TRANSLATING LERMONTOV'S *1831-go IYUNYA 11 DNYA*: PROSODIC FEATURES AND THEIR EMOTIONAL-PROPHETIC CARGO

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Abstract A discussion of some of the problems arising during the course of attempting a 'musical' verse translation of Lermontov's early lyric poem *1831-go IYUNYA 11 DNYA* is presented. A metrical analysis of the poem's prosodic features is carried out in accentual-syllabic, beat-prosodic and musical terms. In particular, the Russian poet's extensive use of enjambment and caesura to create rhythmic and syntactic tension between the levels of phrase and poetic line creates challenges for a translator who aims to preserve the rhythmic structure of the original while also using the phraseological resources of the target language to the fullest advantage. In the course of the analysis, it became apparent that some prosodic features, appearing both in the source text and the attempted translation, evade full description in accentual-syllabic, beat-prosodic and musical terms. Therefore, it also became necessary to introduce the concept of "flow", which is derived from contemporary rap music and may partially correspond to the Russian prosodic term *zashagovaniye*. Readers are invited to assess to what extent the translation strategies employed in this case are successful in maintaining fidelity to the source text in terms of its (i) signification, (ii) form, (iii) emotionality and (iv) singability.

Keywords: singability, Lermontovian man, creative demiurge, emotional-prophetic cargo, beat prosody, phrasing, isochrony, dipody, flow, zashagivaniye

Introduction

Despite his early and violent death at the age of 26, Mikhail Yuryevich Lermontov remains one of the most influential and compelling figures in Russian poetry. The focus in anglophone scholarship on Lermontov's prose novel *A Hero of Our Time* may be partly because the musicality of Lermontov's Russian verse resists the efforts of translators to render it into English. Moreover, while many influential author-critics have counselled against attempting to capture the music of poetry in translation, when it comes to such a musical poet as Lermontov, a prose translation would deprive readers of an important part of its content.

Written at the age of seventeen, *1831-go IYUNYA 11 DNYA*[1] is one of Lermontov's most metaphysical lyrical works. According to G.E. Gorlanov, the poem "stands out against the rest of Lermontov's work in terms of its philosophical significance", with some stanzas having "programmatic applicability for creativity per se" (Gorlanov, 2017, p. 134). In its concentration of the young poet's worldview, the poem paints a vivid picture of the inner life of an individual and, in so doing, simultaneously presents the unique quality and universality of a new creative demiurge, which, now fully formed as what D.E. Maksimov terms

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[1] 1831-го ИЮНЯ 11 ДНЯ

'Lermontovian man'[2] (Maksimov, 1964) will go on to set its palpable imprint on the subsequent development not only of Russian literature but of world culture per se.

Gorlanov cites a number of aphoristic phrases drawn from the poem that have become an integral part of the Russian language. Although good phrase-for-phrase translations are not always possible in the overall context of the poem from which they are drawn, the following snippets may give the anglophone reader a flavour of these (readers who know Russian may access the original phrases in the footnotes): *In simple prose, a man cannot describe / internal strife*[3]; *this compelling voice / a summons to eternity*[4]; *And where there's no struggle / life's a drag*[5]; *only in a man are they combined: / this fractious blend of sacred and profane*[6]; *thought is strong, / when not constrained by logic, only song*[7].

According to Irina Shcherbatova, the young Lermontov was "…a well-educated and precocious individual, with family ties connecting him to the Decembrists [and] not indifferent to the spiritual needs of society or to its dramatic events." However, in discussing the philosophical nature of Lermontov's early work, Shcherbatova notes that "what preoccupied Lermontov most of all was the exceptional individual who stands in opposition to society and is forced into solitude" (Shcherbatova, 2016, p. 146).

Perhaps more than any other single work, *1831-go IYUNYA 11 DNYA* announces the birth of the prophetic Lermontovian literary genius. However, this parturition does not come without certain labour pains. As also prefigured in many other of his works (including 'The Bard is Dead!'[8], 'Ossian's Tomb'[9], 'Dream'[10] and the prose novel 'A Hero of Our Time'), in *duelling with the Absolute*[11], *… each breath / relinquishing all earthly gifts to death*[12], Lermontov foresees his *fate, [his] own demise*[13], precociously setting *the seal thereon*[14]. A mere nine years after writing these lines, he will indeed find his *sanguine grave / absent benediction or a cross*[15]. Nevertheless, like the *young boy / drawn here he knows not why / to sit a while and meditate alone*[16], we continue to keep Lermontov's creative demiurge alive with our attention 177 years after the writer's actual death.

If the creative demiurge birthed in this way really is exceptional, the question arises as to the linguistic means used to bring about such a parturition and whether these can survive the translation process. Lermontov describes the difficulties involved: *in simple prose a man cannot describe internal strife*[17]; moreover, *…who can such phenomena explain / and who has eyes to peer into the dark?*[18]; however, *…this mad ideal / breathes life into a skeleton*[19];

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[2] Лермонтовский человек

[3] Холодной буквой трудно объяснить / Боренье дум.

[4] неведомый пророк / Мне обещал бессмертье

[5] Так жизнь скучна, когда боренья нет.

[6] Лишь в человеке встретиться могло / Священное с порочным.

[7] Их на бумагу трудно: мысль сильна, / Когда размером слов не стеснена

[8] Смерть поэта

[9] Гроб Оссиана

[10] Сон

[11] Против непобедимой

[12] …живой / Я смерти отдал всё, что дар земной

[13] Я предузнал мой жребий, мой конец,

[14] грусти ранняя на мне печать

[15] Кровавая меня могила ждёт, / Могила без молитв и без креста

[16] …чужестранец молодой, / Невольным сожаленьем и молвой / И любопытством приведён сюда

[17] Холодной буквой трудно объяснить / Боренье дум.

[18] И кто его источник объяснит, / И кто заглянет в недра облаков?

[19] …пылкая мечта / Приводит в жизнь минувшего скелет

nevertheless, *...each day I must perform some mighty work / of which immortals would be proud, not shirk / an acting hero's duties*[20]; but *life's a half-written song / I'm just afraid I won't have time / to bring it to fruition*[21]; still, *this state, to which I'm long resigned / cannot be expressed in any tongue / neither that of demons, nor divine*[22]; in conclusion, *though hard to put on paper, thought is strong / when not constrained by logic, only song*[23].

In order to address this question, it will be necessary not only to attempt such a translation into another language – in this case, English – but also to try to understand what prosodic devices are involved in (re)creating the poem's unique effects. In this study, the prosodic features used by Lermontov are analysed in accentual-syllabic, beat-prosodic, and musical terms.

Accentual-syllabic metrical analysis

Although Russian, like English, is generally considered to be a **stress-timed** language (Patmore, 1961, p. 9), it is clear that, when writing the poem, Lermontov considered the syllable to be an important rhythmic unit. Therefore, analysed in terms of **accentual-syllabic metre**, *1831-go IYUNYA 11 DNYA* may be characterised in terms of the number and alternation of its stressed and unstressed syllables, organised into **metrical feet**, the great majority of these consisting of **iambs**.

The poem's **stanzaic structure** combines the two **quatrains** of a **heroic rispetto**, whose **rhyme scheme** – in which the first four lines have alternate **masculine end rhymes** (abab) while the succeeding four lines consist of pairs of (also masculine) **rhyming couplets** (ccdd) – is strictly observed throughout. The total number of syllables comprising each line in the original poem is fixed to ten.

At first glance, all but one of the 256 unique lines of *1831-go IYUNYA 11 DNYA* appear to be structured in perfect **iambic pentameter**, i.e. having exactly five iambic feet per line. Due to the extremely sparing use of **inversion** (or **metric substitution**), when an **iamb** is directly substituted by a **trochee** in the line *Protiv nyepobyedimoy, mnogo zla*[24], the jarring intrusion of this rhythmic feature[25] may draw the historically-aware reader's attention to the impossibility (and necessity!) of artistic freedom under the autocratic rule of Tsar Nicholas I (Shcherbatova, 2016, p. 147).

Nevertheless, in the course of accentual-syllabic analysis, some subtler metrical substitutions may also be identified. In Nina Vernadsky's investigation of *Lermontov in Russian Music*, the scholar observes that the poet's prosody is

> much more variegated than Pushkin's. Not content with the iambus and the trochee, Lermontov was always in search of new combinations of rhythms in his versification. He would combine two-syllable and three-syllable measures, and gradually his preference went to the three-syllable foot, such as the amphibrach, dactyl and especially the anapaest. He even experimented with the four-syllable foot, which, according to the treatises on versification does not exist in Russian verse (Vernadsky, 1943, p. 11).

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[20] Мне нужно действовать, я каждый день / Бессмертным сделать бы желал, как тень / Великого героя

[21] Мне жизнь всё как-то коротка / И всё боюсь, что не успею я / Свершить чего-то!

[22] Я к состоянью этому привык, / Но ясно выразить его б не мог / Ни ангельский, ни демонский язык

[23] Их на бумагу трудно: мысль сильна, / Когда размером слов не стеснена,

[24] duelling with the Absolute, it fails

[25] It is also possible that a reader may choose to wrench the natural stress of the word 'protiv' from the first syllable to the second, thus preserving the iambic metre.

Accordingly, in *1831-go IYUNYA 11 DNYA*, iambs may also be seen to be substituted by **spondees,** typically occurring at the beginning of a line where they resolve rhythmic tension accumulated in previous lines. For example, *And who can such phenomena explain? / And who has eyes to peer into the dark? / **Why try**? They disappear without a mark.*[26] The characteristic bell-like "ding-dong" effect produced by two consecutive syllables given equal emphasis subtly heightens the dramatic effect, accentuating what Gorlanov refers to as the poem's "unearthly[27]" character. Going further, it is also possible to scan *ya plakal*[28] as an **amphibrach** or interpret *boren'ye doom*[29] and *blagoslovit*[30] as **fourth paeons**.

In the poem, Lermontov makes extensive use of the **caesura**, defined in modern European poetry as marking the end of a natural phrase (especially when occurring in a position other than line end), and **enjambment**, where incomplete syntax at the end of a line necessitates the running over of a phrase from one poetic line to the next. The rhythmic tension thus established between poetic line and natural phrase, as well as the periodic release of such tension, is one of the poem's key prosodic features, by means of which its prophetic and emotional cargo is delivered.

Isochrony and dipody

In his seminal *Essay on English Metrical Law*, the English poet and critic Coventry Patmore notes that "in the finest specimens of versification, there seems to be a perpetual conflict between the law of the verse and the freedom of the language", with each aspect being "incessantly, though insignificantly, violated for the purpose of giving effect to the other" (Patmore, 1961, p. 9). Nevertheless, "metre", he observes, "in the primary degree of a simple series of isochronous intervals, marked by accents, is as natural to spoken language as an even pace is natural to walking" (ibid., p. 10).

In referring to **isochrony** here, what does Patmore mean? In their recent study, Ravignani & Madison examine the question of isochrony from an evolutionary perspective, reviewing the available evidence in the signals of humans and other animals from the functional perspectives of physiology, cognitive neuroscience, signal processing and interactive behaviour. Here **rhythm** denotes a pattern of events in time, while isochrony is defined as a rhythm where all intervals between events are equal like those of a metronome. In this context, **beat** represents the human psychological tendency to superimpose an isochronous grid onto a rhythmic sequence (Ravignani & Madison, 2017, p. 2). The question then arises as to whether a rhythmically complex poem such as *1831-go IYUNYA 11 DNYA* can be seen as exhibiting **isochrony** such that a continuous beat is felt to be mapped onto the rhythmic structure of the poem as a whole.

Beat-prosodic analysis

The insight that rhythm in (English) poetry is realised by the "alternation of beats and offbeats" (Carper & Attridge, 2003, p. xi) is central to Derek Attridge's concept of **beat prosody**. When taking this approach to the scansion of rhythmic verse, a simple system of symbols is used to show where stressed syllables coincide with beats, and unstressed syllables – with offbeats. For the most regular verse, this alternation requires two symbols only – an uppercase letter 'B' to show the presence of a beat and a lowercase letter 'o' to

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[26] И кто его источник объяснит, / И кто заглянет в недра облаков? / **Зачем**? Они исчезнут без следов.

[27] неземного

[28] я плакал

[29] боренье дум

[30] благословит

denote the offbeat. However, Attridge's system is also capable of capturing finer nuances of rhythmic expression, e.g. when an offbeat syllable nevertheless carries a certain degree of emphasis or a syllable that is not ordinarily emphasised happens to coincide with a beat.

In their co-authored book *Meter and Meaning*, Carper and Attridge identify three main kinds of offbeat: the single offbeat **o** when an offbeat is realised by a single syllable, the double offbeat (**-o-**) in which two syllables "are hurried over and are together felt as an offbeat", and the implied offbeat (**ô**), which is felt to be located in the silence between two adjacent beats, but in the absence of syntax or punctuation cues, resulting in "an eddy in the smooth flow of the line" (Carper & Attridge, 2003, p. 35).

An additional significant rhythmic feature must be accounted for in the pauses following **end-stopped** lines (where enjambment is not present), as well in the caesurae extensively employed by Lermontov in *1831-go IYUNYA 11 DNYA* in medial positions. Both of these prosodic features entail what Attridge terms a **virtual offbeat** (Attridge, 1995, pp. 68–69). Attridge notes that in the end-line position, a virtual offbeat usually appears in conjunction with a virtual beat. Like line ends, caesurae may be designated as either feminine (following an unstressed syllable) or masculine (following a stressed syllable). In the latter case, the virtual offbeat is likely to be more heavily accented.

Attridge's beat prosodic approach, developed over the course of several decades and three major books, addresses many identified deficiencies in the use of classical prosody to analyse modern English (and, potentially, Russian) verse. In a brilliant 1990 article, Attridge uses the example of the poem *Disobedience* by A.A. Milne to demonstrate how "four-beat" verse can not only be analysed in terms of alternation between beats and offbeats, but also that its basic rhythmic structure readily lends itself to dipodic[31] division and multiplication, i.e. 1-2-4-8-16 (Attridge, 1990, pp. 1015–1022).

Discussing what he refers to as the "temporal tradition" in prosody, in which metrical units are quantised in terms of their duration, Attridge considers isochrony in terms of "the tendency of the stressed syllables of certain languages to fall at perceptually equal time intervals" (Attridge, 1982, p. 22). He shows that an increase in the number of unstressed syllables per word uttered within the same time frame preserves the "natural rhythms of the language […] at least until the number of nonstresses demands the introduction of a secondary accent" (ibid.)

However, Attridge's significant attempts to use a beat-prosodic approach to analyse iambic pentameter seem not to fully address the question of isochrony extensively discussed in earlier scholarship and developed in a functional context e.g. by Ravignani & Madison. In his review of Attridge's 1982 magnum opus *The Rhythms of English Poetry*, the eminent linguist Bruce Hayes notes that, when discussing iambic pentameter, Attridge "applies the idea of an 'escape from binarity' […] with varying degrees of success" (Hayes & Attridge, 1984, p. 917). Hayes accurately presents Attridge's position as follows:

> Poets favour pentameter precisely because it is unnatural: in art verse, the poet is striving for more subtle rhythmic effects, and to achieve them must escape the powerful rhythm of the natural binary hierarchy. Pentameter escapes binarity because five is indivisible, and because (unlike three and seven, the other candidates) it won't match a power of two if a silent beat is added. (ibid., p. 916)

Attridge's seemingly strong claim that pentameter avoids binarity (i.e. dipody) is weakened by his reluctance to temporally quantise the pauses at the end of each poetic line.

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[31] **dipody,** i.e. rhythmic organisation at the level of the **colon** (a metrical unit comprised of two feet),

Over his three major books, he only acknowledges this aspect once in passing when discussing a **metrical walking** approach to feeling poetic rhythm:

> Some "metrical walkers" like to feel that every beat in five-beat lines will come consistently on the right foot (or the left). These people are happier when they add an "end of the line" step before moving on to the next line. (Carper & Attridge, 2003, p. 15)

Taking such a "metrical walking" approach to the allocation of beats in the iambic pentameter of *1831-go IYUNYA 11 DNYA,* it may be clearly felt that – although not always coincident with natural stresses – each line is structured by three primary beats, the first naturally occurring on the second syllable of the first iambic foot, the second half-way through the line and the third coinciding with the last syllable of each line.

Моя́ душа, я по́мню, с детских ле́т
Чуде́сного иска́ла. Я люби́л
Все обо́льщенья све́та, но не све́т,
В кото́ром я мину́тами лишь жи́л;
И те́ мгновенья бы́ли мук полны́,
И на́селял таи́нственные сны́
Я э́тими мгнове́ньями. Но со́н,
Как ми́р, не мог быть и́ми омрачён.

From a musical point of view, this basic rhythmic pattern strongly suggests a 3/2 bar structure, with each bar coinciding with a poetic line and an **anacrusis**[32] occurring for each verse as well as for each bar (line) where there is no enjambment.

Here it can be clearly seen that each of the three main beats (minims) per line is divisible by two (crotchets), four (quavers) and eight (semiquavers). Since the majority of syllables coincide with quavers, we can observe a basic rhythmic structure having twelve subdivisions per bar (line). Multiplying by the number of bars (lines) per stanza (8), we thus obtain 24 main beats and 96 subdivisions per stanza.

Thus, the question concerning dipody and its relation to isochrony can be seen to subtly shift its emphasis. Although, in terms of its rhythmic structure as outlined above, *1831-go IYUNYA 11 DNYA's* iambic pentameter does indeed resist simple binary division and multiplication, the presence of isochrony can be clearly felt in the rhythmic divisions of both two and three (and multiples thereof). It is perhaps no coincidence that the poem's other major divisions (8 lines per stanza, 32 stanzas in total) also tend to support an isochronous reading. Therefore, the hypotheses can be advanced that: (a) a more complex and rhythmically interesting isochrony emerges when both dipody and triple groupings are present in a poem's beat-prosodic structure; and (b) that the pauses inherent in the line-end

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[32] In prosodic terms, one or more unstressed syllables at the beginning of a verse; in musical terms, one or more unstressed notes before the first bar line of a passage.

and midline caesurae of iambic pentameter can be fully accounted for within such a larger rhythmic structure.

E – ter – nal – soul, since child-hood, I re – call, / In search of the mi – ra – cu – lous sub-lime, not
Мо – я ду – ша, я пом – ню, с дет-ских лет / чу – дес – но – го ис – ка – ла. Я лю – бил все

light it – self, but light's de – lu – sions all, / in which I dwellt for mi – nutes at a time; and
о – боль – ше – нья све – та, но не свет, / в ко – то – ром я ми – ну – та – ми лишь жил; и

tor – ments filled those mo – ments as it seems; / I'd oc – cu – py such e – nig – ma – tic dreams a –
те мгно – ве – нья бы – лы мук поль – ны, / и на – се – лял та – ин-ствен – ны – е сны я

mongst those in – stants, but, like peace, the / dream wi – thin could ne – ver find – re – lease.
э – ти – ми мнго – ве – ня – ми но сон, как / мир, не мог быть и – ми ом – ра – чён.

Phrasing, "flow", "zashagivaniye"

As already remarked in the introduction, one of the key features of *1831-go IYUNYA 11 DNYA* is the naturalness of its phrasing, resulting in the generation of aphorisms now integral to the Russian language. However, in an attempt to re-create this naturalistic phraseological effect in English, the decision was taken to sacrifice the strict syllable-per-line count and masculine-only rhyme scheme, resulting in the introduction of additional prosodic features including **catalexis** (e.g. acephaly) and **hypercatalexis** (e.g. feminine and triple rhyme). The addition of these extra features, while helping to facilitate naturalistic phrasing in the target language, had implications for the flow of syllables and metaphors across lines and underlying beat, further heightening the tension between the law of the verse and the freedom of the language. In order to conceptually reconcile these tensions with the underlying beat to preserve isochrony, it thus becomes necessary to introduce the concept of **flow**.

In his discussion of the perception of flow in contemporary rap music, Kyle Adams observes that "the effect created by enjambment is that even when rhymed syllables fall on the fourth beat, they are perceived as being in the middle of a larger unit that continues into the next line" (Adams, 2009, p. 2). Although the prosodic concept of flow, which may partially correspond to the Russian term *zashagivaniye* (or "striding"), has yet to be rigorously defined in the literature, it may be felt to consist in the correspondence of metaphors and images with rhythmic cadences that appear to "tumble" or "fall" into one another, or, as James Underhill puts it, "in and out of regularity" (Underhill, 2016, p. 21).

Musical analysis

Patmore observes that "the word 'music' is in reality a much more accurate expression for that which delights us in good verse, apart from the meaning, than the word 'rhythm'." (Patmore, 1961, p. 16) In previous research, the present author explored the concept of **singability** on the example of a translation and performance of Schubert's Winterreise song cycle in(to) English (Beavitt, 2018, pp. 84–93). While of more obvious application to texts already set to music, the same principle can also be applied to the translation of texts, which, although not (yet) set to a particular music, are of sufficient musicality to be potentially set to music in the future. Here of course, the question arises – to *which* music shall it be set?

Nevertheless, the hypothetical possibility of a musical setting is sufficient to consider a poetic translation in terms of its singability. The large number of Lermontov's lyrical poems already set to music by mainly Russian composers, as well as the observations of many researchers referring to the essential musicality of Lermontov's poetic work, should leave us in little doubt that additional settings are in principle possible. Therefore, when considering the translation of such poetry into different languages, the criterion of singability may be applied: if a translation is not singable to the same music as the original, and vice versa, then it can be seen to have failed to meet this criterion.

Conclusion

When translating verse, a significant problem arises[33]: as a general rule, at the level of the phrase, either the meaning of the text or its musicality may be preserved by the translator, but not both. Therefore, the verse translator must be prepared to sacrifice literal meaning at the level of the phrase and line, while at the same time preserving the golden thread of sense that runs through the poem as a whole. As the literary translator and translation theorist Mark Polizzotti observes "Real fidelity takes liberties. The translator's task […] consists not of crashing two linguistic systems together but of negotiating them as one would an entente cordiale, so that the target text might dance with the target reader just as the source text does with the source reader." (Polizzotti, 2018) In a similar vein, James Underhill, whose poetic translation value system considers the preservation of **voice** to be paramount, observes that "we do not translate a language, we do not translate poetry; we translate a poem. As long as we remain close to the poem, we will remain close to a voice that emerges in its versification." However, he warns that "if translators are dominated by their own aesthetics of poetry, formal elements can end up taking the translation away from the original", since "taking a poem apart and reassembling it involves random impulses that are shaped by conflicting desires". Nevertheless, even if this direction coincides with a reformulation of the poem's meaning, "the result may work" (Underhill, 2016, pp. 22–23).

Practical and theoretical work aimed at evaluating the singability of the translated poem against the same musical accompaniment (i.e. isochronous grid) as that accompanying the original verses is ongoing. Combined with this, research into flow, derived from contemporary rap and possibly corresponding to the Russian prosodic term *zashagivaniye*, is aimed at consolidating the concept and associated terminology, developing approaches for improving its notation, as well as examining its implications for the role of isochrony in human and animal signal processing.

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[33] This problem, which arose during the course of his translation of Pushkin's Eugene Onegin, was discussed in depth by the translator, author and critic Vladimir Nabokov.

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