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Stanisław Barańczak: Between Autonomy and Support

Stanisław Barańczak (1946-2014), a leading poet of the Polish 'New Wave' formation, dissident intellectual, prolific translator and, from the early 1980s until his recent death, an émigré and professor at Harvard University, remains one of the most prominent translation critics and literary figures in Poland. This article attempts to revisit his first theoretical paper on literary translation entitled 'Przekład jako "samoistny" i "związany" obiekt interpretacji' [The Translation as a „Self-sufficient” and „Integrated” Object of Interpretation] ([1972]/1974) and to present his early scholarship within the Structuralist framework of literary communication. In academic criticism this particular text has generally been misinterpreted: it has usually been deemed analytically unhelpful and believed to reiterate some of the clichés of Translation Studies. This article will attempt to discard those oversimplified interpretations by establishing a bridge between Barańczak’s theoretical claims and his own translation practice. The concept of translation as a “self-sufficient” and “integrated” object of interpretation will be discussed with special reference to the way Barańczak himself later constructed and published his own literary translations, his ethical approach to autonomy and support in translation, as well as the general intellectual and literary context of that time.

According to the often quoted conversation between Iosif Brodsky and one of the Polish Nobel prize laureates, Czesław Miłosz, the two prominent poets discussed and praised Stanisław Barańczak’s literary translation practice in the following way:

*IOSIF BRODSKY: The boy is a genius, Stasiek, ya?
CZESŁAW MIŁOSZ: Fantastic.*

IOSIF BRODSKY: *What he does in translation rates absolutely remarkable*, yes. (MIŁOSZ & BROPSKY 2006: 117-118)

This significant exchange of opinions already points to something that granted Barańczak almost a cult status as a literary translator in contemporary Poland: his unique knack for creative translation, his great finesse and ease in finding the least obvious solutions as well as his incredible speed in publishing his renderings of Anglophone verse and Shakespearean plays from the early 90s onwards. Having been labelled as a “dissident poet” and intermittently banned from printing in Communist Poland, Barańczak emigrated to Cambridge, Massachusetts to take up a position of professor at Harvard University. Soon after the 1989 transition, he re-entered the literary scene with great panache: publishing (besides his own poetry and essays) a wide range of literary translations and translation criticism, often in the unconventional form of thematic anthologies and playful translation books. It is also partly due to the quality, scope and abundance of his translation activity that Barańczak became an iconic figure of English-Polish intercultural transfer throughout recent decades, anointed by Czesław Miłosz in yet another statement to the effect that: “since its beginnings until now, Polish literature has not yet had such a translator as Barańczak” (MIŁOSZ 1995: back cover). Also, Barańczak may be the only translator in history with such a recognisable literary translation *oeuvre* that it was possible to turn this into a theatrical play in its own right. Staged for the first time in 2013 (Poznań New Theatre), the play *Mister Barańczak* has a very telling title: it introduces the poet with an English form of address (Mister), which alludes both to his American literary persona and academic activity as well as the crucial role he had in his mediation between Anglo-Saxon and Polish literary traditions. At the same time, however, Barańczak’s renderings and texts devoted to the art of translation have triggered much scholarly and literary debate on translation theory and practice. What particularly stirred up controversy in the early 90s was his unfavourable diagnoses of Polish translations of poetry to date, even more so as they constituted a critical voice from the “outside”. This somewhat polemical attitude and subversive tone emanated not only from Barańczak’s particular aesthetic preferences, but also, more importantly, from his entire understanding of what literary translation is and what it should entail for the reader. In the end, some of his texts, if not

revolutionising, then at least challenging, provided a refreshing perspective on the relationship between the original and its creative rendering in the Polish literary translation tradition. Barańczak’s most intensely commented on and popular essay on translation of the time is unquestionably his *Mały, ale maksymalistyczny manifest translatołogiczny* [A Small but Maximalist Translatołogical Manifesto] (BARAŃCZAK 1990) with a provocative and witty subtitle playing on the double meaning of the Polish verb *tłumaczyć* (translate, explain): *Tłumaczenie się z tego, że tłumaczy się wiersze również w celu wytłumaczenia innym tłumaczom, iż dla większości tłumaczeń nie ma wytłumaczenia* [Explaining yourself that you translate poems also in order to explain to other translators that for the majority of translations there is no explanation]. It is in this essay that Barańczak famously discussed the concept of *semantic dominant* (previously, *stylistic dominant*; BARAŃCZAK 1984):¹ the aesthetic or formal principle according to which an original poem is structured and which a translator focuses on in their rendering.² This manifesto would also open his collection of essays on literary translation followed by “a little anthology of problem translations” published slightly later as *Ocalone w tłumaczeniu* [Saved in Translation] (1992, 2004) and would consequently become Barańczak’s flagship text on literary translation alongside which his translation practice would be analysed by Polish translation critics.

In this paper, however, I will not discuss Barańczak’s “translatołogical manifesto”, but rather revisit his first theoretical text on literary translation titled *Przekład jako “samoistny” i “związany” obiekt interpretacji (na marginesie niektórych polskich tłumaczeń Gottfrieda Benn)* [The Translation as a „Self-sufficient” and „Integrated” Object of Interpretation: Some Polish Translations of Gottfried Benn]³ (BARAŃCZAK 1974: 47–74), which he himself never discussed or reprinted again. The paper was presented at

1 To be more precise, the term itself was probably taken from the Polish Formalist Kazimierz Wójcicki or Russian Formalists (Yury Tynyanov, Boris Eikhenbaum, Roman Jakobson), who adapted it from the German theorist Broder Christiansen and his *Philosophie der Kunst* [Philosophy of Art]. Cf. Andrzej Karcz’s discussion of the term ‘dominant’ (KARCZ 2002: 80–82).

2 Joanna Niżyńska quite helpfully gave an approximation of the semantic dominant as “a kind of objective correlative” (NIŻYŃSKA 2015) that ought to be identified in the original and becomes a starting point for a translation into another language.

3 I give the title in English after Elżbieta Tabakowska’s translation suggested in her chapter on *Polish tradition* in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (TABAKOWSKA 1998).

a conference in Szczawnica (in Matopolska [Lesser Poland]) in 1972 and published in an edited volume two years later alongside essays by Polish translation critics (Jerzy Święch, Józef Zarek, etc.) and the Slovak Functionalist translation critic, Anton Popovič. At that time, Barańczak was a young scholar affiliated with the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań (he was only 26 years old) and, perhaps, it is also partly due to his lack of experience that this academic debut has been rather neglected or has attracted little attention from translation critics. Furthermore, the eponymous distinction of “self-sufficient” and “integrated” has unfortunately been misinterpreted on a couple of occasions and, as a result of the oversimplifications, the text has been deemed analytically unhelpful and believed to reproduce some of the clichés of Translation Studies. For instance, Elżbieta Tabakowska in her chapter on *Polish tradition* in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* confined Barańczak’s concept to “the old opposition” of domestication and foreignisation expressed in new terms, adding that the literary translation theory in Poland represented by Barańczak would “rarely offer anything more than passing observations and fragmented comments” (TABAKOWSKA 1998: 530). Likewise, another critic, Arkadiusz Luboń, appropriated the text for his recent study on the New Wave poets’ translation practice, *Przekraczanie obcości* [Overcoming Foreignness] (2013) in a similarly reductive manner: Her reworded Barańczak’s categories as staying with “the truth of the original” (integrated) and its “falsification by excessive autonomy” (self-sufficient), which would again only bring back the old mantra of “fidelity” and “infidelity” of translation in relation to the source text (LUBOŃ 2013: 42). When equated with either of these binary oppositions, Barańczak’s remarks might seem completely uninventive and analytically obsolete. Thus, it is perhaps no surprise that the editors of the recently published anthology of Polish translation thought encompassing the most influential articles in the field, titled *Polska myśl przekładowa. Antologia* [Polish Translation Thought: Anthology] decided not to include this text in the book (PEBONCZA BUKOWSKI & HEYDEL 2013: 17). Although Barańczak’s first paper has been conventionally ignored or criticised for its unchallenging conceptual framework, by the same token, a few critics have also appreciated its distinctive voice. Apart from Lorenzo Constantino, who selected this paper for his Italian pioneering anthology of Polish translation theory *Teorie della Traduzione in Polonia* (*La tradizione artistica come oggetto di interpretazione*

zione indipendente e correlato, CONSTANTINO 2009: 69–80), two Polish literary theorists have indicated how this paper could inform Barańczak’s own translation practice. In his article *Przekład poezji i poezja przekładu* [translation of poetry and Poetry of translation] (BALBUS 1993), Stanisław Balbus remarked that Barańczak would pose a lot of intellectual and artistic challenges to his readers by constructing his translations of poetry as creative applications of his theoretical concept. Likewise, Monika Kaczorowska recently referred to Barańczak’s text in her monograph on the poet’s artistic and translation practice, pursuing a new interesting line of study of his translations as “meta-utterances” that are created in order to comment on the original poetics (KACZOROWSKA 2011: 208). Therefore, at least these few defensive instances call for a revision of the paper and its reception within Translation Studies. To this end, I will also try to establish a parallel between Barańczak’s reflections on translation and his own literary translation practice.

The first difficulty in interpreting Barańczak’s paper arises already in the way the discussed distinction has been used out of the original context and not in its full wording. This can be illustrated with reference to the text’s title, prone to shortening because of its rather convoluted structure. Contrary to what some handy abbreviations might imply, the article does not feature “self-sufficient” and “integrated” translations, but more precisely translations that can become “self-sufficient” or “integrated” objects of interpretation for the readers. This second part of the phrase, although vulnerable to omission, already gives an important hint as to what Barańczak would most intensely emphasise in his translation practice, namely: the reader’s part and their interpretative perspective. Following the Eastern European Functionalist or Structuralist model of literary communication, Barańczak placed translation in the communication situation between the translator and the reader, and it is exactly this interdependence that would shape the given two different modes of interpreting translated texts by their recipients. According to Barańczak, the translator is able to construct their translation in such a way that its textual shape projects one of the two reading approaches: the recipient can read it as a stand-alone text as all the original necessary information has been contained in the translation content and no juxtaposition with the original is required for its understanding (*self-sufficient* object of interpretation); or the reader can interpret it in confrontation with the origi-

nal or with its other existing (re)translations, having been encouraged to a parallel reading or analysis of the original and its creative rendering (*integrated* object of interpretation). Either of these two modes can be facilitated and projected by the translator himself through his particular translation decisions but also, on a more structural level, by the publishing context and specific editorial strategies. For instance, Barańczak argued that if the translated text contains a lot of editorial devices, e.g. footnotes, comments, or even whole forewords by the translator, this indicates that the translation can become a “self-sufficient” text, read in dissociation from the original, as all the necessary information has been contained in the target publication and no verification with the source text can enhance the reader’s understanding of it. Then, in the case of a work presented in a bilingual version, the “integrated” mode of reading is somewhat inscribed into the nature of translation, as it indirectly invites the recipient (who will ideally be capable of reading in two languages and comparing both versions) to trace how the translation relates to the original poetics, how it comments on them and how some meanings are intentionally reconfigured. These observations might sound quite general and not necessarily explain how the reader will actually react to certain features outlined by Barańczak – for instance, depending on the culture, expectations and individual traits, they might not be able to read in two languages and interpret the extra-textual information and the editorial hints as intended by the translator – but this is not most crucial for Barańczak’s argumentation. Instead, the critic would rather bring to the fore the translator’s ethical stance in the process as he or she should be aware of the consequences that the publication context and the translator’s framing may present for the readers and their respective interpretations. This particular attention to ethics in the communication with the reader through translation partly stems from Barańczak’s New Wave poetic agenda, in which the intentions of the speaking subject should: firstly, be explicit and clearly communicated to the recipient; and secondly, adopt respectively the most adequate means of presenting the text rather than manipulate it or thoughtlessly adhere to the prevailing norms. In this setting, the translator can therefore at least attempt to make a creative use of this knowledge when constructing their texts or even (as some cases from Barańczak’s *oeuvre* will demonstrate later on) play with this notion through a sort of translation experimentation.

At the same time, however, Barańczak’s communication project also assumes some reciprocity in the process and equally demands intellectual endeavour and attention from the reader in their active reception, especially when he or she is invited to read a translation as an object of interpretation “integrated” with the original or with other previous (re)translations of the same original. Besides the New Wave sensitivity to the form of presenting the text and the axiom of being fair to the readers, Barańczak’s theoretical inspirations for his project’s framework in this respect derive from two further sources. The first one is definitely Edward Balcerzan, Barańczak’s university colleague and one of the most influential Polish translation theorists who alongside the already mentioned Slovak theorist Anton Popovič, pursued the Functionalist or Structuralist approach to literary translation. It is worth mentioning that Popovič from the Nitra circle and Balcerzan from the Poznań school would also develop their projects under the reciprocal influence: in her *Czech and Slovak Translation Theories: The Lesser Knowns Tradition*, Zuzana Jettmarová mentioned the impact of Balcerzan’s thought on Anton Popovič (JETTMAROVÁ 2008) and, likewise, the Slovak theoretician’s texts were at that point not only accessible in Polish, but also read and discussed by the Poznań school scholars (e.g. POPOVIČ 1971, POPOVIČ 1973), including the article published with Barańczak’s paper in the edited volume after the 1972 conference (POPOVIČ 1974). In a series of his academic works of that time, culminating later in his *magnum opus* titled *Teória umeleckého prekladu. Aspekty textu a literárnej metakomunikácie* [Theory of Artistic Translation: Aspects of Text and Literary Metacommunication] (1975), Popovič pursued a “meta-communicative” approach to his studies of literary translation. For instance, he argued that some translations can function as “meta-texts”, that is texts overwritten on the original and existing as meta-commentaries to them, but in some other cases they are made and read as original and independent primary works with their translators acting in front of their readers as their original authors (POPOVIČ 1971: 206). If we reformulate this statement in Barańczak’s terms, it becomes clear that his translations as “integrated” objects of interpretation enter a similar type of meta-relationship with the original, whereas the “self-sufficient” objects are framed and presented as independent, autonomous works. However, Barańczak would probably not entirely agree to the simulated quasi-authorial status of the translator who, according to

him, could still be present in their own right on a more discursive level; through footnotes, introductions and other editorial interpolations. Interestingly, having noticed the affinity between Barańczak's and Popovič's theoretical propositions, one of the Poznań scholars, Ewa Kraskowska, actually argued that the term of "meta-text" used in reference to literary translation might be misleading and ambiguous, so should be subsequently replaced with the "integrated text" coined after Barańczak's disfunction (KRASKOWSKA 1989: 25).

Terminological disputes aside, such intuitions were definitely in the air at that time and they placed the act of translation in a network of different communication agents and contexts. On the wave of these reflections, Barańczak extends the interrelation between the original and its translation onto a more intricate web of interdependent factors, especially by placing the translation as an "integrated" object of interpretation in relation to other (re)translations existing in the target literary tradition. From today's perspective, the understanding of literary translation as affected by and dependent on other translations and retranslations sounds very familiar: "Retranslation studies" have become a prominent field within the contemporary Translation Studies paradigm, going beyond the normative and source-oriented model of equivalence. When in 2009 Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçağlar in her chapter titled *Retranslation* from the second edition of *The Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies* mapped a wide range of recent theoretical models explaining various mechanisms leading to retranslations, all their authors took it as axiomatic that literary translations in the target culture should be analysed in all their multiplicity and with reference to other versions (TAHIR-GÜRÇAĞLAR 2009: 233-235). In the early 70s, however, that assumption was probably not that common as it would trespass on the purely linguistic approach to the process of translation that would conventionally focus on the relationship between original meanings and their reflections in translation. In his theoretical discussion of different retranslations and analysis of a particular case study, however, Barańczak seemed to build on one of the most important texts in Polish translation thought, that is *Poetyka przekładu artystycznego* [The Poetics of Artistic Translation] written by the Polish translation theorist Edward Balcerzan a few years earlier, in 1968 (BALCERZAN 1968). It is here that Balcerzan introduced his term "translation series", redefining the ontological status of a literary work in translation. According to Balcerzan, each

foreign work transferred to a different culture exists not as a single translated text, but within a whole series of translations. Even if there has been only one translation of a certain work in a given point in time, it should be nonetheless treated as the beginning of a potential series of translations as there can always be more new readings and renderings to come. In other words, the relation of the source text and its translation(s) can never be one-to-one as the act of translation assumes its multiple and indefinite ontology in the target culture. What is more, Balcerzan himself stated that translation can "open itself" in two separate directions: towards the original or towards another rendering in the series. Although Barańczak in his paper never directly referred to Balcerzan's concept by its name, the way he analysed the complex network of Polish translations of Gottfried Benn's poem might suggest the influence of Balcerzan's theoretical framework. When approaching a single (re)translation as a text "integrated" with some earlier translations of the same work, he implicitly assumed that this very translation was affected not only by the original text, but at the same time placed among other renderings and shaped by them.

Taking a more in-depth look at Barańczak's own translation and editorial strategies, and reading them alongside his early theoretical reflections (that is interpreting his translations as objects "integrated" with his critical writing) demonstrates some interesting similarities. Of course, this is far from saying that Barańczak's innovative art of translation and creative ideas should be, by and large, pigeonholed in some simple binary oppositions. However, it simultaneously needs to be pointed out that his awareness of how the positioning of the translated text could, according to him, influence it as "an object of interpretation" might be traced in the way he constructed his books and collections of translations. First of all, having complained in his paper that bilingual editions of poetry in translation were typical only of Western traditions of publishing (BARAŃCZAK 1974: 49), he then composed his translations of individual authors in exactly that way. In his series of various Anglophone poets published throughout the 1990s as *Biblioteczka poetów języka angielskiego* [Library of English Language Poets], his selections of translated poetry by, for instance, Emily Dickinson (100 poems, 1990) Philip Larkin (44 poems, 1991), Robert Frost (55 poems, 1992), Thomas Hardy (55 poems, 1993), W.H. Auden (44 poems, 1994), Elizabeth Bishop (33 poems, 1995), and John Donne (77 poems, 1997) would be accompanied by the original

texts on the left-hand pages (regardless of the length of the collection), as if the originals were indeed supposed to, as Barańczak put it in his paper, “enrich the translation information-wise, in a way intended by the translator” (BARAŃCZAK 1974: 59). When asked about his imperative to publish translated poetry in bilingual editions during the 1990 interview titled *Autonomia i oparcie* [Autonomy and Support], Barańczak admitted that he would always endeavour to convince his editors and manage (with single exceptions) to provide original poems in parallel. He justified this publishing strategy on the ethical level:

Each of us stretches between two extremities: foreignness and community, individuality and belonging; and this also seems to apply to a translation of poetry. If it is good, it is an autonomous, self-sufficient poem in its own language that does not require any other back-up. But at the same time, if it is good, it also involves a form of creative dialogue with the original; despite all its self-sufficiency, it cannot exist without the source text. What I find equally interesting in translation, just as in poetry, are apparently these situations when you discover that you cannot exist without the sense of your own autonomy and, simultaneously, you cannot exist without the support of others. (BARAŃCZAK [1990]/1993a: 57, my translation throughout)

In these words, once again after almost two decades, Barańczak reminded the readers how they should think of his translations of poetry and, perhaps, about translations of poetry in general: as poetic works in their own right that creatively relate to the originals or, in other words, that are “integrated” with the originals and supported by their poetics. This mode of reading translations is definitely not intuitive, and Barańczak’s translations of poetry have indeed often been criticised for departing too much from the letter of the original and employing his own artistic diction rather than reconstructing the original idiom. As a remedy for such misunderstandings, Stanisław Balbus called in his article for the ideal reader of Barańczak’s translations who would reach beyond the reception of translations as substitutions of the original (BALBUS 1993: 45). Also, in her monograph devoted to Barańczak’s literary translation practice *Thymaczenie jako kontynuacja twórczości własnej* [Translation as a Continuation

of the Translator’s Own Work], Monika Kaczorowska (2011) equally followed suit. According to her, Barańczak’s translations of poetry should be treated as literary works in which he “takes on a threefold role: of translator, of poet and of commentator”, as he “simultaneously translates the poem, writes a poem according to the rules of his own literary work and through his translations, he comments on the original poetics” (KACZOROWSKA 2011: 33). And such a constant desire to take a stance towards the other’s word also derived from the need typical of the New Wave poets to penetrate the language and to examine “the word in the state of suspicion” (BARAŃCZAK 1979: 116). However, the most important reason here would be rather Barańczak’s awareness of the incongruity between the original and the translated world, which are never able to replace each other, but which could at least be editorially juxtaposed and compared in a parallel reading.

On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that Barańczak’s renderings of Shakespeare were never published next to the source texts; they were, therefore, constructed as independent from the original or “self-sufficient” objects of interpretation (although probably still “integrated” with the previous Polish translations of Shakespeare). I believe that there were two key reasons for this: firstly, Barańczak’s own understanding of how Shakespearean works should be translated with regard to their specific function as theatre plays – since his own translations were commissioned by theatre directors (e.g. Tadeusz Łomnicki, Andrzej Wajda); and secondly, his specific role in the transfer of Shakespeare. The first can be seen in Barańczak’s special treatment of Shakespearean verse and its theatrical provenance, which he expressed in one of his essays, *Od Shakespeare’a do Szekspira* [From Shakespeare to Szekspir; *Szekspir – Polish traditional spelling of the name*] (BARAŃCZAK [1992]/2004: 209–211). In this text Barańczak commented on the previous renditions by Maciej Słomczyński, a well-established translator of Shakespeare known for a principally hermeneutical approach in his philologically and historically oriented reconstructions of the text. Barańczak criticised Słomczyński’s translations for lacking both clarity and “theatrical potential” (*sce-niczność*) whereas the priority for any verse translated for theatre would be the capability of *playing* on its own. In other words, it is due to the specific role and reception of literary translation for theatre that, in Barańczak’s words, no information from the original – in the moment of

communicating the text – can enrich the way it is interpreted by the audience. And this is also how Barańczak ‘visualised’ his translations of Shakespeare: as a text delivered from the stage and existing in the theatrical space. In the interview *Poezja musi być wieczną czujnością* [Poetry Must Be Eternal Vigilance], he distinguished the case of translating Shakespearean verse in the following way:

[...] the key problem for the translator lies in brevity and semantic density as the virtues that constitute Shakespeare the poet, whereas the theatre stage demands exactly the opposite qualities: clarity and transparency. When heard from the stage, Shakespearean dialogue needs to be at the same time lyrically brilliant and instantly comprehensible. (BARAŃCZAK [1990]/1993b: 74)

The second reason for the “self-sufficient” publishing form of Barańczak’s Shakespeare might be that the translator was not in the position of introducing Shakespeare, but rather of reinterpreting him, and taking a stance with regards to other existing and rather well-known renderings. This is true especially with reference to the aforementioned Słomczyński’s translations. By criticising them in a public debate, Barańczak himself imposed a comparison between the two versions and directed the reading of his own rendering as an improvement on and remedy to the textual practices of his predecessor. Where Słomczyński’s text seemed impenetrable in terms of language or cultural reference, Barańczak’s own translation clarified the imagery, made it more explicit, or transferred it to the current communicative environment. In her analysis of Barańczak’s *King Lear*, Anna Cetera described all these strategies as typical of “(meta)translations”, since Barańczak “directs his audience’s attention to the game he himself plays with Shakespeare” (CETERA 2008: 210-211). But such a game was only possible because of the translator’s role in approaching the canon; since Shakespeare was already a well-established author in Polish literary culture,⁴ the next translation had to be “integrated” to the known (re)translations rather than to the original. Barańczak

4 Stefania Skwarczyńska even argued that, for example, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in Józef Paszkowski’s translation should be treated like a standard work of Polish literature (SKWARCZYŃSKA 1975).

made this point quite clear in his paper, by arguing: “The less a translation is an element of the ‘vanquished’ tradition and the more it is a literary presence, the more it is ‘self-sufficient’ [in relation to the previous translations]” (BARAŃCZAK 1974: 52). Another rendering of Shakespeare, in contrast, should always be placed within a long record of Shakespearean translations and only these connotations enrooted in the target culture can be activated in the viewers’ minds during the performance (unlike the original to which they have no access on the spot).

Still, in both cases it is notable how Barańczak’s particular care and awareness of the translation’s publishing context and presentation of itself is intertwined with his strategy and, subsequently, with the assumed pattern of reading and interpreting the text. Significantly, that also allowed him to use some more reticular arrangements, which he successfully pursued in other books. Some of these unconventional publications were released by the a5 Press, an independent institution founded in 1989 by Barańczak’s New Wave fellow poet Ryszard Krynicki and his wife, known for its avant-garde profile and particular attention paid to typographical qualities. For example, next to his essays on literary translation in *Ocalone w tłumaczeniu* [Saved in Translation] (2004) published first in 1992 by the a5 Press, Barańczak included what he called in the subtitle: “a little anthology of problem translations”, in which the recipient was invited to read translations as riddles or, in his words, “40 puzzles in the form of 40 poems to translate, each supplied with a commentary explaining in detail why this task is practically impossible, and 40 solutions to the puzzles in the form of translations done nevertheless” (English translation of the subtitle after: BARAŃCZAK 1992: 42). Barańczak was very particular about the editorial shape of this untypical publication as he insisted on the analogous arrangement already in the “taster” selection of translation examples prepared for the Parisian “Zeszyty literackie” literary magazine (BARAŃCZAK 1991: 32–59). Both the sample and actual “little anthology” in *Ocalone w tłumaczeniu* were, therefore, organised in such a way that the original poem was presented first, followed by the translator’s commentary and the pointed *Zadanie* [Task] of the translator with regard to this specific literary work. However, the *Rozwiązanie* [Solution], which is the Polish translation of the poem, did not immediately accompany these texts, but was found after the whole collection of “tasks”. In one of the examples, Barańczak even phrased the translator’s task in

terms of a mathematical equation. Presenting James Merrill's poem *Ideas* and the Slavic language interference by one of the interlocutors (Xenia) in the original, he claimed that when translating this work into Polish "everything boils down to a simple equation with one variable: American; Slavic = Polish : x ; x = ?". Naturally, conceptualising the process of translation as "a task", with its "solution" placed some pages later, became partly a rhetorical device. Barańczak would formulate "the task" in a way in which he could later solve it, pointing to the most important issues he had himself considered crucial for the interpretation of a poem. But the whole concept of this game was that the reader was supposed to participate in the moment of recognition and discover how elements of the puzzle gradually formed the final image. And this could only happen because Barańczak projected the reading of his translations by influencing the way they were published, positioned and framed within his translation book. In this particular case, Barańczak in a way tricked the reader into examining the original first, then into going through the explanation of his line of thinking reflected in the respectively adapted strategy, and finally the product of this particular interpretation: a poem in Polish that was entirely "integrated" with the original (or, perhaps, with the way Barańczak presented it to the reader).

Furthermore, in his first paper, still in the context of this discussion of publication form and its significance for the interpretation of translation, Barańczak mentioned an interesting, ambivalent case of translation which is seemingly "integrated" with the original, but in fact leans towards the "self-sufficient" nature:

There is another device, which plays a similar role and is used by editors of translations, namely: placing several renderings of an original text next to each other. It seems it is an incentive to approach the translation as an 'integrated' object of interpretation. However, it also happens that the juxtaposed translations complete and verify each other, which allows for reading them in abstraction from the original, hence as a "self-sufficient" object of interpretation. (BARAŃCZAK 1974: 54-55)

According to Barańczak, such a selection of different renderings of the same text is in fact constructed in such way that the translations detach

themselves from the original, which makes the work "self-sufficient" as a whole, although all the versions simultaneously become dependent on or "integrated" with each other. Obviously, this editorial strategy is usually pursued for scholarly editions and often without the knowledge of the translators themselves. For instance, when the Polish edition of T.S. Eliot's poetry by the Ossolineum Press juxtaposed several existing renderings of the same poems, this editorial device, as the editor stated, was meant to acquire "a full, multiplied illumination of a given work" (RULEWICZ 1990: cxvii). It is, therefore, even more interesting that Barańczak himself made use of this strategy in a few instances and turned it into a creative variation of different translation solutions, most explicitly in his anthologies: *Fioletowa krowa* [The Purple Cow] (1993) and *Pegaz zdębiał* [Pegasus Fell Dumb] (1995). Whereas the latter featured Barańczak's multiplied homophonic renderings of the same original, in *Fioletowa krowa*, he presented five cases of various possible readings of one work through translation in a slightly different way. The anthology comprised 333 translated nonsense poems to which Barańczak attributed numbers. Although treated as single works in this numeration system, the aforementioned five cases in fact broke into multiple translation versions as Barańczak placed them next to each other, all under one title and number. Thanks to this device, they often illuminated each other in translation by simultaneously offering different perspectives on the original: 58. *O mułach* (after Ogden Nash's *Mules*); 101. *O niemowlętach* (Ogden Nash's *Reflection on Babies*); 118. *Monotonia* (Langton Hughes's *Ennuï*), 157. *Doniesienie* (Dorothy Parker's *News Item*); 263. *Refleksje na temat przelamywania lodów przy nawiązywaniu stosunków towarzyskich* (Ogden Nash's *Reflections on Ice-Breaking*). Some of them were presented in a hierarchy of relevance according to the translator's commentary, given in square brackets, but in most cases they were juxtaposed as equally legitimate parallel versions of the original. For instance, in one of them titled *Refleksje na temat przelamywania lodów przy nawiązywaniu stosunków towarzyskich* [Reflections On (The Theme of) Ice Breaking], Barańczak brought together a chain of 12 completely different, but identically possible variations on the original theme. Then, in his translation of the couplet *Reflection on Babies* by Ogden Nash: "A bit of talcum/ Is always walcum", he provided three parallel versions, the first of which was built on a triple rhyme: "Już pierwszy ich wrzask zza szybki,/ Mówi ojcu, że nie był za szybki,/ Naby-

wajac na zapas zasyptk' [The very first scream from behind the glass/
Tells the father he wasn't too fast./ Buying baby powder as a spare.]; and
the remaining two preceded by a humorous comment that they were "two
separate variations on the above theme created by the translator, which
are based on the same rhyme, but simultaneously present opposite per-
spectives of the two interested parties and, subsequently, form a dialectic
parent-baby diptych" (BARAŃCZAK 1993: 101). And indeed, one of the two
renderings is presented from the viewpoint of the parent: "Wie, że po
pudrze,/ Szkrab mniej mu się drze" [He/She knows that after using pow-
der./ The toddler less cries to him.]; and the other one is written from the
perspective of the baby: "Gdy zapomnieć o pudrze./ Do utrały się tchu
drze" [Forgetting the powder means that/ He/She will cry until blue in
his/her face]. Since it was not exactly determined in the original whether
the bit of talcum is welcomed by the child or the parent, these two read-
ings bifurcated into two more explicit readings in translation. But as the
original had simultaneously generated three different texts, all of them
became equally valid variants of the source poem, which completed each
other and together created a consistent 'triptych' of mutually complemen-
tary perspectives.

In a sense, these artistic translation chains of different versions could
be also seen as Edward Balcerzan's "translation series" in practice.⁵ As
they were placed next to each other in Barańczak's editorial strategy of
multiplying different possible readings, they became "integrated" with
each other, but also worked as a "self-sufficient" literary work in its own
right. This translation device has proven to be quite inspirational in Polish
literary translation criticism. Leszek Szaruga in his commentary on
Barańczak's translation exercises pointed out that: "This is, of course, only
about playing, but it is also not devoid of any deeper significance. After all,
we know that such translation series come into being, that new transla-
tors take up the challenge (and the risk) of creating translations anew"
(SZARUGA 2014: 108). In a similar manner, Edward Balcerzan created a
chain of translation variations in Polish on the theme from a Russian hu-

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5 Such a combination might be in fact treated as a special (synchronic) case of the "transla-
tion series", described by Józef Zarek in his article *Seria jako zbiór tłumaczeń* [Series as a
Set of Translations]. According to Zarek, when the series is not formed over time, it simul-
taneously provides a plethora of alternative interpretations and appears as a consistent set
of parallel translations (ZAREK 1991: 8).

morous song, *chastuska*. The poem composed from these multiplied
translations was titled by him: *deconstruction*, and he also referred to in
the last self-reflexive verse as a "*Czastuszkowy Derrida*" (Derrida made of
chastuszkas). As Balcerzan tellingly admitted, the entire playful poem in
the style of Barańczak was "a translation series *sui generis*" (BALCERZAN
2014). Finally, Barańczak's concept of translations as objects of interpre-
tation that are "integrated" altogether, verify each other, and thus become
a "self-sufficient" text on its own turned out to be a very inspirational and
capacious metaphor referring to other types of textual practices. Ewa
Kraszkowska started her article *Intertekstualność a przekład* [Intertextual-
ity and Translation] referring to Barańczak's paper by an intriguing allu-
sion and self-reflection:

*This essay is not a "self-sufficient" text since it has been created
principally as a result of reading works by others. It attempts to put
together some dispersed remarks by a few authors who express
the same thought in different ways [...]. Its aim is to unite them and
compose them in such a way that they can illuminate, add to and
comment on each other.* (KRASKOWSKA 1992: 129)

In other words, by extending Barańczak's concept to broader categories
and levels of discourse, Kraszkowska suggested that it can be interpreted
not only in artistic terms but also as a means of entering a dialogue with
different speaking subjects. After almost half a century, Barańczak's paper
can still teach its readers an important lesson about how the framing and
positioning of any text, included translation, puts it in an intricate net-
work of intertextual relations and interdependencies. Thinking of transla-
tions as placed somewhere on a scale between "self-sufficient" and "inte-
grated" objects of interpretations, or actually combining both at the same
time in the act of illuminating each other, the original, and other texts,
definitely opens them up for multiple and more complex readings. Be-
sides being a helpful interpretative key to Barańczak's own literary trans-
lation output and the way he projected these multi-threaded acts of read-
ing himself, his remarks also signal a broader understanding of any liter-
ary practice and the following hermeneutical approach. Just like in the
case of poetry, Barańczak's New Wave category of ethically engaged poet-
ics touches on the issue of how translators communicate with their read-

ers and what rules they project for this act of literary communication. For Barańczak, translation and every artistic practice will therefore be inevitably suspended between any of the two extremities: be it "foreignness and community", "individuality and belonging", or "autonomy and support".

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Olgierd Adrian Wojtasiewicz (1916–1995)

Translator, Scholar and Trainer of Translators

The paper is an attempt to draw a sociological portrait of Olgierd Adrian Wojtasiewicz, Polish linguist, translator, scholar and translators' trainer who published a book entitled "Introduction to the Theory of Translation" in 1957. In this paper I shall be investigating the main tenets of Wojtasiewicz's contribution to translation studies, the main reason of its total ignorance outside Poland. I shall also look at his major achievements as a translator and founder of the first academic institution in Poland for the training of translators and interpreters.

Introduction

In 1957 Olgierd Adrian Wojtasiewicz, a Polish lawyer, linguist, sinologist, translator and scholar, published a small, yet a very ambitious work entitled *Introduction to the Theory of Translation* [in Polish *Wstęp do teorii tłumaczenia*] with Zakład im. Ossolińskich in Wrocław and Warsaw, one of the most prestigious Polish publishing houses. More than 50 years elapsed, and this small book, completely unknown outside Poland, continues to inspire, puzzle and influence Polish researchers in translation studies. For many of his followers, his ideas have lost nothing of their validity. For others, concepts put forward in his work are but an account of one specific period in the history of the discipline, and are no more of use in modern translation research. Notwithstanding the above, for both, the proponents of his line of thought, and for his critics, Wojtasiewicz remains the founding father of Polish translation studies (HEJWOWSKI 2009).