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Poems by Frank O'Hara and Allen Ginsberg Translated by Polish Poets : The Conflict between "Classicists" and "Barbarians"?

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The Conflict between “Classicists” and “Barbarians”?

The 1950s and 1960s in the United States were a time when rebellious poetry flourished. The Beat Generation and the New York School, with Allen Ginsberg and Frank O'Hara as their leaders, came to prominence. Boundless creative freedom and iconoclastic visions of the poets who rebelled against literary tradition caused both fractions to be seen as “barbarian” (Cieślak and Pietrych). The long-lasting conflict between the lawmakers of cultural policies and the “barbarians” resulted in the fact that their poems did not reach Europe until the 1970s. In Poland, the poems of the Beat Generation and the New York School were published even later as they were initially prohibited by the communist censorship. Therefore, translators could not translate the works of the “barbarians” as a whole but had to translate individual pieces only.

The breakthrough came as late as 1986 when issue 7 (180) of *Literatura na Świecie*, the so-called “blue issue,” was published. This volume was wholly edited by Piotr Sommer and comprised of two parts. The first one included an extensive selection of Frank O'Hara's poems, his friends' memories, exquisite critical essays on O'Hara's works and also the interview O'Hara gave to Edward Lucie-Smith. The second part was prefaced by the reproductions of paintings by Willem de Koonig, Fairfield Porter and Larry Rivers, and comprised of poems by John Ashbery, whose interpretations were introduced by three critical essays. Quite unexpectedly, the “blue issue” received a warm welcome and

almost instantaneously became a cult issue. Not only did it arouse enthusiasm and delight of the readers but it also became an important inspiration for the authors of the so-called generation of 30-year-olds (the name stems from the fact that the majority of these poets were born in the 1960s; they were also known as the “bruLion generation”) who were the founders of a new poetic trend.

There were a few factors which contributed to the extraordinarily positive response to the publication of the “blue issue,” amongst others the exhaustion with politicization and the realization that the conflict between society and authority will remain unresolved (Cieślak 175). Polish poetry in the 1980s was mainly focused on describing the “solemn tragedy of History”¹ and on “lifting spirits” under the threat of repressions of the communist system. In comparison with this, the poems of American “barbarians” (mainly from the New York School) must have seemed an incredibly refreshing novelty to Polish authors. Dariusz Foks, one of the *bruLion* generation poets, in the interview given to Mariusz Grzebalski, said the following:

It turned out that you could speak differently, more naturally, less solemnly, and not necessarily about all those terribly serious and important matters but about ordinary, down-to-earth stories. It turned out that poetry can be—and is—fulfilled in such matters. (Grzebalski and Foks 1994)

Moreover, in the same year (1986) two volumes of verse which were inspired by the New York School poetry were published: *Czynnik liryczny* (*The Lyrical Factor*) by Piotr Sommer and *Starzy znajomi* (*Old Friends*) by Bohdan Zadura; both authors were also the translators who promoted the New York School poets in Polish culture. These “proto-bruLionists”—or “pre-bruLionists”²—proposed a “new diction” which emphasized the importance of language and consisted in defying the community duties which are required of the individual in socialism. This new diction was very well received by young authors who soon decided to join it (Cieślak 181-182). And hereby, despite the great time lapse (it was 20 years after O’Hara had died), in the mid-1980s

¹ Polish: *wzniosły dramat historii*. A term coined by Anna Legeżyńska and Piotr Śliwiński. (See Legeżyńska and Śliwiński *Poezja polska po 1968 roku. Książka dla nauczycieli, studentów i uczniów*. Warszawa: WSiP, 2000. 77).

² The original Polish version: “proto(pre?)bruLionowcy.”

new “barbarians” were born in Polish poetry. Among them were the poets who published their works in *bruLion* (which was founded by Robert Tekieli also in 1986), for instance: Marcin Baran, Marcin Świetlicki, Miłosz Biedrzycki, Krzysztof Jaworski and Jacek Podsiadło. This “generation of 30-year-olds” decided to take the stand opposing the authors of metaphysical and intellectual poetry.

The *bruLion* authors were first called “barbarians” in 1992 in the title of the anthology of their poetry, *Przyszli barbarzyńcy* (Tryksha 127). This title has a double meaning and can be rendered in English either as *The Barbarians Have Come* or *The Future Barbarians*. Three years later Karol Maliszewski decided to develop this idea of “barbarian” poets by creating an opposition between the “barbarian option” and the “classicistic option” and by naming the main characteristics of both of them.³ The publication of this division raised a heated discussion in magazines such as *Nowy Nurt*, *Kresy* or *Tygodnik Powszechny*. The critics attacked Maliszewski for expressing opinions which were too generalized and which simplified an otherwise complex poetic phenomenon. But in fact, the dispute was about the primacy of one of the options. In response to the abundance of new yet not satisfactory classifications and descriptions of “new” poetry, Krzysztof Varga and Paweł Dunin-Wąsowicz (who preferred the works of “barbarians”) decided to make a dictionary, named *Parnas Bis*, containing their own definitions of issues that intrigued them. But *Parnas Bis* prepared by them turned out to be more of a provocation. The foreword included information that the quotations were chosen tendentiously due to the lack of liking toward certain people described in the dictionary (Dunin-Wąsowicz and Varga 3-5). The definition of “neo-classicists” was full of malicious remarks and statements like “the new classicists are obsession-genic” or “the neo-classicist poetry is characterized by an overuse of surnames like Hölderlin or Vermeer” (Dunin-Wąsowicz and Varga 137).

The conflict between the “classicists” and the “barbarians” was not limited to the dispute about the poetics of both groups. Along with the birth of Polish “late barbarians,” some of the classicists who had already gained fame and respect in the literary circles, felt that their position may be threatened. In order not to let the 30-year-olds into the literary Parnassus, they were determined to

³ See K. Maliszewski, “Nasi klasycyści, nasi barbarzyńcy,” *Nowy Nurt* 19 (1995): 1.

discredit the works of American poets which were their main source of inspiration. It was most visible in Czesław Miłosz's critical declarations. Piotr Sommer in the interview given to Joanna Orska quotes Miłosz's words (first published in the first issue of *NaGłos*):

[American poets] have nothing to write about . . . And to have nothing to write about is the main problem of global poetry . . . The main subject of American poetry is family, mother and father. And usually it is an unhappy family as mother was a monster or father was a monster . . . (Orska 54)

Furthermore, Sommer recalls an interview with Miłosz published in *Literatura na Świecie* around the end of 1980s wherein Miłosz when asked about the popularity of the New York School said that they were not very popular in the USA and he had not heard much about them anyway. Sommer summarizes both statements by saying:

Miłosz—despite his 40-year-long stay in the US—has a relatively modest understanding of what was happening in the American poetry in the second half of the century (ibid.).

At the same time, however, he admits that Miłosz's comments were in that period treated with great respect. Especially since the New York School poets were criticized also by other well-known classicists: Adam Zagajewski (who repeatedly warned Polish poets against the “trivially low caliber” of Frank O'Hara) or Krzysztof Koehler (who was worried that Polish poetry may adapt matters that would contaminate Polish poetic “homeliness” [Orska 54]). In the meantime, the “barbarians” attacked the “classicists” by dedicating harsh, provocative texts to them. Two of the most important ones among them would be two poems by Marcin Świetlicki: “Dla Jana Polkowskiego” (“For Jan Polkowski”) and “Wiersz dla Zbigniewa Herberta (dedykowany Wisławie Szymborskiej)” (“A Poem for Zbigniew Herbert [Dedicated to Wisława Szymborska]”). As Anna Tryksza noted, these poems were not aimed at criticizing individual poets but at poetry which was subjected to discussing national ideas and patriotic myths (Tryksza 124). The following quotations may serve as evidence: *Żyliśmy w cza-*

*sach / w których Adam Michnik*⁴ / *wybornie znał się na poezji* (“We lived in the times / when Adam Michnik / perfectly knew poetry” [Świetlicki, 1998: 15]) or *Poezja niewolników żywi się ideą / Idee to wodniste substytuty krwi* (“The poetry of slaves feeds on the idea / Ideas are thin substitutes of blood” [Świetlicki, 2002: 54]). The fact that the new poets were ostentatiously putting the names of classicists and iconic literary characters in an often offensive context (which can be seen for instance in Darek Foks’s poem title “Kopniak w dupę dla Maćka Chełmickiego”—“A Kick in the Butt for Maciek Chełmicki”⁵) only exacerbated the conflict between the groups.

The “late barbarians,” inspired by the poems of the Beat Generation and the New York School, tried to imitate their characteristic poetics. They often used a figure of enumeration, defined by the critics as “I’m doing this and I’m doing that” (Skwara 69). They meticulously described the platitudinous details of their lives, filled their texts with irony and vulgarisms. According to Marta Skwara, who examines the intertextuality in modern Polish poetry, the works of *bruLion* poets can hardly be called an “art of intercultural dialogue.” She says:

Behind the gestures . . . of Polish “barbarians” who made references to O’Hara, there usually was a slightly provocative naivety (so what that I am like him) or a joke that disguised an unhappy consciousness, a virtually tragic mockery (ibid.).

Skwara analyzes “young” modern poetry by authors that did not belong to the *bruLion* generation, from the point of view of intertextuality. She points out that true intertextuality was often made impossible by the impassable language barrier. The dialogue undertaken by these “young” modern authors is in fact a dialogue only with the national tradition—the tradition of translators who adopted and adapted the poems to Polish culture. I decided to refer this no-

⁴ Adam Michnik was one of the main figures of anti-communist opposition in Poland in the years 1968-1989. Many anti-communist poems were dedicated to him at that time, e.g. Zbigniew Herbert’s “Msza za uwięzionych.” (“A mass for the imprisoned”).

⁵ Maciek Chełmicki is the main character in Jerzy Andrzejewski’s novel *Popiół i diament* (*Asbes and Diamonds*). He represents the so-called “generation of Columbuses”: he is a sensitive 24-year-old man who is a member of Armia Krajowa (Home Army). After the end of the war, he fights the communists and is killed by them. This figure, referred to by Foks, is a symbol of a character who lives according to the ideology of classicist poems.

tion of “second-degree intertextuality” (Skwara 81-82) to the works of Polish “barbarians” who, while looking for inspiration, had to refer to texts “marked by translation.” However, the translations were made not only by other “barbarians” but also by “classicists.” I hereby aim at analyzing Polish translations of poems by the Beatniks and poets of the New York School by looking at the works of two of the most prominent representatives of both groups: Allen Ginsberg and Frank O’Hara. The element that binds all the examples together is the person of a “barbarian” translator, Piotr Sommer. It is worth noting that there was yet another variant of Polish o’harism inspired by the works of John Ashbery, whose main representative was Andrzej Sosnowski. However, as Marta Skwara wrote in the aforementioned paper (Skwara 78), Sosnowski—a poet, translator and philologist, who also belonged to an older generation than the other o’harists—can by no means be accepted among the “barbarians” (he is usually assigned to the “neo-avant-garde” circles) and therefore I decided not to include his works in this paper and instead concentrate solely on the first variant.

Chinese whispers

I consider Grzegorz Musiał, Piotr Sommer, Julia Hartwig and Artur Międzyrzecki to be of special interest among the multiple Polish translators of Allen Ginsberg’s poetry. All of them were the participants of the International Writing Program in Iowa City and hence had the opportunity to directly embrace American literature and culture. While they were staying in the USA during their scholarships, they took part in multiple translation sessions during which they had a chance to work with poets from all over the world in order to translate English-language poems into other languages and *vice versa*. That certainly gave them an advantage over other interpreters of American poetry. Also, I have found most interesting the fact that Międzyrzecki, Hartwig as well as Sommer decided to prepare a volume called *Znajomi z tego świata (Friends from this World)*. Whereas Grzegorz Musiał was famous for his fascination with the works of leader of the Beatniks,⁶ the “barbarian” writing style of Ginsberg

⁶ Grzegorz Musiał openly admitted his fascination with Ginsberg’s poetry. The two poets corresponded for years and while Musiał was in the USA, he met Ginsberg in person.

could not have been of much admiration of classicists such as Międzyrzecki or Hartwig. Sommer has mentioned multiple times that he did not think of Ginsberg's poetry as highly as he did of the New York School poetry. In the interview given to the editor of *Świat Literacki* he said:

I do not think that everything in Ginsberg's poetry is bad but there are many things that are exaggerated or failed. Especially in the moments when we see his raw views and opinions. (Basiuk, Piasecki and Szwed-Platerek 70)

However, in the same interview Sommer admitted that he had decided to see to Ginsberg's poetry in order to show the poet's meditative and lyrical side (ibid.).

Even if we accept Sommer's explanation as true (we must not forget that translator's choices are often dictated simply by his/her contract), it would be a true challenge to find a justification of Hartwig's and Międzyrzecki's choices. Both had the chance to get to know Ginsberg personally and also a chance to dislike him: after a fortnight's stay in their residence, the American poet quite unexpectedly insulted his hosts with an impertinent monologue.⁷ The fact that both translators were unconvinced by Ginsberg's writing style and their disappointment in Ginsberg himself may have influenced the way they translated his poems.

While analyzing Julia Hartwig's translations, one could get an impression that she is trying to tame the chaos for which Ginsberg's poems were famous—just as she tried to tame the poet himself.⁸ She eliminates some adjectives, shortens the lines and even interferes with the chronology of events. All these steps can be observed in her translation of "A Strange New Cottage in Berkeley," called "Niezwykły domek w Berkeley." A fragment of the second line in the original version is: ". . . with its rotten old apricots miscellaneous under the leaves" (C). Hartwig translated it as . . . *z ukrytymi w liściach zgniłymi*

He also dedicated his poem "Biesy" ("Demons") to Ginsberg and its first line is a reference to Ginsberg's "Howl."

⁷ This event was described in detail by Julia Hartwig (See Hartwig, *Dziennik amerykański*. Warszawa: PIW, 1980. 95).

⁸ In her *Dziennik amerykański* Hartwig points to the fact that Ginsberg would frequently behave in an immature way. She reminisces for instance that Ginsberg used to mock and laugh at various people while she would try to appease the situation.

morelami (“... with rotten apricots hidden under the leaves” [Z, 31]), leaving out the adjectives “old” and “miscellaneous.” If we take into account the fact that the process of rotting is a direct consequence of the fruits getting old, we can accept that she wanted to eliminate the repetition which she thought was not necessary to maintain the meaning of the verse. The third adjective, “miscellaneous,” which emphasizes the natural diversity of the fruits could have been disposed of due to its obviousness. Hartwig’s care about the form of the poem did, however, perturb the “talkativeness” characteristic to Ginsberg’s poetry but the “minor” changes made by her turned out only to be a prelude to much more radical alterations. In the fifth line, Hartwig omitted the adjective “godly” and translated the phrase “godly extra drops” as *dodatkowa porcja [wody]* (“extra portion [of water]”). This omission distinctly simplified the presented image and limited the possible interpretations: the adjective “godly” certainly adds a more profound, or sacred even, meaning to what the lyrical I is doing. In this line Hartwig also changed the chronology of events. The original line employs two present participles which make it impossible to determine the exact sequence of events: “wet the flowers, playing the sunlit water each to each, returning for extra drops.” Hartwig decided to change the second participle into a personal verb form thus arranging the text chronologically: *podlałem kwiaty nawilżając każdy z osobna nagrzaną w słońcu wodą, wróciłem po dodatkową porcję* (“I wet the flowers, moistening each one individually and returned for extra portion”). This manipulation allowed her to extract some order out of the chaotic descriptions of the lyrical I’s tasks and to build a logical, cause-and-effect sequence. Unfortunately, Ginsberg’s poem, devoid of most of its “coarseness” lost its spontaneous character. The Polish translation of *A Strange New Cottage in Berkeley* was not reminiscent of a poem written in the spirit of unlimited creative freedom, characteristic of the Beat Generation poets.

Hartwig did similar modifications to the poem “221 Syllables at Rocky Mountain Dharma Center.” Her translation is entitled “269 sylab z ośrodka Dharmy w Górach Skalistych” (“269 Syllables at Rocky Mountain Dharma Center”). The change in the number seems unavoidable due to the varying lengths of the poem in various language versions but the extraordinary ease with which the translator removes or replaces words seems rather surprising. The original third stanza, “Moonless thunder—yellow dandelions flash in

fields of rainy grass” (W, 41), was rendered by Hartwig as *Grzmot w ciemną noc—błyskają złotem mlecze wśród mokrej od deszczu trawy* (“A thunder in the dark night—dandelions flash with gold in the grass wet from rain” [Z, 76]). There are three major changes in one stanza. “Moonless thunder” has become a more rhythmic *grzmot w ciemną noc*, dandelions have become gold (perhaps the epithet “yellow” seemed too banal?) and the noun has disappeared altogether thereby changing the image created by Ginsberg. The following stanzas are full of similar changes—in the sixth one, Hartwig changes “dandelion seeds” into *źdźbła dmuchawca* (“dandelion blades”), apparently oblivious to the fact that the blades cannot float over the marsh grass as it was presented in the poem. In the seventh stanza, the translator replaces “a plane roar” with *warkot motoru* (“an engine whirr”). During the analysis of Hartwig’s translation, one cannot help but notice that she intended to “improve” Ginsberg’s poem by modifying the most predictable epithets (like the color of dandelions or the sound of a plane). While making these changes, she probably did not pay attention to the author’s fascination with Buddhist philosophy (which is indicated by the title; Rocky Mountain Dharma Center is a Buddhist centre and a place where the lyrical I speaks from) and the fact that the poem is filled with Buddhist symbolism. If one takes this philosophical context into account, it transpires that the image of a moonless thunder may be associated with the thunder of Dharmata—a loud noise accompanying the Radian Light which appears during the transgression of a dying person into bardo i.e. the intermediate state (*Tybetańska księga umarłych*). This interpretation is supported by the fact that the thunder strikes, according to the lyrical I, in the vicinity of yellow dandelions, making some of their seeds fly away. It is in accordance with the Buddhist philosophy which assumes that every dying being leaves its karma seeds which allow for its rebirth in the next incarnation (ibid.). Dandelion seeds, torn from the rest of the flower, may therefore show the transformation of the lyrical I and his transition (probably only a spiritual one) to a new form. Taking this context into consideration, Hartwig’s interventions such as changing “seeds” into “blades” or removing the word “fields” (in Buddhism, the transformation into the most wanted form is connected with finding appropriate ground) seem to considerably limit the interpretational possibilities. Moreover, by taking care of rhythmization of the text—nonexistent in Ginsberg’s poems—and by

neglecting the stray rhymes occurring in the original stanzas, Hartwig formalized the piece.

Inconsequent form, the abundance of epithets, talkativeness, and obsessive descriptiveness—these are just a few elements of Ginsberg’s poems that Hartwig fought with. Was the poet’s attitude similarly “valiant” towards the poetics of the American author? In order to answer this question I would like to compare her translation of “Transcription of Organ Music” with the translation by Grzegorz Musiał. The difference, in my opinion, is best seen in the second half of the ninth stanza which depicts the lyrical I’s memories of the throes of love. Here are three versions of this reminiscence:

Allen Ginsberg “Transcription of Organ Music”	Trans. Grzegorz Musiał “Transkrypcja organowa” (“Organ Transcription”)	Trans. Julia Hartwig “Transkrypcja muzyki organowej” (“Transcription of Organ Music”)
<p>I remember when I first got laid, H.P. graciously took my cherry, I sat on the docks of Provincetown, age 23, joyful, elevated in hope with the Father, the door to the womb was open to admit me if I wished to enter (S, 44).</p>	<p><i>Pamiętam, gdy puściłem się po raz pierwszy, H.P. wspaniałomyślnie zabrała mą cnotę, siedziałem na nabrzeżu w Provincetown, miałem 23 lata, byłem radosny, uniesiony nadzieją ku Ojcu, wrota macicy otwarte by przyjąć mnie gdybym zechciał wejść (S, 45).</i></p> <p>I remember when I got laid for the first time, H.P. generously took my virginity, I sat on the shore in Provincetown, I was 23, I was joyful, elevated in hope with the Father, the gates of the uterus open to admit me if I wanted to enter.</p>	<p><i>Pamiętam mój pierwszy seks, H.P. odebrał mi z wdziękiem mój wiśniak, siedziałem w dokach Provincetown, miałem 23 lata, byłem pełen radości, uniesiony nadzieją jaką pokładałem w Ojcu, tono było gotowe mnie przyjąć, gdybym chciał wejść (Z, 35).</i></p> <p>I remember my first sex, H.P. graciously took my kirsch, I sat in the docks of Provincetown, I was 23 years old, I was full of joy, elevated in the hope I had with the Father, the womb was ready to admit me if I wanted to enter.</p>

The above juxtaposition of translations clearly shows that Hartwig altered the original by giving it a more subtle tone. “Cherry,” which is a slang word for virginity, was rendered as *wiśniak* which—although sounds almost the same as the literal translation of “cherry” (*wiśnia*), has altogether different connotations (it is a type of alcohol). Thereby Hartwig completely changes the meaning of the original verse. The colloquial expression “get laid” was replaced with the word *sex*. One must note, however, that for Hartwig even the seem-

ingly neutral word “sex” is a very strong expression and would never make way into her own poetry. What is more, a thorough analysis of the quoted excerpt shows that Hartwig decided to make an even more courageous move. The verb “took” which refers to a person described by the initials H.P. was rendered by her in a masculine form, clearly indicating the homosexual orientation of the lyrical I. By doing so, she turned out to be more “barbaric” than Musiał who (despite having presented quite uninhibitedly his homosexual relationship with a popular sportsman in his *Dziennik z Iowa—Iowa Diary* [Musiał 291]) decided to transform the controversial confession of the lyrical I into an ordinary (and bordering on boring) story of a heterosexual man recalling his first sexual encounters. This translational retreat could not be compensated by the fact that Musiał decided to employ crude language and to use the anatomic term *macica* (“uterus”) instead of *łono* (“womb”) in order to emphasize the unique stylistic of the American poet.

The difference between the two translations can be seen once again in the way they both rendered the deliric metaphor “mental open eye” (S, 42). Hartwig decided again to take on the role of a classicist poet whereas Musiał managed to maintain a “mental understanding” with the author. It is necessary to remember that the Beatniks believed in the existence of the so-called “third eye” which can be opened up when stimulated by narcotics and which allows one to see the ultimate truth. Musiał replaced this metaphor with *czujne oko mózgu* (“watchful eye of the brain” [S, 43]), which means that he took this context into account, whereas Hartwig ignored it and interpreted “mental open eye” as *otwarte okno . . . umysłu* (“the open window . . . of the mind” [Z, 34]). It is not the only time when both translators approached Ginsberg’s metaphors in completely different ways. In the poem “In The Baggage Room At Greyhound” the lyrical I speaks about a huge metal horse, standing among wooden trunks, barrels and suitcases. This vision seems to refer to surrealist paintings which the Beatniks found most inspiring. A strange platform which is a combination of an object and a living creature, appearing among ordinary things, brings to mind, for example, a mystery creature from Salvador Dali’s painting “Invisible Sleeping Woman, Horse, Lion” (1930), in which one can see a woman, a horse, a lion and even a part of a boat. Just like this creature, Ginsberg’s unusual horse is a non-specified, thought-provoking object; perhaps

its aim was to suggest that the viewer was under the influence of hallucinogenic substances? Musiał decided to keep this intriguing vision in his translation. In his rendition, the equivalent of Ginsberg's "huge tin horse" (S, 62) is *wielki metalowy rumak* ("great metal steed" [S, 63]). Hartwig, on the other hand, decided to replace the hallucinatory hybrid with a simple word *platforma* ("platform" [Z, 40]) which may indicate that the poet did not take Ginsberg's fascination with surrealism into account.

Scholars who engage into translation studies have created multiple definitions of adequate translation. They are varied and more often than not take different issues into consideration. For instance, Vladimir Procházka claims that a translator [who wants to create a good translation] has to: 1) "understand the original in respect of subject and style"; 2) "overcome the differences between the two language structures"; 3) "recreate in the rendition the original stylistic structures of the original" (Garvin 111). Oliver Edwards emphasises that "we expect from the translation . . . the atmosphere being as close to the original as possible. Characters, situations, thoughts must appear the same as they were in the mind and the heart of the author" (Edwards 13). Matthew Arnold states that: "The translation should affect us the way the original affected its first listeners" (1861, qtd in Nida 61). If one were to relate Hartwig's translations of Ginsberg's poem to any of the definitions above, it would be exceedingly difficult to find them as fully rendering the content and style of the originals. Hartwig's translation of "A Strange New Cottage in Berkeley" shows that she did not try to recreate the stylistic structures of the original; some fragments of the "221 Syllables at Rocky Mountain Dharma Center" translation, are devoid of their original meaning which is rooted in Buddhist topics (blurred by Hartwig). For instance, "In The Baggage Room At Greyhound" and "Transcription of Organ Music" are bereft of surrealist images and erotic connotations and therefore seem but an echo of memories and ideas that were once present in the author's mind. In this case, it seems simply impossible to trigger the same (or a similar) reaction in the readers—significant in the context of intercultural dialogue—of the original works and the translation.

With the exception of Musiał's abovementioned translational "sidestepping," his translations seem to render the meaning of the originals quite faithfully, mainly because of the stylistic similarities. A thorough analysis of his

translations reveals, however, that in some fragments he decided to change Ginsberg's words instead of translating them. It is visible in "Transcription of Organ Music:" In the second stanza he translated "the night" (S, 42-46) as *ciemność* ("darkness" [S, 43-47]), in the fifth—"qualities" as *substancje* ("substances"), and in the sixth—"sunset" as *wieczór* ("evening"). Perhaps the ease with which the translator changed the words connected to very specific natural phenomena ("sunset," "night") into more ambiguous phrases ("evening," "darkness") was a result of thinking that the lyrical I was under the influence of hallucinogenic substances (which is indicated by the way he described reality) and, therefore, his surreal vision need not to be set in a particular time and space. The changes are even more pronounced in Musiał's translation of "A Supermarket in California." A confession which opens the original poem—"What thoughts I have of you tonight" (S, 40)—he translated into *Ileż myślę o tobie w ten wieczór* ("How much I think of you this evening" [S, 41]). Ginsberg's imaginative and ambiguous phrase "shopping for images" was translated as *chodzenie po sklepach w poszukiwaniu wrażeń* ("walking around the shops, looking for thrills"). But despite these alterations, Musiał tried not to interfere with the barbarian poetics of Ginsberg the way Hartwig did. He accepted the chaos of the poems, trying even to maintain the original word order which, taking into account Ginsberg's clusters of participles, was a true challenge. He did not eliminate epithets or metaphors, and where he could, he tried to save Ginsberg's individual, distant rhymes. It can be seen in the following fragment of "A Supermarket in California:" "I walked down the sidestreets under the trees" which Musiał translated into *pod drzewami idę w dół bocznymi uliczkami*.

What is characteristic about Musiał's translations is the lack of euphemisms and even a certain amount of crudeness. These features cannot be seen in the translations by Artur Międzyrzecki. The changes he proposed in the translation of "At Apollinaire's Grave" look like genuine censorship. The "clean-up" of inappropriate elements begins in the seventh line. The original line "Peter Orlovsky and I . . . held temporary hands tenderly" (U, 120-126) Międzyrzecki shortens by the adverb "tenderly" thereby depriving the poem of the allusions of homosexual love between the characters. Next, Międzyrzecki changed the content of the lyrical I's declaration in the third stanza: "Guillame, how I envy your . . . Zone with its long crazy line of bullshit about death" by eliminating

the vulgar noun “bullshit” and by that means taking the irony out of this fragment. In the third part of the poem, Międzyrzecki replaced a simile “a piece of thin granite like an unfinished phallus” with a more subtle description: *cienki granit o fallicznym kształcie* (“thin granite of a phallic shape” [Z, 43-47]). The biggest change the translator made to the text is the part where Ginsberg describes Christ: “Christ hangs big chested and sexy”—Międzyrzecki decided to censor the word “sexy” and render the relief description as *żarliwy Chrystus z obnażoną piersią* (“passionate Christ with a bare chest”).

As we can see, Międzyrzecki’s version of “At Apollinaire’s Grave,” devoid of irony characteristic of the poetry of American barbarians, iconoclastic visions and homosexual tones, is but a bare skeleton of the original poem. Once taken out of its primary context (which allows for the assumption that Ginsberg, as a Buddhist, perceived Christ only as a physical being), the image distorts the contents of the original poem and significantly changes the possible interpretations. Such an interference with the “barbarian” poetics drew the attention of Piotr Sommer who amusedly noted in the afterword to *Znajomi z tego świata*:

even the crucified Christ seems to Ginsberg an attractive man . . . even if the Polish translation does not want to become too attached to this idea. (Sommer 94)

Bożena Tokarz, who examined the personal aspects of artistic translations, noted that the relation between the original and the translation often consists in preserving the contradiction which constitutes different models of reality in different languages. According to her, “before a translation in a specific sign system can be achieved, a translation from culture to language occurs” (Tokarz 272). This contradiction between separate models of reality is apparent in the juxtaposition of the original poem with Międzyrzecki’s translation. The Polish rendition of Ginsberg’s poem, deprived of iconoclastic epithets, whose usage in the religious context was thought of as inadmissible by the Catholic translator, may serve as an example of a translation from “barbaric” culture to “classicist” language. Similarly to some of Hartwig’s translations, this rendition also does not convey the atmosphere of the original (as said by Edwards) and thus cannot affect the recipients in the way Arnold wanted.

“Mental understanding” between the original and the translation can be seen in the translations by Piotr Sommer. Despite the fact that he explicitly

criticized some of Ginsberg's views and opinions, he does share some aspects of "barbarian" poetics and the translations of Ginsberg poems prepared by him reveal virtually no modifications when juxtaposed with the originals. Apart from slight interferences with the word order (such as the repositioning of the adjective *siwobrody* ("graybeard") in the description of the "father" in "A Supermarket in California" [Ginsberg, 1993: 33]), there are only insignificant alterations to the titles (the biggest of which is in translating "The Bricklayer's Lunch Hour" into "Przerwa na obiad" — "Lunch Break" [Z, 7]).

A similar observation can be made while analyzing Sommer's translations of Frank O'Hara's poems. The alterations found in Sommer's renditions are merely nuances. One of such modifications can be seen in the poem "Why I am not a painter" ("Dlaczego nie jestem malarzem"); the original confession "it was too much" (P, 60) was rendered as a much more colloquial phrase *przeholowałem z tym* ("I overshot the mark" [T, 50]). In O'Hara's "Personal Poem" ("Wiersz osobisty") Sommer translates "lounger" (P, 43) as *obibok* (T, 76) thereby changing the word's meaning—*obibok* means "lazybones;" and in "For Grace, After A Party" ("Dla Grace, po prywatce") Sommer deprives the scene of giving a speech its original expression by translating "I was blazing my tirade" (P, 27) as *wygląszałem tyradę* ("I was saying my tirade" [T, 29]). It turns out, however, that even minor changes (even restricted only to the titles) may hinder the intercultural dialogue. Proof of this is visible in the translation of Frank O'Hara's "The Day Lady Died." In an interview for *Świat Literacki*, Sommer talked about his fascination with O'Hara's poem and confessed that translations of his poems took him as much as ten years (Basiuk, Piasecki and Szwed-Platerek 61). In the interview given to Joanna Orska, he admitted that despite his attempts, he is still unsure of the way he rendered the poem's title:

"The Day Lady Died" [is a phrase] which I translated more than twenty years ago into "Dzień, w którym zmarła Lady Day" ("The Day When Lady Day Died") is not as well as I would have liked. I still do not know what to do with this pun. (Orska 56)

⁹ These observations can also be referred to a significantly larger number of Polish inspirations with the poetry of American "barbarians." However, the harsh limitations of a conference paper do not allow to elaborate on all of them.

At the same time Sommer noted that this single phrase inspired so many poets that it was decided to publish an anthology gathering all “twin poems.” Such titles as “Dzień, w którym umarł Czesław Miłosz” (“The Day When Czesław Miłosz Died”) by Liliana Abraham-Zubińska, clearly show that the attempts to engage in an intercultural dialogue with O’Hara’s text have been futile. “The Day When” pattern used by the poets is in fact a calque of the Polish translation and does not convey the original linguistic puzzle. It is important to remember that in the title of O’Hara’s poem, the noun “Day” can both mean the artistic pseudonym of Billy Holiday and point to the “day” when she died. Polish titles referring to it remind the reader of a text written down during a game of Chinese whispers. This remains, however, a situation which leaves the translator helpless. As Edward Balcerzan notes:

[it happens that] in the repertoire of artistic devices in the original, the translator recognises a combination of system elements of the foreign language; . . . he or she cannot make them present in the rendition . . . as the target language lacks at least one—analogue element constituting the material of a particular combination . . . Untranslatability wins. (Balcerzan 90-91)

Such untranslatability of a linguistic device can be seen in this particular poem title.

The publication of translations of individual Allen Ginsberg poems and then the cult “blue issue” of *Literatura na Świecie* dedicated to the works of the New York School, led to the birth of “the late barbarians” in Poland. A considerable time delay, limited access to poetry due to the communist censorship and last but not least the lack of familiarity with English language, made it impossible for young Polish “o’harists” to engage in a real intercultural dialogue. As they could not learn the naturalness of expression directly from the American poets, they had to rely on their imitations present in Polish translations. Some of the translations, however, differed a lot from the original versions. The classicists who did not acknowledge the free model of poetry created their own versions of “barbaric” works, often adapting them to familiar patterns and to some extent, modifying the original character of the translated works. Some of Ginsberg’s poems, inspired by Buddhism or surrealism, had been taken out of their context and, therefore, lost their original overtone. Ginsberg’s poems “smoothed” and

“ordered” by Hartwig, for instance “A Strange New Cottage in Berkeley,” lost their spontaneity. Moreover, the controversial poem “At Apollinaire’s Grave,” translated by Międzyrzecki, became a battlefield after the fight between the conservative, Catholic translator and the rebellious Buddhist author. While working on some translations (e.g. “Transcription of Organ Music”) Hartwig abandoned the classicist poem form and conveyed the “barbaric” content in the poem’s key parts but these moments were few and far between. At the same time, the efforts of Polish barbaric poets to build a bridge enabling the intercultural dialogue with the Americans were not always successful. Musiał’s translations, despite maintaining the stylistics of the original works, were often free paraphrases and Sommer’s translations were not always capable of overcoming the untranslatability of elaborate wordplays employed by Ginsberg and O’Hara. As a result, Polish novice barbarians, who depended on various translations, did not employ the “American voice” but rather imitated it in their own intertextual, yet hardly ever intercultural, plays.

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Summary

This article is about the emerge of "late barbarians" centered around *bruLion* and their dispute with the classicists. The main thesis is that Polish "barbarians" were unable to engage in a real intercultural dialogue with the Beat Generation and New York School poets who inspired them. The author refers to this phenomenon as "second-degree intertextuality" and states that it was caused mostly by the limited knowledge of the English language. The writers often had to base on translations which were distant from the original texts. The author analyzes and compares the tendencies in translations made by Polish authors, both "barbarians" (Musiał, Sommer) and civilized (Hartwig, Międzyrzecki), proving that the classicists often adapted "barbaric" works to familiar patterns, and the translations made by "barbarians" sometimes resembled free paraphrases of the original texts.

Key words: comparative literature, translation studies, Polish poetry, Julia Hartwig, Artur Międzyrzecki, Piotr Sommer, Grzegorz Musiał

Wiersze Franka O'Hary i Allena Ginsberga tłumaczone przez polskich poetów. Konflikt pomiędzy „klasycystami” a „barbarzyńcami”?

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia okoliczności narodzin polskich „spóźnionych barbarzyńców”, skupionych wokół „bruLionu”, i opisuje ich spór z klasycystami. Autorka stawia tezę, iż polscy „barbarzyńcy” nie byli w stanie nawiązać prawdziwego interkulturowego dialogu z poetami Beat Generation oraz New York School (reprezentowanymi tu przez Allena Ginsberga i Franka O'Hare), od których czerpali inspirację. Zaistniałe zjawisko

określa mianem „intertekstualności drugiego stopnia” i stwierdza, że było ono spowodowane przede wszystkim ograniczoną znajomością języka angielskiego, która zmusiła „trzydziestolatków” do korzystania z, bardzo odbiegających od oryginałów, rodzimych przekładów wierszy Amerykanów. Autorka analizuje i porównuje tendencje w translacjach wykonywanych przez polskich „poetów-barbarzyńców” (Musiał, Sommer) oraz poetów-klasycystów (Hartwig, Międzyrzecki), dowodząc, iż klasycyści nierzadko dopasowywali tłumaczone wiersze do bliskich sobie wzorców, a translacje „barbarzyńców” przypominały czasem bardzo swobodne parafrazy oryginalnych utworów.

Słowa kluczowe: komparatystryka literacka, studia przekładoznawcze, poezja polska, Julia Hartwig, Artur Międzyrzecki, Piotr Sommer, Grzegorz Musiał