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IDEOLOGY IN POLISH TRANSLATIONS OF ANGLO-AMERICAN LITERATURE

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Abstract: Ideology has always influenced translation, yet this fact became a topic of scholarly research only in the 1990s. The working of ideology in literary translations most often manifests itself as a conflict of value systems. From vast reservoir of foreign sources, the native axiology absorbs values that it needs to sustain its culture. It is not a coincidence that Anglo-American literature, propagating ideas of democracy and individual freedom, became popular in Poland in the first half of the nineteenth-century when Poland did not exist as a state. Only a century later, American literature was the most popular of all foreign literatures in pre-1939 Poland. World War II changed this situation, and the Soviet-controlled apparatchiks favored translations that were ‘politically correct.’ Yet, because of their connections with earlier revolutionary movements, avant-garde Anglo-American writers were often published during the communist regime, for example Virginia Woolf, whose novels were standardized to appeal to the tastes of popular readers. After Poland regained independence in 1989, the national book market was privatized and commercialized, and avant-garde literature needed advertising to get noticed. Cormack McCarthy’s novels were translated into Polish on the wave of popularity of the Coen brothers movie based on *No Country for Old Men*. The two Polish translations of McCarthy’s novel try to sound like a typical hard-boiled realistic fiction. This is where the ideology of consumerism meets the ideology of communism: literature is a means to sustain – and control – a cultural monolith, where all differences are perceived as possible threats to social order.

Key words: ideology, Polish translations of Anglo-American literature, Romanticism, avant-garde, Virginia Woolf, Cormack McCarthy

1. Introduction

The influence of ideology on translation first became a focus of scholarly research at the turn of the twentieth-century. Maria Celzada-Pérez (2014:loc.67), who edited an influential anthology of criticism about the relationship between ideology and translation, observes that towards the end of the 1990s linguists developed a new research trend – critical discourse analysis – whose aim was to “expose the ideological forces that underlie communicative exchanges.” Following in their footsteps, some translato-logists, such as Peter D. Fawcett (1998:107), found translation a site of constant ideological encounters; others, including André Lefevere (1992:87), put forward a claim that ideology was the most important level of translation, providing a basis for the remaining levels, such as poetics, universe of discourse, and language.

As the Belgian-American theorist elucidates, the working of ideology manifests itself as a conflict of value systems. In order to get published, the translation has to follow acceptable literary standards in the target language culture, which may require a

modification of the original text, or – in extreme cases – omission of its fragments, or even its total rejection (Lefevere 1992:88). In Lefevere's view, ideology always reflects a cultural tension, which functions in the mode of the postcolonial struggle between the colonizer and the colonized. Accordingly, in order to be translated, any text has to be culled from its native context and manipulated in the process of acculturation. However, it seems more inspiring to see translation as a sublimation of aesthetic values, aiming at cultural expansion.

2. Ideology in the Earliest Polish Translations of Anglo-American Literature

Because of sheer variety of its genres and voices, from its very beginning, literature written in English propagated values of individual freedom, which were particularly attractive for Poles in the first half of the nineteenth century, when Poland did not exist as a state. This was the main reason why – in spite of the fact that the most popular foreign languages in Congress Poland were French, Russian, and German – Anglo-American literature started to gain a recognizable character for the reading audience. In the earliest period, at the turn of the eighteenth century, insufficient knowledge of the English language did not prevent translators from presenting Anglo-American authors, since it was the norm to translate indirectly, that is, ignoring the original text. Thus, as Elżbieta Tabakowska pertinently observes (Tabakowska 1998:527), the pre-Romantic English poet Edward Young was translated into Polish from French paraphrases, and the first Polish staging of *Hamlet* was prepared on the basis of a German translation.

Later, Polish translators worked on English originals, and this was a great improvement in translation practices. What is important, already in the first half of the century, the repertoire of translated texts transcended the classics, such as Shakespeare¹ or Milton². The most popular writer of the English language in the first decades of the century was Walter Scott, whose “Waverly Novels” series was translated and published almost in its entirety by Franciszek Salezy Dmochowski in the 1820s. Likewise, Polish adaptations of Scott's earlier verse novels, such as *Rokeby* (1813) compiled by Wanda Malecka, appeared in the same period. The Romantic turn in Polish literature was largely inspired by translations from English, and Great British romantic poets were very popular, including the Lake Poets, William Wordsworth and John Keats. However, the most important of the English romantics was Lord Byron. *The Giaour* was translated into Polish by Adam Mickiewicz in 1834, twenty years after its publication in English, and it left an indelible trace on the literary manner of the day in Poland, inspiring an endemic literary technique called ‘Bayronism’ and developed by such poets as Antoni Malczewski and Seweryn Goszczyński.

The common reader's tastes were shaped mostly by pioneers of popular romances, such as Washington Irving or James Fenimore Cooper, who gained popularity due to their stylistic and narrative flamboyance. Irving's Polish selection of short stories was first published in 1826, and it was rendered anonymously as *Nadzwyczajne przygody*

¹ The first Polish translator working with English texts of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* was Ignacy Hołowiński, whose efforts were printed between 1839 and 1841.

² The author of *Paradise Lost* was rendered from the English original by Jacek Przybylski in 1791.

człowieka osłabionych nerwów [*Extraordinary Adventures of a Man of Weakened Nerves*]. Cooper's Polish debut was his second novel, *The Spy* (1820), published as *Szpieg: romans amerykański* (1829) [*The Spy: An American Romance*] in J.H.S. Rześniński's four-volume rendering, which was advertised on the front cover as "referring to the original." First American poets – Edgar Allan Poe and Walt Whitman – reached the Polish audience in Zenon Przesmycki's translations in the 1880s, half a century after their debuts in English. Yet the Irish scandalizer Oscar Wilde, who wrote his most important works between 1888 and 1895, was translated into Polish with a relatively short delay: Maria Feldmanowa rendered *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in 1906, and Jan Kasprówicz created Polish versions of Wilde's selected poems in 1907. Later writers, such as George Bernard Shaw, often had their exclusive translators, carefully chosen for their talents and education. In Shaw's case, it was a London-based author, Florian Sobieniowski, who – after being interviewed by Shaw himself in 1912 – received the exclusive rights to translate the future Nobel Prize winning playwright into Polish.

According to Krystyna Tołczyńska-Dietrich (1975:117) in the period between World War I and World War II, American literature was "the most widely translated of all literatures in pre-1939 Poland." Separate editions of the classics – including Franklin, Irving, Cooper, Hawthorne, Emerson, Longfellow, Poe, Whitman, Twain, Bret Harte, O. Henry, and Upton Sinclair – would run into several hundred volumes. Hawthorne alone was first published in the Warsaw weekly *Echo Muzyczne, Teatralne i Artystyczne*; then he was anthologized by Julian Tuwim in a collection of short stories *Humor amerykański* [*American Sense of Humor*] (1927); *The Scarlet Letter* came out in 1930 in Adam Laterner's translation, while *Tanglewood Tales* was published in 1937 in M. J. Lutosławska's rendering (Tołczyńska-Dietrich 1975:118). Cooper's list of publications in Polish was even more impressive: nearly a hundred titles and editions of his works appeared between 1820 and 1939. Additionally, Cooper was one of the first of American authors published in Poland after World War II, as several of his titles appeared already in 1946 and 1947 (Tołczyńska-Dietrich 1975:119). Furthermore, the 1920s and 1930s were a period when great contemporary American novelists were translated into Polish, including Theodore Dreiser (*An American Tragedy* was published in 1929), John Dos Passos (*Manhattan Transfer* appeared in 1931 with a special introduction for the Polish edition), and William Faulkner (the publication of *Light in August* was announced in 1938, yet it had to be postponed because of the coming war) (Tołczyńska-Dietrich 1975:123).

It seems that – in the earliest era of their translations into Polish – the works of American writers were chosen mostly for their ideological content. The pro-democratic values which emanated from the texts of the Founding Fathers and their followers served as an incentive to promote a spirit of contrariness against the partitioners' anti-Polish policies. Later, in free Poland, translations of American novelists criticizing social injustice in the USA strengthened unstable Polish democracy. Therefore, translation served as a platform for dissidence that was designed to change the outlook of indigenous Polish readers.

3. Translations of Anglo-American Literature after World War II: Avant-Gardity of Virginia Woolf in Polish

The increasing saturation of Polish literature with Anglo-American tradition was abruptly stopped by World War II. As Elżbieta Tabakowska points out (1998:529), the revival of cultural life under the Soviet dominance favored translations of works seen as “politically correct.” At the end of the 1940s, political tension between the Soviet Union and the Western Bloc rose to the highest peak, which led to the Korean War. It was then that the United States and its allies, including the United Kingdom, became Poles’ greatest enemies in the official discourse of the Polish United Workers’ Party. In order to get published, all translations needed a positive verification from the Ministry of Public Security’s department, which was the official name of the state censorship, Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk [The Main Office of Control of Press, Publications, and Shows]. Between 1952 and 1954, as many as 2500 titles were banned in Poland, most of them English and American novels (Żmigrodzki 2002:77-78). This situation was extremely uncomfortable for translators of Anglo-American literature, because guidelines for censors were secret and changed unpredictably according to political fluctuations; as a result, communist apparatchiks could be alarmed by all sorts of issues, facts, specific works, or names that the government wanted to delete from public consciousness (Domska 2011:82-83). In the air of constant fear and suspicion, many translators – consciously or not – self-censored their works. Those who did not, often involuntarily highlighted negative aspects of the source language culture, for example Maria Skibniewska in her rendering of *The Catcher in the Rye* or Bronisław Zieliński in his numerous rendering of Hemingway’s fiction.

The name of the last writer – via his connection with the most famous experimenter in the English language, Ezra Pound – is inseparable from the history of artistic avant-gardes in London and Paris in the first decades of the twentieth century. It seems that, for the communist rulers of Poland from 1950s to the end of 1980s, avant-garde writers were more aesthetically and ideologically acceptable than their commercially oriented colleagues. On the one hand, Communists cherished the idea of being social and artistic avant-gardes of the world. On the other, many twentieth-century avant-garde artists and writers flirted with communism, especially French surrealists, such as Louis Aragon, André Breton, Paul Éluard, and Benjamin Péret, all of whom joined the French Communist Party. As a result, in the Communist Poland, the aura of avant-garde revolutionariness promoted translations of Anglo-American authors as controversial as Ezra Pound³ and as difficult as T.S. Eliot⁴ or James Joyce⁵.

The Polish translation of Virginia Woolf’s novel *To the Lighthouse* is a good example of an avant-garde work published in Poland during the communist regime. It

³ Pound’s collection of poems – *Maska i pieśń* [*The Masque and the Song*] – was first published in 1960, in Munich, in Jerzy Niemojowski’s translation, at a time when many American poets and critics still had ambivalent feelings about Pound’s poetry because of his anti-Semitism.

⁴ Many of Eliot’s poems were translated into Polish already in the 1930s by Józef Czechowicz, while his most famous poem “The Waste Land” was translated by Czesław Miłosz in the 1940s.

⁵ The Polish translation of *Ulysses* by Maciej Słomczyński was published in 1969.

seems that its publication was mistakenly overlooked by the state censorship, since the novel's author was a woman whose father was an English aristocrat and therefore an enemy of working class people. Moreover, the novel was published in 1962, when the Gomułka's Thaw was over, in a period of growing hostility of Polish communist elites toward western culture (Albert 1991:809). The translator was Krzysztof Klinger, a Warsaw-based journalist and amateur historian, who specialized in detective fiction and rendered into Polish numerous novels by Raymond Chandler and Edmund Crispin (*Gazeta Wyborcza. Archiwum* 2016). It seems that the aura of the avant-garde masterpiece might have been helpful in getting Woolf's classic printed by the oldest and largest publishing house in the communist Poland – Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza "Czytelnik" [Printing Cooperative "The Reader"].⁶ Additionally, Klinger's translation appeared in the so-called Nike series, which was the highest recommendation of literary quality.⁷ Quite typically of the mid-twentieth-century Polish renderings of Anglo-American modernist experimenters, the Polish version of *To the Lighthouse* – *Do latarni morskiej* – rather concealed than accentuated its avant-garde roots, trying to sound like canonical 'great' literature of romantic provenance.

The most widespread technique used by Polish translators in the mid-twentieth century was domestication, whose aim was to make the translator invisible and his or her text as fluent as the original. This practice was very common also in Anglo-American literature. As Lawrence Venuti has it (2004:1), a translated text was judged acceptable when the "absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities [made] it seem transparent." Klinger uses domestication to adapt *To the Lighthouse* to the expectations of readers brought up in the tradition of realism, which was predominant in Polish literature during the modernist period (Miłosz 1993:481-505). On the most conspicuous level, the visual/graphic form of Woolf's text is standardized, annihilating her special use of typography and punctuation, which are far from being conventional. As Susan Solomon observes (2013:20-21), for modernist experimenters, non-standard punctuation was an apt device in achieving "rupture, displacement, and shock," which were vital elements of their poetics. Klinger must have recognized this quality of Woolf's text, yet he decided to normalize his translation. Additionally, he simplified the syntactical ambiguity of the original novel that functioned as a means to produce semantic indeterminacy, typical of so many modernist masterpieces⁸.

This type of indeterminacy can be found in *To the Lighthouse*. For example, in the third chapter of the first section, "The Window," the third-person narrator presents Mrs. Ramsey's convoluted train of thoughts (Woolf 1996:27-28):

⁶ "Czytelnik" was created in September 1944 by the first prime minister of the post-war Poland, Edward Osóbka-Morawski.

⁷ The series logo presented the goddess Nike, and all volumes in the series were cloth-bound hardcovers with dust jackets.

⁸ According to Marjorie Perloff (1998:30), who examined the notion of indeterminacy in early twentieth-century literature, meaning in modernist experimenters oscillates between reference and compositional game: the text's particulars no longer cohere in a logical configuration because they often resemble the abstract arguments of music, and it is not possible to decide which associations are relevant for interpretation and which are not. This fundamental undecidability is the core of the poetic of indeterminacy started by Arthur Rimbaud.

But here, as she turned the page, suddenly her search for the picture of a rake or a mowing-machine was interrupted. The gruff murmur, irregularly broken by the taking out of pipes and the putting in of pipes which had kept on assuring her, though she could not hear what was said (as she sat in the window which opened on the terrace), that the men were happily talking; this sound, which had lasted now half an hour and taken its place soothingly in the scale of sounds pressing on top of her, such as the tap of balls upon bats, the sharp, sudden bark now and then, "How's that? How's that?" of the children playing cricket, had ceased; so that the monotonous fall of the waves on the beach, which for the most part beat a measured and soothing tattoo to her thoughts and seemed consolingly to repeat over and over again as she sat with the children the words of some old cradle song, murmured by nature, "I am guarding you – I am your support," but at other times suddenly and unexpectedly, especially when her mind raised itself slightly from the task actually in hand, had no such kindly meaning, but like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beat the measure of life, made one think of the destruction of the island and its engulfment in the sea, and warned her whose day had slipped past in one quick doing after another that it was all ephemeral as a rainbow – this sound which had been obscured and concealed under the other sounds suddenly thundered hollow in her ears and made her look up with an impulse of terror.

The most striking feature of the above section, consisting of just two sentences, is an ambiguity of its opening gesture: the contrast between 'here' and some other place is unclear, yet, for the persona emerging in the fragment – Mrs. Ramsay – it serves as a stimulus to focus on various details of her existence. The 'gruff murmur,' which distracts her attention from a newspaper, is the subject of the second sentence, and it introduces a seemingly chaotic list of her innermost memories of pleasant and unpleasant sounds. The sentence is a good example of Woolf's stream of consciousness, which often sounds like a lofty poetic riff, whose ambiguity is intensified by shifting temporal perspective, constantly switching from the present to the past, and multiple gerund forms. However, Woolf's prose is far from being disorganized: the writer uses a variety of punctuation marks, and she skillfully absorbs fragments of a conversation. Klinger's translation ignores the precise structure of the original, changing it into more or less conventional prose (Klinger 1962:23-24):

Kiedy odwracała stronicę szukając rysunku grabi lub kosiarki, przeszkodziło jej w tym głucho mruczenie, przerywane od czasu do czasu odgłosem fajek wyjmowanych i wkładanych do ust, co upewniło ją, że mężczyźni znów sobie pogodnie gawędzą (choć nie słyszała tego, co mówią, bo siedziała przy oknie); ale mruczenie to, które trwało już od pół godziny i łagodnie łączyło się z dźwiękiem piłek uderzanych kijami i z ostrymi krzykami dzieci – No, to masz! No, to masz! – grających w kriketa, niepostrzeżenie ustało: doszedł ją monotony szum fal bijących o brzeg; wybijały one miarowy i kołyszący jej myśli rytm, śpiewany przez przyrodę, coś jak powtarzający się bez końca wiersz starej kołysanki, znanej jej z czasów siedzenia przy dzieciach: "Czuwam nad tobą i chronię cię." Lecz czasami, zupełnie nagle i niespodziewanie, zwłaszcza wtedy, kiedy myśl odrywała się od tego, czym zajmowały się w tej chwili jej ręce, głos fal nie był taki dobrotliwy, lecz jak widmowy werbel bębnow, bezlitośnie odmierzających życie, zmuszał do myślenia o tym, że wyspa, wchłonięta przez morze, ulegnie kiedyś zniszczeniu, i ostrzegał ją, której dni toczyły się szybko, jedno za drugim, wypełnione różnymi zajęciami, że wszystko jest tak złudne jak tęcza. Ten dźwięk, ukryty i zagłuszony przez inne, uderzył teraz w jej uszy i sprawił, że uniosła oczy w przerażeniu

[lit.: When she turned the page, looking for a drawing of a rake or a mowing machine, she was interrupted by a dull murmur, interspersed from time to time by the sound of pipes put in and out of mouths, which made her sure that the men were chatting gaily again (although she could not hear what they said because she sat at the window); but this murmur that already lasted for half an hour and gently joined itself with the sound of balls hit by bats and sharp shrieks of children, "Take it! Take it," playing cricket, suddenly stopped: she could hear a monotonous hum of waves on the shore; they were playing a measured rhythm that was swinging her thoughts, sang by nature, something like a text of an old lullaby, which she knew since she took care of her children: "I take care of you and I protect you." But sometimes, quite suddenly and unexpectedly, especially when her thoughts ran away from what her hands were occupied with now, they sound of waves was not so friendly, but it resonated like a spectral echo of drums, mercilessly measuring life, forcing to think that the island, devoured by the sea, would be destroyed some day, and it warned her, whose days were running so fast, one after another, full of different jobs, that everything is illusory like a rainbow. This sound, hidden and drowned by other sounds, hit her ears now and made her look up in terror].

Instead of two sentences, the Polish reader gets four statements, whose arrangement does not have the experimental twist of the original. Moreover, Klinger strengthens connectivity between clauses either by deleting ambiguous phrases – for example, he gets rid of the initial 'but here' – or by performing padding, that is supplementing the text with additional information to eliminate its ambiguity altogether. In the above fragment, the narrator describes Mrs. Ramsay's past, saying that "[her] day had slipped past in one quick doing after another that it was all ephemeral as a rainbow." Translating it into Polish, Klinger changes simple yet metaphorical 'one quick doing after another' into realistically clear 'jedne za drugimi, wypełnione różnymi zajęciami' [lit.: one after another, full of different jobs]. This is clearly an overinterpretation, as there are no 'different jobs' in the original.

As Jerzy Jarniewicz observes (2012:53), Polish translators of Anglo-American literature usually add some supplementary information to their renderings, which is necessary because of the differences in syntax and idiom of the two languages. However, what Klinger does exceeds acceptable norms of literary translation: in his rendering of *To the Lighthouse*, he seems to constantly violate Virginia Woolf's intentions, especially those connected with the aesthetic level of her work and manifesting themselves in modernist indeterminacy, like in the above longer fragment. However, Klinger uses padding and addition also in relatively clear sentences, which shows negligence towards the author of the original and an impulse to dominate over the translated text. At the beginning of the novel, one of the characters – Lily Briscoe – hesitates how to express her feelings (Woolf 1996:32-33):

It was absurd, it was impossible.

In Klinger's translation (29), we read:

To było całkiem niemożliwe i bez sensu. Nie można mówić tego, co się myśli [lit.: It was absolutely impossible and had no sense. One cannot say what one thinks].

In the Polish version of the novel, the first sentence changes the order of the adverbs for no apparent reason – ‘absurd... impossible’ becomes ‘niemożliwe i bez sensu’ [lit.: impossible and senseless]. Moreover, the Polish translation contains an extra sentence: “Nie można mówić tego, co się myśli” [lit.: One cannot say what one thinks], which is obviously an example of padding, destroying the concise parataxis of Woolf’s original – ‘it was...it was.’

A few pages further into the novel, the reader encounters a similar problem when one of characters makes a general observation (Woolf 1996:39):

But the number of men who make a definite contribution to anything whatsoever is very small.

Klinger (35) translates it as follows:

Ale jeżeli chce się być rzeczowym i sprawiedliwym, to trzeba pamiętać, że ilość ludzi wnoszących coś nowego do jakiegokolwiek dziedziny... jest bardzo mała [lit.: But if you want to be matter-of-fact and just, you have to remember that the amount of people introducing anything new to any discipline... is very small].

This is rather an example of adaptation or paraphrase than a proper translation. The main clause added by Klinger – ‘But if you want to be just’ – gives the statement a sententious undertone so common in the moralizing realism of Shaw or Huxley.

On the other hand, there are many examples in the novel where Klinger omits some phrases or longer fragments of the original text. As Vanessa Leonardi claims (2007:128), the translator usually believes that his or her omission “would not do any harm to the original message since the translation of a particular word or expression... would only distract the reader.” Yet, some harm is done to Woolf’s novel, since Klinger’s omissions deprive the original text of many proper names, which produce a specific – we might say “English” – character of the book. As a result, the reader encounters quite a generic prose, whose style is transparent. Very often, Klinger’s reductive approach is focused on adjectives and adjectival phrases, which are deleted, like in a relatively insignificant description of Mrs. Ramsay’s wardrobe (Woolf 1996:42):

She took the heather-mixture stocking.

Klinger (39) translates it as follows:

Wzięła pończochę [lit.: She took the stocking].

Apparently, there is no reason why the compound adjective ‘heather-mixture’ should be omitted, yet Klinger decides to omit it. In a similar gesture, such proper names as ‘Hebrides’ (the British islands) or ‘Sweet Alice’ (the flower from the genus *Lobularia maritime*) disappear from the Polish text. Those and many other similar changes could be interpreted as attempts at domesticating the original.

More importantly, as Vanessa Leonardi points out (2007:129), both addition and omission are forms of ideological manipulation, always reflecting the translator's value system and perspective on various issues. In Klinger case, the most conspicuous ideological manipulation is his substitution of modernist indeterminacy with a bourgeois aesthetics rooted the tradition of the nineteenth-century realism. In other words, the Polish version of *To the Lighthouse* reinstalls conservative values that the first modernist experimenters – including Virginia Woolf and her literary circle – were trying to debunk. This proves that the cultural revolution promised by the communist regime in Poland after World War II was a fiction: the slogans about the alliance between writers and workers – the ultimate goal of all avant-gardes – were false because officially promoted literature appealed to popular tastes, using clichés borrowed from the nineteenth-century classics, with the first- or the third-person narrator, whose accounts are based on mimetic representation.

4. Translations of Anglo-American Literature after 1989: Avant-Gardity of Cormack Mccarthy in Polish

After Poland regained independence in 1989, the Main Office of Control of Press, Publications, and Shows was liquidated and censorship abolished, which radically improved the situation of the translated book market and in the practice of translation. Suddenly, all banned authors could be published without interference or cuts, including cult figures, such as George Orwell, who gained immense popularity. However, political freedom and free market also meant commercialization of literature: Polish bookstores were flooded with all genres and kinds of popular fiction, most of which were translations from English. Those constituted 70 percent of all publications printed in Poland annually between 1989 and 2011, and altogether they mounted to over half a million of titles (Fordoński 2016). In the new conditions, translations of avant-garde literature had to compete for the reader's attention with thousands of other texts designed for leisure reading. Between 1945 and 1989, Anglo-American provenience of a text was the best guarantee of its publishing success while in the new cultural configuration, in order to be successful, any publication needed advertising. As a result, avant-garde literature and arts started to be appreciated for their anti-bourgeois shock value rather than aesthetic design or social aspirations.

Definitely, contemporary cultural environment in Poland is not necessarily more open towards avant-garde poetics than it was under the communist regime fifty years ago. To put it simply, the ideology of avant-garde literature and the ideology of free-market economy lack common axiological grounds. This becomes clear when we examine the Polish translations of Cormac McCarthy, who may be considered a postmodern continuator of Virginia Woolf's experimental poetics. According to Harold Bloom (2009:1), McCarthy – born in 1933 – is one of the greatest American novelists of our time, immersed in everyday vernacular, but also consciously expanding various aspects of early modernists' artistic endeavors, including experiments with visual form of the text. McCarthy's most famous novel – *No Country for Old Men* (2005) – appeared in Polish translation in 2008, on the wave of popularity of the Oscar-winning

movie by the Coen brothers under the same title. The first Polish translator was Robert Bryk, whose rendering appeared in 2008, and the second was Robert Sudół, who published his translation in 2014. The second translation seems to be more accomplished as a literary work, and also more accurate. However, both translators seem to underestimate the aesthetic dimension of the American novelist's oeuvre, and ignore his experimental fervor.

Very much like Virginia Woolf, Cormac McCarthy uses punctuation as a tool to refer to the modernist artistic revolution as expressed in Ezra Pound's famous dictum, "make it new." In fact, McCarthy's relationship with Pound seems to be deeper still: similarly to sections in *Cantos*, disjunctive utterances of characters in the novel are often series of non-sequiturs, left for the reader to form an interpretable whole. A good example of this strategy is the beginning of the novel's *first chapter*, when the deputy, who has just caught a psychopathic criminal, calls the Sheriff and describes the offender's unique weapon (McCarthy 2005:5):

Just walked in the door. Sherriff he had some sort of thing on him like one of them oxygen tanks for emphysema or whatever. Then he had a hose that run down the side of his sleeve and went to one of them stunguns like they use at the slaughterhouse. Yessir. Well that's what it looks like. You can see it when you get in. Yessir. I got I covered. Yessir.

Characteristically, McCarthy does not mark off dialogues in his novels. In the above fragment, the deputy's words get mixed up with the narrator's comments, which produces an ambiguity that can hardly be resolved. The lack of the dialogue notation might suggest that the narrator is a non-human consciousness or perhaps just a registering device. On the other hand, the continuous and indiscriminate recording of reality brings to mind the most recent experimenters in American literature. The notion of mechanical 'rewriting' or 'copying' of various aspects of reality is crucial not only for Kenneth Goldsmith, for example, but for all writers associated with the so called 'conceptual literature.' The label was coined by Goldsmith and his friend, poet and critic, Craig Dworkin. Both authors edited an influential anthology of "conceptual writing" *Against Expression*. Cormac McCarthy seems to be their direct predecessor. In his novels – like in their poems – creativity operates on a different level (Dworkin and Goldsmith 2011:xxi): it is not the text that matters, but the way the text is processed because "the underlying ethos and modes of writing have been permanently changed."

The first Polish translator of the novel has difficulty with interpretation of the fragment, but also with understanding of the text on the most basic, semantic level (Bryk 2008:9):

Szeryf właśnie wyszedł. Zastępca nosił przy sobie butlę z tlenem, taką jakiej się używa przy rozedmie płuc czy innych chorobach. W rękawie miał rurkę połączoną z pistoletem do uśmiercania zwierząt w rzeźni.

– No. Jestem tym, na kogo wyglądam. Zobaczysz, jak przyjdę. No. Ukrywam to. No. [lit.: The Sheriff has just left. The deputy carried the bottle with oxygen, the same as there are used for emphysema or other diseases. In his sleeve he had a tube linked to the

gun used to slay animals in slaughterhouse. “Yeah. I am what I look like. You will see, when I come. Yeah. I’m hiding it. Yeah.”].

The graphic notation of the text is completely changed, and its original ambiguity is gone. Moreover, the meaning of the entire fragment is distorted: the person who has just got into the room (not left as it is translated by Bryk) is the deputy, and not the Sheriff. What is more, the man who had the oxygen tank is Chigurh, who was caught by the deputy, and not the deputy himself, as it is suggested in the translation. Such a serious misinterpretation of the text has significant influence on the reader’s (mis)understanding of the plot of the novel.

The second Polish translation of *No Country for Old Men* seems to be closer to the original, yet Robert Sudół does not avoid domestication, which is visible in his adding punctuation to the text in order to strengthen its coherence (Sudół 2014:9):

Dopiero żeśmy weszli. Szeryfie, on ma ze sobą jakieś cudo, jakby butlę z tlenem na rozedmę płuc albo coś. No i rurkę w rękawie połączoną z takim paralizatorem, co ich używają w rzeźniach do ogłuszania. Tak jest. Na to wygląda. Sam pan zobaczy po powrocie. Tak jest. Zabezpieczyłem. Tak jest [lit.: We’ve just gotten in. Sheriff, he’s got with him some strange thing, like an oxygen tank for emphysema or something. And a pipe in his sleeve, connected to a one of those paralyzers that they use in slaughterhouses for knocking out animals. Yes. It seems. You will see it yourself when you come back. Yes. I’ve secured it. Yes.].

Differently than McCarthy, Sudół uses a comma after ‘sheriff,’ and adds a comma in the compound-complex sentence that follows, simplifying the structure of the statement. The Polish translator also replaces the phoneticism ‘yessir’ with the grammatically correct and transparent form ‘tak jest’ [lit.: yes].

There is one more important feature of the omniscient narrator that indiscriminately registers all details of the physical world in McCarthy’s novel – a vast knowledge of firearms and ammunition, which seems to stem from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century frontier tradition and sounds like an ironic comment on the unique American gun culture, deeply rooted in realities of Texan life. At the beginning of the novel, one of its protagonists, Llewelyn Moss, hunts antelopes near the Rio Grande. The narrator describes in minute details the protagonist’s firearm (McCarthy 2005:8):

The rifle strapped over his shoulder with a harness-leather sling was a heavybarreled .270 on a ’98 Mauser action with a laminated stock of maple and walnut. It carried a Unertl telescopic sight of the same power as the binoculars.

McCarthy gives a precise description of a German bolt-action Mauser rifle, including the name of a popular optical company that produced telescopic sights in United States from 1934 to 2008. Robert Bryk’s 2008 translation seems to ignore the original’s penchant for guns and underestimates the symbolic importance of military paraphernalia appearing in McCarthy’s novel (Bryk 2008:11):

Z ramienia zwiślał mu na skórzanym pasku sztucer z lunetą i kolbą wykonaną z warstw klonu i orzecha [lit.: From his shoulder overhung on a leather stripe a hunting rifle with a telescope and stock made of the layers of maple and walnut.].

In Polish, the description of Moss's weapon is laconic and inaccurate, since the translator omits the proper names of the rifle and the producer of the telescope. The second Polish translation by Robert Sudół is far more accurate (Sudół 2014:12):

Karabinem zawieszonym na ramieniu na skórzanym pasku był sztucer powtarzalny z precyzyjną ciężką lufą kaliber .270, wzorowany na klasycznym systemie mauserowskim z 1898 roku, z klejonym łożem z orzecha i klonu. Wyposażony w celownik optyczny firmy Unertl o takiej samej mocy jak lornetka [lit.: The rifle hanging on his arm was a repeatable hunting rifle, with a precise heavy barrel, caliber .270, modeled on a classical Mauser system from 1898, with a glued stock made of chestnut and maple. The telescopic sight was from Unertl, and it was of the same power as the binoculars.].

However, in the above fragment, Sudół's accuracy seems to be his greatest weakness. The description of Moss's weapon is far too specific – containing phrases that would surprise even experts – and that is why it sounds unnatural.

Finally, the true greatness of McCarthy's fiction lies in its local character, of which the above sentiment for guns is a crucial part. McCarthy uses the South-Western Texan variety of American language, strongly influenced by Spanish, which is reported to be the most common language beside English in the U.S. (Montgomery, Johnson 2007:109). Due to intense immigration in the two recent decades, the Latino population in the USA numbers more than 35 million people. About 80% of them declare to speak Spanish at home, which makes the U.S. the world's fifth most populous Spanish-speaking country. Even though Texas has no official language and the American English is used by vast majority of Texan people, people of Spanish origin have always played a key role in creating the state's culture. Additionally, Spanish was spoken in Texas over a century before English even started to be used there (Montgomery, Johnson 2007:115). The consequence of the coexistence of the two languages is a widespread code-switching. Not only can it be heard in informal speech, but also in the current mass media.

The variety of South-Western English, which is commonly used by the residents of Texas, is officially called Texas English. The strongly characteristic phonological aspects of Texan English are for instance 'pen/pin' vowel merger, and the loss of the diphthong 'ai.' The Texan English includes also some peculiar grammatical features, such as the form "might could" (Montgomery, Johnson 2007:116). Unfortunately, in the Polish renderings of the novel, the linguistic specificity of the text is lost. Both Robert Bryk and Robert Sudół have problems with finding a convincing way of recreating the culture-specific level of McCarthy's novel. *No Country for Old Men* contains a number of Spanish phrases, which could be difficult to understand for the reader who is unfamiliar with the Spanish language. In the original version of the novel, we find Spanish expressions both in the dialogues between characters and in the narrative fragments that give a detailed description of the Texan landscape.

Those are mainly names of plants, and one of them is *candelilla* (McCarthy 2005:11) – a perennial desert shrub, which is a Mexican species, growing in abundance in Texas. The first Polish translator uses the Polish scientific name of the plant *euforbia*

(Bryk 2008:15), which sounds completely unnaturally. The second one uses a more colloquial name *wilczomlecze* (Sudół 2014:15), which is rather unknown in Poland. A more suitable choice would be to leave the Spanish-sounding name of the shrub untranslated and describe the plant in a footnote.

As for the dialogues that contain Spanish phrases, both Polish translators avoid interpretation and preserve the notation of the original. Both of them use footnotes with direct translations of McCarthy's novel. In the first chapter of *No Country*, we read a conversation between the main protagonist Llewellyn Moss and the Mexican gangster who has been shot during the drug exchange in the desert (McCarthy 2005:14):

Moss scanned the surrounding country. I told you, he said. I aint got no water.
 La puerta, the man said.
 Moss looked at him.
 La puerta. Hay lobos.
 There aint no lobos.

In the first Polish translation, Spanish vocabulary is written in italics and it is translated in footnotes (Bryk 2008:15):

Moss rozejrzał się po okolicy.
 – Mówiłem Ci, że nie mam żadnej wody.
 – *La puerta** – rzekł tamten.
 Moss spojrział na niego.
 – *La puerta. Hay lobos***.
 – Tam nie ma żadnych *lobos*. [lit.: Moss had a look at the surrounding.
 – I told you, I don't have any water.
 – *La puerta* – said the other man.
 Moss took a look at him.
 – *La puerta, Hay lobos*.
 – There are no lobos there.].

The second Polish translation is identical, except that it does not italicize the statements in Spanish and does not use dashes to mark dialogues. It seems that both translations are insufficient. In fragments like the above one, the translator should rather try to suggest a feeling of foreignness instead of actually producing it, since the target reader of the translation, who comes from Poland, is not bilingual.

5. Conclusions

No Country for Old Men in Polish translations is a different type of a novel. It is rather a violent thriller than a literary experiment, paying tribute to a local culture disappearing in the wave of globalization. However, translating avant-garde literature is not necessarily more difficult than translating other types of literary texts. The only difference is that such a translation requires greater care for the intertextual level of language and the novelty of its artistic craft that distinguish avant-garde from mainstream productions. Neither of the Polish translators of McCarthy's novel manages to distinguish and preserve such details. But is it possible to achieve this

idealistic goal at all? In the free-market economy, avant-garde writers and artists are often perceived as heroes – or villains – of global culture, and their artistic achievements are neglected since they cannot fulfill the goals of marketing strategies. What counts is the glamour of celebrity culture, in which experimenters are advertised as founding fathers of the present-day sensitivity. This is where the ideology of consumerism meets the ideology of communism: literature is a means to sustain – and control – a cultural monolith, where all differences are perceived as possible threats to social order.

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