I.A.AKSENOV AS AN INTERPRETER OF THE WORKS OF ENGLISH PLAYWRIGHTS OF ELIZABETHAN ERA

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: The article analyzes the specifics of I.A. Aksenov’s interpretation of works of the English playwrights of the Elizabethan era, the predecessors and contemporaries of Shakespeare. Methods: In the process of analysis comparative, comparative-historical, comparative-typological, historical-genetic and sociocultural methods of research are used. Findings: Though in the late twentieth century there appeared a lot of new Russian translations of the drama works of the Elizabethan era («The Broken Heart» by J.Ford translated by S.E. Task, «A Woman Killed with Kindness» by T.Heywood translated by P.V.Melkova, «The Shoemaker’s Holiday» by T.Dekker translated by M. Yakhontov and some others), I.A. Aksenov still remained the greatest Russian interpreter, who was able to perceive the works of Shakespeare’s predecessors and contemporaries as an integral unity. To a large extent, I.A. Aksenov’s interpretations are outdated, but the acquaintance with the translational experience will undoubtedly contribute to the appearance of new perusals of the works of the authors, who became the literary background on which Shakespeare’s large-scale figure arose. Novelty: Translational interpretation of the works of Shakespeare’s predecessors and contemporaries became one of the most important creative achievements of I.A.Aksenov. Two collections of translations of the Elizabethan plays, prepared by I.A.Aksenov, being separated by a change of historical epochs, remain at the same time a holistic phenomenon, the most significant part of his heritage.

Keywords: I.A. Aksenov, dramaturgy, Elizabethan era, literary translation, Russian-English literary connections, reception, tradition, intercultural communication, artistic detail.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of «Elizabethans» was probably introduced by I.A. Aksenov; at least it is unknown if it was used in the past. One can argue about the terminological precision of the concept proposed by I.A. Aksenov, since the Elizabethan playwrights lived during the era of King James I, as well, one can speak about the meaningless association of very different playwrights under a common name (cf. about this: 1, p. 8; 2, p. 6), but this concept is characterized by its capacity, integrity, desire to comprehend the flowering of English dramaturgy in full variety of manifestations, not limited to two or three most significant names. I.A. Aksenov meant «Elizabethans» as «the writers, the activities of which took place in fifty years after 1587, that is, from the time of the defeat of the Invincible Armada to the Great Uprising»: «This name is not as conditional as it seems to be, for – although several rulers were replaced in the named jubilee – the people who inhabited it, either were born in the reign of the Virgin Queen, or were brought up in a circle of concepts of the era of this rule» (3, p. 277).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The issues of the translational perception of the works of playwrights of the Elizabethan era have been examined in the comparative literary studies, Russian-English literary and historical-cultural ties. The most significant of them are «The predecessors of Shakespeare. An Episode from the History of English Drama in the Era of Elizabeth. Lyly and Marlowe» (4), «Robert Green, his Life and Works» (5) by N.I.Storozhenko, «Shakespeare’s contemporaries» (6) by A.A.Anikst, «Dramatic Works of Younger
Contemporaries of Shakespeare» (2) by A.N.Gorbunov, «Personality and the state in the historical dramas of Shakespeare’s contemporaries» (7), «Contemporaries of Shakespeare: Christopher Marlowe, Benjamin Jonson, George Chapman» (8) by V.P. Komarova, «Christopher Marlowe and Konstantin Balmont» (9), «Russian Reception of Christopher Marlowe’s Creative Work in the 1830 – 1850-s» (10), «Marlowe’s Creativity in A.A.Anikst’s Works on Literary and Art Criticism» (11) by D.N. Zhatkin and A.Ryabova.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The works of the English drama of the Elizabethan Era together with the literature criticism on them, translated by Aksenov, became the material for analysis. The method of the research is based on the works of the classics of domestic comparative literature, i.e., V.M. Zhirmunsky, M.P.Alekseev, Yu.D.Levin, researchers of the theory and history of literary translation, Russian-English literary and historical and cultural ties, the history of Russian and English literature and culture. During the analysis, comparative, comparative-historical, comparative-typological, historical-genetic and sociocultural methods of research were used.

RESULTS

Elizabethan Era was divided by I.A.Aksenov into four stages. As part of the preparatory phase, he noted two trends: a realistic one, represented by the works of J.Peel and R.Green, and the romantic one, defined in the work of J.Lyly. The history of this stage is characterized by the victory of the romantic trend, vividly embodied in the dramas of Ch. Marlowe, who finally «established the general compositional principles of the English drama», while «the foundations of the specific structures have been worked out by other playwrights – by T. Kyd for the “bloody tragedy”, and by R.Green for the comedy» (3, p. 278). The second stage of the development of the «Elizabethan» drama, that «realized the possibilities of composing created by Ch. Marlowe», was, according to I.Aksenov, characterized by the domination of realism «illuminated by the brilliant genius of Shakespeare and the titanic mechanics of Jonson» (3, p. 278), who denied the romantic inclination that broke through in the sentimental plays of T. Heywood and the sarcastic writings of J.Marston. The romantic mood, conveyed by Ch. Marlowe, was picked up by the playwrights of the third stage, who wrote many texts, which could not be noticeable in the literary process, but appeared to be an important milestone in the development of the Elizabethan drama. The works created in the framework of the fourth stage, according to I.Aksenov, are characterized by rhetoric and scenic resourcefulness. The researcher notes that in the play «Roundheads» by J. Crown (1681) and in works of W. Davenant, the exclusiveness becomes anecdotal, complexity – inconsistent, feelings – sensitive, and pathetics – high-flown.

By the time the first translations and articles by I.A. Aksenov appeared, the early stage of the development of the «Elizabethan» drama was known among the Russian readers thanks to the monograph «The predecessors of Shakespeare. An Episode from the History of English Drama in the Era of Elizabeth. Lilly and Marlowe» by N. I. Storozenko, published in 1872 in St.Petersburg, as well as translations of individual plays of Ch. Marlow «The Tragic History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faust», «The Jew of Malta», «Edward II»). The second stage, with the exclusion of Shakespeare, was presented only in biographical materials about Ben Jonson, as well as fragmentary translations of very few of his plays. In Russia the fourth stage was mainly known from the tragedy «Feast during the plague» by Alexander Pushkin, which had a subtitle «From the Wilson’s tragedy: The city of the plague». I.A.Aksenov stressed that, among the huge variety of «Elizabethan» drama of the third stage, the Russian readers knew some brief fragments from the plays of C.Tourneur «The Atheist’s Tragedy» and J. Webster’s «The White Devil», the conversation between Annabella and Giovanni from the play of J. Ford «It’s Pity She’s a Whore», printed by K.D.Balmont in the third issue of the «Northern Flowers», as well as a retelling of the plots of J. Webster’s plays «The Duchess of Malfi» and «The White Devil», presented in the book by PP Muratov «Images of Italy», published in Moscow in 1911 (see: 3, p. 280).

The first collection of plays «Elizabethans», prepared by I.A.Aksenov and published in 1916 in the «Centrifuge» publishing house, had a happy fate. The concept of the collection was immediately and
finally lined up. It included the plays «It’s Pity She’s a Whore» by J.Ford, «The White Devil» by J. Webster and «The Atheist’s Tragedy» by C.Tournear. The choice of playwrights and plays was not accidental, in part due to the lack of translations of the tragedies by of J. Webster and C.Tournear into the mainland languages, as well as to the excessive liberty of the French adaptation of the tragedy of J.Ford made by M.Maeterlinck for the theater «L’Oeuvre».

I.A.Aksenov first mentioned on his work on the collection of «Elizabethans», dated March 25, 1916, in a letter to S.P. Bobrov, in which the translator reported «the other day proofs of my old allies will come (Ford, Webster, Tournear)» (12, sheet. 4cov.). In the next letter to S.P. Bobrov, sent on April 4, 1916, I.A.Aksenov spoke in more detail about the forthcoming collection: «my translations include an octave volume consisting of 12 sheets with a cover of motley paper, reproducing the one in which the books of the XVII century used to come out, it will be called «Elizabethans I», the name is generally a conditional one, since the activities of playwrights, closed under the cover, took place in the time of the heirs of the illustrious Queen. I give translations of “It’s Pity She’s a Whore” by John Fo<r>d, “The White Devil” by J.Webster and “The Atheist’s Tragedy” by Cyril Tourneur <...>. The translation was made “in the size of the original” with the preservation of the number of verses, and, if possible, their logical movement (i.e., hyphenation, etc.) The size is a “conditional Russian 5-line iambic, with movable caesura and variable endings”. I did not dare to exactly reproduce the English white verse with its pauses and anacrises, it was difficult to get to this, as the problem of perception of the poetry of that time was not well studied» (13, sheet 8–8cov.).

In a letter dated April 28, 1916, I.A Aksenov sent a «ready drawing» of the detailed book of «Elizabethans» to S.P.Bobrov. From his follow-up letter to S.P.Bobrov, sent on May 12, 1916, one can learn about the desire of the latter to furnish the compilation with portraits of the playwrights presented in it; I.A.Aksenov refused this idea, as they lacked information about the life of the English authors: «<...> about Webster and Tourneur we only know that they have repeatedly pawned their costumes in the pawnshop (receipts in books), but about Ford is only known when he was baptized, but the day of death (and the year) is unknown, just like the events occurred between these points» (14, sheet 24).

The collection was published in September 1916, as reported in I.A.Aksenov’ letter, sent on those days (September 21), to S.P.Bobrov, in which he expressed gratitude to the addressee for his assistance in the publication of the collection, separately he noted the qualitative cover of it, as well as the adjustments made to it. I.A. Aksenov made his further explanations in a letter to S.P. Bobrov on September 25, 1916, in which he clarified the reasons for the abbreviations and spoke about the peculiarities of the translation: «The abbreviations you are writing about are caused by the desire to preserve the number of verses and the number of concepts of each verse» (15, sheet 62).

Modern theater directors also became interested in translations of I.Aksenov, included in the first volume of «Elizabethans», in 1916. Thus A.Ya.Tayrov, in a letter sent in May 1916, asked S.P. Bobrov to acquaint him with the translations before the book was published (see: 16, sheet 1–2); on December 27, 1916, V.E. Meyerhold, who at that time was publishing the magazine «Love of Three Oranges», informed S.P. Bobrov that the journal’s employees hoped to receive a copy of the «Elizabethans» as a gift (see: 17, p. 186).

I.A. Aksenov had conceived the idea of the second collection even before the publication of the first volume of the «Elizabethans». In a letter to S.P. Bobrov on April 4, 1916, he outlined a plan of the future collection, which was to include translations of the plays «A King and no King» by F. Beaumont and J. Fletcher, «A Woman Killed with Kindness» by T. Heywood, as well as the «Yorkshire tragedy» by an unknown author (13, sheet 9cover). I.A. Aksenov partially explained the choice of the play «A King and no King» by F. Beaumont and J. Fletcher with its topicality – «the action takes place in Armenia and Iberia (Georgia)» (18, sheet 21). While working on the second volume of «Elizabethans», I.A.Aksenov continued varying a content of the collection: «F. Beaumont and J. Fletcher. A King and no King. P.
Massinger, Renegade. T. Heywood. Killed with Kindness. The first of these three is ready, I am thinking to move the rest to the winter, Heywood is for sure but Massinger is supposedly, maybe I’ll replace him with Dekker» (19, sheet 58). Despite the work done, about which I.A.Aksenov was regularly reporting in his letters to S.P. Bobrov – on October 20, 1916 («I have already finished A King and no King, it is being rewritten» (20, sheet 66)), on December 22, 1916 («In the most fantastic atmosphere, I have safely brought the Second Elizabethans up to its half and I am to translate the most common one-actor drama. I have nothing to do but to hasten to finish them and take on Jonson» (21, sheet 32cov.), on January 16, 1917 («The postscript on the first sheet: The text of Elizabthans> II will be ready not earlier than in May» (22, sheet 2d)), the second volume of «Elizabethans» was published only after the death of a translator in 1938. It is difficult to explain why more than two decades have passed between the beginning of work on the book and its publication. The reason can be partially seen in the bureaucratic mechanisms in the publishing industry in the Soviet period (referring to, for example, a letter to Aksenov’s wife on May 5, 1933: «…> and Heywood, etc., I will still walk to Professor Rozanov and lie down there waiting for his academic blessing, which will require certain time» (23, sheet 11)), partially in the continuous search of works worthy for publication (the play «A King and no King» by F. Beaumont and J. Fletcher was not included in the final edition).

The second collection of «Elizabethans» was prefaced with the foreword of the publishing house, in which the importance of studying the works of the English playwrights of Shakespeare’s time in order to better understand Shakespeare himself was stressed. The book included some articles of different years: the republished «Ben Johnson. Life and Work» (from the first volume of the two-volume edition of «The Dramatic Works» by Ben Johnson, 1931) and «Ben Johnson in the Struggle for the Theatre» (from the second volume of the above two-volume edition, 1933), and also the previously unpublished articles «Thomas Heywood and Thomas Dekker», «John Fletcher». The first translation of the comedies of «The Fair Maid from the West» by Thomas Heywood, «The Honest Whore» by Thomas Dekker and «The Woman’s Prize or the Tamer Tamed» by John Fletcher were also included in the collection.

I.A. Aksenov chose to translate the play «It’s pity She’s a Whore» from the works of J. Ford, in which the dramatist reached the highest tragic tension. The influence of Shakespeare’s «Romeo and Juliet» could be traced in the plot of the tragedy, which in no way attested to the inner closeness of the spirit of Shakespeare’s and Ford’s creativity. J. Ford appeared to be «a great connoisseur of the woman’s heart, a truthful and sympathetic depicter of the “women’s fate”, who deeply studied the art of composition, the rival of Shakespeare in the talented dramatization of the English history» (24, p. 726). In the center of the tragedy there is a story of the incestuous love of Annabelle and Giovanni, in which the «nature» becomes a manifestation of the spontaneous freedom of feeling, acquires a mystical connotation and acts as an unrestrained force «pushing people to sin, crime and death» (25, p. 134). In the article «Envoi», printed together with the translation of the tragedy, I.A. Aksenov suggested that the motive that prompted J. Ford to create the work could be the acquaintance with the book «Tragic Stories of Our Time» by François Rosset, published in the second edition in Rouen in 1626. The heart of this story is the story of Julian de Ravallet and Margarita le Fauconnier, a brother and a sister, convicted of incest: «with their story made a lot of noise at home, it was not surprising that this deplorable story, soon retold by Rosset, was listened to, among the greedily absorbed French news, with great interest in London (1615)» (3, p. 282). The tragedy was translated by I.A. Aksenov, with the French adaptation of M. Maeterlinck taken into account. He made it, however, closer to the original, having interpreted the poetic remarks, adapted by M. Maeterlinck in prose, in verse; he made the characters, omitted in the adaptation of M. Maeterlinck, again appear on the stage.

The Russian readers are acquainted with the works of J. Webster thanks to the translations of I.A. Aksenov («The White Devil or Vittoria Accorombona», translated in 1916), P.V. Melkova («The Duchess of Malfi», translated in 1959 for the collection of the plays «Contemporaries of Shakespeare»), and S.E. Task («The Devil’s Law Case», translated in 1986 for the collection «The Younger Contemporaries of Shakespeare»). J. Webster enjoyed the special sympathy of I.A. Aksenov,
who was dreaming of «the finalizing of a separate volume of all dramas of Webster» (19, p. 58), however, not materialized. I.A.Aksenov noted that Webster «seemed to have the goal of accommodating the greatest number of nouns in ten to eleven syllables of his verse by using the brevity of the English word»; Thus, «the complex labyrinth of utterances was unexpectedly illuminated by the rumble of formidable lyricism and it happened when it was necessary to speak about death» (26, p. 67). «The White Devil» is a play about the vicious love of the Duke of Bracciano and the Venetian courtesan Vittoria Accorombona, that pushed the heroes to crime, about the revenge of relatives and a cruel death; its basis are the real events occurred in Italy in the era of Cinquecento (XVI century) (27, p. 565). The greatness of Webster’s drama lies in the simplicity of the presentation of the story, combined with the multifaceted characters. The unbridled sensuality of the image of Vittoria is successfully combined with her cold cruelty, and the timidity, «interfering with praying» (28, p. 98) with her impudence in the face of accusers and executioners, who are ready «to kill a baby in the first case» (28, p. 184). Webster gives mystical meaning to the theme of death; death becomes a symbol of emancipating the spiritual nature of a human being, of stopping sufferings, of finding immortality (28, p. 185). The playwright seeks for «not only amazing the spectators with some scenic effects, but inspiring them an idea of a tragic human fate and the illusory of earthly existence» (25, p. 126), brilliantly conveyed by I.A. Aksenov. When reading his translation, the image of J. Webster himself involuntarily arises before the reader, of a gloomy and harsh man, originated by pictures of human insanity, cruelty and depravity, of a misanthrope and a fatalist fully possessing his «cruel talent» (see: 24, p. 726-727). «The White Devil» was the only translation of I.A.Aksenov from the «Elizabethans» that was reprinted in the following years: it was included in the supplement to the publication of Ludwig Tieck’s novel «Vittoria Accorombona» in the series of «Literary Monuments» in 2002 (see: 29, p. 209-345).

No biographical information about the playwright Cyril Tourneur is left. Only two tragedies are known to date: «The Revengers Tragedy» (1607) and «The Atheists Tragedy» (1611), both translated into Russian: the first by S.E. Task (published in 1981 in the collection «The Younger Contemporaries of Shakespeare»), the second – by I.A.Aksenov (published in 1916 in the first volume of «Elizabethans»). In both plays of C. Tourneur, despite the similarity with the «bloody» theme of the «Spanish tragedy» by T. Kyd, the motive is much more complicated, as it is closely connected with the crisis of the Renaissance humanism itself, which generated «a tragic idea of the depravity of not only existing social mores but of the very “nature” of a humane being as well» (25, p. 121). D’Amville, the main character of the play «The Atheists Tragedy», professes atheism, like Faust by Ch.Marlowe, however, unlike him, he does not seek for absolute knowledge, he is an ordinary Machiavellian, who puts the power and money at the head, having turned atheism to a primitive cult of nature (in the spirit of Shakespeare’s Edmund of the «King Lear») and shameless amorality (see: 2, p. 29). Though he departed from free-thinking «Machiavellian», Puritanism was still alien to Tourneur. Along with aristocratic debaucheries – D’Amville, Levidulchia, a negative character in the eyes of Tourneur was also the Puritan Langebeau Snuffe, a hypocrite and a traitor. In «The Atheists Tragedy» Tourneur advanced the thesis that combating sins and vices by traditional «human» means was useless and dangerous, for «the right to vengeance belongs to the heavens», and «the human destiny is a self-denial and obedience to divine providence» (25, p. 123). The divine providence was clearly visible in the end of the tragedy, when D’Amville, taking on the role of executioner, inflicted a mortal wound to himself. The defeat of D’Amville lies in the collapse of his Machiavellian worldview rather than in the death of the hero: «That was the result of the mind of nature, / But it is insane. And above it / There is a force, that exceeded the flight / of my fancies» (30, p. 272).

Only a tenth of the creative works of T. Heywood, who wrote alone and co-authored more than 220 plays, has reached the descendants. The reason was that Haywood «was not at all infected with the mania of popularity and he was never in a hurry to be published», «he did not dream of fame in the offspring», as a result, the play appeared in the print «by the efforts» of «numerous unscrupulous <…> book sellers-pirates» (see: 24, p. 729-730). One of the contemporaries of T.Heywood – a book merchant Kirkman – left
the witness of the rationalism of T. Heywood in the following notes: «extremely hardworking» Heywood set himself the rule of writing every day a full sheet of paper during many years» (31, p. 139).

The Russian readers are acquainted with the works of T. Heywood thanks to the translations of his plays by I.A.Aksenov in 1931 («The Fair Maid of the West»), P.V.Melkova in 1956 («The Fair Maid of the West») and in 1959 («A Woman Killed with Kindness»). I.A.Aksenov was attracted by the dramaturgy of T. Heywood owing to its accuracy, thoughtfulness, «prosaic» style, absence of excessive euphuisim, «locality» and «patriotism», «inviolability» of interpreting norms of behavior, portraying <…> images of people rather than characters in «light and transparent tones», and, what is most important, to its realism, the ability to skillfully display petty domestic life: the translator called Heywood «a realist in observation» (see: 32, p. 148–153; 33, p. 40). I.A.Aksenov pointed out that the accentuated realism of the plays as well as the gaps in the psychological justification of the critical actions of the heroes could have been overcame by the actors’ playing, otherwise the illogical actions described by the playwright would be unacceptably false.

The second volume of «Elizabethans» included the translation of the comedy «The Fair Maid of the West» by T. Heywood. According to I.A.Aksenov, the composition of the play was constructed «on the principle of simple stringing of events, with few deviations on the proscenium, necessary for the time of reinstalling the props on the stage» (32, p. 154). The main character of the comedy is Bess Bridges – the daughter of an honest, but ruined tanner, forced to transfer her feeding to the owner of the company, where Bass is enlisted as a helper. In the course of the play, the heroine is forced to perform many worthy exploits: to command the cruiser, to protect the trade interests of England in Morocco, to renounce the offered to her Sultan’s crown for her love of the noble squire. I.A. Aksenov believed that the merit of the comedy lies in the «immutability of the character of Bess», carried out through a series of embarrassing provisions, in each of them, revealing new aspects of her personality and resolving the confusion, just as she should, without slightest stretch and falsity» (32, p. 152).

Among the works of T.Dekker, I.A.Aksenov selected for his collection of «Elizabethans» (34, p. 103) «the most mature in artistic terms» two-comedy «The Honest Whore», written together with T. Middleton, who helped T.Dekker make the plot (the first part was created in 1604–1605, the second – as to some researchers, after a quarter of a century). As the main positive image of the comedy T.Decker chose the courtesan Belafront who, having fallen in love with the young Count Ippolito, abandoned her depraved life. However, Ippolito, mourning the death of his beloved Infelice, did not meet the courtesan’s reciprocity. In the finale of the play, Ippolito married Princess Infelice, as the report of her death turned out to be false, but the repentant Belafront married the carefree Mateo, who tempted her. However, in the second part of the comedy the conditionally «happy» decoupling seemed, apparently, not quite realistic to T.Dekker. As a result, the second part of the play showed the everyday life: years had passed and the characters, as typical of everyday comedies, revealed themselves from the other side. Noble Ippolito, jaded by his beautiful Infelice, began seeking for love of Belafront, who was virtuous and faithful to her husband Mateo, while her husband appeared to be an incorrigible idler and player.

Speaking about the weakness of the composition of the play, I.A. Aksenov stressed that its construction is like a «disorderly tangle of some curves» (32, p. 156), which the author himself was not always able to unravel. When working on the play, according to I.Aksenov, the anti-aristocratic mood of the playwright was intensified, thus bringing him closer to the Puritans. When depicting the life of ordinary citizens, Dekker could not but note the emerging Puritan ethic that was penetrating everyday life with the ideals of communality, nationality, diligence, abstinence, sobriety and modesty (see: 32, p. 171; 35, p. 230). In the plays of T. Dekker, the immoral aristocrats were contrasted to bourgeois with its incorruptible honesty and loyalty to the old patriarchal ideals; the term «Puritan», although remaining a curse, came from the evil people, who directed it against the heroes, who had descended from the path of vice, therefore, turning into praise.
Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, along with Ben Jonson, in I.A.Aksenov’s opinion, were the most outstanding contemporaries of Shakespeare. Though some of the plays were written by themselves alone (in particular, J. Fletcher composed the following plays as «The Faithful Shepherdess», «Monseur Tomas», «Valentianian», «Wit Without Money», «The Woman’s Prize or the Tamer Tamed», «The Humorous Lieutenant», and F. Beaumont – the play «The Woman Hater»), the greater and better part of the heritage, they left, was the result of their co-authorship.

Choosing J. Fletcher’s play «The Tamer Tamed», I.A. Aksenov began with its perception as a «parody» continuation of the Shakespearean comedy «The Taming of the Shrew». Once again, there appears the image of Shakespeare’s Petruccio, who, after his wife Katharine death, leaves for England, where he again marries the virtuous and witty Maria. His second wife decides to tame her «annoying and around self-satisfied», «hot-tempered» like a gunpowder husband, even using more rude methods than he used with his first wife. It was not a surprise that the choice fell on comedy. J. Fletcher was «well-known for his art of comic writing», his contemporaries preferred his comic works to Shakespeare’s, that fact allowed them to put forward the thesis that «the language of Shakespeare is outdated, and Ben Jonson’s wit is inferior to Fletcher’s» (31, p. 174).

Neither the persons (some «abstract figures» – Petruccio, Maria, Libya, etc.) nor the actions of individual heroes, whose motives are so exaggerated that make them completely escape the reality («taming», Petruccio’s death, forgiveness, etc.) are in the center of the plays, including the comedy «The Tamer Tamed», but the complex interrelations, i.e. «the feelings, inherent in a person, that create the value, the attitude towards which is the criterion of rightness and wrongness of the heroes of the comedy together with the society itself, the comedy is directed to» (31, p. 175). Some crisis one can feel in «The Tamer Tamed», it consists in an excessive depravity of the plot («sexual motives are on the first plan in the comedy, making it frivolous, whereas in Shakespeare’s the relations between the heroes are extremely chaste» (36, p. 27) ), in the reluctance to see the rapidly changing reality, being replaced by the «world of colorful romantic fictions», and finally, in the construction of the plot itself, where you can observe the dynamics and abundance of actions instead of a wealth of content, and sharp dramatic situations instead of sharp problems (see: 37, p. 116).

Russian readers and viewers are well aware of the works of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, as the translators have often turned to their plays. For example, thanks to the efforts of M.L. Lozinsky, the comedy «The Spanish Curate» by J. Fletcher became well known in 1932; In addition, translations of A.A. Anikst and M.D. Zabludovsky («The Knight of the Flaming Pestle»), T.Levit («Rule a Wife») are known. In 1965 a collection of plays by playwrights was published in two volumes, which included both the previously published ones («The Knight of the Flaming Pestle» by P.V. Melkova, «Philaster» by B.B. Tomashevsky), and the new translations – «The Night Walker, or The Little Thief», «Wit Without Money», «The Wild-Goose Chase», «Monseur Thomas», «Rule a Wife and Have a Wife» by P.V. Melkova, «The Maid’s Tragedy», «The humorous Lieutenant», «A Wife for a Month», «The Woman’s Prize or The Tamer Tamed» by Yu. B. Korneev.

**DISCUSSION**

The estimation of translations by contemporaries was very ambiguous. The first book of «Elizabenths» was favorably received; many reviewers drew attention to the importance of translations of Old English dramaturgy published; in particular, in the sixteenth issue of the journal «News of the Moscow Literary and Art Circle» V.Ya. Bryusov noted that, «in any case, the publications of these dramas, occupying a certain position in the English theater, is an acquisition for our literature» (38, p. 38). V.M.Zhirynunsky highly appreciated the efforts of I.A.Aksenov, having noted in his review in No. 1 of the journal «Severnye zapiski» (Northern Notes) (1917) that «the translator has thoroughly worked on the difficulties of the original»: «One can feel the attention paid to the word, the struggle with the word, the desire to come closer to the nuances of the verbal form, to its artistic richness and tension, the Russian «Elizabenths» are surely distinguished by a peculiar poetic reality, sometimes almost adequate to the English one» (39, p. 271). V.M.Zhirynunsky noted that false poetry theories caused significant
shortcomings of Aksenov’s book, among which he enumerated the interpreter’s desire to use monosyllabic words, syntactical simplicity and lapidary, the rejection of descriptive expressions and complex harmonization with the help of conjunctions: «Following the monosyllabic nature of English words, he tries to squeeze as many significant words as possible into a line or a sentence» (39, p. 271).

The output of the second volume of «Elizabethans» was almost unnoticed, for the exception of the fragmentary remarks of the reviewer of the book A.A. Smirnov made in a letter to the editorial board of the publishing house «Academia» in November 16, 1933. A.A. Smirnov found several «oddities» in the translation of «The Fair Maid of the West» by T. Heywood, for example: «Take care of the bar»; «Please choose the best of the rooms, / Wine, as you like, / When I get free – I will come»; «One thing for me to think: as in a coffin, / Where I’d like to lie with you»; «...> If indecency / And my sunburn would not let you recognize me ...» (40, sheet 5–5cover). Further from the letter one can learn that the translation correction, carried out by I.A.Aksenov, seemed unsatisfactory to A.A.Smirnov: «As in the places noted by me, they have been corrected (in addition, not all) in a completely inadequate manner, and very often even so that the new version appeared to be even worse than the first» (40, sheet 5cover). There were sharp statements about Aksenov’s translation of «The Honest Whore» by T.Dekker: «I have worked through the first few pages of the play «The Honest Whore», and I.A.Aksenov obviously agreed with my remarks, because he corrected almost all the places I mentioned on pp. 1-5. (Please pay attention to page 2, where the correcting of every line was required). But after page 5, when my remarks became rare and unsystematic, I.A.Aksenov not only failed to check (as I asked him) the rest of his translation to remove mistakes from it, – which would be quite natural on the part of the person, who is reputed to be a specialist in «Elizabethan» texts and who wants to maintain his reputation, – but even stopped paying attention to my remarks at all» (40, sheet 6cov.–7cov).

CONCLUSIONS

For almost all of his creative life (1916-1935) I.A.Aksenov was paying special attention to the English literature and culture trying to introduce to the Russian readers the traditions and cultural features of England in the Elizabethan era, which in many respects remained unfamiliar to Russia in the first third of the 20th century. One of the most important creative achievements of I.A.Aksenov was the interpretation of the works of the secondary playwrights of the Elizabethan era (J.Ford, J.Webster, K.Tourneur, T.Heywood, T.Dekker, etc.). I.A.Aksenov was the first of the Russian writers and translators to present the heyday of the English drama as a single whole, in which both the names of the second row and the seemingly insignificant details turned out to be important.

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