

erally, without resorting to transformation. Leonid Pervomaysky, as we see, was not the least bothered that the metaphor is "contraindicative" to Ukrainian folk poetry. Here, as in all other areas of literary creativity, there can be no universal recipes.

DON JUAN If I were challenged to name a translation that has put the ruinous theory of literalism to shame, finally, once and for all, I would naturally name the translation of Byron's *Don Juan* by Tatyana Gnedich.¹⁴

The immortal poem has been translated more than once into Russian. I can remember from childhood the translation done by P.A. Kozlov (not to be confused with Ivan Kozlov, Byron's great translator in the Romantic period). It was a fully proper translation, but it was so anemic that Russians who read it got an unintended picture of Byron as an untalented writer of tedious doggerel. Later, in the Soviet period, *Don Juan* appeared in the translation of Georgy Shengeli. Shengeli was a diligent drudge, but his conscientious work of many years on Byron's work of genius turned out to be a fool's errand because of the erroneous principles which formed its basis. If his translation of *Don Juan* is ever mentioned in the literature, it is only as a sad example for other translators: how a poetic text should never, under any circumstances, be translated. In his pursuit of mechanical, sham precision Shengeli attempted to reproduce each stanza word for word, line for line, without concern for communicating its sparkling style.

It is thus with great joy—truly unexpected joy!—that we have found *Don Juan* in the translation of Tatyana Gnedich. Reading this translation after being immersed in the previous translations is like emerging onto a broad, sunlit expanse after deep grieving in a dark tomb. To the amazement of Russian readers, *Don Juan* turns out not to be a pile of countless rhymed rebuses which no one cares to decipher, but an inspired—and

crystal clear—work of art fully worthy of the delight with which it was hailed by Pushkin, and Goethe, and Shelley, and Walter Scott, and Mickiewicz. Tatyana Gnedich must have said to herself, let the individual images and the individual colors of the original be lost, just so long as the reader is given the poem's crystal clarity, the vital naturalness of its intonations, the unforced lightness of its simple and distinct diction. This was her only concern. Any given stanza of her translation has lost almost half the semantic units of the original: the translator readily threw out dozens of details for the sake of guaranteeing her translation the sharp verbal expressiveness inherent to the original. Away with verbal ambiguity and inarticulate mumbling!

Listen, for example, to the sound of the hypocritical howls of offended innocence cast at her jealous husband by Donna Julia, who has just betrayed him, at the very moment Don Juan is hiding beneath her mattress:

CXLV

During this inquisition Julia's tongue
Was not asleep—"Yes, search and search,"
she cried,
"Insult on insult heap, and wrong on wrong!
It was for this that I became a bride!
For this in silence I have suffered long!
A husband like Alfonso at my side;
But now I'll bear no more, nor here remain,
If there be law or lawyers in all Spain.

CXLVI

"Yes, Don Alfonso! husband now no more,
If ever you indeed deserved the name,
Is't worthy of your years?—you have threescore—
Fifty, or sixty, it is all the same—
Is't wise or fitting, causeless to explore
For facts against a virtuous woman's fame?
Ungrateful, perjured, barbarous Don Alfonso,
How dare you think your lady would go on so?

CXLVII

"Is it for this I have disdain'd to hold
 The common privileges of my sex?
 That I have chosen a confessor so old
 And deaf, that any other it would vex,
 And never once he has had cause to scold,
 But found my very innocence perplex
 So much, he always doubted I was married—
 How sorry you will be when I've miscarried!"¹⁵

The reader, I am sure, will not be upset that I have offered such a long quotation. It is necessary to provide a concrete example, so that it can be appreciated what vital intonations of human speech Tatyana Gnedich had to convey—and did convey with irreproachable fidelity and unerring artistry. This rushing, stormy torrent of shameless self-praise, false reproaches, and complaints is re-created with such skill in Gnedich's translation that one hears—one actually hears—all the modulations of a feignedly outraged woman which are heard in the original.

And of course, we do not in the least regret the many sacrifices she had to make in order to achieve what she did. These sacrifices are insignificant in comparison with the benefit they bring us. Where Byron says: ". . . her soft lips lie apart, / And louder than her breathing beats her heart" (CLVIII), we read in Gnedich's translation: "She was lovely as an angel" (47). With Byron it is: "God grant you feel not then the bitterest grief!" (CLVII); with Gnedich: "How stupid, and wretched, and cruel he was" (47). Literalists will generally find a rich mine here. No one will prevent them from the mean pleasure of caviling at the supposedly impermissible "imprecisions" that can be easily discovered in Gnedich's translation. "In this translation," they will say, "it says that Julia was 'majestically pale' (47), that she has 'silken shoulders' (46), and that she exclaims ironically, 'The sofa is perfect for a dwarf to hide!' (46), while Byron's text says nothing of dwarfs, or silken shoulders, or majesty." And again: "In the translation of octavo CXLIX Cazzani is titled count, while in the original he is a simple musician. The count is actually his 'coun-

tryman' Count Corniani (and not his 'friend,' as the translator has it). The count does not call Donna Julia a 'virtuous Spanish woman,' as it says in the translation (44), but 'the only virtuous wife in Spain.' And again, in the translation of octavo CXLIX it says, 'Were not many English at my feet?' while in the original it says, 'Were there not also Russians, English, many?' The final three lines of the octavo can be shown to be even further from the original. Byron says:

The Count Strongstroganoff I put in pain,
 And Lord Mount Coffeehouse, the Irish peer,
 Who killed himself for love (with wine) last year.

But the translator composes the rhyme *poshcháda-dosáda*, thereby adding the words 'mercy' and 'vexation' to the work." This is what literalists will point out with mean pleasure. Literalists who demand that translations of poetry be done verbatim—even though the implementation of this demand turns the text of a translation into cacophonous nonsense—will be happy to cavil even that the number of bishops at Donna Julia's feet is also given incorrectly in the translation—the original has two, and the translation one. And so on. And so on.

But essentially, what does it matter to us whether there are two bishops or one? Or whether Corniani or Cazzani was the count? Or that it was Irish blood flowing in the veins of Lord Mount Coffeehouse? These are all third-rate details whose sacrifice in the cause of re-creating the vital, emotative intonations of the original with maximal precision is not to be in the least regretted.

Tatyana Gnedich would never been able to achieve this if she did not have such great linguistic resources at her command. Her lexicon has a handsome supply of fine words, rich in nuance, facilitating the liveliness of the poem's speech with great strength. She writes of Suvorov that he was "a bit eccentric and frivolous" (*Chudakovaty i vertliavyi*, 268), which is just fine for "a little-odd-old man." Every single page is characterized by this lively, animated, never translation-like speech.

True, there is one quality of the original that remains almost

untouched in Gnedich's translation: the whimsical rhyme system. *Don Juan* has an incalculable multitude of mischievous, punning, unexpected, distracting rhymes which impart a special character of grotesquely virtuoso play to the text. On me they make an impression of a fireworks display. But instead of demanding that the translator re-create these brilliant whimsies, we will instead express our gratitude to her for her great gift to Russian readers—her intelligent, loving, talented translation of one of the greatest works of world poetry. When one realizes that every octavo demands two sets of triple rhymes, to say nothing of the resounding concordances at the end of each and every line, and that there are a total of 1,763 octaves in *Don Juan*—the only words we have a right to speak about Tatyana Gnedich's self-sacrificing labor are the words "heroic deed."

These lines were already written when a report appeared in the newspapers about the extraordinary conditions under which Tatyana Gnedich performed her heroic creative deed. She was arrested in 1944 and, as it says in the newspapers, "shared the tragic fate suffered by so many in the period of the cult of personality." In her solitary cell there were no books, no paper, no pen, no ink. But happily, she knew the fifth, the ninth, and part of the first canto of Byron's poem by heart. "Tatyana Gnedich was obliged to carry out her immense work on the translation of *Don Juan* in her head."¹⁶ An amazing memory, a magnificent force of intellect, heroically overcame these almost insurmountable obstacles.

GOOD and Bad To be frank, I was a bit
 — worried when I first saw an English translation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*. It was painful to think that in place of Pushkin's lines I would be obliged to read bland and lackluster doggerel worked up by the limp hand of a hack. I have