

THE FIRST TRANSLATIONS OF HARLEM RENAISSANCE POETRY IN SLOVENIA

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Abstract

From the present-day perspective Harlem Renaissance poetry represents an epoch-making contribution by America's black authors to the mainstream literature. However, in the post World War I era black authors struggled for recognition in their homeland. The publication of a German anthology *Afrika singt* in the late 1920s agitated Europe as well as the German-speaking authors in Slovenia. Mile Klopčič, a representative of the poetry of Social Realism, translated a handful of Harlem Renaissance poems into Slovene using, except in two cases, the German anthology as a source text. His translations are formally accomplished but fail to reproduce the cultural significance of the Harlem Renaissance poetry.

In the aftermath of the Civil War millions of former black slaves migrated to the North of the United States in search of work and a better life. As Steinberg notes it came to a drastic change in the white people's perception of the black at the beginning of the 20th century due to "the labor shortages that resulted from the cutoff of immigration [that] provided blacks with their first real opportunity to be hired in northern industry" (Steinberg 202). Their leaving by the hundreds of thousands triggered a wave of economic panic in the South as well as forced the Northern employers to lower the racial barriers. "The First World War thus marked the beginning of a black exodus from the South that would continue for over half a century" (203). This exchange of the agricultural environment for the industrial resulted in the proletarianization of American blacks. Steiner has rightly observed that "a caste system evolved in industry that designated certain jobs as 'negro jobs', and relegated black workers to the lowest paying, and not infrequently back-breaking or dangerous jobs" (Steiner 206).

Against this backdrop of a society that was organized on racial principles there evolved, in the 1920s, a black literary movement in New York's Harlem. At the time it was known as Negro poets, nowadays we know it as the Harlem Renaissance. It can be regarded as the black authors' response to the general feeling of alienation and isolation as well as disappointment with the philistine American society. Diggins has observed that lingering stereotypical images of the good-natured "Sambo" and "Uncle Tom" – such as perpetuated in the popular film "The Birth of a Nation" – propelled a number of

black poets toward the “lyrical left” such as propagated in the 1920s by John Reed and Max Eastman (123, 131). Mottram agrees by saying that “Negro poetry was the most significant proletarian poetry of the interwar years, more intelligent and less politically hidebound than the New Masses dogmatists, if less politically defined towards action in its complexities” (Mottram in Bradbury and Palmer, 235). Last but not least, Soto calls attention to *The New Negro Anthology* of 1925 where its editor Locke “together with W.E.B. DuBois, Jessie Redmon Fauset, James Weldon Johnson, and a handful of additional critics, cemented the notion that an avant-garde of accomplished artists might pave the way for a broad program of social uplift” (919).

Literary historians have placed the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s, the time of the Jazz Age, spanning across the decade until the onset of the Depression with some belated reverberations in the 1930s.

Now that more than seven decades have lapsed since its upsurge, the time is right to look at who brought it to the attention of Slovene reading audience, and, when they did so, how.

In the 1920s Slovenia, at the time a part of the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Slovenes and Croats, took no heed of the Harlem Renaissance whatsoever. The country had been historically linked with the German-speaking world as a part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Consequently, few people could speak and/or write English. Translations from American literature were rare. Stanonik cites the following authors whose individual works were published in Slovene before 1920: Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Washington Irving, Edgar A. Poe, Upton Sinclair and James F. Cooper. Translations of American juvenile literature dominated the 1920s. The first black author to be translated into Slovene was Harriet Beecher Stowe whose *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was translated twice – in Celovec (nowadays Klagenfurt, Austria) as *Stric Tomaž ali življenje zamorcev v Ameriki* (1853) and in Ljubljana (*Stric Tomova kočica ali življenje zamorcev v robnih državah severne Amerike*, 1853) (Stanonik 69-70; Jurak 1960:118). Both translations are classified as juvenile literature. At this stage in the history the attitude of Slovenians toward the black race can only be described as naïve. There had been no Negroes around which blurred the people's perception of negritude; black people were considered exotic, unearthly, and alien. It is interesting that the Slovene word for “Negro” bears no reference to black skin. According to Snoj (846) the word “zamorec” denotes a person who lives behind the sea, i.e. far, far away. The word, common in the 19th century is still in use but has, over time, acquired a negative connotation similar to “nigger”. The neutral term in modern use is “črnc” (black man).

Between the two world wars, Slovenia opened up to contemporary European literary movements though it was still lagging behind. In the decade following the Armistice, Slovenian literature experienced a flowering of Expressionism (at the time already extinct in its land of origin, Germany) and Futurism. After 1930, however, social realism, a modest offspring of the concurrent Russian socialist realism, began to take over. Its basic demand being faithful in portrayal of real life, it took nourishment from traditional realism and naturalism, albeit on a new basis stressing mostly man's social aspects over his psychological setup. Social realism embraced a deterministic view of human existence placing social determinants above the biological ones allowing for,

at the same time, man's predisposition to goodness, happiness and justice. The most important characteristic of social realism was a historical view of man's social existence – clearly an adaptation from Marxism. Given that man belongs to a certain class and that class struggle determines his happiness, class struggle will end with the triumph of the proletariat which can be achieved through step-by-step changes. Social realism thus concentrated on the fate of 'little people' – peasants and laborers, their misfortunes and their inclination toward happiness (Kos 281). When Sinclair Lewis received the 1930 Nobel Prize for literature for his realistic novels of American middle class life Slovene authors for the first time showed a lively interest in contemporary American literature. In the spring of 1932 Slovene American author Louis Adamic visited his homeland after nineteen years of absence. Having moderately succeeded as a writer in the United States with his books *Dynamite* (1931) and *Laughing in the Jungle* (1932), he was enthusiastically greeted by the Slovene intelligentsia who felt honored to enjoy the company of "a great American author".¹ He, in turn, used the opportunity to put the Slovene translators on the right track by alerting them to the newest developments in American literature including black poetry.

In this atmosphere of heightened social sensitivity the Slovene author Mile Klopčič (1905-1984) first introduced Harlem renaissance poets to Slovene readers. There could hardly have been a more appropriate person to do it: born in L'Hopital, France as the son of a Slovene emigrant miner and growing up in poor, working-class environment, genetically predisposed him to social realism. Klopčič whose poetry began to appear in print in the 1920s turned to social realism around 1930, becoming one of its leading harbingers in Slovenia. The most frequent motifs of his poetry include suffering, the daily struggle of a poor laborer as well as class struggle. His poetic style is clear and precise using relatively few figures of speech preferring traditional well-structured stanzas, regular meter and end-rhyme. His particular strength lies in the ability to observe the tiniest detail.

When and how did Klopčič chance upon the Harlem Renaissance? In an interview in 1977² he said he had taken an interest in Negro poetry in the 1930s. Although he had been in touch with the Slovene American socialist author Ivan Molek,³ Klopčič said he had had no access to the original Harlem Renaissance poetry then. It was presumably due to his lack of fluency in English that he turned to German anthologies instead, particularly the epoch-making *Afrika singt* (published in 1929 by Anna Nussbaum). The prewar climate of uncertainty and intimidation sharpened the senses of the European reader who, for the first time, was able to share a black person's feelings of frustration, despair, longing and hope. The book is said to have been the first European attempt to translate black American poetry into German.

In her introduction, the editor Anna Nussbaum refers to the anthology as "eine geschlossene Auslese Afro-amerikanischer Lyrik in deutscher Sprache" (a 'unified' selection of African American lyrical poetry in the German language) (Nuss-

¹ Adamic reached the status of celebrity only after his return to the States with the publication of *The Native's Return* (1934).

² Interview with the author of this article conducted on February 10, 1977.

³ Molek (1882-1962) was poet, prose writer, dramatist, journalist. He emigrated in 1900, lived in Pennsylvania, Chicago, New York and California.

baum 8). Her assessment places the value of this poetry on racial consciousness and the connection with Africa, citing Alain Locke who proclaimed the poet's roots to be the quintessential poetic motive (9). According to Nussbaum, the sole purpose of the anthology was a "Beitrag zur Wahrheit" (a contribution to the truth) (Ibid.).

Given that the editor must select, Nussbaum concentrated on the lyrics that reverberate with the rhythm of spirituals, blues and jazz. According to her, the selection was not intended to please those who find cheap pleasure in syncopation but rather to prove that such "music" results from the musical nature of a black person (10).

As already mentioned, Slovene authors of the 1930s tilted towards the German cultural sphere. When Nussbaum's anthology stirred the German-speaking countries, Slovene author Mile Klopčič was among the first to listen in to the novelty.

Adamic's visit was the right occasion for telling him about his translations from the Harlem Renaissance poetry stimulated by the publication of Nussbaum's anthology. Adamic immediately ordered some anthologies of Negro poetry from the United States for Klopčič to use.

In the summer of 1932, Fran Albreht, the editor of a literary magazine the *Ljubljanski zvon* (The Ljubljana Bell)⁴ decided to publish a special (American) issue of the magazine to include poetry, short fiction and nonfiction. Mile Klopčič who was among the main participants was responsible for the poetry section. He selected the poems he had translated himself, and wrote a short introduction "Iz lirike črncev" (From the Lyrics of the Negro). There he mentioned the persistence and the persuasive power of black poets and prose writers in their attempt to assert themselves against the mainstream white majority. In his general assessment of the Harlem Renaissance poetry Klopčič says that it expresses a yearning for the African homeland and hatred for the white man. That, according to Klopčič, is rapidly giving way to the black people's "wish, plea and demand" (431) for both races to become brothers; Klopčič substantiates his idea by quoting Langston Hughes' line "Tudi mi smo Amerika" (We, too, are America) (Ibid.). Interestingly though, Klopčič no longer interprets the black man's bitterness as derived from black inequality but he takes a more universal approach instead by saying it is an expression of modern man's sense of despair. It must have been difficult for Klopčič to make a balanced and fair assessment of the Harlem Renaissance poetry at a time when so little was known about American literature in Slovenia. In his introduction he recalls the critical response following the publication of Sterling Brown's collection *Southern Road* but it is doubtful if he ever read any of the articles that he mentions. I believe his chief sources of information were the Slovene American press, particularly the *Prosveta* (the Enlightenment), edited by John Molek, and Adamic.

In his introduction that precedes the handful of translated poems, in part based on Nussbaum's "Biographischer Anhang" (Biographical supplement, 157-170) Klopčič briefly introduces the poets providing the basic biographical as well as bibliographical data. Speaking of Langston Hughes, he comments in brief on his poetic craftsmanship by evoking his blues poems as modeled after Negro folk songs. In the case of Claude McKay, Klopčič finds his travels to Europe and the Soviet Union the most notable. In the

⁴ Ljubljanski zvon, vol.,7-8 (1932), 431-437.

conclusion Klopčič confesses his translations are largely based on the German translations without having had the opportunity to compare them with the original poems. The readers are kindly advised to consider them “free recreations” (Klopčič 431). Klopčič’s selection includes the following poems:

James Weldon Johnson, “Stvarjenje. Črnska pridiga” (The Creation);
Countee Cullen, “Črnc govori črni” (Brown Boy to Brown Girl);
Langston Hughes, “Naša dežela” (Our Land) and “Novo dekle v kabaretu” (The New Cabaret Girl);
Sterling Brown, “Maumee Ruth”;
Claude McKay, “Trudni delavec” (The Tired Worker).

It should be pointed out that slightly less than two decades after their first publication by the *Ljubljanski zvon*, Klopčič published an anthology of his translations from world poetry *Divji grm* (The Wild Bush, 1952) subtitled “Prevodi in prepesnitve” (Translations and re-creations). Part Three of the book contained English, American (i.e. Harlem Renaissance) and German poems. Klopčič reprinted most of the poems from the *Ljubljanski zvon*, however, he left out Johnson’s sermon “The Creation” replacing it with yet another poem by Langston Hughes, “Tudi jaz” (I, Too). Some of the 1932 poems were slightly changed by the translator. The modifications were carried out to improve the aesthetic effect.

The above mentioned poems can be found in various sections of *Afrika singt*. The first section “Die neue Heimat” (The New Homeland) contains two poems by Langston Hughes: “Auch ich singe Amerika (I, Too, 42) and “Unser Land” (Our Land, 45). Section “Arbeit” (Work) includes Claude Mc Kay’s “Der müde Arbeiter” (The Tired Worker, 56). Hughes’ “Das neue Kabarettmädel” (The New Cabaret Girl, 100) can be found in the section “Harlem, and Countee Cullen’s “Brauner Junge zu braunem Mädchen” (Brown Boy to Brown Girl, 118) in the section “Liebe” (Love).

On p.145 of *Afrika singt* a quotation from Langston Hughes explains the fundamental nature of the blues songs contained in the book as a kind of Negro folk songs that, unlike the spirituals, possess a certain poetic form. The poet calls attention to the sadness of tone that characterizes the blues, however, when the blues are sung people tend to laugh (Hughes in Nussbaum, 145). In an afterword, Hermann Kesser attempts to define from the European cultural perspective what he calls the “Blues-Lebensgefühl”. He portrays it as a musical circle consisting of the awareness of a ruined life, the slavery, the impossibility to change things on the one hand, and the joy of being and the never ending Negro temperament on the other. The resulting music based on primitive prehistoric work rhythms is presented as “rauschaft” (ecstatic), however there is this dull and monotonous sound that is repeated as a refrain; the Negro verses, so Kesser, cast a shadow behind them. Kesser further notes that the whites dance to this magically exotic music: however, it is time “in unsere Tänze etwas Echtes zu mischen” (to mix something truthful into our dances, 144).

Keeping in mind Beaugrande’s thesis that “[t]he basis of the act of translation is not the original text but rather the representation of the text that is eventually generated in the translator’s mind” as well as that most errors in translation occur due to “inaccurate reading” and not “inaccurate writing” (Beaugrande in Diaz-Diocaretz 18) my attention will focus on the translators’ ability or inability to preserve the cultural significance

of the source texts in their translations. It is not the purpose of this paper to analyze in detail the translators' solutions for special structures, themes, imagery, point of view, mode and tone, language and the elements of prosody. I will rather look at the translators' solutions to overcome the cultural gap. The question that poses itself is: Were the translators aware of a larger historical picture or were they missing it?

The dilemma concerning Mile Klopčič's translations of the above-mentioned poems is that they were translations of translations with just two exceptions: Johnson's "The Creation" and Brown's "Maumee Ruth." Klopčič's source text was not the original American poem but its German translation. This means that in line with Jakobson's definition (Jakobson in Diaz-Diocaretz 20) the poems' English language was interpreted in the light of the German language first and that, in turn, in the light of the Slovene language. Both German and Slovene translators were motivated by their world vision, they were guided by their cultural and ideological presuppositions. The German translators (Anna Siemsen, Anna Nussbaum and Josef Luitpold) had to solve the difficulties of language (particularly the length of words and the use of black vernacular), syntax, rhythm and style. In the process of writing (interpreting) they frequently resorted to reduction or even omission and only now and then to expansion. On a general level, the same applies to Klopčič's translations.

Let us look at some of the translators' solutions in the case of Langston Hughes' "The New Cabaret Girl".

The poem is a blues song written in the black vernacular. The male speaker introduces a new cabaret girl who also gets the chance to speak. Their words are alive and sinewy, his are further rough and rude. The poem consists of six four-line stanzas with every second line rhyming. Given the brevity of lines (dimeter, trimeter, tetrameter) the end rhyme heightens the emotional effect of the speaker's words and so does the refrain "If her daddy ain't white/Would be a surprise"(3,4), "If her daddy ain't fay/Would be a surprise" (15-16). The speaker's words reveal the brutal reality of black life: a young mulatto girl, probably the illicit offspring of some white delinquent has caught the speaker's eye because he too is black and can relate to her suffering. Being black the girl can do little except prostitute herself to make a living.

The translation of black vernacular used by Hughes as textual strategy and as such indispensable to the meaning seemed to be the most problematic to the translators Anna Siemsen and, subsequently, Mile Klopčič. There is no parallel language in German or Slovene. Siemsen introduced some dialectal expressions (Ich *fragt* sie *heut* Nacht, *Mädel*, *Mädelchen*, mit Augen *wies* Meer) that lack the social function of the Negro speech. The first line "that little yaller gal" (1) was translated as "Ein Mädelchen gelb". Here the translator's mediation between the source text and the target reader failed completely as she neglected the cultural significance of the word "yaller" (meaning yellow) denoting a person of light brown complexion, a mulatto. Siemsen further replaced the specific Negro cultural context with the German in lines 5 and 6 by substituting "Schnaps" for "gin and "Likör" for "corn". In the source text the male speaker's approach to the girl can be described as a mixture of anger aimed at the philistine society that forced the girl to seek a morally questionable profession, and his human concern and pity. However, the line "That crazy little yaller gal" (13) melts down to sentimental pity ("Du armes, kleines Mädel" [You poor little girl]) in Siemsen's poem.

The Slovene translator followed Siemsen's example closely except in the first stanza where he inverted the lines: "Ein Mädelchen gelb,/ Mit Augen wies Meer" (1-2) was translated as "Z očmi kakor morje/ z rumeno poltjo..." (With eyes like sea/ with yellow skin). The cultural significance of "yaller" is not only lost in the Slovene poem, the syntagm "rumena polt" (yellow skin) is misleading as it suggests a person of Asian origin. What is more, the black cultural context is neutralized ("gin/Schnaps" becomes "žganje" and "corn/Likör" turns into "liker") and sentimental pity becomes the dominant emotion. Unlike Siemsen the Slovene translator bowed to the unwritten rule of the time to use standard literary language only.

Countee Cullen's poem "Brown Boy to Brown Girl" was translated to German by Josef Luitpold, and Klopčič translated from Luitpold. This Italian sonnet dedicated to Cullen's first wife Yolande, the daughter OF W.E.B. Du Bois, posed a number of formal problems. The translators' attempts to solve them had a devastating effect on the meaning of the German and Slovene versions. In Cullen's text the speaker's first line introduces a six-line argument meant to convince the beloved of the truth of the speaker's proposition, a set of certainties (him holding her hand, her hair shining in the setting sun, him breaking the invisible line between the two of them) which the speaker then contrasts with the great unknown – the uncertainty concerning his personal freedom. The translators resorted to romantic clichés that completely eroded the meaning. Whereas the source text contains a series of powerful images in the sestet – telling of a time "long before this pain" in "a land of scarlet suns" before the hurricane fell upon them, both translations present the two lovers who have become entangled in the web of love sighing (German) and suffering (Slovene) under foreign skies on a foreign soil. Hughes' tangled syntax obviously presented a major obstacle to both translators. Although Klopčič searched for some other solutions than Luitpold (he may have compared the German translation with the original) his and Luitpold's poems fell short of the meaning of the source text.

Claude Mc Kay's "The Tired Worker" bears the theme of social protest: a tired black worker is looking forward to the evening and night as the only time to rest his "tired hands and aching feet" (9). The speaker uses very emotional language to address his innermost being urging it to whisper softly as the afternoon slowly drifts into evening. He is turning inwards while his aching body anticipates peace and rest. Although Mc Kay never uses the word "black" in his poem it is evident that the speaker is a Negro. His tiredness is extreme, slave like. At the end of the day he will only be capable of a "leaden sigh" (7), his day was "wretched" (8), his whole being is weary – "my veins, my brain, my life" (13). Both translators, Luitpold followed by Klopčič, evidently puzzled over the poem's form. Whereas Luitpold concentrated on preserving the Shakespearean sonnet form, Klopčič tried to create an Italian sonnet but failed in terms of the rhyme scheme. The translations thus present a tired speaker at the end of the day but the connotation of blackness is lost.

Langston Hughes' "Our Land" has an ironic subtitle – "Poem for a decorative panel" – unobserved by either translator, Luitpold and Klopčič. The source text tells about an America that is ugly, brutal, insensitive to the plight of a black man. Images of ugly reality are contrasted with dreamlike sensory imagery intended to present the physical world as it should be: full of sunshine, fragrant waters, chattering birds and green

landscape. The translators worked hard to hold on to the evocative power of Hughes' imagery, however their poems nevertheless fall short of the poetic excellence of the source text. The translators employed more straightforward, less passionate language. Whereas the source text abounds in repetitions, exclamations, the use of sound effects, especially long vowels and diphthongs, alliteration and assonance, most of that is sadly missing in the German and the Slovene poem. Hughes' is a blues song, melancholic in tone, sung slowly and passionately, using a unique rhythm. The translators' misrepresentation of "where the twilight/ is a *soft bandanna handkerchief*"(5) as "Rosengold-Gewand"/ "Zametna halja v rdečem in zlatem" (red-and-gold velvet frock) eliminates a powerful symbol of negritude. The same goes for the idea of movement, of going away when hard times become unbearable, so characteristic of blues songs, expressed in the final stanza: "O sweet away!! Ah, my beloved one, away" (16,17). Luitpold omitted the above lines, as did Klopčič.

The translations of Langston Hughes' "I, too" appeared in Nussbaum's anthology as well as the anthology *Divji grm*. This beautiful free verse poem with the theme of black struggle resonates with the elements of African American oral tradition and blues. The poem is an expression of immense racial pride of the speaker who is a black man. The introductory line "I, too sing America" steps up to "I am the darker brother" only to confront the ironic "They send me to eat in the kitchen" (1-3). But the black speaker laughs while getting ready for his big day when no one will dare send him away when guests come. The speaker of the poem juxtaposes two worlds, the bleak present and the brilliant future by using standard English this time, the speaker's language being terse, clipped, factual. The dominant idea of the poem is the speaker's pent-up anger and racial pride. Nussbaum's and Klopčič's translations can be considered worthy representations of the source text although both translators took liberties to reverse some lines, join them - or even change the first one into the poem's title (Nussbaum's solution not followed by Klopčič). Apart from the above there were relatively few shifts in either translation and the meaning of the poem is as clear in the translations as it is in the source text owing to the relative simplicity of the vocabulary, syntax and free verse form.

The last two poems are, translation-wise, easier to evaluate than the above since there is no German intermediary between the source text and its Slovene translation. Klopčič recalled how Louis Adamic first read and then interpreted Sterling Brown's ballad "Maumee Ruth" to him and how he, Klopčič, later on ploughed through the task of "translating" prose into verse. Sterling used standard English with an occasional vernacular expression ("gal", "snow" for "cocaine", "peach" for "woman"). The unidentified black speaker presents his brutal, unsentimental verdict at the time of Maumee Ruth's death and burial. The poor black woman died forgotten by her own children who got lost in the cruel jungle of America. The poem is a reminder to the insensitive, racist America of what the system does to its black people.

Klopčič was careful to hold on to the rhythm and the rhyme of the source poem as well as the repetitions: "Might as well bury her / And bury her deep. /Might as well put her Where she can sleep" ("Pa jo pokopljimo, /pokopljimo globoko v zemljo./ Pa jo v grob spustimo, /kjer spala bo mirno"). There are two Slovene versions of the poem; the second one, published in the 1952 anthology was modified by Klopčič - mostly insignificant shifts like the removal of accents and a rewriting of the third stanza to

secure a regular metrical pattern. Klopčič's poem is a faithful enough representation of Brown's poem in Slovene. With its simple syntax and few figures of speech, the poem was relatively easy to translate.

James Weldon Johnson's "The Creation" was also translated directly from English. As was the case with the above poem, the intermediary Louis Adamic. With the exception of a few misrepresentations such as "Dolgčas mi je" (I'm bored) instead of Johnson's "I'm lonely", as well as minor shifts such as changing the punctuation, joining two lines into one and simplifying, Klopčič adhered to the source text rather faithfully selecting his words carefully, choosing poetic expressions and marking the accent to make his language sound more formal. Under the circumstances, Klopčič performed well, his version of Johnson's poem capturing the meaning and the spirit of the Negro creation myth.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the 20th century in Slovenia literary translation was struggling to be recognized as art. The translators were encouraged to strive towards an artistic recreation of the source text rather than a simple transmission from a foreign language to Slovene (Menart 1975). In the late 1920s Mile Klopčič joined in the enthusiastic reception of the Harlem Renaissance poets in the German-speaking countries. The poems published in the anthology *Afrika singt* addressed him as a human being and as a poet. Unable to resist the temptation, he translated a handful of poems into Slovene thereby disregarding one of the basic rules of translation, i.e. that a translation should always be performed from the original (source) text. Moreover, as a translator he should possess the knowledge of the literary-historical circumstances within which the Harlem Renaissance poems were placed. We have every reason to believe Klopčič's knowledge of the English language and cultural significance of the Harlem Renaissance poetry was insufficient. Whereas the translation should balance the translator's own literary tradition and culture with those of the source text, the former overcame the latter in his translations. Translating from German, Klopčič was aware of the insurmountable culture gap. The poems he was about to translate were removed from the specific cultural context of the Negro movement in post World War 1 New York to an utterly different cultural context of the late 1920s Slovenia by way of another wholly different context of the postwar Germany. Therefore he set himself the goal to produce translations that would be intelligible on the level of competence – to the Slovene reader, his primary goal being to create esthetic effect. His translations need therefore be judged in the context of their time and external circumstances. Their quality falls short of the poetic excellence of the Harlem Renaissance and in a number of cases his translation changed the meaning of the poem, which leads us to conclude that the historical value of Klopčič's translations exceeds their literary quality.

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