

## TRANSLATING POLISH ROMANTICISM... LITERARY ALLUSIONS IN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF ANDRZEJ BURSA'S POEMS

### Abstract

The work analyses translation difficulties linked to literary allusions and compares the translation techniques applied in two English editions of Andrzej Bursa's poems: one by Kevin Christianson and Halina Ablamowicz, the other by Wiesiek Powaga. First, the peculiarities of translating intertextuality are presented. Then, specific techniques of translating such allusions are analysed, compared and discussed. Finally, the strategies adopted by the translators were summed up and assessed.

**Keywords:** Allusions, Bursa, intertextuality, poetry, Romanticism, translation.

### 1. Introduction

One of the most widely discussed problem connected with literary translation is how to render culture-specific elements – including allusions to literary works. This is particularly difficult when what is alluded to is a very peculiar cultural or literary formation – as it is in the case of Polish Romanticism, which cannot possibly be compared to any other variant of Romanticism in the world. To show the specific translation difficulties connected with this phenomenon, the present article shows how they were tackled in the English versions of poems by Andrzej Bursa, who referred to the Polish Romantic poets more than often. Bursa is generally perceived as the one who strongly rebelled against that tradition, which, incidentally, shaped for centuries the vision of poets in the Polish culture.

As Beata Tarnowska [2011] stated, the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was the period when the interest in this artist's work began to grow in the Anglo-Saxon world, which might be connected with the fact that the two collections of Bursa's poems translated into English were published after the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the poet's death in 1957. The subject is interesting not only due to the rising interest in this poet's work, but also because so far there has appeared no single complete edition of his works in English (or in any foreign language whatsoever), so it is worthwhile discussing the translations to date, which might help deciding which strategy would be best to apply if such a publication was to be prepared in future.

Thus, the aim of the present article is to provide a comparative analysis of the translation strategies and techniques applied in two vastest English-language collections of Andrzej Bursa's poems: a bilingual edition *Wybór wierszy. Selected Poems* by Kevin Christianson with Halina Ablamowicz [Bursa, 2008] published in America and *Killing Auntie & other work* by Wiesiek Powaga [Bursa, 2009] prepared in Britain. The comparative aspect of the analysis will be of particular importance because it will help to reveal the strong and weak points of the translators' work and thus indicate the most problematic aspects of rendering ty-

pically Polish literary allusions in another language. However, before the analytic part of the article, it is worthwhile reviewing the nature of intertextuality and its impact on translation. Having done that, brief information on possible translation strategies and techniques will be shown. Then, the intertextual references to Polish Romanticism in Bursa's poems and their English versions will be presented and commented on.

## 2. Intertextuality in translation

Intertextuality has played a most significant role in the literary studies of recent decades. This category, introduced by Julia Kristevá, who derived it from Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism in literature, has gained special importance in the analysis of postmodern literature [Nycz, 1992, 9-11]. Although there exist several understandings of this popular notion, what is certain is that it embraces the relations between the given text and other texts. Sometimes realizing this reference is essential for the comprehension of the work, sometimes it only adds new senses, but missing it will not blight the interpretation, only impoverish it. However, the interpretation of a work abounding in intertextual elements always depends on whether the reader is familiar with another work, a genre, a tradition, a convention, and so on. The latter cases are examples of the so-called architextual relations [Ibidem, 12].

For Olgierd Wojtasiewicz (2005|1957), who laid foundations on the Polish translation theory, intertextual references belong to the group of erudition allusions. Michał Głowiński [2000, 24, my own translation] defines an intertextual reference as: *a fragment wherein the intertextual relations are prevailing, which attract the reader's attention, direct it in a specific way, not towards the next segment of the text, but towards other texts* As Balcerzan [1998, 96] believes, the quotations and paraphrases of other literary texts are often what actually determines the basic senses of the work as well as its aesthetic appeal. Głowiński [2000, 17-18] claims that the role of intertextuality is not sheer quotation, implementing somebody else's words into the structure of a new work. When making an intertextual reference, the author decontextualizes an element (uproots it from the original text, group of texts or tradition) and recontextualizes it, in some specific purpose, in a new setting, in which it is supposed to function in a new way, nonetheless still showing a bond with its origins. Now, the borrowed element needs not fulfil the same function as in the text it was taken from; quite the opposite, it may even be interpreted in the way that is exactly reverse compared with the original [Ibidem, 17]. This might serve, among other things, achieving a satirical tone or a grotesque effect.

Therefore, when analysing an intertextual reference, it is not enough to find the reference and identify its source correctly. It is also necessary to track its role in the text as well as the way it disturbs the course of reading, to what mental operations it forces the reader, find the perspective in which the element referred to ought to be perceived (Ibidem, 19, Budzińska, 2008, 19). It is also important in what way it is motivated, what justification its appearance has in the storyline [Głowiński, 2000, 20], what its interrelations with other elements of the work consist in. It goes without saying that all these factors need to be well thought of in the process of translating the text. This is why finding the recognized equivalent – that is, an already existing and acknowledged translation of the given fragment (poem, verse, strophe, etc.), if it exists, appears only the tip of the iceberg. However, this should probably always be the point of departure.

Balcerzan [1998, 96] indicates two basic ways of dealing with intertextuality and other allusions in translation: calque and substitution. One of them might be qualified as foreignizing and the other one – domesticating (although the scholar does not state it explicitly). The choice between the two techniques is especially vital when in the original text a quotation is used that is well-known in the source culture, but not in the target culture. What appears critical is that Balcerzan does not speak about the existence or the lack of

the recognized equivalent of a given quotation (e.g. included in a translated work, published and accessible to the target culture members), but about its popularity, recognisability. Therefore, there are cases when the translated fragment, even if it has the same meaning, does not connote in the same way as the original text does. In other words, its place in culture (its importance, its interrelations with other works etc.) is substantially different. This is why, for instance, in Ernst Robert Curtius' German translation of *The Waste Land* the quotations were dealt with differently [Hollander, 1969, 217], depending on whether the translator assumed that the audience were familiar with them.

If the translator decides to use a calque, the allusion remains in the text, but its impact is weakened. It can only work when the audience happens to know the given element taken from the author's culture. Furthermore, it is far more likely that the readership will recognize the allusion and be able to interpret it if they see a recognized equivalent, which they might have already seen in other sources, rather than the translator's own *ad hoc* invention.

Grzegorz Moroz [2005, 89] provides a case study of the way Bogdan Baran tackled quotations from Shakespeare in his translation of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. He concludes that the fact the translator presented his own translation (he even rendered verse with prose in some instances), while he could have used one of the "canonical" ones by Paszkowski, Ulrich or Koźmian had vital consequences for the impact of the whole novel. Namely, it became virtually impossible to recognize the references; the intertextuality and the polyphony of the source text were destroyed. Thus, Moroz insists that the quotations be replaced with their recognized translations that exist already in the polysystem of the translated literature in the target culture (to put it in Itamar Even-Zohar's terms – see e.g. [Bilczewski, 2010, 151–165]).

The polar opposite of calque is substitution. This technique consists in seeking a similar, relevant reference in the target literature. In the case of translation into Polish, the result of this procedure is, as Balcerzan puts it, *forcible polonization of non-Polish literature* [Balcerzan 1998, 96, my own translation]. Indeed, since in the translated work all the references are taken from the target culture, it does not enrich the target literature in new elements. In other words, the target audience is deprived of the chance of learning about the works, artists etc. they did not know about. In a sense, the readers are thus suggested that the foreign writer quoted Polish poets and alluded to the Polish culture, which is obviously not true. Therefore, in a sense such an approach violates the principle of loyalty towards both the author and the reader.

### 3. The analysis of techniques applied in the translation of Bursa's poems

Two basic ways of introducing quotations and other allusions may be distinguished in the collected material: first, an "overt" quotation provided with the name of the author (generally deprived of the name of the source work) – they are most often introduced as mottos above several poems and they come from diverse artists, both Polish and foreign. Second, "covert" allusions are those that are not explicitly introduced by the speaking person – their discovery depends to a larger degree on the reader's skills and erudition.

#### 3.1. Quotations

Amongst the works included in *Selected Poems*, there are five instances of opening a poem with a quotation. In only one of these instances is the quotation bound with the Polish culture. In *Pętla architektury* Bursa used two lines directly taken from *Oda do młodości* (*Dzieckiem w kolebce kto leb urwał hydrze, / Ten młody zdusi centaury*). What is vital, the function of the fragment from Adam Mickiewicz's poem is not only to serve as a motto – it recurs at the end of the poem; Hercules' feat (who, according to Mickiewicz, already as an

infant in the cradle, killed Hydra<sup>1</sup>) is contrasted with the conduct of the one who, also in the cradle, knelt down in front of Chimera (*Bo kto dzieckiem w kolebce przed chimera kłęknał / Ten młody zginąć musi pod toporem miasta*). The parallelism is utterly clear and underlined by the fact that Mickiewicz's words are repeated literally, just as in the motto. This is why it appears particularly important to retain this parallelism and translate the phrase *dzieckiem w kolebce* twice in the same way.

As for this very quotation, Christianson and Ablamowicz had at their disposal a whole panoply of the already existing English translations of Mickiewicz to choose from. Over almost two centuries since the creation of *Ode to Youth*, there have been a number of attempts at translating it into English, taken among others by Paul Soboleski [1881, 212–214], Adam Czerwiński [quoted, for instance, in Kott, 1987, 114] or, recently, by Jarek Zawadzki [2007, 49]; it was published only a year before Christian and Ablamowicz released their book). Nonetheless, instead of choosing to consult one of the already existing English versions of the ode, the translators decided to make their own. The source is recognizable anyway, yet there does not appear to be any logical explanation why they chose to do so. What is more important, however, is that the mentioned phrase is not repeated at the end of the text – it is only paraphrased, which makes it more demanding to catch the parallelism (yet of course it is still quite visible, not least because of the semantic layer).

An example of an allusion being in fact an inexact quotation is the line *cierpi za miliony* ('suffers for millions') in Bursa's poem *Poeta*. The phrase refers to the *Great Improvisation*, virtually the best-known monologue from *Forefathers' Eve* (part III), which in turn is the chef-d'oeuvre of Adam Mickiewicz, considered as the most eminent Polish poet. The exact wording goes as follows: *Nazywam się Milijon – bo za miliony / Kocham i cierpię katusze My name is million, for I love as millions; / Their pain and suffering I feel*; translation by Dorothea Prall Radin, after Masłowski [2006, 10]. The words are originally uttered by Konrad, the play's hero, who, imprisoned, argues with God, who in turn, to Konrad's indignation, remains silent. The dramatic scene has helped establish in the Polish culture the image of a poet or an artist in general – their role, their hardship, their stigma. So, it can be easily guessed, placing this meaningful Romantic line in the context of a pressing physiological need (Bursa's poet suffers for millions, feels his bladder hurt, unzips his fly, zips it up and then continues suffering for millions) was not supposed to pay a tribute to Mickiewicz. It is rather a bitter mockery: either on the outdated idea or on the times in which the realisation of this beautiful scheme is no longer possible. This or another way, this short consideration has hopefully shown that for the poem to be profoundly comprehended, the reader needs to catch the allusion to *Forefathers' Eve* in the first place; it is not sufficient to understand the linear meaning and guess that it is some quotation from an important Polish work. The importance of the allusion itself is highlighted in the construction of the poem – the line is repeated twice, in separate places: at the beginning and at the end of the text, thus acting as a framing device. This derisive tone of the poem is strengthened by the Russian word *apiat'* right before the second occurrence. As Balcerzan [2011, 269] claims, this foreign item strengthens the overall sense of the speaking person's disillusionment with the revolutionary plans as envisioned in Romanticism.

The most obvious, and probably the very first, step to take is verifying whether the source of quotation has ever been translated into target language (English in this case). However, this will not seem to suffice since the key feature of this reference to Mickiewicz is its obviousness, maybe even coarseness (it is just as deprived of subtlety as the majority of Bursa's stylistic figures). Again, it proves that the condition of creating in an English reader

<sup>1</sup> It should be added that this fragment of the poem does not comply with the Greek myth, according to which Hercules killed Hydra as his second Labor, as an adult man, whereas he killed two snakes sent by Hera when he was an infant.

a set of associations similar to that created in the source text readership's minds appears to be its recognisability. It should be borne in mind, however, that the quotation is not exact – for instance, the classical line speaks of both loving and suffering for millions, while Bursa only mentions the suffering part. This is quite relevant because in Polish, both activities are named with finite verbs (*kocham, cierpię*), which makes it easier to remain very close to the original work despite the ellipsis of one of them. In English, however, the second activity was named with the nominative, gerundial form (*suffering*, derived from the verb *suffer*), due to which the translator is required to interfere into the text to a greater degree than Bursa did himself, when adjusting Mickiewicz's line to his own poem. In practice, this grammatical difference will probably influence the recognisability of the allusion.

What Christianson and Ablamowicz did was provide the most natural translation of the line (*suffers for millions*), and supplement the allusion with a footnote at the bottom of the page. However, there is a substantial mistake in the footnote: it states that the famous quotation comes from Juliusz Słowacki's *Kordian*, and it erroneously claims the words are uttered when the hero explains where his name comes from (namely, it is derived from a Latin word meaning 'heart'). In reality, however, the line alludes to the Biblical *Legion*, the name of an evil spirit (Mark 5,9: *My name is Legion: for we are many* – after King James Bible). Had it been not for the incorrect information, the technique of using a recognized equivalent and giving additional explanation would make it easier for the reader to interpret the quotation as an allusion to the Romantic tradition. Notwithstanding, the facts provided in the footnote do not appear to guide the reader towards what is most important, namely the reference to the lofty idea of a poet and their mission as perceived in the Polish Romanticism, when it was one of the vital concepts.

Powaga's version only differs from the earlier one in that the translator added the definite pronoun *the: suffers for the millions*. Slight as it may appear, this divergence is worth focusing on for a while. Namely, it should be asked why the translator decided that the millions which are suffered for are defined in some way – they might be millions of Poles (but if the reference to Mickiewicz is not correctly identified, this interpretation is not so obvious) or *the millions* mentioned by Mickiewicz (this interpretation would be very relevant, but in this case it should be above all made sure that the allusion be suitably highlighted). He also did not give any extra information, relying on the erudition of the reader or assuming that the understanding of this allusion was not vital to the comprehension of the whole text. This version certainly reads smoother (especially that it is also deprived of the Russian lexical item *apiat'*) than the earlier one, but there is nothing in the text that could possibly make the reader realize that they deal with some allusion, due to which any potential assessment of the applied strategy would depend on whether the allusion is crucial or only marginal. Certainly, the poem in this version is perfectly interpretable as an attack on the myths that restrict the artists' freedom. Nevertheless, if the work is deprived of the polemics with the great Polish poet, it no longer appears so daring and so original. Therefore, it could be concluded that the translators were not loyal towards the author (by diminishing the value of his work) and towards the readership (by preventing them from deepening their knowledge about Polish literature).

### 3.2. Proper names

A specific kind of literary allusion is obviously proper names. In Bursa's work, plenty of those are linked to Polish literature or tradition. There can be found at least two conventional names, referring to a whole genre, not necessarily to a specific work: *Wernyhora* and *Karusia*. Both of them refer to some current or genre popular in the Polish Romanticism: *Werny-*

*hora*<sup>2</sup> evokes a series of works touching national problems and *Karusia*<sup>3</sup> – the ballad. Before translating the name – and the connotations – one is obliged to consider, firstly, whether the genres themselves are familiar to the overseas readership and secondly, whether they are also linked with the names. It should be borne in mind that, as Paweł Cichawa stresses [2002, 99], the connotations with the ballad are not identical in various cultures [more specifically, he writes about the Scottish and the Polish ballads]. Therefore, it will probably not suffice to simply refer the readership to that peculiar genre as Mickiewicz's or Witwicki's ballads are very peculiar in that they convey an abundance of allusions to Polish folk culture,

Sometimes the translator might be forced to choose between preserving the name [its sound, immediate connotations etc.] and preserving the literary association, thus neglecting the name itself. Thus again, it appears vital to judge what is essential to the interpretation of a given work, what constitutes its biggest asset. No general rule can be formulated in this respect.

The eponymous hero of the poem *Wernyhora* is mostly being awaited – it is implicitly suggested that once he comes, there will be a significant breakthrough in the speaking person's life. This mirrors the attitude towards the original prophet, whose words were supposed to be guidelines for the Polish nation. Notwithstanding, even when Wernyhora comes to the speaking person, there is no revolution at all – the only thing to do is keep on waiting. Moreover, Bursa's character is very modern – he wears a sweater and smokes the cigarettes. The clash between the majestic Romantic figure and its modern caricature presented by Bursa is certainly worth preserving in translation; so is also the parallelism between the fate of the speaking person and the nation [that also, as it turned out, awaited Wernyhora's salutary prophecies in vain]. This is why Christianson and Ablamowicz's version, involving the transfer of the name, appears very reasonable, although the translators had to recur to adding a footnote.

What is less understandable, however, is the very content of the note. Namely, it involves not only the explanation who Wernyhora was in Polish folklore, but also the examples of his appearances in the Polish art. The three quoted examples are Jan Matejko's painting [which is fully justified for it established the way Wernyhora is imagined right up until our times], Stanisław Wyspiański's play *The Wedding* [which is interesting because it is one of the most crucial mentions of the mysterious prophet, but it comes from the epoch of Young Poland, thus constituting a flagship modernist polemics with the Romantic myths] and its adaptation for film by Andrzej Wajda. What can be striking is the lack of any literary example from Romanticism – and the mention of Wajda's film instead. Admittedly, this work is more likely to be familiar to the wide foreign audience than, say, Słowacki's *Silver Dream of Salomea*, but it certainly does not significantly enrich Wernyhora's image in the Polish culture.

It is interesting to notice that in Powaga's version of the same poem this cultural item was dealt with in a very different way. The translator applied the technique of hypernym and replaced the name with a more general common noun *prophet*. In this way, the poem became

<sup>2</sup> As a half-legendary, literary character, Wernyhora was introduced into the Polish poetry by Michał Czajkowski (Sadyk Pasha) in 1838, in his poem *Wernyhora* [Siwicka, 1999]. His later appearances included *Fantazy*, *Beniowski* and *Silver Dream of Salomea* by Słowacki (where his figure was described in quite an ironic way) and *The Wedding* by Stanisław Wyspiański.

<sup>3</sup> Admittedly, *Karusia* may also be treated as an intertextual allusion to a specific poem: *Romantyczność* (*The Romantic*), for it is in this ballad where a girl of that name appears. However, I am convinced that it also evokes the whole series of Mickiewicz's *Ballads and Romances* and, indirectly, the entire folk current in Romantic literature. This is because *The Romantic* was supposed to be an artistic manifesto and thus ought to be interpreted in a wide context. In contrast, Władysław Broniewski's poem *Ballads and Romances* (Broniewski 1956: 5) refers rather to the single poem about *Karusia* although it takes its title from the name of the whole cycle of Mickiewicz's works. It can be judged based on extensive quotations from *The Romantic*, whose origins are actually explained in a footnote to Ilona Ralf Sues' translation.

far more universal and no longer required adding any extra information. However, it appears that in this particular case the reference to the Romantic myth should be placed on the very top of the hierarchy of the semantic dominants [speaking in Stanisław Barańczak's terms – see Barańczak 2004] and absolutely deserved to remain in the text. This is all the more vital that, as it was already pointed out, the allusions to Romanticism, as well as its criticism, are one of the key features of Bursa's entire work. As a result, Powaga's *Prophet* speaks only about the futility of anticipation in general; what is worse, the word *prophet* without any additional clues directs the interpretation towards the Old Testament prophets, which was most probably not Bursa's intention. All this makes this English text rather an adaptation than a domesticating translation.

The poem *Karusia* refers to Mickiewicz's most famous ballad, wherein a girl sees her dead lover's spirit and refuses to accept the rational explanations provided by the elders from her village. However, Bursa's work is rather an allusion to the whole cycle of Mickiewicz's ballads – it can be noted based on the two last lines, where there is a retrospection and the reader finds out about a former lover who seduced *Karusia* – this kind of plot is very typical of Mickiewicz's *Ballads and Romances*, but not really of *The Romantic*, wherein the original *Karusia* appeared. Although Bursa's text enlists three women, *Karusia* is the main heroine – it is her whom the boy entwined in his arms. The key name was translated by Christianson and Ablamowicz as *Little Carrie*, and so was rendered the poem title. The translation attempts at rendering the diminutive name form and thus highlights the contrast between the form of the name and the fact Bursa's *Karusia* is in her forties. Nonetheless, it is very far from preserving the connotation with one of the most famous Polish poems ever written. The translators did not include a footnote, even though the edition abounds in such extra explanations. It is worthy of note that all three names were replaced with their English equivalents (*Zosia* became *Sophie* and *Kasia* – *Kathie*). What is striking, however, is that only the name of the main character was fitted with the epithet *little* and that it was only added in the title. It might imply that the three women are of different age, or that Bursa distinguishes *Karusia* (or *Carrie*) in some other way, which is not actually the case.

Now, let us analyze an instance of a proper name alluding to a specific Romantic work. Strangely enough, there is only one poem wherein literary characters from Polish books appear – that is *Do Juliusza Słowackiego* (Christianson and Ablamowicz: *To Juliusz Słowacki*), the poem which is, incidentally, heaviest with translator's notes of all the texts included in *Selected Poems* – there are as many as 7 of them. The main message of the text is the admiration for Słowacki, even though he was often in Mickiewicz's shadow. Both figures mentioned by Bursa in there originate from Słowacki's masterpieces; they are eponymous heroes from the poem *Anhelli* and the play *Kordian*. What is peculiar about the work is that the persona does not mention the figures of *Anhelli* or *Kordian* themselves – as it is in the poems *Wernyhora* or *Karusia*. What is alluded to are actually fictive characters, not actual people (this is visible for instance in the use of the pronoun in the phrase: *twój Kordian* – 'your Kordian'). Both names were transferred unchanged into the target text and equipped with footnotes. Again, like in *Wernyhora*, what raises controversy is not the very decision to write additional information (which was probably indispensable, given the literary allusions are really crucial to the comprehension of the poem and the fact Słowacki's works might not be well known abroad), but its content.

*Kordian* was described very laconically, as an important work directed against Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve*. There are two problems with this explanation. First, it is too scarce for a layman to understand the whole strophe alluding to various episodes from the play. Second, it refers the readership to the poem *Poeta* (Christianson and Ablamowicz: *The Poet*) and the commentary thereto, which, as it was already shown, is disastrously erroneous. As for *Anhelli*, which is only mentioned at the end of the poem, the note provides a lot of infor-

mation, involving such details as the plot and the parallelism between Anelli's fate and the life of the Poles during the Second World War and thereafter. This latter piece of information does not appear to be really relevant and necessary because it is rather a kind of interpretation or an attempt at broadening the readership's knowledge about Poland, its history and culture, than just providing the foreign audience with the facts that a typical Polish reader takes for granted.

The poem in question is all the more difficult to render in a foreign language that it also contains a significant number of authentic names, belonging to Polish Romantic and 20<sup>th</sup>-century poets. They are probably supposed to highlight that it is Słowacki's and not Mickiewicz's (who was more appreciated in their lifetime) whose thought was continued in Bursa's epoch – for instance in the works by Broniewski or Gałczyński. The contemporary poets' surnames were transferred into the target text unchanged and commented on in one footnote, where it is stated that they were important poets from Bursa's times and that both were influenced by the author of *Kordian*, albeit differently. This is enough for the foreign readership to understand why Gałczyński and Broniewski are mentioned in this context.

What is most exposed in the notes concerning the Romantics is that the assessment of their merits divided the Polish poets – this dispute was unnecessarily repeated in several footnotes. Apart from this information, there are explanations of who Mickiewicz, Słowacki and Krasiński were (strangely enough, their names were accompanied with makeshift pronunciation hints, which was probably not really indispensable, unless it is supposed to help recite the poem), a comparison of Mickiewicz to Pushkin or Shakespeare. Moreover, Christianson and Abłamowicz attempt at interpreting the poem, claiming that Bursa identifies with Słowacki. This is rather irrelevant for Bursa's attitude is just as clear to a Polish reader as it is to an American one; it may be read from the way he writes about the poets, there is no need to make it even more explicit, especially that the dispute over the hierarchy of the "trinity" was so strongly underlined. Finally, Christianson and Abłamowicz added a footnote to the metaphors that are used instead of the poets' names: *Dębie Słońcu (Oak-Sun)* and *brzoźką i księżycem (a young birch and a moon)* to make it clear whom they indicate, which is certainly a good thing because the foreign audience might not be familiar with the fact that the three poets are often mentioned together, and thus it might be difficult to figure out who is actually spoken about in the text.

All in all, the biggest problem with *Do Juliusza Słowackiego* is that the text contains so many cultural allusions that required extra information that the gist of it was actually moved from the poem itself into the translator's notes. As a result, what the reader gets are muddled lines accompanied with generous explanations, whose reading is absolutely indispensable not only for the interpretation to be complete, but to be possible at all. Therefore, since the footnotes cannot be skipped, the poem itself is no longer an autonomous text. This proves that in some situations it is impracticable to create a translation possible to be understood without recourse to footnotes. Either the rule that the text itself ought to be self-sufficient and its understanding ought not to necessarily require taking into consideration the notes does not apply to translator's footnotes, or else there exist such poems whose translation is pointless at all (what might possibly function without any notes would be an adaptation of *Do Juliusza Słowackiego*, but it is barely imaginable).

#### 4. Conclusion

Bursa's poetic abound in erudite allusions, mostly to the Polish Romanticism. There are even poems which are constructed on the basis of this kind of references, such as *Do Juliusza Słowackiego* (Christianson and Abłamowicz: *To Juliusz Słowacki*) or *Poeta* (Christianson and Abłamowicz: *The Poet*, Powaga: *Poet*), whose apt translation is an essential condition of preserving their gist. The former involves a series of names or text titles, which evoke very

specific associations in the Polish reader and, probably, even translated correctly into English, they would call for some explanation; otherwise they will be just empty lexical items, evoking a very general impression of “Polishness”. *Poeta* involves a meta-reflection concerning the vision of a poet and the mission of poetry (brutally demythologized), especially in the filthy, stifling world familiar to Bursa. But the lyrical subject also challenges the Romantic tradition of viewing poets and poetry, which is still quite popular in Poland and which perhaps restricts today’s creators not much less than in the epoch of Mickiewicz and Słowacki.

As it turns out, the most widely used translation technique was adding a footnote (in the case of Christianson and Ablamowicz) or neutralizing the reference (as Powaga did e.g. in the case of *Wernyhora*). It appears, however, that the translations of poems founded on a literary allusion are not particularly successful – they either lose the flavour of the original or make the poem virtually unreadable, because the reading process is constantly disrupted by the need to look at the translators’ clarifications. The problem is all the more complicated due to the immoderate use of footnotes and their chaotic character (the translators sometimes make significant mistakes and they apparently provide all their associations without making any selection thereof and without highlighting the essential information). All in all, the analyses of the selected poems would probably suggest that there does exist a group of poems which definitely cannot be translated in a satisfying way: loyal both towards the author and towards the reader. The saturation with cultural allusions appears so significant that such works are either stripped of those untranslatable connotations – and thus become quite bland – or supplemented by copious footnotes – and thus lose their autonomy.

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## **TŁUMACZĄC POLSKI ROMANTYZM... ALUZJE LITERACKIE W ANGIELSKICH PRZEKŁADACH WIERSZY ANDRZEJA BURSZY**

### **Streszczenie**

W artykule przeanalizowane zostały trudności tłumaczeniowe związane z aluzjami literackimi, porównano też techniki tłumaczeniowe zastosowane w dwóch anglojęzycznych wydaniach wierszy Andrzeja Bursy: w przekładzie Kevina Christiansona i Haliny Ablańowicz oraz Wieśka Powagi. Najpierw przedstawiono problem przekładu odniesień intertekstualnych. Następnie zbadane, porównane i omówione zostały poszczególne techniki tłumaczeniowe. Artykuł kończą podsumowanie i próba oceny strategii tłumaczy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Aluzje, Bursa, intertekstualność, poezja, przekład, romantyzm.