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MULTILINGUAL EXPERIMENTS IN PAUL MULDOON'S POETRY
МУЛЬТИЛІНГВАЛЬНІ ЕКСПЕРИМЕНТИ В ПОЕЗІЇ ПОЛА МАЛДУНА
МУЛЬТИЛИНГВАЛЬНЫЕ ЭКСПЕРИМЕНТЫ
В ПОЭЗИИ ПОЛА МАЛДУНА

Розглянуто мультилінгвальні експерименти в поезіях Пола Малдуна – одного з відомих сучасних поетів, що пишуть англійською мовою. Використання іншомовних елементів у поетичному тексті інтерпретується дослідниками по-різному: як космополітичний характер сучасної поезії, яка прагне відобразити складне перехрещення мов, діалектів, ідіом та жаргонів; як пошуки універсальної поетичної мови, яка б розширювала її можливості перетинати межі національної ідентичності; як спробу перебороти догматизм своєї мови з її умовними літературними канонами; нарешті, як художню стратегію. Аналіз показав, що всі ці і деякі інші аспекти знаходять відбиток у поезіях Малдуна. Було також виявлено, що використання ним іншомовних елементів має свої особисті параметри. Його лексика характеризується високим ступенем еклектичності – змішуванням слів, які належать різним мовам, діалектам, стилістичним реєстрам, соціальним і професійним жаргонам. Серед улюблених прийомів поета – фонетична гра, етимологізація, зрощення слів, у тому числі слів або частин слів з різних мов; широке використання власних імен і назв (нерідко спотворених), в яких головним є їх звучання, а не значення; оказіональні утворення, які знаходяться на периферії лінгвістичних норм або порушують їх.

Ключові слова: мультилінгвальний експеримент, художня стратегія, етимологізація, еклектичність, фонетична гра, мовна гібридизація.

Проанализированы мультilingвальные эксперименты в поэзии Пола Малдуна – одного из наиболее заметных современных англоязычных поэтов. Использование иноязычных элементов в поэтическом тексте интерпретируется исследователями по-разному: как космополитический характер современной поэзии, которая стремится отразить сложное перекрещивание языков, диалектов, идиом и жаргонов; как поиски универсального поэтического языка, расширяющего его возможности выхода за пределы национальной идентичности; как попытку преодолеть догматизм своего родного языка с его условными литературными канонами; наконец, как художественную стратегию. Анализ показал, что все эти и ещё некоторые другие аспекты находят отражение в поэзии Пола Малдуна. Было также выявлено, что используемые им иноязычные элементы имеют свои особые параметры. Его лексика характеризуется высокой степенью эклектичности, смешением слов различных языков, диалектов, стилистических регистров и жаргонов. Среди излюбленных приёмов поэта – фонетическая игра, этимологизация, словосложение, в том числе

слов или морфем различных языков, использование собственных имён и названий (часто искажённых), в которых главным для Малдуна является их звучание, а не значение, окказиональные образования, находящиеся на периферии лингвистических норм или их нарушающие.

Ключевые слова: мультилингвальный эксперимент, художественная стратегия, этимологизация, эклектичность, фонетическая игра, языковая гибридизация.

The article is focused on the study of multilingual experiments in the poetic texts of Paul Muldoon – one of the most formally innovative poets writing in English today. Multilingualism as a poetic practice is interpreted by linguists and literary critics in more than one way: as a cosmopolitan character of the contemporary poetry, which strives to reflect a complex intersection of languages, dialects, idioms and jargons; as a search for the universal poetic language that can extend its possibilities beyond the limits of national identity; as an attempt to overcome linguistic dogmatism with its conventional literary canon; at last, as a literary strategy. Analysis has shown that all these and some other aspects are reflected in Muldoon’s poetic texts. It was also found that multilingualism in his poetry has its own very special parameters. His poetry is characterized by highly eclectic vocabulary, by phonetic play and compounding of words and morphemes of different languages, by the abundant usage of proper names whereby words become pure sounds, free of all meaning, by numerous nonce-words which in fact are hybrid formations focusing on shifting semantic variations between languages and cultures.

Keywords: multilingual experiment, artistic strategy, etymologizing, eclecticism, phonetic play, language hybridity.

Multilingualism is a significant dimension of much contemporary «English» poetry writing that functions differently in the poetic practice of different authors. It is necessary to remark that this practice coincides with general socio-cultural tendency to multilingualism governed by the need of globalization and cultural openness. The question considered in this article is what the use of multiple languages means in contemporary poetry and, in particular, in Paul Muldoon’s lyrics.

Along with the ordinary language which is spoken by people in everyday communication there exists the poetic language, the language of the highest order, the essence of which is in its potential qualities. The poet-critic M. Epshtein suggests creating the new science – linguosophia that could study not the existing languages but rather the question of what the language could be. The prototypes of such virtual languages and their structure are described by G. Deleuze on the basis of literary experiments of XX century [1]. One can also recollect some earlier attempts to create hybrid languages, for instance, Eugene Jolas’s Utopian dream at the beginning of XX century to create a universal language that «might bridge the continents and neutralize the curse of Babel by absorbing Anglo-Saxon, Greco-Latin, Indian, Spanish, French, Canadian French, German, Pansylvanian German, Dutch, Hebrew, the Slavic and Slavonic languages [10]. The examples of his unsuccessful attempts to create such language can be found in his poetry.

Another attempt in this direction was made by Velimir Khlebnikov also in the first decades of XX century, who invented the «nest of languages» and described 53 images of this virtual universal («star») language at which representatives of all nations of all times could speak. V. Faschenko-Takovich remarks that many of Khlebnikov’s languages were implemented into life. Thus, for instance, his «chisloimena» were partially realized in the number code of contemporary informatics [3, p. 73]. This example illustrates the approach to the poetic language as a prototype for the universal

language of the future.

Speaking about multilingualism in the contemporary poetry some analysts connect it with cosmopolitanism of its authors, especially those who through travel or emigration have acquired the knowledge of more than one language and cannot but use this experience in their poetry. M. Gaboni remarks that today's cosmopolitanism as a word and as a concept has lost the aristocratic, idealized, universalist meaning of the enlightenment to become a «cosmopolitanism of reality», which is not simply one, for it admits many versions, born of distinct experiences of displacement and of travel» [8, p. 35].

Multilingualism has long been one of the key characteristics of literary experimentation. Avant-garde or experimental poetry understands multilingualism as a part of the modernist dream of breaking with the past in order to prefigure an unforeseen but possible future. In H. Yezep's opinion (Mexican poet-critic) modernist poets constructed an «imperial fantasy» in which they could gather past, present and future into a single place and time; this «transhistoric consumerism» assured their cultural centrality.

Sarah Dowling argues, that, although avant-garde technique through which modernist writers incorporated other languages recur in contemporary multilingual poems, she finds that «contemporary poets tend to avoid the modernists' unifying impulses, the desire to «make it cohere», in Pound words, in a total system [7].

Ania Spira understands multilingual experiments as a literary performance of transcultural identity and sees them as an attempt to create «transcultural aesthetics» or «multilingual cosmopoetics» [12].

Almost the same view is expressed by N. Fateeva who considers that multilingual experiments are «connected with the search for universal poetic language». Investigating this peculiarity in the contemporary Russian poetry she remarks: «The beginning of XX century is associated with Futuristic aim at creating «zauzny jazik» mainly on the basis of Slavic roots while the turn of XX–XXI centuries is characterized by the appearance of «multilingual zaum», in which sound sequences belong simultaneously to two or more languages, and the poet seems to make a translation from one language into another... Thus, the search for similar sound sequences in different languages leads to general expanding of poetic-linguistic field» [2, p. 87].

Generalizing what have been said above we can conclude that multilingual experiments in poetry are mainly aimed at investigating the potential possibilities (phonetic, morphological, word-building, syntactical) of different languages and their interaction, thus probing the future perspective of their development in general.

Paul Muldoon (born in 1951), an outstanding Irish poet, who has a reputation as an innovative voice in English-language poetry, is strongly marked by the use of multilingual elements. His vocabulary is highly eclectic: it is a mixture of common colloquial words and familiar phrases (*a hell of, it hits me, a slip of a girl, smart-ass, kick the bucket*) and bookish words of different kinds including those which have been assimilated by the English language but preserved their foreign appearance (*embonpoint, accoutrements, impromptu, equinoxe*, etc.), terms (*chlamidia, ovarian cancer, uterine, excoriate, Achillea millefolium*), archaic (*hobbledehoy, desperado*), dialect (*blether*), exotic words (*mah-jong, cruzeiro, kraal*) et al.

Foreign words per se in all imaginable languages are employed in great numbers especially in Muldoon's poetry after 80s. French occupies a special place among other foreign languages not only because the author uses it very lavishly (words, stock phrases,

whole sentences and bigger pieces of text) but also because these pieces of text often carry their live speech intonation. Here is an example from the poem “The Bangle”: “*Si Monsieur l’épicure... Si Monsieur l’épicure voudrait/ un verre de Veuve Cliquot/ aprèson Bonderay/ au Foin...?*”

Other essential features of Muldoon’s poetics are multilingual interlocking wordplay, mainly pun, allusions, ironic twists on common expressions, anagrams, spun idioms and macaronic rhymes. He is especially skilled in the use of etymology. Here are a few lines from the poem “The Bangle” which present a typical Muldoon’s play upon words based on etymology:

I studied the menu as a catechumen
might his catechism. The *gâteau au framboises et fraises*
or the *gâteau icumen*
in, lhude sing, lhude sing [11, p. 460].

The play upon words here is based, first, upon phonetic similarity of the second part of the word *catechumen* with the word-phrase *icumen*.

Catechumen – a person, esp. in the early church, undergoing instruction prior to baptism [6, p. 268].

Icumen comes from the 13th century English song “*Sumer is Icumen In, Lhude Sing Cucuu!*” which translates approximately to “Summer has come, loudly sing cuckoo!” The song is composed in the Wessex dialect of Middle English.

The second way of reading these lines, is based on breaking up of the word *catechumen* into two parts *cat + echumen* in parallel to *gâteau + icumen* with the result of humorous profanation of the religious practice.

In connection with this punning device we can recollect Muldoon’s pun on his own name: Muddledoon.

Another bright example of Muldoon’s pun can be observed in the following lines from the poem “Yarrow”:

after a twelve-hour day at Scadden, Arps
she wanted me to play Catullus
to her, like, Clodia; even now I savour her *arrière-*
goût of sweat and patchouli oil

Pun here is based on similar spelling and pronunciation of the French word *goût* (meaning *smell*) and English word *goat* (a horned animal).

A great number of author’s nonce-words are based on blending of two or more words or parts of words: *dracunculus*, *semioticonoclast*, *gubernaculum*, *scinnymalinks*, *catticallipiller*, *knobkerrieknout* etc. Some of them are easily decipherable, the meaning of others is rather vague.

One more example of the bilingual puns and semantic doubles (Cicero – Caesar, US – USSR, album – white) appear in Muldoon’s epigram on the Beatles’ 1966 “White Album”:

Though that was the winter when late each night
I’d put away Cicero or Caesar
and pour new milk into an old saucer
for the hedgehog which, when it showed up right

on cue, would set its nose down like that flight
back from the U.S...back from the, yes sir...
back from the...back from the U.S.S.R...
I’d never noticed the play on «album» and «white».

Many critics are stunned by the range of Muldoon's multilingual puns, surprising associations and analogies between apparently unrelated texts and ideas and some call it "an associative madness". Bernard O'Donoghue is of a different opinion. He states that all these are not meant to be persuasive: they are just one way of organizing material. «It's intertextuality, at one level, it is mocking scholarship».

Stephen Burt, describing this feature of Muldoon's poetry, calls it "alchemic transformations". "Words, objects and people merge and dissolve into each other – *soutane* into *Soutine*, *Merlin* into *Marilyn*" [5, p. 19–20]. Such mutability creates fluidity and ambiguity which are especially characteristic of Paul Muldoon's later work.

It is difficult not to agree with Maria Johnston's remark that Paul Muldoon's poetry shows how "the poetic text can become a space for linguistic fertilization and the exploration of idiomatic texture of interacting languages" [9].

Thus, the postmodern cultural mood makes multilingual experiments a significant feature of Muldoon's literary art. The element of multilingual play in his poetry is very strong, but it goes far beyond that. It turns into an exploration of the expressive resources of interacting languages and cultures and becomes the potential for a more authentic form of representation.

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