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The ensemble of death and dance: Songs of The Tiger Lillies in Polish translation by Szymon Jachimek

ABSTRACT

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This paper analyses the modifications introduced by Szymon Jachimek in his translation of The Tiger Lillies' songs, used in a Polish theatrical production in 2016. The Tiger Lillies, a British band, represent an alternative genre of *punk cabaret*, characterised by dark, transgressive humour, inspirations drawn from Weimar-era cabaret, and neo-Victorian aesthetics. Based on selected examples and taking into consideration the intersemiotic elements of music and performance, I discuss the deviations from the source text introduced by the translator: from (self)censorship of religious irreverence to far-reaching domestication shifting the material towards topical political satire. Rather than considering such deviations as precluding the text from being a translation *per se* and branding it 'adaptation', I instead perceive them as expressions of creativity and appropriation, reconstructing the means and aims of making the material "one's own". The paper, it is to be hoped, will form an invitation to further study of the creative capacities and the authorial competence of song translators.

Keywords: song translation, appropriation, punk cabaret, Tiger Lillies, Szymon Jachimek

1. Introduction

This paper aims to analyse the translation, by Szymon Jachimek, of three songs by the British band The Tiger Lillies used in the theatrical production *Zespół Śmierci i Tańca, czyli piosenki Tiger Lillies* ("The ensemble of death and dance, or the songs of The Tiger Lillies"), premiered in 2016 (Valldal-Czarnecki/

Jachimek 2016; available in an unpublished audiovisual recording). The majority of the nineteen translated songs used in the show maintain the general imagery, subject, and content of the source material – the affinity with the original artists is even declared in the very title of the show, which includes the band's name. However, as Theo Hermans justly points out, translation is never transparent, as it “appropriates, transforms, deflects and dislocates” (Hermans 1998: 67). Thus, what I find particularly promising as a research area is not the overall level of fidelity of the translation, but those points where the translator diverges from the source text. The selected songs have been chosen as particularly representative of this process.

Rather than assessing the quality or necessity of the modifications, I am proposing to present an analysis of their directions, results, and reconstructed rationale. Hence, this paper is meant, and hoped, to contribute to the descriptivist approach in song translation studies, treating the discussed texts as elements of the socio-cultural environment of the target culture.¹ It should also be added that, while all the analysed translations meet the broad criteria of singability defined as “the attainment of musico-verbal unity between the text and the composition” (Franzon 2008: 375), this factor is not a subject of further considerations, which are focussed mainly on the semantic content and not on the technicalities of adjusting the text to music.

The term of particular relevance in this paper is that of appropriation, understood here in the sense proposed by Johan Franzon (2022), i.e. as a flexible and descriptive tool for discussing how a song is made “one's own” in terms of its new functions, contexts, or prospective audiences. I find this term particularly useful in song translation studies, where target texts often gain a new life, sometimes rather distant from their source.

2. The artistic and socio-cultural context of the target text

The translations discussed in this paper were authored by Szymon Jachimek (2016). As is often the case in the field of song translation (cf. Franzon 2008: 373–374), Jachimek is not a professional translator, but predominantly an artist operating in the theatre world: an improvisational comedian, a playwright, and a musician. Within his theatrical work, he was commissioned (as confirmed by the translator²) to translate a selection of The Tiger Lillies' songs from English into Polish for the theatrical production *Zespół Śmierci i Tańca, czyli piosenki Tiger Lillies*.

1] For more on the current trend of descriptivism in song translation studies see Greenall et al. (2021).

2] Personal communication on 15.04.2023.

The performance includes nineteen of the band's songs in Polish translation – the selection of songs is rather eclectic, with no specific subject taking precedence. They are bound into a narrative by added original dialogue lines (also by Jachimek). The eight characters, clad in neo-Victorian costume, including a three-legged woman, a magician, and an acrobat, present a rather bizarre act of song, spoken word, and elements of dance, all in the spirit of a crooked cabaret act or a “freakshow”. The musical accompaniment, performed live on a piano, a double bass, and drums, generally follows the melodies and style of the source material. The show was performed in 2016 in the Stefan Jaracz Theatre in Olsztyn and then on several other stages in Poland (Sknadaj 2017). What is crucial for outlining the socio-cultural context, relevant in discussing the translational choices, it formed a graduation performance of students of the postsecondary acting school in Olsztyn (Policealne Studium Aktorskie im. Aleksandra Sewruka przy Teatrze im. Stefana Jaracza w Olsztynie), attended i.a. by the performers' friends and families.

True to The Tiger Lillies' spirit, discussed in the next section, motifs of death and the macabre are intertwined with black humour in the spectacle. It also includes elements of audience participation and improvisation, owing much both to the ostensibly spontaneous style of The Tiger Lillies' performances and to Jachimek's vast experience as an improvisational stand-up comedian. This ironic, humorous overtone should not be overlooked when considering the direction of the translations discussed in the following sections, meant as case studies of the modifications introduced by the translator.

3. The Tiger Lillies and their sarcastic scofferies

The Tiger Lillies remain niche artists both in their native Great Britain and in Poland, so a brief introduction into their idiosyncratic style seems advantageous. The trio, present on the British scene since the late 1980s, are prolific artists with over fifty self-released studio albums. They also tour extensively and have given several concerts in Poland, usually in smaller, club-like venues or theatres. The creative force behind their oeuvre is the band's frontman, Martyn Jacques: the author of almost all the song lyrics, the singer, and the accordionist. Other band members are Adrian Stout on double bass (as well as on theremin or musical saw) and, presently, Budi Butenop on drums (the group has seen a number of drummers). Their eclectic style is often described as *punk cabaret*: a fusion of Weimar-style cabaret, circus music, and klezmer influences, juxtaposed with provocative, often ironic, lyrics and marked by a penchant for campy extravagance, intentional “bad taste”, black humour, and carnivalistic reversal of the sacred and the profane (for more on punk cabaret see Mach 2020; on The Tiger Lillies see Ramalho 2020).

The music and performance of the band form an additional source of meaning for a translator, as is indeed the case in every song translation.³ The Tiger Lillies' music, with its uncanny, shrieking falsetto vocal, accompanied by an accordion, sometimes supplemented by a theremin or a musical saw, oscillates between childlike goofiness and disturbing cacophony, thus creating a fitting foil for their grotesque lyrics. This effect is further amplified on the performative level, with the musicians donning vaguely Victorian outfits, bowler hats, and bizarre greasepaint makeups, evoking associations with a distorted circus or a hellish fairground. These auditory and visual signals of non-literality invite one to search for irony also on the textual level, thus potentially influencing the translational process.⁴ Although Jacques' lyrics are often ostensibly gruesome, the overall aesthetics of the band directs the recipient towards "ironic engagement" (Cohan 2005: 21) and towards subversive, humorous overtones. In fact, the spirit of irreverence and black humour permeates the band's oeuvre as a whole and may be considered a constant point of reference in interpreting their lyrics.

4. Religious provocations of the band

One aspect of the group's stylistics seems crucial for the purposes of this paper – that of religious provocations and mocking Christianity. The Tiger Lillies' songs have been described as "outright blasphemous" (Arthur 1996) even in their native Great Britain. God is referred to as "a swine" (The Tiger Lillies 2009: track 1–2) or "a silly old fool" (The Tiger Lillies 1996: track 10) in their lyrics. The song "Banging in the Nails" (The Tiger Lillies 1996: track 3) may be seen as the epitome of the band's irreverence: the lyrics, delivered by Jacques in an ecstatic falsetto to an exuberant accompaniment, describe Christ's crucifixion from the perspective of the executioner who seems to be thoroughly enjoying his task. The irony is augmented on the visual level, with the video presenting the band playing live in a pub with a group of beer-drinking "Jesuses" prancing about the room.⁵ This song evokes associations with *Life of Brian* (Monty Python 1979) – a film that parallels the life of Jesus Christ and ridicules everything and everyone, offering a jolly song about crucifixion not unlike "Banging in the Nails". While this paper is not meant as an in-depth study of social attitudes towards lampooning religion in Great Britain and in Poland, it is assumed here that the former is more liberal and relaxed in comparison to the latter (which may be

3| For the triadic semiotic nature of a song, consisting of textual, musical, and performative elements, see Franzon (2008: 376).

4| For the role of intersemiotic elements in intertextual translation see e.g. Kaźmierczak (2018: 26–27).

5| <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SvA8NPAI2Dg> (accessed: 15.06.2023).

a plausible reason why this song was not among the nineteen selected for the Polish production). Below is a brief discussion of this issue.

Roman Catholicism remains the dominant religion in Poland – it was declared by 71.30% of respondents in the recent national poll of 2021, with the second largest denomination only declared by 0.40% and non-belonging to any religion – by 6.87%.⁶ This differs significantly from the United Kingdom with its more secularised society and an array of denominations (with only 46.2% respondents describing themselves as Christian and 37,2% declaring no religion).⁷ Besides that, religion in Poland has long been inseparably intertwined with national identity (Porter 2001: 289) and with politics (Davies 2005: 152). Everyday observation of the social discourse in Poland may lead to the conclusion that attitudes towards religious issues can be perceived as a demarcation line dividing Polish society. This may mean that a translator translating a text mocking Christianity will face the task of negotiating priorities between the fidelity to the source text and the assumed expectations of the target recipients with raised awareness.

Within the Polish religious landscape, the subject of particular relevance for the translation discussed in the following section is the Marian devotion. In the Roman Catholic Church, the Virgin Mary is subject to special veneration, or *hyperdulia*, and her cult exceeds that of the saints (Carroll 2003: 266). This veneration is particularly visible in Poland, where the Virgin Mary is called the Queen of Poland and celebrated as such on the 3rd of May, the anniversary of adopting the first Polish constitution, thus forming a further link between the religious and national domains and leading to the perception of Mary as the embodiment of not only religious, but also patriotic values (Porter 2005: 153). For all these reasons, offending this figure may be assumed to constitute a violation of a particularly sacred taboo for a non-negligible part of the target audience. This, as is discussed in the following section, may have been a cause for deliberation for the song translator.

5. Is Mary a good sport? Translator treading a thin line

This section is aimed at discussing the translational manipulations in Jachimek's translation of the song "Heaven to Hell" (The Tiger Lillies 1996: track 9), entitled "Piekielne niebo" ('Hellish heaven'). The original song, comprising seven stanzas, describes the boredom and disillusionment experienced by the first-

6] <https://stat.gov.pl/spisy-powszechne/nsp-2021/nsp-2021-wyniki-ostateczne/stan-i-struktura-demograficzno-spoleczna-i-ekonomiczna-ludnosci-polski-w-swietle-wynikow-nsp-2021,6,2.html> (accessed: 05.02.2024).

7] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021> (accessed: 05.02.2024).

person narrator in heaven – apparently a rather bland and disappointing place. Each stanza, except the first one, introduces some of the distinguished celestial inhabitants: Saint Peter, the angels, Saint Matthew, Saint Christopher, the Virgin Mary, God, and Jesus, who, one by one, prove to be quite dull and ridiculous – a fitting setting to analyse the issue of translating religious provocations in the light of the cultural discrepancies described in the previous section.

Jachimek introduces several modifications to the narrative. The first may be seen in the second stanza, where lines 7–8 “the angels look down their noses/ ‘cause [the narrator is] from a different class” are replaced by adding new elements to the description of the heavenly boredom: everything is drenched in white and gold, the colours which the narrator hates (“wszystko w złocie i w biele/ tak nienawidzę tych barw”). In the original, this fragment is filled with “Britishness”, as not only does it refer to a silent contempt between classes, but the rhyme “farce” – “class” between lines 6 and 8 may be fully appreciated only when pronounced with a British accent as /'fɑ:s/ and /'kla:s/.⁸ A similar satirical allusion in the target text could escape the audience due to the fact that the class structure seems to be much less delineated in the Polish society in comparison to the British one. Thus, the translational choice applied by Jachimek may be perceived here as adjusting the text to the needs of the recipients, directed towards achieving the *skopos* of the translation (cf. Vermeer 1989/2000: 222–223), consisting in producing an enjoyable and understandable song.

A similar operation may be observed in replacing the third stanza about Saint Matthew with the description of Saint Anthony as an infuriating partner in playing hide-and-seek, always able to find the narrator (“Święty Antoni to palant. / Tak strasznie wkurza mnie, że/ gdy gramy w chowanego/ od razu znajduje mnie”). Saint Matthew does not seem to be a widely present figure in the Polish religious landscape, while Saint Anthony is recognisable as the patron saint for the recovery of lost items and people (Kopaliński 1997/ 2003: 49). This figure is already present in Polish popular music, for example in the pre-war tango “Piosenka o zagubionym sercu” (‘A song of a lost heart’, by Wars/ Swinarski 1935/1976), where the narrator pleads with the saint to help her find her lost heart. It may, therefore, be claimed that the translator adapted the text by replacing a less familiar saint with a more familiar one.

The modifications are even more evident in the case of the fifth stanza of the source text, referring to the Virgin Mary, which is entirely omitted in the target text. In order to understand the potential reasons for such a decision it is necessary to first examine the content of this stanza in the source text. At first glance, it offers a positive description of Mary as the only good person in heaven, generous and “a good sport” (line 20). This description conforms to the image

8| <https://dictionary.cambridge.org> (accessed: 15.06.2023).

dominant in Christianity, of the caring, compassionate mother of God and of all the Church. Nevertheless, in the light of the subversive style of *The Tiger Lillies*, it is worth searching for other, implicit meanings – and indeed, the expression crucial for reading this stanza in a different way is “a good sport”. Usually, this means a person who accepts losing honourably or, more broadly, a good, generous person.⁹ However, as a slang expression, it describes a sexually available or promiscuous woman (Partridge 1937/2006: 1131). The phrase “a good sort” (line 18) can be considered synonymous in this context¹⁰. Therefore, the stanza may be seen as subtly presenting the Virgin Mary as a promiscuous figure, whose “generosity” is understood as being sexually available for the inhabitants of heaven.

Such an interpretation of the source text poses a challenge for the translator due to the status of the Virgin Mary in Poland, described above. To maintain the sense of the original and to suggest Mary’s promiscuity could possibly be perceived as a violation of religious feelings by some of the audience members, even with potential consequences to the translator. This may explain why the translator decided to completely omit the discussed stanza, especially that the show including the song was a graduation performance, the principal aim of which was probably not to amplify the shock value, but to present the students’ acting skills to their friends and families in the audience (this line of reasoning was confirmed by the translator¹¹). This may be seen as an act of self-censorship. On the other hand, it may be posited that such a decision is in fact a form of calibrating the text to the specific needs of the target production. If one agrees with Olgierd Wojtasiewicz that a translation should evoke similar associations in the target recipients as the source text evokes in its audience (Wojtasiewicz 1957/1996: 17), maintaining the same level of irreverence in the translation would pervert this objective, since the associations of the Polish audience may be assumed to be different than those of the British one.

Interestingly, and perhaps even paradoxically, in the lines describing Jesus Christ, not only does the translator not omit irreverent passages, but he even strengthens them. The source text (lines 25 and 26) only mentions that Jesus plays the guitar and sings like Joni Mitchell. The reference to the Canadian singer may be deemed more comprehensible to English-speaking audiences, who may associate this fragment with a “gentle, soft-spoken, fair-haired folk singer, the classic old lady” (Willis 1973), in line with the general image of heaven in the song, that is to say – far from exciting. This picture may be less familiar to the Polish audience, which may be why the translator sought different

9| <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary> (accessed: 15.06.2023).

10| Cf. Sex-lexis.com (accessed: 15.06.2023).

11| Personal communication on 15.04.2023.

imagery to convey the ridiculousness of Christ's persona. This comes in the form of a comment that Jesus, when playing the guitar, is unable to play F-sharp major ("nie chwyta Fis-dur") because of the holes in his hands left by the nails. The choice of imagery, juxtaposing gory elements with a trivial conclusion, resembles the black humour of The Tiger Lillies, but is rather incoherent with the mild approach to religious matters in the rest of the target text. Yet, it is worth noting that during the stage performance the audience welcomed this particular fragment with laughter and applause (Valldal-Czarnecki/ Jachimek 2016 [47:27]). This may be considered an empirical confirmation that the humorous effect is achieved in this stanza despite the riskier approach to the subject. Jachimek (2023) admits that he found this particular fragment a fortunate solution in terms of its sound and humour, and thus decided to keep it. Overall, it seems that the translator is constantly negotiating between the divergent axes of maintaining the general spirit of the original, finding the venue for his own creative expression as an author, and mitigating the content due to the particular socio-cultural context.

6. The A-word. The translator as appropriator

This section analyses two translations, considered here as the instances of appropriation: "Sinner" (The Tiger Lillies 1994: track 10), translated as "Grzeszny" ('the sinful one', using a masculine grammar form), and "Anger" (The Tiger Lillies 2008: track 7), translated as "Wściekła" ('the angry one', in feminine form). This joint analysis is justified by the fact that both target texts were subjected to a similar translational strategy – by domesticating the setting of the narrative and introducing target-culture intertextual allusions, the translator "made the texts his own" and transformed both songs into a topical social commentary.

An in-depth analysis of the socio-political situation in Poland at the time of preparing and staging the discussed translations is a subject that exceeds both the scope of this paper and the expertise of its author. Nonetheless, a brief outline is provided here as an introduction to the subject. The production premiered on 16 April 2016¹² ("Zespół Śmierci i Tańca, czyli piosenki Tiger Lillies" n.d.), just several months after the Polish parliamentary elections of 2015, won by the right-wing, populist, Eurosceptic party Law and Justice (PiS – Prawo i Sprawiedliwość), maintaining close links with the Catholic Church. This reshuffling of political power led to a phase described by some as a "velvet dictatorship" (Agh 2016: 35 after Michnik 2015), strongly relying on conservative and nationalist narratives. That, in turn, fuelled the already existing tension between

12| <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/przedstawienie/64916/zespol-smierci-i-tanca-czyli-piosenki-tiger-lillies> (accessed: 16.06.2023).

PiS supporters and the more liberal, progressive and pro-European social groups. The result was the exacerbation of Polish culture wars between these two opposing factions, focussed on the issues of national identity, the role of Catholicism in public life, and the attitude towards “the Other”: members of the LGBTQ+ community, foreigners, migrants, etc.¹³

Let me now present how the translations of “Sinner” and “Anger” fit into this polemic. “Sinner” forms a list of numerous sins of the narrator, commencing with “God, I’ve been a sinner/ God, I know I’m damned” (lines 1–2). Yet, as is frequently the case with The Tiger Lillies’ songs, the lyrics cannot be taken at face value and they are underpinned with subversive humour. “I’m a homosexual hermaphrodite/ and a dirty old man” (lines 3–4), “I am a Pakistani/ and I come from Birmingham” (lines 15–16) – sings Martyn Jacques, leaving the audience little doubt that this ostensible confession of preposterous “sins” is actually a ridicule of typical fears and prejudices of the (British) society. The general tone of the lyrics seems rather humorous, with mockery prevailing over embitterment. This is also signalled on the musical level, where the breathless falsetto, rambunctious accordion, vigorous tempo, and 2/4 time signature create an ambience of a goofy gallopade.

The translator maintains the comical potential of the text, yet adapts it to the Polish socio-cultural context as of 2016. A “homosexual hermaphrodite” from line 3 becomes a gay homophobe (“jestem gejem homofobem”). This clearly directs the audience towards two of the opposing enemy figures of the above-mentioned Polish culture wars. For the political right, it is the LGBTQ+ movement, demonised by PiS and the Church (whose representative even referred to this movement as a “rainbow plague” at one occasion; see e.g. Davies/ Tait/ Walker 2019). For the political left, in turn, one of the enemy figures, and the object of many protests, is the resulting homophobia. Other “sins” also include typically Polish references. For example, line 7, having no apparent equivalent in the source text, states: “jem warzywa na rowerze” (‘I eat vegetables on a bicycle’) – this seemingly nonsensical phrase may be read as an allusion to the statement made just three months before the show’s premiere, in January 2016, by the Polish foreign minister Witold Waszczykowski in his interview for the German journal *Bild*, where he criticised the values promoted in the Polish media before the 2015 elections as a “Marxist” endorsement of an evolution toward the world of cyclists and vegetarians (Vehlewald 2016). This expression was widely publicised and quickly became a popular meme, so the discussed line may be deemed recognisable for the target audience as an acerbic joke referring to the Polish political scene. Thus, the translator used a form of domestication

13| For more on the culture wars in Poland in the discussed period see e.g. Słaćalek (2021).

by introducing a reference to an element absent from the source text, but anchored in the target culture.

Another example of “Polonising” the translation comes in lines 11–12. This whole stanza is added to the text (the original song has only six stanzas, while the translation – thirteen) and these lines could be back-translated as: ‘When a lady wants to owe me a grosz [a Polish equivalent of a penny], I yell no!’ („gdy pani chce być winna grosz/ to wtedy krzyczę ‘Nie!’”). Again, this fragment can be assumed to sound familiar to Polish audiences, used to often hearing the question: “Can I owe you a grosz?” when paying in cash for groceries. This image, absent in the source text, is yet another instance of domestication. It seems, however, to be done not in order to “move the writer towards the reader” in the classic understanding of Friedrich Schlegel (Schlegel 1813/2013: 49), but as a form of the translator’s artistic expression, a means of augmenting the humour and, in general, a form of appropriative undertaking.

This survey of appropriating operations would not be complete without discussing the intertextual allusion introduced in lines 15–16 (again, in a stanza not having a discernible equivalent in the original). Here, the narrator declares another ridiculous “sin”: ‘I will murder the tabby grey cats, both of them’ (“szarobure zamorduję / koty obydwą”). The wording is a clear paraphrase of a popular Polish lullaby, “Ach śpij, kochanie” (Wars/ Starski 1938), with its line about ‘two cats, both of them tabby grey’ (“kotki dwa, [...] szarobure obydwą”). The comical intention of introducing this preposterous threat seems obvious, and so does the act of placing the stamp of the translator and of his cultural milieu on the target text.

Another translation turned into a localised political commentary is Jachimek’s rendition of “Anger” – a song of four stanzas interspersed with a repetitive chorus “Are you angry? I’m so angry”. The source-text narration oscillates between the first and second person: the singing persona alternately expresses their own rage and directs their statements to an equally livid addressee. The overall image is that of a spiral of hatred and violence resulting from omnipresent anger and fear-mongering. Spatial and temporal setting is practically undisclosed. Unlike “Sinner” with its light-hearted mockery, this song hits a much graver note and could be viewed as a warning against the vicious circle of social resentment.

This subject seems to have resonated with the translator, whose text leans toward a biting satire on the situation in Poland at the time of staging the show. This is particularly visible in the third stanza: “Słyszałem, że tu mieszka Arab, Żyd i gej./ Polsko, ty go wyrzuć z granic i pamięci swej./ Gorzej się oddycha, gdy tacy ludzie w krąg./ Przenieś, Panie, moją duszę do zielonych łąk” (‘I’ve heard that an Arab, a Jew, and a gay lives here./ O Poland, throw him out of your borders and out of your memory!/ It’s harder to breathe with such people around./

O Lord, transport my soul to the green meadows!'). The sarcastic appeal addressed to Poland sounds like an accurate pastiche of a Polish nationalist discourse, while the list of people who make it "harder to breathe" ("a Jewish homosexual queer" in the source text) directs the audience towards the issues of xenophobia and homophobia, often present in such a discourse.

The final line of the quoted stanza, "Przenieś, Panie, moją duszę do zielonych łąk", is of particular interest. Similarly to the already discussed manoeuvre in the translation of "Sinner", Jachimek quotes, nearly verbatim, a very well-known text from the Polish culture – this time not a mere lullaby, but the opening lines of the pivotal Romantic poem "Pan Tadeusz" by Adam Mickiewicz (1834/1989): "przenoś moją duszę [...] do tych łąk zielonych". The phrase in question, in Bill Johnston's recent translation, reads: "transport my [...] soul [...] to those meadows [...] green" (Mickiewicz 1834/2018). This reference, to what is arguably one of the most foundational of Polish poems, may not go unnoticed. Mickiewicz's invocation, originally addressed to the Virgin Mary as a pleading for a chance to see the beloved motherland, is recontextualised in the translation, where it punctuates Polish xenophobia and contributes to the tone of an engaged commentary on the present socio-political landscape.

This topicality is further accentuated in the final line of the last, fourth stanza of the target text: "wyrzyg, wkurw i wściekłość kropka pe el", which could be glossed as 'disgust, fury, and rage, dot pee el' – with the three initial letters *w* in a Polish alliterating phrase turning it into: *www.pl*, an allegorical "website" of Poland. Yet again, the translator makes a witty remark on the negative emotions taking over the troubled country, without any equivalent in the source material. The translation clearly becomes an act of appropriation, expressing the ideas and sentiments relevant for the "here and now" of the target text rather than conveying the intricacies of the source.

7. Conclusions

The discussed manipulations in the target text form, without a doubt, "extensive and wilful deviations from the original" (Low 2013: 231). Peter Low is inclined to brand such products as adaptations rather than translations in the proper sense. However, I believe that introducing such categories and defining their demarcating lines is a fruitless and maybe even impossible undertaking (cf. Greenall et al. 2021: 17). In song translation, deviations seem omnipresent, be it only for the reason of the 'melic dominant', i.e. the exigence of the formal constraints of aligning the text to music (*dominanta meliczna*; cf. Bednarczyk 2008: 86). In some cases, due to cultural differences, they may even take a form of censorship or, as presented here in the form of the absent stanza on the Virgin Mary, self-censorship.

Yet, the key reason for such far-reaching modifications lies, I believe, elsewhere than in the requirements of singability or in the perceived cultural limitations. As has already been mentioned above, song translation is often a side project for non-professional translators whose main area of activity remains creative art: theatre, songwriting, music. If they are drawn towards song translation, it may be precisely because they are tempted to employ their creativity in the process. This was also confirmed by the translator of the discussed texts, who said: “I asked myself a question: what would Martyn Jacques write about if he were from Poland?” (Jachimek 2023; trans. A.M.). This statement may be seen as supporting the claim that the discussed texts were appropriated in order to tell a new story, relevant from the perspective of the translator, of the performance, and of the target audience.

With regard to the creative appeal of song translation, I concur with the famous Polish poet and translator Stanisław Barańczak in his assertion that what motivates him in poetry translation is the ambition to ‘break the backbone’ of a seemingly untranslatable text and the – almost physiological – thrill of ecstasy when this venture proves successful (Barańczak 1990/2004: 14, 16; quoted phrase trans. A.M.). It is my belief that this particular aspect of the act of translation – the satisfaction it offers – does not gain commensurate attention in the translation theory: to paraphrase José Ortega y Gasset’s words (1937/1992), there seems to be too much focus on the translators’ miseries and not enough on their splendours. Therefore, further exploration of the topic of song translation as a form of expressing the authorial agency and artistic creativity seems a promising area of future research.

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Appendix: Source and target lyrics

1.

“Heaven to Hell” (lyrics M. Jacques, transcribed by A. Mach), © Misery Guts Music Ltd. “Piekielne niebo” (trans. S. Jachimek, as provided by the translator).

Source text	Target text
I thought I'd be happy in heaven I thought it would be swell I thought I'd be happy in heaven In fact I'm unhappy as hell	Tak chciałam się dostać do raju By wieczność miała smak Tak chciałam się dostać do raju A niech to jasny szlag
The harps, they all bore me Saint Peter's jokes are a farce The angels look down their noses 'Cause I'm from a different class	Święty Piotr to nudziarz I głowa boli od harf Wszystko w złocie i w bieli Tak nienawidzę tych barw
Saint Matthew discovered religion He converts people every day Whenever he gets near me I tell him to go away	Święty Krzysztof kieruje ruchem Jeździmy sześć ka em na ha Gdy ktoś tę prędkość przekroczy Z radaru leci iza
Saint Christopher, I've been rude to him I told him what he could do with his staff I told him where he could stick it And he didn't laugh	Święty Antoni to palant Tak strasznie wkurza mnie, że Gdy gramy w chowanego Od razu znajduje mnie
Only old Mary's a good'un Yeah, she's a good sort She's generous with everyone She's a good sport	Bóg ma dosyć wszystkiego Bo ludzie zawiedli go Mówi, że woli kopytne I ciągle siedzi w zoo
And God, he's a miserable bastard He's always making up rules I'm terribly disillusioned I think he's a silly old fool	A Jezus gra na gitarze I śpiewa mnóstwo bzdur Lecz przez swe dziury po gwoździach Nie chwyta Fis-dur
Jesus, he plays the guitar He sings like Joni Mitchell I thought I'd be happy in heaven But in fact I'm unhappy as hell	Wszyscy znajomi są w piekle Rodziny także brak Tak chciałam się dostać do raju A niech to jasny szlag

2.

“Sinner” (lyrics M. Jacques, transcribed by A. Mach), © Misery Guts Music Ltd.
 “Grzeszny” (trans. S. Jachimek, as provided by the translator).

Source text	Target text
God, I've been a sinner God, I know I'm damned I'm a homosexual hermaphrodite And a dirty old man	Boże, jestem grzeszny Boże, jestem zły Jestem gejem, homofobem, Mam zbereżne sny
God, I've been a sinner At the Pearly Gates St Peter slipped it in again He always comes to late	Boże, jestem grzeszny, Boże, jestem zły Jem warzywa na rowerze, Obsikuję bzy
God, I've been a sinner And now I'm gonna die Can I get into heaven If I wear a suit and tie?	Boże, jestem grzeszny, W noce i we dnie Gdy pani chce być winna grosz, To wtedy krzyczę „nie”!
God, I've been a sinner God, I know I'm damned I am a Pakistani And I come from Birmingham	Boże, jestem grzeszny, Już dosięgam dna Szare bure zamorduję! Koty obydwu
La la la la la la...	Boże, jestem grzeszny Boże, jestem zły
God, I've been a sinner I had sex with sheep And when I did have sex with them Insertion it was deep	Jestem Syryjczykiem, Przyjechałem z Ostródy La la la la la la...
God, I've been a sinner God, I know I'm damned I am a Pakistani And I come from Birmingham	Boże, jestem grzeszny Śmierdzą tak jak cap W internecie szukam ciągle Tylko gołych bab
La la la la la la...	Boże, jestem grzeszny Nie znam słowa „stop” A najfajniej, gdy z tą babą Baraszkuję chłop Boże, jestem grzeszny Grzeszny jest mój duch

Source text	Target text
	Jeszcze fajniej, gdy z tą babą Baraszkuje dwóch
	Boże, jestem grzeszny Pokłon biję złu Lubię, kiedy jedną babę ! Bierze chłopów stu
	Boże, jestem grzeszny Siedzi we mnie bies I najlepiej gdy do chłopów Też dołącza pies
	Boże, jestem grzeszny Boże, jestem zły Jestem Syryjczykiem, Przyjechałem z Ostródy
	La la la la la la...
	Boże, jestem grzeszny Rznąłem owce dwie Tak głęboko w nie wchodziłem Że aż dziwiły się!
	Boże jestem grzeszny, Lecz odłóż, Boże, łom Staję dobrym się człowiekiem Gdy opuszczam dom...
	La la la la la la...

3.

“Anger” (lyrics M. Jacques, transcribed by A. Mach), © Misery Guts Music Ltd.
“Wściekła” (trans. S. Jachimek, as provided by the translator).

Source text	Target text
Are you angry in the morning? Are you angry late at night? Are you always ready with violence... to fight?	Czy się wściekasz o poranku? Czy też raczej kiedy zmierzch? Czy masz dłoń tę w pięść zwiniętą? ...tę też?

Source text	Target text
Well this anger is an illness that will take you away It's a never-ending tragedy and it runs from day to day	Wiedz, że wściekłość to choroba, która niszczy cały świat Nieskończona katastrofa od najmłodszych naszych lat
Are you angry? Are you angry? Angry	Jesteś wściekły? Jesteś wściekła? Wściekły! Wściekła!
You shove me, I'll hit you, I'll make you rue the day You cut your car in front of mine, I'll make you pay You're different from me, so you I'll have to hit If there's something you don't understand, it's better to kill it	Ty pchniesz mnie, ja oddam i pożałujesz dnia Ty mi obsrasz wycieraczkę, ja otruję twego psa Jesteś jakiś inny, więc podpalę twoje drzwi, Jeśli czegoś nie rozumiesz, gwałć i morduj, kop i klnij
Are you angry? Are you angry? Angry	Jesteś wściekły? Jesteś...
I hear that you're a Jewish homosexual queer I'm afraid I must exterminate, you fill me full of fear It's bad for my blood pressure it puts me under strain One day I'm gonna die and there'll be so much pain	Słyszałem, że tu mieszka Arab, Żyd i gej Polsko, ty go wyrzuć z granic i pamięci swej! Gorzej się oddycha, gdy tacy ludzie w krąg Przenieś panie moją duszę do zielonych łąk!
I'm angry. I'm so angry Angry	Jesteś wściekły? Jesteś...
I'm so angry, I'm going to kick your head in I don't care that it's a mortal sin My father he abused me and my mother I did kill Now your guts I'm going to spill	Kark ci skręcę, taki to twój pech Przy tobie to nie będzie już śmiertelny grzech Środki poświęcone przez najwyższy cel Wyrzyg, wkurw i wściekłość kropka pe el
I'm so angry, I'm so angry Angry! (x23)	Jesteś wściekły? Jesteś...