

TURGENEV AND WHITMAN

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IN PROFESSOR ANDRÉ MAZON'S description of the manuscripts of Ivan Turgenev kept in the National Library in Paris (*Manuscrits parisiens d'Ivan Tourguénev, notices et extraits par André Mazon* [Paris, 1930]), one finds the following entry:

70. D. 38.—Battez, battez tambours! A sheet of paper of 312 mm. by 392 mm. folded in two, the recto of the first page of which has alone been used. Call number 25-e: 411-e piece. Rough draft of a poem in three stanzas beginning with the words: Beat, Beat, Drums! This piece will be published later. (p. 94)

The piece has never been published, however. A few years ago we obtained the microfilm of the manuscript and of other Turgenev materials belonging to the French National Library. For the text of the poem, with Turgenev's numerous emendations and variants, see Figure 1. What is most striking about this poem are its contents and its form, which differ completely from Turgenev's poetic experiments known to us.

This fact (to which we will add the peculiarity of the presence in the text of one or more variants for individual lines) makes us suppose that we don't have here an original composition by the author, but rather a translation. Who is the author of this poem? The answer is an unexpected one. "Beat! Beat! Drums!" comes from the pen of Walt Whitman and belongs to the group of poems entitled *Drum-Taps*, written by the poet during the Civil War in America. Separate poems belonging to this group appeared in newspapers, but the whole cluster was collected in book form after the war in 1866. Whitman included it later in the fourth edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1867. One of the most striking pieces in the cluster, "Beat! Beat! Drums!" is an appeal to the citizens of the North to abandon their daily cares and concerns, their pleasures and enjoyments, in the name of the struggle against the supporters of slavery in the South.

Editor's Note:

This short essay originally appeared in Russian in *Russkaia Literatur*a 2 (1966), 196-199. Since it remains the only extended analysis of Turgenev's translations of Whitman, we present it here in an English translation by Claudine Prieur, and Paule and Roger Asselineau.

Бейте, Бейте, Барабаны!

Бейте, бейте, барабаны! — Трубите, трубы, трубите!
 Сквозь окна, сквозь двери — врывайтесь, подобно
 Наглой силе безжалостных людей!
 (безжалостно, подобно наглым и сильным людям)
 Врывайтесь в торжественный храм [*was*: торжественную церковь] и развейте
 Сборище богомольцев;
 В<рывайтесь>ь [*inserted*] в [*was*: В] школу, где ученик сидит над книгой;
 Не оставляйте в покое жениха — не должен он
 вкушать счастье с своей невестой,
 И мирный [*crossed out, then restored*] земледелец [*was*: пахарь] не должен вкушать
 тишину, [*crossed out, then restored*]
 радости мира, не должен пахать [*further was*: землю] свое поле
 и собирать свое зерно —
 Так [*was*: Оттого] сильны и нагло ужасны ваши трескучие раскаты,
 о бар<абаны>! — так резки ваши возгласы, о трубы! [*previous variants*:
 1. сильно и нагло ваше грохотанье (*not finished*)
 2. сильны и нагло ваши грохочущие удары — так резки ваши возгласы, о трубы!]

Б<ейте>, б<ейте>, б<арабаны>! — Т<рубите>, т<рубы>, т<рубите>!
 Заглушайте [*before*: заглушайте — *crossed out*: над] торговый шум и суету — и грохот
 колес
 По улицам! [*previous variants*:
 1. заглушайте шум городов — и грохот колес по улицам
 2. заглушайте торговый шум и гам — и грохот колес по улицам]
 Готовы ли постели в домах для сонных [*inserted*] людей [*further was*: [желаю<щих>] ищущих],
 Желающих отдыха ночного? [*was*: и ночлега]
 Не должны спать эти люди в этих постелях,
 Не должны [*was*: будут] купцы [*inserted*] торговать днем — ни барышники,
 ни [*further was*: дел<ьцы>] аферисты — Хотят ли они продолжать свое
 ремесло [*was*: дело] ?
 Хотят ли говоруны говорить? Хотят ли
 певцы пытаться запеть?
 Хочет ли законник встать в Палате [*was*: в суде], чтобы
 защищать свое дело перед судьей?
 Гремите, трещите, быстрее [*was*: скорее], громче [*was*: резче], барабаны —
 Трубы, трубите, резче и сильнее!

Б<ейте>, б<ейте>, б<арабаны>! — Т<рубите>, т<рубы>, т<рубите>!
 Не [*further was*: сдав<айтесь>] вступайте ни в какие переговоры, не останавливайтесь
 ни перед каким законом <?>; [*was*: мольбой]
 Пренебр<егайте> [*before*: Пренебр<егайте> — *crossed out*: не бр<егайте>]
 робким — пренебрегайте плачущим и молящим,
 Пренебр<егайте> стариком умоляющим [*was*: уговаривающим] юношу
 [*further was*: молодого];
 Пусть не слышатся ни голоса малых ребят, ни жалобы матерей; [*started*: Да не
 слышится голосов детей]

Пускай потрясаются столы, трепещут
 лежащие на них мертвецы в ожидании доски. [*previous variants*:
 1. Заставьте [дрожать даже] столы трепетать
 2. Заставьте трясти столы, на которых лежат мертвые в ожидании доски
 3. Пускай самые мертвецы в ожидании доски это не знают <?>, пускай они тр<епещут>]
 Оттого сильны и пронзительны Ваши удары, о грозные барабаны,
 так громки Ваши возгласы, о трубы!

Figure 1. Turgenev's translation of "Beat! Beat! Drums!"

The photocopy of the manuscript of the poem, which we have in our files, shows a handwritten rough draft which invites serious scrutiny. The corrections made by the author are mostly to be found in the third stanza, where it is particularly difficult to separate the last layer of corrections from the others. The revisions of the manuscript show how, starting from a literal rendering of the basic text, the writer—especially in the first two stanzas—attains an artistic form. Thus, one can notice the replacement of several words by synonyms (see the variant of the fourth line of the first stanza) and the use of anaphoras which do not exist in the original (see the sixth line of the first stanza). The suppression of the beginning of the second line of the second stanza shows the refusal of the translator to follow the original slavishly. On the whole, Turgenev treats the original with great care, trying in his translation not to wander away from the text (see the variants of the last line of the first stanza).

The corrections in the third stanza, however, have a different character. They show that the last part of the poem corresponds only to the first stage of the translator's work, i.e., the literal rendering of the text.

The manuscript reveals that the work of the translator was still far from completed. We can deduce that Turgenev expended a great deal of effort in his translation of Whitman's poem, because the form of Whitman's piece was alien to Russian poetry on account of its specific style and its "peculiar rhythmic pattern," whose originality lies in the use of "standard poetic measures combined in a very complex manner."¹

In the relationship of Turgenev with Whitman's poetry, there appears an interest in and a constant attraction to America, a country he saw as a "fertile prairie . . . on whose horizon there burns a dazzling dawn."² This interest in America began in his adolescence and lasted during his entire life. As early as the late 1860s, he came into direct contact with American writers and others who played a part in the social life of America (in 1867, for instance, Eugene Schuyler, a translator and diplomat, called on him.)³ These bonds were reinforced and strengthened in the 1870s and 1880s.⁴ Turgenev appreciated these direct contacts; they helped him to understand American literature, which he always followed very closely. He was attracted by the strong originality and Americanness of the work of Hawthorne, Longfellow, Lowell, and Bret Harte: "I always try to keep *au courant* of your literature," Turgenev said to H.H. Boyesen; "If I miss something important, I wish you would let me know."⁵

Turgenev's passion for Whitman's work is evident in his personal testimony. On October 31 [November 12 in our calendar], 1872, he wrote to P.V. Annenkov: "To A. Ragozin I am sending together with an extract from *A Hunter's Notes* a few lyric poems translated from the

astonishing American poet Walt Whitman (have you heard of him?), with a brief prefatory note. You cannot imagine anything more startling."⁶

Some time later Turgenev told Annenkov that "the translations of Whitman (not Whiteman) have been abandoned."⁷ This statement, as well as the absence of all materials and documents contradicting it, have given Turgenev scholars reason to believe that "Turgenev's translations of Whitman were not completed and have not survived." It is clear, then, that the topic "Turgenev and Whitman" is a special case in scholarly comparative literature.

The sources of Turgenev's knowledge of Whitman's work have not been established with certainty, and the fate of his translations of Whitman's poems during the approximately forty years before Whitman became generally known to the Russian reader is also not clear. It may be because these translations have not come to light until recently that the study of this topic has been slow and laborious, and that it had to be concluded that Turgenev gave up the idea of finishing them.

It is true that Whitman's own testimony—recorded by Horace Traubel in the late 1880s—informs us that in Russia censorship prevented the publication of his poems: "I have been prohibited in Russia, under ban; John Swinton, who has a good deal to do with the Nihilists there, told me of it."⁸ This conversation seems to have taken place after the announcement of the publication of *Leaves of Grass* in Russia in 1881. The publication did not take place, but the very fact of its announcement is interesting in that it appears to be one of the reasons for the birth in Whitman of an interest in Russia, which was expressed in particular in his "Note on Russia."⁹

The materials discovered in the Turgenev archives in Paris prove that the subject "Turgenev and Whitman" is still far from exhausted and will require further research and investigation.

NOTES

1 Maurice Medelson, *Zhizn i tvorchestvo Whitman'a [Life and Work of Whitman]* (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), 186. Compare the best known translation of these lines into Russian by Konstantin Balmot in *Sbornik Znanie* (St. Petersburg) 12 (1906), 251-252.

2 Turgenev's statement about America was recorded by H.H. Boyesen in his reminiscences on the Russian writer. See *Foreign Criticism of Turgenev*, 2nd edition (St. Petersburg, 1908), 147.

3 See Turgenev's letters to some friends, September 17 [i.e., 29], 1867, in *Turgenev's Letters [Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v dvatsati vos'mi tomak]* (Moscow-Leningrad: Nauka, 1965), 6:310, 312-313, 578.

4 See Per E. Seyersted, "Turgenev's Interest in America as Seen in His Contacts with H.H. Boyesen," *Scando-Slavica* 11:25-39.

5 Boyesen, 148.

6 *Turgenev's Letters*, 10:18.

7 *Turgenev's Letters*, 10:31.

8 Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, vol. 3 (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1914), 47.

9 Whitman, *Prose Works 1892*, ed. Floyd Stovall (New York: New York University Press, 1964), 2:511-512. [The first allusion to Whitman in Russia is by John Swinton in a letter to Whitman dated August 12, 1882; see Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, vol. 2 (New York: D. Appleton, 1908), 393 (R.A.'s note).]