ABSTRACT

The article considers the history of Russian translation reception of Robert Burns's poem ‘John Anderson my Jo’ in the middle of the 19th – the beginning of the 21st centuries. The first translation of this work into Russian made by M. L. Mikhaylov in 1856 became an undoubted creative triumph of the interpreter, having considerably predetermined the interest of Russian criticism in ‘John Anderson my Jo’ and stimulated the emergence of the subsequent interpretations. In the next years P. I. Veynberg (1869), V. M. Mikhailov (the 1880-s), A. M. Fedorov (1896), S. Ya. Marshak (1938), S. A. Orlov (1939, 1959), S. B. Bolotin and T. S. Sikorskaya (1954), S. Sapozhnikov (2014) translated Burns’s poem. Comparison of the translations of different years allows seeing the specifics of each of the interpretations caused both by features of creative identity of Russian interpreters and distinctions connected with the evolution of approaches to poetic translation in the course of literary development. Burns’s poem ‘John Anderson my Jo’ was mentioned by I. S. Turgenev in his letter to P. Viardot of November 23 (December, 5), 1870; K. I. Turner, R. Ya. Right-Kovaleva, S. A. Orlov, Ye. S. Belashova, A. A. Golikov etc. wrote about it in their researches. The poem ‘John Anderson my Jo’ became one of the most popular Burns’s works in Russia thanks to the achievements of Russian translators.

Keywords: Robert Burns, Russian-English literary relations, poetic translation, reception, tradition, cross-cultural communication

RESUMEN


Palabras clave: Robert Burns, relaciones literarias ruso-inglesas, traducción poética, recepción, tradición, comunicación intercultural.

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1. Introduction

The poem “John Anderson my Jo” was written by Robert Burns in Ellisland in 1789; it was not absolutely traditional for the creative work of the Scottish poet, who, having hardly reached the age of thirty years old, unexpectedly began to reflect on the end of life and death. In spite of appearing of the first translation of the poem made by M. L. Mikhaylov in 1856, the interest in it in Russia was very limited initially. Many Russian readers learned about Burns’s work thanks to their knowledge of European languages; it, in particular, can be said about I. S. Turgenev, who wrote in the letter to Pauline Viardot of November, 23 (December, 5), 1870: “[…] j’ai tout mon beau et cher passé de 27 ans à garder – c’est aussi un trésor et cela m’inspire du respect. Et cela sera ainsi comme pour “Joe Anderson my Joe” de Burns – nous descendrons la colline ensemble” [“[…] I have to keep all my wonderful and dear 27-year-old past – it is a treasure too, and it commands my respect. And we will experience the same as in Burns’s ”Joe Anderson my Joe”, and we will go down the hill slope together] (Turgenev 1994: 268, 350).

In the next years the translations of Burns’s poem were made by P. I. Veynberg (1869), V. M. Mikheyev (the 1880-s), A. M. Fedorov (1896), S.Ya. Marshak (1938), S. A. Orlov (1939, 1959), S.B. Bolotin and T. S. Sikorskaya (1954; Taubaye et al, 2018; Sadeghpour et al., 2017; Golkar, et al, 2014; Gamarra, et al, 2018; García-Santillán, 2019), S. Sapozhnikov (2014). The present article is devoted to the comparative analysis of translations of “John Anderson my Jo”, finding their similarity and specifics.

2. Literature Review

Obviously, the first publication in Russian, having the analysis of “John Anderson my Jo”, was K. I. Turner’s article “Robert Burns” issued in 1896 – in the year of the 100th anniversary from the date of the Scottish poet’s death. K. I. Turner considered “John Anderson my Jo” one of the songs concerning house life, describing “with all sympathy of soul, sensitive to all kind and sacred in nature of a person, a story of gentle attachment, the strength of which was not weakened by years, the constancy of which was not shaken by misfortunes” (Turner 1896: 114). The researcher offered a short retelling of the poem, quite precisely transferring its main idea: “The old wife reminds her husband the past days of their first acquaintance, when his curls, now white as snow, were black as raven, when his forehead, now cut up by wrinkles, was white and smooth. She reminds him those cheerful, pleasant days they had together in their youth and calls blessing on her old man’s head “covered with snow”, finds a consolation in that thought that as they climbed the mountain of life together, so now they will go down the hill hand in hand and will fall asleep together, having reached the pier” (Turner 1896: 114).

Professor S. A. Orlov, a famous researcher of Burns’s creativity, who translated “John Anderson my Jo” twice, in 1939 and 1959, separately argued on this penetrating lyrical etude of the Scottish poet in his book “The National Poet of Scotland (to the 200th Anniversary since the Birth of R. Burns)” (1959): “The poet shows so much deep feeling, so much respect for the person, glorifying friendship and humanity. Addressing to his friend – John Anderson, whose black hair was snowed by time, the poet pronounces the words of love and fidelity, amity and friendship. Sincerity and lyricism, passion of feelings and vitality, total absence of sentimentality or affectation, lucidity of mind and clarity, musicality and special literary expressiveness – such is the song by Burns” (Orlov 1959: 17).

A unique colour of the poem ”John Anderson my Jo”, one of Burns’s best, was underlined by R. Ya. Right-Kovaleva in her book “Robert Burns” published in 1965 in the series “Life of Outstanding People”: “If Burns wrote only one this song, his name would be remembered forever: so inseparably, smoothly and strongly the words matched up the old motif, so quiet and eternal love of two people, who grew old together, is transferred in them” (Right-Kovaleva 1965: 216). The author of the article “Scottish Folk Songs in Robert Burns’s Interpretation (Questions of Language and Style)” (1982) A. A. Golikov was especially interested in the form of Burns’s song – two eight-line stanzas, assuming aspiration “to extreme laconism and simplicity” (Golikov 1982: 118).

Many articles give estimates of the first translation of Burns’s song created by M. L. Mikhaylov (Burns 1856). In particular, S. A. Orlov in his research “Burns in Russian Translations” (1939) called M. L. Mikhaylov's translation “the best of all Russian translations of this poem”: “Deep lyricism, the thought of inviolability of feeling of attachment and friendship are transferred in the translation with great strength” (Orlov 1939: 238). According to Ye. S. Belashova in her thesis “Robert Burns in S. Marshak’s Translations” (1958), M. L. Mikhaylov's translation has great proximity to the original; the interpreter managed to recreate deep lyricism and warmth of the tone of the original, to keep metaphors and periphrases, because of what “Russian poems are not less poetical than Burns's ones” (Belashova 1958: 92). An enthusiastic assessment is given to this translation by Yu. D. Levin, who included it in full into the monograph “Reception of English Literature in Russia: Researches and Materials” (1990), having commented on it as follows: “Mikhaylov, in effect, was the first to recreate Burns in Russian adequately, transferred vital humanistic pathos, dramatic nature of his poetry and originality of the poetic form. Under Mikhaylov's hand “Russian Burns” gained authenticity, which he had not had earlier” (Levin 1990: 240).
3. Materials and Methods

The material for the analysis are translations of Robert Burns’s poem “John Anderson my Jo” made by M. L. Mikhailov (1856), P. I. Veynberg (1869), V. M. Mikheev (the 1880-s), A. M. Fedorov (1896), S. Ya. Marshak (1938), S.A. Orlov (1939, 1959), S. B. Bolotin and T.S. Sikorskaya (1954), S. Sapozhnikov (2014). Methodologically, the research relies on Alexander N. Veselovsky, Alexey N. Veselovsky, V. M. Zhirmunsky, M. P. Alekseyev, Yu. D. Levin, A.V. Fedorov, Ye. G. Etkind’s fundamental works, etc. and also on the works of Russian researchers, studying the aspects of Burns’s biography and creativity, perception of Burns’s heritage in Russia, including those directly connected with the poem “John Anderson my Jo” (K. I. Turner, S. A. Orlov, A. A. Golikov, A. A. Yelistratova, B. I. Kolesnikov, Ye. S. Belashova, D. N. Zhatkin, etc.). In the course of studying of the research problem comparative-historical, comparative and historical-typological approaches and also methods of the complex analysis were used.

4. Results

Burns’s poem is written in iambus, with abab rhyme. This size is kept in all Russian translations, with the exception of the translation of P. I. Veynberg, who used amphibrach. The two-octave structure of the original is recreated by M. L. Mikhailov, P. I. Veynberg, V. M. Mikheev, S. Sapozhnikov; A. M. Fedorov, S. Ya. Marshak, S. B. Bolotin and T.S. Sikorskaya offered four stanzas-quatrains, what also does not contradict the original; S. A. Orlov has no graphic division into stanzas.

Because of the use of such peculiar lexicon as cherep gol [not speckled], osnezhyon [snowed] for the description of the head of the old hero. An unsuccessful selection of lexicon (ne ispeschhron [not speckled], osnezhyon [snowed]) in A. M. Fedorov’s translation led musicality of Burns’s poem to loss.

Ye. S. Belashova noted P. I. Veynberg’s rough deviations from formal features of the original (Belashova 1958: 107). P. I. Veynberg translated this song together with two more works by Burns – “The Jolly Beggars: A Cantata” (1785) and “Lord Gregory, A Ballad” (1793). The translations were made for the publication in “Otechestvenniye zapiski”, about what P. I. Veynberg reported to N. A. Nekrasov at the end of May – beginning of June, 1868 (Писма к Н. А. Некрасову <…> 1949: 178; Zhatkin 2016: 22). However, N. A. Nekrasov chose only two translations (Burns 1868b: 325–336; Burns 1868a: 622), did not print ”John Anderson my Jo”, and it was published in the journal “Delo” in 1869 (Burns 1869: 183).

According to Ye. S. Belashova, S.Ya.Marshak in this case (as well as in many others) skillfully found the main thing, defined the song originality, consisting in deep lyricism of Burns’s comparisons, and subordinated all means of Russian to its identification (Belashova 1959: 11). Speaking about S. Ya. Marshak’s translation, S. R. Mayzels noted that “in different editions there are discrepancies in the first verse: “Джон Андрецов, когда с тобой…” [Dzhon Anderson, kogda s toboy…], “Джон Андрец, мой друг, Джон…” [Dzhon Anderson, moy drug, Dzhon…]” (Mayzels 1969: 770). However, actually, there are more discrepancies. So, the first edition printed in “Literaturnaya gazeta” in 1938 differs from the third edition (1959) only in three initial lines: “Джон Андрецов, когда с тобой / Деля я кхле б и соль, / Я помню волос твой густой / Был черен, точно смоль” (the first edition) [Dzhon Anderson, kogda s toby / Delil ya khleb i sol, / Ya pomnyu volos tvoy gustoy / Bil chyoren, tochno smol] (Marshak 1938: 5) – “Джон Андрец, мой старый друг, / Подумай-ка, давно ли / Густой, кругой твой локон / Был черен, точно смоль” (the third edition) [Dzhon Anderson, moy stary drug, / Podumay-ka, danno i / Gustoy, krutoy tvoy lokon / Bil chyoren, tochno smol] (Marshak 1959: 216; Marshall 1969: 212).

Having compared the first and second editions of S. Ya. Marshak’s translation in his review of the book “Robert Burns in S. Marshak’s Translations” (1950) published in 1951, A.T.Tvardovsky considered that in the second case one of the best poems by Burns “was crippled rhythmically” (Tvardovsky 1951: 229) – with all its rather bigger accuracy the second edition of the translation enters a dissonance with standards of Russian: “Джон Андрец, мой друг, Джон, / Подумай-ка, давно ли / Густой, кругой твой локон, Джон, / Был черен, точно смоль” [Dzhon Anderson, moy drug, Dzhon, / Podumay-ka, danno i / Gustoy, krutoy tvoy lokon, Dzhon, / Bil chyoren, tochno smol] (Robert Burns v perevodakh S.Marshaka 1950: 140). Nevertheless, in her article “The Skill of S.Marshak, a Translator of Burns” (1960) on the example of S.Ya.Marshak’s translation of the end of the first octave and the beginning of the second octave of the second edition T.B.Liokumovich showed that the translator fully mastered Burns’s characteristic technique of catching up of the last words of one stanza by the beginning of the following stanza: “It gave to his poems song continuity, allowed to connect the previous thought with the subsequent one and to try to make the reader follow the course of the represented events with unflagging attention all the time” (Liokumovich 1960: 83), compare: “Теперь ты стал не тот, Джон, / Ты знал немало вьюг. / Но будь ты счастлив, льсый Джон, / Джон Андрец, мой друг! / Джон Андрец, мой друг...
In different years S. A. Orlov created two very different translations of Burns's song – “Dzhon Anderson, moy drug” (“John Anderson, my friend”, 1939) and “Dzhon Anderson” (“John Anderson”, 1959). In his article “In Languages of Peoples of Our Country (Burns "John Anderson")” (1972), presenting the translations of the poem in languages of peoples of the USSR (Ukrainian, Belarusian, etc.), S. A. Orlov reproduced his translation in the initial form that demonstrates that by the end of his life he returned to the early edition printed in 1939 (Orlov 1972: 110–111). S. B. Bolotin and T. S. Sikorskaya’s translation created in 1954 partly correlated in tonality with S. A. Orlov's translations differs in some licence and philosophical character.

Let us note that most of the latest translators of Burns (Ye. D. Feldman, Yu. V. Knyazev, S. A. Aleksandrovsky, etc.) did not interpret Burns's text (at least, we do not know any published variants). And only S. Sapozhnikov, who set the task to present full Burns to the Russian reader, translated two significantly differing versions of the poem at once: the “early” one, presenting a dialogue (included into the second part of Thomas Percy's collection “The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry” published in 1765), and the “late” one – a monologue of a wife, reproaching her old husband with laziness and sexual infirmity, which enjoyed special popularity in Burns's days (Burns 2014: 1018–1021). This late variant, in fact, can be considered the Scottish national song; Burns's authorship in this case is challenged by researchers, but not by S. Sapozhnikov, specifying in comments on the translation: “...an obscene version of "John Anderson my Jo", the intonation of which is much warmer and softer. Numerous versions of the national song with the same name were popular in the middle of the 18th century, and here Burns approaches to their everydayness and sexual egoism much closer” (Burns 2014: 1165). However, in fact, there was a traditional text of the Scottish national song and its interpretation created by Burns in 1789 for “The Scots Musical Museum” of James Johnson: Burns's interpretation, entering into a controversy with the traditional text, well-known to his listeners, approves a much higher level of culture of human relations: there are no complaints, hidden irritation, offensive sneers; instead of it there is a motif of pride, fidelity, attachment to each other of the people, who had lived long and hard life together” (Arinstein 1982: 625). “The Caledonian Pocket Companion” of James Oswald was a melody source for Burns's composition; the publication took place in the collection “The Songs of Robert Burns” by James Chalmers Dick in 1903.

Burns's colouristic antonymic couple like the raven—like the snow designed to oppose youth and an old age, when comparing hair colour of the hero with raven and snow, found reflection in all Russian translations, and M.L. Mikhailov found it possible to accent emergence of wrinkles on the face, forehead, what is not mentioned in the original: "When we were first acquainted / Your locks were like the raven, / Your bonnie brow was brent; / But now your brow is held, John, / Your locks are like the snow; / But blessings on your frosty pow" (Burns 1865: 160) — "Как я сошлас с тобой, / Был гладок лоб твой и как смоль / Был черен волос твой. / Теперь морщины по лицу / И снег житейских вьюг / В твоих кудрах; / — но — бот храны / Тебя ..." [Kak ya soshlas s toboy, / Ti znal moyu lyubov... / Ty soshla s toboy, / Vtvoikh kudryakh; no – bog khram/ Teyha <...>](Mikhaylov 1958: 151), in the second edition of S.A.Orlow's translation (Джон, Андерсон, давным-давно [Dzhon, Anderson, davnim-davno]) and also in S.Sapozhnikov's translation (Джон, Андерсон, родной [Dzhon, Anderson, rodnoy]).
5. Discussion

In A.I. Palladin’s notes (1954) for S.B. Bolotin and T.S. Sikorskaya’s translation it is specified that Burns “often composed his songs to the existing national tunes. So the song “John Anderson” was written, Burns liked to sing it” (Palladin 1954: 391). S.A. Orlov in his book “The National Poet of Scotland (to the 200th Anniversary since the Birth of R.Burns)” (1959) enthusiastically spoke of music of the lyrics in this song: “Three components of a song – a thought, inter syllabic pauses and a melody are harmoniously connected with each other. Burns carefully finishes the song, trying to obtain extreme harmony, integrity and coherence. Richness of alliterations, melodiousness, frequent repetitions, lyricism with surprising clarity and clearness of the thought defines beauty and unique charm of his songs” (Orlov 1959: 17–18). S. A. Orlov agrees with the English criticism, calling songs by Burns the very

Motifs of Burns’s work are present in the original poem “Moy drug, khvala tebe i chest...” (“My friend, praise to you and honor...”, 1970) of the modern poet-translator Ye.D. Feldman, who translated more than four hundred texts of Burns. This song contains ten stanzas, practically each of which comes to an end with the address “Джон Андерсон, мой друг!” [Dzhon Anderson, moy drug!] (Feldman 1970: 335–336); after the second and final stanzas a peculiar refrain of six lines is introduced: “Ты в этой жизни, / Может быть, / Богатства не скопил, / Но дай бог всему / Прожить, / Как ты свой век прожил!” [Ti v etoi zhizni, / Mogut byt’, / Bogatstva ne skopil, / No day Bog vsem’yu / Prozhit’, / Kak ty svoi vek prozhit’!] (Feldman 1970: 335–336).

Ye.D. Feldman distinctly shows the peasant life of the hero (“Земля добрела и цветла, / Когда вставал за плуг” [Zemlya dobrela i tsvela, / Kogda vstaval za plug]; “Ведь Богатства не скопил, / Но дай Бог всему / Прожить, / Как ты свой век прожил!” [Bogatstva ne skopil, / No day Bog vsyakomu / Prozhit’, / Kak ti svoi vek prozhit’!]) (Feldman 1970: 335–336); after the second and final stanzas a peculiar refrain of six lines is introduced: “Ты в этой жизни, / Может быть, / Богатства не скопил, / Но дай бог всему / Прожить, / Как ты свой век прожил!” [Ti v etoi zhizni, / Mogut byt’, / Bogatstva ne skopil, / No day Bog vsyakomu / Prozhit’, / Kak ti svoi vek prozhit’!] (Feldman 1970: 335–336).
6. Conclusions

Thus, each of Russian translations of Robert Burns’s song “John Anderson my Jo” made by M. L. Mikhaylov, P. I. Veynberg, V. M. Mikiheyev, A. M. Fedorov, S. Ya. Marshak, S. A. Orlov, S. B. Bolotin and T. S. Sikorskaya, S. Sapozhnikov is peculiar and unique. Translators S. Ya. Marshak and S. A. Orlov made several attempts of interpretation of Burns’s song, and the last one was not only the interpreter, but also the researcher of “John Anderson my Jo” and studied not only the original, but also its numerous translations into languages of peoples of the USSR in detail. The popularity of Burns’s song in Russia is also demonstrated by appearance of the original poem “Moy drug, khvala tebe i chest!..” (“My friend, praise to you and honor!..”) created after it by Ye. D. Feldman in our days.

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