

Stefano Garzonio

Italian and Russian Verse: Two Cultures and Two Mentalities

Мой дядя самых честных правил,
Когда не в шутку занемог,
Он уважал себя заставил
И лучше выдумать не мог...

“My uncle, a most worthy gentleman,
When he fell seriously ill,
Constrained everyone to respect him,
Couldn’t have done better if he tried...”

U – U – U – U – U

This is the beginning of Puškin’s novel in verse *Evgenij Onegin*, written in Iambic Tetrameter, the most popular meter in Russian poetry.

Modern Russian versification grew out of the so-called Trediakovskij-Lomonosov reform (here I mean of course the treatises *New and brief Method for Composing Russian verse*, 1735, by V.K. Trediakovskij and Lomonosov’s *Letter on the rules of Russian versification* accompanied by the *Ode on the Taking of Khotin*, 1739). This reform introduced the Syllabotonic system of Versification in the late 1730s. This choice was determined not only linguistically but also by historical and, more generally, cultural factors. Was this the only path that Russian poetry could have chosen?

Lomonosov preferred the German model of versification and such a decision was directly linked to the prevalent cultural orientation of Russian literature in the first decades of the 18th century. At the same time Antiokh Kantemir, far from Russia in his mission-exile, wrote his *Pis’mo Xaritona Makentina k prijatelju o složenii stixov ruskix* (Letter of Xariton Makentin to a friend on composing Russian verse, 1743), There he proposed certain innovations to be made to the traditional Russian Syllabic verse. Kantemir’s suggestions were based on Italian and French models of versification (see Gasparov 1997: 156).

If a new Syllabotonic model required rigid alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables, a strongly expressed distinction between verse and non verse based on the rhyme and the refusal of enjambment, Kantemir upheld a form of less rigid verse, in which stresses were distributed more freely and enjambment was accepted. At the

same time, he accepted the so-called *versi sciolti*, borrowed from Italian poetry, the unrhymed verses not allowed by French poetry and the old Russian Syllabics.

If we look, for example, at Kantemir's Syllabic *odinnadcatistožnik* (the meter consisting of eleven syllables) we find that the only stress constants in the verse are the fourth and the tenth. It means that his verse needed only a constant feminine caesura after the fifth syllable:

Уже довольно, / лучший путь не зная,
 Страстьми имея / ослепленны очи,
 Род человеческ / из краю до края
 Заблуждал жизни / в мрак безлунной ночи...

○○○ – ○ // ○○○○ – ○

This is an excerpt from Kantemir's well-known ode *V pochvalu nauke*, which, as British specialist V. Boss maintained, was a translation imitating the Italian ode *L'Italia liberata da' Gotti* by Gian Giorgio Trissino (Boss 1963).

If we look at the verses, which Kantemir called "*svobodnye*" (free):

Долго думай, что о ком и кому имеешь
 Сказать. Любопытного беги: говорлив он;
 Бесперечь отверстые уши не умеют
 Вверенное сохранять; а слово, однажды
 Выпущенное из уст, летит невозвратно.

it is clear that they display greater freedom in stress distribution, as Kantemir was against the same term of foot (*stopa*), – and also in the syntactic organization of poetic discourse.

Kantemir's verse is very close to the Italian *endecasillabo*.

Here I will quickly remind you that Italian *endecasillabo*, in its canonical rhythmic form, presents a constant stress on the tenth syllable and has a very high probability of stress on the fourth and/or sixth syllables:

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
 Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura
 Ché la diritta via era smarrita...

While Lomonosov had chosen the German prosodic pattern, which was founded on a rigid organization of verse at the metric level, Kantemir preferred a freer prosodic pattern that followed a specific syntactic organization of verse. In Lomonosov's opinion, accentual rhythm is determinant, in Kantemir's opinion, a special syntactical rhythm and stylistics are most important.

Are there any extra-literary element to support Lomonosov's preference? Most certainly. First of all, as mentioned above, the general orientation of early Petrine

Russia towards German culture, for example the presence of German official poets at the Russian court.

If we analyse this question thoroughly, we can point out that in the 18th century Russia poetry had a strong official character. The prevalent genre of the time was a panegyric ode. Odes were recited in the presence of sovereigns during sumptuous celebrations and the form of the performance determined the structure of the poetic text. 18th Century Russian verse was solemn and rather different from everyday forms of expression. This difference can be seen at various levels of language, but the prosodic appears decisive. The accentual pattern that Lomonosov proposed was really “a violation of the language”. This in spite of the well-known opinion of some Soviet scholars, who insisted that the move from the Syllabic system of Baroque poetry to a new Syllabotonic versification was presupposed by the accentual nature of the Russian language. According to this speculation new Russian verse had to overcome the most extreme manifestations of German pattern. By this I mean, the full stressed form of Iambic tetrameter, as in the following excerpt from Lomonosov’s *Ode on the Capture of Xotin* (1739):

На Пинд ли под ногами зрю?
Я слышу чистых сестр музыку!
Пермским жаром я горю
Теку поспешно к оных лику...

The fully stressed verse automatically excludes many rhythmical words in the Russian dictionary. Some 120 years later, the famous revolutionary Nikolaj Černyševskij, the author of the novel *What is to be done?* calculated that in the Russian language the average ratio between the number of syllables and the number of stresses is 3:1. Černyševskij thought that ternary meters were more natural than binary meters (see Gasparov 1994: 128-129).

We know that in Russian language stress occurs somewhat less frequently than in German, about once in every 2.7 or 2.8 syllables. Therefore, we can conclude, that the natural rhythm of their language forced Russian poets to avoid the four-stress verse, since words with two or more close unstressed syllables could not be employed.

Recently Maksim Šapir suggested another explanation: Lomonosov’s reason for abandoning the fully stressed German pattern was not specifically linguistic but rather historical. This was not because this form was “a violation of the language” but it became “a violation of history”. Since a great poet had to sing the victories and the virtues of Peter the Great (in Russian Petr), of Anna Ioannovna and of the little Ioann, who was dethroned by Elizaveta Petrovna, he didn’t encounter any difficulty in naming the sovereigns: Petr was monosyllabic, Anna and Ioann bisyllabic. When Elizaveta took the throne the situation changed radically. It was possible to violate the language, but not the name of Her Highness. Lomonosov was forced to introduce the pyrrichium (a foot with two unstressed syllables) into the Iambic tetrameter (see Šapir 1996).

РУКОЮ ОН ЕЛИСАВЕТЫ
ПРОТИВНЫХ РАЗРУШИТ НАВЕТЫ...

It is evident that typologically metric forms are established as a result of linguistic and cultural influences. The different results of these influences are visible on the historical axis. In early Russian Classicist poetry the ideological element seems to be decisive: it is expressed in German orientation and the official function of poetry. This situation is confirmed by the prevalence of the performance of the text on its written, printed realization.

Kantemir's attempt to choose an alternative path failed because it did not correspond to art's new political role. Syllabic meter was considered one of the relics of the Old Russian Culture. A freer rhythmical verse, of Italian or English pattern, failed to answer the demands of new Petrine literature and its ideological subtexts.

But are these and Russian verse patterns exactly opposite?

Russian is a language based on accentual isochronism, Italian is based on a syllabic one. In Russian we pronounce “перевóд”, where the reduction of the first and second vowel is quite distinct, in Italian we say “dómino”, where all three syllables have identical length.

This situation strengthens dependency on the rhythm of accents in Russian and on the number of syllables in Italian. From this point of view, Russian and Italian verse represent different fronts. But from a historical and cultural perspective the situation can change.

First of all it is necessary to point out that Russian and Italian have flexible stress on words. While French or Polish are fixed stress languages, French on the last syllable (and the artificial *e muet*) and Polish on the last syllable but one (with the rhythmic enrichment of monosyllables), Russian and Italian have different stress in different syllabic positions (in Russian *прово́да, перево́ды, выво́ды, вывода́ми* and so on; in Italian *...capítano, capìto, capítano, capítano...* and so on). Thus these languages can develop a syllabotonic rhythm in a much easier way with the prevalence of tonic and syllabic principles respectively. Obviously, we have to consider the historical development of prosodic systems in any particular language, but, in the diachronic definition of a metric system, culture plays a decisive role. First of all, what is decisive is the function assigned to poetry in the society. That depends on the extent to which poetic expression can stay away from everyday speech and to the extent of which it is perceived as an artificial form of expression. Again, I will use an example from 18th century Russian poetry. In spite of the fact that in everyday pronunciation the passage from *e* to *ë* was by this time achieved, in 18th century poetic rhyming and up to Pushkin's early poetry, it is possible to meet rhymes such as *удем/нрুষем*. A really artificial device in Italian poetry is the so-called “elision”, actually the *synalefis* (the opposite is *dialefis*), a feature that enables two vowels to be counted as a singular syllable, or the *hiatus*, the *dieresis* (the opposite is *sineresis*), which enables a diphthong to be counted as two syllables:

Batte a la tua finestra, e dice, il sole:
 Lèvati, bella, ch'è tempo d'amare.
 Io ti reco i desir de le viole
 E gl'inni de le rose al risvegliare...
 (Giosuè Carducci, *Mattinata*)

Here we have several examples of *synalefis* (batte a la...finestra e... reco i...rose al...), and *dieresis* (viole), but also some usual elisions (ch'è, d'amare, gl'inni). Thank to these features, the meter of Carducci's lyrics is a regular *endecasillabo*. However these features function throughout Italian poetical tradition and are felt as natural.

As in Russian Syllabotonic poetry, where it was impossible to preserve a fully stressed pattern of verse because of the average length of Russian words, it is impossible in Italian syllabic poetry to avoid *synalefis* and *dieresis* because of the high average of vowels at the end and at the beginning of Italian words. On the other hand, the flexibility of word stress enables Italian verse develop a syllabotonic system. There are special works on Italian verse rhythm that show the rise and fall of Iambic rhythm in endecasillabo or other meters. Some shorter Italian meters show a clear tendency to a syllabotonic structure. Such a phenomenon is frequently linked to imitations of Classical Greek and Latin verse.

Since the Italian language has no chronematic opposition (short and long syllables) but only tonic, all Italian imitations of Classical poetry are founded on three different approaches: 1) an artificial attempt to consider Italian syllables short and long (we find this in other European poetical traditions); 2) the substitution of short and long syllables with stressed and unstressed (a syllabotonic metric system) and 3) an approximate imitation of Classical meters with special new Italian verses, functioning as equivalents to Classical ones.

Here is an example from Ariosto's Prologue of the piece *Lena*, written in Iambic Trimeters with a dactylic close (see Beltrami 1991: 195-196), an imitation of Latin Iambic Trimeter:

Ecco La Lena, che vuol far spettacolo
 Un'altra volta di sé, né considera,
 Che se l'altr'anno piacque, contentarsene
 Dovrebbe, né si por ora a pericolo
 Di non piacervi: che 'l parer de gli uomini
 Molte volte si muta, et il medesimo
 Che la mattina fu, non è da vespero...

We have the following metric scheme: $\cup - \cup - \cup - \cup - \cup - \cup \cap$, but the tendency to break the rigid alternation is obvious. From this point of view Italian Syllabotonic verse is less rigid than Russian.

Now we can go back to Kantemir's attempt to build new Russian verse according to Italian and English models. I will not analyse English verse, but in comparison to German or Russian verse its less rigid structure in the alternation of strong and weak

positions is obvious. Italian verse, first of all *endecasillabo*, is still less rigid since it has only a constantly strong position on the tenth syllable and other strong positions usually on fourth and/or sixth position. On the other hand, a special tradition of stressing the seventh position is well known, especially in heroic comic genres.

Kantemir, who lived in England and frequented Italian poets such as Paolo Rolli, the Italian translator of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, considered it natural to pay attention to English and Italian models. The verse that Kantemir proposed was different from everyday speech not because of a strongly underlined prosodic level, but because of particular syntactic and stylistic structures.

This is really close to the Italian model, where verse is denoted by the nature of intonation, yet not by a strong underlined accentual alternation. This situation can be confirmed by a comparison of recitals of Russian and Italian verse. When reading any Italian verses, Russians tend to underline the rhythm of stresses, trying to find an Iambic alternation, which Italians do not individualize. On the other hand, a strongly binary performance of poetry is perceived by an Italian reader as something primitive and unpleasant (see below).

What is important to point out it is the difference in Italian and Russian verse. This is related to history, not to language. If Russian verse is characterized by the need to underline the prosodic rhythm of a singular sequence and to make it rigid and complex (I certainly mean the Classical Russian Verse), Italian verse is defined by the rigid and complex character of the stanza. By this I mean not just sonnet or sestina, but especially the canzone (the old canzone of Petrarca or the free canzone of Leopardi), which has a very complex texture of verses and rhymes. Italian verse shows an evident aspiration to complexity on the paradigmatic level, which I believe, is balanced by more freedom on the syntagmatic level. Such a complexity is perceived more easily by reading, rather than reciting. Russian poetry is written first of all for recitation (the syncretistic moment is very important). The stanzaic organization of verse is constantly developed but this complex texture was developed only during Modernism and certainly also because of many translations and imitations of Italian poetry (a special form, the *corona* of sonnets had its own adventure in Russia).

As mentioned above, the failure of Kantemir's proposal was related to general historical and cultural factors. There were no linguistic elements, which could have prevented applying Kantemir's new Syllabic verse.

On the other hand, cultural and historical factors can favour the introduction of special features from other languages, a sort of "violation of the native tongue". Here I would like to show some cases related to Italian verse.

Usually, new Russian verse enriched its arsenal of meters and rhythms by poetic translations. The poetic translation was not only a form of "adaptation of foreign texts and models to native habits", but also an opportunity to introduce new forms and principles into native poetic culture.

From this point of view, also the introduction of the Syllabotonic system was a kind of "adaptation of foreign models to native habits". The whole of the 18th century was characterized by such an activity of translation and domestication. The main

prototypes were French and German. In spite of that, Italian culture and its poetry found a special niche. This was musical poetry, the lyrics of melodramas, arias, librettos and so on. In the beginning, translations had only to inform the sovereigns of the content of dramas, librettos and so on, but in the late 1760s and later, translations of musical texts were bound to musical performance. It meant that translated text should have reflected the rhythmic movement of the original text. Hence handwritten musical scores provide very interesting information. There are plenty of cases where Italian verse influenced Russian metrical forms. I shall give you some examples:

It will be important to remember that while Kirill Trediakovskij tried to reform Russian Verse, he also translated the libretto of Prata-Araja opera *La forza dell'amore e dell'odio* (The force of love and hate, 1736). Actually, we do not know whether this translation was meant to be performed or was only an abstract for the benefit of Anna Ioannovna. However, arias were translated into verse and there are examples of the equimetrical transposition of Italian verse:

Гнев твой меня не устрашает...
 Non mi spaventa il tuo furore
 Однако ты умрешь, изменник.
 Cadrai svenato o traditore.
 Я не смотрю на твою бодрость,
 La tua costanza io non pavento,
 Нет ни жалости ни милости?
 Non v'è pietà? Non v'è clemenza?

We have some Italian *novenari* (nine-syllable verses) transposed into Russian syllabic *devjatisložniki*. The last verse has no correspondence in stress position (for an equi-rhythmical reception we should read жалóсти and милóсти), but a perfect correspondence in syllable number. It means that Trediakovskij was more concerned with this aspect of Italian verse than with the tonic one (see Garzonio 1995).

Throughout the whole of the 18th century and at the beginning of the 19th we can find many examples of efforts to transpose Italian verse into Russian Syllabotonic mode. In musical poetry, besides equimetric proposals, we also have *sineresis* and *synalefis*. Actually, it was exactly at this time that a new myth of Russian culture was created. I mean the musicality of verse, an idealizing of verse as a synthetic expression of thought and harmony. Everybody educated in Russian poetical culture remembers the famous words pronounced by Puškin about Batjuškov's poetry. "Perfect Italian sounds". This was not just a metaphorical comment, but it was a concept linked to a specific trend in the Russian poetry of Romanticism, where the harmonic musicality of the Russian language was perceived as the "Italian" of the new era. Russian poetry was perceived as the new "Italian poetry" of contemporary times.

The generation of poets from Puškin's epoch were nurtured with a particular love of Italian music and Italian poetry. The so-called "Italian school" was invented,

oriented towards Petrarchism on the one hand and on Italian *belcanto* on the other. By that I mean not only Semen Raič (who was Tjutčev and Lermontov's teacher), but a wider cultural concept. This situation also influenced metrics and put the question of a comparison between Russian and Italian verse and their nature (see Garzonio 1986).

The idea of the harmonic development of Russian verse, of the harmonic nature of Russian language was reflected in poetic practice and in theoretical thought.

In some essays on the idea of musical interpretation of verse of the 1820s (for instance the works of Kubarev and Nadeždin), the proposal of analysing verse on the basis of musical theory concluded that Russian versification was as musical as Italian. Here a very important role was played by Biagioli, whose observations on the poetry of Dante and Petrarca were respected in Russia (see Garzonio 1987).

It was not surprising, therefore, that a young representative of Puškin's *pléiade*, Stepan Ševyrev, argued for the employment of Italian poetic license in Russian verse, in the shape of elision/synalefis. He used elisions in his translations of Dante and Tasso, basing himself on what he thought of as the similar musicality of the Russian and Italian languages. Ševyrev claimed that Russian folk poetry used elisions similar to those of Italian. For him, this meant being a true Slavophile. In his article *O vozmožnosti vesti ital'janskiju oktavu v russkoe stixosloženie* (on the possibility of introducing Italian ottava into Russian versification), Ševyrev wrote that the Russian language "в своих стихиях первобытных, измененных влиянием соседей западных и Немецкою тоническою просодиею, заключает в себе начала, близкие к стихиям языка Италиянского" [in its original elements, changed by the influence of Western neighbours and German tonic prosody, contains principles close to the elements of Italian language (Ševyrev 1831: 280)]. Ševyrev is persuaded that Italian pronunciation gives its language and verse a special cantability, a kind of recitative, like the one we know in lyrical opera, and such a recitative is characteristic of Russian folk songs.

Afterwards, he tried to employ some euphonic features of Italian metrics, such as *synalefis*, and a certain musicality, which he believed can be found in Russian folk poetry, in his translation from Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* (VII Canto). See the following examples of *synalefis*:

А в сердце изменнику вникает хлад...
 Отважный витязь, что Гернанда убил...
 Что об щит его Раймонде блещет вера та же...
 И всякой раз вскипая боле и боле...
 Срацины и демоны не покидали...

The idea that traditional Russian folk poetry was close to the Italian model and that the German Tonic model drove Russian poetry away from this natural form and from its proximity to Italian poetry, brings us once again to the initial question, the Trediakovskij-Lomonosov reform and another possibility of Kantemir. How decisive is the language and how decisive is culture in the choice of the verse form?

The general development of Italian and Russian poetry in the post-romantic

period, and particularly in the 20th century, provides us with some other interesting arguments.

On the one hand, the efforts of Italian poetry to introduce forms of Syllabotonic metrics is truly remarkable (for instance the so called *Odi Barbare* by Carducci), especially in Pascoli's attention to observing accentual schemes in his texts and the marked increase in stanzaic repertoire during Modernism. On the other hand, the general poetic culture from Modernism to the Avantgarde had a similar influence on Russian and Italian verse. Both developed freer forms of verse. Russian moved from the syllabotonic to the tonic system and to *vers libre* (for example in Kuzmin's poetry). Italian moved from the syllabic to the tonic system and to *vers libre*. Both literatures developed forms of visual poetry, and some points of contact can be traced during the high period of Futurism (for instance the dependence of Kamenskij and Šeršenevič on Marinetti's poetry).

In the Soviet period we see a refusal of Avantgarde literary expression. Something like this can be seen in fascist Italy, although the regime was much more tolerant to experimentation with Futurism.

In both poetical cultures we can see a return to classical forms. Such a return is stronger in Soviet official poetry than in Italian. Something quite interesting can be observed in non official Russian Soviet poetry after World War II. On the one hand, we have a rebirth of *vers libre*, on the other hand, we see the growth of a new Russian syllabic tradition linked first of all to the widespread practice of translating from Polish syllabic poetry.

In the Soviet Commonwealth, syllabics was represented first of all by Polish poetry (but also by some Turkish versifications). New interest in Syllabic poetry is related also to Italian poetry. By that I mean a rather curious attempt to do a new translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Starting from the 1970s, the yearbook "Dantovskie Čtenija" offered its readers a new syllabic translation of Dante by Moscow scholar Aleksandr Iljušin.

Between 1935 and 1945 Mixail Lozinskij made a superb Russian translation of the *Divine Comedy*. Lozinskij reproduced Italian *endecasillabi* with the Iambic Pentameter, which was always a traditional functional equivalent of the Italian metre (first examples were given by Pavel Katenin in the 1810s). Iljušin tried to recreate the medieval atmosphere of Italian *terzinas* by means of a special syllabic verse, which aspires to be considered a formal equivalent of the Italian one.

Here is an example:

На полдороге странствий нашей жизни
Я заблудился вдруг в лесу дремучем,
Попытки ж выйти вспясть не удались мне...

As you can see the Syllabic verse that Iljušin chose for his translation has a very high percentage of caesura after the fifth syllable. This form is rather archaic, very far from contemporary aesthetic sensibility. It is a kind of stylization with one very

curious element. I have just mentioned the practically constant position of verse caesura. This was required by Kantemir in his metric treatise. He defined the simple Russian *odinnadcatisložnik* as a verse of two hemistichs, the former of five syllables and the latter of six syllables. He also mentioned a second form, called *tupaja*, made by a hemistich of six syllables and another of five. And so, Iljušin's translation seems to be rhythmically closer to the 18th century Russian syllabic verse, than to the original Dantean *endecasillabo*. Recently Mixail Gasparov translated Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. The well-known scholar and translator decided to put the famous poem of chivalry into Russian free verses. This approach is accepted in contemporary Italian translations but it is almost non-existent in Russian tradition, where a Canonical verse form is usually chosen.

In Italian tradition, especially after the translations by Niccolò Tommaseo of *Canti del popolo Greco* and *Canti Illirici*, the practice of "metodo alineare", the translation line after line into euphonic and rhythmical prose / free verse, is generally overwhelming.

This approach radically distinguishes modern Italian poetic sensibility from the Russian one. Every Italian reader perceives a translation in "metodo alineare" as a poetic text, while Russian readers usually accept only a metric translation. Russian translators are busy finding functional semantic and metric equivalents while Italian translators are free from metric chains and their efforts are concentrated on restoring euphonic or iconic texture.

As it is not hard to verify, the cases of contact between Italian and Russian verse in the 20th century are sporadic and linked to philological approaches. This doesn't mean that the distance between Russian and Italian versification was determined by specific linguistic obstacles. Rather obstacles were of a cultural nature. Russian verse could not become syllabic because only the Syllabotonic system answered the needs of a particular intonation. Again the Russian poets' love of the musicality of Italian verse was a myth based on the special reception of Italian poetry. Such circumstances are confirmed by the idea of Russians recognizing the iambic nature of Italian verse rhythm and by the different ways in which verses by Russian and Italian poets are recited. While in Italian contemporary verse an intimate, prosaic, minor tone of reading is the rule, Russian verse has to be strongly marked rhythmically. I do not mean only the official poets of the Soviet era, from Majakovskij to the generation of thaw, but for most of the general Russian tradition of the 20th century.

This situation has been changing quite fast over the last few years. My judgement concerns Modern Russian poetry linked to Classical patterns. What had been happening over the last two decades is yet to be described. It is indeed culture and not language that is deciding the destiny of Russian and Italian verse. And culture is to be understood as tradition and innovation.

In one conversation the well-known poetess Elena Švarc told me that only Russian verse defends poetry from death. Other western forms of verse based on *vers libre* are seen as chaotic and indefinable. They cannot be read and perceived as verses...

It is clear that it is very hard for Russian poetry to abandon the original ideas of Russian verse reform. Perhaps, Lomonosov is still our contemporary. Russian verse needs a strongly marked rhythm to be distinguished from everyday discourse.

Let me finish with some words about Italian verse. For many centuries Italian verse was syllabic. As Gasparov's studies and statistics show, there may have been an attempt to make it syllabotonic, but this process never reached the rigidity of the German and Russian traditions.

It is clear that there were no cultural reasons for changing such a trend. The reason is not basically linguistic, – the possibility of composing syllabotonic verses in Italian, as shown above, is obvious, – but rather cultural. We could suggest that such an orientation had and has its foundation in a particular attitude on the part of the Italians towards composing, performing and perceiving poetry. The chance of a choice in considering a diphthong one or two syllables and in introducing *syneresis* gives the poet great freedom. As shown by performance, Italian poetry is based on a special intonation, which is very far from a rigid prosodic scheme. This scheme is perceived as something unnatural and archaic.

In the 20th century the Syllabic system was strongly undermined by the great diffusion of international *vers libre*. What makes Italian verse a verse is first of all lexicon, style and intonation. Prosody loses its pre-eminent position. Verse becomes a form of interior text, not loudly pronounced, but read in silence and built almost exclusively on other forms of rhythmical movement (rhythm of images, of tropes and so on).

On the other hand, especially over the last few decades we have witnessed new tendencies. First of all, as in other national traditions, the new strong connection of poetry and music is seen in various genres of songs by singer/songwriters (in Italian poetry we have the re-invention of the rhyme, which 20th century verse libre had abandoned), then we see a renewed interest in reciting poetry (for example, there have been several attempts at new readings of Dante's Comedy) and a new interest in Classical versification, especially when the new poetics of Postmodernism and Post-postmodernism have shown the crisis of the destructive attitude of Modernism and Avantgarde. It is again culture and not the mechanics of linguistic material that decides the destiny of poetic forms.

Bibliography

- Beltrami 1991: P.G. Beltrami, *La metrica italiana*, Bologna 1991.
- Boss 1963: V. Boss, *La Quatrième ode de Kantemir et L'Italia Liberata de Gian Giorgio Trissino*, "Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique", IV, 1963, 1-2, pp. 47-55.
- Garzonio 1986: S. Garzonio, *S.E. Raič e la "scuola italiana"* (Contributo alla storia dei dibattiti poetici in Russia negli anni Venti del secolo XIX), "Il Confronto letterario", 1986, 5, pp. 219-245; 6, pp. 453-472.

- Garzonio 1987: S. Garzonio, *Ob avtorstve odnoj stat'i v žurnale "Galateja", posvjaŝennoj ital'janskomu stixu*, in: *Le romantisme russe et les littératures néo-latines*, Firenze 1987, pp. 71-88.
- Garzonio 1995: S. Garzonio, *Trediakovskij – perevodčik ital'janskix muzykal'nyx p'es*, "Slavianovedenie", 1995, 1, pp. 50-60.
- Gasparov 1994: M.L. Gasparov, *Sovremennij russkij stix. Metrika i ritmika*, Moskva 1994.
- Gasparov 1997: M.L. Gasparov, *Russkij sillabičeskij trinadcatislložnik*, in: M.L. Gasparov, *Izbrannye trudy*, III, *O stixe*, Moskva 1997, pp. 132-157.
- Šapir 1996: M.I. Šapir, *U istokov russkogo četyreŝtopnogo jamba: geneziŝ i evolucija ritma (K sociologičeskoj xarakteristike stixa rannego Lomonosova)*, "Philologica", III (N° 5/7), 1996, pp. 69-101.
- Ševyrev 1831: S.P. Ševyrev, *O vozmožnosti vvesti italijanskiu oktavu v russkoe stixosloženie*, "Teleskop", 1831, 11, pp. 263-299.

Abstract

Stefano Garzonio

Italian and Russian Verse: Two Cultures and Two Mentalities

The present text was given as a talk at Stanford University in 2003. Here the author presents a comparative analysis of Russian and Italian versification and pays attention to the cultural contacts between these two poetical traditions in an effort to define the role played by Italian patterns in Russian verse. In this perspective the author offers a history of Russian poetical translation of Italian texts pointing out the different opinions of Russian poets about the "musicality" of Italian verse. The combined influence of language and culture in modeling different Russian poetical forms in a chronological perspective is underlined.