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REPRODUCTION OF ALLUSIONS IN UKRAINIAN TRANSLATIONS OF ENGLISH LITERARY PROSE

Summary

*The article is concerned with the notion of intertextuality and embarks upon the analysis of allusions in the novel *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell and the ways of their reproduction by means of the Ukrainian language. Biblical, mythological, cultural and historical allusions prevail in the original text. Translation commentaries, transcription and translation of allusive proper names were frequently used to faithfully reproduce allusions in the Ukrainian translation.*

Key words: *allusion, translation, translation commentary, literary prose fiction, precedent text.*

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UNDERSTANDING BRITISHNESS THROUGH THE MERSEY POETS

Summary

The British literary scene of the 1960s was very vivid and multifaceted. Although London has traditionally been considered as the literary centre of the British Isles, in the 1960s the situation changed and Liverpool, with its vibrant cultural scene, both mainstream and counter-cultural, provided an alternative to the metropolis. In this era, literature and music in Liverpool went hand in hand, forming a unique scene that attracted mass audience. The paper focuses on the poetry by the Mersey poets Brian Patten, Roger McGough and Adrian Henri and will examine in detail Czech translations of their poetry. It discusses not only their thematic choice and poetic technique but also the performative element that influences the interpretation of their poetry to a great extent. Last but not least, the paper looks at the close relationship between poetry on the page and the lyrics that these poets wrote for their own music bands, as well as for the Beatles.

Key words: *Mersey poetry; Liverpool scene; Roger McGough; Brian Patten; Adrian Henri; translation; poetry; British poetry.*

The American Beat poets paved the way for avant-garde and underground culture. Inspired by their American colleagues, the 1960s Liverpool poets, represented by Adrian Henry, Roger McGough, and Brian Patten, provided a counterbalance to the established British mainstream intellectual poetry of the 1950s by the Movement and Group poets. Given the socio-economic background of the Liverpool poets, who came from mainly working-class families and attended art colleges rather than prestigious universities, they had a close relationship to culture for the masses. They did not aspire to idiosyncratic highbrow poetry that would be appreciated by a limited number of readers. Rather, the Liverpool poets addressed everyday issues with a sarcastic sense of humour and strong emotions and contemporary subject matter with hardly any classical references or intricate metaphors that would be difficult to decipher. For them, poetry and music were a form of mass entertainment, as Roger McGough postulates: "the kids didn't see this poetry with a capital p, they understood it as a modern entertainment, as part of the pop-movement" [9, p. 11]. As a consequence, their poetry had an affinity with the music of the day. The Liverpool poets intertwined with musicians, either writing lyrics or even performing themselves; for example, Roger McGough was a member of a number of bands, such as The Scaffold, in which Michael McCartney who was the brother of Paul McCartney and who used the stage name Mike McGear, also performed. Liverpool was thriving with pop culture and the Beatles helped to build a platform that provided an alternative to the artists established in London.

The Liverpool poets opened the way for performative poetry. In their effort to perform rather than read poetry, they were later followed by younger British diasporic writers, such as Levi Tafari or Benjamin Zephaniah. When looking at the quality and art of the poetry by the Liverpool poets, Radhika Lakshmi maintains: "The Liverpool poets believe that the effect that a poem produces is more important than the poem itself; a poem should be considered as an 'agent' (that conveys the poet's message), rather than an 'object'" [4, see webpage]. Therefore, when evaluating the translations of their poetry into Czech, one has to bear in mind that their texts should be looked at as if they are still not finished and therefore active participation by the reader in the process of interpretation is required.

Roger McGough supported the counter-culture outside the UK. Shortly before the Velvet Revolution he visited Czechoslovakia in October 1989 to participate in a demonstration commemorating John Lennon. He recalls: "I was surrounded by burning candles and recited my poems and I felt that something strange was happening. Similarly to the others who were there with me, I could not imagine what big thing would come out of it" [3, p. 9]. McGough represented the avant-garde scene, which represented a break from the intellectual poetry of the Movement and the Group. This Liverpool avant-garde was also often associated with Michael Horovitz, Adrian Henri, and Brian Patten. They had built upon pop culture, bar/club culture (e.g. Blue Angel, Hope Hall) and beat culture, which had emphasized performance and the active participation of the audience. Sharing some visions with the American Beat poets and having personal contacts with them (e.g. Allen Ginsberg famously visited Liverpool in 1965), the Mersey poets foregrounded the social aspects of the working-class Liverpool of the 1960s and soon discarded the idea of combining poetry and jazz; rather, they used their poetry as lyrics to a new kind of popular music that crystallized best in the hands of the Beatles. As a consequence, in his poetry Roger McGough focuses on everyday objects and emotions. His selected poems were translated by Dan Jedlička in 2011 in *Někdo přijde a udělá to za mě líp*. Jedlička decided to group his translations into thematic groups, such as Fools, Moving Continents, or Serious Poems. When translating the individual texts, Jedlička chose to follow the English practice of capitalizing the first letter in the line. However, such a practice, which is not supported by syntax and grammar in general, does not seem natural in Czech; rather, it disturbs the reader. On the other hand, the translator made a very representative selection from McGough's poetry. In one of his most celebrated poems, "Let me die a youngman's

death," the speaker wishes to die as a gentleman with a youthful spirit. The whole text is written in the style of light verse, and therefore an ironic and sarcastic distancing from taking the world too seriously is evidently the ruling tone of this poem. The poet challenges the death rituals of clean sheets and holy water. In translating the poem Jedlička shifts the meaning of a young man's death to a young death, by which he foregrounds an easy way of dying. What is lost throughout the translation is the sense of humour and the quasi-colloquial style and the form of a monologue. McGough emphasizes the state of the spirit over the bodily condition of the dying person. The speaker wishes his death to be a continuation of the adventures of his life and therefore he refuses to have his body surrounded by the traditional candles and angels. Stanzas two, three, and four provide examples of possible exciting deaths: from being hit "by a bright red sports car" at the age of 73, or when he is 91 while he is sitting "in a barber's chair" he hopes "rival gangsters / with hamfisted tommyguns burst in" [and] "give [him] a short back and insides;" or, alternatively, at the age of 104, when he is "banned from the Cavern," a legendary club aimed at the young generation, he hopes to be killed by a jealous lady when she catches him in bed with her daughter. The whole poem is in a very English tradition, framed by two stanzas (the opening and the closing one) repeating the phrase "let me die a youngman's death" and followed by phrases that share the same syntactic principle, i.e. "not" followed by a string of words used as adjectival attributes – "not a clan and inbetween / the sheets holywater death" or "not a free from sin tiptoe in / candle wax and vanishing death." Such phrases contribute to the implied flow of speech and, in addition, suggest that the speaker is still not out of breath. Although Czech is not particularly suited to such long strings of words used as attributive adjectival phrases, Jedlička does not attempt to replace the syntactic structure by, for example, lexical similarities, and therefore a certain amount of the charm and wit of the poem is lost. Unfortunately, the translator did not pay too much attention to the embedded puns and poetic devices. In an obvious reference to old age and the occurrence of various tumours typical of such an age, McGough twists the seriousness of tumour-related problems into a light-hearted statement "in constant good tumour", which apparently refers to "good humour". Moreover, the words "tumour" and "humour" rhyme, which adds another quality to the English line. The Czech text does not respect it and Jedlička opts for an almost literal translation of "smysl pro tumour mi stále bude vlastní". Although by inserting the word "smysl [sense]" he tries to explain the pun explicitly, it fails. The line reads awkwardly in Czech. Another case of punning in English appears in the third stanza, which is set at the barber's. While McGough utilizes the English phrase "short back and sides" for a particular haircut and twists it to "short back and insides" in reference to the gangsters and their potential shooting, Jedlička employs the verb "rozhrne" [parts the hair], which ruins not only the pun but also the image of the organs protruding from the body after the imagined shooting. On the other hand, in the fourth stanza, the translator manages to maintain the alliteration of "may my mistress" as "mě má milenka," which keeps the sound quality of the line appropriate for its content. However, for unknown reasons, Jedlička does not respect the punctuation rules in the last but one line of this stanza, a decision which does not have any rational reason behind it. As regards punctuation in the poem in general, the English text does not have any, including the very final line, so as to suggest the flow of speech and the open-endedness of life as perceived by the narrator. On the contrary, Jedlička uses commas, which segment the text, and thus suggests a certain type of interpretation. On the whole, the poem deserves to have received more careful inspection on the part of the translator, especially with regard to its form and its close relationship to its content.

Adrian Henri, another of the Mersey poets, comments on the communication channels of poetry: "I see reading the poem out loud and reading the poem on the page as two aspects of the poem's life. Both are equally important. But I can quite see that from the late 70s. ... listening to a poem read out loud is the first contact with the writer and whatever skill the writer has in projecting their work makes it a different experience than reading it on the page. Both are valid. And this is

where the issue for performance comes: the poem has to be good enough to stand up in the cold light of day" [8, see webpage]. Therefore, he maintains that "poetry is a very heightened form of words and demands concentration. Nevertheless, I think the poem should stand up on its own and shouldn't need introductions and footnotes"[8, see webpage]. There has not been much poetry by Henri that has been translated into Czech. One example, however, is "Galactic Lovepoem," which has been translated by Miroslav Macek. The poem itself is a piece of occasional lyric love poetry. Henri uses the setting of a galaxy nicely and by juxtaposing the constellations, he guides the reader through the process of reading before you finally go to sleep at the side of someone beloved. Such poetry clearly builds upon the style of Cavalier poetry, which promoted beauty and, in a sense, "carpe diem." Although Macek was able to retain the overall tone of the poem, the first problem occurs in the title, "Galactic Love poem," which is translated as "Galaktická láskyplná báseň." I believe that instead of "láskyplná" [full of love] "milostná" [love] would have been much more suitable because not only does it respect the tradition of love poetry but also the word "láskyplná" is not used very frequently in Czech and its connotations are marked. Moreover, when the love the speaker feels towards the person being addressed in the poem is apparent, there is no need to overemphasize it in the title. In addition, Macek does not respect the perspective in translating the second line "before we go to bed "by focusing on a single person only: "než-li dáš hlavu na polštář" [before you put your head on the pillow]. By this line the narrator suggests the experience of two people in love going to bed side by side and the attention is not only paid to the lady. The lines "Then reach out and switch off the planets / We'll watch them go out one by one" shrink into one in the Czech translation "Planety jednu po druhé zhasni" [switch off the planets one after another] [1, see webpage]. There is no reason to shorten the original poem. What has gone missing is the shared observation of the sky, which is a very stock love image but which at the same time suggests the time spent together by the two individuals. On the other hand, Macek succeeds in putting across the rather stale English line "We'll both be up early tomorrow" when he translates it as "vstaneme s prvním svítáním" [we shall get up before the sunrise]. What is to be appreciated is that he decided to use a poetic image instead of a literal translation that would have ruined the prevailing atmosphere of the poem. However, in English the final line "a new universe has begun" extends the image from the previous line of the two lovers getting up together to meet the "new universe," which is a poetic metaphor standing for a new day that has just begun; however, the Czech translation "na novém světě budeme šťastní" [we shall be happy in a new universe] makes the implied English interpretation explicit, which should have stayed only implied but, moreover, talks about a "new world" as if the two lovers had travelled to a different planet. "Galactic Lovepoem" exemplifies a piece of poetry which is certainly understood differently when read or recited aloud. Henri believes that the performative element of poetry reading is essential: "Some part of what the poem is about hopefully transfers itself at the reading. It's *quantitatively* different from reading from a page because you can't get the tone or inflection that you get in performance. It's not theatre, it's not being an actor; you're not pretending to be anything you're not. I think it boils down to honesty, the feeling that somebody is talking directly to you. It's not just talking down a telephone. It's a very considered, distilled way of talking that articulates something for you so you go away from the reading feeling you've had a good night out and that certain things have been made clear to you"[8, see webpage].

The third poet in the prominent Liverpool trio is Brian Patten. Interestingly, he worked as a journalist at the beginning of his career and among the first articles he wrote for *The Bootle Times*, a local newspaper in Liverpool, was one on his later colleagues Roger McGough and Adrian Henri. His poetry has been translated into Czech in the form of isolated poems being published here and there; for example, Miroslav Macek has translated "Simply Lyric" on his personal blog. In 2012, Patten's poem "Miss Shush" ("Slečna Pšt!") appeared in Lucie Ševčíková's translation in a collec-

tion of short stories in Czech translation called *Zloděj stínu a jiné povídky pro děti* (*Kids' Night in* – selected by Jacqueline Wilson). For the Prague Writers' Festival in 2009, Patten's poems "Episode" and "Minister For Exams" were translated by Jiří Josek. When one looks at the latter, the poem copies the question-answer scheme of a test. However, instead of providing exact factual answers the narrator wanders off and gives very poetic answers. As a consequence of his inability to complete tests properly, he now has a blue-collar job sweeping the streets. When asked for an explanation, he responds with another set of question-answer test-like lines. The opening three lines, "When I was a child I sat an exam./ This test was so simple / There was no way I could fail," are translated as "Jako dítě šel jsem ke zkoušce. / Dali mi jednoduchý test. / Všechno jsem věděl." Josek does a good job by recasting the last line, which says that the speaker knew everything instead of trying to translate it literally, which would be very awkward. As there is no rhyme or metre that needed to be kept, this choice works very well within the text. The first question, "Describe the taste of the Moon" (Jak chutná měsíc?), is answered with "It takes like Creation I wrote, / it has the flavour of starlight" ("Chutná jako Stvoření / s příchutí hvězdného svitu, napsal jsem."). The translator disrespects the flow of the lines and whereas in the English version, there is an end-stopped line, in Czech there is enjambement, and he adds the phrase "I wrote" ("napsal jsem") only at the end of the two lines. However, the English version has the second line as an afterthought to the first one, so the placement of the phrase is essential here and the Czech translation does not reflect it. In answering the second question, "What colour is Love?" (Jakou barvu má láska?) with "Love is the colour of the water a man / lost in the desert finds, I wrote" ("Láska má barvu vody, kterou / zbloudilý žíznivec najde na poušti. ") Josek succeeded in replacing the noun phrase "man lost in the desert" by a simple Czech noun phrase "zbloudilý žíznivec," which works very well here and carries both the denotative and connotative meaning. The third question and answer, "Why do snowflakes melt? / I wrote, they melt because they fall / on to the warm tongue of God," is translated literally as "Proč se vločky rozpuštějí? / Rozpuštějí se proto, / že padají na teplý jazyk pánaboha," but such a translation fulfils its function properly here. What is a shame, however, is that the phrase "I wrote" is left out both in the second and in the third answer, which ruins the rhythm and purposeful repetition which adds to the overall structure of the poem and reminds the reader that the scenario framing the text is that of a written test. The poem ends by providing an explanation of why, for his living, the narrator "[sweeps] the streets / or clean[s] out the toilets of the fat / hotel" (abych byl z něčeho živ, zametám ulice / a umývám záchody po nóbl hotelích"). The explanation has the form of two questions on purpose in order to show that however hard the child tries and supplies an answer which clearly indicates his vivid imagination, there is no understanding of it by the official educational establishment which desires only factual information: "how large is a child's / imagination? / How shallow is the soul of the / Minister for exams?" ("Jak nesmírná je představitivost dítěte? / Jak omezený je ministr zkoušek?"). By juxtaposing the questions which indicate the different focus of both the child and the Minister for exams, Patten mocks the establishment, which does not support creativity and rather looks for mechanical stock answers.

The poetry by the Liverpool poets and their poems in translation indicate that it is not easy to capture the unique artistic pop culture spirit of Liverpool. However hard the Czech translators try to mediate the light verse poems by Patten, McGough, and Henri, the ease and conversational nature of their poetry is always lost in translation.

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