

Views on Translation by Selected Polish Writers of the Enlightenment

Agnieszka Kałużna, University of Zielona Góra, Poland
agarob11@o2.pl

Abstract

The article presents views on translation expressed by selected Polish eighteenth century writers. Debate on translation includes issues regarding translating prose and poetry. Polish writers provide guidelines how to render proverbs, borrowings or anachronisms, whether to focus on transferring the meaning or on following words. The notion of genius in translation is thoroughly discussed and the act of imitation severely criticised. Finally conclusions are drawn.

Key words

views on translation, Polish writers of the Enlightenment Age, translation of prose, translation of poetry, free translation method vs. word-for-word translation method.

1 Introduction

Nowadays, as the access to the Internet and various technological facilities such as a computer, has been so wide, a translator happens to be a person who can skilfully use his/her IT knowledge for the purposes of translation. Today, one can hardly imagine a translator who works without a computer relying exclusively on his own mental and dictionary capabilities. As far as dictionaries are concerned, paper ones are superseded by online dictionaries, which are far more convenient to use and, most importantly, need very little space. To confirm this statement, I can provide an observation I made among my students of the translation class as an example. During the translation classes, I usually encourage my students to bring dictionaries. As a result, the majority of students come equipped with electronic devices and a student with a paper dictionary is definitely in the minority.

It seems that a contemporary translator has to be an IT specialist and a businessman who is responsible for managing his/her own translation activity. He/she is the one to attract customers, to invest in advertising, to rent an office or set up his/her own freelance business.

When it comes to methodology of translation, there still lingers an erroneous view that the work of a translator is simple, easy and fun. This opinion is especially favoured by laymen who believe that there is absolutely no difficulty in

replacing one word in the source language for another word in the target language. On the surface, the work of a translator seems deprived of stress, although more often than not a translator works upon tremendous stress of meeting unfeasible deadlines. The world rushes forward, so are challenges and requirements imposed on translators.

What was the work of a translator like in the past? Was it any easier or more difficult then? How did translators cope without computers? This article is an attempt to provide answers to the above-mentioned questions.

2 Prose translation

2.1 Translation of meaning vs. translation word for word

In order to reproduce a portrait of the eighteenth century translator in Poland, one should turn to essays on translation drawn up in the 'Enlightenment Age'. Translation was the subject of discussion by contemporary writers who willingly shared their opinions in this regard. Debate among writers frequently oscillated on suitable/unsuitable translation methods. The main dominant tendencies were: translation word for word and free translation.

In the 18th century, the theory of translation was triggered and shaped just by views expressed by various writers and it can be said that thanks to their opinions on translation the theory emerged and started evolving. Although it was just a humble beginning, it is worth emphasising that the direction it was following was appropriate. Franciszek Bohomolec (1720-1784) was of the opinion that:

„(...)nie na słowa, ale na rzecz w tłumaczeniu oglądać się należy. To sztuka, to chwalebne tłumaczenie, kiedy ja myśl autora gładko i żywo wyrażę, choć innymi daleko słowy. (...) Tak tłumaczyć jest tłumaczyć mądrze i rozumnie; do słów zaś przywiązywać się jest tłumaczyć po dziecinnemu i niewolniczemu” [Eng: (...) not to words but to meaning one should turn in translation. This is the art and translation worth praising when I express the author's thoughts smoothly, although via completely different words. (...) Such translation is a wise translation; sticking to words too closely is childish and slavish translation] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan 1977, p. 71).

Bohomolec understood that translation cannot be restricted to mere replacement of words and that words are not enough to transfer the meaning. He was far from slavish translation method in which the translator was a hostage to

the words. Words seem important on the surface, however, when one gets closer, it becomes obvious the most significant thing is the meaning. Such a translation that reflects the meaning of the original, according to Bohomolec, is wise, and clinging to words too much is childish.

Bohomolec was not alone in his opinions on the necessity to transfer the meaning, not the words. One of his protagonists was Ignacy Krasicki (1735-1801) who supported a free translation method in the following way:

„(...)do myśli, a nie do słów autora przywiązywać się powinien tłumacz” [Eng: to the author’s thoughts, not words a translator should turn] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 74);

Prawy tłumacz przeistoczyć się powinien w tłumaczonego (...) łatwiej to uczuć można niżeli wyrazić” [Eng: Righteous translator should transform into the translated (...) it is easier to feel than to express] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 75).

Krasicki, apart from praising free translation method, provided guidelines how to translate in the right way. His view was that the translator should try to feel reality of the source text and transfer his feelings and emotions into the target text. Simultaneously, Krasicki strongly criticised the method of translating word for word and had no mercy for literal translators:

„(...) tłumacze albo naśladowcy przywiązujący się szczególnie do słów sprawiedliwie nazwani są od Horacjusza bydłęcą trzodą” [Eng: translators or imitators attaching particularity to words are fairly called after Horace the cattle herd] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 75).

It is plain to see that translation was the issue that provoked extreme emotions in writers such as Krasicki. In a similar vein, Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski (1734-1823) expressed himself:

„Tłumaczyć literalnie to wokabularz spisywać; tłumaczyć mylnie jest to myśli przeistaczać” [Eng: Translating in a literal way equals listing words in a dictionary; translating erroneously equals transforming thoughts] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 89).

Czartoryski explained where the catch was when translating word for word as follows:

„Dosłowni tłumacze i ich obrońcy najczęściej niesmaczność wykładów swoich starają się krasić i wymawiać wiernością nieodstępną oryginałowi; lecz nie zastanawiają się nad tym, że słowa też same we dwóch językach różnią się jednak między sobą, co do zupełności tożsamego znaczenia” [Eng: Literal translators and their defenders try most frequently to find suitable excuses to explain that they have to be faithful to the original. What they do not take into account is the fact that the same words do not equal the same meaning in two languages] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 91).

Why was he not tolerant towards literal translators? Perhaps at that time, they happened too often? The question remains unanswered.

In the 18th century, incidents occurred in which a translator rendered a text not knowing the source language. For instance, someone who knew Latin decided to translate from Greek. As a result, the translator without the knowledge of the source language tried to be slavishly faithful to the words in translation, perhaps with the assistance of dictionaries simply because it must have been very difficult to express a meaning of the language the translator did not know. Today such an approach seems unbelievable, however the past witnessed such cases unfortunately. Perhaps that was the reason why Krasicki and Czartoryski were so critical towards literal translation method? To confirm the statement that such cases had taken place, let turn us to words by Bernard Domasławski: „Głupi (...) kto języka nie umie, a książkę tłumaczy” [Eng: Silly (...) is the one who does not know a language and translates a book] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 81).

The problem of the literal and word-for-word translation method was discussed by Polish writers quite frequently. A similar view to Czartoryski was shared by the poet Euzebiusz Słowacki (1772-1814) who tried to explain why translating in a too-literal way did not add fame to the translator:

„Jedne języki w użyciu przenośni są śmielsze, bojaźliwsze drugie, każda mowa ma pewne przysłowia, pewne upoważnione zwyczajem, w których się wzajemnie rozumiemy: i dlatego niepodobna słownie tłumaczyć z jednego języka na drugi” [Eng: Some languages are bolder in using metaphors than other ones, each language has its specific proverbs and customs understood by the native people; that

is why, it is impossible to translate word for word from one language into another] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 126).

Ignacy Włodek (1723-1780) was the writer who not only supported the idea of transferring the sense of the original and not particular words, but also provided guidelines how to translate in an appropriate way:

„Tłumaczenie powinno być rzetelne nie co do słów, ale co do rzeczy i sposobu opisania, ile język ów, którym się pisze, przypuścić może. (...) do rzetelności jeszcze należy: nic nie przydać ze swego, nic nie ująć z tego, co się tłumaczy (...) ma uważać na rzecz i na wyrażenie rzeczy, żeby z tąż pięknnością wydawało się w języku drugim jak i w pierwszym” [Eng: The translation should be reliable, not to the words, but to the meaning and the way of translating (...) reliance in translation means that the translator should not add anything from himself, not take away anything from the original (...) He should do his best to reflect the original beauty in an equivalent manner] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 83).

An appropriate translation, according to Ignacy Włodek, is the one which does not embellish or impoverish the original but deftly expresses its intention and original beauty. Therefore, such a translation should not be featured as translation but the second original in which the reader could feel that he dealt with authentic text and not a mere copy.

Admittedly, eighteenth century writers set really high standards for translators. The Polish poet, literary critic and historian, Stanisław Potocki (1755-1821) paid attention to ‘sense’ in translation. According to him, a good translation is one that transfers the sense of the original:

„Tłumaczenie dobrym być może, byle dokładnie oddawało sens i myśl autora, byle nim mowa czystą i narodową była. Więcej wymaga przekładanie i w nim prawdziwa sztuka, i trudność tego rodzaju polega: jest ono, że tak powiem, walką między wzorowym pisarzem i przekładającym, który zdobyć na pierwszym wszystkie jego piękności usiłuje i przenieść w swój język, kiedy on zwykle tych piękności dzielnie broni, jak gdyby był ich zazdrosnym. Ta zaś obrona polega w różnym duchu i składzie języków: przemóc ja jest największą zaletą i zaszczytem tłumacza” [Eng: A good translation is such that it exactly reflects the sense of the original and the author, and such that it

preserves genuine, national language of the source text. The real art of translating consists of finding a balance between a brilliant writer and translator, just like in a fight when the translator strives to conquer all the beauty of the original and transfer it into the target language whereas the writer tries to defend all the treasure of the original as if being envious of its beauty. If the translator succeeds in overcoming the author's defence, he deserves the highest praise] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 104).

Typical of the eighteenth century writers, Potocki used a metaphor to illustrate a phenomenon of translation. Potocki assigns translation human features, such as envy and then picturesquely describes the original as a defender or guard of its beauty. The primary role of the translator is to overcome and conquer the difficulties and if successful, deserves the highest praise.

2.2 Guidelines for translators to follow as regards proverbs, borrowings and anachronisms

As far as guidelines regarding translation of selected elements of culture are concerned, the above-mentioned Euzebiusz Słowacki (1772-1814) discussed this issue extensively. He warned translators against a reckless rendition of proverbs, which on the surface seem an interesting variety in translation, but in reality they can be a trap:

„Stąd te wszystkie przypowieści i przysłowia, które w pewnym względzie uważane, stanowią bogactwa i moc języka, w mowie poważnej albo nigdy, albo z wielką ostrożnością używane być mogą. Nadają one niekiedy mowie postać szczeroci i prostoty, ale częściej przez swoją błahość i niskość wyprowadzają czytelnika z potrzebnego omamienia, przerywają poważne działania jego rozumu albo strącają go nagle z wysokości, do której się wzniosła jego imaginacja” [Eng: All those allegories and proverbs which are regarded as pride and fortune of a language, should be used with care in translation. On one hand, they give a language a form of sincerity and simplicity but on the other, due to their trivial and insignificant character, they distract the reader, depriving him of imagination] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 133).

Undoubtedly, Słowacki must have been aware of difficulty in translating a proverb in a manner that would be intangible and comprehensible to the reader.

Słowacki did not approve of using borrowings and anachronisms to excess. He was a proponent of language purity in translation, which he described in the following way:

„Tłumaczenia pism z obcych języków i znajomość ich rozszerzona w narodzie wzbogaca wprawdzie mowę ojczystą, ale uważać pilnie należy, aby przez naganne wprowadzenie cudzoziemskich sposobów mówienia czystość jej skażona nie była. W dawniejszych pisarzach polskich latynizmy, w teraźniejszych galicyzmy germanizmy często postrzegać się dają (...)” [Eng: Indeed, translations from other languages enrich the mother tongue, however, one should be very careful not to contaminate it by introducing foreign patterns, which is blameworthy. In the past, Polish writers exaggerated with Latin borrowings, nowadays, they overuse Galician and German patterns (...)] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 126).

It seems Słowacki was an aesthete for whom beauty of his mother tongue in and beyond translation was of the greatest significance. He featured certain sensitivity to foreign elements in translation and did not tolerate exaggeration. His desire for harmony and ideal form of translation is predominant. Słowacki also paid attention to cohesion in translation and emphasised the necessity of consistency and chronology in translation, which is so often neglected by contemporary writers. To confirm his statements, he provided the following examples:

„Niektórzy z naszych, osobliwie dawniejszych tłumaczy, w przekładaniu nazwisk krajów i urzędów stosują się do czasów i zwyczajów teraźniejszych: tak Wargocki, tłumacząc Cezara, Gallów Francuzami, Germanów Niemcami nazywa lubo te nazwiska później, po nastąpionych odmianach w posadzie narodów, używane być zaczęły: tak Kojałowicz w przekładzie Tacyta nadaje dawnym Rzymianom starostów, biskupów, a nawet konsulów burmistrzami mianuje. Takie anachronizmy oburzają ludzi znających nazwiska i obyczaje starożytne, tym zaś, którzy tych znajomości nie mają, dziwaczne i fałszywe nadają wyobrażenia” [Eng: Some writers, when translating names of offices and countries of the past, use contemporary equivalents, e.g. Wargocki, the writer, when translating Caesar, called Gauls the French and Germani called the German (...) Kojałowicz when translating Tacitus, entitled former Romans as foremen, bishops, consuls or even mayors. Such

anachronisms cause an indignant reaction in people who know ancient customs and traditions, and in those who do not possess that knowledge, a misleading image] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 134).

Perhaps, the lack of coherence and cohesion, as featured by some writers, resulted from negligence and, presumably, hurry. Słowacki's remarks seem timeless and should not be underestimated in the difficult art of translating even today.

2.3 Genius in translation

Nowadays, nobody expects a translator to be such a genius that the qualities of which should be vivid in translation. However, in the 18th century genius was an inseparable part of translation. Then, a translator was perceived as a spirited artist who could, by way of his unique talent and originality, enchant the reader. The translator was believed to possess superhuman qualities and to be, if not a creator of wonders in translation, then just a creator of translation whose role was to improve, embellish and add fame to the original, if necessary. One of the protagonists of such an approach in translation, among other writers, was Ignacy Krasicki (1735-1801) who defined translation as follows:

„Tłumaczenie w rodzaju nauk toż samo zdaje się być co kopiowanie w sztukach; nosi więc na sobie jakoweś piętno upokarzające, iż nie mogąc być sami przez się działaczami, innych działania obwieszczają. Ale obrotna ku pożytkowi swojemu miłość własna umie z upokorzenia ukształcić chlubę: stwarza z uczniów mistrze, a takimi są ci, którzy tłumacząc, poprawiają dzieło i kształcą, a raczej chcą kształcić i poprawiać tych, których tłumaczą” [Eng: Translation, if understood as science, seems similar to a mere act of copying; thus it is just a humiliating activity in which a translator being unable to act independently, is forced to announce somebody else's activities instead of his own. However, a skilful translator can turn humiliation into pride by turning students into masters by means of improving and enriching the original in the form of translation] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 78).

The notion of genius in translation was mentioned by Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski (1734-1823) who described the qualities of an ideal writer in the following way:

„Między przymiotami, które pisarza znakomitym czynią, liczyć należy zgodność geniuszu jego z geniuszem czyli umysłem języka tego, w którym pisze” [Eng: Among qualities a brilliant writer should feature is an ability to comply his own genius with the genius of the original author] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 95).

Stanisław Staszic (1755-1826), the journalist and ideologist of the Enlightenment Age paid attention to challenges a translator is faced with:

„Jedną z największych trudności w dobrym tłumaczeniu jest dokładne rozróżnienie geniuszu języka od geniuszu autora” [Eng: One of the greatest difficulties in translation is to make a distinction between genius of a language and genius of the original author] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 99).

Similar views were shared by Stanisław Potocki (1755-1821) who defined difficulties a translation brings accordingly:

„Przekładanie wielkiego pisarza jest walką stylu i zapaską geniuszu” [Eng: translating a great writer requires conquering the original author’s style and competing the original genius] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 101).

One of the Polish playwrights, critics and historians, Ludwik Osiński (1775-1838) expressed his opinions on creation as an integral part of translation as follows:

„Dobrze więc tłumaczyć jest to tworzyć (...), bez pomocy tworzenia, jaką w oryginale widzimy, przekład nie dostąpi chluby” [Eng: A good translation is such that the translator is a creator (...) without creation so typical of its original, a translation should not deserve honour] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 111).

2.4 Translation vs. imitation

In the Enlightenment Age, translators-imitators were particularly criticised. As it seems, the act of imitating or copying the original was the reason for deprecation and calling a translator an imitator was offensive. According to Ludwik Osiński (1775-1838):

„Pisarze niezdolni dobrze tłumaczyć zwykle tę niedołążność pokrywają zamiarem „naśladowania”, dodając mu nawet niekiedy przymiot „wolnego”. Jak w malarstwie piękniejszy obraz twarzy nie zastąpi braku podobieństwa, tak w przekładzie naśladowanie może być poczytane za dowód, wsparty własnym wyznaniem tłumacza, że przekładać nie umiał” [Eng: Those writers who are incapable of good translation try to hide this infirmity by way of imitation which, they believe, is a kind of free translation. But as it is the case in painting, an image of a face painted in a prettier manner does not substitute for lack of its similarity in the original. In a similar vein, imitation can serve as evidence that the translator could not translate] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 110).

Osiński calls the issue of translator’s incapability an infirmity (Balcerzan 1977: 110), and that infirmity can be associated with lack of skill, senility and disease. In other words, a translator-imitator unmasks the fact of lacking appropriate competence and, according to Osiński, such a person, deprived of translating qualifications, should not translate.

Imitation, from the critical point of view, was also presented by Franciszek Ksawery Dmochowski (1762-1808), who translated from French into Polish. His opinion in this regard is included below:

„Nie chodź ślepo cudzymi ścieżkami jak bydło,
Jeżeli w dobrym chwalebna, tedy w złym obrzydła
Rzecz naśladowanie. Znajdzie kto wiersz nowy,
Już ma tłum naśladowców za sobą gotowy;
A gdy w nim każdy wyraz wiele zawsze znaczy,
Biedne naśladowniki zostają w rozpacz.
Rzadko uda się komu. Wiek świadczy wiekowi-
Nie zrównał naśladowca nigdy autorowi.
Ufajmy więcej sobie, znajmy swe przymioty” (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 88).

Dmochowski’s opinion leaves no illusions as through the expression „biedne naśladowniki” [Eng: poor imitators] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 88) Dmochowski manifests pity towards imitators and believes that the act of copying does not pay any tribute to a translator and it rarely succeeds. His opinion surprises as, it seems, he perceived imitation as an issue of chance, and not as a deliberate action.

3 Translation of poetry

An eighteenth century translator was an artist and a spirited poet. Can a poet translate a poet? What were the views in this regard shared by Polish writers of the Enlightenment Age? One of the notions debated upon was a dilemma if a poem should be translated into verse or into prose. Opinion by Franciszek Karpiński (1741-1825), the poet and playwright, is provided below:

„Dbała o wymowę swoją, Francycja piękny nam z siebie podaje przykład: gdzie czyli co doskonałego w dawnych pisarzach było, czyli się u sąsiadów teraz pokaże, zaraz to na swój język przenoszą. Ani się tym zatrudniają, ażeby poetów dzieła wierszem koniecznie tłumaczyli: ale piękne cudzych autorów wiersze na ojczystą prozę przekładają, nie chcąc tym sposobem słowa jednego z wielkiego mówcy utracić. Tłumaczeniem zaś z wiersza na wiersz, spadków i liczby koniecznością przymuszony, poeta i słowa odmieniać, i od myśli autora często odstąpić musi” [Eng: France gives us a good example: wherever there was anything brilliant in ancient writers, it transformed this into French. They were not bothered to translate verse into verse] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 85).

Karpiński pointed out that some writers who translated verse into prose, did it in a way that did not harm the original at all, as they were able to transfer the author's intentions in an accurate way, although via completely different words. Assuredly, they did their best to maintain similar number of syllables and rhymes as in the original. Yet, it was not always possible to reconcile a sense of the source text with such a challenging style of language.

During the Enlightenment, there was a belief that poetry was sweetness to the ear and the translated poetry should be forgiven imperfection, as its predominant role was to educate, advise and communicate the truth. Such an opinion was shared by Maciej Grzegorz Garnysz (1740-1790), who admired the manner in which Jan Kochanowski (1530-1584) translated poetry. For Garnysz Kochanowski's translation was: „pieszczenie ucha wieku osiemnastego” [Eng: caressing the ear of the eighteenth century] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 87). Garnysz's view on Kochanowski's translation methods is included below:

„Chcąc, aby nowemu tłumaczeniu ususzył się stary Kochanowski, należy podobno na dopełnienie braku nagrodzić wdziękiem i powagą, a przywabić słodczą pieśczone ucho wieku osiemnastego i pisząc

dla narodu – ulegać nawet narowom narodowym, inaczej nawet na wstępie zrażony któżkolwiek reszty nie dosłucha. Zbieganie się chropowate jednozgłoskowych wyrazów, (...) obrotów niezupełnie przyswojonych przysada – zdaje się uchybiać celu gładkości szlachetnej poezji, której szczególna od innych umiejętności jest cecha, aby nauczając wmawiała prawdę wdziękiem i słodyczą w umysły nawet odporne i twarde” [Eng: To enrich Kochanowski’s translation, it could be completed by charm and seriousness and sweet caress of the ear of the eighteenth century so that it could reflect national impulses. The role of poetry is to communicate the truth even to resistant and hard minds in a charming and sweet way] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 87).

Poetry was compared to music the chords of which should feature harmony and be pleasant to the ear, both in the original and translation. The success of this project lay in the hands of a conductor-translator who tried to meet this difficult challenge. Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski (1734-1823) emphasised that poetry was far more difficult to translate than prose:

„Poezji tłumaczenie nierówne staje się (jak każdy przyzna) pracowitsze niżeli prozy, bo daleko jest więcej trudności do przełamania: lecz za to na pokonaniu owych trudności zasadza się doskonałość roboty. (...) Urok poezji wynika z połączenia siły w myślach z trafnością, wytworu bez przesady i naciągania z niepospolitością w rzeczach samych i w wyrazach, tudzież dowcipu z niezawodnością gustu; węzeł tego połączenia zaciskać i nierozzerwalnie utrzymywać powinna harmonia. Wdzięk zaś i harmonia tak mało być mogą tłumaczonymi jak muzyka i własnorodności charakter nosić na sobie mają koniecznie” [Eng: Translating poetry is more industrious than translating prose as there are far more difficulties to break. But the success of breaking those difficulties is the essence of the work. (...) The charm of poetry results from linking the power of thoughts with accuracy, creation without exaggeration, exceptionality, humour and infallibility of taste; this knot should be tightened by harmony. And harmony translates like music recognised by its unique charm] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 91).

The eighteenth century expectations as to how poetry should be translated were very ambitious. It was believed that a translator should intercept the author's thoughts, transfer the form of the original as close as possible and enchant the reader with harmonious melody of his translation. The work of a translator was compared to that of a sculptor. Such an opinion was featured by Ludwik Osiński (1775-1838), which is provided below:

„Tu kunszt poddaje się łąkliwie powtórzeniu rysów, kolorów, stosunków, kształtów i postaci oryginału; tłumacz zaś mówcy lub poety, jeżeli mógł mieć udział w tym porównaniu, uważać by go raczej należało jak rzeźbiarza, chcącego z malowania posąg utworzyć, lub przeciwnie” [Eng: The art gives way to repeating features, colours and shapes of the original; the translator of a speaker or poet should be regarded as a sculptor who attempts to transform his sculpture into a brilliant painting] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 110).

In the light of the above quotation, translation was perceived as an art, and the translator was expected to manifest his artistic expression to the highest degree, not transgressing the original at all. Ludwik Osiński described this phenomenon accordingly:

„Ważnym rymotwórstwa tryumfem będzie zawsze trudność zwyciężona, i to zniamię jest wszystkim sztukom właściwe. Cóż nas najwięcej uderza i zadziwia w obrazie, w posągu, w poemacie? To zapewne, iż sztuka zdolną była nadać marmurowi miękkość kształtów żyjących, płótnu wszelką miąższość postaci i łudzący pozór przestrzeni, wierszowi zaś, mimo więzy miary i rymu, tę samą wolność i swobodę, jaka byłaby piszącego zwyczajnym językiem, którym on bez musu i bez trudu zmąsły i serce zniewala” [Eng: The important aspect of translation consists in a triumph of creating rhymes, so typical of the art. What amazes us most in a painting, statue or poem? Assuredly the fact that the art was able to endow a piece of marble softness of shapes characteristic of living creatures, a piece of canvas an illusionary shell of space, a poem the same freedom and ease as in the original, despite bonds of rhymes] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan, 1977, p. 123).

Metaphorical frame in the approach of translation seems typical of the Enlightenment Age. The norm was to compare the translator's work to that of a

painter who does his best to express similarity of the original via slightly different colours, if necessary. Euzebiusz Słowacki (1772-1814) provided his opinion in this regard in the following way:

„Tłumacz, który nie przelał w siebie duszy oryginalnego pisarza i który mechanicznej prawie oddany pracy, mniej na moc myśli niż na liczbę wyrazów daje baczenia, taki, mówię, tłumacz jest w przypadku wspomnianych malarzy. Obce są dla niego piękności wzoru, bo ich nie czuje: wielkie obroty wymowy, uniesienia czułości, górne obrazy imaginacji, giną w jego przekładzie; bo na jego umyśle i sercu nie uczyniły wrażenia: wszędzie on same tylko widzi wyrazy i kształty mówienia” [Eng: A translator who does not transfer the soul of the original author and works mechanically, focusing more on counting words than on power of thoughts can be compared to a painter. Such a painter does not care for beauty of the original because he does not feel it; his imagination is resistant to its charm, which makes no impression on him. All he can see is just words and language shapes] (translated by Agnieszka Kałużna) (Balcerzan 1977: 129).

The above fragment makes us realise how sensitive eighteenth century writers must have been. Their sensitivity referred to beauty, art and harmony in translation. Presumably, they believed that by way of sensitivity, they could accomplish perfection in translation. And, as it was then, this ideal has still remained unattainable today.

4 Conclusion

Nowadays, nobody expects a translator to be a poet, painter or sculptor of the source text. Is contemporary translation associated with harmonious melody of the original? Has not the profession of a translator been dominated by commerce? Perhaps our down-to-earth, contemporary translators-IT specialists could do with a little fineness? Was the Enlightenment Age particularly abundant with translators-geniuses who were so sensitive to beauty? What were the features of the 18th century translators-geniuses? Could contemporary translators be patterns to imitate by those from the Enlightenment? Maybe those translators were more writers and poets than experts in translation? Let's allow these questions to remain unanswered.

When it comes to my personal opinion, I would like to believe that translation heritage of the past epochs could serve as inspiration for contemporary translators because such excellent patterns are definitely worth imitating and

one could learn a lot from our wiser ancestors. In the 18th century, the work of a translator must have been very challenging, much more difficult than today. This exceptional activity was restricted to talented poets only. Nowadays, a translator can avail of computer assistance, which makes his work easier but, at the same time, tempts and encourages the contemporary translator to imitate and copy various materials rather than to create his/her own masterpiece.

In an era of progress and modern technologies, one cannot help but notice that contemporary translators gazing into the distance seem to search for treasure that his ancestors had already found ages ago. Therefore, perhaps it is a good idea to appreciate the knowledge that the past still offers us today and thus, save it from oblivion.

References

- BALCERZAN, E. (1977). *Pisarze polscy o sztuce przekładu*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie.
- KALUŻNA, A. (2011). *English Literary Translations into Polish until 1800*. Zielona Góra: Oficyna Wydawnicza Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego.
- KOTT, J. (1956). *Poezja Polskiego Oświecenia*. Warszawa: Czytelnik.
- LIBERA, Z. (1988). *Od Średniowiecza do Oświecenia*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- SADKOWSKI, W. (2002). *Odpowiednie dać słowu słowo*. Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka.
- STĘPIEŃ, M., & WILKOŃ, A. (1980). *Historia literatury polskiej w zarysie*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.

Contact

Assoc. Professor Agnieszka Kałużna, PhD.
Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Neophilology
University of Zielona Góra, Poland
agarob11@o2.pl