

Irish-language modernism in Czech translations' paratexts

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Abstract

The paper surveys the paratexts of four Irish-language modernist novels and, additionally, three Irish short story collections published in Czech translation. It seeks to analyse the strategies used to introduce the texts to the target readers, concentrating in particular on the ways in which the authors of the paratexts use references to Czech culture and Irish literature written in English. It also studies their approach to modernism as a productive critical label and their manner of projecting Irish modernism to Czech readers.

Keywords: Irish modernism, Irish language, translations from the Irish language, translation paratexts

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In the afterword to his 2013 translation of Pádraic Ó Conaire's short story collection *Biskupova duše*, Radvan Markus notes that Ó Conaire was a pioneer of modernist writing in the Irish language and that other Irish-language modernists, of whom he names Flann O'Brien, Máirtín Ó Cadhain, and Eoghan Ó Tuairisc, only emerged during and after World War II. With the publication of Markus's translation of *Cré na Cille* in 2017, Máirtín Ó

Cadhain became the last of those four authors to have a novel translated into Czech.

This paper surveys the paratexts¹ of the four Irish-language modernist novels translated into Czech, in order to reveal the strategies used to present Irish-language literature to the target texts' readers. It seeks to identify the ways in which the authors of the paratexts try to engage and inform the reader and the field of literary references they use in that process. Within that scope, two research questions will be at the forefront of attention. The first concerns the selection of the authors or literary phenomena referred to in the paratexts. What is of interest here is the authors' willingness to reach for elements of the target culture (i.e. Czech authors or texts), the source culture (Irish literature in Irish and English), and world literature. It is assumed that those choices can be seen as strategies that somewhat correspond to the two main strategies in translation, i.e. domesticating and foreignizing the translated text (Baker 241–244). All the translated novels are considered by the authors of various papers, monographs, and reference works – as well as by the authors of some of the Czech paratexts analysed – to represent modernist modes of writing. As it is modernist literature where the notions of Irish literature (as source literature) and world literature are likely to overlap in references to James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, the second question concerns the relevance of modernism in the paratexts. Is 'modernist' an important critical label in the case of the four authors/novels, and if so, how is (Irish) modernism projected in the paratexts? The paper takes a descriptive approach and predominantly concentrates on what is found (or what is significantly lacking) in the paratexts given the scope of the analysis. It does not presuppose a model against which the presentations offered by the paratexts' authors could be evaluated. The four novels studied are: Flann O'Brien's *Řeči pro pláč* (*An Béal Bocht*), Pádraic Ó Conaire's *Vyhnanství* (*Deoraíocht*), Eoghan Ó Tuairisc's *L'Attaque*, and Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *Hřbitovní hlína* (*Cré na Cille*). Additionally, three short story collections were considered in order to provide more context: Pádraic Ó Conaire's *Biskupova duše*; the collection *Muž, který vybuchl* – which features various Irish-language authors including Ó Conaire, O'Brien, and Ó Cadhain; and *Ni králi, ni císaři*, which presents mainly English-language writing but also contains some stories originally written in Irish. The analysis largely draws from the study of afterwords/post-faces and the information provided on the dustcover, cover, and slips. Reviews and other forms of presenting the books in the media proved to be heavily dependent on the information provided in this manner (which arguably serves as a marker of the importance of the afterwords and blurbs in question), and thus only selected reviews will feature in the paper.

The dustcover of Radvan Markus's translation of Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille* advertises the book as "the funniest work of Irish modernism". As Joe Cleary notes in his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Irish Modernism*, "the term 'Irish modernism' provokes knotty questions of definition", as, among other reasons, much of it happened outside of Ireland (4). In the context of Czech culture, one problem with the term is that it may fail to signify anything to the reader. The publishing house Argo, which produced the aforementioned dustcover, has a tradition of publishing translations of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett and presenting them as Irish writers; this tradition dates back to the first post-1989 Czech edition of *Ulysses*, published in 1993. However, these two and Irish writers (and others) have often been taken for English writers by readers.² The editors and translators of *Vzdálené tóny naděje*, a collection of Irish poetry, point out this problem in the very first paragraph of their introduction to the book (7). Moreover, Martin Hilský,

who in his monographic study *Modernisté* discusses Joyce within the scope of Anglo-American modernism alongside Eliot, Woolf, and Lawrence, argues that attributing national affiliations to versions of modernisms has limited validity, as one of modernist art's key features was its transnational, cosmopolitan character (32). This view appears to be shared by the authors of *Dějiny nové moderny*, a survey of Czech modernism presented in an international context. In most cases they omit the nationality altogether when discussing internationally recognised figures (such as Joyce) or present it somewhat casually. For example, a list of "English intellectuals" on page 88 opens with Joyce – who is described as Irish, while G. B. Shaw, who follows him, is not (Papoušek 88). If we reverse the logic of ascribing Englishness to authors writing and works written in English, and thus read Irish modernism as denoting modernist works in the Irish language, such a reading would potentially make sense for *Cré na Cille* in a Czech context (as some Irish-language modernist writing has been made available to Czech readers), but overall it would probably not be very likely to occur to anyone. From the source culture's perspective, the problem would primarily lie in the associations that the Irish language evokes. Joe Cleary notes that "the Irish language was so intrinsically associated with 'tradition' that an Irish-language modernism may have seemed a logical improbability" (13). While this could be true for a part of the Czech audience as well, there may be an even bigger problem in the target culture, as it cannot be confidently expected that Czech readers would even be aware of the Irish language's existence – a fact that prompts the authors of the translated texts' paratexts to address the linguistic situation in Ireland as well as the country's literary traditions.

In the 2000s, there was already enough awareness of the Irish language in Czechia to breed translators who were capable of translating literary texts directly from Irish, but *Řeči pro pláč* was based on the 1973 English translation of *An Béal Bocht* by Patrick C. Power. The novel was eventually published in 1997, having been announced as being prepared for publication in the journal *Souvislosti* in 1993. It was the first text by Brian O'Nolan to be published in full and in book form in Czech, and it was attributed to Flann O'Brien – one of many, but also the most prominent of O'Nolan's pseudonymous literary selves. The original Irish text of *An Béal Bocht* was published in 1941 under a different pseudonym – Myles na gCopaleen.

The sleeve introduces the author as a pioneer of postmodernism in Irish literature and the book as "written in Gaelic". The 1990s were a time of a heightened interest in Celtic culture in the Czech Republic, most often referred to as Celtomania. Josef Chuchma's review of the book, published in the newspaper *Mladá fronta Dnes*, specifically notes the popularity of anything Celtic at the time (19). In fact, the review itself is published on the same page as a review of Anna Bauerová's *Srdce v kamenném kruhu*, a Czech novel which fictionalises Celtic history in the Czech lands. This was also a time when, after the fall of communism with its restrictive publishing policies, postmodernism became somewhat belatedly popular. The extraordinary combination of Celtic elements and postmodern writing certainly was certainly able to attract readers' attention.

There is an afterword in *Řeči pro pláč* written by Ondřej Pilný, who later translated Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* and became a prominent figure among researchers interested in the author. In the first two paragraphs, he introduces the author and among his most notable works he mentions *Rhapsody in Stephen's Green*, O'Brien's adaptation of the Čapek brothers' play *Ze života hmyzu*. O'Brien's version of the play was first made avail-

able in print in 1994 after it was found in O'Brien's papers, so it was a relatively new addition to O'Brien's published work at the time when the afterword was written. However, it seems that the fact that the original play was by Czech authors was as much of a reason for including it in *Řeči pro pláč*'s presentation to Czech readers. Later in the afterword, when Pilný briefly discusses the Irish-language sources O'Brien parodies in his novel, he likens them to Božena Němcová's *Babička*. This 19th-century Czech classic deals with the old ways of rural life, as do the Gaeltacht biographies³ O'Brien's satire targets. This is a very pragmatic move. The afterword is not very long, and this allows Pilný to effectively provide Czech readers with some kind of idea about the content of those biographies. He appeals to Czech readers' knowledge of the rural themes presented in *Babička* as well as its status as somewhat unpopular compulsory reading in schools. Although O'Brien's 1940s parody is targeted at authors who were nearly his contemporaries, by the 1990s in Ireland some of them had already achieved the hated school reading status that *Babička* has in the target culture. Also, their content – that is, descriptions of old rural ways of life – is nearly as far removed from the average Irish readers' experience in the 1990s as Němcová's novel is for their Czech counterparts. Rather than providing the target text's readers with a fact-packed academic lecture on how *An Béal Bocht* came to be, Pilný offers a much more relatable text, which helps the readers to experience the novel similarly to how a modern-day Irish reader would experience it. The afterword also contains some more general information on the status of the Irish language and the efforts to revive it, which are also satirised in the novel in parodic representations of Gaelic revivalists. An important point to note on the latter is that because the Czech language was also once on the verge of extinction, the Czechs too have their own revivalist tradition – including vocabulary to describe it. This allows Pilný and the author of the text on the slip to evoke certain images in the target reader's mind by simply using the term 'buditel' (revivalist), without having to provide much explanation of what the Gaelic revival was about.

Individual chapters of the novel were published earlier in the journal *Souvislosti* in 1993 and 1997, with postfaces by the translator Jan Čáp. They provide information on the work, its relevant contexts, and the author. The first postface, from 1993, is quite brief, and yet it provides more detailed information on the Gaelic revival than Ondřej Pilný's text featured in the book edition, including references to W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, notable figures in the source culture but also internationally recognizable. Unlike Pilný, Čáp does not make references to the target culture in this text. Čáp's 1997 essay is longer and more detailed than Pilný's text featured in the book. It provides more background information on O'Brien and his novel, and more detailed information on the status of the Irish language including a historic overview and some statistics. In both of Čáp's texts, references are made to James Joyce. This is a fairly common practice in introducing O'Brien's work, as he has been compared to Joyce ever since his debut novel *At Swim-Two-Birds* was published in 1939. Quite surprisingly, however, these references appear neither in the afterword in the book, nor in the blurb on the book's sleeve. In the longer 1997 text, other notable Irish figures are recalled, such as Samuel Beckett and Sean O'Casey in the first two paragraphs, and Oscar Wilde and Jonathan Swift later in the text. It also likens O'Brien to a prominent target culture figure – Jaroslav Hašek. It specifically speaks of a Hašekian ability to soil one's own nest (Čáp, "O'Brienovy Řeči" 302). This ability is again mentioned in the text on the book sleeve, however the attribute 'Hašekian' is removed from it. The

Hašekian character of O'Brien's writing is also noted in Josef Chuchma's review, which introduces Bohumil Hrabal as a target culture figure that may help the readers to imagine what kind of a writer Flann O'Brien is.

The novel, or O'Brien's writing in general, is not explicitly described as modernist in the *Souvislosti* postfaces, nor is it described as postmodernist (as it is on the sleeve in the book edition). However, through references to Joyce and Beckett it is implied that O'Brien belongs to the same category of writers.

2004 saw the first novel ever to be translated into Czech directly from Irish – and it was advertised as such on the back of the cover. It is Daniela Furthnerová's translation of Pádraic Ó Conaire's *Deoraíocht*, which *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* introduces as the first modernist work in Irish. The book has a short note on the back of the cover, an afterword, and the translator's note at the end.

It takes a different approach in introducing the work and its author to Czech readers. The afterword discusses Russian influences and names Gogol, Dostoyevsky, and Turgenyev, while the back of the cover links Ó Conaire to Samuel Beckett and the film director David Lynch. No parallels with Czech writers are made, either in the afterword or on the cover. Of Irish writers, the afterword introduces Pádraig Pearse (with an Irish spelling of Pádraig) in some detail, and also mentions Peadar Ó Laoghaire and the Gaeltacht biographies. It makes no reference to Flann O'Brien and his parody of the Gaeltacht biographies that the Czech reader might already know. A translation of Pearse's short story appeared in a 1965 Irish short story collection *Ni králi, ni císaři* edited by Aloys Skoumal, which takes the Irish struggle for independence as the collection's main theme, but the Czech readers in the 21st century are not particularly likely to be well acquainted with him, and they are even less likely to be aware of Ó Laoghaire.

The afterword opens with a sentence which lists Ó Conaire's possessions at the time of his death. The rest of his biography is presented in the last paragraphs, with the list of his possessions appearing once more in the very last sentence. In the middle of this explicitly stylised frame, the text mostly offers a summary and an analysis of the novel. While *The Oxford Companion* is rather sceptical about the quality of the work, describing it as modernist "despite a certain simplicity and, indeed, on occasion, laziness of style" (Welch 412), the afterword in the Czech translation deals with intentional errors that are consciously employed by the author as an artistic method, and hails the novel as one of the most original works in Irish literature in either of the island's languages.

Czech readers are not specifically addressed at any point in the afterword. As the text lacks an explicit authorial attribution⁴, it is not immediately clear whether it was written specifically for the Czech readership or taken out of some Irish or English edition of the novel. The blurb on the back cover is similarly un-localized, except for the last sentence about the book being the first direct translation from Irish to Czech. Even the translator's note (a part where one usually expects a target culture-oriented commentary) is mostly concerned with the fact that both Irish editions and the 1994 English translation do not contain certain fragments that are found in the manuscript and are now to be found in the Czech translation. The Czech readers are thus reportedly the first ones to read the novel in its entirety. To help them navigate through it, they are equipped with paratexts focusing on Irish culture and world literature. The novel is referred to as the first "modern" novel in Irish in the afterword, and an implied reference to modernism is made on the cover

by the suggestion that the readers may find in it similarities to Samuel Beckett's works. However, Beckett is not described in any way on the cover – either as a modernist or as an Irishman. Positioning him next to David Lynch evokes a broader range of experimental artistic strategies that are not so easily reduced to modernism. Overall, the presentation of the book in the paratexts seems to presume a more demanding reader with more exclusive tastes than the more ordinary readership implied by the paratexts of Flann O'Brien's book and journal chapters.

In 2007 Radvan Markus published his translation of Eoghan Ó Tuairisc's historical novel *L'Attaque*. Markus also wrote the afterword, in which he provides background historical information instrumental to understanding the novel's plot, some information on the portrayal of the 1798 rebellion in Irish literature (on which he wrote his dissertation and published a monograph titled *Echoes of the Rebellion: The Year 1798 in Twentieth-Century Irish Fiction and Drama*), and the reception of *L'Attaque* in Ireland.

The biographical information on the author is fairly concise, and ends with a mention of Ó Tuairisc translating Máirtín Ó Cadhain's short stories into Irish. Ó Cadhain is also mentioned on the dust cover, where Ó Tuairisc is introduced as being his follower, but at no point does the reader find out who Máirtín Ó Cadhain was. While a decade later, thanks to Markus's brilliant translation of *Cré na Cille*, Ó Cadhain may be the most widely recognised Irish-language author among Czech readers, this was hardly so at the time when Ó Tuairisc's *L'Attaque* was published. International writers listed as other influences are easily recognisable names such as Leo Tolstoy and Walter Scott. Tolstoy is also mentioned on the dust cover.

The humorous passages of the novel are likened to *The Good Soldier Švejk* without naming its author – the implication being that every Czech person who has enough interest in literature to reach for Ó Tuairisc's work would probably know it anyway. Thus, despite the way in which Markus leaves Ó Cadhain uncommented, he essentially returns to addressing the specific needs of Czech readers. This is explicitly stated when the section of the afterword which discusses old Irish inspirations behind the novel opens with a comment that unlike the European tradition of historical prose, these would be hard for the Czech reader to recognize in the work itself.

Modernism as such does not really feature in the paratexts in this case, despite the fact that Ó Tuairisc is seen by critics as one of the continuators of the modernist experiment in Irish-language fiction (de Paor 169). Retrospectively, when read from the 2018 perspective, references to Máirtín Ó Cadhain may provide the link to Irish-language modernism.

The book's Irishness, on the other hand, is (quite literally) brought to the forefront. An idiomatically Celtic/Irish image of Celtic crosses in the twilight is featured on the book's cover (both the dustcover and the cover proper), which immediately attracts the attention of the Celtic-oriented part of the Czech readership. A similar strategy of employing visual paratexts is seen in the 2014 re-edition of *Ni králi, ni císaři*, a collection of short stories by various Irish writers edited by Aloys Skoumal in 1965. The original 1960s artwork was replaced by an intensely green cover with Celtic imagery (images from a 7th-century Irish evangeliary), and a stylized font was used for the title. This seems to suggest that while the peak of Celtomania was reached the 1990s, an interest in what is traditional and Celtic within Irish culture still persists, and it can still be employed to attract Czech readers.

In 2013, a collection of short stories by Pádraic Ó Conaire, *Biskupova duše*, was pub-

lished in Radvan Markus's translation, with an afterword also written by him. It offers more detailed information on Ó Conaire's life than the 2004 translation of *Deoraíocht*, and it employs a more playful way of introducing it. It starts with information that is immediately disclosed as being false, and it ends with a reference to an Ó Conaire-inspired internet hoax to entertain the reader. It provides information on the author's works and some general information on literature in Irish. This includes introducing the notion (which was held by some traditionalists) that Irish-language literature should be set in Irish-speaking areas; Markus uses this opportunity to refer to O'Brien's *An Béal Bocht* and its Czech translation. Furthnerová's translation of *Deoraíocht* is also mentioned (both translations are described in superlatives), which may encourage the reader to seek out these books as well.

International influences listed again include the Russian writers Gogol and Turgenev, just like in *Deoraíocht*'s translation, but in this case Tolstoy replaces Dostoyevsky. Scandinavian and French influences are mentioned as well, though no specific authors are named. The dustcover also refers readers to three Irish authors – James Joyce, Liam O'Flaherty, and Frank O'Connor – who wrote solely (or in the case of O'Flaherty, primarily) in English. While Joyce is immediately recognisable, Frank O'Connor and Liam O'Flaherty have had much less visibility as individual authors. O'Connor had a short story collection translated into Czech in 2007, and O'Flaherty's novels were popular in the inter-war period but have not been published in Czech since the 1930s, though his short stories continued to appear in periodicals and collections by various authors (as did O'Connor's). Just as in the case of Ó Tuairisc's book and the references to Ó Cadhain made there, the reader is expected to have a broader knowledge of Irish culture than is offered by existing major translations in order to make sense of the references. However, in the Internet era this arguably hardly presents a challenge to an interested reader, who may be prompted by such references to research the information that is missing from the book itself.

Ó Conaire's affiliation to modernism is discussed in the afterword. Markus notes that while Ó Conaire can be classified as a modernist writer, his version of modernism has little to do with the modernism of James Joyce, which is referred to as Anglo-American (rather than Irish) modernism by Markus. An affinity with Kafka is observed, and Kafka is referred to as 'pražský rodák', meaning 'a native of Prague'. That piece of information is likely to be as well-known to the Czech reader as the missing name of the author of *The Good Soldier Švejk* in the afterword to *L'Attaque*, and is thus potentially redundant. The intention then seems not so much to merely inform readers, but also to introduce a certain link between Ó Conaire and the target culture – if not on the level of national literatures, then at least through literary geography.

It is argued in the afterword that while the modernist label is valid for *Deoraíocht*, it is not appropriate for the short stories presented in the collection. The author is identified as the precursor of modernism in Irish literature, but the authors that are named here as Irish-language modernist novelists proper are Flann O'Brien, Máirtín Ó Cadhain, and Ó Tuairisc. As has already been mentioned earlier, this list contains all the authors who have currently been translated into Czech – and once we take Ó Cadhain out, all that were available at the time of writing the afterword.

In 2016, a short story collection edited by Radvan Markus was published with a subtitle that reads "a collection of short stories translated from Irish" (*Muž, který vybouchl*:

výbor povídek přeložených z irštiny). The very act of translating from Irish is extensively thematised in the paratexts. The text on the dustcover's sleeve begins with the information that there were eight translators involved in the project, and ends with their names. It also provides a short overview of the history of Irish language courses taught at Charles University in Prague. We learn that they began in 1990, and that Brian Ó hEithir was the first teacher. From there it goes on to inform the reader that Breandán Ó hEithir, Brian's father, adapted *The Good Soldier Švejk* for Irish-language radio, information that has little to do with Irish courses in Prague but plenty to do with searching for affinities and connections between Irish-language and Czech writing.

These affinities and connections are very prominently presented in the afterword and the individual biographical notes on the authors featured in the collection whenever they can be found. From the general afterword we find out that Patrick Pearse, who argued that Irish writers should seek inspiration in European writing, had Czech writers on his list of desirable influences, and that Liam O'Flaherty's short story included in the collection will give a different meaning to the word 'svíčková', the name of a traditional Czech beef dish (the joke here is that the word 'svíčka', meaning 'candle', is in the root of the Czech name of the dish, and in the story one of the characters dies after consuming candle wax).

The individual biographical section then informs the readers that one of Máirtín Ó Cadhain's short stories was inspired by Karel Čapek and that Milan Kundera is one of Pádraig Ó Cíobháin's favourite writers.

Even though some of the authors included in the collection are modernist writers, the label does not appear anywhere in the paratexts, and neither is modernism discussed there. However, Flann O'Brien is labelled as a postmodernist or a (post)modernist. The spelling with parentheses signals, however faintly, the shift in O'Brien's position within the literary spectrum. After a period of being recognised primarily as a (pre)postmodernist author (as in the case of the first Czech translation), with the current critical interest in modernism on the rise (and in postmodernism in decline) he is now often identified as a modernist writer (McDonald and Murphet).

The latest Irish-language novel to be published in Czech is Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille*, again in Radvan Markus's translation. It was published in late 2017 by Argo, a major publishing house (all of the books previously discussed were by much smaller-scale publishers) and it has been receiving a fair share of critical and media attention, especially after it won in the translated book category of the most prestigious literary prize in Czechia – Magnesia Litera.

It is supplemented with a fairly extensive essay by Markus. It begins and ends with Breandán Ó hEithir, the Irish writer, who reportedly was a great fan of the book and who also happens to be the father of Brian Ó hEithir, the Irish teacher mentioned on the dustcover of *Muž, který vybuchl*. Breandán Ó hEithir's adaptation of *The Good Soldier Švejk* is brought up again, and Markus, reading the two novels through Bakhtinian concepts, discusses the affinities between the two works. On a more general note, he reports on the inadequacies of Hašek's English translations. Breandán Ó hEithir's Irish adaptation is reported to be the better version – not least because, as Markus argues with the aid of references to Ó hEithir, Irish and Czech share a fondness for the type of vulgarity and insults that the English language cannot render (Ó Cadhain 352–353).

The information that one of Máirtín Ó Cadhain's short stories was inspired by Karel

Čapek, already presented in the 2016 short story collection *Muž, který vybuchl*, is repeated here (Ó Cadhain 340).

The afterword also presents an extensive biography of Ó Cadhain, a formal analysis and interpretation of *Cré na Cille*, quite extensive information about the author's sources, and a section about the novel's reception – in which James Joyce figures quite prominently, as *Cré na Cille* was originally rejected by the publishers for being too Joycean.

Even though the book is advertised on the dustcover as the funniest work of Irish modernism, Irish modernism in any of its versions is hardly a key topic in Markus's essay. However, an interview with Markus conducted by Anna Stejskalová for the journal A2 after he won the Magnesia Litera prize very much revolves around Irish modernism, mainly Joyce and Beckett (Stejskalová 20–21), which seems to suggest that Irish modernism as a marketing slogan on the dustcover helps to steer the discussion on Ó Cadhain's novel in that direction – the other probable reason being that the Joycean-Beckettian Irish modernism is still the most idiomatic form of Irish modernism for any well-informed Czech reader. An interview by Markéta Musilová for iLiteratura.cz, although it has a broader scope of topics than Stejskalová's interview, also begins by asking Markus about Joyce. Unlike Stejskalová, however, Musilová moves on to discuss primarily the Irish language and Irish-language literature, referring to already existing Czech translations and asking Markus about his further translation plans and dreams for the future (Musilová).

While the body of Czech translations of Irish-language literature may seem small in terms of the absolute number of published books, it is in fact very impressive considering how rare fluency in Irish is not only abroad, but even in Ireland itself. Much effort has been put into introducing Czech readers to Irish-language works. With the exception of the paratexts of Pádraic Ó Conaire's *Deoraíocht*, there is a tendency to make Irish-language modernist works accessible and relatable to the Czech reader through strategies similar to the strategy of domestication, by seeking all kinds of connections to various elements of the target culture. Radvan Markus's paratexts, which at this point are found in the majority of books translated from Irish to Czech, tend to include highly relatable types of information such as extensive biographies and anecdotes, often humorous. Humour is also an obvious association triggered by the figure of Jaroslav Hašek, the Czech author most often referred to in the paratexts. Čáp, Chuchma, and Markus are not the only ones to observe affinities between his work and Irish writing. Similarities between James Joyce and Hašek have also been discussed by Tomáš Kubíček (Kubíček 31). This may suggest the potential for more general parallels between Czech and Irish modernist cultures to be observed, thus opening up the field to studying the two cultures' relations within the broader scopes of European modernist networks. Recurring references to Karel Čapek, although less detailed than those made to Hašek, could also serve that purpose. However, modernism as a defining label is used sparingly, even though the postmodernist label is still considered productive in introducing Flann O'Brien. Discussions of the source culture revolve mainly around the situation of Irish-language literature and the Irish language in general, while references to English-language Irish writers, including the easily recognizable moguls such as Joyce and Beckett, are relatively scarce. Effectively, then, the implied Czech readers may fail to recognize Irish-language modernist writing as modernist, but counterintuitively they are likely to accept the works as relatable and familiar despite the fairly exotic and obscure source language they were translated from. The vision offered

by the Czech paratexts is largely based on accessibility to a wider audience, much unlike the stereotype of exclusive, elitist art traditionally associated with high modernism, and on concentrating on the local elements of the source and target cultures and the affinities between them rather than seeking for universal, cosmopolitan traits.

Notes

¹ Gérard Genette, who coined the term, defines paratextuality as the “relationship that binds the text properly speaking, taken within the totality of the literary work, to what can be called its paratext: a title, a subtitle, intertitles, prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals, whether allographic or autographic. These provide the text with a (variable) setting and sometimes a commentary, official or not” (3).

² This is not a specifically Irish problem; it is a part of a larger issue of conflating all English-language writers from the British Isles into the category of “English writers”. For example, Michal Peprník, in his introduction to *Metamorfóza jako kulturní metafora*, admits his surprise at finding out that R. L. Stevenson was a Scotsman, not an Englishman (7).

³ The Gaeltacht biographies were a genre of mainly autobiographical writing that described archaic rural life in Irish-speaking areas (i.e. the Gaeltacht). They became widely popular in the 1930s in Ireland, and their popularity was largely fuelled by the Irish state’s cultural policies of promoting the image of rural Gaelic-speaking regions as the ideal and true Ireland. Much of the production was formulaic and of little artistic value, however *An t-Oileánach* by Tomás Ó Criomhthain, which was the main source parodied in *An Béal Bocht*, was actually much admired by O’Brien. For more on the genre and O’Brien’s use of it in *An Béal Bocht* see Farnon and Taaffe (101–114).

⁴ The copyright section attributes the “Epilogue” to the translator Daniela Furthnerová. As in the book the afterword is followed by the translator’s note, also not explicitly signed with Furthnerová’s name but with her authorship suggested by the title of that text, the impression may arise that the two texts were written by two different authors. The impression is further strengthened by the fact that there is some overlapping in terms of the topics addressed by the two texts (e.g. the Irish language in general), so it is not clear why there are two texts, not one.

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