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Fet's Catullus

Reflecting a lengthy tradition of received opinion, Brian James Baer and Natalia Olshanskaya (2014: 47) state: “In his translations, Fet made a consistent attempt to reproduce the literal meaning and to secure the formal elements of the original.” However, close examination of his theoretical positions over time and of his practice in assembling the veritable library of Classical poets he translated from the Latin during the final decade of his life demonstrates that in fact he fluctuates considerably in the underlying principles he is applying to his translation work, and is neither a slave to any late Romantic ideology of translation nor a captive of such facile oppositions as 'подражание' versus 'перевод'. Instead, his is the flexible, tempered approach of the mature major lyric poet, applying in his versions his profound knowledge of the German tradition of classical scholarship to the tasks at hand; he is guided rather than governed by the trope he chooses to symbolize his view of the role of the translator as presented in his preface to his 1885 complete translation of Catullus: “Самого переводчика можно уподобить дерзновенному водолазу, ищущему на дне морском сокрытых драгоценностей. Он приносит лишь то, что в данном случае нашел: редкостные украшения, перемешанные с удивительной дрянью, драгоценности, затонувшие при древних кораблекрушениях, огнецветные, фантастически изветвленные кораллы, истинные жемчужины в неприглядных раковинах; пусть другие разбирают, очищают и употребляют в дело.” Fet's “vertical” imagery here, then, forms a second coordinate axis to Pushkin's more famous “horizontal” “почтовые лошади просвещения.”

One need but consider Fet's translation of Catullus's *Carmina* 16 to conclude that he was far indeed from reproducing literal meaning: “Pedicabo vos et irrumabo” is conveyed by “В лицо всех пакостей наделаю я вам.” Yet, well aware of Pushkin's famous version of Catullus 51, when Fet undertakes his own translation of that poem, he pays closer attention to the minutiae of the Latin text than does Pushkin, and when his effort is analyzed in juxtaposition with other of his translations of Catullus's own translations from the Greek, it reveals that he is aware of the sophisticated strictures imposed on him by considerations of boundary phenomena between embedded and embedding structures, analogous to those to be observed in ekphrasis, or in the bezeling of poetic text by prose. Form, too, is materially altered in Fet's Catullus: end-rhyme is added to his conscientious efforts to conserve rather than preserve the classical quantitative meters he encounters: the hendecasyllabic, the senarius, the scazon, the sapphic, the priapean, the septenarius, the greater aesclepiad, the glyconic, the hexameter, the galliambic, and the elegiac distich. Fet's treatment of the last of these, Catullus's most common meter, is illustrated by a detailed discussion of *Carmina* 85.

Taken as a whole, Fet's complete Catullus represents a distinct approach to translation chosen as appropriate to his source original – the “перевод с объяснениями” of his translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Juvenal's *Satires*, rather than the unappended “перевод” volumes of his Virgil or Plautus – in which the explanatory notes are part of the entire aesthetic effect of the work.

WORKS CITED

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