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**ASPECTS OF TRANSLATING POETRY BY  
J. BRODSKY**

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## **Anotācija**

Pašreizējā pētījuma priekšmets ir Brodskā kā dzejas tulka darbība. Šī darba mērķis ir pārbaudīt izvirzīto hipotēzi, ka oriģinālo, t.i. krievu dzejoļu formālo iezīmju saglabāšana angļu tulkojumos kalpo par Jozefa Brodskā tulkošanas pieejas dominējošo aspektu. Šajā pētnieciskajā darbā ir sniegts ieskats Brodskā biogrāfijā, kā arī viņa šķietami iemīļotā tulkošanas paņēmiena teorētiskā bāze. Darba ietvaros tika veikta 15 dzejoļu (kā oriģinālo, tā arī tulkoto) metrikas analīze, kuras rezultāti atbalsta sākotnējo hipotēzi.

**Atslēgas vārdi:** Jozefs Brodskis, dzejas tulkošana, metrika

## **Abstract**

The subject of the current research is Brodsky's activity as a poetic translator, the goal being to verify the hypothesis that that retention of formal aspects of original Russian verse in English translation was a prevailing aspect in Joseph Brodsky's poetic translation practice. An overview of the poet's biography has been provided, along with a background for his supposedly preferred translation technique. A metrical analysis of 15 poems (both originals and translated counterparts) has been carried out, substantiating the proposed hypothesis.

**Key words:** Joseph Brodsky, poetic translation, verse meter

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## Introduction

Joseph Brodsky, considered one of the greatest Russian poets of the twentieth century, was – along with Vladimir Nabokov – one of the rare figures actively present in both Russian and English literary domains, primarily by means of self-translation. The current research presents an attempt to give an insight into the phenomenon of Joseph Brodsky in terms of poetic translation: his relationship with the English language, his approach to poetic translation and favoured techniques in this sphere.

The subject of the current research is Brodsky's activity as a poetic translator, the goal being to verify the hypothesis that that retention of formal aspects of original Russian verse in English translation was a prevailing aspect in Joseph Brodsky's poetic translation practice. To achieve the goal, the following enabling objectives have been set up:

- To provide an overview of Joseph Brodsky's biography, including his entering getting acquainted with the English language and entering the English literary domain
- To provide a background for his supposedly preferred translation technique by means of outlining his principles of poetic translation
- To collect a sufficient amount of data and carry out a metrical analysis of 15 poems translated by Brodsky in order to substantiate the proposed hypothesis

The first chapter of the paper contains a brief overview of Joseph Brodsky's biography before and after emigration from the Soviet Union, featuring his most notable achievements. The second chapter is dedicated to the poet's entering the English literary domain, i.e. the way from the first attempts of writing in English to becoming an acknowledged English writer. Moreover, the growth of his degree of involvement into the translation of his verse in English has been traced. The third chapter features an insight into Brodsky's personal views on language, based mainly on quotations taken from interviews and his own works. Some views on the matters of poetry and prose have also been concerned. The fourth chapter presents a similarly provided insight into what may be called Brodsky's principles of poetic translation. The fifth chapter contains a brief formal analysis of Brodsky's poem 'A Second Christmas by the Shore' (both the original and translated versions) serving as a preliminary to the subject of the last chapter which, in turn, features a metrical analysis of 15 poems from the collection 'A Part of Speech,' translated into English by the author himself, though on the basis of

previously existing translations by Daniel Weissbort. The metrical analysis serves as a practical substantiation of the above introduced hypothesis.

Owing to the exceptional abundance of long quotations in the chapters III and IV, the references are provided in footnotes. Most of the quotations have been taken from the collected works of Joseph Brodsky edited by Y. Gordin (2001) and translated from Russian by the author. The poems subject to metrical analysis have been taken from the 1980 edition of the poem collection 'A Part of Speech,' published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Other, less significant sources are listed in the bibliography section.

Whereas chapters I, II, III and IV are purely discursive and feature mere library research as the only utilized method, the analysis presented in chapter V is based on some elements of the metrical analysis method elaborated by J. Smith, who himself applied it to Brodsky's verse.

The research might be useful for any English reader willing to get acquainted with the phenomenon of Joseph Brodsky, as well as for any further research in the field of poetic translation.

## 1. A BIOGRAPHIC INSIGHT

The current chapter presents an attempt of providing an insight into the biography of Joseph Brodsky, shedding a light on his life before and after emigration from the USSR. Moreover, his main achievements have been listed, culminating with the reception of Nobel Prize.

Joseph Brodsky (Russian: Иосиф Александрович Бродский) was born on May 24, 1940 in Leningrad (now Saint-Petersburg). His father, Aleksandr Brodsky, was a photojournalist working for the Soviet navy, and his mother, Maria Volpert, worked all throughout her life as a secretary and as an accountant. Bourgeois descent, along with Jewish nationality shared by both parents, served as a serious obstacle in their career, making the mother unable to receive higher education diploma and hindering the father's professional progress. Perhaps it was their knowing that these stigmata were automatically carried over to their son that kept them from insisting upon his return to school when he left it unfinished at the age of fifteen. So, having dropped secondary school as an eight-grade student, young Joseph started to work and tried out a variety of jobs among which were those of a milling machine operator, a greaser, an assistant at a morgue, a hospital attendant and a geologist's assistant. At the same time he was engaged in self-education, realizing himself as a poet and translator. (Volkov, 2000:26)

What exactly urged Brodsky to write poetry remains unknown; Joseph himself provides a humoristic explanation going that it was the proximity of his parents' place to the apartments once shared by famous Russian poets and life companions Dmitry Merezhkovsky and Zinaida Gippius (*ibid.*, 37). It might have been, nonetheless, the abundance of talented poets of the city where Brodsky lived. For example, Yevgeny Rein (1994:188), speaking about the 'poetic geography of that-time Leningrad,' points out quite a large number of names, among which there are Lev Losev, Vladimir Uflyand and Mikhail Eremin who were Joseph Brodsky's close friends.

Rein (*ibid.*) classifies the first poetic attempts of Brodsky as 'the "Foreign Literature" magazine stage,' pointing out the noticeable influence of such non-Russian poets as Pablo Neruda, Nâzım Hikmet and Yiannis Ritsos whose verse could be read on the pages of the respective magazine. In this regard it would be worthwhile to mention the profound influence made on Brodsky's personality by Anna Akhmatova. In his Nobel lecture Brodsky mentioned her among the several poets of whom he wrote: 'those whose deeds and whose lot matter so much to me, if only because if it were not for them, I, both as a man and a writer, would amount to much less; in any case, I wouldn't be standing here today.' (Online 1)

Along with Akhmatova Brodsky mentioned Robert Frost, whose verse was the beginning of Brodsky's getting acquainted with English and American literature. (ibid.) 'The Anthology of English Verse' composed by D. S. Mirsky became Joseph's first textbook of the English language. (Losev, Vail, 1998:49) Brodsky recalls:

'I armed myself with a dictionary and started mastering English; I read this anthology cover to cover. I read and compared things, line by line. I was eager to expand the boundaries of what I could read as I more or less new what was going on in Russian literature by the age of twenty three. It's not that I had studied it all or it had seized to satisfy me – it was just that by that time I had read almost everything and wanted more'

Thus, poetic translation for Brodsky was from the very beginning the main way of perceiving English and American verse. Later, as a university professor, he would address his students: (ibid.:53)

'The best way of learning a language is to translate poetry written in that language. The music of a poem is holding you, you are drifting down the wave of sound, looking into the depth of the ocean. And deep down you are noticing the wild life of sea creatures. In the same manner the complexities of a language, its syntax, open up to you when you perceive those within the self-sufficiency of the world of a poem.'

Brodsky did not quit his exercises in English even in exile, among the wilderness of Northern Russia where he was sent by court verdict, being found guilty of 'social parasitism' in 1964. The evident groundlessness of accusations, along with support from such notable figures in the field of literature like Efim Etkind would not change the court ruling: everything was decided beforehand by the authorities. Brodsky, whose verse by that time had become a substantial cultural phenomenon, obviously did not fit into the framework of proclaimed Soviet way of life, so he had to be isolated from the audience capable of perceiving his art.

This trial, however, had a positive impact on Brodsky's career: for the first time the attention of the international community was drawn to the young poet. Various notable figures in the field of literature from different countries protested against Brodsky's persecution by the authorities. Thus, as early as 1965 he returned to Leningrad. The same year was marked by the publication of his poetry collection 'Longer and Shorter Poems' in New York. A year later came out the French, German and Dutch editions of the book. This, however, did not grant him official acclaim in the Soviet Union: was able to earn a living working as a translator, yet none of his own verse was published in the USSR. Neither was his getting elected as member of the Bavarian Academy of Art and Sciences any contribution into tolerance towards the poet on the part of the Soviet regime. Thus, by 1972 he became *persona non grata* in the USSR and was expelled from the country.

From the very beginning of his emigration years Brodsky received high critical acclaim in the international literary circles: less than a year after his expulsion he read several lectures in London and Oxford (together with Wystan Auden, a prominent English poet who considerably supported Brodsky during his first years abroad). In the same year he became poet in residence at the University of Michigan and settled in the USA; five years later he would be granted American citizenship.

In 1978 Brodsky took up a teaching position at Columbia University and later – at Mount Holyoke college in Massachusetts. In the same year he became member of the American Academy and *dr. honoris causa* at Yale University. A 1979 collection of his verse translated into Italian was awarded the Feltrinelly Prize for Poetry and Mondello Literary Prize. In 1981 Brodsky was granted the famous MacArthur fellowship, and finally, in 1987 he received the Nobel Prize in literature, ‘for an all-embracing authorship, imbued with clarity of thought and poetic intensity.’ (Online 1)

In 1991 Joseph became member of the French Legion of Honour, *dr. honoris causa* at the University of Oxford and Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress. He would not consider the latter a purely nominal position and would try to exercise his authority in order to popularize poetry among common people. Thus, in his essay entitled ‘An Immodest Proposal’ he suggested boosting the publication of poetry collections and lowering the prices, so that poetry books would be sold in supermarkets and drugstores. In such way, in Brodsky’s words, the American nation would turn into ‘an enlightened democracy.’

However sceptically this proposal might have been received by the society, some elements of it were implemented in real life: for example, by 1994 poetry books began to be sold in US hotels. Moreover, with the intention to spread poetry across the country Brodsky founded the non-profit organization ‘American poetry and literacy project,’ the members of which were engaged in various public activities such as distributing free poetry books and installing posters on the streets.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of the above said, Brodsky’s biography appears surprisingly fitting the concept of a self-made man which forms the basis of ‘the American dream’: a poor immigrant who received no acclaim in his homeland ascends – within a rather short period of time – to the honourable position at the Library of Congress. The famous words of Anna Akhmatova turned out to be prophetic.<sup>2</sup>

The next chapter deals with the poet’s way towards becoming known in the English literary domain, listing the main landmarks of his publications in English. An insight is given

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<sup>1</sup> Scott, J. (1994) Along With the Bible, a Poetry Anthology; The Vision of 2 Unlikely Collaborators Places Books of Verse in the Hands of Travelers. *The New York Times*

<sup>2</sup>Какую биографию делают нашему рыжему – как будто он кого-то специально нанял

into the dynamics of his degree of involvement in the translation of his verse, along with the general information as to what has been translated and published in English.

## 2. WAY TOWARDS ENGLISH LITERARY DOMAIN

The first appearance of Brodsky in the English literary domain happened around 1972 (the 1965 publication 'Longer and Shorter poems' was in Russian), slightly earlier than his arrival in the US, on the pages of 'Russian Literature Triquarterly,' a journal edited by Carl and Ellendea Proffer<sup>3</sup>. The journal featured several translations of Brodsky's verse into English made by George Kline and Jamie Fuller, bearing a humble place among translations from other Russian poets such as Mandelstam, Gumilev and Tsvetaeva. The next publication (April 5, 1973) appeared already in the prestigious 'New York Review of Books,' featuring 3 poems translated by Kline and an article 'The Poems of Joseph Brodsky' written by Wystan Auden, which demonstrates a high pace of climbing the English literary Olympus.

Brodsky gets frequently published in the New York Review of Books: on August 9, 1973 a set of Brodsky's literary reviews came out, translated by Kline and Proffer, while the edition of September 19, 1974 featured Brodsky's first, though prosaic, attempt to utilize English on his own in addressing the Anglophone reader – 'An Appeal for Vladimir Maramzin.' The second attempt came in the form of an essay, entitled 'On Cafavy's side,' published in the edition of February 17, 1977. The following essays, such as 'The Art of Montale,' 'In a Room and a Half' and 'On Derek Walcott' were published in various prestigious English and American magazines and granted Brodsky a reputation of a brilliant essayist and literary critic.

Brodsky's essays in English were published in two collections, 'Less than One' and 'On Grief and Reason'; the first collection was awarded the National Book Critics Prize in the US, receiving high critical acclaim in British reviews as well. (Losev, Vail, 1998:85)

In this regard it would be interesting to note that Brodsky's literary realization in the domain of the English language (i.e. writing in the language without the interference of any third parties such as translators) was initially prosaic. That is, in one of his interviews to Solomon Volkov (2000:170), when the discussion touched upon the question of placing the literary carrier 'upon English rails,' Brodsky admitted: 'As to prose, it is definitely so. But as to verse – it is impossible to write poetry in two different languages, though I have actually been trying to do that.' Furthermore, in an interview to Sven Birkerts (1997:96) Brodsky expanded the thought:

'First and foremost, what I am writing in Russian is enough for me. Moreover, there are so many talented people among the poets writing in English! There is no point in

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<sup>3</sup> The Editors (1972) Short Reviews. *The New York Review of Books*

my entering a foreign domain. The poem I wrote in memory of Lowell was in English solely because I wanted to please his shadow. And when I finished the poem, other English rhymes came to mind, and it was surely very interesting, but I told myself, “Stop! I do not want to create an additional reality.”

In the same interview Brodsky once more stresses his unwillingness to compete with those speaking English as their mother tongue in the field of poetry, reserving the latter for his native language:

‘And if I started writing in English, I would have to compete with those people who speak it as their mother tongue. Finally – and, perhaps, most importantly – I do not set up such objective. Generally I am happy that I write in Russian, even though success is not always there. And even if my Russian attempts fail, I do not try to create something in English instead. I do not want to get punished twice. As to English, it is there in my prose, and writing in this language helps me acquire self-confidence.’

When in a newspaper article Brodsky was mentioned as a person who had successfully recuperated after exile, having become an American poet, he commented on that opinion, ‘It is surely very flattering, but total rubbish.’ (ibid.)

Indeed, Brodsky’s first poem collection in English consisted solely of translations from Russian made by George Kline. It was only later, when the second collection – ‘A Part of Speech’ – was in the process of creation, that Brodsky got seriously involved in shaping his verse in English. The foreword to the book contains Brodsky’s explanation as to that matter:

‘I have taken the liberty of reworking some of the translations to bring them closer to the original, though perhaps at the expense of their smoothness. I am doubly grateful to the translators for their indulgence.’

That is, a number of translators worked on the creation of ‘A Part of Speech,’ while the author supervised the process, editing the results in accordance with his own aesthetic views, which, as illustrated by the above quotation, had the concept of closeness to the original as a driving force (this will be closely examined in the following chapters).

Logically, the translators were not always satisfied with the author’s interference in their work, which could be perfectly illustrated by the following example: Daniel Weissbort, who had previously translated a number of poems by Brodsky and published those, was not even mentioned in the list of people working on the book, though these poems were included in the collection. Brodsky completely reworked Weissbort’s versions, and they were marked as ‘translated by the author.’ These fifteen poems can be considered the first product by Brodsky as self-translator.

The next poetry collection, ‘To Urania,’ demonstrates a higher degree of the author’s involvement: only 4 of the overall 46 poems were translated without Brodsky’s interference;

8 were translated in collaboration (author and a foreign translator), 23 were translated by the author and 12 were originally written in English. Finally, the last poetry collection – ‘So Forth’ – features the utmost extent of Brodsky’s involvement: only one poem was translated without his interference (by Alan Meyers), 7 were results of collaborative work and 32 were self-translations. The other 21 poems were originally written in English.

To conclude, Brodsky’s appearance in the English literary domain was initially that of a prosaist. As to poetry, his main field of occupation, in the beginning it was being translated in English without the interference on the part of the author, his degree of involvement into the process growing gradually. By the time when his last collection of poems in English got published, his involvement reached the utmost extent: the collection consisted mainly of verse originally written in English of self-translations.

The next chapter attempts to provide an insight into Brodsky’s general views on language – both Russian and English – which are presented as preceding the poet’s principles of poetic translation. Brodsky’s commentaries on his mother tongue are presented, along with those on his ‘relationship’ with the English language and speculations upon the suitability of both languages for prose or poetry in the context of his creative work. Some insights are also given into the importance of formal aspects of poetry in the light of Brodsky’s thought.

### 3. POET AND LANGUAGE: BRODSKY'S VIEWS ON LANGUAGE

Not being a professional linguist, Brodsky did not attempt to structurize any global linguistic paradigm; his interest mainly regarded the narrow and specific field of poetic language. Nevertheless, in his speculations upon this topic he reached a height which might turn out inaccessible for many an academic scholar. Apart from reflections on his native language, Brodsky would actively reflect upon the nature of English. Of course, the poet's linguistic views are mere subjective constructs and are not applicable for making any all-embracing judgements, yet they are by all means relevant in the context of the present research – the poet's poetic translations.

Speaking of the Russian language, Brodsky points out its 'remarkable flexibility' and 'capacity to reflect the most subtle movements of the human soul.'<sup>4</sup> Most remarkable are Brodsky's thoughts about Russian grammatical system. Purely grammatical issues, according to Brodsky, acquire a kind of cultural significance, influencing the nature of Russian literature:

'As to cobwebs, the Russian language - where the subject often takes a cosy position at the very end of the sentence, where the message often lies in subordinate clauses – was created on that purpose. It's nothing like English with its alternative "either/or", it's a language of the subordinate, the concessive, a language based on "although." Any idea expressed in this language easily turns into its opposite, and there's nothing more relevant for Russian syntax than communicating doubt and self-destruction. The polysyllabic lexis (...) brings to light the primary, spontaneous nature of things. The latter is better reflected in a single word than in any convincing argument, whereby writers who are about to expand some thought often stumble upon the sound and find themselves deeply immersed in the phonetics of this or that word. This leads the writer to most strange places.'<sup>5</sup>

Russian grammar, in Brodsky's view, has an even deeper cultural effect, influencing as much as whole Russian mentality:

'(...) the language itself, where verbs and nouns can swap places as freely as you please, cultivated such an ambivalence of feelings within us that by the end of a decade our will was hardly stronger than that of seaweed. (...) There is probably no better refuge for the spirit than the Russian language with its excessive inflection: the subject may calmly rest at the end of the sentence, and its ending may change depending on the case, gender and number (...).'<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Гордин, Я. (2001) *Сочинения Иосифа Бродского*. Пушкинский Фонд: Санкт-Петербург p. 22

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 117

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 103

As to the English language, Brodsky's tone is much less aggressive and peremptory, which is probably due to the fact that his relationship with English began at a much more mature stage than with his mother tongue, and this process was much more conscious, i.e. the poet was not victimized by the language as it appears to have been with Russian. Brodsky identifies the initial stage of his relationship with the English language:

'At first it was 'a language you can make a mistake in'; the only phrase I could produce, knowing I wouldn't err was "Mr. Auden, what do you think of ...," with a name in the end.'<sup>7</sup>

Brodsky's competence in the English language grew, leading to a kind of 'loving'<sup>8</sup> relationship between the poet and the language. While the Russian language, in Brodsky's view, was deeply rooted in his mentality, the English language was easily externalized and contemplated by Brodsky. The phonetic aesthetics of English was particularly admired by the poet:

It was breathtakingly exciting for me to hear Oxford accent. There was this phenomenal nobleness of sound! I remember my reaction that time – I almost fainted, physically stunned! Few things had had as strong an impression on me – say, when I saw our planet from above.'<sup>9</sup>

The comparison with Earth seen from above is quite picturesque in the light of the difference between Brodsky's relationship with English and Russian: it can hardly be imagined that a person would get as ecstatic, hearing the sounds of the language surrounding him all life long.

With time, Brodsky's linguistic competence allowed him to choose which language to utilize in his writing. The poet would also motivate his choice – for example, when he wrote his essay 'To Please the Shadow,' the choice of English was influenced by a purely emotional factor:

'My wish to write in English had nothing to do with self-assurance, complacency or convenience: I simply wanted to please the shadow. Of course, linguistic barriers were hardly applicable to Auden's that-time whereabouts, but somehow I thought that he would like it more if I addressed him in English.'<sup>10</sup>

In the essay 'A Room in a Half' the Brodsky refers to the English language by means of many exquisite metaphors: 'a language the parents don't know,' 'freedom reserve,' 'foreign code of conscience,' 'an escape hatch in the chimneys of the state crematorium,' 'a shelter for my dead folks,' 'the best way of afterlife,' and 'something good for health.'<sup>11</sup>

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7 *ibid.*, p. 270

8 Биркетс, С. (1997) Интервью с Бродским. Звезда: Санкт-Петербург р. 81

<sup>9</sup> Волков, С. (2000) Диалоги с Иосифом Бродским Независимая Газета: Москва р. 136

<sup>10</sup> Гордин, Я. (2001) *Сочинения Иосифа Бродского*. Пушкинский Фонд: Санкт-Петербург р. 257

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 322

However, the idea of manipulating the language remained foreign to Brodsky who saw language as a tyrant dictating his will to the poet:

‘It is the language itself that urges you to write a poem; there is no muse, only the will of language.’<sup>12</sup>

Thus, whereas Russian for Brodsky remained the sacred language of art, English for him became that of pragmatism:

You can’t speak illogical things in English. What is it that distinguishes English from other languages? You can write a phrase, say, in Russian or Italian, and you will by all means like it, i.e. in the foreground for you there will be its elegance, its intricacy. (...) In English, in turn, it is clear from the start whether a phrase is meaningful or not. A person speaking or writing in English is motivated primarily by common sense. The difference between English and other languages is that between chess and tennis’<sup>13</sup>

The logic and analytical structure of English became most important for Brodsky. This makes it clear why switching to English resulted in the poet’s turning to prose: out of about 60 prosaic texts he wrote only 16 were originally written in Russian, while out of his more than 500 poems only about 45 were originally English.

In fact, Brodsky considered prose greatly inferior to poetry, a less perfect manifestation of language. About this he wrote in his essay ‘A Poet and Prose’:

‘The idea of equality is foreign to the nature of art, and the thought of any writer is hierarchical. In this hierarchy, poetry is placed higher than prose, and a poet – higher than a prosaist. This is so not only because poetry is much older than prose, but owing to the fact that a poet in need can sit down and write, say a newspaper article, while a prosaist will hardly be capable of writing a poem.’<sup>14</sup>

Similar thoughts with similar comparisons were expressed in an interview with Solomon Volkov:

‘Poets are generally more important than prosaists. Bot as individuals and writers. Generally speaking, the difference between prose and poetry is that between infantry and air force. (...)’<sup>15</sup>

That is, Brodsky deems poetry and poetic talent more universal than prose and argues that poetry requires a higher level of devotion on the part of its creator. According to Brodsky, ‘only a poetic experience can liberate a prosaist from the inclination towards verbosity and teach him the dependence of the unit weight of a word on the context and focus of thought, as well as omission of the self-evident’<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 92

<sup>13</sup> Волков, С. (2000) Диалоги с Иосифом Бродским Независимая Газета: Москва p. 136

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 129

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 172

<sup>16</sup> Гордин, Я. (2001) *Сочинения Иосифа Бродского*. Пушкинский Фонд: Санкт-Петербург p. 129

Brodsky deems the more consistent development of thought characteristic of prose to be illusionary, at the same time considering prose to be essential for any poet. However, according to Brodsky, there are quite few things that a poet can learn from prose: ‘attention towards details, the use of common lexis and bureaucratic clichés and on rare occasions – some composition patterns.’<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, however ironic the poet’s remarks about prose might be, Brodsky leaves it one essential role:

‘There are things that can be realized only within the domain of prose. When there are more than three characters, any poetic form will be inappropriate, but for epic poetry. Moreover, speculations on historical topics and childhood memories are also best realized in prose.’<sup>18</sup>

This also illustrates Brodsky’s intolerance towards poetry of confession (e.g. works of Sylvia Plath): in one of the interviews he said, ‘in our country it is considered inappropriate to write about yourself. Poetry is confessional by itself.’<sup>19</sup> Perhaps, it was the wish to talk to the English reader about his personality that urged Brodsky to turn to prose.

Another positive quality of prose noted by Brodsky is its capacity of reproducing ‘sentiments of a more subtle nature’ in a more reader-friendly way: ‘prose can take the reader by the hand and get him where he would have to be pushed into by poetry.’<sup>20</sup>

For the poet himself prose was ‘hateful for its lack of any formal discipline, apart from the bleak semblance of such that appears as one goes.’<sup>21</sup> He was convinced that it is the absence of formal restrictions that puts prose in a position inferior to that of poetry:

All writers strive to the same thing: to catch up with or hold on to the lost and constantly flowing Time. To do this, a poet has caesura, dactylic clauses and unstressed feet, while a prosaist is totally deprived of these means.<sup>22</sup>

Brodsky considered the formal aspect of poetry – e.g., meter, rhyme and stanzaic design – to be a kind of natural phenomenon:

‘Even the most artificially-looking forms of poetic language – such as *terza rima* or *sestina* – are but natural mutations of the echo following the initial word.’<sup>23</sup>

These formal aspects – for example, rhyme – acquire additional functions in Brodsky’s view:

By virtue of rhyme language puts together incompatible things. (...) Rhyme turns an idea into a law, allowing to feel the proximity of seemingly distant things for the

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 130

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Лосев, Л.; Вайль, П (1998) *Иосиф Бродский: труды и дни*. Независимая Газета: Москва p. 52

<sup>20</sup> Гордин, Я. (2001) *Сочинения Иосифа Бродского*. Пушкинский Фонд: Санкт-Петербург p. 139

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 299

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p. 131

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 135

proximity of objects, ideas and notions is by itself a rhyme: sometimes it is rich, sometimes a half rhyme or an eye rhyme. When you are keen at rhymes, it is easier to put up with reality.<sup>24</sup>

Such notions as rhythm, sound and prosody also acquire a vital importance, having to do with the category of time:

‘What we call the music of poetry is in fact a process of turning Time in a construction you can hold on to. In other words, sound in poetry is the incarnation of Time, the background against which the content acquires stereoscopic nature. (...) Prosody is the repository of Time in the language. (...) Well isn’t a poem - with all its caesurae, pauses and spondees - a game played by language in order to reorganize time?’<sup>25</sup>

To conclude, the above illustrated views that were held on to by the poet can be grouped in the following way:

- manners of distinguishing between Russian and English in terms of their effect on Brodsky’s personality and being more suitable for either prose or poetry in the context of the poet’s art
- manners of distinguishing between poetry and prose
- views on the formal aspects of poetic language

It is possible to suppose that the views regarding language as such lay in the basis of Brodsky’s principles of poetic translation, which are an important topic in the context of the present research. An attempt to identify those principles is presented in the next chapter.

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 247

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p 261

#### 4. BRODSKY'S PRINCIPLES OF POETIC TRANSLATION

As it has already been mentioned earlier, Brodsky started making poetic translations as soon as he began learning the English language. Translation for him was a way of acquiring linguistic competence. Thus, Brodsky, while still a young man, received high acclaim as a professional translator. For example, at the trial prior to his eventual expulsion from the Soviet Union he was defended by Natalia Grudinina, a poetess and professional translator. The following is an excerpt from her defence speech:

‘As a professional translator and philologist I state that Brodsky’s translations meet the standards of a high professional level. Brodsky is gifted with a specific, rare talent of literary poetic translation. In my opinion, he is a very talented poet and, as a translator, is far more competent than many people who are considered professionals in the field.’<sup>26</sup>

A similar view was expressed by another defender of Brodsky, notable Russian philologist Efim Etkind:

About a year ago I happened to get to know Brodsky’s writings. I got deeply impressed by the clarity of his poetic tropes and overall musicality and passion of his verse. I understood that I was dealing with an exceptionally gifted person who also possessed great ability to work and diligence. His translations, which I happened to read a bit later, strengthened my opinion. I have talked to Brodsky a lot and have been quite surprised with his knowledge of American, English and Polish literature. All that I know about Brodsky’s work makes me convinced that in the future he will become a great poet and translator. I also know that my opinion is shared by such experts in poetic translation as Samuil Marshak and Korney Chukovsky.’<sup>27</sup>

Finally, practically the same was said by Vladimir Admoni, a notable Russian philologist, translator and linguist:

In the last year I have been following Brodsky’s progress in translation. The reason for my doing so is the talent and vividness manifested in his works. They are evident of his high proficiency as a translator.’<sup>28</sup>

Taking into account the situation in which these confessions were made, it becomes clear that Brodsky’s skill in translation was truly recognized by notable experts in the field.

The principles underlying Brodsky’s concept of poetic translation began to shape at the very beginning of his involvement in translation as such. Working as a university professor in the US, he would recall:

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<sup>26</sup>Гордин, Я. (1989) *Дело Бродского*. Нева: Санкт-Петербург; p. 154

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 155

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p.158

‘When I just started making translations, I had a thick dictionary on my desk. When I thumbed through it, searching for this or that unfamiliar word, I got excited every time I saw the word isolated, with all its possible meanings listed below. I understood that to translate a word, you must actually use only one word of the target language, yet in your mind you must bear all its possible meanings, its etymological roots, phonetic and mythological resonance. Thus I began, along with learning a foreign language, to discover things about my own.’<sup>29</sup>

Clearly, it was evident for Brodsky that poetic translation does not lie completely within the domain of linguistics, bearing a great cultural significance:

‘Our civilization is a sum total of different cultures that are brought to life by their universal spiritual reader, and the main communicator of civilization is translation. Translation is placing a Greek portico into the realia of tundra.’<sup>30</sup>

Thus, translation for Brodsky started with a thorough study of the cultures standing behind the languages involved. Comparing the cultural realia behind English and Russian, he says the following:

‘Anglophone poetic tradition, to put it simply, is a detached poetic tone. I remember that back in childhood I was shocked by a line in a poem (...), by an American poetess. She stands on a bridge crossing a small river and sees small fish down in the water, briefly commenting, ‘like silver spoons.’ This image world never came to the mind of a Russian poet since fish and spoons are very far placed notions for the Russian mind. Even if a Russian poet tried to put these together, he would emphasize this very much.’<sup>31</sup>

As to the same differences but in the light of the formal aspects of poetry, the following observation may be illustrative:

‘Here’s another difference between English and Russian poetry: an English poem will have mostly masculine endings. Therefore, Dante may be translated to Russian but not into English. English simply does not have those sounds. Even a wimpiest English poet – owing to those masculine endings – to a Russian ear will sound reserved, stern and dignified.’<sup>32</sup>

As to the differences between the religious backgrounds of English and Russian poetic traditions, Brodsky proposes the following observation:

‘Protestant poetry has no inclination towards churching the imagery, no ritual, whereas in Russian it is vice-versa.’<sup>33</sup>

Finally, Brodsky generalizes the above mentioned differences in the following way:

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<sup>29</sup>Лосев, Л.; Вайль, П. (1998) *Иосиф Бродский: Труды и Дни*. Независимая Газета: Москва р. 48

<sup>30</sup>Гордин, Я. (2001) *Собрание Сочинений*. Пушкинский Фонд: Санкт-Петербург. 258

<sup>31</sup>Волков, С. (2000) *Диалоги с Иосифом Бродским*. Независимая Газета: Санкт-Петербург. 96

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 101

What in English is called ‘incompleteness,’ may be reproduced in Russian. But the Russian reader will not be able to adequately evaluate this incompleteness for one simple reason: the Russian reader was not brought up in the culture of incompleteness and ironic restraint.<sup>34</sup>

As to American poetry, Brodsky names practically the same characteristic features: ‘Outstanding restraint and no lyricism. No emotion. Everything is named with adequate names.’<sup>35</sup>

It could be inferred from the above said that, according to Brodsky, Anglophone poetic tradition implies incompleteness and restraint, whereas Russian poetry is emotional and colourful. To sum up Brodsky’s views upon the relationship between the two traditions I will again use his own words: ‘substantial incompatibility’ and ‘absolute polarity.’<sup>36</sup>

This situation, in Brodsky’s view, has resulted in the faultiness of many existing translations of English verse into Russian and vice-versa:

‘It is very hard to translate English poets. And when something gets translated, it is often hard to understand what kind of thing emerges before the reader. In Russia we all know who Shakespeare was, but we fail to perceive him adequately, putting him somewhere near Pushkin. Let us consider Russian translations of Shakespeare made by Pasternak: they are great of course, but have very little to do with Shakespeare. It is evident that the tonality of the English language is foreign to Russian poetry.’<sup>37</sup>

The only ‘lucky person’ to survive in Russian translation, according to Brodsky, was Robert Frost. All the others have suffered.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, Brodsky thought that English poetry translated to Russian was in a better condition than Russian verse in English:

‘It is easier to translate from English to Russian, here you can do everything. Even that straightforwardness of English – you can place it into a more or less edible trope and retain everything. This is so due to the fact that Russian is much more flexible in terms of grammar. (...) The power of Russian lies in its subordinate clauses, in all the participial constructions and other twists and turns of grammar. All this simply does not exist in English, and when you do English translation it is immensely hard to retain this. (...). And there are not many people capable of such work. (...) Even a talented poet who understands the task intuitively cannot reproduce a Russian poem in English: there are simply no such possibilities. (...) This is why a translation from Russian to English is always straightens the text. With English-Russian translation the problem is different: mere absence of cultural background on the part of the reader.’<sup>39</sup>

In this regard it would be important to point out the utmost degree of Brodsky’s concern about retaining the formal aspects of Russian verse in English translation:

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 94

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p. 102

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p.139

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p. 95

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

Today's trend in poetic translation consists in rendering a poem's content by virtue of neglecting its structural aspects. This gets justified by the fact that the main form of English poetry in XX century is *vers libre*. (...) Modern scholars consider it normal in the context of XX century. Against this I protest.<sup>40</sup>

Brodsky gives out passionate negative comments as to the strategy preferred by modern translators working with English as target language:

'For them, the main law of modern poetry is total freedom. To such freedom – or rather – slackness and lack of discipline – I prefer banality. To me, even a cliché – but may it be a classical cliché – is better than slackness.'<sup>41</sup>

'It would be inappropriate to expect the translator to imitate the author: the voice with which you are working must remain inimitable. Yet the timbre, tonality and tempo of a poem can be reproduced. It should be remembered that verse meter is of spiritual value, having no equivalents. Meters can't be substituted by one another, not even to mention *vers libre*. The disparity of meters amounts to fibrillation of the heart muscle. The disparity of rhyming schemes, in turn, amounts to lack of harmony between processes in the brain. Impudent handling of these things is sacrilege at best, if not mutilation or even murder. Anyway, it is a sort of mindcrime for which the criminal – especially if he gets away with it – pays with mental degradation; as to the readers, they are buying fake.'<sup>42</sup>

Such anxiety about retaining the formal aspects of Russian verse in translation was typical of Brodsky. For example, Peter France argues:

'Where others often sacrifice rhyme and meter, for him these were the essence of a poem. As he put it in a letter to me, form is what distinguishes poetry from prose, and it is the first to be preserved.'<sup>43</sup>

As noted by Weissbort (1989:3), Brodsky demanded retention of form at the expense of normal English language. The above mentioned makes it possible to conclude that rendering of form for Brodsky was the most important aspect of translation, and his translations are by no means new texts but translations in the strictest sense of the word. More importantly, it has been shown that retaining the formal aspects of original Russian verse in English translation was of vital importance for Brodsky, which forms the hypothesis to be experimentally proven in the course of the present research. The next chapter provides preliminary support to the hypothesis, featuring a brief formal analysis of Brodsky's poem 'A Second Christmas by the Shore,' translated from Russian by the author in collaboration with George Kline and included in the 1980 edition of 'A Part of Speech.'

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p. 57

<sup>41</sup> Биркетс, С. (1997) *Интервью с Бродским*. Звезда: Санкт-Петербург p. 82

<sup>42</sup> Гордин, Я. (2001) *Собрание Сочинений*. Пушкинский Фонд: Санкт-Петербург p. 261

<sup>43</sup> France, P (1996) *Translating Brodsky*. Modern Poetry in Translation: Oxford p. 20

## 5. 'A SECOND CHRISTMAS BY THE SHORE': A BRIEF FORMAL ANALYSIS

The present chapter contains a brief formal analysis of the Russian-English translation of Joseph Brodsky's poem 'A Second Christmas by the Shore,' concerning the following formal aspects:

- Verse meter
- Rhyme pattern
- Number of lines
- Enjambments

### Stanza I

#### Original

Второе Рождество на берегу  
незамерзающего Понта.  
Звезда Царей над изгородью порта.  
И не могу сказать, что не могу  
жить без тебя - поскольку я живу.  
Как видно из бумаги. Существую;  
глотаю пиво, пачкаю листву и  
топчу траву.

A 5-foot-iambus  
B 4-foot-iambus  
B 5-foot-iambus  
A 5-foot-iambus  
C 5-foot-iambus  
D 5-foot-iambus  
D 5-foot-iambus  
C 2-foot-iambus

Number of lines: 8  
Rhyme pattern: a/bb/a/c/dd/c  
Enjambments (in bold): 2

#### Translated

A second Christmas by the shore  
of Pontus, which remains unfrozen.  
The Star of Kings above the sharp horizon  
of harbor walls. And I can't say for sure  
that I can't live without you. As  
this paper proves, I do exist: I'm living  
enough to gulp my beer, to soil the leaves, and  
trample the grass.

A 4-foot-iambus  
B 4-foot-iambus  
B 5-foot-iambus  
A 5-foot-iambus  
C 4-foot-iambus  
D 5-foot-iambus  
D 5-foot-iambus  
C 2-foot-trochaic

Number of lines: 8  
Rhyme pattern: a/bb/a/c/dd/c  
Enjambments (in bold): 4

## Stanza II

### Original

Теперь в кофейне, из которой мы,  
как и пристало временно счастливым,  
беззвучным были выброшены взрывом  
в грядущее, под натиском зимы  
бежав на Юг, я пальцами черчу  
твое лицо на мраморе для бедных;  
поодаль нимфы прыгают, на бедрах  
задравпарчу.

A 5-foot-iambus  
B 5-foot-iambus  
B 5-foot-iambus  
A 5-foot-iambus  
C 5-foot-iambus  
D 5-foot-iambus  
D 5-foot-iambus  
C 2-foot-iambus

Number of lines: 8  
Rhyme pattern: a/bb/a/c/dd/c  
Enjambments (in bold): 3

### Translated

Retreating south before winter's assault,  
I sit in that café from which we two were  
exploded soundlessly into the future  
according to the unrelenting law  
that happiness can't last. My finger tries  
your face on poor man's marble. In the distance,  
brocaded nymphs leap through their jerky dances,  
flaunting their thighs.

A 5-foot-iambus  
B 5-foot-iambus  
B 5-foot-iambus  
A 5-foot-iambus  
C 5-foot-iambus  
D 5-foot-iambus  
D 5-foot-iambus  
C 2-foot-iambus

Number of lines: 8  
Rhyme pattern: a/bb/a/c/dd/c  
Enjambments (in bold): 2

## Stanza III

### Original

Что, боги, - если бурое пятно  
в окне символизирует вас, боги, -  
стремились вы нам высказать в итоге?  
Грядущее настало, и оно  
переносимо; падает предмет,  
скрипач выходит, музыка не длится,  
и море все морщинистой, и лица.  
А ветра нет.

A 5-foot-iambus  
B 5-foot-iambus  
B 5-foot-iambus  
A 5-foot-iambus  
C 5-foot-iambus  
D 5-foot-iambus  
D 5-foot-iambus  
C 2-foot-iambus

Number of lines: 8  
Rhyme pattern: a/bb/a/c/dd/c  
Enjambments (in bold): 2

## Translated

Just what, you gods – if this dilating blot,  
glimpsed through a murky window, symbolizes  
your selves now – were you trying to advise us?  
The future has arrived and it is not  
unbearable. Things fall, the fiddler goes,  
the music ebbs, and deepening creases  
spread over the sea's surface and men's faces.  
But no wind blows.

- A 5-foot-iambus
- B 5-foot-iambus
- B 5-foot-iambus
- A 5-foot-iambus
- C 5-foot-iambus
- D 4-foot-iambus
- D 5-foot-iambus
- C 2-foot-iambus

Number of lines: 8  
Rhyme pattern: a/bb/a/c/dd/c  
Enjambments (in bold): 2

## Stanza IV

### Original

Когда-нибудь оно, а не - увы -  
мы, захлестнет решетку променада  
и двинется под возгласы "не надо",  
вздымая гребни выше головы,  
туда, где ты пила свое вино,  
спала в саду, просушивала блузку,  
- круша столы, грядущему моллюску  
готовя дно.

- A 5-foot-iambic
- B 5-foot-iambic
- B 5-foot-iambic
- A 5-foot-iambic
- C 5-foot-iambic
- D 5-foot-iambic
- D 5-foot-iambic
- C 2-foot-iambic

Number of lines: 8  
Rhyme pattern: a/bb/a/c/dd/c  
Enjambments (in bold): 1

### Translated

Someday the slowly rising breakers but,  
alas, not we, will sweep across this railing,  
crest overhead, crush helpless screams, and roll in  
to find the spot where you drank wine, took cat-  
naps, spreading to the sun your wet  
thin blouse – to batter benches, splinter boardwalks,  
and build for future molluscs  
a silted bed.

- A 5-foot-iambus
- B 5-foot-iambus
- B 5-foot-iambus
- A 5-foot-iambus
- C 4-foot-iambus
- D 5-foot-iambus
- D 3-foot-iambus
- C 2-foot-iambus

Number of lines: 8  
Rhyme pattern: a/bb/a/c/dd/c  
Enjambments (in bold): 1

The rhyme pattern of the original, persistent in all the four stanzas – a/bb/a/c/dd/c – as well as the number of lines in each stanza is fully reproduced in the translation, no deviations can be observed. The metrical structure, in turn, underwent certain modifications:

- Stanza I: in the first and fifth lines the original iambic pentameter was changed to iambic tetrameter
- Stanza III: in the sixth line the original iambic pentameter was changed to iambic tetrameter
- Stanza IV: in the fifth line the original iambic pentameter was changed to iambic tetrameter and in the seventh line – to iambic trimeter

However, five ‘deviant’ lines out of the overall 32 cannot be viewed as any significant change of the original metric structure, being rather a kind of ‘inevitable sacrifice’ to the drastic structural difference between the source language and the target one. Finally, the number of evident enjambments is even higher in the translated version, amounting to 9 as opposed to 8 in the original.

Thus, having analyzed several formal aspects of the translated poem in terms of their equality to the original counterparts, we can pass over to a larger-scale and more detailed analysis of Brodsky’s translations, presented in the next chapter.

## 6. 15 POEMS FROM ‘A PART OF SPEECH’: A METRICAL ANALYSIS

A cycle of 15 poems included in the collection ‘A Part of Speech’ may be considered the first major work of Joseph Brodsky in the field of self-translation. However, the original Russian poems of the cycle were first translated by Daniel Weissbort, and published in the ‘Poetry’ journal in 1978. The original variant of the cycle featured twenty poems, all of which were translated by Weissbort. Brodsky turned down Weissbort's versions and, partially basing on those, created his own translation of the cycle which, however, features only fifteen of the original twenty poems. Thus, in 1980, the cycle was published bearing solely the name of the author.

As noted by Polukhina (1998:49), the reason for Brodsky's turning down Weissbort's translations and publishing his own versions was the fact that he was unsatisfied with their quality, having found them ‘metrically weak.’ As it was mentioned before, the most important aspect of poetry for Brodsky was its phonetic image created by rhyme, and, what is more relevant in the context of the present research, its metrical structure. Brodsky saw the main task of artistic translation in preserving these features, being convinced that the ‘timbre, tonality and tempo of a poem,’ manifested in its meter can and must be reproduced. The poet bravely undertook this most complicated task, and the comparative analysis of the metrical structure of both original and translated poems shall allow us to make judgments as to these audacious attempts.

The metrical analysis undertaken in the present research is based on the methodology – or, rather, some of its elements – elaborated by J. Smith, who has successfully applied it in his analyses of Brodsky's poetry (2002:445). The collection has been analyzed regarding the following aspects:

- Syllabic composition of lexis
- Overall syllable quantity
- The ratio of stressed syllables and overall syllable number
- The number of syllables in a line and its variations
- The size of unstressed intervals between the stressed syllables

The poems – originals and their translated counterparts – are named according to their opening lines, organized in pairs and indexed with Roman numerals in the order appearing in the 1980 edition of the collection, which may be observed in the following list<sup>44</sup>:

- I. 'I was born and grew up in the baltic Marshland' (Я родился и вырос в балтийских болотах, подле)
- II. 'The North buckles metal' (Север крошит металл, но щадит стекло)
- III. 'From nowhere with love' (Ниоткуда с любовью, надцатого мартабря)
- IV. 'A list of some observations' (Это – ряд наблюдений. В углу – тепло)
- V. 'I recognize this wind battering the limp grass' (Узнаю этот ветер, налетающий на траву)
- VI. 'A navy-blue dawn in a frosted pane' (Темно-синее утро в заиндевевшей раме)
- VII. 'You've forgotten that village lost in the rows and rows' (Ты забыла деревню, затерянную в болотах)
- VIII. 'In the little town out of which death sprawled over the classroom map' (В городке, из которого смерть расползлась по школьной карте)
- IX. 'As far for the stars, they are always on' (Что касается звёзд, то они всегда)
- X. 'Near the ocean, by candlelight' (Около океана, при свете свечи; вокруг)
- XI. 'The Laocoon of a tree, casting the mountain weight' (Деревянный лаокоон, сбросив время на гору с...)
- XII. 'If anything's to be praised, it's most likely now' (Если что-нибудь петь, то перемену ветра)
- XIII. 'There is always a possibility left' (Всегда остаётся возможность выйти из дому на...)
- XIV. 'And when "the future" is uttered, swarms of mice' (И при слове «грядущее» из русского языка...)
- XV. 'Not that I am losing my grip' (Я не то что схожу с ума, но устал за лето)

As it will be shown in the course of the present research, Brodsky strived to reproduce the metrical structure of his original Russian verse in its English translation, despite the fact that the lexis of the English language has a syllabic composition drastically different from that of the Russian language. While in Russian polysyllabic words prevail, English lexis is mainly monosyllabic. To illustrate this difference in the context of the subject of the present research, an analysis of been carried out, demonstrating the syllabic composition of the lexis of the

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<sup>44</sup> Actual poems may be observed in the 'Appendix' section

original poems as compared to their translated counterparts. The results may be observed in the tables below:

*Table 6.1* the distribution of words by number of syllables in the original poems

Poem № in the cycle	Number of words									Total
	Non-syllabic	1-syllabic	2-syllabic	3-syllabic	4-syllabic	5-syllabic	6-syllabic	7-syllabic	8-syllabic	
I	3	23	36	15	6	0	0	0	0	83
II	3	26	27	9	3	1	0	0	0	69
III	4	35	30	22	9	2	1	0	0	102
IV	3	15	24	10	5	0	0	0	0	57
V	6	19	28	9	4	5	0	0	0	71
VI	6	15	23	13	13	3	0	0	0	73
VII	5	32	29	17	4	1	0	0	0	88
VIII	2	21	28	16	10	0	0	0	0	77
IX	4	23	29	12	2	1	0	0	0	71
X	4	13	27	10	11	6	0	0	0	71
XI	5	17	25	12	13	4	1	0	0	77
XII	7	18	25	16	8	2	1	0	1	78
XIII	4	23	20	14	10	2	0	0	0	73
XIV	3	28	23	7	11	0	0	0	0	72
XV	4	29	25	20	7	0	0	0	0	85
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1147</b>
<b>Share</b>	<b>5.5%</b>	<b>29.4%</b>	<b>34.8%</b>	<b>17.6%</b>	<b>10.1%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Table 6.2* the distribution of words by number of syllables in the original poems

Poem № in the cycle	Number of words									Total
	Non-syllabic	1-syllabic	2-syllabic	3-syllabic	4-syllabic	5-syllabic	6-syllabic	7-syllabic	8-syllabic	
I	0	85	27	1	0	0	0	0	0	113
II	0	76	20	0	0	1	0	0	0	96
III	0	94	27	5	1	2	1	0	0	128
IV	0	66	24	2	2	0	0	0	0	94
V	0	74	16	4	0	5	0	0	0	94
VI	0	63	29	4	1	3	0	0	0	97
VII	0	96	20	5	1	1	0	0	0	122
VIII	0	71	23	7	0	0	0	0	0	101
IX	0	72	18	3	0	1	0	0	0	93
X	0	71	27	4	0	6	0	0	0	102
XI	0	67	24	5	3	4	0	0	0	100
XII	0	84	23	5	0	2	0	0	0	112
XIII	0	75	25	1	0	2	0	0	0	102
XIV	0	77	19	4	0	0	0	0	0	100
XV	0	94	21	2	1	0	0	0	0	118
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1165</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1597</b>
<b>Share</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>72.9%</b>	<b>21.5%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>100%</b>

As the tables show, disyllabic words prevail in the Russian versions, making up 34.8% of the total word number. They are followed by monosyllabic (29.4%), trisyllabic (17.6%) and four-syllabic words (10.1%); words having more than four syllables, together with

functional words without syllabic value (such as prepositions) are not in abundance, they make up a total of 8.1% of the overall word number.

In turn, the translated versions feature the absolute prevalence of monosyllabic words (72.9%), while disyllabic ones make up a considerably smaller proportion – 21.5%; words consisting of three to six syllables make up as little as 5.5% of the overall word number and those consisting of more than 6 syllables are not there at all, as well as words without syllabic value. A more vivid example is presented in the tables below, showing the number of 0- to 4-syllabic words per line in both the original and translated versions of poem I:

**Table 6.3 number of 0- to 4-syllabic words per line in the original poem**

Line	Number of words				
	Non-syllabic	1-syllabic	2-syllabic	3-syllabic	4-syllabic
<i>Я родился и вырос в балтийских болотах, подле</i>	1	2	2	3	0
<i>серых цинковых волн, всегда набегавших по две,</i>	0	3	2	1	1
<i>и отсюда - все рифмы, отсюда тот блеклый голос,</i>	0	3	3	2	0
<i>вьющийся между ними, как мокрый волос;</i>	0	1	4	1	0
<i>если вьется вообще. Облокотясь на локоть,</i>	0	1	4	0	1
<i>раковина ушная в них различит не рокот,</i>	1	2	1	2	1
<i>но хлопки полотна, ставень, ладоней, чайник,</i>	0	1	3	2	0
<i>кипящий на керосинке, максимум - крики чаек.</i>	0	1	2	2	1
<i>В этих плоских краях то и хранит от фальши</i>	1	3	5	0	0
<i>сердце, что скрыться негде и видно дальше.</i>	0	2	5	0	0
<i>Это только для звука пространство всегда помета:</i>	0	1	4	2	0
<i>глаз не посетует на недостаток эха.</i>	0	3	1	0	2
<b>Total:</b>	3	23	36	15	6

**Table 6.4 number of 0- to 4-syllabic words per line in the translated version**

Line	Number of words				
	Non-syllabic	1-syllabic	2-syllabic	3-syllabic	4-syllabic
<i>I was born and grew up in the Baltic marshland</i>	0	8	2	0	0
<i>by zinc-gray breakers that always marched on</i>	0	4	3	0	0
<i>in twos. Hence all rhymes, hence that wan flat voice</i>	0	10	0	0	0
<i>that ripples between them like hair still moist,</i>	0	6	2	0	0
<i>if it ripples at all. Propped on a pallid</i>	0	7	3	0	0

<i>elbow,</i>					
<i>the helix picks out of them no sea rumble</i>	0	7	1	0	0
<i>but a clap of canvas, of shutters, of hands, a kettle</i>	0	9	2	0	0
<i>on the burner, boiling - lastly, the seagull's metal</i>	0	3	5	0	0
<i>cry. What keeps hearts from falseness in this flat region</i>	0	8	2	0	0
<i>is that there is nowhere to hide and plenty of room for vision.</i>	0	10	3	0	0
<i>Only sound needs echo and dreads its lack.</i>	0	6	1	0	0

Thus it becomes possible to conclude that that the lexis of the original Russian poems is mainly polysyllabic, while that of their English translated counterparts is mainly monosyllabic, in accordance with the realia of the respective languages. Nevertheless, as it will be shown further, Brodsky succeeds to carry over – to a considerable extent – the metrical structure of the original Russian poems to their English translations.

To begin analyzing the metrical structure of the inspected cycle of poems it was decided to quantitatively identify the syllabic type of the metrical structure utilized in the original poems and compare it to that of their translated counterparts. This was done by calculating the ratio of stressed syllables and overall syllable number; the results may be observed in the following tables:

*Table 6.5 stressed-overall syllable ratio in the original poems*

Poem number in the cycle	Number of stressed syllables	Overall syllable quantity	Stressed-overall syllable ratio
I	57	164	1/2.9
II	44	126	1/2.9
III	68	210	1/3.1
IV	44	112	1/2.5
V	48	143	1/3
VI	55	167	1/3
VII	53	162	1/3.1
VIII	57	168	1/2.9
IX	49	131	1/2.7
X	52	151	1/2.9
XI	57	181	1/3.2
XII	53	172	1/3.2
XIII	51	155	1/3
XIV	49	139	1/2.8
XV	55	169	1/3.1
<b>Total</b>	792	2350	<b>Average: 1/3</b>

Table 6.6 stressed-overall syllable ratio in the translated versions

Poem number in the cycle	Number of stressed syllables	Overall syllable quantity	Stressed-overall syllable ratio
I	59	141	1/2.4
II	49	115	1/2.3
III	73	173	1/2.4
IV	51	128	1/2.5
V	54	130	1/2.4
VI	58	136	1/2.6
VII	60	156	1/2.6
VIII	60	138	1/2.3
IX	49	118	1/2.4
X	56	137	1/2.4
XI	64	145	1/2.3
XII	59	145	1/2.3
XIII	54	133	1/2.5
XIV	53	127	1/2.4
XV	58	146	1/2.5
<b>Total</b>	857	2068	<b>Average: 1/2.4</b>

A more vivid example is presented in the tables below, showing the ratio of stressed syllables and overall syllable number in both the original and translated versions of poem I:

Table 6.7 the ratio of stressed syllables and overall syllable number in the original poem

Line	Stressed syllable number	Overall syllable number	Ratio
<i>Я родился и вырос в балтийских болотах, подле</i>	5	15	1/3
<i>серых цинковых волн, всегда набегавших по две,</i>	5	14	1/2.8
<i>и отсюда - все рифмы, отсюда тот блеклый голос,</i>	5	15	1/3
<i>вьющийся между ними, как мокрый волос;</i>	4	12	1/3
<i>если вьется вообще. Облокотясь на локоть,</i>	4	13	1/3.3
<i>раковина ушная в них различит не рокот,</i>	5	14	1/2.8
<i>но хлопки полотна, ставень, ладоней, чайник,</i>	5	13	1/2.6
<i>кипящий на керосинке, максимум - крики чаек.</i>	5	15	1/3
<i>В этих плоских краях то и хранит от фальши</i>	4	13	1/3.3
<i>сердце, что скрыться негде и видно дальше.</i>	5	12	1/2.4
<i>Это только для звука пространство всегда</i>	5	15	1/3
<i>помеха:</i>			
<i>глаз не посетует на недостаток эха.</i>	5	13	1/2.6
<b>Total:</b>	57	164	1/2.9

Table 6.8 the ratio of stressed syllables and overall syllable number in the translated version

Line	Stressed syllable number	Overall syllable number	Ratio
<i>I was born and grew up in the Baltic marshland</i>	4	12	1/3
<i>by zinc-gray breakers that always marched on</i>	4	10	1/2.5
<i>in twos. Hence all rhymes, hence that wanflatvoice</i>	5	10	1/2
<i>that ripples between them like hairstillmoist,</i>	5	10	1/2
<i>if it ripples at all. Propped on a pallid elbow,</i>	5	13	1/2.6
<i>the helix picks out of them nosearumble</i>	5	11	1/2.2
<i>but a clap of canvas, of shutters, of hands, a kettle</i>	5	14	1/2.8
<i>on the burner, boiling - lastly, the seagull's metal</i>	5	13	1/2.6
<i>cry. What keeps hearts from falseness in</i>	6	12	1/2
<i>thisflatregion</i>			

<i>is that <b>there</b> is <b>nowhere</b> to <b>hide</b> and <b>plenty</b> of <b>room</b> for <b>vision</b>.</i>	6	16	1/2.7
<i>Only <b>sound</b> needs <b>echo</b> and <b>dreads</b> its <b>lack</b>.</i>	4	10	1/2.5
<i>A <b>glance</b> is <b>accustomed</b> to <b>noglanceback</b>.</i>	5	10	1/2
<b>Total:</b>	59	141	1/2.4

As the tables illustrate, the average stressed-overall syllable ratio for the original Russian poems equals 1/3, which is a characteristic feature of trisyllabic meter, the only exception being poem IV, where a slight shift towards disyllabic meter may be observed (ratio 1/2.5). In turn, the majority of translated versions demonstrate a higher respective ratio – the average being 1/2.4 – than it would be typical of trisyllabic meter; however, the ratio is notably lower than a typical disyllabic meter would demonstrate. According to Gasparov (1989:161), trisyllabic meters are extremely uncommon for English verse mainly due to the monosyllabic nature of English lexis; therefore, it becomes possible to conclude that the above described shift towards trisyllabic meter is by itself a notable violation of the prosodic norms of the English language. This might serve as a preliminary substantiation of the hypothesis stating that Brodsky's degree of concern with retaining the original metrical structure of his verse in translation was most high.

However, the inclination of the translated poems towards a trisyllabism, which, in accordance with the author's intention, brings the meter of the translations closer to that of the originals, might have a side-effect on the English-speaking reader's perception of the translations: according to Gasparov (ibid.), in Russian trisyllabic meter is perceived as conveying a drawling and sluggish impression, while in English it is perceived as fast and even 'dancing,' which might distort the reader's perception.

The question arises: by what means is the original trisyllabic meter conveyed, given that the lexis of the original poems is mainly polysyllabic and that of the translated versions – monosyllabic? For example, the addition of a single syllable, necessary for building a trisyllabic pattern would almost inevitably result in an 'unnecessary' lexical unit, which, on a larger scale, would make it extremely difficult to retain the semantics of a poem. One of the possible answers might lie in the analytical structure of the English language where many lexical units of syllabic value have only grammatical meaning. I decided to count the percentage share made up by function words out of the overall word number both in the original poems and translations. The results may be seen in the following table:

**Table 6.9** the percentage share of function words in the translated versions as compared to the original counterparts

Poem number in the cycle	Originals		Translations	
	Number of function words	Total word number	Number of function words	Total word number
I	23	83	39	113
II	22	69	34	96
III	33	102	46	128
IV	14	57	34	94
V	21	71	30	94
VI	18	73	28	97
VII	29	88	47	122
VIII	20	77	35	101
IX	27	71	36	93
X	19	71	46	102
XI	16	77	32	100
XII	20	78	39	112
XIII	21	73	43	102
XIV	21	72	36	100
XV	29	85	45	118
<b>Overall:</b>	333	1147	570	1572
<b>Share:</b>	29%	100%	36.2%	100%

As it was expected, the translated versions have a bigger share of function words (36.2%) than their original counterparts (29%). A more vivid example is presented in the following tables, showing the number of function words per line in both the original and translated versions of poem X:

**Table 6.10** number of functional words per line in the original poem

Line	Number of function words
<i>Около океана, при свете свечи; вокруг</i>	3
<i>поле, заросшее клевером, щавелем и люцерной.</i>	1
<i>Вечеру у тела, точно у Шивы, рук,</i>	3
<i>дотянуться желающих до бесценной.</i>	1
<i>Упадая в траву, сова настигает мышь,</i>	0
<i>беспричинно поскрипывают стропила.</i>	0
<i>В деревянном городе крепче спишь,</i>	1
<i>потому что снится уже только то, что было.</i>	6
<i>Пахнет свежей рыбой, к стене прилип</i>	1
<i>профиль стула, тонкая марля вяло</i>	0
<i>шевелится в окне; и луна поправляет лучом прилив,</i>	2
<i>как сползающее одеяло.</i>	1

**Table 6.11 number of function words per line in the translated version**

<b>Line</b>	<b>Number of function words</b>
<i>Near the ocean, by candlelight. Scattered farms,</i>	3
<i>fields overrun with sorrel, lucerne, and clover.</i>	2
<i>Toward nightfall, the body, like Shiva, grows extra arms</i>	3
<i>reaching out yearningly to a lover.</i>	3
<i>A mouse rustles through grass. An owl drops down.</i>	4
<i>Suddenly creaking rafters expand a second.</i>	1
<i>One sleeps more soundly in a wooden town,</i>	4
<i>since you dream these days only of things that happened.</i>	5
<i>There's a smell of fresh fish. An armchair's profile</i>	4
<i>is glued to the wall. The gauze is too limp to bulk at</i>	8
<i>the slightest breeze. And a ray of the moon, meanwhile,</i>	5
<i>draws up the tide like a slipping blanket.</i>	4
<b>Total:</b>	46

The above data may – to some extent – substantiate the proposed explanation.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the metrical structure of the original poems in ‘A Part of Speech’ is quite far from the domain of syllabic versification since the number of syllables in a line may considerably vary, which is illustrated in the table below:

**Table 6.12 variation of syllable number per line in the original poems**

<b>Poem number in the cycle</b>	<b>Variation of syllable number in a line</b>
I	12 – 15
II	8 – 14
III	10 – 18
IV	8 – 11
V	8 – 15
VI	12 – 16
VII	11 – 17
VIII	11 – 18
IX	9 – 13
X	10 – 17
XI	11 – 20
XII	11 – 18
XIII	10 – 17
XIV	9 – 15
XV	12 – 17
<b>Average:</b>	6

As the table shows, none of the poems demonstrate a constant number of syllables in a line, the average variation rate being 6 syllables. The following table, in turn, demonstrates that the same happens in respective translated versions:

**Table 6.13 variation of syllable number per line in the translated versions**

Poem number in the cycle	Variation of syllable number in a line
I	10 – 16
II	8 – 14
III	7 – 15
IV	9 – 13
V	9 – 13
VI	10 – 13
VII	9 – 16
VIII	9 – 16
IX	7 – 13
X	10 – 14
XI	9 – 15
XII	9 – 15
XIII	7 – 13
XIV	8 – 13
XV	8 - 13
<b>Average:</b>	5.6

Similarly to the originals, the translated versions do not have an equal number of syllables in the lines with the average variation rate being 5.6 syllables.

The tendency may be illustrated more vividly on the basis of a concrete example – poem XIV.

The number of syllables per line both in the original and translated versions is shown in the following tables:

**Table 6.14 number of syllables per line in the original poem**

<i>and when "the future" is uttered, swarms of mice</i>	11
<i>rush out of the Russian language and gnaw a piece</i>	12
<i>of ripened memory which is twice</i>	8
<i>as hole-ridden as real cheese.</i>	7
<i>After all these years it hardly matters who</i>	11
<i>or what stands in the corner, hidden by heavy drapes,</i>	8
<i>and your mind resounds not with a seraphic "doh",</i>	7
<i>only their rustle. Life, that no one dares</i>	9
<i>to appraise, like that gift horse's mouth,</i>	9
<i>bares its teeth in a grin at each</i>	8
<i>encounter. What gets left of a man amounts</i>	11
<i>to a part. To his spoken part. To a part of speech.</i>	13

**Table 6.15 number of syllables per line in the translated version**

<i>и при слове "грядущее" из русского языка</i>	15
<i>выбегают мыши и всей оравой</i>	11
<i>отгрызают от лакомого куска</i>	11
<i>памяти, что твой сыр дырявой.</i>	9
<i>После стольких зим уже безразлично, что</i>	12
<i>или кто стоит в углу у окна за шторой,</i>	13
<i>и в мозгу раздаётся не неземное "до",</i>	13
<i>но ее шуриание. Жизнь, которой</i>	11
<i>как даренной вещи, не смотрят в пасть,</i>	10
<i>обнажает зубы при каждой встрече.</i>	11

<i>От всего человека вам остается часть</i>	13
<i>речи. Часть речи вообще. Часть речи.</i>	10

The identified tendency makes it possible to suggest that the metrical structure of both originals and their translated counterparts belongs to the domain of accentual verse where the number of syllables per line is not fixed (Gasparov, 2001).

Further and more precise definition will be based, first, on Smith's statements that a very popular metrical structure utilized by Brodsky is *dolnik* – a subtype of accentual verse characteristic of Russian poetry in general (ibid.). The typical feature of *dolnik*, according to Gasparov (ibid.) is the presence of 1- and 2-syllabic intervals between the stressed syllables; intervals with other syllabic value are characteristic of other subtypes of accentual verse. The following table illustrates the syllabic composition of intervals between the stressed syllables in the original poems of 'A Part of Speech':

**Table 6.16** syllabic composition of intervals between the stressed syllables in the original poems

Poem № in the cycle	Intervals of unstressed syllables between the stressed ones							Total
	Non- syllabic	1- syllabic	2- syllabic	3- syllabic	4- syllabic	5- syllabic	6- syllabic	
I	1	17	21	2	3	1	0	45
II	0	13	10	3	5	1	0	32
III	1	15	29	0	4	3	0	52
IV	0	14	15	0	3	0	0	32
V	0	12	18	2	2	1	1	36
VI	0	14	24	2	3	0	0	43
VII	0	18	18	1	4	0	0	41
VIII	0	20	20	3	2	0	0	45
IX	0	15	20	0	1	1	0	37
X	0	16	18	0	5	1	0	40
XI	2	15	16	2	9	0	1	45
XII	0	13	19	2	3	2	2	41
XIII	2	11	16	0	9	1	0	39
XIV	3	17	10	1	6	0	0	37
XV	1	18	17	1	6	0	0	43
<b>Total</b>	10	228	271	19	65	11	4	608
<b>Share</b>	1.6%	37.5%	44.6%	3.1%	10.7%	1.8%	0.6%	100%

As it may be observed, disyllabic unstressed intervals prevail, making up 44% of the total number of intervals between the stressed syllables and being followed by monosyllabic intervals (37.5%). A total of 82.1% is made up by such intervals, which, together with the the above demonstrated absence of a constant number of syllables in the lines makes it possible to conclude that the metrical structure belongs to the domain of accentual verse, and namely to its subtype called *dolnik* in Russian poetic tradition

The following table, in turn, demonstrates the presence of the same tendency in the translated versions:

Table 6.17 syllabic composition of intervals between the stressed syllables in the translated versions

Poem № in the cycle	Intervals of unstressed syllables between the stressed ones							Total
	Non-syllabic	1-syllabic	2-syllabic	3-syllabic	4-syllabic	5-syllabic	6-syllabic	
I	13	17	17	2	0	0	0	49
II	6	13	13	2	3	0	0	37
III	6	27	20	1	3	0	0	57
IV	1	17	15	5	1	0	0	39
V	6	16	13	6	1	0	0	42
VI	6	22	13	5	0	0	0	46
VII	4	21	18	3	2	0	0	48
VIII	10	20	13	3	2	0	0	48
IX	7	15	12	1	2	0	0	37
X	5	21	16	1	1	0	0	44
XI	11	23	11	6	1	0	0	52
XII	9	17	14	5	2	0	0	47
XIII	7	16	17	0	2	0	0	42
XIV	3	23	11	3	1	0	0	41
XV	4	19	19	4	0	0	0	46
<b>Total</b>	98	287	222	47	21	0	0	675
<b>Share</b>	14.5%	42.5%	32.9%	7%	3.1%	0%	0%	100%

As it may be observed, monosyllabic and disyllabic intervals dominate, though making up a bit smaller proportion – 75.4% - in the translated versions as well. The situation is the same as with the originals: absence of a constant number of syllables in the lines together with the prevalence of 1- and 2-syllabic intervals between the stressed syllables makes it possible to conclude that the original accentual metrical structure – *dolnik* – has been carried over to the translated version of ‘A Part of Speech.’

Having identified the main metrical type of ‘A part of Speech’ as accentual verse and namely *dolnik* both in original poems and in their translated counterparts, I found it relevant to provide a deeper substantiation of Brodsky’s outstanding concern with the retention of original meter in his translations.

According to Smith (2002:456), one of the additional, typical ‘trends’ of Russian *dolnik* is the following: the penultimate stressed syllable in a line is preceded by two unstressed syllables, the last stressed one being preceded by one unstressed syllable, i.e the final unstressed interval (the one preceding the last stressed syllable) consists of one syllable, whereas the penultimate interval (preceding the penultimate stressed syllable) – of two. Smith argues that this trend is often found in Brodsky’s Russian verse (*ibid.*), which urged me to look for this pattern first in the original poems of ‘A Part of Speech.’ The following table illustrates the results:

*Table 6.18* the share of final monosyllabic and penultimate disyllabic unstressed intervals in the original poems

Poem number in the cycle	Number of lines having the following intervals	
	Final monosyllabic	Penultimate disyllabic
I	12	9
II	10	4
III	8	13
IV	8	10
V	8	8
VI	8	9
VII	8	10
VIII	10	8
IX	11	11
X	8	9
XI	7	6
XII	9	7
XIII	6	8
XIV	9	6
XV	10	7
<b>Total:</b>	132	125
<b>Share of overall 184:</b>	71.7%	67.9%

As the tables show, the tendency pointed out by Smith is rather persistent in the original poems of ‘A Part of Speech’: 132 lines (about 72% of the overall number of lines) have the final interval of unstressed syllables consisting of one syllable, whereas the penultimate interval of unstressed syllables consists of two syllables in 125 lines (about 68% of the total line number).

The following table, in turn, illustrates the presence of the tendency also in the translated versions:

*Table 6.19* the share of final monosyllabic and penultimate disyllabic unstressed intervals in the translated versions

Poem number in the cycle	Number of lines having the following intervals	
	Final monosyllabic	Penultimate disyllabic
I	8	8
II	6	6
III	13	10
IV	7	7
V	8	9
VI	8	3
VII	8	8
VIII	9	3
IX	9	9
X	10	8
XI	8	4
XII	9	9
XIII	7	7
XIV	11	5
XV	9	7
<b>Total:</b>	130	103
<b>Share of overall 184:</b>	70.7%	56%

However extraordinary it may seem, the tendency is carried over – though to a bit smaller extent – to the translated versions: the final interval of one unstressed syllable is there in 130 lines (about 71% of the total line number); 103 lines (56% of total line number), in turn, feature the penultimate interval of two unstressed syllables. Thus, the translated versions acquire the additional, typical features of Russian *dolnik*.

The above described tendency requires a practical illustration. The following tables contain the original and translated versions of poem VII. The unstressed intervals are underlined, while the stressed syllables are shown in bold. Columns to the right illustrate the absence/presence of the relevant intervals in each line:

Table 6.20 the distribution of final monosyllabic and penultimate disyllabic unstressed intervals in the original poem

Line	Interval type	
	Penultimate disyllabic	Ultimate monosyllabic
<i>Ты забыла <u>деревню</u>, <u>затерянную</u> в <u>болотах</u></i>	Yes	No
<i>занесенной губернии, где чучел на огородах</i>	No	No
<i>отродясь не <u>держат</u> - <u>нет</u> там <u>злаки</u>,</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>и дорогой <u>тоже</u> все <u>гати</u> да <u>буераки</u>.</i>	Yes	No
<i>Баба Настя, поди, померла, и <u>Пестерев</u> <u>живедва</u> ли,</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>а как жив, то <u>пьяный</u> <u>сидит</u> <u>подвале</u>,</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>либо ладит из спинки нашей <u>кроватьи</u> <u>что-то</u>,</i>	No	Yes
<i>говорят, <u>калитку</u>, <u>не</u> <u>говорота</u>.</i>	Yes	No
<i>А зимой там колот <u>дрова</u> <u>сидят</u> <u>на</u> <u>репе</u>,</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>и звезда моргает от <u>дыма</u> в <u>морозном</u> <u>небе</u></i>	Yes	Yes
<i>И не в <u>ситцах</u> в окне <u>невеста</u>, а <u>праздники</u> <u>пыли</u></i>	Yes	Yes
<i>да пустое <u>место</u>, где <u>мы</u> <u>любили</u>.</i>	Yes	Yes
<b>Total:</b>	10	8

Table 6.21 the distribution of final monosyllabic and penultimate disyllabic unstressed intervals in the translated version

Line	Interval type	
	Penultimate disyllabic	Final monosyllabic
<i>You've forgotten that village <u>lost</u> in the <u>rows</u> and <u>rows</u></i>	Yes	Yes
<i>of swamp in a pine-wooded territory where no scarecrows</i>	No	No
<i>ever stand in <u>orchards</u>: the <u>crops</u> aren't <u>worth</u> it,</i>	Yes	No
<i>and the roads are also just <u>ditches</u> and <u>brush</u> <u>woods</u> <u>surface</u>.</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>Old Nastasya is dead, I take it, and <u>Pesterev</u>, <u>too</u>, for <u>sure</u></i>	Yes	Yes
<i>and if not, he's sitting drunk in the cellar or</i>	No	No
<i>is making something <u>out</u> of the <u>headboard</u> of our <u>bed</u>:</i>	Yes	No
<i>a wicket gate, <u>say</u>, or <u>some</u> <u>kind</u> of <u>shed</u>.</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>And in winter they're chopping wood, and <u>turnips</u> is <u>all</u> they <u>live</u> on,</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>and a star blinks from all the <u>smoke</u> in the <u>frosty</u> <u>heaven</u>,</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>and no bride in chintz at the window, but the <u>dust</u>'s <u>gray</u> <u>craft</u>,</i>	No	Yes
<i>plus the emptiness where <u>once</u> <u>weloved</u>.</i>	No	Yes
<b>Total:</b>	8	8

The tables vividly illustrate the exceptional proximity of the original verse meter to that of the translated version: the original poem features 10 containing penultimate disyllabic

intervals and 8 lines containing final monosyllabic ones; its translated counterpart has 'lost' only 2 lines that should have had penultimate disyllabic intervals.

Thus, the above presented analysis of several versification aspects of the poems from 'A Part of Speech' and their translated counterparts has shown that Joseph Brodsky has to a considerable extent succeeded to reproduce the original verse meter in the translations, despite the fundamental differences between English and Russian in terms of morphology, prosody and syllabic composition of lexis (monosyllabism vs. polysyllabism).

## Conclusions

In the current research an insight has been given into Joseph Brodsky's biography, views on language and principles of poetic translation. The data has been presented in chapters, featuring a substantial number of quotations (mainly translated by the author) and the author's commentaries.

Moreover, a substantial amount of calculations has been made, based on the corpus of text formed by fifteen poems from the collection entitled 'A Part of Speech.' The data has been presented in tables, accompanied by the author's commentaries.

The latter has formed the basis for a metrical analysis of the first serious attempt of Joseph Brodsky in the field of poetic self-translation, which, in turn, has proved the proposed hypothesis that retention of formal aspects of original Russian verse in English translation was indeed a prevailing aspect in Joseph Brodsky's poetic translation practice.

It may even be possible to conclude that the reproduction of form became an end in itself for Brodsky as translator: he found equivalents practically for all the aspects of metrical structure of the originals, utilizing the resources of an analytical language with mainly monosyllabic character of lexis and fixed word order, as opposed to the polysyllabic nature of Russian lexis, its relatively free word order and tolerance towards trisyllabic meters. He succeeded to reproduce line length, trisyllabic nature of meter and even some of its specific, tradition-dependent features. (However, the resulting constructions may be to a certain extent inadequate in the context of the English speakers' perception given the cultural differences: in addition to what has been mentioned above regarding the adequacy of perception, to the Russian ear strict metrical organisation seems rooted in the classical poetic tradition and still topical today, while for an English or American reader it might seem archaic or experimental). As it has been demonstrated in the previous chapters, the prevailing principle of translation for Brodsky was a most accurate reproduction of the formal aspects of the original.

Moreover, as it has been shown in the actual analysis, Brodsky succeeded to reproduce the metrical structure of his original Russian verse in English, going as far as bringing the typical features of Russian *dolnik* into the translation. That is, the hypothesis underlying the present research may be considered proven: retention of formal aspects of original Russian verse in English translation was indeed a prevailing aspect in Joseph Brodsky's poetic translation practice

## Theses

1. Brodsky's appearance in the English literary domain was initially that of a prosaist
2. Brodsky considered prose greatly inferior to poetry, a less perfect manifestation of language
3. Brodsky's degree of involvement in the process of translation of his verse into English grew gradually
4. According to Brodsky, Anglophone poetic tradition implies incompleteness and restraint, whereas Russian poetry is emotional and colourful
5. The formal aspects of poetry, such as for rhyme and meter, acquired additional, substantial functions in Brodsky's view
6. Such notions as rhythm, sound and prosody acquire a vital importance in Brodsky's opinion, having to do with the category of time
7. Retaining the formal aspects of original Russian verse in English translation was of vital importance for Brodsky
8. The prevailing principle of translation for Brodsky was a most accurate reproduction of the formal aspects of the originals
9. Brodsky succeeded to reproduce the metrical structure of his original Russian verse in English, going as far as bringing the typical features of Russian accentual verse – *dolnik* – into his poetic translations

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## Appendix 1

### Corpus of translated poems

#### I

I was born and grew up in the Baltic marshland  
by zinc-gray breakers that always marched on  
in twos. Hence all rhymes, hence that wan flat voice  
that ripples between them like hair still moist,  
if it ripples at all. Propped on a pallid elbow,  
the helix picks out of them no sea rumble  
but a clap of canvas, of shutters, of hands, a kettle  
on the burner, boiling - lastly, the seagull's metal  
cry. What keeps hearts from falseness in this flat region  
is that there is nowhere to hide and plenty of room for vision.  
Only sounds needs echo and dreads its lack.  
A glance is accustomed to no glance back.

#### II

The North buckles metal, glass it won't harm;  
teaches the throat to say, "Let me in."  
I was raised by the cold that, to warm my palm,  
gathered my fingers around a pen.

Freezing, I see the red sun that sets  
behind oceans, and there is no soul  
in sight. Either my heel slips on ice, or the globe itself  
arches sharply under my sole.

And in my throat, where a boring tale  
or tea, or laughter should be the norm,  
snow grows all the louder and "Farewell!"  
darkens like Scott wrapped in a polar storm.

#### III

From nowhere with love the enth of Marchember sir  
sweetie respected darling but in the end  
it's irrelevant who for memory won't restore  
features not yours and no one's devoted friend  
greet's you from this fifth last part of earth  
resting on whalelike backs of cowherding boys  
I loved you better than angels and Him Himself  
and am farther off due to that from you than I am from both  
of them now late at night in the sleeping vale  
in the little township up to its doorknobs in  
snow writhing upon the stale  
sheets for the whole matter's skin-  
deep I'm howling "youuu" through my pillow dike  
many seas away that are milling nearer  
with my limbs in the dark playing your double like  
an insanity-stricken mirror.

#### IV

A list of some observation. In a corner, it's warm.  
A glance leaves an imprint on anything it's dwelt on.  
Water is glass's most public form.  
Man is more frightening than its skeleton.  
A nowhere winter evening with wine. A black  
porch resists an osier's stiff assaults.  
Fixed on an elbow, the body bulks  
like a glacier's debris, a moraine of sorts.  
A millennium hence, they'll no doubt expose  
a fossil bivalve propped behind this gauze  
cloth, with the print of lips under the print of fringe,  
mumbling "Good night" to a window hinge.

#### V

I recognize this wind battering the limp grass  
that submits to it as they did to the Tartar mass.  
I recognize this leaf splayed in the roadside mud  
like a prince empurpled in his own blood.  
Fanning wet arrows that blow aslant  
the cheek of a wooden hut in another land,  
autumn tells, like geese by their flying call,  
a tear by its face. And as I roll  
my eyes to the ceiling, I chant herein  
not the lay of that eager man's campaign  
but utter your Kazakh name which till now was stored  
in my throat as a password into the Horde.

#### VI

A navy-blue dawn in a frosted pane  
recalls yellow streetlamps in the snow-piled lane,  
icy pathways, crossroads, drifts on either hand,  
a jostling cloakroom in Europe's eastern end.  
"Hannibal..." drones on there, a worn-out motor,  
parallel bars in the gym reek with armpit odor;  
as for that scary blackboard you failed to see through,  
it has stayed just as black. And its reverse side, too.  
Silvery hoarfrost has transformed the rattling bell  
into crystal. As regards that parallel-  
line stuff, it's turned out true and bone-clad, indeed.  
Don't want to get up now. And never did.

## VII

You've forgotten that village lost in the rows and rows  
of swamp in a pine-wooded territory where no scarecrows  
ever stand in orchards: the crops aren't worth it,  
and the roads are also just ditches and brushwood surface.  
Old Nastasya is dead, I take it, and Pesterev, too, for sure,  
and if not, he's sitting drunk in the cellar or  
is making something out of the headboard of our bed:  
a wicket gate, say, or some kind of shed.  
And in winter they're chopping wood, and turnips is all they live on,  
and a star blinks from all the smoke in the frosty heaven,  
and no bride in chintz at the window, but the dust's gray craft,  
plus the emptiness where once we loved.

## VIII

In the little town out of which death sprawled over the  
classroom map  
the cobblestones shine like scales that coat a carp,  
on the secular chestnut tree melting candles hung,  
and a cast-iron lion pines for a good harangue.  
Through the much laundered, pale window gauze  
woundlike carnations and kirchen needles ooze;  
a tram rattles far off, as in days of yore,  
but no one gets off at the stadium any more.  
The real end of the war is a sweet blonde's frock  
across a Viennese armchair's fragile back  
while the humming winged silver bullets fly,  
taking lives southward, in mid-July.

## IX

As for the stars, they are always on.  
That is, one appears, then others adorn the inklike  
sphere. That's the best way from there to look upon  
here: well after hours, blinking.  
The sky looks better when they are off.  
Though, with them, the conquest of space is quicker.  
Provided you haven't got to move  
from the bare veranda and the squeaking rocker.  
As one spacecraft pilot has said, his face  
half sunk in the shadow, it seems there is  
no life anywhere, and a thoughtful gaze  
can be rested on none of these.

## X

Near the ocean, by candlelight. Scattered farms,  
fields overrun with sorrel, lucerne, and clover.  
Toward nightfall, the body, like Shiva, grows extra arms  
reaching out yearningly to a lover.  
A mouse rustles through grass. An owl drops down.  
Suddenly creaking rafters expand a second.  
One sleeps more soundly in a wooden town,  
since you dream these days only of things that happened.  
There's a smell of fresh fish. An armchair's profile  
is glued to the wall. The gauze is too limp to bulk at  
the slightest breeze. And a ray of the moon, meanwhile,  
draws up the tide like a slipping blanket.

## XI

The Laocoon of a tree, casting the mountain weight  
off his shoulders, wraps them in an immense  
cloud. From a promontory, wind gushes in. A voice  
pitches high, keeping words on a string of sense.  
Rain surges on; its ropes twisted into lumps,  
lash, like the bather's shoulders, the naked backs of these  
hills. The Medhibernian Sea stirs round colonnaded stumps  
like a salt tongue behind broken teeth.  
The heart, however grown savage, still beats for two.  
Every good boy deserves fingers to indicate  
that beyond today there is always a static to-  
morrow, like a subject's shadowy predicate.

## XII

If anything's to be paised, it's most likely how  
the west wind becomes the east wind, when a frozen bough  
sways leftward, voicing its creaking protests,  
and your cough flies across the Great Plains to Dakota's forests.  
At noon, shouldering a shotgun, fire at what may well  
be a rabbit in snowfields, so that a shell  
widens the breach between the pen that puts these limping  
awkward lines and the creature leaving  
real tracks in the white. On occasion the head combines  
its existence with that of a hand, not to fetch more lines  
but to cup an ear under the pouring slur  
of their common voice. Like a new centaur.

### XIII

There is always a possibility left - to let  
yourself out of the street whose brown length  
will soothe the eye with doorways, the slender forking  
of willows, the patchwork puddles, with simply walking.  
The hair on my gourd is stirred by a breeze  
and the street, in distance, tapering to a V, is  
like a face to a chin; and a barking puppy  
flies out of a gateway like crumpled paper.  
A street. Some houses, let's say,  
are better than others. To take one item,  
some have richer windows. What's more, if you go insane,  
it won't happen, at least, inside them.

### XIV

and when "the future" is uttered, swarms of mice  
rush out of the Russian language and gnaw a piece  
of ripened memory which is twice  
as hole-ridden as real cheese.  
After all these years it hardly matters who  
or what stands in the corner, hidden by heavy drapes,  
and your mind resounds not with a seraphic "doh",  
only their rustle. Life, that no one dares  
to appraise, like that gift horse's mouth,  
bares its teeth in a grin at each  
encounter. What gets left of a man amounts  
to a part. To his spoken part. To a part of speech.

### XV

Not that I am losing my grip: I am just tired of summer.  
Your reach for a shirt in a drawer and the day is wasted.  
If only winter were here for snow to smother  
all these streets, these humans; but first, the blasted  
green. I would sleep in my clothes or just pluck a borrowed  
book, while what's left of the year's slack rhythm,  
like a dog abandoning its blind owner,  
crosses the road at the usual zebra. Freedom  
is when you forget the spelling of the tyrant's name  
and your mouth's saliva is sweeter than Persian pie,  
and though your brain is wrung tight as the horn of a ram  
nothing drops from your pale-blue eye.

## Appendix 2

### Corpus of original poems

#### I

Я родился и вырос в балтийских болотах, подле  
серых цинковых волн, всегда набегавших по две,  
и отсюда - все рифмы, отсюда тот блеклый голос,  
вьющийся между ними, как мокрый волос;  
если вьется вообще. Облокотясь на локоть,  
раковина ушная в них различит не рокот,  
но хлопки полотна, ставень, ладоней, чайник,  
кипящий на керосинке, максимум - крики чаек.  
В этих плоских краях то и хранит от фальши  
сердце, что скрыться негде и видно дальше.  
Это только для звука пространство всегда помеха:  
глаз не посетует на недостаток эха.

#### II

Север крошит металл, но щадит стекло.  
Учит гортань проговорить "впусти".  
Холод меня воспитал и вложил перо  
в пальцы, чтоб их согреть в горсти.

Замерзая, я вижу, как за моря  
солнце садится, и никого кругом.  
То ли по льду каблук скользит, то ли сама земля  
закругляется под каблуком.

И в гортани моей, где положен смех  
или речь, или горячий чай,  
все отчетливей раздается снег  
и чернеет, что твой Седов, "прощай".

#### III

Ниоткуда с любовью, надцатого мартобря,  
дорогой уважаемый милая, но не важно  
даже кто, либо черт лица, говоря  
откровенно, не вспомнить уже, не ваш, но  
и ничей верный друг вас приветствует с одного  
из пяти континентов, держащегося на ковбоях;  
я любил тебя больше, чем ангелов и самого,  
и поэтому дальше теперь от тебя, чем от них обоих;  
поздно ночью, в уснувшей долине, на самом дне,  
в городке, занесенном снегом по ручку двери,  
извиваясь ночью на простыне -  
как не сказано ниже по крайней мере -  
я взбиваю подушку мычащим "ты"  
за морями, которым конца и края,  
в темноте всем телом твои черты,  
как безумное зеркало повторяя.

#### IV

Это - ряд наблюдений. В углу - тепло.  
Взгляд оставляет на вещи след.  
Вода представляет собой стекло.  
Человек страшней, чем его скелет.

Зимний вечер с вином в нигде.  
Веранда под натиском ивняка.  
Тело покоится на локте,  
Как морена вне ледняка.

Через тыщу лет из-за штор моллюск  
извлекут с проступившим сквозь бахрому  
оттиском "доброй ночи" уст  
не имевших сказать кому.

#### V

Узнаю этот ветер, налетающий на траву,  
под него ложающуюся, точно под татарву.  
Узнаю этот лист, в придорожную грязь  
падающий, как обагренный князь.  
Растекаясь широкой стрелой по косою скуле  
деревянного дома в чужой земле,  
что гуся по полету, осень в стекле внизу  
узнет по лицу слезу.  
И, глаза закатывая к потолку,  
я не слово о номер забыл говорю полку,  
но кайсацкое имя язык во рту  
шевелит в ночи, как ярлык в Орду.

#### VI

Темно-синее утро в заиндевевшей раме  
напоминает улицу с горящими фонарями,  
ледяную дорожку, перекрестки, сугробы,  
толчею в раздевалке в восточном конце Европы.  
Там звучит "ганнибал" из худого мешка на стуле,  
сильно пахнут подмышками брусья на физкультуре;  
что до черной доски, от которой мороз по коже,  
так и соталась черной. И сзади тоже.  
Дребезжащий звонок серебристый иней  
преобразил в кристалл. Насчет параллельных линий  
все оказалось правдой и в кость оделось;  
неохота вставать. Никогда не хотелось.

## VI

Ты забыла деревню, затерянную в болотах  
занесенной губернии, где чучел на огородах  
щтродясь не держат - не те там злаки,  
и дорогой тоже все гати да буераки.  
Баба Настя, поди, померла, и Пестерев жив едва ли,  
а как жив, то пьяный сидит в подвале,  
либо ладит из спинки нашей кровати что-то,  
говорят, калитку, не то ворота.  
А зимой там колют дрова и сидят на репе,  
и звезда моргает от дыма в морозном небе.  
И не в ситцах в окне невеста, а праздник пыли  
да пустое место, где мы любили.

## VII

В городке, из которого смерть расползлась по школьной карте,  
мостовая блестит, как чешуя на карпе,  
на столетнем каштане оплывают тугие свечи,  
и чугунный лев скучает по пылкой речи.  
Сквозь оконную марлю, выцветшую от стирки,  
проступают ранки гвоздики и стрелки кирхи;  
вдалеке дребезжит трамвай, как во время оно,  
но никто не сходит больше у стадиона.  
Настоящий конец войны - это на тонкой спинке  
венског стула платье одной блондинки  
да крылатый полет серебристой жужжащей пули,  
уносящей жизни на Юг в июле.

## VIII

Что касается звезд, то они всегда.  
То есть, если одна, то за ней другая.  
Только так оттуда и можно смотреть сюда;  
вечером, после восьми, мигая.  
Небо выглядит лучше без них. Хотя  
освоение космоса лучше, если  
с ними. Но именно не сходя  
с места, на голой веранде, в кресле.  
Как сказал, половину лица в тени  
пряча, пилот одного снаряда,  
жизни, видимо, нету нигде, и ни  
на одной из них не удержишь взгляда.

## **X**

Около океана, при свете свечи; вокруг  
поле, заросшее клевером, щавелем и люцерной.  
Вечерк у тела, точно у Шивы, рук,  
дотянуться желающих до бесценной.  
Упадая в траву, сова настигает мышь,  
беспричинно поскрипывают стропила.  
В деревянном городе крепче спишь,  
потому что снится уже только то, что было.  
Пахнет свежей рыбой, к стене прилип  
профиль стула, тонкая марля вяло  
шевелится в окне; и луна поправляет лучом прилив,  
как сползающее одеяло.

## **XI**

Деревянный лаокоон, сбросив на время гору с  
плеч, подставляет их под огромную тучу. С мыса  
налетают порывы резкого ветра. Голос  
старается удержать слова, взвизгнув в пределах смысла.  
Низвергается дождь; перекрученные канаты  
хлещут спины холмов, точно лопатки в бане.  
Средиземное море шевелится за огрызками колоннады,  
как соленый язык за выбитыми зубами.  
Одичавшее сердце все еще бьется за два.  
каждый охотник знает, где сидят фазаны, - в лужице под лежащим.  
За сегодняшним днем стоит неподвижно завтра,  
как сказуемое за подлежащим.

## **XII**

Если что-нибудь петь, то перемену ветра,  
западного на восточный, когда замерзшая ветка  
перемещается влево, поскрипывая от неохоты,  
и твой кашель летит над равниной к лесам Дакоты.  
В полдень можно вскинуть ружье и выстрелить в то, что в поле  
кажется зайцем, предоставляя пуле  
увеличить разрыв между сбившимся напрочь с темпа  
пишущим эти строки пером и тем, что  
оставляет следы. Иногда голова с рукою  
сливаются, не становясь строкою,  
но под собственный голос, перекатывающийся картаво,  
подставляя ухо, как часть кентавра.

### XIII

Всегда остается возможность выйти из дому на  
улицу, чья коричневая длина  
успокоит твой взгляд подъездами, худобою  
голых деревьев, бликами луж, ходьбою.  
На пустой голове бриз шевелит ботву,  
и улица вдалеке сужается в букву "у",  
как лицо к подбородку, и лающая собака  
вылетает из подворотни, как скомканная бумага.  
Улица. Некоторые дома  
лучше других: больше вещей в витринах,  
и хотя бы уж тем, что если сойдешь с ума,  
то, во всяком случае, не внутри них.

### XIV

и при слове "грядущее" из русского языка  
выбегают мыши и всей аравой  
отгрызают от лакомого куска  
памяти, что твой сыр дырявой.  
После стольких зим уже безразлично, что  
или кто стоит в углу у окна за шторой,  
и в мозгу раздается не неземное "до",  
но ее шуршание. Жизнь, которой,  
как даренной вещи, не смотрят в пасть,  
обнажает зубы при каждой встрече.  
От всего человека вам остается часть  
речи. Часть речи вообще. Часть речи.

### XV

Я не то что схожу с ума, но устал за лето.  
За рубашкой в комод полезешь, и день потерян.  
Поскорей бы, что ли, пришла зима и занесла все это -  
города, человек, но для начала зелень.  
Стану спать, не раздевшись или читать с любого  
места чужую книгу, покамест остатки года,  
как собака, сбежавшая от слепого,  
переходят в положенном месте асфальт. Свобода  
это когда забываешь отчество у тирана,  
а слюна во рту слаще халвы Ширази,  
и хотя твой мозг перекручен, как рог барана,  
ничего не каплет из голубого глаза.

