

## Notes on the metrical semantics of Russian, French and German imitations of Janus Secundus's *Basium II*

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**Abstract:** This article links Konstantin Batiushkov's poem *Elysium* (1810) to the tradition of poetic imitations of Janus Secundus's *Basium II*. A French equivalent for this poem's pythiambic distichs was invented by Ronsard (*Chanson*, 1578), who used cross-rhymed quatrains with regular alternation of dodecasyllabic and hexasyllabic lines. However, the French translators of *Basia* of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries could not use this metre, because its semantic aura was drastically changed by Malherbe's *Consolation à Monsieur du Périer* (1598). Batiushkov's *Elysium* as well as its Latin and French sources are poems about a delightful death and the union of lovers in the afterlife; yet the metre, which was used in Malherbe's poem, was for more than two centuries a metre of mournful elegiac stanzas about eternal separation. The question of a metrical prototype for Batiushkov's poem still remains undetermined. His "anacreontic" trochaic tetrameter does not have analogues in the Latin original or its French translations, but coincides with the metre of G. A. Bürger's *Die Umarmung* from 1776 (of which Batiushkov was hardly aware in 1810), and finds parallels in some eighteenth-century Russian imitations of *Basium II* which were most likely forgotten by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

1. The Russian *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of the Renaissance neo-Latin poet Janus (Johannes) Secundus (1511–36) is not long; in France, however, his amatory elegies and *Basia*, or *Liber Basiorum*, poetic cycle were frequently translated into both verse and prose. In Russia the first imitation of *Basia* – five pieces translated from the French intermediary versions of Moutonnet de Clairfons and Dorat – were published in Mikhail Kheraskov's periodical *Вечера* [*The Evenings*] (see Berkov 1952: 297; Grishakova 1994: 26), first in 1772–73, and then again in 1788–89. The first complete translation appeared as late as 1983,

in the academic book series *Литературные памятники* [*Literary Monuments*], between the same covers with Erasmus of Rotterdam (see Erasmus of Rotterdam, Janus Secundus 1983).

As has been demonstrated elsewhere (Pilshchikov 2004, 2009), an elegy by one of the most important poets of the Golden Age of Russian literature, Konstantin Batiushkov's *Елизий* (*Elysium*, 1810), is an imitation of the second poem from the *Basia* cycle (“*Vicina quantum vitis lascivit in ulmo...*”)<sup>1</sup>. It has also been demonstrated that Batiushkov had in mind not only the Latin original, but also the tradition of French (and maybe also German) imitations of *Basium* II. Significantly, each translation and imitation uses a different poetic metre. The aim of the present paper is to explain these differences.

2. Let us compare the poems of Batiushkov and Janus Secundus<sup>2</sup>. The following is a fragment from *Elysium*:

[...] А когда в сени приятной  
Мы услышим смерти зов,  
То как лозы винограда  
Обвивают тонкий вяз,  
Так меня, моя отрада,  
Обними в последний час!  
Так лилейными руками  
Цепью нежною обвей [...]  
(Batiushkov 1834: 75)<sup>3</sup>

Leonid Maikov, the first to comment on these lines, found here “a Horatian image” (Maikov, Saitov 1887: 315). Indeed, they recall the beginning of Horace's *Epode XV*: “[...] *cum tu* [...] / *artius atque hedera procera adstringitur ilex*, / *lentis adhaerens bracchiis* [...]” (“[...] when you [...], / more tightly than

<sup>1</sup> Batiushkov's editors published this poem under the title *Отрывок из Элегии* [*A Fragment of an Elegy*] (see Batiushkov 1834: 75–76). Nikolai Fridman (1955: 366, 1964: 282) identified this poem with Batiushkov's unknown elegy *Елизий* [*Elysium*], which was included in his *Расписание моим сочинениям* [*List of my Works*] compiled around November 1810 (PD: 40v).

<sup>2</sup> For more detailed comparison see the article “The symbolism of Elysium in Batiushkov's poetry” (Pilshchikov 2004: 96–109).

<sup>3</sup> “[...] And when, under the hospitable shelter, / we hear the call of death, / then, just as grapevines / enlace the thin elm, / so, my delight, / embrace me in our last hour! / enlace [me] with your lily-white arms / [as] with a tender chain [...]” Here and henceforth, translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

the tall oak is embraced by the ivy, / entwined [ed me] with supple arms [...]” etc. (Hor. *Epod.* XV, 3–6). Janus Secundus invokes Horace’s passage as well, and it is not a sheer coincidence that *Basium* II exploits the same metre as *Epode* XV, particularly the pythiambic strophes (distichs), in which the long dactylic hexameter lines alternate with short iambic dimeters (see Schroeter 1909: 200; Schoolfield 1980: 106; Gasparov 1983a: 269, 1983b: 312–314; Price 1996: 60). Batiushkov’s elegy connects with *Epode* XV not directly, but through the medium of *Basia*. While Horace compares the lovers to the oak (*ilex*) and ivy (*hedera*), in Janus Secundus the Horatian images are preceded by an analogous description of the embracing lovers as a grapevine (*vitis*) enlacing an elm (*ulmus*)<sup>4</sup>. Cf. *Bas.* II, 1–14:

Vicina quantum vitis lascivit in ulmo,  
 Et tortiles per ilicem  
 Brachia proceram stringunt immensa corymbi,  
 Tantum, Neæra, si queas  
 In mea nexilibus proserpere colla lacertis  
 Tali, Neæra, si queam  
 Candida perpetuum nexu tua colla ligare,  
 Iungens perenne basium,  
 Tunc [...]
 

mutuis in osculis

 Defectos, ratis una duos portaret amanteis  
 Ad pallidam Ditis domum.  
 (Ioannes Secundus 1651: 76)<sup>5</sup>

Janus borrows the image of the vine and the elm from Ovid’s *Heroides* (Ellinger 1899: IV), in which Oenone addresses Paris: “*Non sic adpositis vincitur vitibus ulmus, / ut tua sunt collo brachia nexa meo*” (“The elm is not so closely clasped by the clinging vine / as was my neck by your embracing arms” – Ovid. *Epist. Her.* V, 47–48; trans. Grant Showerman). Batiushkov, in contrast, eliminates the Horatian comparison, while preserving the Ovidian (“[...] just as grapevines / enlase the thin elm [...]”).

<sup>4</sup> On this topos see Demetz (1958).

<sup>5</sup> “If, as the vine clings amorously to the elm, / and the mazy ivy over the tall oak / fixes its endless sprays; / if thus, Neæra, thou couldst / enring my neck with thy binding arms; / if I, Neæra, could thus / enfold thy white neck perpetually, / and cling to thee in an everlasting kiss; / then [...] / when with mutual kisses / we had spent ourselves, / one boat should carry both lovers / to the pallid abode of Dis [= Pluto]” (cf. Kelly 1854: 372).

The next fragment of *Basium* II, which describes the afterlife, recalls another Roman love poem, Tibullus's *Elegy* I, 3 (Kelly 1854: 373; Gendre 1978; Schäfer 2004: 242–243). Batiushkov's translation of the elegy, which includes the earliest extant description of the lovers' Elysium, is dated to the first half of 1811 (Pilshchikov 1994b: 217–218, 2004: 89):

И ты, Амур, меня в жилища безмятежны  
В Элизий проведеш таинственной стезей:  
Там вечная весна меж рощей и полей [...]  
(Batiushkov 1815: 208)<sup>6</sup>

A common classical source explains the parallels between Batiushkov's imitation of Tibullus and his imitation of Janus Secundus (Kažoknieks 1968: 118; Vacuro 1994: 134; Pilshchikov 2004: 89–90):

И тогда тропой безвестной  
Долу, к тихим берегам,  
Сам он, бог любви прелестной,  
Проведед нас по цветам –  
В тот Элизей, где все тает  
Чувством неги и любви [...]  
(Batiushkov 1834: 75–76)<sup>7</sup>

*Basium* II concludes with a meeting between those already inhabiting Elysium and those newly arrived in the fields; Batiushkov's elegy ends with a similar scene:

Там, под тенью миртов зыбкой,  
Нам любовь сплетет венцы,  
И приветливой улыбкой  
Встретят нежные певцы<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> “And you, Amor, to the tranquil dwellings / in Elysium will lead me by the mysterious path; / there, between groves and fields, is the eternal spring [...]”

<sup>7</sup> “And then, by an unknown path, / downwards, to the silent shores, / he, the charming god of love, will himself / lead us through the flowers / to Elysium, where everything melts / with the feeling of bliss and love [...]”

<sup>8</sup> “There, under the uncertain shade of myrtles, / love will entwine crowns for us, / and tender singers will meet us / with affable smiles.”

3. Let us now consider the French translations of *Basia*. The history of the French reception of Janus Secundus has two “peaks”: one in the sixteenth century, when Pierre de Ronsard and other “stars” of the Pléiade translated the poems from the *Liber Basiorum* (see Ronsard et al. 1946), and another in the eighteenth century, when Claude Joseph Dorat published the book of *Les Baisers* (Dorat 1770a, 1770b). Reactions to Dorat’s free adaptations soon followed, and faithful translations of *Basia* in both prose and verse began to appear: Julien Jacques Moutonnet de Clairfons (1771), Édouard-Thomas Simon (1786), comte de Mirabeau (1794), Pierre-François Tissot (1806), Michel Fillette Loraux (1812) and others published their own versions (see Ellinger 1899: XXIII–XXXIII; Tomashevskij 1917: 61, footnote 1; Gasparov 1983a: 271; Sers 1996: XII)<sup>9</sup>.

In the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries Ronsard was out of favour. According to Jean François La Harpe (*Lycée*, pt. 2, bk. 1, ch. 1), “*Ce dernier est aussi décrié aujourd’hui qu’il fut admiré de son tems;*” his poems had been totally “forgotten” (*oublié*), and no one read them anymore (Laharpe 1799: 105). La Harpe denied the Pléiade any significance in the development of French literature, and singled out two main figures in the history of French poetry of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: “*Marot [...] avait réussi [...] dans la poésie galante et légère: Malherbe fut le premier modèle du style noble, et le créateur de la poésie lyrique*” (Laharpe 1799: 119). This scheme, which La Harpe inherited from Boileau, was very influential among the poets of the “Arzamas” group, including Batiushkov. Nevertheless, several divergences from Janus Secundus’s Latin text in Batiushkov’s poem coincide with divergences from the Latin original in Ronsard’s *Chanson* to Helen (1578), which also imitates *Basium* II. As metric equivalents of the quantitative pythiambic strophes, Ronsard chose cross-rhymed quatrains of syllabic lines of varying lengths, in which long dodecasyllabic lines with feminine rhymes regularly alternate with short hexasyllabic lines with masculine rhymes. The stanzaic form is supported and/or motivated by the rhyme structure *AbAb*.

It was Ronsard who withdrew the Horatian comparison at the beginning of the poem, so that only the Ovidian comparison remained:

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<sup>9</sup> For the bibliography of the French eighteenth and early nineteenth century translations from Janus Secundus, see Sers (1996: XXIX–XXX).

Plus estroit que la Vigne à l'Ormeau se marie  
 De bras souplement-forts,  
 Du lien de tes mains, Maistresse, ie te prie,  
 Enlace-moy le corps.  
 (Ronsard 1584: 240)

The French poet then introduced a new, audacious image:

Et feignant de dormir, d'une mignarde face  
 Sur mon front panche toy:  
 Inspire, en me baisant, ton haleine & ta grace  
 Et ton cœur dedans moy.

This same variation appears in Batiushkov:

Так лилейными руками  
 Цепью нежною обвей,  
 Седини уста с устами,  
 Душу в пламени излей!<sup>10</sup>

*Излить* (imperative: *излей*) means ‘outpour’; the French poet used a different verb, *inspirer*, ‘to breathe in’. However, Batiushkov’s decision to replace ‘to breathe in’ with ‘outpour’ seems, in this poetic context, justifiable. The poet Ivan Aksenov (1884–1935) made the same change when he translated these lines of Ronsard more than one hundred years later:

И, притворствуя сон, ты, лица обаянье  
 На чело мне склоня,  
 Лобызая, излей свою прелесть, дыханье  
 Да и сердце в меня.  
 (quoted in Gasparov 1983b: 313)

Unlike Janus Secundus, who did not divide the topography of the other world and spoke of *pallida Ditis domus*, Ronsard refers to this place as “*les champs Elisez*” (here Batiushkov is again closer to Ronsard than to their common original). When Janus describes the *fragrant fields* (*odorati campi*), we can only guess that the fragrance arises from the presence of flowers, and that the fields

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<sup>10</sup> “So enlace [me] with your lily-white arms / [as] with a tender chain, / join [your] lips to [my] lips, / outpour [your] soul in a flame!”

must have been situated on the shore where Charon's ferry landed. Ronsard in his *Chanson* openly mentions the *flowers* growing on the *shores* or *banks* of the underground river: "*les fleurs des riuages*" (Ronsard 1584: 241); cf. in Batiushkov: "[...] downwards, to the silent *shores*, / he, the charming god of love, will himself / lead us through the *flowers* [...]"<sup>11</sup>. Ronsard renames the *eternal spring* (*perpetuum ver*), which is mentioned in the Latin original, as an eternal "April": "[...] *du plaisant Auril la saison immortelle*" (Ronsard 1584: 241). We find a similar change in the early and the definite version of Batiushkov's translation of the parallel passage from the Tibullan *Elegy* I, 3: the line "Там вечная весна межъ рощей и полей" ["There, between groves and fields, is the *eternal spring*"] (Batiushkov 1815: 208) was replaced with: "Туда, где вечный Май межъ рощей и полей" ["There, between groves and fields, is the *eternal May*"] (Batiushkov 1817: 23). These observations support our suggestion that Batiushkov was familiar with Ronsard's text<sup>12</sup>.

4. Claude Joseph Dorat, whose *Les Baisers* renewed interest in the poetry of Janus Secundus in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, and who was at that time "*connus de tout le monde*" (Heu 1806: ij), split the plot of *Basium* II between two poems, *L'Extase* and *Les Ombres*. The first poem, *L'Extase*, features unpatterned rhymed verse with free combinations of lines of 12, 8 and 10 syllables, as well as free rhyme chains:

Vois, ma Thaïs, cette vigne amoureuse,  
Se marier à ce jeune arbrisseau;  
Vois le lierre embrasser l'ormeau  
De sa guirlande tortueuse.  
Puisse tes bras voluptueux  
Me serrer, m'enchaîner de même! [...]  
Alors, ô ma Thaïs, [...]  
La même barque au noir rivage

<sup>11</sup> Charon, alluded to in *Basium* II ([...] *ratis una duos portaret amanteis* [...]), and Venus, mentioned in the same context by Tibullus in his *Elegy* I, 3 (*Sed me* [...] *ipsa Venus campos ducet in Elysios*), are both replaced by Amor in Batiushkov's imitations of *Basium* II and *Tibull.* I, 3. It is most likely that Batiushkov followed the example of Antoine de Bertin's imitation of *Tibull.* I, 3 (see Pilshchikov 1994a: 86, note 29; Pilshchikov 2004: 91).

<sup>12</sup> I assume that "we may speak of influence of the intermediate version [on the later translation], when two translations reveal a considerable amount of identical deviations from the original text, and these deviations do not coincide with the deviations from the original in other translations [of the same text]" (Pilshchikov 1995: 90–91).

Porteroit sans effort deux Amans éperdus,  
 Et nous y serions descendus,  
 Avant d'avoir soupçonné le passage.  
 (Dorat 1770a: 88–89; 1770b: 107–108)

The second poem, *Les Ombres*, uses a more regular scheme that features alexandrines with free rhyme chains:

[...] De ce globe échappés, nous verrons ces jardins  
 Ouverts dans l'Élysée aux vertueux humains.  
 Là, tout naît sans culture: en cet aimable asyle  
 La terre d'elle-même épanche ses présens:  
 D'un soleil tempéré la lumière tranquille  
 A ce qu'il faut d'ardeur pour fixer le printemps.  
 (Dorat 1770a: 106, 1770b: 129)

Both imitations are very loose; in the meantime, some deviations from the Latin text in Dorat's poems coincide with the deviations from Janus Secundus's original in Batiushkov's elegy. Thus, in *Les Ombres* we read:

Là des tendres Amans les Ombres se poursuivent;  
 Ces Amans ne sont plus, et leurs flammes revivent.  
 (Dorat 1770a: 106, 1770b: 129)

In Batiushkov's *Elysium*: “Там любовник воскресает / С новым пламенем в крови” (“There, the lover revives / with new flame in his blood”)<sup>13</sup>.

There is some affinity between Batiushkov's elegy and the most faithful of the French poetic translations of *Basia*. This version was published in 1806 by Pierre-François Tissot, professor of Latin poetry at the *Collège de France* and a future member and director of the *Académie française*. Tissot writes so that short hexasyllabic lines with feminine rhymes alternate with long dodecasyllabic lines with masculine rhymes (the rhyme structure: *AbAbCdCd* etc.):

Vois-tu cette vigne légère  
 Vers l'ormeau conjugal monter avec amour?  
 Vois-tu cet ambitieux lierre  
 Du chêne aux long rameaux embrasser le contour?

<sup>13</sup> The rococo flavour of Batiushkov's *Elysium*, noted by Mikhail Gershernzon (Gershernzon 1924: 36), may have been a result of Dorat's influence.



Ainsi puissent tes bras flexibles  
 L'un à l'autre enchainés doucement me presser!  
 Ainsi, par des nœuds invincibles,  
 Par d'immortels baisers je voudrais t'enlacer.  
 (Tissot 1806: 9)

It should be noted that line 14 of Batiushkov's *Elysium* (“[...] Цепью нежною обвею [...],” or, “enlace [me] with a tender *chain*”) reflects the phraseology of the French verb *enchaîner* ‘enchain’, which, in French translations of *Basium* II, serves as an equivalent of the Latin *ligare* ‘entwine, enlace’ (“[...] *Candida perpetuum nexu tua colla ligare* [...]).

5. It is difficult to say if Batiushkov was familiar with the two other poetic translations of *Basia*, which appeared in the first decade of the nineteenth century. One of them was published in Paris in 1803; the anonymous translator signed his opus as “*un amant de vingt-deux ans*”. *Basium* II, written in octosyllables, begins here as follows:

Comme on voit la vigne voisine  
 Avec l'ormeau se marier,  
 Et s'élançer de la racine  
 Jusqu'au faite du chêne altier  
 Les immenses festons du lierre  
 En replis longs et tortueux;  
 De même Adèle, amante chère!  
 Viens jeter tes bras amoureux  
 Au cou de ton amant fidèle;  
 Viens, enlaçons-nous tous les deux;  
 Formons une chaîne éternelle.  
 (Jean Second 1803: 8)

Another book of *Les Baisers* was also published by an amateur – this time it was the *Chef de Bureau au Ministère de la Guerre*, P.-J. Heu, who, following Dorat, used the unpatterned combinations of freely rhymed 12/8/10-syllabic lines:

Autour d'un jeune ormeau la vigne s'entrelace  
 Et l'enchaîne amoureusement;  
 A l'abrisseau voisin le lierre s'attachant,  
 De ces rameaux étroitement l'embrasse.  
 Imitons les, Doris [...]!  
 L'un à l'autre que rien ne nous puisse arracher!

Dans les bras d'un de l'autre, aimable et tendre amie,  
 Voluptueusement exhalons notre vie!  
 Le vieux Caron, cet avide nocher,  
 Tous les deux d'un même voyage  
 Nous conduira vers ce sombre rivage  
 Que redoute un amant pervers;  
 Et sans nous être aperçus du passage  
 Nous serons descendus chez le dieu des enfers.  
 (Heu 1806: 11)

6. The various forms of versification in the sources of Batiushkov's *Elysium* bring us to the main query: why Batiushkov used the particular syllabo-tonic metre for his imitation of *Basium II* – namely, trochaic tetrameter. As we remember, the Latin poem uses pythiambic strophes, in which the long lines alternate with short lines, and Ronsard in his imitation used the approximate syllabic analogue of this quantitative metre. Batiushkov very rarely used non-classical metres (Matjash 1979: 99–100). He experimented with an imitation of an Ancient Greco-Roman metre only once, but left an unfinished draft (Koshelev 1989: 476–477). The Russian poet could have taken into account the metre of Ronsard's French version, and could have chosen its rough syllabo-tonic equivalent. It may have been either a trisyllabic metre (anapaest) with regular alternation of 4-foot and 2-foot lines (just as in Aksenov's translation of Ronsard), or, more likely, a disyllabic metre (iambus) with regular alternation of 6-foot and 3-foot lines (cf. Gasparov 1989: 127, 129). However, this did not occur. Apparently, Batiushkov and his contemporaries perceived the French metre – in which dodecasyllables alternate with hexasyllables – differently than Ronsard did. Typically enough, none of the French poets who translated Janus Secundus in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries happened to use Ronsard's metre. Who is to "blame" for this? The answer is: François de Malherbe.

When Ronsard composed his *Chanson* to Helen in 1578, he could not, of course, foresee that after him would "finally come Malherbe," as Boileau put it in *L'Art poétique* (I, 131), and that, in 1598, Malherbe would use this metre for his stanzas *Consolation à Monsieur du Périer... sur la mort de sa fille*. The celebrated quatrain from this poem became a textbook quotation:

Mais elle etait du monde, où les plus belles choses  
 Ont le pire destin;  
 Et Rose elle a vécu ce que vivent les roses,  
 L'espace d'un matin.  
 (Malherbe 1631: 213 [2<sup>e</sup> pagination])

Alexander Pushkin commented on this stanza as follows: “Malherbe survives on account of four lines of an ode to du Périer, and some lines by Boileau” (Pushkin 2003: 42; cf. Pushkin 1949: 191). “Some lines by Boileau” are the above-mentioned celebrated passage from Chant I of *L'Art poétique*:

Enfin Malherbe vint, & le premier en France,  
 Fit sentir dans les vers une juste cadence [...]  
 (Boileau-Despréaux 1685: 179)

Like all his contemporaries who were widely read in French literature, Batiushkov knew Malherbe's lines by heart. Thus, in May 1811 he wrote in his notebook *Разные замечания* (*Different Notes*) about a girl who “завяла на утренней жизни своей<sup>14</sup> et rose elle a vécu [sic!] ce que vivent les roses, l'espace d'un matin” (PD: 123). The quotation is cited *in continuo*, and the sentence contains only one comma after the word *roses*, marking the pause between poetic lines. Obviously, Batiushkov felt and expressed the verse rhythm of the French phrase.

La Harpe in his *Lycée* (pt. 2, bk. 1, ch. 1) wrote of Malherbe's stanzas to du Périer:

Observons d'abord le choix du rhythm: ce petit vers qui tombe régulièrement après le premier, peint si bien l'abattement de la douleur! C'est là le vrai secret de l'harmonie dont on parle tant aujourd'hui: il ne s'agit pas de la travailler avec effort, il faut la choisir avec goût (Laharpe 1799: 124).

Batiushkov's *Elysium* as well as its Latin and French sources are poems about a delightful death and the union of lovers in the afterlife. Yet the metre, which was used in Malherbe's poem, was for more than two centuries a metre of mournful elegiac stanzas about eternal separation (Fromilhague 1954: 171 sq.; Mo 2002: 650–652). This explains why Tissot, who wanted to preserve the characteristic contrast between long and short lines in Janus Secundus's

<sup>14</sup> “faded in the morning of her life”.

distichs, had to “invert” the pythiambic strophes in order to avoid association with Malherbe: in Tissot’s translation, the odd-numbered lines are short, and the even-numbered lines are long.

We will not find 4-/2-foot trisyllabic metres in Batiushkov (Matjash 1979: 111–112; cf. Gasparov 1984: 121–122), while a metre, in which 6-foot disyllabic (though trochaic, and not iambic) lines alternate with 3-foot disyllabic lines, he *chose* – perhaps following La Harpe’s advice – only once, for the elegy *На смерть супруги Ф. Ф. К[окошки]на* (*On the Death of the Spouse of F. F. K[okoshki]n*, April or May 1811):

Нет подруги нежной, нет прелестной Лилы!  
 Все осиротело!  
 Плачь любовь и дружба, плачь Гимен унылый!  
 Счастье улетело!  
 [...]  
 Все вокруг уныло! Чуть Зефир весенний  
 Памятник лобзает;  
 Здесь, в жилище плача, тихий смерти Гений  
 Розу обрывает.  
  
 Здесь Гимен прикован, бледный и безгласный,  
 Вечною тоскою,  
 Гасит у гробницы свой светильник ясный  
 Трепетной рукою!  
 (Batiushkov 1817: 84–85)<sup>15</sup>

The theme is the same as in Malherbe: these are stanzas to a friend who has lost a close relation. In Malherbe’s poem it is a young daughter, in Batiushkov’s poem it is a young wife, who is also compared to a rose.

In 1803, this rare metre was used by Vasilii Kapnist, an elder poet, whose work was important for Batiushkov (see Serman 1959: 302–303). His poem is entitled *На смерть друга моего* [*On the Death of my Friend*]:

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<sup>15</sup> “She is no more, a gentle friend, the charming Lila! / Everything is orphaned! Cry, love and friendship, cry, the gloomy Hymen! / Happiness has gone away! // [...] // Everything is dismal! Only the spring Zephyr / kisses the gravestone; / here, in the house of lament, the silent Genius of death / plucks a rose. // Here Hymen, pale and mute, confined / by endless sorrow, / extinguishes his bright torch / with trembling hands!”

Ах! по что любезна друга, рок постылой!  
 Ты меня лишаешь?  
 С кем делилось сердце, холодной с тем могилой  
 Вечно разделяешь.  
 [...]  
 Вслед тебя отныне лишь любовь уныла  
 Гроб твой посещает:  
 Там, твой прах пожравша холодная могила  
 Слезы пожирает.  
 (Карнист 1806: 150–153)<sup>16</sup>

Such a metre could not be used in *Elysium*. Batiushkov had to find something else.

It is well known that the 4-foot iambus was normally used as a syllabo-tonic equivalent of the French octosyllable (Gasparov 1989: 123). Antoine de Bertin's imitation of *Tibull. I, 3* is written in octosyllabic lines; it influenced both Batiushkov's translation of *Tibull. I, 3* and Batiushkov's imitation of *Basium II* (see above, footnote 11). The translation of *Basium II* by "un amant de vingt-deux ans" is also written in octosyllables. However, Batiushkov did not use iambic tetrameter. Nor did he choose the Russian alexandrine (6-foot iambus) which is particularly used in his lyrics for "imitations of ancient poets" ("подражания древним", as Pushkin called them): thus, Batiushkov used it in his Tibullan elegies (including the aforementioned translation of *Tibull. I, 3*), which were composed in 1809–11, and in the 1811 imitation of Bion's idyll (see Pilshchikov 1995: 97, 100, note 18). Moreover, Batiushkov did not return to the unpatterned freely rhymed verse, although he could have followed Dorat's two imitations of *Basium II*, which featured the unpatterned freely rhymed verses and freely rhymed dodecasyllables. In France *Basium II* was translated in an unpatterned freely rhymed verse by Dorat's follower P.-J. Heu; in Russia the same metre was later used by a certain D. Bogdanov (Bogdanov 1828).

Batiushkov found another way. For his cheerful poem he chose a "short" disyllabic tetrameter, and preferred the "Anacreontic" trochaic tetrameter to the "neutral" iambic tetrameter (in the nineteenth century the rhymed 4-foot

<sup>16</sup> "Ah! why, odious fate, of my beloved friend / do you deprive me? / By the cold grave from the one, in whom I was confidant, / I am separated for ever. // [...] // In order to see you, only the mournful love / visits your gravestone: / there the cold grave that devoured your ashes / now devours [the love's] tears."

iambus was the most widespread Russian metre). Here he had a choice: an unrhymed or regularly rhymed trochee (cf. Matjash 1979: 104; Gasparov 1984: 114, 1999: 193, 202–203); he chose cross-rhymed trochaic tetrameters with regular alternation of feminine and masculine endings. The author himself gave us the right to call this trochee “Anacreontic”: indeed, although the poem was first published as *A Fragment of an Elegy* (see above, footnote 1), in Batiushkov’s 1810 *List of my Works* it is placed in the section titled *Anacreontea* (PD: 40v).

When Batiushkov chose the trochaic tetrameter, however, he could have had in mind a precedent: not a French example, but a German one. In 1776 Gottfried August Bürger composed the cross-rhymed 4-foot-trochee quatrains entitled *Die Umarmung* [*Embrace*]. As the author himself explained in the Preface, this poem was a variation of “*eine Elegie des Johannes Secundus*” (Bürger 1778: XIII):

Wie um ihren Stab die Rebe  
 Brünstig ihre Ranke strikt,  
 Wie der Epheu sein Gewebe  
 An der Ulme Busen drückt;  
 [...]  
 Dürft’ ich so dich rund umfassen!  
 Dürftest du, Geliebte, mich! –  
 Dürften so zusammenhangen  
 Unsre Lippen ewiglich!  
 [...]  
 Sterben wolt’ ich im Genusse,  
 Wie ihn deine Lippe beut,  
 Sterben in dem langen Kusse  
 Wollustvoller Trunkenheit.  
 (Bürger 1778: 243–244)<sup>17</sup>

Bürger’s imitation of Janus Secundus became the original of G. Sokolsky’s 4-foot-trochee poem *Прощание* [*Valediction*] (Sokolsky 1816).

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<sup>17</sup> “Just as a grapevine around the pole / passionately winds its sprouts, / just as ivy presses its threads / to the bosom of the elm; // [...] // if I only could embrace you in the same way, / and you could [embrace] me, my beloved! – / if our lips could join / in such a way forever! // [...] // I would like to die in delight, / which your lips give, / to die in a long kiss, / drunken with its bliss.”

However, Batiushkov started to involve himself in German culture in 1813, when he came to Germany as a junior captain of the Russian army, while *Elysium* was composed in 1810, when the poet was fascinated with Latin, Italian and French poetry. Incidentally, the title of Batiushkov's poem – *Елизий* [*Elysium*] – may be linked to the French tradition of the translations and imitations of *Basium* II: for instance, the prose translation of Édouard-Thomas Simon (1786: 71) is entitled *L'Elysée*, and the poetic translation by “*un amant de vingt-deux ans*” was published under the title *Les Ombres, ou l'Elysée*. Thus, the question of some kind of Western European metrical prototype for Batiushkov's poem still remains undetermined.

In this context, we may consider the Russian examples of “Anacreontic” reinterpretation of Janus Secundus. The metres of the first Russian imitations of *Basia* (1772–73, translated from the French) create generic and thematic frames of reference by which they might be read: light “Epicurean” poetry with its unpatterned freely rhymed iambs, *Anacreontea* with *unrhymed* iambic tetrameters (less usual for this genre than the unrhymed iambic trimeter or the unrhymed trochaic tetrameter<sup>18</sup>), and the “imitations of ancient poets” genre with its rhymed and unrhymed alexandrines<sup>19</sup>. *Basium* II is translated here using the unrhymed iambic tetrameter (*Вечера* 1772/1788: 35–36). Additionally, a poetic imitation of the first part of *Basium* II appeared in 1779, in the cycle *Перевод с немецкого Анакреонтических стихов* [*Translation of Anacreontic Verses, from the German*] (German original unknown), which was published in Nikolai Novikov's magazine *Модное ежемесячное издание, или Библиотека, для дамского туалета* [*A Fashionable Monthly, or Library, for the Ladies' Boudoir*]. Here, as well as in six other poems from this cycle, the unrhymed trochaic tetrameter appears:

Обойми меня драгая,  
 Как и грозды виноградны  
 Свой объемяют твердый стебель;  
 И как будто почивая  
 Приклонись ко мне приятно,  
 Чтоб любовь в меня вдохнути

<sup>18</sup> On the Anacreontic semantics of the Russian iambic trimeter see Gasparov 1999: 30, 90, 192.

<sup>19</sup> Cf.: “Out of five *Kisses*, which were published in *The Evenings*, one has a form of an Anacreontic ode, and another uses the unrhymed 6-foot iambus, in the spirit of the ‘à l'antiquité’ poetic experiments of that epoch” (Grishakova 1994: 35, note 20).

Сладким звуком поцелуев.  
 [...]
 Но когда умрем мы оба,  
 То скажу тогда Харону,  
 Чтоб в одной Харон нас лодке  
 Перевез в поля приятны,  
 Где в кустах густыя мирфы  
 Тени смертных любят нежно.  
 Я и там любить ты буду  
 Прямо райски лобызая.  
 (BDT 1779: 42–43)<sup>20</sup>

It is relevant to our discussion that this poem is entitled *Елисейские поля* [*The Elysian Fields*] and connected to the German poetic tradition<sup>21</sup>.

It is also possible that Batiushkov decided to add an Anacreontic flavour to his elegy all by himself. In 1810 he translated into trochaic tetrameters three more poems which had originally been written using different metres:

*Привидение. Из Парни* [*The Ghost. From Parny*] (Évariste Parny's original: *Le revenant*, octosyllables);  
*Ложный страх. Подражание Парни* [*False Fear. Imitation of Parny*] (the original: *La frayeur*, decasyllables);  
*Счастливец. Подражание Кастю.* [*The Fortunate. Imitation of Casti*] (Giambattista Casti's original: *A fille*, pentasyllables with alternation of dactylic and feminine endings).

In Batiushkov's *List of my Works* they are all included in the *Anacreontea* section.

Mikhail Gasparov did not distinguish *Elysium* from among the other 4-foot-trochee elegies and elegiac epistles composed by Batiushkov:

<sup>20</sup> "Embrace me, my darling, / just as bunches of grapes / clasp their strong stem; / and, as if dormant, / bend forward to me pleasantly, / to breathe [= inspire] love into me / with a sweet sound of kisses. / [...] / But when we both die, / I will say to Charon / to take us in the same ferry / to the pleasant fields, / where, under the roof of the spreading myrtle / mortal shadows love [each other] tenderly. / I will love you even there, / kissing you blissfully."

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Mihhail Lotman's remark on the associations of the trochaic tetrameter with *Anacreontea* and the tradition of German songs (Lotman 1996: 300).



All the eight poems by Batiushkov, in which the trochaic tetrameter is used, were composed in 1806–1815 (from *К Гнедичу* [*To Gnedich*] to *Вакханка* [*The Bacchante*]), all of them are contemporary with the young Pushkin and keep up the Epicurean thematic repertoire of light poetry (Gasparov 1999: 202).

However, it is worth determining within a wider “Epicurean” semantic aura a more specific, “Anacreontic” variation (cf. Gasparov 1990, 1999: 201). Giambattista Casti’s poem, which was imitated by Batiushkov, is included in Casti’s *Anacreontiche* (Blagoj 1934: 508). In Batiushkov’s *Опыты в стихах и прозе* [*Essays in Verse and Prose*], however, it is included in the *Miscellanea* section (Batiushkov 1817: 192–195), while the aforementioned translations from Parny are included in the sections of *Elegies* and *Miscellanea*, respectively (Batiushkov 1817: 39–42, 183–185). Nevertheless, we can discover an Anacreontic “substratum” in all three translations. In particular, this is indicated by their literary genesis: for example, the poetics and style of Batiushkov’s *The Ghost* were directly influenced by Gavriil Derzhavin’s 4-foot-trochee poem *Любушке* [*To Liubushka*], which appeared in his 1804 collection *Анакреонтические песни* [*Anacreontic songs*] (see Ionin 1989: 16; Pilshchikov 1994a: 82, note 4)<sup>22</sup>.

We can see that, in Batiushkov’s work, the trochaic tetrameter became a means to transform the genre of the elegy, opening it for interaction with the neighbouring genres, especially Anacreontic lyrics. In this way, the tendency to blur generic boundaries – so characteristic of the “mediocre styles” in the late Classicist and early Romanticist age – manifests itself.

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<sup>22</sup> “In Derzhavin, the 4-foot trochee is clearly associated with the Anacreontic theme and opposed to iambs” (Lejbov, Roman 2005. Семантика четырехстопного хоря Тютчева: к постановке проблемы. <http://r-l.livejournal.com/1082749.html>). See also Elena Dryzhakova’s paper on Derzhavin’s trochees (Dryzhakova 1995).

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### **Заметки о метрической семантике русских, французских и немецких переводов «*Basium II*» Иоанна Секунда**

Статья вписывает элегию К. Батюшкова «Элизиум» (1810) в традицию подражаний второму стихотворению из книги Иоанна Секунда «*Basia*» («Поцелуи»). Французский силлабический эквивалент для пифийамбического (эподического) дистиха, которым написан латинский оригинал, нашел Ронсар: в его подражании («*Chanson*», 1578) использованы катрены перекрестной рифмовки, состоящие из 12-сложников с женскими окончаниями и 6-сложников с мужскими окончаниями. Однако французские переводчики «*Basia*» XVIII–XIX вв. не могли воспользоваться этим размером, потому что его семантический ореол кардинально изменил Малерб, написавший такими катренами свое хрестоматийное «Утешение господину Дюперье... на смерть его дочери» (1598). «Элизий» и его прототексты – это стихи о радостной смерти в наслаждении и соединении любовников за гробом, а размер, употребленный Малербом, на двести с лишним лет стал размером траурных элегических стансов о вечной разлуке. Вопрос о метрическом прототипе стихотворения Батюшкова остается открытым. «Анакреонтический» 4-стопный хорей с перекрестной рифмовкой, которым написан «Элизий», не обнаруживает аналогов ни в латинском тексте, ни в его французских переводах, но неожиданно совпадает с метром Бюргерова «Объятия» («*Die Umarmung*», 1776), которое Батюшков вряд ли знал в 1810 г., и находит ближайшую параллель в нерифмованных 4-стопный хорейх некоторых русских подражаний «*Basium II*», переведенных с немецкого в 1770-е годы и к началу XIX века, вероятно, забытых.

### **Märkusi Janus Secunduse “*Basium II*” vene, prantsuse ja saksa imitatsioonide meetrilise semantika kohta**

Käesolev artikkel seob Konstantin Batjuškovi luuletuse “*Elysium*” (1810) Janus Secunduse “*Basium II*” poeetiliste imitatsioonide traditsiooniga. Selle luuletuse pütijambiliste distihhonide prantsuse ekvivalendi leiutas Ronsard (“*Chanson*”, 1578), kes kasutas ristriimilisi katrääne, milles korrapäraselt vaheldusid kaheteist- ja kuuesilbilised read. “*Basia*” prantsuse tõlkijad 18. sajandil ja 19. sajandi alguses ei saanud seda värsimõõtu siiski kasutada, sest selle semantilist oreooli oli drastiliselt muutnud Malherbe’i “*Consolation à Monsieur du Périer*” (1598). Batjuškovi “*Elysium*” nagu ka selle ladina ja prantsuse allikad on luuletus õnnelikust surmast ja armastajate ühinemisest sealpoolsuses; värsimõõt, mida Malherbe’i luuletuses kasutati, oli üle kahesaja aasta igavesest lahuselekust rääkivate leinaeleegiate mõõt. Batjuškovi luuletuse meetrilise prototüübi küsimus jääb lahenduseeta. Tema “anakreontilisel” trohheilisel tetrameetril ei ole ei ladina originaalis ega selle prantsuse tõlgetes analoogi, küll aga langeb see kokku G. A. Bürgeri luuletuse “*Die Umarmung*” (1776) värsimõõduga (millest Batjuškov oli 1810 vaevalt teadlik); paralleele leidub ka mõnes 18. sajandi *Basium II* jäljendustest, need olid 19. sajandi alguseks aga tõenäoliselt unustusse vajunud.