

# The Metrics of Four Czech Poets in Russian Translations

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**Abstract:** The paper considers the poetry of four Czech authors – František Gellner, Viktor Dyk, Karel Toman, and Fráňa Šrámek – in their Russian-language translations. Based on known published translations made by 17 Russian translators throughout the 20th century, it describes their metrical and stanzaic forms in comparison with the original Czech poems. The description and comparative analysis serve to consider a number of questions, including which of the Czech forms appear most attractive to Russian translators, which formal elements are typically preserved and which are significantly altered in the translations, and how Russian readers' overall perception of the four Czech poets and their oeuvres is shaped through the choices made by translators, in terms of versification.

**Keywords:** Comparative verse studies; Czech poetry; poetry translation; Russian poetry; Czech and Russian literary relations

## 1. Introduction

Despite certain relatively long-lived scholarly interest in Czech-Russian literary connections, they have rarely been considered in the light of 19th- or 20th-century versification. In Czechia, Russian versification was studied by Jaroslav Závada, brother of the poet Vilém Závada. Among others, he authored a monograph on the aesthetics of Russian verse (Závada 1949a) and essays on the Czech translations of Pushkin's (Závada 1949b) or Majakovskij's poetry (Závada 1951). Závada's interest in Russian verse also influenced his understanding of the Czech verse system, particularly in his attempts to coin the term amphibrach for Czech dactyl with anacrusis – although this was found rather unconvincing by the scholarly community (see, e.g., Horálek 1949). Karel Horálek, a respected linguist, also carried out research in the versification

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of various Slavic languages (see, e.g., Horálek 1977). Notable works specifically related to Czech and Russian poetic translation include those written by Roman Jakobson, Miroslav Červenka, and Květa Sgallová: Jakobson proposed the idea of functional equivalency regarding translations of Russian meters to Czech (Jakobson 1995[1930]), while Červenka and Sgallová closely analysed the metrics of Czech translations of Pushkin (Červenka, Sgallová 2015[1992]).

Few works are dedicated specifically to Russian translations of Czech poetry. In Russian, the research literature for translations of Czech poetry comprises individual essays dedicated to either the works of particular translators or to translations from a particular Czech poet (Budagova 1965; Korychankova, Kriukova 2012; Korychankova, Kriukova 2019; Nikolaeva 1964; Pozdniakova 1993; Romanenko 1990; Solov'jova 1989). Although such essays include occasional observations or comments concerning versification, no dedicated research in the verse of Russian translations from Czech poetry could be identified.

This paper is a step to fill the gap, by analysing the Russian translations of four Czech poets: Viktor Dyk (1877–1931), František Gellner (1881–1914), Karel Toman (1877–1946), and Fráňa Šrámek (1877–1952). These poets (we should note that there are differences in their poetics and not everything listed below, based on Burova 2013: 48–49, is true for each of them) are typically associated with the second generation of Czech modernists that rejected the concept of “elite” art and committed to seeking unity between literature and real life. As opposed to abstract “symbolist” ideas and images, they promoted real-life objects and themes, and replaced a universal viewpoint with authentic and concrete individual experience. They also made extensive use of colloquial urban language, including its “inferior” registers. They were not interested in *vers libre* – which had been cherished by symbolists – and revived more organised structures based on regular rhythm and rhymes. In composition, they tended towards shorter stanzas with various kinds of repetitions and towards other elements and forms typical of songs, often derived from urban folklore or *cabaret* culture. In fact, some pieces by Gellner and Šrámek eventually entered into urban folk culture as verses of popular songs.

While reviving metrical verse forms, they also used elements of verse less frequent at the time: ternary meters (all the four of them), free iambic verse (mostly Toman), starting iambic lines with multisyllabic words<sup>1</sup> (all the four of them), or starting trochaic lines with monosyllabic words (Šrámek), etc. After an important period of fervent, rhetorical, nationalist poetry or overly

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<sup>1</sup> Although Czech features fixed stress on the first syllable, it is possible to start a iambic line with a multisyllabic word.

sophisticated symbolist verse, they reverted to more structured and simple forms.<sup>2</sup>

In Russian, while the above authors are mentioned quite often, few published go beyond these mere mentions. In fact, the literature is virtually limited to a number of *memoranda* (Budagova 1972; Budagova 1975; Galimzianova 2021; Sherlaimova 1964; Viazovtseva 2021), parts of chapters or more detailed mentions in coursebooks, monographs, or review articles in Czech literary history (Budagova 2001; Kishkin 1963; Kuznetsova 1987; Markov et al. 1963; Sherlaimova 2004; Zhitnik 1994). Russian scholars – as well as Czech literary historians – often consider the four poets as members of a group, although they had never been organised formally as such. Relying on the Czech literary, critical, and scholarly traditions of the time, primarily on mainstream literature and František Buriánek in particular (e.g., Buriánek 1968), Russian researchers refer to them as to *buntari* (*buřiči* in Czech, both meaning “troublemakers”) and *anarkhisty* (“anarchists”).<sup>3</sup>

This paper is based on a comparative analysis of metrical and stanzaic structures of poems by the four Czech poets and their Russian translations by various translators in different periods. The analysis aimed to determine which Czech verse forms appeared most attractive to Russian translators, which formal elements were typically preserved in their translations, through the closest formal analogues, and which forms were replaced with functional analogues or other forms; more generally, it discusses how the Czech “anarchist” poets appear to Russian readers, through their translations, in terms of the choices of verse forms made by the translators, and whether or to what extent the way they appear is consistent with their actual roles in the Czech literary process.

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<sup>2</sup> Little is known of how much and what exactly the four Czech poets knew or read of Russian literature. It appears, however, that Toman, Gellner, and Dyk were influenced by German and French literature (particularly Heinrich Heine, Richard Dehmel, Paul Verlaine). However, Šrámek’s works (see Buriánek 1959) evince a certain level of interest in Russian literature, particularly in the Russian classical novel (e.g., Tolstoy) and drama (Chekhov). However, this evidence is naturally valid for Šrámek’s prose and plays, not for his poetry. The only exception we know about is a short review of the first publication of his collection of poems entitled *Splav* (1916), where the reviewer states that “The father of such a poetry is the Russian Valerii Briusov, with a group of symbolists” (Zvěřina 1917). However, because the review was published during World War I, connections with Russia may have been exaggerated.

<sup>3</sup> One other author often mentioned in connection with this group, besides a number of little-known authors, is Stanislav Kostka Neumann.

## 2. Material and main sources

The research considered all the Russian translations of poetry by Viktor Dyk, František Gellner, Karel Toman, and Fráňa Šrámek that could be found, published in different sources. The overall material comprises 138 Czech poems from the period between 1898 and 1952 and their 158 Russian translations by 17 different translators. For the Czech poems, the main sources for our analysis were the Czech Digital Library (Svadbová et al. eds. 2005), Toman 1997, Šrámek 2000, and Gellner 2012a; 2012b. For the Russian translations, the main sources primarily included the three volumes of the 1959 *Antologija* edited by L. S. Kishkin, A. P. Solov'jova, S. A. Sherlaimova, and S. V. Nikol'skij (Kishkin et al. 1959).<sup>4</sup> Another important source was the 1982 anthology *Rany i rozy*, edited by A. P. Solov'jova (Solov'jova 1982) and comprising translations from Josef Svatopluk Machar, Antonín Sova, Karel Toman, and Fráňa Šrámek. A number of translations were also retrieved from collected works by their respective authors (Bal'mont 1990; Bal'mont 2001; Chulkov 2019; Litinskaja 1992; Malevich 2015) or anthologies of Czech and Slovak poetry (Sherlaimova 1975; Blaginka, Fel'dek 1983).

The two main sources for this study, *Antologija* and *Rany i rozy*, are two very different types of publications. *Antologija* is an extensive three-volume collection of poetry by multiple authors of many generations and, compared to *Rany i rozy*, it features relatively few poems by each individual author. Nonetheless, Toman with 14 poems, Šrámek with 11 poems, and Gellner with 11 poems are (in contrast to Dyk – see below) represented quite well, including samples from most of their books of poetry that had been published in their lifetimes. *Antologija* does not provide us with the bibliography of Czech originals. It would be interesting to know whether the selection of poems comes from a critical edition of collected or selected poems or from some kind of anthology (in which case the poems would have been preselected). It is hard to guess, but in Gellner's case the source may likely be the 1952 anthology of his poems, which contains all the poems published in *Antologija* (Gellner 1952).<sup>5</sup> As for Viktor Dyk, his works are only represented with 7 poems from

<sup>4</sup> On the importance of this publication, see Budagova 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Although this is a purely Marxist anthology (with a purely Marxist foreword), it seems that these translations were still subject to censorship. Note, for instance, the translation entitled “Ne zhdu nichego ot reform...”. The Czech original (“Nečekám nic od reforem...”) reads: “Nad mou hlavou rudý prapor / hlásá pouze zmar a zápor”, meaning “Above my head [there is] the red banner / only declares death and negation...” The original poem was composed in 1903, therefore the red banner mentioned in the quote refers to the banner of anarchists – not communists. The

his so-called “war tetralogy” (four books of civic poetry dedicated to World War I), although he also published multiple books of poetry, both before and after the war.

The anthology *Rany i rozy* only features poetry by Toman and Šrámek, out of the four authors considered here. Contrary to *Antologija*, it provides a bibliography of Czech sources, which shows that these are ordinary editions mainly of selected or collected works. Šrámek is represented much more extensively; moreover, while Czech readers are mostly familiar with Šrámek’s early poetry, including his famous book *Splav*, they hardly know much of his later poems, which are considered less masterful and are therefore seldom republished. However, *Rany i rozy* features translations from all his books of poetry, including later and less known ones. In fact, Šrámek’s later poems are even more numerous here than his early ones, including 10 poems from *Nové básně* and 7 poems from *Rány, růže* (which inspired the title of the Russian anthology *Rany i rozy*), which would likely come as unexpected to a Czech reader.

As for Karel Toman’s poetry, there is nothing out of the ordinary about the selection found in the two considered anthologies, which feature all his poetic books in equal measure – except for *Měsíce*, which is represented in its entirety. The only poetic book that appears to be completely excluded is his first one, *Pohádky krve*, which was strongly influenced by decadents; Toman himself was very reserved about this collection and republished it only once. Another notable exclusion is his book *Hlas ticha*. The original book comprises 12 poems, but *Rany i rozy* only features 5 of them, clearly avoiding those dealing with Russia or the USSR – unsurprisingly, as the left-out poems are openly critical, for example, by referring to the famine of 1921 and other effects of the regime.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. Authors and translators

The distribution of translations between different poets and translators is shown in Table 1. Russian translators appeared to be more interested in Toman and Šrámek, while Dyk and Gellner were translated less frequently. One reason could be that both Gellner and Dyk died much earlier (in 1914

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Russian translation, however, reads: “Poloshchetsia krasnoe znamja, / Kak simvol svobody, kak plamja”, meaning “The red flag is flapping / As a symbol of liberty, like a flame”. By altering the original Czech lines, the translation makes them associate with the red banner of the Bolshevik revolution and completely reverses the image and the meaning behind it.

and 1931 respectively), while translators may have been more interested in following their recently active “contemporaries”. Furthermore, both Toman and Šrámek survived World War II and anti-fascist motives were strong in their poetry, which made them particularly important for the post-war Soviet agenda and therefore demanded by state publishers.<sup>6</sup> Some of Toman’s and Šrámek’s poems even came to have two different translations each; in that relation, Toman’s *Měsíce* – an earlier work with no reference to the anti-fascist agenda – were of particular interest among translators, just as they were to Czech readers, critics, and scholars: 7 out of the 12 poems in the book have two Russian translations. For each of the seven poems, one of the two translations is by Konstantin Bal’mont, while the second is by Jurij Vronskij for “Leden”, “Březen”, and “Duben”, David Samojlov for “Únor”, Irina Gurova for “Květen”, Natella Gorskaja for “Listopad” and “Prosinec”.

Vronskij translated the most poems of those considered here, with a clear preference for Toman; a considerable number of translations was also contributed by Gorskaja, who was equally interested in Toman and Šrámek, and by Grigorij Kruzhkov, who focused solely on Šrámek. Five other translators, namely Bal’mont, Gurova, Antonin Ladinskij, Ruvim Moran, and Marija Pavlova, showed considerable interest in the authors discussed here, each of them having created from 7 to 14 translations. Bal’mont and Gurova worked more on Toman, Pavlova preferred Šrámek, while Ladinskij and Moran distributed their attention between Šrámek and Gellner, with preference given to the latter. The remaining eight translators created five or less translations of poems by the discussed authors, which makes their contribution appear occasional.

It should be noted that interest in the Czech poets changed over time. The generation of translators born before the Russian revolution (Bal’mont, Ladinskij, Moran, Martynov) only translated a few poems, but they chose works by all four authors, that is, Dyk, Gellner, Toman, and Šrámek. Later “Soviet” generations ignored Gellner altogether. The generation born in the 1920s (Vaksmakher, Vronskij, Gorskaja, Gurov, Gurova, Samojlov) preferred Toman over Dyk or Šrámek, although all three were within their scope.

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<sup>6</sup> It is remarkable that translations from these poets were included in thematic collections with self-explanatory titles, such as “From Dark to Dawn: The Poetry of Anti-Fascist Resistance in Czechoslovakia” (*Iz mraka k rassvetu: Poezija fashistskogo soprotivlenija Chekhoslovakiji*) (Sherlaimova, Belza 1975), “The Poetry of the Great Patriotic War and Anti-Fascist Resistance” (*Poezija Velikoj Otechestvennoj vojny i antifashistskogo Soprotivlenija*) (*Poezija Velikoj Otechestvennoj vojny* 1980), “Noble Rage: Anti-Fascist European Poetry” (*Jarost’ blagorodnaja: Antifashistskaja poezija Evropy*) (*Jarost’ blagorodnaja* 1970).

Finally, KruzHKov and Kuznetsova, who were born in the 1940s, appear to have focused on Šrámek alone.

### 3.2. Metrical typology

The metrical typology of both the Czech poems and their Russian translations is quite diverse. Let us consider the wide range of metrical and stanzaic forms, based on the data included in Tables 2, 3, and 4.<sup>7</sup>

The total number of metrical forms identified in the Czech poems was 20, while their Russian translations accounted for 31 forms. The ratios of the main groups of meters (trochees, iambs, ternary, and tonic) in the Czech poems and their Russian translations are 15 : 57 : 10 : 18 and 16 : 57 : 11 : 16 respectively. The two sets of data show only minor differences, and so at first sight it seems that Russian readers have been provided by an adequate perspective of the overall metrical landscape of this specific Czech poetry.

For comparison, let us consider the same ratios for Russian poetry of the first half of the 20th century (1890–1935 and 1936–1957 respectively (Gasparov 2000: 316)): 21 : 45 : 15 : 19 and 23 : 43 : 22 : 12. In both the Czech poems and their Russian translations considered in this paper, the shares of trochee and ternary meters are lower compared to their average shares in

<sup>7</sup> It is important here to comment on terminology and clarify differences between several terms when applied to Czech or Russian verse.

1) In Czech versification, there is a meter identified as dactyl with anacrusis (in the Russian language, its closest analogue would be amphibrach). Such verse may freely alternate, within the same text, with ordinary dactyls that have no anacrusis, and such alterations would not be considered a violation of dactylic meter. Although the sources of this paper include no poems based on pure dactyl with anacrusis, occasional lines with anacrusis do appear in several dactylic poems.

2) There are no anapests in Czech verse because the accentological properties of the Czech language make anacrusis of two syllables impossible.

3) In Czech verse studies, the term *dol'nik* is not typically used (with the only exception of a little-known German dissertation by the Czech émigré Miloš Sedmidubský (Sedmidubský 1988)). However, Czech verse does make use of structures that are formally similar to the Russian *dol'nik* and are referred to as “free dactyl-trochees” or “free logaoedics”. For the purposes of this paper, to facilitate comparative analysis and to avoid overcomplicating the terminology, such Czech structures are referred to as *dol'niks*.

4) In the same manner, in order to make the comparison of metrical structures more readable and comprehensive, for the purposes of this paper, certain Czech metrical structures were referred to as *taktovik*. This simplification was used in relation to structures where unstressed intervals between *icti* varied in length between 0 to 2 or 1 to 3 syllables. Typically, Czech verse considers such structures as occasions of *vers libre*.

original Russian poetry of the time, while iambic meters are used more extensively. The share of non-accentual-syllabic meters in both the Czech poems and their translations is higher than the average for Russian poetry of 1936–1957 and tends more towards the earlier and more experimental period in the history of Russian verse.

In the considered poems and their translations, the most widely used metrical forms are iambs where lines vary in syllabic lengths, both regularly (Russian *raznostopnyj* iamb) and irregularly (Russian *vol'nyj* iamb, or “free” iamb). One explanation could be that a significant share of the translations is from Toman, whose apparent preferences were with those meters. The ratios of regularly and irregularly varying iambic verse in the Czech poems and their Russian translations was 57 : 43 and 46 : 54 respectively. This reflects the fact that the Czech free iambic verse was often translated into Russian with more regular iambic meters (e.g., Toman’s “Zima” in 4- and 5-foot iamb was translated by Vronskij using 5-foot iamb, while Kruzhkov used iambic verse with regular alternation of lines of different lengths for Šrámek’s “Prosinec”, which is originally composed with an irregular alternation of lines of different lengths) or with purely tonic meters (e.g., Bal’mont translated Toman’s “Únor”, written in “free” iamb in Czech, using free ternary meter with alternating anacruses, while Ladinskij used the free *dol'nik* for his translation of “Vřes” by Šrámek). Experimenting with tonic verse in translations may have been provoked by the atypical structure of the Czech free iambs in these poems: in Toman, the syllabic lengths of his iambic lines vary within a range that is unusually wide for a Russian reader, and there are no rhymes, while Šrámek also uses unusually short lines.

In general, compared to the Czech poets, the Russian translators apparently avoided the most irregular metrical forms, including free *dol'nik*, *vers libre*, or polymetrical verse, translating them with more regular forms. For example, where Šrámek used free *dol'nik* in his “Odjezdy”, including frequent “dactylic” lines with 2 or 4 *icti*, Vronskij in his translation (“Otjezdy”) opted for regularly alternating lines of 4-foot and 2-foot dactyl; in his translation of Šrámek’s “Kratičký sen o domečku” (“Korotkij son o domike”), Kruzhkov also replaced *dol'nik* with dactyl and, in his Russian versions of “Když ke dni den” and “Svatováclavské vzpomínání 1945” by the same author (in Russian, “Kogda ty mne darish novyj den, chtoby zhit” and “Vospominanie o sviatom Vatslave. 1945”), he replaces the original Czech *vers libre* with Russian 5-ictus *dol'nik* and free *taktovik* respectively. It should be noted though that, in the latter two poems, the original verse is rhymed (which is not unusual in Czech *vers libre*), and also there is a trend towards metricalisation (dactylic and dactylic-trochaic



rhythmical tendency), therefore the choice of more regular tonic meters in their translated versions may be considered justified.

Most of the material considered in this paper consists of translations from Toman and Šrámek. As manifested in Table 3, the two poets are shown as very different authors, in terms of their metrical preferences. Two of every three translations from Toman are iambic – either with regularly alternating lines of different lengths or in irregular, free iambic verse, with the latter form slightly prevalent. Overall, the metrical typology of the “Russian” Toman includes 13 different forms. Translations from Šrámek are less numerous, but their metrical typology is twice as rich, accounting for 24 metrical forms. Šrámek’s translations do not manifest as strong a preference towards any specific forms, although 4-foot trochaic verse is the most frequently used of any form. That is quite unexpected, considering the trends in Czech verse of the period, and would have been more typical of early 19th-century Czech poetry. However, it suitably represents Šrámek’s personal predilection for 4-foot trochee. In general, the distribution of meters between translations from the four authors gives a good impression of their actual respective preferences. Specifically, Toman tended to use free iambic verse, Gellner was keener on 4- or 5-foot iamb, and so was Dyk, while Šrámek was inclined to use 4-foot trochee. Although 4-foot trochee was far from the most popular meter in Czech poetry of the 20th century, it manifestly characterises Šrámek as an author of songs, including those associated with (urban) folk tradition.

### 3.3. Stanzaic typology

As can be seen from Table 4, most of the material discussed here comprises stanzaic texts that represent an impressive variety of stanzaic forms, including rhymed, half-rhymed, and unrhymed, with similar or varying schemes, of different lengths from two to eight lines, where the number of lines can be even or odd. Quatrains, however, prevail, as might be expected.

The same applies to the poetry of the four authors in general, especially with regard to Dyk and Gellner, who mostly used quatrains of 5-foot-iambic lines with just two alternating syllabic lengths, namely 11.10.11.10 or 10.11.10.11. Šrámek, besides quatrains, also tended to use longer stanzas of 6, 7, 8 lines. For Toman, quatrains were also his most frequently used form, though he would try to vary the “dull” quatrains by combining lines of several different syllabic lengths in unique combinations (e.g., four lines of 9.5.7.4 syllables or 11.4.7.6 syllables) and use them just in one or two poems, and then find a new

combination. In the 1890s, in the early days of their writing, Dyk and Toman also used rhymed or unrhymed tercets, though they abandoned this form in their later works.

Among the forms that border between stanzaic and non-stanzaic, the most numerous group of poems represents what may be called “fixed” forms. Most of them are translated from Toman’s *Měsíce*, which may be considered variations of his own signature fixed form. The book comprises 12 texts of free iambic verse, each composed of 13 lines and divided into two quintets and a tercet,<sup>8</sup> with occasional rhymes and irregular sequences of masculine and feminine clausulae. Toman’s form resembles the sonnet in both its length (13 lines vs 14 lines in classical sonnets) and structure (sequences of 5+5+3 lines vs 4+4+3+3 lines).

#### 3.4. Differences between the Czech poems and their Russian translations

When choosing a Russian metrical or stanzaic form intended to shape the Russian readers’ perception of their translations, Russian translators had various options. In many cases, they simply made use of the closest formal (not functional) equivalents of the original forms – for example, Czech trochee was translated using Russian trochee, Czech quatrains remained quatrains in the Russian translation. This is often the case in the material considered here: 89 out of the 155 translations closely recreate the metrical structure of their originals (sometimes with minor deviations), and 115 do that in terms of their stanzaic structure.<sup>9</sup> However, this still leaves a significant number of formal changes in meter and/or composition. Those changes may be classified as follows:

(a) use of more regular forms in the translation compared to those in the original, e.g., where “*dol’nik*” is used in the original, the Russian translation uses regular iamb, or non-stanzaic free-rhymed verse in the original is translated as regular quatrains;

<sup>8</sup> With the only exception of “*Říjen*”, which consists of three stanzas of 4+6+3 lines.

<sup>9</sup> In the material considered here, differences in types of clausulae occurred very often, obviously mainly due to accentological differences between Czech and Russian and were therefore considered irrelevant for the purposes of this study. However, irregular variations of different types of clausulae within a poem were regarded as a structural difference when compared to the regular alternation of only two types of clausulae in its translation, and *vice versa*.

(b) use of less regular forms in the translation compared to those in the original, e.g., regular trochee is translated into ternary meter with alternating anacruses, or regular quatrains become blank verse with no stanza at all;

(c) use of metrical and/or stanzaic forms that are not the closest formal analogues of those in the original but are as regular as the original forms, e.g., trochaic verse is translated with iamb or various stanzaic types within a poem follow in a different order.<sup>10</sup>

Based on this classification, for metrical forms, the Russian translations do not show a much greater predilection towards more regular meters (found in 30 translations) than towards less regular structures (found in 22 translations). Regarding stanzaic structures, on the other hand, Russian translators tended to include more irregularities, adding inconsistencies in rhyming, varying types of stanzas, using more blank lines etc., with the total number of translations with less regular stanzaic structures accounting for 29 cases, compared to only 9 translations with more regular stanzaic forms.

### 3.5. Individual translators and their approaches

All of the aforementioned observations and tendencies are very general, and individual translators may differ significantly in terms of both their preferences of Czech authors and their choices of specific poems or forms (see Table 5). Let us consider the issue more thoroughly and discuss works by those translators who showed a more sustained interest in the four Czech poets.<sup>11</sup>

Konstantin Bal'mont (1867–1942) was perhaps the most renowned of all the translators considered here. In relation to Czech poetry in particular, his dedicated volume of translations of the Parnassist poet Jaroslav Vrchlický (1853–1912), (Bal'mont 1928) is often referred to. He also authored a book entitled *Dusha Chekhii v slove i dele* (1931), which was not published until 2001

<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of this study, the following assumptions were made: binary or ternary meters are more regular than any other Czech or Russian meters; *dol'nik* is more regular than *taktovik*; any Russian or Czech meter is more regular than *vers libre*; any verse where lines vary in the number of metrical stresses is less regular than that where the number of metrical stresses does not vary; any stanzaic structure is more regular than any non-stanzaic structure; and forms based on similar stanzas are more regular than those where stanzas vary in their lengths or rhyming.

<sup>11</sup> This section will only deal with translators who translated more than five poems by the discussed authors.

(Bal'mont 2001).<sup>12</sup> In it, he contemplated Czech history, literature, and contemporary poetry, analysed and translated a number of poetic pieces, including those by Karel Toman – “vysoko-tonkogo, ideal'no-chuvstvujuschego poeta besprijutnykh” (“a highly-delicate, ideally-sensitive poet of the shelterless”) (Bal'mont 2001: 176).

Bal'mont translated Toman's poems using irregular metrical forms, that is, those where the number of *icti* and/or sequences of metrically “weak” and “strong” syllables vary without any particular system. Meanwhile, all the original poems were written in either free iambic verse or “transitional” forms that are close to it (e.g., “Mart” — the translation of Toman's “Březen”). Compared to their originals, Bal'mont's translations are more metrically diverse: free iamb and “transitional” forms (“Solnechnye chasy”, “Aprel”, “Maj”, “Nojabr”, “Dekabr”) appear alongside polymetrical verse (“Mart”), free ternary meters with variable anacruses and other deviations, and “transitional” free *doľnik* (“Janvar”, “Fevral”).

While half of Bal'mont's translations feature a metrical structure that is more complicated and diverse than that of the Czech originals, the other half keeps within free iamb, thus following the originals, despite changing or narrowing the range within the lengths of iambic lines.<sup>13</sup> In general, there is a clear tendency towards slightly longer lines in the translations.

In terms of their stanzaic structure, Bal'mont's translations are quite atypical, resembling the Czech originals. Bal'mont ventured to further “loosen” the already irregular original structure: in four translations, he eliminates the occasional rhymes – “Janvar”, “Aprel”, “Maj”, “Nojabr” are all unrhymed. In “Janvar”, masculine and feminine endings are joined by dactylic ones. In three translations, the text is divided into two (“Janvar”, “Maj”) or four (“Aprel”) stanzaic units, rather than three, as in the originals. In “Dekabr”, there are 14 lines like in a traditional sonnet, instead of 13 as in all the original Czech poems in Toman's *Měsíce*. It is only in two of Bal'mont's translations, namely in his “Fevral” and “Mart”, that the sequences of rhyming and blank lines, their number and types of clausulae accurately reproduce those of Toman's original poems.

Parts of Toman's *Měsíce* were also translated by Jurij Vronskij (1927–2008). His choices of verse forms were different from those of Bal'mont, primarily

<sup>12</sup> For more details on Bal'mont's book and its history, see Zhakova 2003.

<sup>13</sup> For example, Toman's “Listopad” contains iambic lines from two to six feet long, which Bal'mont translates as “Nojabr”, with lines that are from four to six feet long. “Sluneční hodiny” by Toman contains lines from two to five feet long, while Bal'mont in his translation entitled “Solnechnye chasy” makes them three to six feet long.

because he more closely followed the original forms. In Vronskij's Russian translations, Toman's free iambs become Russian free iambs, with only minor and occasional changes – for example, in five out of eight translations, the lengths of his iambic lines vary in a smaller range than they do in the original poems. The structure of three stanzaic units is generally preserved, while occasional rhymes or alternations of clausulae were sometimes altered.

In general, in his translations of the four Czech authors, Vronskij accurately reproduces both metrical and stanzaic structures of 17 out of 37 poems, and most changes are in terms of meter (14 poems). When it comes to stanzaic structure, the translator is more likely to follow the originals.

In the translations by Natella Gorskaja (1928–2008) considered in this paper, metrical structures differ from the original poems in more than half of the texts, and the same is true for their stanzaic structures. It is only in 11 out of her 28 translations that both metrical and stanzaic features accurately reproduce Czech originals — including clausulae but excluding only occasional minor deviations. Her translations from Toman appear to stick closer to the original verse structures, while those from Šrámek tend to vary more in terms of verse structure, especially where the Czech original meter is other than iambic or trochaic. This may be due to the fact that Šrámek's original poems tend to include minor deviations, like occasional lines that interrupt and/or alter the overall metrical structure of the poem. His verse forms are therefore less regular than those of Toman, often ambivalent, and thus give the translator a good reason to consider a variety of formal equivalents. Gorskaja obviously accepted the challenge and successfully rendered this difference between the verses of Toman and Šrámek for Russian readers to be able to perceive. In terms of stanzaic structure, deviations from the original structure often include rhyming schemes; other parameters like types of stanzas or whether the text is stanzaic or non-stanzaic remain true to the original.

Irina Gurova (1924–2010) accurately reproduces Czech meters and stanzaic structure using the closest formal Russian analogues in 7 out of her 14 translations. Wherever metrical structure is different in her translations, any differences are towards more free or less regular forms. For example, 4-foot iambs may be replaced with free iamb or *dol'nik*, meter with regular alternation of lines of different lengths may be replaced with free verse, and free dactyl may be replaced with ternary meter with variable anacrusis. In terms of their stanzaic structure, Gurova's translations are mostly accurate. It seems appropriate to highlight her translation of Dyk's "Hořké sloky" written in dactyl

(“Gor’kie stroki”), where dactylic clausulae, although not rare in Czech verse,<sup>14</sup> are transformed in Russian into rather exotic hyperdactylic ones. By using this type of clausulae, the translator makes Russian readers perceive Dyk’s poem as formally unusual and experimental in terms of rhyme, when it actually is not.

Even though Grigorij Kruzhkov (born 1945) only translated poems of one of the four authors discussed in this paper, his translations of Šrámek feature the widest diversity of metrical forms. He mostly prefers more regular meters, replacing polymetric forms with monometric ones, *vers libre* with either *dol’nik* or *taktovik*, purely tonic meters with binary or ternary regular meters, etc. This predilection for more regular meters is found in 13 out of his 24 translations.<sup>15</sup>

Four out of six of Gellner’s poems translated by Antonin Ladinskij (1895–1961) are in 5-foot iamb, including “Francesco Farniente”, which was originally written in iambic verse (4- and 3-foot iamb) with regularly alternating lines of different lengths (8.7.8.7.7). All four of his translations of Šrámek have their own meters and are different from the metrical structure of their respective Czech originals — trochee is translated as 3-foot iamb, free dactyl as a ternary meter with variable anacruses, free iamb as *dol’nik*, free *dol’nik* as 5-foot iamb.

Among the Russian translators who created at least ten translations of works by the four considered Czech poets, Vronskij and Kruzhkov represent two opposite approaches, in many ways. Vronskij’s translations are mostly of Toman, while Kruzhkov only translated Šrámek out of the four poets discussed here. Vronskij’s verse forms are far from diverse – his 37 translations feature as few as eight different meters, and 32 poems are in iambic verse; Kruzhkov’s 28 translations are in 15 different meters, and only two texts are iambic. As for Gurova and Gorskaja, they use similar approaches with no extreme choices. Each of them has translations from two different authors, of whom they both clearly prefer Toman. For each of them, the ratios of the number of metrical forms to the number of translated poems is 1 : 2, and over half of their translations are iambic.

<sup>14</sup> According to the data retrieved from the database of Czech verse (Plecháč – Kolár 2014) for the 19th to early 20th centuries, the ratios of masculine, feminine, and dactylic *clausulae* in dactyl verse are 18 : 55 : 27, in dactyl-trochee 12 : 69 : 19, while the same ratios for Dyk are 20 : 56 : 24 (dactyl) and 13 : 40 : 48 (dactyl-trochee).

<sup>15</sup> Kruzhkov’s translations include five texts (out of 24) that differ from their respective originals in length. Four translations are shorter than the original poems by 1 to 3 lines, and one translation is one line longer. None of the changes have any apparent explanation.

## 4. Conclusions

Although the poetry of Dyk, Gellner, Toman, and Šrámek was hardly popular with Russian translators, it was required, particularly that of Toman and Šrámek. Some of the poems were translated more than once and republished in various anthologies and collections. The choice of poems to be translated was motivated both by their ideological values (revolutionary, anti-war, anti-fascist, sometimes communist attitudes) and by their aesthetic formal peculiarities (the sophisticated metrical and stanzaic composition of Toman's *Měsíce* and stanzas of varying lengths, sometimes with uneven numbers of lines, with occasional or predominant blank lines, with multiple refrains and repetitions, intervening and overlapping, typical of songs).

Although the translators differ in their approach, in general, they tend to transform the original Czech metrical and/or stanzaic structures, with only around 42 percent (66 out of 158, not counting occasional deviations from the predominant form) of translations recreating both metrical and stanzaic features of their originals. Alterations are in terms of one or more of the following: meter, number of *icti*, types of stanzas, rhyming schemes, or even overall number of lines in a text. There is, however, one feature that remains without change in the translations, with only a few exceptions – if poems are stanzaic they remain stanzaic, if they are non-stanzaic they remain non-stanzaic. The translations by Grigorij Kruzhkov are the most independent from their Czech originals, while those by Ruvim Moran are the most accurate in terms of verse forms.

Generally, the most metrically irregular Czech poems tend to be translated with more regular metrical forms, although contrarily, less expressly irregular forms may also be replaced with something less regular, so that the overall picture gives no reason to talk of any general trends – neither “simplification”, nor “complication”. Another metrical trend is towards using longer lines in translation – obviously to make it easier for translators to accommodate as much of the original meaning as possible.

In the choice of stanzaic forms, however, Russian translators tend to seek more irregular analogues for more regular Czech forms. Along with the already impressive variety of stanzaic types, rhyming schemes, refrains, etc. selected for translation, this results in an overall picture that is quite vivid, if not exotic. The diversity of quatrains alone is very impressive, including, along with common alternate or plain rhymes, various half-rhymed or blank schemes (e.g., XaXa, XXAA, AAAX, AXAX, XXXx, and more).

In the context of the Russian tradition, a rich diversity of lyrical stanzaic structures and interest for fixed forms are associated with the early 20th

century, before 1913, that is, with Symbolist poetry primarily (Gasparov 2000: 260). This was a time when Russian poets experimented with traditional forms and derived new forms, even their own signature fixed forms, as well as new stanzas, including those with longer chains of rhymes, or non-rhymed or half-rhymed stanzas (Gasparov 2000: 262–265).<sup>16</sup> Judging by the translations discussed in this paper, Russian readers are likely to perceive Dyk, Gellner, Toman, and Šrámek in line with that “Symbolist” trend and associate them with the versification of the early 20th century, the poetry of Symbolists and decadents.<sup>17</sup> However, in reality, the four Czech poets belonged to a younger generation that departed from Symbolism and decadence, as well as from formal experimentation, giving preference to more traditional verse forms, simple quatrains, and traditional rhymes. Therefore, by their choice of poems with more complicated and atypical stanzaic structures, or the transformation of original structures into less typical ones, Russian translators, while giving their readers a strong impression of how well the Czech poets mastered versification, may also disrupt their understanding of the 20th-century Czech literary process.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Mikhail Gasparov emphasised that, in the Silver Age of Russian poetry, “novye strofy opiralis’ preimushchestvenno na traditsionnye sillabo-tonicheskie razmery i traditsionnuju tochnuju rifmovku. Kogda okolo 1913 goda eksperimenty s chistoj tonikoj i s netochnoj rifmoj pochni zapolnjajut poeziju, to eksperimenty so strofikoj, kak by dlja kompensatsii, ischezajut iz vidu: prostyje 4-stishija gospodstvujut vnov” (“new stanzas were based primarily on traditional syllabic-tonic meters and traditional perfect rhyming. When, around 1913, experiments in pure tonic meters and imperfect rhymes become virtually predominant, experiments in strophic forms, as if to compensate for that, retire from sight, and simple quatrains come to prevail again”) (Gasparov 2000: 266).

<sup>17</sup> Apart from the mainstream term used for the group (*buřiči*), these poets are sometimes called Post-Symbolists in Czech literary history even though they have little in common with the Symbolists’ meters. But readers of the Russian translations could consider the term Post-Symbolists to be quite reasonable.

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