The influence of Scots, especially of Robert Burns, on Danish poets and authors

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Abstract

The main theme of this paper is the Jutlandic poet and author Jeppe Aakjær's translations of several poems by Robert Burns in the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. In addition, translations of Burns' poems in the middle of the 20th century by another dialect-poet, Martin N. Hansen, are taken into account, as well as a translation of one of the longer poems by the author Hans Kirk. However, the inspiration from Scots already began in the early 19th century with the author St. St. Blicher.

1. Early inspiration around 1800: St. St. Blicher translating Ossian and Laidlaw

During his years of study in Copenhagen, the Danish poet and author Steen Steensen Blicher (1782–1849) became very engaged in the Ossian epic poems. He certainly believed in the claim of James Macpherson (1736–1795) that, at remote places in Scotland, he had found the long stories of the Celtic past by the bard Ossian, and had published them in 1761 and 1763, although Samuel Johnson and others had raised serious doubts as to the originality of the poems, implying that Macpherson had written them himself. Blicher's translation into Standard Danish in two volumes, first published in 1807 and 1809 (Blicher 1920), was quite well acknowledged, and at the time he was called "Ossians heldige Oversætter" [Ossian's skillful translator] (Nørvig 1943: 54). Stylistically, the poems may be described as a 'conglomerate of the Bible, the Iliad and the Aeneid' which corresponded to the image people at Macpherson's time wanted to

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have of their forefathers; the gloomy style is more or less transferred to some of Blicher's writings about life on the heath and in rural parts of Jutland (Nørvig 1943: 49ff.). Some years later, Blicher became interested in writing short stories and poems; some of these used dialectal words, and a few were written wholly in the Jutlandic dialect. Blicher was inspired in this by a Scottish poem, Lucy's flittin' (published 1810) by William Laidlaw (1780–1845)¹, at the time Walter Scott's secretary. Blicher called his version of this poem, Faawal Marri [Farewell Marie / Mary]; it was first printed in the periodical Nordlyset [The Northern Lights] in 1828 (cf. Blicher 1923: 83ff.) and, some years later, with small improvements, in the collection of dialectal stories and poems in *E Bindstouw* [The Knitting Room] (cf. Blicher 1842; Blicher 1930: 73ff.). In 1828, in the preamble to Faawal Marri, Blicher praises the use of dialects and criticizes public opinion for not being willing to accept them, e.g. the use of initial winstead of v- in the Jutlandic pronunciation of many words. He argues that this, and other Jutlandic sounds, are used at the court of St. James in London where "they sound lovely from the lips of the lovely ones" (i.e. the ladies) (Blicher 1923: 84). In literature, dialects have often been employed to give the effect of sneering humour, Blicher remarks, but with Faawal Marri he wants to show that they can be used for serious and sad events as well. The poem (5 stanzas of 6 verses) in East Jutlandic dialect is about broken-hearted love: the 16 year old maid at a farm is in love with the young son there, but she has to move to another farm, which they both are very sad about; she feels that she now has no friends left and, as her parents are dead, she longs for death too. In fact, her death a couple of months later ends the poem, "before three months had passed she was stiff and cold; / before the sun came back Marri lay in the black mould" (in the dialect: Aa faer et Fjarringoer uar om, da ua hun stin aa kaald; / Fa Suolen kom igjen, da loe Marri i suoten Maald, stanza 5). The poem by Laidlaw likewise has 5 stanzas, but each of 8 verses; the age of Lucy is not mentioned, only that she is an orphan (stanza 1); the last verses of stanza 5 run, "For bonnie sweet Lucy, sae gentle and peerless, / lies cauld in her grave, and will never return". Blicher indeed showed that Jutlandic dialect as well as Scots could be used for relating sad incidents. In his notes to the poem, Blicher compiled a list of about 20 words from his translation of Laidlaw, intended to show parallel forms in Jutlandic, English (Scots) and Danish (Blicher 1923: 85ff.). Superficially, there are some similarities, but there is no basis

¹ Laidlaw's poem can be found in Aakjær's biography of Blicher (Aakjær 1904: 203).

for more systematic conclusions regarding parallels between the dialects or languages mentioned.

One may ask why Laidlaw and not Burns inspired Blicher to write a dialect poem, as Burns and Blicher seem to have had the same literary taste, Ossian was also "king of poets" to Burns, according to Nørvig (1943: 528f). But, as Burns is not mentioned in the preamble to *Faawal Marri*, Blicher presumably did not know of him at that time. It should be added that Blicher wrote more poems in dialect in the following years, and some of these are found in the volume mentioned above, *E Bindstouw*.

2. Main inspiration around 1900 and 1950

2.1. Aakjær translating Burns from the 1890s

In his youth, the (Jutlandic) poet and author Jeppe Aakjær (1866–1930) became very much engaged in the poetry and whole life story of Robert Burns (1759–1796). He ascribes this to Thomas Carlyle's book about heroes (Carlyle 1841), which he had read in the Norwegian translation (Carlyle 1889, cf. Aakjær 1929: 36f.) after attending a folk high school. Some twenty years after, Aakjær recalls the experience in a public speech in 1913:

I still remember my mind's strong engagement in the book's two to three wildly well-speaking pages about Robert Burns. The sublimity and force of the description together with the peace and beauty of the scenery had, to me, the whole suddenness and ecstasy of a revelation. I felt the same deep quivering that must seize the astronomer when he suddenly discovers a star of the first order. And I promised myself that I would not give in before I had collected and taken in the treasures here shown to my eyes. And now followed years of labour to learn a foreign language, even a foreign dialect – and the learning of foreign languages has never been easy to me – but for 10 years of my life Robert Burns became the personality who occupied me most profoundly. His poetry enthralled me; his life's fortune took me in by its simplicity and tragedy. (Aakjær 1919b: 264f., my translation)²

Presumably, Aakjær was impressed by descriptions (in the Norwegian translation) of Burns in the 18th century such as, "a curious phenomenon ...

Aakjær's Scottish reviewer, Kinghorn, refers to this passage too; his translation (1980: 58) differs slightly from mine.

a Hero starting up among the artificial pasteboard figures and production, in the guise of Robert Burns. Like a little well in rocky desert places ... a giant Original Man; one of those men who reach down to the perennial Deeps, who take rank with the Heroic among men" (Carlyle 1841: 174). In six lectures, Carlyle describes six types of hero, and lecture V, *The Hero as a Man of Letters*, includes Samuel Johnson, Rousseau and Burns. Carlyle mentions some obstacles Burns had to fight, e.g. that he wrote in "a rustic dialect, known only to a small province of the country he lived in" (Carlyle 1841: 175); he was known as the "ploughman-poet". In another work Aakjær sums up, "My first knowledge about Robert Burns dates back to reading Thomas Carlyle (1889–90). In the middle of the 90s I learned Scottish on my own; in 1897–98 I began to translate him" (Aakjær 1919a: 286, my translation).

Aakjær started translating Burns while studying in Copenhagen and reached about 50 poems (Aakjær 1934: 31). Some of these were first published in newspapers; these are mentioned with dates of publication in Aakjær (1919a: 286f). Later, they were published again together with other poems in the volumes, Fri Felt [Open Landscape] (1905) and Muld og Malm [Mould and Metal (alloy)] (1909), and finally with a few more in Digte [Poems] as vol. II in Samlede Værker [Collected Works] in Aakjær (1919a). Burns' long poem, Tam o' Shanter, was given its own version, very much changed and extended, in the rhymed story Esper Tækki in 1913. However, the most famous and widely known poem only came forth in 1922–23, the translation – or rather, the new poetic version – of Auld lang syne / Should auld acquaintance be forgot, as the Jutlandic song, Skuld gammel Venskab rejn forgo, to be used with the well-known Scottish melody. In 1906, Aakjær had a grant which made it possible for him to visit Scotland and Burns' places there; he was much taken by the landscape, and the visit inspired him to write three poems about Burns, published in Muld og Malm (1909). These will be explored further in section 3.2.

2.2. Martin N. Hansen translating Burns from the 1940s

The dialect author and poet Martin N. Hansen (1893–1976) from the island Als in Southern Jutland (North Schleswig) was so inspired by Robert Burns that he translated 25 of his poems, published in Hansen (1951): *Nogle digte af Robert Burns*, [Some poems of Robert Burns], among them several of the poems already translated by Aakjær, which will be discussed in the following sections. Burns' love poems in particular attracted this

poet; additionally, the poems that he has in common with Aakjær should be mentioned: *Ja, fløjt og æ komme* [Whistle an' I'll come to you], *Åh, var min Kjærest* [O, were my love yon lilac fair], and *Grøen groer e Kløwer*, *oh* [Green grow the Rashes O].³ According to Hansen (1951: 15), it presumably also holds for Burns as well as for Goethe (whom Hansen also translated) that "the women he praised did not rank more than the ordinary. It was he that gave them their status and created what he needed". Or, as Burns' brother Gilbert formulates it more directly, "The women with which Robert fell in love he immediately bestowed with a lot of beauties that no one else could catch sight of in them" (Hansen 1951: 15, my translation). Hansen visited Burns' places after the Second World War, and like Aakjær he immediately felt comfortable in this countryside; he found it was like coming home to his beloved Als (Hansen 1948: 14).

In the following section, the poems by Aakjær are quoted from the editions mentioned. The poems are presented in a (mainly) chronological order according to when Aakjær published them. Where Hansen translated a poem also translated by Aakjær it will be mentioned after the comments on Aakjær's translation.

3. Dialectal words in the translations

Aakjær mostly translates into Standard Danish and only uses characteristic dialect words (especially from Midwestern Jutland) in some places; most of these will be commented on below. Hansen translates into almost pure Alsian (or Southern Jutlandic) dialect, so only a selection of the dialectal words from this can be noted here. In most of the translations Aakjær follows Burns as to number of stanzas and the verses in them, although he occasionally adds a stanza or omits one to match the meaning of the original; Hansen is even more loyal to Burns.

3.1. Fri Felt [Open Landscape] (Aakjær: 1905).

The volume holds translations of seven poems by Robert Burns (Aakjær 1905: 79–104). The poems are placed as a group in front of other groups of poems, named (in translation) *Men and opinions* (1905: 107–127), *Student songs* (1905: 130–145), *Political songs* (1905: 145–151), and *Social poems* (1905: 53–181).

³ *Kløwer* is a dialectal form of Standard Danish *kløver*, 'clover', and *rash* is Scots for 'rush'.

3.1.1. Delystige Tiggere (Aakjær 1905: 79–95). (Burns: The Jolly Beggars). This long poem in fact holds an array of poems, including poems about: love, a soldier's bragging, a poet's (the fiddler's) story and credo and finally, threatening skirmishes. Aakjær divides it into 16 parts, I-XVI, each having from 1 to 7 stanzas consisting of from 4 to 14 verses, in total about 300 verses. The setting by Burns is a jolly party held at an inn by a group of beggars on a cold autumn or winter evening. Aakjær tries to transfer this to Denmark / Jutland by writing of a *Tatertrop*, i.e. a troop (or group) of gypsies or the like; such groups were known in Aakjær's home area. In Burns' version, a beggar is sitting and drinking with his *doxy* (lover), Aakjær translates this to Dulle which is a derogatory word for a woman of easy living both in Standard Danish and in the dialects (although in some areas it also may describe a 'sweet little girl', cf. the entry *dulle*¹ in Jysk Ordbog). Also tøjte, 'hussy, tart' in Tatertøjte (section V) is a derogatory word, the compound being a translation of Burns' *tinkler hizzie* (verse 84); this means 'tinker' and 'young woman' (hussy).

Other dialect words are, *En lille Praas* (section IX), Jutlandic for a little, perhaps boasting person, corresponding to Burns' "A pygmy scraper" (v. 155). Later, for *dansed Ril* (section XIII) [danced a reel] a parallel is not found in Burns, who used another wording. A special word is *Glutter* (section XIV), plural of *Glut*, 'girl, young woman', which is not a dialectal word, rather, an informal word; *Glutter smaa* 'young girls' corresponds to Burns' *a' the fair* (all the fair women, v. 258). *Glut* is used again (section XVI), here rendering the depreciating *callet*, 'a prostitute', v. 312) used by Burns.

In this poem, Burns often alludes to antiquity or mythology, and Aakjær renders it in Standard Danish; only a couple of verses will be mentioned here to show how he masters this style. What may be called 'the fiddler's credo' by Burns runs, "I am a bard of no regard / Wi' gentlefolks and a' that / But Homer-like, the glowrin' byke / Frae town to town I draw that" (v. 246–249). Aakjær translates this into, *Jeg er Poet og ildeset / hos Folk af Stand og alt det; / men Hoben selv den lytter til, / som selve Livet gjaldt det* (section IV, v. 268–272). It should be noted that Aakjær manages to coin an internal rhyme: *Poet / ildeset* as a parallel to Burns' "bard / no regard". Here, Aakjær omits the reference to Homer, but just after this he mentions the muses as well as *Kastalias Væld* and *Helikon*, renderings of Burns'

"Castalia's burn and Helicon"; Helicon is the mountain of the muses, and Castalia's burn is a spring in the vicinity of Helicon. See Arboe (2005: 40f.) for further comments on the use of antiquity in the poems.

Hansen (1951: 48–62) translates this poem into the Alsian dialect under the heading, *Det lykle Rak* [The jolly riff-raff]. The verses quoted above are here rendered, *Æ skal itt vigt 'mæ med å digt ' / Di rig 'kån sjælden fatt ' e / Men hvad gør det, om I hør te, / og Folk som jer vil skatt ' e*, i.e. [I shall not show off by my writing poetry / The rich ones will seldomly understand it / But what does that matter if you just listen / and people like you will appreciate it] (Hansen 1951: 60). Hansen also manages to form an internal rhyme, *vigt ' / digt'*, in the first of the verses. He does not refer directly to antiquity, but alludes to the muses in the following lines by using the noun *Sangmø*, 'singing maid', creating a poetical touch.

The following poems are more or less love poems.

3.1.2. *Findlay / Hvem staar der ved min Kammerdør?* (Aakjær 1905: 46). (Burns: *Findlay / Wha is that at my bower door?*).

The poem is constructed as a dialogue between a girl in her chamber and a man outside. Aakjær's translation is in Standard Danish with no dialectal words. The initial *wha* by Burns is Scots for the pronoun 'who'. Hansen gave the poem the title, *Hven er derud?* [Who is out there?], and to give it a more local stamp he changed the name Findlay to *Jesper*, a man's name in Danish, used in the dialects too.

3.1.3. Jenny i Rugen (Aakjær 1905: 98). (Burns: Coming through the Rye). The theme here is, 'girl meeting boy in the field'. As in Findlay, Aakjær's translation is in Standard Danish and, as in De lystige Tiggere above, the noun Glut, 'girl' is used in each stanza; the definite form Glutten is made to rhyme with e.g. Gutten, the definite form of Gut 'boy'. Stanza 3 begins, Hvis nu Gutten mødte Glutten [if the boy now met the girl], corresponding to Gin a body meet a body by Burns, where gin means 'if', and a body is the Scots word for 'one', i.e. 'a person' (Murison (1977: 39). In the second stanza, Aakjær uses the girl's name, Jenny, from stanza 5 by Burns, and he takes it into the title too. Hansen's title is, Tidle i e Dågg [Early in the dew'] (p. 74), and he translates some of the verses in the poem more directly than Aakjær, e.g. in stanza 3, Træffe jen en ([If one meets one], i.e. 'if a person

meets another person', and in the same way, *kysse jen en* [If one kisses one], corresponding to *Gin a body kiss a body* by Burns.⁴

3.1.4. *Jock Rab* (Aakjær 1905: 99). (Burns: *Eppie M'Nab*).

The poem shows a man who is losing his girl to a lord. In stanza 1 and later, Aakjær translates "my dearie" into *min Kjærrest* where *Kjærrest* is a dialectal form of Standard Danish *kæreste*, literally a superlative, 'dearest'. No other dialectal words or forms are used in the translation, and only small changes are made in the imagery, e.g. in stanza 3, *Pak du dig din Vej!* [go away] instead of "she has you forgot", and in stanza 4, *stakkels* 'poor' *Jock Rab* instead of *thy ain Jock Rab*.

3.1.5. Tibbie Dunbar (Aakjær 1905: 100). (Burns: Tibbie Dunbar).

The theme here is, 'young man loving girl despite her rich father's dislike'. Dialectal words are not used in Aakjær's translation; "sweet Tibbie Dunbar" is rendered, *skjøn Tibbie Dunbar* where *skjøn* (or *skøn* in the orthography now) means 'beautiful, sweet'. Here too we find only small changes due to the translation, e.g. the sentence, "say thou wilt hae me for better for waur" (i.e. for better or worse), is just altered into, *saa lidt jeg end har* [as little as I have got]. Hansen changes the girl's name into *Ann Katrin* (in Standard Danish, Anne Katrine) and makes this the title of the poem (p. 85), again to associate the poem more tightly to his region.

3.1.6. Duncan Gray (Aakjær 1905: 101f.). (Burns: Duncan Gray).

The theme of this poem may be described as, 'shipwrecked wooing restored'. The 5 stanzas of 8 verses are retained in Aakjær's translation, likewise the thrice repeated refrain in each stanza, *ha, ha for Bejlen der,* which renders Burns' refrain, "Ha, ha, the wooing o't" (of it). In the translation, no dialectal words are used, but the imagery is much changed, e.g. in stanza 2, "Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig" had to be changed because

⁴ This poem by Burns has given inspiration not just across the North Sea to Aakjær and Hansen, but also across the Atlantic Ocean, to the novel *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger (1945). The title of the book is made from a false quotation by the protagonist, the young Holden Caulfield, who refers to the poem as, *If a body catch a body comin' through the rye* and persists with this, although his sister, Phoebe, corrects him with the right words, *meet a body* (Salinger 1991: 186). Holden has made himself the vision of becoming a person who can save many small children playing in a big field of rye and coming near to a cliff without realizing the danger, and then he can catch them safely at the right moment. It is really hard for him to give up this image of himself when he later on must admit that Phoebe's version is the right one.

most Danish readers would not know the island Ailsa Craig in the Firth of Clyde, not far from Burns' place. Aakjær turned the analogy into another, *Meg var døv som Stok og Sten* [deaf as log and stone, (stone-deaf)].⁵ In the translation in stanza 3, "She may gae to – France for me!" Aakjær catches the implication that Burns makes and expresses it directly, *Hun for mig kan gaa til Hel!* [she can go to Hell if she pleases]. Aakjær retains the Scots personal names, Duncan and Meg, but Hansen changed them into the more local names, *Pede* (in Standard Danish, Peder) and *Mette*, in his translation with the title, *Det Frieri* [The wooing] (p. 86f.). In stanza 3, Hansen uses another idiom, *Rejs te Hekkenfeldt, min Ven!* [go to Hekkenfeldt, my friend] with the same meaning as the idioms by Aakjær and Burns; *Hekkenfeldt* is an old name for the volcano Hekla on Iceland, but in the idiom it just means 'an unpleasant place far away'.

3.1.7. *Nancy* (Aakjær 1905: 103f.). (Burns: *Husband, husband, cease your strife*).

The poem shows sharp skirmishes between a husband and his wife. No dialectal words are used in the translation by Aakjær, but again the imagery is changed in some respects, e.g. Nancy's ironic answer in stanza 3, "I'll desert my sov'reign lord", is turned into the more cheerful, *saa Farvel, min Dril'pind* [then goodbye, my teaser].

As some of the comments and quotations suggest much more could be said about these poems and the translations. But hopefully, the examples above have given an impression of the challenges Aakjær as well as Hansen had to fight, and how they managed to cope with them in the translations.

3.2. Muld og Malm (Aakjær 1909) [Mould and Metal (alloy)].

Translations of eight of Robert Burns poems are found here (1909: 81– 106); Aakjær had translated them some years before (1898–99), according to the introduction to the volume. Preceding these poems are three poems written by Aakjær himself after visiting Burns' home and its surroundings in 1906 (p. 75–78). Their titles are, *Ved Skotlands gamle Eg* [At the old oak of Scotland], *I Burns' Fødehjem* [In Burns' native home], and *Paa Lochlea* [On Lochlea]. Aakjær here praises Burns' poetry, e.g. hvert Digt en Diamant [each poem a diamond], and loathes Burns' contemporaries, e.g. Som fattig Tolder lod dit Folk dig dø [as a poor customs officer your nation let you die].

⁵ A rather special use of the Danish sequence, 'Stok og Sten'; normally these words together are used in the idiom, *over stok og sten* ('in a haste, wildly').

The Burns section comes after a section of poems under the heading *I Tiden og Striden* [In the time and the fight] (p. 3–71), and is followed by a section of other poems named *Stille Vand* [Silent Water] (p. 109–175).

3.2.1. John Anderson (Aakjær 1909: 81). (Burns: John Anderson, my jo). In the poem, an elderly woman speaks of her love to her husband. In Aakjær's translation a single dialectal word is found in stanza 2, vi klatred op til Kammen; nu maa vi dulre ned, John [we climbed the hill to the top / now we must walk slowly down], i.e. the verb dulre, which means 'walk slowly, with small (uncertain) paces', according to the entry dulre 1 in Jysk Ordbog (in my translation). It is used as an equivalent to the verb totter by Burns. In Hansen (1951: 69), the personal name is altered into the Danish name Jens, and the title is changed into, Do var min Glæj og ålt [you were my love and everything], which relates my jo by Burns in a dialectal, but adequate way.

3.2.2. *O*, *luk mig ind blot én Nat* (Aakjær 1909: 82ff.). (Burns: *O Lassie, art thou sleeping yet?*).

The theme here is, 'young man's wish to be with a young woman, and her negative answer'. There are no dialectal words in Aakjær's translation but, as earlier, the noun *Glut* 'girl' is used, here as the last word in the first five stanzas, the young man's apostrophe to the girl, *jeg vil saa gerne ind, Glut* [rise and let me in, jo]. The imagery is changed a good deal, but Aakjær manages to give good Standard Danish equivalents to the metaphors with flowers and birds by Burns (Arboe 2005: 41f.). Hansen (1951: 93f.) does likewise in dialectal form, e.g. in the girl's bitter answer, stanza 9, *En fatte Pig', det ved en nok, / er vel en Blomm, I gjenn vil plåkk, / for senn å ramm' hind med jer Stok / og gi' hind Tramp og Træj, Ven* [a poor girl, one knows for sure, / is certainly a flower you want to pick / in order to hit her with your stick later on / and tread and trample her, my friend].

3.2.3. Skjøn Nelly (Aakjær 1909: 85). (Burns: On a Bank of Flowers).

The poem describes a young man's feelings when seeing a young woman sleeping between flowers. In Aakjær's translation there are no dialectal words, but again the noun *Glut*, 'girl' is used, here only in the last verses in stanza 4, *Glutten blev / som Glutter bliver til sidst* [the girl became as girls become at last], corresponding to, "he found the maid / Forgiving all, and good" by Burns. As mentioned in 3.1.5, the adjective *skjøn*, 'beautiful' is spelled *skøn* nowadays.

3.2.4. *Hvad kan en ung Kvinde* (Aakjær 1909: 87f.). (Burns: *What can a Young Lassie do with an Auld Man*).

Here a young woman is complaining about her elderly husband. Aakjær expanded the four stanzas by Burns from 4 to 6 verses each, cf. the extension in stanza 2, *Han klager, han klynker / hans Ansigt har Rynker*, as sort of a parallel to the single verse by Burns, i.e. "He's always compleenin' frae mornin to e'enin'". In the same stanza a dialectal adjective is found in, *Blodet er blaaset* [the blood is bluish]; Standard Danish would prefer another derivation of *blå* 'blue' with the same meaning, i.e. *blaalig* instead of Jutlandic *blaaset*.

3.2.5. *Der boed en Bonde* (Aakjær 1909: 89ff.) (Burns: The carle of Kellyburn braes).

The poem renders a rollicking story about a peasant who gives his sharptempered wife to the devil but must take her back again, as she is raging too much for the devils in hell! This is described in 15 stanzas (of 4 verses) in Aakjær's translation. Each stanza has a refrain in both the second and fourth verse, in which more unusual plant names are mentioned, correctly translated by Aakjær: *Rude, Timian* 'rue', 'thyme'. In stanza 5, a dialectal oath is found in the verse, *da er du mænd værre end Rygterne gaar* [then you are worse than rumours tell]; here *mænd* is a dialectal short form for *saamænd*, a weak oath, in fact a shortening of the idiom: *så hjælpe mig gud og hans hellige mænd* [so help me God and his holy men]. And, in stanza 7, the peasant's wife replies to the devil, *Nej, Gi'om jeg vil!* [no, for God's sake, I will not], where *Gi'* is another dialectal weak oath used instead of *Gud*, 'God', again an emphasis with earlier religious overtones.

A further dialectal word in the translation is the noun *Polde*, used about a pig in stanza 6, where the husband helps the devil by putting the wife in a sack to carry on his back: *som Bonden sin Polde han bar hende væk* [like the peasant his pig he carried her away]. This analogy is used instead of the analogy by Burns, "like a poor pedlar, he's carried his pack".⁶ Also in stanza 12, Aakjær uses a somewhat dialectal image, *svor ved sin rødeste Kok* [swore by his reddest cock]. The Standard Danish noun is here *hane* instead of *kok*, and the whole intended idiom is certainly invented by Aakjær himself as it is not attested in dictionaries. All this is done to render the verse by Burns, "The devil he swore by the kirk and the bell".

⁶ Aakjær once more uses the 'pig in a sack'-motive in his version of *Tam o' Shanter*, cf. chapter 4.1.

3.2.6. Hellig Wolles Bøn (Aakjær 1909: 93ff.). (Burns: Holy Willie's Prayer).

This long poem (17 stanzas of 6 verses) forms a critique of persons in church life, including bits of concessions of personal moral shortcomings. Burns wrote it as a satirical portrait of a hypocritical priest⁷, whose name Aakjær renders as *Wolle*, a Jutlandic pronunciation of the Standard Danish man's name Ole, presumably chosen to take away some of the dignity of the person. In stanza 8, Aakjær uses the dialectal noun Klokke 'skirt, petticoat' in the verse. Da skal din Tjener aldrig lette / en Klokke mere [Then your servant shall never more lift a skirt], where *din Tiener* is the priest himself, who has just confessed to have been too intimate with a girl. By Burns, the corresponding verses run, "I'll ne'er lift a lawless leg / Again upon her". In stanza 13, the speaker tells of one of his enemies that han alle siofler [he treats everybody very badly], where Burns has that he "set the warld in a roar / O' laughin' at us". In the later edition. *siofler* is changed into the Jutlandic verb mofler (Aakjær 1919a: 173), which Aakjær explains in a note as har Krammet paa [is in control of]. The word is intended to make a rhyme with Kartofler, 'potatoes', which mofler is doing better than siofler, although not perfectly.

3.2.7. *Trods alt det* (Aakjær 1909: 99f.). (Burns: *For a' that and a' that*). This poem (of 5 stanzas) is written in Standard Danish and gives a socially oriented critique of the lords, or the upper classes as such, from the poor man's view. The sequence *Trods alt det* [in spite of all that] is used as the fifth verse in all stanzas. The spite is directed against the rich people, as the poor people struggle on to make a living in spite of their neglect. Aakjær mentions that, at the time of writing this and the following poem, he translated a good deal of social poetry, "of which our own literature owned so little" (Aakjær 1934:31, my translation).

3.2.8. *Født til Graad* (Aakjær 1909: 102ff.). (Burns: *Man was made to mourn*).

In this Standard Danish poem of 11 stanzas, again social conditions are criticized from the poor people's perspective. The title of the poem, which translates into [born to crying], is used as the last verse in stanzas 3–6, whereas the following stanzas have variations with *Graad*, 'crying' as a fixed element. No dialectal words are used, but some words are rather old-

⁷ Aakjær (1919a: 286) mentions him as *a Scottish Tartuffe* with reference to a comedy (1664) by Moliere.

fashioned, e.g. *Folen* in stanza 4 is the definite form of *Fole*, 'foal', where $F
oldsymbol{ heta}$ (with the definite form $F
oldsymbol{ heta}$) was the usual noun at Aakjær's time as well as later on.

The social indignation, the wrath against the wealthy classes who spoil or at least harass the existence for the poor, is a theme Aakjær brings out especially in the novel *Vredens Børn* [The children of wrath, 1904].⁸

3.3. Samlede Værker. II. Digte [Collected works. II. Poems]

Here, the fifteen translated poems from *Fri Felt* and *Muld og Malm* are placed together in a group (Aakjær 1919: 165–198) also containing the five following translated poems. After these, twenty poems follow (p. 199–280), including translations by Aakjær of English poets (e.g. Goldsmith, Shelley), of French and German poets (e.g. Goethe, Heine) and of Scandinavian poets (e.g. Bellman, Fröding). Hansen did not translate any of the five poems discussed below.

3.3.1. Burns om sig selv (Aakjær 1919: 165f.) (Burns: There was a lad).

In the poem, a boy is named Robin and is foreseen to be a womanizer. In stanza 1, the words *Der var en Knøs, var født i Kejl*, follow Burns, "There was a lad, was born in Kyle", Aakjær respelling Kyle into *Kejl* to get a rhyme with *Segl* (seal of a document). The poem is translated into Standard Danish; only the verb preterite form *keg* may also be dialectal, cf. stanza 3, *Den Spaakvind keg ham i hans Haand*, rendering "The gossip keekit in his loof" [palm of the hand]. The infinitive of *keg* is *kige*, an older and dialectal parallel form to the verb *kikke*, 'look'. Aakjær's translation of the noun *gossip* may be a little unprecise, it means 'godmother' rather than 'fortune-teller' (cf. Spaakvind), acccording to *Engelsk-Dansk Ordbog*, and it is more likely that a godmother may have a say in giving the boy a name, which she has in Burns' poem, "I think we'll ca' ham Robin" (stanza 3).

3.3.2. *I det Fjærne* (Aakjær 1919: 170). (Burns: *The bonnie lad that is far away*).

Here, a young girl is longing for her lover to return as she is expecting their child. There are no dialectal words in the poem. The first verses run, *Hvor kan jeg være god og glad / og synge ved min Kjærne* [how can I be good and glad / and sing by my churn], whereas Burns, instead of the last wording has, "how can I gang brisk and braw", and thus does not mention a

⁸ The title is an idiom dating back to the Pauline Epistles of the New Testament.

noun corresponding with *Kjærne*, 'churn', as Aakjær does. This word was usual in late 19th century, nowadays spelled *kærne*. Aakjær presumably made the sequence, *synge ved min Kjærne*, to get a rhyme with the verse, *maa færdes i det Fjærne* [has to be far away], the last word now written *fjerne*.

3.3.3. Var Skylden min (Aakjær 1919: 185f.). (Burns: Had I the wyte).

The theme of the poem is, 'man defending a love affair with the wife of a violent man'. In stanza 4, we find one marked dialectal and old-fashioned word, the noun *Skjættekam*, a direct translation by Aakjær of *ripplin-kame* in stanza 3 by Burns; it designates a rough type of comb earlier used in the making of flax, besides *rippling comb* also called a *flax scutcher*. Stanza 4 by Aakjær runs, *En Skjættekam han brugte tit / imod den arme Kvinde* [a rippling comb he often used / against the poor woman] whereas Burns, in stanza 3, describes the process and results in more detail, "He clawed her wi' the ripplin-kame, / And blae and bluidy bruised her" (Scots *blae* 'blue', *bluidy* 'bloody'). The speaker appeals to the reader for understanding that he has helped the woman in cheating such a husband, who is called a *Stodder* 'blighter' by Aakjær in stanza 4.

3.3.4. Wolles Viv (Aakjær 1919: 186f.). (Burns: Willie's Wife).

In this poem, a woman is described in detail as really ugly. As in 3.2.6, the Jutlandic form Wolle is used for the Standard Danish first name Ole. The surname *Wattel* is formed after *Wastle* by Burns, and Aakjær has transferred the poem to Salling in the first stanza by placing the protagonist in the village *Junget*. This is a place name chosen in order to make a rhyme with *runged*, 'resounded', a shortening of the standard orthographic form rungede to secure the rhyme. Aakjær gives the wife the name, Marri Hop 'Mary Hop', a jesting name, corresponding to "Tinkler Madgie" by Burns, with a Jutlandic form *Marri* of the Standard Danish form *Marie*. In the refrain in stanza 1, En saadan Kvind som Wolle har / jeg gav sgi ej en Sysling for her, which in Burns is: "Such a wife as Willie had, / I wad na gie a button for her", the derogatory or dialectal form Kvind 'woman' is used instead of the usual form Kvinde. In the following sentence, Sysling denotes an old coin of little value (also written Søsling), in use until about 1850. In the same sentence, sgi is a weak oath, a contraction of så gid where gi is the same replacement for 'God' as Gi, mentioned in 3.2.5, and hind is a dialectal form of the pronoun hende 'her'. The oath is repeated in

the refrain of stanza 3, but in stanza 2 and 4 it is omitted and substituted by other short words to retain the metrical foot of the refrain.

3.3.5. En Skrædder i Sengen (Aakjær 1919: 187). (Burns: The Tailor fell thro' the Bed).

The poem renders an unexpected, but welcomed love affair. A tailor fell, as Burns puts it, with "thimbles and all" through one floor to the floor below where he hit the bed of a young girl, and she did not mind his coming there. The only dialectal word is *bardused* in stanza 3, a preterite form of *barduse* 'to fall suddenly', derived from a more common adverb *bardus* in the idiom, *falde bardus*, 'fall suddenly'. In Aakjær's version, the last verse runs, *mon der ej er flere, som ej blev alt for vred, / selv om en lille Skrædder bardused til dem ned*? [I wonder if there should not be more (girls) who would not be too angry / although a little tailor suddenly fell down to them]. This is a variation of the ending by Burns, where someone would like to "see the bit tailor come skippin' again".

As has been hinted at several times above, Aakjær often translates poems about strained relationships between man and woman, husband and wife. Kinghorn (1980: 74) mentions that this may have a connection with Aakjær's problematic marriage with the author Marie Bregendahl (1867–1940) from 1893; when he was translating the poems above the marriage was collapsing and he felt strong emotional tensions in his domestic life. They divorced in 1900. In 1907, Aakjær married Nanna Krogh; they settled at the farm *Jenle* in Salling, some miles north of Skive.

4. Danish versions of Tam o'Shanter

This long poem by Burns (224 verses) has been characterized as a "mockheroic rendering of folk material" (Abrams 1979: 98). Kinghorn (1980: 70) also mentions this aspect; "rapid succession of events forces the mockhero towards his inevitable doom".

4.1. Esper Tækki (Aakjær 1913)

This rhymed story by Aakjær is not a direct translation of *Tam O'Shanter*, but a much expanded story on the same theme, although transplanted to Salling and formed as an *empe* (a dialectal word for 'adventure' or folk story in its own). Burns' poem was more directly translated into Danish by Hansen (1951) and a few years earlier by the author, Hans Kirk (1945). Comparisons will be made between these three versions.

Aakjær tried to make a direct translation of "this price-less poem with its exuberant spirits", but was not content with his first attempts; he felt that "Burns' Scottish high spirits became so grey and colourless" in his rendering. However, when he remembered his "own old people from Fjends and their sumptuous orgies at Skive market" he found that he could write an "original story with a cognate motive", and then at last the writing was easy for him (Aakjær 1934: 140, my translation). He felt that his dialectal story had to be much longer before it sounded like a genuine tale from Salling⁹ so he expanded the story *Esper Tækki* to about 700 verses (55 pages of 12–15 verses). *Esper* is an alternative form of the man's name, Jesper, mentioned above, and *Tækki* is dialectal for Standard Danish *tækker*, 'thatcher'.

The market day where it all started is placed in Ayr by Burns; late in the day and after some drinking in a joyful company Tam saddled his horse and rode homewards, but was detained by Alloway's "auld haunted kirk" (verse 32), which now "seem'd in a bleeze" (a blaze, 102) because of a witches' sabbath going on there. Aakjær's protagonist, Esper, also had to leave a drinking party before he started walking home, carrying a newly bought pig in a sack on his back (p. 17). He slowly walked some miles and suddenly was most frightened by a sight: *Æ Hægser*¹⁰ war sammelt ved Breum Kjeld' [the witches had gathered at Breum spring], (p. 35)¹¹, in clear light, wal hundrede Lvs med Flamm' øwer Flamm' [probably a hundred lights with flame by flame] (p. 37). Now, Burns lets Tam get really enthralled by the sight of all the dancing and wriggling women / witches to the frenzied tones by the devil, "auld Nick" (120ff.), especially by looking at one girl, the neighbour's Nannie, "a souple jade she was and strang" wearing an all too short skirt, and Tam at last loses his mind and roars, "Weel done, Cutty Sark!' / And in an instant all was dark!" (189f.).¹² Aakjær also lets Esper look at the witches and all their feast;

⁹ Aakjær was aware that his native dialect in Fjends south of Skive was not quite the same as the dialect in Salling north of Skive, where he lived from 1907. He solved the problem by letting the protagonist *Esper* be from Fjends, but his wife *Kjesten* (Kirsten, in Standard Danish) from Salling, so that people from Salling could not accuse him of using wrong Salling-forms of the dialectal words (Aakjær 1934: 141). In fact, the differences between the two dialects are rather small (Arboe 2019).

¹⁰ In Standard Danish, *Heksene*; in Western Jutlandic the definite article α is prepositioned (as in English), yielding α Hægser here, and α Kjeld a few lines below this.

¹¹ Breum is a village a couple of miles north of Aakjær's farm, *Jenle*, in Salling.

¹² Presumably, the fast sailing ship of the 1870s, the tea-clipper *Cutty Sark* with the short sails, got its name from this passage (Arboe 2005: 37).

he recognizes a neighbour's daughter, *Ka'Rytter*, who then (surprisingly) sets out to sing a song of 12 stanzas about the witches' feast with *Gammel Jerrik*, 'Auld Nick' as the guest of honour (p. 43ff.). As the witches swarm around in the air, Esper tries to steal away, and suddenly he stumbles over the pig, which gives a shriek (p. 50); the witches also shriek and turn their flock threatening against Esper: \pounds *Kjeld' laa som død. Aall' Lys de slottes* [the spring lay as dead, all light was made out] (p. 51). So, the provoking factor here is changed from a roar by the protagonist to a shriek from the protagonist's newly bought pig.

By this sketch of the plot leading up to the climax, I hope also to have given a small impression of the Midwestern Jutlandic dialect in Aakjær's long epic poem inspired by *Tam o'Shanter*. I shall return to the ending of the story below, but first we shall have a look at two more direct translations into Danish, one of them into the Southern Jutlandic dialect.

4.2. Tammes Sånder (Hansen: 1951)

As above, Hansen changes some Scots names into more Danish- or Jutlandic-sounding names, and Tam o' Shanter is turned into Tammes Sånder (Hansen 1951: 75–84, with illustrations), which maybe represents a Jutlandic pronunciation of a Danish name (e.g. Thomas Sander). Tam's wife is called Kjesten (as by Aakjær), and some of the other persons are known from other poems by Hansen. The name of the market town is not mentioned, but presumably is Sønderborg, the largest town of Als, and as the place for the witches' sabbath Lysafild Kjerk (Lysabild church) (p. 78) is chosen, some eight miles east of Sønderborg. Tam is riding on horseback as in the poem by Burns, not walking as Aakjær's Esper. The dancing girl is here called Anna, and when at last Tammes raft fro Sind o Sans: / Det, Stumpsærk, er en rigtig Dåns! [Tammes roared, out of his mind, / This, Cutty-Sark, is really a dance!] (p. 83), also here all the light vanished. By comparison with Hans Kirk, discussed below, it will be noted that Hansen uses the same translation of Cutty-Sark as Hans Kirk; he also has a few other translation details in common with Kirk.

4.3. Tam o'Shanter (Kirk: 1945)

The author Hans Kirk (1898–1962), known for the novel *Fiskerne* (The Fishermen, 1928) and other novels, translated *Tam o'Shanter* in 1945 into Standard Danish in a congenial way, maintaining many of the images and metaphors in Burns' poem. He also maintains the place names and most of the personal names (although he does not mention Tam's wife, "thy ain

Kate", by name), and the protagonist is riding on horseback as by Burns and Hansen. At the witches' sabbath the devil is said to be playing the bagpipes (*Sækkepibe*, p. 18), which presumably is hinted at by Burns, "He screwed the pipes and gart them skirl" (v. 123, i.e. made them shriek). Also, Kirk's Tam is looking almost in a frenzy at Nannie, the wild, well-dancing girl, until he roars: '*Bravo, Stumpesærk!*' /- og saa blev mørkt alt Satans *Værk* [Bravo, Cutty-Sark / and then all Satan's work was in the dark] (p. 21). Moreover, Kirk has four verses (p. 19) about dead lawyers and priests in the array of uncouth dead persons at Alloway's church, verses which are not found in the original versions of *Tam O' Shanter* where the phrasing just is, "Wi' mair of horrible and awfu' / Which even to name wad be unlawfu'" (v. 141f.).¹³ Also, Hansen offers additional verses not found in Burns.

4.4. The different endings of the story

As to the ending of the poem, Hans Kirk and Hansen follow Burns: after the showdown by the church *Tam* resp. *Tammes* tries to flee on his horse with the flock of flying witches howling after them. They almost succeed because the witches cannot pass a stream, only get to the middle of it, but before that one of them, Nannie / Cutty-Sark by Burns, just gets hold of the horse's tail and tears most of it off. Burns ends the poem by an admonishing morale to "each man and mother's son" who should be inclined to drinking or to think of cutty-sarks, "Think! ye may buy the joys o'er dear / Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare". Hansen likewise asks for such men that *di må var' sej for en Spøg* ('they will be on guard for pleasantry'), remembering *Tammes Sånders Øg* (a depreciating word for 'horse', 'mare').

Aakjær's ending takes another turn: *Esper* has to walk his way home with the pig in the sack, and some of the witches have to toil their way up and down the furrows of the fields. However, when the thus tired *Ka' Rytter* almost catches him he is saved by his knife of pure steel, which she and other witches cannot cope with (p. 53). On his way homewards he falls asleep in a field; his wife, who has found him, wakes him up; she scolds him for being drunk and asleep while other people are busy at work. The two of them argue a good deal, but they go home and work together. Esper gets a kiss and a couple of drinks (an element of the 'folk material' hinted at above), and Aakjær ends the story by the comment, *Men bejst*

¹³ Burns (1793, vol.2: 203), Burns (1820, vol.3: 295), as well as Burns (1994:4).

af det hiele: Æ Gris den tryves! [but best of all, the pig is thriving!] (p. 59), referring to the side story of the pig bought at the market. In this way, Aakjær found that he had written a really good tale from Salling, and some people even judged it as being among the best of all he had written in dialect form (Aakjær 1934: 140).

The translations of *Tam o' Shanter, The Jolly Beggars* and *O Lassie, art thou sleeping yet?* by Aakjær and Hansen (cf. 3.1.1 and 3.2.2 above, as well as *Green grow the Rashes O* by Hansen) are analyzed and compared as to their equivalents to some of the imagery (especially metaphors) by Burns in Arboe (2005:39ff).

5. Skuld gammel Venskab rejn forgo (Aakjær: 1922/1923)

Aakjær used the title mentioned, *Skuld gammel Venskab rejn forgo*, [Should old friendship pass wholly away], for his version of *Auld Lang Syne / Should auld acquaintance be forgot*. Aakjær's translation was first published in a newspaper, *Skive Folkeblad*, 31 January 1922 (Kinghorn 1980: 69), late in the year also in an the illustrated almanac, *Danmark 1923*, with the title, *For læng, læng sind* [Long, long ago], and with a written accompaniment (Arboe 2002: 17).

Most of the poems mentioned above are not generally known any longer, but this last translation or version of Burns is as well-known as many of Aakjær's popular Danish songs, esp. from the *Højskole-sangbogen*, a rather frequently updated song book; it is also found in Aakjær (1931: 23), where it is dated 31 Jan 1922. The story behind the translation of *Auld Lang Syne* is that in 1921–22 at Aakjær's farm *Jenle*, they had a farm hand, Søren Poulsen, who could play the fiddle and who brought the tune of *Auld Lang Syne* to Aakjær's knowledge. Aakjær then translated the song so that they all, children and grown–ups, could sing it together, as recalled many years later by his daughter, Solvejg Bjerre (cf. Arboe 2004: 37). Aakjær also mentions this period with joy, "the Scottish singer Rob. Burns has once more filled my parlour with highness, oh Scotland, which I visited in 1906, it is my second native country", (my translation, Arboe 2002: 37).

The poem has 5 stanzas of 4 verses plus the refrain, which begins with, *De skjønne Ungdomsdaw, aaja, / de Daw saa swær aa find* [the beautiful days of our youth, oh yes, those days so hard to find]. Here, Aakjær is, in fact, adding content to Burns verses, as Burns just repeats, *For auld lang syne (my dear)*. In stanza 2, Aakjær makes a really difficult beginning, *Og gi så kuns de Glajs en Top / og vend en med di Kaw'* [And then just

give the glass a top / and turn it around with your left hand]. Here, Burns has the verses, "And surely ve'll be your pint stowp! / and surely I'll be mine!", which Aakjær obviously does not translate directly. Many people, including dialect speakers, have, over the years, asked us at The Jutland Dialect Dictionary what Aakjær is, in fact, talking about here. The solution of the riddle is that the two old friends are drinking kaffepunch 'coffee punch' together, i.e. each of them takes a small glass of aquavit, fills it to the rim (the 'top'), and pours it into his cup of coffee. In earlier times, this was a beloved drink in Jutland (Arboe 2002: 23), in many areas called en bitte swot 'a little black one' or the like. It does not seem part of the tradition to use the left hand to pour the aquavit from the glass into the cup: presumably Aakjær is using the noun *Kaw*' 'left hand' to get a rhyme with Daw, 'days' just after. In stanza 5, Burns has the verse, "And we'll tak a gude-willie waught (i.e. a very hearty swig¹⁴), / for auld lang syne", whereas Aakjær has a much more deep-felt reflection, Hvor er æ skjøn aa find en Ven / en haaj mist for læng, læng sind! [how beautiful it is to find a friend / one had lost long, long ago!]. Furthermore, in my view, this has more content than the verses by Burns, but it is correct that the idiom, a gude-willie waught is lost, an idiom the use of which in the poem is appreciated by Scottish readers (Kinghorn 1980:67). The two poems are analyzed in detail in Arboe (2002) with comparisons of idioms and imagery, and with comments on the Jutlandic and Scots words used.

Hansen (1951) also translated this poem into Jutlandic: *For læng, læng senn* [long, long ago], (p. 70f.). Stanza 5, which corresponds to stanza 2 by Aakjær¹⁵, is translated by Hansen into, *Og lævnes der voss Stoend å tømm / et Halsstab no og da, / så vil vi mindle løvt vort Krus / o tænk o ålt, der va.* [If we are given the time to empty / a half-stoup sometimes, / then we shall amicably lift our cup / and think of all that was]. This translation seems more subdued than Aakjær's above; the same holds for the other stanzas by Hansen, and his version has not been able to compete with Aakjær's in popularity.

6. Conclusion

The Danish poets and authors treated here were greatly inspired by Scots poets, Aakjær, Hansen and Hans Kirk by Burns, Blicher by Laidlaw (and perhaps later by Burns). They were so inspired that they directly translated

¹⁴ Gude-willie = hearty; waught = a big drink

¹⁵ In some editions, *Auld Lang Syne* was published with stanza 2 and 5 interchanged, (cf. Arboe 2002: 27).

poems, mostly those by Robert Burns, or gave new versions of them, or used a poem as a springboard for a partly parallel, but much elongated rhymed story (Aakjær's version of *Tam o' Shanter*). The themes of the poems mirrored central facets of life as feasts (*The Jolly Beggars*), pleasures and sorrows of love, social inequality and more. It has been shown that dialects could be used in poems relating both hilarious stories and everyday events as well as serious and sad incidents.

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