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## TRANSLATING LINGUISTIC POETRY: MARIO MARTÍN GIJÓN'S *RENDICCIÓN* IN POLISH, ENGLISH AND FRENCH

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### Abstract

The lyrical work of Spanish poet Mario Martín Gijón is linguistic in the extreme. Not only does he juxtapose similar-sounding words, but he fuses them graphically into one, with parentheses containing a word fragment [*me(re)ce*, *entreg(u)arme*] or two fragments separated by a slash [*conju(r/nt)os*, *in(v/f)ierno*]; he also uses enjambment within words (*cor / reo*, *tarde / seosa*). These techniques result in a multiplication of readings, which constitutes a major challenge for translators.

Terence Dooley, Miguel Ángel Real and the author of this essay (here in the dual role of translator and researcher) translated Martín Gijón's poetry into English, French and Polish, respectively. Each translator had at their disposal language matter with very distinctive characteristics. The translator into French was able to take advantage of the largely convergent Romance roots, which made it possible to recreate many word games on a one-to-one scale or with only minimal changes. The English language afforded such a possibility much less frequently, and Polish, just once. As a result, the English and Polish translations are re-creations to a much larger extent than the French one. However, the significant differences between each of the versions stem not only from the properties of the target languages, but also from the different approaches of the translators.

**Keywords:** poetry, Mario Martín Gijón, paronomasia, Spanish, cognitive poetics, love poetry

Mario Martín Gijón (born 1979 in Villanueva de la Serena, Extremadura) is a Spanish poet, novelist and literary critic. His lyrical work comprises four volumes: *Latidos y desplantes* (2011), *Rendición* (2013), *Tratado de*

*entrañeza* (2014) and *Des en canto* (2019). Martín Gijón is undoubtedly one of the most original Spanish-language authors: his poetry is linguistic in the extreme. Not only does he juxtapose similar-sounding words, but he fuses them graphically into one, with parentheses containing a word fragment [*me(re)ce, entreg(u)arme*] or two fragments separated by a slash [*conju(r/nt)os, in(v/f)ierno*]; he also uses enjambment within words (*cor / reo, tarde / seosa*). Such techniques result in a proliferation of readings, e.g. *conju(r/nt)os* means *conjuros* ‘spells’, as well as *conjuntos* ‘together’.

The volume discussed in this article is titled *Rendición* (Martín Gijón 2013). It consists of 54 love poems, most of them short, spanning no more than twenty verses. Together they form a story of separations and reunions, which the reader reconstructs from fragments of words and sentences, as well as reading between the lines. The juxtaposition of form and content, i.e. the subversive versification and the theme of love, may seem surprising, but the ever-searching, nebulous poetics proves remarkably adequate as a form of expressing feelings – something undefined, dynamic and often contradictory. The poet constantly second-guesses himself, creating alternative versions – which are actually complementary, because no reading precludes any of the others. As the Spanish writer Rafael-José Díaz puts it: ‘these poems are palimpsests of themselves’<sup>1</sup> (Martín Gijón 2014: 9).

The title *Rendición* was formed by combining the words *rendición* ‘surrender’ and *dicción* ‘speech, diction’. The English edition of the volume, *Sur(rendering)*, translated by Terence Dooley, was published in 2020 (Martín Gijón 2020b), and my Polish translation titled *Zaklin(ow)anie*, is forthcoming (Martín Gijón [in press]); both editions are bilingual. The French translations discussed in this paper – authored by Miguel Ángel Real – were published in an online literary magazine (Martín Gijón 2020a). The Extremaduran poet’s lyrical work has also been translated into Chinese, Romanian, Serbian, Italian and German.

To date, Martín Gijón’s poetry has been the subject of more than twenty articles and reviews, in three languages.<sup>2</sup> One of Spain’s leading literary

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise specified, all translations of quotations from Polish and Spanish are mine [J.S.]

<sup>2</sup> The following Spanish-language essays on Mario Martín Gijón’s poetry have been published: Max Hidalgo (2020), Marta López Villar (2020), Rafael Mamos (2014), Eduardo Moga (2013, 2014, 2015), Rafael Morales Barba (2012), José Miguel Perera (2019), Javier Pérez Walías (2017), Ewa Śmitek (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). Two reviews of the volume *Sur(rendering)* (Brinton 2020; Seed 2021) have been published in English. The

critics, Eduardo Moga (2015: 388), ranks him among the most important poets of his generation. Critics and scholars alike touch upon the two main aspects of his poetry: its experimental form and its theme of love. Max Hidalgo describes Martín Gijón as a poet who, like Roland Barthes, 'suffers from a rare disease: he sees language', and who writes 'not just about the dilution and opacity of language, but about its explosion'. Rafael Mammos (2014: 79) believes that 'in *Rendición* we witness a reconstruction of something shattered, a reconstruction which often uses borrowed elements that may not have been part of the original structure'. Mammos also emphasises the reader's role in such a reconstruction. Indeed, Marta López Villar (2020: 7) points out that in Martín Gijón's poetry, the word undergoes a constant metamorphosis: 'from each poem new ones are born, depending on the way they are read, reflecting the infinite possibilities of the word's meaning. A poem within a poem, like nesting dolls'.

Critics emphasise the eroticism and sensuality of Martín Gijón's poetry (Perera 2019). Ewa Śmiłek (2019: 102) argues that his poetry becomes embodied, as understood by Maurice Merleau-Ponty: words cease to be a means of designating thought and instead become its presence. Such an embodied word forces a change of perspective – it is not so much the representation of the body/object that is important, but the very act of expression (Śmiłek 2019: 112). Rafael Morales Barba (2012: 102) draws attention to the sense-creating tension between the contradictory notions of absence and shared bliss. In the construction of the lyrical subject, who is passionate and devoted, Rafael Mammos (2014: 79) notes the affinity of Martín Gijón's poetry with the medieval ethos of courtly love, and Javier Pérez Walias (2017: 155) points out that it follows the best traditions of Spanish love poetry.

## Case studies

Let us examine three poems from *Rendición* along with their translations. In the first text, love provides salvation from existential emptiness (Martín Gijón 2013: 34, 2020a, [in press], 2020b 43):

salvación del vacío  
 redención de lo do  
                                   nado  
 en esta esperanza  
                                   randeada  
 por las olas ausentes  
 de tu respir  
                                   acción  
 recor  
                                   dada

salut du vide  
 rédemption de ce qui fut don  
   né  
 dans cet espoir  
                                   emué  
 par les vagues absentes  
 de ta respir  
                                   action  
                                   r  
                                   appelée

przeniecie nicości  
 odpuścić pust  
                                   ki  
                                   edy  
 w nadziei pły  
                                   nę  
                                   kanej  
 przez fale nieobecne  
 oddechu  
                                   echo  
 oddania

salvation from the void  
 forgiveness of the given  
                                   where I swim  
 in the hopeful  
                                   w(o/hi)rl[e]d  
 (l)over and (l)over  
 by breakers

of your abs(c)ent  
breathing  
(w)rec(k/all)ed

The poet uses the paronymy of *salvación* ('salvation') and *vacío* ('emptiness'), as well as of *redención* ('redemption') and *donado* ('given, offered'). The last two syllables of the word *donado*, transferred to the next verse, form the verb *nado* 'I swim'. Attention is also drawn to two words joined by a common syllable: *esperanza* ('hope') and *zarandeada* ('shaken'). *Respiración* is, in turn, a combination of *respiración* ('breathing') and *acción* ('action'). Finally, *dada* ('given, offered') is graphically distinguished in *recordada* ('recalled, remembered').

The opening lines of the French and English translations (*salut du vide; salvation from the void*) contain alliteration. The second verse of the French translation (*rédemption de ce qui fut don / né*) is rather lengthy, but retains the level of paronomasia of the original. In the English version (*forgiveness of the given*), the paronomasia results directly from etymological affinity. The greatest challenge of this passage is undoubtedly recreating the word-play of *do / nado*, that is, to make one word imply another, both graphically and phonically – as in the original 'given, offered' includes 'I swim'. Terence Dooley only adds the semantic element *nado* in the following verse, *where I swim*; he does not try to merge it with the preceding word. Miguel Ángel Real takes advantage of the fact that the last two letters of *donné*, mean 'born': *né*. The lyrical subject therefore does not swim, but is born in the *espoir remué* ('stirred hope'), which is written, as in the original, with a common element, covering, however, not a whole syllable, but a single letter. Dooley takes advantage of the homophony of *world* and *whirled*, merging them into *w(o/hi)rl[e]d*. He also adds *(l)over and (l)over*, which stands both for *lover and lover*, and *over and over*. The verse *por las olas ausentes* ('through absent waves') is translated by Real literally (*par les vagues absentes*), while the English translator writes *by breakers / of your abs(c)ent / breathing*. *Breaker* is a hyponym of *wave*. The word is graphically similar to *breathing*, and the root *break* is also significant – along with *wrecked* it makes the English text more abrupt than the Spanish original. The neologism *(w)rec(k/all)ed* includes both *recalled* and *wrecked*, with *all* extracted graphically. Real translates this part using vocabulary analogous to the original: *respir / acción* as *respir / action*. The figure *recor / dada* is in this case *r / appelée* – the paronomasia is due to etymological affinity, as *appelée* means 'named, called' and *rappelée* means 'recalled'.

The stylistic dominant of the work is constituted by the two paronomastic pairs in the opening verses, evoking emptiness and salvation. Hence, in Polish I opted for *przenicowanie nicości* ('the turning of nothingness') and *odpuszczenie pust / ki* ('the pardon [or: letting go] of emptiness'). Although *odpuszczenie* 'pardon' and *pustka* 'emptiness' are etymologically related, their meanings are so distant that juxtaposing them can be considered semantically significant. Furthermore, *odpuszczenie* 'pardon' is a term with religious connotations, just like *salvación* and *redención*. This is all the more important, because religious motifs appear repeatedly throughout *Rendición* – used, however, not in an ecclesiastical, but in an existential and/or amorous context. This is also the case in this poem: the lyrical subject owes his salvation from nothingness to the beloved.

The first line of the Polish translation alludes to a poem by Wisława Szymborska (2007: 194) which contains a superb play on the words *nicość* i *przenicować*:

Nicość przenicowała się także i dla mnie.  
 Naprawdę wyróciła się na drugą stronę.  
 (...)  
 ile po tamtej stronie pustki na nas przypada,  
 ile tam ciszy na jednego tu świerszcza

The word *przenicowanie* translates as 'turn' or 'reverse', but is applicable only to fabrics, e.g. when old coats would be cut at the seams and then sewn back together with the fabric reversed. It stems from the word *nice* 'the other side [of a fabric]', which creates a wordplay with *nic* 'nothing'. *Przenicowanie nicości* is therefore reversing nothingness, i.e. coming into existence, being saved from the void.

To reproduce the figure of the shared syllable of *esperanza / randeada* (*esperanza* 'hope', *zarandeada* 'shaken') I came up with *pust / ki / edy* (*pustki* 'of emptiness', *kiedy* 'when') and *ply / nę / kanej* (*płynę* 'I swim', *nękaney* 'distressed'). Finally, the recollection of raptured breathing evoked by the lines *respir / acción / recor / dada* (*respiración* 'breathing', *acción* 'action', *recordada* 'remembered', *dada* 'given') is reflected in the verses *oddechu / echo / oddania* (*oddech* 'breath', *echo* 'echo', *oddania* 'giving'). The word *echo* itself seems to echo the word *oddechu* 'breath'.

In another poem, growing desire exacerbates the pain caused by separation (Martín Gijón 2013: 37, 2020a, [in press], 2020b: 49):

enardecerme  
 para enardecirte  
 en el ard(ol)or  
 que me(re)ce  
 tu aus(es)encia

m'enflammer  
 pour t'embras(s)er  
 dans l'ard(oul)eur  
 que (b/g)erce  
 ton ab(es)sence

rozgorzec  
 by cię ol  
                     śnić  
 za(l/r)  
 który (g/k)oi  
 twoją nieob(e)c(n)ość

(h)ard(ou/e)r  
 to (ki/ca)ndle  
 in you the cand(i/e)d  
 fire fanned  
 by your incandescent  
 (ab/es)sence

The poem is based on the metaphor of love as fire – one of the most common conceptual metaphors.<sup>3</sup> As George Lakoff and Mark Turner (1989: 50) affirm, the originality of a metaphor should be considered on two levels: the conceptual and the linguistic. In Martín Gijón's text, the metaphor is no doubt original on the linguistic level, and thus semantically innovative. In the second verse the verb *enardecer* 'to ignite, to make passionate' is fused with *decir* 'to say, to tell': instead of *\*enardecerte*<sup>4</sup> ('make you passionate'),

<sup>3</sup> The conceptual metaphor is a key term in cognitive linguistics. The source domain is mapped onto the target domain (Lakoff, Johnson 1980).

<sup>4</sup> A single asterisk marks versions other than those appearing in the texts, while three asterisks mark the incipits of untitled poems.

we see the neologism *enardecirte*, which combines the semantic elements of ‘ignite’ and ‘say’. In the next three lines, the poet uses three neologisms, each of which offers two possible readings. Thus, *ard(ol)or* is a combination of *ardor* ‘ardour’ and *dolor* ‘pain’; *me(re)ce* is *mece* ‘rocks, cradles’ and *merece* ‘deserves’; *aus(es)encia* is *ausencia* ‘absence’ and *esencia* ‘essence’. These verses can thus be understood in multiple ways, in part because the nouns in verses three and five can exchange the function of subject and object: ‘the ardour that cradles your absence’, ‘the ardour which is cradled by your absence’, ‘the pain that cradles your absence’, ‘the ardour that your essence deserves’, and so on. All these readings are simultaneous and complementary: the polyphony reinforces the sense of longing for the closeness of the beloved; a longing that combines the joy of love and the heartbreak of being apart. Through such a creative approach to the linguistic matter, the poet has managed to capture the ambiguous and imprecise nature of feelings.

The French translation makes use of the similarity between the verbs *embraser* ‘to set alight’ and *embrasser* ‘to kiss, to embrace’: *embras(s)er*. Later in the poem, the translator is assisted by the common etymology of the Spanish and French words, thanks to which he can reproduce *ard(ol)or* and *aus(es)encia* as *ard(ou)eur* and *ab(es)sence*. As for the verb *(b/g)erce*, it is a combination of *bercer* ‘to cradle’ and *gercer* ‘to chap, to crack’.

The English translation is much more free. In *(h)ard(ou/e)r* one can perceive *ardour* and *harder*; *(ki/ca)ndle* is *kindle* and *candle*. The first two lines can thus be read as *harder to kindle*, *ardour to kindle*, and as *ardour to candle* and *harder to candle*. The neologism *cand(i/e)d* is puzzling: the way it is written would suggest readings of *candid* and *canded*, but the latter word does not exist. Perhaps Dooley meant *candied*, which, combined with *candid*, should rather be written as *candi(e)d*. It has to be said that even *harder to kindle in you the candid fire fanned by your incandescent absence* is quite a departure from the semantic dynamics of the original, let alone *candied fire*.

This short poem was one of the most difficult to translate, out of the entire volume of over fifty, since each verse had been rendered into multiple versions in my translation. For stylistic reasons I wanted to avoid the reflexive pronoun *się*, so I could not translate *enardecerme* literally, as *rozpalić się*. The triad of *ard(ol)or*, *me(re)ce* and *aus(es)encia* was also particularly challenging, since the Polish equivalents do not stem from Latin roots. If I had only been able to write „ab(e)sencja” [or „(ab/e)sencja”]... But *absencja* is not a full synonym for *absence* – it only functions in the context of work:



'absence from work due to illness'. In the end I decided on *nieob(e)c(n)ość*, i.e. *nieobecność* 'absence' and at the same time *nieobcość* 'the quality of being known to someone'; *ża(l/r)*, i.e. *żał* 'grief' and *żar* 'ardour'; and *ol / śnić*, i.e. *oślnić* 'dazzle' and *śnić* 'dream'; and *(g/k)oi*, i.e. *goi* 'heals' i *koi* 'soothes'.

In the third poem presented here, the memory of the beloved makes her absence unbearable (Martín Gijón 2013: 18, 2020a, [in press], 2020b: 13):

el averno de no ver  
te

el callado son de tu son  
risa  
la gozosa caída de tus pa  
sos tan bella

tu labrar mis palabras en silencio  
el templado mar de tu mirada con  
templada  
luz  
navegando el tiempo de mis ojos

toda esta carencia endurece  
los muros de mi in(v/f)ierno

l'enfer de ne pas (te)  
voir  
le son retenu de ton sou  
rire  
la joyeuse chute de ta dé  
marche si belle

tu laboures mes paroles en silence  
la mer tiède de ton regard avec une tiède  
lumière  
navigant le temps de mes yeux

toute cette carence endurecit  
les murs de mon en(f/v)er(s)

przepaść bez echa  
tych kroków  
droga moja

po  
     głos tłumiony u  
                             śmiechu  
 ci sza  
 nie ton  
     i twojego spojrzenia  
 miękko wczytanego  
                             we mnie  
 światło  
     przepływa przed oczami

zima coraz niżej  
 zatacza kręgi piekieł

Avernus, unsoundable pit–

of never seeing                      y  
 hearing the mute                    you  
 welcome of your smile  
 the joyful footfall of              you  
   so beautiful

your silent sewing of my words  
 the temperate sea I  
     see in your comtemplate  
                             eye

sailing the (h)our of my light

all this without-ness  
 cementing the walls  
 of my winter-hell

The main metaphor, which opens and closes the poem, is the absence of the beloved perceived as hell. The first two lines, *el averno de no ver / te*, literally mean ‘the averno of not seeing you’. Averno (Avernus) is a volcanic crater in southern Italy, in Roman times considered the entrance to hell. The final manifestation of the metaphor is *in(vf)ierno*, a combination of *invierno* ‘winter’ and *infierno* ‘hell’.<sup>5</sup> Both wordplays present a considerable

<sup>5</sup> The poem contains more sense-creating puns, such as: *son* ‘sound’ and *son / risa* (*son-risa* ‘smile, *risa* ‘laughter’), *labrar* (‘work’, ‘cultivate’, ‘carve’) and *palabras* ‘words’, *tem-*

translation challenge. In the first verse, Dooley writes *Avernus* (unlike the poet, he capitalizes it) and continues: *unsoundable pit / y*, which contains both *pity* and *pit*. Although there is undoubtedly a play on words here (also due to the word *unsoundable*, derived from *sound*), such a stylistic device cannot be deemed successful, for several reasons. Firstly, the lines *Avernus, unsoundable pit / y of never seeing you* seem like an apostrophe (in terms of rhetoric): the poem seems to be addressed to the crater. The second reason is the lack of justification in the translated text. In the original, it is alliteration: *averno* is followed by the words *de no ver / te*. In the English poem, on the other hand, *Avernus* seems strange and surprising (even if we do not interpret it as the addressee of the poem); it seems pompous, especially when written with a capital A. The word *never*, placed below, is, admittedly, similar in sound and graphic form, but the paronomasia is not very noticeable. The third reason is the word *you* placed close to the *y* of the previous verse. The reading imposed by this arrangement of the text is... *pity you*. What could be further from the romantic message of the original than such an (unintentionally) sarcastic interjection?

The translators into French and Polish adopted a different strategy: since in the original *averno* is involved in wordplay with its immediate neighbours, the same should happen in translation. I chose the word *przepaść*, which can be either a noun, ‘abyss’, or a verb, ‘to perish, to disappear’. In the phraseological trace *przepaść bez echa / twych kroków* ‘abyss/to perish without the echo of your steps’ both meanings are brought into focus. A phraseological trace is a textual phenomenon that arises from the evocation of a phraseological unit (idiom) in the process of reading (Studzińska, Skibski 2016: 154). In this case, the Polish reader will recall the idiom *przepaść bez echa*, whose figurative meaning is ‘to vanish without a trace’ (the literal meaning is ‘to vanish without an echo’), and juxtapose the verb *przepaść* with the homonymous noun, which means ‘abyss’. The wordplay here takes place at the semantic level. Real, on the other hand, chose alliteration: he replaced *averno* with *enfer*, obtaining *l'enfer de ne pas (te) / voir* [literally, ‘the hell of not seeing (you)’].

The final manifestation of the metaphor of hell, *toda esta carencia endurece / los muros de mi in(v/f)ierno* (literally, ‘all this lack hardens / the walls of my winter/hell’) is difficult to translate, primarily because of the need to reconstruct the semantic relationship between ‘hell’ and ‘winter’.

It is crucial, however, not only because of the figure *in(v/f)ierno*, whose components justify each other, but also because of the metaphor – which appears in other poems in the volume – of winter as a time of separation and summer as a time of being together<sup>6</sup> (e.g. *imprevista tu visita vera / niega / la mente lo que el ojo ve*<sup>7</sup>). Dooley combines *winter* and *hell* into *winter-hell*, which has no particular stylistic value. The English reader will not even guess that there was a play on words in the original – unless they refer to the Spanish text. A poetic translation should not require the reader to consult the original in order to have an idea of the richness of style. The translator into French repeats the word *enfer* ‘hell’, fusing it with *envers* ‘reverse side’, something implicitly negative – but the semantic element of ‘winter’ is lost. It also seems that the repetition of the word from the opening line, *enfer*, is not optimal, since *averno* and *invierno* are different words. I decided to play with words on a semantic level: *zima coraz niżej / zatacza kręgi piekiel* (literally, ‘winter ever lower / makes circles of hell’). In Polish the word *kręgi* has an ominous ring to it, and *kręgi piekiel* ‘circles of hell’ evoke Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.

## Translation limits and levels of equivalence

Martín Gijón’s poetry, the main sense-creating mechanism of which is paronomasia, imposes constant questions regarding the limits of translation. There is no doubt that in the case of poetry, especially linguistic poetry, the translation must sometimes stray from the original in order to remain close to it. The key question is the distance – where is the boundary beyond which a translation becomes merely an adaptation? No less important is the direction. In the case of *Rendición*, it is clear that the target text must not only be a good poem, but also a good love poem.

As for equivalence, in this instance there are three levels to take into consideration. The first is the lyrical situation, an integral part of which is the state of mind of the lyrical subject. Is the poem about the longing for the beloved? Or maybe about the joy of reunion? If the state of mind is complex (and it often is), this must also be conveyed. The second level is metaphor.

<sup>6</sup> It is a classic metaphor, present i.a. in Shakespeare’s Sonnet LVI: “As call it winter, which being full of care, / Makes summer’s welcome thrice more wish’d, more rare”.

<sup>7</sup> From the poem *sueño estival* (Martín Gijón 2013: 27).

As far as possible in my own translation, I tried to keep the main conceptual metaphor of the original. Furthermore, if it was feasible, I also tried to keep the individual manifestations of the main conceptual metaphor. Sometimes, however, wordplay resulted in a change of the source domain, e.g. I translated *sólo bal / buceo / en tu mirada*<sup>8</sup> (*balbuceo* ‘to stammer, to babble’, *buceo* ‘I dive’; ‘I only stammer/dive in your gaze’) as *zapę / tłę się / w twoim spojrzeniu* (*zapętlę się* ‘I will get tangled/confused’, *tłę się* ‘I smoulder/flicker’) Although I replaced ‘diving’ (which relates to the source domain of water) with ‘smouldering’ (which relates to the source domain of fire), I think *zapętlę się* conveys the difficulty in speaking, and *tłę się* transmits contemplation and anticipation. Incidentally, Dooley translated this passage as *I (st)utter / alone / I di(v)e*<sup>9</sup>, which is a significant change, as the original does not mention the death (even in a metaphorical or hyperbolic sense) of the lyrical subject – it is about the pain and illness of the beloved.

The third level of equivalence is that of wordplay. Paronomasia can take many forms, and Martín Gijón is exceptionally creative in this regard. Apart from the traditional placing of similar-sounding words next to each other (e.g. *invisible / invencible*) or creating neologisms (e.g. *aira*, a combination of *aire* ‘air’ and *ira* ‘anger’), he uses parentheses (*muda(ble)*, i.e. *muda* ‘mute’ and *mudable* ‘changeable’), parentheses with a slash (*to(d/r)o*, i.e. *todo* ‘everything’ and *toro* ‘bull’), brackets (*cu(er)[en]pos*, i.e. *cuerpos* ‘bodies’ and *en pos* ‘in pursuit’), hyphens (*a-brazos*, i.e. *abrazos* ‘embraces’ or *a brazos* ‘by arms’), enjambment (*vuel / ve*, i.e. *vuelve* ‘comes back’ and *ve* ‘look’ or ‘go’), homophonic spelling (*va hilando* as *va hilando* ‘weaves’ and *bailando* ‘dancing’) and italics (*unidos*, ‘joined’, with the morpheme *dos* ‘two’ singled out). He often combines several of these procedures (*nos-otros y(m)posibles*, i.e. *nosotros* ‘we’, *nos* ‘us’, *otros* ‘others’, *y* ‘and’, *imposibles* ‘impossible’, *posibles* ‘possible’). As can be seen, Martín Gijón uses a wide array of techniques. In translation I consider it crucial to emphasise the semantic element in question – the type of technique is not as important. That being said, I tried to use the same technique whenever possible. In addition to the techniques used by the poet, I also used semantic figures (neosemantism, polysemy, phraseological trace), which are not innovative in themselves, but it can be considered experimental to use them in translation instead of or in addition to paronomasia.

<sup>8</sup> From the poem *infirmidad* (Martín Gijón 2013: 49).

<sup>9</sup> Martín Gijón 2020b: 71.

## Linguistic matter

Translating linguistic poetry is difficult, and even more so if the languages involved are etymologically distant, as the chances of using the same root words decrease. In principle, the target language should be treated as innovatively as the author has treated the source language. However, morphology and syntax stand in the way. Polish words are longer than Spanish ones, more of them undergo inflection, they consist of more varied syllables and contain more consonants. All this makes them more resistant to attempts at dis- and reintegration. It was particularly difficult to reproduce Martín Gijón's signature technique of parentheses with a slash. This is because the reader's eye might at first glance read all the letters in sequence, skipping over the slash. It is important that the result of such a reading does not sound too strange. Ideally, it would have a meaning of its own, as, for example, in my translation of the poem *infirmidad*, which begins: *el dolor / nos fuerza / farnos* ('pain tears us away', with *fuerza* 'forces' and *zafarnos* 'tear ourselves away' sharing a syllable). I wrote: *ból / nas o(d/k)rywa*, where the parenthetical word can be read as *odrywa* 'tears away', *okrywa* 'covers' or *odkrywa* 'discovers'.

The translator into French was aided by the affinity of the Romance root words, so that numerous figures and even whole fragments could be reproduced on a one-to-one scale, e.g. *del germen / tal / tu pre / stancia / (a)parecerá*<sup>10</sup> as *du germe / ntal / ta pres / tance / (ap)paraitra*.<sup>11</sup> In addition, French is a language exceptionally rich in homophones, which affords abundant opportunities for wordplay. However, Real does not seem to have made full use of them, e.g. in the case of the verses *sal dulce / de tu cuerpo*<sup>12</sup> ('come out sweet / out of your body', 'sweet salt of your body' or 'sweet charm of your body'). Real only wrote *sors douce de ton corps*<sup>13</sup> ('come out sweet / of your body'), without taking advantage of the homophony of *sors* ('come out') and *sort* ('charm, spell'). Had he done so, he would have obtained the wordplay: *\*sor(t/s) dou(x/ce) / de ton corps*, which would mean both 'come out sweet / of your body' and 'sweet charm / of your body'.

<sup>10</sup> From the poem *fe en la palabra* (Martín Gijón 2013: 58).

<sup>11</sup> Martín Gijón 2020a.

<sup>12</sup> From the poem *\*\*\*sal dulce* (Martín Gijón 2013: 61).

<sup>13</sup> Martín Gijón 2020a.

English also has immense paronomastic potential, but its relationship to Spanish is more distant, which means that the translator has to create most word games from scratch. In Dooley's translation too, however, this potential seems untapped. In a few cases, he presents only a semantic analysis of the original wordplay, and the effect is more that of work-in-progress than of a final version. This is the case with the above-mentioned *winter-hell*, as well as with some figures based on enjambment, e.g. *pen / sable* (*pensable* 'conceivable', *sable* 'sabre') and *gema / no* (*gema* 'jewel', *mano* 'hand'), which Dooley simply writes as words separated by a slash and which fail to interact with each other: *pen/sabre* and *diamond/hand*<sup>14</sup>. While in the original texts the sometimes surprising imagery is motivated by paronomasia, the lack of motivation in the translations makes the English reader perceive Martín Gijón as a surrealist. There are also unwarranted changes of meaning, e.g. *es un sueño no es real despertaré* ('it is a dream it is not real I will wake') is translated by Dooley as: *it is a dream it isn't real you woke*<sup>15</sup> – he changes not only the future tense to the past tense, but also 'I' to 'you', which is particularly confusing, as the rest of the poem is addressed to the lyrical 'you'.

It should also be mentioned that Dooley uses parentheses inconsistently. Martín Gijón uses them according to generally accepted rules: the letters in parentheses are optional, e.g. *di(ji)ste* is *diste* ('you gave') or *dijiste* ('you said'). Dooley, however, often uses them inversely, placing the optional part outside, e.g. *k(not)*, *m(ail)*, *obs(cure)*, *a(muse)d*, in order to make the morpheme in question stand out – although Martín Gijón himself achieves this effect with italics or dashes. Such a shift in poetic language can be considered an experimental translation procedure, but in my opinion it is not a successful one: the English texts give the impression of being overly chaotic, especially since Dooley allows himself a great deal of freedom in the arrangement of the enjambed lines (while Martín Gijón consistently begins the second part of the broken line exactly below where the first one ends). Finally, there is one poem<sup>16</sup> that Dooley omits:

<sup>14</sup> Both examples are from the poem *tu donación* (*en busca de una [p/m]atria*) – *your donation* (*towards a [fa/mo]therland*), Martín Gijón 2020b: 68–69.

<sup>15</sup> From the poem *\*\*\*origen de la imagen* – *\*\*\*origin of the image* (Martín Gijón 2020b: 10–11).

<sup>16</sup> Martín Gijón 2013: 60.

**sin ti soy**

una car

casa

de mi ser([i/y]a)

(des)habitada

And yet it can be translated into English, for example like this:

**without you I am**

(a) home

sick

[un]wreck[ognizable]

con

d(e/a)mned

**Literary tradition**

Just as important as the properties of the linguistic material is the literary tradition of the target culture, both at the level of form and content. Linguistic poetry has been an important trend in Polish literature for several decades. Innovative versification and a multitude of neologisms might appeal to readers in Poland even more than in Spain, where such poetry is a much rarer phenomenon (which, incidentally, may come as a surprise, given the rich output of Spanish *avant-garde* movements from the early 20th century, such as *ultraísmo* and *creacionismo*<sup>17</sup>).

As far as its subject matter is concerned, *Zaklin(ow)anie* will be a completely unique book in the Polish poetic panorama, where – apart from anthologies – there are hardly any volumes composed exclusively of love poems. The great value of Martín Gijón's poems is their intense eroticism combined with a deep respect for the lyrical 'you'. Polish contemporary poetry written by men is extremely deficient in this regard: toxic masculinity is still prevalent.

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<sup>17</sup> Incidentally, *creacionismo* also influenced Polish poetry of the interwar period, through the poetry of Tadeusz Peiper (Baczyńska 2014: 419–420; Lentas 2011).



## Intertextual references

The last few poems of *Rendición* contain fragments of foreign tissue. Woven into the lines are quotes in German, highlighted in italics. Most are excerpts from Paul Celan's poems *Lob der Ferne*, *Corona*, *Erblinde schon heut* and *Tübingen, Jänner*. There is also a quote from Nietzsche: *werde der du bist*, 'become who you are', an idea taken from *Pindar's Second Pythian Ode*. Martín Gijón fuses the quotations with fragments of Spanish words, e.g. *Zur Blindheit über- / redete Augen*<sup>18</sup> / *eramos luz*<sup>19</sup>. The German excerpt means 'eyes convinced to be blind', and the passage in Spanish can be read as *éramos luz*, 'we were light', or *generamos luz*, 'we generated light'.

I kept the German passages in the original [*Zur Blindheit über- / redete Auge / n / aszym własnym byliśmy świat(ł)em*], on the assumption that since the author did not want to explain too much to the reader, neither should the translator. Dooley seems to think otherwise: after the German words, he gives a loose English translation of them (*Zur Blindheit über- / redete Augen / eyes over- / whelmed by blindness we / generated and / we were light*), performing only a semantic dissection of the Spanish verses, and with no attempt at wordplay. It is difficult to say what solution the French translator would have adopted, since none of the poems he translated are from the last part of the volume.

In addition to the German quotations mentioned above, there are other intertextual references in the rest of the book, but they are not italicised. For example, *repartiendo semilla / en la tierra baldía*,<sup>20</sup> 'sowing seed on the wasteland', brings to mind T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, whose Spanish title is *La tierra baldía*.<sup>21</sup> The line *aterrado de tierra*<sup>22</sup> (*terrified by terrain*, in Dooley's translation<sup>23</sup>) is a distant echo of the poem *Vuelta de paseo* by Federico García Lorca: *asesinado por el cielo* (lit. 'murdered by the sky').

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<sup>18</sup> Quotations from Celan and Nietzsche are italicised by the poet, but I cite them in plain type to distinguish them from other foreign-language quotations, in this article italicised by default.

<sup>19</sup> From the poema *si go ciego* (Martín Gijón 2013: 74).

<sup>20</sup> From the poem \*\*\* *la promesa de me-d(ec)irte* (Martín Gijón 2013: 19).

<sup>21</sup> Incidentally, in Dooley's translation the reference is lost, he writes: *sowing seed / on barren land* (Martín Gijón 2020b: 15).

<sup>22</sup> From the poem *sacrificio sin fe* (Martín Gijón 2013: 23).

<sup>23</sup> Martín Gijón 2020b: 23.

In the verse *¿vivir es despertar?*<sup>24</sup> (*Is life to wake?*, as Dooley puts it<sup>25</sup>) we can see an allusion to Pedro Calderón de la Barca's *Life is a Dream*, and in *secre(t/g)o / de mis noches / más os / curas*<sup>26</sup> ['secret(e) of my darkest nights'<sup>27</sup>] to *Dark Night of the Soul* by John of the Cross.

Bearing in mind the numerous intertextual references in the original, I included references to Polish poetry in my translation – the aforementioned allusion to Wisława Szymborska's \*\*\**Nicość przenicowała się* is not the only one. This collage strategy had not been planned in advance: the phrases would come to mind of their own accord, but, nevertheless, I made a conscious decision to include them in the target texts. The verses *cada vez que aterrizan las aves perdi / das*,<sup>28</sup> brought to mind *ptaki powrotne* 'birds of return' from Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński's poem *Piosenka* ('Song'): *Znów wędrujemy ciepłym krajem, / malachitową łąką morza. / (Ptaki powrotne umierają / wśród pomarańczy na rozdrożach.)*<sup>29</sup> (Baczyński 2019: 13).

### llamadas perdidas

dispersas las prisiones en que habita  
 tenaz e imprevisible tu recuerdo  
 cada vez que aterrizan las aves perdi  
das  
 en barajar de nuevo  
códigos y signos

### połączenia nieodebrane

w gruzy obracasz twierdzę  
 która więzi myśli o tobie nieustannie  
 za każdym razem gdy lądują  
 ptaki powro  
tn(e/ę)  
 na nowo znaki i kody

<sup>24</sup> From the poem \*\*\* *dormido irradiaba* (Martín Gijón 2013: 40).

<sup>25</sup> Martín Gijón 2020b: 55.

<sup>26</sup> From the poem *¿so(s) (ñ/n)ada?* (Martín Gijón 2013: 62).

<sup>27</sup> Dooley's translation yet again fails to convey the allusion: *secret ghost / stolen from my night* (Martín Gijón 2020b: 97).

<sup>28</sup> Martín Gijón 2013: 25.

<sup>29</sup> Literally: 'Again we wander the warm country, / the malachite meadow of the sea. / (The birds of return are dying / among the orange trees at the crossroads.)'.

In turn, the words *inmen so(y) / ojo azul / de los días*<sup>30</sup> (*the vast blue eye / of days*, in Dooley's words<sup>31</sup>) recalled *łagodne oko błękitu* ('the gentle eye of the blue') from Cyprian Kamil Norwid's poem *W Weronie* ('In Verona'): *Nad Kapuletich i Montekich domem, / Splukane deszczem, poruszone gromem, / Łagodne oko błękitu* —<sup>32</sup> (Norwid 2003: 54).

di  
lu  
vió

entre nos otros

el inmen so(y)  
ojo azul  
de los días sin  
sus lágrim(i)as

(po/  
u)  
łudnie

pomiędzy  
na(s) dwoje

pa(t)rzyło  
piekące oko błękitu  
bez łez  
niczym ja

I will not list all my poetic references here, as I do not want to spoil any potential entertainment value for readers who may wish to search for them one day.

<sup>30</sup> Martín Gijón 2013: 55.

<sup>31</sup> Martín Gijón 2020b: 85.

<sup>32</sup> Literally: 'Over the house of the Capulets and the Montagues / Doused by rain, moved by thunder / The gentle eye of the blue —'.

## Conclusions

The poetry of Mario Martín Gijón is unique for several reasons. His idiolect, iconically representing ambiguity, exposes the deficiencies of language as a means of expression, especially in regard to naming complex emotional states. The juxtaposition between the daring form and the vulnerability of the declaration of love is a key aspect. But does the experimental nature of Martín Gijón's poetry mean that the translations are experimental as well? As Tamara Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz (2018: 83) points out, the translation of experimental literature is not the same as experimental translation, since “[b]oth ‘conventional’ translations of experimental texts and experimental translations of ‘conventional’ texts are richly represented”. From the perspective of cognitive poetics, which emphasises the intersubjectivity of reception, a conventional translation is one whose premise is to enable the reader of the target text to perform a construction of meaning analogous to that which can be done by the reader of the original. The aim of experimental translation, on the other hand, is to induce different cognitive states in the recipient, whether by means of intersemiotic transposition or strictly linguistic procedures. From this perspective, the translations discussed in this paper should be considered conventional: their aim was to reproduce Martín Gijón's poems in another language. However, let us examine the means that the translators used to achieve this aim. The French translation is the closest in form, mainly due to etymology: Miguel Ángel Real was able to make use of the largely convergent Romance roots, which make it possible to reproduce many word games on a one-to-one scale, or with only minor alterations. The fact that there are only six French texts is also important – it cannot be ruled out that their translatability was a criterion for selection. The English and Polish translators dealt with the impossibility of reproducing the paronomasia of the original in different ways. Dooley's paronomasia often leads to a lack of equivalence at the level of the lyrical situation, and there are also cases in which he is content with a semantic analysis of the original paronomasia, without attempting a play on words. Such procedures can hardly be regarded as experimental – rather, they are symptoms of a not very competent translation. The two techniques that could be considered experimental are the different use of parentheses from the original and a much freer verse construction. Generally speaking, in the English translations Martín Gijón comes across as a surreal and chaotic poet.

In my translations, I applied two techniques that can be considered experimental, since they differ from those of Martín Gijón. The first was the use of semantic figures (neosemantism, polysemy, phraseological trace) to complement word games based on paronomasia. The second was the introduction of references to Polish poetry into some of the texts. Both of these measures, however, were meant to semantically enrich the places that were underscored in the original by means of paronomasia – and thus, ultimately, to evoke in the reader cognitive states analogous to those experienced by the reader of the original.

Each of the language versions is different, both due to the different language material and the translators' approach to the text. In French, it was often possible to reproduce the original paronomasia. Such a possibility presented itself much less frequently in English, and almost never in Polish. Therefore, the English and Polish translations are re-creations to a much greater extent than the French one. Terence Dooley treated the originals very freely, both in terms of content and form. My goal was to create texts as close to the originals as possible on the level of lyrical situation and metaphor, and which at the same time are able to function independently in the target culture as love poems.

Translated by the Author

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