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ROBERT BURNS IN RUSSIAN

Robert Burns, *Poems and Songs*. Moscow: Raduga, 1982. pp. 231-253.

Translated by Maria Artamonova

In a 1827 conversation with Eckermann, Goethe said: 'Take Burns, for example. What made him great if not the ancient songs of his ancestors which thrive even today on the lips of the common people, songs he heard in the cradle, songs that nurtured him in his boyhood, and whose formal excellence so inhabited his young soul that their spirit became the foundation of his own writing. And what else made Burns great, but that his own songs were received with gratitude in the ears of his people, sung back to him by the reapers and binding girls in the fields, and raised as a greeting by his carefree companions of the ale-house. O, it could hardly have gone better for him!'<sup>1</sup>

Goethe pinpointed exactly the strength and greatness of Burns' poetry: it lies in the close and living connection, the affinity between the poet and his people. This is how he remained in the memory of his contemporaries and the following generations. The Russian revolutionary poet and thinker Nikolay Ogarev stressed in his collection called *Secret Russian Literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (London, 1861) that Burns was a happy exception for Europe, where the common people were denied an access to education by the rich estates and so did not as a rule know the poets of their own country. 'Only chance circumstances introduce the people to its poets,' Ogarev wrote, 'this requires the poet to live amongst it, for the people not to read him but to listen to him. This is how Burns appears in Scotland. Burns, who lives and sings among the mountain shepherds, whose poems are therefore memorised by them and passed from generation to generation.'<sup>2</sup>

But such an opinion of Burns was not formed by the Russian men of letters until the middle of the nineteenth century. The Scottish poet had not gained immediate recognition in Russia. The first translation had appeared as early as 1800, four years after the poet's death. A Sentimentalist journal *Hippocrene or the Pleasures of Philology*, published a prose translation of Burns' (transliterated as 'Borns'; such spelling persisted for a long time) *Address to the Shade of Thomson* (1791). While spring, summer, autumn and winter replace one another in nature, it said, 'until then, o beloved sweet singer of the year! shall this laurel thrive that thou hast earned for thyself, and meanwhile Scotland shall with tears of joy proclaim that *Thomson* was her son'.<sup>3</sup> It is quite clear that in this case, the Russian translator was interested not in Burns but in James Thomson as the author of *The*

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<sup>1</sup> Eckermann, J.P. *Conversations with Goethe* (Thursday, 3 May 1827) [English translation by Iain Galbraith, in Tom Hubbard and R.D.S. Jack, eds. *Scotland in Europe*, 137-138].

<sup>2</sup> Ogarev, N.P. *Izbrannye socialno-politicheskie i filosofskie proizvedenia [Selected Social-Political and Philosophical Works]*. Moscow, 1952, vol. 1, p. 426.

<sup>3</sup> *Ippokrena, ili Utehi Ljuboslovija*, 1800. Part 7, p. 16.

[Original: So long, sweet Poet of the year!  
Shall bloom that wreath thou well hast won;  
While Scotia, with exulting tear,  
Proclaims that Thomson was her son.]

*Seasons*, which was much lauded by Russian Sentimentalist publications<sup>4</sup>, including *Hippocrene*, and that the readers could hardly have formed any opinion about the Scottish national poet based on this excerpt.

Two decades passed before the Russian press would offer any response to his works. The *Short Essay on Poetry* prefaced to the *Collection of Samples of Russian Compositions and Translations in Verse* authored by O.E. Sreznevsky, a tutor of letters at the St Petersburg Artillery School, the chapter 'On English Poetry' named two poets which 'in the time closest to our own have distinguished themselves in English poetry' as E. Darwin and Robert Burns, who 'sang of his love of his motherland, the fair banks of the Devon and Astroml [sic], the warrior's return to his parent's cottage, the folk lore, the pleasant rural evenings spent in the company of his children, the ardent and unconquerable love – who animated his jolly, satirical and despondent inventions with a sentiment strong and artless, attractive and tender...'<sup>5</sup>

Sreznevsky's *Essay* was a compilation. Among other things, his information about English poetry was borrowed from the French journal *Revue encyclopédique*, from which a relevant article was translated in 1821 for the *Son of the Motherland* journal. This reproduced the same information about Burns, albeit in a different Russian translation.<sup>6</sup>

By 1820, Burns' name must have become more familiar in Russia: we meet it from time to time on pages of Russian periodicals in chronicle-type notes. One informed readers that 'a beautiful memorial to the poet Robert Burns was erected in Ayr in Scotland,'<sup>7</sup> another used the occasion of Byron's death to mention him in a list of 'English poets' who died 'in the very bloom of manhood and talents,'<sup>8</sup> another told of a certain Scotsman, a self-taught sculptor who demonstrated 'graven images' which 'portrayed two persons adopted from the poetic works of the Scottish versifier Burns,'<sup>9</sup> etc. Of special interest is a conversation between Amédée Pichot and Walter Scott, translated from French, in which the novelist spoke of historic Scottish heroes celebrated in popular ballads and recalled that Burns, 'a poet of common origins, had also sung of Wallace and Bruce at the end of the last century.'<sup>10</sup>

The spread of Burns' popularity in Russia was much aided by a brochure entitled 'A Saturday Evening in Rural Scotland. A Free Imitation of R. Burns by I. Kozlov'. The blind poet Ivan Kozlov (1779-1840), one of the most prominent representatives of the Russian Romanticism whose works often turn to the idea of submission to the will of Providence, selected a poem by the Scottish bard which is written in the literary English language in clear imitation of the Sentimentalists (this is highlighted

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<sup>4</sup> The same section of *Hippocrene* also contained a prose translation of W. Collins' *Ode on the Death of Mr. Thomson* and a prose dedication 'to Jems [sic] Thomson and his The Seasons' signed by 'V.G.' (*Ibidem*, p. 145-146, 159-160). On the reception of Thomson's poetry in Russia, see above, p. 168-181.

<sup>5</sup> *Sobranie obrazcovykh russkikh sochinenij v stihah, izdannoe Obshchestvom ljubitelej russkoj slovesnosti* [*Collection of Sample Russian Compositions in Verse Published by the Society of Lovers of Russian Letters*], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., St Petersburg, 1821. Part 1, c. XC-XCI.

<sup>6</sup> 'An Historical Essay on English Poetry and the Contemporary English Poets', translated from the *Revue encyclopédique* by Iv. Po-ko, *Syn Otechestva*, 1821. Part 72, No. 34, p. 19-20.

<sup>7</sup> *Russkij Invalid*, 1823. 6 Aug. No. 184, p. 734.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, 1824. 21 June. No. 146, p. 582.

<sup>9</sup> *Babochka*, 1829. 12 June. No. 47, p. 185.

<sup>10</sup> 'Beseda u Valtera Skotta: Iz Puteshestvija Pisho [A Conversation with Walter Scott: From Pichot's Travels]', translated by –n. *Syn Otechestva*, 1827. Part 112, No. 8, p. 388. The postscript to the article said: 'Here is an ode composed in a fit of enthusiasm by Robert Burns in memory of the Battle of Bannockburg [sic]. This ode has become a popular song. In it, Bruce is addressing his host: "Scots wha hae with Wallace bled etc." This is followed by a prose translation of the poem into Russian, after which the author concludes: "You will guess that the speed of versification enhances the effect of this song'. *Ibidem*, p. 399-400.

by the epigraph taken from *The Country Churchyard* by Thomas Gray) and which paints a peaceful family idyll of a modest, honest and God-fearing farm labourer. In Kozlov's adaptation of *The Cotter's Saturday Night* (1786), he preserves the original content relatively fully and faithfully for his time, with special emphasis on the motif of humility and submission to God's will. This is his peasant farmer teaching his children:

That mother and father tell them to obey,  
To live hospitably and remember the fear of God,  
To seek a refuge from their needs in their labours,  
To shun sinful thoughts by day or night,  
To be truthful in word and deed –  
He planted this in their minds since childhood;  
He said: 'Everyone has the same road  
To Beauty: to implore their Creator about everything,  
Not to do evil, always to do good;  
God shall be with him who seeks God with his heart.

[Original:  
Their master's and their mistress' command,  
The younkers a' are warned to obey;  
And mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,  
And ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play;  
"And O! be sure to fear the Lord alway,  
And mind your duty, duly, morn and night;  
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,  
Implore His counsel and assisting might:  
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright.]

The 'freedom' of the translation mostly consisted in the opening dedication to 'Al. An. V...k.va' (the late Alexandra Andreyevna Voyeykova, a close friend of Kozlov's), in which the blind poet mourned his fate. At the end, reproducing Burns' address to Scotland, Kozlov added another stanza in which he, in turn, addressed his own country:

And I call upon thee, thee,  
Holy Russia, our motherland!  
Flourish, flourish, my native country!  
Among earth's kingdoms, like a young palm,  
Flourish in everything, and pour happiness out in a flood!  
The country of high spirits, thoughts, and deeds!

The same brochure also contained a translation of Burns' *Stanzas to a Mountain Daisy* presented as 'To A Field Daisy Which Robert Borns, When Working His Field, By Accident Cut With The Iron of His Harrow In April 1786', where the motif of religious resignation, so typical for this translator, was again enhanced; for instance, the lines of stanza VIII 'Till, wrench'd of ev'ry stay but Heav'n, He, ruin'd, sink' are rendered as 'There is no refuge; he shall find rest in Heaven'.

Kozlov's translation was noticed: several Russian periodicals reported the publication of the brochure. However, some reviewers wrote more about Kozlov and his tragic fate than they did about Burns. The government-approved *Severnaya Pchela* only had two sentences to say about the translated poems: 'The first, composed by Robert Burns: *A Saturday Evening in Rural Scotland*, depicts a Scottish cotter at rest among his family <...>. The second, by the same author: *To a Field Daisy* <...> is a charming original piece!'<sup>11</sup> The critic Orest Somov in his 'Review of Russian Letters over the First Half of 1829' mentioned Kozlov's Burns translations only to note that their author was 'a Scotch poet of common birth.'<sup>12</sup>

But Nikolay Polevoy (1796-1846), a literary critic with democratic views, used the publication of *A Saturday Evening in Rural Scotland* as a pretext to print the first Russian article 'On the Life and Works of R. Burns,' in his journal called *The Moscow Telegraph*.<sup>13</sup> It opened with the words: 'The name of Burns has hitherto been unknown in our literature. Mr. Kozlov was the first to introduce the Russian public to this remarkable poet.' Having presented a biography of Burns at the beginning, Polevoy went on to develop an idea close to his heart, namely that high poetry could be written by a man standing on a low level of the social hierarchy. 'Burns,' he wrote, 'was an exalted, ardent poet, who succumbed, at last, to the blows of fate that had thrown him into a state different from that to which he belonged by virtue of his intellect, soul, and imagination. For his entire life, he remained, indeed, a poor man <...> but he understood the most delicate of sensations, he felt like a poet, and a poet's name knows no aristocracy. <...> The power of a genius is in himself and not in the glitter of respectability surrounding his substance. Mr. Kozlov seems to have overlooked this distinction and thought Burns a mere peasant who whistles on his poetic pipe *en passant*. This we believe to be the principal error of the Russian translation, since it reminds us not of Scotland's fiery bard burned by the flames of his passions but a simple farmer telling a quaint tale of his rustic life.' Speaking of the diversity of Burns' poetry, Polevoy mentioned his satirical poems such as *Holy Willie's Prayer* (Polevoy's *Hypocrite's Prayer*) and *Address to the Deil*.

Writing later in his article 'The Division of Poetry into Genera and Species' (1841), Vissarion Belinsky described Burns alongside Shakespeare and the English Romantic poets as a creator whose works 'constitute a most bounteous treasury of lyric poetry.'<sup>14</sup> In his article 'Collected Works of Ivan Kozlov' (1841), he expressed regret that Kozlov 'did not produce a translation of Burns but a free imitation of this poet.' The critic believed it especially incongruous that 'after the Scottish poet's fine address to his motherland, the translator <...> should suddenly turn to Russia'. 'Scottish life pictured by Burns in his wonderful idyll,' Belinsky noted, 'is just as similar to the life of our peasant men, women, lads and lasses as the Muse Calliope is similar to Kheraskov.'<sup>15</sup>

But Kozlov's adaptations contributed to the establishment of Burns' poetic reputation in Russia, evidence of which can be found in an anonymous review published in the *Moskovskij Telegraf*. Discussing a poetic view of the world, the author wrote: 'Once we happened to attend a lecture by a Professor who asked one man in the audience to express his feelings when looking at a flower. A middle-aged man who looked like an experienced man in his field emerged from the crowd. "When

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<sup>11</sup> *Severnaya Pchela*, 1829, 30 May. No. 65, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Severnye tsvety na 1830 god*. St Petersburg, 1829, p. 67.

<sup>13</sup> *Moskovskij Telegraf* 1829. Part 28, No. 14, p. 195-211. The article was signed 'N.N.', on its attribution to N.A. Polevoy see Berezina, V.G. 'N.A. Polevoy in *Moskovskij Telegraf*', in *Uchenye Zapiski Leningradskogo Universiteta* 1954. No. 173. Philological Research

<sup>14</sup> Belinsky, V.G. *Complete Works [Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij]*. Moscow, 1954. Vol. 5, p. 51.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*. P. 72.

we see a flower," he said, "a feeling of wonder is born inside us. We examine its leaves and cup: they are wonderful, etc." The explanation was not too bad. But remember a description of a flower in Burns, who dedicated an entire elegy to a daisy. Here is the difference!.. The student and Burns! Just like these men are dissimilar, so dissimilar are the impressions made by objects on them, and so dissimilar are their expressions.<sup>16</sup> Let us also point out that already at that time the name of the Scottish bard began to be applied to common people who distinguished themselves in the art of poetry. There is evidence that Alexander Voyeykov, a man of letters close to Pushkin's circle, referred to the self-taught peasant poet Fedor Slepuchkin (1783-1848) as 'a Russian Burns'.<sup>17</sup>

Pushkin himself must have become interested in Burns in the early 1830s. His library contained a two-volume edition of the Scottish poet's works.<sup>18</sup> The first 128 pages of volume 1 have been cut open: they include *The Two Dogs*, *The Holy Fair*, *The Vision*, *The Jolly Beggars*, *The Cotter's Saturday Night*; the open part concludes with *Stanzas To A Mountain Daisy*. It is possible that Pushkin wanted to consult the originals of the poems translated by Kozlov.

It was at the same time that the young Mikhail Lermontov was introduced to Burns' poetry. His attention was captivated by the stanza from the *Parting Song to Clarinda* ('Ae fond kiss and then we sever') which Byron chose as an epigraph to his poem *The Bride of Abydos*:

Had we never loved so kindly,  
Had we never loved so blindly,  
Never met or never parted  
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Lermontov's translation reads:

If we hadn't been children,  
If we hadn't loved blindly,  
If we had not met or parted,  
We would never have known suffering.<sup>19</sup>

Lermontov did not publish his juvenile composition, and it was never printed during his lifetime. But at the same time, translations started to appear in press which were made not even by second-rate translators but by complete unknowns, who rendered Burns by operating with combinations of common poetic clichés. Here is how P.A. Dragomanov began his translation of *The Gowden Locks of Anna*:

Yesterday, when in the company of friends  
The wine hissed as it was poured into glasses,  
Upon my breast were streaming

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<sup>16</sup> 'The Pauper', written by A. Podolinsky. In *Moskovskij Telegraf*, 1830. Part 32, No. 7, p. 356.

<sup>17</sup> See Old Petersburger V.B. (Burnashev, V.P.). 'Moe Znakomstvo s Voyeykovym v 1830 Godu i Ego Pjatinichnye Literaturnye Sobranija' [My Introduction to Voyeykov in 1830 and his Friday Literary Gatherings], *Russkie Vesti*, 1871. Vol. 95, No. 10, p. 607.

<sup>18</sup> *The Poetical Works of Robert Burns*. Chiswick, 1829.

<sup>19</sup> Lermontov, M.Yu. *Sochinenija [Collected Works]*. Moscow, Leningrad, 1954. Vol. 1, p. 90. The first version of the translation is dated to 1830, and the present version to 1832. The poet made an error in the first line, conflating the English *kindly* with the German *Kind* 'child'.

The golden curls of dear Anna.<sup>20</sup>

[Original:

Yestreen I had a pint o' wine,  
A place where body saw na;  
Yestreen lay on this breast o' mine  
The gowden locks of Anna.]

Another, hardly more gifted, versifier called M.A. Demidov, used the poem *To A Mountain Daisy*, which he had probably seen in Kozlov's translation, as a prototype for his 'Imitation of R. Borns' entitled *A Flower*:

A pretty flower was growing in the field,  
Now it has been mown down and is no more.  
How I pity thee, o dear flower.  
And my hour may be nigh, just like yours!<sup>21</sup>

Of course, such hack poetry, scant though it was, gave Russian readers no opportunity to form any accurate impression of the Scottish poet.

At this time, Burns is regularly mentioned in Russian journals, usually in translated articles on English literature.<sup>22</sup> Another translation, albeit a rather loose one, appeared in an extensive article entitled 'Robert Borns' and published anonymously in the *Reading Library [Biblioteka dlja Chtenija]*.<sup>23</sup> It was attributed to the journal editor, O.I. Senkovsky<sup>24</sup>, and it is quite possible that he is indeed the author of the Russian version. But its ultimate source is an essay by the French translator of Burns, Léon de Wailly, published in a Parisian magazine and then prefaced with a few alterations to his collection of Burns translations.<sup>25</sup> The *Reading Library* article introduced Russian readers to the Scottish poet's biography supplemented with a translation of his extensive autobiographical letter written in 1787; it also contained a general overview of his works and short retellings of several of them.

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<sup>20</sup> 'Pesnia (Iz Bornsa)' [A Song (from Burns)], trans. from English by P. Dr-v. *Severnyj Merkurij*, 1831. Vol. 3, No. 61, p. 246. Another translation by Dragomanov 'from Borns' is *The Farewell (Girlanda 1831, Part 1, bk 6, p. 155-156)*. For information about P.A. Dragomanov see article about his brother: Ajzenshtok, I.Ya.

'Poeticheskaja Dejatelnost Ya.A. Dragomanova' [The Poetic Activity of Ya.A. Dragomanov], *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, Moscow, 1956. Vol. 60, bk. 1, p. 561, 569.

<sup>21</sup> *Literaturnoe Pribavlenie k Russkomu Invalidu*, 1834. P. 14, No. 43, p. 343.

<sup>22</sup> See, for instance, 'Otryvok iz Dnevnika Lorda Bajrona' [An Excerpt from Lord Byron's Diary], *Syn Otechestva i Severnyj Arhiv* 1831, vol. 19, No. 17, p. 13; 'Poety-Samouchki v Anglii' [Self-Taught Poets in England] (*Revue des deux Mondes*), *Teleskop* 1832, Part 7, No. 3, p. 314; 'Dvizhenie Literaturny v Anglii s Nachala XIX Veka' [The Literary Movement in England from the Beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century] (*Dublin University Magazine*), *Ibidem*, 1834, Part 21, p. 81-82; 'Vzgljad na Anglijskuju Literaturu' [A Look at English Literature] (from French, Ars...), *Syn Otechestva i Severnyj Arhiv* 1834, vol. 41, No. 7, p. 486; (Cunningham, A.) 'Robert Berns i Lord Bajron' [Robert Burns and Lord Byron], *Otechestvennye Zapiski* 1842, vol. 23, No. 7, Sect. 8, p. 30-35.

<sup>23</sup> *Biblioteka dlja Chtenija* 1837, vol. 24, Sect. 2, p. 96-136.

<sup>24</sup> See Orlov, S.A. 'Berns v Russkih Perevodah' [Burns in Russian Translations], in *Uchenye Zapiski Leningradskogo Pedagogicheskogo Instituta im. A.I. Gertsena*, 1939, vol. 26. Dept of General Literature, p. 232.

<sup>25</sup> *Poésie complètes de Robert Burns / Traduites de l'écossois, par M. Léon de Wailly: avec une introduction de même*. Paris, 1843, p. I-XL.

The poet was praised to the highest degree. 'Burns' name can be cited next to the name of the all-encompassing Shakespeare as a poet most endowed by nature,' it said. 'His peculiar characteristics were those most necessary for a poet: a deep sensitivity, a heart inclined both to love and to hate, but mostly to love in the wider sense of the word: love of women, love of motherland, love of nature. In addition to which he had a noble soul, full of self-respect, selfless to excess, brave, unyielding in adversity; a mind decorated by humour whose joy in no way dried his heart; a sensuality, a source of good and evil, virtues and flaws, but also of poetry; and finally, a brilliant imagination which animates all images with a most fresh and beguiling light, which is also the truest.'<sup>26</sup>

The Russian translator included in his article a rendering into Russian traditional *bylina*-style rhythmic prose of Burns' popular ballad *John Barleycorn*, which is an eternal myth of a dying and resurrected deity reworked in a rustic fashion. The translation was quite faithful; it even mentioned Scotland at the end like the original. But the extensive use of specifically Russian folk idioms and the very title *Ivan Yerofeich Bread Grain* gave the poem a different national colouring.

Here is the beginning of this idiosyncratic translation:

There were three Tsars in the East,  
Three Tsars both strong and great;  
They, *Busurmans* [pagans], swore  
To undo Ivan Yerofeich Bread Grain.

And they dug a deep furrow and tossed him there.  
And they piled land over his head;  
And they swore, the *Busurmans*,  
That they had undone Ivan Yerofeich Bread Grain.<sup>27</sup>

[Original:

There was three kings into the east,  
Three kings both great and high,  
And they hae sworn a solemn oath  
John Barleycorn should die.

They took a plough and plough'd him down,  
Put clods upon his head,  
And they hae sworn a solemn oath  
John Barleycorn was dead.]

It is interesting that the great Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevchenko also felt an affinity with Burns. In 1847, when he was drafting a preface to his poem *Kobzar* [*The Bard*] in which he argued for his right to write poetry in his native Ukrainian language, Shevchenko referred to Burns as his

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<sup>26</sup> *Biblioteka dlja Chtenija* 1837, vol. 24, Sect. 2, p. 125-126.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 133.

predecessor who worked in the Scots dialect rather than the standard literary language. 'And Burns still remains a popular and great poet', Shevchenko stressed.<sup>28</sup>

The new age of revolutionary liberation movement in Russia which began in the middle of the 1850s indirectly contributed to the growing interest in Burns. It was to be expected that at the time when the peasant question was the focus of the social debate, democratically minded literary figures should turn to Scotland's peasant poet. On 30 June 1855, Nikolay Nekrasov wrote to Ivan Turgenev: '...I have a painful desire to inform myself about Burns at least a little; you studied him once and even wished to write about him; it should be easy for you to translate one or two pieces (of your choice) for me into prose; please enclose the original metre by transferring it to some Russian verse <...> so that I can try to produce a poetic translation. Please humour me, send me something, even if it only one page to begin with.'<sup>29</sup> Turgenev was happy to oblige. 'I am already convinced that you will be delighted by Burns and will find it a joy to translate him,' he wrote in response on 10 July. 'I promise to select some excellent pieces for you and to enclose the metre sample. Burns is a pure font of poetry. You can first try to write something using this metre, a favourite of his:

I cannot tell you  
Of whom you should sing  
But I cannot no longer conceal  
From you  
That I am starting to be annoyed  
By the intense heat.

See? This is a metre that goes well with elegiac and melancholy pieces. Burns used this metre in his famous poem addressed to a field flower cut by his plough. Do send some Burns to me.'<sup>30</sup>

Turgenev himself later intended to write an article on 'Koltsov and Burns'.<sup>31</sup> He stated in one of his letters: 'Koltsov was a real people's poet, to the extent this is possible in this century, and if it is too great an honour to him to compare him to Burns, whose nature and talent is considerably richer and more vibrant, they do share certain traits nonetheless...'<sup>32</sup> It must be said that such a comparison was self-evident and was repeatedly made in Russian publications.<sup>33</sup>

Unfortunately, Turgenev never wrote his article. Nekrasov's intention to translate Burns was also never realised. But *Sovremennik*, the journal he edited, in 1856 published six of Burns' poems translated by the revolutionary poet and translator Mikhail Mikhailov (1829-1865): *John Anderson*,

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<sup>28</sup> 'Neizdannye Proizvedeniya Shevchenko. II. Predislovie k "Kobzarju"' [Shevchenko's unpublished works: a preface to *Kobzar*], *Byloe* 1906, August, p. 3. See Levenson, A.Z. 'Burns i Shevchenko' [Burns and Shevchenko], *Nauchnye Zapiski Kharkovskogo Pedagogicheskogo Instituta Inostrannykh Jazykov*, 1939, vol. 1, p. 109-122.

<sup>29</sup> Nekrasov, N.A. *Sobranie Sochinenij* [Collected Works]. 8 vols. Moscow, 1967, vol. 8, p. 140-141.

<sup>30</sup> Turgenev, I.S. *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij i Pisem* [Complete Collected Works and Letters]. 28 vols. Moscow, Leningrad, 1961, vol. 2, p. 295-296.

<sup>31</sup> See *Ibidem*. Moscow, Leningrad, 1962, vol. 4, p. 110 (letter to E.M. Feoktistov dated 19(31) July 1860).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*. 1963, v. 6, p. 112, 389 (letter to W. Rolleston dated 7(19) October 1866: the original is in French).

<sup>33</sup> Thus, the literary historian Orest Miller wrote in his article 'The English Literature of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century': 'Burns, whose popular-spirited poetry has an affinity with Koltsov's, was also, like our own poet, a victim of the position in which he was forced to spend his whole life.' (*Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshchenija* 1860, Part 108, No. 11. Sect. 3, p. 98).

*My Jo, To A Mouse..., Stanzas To A Mountain Daisy..., Lines On A Merry Ploughman, John Barleycorn, and Luckless Fortune.*<sup>34</sup>

A talented interpreter of many foreign-language poets, especially famous for his Heine translations, a progressive thinker and public figure, Mikhailov was essentially the first to create a proper Russian version of Burns' poetry, to get across his life-affirming, humanistic messages, the drama of his life and the originality of his poetic forms. In Mikhailov's hands, the 'Russian Burns' gained an immediacy he had not possessed before. Here is an example:

John Anderson, my dear friend!  
When I first met you,  
Your brow was smooth, and like tar  
Was your dark hair.  
Now there are wrinkles on your face,  
And the snow of life's storms  
Lies on your curls; but – God save  
You, my dear friend!

John Anderson, my dear friend!  
We climbed the mountain together,  
And how many happy days  
We spent with each other!  
Now we need to limp along downhill;  
But hand in hand  
We shall walk and together at the foot of the mountain  
We shall sleep, my heart!

[Original:  
John Anderson, my jo, John,  
When we were first acquent;  
Your locks were like the raven,  
Your bonie brow was brent;  
But now your brow is beld, John,  
Your locks are like the snaw;  
But blessings on your frosty pow,  
John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John,  
We clamb the hill thegither;  
And mony a cantie day, John,  
We've had wi' ane anither:  
Now we maun totter down, John,  
And hand in hand we'll go,  
And sleep thegither at the foot,

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<sup>34</sup> *Sovremennik* 1856, vol. 57, No. 6, Sect. 1, p. 229-236.

John Anderson, my jo.]

Mikhailov's translations were immediately reprinted in popular publications<sup>35</sup> and subsequently included in various collections representing Burns up to the 1930s.

Another poet from the revolutionary democratic camp, Vasily Kurochkin (1831-1875), a famous translator of Béranger, wrote a 'Pauper's Song' which was inspired by Burns' *I Hae A Wife O' My Ain*:

How I live – I have no idea;  
But I do not owe anything to anyone,  
I cannot help anyone,  
And no-one will help me.

I'll clasp my girlfriend close to my heart,  
She loves me for that.  
I am not jealous of anyone,  
And no-one is jealous of me.<sup>36</sup>

[Original:

I Hae a wife of my ain,  
I'll partake wi' naebody;  
I'll take Cuckold frae nane,  
I'll gie Cuckold to naebody.

I hae a penny to spend,  
There-thanks to naebody!  
I hae naething to lend,  
I'll borrow frae naebody.]

Two other Burns translators were close to the democratic movement of the 1860s: Pyotr Veinberg (1831-1908) and Dmitry Minaev (1835-1889). The former, a translator of many Western European writers, chose Burns' cantata *The Jolly Beggars* and poems *Lord Gregory* and *John Anderson, My Jo*,<sup>37</sup> whereas the latter translated *The Twa Dogs* and the poem Kurochkin had already approached: Minaev called his free interpretation of Burns *In The Attic*.<sup>38</sup>

In the early 1860s, translations of Burns were made by Vsevolod Kostomarov (1837-1865), who later became notorious as an informant during the political prosecution of Mikhailov and Chernyshevsky. Before his arrest in 1861, which became a turning point in his life, Kostomarov had had links with revolutionary circles. This was probably when he produced his Burns translations, which were included in the collection entitled *Poets of All Times and Nations* (Moscow, 1862) which

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<sup>35</sup> See, inter alia: *Dlja Legkogo Chtenija: Povesti, Rasskazy, Komedii, Puteshestvija i Stihotvorenija Sovremennyh Russkij Pisatelej* [For Easy Reading: Stories, Tales, Comedies, Travels and Poems by Contemporary Russian Writers]. St Petersburg, 1859, vol. 9, p. 125-133.

<sup>36</sup> *Russkie Vesti* 1857, vol. 10. July, bk 2, p. 320.

<sup>37</sup> *Otechestvennye Zapiski* 1868, vol. 180, No. 9. Sect. 1, p. 325-336; Vol. 181, No. 12, Sect. 1, p. 622. *Delo* 1869, No. 1, p. 188.

<sup>38</sup> *Delo* 1870, No.1, p. 134-141; No. 2, p. 85 (the latter translation signed by Minaev's pseudonym 'D. Sviyazhsky').

was put together by Kostomarov and F.N. Berg.<sup>39</sup> These translations are of *Tam O'Shanter*, *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, *Is There For Honest Poverty*, *I Hae A Wife O' My Ain*, and *Wha Is That At My Bower-Door*. To these was added a translation of *The Vision* by Dmitry Min (1818-1885), while Kostomarov included five of Mikhailov's translations and Kozlov's *To A Daisy* in his introductory article in the 'Robert Burns' section. The article itself was described by Dmitry Pisarev as a 'poor compilation';<sup>40</sup> it mainly reproduced the above-mentioned essay by de Wailly supplemented with extensive quotations from an essay on Burns by the English historian and writer Thomas Carlyle. In Kostomarov's translations, the social urgency of Burns' poems was muted, and artistically they left much to be desired.<sup>41</sup>

The translations by the democratic figures of the 1860s (Kostomarov included) produced a somewhat one-sided impression of Burns; his love poetry, for instance, was hardly touched. Nevertheless, for over half a century these translations were the main source of information about the Scottish poet for the Russian readers. They made up the Robert Burns section in the famous anthology of English poetry in translation compiled by N.V. Gerbel (1827-1883).<sup>42</sup> They also formed the foundation of various collections of Burns' poems which were published subsequently. The rare individual new translations which occasionally appeared in journals and collections in the 1870s and 1880s signed by M. Shelgunov, L. Nervin (A.A. Kryukov), M. Rosengeim, O. Golovnin (R.F. Brandt), I. Veev (M.A. Lachinov) etc., were seldom above average; they hardly attracted any attention and were never reprinted afterwards.

However, there are two noteworthy articles which were published in the democratic journals of the time. The first was by Natalya Utina, a participant of the St Petersburg radical circles of the 1860s, the wife of Nikolay Utin, a prominent figure in the Land and Liberty organisation.<sup>43</sup> 'Burns' main importance as a poet,' she wrote, 'lies in his artless and sincere attitude to that dark life of the people which was a source of both his inspiration and his personal suffering.' Utina stressed that Burns' deeply truthful and heartwarming poetry grew from everyday, mundane, unembellished life of the people: 'What he saw in front of him every day – the joys and sorrows of entirely unheroic characters, the love, hopes, apprehensions and disappointments of some day labourers and female workers – in a word, the squalid everyday life serves for him as a constant source of inspiration.'<sup>44</sup> Utina included her own translations of three of Burns' poems in her article.

Another public figure, Maria Tsebrikova (1835-1917), who also had ties to the revolutionary Narodnik movement, used her article<sup>45</sup> both to remark on the poet's affinity with his people and to point out that 'popular poets always appeared at the time of unrest among the people's forces, at the time when the social conscience awakened <...>. Burns appeared in England when ideas of liberty and people's rights <...> started to gain new momentum under the influence of the ideas of the French Encyclopaedists which had penetrated into England and had not yet provoked the vicious

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<sup>39</sup> Although the title page states 1862 as the year of publication, it was prepared before that; the censorship permit is dated 11 February 1861.

<sup>40</sup> *Russkoe Slovo* 1862, No. 5, Sect. 2, p. 81.

<sup>41</sup> See Belashova, E.S. 'Perevody V.D. Kostomarova iz Roberta Bernsa' [V.D. Kostomarov's Burns Translations], *Nauchnyj Ezhegodnik Chernovitskogo Universiteta za 1956 God*, Chernovtsy, 1957, p. 371-379.

<sup>42</sup> *Anglijskie Poety v Biografijah i Obrazah* [English Poets in Biographies and Images]. Ed. by N.V. Gerbel. St Petersburg, 1875, p. 232-245.

<sup>43</sup> N. Al-eva (N.I. Utina). 'Robert Berns: Shotlandskij Narodnyj Poet' [Robert Burns: The Scottish National Poet], *Delo* 1876, No. 5, p. 257-292; No. 6. p. 179-234.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, No. 5, p. 258-259.

<sup>45</sup> Tsebrikova, M.K. 'Burns', *Mysl* 1880, No. 3, p. 102-116.

persecution to which they were subjected after the terrible storm of the French Revolution broke out.' As a mouthpiece of popular aspirations, Burns 'in his songs gives a voice to all the pain which has been building up for centuries within the people's heart by reiterating: we have a right to a better destiny.'<sup>46</sup> Tsebrikova's article, which linked Burns to the ideas which lay the foundations for the French Revolution, was not published in its entirety: its promised conclusion was never printed, probably because it was suppressed by censorship.

One should specially note the article published in 1893 and entitled 'The English Poets of Need and Grief'. Its author, Nikolay Storozhenko (1836-1906), the leading Russian historian of the English literature of the time, the founding father of Shakespeare studies in Russia, focused in this article on the works by Oliver Goldsmith, Robert Burns, George Crabbe, Ebenezer Elliott and Thomas Hood. Of Burns, he wrote: 'The banner of realism and humanism hoisted up in English poetry by Goldsmith was grasped by the strong hands of the greatest poet of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Robert Burns. This natural genius was perhaps the most original of English poets. <...> If Burns did not possess a reputable education, he had instead the qualities which are obligatory for a true poet – an incredibly impressionable temperament, a feeling for everything poetic in nature and life, and a humanistic loving heart. The love of humanity was the religion of his heart. <...> He embraced the entire nature with his loving gaze, while his poetic heart was tied with mysterious strings to everything sensitive to the throbbing of global life.'<sup>47</sup> This was the first time such high praise of Burns' genius appeared in Russian press, and it is all the more valuable since it came from such an authority on English literature.

Burns' centenary provoked a renewed interest in the poet and his works in Russia, like everywhere else. The Russian journals of 1896-1897 published a number of essays dedicated to him. Articles were written by the above-mentioned poet and translator Pyotr Veinberg<sup>48</sup>; the poet Olga Chumina,<sup>49</sup> the Englishman Charles Turner, Professor of St Petersburg University,<sup>50</sup> Ivan Ivanov, Professor of the St Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy,<sup>51</sup> and others.<sup>52</sup> New translations of Burns' poems were also published, but not a single leading Russian poet of the time showed any interest in them. The translations by Olga Chumina-Mikhailova (1864-1909)<sup>53</sup> were relatively effective, but marred by the style of derivative 1880s poetry typical of this author. For instance, it is hard to recognize Burns in these saccharine verses:

The snows have melted,

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 102-103, 105.

<sup>47</sup> *Severnye Vesti*, 1893, No. 5, p. 46.

<sup>48</sup> Veinberg, P. 'Robert Berns: Ocherk. Po Povodu Stoletnej Godocshchiny Ego Smerti' [Robert Burns: (An Essay dedicated to the centenary of his death)], *Russkoe Bogatstvo* 1896, No. 9, p. 31-54; No. 10, p. 129-155.

<sup>49</sup> O.Ch. 'Robert Burns', *Jezhemesyachnoe Literaturnoe Prilozhenie k Zhurnalu Niva*, 1896, July, p. 483-490.

<sup>50</sup> 'Robert Burns: Article by Turner, Professor of St Petersburg University', translated from the manuscript by A.N. Annenskaya, *Mir Bozhij* 1896, No. 7, p. 102-116.

<sup>51</sup> Ivanov, I. 1) 'Robert Burns', *Russkaja Mysl* 1896, Bk. 7, Sect. 2, p. 44-65; Bk. 8, Sect. 2, p. 84-92; 2) 'Poet Krestjanskogo Truda' [The Poet of Peasant Labour], *Chitateľ* 1897, No. 27, p. 41-128.

<sup>52</sup> See, for instance: 'Robert Burns', *Po Morju i Sushe* 1896, 28 July, No. 30, p. 491; Zimchenko, N. 'Robert Berns: Ocherk' [Robert Burns: An Essay], *Detskoe Chtenie* 1896, Aug., Sect. 2, p. 290-302; 'Iz Literaturnogo Mira: Stoletnij Jubilej Shotlandskogo Poeta Berns' [From the Literary World...: the Centenary of the Scottish Poet Burns], *Knizhki Nedeli*, 1896, Aug., p. 275-276; Pimenova, E. 'Iz Zhizni i Literaturny na Zapade... Robert Berns' [From Life and Literature in the West... Robert Burns], *Obrazovanie* 1896, No. 7-8, Sect. 2, p. 99-103; 'Robert Burns', *Vsemirnaja Illustratsija* 1896, Vol. 56, No. 2 (1432), p. 36-37.

<sup>53</sup> Chumina was the poet's maiden name and Mikhailova was her married name; she signed her Burns translation alternately by both surnames.

The meadows are green,  
Washed with a light-coloured wave,  
But there is sorrow in my heart,  
And I pity someone  
Who will not return here in spring...'  
(*The Sun and Moon*)<sup>54</sup>

[Original:

The winter it is past, and the summer comes at last  
And the small birds, they sing on ev'ry tree;  
Now ev'ry thing is glad, while I am very sad,  
Since my true love is parted from me.]

Chumina would arbitrarily condense Burns' poems, introduce her own additions or change the metre. The contemporary translations by N. Novich (N.N. Bakhtin, 1866-1940) and A.M. Fedorov, published at the same time, were of even poorer quality. At the same time, Burns' centenary made it clear that a separate collection of Russian translations of Burns' poetry was required.

Such a collection appeared in 1897.<sup>55</sup> Its compiler, a children's author called Ivan Belousov, brought together the translations made in the 1850s-1860s and added the new translations by Chumina, Novich and Fedorov. There were 40 poems all in all, to which Belousov prefaced a biographical essay which was a slapdash combination of Kostomarov's article from his *Poets of All Times and Nations* anthology. This first collection of Burns in Russian must not be seen as an appropriate introduction of the great Scottish poet to the Russian audience. Nevertheless, the poet A.A. Korinsky proclaimed in his review: 'There is no doubt as to the success of this book'.<sup>56</sup> And it must have enjoyed some degree of success because Belousov reprinted it seven years later in the Cheap Library series run by A.S. Suvorin's publishing house, adding eight poems translated by Chumina and Novich.<sup>57</sup>

Belousov's collection drew a line under pre-Revolution Burns translations. Despite its limited scope (48 poems), it showcased different aspects of Burns' works. There was the love poetry and the satire, *The Cotter's Saturday Night* and *The Jolly Beggars*, a literary manifesto in *The Vision*, a cheeky folklore legend in *Tam O'Shanter*, etc. But the overall standard of the translations was not high, making it impossible for Russian poetry to adopt Burns. Isolated new translations published prior to 1917, including an incongruous adaptation of *John Barleycorn* by Konstantin Balmont,<sup>58</sup> could not have changed the big picture.

After the Great October Socialist Revolution, interest in Scotland's national poet understandably grew, although it could not be satisfied immediately in the turmoil of the civil war and post-war

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<sup>54</sup> *Vesti Evropy* 1896, Bk. 7, p. 355. The original is *The Winter It Is Past*. See: Belashova, E.S. 'Perevody O. Chuminoj iz Roberta Bernsa' [O. Chumina's Translations from Robert Burns], *Nauchnyj Ezhegodnik Chernovitskogo Universiteta za 1957 God*, Chernovtsy, 1958, Vol. 1, p. 255-258.

<sup>55</sup> Burns, R. *Stikhotvorenija v Perevode Russkih Poetov, s Biograficheskim Oчерkom i Portretom* [Poems Translated by Russian Poets with a Biographical Essay and Portrait]. Moscow, 1897. 96 pages.

<sup>56</sup> *Sever* 1897, No. 4, Column 124.

<sup>57</sup> *Robert Burns i Ego Proizvedenija v Perevode Russkih Pisatelej* [Robert Burns and His Works Translated by Russian Authors], ed. by I.A. Belousov; with a biographical essay. St Petersburg, [1904]. 115. (*Deshevaja Biblioteka*, No. 361).

<sup>58</sup> *Obrazovanie*, 1909, No. 5, p. 1-2.

destruction. In the summer of 1918, the poet Leonid Andruson (1875-1930), who had translated Burns earlier,<sup>59</sup> published an article entitled 'The Singer of the Plough and the Earth' in the magazine called *K Solntsu! [To the Sun!]*, in which he called him 'the greatest of all poets of common origins' and announced that the journal intended to publish a collection of 'selected songs by Robert Burns translated by famous Russian poets'; three new translations by Andruson were appended to the article.<sup>60</sup> The publisher's intention was never realised as the magazine soon ceased to exist. But in 1919, the publisher S.M. Nonin, known for producing popular editions aimed at the general public, edited a small volume of Burns' poems which featured translations by Mikhailov, Kurochkin, Veinberg and Kostomarov.<sup>61</sup>

Robert Burns was placed on the list of 18<sup>th</sup>-century English poets included in the plan of the publishing house Vsemirnaya Literatura [World Literature], founded by Maxim Gorky immediately after the Revolution (1918-1924);<sup>62</sup> but the publication never happened.

In the 1920s, the wonderful Soviet Romantic poet Eduard Bagritsky (1895-1934) produced new interpretations of the poems *John Barleycorn* and *The Jolly Beggars*. He may not have consulted the originals, but he used the existing translations by Mikhailov and Veinberg as a springboard for creating his own versions (which were printed alongside his own poems) in which the theme of freedom-loving and rebellion was especially prominent. This is how Bagritsky portrays John Barleycorn, as a rebel who can be neither suppressed nor destroyed.

He is spewing forth his yeast power.  
He is boiling up and singing,  
He is moving about in a bowl doing the rounds,  
He is spilling the foam on the floor...

It may be that nothing is left  
And your ashes have been scattered,  
But the blood of your heart  
Lives on in people's hearts!..

He who is drunk on bitter hops,  
Who has seen the bottom of his cup,  
Let him shout: Long live John  
Barleycorn!

[Original:  
And they hae taen his very heart's blood,  
And drank it round and round;  
And still the more and more they drank,

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<sup>59</sup> See Andruson, L. *Skazka Lubvi [Love's Fairytale]*, St Petersburg, 1908, p. 137-141 (*Willie Brew'd A Peck O' Maut, Gudewife, Count The Lawin*).

<sup>60</sup> *K Solntsu!* 1918, 7 July, No. 1, p. 5-6 (translations of *The Ploughman, Contented Wi' Little And Cantie Wi' Mair, The Deil's Awa Wi' The Exciseman*).

<sup>61</sup> Borna, R. *Pesni Shotlandskih Poseljan*. Petrograd, 1919. 16 pages.

<sup>62</sup> See *Katalog Izdatelstva "Vsemirnaya Literatura" pri Narodnom Komissariate po Prosveshcheniju*, with introduction by M. Gorky. Petrograd, 1919, p. 60.

Their joy did more abound.

John Barleycorn was a hero bold,  
Of noble enterprise;  
For if you do but taste his blood,  
'Twill make your courage rise.

'Twill make a man forget his woe;  
'Twill heighten all his joy;  
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing,  
Tho' the tear were in her eye.

Then let us toast John Barleycorn,  
Each man a glass in hand;  
And may his great posterity  
Ne'er fail in old Scotland!]

The two final lines of *The Jolly Beggars* are typical as well – entirely invented by the Russian poet:

The King's laws  
Cannot twist our necks!<sup>63</sup>

But the matter of new translations from Burns was still unsolved. The need for them became all the more urgent when a small collection of his poems was published in 1934 in a supplement to *Ogonyok* magazine, where old translations from Mikhailov to Novich were reprinted since no recent ones were available.<sup>64</sup>

This is when the famous writer and translator Tatiana Shchepkina-Kupernik (1874-1952), who had translated Shakespeare, Molière, Schiller, Goldoni, Rostand, and many other Western European authors, primarily dramatists, turned to Burns. By 1936, she had prepared a collection of the Scottish poet's selected works, which included 74 poems.<sup>65</sup> No-one had ever translated so much of Burns' poetry into Russian before. Shchepkina-Kupernik reflected different genres of his poetry, made new translations of many works which had been translated before and added others, as yet unknown in Russian, including some verses which are very important for Burns' poetic heritage, such as *Holy Willie's Prayer* or *A Poet's Welcome To His Love-Begotten Daughter*, etc. The translator immersed herself in the spirit of Burns' poetry, giving credit to his democracy and love of life and the folk song-like quality of his lyrics. She produced successful renditions of his political poems and satires, as well as his many songs. But the difference between their poetic temperaments was making itself felt too, especially in the translations of love lyrics. Burns' artlessness was often transformed by Shchepkina-

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<sup>63</sup> Bagritsky, E. *Stihotvorenija i Poemy [Verses and Poems]*. Moscow, Leningrad, 1984, p. 59, 136 (*Biblioteka Poeta: Bolshaja Serija*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)

<sup>64</sup> Berns, R. *Shotlandskie Pesni [Scottish Songs]*. Preface and notes by A.D.M. 1934, 48 pages (*Biblioteka Ogonyok*, No. 28).

<sup>65</sup> Berns, R. *Izbrannaka Lirika [Selected Lyric Poems]*. Trans. from English by T.L. Shchepkina-Kupernik. Ed., preface and notes by S. Babukh. Moscow, 1936, 160 pages. See Orlov, S.A. 'T.L. Shchepkina-Kupernik, perevodchik Bernsa' [T.L. Shchepkina-Kupernik, the Translator of Burns], *Literaturnye Svyazi i Traditsii: Mezhvuzovskij Sbornik*. Gorky, 1972. Issue 3, p. 99-112.

Kupernik into a conventional poetic sentimentality. This can be seen in the very first translation in the volume, which began with the words:

My love is a red red rose  
Which bloomed in the heat of June;  
My love is a tender tender song,  
The unearthly sound of the melody!

[Original:

O my Luve's like a red, red rose,  
That's newly sprung in June:  
O my Luve's like the melodie,  
That's sweetly play'd in tune.]

The epithet 'unearthly', which has no counterpart in the original, gave the stanza a pitch which is completely alien to Burns. The translator was also imprecise in approaching the poetic form of Burns' original.

In spite of all the merits of the collection, Shchepkina-Kupernik was not entirely able to reconcile Burns with Russian poetry. This was accomplished by Samuil Marshak.

Samuil Yakovlevich Marshak (1887-1964), well-known both in the Soviet Union and beyond as a poet, playwright and translator, rendered the works of poets from all over the world into Russian, focusing especially on English poetry. His translator's record includes all 154 of Shakespeare's sonnets; he also translated Milton, Blake, Byron, Wordsworth, Keats, Kipling, Lewis Carroll, and many others. He first turned to Burns in 1924. But he had translated some Scottish ballads as early as the 1910s, which had served as a good schooling, preparing him to recreating the works of the Scottish national poet in Russian. After the mid 1930s, Marshak embarked on a regular Burns translation project and published a small collection of his translations in 1947,<sup>66</sup> which has since been repeatedly reprinted under the title *Robert Burns v Perevodah S. Marshaka* [*Robert Burns Translated by S. Marshak*], every time with new additions. In 1959, Marshak wrote: 'I am delighted to have the honour to present my contemporaries and compatriots with the most complete collection of Burns translations to date. I have devoted over twenty years to this labour and I still believe my task is not finished.'<sup>67</sup> Marshak continued with this task for the rest of his life. The most complete edition is the posthumous one, containing 215 poems or roughly two thirds of Burns' poetic legacy.<sup>68</sup>

But the number of poems and even the translator's mastery are not the most important things. Every translator, especially one who is also a poet, puts their own creative imprint on the work that is being translated, whether consciously or subconsciously. (We have seen this in the Burns translations from Kozlov to Shchepkina-Kupernik). Marshak's own poetic talent turned out to be akin to Burns' muse. It is telling that the poet and translation theorist Korney Chukovsky saw Marshak as 'obsessed with great folk poetry. <...> He loved poetry, especially folk poems and songs, with an

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<sup>66</sup> Berns, R. *Izbrannoe [Selected Works]*. Trans. by S. Marshak. Moscow, 1947, 95 pages.

<sup>67</sup> Marshak, S. 'Robertu Bernsu 200 Let' [Robert Burns is 200], *Kultura i Zhizn*, 1959, No. 1, p. 60.

<sup>68</sup> Berns, R. *Stihi [Poems]*. Trans. by S. Marshak. Moscow, 1976, 386 pages.

abandon and a passion.<sup>69</sup> This is why he was able to unlock the very spirit of the poems by the great Scottish folk poet.

Marshak's translations are far from literal. Departures from the original, inevitable in any poetic translation, let alone English to Russian translations, can be found almost in every line. But a careful analysis reveals that these frequent deviations, taken together with Russian language rules, make it possible to create a poetic whole which includes more than the verbal content; there is also the style, the imagery, the emotional pitch, the simplicity and dramatism, the movement of the poem, the music – all the features which imbue a translation with the charm of an original work. It is not by chance that Alexander Tvardovsky claimed that '... these translations possess such an enchantment of free poetic speech, as if Burns himself had written in Russian and was thus appearing before Russian readers without any mediation.'<sup>70</sup>

In Marshak's translations, we see a multi-faceted image of Burns. The Russian poet was able to render the tonal originality of Burns' songs, making each one sound individual and unique. Let's limit ourselves to one comparison. Here are the beginnings of three poems in translation:

*Wha Is That At My Bower-Door?*

"Who is there knocking at such a late hour?"

"Of course it is I, Findlay!"

"Go home. Everyone's asleep here!"

"Not everyone!" said Findlay.

"How dare you come to me?"

"I dare," said Findlay.

"I bet you'll make a lot of mischief..."

"I can!" said Findlay.

[Original:

"Wha is that at my bower-door?"

"O wha is it but Findlay!"

"Then gae your gate, ye'se nae be here:"

"Indeed maun I," quo' Findlay;

"What mak' ye, sae like a thief?"

"O come and see," quo' Findlay;

"Before the morn ye'll work mischief:"

"Indeed will I," quo' Findlay.]

*O Whistle, And I'll Come To Ye*

You whistle – I won't make you wait,

You whistle – I won't make you wait.

Let my father and mother chide me,

You whistle – I won't make you wait!

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<sup>69</sup> Chukovsky, K. *Vysokoe Iskusstvo: O Principah Hudozhestvennogo Perevoda [A High Art: On the Principles of Literary Translation]*. Moscow, 1964, p. 203.

<sup>70</sup> Tvardovsky, A. *Statji i Zametki po Literature [Articles and Notes on Literature]*. Moscow, 1961, p. 70.

But look out as you are climbing to me,  
You find a hole in the garden wall,  
Find three steps in the garden under moonlight,  
Go as if you are not coming to me.  
Go as if you are not coming to me at all.

[Original:

O Whistle, an' I'll come to ye, my lad,  
O whistle, an' I'll come to ye, my lad,  
Tho' father an' mother an' a' should gae mad,  
O whistle, an' I'll come to ye, my lad.

But warily tent when ye come to court me,  
And come nae unless the back-yett be a-jee;  
Syne up the back-stile, and let naebody see,  
And come as ye were na comin' to me,  
And come as ye were na comin' to me.

*Thou Hast Left Me Ever*

You have left me, Jamie,  
You have left me,  
You have left me for ever, Jamie,  
You have left me for ever,  
You jested with me, darling,  
You were not straight with me –  
You swore you'd remember me to the grave,  
And then you left me, Jamie,  
Then you left!

[Original:

Thou hast left me ever, Jamie,  
Thou hast left me ever;  
Thou has left me ever, Jamie,  
Thou hast left me ever:  
Aften hast thou vow'd that Death  
Only should us sever;  
Now thou'st left thy lass for aye-  
I maun see thee never, Jamie,  
I'll see thee never.]

In all three translations, the main artistic devices are repetitions and parallelisms, but they are very different emotionally: the cheeky refrains in the first one, the mischievous tongue-twisters in the second, and the mournful lamentations in the third one, which is full of grief and despair.

Marshak provided new translations of Burns' poems already familiar to Russian readers, breathing new life into them. However, the majority of love, satirical, freedom-loving patriotic poems were translated into Russian for the first time. One should mention, first of all, the translation of the poem *The Tree of Liberty*, written by Burns during the heyday of the French Revolution and containing his secret hopes and dreams of a free society:

There is a tree in Paris, brother.  
Under its luxuriant shadow  
The friends of motherland hasten,  
Rejoicing in their victory.

Where now near its bole  
The free folk is thronging,  
The Bastille stood yesterday,  
The dungeon of all France.

From year to year a marvellous fruit  
Grows on the tree, brother,  
Whoever eats it will realise  
That a man is not a beast, brother.

<...>

And I believe: a day will come,  
And it is not too far –  
When the shade of this magical foliage  
Will cover us.

The peoples and lands, brother,  
Will forget slavery and need.  
And people will live in harmony  
As a friendly family, brother.

[Original:

"Heard ye o' the tree o' France,  
I watna what's the name o't;  
Around it a' the patriots dance,  
Weel Europ kens the fame o't.  
It stands where ance the Bastille stood,  
A prison built by kings, man,  
When superstition's hellish brood  
Kept France in leading strings, man.  
"Upo' this tree there grows sic fruit,  
Its virtues a' can tell, man,  
It raises man aboon the brute,  
It maks him ken himsel, man.

<...>

"Wi' plenty o' sic trees, I trow,  
 The warld would live in peace, man;  
 The sword would help to mak a plough,  
 The din o' war wad cease man.  
 Like brethren wi' a common cause,  
 We'd on each other smile, man;  
 And equal rights and equal laws  
 Wad gladden every isle, man.  
 "Wae worth the loon wha wadna eat  
 Sic haesome dainty cheer, man;  
 I'd gie my shoon frae aff my feet,  
 To taste sic fruit, I swear, man.  
 Syne let us pray, auld England may  
 Sure plant this far-famed tree, man;  
 And blythe we'll sing, and hail the day  
 That gave us liberty, man.]

Marshak was the first to introduce Russian readers to hitherto unknown genres of Burns' poetry, such as his epistles or poetic letters (see *Epistle To Davie, A Brother Poet, Epistle To James Smith*), and his epigrams scourging arrogance, bigotry, greed, stupidity, hypocrisy. In short, Marshak offered a multi-faceted view of Burns in Russian. As Tvardovsky wrote: 'S. Marshak was able, after many years of painstaking searching, to find the appropriate intonations which do not lose their original Russian properties but offer a fine rendition of the verbal music based on a language whose nature is far from Russian. He made Burns Russian but preserved his Scottishness.'<sup>71</sup>

Marshak's translations have made Burns an organic part of our culture. Many of them were put to music by Soviet composers (including Dmitry Shostakovich, Georgy Sviridov, Dmitry Kabalevsky), which brought their musical nature into sharper focus. It is telling that these translations found a response in the Scottish poet's homeland. When the English critic Lionel Hale, writing in *The Times* in the 1940s, claimed that Burns was 'hard to understand for the English' and was a poet of limited, 'regional' scope, the poet's compatriots referred to Marshak's translations in their indignant comments, citing the great Scotsman's popularity in the Soviet Union.<sup>72</sup> In 1959, Marshak was elected Honorary President of the Robert Burns Federation in Scotland.

But with all their internal affinities, Marshak as a poet has some inevitable differences with Burns. True to his own poetic temperament, he often 'brings to light' things that Burns express more vaguely, making Burns' imagery and emotions more straightforward, clear, defined. On the other hand, Marshak tends to tone down, 'refine' Burns' sharp and rude expressions (he sometimes uses expressions which would have been taboo if they were literally translated into Russian). All of this is prompting other translators to look for ways of reconstructing 'a Russian Burns'. At different times, translations by S. Bolotin and T. Sikorskaya, I. Ivanovsky, V. Rogov, S. Orlov, D. Bayanov were published alongside Marshak's.

An interesting experiment was undertaken by the translator Sergey Petrov (1911-1988), who was a dedicated proponent of using Russian colloquialisms in translation, believing that a skilled use of

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 71-72.

<sup>72</sup> See Morozov, M.M. *Izbrannye Statji i Perevody [Selected Articles and Translations]*. Moscow, 1954, p. 324-325.

this language register would enrich the translator's stylistic palette without Russifying the translation to much. In his translation of *The Jolly Beggars*, Petrov departed from the now-traditional Russian title *Merry Beggars* and called the cantata *The Revelling Riffraff* instead. Here is his version of the beginning:

When, like a swarm of pipistrelles,  
Boreas tosses the shrunken leaves  
On the air,  
When the young frost,  
Already grey with rime,  
Is pinching people's cheeks,  
At Sweetie Nansie in a late hour  
the merry vagabonds,  
a wandering gang gathered  
to drink their last shirt away.  
They were brawling and bellowing  
And singing each their own tune,  
They were clapping and stomping,  
So that the bowls were sent rolling.'

[Original:

When lyart leaves bestrow the yird,  
Or wavering like the bauckie-bird,  
Bedim cauld Boreas' blast;  
When hailstanes drive wi' bitter skyte,  
And infant frosts begin to bite,  
In hoary cranreuch drest;  
Ae night at e'en a merry core  
O' randie, gangrel bodies,  
In Poesie-Nansie's held the splore,  
To drink their orra duddies;  
Wi' quaffing an' laughing,  
They ranted an' they sang,  
Wi' jumping an' thumping,  
The vera girdle rang]

And here is a stanza from a song sung to a tune of *Soldier Laddie*:

[I grew bored of the moody boozer,  
I tried well nigh the whole regiment as husbands,  
I have such a soft spot for a bonny soldier,  
All I want is a bonny soldier!

Hey, sing and make merry!..<sup>73</sup>

[Original:

Full soon I grew sick of my sanctified sot,  
The regiment at large for a husband I got;  
From the gilded spontoon to the fife I was ready,  
I asked no more but a sodger laddie.]

One should separately note the work of the Arkhangelsk poet V. Fedotov; he translated over a hundred of Burns' poems (mostly songs), many of which were not available in Marshak's translations, and published them in two collections.<sup>74</sup> Fedotov is an experimenter; he also introduces Russian colloquialisms into his translation, although he is not always successful: sometimes his russification seems too extreme. Moreover, his translations suffer from a stylistic eclecticism, imprecise rhymes and occasional carelessness. At one point, they were subjected to a harsh criticism by Korney Chukovsky.<sup>75</sup> But Fedotov had some undisputed successes (which Chukovsky also acknowledged), which made it possible to show Burns to Soviet readers in a different light. Here are excerpts from his translation of *The Gowden Locks Of Anna*:

Away from peeping eyes  
Yesterday I had a hearty drink,  
Yesterday I was alone  
With the golden-braided Anna.  
The hungry man did not rejoice so much  
When he found manna in the desert  
As I did when I tasted the honey boons  
From Anna's kisses.

<...>

Let the court and church following in its footsteps  
Threaten me with punishment,  
Let them go to the devils,  
And I shall go to Anna.  
The light of my eyes is in her,  
I will not live without her;  
If I had three wishes granted to me,  
I would name Anna first.

[Original:

Yestreen I had a pint o' wine,  
A place where body saw na;

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<sup>73</sup> *Anglijskaja Poezija v Russkih Perevodah: XIV-XIX Veka [English Poetry in Russian Translations: 14<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries]*. Moscow, 1981, p. 215, 219.

<sup>74</sup> Berns, R. *Stihi i Pesni [Poems and Songs]*. Translated by V. Fedotov. Arkhangelskoe knizhnoe izdatelstvo, 1959, 124 pages; Berns, R. *Pesni i Stihi [Songs and Poems]*. Translated from English by V. Fedotov. Moscow, 1963, 232 pages.

<sup>75</sup> See Chukovsky, K. 'V Zashchitu Bernsa' [In Burns' Defence], *Novy Mir* 1963, No. 9, p. 224-227.

Yestreen lay on this breast o' mine  
 The gowden locks of Anna.  
 The hungry Jew in wilderness,  
 Rejoicing o'er his manna,  
 Was naething to my hinny bliss  
 Upon the lips of Anna.  
 <...>  
 The Kirk an' State may join an' tell,  
 To do sic things I maunna:  
 The Kirk an' State may gae to hell,  
 And I'll gae to my Anna.  
 She is the sunshine o' my e'e,  
 To live but her I canna;  
 Had I on earth but wishes three,  
 The first should be my Anna.]

One often hears that Burns found a second homeland in the Soviet Union, and this is quite correct. He is one of our nation's most beloved poets. His works in Russian translators are published in many thousands of copies. An important example is a bilingual collection published in 1982.<sup>76</sup> Compiled by I. Levidova, a critic and literary historian, it contains 117 of Burns' best poems in the original. Russian translations are facing the originals, with 26 poems appearing in two or more translations (the poem *I Hae A Wife O' My Ain* is represented by five translations and *John Barleycorn*, *To A Mountain Daisy*, *The Jolly Beggars* by four); there are 157 translations all in all. Although the majority in the selection are by Marshak, the book features works by twenty Russian translators from Ivan Kozlov to our own time. The collection also contains notes containing textual, bibliographic, historical, literary, biographical, social and linguistic information, as well as a glossary compiled by L.M. Arinshtein. The collection is followed by a postscript on 'Burns in Russian' written by the present author and serving as the basis for this article. 150,000 copies of the collection were published and sold off as soon as the book sales were launched.

The Soviet press widely marked Burns' 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Festive events were held to commemorate Burns' jubilee. A special methodological manual was even published to prepare such events.<sup>77</sup> Students at a Moscow school named after Pushkin organised a 'Club of Friends of Pushkin and Burns', and this club received support from the Great Britain-USSR Association and the Union State Library which enabled it to publish its own collection in Russian and English dedicated to Scotland's bard.<sup>78</sup>

Burns' life and works are being constantly researched by Soviet literary critics. Since it is impossible to provide a full list of appropriate publications here,<sup>79</sup> let us just mention the monographs by A. Elistratova<sup>80</sup> and B. Kolesnikov<sup>81</sup>, the poet's fictionalised biography in the series

<sup>76</sup> Berns, R. *Stihotvorenija [Poems]*. Moscow, 1982. 704 pages.

<sup>77</sup> *Robert Berns (1759-1959): Materialy k Vecheru, Posvjashchennomy 200-letiju so Dnija Rozhdenija [Robert Burns (1759-1959): Materials for an Event Dedicated to the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of His Birthday]*. Moscow, 1958, 7 pages.

<sup>78</sup> *Venok Robertu Bernsu [A Wreath for Robert Burns]*. Moscow, 1964, 116 pages.

<sup>79</sup> See: Bibliographic list: Key publications on Burns in Russian, in Berns, R. *Stihotvorenija [Poems]*, p.698-701.

<sup>80</sup> Elistratova, A.A. *Robert Berns: Kriticheskio-Biograficheskij Oчерk [Robert Burns: a Critical and Biographic Essay]*. Moscow, 1957, 159 pages.

*Lives of Remarkable People* written by R. Rait-Kovaleva,<sup>82</sup> a series of articles by S. Orlov, who spent many years studying the great Scotsman.<sup>83</sup> Burns and the translations of his poems are the subject of dissertations submitted in the higher education establishments of the Soviet Union.<sup>84</sup>

But perhaps the most prominent evidence of Burns' popularity in our country is the creative response of Soviet poets. New poetry collections often have titles like *Robert Burns, Inspired by Burns, Burns' Cottage*, etc. Let us give a few examples from the works of three different poets which share the same title:

Lives are hard, fates are fickle,  
God's ways are mysterious,  
The handsome black-eyed Scotsman,  
I am dreaming of you today...  
(T. Gnedich, *Robert Burns*)<sup>85</sup>

The land is full of fires,  
The land is full of smoke,  
Of flowers,  
Of the bright dews...  
Live, my friend,  
In my home,  
The Scotsman Robert Burns!  
(A. Kryuchkov, *Robert Burns*)<sup>86</sup>

Because you were a faithful son  
Of your woods, fields,  
Your peaks,  
Your valleys,

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<sup>81</sup> Kolesnikov, B.I. *Robert Berns: Ocherk Zhizni i Tvorchestva [Robert Burns: an Overview of Life and Work]*. Moscow, 1967, 240 pages (*Biblioteka Slovesnika*)

<sup>82</sup> Rait-Kovaleva, R. *Robert Burns*. Moscow, 1959, 366 pages (*Zhizn Zamechatelnyh Ljudej* series); 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Moscow, 1965, 352 pages.

<sup>83</sup> Orlov, S.A. 1) 'Berns i Folklor' [Burns and Folklore], *Uchenye Zapiski Kujbyshevskogo Pedagogicheskogo Instituta*, 1942, issue 6, p. 124-152; 2) 'Krestjanskij Vopros v Poezii Bernsa' [The Peasant Issue in Burns' Poetry], *Ibidem*, 1943, issue 7, p. 381-393; 3) *Narodny Poet Shotlandii: K 200-letiju so Dnij Rozhdenija R. Bernsa [Scotland's National Poet: Marking the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Birth of Robert Burns]*. Gorky 1959, 37 pages; 4) 'Valter Skott i Poezija Roberta Bernsa' [Walter Scott and Robert Burns' Poetry], *Uchenye Zapiski Gorkovskogo Universiteta Imeni N.I. Lobachevskogo*. 1961, issue 52, p. 247-264; 5) 'Na Jazykah Narodov Nashej Strany: (Berns, Dzhon Anderson)' [In the Languages of the Peoples of Our Country: (Burns, John Anderson)], in *Literaturnye Svyazi i Tradicii*. Gorky, 1972, issue 3, p. 99-112; 6) 'Poema Roberta Bernsa "Blagochestivaja Jarmarka" (K Probleme Perevoda)' [R. Burns' Poem *The Holy Fair*: Towards the Problem of Translation], in *Literaturnye Svyazi i Problema Vzaimov;ijanij*. Gorky, 1980, p. 97-103.

<sup>84</sup> See dissertation abstracts: Sevryugina, L.V., *Robert Berns – Velikij Shotlandskij Poet [Robert Burns, a Great Scottish Poet]*, Moscow, 1955, 16 pages; Belashova, E.S. *Robert Berns v Perevodah S. Marshaka [Robert Burns in S. Marshak's Translations]*, Chernovtsy, 1959, 15 pages; Nechiporuk, O.D. *Robert Berns v Ukrainskih Perevodah i Literaturovedenii [Robert Burns in Ukrainian Translations and Literary Criticism]*. Kiev, 1959, 21 pages.

<sup>85</sup> Gnedich, T. *Etjudy, Sonety [Sketches, Sonnets]*. Leningrad, 1977, p. 34.

<sup>86</sup> Kryuchkov, A. *Litsom k Ognju [Facing the Fire]*. Alma-Ata, 1975, p. 27.

Your Scotland –  
Thank you, jolly Robin!  
Know:  
This land will be free,  
This land will be happy  
Until the end of days!  
(N. Matveyeva, *Robert Burns*)<sup>87</sup>

These and other poems dedicated to Burns are a clear indication of the spiritual affinity between the Soviet and Scottish peoples and more broadly, of a unity of all progressive humankind. The poet Samuil Marshak, writing to Burns to mark his 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary, had every reason to say these words:

Your barefoot muse  
Is dear to us, your friends.  
She has walked through every land  
In the Soviet Union.  
We remember you  
Among the merry noise of the feast,  
And you are with us in the struggle  
For peace and happiness of the world!<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Matveyeva, N. *Dusha Veshchej: Kniga Stihov [The Soul of Things: a Book of Poems]*. Moscow, 1956, p. 51

<sup>88</sup> Marshak, S.Ya. 'Robertu Bernsu' [To Robert Burns], *Novy Mir* 1959. No. 1, p. 139.