of a 1663 novel by Paul Tallemant entitled *Voyage à l'isle d'amour*. Trediakovsky's *New and Short Method for the Composition of Russian Verse* appeared in 1735, and he became a professor at the Academy of Sciences in 1745. His last work was another translation, of Fénélon's *Les Aventures de Télémarque*, a utopian novel in which despotism was satirized: naturally, it was not well received at Catherine's court. {2-3}

Trediakovsky was the court poet of Anna's reign, a translator of French literature and an important theoretician of Russian versification. Trediakovsky's own work seems rather clumsy to us, and was anyway overshadowed by Lomonosov's.

Trediakovsky is still known for his patriotic odes on the Boileau model, however, which celebrated coronations and military battles, though he also wrote 'spiritual odes'. The poem illustrated is an early piece, based on Polish models and still written in syllabic verse, but Trediakovsky's *Composition* in fact argued for metrical verse, which his work helped to popularize. With other theoreticians — Lomonosov, Sumarokov and Kantemir — he managed to quarrel over the use of trochees, but Trediakovsky was the first to work out a complete genre system and give examples. {3}

It was Trediakovsky's concern for morality, most particularly the morality of government, that got him into trouble, as of course it did Derzhavin. He translated John Barclay's 1671 *Argentis*, for example, which criticizes the absolute monarchy of the sun king, but it was his *Fénélon* that really made his stay at Catherine's court untenable, though the attack skirmished on the translation's style and meter. In fact, the dactylotrochaic hexameter had been borrowed from the German poet Wilhelm Klopstock, who had invented it to mimic the classical meter. Metrical matters in 18th century Russian verse are far more complicated than this brief survey suggests. {3}

Verses in Praise of Russia was written in 1728, when Trediakovsky was a needy student living nonetheless in some style at Paris. It's a patriotic lyric, from someone who was much struck by the elegance of Parisian ways but nonetheless felt that his native country should not be forgotten. {1-2}

Trediakovsky's later work is more weighty, philosophical and moralistic. {3} It is not now popular but illustrates how far Russian verse was to travel to reach Pushkin's standards. The language here is elevated: sceptres and porphyry are symbols of power; miters refer to bishops; vivat is Latin for Long live!

References

1. Wachtel, M. *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry* (CUP 2004) 127-9.
2. Mirsky, D.S. *A History of Russian Literature* (Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 42-3.

3. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 48-52.
4. Analysis of Trediakovsky's Poem in Praise of Russia: in [Russian](#).

Sumarokov: Fly, My Sighs

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Александр Сумароков: ЛЕТИТЕ, МОИ ВЗДОХИ

Летите, мои вздохи, вы к той, кого люблю

Date: 1755

The poem is written in couplets, hexameters rhymed aa
bb cc dd:

Летите, мой вздохи, вы к той, когó люблю, ба
И горесть опишите, скажите, как терплю; ба
Останьтесь в ёя сёрдце, смягчите гордый взгляд бб
И после прилетите опять ко мне назад; бб
Но только принесите приятную мне весть, бс
Скажите, что ещё мне любить надежда есть. бс
Я нрав такой имёю, чтоб долго не вздыхать, бд
Хороших в свете много, другую лъзя сыскать бд

Alexander Petrovic Sumarokov (1718-1777)

With Lomonosov, Alexander Petrovic Sumarokov (1718-77) was the father of Russian poetry in the European manner. He was born into the Muscovite gentry, educated at the Cadet School in Petersburg, and, with French taste and polish so acquired, became the first Russian gentleman to choose the profession of letters.

Sumarokov wrote regularly: plays, satires, conventional love poems: a great mass of work. He also pioneered journalism and literary criticism, but his greatest gifts to Russian literature were metrical inventiveness and a genuine ear for melody

In this capacity, Sumarokov saw himself as inculcating the canons of classical good taste in Russia, exchanging letters with Voltaire, and becoming a second, Russian Boileau. With Lomonosov (though much more testily), Sumarokov laid down the immutable literary forms in Russian, specified by shape, style and metre. The high forms were epic, tragedy and solemn ode. On a lower level stood the Horatian ode, the song, the satire, the verse-tale, the fable and burlesque. {1-2} Poets could write in any one of these, but they could not mix the forms.

Sumarokov wrote regularly: plays, satires, conventional love poems: a great mass of work. He also pioneered journalism and literary criticism, but his greatest gifts to Russian literature were metrical inventiveness and a genuine ear for melody

Sumarokov's work is typically eighteenth century in its balanced and rational style, showing the usual love of rhetoric, antithesis, literary conceit and clever argument. Here is the conclusion of his 1755 *Sonnet*:

I join you in your grievances, I see your tears.
You are not alone in having eyes and ears:
I, in weeping with you, know your cares and strife

See how both tormentors, and in the self-same breath,
will, having struck down honour, require you honour life,
and honour, having struck down love, require your death.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926/ Vintage Books 1958) 47-8.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 57-60.
3. Russian text. Search [Wikisource](#).
4. Poemhunter [translation](#).

Lomonosov: Ode Selected from Job: Chapters 38, 39, 40 & 41

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Михаил Ломоносов : ОДА, ВЫБРАННАЯ ИЗ ИОВА, ГЛАВЫ 38, 39, 40 и 41

О ты, что в горести напрасно,

Date: 1743-51

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters, rhymed as follows:

О ты, что в гóрести напрáсно 4А
На бóга рóпщешь, человек, 4b
Внимáй, коль в рéвности ужáсно 4А
Он к Йову из тóчи рек! 4b
Сквозь дождь, сквозь вихрь, сквозь град блистáя 4С
И глáсом грóмы прерывáя, 4С
Словáми нéбо колебáл 4d
И так егó на рáспрю звал: 4d

The Book of Job tells how the Devil tested a prosperous and pious man with the loss of his possessions, children and health, but found that the man still refused to renounce God. Still intact was his patience and perseverance, and his belief in God's goodness, faithfulness and restorative powers. The Book was well known to all church-going people, which was the vast majority in Russia, including Lomonosov himself. The Ode

uses or incorporates only a few verses of the Book, which Lomonosov, being also a good scientist, duly enumerated. The poem is well regarded and has similarities to Derzhavin's work, notably his 'To Rulers and Judges'

Lomonosov was a 'materialist philosopher' but also a believer in the Orthodox Church. For many Russians, the book of Job, was also one of the most attractive, tragic and philosophical books in the Old Testament, well known in the XVIII century' and becoming a textbook in the next. {1}

We need articles from Russian literary critics on Lomonosov's uses of sources: what parts of the Book of Job he used, to what effect and why. Unfortunately, the only articles I have been able to locate on the internet (listed below) are rather general and diffuse. Accordingly I will make a brief stab at these matters, beginning by listing sections from Job that Lomonosov does appear to have incorporated in his Ode. These are (from the New International Version of the Bible):

The LORD Speaks:

Job 38

Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm. He said:

2 "Who is this that obscures my plans
with words without knowledge?

3 Brace yourself like a man;

I will question you,

and you shall answer me.

4 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?

Tell me, if you understand.

5 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!

Who stretched a measuring line across it?

6 On what were its footings set,

or who laid its cornerstone

7 while the morning stars sang together

and all the angels shouted for joy?

8 "Who shut up the sea behind doors

when it burst forth from the womb,

9 when I made the clouds its garment

and wrapped it in thick darkness,

10 when I fixed limits for it

and set its doors and bars in place,

11 when I said, 'This far you may come and no farther;

here is where your proud waves halt'?

12 "Have you ever given orders to the morning,

or shown the dawn its place,

13 that it might take the earth by the edges

and shake the wicked out of it?

14 The earth takes shape like clay under a seal;

its features stand out like those of a garment.

34 "Can you raise your voice to the clouds

and cover yourself with a flood of water?

35 Do you send the lightning bolts on their way?

Do they report to you, 'Here we are'?

Job 39:

"Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom

and spread its wings toward the south?

27 Does the eagle soar at your command

and build its nest on high?

28 It dwells on a cliff and stays there at night;

a rocky crag is its stronghold.
29 From there it looks for food;
its eyes detect it from afar.

Job 40:

6 Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm:

7 "Brace yourself like a man;

I will question you,
and you shall answer me.

"Look at Behemoth,
which I made along with you
and which feeds on grass like an ox.

16 What strength it has in its loins,
what power in the muscles of its belly!

17 Its tail sways like a cedar;
the sinews of its thighs are close-knit.

18 Its bones are tubes of bronze,
its limbs like rods of iron.

Job 41:

"Can you pull in Leviathan with a fishhook
or tie down its tongue with a rope?

2 Can you put a cord through its nose
or pierce its jaw with a hook?

I won't go through these in detail, but it's clear that:

1. Lomonosov's use was selective and partial. Much has been left out. Material is sometimes quoted and sometimes paraphrased.

2. When passages or names are quoted (e.g. Behemoth),

these should appear as such and not be paraphrased into something else (woodland giant).

3. Lomonosov's poem is not a précis of Job, but an Ode on God's power in the universe, illustrated by selective quotation from the Book of Job.

4. Those illustrations are extended and decorated with poetic fancy.

5. That fancy notwithstanding, Lomonosov is celebrating a scientist's view, which is to glory in the manifold wonder of the world.

The range of reference and elevated language is common to Lomonosov's odes. Khotyn (1739) was one battle in the protracted wars between Russia and Turkey in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but one in which the Russian army gave good account of itself, capturing the fortress of Khotyn, and confounding Austrian hopes. Though the battle led to no major changes on the political chessboard of Europe, it is important in a literary sense, being for Russians the start of their individual and independent poetry lineage. The lengthy poem opens with:

ODE TO THE BLESSED MEMORY OF THE EMPRESS
TO THE EMPRESS ANNA IOANNOVNA
TO DEFEAT THE TURKS AND TATARS
AND FOR THE CAPTURE OF KHOTYN IN 1739

A rapture sets my mind aglow

as though from mountains tops to soar.
Here forest winds forget to blow,
and silence fills the valley floor.
Indeed the very spring is still
that ever murmurs on at will
with rushing sounds stream-water yields.
Here too are woven laurels crowned
with rumours eddying far around,
and smoke that lifts from distant fields.

Is Pindus here beneath me real,
and sisters' music that I hear?
Is this Permessus fire I feel,
that group to which I should draw near?
Given healing water must I yet
my works and all the past forget?
Dash Castalian dew on eyes,
that, far through hill and steppe-land's space,
my soul press on to that far place
where dawns from very nights arise?

And like some ship that rides the seas,
though towering waves resists in force,
they cleave those whitened tops with ease,
and ship continues on its course.
And so a silver trail will mark
a passage through abysmal dark.
As though on Russians power they'd call
when dark on dark they're riding by,
the dust of horsemen dims the sky,
yet, soulless, they will headlong fall.

With love for fatherland, a mighty flood
are sons of Russia to the core.
When each desires to shed his blood,
it's strength that's drawn from sounds of war.
As lion at a wolves' attack
bares teeth and draws its muzzle back,
so eyes, in fire and fear alike,
will match its thrashing, dusty tail.
There comes a roar — the forests quail —
uncoil the muscles: then the strike.

The Ode to Elizabeth is even grander, opening with:

ODE TO THE DAY OF ASCENSION
TO THE ALL RUSSIAN THRONE OF HER MAJESTY
EMPRESS ELISAVETA PETROVNA
RULER OF ALL RUSSIA IN 1746

From fair Parnassus' lofty view
the mind is onward urged to leap,
past crystal waters tumbling through,
to that cool haunt the Muses keep.
Not needful of these springs to drink,
but pleasant in these groves to think.
'Elizabeth' the voices came
from trees and hills all hereabout;
with joyful note and loud they shout
and to the stars exalt your name.

The dawn from heaven's gate arose,
and with a crimson hand decrees
that now her rosy robe impose,

across the fields and woods and seas
the need that night bow down to her,
that days and firmament concur.
Her coming to the throne will stay
each hopeful face assembled here,
that joy and radiance adhere
to our great Russia saved today.

Looking at great Peter's deeds
with city, ships and regiments,
to what each home-forged shackle leads —
that power which other hands dispense —
how enviously would Russia sigh,
that every hour the heart should cry:
be my protector, draw you near,
lay low these troubled times, defend
the tribe that Peter would commend:
bring comfort to your people here.

Have paternal laws cut down,
no ills in regiments appear.
Let full sanctity of crown
be such no strangers interfere.
Remove the church's revenue.
Great palaces are waiting you
with porphyry, sceptre and the throne.
Have the Almighty lead you. He,
with His strong hand, will always see
our evil terrors overthrown.

Lomonosov was not being insincere in turning out his Ode.
It was one of his duties as court poet, and prospects did

indeed look brighter at her ascension to the throne. The poem is a long piece decked out with solemn and uplifting phrases, placing Elizabeth in the best company of antiquity.

References

1. Автор Попов Д.С «Ода, выбранная из Иова» Useful notes on the poem, in [Russian](#).
2. №6 Ода, выбранная из Иова General article on Job, in [Russian](#).
3. Духовные оды» Ломоносова («Ода, выбранная из Иова», «Переложение псалма 143»), их идейно-художественное своеобразие. Антицерковная сатира Ломоносова («Гимн бороде»), ее связь с духовными одами. Lomosov's place in literature, in [Russian](#).
4. Mikhail Lomonosov [Wikipedia](#).
5. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926/ Vintage Books 1958) 43-7.
6. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 52-7.

Lomonosov: Evening Meditation

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Михаил Ломоносов : Вечернее размышление о божием величестве при случае великого северного сияния
Лице свое скрывает день;

The poem is written in tetrameters, a little irregular but rhymed aBaBcc:

Лице своё скрывает день; 4а
По́ля покрýла мрачнá ночь; 3В
Взошлá на гóры чернá тень; 4а
Лучи́ от нас склони́лись прочь; 3В
Откры́лась бéздна звёзд полнá; 4с
Звёздам чи́сла нет, бéздне дна. 4с

Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-1765)

Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-1765) was both the father of Russian literature and a scientist of the first order, holding simultaneously the position of court poet to the empress Elizabeth and Professor of Chemistry at the Academy of Sciences. He brought Russian versification into line with European lines, wrote the first Russian poems that deserve the title great, and also made important advances in the pure and applied sciences, notably in geology, geography, chemistry and astronomy.

The polymath was born into the family of peasant fishermen near Archangel, contrived admission into the Slavian-Greco-Latin Academy in Moscow, and was sent to study mining at the universities of Marburg and Freiberg. He married in 1741, returned to Russia, was appointed Professor of Chemistry in 1745, becoming instrumental in founding Moscow University in 1755. He also found time in an extraordinarily productive life to write the first Russian grammar (1755) and an influential essay on the use of Church Slavonic in Russian verse (1757). Eventually the work and opposition from German Academics overtaxed even his resources, and Lomonosov's last years were marred by drink and mental exhaustion.

Lomonosov is famous for his odes, which typically celebrated anniversaries, name days, Russian achievements and occasionally military victories. Most odes are dedicated to the Empress Elizabeth, but he also wrote odes for Ivan IV, Peter III, the Grand Duke Paul and one for the empress Catherine (who later removed him). The most enduring are the sacred odes that glorify nature and the power of God. The style is often grandiloquent, with features of the baroque, but most poems end peacefully, in a quiet faith in the future.

The poem here, 'An Evening Meditation on God's Greatness on the Occasion of the Great Northern Lights' combines scientific curiosity with religious awe. It is a famous and popular piece, as is its companion 'Morning Meditation on God's Greatness'.

Lomonosov managed to reconcile Church Slavonic and colloquial Russian in theory and his own work. Church Slavonic was to be divided into five layers of formality, and these blended appropriately into three styles: high, middle and low. Odes were written in the high style, epistles in the middle style and comedies in the low style. Many foreign words that were

popular in Russia at the time were to be excluded. This sounds rather artificial but the system worked fairly well for poets until Karamsin (1766-1826) and Pushkin (1799-1837) popularized a more flexible middle style. Lomonosov himself used all three styles in a remarkably wide range of work from humorous pieces, translations from the classics, laudatory odes and two tragedies in verse: *Tamira and Selim* and *Demofont*. He even wrote an extended treatise in verse: *Letters on the Use of Glass*, well known and still quite readable.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. *A History of Russian Literature* (Knopf 1926/ Vintage Books 1958) 43-7.
2. Bristol, E., *A History of Russian Poetry* (1991, O.U.P.) 52-7.

Lomonosov: On the Road to Peterhof

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Михаил Ломоносов : Стихи, сочиненные на дороге в Петергоф,

Кузнечик дорогой, коль много ты блажен,

Date: 1761

The poem is written in rhymed hexameter couplets:

Кузнéчик дорогóй, коль мнóго ты блажéн, ба
Коль бóльше пред людьмí ты счáстьем одарён! ба
Препровождáешь жизнь меж мягкоу травóю бВ
И наслаждáешься медвяноу росóю. бВ
Хотя́ у мнóгих ты в глазáх презрénна тварь, бс
Но в самóй íстине ты пéред нáми царь; бс
Ты áнгел во плóти, иль, лúчше, ты бесплóтен! бD
Ты скáчешь и поéшь|поёшь, свобóден, беззабóтен,
бD
Что вíдишь, всё твоё; вездé в своём дóму, бе
Не прóсишь ни о чём, не дóлжен никомú. бе

References

1. Russian [text](#).
2. Lomonosov poems on disk. [Etsy](#).
3. Museum of [Peterhof](#). Website.
4. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 56.

Derzhavin: On the Death of Prince Meshchersky

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Гавриил Державин: НА СМЕРТЬ КНЯЗЯ МЕЩЕРСКОГО

Глагол времен! металла звон!

Date: 1779

Prince Meshchersky was a rich aristocrat whom Derzhavin had known briefly on his entry into St. Petersburg society. Written in Petersburg in 1779 and the first of Derzhavin's really successful poems. Comment by Khodasevich pp. 84-6.

1. A reference to General Perliev, a common friend of Meshchersky and Derzhavin.

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters, each stanza being:

Глаго́л времён! метáлла звон! 4а
Твой стра́шный глас меня́ смущáет; 4В
Зовёт меня́, зовёт твой стон, 4а
Зовёт — и к грóбу приближáет. 4В
5. Едвá увíдел я сей свет, 4с
Ужé зубáми смерть скрежéщет, 4D
Как мóлнией, косóю блéщет, 4с
И дни мо́й, как злак, сечёт. 4D

References

On Derzhavin

1. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926/ Vintage Books 1958) 49-53.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 73-79.
3. Poet's Library: Founded by M. Gorky. Second Edition. Г. P. Derzhavin 1957. Russian texts.
<https://rvb.ru/18vek/derzhavin/toc.htm>
4. Levitsky, A. and Kitchen, M.T. trans. (2001) G. R. Derzhavin: Poetic Works. A Bilingual Album. Brown Slavic Dept. xii+590 pp. Very full translations.
5. Brintlinger, A. (2007) The Twilight of Russian Literature: Vladislav Khodasevich and Gavriil Derzhavin
https://www.academia.edu/3527880/The_Twilight_of_Russian_Literature_Vladislav_Khodasevich_and_Gavriil_Derzhavin
6. Serman, I in Moser, C. ed. (1992) The Cambridge History of Russian Literature. pp. 88-91. Google Books
7. KP-TTS writers (2021) A very short biography of Derzhavin: Achievements of Gabriel Derzhavin.
<https://kp-tts.ru/en/ochen-kratkaya-biografiya-derzhavina-samoe-glavnoe-derzhavin.html>
8. Kroth, O. (2016) Honouring the Russian poet Gavrila Derzhavin 200 years after his death.
<https://olivia2010kroth.wordpress.com/2016/07/20/olivia-kroth-honouring-the-russian-poet-gavrila-derzhavin-200-years-after-his-death/>

9. Online Library writers (2021) Разнообразие творчества Г.Р. Державина (The diversity of Derzhavin's work) Several articles. <https://licey.net/free/14-razbor-poeticheskikh-proizvedenii-russkie-i-zarubezhnye-poety/67-russkaya-poeziya-xviii-veka/stages/3014-raznoobrazie-tvorchestva-gr-derzhavina.html>

10. Pait, M. Y. (2004) Проблемы рецепции ОД и эподов Горация в России XVIII-начала XIX вв (Problems of reception of odes and epodes of Horace in Russia in XVIII - early XIX centuries. PhD. Thesis.) <https://www.dissercat.com/content/problemy-retseptsii-od-i-epodov-goratsiya-v-rossii-xviii-nachala-xix-vv-na-primere-tvorchest>

11. Khodasevich, V (1886-1939) Derzhavin: A Biography, translated by Angela Brintlinger. University of Wisconsin Press, 2007.

On the Death of Prince Meshchersky

1. Kinosaitonlian writers (2021) Plan for an ode to the death of Prince Meshchersky. Analysis of the poem on the death of Prince Meshchera (machine translated). <https://kinosaitonlain.ru/en/plan-ody-na-smert-knyazya-meshcherskogo-analiz-stihotvoreniya-na-smert.html>

2. Atomiye writers (2021) Prince Meshchersky. History. <https://en.atomiye.com/prince-meshchersky-history/>

Derzhavin: To Rulers and Judges

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Гавриил Державин: ВЛАСТИТЕЛЯМ И СУДИЯМ

Восстал всевышний бог, да судит

Date: 1780

Written in 1780 in Olonets, when Derzhavin was involved in one his usual battles with officialdom. Comment by Khodasevich pp. 113-4

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters, rhymed:

Восста́л всевы́шний бог, да су́дит 4А

Земны́х бого́в во со́нме их; 4b

Доко́ле, рек, доко́ль вам бу́дет 4А

Щади́ть непра́ведных и злых? 4b

References

1. Bashschool2 writers (2021) Gavril Derzhavin rulers and judges. Analysis of the poem "Rulers and Judges"

Derzhavina G.R. <https://bashschool2.ru/en/gavrila-derzhavin-vlastitelyam-i-sudiyam-analiz-stihotvoreniya.html>

2. Ik-Ptz writers (2020) Derzhavin to rulers and judges completely. Analysis of the poem "To Sovereigns and Judges" by Derzhavin G.R. <https://ik->

ptz.ru/en/literatura/derzhavin-vlastitelyam-i-sudiyam-polnostyu-analiz-stihotvoreniya.html

3. r-bookclub writers (2021) «Властителям и судиям», или Державинская экспрессия и ярость ("To the Rulers and Judges" Derzhavin's expression and power.) <https://r-book.club/shkolnoe/stihi/vlastitelyam-i-sudyam.html>

Derzhavin: Felitsa

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Гавриил Державин: ФЕЛИЦА

Богородица царевна

Date: 1782

Written in Petersburg in 1782, and dedicated to the empress Catherine. It was thought not sufficiently respectful by courtiers, but delighted the empress herself, who rewarded Derzhavin with a diamond-encrusted snuffbox. Comment by Khodasevich pp. 91-6. Specific notes are:

1. Khlor. Refers to a book of instruction written by Catherine for her grandson, the future Alexander I.
2. Mirza were noblemen of Tatar descent.

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters, the stanza being rhymed as follows:

Богородица царевна 4А
Киргиз-Кайсацкия орды! 4b
Котóрой мýдрость несравнённа 4А
Открыла вёрные следы 4b
Царевичу младóму Хлóру 4С
Взойтí на ту высокоу гóру, 4С
Где рóза без шипóв растёт, 4d
Где добродётель обитáет,— 4Е

Она́ мой дух и ум пленя́ет, 4Е
Подáй найтí её сове́т. 4d

References

1. Bolcheknig writers (2021) Recreating the genre in Ode Felitsa. The skill of Gabriel Derzhavin in creating the image of Catherine II in the ode to Felitsa.

<https://bolcheknig.ru/en/enciklopediya/peresozdanie-zhanra-v-ode-felica-masterstvo-gavriila-derzhavina/>

2. Prutskov et al. (1983) Ode felitsa summary.

Composition analysis of the ode derzhavin felitsa.

Idealization of the image of Catherine — Источник:

<https://muegn.ru/en/podgotovka/oda-felica-kratkoe-soderzhanie-sochinenie-analiz-ody-derzhavina.html>

3. Hart, P.R. (1972) Mirza and Mistress in Derzhavin's Felitsa Poetry. Slavic Review.

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/slavic-review/article/mirza-and-mistress-in-derzhavins-felitsa-poetry/91E6E6D7B7A24A2CA2663CF95B6F0063>

4. Proskurina, V. (2011) Creating the Empress: Politics and Poetry in the Age of Catherine II. Academic Studies Press. pp. 182-217. Google Books.

Derzhavin: Waterfall (opening excerpt)

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Гавриил Державин: ВОДОПАД

Алмазна сыплется гора

Date: 1791-94

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters, rhymed:

Алма́зна сы́плется го́ра 4а

С вы́сот четы́ремя ска́лами, 4В

Же́мчугу бе́здна и серебра́ 4а

Кипи́т внизú, быёт вверх бугра́ми; 4В

От брызгов си́ний холм стои́т, 4с

Дале́че ре́в в лесу́ греми́т. 4с

Written in Petersburg in 1791-4 but alludes to the Kivach falls, which Derzhavin visited as Governor of Olonets in 1785. The poem adds an elegy to Prince Potemkin.

Comment by Khodasevich pp. 107-9. Whole poem is 74 stanzas of iambic tetrameters rhymed aBaBcc.

References

1. Jiyuu.ru writers (2021) Гавриил Державин — Алмазна сыплется гора [Водопад]) (Gavriil Derzhavin - The Mountain of Diamonds [(Waterfall)]) <https://jiyuu.ru/ob-avtorah/derzhavin-vodopad.html>

2. Stennik, Y.U. (1993) Композиция и план Державинского "Водопада". (Composition and Plan of Derzhavin's "Waterfall") http://dergavin.ru/critics_88/

3. Suzi, G. (2013) Losing the Unruly Stream: Kondopoga and the Kivach Waterfall.

<http://www.environmentandsociety.org/arcadia/losing-unruly-stream-kondopoga-and-kivach-waterfall>

Derzhavin: To Eugeny: Life at Zvanka (excerpt)

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Гавриил Державин: ЕВГЕНИЮ. ЖИЗНЬ ЗВАНСКАЯ

Блажен, кто менее зависит от людей,

Date: 1806

Блаже́н, кто ме́нее зави́сит от люде́й, ба
Свобо́ден от долго́в и от хлопóт прика́зных 6В
Не и́щет при дворе́ ни зláта, ни честей ба
И чужд суёт разнообра́зных! 4В

63 stanzas of hexameters/tetrameters rhymed 6a6B6a4B.
Written in May–July 1807, at Zvanka, the country residence in which the Derzhavins spent the summer months after 1803. The poem is dedicated to Derzhavin's friend, Bishop Eugene Bolkhovitinov (1767-1837), historian, archaeologist, and historian of literature, who lived in the Khutynsky monastery, some 60 versts away. Specific notes are as follows:

1. Literally 'of all life's wonder. In this beauty's spectacle': transposed for euphony. Krasot strictly means 'shame' i.e. a spectacle.
2. Translation a little condensed: literally: the sound of lambs in the air, in the bushes the nightingale's whistle.
3. Ditto: literally: the roar of crows, the thunder of woodpeckers and the neighing of horses.
4. 'The breeze from my house is Manzhurian or Levantine'. Refers to smells of tea (Manchurian) and coffee (Arabia, delivered through the Levantine trade).

5. Divlyusya in Vestnik ('Herald of Europe'), founded by N. M. Karamzin and published at the time by V. A. Zhukovsky.

References

1. Russian Historical Library writers (2021) Державин «Евгению. Жизнь Званская» – краткое содержание и анализ. (Derzhavin's "Eugene. The Life at Zvanka" - summary and analysis)

<http://rushist.com/index.php/literary-articles/5701-derzhavin-evgeniyu-zhizn-zvanskaya-kratkoe-soderzhanie-i-analiz>

2. Sergusheva S.V. (2006) "Евгению. Жизнь Званская": анализ стихотворения ("To Eugene. The Life at Zvanka: abridged from Russian literature of the 18th century.)

https://classlit.ru/publ/literatura_18_veka/derzhavin_g_r/evgeniju_zhizn_zvanskaja_analiz_stikhotvorenija/117-1-0-2380

3. Meior, A.G. (2021) Анализ стихотворения Державина Евгению жизнь званская (Analysis of Derzhavin's poem 'Eugene: The life at Zvanka'.) <https://ostihe.ru/analiz-stikhotvorenija/derzhavina/evgeniyu-zhizn-zvanskaya>

4. Byrd, C. (1996) Thunder Imagery and the Turn Against Horace in Derzhavin's "Evgeniyu Zhizn' Zvanskaya" (1807) in Barta, P.I. et al eds. Russian Literature and the Classics. Psychology Press. pp. 13-31. Google Books.

Karamsin: Merry Hour

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Николай Карамзин: Весёлый час

Братья, рюмки наливайте!

Date: 1791

Karamsin's 'Merry Hour' is a simple little poem in iambic tetrameters, rhymed AbAb:

Бра́тья, рю́мки налива́йте! 4A

Лéйся че́рез край, вино́! 4b

Всё до ка́пли выпива́йте! 4A

Осуша́йте в рю́мках дно! 4b

Nikolay Karamsin (1766-1826)

Nikolay Karamsin did not write great poetry, but reformed the literary language of Russia, facilitating the poetry of Pushkin and his circle and thus making possible the Golden Age of Russian verse.

To understand Karamsin's achievement we have to look at his predecessors. Lomonosov (1711-65) had reconciled Church Slavonic and colloquial Russian. Church Slavonic was to be divided into five layers of formality, and these blended appropriately into three styles: high, middle and low. Odes were written in the high style, epistles in the

middle style and comedies in the low style. Many foreign words that were popular in Russia at the time were to be excluded. Derzhavin (1743-1816) wrote with a Baroque complexity, ruggedly magnificent at best, but inimitable.

Karamsin merged the high and low into the middle style, and wrote with a simplicity and directness that verged on the conversational, albeit the conversation of well-bred gentlemen at ease in their clubs and at home with friends.

Karamzin also made popular the 'poetry of sentiment'. All poetry, being an art form (at least before late Modernism), engendered emotion, but the poetry of sentiment made the overriding sentiment the subject of the poem. Karamsin's *Merry Hour* continually reiterates how hard this world is, and how wine gives us some temporary relief from its sorrows and vexations.

These are not profound observations, but the merit of the poem lies in its pleasing expression

References

1. Bristol, E. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P., 1991) 84-88.
2. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature. (Alfred A: Knopf, 1926/1958) 62-66.
3. Text of the poem "Merry Hour" by Karamzin. [Весёлый час](#).

Karamsin: Autumn

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Николай Карамзин: Осень

Веют осенние ветры

Date: 1789

The poem Autumn is in unrhymed dactyls (- u u):

Ве́ют осе́нние ве́тры - u u - u u - u
В мра́чной дубра́ве; - u u - u
С шу́мом на зе́млю ва́ляются - u u - u u - u u
Жёлтые ли́стья. - u u - u

По́ле и сад опу́стели; - u u - u u - u
Се́туют холмы́; - u u -
Пе́ние в ро́щах умо́гло — - u u - u u - u
Скры́лись пт́ички. - u u - u

References

1. Bristol, E. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P., 1991) 84-88.
2. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature. (Alfred A: Knopf, 1926/1958) 62-66.
3. Николай Карамзин — Осень: Стих. [Text](#) and commentary.
4. Analysis of the poem "Autumn" by Karamzin. Text and notes in [Russian](#).

Krylov: Quartet

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

басня Крылова: Квартет

Проказница-Мартышка

Date: 1811

The poem is in simple iambic, but the line lengths and rhymes are quite varied:

Прока́зница-Марты́шка, 3А

Осе́л, 1b

Козе́л, 1b

Да косола́пый Ми́шка 3А

Зате́яли сыгра́ть Кварте́т. 4с

Доста́ли нот, ба́са, альтá, две скри́пки 4D

И се́ли на лужо́к под ли́пки, — 4D

Пленя́ть сво́им иску́ством свет. 4с

And so on. The translation reproduces Krylov's rhyme scheme.

Ivan Krylov (1769-1844)

Ivan Krylov (1769-1844) wrote prose satires, plays and lyrical poems, but is now remembered for his fables, many of which have passed into the Russian language as authentic proverbs. Born the son of a poor army captain in Tiver, Krylov was largely self-educated, but became

successively an editor, a publisher and a librarian. His satires were directed at landowners and their abuse of serfs, at theatre people, women, urban night life and the world of fashion and snobbery. {1}. Krylov's plays include tragedies, but most are comedies about love and marriage in the gentry families. The lyrics, some fifty in all, are generally considered rather flat and prosaic.

The opening years of the nineteenth century in fact saw a veritable craze for fable writing in Russia, and any representative collection of Russian verse has to include them. There were several such writers, but Krylov was the best, still read and inimitable. His last position, a veritable sinecure, was in the Public Library of St. Petersburg, where slothfully remained for over 30 years, noted for his laziness, untidiness, good appetite and shrewd, if somewhat malicious, common sense.

Most of the Fables were written between 1810 and 1820, and collected into nine volumes. What made them popular was both their sound, middle-class, common sense and Krylov's mastery of Russian. There's sometimes a raciness in the colloquial diction, but the descriptive and lyrical sections are very eighteenth century in tone. However tightened up for verse, moreover, the words are the living speech of the street and taverns, rich in the proverbs for which Russian is famous.

References

1. Bristol, E. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 98-100.
2. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926 / Vintage Books 1958) 68-71.

Zhukovsky: Lalla Ruk

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Василий Жуковский: ЛАЛЛА РУК

Милый сон, души пленитель

Date: 1821

Zhukovsky reformed the diction and metre of Russian poetry. Indeed, he created a new poetical language, in which the originating feelings have been wholly subsumed by artistic expression, and which, when taken further by Lermontov, became the model for Russian nineteenth-century verse.

The poem is simply written in iambic tetrameters rhymed AbAb:

Милый сон, души пленитель, 4A

Гость прекрасный с вышины, 4b

Благодатный посетитель 4A

Поднебесной стороны, 4b

Many of the poems of Vasily Andreyevic Zhukovsky (1783-1852) were translations of European pieces, or 'in the manner of', which is the case here. 'Lalla Rookh' was a long poem of Thomas Moore's, wildly successful in its day, which mixed the spice of eastern romance with exotic locations. The poem was published in 1817, with the title taken from the name of the heroine of the tale, the

fictional daughter of the 17th-century Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. *Lalla Rookh* boasts four narrative poems connected by prose. The verse is typical of its period: rhymed couplets and tetrameters, not over-accomplished but quite adequate for the purpose. The opening lines give the flavour:

In that delightful Province of the Sun,
The first of Persian lands he shines upon.
Where all the loveliest children of his beam,
Flowerets and fruits, blush over every stream,
And, fairest of all streams, the MURGA roves
Among MEROU'S bright palaces and groves;-- .

References

1. Wachtel, M. *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry* (CUP 2004) 83-5.
2. Mirsky, D.S. *A History of Russian Literature* (Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 75-9.
3. Bristol, E.B. *A History of Russian Poetry* (O.U.P. 1991) 94-97.
4. Lalla Rookh. Good [Wikipedia](#) introduction.
5. Fran Printchett's Lalla Rookh crafted for the [Internet](#)

Zhukovsky: The Singer

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Василий Жуковский: Певец

В тени дерев, над чистыми водами

Date: 1811

The prosody is a little irregular but mostly conforms to iambics, rhymed AbbAcDDc:

Он сёрдцем прост, он не́жен был душóю 5A

Но в мíре он минúтный стрáнник был; 5b

Едвá расцвёл - и жизнь уж разлюбíл 5b

И ждал концá с волнёньем и тоско́ю; 5A

И ráно встрéтил он конéц, 4c

Засну́л желáнным сном могíлы... 4D

Твой век был миг, но миг уны́лый, 4D

Бéдный певéц! 2/3c

The last line runs - u u -, and can be read as a dimeter ternary or iambic trimeter with the second stress missing.

Zhukovsky's *Bard* or *Singer* was written in 1811 and continues a well-known theme, that of the talented poet who meets with an early or tragic death. In fact, the period was a difficult one for Zhukovsky: he had just lost his adoptive mother M.G. Bunina, and then his own mother E. D. Turchaninova.

Additionally, though he had survived the early death of his close friend, Andrey Turgenev, his hopes of marriage with Maria Andreevna Protasova were further dashed when she married someone else. {4}

The poem is somewhat repetitive, therefore, harping on the one theme of an early death, but is also an excellent example of Karamzin's 'sentimentalism'. {1-3} Death is welcomed, called literally in the Russian 'a welcome dream', and 'the harbour of sorrowful thoughts', an attitude that was to become Zhukovsky's calling card.

It's also instructive to compare Zhukovsky's output to Pushkin's, to note how restrictive it is in theme and treatment. Zhukovsky wrote excellent verse, but it has nothing of the verve, balance and range of Russia's national poet.

References

1. Wachtel, M. The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry (CUP 2004) 83-5.
2. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 75-84.
3. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 94-97.
4. Анализ стихотворения Жуковского «Певец» Short article in [Russian](#)

Zhukovsky: The Boatman

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Василий Жуковский: Пловец

Вихрем бедствия гонимый,

Date: 1812

The poem is in iambic tetrameters, rhymed AbAb CdCd,
etc.:

Вихрем бедствия гонимый, 4A

Без кормила и весла, 4b

В океан неисходимый 4A

Буря челн мой занесла. 4b

В тучах звездочка светилась; 4C

«Не скрывайся!» — я зывал; 4d

Непреклонная сокрылась; 4C

Якорь был — и тот пропал. 4d

Zhukovsky's poems often deal with otherworldly situations, where the speaker acknowledges some divine or semi-divine presence, with a strong dose of Karamzin's 'sentimentalism'. In this poem, entitled the 'Boatman', it is difficult to know if Zhukovsky's angels are real or simply a personification of divine providence. {1-3}

The poem was first published in the journal "Bulletin of Europe", in 1813 (Nos. 7 and 8) under the authorship of

V. Zh. and appears in the collection 'V. A. Zhukovsky, Poems. The poet's library. The Big Series' (1956, p. 104.) It has also been set to music (E.g. 'The newest collection of romances and songs collected from the best authors, M., 1830 to 1855. Music by A. Pleshcheyev, Verstovsky, Glinka') {4}

References

1. Wachtel, M. The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry (CUP 2004) 83-5.
2. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 75-84.
3. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 94-97.
4. Василий Жуковский и русская песня (Vasily Zhukovsky and the Russian song) Text and brief notes in [Russian](#).

Zhukovsky: Mysterious Visitor

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Василий Жуковский: Таинственный Посетитель

Кто ты, призрак, гость прекрасный?

Date: 1824

The poem is in iambic tetrameters, rhymed AbAbCdCd:

Кто ты, при́зрак, гость прекра́сный? 4A

К нам отку́да прилетáл? 4b

Безотвѣтно и безгласно 4A

Для чегó от нас пропáл? 4b

Гдѣ ты? Где твоѐ селѣнье? 4C

Что с тобо́й? Куда́ исчѣз? 4d

И зачѣм твоѐ явлѣнье 4C

В поднебѣсную с небѣс? 4d

References

1. Wachtel, M. The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry (CUP 2004) 83-5.
2. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 75-84.
3. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 94-97.

Zhukovsky: Night

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Василий Жуковский: Ночь

Уже утомившийся день

Date: 1823

The poem is in amphibrachic metre (ternary: u - u u - u u -) and is rhymed as follows:

Ужé утомíвшийсá день За
Склонíлся в багрáнные вóды, ЗВ
Темнéют лазúрные свóды, ЗВ
Прохла́дная стéлетсá тень; За
И ночь молчáливáя мíрно ЗД
Пошла́ по доро́ге эфíрной, ЗД
И Гéспер летíт пéред ней Зе
С прекра́сной звездóю своéй. Зе

References

1. Wachtel, M. The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry (CUP 2004) 83-5.
2. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 75-9.
3. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 94-97.

Batyushkov: Farewell

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Константин Батюшков: Разлука

Гусар, на саблю опираясь

Date: 1812

The poem is written in iambics rhymed AbAb, etc.:

Гусáр, на сáблю опира́ясь, 4A

В глубóкой гóрести стоя́л; 4b

Надо́лго с ми́лой разлуча́ясь, 4A

Вздыха́я он сказа́л: 3b

«Не плачь, красáвица! слезáми 4C

Кручи́не злой не пособи́ть! 4d

Клянуся че́стью и уса́ми 4C

Любви́ не измени́ть! 3d

Little needs explaining in the poem, which is not a moralizing piece but a light-hearted, bantering comment on our common failings. That being the case, it seems best to retain the feminine rhyme, allowing its contrivances to emphasize that this is a display of verbal cleverness, not to be taken seriously. Many of Pushkin's circle could turn their hand to these

References

1. Mirsky, D.S., *A History of Russian Literature* (Knopf 1926 / Vintage Books 1958) 79-83.
2. Bristol, E., *A History of Russian Poetry* (O.U.P.) 100-2.

Batyushkov: My Guardian Spirit

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Константин Батюшков: Мой гений

О, память сердца! ты сильнеей

Date: 1815

О, па́мьть се́рдца! ты сильне́й 4а
Рассу́дка па́мьти печáльной 4В
И ча́сто прéлестью своéй 4а
Ме́ня в стране́ пленя́ешь да́льной. 4В

Я по́мню го́лос ми́лых слов, 4с
Я по́мню о́чи голу́бые, 4D
Я по́мню ло́коны златые́ 4D
Небре́жно вы́ющихся вла́сов. 4с

Konstantin Batyushkov's poem was written in 1813 after the poet broke off his engagement with Anna Furman. In fact he'd written a whole cycle of poems to Anna, with whom he was much in love. That affection seemed to be returned, but Batyushkov unfortunately overheard Anna confess to friends that it was Batyushkov's wealth and social position that attracted her, indeed offered an escape from the instructions and control of her family. {3} Batyushkov was bitterly disappointed, but published the poem cycle just the same (as indeed most poets would.)

This is a simple but accomplished piece, neatly rhymed and convincing. Its emotive power lies in the epithets, the descriptive power of 'voice, blue eyes and curly golden hair', plus 'sweet, unforgettable image' and 'sad dreams', etc. Some lines employ marked alliteration, the "s" and "h" consonants helping to emphasize the sadness. {3}

References

1. Mirsky, D.S., A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926 / Vintage Books 1958) 79-80.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 100-102.
3. Анализ стихотворения «Мой гений» Brief article in [Russian](#).

Batyushkov: Shadow of a Friend

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Константин Батюшков: Тень друга

проанализируйте стихотворение Я берег покидал туманный Альбиона:

Date: 1814

The poem is written in iambic metre, generally hexameters but also pentameters and tetrameters. The verse is a little irregular: occasionally the natural stress of a word does not coincide with the metrical stress. Feminine rhymes are shown in upper case and feminine rhymes in lower case:

Я бѣрег покидал туманный Альбиона: 6A
Казалось, он в волнах свинцовых утопал. 6B
 За кораблѣм вилася Гальциона, 5B
И тихий глас её пловцев увеселял. 6b

 Вечерний ветер, валов плесканье, 4C
Однообразный шум и трепет парусов, 6d
 И кормчего на палубе зыванье 5C
Ко страже дремлющей под говором валов; 6d

Всѣ сладкую задумчивость питало. 5E
Как очарованный у мачты я стоял, 6f
 И сквозь туман и ночи покрывало 5E
Светила Севера любезного искал. 6f

Вся мысль моя была́ в воспомина́нье, 5G
Под не́бом сладостным оте́ческой земли. 6h
Но ветро́в шум и мо́ря колыха́нье 5G
На ве́жды то́мное забвёнье навели́. 6h

5. Мечты́ сменя́лись мечта́ми 4I
И вдруг... то был ли сон?.. предста́л това́рищ мне, 6j
Погы́бший в роковом о́гне 4j
Зави́дной смертию, над Пле́йскими стру́ями. 6I

Но вид не стра́шен был; челó 4k
Глубо́ких ран не сохра́няло, 4k
Как у́тро Ма́йское весели́ем цвелó, 5I
И всё небёсное ду́ше напомина́ло. 6L

«Ты ль это, ми́лый друг, това́рищ лу́чших дней! 6m
Ты ль это? я вскрича́л, о во́ин ве́чно ми́лой! 6N
Не я́ ли над твоёй безвре́менной моги́лой, 6N
При стра́шном з́ареве Белло́ниных о́гней, 6m

Не я́ ли с ве́рными друзья́ми 4O
Ме́чем на дере́ве твой по́двиг начертáл, 6p
И тень в небёсную отчи́зну провожда́л 6p
С мольбо́й, рыда́ньем и слезáми? 4O

Тень незабвённого! отве́тствуй, ми́лый брат! 6q
Или протёкшее всё бы́ло сон, мечта́нье; 6R
Всё, всё, и блёдный труп, моги́ла и обря́д, 6q
Сверше́нный дру́жбою в твоё воспомина́нье? 6R

10. О! мо́лви сло́во мне! пуска́й знако́мый звук 6s

Ещё мой жадный слух ласкает, 4Т
Пускай рука моя, о незабвенный друг! 6s
Твою, с любовью сжимает...» 4Т

И я летел к нему... Но горный дух исчез 6u
В бездонной синеве безоблачных небес, 6u
Как дым, как метеор, как призрак полночи, 6V
Исчез, — и сон покинул очи. — 4V

Всё спало вокруг меня под кровом тишины. 6w
Стихии грозные казались безмолвны. 6X
При свете облаком подёрнутой луны, 6w
Чуть веял ветерок, едва сверкали волны, 6X

Но сладостный покой бежал моих очей, 6y
И всё душа за призраком летела, 5Z
Всё гостя горного остановить хотела: 6Z
Тебя, о милый брат! о лучший из друзей! 6y

References

1. Mirsky, D.S., A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926 / Vintage Books 1958) 79-83.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 100-2.
3. Analysis of Batyushkov's poem 'The Shadow of a Friend': Short article in [Russian](#).

Batyushkov: Madagascar Song

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Константин Батюшков: Мадагаскарская песня: Стих
Как сладко спать в прохладной тени,

The output of Konstantin Nikolayevich Batyushkov (1787-1855) was comparatively small, but includes poems of great charm. His *Madagascar Song* is modelled on pieces by Évariste Parny, and thus a purely imagined place. Neither Parny nor Batyushkov never visited the island, or indeed knew much about it. It's an example of Batyushkov's attempt to bring some of the sweetness and melody of European verse into Russian.

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters, rhymed AbAb:

Как сла́дко спать в прохла́дной те́ни, 4A
Пока́ доли́ну зной пали́т 4b
И ве́тер чуть в древе́сной се́ни 4A
Дыха́нием ли́стья шевелит! 4b

References

1. Mirsky, D.S., *A History of Russian Literature* (Knopf 1926 / Vintage Books 1958) 79-83.
2. Bristol, E., *A History of Russian Poetry* (O.U.P.) 100-2.

3. Pilshchikov, I.A and Fitt, T.H., Konstantin Batyushkov:
Life and Work. Extended article in [English](#).

Batyushkov: Youthful Days

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Константин Батюшков: К постарелой красавице

Тебе ль оплакивать утрату юных дней?

Date 1817-18

The poem is written in iambic metre, in alternating hexameters and tetrameters. Feminine rhymes are shown in upper case and feminine rhymes in lower case:

Тебѣ ль оплакивать утрату юных дней? ба

Ты в красотѣ не изменилась 4В

И для любви моѣй За

От времени ещё прелестнее явилась. 6В

Твой друг не дорожит неопытной красой, 6d

Незрелой в таинствах любовного искусства. 6E

Без жизни взор её стыдливый и немой, 6d

И робкий поцалуй без чувства. 4E

Но ты, владычица любви, 4f

Ты страсть вдохнёшь и в мёртвый камень; 4G

И в осень дней твоих не погасает пламень, 6G

Текущий с жизнью в крови. 4f

In the years preceding the onset of madness, Batyushkov produced lyrical epigrams with a great beauty of rhythm

and diction, with a haunting emotional intensity that are unique to Russian.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S., A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926 / Vintage Books 1958) 79-83.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 100-2.
3. Pilshchikov, I.A and Fitt, T.H., Konstantin Batyushkov: Life and Work. Extended article in [English](#).

Pushkin: To Anna Kern

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Александр Пушкин: К * * *

Я помню чудное мгновенье

Date: 1825

The poem is in simple iambic tetrameters, rhyming AbAb:

Я помню чудное мгновенье: u-u-u-u-u 4A

Передо мной явилась ты, u-u-u-u- 4b

Как мимолётное виденье, u-u-u-u-u 4A

Как гений чистой красоты. u-u-u-u- 4b

Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837)

Alexander Pushkin was born in 1799 to an ancient aristocratic family and died of a duelling wound in 1837. In that short and often thwarted life, Pushkin modernized the Russian language, widening its vocabulary, removing archaic terms, and employing tones of address that would make Russian a fit vehicle for a century of poets, novelists and short story writers, many of them deservedly world famous.

Pushkin was precociously gifted, writing brilliantly from the first, but the Russian state, autocratic, heavily policed and backward looking, saw in these eloquent but often acerbic outpourings only looming trouble. Alexander I was

not particularly repressive, indeed brought modernizing notions when he ascended the throne in 1801, but the French Revolution had sent shudders through the thrones of Europe, and Russia itself was invaded by Napoleon, a conquest it narrowly evaded only by extreme scorched earth policies and the onset of the Russian winter. The much more authoritarian Nicholas I, who recalled Pushkin from exile, himself suffered the Decembrist Uprising, a coup by army officers that sought to make the ancient throne of the Romanovs into a constitutional monarchy. The coup was quickly put down and its participants made an example to others, but the discovery of Pushkin's poems among the Decembrists' papers did not endear him to the authorities

Pushkin's *To ***** is probably the best-known love poem in the Russian language. Anna Petrovna Kern was a Russian socialite and memoirist, with whom Pushkin had a brief affair in 1825. {1} She was brought up in Lubny in the Poltava Governorate and in 1817 was married to the 56-year-old General Kern, whom she claimed to detest.

Reference

1. Anna Kern. Wikipedia entry.

Pushkin: Bound for Far-Off, Native Shores

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Александр Пушкин: Для берегов отчизны дальной...

Для берегов отчизны дальной

Date: 1830

The poem is in simple iambic tetrameters, rhyming AbAb:

Для берегов отчизны дальной 4A

Ты покидала край чужой; 4b

В час незабвенный, в час печальный 4A

Я долго плакал пред тобой. 4b

Мои хладящие руки 4C

Тебя старались удержать; 4d

Томленье страшное разлуки 4C

This now famous poem was written on November 27, 1830, but not published until 1841, after Pushkin's death. Over the identity of the woman there is contention, some believing she is the figment of Pushkin's imagination, others identifying her as Mme Riznich, with whom Pushkin has a brief affair, at Odessa in 1823. Mme Riznich did indeed return to Italy. Some parts of the poem may thus be true, but with Pushkin imagining the rest, that the woman would still want to write. Poets are not trustworthy diarists.

I diverge from the usual rendering of three lines in the first stanza, which, more literally, would be:

to still prevent you leaving me,
and terribly I moaned and cried
that you not end this agony.

But it doesn't make much sense, unless we feel Pushkin liked to wallow in grief. 'Agony' is also dangerously close to burlesque. I think we can ascribe some literary tact to Russia's greatest poet, and paraphrase the line intelligently.

Reference

1. Анализ стихотворения Пушкина для берегов отчизны дальней. Brief article in [Russian](#).

Pushkin: I Loved You

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

александр пушкин я вас любил анализ

анализировать Я вас любил: любовь еще, быть может

Date: 1829

The work is written in five-foot iambics with alternating male and female rhymes. The rhythm is complex but precise, with a pause in each line after the fourth syllable. All the rhymes in the even lines contain the sound "m": 'not quite', 'nothing', 'then', 'other', 'torment'. All the rhymes in the odd lines contain the sound "ж": 'perhaps', 'disturb', 'hopelessly', 'tenderly'. {3}

Я вас любил: любовь ещё, быть может, 5A

В душе моей угасла не совсем; 5b

Но пусть она вас больше не тревожит; 5A

Я не хочу печалить вас ничем. 5b

Я вас любил безмолвно, безнадежно, 5C

То робостью, то ревностью томим; 5d

Я вас любил так искренно, так нежно, 5C

Как дай вам бог любимой быть другим. 5d

The woman addressed is either Caroline Subansky, whom Pushkin met in his southern exile, or the cultivated and aristocratic daughter of the President of the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts, Anna Olenina, to whom Pushkin

proposed, but was rejected. Pushkin, the compulsive womaniser, is here being serious, or thought himself so, and the sentiments have to be taken at their face value.

References

1. Goldlit writers. "I Loved You ..." An analysis of Pushkin's poem <https://goldlit.ru/pushkin/752-ya-vas-lubil-analiz> (in Russian)
2. Detskiycas writers. Analysis of Pushkin's poem. "I loved you..." (in Russian) <http://detskiychas.ru/school/pushkin/анализ-пушкин-я-вас-любил/>
3. Сезоны года writers. A.Pushkin "I loved you": an analysis. <https://xn----8sbiecm6bhdx8i.xn--p1ai/анализ-стихотворения-Я-вас-любил.html> (in Russian)
4. Liberman, A. (2016) Two Miracles of Russian Love Poetry. <https://russianlife.com/stories/online-archive/two-miracles-of-russian-love-poetry/>
5. Pushkin's I Loved You. <https://allpoetry.com/I-Loved-You>
6. пушкин я-вас-любил <http://poiskm.co/show/a-c-пушкин/я-вас-любил-любовь-еще-быть-может>
7. Yandex <https://translate.yandex.com/>
8. RussianGram. <http://www.russiagram.com/>
9. Skuratovsky, G. (2012) Echoes of Russian Verse. ISBN-13: 978-1477467251
10. Saint Petersburg writers (2018) Alexander Pushkin. <http://www.saint-petersburg.com/famous-people/alexander-pushkin/>

11. Wikipedia writers Donjuan list of Pushkin.
https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Донжуанский_список_Пушкина
12. DuVernet, M.A. (2014) Pushkin's Ode to Liberty: The Life and Loves of Alexander Pushkin. Xlibris
13. Britannica writers. Alexander Segeyevich Pushkin (2018) <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alexander-Sergeyevich-Pushkin>
14. Poetry Soup writers Alexander Pushkin Biography. (with the famous Baring translation).
https://www.poetrysoup.com/alexander_pushkin/biography
15. Abosch, E. (2012) The City of the Steps.
<http://odessahistory-eabosch2012.blogspot.com/2012/04/vorontsov-and-pushkin-affairs-and.html>
16. Mirsky, D.S. (1958) A History of Russian Literature From Its Beginnings to 1900. Vintage Books. 84-5.
17. Kahn, A. (2007) The Cambridge Companion to Pushkin. C.U.P. Chapter 2.
18. `Znichka`. (2010) Pushkin's Love (in Russian)
<https://znichk-a.livejournal.com/59452.html>
19. Druzhnikov, Y. (2018) Prisoner of Russia: Alexander Pushkin and the Political Uses of Nationalism Routledge.
20. Fire magazine writers. The theme of love in the lyrics of A. Pushkin. (in Russian)
<http://www.kostyor.ru/student/?n=52>
21. Yan, Y.L. (2006) Evolution of the system of moral values in lyric poetry: Pushkin (in Russian)
<http://www.dissercat.com/content/evolyutsiya-sistemy-nravstvennykh-tsennostei-v-lirike-pushkina>
22. Binyon, T. J. (2004) Pushkin: A Biography. Vintage.

Audio Recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gohkilHngEs>

Pushkin: Winter Morning

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

александр пушкин Зимнее утро

Мороз и солнце; день чудесный!

Date: 1829

The poem is in simple iambics, rhymed AAbCCb:

Морóз и со́лнце; день чуде́сный! 4A
Ещё ты дре́млешь, друг преле́стный — 4A
Пора́, красáвица, проснись: 4b
Откро́й со́мкнуты не́гой взóры 4C
Навстрéчу се́верной Аврóры, 4C
Звездóю се́вера явись! 4b

Winter Morning is a straightforward but evocative piece of Pushkin's maturity. The simple delights that winter brings are described with some relish, the scene enhanced by the poet's unnamed companion.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S., A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926 / Vintage Books 1958) 83-102.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 109-15.

Pushkin: Confession

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

александр пушкин ПРИЗНАНИЕ {1}

Я вас люблю, - хоть я бешусь,

Date: 1828

The poem is arranged in stanzas as 4 4 4 4 4 5 4 4 4 4.

The quatrains rhyme aBbA (1,9, 10):

{8}

Я вас люб лю, - хоть я бе шусь, 4a

Хоть э то труд и стыд нап рас ный, 4B

И в э той глу пос ти нес част ной 4B

У ва ших ног я приз на юсь! 4a

Or aBbA (2-5, 7-8):

Мне не к ли цу и не по ле там...4a

По ра, по ра мне быть ум ней! 4B

Но уз на ю по всем при ме там 4a

Бо лезнь люб ви в ду ше мо ей: 4B

And the central section rhymes :

Ког да за пяль ца ми при леж но 4A

Си ди те вы, скло нясь не бреж но, 4A

Гла за и куд ри о пус тя, - 4b

Я в у ми ле ньи, мол ча, неж но 4А

Лю бу юсь ва ми, как ди тя!..4b

Confession was written while Pushkin was still popular, wildly so before his marriage in 1830. The poem is a favourite of Pushkin lovers, and has been widely translated. {2-7} The crucial question is how seriously we're to take the inveterate womaniser, the scamp who bragged of 113 great loves before marriage. {9} I take the poem as a waggish piece, with tongue firmly wedged in cheek, and so replicate the feminine rhymes. A more charitable view would be simply to take it as accomplished light verse, which was popular in Pushkin's circle. {10}

References

1. Pushkin A. (1826) Confession.
https://rvb.ru/pushkin/01text/01versus/0423_36/1826/0419.htm
2. Lada, S. Translation of Pushkin's Confession.
https://russianlegacy.com/russian_culture/poetry/pushkin/confession.htm
3. Deutsche, B. Confession.
<https://www.cordula.ws/poems/confession.html>
4. Purgina, L. A. Pushkin, Confession (to Alina Osipova)
<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-pushkin-confession-translation-rus/>
5. Poetry and Translation writers. Confession.
<https://sites.google.com/site/poetryandtranslations/alexander-pushkin/confession>
6. Gurarie, G. (1995) Confession. <https://www.uni->

potsdam.de/u/slavistik/pushkin/opus_ueb/trans_en/priznanie/gu_confession.html

7. All Poetry

Writers.<https://allpoetry.com/poem/8454185-Confession-by-Alexander-Sergeyevich-Pushkin>

8. Shaw, T. (2011) Pushkin's Rhyming: A Comparative Study. Univ of Wisconsin Press, 2011

9. Facts and Details writers (2018) Pushkin.

http://factsanddetails.com/russia/Arts_Culture_Media_and_Sports/sub9_4b/entry-5028.html

10. Mirsky, D.S. (1958) A History of Russian Literature From Its Beginnings to 1900. Vintage Books. 86-90.

11. Facts and Details writers (2018) Russian Society.

http://factsanddetails.com/russia/People_and_Life/sub9_2e/entry-5014.html

12. Encyclopedia Britannica writers (2018) Russia: Daily Life and Social Customs.

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Russia/Daily-life-and-social-customs>

13. Шиманский А.П. (2007) Aristocracy in Late Nineteenth-century Russian Society.

http://portalus.ru/modules/english_russia/rus_readme.php

Audio Recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PC5Q1qIHYSU>

Pushkin: Caucasus

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

александр пушкин Кавказ

Кавказ подо мною. Один в вышине

Date: 1836

The Caucasus is written in ternary tetrameters, rhymed abba. There there is no constant pattern to masculine and feminine rhymes, though they tend to aBbaCC.

Кав каз по до* мною. О дин в вы ши не 4а
Сто ю над сне га ми у кра я стрем ни ны; 4В
О рел, с от да лен ной под няв шись вер ши ны, 4В
Па рит не под виж но со мной на рав не. 4а
От се ле я ви жу по то ков рож день е 4С
И пер во е гроз ных об ва лов дви жень е. 4С

Здесь ту чи сми рен но и дут по до мной; 4D
Сквозь них, низ вер га ясь, шу мят во до па ды; 4E
Под ни ми у те сов на ги е гро ма ды; 4E
Там ни же мох то щий, кус тар ник су хой; 4d
А там у же* ро щи, зе ле ны е се ни, 4F
Где пти цы ще бе чут, где ска чут о ле ни. 4F

А там уж и лю ди гнез дят ся в го рах, 4g
И пол за ют ов цы по злач ным стрем ни нам, 4H
И пас тырь нис хо дит к ве се лым до ли нам, 4H
Где мчит ся Араг ва в те нис тых бре гах, 4g

И ни щий на езд ник та ит ся в у щель е, 4I
Где Те рек иг ра ет в сви ре пом ве сель е; 4I

И гра ет и во ет, как зверь мо ло дой, 4j
За ви дев ший пи щу из клет ки же лез ной; 4K
И бьет ся о бе рег в враж де бес по лез ной 4K
И ли жет у те сы го лод ной вол ной...4j
Вот ще! нет ни пи щи е му, ни от ра ды: 4L
Тес нят е го* гроз но не мы е гро ма ды. 4L

The Caucasus is one of Pushkin's southern exile pieces. In 1820 he wrote his *Prisoner of the Caucasus* poem, which became enormously popular, but his political verse and lampoons nonetheless earned the deep distrust of Alexander I. From 1820 to 1823, Pushkin was exiled to the Caucasus and Crimea, where wrote *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*. {6} Pushkin was then recalled, but a revealed interest in atheism earned him a further two years of exile, now on his mother's estate near the northwest frontier town of Pskov, where he wrote most *The Gypsies*. With the accession of Nicholas I, Pushkin was again recalled from exile, married and found a nominal position at court, more as the husband of the impecunious beauty Natalya Goncharova than on his recognised merits. {7} *The Caucasus* belongs a later cycle of poems, published in 1836.

The Caucasus, that southwest-trending mountain range now occupying parts of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, is linguistically diverse terrain, {9} and was even more so in Pushkin's day. Its peoples were fiercely independent, and therefore trouble to the Russian government right

through to their 'pacification' in the protracted Caucasian Wars (1817-64). {10} Artists saw the area differently, delighting in the romance of a country so different from the unchanging steppelands, matched by a wild history and clash of colourful peoples, each with their strange customs and exotic dress. More than anyone, however, it was Pushkin who created its literary character. {11}. His *Prisoner of the Caucasus* (1822) was inspired by the poet's exile in Pyatigorsk, and successfully worked in Romantic and Orientalist themes around the Byronic figure of a Russian officer captured by tribesmen but rescued by a beautiful Circassian woman. {11} Despite its obvious Romantic and Orientalist themes, borrowed in part from Chateaubriand, Pushkin's use of academic footnotes and reliable ethnographic material his *Prisoner* gave the poem almost factual credibility. {12} It was highly influential on popular perceptions of this troublesome region. The poem indeed remains one of Pushkin's most famous works, and is often referenced in Russian popular culture, in films such as the Soviet comedy *Kidnapping, Caucasian Style*.

By 1818, Pushkin had acquired the accent that is his alone. The early poetry, that of *Ruslan and Ludmilla*, for example, was cold and brilliant, astonishingly assured by technical standards, but essentially French, depending on the exact word and use of metonymy and similar figures of speech rather than any persuasive emotion. His greatest successes were *Prisoner of the Caucasus* (1822) and *The Fountain of Bakhchisaray* (1824), where the form (verse and diction) were perfect but more impressive than

the content. Byron was an inspiration, here, but not much of an influence: *Eugene Onegin* has none of the sweep and satiric power of *Don Juan*. The first chapter is the crowning achievement of Pushkin's youth — brilliant, light-hearted and ebullient, growing slowly into the resigned and muffled tragedy of the eighth chapter. It has spontaneous vitality and an unerring sense of artistic measure, plus that peculiar Russian realism that is poetical without idealising anything way from reality — one which continued in Lermontov, Turgenev, Chekhov and Bunin. {15}

Caucasus is a little later, appearing in the 1823-36 collection, which includes impressions of journey Pushkin made to the region between May and August 1829. {13} Here again there is the love of freedom, denoted by the eagle and the turbulent Aragvi and Terek Rivers. The Caucasus is still a breath-takingly beautiful place, of course, {14} and Chechnya independence continues to trouble Russian autonomy. {16}

Postscript

The Caucasus ends on the point of saying more, and Pushkin did indeed write an incomplete stanza that would have been difficult to publish at the time. It was added to the 1936 collection of his works, and runs: {8}

Так буйную вольность законы теснят, а
Так дикое племя под властью тоскует, В
Так ныне безмолвный Кавказ негодует, В

Так чуждые силы его тяготят. . . а

So long is liberty oppressed by laws,
so will the tribes resist until they're free:
at length the smoldering Caucasus will be
unburdened by this monstrous foreign cause.

References

1. Pushkin, A. Caucasus.
https://rvb.ru/pushkin/01text/01versus/0423_36/1829/0509.htm
2. Caucasus Poem by Alexander Sergeyevitch Pushkin.
<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-caucas/>
3. Unbegaun, B.O. (1966) Russian Versification. O.U.P. 35.
4. In detail, the distinction between anapaestic and dactylic verse is a vexed and technical matter. See the references in Holcombe, C.J. (2015) Writing Verse: A Practical Guide. Ocaso Press. Section 9.3, particularly p.197.
5. Mirsky, D.S. (1958) A History of Russian Literature From Its Beginnings to 1900. Vintage Publishers. 88.
6. Poetry Foundation writers (2018) Alexander Pushkin.
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/alexander-pushkin>
7. Alexander Pushkin's Biography: 1799-1837.
<http://pushkin.ellink.ru/2018/english/push1.asp>
8. А.С.Пушкин. "Кавказ". Вопросы знатокам
<https://aillarionov.livejournal.com/97508.html#/97508.html>
9. Blumgardt, T (2209) Ethnolinguistic Groups in the

Caucasus Region 2009.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ethnic_Groups_In_Caucasus_Region_2009.jpg

10. Wikipedia writers (2018) History of the Caucasus.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Caucasus

11. Breining, O. (2015) The Caucasus in Russian Literary Imagination: Pushkin, Lermontov and Tolstoy.

https://www.academia.edu/24218561/The_Caucasus_in_Russian_Literary_

[Imagination_Pushkin_Lermontov_and_Tolstoy?auto=download](https://www.academia.edu/24218561/The_Caucasus_in_Russian_Literary_Imagination_Pushkin_Lermontov_and_Tolstoy?auto=download)

12. Druzhnikov, Y. Fugitive Record: Chapter 15. (in Russian)

<http://www.druzhnikov.com/text/rass/usnik/8.html>

13. Folk Character of Poems by Pushkin: The Extreme and Caucasus. (in

Russian)<http://www.testsoch.info/volnolyubivyyj-xarakter-stixotvorenij-a-s-pushkina-uznik-i-kavkaz/>

14. Wikipedia authors (2018) Aragvi River.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aragvi_River

15. Mirsky, 83-102

16. BookBrowse authors (2018) A Short History of Chechnya

<https://www.bookbrowse.com/blogs/editor/index.cfm/2013/4/23/A-Short-History-of-Chechnya>

Audio Recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHEBF7kJ9zE>

Pushkin: Prophet

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

александр пушкин: Пророк

Духовной жаждою томим

Date: 1826

Духóвной жа́ждою томím, 4а

В пусты́не мра́чной я влачи́лся, — 4В

И шестикры́лый серафíм 4а

На перепу́тье мне яви́лся. 4В

The poem is in simple iambic tetrameters, written without stanza breaks, but tightly rhymed in the Russian fashion as: a B a B c c D D e e F g g F h h I j j I k L k L m m N o N o. These 2 and 4 line groupings add emphasis to the narrative.

There are three points of interest: distortions of sense created by close rhyme patterns, the solemn tone achieved with old Slavonic words, and what the imagery means. We start with the imagery and the general sense of the poem:

The poem was written 1826, immediately after the abortive Decembrist coup of the previous year. Happily, Pushkin had been exiled to Mikhaylovskoye in the Psov area at the time, and couldn't physically take part in the attempt to replace the absolutist government by a constitutional monarchy, but his connections and

sympathies were well known. For Pushkin and liberal sentiment, the savage suppression was indeed a parting of the ways, a lost opportunity to avert autocratic rule (and thus the horrors of social upheavals that led to the Soviet Revolution). That being the case, the crossroad in line 4 of the poem is obviously significant.

References

1. Анализ стихотворения «Пророк» Пушкина. Brief analysis in [Russian](#)
2. Isaiah 6 [Bible](#)

Pushkin: Natalya's Letter

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

александр пушкин: Евгений Онегин (Письмо Татьяны)

Я к вам пишу – чего же боле?

Date: 1831

The Russian text is tightly rhymed in iambic tetrameters (A is a feminine rhyme, b is a masculine one). Tatiana's famous letter starts:

Я к вам пишу – чего же боле? А
Что я могу еще сказать? b
Теперь, я знаю, в вашей воле А
Меня презреньем наказать. b
Но вы, к моей несчастной доле А
Хоть каплю жалости храня, с
Вы не оставите меня. с
Сначала я молчать хотела; D
Поверьте: моего стыда е
Вы не узнали б никогда, е
Когда б надежду я имела D
Хоть редко, хоть в неделю раз f
В деревне нашей видеть вас, f
Чтоб только слышать ваши речи, G
Вам слово молвить, и потом h
Все думать, думать об одном h
И день и ночь до новой встречи. G
Но, говорят, вы нелюдим; i

В глуши, в деревне всё вам скучно, J
А мы... ничем мы не блестим, i
Хоть вам и рады простодушно. J
The Russian for the remainder of the letter is:

22. Зачём вы посетили нас? I
В глúши|глуши́ забы́того селёнья K
Я никогда́ не зна́ла б вас, I
Не зна́ла б го́рького муче́нья. K
Ду́ши|Души́ неопы́тной волне́нья K
Смирив со вре́менем (как знать?), m
По се́рдцу я нашлá бы дру́га, N
Была́ бы ве́рная супру́га N
30. И добродетельная мать. m
Друго́й!.. Нет, никому́ на све́те O
Не отдалá бы се́рдца́ я! p
То в ви́сшем сужденó совете... O
То во́ля не́ба: я твоя́; p
Вся жизнь моя́ была́ залóгом Q
Свидáнья ве́рного с тобо́й; r
Я зна́ю, ты мне по́слан бо́гом, Q
До грóба ты храните́ль мой... r
Ты в снови́дeньях мне явля́лся, T
40. Незр́имый, ты мне был уж мил, u
Твой чу́дный взгляд меня́ томил, u
В душе́ твой го́лос раздава́лся T
Давно...нет, это был не сон! v
Ты чуть вошел, я вмиг узнала, W
Вся обомлела, заплыла W
И в мыслях молвила: вот он! v
Не правда ль? Я тебя слыхала: X
Ты говорил со мной в тиши, y

Когда я бедным помогала X
50. Или молитвой услаждала X
Тоску волнүемой души? y
И в это самое мгновенье z
Не ты ли, милое виденье, z
В прозрачной темноте мелькнул, а
55. Проникнул тихо к изголовью? В
Не ты ль, с отрадой и любовью, В
Слова надежды мне шепнул? а
Кто ты, мой ангел ли хранитель, С
Или коварный искуситель: С
60. Мои сомнения разреши. d
Быть может, это всё пустое, E
Обман неопытной души! d
И суждено совсем иное... E
Но так и быть! Судьбу мою f
Отныне я тебе вручаю, G
Перед тобой слезы лью, G
Твоей защиты умоляю... f
Вообрази: я здесь одна, h
Никто меня не понимает, I
70. Рассудок мой изнемогает, I
И молча гибнуть я должна. h
Я жду тебя: единым взором J
Надежды сердца оживи k
Иль сон тяжёлый перерви, k
Увы, заслуженный укором! J
Кончаю! Страшно перечести... I
Стыдом и страхом замираю... M
Но мне поручкой ваша честь, I
79. И смело ей себя вверяю...M

The translation can also be made in masculine rhymes entirely.

I write this letter: you will see
there's very little left unsaid.
It's clearly in your gift to be
disparaging of one ill bred
enough as scant propriety.

But if some pity can be stirred
you will not leave my call unheard.
I'd, firstly, never meant to tell
how far this girlish heart would go
10. or even let my interest show
but simply trust that all go well.

I'd barely see you once a week,
around our village, hear you speak,
would hold forth naturally and then,
in greeting you, have every right
to think on further, day and night,
towards the hour we'd meet again.

But you're, they say, unsociable:
our rural solitude's to blame,
20. and we, of course, are awfully dull,
but pleased to greet you all the same.

Why did you visit us, or even deign
to know us in this rustic place?
I'd not have met you, nor would pain
have left its heart-tormenting trace.

Just inexperience, is it? Start
of new adventures for the heart?
It could have been some other you
where I in time would find a friend,
30. and be good wife to, doubtless end
as well-regarded mother too?

But, no! There's no one here on earth
I'd give my heart to, see as cause
for that high court to prove its worth.
It's Heaven's will that I be yours.

My life till now was golden shod
with faithfulness conjecture gave.
I know that you are come of God
to be my guardian to the grave.
40. You've long appeared to me in dreams,
and, though invisible, took form
that winning words at once were warm
and close inviting . . . are, it seems . . .
For though it came as from afar
immediately that voice was true,
a man walked in, and that was you.
My whirling mind said, here you are!

But I had heard you, so I swear,
in quiet speaking to the core
50. when I was helping with the poor,
or close delighting in my prayer,
and in that tumult knew my soul
was one with yours, complete and whole.

In darkness even I could see
you whisper words that by my bed
were love and joy to me ahead.
Were not these proper hopes for me?
My guardian angel, aren't you, who
would never tempt with things not true?

60. Enough is said, so speak the truth.
Comes this from made-up, idle source,
or some confusion sprung from youth,
when future takes a different course?

Suppose that's so, does not my fate
depend on what I'm telling you?
In tears I languish: what you do
protects me, surely, in this state?

Imagine me alone instead,
who lacks a friend to hear her out,
70. whose burdened mind gives way to doubt
and to the grave bears thoughts unsaid.

So now I wait. Your words approach
which maybe will revive my hope
but just as likely give you scope
for needful censure and reproach.

I dare not read what's written here
for shame, and consternation too:
my honour's forfeit: all too clear
the self that I entrust to you.

References and Resources for Eugene Onegin

1. Eugene Onegin: Russian text.
<http://www.rvb.ru/pushkin/01text/04onegin/01onegin/0836.htm>
2. Lee, P.M. (2017) English Versions of Pushkin's Eugene Onegin.
<https://www.york.ac.uk/depts/maths/histstat/pml1/onegin/>
3. Arndt (1963): Alexander Pushkin, Eugene Onegin: A novel in verse. The Bollingen prize translation in the Onegin Stanza by Walter Arndt [1916–2011]. Critical Essays by Roman Jakobson, D.J. Richards, J. Thomas Shaw and Sona Stephan Hoisington. New York, NY: Dutton 1963. SBN 0-525-47132-4, LCCN (Library of Congress Control Number): 63024729.
4. Arndt (1992): Alexander Pushkin, Eugene Onegin: A novel in verse (Second Edition, Revised). The Bollingen prize translation in the Onegin Stanza extensively revised by Walter Arndt [1916–2011]. Critical Essays by Roman Jakobson, D.J. Richards, J. Thomas Shaw and Sona Stephan Hoisington. Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis 1992. ISBN 0 87501 106
5. Beck: Alexander Pushkin, Eugene Onegin. Translated with an introduction and notes by Tom Beck [1941-]. Sawtry, Cambs: Dedalus 2004. ISBN 1 903517 28 1.
6. Bonver: Evgeny Onegin (A Novel in Verses). 2001–2003; last correction 2004. Translated by Yevgeny Bonver [Евгений Бонвер]. On the web at <http://www.poetryloverspage.com/yevgeny/pushkin/evge>

ny_onegin.html

7. Briggs: Yevgeny Onegin: A Novel in Verse by Alexander Pushkin, translated from the Russian with an introduction by Anthony Briggs. London: Pushkin Press 2016. ISBN 978 1 782271 91

8. Clarke (2011): Eugene Onegin: A novel in verse by Alexander Pushkin. Translated and with a commentary by Roger Clarke [1939-] (includes the Russian text on facing pages). Richmond: Oneworld Classics 2011. ISBN 978-1-84749-160-2.

9. Clough: Pushkin's 'Eugene Onegin'. A new version with the text by S.D.P. Clough. Malvern Wells or Oxford: S.D.P. Clough [1988]. ISBN 0947998063.

10. Corr e: Eugene Onegin by A. Pushkin. Translation of Cantos 1 and 2 by Alan D[avid]. Corr e. 1999. On the web at <https://pantherfile.uwm.edu/corre/www/pushkin/>

11. Deutsch (1936): Eugene Onegin, a novel in verse [translated by Babette Deutsch, 1895–1982] in The Poems, Prose and Plays of Alexander Pushkin. Selected and Edited, with an Introduction by Avraham Yarmolinsky. New York: Random House 1936 and 1943. British Library Shelfmark 2338.e.6. LCCN (Library of Congress Control Number): 37000079.

12. Deutsch (1943): Eugene Onegin, a novel in verse, by Alexander Puskin; a new translation by Babette Deutsch [1895–1982]; edited, with a special introduction, by Avrahm Yarmolinsky; illustrated with lithographs by Fritz Eichenberg, New York: Heritage Press 1943. LCCN (Library of Congress Control Number): 43012373.

13. Deutsch (1964): Alexander Pushkin, Eugene Onegin: A novel in verse. Translated by Babette Deutsch [1895–1982]. London, etc.: Penguin 1964. ISBN 0 14044151

14. Elton: Alexander Pushkin, Evgeny Onegin by A.S. Pushkin; translated by Oliver Elton [1861–1945] and illustrated by M.V. Dobujinsky; with a foreword by Desmond MacCarthy. London: The Pushkin Press, 1937, reprinted 1943. LCCN (Library of Congress Control Number): 38011103.
15. Emmet & Makourenkova: A.S. Pushkin, Eugene Onegin. Translated by Olivia Emmet, Svetlana Makourenkova [Светлана Александровна Макуренкова]. Москва: Прогресс-Традиция [Moscow: Progress-Traditsiya] 1999. Reprinted Москва: Река Времен [Moscow: Reka Vremen] 2009. ISBN 978-5-85319-124-2.
16. Falen: Alexander Pushkin, Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse. Translated and with an introduction by James E. Falen [1935-]. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 1995. ISBN 0 19 282491 0. Audio version read by Stephen Fry available on the web at <http://fryreadsonegin.com/>
17. Hobson A.C. Пушкин Евгений Онегин: роман в стихах. В переводе Мэри Хобсона / Evgeny Onegin: A novel in verse by Alexander Pushkin. Translated by Mary Hobson [1926-]. Москва: Русская школа 2011 [Moscow: Russkaya shkola (Russian school) 2011]. ISBN 978-5-91696-012-9. The same text is reprinted (with a small number of corrections made) London: Anthem Press 2016. ISBN 978-1-78308-458-6, with the title changed to Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse (although the hero is still referred to as Evgeny in the text). Available as a Naxos Audiobook. Not in British Library or Library of Congress. See <http://www.rusterra.com/2009/02/12/meri-hobson/> and <http://www.newmillennium.ru>

18. Hofstadter Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse by Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin. A Novel Versification by Douglas Hofstadter [1945–]. New York, NY: Basic Books 1999. ISBN 0 465 02093 3.
19. Hoyt: Alexander Pushkin, Eugene Onegin: A novel in verse. In the original Russian and in English Translation by Henry M. Hoyt [1914-2012]. Indianapolis IN: Dog Ear Publishing 2008. ISBN 978 159858 340 3
20. Johnston (1977): Alexander Pushkin, Eugene Onegin. Translated by [Sir] Charles [Hepburn-]Johnston [1912–1986]. London: Scolar Press 1977. British Library Shelfmark X.989/52100. LCCN (Library of Congress Control Number): 79309650. This version with minor revisions is on the web at http://lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/onegin_j.txt
21. Kayden: Alexander Pushkin, Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse. Translated from the Russian by Eugene M[ark]. Kayden [1886–1977]. Yellow Springs, OH: The Antioch Press 1964. LCCN (Library of Congress Control Number): 62021072
22. Kline: Alexander Pushkin, Eugene Onegin. Translated by A. S. Kline 2009. On the web at <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/klineaspushkin.htm>
23. Kozlov (1994): Pushkin A.S. Eugene Onegin: Novel in verse. Translated by Kozlov S[ergej]. N[ikolaevich]. [Сергей Николаевич Козлов] [Профессор, Московский Государственный Социальный Университет; Professor, Moscow State Social University]. Москва: из-во «Союз» [Moscow: «Soyuz»] 1994. ISBN 5-7139-0031-2. Not in British Library or Library of Congress.
- Pushkin's 24. Kozlov (1998): Pushkin A.S. Eugenij Onegin: novel in verse. Translated by S[ergej].

N[ikolaevich]. Kozlov [Сергей Николаевич Козлов]
 [Профессор, Московский Государственный Социальный
 Университет; Professor, Moscow State Social University].
 Москва: Риф "Рой" [Moscow: Rif "Roj"] 1998. ISBN 5-
 89956-108-4. Rare in the West; British Library Shelfmark
 YA.2003.a.40485. Ledger:Yevgeny Onegin. A dual
 language version. English translation by G[erard].
 25. R. Ledger. Oxford: Oxquarry Books 2001. ISBN 0
 9540272 0 5. On the web at [http://www.pushkins-
 poems.com/](http://www.pushkins-poems.com/)

26. Liberson (1975): Eugene Onegin revisited: Love
 poetry of Alexander Pushkin and Charles Baudelaire
 translated by Wladimir T. Liberson [1904–1994]. New
 York, NY: Sage 1975. ISBN 0-89360-004-0.

27. Litoshick: A.S.Pushkin. Eugeny Onegin (1–3 chapter).
 English translation Dennis Litoshick. Last modified 2001.
 On the web at
[http://lib.mediaring.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/litoshik.
 txt](http://lib.mediaring.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/litoshik.txt)

28. Lowenfeld From Julian Henry Lowenfeld, My Talisman,
 The poetry and life of Alexander Pushkin: Translated with
 Commentary, and a Biography of Pushkin, New York, NY:
 Green Lamp Press 2010. 29. Mitchell: Alexander Pushkin,
 Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse Translated with an
 introduction and notes by Stanley Mitchell [1932–2011].
 London, etc.: Penguin Books 2008. ISBN 978 0 140 44810
 8. 30. Nabokov (1964): Eugene Onegin. A novel in verse
 by Alexander Pushkin. Translated from the Russian with a
 Commentary by Vladimir [Vladimirovich] Nabokov
 [Владимир Владимирович Набоков] [1899–1977].
 London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1964. British Library
 Shelfmark X.908/4018. LCCN (Library of Congress Control

Number): 63010708

31. Nabokov (1975): Eugene Onegin. A novel in verse by Alexander Pushkin. Translated from the Russian with a Commentary by Vladimir [Vladimirovich] Nabokov [Владимир Владимирович Набоков] [1899–1977] (revised edition). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1975. ISBN 0 691 01905 3.

and was reprinted in 32. Phillipps-Wolley: "A Russian Rake". Being a paraphrase of the first book of Pushkin's "Eugene Onegin," in something like the metre of the original. 1883. This rough translation [by Clive Phillipps-Wolley, 1853–1918] first appeared in the Proceedings of the Anglo-Russian Literary Society Songs from a Young Man's Land, Toronto: Thomas Allen 1917. LCCN (Library of Congress Control Number): 39006985. On the web at http://www.archive.org/stream/songsfromyoungma00philuoft/songsfromyoungma00philuoft_djvu.txt

33. Portnoi Russian Dual Language Book: Eugene Onegin in Russian and English by Alexander Pushkin, Nikolay Portnoi, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform 2016. ISBN 978-1533206848. 34. Radin & Patrick: Eugene Onegin. Translated from the Russian of Alexander Pushkin by Dorothea Prall Radin [1889–1948] and George Z[inovei]. Patrick [1886–1946]. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1937. LCCN (Library of Congress Control Number): 37027746. British Library Shelfmark 20030.bb.36.

35. Sharer: Michael Sharer [Michael Shuwarger] [1913–], A Rendition of Alexander Pushkin's "Eugene Onegin": A Novel in Verse. Los Angeles: Beamish Publishers 1996. LCCN (Library of Congress Control Number): 96222888.

36. Simmons: Evgenie Onegin: A Romance in Verses.

Done into English verse by Bayard Simmons. Typewritten (134 pp.) [London] 1950. British Library Shelfmark Cup.504.gg.5.

37. Spalding: Alexander Pushkin, Eugene Onéguine: A romance of Russian life. Translated from the Russian by Lieut.-Col. [Henry] Spalding, London: Macmillan and Co. 1881. British Library Shelfmark 11585.i.28. [Since this is now rare, it may be worth knowing that there there are two modern reprints: one by Gloucester: Dodo Press, 2009, ISBN 1409906701, and the other, entitled Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse (and with no indication of the original date of publication of the translation) by Seven Treasures Publications, 2008, ISBN 9781440496875.] On the web at <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/23997> or http://rt.com/Russia_Now/Russian_literature/Alexander_Pushkin_1799-1837.html

38. Stone: Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse, by Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin (translated by Marilyn K. Stone) (Unpublished manuscript, 2005). Referred to on the web at

<http://www.cogsci.indiana.edu/EugeneOnegin.html>

39. Thomas: Onegin, by Alexander Pushkin, translated by D[onald] M[ichael] Thomas [1935-], London: Francis Boutle Publishers 2011 ISBN 978 1903427 64 4. Extract (Chapter 8, XXXIX-XLVII) in Modern Poetry in Translation: Polyphony Series 3 No. 14 (2011) and at <http://www.mptmagazine.com/poem/extract-from-yevgeni-onegin-160>

40. Kline, A.S. (2009) Alexander Pushkin: Eugene Onegin. <https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Russian/Onegin3.php>

41. Ledger, G.R. (2009) Pushkin's Poems: Eugene

- Onegin. <http://www.pushkins-poems.com/Yev311.htm>
42. Johnson, Chales (1977) Alexander Pushkin, Eugene Onegin. http://wikitranslate.org/wiki/Pushkin_-_Tatyana%27s_Letter
43. Alexander Pushkin - Tatyana's letter to Onegin: Verse. <https://rustih.ru/Alexander-pushkin-pismo-tatyany-k-oneginu/>
44. Holcombe, C.J. (2004) Translating Pushkin. <http://www.textetc.com/workshop/wt-pushkin-1.html>
45. Pushkin Remembrance. <http://rupoem.ru/pushkin/kogda-dlya-smertnogo.aspx>
46. Bristol, E. (1991) A History of Russian Poetry. O.U.P., 114.
47. Baring M. (1966) From the Russian of Alexander Pushkin. Maurice Baring (1874-1945) in Steine,G. Poem Into Poem. Penguin Books. Also at: [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Remembrance_\(Pushkin\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Remembrance_(Pushkin))
48. Leontiev, S. M. Reading (MP3 and Real Audio) of Eugene Onegin. https://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/Александр_Сергеевич_Пушкин
49. Obolensky, D. (1962) The Penguin Book of Russian Verse. xxxviii.
50. Yarmolinsky, A. Editor. (1949) A Treasury of Russian Verse. Macmillan. https://archive.org/stream/treasuryofrussia012249mbp/treasuryofrussia012249mbp_djvu.txt
51. Bristol (1991) 109 -15.
52. English and Russian verse preferences are aptly summarised in Kembball, R. (2019) Alexander Blok: A study in rhythm and metre. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. Chapter 1. Google Books.

53. Bowra, C.M. ed. (1943) A Book of Russian Verse.
MacMillan. pp. 70-71.

Audio Recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-sWRYzZ7MpQ>

Pushkin: Remembrance

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

александр пушкин: Воспоминание

Когда для смертного умолкнет шумный день

Date: 1828

The poem is in alternating iambic hexameters and tetrameters.

Когд́а для смёртного умóлкнет шóмный день	6а
И на немýе стóгны гра́да	4В
Полупрозра́чная наля́жет но́чи тень	6а
И сон, дневных́ трудóв награ́да,	4В

References

1. Mirsky, D.S., A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926 / Vintage Books 1958) 83-102.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 114.

Pushkin: Gypsies

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

александр пушкин: ЦЫГАНЫ

Цыганы шумною толпой а

Date: 1827

Published in 1827, *The Gypsies* is the last of Puskin's southern cycle of romantic narrative poems, and the most popular. In it Pushkin moves away from the earlier influences of Byron and Chateaubriand, and fashions something cooler and more exact, a style that will serve him well with the later *Eugene Onegin* and *The Bronze Horseman*.

Russian verse is a little different from English, and the prosody pages give the natural or intrinsic stresses possessed by the individual Russian words. Russian words may or may not have a stressed syllable, but they never have a secondary stress. One word, of whatever number of syllables, can therefore have no more than one stressed syllable. By Russian verse conventions, however — highly artificial but serving well for two centuries — multisyllabic words can nonetheless be fitted into a simple metrical scheme by assigning an unvoiced stress to syllables that are not stressed in conversation, allowing them to be 'sensed' or 'heard' in the mind only. But while the natural stress pattern is individual words is largely fixed, the Russian poet can chose his words so that the

number of natural stresses varies from the full complement to practically none in any given line. Russian verse is therefore more fluid and delicately patterned than its English counterpart, and end rhyme is correspondingly more important.

Pushkin's opening lines, for example, have 2, 2, 3 and 3 natural stresses respectively and are rhymed a B a B.

Цыга́ны шу́мною толпо́й 4а
По Бессара́бии кочу́ют. 4В
Они́ сего́дня над реко́й 4а
В шатра́х изодо́ранных ночу́ют. 4В

The English:

The gypsies in their noisy way 4a
that far through Bessarabia roam 4b
are camped across the river, stay 4a
in threadbare tents that make their home. 4b

The translation faithfully replicates Pushkin's rhyme schemes throughout, but replaces the feminine rhyme with a masculine one.

References and Sources for Both Excerpts

1. Wikisource Russian text. Цыганы (поэма — Пушкин)
<https://ru.wikisource.org>
2. Ledger, G.R. (2009) Gypsies (1827) Russian text and partial translation <http://www.pushkins-poems.com/Gypsies01.htm>
3. Zheleznova, I. (1922) Alexander Pushkin: Selected Works in Two Volumes. Volume One. Progress Publishers, Moscow.
<https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.458633/2015.458633>.
4. Wikipedia writers (2018) The Gypsies (poem)
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gypsies_\(poem\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gypsies_(poem))
5. Arndt, W.W. (1965) 'The Gypsies' by Alexander Pushkin. Slavic Review.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2492329>
6. Bonver, Y. (2005) Alexander Pushkin: The Gypsies.
<https://www.poetryloverspage.com/yevgeny/pushkin/gypsies.html>
7. Clarke, R. (2019) Gypsies - extract from my translation. https://www.roger-clarke.co.uk/?page_id=320 (Prose rendering of later part of poem).
8. Mirsky, D.S. (1881/1958) A History of Russian Literature. Vintage Books. 92-3.
9. Bristol, E. (1991) A History of Russian Poetry. O.U.P., 111.
10. Kropotkin, P. (1915) Ideas and Realities in Russian Literature. New York: Alfred Knopf. Chapter 2.
11. Lukashenok, I. (2012) Insight about Pushkin's poem

Gypsies (in Russian)

<https://www.proza.ru/2012/11/04/783>

12. Literacy writers (2008) We write poems but with Pushkin. (in Russian) <http://docplayer.ru/37056293-Aleko-ostav-nas-gordyy-chelovek-ty-ne-rozhden-dlya-dikoy-doli-ty-dlya-sebya-lish-hochesh-voli.html>

13. Kropotkin, P. (1915) Ideas and Realities in Russian Literature. New York: Alfred Knopf. Chapter 2. http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/kropotkin/literature/russianlit_ch2.html

14. Phillips, M. (2019) Alexander Sergevich Pushkin (1799-1837) <https://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/features/blackeuro/pdf/pushkin.pdf>

15. Characteristics of Pushkin. Grouped under eight headings (in Russian). http://www.pojety-znaki-odarenosti.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=276&Itemid=159

16. Klimova, S. Byron's Turkish Tales and Russian Byronism: Pushkin and the Early Nineteenth Russian Reception of Byron. <https://online.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/doi/abs/10.3828/bj.33.2.5?journalCode=bjc>

17. Butchard, D. (2015) Tracing Lord Byrons Influence on Pushkin. https://www.rbth.com/literature/2015/01/28/tracing_lord_byrons_influence_on_pushkin_43213.html

18. Karlinsky, S. et al (2013) Two Pushkin Studies: Pushkin, Chateaubriand and the Romantic Pose in Freedom from Violence and Lies: Studies in Russian Poetry and Music. Academic Studies Press.

19. Golburt, L. (2016) Alexander Pushkin as a Romantic.

- https://www.academia.edu/26047469/Alexander_Pushkin_as_a_Romantic. In Hamilton, P. (2016) *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism*. 517-524.
20. Allen, E. (2007) *A Fallen Idol is Still a God: Lermontov and the Quandaries of Cultural Transation*. Chapter 3. Stanford University Press.
21. Greenleaf, M. (1994) *Byron's Byronic Apprenticeship: A Problem in Cultural Syncretism*. *The Russian Review*.
https://www.jstor.org/stable/131193?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents
22. Barzun, J. (1953) *Byron and the Byronic*. *The Atlantic*.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1953/08/byron-and-byronic/309156/>
23. Fadipe, F.S. (1975) *A Comparative Study of Byron and Pushkin with Special Attention to Don Juan and Evgeny Onegin*. N.Texas State University MA Thesis.
24. Cochrane, P. (2015) *Byron's European Impact*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 266 305.
- 25 Lemon, A. (2000) *Between Two Fires* Duke University Press. Google Books.
26. Muryanov, M.F. *Pushkin and the Gipsy* (in Russian)
<http://www.philology.ru/literature2/muryanov-99.htm>

Pushkin: Bronze Horseman (prelude)

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

александр пушкин: МЕДНЫЙ ВСАДНИК

На берегу́ пусты́нных волн

Date: 1833

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters throughout.

На берегу́ пусты́нных волн 4a
Стоя́л он, дум вели́ких полн, 4a
И вдаль гляде́л. Пред ним широко 4B
Река́ неслася; бе́дный че́лн 4a
По ней стреми́лся одино́ко. 4B
По мши́стым, то́пким берега́м 4d
Черне́ли избы́ здесь и там, 4d
Прию́т убо́гого чухо́нца; 4E
И лес, неве́домый луча́м 4d
10. В тумáne спря́танного со́лнца, 4E
Круго́м шумéл.

 И ду́мал он: 4f
Отсе́ль грозить мы бу́дем шведу́, 4G
Здесь бу́дет го́род зало́жен 4f
На зло надме́нному соседу́. 4G
Приро́дой здесь нам суждено́ 4h
В Евро́пу проруби́ть окно́, 4h
Ного́ю твёрдой стать при мо́ре. 4I
Сюда́ по но́вым им волна́м 4j

Все фла́ги в го́сти бу́дут к нам, 4j
20. И запиру́ем на простóре. 4I

Прошлó сто лет, и ю́ный град, 4k
Полно́щных стран красá и дíво, 4L
Из тьмы лесóв, из то́пи блат 4k
Вознёсся пы́шно, гордели́во; 4L
Где прéжде фíнский рыболо́в, 4m
Печáльный па́сынок приро́ды, 4N
Оди́н у низких берего́в 4m
Бросáл в неведóмые во́ды 4N
Свой ветхой не́вод, ны́не там 4o
30. По оживлённым берега́м 4o

Грома́ды стрóйные тесня́тся 4P
Дворцо́в и ба́шен; кораблí 4q
Толпо́й со всех концо́в земли 4q
К богáтым при́станям стремя́тся; 4P
В гранít оделася Невá; 4r
Мосты́ повíсли над во́дами; 4S
Тёмно-зелёными сада́ми 4S
Её покрýлись островá, 4r
И пéред младшею столи́цей 4T
40. Помéркла ста́рая Москва́, 4r

Как пéред но́вою цари́цей 4T
Порфиронóсная вдова́. 4r
Люблю́ тебя́, Петра́ творéнье, 4U
Люблю́ твой стрóгий, стрóйный вид, 4v
Невы́ держáвное течéнье, 4U
Береговóй её гранít, 4v
Твои́х огра́д узóр чугу́нный, 4W

Твои́х задумчи́вых ноце́й 4x
Прозра́чный су́мрак, блеск безлу́нный, 4W
50. Когда́ я в ко́мнате моёй 4x

Пишу́, чита́ю без ла́мпады, 4Y
И я́сны спя́щие грома́ды 4Y
Пусты́нных у́лиц, и светла́ 4z
Адмиралте́йская игла́, 4z
И, не пуска́я тьму но́чную 4A
На золоты́е небеса́, 4b
Одна́ заря́ сменить дру́гую 4A
Спешит, дав но́чи полчаса́2. 4b
Люблю́ зима́ твоёй жесто́кой 4A

60. Недви́жный возду́х и моро́з, 4c
Бег са́нок вдоль Не́вы широ́кой, 4A
Девя́чьи ли́ца я́рче роз, 4c
И блеск, и шум, и го́вор бала́в, 4d
А в час пиру́шки холосто́й 4e
Шипе́нье пени́стых бока́лов 4d
И пу́нша пламень голу́бой. 4e
Люблю́ вои́нственную жи́вость 4F
Потеш́ных Марсо́вых полёй, 4g
Пехо́тных ра́тей и конёй 4g
70. Однообра́зную краси́вость, 4F

В их стро́йно зыблемом стро́ю 4h
Лоску́тья сих знаме́н победных, 4I
Сия́нье ша́пок э́тих ме́дных, 4I
На сквозь простре́ленных в бою́. 4h
Люблю́, воённая столи́ца, 4J
Твоёй тверды́ни дым и гром, 4k

Когда́ полно́щная ца́рица 4J
 Дару́ет сы́на в ца́рской дом, 4k
 Или́ побéду над врагóм 4k
 80. Росси́я снóва торжествúет, 4L

 Или́, взломáв свой с́иний лёд, 4m
 Невá к моря́м егó несёт 4m
 И, чу́я вешни дни, ликúет. 4L
 Красúйся, град Петро́в, и стой 4n
 Неколеб́имо как Росси́я, 4O
 Да уми́рится же с тобо́й 4n
 И побеждённая стих́ия; 4O
 Враждú и плен стар́инный свой 4n
 Пусть во́лны ф́инские забúдут 4P
 90. И тщéтной злóбою не бúдут 4P

 Трево́жить вéчный сон Петро́! 4q
 Была́ ужáсная порá, 4q
 Об ней свежо́ воспомина́нье... 4R
 Об ней, друзья́ мо́й, для вас 4s
 Начну́ своё повествова́нье. 4R
 86. Печáлен бúдет мой рассказ. 4s

The poem falls into three sections. The Prelude opens with a short account of Peter the Great's decision to build a new capital in the Neva swamps, but the bulk of the Introduction approximates to an ode to St. Petersburg, written a rather formal, 18th century style. Succeeding parts deal with the great flood of 1824, and have a more relaxed and even conversational style. Part One depicts the misfortunes of Evgeny, a lowly clerk, who suffers the ill effects of the flood. Eventually, in Part Two, Evgeny

gets a boat to visit his beloved's home, only to find it swept away. He loses his reason, roams the streets and, a year later, cursing St. Petersburg's founder, imagines the monument to Peter come alive and start chasing him. Evgeny's death is not described, but his dead body is found in a ruined hut floating on the water. Despite the two styles, and the unsolved conflict between personal happiness and regal authority, {2} The Bronze Horseman succeeds through Pushkin's legendary verse abilities.

References

1. The Bronze Horseman (poem) [Wikipedia](#).
2. Dewey, J. The Bronze Horseman. Translator's [Commentary.org](#) site.
3. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (1926-58, Random House) 98.
4. The Bronze Horseman: Russian [text](#). Also [iLibrary](#).
2. 5. Pushkin Institute's excellent audio [recording](#).

Pushkin: Monument

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

александр пушкин: Ехегі monumentum

Я памятник себе воздвиг нерукотворный

Date: 1836

The poem is in simple iambics, rhymed AbAb:

Я пámятник себé воздвíg нерукотвóрный, 6A

К нéму не заростет нарóдная тропá, 6b

Вознёсся вь́ше он главóю непокóрной 6A

Александрíйского столпá. 4b

The Monument is one of the Pushkin's better-known poems, and vies in celebrity with Derzhavin poem of the same name. Both of course descend from Horace Ode III.30, and present the translator with formidable problems if something accomplished and convincing is wanted. The Monument stanza is written as three hexameters and a concluding tetrameter, rhymed as 6A 6b 6A 4b poem. That is a perfectly natural stanza in Russian, but much less so in English. Added to this are the proper names that Pushkin weaves in, which have to be included to give the ode its wide-ranging power

References

1. Mirsky, D.S., A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926 / Vintage Books 1958) 83-102.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 109-15.

Baratynsky: Death

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Евгений Баратынский: Смерть

Смерть дочью тьмы не назову я

Date: 1828

The poem is written in simple tetrameters, rhymed AbAb:

Смерть дщѣрью тьмы не назову́ я 4А

И, раболѣпною мечтѳой 4b

Гробовый ѳостов ей дару́я, 4А

Не ополчу́ её косо́й. 4b

Evgeny Abramovich Baratynsky (1800-1844)

Evgeny Abramovich Baratynsky was born in 1800, briefly educated in an aristocratic military school, served in the Petersburg footguards, was posted to Finland, and began writing the poetry much admired by Pushkin's friends and their circle. In 1826 he married and settled in Moscow, turning out several volumes of verse. The early work is light verse, but fastidiously turned, and then came three verse novels: *Eda*, *The Ball* and *The Gypsy Girl*, reminiscent of Pushkin, but more realistic and less successful. Pushkin's earlier poetry has an easy naturalness, but in Baratynsky the careful thought and effort remain in the lines, accomplished though they are.

Baratynsky's verse is sonorous, with a cold, metallic brilliance that brings out a carefully tempered wit that belongs more to

the previous century. Like the equally famous Autumn of 1837, this Death of 1829 is also splendidly rhetorical in the grand manner of classicism, but with Baratynsky's own personal note of melancholy.

References and Resources

1. Mirsky, D.S., *A History of Russian Literature* (Knopf 1926 / Vintage Books 1958) 104-7.
2. Bristol, E., *A History of Russian Poetry* (O.U.P.) 116-18.

Baratynsky: Autumn

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Евгений Баратынский: Сентябрь

Смерть дщерью тьмы не назову я

Date: 1841

Baratynsky's poem employs an iambic ten-line stanza rhymed as follows:

И вот сентябрь! замедля свой восход, 5а

Сияньем хладным солнце блещет, 4В

И луч его в зеркале зыбком вод 5а

Неверным золотом трепещет. 4В

Седая мгла виется вокруг холмов; 5с

Росой затоплены равнины; 4D

Желтеет сень кудрявая дубов, 5с

И красен круглый лист осины; 4D

Умолкли птиц живые голоса, 5е

Безмолвен лес, беззвучны небеса! 5е

This long poem opens (and briefly concludes) with traditional vistas, of a final ripening before the dreary sterility of winter, but the trains of thought developed are vast, conflicting and comfortless. Baratynsky's temperament was naturally gloomy, half searching for love and half despairing of finding it. So the moralizing tone here, very different from the sensuous hedonism of

the English Romantics. Baratynsky married, apparently happily, but that melancholy, which gave a piquant charm to his early poems, here becomes an abiding human concern.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S., *A History of Russian Literature* (Knopf 1926 / Vintage Books 1958) 104-7.
2. Bristol, E., *A History of Russian Poetry* (O.U.P.) 116-18.

Baratynsky: Spring has Come

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Евгений Баратынский: Весна, весна! как воздух чист!

Весна, весна! как воздух чист!

Date: 1832

The poem is written in alternating iambic tetrameters and trimeters, rhymed хаха:

Весна́, весна́! как во́здух чист! 4х
 Как я́сен небоскло́н! 3а
Своёй лазурию живо́й 4х
 Слепи́т мне о́чи он. 3а

Evgeny Abramovich Baratynsky's work was rather belatedly appreciated, though here comparable with Tyutchev's. *Spring, spring' how pure the air!* is one of Baratynsky's most famous poems, familiar to Russian schoolchildren, but notable for its lively dynamism: streams ripple, clouds fly, a lark sings, a river carries ice, etc.

Some observations. The Russian is bulkier than the English, which requires we pad out the lines a little if we want to keep the 4343 stanza form, which I think we do. There are also many small departures from fidelity. The 'brightly sing' is literally only 'the clouds fly!' in the

Russian. My ' a high and brilliant thing: / for so the soaring lark begins' is literally ' and in the bright height / the invisible lark sings'. And so on, all needed to make the poem work properly in English.

Brief References

1. Mirsky, D.S., A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926 / Vintage Books 1958) 104-7.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 116-18.
3. Darklore Children's Encyclopedia [Analysis](#) (in English).

Baratynsky: Dissuasion

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Евгений Баратынский: Разуверение

Не искушай меня без нужды

Date: 1821

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters, occasionally irregular, and the stanzas are rhymed AbAb AbbA AbbA AbAb. The prosody of the first two stanzas is:

Не искуша́й меня́ без нужды́ 4A
Возвра́том не́жности твоёй: 4b
Разочара́ванному чу́жды 4A
Все обольще́нья пре́жних дней! 4b

Уж я не ве́рю увере́ньям, 4C
Уж я не ве́рую в любóвь, 4d
И не могу́ преда́ться вновь 4d
Раз измен́вшим снови́дeньям! 4C

Baratynsky's poem, variously called *Elegy*, *Dissuasion*, *Disbelief* or *Disillusion* was written for his cousin Varenka Kuchina in 1821 and published in 1825. It's a key poem, not just a pretty little piece made even more popular by being put to music by Mikhail Glinka (1804-57). Though seeming a light trifle, it expresses the eternal longings for love and friendship in someone who has lost belief in an

earlier age of reason but cannot yet trust his feelings. {1-4}

Brief References

1. Mirsky, D.S., A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926 / Vintage Books 1958) 104-7.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 116-18.
3. Glinka's version: audio recording: [Разуверение](#)
4. Brief analysis [Goldlit](#) (in Russian).

Yazykov: Evening

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Николай Языков: Вечер: Стих

Ложатся тени гор на дремлющий залив;

Yazykov's poem is written in iambic hexameters, quite regular and rhymed aa BB cc:

Ложáтся тéни гор на дрéмлющий залив; ба
Прибрéжные сады лимóнов и олів ба
Пустéют; чуть блéстит над мóрем за́пад я́сный, бВ
И скóро бóжий день, весёлый и прекра́сный, бВ
С огни́стым пúрпуром и зóлотом уйдёт бс
Из чи́стого стеклá необозр́имых вод. бс

Evening is a short piece, only six lines long, but, being written in iambic hexameters, so natural to Russian verse but foreign to English, gives many translation problems.

Nikolay Mikhaylovich Yazykov (1803-46) was a major poet of the Russian 1820s, inferior only to Pushkin and Baratynsky in stylish accomplishments. Like them, he was a master craftsman, but his verse is harder, more forceful and more skilfully controlled. Many pieces are tours de force, and have a cold crystalline splendour, where any feeling for subject takes second place to the intoxicating rhythms and sheer nervous energy.

References

1. Bristol, E. A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 120.
2. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature. (Alfred A: Knopf, 1926 / Vintage, 1958) 107-9.

Yazykov: The Rhine

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Николай Языков: К Рейну

Я видел, как бегут твои зелены волны:

Date: 1840

The poem is written in alternating iambic hexameters and tetrameters, rhymed AbAb:

Я ви́дел, как бегу́т твои́ зе́лены во́лны 6A

Они́, при ве́шнем све́те дня, 4b

Игра́я и шумя́, лету́чим бле́ском по́лны 6A

Кача́ли ла́сково меня́; 4b

This poem, *The Rhine* of 1840, with its extended catalogue of Volga tributaries, is one of the great triumphs of Russian verbal art. It is also, of course, a purely intellectual exercise: Yazykov has no real sympathy for nature or its inhabitants.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. *A History of Russian Literature* (Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 107-9.

Koltsov: Song

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Алексей Кольцов: Песня

Ты не пой, соловей

Date: 1832

The poem is unrhymed and generally written in trimeters, though a few lines have only two stressed syllables:

Ты не пой, соловéй, 3
Под мо́йм окно́м; 3
Улетí в лесá 3
Моéй рóдины! 3
Полюбí ты окно́ 3
Души́-деви́цы... 2
Прошебечь не́жно ей 3
Про мою́ тоску́; 3
Ты скажи́, как без ней 3
Сóхну, вяну я, 3
Что травá на стéпи 3
Пéред óсенью. 3

Alexy Koltsov (1809-42) was the self-taught native singer that appears from time to time in Russia's literary history. Koltsov was not a 'son of the soil, but a merchant, the son of a cattle dealer in Vooronezh. Though essentially remaining a provincial attached to country ways, Koltsov was introduced to literary society in Petersburg and

Moscow, and could count Krylov, Viazemsky and Puskin among his friends. {1}

Kolsov's often appear artless country songs, but conceal a good deal of literary craft. They are highly finished, coherent and polished. When rhymed, the line endings can be dactylic, i.e. feature an extra unstressed syllable. Often the poems are on personal themes, of rural poverty and injustice and feature the runaway serf, the robber, rebellious youth.

Love is apt to be unrequited, forced or lost through death. Sorrow is a constant theme, combined by a wistfulness, even a resentment. Many of the poems were set to music by Rimsky-Korsakov, Musorgsky and Balakirev.

References

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 133-35.

Tyutchev: Spring Storm

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Федор Тютчев: Весенняя гроза

Люблю грозу в начале мая

Date: 1828

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters, rhymed:

Люблю́ грозу́ в нача́ле ма́я,	4A
Когда́ весе́нный, пе́рвый гром,	4b
как бы резвя́ся и игра́я,	4A
Грохо́чет в не́бе голу́бом.	4b

Notable is the happiness in tone, the freshness of the imagery and the alliteration in g and R (e.g. грозу́ гром, игра́я, Грохо́чет and голу́бом in first stanza)

Fëdor Ivanovich Tyutchev (1803-73)

Tyutchev's work, occasional and never abundant, was rediscovered by Nekrasov, and remains celebrated for its lyrical nature pieces and intense love poetry. The last was inspired by wives and mistresses, most particularly by Elena Denisieva, his daughter's associate, with whom he had a long and passionate association that did little to harm his reputation but wholly ruined hers. When, in 1864, Mlle Denisieva died, Tyutchev was plunged into grief and despair, his remorse only sharpened by the

forbearance shown by his (now second) wife, and then the deaths of two of Elena Denisieva's children, who succumbed to the same disease. {1-3}

Tyutchev is now regarded as the true descendent of Pushkin: the little poems sent to *Sovreménnik* are known by heart across Russia and the love poems speak of a torment that no one will wish to experience. All the poetry, except the savage invective of the late political pieces, which can rise into true eloquence, is pantheistic, profoundly pessimistic and dualistic, indeed Manichean. The Cosmos around us is always at the mercy of Chaos. Our existence here is fleeting and precarious. Tyutchev's poems are the more remarkable in that he used Russian infrequently: his wives did not speak Russian, and Tyutchev's everyday speech and correspondence was in French.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Poetry. (Alfred A. Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 132-6.
2. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 126-9.

Critical /Literary Articles (in Russian)

1. <https://vsedz.ru/content/f-i-tyutchev-lyublyu-grozu-v-nachale-maya>
2. <https://unotices.com/page-essay.php?id=2236>

Audio Recordings

1. <https://teatr.audio/tyutchev-fedor-lyublyu-grozu-v-nachale-maya>
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUpyBTr4x_c
3. https://teatr.audio/tyutchev-fedor-vesennyaya-groza_2

Tyutchev: Autumn Evening

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Федор Тютчев: Осенний вечер

Есть в светлости осенних вечеров

Date: 1850

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters, rhymed:

Есть в свѣтлости осѣнных вечерѳв	4a
Умѣльная, таѣнственная прѣлесть!..	4B
Зловѣщѣй блеск и пестротѣ дерев,	4a
Багрѣнных листьѣв тѳмный, лѣгкий шѣлест,	4B

Notable are the quiet tone, the preponderance of nouns and adjectives: quite unlike the previous poem, there are few verbs here (far fewer than needed for the English translation). Also worth noting is the sibilant alliteration, especially in the last stanza: Ущѣрб, изнеможенъе — и на всѣм.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Poetry. (Alfred A. Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 132-6.
2. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 126-9.

Critical /Literary Articles (in Russian)

1. <https://pishi-stihi.ru/osennij-vecher-tyutchev.html>
2. <http://www.litra.ru/composition/get/coid/00010501184864045974/woid/00083801184773070169/>

Audio Recordings

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjIVbUBTT5w>
2. <https://book-audio.com/21603:Tyutchev-fiodor-vesenniaia-groza> (1 of 78 Tyutchev readings)

Tyutchev: Winter Has the Snow

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Федор Тютчев: Зима не даром злится

Зима́ не да́ром зли́тся

Date: 1836

The poem is written in iambic trimeters, rhymed:

Зима́ не да́ром зли́тся,	3А
Прошла её́ пора –	3б
Весна́ в окно́ стучи́тся	3А
И го́нит со двора́.	3б

The language is fresh and simple, almost conversational. The piece was sent as a sketch to Prince Gagarin, but only published after Tyutchev's death. The short lines make for rhyming difficulties: rhymes are approximate in line 5 with 7, and 18 with 20. The formal translation is likewise a little free.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Poetry. (Alfred A. Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 132-6.
2. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 126-9.

Critical /Literary Articles (in Russian)

1. <https://obrazovaka.ru/analiz-stihotvoreniya/tyutchev/zima-nedarom-zlitsya.html>
2. <https://pishi-stihi.ru/zima-nedarom-zlitsya-tyutchev.html>
3. https://www.sochinyashka.ru/russkaya_literatura/analiz-stihotvoreniya-tutcheva-zima-nedarom-zlitsya.html

Audio Recordings

1. <https://teatr.audio/tyutchev-fedor-zima-nedarom-zlitsya>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aB-agPumPiI>
3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oK33g_UE3OA

Tyutchev: Winter is the True Magician

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Федор Тютчев: Чародейкою Зимою

Чародейкою Зимою

Date: 1852

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters, rhymed:

Чародéйкою Зимóю	4A	
Околдóван, лес стоит -	4b	
И под снéжной бахромóю,		4A
Неподв́жною, немóю,		4A
Чудной ж́изнью он блест́т.	4b	

Notes

An exact and evocative piece using dated words (e.g. пуховой) for solemn effect. Each stanza opens with a general description and then adds details. The poem was written in 1852 but only published 14 years after Tyutchev's death

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Poetry. (Alfred A. Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 132-6.
2. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 126-9.

Critical /Literary Articles (in Russian)

<https://obrazovaka.ru/analiz->

<stihotvoreniya/tyutchev/charodeykoyu-zimoyu.html>

<https://pishi-stihi.ru/charodejkoyu-zimoyu-tyutchev.html>

<https://goldlit.ru/tutchev/387-charodeikoiu-zimoiu-analiz>

Audio Recordings

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8I-PTVhtz_E

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQt7Et9gELI>

<https://teatr.audio/tyutchev-fedor-charodeykoyu-zimoyu>

Tyutchev: I Love those Feral Eyes

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Федор Тютчев: Люблю глаза твои

Люблю глаза твои, мой друг

Date: 1835

The poem is a little irregular, but approximates to iambic tetrameters, rhymed:

Люблю глаза́ твои́, мой друг,	4a
С игро́й их пла́менно-чуде́сной,	4B
Когда́ их припо́дымешь вдруг	4a
И, сло́вно мо́лнией небе́сной,	4B
Оки́нешь бе́гло це́лый круг...	4a

Several MS variations. The last stanza refers to the morning light.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Poetry. (Alfred A. Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 132-6.
2. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 126-9.

Critical /Literary Articles (in Russian)

1. <https://pishi-stihi.ru/lyublyu-glaza-tvoi-moj-drug-tyutchev.html>
2. <https://ostihe.ru/analiz-stihotvoreniya/tyutcheva/segodnya-drug>

Audio Recordings

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w322RzbinIg>
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0N-R_FIm4JI
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pnUCKeikxA4>

Tyutchev: A Golden Time I Have in Mind

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Федор Тютчев: Я помню время золотое

Я помню время золотое

Date: 1833

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters, rhymed:

Я помню время золотое, 4А
Я помню сердцу мильный край. 4b
День вечерел; мы были двое; 4А
Внизу, в тени, шумел Дунай. 4b

Tyutchev is remembering a Rhineland holiday spent in the company of Baroness Amalia von Krudener (née Lerchenfeld), with whom he remained close throughout his life.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Poetry. (Alfred A. Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 132-6.
2. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 126-9.

Critical /Literary Articles (in Russian)

1. <https://pishi-stihi.ru/ya-pomnyu-vremya-zolotoe-tyutchev.html>
2. <https://ostihe.ru/analiz-stihotvoreniya/tyutcheva/ya-pomnyu-vremya-zolotoe>

Audio Recordings

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4CAKjjik5Q>
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Q_DKRb2b1M

Tyutchev: As One That's Lost in Sleep

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Федор Тютчев: Я помню время золотое

Я помню время золотое

Date: 1864

The poem is written in iambic pentameters, rhymed:

Весь день она лежала в забытьи,		5a
И всю её уж тени покрывали.	5B	
Лил тёплый летний дождь — его струи		5a
По листьям весело звучали.		5B

Commemorates the last day of Elena Denisieva, whose death from tuberculosis prematurely aged Tyutchev. The deaths of two of Elena's children followed, from the same disease.

It is not a self-indulgent but carefully crafted piece: note for example the alliteration in 'l' in the second stanza, and the hissing 's' in line 5, which emphasizes the noise of the rain.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Poetry. (Alfred A. Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 132-6.

2. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991)
126-9.

Critical /Literary Articles (in Russian)

1. <https://pishi-stihi.ru/ves-den-ona-lezhala-v-zabyti-tyutchev.html>
2. <https://www.kritika24.ru/page.php?id=30434>

Audio Recordings

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYDWd7oVdTU>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgcBAmvY9Q8>

Tyutchev: Last Love

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Федор Тютчев: Я помню время золотое

Я помню время золотое

Date: 1851-4

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters, rhymed:

О, как на склоне наших лет	4а	
Нежней мы любим и суевейней...	4В	
Сияй, сияй, прощальный свет		4а
Любви последней, зари вечерней!	4В	

A remorseful Tyutchev, remembering Elena Denisieva.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Poetry. (Alfred A. Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 132-6.
2. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 126-9.

Critical /Literary Articles (in Russian)

<https://www.kritika24.ru/page.php?id=40752>

<https://otvet.mail.ru/question/70229608>

Audio Recordings

<https://teatr.audio/tyutchev-fedor-est-v-moem-stradalcheskom-zastoe>

<https://audiolitera.ru/inapp/content/6/646/> (inexpensive audiobook)

Tyutchev: On the Eve of the Anniversary of August 4, 1864

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Федор Тютчев: Накануне годовщины 4 августа 1864

Вот бреду я вдоль большой дороги

Date: 1865

The poem is written in iambic pentameters, rhymed:

Вот бреду я вдоль большо́й доро́ги	5a irregular
В ти́хом све́те гáснущего дня...	5b
Тяжелó мне, замира́ют но́ги	5A
Друг мой ми́лый, ви́дишь ли меня́?	5b

An elegy to the poet's love for Elena Denisieva, with slow, dragging rhythms. The view changes through the three stanzas, from towards the future love, through the darkening retrospect on love, and then the sad eternity of emotions.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Poetry. (Alfred A. Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 132-6.
2. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 126-9.

Critical /Literary Articles (in Russian)

1. <https://obrazovaka.ru/analiz-stihotvoreniya/tyutchev/poslednyaya-lyubov.html>
2. <https://goldlit.ru/tutchev/203-poslednyaya-lubov-analiz>

Audio Recordings

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJDxa99PoD4>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dshdfRGYLBQ>

Tyutchev: How Readily the Seas at Night Contrive

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Федор Тютчев: Как хорошо ты, о море ночное

Как хорошо ты, о море ночное

Date: 1865

The poem is written in dactylic tetrameters, rhymed:

Как хорошó ты, о мóре ночнóе, - u u - u u - u u - u

4A

Здесь лучезáрно, там сízo-темнó... - u u - u u - u u

- 4b

В лúнном сиянии, слóвно живóе, u - u u - u u -u u

4A

Хóдит, и ды́шит, и блéщет онó... - u u - u u -u u -

4b

The poem was published in 1865, and again the same year with improvements. The poem was written in Nice, shortly after the death of Elena Denisieva, to whom the last stanza refers.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Poetry. (Alfred A. Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 132-6.
2. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 126-9.

Critical /Literary Articles (in Russian)

<https://pishi-stihi.ru/kak-horosho-ty-o-more-nochnoe-tyutchev.html>

<http://shpargalkino.com/stixotvorenje-kak-xorosho-ty-o-more-nochnoe-f-i-tyutcheva-vospriyatje-tolkovanie-ocenka/>

<https://ostihe.ru/analiz-stihotvoreniya/tyutcheva/kak-horosho-ty>

Audio Recordings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mFGShYakfKU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5ldFIi-ehU>

Tyutchev: Why Do You Howl, O Night Wind Here?

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Федор Тютчев: О чем ты воешь, ветер ночной?

О чем ты воешь, ветер ночной?

Date: early 1830s

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters, rhymed:

О чём ты вóешь, ветер ночной?	4a
О чём так сéтуешь безúмно?..	4B
Что знáчит стрáнный гóлос твой,	4a
То глúхо жáлoбный, то шúмно?	4B
Поня́тым сёрдцу языко́м	4c
Тверди́шь о непоня́тной му́ке –	4D
И ро́ешь и взрыва́ешь в нём	4c
Поро́й не́истовые звúки!..	4D

Published in 1836, this is a powerful poem that illustrates Tyutchev's Manichean view. Line 7 is important: the wind digs up violent matters from the depths.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Poetry. (Alfred A. Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 132-6.
2. Bristol, E.B. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 126-9.

Critical /Literary Articles (in Russian)

1. <https://pishi-stihi.ru/o-chem-ty-voesh-vedr-nochnoj-tyutchev.html>
2. <http://shpargalkino.com/stixotvorenje-o-chem-ty-voesh-vedr-nochnoj-voepriyatje-tolkovanie-ocenka/>

Audio Recordings

1. <https://thiwomada.podfm.ru/tutchev/53/>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4GTIMf8F1c>

Tyutchev: Silentium

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Федор Тютчев: Silentium

Молчи, скрывайся и таи

Date: second half of 1820s

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters, rhymed:

Молчи́, скрыва́йся и таи́	4a	
И чу́ства и мечты́ свои́ —	4a	
Пуска́й в душе́вной глубине́	4b	
Встаю́т и захо́дят оне	4B	irregular
Безмо́лвно, как звёзды в но́чи,-	4C	
Любу́йся ими́ — и молчи́.	4c	

The famous 'Silentium' was one of the first poems to be published by Tyutchev (1833, and then again 1836, 1854 and 1868), and was written in the happiness of his first marriage. 'Silentium' was used to call students to order before a speech in Moldova, and also serves as an introduction here. As noted in the prosody section, there are small irregularities in the first stanza. The three stanzas develop the theme logically, from the emphatic call to inwardness, through argument and then the injunction to live inwardly.

References

<https://pishi-stihi.ru/silentium-tyutchev.html>

<https://ostihe.ru/analiz->

<stihotvoreniya/tyutcheva/silentium>

<https://literaguru.ru/analiz-stihotvoreniya-tyutcheva-silentium/>

<http://shpargalkino.com/stixotvorenie-silentium-f-i-tyutcheva-vospriyatie-tolkovanie-ocenka/>

Audio Recordings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYtGun8DogU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObVasj0Ij5U>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0TWyMvOO6w>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQxTbo4_G9Q

Lermontov: Cossack Lullaby

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Михаил Лермонтов: : Каза́чья колыбѣльная пѣсня

Спи, младенец мой прекрасный,

Date: 1833

The poem is written in tightly rhymed iambic stanzas:

Спи, младе́нец мой прекра́сный, 4А

Баюшки-баю́. 3b

Тíхо смóтрит ме́сяц я́сный 4А

В колыбѣль твою́. 3b

Ста́ну ска́зывать я ска́зки, 4А

Пѣсенку спою́; 3b

Ты ж дремли́, закрывши гла́зки, 4А

Баюшки-баю́. 3b

The beautiful *Cossack Lullaby* was composed by Mikhail Lermontov in 1838, when he was first stationed in the Caucasus. It's a cradle song, popular among translators, but causing difficulties because its short 4/3 stanzas are tightly rhymed.

Lermontov reputedly heard a Cossack woman singing to her baby in a village close to where he was stationed during the war that was claiming heavy casualties to Russian troops. Lermontov put his own words to the

lullaby, but it accurately reflects a Cossack's continual need to protect his land from Chechen raids.

Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841)

Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841) is often seen as Russia's greatest poet after Pushkin, though his life was shorter and his output much more restricted. {1} He introduced a Byronic Romanticism, a greater realism and a strong sense of poetic persona. {2}

Lermontov born to an aristocratic family in Moscow, lost his mother early, and, after the break-up of the family, was brought up as spoiled child by female relatives, who perhaps exacerbated a morbid self-consciousness and touchy vanity. The young man was educated at Moscow University and at an army cadet school in St. Petersburg, graduating as hussar in 1834. His poem 'Death of a Poet', denouncing Pushkin's enemies, won him celebrity but also exile to the Caucasus. A collection of poems appeared in 1840, as did his one novel: 'The Hero of Our Time'. After a duel with the French ambassador's son he was again exiled to the Caucasus but now demoted. In the Caucasus Lermontov proved a brave and capable officer, but on leave, in a quite needless duel with a former schoolmate, the 27-year-old poet was killed at the first shot. {3}

Lermontov's reputation has varied over time. Mirsky {4} remarked that 'The perfection of Lermontov's style and narrative manner can be appreciated only by those who really know Russian, who feel fine imponderable shades of words and know what has been left out as well as what has been put in.' Nabokov differed: 'The English reader should be aware that Lermontov's prose style in Russian is inelegant, it is dry and

drab; it is the tool of an energetic, incredibly gifted, bitterly honest, but definitely inexperienced young man. His Russian is, at times, almost as crude as Stendhal's in French; his similes and metaphors are utterly commonplace, his hackneyed epithets are only redeemed by occasionally being incorrectly used. Repetition of words in descriptive sentences irritates the purist.' {5}

Mirsky {6} has a general observation. The poets of Russia's Golden Age were all 'makers', i.e. their poetry was not the transcript of experience but a creation out of the material of experience. So was Lermontov's poetry, but it was also (like all real poetry) a transformation, where the poet willed the raw experience to play a larger part than had been the case with his elders. His later work was less aimed at making a thing of beauty, however, as making something with 'a beautiful language of emotions', i.e. something that expressed an inner state of greatness and altogether transcended the originating experience. That seems to me true, and hints at two things. One is why we find today's 'serious poetry' so limited: the emotional realm is altogether neglected. The second is the need for superlative translations: getting the sense right is the least of our tasks.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 136-44.
2. Bristol, E. A. History of Russian Poetry (OUP 1991) 129-33.
3. [Britannica](#) entry.

Lermontov: A Dream

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Михаил Лермонтов: Сон

В полдневный жар в долине Дагестана

Date: 1841

The poem is written in simple iambic pentameters,
rhymed AbAb.

В полднёвный жар в долине Дагестана 5A

С свинцом в груди лежал недвижим я; 5b

Глубокая ещё дымилась рана, 5A

По капле кровь точилась моя. 5b

A/The Dream by Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841) illustrates what difficulties attend a fully rhymed translation. The poem has a disconcerting realism in its setting, as many of the later pieces do. {1} Lermontov was a Romantic but, as his 'Hero of Our Time' indicates, one that grew increasingly honest and uncomfortable. 'Sleep' or 'Dream' as it's commonly known, simply leaves the facts to speak for themselves.

References

1. Bristol, E. A. *History of Russian Poetry* (OUP 1991) 129-33.

2. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 136-44.

Lermontov: My Country

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Михаил Лермонтов: Родина

Люблю отчизну я, но странною любовью!

Date: 1841

The poem is in iambics, but its structure is unusual:

Люблю отчизну я, но странною любовью! 6A

Не победит её рассудок мой. 5b

Ни слава, купленная кровью, 4A

Ни полный гордого доверия покой, 5b

Ни тёмной старины заветные преданья 6C

Не шевелят во мне отрадного мечтанья. 6C

Но я люблю — за что, не знаю сам — 5d

Её степей холодное молчанье, 5e

Её лесов безбрежных колыханье, 5e

Разливы рек её, подобные морям; 6d

Просёлочным путём люблю скакать в телеге 6F

И, взором медленным пронзая ночи тень, 6g

Встречать по сторонам, вздыхая о ночлеге, 6F

Дрожащие огни печальных деревень; 6g

Люблю дымок спалённой жнивы, 4H

В степи ночующий обоз 4i

И на холме среди жёлтой нивы 4H

Чету́ белёющих берёз. 4i

С отра́дой, мно́гим незнако́мой, 4J

Я ви́жу по́лное гумно́, 4k

Избу́, покрýтую соло́мой, 4J

С резны́ми ста́внями окно́; 4k

И в пра́здник, ве́чером роси́стым, 4L

Смотрéть до по́лночи гото́в 4m

На пля́ску с то́паньем и сви́стом 4L

Под го́вор пьяных мужичко́в. 4m

Lermontov wrote voluminously in childhood, but only from 1836 is the poetry memorable, sometimes very memorable indeed. Lermontov is not easy for non-Russians to appreciate, much depending on the exact phrasing. Many indeed prefer his prose, sometimes called the best Russian ever written. Chekhov thought similarly of *Taman* short story, which he considered Russia's best short story. {5}

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 136-44.
2. Bristol, E. A. History of Russian Poetry (OUP 1991) 129-33.
3. [Britannica](#)
4. Mirsky, 163.

5. [Wikipedia](#)
6. Mirsky 144-5.

Lermontov: New Year's Night

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Михаил Лермонтов: 1-е января

Как часто, пестрою толпою окружен

Date 1840,

The iambic six-line stanza has this form:

Как ча́сто, пёстрою толпо́ю окружён, 6 а

Когда́ передо мно́й, как бу́дто бы сквозь сон, 6 а

При шу́ме му́зыки и пля́ски, 4В

При ди́ком шёпоте затвержённых рече́й, 6С

Мелька́ют о́бразы безду́шные люде́й, 6С

Приличьем стя́нутые ма́ски, 4В

Lermontov's *The First of January* relates to a real incident. On 31st December 1839, the tsar Nicholas 1st gave a ball at St. Petersburg, a New Year's masquerade ball attended by high society and members of his extended family.

Lermontov was present, as was Turgenev, who noted how bored the tsar looked, continually being pestered by noted beauties, whatever mask he put on. That observation forms the first part of Lermontov's poem.

In the second part, Lermontov is remembering the simplicity and naturalness of his early life. He dwells on details of the aunt's home where he was brought up, which seem such a contrast to this world of superfluous

luxury, insincere and enervating. Finally, in the third part, Lermontov remembers some first love (real or created) and determines not only to quit these false standards but to angrily denounce them in his work.

In this poem are combined both Romantic aspects of Lermontov, the visionary and the rhetorical. It is a difficult poem, with abrupt changes in tone, rhymed hexameters creating problems for English verse translation, and with Lermontov's contempt of fashionable society threatening to become empty bombast.

References

1. Bristol, E. A. History of Russian Poetry (OUP 1991) 129-33.
2. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 136-44.

Lermontov: Alone I Look Out

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Михаил Лермонтов: Выхожу один я на дорогу . . .

Выхожу один я на дорогу

Date: 1843

Not to be guessed from modern translations, the poem is in pentameters, rhymed aBaB:

Сквозь тумán кремни́стый путь блестя́т. 5а

Ночь тиха́. Пусти́ня внемлет бо́гу, 5В

И звезда́ с звездóю говорíт. 5а

В небеса́х торже́ственно и чу́дно ! 5В

Alone I Look Out is favourite of many Lermontov readers. It was written in the spring or early summer of 1841, shortly before Lermontov's death in a needless duel, which it seems to prefigure. Certainly there seems to be an acceptance of fate, even a passive fatalism on the part of the writer. The poem was published posthumously in 1843.

The epithets are appropriate and moving: "flinty way", "cold sleep", "quiet voice", "dark oak". Note also the personification – "the waste listens to God", "the star speaks to the star" – which indeed speaks of the poet's loneliness, his knowledge and acceptance that he would

always be a little different and cut off from ordinary consciousness.

References

1. [Vladimirovna, K. N. Анализ стихотворения «Выхожу один я на дорогу» Лермонтова](#) Simple school essay (in Russian).
2. Bristol, E. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 129-33.
3. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Vintage, 1958) 136-44.
4. Bowra, C.M, A Book of Russian Verse (Macmillan, 1943) 43.

Lermontov: The Cloud

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Михаил Лермонтов: Утес

Ночевала тучка золотая

Date: 1842

The poem is written in iambic pentameters, rhymed ABAB, i.e with feminine rhymes throughout:

Ночевáла тучка золотáя 5A
На грудí утёса-великáна, 5B
Утром в путь она́ умчáлась рáно, 5B
По лазу́ри вёсело игра́я. 5A

Lermontov's *The Cliff* presents three problems for translators: how to render the feminine rhymes used throughout, what to do with the pathetic fallacy {1} and how to move beyond the poem's sentimentality. {2}

We are in the Romantic period, rather brief in Russia, but ably summarized as 'marked by six primary characteristics: celebration of nature, focus on the individual and spirituality, celebration of isolation and melancholy, interest in the common man, idealization of women, and personification and pathetic fallacy.' {3}

The Pathetic Fallacy

The Pathetic Fallacy, i.e. the ascribing of emotion to inanimate objects, was castigated by John Ruskin, but remains alive and well in many types of poetry, in English poetry of the Romantic period, for example, or pre-modern Chinese poetry generally. Strictly speaking, Lermontov's poem goes further, into anthropomorphism: the cliff not only has human attributes but acts like a sentient and active being. But before we say 'far-fetched' or 'impossible', we should remember that the [Meghaduta](#), Kalidasa's 'Cloud Messenger' has an anthropomorphic cloud throughout its celebrated stanzas.

Sentimentality

The need, I think, for the translator, is to make the poem fully convincing. We may privately wonder if Lermontov really thought of the cloud in this manner, rather than as a literary conceit on which to pin emotions he didn't truly feel, i.e. rank sentimentalism. In contrast, Russian critics have generally called the poem one of the 'most striking and impressive landscape and philosophical works of Lermontov', where the cliff's loneliness echoes the poet's state of mind. Lermontov, too, was 'crying quietly in the desert.' {5} There is also the contrast between the thoughtless activity of youth and the sad wisdom of age.

Translating a pertinent section: {5}

'To fully convey the feelings and mood of this work, the poet used the following means of artistic expression: personification (the cloud spent the night, rushed away in

the morning, the cliff thought, the cliff cries), metaphor (playing on the azure, the giant cliff), epithets (golden cloud, old cliff), periphrasis (a wet trace in the wrinkle of the cliff - traces tears). The alternation of the sounds "p", "l", "b" (alliteration) and the repetition of the sounds "o" and "a" (assonance) gives the work a special smoothness and expressiveness.'

References

1. Pathetic [Fallacy](#) Short account on Literary Terms.
2. [Sentimental](#) poetry. Good Wikipedia article.
3. [Romanticism](#) in Poetry. ThoughtCo's brief article.
4. Bowra, C.M, A Book of Russian Verse (Macmillan, 1943) 7, 14, 25, 38, 40, 67, 78, 79, 83 and 115.
5. Google 'литературный анализ Михаил Лермонтов Утес'.
6. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Vintage, 1958) 136-44.

Lermontov: The Sail

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Михаил Лермонтов: Парус

Белеет парус одинокой

Date: 1832

The poem is in iambics, rhymed AbAb:

Белéет пáрус одино́кой u-u-u-u-u 4A

В тумáне мóря голу́бом!.. u-u-u-u- 4b

Что и́щет он в странé далёкой? u-u-u-u-u 4A

Что кíнул он в краю́ родно́м?.. u-u-u-u- 4b

The Sail is an enigmatic little poem by Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841) that is simple only on the surface. {1} Ostensibly the sail stands for Lermontov's independent life, {2} where his principled stand for free speech in Russia earned him two periods of exile to the Caucasus. Here he was to find his vocation as a serving officer, though in the last journey out, at the spa town of Pyatigorsk, he also managed to quarrel with a school-friend over the same lady, in an offensive manner, for which he was called out and killed in a duel.

The poem has no line run-on, no striking metaphors, and nothing particularly difficult in vocabulary and syntax. It has, nonetheless, occasioned a great deal of scholarly comment. {1}

But, as Michael Wachtel points out, this surface simplicity is deceptive. {1} Each stanza consists of a two-line description followed by ellipsis and two-line interpretation. There is also a slow build up in emotion: the first stanza ends with a question, the second with a statement, and the third with an exclamation.

The interpretation of the first stanza is not unreasonable, but the second stanza brings problems. Though the sail is apparently far away, we can hear the mast creak. The interpretation does not follow from the description, moreover, so that the sail has become a symbol, not only for the entire ship (synecdoche) but humanity itself. In the third stanza we have the unlikely images of blue and sun in the misted blue, and then, in no way connected with the images, the rebellious poet seeking peace among storms. Here, of course, is Lermontov's persona, one further developed in the not wholly attractive portrait of Pechorin in *A Hero of Our Time*. Lermontov's Romanticism is beginning to open the fissures that underlie our current Modernism.

References

1. Wachtel, M. *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry* (CUP 2004) 113-5.
2. Mirsky, D.S. *A History of Russian Literature* (Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 136-44.

Fet: Greetings

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Фет: Я пришёл к тебе с приветом

Я пришёл к тебе с приветом

Date: 1842

The poem is a little unusual: iambic trimeters, with an extra opening unstressed syllable and all the end-rhymes feminine:

Я пришёл к тебе́ с привéтом, и и - и - и - и 3А

Расска́зать, что со́лнце вста́ло, и и - и - и - и 3В

Что оно́ горя́чим свéтом и и - и - и - и 3А

По листáм затрепетáло; и и - и - и - и 3В

This is an early poem, but Fet's idiosyncrasies are already evident, notably his preference for heavy end-rhymes.

Afanasy Afanasievich Fet (1820-92)

Afanasy Afanasievich Fet was the son of a Russian squire named Shenshin and a German wife, but the marriage, contracted abroad, was not recognised at home. It was not until 1876 that a royal decree allowed Fet to adopt the surname Shenshin, and in fact he kept the earlier name for his publishing life. Fet's progress was rapid. He published, at his own expense, a volume of poems in 1840 that showed little promise, but was sending to the

Moskvityanin some of his most perfect lyrics only two years later. He entered military service and served in various cavalry regiments for the next fifteen years. Promotion was slow, however, and it was only in 1856 that Fet could leave as Captain of the Guards and a title. After a short journey abroad, he married the daughter of a rich tea merchant and settled down to make a success of his estate. Fet was exceptionally reserved, but his poetry was well received, making him one of the best-known literary figures in the 1850s, familiar with Turgenev, Tolstoy and other luminaries of the day. The exclusively aesthetic nature of his poetry made him enemies among those promoting civic poetry, however, and in 1863, after the third edition of his poems appeared, Fet retired from the literary scene. Twenty years went by. After 1883 Fet occasionally issued small volumes under the title of *Evening Lights*, but he was never prolific, preferring to work instead on three volumes of memoirs and translations of the Roman poets.

Fet was a devotee of the aesthetic aspects of poetry, and was appreciated as such by the creative writers of his time, but not by critics who saw these gently melodic pieces as little better than 'moonshine'.

But for Druzhinin the chief property of Fet's talent was 'the ability to catch the elusive, to give an image and a name to what was before him nothing more than a vague, fleeting sense of the human soul, a feeling without an image and a name'. After 1863, and especially in the 1880s, Fet's poetry becomes more difficult, metaphysical and condensed. The greatest achievements in the last

years were the love poems for someone whom Fet had not married long ago for career reasons. They are remarkable in a man of seventy, but more so for the saturation of experience compressed into hard outlines.

References

1. Gustafson, R.F. *Imagination of Spring: The Poetry of Afanasy Fet*. (Yale 1966 / Greenwood Press 1976)

Fet: Steppe at Evening

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Фет: Степь вечером

Клубятся тучи, млея в блеске алом

Date: 1850

The poem is in iambics, rhymed AbAb:

Клубя́тся тучи́, мле́я в бле́ске а́лом, 5A

Хотя́т в росе́ поне́житься поля́, 5b

В послéдний раз, за трéтьим перевáлом, 5A

Пропáл ямщи́к, звеня́ и не пыля́. 5b

The Steppe at Evening is one the atmospheric little poems Afanasy Fet (1820-92) liked to write, often about nothing in particular beyond immediate sense impressions. At a time when writers were addressing the serious social problems of the day, which were to overthrow the empire a half century later, these little pieces attracted a good deal of contempt.

By eliminating words not essential to the effect wanted, Fet can be a little enigmatic, as he is here. Who is the rider, and what is the significance of the third pass? Only to emphasize the great vastness of the steppes, I think, where the 'pass' will be some brief and uninterrupted view (not a mountain pass) and the ringing (звеня) be the jingle of the horse's harness.

We should also note the quiet musicality: the last two lines and their phonetic transcription:

Лунá чистá. Вот с нёба звёзды глянóт,
И как рекá засвётит Млéчный Путь.

luná chistá. voth s nyoba zvyozdy glyánoot,
yi kak reccá zasvétit mléchny put.

References

1. Wachtel, M. The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry (CUP 2004) 110-13.
2. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926/Vintage 1958) 234-6.

Fet: Storm in the Skies

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Фет: Буря на небе вечернем

Буря на небе вечернем

Date; 1842

The poem is in dactylic trimeter, rhymed as follows:

Буря на небе вечернем - у у - у у - у 3А

Моря сердитого шум - у у - у у - 3б

Буря на море и думы, - у у - у у - у 3С

Много мучительных дум - у у - у у - 3б

A Storm in the Evening Sky is one of the simplest poems, but illustrates Afanasy Fet's (1820-82) approach: a minimum of verbs and clauses, the piling up of nouns and adjectives and short, simple sentences without conjunctions (parataxis) {1}

A Storm in the Evening Sky is a well-known little piece, and shows the extent to which Fet would upset the poetic expectations of his day to get certain effects. We analyse the poem below, but will later have to consider the bulk of Fet's work, which can pass from the simplistic to the over-simple.

Not only words, but whole lines are repeated. The end-rhymes are insistent, not to say heavy, and there are also

starting rhymes: Бúря threes times and Моря twice. Even the words that do not rhyme are echoes of others: вечернем with Чёрная and возрастающих. Of the seven nouns in the poem, four share the stressed 'u', and two the stressed 'o'. All the nouns, moreover, are either monosyllables or disyllables with the stress on the first syllable. {2}

What was the purpose of such word play? Probably an increasing personification, as the poem moves from observation (lines 1 and 2) to effect on the observer (lines 3 and 4) that intensify through lines 6 to 8. We should also note dumy (дúмы), associated with man (the 'thinking reed in Pascal's famous formulation), which is relentlessly hammered home in dum (дум) and its rhymes. Sound, syntax and meaning are so closely interwoven that we cannot entirely distinguish human from non-human, the poet's troubled thoughts from the deafening storm as the poem proceeds. {2}

The poem, written in 1842, was considerably ahead of its time. Just as the Barbizan school gradually promoted landscape painting into being the main subject of interest, so Fet made sense impressions a theme in themselves — hence his importance to writers like Turgenev, Chekhov and Bunin. Not for nothing did Bunin entitle one of his more memorable stories *A Cold Autumn*, quoting from Fet's 1854 poem *Какая холодная осень!*..

These little poems and their translation are harmless diversions. But what are we to make of the bulk of Fet's

work? One of Fet's better known poems has been translated as the following by Richard Gustafson: {4}

There is a sad birch
Near my window,
And by the frost's fancy
It is attired.

The ends of the branches hang
Like bunches of grape, -
And its whole funeral attire
Is joyful to my glance.

I love to watch
The play of dawn upon it,
And it will be a pity, if the birds
Shake off the beauty of the branches.

This is not to question Dr Gustafson's translation in a study that may still be the best we have in English on Fet's poetry, but the poem is coming perilously close to kindergarten verse. Even the nine translations that appear in C.M. Bowra's *A Book of Russian Verse* {5} — and all from translators with a mastery of traditional verse that is largely lost today — are only pleasant trifles. Why nothing more adventurous? Fet was hardly a timid soul, but, as Mirsky remarks, 'In his student years he was, like all his contemporaries, expansive and naively open to generous and ideal feelings, but later on he disciplined himself into a guarded reserve that had all the appearance (and a good deal of the substance) of callousness.' One can at least sympathize with critics who expected more at a time

when Russia was experiencing the growing social unrest that would overthrow the government in the 1917 Revolution.

References

1. Gustafson, R.F. *Imagination of Spring: The Poetry of Afanasy Fet.* (Yale 1966 / Greenwood Press 1976) 160.
2. Wachtel, M. *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry* (CUP 2004) 110-13.
3. Mirsky, D.S. *A History of Russian Literature* (Knopf 1926 / Vintage 1958) 234-6.
4. Gustafson, 141-2.
5. Bowra, C.M. *A Book of Russian Verse* (Macmillan, 1943) 64-8.
6. Mirsky, 235.

Fet: Clear and Golden

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Фет: В вечер такой золотистый и ясный,
В вечер такой золотистый и ясный,

The poem is in the amphibrachic (u-u) or ternary metre:

В ве чер та кой зо ло тис ты й и яс ный,	4A
В этом ды ха ныи вес ны все по бед ной	4B
Не по ми най мне, о друг мой пре крас ный,	4A
Ты о люб ви на шей роб кой и бед ной.	4B

The woman remembered is Maria Lazich, about whom Fet naturally had a guilty conscience. She was courted in 1848, but then, being penniless, and with Fet anyway determined to regain his aristocratic status first, was promptly abandoned. In 1851 Maria set her clothes alight, either by accident or design, and died four days later. 'Do not blame him for this,' she apparently said, but Fet nonetheless felt remorse for the rest of his life, (as far as one can tell in so taciturn a personality).

Is Fet being the reliable narrator here? After all, it was not Maria who had anything to feel ashamed about, but Fet, who is both having his cake and eating it in this poem, i.e. pretending that it was Maria who had cold feet about the affair. That, unfortunately, is the somewhat less than honest attitude we shall have to accept with poets, who

are skilful is creating the needed persona. For translation purposes, we have to take the poem at its face value.

Regarding structure, we could translate the lines as tetrameters, but their ternary or amphibrachic nature suggests the pentameter would be better: the lines have ten or more syllables. There should also be a quiet musicality.

References

1. вечер такой золотистый и ясный (Фет)
<http://ogrik2.ru/b/afanasij-afanasevich-fet/shepot-robkoe-dyhane/26336/v-vecher-takoj-zolotistyj-i-yasnyj/220>
2. Mirsky, D.S. (1958) A History of Russian Literature. Vintage Books. 234-6
3. Krinit, A.B. Analysis of poetry A.A. Fet (in Russian)
<https://www.portal-slovo.ru/philology/40634.php>
4. Yakovlevich, B. B. (2014) Fet - essays on life and work.(in Russian) <http://litresp.ru/chitat/ru/Б/buhshtab-boris-yakovlevich/fet---ocherki-zhizni-i-tvorchestva/10>
5. Analysis of the Fet poem Spring Thunderstorm (in Russian, with audio) <https://ostihe.ru/analiz-stihotvoreniya/feta/vesennyaya-groza>
6. Pishi-Stihi authors. Evening by A. Fet <http://pishi-stihi.ru/vecher-fet.html>

Audio Recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSJ049UGJUc>

Maikov: Haymaking

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Аполлон Майков: Сенокос

Пахнет сеном над лугами...

Date: 1856

The poem is in iambic tetrameters rhymed AbAb:

Па́хнет се́ном над луга́ми... 4A
В пе́сне ду́шу веселя́, 4b
Ба́бы с гра́блями ряда́ми 4A
Хо́дят, се́но шевеля́. 4b

The poem was written in 1856 and published in the *Snowdrop* two years later. It soon joined the repertoire of much-loved children's literature, and is one of the first poems that schoolchildren commonly learn in Russia today. {2}

Apollon Maikov (1821-97)

Apollon Maikov was educated at St. Petersburg, and from 1842 to 1845 studied art in France and Italy. On returning to Russia, he became a civil servant and worked at the Rumiantsev Museum in Moscow. His was a markedly gifted family. An 18th century ancestor was a noted poet; his father was a painter and a brother a literary critic. Maikov sympathized with the French art-for-art's-sake poets and, like Gautier and his followers, was often

inspired by classical antiquity. Maikov's work is severely classical in the main, unsentimental but closely observed. His later travel impressions incorporated figures met in journeys around Normandy, the Alps and Naples.

Maikov grew up on his grandmother's estate, and retained a warm affection for the steady rhythms of country life, the good humour of this piece quietly increasing from stanza to stanza. It's also more carefully crafted than first appears, and was one of a series that Maikov wrote commemorating all things Russian at the outbreak of the Crimean War.

References

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 144-5.
2. Анализ стихотворения «Сенокос» Майкова. Brief critical article in [Russian](#).
3. Haymaking by Apollon Maikov. Cornford and Salaman [translation](#) and notes

Polonsky: The Blind Preacher

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Стихотворение Полонского Слепой проповедник

Был вечер; в одежде, измятой ветрами

Date: 1840-45

The poem is written in amphibrachic tetrameters, each stanza being rhymed AbbAacDDc:

Был вѣчер; в одѣжде, измятой ветрами, у – у у – у у – у у – у
Пустынной тропюю шёл Бэда слепой; у – у у – у у – у у –
На мальчика он опирался рукой, у – у у – у у – у у –
По камням ступая босыми ногами, у у – у – у у – у у – у

И было всё глухо и дико кругом, у – у у – у у – у у –
Одні только сосны росли вековые, у – - у – у у – у у -у
Одні только скалы торчали седые, у – - у – у у – у у -у
Косматым и влажным одетые мхом. у – у у – у у – у у -

Polonsky is best known for poems in exotic settings, often wild and disordered, in which his vivid pen-sketches stand out as quite unlike those of his contemporaries, or Russian literature generally. Most characters face misfortune of some sort, but meet it manfully. Polonsky's world is one lit by good and evil, from which God's divinity has been withdrawn, leaving it a rather confused, sad and empty place.

Jacov Polonsky (1819-98)

Jacov Polonsky came from the minor gentry, and after graduating from Moscow University, held various bureaucratic positions in Odessa and Tiflis. Here he published his first collections of poems. From 1851 he lived in St. Petersburg, where he contributed to, and sometimes edited, various well-known literary magazines. Between 1860 and 1896 he served in the office of censorship of foreign literature.

Polensky was a Romantic poet, but also rather pessimistic and backward looking. He lost his own religious convictions early, became a liberal in politics, but missed the religious support enjoyed, as he saw it, by earlier periods. He also wrote plays in verse and prose, novels, essays and memoirs, none of which seem to have lasted.

Polonsky traveled widely in later years, and many poems have an exotic setting, in Finland, Persia and the Mediterranean world. Most have a clear message, moreover, too didactically presented at times, but Polonsky didn't fit into contemporary literary movements, neither belonging to the civic school or in any way anticipating the Symbolists poets of Russia's Silver Age. He was and remains simply of himself, individual and uncompromising. {1}

References

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 145-47.

2. Bowra, C.M., A book of Russian Verse (Macmillan, 1947) 61-2.

Alexy Tolstoy: Do You Remember, Maria?

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Алексей Толстой: Ты помнишь ли, Мария...

Ты помнишь ли, Мария

Date 1840

The poem is in trimeters rhymed AbAb:

Ты по́мнишь ли, Мари́я, 3А
Оди́н старíнный дом 3б
И ли́пы вековы́е 3А
Над дре́млющим прудо́м? 3б

Alexy K. Tolstoy (1817-75)

Count Alexy K. Tolstoy, a distant cousin of the famous novelist, was a many-sided and versatile poet and playwright. {1-2} After Derzhavin, he was the greatest exponent of the grand manner, but also the writer of the best nonsense verse in Russian. Mirsky calls him the least disharmonious of Russian poets, but also in every respect a gentleman, with a clean and noble expression in all he produced. Bristol calls him the guardian of German romantic idealism, committed to transcendental beliefs and seeing the world as an unending struggle between good and evil.

Alexy Tolstoy was also a wealthy aristocrat who, after an education at Moscow University, was appointed to the Foreign Office and served in Frankfurt from 1837 to 1840. He retired to his estate in 1861, and in 1863 married Sofia Miller, the inspiration for many of his poems. His first play, 'The Death of Ivan the Terrible' appeared in 1866, and his first collection of poems in 1867, but Tolstoy had already made a name for himself with comic poems, parodies and wonderfully senseless lyrics.

Tolstoy wrote many narrative poems and ballads, often incorporating his nostalgic views of the past, his political beliefs and, in later life, his religious and philosophical persuasions. His plays and novels were popular in the 1860s, but the poetry less so

Tolstoy's problem was the facility with which he wrote, and the absence of a discriminating audience to keep him from writing too close to cliché, but the best of his work kept the lyric alive for later generations.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S., A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926 / Vintage Books 1958) 232-4.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 147-50.

Alexy Tolstoy: Troparion

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Алексей Толстой: Иоанн Дамаскин

«Какая сладость в жизни сей

Date: 1859

In general the poem is rhymed thus:

1. «Какáя слáдость в жízни сей 4а
Земно́й печáли неприча́тна? 4В
Чьё ожида́нье не напрáсно? 4В
И где счастли́вый меж люде́й? 4а
Всё то превра́тно, всё ничто́жно, 4С
Что мы с трудо́м приобрели́,— 4d
Какáя сла́ва на зéмли 4d
Стои́т тверда́ и непрелóжна? 4С
Все пéпел, при́зрак, тень и дым, 4е
Исчéзнет всё как вихо́рь пы́льный, 4F
И пéред сме́ртью мы стои́м 4е
И безору́жны и бесси́льны. 4F
Рука́ могу́чего слаба́, 4g
Ничто́жны ца́рские велéнья — 4Н
Прими́ усóпшего раба́, 4g
Госпо́дь, в блаже́нные селе́нья! 4Н

Alexy Tolstoy (1817-75) was a deeply religious man who saw the Orthodox Church as the natural religion of the Russian people. The poem covers some incidents in the life of the Rev. John of Damascus, beginning from his time as beloved servant of the Damascus Caliph Umayyad. John made a legendary trip to Constantinople to denounce the Byzantine emperor Leo III, and then traveled to the Great Lavra of St. John Sava Sanctified in the Judean desert. The Rev. John wrote a poem to comfort the brother of the deceased monk, which was against the otherworldly doctrines of the order, which he was forced to leave. The Most Holy Theotokos appeared to the elder in a vision, however, and asks why he is persecuting John. The Most Holy Virgin, speaking of John, compares the joy that his gift brings with the joy that nature gives, and finished his speech with the following appeal: 'Leave the flowers to the earth, leave the harmonies to Damascus!' The poem ends with the triumph of the gift of the song of St. John, and mentions, in particular, the Song of the Resurrection.

The central part of Tolstoy's poem is a famous rendering of the *Troparion*, which John wrote in memory of the deceased monk's brother. John is slandered and the Caliph orders that the saint's right hand be severed as punishment. Mary, the Mother of God, miraculously restores the hand to John, but Tolstoy, who could read the Greek, in fact bases his poem on the saint's life thereafter, perhaps in keep with the naturalist feeling of the times. As John is restored to his old position in the caliphate, so Tolstoy is given divine permission to use his poetic gifts again.

The theme of *Troparion* is the vanity of earthly wishes, of course, and the poem has the power of some of Derzhavin's piece, notably 'On the Death of Prince Meshchersky'. A troparian is usually a single chant, but here Tolstoy repeats the theme four times, enhancing its solemn grandeur, which is in contrast to the poem as a whole.

The poem was in fact set to music by Sergei Taneyev, and the cantata first performed in 1884 in memory of the pianist Nikolay Rubinstein.

Brief References

1. Иоанн Дамаскин Ruskline article of 2004. Brief analysis of John of Damascus poem and background (in Russian) with references.
2. Bristol, E. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 147-50.
3. Bowra, C.M. A Book of Russian Verse. (Macmillan 1943) 58-60.

Alexy Tolstoy: The Convicts

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Алексей Толстой: Колодники

Спускается солнце за степи

Date: first half of 1850s

The piece is written in dactyls, rhymed as follows:

Спуска́ется со́лнце за стéпи, и - и и - и и - и 3А

Вдали́ золотíтся ковы́ль,— и - и и - и и - 3б

Коло́дников звóнкие це́пи и - и и - и и - и 3А

Взмета́ют доро́жную пы́ль. и - и и - и и - 3б

The Convicts by Alexy Tolstoy (1817-75) features the prisoners, often political prisoners, who were obliged to trudge across the Orenburg steppes on their way to Siberian hard labour. It was not an infrequent sight in tsarist Russian: gangs of prisoners, heads shaven, chained together, with slow steps, sullen brows, and heavy thoughts. Touched by their plight, Tolstoy contrasted their misfortune with the natural freedom of the Volga, the wide and steppes and the untrammelled human will.

The prisoners' journey is presented as endless suffering that does not stop even when the sun goes down. In time the poem was set to music and sung by T. Grechaninov, becoming a popular revolutionary song. It was greatly

loved by Lenin and was often sung by prisoners of all political persuasions.

The poem is outwardly simple, but the ternary rhythm and feminine rhymes give much trouble to the translator.

References

1. [Анализ стихотворения Толстого «Колодники»](#) Simple school essay (in Russian).
2. Bristol, E. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 147-50.
3. Bowra, C.M. A Book of Russian Verse. (Macmillan 1943) 58-60.

Nekrasov: At the Entrance

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Николай Некрасов: Размышления у парадного подъезда

Вот па рад ный подь езд. По тор жест вен ным дням

Date: 1858

The poem is written in the ternary metre, generally amphibrachic (u-u), sometimes a little less regularly. In the more lyrical sections the metre is probably better called dactylic (- u u). The rhyme scheme is aBBa or AbbA:

Вот па рад ный подь езд. По тор жест вен ным дням, 4a
О дер жи мый хо лоп ским не ду гом, 4B
Це лый го род с ка ким-то ис пу гом 4B
Подь ез жа ет к за вет ным две рям; 4a
За пи сав сво е и мя и звань е, 4C
Разь ез жа ют ся гос ти до мой, 4d
Так глу бо ко до воль ны со бой, 4d
Что по ду ма ешь - в том их приз вань е! 4C
А в о быч ные дни э тот пыш ный подь е зд 4e
О саж да ют у бо ги е ли ца: 4F
Про жек теры, ис ка те ли мест, 4F
И прек лон ный ста рик, и вдо ви ца. 4e

The poem ends with:

Wherever people are, you'll hear them sigh

and groan, so have the heart to ask them why.
You will wake and see and, gathering strength,
observe your destinies, obey what's right
All you could have done is here at length
set down: I've made this aching song to light
the spirit on to its eternal strength.

Nikolay Alexeyevich Nekrasov (1821-72)

Nekrasov was an editor of genius, getting the best from his contributors, finding the talent, encouraging, supporting and guiding their efforts through the perilous waters of state censorship, and still making money through the most ingenious of business novelties. Yet this leader of exemplary opinion was anything but honest. All attest to the man's hard-hearted, rapacious and unscrupulous nature. The social reformer also gambled lavishly, made no secret of pursuing the pleasures of women and dining out, and snobbishly hob-nobbed with his social betters. To save himself and his *Sovremennik*, the unapologetic hypocrite also composed and read in public a poem praising Count Muraviëv, the most brutal and determined of reactionaries. Turgenev, Herzen and other principled radicals hated the man with a vengeance, but Nekrasov remained undeniably popular with his co-workers and the masses, his funeral being a noted public event.

Nekrasov was not a careful craftsman, and, though he was an excellent critic of others' work, had little capacity for his own. Nekrasov's work is prolific but very mixed. It was not so much lapses of taste, said his critics, but of no

taste at all, of not being concerned with such matters. Nekrasov has none of the tact, balance and luminous sense of limits that inform the work of Pushkin, Turgenev and Tyutchev, and the dangerous facility he acquired in his years of hack journalism allowed him to mechanically churn out verse on anything he pleased, as and when the need came to him. What most drove him to hold forth were the monstrous sufferings of the poor, with whom — his own life-style notwithstanding — he genuinely sympathised. He identified personally with his subjects, moreover, and almost alone among the great Russian poets, could enter into the peasant's hopes, sufferings and rough good humour. Many of his pieces have the genuine air of folksongs. At his best, Nekrasov is incomparable, writing with intense humanity, often with biting satire and savage invective. He was also able to incorporate colloquialisms and slang into his verse, compose in loose ternary measures, and carry off such incongruous matters quite naturally.

Critical opinion is therefore still divided over Nekrasov, between those who despise his style (which concerned him not at all) and those who value the searing frankness of his views (which he saw as the obvious truth). He was undoubtedly the greatest civic poet of the second half of the Russian nineteenth century, and there are poems that only he could have produced: *Who Can Be Happy in Russia?*, *Frost the Red-Nosed*, and the piece translated here.

On the basis of his 1840 volume of verse, which showed no promise whatsoever, Nikolay Alexeyevich Nekrasov

gave up his studies at St. Petersburg University and turned to literature, which prompted his bullying squire of a father to immediately sever the allowance. For three years, Nekrasov lived in direst poverty, experiencing at first hand what was to be a constant theme of his work: the sufferings of Russia's oppressed classes. But by 1845, through an astonishing amount of hack journalism, commercial acumen and genuine critical taste, Nekrasov had become the principal publisher of a new literary school, which in time brought out all the leading names of Russian literature in the mid-to-later nineteenth century. His own verse improved, and found enthusiastic support from Belinsky and other leading critics. In 1847, Nekrasov acquired the *Sovremennik*, which had been Pushkin's journal, and soon turned a valetudinarian relict of the aristocracy into a splendidly paying affair and the principal literary review in Russia. Surviving the hard times of reaction, it became the rallying ground of the extreme left, for which was closed down the following year in the panic that followed the first attempt on Alexander II's life. Two years later, Nekrasov took over the *Otechestvennye Zapiski*, where he remained the owner and editor of the most radical journal in the country until his death.

Nekrasov's main theme was, as he put it, 'the suffering of the Russian people.' In this he was entirely sincere, though his own life was often very different from what he espoused — a reason perhaps for the bitter irony, gloom, distraction and guilty conscience that featured prominently. Yet, though subjective, that tortured compassion for his fellow men allowed Nekrasov to get inside his characters, identifying with their humour and

native cunning as much as with the monstrous suffering they received at the hands of landowners and officialdom. Sometimes he idealized the serfs, which could lead to sentimentality, and that flaw is not entirely missing from the later stages of this poem, where Nekrasov turns his savage invective on:

You inhabiting great luxury
will in your deepest slumber see . . .
Who say that's life's a blessing all the same
with comfort and a need for name. .

References

1. Nekrasov, N. Reflections on the Main Entrance.
<http://www.stihi-rus.ru/1/Nekrasov/89.htm>

Audio Recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-YE7WSND4Y>

Nekrosov: Pedlars

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Николай Некрасов: «Коробейники»

«Ой, полна, полна моя коробушка,

Date: 1861

The poem is written in regular iambic tetrameters, rhymed AbAb, where the feminine rhyme has a second syllable (but isn't stressed, i.e. doesn't turn the line into a pentameter). The result is a ballad-like rhythm, which suits the folk-tune style that Nekrasov was fond of.

«О, пол на́, пол на́ ко ро́ буш ка, 4А

Есть и си́тцы и пар ча́. 4b

По жа ле́й, мо я́ заз но́ буш ка, 4А

Мо ло де́ц ко го пле ча́! 4b

The concluding stanza has six lines:

Так пос той же! Не ру ши мо е 4А

О бе ща ныи це да ю: 4b

О по рож нит ся ко ро буш ка, 4А

На Пок ров до мой при ду 4b

И те бя, ду ша-заз но буш ка, 4А

В бож ью цер ковь по ве ду!» 4b

The Pedlars or See How Many Goods I Pack, is one of Nekrasov's most popular pieces, and has indeed acquired a life of its own, having been set to music as a genuine folk song. The sequence in fact ends unhappily with the pedlars being murdered for their takings, but illustrates the unsentimental values of peasant life

References

1. Nekrasov, N. (1861) Коробейники. <http://nekrasov-lit.ru/nekrasov/stihi/258.htm>
2. Wikipedia writers. Korobeiniki. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korobeiniki>
3. Mirsky. D. (1958) A History of Russian Literature. Vintage Books. 238-43.
4. Berg, A. (2013) Russian Poetry in the Marketplace 1800-1917, and Beyond. <https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/11064404>

Audio Recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0xgoDbIWUI>

Nekrasov: Home

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Николай Некрасов: Родина

И вот они опять, знакомые места

Date: 1846

The poem is written in hexameters, rhymed aa bb cc, etc. This is not an unusual measure in Russian, but much less easy to handle in English.

И вот онѣ опять, знакомые местá, u-u-u-u-u-u- ба
Где жизнь отцов моих, бесплодна и пуста́, u-u-u-u-u-u- ба
Текла́ среди пиров, бессмысленного чванства, u-u-u-u-u-u- бВ
Разврата грязного и мелкого тиранства; u-u-u-u-u-u- бВ
Где рой подавленных и трепетных рабов бd
Завидовал жизнью последних барских псов, бd
Где было суждено́ мне божий свет увидеть, бE
Где научился я терпеть и ненавидеть, бE
Но, ненависть в душе́ постыдно притая́, бf
Где иногда́ бывал помещиком и я; бf
Где от души́ моёй, доврѣменно растлѣнной , бG
Так рано отлетѣл покой́ благословѣнный, бG

My solution has been to write hexameters with broken and changing rhythms — not attractive of course, but I hope effective.

References

1. Bristol, E. A. History of Russian Poetry (OUP 1991) 155-59.
2. Mirsky. D. (1958) A History of Russian Literature. Vintage Books. 238-43.

Nekrasov: Red-Nosed Frost (selections)

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Николай Некрасов: Мороз, красный нос

Ты опять упрекнула меня

Date: 1864

The poem is written in ternary measures: amphibrachic trimeters for the most part, but dactylic trimeters for a central section between lines 559 and 835 inclusive.

See the free Ocasop Press ebook for details.

References

1. Bristol, E. A. History of Russian Poetry (OUP 1991) 155-59.
2. Mirsky. D. (1958) A History of Russian Literature. Vintage Books. 238-43.
3. Birkenmayer, S.S. (1968) Nikolay Nekrasov: His Life and Poetic Art. Mouton. pp. 118-37.

Audio Recordings

1. Мороз, Красный нос автор Николай Некрасов читает Борис Горбатов

<https://knigavuhe.org/book/moroz-krasnyi-nos/>

2. Некрасов Николай - Мороз красный нос

<https://teatr.audio/Nekrasov-nikolay-moroz-krasnyy-nos>

3. Мороз, Красный носТекст

<https://www.litres.ru/nikolay-Nekrasov/moroz-krasnyy-nos/chitat-onlayn/>

Nekrasov: Who Can Be Happy in Russia

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Николай Некрасов: Кому на Руси жить хорошо.

Широкая дороженька

Date: 1864-77

The lines have eight and six syllables, which Eric McDonald {5} reads as an unrhymed iambic trimeter, usually with a dactylic ending:

1. Широ́кая доро́женька, (8) u - u - u - u u
- Берёзками обста́влена, (8) u - u - u - u u
- Далеко́ протяну́лася, (8) u u - u - u - u
- Песча́на и глуха́. (6) u - u - u -
5. По сторо́нам доро́женьки (8) u - u - u - u u
- Иду́т холмы́ полого́е (8) u - u - u - u u
- С поля́ми, с сенокóсами, (8) u - u - u - u u

Who Can Be Happy and Free In Russia is an epic (8,862-line) four-part poem by Nikolay Nekrasov (1821-78). The first sections were published in the *Sovremennik* and *Otechestvennyye Zapiski* in 1866, but its fourth part, *The Feast for All the World* (1876–1877) was delayed by censorship problems (as was the whole poem), and Nekrasov's declining health. The work was never quite finished, but the poem as written, albeit with Nekrasov's obliging cuts, first appeared in 1881.

The poem is a celebration of Russian life. Seven peasants take a long journey across Russia united in the hope of finding at least one happy person, a hope that remains unfulfilled as they encounter only suffering and injustice. That surprises the travellers as the Emancipation of the serfs had supposedly left them masters of the land. In the Prologue, the wanderers find a self-assembled tablecloth, and, so fortified, continue in their search. Chapter titles give some indication of what they get up to: village fair, drunken night, happy ones, the die-hard, Klim the elder, peasant woman, wedding, governor's lady, feast for the whole village, bitter time, pilgrims and wanderers, old and new.

They meet with various representatives of society — peasant, squire, parson, etc. — and are given marvellous accounts of moral achievements, heroism and crime, which they happily accept. The poem, against the odds, ends in joyful optimism at a future guided by a democratic intelligentsia.

'Who Can Be Happy in Russia' is one of most remarkable poems in Russian, and though, like all Nekrasov's work, it has its unsuccessful passages, the work remains a tribute to his countryman's good humour, verbal expressiveness and keen wit. To judge by Gutenberg downloads, it is not much read in the west, but the poem has become in Russia something of a national classic.

References

1. Russian text. iLibrary.ru.
2. Juliet Soskice translation, with introduction and chapter headings. [Gutenberg](http://Gutenberg.org).
3. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 155-9.
4. Mirsky, D.S., A History of Russian Literature (Knopf 1926 / Vintage Books 1958) 238-43.
5. Mcdonald, Eric. 2013 Translation comparison: Who Can Be Happy in Russia? [XIX Bek](#)
6. Mcdonald, Eric. 2014 Translation comparison: Who Lives Happily in Russia?, again. [XIX Bek](#)
7. It's for this reason I haven't adopted Soskice or Dralyuk's ternary meter for my translation of Nekrasov's Red-Nosed [Frost](#).
8. Nikolay Nekrasov. Altruistic World Online [Library](#).

Balmont: Reeds

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Константин Бальмонт: Камыши

Полночной порою в болотной глуши

Date: 1895

The poem is written in amphibrachic (u - u) couplets, a little irregularly in some lines. The first (regular) couplet:

Полно́чной поро́ю в боло́тной глуши́ u-u u-u u-u u- 4a
Чуть слы́шно, бесшу́мно, шурша́т камыши́. u-u u-u u-u u- 4a

Konstantin Balmont (1867-1942)

Konstantin Balmont was a Degenerate Poet *par excellence*. He came from a family of landowners, probably of Scottish descent, who held lands in the Ivano-Voznesensk area, Russia's 'Manchester'. On political grounds, he was expelled from school and Moscow University, but gained a law degree from Yaroslav. After lengthy depression, a broken marriage and a suicide attempt, Balmont became a translator and original poet. His first literary success came with *Under Northern Skies* in 1894, and until 1905 Balmont was probably Russia's leading Symbolist. He left the country in 1917, and travelled widely, incorporating exotic material into his voluminous poems and travelogues. He was happy to participate in early street demonstrations but turned

against the second 1917 Revolution, settling eventually in France, where he became an alcoholic, and was committed to a sanatorium in 1930, dying there largely destitute and ignored.

The Russian Symbolists were slow to win acceptance. They combined a fastidious verse craftsmanship with social attitudes that were rather questionable, if not downright wicked to the common people. In the poem here, *The Devil's Voice*, is Konstantin Balmont being sincere and not simply playing to the gallery of disaffected Russian youth, particularly girls who liked to live dangerously, or appear to do so? Yes, he was. Balmont had a decided animus against religious institutions that helped hold together society in Imperial Russia, and he therefore welcomed the first 1917 Revolution, only turning against the second, the Bolshevik Revolution, which he saw as replacing one authoritarian and oppressive regime by another. He left Russia in 1917, travelled widely, and finally settled in France, slowly becoming disillusioned, an alcoholic and finally the destitute inmate of a local sanatorium, where he died in 1942.

That wildness and hit or miss attitude to life was part of Balmont's character. He wrote voluminously, for long periods turning out a new collection every year, but the good poems became fewer and fewer until by 1905 he had succumbed to a middle age contentedness that is fatal to the muse. The spontaneous lyricism of words that just came to him was resistant to the continual rewriting and rewriting that good poetry generally needs, and his émigré status didn't help: the Soviets had long ago

returned to civic poetry.

It is for six books published from 1894 to 1904 that Balmont is remembered, and which have a richness of sound and vocal design new to Russian verse. In way difficult for us to understand, and only practised in the English poets of the Nineties (and perhaps in Stevens's *Sunday Morning*), the very sound of words had colour and meaning for Symbolist poets. In spite of their narrow views and mannerisms, they combined great talent with careful craftsmanship that had been missing from Nekrasov and other civic poets, making this so-called Silver Age only slightly inferior to the Golden Age of Pushkin's circle. Pushkin himself was inimitable, of course, and the Golden Age was much more varied in tone and subject matter. The Symbolists, on the other hand were irremediably serious and solemn. Life was a ritual, and writing verse even more so. In Blok and Sologub the solemnity is sometimes relieved by bitter feelings of 'metaphysical irony', but only Bely had a genuine and irrepressible gift for humour. Balmont, alas, did not.

Like Mallarmé, the Russian Symbolists tried to bring poetry closer to music. The semantic nature of words is overlaid or obliterated by the emotional value of sounds and their connotations. They ceased to be words as such, and became more in the nature of 'phonetic gestures'.

The many varied meanings thus conjured up also gave an air of mystery to the poems, or 'obscurity' as the general public saw it. But the poetry was new, was an improvement on civic verse, and paved the way for Russian Modernist verse.

Konstantin Balmont's poetry, dedicated to the search for a cosmic wholeness, was attractive to many by virtue of colour, expansive tone and natural lyricism. The work was very hit and miss, however, as Balmont was unfortunately unable to revise or work on the spontaneously given lines. Decline set in after 1905, and even his prose Mirsky castigates as 'the most insipid, turgid and meaningless in the language.

The six books Balmont published from 1894 to 1904 do have a richness of sound and vocal design unknown in Russian before, much though critics complained that the verse lacked variety or any real feeling for the Russian language.

Being influenced by the French Symbolists, and their escape from oppressive city life, the Russian Symbolists also came to adopt a cosmopolitan imagery and an escape into universal symbols. But a love of their countryside is also a continuing aspect of Russian literature, and here Balmont is recording the intimate world of nature, not of course without attributing a world-weariness and desolation to a moonlit scene. The translation point here is how far we wish to depart from a literal translation of the Russian words to convey the tone that Balmont was aiming for.

Russian, with its liquid syllables, is admirable for these effects, but even in English there are many possibilities that readers can try for themselves (muted, soundless, noiseless, imperceptible, etc.) But the point I am making

is that translation has to be appropriate — in diction, in rhythm and what George Saintsbury would call 'fingering', i.e. those modifications to an exact metre needed for variety and expressiveness.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S, Contemporary Russian Literature (Alfred A Knopf, 1926) 184-6.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 172-5.

Balmont: Devil's Voice

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Константин Бальмонт: Голос Дьявола

Я ненавижу всех святых

Date: 1903

The poem is written in iambic tetrameters, with an extra unstressed syllable ending the even-numbered lines:

Я ненави́жу всех святы́х, 4а
Они́ забот́ятся мучи́тельно 4ВВ
О жа́лких по́мыслах свои́х, 4а
Себя́ спаса́ют исклю́чительно. 4ВВ

Like Mallarmé, the Russian Symbolists tried to bring poetry closer to music. The semantic nature of words is overlaid or obliterated by the emotional value of sounds and their connotations. They ceased to be words as such, and became more in the nature of 'phonetic gestures'.

The many varied meanings thus conjured up also gave an air of mystery to the poems, or 'obscurity' as the general public saw it. But the poetry was new, was an improvement on civic verse, and paved the way for Russian Modernist verse.

The Symbolists were accomplished technicians, but we have to be careful not to make translations too facile or witty that they verge on self-mockery. Balmont always took himself seriously, and for that reason I have broken the rhythm in places, writing 'wholly unconscionable they are in this' rather than 'a touch peremptory in this', which is better verse. I have also substituted 'Serpent's' for the Russian 'Snake's' in stanza 4, to make a stronger line.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S, Contemporary Russian Literature (Alfred A Knopf, 1926) 181-6.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 172-5.

Balmont: I Came into the World

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Константин Бальмонт: Я в этот мир пришёл

Я в этот мир пришёл, чтоб видеть Солнце...

Date: 1903

The poem is written in iambics: AbAb:

Я в ётот мир пришёл, чтоб вíдеть Сóлнце 5А

И сíний кругозóр. 3b

Я в ётот мир пришёл, чтоб вíдеть Сóлнце, 5А

И вьíси гор. 2b

I Came into the World to See the Sun dates from the 1903 *Let Us Be Like the Sun* collection, and is one of Balmont's best-known poems, being even admired by Mayakovsky. Balmont was not indulging in much modesty here, but what he says is true: at his best he was inimitable, in a rather vainglorious way.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S, *Contemporary Russian Literature* (Alfred A Knopf, 1926) 184-6.
2. Bristol, E., *A History of Russian Poetry* (1991, O.U.P.) 172-5.

Bryusov: Huns

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Валерий Брюсов: Грядущие гунны

Где вы, грядущие гунны

Date: 1904-05

The poem is written in amphibrachic trimeters rhymed ABAB, i.e. with feminine rhymes throughout:

Где́ вы, грядúщие гúнны, - у у - у у - у 3А

Что тúчей навíсли над мíром! - у у - у у - у 3В

Слы́шу ваш то́пот чугúнный - у у - у у - у 3А

По ещё не открýтым Памíрам. - у у - у у - у 3В

Evelyn Bristol's unrhymed version Bryusov's 'The Huns.'

{1} Her first and last stanzas:

Where are you, Huns of the future,
That hand o'er the world like a cloudburst?
I hear the tramp of your iron
On Parmiras as yet undiscovered.

Our lore may all perish, be traceless —
All we alone knew on the planet,
But you, who will come and destroy me —
I meet with a hymn and welcome.

This version, which is clearly not a literary one, but

intended to convey the plain meaning, suggests that the poem is not set in the historical past but in the present. The 'coming Huns' are the threatening future.

Valery Yakovlevich Bryusov (1873-1924)

The nominal master of Russian Symbolism was Valery Bryusov, though more recognized for his organizing flair: it was his miscellanies of 1894 and 1895 that probably gave the Symbolist name to the movement. Bryusov was a competent poet nonetheless, and published important collections in 1900 (*Tertia vigilia*) and 1903 (*Urbi et orbi*). There were often classical themes and setting reminiscent of the French Parnassians in his work but Bryusov's most compelling theme focused on the intractable nature of human evil. Bryusov's magazine *The Scales* was at the heart of the Russian Symbolist movement, but Bryusov also wrote short stories, dramas and historical novels.

Bryusov was born in Moscow to a merchant family, attended Moscow University, and, with the help of fellow students, started publishing poems that were not valued or understood at the time, indeed were widely ridiculed. But patronage came from the wealthier merchant families, the two collections gained the respect of fellow poets, and in 1910 he became the literary critic of a prestigious newspaper, *Russian Thought*. Bryusov embraced the October Revolution, joined the Communist Party in 1920, and held positions in the Ministry of Education until his death. {1-2}

Bryusov was a cultivated man, who took an informed interest in historical periods and personalities. He wrote poems on King Esarhaddon of Assyria, Pysche, Moses, Cleopatra, the Scythians, Mary Stuart and Napoleon. In this he had affinities with the French Parnassians, but not at all with English poets, British or America. English poets, or those of any distinction, simply did not write about such subjects, even at the cost of making (I would argue) their work rather provincial if not parochial.

Bryusov was also a man of his time, who despaired of tsarist government, seeing it as dysfunctional, authoritarian and oppressive, largely incapable of change. Like many others he welcomed the Revolution, and (unlike many others) managed to accept and accommodate himself to the Communist regime. In the poem being translated, the Huns are not merely historical figures, therefore, but the forces of change. For that reason, he listens to the tramp of the masses (where the Huns were nomadic horsemen, of course) and calls the Pamirs an unknown country (i.e. a lofty but somewhat unknown entity). {1}

References

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 175-8.

Bryusov: To the Poet

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Валерий Брюсов: Поэту

Ты должен быть гордым, как знамя:

Date: 1909

The poem is written in amphibrachic trimeters rhymed

AbAb:

Ты до́лжен быть го́рдым, как зна́мя: u – u u – u u – u

3A

Ты до́лжен быть о́стрым, как меч; u – u u – u u - 3b

Как Данту, подзе́мное пла́мя u – u u – u u – u 3A

Должно́ тебе щёки обже́чь. u – u u – u u - 3b

Far from being the prankster and mountebank his youthful imitations of French poets caused him to be seen as, Bryusov was one of the most solemn and deadly serious figures in the whole of Russian literature. Though every new book was initially received with bewilderment and ridicule, by 1903 Bryusov had been recognized as the head of the Russian Symbolists, and Symbolism itself became a reputable movement. His *Vesy* (*The Scales*: 1904-9) was the most civilized and European-leaning literary journal of its time. All this promotion came at a cost, however, and Bryusov's poetry slowly declined. He had always been more than just a poet, but that wonderful energy and creativeness inevitably fell off and

All My Melodies of 1909 showed no advance on *Stephanos* of 1906. {1-2}

Stephanos included magnificent variations on Greek fables, and was probably the best achievement of the classical Symbolists in Russia. Unfortunately, as in his prose, Bryusov's visions of sensuality and cruelty remain pageants of loud colour, and there is little genuine feeling or psychology in the depictions. By 1913, even Bryusov's novels had declined in plot and creativity.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S, *Contemporary Russian Literature* (Alfred A Knopf, 1926) 186-91.
2. Bristol, E., *A History of Russian Poetry* (1991, O.U.P.) 175-8.

Sologub: Moistened Clay

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Федор Сологуб: Восставил Бог меня из влажной глины

Восставил Бог меня из влажной глины

Date: 1896

The poem is written in alternating pentameter and tetrameter rhymed AbAb:

Восста́вил Бог меня́ из вла́жной гли́ны, 5A

Но от земл́и не отдали́л. 4b

Родныея́ мне — верши́ны и доли́ны, 5A

Как я себе́, весь мир мне мил. 4b

The last line of the third stanza has only three stresses, i.e. is 3b.

The poem was written in 1896, when Sologub was still relatively optimistic about Russia and life in general. It's a pantheistic view, in which Sologub views himself as materially part of the earth and thus naturally in tune with its aims and moods. The main difficulty with this poem is to convey the musicality without over simplifying the content.

Fedor Sologub (1863-1927)

The last years of the Russian nineteenth century saw a political amelioration in the air: the reactionary attitudes of Alexander III and Nicholas II were marked by social unrest and repressive measures. To this mix of desperation and modest hopes was added the fin de siècle world-weariness of European culture, with their belief that truths were irrational or knowable only through artistic expression. Symbolism in Russia was relatively mild and philosophic in nature, though nonetheless called 'decadent' by the great mass of the reading public, who did not care for it. Being Russia, that philosophical nature also took on a religious flavour, and in Sologub became markedly Manichean, divided between a universal good and evil. He even invented cosmologies of his own in two volumes published in 1904, some of them deriving from Schopenhauer's pessimism, and some with a more Gnostic view.

To what extent Sologub believed these cosmologies is difficult to say. Primarily, he regarded himself as a poet, and one that until the twentieth century was content to write about nature and her melancholy moods. Unusually for Symbolist poets, Fedor Sologub (1863-1927) did not come from a cultivated family. He was the son of a sadistic peasant maid employed in a St. Petersburg merchant family, and after education at a teacher's seminary, returned to Petersburg as a teacher and later a school inspector. Only the fame of his Gogol-like novel *The Petty Demon* in 1907, set in provincial Russia, allowed

him to earn a living through his pen, but he eventually clashed with the Soviet authorities. In 1921 he and his wife were denied permission to leave Russia. His wife committed suicide. Sologub could not get his own works published after 1923, and had to support himself by translation. He was the permanent President of the Leningrad Writer's Union when he died.

Despite these difficulties, and increasing pessimism, Sologub was a prolific writer, sometimes too prolific, critics complained, and too restricted in his themes, moreover, but the verse was always competent and often a good deal more. The vocabulary was limited, and there was little of the suggestive vagueness that Symbolist poets favoured, but Sologub had a good ear for the music of verse. {1}

Fedor Sologub generally employed a limited vocabulary, but made extensive use of simple words as symbols or extended metaphors. That's something we must bear in mind when translating his poetry. It's true that the translator can only work with what's given him, the plain words on the page, but they have to be interpreted in the broader light of what we know generally of Sologub's aims in other work. Sologub's romantic resentment of heaven was coupled with a fertile visual imagination, {1} and here, in this late poem, that is only entitled as the first line, we have an extended allegory.

References

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.)
178-81

Sologub: High Moon

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Федор Сологуб: Высока луна Господня

Высока луна Господня

Date: 1922

The poem is written in iambics rhymed 4a2b4a2b, where upper case indicates the feminine rhyme:

Грусть томи́т меня́ сего́дня 4A

И тоска́. 2b

Просыпа́йтесь, наруша́йте 4A

Тишину́. 2b

Mankind's passage on the earth and his hope of salvation has been transposed to the canine world, though without improving on Sologub's generally gloomy view of life. The 'traveler' I would read below as Christ the Saviour, who may, at least in Sologub's eyes, be friend or foe. Dogs bay at the moon, and the poem ends in our human longings for something we cannot have.

References

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 179.
2. Mirsky, D.S, Contemporary Russian Literature (Alfred A Knopf, 1926) 196-201.

Sologub: Lullaby

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Федор Сологуб: Тихая колыбельная

Много бегал мальчик мой.

Date: 1906

The poem is written in tetrameters, all with masculine rhymes: ababcc:

Мно́го бе́гал ма́льчик мой. 4а

Но́жки го́лые в пы́ли. 4b

Но́жки ми́лые помóй. 4а

Моя́ но́жки, задремли́. 4b

Я спо́ю|спою́ тебе́, спою́: 4с

«Баю-баюшки-баю́». 4с

Mirsky goes on to say that 'As for his idealistic lyrics, which, after all, are his greatest achievements, it is useless, except one be a master of English verse, to attempt any translation on them. {1} Against that, the editors of *The Penguin Book of Russian Verse* give only one short extract of one poem: My Boring Lamp. {2}

References

1. Mirsky, D.S, Contemporary Russian Literature (Alfred A Knopf, 1926) 196-201.
2. Chandler, R. et al. The Penguin Book of Russian Poetry (Penguin Random House, 2015) 158.
3. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 178-81.
4. Markov, V. and Sparks, M.L. (Eds.) Modern Russian Poetry (Bobbs-Merril & Co., 1967) 100-103.

Hippius : Freedom

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Зинаида Гиппиус: Свобода

Я не могу покоряться людям.

Date: 1904

The poem is written in alternating tetrameters and trimeters rhymed AbAb etc., but with an impaired rhythm, i.e. the dolnik that Hippius liked:

Я не могу́ покоря́ться лю́дям. - u u - u u - u - u 4A

Мо́жно ли ра́бства хоте́ть? - u u - u u - 3b

Целую́ жизнь мы друг дру́га су́дим, — - u u - u u - u - u 4A

Что́бы зате́м — умере́ть. - u u - u u - 3b

Я не могу́ покоря́ться Бо́гу, - u u - u u - u - u 4C

Е́сли я Бо́га люблю́. - u u - u u - 3d

Он указа́л мне мою́ доро́гу, - u u - u u - u - u 4C

Как от не́ё отступлю́? - u u - u u - 3d

Zinaida Hippius (1869-1945)

Zinaida Hippius was the leading religious poet in Russia of her time, but it was not conventional faith by any means. She drew from Vladimir Solovyev (1853-1900) the concept of a universal love that binds together the earthly and divine. Her poems commonly dramatize the struggle for moral and religious enlightenment, against ennui, and against self-love and pride.

Hippius was born in a rural area of Tula, and mostly educated at home. In 1889 she married Dmitry Merezhovsky, and lived in St. Peterburg, where the two founded a Sunday salon for like-minded writers. They were later joined by the literary critic Dmitry Filosofov, with whom they formed a ménage a trois. Zinaida herself wrote in the masculine gender, and flaunted a bohemian dandyism in clothes and attitudes. Disappointed by the 1905 Revolution, the couple moved to Paris. They supported the earlier 1917 Revolution, but not the Communist one, returning to France, where they lived for the remainder of their lives.

Hippius was well known in Russia before the Revolution, but much less so the later years, though the Bolsheviks allowed the publication of her last two collections: *Last Poems* (1918) and *A Diary, 1911-1921* (1929). She also wrote short stories, plays and novels, but these haven't lasted.

I'd make two suggests. First is that extra syllables of the dolnik should swell the stanza from 4 3 4 3 to 5 4 5 4 lines. The second is to adopt the freer approach of Bonver's translation and try to fathom Hippius' meaning. Russian Symbolism takes liberties with sense, but is not wholly irrational. My translation therefore has the logic that Hippius is arguing, I think, though the rendering certainly enlarges the rather plain original. My 'I can't submit to God's judgemental wrath' is simply 'I cannot submit to God' in the Russian, for example. My 'like him, are free to love or weep' is even further from the literal ('Children are free, like Him') but of course I am finding a

rhyme for 'holds us in', which is again simply 'net' in the original.

References

1. Mirsky, D.S. Contemporary Russian Literature (Knopf 1926) 192-96.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 181-83.
3. Анализ стихотворения З. Гиппиус «Нелюбовь» (Analysis of Z. Gippius' poem "Dislike") General account of Symbolist poetry in [Russian](#).

Bunin: Leaf Fall

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Иван Бунин: Листопад

Лес, точно терем расписной

Date: 1901

The poem is conventionally written in iambic metre, masculine and feminine rhymes alternating, generally in stanzas of 4 lines, but occasionally of 2, 5 and 6 lines.

One of Bunin's most celebrated poems, which (with his *Hiawatha* translation) won him his first Pushkin prize. It was written in August 1900 and first published in a St. Petersburg magazine, there called *Autumn Poem* and dedicate to M. Gorky. The poem shades into several sequences: an opening description of the forest flooded with autumn colours (lines 1-12), autumn personified as the widow (13-26), late autumn in the forest gradually succumbing to the privations of winter (27-148), and full winter in the forest (149-166). These last two sections are interspersed with the appeal of the forest to its inhabitants (31-9, 69-82, 105-110, 119-20, 143-8). The overall tone is melancholic, in places folk-song like in its cadences, and the poem is often seen as an elegy to the passing of summer's richness.

Ivan Bunin (1870-1953)

Ivan Bunin was born on his parents' ancestral estates in central Russia, became a widely-respected writer, was awarded the Pushkin Prize for Poetry on three occasions, left Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution, continued to write in France, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1933, and became internationally known for his short stories, many of which exhibit an acute nostalgia for a vanished way of life.

Bunin in fact published a wide variety of work throughout his life — poems, stories, novellas, a semi-autobiography and literary memoirs — but poetry remained his first love. A poem was indeed his earliest published work, and poetry of a special sort informed most of what he wrote thereafter, even in his bleakest portrayals of Russian village life. Bunin largely gave up verse for prose in middle age, but that prose was also written to the high standards of verse, i.e. with a sharp ear for the exact word and a sense of an inner music on which the piece depended for its structure and lasting appeal.

Poetry for Bunin required application, observation and detachment. Each poem was a separate conception, therefore, born of what its author felt and saw at that particular moment, and not the product of a sustained reflection on intellectualised themes, as Modernist work tends to be. Bunin was thus a very traditional poet, indeed reactionary in later years. A poet in Bunin's view does not create from sustained imagination, but must fuse sense impressions and craft to produce aesthetic entities that reconcile us to our existence as it generally is,

fragmentary and in the end unsatisfactory, but still mysteriously life-enhancing.

References

1. Bristol, E. (1991) A History of Russian Poetry. O.U.P. pp. 184-5.
2. Mirsky, D.S, (1926) Contemporary Russian Literature. Alfred A Knopf, 124-30.
3. Holcombe, C.J. (2020) Ivan Bunin's Poetry. Ocaso Press.

Bunin: Flowers and Bumblebees

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Иван Бунин: И цветы́, и шмелі́, и травá, и колосья

И цветы́, и шмелі́, и травá, и колосья

Date: 1918

The poem is written in an anapaestic metre in alternating tetrameter and trimeter lines rhyming AbAb.

И цветы́, и шмелі́, и травá, и колосья, 4A (uu-uu-uu-uu-u)

И лазу́рь, и полúденный зной... 3b (uu-uu-uu-)

Срок настанет - господь сына блúдного спросит: 4A (uu-uu- -u-uu-u)

"Был ли счáстлив ты в жízни земно́й?" 3b (uu-uu-uu-)

References

1. Bristol, E. (1991) A History of Russian Poetry. O.U.P. pp. 184-5.
2. Mirsky, D.S, (1926) Contemporary Russian Literature. Alfred A Knopf, 124-30.
3. Holcombe, C.J. (2020) Ivan Bunin's Poetry. Ocaso Press.

Bunin: Sirius

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Иван Бунин: Сириус

Где ты, звезда моя заветная

Date: 1923

The poem is in iambic tetrameters, in places irregular:

Где ты, звезда моя заветная, 4А (-иу-и-и-иу)

Венец небесной красоты? 4b

Очарованье безответное 4А

Снегов и лунной высоты? 4b

Bunin wrote this poem in 1922, in France, to which he had fled to escape the Red Army and the destruction of the old way of life that had been mother Russia. Sirius is the brightest star in the night sky, and is looking down, Bunin realizes, not only over the busy streets of Paris, but on his homeland, which he will not see again. Very probably, he will be buried far from the land God watches over, and therefore lie forgotten by what is most dear to him, the lands of childhood and his parental home.

References

1. Bristol, E. (1991) A History of Russian Poetry. O.U.P. pp. 184-5.

2. Mirsky, D.S, (1926) *Contemporary Russian Literature*. Alfred A Knopf, 124-30.
3. Holcombe, C.J. (2020) *Ivan Bunin's Poetry*. Ocaso Press.

Bunin: Morpheus

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Иван Бунин: Морфей

Прекрасен твой венók из óгненного máка

Date: 1924

The poem is in iambic hexameters, rhymed AA bb CC dd
EE ff:

Прекрасен твой венók из óгненного máка,

6A

Мой Гость тайнственный, жилéц земнóго мрáка.

6A

Как блéден смýглый лик, как дóлог гру́стный взор,

6b

Глядя́щий на меня́ и крóтко и в упóр,

6b

Morpheus was the god who shaped the dreams through which he appear to mortals in forms of his own choosing. As such, he was the messenger of the gods, able to give divine messages to sleeping mortals. Morpheus and his extended family lived in the Underworld, and only the gods on Olympus could visit him there. Morpheus himself slept in a cave filled with poppy seeds, and of course from varieties of poppies is opium extracted. Also located in the land of dreams were the River of Forgetfulness and the River of Oblivion, which Bunin has seen in this poem as the grave that divides the living from the dead.

References

1. Bristol, E. (1991) *A History of Russian Poetry*. O.U.P. pp. 184-5.
2. Mirsky, D.S, (1926) *Contemporary Russian Literature*. Alfred A Knopf, 124-30.
3. Holcombe, C.J. (2020) *Ivan Bunin's Poetry*. Ocaso Press.

Esenin: My Native Land

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Сергей Есенин: Устал я жить в родном краю

Устал я жить в родном краю

Date: 1916

The poem is in iambic tetrameters, rhymed aBaB:

Уста́л я жить в родно́м краю́ 4а

В тоске́ по грéчневým простóрам. 4В

Покíну хíжину мою́, 4а

Уйдú бродя́гою и вóром. 4В

Sergey Esenin (1895-1925) was born into a peasant family in Riazan province, but lived in Moscow from 1912 to 1915. Thence he moved to St Petersburg, where he met Blok, Gorodetsky and Kliuev, the latter becoming his tutor, friend and perhaps lover. The pupil soon outdid the master, however, and Esenin joined with Shershenevich and Mariengof to found the Imagist school of poetry. Esenin's aesthetic was different, but he shared with them a rowdy hooliganism that began to appear in his themes. In 1923 he married the famous dancer Isadora Duncan, and travelled with her to western Europe and the United States. Duncan spoke no Russian, and the couple were divorced a year later. Esenin returned to Russia, gave up Imagism, and remarried. Though somewhat the worse for drink, Esenin travelled extensively, in the Caucasus and

beyond, but in 1925 hanged himself in a Lenigrad hotel room.

Esenin depicted himself as the innocent country boy spoiled by urban bohemia, a pose that brought him immense popularity but little critical acclaim. Yet Esenin was and still is a much-loved poet, appealing to all classes, and the poetry is far from artless nostalgia for a vanished country life. He developed quite rapidly on arriving in St. Petersburg, becoming deeper, more mysterious. There is a greater awareness of pain, a growing sense of loss of innocence. The narrative thread is less clear, and the fragmented poems become ornamented with modernist imagery.

Despite the alcoholism, the last four years of Esenin's life show a return to steady writing: a wider range of subjects, reflections on love affairs, and an alienation from life, which may have exacerbated the suicidal tendencies.

Esenin was an Imagist, and so inclined to put isolated images into his poems, sometimes self-evident in meaning, and sometimes not. Here we have *зеленый вечер* (green evening), where green, I imagine, means alive and fertile. There is also the friend who sharpens up his knife (who may welcome or attack the poet), and some other friend about whose name Esenin cares about. They give the poem an inconsequential air of mystery.

References

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P., 1991) 246-8.
2. Mirsky, D.S, (1926) Contemporary Russian Literature Alfred A Knopf. 264-8.
3. Ruverses Esinin [introduction](#).
4. Сергей Есенин — Устал я жить в родном краю. Short article in [Russian](#).

Vasiliev: Natalya

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Павел Васильев: СТИХИ В ЧЕСТЬ НАТАЛЬИ

В наши окна, щурясь, смотрит лето

Date: 1934

The poem is in iambic pentameters, rhymed:

В на́ши о́кна, щу́рся, смóтрит ле́то, 5A

То́лько жа́лко - занаве́сок не́ту, 5A

Ве́треных, весёлых, кружевных. 5b

Как бы онí ве́село летáли 5C

В о́кнах приоткры́тых у Ната́льи, 5b

В о́кнах незатворенных твои́х. 5C

There are several points of interest. First is the tone. How do we translate the first two lines, where жалко means 'sorry'? As: At the windows summer looks uncertain: / that seem, please pardon me, to lack a curtain? Probably not: the uncertain / curtain rhyme is too glib, and introduces a feminine rhyme in this translation that otherwise avoids them. The please pardon me also seems somewhat arch or ruefully condescending. It may be best leave the жалко only implied: The windows squinting through the summer air, / are stupefied to find no curtain there. It's really a question of taste, of how colloquial we want to make the diction. Lines 11 and 12 are translated by Obolensky as: with the cannon balls of breasts, may

become golden and that I may never tire of gazing at you. Strictly speaking, the Russian doesn't quite say that, and it may be better to have a jocular and knowing admonition: let's have no golden cannon balls for breasts: / no: just to look at them, I sure could not. By stanza three the coyness is lost, and the poem moves to straightforward declaration.

Pavel Vasiliev (1910-37)

Pavel Vasiliev was one of many writers, artists and intellectuals who disappeared in the Great Purges of the 1930s. His boisterous love of life, not to mention his rowdy hooliganism and outspoken contempt of Stalin and Stalinism, made him a marked man. He was arrested briefly in 1932, expelled from the Union of Soviet Writers and then barred from publishing in 1934. In February 1937 he was arrested once more, convicted of treason, and shot at Moscow's Lefortovo Prison on July 16, his ashes being buried in an unmarked mass grave at the Donskoi Cemetery. {1}

Vasiliev was born in the city of Zaisan (now in Votochnyi Kazakhstan oblast) to a Cossack family and had his first poem published at the age of 16. Abandoning studies at Novosibirsk University, he spent two years as a sailor and gold miner, experiences he later described in two books of essays, *Gold Exploration* and *People of the Taiga* (both 1930).

In 1928 he moved to Moscow, where his promise was immediately recognised. Publications followed rapidly: an

epic poem *Song About the Death of the Cossack Army* (1928 to 1932), *Troika* (c. 1933), *Fists* (1934), *The Salt Rebellion* (1934), and the lyric cycle *Poems for Natalya* (1934). Vasiliev was one of the last great exponents of "peasant poetry", a movement in 20th Century Russian and early Soviet Literature, epitomized by Sergei Yesenin. Vasiliev himself used folkloric elements, musical rhythms and violent, colourful imagery in describing the Siberian countryside and its rapid transformation under Communism. {2}

References

1. Obolenski, D. (1962) *The Penguin Book of Russian Verse*. 427-30.
2. Стихотворения дня - 86. Павел Васильев. Лагерь и Стихи в честь Натальи. (2013) [Text and Analysis](#).

Bely: To My Friends

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Андрей Белый: Друзьям

Золотому блеску верил

Date: 1907

The poem is basically a amphibrachic trimeter, but rather irregular:

Золотóму блéску véрил, u u – u – u – u 3A
А úмер от сóлнечных стрел. u - u u - u – u 3B
Дúмой века́ измéрил, - u u – u – u 3A
А жизнь прожítь не сумéл, u – u – u u – 3b

Не смéйтесь над мёртвым поётóм: u – u u – u u – u 3C
Снесíte емú цветóк. u – u u – u - 3d
На крестé и зимóй и лётóм u u – u u – u – u 3C
Мой фарфóровый бьётся венóк. u u – u u – u u - 3d

Цвётý на нем побíты. u – u u – u – u 3E
Образóк полинял. - u – u u - 3f
Тяжёлые плíты. - u – u – u 3E
Жду, чтоб их кто-нибúдь снял. - u u – u – u 3f

Любíл тóлько звон колокóльный u - - u u – u - 3G
И закáт. - u - 2h
Отчегó мне так бóльно, бóльно! u u – u u – u – u 3G
Я не виновáт. - u – u - 3h

Пожалéете, придíte; u u – u – u – u 3I
Навстрéчу венкóм метнúсь. u – u u – u - 3j
О, любíte меня́, полюбите — u u – u u – u u – u 3i
Я, быть мóжет, не úмер, быть мóжет, проснúсь — u u – u u – u u – u u

- u 4j

Вернётся! u - 1j

To My Friends is an appeal from beyond the grave. As with Bryusov, and the Symbolists generally, Bely remained unappreciated for years, the mixture of serious theme and whimsical treatment making Bely seem insincere if not an outright mountebank.

Andrey Bely (1880-1934)

Andrey Bely (born Boris Bugaev) was the most innovative of Symbolist poets, but his poetry is much less imposing than his prose. *Gold in Azure*, Bely's first poetry collection, is animated by a gentle nostalgia for mystical heights. Many pieces are tongue-in-cheek tableaux from historical periods, and there are several sunset sketches in pastel colours. *The Urn* has darker themes (though not all are entirely serious) of mystery, the forsaken lover, the hard and lonely calling of the poet. In *Ashes* the subject is Russia, and the despair the country causes Bely. Subjects include a cycle called *The Village*, where murders are committed, the rich are pitted against the poor, and women mistreated. The cycle entitled *The City* sees Bely a mental patient in a clown suit. In *Insanity* Bely appears as Christ.

Bely was also disappointed by the Revolution, but, unlike Blok or Gorky, who wrote nothing during this period, Bely came to terms with the new order. Poems for Bely are generally creations, often avant-garde, rather than records of experience. Some poems indeed seem like

extracts of a novel, and Bely's *The Silver Dove* and *Petersburg* are still read.

References

1. Bristol, E. A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P., 1991) 187-91.
2. Mirsky, D.S. Contemporary Russian Poetry. (Alfred A: Knopf, 1926) 225-35.
3. Mirsky 236.
4. Analysis of Andrey Bely's poem "To My Friends" in [Russian](#).

Blok: I Foresee You

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Александр Блок: Предчувствую Тебя

Предчувствую Тебя. Годы проходят мимо —

Date:

The poem is in slightly irregular pentameters and hexameters, (i.e. dolnik) rhymed as follows, where the feminine rhyme is shown in upper case:

Предчу́вствую Тебя́. Го́ды прохо́дят ми́мо — 6/5A
Все́ в о́блике однё́м предчу́вствую Тебя́. 6b

Весь горизóнт в огнё — и я́сен нестерпи́мо, 6A
И мо́лча жду́, — тоску́я и любя́. 5b

Весь горизóнт в огнё, и бли́зко появле́нье, 6C
Но стра́шно мне: изме́нишь о́блик Ты, 5d

И де́рзкое возбуди́шь подо́зре́нье, 5/6C
Смени́в в конце́ приви́чные черты́. 5d

О, как паду́ — и го́рестно, и ни́зко, 5E
Не одоле́в смерте́льные мечты́! 5f
Как я́сен горизóнт! И лучеза́рность бли́зко. 6E
Но стра́шно мне: изме́нишь о́блик Ты. 5f

I have shown 5/6 where two stressed syllables come

together — e.g. Тебя́. Го́да in line 1 — which we could count as running together or separated by a missing unstressed syllable.

Contrary to first impressions, this is not a conventional religious poem, but a reflection on his forthcoming marriage to Liubov Mendeleyeva, a childhood friend and daughter of the celebrated chemist. Blok saw her as the incarnation of divine love, embodying a purity that conjugal relations would only spoil.

Most writers learn to keep art distinct from life, but Blok rarely did. Nor, brought up in the most rarefied of university circles, did he acquire much everyday common sense, causing his wife to eventually leave him. Liubov did return to this most sensitive and intelligent man, but was pregnant with someone else's child. To these strains in the marriage, Blok himself added his own flagrant affairs. But, unreal as this conception of pure womanhood proved to be, we must remember that Blok was only 21 when he wrote the piece, and the Symbolist concept was common in Blok's circle. In short, we have to take the poem as it is, and do our best for it in the translation.

One: Getting at the Meaning

The poem was written in 1901, and looks forward to marriage with his childhood friend (1903) and expected dedication of his *Verses About a Beautiful Lady* to her (1904). Blok was an adherent of Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyev's philosophy about the Eternal Feminine, where the 'Beautiful Lady' is a symbol of beauty and goodness.

In his cycle of poems, she is called 'Her' 'the Daughter of Light', 'the Mysterious Maiden', 'Eternal Love', 'Bright', 'Quiet', 'Mistress of the Universe'...all of which Blok thought he had found in Liubov Dmitrievna Mendeleeva, whom he had known since childhood, but with whom he became especially close in 1898. Unfortunately, this worship of female beauty excluded conjugal relations, and Liubov Dmitrievna, increasingly exasperated with her famous husband, also took up with the poet Andrey Bely, and then left Blok altogether. Amazingly, Blok seem not to have anticipated these problems, but seems only concerned that his future wife may change her idealized form before marriage and thus endanger the dedication of his life's work to her. Blok's views could be strangely unreal at times.

The Young Symbolists, to which Blok belonged, as well as to the Decadents, adopted Nietzsche's idea of a superman, but, unlike the superman, did not set themselves up as an enemy of the common crowd, but genuinely wanted to save humanity and the world. They welcomed the 1905 demonstrations, therefore, but rapidly became disenchanted with the 1917 Revolution and its unavoidable reality. Taking the poem's two-line stanzas in turn:

Couplet One

Introduction: sets the scene: the poet worries that what he sees in his beloved's face may not last.

Couplet Two

The poet looks to the future, which he sees as bright and joyful. Fire is a symbol of victory, the triumph of light over darkness, a symbol of purification, as well as a symbol of household wealth, which explains the author's expectation of a quick betrothal to his beloved. Silence is a sign of agreement, of humbly awaiting events.

Couplet Three

Again his worries come to the fore, and his beloved may not share the poet's worldview.

Couplet Four

Indeed the poet is waking to a bold suspicion that his wife will indeed change from what it used to be.

Couplet Five

The suspicion is now a mistake and does seriously threaten their marriage. The poet will fall from his lofty ideals and experience great sorrow.

Couplet 6

The sky (his prospects) is still bright, however, and the poet will continue to put his wife on a pedestal. Her radiance is near, though the doubts return.

We should note the cyclical nature of the piece, the emphatic epithets, the rhetorical exclamation and the tight coherence achieved by alliteration, etc.

Two: Metrical Form

The poem is written in mixtures of pentameters and hexameters, in places a little irregular, though not strictly Dol'nik. The form is an essential feature of the poem, and needs to be retained in the translation.

Three: Rhyme Problems

Rhyme has caused some translators a good deal of trouble. As always, in poetry and translation, rhyme has to appear natural, indeed inevitable, and most British poets have used well-tried conventional rhymes that do not draw attention to themselves.

Alexander Alexanderovich Blok (1880-1921)

By retreating into the inner world of imagination, the Symbolists were a reaction to the crass materialism of the age and to the social intentions of civic poets like Nekrasov. Important predecessors were Tyutchev and Fet, but the strongest influences were French: Baudelaire, Verlaine and Mallarmé. All explored a reality beyond the world of the senses, and tried to bring poetry closer to the art of music. In Russia these experiments inspired a whole movement, equal in many ways to the accomplishments of Pushkin and his circle, but where the most confident and accomplished performer was Alexander Blok. He used a metaphoric language to convey spiritual and psychic

experience, and his many religious and love poems brought Romanticism back into fashion. Blok hailed the Russian Revolution as liberation from outworn conventions, and though he was disappointed by its reality, and indeed died a broken man, empty of inspiration, he left behind a new technical mastery, particularly in stress verse, where it was the number of stresses to the line, and not the metre, that gave verse its coherence.

Blok was born into a sheltered and intellectual environment. His father was a law professor, and his mother the daughter of the rector of St. Petersburg University. He was reared in the atmosphere of artistic refinement at the manor of his aristocratic maternal grandparents, and in 1903 married Lyubov Mendelejeva, daughter of the famous chemist. Poetry came easily and naturally to Blok, and the early verse celebrated the exaltation and spiritual fulfilment of marriage. The technical mastery of Pushkin, and the apocalyptic philosophy of the poet and mystic Vladimir Solovyev were important influences on Blok, who developed innovatory rhythms where sound and musicality were paramount. The first collection of poems, the cycle *Stikhi o prekrasnoy dame* (1904; *Verses About the Lady Beautiful*), focuses on personal and intimate themes but these are somewhat ethereal and mystical, where the lady is a symbol for eternal femininity.

It was the third volume that contained Blok's strongest work. Older poems were incorporated with new to give an historical and mystical perspective of Russia in the 1910s.

Blok did not see combat in W.W.I, serving in the engineering and construction corps, but he was well aware of the 1917 Revolution, which he saw as part of a world-wide period of change — critical, tragic, and threatening in its consequences, but to be welcomed by Blok's faith in humankind. Blok worked for a commission investigating crimes of the imperial government, and later directly for the Bolsheviks, whom he felt represented the will of the people. “Terrible, sweet, inescapable, imperative” was how he expressed it in his poetry, which was represented by the novel in verse *Dvenadtsat* (1918; *The Twelve*) and the poem *Skify* (1918; *The Scythians*). Blok vividly expressed the mood of the time, but quickly became disillusioned with the Bolshevik government, practically ceasing to write poetry thereafter.

Reference

1. Анализ стихотворения «Предчувствую тебя» [A. A. Blok](#) Short article in Russian.

Blok: Black Raven

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Александр Блок: Предчувствую Тебя

Предчувствую Тебя. Года проходят мимо —

Date: 1910

The piece, written in 1910, is almost in iambic tetrameters, but the odd additional syllable shows this is dol'nik verse, which Blok was particularly fond of. {2}

Чер ный во рон в сум раке снеж ном, 4A

Чер ный бар хат на сму глых пле чах . 4b

Том ный го лос пен ием неж ным 4A

Мне по ет о юж ных но чах . 4b

References

1. Черный ворон в сумраке снежном...

Стихотворение Александра Блока

<https://rupoem.ru/blok/chernyj-voron-v.aspx>

2. Burnshaw, S. (1960) The Poem Itself. Penguin Books.

Appendix: Alexander Blok. 328-9.

3. Obolensky, D. (1962) The Penguin Book of Russian

Verse. Penguin Books. Introduction, xliii-xlvi.

4. Encyclopedia Britannica writers (2018). Alexander Blok.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alexander-Alexanderovich-Blok>

Audio Recording

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCCYB_nZDtY

Block: Stormy Weather

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Александр Блок: Пусть светит месяц — ночь темна.

Пусть светит месяц — ночь темна.

Date: 1898

The verse is close to iambic tetrameters, rhymed aBaB, but the occasional extra syllable means it's probably better seen as dol'nik verse:

Пусть све тит мес яц - ночь тем на.	4а
Пусть жизнь при но сит лю дям счастье е,-	4В
В мо ей ду ше люб ви вес на	4а
Не сме нит бур но го не настъ я.	4В

I have taken месяц as 'month', rather than the 'moon', which most translators sensibly assume, aiming for a rather more evocative translation.

Symbolism in literature was a complex movement that deliberately extended the evocative power of words to express the feelings, sensations and states of mind that lie beyond everyday awareness. The open-ended symbols created by Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) brought the invisible into being through the visible, and linked the invisible through other sensory perceptions, notably smell and sound. Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-98), the high priest of the French movement, theorized that symbols were of

two types. One was created by the projection of inner feelings onto the world outside. The other existed as nascent words that slowly permeated the consciousness and expressed a state of mind initially unknown to their originator. {4-5}

Like their French originators, the Russian Symbolists also wrote verse as something aspiring to music, but broke into two factions. Some, like Bryusov, saw Symbolism as a purely literary movement. Others, notably Vyacheslav Ivanov, Bely and Blok, believed Symbolism was a mystical religion to which poets served as high priests.

Blok was the greatest of the Symbolists, using metaphorical language of marked originality to convey spiritual and religious experiences, and with the images possessed of multiple meanings to express the link between the visible and invisible worlds. {4}

The notion is not difficult to understand. Words do not get their meaning from definitions or dictionaries but from their social purposes, Wittgenstein was to argue, from the practical context in which they are employed. Many nineteenth century also thinkers rejected the Enlightenment's notion of progress and abstract categories, and spoke instead of a Volk, a people — something that was not rationally grounded or justified, but grew from feelings and traditions previously overlooked. Social life was indeed analogous to organic growth, and aspects of social life were related to each

other like functions of a living body. Herder developed this notion, relating earth to the cosmos, man to earth, man as a social and historical being. History was the growth of a single, marvellous tree whose branches were the cultures of mankind. If all reality is fundamentally one, and the Divine is present in all its manifestations, then what occurs in history is Revelation. Individual conscience may be fallible, but it is the role of man's moral sense to penetrate deeper into the nature of all that exists. The sense of the dark and hidden, the feeling of dependence and awe, and a worshipful acceptance of the fullness of being, are the attitudes which put religious man in touch with the Divine. The Slavophiles in Russia of the 1830s and 1840s also believed in the primacy of the moral and religious law, the ancestral tradition and the spontaneous sense of the right and just over the written laws and regulations of the state. {5}

Words were natural intermediaries in this process, and could yield their shadowy and larger meanings if used appropriately. Blok saw art as an element in cultural history, and the latter also had a religious dimension — which in Blok's case was a mystical love for Divine Wisdom. He began to interweave love, art and dissident views into his duties as the high priest of Symbolism, engaging in affairs — which, when reciprocated by his wife, ended in disillusionment and wrecked his first marriage. The Beautiful Lady of his early poems gave way to correspondences taken from contemporary Russia, often with urban, everyday and dispiriting imagery, for which he had an innate sense of the appropriate. Blok first welcomed the Revolution but grew increasingly depressed

and finally silent over its reality. The stern necessities of a communist regime fighting for its life with harsh decrees became very different from the artistic and highly cultured society in which he was reared, and was worlds apart from the social realism it advocated. To the new democratic purposes of the common man, Symbolism had become a reactionary bourgeois art form. {6}

References

1. Blok, A. Let The Month Shine. <http://pishi-stihi.ru/pust-svetit-mesyac-noch-temna-blok.html>
 2. The Stranger: Selected Poetry — Alexander Blok, Andrey Kneller (Translator)
<https://nonbookreviews.wordpress.com/2016/02/28/the-stranger-selected-poetry-alexander-blok-andrey-kneller-translator/>
 3. Wikipedia writers (2018) Symbolism. Jul. 2004.
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symbolism_\(arts\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symbolism_(arts)).
 4. Obolenski, D. (1962) The Penguin Book of Russian Verse.
 5. Mirsky, D.S. (1958) A History of Russian Literature. Vintage Books.169.
 6. Bristol, E. (1991) A History of Russian Poetry. O.U.P. 191-6
- Audio Recording
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLZg5kPmZLc>

Blok: Steps of the Commander

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Александр Блок: Шаги Командора

Тяжкий, плотный занавес у входа

Date: 1912

The poem takes the form of ten stanzas in iambic measure and rhymed 5A4b6A4b, where the feminine rhyme is shown in upper case:

Тяжкий, плóтный зáнавес у вхóда, 5A

За ночнýм окнóм — тумáн. 4b

Что тепéрь твоя постýлая свобóда, 6A

Страх познáвший Дон-Жуан? 4b

As usually interpreted, 'The Steps of the Commander' depicts Don Juan about to be slain by the stone statue invited into his house. He dies repentant, however, discovering a higher vision in Donna Anna. {1} Nonetheless, Don Juan and Donna Anna are somewhat conflated in a poem that has a threatening dream-like quality, stronger on atmosphere than clear narrative.

Reference

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991)
191-96.

Blok: Unknown Woman

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Александр Блок: Незнакомка

По вечерам над ресторанами

Date: 1906

The poem is in regular iambic tetrameters, rhymed AbAb, where the feminine rhyme (which ends with two unstressed syllables) is shown in upper case:

По вечерáм над ресторáнами 4A

Горя́чий во́здух дик и глух, 4b

И пра́вит о́криками пья́ными 4A

Весéнный и тлетво́рный дух. 4b

Alexander Blok's *The Unknown Woman* poem is a popular piece, and has been much translated. It is, nonetheless, a puzzling poem: difficult to fully understand, and difficult to recreate in English. Blok's choice of descriptive words can be rendered fairly faithfully, but a straight transcription does not usually create a poem.

Blok's Symbolism juxtaposes the vulgar and everyday with the refined and beautiful. We should also note that in Russian the words "wine" and "guilt" are homonyms. {1} They share the same spelling and pronunciation in singular ablative case, but have different meanings. To

the vaguely erotic dimensions of the poem is thus added a sense of guilt: the woman is waiting to be picked up.

References

1. Belyayeva, D. The Silver Age of Russian Poetry.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 191-96.
3. Mirsky, D.S., Contemporary Russian Literature: 1881-1925. (Arthur Knopf, 1926) 217-20.

Viacheslav Ivanov: Beauty's Nomads

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Вячеслав Иванов: Кочевники Красоты

Вам — пращуров деревья

Date: 1904

The poem is in iambic trimeters rhymed AbAb, where the feminine rhyme is shown in upper case:

Вам — пращуров дерéвья 3А

И клáдбищ теснотá! 3б

Нам вóльные кочéвья 3А

Судíла Красотá. 3б

Viacheslav Ivanov (1866-1949)

Viacheslav Ivanov was first educated in Moscow, where he studied history and philosophy, and then in Berlin where he studied Roman law and economics under Theodor Mommsen. He was also much interested in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and the German Romantics generally, especially Novalis and Friedrich Hölderlin.

Ivanov married Darya Mikhailovna Dmitrievskaya, the sister of a close childhood friend in 1886, studied archaeology in Rome, and in 1893 met his second wife, Lydia Zinovieva-Annibal. After receiving their divorces, the two married in 1899, first settling in Athens, then moving

to Geneva, and making archaeological pilgrimages to Egypt and Palestine.

In 1903, The Ivanovs made a celebrated return to St. Petersburg, where they established the most fashionable literary salon of the era, entertaining Symbolist writers and others in Wednesday soirees that rarely got started until a 2 am supper was served. Both Ivanovs were bisexual, but Viacheslav was gravely stricken by his wife's death in 1907. Attempts to get Akhmatova to leave her immature husband came to nothing. Finally, apparently under orders from Darya Mikhailovna, who appeared in a dream, Viacheslav then married a stepdaughter, the daughter of his first wife, in 1913. Tragedy struck again in 1920, however, when Vera died. Heart-broken, Ivanov moved to Baku, where he held the University Chair of Classical Philology. At last, indifferent to turmoil in Soviet Russia, and aloof from émigré politics, Ivanov settled in Rome, being received into the Russian Catholic Church in 1926.

Ivanov continued to write until nearly the end of a tangled but fruitful life: poems, plays, translations and scholarly studies. He was the most erudite of Symbolist poets, indeed of Russian poets altogether, with an enviable learning and range of reference that's reflected in his poems.

Ivanov was much given to solemn and majestic pieces, but this is something different. As often the case with Symbolist poems, the precise meaning is difficult to pin down, beyond the conventional picture of artists being eternal nomads, settling briefly and then moving on to fresh pastures.

Reference

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P. 1991) 196-9.

Viacheslav Ivanov: Taormina

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Вячеслав Иванов: Таормина

За мглой Авзонии восток небес алей

Date: 1901

The poem is a sonnet: iambic hexameters rhymed aBba cDDc EEf GfG, where the feminine rhyme is shown in upper case:

За мглой Авзѳ́онии востѳ́к небѳ́с алей; ба
Янтѳ́рный всхѳ́дит дым над снеговерхой Этно́й; бВ
Снег рде́ет и горѳ́т, и пѳ́рпур одноцвѳ́тный бВ
Течѳ́т с еѳ́ главы́, как ца́рственный э́лей. ба

Bely, Blok, Ivanov and Annensky are often grouped under Symbolist Idealism. {1} The poets were Idealists in seeing grounds for hope in the social and political turmoil around them, and Symbolists in a mysticism that drew heavily on Baudelaire and Mallarmé: words were symbols whose significance could only be found in the activity of writing. Viacheslav Ivanov, called 'Viacheslav the Magnificent' was the 20th century master of the grand style, and added erudition and polemics to the idea that literature was a religious activity, in his case Christian but with strong dash of happy paganism. In the 1890s, Ivanov repeatedly visited Italy, studying Renaissance art and Catholic mysticism. The sonnets in particular were also

influenced by the rugged nature of Lombardy and the neighbouring Alps.

Ivanov's poems were often majestic, solemn, and declamatory, resembling 18th century odes but studded with erudite references to the classics.

The poem comes from the cycle of *Italian Sonnets*, where the ancient gods are imagined to live again, or be still living. Ivanov is picturing an altar to Dionysus (Evius) in an ancient theatre on Sicily (Ausonia) surrounded by the sea (Pontus). {1}

Melpomene is the Greek muse of tragedy, and Tartarus rules the underworld of the dead (here volcanic depths) where sinners are judged. Our rendering must clearly aim for something equally majestic and imposing.

References

1. Bristol, E., *A History of Russian Poetry* (O.U.P. 1991) 197.
2. Mirsky, D.S., *Contemporary Russian Literature 1881-1925*. (Alfred A. Knopf, 1926) 205-09.
3. Markov, V. and Sparks, M.L. (Eds.) *Modern Russian Poetry* (Bobbs-Merril & Co., 1967) 133.

Viacheslav Ivanov: Transcende Te Ipsum

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Вячеслав Иванов: Transcende te ipsum

Два жала есть у царственного змия

Date: 1904

The poem is a sonnet: iambic pentameters rhymed AbbA CDCD eFe gFg, where the feminine rhyme is shown in upper case:

Два жа́ла есть у ца́рственного зми́я; 5A
У а́нгела По́рывов — два крыла́. 5b
К распу́тию душа́ твоя́ пришла́: 5b
Вождь сей тропы́ — Рахи́ль; и о́ной — Ли́я. 5A

The phrase comes from St. Augustine, where transcendere is used in two contexts: in the platonic ascent of the soul towards God, and in the end of that ascent, which is God himself. {2} Sophia is wisdom, or the love of wisdom, female when personified. The Biblical Rachel was the favourite of Jacob's two wives; Leah was his unloved wife. In the medieval world of scholarship, Rachel was taken as a symbol of the contemplative or monastic life, and Leah as a symbol of the active or non-monastic life. {3}

What is this riddling poem saying? Probably something along the lines that humankind must choose between a life of action (suitable for most folk) and one of contemplation (the few who practise art as a religious pursuit). Wisdom is needed in both walks of life. Indeed the two reach similar ends. By earnestly thrusting your self forward you will rise above your individual nature and reach God by appreciating the infinite bounds of the real world. By contemplation and sinking deep into yourself you will also reach God, if only by realizing that you cannot in the end lose your individuality. Both paths are built on and underpinned by the darkness of sin and ignorance.

References

1. Bristol, E., *A History of Russian Poetry* (O.U.P. 1991) 196-9.
2. Aertsen, J. A., *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought* (Brill, 2012). 22
3. Leah. Wikipedia.

Annensky: Among the Worlds

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Иннокентий Анненский: Среди миров

Среди миров, в мерцании светил

Date: 1909

Like their French originators, the Russian Symbolists also wrote verse as something aspiring to music, but broke into two factions. Some, like Bryusov, saw Symbolism as a purely literary movement. Others, notably Vyacheslav Ivanov, Bely and Blok, believed Symbolism was a mystical religion to which poets served as high priests.

Blok was the greatest of the Symbolists, using metaphorical language of marked originality to convey spiritual and religious experiences, and with the images possessed of multiple meanings to express the link between the visible and invisible worlds. {4}

with psychological insight. The works were often mysterious, but the mystery in this poem does not lie in complexity, cipher and semantic vagueness, (a feature of French Symbolist poetry) but in a special psychological sharpness that is born from nothing but 'verbal dust'. To be specially noted are:

1. The anaphora: Not because I loved her, / but because

I'm languishing with others ... repeated with Not because of Her light, /And because with Her there is no need for light ...

2. The loneliness of the poet: I'm angry with others, doubt is heavy, I beg the answer, no need for light.

3 The capitalisation of Star, Her, and Her. She is important, irreplaceable.

4. The musicality of the piece.

5. The poem's tight-knit nature: no word is superfluous.

References

1. Wikipedia writers. Innokenty Annensky.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Innokenty_Annensky

2. Bavin, S. Innokentiy Annensky (Fate of the Silver Age Poets)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20070929090234/http://www.litera.ru/stixiya/articles/860.html> (Excerpt from The Fate of the Poets in the Silver Age. Russian State Library. In Russian).

3. Poet's Page writers (2003) Innokenty Fedorovich Annensky: 1856-1909.

<http://max.mmlc.northwestern.edu/mdenner/Demo/poetpage/annensky.html>

4. Annensky, I. (1901) Among the World's, translated by Bonver, Y. (2001).

https://www.poetryloverspage.com/yevgeny/annensky/among_worlds.html

5. Cigale, A. (trans.) Anthology of Russian Minimalist and Miniature Poems: Part I, The Silver Age.

https://www.albany.edu/offcourse/issue41/cigale_translations1.html#annensky

6. Belyayeva, D. The Silver Age of Russian Poetry.
<http://www.silveragepoetry.com/2013/01/innokenty-annensky.html>
7. Poem Hunter Staff Among Worlds: A Poem by Innokenty Fedorovich Annensky.
<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/among-worlds/>
8. Liberman, A. (2016) Two Miracles of Russian Love Poetry. <https://russianlife.com/stories/online-archive/two-miracles-of-russian-love-poetry/>
9. Yandex <https://translate.yandex.com/>
10. Pshi-stihi writers. Among the Worlds I: Annensky (in Russian) <http://pishi-stihi.ru/sredi-mirov-annenskij.html>.
11. uNnotices writers. An analysis of A. Annensky's poem "Among the Worlds". (in Russian)
<https://unotices.com/page-essay.php?id=2459>
12. Annensky: Amid the World. 14 translations on Ruverses. https://ruverses.com/innokenty-annensky/amid-the-worlds/#google_vignette

Gumilev: Like the Wind

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Николай Гумилев: Словно ветер страны счастливой
Словно ветер страны счастливой

Date: 1915

The poem looks to be in tertiary tetrameters, either a loose dactylic or more probably a dolnik: rhyming is ABAB:

Слóвно вéтер страны́ счастлíвой, - u - u u - u - u

3/4A

Но́сятя жáлобы влюблénных. - u u - u - u - u 3/4B

Как колосья созрévшей нíвы, - u u - u - u - u 3/4A

Клóняются гóловы непреклóнных. - u u - u u - u - u

3/4B

The rhythm is clearly a little irregular, and third line rhyme is only approximate.

We can see the effect of the various forms of verse by rewriting stanza three.

Free verse: more varied and lightly patterned:

Is beauty to them not submissive;

does the Greek's lamp not know intent?
Is the friend's Arab seed not hissing,
does incense not fill the tent?

Traditional verse: the rhythm more regular and
regimenting:

Are not her looks to them submissive;
does not the Greek's lamp know intent?
Is Arab seed of friend not hissing,
doesn't incense fill the tent?

Most translations today use a mix of free-verse and prose
that I call 'prose-verse', as in Richard McCain's rendering:

Beauty is their slave!
The Greek woman tends the icon lamps by night,
and the Arab's friend roasts
fragrant beans in the tent.

Prose lacks even minimal graces: the literal (machine)
translation of the Russian is:

Is beauty not submissive to them!
The Greek woman warms up on the night of the lamp,
And the friend of the Arab grain
Incense burns in the tent.

True free verse is the most difficult to write, requiring an
acute ear for phrasing and much time spent testing the
innumerable possibilities.

Nicholay Gumilev (1886-1921), Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966) and Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938) are three poets whose names are often linked. All were Acmeists, i.e. heirs of Symbolism but aiming for greater clarity and objectivity. All knew each other well. Mandelstam and Gumilev were close friends, and Akhmatova was Gumilev's first wife. All suffered under the Soviet state. Akhmatova was able to publish little after 1921, and most of her work came out posthumously. Mandelstam was exiled twice and died in transit to the gulag camps. Gumilev was shot for participation in a counterrevolutionary plot. {1}

Beside his contemporaries, Mandelstam and Akhmatova, Gumilev is often seen as 'light-weight', lacking the depth of the first and the passion of the last. But Gumilev was innovative and introduced exotic themes into Russian verse. He created a new direction, moreover, where spiritual matters are nonetheless rooted in the concrete world. {1}

Reference

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 207-210.

Gumilev: Gates of Paradise

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Николай Гумилев: Ворота рая

Не семью печатями алмазными

Date: 1908

The poem is written in iambic pentameters rhymed AbAb:

Не семью печатями алмазными 5A
В Бóжий рай замкну́лся вéчный вход, 5b
Он не ма́нит блéском и собла́знами, 5A
И егó не ве́дает наро́д. 5b

The feminine rhyme has two terminal unstressed syllables.

Two points. One: why consult the critical literature rather than simply transcribe the words on the page? Because all translation is an interpretation, which has to be done with understanding. I had first translated line 4 as 'nor does an ignorance of Him suffice', which continues the thread of line 3 and picks up the rhyme on line 2. But the Russian is much simpler, and is as the previous renderings indicate: 'and the people do not know it.' In fact, for Gumilev, all gates lead to knowledge and revelation but only to those who are worthy of the insight, i.e. initiates. Entering another world is not the goal of the path, moreover: the portal opens in unexpected places, and not everyone can

even see it. {3}

Two: why try to write decent verse in the translation, as I have here? Perhaps the reason lies in what Jan Swafford said of Ravel. 'Yet Ravel is one of the most beloved of twentieth century composers because he turned his genius and patient labours not towards technical novelty but towards what worked: what sounded best from the instruments, what entertained, charmed, dazzled the ears and imagination.' Prose won't normally give us those qualities.

Gumilev's poetry is not as slight as first seems. Certainly he has been overshadowed by Mandelstam and Akhmatova, who offer scholars more to get their teeth into. And Gumilev's work can also lack facility and immediate appeal. {2} But even this charming little piece, *The Gates of Paradise*, is articulating something Gumilev held very dear, indeed built his poetry around: that life is a journey which has to be undertaken with special sensitivity and understanding. {3}

Gumilev often dedicated his works to travelers, and people close to him in spirit. To fellow Acmeists, the road or journey is associated with two worlds, marked by a door, gateway, stairway, threshold and boundaries of space. The door to this space is always open to those who are spiritually inclined, i.e. it has objective reality but opens to areas beyond the physical world. That 'golden door', as Gumilev never tired of explaining to Akhmatova, was the object of his continual travel overseas, but which, by 1915, he'd accepted was beyond his reach.

The Gates of Paradise comes from Gumilev's 1910 collection *Pearls*. This was in a more personal style than poetry in the first two books, and here has a moral dimension, castigating the rich and proud. The Russian theme of our common humanity, prevalent even in Chekhov's mischievous tales, here continues even through the post-Symbolist era. {1}

References

1. Russian text of the [poem](#).
2. Bristol, E., *A History of Russian Poetry* (1991, O.U.P.) 208.
3. Пинаев С.М., Дмитриева Ю.Ю. — «Двери рая вскроются для нас...»: семантика медиальности в поэзии Н.С. Гумилева // *Litera*. – 2021. – № 5. – С. 15 - 24. DOI: 10.25136/2409-8698.2021.5.35509 ("The doors of paradise will open for us...": the semantics of mediality in the poetry of N.S. Gumilev. Extended article in [Russian](#) with good references.)
4. Stafford, J. *The Vintage Guide to Classical Music* (Random House, 1992) 377.

Gumilev: Trees

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Николай Гумилев: Деревья

Я знаю, что деревьям, а не нам

Date: 1918

The poem is written in simple iambic pentameters rhymed aBaB:

Я зна́ю, что дере́вьям, а не нам 5а
Дано́ вели́чье соверше́нной жи́зни, 5В
На ла́сковой земле́, сестре́ звёздам, 5а
Мы — на чужби́не, а они́ — в отчи́зне. 5В

Gumilev's first two collections were romantic and picturesque, with much of the imagery coming from fairy tales. In his next two books ('Pearls' 1910 and 'An Alien Sky' 1912) were more personal, reflecting on his unsuccesses in life and introducing impressions of Africa. Real travel impressions were included in 'The Quiver', but the collection has more to do with myths and stories examined in historical perspective. Poems in 'The Campfire' of 1918 had much the same subjects but were more philosophical. Abstract evil and philosophical conundrums feature in poems written after the 1917 Revolution, in 'The Porcelain Pavilion' (1918), 'The Pillar of Fire' (1921) and 'The Tent' (1924). Gumilev was an

exacting literary critic, and also a writer of plays and stories that are not much read now. {1}

'Trees' is the first poem in Gumilev's 'The Campfire' collection of 1918. Though it depicts the eternal theme of a moral life in unspoiled nature, Gumilev also begins here to sound a warning. There is a metaphysical threat in nature, which in later collections becomes nightmarishly evil. {1}

Reference

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 209.

Kuzmin: Abandoned

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Михаил Кузмин: О, быть покинутым...

О, быть покинутым — какое счастье!

Date: 1907

Kuzmin's poem is written in iambic pentameters rhymed
AbAb

О, быть покинутым — какое счастье! 5A

Какой безмерный в прошлом виден свет 5b

Так после лета — зимнее несчастье: 5A

Всё помнишь солнце, хоть его уж нет. 5b

Mikhail Alexeevich Kuzmin (1872-1936)

Mikhail Alexeevich Kuzmin was a greatly gifted man. He had the artistic skills sufficient to professionally illustrate his many books of verse. He studied music under Rimsky-Korsakov, and was able to set many of his poems to music, accompanying himself on the piano in literary salons. He published twelve books of poetry in conventional and free verse forms, exhibiting craft mastery in both. Besides a great deal of translation in his later years, he wrote several novels, over a hundred short stories and forty dramatic works. And yet, though on good terms with the great poets of the Silver Age, Kuzmin is not normally mentioned in the same breath. Why?

Perhaps because he was too accomplished and versatile, as Cocteau was in France, exhibiting a facile ease that showed little of the hard struggle with outmoded conventions expected of the revolutionary future. Minsky calls this style 'stylisation': work of great delicacy but to some extent a pastiche, employing forms from earlier decades. The piece illustrated here, for example, would not look out of place among poets of Pushkin's circle.

Kuzmin is best known for his 'Alexandrian Songs', and bright-coloured descriptive pieces also form the bulk of his work. He often comes over as the languid aesthete, with themes redolent of love, light and gracefully treated, but still scented with delicately homosexual traits.

But his later poems can be much direct and challenging, as were his depictions of a cold Petrograd in the 1920s, the city slowly starving to death under Soviet mismanagement.

References

1. Bristol, E. A History of Russian Poetry (1991, O.U.P.) 220-21.
2. Mirsky, D.S. A History of Russian Literature. (Alfred A: Knopf, 1926 / Vintage, 1958) 238-39.
3. Chandler R. et al. The Penguin Book of Russian Poetry (Penguin, 2015) 168-70.
4. Poems by Mikhail Kuzmin. Introduction on [Ruverses](#).

Khodasevich: Monument

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Владислав Ходасевич: Памятник

Во мне конец, во мне начало

Date: 1928

The poem is simply written in iambic tetrameters, rhymed AAbb CCdd, where upper case denotes a feminine rhyme:

Во мне конéц, во мне начáло. 4A

Мной совершённое так máло! 4A

Но всё ж я прóчное звенó: 4b

Мне éто счáстие данó. 4b

In Khodasevich also appears a bitterness, the malaise that is characteristic of the 20th century. The earlier poems are marked by decadence, but this gives way to cynicism and rancour at the banal 'horrors' of life, to nebulous anxieties and the falsities of society.

In this poem, however, clearly entitled 'Monument' to contrast with the assertive confidence of Derzhavin and Pushkin, the sentiment is more of gentle resignation and reflection on the mysteries of time and eternal recurrence.

But what exactly is the poem saying? At this point we need to consult the Russian critics, {4} though these

unfortunately only point out that 1. the exact circumstances of the poem's creation are not entirely known, 2. the contrast is clearly with Pushkin's Monument, 3. the words are largely to be taken at their face value, and 4. Punctuation errors suggest that the last line should read 'where time is wind and sand', possibly an allusion to Einstein's General Relativity Theory.

I'm not a Khodasevich scholar, but find these suggestions over-clever. Nonetheless, we should keep the translation open to the same allusions and interpretations that Russian critics have found in the original.

Vladislav Khodasevich (1886-1939)

Vladislav Khodasevich was born in Moscow but of Polish-Lithuanians: his mother was Jewish and his father Catholic. That combination of sources gave Khodasevich some independence from Symbolist influences: he was a genuine mystic and his style is closer to the poetry of the past, to Pushkin and his circle with their love of wit and craftsmanship. Khodasevich bought out his first collection in 1907, but it was his 1917 *The Grain's Past* that brought him fame. *The Heavy Lyre* followed in 1922, but in 1922 Khodasevich left Russia with Nina Berberovna, settling in Sorrento, Berlin and Paris. A third important collection, *European Night* followed in in 1927, but depression, ill-health and poverty made poetry writing difficult. Nonetheless, Khodasevich did receive well-deserved acclaim for his critical articles and for an admirable and still standard biography of Derzhavin. {6}

References

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 222-23.
2. Mirsky, D.S. Contemporary Russian Literature 1881-1925. (A. Knopf) 239-40.
3. Chandler R. et al. The Penguin Book of Russian Poetry (Penguin, 2015) 235-6.
4. Lavrentiev, M. (2012) Vladislav Khodasevich. Extended article in [Russian](#).
5. Holcombe C.J. (2021) [Dherzhavin](#): Selected Poems.
6. Khodasevich, V (1886-1939) Derzhavin: A Biography, translated by Angela Brintlinger. University of Wisconsin Press, 2007.

Akhmatova: Last Meeting

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Николай Гумилев: Песня последней встречи

Так беспомощно грудь холодела

Date: 1911

The poem is in ternary rhyme, rhymed AbAb but in slightly irregular anapaests:

Так беспомощно грудь холодела, u u – u u – u u – u 3A

Но шагí мой бы́ли легкí. u u – u - - u u - 3b

Я на правую рúку надéла u u – u u – u u – u 3A

Перчатку с лéвой рукí. u – u – u u – 3b

Показáлось, что мно́го ступéней u u – u u – u u – u 3C

А я зна́ла — их то́лько три! u u – u u – u u 3D

Ме́жду клéнов шéпот осéнный - u – u – u u – u 3C

Попросíл: «Со мно́ю умрí! u u – u - u u - 3d

Я обмáнут моéй уны́лой, u u – u u – u – u 3E

Переменчивой, злой судьбóй». u u – u u – u - 3f

Я отвéтила: «Мíлый, мíлый! u u – u u – u – u 3E

И я то́же. Умрú с тобóй...» u u – u u – u – 3f

Это пéсня послéдней встрéчи. - u - u u – u – u 3G

Я взгляну́ла на тёмный дом. u u – u u - u u 3H

Только в спальне горели свечи - у - у у - у - у 3G
Равнодушно-жёлтым огнём. у у - у - у у - 3h

Anna Akhmatova (1899-1966)

Anna Akhmatova (real name Anna Andreyevna Gorenko) and Marina Tsvetaeva (1892-1941) are generally held to be the greatest of Russian women poets — by virtue of their originality and power of writing. Both were poets of love, but not generally of happy love. Both suffered under the Soviet regime. Akhmatova was able to publish little after the 1920s, and Tsvetaevs committed suicide after returning friendless to Russia in 1941.

Akhmatova early work was generally short lyric poems on the joys, and more usually the difficulties and sorrows, of love, but her later cycles, such as Requiem (1935–40) also acted as witness to the Stalinist terror. Her early (1912-25) style was quite distinctive: strong and clear but still economical and restrained, focusing on women's troubles seen from a feminine point of view. She was rarely in favour with the Soviet authorities, but pointedly chose not to emigrate.

Akhmatova's first husband, Nikolay Gumilev, was executed as a counter-revolutionary, and both her son Lev Gumilev and her common-law husband Nikolay Punin spent many years in the Gulag, where Punin eventually died. Akhmatova's second husband, Vladimir Shileiko, was an Assyriologist, and though the poet always regarded St. Petersburg as home, she was able to live in Paris for a while.

Much of the early poetry was a personalizing of fictional incidents, moreover, something the Soviet regime regarded as old-fashioned and self-indulgent. Only in the 1960s did the poet really become well-known outside Modernist Russian circles.

References

1. Bristol, E., *A History of Russian Poetry* (O.U.P.) 211-12.
2. Watchel, M. *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry*. (C.U.P. 2004) 99.
3. Bristol, 210-14.
4. Short article in [Russian](#).
5. Another school lesson, a little fuller, but also in [Russian](#).

Akhmatova: All Is Traded

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Николай Гумилев: Всё расхищено, предано, продано
Всё расхищено, предано, продано

Date: 1921

The poem is in ternary rhythm, rhymed AbAb but in slightly irregular anapaests:

Всё расхищено, предано, продано, и и – и и – и и – и и 3A

Чёрной смерти мелькало крыло, – и – и и – и и – 3b

Всё голодной тоскою изглодано, и и – и и – и и 3A

Отчего же нам стало светло? и и – и и – и и – 3b

Днём дыханнями вѣет вишнёвыми и – и и – и и – и и 3C

Небывалый под городом лес, и и – и и – и и – 3d

Ночью блещет созвездьями новыми – и – и и – и и – и 3C

Глубь прозрачных июльских небес, – и и и – и и – и и – 3d

И так близко подходит чудесное и и – и и – и и – и 3E

К развалившимся грязным домам... и и – и и – и и – 3f

Никому, никому неизвестное, и и – и и – и и – и 3E

Но от века желанное нам. и и – и и – и и – 3f

The poem *All is Traded* was written in 1921, a difficult year for Akhmatova and Russia in general. The Bolsheviks were still expelling the remnants of White armies in the south of Russia, and a naval mutiny at Kronstadt was followed by peasant revolts. The White Army was dangerously active in Siberia, and Red Army attacks on

enemy sympathizers increased in ferocity throughout the year.

After her divorce from Gumilev in 1918, Akhmatova and Gumilev's son found themselves without ready means of support. Akhmatova did receive help from Natalia Rykovoya, however, to whom the poem was dedicated. Natalia's father was in charge of an experimental farm in Tsarskoye Selo, which intermittently provided Akhmatova with an island of normality in the surrounding sea of imposed social change.

Akhmatova did not accept the Revolution, nor choose to hide her detestation. She bitterly resented the collapse of the old social order, and hoped for its return. The Soviet authorities therefore looked very unfavourably on her work, and the present poem was published only because it seemed to look forward to better times in Russia.

In fact, it was hopes of better times for Akhmatova's family that she was writing about, which proved largely illusory. Life thereafter was even harder. Her son by Gumilev was eventually imprisoned, and her common-law husband died in the gulags.

References

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 210-14.
2. Analysis of the poem "Everything is plundered, betrayed, sold" by Akhmatova. Short article in [Russian](#).
3. Analysis of Akhmatova's poem 'Everything is plundered, betrayed, sold...' Another school article in [Russian](#).

Akhmatova: I Don't Ask

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Николай Гумилев: Я не любви твоей прошу...

Я не любви твоей прошу...

Date: 1914

The poem is in iambic tetrameters, rhymed aBba cDcd, etc.

Я не любви́ твоёй прошу́. 4а

Она́ тепе́рь в надёжном ме́сте... 4В

Пове́рь, что я твоёй неvéсте 4В

Ревни́вых пи́сем не пишу́. 4а

Akhmatova saw poetry as a high, exacting art, but popular elements in her work made her into a celebrity. Acmeism to Akhmatova was not simply a poetic style but a way of living, a pledge of personal honour.

Much of the early poetry was a personalization of fictional incidents, moreover, something the Soviet regime regarded as bourgeois and self-indulgent. Only in the 1960s did the poet really become well known outside Modernist Russian circles

References

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 210-14.

2. Watchel, M. The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry (C.U.P., 2004) 99-103.

Mandelstam: Silentium

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Осип Мандельштам: Silentium

Она еще не родилась

Date: 1910, 1935

The poem is in simple iambic tetrameters, rhymed aBBA:

Она́ ещё не родила́сь, 4а

Она́ и му́зыка и сло́во, 4В

И потому́ всегó живо́го 4В

Ненарушаемая связь. 4а

Osip Emilievich Mandelstam's (1891-1938) poem *Silentium* appeared in his debut collection *Stone* in 1910. It was written on a theme well known to Russians from a Tyutchev poem of the same name. Tyutchev's poem is often seen as the inspiration of Russian Symbolism, moreover, which was the major movement in Russian poetry when *Stone* was published. Should we translate the poem as a Symbolist and look for tenuous correlations in the symbols, or as a precursor to Mandelstam's later Acceism?

Poets are often not conscious of belonging to any particular movement, of course, or completely so, and the characteristics of poetry movements tend to be recognized only later, when scholarly studies are put together. But in

this case we do need to know, if only to ensure technical questions — whether to reproduce the iambic tetrameters of the original or use a more contemporary style — do not close off the various interpretations the original Russian supports.

Osip Emilievich Mandelstam (1891-1938)

Osip Emilievich Mandelstam was born in Warsaw but raised in St. Petersburg, Russia. His father was a prominent leather merchant and his mother a teacher of music. Mandelstam attended the renowned Tenishev School, and then studied at the Sorbonne, the University of Heidelberg, and the University of St. Petersburg, but left off studies to pursue a writing career. His first collection, *Kamen*, or *Stone*, appeared in 1913, when Symbolism was the dominant movement, but Mandelstam slowly moved to a more direct treatment of thoughts, feelings, and observations under the aegis of Acmeism. In 1922 his second book, *Tristia*, secured his reputation, and both it and *Stone* were released a year later in new editions.

Mandelstam initially supported the Revolution, but grew increasingly unhappy with its political control of the arts, writing a great deal of essays and literary criticism in the twenties. In the following decade came the great purges, and Mandelstam, who had unwisely compared Stalin to a beetle in one of his poems, was arrested, twice exiled and finally met his death in one of the transit camps of the Gulag Archipelago.

While writing the poems of *Tristia*, famed for their classical clarity, their musical gorgeousness, and emotional immediacy, Mandelstam also wrote in parallel other poems marked by a step-change in the density of what Irina Semenko called his “poetic thought”. . . .

The musicality of that poetic line also changed radically in the 1930s, giving way to off-rhymes, repetition and irregular rhythms, sometimes jarring effects from the most musical of poets who, consistent with his dialectical nature, also at times aspired to escape reality and fashion pure poetry composed of its sounds and internal harmony.’ {5}

Many have seen Mandelstam as terrified of the Revolution, nostalgic of the old world and deeply opposed to the Soviet state, but he was in fact a Soviet writer committed to the transformation of society through socialism, a great reader of newspapers and as a member of the intelligentsia acutely aware of everyday issues. He published in SR papers and was regarded by many communists as one of their own. He was a member of the Moscow Professional Union of Writers until its dissolution in 1930. He was much in demand as a literary translator.

He appeared with Pasternak, Mayakovsky and Aseev in Moscow in 1923. He wrote over 200 reviews, translations and articles during the NEP, though remaining without political affiliation. Like most poets he was financially insecure, but nonetheless well regarded by the communists. Thought not finding country life agreeable,

he generally supported the peasants, and spoke out against disastrous collectivisation. {5}

References

1. Ningthoujam, D.S. Abbreviated Lives Tragic Tales of Artists Scientists and Writers. (Blue Rose Publishers 2022) 185. Google Books.
2. Silentium Mandelstam. Osip Mandelstam, "Silentium": analysis of the poem. Extended article in [English](#). Includes much more than I have summarized here.
3. Poems by Osip Mandelstam. Introduction in [Ruverses](#).
4. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P., 1991) 205-7.
5. Kahn, A. Mandelstam's Worlds: Poetry, Politics, and Identity in a Revolutionary Age. (O.U.P., 2020). Introduction O2.

Mandelstam: St. Sophia

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Осип Мандельштам: Айя-София

Айя-София,- здесь остановиться

Date: 1912

The poem is in simple iambic pentameters, rhymed AbAb:

Айя-Софі́я,- здесь остано́виться 5A

Суді́л Госпо́дь наро́дам и царя́м! 5b

Ведь ку́пол твой, по сло́ву очеви́дца, 5A

Как на це́пи, подв́ешен к небеса́м. 5b

Mandelstam was an Acmeist {1-2} in this early poem, a movement that has no exact counterpart in the west, but could be called neorealist or neo-Parnassian. It was concerned with achieving an exact impression of the tangible world around, and expressing that world with crystalline and musical exactness. Acmeism happily accepted the heritage of Symbolism, but renounced all mystical aims.

Mandelstam's poetry has an extraordinary sense of balance. The free association of ideas appears at times chaotic, but what remains above all is a feeling of harmony. He was a lyric poet to the marrow — but his most successful works form an important part of the objective reality of Russian history. The verbal fabric of his

later work is intricate, like a mosaic, sometimes fragile, sometimes adamantine but always with a strong feeling fused with extreme inner refinement that often uses with simple colloquialism.

Clearly our rendering must reflect these qualities, and use Mandelstam's technical language. Cupola is a rounded dome forming or adorning a roof or ceiling. Apse is a semicircular or polygonal termination to the choir, chancel, or aisle of a church, secular or ecclesiastical building. Exhedra is a room, portico, or arcade with a bench or seats where people may converse. Pendative is a curved triangle of vaulting formed by the intersection of a dome with its supporting arches.

We have to write in a style that reflects the original, i.e. impersonal and precisely cognizant of the hard realities of life.

References

1. Analysis of the poem of Aya-Sofia by Mandelstam. Short article in [Russian](#).
2. Analysis of Mandelstam's poem 'Hagia Sophia'. Another short article, also in [Russian](#).
3. Poems by Osip Mandelstam. Introduction in [Ruverses](#).
4. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P., 1991) 205-7.
5. Kahn, A. Mandelstam's Worlds: Poetry, Politics, and Identity in a Revolutionary Age. (O.U.P., 2020). Introduction O2.

Mandelstam: Tristia

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Осип Мандельштам: Tristia

Я изучил науку расставанья

Date: 1918

The poem is in iambic pentameters, the stanza rhymed
AbAbCdCd:

Я изучил нау́ку расстава́нья 5A
В простоволо́сых жа́лобах ночны́х. 5b
Жу́ют волю́, и длі́тся ожида́нье — 5A
После́дний час вигі́лий городскі́х, 5b
И чту́ обря́д той петуши́ной но́чи, 5C
Когда́, подня́в доро́жной ско́рби груз, 5d
Гляде́ли вдаль запла́канные о́чи 5C
И же́нский плач меша́лся с пе́ньем муз. 5d

Osip Emilievich Mandelstam's (1891-1938) poem *Tristia* was the title poem of the collection of the same name that appeared in 1923. Mandelstam was living intermittently in self-exile in the south, and the title obviously echoes the poems written by Ovid when exiled by Augustus to the unfriendly shores of the Black Sea. References to exile and the classical world are scattered through the collection, but suggest that Mandelstam still saw some hope beyond this difficult period in Russia's history. But Mandelstam and his wife were arrested during the 1930

purges and sentenced to three year's exile in the northern Urals. Subsequently they settled in Voronezh, but Mandelstam was again arrested in 1938, and sentenced to five years' detention in the gulag labour camps. He died of cold and hunger, near-insane, it was reported, in a transit camp near Vladivostok.

These were the early days of the Soviet Revolution, where there was much apprehension, confusion and social upheaval, to which the conventional view of classical world offered an unchanging refuge, unreal and illusory though that image was.

The references are not saying anything specific. 'Erebus' is the personification of darkness, but not generally used in divination. Is the fire burning in Когда огонь в акрополе горит a votive fire or one denoting warfare? We don't know. The last lines seem to refer to the grief felt by wives when their menfolk disappear.

Critics have dug up some details. 'Tristia' quotes a line and a theme from a poem by Akhmatova. 'Delia' refers to one of Batyushkov's free translations from Tibullus, referring to a woman called Plania, though she is naked rather than bare-footed. They seem not to matter, only adding to the general sense of poignancy and bitterness in separation.

Mandelstam's Russian here has a lapidary exactness, reminiscent of Latin, which should be conveyed in the translation.

Brief References

1. Espinós, J. (2015). The Realm of Hades and Its Symbols in Mandel'shtam's Tristia: A Transparent Path to Redemption. *Russian Literature*. 77. 10.1016/j.ruslit.2015.04.001. (Researchgate)
2. Peter McCarey, P. (2022) *The Fortnightly Review*. Notes to the translation.
3. Poems by Osip Mandelstam. Introduction in [Ruverses](#).
4. Bristol, E., *A History of Russian Poetry* (O.U.P., 1991) 205-7.
5. Markov, V and Sparks, M. *Modern Russian Poetry* (Bobbs-Merril & Co, 1967) 293-4.

Tsvetaeva: Jealousy

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Марина Цветаева: Попытка ревности

Как живется вам с другою

Date: 1924

The poem is in trochaic tetrameters, rhymed AbAb:

Stanza one

Как живётся вам с друго́ю, — 4A

Прóще ведь? — Удáр веслá! — 4b

Лíнией береговóю 4A

Скóро ль пáмять отошлá 4b

Sometimes a little irregularly: Stanza two

Обо мнé, плавúчем óстрове - u - u - u - u u 4C

(Пó нéбу — не по вóдам!) - - u - u - u 4D

Дúши, дúши! быть вам сёстрами, - u - u - u - u u 4C

Не любóвницами — вам! - u - u - u - 4d

Tsvetaeva's style was quite radical. She mixed an everyday language with one that was much more bookish (even incorporating eighteenth century words), often incorporating references to the classical world. Typology was also novel. The poem contains 22 dashes, 21 question marks, 7 exclamation marks and 1 ellipsis.

The sense thus appears more fragmentary and discursive, and is not always contained by individual lines and stanzas.

Several features of Tsvetaeva's verse are important. The lines are tetrameters, are rhymed AbAb, sometimes approximately. The language is everyday and unelevated, but contains the odd, old-fashioned word. The content is not wholly contained by the line, or even the stanza. The verse is nonetheless accomplished and pleasing.

Marina Tsvetaeva's (1892-1941) life was even harder than Akhmatova's. She was born in Moscow, the daughter of a professor of graphic arts. Her mother was an accomplished pianist. Her first collection of poems, published in 1910, established her as a promising poet, which she confirmed in extensive publications before the 1917 Revolution. She married early, and in 1912 her daughter Ariadne was born. During the Civil War her husband, Sergey Efron, fought with the volunteer White Army in the Crimea, and she was able to join him only in 1923. The couple emigrated and lived in Berlin, Prague and Paris. A son was born in 1923. Unfortunately, Efron was unmasked as a Soviet agent and returned to Russia with their daughter. Tsvetaeva followed with their son in 1939. Efron and Ariadne were subsequently arrested. Bereft of family, friends and future, Tsvetaeva was evacuated to the small town of Elebuga, where she hanged herself in 1941.

Tsvetaeva was a member of no particular literary movement. Many of the poems are autobiographical,

relating to a life that was lived intensely but unhappily, with exaggerated feelings of attachment to individual poets of both sexes, which sometimes grew into romantic infatuations. From 1917 to 1922, Tsvetaeva wrote poems commemorating the White Army, but it is poems written in the mid twenties, celebrating mother Russia, that are her most accomplished and popular. {1}

References

1. Bristol, E., *A History of Russian Poetry* (O.U.P.) 241-44.
2. Watchel, M. *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry* (C.U.P., 2004) 103-09.

Tsvetaeva: Newspaper Readers

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Марина Цветаева: Читатели газет

Ползёт подземный змей

Date: 1935

The poem is in iambic trimeters:

Ползёт подзёмный змей, 3а

Ползёт, везёт людéй. 3б

И кáждый — со своéй 3а

Газéтой (со своéй 3б

Экзéмой!) Жвáчный тик, 3с

Газéтный костоéd. 3д

Жеватели мастíк, 3с

Читáтели газéт. 3д

As Michael Watchet notes, the poem contrasts the immediate gratification in meaning that a newspaper affords its readers with the subtle interplay of meaning, typography and sound that a Tsvetaeva reader has to grapple with. The poem is indeed set out like a newspaper column, tightly rhymed but with the sense repeatedly suspended and emphasized.

That repetition extends to rhymes and genders of words. It's a sophisticated exercise conducted in condensed, snapped off lines.

1. First some general points. Tsvetaeva's piece is in strict iambs, but I have loosened the metre a little, to better encompass the prose meaning and to introduce a more provisional and relaxed tone. Is this correct? Probably not. Tsvetaeva's words are more scornful than this.

2. Tsvetaeva is fond of elliptical constructions, which leave only pointers or milestones to the full meaning. For that reason alone it seems wise to reproduce the original typography. {3} The frequent repetitions also serve as rhythmic-intonations, transmitting the rhythm of the subway train movement, the poetics of the avant-garde (expressionism) and heightening the emotional tension. {4}

3. This is a best guess at the meaning, not of course by a Tsvetaeva scholar but by a jobbing poet. That may be acceptable for a first draft, but critical articles {3-4} then have to be consulted.

4. Lines 1-4. The snake is the Paris Metro, and although Tsvetaeva does not really make this clear, it's vital if readers are to visualize the setting. Critics also believe the repetition of lines 3 and 4 is important in emphasizing the repetitive nature of the news. Shambat's rendering reproduces the feature.

5. Lines 5 to 7 are enigmatic. Shambat and Feinstein largely reproduce the Russian, word for word. I make a stab at the meaning: the newsprint looks like ezcma; the bone is the colour of the newsprint 'white space';

masticate refers not only to the chewed-up appearance of the copy, but to what newspapers do with the original facts. This should be brought out more.

6. Lines 11-12 are complicated: a reference to how newsprint actually looks, how much of the news is faceless, i.e. churned out by anonymous journalist, and how its inaccuracies get more people arrested and killed. The previous renderings imply this.

7. The draft has made lines 13-16 more difficult than they really are. There is a sexual innuendo in the 'giving birth to newspapers', but it's not blatant. Women dress the way fashion dictates and the same unthinking attitude creates the herd instinct of newspaper readers.

8. Lines 17-20 are presumably nuggets of information to be found in the newspaper. They haven't been much commented on, but may exemplify dull and then scandalous lives.

9. The 'sways' in line 18 is important. Tsvetaeva is visualizing passengers swaying from side to side as they are carried, reading their newspapers, through the Metro. The rendering should bring this out more.

10. Lines 21-22 are probably social comment: do readers belong to the manual trades (who get up at sunrise) or to the partying bright young things (who come to life after the sun goes down)?

11. Line 29. Though clearly chosen to get the rhyme,

'atonements' is not the right word. Страшный суд actually means 'the Last Judgement', as Feinstein correctly renders it. {5}

12. Line 34 (Стар материнский страх) is unclear. Shambat has 'Old is the mother's fear.' Feinstein has 'the old maternal terror'. Clearly the trash / ash rhyme is inappropriate.

13. Line 36. Schwarz's powder is gunpowder. The Abyssinian War had broken out, leading Tsvetaena to fear (correctly) that world wars were in prospect. {4}

14. The poem was written in 1935, at the beginning of the show trials that would lead to the Great Terror, where some 700,000 people were interrogated and executed by the NKVD. Though Tsvetaeva is really criticizing the Parisian bourgeoisie, the Russian show trials were a complete dereliction of journalistic integrity. Lines 45-53 are commenting on this. (And if Tsvetaeva is sounding self-righteous and unrealistic when dissent in Stalinist Russia was immediately fatal, she was also horribly prescient: no one is recorded to have failed to confess or implicated others under NKVD interrogation).

References

1. Watchel, M. The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry (C.U.P., 2004) 2-4.
2. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 241-44.
3. Analysis of Tsvetaeva's poem "Newspaper Readers". Extended article in [Russian](#).

4. Russian Poetry. Читатели Газет Short article in [Russian](#).

5. Tsvetaeva: Newspaper Readers: two free verse translations on [Ruverses](#).

Tsvetaeva: Poets

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Марина Цветаева: Поэты Поэт

Поэт — издаleка заводит речь.

Date: 1923

The opening lines are:

Поёт — издаleкá заводит речь. 4a

Поэта — далеко́ заводит речь. 4a

Планетами, приметами, окольных 5B

Притч рытвинами... Между да и нет 5c

Он да́же размахну́вшись с колоко́льни 5B

Крюк выморочит... И́бо путь коме́т — 5c

There are several issues here. Most obvious is the Bastille reference, which I have tagged for the moment with 'renowned and old' to get the rhyme. What is it doing in the poem, and what is it saying? I have to say I don't know, and haven't been able to find out in the Russian articles consulted. The only safe way of proceeding in those circumstances is to leave a strict translation from the Russian: Кто в каменном гробу Бастилий (Who is in the stone coffin of the Bastille). In fact, I suspect it's a throwaway line used to rhyme with Тот, чьи следы — всегда простыли (The one whose footprints are always cold), which, of course, helps not at all.

Marina Tsvetaeva (1892-1941) has become a popular choice for translators of Russian poetry, and with good reason. The exemplary courage of a life spent battling the Soviet regime. The woman poet with a distinctly feminist outlook, speaking frankly of women's affairs. The friend of Russia's leading poets of the day, who often wrote of or to them. The émigré writer, describing tellingly that often dispiriting experience. And there's the distinctive style, disjointed, direct and experimental, which translates well into the free verse styles preferred today.

The early poetry was autobiographical, and sometimes verged on a false innocence, but her two volumes entitled 'Milestones', published in 1921 and 1922, were a major addition to European literature and created a mirror of the Russian mind, often at an instinctive and peasant level.
{1}

For all the novelty of Tsvetaeva's style, and its apparent randomness, the poems still rhymed and employed regular stanza forms. How these forms can be transferred to English, or if they should be at all, is the subject of this little demonstration.

In 'Poets', one of a series of such poems, Tsvetaeva mimics the apparently discursive nature of the poet's thought in a piece that jumps from thought to thought, which employs five regular stanzas of rhymed iambic pentameters with three odd lines, two acting as an

introductory couplet, and one (line 19) that doesn't rhyme and doesn't follow the overall shape of the piece. {2}

References

1. Bristol, E., *A History of Russian Poetry* (O.U.P.) 241-44.
2. Watchel, M. *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry* (C.U.P., 2004) 49, 103-09.

Pasternak: February

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis: анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Борис Пастернак Февраль, Достать чернил и плакать:
Февраль, Достать чернил и плакать:

Date: 1912

The poem is in simple iambic tetrameters, rhymed AbAb:

Февра́ль. Доста́ть черни́л и пла́кать! 4A
Писа́ть о февралé навзры́д, 4b
Пока́ грохоча́щая сля́коть 4A
Весно́ю чёрною горíт. 4b

The greatest difficulty most readers will have with *February* is to understand it in depth. As is common in Pasternak, there are two themes interwoven. The first, quite obviously, are the visual impressions: staring the rain-filled sky, watching how the cab-wheels slowly blacken the slushy snow, their darks and brights too vivid to comfortably view (line 4), of being driven in the cab and hearing the tick of its wheels through the boom of church bells, noticing the rooks in the trees and their reflections in the blackening puddles beneath. In good Pasternak fashion, these are turned into audacious metaphors and similes.

Then the deeper meaning, which in the later Pasternak becomes an opening of oneself to enlightening, raw

experience. Here there is the usual contest between winter snows and spring rains, much loved by Russian writers and painters, plus the admonition to value the experience for its randomly appearing self, rather than what the finished poem is saying (lines 7-8 and 15-16). That's a little ironic, given that Pasternak has taken such pains to present an oblique view of the scene, one that is centred on the poem's persona. It is a difficult way of composing, and Pasternak's writing naturally suffered from prolonged 'dry' spells.

I have taken some liberties in lines 11-12, employing just the technique that Pasternak himself uses. The literal rendering of the lines is: 'They will fall into puddles and bring down / the dry sadness at the bottom of the eyes'. I have also emphasized the context more, so that readers appreciate where the words come from, i.e. make better sense.

Boris Pasternak (1890-1960)

Though best known for his 'Doctor Zhivago', Boris Pasternak was widely respected in his native Russia for poems that introduced Modernist techniques and approaches, sometimes prefiguring their appearance in the west. Pasternak came from a markedly cultivated family. His mother was a concert pianist and his father a well-known artist. Pasternak himself spoke several languages, studied music under Scriabin, and had published his first important collection ('My Sister — Life') by 1923. Though commonly at odds with the Soviet government, he survived the terrible purges of the 30s,

and was well-known internationally even before 'Zhivago' was published in 1957, (when official pressure obliged him to decline the Nobel prize awarded the following year.)

{1}

'February' is an early poem, a very popular and much translated one. It illustrates how the initial strangeness of his poems comes from the insertion of loosely linked perceptions, often viewed from unusual perspectives or context in which they're placed by the combination of linear and associative techniques. {2}

Not all poems survive transportation into a different language, especially when the connotations and musicality in the Russian words has no exact parallel in the English. The clue to Pasternak's work lies in identifying the context, here a cab journey across a large city. Stray observations are used as striking metaphors and linked by an 'elusive syntax'. {2}

References

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 235.
2. Rudman, M. et al. (ed and trans), Pasternak, B. My Sister — Life (Northwest University Press, 2001) Introduction xvi. Helpful introduction and decent poems as translations in the contemporary fashion, i.e. rather free.

Khlebnikov: Hunger

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Велимир Хлебников: Голод

Почему лоси и зайцы по лесу скачут

Date: 1921

The poem is written in unrhymed lines that approximate to anapaests but are of no fixed length:

Почему́ лóси и зáйцы по лéсу скáчут, и и - - и и - и и - и - и
Прочь удаля́ясь? и и - и
Люди съéли кору́ осíны, - и - и и - и - и
Ёлей побéги зелёные... - и и - и и -и
Жёны и дéти брóдят по лéсу - и и - и - и и - и
И собира́ют берёзы листьы́ - и и - и и - и и -
Для щей, для окрóшки, борщá, и - и и - и и -
Ёлей верху́шки и серéбряный мох — - и и - и - и и -
Пíща лесна́я. - и и - и
Дéти, развéдчики лесá, - и и - и - и -
Брóдят по рóщам, - и и - и

There is no hope of replicating the rhythmic structure of the original, and it seems best to write a deft prose — as previous translators have done. There are only trifling differences in the renderings, but all are relatively flat. Quasi-prose styles do not carry much emotional charge, however heartbreaking may be their subject matter. The Great Famine of 1921 hit the Volga region particularly

hard, incidentally, and millions died, both from the drought itself and Soviet mismanagement. {5}

Khlebnikov had a deep feeling for the Russian language, which he often plays with, creating new juxtapositions and neologisms. His mysticism embraced words and things rather than ideas and symbols. Khlebnikov's world was often primitive but magical, free of Christian and Russian civilization, one often conjured up by his wide-ranging use of analogy. Sometimes he seemed to be looking for an ur-language, and Khlebnikov had many links with Futurist painters, who were also throwing off the shackles of formal art-school training. {1-3}

Velimir Khlebnikov (1885-1922)

Together with Mayakovsky, Velimir Khlebnikov was Russia's most important Futurist poet. He was far more versatile than can be illustrated here, but a retiring nature, and nomadic existence close to penury in his last years, kept him out of the public eye. Khlebnikov was born in Astrakhan, studied a wide variety of subjects at Kazan and St. Petersburg universities without completing a degree, and then embarked on a literary career with like-minded and subsequently famous Silver Age poets. His only published volume of poems, 'Creations', appeared in 1914, though other poems, epics, plays and essays were published by futurist small presses of the time. Much was simply lost in his hand-to-mouth existence, or had to be published posthumously. He carried manuscripts and books around in a pillowcase, which, adding to his odd appearance and habits, caused him to be arrested by both the Red and White Armies on occasion. His travels in the

east produced poems set in the Caucasus, Baku, central Asia and Persia, but he died, neglected, in a Russian provincial hospital of an undiagnosed disease, when his contemporaries were enjoying wide celebrity. {1-4}

Khlebnikov's experimental work prepared the way for Mayakovsky's breakthroughs, and influenced both Pasternak and a long line of later poets. He broke the practices of Symbolism, and encouraged a new 'trans-sense language' (*zaumnyi yazyk*, or *zaum*), something beyond the inherited language. The result was complex, chaotic, and unassembled syntax, where phenomenally accomplished lines could be interspersed with bewildering enigmas. {4}

References

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 327-30.
2. Mirsky, D.S. Contemporary Russian Literature 1881-1925. (A. Knopf) 268-69.
3. Chandler R. et al. The Penguin Book of Russian Poetry (Penguin, 2015) 195-98.
4. Poems by Velimir Khlebnikov. Introduction on [Ruverses:](#)
5. The Great Famine of 1921. [Alphahistory](#)

Myakovsky: Our March

Internet Search Phrases

Literary Criticism: литературная критика. Analysis:
анализ

Audio Recording: аудиозапись

Владимир Маяковский: Наш марш

Бейте в площади бунтов топот!

Date: 1918

The poem can be scanned as follows:

Бéйте в плóщади бúнтов тóпот! - u u - u u - u - u - u 5A (10) 5

Вýше, гóрдых голóв грядá! - u - u u - u - 4b (8) 4

Мы разлívом вторóго потóпа u u - u u - u 3A (7) 4

перемóем мирóв городá. u u - u u - u 3b (7) 4

Дней бык пег. - u - 2c (3) 2

Мédленна лет арбá. - u u - u - 3d (6) 3

Наш бог бег. - u - 2c (3) 2

Сéрдце наш барабáн. - u u - u - 3d (6) 3

Есть ли нáших золот небéсней? u u - u u - u - u 3E (9) 5

Нас ли сжалит пúли осá? u u - u - u u - 3f (8) 4

Нáше ору́жие — нáши пéсни. - u u - u u - u - u 3E (10) 5

Нáше зóлото — звенящие голосá. - u - u - u u - u - 6f (9) 5

Зéленью ляг, луг, - u u - - 3g (5) 3

вы́стели дно дням. - u u - - 3h (5) 3

Рáдуга, дай дуг - u u - - 3g (5) 3

лет быстролётным коня́м. - u u - u u - 3h (7) 4

Видите, скúшно звéзд нéбу! - u u - u u - u 3I (8) 4

Без негó нáши пéсни вьём. u u - - u - u - 3/4j (8) 4

Эй, Бóльшая Медвéдица! трéбуй, u - u - u - u u - u 3J (10) 5

чтоб на не́бо нас взяли живьём. u u - u u - u u - 3I (9) 5

Ра́дости пей! Пой! - u u - - 3k (5) 3

В жи́лах весна́ разлита́. - u u - u u - 3I (7) 3

Се́рдце, бей бой! - u - - 3k (4) 3

Гру́дь на́ша — медь лита́вр. u - u - u - 3I (6) 3

Naturally stressed syllables are shown as - , unstressed as u. Numbers in () are the syllable counts for the line.

Number following the () suggest a metre for the second version: 5= pentameter, 4= tetrameter, 3= trimeter, 2= dimeter.

The poem is a popular one, but dangerously close to bombast, so that extending the line length with something so vacuous only makes matters worse. It seems better to use the stressed syllable count as a guide to line length and write a slightly improved version of our first stab.

Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930) is now chiefly remembered for his prose play 'The Bedbug', but was the author of celebrated books of poetry, appearing first as the avant-garde rebel and then the unofficial poet laureate of the Soviet Union. Mayakovsky was born to a forest ranger who brought his family to Moscow in 1906. The young poet became a communist agitator, was arrested on three occasions and spent six months in solitary confinement at Butyrki Prison. He enrolled in an art college, and began associating with Osip Brik, a wealthy patron of the avant-garde, whose wife became the object of Mayakovsky's unhappy love poetry. After the Revolution, Mayakovsky produced posters for the telegraph agency ROSTA, and with Brik's assistance

founded the LEF in 1922. From 1924 Mayakovsky made annual trips to Paris, and also visited Cuba, Mexico and the USA. His love for a Russian émigré woman in Paris was unrequited. In Russia he was obliged to join the government-sponsored RAPP, and in 1930, disillusioned with the Soviets, and life in general, Mayakovsky committed suicide. {1}

Mayakovsky's early work expresses the resentment felt by the working classes towards the bourgeoisie, but also his unbridled love for gambling and the low life. He also celebrated the Revolution, becoming famous for 'Our March', the poem below. He genuinely hoped his poetry had social benefit, paving the way to a better future, and that poetry naturally merged with political propaganda, in time extinguishing the early lyrical phase. {1}

He was well known, tens of thousands of people attending his funeral. Mayakovsky was indeed canonized by Stalin, who said: 'Mayakovsky was and remains the best and most talented poet of our time. Indifference to his poetry is a crime.' Pasternak saw this as Mayakovsky's second death, but it was a political death only. To many he remained a great poet of love and loneliness. {2}

Mayakovsky cultivated a larger-than-life figure, complete with outrageous figures of speech, soaring fantasies and vulgarities new to Russian poetry, and is credited with freeing its forms with free verse and inexact rhymes. He sympathized with the lower classes, but did not identify with them, remaining to the end his own brawling and flamboyant self.

References

1. Bristol, E., A History of Russian Poetry (O.U.P.) 230-33.