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## THE ENGLISH INTERPRETATION OF RAINER MARIA RILKE'S WORKS

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The peculiarities of the English interpretation of the works of a famous Austrian writer Rainer Maria Rilke have been analysed. Rilke's works are considered as a new period in the development of the European poetry including all stages of the difficult way of the poet's aesthetic searches – from neo-romanticism and impressionism through deep in philosophical and religious thoughts symbolism to the style which aims at the concreteness of an image and replaced expressionist pathos and sketchiness. A special attention is paid to the history and analysis of the English translations of the writer's poetical cycles *The Sonnets to Orpheus* and *The Duino Elegies*. The studying of the poetic structure of the English translations of the poem *Autumn Day* and Rainer Maria Rilke's poem *The Panther* translated by Walter Arndt play an essential role as well.

**Keywords:** Art Nouveau, modernism, philosophy, expressionism, symbolism, sonnet, elegy.

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**The problem setting.** Susan Salter Reynolds wrote, «Reading Rilke, a deep celebration of reading and translating, is a kind of antidote for when words become unhinged from meaning, an antidote to the loneliness of reading and of writing. Gass repairs the arteries between the heart and the mind and the mouth and the hand, giving them new flexibility and vigor. (...) It is a clear and refreshing book, like bathing away the hollowness of the words we must translate every day» [1, 1999].

The aim of the research consists in identifying the characteristic features of the English interpretation of Rainer Maria Rilke's works (based

on the poetical cycles *The Sonnets to Orpheus*, *The Duino Elegies*, poems *The Panther* and *Autumn Day*).

**The analysis of the latest investigations and publications.** Rilke's works were studied by famous American biographers, such as William H. Gass (*Reading Rilke: Reflections on the Problems of Translation*), George C. Schoolfield (*Dictionary of Literary Biography*), H. F. Peters (*Rainer Maria Rilke: Masks and the Man*), Ralph Freedman (*Life of a Poet: Rainer Maria Rilke*), W. L. Graff (*Rainer Maria Rilke: Creative Anguish of a Modern Poet*), Judith Ryan (*Rilke, Modernism and Poetic Tradition*) and others.

The British germanists, such as E. M. Butler, Eudo C. Mason, H. W. Belmore, D. Prater, also play an essential role in the English interpretation of Rilke's poetry.

This research aims at solving the following problems:

– The studying of Rainer Maria Rilke's works in the context of Austrian literature and the literary tendencies of the poet's period.

– The identification of the problems and poetics of Rainer Maria Rilke's works. – The determining of the peculiarities of the writer's lyric poems.

– The studying of the main periods of the poet's works interpretation in English-speaking countries.

**The presentation of the main material.** Rainer Maria Rilke was a famous Austrian poet, translator, essayist, romanticist. Rilke's poetry is noted for the lyricism and symbolism intensity of a philosophical perception of an internal life and reality. The writer had a big impact on a modern poetry of different nations, including Ukrainian poetry. The works of the Austrian poet are considered to be a striking example of the search of the ways to a lost harmony and the positive values at the beginning of the 20th century. Rilke's poetry established a new period in the development of the European poetry, included all stages of the difficult way of the poet's aesthetic searches.

Rilke's poetry was translated into many languages. Thus, Rilke's works were translated into English by Robert Bly (1981), Franz Wright (1990), David Young (1994), Galway Kinnell and Hannah Liebmann (1999), Edward Snow (1966), Vita Sackville-West (1931), Jessie Lemont (1945), Alfred de Zayas (2005) and many others.

The poetical cycle *The Sonnets to Orpheus* was written in 1922 and was dedicated to the memory of Wera Ouckama-Knoop, his friends' daughter, who died young.

As to the interpretation of *The Sonnets to Orpheus* in English-speaking countries three main periods are determined: the initial period – from 1936 to 1976, the second period – from 1977 to 1999, the third period – from 2000 till now.

James Blair Leishman's translation (1936) laid the foundations for the reproduction of *The Sonnets to Orpheus* in Great Britain and the USA, as well as other English-speaking countries. Later several other translators of *The Sonnets to Orpheus* followed his way. During 1936-1976 the full translations of all sonnets of the cycle were done by M. D. Herter Norton, J. Lemont and C. F. McIntyre.

In 2006 the second full version of Rilke's sonnets translated by a Scottish poet D. Paterson was published.

The second period of the interpretation of *The Sonnets to Orpheus* is connected with Rilke's centenary celebrations in 1975. The full translations of all sonnets of the cycle done by A. Poulin, K. Pitchford, S. Mitchell, D. Young, L. Norris, R. Hunter, and others appear since 1977.

The third period starts in 2000 and is characterised by a deep interest of English germanists and translators in Rilke's works. At least seven full translations of *The Sonnets to Orpheus* became available to readers in Great Britain, the USA and Canada from 2000 to 2007.

The following leading types of the English translations of *The Sonnets to Orpheus* are defined: 1) a translation-adaptation, 2) a prose translation, 3) an adequate translation, 4) the poems based on the original.

The main peculiarities of *The Sonnets to Orpheus* are completeness and rhythm. The two parts of the book are connected with the problems of life and death, represented as the equal parts of the one entity.

The uniqueness of the structure of *The Sonnets to Orpheus* is presented by the so-called cycle-in-cycle or subcycle that is the connection of several sonnets inside the one part by the same theme. For example, the fifth and sixth sonnets of the second part are devoted to the flowers. We will illustrate it by quoting some verses of these sonnets from the original and the translation done by Robert Temple:

<p><i>Blumenmuskel, der der Anemone Wiesensmorgen nach und nach erschließt bis in ihren Schoß das polyphone Licht der lauten Himmel sich ergießt,</i></p>	<p><i>Reflex of the flower, which bit by bit opens The anemone to its meadow morning, Till the clamouring heaven showers into its midst Its vast polyphony of light,</i></p>
<p><i>Rose, du thronende, denen im Altertume warst du ein Kelch mit einfachem Rand. Uns aber bist du die volle zahllose Blume, der unerschöpfliche Gegenstand.</i></p>	<p><i>You, rose, lender of majesty, how simple you were In ancient times, bare calyx with mere rim, But now to us you are numberless, Inexhaustible, – a presence.</i></p>

The seventh and fourteenth sonnets of the same part continue this theme as well:

*Blumen, ihr schließlich den ordnenden Händen verwandte,  
(Händen der Mädchen von einst und jetzt),  
die auf dem Gartentisch oft von Kante zu Kante lagen, ermattet und sanft verletzt,*

*Flowers, you who end in close affinity to the arrangers' hands  
(Hands of girls then, hands of girls now),  
You who cover the garden table from end to end,  
Grown weak, gently injured,*

*Siehe die Blumen, diese dem Irdischen treuen,  
denen wir Schicksal vom Rande des Schicksals leihn, –  
aber wer weiß es! Wenn sie ihr Welken bereuen,  
ist es an uns, ihre Reue zu sein.*

*Behold the flowers, who are so faithful to the earth,  
Taken from fate's very edge, which we then endow with a fate –  
But who knows this? If they regret their withering,  
It is for us to become their remorse.*

One more interesting thing concerns the size of sentences. A sentence may consist of one word, for instance *Nichts* 'nothing', or of ninety-five words.

While English translators tried to express the contents of the sonnets, their semantics, ignoring rhymes, Ukrainian translators aimed at combining both – the content and the form, maintaining rhymes, melody, and euphony.

The poetical cycle *The Duino Elegies* was written in 1922. The main theme of this poetry is an inseparable link of life with death. In *The Duino Elegies* Rilke raised a problem of the role of a human culture and art in spirituality of the world as the highest form of immateriality.

The very first translation of *The Duino Elegies* was done by Vita Sackville-West in 1931, the second translations were done by J. B. Leishman and S. Spender in 1939, and later Rilke's elegies were translated by J. Lemont, J. Leishman, C. F. McIntyre, A. Poulin and many others. In 2001 a famous British poet and translator A. S. Kline made his translation available to readers on the Internet. His book *Fountain of Joy: Rilke's Duino Elegies* was published in 2010, where he gave a full analysis of the elegy, studying the peculiarities of vocabulary and syntax.

Let us analyse the translation of Anthony Kline:

*Wer, wenn ich schrie, hörte mich denn aus der Engel*

*Ordnungen? und gesetzt selbst, es nähme  
einer mich plötzlich ans Herz: ich verginge von  
seinem  
stärkeren Dasein. Denn das Schöne ist nichts  
als des Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch gra-  
de ertragen,  
und wir bewundern es so, weil es gelassen ver-  
schmäh,  
uns zu zerstören. Ein jeder Engel ist schrecklich.*

*Who, if I cried out, would hear me among  
the Angelic*

*Orders? And even if one were to suddenly  
take me to its heart, I would vanish into its  
stronger existence. For beauty is nothing but  
the beginning of terror, that we are still able to  
bear,  
and we revere it so, because it calmly disdains  
to destroy us. Every Angel is terror.*

The characteristic feature of these verses is enjambment that provides readers with the impression of incompleteness. Let us have a look at the first line, as an example:

*Who, if I cried out, would hear me among  
the Angelic  
Orders?*

Here we may observe running over of the meaning from the first poetical line to the second, without using any punctuation.

*Aber weil Hiersein viel ist, und weil uns schein-  
bar  
alles das Hiesige braucht, dieses Schwindende,  
das  
seltsam uns angeht. Uns, die Schwindendsten.  
Ein Mal  
jedes, nur ein Mal. Ein Mal und nicht mehr. Und  
wir auch*

*ein Mal. Nie wieder. Aber dieses  
ein Mal gewesen zu sein, wenn auch nur ein Mal:  
irdisch gewesen zu sein, scheint nicht widerrufbar.*

*But because being here is much, and because all  
that's here seems to need us, the ephemeral, that  
strangely concerns us. We: the most ephemeral.*

*Once,*

*for each thing, only once. Once, and no more.*

*And we too,*

*once. Never again. But this*

*once, to have been, though only once,*

*to have been an earthly thing – seems irrevocable.*

As in the original, the translator doesn't stick to the same verse form. In my opinion, it helps to create the necessary atmosphere of excitement, confusion, uncertainty.

One of the most interesting for translation among Rilke's poems is the poem called *Autumn Day*, written in 1902, that shows God presented in the nature. In the poem a man talks with God. One feels fatigue, fatigue caused by summer, partially, even by life. Summer is the symbol of activity, real emotions, progress; it was too long. That is why one wants to have a rest, to relax.

*Herr: es ist Zeit. Der Sommer war sehr groß.  
Leg' deinen Schatten auf die Sonnenuhren,  
und auf die Fluren lass die Winde los.*

*Lord, it is time. Let the great summer go,  
Lay your long shadows on the sundials,  
And over harvest piles let the winds blow.*

This English translation is done by Guntram Deichsel. We have chosen this translation among many others, because to our mind, it expresses the meaning of the poem in the best way, preserving the rhyme and melody.

Rilke created a system of the unique images using alteration of the masculine and feminine rhymes.

*Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr.  
Wer jetzt allein ist, wird es lange bleiben,  
wird wachen, lesen, lange Briefe schreiben  
und wird in den Alleen hin und her  
unruhig wandern, wenn die Blätter treiben.*

*Who's homeless is, will for long stay alone.  
No home will build his weary hands,  
He'll wake, read, write letters long to friends  
And will the alleys up and down  
Walk restlessly, when falling leaves dance.*

In the original the line starts with anaphor (repetition of *wer*) in order to attract a reader's attention, to show that it is too late to do something, to show that you have to give up. The translator omits this stylistic device, he tries to express the appropriate mood – despair and the fact of being forced to do something with the help of the frequent use of English *will*.

The poem *The Panther* is a great example of symbolism that was written in 1902. The author tells us about confinement of an animal, in this way he shares his sadness and pain with read-

ers. Rilke describes the time when he was sent to a military school.

<p><i>Sein Blick ist von Vorübergehen der Stäbe so müd geworden, daß er nichts mehr hält. Ihm ist, als ob es tausend Stäbe gäbe und hinter tausend Stäben keine Welt.</i></p> <p><i>Der weiche Gang geschmeidig starker Schritte, der sich im allerkleinsten Kreise dreht, ist wie ein Tanz von Kraft um eine Mitte, in der betäubt ein großer Wille steht.</i></p> <p><i>Nur manchmal schiebt der Vorhang der Pupille sich lautlos auf – Dann geht ein Bild hinein, geht durch der Glieder angespannte Stille – und hört im Herzen auf zu sein.</i></p>	<p><i>His gaze has been so worn by the procession Of bars that it no longer makes a bond. Around, a thousand bars seem to be flashing, And in their flashing show no world beyond.</i></p> <p><i>The lissom steps which round out and re-enter That tightest circuit of their turning drill Are like a dance of strength about a center Wherein there stands benumbed a mighty will.</i></p> <p><i>Only from time to time the pupil's shutter Will draw apart: an image enters then, To travel through the tautened body's utter Stillness – and in the heart end.</i></p>
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This translation was done by Walter Arndt. The poem makes us feel anxiety, suffering, displeasure, discomfort. These feelings may be explained by the confrontation of two entities – an animal's force and a natural strength and a narrow cage.

The translator uses a large number of epithets. He tries to stick to the original on the semantic and lexical levels, to reproduce every detail. The author uses alliteration, for example:

*Der weiche Gang geschmeidig starker Schritte, der sich im allerkleinsten Kreise dreht.*

So, we may see the alternation of the sounds [sch] and [s] in these lines. The translator aims for

maintaining even this small detail by the alternation of [s] and [ch]:

*The lissom steps which round out and re-enter That tightest circuit of their turning.*

The panther represents the young poet. In German this word is masculine. Walter Arndt preserves this important feature. He uses the pronoun *his* in the first line pointing out that the panther is masculine.

One of the congenial Ukrainian translators of Rainer Maria Rilke is Vasyl Stus. It was he, who doing translation of poet's poems, pointed out the complexity of their reproduction, their transformation into other languages.

**Conclusion.** Rainer Maria Rilke's works in the context of Austrian literature and the literary tendencies of the poet's period have been analysed. The problems of life and death, represented as the equal parts of the one entity, as well as God also play an essential role in his poetry. Moreover, the main theme of Rilke's works is art that according to the poet could save the world, bringing him harmony and spirituality.

As to the interpretation of poet's works in English-speaking countries, English translators tried to convey the meaning and to find the best lexical equivalents, omitting rhymes, Ukrainian translators instead focused on combining the content and the form, maintaining melody and euphony of his poems. Among other things, we have defined the leading types of the English translations of *The Sonnets to Orpheus*: a translation-adaptation, a prose translation, an adequate translation, the poems based on the original. As to our mind, the translations of James Blair Leishman, Anthony Kline, Guntram Deichsel, Walter Arndt appeared to be the closest to the original and expressed the atmosphere, semantics, melody of poems in the most precise way, that is why these translations became the objects of our research.

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## **АНГЛОМОВНА РЕЦЕПЦІЯ ТВОРЧОСТІ РАЙНЕРА МАРІЇ РІЛЬКЕ**

### **Анотація**

Досліджено особливості англомовної інтерпретації поетичної творчості відомого австрійського письменника Райнера Марії Рільке. Творчість Рільке розглядається як новий період у розвитку європейської поезії, яка увібрала в себе всі етапи складного шляху естетичних пошуків митця – від неоромантизму та імпресіонізму через заглиблений у філософські та релігійні роздуми символізм до стилю, що тяжіє до конкретності зображення і прийшов на зміну експресіоністському пафосу та схематизму. Особливу увагу присвячено історії й аналізу англомовних перекладів поетичних циклів письменника «Сонети до Орфея» і «Дуїнянські елегії», також розглянуто поетичну структуру поезії «Осінній день» в англомовних перекладах та вірша Р.-М. Рільке «Пантера» в перекладі У. Арндта.

**Ключові слова:** модерн, модернізм, філософія, експресіонізм, символізм, сонет, елегія.

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## **АНГЛОЯЗЫЧНАЯ РЕЦЕПЦИЯ ТВОРЧЕСТВА РАЙНЕРА МАРИИ РИЛЬКЕ**

### **Аннотация**

Исследованы особенности англоязычной интерпретации поэтического творчества известного австрийского писателя Райнера Марии Рильке. Творчество Рильке рассматривается как новый период в развитии европейской поэзии, отобразивший все этапы сложного пути эстетических поисков мастера – от неоромантизма и импрессионизма сквозь углубленный философскими и религиозными размышлениями символизм к стилю, тяготившему к конкретике изображения, пришедший на смену экспрессионистскому пафосу и схематизму. Особенное внимание уделено истории и анализу англоязычных переводов поэтических циклов писателя «Сонеты к Орфею» и «Дуинские элегии», также рассмотрено поэтическую структуру поэзии «Осенний день» в англоязычных переводах и стихотворения Р.-М. Рильке «Пантера» в переводе У. Арндта.

**Ключевые слова:** модерн, модернизм, философия, экспрессионизм, символизм, сонет, элегия.