

# German and Spanish rhythmic accents in Russian three-ictus dolnik

Vera Polilova\*

**Abstract:** This article presents a comparative rhythmic analysis of two types of Russian three-ictus dolnik: a heterosyllabic variant used as an equivalent of the German three-stress meter and an isosyllabic variant (7M/8F/9D) used as an equivalent of the Spanish octosyllabic meter. The corpus under examination is divided into two subcorpora. Subcorpus A consists of translations of Heinrich Heine's poems, comprising 732 lines from 51 translations by twelve Russian translators, published between 1911 and 2003. Subcorpus B consists of translations of Federico García Lorca's and Spanish folk *romances*, comprising 1,006 lines from 17 translations by six Russian translators, published between 1940 and 1991. The main questions addressed are: 1) How do the rhythmic characteristics of three-ictus dolnik differ in translations from German and Spanish? 2) Is the translated dolnik rhythmically different from the original Russian dolnik? 3) If so, can these differences be attributed to the influence of foreign verse? 4) How did the canonization of dolnik in mid-twentieth-century Russian poetry influence its use in translations? 5) How do isotonic and isosyllabic factors interact within the dolnik rhythm? To answer these questions, the article outlines the structure of dolnik and its role in Russian versification. It provides a historical overview of how different variants of the meter have been used in translations and then proceeds to a detailed rhythmic analysis (including stressing, length of inter-ictic intervals, syllabic length, and the proportion of different line types) of the variants in question. The results of the rhythmic analysis demonstrate how translators' strategies differ and evolve over time, revealing the specific properties of each subcorpus, their differences from each other, and their divergences from the original twentieth-century Russian dolnik. The findings underscore the flexibility of metrical forms and their broad potential for rhythmic imitation of foreign verse. The article also shows that the canonization of experimental meters in the original poetic tradition facilitates the canonization of these meters in translated poetry, which gradually diverges from foreign prototypes.

**Keywords:** poetic translation, Heine in translation, Spanish octosyllable in translation, Russian three-ictus dolnik.

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\* Author's address: Vera Polilova, Faculty of Letters and Arts, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Bd. Victoriei nr. 10, 550024, Sibiu, Romania. Email: vera.polilova@gmail.com.

## 1. Introduction

Thirty-five years ago, Lucilla Pszczołowska described translated verse as “a largely independent, special world, a special sphere, and finally a special system of verse forms”, which “creates its own poetic devices, its own tradition” (Pszczołowska 1989: 272–273). Drawing on this observation, I examine two specific variants or subtypes of Russian *dolnik* used in poetic translations as metrical equivalents of various European meters. These are **the heterosyllabic three-ictus dolnik** and **the isosyllabic three-ictus dolnik** (7M/8F/9D), which serve, respectively, to render the German three-stress meter and the Spanish octosyllabic meter (*octosílabo*). My analysis primarily focuses on twentieth-century Russian translations of the poetry of Heinrich Heine, Federico García Lorca, and Spanish folk *romances*.

*Dolnik* in Russian verse is characterized by a high degree of metrical and rhythmic variety (for details on its structure, see Section 2). While the two most commonly used variations of this meter are the three-ictus and four-ictus *dolnik*, there are also shorter and longer forms, as well as variations featuring regular alternation of lines of different lengths (for example, a regular alternation of four- and three-ictic lines), “free” *dolniks* with irregular alternation of line lengths, and a recently identified variation, labeled “segmented *dolnik*”, which became a specific feature of Joseph Brodsky’s poetic manner (Liapin 2011).

This richness of the formal potential of *dolnik* verse is reflected in the wide variety of individual rhythmic styles, which differ from one author to another, evolve across different periods in an author’s career, and vary from text to text. The rhythmic variety arises from several factors. *Dolnik* allows for extra-metrical stresses (particularly in the disyllabic anacrusis) and the omission of metrical stresses. Both constant and variable anacruses are possible, as well as regularly alternating anacruses. The length of unstressed intervals within a line can range from one or two unstressed syllables in fully stressed rhythmic patterns to three, four, or even five unstressed syllables in patterns where metrical stress is skipped.

Regarding syllabic length, Russian poets have developed and practiced *dolniks* with significant variability in overall syllabic length, as well as isosyllabic forms of the meter (Colombo 1999), including those closely resembling logaoedic meters (the so-called “solidified *dolnik*”, Russian: *застывший дольник*; see, e.g., Kholshevnikov 2004: 74; Kolmogorov 1968; Ivanov 1968; Smith 1975; Bailey 1981).

As mentioned above, beyond its role in original Russian poetry, *dolnik* also functions as a formal equivalent for translating foreign poetic forms. However, this function remains insufficiently studied, and little is known about how the

rhythm of translated dolnik compares to that of the original. This study aims to fill this gap by conducting a comparative rhythmic analysis of two variants of the three-ictus dolnik used in translations from German and Spanish. The primary questions addressed are:

1. How do the variants of the three-ictus dolnik used in translations from Spanish and German differ rhythmically?
2. Does the rhythm of translated three-ictus dolnik differ from that of the original Russian dolnik?
3. If differences exist, are they attributable to the formal influence of foreign verse?
4. Did the canonization of dolnik in mid-twentieth-century Russian poetry influence the rhythm of the three-ictus dolnik in poetic translations?
5. Finally, how do isotonic and isosyllabic factors interact within the rhythm of three-ictus dolnik?

Before addressing these questions (Section 4), I will describe the structure of dolnik and its role in Russian versification (Section 2) and provide a brief historical overview of the use of its rhythmic variants in poetic translations (Section 3).

## 2. The Russian dolnik's accentual and syllabic principles and the rhythmic typology of three-ictus dolnik

Central to the concept of Russian dolnik is its syllabic and accentual regularity. Generally speaking, dolnik has both syllabic-accentual and accentual (tonic) verse features. Marina Tarlinskaja observes:

The relative syllabic and accentual regularity of structure makes it possible to identify potentially-stressed ("ictic") and potentially-unstressed ("non-ictic") syllabic positions, and to abstract the dolnik verse pattern in the form of a scheme, as with the iamb or the anapaest. [...] The variable syllabic size of non-ictic positions blurs the structure of lines and moves the dolnik closer to purely accentual (tonic) verse, in which only actual stresses are a reality and the unstressed intervals vary within a wide range. (Tarlinskaja 1992: 4; 1993: 192)

The concept of Russian dolnik as a "transitional" metrical form between classical Russian syllabotonic (syllabic-accentual) and tonic verse can be traced

back to Mikhail Gasparov (1968: 60). This perspective differs from that of earlier scholars, who analyzed *dolnik* within the framework of tonic versification (Brjusov 1919: 120–121; Zhirmunskij 1925: 184–225; 1966 [1925]: 171–207; for a brief overview of other interpretations see: Gasparov 1968: 74–75; 1974: 226).

Mihhail Lotman also views *dolnik* as a meter that blends the principles of syllabic-accentual and tonic verse (Lotman 1995: 314–318). However, he proposes describing it as an independent accentual-syllabic (as opposed to syllabic-accentual) versification system, entirely abandoning the notion of “transitional” systems (Lotman 1998: 237; Pilshchikov 2024a: 109–110). Instead, Lotman specified that the late Russian *dolnik*, which exhibits a distinct tendency toward the stabilization of the disyllabic anacrusis – and, most importantly, toward isosyllabism – can be defined as a type of verse that incorporates features of not two but three systems of versification: syllabic-accentual, tonic, and syllabic (Lotman 1995: 318; see below for details).

Despite scholarly disagreements regarding the typological interpretation of *dolnik* and its varieties (Plungian 2011; Korchagin 2017; Polilova 2021: 148–151; Breido 2021), there is consensus on the formal boundaries of this meter, rooted in the classical studies of the 1960s–1970s (Kolmogorov 1963; Kolmogorov, Prokhorov 1963, 1964; Gasparov 1968 and 1974; for the history of the term see Pilshchikov 2024b: 139–140). According to this consensus, three-ictus *dolnik* is a meter with three icti (strong positions) per line, with inter-ictic intervals ranging from one to two syllables. The anacrusis may extend from zero to two syllables, and clausulae (line endings) may be masculine, feminine, dactylic, or hyper-dactylic.

One might conclude that there are only four variations of the three-ictus *dolnik* line if anacrusis and clausula alternations are not considered: SwwSwwS, SwSwwS, SwwSwS, and SwSwS. However, the number of rhythmic realizations increases due to variations that omit metrical stresses. Not all strong positions are necessarily stressed; like a syllabic-accentual line, a *dolnik* line may skip schematic stresses. Consider the lines from Examples 2 and 3 below: *Pobezháli na ostrová, Skóshennaja travá, Kamerónovoj Galeréej, and Gde bezmólvstvujut vodopády*.<sup>1</sup> These lines contain unstressed intervals longer than two syllables, with only two strong positions in each line actually bearing a stress.

Lines found in Examples 1–3 illustrate the structure of Russian three-ictus *dolnik*. The second column shows the rhythmic pattern, and the third column

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<sup>1</sup> The relative adverbial pronoun *gde* (‘where’) occupying the first syllable of a disyllabic anacrusis in the last example may be considered either as atoned or bearing an extrametrical stress.

represents the order of the unstressed intervals. Numbers denote the syllables in metrically unstressed ('weak') inter-ictic positions; numbers in parentheses indicate anacruses and clausulae.

Example 1. Alexander Blok, "Ego vstrechali povsjudu..." ("He was met everywhere...", 1902)

Egó vstrecháli povsjúdu	(x)XxXxxX(x)	(1) • 1 • 2 • (1)
Na úlitsakh v sónnye dní.	(x)XxxXxxX	(1) • 2 • 2 • (0)
On shól i njós svojo chúdo,	(x)XxXxxX(x)	(1) • 1 • 2 • (1)
Spotykájas' v moróznoj tení.	(xx)XxxXxxX	(2) • 2 • 2 • (0)

Example 2. Mikhail Kuzmin, "Teni kosymi uglami..." ("Shadows, at skew angles...", 1914)

Téni kosými uglámi	XxxXxxX(x)	(0) • 2 • 2 • (1)
Pobezháli na ostrová	(xx)XxxxxX	(2) • 4 • (0)
Pákhnet plokhími dukhámi,	XxxXxxX(x)	(0) • 2 • 2 • (1)
Skóshennaja travá.	XxxxxX	(0) • 4 • (0)

Example 3. Anna Akhmatova, *Poema bez geroja* (*Poem without a Hero*, 1940–1962)

A tepér' by domój skorjée	(xx)XxxXxX(x)	(2) • 2 • 1 • (1)
Kamerónovoj Galjeréej	(xx)XxxxxX(x)	(2) • 4 • (1)
V ledjanój taínstvjennoj sád,	(xx)XxXxxX	(2) • 1 • 2 • (0)
Gde bjezmólvstvujut vodopády,	(xx)XxxxxX(x)	(2) • 4 • (1)
Gde vsje dévjat' mnje búdut rády,	(xx)XxxXxX(x)	(2) • 2 • 1 • (1)
Kak byvál ty kogdá-to rád.	(xx)XxxXxX	(2) • 2 • 1 • (0)

Assuming the possibility of skipping schematic stresses on the first and second ictus (with the last ictus being constantly stressed), we arrive at ten possible rhythmic forms, as described by Gasparov (1968: 67–70; 1974: 223–225; see also Liapin, Pilshchikov 2015: 61). Gasparov further suggested reducing these to five basic patterns – a system, in which each pattern describes the structure of inter-ictic intervals regardless of whether the line is fully stressed or some icti are unstressed:

Form number	Form structure	Unstressed intervals
I	(0/1/2) • 2 • 2 • (0/1/2/3)	2.2
II	(0/1/2) • 1 • 2 • (0/1/2/3)	1.2
III	(0/1/2) • 2 • 1 • (0/1/2/3)	2.1
IV	(0/1/2) • 1 • 1 • (0/1/2/3)	1.1
V	(0/1/2) • 4 • (0/1/2/3)	4

For simplicity's sake, I will refer to these forms by indicating the form number and the length of the inter-ictic intervals, as shown in the third column.

Form V (4) is a very specific form with a virtual (or movable) unstressed ictus (Ivanov 2004: 100–102) or a prolonged inter-ictic interval serving as an “equivalent of stress” (Tomashevskij 1925: 100). Forms II (1.2) and III (2.1) would turn into Form V (4) if their second ictus were not stressed. As Liapin and Pilshchikov noted, “in Form V, the syllabic factor prevails over the tonic factor” (2015: 61).

In line patterns with a skipped stress on the first ictus, the syllabic position of the unstressed ictus can be ambiguous or not depending on the rhythmic context. In poems with a constant anacrusis, the placement of the first ictus can be determined unambiguously, while in poems with a variable anacrusis, it remains uncertain. Ambiguity prevents these patterns from being unequivocally classified into one of the five basic rhythmical forms. In rhythmic analysis, ambiguous lines are considered separately. The possible correspondences are as follows:

ternary rhythm	XxxxxX	= 2.2
binary rhythm	XxxxX	= 1.1
ternary or mixed rhythm	xxxXxxX	= 2.2 / 1.2
binary or mixed rhythm	xxxXxX	= 2.1 / 1.1
binary or mixed rhythm	xxxxxX	= 1.2 / 2.1 / 1.1

It is important to emphasize that a hallmark of the original Russian three-ictus *dolnik* (i.e., the *dolnik* used in original texts, not in poetic translations), in comparison with similar European metrical forms such as English and German three-stress verse, is the minimal presence of lines with binary rhythm (Tarlinskaja 1993: 80, Table 5). It is no surprise, then, that examples 1–3 do not feature iambic or trochaic rhythmic patterns.

The rhythmic evolution of Russian three-ictus *dolnik* between 1890 and 1960 reveals several key trends (see Tables 1–2): first, a steady decline in the proportion of lines with ternary rhythm (from 34% to 11%); second, the near-total disappearance of lines with binary rhythm (from 3.7% to 0.4%); third, a marked preference for Form III (2.1) over Form II (1.2), with respective shifts from 27.5% and 31.9% to 52.5% and 13.7%; and fourth, the rising popularity of Form V (4), which led to a corresponding decrease in fully stressed lines (i.e. lines with three stresses – one on each ictus). Additionally, this period saw an increase in isosyllabism and a greater prevalence of disyllabic (“anapestic”) anacruses. By the 1960s, after 50 years of intensive rhythmic development,

Russian three-ictus dolnik crystallized as a meter based on the combination of Forms III (2.1), V (4), and II (1.2).

Table 1. The preferred forms of three-ictus dolnik (from Gasparov 1974: 225, Table 3)

Form number	1890–1910	1910–1920	1920–1930	1930–1940	1940–1950	1950–1960	Total
I (2.2)	33.9%	22.7%	26.9%	19.0%	16.5%	11.1%	18.9%
II (1.2)	31.9%	22.7%	16.9%	13.7%	12.9%	13.7%	14.5%
III (2.1)	27.5%	42.7%	46.1%	45.2%	51.4%	52.5%	47.8%
IV (1.1)	3.7%	2.4%	1.7%	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%	1%
V (4)	1.2%	6.1%	11.4%	20.7%	18.0%	21.6%	16.3%
Other forms	1.8%	3.4%	3.0%	0.9%	0.9%	0.7%	1.5%

Table 2. Rhythmic tendencies of three-ictus dolnik (from Gasparov 1974: 236, Table 12)

	1890–1910	1910–1920	1920–1930	1930–1940	1940–1950	1950–1960
Isosyllabism	62.4%	74.9%	71.4%	80.5%	83.2%	88.5%
Constant disyllabic anacrusis	38.0%	35.2%	52.6%	68.9%	67.7%	60.8%
Skipped metrical stresses	1.7%	8.2%	15.0%	23.6%	21.4%	24.7%

Summarizing the data on the rhythm of the three-ictus dolnik, Gasparov proposed dividing its evolution into two distinct periods: the experimental period (1890s–1920s) and the stabilization period (1930s–1950s). He observed that the growing uniformity in the syllabic length of dolnik verse causes it to gravitate toward syllabic-accentual rather than pure tonic meters (Gasparov 1974: 237–240; cf. 1968: 96–97).

Mihhail Lotman offers a slightly different perspective, suggesting that weakening the tonic principle leads to a compensatory strengthening of the syllabic principle. He notes that the syllabic principle in dolnik manifests differently from traditional syllabic-accentual meters, displaying a tendency to align a metrical unit with a specific number of syllables. He concludes: “The syllabic-accentual foundation of dolnik not only weakens but also breaks down into relatively independent tonic and syllabic tendencies, positioning dolnik as a metrical form intermediate between syllabic-accentual, pure tonic, and pure syllabic verse” (Lotman 1995: 317–318).

I will return to these statements by Gasparov and Lotman later in Sections 4 and 5.

When analyzing individual rhythmic styles of the three-ictus dolnik, scholars commonly refer to the typology also proposed by Gasparov (1968: 97–105; 1974: 240–244, Table 16). Drawing on statistical data on the rhythmic patterns used by 65 Russian poets who employed this meter between the 1890s and the 1960s, Gasparov systematized and grouped the material to identify dominant rhythmic tendencies. He began by determining the three most frequent rhythmic patterns for each poet, grouped them into 18 categories based on these patterns, and then excluded groups where atypical variations for the overall corpus – e.g., Form II (1.2) and Form IV (1.1) – ranked highest in frequency. He further refined the classification, reducing the remaining 13 groups to five types, focusing on the two most frequent patterns for each type. Ultimately, Gasparov identified the five most important rhythmic types: three primary types named after prominent Russian poets who first exemplified these tendencies (the “Esenin type”, the “Tsvetaeva type”, and the “Gumilëv type”), and two additional types described as transitional between them.<sup>2</sup>

Although Gasparov’s typology of three-ictus dolnik is widely recognized, its application presents certain challenges, as Vladimir Plungian outlines in his article eloquently titled “*Did Esenin Use ‘Esenin’s Dolnik’?*” (Plungian 2008). First, the types of dolnik are linked to specific authors’ names, even though not all their works or creative periods conform to a single type. Second, the typology is based solely on the characteristics of the inter-ictic interval and neglects the parameters of the anacrusis. The importance of the anacrusis in dolnik typology should not be underestimated: it is crucial to consider both its variability or constancy and its length (Taranovsky 1962: 114–123; Bailey 1981).

In recent years, researchers have consistently built upon Gasparov’s typology of dolnik, identifying new rhythmic subcategories of this meter (Ivanov 1996; Plungian 2008; Liapin 2011; Levashov, Prokhorov 2016; Korchagin 2017; Breido 2021; see also Polilova 2017; 2021: 148–151).

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<sup>2</sup> In the “Esenin type”, the predominant forms are I (2.2), III (2.1), II (1.2), and V (4). In the “Gumilëv type”, Forms II (1.2), III (2.1), and V (4) dominate, while Form I (2.2) is generally avoided. In the “Tsvetaeva type”, Forms III (2.1) and V (4) are the most frequent, and Forms I (2.2) and II (1.2) are typically avoided.



### 3. Dolnik in poetic translations

#### 3.1. Rendering German strict-stress meter into Russian dolnik

The emergence of dolnik as a distinct meter in Russian poetry is deeply intertwined with the influence of European poetic forms and the effort to find structural equivalents for German accentual versification and classical Greek and Roman meters (Gasparov 1974: 234–235; Lotman 1995: 318–319). Early examples aligning with the modern-day definition of dolnik can be traced back to the eighteenth century as isolated poetic experiments. By the nineteenth century, this form gained modest traction, particularly in translations of German and English poetry (Zhirmunskij 1925: 212–218; 1966 [1925]: 195–202; 1928: 253–255; Bailey 1969: 1–6; Abisheva 1975). However, it was not until the Symbolist movement in Russian poetry that dolnik was fully developed and embraced.

A pivotal figure in this evolution was Alexander Blok, whose poetic innovations solidified dolnik's role in Russian versification. As Viktor Zhirmunsky observed in the 1920s:

...the victory of the principle of pure tonism over Lomonosov's structuring of poetic feet [*stoposlozhenie*] occurred in our own time, during the era of Neo-Romanticism. This marks a revolution in the history of Russian poetry – a revolution as significant as the introduction of the syllabotonic system by Trediakovsky and his followers. Undoubtedly, the decisive role in this revolution belongs to the work of Alexander Blok. (Zhirmunskij 1928 [1921]: 253; see also Bailey 1969: 15–16; Tarlinskaja 1993: 17–19; Gasparov 1997: 449–456; Polilova 2024a: 222–227)

Moreover, only after dolnik became part of the Symbolist metrical repertoire was significant progress achieved in equimetric translations of German stress meters. As James Bailey astutely notes in his article “Blok and Heine: An Episode from the History of Russian *Dol'niki*” (1969), despite the best efforts of nineteenth-century poets, their translations often failed to maintain rhythmic fidelity to the German prototypes. However, in Blok's translations of Heine made at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the rhythmic features of the German originals were conveyed with remarkable precision. Extensively incorporating lines with binary rhythm, these translations exhibit a rhythm markedly distinct from the dolnik style Blok employed in his original poems of 1902–1905 (see Table 3).

Example 4. Alexander Blok’s translation of Heinrich Heine’s “Am fernen Horizonte...” (“Na dal’nem gorizonte...”, January 1909)

Moj stáryj gnév prosnjótsja,	(1) • 1 • 1 • (1)
I já slomljú moj jarjóm.	(1) • 1 • 2 • (0)
Ty znájesh – v stároj pésne:	(1) • 1 • 1 • (1)
Odnázhdy v chás nochnój	(1) • 1 • 1 • (0)
Podrúgu júnosha mjórtvyj	(1) • 1 • 2 • (1)
V mogilu vzjál s sobój?	(1) • 1 • 1 • (0)
Povér’, krasá i dívo,	(1) • 1 • 1 • (1)
Ty, chístoje ditjá,	(1) • 3 • (0)
Ja zhív, u menjá jest’ síla,	(1) • 2 • 1 • (1)
Síl’njěj vsjékh mjórtvykh já!	(1) • 1 • 1 • (0)

Table 3. Meter variations in Blok and Heine (from Bailey 1969: 9)

	Binary	Ternary	Mixed
Heine	43.8%	13.0%	42.6%
Blok’s Heine	39.1%	18.2%	42.7%
Blok	0.6%	23.2%	75.4%

Despite the contrasts between the rhythm of Blok’s original dolniks and the rhythm of his translations of Heine, his contemporaries unambiguously attributed the successful rendition of German stress meter to the canonization of a new verse form in the poetry of Blok and other Symbolists (Fedorov 1928: 51; Zorgenfrej 1931: XXX; see also Etkind 1963: 284–287). Eugenia Knipovich’s memoir offers valuable insight into how Blok achieved such a high level of rhythmic fidelity in his translations: when translating or editing, he would tap out the original rhythm with a pencil or vocalize the melody (Knipovich 1987: 50).

A lesser-known experiment in equimetric and equirhythmic translation of German verse from the same period underscores the importance of melodic patterns in reproducing foreign meters. This experiment is a collection of poems by Schiller, Goethe, Heine, and other German poets, set to music by Franz Schubert, translated into Russian and published by Viktor Kolomiytsev (or Kolomiytsov, 1868–1936). Kolomiytsev emphasized that all his translations preserved the original rhythm and could be performed to Schubert’s musical compositions (Kolomiytsov 1933: 6; on Kolomiytsev’s translations of Heine, see Bailey 1969: 12–13; Orlitskij 2019). As an illustration, consider the unstressed intervals in his translation of Goethe’s “Erlkönig” from this collection. In cases where various rhythmic interpretations were possible, the version corresponding to the rhythmic pattern of the German line was chosen (see Example 5).

Example 5. Viktor Kolomiitsev's equirhythmic translation of Goethe's "Erlkönig" (1933)

Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt fasst er mich an!	"Menjá on khvatájet! Otéts, ja v ogné!
Erlkönig hat mir ein Leids getan! –	Tsár' elfov sdélal tak ból'no mné!"
Dem Vater grauset's, er reitet geschwind,	Otéts robéet; vse síly sobráv,
er hält in den Armen das ächzende Kind,	S toskújushchim sýnom on mchítsja
	stremgláv, –
erreicht den Hof mit Müh' und Not;	On gónit, – vót on u vorót:
in seinen Armen das Kind war tot.	V egó ob'jatijakh sýn byl mjórtv.

(1) • 2 • 2 • 2 • (0)  
 (0) • 2 • 2 • 1 • (0)  
 (1) • 1 • 2 • 2 • (0)  
 (1) • 2 • 2 • 2 • (0)  
 (1) • 1 • 1 • 1 • (0)  
 (1) • 1 • 2 • 1 • (0)

(1) • 2 • 2 • 2 • (0)  
 (0) • 2 • 2 • 1 • (0)  
 (1) • 1 • 2 • 2 • (0)  
 (1) • 2 • 2 • 2 • (0)  
 (1) • 1 • 3 • (0)  
 (1) • 1 • 2 • 1 • (0)

Bailey concludes his analysis of Blok's translations with the following observation: "How much Blok's stringent demands for rhythmic exactness have affected later translations of Heine and how common *dolniki* with a binary structure have become in Russian poetry are open questions" (Bailey 1969: 16). In recent years, researchers have shown renewed interest in the Russian *dolnik* with a binary structure (Plungian 2011; Korchagin 2017: 722–726). However, over the past half-century, no one has explored the extent to which Blok's translation style influenced subsequent translations of Heine. This question was among the key starting points for my study.

In Section 4, I analyze the rhythmic evolution of the heterosyllabic three-ictus *dolnik* in Russian poetic translations of Heine throughout the twentieth century. The material includes translations published between 1911 and 2003 (see the Index in the Appendix).

### 3.2. Rendering Romance verse into Russian *dolnik*

The role of *dolnik* as an equivalent for Romance versification has received less scholarly attention than its adoption in translations from German. The first recorded example of this rhythmic approach (see Fedorov 1928: 47–48) is Nikolai Gumilëv's version of Théophile Gautier's "Au bord de la mer" ("La lune de ses mains distraites...") – "Uronila luna iz ruchek..." (1912), which imitates the original French octosyllable (8M/9F) using three-ictus *dolnik* lines with constant syllabic length. Gumilëv's experiment was noted by Mikhail Gasparov (1968: 88), who later proposed a specific term for this type of verse,

*quasi-syllabic dolnik* (Russian: *мнимо-силлабический дольник*). Gasparov further observed its prevalence in translations of Spanish *romance* verse (Gasparov 2001 [1993]: 160–161).<sup>3</sup>

Duccio Colombo (1999) conducted the most comprehensive analysis to date of the isosyllabic *dolnik* in Russian poetry, highlighting the Acmeists' deliberate effort to render syllabic verse into Russian. Colombo referenced a remark from Gumilëv's article "Acmeism and the Legacy of Symbolism":

Just as the French sought a new, freer verse, the Acmeists strive to break the chains of meter by skipping syllables and by freer transposition of stress than ever before; and there are already poems written in a newly devised syllabic system of versification. (Gumilëv 1913: 42–43; trans. by David Lapeza)

Colombo identified this verse form not only in translations and original works by Gumilëv ("Poema Nachala. Kniga pervaja. Drakon. Pesni I–II" ["The Poem of Beginnings. Book One. The Dragon. Songs I–II", 1921]; "Persten" ["The Ring", 1921]) but also in the poetry of Zinaida Gippius, Elizaveta Kuzmina-Karavaeva, Vladimir Shileiko, Nikolai Otsup, and others.

Among the previously unknown examples of the isosyllabic *dolnik* is a poem by Cherubina de Gabriak (the literary pseudonym of Elizaveta Dmitrieva). Given its mystificatory nature – the poem was allegedly composed by a Russian-speaking Spanish countess – it can be regarded as an imitation of Romance isosyllabic verse (Example 6).

Example 6. Cherubina de Gabriak. "Prorok (I. On raskryvaet...)" ["The Prophet (I. He reveals...), 1910]

On prishól sjudá ot Vostóka,	(xx)XxXxxX(x)
Zapyljónnym plashchóm odét,	(xx)XxxXxX
Opirájas' na zhézl proróka,	(xx)XxxXxX(x)
A mne býlo trinádsat' lét.	(xx)XxxXxX

The isosyllabicity of the following logaoedic poem from Marina Tsvetaeva's "Carmen" cycle (Example 7) may similarly be motivated by its Spanish theme<sup>4</sup>:

<sup>3</sup> On the history of rendering the Spanish octosyllable in Russian translations, see Goncharenko 1980; Svetlakova, Khvorost'janova 2010; Polilova 2018; Babushkin, Polilova 2022: 14–19.

<sup>4</sup> For the stanza structure and its Spanish leitmotifs, see Polilova 2018: 103.

Example 7. Marina Tsvetaeva, “Bozhestvenno, detski-plosko...” (“Divinely, childish-  
flat...”, June 1917)

Bozhéstvenno, détski-plósko	xXxxXxX(x)
Korótkoe, v sbórku, pláťe.	xXxxXxX(x)
Kak stórony píramídy	xXxxxxX(x)
Ot pójasa mchát boká.	xXxxXxX

As far as current evidence suggests, Valentin Parnakh (1891–1951) appears to be the first translator to employ the three-ictus isosyllabic dolnik as an equivalent for Spanish *octosílabo*. Whether Parnakh was directly influenced by Gumilëv’s method or arrived at this solution independently remains unclear. However, Parnakh did not initially settle on this kind of dolnik as a consistent equivalent for the Spanish meter. In his first published translation of García Lorca’s “Romance de la Guardia Civil Española” (“Romans ob ispanskoj zhandarmerii”, 1939), he combined three-ictus dolnik lines with trochaic tetrameters (four-foot trochees), as previously observed (Musaeva 2012: 205–206).<sup>5</sup> A similar tendency is evident in his translations of García Lorca’s “El Diamante” (“Almaz”) and “Thamar y Amnón” (“Famar’ i Amnon”), although in other translations of the Spanish octosyllable Parnakh abandoned the use of trochaic lines.

As shown in Examples 8 and 9, which present translations alongside their corresponding originals (with rhythmically identical or almost identical lines underlined), Parnakh strictly preserves the syllable count per line and reproduces the rhythmic features with remarkable accuracy. However, the translations do not retain the trochaic rhythm (with stresses on odd syllables only) present in the Spanish originals (see Example 9).

Example 8. Valentin Parnakh’s translation (1940s) of Federico García Lorca’s “Preciosa y el aire”

Pergámentnoju lunóju	<u>(x)XxxxxX(x)</u>	<u>xXxxxxXx</u>	Su luna de pergamino
Prešósa zvenít i svétit.	<u>(x)XxxXxX(x)</u>	<u>xXxxXxXx</u>	Preciosa tocando viene.
Uvídev eyó, podnjálsja	<u>(x)XxxXxX(x)</u>	<u>xXxxxxXx</u>	Al verla se ha levantado
Bessónnyj guljáka – vétér...	<u>(x)XxxXxX(x)</u>	<u>xXxxXxXx</u>	el viento que nunca duerme.

<sup>5</sup> On attempts to convey the Spanish octosyllable using syllabic verse rather than dolnik or trochee, see Polilova 2024b. For the use of syllabic verse in Russian translations of Romance syllabic meters, see Kharlap 1981, Iliushin 1986, and Polilova 2023.

Example 9. Valentin Parnakh's translation (published 1944) of Federico García Lorca's "Romance de la luna, luna"

Iz róchchi maslín vykhódjat –	(x)XxxXxX(x)	xxxxXxXx	Por el olivar venían,
Brónza i grjóza – tsygány.	XxxXxxX(x)	XxXxxxXx	bronce y sueño, los gitanos.
Oní v vysókoe nébo	(x)XxXxxX(x)	xxXxxxXx	Las cabezas levantadas
Smótrjat s toskój neskazánnoj.	XxxXxxX(x)	xxXxxxXx	y los ojos entornados.

Later, Parnakh employed the isosyllabic three-ictus *dolnik* not only to translate García Lorca's octosyllabic verse but also to render this poetic form in his complete translation of Calderón de la Barca's drama *Life is a Dream*, only small fragments of which were published in 1949.

In notes written while working on his unrealized edition of Calderón's masterpiece, which remained unknown until recently, Parnakh offers several observations on the verse forms of Spanish poetry and the challenges of adapting them into Russian. These notes reveal that his goal was to imitate the rhythmic fluidity of Spanish verse. Parnakh emphasizes that expanding the metrical repertoire of Russian poetry enables a more accurate rendering of European forms:

Before Russian Symbolism and Futurism, both of which enriched Russian poetry with metrical and rhythmic innovations in the field of versification, no attempts were made to bring Russian tonic verse closer to syllabic verse of Romance languages. [...] Russian poetry has been enriched by the experiences of Symbolism and Futurism, particularly in terms of metrics and rhythm. This development now makes it possible to approximate Russian tonic verse to Spanish syllabic verse. [...] Unlike Professor Petrov and K[onstantin] Balmont, I translated it [...] using an approach that aligns more closely with Spanish syllabics. I rejected the overly familiar iambic tetrameter, so common in Russia, and instead employed [...] a mixed, rich, and flexible combination of amphibrachs, dactyls, and iambs. (Parnakh 2024a: 408–409)

As seen in this quotation, Parnakh viewed the meter he used as a type of mixed syllabic-accentual meter.

In the 1950s–1990s, the approach proposed by Parnakh was adopted by several translators of Spanish poetry, including Mikhail Zenkevich (1886–1973), Natella Gorskaya (1928–2008), and Anatolii Geleskul (1934–2011). However, other translators only partially incorporated his innovations. Ovadii Savich (1896–1967), Valentin Stolbov (1913–1991), Inna Tynianova (1917–2014), Mark Samaev (1930–1986), and Pavel Grushko (born 1931) used the heterosyllabic rather than isosyllabic three-ictus *dolnik* to render the *octosílabo*.

Therefore, Parnakh's choice of equivalence was specifically perceived as tonic verse rather than syllabic verse. When other translators adopted this approach, they often overlooked the strict syllable count in the lines.

It is noteworthy that several decades after Parnakh's experiments, translator Vladimir Reznichenko (1945–2010) applied a similar approach, employing the logaoedic dolnik to convey Spanish *endecasílabo* and thereby imitating the syllabic structure of syllabic verse (Example 10).

Example 10. Vladimir Reznichenko's translation of Luis de Góngora's "A Córdoba"

Stény, vragám dajúshchie otpór,	XxxXxXxxxX
báshni – tverdýni chésti i otvági!	XxxXxXxxxX(x)
Tsár andalúzskikh rék, v potókakh vlági	XxxXxXxXxX(x)
chístym peskóm uséjavshij prostór!	XxxXxXxxxX

To analyze the rhythmic evolution of the isosyllabic three-ictus dolnik throughout the twentieth century, I selected translations of Spanish *romancero* (texts with more than 90% isosyllabic lines) published between 1940 and 1991 (see the Index in the Appendix).

#### 4. Corpus structure, results, and discussion

The corpus examined consists of Russian dolnik translations made during the twentieth century from German and Spanish. The Appendix provides a list of the texts analyzed, along with the number of lines in each and the original German or Spanish title.

**Subcorpus A** consists of translations of Heinrich Heine's poems in monometrical<sup>6</sup> heterosyllabic three-ictus dolnik. The subcorpus comprises 732 lines from 51 translations by twelve Russian translators, published in 1911–2003: Alexander Blok (1880–1921), Yuri Tynianov (1894–1943), Vil'gel'm Zorgenfrej (Wilhelm Sorgenfrei, 1882–1938), Vera Arens (1883–1962), Samuil Marshak (1887–1964), Ada Onoshkovich-Yatsyna (1897–1935), Evgeniya Kipovich (1898–1988), Vil'gel'm (Wilhelm) Levik (1906–1982), Tamara Silman (1909–1974), Greinem Ratgauz (1934–2011), Vladimir Levansky (1942–2010), and Vladimir Letuchy (1943–2015). Sample sizes range from 16 to 132 lines. In three cases where the number of lines per translator was fewer than 40 (Vera

<sup>6</sup> Texts with alternating four-ictic and three-ictus lines were excluded from consideration.

Arens [32 lines], Ada Onoshkovich-Yatsyna [32 lines], and Eugenia Kipovich [16 lines]), these were excluded from the summary graphs and from Table 8 that shows the proportion of different line types in the Russian translations of Heine, as the representativeness of such a small sample size is questionable.

**Subcorpus B** consists of translations of Federico García Lorca's and Spanish folk *romances* in monometrical isosyllabic three-ictus dolnik (7M/8F/9D). This subcorpus comprises 1,006 lines from 17 translations by six Russian translators: Valentin Parnakh (1891–1951), Mikhail Zenkevich (1886–1973), Anatolii Geleskul (1934–2011), Natella Gorskaya (1928–2008), Yunna Moritz (born 1937), and Vladimir Vasiliev (1929–2014).

Next, I will describe the rhythmic features of lines in isosyllabic ("Spanish") and heterosyllabic ("German") variants of the translated three-ictus dolnik, focusing on 1) rhythmic variations, 2) the syllabic length of inter-ictic intervals, 3) stressing, 4) anacrusis type, and 5) line length. These parameters will be compared between the two subcorpora and evaluated against data from the scholarly literature on the rhythmic features of the original Russian three-ictus dolnik.

#### 4.1. The proportion of different line types

For categorizing rhythmic patterns, I have followed the conventions outlined in Section 2 of this article.

Table 8 and Charts 1 and 2 illustrate the distribution of binary, ternary, and mixed line types across different translators and summarize the results. The charts provide information about the rhythm of the translations and the rhythmic organization of the German and Spanish originals. Percentages are calculated based on the total number of lines per translator. Lines that skip the first ictic stress or both the first and the midline ictic stresses in texts with a variable anacrusis were excluded from categorization into line types. These account for only 7 lines in Subcorpus A and 33 in Subcorpus B. The charts indicate the years of the translations' first publication in parentheses.



Table 8. The proportion of different line types in Russian translations of Heine (heterosyllabic three-ictus dolnik) and Spanish octosyllables (isosyllabic three-ictus dolnik), in % of total lines

	Binary	Ternary	Mixed	Mixed variations		
	Form IV (1.1)	Form I (2.2)	Form III (2.1) + Form II (1.2) + Form V (4)	Form III (2.1)	Form II (1.2)	Form V (4)
Subcorpus A (Heine translations)						
Blok	31.8%	20.5%	47.7%	19.7%	24.2%	3.8%
Tynianov	26.3%	25.0%	52.6%	22.4%	21.1%	3.9%
Sorgenfrei	14.9%	36.2%	48.9%	12.8%	34.0%	2.1%
Levik	33.3%	37.2%	29.5%	9.0%	16.7%	3.8%
Marshak	31.9%	48.9%	19.1%	10.6%	6.4%	2.1%
Silman	12.5%	37.5%	50.0%	16.1%	32.1%	1.8%
Ratgauz	2.1%	56.3%	41.7%	22.9%	16.7%	2.1%
Levansky	8.9%	19.0%	72.2%	25.3%	39.2%	7.6%
Letuchy	16.2%	25.7%	58.1%	35.1%	20.3%	2.7%
Subcorpus B (translations of Spanish octosyllables)						
Parnakh	–	27.2%	67.3%	27.7%	29.2%	10.4%
Zenkevich	–	25.0%	67.7%	37.1%	24.2%	6.5%
Geleskul	–	7.8%	89.0%	50.5%	28.0%	10.6%
Gorskaya	–	4.3%	95.7%	63.6%	28.8%	3.3%
Moritz	–	3.1%	96.9%	78.6%	9.2%	9.2%
Vasiliev	–	16.1%	77.8%	36.1%	29.4%	12.2%

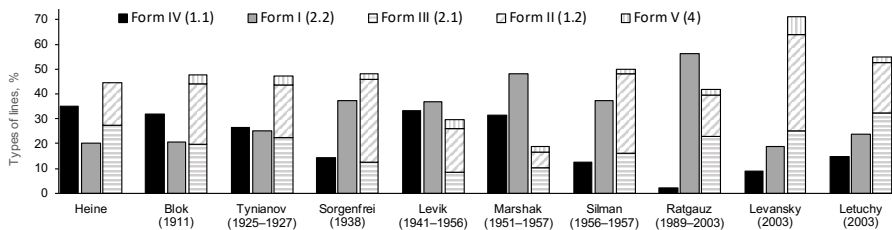


Chart 1. The proportion of different line types in Heine’s originals (from Tarlinskaja 1993: 80, Table 5)<sup>7</sup> and the Russian translations of Heine (heterosyllabic three-ictus dolnik)

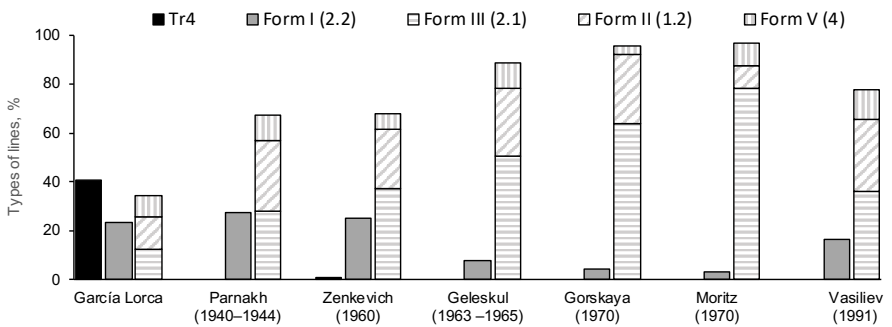


Chart 2. The proportion of different line types in García Lorca’s octosyllables (from Polilova 2024b: 259, Table 2) and the Russian translations of Spanish octosyllables (isosyllabic three-ictus dolnik)

The rhythmic specificity of the heterosyllabic three-ictus dolnik used in translations of Heine, as compared to the original Russian dolnik, is evident in the proportion of binary, ternary, and mixed rhythmic variations. All translators who worked after Blok, except for Ratgauz, actively used lines with binary rhythm when rendering Heine’s three-stress meter. Their proportions range from 26–33% in Blok, Tynianov, Marshak, and Levik to 9–16% in Sorgenfrei, Silman, Levansky, and Letuchy. Ratgauz, with his 2% of iambic variations, stands out rhythmically from the other translators. However, even in his case, the proportion of lines with binary rhythm remains high compared to the original Russian three-ictus dolnik, in which, according to Gasparov, the

<sup>7</sup> In Tarlinskaja’s book (1993), lines with skipped midline ictic stress [Form V (4)] are divided between Forms III (2.1) and II (1.2).

proportion of lines with a binary pattern (1.1) never exceeded 0.5% from the 1930s onward.

Despite this common feature across all translations in Subcorpus A, different rhythmic styles are evident among the translators. Blok and Tynianov demonstrate the highest level of rhythmic fidelity. Translators from the 1930s–1950s (Sorgenfrei, Levik, Marshak, and Silman) also aimed to replicate the original sound of German verse, maintaining a high number of lines with binary rhythm. However, they mostly fail to preserve Heine's original balance of line types. Sorgenfrei, Silman, and particularly Marshak use lines with ternary rhythm excessively. Additionally, Marshak employed notably fewer "genuine" *dolnik* lines.

There is a clear similarity in the rhythmic patterns of Sorgenfrei and Silman. By contrast, Marshak and Levik exhibit distinct rhythmic styles: Levik balances binary, ternary, and mixed line types in nearly equal proportions, whereas Marshak shows a marked preference for ternary-rhythm lines. In the translations of Letuchy and particularly Levansky, published in 2003, there is an evident increase in the proportion of mixed-rhythm lines. Ratgauz's translation strategy stands out by combining ternary-rhythm lines (56%) with mixed-rhythm lines (42%).

Compared with the original Russian *dolnik*, the *dolnik* in the translations of Heine lacks the pronounced dominance of Form III (2.1) over Form II (1.2), which has characterized the Russian three-ictus *dolnik* since the 1910s–1920s. The share of form V (4) is relatively low, whereas in the original *dolnik*, its proportion steadily increased from 11% to 22% between the 1910s and 1960s (see Table 1). I explain these rhythmic features of the *dolnik* in the Heine translations as follows: the active use of Form II (1.2) with an iambic anacrusis (x)XxXxxX(x) compensates for the lack of lines with binary rhythm. In contrast, Form V is avoided to emphasize an explicit tonic rhythm.

Table 9 presents data on the frequency of different line types, including a separate breakdown of lines with unstressed icti. A close examination of this data reveals a notably high level of stressing in binary patterns, ranging from 65% in Tynianov's translations to 92% in Letuchy's. This suggests that preserving the metrical structure in heterosyllabic *dolnik* lines with binary rhythm requires strict rhythmicality to underscore the line's metricity.

The rhythmic features of the texts from Subcorpus B and the rhythmic evolution of the isosyllabic *dolnik* are more closely aligned with the trends observed in the original Russian three-ictus *dolnik*. In the second half of the twentieth century, there was a decline in the use of lines with ternary rhythm and a marked preference for Form III (2.1) over Form II (1.2). An exception is

Table 9. The proportion of different line patterns in Russian translations of Heine (heterosyllabic three-ictus dolnik) and the Russian translations of Spanish octosyllables (isosyllabic three-ictus dolnik): absolute numbers and % of total lines

Translator	XxXx	XxxxX	XxxXxxX	Xxxx xxX	XxxXxxX	XxXxxX	XxxxxX	1st ictus unstressed	1st and 2nd icti unstressed	Other	Number of lines
Subcorpus A (Heine translations)											
Blok	22% (30)	9% (12)	20% (27)	–	19% (26)	24% (32)	3% (5)	–	–	–	132
Tynianov	17% (13)	9% (7)	25% (19)	–	22% (17)	21% (16)	3% (3)	1% (1)	–	–	76
Sorgenfrei	12% (6)	2% (1)	35% (17)	–	12% (6)	33% (16)	2% (1)	2% (1)	–	–	48
Onoshkovich- Yatsyna	–	3% (1)	18% (6)	–	46% (15)	21% (7)	9% (3)	–	–	–	32
Arens	6% (2)	3% (1)	40% (13)	–	28% (9)	18% (6)	3% (1)	–	–	–	32
Knipovich	25% (4)	–	6% (1)	–	43% (7)	25% (4)	–	–	–	–	16
Levik	23% (20)	7% (6)	34% (29)	–	8% (7)	15% (13)	3% (3)	7% (6)	–	–	84
Marshak	22% (11)	8% (4)	47% (23)	–	10% (5)	6% (3)	2% (1)	2% (1)	–	–	48
Silman	10% (6)	1% (1)	37% (21)	–	16% (9)	32% (18)	1% (1)	–	–	–	56
Ratgauz	0	2% (1)	56% (27)	–	22% (11)	16% (8)	2% (1)	–	–	–	48
Levansky	7% (6)	1% (1)	18% (15)	–	25% (20)	38% (31)	7% (6)	1% (1)	–	–	80
Letuchy	13% (11)	1% (1)	22% (18)	1% (1)	32% (26)	18% (15)	2% (2)	6% (5)	1% (1)	–	80
Subcorpus B (translations of Spanish octosyllables)											
Parnakh	–	–	27% (55)	–	27% (56)	29% (59)	10% (21)	5% (11)	–	–	202
Zenkevich	1% (1)	–	23% (29)	1% (2)	37% (46)	24% (30)	6% (8)	4% (5)	–	2% (3)	124
Geleskul	–	–	6% (15)	1% (2)	50% (110)	27% (61)	10% (23)	3% (7)	–	–	218
Gorskaya	–	–	3% (6)	1% (2)	63% (117)	28% (53)	3% (6)	–	–	–	184
Moritz	–	–	3% (3)	–	78% (77)	9% (9)	9% (9)	–	–	–	98
Vasiliev	–	–	16% (29)	–	36% (65)	29% (53)	12% (22)	6% (11)	–	–	180

Vasiliev, whose use of the isosyllabic three-ictus dolnik is rhythmically similar to the dolnik of Parnakh and Zenkevich.

Subcorpus B has a stronger prevalence of Form V (4) in the isosyllabic three-ictus dolnik compared with Subcorpus A. It accounts for an average of 8.7% across Subcorpus B, with a maximum of 12.2% in Vasiliev's translations, vs. 3.3% on average across Subcorpus A. This difference confirms the inverse correlation between the degree of dolnik's isosyllabism and its stressing.

#### 4.2. Stressing

Despite differences in individual translation strategies, the data on ictus stressing (Tables 10–11) reveal an inverse correlation between isosyllabism and stressing. The isosyllabic dolnik is characterized by a more pronounced alternating rhythm.

According to Gasparov, stressing of the second ictus in the original three-ictus dolnik fell below 80% as early as the 1930s–1940s and has not exceeded that level since. In dolniks with a zero anacrusis, Bailey's data indicate that stressing of the second ictus stood at 72% between 1950 and 1975. Both subcorpora, therefore, display consistently high levels of ictus stressing.

The heightened stressing in the heterosyllabic dolnik of Subcorpus A can likely be attributed to the need to emphasize its rhythmic structure. However, the consistently high level in the isosyllabic three-ictus dolnik (7M/8F/9D) is more challenging to explain. Additionally, Subcorpus B shows a somewhat reduced stressing of the first ictus in the works of several translators. This trend correlates with the frequent use of the line pattern xxxXxxX(x) (*Karabínéry v molcháňe; protantsevál, shalovlívyj*).

Table 10. Stressing in Russian translations of Heine (heterosyllabic three-ictus dolnik), in % of total lines

	1st ictus	2nd ictus	3rd ictus	Total number of lines
Blok	100.0%	87.1%	100.0%	132
Tynianov	98.7%	86.8%	100.0%	76
Sorgenfrei	97.9%	95.8%	100.0%	48
Onoshkovich-Yatsyna	100.0%	87.5%	100.0%	32
Arens	100.0%	93.8%	100.0%	32
Knipovich	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	16
Levik	92.9%	89.3%	100.0%	84
Marshak	97.9%	89.6%	100.0%	48
Silman	100.0%	96.4%	100.0%	56
Ratgauz	100.0%	95.8%	100.0%	48
Levansky	98.8%	91.3%	100.0%	80
Letuchy	92.5%	93.8%	100.0%	80
Column average	98.2%	92.3%	100.0%	

Table 11. Stressing in Russian translations of Spanish octosyllables (heterosyllabic three-ictus dolnik) in % of total lines

	1st ictus	2nd ictus	3rd ictus	Total number of lines
Parnakh	94.6%	89.6%	100.0%	202
Zenkevich	93.5%	89.5%	100.0%	124
Geleskul	96.8%	85.3%	100.0%	218
Gorskaya	100.0%	95.7%	100.0%	184
Moritz	100.0%	90.8%	100.0%	98
Vasiliev	93.9%	81.7%	100.0%	180
Column average	96.5%	88.8%	100.0%	

### 4.3. The syllabic length of inter-ictic intervals

The data on the popularity of specific rhythmic forms in Subcorpus A and Subcorpus B allow us to determine the average length of the unstressed inter-ictic interval (see Tables 12–13). These values were calculated for all fully-stressed lines in each translator's output.

According to Gasparov, the average syllabic length of the first and second inter-ictic intervals in the original Russian dolnik of 1890–1960 was 1.81 and 1.41, respectively. Starting in the 1910s, a trend emerged toward lengthening the first interval relative to the second. By the 1950s–1960s, their respective averages were 1.81 and 1.31 (Gasparov 1974: 237, Table 13). The translations of Heine and Spanish octosyllables show noticeable differences in interval length. The average values for Subcorpus A are 1.60 and 1.58, while for Subcorpus B, they are 1.71 and 1.44. These differences can primarily be attributed to the presence or absence of lines with binary rhythm.

The isosyllabic dolnik resembles the original three-ictus dolnik in terms of interval length (1.71 and 1.44 vs. 1.81 and 1.41). However, excluding Moritz's dolnik (1.90 and 1.13), which demonstrates a high degree of logaedization and predominantly relies on Form III (2.1), the difference in the length of the first and second intervals in the translations from Spanish appears more balanced at 1.67 and 1.51 syllables. Among all the translations, only Parnakh's shows a first interval that is longer than the second.

In the translations of Heine, the intervals are also less contrasting than in the original dolnik. On average, the first interval is noticeably shorter than in the original dolnik due to the frequent use of Forms IV (1.1) and II (1.2). For 6 out of the 12 translators in Subcorpus B, the first interval is shorter than or equal to the second interval.

Table 12. The syllabic length of inter-ictic intervals in Subcorpus A (translations of Heine)

	1st interval	2nd interval
Blok	1.46	1.51
Tynianov	1.55	1.54
Sorgenfrei	1.51	1.73
Onoshkovich-Yatsyna	1.75	1.46
Arens	1.73	1.63
Knipovich	1.50	1.31
Levik	1.52	1.61
Marshak	1.67	1.62
Silman	1.56	1.72
Ratgauz	1.83	1.76
Levansky	1.49	1.64
Letuchy	1.63	1.47
Column average	1.60	1.58

Table 13. The syllabic length of inter-ictic intervals in Subcorpus B (translations of Spanish octosyllables)

	1st interval	2nd interval
Parnakh	1.65	1.67
Zenkevich	1.71	1.56
Geleskul	1.67	1.41
Gorskaya	1.70	1.34
Moritz	1.90	1.13
Vasiliev	1.64	1.56
Column average	1.71	1.44



#### 4.4. The syllabic length of the line

In Subcorpus A (translations of Heine), the syllabic length of the line from its beginning to the third and last ictus predominantly ranges from 6 to 8 syllables (see Table 14). Ratgauz's translations include a limited number of 6-syllable lines due to the absence of lines with binary rhythm.

In Subcorpus B (translations from Spanish), a line length of 7 syllables is maintained in more than 90% of the lines, but only in Parnakh's translations are no deviations permitted (see Table 15).

Table 14. The syllabic length of the line (from the beginning to the last ictus) in Subcorpus A

	5	6	7	8	9
Blok	–	33.3%	40.2%	24.2%	2.3%
Tynianov	2.6%	26.3%	43.4%	26.3%	1.3%
Sorgenfrei	–	14.6%	47.9%	37.5%	–
Onoshkovich-Yatsyna	–	31.3%	53.1%	15.6%	–
Arens	–	12.5%	50.0%	37.5%	–
Knipovich	6.3%	18.8%	68.8%	6.3%	–
Levik	–	34.5%	29.8%	35.7%	–
Marshak	2.1%	37.5%	12.5%	47.9%	–
Silman	–	14.3%	50.0%	35.7%	–
Ratgauz	–	2.1%	41.7%	56.3%	–
Levansky	–	10.0%	48.8%	35.0%	6.3%
Letuchy	–	37.5%	42.5%	18.8%	1.3%

Table 15. The syllabic length of the line (from the beginning to the last ictus) in Subcorpus B

	6	7	8	9
Parnakh	–	100.0%	–	–
Zenkevich	3.2%	91.1%	3.2%	2.4%
Geleskul	6.2%	94.0%	–	–
Gorskaya	–	95.7%	4.3%	–
Moritz	6.1%	90.8%	3.1%	–
Vasiliev	0.6%	99.4%	–	–

#### 4.5. Anacrusis

The length of the line is closely connected to the nature of the anacrusis, which is mostly monosyllabic in both subcorpora, unlike in the original Russian *dolnik* (Tables 16–17). In translations of Heine, this effect is undoubtedly influenced by the anacrusis patterns in the original text. In Heine's lyrics, the anacrusis is monosyllabic in 86–96% of cases (Tarlinskaja 1993: 84). This explains the apparent stabilization of the anacrusis observed in Subcorpus A. Disyllabic anacruses appear with some frequency only in the translations by Blok (14%), Tynianov (9%), and Levansky (30%), while 7 out of 14 translators do not use them at all. The high frequency of disyllabic anacruses in Levansky's translations correlates with his greater use of lines with nine syllables compared to other translators. These lines often have anapestic rhythm (*I kiváet, kiváet tak zhútko*), which is rare in the works of others. By contrast, a constant monosyllabic anacrusis (100%) is found only in Sorgenfrei's translations of Heine.

Table 16. The syllabic structure of the anacrusis in Russian translations of Heine

	Zero	Monosyllabic	Disyllabic
Blok	7.6%	78.0%	14.4%
Tynianov	10.5%	80.3%	9.2%
Sorgenfrei	–	100.0%	–
Onoshkovich-Yatsyna	34.4%	62.5%	3.1%
Arens	6.3%	93.8%	–
Knipovich	6.3%	93.8%	–
Levik	2.4%	97.6%	–
Marshak	8.3%	89.6%	–
Silman	3.6%	96.4%	–
Ratgauz	2.1%	97.9%	–
Levansky	1.3%	68.4%	30.4%
Letuchy	23.8%	67.5%	2.5%

In García Lorca's *octosílabo*, the proportions of zero, monosyllabic, and disyllabic anacruses are 27%, 26%, and 36%, respectively (my calculation, 472 lines of *Romancero gitano*). The absence of disyllabic anacruses in Russian translations is due to the impossibility of fitting them into a 7-syllable line with mixed or dactylic rhythmical structure.

The frequency of zero anacruses (which directly correlates with the proportion of lines with dactylic rhythm) is most faithfully preserved by

Acmeist-generation translators Parnakh and Zenkevich. In contrast, it decreases significantly in the works of Gorskaya and Moritz, falling to zero in Gorskaya’s case.

Table 17. The syllabic structure of the anacrusis in Russian translations of Spanish *romances*

	Zero	Monosyllabic
Parnakh	27.2%	67.3%
Zenkevich	24.2%	71.0%
Geleskul	12.8%	83.9%
Gorskaya	–	100.0%
Moritz	6.1%	93.9%
Vasiliev	16.7%	77.2%

5. Conclusions

The material examined in this study reveals that three-ictus dolnik, an actively used meter in Russian poetry since the early twentieth century, was adopted by Russian translators during the 1920s and 1930s to convey European meters that have previously been rendered in traditional syllabotonic forms. Dolnik provided a structure more closely aligned with foreign poetic patterns, enabling the reproduction of essential features of tonic and syllabic meters, such as variable unstressed intervals.

This study addressed the following five distinct but interconnected research problems.

**First**, I examined how the rhythmic organization of the three-ictus dolnik differs in translations from Spanish and German. The analysis focused on rhythmic parameters such as stressing, the length of inter-ictic intervals, syllabic length, and the proportion of different line types. Two subcorpora were analyzed:

Subcorpus A: Russian translations of Henrich Heine poems, published between 1911 and 2003

Subcorpus B: Russian translations of Federico García Lorca’s poems and Spanish folk *romances*, published between 1940 and 1991.

The findings reveal that translations from German and Spanish using the three-ictus *dolnik* differ significantly in rhythmic patterns, inter-ictic interval lengths, and stressing. While both subcorpora conform to the accepted definition of *dolnik* verse, they effectively represent two distinct types of this meter.

**Second and third**, the rhythmic features of the translated three-ictus *dolnik* in both subcorpora were compared with the rhythm of the original Russian three-ictus *dolnik* of the twentieth century to determine how they differ and whether these differences can be attributed to the formal influence of foreign verse. Both variants of *dolnik* in the translations are characterized by monosyllabic anacruses, which are far less frequent in the original Russian *dolnik*, where disyllabic anacruses are more common.

The reasons for this feature differ between the two subcorpora. In translations of Spanish octosyllables, the use of disyllabic anacruses is precluded by the strict syllabic constraint of the line length. In translations from German, disyllabic anacruses were permissible but gradually fell out of favor. This shift likely reflects the translators' efforts to emulate the sound of Heine's original verse, which mostly features monosyllabic anacruses, as well as their efforts to compensate for the underuse of lines with iambic rhythm by employing the mixed pattern *xXxXxxX(x)* with a monosyllabic anacrusis.

The study shows that the equirhythmic translation method introduced by Alexander Blok for rendering Heine's verse in the early twentieth century became widely adopted and was employed by subsequent generations of translators. Although later translators did not achieve Blok's level of rhythmic precision, the meter used in translations from German remained rhythmically distinct from the original Russian *dolnik*.

In contrast, the isosyllabic three-ictus *dolnik* used to render the Spanish octosyllable into Russian is rhythmically closer to the original Russian *dolnik*. It follows the same evolutionary trends, such as the decrease in the proportion of lines with ternary rhythm and a marked preference for Form III (2.1) over Form II (1.2). However, as noted above, the key distinction from the original Russian three-ictus *dolnik* is the absence of disyllabic anacrusis.

**Fourth**, I explored how the canonization of *dolnik* in mid-twentieth-century Russian poetry influenced the rhythm of the three-ictus *dolnik* in poetic translations. The data indicate that while the *dolnik* in translations retains some of its basic features, it nevertheless becomes rhythmically closer to the original Russian *dolnik*. This is particularly evident in the isosyllabic *dolnik* (7M/8F/9D). These findings support the hypothesis that the domestication of experimental meters predetermines their evolution in translated poetry, steering them toward established national conventions. Consequently, these meters gradually diverge rhythmically from their foreign prototypes.

My analysis reveals that the experimental and stabilization periods identified by Gasparov in the evolution of Russian three-ictus dolnik are also observed in the evolution of its translated counterpart. During the experimental period, there was a strong tendency to closely reproduce the rhythmic features of foreign verse, as seen in the works of Blok, Tynianov, Parnakh, and Zenkevich. In the stabilization period, however, the chosen metrical equivalent lost its strong connection to its foreign prototype and began to align more closely with national poetic conventions.

**The fifth and final question** addressed in this study was how isotonic and isosyllabic factors interact in the rhythm of three-ictus dolnik. As outlined in Section 2, researchers hold varying views on the placement of dolnik within systems of versification. Mihhail Lotman's observation that the Russian dolnik, as it developed by the second half of the twentieth century, is a meter that combines syllabic-accentual, tonic, and syllabic principles proved particularly beneficial for this study.

The analysis of the two types of dolnik used in translations – one heterosyllabic, characterized by a combination of binary, ternary, and mixed rhythms, and the other isosyllabic, based exclusively on ternary and mixed patterns – revealed an inverse correlation between the degree of isosyllabism and stressing. Dolnik based on binary rhythm tends to avoid omitting metrical stresses, emphasizing the tonic principle. Conversely, dolnik that excludes lines with binary rhythm places greater reliance on the syllabic basis. From the standpoint of metrical typology, these two dolnik types exhibit significant differences.

## Appendix. List of translations examined

**Subcorpus A.** Heinrich Heine's poems rendered into Russian heterosyllabic three-ictus dolnik.

Alexander Blok (published 1911; 132 lines)

1. "Не знаю, что значит такое..." ("Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten...") 24
2. "Сырая ночь и буря..." ("Die Nacht ist feucht und stürmisch...") 20
3. "Красавица рыбачка..." ("Du schönes Fischermädchen...") 12
4. "Играет буря танец..." ("Der Sturm spielt auf zum Tanze...") 12
5. "Вечер пришел безмолвный..." ("Der Abend kommt gezogen...") 32
6. "На дальнем горизонте..." ("Am fernen Horizonte...") 12
7. "Ты знаешь, что живу я..." ("Wie kannst du ruhig schlafen...") 12
8. "Племена уходят в могилу..." ("Die Jahre kommen und gehen...") 8

Yuri Tynianov (published 1925–1927; 76 lines)

1. “Когда я ранним утром...” 1927 (“Wenn ich an deinem Hause...”) 16
2. “На той на горе на высокой...” 1927 (“Da droben auf jenem Berge...”) 16
3. “А ведь кастраты плачут...” 1925 (“Doch die Kastraten klagten...”) 12
4. “Девница, стоя у моря...” 1927 (“Das Fräulein stand am Meere...”) 8
5. “Не верую я в Небо...” 1927 (“Ich glaub’ nicht an den Himmel...”) 12
6. “Человек от этого счастлив...” 1927 (“Das macht den Menschen glücklich...”) 12

Evgenia Knipovich (published 1928<sup>8</sup>; 16 lines)

1. “Картины времен забытых...” (“Manch Bild vergessener Zeiten...”) 16

Vera Arens (published 1931; 32 lines)

1. “Спеши, любимая, крепко...” (“Du sollst mich liebend umschließen...”) 8
2. “Я много творю песнопений...” (“Ich mache die kleinen Lieder...”) 16
3. “Любви моей лилея...” (“Du Lilie meiner Liebe...”) 8

Ada Onoshkovich-Yatsyna (published 1931; 32 lines)

1. “Сегодня скрипкам поется...” (“Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen...”) 8
2. “Ветрено, хмуро, жутко...” (“Das ist ein Brausen und Heulen...”) 8
3. “Как низко ты поступила...” (“Wie schändlich du gehandelt...”) 8
4. “Цветы надышаться жаждут...” (“Es schauen die Blumen alle...”) 8

Wilhelm Sorgenfrei (published 1938; 48 lines)

5. “Самоубийц хоронят...”<sup>9</sup> (“Am Kreuzweg wird begraben...”) 8
6. “Во сне я горько плакал...”<sup>10</sup> (“Ich hab’ im Traum’ geweinet...”) 12
7. “Вот вызвал я силою слова...”<sup>11</sup> (“Da hab’ ich viel blasse Leichen...”) 28

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<sup>8</sup> The first publication was anonymous. The translator was identified based on subsequent editions (Levinton 1958: 172).

<sup>9</sup> The first publication was anonymous. The translator was identified based on subsequent editions (Levinton 1958: 194).

<sup>10</sup> The first publication was anonymous. The translator was tentatively identified by Akhill Levinton (1958: 188).

<sup>11</sup> The first publication was anonymous. The translator was identified based on subsequent editions (Levinton 1958: 118).

Wilhelm Levik (published 1941–1956, 84 lines)

1. “Сырая ночь беззвездна...” 1941–1956 (“Der Herbstwind rüttelt die Bäume...”) 20
2. “Мы возле рыбацкой лачуги...” 1941–1948 (“Wir saßen am Fischerhause...”) 28
3. “Как призрак забытый, из гроба...” 1948 (“Manch Bild vergessener Zeiten...”) 24
4. “Пугливой лилии страшен...” 1950 (“Die Lotosblume ängstigt...”) 12

Samuil Marshak (published 1951–1957; 48 lines)

1. “Весь отражен простором...” 1951 (“Im Rhein im schönen Strome...”) 12
2. “Рокочит трубы оркестра...” 1951 (“Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen...”) 8
3. “Двое перед разлукой...” 1951 (“Wenn zwei voneinander scheiden...”) 8
4. “Кричат, негодуя, кастраты...” 1951 (“Doch die Kastraten klagten...”) 12
5. “Трубят голубые гусары...” 1957 (“Es blasen die blauen Husaren...”) 8

Tamara Silman (published 1956–1957; 56 lines)

1. “Какое жаркое лето...” 1956 (“Es liegt der heiße Sommer...”) 8
2. “Когда бы цветы узнали...” 1956 (“Und wüßten’s die Blumen, die kleinen...”) 16
3. “Твои жемчуга и алмазы...” 1956 (“Du hast Diamanten und Perlen...”) 12
4. Зима: “А холод и в самом деле...” 1957 (Winter: “Die Kälte kann wahrlich brennen...”) 12
5. “В глазах твоих синих-синих...” 1957 (“Mit deinen blauen Augen...”) 8

Greinem Ratgauz (published 1989–2003; 48 lines)

1. “Застыли недвижно звезды...” (“Es stehen unbeweglich...”) 12
2. “На крыльях могучей песни...” (“Auf Flügeln des Gesanges...”) 20
3. “Я вижу: звезда упала...” 1989 (“Es fällt ein Stern herunter...”) 16

Vladimir Levansky (published 2003; 80 lines)

1. “Под луною море без краю...” (“Der Mond ist aufgegangen...”) 12
2. “Я побывал в том зале...” (“Ich trat in jene Hallen...”) 4
3. “В каморке девушка дремлет...” (“Die Jungfrau schläft in der Kammer...”) 20
4. “Застыл у ее портрета...” (“Ich stand in dunkeln Träumen...”) 12
5. “Зачем слезой одинокой...” (“Was will die einsame Träne?...”) 16
6. “Толкуют, что страсть моя – пытка...” (“Man glaubt, daß ich mich gräme...”) 16

Vladimir Letuchy (published 2003; 80 lines)

1. “На богомолье в Кевлар” (“Die Wallfahrt nach Kevlaar”) 80

**Subcorpus B.** Federico García Lorca’s and Spanish folk *romances* rendered into Russian isosyllabic three-ictus dolnik (7M/8F/9D).

Valentin Parnakh (published 1940–1944; 202 lines)

1. “Схватка” 1940 (F. García Lorca, “Reyerta”) 38
2. “Романс о луне, луне” 1944 (F. García Lorca, “Romance de la luna, luna”) 36
3. “Романс о черной печали” 1944 (F. García Lorca, “Romance de la pena negra”) 46
4. “Сан-Мигель” 1944 (F. García Lorca, “San Miguel”) 52
5. “Пресъоса и ветер”<sup>12</sup> (F. García Lorca, “Preciosa y el aire”) 30 [incomplete translation]

Mikhail Zenkevich (published 1960; 124 lines)

1. “Сан-Габриэль” 1960 (F. García Lorca, “San Gabriel. Sevilla”) 70
2. “Умерший от любви” 1960 (F. García Lorca, “Muerte de amor”) 54

Anatoly Geleskul (published 1963–1965; 218 lines)

1. “Романс об испанской жандармерии” 1963 (F. García Lorca, “Romance de la Guardia civil española”) 124
2. “Романс о луне, луне” 1965 (F. García Lorca, “Romance de la luna, luna”) 36
3. “Пресъоса и ветер” 1965 (F. García Lorca, “Preciosa y el aire”) 58

Natella Gorskaya (published 1970; 184 lines)

1. “О Саиде” (“Por la calle de su dama / paseándose anda Zaide...”) 56
2. “О Тарфе и Саиде” (“Mora Zaida, hija de Zaide / no quiero que mas te burles...”) 48
3. “О Сапе” (“La libre Zara, que un tiempo / no le dió para quejarse...”) 80

Yunna Moritz (published 1970; 98 lines)

1. “Родриго ле Лара” (“¡Ay Dios, qué buen caballero / fue don Rodrigo de Lara...”) 98

<sup>12</sup> Composed in 1939–1944, first published in 2024 (Parnakh 2024b: 410–411).



Vladimir Vasiliev (published 1991; 180 lines)

1. “Романс о Ландарико” (“Romance de Landarico”) 64
2. “Романс о том, как отец Сида Дъего Лайнес определил, кто из его четырех сыновей нахрабрейший” (“Ese buen Diego Lainez / después de haber ayantado...”) 66
3. “Романс о том, какой необычный собор состоялся в городе Риме” (“Romance del singular concilio habido en la ciudad de Roma”) 50

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