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RHYTHM EQUIVALENCE IN RUSSIAN VERSE TRANSLATIONS OF MILTON'S PARADISE LOST

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Abstract

The main problem of verse translation from English into Russian is that an average target language word in this pair is about 1 ½ times longer than its equivalent in the source language. As a result, the translator has to choose between two strategies: the formal (line-for-line) or semantic (word-for-word). These two strategies are vividly demonstrated by two Russian translations of J. Milton's Paradise Lost: the very first full verse one, published in 1899 by Olga Chyumina, who tries to save every word, and the latest, 1976 version, by A. Steinberg, who takes the line as a basis of translation. In this article, we suggest comparing these translations on the basis of rhythm equivalence ("equirhythmicity"), which is generally understood as the translator's capability of "keeping pace" with the rhythmic patterns of the original text. It is shown that the number of rhythmic coincidences can be counted, thus making it possible to calculate the degree of correspondences of both Russian verse texts to the English poem. The difference between the word and the line as a minimal unit of translation is demonstrated through the comparison: as the English lines are not able to "accommodate" all the Russian words, because they are generally longer, O. Chyumina prefers to extend lines and to put all the words below, whereas A. Steinberg preserves the lines by making a few omissions. Not surprisingly, the latest translation comes to be more equirhythmic than the earliest, which is proved statistically and contextually.

Keywords: Equivalence, Milton, *Paradise Lost*, rhythm, translation

1. Introduction

Milton's longest epic Paradise Lost, by the mid-18th century confidently declared to have obtained a place in the first rank of English classics (Adlington, 2016), was translated into Russian more than a dozen times. For a long time, however, there were no full verse translations: from the first prose version of Stroganov, handwritten in 1740s and never printed, there passed at least 150 years before O. Chyumina completed her blank verse variant of the poem in 1899. Though many fragments were tried by numerous Russian poets (Gnedich in 1805 experimented with the fragment on blindness from Book III, Mei in 1850s-1860s rendered fragments from Books I and IV in verse), it was only Chyumina's translation to come first and to be followed by a row of the 20th century blank verse translations: by Kudasheva, Kholodkovsky, and Steinberg, published, correspondingly, in 1910, 1911, and 1976.

2. Problem Statement

The obvious problem of a verse translation, even blank, into any language is "saving" the lines together with the meaning (Autieri, 2019; Calderon, 2020; Opperman et al., 2018; Scott, 2015). When the source and the target languages are quite different in the length of an average word, each line changes in its length correspondingly, thus making it necessary either to fill in the gaps or to omit certain words and even phrases (Flotats, 2002; Machacek, 2003). When rendering from English into Russian, a translator has to deal with the problem of lines extension. As far as *Paradise Lost* is concerned, one more possible solution of this, beside omissions and shortenings, can be considered – increasing the number of lines. The epic form is not closed in itself (as compared, for instance, to a sonnet (Fickling, 2019; Fischer, 2017), and thus the translator can let certain text elements "go" to the next line. The blank verse only makes this process easier, as there are no rhymes to tighten the Russian interpreter.

3. Research Questions

In our analysis, we will try to answer three questions:
- Does the rhythmic pattern of the poem (iambic pentameter) influence Russian verse translations?
- If so, can they be compared on the basis of rhythmic patterns corresponding to certain word equivalents?
- In what way is it possible to calculate the rhythm equivalence of Russian verse translations to the English source text of the poem?

4. Purpose of the Study

For the foregoing analysis, two Russian verse translations were chosen: the very first one, made in 1899 by Chyumina and reprinted in 2013 (Milton, 2013), and the very latest one, published in 1976 by Steinberg (Milton, 1976). The source text is quoted according to the 1674 edition (Milton, 1674); all the Russian quotations are given according to the two aforementioned editions. The purpose of the study is to compare the rhythmic patterns of both translations to the source text and to find out the rhythmic

equivalence (equirhythmicity) of each of them. The equivalence is understood here as a degree of correspondence of the target text to the source one, or, in other words, as the percentage of coincidences between the two text variants. The equirhythmicity, as a particular form of equivalence manifestation, is, therefore, the percentage of rhythmic coincidences of the translation to the original.

5. Research Methods

The analysis presented in this paper is based mainly on the comparative method (Issa, 2015), which implies drawing out rhythmic patterns in order to compare them, and thus using segmentation and accentuation (graphic marking) methods. The phonetic and grammatical methods (like scanning and syntactic valency contrasting) are to be applied as auxiliary, as certain syllables, phonetically (rhythmically) stressed, might be grammatically non-accentualized (Machacek, 2003), thus forming the so-called "pyrrhic" feet. The quantitative methods, typically used in text linguistics and functional stylistics (Itskovich, 2018; Matveeva, 2017), should be applied as well to provide the objective results of the foregoing comparison.

6. Findings

Milton's first original line has the following rhythmic pattern (where slash-marked are stressed syllables, slash-in-brackets marking refers to the "pyrrhic" feet, the unstressed syllables are shown with the ∪-symbol):

∪	/	∪	(/)	∪	/	∪	(/)	∪	/
Of	Man's	First	Dis-	o-	be-	dience,	and	the	Fruit

In her translation, O. Chyumina puts forward the sixth line (*Povedai nam, bozhestvennaia muza* = Milton's *Sing, Heav'nly Muse*, I, 6). Therefore, the first line of the Paradise Lost is to be compared to the second line (together with a part of the third one), which come to be as follows:

∪	/	∪	(/)	∪	/	∪	(/)	∪	/	∪
O	per-	vom	o-	slu-	shan'-	e,	che-	lo-	ve-	ka
∪	/	∪	(/)	∪	/	∪	(/)	∪	/	
I	de-	re-	va	zap-	ret-	no-	go	plo-	de	

(Back translation into English: "Of (the) first disobedience of (the) man
And (the) tree's forbidden fruit".)

Though being one syllable longer than the original, the second line has a peculiar correspondence to the source text: the "pyrrhic" feet are exactly the same (in the second and in the fourth places). Even more peculiar is the absolute rhythmic coincidence (100 %) of the word *Disobedience → oslushan'e* in the two text variants: the first syllable is stressed only metrically (though in English it can be said to have the so-called "secondary" stress), the third one has its "strong" stress (phonetically and metrically), the

second and the fourth are unstressed. This "ideal" rhythm equivalence makes it possible to count the percentage of coincidences for the other words, as given in Table 1:

Table 1. The rhythmic equivalence of Chyumina's version to Milton's original text as compared by the first line

Source word	English rhythmic pattern	Target word	Russian rhythmic pattern	Rhythmic equivalence
Of	∪	O	∪	100 %
Man's	/	cheloveka	(/) ∪ / ∪	25 %
First	∪	pervom	/ ∪	50 %
Disobedience	(/) ∪ / ∪	oslushan'e	(/) ∪ / ∪	100 %
and	(/)	i	∪	0 %
the Fruit*	∪ /	plode	∪ /	100 %
Average			62.5 %	

*As there are no articles in Russian, English *a* and *the* can be counted with the nouns they correspond to, otherwise they will always give zero-percent rhythmic correspondence.

Two Russian equivalents out of six (1/3) are longer than their English versions: *Man's* becomes three syllables longer, *First* adds one more syllable. Though logically explicable, as an average Russian word is generally longer than an average English one, this gives lengthening by four syllables. Chyumina prefers to leave one of them in the same line, thus making its clause one syllable longer, but the three others are to be moved to the next line (*i ... plode*), otherwise the iambic pentameter will be spoiled. As a result, the next Russian line (namely, Chyumina's third) becomes partially filled and is not able to correspond to Milton's next line. This is how the Russian text becomes longer: the total of 798-lined Book I in Chyumina's translation equals 973 lines.

As for Steinberg's translation, he misses the word *Man's* and compensates one-syllable lengthening with the help of the article, thus preserving line-to-line correspondence:

∪	/	∪	(/)	∪	/	∪	(/)	∪	/
O	per-	vom	pre-	slu-	shan'-	e,	o	plo-	de,

(Back translation into English: "Of (the) first disobedience, of (the) fruit".)

One more Steinberg's change is the replacement of the conjunction *and* with the second *o* (equivalent to the English *of*). This does not, however, spoil the general rhythmic structure of his first line:

Table 2. The rhythmic equivalence of A. Steinberg's version to J. Milton's original text as compared by the first line

Source word	English rhythmic pattern	Target word	Russian rhythmic pattern	Rhythmic equivalence
Of	∪	O	∪	100 %
Man's	/	–	–	0 %
First	∪	pervom	/ ∪	50 %
Disobedience	(/) ∪ / ∪	preslushan'e	(/) ∪ / ∪	100 %
and	(/)	o	(/)	100 %
the Fruit*	∪ /	plode	∪ /	100 %
Average			75 %	

In this version, as shown in Table 2, not a syllable is supplied. Steinberg prefers to save the syntactic structure of the source text (*Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit... / Sing, Heav'nly Muse → O pervom preslushan'e, o plode... / Poi, Muza gorniaia!*). The same number of syllables and feet makes the phrase sound as energetic and flexible as in Milton's original text.

The second English line corresponds to the same iambic pentameter pattern, however, without "pyrrhic" feet (though in case with *that* in the very first foot this might be dubious):

∪	/	∪	/	∪	/	∪	/	∪	/
Of	that	For-	bid-	den	Tree	whose	mor-	tal	taste

As Chyumina replaced three syllables out of ten with the words *o plode* from the previous line, she has no place for rendering *mortal taste* in Russian, and thus the corresponding equivalents (*smertel'nyi vkus*) appear in the next (fourth) line:

∪	/	∪	(/)	∪	/	∪	(/)	∪	/
I	de-	re-	va	zap-	ret-	no-	go	plo-	de,
∪	/	∪	/	∪	/	∪	(/)	∪	/
Smer-	tel'-	nyi	vkus	ko-	to-	ro-	go	pri-	nes

(Back translation into English: "And (the) tree's forbidden fruit,
(the) mortal taste of which brought".)

The resulting rhythmic structure is somewhat average of Milton's first and second lines (the undoubted "pyrrhic" foot remains in the fourth position, which does not correspond to the original pattern). Three more syllables are used for rendering *whose* (Russ. *kotorogo*). As a result, the target text becomes five more syllables longer (Table 3):

Table 3. The rhythmic equivalence of Chyumina's version to Milton's original text as compared by the second line

Source word	English rhythmic pattern	Target word	Russian rhythmic pattern	Rhythmic equivalence
Of Tree*	∪ /	dereva	/ ∪ (/)	50 %
that	/	–	–	0 %
Forbidden	∪ / ∪	zapretnogo	∪ / ∪ (/)	75 %
whose	∪	kotorogo	∪ / ∪ (/)	25 %
mortal	/ ∪	smertel'nyi	∪ / ∪	67 %
taste	/	vkus	/	100 %
Average			52.83 %	

* Russian genitive is expressed within a single word via the inflexion *-a*, which is the direct grammatical equivalent to the English preposition *of*.

As we can see, Chyumina prefers not to lose a word (with the only exception of *that*, which can be qualified close to an article here: *that Forbidden Tree whose* = *the Forbidden Tree whose*). A. Steinberg decides to preserve the line in his translation as well:

∪	/	∪	/	∪	/	∪	/	∪	/

| Za- | pret- | nom, | pa- | gub- | nom, | chto | smert' | pri- | nes |

(Back translation into English: "Forbidden, mortal, which brought (the) death".)

Here, the translator omits the words *tree* (together with *of* and *that*) and *taste*. The explanation to the replacement of *mortal* (*smertel'nyi*) with *pagubnom* (referring to the *fruit*, not to the *taste*) is quite logical: Milton's third line contains the word *death*, which brings tautology when rendered in Russian (cf. *smertel'nyi – smert'* in Chyumina's version). However, this makes the equirhythmicity lower, as shown in Table 4:

Table 4. The rhythmic equivalence of Steinberg's version to Milton's original text as compared by the second line

Source word	English rhythmic pattern	Target word	Russian rhythmic pattern	Rhythmic equivalence
Of Tree	∪ /	–	–	0 %
that	/	–	–	0 %
Forbidden	∪ / ∪	zapretnom	∪ / ∪	100 %
whose	∪	chto	∪	100 %
mortal	/ ∪	pagubnom	/ ∪ (/)	67 %
taste	/	–	–	0 %
Average			44.5 %	

What is more interesting, Steinberg's second line appears to contain the equivalent for *brought Death* – the phrase from Milton's third line, thus syllabically even outpacing the latter (which is possible, of course, thanks to numerous omissions):

| ∪ | / | ∪ | (/) | ∪ | / | ∪ | / | ∪ | / |
| Brought | Death | in- | to | the | World, | and | all | our | woe, |

The second "pyrrhic" foot, together with the dubious fourth one (as in the case of *that* replaced with the pronoun), form nearly the same rhythmic pattern as in the first line. O. Chyumina's translation, being eight syllables longer here, is no longer able to preserve the same scheme; the two leaving syllables are covered here, thus making one more line added to the translation. Cf. the fourth and the fifth lines transliterated in English:

∪	/	∪	/	∪	/	∪	(/)	∪	/
Smer-	tel'-	nyi	vkus	ko-	to-	ro-	go	pri-	nes
∪	/	∪	/	∪	/	∪	/	∪	/	∪
Na	zem-	liu	smert'	i	vse	stra-	dan'-	ia	na-	shi.

(Back translation into English: "(The) mortal taste of which brought

to (the) Earth (the) death and all sufferings of ours".)

Table 5. The rhythmic equivalence of Chyumina's version to Milton's original text as compared by the third line

Source word	English rhythmic pattern	Target word	Russian rhythmic pattern	Rhythmic equivalence
Brought	∪	prines	∪ /	50 %
Death	/	smert'	/	100 %
into	∪ (/)	na	∪	50 %
the World	∪ /	zemliu	/ ∪	0 %
and	∪	i	∪	100 %
all	/	vse	/	100 %
Average			60.375 %	

The data given in Table 5 show that it is Chyumina's fourth line (*Smertel'nyi vkus kotorogo prines*) which should be considered supplementary, the first three words corresponding to Milton's second line (*whose mortal taste*), the last one referring to the third line (*brought*), thus helping the translator preserve her word-for-word strategy. A. Steinberg, on the contrary, continues his line-for-line translation:

∪	/	∪	/	∪	/	∪	/	∪	/
I	vse	nevz-	go-	dy	na-	shi	v e-	tot	mir,

(Back translation into English: "And all our woes into this world".)

Table 6. The rhythmic equivalence of Steinberg's version to Milton's original text as compared by the third line

Source word	English rhythmic pattern	Target word	Russian rhythmic pattern	Rhythmic equivalence
Brought	∪	prines	∪ /	50 %
Death	/	smert'	/	100 %
into	∪ (/)	v etot mir	/ ∪ /	50 %
the World	∪ /	i	∪	100 %
and	∪	vse	/	100 %
all	/	nashi	/ ∪	50 %
Average			69 %	

Though getting nearly the same equirhythmic figures by each word as Chyumina, Steinberg's translation, as Table 6 demonstrates, comes to be averagely more equirhythmic than his predecessor's. This happens thanks to the fact that the English preposition *into* corresponds to the Russian *v*, which does not form a separate syllable (as opposed to Chyumina's *na*). Therefore, the phrase *into the World* in Steinberg's understanding is to be interpreted as one phonetic word, thus excluding the possibility of complete non-equirhythmic rendering (Chyumina had to move the stress in the two-syllabic *the World* from the second syllable to the first one, thus getting the zero-percent rhythmic correspondence).

7. Conclusion

The three lines of Milton's poem observed in two Russian translations (1899 and 1976) can be considered forming the general introduction of the poem, as the speaker names the main subjects of the forthcoming work: *Man*, *Disobedience*, *Fruit*. Not without reason does Chyumina conclude her five lines (developed from these three and supplied by *Sing, Heav'nly Muse* taken from I, 6 and extended to the

whole line) with a full stop. The fourth line names the main predicate of the whole poem (*loss of Eden*) and starts anticipating the subjects of Milton's second great epic, "Paradise Regained", logically understood as a continuation of "Paradise Lost". Therefore, the next two lines can be considered a general introduction to the whole of both poems, not only to the first one analysed here.

The detailed rhythmic analysis suggested above shows the two translators' strategies even by these three lines. While Chyumina tries to save all words, Steinberg prefers line-for-line strategy. The latter comes to be more successful: beside lacking line extension, Steinberg's version appears to be more equirhythmic than Chyumina's. This can be proved in figures: the first translation is averagely equirhythmic to the source text by $(62.5+52.83+60.375)/3 \approx 58.57$ %, whereas the second one has the $(75+44.5+69)/3 \approx 62.83$ % equirhythmicity. The secret here is in the length of an average Russian word, which generally has more syllables than its English equivalent. To save the rhythm of the source text, the translator has to omit certain lexical units. Without doing this, the original syllabic structure gets broken, and one can do nothing but put the words left into the next lines. However, which strategy to choose, word-for-word or line-for-line, is the thing each translator should decide for him/herself, as the excess of lexical omissions might be as well dangerous for the particular details of the whole text.

Acknowledgments

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