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## Shakespeare, "Thou Art Translated". *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as Rock-opera

### Abstract

This article comments on the use of Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński's 1950 translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the rock-opera adaptation created by Leszek Możdżer and Wojciech Kościelniak in 2001. Inspecting the production's critical reception against the background of the translation's origin and its position in the canon of Polish renderings of Shakespeare's plays, I explain the critics' negative reactions to the merge of this traditional poetic translation with modern scenography and music. Analysing a selection of songs, I identify a number of features of Gałczyński's text that decide about its functionality in this fairly unusual theatrical test. I also describe the modifications introduced in the translation by the authors of the adaptation in the process of transforming the play's text into a quasi-libretto.

Keywords: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Sen nocy letniej*, translation, adaptation, Gałczyński, Możdżer, Kościelniak, rock-opera

While creating a theatrically functional text is the primary aim for any translator of plays, it is usually true that translations intended for the stage age much faster than their source texts. As language changes with each generation of its users and theatre depends on text that is pragmatic and spontaneously understood, authors like Shakespeare are bound to be translated frequently. Looking at the Polish reception of his plays, one can quite precisely identify decades of popularity of the same play's subsequent translations. New versions are most often commissioned by and created in cooperation with theatres, when it is felt that the previous ones have lost their appeal on stage, as their language has become dated. Such was the case with the 19<sup>th</sup>-century translations in the 1930s or with the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century renderings at the turn of the new millennium. There are also years in which versions resulting from certain translation projects – like endeavours to translate the whole canon – tend to dominate the stage for one or two decades, rarely longer. Last but not least, there are fashions: certain translations, deemed as especially stage-friendly, are used in theatres more frequently than others, review-

ers applaud, and audiences are satisfied with a version that makes Shakespeare – to use Jan Kott’s clichéd phrase – their “contemporary” again.<sup>1</sup>

In this article I am going to discuss a case that would be difficult to describe within the general tendencies I have just sketched. At the very beginning of the twenty-first century, a translation relatively little known at that time, written fifty years earlier and marked by its author’s very specific poetic personality, was used as a libretto in an ultra-modern musical adaptation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Examining that production’s critical reception and analysing the modifications introduced in the text of the translation to create a series of songs, I aim to establish the features of the translation that decided about its functionality in a rock-opera adaptation.

With one performance almost each year between 1902 and 2016, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is the play by Shakespeare which sets records of popularity in Polish theatres that can compete only with *Hamlet*. Some years even saw several productions shown in various theatres throughout the country. Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński’s translation, written in 1950 and then regularly used by directors over the next six decades,<sup>2</sup> is one of the play’s six renderings into Polish, including the three 19<sup>th</sup>-century ones.<sup>3</sup> When it was used in the rock-opera adaptation, *Sen nocy letniej*, premiered in 2001 at the Musical Theatre in Gdynia, this choice was almost unanimously assessed by reviewers as highly eccentric. To explain that reaction, one has to reflect on Gałczyński’s place in the canon of Polish literature and his rendering’s position in the rich repertoire of translations that our theatres have at their disposal.

K.I. Gałczyński (1905–1953) was one of the most original and popular Polish poets of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Belonging to the major lyricists of the interwar period, he was influenced by, but never formally represented, the period’s main poetic traditions. Neither definitely classicistic nor avantgarde, his poetry is singular and defies any clear-cut categorisations. He also wrote theatre and radio plays and, as supreme satirist, he is best remembered for his short dramatic works known under the collective name *The Little Theatre of The Green Goose* that employed grotesque, nonsense and abstract humour. This series of sketches was originally published in the popular weekly magazine “Przekrój” (between 1946 and 1950) and not meant to be performed, regarded rather as “a joke (...) based on the denial of performance”.<sup>4</sup> Although many of its texts pretend to be stage pieces, they read more like avantgarde poems or meta-theatrical cabaret skits.<sup>5</sup> Gałczyński’s satirical pieces and his lyrical poetry were widely known and

<sup>1</sup> See footnote 8 below.

<sup>2</sup> See the data base of the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, available at <http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/realizacje/lista.html?nazwisko=Shakespeare&tytul=Sen+nocy+letniej> (access: 12.09.2017).

<sup>3</sup> The translators and publication dates are: Ignacy Hołowiński (1840), Stanisław Koźmian (1866), Leon Ulrich (1895), K.I. Gałczyński (1952) – as listed by S. Helsztyński in *Przekłady szekspirowskie w Polsce wczoraj i dziś*, as well as Maciej Słomczyński (1982), and Stanisław Barańczak (1992).

<sup>4</sup> D. Gerould (ed.), *Twentieth-Century Polish Avant-Garde Drama*, London 1977, pp. 61, 62.

<sup>5</sup> About meta-theatre in Gałczyński’s *The Green Goose*, see: M. Palmowski, *Stage Directions in the Avant-garde Drama of Kenneth Koch and Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński*, in: *Eyes to Wonder, Tounge to Praise*, Kraków 2012.

very popular during his lifetime and for at least the four decades that followed his death. "After the war his fame reached heights nowadays reserved for stage and screen celebrities,"<sup>6</sup> assesses a critic of a major web portal founded by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute and dedicated to promoting Polish culture. The poet is still read in schools (especially his war poetry and the *Green Goose* sketches) and Wikipedia records more than thirty songs, composed by various contemporary vocalists, that are based on his most well-known and loved poems. It is this mixed legacy of Gałczyński's lyrical and satirical work that sheds light on the reception of his translation of Shakespeare's comedy.

Gałczyński translated from several languages (including English, German, Russian and Spanish), but we do not know anything about his translation philosophy. He never wrote any theoretical texts on translation, nor did he leave any translatorial paratexts. His biographers and literary historians agree that Gałczyński would undertake poetry translation rather unwillingly and had a tendency to bend the translated texts to his own vision and to leave in them marks of his very original poetics.<sup>7</sup> This is perhaps why the first critics saw him as the author of "free" translations from Shakespeare, which they were inclined to describe as paraphrases rather than translations.<sup>8</sup> Asked in an interview about his strategies, Gałczyński answered with a mixture of provocation, autocreation and gibe, so typical of him, that as a poet he had the right to talk about inspiration.<sup>9</sup> Distanced as he was to theories, he treated translations from Shakespeare very seriously, knew extensively the previous Polish renderings and their critical notes, as well as the German and Russian versions of the plays. Being thus, on the one hand, a translator conscious of the cultural heritage, he was, on the other hand, daring and independent, and would take his decisions consciously as is well seen in his reactions to criticism. He was criticized mainly for using language too modern and too informal, which – especially in the scenes with the mechanicals – caused associations with the *Green Goose* theatre. While defending his translation, Gałczyński referred to the very spirit of Shakespeare's epoch and claimed that the Renaissance richness and liveliness of the play could only be rendered by avoiding archaization and highlighting the grotesque.<sup>10</sup>

Gałczyński translated only two full plays by Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the first part of *Henry IV*, as well as some passages from the second part and the opening scenes of *The Tempest*. He worked on Shakespeare during the last four years of his life, which were very intensive and dramatic,

<sup>6</sup> M. Gliński, *The Vices and Virtues of Versemaker Gałczyński*, <http://culture.pl/en/article/the-vices-and-virtues-of-versemaker-galczynski> (access: 24.10.2017).

<sup>7</sup> See: e.g. W. Lewik, *Wstęp*, in: W. Szekspir, *Sen nocy Letniej, Henryk IV cz. 1, Fragmenty: Henryk IV cz. 2, Burza*, K.I. Gałczyński (transl.), Warszawa 1954, p. 5; A. Drawicz, *Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński*, Warszawa 1972, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> Today, almost 70 years later and with dozens other translations produced, such opinions read as rather biased and exaggerated.

<sup>9</sup> S. Helsztyński, *Aneks. Szekspir w Polsce*, in: W. Shakespeare, *Dziela dramatyczne*, Warszawa 1973, p. 941.

<sup>10</sup> N. Gałczyńska, *Przypisy*, in: K.I. Gałczyński, *Przekłady i uzupełnienia, Dzieła*, t. 5, Warszawa 1960, p. 703.

partly because of his deteriorating health and partly because of the ideological conflict with the leaders of the Polish Writers Union that resulted in a publication ban which lasted almost two years. Although Gałczyński was the author of several poems composed in the vein of socialist realism, his stance towards communism was more than ambiguous. Accepting the need to produce literature on demand in order to earn a living, he at the same time strived to retain artistic independence by putting on the mask of a Fool who is allowed to mock any political and social faction. In 1950, he was accused of “ideological immaturity” manifested in the “bourgeoisie spirit” of his writings. Gałczyński’s biographers consider that he would never have translated Shakespeare, had it not been for the circumstances that forced the poet to look for alternative sources of income.

Nevertheless, his readers’ expectations were high. When “Przekrój” informed that Gałczyński had started to work on *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the editors got flooded with letters from the poet’s admirers, who expressed their conviction that there was no other writer able to do the job better than this supreme lyricist of the night-time and the moon, of love and magic. Many of Gałczyński’s poems draw on imagination, irrationality, mystery, and on the belief that art, being the first instinct and the ultimate bliss of a human being, is indefinite and unbound. Above all, however, Gałczyński’s private life was an inexhaustible source of myths and gossip, which fuelled the aura of artistic bohemia that surrounded his life and became part and parcel of his posthumous legend. Gałczyński’s biography is a colourful medley of tragedies and trifles, things both terrifying and laughable – from his childhood traumas, the war spent in a prison camp and three heart attacks, through his notorious night-walking, his unstable temperament, the repeated incidents of wild drinking alternating with periods of persistent abstinence, his love-affairs and his incredibly patient wife, who was his muse and inspiration for his best love poems, to his incredible talent for languages, his passion for music, and his love of green ink... Gałczyński was a great provocateur, whose life and art formed a domain ruled only by himself – the great sorcerer, the lunatic, “the moon fellow”, as he liked to call himself. For a writer who saw poetry as powerful magic, able to lead reason astray, the meta-artistic motifs in Shakespeare’s comedy must have seem natural, pertaining to the very core of his understanding of the value of artistic illusion. “Your whole life and all your poetry is a midsummer night’s dream”,<sup>11</sup> wrote one of the poet’s fans.

As I argued elsewhere, Gałczyński’s rendering of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is a perfect case to testify the impact of writer-translators’ authorial work on the shape, and – what is less obvious and more fascinating – on the reception of their translations.<sup>12</sup> For the readers of his poetry it was obvious that his version of Shakespeare’s comedy would fuse seamlessly with the rest of his literary work, become its integral part and that they were certain to recognize in it the familiar and favourite poetics. The readers’ intuitions were very soon confirmed by the

<sup>11</sup> K. Gałczyńska (ed.), *Pozdrowienia dla czarodzieja. Korespondencja Konstantego Ildefonsa Gałczyńskiego*, Warszawa 2005, p. 222.

<sup>12</sup> A. Romanowska, *Za głosem tłumacza. Szekspir Iwaszkiewicza, Miłosza i Gałczyńskiego*, Kraków 2017.

critics' opinions, who described this translation with phrases very similar to those associated with Gałczyński's authorial writing: oneiric quality, dreamlike poetics, fairy-tale-like moods, poetic apology of the night. Much evidence of how well this fusion worked is to be found in the texts Gałczyński composed while working on the play's translation and soon after it was finished. It is beyond the scope of the present article to write about this extensively, so I will limit myself to saying that around the time when the poet completed his translation, he composed works that belong to his most mature and most important ones: the volumes *Kronika olsztyńska* and *Pieśni*, and two long poems, *Wit Stwosz* and *Niobe*. Instrumental in this phase of Gałczyński's literary activity were three summers spent in the beautiful and wild, densely forested lake area of north-eastern Poland, to which his wife took him, in the hope of repairing his deteriorating health. For the city-based poet, who had rarely spent longer time outside Warsaw before, the nature discovered in the Masurian region became a fresh source of inspiration. The charm of the woods, the beauty of the lakes and the peacefulness of country life brought new poetic impulses. *Kronika olsztyńska*, Gałczyński's "search for eternal summer" is a chronicle of summertime, a documentary of the poet's rediscovery of nature and his poetic attempt to prolong the summer, to never let it pass. The volume's motto is a poetic paraphrase of Titania's self-presentation "I am a spirit of no common rate;/The summer still doth tend upon my state" – *I wieczne lato świeci w moim państwie* ['And eternal summer shines in my state']. In many phrases from this volume – like "among all women in the world night is the fairest" or "I write poems on sand, having dipped my pen in the moon" – we find Gałczyński's familiar night-time imagery augmented by the experience of close and intimate contact with nature. The critics agree that translating *A Midsummer Night's Dream* served as a formative prelude to that last, and most significant, phase of his writing.

Before considering the features of Gałczyński's translation which appealed to the authors of the 2001 rock-opera, it is necessary to present a short outline of its critical reception. Apart from the recurring truism about this being a typical example of a translation that is "fair, but unfaithful," the early critics' opinions were surprisingly discrepant. The translation's language, free from archaisms, was praised by some as fresh and flexible, while others criticised it as plain and crude. It comes as no surprise that commentators from theatre circles would be rather inclined to welcome its modern language with enthusiasm, while the literary critics would typically catalogue the translation's "philological" shortcomings. The theatre director, who commissioned Gałczyński with the translation, welcomed the fact that audiences would finally be able to understand the text spoken from the stage thanks to the "clear, easy and – at the same time – poetic, language".<sup>13</sup> Another theatrically-minded critic saw this version's great theatrical potential in its "gripping" language that was able to attract and hold the audience's attention.<sup>14</sup> This quality was also appreciated by Czesław Miłosz, an otherwise very fastidious critic, who nevertheless assessed Gałczyński's version as too smooth in compari-

<sup>13</sup> K. Gałczyńska (ed.), *Pozdrowienia dla czarodzieja...*, p. 55.

<sup>14</sup> J. Zawiejski, *O przekładach dramatu*, in: *O sztuce tłumaczenia*, M. Rusinek (ed.), Wrocław 1955, p. 431.

son with the powerful energy of Shakespeare's original.<sup>15</sup> Alongside such positive reactions, university professors and language specialists would typically list their objections: disrespectful treatment of the proportion between the rhymed and unrhymed verse, the modernised language of the mechanicals, freedom in rendering poetic imagery, the missing lines, the mistakes resulting from misunderstanding of epoch-specific cultural allusions, and so on.<sup>16</sup> Looking at those complaints from today's perspective, when Gałczyński's translation has already become a classic, it is impossible to overlook a certain paradox. One of the most serious grievances voiced by the early critics was that the language of the Athenian workers was too modernised (including some informal phrases from the Warsaw working class street jargon) to reflect Shakespeare's universality and to secure this version's duration. And yet the translation's several-decade-long popularity on stage, as well as its adaptation into a rock-opera at the beginning of the new millennium, suggest that these critics were misguided.

The rock-opera prepared by the Gdynia Musical Theatre in October 2001 is doubtlessly the most unusual production based on Gałczyński's translation. The authors – pianist and composer Leszek Możdżer, and theatre director Wojciech Kościelniak – having cooperated earlier on that theatre's great hit, a Polish version of the musical *Hair* – wanted to create an original musical production that would be – as opposed to their previous work – “European” in spirit. Reluctant to classify their *Sen nocny letniej* as a musical, the label associated with trivial plots, they wanted to draw on the genre of rock-opera. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – with “Mozartian interweaving of its different layers of the plot and artifice”<sup>17</sup> – has a long stage history in musical theatre and a long catalogue of famous musicians and directors who worked on the productions and composed pieces inspired by the play, Mendelssohn's incidental music being perhaps the best well-known case. From the 1692 adaptation with music by Henry Purcell, to the 18<sup>th</sup> century mock-operas and John Christopher Smith's *The Fairies* with Garrick's libretto, to Benjamin Britten's internationally successful 1960 opera remembered for its musical diversity, the play is repeatedly “tested” on musical stages. Asked about the origin of their idea to interpret it in the musical theatre, Możdżer and Kościelniak recalled having “heard this comedy as an opera” while reading Gałczyński's translation. It presented itself as an “ideal libretto” – rhythmical, light, easy to understand and – at the same time – artistically refined.<sup>18</sup>

Możdżer and Kościelniak coined for their production the term “trance-opera”. While in a rock-opera it is the rock music that organizes the whole production, in a trance-opera the organizing tool is trance music, which has the function of binding particular elements of the performance into a coherent unity. Trance, with its

<sup>15</sup> Cz. Miłosz, *Przekłady i Gałczyński*, in: Cz. Miłosz *Kontynenty*, 1999, p. 358.

<sup>16</sup> See: G. Sinko, *Dramat angielski i niemiecki w wydawnictwach PIW*, “Pamiętnik Literacki” 1955, no. 1 (13), pp. 206–216; idem, *Cena i koszty modernizacji*, “Nowa Kultura” 1959, no. 21, pp. 6–7; S. Helisztyński, *Przekłady szekspirowskie w Polsce wczoraj i dziś*, “Pamiętnik Teatralny” 1954, no. 2 (10), pp. 3–91.

<sup>17</sup> M. Dobson, S. Wells (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, Oxford 2001, p. 298.

<sup>18</sup> J. Ciosek, *Szekspirowska baśń o miłości*, “Dziennik Polski” 2007, 19.01, p. vii.

repetitiveness, became a theatrical tool through which the emotions expressed by the actors are conveyed to the audience. In Moździerz and Kościelniak's production, the text was transcribed into seventy songs composed in a variety of musical styles – rock, jazz, techno, hip-hop, rap, ethno, and club music. The structure of each song, as well as of the whole production, was based on repetitions that drew the audience into an atmosphere of a dreamy trance. One of the reviewers aptly noted that Moździerz's jazz temperament had allowed him to create a very unorthodox piece: rather than composing music for Gałczyński's translation of Shakespeare's text, he had filled this text with pulsating sounds that pervaded the whole theatrical space with cumulated repetitive musical motifs. The trance quality emerged only gradually, but it was finally effective, taking hold of even the most resistant audience.<sup>19</sup>

The daring variety of musical genres merged into one production had its source in the versatile interests and apparently unlimited artistic imagination of Moździerz, who, in the last two decades, has grown into one of the most recognizable Polish jazz musicians and one of the greatest individualities of the European jazz scenes. Appreciated and rewarded for his numerous projects – ranging from improvisations on Fryderyk Chopin's themes to his cooperation with the Holland Baroque ensemble – already before *Sen nocy letniej*, he had become known for his theatre and film music, having cooperated with such internationally recognised artists as Grzegorz Jarzyna (Sarah Kane's *Psychosis* in Düsseldorf) or Jan Kaczmarek (soundtracks for 20th Century Fox and Miramax). Some critics appreciated the adaptation's musical variety as creative eclecticism, calling it "an outstanding piece, full of references to the history of world music",<sup>20</sup> while others dismissed it as a crazy jumble of styles, too daunting to form any meaningful unity.<sup>21</sup> There were also reviewers who found the translation jarring with the modern costumes and scenography, which resulted in a discord between the text of the songs and the other elements of the production. Joanna Chojka complained that Gałczyński's refined poetry had no chance to reach the spectators through the aggressive music and dense stage design, at the same time appreciating the impressive staging and the dexterity of the cast. In her opinion, the weak point of the production was the lack of an original libretto that would level the discrepancy between the poetic text and the modern music and spare the audience stylistic and emotional twists.<sup>22</sup> Another reviewer, apparently averse to rock, described that discrepancy in terms of the composer's "fatal miracle", in which "Shakespeare's mossy softness and flexibility and Gałczyński's oneiric phrases were merged with the iron clatter of an armed division".<sup>23</sup>

To inspect how Gałczyński's translation fared in this rock-opera production, I will begin with an example inspired by one of the critical reviews. Appreciat-

<sup>19</sup> J. Targoń, *Przyczajony trans*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 2007, 22.01, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> P. Sobierski, *Więcej niż musical*, "Teatr" 2013, no. 10, p. 28.

<sup>21</sup> B. Czechowska-Derkacz, *Baśń o miłości*, "Głos Wybrzeża" 2001, 31.01, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> J. Chojka, *Menu*, "Wprost" 2001, no. 45, p. 108; idem, *Trans nocy letniej*, "Teatr" 2002, no. 1–2, p. 71.

<sup>23</sup> P. Głowacki, *Wichrowe durszlaki*, "Dziennik Polski" 2007, 22.01, p. 7.

ing the production's musical potential, the author criticized its dissonant effects produced at the level of stage design and costume. He referred to musicals such as *West Side Story* or *Kiss Me, Kate*, the success of which was based on adaptation that transplanted the stories into modern time not only through costume and manners, but also through language. In the Gdynia production, he disliked not so much the fusion of the "traditional and poetically refined" translation and the ultra-modern music as present day dress and scenography that used modern technology (video films projected on huge screens behind high metal scaffoldings, with platforms for actors to appear on various levels of the stage space). "Such radical modernisation of the old text through music, scenography and costume makes the text senseless (...). Instead of writing their own libretto, the authors threw their own dreams into Shakespeare's dream".<sup>24</sup> Yet the critic seems to have missed the very point of Kościelniak's stage design. The setting was modern, but at the same time unspecific enough to be filled in by the audience's imagination with whatever associations they chose. Following as much Shakespeare as Gałczyński, the subsequent episodes on stage were to draw the audience into a world of a dreamy trance, in which certain things happened as if in a void, in an unlocated and temporarily unknown sphere and in which senses did not work as they normally would. To achieve that effect, the authors created a theatrical space as much devoid of any particular time-suggesting elements as possible. The characters had on cotton trousers or shining minidresses, but such costumes were fairly common and neutral. Gałczyński's translation enhanced this effect with his quite unexpected choice of adjective for "transparent" in Lysander's affectionate praise "Transparent Helena!" In Shakespeare, Helena's natural transparency, i.e. beauty, convinces Lysander of the girl's ideal qualities: "Nature shows her art,/ That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart" (2.2.103).<sup>25</sup> The translator modified this praise into a cry of amazement: *Heleno, tyś jak szklana! Co za cuda,/bo oczy moje widzą twoje serce* ['Helena, you are as if made of glass! What wonders (are these)/that my eyes can see your heart']. In the song, the text was shortened. Lysander's *Heleno, tyś jak szklana! Co za cuda* expressed his admiration not of Helena's spiritual beauty, but of her perfect body that, in his desire-kindled imagination, seemed to be shining like clean polished glass and, like a glass, reflected his desires, drawing him to her with irresistible power.

This effect, magnified by the actor's gestures and movements, underscores the physicality of desire, which is entirely consistent with the opera's focus on body language. Możdżer and Kościelniak's production included numerous references to Kott's interpretation of the play as a story about the dark side of human nature, about desire, sexual initiation and love studied in a variety of forms and shades, but mostly through the lens of animalistic eroticism.<sup>26</sup> The de-rationalising effects of the love-juice were depicted in the (especially male) actors' animal-like move-

<sup>24</sup> R. Pawłowski, *Puk jako zwierzę pociągowe*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 2001, 30.01, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> The play is quoted from The Arden Shakespeare edition by Harold F. Brooks, 1979.

<sup>26</sup> J. Kott, *Szekspir współczesny*, Warszawa 1965, pp. 261–286. From Kott's famous essays on Shakespeare's plays, published in English as *Shakespeare our Contemporary*, we know that he read *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Gałczyński's translation.



ments. In the forest they behaved like night animals: watchful, fearful, performing their nature-determined rituals. In this context the dialogue of the lovers may have sounded far-fetched when Hermia had referred to her maiden modesty, persuading Lysander to "lie further off" before they fell asleep away from one another, especially since a moment later we saw them copulating. Were they making love or were they dreaming about it? The production's frequent tone shifts highlighted ambiguity, which was effectively underscored by the use of light and disquieting music. The end of the scene brings another example to prove that Gałczyński's translation served as an effective tool for creation of such shifts. Hermia's final line – two sentences separated by a full stop – *Lecz ja cię znajdę zaraz. Lub śmierć znajdę* ['But I will find you instantly. Or (I will) find death'], if compared to the much less dramatic "Either death or you I'll find immediately" (2.2.155), enhanced the potential of showing the character's entangled emotions.

One of the most frequently quoted examples of *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* concentrated lyricism is Titania's speech in act 2 scene 1, provoked by Oberon's teasingly impertinent greeting "Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania" (2.1.60). The speech, being a poetic development of the play's themes of irrationality and confusion caused by passions, is an illustration of the verbal potential of poetic drama, of the spoken word's imagination-stirring powers. At the same time, its density of detail, its hyperbolic scope, and its length make it a theatrical challenge for modern audiences, who often are – unlike those in Shakespeare's time – distrustful and impatient when confronted in theatre with such type of text. Thus the quarrel between Oberon and Titania, having been a treat for a "poetically minded" translator like Gałczyński, presents a strenuous theatrical test for the sustainability of his translation. In Moździerz and Kościelniak's interpretation, this test was passed incredibly well, because the music's authors used the text's theatrical potential to the full. The speech, together with the preceding and following dialogues, was turned into an energetic rock piece with elements of trance. Titania was furious and aggressive. The angrier she grew at Oberon, the more frightening and dominating she became against the loud beats of drums and electric guitars. All this was set in motion by Gałczyński's text with its phonetic robustness, syntactic transparency and conversational phrases. The text carried the emotions and the energy throughout the whole piece, thanks to devices either imitated from Shakespeare – like the enumeration in "And never, since the middle of the summer's spring,/Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead" (2.1.82–83), or created via the translator's choices – like the aggressive onomatopoeic effects of the fricatives and trills of *wiatry, że nam próżno świszczą* for "the winds, piping to us in vain" (2.1.88).

The song-quarrel was constructed by introducing numerous cuts, changing the order of the lines, eliminating inversions and adding a refrain which highlighted the central topic of the conflict, being at the same time the most attractive two lines from Gałczyński's translation. The phrase *O, to są tylko fałszerstwa zazdrości* is phonetically as effective with its hissing and rustling fricatives as "These are the forgeries of jealousy" (2.1.81) and the line *a skutek taki, że świat stracił głowę* ['and the result is that the world has lost its head'] for "and the mazèd world, (...) now knows not which is which" (2.1.113–114) introduces a congenial idiom,

which was the more effective because of what we saw on the stage: the surprising, confusing, varied movements of Titania's dance as she sings. Choreography in this scene, as in many other scenes of the production, was emblematic. The dance resembled once some ritualistic movements, when Titania's train was involved, once some grotesquely awkward ballet, when Oberon and Titania danced together. Both characters had a diabolic quality about them and their argument looked and sounded like a quarrel of two demons, especially as it culminated with a verbal fight, based on Gałczyński's modification which introduces a repetition of the phrase *za żadne skarby* ['for no treasure'] for "The fairy land buys not the child of me" (2.1.122) and for "Not for thy fairy kingdom" (2.1.144). Moździerz and Kościelniak, inspired by this repetition, made the phrase *Daj mi chłopaka, wtedy pójdę z tobą* ['give me the boy, then I'll follow you'] recur several times, also in a shortened form *Daj mi go* ['Give him to me'], to which Titania retorts *nie oddam tobie go za żadne skarby* ['I am not going to give him to you by any means'] and later only *Nie!* ['no']. With each repetition, the "No!" cry got louder and more shrilling, augmented by the echo of Titania's fairy supporters.

A very interesting aspect of the adaptation was the decision to highlight the play's meta-theatricality. This was done primarily in two ways. The first one consisted in employing very precise, symbolic stage movement, which is a feature not only of operatic theatre, but also of the "bare-stage" tradition in which Shakespeare's play-texts were created. Performance based on the convention of symbol and synecdoche, the "theatrical shorthand"<sup>27</sup>, helped the authors of that interpretation to coordinate singing and acting. It enabled the actors to achieve maximum effect in terms of stage movement with minimum physical effort, at the same time ensuring the proper level of dynamism on both the visual and the aural levels. This was well visible, for instance, in the scene depicting Helena's "fond chase". The actors singing the parts of Demetrius and Helena did not stop moving even for a moment. They used the whole space available to them to perform the escape and the chase, if only with a few short steps forwards and backwards or a feigned leap. They danced, circled and trotted, straining their bodies to make the contrastive emotionality of the conflict as suggestive visually as it was verbally. This was enabled by the translation which does not lose anything from the original's straightforwardness and tension, with the terse *precz* for "hence" or the informal *przestań wreszcie deptać mi po piętach* (equivalent of "stop breathing down my neck") for "get thee gone, and follow me no more". The rhythmical steps and circular movements performed with trance-creating repetitiveness were supported by the seesaw quality of the translation's simple syntax that follows the parallelisms of the lines "The one I'll slay... the other slayeth me" or "Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair?", with their caesuras reflecting the emotional charge of the juxtapositions: *Przestań mnie ścigać, ja ciebie nie kocham./(...) Jego bym zabił, ona mnie zabija*. Moreover, Gałczyński used predominantly short, mainly two-syllable words and avoided enjambment. The

<sup>27</sup> A.C. Dessen, *Shakespeare and the Theatrical Conventions of his Time*, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, S. Wells (ed.), Cambridge 1986, p. 90.

text's clarity and flexibility enabled the composer to underscore with rhythmical and repetitive music the symbolic gestures of reaching and rejecting, and then to support the equally symbolic meaning of the scuffle and mock rape that followed when Helena tried to hold Demetrius once by his arm, once by his leg. As she got clinging onto him, and he started threatening her, they locked and wrestled, imitating copulatory movements, while their two songs, until now following the original speech distribution of the dramatic dialogue (with considerable cuts), merged into a feverish duet of intertwined tunes and overlapping lines. With the emotional tension of the quarrel reaching its peak, the text got disrupted, partly incomprehensible, with only some key lines – like Demetrius' *ja cię nie kocham* ['I don't love you'] or *przestań mnie ściagać* ['stop following me'] – occasionally surfacing against the controlled chaos of the exchange.

The other device emphasising theatricality was more original and surprisingly effective. Throughout the production, the actors sang not only the main text, or rather songs based on it, but also the stage directions. The gesture of drawing attention to the theatrical seams produced a number of interconnected effects. Firstly, stage directions, realised as mini interludes between particular songs, became integrated in the verbal-musical texture of the performance. They had their own rhythms, structures, and sounds and were, just as the main text, subject to the adaptors' modifications. For instance, in the quarrel between Demetrius and Helena, the stage directions were used as a coda and so they were given a parallel pattern: *Wchodzi Demetriusz, a za nim Helena* ['Enters Demetrius followed by Helena'] and *Wychodzi Demetriusz, a za nim Helena* ['Exists Demetrius...'], instead of *Demetriusz i Helena wychodzą* ['Demetrius and Helena leave'], as reads Gałczyński's translation. Secondly, stage directions functioned as independent devices creating and sustaining the theatrical illusion. Place- or time-creating announcements, like *Inna część lasu. Tytania wchodzi z orszakiem* ['Another part of the forest. Titania enters with her train'], suggesting a transition from the human to the fairy world, were often sung repeatedly, merging into the background sounds created by the fairies, who often functioned as a choir. Thirdly, stage directions were used to enhance the density of the entangled plots. In the third act, when the young lovers' argument in the woods reached its peak with offensive words flying in the air, the furious Hermia reached for Helena's eyes and the boys prepared to fight, the love-juice poisoned lovers got caught in a vicious circle of aggression and mutual accusations. The state of utmost confusion and irrationality, of – indeed – a kind of blind trance, was sustained by the beat of the fairy chorus's singing "entries and exits," which – as the pace grew faster – turned into a recitation: *Wchodzi, Wychodzi, Wychodzą, Wchodzą, Wchodzi, Wychodzą, Wychodzi, Wchodzą*, etc. Linked to this aspect is the most generally employed and the most important function of the sung stage directions – creating the illusion that whatever happened to the humans in the wood was initiated and controlled by the fairies. The fairies became directors or, at times, dictators, as they "translated" the darker shades of the lovers' humanity and transformed them into quasi-animals. This overwhelming quality of magic was, in this production, especially well visible because the fairies and the humans were together on stage

almost all the time. Vertically, thanks to the scaffolding and platforms, as well as horizontally, using the back stage, the two groups were as if separated, yet at the same time within the audience's view. In the prolonged – seemingly endless – sexual act of Titania and the ass-headed Bottom, the fairy queen and her lover were visible upstage in the dim colourful flashlights, while below, on the mundane level of the forest, the enchanted lovers would run, chase, hate, despair, and quarrel – not being able to fulfil their desires, no matter how much they tried. In many other scenes, the fairies were also there, accompanying the human dealings, while silently dancing to the trance rhythms of the music, or singing their choir parts, created from bits and pieces of the dramatic dialogue and stage directions.

The most famous metatheatrical piece in the play, Puck's epilogue, was composed as a lyrical, slow pace lullaby, not devoid, however, of some rapacity and mystery that sent shivers down one's spine. Puck's farewell song began with unhurried phrasing and tender regretful expression, the tune gliding on the assonances in the first four lines – created by the [u], [i] and [ɔ] sounds in words like *my, duchy, płocze, trochę*: *Jeżelimy, duchy płocze,/obraziliśmy was trochę,/wiedźcie, że to sen jedynie/I zaraz jak sen przeminie*. The song only gradually moved towards more energetic rhythms and brighter sounds, that became almost disconcertingly demonic in the prolonged note and the piercing tone on the word *złe* ['bad'] in the phrase *a co złe to ja naprawię* ['and what has been bad I will mend']. This almost menacing cry changed in an instant, as if by a touch of magic, to the light-hearted and humorous self-presentation, which was at the same time a guarantee that Puck was able to "make amends" if necessary. This effect was effectuated in the translation both by the semantic content and by the sounds. The attribute "honest" in "as I am an honest Puck" was amplified into *Bo ja jestem Puk-Koleżka,/we mnie wielka radość mieszka* ['Because I am Robin-Little Fellow/in me great joy dwells']. The diminutive form *Koleżka* suggested an easy going good-humoured companion, who was always ready to play jokes on others and whose natural aura was "great joy". At the same time, the change in tone was produced by the gliding [i] and [j] sounds in *ja naprawię, ja jestem, we mnie, and wielka* and by the staccato of the [k] sounds in *Puk-Koleżka, wielka and mieszka*. Having reached the peak, from the eleventh line on, the song returned to its pensive melancholic mood and delicate tones that culminated in the long vowels of *Dobranoc, drodzy widzowie,/dajcie nam brawo łaskawie* ['Good night, dear spectators,/give us applause graciously']. Thanks to its dreamy and mysterious mood, the song seemed to be simultaneously bidding good-bye to the dream of the theatre and promising a new time of wonders to be looked for in the night's sleep. Where in the original there are three different vocabulary items – "slumb'ered", "these visions", and "a dream" – the Polish text repeated the word *sen* (which means both "dream" and "sleep"), foregrounding in this way the key word from the title – *Sen nocy letniej*, which is also the key word of the play. In the last three lines, the song became quieter again, based on a mixture of rising and falling tunes, and closed with an unexpected – thoroughly out-of-this-world – rising glissando and a two-minute-long vocalise that faded away very slowly, until the listeners understood that Puck had left them alone, having transported himself back to the world of the fairies.

Last but not least, there is one more feature of Puck's epilogue in Gałczyński's translation that facilitated the text's transformation into a song. The promise *a co zle, to ja naprawię* ['and what has been bad I will mend'] – repeated in the eighth and the sixteenth lines, i.e. exactly in the middle of the song and at the very end – constitutes a refrain. In comparison with other Polish translations of the play's epilogue, which contain numerous consonant clusters, hissing sounds and multi-syllable words, the musical qualities of Gałczyński's version, with its suggestive phonetic layer, make it a natural song.

Although Możdżer and Kościelniak did not write an original libretto for their adaptation, they modified Gałczyński's translation in several ways in order to achieve two main purposes. Firstly, to make it function as a series of songs. In this respect they used tools like shortening, deletion or an exchange of words that are difficult to pronounce for phonological reasons or difficult to understand for lexical or morphological reasons, mostly because they are nowadays obsolete. For the same reasons, they modified the order of some utterances and speeches, creating stanzas and refrains. Secondly, they approached many passages selectively, shortening the text in order to fit their interpretations of particular episodes. Gałczyński's translation was used extensively in a way that brought to the fore numerous features that make it functional in a musical theatre: straightforward syntax, lack of archaisms, musicality and rhythmicity, as well as clarity of the metaphoric images. After the 2001 Gdynia production, the trance-opera was six years later recreated in the Kraków Academy of Theatre Arts with a student cast, and from 2007 was performed for several years in Teatr Nowy in Poznań. This remake, just as the original undertaking, met with mixed critical reception, but was enthusiastically received by the public. Kościelniak and Możdżer's interpretation of Shakespeare's comedy, thanks to the use of modern music and the cast of popular singers in the main roles, contributed to familiarizing with the play audiences not otherwise interested in theatre. This can easily be seen in the comments posted by the web users, in reaction to the several excerpts from the productions that are available via YouTube. Gałczyński's translation, commonly associated with heightened lyricism and viewed today as traditional, proved flexible enough to become the basis of songs composed in a mixture of musical styles, and fresh enough to function in a technically modern, though ultimately timeless, interpretation.

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