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“The First Swallow”: Avian Metaphors in Nikita Khrushchev’s Political Discourse

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Birds are a rich source for metaphors in paremias that are known to be a significant rhetorical force in various modes of communication. This article deals with the repertoire of ornithological proverbial texts utilized in the Soviet leader’s public speeches and memoirs, as well as in their English translations. The metaphor human is bird, in which there are various grounds of comparison, is explored. The peculiarities of using avian metaphors in the context of the original and the ways of their translation into English are scrutinized as well. The analysis of the material shows that the main features, shared by the Target (human) and the Source (bird species), are grounded on physiological characteristics and behavioral traits, having a negative slant. The equivalent and literal translations are applied as the main methods of rendition. Of particular interest are the metaphorical “animalistic metamorphoses” found in translation.

KEYWORDS: avian metaphor; comparative study; Nikita Khrushchev; political discourse; translation

1. Introduction

At present, the problem of studying the universal features, as well as the specificity of national character and mentality, based on the main concept spheres in phraseology is the focus of attention of both Russian and foreign linguists. It is generally accepted that commonalities and dissimilarities of phraseological units in different languages can be identified by means of a frontal interlingual comparison.

Since earliest times birds have been not only a material but also a cultural resource. Avian figures have been created by prehistoric humans and have featured prominently in the mythology and literature of different

societies throughout the world. Long before ornithology was practiced as a science, interest in birds and the knowledge of them found expression in conversation and stories which then crystallized into the records of various cultures and religions. The Bible refers to Noah's use of the raven and dove to bring him information about the proverbial Flood. Aesop's fables abound in bird characters. The bestiaries of the Middle Ages contain moralistic writings that perceive avian beings as symbols for conveying different ideas.

Birds reflect a strong symbolism. Avian beings are generally known to symbolize freedom because they can walk on the earth and swim in the sea like humans, but they also have the ability to fly into the sky. However, "symbols are multi-vocal and therefore open to a variety of investigative angles" (Turner, 1967, 50). Moreover, different cultures have a varied understanding of all symbols, and birds are no exception to this.

Ancient civilizations viewed avian beings as sacred and spiritual. Because of travelling across the sky to numerous distant places, birds have always been regarded as the messengers and predictors of future events. Birds were valuable symbols in Egypt, Rome, and Greece. In Egypt, the bird symbol was considered the power of the soul leaving a person's body. The Romans believed that when avian beings flew from east to west, they were most often preceded by success in both personal and professional life. The Greeks even invented the practice of reading the signs of the times through birds' behavior called ornithomancy. The bird in general has long been a common Christian symbol of the transcendent soul. In the medieval iconography, an avian being entangled in foliage symbolized the soul embroiled in the materialism of the secular world. "According to the Koran, the «language of birds» is spiritual knowledge and is related to the souls" (Rogue, 2018, 99).

Different cultures have a very prolific set of metaphors for animals. As stated by Andrew Goatly (2006, 25), "the widespread and persistent view that humans are somehow at the pinnacle of creation has given rise to a general pattern among human is animal metaphors: the great majority are negative and pejorative." Inasmuch as proverbial texts express traditional wisdom shared by all people of a culture, the metaphor human is bird is worth discussing, and the analysis of Russian avian phraseological units and their translation into English seems interesting in terms of including

these “bird species” elements in paremias that reveal the commonality of associations, as well as their differences.

2. Previous research

One of the most powerful and the most frequently-used expressive means for creating images is the metaphor. The metaphorical level is the symbolism, expressing the nature of the relationship between interlocutors, their ontological status, as well as their desires, thoughts, and feelings. The metaphorical language represented in folk speech makes people’s interaction more open. The metaphor is directly related to the image, and it is important for the pragmatic effect of communication. In order to recognize a pragmatic code and an adequate perception of a metaphor, speakers and their communicative partners need to have common cultural background knowledge (for a more detailed discussion of the metaphor, v. Carter, 2019).

The cognitive approach (Lakoff, Johnson, 2003) makes it clear that translatability is not only a matter of words but that is also inextricably linked to the conceptual systems of the source and target culture, since one’s conceptualization of reality depends on the language one speaks. Translating by target language equivalents seems to be the most productive way of making the rendering of phraseological units figurative (Кузьмин, 2004). The presence of figurativeness in translation of paremias helps to communicate the necessary emotive evaluation. It is a common view that translation difficulties usually arise in the cases when there happens to be no corresponding idiom in the target language that can be used for rendition, or when the existing “ready-made” equivalent cannot be employed for any reason.

Paremias in actual use are verbal strategies for dealing with social situations. To understand the meaning of proverbial texts in actual speech acts, they should be viewed as part of the entire communicative performance and the entire cultural background, against which a speech-event has to be set. Furthermore, only the analysis of the application and function of idioms within particular contexts can determine their specific meanings.

In recent research on avian metaphors, much attention is being given to various cultural and religious investigations (Александрова, 2017; Dederen, Mokakabye, 2018; Rogue, 2018; Терешко, 2019), including comparative studies conducted both in sister languages (Malykhina, Pravednikov, Kuzmina, Starodubtseva, Larina, Pisareva, 2017; Беккер, 2019), as well as in unrelated languages (ЛЫЗЛОВ, 2019). Some linguists have attempted to address the issue of universal and specific features based on the main concept spheres in phraseology. As it turned out, the frontal interlingual comparison makes it possible to weed out subjective “nationalized” interpretations of some proverbial texts. However, there is still a great deal of debate over it.

One of the features that determines politicians’ manner in which they make speeches and create a certain emotional background is the aphoristic character (viz. idioms, proverbs, metaphors, etc.) which is notable for the novelty and originality of thought (for more information on this issue, v. Carter, 2016). There is some evidence that quite a number of famous public figures were masterful employers of proverbs in their political speeches as well as in their writings (Meščerskij, 1981; Mieder, 2005). While Nikita Khrushchev’s inclination towards the application of proverbs and proverbial expressions has been noticed and paid some attention to (McKenna, 2000; Taubman, 2003), there is merely a very short study that refers to his use of paremias illustrated by textual examples (Carter, 2016; 2019), and the metaphorical matters with a special focus on the avian proverbial images have not been scrutinized yet. Thus, this gap needs to be filled.

3. Corpus and methodology

In the present research, avian metaphors were examined in the parallel corpus, i.e. “a corpus that contains source texts and their translations” (McEnery, Xiao, 2007, 20), which includes the Russian speeches by Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev (1894–1971), the Soviet leader of “the Thaw” period (Подольский, Волошинова, 2019), delivered in different settings in the USA in 1959–1960 (Хрущев, 1960) and his memoirs (Хрущев, 2016a; , 2016b) along with their translations in the English language (*Khrushchev in America*, 1960; *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2004;

2006; 2007). According to Anthony McEnery and Zhonghua Xiao (2007, 18), “such corpora can give new insights into the languages compared – insights that are not likely to be noticed in studies of monolingual corpora; they can be used for a range of comparative purposes and can increase our knowledge of language-specific, typological and cultural differences, as well as universal features.”

After compiling a parallel corpus, the original texts and their translations were searched for the target phraseological units containing the names of bird species. Then the subcorpus of text fragments with the phraseological forming elements was compiled, and each example was analyzed in terms of conceptual metaphors and their possible linguistic equivalents.

4. Analysis

In Nikita Khrushchev’s public speeches made in America and in his memoirs, the names of 12 bird species appear 23 times. The English translation provides 22 proverbial instances, including 20 avian metaphors that are worthy of careful consideration.

Human is sparrow

Many ornithological metaphors are based on the bird’s size or shape. Often a man of a small stature is compared with one of the smallest representatives of birds, a sparrow, in order to emphasize not only the size but also “the defenselessness of the person described” (Александрова, 2017, 79). Reflecting on a big celebration held in Kharkov during the World War II, Khrushchev employed the metaphorical comparison *как воробьи* (like sparrows) to characterize the behavior of people who were threatened by two enemy reconnaissance planes that suddenly appeared and began circling over the city:

Как воробьи, которые, когда налетает ястреб, сейчас же прячутся под крыши, так и народ побежал к домам (Хрущев, 2016а, 393).

Like sparrows that immediately start hiding under the eaves when a hawk appears, the people began running for the nearest buildings (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2004, 542).

The proverbial saying *воробьи чирикали* (lit. sparrows were twittering) is about noisily, wailing, chatting or shouting, interrupting each other (usually worried, excited or frightened) people. Remembering the Fourteenth Congress and the worsening of relations with China, the Soviet leader used this avian metaphor to describe how excited everybody was about the news and the forthcoming changes. Due to the absence of an equivalent idiom in the target language, the literal translation was provided:

Помню, когда мы приехали на съезд, уже, как говорится, воробьи обо всем чирикали, и довольно громко был слышен в народе глас, даже и для обывателей, что в партии намечился глубокий раскол (Хрущев, 2016а, 32).

I remember that even as we arrived at the congress, “the sparrows were twitting about everything,” as the saying goes. Among ordinary people you could hear the view being expressed rather openly that a deep split in the party had occurred (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2004, 21).

Хотя такую масштабную работу, которую они провели против нас, конечно, нельзя было скрыть, и о ней чирикали воробьи на всех крышах (Хрущев, 2016b, 82). However, the work they were carrying out against us was, of course, conducted on such a large scale that it was impossible to hide, and the sparrows on all the roofs had begun twittering about it (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2007, 478).

“The world of birds inspires many proverbs with connotations revealing the cunning, protection, the most practical meaning of life” (Cristea, 2016, 186). The paremia *Старого воробья на мякине не проведешь* (An old sparrow cannot be caught with chaff) refers to an experienced person who cannot be deceived or outsmarted. The proverbial text reflects human observations of the sparrow’s habits. In the past, the bird has long caused a lot of trouble for peasants. It has been noticed that “an old sparrow never flies to the chaff (i.e. to the ears of grain already beaten with threshing flails), but it looks for any unthreshed stacks” (Мокиенко, 2017, 87).

There are equivalents of *Старого воробья на мякине не проведешь* in a number of Slavic languages, such as “Belarusian (*Старога вераб’я на мякіне не ашукаеш*), Ukrainian (*Старого горобця на полові не обдуриш*), Polish (*Starego wróbla nie weźmiesz na plewy*), Czech (*Starého vrabce plevami neošidiš*)” (Котова, 2000, 35). In some Germanic languages, for instance, in English, there is an analogue of the adage, containing an avian metaphor (*Old birds are not caught with chaff*), though it is not specified what bird species are implied. At luncheon held at the Twentieth Century Fox Studios in Los Angeles on September 19, 1959, the Russian

“sparrow” metaphor was utilized by the Soviet leader as a characteristic of Russian people who can easily distinguish true from false. It was literally translated into English:

Я вам напомнил бы на сей счет русскую поговорку: “Старого воробья на мякине не проведешь” (Хрущев, 1960, 188).

I might quote the Russian saying in this regard. It says, “You cannot catch an old sparrow with chaff” (*Khrushchev in America*, 1960, 106).

Human is raven

As indicated by Arvo Krikmann (2001, 15), all the texts under the “animal/animal” category are “basically the so-called *sentential metaphors*, and in order to understand them, we have to «translate» the world of animals into the world of humans.” One of the most productive clusters of synonyms in this category is the group of metaphors emphasizing that animals (predators, in particular) understand and do not harm each other.

The proverb *Ворон ворону глаз не выклюет* (Ravens do not pick ravens’ eyes) means that “persons bound by common (often selfish or even dishonest) interest would always act hand in glove and never betray one another” (Кузьмин, Шадрин, 1989, 47). The adage is known to many languages since antiquity. There are equivalents of *Ворон ворону глаз не выклюет* in a number of Slavic languages, such as “Belarusian (*Воран ворану вачэй не выклюдзе*), Ukrainian (*Ворон ворону ока не виклює*), Bulgarian (*Гарван гарвану око не вади*), Serbian (*Врана врани очи не вади*), Polish (*Kruk krukowi oka nie wykole*), Slovak (*Vrana vrane oko nevykole*), Czech (*Vrána vráně oči nevyklove*)” (Котова, 2000, 35). The proverbial lore of some cultures has paremias that are close in meaning but differ in figurativeness: for example, “German (*Ein Wolf frisst nicht den anderen*); Spanish (*Lobo no come a lobo*), Italian (*Cane non mangia cane*), French (*Les loups ne se mangent pas entre eux*) and Latin (*Canis caninam non est*)” (Пуччо, 2012, 66).

This proverb was cited by the Soviet politician at one of the sessions of the United Nations Organization to express his disapproval and indignation of the way how the representatives of the colonizing countries supported

each other. For any reason, the Russian adage has not been translated into English:

Есть поговорка: “Ворон ворону глаз не выклюет”. И колонизатор колонизатора поддерживает (Хрущев, 2016b, 608).

Human is goose

In ancient times, the goose equated to the beginning of the World Egg, which symbolized the divine First Creation. “It was considered a symbol of omen, a divine sign, as well as a symbol of marital fidelity” (Маковский, 1999, 154). Nowadays, in some cultures, the goose symbolizes travel, loyalty, sociability, protection, bravery, etc.

The metaphorical comparison *как с гуся вода* (lit. like water off a goose’s back) relates to people “who are not affected by any punishment, censure or persuasion” (Мокиенко, Никитина, 2008, 159) because of being protected. The idiom comes from the literal characteristic that the goose (duck) feathers have for resisting water. In fact, waterfowls’ feathers are coated in special oil that repels water. For this reason, water droplets quite literally roll off geese or ducks’ backs. Analyzing the real state of Soviet military equipment and the reserves having been built up in the event of the war, Khrushchev tried to find those who were responsible for the wrong estimation of the condition of the Red Army and for a great many things being left undone. As can be seen in the extract below, this Russian proverbial saying is translated by means of an English analogue where a goose is replaced by another waterfowl, a duck:

Люди, которые до этого были ответственны, с них как с гуся вода (Хрущев, 2016a, 217).

The people who were responsible seemed unconcerned. To them, apparently, it was like water off a duck’s back (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2004, 276).

The goose is known for its warrior spirit. The proverbial expression *не дразнить гусей* (lit. not to tease the geese) has been traced back to the Russian fable *Geese* by Ivan Krylov. Its basic meaning is “to refrain from doing something in order to avoid an undesirable reaction, hurting one’s feelings or offending somebody” (Уолш, Берков, 1988, 214). All three

situations under investigation relate to different political events. The first one deals with China’s claims about the dividing line of the border with the Soviet Union. The second one refers to Khrushchev’s visit to Egypt. The last situation concerns the disagreement on the withdrawal of Soviet bombers. In the first two cases, the metaphor is translated by means of an analogue lacking in avian imagery. As for the last situation, the literal translation is provided.

Мы исходили из того, что лучше из-за пустяков не дразнить гусей, а прийти к полюбовному соглашению (Хрущев, 2016b, 78).

We proceeded from the standpoint that it was better not to make waves, but to arrive at an amicable agreement (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2007, 473).

А я военных баз не посещал, чтобы это не являлось плохой демонстрацией. Зачем дразнить гусей? (Хрущев, 2016b, 374).

I didn’t visit any military bases, so as not to give any bad impression. Why make waves or ruffle anyone’s feathers (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2007, 853).

Но потом вынуждены были согласиться с Кеннеди и их вывели тоже, чтобы не дразнить гусей (Хрущев, 2016b, 673).

But later we were forced to concede to Kennedy, and we withdrew the bombers as well, so as “not to tease the geese” (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2007, 341).

In his memoir manuscript, Khrushchev remembers the beginning of his official visit to the United States in 1959 and the people’s attitude to the representatives of the Soviet delegation. The metaphor *гусь лапчатый* (lit. a goose with paws), i.e. a roguish, quirky man (Зайнунльдинов, Шмидт, 2019), is employed by the politician for expression of irony to characterize himself from the viewpoint of the Americans. As it appears, the “animalistic metamorphosis” is taken place in the translation of the cited metaphor: a goose turns into a sly fox, though the literal translation is given as well:

Видимо, американцы относились к нам с терпением: посмотрим, что выйдет, что это за такой-сякой гусь лапчатый, возглавляющий их правительство, интересно взглянуть на него или услышать (Хрущев, 2016b, 480).

The Americans seemed to take a tolerant attitude toward us, as though to say: “We’ll see how things turn out. Let’s see what kind of sly fox [literally «goose with paws»] it is who heads their government.” It was interesting for them to take a look and listen to this strange creature (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2007, 106).

Human is chicken

Animals have been part of human life as pray and animal husbandry, so it is not surprising that they have been thoroughly observed in many different ways. A chicken is a common domestic fowl. It is one of the “top-five” group of favorite referents featured in animal proverbs and zoo-metaphors (Krikmann, 2001). The metaphorical comparison *ходить, как мокрая курица* (lit. “to walk like a wet chicken”) refers to a person who moves around with a depressing and sad look. Reflecting on Josef Stalin’s conduct at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, Khrushchev compares the Soviet leader with the bird, thus criticizing his pathetic behavior in this tense period of Russian history:

Такое началось в 1943 году и продолжалось позже, когда Сталин обрел прежнюю форму и уверовал, что мы победим. А раньше он ходил, как мокрая курица (Хрущев, 2016а, 537).

Stalin had regained his former proud bearing and felt assured that we would win the war. Previously he had gone around looking as bedraggled as a soaked chicken (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2006, 44).

Human is canary

It has been found that “some birds personify masculinity. Others align themselves with the social realm of women” (Dederen, Mokakabye, 2018, 92). The third category is more ambiguous to nature and seems to defy a simple binary classification.

Canaries are small finches of the Canary Islands that are usually greenish to yellow and that are kept as sage birds and singers. The proverbial comparison *вырядиться, как канарейки* (lit. to dress up like canaries) is said about people who are wearing any clothes of bright yellow. Though the lexeme *канарейка* (canary) is of feminine gender in Russian, in the analyzed situation, it serves to criticize military men wearing shoulder boards and epaulets as well as stripes down the sides of uniform trousers. It is interesting to note that in the English translation, we can observe an “avian metamorphosis,” namely, canaries turn into peacocks, though it might raise a question about the adequacy of translation because, in Russian, a canary metaphor and a peacock metaphor do not match.

А сейчас вырядились, как какие-то канарейки (Хрущев, 2016b, 22).
But now we’ve dressed ourselves up like peacocks (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2007, 405).

Human is peacock

The peacock is “a male peafowl distinguished by a crest of upright feathers and by greatly elongated loosely webbed upper tall coverts which are mostly tipped with iridescent spots and are erected and spread in a shimmering fan” (*Merriam–Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 2003, 911). “The peacock passes direct from Pagan to Christian art. In the former it was Juno’s bird, and was supposed to represent the apotheosis of an empress. On Christian sepulchers in the Catacombs the peacock is symbolic of immortality” (Collins, 1913, 33). In some cultures, this avian being illustrates grace, compassion, awakening, and nobility. The peacock is considered the epitome of beauty as well. However, this bird is often related to the symbol of vanity as it likes to show off its vibrantly colored tail to impress the females.

One more avian proverbial saying dealing with a manner of dressing is the metaphorical comparison *нарядиться, как павлин* (to dress up like a peacock) that is applied to a vulgar-dressed man. In the following passage, Khrushchev criticizes Aleksei Kirichenko, a member of the Military Council, for being dressed in a light gray overcoat. The Soviet leader made a comment that it was inappropriate for the military man to do it because, in the tsarist era, that was the color of the overcoats worn by generals. The translator rendered this Russian metaphor into English by the full equivalent conveying the same type of overtones as the context of the original does.

Какой вы генерал? Нарядились, как павлин (Хрущев, 2016a, 292).
What kind of general are you? You’ve dressed yourself up like a peacock (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2004, 388).

Human is partridge

Paremiias “are also like a window to our relation to other species” (Lauhakangas, 2019, 592). The partridge is considered a game bird that is

hunted by man in the wild. The proverbial comparison *передушить, как куропаток* (lit. to strangle like partridges) is about an immediate, easy, ruthless, and decisive reprisal against someone who is weak or defenseless. In his memoirs, Khrushchev claimed that Josef Stalin suffered from lack of confidence in his own people, underestimating the inner power of resistance of Soviet people to outside influence. He quoted Stalin's words about the threat of becoming victims of external enemies, integrating the metaphorical comparison with the "partridge" component that was translated by way of the English avian analogue:

Недаром он говорил нам, что мы не сможем противостоять противнику: "Вот умру, и погибните, враги передушат вас, как куропаток" (Хрущев, 2016b, 532).
 It was not by accident that he kept telling us that we could not stand up to the enemy. He kept saying: "Once I die, you're all going to perish. The enemy will mow you down like so many partridges" (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2007, 173).

Human is swallow

Swallows are among the most common species of birds seen worldwide. In different cultures and nations, the swallow symbolizes spring, morning and rebirth, hope, friendship and loyalty. In Ancient Greece and Rome to kill a swallow meant to court disaster because the swallow symbolized dead children's spirits. In China, the swallow is a symbol of courage, loyalty and positive destiny changes but, in Japan, it symbolizes mothering care as well as infidelity. In Africa, the swallow represents purity. Swallows are traditionally among the most beloved and honored birds in Slavic cultures. In Russia, it embodies a female symbolic. The swallow is a pure, holy bird which, along with the dove and the lark, belongs to God's birds. "Swallows' twittering is perceived as a tireless prayer" (Malykhina, Pravednikov, Kuzmina, Starodubtseva, Larina, Pisareva, 2017, 26).

The universal proverbial expression *первая ласточка* (the first swallow) applies to someone who is the first in the line to be followed. In both instances described in Khrushchev's recollections, the "swallow" metaphors are translated by full equivalents, but while in the former case, emotive evaluation conveys the author's positive attitude to the person, in the latter one, it is the source of the negative evaluation because of the negative context of the original.

Между прочим, Лагутенко сыграл роль первой ласточки, прилетевшей к нам после холодной зимы, так как первым из инженеров-практиков пришел к нам со своими идеями (Хрущев, 2016a, 683).

Incidentally, Lagutenko played the role of the first swallow flying in after a cold winter, because he was the first practicing engineer who came to us with his ideas (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2006, 270).

Именно он стал первой ласточкой в печальном повороте в таких отношениях с Китаем (Хрущев, 2016b, 97).

It was he who played the role of first swallow when the unfortunate turn in our relations with China began to occur (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2007, 494).

Human is parrot

The parrot is a tropical bird that is often crested and brightly colored. It is a common view that the parrot exemplifies communication and talkativeness. People who sedulously echo another’s words are often compared with parrots. As can be seen in the passage below, criticizing himself and other party members who pointlessly and thoughtlessly repeat Lenin’s words and seem not to have their own opinion, Khrushchev uses the avian comparison *как попугаи* (like parrots) that is translated into English by way of an equivalent:

К сожалению, мы, как попугаи, повторяя слова Ленина, очень плохо учимся на деле и еще хуже переносим рациональное в нашу социалистическую действительность (Хрущев, 2016b, 510).

Unfortunately, we repeat Lenin’s words like parrots, but learn very poorly in practice and have done even worse when it comes to borrowing rational elements and introducing them onto our socialist reality (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2007, 145).

Human is nightingale

Any bird named in a proverbial saying fills with a specific human meaning and affirms a traditional field of collective experience or a situational state of facts. Some attention has been paid to the description of people’s voices and vocal abilities, as well as their comparison with birds’ singing (Александрова, 2017). The singing of an uncomely nightingale, an excellent natural musician, is sonorous, iridescent, with a lot of trills. The nightingale can be considered the standard of a singer in nature,

therefore, comparing someone with one of the most famous singing birds, the speaker usually compliments him/her, but not in the following case, where the Soviet leader ironically criticizes Walter Reuther, the President of the United Automobile, Aircraft and Agricultural Implement Workers, for being vain of showing off himself:

“Вы как соловей,” – улыбаясь, говорит Н. С. Хрущев. – “Когда он поет, то закрывает глаза, ничего не видит и никого, кроме себя, не слышит” (Хрущев, 1960, 215). “You are like a nightingale,” N. S. Khrushchev said, smiling. “It closes its eyes when it sings and sees nothing and hears nobody but itself” (*Khrushchev in America*, 1960, 132).

Human is ostrich

“Any animal has a specific cultural function in human speech. Talking about a concrete situation, we often use an animal reference true and false at the same time” (Cristea, 2016, 180). There is a myth that is more than two thousand years old: the ostrich when pursued hides its head in the sand and believes itself to be unseen. The fact is that ostriches do not hide their heads in the sand but press them to the ground in case of a threat to listen to soil vibrations that signal danger. As it appears, the proverbial phrase *прятать голову в песок, как страусы* (to hide a head like an ostrich), that characterizes someone “who refused to face unpleasant facts” (Goatly, 2006, 28), continues to be an effective image for people’s behavior in different situations of modern life. The evidence shows that Khrushchev has integrated this metaphor on a number of occasions both in his public speeches (criticizing those who doubted the feasibility of the Soviet economic development) and later in his memoirs (stating the inappropriateness of such behavior for the Soviet government in the time of friction with the Chinese Communist party). Despite many differences between the two languages compared, the highest correspondence of the Russian and the English proverbial phrases in terms of meaning, structure, and function can be observed:

Но это страусовая политика, когда страус видит, что противник его догоняет, он, как говорят, зарывает голову в песок (Хрущев, 1960, 130).

But that is ostrich policy: when an ostrich sees that its rival is overtaking it, it is said to hide its head in the sand (*Khrushchev in America*, 1960, 55).

Но и мы не могли прятать голову в песок, как страусы, а смотрели такой опасности прямо в лицо (Хрущев, 2016b, 38).

But we couldn't hide our heads in the sand, like ostriches: we had to look this danger straight in the face (*Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, 2007, 425).

Human is snipe

The last example is a telling one and centers around the proverb *всяк кулик свое болото хвалит* (lit. every sandpiper praises its own bog) that emphasizes the fact that people extol what is familiar, close and dear to them.

Because of the connection with such an unpopular habitat as the swamp, and the low value of this avian being from the viewpoint of Russian hunters and peasants, this bird acquired negative associations. In folk speech, a sandpiper is applied to a stupid, slow-witted, and simple person, a drunken drunkard or a long-nosed man. Perhaps, the adage also reflects the ancient mythological reminiscences of the pagan past known among some European peoples. The sandpiper was considered a sacred bird of the god of thunder or a witch bird. It was expected to predict bad weather and bring misfortune. “The ironic coloring of the proverb may be the consequence of the «overthrow» of this mythological function of the sandpiper under the influence of Christian belief” (Мокиенко, 2017, 182).

The point should be made that the bird's attachment to the swamp is reflected in the proverbs of other Slavic languages, although a similar model but presented by different images is quite common in many cultures. There are equivalents and analogues of *Всяк кулик свое болото хвалит* in “Belarusian (*Кожны кулік сваё балота хваліць*), Ukrainian (*Усяк кулик до свого болота звик*), Bulgarian (*Всяко птиче својто гнездо хвали*), Serbian (*Свакоме је своје најслађе*), Polish (*Každy ptak swe piórka chwali*), Slovak (*Každý vták svoje hniezdo si chváli*), Czech (*Každy chváli své*)” (Котова, 2000, 79). The English proverbial analogue “Every peddler praises his own pack” (Wilkinson, 1993, 12) is lack of animal imagery. In his speech at the luncheon given by Robert Wagner, the mayor of New York, on September 17, 1959, Khrushchev had recourse to this adage to add folkloric spice to his political rhetoric as well as to vividly remind the American listeners of the proverbial truth related to the issue of

comparing different political systems. Even though the Russian and English metaphors differ in their images (the names of bird species), there is no doubt that both proverbs are identical in their meaning.

У русских есть такая пословица: “Всяк кулик свое болото хвалит”. Вы хвалите капиталистическое болото, что же касается нас, то я, конечно, не скажу, что социализм – это болото, но вы можете, конечно, отозваться о нашей системе так же, как я говорю о вашей (Хрущев, 1960, 123).

The Russians have a proverb which says that every snipe praises its own bog. You extol the capitalist bog: as for us, I shall not, naturally, say that socialism is a bog, but you can, of course, speak of our system much as I speak of yours (*Khrushchev in America*, 1960, 48).

5. Conclusion

In view of the findings, it is clear that one of the themes in Khrushchev's metaphorical usage in public speeches and memoirs is the likening of people to different bird species. They are compared to avian beings in many respects. The analyzed contextual illustrations of avian paremias are mostly the demonstrations of an objective metaphorization of the bird motif; the parallels between a bird and a man occur in the physiological features (appearance, size and age) as well as in the behavioral traits (being weak, defenseless, noisy, chatting, hot-tempered, cunning, cowardly, narcissistic, etc.). As it turns out, for the most part, the metaphorical use of the bird-image paremias in the Russian leader's discourse is directly related to different statesmen and policy-makers. The attention of the target audience is particularly focused on their appearance, behavior and actions which, in most cases, reveal the author's negative attitude. The arsenal of the avian idioms by the Soviet politician definitely adds some expressiveness and colloquial color to his speeches and recollections occupied with his views and reflections on different historical and political events.

The English renditions of the Russian contextualized examples demonstrate various means of their realization in the target language: translating by equivalents or analogues, sometimes with metaphorical “animalistic metamorphoses.” It has been found out that in order to make the English proverbial texts adequate, in the cases, when the target phraseological unit does not convey the meaning of the Russian idiom, the literal translation

with the following commentaries and the translation by way of analogues lacking in zoomorphic imagery have been applied.

The present study has focused on metaphorical concerns in paremiology and brought to light the discussion of challenges in rendition of avian metaphors from one language to another because of the obstacles, cultural and linguistic. These issues are important from the point of view of intercultural communication, and they demand further research.

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