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|  | Meter and Other Formal Features |  |
| **Silentium**1. *Молчи, скрывайся и таиИ чувства и мечты свои –Пускай в душевной глубинеВста****ют*** *и за****ход****ят он****е****Без****мол****вно, как* ***звез****ды в ноч****и****, – Любуйся ими – и молчи.*  **Tyutchev** | 1. Keep still, be silent and concealYour dreams, your thoughts, all that you feel.Within your soul they’ll set and riseLike **star**s, un**seen** by **o**ther **eyes**.A **sense** of **won**der **they’ll** in**still**When gazed upon, if you’ll keep still. | Of the 18 lines of this poem, all but three (two in the first stanza) are iambic. The other three are amphibrachs. Tyutchev did not want these lines regularized, but I regularized them in English; at first not even noticing, and then liking them the way they were. |
| **Конек-Горбунок** 2. *За горами, за лесами**За широкими морями,**Против неба – на земле**Жил старик в одном селе,**У старинушки три сына**Старший умный был детина,**Средний сын и так и сяк**Младший вовце был дурак*.-**Yershov (or maybe Pushkin)** | 2.Beyond the hills, beyond the seas,Beyond the forests dense with trees,Below the sky, above the ground, In a hamlet near a town,Lived three sons and their old dad.The oldest was a clever lad.The second, neither smart nor dumb,The third, a carefree simpleton. | 2. This poem has more than 2500 lines, it is written in the preferred Russian folk meter of troches. It also alternates masculine and feminine rhymes. I did not believe that I could write that many lines of a narrative poem without starting some lines with an unstressed syllable. Also, trochaic is not felt in English as any more folksy than iambic. I chose to use mainly iambs alternating with a few troches for variety. Feminine rhymes are more difficult in English than in Russian and while I used them, I did not stick to regular alternation. |
| 3.Крылов **Две Бочки** Кто про свои дела кричит всем без умолку) 13 syl femВ том, верно, мало толку 7 syllable femКто делов истинно, — тих часто на словах. 12 syll mascВеликий человек лишь громок на делах, 12 syll mascИ думает свою он крепку думу 11 syl. fem.Без шуму. 3 syll. femTotal 27 feet, 58 syllables.  | 3.Two Barrels, Translation retains rhyme scheme but exact line lengths, and unlike original uses no feminine rhymes.A person who declaims about his every deed. 12, m.Is apt to be the sort we need not heed, 10, mWhile one deserving of our praise 8, m.Prefers the worthy act to boastful phrase. 10 ,mAnd those who truly merit fame 8. m Do not declaim. 4 m.Total 26 feet, 56 syllables. | 3. I had a commission to translate a book worth of Krylov (ultimately 62 fables). Krylov wrote exclusively in iambs but alternated length of line from 1 syllable to 13 syllables (with lines of very different length frequently rhyming). He also varied rhyme schemes at will. I decided I would not pay attention to exact line or poem length or rhyme scheme either as long as I stayed within the limits on the original work.  |
| 4. **Мышь и Крыса** (Omit)«Соседка, слышала ль ты добрую молву? — аВбежавши, Крысе Мышь сказала. — бВедь кошка, говорят, попалась в когти льву? аВот отдохнуть и нам пора настала!»б | The Mouse and the Rat“There is great news, rejoice, my friend,”аProclaimed a Mouse to her good neighbor Rat.б“You’ll never guess what’s happened to the Cat.бThe Lion caught her; now our woes are at an end.”а | Krylov uses all sorts of rhyme schemes, I never tried to match, though used conventional scheme that he uses. Again here not feminine rhymes in English. |
| **Names, Species, Genders, Nationalities** |
| **Ворон и Лицица Крылов.**5.1) *Вороне где-то бог послал кусочек сыр* *2) Лисица видит сыр. Лисицу сыр пленил. Крылов*5. 1) One lucky day Miss Crow got hold of Cheese,2) He spied the cheese and then Fox fell in love. | 5. Crow is feminine in Russian but Krylov chose to make the Fox a Vixen. Aesop’s Fox and Crow are variously interpreted as to gender, though La Fontaine made both male. I would have followed Krylov but I originally translated this for a Children’s Theater and the Fox was already cast as male and the Crow as female. Although my choice is consistent with general gender stereotypes about how insincere flattery may be used in gender relationships, it was simply the casting that .caused me to do this. |
| 6. A single line from a Ratushinskaya poem in which the poet is wishing a community a happy future.*\***И чтоб* ***синицы*** *в садах, ....и лебеди –на прудах*6. Original and final line translation.May there be larks in your gardens and swans in your ponds. |  I was translating a book of Ratushinskaya for a very conservative evangelical organization. Irina was a delight to work with but the editors gave me all kinds of problems—aside from insisting on the emphasis of themes consistent with their philosophy, they kept second guessing my translations for accuracy—they appeared to have a non-poetry loving native Russian speaker checking everything and would reject translations that Irina loved on the grounds of word for word accuracy. They also knew no Russian and nothing about meter and could not understand why trying to render the sound was important even if accuracy was slightly compromised. The editors came back to me and told me that they had reason to suspect that larks was not the correct bird name.Now I am an amateur bird watcher and even once finagled a bird watching day outside of Moscow, and I know very well that the translation of синицы is not larks. So I very docilely wrote back agreeing to change the line to the more accurate: May there be great tits in your gardens. Needless to say, we went back to my first version. |
| 7. Жареная рыбка,Дорогой **карась,**Где ж ваша улыбка,Что была вчерась? N.S. Bodrevoy | 7. **Carp** aswim in gravy**,**Dear old friend, I pray,Where’s the smile you gave meOnly yesterday? | This is a little known delightfully amusing poem about a fish Lothario who commits suicide out of love. A problem occurred with the English species name. Evidently **карась**, is translated as Caspian Carp while карп is the name of the smaller carp variety. Also I gathered a certain personality is associated with one or more of these fishes, and the editor felt that calling this fish simply carp would distort the picture, even though she agreed that we could not use Caspian Carp throughout because the lines were too short. Finally I said at random that the verb to carp meant to complain and criticize. For some reason this was enough to convince her to agree to my version. |
| 8 .Пушкин Черная ШальЕдва я завидел гречанки порог, \*Глаза потемнели, я весь изнемог...В покой отдаленный вхожу я один...Неверную деву лобзал **армянин**. Пушкин | And reaching the house where my mistress did dwell, I seemed to take leave of my reason as well.I opened her bedchamber door with a jerkAnd saw my false mistress embracing a **Turk!** | I translated this poem more or less as a parody of the genre, whether or not Pushkin meant it to be one. I could not find a rhyme for Armenian and figured that the hero of the poem would be equally outraged to find his girl in the arms of a Turk. Later a Russian native speaking audience argued that this was a real lapse because Turks and Armenians have been enemies for ages. |
| 9. ОКУДЖАВА Надежда, я останусь цел, не для меня земля сырая.А для меня твои тревоги, и добрый мир твоих забот..Okudzhava | Speranza, I’ll remain unharmed: The clammy earth is not for me, Because for me are your misgivings And the kind world of your concern. NABOKOV  | Just to talk about the name, this is a Russian poem in which a Russian soldier at war addresses his wife or beloved. The name for her the poet uses means hope. It seems to me appropriate to use the Russian name, but if it had to be translated why use an Italian name, whose meaning is arguably no more intelligible than the Russian? In this case a footnote for Nadezhda would be appropriate. |
| 10. . . ОКУДЖАВА (omit) В арбатском подъезде мне видятся дивные сцены (из давнего детства, которого мне не вернуть:то **Ленька** Гаврилов ухватит ахнарик бесценный, мусолит, мусолит, и мне оставляет курнуть!Т**о Нинка** Сочилина учит меня целоваться,и сердце мое разрывается там, под пальто.И счастливы мы, что не знаем, что значит прощаться,тем более слова «навеки» не знает никто.  | 10. How much of my childhood took place in Arbat’s entry halls,These wonderful scenes from lost times in my mind I still see:How **Levka** once found a fresh butt that some guy had let fallAnd puffing his fill, my best buddy then passed it to me.How , that tomboy, decided she’d teach me to kiss,And how my heart pounded once I’d got up the courage to try.We never imagined that life isn’t always like this,Not knowing how often “forever” must follow “good bye.”  | Reading this poem in Russian, there is no confusion about the gender of the two friends the poet refers to. To an English speaker, a transliteration of the names is less clear. I tried to provide this information by changing Lenka to Levka (Lev being an identifiable Russian name) and adding *my best buddy* and substituting “that tomboy” for Nina Sochilina’s last name. |

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| 11.ЧУКОВСКИЙ АЙБОЛИТ. Добрый **доктор Айболит!**Он под деревом сидит.Приходи к нему лечитьсяИ корова, и волчица,И жучок, и червячок, И медведица!  | **Kindly Dr. I.M. Sick**Makes animals feel better quickFrom the woods, the hills and plainsCome bring him all their aches and painsWolves, bears, cows, the tiny tickAll seek the help of I.M. Sick. | Clearly the name has to be translated into something equivalent that makes sense in English, is or can be iambic and has a number of rhymes. Note too that while most of the material is retained (certainly all the main points) not in the analogous lines. The translation leaves out Sitting under a tree, adds from woods, hills and pains, and substitutes tiny tick for beetle and worms.  |
| 12.СОН  **Lermontov**В полдневный жар в **долине** Дагестана \*С свинцом в груди лежал недвижим я;Глубокая ещё дымилась рана,По капле кровь точилася моя. Lermontov | In noon's heat, in a **dale** of DagestanWith lead inside my breast, stirless I lay;The deep wound still smoked on; my bloodKept trickling drop by drop away. **NABOKOV** | To me though, dale is a more or less accurate translation of долине, the old English term conveys the gentle English countryside and not the rugged mountains of Dagestan. Even worse is “glen” used by other translators. I used gorge. Also note the sacrifice of rhyme between lines 1 and 3. I was unable to determine whether such a wound in the high desert was more likely to smoke or steam.  |
| 13ROBERT FROST Stopping by Woods. My little horse must think it queer To stop without a farmhouse nearBetween the woods and frozen lakeThe darkest evening of the year.He gives his harness bells a shake   To ask if there is some mistake.   The only other sound’s the sweep   Of easy wind and downy flake.  | Мой конь, бедняжка, не поймет,Чего его хозяин ждетУ сонных сосен и ракит,Когда вокруг—лишь снег да лет.Он тихо упряжью звенит,Но лес бемолвствует и спит, Лишь мягко падает снежок, Да ветер ветви шевелит. Translator Unknown | This is actually one of the best poetic translations from English to Russian I have ever read. However, my husband is a dyed in the wool New Englander and agrees with me that when he pictures New English forests they are deciduous not pine. Furthermore, ракит the “goat willow” does not grow in the Western Hemisphere at all, certainly not identifiably in pine forests. Am I being ridiculous to be bothered by this small botanical nuance, when the translation is so good? Is putting rakit in New Hampshire, as bad as putting palm trees in Moscow? |
| Making Poems Acceptable and Intelligible to Target English Speaking and non-Russian Speaking Audiences |
| 14. Конек-Горбунок Говорит ему: “Послушай, \*Побегай в дозор, Ванюша;Я куплю тебе лубков,Дам **гороху и бобов**”. Yershov /Pushkin | “If you will help us guard the wheat,Next market day you’ll get a treat.**I bet you’d really like a sweet.**Now this brought Vanya to his feet. | I translated this for an audience that included English speaking children. Knowing something of this population, I could not imagine them being bribed to do an unpleasant task by being offered a treat of peas and beans. Originally, I had translated лубков as picture book, but my editor insisted I take it out.  |
| 15. Третий Зачатьевский \* Переулочек, переул… Горло петелькой затянул. Akhmatova | Third Zachatyevsky You noose-shaped Moscow cul de sac,Keep drawing tighter round my neck. | A great deal of background information is necessary to understand the first stanza of this poem. 1) The reference is to a rather large Moscow semicircular street, indeed shaped like a noose, and having outlets at either end onto the same street—a kind of dead-end or cul de sac. 2) In 1940, many of the poet’s friends had been taken into custody and she, who lived on this street, feared for her own life. All of this seemed to be important to get into the first stanza  |
| 16. Что имя нежное мое, мой нежный, неУпоминаете ни днем, ни ночью - всуе...Что никогда в церковной тишинеНе пропоют над нами: аллилуйя! Tsvetayeva | That you my sweet don’t seek to speak my name,On pretexts neither apt nor apropos,.That loving vows we never will declaim,Into the future hand and hand won’t go. | The Russian reference is to marriage in the Orthodox Church, possibly not clear to English speaking audiences. I replaced it with something much clearer to American readers of any faith. |
| 17. Юнна Мориц Что делать скажите,Добрейшей старушке,Когда завелись У старушки в избушке:Ленивая кошка,Ленивая мышка,А также ленивая,Сонная мушкаИ с ними в придачуЛенивый мальчишка?  | They lived with old Maisy,Who’d never been lazy,The way they just sat there,Was driving her crazy.But what could she do When they lived in her housy—The lazy small boy And the lazy wee mousy, The lazy old fly And the lazy fat kitty.When she worked so hard?What a terrible pity! | Another one with a child audience. A good part of its appeal in my opinion is the rhyming of all the diminutives, I tried to mirror this by using not completely standard words such as housy. I also changed the old lady to Maisie to be able to use the rhyme with lazy. One strict Russonate critic criticized the translation for teaching children it was OK to use non-standard English diminutives. On the other hand, it was my then 2-year old grandson’s favorite poem.  |
| 18. Южный ктототам ЗаходерОткровенно признаюЗвери нетНа букву «Ю».Это—Южный Ктототам.Я его придумал сам!  | Urasian Whatapup.I frankly will confess to youNo creature’s name Begins with U.As for Urasian WhatapupI must admit: I made him up | I have translated all of Zakhoder’s Animal alphabet—needing to call the animals by their English name no matter what letter it begins with. In this case I gave myself translational cart blanche. |

19. Which of the two following versions appears to you the most faithful? In your opinion is the most faithful also the best?

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| Сегодня, я вижу, особенно грустен твой взглядИ руки особенно тонки, **колени обняв.**Послушай: далёко, далёко, на озере ЧадИзысканный бродит жираф.Вдали он подобен цветным **парусам корабля**,И бег его плавен, как радостный птичий полет.Я знаю, что **много чудесного видит земля,**Когда на закате он прячется в мраморный грот.Я знаю веселые сказки таинственных странПро чёрную деву, про страсть молодого вождя,Но ты слишком долго вдыхала тяжелый туман,Ты верить не хочешь во что-нибудь кроме дождя. | Rhymed. I see that this morning your eyes are especially sad;Especially slender the arms that encircle your **calves**Well, listen, far off to the south on the shores of Lake Chad,There roams the exquisite giraffe.…He seems at a distance a luminous sail on the **waves**And fluid his gait, like a bird in its rapturous flight.**But only the Earth knows the site** of the marble walled cavesTo which he retreats when the sun starts to set every night.…I’d cheer you with tales of this land **full of wonder and song**,Of young tribal chiefs and dark maids, of their passion and **pain...**But you have been breathing the fogs of the North for too longAnd don’t want to believe there is anything else but the rain. | UnrhymedI see that this morning your eyes are especially sad;Especially slender the arms that encircle your knees,Well, listen: far, far away on the distant shores of Lake Chad,There roams the exquisite giraffe.…He seems at a distance the luminous sail of a shipAnd fluid his gait like the rapturous flight of a bird.I know that the Earth has seen much that is wondrous and strangeWhen nightfall compels his retreat to a marble walled cave.I know many lighthearted tales of mysterious lands,Of raven skinned maids and the love of the headstrong young chief...But you have been breathing the fogs of the North for too longAnd don’t want to believe there is anything else but the rain.… |