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BERNARD SHAW'S *DEVIL'S DISCIPLE* IN PRE-REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA

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Abstract. This paper is the first part of a research diptych dealing with the literary and theatrical fate of Bernard Shaw's early play *The Devil's Disciple* (1897) in Russia. It presents a comparative study carried out on the basis of several pre-revolutionary translations of this dramatic piece into Russian. Special attention is paid to I. Danilov and K. Chukovsky's collaboration (1908), N. Smursky's remake (1909), and N. Efros's translation (1910) of Shaw's drama. The aim of this research is to consider the circumstances under which different translations and adaptations were created; to highlight the objectives set and the strategies chosen by their authors and to assess the influence of those factors on the perception of Shaw's drama by Russian audiences. The paper also employs elements of the culturological approach by including various critical reviews of the productions based on the abovementioned translations in theatre periodicals. The stage version produced by P. Gaideburov and N. Skarskaya in their Itinerant Theatre in 1909 and Alexander Tairov's production of 1910 are given a thorough examination based on the materials of The Russian State Archive of Literature and Art as well as The Central State Archive of Literature and Art. The article highlights the peculiarities of the directors' and actors' interpretations of the text, on the one hand, and the critics' perception of Shaw's drama, on the other. The author makes a conclusion on how the historical and cultural context affected the editorial and theatrical fate of *The Devil's Disciple* in pre-revolutionary Russia and how it set the stage for the further journey of the play in the Soviet Union. This is the first research of its kind both in Russian science and abroad.

Keywords: Bernard Shaw; 20th-century drama; pre-revolutionary Russian theatre; Russian-Western literary contacts; literary translation; theatre and literary criticism; Itinerant Theatre

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«УЧЕНИК ДЬЯВОЛА» Б. ШОУ В ДОРЕВОЛЮЦИОННОЙ РОССИИ

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Аннотация. Данная статья является первой частью диптиха, посвященного литературной и театральной судьбе ранней пьесы Бернарда Шоу «Ученик дьявола» (1897) в России. Проводится компаративное исследование нескольких дореволюционных переводов данного произведения на русский язык. Основное внимание уделяется совместной работе И. Данилова и К. И. Чуковского (1908), переработке драмы Н. А. Смурским (1909) и переводу Н. Е. Эфроса (1910). Целью данного труда являются рассмотрение условий создания переводов и адаптаций текста Шоу, задач, стоявших перед переводчиками, выбранных ими стратегий и оценка влияния этих факторов на восприятие драмы русской публикой. Также используются элементы культурологического подхода за счет привлечения критических обзоров, основанных на указанных переводах спектаклей в театральной периодике. На основе архивных материалов ЦГАЛИ и РГАЛИ более подробно анализируются постановки «Ученика дьявола», организованные Передвижным театром П. П. Гайдебурова и Н. Ф. Скарской в 1909 г. и Александром Таировым в 1910 г. Выявляются особенности подходов в режиссерской и актерской интерпретации текстов, с одной стороны, и восприятия драмы Шоу критиками, с другой. Делается вывод о том, как историко-культурный контекст влиял на печатную и сценическую судьбу произведения в дореволюционной России, и каким образом он подготовил почву для дальнейшего пути пьесы в Советском Союзе. Данное исследование является первым в своем роде как в российской науке, так и за рубежом.

Ключевые слова: Бернард Шоу; драматургия XX века; дореволюционный театр в России; западно-российские литературные контакты; художественный перевод; литературная и театральная критика; Передвижной театр

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Introduction

Shavian studies present a broad field where translation of the Irish dramatist's works in other languages and their further dramatic adaptations are constantly in the focus of attention. Apart from the general review "Bernard Shaw in Translation" [Crawford 2000], there exists a vast body of articles on Shaw's relationship and collaboration with his German translator Siegfried Trebitsch (among the latest endeavours, the second chapter in "Telling the Story of Translation" [Woodsworth 2017: 11–66] can be mentioned); cross-cultural aspects of Chinese translation and reception of Shaw's dramas are gaining more attention [Wey 2009; Li 2021], while the transformations of Shaw's texts and stage productions in such countries as Spain, Mexico and Argentina are thoroughly considered in the book "Bernard Shaw and the Spanish-Speaking World" [Rodríguez Martín 2022].

Speaking of the Russian academic realm, we should note that despite the avid interest expressed to Shaw in the Soviet literary criticism, the research on performances of his pieces in Russia are not so numerous or systematic (those existing were mainly carried out by A. G. Obraztsova¹ who, although in great detail, focused only on shows she was particularly interested in), while the issue of translating Shaw into Russian had not occurred in scientific writing until the early 2000s. The few articles on the subject primarily consider *Pygmalion* [Vaseneva 2007; 2013; Belozertseva, Bogatyreva, Pavlenko 2017] – a play about a Cockney flower girl turned into a lady by means of developing proper pronunciation skills (it presents an obvious challenge for a translator being the most linguistically intricate Shaw's piece), – and *The Heartbreak House* [Zhatkin, Futlyayev 2015] (also reasonably elected by Russian scholars as "A Fantasia in the Russian Manner on English Themes"). So far, other Shaw's dramas have remained largely ignored.

The purpose of this article is to expand the textual basis for the research of Shaw in Russian translation by selecting *The Devil's Disciple* (1897) as a play extremely popular both in pre-revolutionary Russia as well as in the Soviet Union and to see the ideological and aesthetic difference in approaches to the Shavian original in print, on stage and in production reviews. The research novelty is also conditioned by the fact that several Russian versions of the text are studied together to trace its continuous evolution within our culture. Thus, the article aims at creating a solid basis for further studies of the issue both within Russia and abroad while assisting foreign scholars interested in the subject to overcome potential linguistic barriers.

¹ Anna Obraztsova (Анна Георгиевна Образцова, 1922–2003) – one of the main Shavian scholars in the USSR. She published numerous books and articles on the English theatre in general and Shaw's dramas in particular including *Bernard Shaw's Dramaturgical Method* (1965), *Bernard Shaw and the European Theatre Culture* (1974).

Setting the stage for the appearance of *The Devil's Disciple* in Russia

The introduction to the 1910 first Bernard Shaw's works edition in Russia states that "Russian broader public, even those who pay careful attention to the literary life of the West, until recently, have completely ignored Shaw, and barely knew even his name. Although about seven years ago Mr Dioneo² introduced that English dramatist to the Russian reader and, not sharing the excessive admiration of certain critics, spoke about Shaw's big talent and originality ... that was, as it seems, the only reference to Shaw in this country. The attention to him then remained 'undrawn' and Shaw himself untranslated. ... Now [in 1910] such ignorance is shifting to lively interest. His books have found their way to Russia, and start finding their translators; his dramas are gaining access to the Russian stage. ... And one should think that interest neither will be passing, nor [become] an accidental literary trend. It would be, of course, too daring to predict that Mr Shaw would grip Russian readers' interest and sympathy as powerfully as Oscar Wilde, Maurice Maeterlinck and Knut Hamsun have. It is rather doubtful that Mr Shaw possesses their overwhelming talent and that the very nature of his oeuvre would allow him to become a 'regent of our dreams'. But it is quite certain that Bernard Shaw, brave in his ideas – ethical and social, – quite diverse in his subjects, merciless in his irony and dashing in his style, will not remain a phenomenon without response, a minor writer of the faceless mass"³ [Shaw 1910: IX–X].

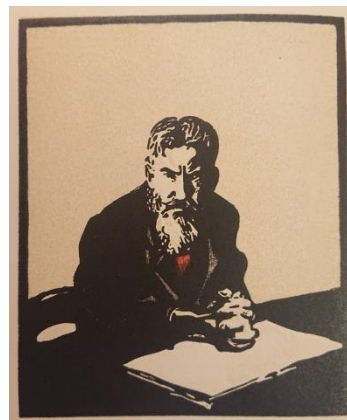


Fig. 1. Bernard Shaw's portrait published in the first edition of his works in Russia (1910)

² Dioneo – a pseudonym used by Isaac Shklovsky (1864–1935), a publicist, ethnographer, writer who, as a journalist of *Russkiye Vedomosti* newspaper, moved to London in 1896 and started publishing his observations of life and culture in England. In particular, he wrote reviews on English literature; some of them (i.e. *Angliyskiye Siluety* [English Silhouettes]) were dedicated to Bernard Shaw.

³ From here onwards all excerpts from Russian editions of Shaw's dramas, critical reviews of *The Devil's Disciple* stage productions, P. Gaideburov's and A. Deytch's publications on the theory and practice of theatre as well as Russian-language scientific papers on the subject are given in translation made by the author of this article.

Even though the reserved and careful character of that introduction could be explained by the editor's prudence, the idea that Shaw remained untranslated before 1910 does not seem to sound fair enough. And the literary and theatrical journey of *The Devil's Disciple* reveals the evidence to the contrary state of affairs.

In order to make further research more comprehensible, we provide a short summary of Shaw's drama. The play depicts an imaginary episode in the American War of Independence. It starts with a family outcast – provocative and dashing young rebel Richard (Dick) Dudgeon who calls himself a "Devil's disciple" – coming back home after the death of his hanged father to take what belongs to him according to the last will of the deceased. Act I introduces his family – a bunch of grotesque caricatures on stupidity, greed, hypocrisy, and hatred, of whom only Essie, a bastard in the puritan family, evokes Dick's sympathy – and two other central characters: righteous minister Anthony Anderson and his young wife Judith who, as it seems, cannot contain her aversion to Dick.

In the course of the play, the British soldiers occupy the town and look for a person to be hanged as a means of calling the locals back to order and obedience to the Crown. Contrary to everyone's expectations, their victim to be is not the Devil's disciple Dick Dudgeon, but the placid minister Anderson. It is only by chance that when they come to Anderson's house, they find Dick instead, and the latter, at some whim of character, decides to conceal his real name and be arrested instead of Anderson in front of the minister's wife. Judith warns Anderson and is shocked when her husband leaves the town hastily instead of helping her to save Richard whom she is now falling in love with. After the wittily written scene at the court where Dick is questioned by the military aristocrat General Burgoyne who respects a gentleman in Richard but is going to hang him nevertheless, the melodramatic story comes to an end when Anderson – no longer a minister but a new leader of the rebels – arrives at the gallows and proposes that the Brits capitulate. Thus, both Dick and Anderson find their true vocation, while America continues its fight for freedom.

First translations

Written in 1897, Shaw's drama did not find its path to Russia straightaway but as soon as it did, it sparked considerable interest among translators. Nowadays there are known at least seven translations of the play into Russian, five of which were made before the Revolution of 1917:

- 1905 – «**Мятежник**» [**The Rebel**] translated by M. Veikonè;
- 1908 – «**Апостол сатаны**» [**Satan's Apostle**] translated by I. Danilov, edited by K. Chukovsky;
- 1909 – «**Пророк Антихриста**» [**The Anti-christ's Prophet**] translated by N. Smursky;
- 1910 – «**Ученик дьявола**» [**The Devil's Disciple**] translated by N. Efros for the abovementioned first edition of Shaw's collected works in Russian;
- 1911 – «**Ученик дьявола (Безбожник)**» [**The Devil's Disciple (Godless)**] translated by S. Rapoport
- 1932–1934 – «**Ученик дьявола**» [**The Devil's**

Disciple] translated by A. Deytch and M. Moraf;

- 1979 – «**Ученик дьявола**» [**The Devil's Disciple**] translated by E. Kalashnikova for the latest Bernard Shaw's collected works edition where for the first time the play was accompanied by its original Preface to *Three Plays for Puritans* translated by E. Kornilova.

Four of them were carried out by not mere translators but theatre and literary critics (Mikhail Veikonè, Kornei Chukovsky, Nikolai Efros, Alexander Deytch), three – by professional dramatists (Veikonè, Efros, and Nikolai Smursky), the 1911 version was created by Semen Rapoport, a publicist and journalist who moved to London in 1891 and since then had been writing articles in Russian and English leading press editions in order to provide better understanding for life and culture of both countries. Thus, the resulting editions of the play in Russian were quite different in approach and that is reflected already in the titles. We are going to discuss some of those in detail.

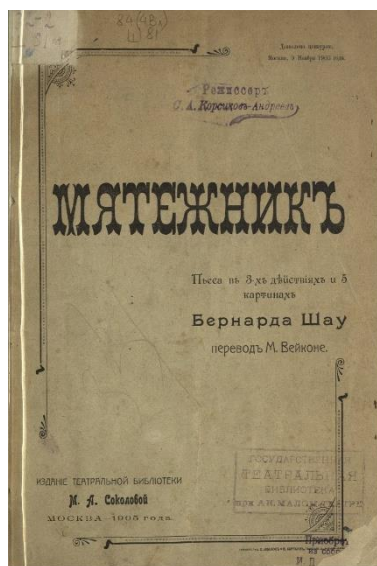


Fig. 2. First edition of M. Veikonè's *Myatezhnik* (1905). Image courtesy of the Russian State Library of Arts

The first translation, *The Rebel*, narrows down the original meaning, as in Russian 'мятежник' – is primarily a participant of a rebellion or a mutiny, an insurgent questioning authority. On the one hand, such choice can be explained through the fact that 1905, when Veikonè's translation appeared, was the year of the First Russian Revolution famous for its military mutinies. In this case, the choice of the word, as well as the historical background of the play must have been meant to resonate with the Russian audience procuring interest for the piece. And indeed, the very first performance based on this translation, which took place in Voronezh one year later, was met with enthusiasm much more indebted to the contemporary circumstances rather than the artistic merits. Here is an excerpt from a 1906 review by the local theatre critic K. Vladimirov: "*The Rebel* enjoyed great success due to the topical character of its plot. Unfortunately, the play, which itself is written in a contrived melodramatic manner, was turned by the performers into a

blank melodrama.”¹

The second translation, *Satan's Apostle*, made by I. Danilov and Korney Chukovsky in collaboration, first of all, alters the Devil's name (in both Russian and English traditions, those are used interchangeably, so there is no considerable shift in the sense) and substitutes the word 'disciple' with 'apostle'. In English, 'disciple' and 'apostle' are also contextually synonymous. In Russian, the words 'ученик' and 'апостол' were interchangeable at the time when the translation was written. However, the Biblical meaning of 'apostle' was always mentioned first in the dictionaries, whereas the second – an eager follower and spreader of a particular idea, teaching etc. – was marked as “metaphorical, literary” and gradually became outdated. Thus, being completely accurate in the beginning of the XX century, that Russian-language version of the title has not aged well and today it is likely to provoke confusion by creating false expectations in the reader's mind.

¹ *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theatre and Art]. 1906. No. 7. P. 112.

Meditating on the reasons behind the translator's choice, one can suggest that the changes were also made bearing in mind the contemporary situation – in this case, not political but theatrical. Judging by the reviews published in newspapers and magazines dedicated to drama and arts, the plays mentioning Satan were quite in fashion at the turn of the centuries in Russia (e.g. *Satan's Power* by the Polish playwright Lucjan Rydel², *Satan's Hurdy-Gurdy* by N. A. Teffi, *Satan's Diary* by L. N. Andreev; and numerous other titles including *Satan's Grief*, *Satan's Destiny*, *Satan's Synagogue* which constantly occurred on theatrical playbills). So, the substitution of 'the Devil' by 'Satan' in the title of Shaw's drama could be part of a promotion strategy which proved to be effective: the repertoire announcements evoked huge interest, however, the success of the play largely depended on its production.

² In the Polish original, the play was titled *Dies Irae* but on Russian stage it acquired the abovementioned name.



Fig. 3. *Satan's Apostle* in the First Itinerant Dramatic Theatre (1908). TsGALI F. R-413. Op. 1. D. 9. L. 1.

Satan's Apostle at the Itinerant Theatre

The production in question took place in St. Petersburg and was directed by Pavel Gaideburov³, the founder of the First Itinerant Theatre in Russia (1905). The theatre's aim was to enlighten the working masses (mainly, the railway station employees who lived in that district) and to assist in their moral and personal development. However, gradually the audience of Gaideburov's theatre expanded and included the local intelligentsia. The theatre repertoire was varied and refined including the classics such as Ancient Greek drama, Shakespeare's and Ostrovsky's pieces as well as contempo-

rary dramatists' oeuvre (H. Ibsen, L. Tolstoy, A. Chekhov, M. Maeterlinck, B. Bjørnson and G. B. Shaw). The main requirement for plays consisted in the presence of a "clear psychological concept," "strict literary merits" and the absence of "crushing pessimism" [Gaideburov 1922: 47]. *Satan's Apostle* (*The Devil's Disciple*) met all those requirements.

Gaideburov's approach to performance stood in strong opposition to any mechanical type of acting based on physical representation clichés. It also revolted against the director's dictatorship (often associated with K. Stanislavky). In contrast, Gaideburov saw a production as a co-creation to which all the participants involved could contribute equally. To a large extent, he saw a theatrical spectacle as a *mystery* in the medieval sense of the word. For him, it was a process of embodying and spiritualizing the "dead as a mere ritual material" through the recreation of an actor's 'ego' performed by each crew member individually, and then, joining the others in a collective experience of the sacred essence of a dramatic act [Gaideburov 1922: 14]. That perception seems to be especially in

³ Pavel Gaideburov (Павел Павлович Гайдебуров, 1877–1960) – Russian and Soviet theatre and film actor, poet, director, and teacher. Together with his wife, actress Nadezhda Skarskaya (Надежда Федоровна Скарская, 1868–1958), he co-founded the First Itinerant Theatre where they performed, directed productions, and instructed younger actors. During 1914–1924, they published a theatrical magazine *Zapiski Peredvizhnogo Teatra* [Notes of the Itinerant Theatre], in 1959 their book of memoirs *Na Stsene i v Zhizni* [On Stage and In Life] appeared.

tune with Shaw's "mystery in three acts" *Candida* which was the next play that Gaideburov put to stage.

Shaw's precision with the musical structure of the dialogue also did not go unnoticed by the founders of the Itinerant Theatre. The inner dynamics of *The Devil's Disciple* were successfully delivered by the troupe not in the least due to Gaideburov's attention to the music of the play. "Each work of literature, as a whole, as well as in parts, bears a specific rhythm which is unique to it. Sound, vibration, nerve, colour, even our thoughts reveal themselves as various vibrations of the matter. ... Connecting two or several individualities, creative emotional experiences develop a clear interaction, tension building and its decrease, a mutual struggle, [thus,] uninterruptedly highlighting the rhythm as an outward sign of the inner movement of a soul. It should be especially relevant to the rhythm of the speech, the dialogue of a tragic theatrical act." [Gaideburov 1922: 16] And in terms of theatrical properties, Gaideburov and Shaw were also unanimous: "the appearance of any object on stage [should be] justified by the irresistible necessity of it in the course of action" [Gaideburov 1922: 33].

The audience should always be observant as far as Shaw's plays are concerned. Careful positioning of the props in *The Devil's Disciple* is evident already in Act I remark describing the scene: "Between the door and the window a rack of pegs suggests to the deductive observer that the men of the house are all away, as there are no hats or coats on them" [Shaw 1963: 272]. In Act II, the way that clothes are hanged by the characters acquires additional meaning as it is the change of Richard's coat for minister Anderson's cloak that manifests their switch, and Dick nearly gives himself away by initially moving in the wrong direction:

THE SERGEANT. Come, Parson; put your coat on and come along.

RICHARD. Yes: I'll come. (*He rises and takes a step towards his own coat; then recollects himself, and, with his back to the sergeant, moves his gaze slowly round the room without turning his head until he sees Anderson's black coat hanging up on the press. He goes composedly to it; takes it down; and puts it on. The idea of himself as a parson tickles him ... He turns to the sergeant, who is approaching him with a pair of handcuffs hidden behind him, and says lightly*) Did you ever arrest a man of my cloth before, Sergeant? [Shaw 1963: 307]

***Satan's Apostle* production in criticism**

Gaideburov's ability to meet all the demands that Shavian drama presented to staging procured notable success to his adaptation of *Satan's Apostle*. The review that appeared in the leading theatrical medium *Teatr i Iskusstvo* [Theatre and Art] after the premiere on December 21st demonstrated the critic's high opinion of the performance and awareness of the unique character of Shaw's works: "Bernard Shaw without a doubt is a bright and talented dramatist. His characters are elegant and original, his psychology is subtle and interesting, his dramatic effects are created by a daring and skilled hand of a master. The drawbacks of his plays are certain far-fetchedness, so to say, contrivance of situations and over-use of paradoxes in which

he falls far behind the King of the genre – ingenious Oscar Wilde."¹

The opinion that Shaw's talent was somewhat inferior to Wilde's was common in pre-revolutionary Russia. However, in contrast with those who read Shavian dramas only in translation, the review revealed that the critic who signed Z.B. (З.Б.) had a more intimate acquaintance with the English original: "The play is produced thoughtfully, in beautiful soft hues of an old engraving. Unfortunately, the translation is unsatisfactory and does not always deliver the nature of the original text. For instance, the sharp wit-tiness of the dialogues is often lost."

In fact, Z.B. was a pen name used by Zoya Bukharova who was not only a literary critic and a journalist but also a poet and professional translator. Hence her meticulousness in terms of assessing the Russian version of the text.

Despite her dissatisfaction with Danilov–Chukovsky translation Zoya Bukharova appreciated Gaideburov's work with the material as he belonged to "the minority of our public" who understood "the spirit of the new English drama" as opposed to the average audience who, while appreciating the main tendency which in most cases includes some kind of re-evaluation, a change of worldview, rarely grasps the softness of hues, the gentleness of traits belonging to another mentality."²

Discussing individual performances, Z.B. was not quite satisfied with Ms Kapustina's "indiscernible diction" and excessive affectation in her performance of Judith. However, Bukharova saw her potential and recommended working on it³. Other critics did not share her view and characterized Kapustina's acting as lyrical and touching – perhaps the best recommendation for Judith with her "childlike self-complacency" and "sentimental character formed by dreams" [Shaw 1963: 281]. But the main focus stayed on the male parts:

"Mr Tairov – Richard – gave a bright and dashing performance of his promising role,"⁴ – Z.B. wrote, and her assessment was later supported in other reviews praising young Alexander Tairov's expressiveness, precision and "passion"⁵ despite at times "unrestrained gesticulation"⁶. All of those would later become hallmarks of the acting technique practised at the Kamerny Theatre founded by Tairov in 1914.

In fact, not long afterwards his success in Gaideburov's theatre, Tairov would produce his own stage version of the play in the Russian Theatre in Riga where he served both as a lead actor and director. That production received rave reviews stating that Tairov once again won the hearts of the audience and after each performance was given flowers and generous presents⁷.

In Gaideburov's production of 1908–1909, the critics also spoke highly of Mr Golfaden as Anthony Anderson. As Zoya Bukharova put it, "The spirit of a

¹ *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theatre and Art]. 1909. No. 1. P. 4.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ RGALI. F. 2328. Op. 1. Ed. khr. 303. P. 26.

⁶ *Ibid.* P. 23.

⁷ RGALI. F. 2328. Op. 1. Ed. khr. 303. P. 53.

revolutionary soldier smouldering under the mask of a minister and suddenly flashing once he hears about Richard's arrest – all that was genuinely delivered by the young actor in a heartfelt manner."¹ Mr Reutov in the role of General Burgoyne – a “historical character of a smart, subtle, brilliant diplomat who signs death sentences with genteel correctness and in cold blood – was elegant and stylish.”² And even Mr Bryantsev's performance of Dick's silly brother Christy deserved many compliments for stealing the show³.

So, the overall impression from the production was extremely favourable: it “fascinated the audience, was listened to with assiduous attention and had a huge, albeit not fully conscious, success.”⁴ That success experienced by Gaideburov's troupe in Saint Petersburg, inspired them to take *Satan's Apostle* on their first grand tour which included at least ten cities – Poltava, Kharkiv, Ekaterinoslavl (cont. Dnipro), Taganrog, Saratov, Simbirsk (cont. Ulyanovsk), Kazan, Vyatka (cont. Kirov), Perm, and Tyumen. We managed to identify the list of tour locations relying on the reviews by local theatre observers published in magazines *Teatr i Iskusstvo*, *Rampa and Actyor* [Limelight and Actor], *Rampa i Zhizn* [Limelight and Life]. According to those reviews, each city's audience gave the Itinerant Theatre actors a warm welcome, and the play – an enthusiastic ovation.

The significance and influence of *Satan's Apostle* in Russian Shaviana

It can be said that Gaideburov's and Tairov's productions of *Satan's Apostle* assisted Shaw's popularity in Russia both with the quality of performances and the in-depth (albeit “not fully conscious”) understanding of the nature of Shavian early drama. If in 1909, Bozhena Vitvitskaya, an actress, theatre critic and journalist, wrote that “Shaw is little known in our [Russian] society”⁵, already in 1910, as we have mentioned earlier, Nikolai Efros indicated the increase of interest to Shaw's oeuvre. The productions of 1908–1909 made both capital and provincial audiences recognise Shaw as “a brisk sceptic who is not prone to excessive lamentation or dismal judgement”, “a very witty man, a subtle psychologist possessing a rich colour palette and a great variety in imagery which makes his works extremely entertaining”⁶. And in the next two decades *The Devil's Disciple* competed with another Shaw's hit *Pygmalion* for being the most frequently staged Shavian drama in Russia.

Moreover, Danilov – Chukovsky translation of the play which Zoya Bukharova reproached as being “unsatisfactory” was, nevertheless, the one that theatre directors usually gave preference to. Commenting on the quality of *Satan's Apostle* as a text compared to the original and to other existing translations, we should say that, of course, Shavian humour is very intricate, often working simultaneously on several levels (lexical, syntactic, rhythmical, and situational),

so it would be impossible to expect a completely accurate representation of the original in another language. However, Chukovsky was a professional translator, critic, writer and editor who saw the primary target of a literary translation in preserving the *spirit* of the piece rather than following obediently every word and trait of the original.⁷ So, when the initial word pun was lost, he richly restored the humorous effect through reversed syntax, intentional discrepancies in the style of a character's speech and the overall situation, as well as the use of connotatively powerful words. In general, master play upon connotations in *Satan's Apostle* added even more colour and overtones to the figures of Mrs Dudgeon, Dick, and General Burgoyne, while preserving the core of their characters intact.

In fact, despite certain alterations, Danilov – Chukovsky collaborative work was the only one to preserve most of Shaw's original imagery that was omitted or substituted by other translators. For example, in their text, “shapeless” and “bottled-nosed” uncle William Dudgeon was portrayed exactly as Shaw intended, whereas in other Russian-language versions he was characterised as “shapeless, with a red nose” (Veikonè), “fat, with a red nose” (Smursky), or “clumsy, with a fat nose” (Efros). Shaw was always very peculiar about the word choice, and in those two traits the playwright highlighted William's two main features: his weak will and alcohol addiction. Those translators who made William red-nosed came close as that trait is usually associated with a drinking man. However, the change was not that necessary.

The Antichrist's Prophet

The respect paid by Danilov and Chukovsky to Shaw's original becomes especially evident in contrast with *The Antichrist's Prophet*, an adaptation created by Nikolai Smursky who did not just transform the text but distorted its ideological concept. Perhaps, that is why there was no mentioning of Shaw's name either on the front page or in the text of *The Antichrist's Prophet*. The only indication that did not allow to give Smursky full credit for its creation was a vague note “loaned from English” [Smursky 1909: front page].

Nevertheless, that does not seem to be the case of remorseless plagiarism. Our educated guess is that the play ignited Smurky's artistic imagination so much he that could not resist the temptation to add certain dramatic accents that, in his view, the play might benefit from. And in fact, that guess can be supported by certain evidence.

⁷ Chukovsky explicitly stated his opinion on the subject in the review of Tatiana Gnedich's work on the Russian adaptation of Lord Byron's *Don Juan*. In contrast with the previous academic and ‘correct’ translation made by P.A. Kozlov which Chukovsky characterized as ‘correct’ but woefully ‘cachectic,’ and G. Shengeli's diligent and highly respectful version that followed the original poem in such detail that it completely lost its artistic values, Gnedich took unimaginable liberties substituting certain character traits and transforming whole sentences but in such a way that it revived *Don Juan's* gripping vitality and for the first time presented Byron's poetry for Russian readers not as something complex and obscure but a true art to be indulged.

¹ *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theatre and Art]. 1909. No. 1. P. 4.

² *Ibid.*

³ RGALI. F. 2328. Op. 1. Ed. khr. 303. P. 23, 28.

⁴ *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theatre and Art]. 1909. No. 1. P. 4.

⁵ RGALI. F. 2328. Op. 1. Ed. khr. 303. P. 55.

⁶ *Ibid.*



Fig. 4. Nikolai Smursky. Korsh Theatre. Editorial House D. Khromov & M. Bakhrakh. (1913). Retrieved from: <https://www.anumis.ru/auc189/id659393>

There is not much known about Nikolai Smursky – even the exact years of his life present an identification problem. However, there is a photograph of him made for The Korsh Theatre in which he was an actor somewhere between 1909 and 1913. In the search through theatrical articles on the Korsh Theatre at the time, there surfaced several notes mentioning N. A. Smursky. The assessment given by critics to his performance in 1910 reveals the young actor's explicit tendency to exaggeration and affectation which provoked merciless irony in theatre observers.

In a review of H. Bataille's *Foolish Virgin* staged at the Korsh Theatre, it is said that Mr Smursky who played "the prominent solicitor, a brilliant orator and socialite, Marcel Armaury" for some reason imagined that a French dandy should "gesticulate like a bear and weep like a cat". The critic suggested that it was Smursky's secret intention to take revenge on all French socialites who leave their wives for seventeen-year-old girls, and "although he could not agree with the approach, he had to admit that it was carried out by the actor quite diligently"². Another review dedicated to M. Dreyer's *Seventeen-Year-Olds* stated that Smursky's performance in that parody on university life "was quite tolerable" and could even have been better, had he "stopped groaning like a provincial Othello" and learnt to put his hands in pockets properly³. Thus, it is quite reasonable to suggest that Smursky's rather grotesque acting method could have affected his translator's technique.

The changes introduced by Smursky to Shaw's text did not limit themselves just to the title (*The Antichrist's Prophet*) which immediately shifted the reader's expectations to some kind of Biblical tragedy. Smursky added titles to the acts: Act I "The Outcast", Act II "Death of Thy Neighbour (The Lion Awakens)", Act III "The Trial", Act IV "To the Gallows". He also

changed some plot details (e.g. Richard paying a visit to his father on the night of his death, and their reconciliation never took place in Shaw's original; in Smursky's text, Uncle Titus turns out to be a usurer who has destroyed many lives etc.), and made considerable cuts and transformations in the remarks as well as certain dialogues (e.g. the introduction is shortened; Dick's conduct with his relatives in Act I becomes more repulsive rather than playful; Mrs. Dudgeon is portrayed even less favourably than in the original etc.).

Most importantly, Smursky added some explanatory lines about the central character's nickname. When asked by Essie why he is called the Antichrist's Prophet, Dick answers "Because I lead such life that people have to live before the Antichrist's arrival. I do not love anyone and I don't believe in anything" [Smursky 1909: 18]. Essie insists on finding out the reason for such life, and Dick says "I am the Antichrist's prophet – that's what I've been told for so many years, and they made me believe it." [Smursky 1909: 19] So when Essie starts to cry, he delivers an extended monologue: "Tears! ... Do you pity me, Essie? Do you understand what you've done? These tears are the first to be shed out of pity and compassion to dissolute, sinful Dick – these tears as a long-desired salutary rain have poured on my heart, withered from anger and suffering..." [Smursky 1909: 20]. Thus, the play that was intended by Shaw to be a mock-melodrama, in Smursky's adaptation, turned into an ultimate melodrama *per se*, and there was no way to reconcile the result with the original.

There is no doubt, however, that Smursky was proud of his work and hoped that it highlighted the main idea of the play, which, as he states in his own short preface, was to show "how misleading appearances might be. How often people stigmatize their neighbours with shameful judgement only because [those neighbours] seem to them evil and vicious, and no one wants to take a look at their soul where more often than not there are hidden gems of heart and mind; and how necessary it is to take that look" [Smursky 1909: 1].

Interestingly enough, the story of hidden potential gradually redeeming the initial faults that produced an unfavourable impression could be applied not only to Richard Dudgeon, but to Smursky himself. According to the press, already in 1910–1911, Smursky was given an opportunity to shine as a theatre manager and director in Nizhny Novgorod where he collected a decent box-office⁴. The papers also reveal that there he collaborated with Pyotr Medvedev⁵ who in 1908 was the first to stage *The Devil's Disciple* under the title *The Antichrist's Prophet* in Vladikavkaz even before Smursky published the text officially in 1909⁶. Obviously, the two knew each other already then, and Smursky gave Medvedev a copy of his translation hoping that it could

¹ *Rampa i zhizn* [Limelight and Life]. 1910. No. 37. P. 11 (609).

² *Ibid.*

³ *Rampa i zhizn* [Limelight and Life]. 1910. No. 43. P. 12 (706).

⁴ *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theatre and Art]. 1910. No. 6. P. 23 (141); 1911. No. 16. P. 19(341).

⁵ Pyotr Medvedev (Петр Петрович Медведев, 1859–? after 1926) – Russian and Soviet actor and theatre manager who in 1885–1918 held *entreprises* in a number of towns in province (including Nizhny Novgorod), and in later years mainly performed in the Alexandrinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg.

⁶ *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theatre and Art]. 1908. No. 51. P. 24 (926).

be staged straightaway. Smurky's text was taken for staging by several other troupes within the next couple of years – in 1909, there was a production in Stavropol where the box office “was constantly high”¹, and another one in 1911 which took place in Novozybkov and, by contrast, was criticized as “very weak” due to the overall poor organization of the theatre and lack of professional direction².

So, the stage life of *The Antichrist's Prophet* was not long while Smursky's career continued and finally brought him the long-aspired appraisal in the role of Commander Gómez de Guzmán in Lope de Vega's *Fuenteovejuna* (1918–1919). There, as already “a serious, thoughtful, no longer young but experienced actor” Nikolai Smursky delivered a “deep and penetrating” performance where he “did not resort to external effects and did not try to arouse the antipathy of the audience with the deliberate rudeness of his methods. Smarmy movements characteristic of a predatory beast, confident and imperious gestures, an arrogantly raised head with a fashionably styled beret, and a rich variety of intonations – either hypocritically friendly, or arrogantly ferocious” – that was how Smursky portrayed the Commander – as “an insidious enemy, capable of any crime, when the boiling passion breaks out, burning him and depriving him of self-control.” [Deytch 1966: 191] Evidently, by that time, Smursky had learnt from his early mistakes and found a way to transform his “bear-like movements” and feline manner of weeping into the powerful means of delivering the hypnotic nature of a human-predator image. The most ironic aspect of the quoted review is that it stated that Smursky was chosen by the director of *Fuenteovejuna* precisely in order to avoid any melodramatic affectation that would otherwise ruin the role in any other actor's approach, meanwhile the most fascinating fact about the lines quoted above is that they belong to Alexander Deytch – one of the future Soviet translators of Shaw's piece.

Nikolai Efros's *The Devil's Disciple*

Last but not least, it is necessary to consider the translation made by Nikolai Efros who was the first to preserve the original title of the play. Ya. Chernyshova and A. Kalnichenko, who in 2014 published a brief thesis article about the influence of historical context on the Soviet translation practices briefly mentioned Efros's translation of 1922 and condemned it for eliminating the historical background and place description in the opening remark completely “because at the time the Bolsheviks proclaimed orientation on the future as a top priority whereas the past should be discarded as dead weight” [Chernyshova, Kalnichenko 2014: 223]. As the authors of the article did not specify the particular edition of Efros's translation that they were relying on, it was impossible for us to verify that information. However, the first time Nikolai Efros published his version of *The Devil's Disciple* was much earlier – in 1910 within the first Bernard Shaw works edition that we started this article with. And that publication testi-

fies against the abovementioned criticism. On the contrary, together with Danilov – Chukovsky translation it can be considered the most complete and the least frivolous in its relationship with the original.

The overall strategy chosen by Efros was to deliver the sense of the original even though in some cases particular grotesque or expressive features softened as a result. For example, if in Shaw's text Mrs. Dudgeon “assaults her chair by sitting down” [Shaw 1963: 274] – a very precise choice of words – in Efros's translation she just “takes her seat” [Shaw 1910: 251] because any attempt at literal reverberation would seem artificial in Russian and not worth it. Another rather pitiful loss concerns the description of Judith Anderson who, in the original, is “pretty and proper and ladylike, and has been admired and petted into an opinion of herself sufficiently favorable to give her a self-assurance which serves her instead of strength. She has a pretty taste in dress, and in her face the pretty lines of a sentimental character formed by dreams. Even her little self-complacency is pretty, like a child's vanity” [Shaw 1963: 281]. What immediately attracts attention is that “pretty” is repeated four times, and given the usual diversity and richness of Shaw's lexical range, it immediately reveals the author's irony towards his heroine. Efros, in his turn, decided to vary Russian synonyms to “pretty” instead of repeating the same lexical trick: Judith is “pretty, slender, ladylike; people admire her and that gives her a self-assurance which serves her instead of strength. She is dressed with taste, and there is something sentimental about her face – a touch of dreams” [Shaw 1910: 255].

But those are tiny digressions as opposed to the ones we have seen in other adaptations. Moreover, if in some cases, Efros's choice of words was not as impressive or ironic as in the original, in others, on the contrary, he found the most accurate idioms and expressions to adapt Shaw's irony to the Russian language. For instance, reasonably omitting a comparison of Christy's awkwardness and absent-mindedness to that of a “negligent wicket keeper” as too culture-specific, Efros, delivers his ‘fattiness’ by the word ‘тучный’ which, in Russian, is associated not only with people but also with animals, especially with calves, and that connotatively gives the reader an idea that Christy is both cumbersome and gullible. At the same time his fair-hair (connotatively neutral in the original) is translated with the word ‘белобрысый’ immediately hinting at his negative features.

Conclusion

Going back to Efros's introduction to *The Devil's Disciple* quoted in the beginning of this article, we can see that even before 1910 Shaw's name was not completely unknown to “the broader public” in Russia. On the contrary, his plays found their translators much earlier and paved their way on stage both in provincial towns all over the country and in the capital. The avid interest to Shaw that revealed itself in 1910 can largely be explained precisely through the success of the stage productions of *Satan's Apostle* by P. Gaideburov and Alexander Tairov in 1909–1910.

Although, the abovementioned critical theatre re-

¹ *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theatre and Art]. 1909. No. 45. P. 23 (799).

² *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theatre and Art]. 1911. No. 32. P. 17 (611).

views supported the general tendency to compare Shaw to Wilde at the time, Shaw's individuality shined through in the translations made by N. Efros, I. Danilov and K. Chukovsky who made the least amount of digressions from the original and preserved the majority of Shavian extensive remarks whereas in other versions they were either substantially reduced (in the case with the description of Dick's and Anderson's houses, or) or left out completely (for instance, the historical background completely eliminated by M. Veikonè in the introductory remark, or Shaw's commentaries referring to the disadvantages of women's position in society absent in N. Smusky's version).

That can be explained through the fact that both Danilov – Chukovsky and Efros's versions were meant primarily for reading and not for staging: the first productions based on those texts appeared after the official publication of book editions. Whereas Veikonè's and Smursky's text editing was aimed at simplification circumstanced by the authors' desire to put the play in production as soon as possible. It seems that they both considered extra commentary on historical and socioeconomical issues raised by Shaw as unnecessary and too complex for a melodrama and potentially harmful for the audience's delight in the

spectacle. However, the outcome of such approach did not prove to be either artistically or theatrically adequate: both texts failed to procure long-running shows and were condemned by the critics.

At the same time, the translations that closely followed Shaw's original and managed to capture not only the playwright's wit but also his spirit provided solid basis for extremely successful and critically acclaimed stage adaptations by P. Gaideburov and A. Tairov.

Overall, we can identify two major thematic aspects dominant in the pre-revolutionary productions of Shaw's drama: 1) the moral transformation of the main character, and 2) the correlation between mutinies in the XVIII-century America and the early XX-century Russia (the latter assisted the play's popularity around 1905 and in the years just before the Russian Revolution of 1917).

It can be said that *The Devil's Disciple* made a considerable contribution to the enviable reputation and success of the directors and actors involved in its productions. And it is also fair to say that the translations and productions considered in this article laid foundation for Bernard Shaw's further triumphant success on and off stage in Soviet Russia which will be considered in our next article on the subject.

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