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**ВАРИАНТНЫЕ ПЕРЕВОДЫ ИРЛАНДСКИХ НАРОДНЫХ ПЕСЕН НА  
АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ЯЗЫК КАК ВОПЛОЩЕНИЕ ПЕРЕВОДЧЕСКИХ ПОДХОДОВ  
К ФОЛЬКЛОРНОЙ КУЛЬТУРЕ ИРЛАНДИИ<sup>33</sup>**

В статье рассматривается проблема перевода ирландскоязычных песен sean nós на английский язык в контексте отражения в нём переводческих подходов к интерпретации традиционной ирландской культуры. Автор проводит сравнительный анализ переводов, выполненных анонимными переводчиками-любителями, уделяя особое внимание стилистическому соответствию перевода и оригинала, а также специфическим особенностям вариантов переводов. Отмечается стремление переводчиков передать основную идею и атмосферу песен sean nós как проявления ирландской национальной культуры, в том числе посредством сохранения оригинального написания имён собственных, подчёркивания эмоциональной насыщенности текста, а также точного отражения его стилистических особенностей (вольный метр и отсутствие рифмы, анафорические повторы и др.). Особое внимание автор обращает на расхождения между оригинальным текстом и его переводческой интерпретацией.

*Ключевые слова:* ирландские народные песни, sean nós, варианты переводов, любительский перевод, народная культура

Irish folklore – like that of any nation – embodies the cultural heritage of the people, their talents, values and attitudes. The antiquity and diversity of Irish folk songs – composed and performed in Irish or in English – illustrate various aspects of Irish national culture and folklore. Traditional Irish solo a capella songs constitute a special folklore subgenre known as sean nós (“old way”, or “old tradition”). The stylistics and the so called “proper performance practice” [Williams 2011] of such songs – including the free metre, the Irish language, variation between verses etc.– make them highly complex and personal, providing the performer with unlimited means of self-expression and ornamentation. When it comes to sean nós, both lyrics and music acquire equally vital importance, while the rhythm and tune variations from verse to verse and from performance to performance highlight the poetic and expressive potential of the song, at the same time demonstrating the performer’s skill and experience. All that makes sean nós the touchstone of traditional Irish music [Noone 2012], “the orally transmitted unaccompanied, highly ornamented musical tradition” [Hobbs 2011, p. 587–588]. Researchers distinguish between three main styles of sean nós, corresponding to the three areas where Irish is still spoken as a community language: the Gaeltachtaí areas of Munster, Connacht and Ulster [Ó Maoldomhnaigh 2004]. Today sean nós songs are performed and recorded by numerous music groups at various kinds of concerts, art festivals and competitions [Costello 2017]. The purpose of our research is to compare alternative English translations of sean nós songs as manifestations of translators’ preferences and interpretations of Irish folk culture. The research methods include close reading and comparative analysis. The research focuses on sample songs

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presented on the <https://songsinirish.com> website together with their respective amateur English translations submitted by anonymous Internet users. The analysis takes into account the stylistic correspondence between the translation and the original as well as the specific features of alternative translations. Most of the songs presented on the said website go along with just one translation, quite often a machine one, but some of them have two or even three translation versions. These include *Tiocfaidh An Samhradh* (Summer will come), *Beidh Aonach Amárach* (“There’s a Fair Tomorrow”), *Mo Ghile Mear* (“My Gallant Darling”) and *Sí Do Mhaimeo Í* (“She is Your Granny”), which constitute the object of our research.

A traditional Irish song *Tiocfaidh An Samhradh* (Summer will come) is very popular in Donegal area. It exists in a number of versions, but the main story is that of a man, often a sailor, whose loved one betrays him in favour of another man. There exist at least three arrangements thereof, one belonging to The Bothy Band, another one – to the Altan group and the other one – to Na Casaidigh (“The Cassidys”). Out of the three alternative translations of the arrangements aforesaid, one (namely, that of the Altan’s version) follows the inconsistent ABCB rhyming pattern, while the other two are made in free verse in line with the classic sean nós tradition. The lyrics consists of thirty-two (sometimes written down as sixteen) lines arranged into four verses, with the framed structure, where the last verse is identical to the first one. The original text of the first verse is as follows:

*Tiocfaidh an Samhradh / agus fásfaidh an féar*  
*Tiocfaidh an duilliúr glas / ar bharr na gcrabhbh*  
*Tiocfaidh mo rúnsearc / le bánú an lae*  
*Is buailfidh sí tíúin suas / le cumhaidh i mo dhéidh*<sup>34</sup>.

One of the most conspicuous discrepancies between the three English translations of the above verse is the syntactic link between the clauses *tiocfaidh an Samhradh* (“summer will come”), *fásfaidh an féar* (“grass will grow”), *tiocfaidh an duilliúr glas* (“leaves will turn green”), *tiocfaidh mo rúnsearc* (“my darling will come”), and *buailfidh sí tíúin suas* (she will play a tune). In the original text the said clauses are combined both with the help of conjunction *agus / is* (and) in the first and the last lines and *asyndetically* (lines 2 and 3). This tendency is partly preserved in the translated *Na Casaidigh* (“The Cassidys”) version (with *syndesis* in lines 1 and 2), while the translations of those performed by The Bothy Band and the Altan provide *asyndetic* and *polysyndetic* connection respectively. The actor in line 3 also varies. In the original text the tune is played by the lady, the persona’s beloved, which is preserved in two English versions. However, the Altan’s version in translation shifts the accent from the lady to the man, giving him the opportunity to express his feelings and attitudes toward the situation. Of special interest is the translation of the word *cumhaidh* in line 4. The word bears negative connotation, its direct meaning being “loneliness, homesickness, parting sorrow” [Ó Dónaill 1977]. However, while two translations follow this implication, using words “loneliness”<sup>35</sup> (The Bothy Band) and “mournful”<sup>36</sup> (Altan), in the *Na Casaidigh*’s version the word is translated as “a song of love”<sup>37</sup>. This not only runs counter to the Irish text, but also breaks the original juxtaposition of the first

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<sup>34</sup> Songs in Irish. *Tiocfaidh An Samhradh*. Available from: <https://songsinirish.com/tiocfaidh-an-samhradh-the-cassidys/> [Accessed 29th August 2021].

<sup>35</sup> Songs in Irish. *Tiocfaidh An Samhradh*. Available from: <https://songsinirish.com/tiocfaidh-an-samhradh-lyrics/> [Accessed 29th August 2021].

<sup>36</sup> Songs in Irish. *Tiocfaidh An Samhradh*. Available from: <https://songsinirish.com/tiocfaidh-an-samhradh-altan-lyrics/> [Accessed 29th August 2021].

<sup>37</sup> Songs in Irish. *Tiocfaidh An Samhradh*. Available from: <https://songsinirish.com/tiocfaidh-an-samhradh-the-cassidys/> [Accessed 29th August 2021].

and the second halves of the verse, where the first two lines create a brightly coloured picture of a summer day, while the other two change the mood to the opposite.

Verses 2 to 4 differ depending on the performer. The Na Casaidigh and Altan perform the second verse as follows:

Is óg 's is óg a chuir mé dúil i ngreann  
Do dhéanfainn súgradh le mo rún ar fail  
Níl baile cuain ann nár gluaiseas ann  
Nach bhfuair eas póigín ó mo stóirín ann

(or Nach bhfaighinn maighdean óg / deas a thrialladh liom)<sup>38</sup>.

This verse is omitted in The Bothy Band's version, so in this case we have only two alternative translations to compare. The analysis shows that both translations are similar to each other except for the last line, which differs in the original versions as well. If the Na Casaidigh's version and its respective translation strengthen the relationship between the man and his loved one, suggesting that the girl follows the sailor from port to port, the Altan's text hints that the sailor finds a new sweetheart in every new place.

Verse 3 in the Altan's and The Bothy Band's lyrics expresses the sailor's sorrow about having to leave his beloved and go to sea. The deep feeling of grief is emphasised and intensified in English translations by adding the connotation of anger and wrath (splóid – "bad cess" (Altan)<sup>39</sup>, brón (literally "sorrow", "grief") – "curse" (The Bothy Band)<sup>40</sup>). The Altan's version's translator substitutes the negative imperative mood of the second line (Ná is í atá mór – "don't be big") with a pair of synonyms "broad and wide", thus depersonifying the sea as an active agent that separates people. On the other hand, the use of synonymous pairs ("broad and wide", "joy and pride", "grieve and mourn") adds an emphatic tone to the text, stressing its emotional aspect. In The Bothy Band's version the above effect is achieved by the translator through the expressive syntax (the emphatic inversion "And no woman will I marry"<sup>41</sup>, polysyndeton) as well as the image of grave in the last line of the verse.

Finally, there is one more verse breaking the news of the girl's being unfaithful to her former beloved. This verse plays the key role in rendering the main idea of the song, therefore, it is present in all the versions: the last one in the Altan's, the last but one in Na Casaidigh's (where the last verse repeats the first one forming a framed structure) and the second one in The Bothy Band's. Neither the Altan's nor the Na Casaidigh's translation follows the asyndetic anaphoric repetition of the original (Scairt mé in lines 1 and 2(3)), inserting the conjunction "and" (Altan)<sup>42</sup> or the words "last night" (Na Casaidigh)<sup>43</sup>, and thus breaking the original suspense effect, which leads to the climax. The most exact and closest to the original is the translator's interpretation of The Bothy Band's version, which not only preserves the syntactic structure of the Irish verse, but also sticks to the minute details of the original vocabulary, translating demonstrative pronoun

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Songs in Irish. *Tiocfaidh An Samhradh*. Available from: <https://songsinirish.com/tiocfaidh-an-samhradh-altan-lyrics/> [Accessed 29th August 2021].

<sup>40</sup> Songs in Irish. *Tiocfaidh An Samhradh*. Available from: <https://songsinirish.com/tiocfaidh-an-samhradh-lyrics/> [Accessed 29th August 2021].

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Songs in Irish. *Tiocfaidh An Samhradh*. Available from: <https://songsinirish.com/tiocfaidh-an-samhradh-altan-lyrics/> [Accessed 29th August 2021].

<sup>43</sup> Songs in Irish. *Tiocfaidh An Samhradh*. Available from: <https://songsinirish.com/tiocfaidh-an-samhradh-the-cassids/> [Accessed 29th August 2021].

thall (ann) as “yonder”<sup>44</sup> and not substituting it with a possessive noun / pronoun as in the other versions.

Beidh Aonach Amárach (“There’s a Fair Tomorrow”) is a traditional Irish song also arranged and performed by the Altan and Na Casaidigh (The Cassidys) groups. This song is familiar to schoolchildren and Irish language-learners around the country, therefore, researchers categorize as a “school song”. The main difference between the two translators’ interpretations is the degree of emotional intensity and expressiveness of the text manifested in diminutive nouns (“mammy” (Altan)<sup>45</sup> vs. “mother” (Na Casaidigh)<sup>46</sup>), verbs with the connotation of strong feeling (“plead” (Altan) vs. “ask” (Na Casaidigh)), and lexical units of the “affection” semantic group (“dearest love” (Altan), where both words belong to the said group, vs. “fondest child” (Na Casaidigh), where only the first word is stylistically marked). Another point worth mentioning is the translators’ intention to preserve the original rhythmic structure of the lyrics, wherever possible without detriment to the lexical correspondence between the translation and the original, which allows performing the chorus and certain verses of the English version to the original tune.

Mo Ghile Mear (“My Gallant Darling”) is a traditional Irish song of a ballad type composed to honour Prince Charles Stewart. The difference between the two Irish versions performed by The UCD Choral Scholars and an Irish solo performer Deirbhile Ní Bhrolchain hinders the comparative analysis of their translations, reducing it to the chorus and certain identical verses. The chief and the most important distinction between the two texts is the high-flown style of the Deirbhile Ní Bhrolchain’s version as opposed to the plain English of The UCD Choral Scholars’ one. The divergence starts with the interpretation of the title epithet mear used to describe the person the song is addressed to. The direct meaning of the Irish word – “quick, fast, nimble, lively, spirited” [Ó Dónaill 1977] – is preserved in the UCD Choral Scholars’ translation (“dashing”) given in the chorus, although the title remains the same as in the other version (“gallant”) that sounds much less decisive and fearless and, therefore, runs contrary to the image of Caesar, the character is compared to. Other examples of elevated translation style include the *Bímse buan ar buairt gach ló* line given as “Every day I’m constantly enduring grief” by Ní Bhrolchain<sup>47</sup> as opposed to “I am perpetually worried every day” by The UCD Choral Scholars<sup>48</sup>, *Ag caoi go cruaidh* – as “weeping bitterly” and “wailing heavily” respectively, and the *Ní haoibhinn (labhrann) cuach ba suairc ar neoin* line – as “The pleasure of the cheerful cuckoo at noon is gone” (Ní Bhrolchain) in contrast with “The cuckoo doesn’t sing cheerfully after noon” (The UCD Choral Scholars). As is the case with the *Beidh Aonach Amárach* song, the translators render the emotional intensity of the text through lexical and syntactic means of expression. On the lexical level the feelings of anguish and longing are rendered in the translation of Ní Bhrolchain’s version through the pairs of directly or contextually synonymous word combinations (“over the hills and far away”, “a spent, worn-out widow”, “neither rest nor fortune”, “weeping bitterly and shedding tears”) as well as lexical units belonging to the semantic field of death (widow, black cloaks). Syntactically, both Ní Bhrolchain’s and The UCD

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<sup>44</sup> Songs in Irish. *Tiocfaidh An Samhradh*. Available from: <https://songsinirish.com/tiocfaidh-an-samhradh-lyrics/> [Accessed 29th August 2021].

<sup>45</sup> Songs in Irish. *Beidh Aonach Amárach*. Available from: <https://songsinirish.com/beidh-aonach-amarach-atlan-lyrics/> [Accessed 4th September 2021].

<sup>46</sup> Songs in Irish. *Beidh Aonach Amárach*. Available from: <https://songsinirish.com/beidh-aonach-amarach-lyrics/> [Accessed 4th September 2021].

<sup>47</sup> Songs in Irish. *Mo Ghile Mear*. Available from: <https://songsinirish.com/mo-ghile-mear-ucd-lyrics/> [Accessed 7th September 2021].

<sup>48</sup> Songs in Irish. *Mo Ghile Mear*. Available from: <https://songsinirish.com/mo-ghile-mear-lyrics/> [Accessed 7th September 2021].

Choral Scholars' translations follow the anaphoric repetition in the first two lines of the chorus (in the former case combined with inversion) and the parallel syntactic structures of the original. The *Sí Do Mhaimeo Í* ("She is Your Granny") song is a traditional Irish song from the region of Connemara. It is performed by the Altan, Celtic Woman and Anúna groups, and presented on the <https://songsinirish.com> website by three nearly identical translations. The minor differences concern the approach to proper names (the town of Iorrais Mhóir (Inis Mhóir) is rendered as Nishmore in the Altan's version, while all the other proper nouns retain the original spelling) and the use of colloquialisms ("squander" and "cause" in Altan's version<sup>49</sup> vs. "drink" and "because" in the two others<sup>50</sup>).

Thus, the above examples illustrate the translators' intention to render the idea and the atmosphere of traditional sean nós songs as manifestations of Irish national culture by preserving the original spelling of proper nouns, emphasising the emotional intensity of the text, as well as its stylistic peculiarities (free metre, anaphoric repetitions etc.). The translators tend to follow the marked rhythmic structure of humorous songs (Beidh Aonach Amárach and *Sí Do Mhaimeo Í* in our case), while sean nós of a ballad type (*Mo Ghile Mear* and *Tiocfaidh An Samhradh*) have less explicit rhythmic patterns and are translated without regard to the number of syllables or stresses. On the other hand, translators add their own interpretation of the Irish lyrics by modifying its tone, using synonymous pairs to stress the key notions and images, and changing the syntactic pattern of the verse.

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