

## ROBERT BURNS IN THE SOVIET PUBLICISM OF 1960 – 1970S

### ROBERT QUEIMA NO PUBLICISMO SOVIÉTICO DE 1960 – 1970

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**Abstract:** This study is the first to systematize and interpret journalistic responses to Robert Burns's work in the Soviet periodicals of the 1960-1970s. The article analyzes the article written by R. Tumanovsky and G. Feldman, "The Country of Burns" in №. 7 of the magazine entitled "In the world of books" for 1978, written based on Scottish and English publications, gives a detailed description of many memorable places related to the biography and poetry work of the famous Scottish poet Robert Burns. The authors of the article, focusing on the universal recognition of the talent of the folk songwriter, say, in full accordance with the Soviet idea of Burns, about the difficult path of the self-taught poet who came out of the people, but who earned truly worldwide fame as a fighter for freedom and equality of simple peasants and workers, not taking into account their national and cultural identity.

**Keywords:** Russian-English literary; comparative science; artistic translation; intercultural communication.

**Resumo:** Este estudo é o primeiro a sistematizar e interpretar as respostas jornalísticas ao trabalho de Robert Burns nos periódicos soviéticos dos anos 1960-1970. O artigo analisa o artigo escrito por R. Tumanovsky e G. Feldman, "The Country of Burns" in №. 7 da revista intitulada "No mundo dos livros" de 1978, escrita com base em publicações escocesas e inglesas, fornece uma descrição detalhada de muitos lugares memoráveis relacionados com a biografia e a obra poética do famoso poeta escocês Robert Burns. Os autores do artigo, enfocando o reconhecimento universal do talento do compositor folk, falam, em plena consonância com a ideia soviética de Burns, sobre a difícil trajetória do poeta autodidata que saiu do povo, mas que conquistou fama verdadeiramente mundial como lutador pela liberdade e igualdade de simples camponeses e trabalhadores, sem levar em conta sua identidade nacional e cultural.

**Palavras-chave:** Literário russo-inglês; ciência comparativa; tradução artística; comunicação intercultural.

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## Introduction

The famous poet-translator S.Ya. Marshak played a big role in the development of English poetry, making it, thanks to his talent to interpret a foreign language text, noting all the cultural and linguistic and geographical realities, conveying the semantic load of the works without distortion and with the smallest details, by creating samples of translation poetic works on the material of foreign authors, accessible and understandable to the Soviet reader. About the unique talent of S. Ya. Marshak as a translator, his “passionate love for creativity”, a peculiar nature of his mind, which allowed him, without reading literary essays and studying the history of literature, to learn “hundreds of folk songs in different languages”, to interpret at a high level the numerous works of Shakespeare, Keats, Shelley, Burns, K.I. Chukovsky repeatedly stated, noting, along with other researchers, an extraordinary flash of reader’s interest to the works of the Scottish freedom fighter in the middle of the 20th century in Russia. It is worth noting that the freedom-loving Burns, who wrote in a rare Scottish dialect, difficult for the inhabitants of Great Britain to understand, earned the ambiguous reputation of a self-taught poet who came out of the common people and did not want to sacrifice his principles for the sake of pleasing the English aristocracy. Robert Burns was met in pre-revolutionary Russia as a “gray peasant simpleton”, “a composer of home-made, clumsy poems” and only thanks to the talent S. Ya. Marshak appeared as “one of sophisticated stylists, a man of delicate and impeccable taste, a wonderful virtuoso of poetic form” (Zhatkin et al., 2016, p. 693-694).

K.I. Chukovsky, describing the translations of the works of the Scottish poet written by S.Ya. Marshak, points to the fact that the reader created an illusion about the originality of the text since it was the Soviet translator who managed to convert the foreign poet into “Russian citizenship” through his talent. Thanks to all of the above facts, the second half of the 20th century can be considered as a period of “translation stability”, when Marshak’s translations, which served as a guide and an example for many interpreters and poets of the former Soviet republics who tried to “tame Burns”, were completely dominant and massively reprinted, to master the grace and rhythm of his works in the best Marshak traditions, contributing to the creation of translations in the languages of the peoples of the USSR (Zhatkin et al., 2016, p. 694-695).

Due to the fact that in no era Burns’s works were not published in Russia in such large editions as in the 1960–1970s, and the appearance of translations into Russian of other poets and lovers of the works of the Scottish bard was extremely rare, an edition during this period V.M. Fedotov’s translations caused a conflict in the literary environment, provoked disputes between Soviet writers about the failure of the creative experiment of a young translator, who was trying to compete with S.Ya. Marshak. K.I. Chukovsky became an ardent defender of S. Ya. Marshak’s works, who sharply criticized the translations of V. M. Fedotov from Burns in his article “In Defense of Burns”, openly expressing his rejection of a number of influential writers of that time, who supported, according to his opinion, “mediocre translator”. Pointing to the presence of many “textural mistakes”, stylistic disadvantages in translations written by V.M. Fedotov, K.I. Chukovsky, among other things, noted their “vulgar Russification”, consisting in indiscriminate use of lexemes, the presence of a large number of factual inaccuracies, a mixture of the realities of Russian folk life with the realities of the Scottish one. Referring to V. M. Fedotov as “a voiceless stutter”, whose “shoddy work” (Zhatkin et al., 2016, p. 695-696), did not correspond to the level of development of literary translation in Soviet Russia in the middle of the 20th century and were not able to compete with the famous translations of S. Ya. Marshak, K. I. Chukovsky insisted on their exclusion from the collections of translations of R. Burns’s works into Russian. Ultimately, all of the above circumstances helped to displace the books with R. Burns’s interpretation written by V.M. Fedotov, rehabilitated only in the 1980s, when none of the participants in the conflict was already alive.

## Literature Review

The most significant Russian studies of R. Burns’s works appeared in the “Marshak’s era” and were associated with the names of R.Ya. Rait-Kovaleva, A.A. Elistratova, B. I. Kolesnikov,

who devoted monographic works to the Scottish poet. The problems of perception of Burns's works in Russia were studied by S.A. Orlov, E.S. Belashova, Y.D. Levin, D.N.Zhatkin. The revival of the translation reception of Burns's works in Russia, observed since the 1990s, did not help to draw the attention of literary scholars to the Russian reception of Robert Burns. Up to nowadays, only the history of Robert Burns' translation reception, in which, incidentally, also there have been significant gaps, is relatively fully understood. If we talk about the history of the literary-critical reception of Robert Burns, about the reminiscences and traditions of Burns in Russian literature, then they did not become the subject of study at all. This article is the first to consider publications about the life and work of Burns in the Russian periodicals of the 1960-1970s, owned by Ruslan Tumanovsky, G. Feldman and M. Inkovsky. Additionally, evidence and facts are involved from an article written by D.N. Zhatkin, published under the title "Robert Burns and K.I. Chukovsky" in the "International Journal of Applied and Fundamental Research", which is a deep comparative analysis of the interpretations of R. Burns's works created by S. Ya. Marshak and V. M. Fedotov.

## Materials and Methods

The material for the study was the journalistic essays about Robert Burns published by Rus. Tumanovsky, G. Feldman and M. Inkovsky in the 1960-1970s. In the process of studying a scientific problem, comparative-historical, comparative, cultural-historical and historical-typological approaches were used, as well as methods of complex analysis. In methodological terms, the study relies on fundamental works in the field of historical poetics, comparative studies, the history of Russian translated literature, theory and history of poetic translation (Alexander N. Veselovsky, Alexey N. Veselovsky, V.M. Zhirmunsky, M.P. Alekseev, Yu.D. Levin, A.V. Fedorov, etc.).

## Results and Discussion

Translators from many Soviet republics were interested in the legacy of Robert Burns, therefore, in order to understand the process of reception of Robert Burns's compositions in the Soviet Union, an article written by Mikhail Inkovsky, one of the employees of "Friendship of Peoples magazine", "The Second Homeland of Burns Expands Borders", published in the seventh issue of this journal in 1964 is important. The author of the article talks about the talented Belarusian translator Yazep Semezhon, who succeeded, following S. Ya. Marshak, in "expanding the linguistic boundaries of the Russian homeland of Burns" (Inkovsky, 1964, p. 255), and make his works accessible and understandable for reading in Belarusian. Talking about the translations of Burns into the Belarusian language, M. Inkovsky emphasizes the need for creative competition, arising from the complexity of the artistic tasks that are set for any translator who wants to translate after S. Ya. Marshak.

Calling S.Ya. Marshak's translations "textbookly known", which are "essentially original" for many readers from around the world who do not know English, including the inhabitants of foggy Albion themselves who do not understand the Scottish dialect in which R. Burns wrote his works, the author of the article concludes that the translation "at the Marshak's level" requires a certain courage, because a creative competition with a master of his craft involves creating new interpretations of a fairly high level, since the reader, getting acquainted with them, will involuntarily compare them with earlier translations of S. Ya. Marshak and more closely evaluate their poetic significance (Inkovsky, 1964, p. 255).

Noting the universal popularity of the translations of S. Ya. Marshak from Robert Burns, the author of the article cites the example of the heading of an article in one of the English newspapers that posted material about the visit of a Soviet translator and a writer to the capital of Great Britain - London. The correspondent of the English newspaper calls S. Ya. Marshak "a man who translated "A Man's a Man for A' that", hinting at the extraordinary complexity of the plan for the content of this phrasal combination and at the same time admiring the creative finding of the Soviet translator, who was able to make accurate and concise transcriptions of

the works of the Scottish bard, understandable for reading in Russian and became “close to millions of Soviet readers” (Inkovsky, 1964, p. 255). Mikhail Inkovsky, repeating the idea of the authors of previous articles that, thanks to the translation talent of S. Ya. Marshak, “the Soviet country is now called the second homeland of Burns”, first informs readers of the “Friendship of Peoples” about expanding the boundaries of perception of the great Scots poetry and refers to numerous facts of translations of R. Burns’s poetry into “languages of many peoples of the USSR” (Inkovsky, 1964, p. 225)

In view of the above, the Soviet journalist informs readers about the publication in 1957 in Minsk of the poetry collection by R. Burns in translations of the Belarusian poet Yazep Semezhon, who, in his words, “worked productively”, trying to recreate the Scottish poetry in Belarusian, overcoming “a serious barrier in front of brothers in the pen”, created unintentionally by S. Ya. Marshak, and at the same time competing with him [2, p. 226]. In addition, other publications are also listed in the article, such as “The Polymya” and “Belarus” magazines, the “Literatura Imaststva” newspaper, which participated in the release of Yazep Semezhon’s translation compilation, which prepared for reading “Already about half of what was translated from Burns into Russian by S. Marshak” (Inkovsky, 1964, p. 225-226).

However, the article written by M. Inkovsky is interesting primarily for a comparative analysis of translations of the works of Robert Burns, made by the Belarusian interpreter Yazep Semezhon and the great poet and translator S. Ya. Marshak.

Based on the prevailing opinion of the inhabitants of Scotland, who considered the poem “Honest Poverty” as “a touchstone for all Burns’s translators”, and referring to the opinion of an English magazine that called S. Ya. Marshak “a man who translated” the poem “A Man’s A Man for A’that”, admiring S. Ya. Marshak’s talent for accurately and succinctly conveying the contents of the text when translated into a foreign language, the author of the article cites the repeating chorus lines from R. Burns’s song “A Man’s A Man For A’That”, which sound in the original as “For a’that, an ‘a’that”. It was for their translation that S. Ya. Marshak so surprisingly accurately picked up the saying “For all that”. Responding positively to the translation of “Honest Poverty” into the Belarusian language, M. Inkovsky considers Yazep Semezhon as a follower and worthy successor of the translation traditions of S. Ya. Marshak. So, for example, the author of the article notes the fact that the Belarusian translator, drawing on the experience of S. Ya. Marshak in using idioms to interpret text in Russian, made an attempt to find a phrasal combination from colloquial speech, not being able to use after the Soviet translator clericalism, which is absent in the Belarusian language. Thus, Yazep Semezhon made “the famous Burns’s refrain to sound in full force”, using the colloquial combination “this way and that”, “We jump this way, we jump that way and for a’that, an ‘a’that...” (Inkovsky, 1964, p. 225-226). The surprising musicality and sonority of Burns’s poems, preserved in the Belarusian translation with the help of Yazep Semezhon, which M. Inkovsky demonstrates, citing examples from the translations of the same R. Burns’s poem “A Man’s A Man For A’That”, written by Yazep Semezhon and S. Ya. Marshak were not be left unnoticed in the article. The publicist gives readers the opportunity to compare independently the translations and feel the melody of the poems of the Scottish poet, so carefully transferred by translating the text into Russian and Belarusian.

In addition to the “stylistic findings” of the Belarusian translator, the author of the article draws attention to his exceptional ability to “preserve the spirit of the original”, “naturally in Belarusian, in the peasant way”, without any luxuries and excesses to express “the indignation of the plowman poet with the injustice of the existing order of things”. M. Inkovsky, calling R. Burns as “a plowman”, once again emphasizes his ennobled origin and close proximity to ordinary people, peasants and workers, who give their last efforts to stay afloat and feed their family. Considering Robert Burns to be truly a folk poet, the author of the article cites lines from the translation of the poem “A Man’s A Man For A’That” by Yazep Semezhon (translated by S. Ya. Marshak – “Honest Poverty”), noting that there are words in it, revealing the specifics of a simple life in the countryside, the names of national realities taken from the colloquial speech of simple Belarusians, such as “pancakes”, “garelka”, “lebeda”. According to the author of the article, such a lexical choice is primarily due to the desire of the translator to make him closer to understanding among the people, which in no way spoils the interpretation, since “the main

idea of the poet was conveyed accurately, his accusatory voice sounds in full force (Inkovsky, 1964, p. 226-227).

M. Inkovsky considers the poem "Wha Is That At My Bower-Door", published in the translation of S. Ya. Marshak under the title "Findlay" and received a second life in the Belarusian interpretation of Yazep Semezhon, as the next translated work that deserves attention. Citing an excerpt from the interpretation of this work in Belarusian in the article, the publicist speaks about Yazepa Semezhon's amazing ability not only to preserve the song's basis of the original, but also "convey the fine instrumentation, melody, sound recording" of Robert Burns's original poetry as a whole (Inkovsky, 1964, p. 228)

In addition to poems written by Robert Burns, Yazepa Semezhon, according to M. Inkovsky, as well as S. Ya. Marshak, was successful in translating epigrams of the Scottish poet, which are small but very difficult to interpret.

The article by M. Inkovsky also contains a critical response from the Soviet writer, poet and translator Maxim Luzhanin, who highly appreciate the work of the Belarusian interpreter and his collection of translations from Robert Burns, entitled as "Scottish Glory". The response of Maxim Luzhanin, cited in the article, states the fact of the dynamic development of Soviet literature in the direction of increasing the number of published translated works from different languages of the world, which is determined not only by the merit of the state's policy as a whole, but also by the skill of translators, who work hard on themselves year by year, make significant efforts, honing the skills of translation of a foreign language text. Maxim Luzhanin, admiring the translations from Burns into the Belarusian language, expressing the feeling of satisfaction "for the language, for poetry, and for culture in general", noting their "worthy professional level", notes when evaluating the poem's collection that "everybody's love to poetry is shown on the pages of this book, but for the transparency of thought and line you don't feel how much time did the author spend and how hard the talented hand of the translator worked" (Inkovsky, 1964, p. 229)

In addition to the positive response of the Belarusian prose writer and poet Maxim Luzhanin, the author of the article shares with readers his impressions of the evening meeting in the country, which he attended during the recitation of "Scottish Findlay", presented as a poetry piece of folklore work in which the name was replaced by "simple Faddem". This proves the considerable glory of the poetry of R. Burns in Belarus. According to M. Inkovsky, precisely thanks to successful translations "the miracle of transplantation is performed", which determines the adaptation of the works of the Scottish poet by the people, getting their second life. The heroes of R. Burns spoke in a close and understandable Belarusian language for the residents of the republic.

In addition to translations of the poems of R. Burns, collected in the book "Scottish Glory", published by "quite large circulation", but sold "in few days", the Belarusian interpreter created interpretations of the poetry of Byron, Whitman, Mark Twain, Joe Wallace, and young Canadian poets. He worked at one of the philological departments of the Belarusian State University, which confirms, according to M. Inkovsky, his excellent knowledge of foreign languages, which ensured an impeccable reputation as a translator with world fame. In support of this fact, the publicist reports on the warmth with which R. Burns's translations into the Belarusian language were received in the poet's homeland, in Scotland, where the collection "Scottish Glory" "took the place of honor at the Burns Memorial House-Museum". For the prepared book, which won third place in the competition of Burns works in Slavic languages, the Belarusian translator received a jubilee edition of Burns's works as a gift from the Burns Society of Scotland (Inkovsky, 1964, p. 229-230).

Finally, in the conclusion of the article, M. Inkovsky once again stated that the "Russian homeland" of the famous Scottish poet Robert Burns "is expanding its language boundaries" due to the appearance of talented translations made not only by the famous Soviet poet and translator S. Ya. Marshak, but also its "worthy successor", the Belarusian interpreter - Yazepa (Inkovsky, 1964, p. 230)

A peculiar result of the Soviet journalistic interpretation of Burns can be considered a review essay about the "country of Burns", published in №.6 of the magazine "In the world

of books" in 1978 by Ruslan Tumanovsky and Grigory Feldman. The article contains brief but comprehensive information about the numerous evidence of the world fame of the great Scottish poet Robert Burns. Attracting illustrations, information from various Scottish and English publications, the authors of the article listed memorial sites associated with the name of the Scottish bard, consistently described house museums, architectural compositions, exhibitions, and the headquarters of Burns's clubs located on various "geographical coordinates" of the "Burns's country". Among the "placers of memorial sites which Robert Burns visited", R. Tumanovsky and G. Feldman note not only the house in Alloway, where, in a rather wretched atmosphere, the national poet was born and spent the first years of his life, but also other memorable places, such as Air and Lochley, Mount Olyphant, Erwin and Tarbleton, Mossgill and Mokhlin, Ellisland and Kirkoswald (Tumanovsky & Feldman, 1978, p. 86).

Separately, the authors of the essay mentioned the small town of Kilmarnock, "where six hundred and twenty copies of the first collection of poems" written by Robert Burns were printed in a small publishing house; they also noted that in "the country of Burns" in almost every house you can find "a volume of his poems or his portrait, books about him", which became "the best evidence of the appreciation of the Scots to Burns for his love for the motherland" [3, p. 86]. Citing the poet's quote from the preface to the first collection of his poems as an example, the authors of the article once again confirm the idea of the Scottish poet's endless devotion to his people, his homeland, his desire to "sing the love and joy of rural life, the beauty of the nature of the native land in their native language" (Tumanovsky & Feldman, 1978, p. 86). It is thanks to a feeling of pride for the work of the Scottish poet who did not kneel before the nobility and who gave his life for his homeland and his compatriots, close-knit Scots traditionally pronounce the Immortal Memory toast on a national holiday for all Scotland - the birthday of Robert Burns.

Warmly speaking about the Burns's Museum in Alloway, the authors of the article paid attention to the exhibits presented in it, among which there were not only household items and tools of the XVIII century, "meticulously reproducing the features of the era", but also modern publications, which allowed creating "a special flavor of a continuous link of times", helping to understand better and appreciate the work of the Scottish bard in the context of various eras. Among the most valuable exhibits of the Burns's Museum, R. Tumanovsky and G. Feldman noticed such an "extraordinary relic" as "a chair from the press on which Burns's works were printed", remarking that the museum's memorial library contains a magnificent collection of carefully collected manuscripts of the poet, "all editions of his works", each of which is marked on admission to the museum's funds with a "special bookplate"; here there are also critical works about his work, illustrations for poems. (Tumanovsky & Feldman, 1978, p. 87).

Many of the exhibits in the Burns's museums, which opened in the houses of the poet's temporary residence, have been preserved thanks to the care of ordinary inhabitants of foggy Albion, devoted to the Scottish bard. also caught The attention of the authors of the article was drawn by an unusual, "huge curtain <...> in the form of an illustration for a poem" which was located in the museum (Tumanovsky & Feldman, 1978, p. 87), and dedicated to one of the most popular heroes of Burns's poem - Tam O'Shenter. Besides the museum in Kirkoswald, there is a sculptural group depicting the heroes of Tam O'Shanter during a "fun conversation" and located inside one of the gardens attached to the townhouse.

Calling Burns "the bard of Caledonia" (the ancient name of Scotland), the authors of the article emphasize his continuous link with the common people, who keep the memory of the poet, who wrote in their native Scottish dialect. It is thanks to this memory that the collection of his poetry is constantly expanding in the "country of Burns", souvenir and gift products are being produced, among which are postcards with reproductions of the poet written by A. Nasmith and A. Skirving, "photographs of memorial sites and monuments", portraits, carpets, badges and commemorative medals. The authors of the essay about Robert Burns also noted the largest and most significant editions of books about the Scottish poet, mentioning the illustrated guide across the "country of Burns", the personal "Encyclopedia of Burns", dedicated to the 200th anniversary of the birth of the national poet and repeatedly reprinted subsequently - it included information about the places where the poet lived or visited, as well as facts

“about his relatives and friends, other persons with whom the poet met or corresponded” (Tumanovsky & Feldman, 1978, p. 87).

In the final part of the article, R. Tumanovsky and G. Feldman acquaint readers with the “dense network of clubs” that are the constituent members of the United Federation of Burns’s clubs, which has been operating since 1885 and has headquarters in Kilmarnock. The Federation’s activities have long gone beyond the borders of the “country of Burns”, expanded its borders, capturing not only Glasgow and Edinburgh, but also English countries – Australia, England, New Zealand, the USA, as well as Czechoslovakia, Denmark, India and a number of African countries. The purpose of the functioning of this Federation is not only to ensure “the protection of historical places associated with the name of Burns”, but also “preserve relics, promote the poet’s creative works”. The work of some clubs is formal, according to the authors of the article, it is limited only by “an annual dinner, at which the speaker’s speech precedes the traditional haggis” (Tumanovsky & Feldman, 1978, p. 87), while other organizations focus on research activities related to the study of materials of the poet’s museums.

The cumulative result of the Federation’s activities can be considered the annual Chronicle, which began to be published in 1891 and is a “grandiose multivolume study of Burns’s life and work” (Tumanovsky & Feldman, 1978, p. 87), including the publication of various materials about the great poet.

The authors of many scientific studies of the work of Robert Burns note the relevance of his poetry to the modern world. R. Tumanovsky and G. Feldman, referring in the article to the “active social position of the poet in the events of his time”, they talk about the prospects for studying Burns’s work from the perspective of its relationship with modernity. They note that Burns continues to influence the latest Scottish poetry, and cite one example from an article published in 1977, entitled as “Burns and the American War of Independence”. Soviet publicists also point out that for Russian critics, poets and translators there remains a lot of undeveloped material about Robert Burns, which can form the basis of new scientific works about the great Scottish poet, and will present the world with new talented translations of his works into Russian (Tumanovsky & Feldman, 1978, p. 87).

## Conclusions

Thus, in Soviet journalism of the 1960–1970s., news items highlighting the peculiarities of poetic works of Robert Burns, imbued with a sense of deep patriotism and love for a small homeland – Scotland began to appear. At the same time, traditionally for Soviet journalism, the poet’s complex creative path and his strong civic position were emphasized. The articles contained a review of authentic material obtained from foreign sources, allowing you to look into the “country of Burns” and get acquainted with the sights, historical places, museum exhibits related to the biography and work of the Scottish poet, consider illustrations of the covers of Burns’s encyclopedias and other commemorative publications, learn about the current the activities of the Federation of Burns’s Clubs and the release of the Federation’s annual publication – “The Chronicle”. For the second half of the 20th century, the appearance of articles about translating experiences of the works of Robert Burns into the languages of the peoples of the USSR is also natural. At the same time, the poets of the Union republics tried not to cede to S. Ya. Marshak (1969), in the art of interpreting of the works of the Scottish bard, who, according to critics, thanks to the skill of translators, found a second homeland in Soviet Russia (Zhatkin, 2019, p. 108-125; Zhatkin & Futljaev, 2019, p. 12-25).

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