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TRANSLATING BLOK'S *DVENADTSAT'* INTO ENGLISH: THEORY AND PRACTICE.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the theoretical and practical issues involved in the translation of Aleksandr Blok's poem *Dvenadtsat'* into English. The theoretical framework of the translation of poetry is examined, followed by a discussion of Russian symbolism and the work of Blok in relation to *Dvenadtsat'*. Two translations of the poem are examined in detail in the light of the preceding sections. The aim of the dissertation is to identify and discuss those problems facing the translator of *Dvenadtsat'* and of Blok's poetry in general. The practical analysis, comparison and assessment of the two translations serve to illustrate the issues raised.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts in Translation at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

[signature]

12th day of December, 1987

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I Gwyn am ei gariad a'i gefnogaeth

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Introduction

The purpose of this project is the identification and discussion of issues involved in the translation of Aleksandr Blok's poem *Dvenadtsat' (1918)* into English. To this end two translations have been chosen for analysis.

The nature of the project means that a considerable amount of background material is needed to provide a theoretical framework for the analysis of the source text and the two target texts, as well as a literary background for Blok's poetry. The project is therefore divided into several sections; the first two chapters provide a survey of the theories relevant for the process of the translation and analysis of a work of literature, concentrating specifically on the translation of poetry. The third chapter looks at the Russian Symbolist movement in general, focusing on Aleksandr Blok, while the fourth chapter considers the nature of Blok's poetry, examining in particular those features which may prove problematic for the translator. In the fifth section a detailed but selective interpretation and analysis of *Dvenadtsat'* is attempted, leading on to the sixth chapter which analyses and compares the two translations studied here. A final chapter seeks to elucidate and summarise the conclusions arrived at by means of this project, providing certain guidelines for the translation of *Dvenadtsat'* and, by extension, for the translation of Blok's poetry in general.

The approach is essentially empirical, based on the issues which emerged during the course of this study. The project does not attempt to be in any way exhaustive; this is a vast topic which could easily have stretched into several hundred pages. Given the time and space available, it does however attempt to provide some insight into the way in which two very different translators approached the poem, and to give an inevitably personal view of their successes and failures, thereby indicating the particular problems facing the translator of the poetry of Blok.

The project is nevertheless firmly rooted in current translation theory, and draws extensively on trends in literary theory and semiotics in the process of analysis. No one theory has been adopted for the pragmatic reason that any practical analysis must be carried out within the framework of the individual work, although certain broad guidelines are clearly invaluable at the outset.

Chapter I: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

While a theoretical framework is essential before the work of analysis and translation can begin, it is also important not to be restricted to one particular approach, but rather to utilise those elements and concepts which are heuristically most useful. In this manner, rather than dogmatically following the dictates of a particular school of thought, both the translator and his critic must make use of various theories and methodologies in order to ensure that he remains aware of all aspects of the process. The present work therefore makes use of linguistics, semantics, and stylistics, as well as structuralism and semiotics.

1.1. Signs and Relations

The basic tenet of structuralism is that the individual units of a system only have meaning in relation to each other. Thus all the elements of a literary text interact to communicate the overall message:

> In short, the full significance of any entity or experience cannot be perceived unless and until it is integrated into the structure of which it forms a part. *[Hawkes 1977:18]*

A poem has the ability to impress the reader as a single structure. Each element of a poem is perceived as an autonomous part of a sequence and as a dependent part of a whole. Ivanov quotes Baran:

> There is no continuous transition, and no correlation at all, between the linguistic forms of the elements of an *utterance* and the *forms* of its whole... only by a leap can we move from syntax to questions of composition. *[cit. Ivanov, ed. Baran 1974: 318]*

Any literary work can be seen to consist of signs which interact on several levels. As poetry generally makes use of complex symbolism and imagery, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is of especial importance. Saussure gave the term *sign* to the combination of a concept and a sound-image, called *signified* and *signifier* respectively *(Saussure 1974 (1959):67)*. The signified can be described as a mental representation of the 'thing' and can be defined only within the signifying process. The signifier is thus inseparable from the signified, but it always has a material substance. The process binding the signifier and the signified is termed the *signification*, and the product the *sign*. An important aspect of a poetic text is that in poetry everything acts as a signifier; thus the overall unity of signifiers and meanings produces a global meaning that is not simply the sum of the isolable parts. Eco takes this further - the whole text functions as a 'hypersign' *(cf. Corti 1978:79)*. This particular nature of the poem:

> attests to the fact that the work can produce a high yield of information precisely because the work as a whole strengthens the complexity of its constituent parts. *(Corti: 90)*

Beaugrande consequently emphasises the need for a translator to consult the thematic structure of the whole text. In poetry this means that rhyme, rhythm and metre, and possibly the visual form of the verse must all be taken into account. If he fails to do this the internal balance of the language structures is in danger *(Beaugrande, ed. Wilss 1980:261)*. Clearly a breakdown of thematic structure is more likely to occur in a long narrative work than in a short poem, as it is easier in the former instance to miss certain tensions and relations within the text.

> Clearly the unit of translating is not the word, but whatever segments of the text function as coherent and cohesive units within actual occurrences *(Beaugrande 1978: 98)*

The occurrence of individual words and phrases, especially in poetry, cannot be detached from their function. The fulfilment of the function of a text must be the highest priority for a translator. This stand is also taken by Zenan Klemenciewicz:

> Das Original sollte als ein System und nicht als eine Stirme von Elementen betrachtet werden, als organische Ganzheit und nicht als eine mechanisch Ansammlung von Elementen. Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers besteht weder darin zu reproduzieren, noch darin, ihre Funktion zu erfüllen und solche Elemente und Strukturen der eigenen Sprache anzuwendend, die, soweit wie möglich, deren Ersatz und Gegenwert mit der gleichen funktionalen Eignung und Wirksamkeit sein konnten. *(cit. Levy 1969: 211-12)*

Not only does a text have to be seen as an organic whole but it must also be considered in relation to other works by the same author *(cf.Wurm:113)*. Many of Blok's poems were written during intense periods of activity and are placed in cycles of poems. In addition certain themes and symbols recur and develop throughout his works. Clearly a translation cannot occupy a totally analogous position in the target language system. The translated work will nevertheless become a part of the target literary system, either as a work in its own right, or as an overt translation.

1.2. Form and content

A central concern of literary analysis and translation theory is the relationship and tension between form and content. This is of especial significance in the poetry of Aleksandr Blok, where the two are inextricably related.

The 'defamiliarising' effect of a work of art, as described by the Russian Formalists, by means of which the reader is forced into a dramatic awareness of language so that his perception of the world is renewed, was a primary concern of the Symbolists *(Eagleton 1983: 3)*. Scholes quotes Shklovsky:

> Art exists to help us recover the sensation of life; it exists to make us feel things, to make the stone stony. The end of art is to give a sensation of the object as seen, not as recognised. The technique of art is to make things "unfamiliar", to make forms obscure, so as to increase the difficulty and duration of perception. The act of perception in art is an end in itself and must be prolonged. In art it is an experience of the process of construction that counts, not the finished product. *(Scholes 1974:84)*

How closely this resembles Blok's own feelings about the act of creation of a work of art, described in his poem *Khudozhnik*.

Shklovsky assigns imagery and other literary devices, including rhyme, rhythm and metre, to this central concept of '*ostranenie*' or 'making strange'. Through these alienating devices, words in poetry become objects in their own right. In Saussurean terminology they become *signifieds* rather than *signifiers*:

> The distinctive feature of poetry lies in the fact that a word is perceived as a word and not merely a proxy for the denoted object or an outburst of an emotion, that words and their arrangement, their meaning, their outward and inward form, acquire weight and value of their own. *[Jakobson, cit.Hawkes: 65]*

The language of poetry permits the writer greater liberties in the way in which he uses language and at the same time it imposes additional constraints, determined by the language and genre of the poetry. The poet makes use of deviations from normal language to produce a 'foregrounding' effect, which may be used so intensively that communication is pushed into the background and the act of expression itself brought to the fore.

Beaugrande emphasises this aspect of the 'unexpectedness' of poetic language, which he sees as its most significant feature *[1975: 15-24]*. The reader is obliged to interpret this use of language by referring to the structures of grammar and meaning within the text. Thus:

> poetic language slows down processing and heightens concentration, whereby increased awareness of formal features becomes possible. *(Beaugrande 1978: 23)*

In translation the choice of words is therefore of particular importance. A translator is often obliged to choose between accepting a change in form or in meaning. The translator must derive a set of priorities in order to place the features of the translated poem in a hierarchy corresponding to that of the original poem. In deciding on such a hierarchy, the overall unity of all elements of the poem must be retained.

Corti relates content to expression, stating that there exists a dynamic relation between them, a structural unity of thematic, symbolic and ideological levels, the form giving added significance to the content. This interaction gives an 'invariant' of the work *[Corti: 106]*.

Levy makes the then innovative statement that where form is a carrier of semantic meaning, it must be preserved in translation *[1969:108]*. The tension between form and content is most marked in poetry, and is especially relevant in the case of Blok, in whose poetry the rhythm, rhyme and metre are closely bound up with the overall meaning of the work.

Every feature of poetry may carry semantic significance. Very often, for example, different metrical schemes indicate different genres. Blok uses the metres of folk poetry and folk songs to establish certain connotations. In this sense the metre acts as a second-level signifier. Yuri Lotman, a leading Soviet semiotician, emphasises that in poetry it is the actual nature of the signifier, the patterns of sound and rhythm set up by the marks on the page, that determine what is signified:

> Poetry activates the full body of the signifier, presses the word to work to its utmost under the intense pressure of surrounding words, and so to release its richest potential. *[cit. Eagleton, 1983: 102]*

1.3. Meaning in poetry

Language can be used in a denotative or in a connotative sense. Connotation exists when the sign from a previous signifier - signified relationship becomes the signifier of a further relationship. Corti describes poetic language as a system of *hypercodification*. Even sounds, syntax, lexis and graphic features acquire semantic meaning in poetry. The text as a whole functions as a hypersign, that is, the poetic text emits a message which changes the reader's perception of reality *[Corti:79f]*. Poets generally agree that poetry resists the flow of language as a vehicle of communication and creates phonic-rhythmic links that would be arbitrary in normal language:

> It follows that in the nonliterary text, the semantic unity creates the link, while in the poetic text it is the link that creates the semantic unity. *[Corti 1978:75]*

It is this feature of intensity, where every word or poetic device has a function and meaning of its own as part of the whole that is the major cause of difficulty in the translation of poetry.

Saussure proposed two dimensions of poetic language; metaphor, represented by the associative synchronic dimension, and metonymy, represented by the syntagmatic diachronic dimension *[cf.Barthes 1964: 59-60]*. While metaphor involves semi-similarity of meaning, in which one sign is substituted for another, thus relating to vertical relations in language, metonymy involves contiguity of meaning, and exploits the horizontal relations of language. In poetic language there is a combination of horizontal and vertical movement:

> The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination. *[Jakobson, ed. Sebeok: 358]*

Words are not simply strung together but arranged according to patterns of similarity created by sound, meaning, rhythm and connotation. Some literary forms are primarily metonymic, such as the works of the realists, while others, especially Romantic and Symbolist literature, are primarily metaphorical. Jakobson notes:

> The principle of similarity underlies poetry; the metrical parallelism of lines, or the phonic equivalence of rhyming words prompts the question of semantic similarity and contrast. Prose, on the contrary, is forwarded essentially by contiguity. Thus for poetry, metaphor, and for prose metonymy, is the line of least resistance. *[cit. Hawkes: 80]*

Davie discusses three aspects of poetry, suggested by Ezra Pound, one of which is termed ***melopoeia***, where the words are charged with a musical property over and above their plain meaning and which directs the bearing of that meaning *[Davie: 34]*. Pound states that melopoeia is "practically impossible to transfer or translate from one language to another, save perhaps by divine accident, and for half a line at a time." *[Pound, cit. Davie: 34]* Blok's poetry is renowned for its musical quality; in addition he makes extensive use of familiar patterns from Russian folk-poetry, providing connotative source text material which cannot be preserved in translation and for which the translator is obliged to compensate.

Geoffrey Leech categorises seven types of meaning which are especially applicable to a discussion of semantic significance in poetry *(1974:10-27)*:

1. Conceptual meaning, sometimes referred to as *denotative* meaning.
2. Connotative meaning, or the communicative value an expression has over and above its purely conceptual content.
3. Stylistic meaning, indications of dialect and register, and the relationship between the addresser and the addressee.
4. Affective meaning, which conveys information about the personal feelings and attitudes of the speaker.
5. Reflected meaning, which refers to what is communicated through association with another sense of the same expression. This is used to especial advantage in poetry. Certain expressions become associated with certain concepts so that their use in another context still evokes those connotations.
6. Collocative meaning consists of the associations a word acquires on account of the meanings of words which tend to occur in its environment. Clearly when they are used in an unusual context the language will be marked in some way; poets often make use of such a device to confound the expectations of their readers.

These last four categories of meaning are all more closely connected with connotative than with conceptual meaning. They may therefore all be grouped under associative meaning and thus contrasted with conceptual meaning.

7. Thematic meaning which involves what is communicated by the way in which a speaker or writer organises the message, in terms of ordering, focus, and emphasis.

Generally a translator is obliged to sacrifice certain elements of the source text in order to preserve other elements. The connotations of certain words and devices vary from language to language. To preserve

all the features of the original would be impossible. The question, then, is how the translator establishes an hierarchy of priorities. This will be discussed further below.

1.4. The socio-historical context

The relationship between the original work and the original readers and between the target text and target readers must be taken into account by the translator. The allusions and connotations of poetry are often specific to that culture and to that poetic tradition.

Any work of literature must be seen in relation to other works by the same writer, as well as to other literature of the period. It must also be considered within the social and historical context from which it comes *[cf. Levy 1969:170-173]* The translator's own ideological outlook will also affect the type of translation produced.

Roland Barthes draws attention to the fact that a literary work is closely linked to the prevailing ideology. Bakhtin points out that all forms of ideological activity are united by their sign character, that is, everything ideological possesses semiotic meaning *[cf.V.V.Ivanov 1974(76):310; Eagleton:135].* Consequently each field of ideological activity forms its own system of signs and symbols. Literature is both

a product and a message of a particular ideology. As Blok was writing at a time when two ideologies were in violent and revolutionary conflict, a conflict which is at the core of 'The Twelve', this is very much reflected in the poem.

The translator must also be aware both of the function of the original in the original culture and the potential function of the translation in the target culture. The fact that the cultural background of the original may be alien to the reader of a translation means that the translation may often have a more highly informative function, in that the translator may make certain aspects of the work more explicit *(Levy 1969:77)*.

1.5. The Role of Reading

It has been said that errors in poetic translation probably derive from errors in reading a text *(Beaugrande 1978: 25; Levy 1969:46)*. Every reader of a text evaluates that text on the basis of his own perception of reality, and in terms of his place in that reality *(cf. Eagleton:14)*. The reader may approach the text in several ways: he may look beyond the text to the socio-historical context, seeking general principles manifest in the work; he may approach a literary work as a system, accepting its autonomy and particularity or he may emphasise certain aspects of the work and ignore others *(cf.Corti: 44-5)*. In addition his interpretation may be based on material supplied by the text or by the reader himself.

The nature of the interpretation of poetry is expansive rather than reductive, as in the interpretation of narrative; the reader must expand and extend the text in order to comprehend the meaning. Maria Corti *[1978: 43]* states that the addressee (or reader) is a collaborator in the polysemic life of the text. Barthes and Kristeva take this further and describe reading as a 'rewriting' of a text *[cf.Corti: 44]*.

It is doubtful that each reading would be equally valuable. A reader may have an inadequate command of the language, he may be unfamiliar with the culture, or he may be unaware of allusions to other works. Beaugrande suggests that the meaning potential of a poem remains constant, while the possibilities for actualising that potential change along with the readers' horizons, that is, with the type of reader and changing historical and social conditions *[1978:30]*. Nevertheless, the more background knowledge a reader brings to his interpretation, the more awareness of the author and the age, then the richer will be his perception of the poem.

Beaugrande *[1980:34]* notes that it is difficult to distinguish between the 'original meaning' of the text and the 'cognitive representation of meaning in the mind of persons involved with the text'. He lists these persons as follows:

a) the original text producer
b) the translator as the receiver in the SL
c) the translator as the text producer in the TL
d) the receiver audience in the TL

For Beaugrande the translator's interpretation of the text is a translation in its own right, forming a mental representation of the text which the translator then simplifies before embarking on the material translation. He distinguishes between a reading based on reader-supplied information and a reading based on text-supplied information:

> Only if the reading process is consistently pursued to the point where the interpretation is maximally dominated by text-supplied information can a truly objective translation be produced. *[1978: 88]*

The translation may either be translator-oriented or it may be reader-oriented. If the former, then the translator substitutes a personal response from the entire meaning potential of the text. Such an approach is obviously highly fallible, especially if the interpretation is affected by insufficient knowledge of the source text and an inadequate analysis of the text functions. Such a translation will not give the reader access to the original intention of the text. On the other hand if the translation is reader-oriented then the translator will remain aware that his approach is only one among many potential responses, thus preserving the polyvalence of the original text as far as possible. His highest priority is the fulfilment of the functions of the text *(Beaugrande (ed.Wilss 1980): 28)* which can only be established by means of a thorough analysis of the original text:

> The translator must generate coincidences in which the same functions are *fulfilled as far as* possible by the corresponding language material *[1980:28]*

The problem is how to *motivate a satisfactory coincidence* by the interaction of form and function in a particular text *[Beaugrande 1980:29]*.

The main theoretical emphasis in literary translation especially applicable to the translation of poetry is ... the importance of seeing the work of art as a structural whole. The translator is faced with the problem of replicating the function of the original text and must therefore take into account the socio-historical context of the source text and of the potential translation, as well as the tension between form and content in both texts. In attempting to preserve the function of the source text he is obliged to develop a hierarchy of priorities inevitably based on his own reading of the text, although he can ensure that this reading is largely text-based; he should also remain aware that the potential meaning of the text is much wider than one personal, narrow interpretation.

The following chapter will look more specifically at those problems facing the translator of poetry, as well as at strategies for the assessment and comparison of translations.

Chapter 2: The Translation of Poetry

Several studies have been made which are directly concerned with the translation of poetry, notably by Robert de Beaugrande [1980], Van Kesteren [1978] and Lefevere [1975]. These theories form a basis for the analysis and comparison of *Dvenadtsat'* and its two translations.

2.1. The translator and his goal

The translator himself is clearly of central importance. In Erbe's opinion, there are born poets and born translators, and the two seldom coincide *(Erbe 1964:161)*. Great poets do not normally make great translators, for too much of their own originality and style will come through in the translation. Thus translations by Goethe, Baudelaire and Poe are renowned more for the skill of the translator than that of the original author. In contrast, Burton Raffel elaborates in detail his belief that the translation of poetry is an art to be undertaken by a poet or a craftsman:

> The greatest sin a translator can commit is to fail to breathe life into his re-creation. He can never really breathe life into it if he is unable to force himself away from the original, and far enough away so that he can be close in spirit and yet be free actually to create in the new linguistic medium *[1971:59]*.

Mandel'shtam, who was both an accomplished poet and a translator of poetry, wrote of the task of translation:

> Translation is one of the most difficult and responsible aspects of literary work, It is essentially the creation of an independent speech system on the basis of foreign material. Switching this system over to the Russian system requires tremendous effort, attention, will-power, a wealth of inventiveness, intellectual freshness, philological sensibility, a huge lexical keyboard and the ability to listen carefully to rhythm, to grasp the picture of a phrase and to convey it; and what is more this must all be accompanied by the strictest self-control. Otherwise the translation is merely interpolation. *[cit. Burnett,ed. Hermans 1985:180]*

The translator of poetry, then, must steer a difficult course between the poetics of the source and of the target language, constrained on all sides by the limitations of his own language, and by the failings and strengths of the original author.

Beaugrande lists several phases in the process of translation:

1. translating the written text into a mental representation
2. collating instances of non-expected usage with possible expected equivalents
3. rearranging smaller or larger sequences according to their communicative content
4. collecting and transferring information contained in the context to the interpretation of problematic elements
5. finding goal-language exponents of the overall mental representation obtained in phases 1 through 4
6. collating the original text against both the translation under production and the multi-level mental representation
7. determining reader responses to the final translation, consulting informants if possible. *[1978: 86-9]*

Translators are first and foremost readers and interpreters of the original text, and as such they may adopt different attitudes towards those elements which are closely linked to the social, historical and literary context in which the source text (ST) was written. They may ignore the problem by omitting items unknown to the target audience; they may preserve the status quo and insert footnotes - which makes it impossible for the reader to approach the text as a work of art, or they may instead translate or interpret these elements for the target reader- which may lead to inconsistency and distortion so that much of the local colour of the text is lost *[Lefevere 1975:87]*. Many translations alternately expand and compress the source text thus producing a distortion of the target text as a literary work of art. This distortion takes place on morphological, semantic, structural and syntactic levels *[Lefevere 1975:95]*. In Lefevere's opinion the only methods that seem to solve the problem are re-interpretation and explanation within the text *[1975:94]*. He proposes that the translator's task is to render the source text - the original author's interpretation of a given theme expressed in a number of variations - accessible to target language readers by replacing these variations with their equivalents in a different language time, place, and tradition *[1975:100ff]*. The translator's first priority however is to the source text's communicative value, a premise also upheld by Beaugrande *[1978:100]*.

In Lefevere's view the criterion for the translator should be the structural value of time-place-tradition elements in the source text; he must decide what is culture-bound and what is structure-bound.

Structure-bound elements should be retained without topicalisation (translated as if written by the author in the target-language culture), but must also be explained. The literary tradition of the original should be replaced by a literary form occupying roughly the same position in the target language tradition *[Lefevere:101]*. Lefevere enumerates five factors in translating competence:

1. the ability to comprehend the source text as a whole, total structure.
2. the ability to measure the communicative value as well as the sense of the source text.
3. the ability to distinguish between culture-bound and structure-bound time-place-tradition elements in the source text and to topicalise the former and explain the latter, while retaining an underlying faithfulness to the total structure of the source text.
4. the ability to select an appropriate literary form within the literary tradition of the target language. If there is none available then he may create one.
5. the ability to interpret the theme of the source text in the same way as the original author, thus aiming at equivalence of effect:

> that translation is the best which comes nearest to creating in its audience the same impression as was made by the original on its contemporaries. *[Rieu,cit. Lefevere:103)*

The more accomplished the writer the more problematic will be any attempt to translate his or her work. Anne Cluysenaar comments:

> The better the writer, as a verbal artist, the harder he or she will be to translate adequately, since, added to the normal inseparability of form and meaning, there will be the stylistic exploitation of accidental features peculiar to the original language system. *[1978:21]*

No two languages offer the same range of accidental features. The translator must therefore seek to reproduce equivalent functions for those features which he cannot reproduce directly.

Verse translation inevitably means that the translator must attempt to compensate for those elements in the source text that cannot be easily transferred to the target text. While 'equivalence' on the concrete level of lexis, syntax, and phonology is impossible, the translator may yet hope to instil new life into the poem in his own language. The ideal would seem to be as expressed by Erbe:

> ...the reader of a translated poem should not only clearly feel the individuality of the poet, but also the atmosphere of his country and people, and that it should still be an adequate poem in the new language. *[1964:13]*

Taking a similar stance, Stankiewicz remarks on the requirements for a good translator:

> ... any good translation is a work of creative reinterpretation in accordance with the set of rules which govern different poetic systems and in accordance with the different possibilities of variation which these allow. *[ed. Sebeok 1960:81]*

2.2. Specific problems

The particular difficulties involved in the translation of poetry stem not only from the nature of poetic language, and the high incidence of symbol and metaphor, but from the unity of sound and meaning, which, as noted above, is more marked in Romantic lyrical verse and in Symbolist poetry. Erbe notes that Roger Fry spent twenty years translating twenty

nine of Mallarmé's sixty four poems, and yet still described the result as a 'preliminary attempt'! [Erbe: 9]

The poetic devices of rhythm, metre and rhyme join individual parts of the poem which are not linked. Rhyme is especially difficult to transfer from language to language, although easier between related languages such as Russian and Czech, where there is considerable lexical and morphological similarity. Forced to assign significance to other words by creating new rhyming pairs the translator inevitably changes the 'thought composition' of the poem *[Levy 1969:177]*. As far as the rhythm and metre of the poem is concerned Levy concludes that it is best to translate the rhythm of the original rather than the metre as this tends to be the major carrier of meaning. Metre is often linked more specifically to a particular poetic tradition, as we shall see below *[Levy 1969:186]*.

The translation of Russian poetry into English involves specific problems; although both Indo-European languages, they belong to two widely divergent families and there are considerable lexical, grammatical, syntactical, and phonological differences. As English is not an inflected language, many grammatical functions can only be fulfilled by word order. The flexible and complex morphological system of the Russian language means that new variations of words are easily invented. The translator into English is therefore operating under considerable linguistic constraints, and must also contend with differing systems of rhyme and versification, which are considered in further detail below.

2.3. Assessing a translation

In the evaluation of a translation an important question is whether the target language text represents a literary work for the target language reader. If the original is distorted to such an extent that the target text cannot be considered as a work of art in its own right then the translation must be deemed a failure. There is an inevitable tension between the fact that the translation should exist as an original and independent work of art, and that it should also convey the 'foreign' qualities of the original to the target audience *(Levy 1969:75)*.

For Beaugrande the traditional distinction between a free and a faithful translation misses the main factors in the rendering of poetic texts into another language and culture. While the literal translator pays a minumum of attention to the communicative function of a text, the 'free' translator neglects the words and phrases used in the original *(Beaugrande 1980:14)*. Beaugrande emphasises the importance of a full functional analysis of any poem to be translated. Any concentration on one aspect of the text to the exclusion of others will lead to a gross distortion of the original, and especially of the communicative value of that text. Levy groups misrepresentations in translation into shifts in three directions:

a. zwischen der allgemeinen und spezifischen Benennung.
b. zwischen der stilistisch neutralen und der expressiven Benennung
c. zwischen einer Wiederholung und einer Modifikation der Wortbezeichnung *[Levy 1969:116]*

In a comparison between the original and the translation the constraints under which the translator is working must be recognised. These constraints will be determined by the traditional versification of the two languages and by the relationships of phonology, morphology and syntax. Beaugrande enumerates those factors which may lead to non-equivalence between the two texts *[1978: 101-2]*:

A. Pertaining to language systems:
1. arbitrariness of relationships of language features to expression
2. difference of segmentation of accepted reality into language
3. incompatibilities between language systems
4. non-correspondence of informational exponents in texts
5. non-correspondence of socio-cultural environments of language-users

B. Pertaining to the poetic use of language in texts:
1. polyvalence and polyfunctionality
2. dense structuration
3. expansion of ordinary grammar and lexicon
4. non-fulfilment of reader expectations

C. Pertaining to the translator as reader/writer:
1. predominance of reader-based information over text-based
2. predominance of general expression over context-specific
3. transition from mental representation to written word
4. inadequate competence (general, structuration and poetic competence in the two languages.

These form three broad categories, the first concerning contrastive linguistics, the second poetics and literary analysis and the third involving empirical studies in translation criticism. It is this last category which has been most neglected, and yet it is the most important,

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for problems at the other two levels are first faced by the translator at this level. Poetic translating competence thus includes strategies for reading, writing, interpreting, expressing and compensating. Beaugrande suggests that a poetic translator must possess 'poetic competence' which is made up of several factors:

a. structuration competence - the ability to produce and interpret the non-expected use of language by reference to structures of grammar and meaning
b. experience with poetry
c. experience with a particular author
d. historical awareness of the situation in which the ST was produced
e. educational training and interests *[1978:33]*

The translator must also be able to establish priorities of equivalence and compensation. For example, if the writer of the original text makes use of coincidentally occurring sound properties in order to add a dimension of meaning, then as this cannot be preserved in translation it may be assigned a low priority. In order to preserve rhyme, however, the translator must modify demands for equivalence on grammatical or syntactical levels. The text will change, but the translator must always keep a sense of the function of the text as a literary work.

2.4. Strategies for comparison

Van Kesteren provides a semiotic model with which to assess the translation of a poem, or indeed any other text (Holmes et al, 1978). His model is partially successful, although he fails to develop any system of priorities. He distinguishes three categories which he labels syntactic, semantic and pragmatic; *syntactics* constitutes the study of the formal properties of signs, and the inventory of rules combining them, *semantics* involves the study of the meaning and content of signs and the influence of context on both, while *pragmatics* is concerned with the study and influence of the use of signs as well as the effects and effectiveness of that use *(1978: 49)*. He goes on to divide each of these into a further three elements, and then proceeds to examine equivalence between the poem and the translation on each of the nine defined levels:

syntactic

qualisign: - rhyme, alliteration, any phonic or graphic element
sinsign: - at the level of morphemes, lexemes.
legisign: - based on the syntactic structure of the text

semantic

icon: - equivalence of semantic or motif structures
index: - equivalence at the level of the theme
symbol: - symbols of a text, or its basic semantic invariant, also termed 'archimotifeme structure'.

pragmatic

rhema: - concerned with stylistic equivalence.
dicent: - equivalence on the level of the literary genre, type of poem etc.

argument: - the period or school in which it was written.

This method has considerable failings in that it is a linear approach, considering each level individually, and gives little guidance for determining the interaction of all these elements. It does however provide us with a list of those elements which must be taken into consideration and can be utilised in this sense.

Toury suggests that translations should be regarded as functions which map TL utterances with a position in the target system, on SL utterances with analogous positions *[ed. Hermans 1985:16-41]*. In his view, descriptive translation studies should focus on functional-relational concepts such as "textual elements or linguistic units in relation to their positions in the translated utterances as systemic wholes" *[21]*. These utterances should then be considered in relation to the target system and in relation to the source utterances. Eventually the process of decision-making involved in the translation can be reconstructed together with the set of constraints accepted by the translator.

Toury is more concerned with identifying the translation norms at work; his approach is largely oriented to the target language and the place of translated works in the target literary system. He emphasises the primacy of the target text in any attempt at comparison. If the source text is always taken as the primary model against which the target text is measured, there is a real danger of seeing only the 'sins' committed against the source text. In his view, problems of translation must be

approached from the target text with respect to its acceptability and performance in the target culture. Translations may constitute a separate literary subsystem or they may be integrated into the indigenous system. Some poetic translations will always remain part of a body of 'translated literature' and will enjoy such limited readership that their position as autonomous works of art will remain in question.

Blok is not widely known in English, translations of his work are probably largely used as aids by those with an inadequate knowledge of Russian; they would form a sub-group within the small subgroup of Russian poetry in translation, with a very limited target audience. For this reason the primacy of the target text is not acceptable for this type of study.

Van den Broeck *[1985:54-62]* discusses Toury's concept of an 'adequate translation'. Such a translation comprises only those features which are functionally relevant for the structural relationships within the source text. An adequate translation is an optimal reconstruction of all ST elements possessing textual functions (which he terms textemes) *[1985: 57]*. Any shifts are a result of the translator's norms, or his desire to conform to the target language system norms. In poetry this often involves an abandonment of the rhyme pattern or the metrical scheme of the original, as the translator subjects the original to the poetic norms of the target language. Van den Broeck proposes three stages for the comparison of texts:

1. a textemic analysis of the ST which determines the functional relevance of linguistic and extra-linguistic elements, giving priority to aspects relating to the hierarchical structuration of various textual components and their interrelationships
2. a comparison of the TT elements corresponding to these textemes taking shifts into account
3. a generalising description of the differences between the actual TT/ST equivalent and the adequate translation *[cf. Hermans 1985:58]*

In undertaking such a three-point process, the issues and aspects of analysis discussed briefly above should also be taken into consideration.

Any assessment and comparison of a poetic work and its translation will to a certain extent remain subjective. For Burton Raffel the primary concern should be that the translation is a poem in its own right:

> This is how translations of poetry must be read, with the inner ear, unaided by dictionaries, grammars, annotations, and scholarly disputes. Poetry is not footnotes, is not definitions. It either is poetry or it is false coin. And poetry in translation is either poetry born anew or it is nothing at all. *[Raffel 1971: 115]*.

It is inevitable that a reader, if he should happen by chance to read two translations of the same poem, will automatically have a preference for one or the other. Any act of reading implies an evaluation. The reader does not have to be familiar with the original in order to assess a translation, because the most important requirement of a good translation is that it be a good poem in the target language and culture.

It may happen in this respect that the translation is deemed superior to the original. More usually, the reverse is true. In any assessment of a translation however, the existence of the poem as an original poem in the target literary system must be taken into account.

Chapter 3: Symbolism and Alexander Blok.

3.1. Symbolism as a literary movement

The literary movement usually referred to as *symbolism* began in France *largely as a reaction against the intense and overwhelming realism of* the latter half of the nineteenth century. The greatest centre of Symbolism outside France is undoubtedly Russia, where an indigenous branch developed and reached its climax during the first decade of the twentieth century. There was a preponderance of prose genres in the form of lengthy novels at the end of the nineteeenth century and a real need was felt among artists and writers for a revival of poetry. In addition the *developing capitalist economy and its concomitant* materialism together with the popularity of Darwinism contributed to an undermining of man's self-esteem and spirituality *(Maslenikov 1968:61).* Merezhkovsky describes the intellectual climate towards the end of the nineteenth century:

> Our period is characterised by two juxtaposed features - it is a time of the most extreme materialism and also a time of the most passionate idealistic transports of the spirit. We are present at a great, highly significant struggle between two ways of life, two diametrically opposed *Weltanschauungen.* The latest demands of religious experience are colliding with the latest conclusions of empirical knowledge. *[cit. Rice 1975:7]*

It was impossible for literature not to reflect this turmoil. The 1890s were a decade of rebellion. Maslenikov states:

> The realisation of irreconcilable spiritual contradictions, as well as a sence of social insecurity and personal insignificance, resulted in an intellectual trend

> that was at once mystically hopeful, apocalyptic, hyper-individualistic and decadently pessimistic. *[p14]*

Although there were many affinities between the movements in France and in Russia, the two literatures had such a different tradition and inheritance that the Russian movement soon developed its own characteristics and dynamics, eventually splitting into two opposing groups. Bryusov and Balmont were at the head of the older so-called Decadent group while the younger Symbolists developed under the leadership of Bely, Ivanov and Blok. While Bryusov and the Decadents looked inwards, the younger group believed that true symbolism must reconcile the poet and the people, and that one of its major tasks was the creation of religious myths and the provision of a collective religious experience *[Rice 1975: 94]*. The twentieth century was seen as an apocalyptic turning-point between the old and the new world, reflected in the poetry of the period in a belief in a Second Coming, a new dawn for Russia, taking up Solvyov's belief in Moscow as the Third Rome *[cf. Poggioli 1960: 127; also cf.3.2. below]*. *Dvenadtsat'* is placed right at the centre of this crossroads between the old and new worlds, a concept which is also central to the carnavalistic trend in literature of the time, again reflected in *Dvenadtsat'*.

Bely, Ivanov and Blok all believed that any phenomenon may be understood as a symbol, and that the ideal could become act or deed so that:

> through the mediation and the contemplation of the principle of love, of the Eternal Feminine, man may ascend to high heaven from this low world. *[Poggioli 1960: 118]*

By externalising and making public those subjective forms given to experience in an attempt to reconcile the concrete and the ideal world, the artist creates *myth*. If the symbols of art deal in this universal currency of myth then they can give the reader a knowledge of the ideal world normally hidden from his view. Thus the poet is able, through his art, to reveal the essential nature of things and their place in the divine scheme, thereby giving the reader access to the ultimate truth. In Symbolist poetry there exists a reciprocal action between the creator and the listener, making the latter into a co-participant in creation. By means of Symbolist poetry the music within us is awakened to throb with the music of the universe. C. M. Bowra attempts a tentative definition:

> The essence of Symbolism is its insistence on a world of ideal beauty, and its conviction that this is realised through art. The ecstasies which religion claims for the devout through prayer and contemplation are claimed by the Symbolist for the poet through the exercise of his craft. *[1943: 6]*

3.2. Influences on Russian Symbolism of relevance to *Dvenadtsat'*

Vladimir Solovyev, an important philosopher and theologist of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, had a profound influence on the Russian Symbolists. Poggioli describes him as paving the way for the movement by once more forging a link between philosophy and religion. In addition he revived the myth of Moscow as the Third Rome *[see p31 above and Poggioli: 120]*. His major thesis was the concept that the whole of creation was ruled by a single all-embracing feminine principle,

a mystical and divine being referred to as *Sophia* or the *Eternal Feminine*. He emphasised the corporality of the spirit in the son of God, the son of Man, and the church as the bride and body of Christ.

Solovyev reinforced the view of poetry as the highest of all instruments of vision; Poggioli could be referring to Blok when he says of Solovyev:

> Poetry was for him both the vessel and the vehicle of that *prophetic dream* which he viewed as the only means to discover eternal truth. [1960: 123]

Schopenhauer affirmed music as the highest form of art, an attitude adopted wholeheartedly by the Symbolists who openly sought to aspire to the qualities of music in their poetry. The musical quality of Symbolist verse was also affected by the music of Richard Wagner, himself a symbol for revolutionary change. His emphatic music was extremely popular in Russia at the time and exerted a strong influence on Blok. Schopenhauer's critique of individualism, in which he emphasised the need to break through the bonds of individuality in order to achieve genuine liberation, was also of significance. Solovyov took the same stance and was possibly the greater direct influence. Although initially the Symbolists stressed the importance of the individual, in later years there was a "retreat from extreme individualism and an attempt to discredit the subjective element in creativity and show art to be an instrument for the reconstruction of communal values" [*West 1970: 181-2*]. According to West the reasons for this retreat were twofold: firstly, there was an ultimate allegiance to the nineteenth century tradition of social commitment in literature, and, secondly, individualism was tempered

by Solovyev as well as by Schopenhauer's concept of the renunciation of the self - the individual could transcend the subjective state and gain knowledge of the metaphysical essence of the cosmos. The symbolist debate concerning the ideal versus the real world reflected Schopenhauer's interpretation of the relationship of appearance and essence. The real tension of the symbolist aesthetic was between the idea that the artist distils from reality what is most generally valid for the community and the idea that he transmutes reality in the light of an imaginative vision or intuition. It involved a faithfulness both to the invisible world and to material incarnation, with the poet as a mediator between two worlds.

The situation peculiar to Russian literature brought the younger group of Russian Symbolists back towards realism in their view of art *[cf.West3]*. *Dvenadtsat'* in particular reflects this semi-realistic quality of Blok's later verse. The poem represents a culmination of Blok's work and in many ways contrasts strongly with his earlier, more mystical verse. *Dvenadtsat'* is at times discordant, at times harmonious, both realist and yet steeped in symbolic references and allusions. It describes real events and a concrete landscape yet comes to a climax in the supernatural and religious. It is a poem that can best be appreciated within the context of the symbolist movement and of Blok's other works.

3.3. Aleksandr Blok - his poetic world

Blok is generally recognised as the greatest of the Symbolist poets, although he is not necessarily the most typical representative of the

movement. As Avril Pyman notes, he has often been described as adhering more closely to Romanticism *[cf.Pyman 1980 Vol.I:97-8]*. Obolensky *comments:*

> He was a consistent Symbolist in his use of metaphorical language to convey spiritual or psychic experience, but much of his religious and love poetry and his view of poetic inspiration may broadly be termed romantic. *[ed.1965: xliv]*

Typically romantic is the duality of both his personality and his verse, each aspect forever in conflict with the other. On the one hand Blok was deeply religious and moral, and his knowledge of the Bible and of religion must not be underestimated as an influence in his work. On the other hand he was amoral and irresponsible, with an element of gypsy-like abandon which is seen so often in his poetry (for example, *Snezhnaya Maska, Karmeni*. Chulkov commented of him:

> Beneath the mask of correctness and pedantry there lurked the fearful stranger - chaos. *[cit.Kemball 1965: 41]*

A major influence on Blok's poetry was Vladimir Solovyev's compelling concept of Sophia; Maslenikov summarises her essential nature:

> Sophia is the companion of God. As such she is the image of the perfect woman-soul. Because God would share his joy with every human, Sophia's image is accessible to every living being. The eternal woman-soul, as living, spirit entity, herself carries out the divine will by reflecting her image in mortals. Each person loves an ideal of the other world. In life each individual loves that, essentially human, being who might best reflect Sophia's image as each individual intuitively conceives it. *[Maslenikov:57-8]*

Blok was the only modern poet to devote so much verse to this divine being, involving his own search for this sacred figure, his fear of disillusionment and failure, and the haunting possiblity of eventual betrayal.

Blok sought to fuse life and art through the creative process. Possibly the major issue in his poems is the question of the synthesis of appearance and essence; he believed along with the other Symbolists that a poet had the ability to look beyond the veil of immediate reality into the abyss of the other, true, reality. Blok sacrificed himself in the quest for this absolute truth, and finally perished when he realised that it was futile - although this was not to come until several years after the Revolution.

The act of creation in which the poet grasped the vison of that other world is described in poems such as *K Muze* and *Khudozhnik*. In 1908 he wrote of poetry:

> Only that which was the writer's confession, only that literary creation in which the author burned himself to ashes can achieve greatness. If the soul immolated thus is enormous it will move more than one generation, one people, one country. But even if the soul is not great, sooner or later it will move at least the poet's contemporaries, not by his craft or originality, but by the sincerity of his self-sacrifice. [cit. Ehrlich 1964: 101.]

Inspiration was derived from the music of the Cosmos and in this sense the poet plays a passive role; the guises of the Muse may however be distorted by the poet's own reaction to a reality which he perceives as

alienated from the harmony of the spheres. Blok elaborates this concept of the dialectic nature of the poet's relationship to life. The thesis is seen as the poet's spiritual freedom and secret knowledge of other worlds; then comes the antithesis - art becomes a descent into hell and the ultimate sin of the Symbolist poet is that he is merely a poet instead of a prophet; finally in the synthesis of this dilemma the poet must return to life and reality.

3.4 Blok's poetry

Blok's first major cycle of poems, *Stikhi o Prekrasnoy Dame*, were published in 1905 and were clearly inspired to a great extent by his infatuation with and love for Lyubov' Mendeleyeva, whom he married in 1903. The overall impression of *Stikhi o Prekrasnoy Dame* is one of faith and hope. Blok makes us aware of the existence of a higher reality, contrasted with the shadowy images of ordinary life:

> Vnemlya zovu zhizni smutnoy,
> Tayno pleshchushchey vo mne,
> Mysli lozhnoy i minutnoy
> Ne otdamsya i vo sne.
> Zhdu volny - volny poputnoy
> K luchezarnoy glubine. *[I:39, 3rd July 1901]*

Blok is able to listen to the harmonious music of the Cosmos and through his creativity to formalise his experience in words by means of symbols rooted in daily life. The Beautiful Lady, whose earthly incarnation is Lyubov Dmitrievna, symbolises the process of creativity - in meeting with her rests the possibility of absolute creative self-realisation.

From 1904 the image of the feminine presence begins to assume strange forms, first as the Nocturnal Violet (1905-6) and then as an image of the elements in the Snow Mask cycle.

Blok was intensely disappointed with the failure of the 1905 Revolution, and his three plays of 1906 are all infused with a sense of despair and a loss of faith. In his increasingly ironic outlook on life, the poet becomes a play-actor and the Beautiful Lady turns into a cardboard doll. This is especially evident in *Balaganchik*, a short carnival play based on the story of Columbine, Pierrot and Harlequin. The use of parody and self-mockery is developed further in *Dvenadtsat'*, where there are several parallels between Columbine and Kat'ka.

On three occasions in his life Blok was overcome by a frenzy of creative activity, each of which produced an outstanding cycle of poems. The first of these, *Snezhnaya Maska*, was written in two weeks just after the Christmas of 1906, when Blok was infatuated with the actress, Natalya Nikolayevna Volokhova. Blok's commitment here is to a new world, symbolised by the the blizzard, a recurring image in his poetry, signifying in this cycle the elemental passion of the moment of creation of an artistic work. Similarly, the cycle *'Karmen'* was written in another creative burst in March 1914 when Blok was infatuated with Lyubov' Aleksandrovna Del'mas, a professional singer. The final poem of the lattar cycle reveals Blok's belief in an ideal existence, a world of harmony:

I v zareve ego - tvoya bezumna mladost'...
Vsye - muzyka i svet: net schast'ya, net izmen...
Melodiey odnoy zvuchat pechal' i radost'...

> No ya lyublyu tebya: ya sam takoy, *Karmen.II 432, lines 117-20]*

Increasingly during the years leading up to the Revolution, when the vision of the Beautiful Lady seemed forever removed from his sight, Blok turned more and [illegible] to Russia, in which he saw an object worthy of his devotion, a kind of feminine entity which would replace or even be identified with the Beautiful Lady. In Blok's search for a synthesis between reality and [illegible] ideal world, he attempted to see Russia as the incarnation of the spirit of music and to prove the 'antimusicalness' of the nature of the intelliguntsia. His views are largely expressed in two papers he gave in 1908 - *Narod i Intelligentsia* and *Stikhiya i Kul'tura*. He establishes a basic opposition between *civilisation* and *culture*, equated respectively with societies living in detachment from, and in harmony with, Nature or the 'Spirit of Music'. He conceived of the spirit of music as a Dionysian force of vital change, bringing chaos in order to create a new cosmos *[Poggioli: 138]*. He believed that rationalist, scientific, educated European society, in suppressing the voice of the elements, had become divorced from Nature and was doomed to collapse, while he saw the popular masses as the true bearers of culture, who had continued to live in harmony with the rhythm of nature and the music of the Cosmos. He wrote in his diary on April 1st 1919:

> Art is born of the eternal interaction between two kinds of music - the music of the creative individual and the music which sounds in the depths of the popular soul, the soul of the masses. Great art is born only of the union of these two electric currents. *[cit. Woodward:14]*

During this period Blok's poems began to contain more overtly political overtones, although the main theme was still the love of the ideal and an

intense anger at the shortcomings of reality. A collection published as *Yamby* in 1919, but written between 1907 and 1914, expresses Blok's anger and compassion for those suffering from social evils, and his longing for change. He wrote to Stanislavsky in December 1908:

> ..My theme, and I know that now for certain, without any doubts whatsoever, is a living, real theme, it is not only *bigger than* me, it is bigger than all of us put together; and it is a theme common to us all. All of us who are *alive* come to it one way or another. If we do not come to it, it will come to us, it is already advancing...
>
> That is how my theme stands before me, *the theme of Russia* (and in particular, the question of the intelligentsia and the people). To this theme I deliberately and irrevocably *dedicate my life.*[Pyman *1980 II:1]*

His poem *Rus'*, written in September of 1906 shows clearly this devotion to Russia and all it symbolised for him:

> Gde raznolikie narody
> Iz kraya v kray, iz dola v dol
> Vedut nochnye khorovody
> Pod zarevom goryashchikh sel...
>
> ...Tropu pechal'nuyu, nochnuyu
> Ya do pogosta protoptal,
> I tam, na kladbishche nochnuya,
> Podolgu pesni raspeval. *[I. 181: 9-12, 29-32]*

Blok became increasingly convinced that the next revolution would be a socialist revolution, sweeping away the old regime ruthlessly and indiscriminately. His foreboding of the future was expressed in the cycle of poems *Na Pole Kulikovom*. His attitude towards his own future and that of Russia swings from pessimism to optimism. As revolution became more and more probable he became intoxicated with confidence in Russia's future:

> I nevozmozhnoe vozmozhno,
> Doroga dolgaya legka*[Vol.I: 296-7, 25-6, 1908]*

At the same time his attitude to Russia remained ambivalent:

> Russia is transformed in his verse into a mystical, lyrical entity, into Blok's culminating feminine symbol, whom he addresses as a bride, a wife and a mother. Yet at the same time she also provokes his hatred and anger, for like the feminine figures of all his visions she is a 'double' - not only a bride but also a gypsy, a symbol not only of love, beauty, harmony, and gentleness, but also of passion, bestiality, chaos and violence. All these conflicting elements are indissolubly fused in the complex image of Blok's Russia. *[Woodward:131]*

Blok grew more and more agitated as the revolution seemed to draw nearer. Chukovsky writes of Blok at that time:

> ...he was literally possessed by this thought of the catastrophe that overshadowed us and whatever the subject of conversation, would return to it again and again. *[cit. Pyman II, p31]*

When the Revolution came he was optimistic and joyful. Bowra quotes Blok's aunt, speaking in 1917 of her nephew's enthusiasm for the Revolution:

> It seemed to him that the old world was really destroyed and that in its place must appear something new and beautiful. He went about, young, cheerful, fresh, with shining eyes, listening to that revolutionary music in the noise of the old world's collapse which, on his own testimony, sounded unceasingly in his ears. [Bowra, p171]

For him the concept of the revolution was musical above all else. In it he saw a manifestation of the Spirit of Music. *Dvenadtsat'* is considered by many to be the culmination of his work, inspired by the 'music' of the revolution. When Blok wrote this poem he was working under the same influence as when he had written the cycles *Snezhnaya Maska* and *Karmen*. He was full of optimism about the revolution, and truly believed that a new, brighter era had dawned for Russia.

Chapter 4: Blok's Poetic Language

4.1. Versification

The 1890s brought a turning point in the history of Russian poetry, influenced strongly by the French Symbolists but with native roots in the poetry of Fet, Tyutchev and Solovyev. Tyutchev broke new ground in his use of language and metre, treating the traditional metres with considerable flexibility, in marked contrast to the rigid constraints under which poets had previously written. By the start of the twentieth century the necessity for an equal number of unstressed syllables between the stressed, or potentially stressed, syllables was abandoned, so that while the number of stressed syllables per line remained compulsory the total number of syllables per line was now variable. Together with the relaxation of such constraints the treatment of other poetic devices such as caesurae, rhyme, and enjambement also changed.

Blok's poetry is very often written in free accentual verse, in which stress is substituted for a combination of length and stress as the dynamic of metrical opposition. Thus no regularity is necessary in its distribution. Blok was instrumental in advancing Russian poetic versification, in that he adapted and changed the more traditional syllabic-accentual verse. It is mainly due to him that accentual verse, based on a set number of stresses and regardless of the total number of syllables was established. For the symbolists this 'free verse' was a

symbol of life's dynamic forces, as they strived to recreate the 'music of the elements'. Such verse is never as free as English verse, however, and Blok's verse retains "heavy tonic stresses, strong effects of symmetry, regularity of rhyme and metre, and frequently archaic diction" *(Stallworthy: 11)*. As it is the constraints and patterns under which a poet writes that help to create good verse, these often cause considerable difficulty for the translator. Stankiewicz writes:

> The great poet is the man who possesses an intuitive meaning of the rules that are obligatory within his own poetic tradition and language, but who also can manipulate these rules in accordance with his own artistic intentions and who can surpass the limits prescribed by tradition. *(ed. Sebeok 1965: 81)*

In Symbolist poetry rhythm and metre are closely linked. Metre can be divided into binary and ternary metres, the former being the most favoured. Binary metre has two variants, iambic and trochaic. Iambic metre is by far the most common in Russian poetry, 64% of Pushkin's verse being written in this metre. Trochaic metre is more common in songs and folk poetry, and is used extensively by Blok. Various deviations in the regular metre are allowed in Russian poetry, mainly involving the omission of stress on certain syllables. In English binary metre the omission of stress is far less common than in Russian as words are generally shorter and many have a secondary stress. The chief characteristic of English binary metre is rather the displacement of stress, syntactical stress replacing metrical stress *(Unbegaun 1977: p44)*.

The normal line in English iambic verse has five feet; in Russian by far the commonest is the four-foot iamb, the norm for almost all genres of iambic verse. The general tendency is for Russian to use a line-length one foot shorter than that usually favoured by English poets *(cf.Kemball 1965:112)*. In English poetry the pentameter enables the poem to carry content by the constant variation of line groupings, while in Russian the four-iamb unit is used to the same end, avoiding monotony by varying the use of word boundaries. Blok himself wrote that the simplest expression of the rhythm of the period of 1910-11 was the iambic metre *(cf. Kemball: 471.*

Rhythm is often seen as a dynamic quality, involving several factors:

i) metrical sequences and deviations
ii) word boundaries in relation to feet boundaries
iii) syntactical groups in relation to metrical groups
iv) syntagmatic relations, word order, syntactic tensions
v) repetition and juxtaposition of sounds *(Hrushovski (ed.Sebeok) 1960:181)*

Tynianov describes rhythm as:

> the constructive factor of verse, dominating and turning all laws of prosaic semantics in a particular direction, that direction which is functionally advanced in the particular poem. *(trans. 1981:17)*

For Tynianov the nature of the form of a literary work as a dynamic phenomenon is of the greatest importance. Structure and meaning are interrelated on all levels, although not all elements have the same value in differing contexts. Thus it is important to distinguish the

distinctive elements in a poet's language and then determine how they work together in the concrete configurations of the poems.

Poems with no consistent metrical scheme may be said to have 'free rhythm'. In such instances the organisation of language fulfils the function of poetic rhythm. In the creation of this rhythm, verse lines are of great importance, as they interact with syntactic and semantic divisions. The major rhythmic differences between poems depend on the respective length of the line. This is particularly common in modern English verse.

Robin Kemball points out the essential difference between the concepts of rhythm held by Bely and Blok; while for Bely rhythm was a matter of mathematical calculation based on the number of deviations from the metrical norm, for Blok:

> It was a human, even a cosmic, conception, intimately bound up with, and deriving from, the events of the world around him and the 'spirit of the time' in which he lived, betrayal of which, as he once remarked, was the only sin which his century would never forgive a man. *[Kemball: 47]*

He quotes Georgiy Adamovich in the same vein:

> Blok's poems must be read, not so much analysing the text as listening to the rhythm - and in any case multiplying the sense by the sound,...Blok's text is confused, its literal meaning, in the majority of cases, obscure. Yet [when] supported by the rhythm - in which case the intonation of the sentence sometimes lends it ten times as much force - the text becomes dazzling in its brilliance *[24]*

Rhyme may interrelate with meaning but its effect is primarily aesthetic. There are three types of rhyme:

1. Masculine: the stress is on the last syllable
2. Feminine: the stress is on the penultimate syllable.
3. Dactylic: the stress is on the third syllable from the end.

In modern English verse the majority of rhymes are masculine while in Russian alternating masculine and feminine rhymes are more usual.

There is often a semantic relationship between rhyming units. Equivalence in sound inevitably involves semantic equivalence, if only on the levels of association connotation. Jakobson states that any analysis of poetic sound must take into account the phonological structure of the given language and the hierarchy of phonological distinctions in a given poetic convention (*Jakobson ed. Sebeok 1960: 374*).

Blok never made a systematic study of metre and prosody. Despite this his technique was almost perfect. Chukovsky wrote:

> His astounding technique is astounding precisely by reason of its being almost imperceptible. Only among lesser poets does technique occupy the forefront of the picture in such a way that we involuntarily become aware of it...But with a great poet, with a Lermontov or a Blok, the entire technique is so organically welded with what was once called the soul that, though enchanted by it, we are yet unconscious of its existence. (*cit. Kemball: 37*)

The translator of *Dvenadtsat'* must take the rhythm, metre and rhyme of the original poem and attempt to translate them into acceptable English poetry. In so doing he must assign greater or lesser importance to each aspect and must choose a form of English poetry which best transfers the

function of the source text in the source language literary milieu into the target language literary milieu.

4.2. The language of Symbolism

The atmosphere at the turn of the century was one of great change, a turning-point in history as well as in art. Kugel describes the attitude of the Symbolists:

> their own feelings of 'strangeness' (in the sense of estrangement, alienation, individual isolation and newness) found expression in a poetry of strangeness (in the senses of mystery, incomprehensibility, innovation). *[p29]*

The Symbolists sought to reaffirm the reality - as they perceived it - of man's inevitable solitariness, of the fact that real communication was for the time being impossible, whilst remaining optimistic about the future. Kugel maintains that the only characteristic common to all the 'Symbolist' poets is the deliberate 'strangeness' of their poetry, rarely intended to be intelligible to the average reader, full of literary allusions and references which often, if at all, could be revealed only by the poet himself *[see Kugel:1971]*. Thus the very language and form of symbolist poetry asserts this eternal isolation *[Kugel:80]*.

In Ivanov's words:

> The artist pushes so far the isolation of his own intimate experience and independent creation that he ultimately severs himself from the crowd, and tragically realises the reciprocal incommunicability of the souls, each one of which remains enclosed within the shell of its own solitude. The language of things, circumscribed

> by separate concepts, must be replaced by allusive references, by a suggestive and fluid imagery; and this is what is meant by the ancient term 'symbol'. This is how *subjective symbolism is created, and its aim is to* mediate between lonely spirits. *[cit. Poggioli 1960:140]*

In Blok's poems concerning the Beautiful Lady his language is especially mysterious:

> Only that evasive, inconsistent, indistinct, incomprehensible, somnolent speech...was appropriate for this theme. Such a shimmering, diffuse myth could only emerge from the depths of a shimmering, diffuse style...One clear, distinct word would have been the death of his Beautiful Lady. Whenever he spoke of her, he always seemed to suggest that he had gone beyond the limits of human speech and was striving to communicate the incommunicable. It seemed as if his words were mere allusions to an inexpressible mystery. *(Chukovsky: 57)*

This elusive quality reaches a climax in *Dvenadtsat'*, where the same vague innuendoes and veiled hints culminate in the image of Christ at the end of the poem.

The suggestively vague nature of symbolist poetry may present the greatest problems for the translator. Should he seek to make explicit that which is veiled in the original, he runs the risk of distortion on syntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels.

Much of Blok's poetry depends for its effect on an evocation of atmosphere created by a combination of words, syntax, metre, and rhythm. Both form and content are carriers of semantic significance, in that by means of sound and connotation, the reader divines something of what Blok is seeking to convey. Bowra suggests that his poems are almost as

free of meaning as music (*Bowra 1943: 147*). Melody and harmony combine with rhythm to give the essentially musical quality of his verse.

Style and register are also important aspects of *Dvenadtsat'*, because of the large amount of dialogue and colloquial language in the poem. Blok literally lurches from one level of diction to another - "from the supposedly dignified and heartfelt to the supposedly undignified and laughably pretentious or pedantic" (*Davie, speaking of the poetry of Jules Laforgue: 39*). This is related to the carnavalistic aspect of Blok's work, which is discussed in greater detail below.

Metaphor in Blok's poetry is extensive; he combines incompatible words, so that the reader is forced to search for links in the surrounding text and in his own real as well as poetic experience. The use of metaphor is typical of symbolist poetry, especially that type of metaphor which forms a symbol or offers an insight into the transcendental world of the poet's vision. Woodward states that no Russian symbolist made greater use of metaphor than Blok. In the cycle *Snezhnaya Maska* the metaphors become kinetic. The basic metaphors of these poems - the blizzard, the flame and the fire - are not new, but:

> What is new is the expansion of the metaphor to the point at which it embraces an entire poem and becomes an autonomous poetic reality developing according to its own inner laws. (Woodward 1966: 20)

In certain of the poems Blok develops two opposing and dissonant metaphors, such as the blizzard and the fire "attempting to convey through the dissonances produced by their collisions the chaos of his

emotions and the nature of the irrational world which was revealed to him" *(Woodward 1968: 20-21)*.

Woodward discusses the various poetic devices used by Blok in his poetry. One of the most important of these was the *kol'tso* or epanadiplosis, which denotes the repetition of the beginning at the end of the poem, and is often used by Blok to give unity to his verse. It was most characteristic of his earlier poems, while in his later poems, as in *Dvenadtsat'*, the poem rises to a final climactic crescendo.

Blok's poetic language is also notable for the use he makes of alliteration and assonance; his poetry is full of echoes and internal half-rhymes:

> Blok's poetry subordinated meaning to sound. He couldn't help himself, the sound waves were stronger than he was. No sooner had he uttered some word than he got the urge to repeat it, although with possible variations in form. *(Chukovsky 1982:97)*

Chukovsky also points out the dominance and importance of vowels in Blok's poetry: "Vowels alone are responsible for the flowing vocalism which is so characteristic of Blok" *(102)*.

Repetition was used extensively by Blok and other Symbolist poets to enrich the musical quality of their verse. This is very much a feature of Dvenadtsat'. Repetition might be of words or of verbs, or of imperatives. There is an abundance of imperatives in his verse, a factor which contributes to its emotional intensity. Then there is a marked repetition of sounds - the symbolists were the first to make the question

of sound-organisation a fundamental poetic principle. He uses alliteration with restraint, accusing certain of his contemporaries of vulgarising it, but his use of assonance is more marked. This is especially true of Volume 3 of his work:

> No iz glubi zerkal ty mne vzory brosala
> I, brosaya, krichala: « Lovi!..»
> A monisto brenchalo, tayganka plyasala
> Ivizzhala zare o lyubvi.
> *(I p352 17-20)*

Many of these features are very much in evidence in *Dvenadtsat'* and present the translator with considerable difficulty.

Chapter 5: The Task of Translating *Dvenadtsat'*

Before any attempt can be made to analyse and compare the two translations of *Dvenadtsat'* under consideration, a detailed analysis must first be made of the original poem, within the framework indicated in Chapters 1 and 2 above. The thematic structure of the source text must be established, and those textemic elements which are of functional relevance in the poem as a whole must be identified. Such an analysis will rely largely on a reworking of Van Kesteren's semiotic categories, with added emphasis on the style and register of the work and the relationship between each category. In addition the socio-historical and socio-cultural background of the poem should be considered, along with the discussion in chapter 3 above. The components which are especially significant in the poem will be identified in order to arrive at a hierarchy of priorities which should be followed by a translator. A suggested hierarchy of textemic elements will form part of the conclusion to this project.

5.1. An introduction to *Dvenadtsat'*

Dvenadtsat' is considered by many to be the culmination of Blok's poetic work as well as the greatest poem to appear from either the Russian symbolist movement or the revolution:

> *The Twelve* was the triumphant justification of the poet's search for form, of his long, slow struggle to introduce 'the personal and particular organically into the objective and the general'. *[Pyman II:288]*

The poem was written in January 1918 at a time when Blok was full of optimism and enthusiasm for the revolution. He wrote in 1920:

> The truth is that the poem was written in that exceptional and always very brief period when the passing revolutionary cyclone raised a storm in every sea - nature, life and art; in the sea of human life there is a little backwater called politics...The seas of nature, life and art were raging and the foam rose up in a rainbow over them. I was looking at that rainbow when I wrote the Twelve; that is why some drops of politics remained in the poem. *(cit. Stallworthy:35)*

Events meant that the revolution was literally taking place around him, and he was highly sensitive to all that was happening:

> ..In January 1918 for the last time I surrendered myself to the element no less blindly than in January 1907 or in March 1914. I do not disavow what I wrote then, because it was written in harmony with the element: for instance, during and for several days after writing *The Twelve* I was physically, through my actual sense of hearing, aware of a great noise all around - a noise compounded of many sounds (probably the noise of the fall of the old world). *(cit.Fyman Vol.II:274)*

There can be no doubt that the poem was born of the revolution and as such must be analysed in that context, although the overall meaning goes far beyond the events of 1917-1918.

Dvenadtsat' differs in many ways from his previous verse in the juxtaposition of harmony and dissona and the stark contrasts in style, register, rhythm and metre. Yet the poem belongs in the Symbolist tradition; symbols and imagery from his previous poems are developed and extended, while the seemingly inevitable although unexpected appearance of Christ in the climax of the poem represents the ultimate dream of the

Symbolist poets - the fusion of the real and the ideal, the consequent birth of a new man and hence of a new Russia.

The poem has given rise to considerable debate, and interpretations of the basic themes of the poem have been numerous and varied. Moreover, the thematic unity of the poem is not easy to discern, especially as there are many apparent contradictions, the greatest of which is the appearance of Christ.

On the surface the story is straightforward enough. The historical context of the poem tells us that it is set in Petrograd. A patrol of Red Guards is marching through the streets. One of them, Petrukha, sees his beloved with another man, a renegade comrade of the Twelve. They surround the sleigh and start shooting. Petrukha kills Kat'ka by mistake and she falls on the snow. Petrukha is crazed with sorrow and guilt, but his comrades tell him to forget what has happened and go on with his revolutionary duties. As the blizzard grows thicker and more fierce the Twelve march onwards, following the red flag blowing before them in the wind. Finally, bearing the flag and walking lightly above the blizzard the figure of Christ is revealed.

Various aspects of the poem of relevance in the process of translation are analysed below; a discussion of the two translations selected for consideration follows in the next chapter.

5.2. The socio-historical content of *Dvenadtsat'*

Dvenadtsat' fulfils a specific role as a poem of the revolution, a strictly culture-bound function which holds far less significance for the English reader. Soviet Marxist critics have always emphasised the Bolshevist revolutionary nature of the poem, identifying Blok's consciousness with the elemental and proletarian nature of the Revolution. Although Trotsky described *The Twelve* as the poetic expression of Blok 's failure to absorb the revolution and its implications *[Ponomareff:465]*, he also wrote:

> The Twelve is a cry of despair for the dying poet, but a cry of despair transforming itself into hope for the future" *[cit. Poggioli:206]*.

There is no doubt that despite Blok's ambivalent attitude to the Revolution, the poem is overwhelmingly optimistic.

Blok saw a basic opposition between the intelligentsia and the people; the former he termed *«bezmuzykal'ny»*, having lost sight of the real world because it had embraced a false Western civilisation. For Blok the revolution was the eve of a new world in which a new kind of man would be born, capable of communion with the elemental life-force that provided his own inspiration. He often spoke of the imminence of the revolution as:

> a cataclysmic, purgative, musical experience that would transform individuals, Russia, possibly the world. *[Hackel 1975:44]*

Blok eventually decided to come down on the side of the Soviets towards the end of 1917. At about the same time the family house at Shakhmatovo was appropriated and looted. This destruction of his home, and especially of his library, had a profound effect on Blok, although he was well aware that sacrifices would be required of everyone:

> Chto zhe vy dumali? Chto revolutsia - idilliya? Chto tvorchestvo nichego ne razrushaet na svoem puti? Chto narod - painka? I, nakonets, chto tak «beskrovnoe» i «bezboleznoe» i razreshil'sya velikaya raspryа mezhdu «chernoy» i «beloy» kost'yu?...*(cit. Orlov 1983:621)*

His ambiguous attitude to to the Revolution and to the old Russia is an important aspect of *Dvenadtsat'* and must therefore be preserved in translation. This is revealed especially in the symbol of the dog, which stubbornly follows the Twelve.

The specific content of the poem means that there are numerous references to historical events taking place at the time. Certain lexical items will therefore present the translator with several alternatives; he may ignore or omit them retain them with no further explanation, or seek to provide further explanation within the text or as a foot-note. Some of these culture-bound lexical items are discussed below:

Petrograd

The background to the poem is clearly the Petrograd of January 1918 with its swirling snow and wind. The first canto sets the scene with its references to dark and slippery streets - largely a result of the breakdown in services during the general chaos. The translator is obliged to retain the scene of the poem, although the name of the city is

never mentioned. A non-Russian reader might well remain unaware of the background to the work - in this case the translator must decide whether to actually give the name of the city in the translation or to provide an introductory or explanatory footnote.

Red Guards

These were the fighting organisation of the working class. From November 1917 they had round the clock sentry duties, and were seen, at least by some, as a symbol of revolutionary brotherhood. However, the patrols of Red Guards, supposedly keeping order, were unreliable and trigger-happy. Blok's own house had to be protected each night by a rota of armed occupants *[Pyman Vol.II:277]*. They are said to have frequently looted Petrograd's massive wine cellars and raided shops, while Orlov, however, writes that the looters were the counter-revolutionaries, so that patrols were despatched by the authorities to stop the looting and destroy the wine - hence line 249: *Gulyay, rebyata, bez vina! [Orlov 1962:491]*. The connotative meaning for an English reader will be less specific.

All-Russian Constituent Assembly: January 5th-6th 1918 (15-16;57-8;60)
It was thought by some that the Assembly would finally subdue the Soviets, who had established a temporary government, while others, including Blok, believed that it would be a temporary body, eventually ousted by a more powerful group. The slogan *All Power to the Constituent Assembly* became a counter-revolutionary slogan used by the 'bourgeois' parties to attempt to overthrow the Soviet power. In fact, the Assembly was dispersed by the Soviets the day after its first sitting. Line 109

[Tovarishch, vintovku derzhi, ne trus'!] is very similar to a headline in *Pravda* on January 3rd, which warned workers against the supporters of the Constituent Assembly, and which read: *Bud'te na strazhe. Krepko derzhite svoi vintovki* (Hackel: 52). In both of these instances the translator's strategy must depend on the type of reader likely to come into contact with the target language text - that is, for whom is the translator translating?

Kerenki (line 95)

These were banknotes issued in August 1917 by the provisional Government headed by Kerensky. They were issued in large numbers and wore out very rapidly. Again, the specific connotative and denotative meaning of the term cannot be transferred.

Nevskaya Bashnya (line 247)

This is presumably the Admiralty Tower overlooking Nevsky Prospect, and together with the reference to the Constituent Assembly assigns the poem to a specific time and place.

Iesus (line 335)

This is a sacred spelling used by the Old Believers - a Russian religious sect. The normal modern Russian spelling, common in 1918, was *Iisus*. The spelling chosen by Blok fits better into the line sequence. Apparently insignificant matters such as orthography and spelling were of great importance to Blok, so that there is little doubt that this particular spelling was used deliberately. Hackel quotes him as saying:

> a true poet's inner mind is expressed in everything, down to the punctuation marks. *[Hackel: 230]*

The introduction of these items into the poem reinforces Blok's intention to place his work very much in the present of 1918. On another level, the themes, symbolism and imagery of *Dvenadtsat'* have a universal significance beyond the limits of Petrograd in 1918. The translator's treatment of these items, bound in the time, place, and tradition of the source text, is of interest in terms of functional equivalence.

Relevant aspects of the poem will now be discussed within broad categories relating to Van Kesteren's pragmatic, semantic and syntactic divisions. By this means it is hoped to draw attention to those features of the poem which present the translator with difficulties as well as identifying those textemic elements which the translator must endeavour to preserve.

5.3. Pragmatic categories

As we have seen, *Dvenadtsat'* was very much a product of its age, and is often seen as a culmination of Blok's own work. The place of the poem within Blok's own work and within the context of symbolism in general has already been discussed, and the specific features of its nature as a symbolist poem will become clearer during the analysis. There were however other literary traditions and influences affecting the position of the poem within Russian literature.

5.3.1. *Dvenadtsat'* and the Carnival Tradition

The theme of the carnival and hence of irony and parody was very much in evidence in literature at the turn of the century. Boris Gasparov's article specifically discusses this aspect of Blok's work, and the following discussion is primarily based on his study.

The intelligentsia at the beginning of the century was strongly influenced by Western culture, and the concept of the carnival was rooted in western tradition. A fundamental idea in the carnival is the idea of the destruction of a new order literally turned upside down to create a new world, particularly relevant when traditions of rationality and humanism were being questioned. Liberated by carnivalistic buffoonery, the artist is able to express that which could not be expressed in traditional serious art. Bakhtin remarked that:

> the carnival image seeks to embrace and combine within itself both poles of the formation or both terms of the antithesis: birth and death, youth and age, top and bottom, face and backside, praise and abuse *[cit. Ivanov:337]*

As the end of the old world is simultaneous with the birth of a new world the links with the revolution are reinforced.

The poem begins with what appear to be theatrical stage directions. The black night and the white snow immediately present a striking opposition, consistently associated in Blok's work with farce. The puppet-like nature of the characters in canto I is also evident: *oni skol'zyat, kovylyayut, prygayut - kak kukly [cf.Gasparov:113]*. There are

numerous examples of this in lines 10-12, 23-4, 37-8, 45-6, 47-9, 52-55. Lines 45-49 describe a wealthy lady wearing an astrakhan coat made of black lambskin. Her fall onto the snow is symbolic of her fall from status in the new post-revolutionary society. The short rhyming couplet which follows this stanza enjoins passers-by to lift her up - again symbolic as well as literal. Blok appeals to the working people to offer help to all classes, and conversely implies that the lady herself will be obliged to depend on them - a true reversal of circumstances.

Cantos II-VIII are typical of another area of carnival activity - folk-theatre *(narodny teatr)*. The murder of the beloved in the name of robber comradeship is a familiar theme in Russian folk drama.

The action seems to take place in a public place; we hear snatches of conversations without being able to identify the speakers, for example II: 94-99:

- A Van'ka s Kat'koy - v kabake...
- U ey kerenki est' v chulke!

- Vanyushka s[illegible]eper' bogat...
-Byl Van'ka n[illegible], a stal soldat!

- Nu, Van'ka, s[illegible]ain syn, burzhuy,
Koyu, poprobuy, potseluy!

Snow and blizzards - *vikhri* - are identified in Russian folk consciousness with dark and unclean purposes. Whenever the enemy is mentioned, there is a reference to the surrounding snow - *metel'*. Thus the blizzard can be seen as the work of demonic forces, a type of revelry akin to that of the carnival.

The Twelve are ambivalently treated as robbers and apostles. They may also be seen as a procession of mummers - an important image in Christmas plays, and medieval mystery plays. Gasparov points out that in the polyvalent nature of the carnival, elements exist on different levels and the relationships between them vary. The Red Guard are mummers, apostles, patrolmen, and robbers; Petrukha is both Peter the apostle and Pierrot; similarly the dog is both real as well as part of the foolery; a symbol of the old world and of the old bourgeoisie as well as a promise of a new world, determined to move forward whatever the price.

This function within the tradition of the carnival must be taken into account by the translator, although no directly parallel tradition exists in English literature of the period. The issue again is a question of the potential readership of the translation, and the amount of background knowledge they bring with them.

5.3.2.Links with Blok's other works

Ponomareff in his article of 1972 stresses the relationships between *The Twelve* and Blok's previous verse. The repeated images of snow and wind are reminiscent of the *Gorod* cycle while the relationship between Pet'ka and Kat'ka corresponds in many ways to the relationship between Blok and the Beautiful Lady. Ponomareff also notes the association with *Neznakomka* in Pet'ka's repentant torments (lines 199-208). There is a parallel between Kat'ka's death and the inadvertent extinguishing of poetic inspiration. She dies, but may be resurrected, and the snowstorm gains

in shape and power (canto XI). Ponamareff sees Christ in the form of the snowstorm as yet another incarnation of the Beautiful Lady. Indeed, he claims that Christ summed up in essence the dilemma of Blok's lifelong journey in search of the Beautiful Lady *(1972: 487)*.

An important aspect of *Dvenadtsat'* is the link with Blok's play *Balaganchik*, written in 1906. There are several parallels between the two works. Pierrot's fiancée suffers a fate similar to that of Kat'ka - death and transformation into a cardboard figure:

> Ona lezhala nichkom i bela.
> Akh, nasha plyaska byla vesela!
> A vot' ona uzh nikak ne mogla.
> Ona kartonnoy nevestoy byla.
> *(Vol.I: 550)*

Pierrot's account of his fiancée's death, in the subject-matter, the structure of events and the selection of words, is echoed in Kat'ka's death in *Dvenadtsat'*, both events being related by Pierrot/Petrukha. In addition, Vanka is treated as Petrukha's double, just as Harlequin is Pierrot's.

All the figures that appear in *Dvenadtsat'* have appeared in Blok's previous poetry or notebooks. The helpless old woman, the bourgeois with his nose in his collar, the lady in her ill-gotten Persian lamb coat; the priest of the *Yamby* cycle with no time to recite the last rites over the agony of the Old World; the writer murmuring words from Chulkov's latest work; a group of prostitutes; a lonely passer-by - all would be familiar to a student of Blok although possibly quite alien to the general reader of an English translation.

In addition, as we have seen, many of the images and symbols in *Dvenadtsat'* are familiar from other works by Blok, particularly those of the night, wind, snow, and blizzard (for example, in *Rus'* and in *Snezhnaya Maska*).

Although these links are of significance to the reader familiar with Blok's other work, in a translation of this poem alone they are of less importance. The translator, however, must attempt to preserve the links for the purpose of the translation of other works. As only one poem is examined here no general conclusions can be reached. In a large collection of Blok's works, however, it would be necessary to trace these links through the poems.

5.4. Semantic Categories

5.4.1. Themes and motifs

Orlov describes the poem as existing on two levels, one a scenario of the events of the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918, and the other as wider philsophical, historical and moral-aesthetic generalisations about the Revolution, Russia and a new humanism and morality *(Orlov 1969:481.* For him the greatest significance of the poem lies in the opposition of two worlds, the Revolution signifiying the death of the old world and the birth of a new world. Orlov believes that canvos VIII and IX form the central point of the whole poem, emphasising that the old world and

all it represents, including all that is personal, must fade away before the general and historical. Thus Petrukha's little tragedy is seen as petty - the old world must burn in the revolutionary fire in order to give birth to the new man:

> Vsyakaya lichnaya tragediya v takie chasy i dni tonet v «more» revolutsii, vo vseobshchy vsemirno-istoricheskoy tragedii katastroficheskogo stolknoveniya dvukh mirov. *[Orlov:81]*

The opposition of two worlds is introduced right at the beginning of the poem in the first canto. The bourgeois, the representative of the old world, stands at a crossroads, both literally and metaphorically, with his nose in his collar, attempting to avoid the effects of the weather and hence of the revolution itself. This opposition is developed by other characters. For example, Kat'ka represents that which is most difficult to relinquish in the old world, an obstacle in the path of progress. There are several parallels between Kat'ka and *Rus'* - the Old Russia. Both are easily seduced and easily killed, neither offering much resistance because both are weak and depraved. Both are victims, and both are fat - *tolstozadaya* (113), and *tolstomorden'kaya* (144), although neither adjective is intended by Blok as derogatory. Blok himself described Kat'ka as follows:

> eto - zdorovaya, tolstomordaya, strastnaya, kurnosaya russkaya devka; svezhaya, prostaya, dobraya - zdorovo rugaetsya, prolivaet slezy nad romanami, otchayanno tseluetsya.... *[cit. Orlov :46]*

Taking the concept of the opposition of two worlds further, Masing-Delic *[1980]* sees an opposition between the female and the male principle. With the fall of both Kat'ka and Old Russia, the male principle begins its

ascendance, ending a female and weakened era of history. This "male religion of action" does not shrink from violence and bloodshed to achieve its end. Having ruthlessly exterminated corruption the true unadulterated face of feminine beauty may once more be seen, directly related to Solovyev's and Goethe's *Das Ewig Weibliche*, as well as Blok's own *Prekrasnaya Dama*. It is true feminine beauty unites with the true, creative male will in the image of Christ - a superior, androgynous being, representing the synthesis of Logos and Sophia:

> Jesus Christ symbolises the ideal union and Being which is immune to death, being the synthesis of Logos and Sophia.....Christ in *The Twelve* is not only a symbol of ideal immortal humanity but also of the transfigured new world in which all polarities have been harmonised. *(Masing-Delic 1980: 127)*

Thus the forces of the universe are transformed through art - one of symbolism's most cherished ideas. In this manner the poem sums up Symbolist mythology and anticipates some of the basic myths and themes of post-revolutionary literature, such as the positive hero and the new man.

The appearance of Christ defies a literal reading; the poem must be interpreted as a story of sacrifice, purification and redemption. As we have seen, the evidence for such a reading is considerable. The apparent links between the *Twelve* and the apostles are evident: both number twelve; Petrukha and Van'ka correspond to Peter and Judas, and there is also an Andrew/Andrey. Both the revolution and the salvation of man involve a cleansing fire of purification, a rejection of the old world and an entry into the new world. The conversion of the Twelve requires a

sacrifice; although the killing of Kat'ka is unpremeditated it secures their salvation and the resurrection of Christ. Thus Kat'ka retains her role as both a sacrificial lamb and a symbol of temptation and depravity *[cf.Stankiewicz 1984: 356]*. Indeed, the sacrifice of a prostitute in return for the salvation of man figured in many medieval passion plays.

The ending of *D.enadtsat'* is in many ways obscure and apparently incongruous. Blok himself responded to his revelation of Christ:

> Did I ever extol Christ? I only noted the fact; that if you peer into the swirling blizzard on this road then you will see Jesus Christ. But sometimes I myself hate this womanly phantom.....I would like its end to be different. When I finished the poem, I was amazed myself: why Christ? But the more I looked into it the more clearly I saw Jesus Christ. And there and then I made an entry: unfortunately it has to be Christ. *[cit. Ponomareff: 487]*

Christ is superior to all others in the poem: he is immune to bullets (l.331) and he soars above the ground (l.332-3l. His immortality is a demonstration of "mankind's future victory over the dark forces in material nature" *[Hasing-Delic 1980:128]*. Hackel emphasises the 'compilative' nature of Blok's Christ. He represents Rus', the people, the Old Believers (hence the spelling in line 335), the forces of the Revolution, the Eternal Feminine, and the Jesus of the Second Coming *[Hackel 1975: 188]*.

Soviet scholars however consider the image of Christ to be alien to the poem:

> but [Blok] could find no other image as morally and ethically evocative and on an equal historic scale, which was capable of expressing symbolically the idea of a new *world being born [Russian Reader: 71]*

Blok wrote in February 1918:

> Strashnaya mysl' etikh dney: ne v tom dela, chto krasnogvardeytsy «nedostoyny» Iisusa, kotory idet s nimi seychas, a v tom, chto imenno On idet s nimi, a nado, chtoby shel Drugoy. *[Vol.II:497]*

Blok deliberately indicates the non-religious character of the Twelve - they march *bez kresta, bez imeni svyatogo.* The rejection of religion and of the official church is emphasised in several cantos [II:91;X:266-7;XI:276]. In the first canto one of the characters pasted onto the snowy landscape is a priest, *almost comical in his long skirts struggling* through the snow. The parody is extended by describing his pot-belly, and how the cross on it used to shine on the people *(narod).* Blok is merciless here in his attack on the established Church. Orlov contends that for Blok the image of Christ was rather a symbol of the renewal of life, and as such may be seen to strengthen the revolutionary nature of the poem, as a description of the birth of a new world, in which the Twelve vanquish the *forces of the old world.* In the half-human and half-divine nature of Christ lies Blok's eternal contradiction, a combination of dream and nightmare, the opposites of good and evil, the sacred and the profane.

5.4.2. Symbolism and Metaphor

This section is closely linked to the thematic structure of the poem. The symbolic connotations of *Dvenadtsat'* are imputed rather than explicit. As suggested in 6.2.1. the poem moves on a double plane which demands both a literal and a symbolic interpretation [cf.Bowra:175].

Sergei Hackel in his scholarly work on *Dvenadtsat' [1975]* presents each of the protagonists and characters in the poem in various guises. Thus the *Twelve* themselves may be beggars *[golyt'ba* - line 228*]*, Red Guards *[115-8]*, or apostles - their more common designation. Hackel proposes that to describe them as *golyt'ba* is more appropriate *[1975:59]*. He points out that the impoverished Cossacks, rallied by Razin and Pugachev in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were described in the same way. In popular tradition Razin also killed the girl he loved in the cause of the Revolution. This legend of Razin has other parallels with *Dvenadtsat'*: it was believed that Razin would one day be resurrected, and, like the Christ of *Dvenadtsat'*, he was also invulnerable to bullets *[Hackel: 331]*.

The Red Guard was established as a proletarian force to struggle with counter-revolutionary forces; Orlov suggests that the Twelve should be seen as the collective hero of the poem. Other critics have tried to emphasise the nature of the Twelve as thugs and criminals, stressing certain lines, for example:

> Na spinu b nado bubnovy tuz!
> Nynche budut grabezhi
> Uzh ya nozhichkom polosnu, polosnu!

Orlov in contrast emphasises the revolutionary nature of the Twelve in lines such as:

> Tovarishchi!
> Glyadi v oba! *[82-3]*
>
> Revolyutsionny derzhite shag! *[107, 185]*

In fact there are two sides to their nature; they are dissolute and yet they possess a strong feeling of revolutionary duty, belonging to the working people but not to the vanguard of the revolution *[Orlov: 68-70]*. It must be remembered that throughout the poem the heroes go forward; the old world, in the shape of the mangy dog, drags after. Their identity as the collective hero is strengthened by their arguments to cheer up Petrukha and to exhort him to return to his revolutionary duties. The interests of society must come before those of the individual.

In Bowra's view [1943:173-175] the Twelve represent the Russian people, who, despite themselves, follow a divine leader. Blok's Christ is a symbol of the Spirit of Music, as well as a figure of the redemption which will come to Russia through bloodshed and suffering. Kat'ka symbolises old ties and affections - she is killed by mistake in a moment of wild frenzy; out of her blood rises the new world. She is both a frivolous whore and a sacrificial white lamb. For many critics Kat'ka is a symbol of the past being swept into oblivion. The significant point in Woodward's opinion is that she is killed by mistake - bonds with the past must be severed, however reluctantly. Such an attitude very much

reflects Blok's own dilemma, for although he truly welcomed the revolution he was well aware of the personal sacrifice that it entailed.

The dog which follows the Twelve is a representative of the bourgeoisie, obliged to follow the revolution; it symbolises the old world at a crossroads of history, struggling behind the revolutionary detachment.

The wind and the blizzard, as in other poems, are symbolic of a force at work sweeping away the old world and its ineffectual inhabitants *(Bowra:172f)*. As such, they clearly symbolise the Revolution itself *(Orlov:49)*. Many of these symbols were common in romantic aesthetics. Russia was frequently identifed with a storm and the word *burya* is used together with *zhizn'* and *strast'* *(Orlov:53)*. These motifs of the swirling snow, bitter wind and storm run throughout the entire poem. For the Twelve however these are their natural elements. While others slip and fall on the ice and battle to walk in the raging snow it is striking to see how the Twelve walk on fearless and full of purpose, never faltering:

> Gulyaet veter, porkhaet sneg,
> Idut dvenadtsat' chelovek. *[84-5]*

At the end of the poem the red flag is introduced as an image which the Twelve are following, unable to see anything clearly in the raging blizzard. The connotations with the uncertainty and chaos of these early days of 1918 are obvious. The Twelve, and the Russian people as a whole could not see far into the future nor know what their fate might be. They only knew that they followed an ideal, a hope for a new world and a new man.

The colours used in *Dvenadtsat'* are stark and defined - white, red and black, although *grey* [...], crimson [205], and gold [267] are mentioned briefly. *White* was a divine and apocalyptic colour for Blok, and has obvious religious connotations of purity and transfiguration. The colour red is symbolic of the red flag and of sacrificial blood. Hackel suggests that the blood-red and the white of the conclusion could refer to Christ's victory over evil through his immolation on the cross *[1975:157]*.

The adjective *chernyy* (black) appears in the very first line of the poem, and frequently afterwards. Again in line 77, the blackness of the night is stressed by the repetition of *chernoe*. The final two stanzas of the first canto increase the sense of foreboding and the presence of evil, but its source remains vague. The word *zlobu* is repeated four times in the last five lines and also forms the major rhyming element of these lines. The canto both begins and ends with the blackness of the night, setting the scene for some macabre event at which the reader can only guess.

The blackness of the night may be seen as a symbol of the deadness of the old world in which characteristic figures are entirely absorbed in their own petty and paltry interests. Black here represents the world of negation which the revolution is seeking to overthrow. In the summer of 1917 Blok wrote in his diary: "What then? Is everything in Russia black again, and is it to be blacker than before?" *[cit. Hackel:1601]*. All references to black in *Dvenadtsat'* refer to the prerevolutionary period

(lines 1, 78, 134, 243, 81, 86). After canto VIII there are no further references. Instead Blok uses red and white, traditionally sacred colours of blood and purity. This is brought to a climax in the garland of white roses, which for Orlov, as a traditionally Western, Catholic image is one of the most obscure in the whole poem. In Orlov's view, black symbolises the old world, Holy *Rus'*, bourgeois society, and all that is 'bad'. White, on the other hand, symbolises all that is true and holy in the Revolution *(Orlov:100)*.

The figure of Christ is introduced by various images - the flag, the wind and the impression of someone enormous. Christ links motif symbols which occur earlier in the poem - an indication of the storm and the blizzard, the element of the unknown, concealed by the night and the snow, and a suggestion of value and purpose - a symbol of festivity and rebellion. There are several colloquial religious references (1.126, 264) as well as religious imagery (1.91, 101, 114, 244, 266-7, 276). At the very end of the canto 2 Blok introduces Holy *Rus'* for the first time as a target for the Twelve's bullets. The adjectives applied to her are mixed and ambiguous: *kondovaya, izbyanaya, tolstozadaya*. They imply a combination of good health, strength, poverty, and a hint of vulgarity - none of which are necessarily negative qualities.

There are several links between Christ and Kat'ka, who represents both the Eternal Feminine and Russia's feminine essence:

Zubki bleshchut zhemchugom...(142)
Snezhnoy rossyp'yu zhemchuzhnoy (333)

Blok refers to the figure of Christ as a "feminine apparition". Much of the imagery in the poem supports this image. Christ in *Dvenadtsat'* is mild and gentle, with a garland of roses around his head *(venchik)*. Many writers have presumed a link with the Beautiful Lady and the Eternal Feminine, which links up with the concept of Christ as an androgynous being (cf. 6.2.1.). In Blok's early verse the Beautiful Lady guided him to Christ. Hackel remarks that when Blok wrote the poem, God and the Eternal Feminine were "interchangeable and cognate" *(Hackel 1975: 143)*.

5.4.3. The overall unity and structure of the poem

This section is closely linked to the pragmatic issues involved. The poem consists of 335 lines divided into 12 cantos which differ in length, content and metrical form. Blok called it both a series of poems and a cycle of poems, and in fact began work in the middle - the poem grew from two lines in the eighth canto, for he originally intended to write twelve separate poems *(Stankiewicz 1984:346)*. Mandel'shtam called it a "monumental dramatic *chastushka*", as *chastushki* were often delivered in a chain. As such it may well fall into similar categories as Elict's *The Waste Land*, or Rilke's *Duineser Elegien*. Stankiewicz refers to it as a new concept of lyrical poem:

> which assigned aesthetic priority to the fragment, the open-ended composition and the elliptic utterance over the monothematic, cohesive and well-balanced form *(1984:347)*

Given the fragmentation of both the form and the content of the poem, Stankiewicz suggests that it should be considered as a syncretic work,

both dramatic and lyric *[1984:350]*. Considered in this light the poem moves on two distinct but interrelated planes:

1. the background of the snowswept city, to which the protagonists of the Old World belong. The twelve men slowly emerge from this background so that by the fourth canto they step into the centre of the stage (1.127-8). This background is identified by its lyrical nature and seems to be synonymous with the poet's voice.
2. the foreground activity and voices of the soldiers, with some interruptions from the poet (lines 169, 187-8, 258, 297, 321-335, and all of cantos IX and XI).

The overall dramatic effect is strengthened by the variations in style, which succeed in obscuring the basic dichotomy between the two planes. The origin of the remarks is often obscure. No indication is given in the text other than by means of the style and register of the language used. For example, canto IV lines 127-8 may belong to the author, while lines 129-31 may be attributed to the soldiers because of the substandard forms and interjections. There are several 'orphan' lines interspersed between the longer stanzas (78; 93; 225-6; 244). These disembodied voices alternate with utterances from the background such as inscriptions on banners, revolutionary slogans and snatches of songs (lines 16;90-1;274-5;295-6;107-8;185-6). This polyphony of voices is deepened by the juxtaposition of different language registers and forms:

> These complex concatenations of chapters and scenes and their contrasts and transitions from one chapter to another are instrumental in reproducing artistically the contradictions of reality itself in its irresistible movement, in its turbulent revolutionary development *[Russian Reader: 79]*

Nevertheless the poem is marked by a strong dynamic impulse and a coherent theme. Poggioli says of *The Twelve*:

> A supreme harmony is achieved by way of a chaotic confusion, by means of an uninterrupted series of dissonances. [1960:205]

The tension between the centrifugal and centripetal tendancies of Dvenadtsat' constitute its principal complexity; its internal cohesion is achieved by formal and semantic devices which run throughout the poem.

Cantos I and XII differ from the others cantos and thus enclose them as a prologue and epilogue.

Canto I creates the landscape of the poem, setting the scene and introducing the puppet-like figures of the old world. It also sets certain motifs in motion, for example the image of the bourgeois (I:29-30 → VIII:240 → IX:250-1 → XII:303-4).

Canto XII acts as an epilogue mainly because of the final stanza and the figure of Christ, whose eventual appearance dominates the development of the poem. This development is not temporal, but rather involves elements of transformation and recognition in that the true identity of the characters and the significance of their actions is gradually revealed. Any temporal movement in the poem refers to the march of the twelve soldiers, which as we have seen, may be interpreted symbolically as their spiritual progress leading from the murder of Kat'ka in canto VI to the appearance of Christ in canto XII (Stankiewicz:354), or as they march

(*chastushki*), as well as folk songs. The rhythm varies from sharp and incisive octosyllabic couplets to free verse, with often almost conversational language. The marked contrast in the rhythm can be seen to represent conflict in the Twelve:

> In the hearts of these twelve men an incoherent struggle is being waged which permeates the poetry as a dialogue of rhythms: the steady beat of the march and the wild Russian song-and-dance, the *chastushka* and the *plyasovaya*, which express, on the one hand, the revolutionary will to power and, on the other, the destructive and self-destructive revolutionary temperament. *[Pyman, Vol.II:289]*

Whereas Blok normally uses the iamb the basis of *Dvenadtsat'* is the trochee, which traditionally conveys movement and excitement, and is strongly associated with Russian folk-poetry. Despite this the poem is polyrhythmic; trochaic and iambic tetrameters intermingle with dol'niki and free verse. In cantos V, VI, and IX iambic tetrameters predominate while in the other cantos there is a predominance of trochaic tetrameters. In canto II there is a background of an iambic marching rhythm, with interruptions of *Ekh! Ekh! bez krestal.* Canto VIII contains falling cadences with interruptions in rhythm, while in canto XI the beginning is rhythmically emphatic and then regularises towards the end paralleling an increased confidence in the Twelve.

The greatest metrical variety in the poem is in the first two cantos; canto I alternates between the trochee, the iamb and the dol'nik e.g.:

> Chernyy vecher/Belyy sneg. [1-2]
> A von i dolgopolyy - /Storomkoy - za sugrob: [37-8]
> Zloba, grustnaya zloba/ Kipit v grudi...[79-80]

towards a new world and a new set of values. Phrases implying the stages of that process are distributed at the beginning of the "drama" in II:85; VII:187; XI:276; XII:297.

The two hostile worlds of the poem, symbolised by the Red Guard and the bourgeois, are brought together both at the beginning and the end of the poem. The bourgeois is first presented as a member of the old class, then he is linked metonymically with the mangy dog [250-7] and then identified with the dog [309-312]. Finally, only the dog limps along behind Christ [328], his significance entirely metaphorical.

Stankiewicz concludes:

> Moreover, while the overt elements contribute to the diversity and fragmentation of the poem, it is the hidden symbolical dimension which lends it a sense of direction and internal cohesion. *[1954:356]*

Tynianov wrote of the last stanza of *Dvenadtsat'*:

> (it) is not only the climax of the poem, but the one in which the whole of its emotional plan is contained, so that the entire work in its own way thus amounts to variations, hesitations, and deviations from the theme of its conclusion. *[cit.Hackel:97]*

5.5. Syntactic Categories

5.5.1. Rhythm and Metre

Blok's experimentation with verse forms is well-known. In *Dvenadtsat'* the verse is modelled on various popular street and factory songs

Interspersed with these are prosaic, non-metrical lines, such as lines 16, 24, 31-2. The first and second cantos are the least regular in rhythm and metre. Canto I is primarily syllabo-accentual although the number of stresses, syllables and feet per line varies tremendously. In the second canto there is a certain rhythmic homogeneity and wholeness in contrast with canto 1. In lines 84-89 and 105-110 when the Twelve are marching and active there is a clear beat with a distinctive pattern in lines 84,88,89,107,108 and 110 which can be described as four-foot iambs with an inserted syllable at the caesura *(Woodward:152)*. Cantos III and IV use the rhythm of the chastushka as well as the hyperdactylic endings of folk poetry - *zagovarivaet, tolstomordenkaya*. Cantos VII, X, XI and XII are predominantly trochaic, while canto VIII is an imitation of a folk-song.

These variations function on a semantic as well as on syntactic and pragmatic levels. The dominance of the trochee emphasises the associations with Russian folk poetry, and hence with the *narod* whom Blok saw as living in greater harmony with the music of the Cosmos.

Canto IX with its strict classical four-foot iambs emphasises that it deals with the old world and bourgeois forms. The marching rhythm through much of the poem symbolises the sense of moving forward, towards the new world, the frequent changes in rhythm and metre giving the poem its dynamic quality.

This marked diversity of metrical forms is associated with the division into thematically differing parts. For example, free verse and iambic metres appear when the voice of the poet or "extrinsic" events are given precedence over the central theme *(Chukovsky: 348)*: lines 33-4, 169, 185, 250, 274-5, 295-6. Variations in the style of the poem motivate other metres; for example canto VIII is a traditional *zaplachka* lament in ternary metre, while the remaining cantos imitating the rhythms of the *chastushki* are set in trochaic tetrameters.

The various scenes correspond to the entry and exit of the different characters. The scene set in the first canto is re-echoed throughout the rest of the poem, and the language and rhyme used here reappear subsequently, for example the rhyme *vperyod/narod* and the introduction of the word *krest* which is the first indication of the theme of Christ. Line 76 brings the question *Chto vperedi?* to which the answer is only provided at the end of the poem.

The metric and rhythmic variety and the diversity of stanzaic form are counteracted by a tendency to tighten the unity of the individual cantos. This is achieved by means of formal devices; for example in canto I the feminine rhyme is dominant: *vecher/veter; plachet/znachit; veselyy/podoly; kosit/nosit;*
sobranie/zdanie; predatel'/pisatel'. Canto II on the other hand is distinguished by its constant masculine rhyme: sneg/chelovek; bogat/soldat; shag/vrag; trus'/Rus'.

Similar devices are used elsewhere in the poem, serving to unify individual cantos but by strengthening the distinctions between the cantos, the work as a whole is further fragmented. This, in Stankiewicz's view is accentuated by the lack of a consistent temporal development and by the semi-autonomous nature of some cantos which have no apparent bearing on the central theme, such as Canto III and IX [*Stankiewicz:349*]. On the other hand links in the rhythm and metre of different cantos join them together within the structure of the poem, for example between cantos II and VI; III, IV, and V; VII, X, XI, and XII; only I and VIII are not echoed elsewhere.

5.5.2. Style and Register

Van Kesteren places stylistic issues in the pragmatic category. This is indicative of one of the failings of his method as this aspect of the use of language is closely linked to aspects of both syntactics and semantics. The significant point, neglected by Van Kesteren, is the function of the choice of syntax and lexis as exponents of the style and register.

Blok uses a type of cinematographic montage technique, with abrupt thematic transitions. Pyman summarises the symphonic nature of *Dvenadtsat'*:

> Like a musician, Blok wove borrowed melodies into his symphony, making them his own. The sounds of the street: staccato shouts, murmured imprecations, snatches of talk, marching feet. Popular rhythms: the Russian dance, the cruel romance, the *chastushka*, the folk-song. Words: snatches of slang; revolutionary jargon with its indigestible foreign words; popular mispronunciations;

> phrases from the Liturgy. Then a growing cacophony: hoarse, angry curses; the rattle of rifle-fire; the long laugh of the wind in the alleyways and, at the last, a total change of key: a soft, compelling music that bursts upon the reader with majestic serenity, as inevitable yet totally unexpected as the choral finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony or the swelling prayer at the end of Schoenberg's *Survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto*. *[Vol.II: 288]*

In Stankiewicz's opinion the truly distinctive character of *Dvenadtsat'* is the novelty of its composition, the density of style, language and thematic development. The style changes according to the speaker and the subject: the purely descriptive passages are written in a solemn, high literary style [lines 79-80,254-5,286-9,323-4] while passages dealing with the Twelve take on the colour and rhythm of popular speech. In canto I the colloquialisms and expletives of the protagonists are blended with the poet's own biting style, replete with idioms and elliptic forms:lines 21, 25-6, 33-4, 47, 64, in contrast with 23-4, 39-40,48-9,50-1.

The many different registers and styles act to increase the polyphony of voices in the poem. Blok makes use of poetic diction, Old Church Slavonic, vulgar language, popular expressions and purely dialectic forms, for example:

a. colloquial diminutives: *snezhok, ledok, fonarik, oglobel'ki, tolstomorden'kaya, zaznobushka*, khodok, druzhok, *krovushka*.
b. colloquial perfectives in -nu: *peremotnulas', podvernulas', polosnu*.
c. substandard forms: *plechist-rechist, nad soboy derzhi kontrol'*,
d. expletives: *kholera, padal', stervets*
e. interjections: *ay, ey, oy, uzho, ekh, ty, ekh-ekh, akh, okh, okh ty, uzh, tra-ta-ta, trakh-takh-takh*.

f. popular speech: *baba, loskut, provalis', golyt'ba*

In the syntax the style of language ranges from the lower registers, such as:

Nu, Van'ka, sukin syn, burzhuy

to the more solemn style of:

Vdal' idut derzhavnym shagom

together with examples of 'incorrect' usage such as *u ey, koy-kak, szadu, ali.*

This ambiguity of style accentuates the fact that meaning is constructed both on a textual level as well as on an implied level of trans-textual references. These extra-textual references and varying genres and registers create the vertical paradigmatic complexity of the poem - Stankiewicz calls it an "outstanding example of modern literary collage" *[1984:352].*

Blok also uses a number of Russian folk-expressions, which add to the flavour of the poem. This is especially noticeable in lines 256-263, where he describes the raging wind:

Razygralas' chtoy-to v'yuga,
Oy, v'yuga, oy, v'yuga!
Ne vidat' sovsem drug druga
za chetyre za shaga!

Sneg voronkoy zavilsya,
Sneg stolbushkoy podnyalsya...

The connotations with folk-poetry are strong. There are several examples of the popular chastushka. The extensive use of dimunitive suffixes also accentuates these links with folk-poetry; cantos III, IV, V, VIII, IX, resemble songs or ballads with openings, repetitions, images, cadences and rhythmic turns of speech typical of folk songs, for example, Oy, Okh, Ekh, Akh, Uzh together with *gore-gor'koe, udal bedoval, nochki chernye, khmel'nye*, and the change of stress on certain words such as *v'yúga* to *v'yugá*.

The unusual, obsolete or colloquial language is used by Blok to achieve a foregrounding effect similar to that discussed above. Similarly, the use of certain terms contributes to the defamiliarisation techniques of which the symbolists were so fond. The use of language and of rhyme also carries semantic significance in focusing the reader's attention on concepts which are central to the thematic development of the poem.

It must be emphasised that each of the categories discussed above is somewhat arbitrary and the analysis is by no means exhaustive. The themes and motifs interact with and through the symbolism and the formal structure of the poem to intensify effects on all levels. The more specific use of the various poetic devices is discussed below together with an analysis of the two translations.

Chapter 6: The Twelve - two translations

Blok has generally been neglected outside Russia, at least partially because of the considerable difficulties encountered by the would-be translator. Those translations that have appeared are difficult to obtain and no attempt has ever been made to systematically assess or compare them. Pyman briefly mentions the dozen or so translations of *Dvenadtsat'* that have been attempted; she calls all of them 'more or less unsuccessful', but refers to the translation by Stallworthy and France (which is assessed below) as 'very English but curiously beautiful'. Pyman concludes that it is nevertheless worth learning Russian to read the poem in the original:

> Always laconic, Blok here invested every word with such a resilience of meaning, sound, associative significance, that one cannot hope to produce more than a fraction of the effect in translation. *[Pyman II:288]*

The translations published by Jon Stallworthy and Peter France [TT1] combine the abilities of a Russian scholar with those of a poet. In the introduction to the poems the translators give some indication of the methodology they decided to adopt and the actual process of translation. They state that they decided to err on the side of a 'free' rather than a 'faithful' translation. The aim in their eyes was to produce poetry that would stand by itself in 1970 (the date of publication). This in itself shows that any faithfulness to the period of *Dvenadtsat'* was not considered of importance. Poems which belong in Russian literature of

the early twentieth century with all the associations and connotations that that entails for present-day - or 1970 - Russian readers or listeners, are being consciously transposed into the contemporary literature of the target language. Given the fact that *Dvenadtsat'* deals specifically with the Revolution and contains a wealth of connotative material for the Russian reader, it is clear that the poem can only be translated 'overtly', that is, the reader will remain aware that he is not reading the original. For the poem to stand alone as an English poem, the translators must employ a large number of compensatory devices.

Stallworthy and France point out several factors which complicate the translation of Russian poetry into English. Most English poets have broken with the old prosody and rhetoric which flourished until the beginning of this century, while many Russian poets even today write in the poetic tradition of the nineteenth century. Stallworthy remarks:

> Blok was in many respects a pioneer, but even so, to modern Western ears his poems would sound ridiculously bombastic if we were to give an accurate rendering of their heavy tonic stresses, strong effects of symmetry, regularity of rhyme and metre, and frequently archaic poetic diction. *[p11]*

Particularly difficult is his use of ternary metres, especially the dactylic, a feature of Russian folk-poetry. Stallworthy and France comment that this sounds natural in Russian but in English is reminiscent of *How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*:

> Perhaps we have not entirely avoided these traps, but at least we have tried to dislocate the regularity and the flow of eloquence where they might have become unacceptable to an English reader. In this we have only been going further along a road opened up by Blok, for he experimented a good deal with poetic form .....But still we hope to have rendered something of Blok's

> famous music, which is easy to enthuse about, hard to analyse, but certainly not unconnected with the supple use of traditional verse forms. [12]

The translators set about the process of translation in the following way. Peter France would send a literal version of a poem to Stallworthy, indicating the metrical score, with notes on rhyme and rhythm, tone, vocabulary, repetition, ambiguity and so forth. Stallworthy would then produce a poem with as little alteration as possible, which France would subsequently criticise, offering alternatives and making suggestions. In this way they arrived at their version of *The Twelve*.

The second translation [TT2] is by Sergei Hackel, published in 1975, although there is no actual reference to the date of translation. It is accompanied by no explanatory notes but is printed in the form of a parallel text with the Russian original on the facing page; this implies that the translation is intended for the reader with some knowledge of Russian, and as the translation forms an appendix to a detailed academic work on *Dvenadtsat'* it was clearly not originally intended for the layman, in contrast to the translation by Stallworthy and France.

The translator must take the potential reader into account when making his translation. The place and nature of publication of the translation and the expected circulation will all be factors in assessing the type of reader. The aims of the two translations are therefore substantially different and the effects achieved also differ considerably.

For practical reasons the translations are discussed canto by canto; this method is not only more straightforward but easier for the reader and is best suited for an analysis which seeks to show in which ways various aspects of the text have altered in translation.

Canto I: At the very start of the first canto the two translations establish their different flavours in their use of rhyme and versification. Blok's opening stanza is powerful; the rhyme scheme follows a clear pattern - ababaa - the final rhyme being imperfect, and a and b being masculine and feminine rhymes respectively. In addition the closed /e/ sound is repeated again and again - *vecher/bely sneg/veter/chelovek/veter,veter/sveta*. Lines 1-12 with their sharp emphatic metre emphasise the strength of the blizzard, setting the scene for the rest of the poem. This is accentuated by the predominance of the *[e]* sound throughout these first lines. In lines 7-12 there are also a number of words containing the sounds *[z]* and *zh]* as well as words beginning with *[e]* - *snezhok; snezhkom; skol'zko; tyazhko; skol'zit; bednyazhka*. Generally, half of the lines are trochaic and half are iambic. Choosing *veter* and *vecher* as rhyming words at the very start of the poem stresses the role of the blackness of the night and the force of the wind as primary symbols in the poem, which form a central part of the poem's thematic and symbolic imagery.

The similarity between the Russian *vecher* and *veter* is of course inevitably lost and a satisfactory compensatory device difficult to

imagine. Hackel [TT2] does however retain much of the rhyme sequence and the repetition of 'wind'. Most importantly, the initial stark contrast between the black night and the white snow, central to the thematic content and imagery of the original poem, is retained. His opening stanza thus retains much of the force of the original, although the short, clipped sounds of the first half of the stanza dissipate in the last line of the stanza:

Filling God's wide world.

Stallworthy and France [TT1] choose to alter the whole rhyme scheme and form of the opening stanza, the versification setting the pattern for the rest of their translation. There is no rhyme at all in the first stanza, while the ends of the lines bear no relation to the semantic construction of the verse. Thus the second line ends with 'hurled' - while in the original and in Hackel's translation it ends with 'snow' - important because of its role as a central image in the poem, and its rhyme with line 4. Moreover, by adding the definite article before the word wind (TT1 2, 3, 5, 6). much of its force - literally - is lost. In addition the black/white contrast is blurred:

Darkness - and white
snow hurled by the
wind.. The wind!
You cannot stand
upright for the wind:
the wind
scouring God's world.

The dominance of feminine rhymes in this canto is not easily transferred as English poetry is obliged to rely heavily on masculine rhymes because of its phonological and morphological structure.

The most striking change made in TT1 is the alteration in the syntactic composition of the lines. There are no capital letters at the beginning of each line; the sentences and conceptual groups of words run over from line to line in endless enjambements. The definite rhythm of the opening verses thus also disappears, giving way in TT1 to to a smooth, rambling piece of verse, with its own slow flowing rhythm.

One of the most significant shifts on both a syntactic and a semantic level is in TT1's rendering of the second stanza, where a specific connotative meaning is added: the original translates word for word as:

> *The wind ruffles/ the light white snow/ beneath th: snow*
> *there's ice/ slipperily, dangerously/ every pedestrian/*
> *slips - oh, poor thing!*

TT2 translates this verse almost literally, adding certain lexical items in order to provide rhymes. TT1 on the other hand introduces the following:

> *pulls/that treacherous wool/ over the wicked ice.*

The image of deceit is made explicit, as well as the nature of the 'wicked' ice, neither of which are present in the original.

Lexical items chosen by the translators occasionally appear incongruous. For example, TT2 refers to the *plakat* as a *poster*: unfortunately posters are never made of cloth, but always of paper, making the next three lines nonsensical to the English reader; this is avoided in TT1 by translating *plakat* as *banner*.

Much of the language is colloquial, and this aspect is present in the translations, although obviously spread over different lexical items. However, it is in the choice of register that the majority of distortions occur. TT1 occasionally changes abruptly from one register to the other, while the original retains the same tone; lines 17-22 for example are informal and colloquial, while TT1 includes a syntactic construction of a fairly formal level - *and they without shirts* - where the colloquial substandard form would have been - *and them without shirts*. In lines 45-51, TT1 is much more successful in retaining this natural colloquial style, while the TT2 version is more stilted, attempting to stay much closer to the original form.

The extensive use of diminutives in the original can only be communicated in English by suitable qualifying adjectives, and the associations with folk-poetry and *chastushki* must be lost. The choice of qualifying adjectives varies considerably: thus for *sneshok* TT2 substitutes *fine snow* while TT1 omits any adjective. In lines 50-51 both translators take advantage of the *image* of the lady in the *fur coat being hauled up off* the ice to insert lines reminiscent of a well-known seashanty, providing some compensation for the lost connotations with folk-poetry. TT2 is less successful in not adopting the lines wholesale from the song, while TT1 does do this, to great effect, conjuring up connotations of a ship and developing his reference in line 50 to her 'beam end':

> Heave ho
> and up she rises - so!

Although the setting is clearly foreign to the English-speaking reader, the translators generally try to transfer certain references to the TL

culture. Thus the explicitly religious references are generally transferred to the Catholic Church; expressions such as *Holy Mother* (T2) and *Mother of God* (T1) are unmistakeably Catholic.

Attempts are made to convey the alliteration and assonance of Blok's verse, where such features can be accommodated without undue clumsiness. TT2 achieves this in the fifth stanza of the canto with lines 28-29:

> Will the frost never lose its grip
> or the wind lay its whips aside?

The reference to Russia in TT1 as 'down and out' (line 35) adds to the general theme of the personification of Russia and its identification with tramps and vagrants, and, eventually, the mangy dog itself. This is adding to the original which only states that Russia has perished, and which is retained more or less literally in TT2.

Both versions convey the tone of irony which is present in Blok, TT1 by means of the words 'pen-pusher' and 'word-spinner' and TT2 by using such terms as 'muttering' and 'big talk'. There are no descriptive verbs in the original, which relies for its effect on abrupt, short lines and fixed rhymes; lines 41-44 place two syntactically similar verbs as a rhyming pair and by means of the parallel construction of lines 42 and 44 succeed in making the priest a comical and pathetic figure. By introducing elements with other connotations and associations TT1 achieves the same effect of hinting at the stupidity and laughableness of the priest, for example, line 40 'joyful tidings' and in TT2, line 44, 'Going on before', which is a familiar line of a popular hymn. In addition the use of words

such as 'belly' [TT1 and 2], and 'waddled' [TT2] are derogatory and increase the sense of ridicule.

In the source text Blok rhymes *vpered* with *narod* - two images that are central to the poem's thematic structure. TT1 fails to include this at all, while TT2 inserts a closely equivalent pair, rhyming *before* with *the poor*. Both translations give a literal rendering of the slogan in line 16, while TT2 chooses to change the reference to *Bolsheviks* to 'reds' - a more familiar term in English.

As the opening canto comes to a close, the polyphonic character of the original comes to the fore. The hauntingly empty streets are emphasised by the short lines of few syllables of TT2, which keeps far more closely to the syntactic and semantic structure of the original. Lines 72-74 are altered drastically in TT1, which replaces *bednyaga* by *chum*, the latter involving semantic alterations on all of the levels described by Leech. On a thematic level once more, TT1 distorts the original in lines 75-77 by translating line 76 in a totally different sense - a line absolutely essential to the future dénouement of the poem:

. Chto vperedi?

TT1 renders this stanza as:

A crust!
What will become
of us? Get lost!

This removes the ambiguity of meaning which is so crucial in the ST, and which is retained by TT2:

What's that ahead?

Canto II: TT1 largely retains the marching rhythm of the original, essential to the success of this canto which introduces the Twelve marching through the streets. TT1 keeps a more or less constant four-foot iambic pattern, with eight syllable lines, as does TT2, although TT2 achieves a more insistent rhythmic pattern perhaps as a result of the choice of syntactic structures. Both translations also retain the pattern of rhyming couplets.

The original rhymes between *kresta/svoboda/tra-ta-ta* are lost in the English translations, thus weakening the impact of the association of these three words. Neither translation provides any compensation for this loss and the lines are further weakened in TT1 by the reflected meaning in *rat-a-tat-tat* of knocking on a door; this adds a degree of symbolism in that the Twelve may be knocking at the threshold of the new world. TT2 completely distorts the whole image, and adds a new dimension by rendering these lines [92,104] as *Blank-blankety-blank!*. This rendering adds considerably to the element of parody in the poem as a whole and may have been intended in this way by the translator; however the degree of comicalness added is difficult to justify. The Twelve lose any sense of credibility and become a group of children playing with toy guns.

TT1 alters the image of convicts to 'jailbird on the run'. Both TT1 and TT2 render *ogni* as 'lights', although the Russian could also indicate fires, lit to provide warmth on the streets. The reference to *kerenki* in

line 95 is translated simply as *banknotes* in TT1 while TT2 adds supplementary information - *old-style banknotes*.

The substandard Russian of lines 94-103 is retained aptly in TT1 with expressions such as *living it up, in the money*, and *son of a whore*, while the register of TT2 less informal although some colloquial forms are included: *get that straight, keep your hands off*.

Key lines in this canto, to be repeated elsewhere in the poem, are lines 107-8, which follow a close syntactic and phonic pattern in the original. The impact is largely lost in TT2, which waters down the lines considerably by extending and lengthening them:

> Keep in revolutionary step! Make no mistake,
> The restless enemy keeps wide awake

TT1 is somewhat more successful, and adds additional emphasis by capitalising the first letter of each word of both lines:

> Keep a Revolutionary Step!
> The Relentless Enemy Will Not Stop!

Another motif of sigificance is *bez kresta* in lines 91, 101, 114, which is given as *with no cross* in TT2 and as *down with the cross* in TT1 - the latter being more emphatically anti-religious. The canto closes with a thematically significant reference to Holy Russia, retained in both translations, although TT1 omits the reference to the peasants' huts which is kept in TT2 as:

> With her rough tough
> huts of wood
> And her fat old rear!

This translation is more restrained than the vulgarity of the original, and TT1, realising the irrelevance to non-Russian readers of lines 111-112, aims to retain the impact of the lines and the emphatic rhythm of the original:

> Mother
> Russia
> with her big fat arse!

Canto III: The canto is formed of *chastushki* and is strongly reminiscent of folk-poetry, the lines being mostly trochaic. The second stanza is actually based on a soldier's *chastushka*.

TT1 retains the songlike features of the original by means of the regular rhythm of the four foot iambs of stanzas one and three and the two foot iambs of the second stanza which serves as a refrain; lines 2 and 3 are repeated and there is a semi-repetition in lines 10-11. TT2 succeeds in conveying a sense of the folk-song flavour of the original by using three foot iambs and by using a line with overtones of an English folk-song :

> For to lay their wild heads down

This translation also begins the canto with 'so' which functions in the same way as *kak* in the original.

On a semantic level the content of the canto is alien to non-Russians. It is inevitable that concepts related to the revolution should be lost in translation, or at least, should lose their emotional overtones, there being no similar event in British history. As noted above, the poem cannot function as a revolutionary poem in modern English literature.

Both TT1 and TT2 keep fairly closely to the text of the original, although the alternative renderings of line 119 - *Ekh ty, gore-gor'koe* - , which is repeated at line 229, and is typical of a Russian folk-song, are of particular interest. TT1 translates the line as *Hell and damnation* while TT2 uses a much softer version: *Oh life is bitter*.

The reference to Austrian rifles is also treated differently by the two translators. TT1 changes 'Austrian rifles' to 'Gerry guns', presumably because of the negative connotations of the word 'Gerry' for English readers. TT2 retains 'Austrian gun', and thus loses that emotionally charged flavour which TT1 manages to preserve.

The last line of the stanza requires comment: *Gospodi, blagoslovi!* TT1 keeps fairly closely to the original and so retains the double sense of blasphemy and an appeal for salvation: *Lord, bless our souls!* TT2 in an attempt to provide a rhyme for 'fire' in the previous line, inserts: *Lord, bless the pyre!*, thus changing the semantic content of the poem.

Canto IV: Blok uses sounds to great advantage in this canto. The juxtaposition of *krutit* and *krichit* in the first line together with the repetition of *krutit* in line 134 in a slightly different sense, all add to the homogeneity of the canto. In lines 135-6 the slight change in sound to produce two similar variants of two different verbs *krutit'* and *shutit'* seems to add to the trivial nature of the conversation, with the extended imperfective endings:

Da pokruchivaet,
Da poshuchivaet.

Neither of these effects is translatable into English, being closely bound to the lexical and morphological system of the Russian language: Both translators attempt to insert some alliteration in these lines as compensation, with reasonable success. Thus TT1 repeats the verb 'twirling', while TT2 repeats 'twists' as well as using 'twiddles' and 'tries his wit'.

The ironic stance of Blok's third stanza is successfully conveyed in TT1 although at the expense of a considerable shift in syntax and semantic content. The whole of the third stanza in TT1 is very different from the original, and the effect of the repetition in lines 137-8 is lost. Both translations fall into the trap of retaining the rhythm and rhyme of the ST to the detriment of the success of the verses. In TT1 words which are normally stressed must be left unstressed, while others must be deliberately swallowed (lines 133-4). TT2 remains much more faithful to the original, but is no more successful; the second stanza especially is not at all satisfactory.

The last line of the canto, rendered by TT1 as *with your little round mug* is comical in English, as 'mug' is rarely used in an affectionate sense, but is generally associated with dislike and aggression. TT2's use of *chubby snout* is even more unsuitable and incongruous. 'Chubby' has a connotative and collocative meaning of affection and childlikeness, while 'snout' strikes the reader as totally unexpected and irrelevant, with its animal associations. 'Chubby cheeks' might have been a preferable alternative, with the same potential double meaning as the original word.

Canto V: This canto gives us an account of Kat'ka's activities as well as an indication of the speaker's ironic attitude. The repetition of words and sounds emphasises the song-like quality of this section as well as the parody behind the voice, for example, the pairing of *khodila* and *pokhodi* as we... as *bludila* and *pobludi (lines 151-156)*. The language includes many marked colloquial forms *(bol'no, nozhka, bludila, yeknulo, al', zhrat', yunker''ve, soldat'yel.* The priority for the translator must be the preservat... of Petrukha's ironic attitude, the major functional component of the canto.

TT1 uses a regular and almost jocular rhythm, with alternating three foot and four foot iambs, while the rhyme scheme closely follows the original. By using a simple kind of repetition the translation retains the song-like quality of the original as well as the sarcasm and bitterness in Petrukha's voice. Certain lexical items are used with an especially ironic effect: for example, the insertion of 'dear' in lines 152 and 154 makes the whole attitude of the canto condescending, an effect which is achieved in the original by the use of diminutives and the repetition of the familiar form of the imperative.

The rhyming couplets, which serve as a refrain, and are particularly ironic, are changed radically in TT1: the reference to dancing is omitted and Petrukha addresses Kat'ka as 'Honey, Honey', a term of endearment which is widely recognised as American and is marked as such to English speakers. As no oth r colloquialisms seem to be specifically American, it is difficult to find a justification for this at this point. In the

second stanza, while the original refers only to lace underwear, TT1 introduces 'furs', presumably in order to provide a rhyme with 'officers'; this is not entirely successful, as although both are symbols of luxury and leisure, the specifically sexual connotations are clouded by the image of warm coats and hats and the associated cold weather. How can one 'carry on' in a fur coat? The second rhyming couplet is similarly altered in TT1 with the same use of 'honey' to parallel the reference in the first couplet, but with the introduction of the image of a skirt; the translator is then obliged to add the image of his heart knocking at his shirt in order to provide a suitable rhyme. In this particular instance the use of the word 'shirt' accentuates the ironical stance of the speaker and as such is very successful.

TT2 also retains the songlike rhythm and ircular nature of this canto by means of a regular rhythm and rhyme sequence, less strict than the ST, but which functions well in English verse. The use of *hey,hey* for *ekh ekh* also adds to this aspect of the canto.

The original uses *seryе getry* as a symbol of luxury and high society; neither translator has chosen to transfer these into a modern cultural setting - he might have worn silk stockings, or silk underwear. TT2 translates this reference literally while TT1 chooses to use *grey spats* in order to provide an imperfect rhyme with 'cadets'. The final couplet of TT1 is changed substantially from the original in that it makes explicit reference to Petr kha and Kat'ka, unlike the original.

Canto VI: The whole of this canto is full of colloquial language (*orat', szadu, tararakhat', nautek, razok, utek, uzhoi* and seems to involve several different speakers. Especially significant is the use Blok makes of assonance with many internal rhymes and phonic echoes cf. *razok/kurok; rada/pada1'; revolyuts'onniy/neugomonniy* [cf.lines 107/108]; *Andryukha/Petrukha; utek/uzho [Woodward:155].* The lines are short, sharp, and distinct, stressing the rapidity of movement and element of panic. This is also emphasised by the use of rhyming couplets which lend speed to the events described, as well as evoking Petrukha's frame of mind. The canto ends with a repetition of lines 107-8: the movement of the revolution goes on, despite personal tragedies.

The fast regular rhythm is retained by both TT1 and TT2 to the same end as in the ST. TT1 does however choose to break up the regularity of the rhythm by an unusual use of syntactic division cutting across the lines of the poem, a tactic used often by TT1 to relieve the possible monotony of the regularity of the original as well as to give a more modern flavour to the translation.

The large number of colloquialisms, both syntactically and lexically, makes the task of translating this canto especially difficult. Blok's use of three verbs in the second line is difficult to retain and so TT1 turns the cabman's cry into direct speech. TT2 on the other hand retains the three verbs rather successful.:

> ...Again the cabby comes, he flies
> Full speed ahead, he shouts, he cries.

In the second couplet, while the Russian is able to place both imperative verbs in a important position at the end of the lines this cannot be achieved as easily in English. The effect is lost in TT1, where the rhymes are *here/rear*, while the lines are translated more naturally in TT2 with *mind/behind* as the rhyming pair. The strongly onomatopoeic nature of line 173 - *Trakh-tararakh-takh-takh-takh-takh* - is lost in TT1 by the insertion of *reload*; the purpose is presumably to relieve the repetition of 'crack' but the suddenness and the impulsiveness of the action is weakened as a result. The only other significant change by TT1 is the use of *dung* for *padal'* (line 184), which is less emphatic than 'carrion', but perhaps more colloquial and vulgar, and therefore more appropriate in the context. TT2 retains the word 'carrion' with some success, and conveys the colloquial nature of the language by the use of certain substandard forms, such as *that'll learn you, the swine*, and *I'll make you pay* (176, 179, 180).

Canto VII: The regularity of the rhythm and rhymes in the first two stanzas emphasises the onward movement of the guardsmen. In TT1 the effect is rather one of stagnation and hesitation:

> Fast, faster, he steps out,
> Knotting a handkerchief
> clumsily round his throat
> his hand shakes like a leaf. (191-194)

TT2 keeps much more closely to the form and rhythm of the original, and reads much more naturally as an original poem, using natural English syntax and intonation to support the line divisions and rhymes, as in the ST. TT1 tends to use words as rhyming pairs which necessitate the

unnatural positioning of stress and emphasis, the rhymes sounding forced and unnatural.

TT1 begins with the emphasis on the marching soldiers but falls prey to a serious lexical error in the second line which spoils the effect of the remainder of the canto. The use of the word *butts* is unfortunate, for while the term 'rifle butt' is familiar to all, the connotations of the word 'butt' in American colloqiual language are equally familiar. Thus a whole new image is unwittingly introduced into the translation, and constitutes a major distortion of the original.

The next stanzas of TT1 present a marked shift from the construction of the original, which is effective in its structural repetition , beginning with *shto* and ending with a verb in *-el* or *-il*. The regularity emphasises the marching and gives a unity to the stanza and to the canto. Unable to reproduce such effects as these or Blok's use of internal rhyme and parallel syntactic structures, which are so effective in Russian (lines 199-202,207-8), the TT1 translator concentrates on the colloquial aspect of the canto, attempting to convey the language used by ordinary working-class soldiers. The original is full of slang (*ruzh'etso, taropit', otoropet', nos povesit', devka, sgoryacha, ish', zavesti sharmanku, izvol'*), and the type of language is an important aspect of the semantic content of the original, but TT1 concentrates on it almost to the exclusion of other aspects of the canto, and the translation suffers as a result. In addition, the choice of lexical items is often

incongruous, for example the juxtaposition of *my friend* and *mate* in lines 195-6: while the first is very much part of a middle class register, the second is the lower register indicated in the ST. Lines 199-208 are especially stilted and unconvincing as original poetry. The use of *brother, brother, brother* in line 199 is in no way equivalent, as it is normally used as an expletive in American slang, and rarely as an equivalent for 'comrade'. The syntax of lines 203-208 is unusual and awkward, and the use of *in my fury* is also the incorrect register. In contrast line 209 is appropriate for the context: *Hey, Peter, shut your trap!*

TT2 keeps more strictly to the form and content of the ST although it also conveys the colloquial flavour. TT2 keeps the reference to comrades, and adds that of mates, both appropriate in the context. He also uses the term 'bird' which is the correct register for the speaker, and makes use of substandard syntactic forms, which are not used at all in TT1. for example the use of 'them' instead of 'those' [line 201, 204], and 'did her in' [line 207].

Petrukha's expression of guilt and regret is made even more expressive by the insertion of an extra syllable in line 208 of the ST, which is retained in TT2:

> So stupidly I did her in,
> Killed her in a fury. Curse...

although 'curse' is somewhat too elevated, and unemphatic; probably 'damn' would have been more suitable. TT1 on the other hand changes the structure of these two lines considerably:

I shot her in my fury –
like the fool I am...

Especially effective in TT2 is line 209, which strikes just the right chord for the reader:

'Stuff your song and dance, you snivellar'

The two choices for the translation of *golyt'ba* are of interest, as the word has been given some significance by critics: TT1 chooses 'scum of the earth' while TT2 uses 'down and outs'. Both differ from the ST word which is in fact obsolete. A better choice is difficult to find, although 'riff-raff' may be an alternative which conveys the general idea without the added connotations of the word used in these two translations.

On the whole TT1's rendering of this canto is not satisfactory, mainly because the translators have concentrated on one aspect of the text to the exclusion of others, and their errors are thus magnified in relation to the ST. TT2, by keeping more faithfully to the original and by compensating for Russian colloquial lexical items and syntactic structures with carefully chosen English ones, creates a more convincing original English verse.

Canto VIII: Blok began the poem in the middle of the eighth canto:

Uzh ya nozhichkom
Polosnu, polosnu! *[238-9]*

The speaker is clearly Petrukha and the whole section has a popular and colloquial flavour with its diminutive rhymes and trochaic base [*vremyacko /temyachku/ semyachki, nozhichkom/ vorobyshkom, krovushku/ ·bushku/ chernobrovushku*].

These elements are compensated for in TT1 by the use of colloquial language and in the second half of the canto, by the use of lexical items and syntactic structures with connotations of folk songs (lines 242-3):

> for the sake of my poor darling
> with her dark and roving eye...

TT2 uses the same devices, with parallel syntax and repetition as well as intimations of popular songs (line 240):

> Fly away, bourgeois, fly away home!

The first line repeats and echoes line 119, which is omitted by TT1, being rendered in line 119 as *damnation* and here as *My God, what a life!* It is omitted [illegible] similar reasons, but is replaced by a reference to 'blues' which has [illegible]sociations both with music and song as well as with depression, and the connotation of typically blues melodies fits well with the general atmosphere of boredom and sadness.

The repetition of *skuka skuchnaya*, with the long closed vowels in the next line implies Petrukha's exasperation with his emotions, his desire to move on and leave his past life behind him. Although TT1 omits the vowel repetition, the repetition of 'I' and the long vowel in *bored* has the same effect. TT2 keeps closer to the original by repeating *boring* and *boredom* but also retaining *deadly*. The similarity in form and sound of the next four couplets, linked both by the repetition of *Uzh* at the beginning of each as well as the rhyming diminutives in lines 232, 234, 236, and 238, and the use and reptition of the verbs *pocheshu, polushchu, polosnu*, present considerable difficulties. These couplets acquire connotations of an almost childish pettiness in the ST; the killing of

Kat'ka is linked both linguistically and semantically with trivial pastimes and then, with a shock, comes the image of 238-9:

> Uch' ya nozhichkom
> Polosnu, polosnu!...

All this is retained in TT1 but without the repetition of the verbs, giving a less musical effect but which is nevertheless effective. Less satisfactory is the choice of expressions; chew my quid is unusual, and possibly unfamilar to most readers, actually referring to tobacco - a deliberate substitute for sunflower seeds. Both translators make this shift although there appears to be no real justification for it. TT2 retains the repetition of the ST, and effectively so:

> So I'll scratch my head,
> That feels fine, that feels fine...

In the next stanza the image of a sparrow is used in the ST to represent the bourgeois with all the connotations of the old world and what that represents, identifying the image with a sparrow - a small, insignificant and unimportant little bird. TT1 makes the sparrow into a starling - both less common and less insignificant, presumably in order to provide a rhyme for 'darling' in line 242. TT2 omits any reference to a bird, simply using the familiar nursery line (line 240).

The canto ends with an extract from the Orthodox funeral service - Kat'ka, and all that she symbolises in the poem is finally laid to rest. Line 245 brings us back to the start of the canto with the lament *Skuchno!* The drawn out long vowel and the familiar cry summarise all of Petrukha's exasperation and tiredness of the past. The repetition is

retained in TT1 by repeating *I'm bored!* Line 244 however is not satisfactorily translated in TT1:

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.

The implication is rather that either Kat'ka was a repentant believer who died in a state of absolution, or that as she died in a state of sin she cannot herself be blessed. The line then loses all the significance that it carries in the ST, and represents a major distortion on the semantic level of the text. TT2 uses a line which might more conceivably be taken from a funeral service and simply indicates traditional religion. These last two lines of TT2 summarise all of Petrukha's exasperation and abhorrence of religion and all that it entails:

Give rest, O Lord, to thy handmaid's soul...

What a bore.

Canto IX: This presents an absolute contrast with the previous cantos. Blok's choice of classical and regular four foot iambs with regularly alternating masculine and feminine rhymes is symbolic of the bourgeoisie and the old world, making more emphatic his caricature of all that is represented.

TT1 attempts to indicate the change in tone by a more sedate, traditional rhythm and language in the first two lines:

Out of the city spills no noise,
the prison tower reigns in peace..

TT2 is more colloquial:

There's quiet over Council Tower,
The city's silent round about..

The reason for rendering *Nevskaya Bashnya* in this way is obscure; it is interesting that in this case translators saw the necessity to make the reference either more explicit or more general for the English reader.

The passing reference to the necessary absence of alcohol, discussed in Chapter 6 above, is changed in TT1 to *We've got no booze* while TT2 puts a somewhat different light on the question with *though liquor's out* in parentheses. Line 249 of the ST echoes those lines which contained the phrase *bez kresta* (91, 101, 114) in canto II, thus making an irreverent link between religion and alcohol. This is lost in TT1 which rendered those lines as *Down with the cross*, and in TT2 which gave them as *with no cross!*.

The second stanza reintroduces the image of the bourgeois on the crossroads with his nose in his collar (cf. line 29-30). Blok then introduces the image of the 'mangy cur' which becomes a symbol of the bourgeois himself and then of the old world. TT1 selects an unusual translation of *pyes* - pup; the purpose is to provide a rhyme for 'up' but is quite inappropriate for the context. 'Pup' has connotations of youth, gaiety, mischievousness and health. In the ST the associations are of 'cur', or a stray dog, as in TT2's, a 'scruffy cur'.

In the third stanza with the development of the symbol of the dog, the immobility of the Old World and all that it represents is emphasised both in the choice of metre and in the choice of words. TT1 fails to extend the symbol satisfactorily. Rather than directly comparing the bourgeois

to the dog, TT1 makes use of an English expression *hangdog air* which only implies a link. The comparison with the old world is also more subtle and less explicit than in the ST. TT thus obscures a central symbol in the poem, while the use of 'pup' is totally inadequate and distorts the semantic invariant of the ST.

TT2 omits the repetition of *stoit* which carries especial significance within the context of the poem. This omission constitutes a distortion on several levels - syntactic and semantic as well as functional and thematic. TT2 does however retain a more direct comparison between the bourgeois and the dog and then between the old world and the dog, by using *mongrel-like* and *mangy tyke*.

Canto X: The canto is formed of a series of jolly couplets ending with the echo of the Varshavanka, the traditional marching song of Russian revolutionaries. Blok makes extensive use of parallel syntactic forms and repetition of key words. The third stanza consists of five rhyming couplets, which are linked to each other by a similarity of sounds: *space/zaviraysya: upas/ikonostas: pravo/zdravo; krovi/lyubvi*. The final couplet is an echo of lines 107-8 and 185-6:

> - Shag derzhi revolyutsionnyy!
> Blizok vrag neugomonnyy!

By changing the word order of these lines Blok emphasises the restless movement of the revolution itself. The stanza is a final exhortation to Petrukha to put the past behind him. The Twelve are seeking salvation from the blizzard as well as from the apparently unseverable bonds with the Old World. They are literally caught between two worlds, but their

only choice is to move forward with the revolution. The rhythm and use of rhyme and assonance in these lines stress the movement of the revolution and of the Twelve themselves, in contrast to the stagnation of the previous canto. This is emphasised further in the final couplet which is rhythmically unrelated to the rest of the canto:

> Vpered, vpered, vpered,
> Rabochiy narod! [274-5]

TT1 chooses again to convey the folk connotations of this canto by using colloquial chatty language; a whole area of semantic content is lost in the translation and very little added in the form of compensation. TT1 does keep a fairly regular rhyme scheme but its major weakness is in the choice of rhyming words. In the first stanza TT1 uses 'just' as a rhyme for 'gust', thus placing abnormal stress on a word which plays a minor syntactic and semantic role. Lines 260-261 are abnormal both syntactically and semantically; the word order has an awkward ring and the use of the word 'form' as a rhyme for 'storm' jars. The regular and emphatic beat of lines 262-3, becomes weak and faded in TT1:

> Snow twists into a funnel,
> a towering tunnel...

The power of the storm thus dissipates suddenly and ineffectually, in contrast with TT2 which renders the couplet more successfully:

> Towers of snow and funnels whirl,
> Snowy peaks rise up and whirl.

TT1 changes the eight line stanza made up of four rhyming couplets into a six line stanza. The reason appears to be to use a longer line and avoid the short clipped lines of the ST. Semantically the substance of

the stanza is retained, the language is colloquial and convincing. The reference to icons and hence to the Orthodox religion is changed simply to 'Christ and his cross' thus making the reference more general.

The major distortion of this stanza in TT1 lies in the use of 'Jesus Christ' in line 264. This is the first explicit reference to Christ in TT1 and within the framework of the poem as a whole the thematic balance is changed. This now forms an explicit appeal to Christ for salvation. The insertion of Christ's name gives the reader a direct hint of the ending of the poem. In addition the normal use of 'Jesus Christ' in such a context is as an expletive expressing horror and disgust, and as such is entirely blasphemous.

Lines 270-271 in TT1 do not have the same echo with the previous lines [107-8,185-6]; TT1 keeps the first line of the couplet intact and alters the second line substantially, thus losing the effect of the ST which changes the order of the first line and makes *revolyutsionny* rhyme with *neugomonny*. The rhyme in TT1 of *step/let up* is correspondingly weak and ineffective. In contrast TT1 renders the final couplet with emphasis and an emphatic rhythm.

TT2 is more faithful to the original , and the songlike quality of the ST is conveyed by the regular dancing rhythm and the strict rhyme scheme, more regular and rhythmic than TT1 because of the correlation between the rhymes, rhythm, line division and natural English intonation. TT2 keeps the reference to icons, with the rather clever line *Protected by an icon*

screen? [267]. The repetition in lines 272-3 falls flat with the use of d'you *hear* and the rhyme with 'near'.

Canto XI: The first line echoes the use of the previous phrases *bez kresta* and *bez vina* by describing the Twelve as marching *bez imeni svystogo*. This motif structure is lost in both translations because there has been no preparation for its retention. The emphasis on the non-religious stance of the Twelve is therefore considerably weakened. The line is translated in TT1 as *Spurning the holy name*, although it is moved to the second line of the canto. TT1 adds to the meaning:

Abusing God's name as they go

which is far more active than the original.

Line 277 of canto IX states that all twelve are moving forward, indicating that the past has finally been severed. The couplets are linked by the rhyme scheme which continues ababab cod de, giving a progression which adds to the impression of continual movement forward to an unknown destination. This is accentuated by the parallel syntax and the very close rhymes [many of Blok's rhymes are irregular]. There are links between the verbs *b'etsya/ razdaetsya/ prosnetsya* as well as *flag/ shag/ vrag*.

TT1 retains the rhythm and the idea of progression but chooses to discard the strict rhyme scheme of the original. Thus the semantic connotations of the rhymes themselves are lost. TT2 chooses accepts the limitations of retaining the rhyme scheme and thus produces a more

rhythmic and musical version which bears more similarity with the ST. The limitations imposed by the rhymes do however cause lexical and semantic problems in TT2 and lines 278-9 suffer as a result. Similar restrictions result in an artificial and false rhyme in line 285, which is not at all successful in TT2 - *Deep enough to mean No Go...* .

The idea of progression forward is conveyed in the second stanza of TT1 by carrying each line semantically and syntactically over into the next 1 .e, even to the extent of splitting a word with a hyphen:

> ..its shrapnel, and through quag-
> mire drifts where the boots drag...

The success of such a device is dubious; it has a significant effect on a pragmatic level, making the poem much more modern in style and genre. It fails however to convey the strong beat of the Russian with its emphatic line division and rhymes. The close relationship of the three couplets is also lost. In contrast the tercet is rendered with an emphatic beat and strong line division:

> Into their faces day and night
> bellows the wind
> without a break...

TT2 chooses to retain the links between the couplets by using three rhyming words - *ahead/tread/yet*. The pairing of *ahead* and *tread* serves to emphasise the onward march of the Twelve. The rhyme is further emphasised by the rhyming of all lines of the tercet:

> And the blizzard blurs their sight,
> Grants no respite
> Day or night...

Canto XII: The first quatrain reiterates the rhyming words of the previous canto: flagom/ shagom. TT1 loses this, not having made it a possibility in the previous canto, while TT2 chooses to discard the link and does not keep the regular rhyme scheme of the first stanza at all. TT1 loses the thematic, syntactic and semantic associations with the repeated rhyming lines of 107-8 and so forth. TT1 and TT2 instead both insert two different words - sovereign tread, thus adding further connotations not necessarily found in the ST. Perhaps 'mighty' would have been more appropriate.

The next stanza, also a quatrain, reintroduces the image of the dog, this time hobbling along behind them; line 303 repeats the same image of line 254 - *pyes golodny*, which is changed in TT1 to *mongrel runt*, the only explicit reference to a dog in canto IX of this translation being *mongrel pup*. TT2 keeps the word *cur* from the ninth canto, but adds the word *scavenger* and inserts the reference to *golodny* in the next line as an adverb. Another important link within the structure of the poem is therefore lost once more in TT1.

Line 302 of the ST repeats the *vykhodit* of line 298, but this time rhyming with *pozadi* instead of *vperedi* - an important contrast in that the opposition of the new and the old world is central to the whole poem. TT1 attempts to retain this contrast by opposing *at their head* with *in the rear*, while TT2 uses various phrases to cover the word *vperedi*: up in front, ahead, contrasted with *behind*.

The third stanza makes explicit the identification of the dog with the old world. The Twelve threaten the dog and hence all that the old world represents with physical violence. The rhymes are formed from morphological parallels: *sheludivíy/ parshivíy* and *poshchekochu/ pokolochu*. The use of the latter verbs as a rhyming pair serves to emphasise the active nature of the threats. TT1 conveys the violence of these threats by the language and the rhythm of the lines. The association beween the old world and the dog is made by fusing the two images directly into 'old mongrel world', although the direct links with canto IX are lost because of the substantial difference between canto IX in the ST and in the translation. TT2 also loses the links with canto IX, and this stanza is generally unsatisfactory, possibly as a result of staying too close to the ST. The link between the 'foul mongrel' and the 'old world' is here made more explicit.

The next stanza describes the dog stubbornly following the Twelve. Again the connotations with the refusal of the Old World to be completely extinguished, as well as of the inability of the people to sever their links with all that it represents, are clear. The direct links wih canto IX are again lost in both TT1 and TT2 (ST line 311). In addition the translation of *ne otstaet* as *does not stir* in TT1 is a further distortion. The function of the line in the ST is to indicate that the dog and hence the old World cannot be left behind. In TT1 the implication is that the dog has indeed stopped and is no longer following, although this will be contradicted further on in the canto.

The canto continues with a further link between *flagom* and *shagom*, recalling the first stanza as well as the previous canto. TT1 loses this, failing to keep any continuity in these words at any point in the poem. The second line of the stanza emphasises the darkness of the streets, and with the last line, stresses the apparently furtive and possibly evil nature of the unseen figure. This is cleverly conveyed in TT1 by the use of *tomb/gloom*. The potential enemy is still unknown in either the ST or the translations - the Twelve have constantly reiterated the need for vigilance (107-8,185-6,272-3, 290-1). The sixth stanza rises to a crescendo in both sound and mood. The next stanza begins with the sound of rifle-fire. But there is no response other than the echo of the shots; the invisible figure is unaffected by the bullets. The only sound is that of the blizzard, which Blok describes as laughing long and gaily in a mockery of the twelve guardsmen. This is emphasised by the rhyme of *otkliksetsya* and *zalivsetsya* at the beginning of lines 322 and 324. TT1 provides an effective translation of this stanza although it differs radically from the original. Unable to retain the parallelism of the two verbs and of the repetition of *to/'to* the translator makes use of a certain alliteration with *splits/seams/sleeve*. TT2 does not attempt any compensatory device here and thus loses much of the effect of the ST.

Then comes another round of rifle-fire, the onomatopoeic couplets both frightening and shocking the reader, preparing the way for the contrast of the final nine-line stanza, which is formed of a single sentence. By using only one sentence here Blok is able to build up to the final astonishing denouement of the whole poem. The first line echoes the

lines repeated most often throughout the poem, symbols of the constant onward movement:

...Tak idut derzhavnym shagom -

The dog is again pictured trailing behind the marching guardsmen, and opposed to it - *vperedi* instead of *pozadi* - but not revealed until the two final words of the poem - is the figure of Jesus Christ. In the build-up to this revelation, the figure is described as carrying a 'bloody' flag, almost invisible through the blizzard, impervious to bullets and stepping softly above the 'early snow', with a garland of white roses around his head. Christ appears to be floating through the air - a familiar religious image of Christ on a cloud; the use of the word *shemchuzhnoy* introduces other 'heavenly' connotations. The final triumph of the poem is the contrast between lines 328 and line 335 - the old and the new are contrasted strongly, the mangy dog and the Old World as opposed to Jesus Christ, and the promise of redemption.

TT1 retains the form of this last stanza, using one sentence. The rhyming unity of the stanza is somewhat dissipated however, for while the scheme of the ST is abacddee, T1 changes to ababdedef. The absence of rhyming couplets for the second half of the stanza inevitably makes it more disjointed, and sets the last line apart from the rest of the verse. Semantically, important distortions occur in TT1 in this all-important final canto of the poem. Christ no longer steps above the snow, but simply in the snow, and he no longer wears a crown of white roses but a

flowery diadem of frost. The overtly religious implications of the stanza and hence of the whole poem are thus destroyed in TT1.

TT2 also keeps the form of the ST with a rhyme pattern of ababccdee.The opposition o *vperedi* and *pozadi* are given as *in their rear* and *up in front* , somewhat weaker for being paraphrased rather than giving one word for each such as 'ahead' and 'behind'. The rest of the stanza retains the semantic content and structure of the original with one major distortion; the use of the word 'spliced' in line 334. It provides a rhyme with Christ but otherwise its presence remains obscure. Literally the word means to join, but is common in slang - although outdated now - as a word for 'to marry'. It is possible that Hackel, with his own very personal interpretation of the poem, is seeking to indicate the final union of man and woman in the figure of Jesus Christ, and the garland of roses is thus seen as a marriage garland. TT2's almost pedantic insistence in places on fidelity to the ST is reflected in the spelling of Jesus in the last line as *Iesus*. The significance of the original spelling has been discussed above *(p59)*. There is little doubt that an English reader would, without the benefit of the parallel text, assume the spelling to be a typographical error.

Chapter 7: CONCLUSION

The aim in this dissertation was to discuss the theoretical and practical issues involved in the translation of Aleksandr Blok's *Dvenadtsat'* into English. In order to fully understand the particular difficulties involved, a considerable amount of background material has been included. The actual discussion of *Dvenadtsat'* was structured around the categories proposed by Van Kesteren, together with a discussion of additional considerations taken from theorists such as Beaugrande and Van den Broeck, and issues which arose during the practical analysis of the texts. Only when this point had been reached was it possible to proceed to a detailed comparison of the source text with the two translations. The results of the analyses make it possible to draw certain conclusions concerning the nature of the task of translating *Dvenadtsat'* and Blok's poetry in general.

The last two chapters presented a detailed and thorough analysis of the source text and of the two target texts. The discussion of the two translations centred on those elements in the translation which differed noticeably from the original poem. The reasons for this were largely practical: firstly, a detailed analysis of each translation as independent works in the target language would have been far too long and tedious; secondly, the general content of the translations is fairly close to the source text, so that the only valuable analysis must focus on points of deviation and distortion. This type of approach to descriptive

translation studies may be open to criticism. Toury especially insists on the primacy of the target text, suggesting that an analysis should start with an identification of the solutions to problems rather than beginning with the problems in the source text as perceived by the analyst. This approach is clearly unsuitable for the analysis and comparison carried out here, which aspires to be critical as well as descriptive. Indeed, the value of analysing translations without any attempt to identify errors and deviations is doubtful. In this work the discussion and comparison has focused on the identification of those textemic elements which possess a functional relevance within the text as an integrated whole. Only when those features have been identified can any attempt at assessment be made.

The first two chapters of this dissertation stressed the importance of considering a poem as a unified whole, each of its parts interacting to produce an overall significance. This approach has been followed throughout, and the relationship between the various poetic devices and the thematic structure of the poem has been consistently emphasised. This aspect must also be stressed in comparing the original with the target texts. In addition, the status of the translated poem as an original poem in the target language literary system must also be taken into consideration. Chapter 2 indicated that a hierarchy of features must be established in order to provide the translator with a set of priorities. However objective the methods used to analyse the source text in order to identify and order these features, it is inevitably an intensely personal and subjective task, depending both on the

reader/translator's perception and experience of *Blok's poetry* and on his understanding and familiarity with English poetry. Nevertheless, by identifying those elements which are most vital to the dynamics and aesthetics of the poem, tentative proposals for a s t of priorities can be made. Enumerating features of importance in the ST does not present a problem; the difficulty lies in establishing an order of priority.

It is essential to recognise the constraints operating on the translator; his aim must always be to translate the functional elements of the poem by means of elements which function on an equivalent level in the target text. He is clearly limited by the language in which *he is working*. The emphasis must be on the overall communicative value, while those features which are the hallmarks of Blok's poetry must also be communicated. Returning to Van den Broeck's three-point process for assessing translations *(described on p27)*, the final stage is described as:

> a generalising description of the differences between the actual TT/ST equivalent and the adequate translation.

An adequate translation, in Toury's terms, comprises only those features which are functionally relevant for the structural relationships within the source text. When guidelines regarding the adequate translation have been established then the translations may be compared with it in general terms.

The purpose of this concluding chapter is therefore twofold: firstly, a hierarchy of functionally relevant textemic features will be proposed,

based on the analysis of the source text and background material; secondly, the translations which were analysed in the *previous* chapter will be compared with this concept of an 'adequate' translation. It must be emphasised that as the reader of the text, either as translator, translation critic or simply as the target language audience, is an individual, then each reading of the text will vary. *For this reason it is often desirable to base any assessment purely on textually-based information, as suggested by Beaugrande.* Unfortunately, literary criticism must contain a certain amount of subjectivity, and ultimately it is a subjective assessment of the texts which will indicate whether or not they constitute 'good poetry'.

A hierarchy of textemic features

1. Given the highly symbolic nature of the original poem, and the place of the ST in the SL literature, the symbolic base of the poem must be a high priority for the translator. This involves metaphor as well as other devices such as the stressing of *certain concepts* through the rhyme and syntactic patterns of the poem; these features should therefore be preserved where possible. Where this is not possible suitable alternatives must be found while retaining a sense of the overall structure of the poem. Both translations succeed to a certain extent in this respect but the major distortions that do occur destroy the internal coherence. This is particularly noticeable, for example, at the end of the poem, where TT1 omits a major area of imagery surrounding the figure of

Christ, and TT2 introduces an element not present in the original. As we have seen, the symbolism in the original poem is linked to other works by Blok, *something* which may be forgotten by the translator working on *Dvenadtsat'* alone. No translation should be attempted without a sense of the whole macrocosm of Blok's work, and with considerable insight into Blok's own world. Only then can the intricate weaving of symbols and imagery be transposed *into the fabric* of another language.

2. The preceding chapters have demonstrated conclusively that the particular sound texture of Blok's poetry, related to his own 'musical' interpretation of life, is an *essential feature* of his work. Thus in *Dvenadtsat'* the sound texture of the poem, especially in its juxtaposition of harmony and dissonance, has a definite semantic function. By combining rhyme, metre, rhythm, assonance and dissonance, Blok creates an intensely personal poetry, in which the *music* of the words and the symbolic content of the poem are indissociable. While it is obvious that the same sounds and musical features cannot be reproduced in English, it is possible to reproduce the function of this musical quality of Blok's verse. At the same time there can be no doubt that even the *most successful* translation will fail to convey the same feelings and emotions for the target audience as the original does for the source language audience. The analysis of the translations has shown that neither of the translations succeeds in consistently conveying that *powerful and emphatic* use of sound which is a primary feature of Blok's poetry and which is functionally relevant in an aesthetic sense as an indication of his standing as a poet.

3. The rhythm and metre of the original is of functional importance in the semantic associations for the reader or audience. This is particularly significant in the way in which Blok makes use of the metre and rhythm of folk-poetry in order to represent the masses, whom Blok revered as closer to the natural order of the Cosmos, and hence as the people most in tune with the revolution. This feature is clearly linked to the previous ones, but can be considered separately when discussing translation. The translator can only attempt to reproduce the communicative function of Blok's use of rhythm and metre. English folk-poetry, although substantial, is less familiar to English readers than Russian folk-poetry is to Russian readers. A possible equivalent to the *chastushka* may be the limerick, but the latter is inevitably humorous and often vulgar, while the *chastushka* need not be either. It must be accepted that there is no true equivalent, chiefly because the social, cultural and literary background of the two literatures do not share sufficient features. Similarly, the actual metre of the poem is not directly relevant; it is its function within the poem that the translator must seek to preserve. Both translations have succeeded to a certain extent in reproducing this feature, although in very different ways. This has been achieved both in the lexis and syntax as well as in the rhyme and rhythm of the poems; unfortunately neither translation has been able to sustain this throughout.

4. The large colloquial component of *Dvenadtsat'* means that any translation should convey the same register, without falling into the trap of using incongruous and anachronistic language. To ignore this

colloquial flavour of the original would result in considerable distortion, although this feature may be subordinated to the preservation of those features already listed. Individual instances of colloquial language do not have to be retained; rather the translator must give his work a colloquial flavour which is functionally equivalent to the use of such language in the original. Both translations have been successful here in different sections of the poem, although TT1 tends to concentrate on this aspect to the detriment of the overall thematic structure. Again, it is the sustained transposition of these elements that is lacking. Moreover, the use of language register and style is not always convincing and tends to be contrived.

5. The historical context of the poem will be perceived very differently by the English reader unless he has deliberately studied the social and historical background. Items bound to the culture of the source text should be retained where they are significant in the thematic structure of the poem. This has been done in the translations studied here; these instances where deviations do occur are not essential to the overall structure.. There is no doubt that the reader will be aware in both translations that the setting of the poem is Russia. The inevitability of this awareness makes the use of Russian names in TT2 more convincing than the use of English names in TT1.

6. Finally, low priority may be assigned to the specific rhyme pattern of the original and to specific lexical and syntactic equivalence, largely because the differences discussed above between English and Russian mean

that close equivalence on these levels is impossible to obtain. This is one area in which TT2 has failed. By attempting to keep rigidly to the rhyme scheme of the original TT2 has fallen into the pitfall of concentrating on one aspect of the text to the detriment of others, and therefore undermines the artistic integrity of both the translation and the original. The issue for the translator here becomes one of acceptability in the target language literary system. It may be argued that strict adherence to the rhyme scheme of the original would not be functional equivalence, as the norms for rhyme schemes differ considerably between the two languages.

It will appear clear that each section of the text, stanza by stanza, canto by canto, must be considered both separately and as part o artistic whole. Thus the order of priority for the features listed ab may change according to the particular problem facing the translator. As the process of evaluation and, first of all, of appreciation, of a work of art is very much oriented towards the reader and is therefore highly subjective, it is inevitable that each reader would choose to order the hierarchy differently. Given the background of Blok's poetry, the features listed in the order presented here reflect the most important characteristics of Blok's work and as such, although by no means exhaustive, they are proposed as a definite hierarchy against which the translations may be compared.

One of the most important criteria of adequacy is that the poem must be acceptable as an original poem in the target language. If the translated poem is not aesthetically pleasing and artistically unified within the inevitable constraints imposed by the socio-historical, linguistic and literary background of the poem, then it cannot be considered a successful translation. The distortions and deviations identified in the previous chapter detract from the potential status of the translations as original poems. If the poems are read with no reference whatsoever to the original then certain features are strikingly incongruous and destroy the artistic unity and beauty of the text.

TT1 begins well - the first three cantos have an exciting blend of harmony and discord; the poem is vigorous and there is a strong impression of movement. In the fourth canto however this slips away and the use of certain lexical items distracts the reader's attention (for example, snout, moustachio, mug). In the sixth canto with the use of the word 'butts' the reader is brought up with a start, uncertain of the author's intention. The whole of canto VII fails as an original composition in the use of language, the rhythm and the lexical content of the lines. In contrast the eighth and ninth cantos are largely successful while the the tenth canto seems artificial. The poem finishes well, apart from one or two lines in the final canto (312-4). The overall impression of this translation is that while the general content and the rhythm of the poem is powerful and effective, the use of certain lexical items and of certain language registers are incongruous when read by a native

English speaker. It would be difficult to believe that the poem had been written originally in English, despite sections of some accomplishment.

TT2 is disappointing when read as an original. The first canto is stilted and lacking in effect. The rhymes appear contrived and much of the language contradicts natural English intonation (23-4, 47-9, 57-9). Canto II is also weak and ineffectual although the third is far more satisfactory. TT2 fares no better in the fourth canto than TT1, especially in the second stanza. The most successful canto in TT2 is the seventh, where the translator succeeds in making use of just the right language register, combining it effectively with an emphatic rhythm and rhyme scheme. There is little more to comment on; the poem is excellent in parts but fails in its use of contrived rhymes and awkward intonation. The overall impression is of a somewhat weak poem by a mediocre poet which would be unlikely to be assigned a place in classical English literature.

On the whole TT1 has opted for a 'free' translation, while TT2 has remained more 'faithful' to the source text. As Beaugrande commented, a tendency to either stance leads to inadequacies: the literal translator will lose the communicative function of the text while the free translator may change or distort the actual content of the text substantially. Although the translators of TT1 have produced a poem which can stand on its own in English literature (although at a level far below that of Blok in Russian literature) they have clearly fallen prey to errors and distortions. In the numerous instances of deviation on all three levels

they have often failed to compensate for those features omitted in their efforts to produce a truly *English poem*. *Despite* these shortcomings, TT1 compares favourably with TT2. The most significant distortion in TT1 is the omission of those elements which made Christ into an immortal and supernatural figure. This alteration undermines all of the symbolic and thematic structure of the text and results in *a far* less *powerful work of art*.

In contrast Hackel allows the original text to constrain his translation to such an extent that it becomes a stilted and mediocre English poem. *Blok's brilliance is never* transposed in the translation; it is difficult to believe that this is the work of a great poet. In addition, Hackel, in his rendering of the last few lines of the poem, allows his own interpretation to take over and thus adds an element to the text that is not present in *the original*. His transference of the rhythm and the language register is on the other hand extremely effective, only to be weakened by the contrived and almost petty rhyme sequences.

It is inevitable that the conclusion should be *drawn* that while Hackel possibly had a greater appreciation of the original poem, and a greater knowledge of all those features typical of Blok's genius, he lacked one of the elements of Beaugrande's concept of 'poetic competence', namely, structuration competence (see p24). Stallworthy and *France on* the other hand combined their abilities; Peter France was the scholar, and possessed the background knowledge to the poem and to Blok's work and Russian literature in general; Jon Stallworthy was the poet, and thus

possessed the structuration competence which Jackal lacked. Between them, they should have produced the optimal translation. Evidence of their failure to do so has already been presented. It is possible that the division of labour dissipated the creative energy required; it may be that Stallworthy is simply not able, even in translation, to reach the heights of creativity for which Blok is revered.

Finally it should be emphasised that the question of the translation of poetry remains extremely complex and the issues involved have no clear-cut solutions. In every case the translator himself works not only within the constraints of the language he is attempting to mould in a likeness to the original, but also within the constraints of his own identity as a reader of the source text and within the limitations of his own ability as a poet. To truly appreciate a poem originally written in another language the reader is obliged to acquire a good command of the language. Ultimately, it must be admitted that a poem in translation is by no means the same work of art. As Savory commented:

> The translation is not the original poem in any but the primitive sense of its meaning; it is a new product, the result of new intellectual effort...a poem is a thing made, and if it is made of English words it is a different thing from a poem made of Latin or Spanish words. *[Savory: 87]*

This overwhelmingly subjective nature of poetry is also emphasised in this quotation from Sir John Denham:

> The business is not alone to translate language into language but poesie into poesie, and poesie is of so subtle a spirit that in the pouring out of one language into another it will all evaporate, and if a new spirit is not added in the transfusion there will remain nothing but a caput mortuum. *(cit.Savory:80)*

Nevertheless, as poetry is b[illegible] translated and read in translation with increasing frequency, studies [illegible] as th[illegible] one do possess a certain relevance, especially as very litt[illegible] evaluative work has been done on existing translations of 'great' poets. It is hoped that the issues raised and the suggestions put forward have made a contribution to translation studies.

АЛЕКСАНДРЪ БЛОКЪ

ДВѢНАДЦАТЬ

1

Черный вечеръ.
Бѣлый снѣгъ.
Вѣтеръ, вѣтеръ!
На ногахъ не стоитъ человѣкъ.
Вѣтеръ, вѣтеръ —
На всемъ Божьемъ свѣтѣ!

Завиваетъ вѣтеръ
Бѣлый снѣжокъ.
Подъ снѣжкомъ — ледокъ.
Сколько, тяжко,
Всякій ходокъ
Скользитъ — ахъ, бѣдняжка!

Отъ зданія къ зданію
Протянутъ канатъ.
На канатѣ — плакатъ:
«Вся власть Учредительному Собранію!»
Старушка убивается — плачетъ,
Никакъ не пойметъ, что значитъ,
На что такой плакатъ,
Такой огромный лоскутъ?
Сколько бы вышло портянокъ для ребятъ,
А всякій — раздѣтъ, разутъ...

Старушка, какъ курица,
Кой-какъ перемотнулась черезъ сугробъ.
— Ахъ, Матушка-Заступница!
— Ахъ, *большевики загонятъ въ гробъ!*

Вѣтеръ :сткій!
Не отстаетъ и моровъ!
И буркуй на *перекресткѣ*
Въ воротникъ упряталъ носъ.

А это кто? — *Длинные волосы*
И говоритъ вполголоса:
— Предатели!
— *Поглбла Россія!*
Должно быть, писатель —
Витія...

А вонъ и долгополый —
Сторонкой — за сугробъ...
Что *нынче* невеселый,
Товарищъ попъ?

Помнишь, какъ бывало
Брюхомъ шелъ впередъ,
И крестомъ сіяло
Брюхо на народъ?

Вонъ барыня въ каракулѣ
Къ другой подвернулась:
— Ужь мы плакали, плакали...
Поскользнулась
И — бацъ — растянулась!

Ай, ай!
Тянь, подымай!

Вѣтеръ веселый
И золъ, и рядъ.
Крутитъ подолы,
Прохожихъ коситъ,
Рветъ, мететъ и носитъ
Большой плакатъ:
«Вся власть Учредительному Собранію»...
И слова доноситъ:

...И у насъ было собраніе...
...Вотъ въ этомъ зданіи...
...Обсудили —
Постановили:
На время — десять, на ночь — двадцать пять...
...И меньше — ни съ кого не брать...
...Пойдемъ спать...

Поздній вечеръ.
Пустѣютъ улицы.
Одинъ бродяга
Сутулится,
Да свищетъ вѣтеръ...

Эй, бѣдняга!
Подходи —
Поцѣлуемся...

Хлѣба!
Что впереди?
Проходи!

Черное, черное небо.

Злоба, грустная злоба
Кипитъ въ груди...
Черная злоба, святая злоба...

Товарищъ! Гляди
Въ оба!

2

Гуляетъ вѣтеръ, порхаетъ снѣгъ.
Идутъ двѣнадцать человѣкъ.

Винтовокъ черные ремни,
Кругомъ — огни, огни, огни...

Въ зубахъ — *цыгарка, примятъ картузъ,*
На спину-бъ надо бубновый тузъ!

Свобода, свобода,
Эхъ, ахъ, безъ креста!

Тра-та-та!

Холодно, товарищи, холодно!

— А Ванька съ Катькой — въ кабакѣ...
— У ей керенки есть въ чулкѣ!

— Ванюшка сынъ теперь богатъ...
— Былъ Ванька нашъ, а сталъ солдатъ!

— Ну, Ванька, сукинъ сынъ, буржуй,
Мою, попробуй, поцѣлуй!

Свобода, свобода,
Эхъ, ахъ, безъ креста!
Катька съ Ванькой занята—
Чѣмъ, чѣмъ занята?..

Тра-та-та!

Кругомъ — огни, огни, огни...
Оплечь — ружейные ремни...

Революціонный держите шагъ!
Неугомонный не дремлетъ врагъ!

Товарищъ, винтовку держи, не трусь!
Пальнемъ-ка пулей въ Святую Русь —

Въ кондовую,
Въ избяную,
Въ толстозадую!

Эхъ, ахъ, безъ креста!

APPENDIX I

3

Какъ пошли наши ребята
Въ красной гвардіи служить —
Въ красной гвардіи служить —
Буйну голову сложить!

Эхъ ты, горе-горькое,
Сладкое житье!
Рваное пальтишко,
Австрійское ружье!

Мы на горе всѣмъ буржуямъ
Мировой пожаръ раздуемъ,
Мировой пожаръ въ крови —
Господи, благослови!

4

Снѣгъ крутитъ, лихачъ кричитъ,
Ванька съ Катькою летитъ —
Электрическій фонарикъ
На оглобелькахъ...
Ахъ, ахъ, паденьки...

Онъ въ шинелишкѣ солдатской
Съ физіономіей дурацкой
Крутитъ, крутитъ черный усъ,
Да покручиваетъ,
Да пошучиваетъ...

Вотъ такъ Ванька — онъ плечистъ!
Вотъ такъ Ванька — онъ рѣчистъ!
Катьку-дуру обнимаетъ,
Заговариваетъ...

Запрокинулась лицомъ,
Зубки блещутъ жемчугомъ...
Ахъ ты, Катя, моя Катя,
Толстоморденькая...

5

У тебя на шеѣ, Катя,
Шрамъ не зажилъ отъ ножа.
У тебя подъ грудью, Катя,
Та царапина свѣжа!

Эхъ, эхъ, поцѣлуи!
Больно ножки хороши!

Въ кружевномъ бѣльѣ ходила —
Походи-ка, походи!
Съ офицерами бродила —
Побродн-ка, побродн!

Эхъ, эхъ, побродн!
Сердце екнуло въ груди!

Помнишь, Катя, офицера —
Не ушелъ онъ отъ ножа...
Аль не вспомнила, холера?
Али память не свѣжа?

Эхъ, эхъ, освѣжи,
Снять съ собою положи!

Гетры сѣрыя носила,
Шоколадъ Миньонъ жрала,
Съ юнкерьетъ гулять ходила —
Съ солдатьемъ теперь поила?

Эхъ, эхъ, согрѣши!
Будетъ легче для души!

6

...Опять навстрѣчу несется вскачь,
Летитъ, вопитъ, оретъ лихачь...

APPENDIX I

5

У тебя на шеѣ, Катя,
Шрамъ не зажилъ отъ ножа.
У тебя подъ грудью, Катя,
Та царапина свѣжа!

Эхъ, эхъ, поплакши!
Больно ножки хороши!

Въ кружевномъ бѣльѣ ходила —
Походи-ка, походи!
Съ офицерами блудила —
Поблуди-ка, поблуди!

Эхъ, эхъ, поблуди!
Сердце екнуло въ груди!

Помнишь, Катя, офицера —
Не ушелъ онъ отъ ножа...
Аль не вспомнила, холера?
Али память не свѣжа?

Эхъ, эхъ, освѣжи,
Опять съ собою положи!

Гетры сѣрыя носила,
Шоколадъ Миньонъ жрала,
Съ юнкерьемъ гулять ходила —
Съ солдатьемъ теперь поила?

Эхъ, эхъ, согрѣши!
Будетъ легче для души!

6

...Опять навстрѣчу несется вскачь,
Летитъ, вопитъ, оретъ лихачъ...

Стой, стой! Андрюха, помогай!
Петруха, сзаду забѣгай!..

Трахъ-тарарахъ-тахъ-тахъ-тахъ-тахъ!
Вскрутился къ небу снѣжный прахъ!..

Лихачъ — и съ Ванькой — наутекъ...
Еще разокъ! Заводи курокъ!..

Трахъ-тарарахъ! Ты будешь знать,
. . . . . .
Какъ съ дѣвочкой чужой гулять!..

Утекъ, подлецъ! Ужо, постой,
Расправлюсь завтра я съ тобой!

А Катька гдѣ? — Мертва, мертва!
Прострѣленная голова!

Что, Катька, рада? — Ни гу-гу...
Лежи ты, падаль, на снѣгу!

Революціонный держите шагъ!
Неутомимый не дремлетъ врагъ!

7

И опять идутъ двѣнадцать,
За плечами — ружьеца.
Лишь у бѣднаго убійцы
Не видать совсѣмъ лица...

Все быстрѣе и быстрѣе
Утораплваетъ шагъ.
Замоталъ платокъ *на шеѣ* —
Не оправиться никакъ...

— Что, товарищъ, ты не веселъ?
— Что, *дружокъ*, оторопѣлъ?
— Что, Петруха, носъ повѣсилъ,
Или Катьку пожалѣлъ?

— Охъ, товарищи, родные,
Эту дѣвку я любилъ...
Ночки черныя, хмельныя
Съ этой дѣвкой проводилъ...

— Изъ-за удалой бѣдовой
Въ огневыхъ ея очахъ,
Изъ-за *родимой* пушистой
Возлѣ праваго плеча,
Загубилъ я, безголовый,
Загубилъ я сгоряча... ахъ!

— Ишь, стервецъ, завелъ *шарманку*,
Что-ты, Петька, баба что-ль?
— Вѣрно, душу наизнанку
Вздумалъ *вывернуть*? Наволь!
— Поддержи свою осанку!
— Надъ собой держи контроль!

— Не такое нынче время,
Чтобы нянчиться съ тобой!
Потяжеле будетъ бремя
Нашъ, товарищъ дорогой!

И Петруха замедляетъ
Торопливые шаги...

Онъ головку вскидываетъ,
Онъ опять повеселѣлъ...

Эхъ, эхъ!
Позабавиться не грѣхъ!

Запирайте етажи,
Нынче будутъ грабежи!

Отыскайте погребъ —
Гуляетъ нынче голытьба!

8

Ожъ ты, горе-горькое!
Скука скучная,
Смертная!

Ужь я времячко
Проведу, проведу...

Ужь я темячко
Почешу, почешу...

Ужь я сѣмячки
Полущу, полущу...

Ужь я ножичкомъ
Полосну, полосну!..

Ты лети, буржуй, воробышкомъ!
Выпью кровушку
За зазнобушку,
Чернобровушку...

Упокой, Господи, душу рабы твоея...

Скучно!

9

Не слышно шуму городского,
Надъ невской башней тишина,
И больше нѣтъ городового —
Гуляй, ребята, безъ вина!

Стоитъ буржуй на перекресткѣ
И въ воротникъ упряталъ носъ.
А рядомъ жмется шерстью жесткой
Поджавшій хвостъ паршивый песъ.

Стоитъ буржуй, какъ песъ голодный,
Стоитъ безмолвный, какъ вопросъ.
И старый міръ, какъ песъ бородный,
Стоитъ за нимъ, поджавши хвостъ.

10

Разыгрались чтой то вьюга,
Ой, вьюга, ой, вьюга!
Не видать совсѣмъ другъ друга
За четыре за шага!

Снѣгъ воронкой завился,
Снѣгъ столбушкой поднялся...

— Охъ, пурга какая, Спасе!
— Петька! Эй, не завирайся!
Отъ чего тебя упасъ
Золотой иконостасъ?
Безсознательный ты, *право,*
Разсуди, подумай здраво —
Аль руки не въ крови
Изъ-за Катькиной любви?
— Шагъ держи революціонный!
Близокъ врагъ неугомонный!

Впередъ, впередъ, *впередъ,*
Рабочій народъ!

APPENDIX I

11

...И идутъ безъ мысли святого
Всѣ двѣнадцать — вдаль.
Ко всему готовы,
Ничего не жаль...

Ихъ винтовочки стальныя
На незримаго врага...
Въ переулочки глухіе,
Гдѣ одна пылитъ пурга...
Да въ сугробы пуховые —
Не утянешь сапога...

Въ очи бьется
Красный флагъ.

Раздается
Мѣрный шагъ.

Вотъ — проснется
Лютый врагъ...

И вьюга пылитъ имъ въ очи
Дни и ночи
Напролетъ...

Впередъ, впередъ,
Рабочій народъ!

12

...Вдаль идутъ державнымъ шагомъ...
— Кто еще тамъ? Выходи!
Это — вѣтеръ съ краснымъ флагомъ
Разыгрался впереди...

APPENDIX I

Впереди — сугробъ холодный,
— Кто въ сугробѣ — выходи!..
Только нищій песъ голодный
Ковыляетъ позади...

— Отвяжись ты, шелудивый,
Я штыкомъ пощекочу!
Старый міръ, какъ песъ паршивый,
Провались — поколочу!

...Скалитъ зубы — волкъ голодный —
Хвостъ поджалъ — не отстаетъ —
Песъ холодный — песъ безродный...
— *Эй, откликнись, кто идетъ?*

— Кто тамъ машетъ краснымъ флагомъ?
— Приглядись-ка, эка тьма!
— Кто тамъ ходитъ бѣглымъ шагомъ,
Хоронясь за всѣ дома?

— Все равно, тебя добуду,
Лучше сдайся мнѣ живьемъ!
— Эй, товарищъ, будетъ худо,
Выходи, стрѣлять начнемъ!

Трахъ-тахъ-тахъ! — И только эхо
Откликается въ домахъ...
Только вьюга долгимъ смѣхомъ
Заливается въ *снѣгахъ*...

Трахъ-тахъ-тахъ!
Трахъ-тахъ-тахъ...

...Такъ идутъ державнымъ шагомъ —
Позади — голодный песъ,
Впереди — съ кровавымъ флагомъ,
И за вьюгой невидимъ,
И отъ пули невредимъ,
Нѣжной поступью надвьюжной,
Снѣжной розсыпью жемчужной,
Въ бѣломъ вѣнчикѣ изъ розъ —
Впереди — Исусъ Христосъ.

Target Text 1 by Jon Stallworthy and Peter France, 1970

THE TWELVE

I
Darkness - and white
snow hurled
by the wind. The wind!
You cannot stand upright
for the wind: the wind
scouring God's world.

The wind ruffles
the white snow, pulls
that treacherous
wool over the wicked ice.
Everyone out walking
slips. Look - poor thing!

From building to building over
the street a rope stips nimbly,
a banner on the rope - ALL POWER
TO THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY.
This old weeping woman is worried to death,
she doesn't know what it's all about:
that banner - for God's sake -
so many yards of cloth!
How many children's leggings it would make -
and they without shirts - without boots - without...

The old girl like a puffed hen picks
her way between drifts of snow.
'Mother of God, these Bolsheviks
will be the death of us, I know!'

Will the frost never lose its grip
or the wind lay its whips aside?
The bourgeois where the roads divide
stands chin on chest, his collar up.

But who's this with the mane
of hair, saying in a
whisper: 'They've sold us down
the river. Russia 's down and out.'?
a pen-pusher, no doubt,
a word-spinner...

There's someone in a long coat, sidling
over there where the snow's less thick.
'What's happened to your joyful tidings,
Comrade cleric?'

Do you remember the old days:
waddling belly-first to prayer,
when the cross on your belly would blaze
on the faithful there?

A lady in a fur
is turning to a friend:
'We cried our eyes out, dear...'
She slips up -
smack! - on her beam end.

Heave ho
and up she rises - so!

The wind rejoices,
mischievous and spry,
ballooning dresses
and skittling passers-by.
It buffets with a shower
of snow the banner-cloth: ALL POWER
TO THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY,
and carries voices.

...Us girls had a session...
...in there on the right...
...had a discussion...
...carried a motion;
ten for a time, twenty-five for the night...
and not a rouble less
from anybody...coming up...?

Evening ebbs out.
The crowds decamp.
Only a tramp
potters about.
And the wind screams...

Hey you! Hey
chum
going my way...?

A crust!
What will become
of us? Get lost!
Black sky grows blacker.

Anger, sorrowful anger
seethes in the breast...
Black anger, holy anger...

Friend!
Keep your eyes skinned!

II
The wind plays up: snow flutters down.
Twelve men are marching through the town.

Their rifle-butts on black slings sway.
Lights left, right, left, wink all the way...

Cap tilted, fag drooping, every one
looks like a jailbird on the run.

Freedom, freedom,
down with the cross!

Rat-a-tat-tat!

It's cold, boys, and I'm numb!

Johnny and Kate are living it up...
She's banknotes in her stock[illegible] cop.

John's in the money too, and how!
He was one of us; he's gone over now!

Well, mister John, you son of a whore,
just you kiss my girl once more!

Freedom, freedom,
down with the cross!
Johnny right now is busy with Kate.
What do you think they're busy at?

Rat-a-tat-tat!

Lights left, right, left, lights all the way...
Rifles on their shoulders sway...

Keep A Revolutionary Step!
The Relentless Enemy Will Not Stop!

Grip your gun like a man, brother!
Let's have a crack at Holy Russia,
Mother
Russia
with her big, fat, arse!
Freedom, freedom! Down with the cross!

III
The lads have all gone to the wars
to serve in the Red Guard -
to serve in the Red Guard -
and risk their hot heads for the cause.

Hell and damnation,
life is such fun
with a ragged greatcoat
and a Jerry gun!

To smoke the nobs out of their holes
we'll light a fire through all the world,
a bloody fire through all the world -
Lord, bless our souls!

IV
The blizzard whirls; a cabby shouts;
away fly Johnny and Kate
with a 'lectric lamp
between the shafts...
Hey there, look out!

He's in an Army overcoat,
a silly grin upon his snout.
He's twirling a moustachio,
twirling it about,
joking as they go...

Young Johnny's a mighty lover
with a gift of the gab that charms!
He takes her in his arms,
he's talking her over...

She throws her head back as they hug
and her teeth are white as pearl...
Ah, Kate, my Katey girl,
with your little round mug!

V
Across your collar-bone, my Kate,
a knife has scarred the flesh;
and there below your bosom, Kate,
that little scratch is fresh!

Hey there, honey, honey, what
a lovely pair of legs you've got!

You carried on in lace and furs -
carry on, dear, while you can!
You frisked about with officers -
frisk about, dear, while you can!

Honey, honey, swing your skirt!
My heart is knocking at my shirt!

Do you remember that officer -

the knife put an end to him...
Do you remember that, you whore,
or does your memory dim?

Honey, honey, let him be!
You've got room in bed for me!

Once upon a time you wore grey spats,
scoffed chocolates in gold foil,
went out with officer-cadets -
now it's the rank and file!

Honey, honey, don't be cruel!
Roll with me to ease your soul!

VI
Carriage again and cabby's shout
come storming past: 'Look out! Look out!'

Stop, you, stop! Help, Andy - here!
Cut them off, Peter, from the rear!

Crack - crack - reload - crack - crack - reload!
The snow whirls skywards off the road.

Young Johnny and the cabman run
like the wind. Take aim. Give them one

for the road. Crack - crack! Now learn
. . . . . .
to leave another man's girl alone!

Running away, you bastard? Do.
Tomorrow I'll settle accounts with you!

But where is Kate? She's dead! She's dead!
A bullet hole clean through her head!

Kate, are you satisfied? Lost your tongue?
Lie in the snow-drift then, like dung!

Keep A Revolutionary Step!
The Relentless Enemy Will Not Stop!

VII
Onward the twelve advance,
their butts swinging together,
but the poor killer looks
at the end of his tether...

Fast, faster, he steps out.

Knotting a handkerchief
clumsily round his throat
his hand shakes like a leaf...

What's eating you, my friend?
Why so downhearted, mate?
Come, Pete, what's on your mind?
Still sorry for Kate?

Oh, brother, brother, brother,
I loved that girl...
such nights we had together,
me and that girl...
For the wicked come-hither
her eyes would shoot at me,
and for the crimson mole
in the crook of her arm,
I shot her in my fury -
like the fool I am...

Hey, Peter, shut your trap!
Are you a woman or
are you a man, to pour
your heart out like a tap?
Hold your head up
and take a grip!

This isn't the time now
for me to be your nurse!
Brother, tomorrow
will be ten times worse!

And shortening his stride
slowing his step,
Peter lifts his head
and brightens up...

What the hell!
It's not a sin to have some fun!

Put your shutters up, I say -
There'll be broken locks today!

Open your cellars: quick, run down...!
The scum of the earth are hitting the town!

VIII
My God, what a life!
I've had enough!
I'm bored!

I'll scratch my head

and dream a dream...

I'll chew my quid
to pass the time...

I'll swig enough
to kill my drought...

I'll get my knife
and slit your throat!

Fly away, mister, like a starling,
before I drink your blue veins dry
for the sake of my poor darling
with her dark and roving eye...

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord...

I'm bored!

IX

Out of the city spills no noise,
the prison tower reigns in peace.
'We've got no booze but cheer up, boys,
we've seen the last of the police!'

The bourgeois where the roads divide,
stands chin on chest, his collar up:
mangy and flea-bitten at his side
shivers a coarse-haired mongrel pup.

The bourgeois with a hangdog air
stands speechless, like a question-mark,
and the old world behind him there
stands with its tail down in the dark.

X

Still the storm rages gust upon gust.
What weather! What a storm!
At arm's length you can only just
make out your neighbour's form.

Snow twists into a funnel,
a towering tunnel...

'Oh, what a blizzard!...Jesus Christ!'
Watch it Pete, cut that rot!
You fool, what did Christ and his cross
ever do for the likes of us?
Look at your hands. Aren't they hot
with the blood of the girl you shot?

Keep A Revolutionary Step!
The Enemy Is Near And Won't Let Up!

Forward, and forward again
the working men!

XI
Abusing God's name as they go,
all twelve march onward into snow...
prepared for anything,
regretting nothing...

Their rifles at the ready
for the unseen enemy
in back street, side roads
where only snow explodes
its shrapnel, and through quag-
mire drifts where the boots drag...

before their eyes
throbs a red flag.

Left,*right*,
the echo replies.

Keep your eyes skinned
lest the enemy strike!

Into their faces day and night
bellows the wind
without a break...

Forward and forward again
the working men!

XII
...On they march with sovereign tread...
Who else goes there? Come out! I said
come out! It is the wind and the red
flag plunging gaily *at their head*.
The frozen snow-drift looms in front.
Who's in the drift? Come out! Come here!
There's only the homeless mongre. runt
limping wretchedly in the rear...

You mangy beast, out of the way
before you taste my bayonet.
Old mongrel world, clear off I say!
I'll have your hide to sole my boot!

The shivering cur, the mongrel cur
bares his teeth like a hungry wolf,
droops his tail, but does not stir...
Hey, answer, you there, show yourself.

Who's that waving the red flag?
Try and see! It's as dark as the tomb!
Who's that moving at a jog
trot, keeping to the back-street gloom?

Don't you worry - I'll catch you yet;
better surrender to me alive!
Come out, comrade, or you'll regret
it - we'll fire when I've counted five!

Crack - crack - crack! But only the echo
answers from among the eaves...
The blizzard splits his seams, the snow
laughs wildly up the whirlwind's sleeve...

Crack - crack - crack!
Crack - crack - crack!

...So they march with sovereign tread...
Behind them limps the hungry dog,
and wrapped in wild snow at their head
carrying a blood-red flag -
soft-footed where the blizzard swirls,
invulnerable where bullets crossed -
crowned with a crown of snowflake pearls,
a flowery diadem of frost,
ahead of them goes Jesus Christ.

ALEKSANDR BLOK

THE TWELVE

1

Black night.
White snow.
Wind, wind!
Knocks you flat before you know.
Wind, wind,
Filling God's wide world.

The wind whips up
The fine white snow.
There's ice below.
It's treacherous,
The going's slow.
One foot wrong, and down you go!

From building to building
A rope is hung.
From the rope a banner's strung:
'All power to the Constituent Assembly!'
An old girl's in tears at the sight,
Can't understand the things they write.
What's it for, tiny poster?
All that cloth, when such a lot
Of kids need covering for their legs,
And most of them in rags, unshod...

Like an old hen she stumbles
Over the top of a snowdrift and mumbles,
'Oh, Holy Mother, pray for us!
Those reds, they'll be the death of us!'

'THE TWELVE'

The wind is fierce
And the frost looking grim.
The bourgeois at the crossroads
Keeps his nose tucked in.

Say, who's that long-hair
Muttering over there,
'Treason!
Russia has perished!'?
A writer? Could be the reason
For his big talk...

And slinking by that snowdrift—
You don't look very pleased:
What's bothering you now,
Comrade priest?

Remember how you waddled
Belly first among the poor
With the cross upon your belly
Going on before?

A fine lady with her fancy furs
Gossips with a friend of hers:
'My dear, how we cried...' At that
She slipped
And (crunch!) fell flat.

Hey, hey!
Up she rises, heave away!

The wind is frisky,
Malicious, gay.
It flirts with skirts,
Sweeps legs away,
It tears and twists and carries
The big declaration:
'All power to the Constituent Assembly'...
And it carries a conversation:

'THE TWELVE'

...We had our own assembly...
...Right here in this building...
...We debated...
Resolved to make it
Ten for a short time, twenty-five a night...
...No undercutting, right?..
...Come on to bed...

Late night.
Empty street.
One lone tramp
Hunched on his feet
And the wind's hiss...

You, misery there!
Come here, dear.
Give us a kiss...

Bread!
What's that ahead?
Pass by!

Black, black sky.

Seething rage, miserable rage
Is what you feel...
Black rage, holy rage...

Comrade! Keep your
Eyes peeled!

2

The wind is high, soft snow flits down.
Twelve men are on their way through town.

Black rifle slings. Lights here and there.
Lights all around. Lights everywhere.

'THE TWELVE'

...We had our own assembly...
...Right here in this building...
...We debated...
Resolved to make it
Ten for a short time, twenty-five a night...
...No undercutting, right?..
...Come on to bed...

Late night.
Empty street.
One lone tramp
Hunched on his feet
And the wind's hiss...

You, misery there!
Come here, dear.
Give us a kiss...

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Comrade! Keep your
Eyes peeled!

2

The wind is high, soft snow flits down.
Twelve men are on their way through town.

Black rifle slings. Lights here and there.
Lights all around. Lights everywhere.

'THE TWELVE'

Chewing fags, their caps a mess,
They'd look right in convict dress.

Freedom, freedom,
Hey, hey, with no cross!

Blank-blankety-blank

It's freezing, comrades, what a frost!

'Van'ka's got Katie in some bar...'
"Th[illegible] old style banknotes in her bra.'

'Got [illegible] himself without much fuss...'
'Joined up with them, deserted us.'

'She's *my girl*, Van'ka, get that straight,
You keep your bourgeois hands off Kate!'

Freedom, freedom,
Hey, hey, with no cross!
Van'ka's busy with that Kath—
What d'you think they're busy at?..

Now, now, none of that.

Lights all round, lights everywhere...
Rifle slings caught in the glare...

Keep in *revolutionary step!* Make no mistake,
The restless enemy keeps wide awake.

Comrade, your gun! *Get rid of fear*
Let's shoot up Holy Russia here—

With her rough tough
Huts of wood
And her fat old rear!

Hey, hey, with no cross!

'THE TWELVE'

3

So our lads they went to join
The Red guard up in town—
Yes, the R.[1] guard up in town
For to lay *their wild heads down.*

Oh life is bitter,
Life is fun!
Torn old greatcoat,
Austrian gun.

Beware, you bourgeoisie, beware!
We're going to set the world aflare.
Blood and universal fire—
Lord, bless the pyre!

4

The cabby shouts, the snow whirls down,
Kate and Van'ka fly through town.
Shafts with all-electric lights,
The latest gadgetry...
Hey, clear the way!..

He wears an army greatcoat,
His features are as stupid as can be,
He twists his black moustache repeatedly—
He twists and twiddles it
As he tries his wit...

Van'ka's shoulders, there's a sight!
Van'ka, he can talk all right!
Got that fool of a Kate in his arms,
Using his charms...

Her head is tilted back,
With pearly teeth a-shine...
Katie, with your chubby snout,
Oh you Katie, Katie mine...

'THE TWELVE'

5

Katie, your neck is raw,
The knife has marked your flesh.
Katie below your breast
There's another scar that's fresh.

Hey, hey, dance away,
Give a luscious leg display!

You used to go around in lace—
Go ahead, then, go ahead.
You had grand officers in bed—
Go to bed, then, go to bed.

Hey, hey, go to bed,
Give my heart a flutter, pet!

That officer (remember?)—
A knife put paid to him...
So soon, and you've forgotten?
Don't tell me you're so dim.

Hey, hey, thrill me through,
Cart me off to bed with you!

You used to wear grey gaiters,
You guzzled hand-made sweets.
Now other ranks, not smart cadets,
Attract you in the streets.

Hey, hey, sin away,
End your worries for today!

6

...Again the cabby comes, he flies
Full speed ahead, he shouts, he cries...

'THE TWELVE'

Halt, halt! Andriukha, mind!
Petrukha, you run round behind!..

Rat-tararat-tat-tat-tat-tat!
And snow spurts up in time to that...

The cabby—Van'ka with him—speeds away...
Quick, cock the gun again. Okay?..

Rat-tararat! And that'll learn you,

Meddling with girls that don't concern you...

He got away, the swine. You wait,
Tomorrow I'll still make you pay.

But where is Katie?—Katie's dead.
She got a bullet through her head.

Pleased, are you, Katie?—No one's to know.
Just lie there, carrion, on the snow.

Keep in revolutionary step! Make no mistake,
The restless enemy keeps wide awake.

7

Again the twelve move forward.
Their guns are back in place.
Only the poor old killer
Dares not show *his* face...

He keeps on going faster,
His scarf he twists and ties:
Can't pull himself together
However hard he tries...

'THE TWELVE'

'Comrade, why are you so gloomy?'
'Why d'you look so cheesed off, mate?'
'Why the hang-dog look, Petrukha,
You're never sorry over Kate?'

'You listen comrades, *listen mates*,
This bird, she was my love.
Them dark and tipsy nights with her—
I never had enough...

'What sent me was the wild abandon
In them fiery eyes of hers
And the birth-mark like a brand on
That right shoulder-blade of hers.
So stupidly I did her in,
Killed her in a fury. Curse...'

'Stuff your song and dance, you sniveller,
You sound like an old woman, Pete.'
'*If you've* lined up a true confession,
We can do without that treat.'
'Come on, pull yourself together!'
'Self-control is what you need!'

'What sort of time is this
To mollycoddle you, mate?
There's plenty worse to come
For all of us—you wait.'

Petrukha's pace gets slower,
He's not so hurried as before...

Eventually he straightens up:
Pete's his cheery self once more...

Hey, hey!
It's no sin to have a fling!

Look your flats and don't delay,
Plunderers are on the way!

'THE TWELVE'

But open cellars now that we
Down-and-outs are on a spree!

8

Oh blues, you miserable blues,
You deadly boring
Boredom!

So I'll go ahead.
Pass the time, pass the time...

So I'll scratch my head,
That feels fine, that feels fine...

So I'll chew my quid,
That's no crime, that's no crime...

So I'll swill you out
With that little knife of mine...

Fly away, bourgeois, fly away home!
Blood is what I'll use to toast
The girl-friend that I fancy most,
The gorgeous one that I adore...

Give rest, O Lord, to thy handmaid's soul...

What a bore.

9

There's quiet over Council tower,
The city's silent round about,
There's no police with any power—
Boys, have your spree (though liquor's out).

'THE TWELVE'

The bourgeois at the crossroads stands.
And hides his nose inside his fur,
While pressed against *him, tail twixt legs*
Skulks a rough-haired scruffy cur.

The bourgeois like a question stands
Silent, hungry, mongrel-like.
Behind him, tail between its legs,
The old world, like a mangy tyke.

10

The blizzard's really on the go now,
Blizzard, ho! Blizzard, hey!
Can't make out your nearest partner
Though he's just four steps away.

Towers of snow and funnels *whirl*,
Snowy peaks rise up and swirl...

'There's a snowstorm for you, Saviour!'
'Pete, d'you mind, do us a favour,
Don't tell us that you've ever been
Protected by an icon screen?
You're not very clever mate.
Think about it and think straight—
Your hands aren't exactly clean,
Stained *with blood for love of Kate*.'
'Keep in revolutionary step, d'you hear?
The restless enemy is near.'

On and on and on again,
Working men!

'THE TWELVE'

11

...The twelve move on together,
Spurning the holy name,
Refusing to show pity,
Prepared for any strain...

Steel rifles at the ready,
Aimed at the unseen foe...
In obscure back alleys
Where there's only snow...
Only untrod snowdrifts,
Deep enough to mean No

The eye is caught—
Red flag ahead.

And there's the sound
Of measured tread.

The vicious foe
May wake up yet...

And the blizzard blurs their sight,
Grants no respite
Day or night...

On and on again,
Working men!

12

...Onwards they march with sovereign tread...
'Who else goes there? Come out!'
Up in front that's just the wind
Makes the red flag flap about...

'THE TWELVE'

Cold snow piling up ahead.
'Who's that in the snowdrift? Mind!..'
Only that scavenger, that cur
Limping hungrily behind...

'Get away, you mangy creature.
I've got a taste of steel for you.
Get lost, old world, foul mongrel
Or else I'll stick you through!'

...Snarling wolf with hungry leer—
Tail tucked under—won't stay clear—
Frozen mongrel—filthy cur. .
'Hey you, answer, who goes there?'

'Who's there waving that red flag?'
'Curse this dark, can't hardly see!'
'Who's that skulking behind buildings,
Scurrying away scot free?'

'Better come on out alive, you,
I'll get you all the same!'
'*Watch out for trouble, comrade,*
Come out, else we take aim!'

Rat-ta-tat! But from the buildings
No response apart from echoes...
Only the blizzard rolls about
In helpless laughter through the snows...

Rat-ta-tat!
Rat-ta-tat...

...So they march with sovereign tread:
In their rear, the hungry cur,
And with blood-red flag ahead,
Unseen, since the blizzard's there,
Unharmed as the bullet fly,
Stepping gently, blizzard-high,
Sprinkling pearly trails of snow,
With garland of white roses spliced—
Up in front is Jesus Christ.

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