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More or Less on the Mark? Translating Harold Pinter's *The Dwarfs: A Novel*

Summary

A literary source text demands the translator's approach for each process of translation. This approach involves a complex and multifaceted analysis of the source text. As Pinter's novel *The Dwarfs* provides rich ground for such analysis, I present a selection of translation issues against the backdrop of a more general problem of translatability. Pinter is a master of English dialogue, which makes its translation a truly daunting task. The conversations between the characters are filled with expressions from cricket, dated British cultural references, puns, literary and Biblical allusions, phrases and formulaic expressions characteristic of Cockney, and numerous allusions to Shakespeare as well as his own earlier plays. I examine the translatability of *The Dwarfs* by discussing three translation codes: lexical-semantic, cultural and esthetic. Although these are closely interconnected and interdependent, I present a choice of issues within each code in order to submit for consideration the challenges facing a Pinter translator as well as to show the complexity of Pinter's artistic vision in one of his earliest works.

Key words: translation, *The Dwarfs: A Novel*, translatability, culture in translation

Bolj ali manj ustrezno? Prevajanje romana *Pritlikavci* Harolda Pinterja

Povzetek

Vsako literarno besedilo od prevajalca zahteva specifičen pristop, ki ga mora ta na začetku postopka prevajanja vedno na novo izbrati. Med drugim je treba natančno in celovito analizirati izhodiščno besedilo. Pinterjev roman *Pritlikavci* (*The Dwarfs*) predstavlja bogato in zanimivo podlago za tako analizo, zato izbrane prevajalske probleme obravnavam s stališča splošnejšega problema prevedljivosti. Pinter je mojster dialoga, zaradi česar predstavlja vsak prevod jezika njegovih oseb zelo zahtevno nalogo. Pogovori vsebujejo izraze iz kriketa, omembe starejše britanske kulture, besedne igre, literarne in biblijske aluzije, fraze in formulaične izraze iz cockneyskega dialekta, aluzije na Shakespeara ter na Pinterjeve zgodnje drame. Prevedljivost romana *Pritlikavci* obravnavam s stališča treh prevajalskih kodov: leksikalno-semantičnega, kulturnega in estetskega. Čeprav so med seboj vsi trije tesno povezani in odvisni drug od drugega, izpostavljam izbrane probleme znotraj posameznega koda. Tako opozarjam na izzive, s katerimi se soočajo prevajalci Pinterjevih del ter na razsežnost in zapletenost Pinterjeve umetniške vizije na primeru enega izmed njegovih najzgodnejših del.

Ključne besede: prevajanje, *The Dwarfs: A Novel*, prevedljivost, kultura pri prevajanju

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1. Introduction: Harold Pinter's *The Dwarfs: A Novel* and translatability

Although published over thirty years after it had been written, *The Dwarfs: A Novel* can be said to be Harold Pinter's (1930-2008) most important early work. Although Harold Pinter is fairly well-known in Poland (albeit recently somewhat neglected) and most of his plays have been translated into Polish, a significant part of his *oeuvre* still remains unexplored. Pinter's poetry remains almost unknown¹, not to mention his screenwriting output (while, for example, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* or *The Comfort of Strangers* are obviously well-known films, the fact that Pinter was a scriptwriter is definitely not).

As for the presence of Pinter on Polish theatre stages, one can observe two major issues. One is the fact that translations of his plays are now in many respects outdated in terms of, for example, sometimes awkward choice of words or syntax. This has a bearing on productions of Pinter in Poland and seems to influence directors' approach to Pinter's older plays. For instance, a recent staging of *The Caretaker* (2010) was, to say the least, not well-received². The other is that, although there are excellent translations of Pinter's later and latest works (including *Celebration*) by Bolesław Taborski, there are instances of dramas that have not been staged at all in the Polish version, the most surprising example being *Moonlight*.

Hence, the study and Polish translation of *The Dwarfs*³ can have a twofold aim. Firstly, I think it is of great importance to shed light upon this fundamental item among Pinter's juvenilia, which seems to have been a little overlooked in studies on Pinter. Secondly, *The Dwarfs* highlights numerous issues connected with the process of translating not only the novel, but Pinter's works in general and could be a good starting point for commencing the revival of interest in Pinter in Poland.

Each Pinter play has been so far widely discussed in numerous journal articles and research studies. In contrast to this, *The Dwarfs: A Novel* has received a peculiar treatment, which seems to be a result of two major factors: first, the existence of the play *The Dwarfs* (1960) based on the book. As with many other dramas, it has already been the subject of numerous studies. An additional challenge when dealing with the play is that it has three versions, each of which replaced the earlier ones in the course of years (see Giantvalley 1986). Second, there is the removal of the female character Virginia from the play. These two facts dramatically change the overall structure and emphasis in the drama. Despite the fact of sharing the same title, *The Dwarfs: A Novel* has thus to be considered a separate work of art.

¹ The poems are sometimes used as part of theatre performances, as in *The New World Order* at Teatr Żeromskiego in Kielce, Poland (2006), in which, among others, Pinter's poem "American Football" appeared between the plays and sketches that comprised the performance (the plays were *Mountain Language*, *One for the Road*, *The New World Order* and *Victoria Station*).

² Cf. "In boring, emotionless monologues, the characters talk mainly about what they are not going to achieve in life" (Kyzioł 2010). If not stated otherwise, all translations are by Ł.B.

³ For the purposes of this essay, and if not stated otherwise, the title *The Dwarfs* stands for the novel by Pinter.

As a result of this complicated fate of the book, there are just a few studies on it, although over 20 years have passed since its publication. It seems justifiable to claim that the reason for this could be a presumption that since the play based on the novel has already been so widely investigated, it seems not worthwhile to deal with the book. While it is true to say that, in the majority of cases, studies of the play prove helpful in elucidating the intricacies of the novel, one should not forget about its different genre as well as the fourth main female character, Virginia, who plays a not insignificant part in the development of the story. However, previous analyses and investigations of Pinter's *The Dwarfs* do little to unravel the novel's variegated layers, including historical, social and cultural references to British reality in the 1950s; formal and thematic epitomization of major trends in the history of post-war British fiction; and last but not least, the focus of this paper, which are linguistic, intertextual and intercultural aspects revealed in the process of translation⁴.

The Dwarfs was inspired by real events from Pinter's early twenties. He transferred them into the novel, sometimes with an almost documentary exactitude, which has been confirmed by people who spent Pinter's adolescent years with him (for example, Woolf (2007); Billington (2007, 59), which includes memories of Jennifer Mortimer). *The Dwarfs* tells the story of a group of friends on the verge of adulthood (one character among them is modelled after Pinter himself, as the author confessed to his biographer and also on other occasions (Stanford 2003)). They are forced to face their first mature decisions and deal with inevitable failures. The plot centres on conversations among the four main characters: Mark, Len, Pete and Virginia. On the surface, the purpose of the exchanges is to reveal the cleverness, brilliance as well as dominance of one character over the others. The conversations circle around art, poetry, drama, religion and male-female relationships, to mention just the most prominent ones. When one looks more deeply, however, out of these talks emerge two striking qualities of the novel. Firstly, the fact quickly noted by Pinter scholars that *The Dwarfs* introduces the reader to numerous aspects of Pinter's later dramatic works with a consistency quite remarkable for a beginner writer. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the novel discloses layers of meaning that go far beyond youthful experimentation and a fascination with Beckett or Joyce, which becomes especially prominent when the novel is subject to the process of translation.

Pinter is above all a master of English dialogue, which makes each attempt to transfer his richly idiomatic language onto the domain of another language and culture a truly daunting task. In *The Dwarfs* the conversations between the characters are filled with expressions taken from Pinter's favourite cricket, references to British reality immediately after World War II, linguistic puns, literary quotations, paraphrases of the Bible, phrases and formulaic expressions characteristic of the Cockney dialect, numerous allusions to Shakespeare, not to mention single words, expressions and even larger passages which can be found both in Pinter's earlier pieces as well as in his later plays.

⁴ The existing studies on *The Dwarfs* approach the novel quite carefully, as if following Toby S. Zinman's observation that "[o]bviously, when a playwright writes a novel, the question of whether any talent, even one as major as Pinter's, can jump genres, is a great question. Even though the novel was written before the fact of Pinter's being called to his vocation, he did, after all, choose to publish it decades later" (1997, 105). Most probably, that is why Pinter's novel is examined predominantly from three perspectives: as an artistic manifesto of a playwright-to-be (Gillen 1990; Gillen 2001; Prentice 1994; Billington 2007); as a source of almost exclusively thematic tricks and solutions which reappear in later works (Peacock 1997); as a work worth reviewing, but not worth analyzing, owing to its many flaws, inconsistencies and even epigonism (Zinman 1997; Kaufman 1990; Steinberg 1990). It must be stressed that this is merely a selection of examples.

All this shows the range of challenges facing a translator of Pinter. Maria Krzysztofiak, one of the Polish experts on literary translation, notices that “due to the specific nature and uniqueness of every literary work, translators as well as literary scholars and translation critics most of all should be aware of the individual nature of artistic structures in literary texts which form the source for the translator of literature” (1999, 56). This awareness requires from the translator a complex and multifaceted analysis and interpretation of the source text⁵. Obviously, it is impossible to cover in this short paper each and every aspect of the translation process of Pinter’s *The Dwarfs*, but it seems worthwhile to outline a number of issues as part of the broader concept of translatability. Extracting the gist of various discussions on translatability (which can be said to be a core problem in theories of not only literary translation), Krzysztofiak defines it as “an ability to convey directly the esthetic, stylistic, connotative and linguistically creative characteristics of a given text” (Krzysztofiak 1999, 71). Translatability is a concept closely connected with a particular literary text as well as its cultural and historical context⁶.

I would like to examine the translatability of *The Dwarfs* by discussing three translation codes: lexical-semantic, cultural and esthetic. Although these are closely interconnected and interdependent (and frequently overlap), I would like to present a choice of issues within each code in order to submit for consideration the challenges facing a Pinter translator as well as to show the depth and complexity of Pinter’s artistic vision in one of his earliest works.

2. The lexical-semantic code

Within the lexical-semantic code the most striking are words, expressions or phrases which do not possess even paraphrased counterparts in Polish. In the case of *The Dwarfs*, this is visible particularly in the different kinds of terminology that the characters use. A particularly prominent field of interest for Mark, Len and Pete is gambling. Time and again they refer to betting and use expressions like “eachway bet” (2, 10⁷). In Poland betting on the results of sports events is not uncommon, but for an average reader the whole range of differences between various kinds of bets may be at least obscure. To complicate things even more, one of the sports on which the British definitely placed bets in the 1950s was cricket, which also reappears in exchanges between the characters⁸. All this once more is even less clear for the Polish reader than the concept of betting, since in Poland cricket is for many a mystery,

⁵ As a result, the translator’s choices can be treated as “interpretive moves”, as described by Venuti (2011, 128).

⁶ It is interesting to expand this by what Allan Turner adds: „[...] in a complex, polyphonic work of literature [...], choices made by the translator, whether wittingly or unwittingly, may reveal what an author was doing in the original. By the same principle, any translation, to the extent that it differs in some respects from its source text, may contribute to an analysis of what constitutes the unique character of a literary work” (2006, 169).

⁷ All references to the novel are to Harold Pinter, *The Dwarfs: A Novel*, Faber and Faber, London, 1992. In the brackets the page number follows the chapter.

⁸ A good example is the fragment of Chapter 4 (pages 34-5) in which Len and Mark pretend that their conversation is a cricket match:

- What have you got against Jesus Christ?
- That’s a fast yorker. [i.e., one of the most difficult throws in cricket]
- Can you play it?
- And later:
- Howzat?
- Not out.

to say the least. Nonetheless, in the translation I tried to preserve, for instance, the double meaning of “howzat?”: as a cricket term and a short version of “how is that?” As a result, I decided to expand the Polish version of “howzat?” into something like: “And what now? Is the batsman out?” This kind of approach was necessary for two reasons. The first one is cultural⁹. *The Dwarfs* – in many respects a book about British post-war times – should not be devoid of references to a sport which for many British people is part of their national identity (a concept especially important and strongly underlined in the first decades after the war). The second one is rooted in Pinter’s biography: every Pinter fan knows that the playwright was a great devotee of cricket¹⁰. Thus, a book so closely connected with Pinter’s life and passions would become distorted if the lexicon of his characters disappeared as a result of being either removed or made more approachable through the introduction of lexical items to convey similar meanings (for example, if the idea of taking risks appeared instead of the concept of betting proper). As Itamar Even-Zohar puts it, “under certain circumstances constraints [and in the field of the Polish language it is the non-existence of cricket terminology and limited familiarity with betting terms] may operate not only in selecting from among established options, but in providing options that did *not* exist before” (1981, 5). Consequently, some cricket and betting terminology has to be introduced into the Polish translation under the pressure of lexical “constraints”.

3. The cultural code

The above-mentioned issues are closely interwoven with the cultural code, which is present on almost every page of the novel. A close reading of *The Dwarfs* reveals the 1950s East End as seen through the eyes of young Pinter and his companions. The originality of the playwright’s early works seems to reside in the fact that he places his characters in quite precisely portrayed time and space while forcing them to face universal problems. In other words, he elevates a specified reality to the level of metaphor and sometimes even symbol¹¹. Thus, it seems intriguing and promising to decide on preserving the cultural elements in the novel so as not to obscure them with the translator’s creativity, as this would lead to the danger of writing a new novel that has little to do with the original text¹². That is why it is better for the reader to learn what “the black hole of Calcutta” was (2, 16), how A and B buttons in telephone booths worked (14, 97) or to read the whole conversations about bus trips with all the London place names (4, 31-2),

⁹ This already shows clearly how blurred the boundaries are between the codes under discussion.

¹⁰ He was recorded to have said, “I tend to think that cricket is the greatest thing that God created on earth, [...] certainly greater than sex, although sex isn’t too bad either” (Bull 2008).

¹¹ For example, the conversation between the two women in the sketch *The Black and White*, apart from being realistic, becomes an image of loneliness and a struggle to evoke empathy in the other person.

¹² To a certain extent, my intention in translating *The Dwarfs* (which is also what the complexity of the novel forced me to do) was to follow, at least in part, what Lawrence Venuti claimed when he stood “out against ‘transparent’ translations that pretend to give a ‘faithful’ version of an original”; Venuti “[rejected] the ideal of the ‘fluent’ translation, as being in itself a falsification, and ultimately [called] for ‘abusive’ translations that proclaim the presence of the translator. For Venuti, the virtue of such an approach is that the characteristic marks, the native flavour of the original are not smoothed out in the name of fluency” (Jackson 1991, 82). Venuti’s stand is best summarized by Jolanta Kozak, who says that “foreignizing translation is [...] not only an opportunity to broaden the conceptual horizons of the reader through repeating the foreign *what* (image), but also an opportunity to refresh the language of translation through exposing and sabotaging the structures of the canon, thanks to the method of deformation (by showing *how* – so showing e.g., the texture, syntax transferred from the original)” (2009, 166-7).

since these also show elements of Pinter's own background and the submersion in the reality of the East End that stayed with him for the rest of his life.

However, the specifics of the cultural code are not only connected with the social and historical backdrop against which the plot is set. A close look into the novel reveals a number of biblical references and allusions. In many cases it is impossible to pass by a fragment or passage without noticing the connections. To provide contrasting examples, it would be instructive to consider one obvious and the other less clear, though possible, reference to the Bible in the text:

1) The fragment from Chapter 6 (49): "Christ? No, no. No. He's what he is and I'm what I'm not. I can't see how we can be related", which refers to Exodus 3:14¹³: "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you". Also Pete's "Follow me. I am the way and the truth. I am the resurrection and the life" (23, 135). This is a combination of biblical quotations from John 11:25: "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (before Lazarus is resurrected) and Matthew 9:9: "And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him."

2) A less clear reference can be found in biblical phrases which in Poland exist in particular forms and which are based on the most widely used translations of the Bible. This fact has to be taken into consideration if the complex texture of *The Dwarfs* is to be transferred to another language. A good example here would be Chapter 9 (60): "Who spoke, saying", which suggests stylistic reference to the Bible, namely the way the words of Jesus are quoted. See, for instance, Matthew 16:13 (emphasis mine): "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he *asked* his disciples, *saying*, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" or Matthew 22: 41-42: "41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus *asked* them, 42 *Saying*, What think ye of Christ? [...]" This doubling of a reporting verb can be found in the Polish translation of the Bible, called *Biblia Warszawska* (The Warsaw Bible), which, interestingly enough, is the most popular protestant version in Poland. Therefore, it neatly corresponds with Pete's Anglicanism, which he discusses in detail in Chapter 8.

Another kind of cultural reference is connected with the fact that Pinter's characters grow up in the post-war world. Pinter's political activism and anti-war statements are well known, and that is why it is interesting to observe how Pinter inserts references and allusions to war time (especially the Holocaust) into the book. Once more, two examples:

1) Chapter 6 (48) Pete says with bitter irony: "It was a cake I'd forgotten about, in the oven. [...] The neighbour [...] was in a state, white in the face. Obviously thought I'd been boiling human bones." Pete may be referring to methods used by Nazis in getting rid of the bodies of people murdered in concentration camps, where researchers used the corpses to produce, for example, soap through processes such as boiling.

2) Chapter 14 (90), Len says: "– You must excuse me. I'm in the centre of a holy plague." To which

¹³ All quotations are from 1769 Oxford King James Bible, <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org>.

Mark replies: “– Do you want me to send out a cart to bury the dead?” Here we are potentially dealing with another Biblical allusion. The beginning of Chapter 14 could be a reference to the ten plagues of Egypt, which befell Egyptians for keeping Jews in captivity. The cart to bury the dead may be connected with the last plague as it is described in Exodus 12: 29-30:

“29 And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. 30 And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.”

The exchange between Mark and Len acquires multiple meanings as a result of a number of factors. The person “in the centre of a holy plague” is Len, clearly a Jew and also one of the characters who throughout the novel displays a fierce willingness to define concepts of God and religion. Additionally, being a Jew, Len also belongs to the nation which less than a decade before the time of the plot was the object of mass extermination. Thus, by referring to the Bible Len also refers to World War II and its atrocities. Perfectly aware of Len’s implications, Mark supplies the picture of a cart which can also be found figuring prominently in numerous war films made by the Nazis to document their misdeeds.

4. The esthetic code

The esthetic code is connected to the organization of the text, drawing the reader’s attention to its own artistic uniqueness. With regard to the translation process of *The Dwarfs*, the esthetic code is most prominent in, but of course not limited to, four areas: language games, the Cockney dialect, intertextual allusions and quotations from other literary sources (mainly Shakespeare) and finally phrases and fragments that appear in earlier and later works by Pinter himself.

a) *Language games*. These take many forms. Apart from Pete and Len’s bantering about their surnames (Pete’s constant referring to Len as Weinblatt and Len’s changing of Pete’s surname from Cox to Pox¹⁴, one can again find references to the time of war. This is especially apparent in Mark and Pete’s exchange in front of the second-hand book shop (2, 19):

- Ethiopian architecture I think it was.
- What was?
- That book I nearly bought.
- Oh that one. I thought it was *Logic and Colic* by Blitz.
- Oh no, Mark said, you’re thinking of *Dust* by Crutz.

Once more surnames deserve attention. “Blitz”, of course, refers to the bombing of London by the Germans. “Crutz”, however, may add an ironic twist here, suggesting a combination of “crazy” and “nuts”. Since the word “blitz” is not unknown in Poland, the second name had to

¹⁴ It is worth noting that the word “cox”, or “coxswain”, means “someone who controls the direction of a rowing boat” (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* 2012), which seems to be closely connected to Pete’s fascination with sailing.

stay in the original form in the Polish version and merely remain suggestive of wartime through similarities to German spelling. However, I was tempted to change both names into “Wojak” and “Świrak”, the first of which may bring to mind references to *The Good Soldier Švejk* by Jaroslav Hašek (in Polish “Wojak Szwejk”), and the second suggests a fairly crazy person, while following the lexical ending of the first word¹⁵.

b) *The Cockney dialect*. Michael Billington in his article “Look back in Hackney” (2003) is correct in stating that the style of *The Dwarfs* takes a lot from the Cockney dialect. The dialogues in the novel vary from longer theoretical musings to fast-paced colloquial exchanges interspersed with expressions, idioms and phrases characteristic of Cockney. Cockney is too specific to London to have any direct equivalent in the Polish language. At the same time, for the characters it constitutes what Broeck calls lexicalized or institutionalized metaphor¹⁶. As a consequence, the translation tries, as it were, to “cover” – but only in places where it was absolutely necessary – the Cockney forms with carefully chosen Polish equivalents or near-equivalents, in the belief that leaving some typically Cockney expressions would definitely destroy the smooth flow of the characters’ exchanges. As a result, Mark, Len and Pete’s eloquence would inevitably be lost, and one should not forget that it is also this eloquence that has become the trademark of Pinter’s style (not to mention the fact that having “the gift of the gab” is what every Cockney should possess).

Cockney is a dialect full of word games, specific grammar rules and rhyming slang. While Pinter’s novel is definitely not pure Cockney, many elements of the dialect can be spotted in *The Dwarfs* and require appropriate rendering from the translator. First of all, the characters’ dialogues abound in phrases like “I’m telling you” or “I tell you”, “look here”, “listen here”, or just “here”. Preserving diligently all these forms would result in very awkward language for the characters. Although such linguistic behaviour can also be traced in Polish, it never happens to such an extent. So, a very important element of translating, especially those parts, was reading the Polish version aloud, as if the novel were a script. This seems an appropriate way to spot places where characters sound unnatural, and it indirectly shows how dramatic Pinter’s first and only novel was (it also explains the natural choice of the radio as the medium of voice for the first rendering of *The Dwarfs*)¹⁷.

¹⁵ Thus, Robert L. Politzer is right to claim that “in many instances words are not used with a clear cut single meaning, but their entire value plays a role in their actual use. Obvious examples for this importance of values, within actual speech are, for instance, the pun or intentional ambiguity. Both offer, for this reason, considerable difficulty to the translator and are often completely untranslatable. Inequalities of value may also have another result. Expressions of two different languages may mean the same, but the associations they suggest, the images they invoke are apt to be different. Texts in which ambiguity, suggestiveness are important are thus always more difficult or often impossible to translate” (1956, 320).

The names of the two authors could also be seen as metaphors, in which case Raymond van den Broeck is right to point out: “For example, when the creation of poetic metaphors of [...] a highly condensed type [...] appears to be dependent not only on metaphoric potentialities (which are inherent to every natural language) but also on the particular morphological potentialities [...], it may be assumed that the relative success of transferring them into another language will equally depend on the morphological characteristics of the TL [target language]” (1981, 80).

¹⁶ “[T]hese are those [...] that have gradually lost their uniqueness and have become part of the established semantic stock (or ‘lexicon’) of the language. They are the so-called lexicalized metaphors whose range may vary from mere ‘formators’ (such as in the face of, beforehand, everybody, already) to single lexical items (such as to harbour evil thoughts, hard cash, a hard-boiled character, etc.) and idioms” (1981, 74-5).

¹⁷ The issue of intonation seems to play an important part here. In his discussion of the interrelations between syntax and intonation,

Finally, Cockney is most famous for its rhyming slang. While *The Dwarfs* is not full of such expressions, they can still be traced. The Polish language does not seem to have a proper equivalent, so the translator's choice was to convey in the Polish version the jocular nature of the rhymed constructions together with the intended meaning, while trying to preserve the lexical content. One example occurs in Chapter 6 (49) with the fragment, "Go home. You? You're just a Charley Hunt" (also "Charlie Hunt" as a synonym for an extremely foolish person, rhyming with "cunt"). Preserving the name of the fictitious person would result in total ambiguity, so here the idiom was translated into Polish as "dupa wołowa" (literally "beef ass") to describe someone exceptionally stupid and weak. In this case the goal was to preserve crude eloquence at the cost of losing the name of an imaginary character. This was caused by the fact that the reader has enough evidence for the three men's fascination with word games concerning names to be left unaware of the one in this example.

c) *Allusions and borrowings from the works of other writers.* Apart from clear references to Shakespeare (especially *Hamlet*), either in the form of direct quotations (the beginning of Chapter 12 (76), in which Pete sings Feste's song from *Twelfth Night*) or modified ones (15 (99), in which Mark paraphrases Duncan's words from *Macbeth*, Act I, Scene 4: "I've discovered an art, Mark said, to find the mind's construction in the arse"), William Blake's "The Lamb" (9, 66), John Milton's *Samson Agonistes* (23 (138), the fragment "All passion spent"), S. T. Coleridge ("Dejection: An Ode" (21 (122): "Now is grown the very habit of my soul") or the concept of "the willing suspension of disbelief" (18 (110): "I suspend belief"), Pinter also uses popular songs (see Chapter 21 – the quotations mainly from blues lyrics), fragments of nursery rhymes (see Chapter 21 (126), for a fragment of "Goosey, Goosey, Gander" ["Downstairs. Upstairs. In my lady's chamber"] or Chapter 9 (60), for "Ride a Cock Horse to Banbury Cross" ["She'd ride a cockhorse"]) and even refers to Russian literature (23 (140): "*Oblomov* by Goncharov"¹⁸). If a particular work existed in Polish translation, it was used in the correctly modified form. Far more difficult were nursery rhymes, which can be found to possess historical undertones, and it seems that they should not be replaced by Polish equivalents but carefully translated, as they would lose, even if only accidentally intended, but nevertheless existing, meaning¹⁹.

Józef Mayen explains that the latter has a "dismantling" influence on the former (as well as on the lexical content) and subordinates syntactic rules in order to provide words with variegated meanings (1972, 32). In fact, *The Dwarfs* abounds in syntactic constructions which are characteristic of the style of spoken rather than written language. It seems to be caused by the fact that, as a very gifted listener of live speech, Pinter equips its written record with signals of encoded intonation. This, in turn, influences the syntax of the characters' dialogues. That is why one can find Len saying about Mark's suit: "What do I think of the cut? The cut? The cut? What a cut! What a cut! I've never seen such a cut!" (4, 31); or Pete describing Mark: "[H]e's a strange chap, is Mark. [...] He surprises me, that bloke, now and again, for the good, I mean" (6, 50).

¹⁸ Ivan A. Goncharov (1812-1891) was a Russian writer. His most famous work is *Oblomov*, whose main character was called a Russian Hamlet because of his indecisiveness and inability to act with determination.

¹⁹ For instance, "Goosey, Goosey, Gander" was interpreted as telling about Catholic priests being persecuted by protestants in the XVI c. Priests had to hide in "priest holes" – secret rooms where they could safely pray. The whole nursery rhyme is as follows:

*Goosey Goosey Gander where shall I wander,
Upstairs, downstairs and in my lady's chamber
There I met an old man who wouldn't say his prayers,
I took him by the left leg and threw him down the stairs.*

With allusions to Shakespeare the problem lies, as with indirect biblical paraphrases, in expressions suggestive of possible references, for example in fragments such as in Chapter 23, (140) in which Mark's words "beginnings can't be observed" may be a paraphrase of Iago's words from *Othello* (Act II, Scene 3, lines 178-179), after he falls into disgrace in Othello's eyes: "I cannot speak / Any beginning to this peevish odds". It is crucial to preserve such suggestions, as they display a striking correspondence to the events in the novel (Mark has already made his first advances to Virginia).

5. Pinter quotes Pinter

Special attention should be given to places where Pinter quotes Pinter, by which I mean he either uses what he had already written or has a go at expressions or fragments which were to appear later in his works. In Poland, a great majority of Pinter's works were translated soon after their English publication. It allowed translators (most of all the late Bolesław Taborski as the greatest translator of Pinter's plays) to trace the development of linguistic forms in Pinter's writing. As a result, one current challenge facing the translator of an earlier work by Pinter is whether to incorporate all the existing translator's work or suggest an entirely new approach. As a consequence, the translator of *The Dwarfs* is, on the one hand, bound by what has already been done so as not to obscure what would be obvious for the English reader and, on the other, tempted to give oneself freedom when dealing with the text, which does not have to be in agreement with other translators' choices. This entrapment is succinctly expressed by Venuti: "A particular edition of a source text [here, Pinter's previous plays] inscribes an interpretation which then limits the translator's interpretive moves" (2011, 129).

As a result, the decision has been made to conscientiously trace and show those fragments in *The Dwarfs* which have already appeared in Polish, altering them to the needs of the present translation but only to such an extent that it does not obscure or discard the connections with Pinter's other writings. Here is a selection of examples in the order in which they appear in the novel:

1) Chapter 3 (27), the fragment when Pete says about Mark: "I'm sure he rides barebacked most of the time and doesn't give it a thought". "Ride barebacked" also appears in *The Hothouse* (Pinter 1991a, 219), when Roote says: "Never ride barebacked. Always take precautions. Otherwise complications set in".

2) Chapter 5 (41), the fragment: "Bordered by ribs and caves of cloud the bright moon stuck". A very similar phrase appears in the one-acter *Silence*. One of its characters, Rumsey, says: "I watch the clouds. Pleasant the ribs and tendons of cloud" (Pinter 1978, 203). One can notice an important similarity: Rumsey's feelings are transferred onto his perception of natural phenomena, and that is why for him shapes of clouds possess an almost sexual quality. In *The Dwarfs* the narrator uses a slightly modified description in the moment that ends one of the most tender scenes between Virginia and Pete. Interestingly, the awareness that the phrase first used in the novel is later uttered by a character in a Pinter play emphasises the fact that *The Dwarfs* has quite a complicated narrative structure. Alongside the obvious presence of the first-person narrators Len, Pete and Virginia (one never learns what Mark is thinking), there is the potentially uninvolved third-person narrator (the one who uses all the reporting verbs and states purely

factual descriptions of the characters' behaviour such as "he sat down" or "he opened the door"). However, at the same time the same narrator resorts to descriptions such as the one above or, e.g., "The door cracked, pale heads whispered through dark, the red light damaged the black, shut" (21, 129). Even from this short overview, it transpires that this interpretational possibility should also be accounted for in the translator's choices.

3) Chapter 12 (79), the fragment: "What I'm accusing you of is operating on life and not in it". Pete's words clearly suggest Teddy's comment from *The Homecoming* (Pinter 1991b, 69): "It's a question of how far you can operate on things and not in things". The word "operating" is not an easy one to translate in this context, but the Polish translation of the play (by Adam Tarn) – "oddziaływać" (Pinter 2006, 63) – provides a suitable solution and allows the translator to preserve this link with Pinter's later works as well²⁰.

4) Chapter 13 (84), the fragment when Pete questions Virginia about Marie Saxon: "Did you have your bath while she was here?" and "Did she soap your armpits?". Pete's questions bring to mind the play *Old Times* when Anna and Deeley wait for Kate to finish her bath and talk about the way she "gives herself a great soaping all over". Later Deeley suggests that Anna should dry Kate because as a woman she knows "where and in what density moisture collects on women's bodies" (Pinter 1991b, 291, 294). Thus, the man reveals his suspicions of a close relationship between the two women. In a more succinct way this is also what Pete does (note the same verb "to soap"). Although his words are not the same as those from *Old Times*, his question is unexpected enough to make Virginia speechless. Therefore, keeping the allusion concealed in Pete's accusation should also remain the translator's aim.

5) Chapter 21 (124), Pete's story about retrieving old manuscripts from graves. As other researchers have also noted (see Peacock 1997, 30-2), this fragment was used by Pinter in *Night School*. There the same story is told by an ex-prisoner, Walter, who talks to Sally, the girl who rented his room while he was away (Pinter 1977, 220). In the Polish translation of *Night School*, Walter refers to Sally in a more formal way (Polish "pani" is repeated many times in his story; in English this difference is obscured). In contrast, Pete's talk in *The Dwarfs* is more direct (the character talks to his peer), longer and contains more details (e.g., the precise description of the ways manuscripts are attached to dead bodies). It is also more reminiscent of a monologue interspersed with direct references to the listener ("Drink up", "You look like a ghost, as it is"). Therefore, this part was translated from scratch, as the common elements remain discernible despite the changes.

Apart from all the above examples, in *The Dwarfs* one can find references to Pinter's writings which still wait to be translated into Polish. The most prominent instance is "A Note on Shakespeare" (Pinter 1998, 5-7), large extracts of which were used in Mark's conversation with Pete in Chapter 23, which is all devoted to Shakespeare. However, what is also worth noting are intriguing similarities between fragments of the novel and Pinter's early poems (see Pinter 1998, 103, 108, 124). For example, in Chapter 9 (59) Pete's thoughts circle around "periphrastic

²⁰ Curiously, this phrase appears for the first time in the autobiographical "Queen of All the Fairies". It is worth noting that, apart from changing the word "life" to "things", the quotation in *The Homecoming* is reversed, which was also noticed by Penelope Prentice (1994, xlviii).

conjugation” and the phrase appears in Pinter’s poem “School Life” (1948). Another one, “The Midget” (1950), has an atmosphere suggestive of Pete’s dream about midgets on a boat from Chapter 2 (21-2). Last but not least, the poem “Jig” (1952) is a vivid depiction of a mad dance of women and men on a boat, which could be seen as an extension of Len’s brief description of Pete and Virginia’s relationship from Chapter 14 (93): “I think when they are alone they must do a jig, a dance, that nobody else could understand”. All these instances do not require comparison with the already existing Polish versions, but being aware of them definitely enhances the translator’s knowledge about the characters and the general mood the novel should convey (e.g., references to boats are very strongly underlined in the novel with regard to Pete, and in the light of these poems, this fact seems to be no accident).

6. Conclusion

What best sums up the challenges that a translator of *The Dwarfs* has to confront are the manifold ways in which the word “mark”, as both noun and verb, is used in the novel. It is difficult to disregard the impression that interweaving the characters’ dialogues with expressions containing the word “mark” could be interpreted as a conscious plan on Pinter’s part to suggest to the reader that the character named Mark is based on the playwright himself. In various forms, “mark” is used by all the male characters. Pete uses it twice in his conversation with Mark (Chapters: 23, 135, and 30, 180). The phrases are “to be up to the mark” and “to be on the mark”. Also Len in Chapter 19 describes Mark as a “marked man” (116), and later in the same chapter Mark displays his unwillingness to consider what Len suggests to him by saying, “You’re off the mark” (119). All the intricacies of the variegated use of the word “mark” reveal the border beyond which it is probably impossible to go while trying to transfer Pinter’s novel into the field of another language. In Polish there is only one verb “markować”, which in simple terms means “to pretend; to try to cheat somebody”. Only in one case was it possible to retain the original sound of the English word and use the Polish word, but with a slight change of meaning (Pete says, “I haven’t met anyone who was quite up to the mark”, which, as it turns out later, is what he thinks about Mark as well). In the Polish version Pete says, “I haven’t met anyone who would at least be able to pretend what I expected of him” / “nie spotkałem nikogo, kto by choć zamarkował to, czego oczekiwałem”). In all other cases the emphasis had to be placed on the context of conversations, and meaning, not sound, had to be underscored. Nevertheless, one can at least still try (who knows how the Polish verb “markować” will develop in subsequent years?), and this seems to be the essence and curious appeal of the never-ending process of translation, even if it is destined to be always not entirely up to the mark.

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